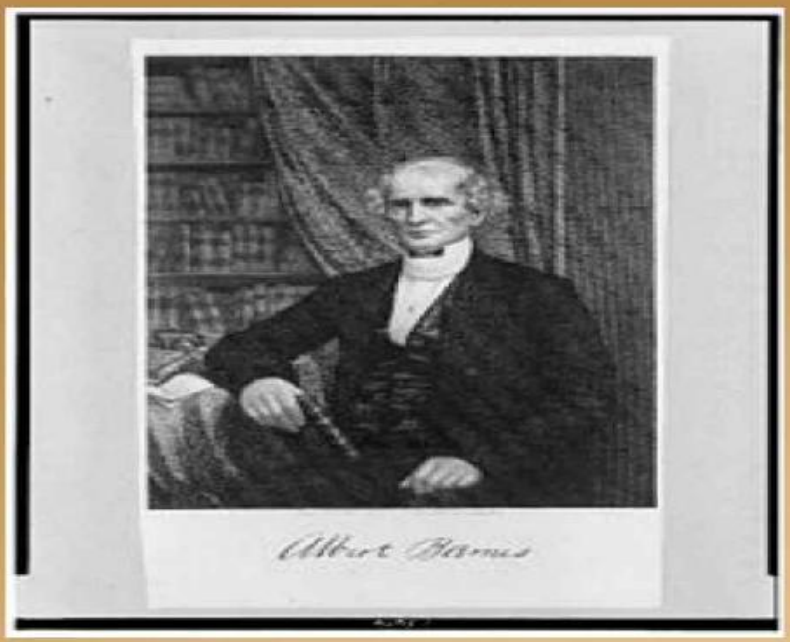

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Notes On The Whole Bible

ALBERT BARNES

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GENESIS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Genesis

The Book of Genesis can be separated into eleven documents or pieces of composition most of which contain additional subordinate divisions. The first of these has no introductory phrase; the third begins with ספר זה תולדת *tôledâh zeh sēpher* "this is the book of the generations"; and the others with תולדות אלה *tôledâh `ēleh* "these are the generations."

However, the subordinate pieces of which these primary documents consist are as distinct from each other as they are complete in themselves. And, each portion of the composer is as separate as the wholes which they go to constitute. The history of the fall Genesis 6:1-8, and the confusion of tongues Genesis 11:1-9 are as distinct efforts of composition and as perfect in themselves as any of the primary divisions. The same holds true throughout the entire Book of Genesis. Even these subordinate pieces contain still smaller passages, having an exact and self-contained finish which enables the critic to lift them out and examine them and makes him wonder if they have not been inserted in the document as in a mold which was previously fitted for their reception. The memoranda of each day's creative work, of the locality of Paradise, of each link in the genealogy of Noah, and the genealogy of Abraham are striking examples of this. They sit, each in the narrative, like a gem in its setting.

Whether these primary documents were originally composed by Moses, or whether they came into his hands from earlier sacred writers and were revised by him and combined into his great work, we are not informed. By revising a sacred writing, we mean replacing obsolete or otherwise unknown words or modes of expressing as were in common use at the time of the reviser, and then putting in an explanatory clause or passage when necessary for people of a later day. The latter of the above suppositions is not inconsistent with Moses being reckoned as the responsible "author" of the whole collection. We think that such a position is more natural, satisfactory, and consistent with the phenomena of all Scripture. It is satisfactory to have the recorder (if not an eye-witness) to be as near as possible to the events recorded. And it seems to have been a part of the method of the Divine Author of the Scripture to have a constant collector, conservator, authenticator, reviser, and continuator of that book which He

designed for the spiritual instruction of successive ages. We may disapprove of one writer tampering with the work of another, but we must allow the Divine Author to adapt His own work from time to time to the necessities of coming generations. However, this implies writing was in use from the origin of man.

We are not able to say when writing of any kind was invented or when syllabic or alphabetic writing came into use. But we meet with the word ספר *sêpher* "a writing," from which we have our English "cipher," as early as Genesis 25:12-18 and Genesis 36, containing the respective records of Ishmael and Esau. When these are placed side by side with those of Isaac and Jacob, the stages in the main line of narrative are found to be nine, that is, two less than the primitive documents.

These great lines of narrative, in like manner, include minor lines, whenever the history falls into several threads which must all be taken up one after another in order to carry on the whole concatenation of events. These come out in paragraphs and even shorter passages which necessarily overlap one another in point of time. The striking uniqueness of Hebrew composition is aptly illustrated by the successive links in the genealogy of Genesis 5, where the life of one patriarch is brought to a close before that of the next is taken up, though they actually run parallel for the greater part of the predecessor's life. It furnishes a key to much that is difficult in the narrative.

This book is naturally divided into two great parts - the first which narrates the creation; the second which narrates the development of the things created from the beginning to the deaths of Jacob and Joseph.

The first part is equal in value to the whole record of what may take place to the end of time, and therefore to the whole of the Bible, not only in its historical part, but in its prophetic aspect. A created system of things contains in its bosom the whole of what may be unfolded from it.

The second great part of Genesis consists of two main divisions - the one detailing the course of events before the deluge, the other recounting the history after the flood. These divisions may be distributed into sections

in the following way: The stages of the narrative marked off in the primary documents are nine in number. However, in consequence of the transcendent importance of the primeval events, we have broken up the second document into three sections, and the fourth document into two sections and have thus divided the contents of the book into twelve great sections. All these matters of arrangement are shown in the following chart:

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I. CREATION:
A. Creation Genesis 1:12:3
II. DEVELOPMENT:
A. Before the Deluge
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XI. Isaac Genesis 25:1936:34
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GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1
- Section I - The Creation
- The Absolute Creation

rēshîyt the "head-part, beginning" of a thing, in point of time ראשית
achărîyth Isaiah′ אחרית Genesis 10:10, or value Proverbs 1:7. Its opposite is
rê'shîyth "in the beginning," is always used in reference to בראשית .46:10
.time. Here only is it taken absolutely

bārā′ "create, give being to something new." It always has God for ברא
its subject. Its object may be anything: matter Genesis 1:1; animal life Genesis 1:21; spiritual life Genesis 1:27. Hence, creation is not confined to a single point of time. Whenever anything absolutely new - that is, not involved in anything previously extant - is called into existence, there is creation Numbers 16:30. Any thing or event may also be said to be created by Him, who created the whole system of nature to which it belongs Malachi 2:10. The verb in its simple form occurs forty-eight times (of which eleven are in Genesis, fourteen in the whole Pentateuch, and twenty-
.one in Isaiah), and always in one sense

eloah is found in the′ אלה *elôah* or′ אלוה *ĕlohîym* "God." The noun′ אלהים
Hebrew scriptures fifty-seven times in the singular (of which two are in Deuteronomy, and forty-one in the book of Job), and about three thousand אלה times in the plural, of which seventeen are in Job. The Chaldee form *elâh* occurs about seventy-four times in the singular, and ten in the plural.′ is proved to be radical, not only by bearing (*h*) ה The Hebrew letter mappiq, but also by keeping its ground before a formative ending. The Arabic verb, with the same radicals, seems rather to borrow from it than to lend the meaning coluit, "worshipped," which it sometimes has. The root probably means to be "lasting, binding, firm, strong." Hence, the noun means the Everlasting, and in the plural, the Eternal Powers. It is correctly rendered God, the name of the Eternal and Supreme Being in our language, which perhaps originally meant lord or ruler. And, like this, it is a common or appellative noun. This is evinced by its direct use and indirect
.applications

Its direct use is either proper or improper, according to the object to which it is applied. Every instance of its proper use manifestly determines its meaning to be the Eternal, the Almighty, who is Himself without beginning, and has within Himself the power of causing other things, personal and impersonal, to be, and on this event is the sole object of reverence and primary obedience to His intelligent creation.

Its improper use arose from the lapse of man into false notions of the object of worship. Many real or imaginary beings came to be regarded as possessed of the attributes, and therefore entitled to the reverence belonging to Deity, and were in consequence called gods by their mistaken votaries, and by others who had occasion to speak of them. This usage at once proves it to be a common noun, and corroborates its proper meaning. When thus employed, however, it immediately loses most of its inherent grandeur, and sometimes dwindles down to the bare notion of the supernatural or the extramundane. In this manner it seems to be applied by the witch of Endor to the unexpected apparition that presented itself to her 1 Samuel 28:13.

Its indirect applications point with equal steadiness to this primary and fundamental meaning. Thus, it is employed in a relative and well-defined sense to denote one appointed of God to stand in a certain divine relation to another. This relation is that of authoritative revealer or administrator of the will of God. Thus, we are told John 10:34 that "he called them gods, to whom the word of God came." Thus, Moses became related to Aaron as God to His prophet Exodus 4:16, and to Pharaoh as God to His creature Exodus 7:1. Accordingly, in Psalm 82:6, we find this principle generalized: "I had said, gods are ye, and sons of the Highest all of you." Here the divine authority vested in Moses is expressly recognized in those who sit in Moses' seat as judges for God. They exercised a function of God among the people, and so were in God's stead to them. Man, indeed, was originally adapted for ruling, being made in the image of God, and commanded to have dominion over the inferior creatures. The parent also is instead of God in some respect to his children, and the sovereign holds the relation of patriarch to his subjects. Still, however, we are not fully warranted in translating אלהים *'ĕlohîym* "judges" in Exodus 21:6; Exodus 22:7-8, Exodus

22:27 (Hebrew versification: 8,9,28), because a more easy, exact, and impressive sense is obtained from the proper rendering.

The word מלאך *mel'āk* "angel," as a relative or official term, is sometimes applied to a person of the Godhead; but the process is not reversed. The Septuagint indeed translates אלהים *'ĕlohîym* in several instances by ἄγγελοι *angeloi* Psalm 8:6; Psalm 97:7; Psalm 138:1. The correctness of this is seemingly supported by the quotations in Hebrews 1:6. and Hebrews 2:7. These, however, do not imply that the renderings are absolutely correct, but only suffiently so for the purpose of the writer. And it is evident they are so, because the original is a highly imaginative figure, by which a class is conceived to exist, of which in reality only one of the kind is or can be. Now the Septuagint, either imagining, from the occasional application of the official term "angel" to God, that the angelic office somehow or sometimes involved the divine nature, or viewing some of the false gods of the pagan as really angels, and therefore seemingly wishing to give a literal turn to the figure, substituted the word ἄγγελοι *angeloi* as an interpretation for אלהים *'ĕlohîym* This free translation was sufficient for the purpose of the inspired author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, inasmuch as the worship of all angels Hebrews 1:6 in the Septuagintal sense of the term was that of the highest rank of dignitaries under God; and the argument in the latter passage Hebrews 2:7 turns not on the words, "thou madest him a little lower than the angels," but upon the sentence, "thou hast put all things under his feet." Moreover, the Septuagint is by no means consistent in this rendering of the word in Similar passages (see Psalm 82:1; Psalm 97:1; 1 Samuel 28:13).

With regard to the use of the word, it is to be observed that the plural of the Chaldee form is uniformly plural in sense. The English version of בר־אלהין *bar -'elâhîyn* "the Son of God" Daniel 3:25 is the only exception to this. But since it is the phrase of a pagan, the real meaning may be, "a son of the gods." On the contrary, the plural of the Hebrew form is generally employed to denote the one God. The singular form, when applied to the true God, is naturally suggested by the prominent thought of his being the only one. The plural, when so applied, is generally accompanied with singular conjuncts, and conveys the predominant conception of a plurality in the one God - a plurality which must be perfectly consistent with his

being the only possible one of his kind. The explanations of this use of the plural - namely, that it is a relic of polytheism, that it indicates the association of the angels with the one God in a common or collective appellation, and that it expresses the multiplicity of attributes subsisting in him - are not satisfactory. All we can say is, that it indicates such a plurality in the only one God as makes his nature complete and creation possible. Such a plurality in unity must have dawned upon the mind of Adam. It is afterward, we conceive, definitely revealed in the doctrine of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

shāmayîm "skies, heavens," being the "high" (*shamay* "be high," שׁמים Arabic) or the "airy" region; the overarching dome of space, with all its .revolving orbs

erets "land, earth, the low or the hard." The underlying surface of′ ארץ .land

The verb is in the perfect form, denoting a completed act. The adverbial note of time, "in the beginning," determines it to belong to the past. To suit our idiom it may, therefore, be strictly rendered "had created." The skies and the land are the universe divided into its two natural parts by an earthly spectator. The absolute beginning of time, and the creation of all things, mutually determine each other.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" Genesis 1:1. This great introductory sentence of the book of God is equal in weight to the whole of its subsequent communications concerning the kingdom of nature.

Genesis 1:1 assumes the existence of God, for it is He who in the beginning creates. It assumes His eternity, for He is before all things: and since nothing comes from nothing, He Himself must have always been. It implies His omnipotence, for He creates the universe of things. It implies His absolute freedom, for He begins a new course of action. It implies His infinite wisdom, for a κόσμος *kosmos* "an order of matter and mind," can only come from a being of absolute intelligence. It implies His essential goodness, for the Sole, Eternal, Almighty, All-wise, and All-sufficient Being

has no reason, no motive, and no capacity for evil. It presumes Him to be beyond all limit of time and place, since He is before all time and place.

It asserts the creation of the heavens and the earth; that is, of the universe of mind and matter. This creating is the omnipotent act of giving existence to things which before had no existence. This is the first great mystery of things; as the end is the second. Natural science observes things as they are, when they have already laid hold of existence. It ascends into the past as far as observation will reach, and penetrates into the future as far as experience will guide. But it does not touch the beginning or the end. This first sentence of revelation, however, records the beginning. At the same time it involves the progressive development of what is begun, and so contains within its bosom the whole of what is revealed in the Book of God. It is thus historical of the beginning, and prophetical of the whole of time. It is, therefore, equivalent to all the rest of revelation taken together, which merely records the evolutions of one sphere of creation, and nearly and more nearly anticipates the end of present things.

This sentence Genesis 1:1 assumes the being of God, and asserts the beginning of things. Hence, it intimates that the existence of God is more immediately patent to the reason of man than the creation of the universe. And this is agreeable to the philosophy of things, for the existence of God is a necessary and eternal truth, more and more self-evident to the intellect as it rises to maturity. But the beginning of things is, by its very nature, a contingent event, which once was not and then came to be contingent on the free will of the Eternal, and, therefore, not evident to reason itself, but made known to the understanding by testimony and the reality of things. This sentence is the testimony, and the actual world in us and around us is the reality. Faith takes account of the one, observation of the other.

It bears on the very face of it the indication that it was written by man, and for man, for it divides all things into the heavens and the earth. Such a division evidently suits those only who are inhabitants of the earth. Accordingly, this sentence Genesis 1:1 is the foundation-stone of the history, not of the universe at large, of the sun, of any other planet, but of the earth, and of man its rational inhabitant. The primeval event which it records may be far distant, in point of time, from the next event in such a

history; as the earth may have existed myriads of ages, and undergone many vicissitudes in its condition, before it became the home of the human race. And, for ought we know, the history of other planets, even of the solar system, may yet be unwritten, because there has been as yet no rational inhabitant to compose or peruse the record. We have no intimation of the interval of time that elapsed between the beginning of things narrated in this prefatory sentence and that state of things which is announced in the following verse, Genesis 1:2.

With no less clearness, however, does it show that it was dictated by superhuman knowledge. For it records the beginning of things of which natural science can take no cognizance. Man observes certain laws of nature, and, guided by these, may trace the current of physical events backward and forward, but without being able to fix any limit to the course of nature in either direction. And not only this sentence, but the main part of this and the following chapter communicates events that occurred before man made his appearance on the stage of things; and therefore before he could either witness or record them. And in harmony with all this, the whole volume is proved by the topics chosen, the revelations made, the views entertained, the ends contemplated, and the means of information possessed, to be derived from a higher source than man.

This simple sentence Genesis 1:1 denies atheism, for it assumes the being of God. It denies polytheism, and, among its various forms, the doctrine of two eternal principles, the one good and the other evil, for it confesses the one Eternal Creator. It denies materialism, for it asserts the creation of matter. It denies pantheism, for it assumes the existence of God before all things, and apart from them. It denies fatalism, for it involves the freedom of the Eternal Being.

It indicates the relative superiority, in point of magnitude, of the heavens to the earth, by giving the former the first place in the order of words. It is thus in accordance with the first elements of astronomical science.

It is therefore pregnant with physical and metaphysical, with ethical and theological instruction for the first man, for the predecessors and

contemporaries of Moses, and for all the succeeding generations of mankind.

This verse forms an integral part of the narrative, and not a mere heading as some have imagined. This is abundantly evident from the following reasons: 1. It has the form of a narrative, not of a superscription. 2. The conjunctive particle connects the second verse with it; which could not be if it were a heading. 3. The very next sentence speaks of the earth as already in existence, and therefore its creation must be recorded in the first verse. 4. In the first verse the heavens take precedence of the earth; but in the following verses all things, even the sun, moon, and stars seem to be but appendages to the earth. Thus, if it were a heading, it would not correspond with the narrative. 5. If the first verse belongs to the narrative, order pervades the whole recital; whereas; if it is a heading, the most hopeless confusion enters. Light is called into being before the sun, moon, and stars. The earth takes precedence of the heavenly luminaries. The stars, which are coordinate with the sun, and preordinate to the moon, occupy the third place in the narrative of their manifestation. For any or all of these reasons it is obvious that the first verse forms a part of the narrative.

As soon as it is settled that the narrative begins in the first verse, another question comes up for determination; namely, whether the heavens here mean the heavenly bodies that circle in their courses through the realms of space, or the mere space itself which they occupy with their perambulations. It is manifest that the heavens here denote the heavenly orbs themselves - the celestial mansions with their existing inhabitants - for the following cogent reasons:

1. Creation implies something created, and not mere space, which is nothing, and cannot be said to be created.

2. Since “the earth” here obviously means the substance of the planet we inhabit, so, by parity of reason, the heavens must mean the substance of the celestial luminaries, the heavenly hosts of stars and spirits.

3. “The heavens” are placed before “the earth,” and therefore must mean that reality which is greater than the earth, for if they meant “space,” and nothing real, they ought not to be before the earth.

4. “The heavens” are actually mentioned in the verse, and therefore must mean a real thing, for if they meant nothing at all, they ought not to be mentioned.

5. The heavens must denote the heavenly realities, because this imparts a rational order to the whole chapter; whereas an unaccountable derangement appears if the sun, moon, and stars do not come into existence till the fourth day, though the sun is the center of light and the measurer of the daily period.

For any or all of these reasons, it is undeniable that the heavens in the first verse mean the fixed and planetary orbs of space; and, consequently, that these uncounted tenants of the skies, along with our own planet, are all declared to be in existence before the commencement of the six days‘ creation.

Hence, it appears that the first verse records an event antecedent to those described in the subsequent verses. This is the absolute and aboriginal creation of the heavens and all that in them is, and of the earth in its primeval state. The former includes all those resplendent spheres which are spread before the wondering eye of man, as well as those hosts of planets and of spiritual and angelic beings which are beyond the range of his natural vision. This brings a simple, unforced meaning out of the whole chapter, and discloses a beauty and a harmony in the narrative which no other interpretation can afford. In this way the subsequent verses reveal a new effort of creative power, by which the pre-Adamic earth, in the condition in which it appears in the second verse, is prepared for the residence of a fresh animal creation, including the human race. The process is represented as it would appear to primeval man in his infantile simplicity, with whom his own position would naturally be the fixed point to which everything else was to be referred.

Verse 2

- II. The Land

hāyah “be.” It is to be noted, however, that the word has three היה

”.meanings, two of which now scarcely belong to our English “be

1. “Be, as an event, start into being, begin to be, come to pass.” This may be understood of a thing beginning to be, אור יהי *yehiy 'ôr* “be light”

Genesis 1:3; or of an event taking place, ויהי מקץ ימים *vayehîy mîqēts yāmîym* "and it came to pass from the end of days."

2. "Be," as a change of state, "become." This is applied to what had a previous existence, but undergoes some change in its properties or relations; as ותהי נציב מלח *vatehîy netsîyb melach* "and she became" a pillar of salt Genesis 19:26.

3. "Be," as a state. This is the ultimate meaning to which the verb tends in all languages. In all its meanings, especially in the first and second, the Hebrew speaker presumes an onlooker, to whom the object in question appears coming into being, becoming or being, as the case may be. Hence, it means to be manifestly, so that eye-witnesses may observe the signs of existence.

tohû vābohû "a waste and a void." The two terms denote תהו ובהו kindred ideas, and their combination marks emphasis. Besides the present *bohû* occurs in only two others Isaiah 34:11; Jeremiah 4:23, and בהו passage ,*tohû* If we may distinguish the two words תהו always in conjunction with *tohû* refers to the form, and therefore תהו *bohû* refers to the matter, and בהו the phrase combining the two denotes a state of utter confusion and .desolation, an absence of all that can furnish or people the land

".*choshek* "darkness, the absence of light חשך

".*panah* "face, look, turn toward פנה ".*pānîym* "face, surface פנים

".*hûm* "hum, roar, fret הום ".*tehôm* "roaring deep, billow תהום

".*rûach* "breath, wind, soul, spirit רוח

".*rāchaph* "be soft, tremble." Piel, "brood, flutter רחף

vehā'ārets "and the earth." Here the conjunction attaches the noun, והארץ and not the verb, to the preceding statement. This is therefore a connection of objects in space, and not of events in time. The present sentence, accordingly, may not stand closely conjoined in point of time with the preceding one. To intimate sequence in time the conjunction would have ".*vatehîy* "then was ותהי been prefixed to the verb in the form

erets means not only "earth," but "country, land," a portion of the′ ארץ earth‘s surface defined by natural, national, or civil boundaries; as, "the .land of" Egypt, "thy land" Exodus 23:9-10

Before proceeding to translate this verse, it is to be observed that the state of an event may be described either definitely or indefinitely. It is described definitely by the three states of the Hebrew verb - the perfect, the current, and the imperfect. The latter two may be designated in common the imperfect state. A completed event is expressed by the former of the two states, or, as they are commonly called, tenses of the Hebrew verb; a current event, by the imperfect participle; an incipient event, by the second state or tense. An event is described indefinitely when there is neither verb nor participle in the sentence to determine its state. The first sentence of this verse is an example of the perfect state of an event, the second of the indefinite, and the third of the imperfect or continuous state.

After the undefined lapse of time from the first grand act of creation, the present verse describes the state of things on the land immediately antecedent to the creation of a new system of vegetable and animal life, and, in particular, of man, the intelligent inhabitant, for whom this fair scene was now to be prepared and replenished.

Here "the earth" is put first in the order of words, and therefore, according to the genius of the Hebrew language, set forth prominently as the subject of the sentence; whence we conclude that the subsequent narrative refers to the land - the skies from this time forward coming in only incidentally, as they bear upon its history. The disorder and desolation, we are to remember, are limited in their range to the land, and do not extend to the skies; and the scene of the creation now remaining to be described is confined to the land, and its superincumbent matter in point of space, and to its present geological condition in point of time.

We have further to bear in mind that the land among the antediluvians, and down far below the time of Moses, meant so much of the surface of our globe as was known by observation, along with an unknown and undetermined region beyond; and observation was not then so extensive as to enable people to ascertain its spherical form or even the curvature of its

surface. To their eye it presented merely an irregular surface bounded by the horizon. Hence, it appears that, so far as the current significance of this leading term is concerned, the scene of the six days‘ creation cannot be affirmed on scriptural authority alone to have extended beyond the surface known to man. Nothing can be inferred from the mere words of Scripture concerning America, Australia, the islands of the Pacific, or even the remote parts of Asia, Africa, or Europe, that were yet unexplored by the race of man. We are going beyond the warrant of the sacred narrative, on a flight of imagination, whenever we advance a single step beyond the sober limits of the usage of the day in which it was written.

Along with the sky and its conspicuous objects the land then known to the primeval man formed the sum total of the observable universe. It was as competent to him with his limited information, as it is to us with our more extensive but still limited knowledge, to express the all by a periphrasis consisting of two terms that have not even yet arrived at their full complement of meaning: and it was not the object or the effect of divine revelation to anticipate science on these points.

Passing now from the subject to the verb in this sentence, we observe it is in the perfect state, and therefore denotes that the condition of confusion and emptiness was not in progress, but had run its course and become a settled thing, at least at the time of the next recorded event. If the verb had been absent in Hebrew, the sentence would have been still complete, and the meaning as follows: “And the land was waste and void.” With the verb present, therefore, it must denote something more. The verb היה *hāyâh* “be” has here, we conceive, the meaning “become;” and the import of the sentence is this: “And the land had become waste and void.” This affords the presumption that the part at least of the surface of our globe which fell within the cognizance of primeval man, and first received the name of land, may not have been always a scene of desolation or a sea of turbid waters, but may have met with some catastrophe by which its order and fruitfulness had been marred or prevented.

This sentence, therefore, does not necessarily describe the state of the land when first created, but merely intimates a change that may have taken place since it was called into existence. What its previous condition was, or

what interval of time elapsed, between the absolute creation and the present state of things, is not revealed. How many transformations it may have undergone, and what purpose it may have heretofore served, are questions that did not essentially concern the moral well-being of man, and are therefore to be asked of some other interpreter of nature than the written word.

This state of things is finished in reference to the event about to be narrated. Hence, the settled condition of the land, expressed by the predicates "a waste and a void," is in studied contrast with the order and fullness which are about to be introduced. The present verse is therefore to be regarded as a statement of the needs that have to be supplied in order to render the land a region of beauty and life.

The second clause of the verse points out another striking characteristic of the scene. "And darkness was upon the face of the deep": Here again the conjunction is connected with the noun. The time is the indefinite past, and the circumstance recorded is merely appended to that contained in the previous clause. The darkness, therefore, is connected with the disorder and solitude which then prevailed on the land. It forms a part of the physical derangement which had taken place on this part at least of the surface of our globe.

It is further to be noted that the darkness is described to be on the face of the deep. Nothing is said about any other region throughout the bounds of existing things. The presumption is, so far as this clause determines, that it is a local darkness confined to the face of the deep. And the clause itself stands between two others which refer to the land, and not to any other part of occupied space. It cannot therefore be intended to describe anything beyond this definite region.

The deep, the roaring abyss, is another feature in the pre-Adamic scene. It is not now a region of land and water, but a chaotic mass of turbid waters, floating over, it may be, and partly laden with, the ruins of a past order of things; at all events not at present possessing the order of vegetable and animal life.

The last clause introduces a new and unexpected clement into scene of desolation. The sentence is, as heretofore, coupled to preceding one by the noun or subject. This indicates still a conjunction of things, and not a series of events. The phrase רוּח אלֹהים *rûach 'ĕlohîym* means "the spirit of God," as it is elsewhere uniformly applied to spirit, and as רחף *rîchēp* "brooded," does not describe the action of wind. The verbal form employed is the imperfect participle, and therefore denotes a work in the actual process of accomplishment. The brooding of the spirit of God is evidently the originating cause of the reorganization of things on the land, by the creative work which is successively described in the following passage.

It is here intimated that God is a spirit. For "the spirit of God" is equivalent to "God who is a spirit." This is that essential characteristic of the Everlasting which makes creation possible. Many philosophers, ancient and modern, have felt the difficulty of proceeding from the one to the many; in other words, of evolving the actual multiplicity of things out of the absolutely one. And no wonder. For the absolutely one, the pure monad that has no internal relation, no complexity of quality or faculty, is barren, and must remain alone. It is, in fact, nothing; not merely no "thing," but absolutely naught. The simplest possible existent must have being, and text to which this being belongs, and, moreover, some specific or definite character by which it is what it is. This character seldom consists of one quality; usually, if not universally, of more than one. Hence, in the Eternal One may and must be that character which is the concentration of all the causative antecedents of a universe of things. The first of these is will. Without free choice there can be no beginning of things. Hence, matter cannot be a creator. But will needs, cannot be without, wisdom to plan and power to execute what is to be willed. These are the three essential attributes of spirit. The manifold wisdom of the Eternal Spirit, combined with His equally manifold power, is adequate to the creation of a manifold system of things. Let the free behest be given, and the universe starts into being.

It would be rash and out of place to speculate on the nature of the brooding here mentioned further than it is explained by the event. We could not see any use of a mere wind blowing over the water, as it would be productive of none of the subsequent effects. At the same time, we may

conceive the spirit of God to manifest its energy in some outward effect, which may bear a fair analogy to the natural figure by which it is represented. Chemical forces, as the prime agents, are not to be thought of here, as they are totally inadequate to the production of the results in question. Nothing but a creative or absolutely initiative power could give rise to a change so great and fundamental as the construction of an Adamic abode out of the luminous, aerial, aqueous, and terrene materials of the preexistent earth, and the production of the new vegetable and animal species with which it was now to be replenished.

Such is the intimation that we gather from the text, when it declares that "the spirit of God was brooding upon the face of the waters." It means something more than the ordinary power put forth by the Great Being for the natural sustenance and development of the universe which he has called into existence. It indicates a new and special display of omnipotence for the present exigencies of this part of the realm of creation. Such an occasional, and, for ought we know, ordinary though supernatural interposition, is quite in harmony with the perfect freedom of the Most High in the changing conditions of a particular region, while the absolute impossibility of its occurrence would be totally at variance with this essential attribute of a spiritual nature.

In addition to this, we cannot see how a universe of moral beings can be governed on any other principle; while, on the other hand, the principle itself is perfectly compatible with the administration of the whole according to a predetermined plan, and does not involve any vacillation of purpose on the part of the Great Designer.

We observe, also, that this creative power is put forth on the face of the waters, and is therefore confined to the land mentioned in the previous part of the verse and its superincumbent atmosphere.

Thus, this primeval document proceeds, in an orderly way, to portray to us in a single verse the state of the land antecedent to its being prepared anew as a meet dwelling-place for man.

Verses 3-5

- III. The First Day

3. אמר′ *āmar* “say, bid.” After this verb comes the thing said in the words of the speaker, or an equivalent expression. In this respect it corresponds with our English “say”.

אור′ *ôr* “light.” Light is simply what makes a sensible impression on the organs of vision. It belongs to a class of things which occasionally produce the same effect.

ויאמר *vayo'mer* “then said.” Here we have come to the narrative or the record of a series of events. The conjunction is prefixed to the verb, to indicate the connection of the event it records with what precedes. There is here, therefore, a sequence in the order of time. In a chain of events, the narrative follows the order of occurrence. Collateral chains of events must of necessity be recorded in successive paragraphs. The first paragraph carries on one line of incidents to a fit resting-place. The next may go back to take up the record of another line. Hence, a new paragraph beginning with a conjoined verb is to be connected in time, not with the last sentence of the preceding one, but with some sentence in the preceding narrative more or less distant from its terminating point (see on Genesis 1:5, and Genesis 2:3). Even a single verse may be a paragraph in itself referring to a point of time antecedent to the preceding sentence.

A verb so conjoined in narrative is in Hebrew put in the incipient or imperfect form, as the narrator conceives the events to grow each out of that already past. He himself follows the incidents step by step down the pathway of time, and hence the initial aspect of each event is toward him, as it actually comes upon the stage of existence.

Since the event now before us belongs to past time, this verb is well enough rendered by the past tense of our English verb. This tense in English is at present indefinite, as it does not determine the state of the event as either beginning, continuing, or concluded. It is not improbable, however, that it originally designated the first of these states, and came by degrees to be indefinite. The English present also may have denoted an incipient, and then an imperfect or indefinite.

3. ראה *horaō* ὁράω "see" *rā'âh* אור *ôr*, "emit light" ראה *rā'âh* "see by light."

רע *rā'* רעה: *ṭôb* "good." Opposite is טיב קרא *qārā'* "cry, call."

ערב *ereb* "evening, sunset." A space of time before and after sunset. ערבים *arebayîm* "two evenings," a certain time before sunset, and the time between sunset and the end of twilight. הערבים בין *bēyn hāʿarbayîm* "the interval between the two evenings, from sunset to the end of twilight," according to the Karaites and Samaritans; "from sun declining to sunset," according to the Pharisees and Rabbinists. It might be the time from the beginning of the one to the beginning of the other, from the end of the one to the end of the other, or from the beginning of the one to the end of the other. The last is the most suitable for all the passages in which it occurs. These are ten in number, all in the law Exodus 12:6; Exodus 16:12; Exodus 29:31, Exodus 29:41; Exodus 30:8; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 9:3, Numbers 9:5, Numbers 9:8; Numbers 28:4. The slaying of the evening lamb and of the passover lamb, the eating of the latter and the lighting of the lamps, took place in the interval so designated.

At the end of this portion of the sacred text we have the first פ (*p*). This is explained in the Introduction, Section VII.

The first day's work is the calling of light into being. Here the design is evidently to remove one of the defects mentioned in the preceding verse, - "and darkness was upon the face of the deep." The scene of this creative act is therefore coincident with that of the darkness it is intended to displace. The interference of supernatural power to cause the presence of light in this region, intimates that the powers of nature were inadequate to this effect. But it does not determine whether or not light had already existed elsewhere, and had even at one time penetrated into this now darkened region, and was still prevailing in the other realms of space beyond the face of the deep. Nor does it determine whether by a change of the polar axis, by the rarefaction of the gaseous medium above, or by what other means, light was made to visit this region of the globe with its agreeable and quickening influences. We only read that it did not then illuminate the deep of waters, and that by the potent word of God it was then summoned into being. This

is an act of creative power, for it is a calling into existence what had previously no existence in that place, and was not owing to the mere development of nature. Hence, the act of omnipotence here recorded is not at variance with the existence of light among the elements of that universe of nature, the absolute creation of which is affirmed in the first verse.

Genesis 1:3

Then said God. - In Genesis 1:3, God speaks. From this we learn that He not only is, but is such that He can express His will and commune with His intelligent creatures. He is manifest not only by His creation, but by Himself. If light had come into existence without a perceptible cause, we should still have inferred a first Causer by an intuitive principle which demands an adequate cause for anything making its appearance which was not before. But when God says, "Be light," in the audience of His intelligent creatures, and light forthwith comes into view, they perceive God commanding, as well as light appearing.

Speech is the proper mode of spiritual manifestation. Thinking, willing, acting are the movements of spirit, and speech is the index of what is thought, willed, and done. Now, as the essence of God is the spirit which thinks and acts, so the form of God is that in which the spirit speaks, and otherwise meets the observations of intelligent beings. In these three verses, then, we have God, the spirit of God, and the word of God. And as the term "spirit" is transferred from an inanimate thing to signify an intelligent agent, so the term "word" is capable of receiving a similar change of application.

Inadvertent critics of the Bible object to God being described as "speaking," or performing any other act that is proper only to the human frame or spirit. They say it is anthropomorphic or anthropopathic, implies a gross, material, or human idea of God, and is therefore unworthy of Him and of His Word. But they forget that great law of thought and speech by which we apprehend analogies, and with a wise economy call the analogues by the same name. Almost all the words we apply to mental things were originally borrowed from our vocabulary for the material world, and therefore really figurative, until by long habit the metaphor was forgotten, and they became to all intents and purposes literal. And philosophers never have and never will have devised a more excellent way of husbanding words, marking analogies, and fitly expressing spiritual things. Our

phraseology for mental ideas, though lifted up from a lower sphere, has not landed us in spiritualism, but enabled us to converse about the metaphysical with the utmost purity and propriety.

And, since this holds true of human thoughts and actions, so does it apply with equal truth to the divine ways and works. Let there be in our minds proper notions of God, and the tropical language we must and ought to employ in speaking of divine things will derive no taint of error from its original application to their human analogues. Scripture communicates those adequate notions of the most High God which are the fit corrective of its necessarily metaphorical language concerning the things of God. Accordingly, the intelligent perusal of the Bible has never produced idolatry; but, on the other hand, has communicated even to its critics the just conceptions they have acquired of the spiritual nature of the one true God.

It ought to be remembered, also, that the very principle of all language is the use of signs for things, that the trope is only a special application of this principle according to the law of parsimony, and that the East is especially addicted to the use of tropical language. Let not western metaphysics misjudge, lest it be found to misunderstand eastern aesthetics.

It is interesting to observe in the self-manifesting God, the great archetypes of which the semblances are found in man. Here we have the sign-making or signifying faculty in exercise. Whether there were created witnesses present at the issue of this divine command, we are not here informed. Their presence, however, was not necessary to give significance to the act of speech, any more than to that of self-manifestation. God may manifest Himself and speak, though there be none to see and hear.

We see, too, here the name in existence before the thing, because it primarily refers to the thing as contemplated in thought.

The self-manifesting God and the self-manifesting act of speaking are here antecedent to the act of creation, or the coming of the thing into existence. This teaches us that creation is a different thing from self-

manifestation or emanation. God is; He manifests Himself; He speaks; and lastly He puts forth the power, and the thing is done.

Let there be light. - The word "be" simply denotes the "existence" of the light, by whatever means or from whatever quarter it comes into the given locality. It might have been by an absolute act of pure creation or making out of nothing. But it may equally well be effected by any supernatural operation which removes an otherwise insurmountable hinderance, and opens the way for the already existing light to penetrate into the hitherto darkened region. This phrase is therefore in perfect harmony with preexistence of light among the other elementary parts of the universe from the very beginning of things. And it is no less consonant with the fact that heat, of which light is a species or form, is, and has from the beginning been, present in all those chemical changes by which the process of universal nature is carried on through all its innumerable cycles.

Genesis 1:4

Then saw God the light that it was good. - God contemplates his work, and derives the feeling of complacence from the perception of its excellence. Here we have two other archetypal faculties displayed in God, which subsequently make their appearance in the nature of man, the understanding, and the judgment.

The perception of things external to Himself is an important fact in the relation between the Creator and the creature. It implies that the created thing is distinct from the creating Being, and external to Him. It therefore contradicts pantheism in all its forms.

The judgment is merely another branch of the apprehensive or cognitive faculty, by which we note physical and ethical relations and distinctions of things. It comes immediately into view on observing the object now called into existence. God saw "that it was good." That is good in general which fulfills the end of its being. The relation of good and evil has a place and an application in the physical world, but it ascends through all the grades of the intellectual and the moral. That form of the judgement which takes cognizance of moral distinctions is of so much importance as to have received a distinct name, - the conscience, or moral sense.

Here the moral rectitude of God is vindicated, inasmuch as the work of His power is manifestly good. This refutes the doctrine of the two

principles, the one good and the other evil, which the Persian sages have devised in order to account for the presence of moral and physical evil along with the good in the present condition of our world.

Divided between the light and between the darkness. - God then separates light and darkness, by assigning to each its relative position in time and space. This no doubt refers to the vicissitudes of day and night, as we learn from the following verse:

Genesis 1:5

Called to the light, day, … - After separating the light and the darkness, he gives them the new names of day and night, according to the limitations under which they were now placed. Before this epoch in the history of the earth there was no rational inhabitant, and therefore no use of naming. The assigning of names, therefore, is an indication that we have arrived at that stage in which names for things will be necessary, because a rational creature is about to appear on the scene.

Naming seems to be designating according to the specific mode in which the general notion is realized in the thing named. This is illustrated by several instances which occur in the following part of the chapter. It is the right of the maker, owner, or other superior to give a name; and hence, the receiving of a name indicates the subordination of the thing named to the namer. Name and thing correspond: the former is the sign of the latter; hence, in the concrete matter-of-fact style of Scripture the name is often put for the thing, quality, person, or authority it represents.

The designations of day and night explain to us what is the meaning of dividing the light from the darkness. It is the separation of the one from the other, and the orderly distribution of each over the different parts of the earth‘s surface in the course of a night and a day. This could only be effected in the space of a diurnal revolution of the earth on its axis. Accordingly, if light were radiated from a particular region in the sky, and thus separated from darkness at a certain meridian, while the earth performed its daily round, the successive changes of evening, night, morning, day, would naturally present themselves in slow and stately progress during that first great act of creation.

Thus, we have evidence that the diurnal revolution of the earth took place on the first day of the last creation. We are not told whether it

occurred before that time. If there ever was a time when the earth did not revolve, or revolved on a different axis or according to a different law from the present, the first revolution or change of revolution must have produced a vast change in the face of things, the marks of which would remain to this day, whether the impulse was communicated to the solid mass alone, or simultaneously to all the loose matter resting on its surface. But the text gives no intimation of such a change.

At present, however, let us recollect we have only to do with the land known to antediluvian man, and the coming of light into existence over that region, according to the existing arrangement of day and night. How far the breaking forth of the light may have extended beyond the land known to the writer, the present narrative does not enable us to determine.

We are now prepared to conclude that the entrance of light into this darkened region was effected by such a change in its position or in its superincumbent atmosphere as allowed the interchange of night and day to become discernible, while at the same time so much obscurity still remained as to exclude the heavenly bodies from view. We have learned from the first verse that these heavenly orbs were already created. The luminous element that plays so conspicuous and essential a part in the process of nature, must have formed a part of that original creation. The removal of darkness, therefore, from the locality mentioned, is merely owing to a new adjustment by which the pre-existent light was made to visit the surface of the abyss with its cheering and enlivening beams.

In this case, indeed, the real change is effected, not in the light itself, but in the intervening medium which was impervious to its rays. But it is to be remembered, on the other hand, that the actual result of the divine interposition is still the diffusion of light over the face of the watery deep, and that the actual phenomena of the change, as they would strike an onlooker, and not the invisible springs of the six days‘ creation, are described in the chapter before us.

Then was evening, then was morning, day one. - The last clause of the verse is a resumption of the whole process of time during this first work of creation. This is accordingly a simple and striking example of two lines

of narrative parallel to each other and exactly coinciding in respect of time. In general we find the one line overlapping only a part of the other.

The day is described, according to the Hebrew mode of narrative, by its starting-point, "the evening." The first half of its course is run out during the night. The next half in like manner commences with "the morning," and goes through its round in the proper day. Then the whole period is described as "one day." The point of termination for the day is thus the evening again, which agrees with the Hebrew division of time Leviticus 23:32.

To make "the evening" here the end of the first day, and so "the morning" the end of the first night, as is done by some interpreters, is therefore equally inconsistent with the grammar of the Hebrews and with their mode of reckoning time. It also defines the diurnal period, by noting first its middle point and then its termination, which does not seem to be natural. It further defines the period of sunshine, or the day proper, by "the evening," and the night by the morning; a proceeding equally unnatural. It has not even the advantage of making the event of the latter clause subsequent to that of the former. For the day of twenty-four hours is wholly spent in dividing the light from the darkness; and the self-same day is described again in this clause, take it how we will. This interpretation of the clause is therefore to be rejected.

The days of this creation are natural days of twenty-four hours each. We may not depart from the ordinary meaning of the word without a sufficient warrant either in the text of Scripture or in the law of nature. But we have not yet found any such warrant. Only necessity can force us to such an expedient. Scripture, on the other hand, warrants us in retaining the common meaning by yielding no hint of another, and by introducing "evening, night, morning, day," as its ordinary divisions. Nature favors the same interpretation. All geological changes are of course subsequent to the great event recorded in the first verse, which is the beginning of things. All such changes, except the one recorded in the six days' creation, are with equal certainty antecedent to the state of things described in the second verse. Hence, no lengthened period is required for this last creative interposition.

Day one - is used here for the first day, the cardinal one being not usually employed for the ordinal in Hebrew Genesis 8:13; Exodus 10:1-2. It

cannot indicate any emphasis or singularity in the day, as it is in no respect different from the other days of creation. It implies that the two parts before mentioned make up one day. But this is equally implied by all the ordinals on the other days.

This day is in many ways interesting to us. It is the first day of the last creation; it is the first day of the week; it is the day of the resurrection of the Messiah; and it has become the Christian Sabbath.

The first five verses form the first parashah (פרשׁ *pārāsh*) or "section" of the Hebrew text. If this division come from the author, it indicates that he regarded the first day's work as the body of the narrative, and the creation of the universe, in the first verse, and the condition of the earth, in the second, as mere preliminaries to introduce and elucidate his main statement. If, on the contrary, it proceeds from some transcriber of a subsequent period, it may indicate that he considered the creative work of the first day to consist of two parts, - first, an absolute creation; and, second, a supplementary act, by which the primary universe was first enlightened.

Verses 6-8

- IV. The Second Day

6. רקיע *stereōma* στερέωμα "spread out by רקע *rāqîya*ʿ "expanse;" *rāqa*ʿ beating, as leaf gold." This expanse was not understood to be solid, as the fowl is said to fly on the face of it Genesis 1:21. It is also described as luminous Daniel 12:3, and as a monument of divine power Psalm 150:1.

7. עשׂה *āśâh* "work on," "make out of already existing materials".

The second act of creative power bears upon the deep of waters, over which the darkness had prevailed, and by which the solid crust was still overlaid. This mass of turbid and noisy water must be reduced to order, and confined within certain limits, before the land can be reached. According to the laws of material nature, light or heat must be an essential factor in all physical changes, especially in the production of gases and vapors. Hence, its presence and activity are the first thing required in instituting a new process of nature. Air naturally takes the next place, as it is equally essential to the maintenance of vegetable and animal life. Hence, its adjustment is the second step in this latest effort of creation.

Genesis 1:6

Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water. - For this purpose God now calls into existence the expanse. This is that interval of space between the earth on the one side and the birds on the wing, the clouds and the heavenly bodies on the other, the lower part of which we know to be occupied by the air. This will appear more clearly from a comparison of other passages in this chapter (Genesis 1:14, Genesis 1:20).

And let it be dividing between water and water. - It appears that the water in a liquid state was in contact with another mass of water, in the shape of dense fogs and vapors; not merely overhanging, but actually resting on the waters beneath. The object of the expanse is to divide the waters which are under it from those which are above it. Hence, it appears that the thing really done is, not to create the space that extends indefinitely above our heads (which, being in itself no thing, but only room for things, requires no creating), but to establish in it the intended disposition of the waters in two separate masses, the one above, and the other below the intervening expanse. This we know is effected by means of the atmosphere, which receives a large body of water in the state of vapor, and bears up a visible portion of it in the form of clouds. These ever-returning and ever-varying piles of mist strike the eye of the unsophisticated spectator; and when the dew is observed on the grass, or the showers of rain, hail, and snow are seen falling on the ground, the conclusion is obvious - that above the expanse, be the distance small or great, is laid up an unseen and inexhaustible treasury of water, by which the earth may be perpetually bedewed and irrigated.

The aqueous vapor is itself, as well as the element with which it is mingled, invisible and impalpable; but when condensed by cold it becomes apparent to the eye in the form of mists and clouds, and, at a certain point of coolness, begins to deposit itself in the palpable form of dew, rain, hail, or snow. As soon as it becomes obvious to the sense it receives distinguishing names, according to its varying forms. But the air being invisible, is unnoticed by the primitive observer until it is put in motion, when it receives the name of wind. The space it occupies is merely denominated the expanse; that is, the interval between us and the various bodies that float above and hang upon nothing, or nothing perceptible to the eye.

The state of things before this creative movement may be called one of disturbance and disorder, in comparison with the present condition of the atmosphere. This disturbance in the relations of air and water was so great that it could not be reduced to the present order without a supernatural cause. Whether any other gases, noxious or innocuous, entered into the constitution of the previous atmosphere, or whether any other ingredients were once held in solution by the watery deep, we are not informed. Whether any volcanic or plutonic violence had disturbed the scene, and raised a dense mass of gaseous damp and fuliginous matter into the airy region, is not stated. How far the disorder extended we cannot tell. We are merely certain that it reached over all the land known to man during the interval between this creation and the deluge. Whether this disorder was temporary or of long standing, and whether the change was effected by altering the axis of the earth‘s rotation, and thereby the climate of the land of primeval man, or by a less extensive movement confined to the region under consideration, are questions on which we receive no instruction, because the solution does not concern our well-being. As soon as human welfare comes to be in any way connected with such knowledge, it will by some means be made attainable.

The introduction of the expanse produced a vast change for the better on the surface of the earth. The heavy mass of murky damp and aqueous steam commingling with the abyss of waters beneath is cleared away. The fogs are lifted up to the higher regions of the sky, or attenuated into an invisible vapor. A leaden mass of clouds still overshadows the heavens. But a breathing space of pure pellucid air now intervenes between the upper and lower waters, enveloping the surface of the earth, and suited for the respiration of the flora and fauna of a new world.

Let it be noted that the word “be” is here again employed to denote the commencement of a new adjustment of the atmosphere. This, accordingly, does not imply the absolute creation on the second day of our present atmosphere: it merely indicates the constitution of it out of the materials already at hand, - the selecting and due apportionment of the proper elements; the relegation of all now foreign elements to their own places; the dissipation of the lazy, deadening damps, and the establishment of a clear

and pure air fit for the use of the future man. Any or all of these alterations will satisfy the form of expression here adopted.

Genesis 1:7

Then made God the expanse. - Here the distinction between command and execution is made still more prominent than in the third verse. For the word of command stands in one verse, and the effect realized is related in the next. Nay, we have the doing of the thing and the thing done separately expressed. For, after stating that God made the expanse, it is added, "and it was so." The work accomplished took a permanent form, in which it remained a standing monument of divine wisdom and power.

Genesis 1:8

Then called God to the expanse, heaven. - This expanse is, then, the proper and original skies. We have here an interesting and instructive example of the way in which words expand in their significance from the near, the simple, the obvious, to the far and wide, the complex and the inferential: The heaven, in the first instance, meant the open space above the surface in which we breathe and move, in which the birds fly and the clouds float. This is the atmosphere. Then it stretches away into the seemingly boundless regions of space, in which the countless orbs of luminous and of opaque surfaces circumambulate. Then the heavens come to signify the contents of this indefinitely augmented expanse, - the celestial luminaries themselves. Then, by a still further enlargement of its meaning, we rise to the heaven of heavens, the inexpressibly grand and august presence-chamber of the Most High, where the cherubim and seraphim, the innumerable company of angels, the myriads of saints, move in their several grades and spheres, keeping the charge of their Maker, and realizing the joy of their being. This is the third heaven 2 Corinthians 12:2 to the conception of which the imaginative capacity of the human mind rises by an easy gradation. Having once attained to this majestic conception, man is so far prepared to conceive and compose that sublime sentence with which the book of God opens, - "In the beginning God created ‹the heavens‘ and the earth."

The expanse, or aerial space, in which this arrangement of things has been effected, having received its appropriate name, is recognized as an accomplished fact, and the second day is closed.

Verses 9-13

- V. The Third Day

9. קוה *qāvâh* "turn, bind, gather, expect".
יבשה *yabāshâh* "the dry, the ground". יבש *yabēsh* "be dry". בוש *bôsh* "be abashed".

11. דשא *deshe'* "green thing, grass".
עשב *ēśāb* "herb".

זרע *zēra'* "seed". זרע *zāra'* "sow," sero.

זרה *perîy* "fruit". פרי *pārâh* "bear"; φέρω *pherō* work of creation on this day is evidently twofold, - the distribution of land and water, and the creation of plants. The former part of it is completed, named, reviewed, and approved before the latter is commenced. All that has been done before this, indeed, is preparatory to the introduction of the vegetable kingdom. This may be regarded as the first stage of the present creative process.

Genesis 1:9

Let the water be gathered to one place; let the ground appear. - This refers to the yet overflowing deep of waters Genesis 1:2 under "the expanse." They must be confined within certain limits. For this purpose the order is issued, that they be gathered into one place; that is, evidently, into a place apart from that designed for the land.

Genesis 1:10

Then called God to the ground, land. - We use the word "ground" to denote the dry surface left after the retreat of the waters. To this the Creator applies the term ארץ *'erets* "land, earth." Hence, we find that the primitive meaning of this term was land, the dry solid surface of matter on which we stand. This meaning it still retains in all its various applications (see note on Genesis 1:2). As it was soon learned by experience that the solid ground was continuous at the bottom of the water-masses, and that these were a mere superficial deposit gathering into the hollows, the term was, by an easy extension of its meaning, applied to the whole surface, as it was diversified by land and water. Our word "earth" is the term to express it in this more extended sense. In this sense it was the meet counterpart of the heavens in that complex phrase by which the universe of things is expressed.

And to the gathering of the waters called he seas. - In contradistinction to the land, the gathered waters are called seas; a term

applied in Scripture to any large collection of water, even though seen to be surrounded by land; as, the salt sea, the sea of Kinnereth, the sea of the plain or valley, the fore sea, the hinder sea Genesis 14:3; Numbers 34:11; Deuteronomy 4:49; Joel 2:20; Deuteronomy 11:24. The plural form "seas" shows that the "one place" consists of several basins, all of which taken together are called the place of the waters.

The Scripture, according to its manner, notices only the palpable result; namely, a diversified scene of "land" and "seas." The sacred singer possibly hints at the process in Psalm 104:6-8: "The deep as a garment thou didst spread over it; above the mountains stood the waters. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up the mountains; they go down the valleys; unto the place that thou hast founded for them." This description is highly poetical, and therefore true to nature. The hills are to rise out of the waters above them. The agitated waters dash up the stirring mountains, but, as these ascend, at length sink into the valleys, and take the place allotted for them. Plainly the result was accomplished by lowering some and elevating other parts of the solid ground. Over this inequality of surface, the waters, which before overspread the whole ground, flowed into the hollows, and the elevated regions became dry land. This is a kind of geological change which has been long known to the students of nature. Such changes have often been sudden and violent. Alterations of level, of a gradual character, are known to be going on at all times.

This disposition of land and water prepares for the second step, which is the main work of this day; namely, the creation of plants. We are now come to the removal of another defect in the state of the earth, mentioned in the second verse, - its deformity, or rude and uncouth appearance.

Genesis 1:11

Let the land grow. - The plants are said to be products of the land, because they spring from the dry ground, and a margin round it where the water is so shallow as to permit the light and heat to reach the bottom. The land is said to grow or bring forth plants; not because it is endowed with any inherent power to generate plants, but because it is the element in which they are to take root, and from which they are to spring forth.

Grass, herb yielding seed, fruit tree bearing fruit. - The plants now created are divided into three classes - grass, herb, and tree. In the first, the

seed is not noticed, as not obvious to the eye; in the second, the seed is the striking characteristic; in the third, the fruit, "in which is its seed," in which the seed is enclosed, forms the distinguishing mark. This division is simple and natural. It proceeds upon two concurrent marks - the structure and the seed. In the first, the green leaf or blade is prominent; in the second, the stalk; in the third, the woody texture. In the first, the seed is not conspicuous; in the second, it is conspicuous; in the third, it is enclosed in a fruit which is conspicuous. This division corresponds with certain classes in our present systems of botany. But it is much less complex than any of them, and is founded upon obvious characteristics. The plants that are on the margin of these great divisions may be arranged conveniently enough under one or another of them, according to their several orders or species.

After its kind. - This phrase intimates that like produces like, and therefore that the "kinds" or species are fixed, and do not run into one another. In this little phrase the theory of one species being developed from another is denied.

Genesis 1:12

Here the fulfillment of the divine command is detailed, after being summed up in the words "it was so," at the close of the previous verse. This seems to arise from the nature of growth, which has a commencement, indeed, but goes on without ceasing in a progressive development. It appears from the text that the full plants, and not the seeds, germs, or roots, were created. The land sent forth grass, herb, tree, each in its fully developed form. This was absolutely necessary, if man and the land animals were to be sustained by grasses, seeds, and fruits.

Thus, the land begins to assume the form of beauty and fertility. Its bare and rough soil is set with the germs of an incipient verdure. It has already ceased to be "a waste." And now, at the end of this third day, let us pause to review the natural order in which everything has been thus far done. It was necessary to produce light in the first place, because without this potent element water could not pass into vapor, and rise on the wings of the buoyant air into the region above the expanse. The atmosphere must in the next place be reduced to order, and charged with its treasures of vapor, before the plants could commence the process of growth, even though stimulated by the influence of light and heat. Again, the waters must be withdrawn from a portion of the solid surface before the plants could be placed in the ground, so as to have the full benefit of the light, air, and

vapor in enabling them to draw from the soil the sap by which they are to be nourished. When all these conditions are fulfilled, then the plants themselves are called into existence, and the first cycle of the new creation is completed.

Could not the Eternal One have accomplished all this in one day? Doubtless, He might. He might have effected it all in an instant of time. And He might have compressed the growth and development of centuries into a moment. He might even by possibility have constructed the stratifications of the earth‘s crust with all their slips, elevations, depressions, unconformities, and organic formations in a day. And, lastly, He might have carried on to completion all the evolutions of universal nature that have since taken place or will hereafter take place until the last hour has struck on the clock of time. But what then? What purpose would have been served by all this speed? It is obvious that the above and such like questions are not wisely put. The very nature of the eternal shows the futility of such speculations. Is the commodity of time so scarce with him that he must or should for any good reason sum up the course of a universe of things in an infinitesimal portion of its duration? May we not, rather, must we not, soberly conclude that there is a due proportion between the action and the time of the action, the creation to be developed and the time of development. Both the beginning and the process of this latest creation are to a nicety adjusted to the preexistent and concurrent state of things. And the development of what is created not only displays a mutual harmony and exact coincidence in the progress of all its other parts, but is at the same time finely adapted to the constitution of man, and the natural, safe, and healthy ratio of his physical and metaphysical movements.

Verses 14-19

- VI. The Fourth Day

14. מאור “a light, a luminary, a center of radiant light *mā'ôr*.”

מועה “set time, season *môʿēd*.”

Words beginning with a formative מ *m* usually signify that in which the simple quality resides or is realized. Hence, they often denote place.

nāthan “give, hold out, show, stretch, hold out.” Latin: *tendo*, נתן .17
teneo; τείνω *teinō* darkness has been removed from the face of the deep, its waters have been distributed in due proportions above and below the expanse; the lower waters have retired and given place to the emerging land, and the wasteness of the land thus exposed to view has begun to be adorned with the living forms of a new vegetation. It only remains to remove the “void” by peopling this now fair and fertile world with the animal kingdom. For this purpose the Great Designer begins a new cycle of .supernatural operations

Genesis 1:14, Genesis 1:15

Lights. - The work of the fourth day has much in common with that of the first day, which, indeed it continues and completes. Both deal with light, and with dividing between light and darkness, or day and night. “Let there be.” They agree also in choosing the word “be,” to express the nature of the operation which is here performed. But the fourth day advances on the first day. It brings into view the luminaries, the light radiators, the source, while the first only indicated the stream. It contemplates the far expanse, while the first regards only the near.

For signs and for seasons, and for days and years. - While the first day refers only to the day and its twofold division, the fourth refers to signs, seasons, days, and years. These lights are for “signs.” They are to serve as the great natural chronometer of man, having its three units, - the day, the month, and the year - and marking the divisions of time, not only for agricultural and social purposes, but also for meeting out the eras of human history and the cycles of natural science. They are signs of place as well as of time - topometers, if we may use the term. By them the mariner has learned to mark the latitude and longitude of his ship, and the astronomer to determine with any assignable degree of precision the place as well as the time of the planetary orbs of heaven. The “seasons” are the natural seasons of the year, and the set times for civil and sacred purposes which man has attached to special days and years in the revolution of time.

Since the word “day” is a key to the explanation of the first day‘s work, so is the word “year” to the interpretation of that of the fourth. Since the cause of the distinction of day and night is the diurnal rotation of the earth on its axis in conjunction with a fixed source of light, which streamed in on the scene of creation as soon as the natural hinderance was removed, so the vicissitudes of the year are owing, along with these two conditions, to the

annual revolution of the earth in its orbit round the sun, together with the obliquity of the ecliptic. To the phenomena so occasioned are to be added incidental variations arising from the revolution of the moon round the earth, and the small modifications caused by the various other bodies of the solar system. All these celestial phenomena come out from the artless simplicity of the sacred narrative as observable facts on the fourth day of that new creation. From the beginning of the solar system the earth must, from the nature of things, have revolved around the sun. But whether the rate of velocity was ever changed, or the obliquity of the ecliptic was now commenced or altered, we do not learn from this record.

Genesis 1:15

To shine upon the earth. - The first day spreads the shaded gleam of light over the face of the deep. The fourth day unfolds to the eye the lamps of heaven, hanging in the expanse of the skies, and assigns to them the office of "shining upon the earth." A threefold function is thus attributed to the celestial orbs - to divide day from night, to define time and place, and to shine on the earth. The word of command is here very full, running over two verses, with the exception of the little clause, "and it was so," stating the result.

Genesis 1:16-19

This result is fully particularized in the next three verses. This word, "made," corresponds to the word "be" in the command, and indicates the disposition and adjustment to a special purpose of things previously existing.

Genesis 1:16

The two great lights. - The well-known ones, great in relation to the stars, as seen from the earth.

The great light, - in comparison with the little light. The stars, from man's point of view, are insignificant, except in regard to number Genesis 15:5.

Genesis 1:17

God gave them. - The absolute giving of the heavenly bodies in their places was performed at the time of their actual creation. The relative giving here spoken of is what would appear to an earthly spectator, when the intervening veil of clouds would be dissolved by the divine agency, and the celestial luminaries would stand forth in all their dazzling splendor.

Genesis 1:18

To rule. - From their lofty eminence they regulate the duration and the business of each period. The whole is inspected and approved as before.

Now let it be remembered that the heavens were created at the absolute beginning of things recorded in the first verse, and that they included all other things except the earth. Hence, according to this document, the sun, moon, and stars were in existence simultaneously with our planet. This gives simplicity and order to the whole narrative. Light comes before us on the first and on the fourth day. Now, as two distinct causes of a common effect would be unphilosophical and unnecessary, we must hold the one cause to have been in existence on these two days. But we have seen that the one cause of the day and of the year is a fixed source of radiating light in the sky, combined with the diurnal and annual motions of the earth. Thus, the recorded preexistence of the celestial orbs is consonant with the presumptions of reason. The making or reconstitution of the atmosphere admits their light so far that the alternations of day and night can be discerned. The making of the lights of heaven, or the display of them in a serene sky by the withdrawal of that opaque canopy of clouds that still enveloped the dome above, is then the work of the fourth day.

All is now plain and intelligible. The heavenly bodies become the lights of the earth, and the distinguishers not only of day and night, but of seasons and years, of times and places. They shed forth their unveiled glories and salutary potencies on the budding, waiting land. How the higher grade of transparency in the aerial region was effected, we cannot tell; and, therefore, we are not prepared to explain why it is accomplished on the fourth day, and not sooner. But from its very position in time, we are led to conclude that the constitution of the expanse, the elevation of a portion of the waters of the deep in the form of vapor, the collection of the sub-aerial water into seas, and the creation of plants out of the reeking soil, must all have had an essential part, both in retarding until the fourth day, and in then bringing about the dispersion of the clouds and the clearing of the atmosphere. Whatever remained of hinderance to the outshining of the sun, moon, and stars on the land in all their native splendor, was on this day removed by the word of divine power.

Now is the approximate cause of day and night made palpable to the observation. Now are the heavenly bodies made to be signs of time and

place to the intelligent spectator on the earth, to regulate seasons, days, months, and years, and to be the luminaries of the world. Now, manifestly, the greater light rules the day, as the lesser does the night. The Creator has withdrawn the curtain, and set forth the hitherto undistinguishable brilliants of space for the illumination of the land and the regulation of the changes which diversify its surface. This bright display, even if it could have been effected on the first day with due regard to the forces of nature already in operation, was unnecessary to the unseeing and unmoving world of vegetation, while it was plainly requisite for the seeing, choosing, and moving world of animated nature which was about to be called into existence on the following days.

The terms employed for the objects here brought forward - “lights, the great light, the little light, the stars;” for the mode of their manifestation, “be, make, give;” and for the offices they discharge, “divide, rule, shine, be for signs, seasons, days, years” - exemplify the admirable simplicity of Scripture, and the exact adaptation of its style to the unsophisticated mind of primeval man. We have no longer, indeed, the naming of the various objects, as on the former days; probably because it would no longer be an important source of information for the elucidation of the narrative. But we have more than an equivalent for this in variety of phrase. The several words have been already noticed: it only remains to make some general remarks.

(1) The sacred writer notes only obvious results, such as come before the eye of the observer, and leaves the secondary causes, their modes of operation, and their less obtrusive effects, to scientific inquiry. The progress of observation is from the foreground to the background of nature, from the physical to the metaphysical, and from the objective to the subjective. Among the senses, too, the eye is the most prominent observer in the scenes of the six days. Hence, the “lights,” they “shine,” they are for “signs” and “days,” which are in the first instance objects of vision. They are “given,” held or shown forth in the heavens. Even “rule” has probably the primitive meaning to be over. Starting thus with the visible and the tangible, the Scripture in its successive communications advance with us to the inferential, the intuitive, the moral, the spiritual, the divine.

(2) The sacred writer also touches merely the heads of things in these scenes of creation, without condescending to minute particulars or intending to be exhaustive. Hence, many actual incidents and intricacies of these days are left to the well-regulated imagination and sober judgment of the reader. To instance such omissions, the moon is as much of her time above the horizon during the day as during the night. But she is not then the conspicuous object in the scene, or the full-orbed reflector of the solar beams, as she is during the night. Here the better part is used to mark the whole. The tidal influence of the great lights, in which the moon plays the chief part, is also unnoticed. Hence, we are to expect very many phenomena to be altogether omitted, though interesting and important in themselves, because they do not come within the present scope of the narrative.

(3) The point from which the writer views the scene is never to be forgotten, if we would understand these ancient records. He stands on earth. He uses his eyes as the organ of observation. He knows nothing of the visual angle, of visible as distinguishable from tangible magnitude, of relative in comparison with absolute motion on the grand scale: he speaks the simple language of the eye. Hence, his earth is the meet counterpart of the heavens. His sun and moon are great, and all the stars are a very little thing. Light comes to be, to him, when it reaches the eye. The luminaries are held forth in the heavens, when the mist between them and the eye is dissolved.

(4) Yet, though not trained to scientific thought or speech, this author has the eye of reason open as well as that of sense. It is not with him the science of the tangible, but the philosophy of the intuitive, that reduces things to their proper dimensions. He traces not the secondary cause, but ascends at one glance to the great first cause, the manifest act and audible behest of the Eternal Spirit. This imparts a sacred dignity to his style, and a transcendent grandeur to his conceptions. In the presence of the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, all things terrestrial and celestial are reduced to a common level. Man in intelligent relation with God comes forth as the chief figure on the scene of terrestrial creation. The narrative takes its commanding position as the history of the ways of God with man. The commonest primary facts of ordinary observation, when recorded in this book, assume a supreme interest as the monuments of eternal wisdom

and the heralds of the finest and broadest generalizations of a consecrated science. The very words are instinct with a germinant philosophy, and prove themselves adequate to the expression of the loftiest speculations of the eloquent mind.

Verses 20-23

- VII. The Fifth Day

20. שׁרץ *shārats* "crawl, teem, swarm, abound." An intransitive verb, admitting, however, an objective noun of its own or a like signification.

נפשׁ *nephesh* "breath, soul, self." This noun is derived from a root signifying to breathe. Its concrete meaning is, therefore, "that which breathes," and consequently has a body, without which there can be no breathing; hence, "a breathing body," and even a body that once had breath Numbers 6:6. As breath is the accompaniment and sign of life, it comes to denote "life," and hence, a living body, "an animal." And as life properly signifies animal life, and is therefore essentially connected with feeling, *nephesh* denotes also these qualities, and what נפשׁ appetite, thought, possesses them. It is obvious that it denotes the vital principle not only in man but in the brute. It is therefore a more comprehensive word than our soul, as commonly understood.

21. תנין *tannîyn* "long creature," a comprehensive genus, including vast fishes, serpents, dragons, crocodiles; "stretch".

22. ברך *bārak* "break, kneel; bless".

The solitude בהו *bohû* the last and greatest defect in the state of the earth, is now to be removed by the creation of the various animals that are to inhabit it and partake of its vegetable productions.

On the second day the Creator was occupied with the task of reducing the air and water to a habitable state. And now on the corresponding day of the second three he calls into existence the inhabitants of these two elements. Accordingly, the animal kingdom is divided into three parts in reference to the regions to be inhabited - fishes, birds, and land animals.

The fishes and birds are created on this day. The fishes seem to be regarded as the lowest type of living creatures.

They are here subdivided only into the monsters of the deep and the smaller species that swarm in the waters.

Genesis 1:20

The crawler - שׁרץ *sherets* apparently includes all animals that have short legs or no legs, and are therefore unable to raise themselves above the soil. The aquatic and most amphibious animals come under this class. "The crawler of living breath," having breath, motion, and sensation, the ordinary indications of animal life. "Abound with." As in Genesis 1:11 we have, "Let the earth grow grass," (דשא תדשע *tadshēʿ deshe'* so here we have, "Let the waters crawl with the crawler," שׁרץ ישׁרצו *yîshretsû sherets* the verb and noun having the same root. The waters are here not the cause but the element of the fish, as the air of the fowl. Fowl, everything that has wings. "The face of the expanse." The expanse is here proved to be aerial or spatial; not solid, as the fowl can fly on it.

Genesis 1:21

Created. - Here the author uses this word for the second time. In the selection of different words to express the divine operation, two considerations seem to have guided the author's pen - variety and propriety of diction. The diversity of words appears to indicate a diversity in the mode of exercising the divine power. On the first day Genesis 1:3 a new admission of light into a darkened region, by the partial rarefaction of the intervening medium, is expressed by the word "be." This may denote what already existed, but not in that place. On the second day Genesis 1:6-7 a new disposition of the air and the water is described by the verbs "be" and "make." These indicate a modification of what already existed. On the third day Genesis 1:9, Genesis 1:11 no verb is directly applied to the act of divine power. This agency is thus understood, while the natural changes following are expressly noticed. In the fourth Genesis 1:14, Genesis 1:16-17 the words "be," "make," and "give" occur, where the matter in hand is the manifestation of the heavenly bodies and their adaptation to the use of man. In these cases it is evident that the word "create" would have been only improperly or indirectly applicable to the action of the Eternal Being. Here it is employed with propriety; as the animal world is something new and

distinct summoned into existence. It is manifest from this review that variety of expression has resulted from attention to propriety.

Great fishes. - Monstrous crawlers that wriggle through the water or scud along the banks.

Every living, breathing thing that creeps. - The smaller animals of the water and its banks.

Bird of wing. - Here the wing is made characteristic of the class, which extends beyond what we call birds. The Maker inspects and approves His work.

Genesis 1:22

Blessed them. - We are brought into a new sphere of creation on this day, and we meet with a new act of the Almighty. To bless is to wish, and, in the case of God, to will some good to the object of the blessing. The blessing here pronounced upon the fish and the fowl is that of abundant increase.

Bear. - This refers to the propagation of the species.

Multiply. - This notifies the abundance of the offspring.

Fill the waters. - Let them be fully stocked.

In the seas. - The "sea" of Scripture includes the lake, and, by parity of reason, the rivers, which are the feeders of both. This blessing seems to indicate that, whereas in the case of some plants many individuals of the same species were simultaneously created, so as to produce a universal covering of verdure for the land and an abundant supply of aliment for the animals about to be created - in regard to these animals a single pair only, at all events of the larger kinds, was at first called into being, from which, by the potent blessing of the Creator, was propagated the multitude by which the waters and the air were peopled.

Verses 24-31

- VIII. The Sixth Day

24. בהמה *behēmâh* "cattle; dumb, tame beasts".

רמשׂ *remeś* "creeping (small or low) animals".

חוּה *chayâh* "living thing; animal".

חוּת־הארץ *chayatô -chā'ārets* "wild beast".

26. אדם *ādām* “man, mankind;” “be red.” A collective noun, having no plural number, and therefore denoting either an individual of the kind, or אדמה *ăd̄āmâh* “the kind or race itself. It is connected in etymology with red soil,” from which the human body was formed Genesis 2:7. It therefore marks the earthly aspect of man.

צלם *tselem* “shade, image,” in visible outline.

דמות *demût* “likeness,” in any quality.

רדה *rādâh* “tread, rule”.

This day corresponds with the third. In both the land is the sphere of operation. In both are performed two acts of creative power. In the third the land was clothed with vegetation: in the sixth it is peopled with the animal kingdom. First, the lower animals are called into being, and then, to crown all, man.

Genesis 1:24, Genesis 1:25

This branch of the animal world is divided into three parts. “Living breathing thing” is the general head under which all these are comprised. “Cattle” denotes the animals that dwell with man, especially those that bear burdens. The same term in the original, when there is no contrast, when in the plural number or with the specification of “the land,” the “field,” is used of wild beasts. “Creeping things” evidently denote the smaller animals, from which the cattle are distinguished as the large. The quality of creeping is, however, applied sometimes to denote the motion of the lower animals with the body in a prostrate posture, in opposition to the erect posture of man Psalm 104:20. The “beast of the land” or the field signifies the wild rapacious animal that lives apart from man. The word חיה *chayâh* “beast or animal,” is the general term employed in these verses for the whole animal kind. It signifies wild animal with certainty only when it is accompanied by the qualifying term “land” or “field,” or the epithet “evil” רעה *rāʿâh* From this division it appears that animals that prey on others were included in this latest creation. This is an extension of that law by which the organic living substances of the vegetable kingdom form the sustenance of the animal species. The execution of the divine mandate is then recorded, and the result inspected and approved.

Genesis 1:26, Genesis 1:27

Here we evidently enter upon a higher scale of being. This is indicated by the counsel or common resolve to create, which is now for the first time introduced into the narrative. When the Creator says, "Let us make man," he calls attention to the work as one of pre-eminent importance. At the same time he sets it before himself as a thing undertaken with deliberate purpose. Moreover, in the former mandates of creation his words had regard to the thing itself that was summoned into being; as, "Let there be light;" or to some preexistent object that was physically connected with the new creature; as, "Let the land bring forth grass." But now the language of the fiat of creation ascends to the Creator himself: Let us make man. This intimates that the new being in its higher nature is associated not so much with any part of creation as with the Eternal Uncreated himself.

The plural form of the sentence raises the question, With whom took he counsel on this occasion? Was it with himself, and does he here simply use the plural of majesty? Such was not the usual style of monarchs in the ancient East. Pharaoh says, "I have dreamed a dream" Genesis 41:15. Nebuchadnezzar, "I have dreamed" Daniel 2:3. Darius the Mede, "I make a decree" Daniel 6:26. Cyrus, "The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth" Ezra 1:2. Darius, "I make a decree" Ezra 5:8. We have no ground, therefore, for transferring it to the style of the heavenly King. Was it with certain other intelligent beings in existence before man that he took counsel? This supposition cannot be admitted; because the expression "let us make" is an invitation to create, which is an incommunicable attribute of the Eternal One, and because the phrases, "our image, our likeness," when transferred into the third person of narrative, become "his image, the image of God," and thus limit the pronouns to God himself. Does the plurality, then, point to a plurality of attributes in the divine nature? This cannot be, because a plurality of qualities exists in everything, without at all leading to the application of the plural number to the individual, and because such a plurality does not warrant the expression, "let us make." Only a plurality of persons can justify the phrase. Hence, we are forced to conclude that the plural pronoun indicates a plurality of persons or hypostases in the Divine Being.

Genesis 1:26

Man. - Man is a new species, essentially different from all other kinds on earth. "In our image, after our likeness." He is to be allied to heaven as

no other creature on earth is. He is to be related to the Eternal Being himself. This relation, however, is to be not in matter, but in form; not in essence, but in semblance. This precludes all pantheistic notions of the origin of man. “Image” is a word taken from sensible things, and denotes likeness in outward form, while the material may be different. “Likeness” is a more general term, indicating resemblance in any quality, external or internal. It is here explanatory of image, and seems to show that this term is to be taken in a figurative sense, to denote not a material but a spiritual conformity to God. The Eternal Being is essentially self-manifesting. The appearance he presents to an eye suited to contemplate him is his image. The union of attributes which constitute his spiritual nature is his character or likeness.

We gather from the present chapter that God is a spirit Genesis 1:2, that he thinks, speaks, wills, and acts (Genesis 1:3-4, etc.). Here, then, are the great points of conformity to God in man, namely, reason, speech, will, and power. By reason we apprehend concrete things in perception and consciousness, and cognize abstract truth, both metaphysical and moral. By speech we make certain easy and sensible acts of our own the signs of the various objects of our contemplative faculties to ourselves and others. By will we choose, determine, and resolve upon what is to be done. By power we act, either in giving expression to our concepts in words, or effect to our determinations in deeds. In the reason is evolved the distinction of good and evil Genesis 1:4, Genesis 1:31, which is in itself the approval of the former and the disapproval of the latter. In the will is unfolded that freedom of action which chooses the good and refuses the evil. In the spiritual being that exercises reason and will resides the power to act, which presupposes both these faculties - the reason as informing the will, and the will as directing the power. This is that form of God in which he has created man, and condescends to communicate with him.

And let them rule. - The relation of man to the creature is now stated. It is that of sovereignty. Those capacities of right thinking, right willing, and right acting, or of knowledge, holiness, and righteousness, in which man resembles God, qualify him for dominion, and constitute him lord of all creatures that are destitute of intellectual and moral endowments. Hence, wherever man enters he makes his sway to be felt. He contemplates the objects around him, marks their qualities and relations, conceives and resolves upon the end to be attained, and endeavors to make all things

within his reach work together for its accomplishment. This is to rule on a limited scale. The field of his dominion is "the fish of the sea, the fowl of the skies, the cattle, the whole land, and everything that creepeth on the land." The order here is from the lowest to the highest. The fish, the fowl, are beneath the domestic cattle. These again are of less importance than the land, which man tills and renders fruitful in all that can gratify his appetite or his taste. The last and greatest victory of all is over the wild animals, which are included under the class of creepers that are prone in their posture, and move in a creeping attitude over the land. The primeval and prominent objects of human sway are here brought forward after the manner of Scripture. But there is not an object within the ken of man which he does not aim at making subservient to his purposes. He has made the sea his highway to the ends of the earth, the stars his pilots on the pathless ocean, the sun his bleacher and painter, the bowels of the earth the treasury from which he draws his precious and useful metals and much of his fuel, the steam his motive power, and the lightning his messenger. These are proofs of the evergrowing sway of man.

Genesis 1:27

Created. - Man in his essential part, the image of God in him, was entirely a new creation. We discern here two stages in his creation. The general fact is stated in the first clause of the verse, and then the two particulars. "In the image of God created he him." This is the primary act, in which his relation to his Maker is made prominent. In this his original state he is actually one, as God in whose image he is made is one. "Male and female created he them." This is the second act or step in his formation. He is now no longer one, but two, - the male and the female. His adaptation to be the head of a race is hereby completed. This second stage in the existence of man is more circumstantially described hereafter Genesis 2:21-25.

Genesis 1:28

The divine blessing is now pronounced upon man. It differs from that of the lower animals chiefly in the element of supremacy. Power is presumed to belong to man's nature, according to the counsel of the Maker's will Genesis 1:26. But without a special permission he cannot exercise any lawful authority. For the other creatures are as independent of him as he is of them. As creatures he and they are on an equal footing, and have no natural fight either over the other. Hence, it is necessary that he should

receive from high heaven a formal charter of right over the things that were made for man. He is therefore authorized, by the word of the Creator, to exercise his power in subduing the earth and ruling over the animal kingdom. This is the meet sequel of his being created in the image of God. Being formed for dominion, the earth and its various products and inhabitants are assigned to him for the display of his powers. The subduing and ruling refer not to the mere supply of his natural needs, for which provision is made in the following verse, but to the accomplishment of his various purposes of science and beneficence, whether towards the inferior animals or his own race. It is the part of intellectual and moral reason to employ power for the ends of general no less than personal good. The sway of man ought to be beneficent.

Genesis 1:29, Genesis 1:30

Every herb bearing seed and tree bearing fruit is granted to man for his sustenance. With our habits it may seem a matter of course that each should at once appropriate what he needs of things at his hand. But in the beginning of existence it could not be so. Of two things proceeding from the same creative hand neither has any original or inherent right to interfere in any way whatever with the other. The absolute right to each lies in the Creator alone. The one, it is true, may need the other to support its life, as fruit is needful to man. And therefore the just Creator cannot make one creature dependent for subsistence on another without granting to it the use of that other. But this is a matter between Creator and creature, not by any means between creature and creature. Hence, it was necessary to the rightful adjustment of things, whenever a rational creature was ushered into the world, that the Creator should give an express permission to that creature to partake of the fruits of the earth. And in harmony with this view we shall hereafter find an exception made to this general grant Genesis 2:17. Thus, we perceive, the necessity of this formal grant of the use of certain creatures to moral and responsible man lies deep in the nature of things. And the sacred writer here hands down to us from the mists of a hoary antiquity the primitive deed of conveyance, which lies at the foundation of the the common property of man in the earth, and all that it contains.

The whole vegetable world is assigned to the animals for food. In the terms of the original grant the herb bearing seed and the tree bearing fruit are especially allotted to man, because the grain and the fruit were edible by

man without much preparation. As usual in Scripture the chief parts are put for the whole, and accordingly this specification of the ordinary and the obvious covers the general principle that whatever part of the vegetable kingdom is convertible into food by the ingenuity of man is free for his use. It is plain that a vegetable diet alone is expressly conceded to man in this original conveyance, and it is probable that this alone was designed for him in the state in which he was created. But we must bear in mind that he was constituted master of the animal as well as of the vegetable world; and we cannot positively affirm that his dominion did not involve the use of them for food.

Genesis 1:30

The whole of the grasses and the green parts or leaves of the herbage are distributed among the inferior animals for food. Here, again, the common and prominent kind of sustenance only is specified. There are some animals that greedily devour the fruits of trees and the grain produced by the various herbs; and there are others that derive the most of their subsistence from preying on the smaller and weaker kinds of animals. Still, the main substance of the means of animal life, and the ultimate supply of the whole of it, are derived from the plant. Even this general statement is not to be received without exception, as there are certain lower descriptions of animals that derive sustenance even from the mineral world. But this brief narrative of things notes only the few palpable facts, leaving the details to the experience and judgment of the reader.

Genesis 1:31

Here we have the general review and approval of everything God had made, at the close of the six days‘ work of creation. Man, as well as other things, was very good when he came from his Maker‘s hand; but good as yet untried, and therefore good in capacity rather than in victory over temptation. It remains yet to be seen whether he will be good in act and habit.

This completes, then, the restoration of that order and fullness the absence of which is described in the second verse. The account of the six days‘ work, therefore, is the counterpart of that verse. The six days fall into two threes, corresponding to each other in the course of events. The first and fourth days refer principally to the darkness on the face of the deep; the second and fifth to the disorder and emptiness of the aerial and aqueous elements; and the third and sixth to the similar condition of the land. Again,

the first three days refer to a lower, the second three to a higher order of things. On the first the darkness on the face of the earth is removed; on the fourth that on the face of the sky. On the second the water is distributed above and below the expanse; on the fifth the living natives of these regions are called into being. On the third the plants rooted in the soil are made; on the sixth the animals that move freely over it are brought into existence.

This chapter shows the folly and sin of the worship of light, of sun, moon, or star, of air or water, of plant, of fish or fowl, of earth, of cattle, creeping thing or wild beast, or, finally, of man himself; as all these are but the creatures of the one Eternal Spirit, who, as the Creator of all, is alone to be worshipped by his intelligent creatures.

This chapter is also to be read with wonder and adoration by man; as he finds himself to be constituted lord of the earth, next in rank under the Creator of all, formed in the image of his Maker, and therefore capable not only of studying the works of nature, but of contemplating and reverently communing with the Author of nature.

In closing the interpretation of this chapter, it is proper to refer to certain first principles of hermeneutical science. First, that interpretation only is valid which is true to the meaning of the author. The very first rule on which the interpreter is bound to proceed is to assign to each word the meaning it commonly bore in the time of the writer. This is the prime key to the works of every ancient author, if we can only discover it. The next is to give a consistent meaning to the whole of that which was composed at one time or in one place by the author. The presumption is that there was a reasonable consistency of thought in his mind during one effort of composition. A third rule is to employ faithfully and discreetly whatever we can learn concerning the time, place, and other circumstances of the author to the elucidation of his meaning.

And, in the second place, the interpretation now given claims acceptance on the ground of its internal and external consistency with truth. First, It exhibits the consistency of the whole narrative in itself. It acknowledges the narrative character of the first verse. It assigns an essential significance to the words, “the heavens,” in that verse. It attributes to the second verse a

prominent place and function in the arrangement of the record. It places the special creative work of the six days in due subordination to the absolute creation recorded in the first verse. It gathers information from the primitive meanings of the names that are given to certain objects, and notices the subsequent development of these meanings. It accounts for the manifestation of light on the first day, and of the luminaries of heaven on the fourth, and traces the orderly steps of a majestic climax throughout the narrative. It is in harmony with the usage of speech as far as it can be known to us at the present day. It assigns to the words "heavens," "earth," "expanse," "day," no greater latitude of meaning than was then customary. It allows for the diversity of phraseology employed in describing the acts of creative power. It sedulously refrains from importing modern notions into the narrative.

Second, the narrative thus interpreted is in striking harmony with the dictates of reason and the axioms of philosophy concerning the essence of God and the nature of man. On this it is unnecessary to dwell.

Third, it is equally consistent with human science. It substantially accords with the present state of astronomical science. It recognizes, as far as can be expected, the relative importance of the heavens and the earth, the existence of the heavenly bodies from the beginning of time, the total and then the partial absence of light from the face of the deep, as the local result of physical causes. It allows, also, if it were necessary, between the original creation, recorded in the first verse, and the state of things described in the second, the interval of time required for the light of the most distant discoverable star to reach the earth. No such interval, however, could be absolutely necessary, as the Creator could as easily establish the luminous connection of the different orbs of heaven as summon into being the element of light itself.

Fourth, it is also in harmony with the elementary facts of geological knowledge. The land, as understood by the ancient author, may be limited to that portion of the earth's surface which was known to antediluvian man. The elevation of an extensive tract of land, the subsidence of the overlying waters into the comparative hollows, the clarifying of the atmosphere, the creation of a fresh supply of plants and animals on the newly-formed

continent, compose a series of changes which meet the geologist again and again in prosecuting his researches into the bowels of the earth. What part of the land was submerged when the new soil emerged from the waters, how far the shock of the plutonic or volcanic forces may have been felt, whether the alteration of level extended to the whole solid crust of the earth, or only to a certain region surrounding the cradle of mankind, the record before us does not determine. It merely describes in a few graphic touches, that are strikingly true to nature, the last of those geologic changes which our globe has undergone.

Fifth, it is in keeping, as far as it goes, with the facts of botany, zoology, and ethnology.

Sixth, it agrees with the cosmogonies of all nations, so far as these are founded upon a genuine tradition and not upon the mere conjectures of a lively fancy.

Finally, it has the singular and superlative merit of drawing the diurnal scenes of that creation to which our race owes its origin in the simple language of common life, and presenting each transcendent change as it would appear to an ordinary spectator standing on the earth. It was thus sufficiently intelligible to primeval man, and remains to this day intelligible to us, as soon as we divest ourselves of the narrowing preconceptions of our modern civilization.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-3

- The Seventh Day

1. צבא *tsābā'* "a host in marching order," a company of persons or things in the order of their nature and the progressive discharge of their functions. Hence, it is applied to the starry host Deuteronomy 4:19, to the angelic host 1 Kings 22:19, to the host of Israel Exodus 12:41, and to the ministering Here חשביעי Levites Numbers 4:23. κόσμος *kosmos* הششי *chashebîy'îy hashshîy* is read by the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Septuagint, the Syriac, and Josephus. The Masoretic reading, however, is preferable, as the sixth day was completed in the preceding paragraph: to finish a work on the seventh day is, in Hebrew phrase, not to do any part of it on that day, but to cease from it as a thing already finished; and "resting," in the subsequent part of the verse, is distinct from "finishing," being the positive of which the latter is the negative.

2. שבת *shābat* "rest". ישב *yāshab* "sit".

3. קדש *qādîsh* "be separate, clean, holy, set apart for a sacred use".

In this section we have the institution of the day of rest, the Sabbath שבת *shabāt* on the cessation of God from his creative activity.

Genesis 2:1

And all the host of them. - All the array of luminaries, plants, and animals by which the darkness, waste, and solitude of sky and land were removed, has now been called into unhindered action or new existence. The whole is now finished; that is, perfectly suited at length for the convenience of man, the high-born inhabitant of this fair scene. Since the absolute beginning of things the earth may have undergone many changes of climate and surface before it was adapted for the residence of man. But it has received the finishing touch in these last six days. These days accordingly are to man the only period of creation, since the beginning of time, of special or personal interest. The preceding interval of progressive development and periodical creation is, in regard to him, condensed into a point of time. The creative work of the six days is accordingly called the

"making," or fitting up for man of "the skies and the land and the sea, and all that in them is" (Exodus 20:10 (Exodus 20:11)).

Genesis 2:2

Then finished. - To finish a work, in Hebrew conception, is to cease from it, to have done with it. "On the seventh day." The seventh day is distinguished from all the preceding days by being itself the subject of the narrative. In the absence of any work on this day, the Eternal is occupied with the day itself, and does four things in reference to it. First, he ceased from his work which he had made. Secondly, he rested. By this was indicated that his undertaking was accomplished. When nothing more remains to be done, the purposing agent rests contented. The resting of God arises not from weariness, but from the completion of his task. He is refreshed, not by the recruiting of his strength, but by the satisfaction of having before him a finished good Exodus 31:17.

Genesis 2:3

Thirdly, he blessed the seventh day. Blessing results in the bestowment of some good on the object blessed. The only good that can be bestowed on a portion of time is to dedicate it to a noble use, a special and pleasing enjoyment. Accordingly, in the forth place, he hallowed it or set it apart to a holy rest. This consecration is the blessing conferred on the seventh day. It is devoted to the rest that followed, when God's work was done, to the satisfaction and delight arising from the consciousness of having achieved his end, and from the contemplation of the good he has realized. Our joy on such occasions is expressed by mutual visitation, congratulation, and hospitality. None of these outward demonstrations is mentioned here, and would be, so far as the Supreme Being is concerned, altogether out of place. But our celebration of the Sabbath naturally includes the holy convocation or solemn meeting together in joyful mood Leviticus 23:3, the singing of songs of thanksgiving in commemoration of our existence and our salvation (Exodus 20:11 (Exodus 20:10; Deuteronomy 5:15), the opening of our mouths to God in prayer, and the opening of God's mouth to us in the reading and preaching of the Word. The sacred rest which characterizes the day precludes the labor and bustle of hospitable entertainment. But the Lord at set times spreads for us his table laden with the touching emblems of that spiritual fare which gives eternal life.

The solemn act of blessing and hallowing is the institution of a perpetual order of seventh-day rest: in the same manner as the blessing of the animals

denoted a perpetuity of self-multiplication, and the blessing of man indicated further a perpetuity of dominion over the earth and its products. The present record is a sufficient proof that the original institution was never forgotten by man. If it had ceased to be observed by mankind, the intervening event of the fall would have been sufficient to account for its discontinuance. It is not, indeed, the manner of Scripture, especially in a record that often deals with centuries of time, to note the ordinary recurrence of a seventh-day rest, or any other periodical festival, even though it may have taken firm hold among the hereditary customs of social life. Yet incidental traces of the keeping of the Sabbath are found in the record of the deluge, when the sacred writer has occasion to notice short intervals of time. The measurement of time by weeks then appears Genesis 8:10, Genesis 8:12. The same division of time again comes up in the history of Jacob Genesis 29:27-28. This unit of measure is traceable to nothing but the institution of the seventh-day rest.

This institution is a new evidence that we have arrived at the stage of rational creatures. The number of days employed in the work of creation shows that we are come to the times of man. The distinction of times would have no meaning to the irrational world. But apart from this consideration, the seventh-day rest is not an ordinance of nature. It makes no mark in the succession of physical things. It has no palpable effect on the merely animal world. The sun rises, the moon and the stars pursue their course; the plants grow, the flowers blow, the fruit ripens; the brute animal seeks its food and provides for its young on this as on other days. The Sabbath, therefore, is founded, not in nature, but in history. Its periodical return is marked by the numeration of seven days. It appeals not to instinct, but to memory, to intelligence. A reason is assigned for its observance; and this itself is a step above mere sense, an indication that the era of man has begun. The reason is thus expressed: “Because in it he had rested from all his work.” This reason is found in the procedure of God; and God himself, as well as all his ways, man alone is competent in any measure to apprehend.

It is consonant with our ideas of the wisdom and righteousness of God to believe that the seventh-day rest is adjusted to the physical nature of man and of the animals which he domesticates as beasts of labor. But this is subordinate to its original end, the commemoration of the completion of

God‘s creative work by a sacred rest, which has a direct bearing, as we learn from the record of its institution, on metaphysical and moral distinctions.

The rest here, it is to be remembered, is God‘s rest. The refreshment is God‘s refreshment, which arises rather from the joy of achievement than from the relief of fatigue. Yet the work in which God was engaged was the creation of man and the previous adaptation of the world to be his home. Man‘s rest, therefore, on this day is not only an act of communion with God in the satisfaction of resting after his work was done, but, at the same time, a thankful commemoration of that auspicious event in which the Almighty gave a noble origin and a happy existence to the human race. It is this which, even apart from its divine institution, at once raises the Sabbath above all human commemorative festivals, and imparts to it, to its joys and to its modes of expressing them, a height of sacredness and a force of obligation which cannot belong to any mere human arrangement.

In order to enter upon the observance of this day with intelligence, therefore, it was necessary that the human pair should have been acquainted with the events recorded in the preceding chapter. They must have been informed of the original creation of all things, and therefore of the eternal existence of the Creator. Further, they must have been instructed in the order and purpose of the six days‘ creation, by which the land and sky were prepared for the residence of man. They must in consequence have learned that they themselves were created in the image of God, and intended to have dominion over all the animal world. This information would fill their pure and infantile minds with thoughts of wonder, gratitude, and complacential delight, and prepare them for entering upon the celebration of the seventh-day rest with the understanding and the heart. It is scarcely needful to add that this was the first full day of the newly-created pair in their terrestrial home. This would add a new historical interest to this day above all others. We cannot say how much time it would take to make the parents of our race aware of the meaning of all these wondrous events. But there can be no reasonable doubt that he who made them in his image could convey into their minds such simple and elementary conceptions of the origin of themselves and the creatures around them as would enable them to keep even the first Sabbath with propriety. And these conceptions would

rise into more enlarged, distinct, and adequate notions of the reality of things along with the general development of their mental faculties. This implies, we perceive, an oral revelation to the very first man. But it is premature to pursue this matter any further at present.

The recital of the resting of God on this day is not closed with the usual formula, "and evening was, and morning was, day seventh." The reason of this is obvious. In the former days the occupation of the Eternal Being was definitely concluded in the period of the one day. On the seventh day, however, the rest of the Creator was only commenced, has thence continued to the present hour, and will not be fully completed till the human race has run out its course. When the last man has been born and has arrived at the crisis of his destiny, then may we expect a new creation, another putting forth of the divine energy, to prepare the skies above and the earth beneath for a new stage of man's history, in which he will appear as a race no longer in process of development, but completed in number, confirmed in moral character, transformed in physical constitution, and so adapted for a new scene of existence. Meanwhile, the interval between the creation now recorded and that prognosticated in subsequent revelations from heaven Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1 is the long Sabbath of the Almighty, so far as this world is concerned, in which he serenely contemplates from the throne of his providence the strange workings and strivings of that intellectual and moral race he has called into being, the ebbings and flowings of ethical and physical good in their checkered history, and the final destiny to which each individual in the unfettered exercise of his moral freedom is incessantly advancing.

Hence, we gather some important lessons concerning the primeval design of the Sabbath. It was intended, not for God himself, whose Sabbath does not end until the consummation of all things, but for man, whose origin it commemorates and whose end it foreshadows Mark 2:27. It not obscurely hints that work is to be the main business of man in the present stage of his existence. This work may be either an exhilerating exercise of those mental and corporeal faculties with which he is endowed, or a toilsome labor, a constant struggle for the means of life, according to the use he may make of his inborn liberty.

But between the sixfold periods of work is interposed the day of rest, a free breathing time for man, in which he may recall his origin from and meditate on his relationship to God. It lifts him out of the routine of mechanical or even intellectual labor into the sphere of conscious leisure and occasional participation with his Maker in his perpetual rest. It is also a type of something higher. It whispers into his soul an audible presentiment of a time when his probationary career will be over, his faculties will be matured by the experience and the education of time, and he will be transformed and translated to a higher stage of being, where he will hold uninterrupted fellowship with his Creator in the perpetual leisure and liberty of the children of God. This paragraph completes the first of the eleven documents into which Genesis is separable, and the first grand stage in the narrative of the ways of God with man. It is the keystone of the arch in the history of that primeval creation to which we belong. The document which it closes is distinguished from those that succeed in several important respects:

First, it is a diary; while the others are usually arranged in generations or life-periods.

Secondly, it is a complete drama, consisting of seven acts with a prologue. These seven stages contain two triads of action, which match each other in all respects, and a seventh constituting a sort of epilogue or completion of the whole.

Though the Scripture takes no notice of any significance or sacredness inherent in particular numbers, yet we cannot avoid associating them with the objects to which they are prominently applied. The number one is especially applicable to the unity of God. Two, the number of repetition, is expressive of emphasis or confirmation, as the two witnesses. Three marks the three persons or hypostases in God. Four notes the four quarters of the world, and therefore reminds us of the physical system of things, or the cosmos. Five is the haIf of ten, the whole, and the basis of our decimal numeration. Seven, being composed of twice three and one, is especially suited for sacred uses; being the sum of three and four, it points to the communion of God with man. It is, therefore, the number of sacred fellowship. Twelve is the product of three and four, and points to the

reconciliation of God and man: it is therefore the number of the church. Twenty-two and eleven, being the whole and the half of the Hebrew alphabet, have somewhat the same relation as ten and five. Twenty-four points to the New Testament, or completed church.

The other documents do not exhibit the sevenfold structure, though they display the same general laws of composition. They are arranged according to a plan of their own, and are all remarkable for their simplicity, order, and perspicuity.

Thirdly, the matter of the first differs from that of the others. The first is a record of creation; the others of development. This is sufficient to account for the diversity of style and plan. Each piece is admirably adapted to the topic of which it treats.

Fourthly, the first document is distinguished from the second by the use of the term אלהים ʿElohiymonly for the Supreme Being. This name is here appropriate, as the Everlasting One here steps forth from the inscrutable secrecy of his immutable perfection to crown the latest stage of our planet‘s history with a new creation adapted to its present conditions. Before all creation he was the Everduring, the Unchangeable, and therefore the blessed and only Potentate, dwelling with himself in the unapproachable light of his own essential glory 1 Timothy 6:15. From that ineffable source of all being came forth the free fiat of creation. After that transcendent event, He who was from everlasting to everlasting may receive new names expressive of the various relations in which he stands to the universe of created being. But before this relation was established these names could have no existence or significance.

Neither this last nor any of the former distinctions affords any argument for diversity of authorship. They arise naturally out of the diversity of matter, and are such as may proceed from an intelligent author judiciously adapting his style and plan to the variety of his topics. At the same time, identity of authorship is not essential to the historical validity or the divine authority of the elementary parts that are incorporated by Moses into the book of Genesis. It is only unnecessary to multiply authorship without a cause.

Verses 4-7
- Part II. The development
- Section II - The Man

- X. The Field

4. תולדות *tôledôt* "generations, products, developments." That which comes from any source, as the child from the parent, the record of which is history.

יהוה *yehovâh* This word occurs about six thousand times in Scripture. It is obvious from its use that it is, so to speak, the proper name of God. It never has the article. It is never changed for construction with another noun. It is never accompanied with a suffix. It is never applied to any but the true God. This sacred exclusiveness of application, indeed, led the Jews to read אדוני *adônāy*, or, if this preceded it′ אלהים to′ *ĕlohîym* always in place of it intimate which the vowel points of one of these terms were subscribed to it. חוה *chāvâh* an older variety of היה *hāyâh* which, as we have seen, has three meanings, - "be" in the sense of coming into existence, "be" in that of becoming, and "be" in that of merely existing. The first of these meanings has no application to God, who had no beginning of existence.

The last applies to God, but affords no distinctive characteristic, as it belongs equally to all objects that have existence. The second is proper to God in the sense, not of acquiring any new attribute, but of becoming active from a state of repose. But he becomes active to the eye of man only by causing some new effect to be, which makes its appearance in the world of sensible things. He becomes, then, only by causing to be or to become. Hence, he that becomes, when applied to the Creator, is really he that causes to be. This name, therefore, involves the active or causative force of the root from which it springs, and designates God in relation with the system of things he has called into being, and especially with man, the only intelligent observer of him or of his works in this nether world. It distinguishes him as the Author of being, and therefore the Creator, the worker of miracles, the performer of promise, the keeper of covenant.

Beginning with the י (*y*) of personality, it points out God as the person whose habitual character it has become to cause his purpose to take place. Hence, אלהים *'ĕlohîym* designates God as the Everlasting, the Almighty, in his unchangeable essence, as he is before as well as after creation. יהוה .noitaer *yehvâh* distinguishes him as the personal Self-existent, and Author of all existing things, who gives expression and effect to his purpose, manifests himself thereby as existing, and maintains a spiritual intercourse with his intelligent creatures.

The vowel marks usually placed under the consonants of this word are said to belong to אדוני *'adonāy* and its real pronunciation, which is supposed to be lost, is conjectured to have been יהוה *yehovâh* This conjecture is supported by the analogy of the supposed antique third singular masculine imperfect of the verb הוה *hāvâh* and by the Greek forms IAΩ *IAW* and IABE *IABE* which are found in certain authors (Diod. Sic. i. 19; Macrob. Saturn i. 18; Theodoret, Quaest. xv. ad Exod.). It is true, indeed, when it has a prefix all its vowels coincide with those of אדדי *'adonāy* But otherwise the vowel under the first letter is different, and the qamets at the end is as usual in proper names ending in the Hebrew letter ה (*h*) as in others. יהוה *yehovâh* also finds an anology in the word ירחם *yerochām* In the forms IAΩ *IAW* and IABE *IABE* the Greek vowels doubtless represent the Hebrew consonants, and not any vowel points. The Hebrew letter ה (*h*) is often represented by the Greek letter α (*a*). From יהוה *yaheovâh* we may obtain רהוּ *yehû* at the end of compounds, and therefore, expect יהוּ *yehû* at the beginning. But the form at the beginning is יהו *yehô* or יו *yô* which indicates the pronunciation יהוה *yehovâh* as current with the punctuators. All this countenances the suggestion that the casual agreement of the two nouns Yahweh and Adonai in the principal vowels was the circumstance that facilitated the Jewish endeavor to avoid uttering the proper name of God except on the most solemn occasions. יהוה *yehovâh* moreover, rests on precarious grounds. The Hebrew analogy would give יהוה *yîhveh* not יהוה *yehovâh* for the verbal form. The middle vowel cholem (*o*) may indicate the intensive or active force of the root, but we lay no stress on the mode of pronunciation, since it cannot be positively ascertained.

5. שׂדה *śādeh* "plain, country, field," for pasture or tillage, in opposition to גן *gan* "garden, park".

.*neśāmâh* “breath,” applied to God and man only נשׁמה .7

We meet with no division again in the text till we come to Genesis 3:15, when the first minor break in the narrative occurs. This is noted by the intervening space being less than the remainder of the line. The narrative is therefore so far regarded as continuous.

We are now entering upon a new plan of narrative, and have therefore to notice particularly that law of Hebrew composition by which one line of events is carried on without interruption to its natural resting-point; after which the writer returns to take up a collateral train of incidents, that are equally requisite for the elucidation of his main purpose, though their insertion in the order of time would have marred the symmetry and perspicuity of the previous narrative. The relation now about to be given is posterior, as a whole, to that already given as a whole; but the first incident now to be recorded is some time prior to the last of the preceding document.

Hitherto we have adhered closely to the form of the original in our rendering, and so have made use of some inversions which are foreign to our prose style. Hereafter we shall deviate as little as possible from the King James Version.

The document upon which we are now entering extends from Genesis 2:4 to Genesis 2:4

This verse is the title of the present section. It states the subject of which it treats - “the generations of the skies and the land.” The generations are the posterity or the progress of events relating to the posterity of the party to whom the term is applied Genesis 5:1; Genesis 6:9; Genesis 10:1; Genesis 11:10; Genesis 37:2. The development of events is here presented under the figure of the descendants of a parental pair; the skies and the land being the metaphorical progenitors of those events, which are brought about by their conjunct operation.

It then notes the date at which the new narrative commences. “In their being created.” This is the first or general date; namely, after the primary creation and during the course of the secondary. As the latter occupied six days, some of the processes of nature began before these days had elapsed.

Next, therefore, is the more special date - “in the day of Yahweh God‘s making land and skies.” Now, on looking back at the preceding narrative, we observe that the skies were adjusted and named on the second day, and the land on the third. Both, therefore, were completed on the third day, which accordingly is the opening date of the second branch of the narrative.

The uniqueness of the present section, therefore, is, that it combines the creative with the preservative agency of God. Creation and progress here go hand in hand for a season. The narrative here, then, overlaps half the time of the former, and at the end of the chapter has not advanced beyond its termination.

yehovâh 'ĕlohîym “the Lord God.” This phrase is here for the אלהים יהוה
ĕlohîym as we have seen, is the generic term′ אלהים .first time introduced denoting God as the Everlasting, and therefore the Almighty, as he was before all worlds, and still continues to be, now that he is the sole object of supreme reverence to all intelligent creatures. Yahweh is the proper name of God to man, self-existent himself, the author of existence to all persons and things, and manifesting his existence to those whom he has made capable of .such knowledge

Hence, the latter name is appropriate to the present stage of our narrative. God has become active in a way worthy of himself, and at the same time unique to his nature. He has put forth his creative power in calling the universe into existence. He has now reconstituted the skies and the land, clothed the latter with a new vegetation, and peopled it with a new animal kingdom. Especially has he called into being an inhabitant of this earth made in his own image, and therefore capable of understanding his works and holding conversation with himself. To man he has now come to be in certain acts by which he has discovered himself and his power. And to man he has accordingly become known by a name which signalizes that new creative process of which man forms a prominent part. Yahweh - he who causes the successive events of time to come to pass in the sight and in the interest of man - is a name the special significance of which will come out on future occasions in the history of the ways of God with man.

The union of these two divine names, then, indicates him who was before all things, and by whom now all things consist. It also implies that he who is now distinguished by the new name Jehovah (יהוה *yehovâh*) is the same who was before called ‹Elohiym. The combination of the names is specially suitable in a passage which records a concurrence of creation and development. The apposition of the two names is continued by the historian through this and the following chapter. The abstract and aboriginal name then gives way to the concrete and the historical.

The skies and the land at the beginning of the verse are given in order of their importance in nature, the skies being first as grander and higher than the land; at the end, in the order of their importance in the narrative, the land being before the skies, as the future scene of the events to be recorded.

This superscription, we see, presupposes the former document, as it alludes to the creation in general, and to the things made on the second and third days in particular, without directly narrating these events. This mode of referring to them implies that they were well known at the time of the narrator, either by personal observation or by testimony. Personal observation is out of the question in the present case. By the testimony of God, therefore, they were already known, and the preceding record is that testimony. The narrator of the second passage, therefore, even if not the same as that of the former, had to a moral certainty the first before his mind when composing the second.

Genesis 2:5

This verse corresponds to the second verse of the preceding narrative. It describes the field or arable land in the absence of certain conditions necessary to the progress of vegetation. Plant and herb here comprise the whole vegetable world. Plants and herbs of the field are those which are to be found in the open land. A different statement is made concerning each.

Not a plant of the field was yet in the land. - Here it is to be remembered that the narrative has reverted to the third day of the preceding creation. At first sight, then, it might be supposed that the vegetable species were not created at the hour of that day to which the narrative refers. But it is not stated that young trees were not in existence, but merely that plants of the field were not yet in the land. Of the herbs it is only said that they had not yet sent forth a bud or blade. And the actual existence of both trees and

herbs is implied in what follows. The reasons for the state of things above described are the lack of rain to water the soil, and of man to cultivate it. These would only suffice for growth if the vegetable seeds, at least, were already in existence. Now, the plants were made before the seeds Genesis 1:11-12, and therefore the first full-grown and seed-bearing sets of each kind were already created. Hence, we infer that the state of things described in the text was this: The original trees were confined to a center of vegetation, from which it was intended that they should spread in the course of nature. At the present juncture, then, there was not a tree of the field, a tree of propagation, in the land; and even the created trees had not sent down a single root of growth into the land. And if they had dropped a seed, it was only on the land, and not in the land, as it had not yet struck root.

And not an herb of the field yet grew. - The herbage seems to have been more widely diffused than the trees. Hence, it is not said that they were not in the land, as it is said of field trees. But at the present moment not an herb had exhibited any signs of growth or sent forth a single blade beyond the immediate product of creative power.

Rain upon the land - and man to till it, were the two needs that retarded vegetation. These two means of promoting vegetable growth differed in their importance and in their mode of application. Moisture is absolutely necessary, and where it is supplied in abundance the shifting wind will in the course of time waft the seed. The browsing herds will aid in the same process of diffusion. Man comes in merely as an auxiliary to nature in preparing the soil and depositing the seeds and plants to the best advantage for rapid growth and abundant fruitfulness. The narrative, as usual, notes only the chief things. Rain is the only source of vegetable sap; man is the only intentional cultivator.

Genesis 2:6

As in the former narrative, so here, the remaining part of the chapter is employed in recording the removal of the two hinderances to vegetation. The first of these is removed by the institution of the natural process by which rain is produced. The atmosphere had been adjusted so far as to admit of some light. But even on the third day a dense mass of clouds still shut out the heavenly bodies from view. But on the creation of plants the Lord God caused it to rain on the land. This is described in the verse before us. “A mist went up from the land.” It had been ascending from the steaming, reeking land ever since the waters retired into the hollows. The

briny moisture which could not promote vegetation is dried up. And now he causes the accumulated masses of cloud to burst forth and dissolve themselves in copious showers. Thus, “the mist watered the whole face of the soil.” The face of the sky is thereby cleared, and on the following day the sun shone forth in all his cloudless splendor and fostering warmth.

On the fourth day, then, a second process of nature commenced. The bud began to swell, the tender blade to peep forth and assume its tint of green, the gentle breeze to agitate the full-sized plants, the first seeds to be shaken off and wafted to their resting-place, the first root to strike into the ground, and the first shoot to rise towards the sky.

This enables us to determine with some degree of probability the Season of the year when the creation took place. If we look to the ripe fruit on the first trees we presume that the season is autumn. The scattering of the seeds, the falling of the rains, and the need of a cultivator intimated in the text, point to the same period. In a genial climate the process of vegetation has its beginnings at the falling of the early rains. Man would be naturally led to gather the abundant fruit which fell from the trees, and thus, even unwittingly provide a store for the unbearing period of the year. It is probable, moreover, that he was formed in a region where vegetation was little interrupted by the coldest season of the year. This would be most favorable to the preservation of life in his state of primeval inexperience.

These presumptions are in harmony with the numeration of the months at the deluge Genesis 7:11, and with the outgoing and the turn of the year at autumn Exodus 23:16; Exodus 34:22.

Genesis 2:7

The second obstacle to the favorable progress of the vegetable kingdom is now removed. “And the Lord God formed the man of dust from the soil.” This account of the origin of man differs from the former on account of the different end the author has in view. There his creation as an integral whole is recorded with special reference to his higher nature by which he was suited to hold communion with his Maker, and exercise dominion over the inferior creation. Here his constitution is described with marked regard to his adaptation to be the cultivator of the soil. He is a compound of matter and mind. His material part is dust from the soil, out of which he is formed as the potter moulds the vessel out of the clay. He is אדם *'ādām* “Adam,” the

man of the soil, אדמה *'ădāmâh* "adamah." His mission in this respect is to draw out the capabilities of the soil to support by its produce the myriads of his race.

His mental part is from another source. "And breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." The word נשמה *neshāmâh* is invariably applied to God or man, never to any irrational creature. The "breath of life" is special to this passage. It expresses the spiritual and principal element in man, which is not formed, but breathed by the Creator into the physical form of man. This rational part is that in which he bears the image of God, and is suited to be his vicegerent on earth. As the earth was prepared to be the dwelling, so was the body to be the organ of that breath of life which is his essence, himself.

And the man became a living soul. - This term "living soul" is also applied to the water and land animals Genesis 1:20-21, Genesis 1:24. As by his body he is allied to earth and by his soul to heaven, so by the vital union of these he is associated with the whole animal kingdom, of which he is the constituted sovereign. This passage, therefore, aptly describes him as he is suited to dwell and rule on this earth. The height of his glory is yet to come out in his relation to the future and to God.

The line of narrative here reaches a point of repose. The second lack of the teeming soil is here supplied. The man to till the ground is presented in that form which exhibits his fitness for this appropriate and needful task. We are therefore at liberty to go back for another train of events which is essential to the progress of our narrative.

Verses 8-14

- XI. The Garden

8. גן *gan* "garden, park," παράδεισος *paradeisos* "an enclosed piece of ground." עדן *ēden* "Eden, delight." קדם *qedem* "fore-place, east; foretime."

11. פישון *pîyshôn* Pishon; related: "flow over, spread, leap." חוילה *chăvîylâh* Chavilah. חול *chôl* "sand." חבל *chebel* "region."

12. בדלם *bedolam* ἄνθραξ *anthrax* "carbuncle," (Septuagint) Βδέλλιον *bdellion* a gum of eastern countries, Arabia, India, Media (Josephus, etc.). שהם *sohām* πράσινος *prasinos* "leeklike," perhaps the The pearl (Kimchi)

beryl (Septuagint), ὄνυξ *onux* “onyx, sardonyx,” a precious stone of the .color of the nail (Jerome)

kûsh Kush; r. “heap, כּוּשׁ ”.*gîychôn* Gichon; related: “break forth גיחון .13 ”?gather

chād “be sharp. חדק ”.*dîglā' chîddeqel* Dijlah, “Tigris חדקל דגלא .14 *perat* Frat, Euphrates. The “sweet or broad stream.” Old פרת ”,rapidus Persian, “frata,” Sanskrit, “prathu,” πλατύς *platus* paragraph describes the planting of the garden of Eden, and determines its situation. It goes back, therefore, as we conceive, to the third day, and runs parallel with the .preceding passage

Genesis 2:8

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden to the east. - It is evident that the order of thought is here observed. For the formation of man with special allusion to his animal nature immediately suggests the means by which his physical needs are to be supplied. The order of time is an open question so far as the mere conjunction of the sentences is concerned. It can only be determined by other considerations.

Here, then, the writer either relates a new creation of trees for the occasion, or reverts to the occurrences of the third day. But though in the previous verses he declares the field to be without timber, yet in the account of the third day the creation of trees is recorded. Now, it is unnecessary, and therefore unreasonable, to assume two creations of trees at so short an interval of time. In the former paragraph the author advanced to the sixth day, in order to lay before his readers without any interruption the means by which the two conditions of vegetative progress were satisfied. This brings man into view, and his appearance gives occasion to speak of the means by which his needs were supplied.

For this purpose, the author drops the thread of events following the creation of man, and reverts to the third day. He describes more particularly what was then done. A center of vegetation was chosen for the trees, from which they were to be propagated by seed over the land. This central spot is called a garden or park. It is situated in a region which is distinguished by its name as a land of delight. It is said, as we understand, to be in the eastern quarter of Eden. For the word מקדם *mîqedem* “on the east” is most

simply explained by referring to some point indicated in the text. There are two points to which it may here refer - the place where the man was created, and the country in which the garden was placed. But the man was not created at this time, and, moreover, the place of his creation is not indicated; and hence, we must refer to the country in which the garden was placed.

And put there the man whom he had formed. - The writer has still the formation of man in thought, and therefore proceeds to state that he was thereupon placed in the garden which had been prepared for his reception, before going on to give a description of the garden. This verse, therefore, forms a transition from the field and its cultivator to the garden and its inhabitants.

Without the previous document concerning the creation, however, it could not have been certainly known that a new line of narrative was taken up in this verse. Neither could we have discovered what was the precise time of the creation of the trees. Hence, this verse furnishes a new proof that the present document was composed, not as an independent production, but as a continuation of the former.

Genesis 2:9

Having located the newly-formed man of whom he had spoken in the preceding paragraph, the author now returns to detail the planting and the watering of the garden. "And the Lord God made to grow out of the soil every tree likely for sight and good for food." We look on while the ornamental trees rise to gratify the sight, and the fruit trees present their mellow fare to the craving appetite. But pre-eminent among all we contemplate with curious wonder the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These will come under consideration at a future stage of our narrative.

Genesis 2:10

Here is a river the source of which is in Eden. It passes into the garden and waters it. "And thence it was parted and became four heads." This statement means either that the single stream was divided into four branches, or that there was a division of the river system of the district into four principal streams, whose sources were all to be found in it, though one only passed through the garden. In the latter case the word נהר *nâhār* may be understood in its primary sense of a flowing of water in general. This flowing in all the parts of Eden resulted in four particular flowings or

streams, which do not require to have been ever united. The subsequent land changes in this district during an interval of five or six thousand years prevent us from determining more precisely the meaning of the text.

Genesis 2:11, Genesis 2:12

The Pishon waters in its subsequent course the land of Havilah. This country is noted for the best gold, and for two other products, concerning which interpreters differ. Bedolach is, according to the Septuagint, the carbuncle or crystal; according to others, the pearl, or a particular kind of gum. The last is the more probable, if we regard the various Greek and Latin forms of the word: Βδέλλα *bdella* Βδέλλιον *bdellion* Josephus Ant. iii. 1,6; οἱ δὲ μάδελκον *hoi de madelkon* οἱ δὲ Βολχὸν καλοῦσι *hoi de bolchon kalousi* Dioscor. i. 71; *alii brochon appellant*, *alii malacham*, *alii maldacon*, Pliny H. N. 12,9. Pliny describes it as black, while the manna, which is compared with it Numbers 11:7, is white; but עין *ʿayîn* the point of resemblance may refer not to color, but to transparence or some other visible quality. This transparent, aromatic gum is found in Arabia, Babylonia, Bactriana, Media, and India. *Shoham* is variously conjectured to be the beryl, onyx, sardonyx, or emerald. The first, according to Pliny, is found in India and about Pontus. As the name Pishon means the gushing or spouting current, it may have been applied to many a stream by the migratory tribes. The Halys perhaps contains the same root with Havilah; namely, הול *hvl* (Rawlinson‘s Her. i., p. 126); and it rises in Armenia (Herod. i. 72). The Chalybes in Pontus, perhaps, contain the same root. The Pishon may have been the Halys or some other stream flowing into the Black Sea.

Genesis 2:13, Genesis 2:14

Gihon, the second river, flows by the land of Kush. It is possible that the name Kush remains in Caucasus and in the Caspian. The Gihon is the stream that breaks or bursts forth; a quality common to many rivers. The name is preserved in the Jyhoon, flowing into the sea of Aral. Here it probably designates the leading stream flowing out of Armenia into the Caspian, or in that direction. Hiddekel, the third, goes in front, or on the east of Asshur. The original Asshur embraced northern Mesopotamia, as well as the slopes of the mountain range on the other side of the Tigris. Perath, the fourth, is the well-known Frat or Euphrates.

In endeavoring to determine the situation of Eden, it is evident we can only proceed on probable grounds. The deluge, and even the distance of

time, warrant us in presuming great land changes to have taken place since this geographical description applied to the country. Let us see, however, to what result the simple reading of the text will lead us. A river is said to flow out of Eden into the garden. This river is not named, and may, in a primary sense of the term, denote the running water of the district in general. This is then said to be parted into four heads - the upper courses of four great rivers. One of these rivers is known to this day as the Frat or Euphrates. A second is with almost equal unanimity allowed to be the Dijlah or Tigris. The sources of these lie not far asunder, in the mountains of Armenia, and in the neighborhood of the lakes Van and Urumiah. Somewhere in this region must have been the celebrated but unnamed stream. The Hiddekel flowed east of Asshur; the primitive portion of which seems therefore to have been in Mesopotamia. The Gihon may have flowed into the Caspian, on the banks of which was the original Kush. The Pishon may have turned towards the Euxine, and compassed the primitive Havilah, lying to the south and east of that sea.

It may be said that the Kush and Havilah of later times belong to different localities. This, however, is no solid objection, on two grounds:

First. Geography affords numerous examples of the transferrence of names from one place to another along the line of migration. Thus, Galatia in Asia Minor would be inexplicable or misleading, did not history inform us that tribes from Gallia had settled there and given their name to the province. We may therefore expect names to travel with the tribes that bear them or love them, until they come to their final settlements. Hence, Kush may have been among the Caucasian glens and on the Caspian shores. In the progress of his development, whether northward or southward, he may have left his mark in Kossaea and Kissia, while he sent his colonies into southern Arabia Aethiopia and probably India.

Second. Countries agreeing in name may be totally unconnected either in time or place. Thus, in the table of nations we meet with two persons called Havilah Genesis 10:7, Genesis 10:29; the one a Kushite, who settled probably in the south of Arabia, the other a Joctanite, who occupied a more northerly locality in the same peninsula. A primitive Havilah, different from both, may have given his name to the region southeast of the Euxine.

The rivers Pishon and Gihon may have been greatly altered or even effaced by the deluge and other causes. Names similar to these may be found in various places. They cannot prove much more than resemblance in language, and that may be sometimes very remote. There is one other Gihon mentioned in Scripture 1 Kings 1:33, and several like names occur in profane history. At first sight it seems to be stated that the one stream branched into four. If so, this community of origin has disappeared among the other changes of the country. But in the original text the words "and thence" come before the verb "parted." This verb has no subject expressed, and may have its subject implied in itself. The meaning of the sentence will then be, "and thence," after the garden had been watered by the river, "it," the river, or the water system of the country, "was parted into four heads." We cannot tell, and it is not material, which of these interpretations correctly represents the original fact.

According to the above view, the land and garden of Eden lay in Armenia, around the lakes Van and Urumiah, or the district where these lakes now are. The country here is to this day a land of delight, and very well suited in many respects to be the cradle of the human race. There is only one other locality that has any claim to probability from an examination of Scripture. It is the alluvial ground where the Euphrates and Tigris unite their currents, and then again separate into two branches, by which their waters are discharged into the Persian Gulf. The neck in which they are united is the river that waters the garden. The rivers, before they unite, and the branches, after they separate; are the four rivers. The claim of this position to acceptance rests on the greater contiguity to Kissia or Susiana, a country of the Kushites, on the one side and on the other to Havilah, a district of Arabia, as well as its proximity to Babel, where the confusion of tongues took place. These claims do not constrain our assent. Susiana is nearer the Tigris itself than the present eastern branch after the separation. Havilah is not very near the western branch. If Babel be near, Armenia, where the ark rested, is very far away. Against this position is the forced meaning it puts on the text by its mode of accounting for the four rivers. The garden river in the text rises in Eden, and the whole four have their upper currents in that land. All is different in the case here supposed. Again, the land of Shinar is a great wheat country, and abounds in the date

palm. But it is not otherwise distinguished for trees. It is a land of the simoon, the mirage, and the drought, and its summer heat is oppressive and enfeebling. It cannot therefore claim to be a land of delight (Eden), either in point of climate or variety of produce. It is not, consequently, so well suited as the northern position, either to the description in the text or the requirements of primeval man.

It is evident that this geographical description must have been written long after the document in which it is found might have been composed. Mankind must have multiplied to some extent, have spread themselves along these rivers, and become familiar with the countries here designated. All this might have taken place in the lifetime of Adam, and so have been put on record, or handed down by tradition from an eye-witness. But it is remarkable that the three names of countries reappear as proper names among the descendants of Noah after the flood.

Hence, arises a question of great interest concerning the composition of the document in which they are originally found. If these names be primeval, the document in its extant form may have been composed in the time of Adam, and therefore before the deluge. In this case Moses has merely authenticated it and handed it down in its proper place in the divine record. And the sons of Noah, from some unexplained association, have adopted the three names and perpetuated them as family names. If, on the other hand, these countries are named after the descendants of Noah, the geographical description of the garden must have been composed after these men had settled in the countries to which they have given their names. At the same time, these territorial designations apply to a time earlier than Moses; hence, the whole document may have been composed in the time of Noah, who survived the deluge three hundred and fifty years, and may have witnessed the settlement and the designation of these countries. And, lastly, if not put together in its present form by any previous writer, then the document is directly from the pen of Moses, who composed it out of pre-existent memorials. And as the previous document was solely due to inspiration, we shall in this case be led to ascribe the whole of Genesis to Moses as the immediate human composer.

It must be admitted that any of these ways of accounting for the existing form of this document is within the bounds of possibility. But the question is, Which is the most probable? We are in a fair position for discussing this question in a dispassionate manner, and without any anxiety, inasmuch as on any of the three suppositions Moses, who lived long after the latest event expressed or implied, is the acknowledged voucher for the document before us. It becomes us to speak with great moderation and caution on a point of so remote antiquity. To demonstrate this may be one of the best results of this inquiry.

I. The following are some of the grounds for the theory that the names of countries in the document are original and antediluvian:

First, it was impossible to present to the postdiluvians in later terms the exact features and conditions of Eden, because many of these were obliterated. The four rivers no longer sprang from one. Two of the rivers remained, indeed, but the others had been so materially altered as to be no longer clearly distinguishable. The Euxine and the Caspian may now cover their former channels. In circumstances like these later names would not answer.

Second, though the name Asshur represents a country nearly suitable to the original conditions, Havilah and Kush cannot easily have their postdiluvian meanings in the present passage. The presumption that they have has led interpreters into vain and endless conjectures. Supposing Kush to be Aethiopia, many have concluded the Gihon to be the Nile, which in that case must have had the same fountain-head, or at least risen in the same region with the Euphrates. Others, supposing it to be a district of the Tigris, near the Persian Gulf, imagine the Gihon to be one of the mouths of the united Euphrates and Tigris, and thus, give a distorted sense to the statement that the four streams issued from one. This supposition, moreover, rests on the precarious hypothesis that the two rivers had always a common neck. The supposition that Havilah was in Arabia or on the Indian Ocean is liable to the same objections. Hence, the presumption that these names are postdiluvian embarrasses the meaning of the passage.

Third, if these names be primeval, the present document in its integrity may have been composed in the time of Adam; and this accounts in the most satisfactory manner for the preservation of these traditions of the primitive age.

Fourth, the existence of antediluvian documents containing these original names would explain in the simplest manner the difference in the localities signified by them before and after the deluge. This difference has tended to invalidate the authenticity of the book in the eyes of some; whereas the existence of antiquated names in a document, though failing to convey to us much historical information, is calculated to impress us with a sense of its antiquity and authenticity. And this is of more importance than a little geographical knowledge in a work whose paramount object is to teach moral and religious truth.

Fifth, it is the habit of the sacred writers not to neglect the old names of former writers, but to append to them or conjoin with them the later or better known equivalents, when they wish to present a knowledge of the place and its former history. Thus, "Bela, this is Zoar" Genesis 14:2, Genesis 14:8; "Kiriath-Arba, this is Hebron" Genesis 33:2; "Ephrath, this is Bethlehem" Genesis 35:19.

Sixth, these names would be orignally personal; and hence, we can see a sufficient reason why the sons of Noah renewed them in their families, as they were naturally disposed to perpetuate the memory of their distinguished ancestors.

II. The second hypothesis, that the present form of the document originated in the time of Noah, after the flood, is supported by the following considerations:

First, it accounts for the three names of countries in the easiest manner. The three descendants of Noah had by this time given their names to these countries. The supposition of a double origin or application of these names is not necessary.

Second, it accounts for the change in the localities bearing these names. The migrations and dispersions of tribes carried the names to new and various districts in the time intervening between Noah and Moses.

Third, it represents with sufficient exactness the locality of the garden. The deluge may not have greatly altered the general features of the countries. It may not be intended to represent the four rivers as derived from any common head stream; it may only be meant that the water system of the country gathered into four principal rivers. The names of all these are primeval. Two of them have descended to our days, because a permanent body of natives remained on their banks. The other two names have changed with the change of the inhabitants.

Fourth, it allows for primeval documents, if such existed of so early a date. The surviving document was prepared from such preexisting writings, or from oral traditions of early days, as yet unalloyed with error in the God-fearing family of Noah.

Fifth, it is favored by the absence of explanatory proper names, which we might have expected if there had been any change known at the time of composition.

III. The hypothesis that Moses was not merely the authenticator, but the composer of this as well as the preceding and subsequent documents of Genesis, has some very strong grounds.

First, it explains the local names with the same simplicity as in the preceding case (1).

Second, it allows for primeval and successive documents equally well (4), the rivers Pishon and Gihon and the primary Havilah and Kush being still in the memory of man, though they disappeared from the records of later times.

Third, it notifies with fidelity to the attentive reader the changes in the geographical designations of the past.

Fourth, it accounts for the occurrence of comparatively late names of localities in an account of primeval times.

Fifth, it explains the extreme brevity of these ancient notices. If documents had been composed from time to time and inserted in their original state in the book of God, it must have been a very voluminous and unmanageable record at a very early period.

These presumptions might now be summed up and compared, and the balance of probability struck, as is usually done. But we feel bound not to do so. First. We have not all the possibilities before us, neither is it in the power of human imagination to enumerate them, and therefore we have not the whole data for a calculation of probabilities. Second. We have enough to do with facts, without elevating probabilities into the rank of facts, and thereby hopelessly embarrassing the whole premises of our deductive knowledge. Philosophy, and in particular the philosophy of criticism, has suffered long from this cause. Its very first principles have been overlaid with foregone conclusions, and its array of seeming facts has been impaired and enfeebled by the presence of many a sturdy probability or improbability in the solemn guise of a mock fact. Third. The supposed fact of a set of documents composed by successive authors, duly labelled and handed down to Moses to be merely collected into the book of Genesis, if it was lurking in any mind, stands detected as only a probability or improbability at best. The second document implies facts, which are possibly not recorded until the fifth. Fourth. And, lastly, there is no impossibility or improbability in Moses being not the compiler but the immediate author of the whole of Genesis, though it be morally certain that he had oral or written memoranda of the past before his mind.

Verses 15-17

- XII. The Command

15. נוּח *nûach* "rest, dwell". עבד *ābad* "work, till, serve". שמר *shāmar* "keep, guard".

We have here the education of man summed up in a single sentence. Let us endeavor to unfold the great lessons that are here taught.

Genesis 2:15

The Lord God took the man. - The same omnipotent hand that made him still held him. "And put him into the garden." The original word is "caused him to rest," or dwell in the garden as an abode of peace and recreation. "To dress it and to keep it." The plants of nature, left to their own course, may degenerate and become wild through the poverty of the soil on which they alight, or the gradual exhaustion of a once rich soil. The hand of rational man, therefore, has its appropriate sphere in preparing and enriching the soil, and in distributing the seeds and training the shoots in the way most favorable for the full development of the plant, and especially of its seed or fruits. This "dressing" was needed even in the garden. The "keeping" of it may refer to the guarding of it by enclosure from the depredations of the cattle, the wild beasts, or even the smaller animals. It includes also the faithful preservation of it as a trust committed to man by his bounteous Maker. There was now a man to till the soil. The second need of the world of plants was now supplied. Gardening was the first occupation of primeval man.

Genesis 2:16-17

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying. - This is a pregnant sentence. It involves the first principles of our intellectual and moral philosophy.

I. The command here given in words brings into activity the intellectual nature of man. First, the power of understanding language is called forth. The command here addressed to him by his Maker is totally different from the blessings addressed to the animals in the preceding chapter. It was not necessary that these blessings should be understood in order to be carried into effect, inasmuch as He who pronounced them gave the instincts and powers requisite to their accomplishment. But this command addressed to man in words must be understood in order to be obeyed. The capacity for understanding language, then, was originally lodged in the constitution of man, and only required to be called out by the articulate voice of God. Still there is something wonderful here, something beyond the present grasp and promptitude of human apprehension. If we except the blessing, which may not have been heard, or may not have been uttered before this command, these words were absolutely the first that were heard by man.

The significance of the sentences they formed must have been at the same time conveyed to man by immediate divine teaching. How the lesson

was taught in an instant of time we cannot explain, though we have a distant resemblance of it in an infant learning to understand its mother-tongue. This process, indeed, goes over a space of two years; but still there is an instant in which the first conception of a sign is formed, the first word is apprehended, the first sentence is understood. In that instant the knowledge of language is virtually attained. With man, created at once in his full though undeveloped powers, and still unaffected by any moral taint, this instant came with the first words spoken to his ear and to his soul by his Maker‘s impressive voice, and the first lesson of language was at once thoroughly taught and learned. Man is now master of the theory of speech; the conception of a sign has been conveyed into his mind. This is the passive lesson of elocution: the practice, the active lesson, will speedily follow.

Not only the secondary part, however, but at the same time the primary and fundamental part of man‘s intellectual nature is here developed. The understanding of the sign necessarily implies the knowledge of the thing signified. The objective is represented here by the “trees of the garden.” The subjective comes before his mind in the pronoun “thou.” The physical constitution of man appears in the process of “eating.” The moral part of his nature comes out in the significance of the words “mayest” and “shalt not.” The distinction of merit in actions and things is expressed in the epithets “good and evil.” The notion of reward is conveyed in the terms “life” and “death.” And, lastly, the presence and authority of “the Lord God” is implied in the very nature of a command. Here is at least the opening of a wide field of observation for the nascent powers of the mind. He, indeed, must bear the image of God in perceptive powers, who shall scan with heedful eye the loftiest as well as the lowest in these varied scenes of reality. But as with the sign, so with the thing signified, a glance of intelligence instantaneously begins the converse of the susceptible mind with the world of reality around, and the enlargement of the sphere of human knowledge is merely a matter of time without end. How rapidly the process of apprehension would go on in the opening dawn of man‘s intellectual activity, how many flashes of intelligence would be compressed into a few moments of his first consciousness, we cannot tell. But we can readily believe that he would soon be able to form a just yet an infantile

conception of the varied themes which are presented to his mind in this brief command.

Thus, the susceptible part of man‘s intellect is evoked. The conceptive part will speedily follow, and display itself in the many inventions that will be sought out and applied to the objects which are placed at his disposal.

II. First. Next, the moral part of man‘s nature is here called into play. Mark God‘s mode of teaching. He issues a command. This is required in order to bring forth into consciousness the hitherto latent sensibility to moral obligation which was laid in the original constitution of man‘s being. A command implies a superior, whose right it is to command, and an inferior, whose duty it is to obey. The only ultimate and absolute ground of supremacy is creating, and of inferiority, being created. The Creator is the only proper and entire owner; and, within legitimate bounds, the owner has the right to do what he will with his own. The laying on of this command, therefore, brings man to the recognition of his dependence for being and for the character of that being on his Maker. From the knowledge of the fundamental relation of the creature to the Creator springs an immediate sense of the obligation he is under to render implicit obedience to the Author of his being. This is, therefore, man‘s first lesson in morals. It calls up in his breast the sense of duty, of right, of responsibility. These feelings could not have been elicited unless the moral susceptibility had been laid in the soul, and only waited for the first command to awaken it into consciousness. This lesson, however, is only the incidental effect of the command, and not the primary ground of its imposition.

Second. The special mandate here given is not arbitrary in its form, as is sometimes hastily supposed, but absolutely essential to the legal adjustment of things in this new stage of creation. Antecedent to the behest of the Creator, the only indefeasible right to all the creatures lay in himself. These creatures may be related to one another. In the great system of things, through the wonderful wisdom of the grand Designer, the use of some may be needful to the well-being, the development, and perpetuation of others. Nevertheless, no one has a shadow of right in the original nature of things to the use of any other. And when a moral agent comes upon the stage of being, in order to mark out the sphere of his legitimate action, an explicit

declaration of the rights over other creatures granted and reserved must be made. The very issue of the command proclaims man‘s original right of property to be, not inherent, but derived.

As might be expected in these circumstances, the command has two clauses, - a permissive and a prohibitive. “Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat.” This displays in conspicuous terms the benignity of the Creator. “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat.” This signalizes the absolute right of the Creator over all the trees, and over man himself. One tree only is withheld, which, whatever were its qualities, was at all events not necessary to the well-being of man. All the others that were likely for sight and good for food, including the tree of life, are made over to him by free grant. In this original provision for the vested rights of man in creation, we cannot but acknowledge with gratitude and humility the generous and considerate bounty of the Creator. This is not more conspicuous in the bestowment of all the other trees than in the withholding of the one, the participation of which was fraught with evil to mankind.

Third. The prohibitory part of this enactment is not a matter of indifference, as is sometimes imagined, but indispensable to the nature of a command, and, in particular, of a permissive act or declaration of granted rights. Every command has a negative part, expressed or implied, without which it would be no command at all. The command, “Go work today in my vineyard,” implies thou shalt not do anything else; otherwise the son who works not obeys as well as the son who works. The present address of God to Adam, without the exceptive clause, would be a mere license, and not a command. But with the exceptive clause it is a command, and tantamount in meaning to the following positive injunction: Thou mayest eat of these trees only. An edict of license with a restrictive clause is the mildest form of command that could have been imposed for the trial of human obedience. Some may have thought that it would have been better for man if there had been no tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

But second thoughts will correct this rash and wrong conclusion. First. This tree may have had other purposes to serve in the economy of things of which we are not aware; and, if so, it could not have been absent without

detriment to the general good. Second. But without any supposition at all, the tree was fraught with no evil whatever to man in itself. It was in the first instance the instrument of great good, of the most precious kind, to him. It served the purpose of calling up into view out of the depths of his nature the notion of moral obligation, with all the kindred notions of the inherent authority of the Creator and the innate subordination of himself, the creature, of the aboriginal right of the Creator alone in all the creatures, and the utter absence of any right in himself to any other creature whatsoever. The command concerning this tree thus set his moral convictions agoing, and awakened in him the new and pleasing consciousness that he was a moral being, and not a mere clod of the valley or brute of the field.

This is the first thing this tree did for man; and we shall find it would have done a still better thing for him if he had only made a proper use of it. Third. The absence of this tree would not at all have secured Adam from the possibility or the consequence of disobedience. Any grant to him whatsoever must have been made "with the reserve," implicit or explicit, of the rights of all others. "The thing reserved" must in equity have been made known to him. In the present course of things it must have come in his way, and his trial would have been inevitable, and therefore his fall possible. Now, the forbidden tree is merely the thing reserved. Besides, even if man had been introduced into a sphere of existence where no reserved tree or other thing could ever have come within the range of his observation, and so no outward act of disobedience could have been perpetrated, still, as a being of moral susceptibility, he must come to the acknowledgment, express or implied, of the rights of the heavenly crown, before a mutual good understanding could have been established between him and his Maker. Thus, we perceive that even in the impossible Utopia of metaphysical abstraction there is a virtual forbidden tree which forms the test of a man's moral relation to his Creator. Now, if the reserve be necessary, and therefore the test of obedience inevitable, to a moral being, it only remains to inquire whether the test employed be suitable and seasonable.

Fourth. What is here made the matter of reserve, and so the test of obedience, is so far from being trivial or out of place, as has been imagined, that it is the proper and the only object immediately available for these

purposes. The immediate need of man is food. The kind of food primarily designed for him is the fruit of trees. Grain, the secondary kind of vegetable diet, is the product of the farm rather than of the garden, and therefore does not now come into use. As the law must be laid down before man proceeds to an act of appropriation, the matter of reserve and consequent test of obedience is the fruit of a tree. Only by this can man at present learn the lessons of morality. To devise any other means, not arising from the actual state of things in which man was placed, would have been arbitrary and unreasonable. The immediate sphere of obedience lies in the circumstances in which he actually stands. These afforded no occasion for any other command than what is given. Adam had no father, or mother, or neighbor, male or female, and therefore the second table of the law could not apply. But he had a relation to his Maker, and legislation on this could not be postponed. The command assumes the kindest, most intelligible, and convenient form for the infantile mind of primeval man.

Fifth. We are now prepared to understand why this tree is called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The prohibition of this tree brings man to the knowledge of good and evil. The products of creative power were all very good Genesis 1:31. Even this tree itself is good, and productive of unspeakable good in the first instance to man. The discernment of merit comes up in his mind by this tree. Obedience to the command of God not to partake of this tree is a moral good. Disobedience to God by partaking of it is a moral evil. When we have formed an idea of a quality, we have at the same time an idea of its contrary. By the command concerning this tree man became possessed of the conceptions of good and evil, and so, theoretically, acquainted with their nature. This was that first lesson in morals of which we have spoken. It is quite evident that this knowledge could not be any physical effect of the tree, seeing its fruit was forbidden. It is obvious also that evil is as yet known in this fair world only as the negative of good. Hence, the tree is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because by the command concerning it man comes to this knowledge.

Sixth. “In the day of thy eating thereof, die surely shalt thou.” The divine command is accompanied with its awful sanction - death. The man could not at this time have any practical knowledge of the physical dissolution called death. We must, therefore, suppose either that God made

him preternaturally acquainted with it, or that he conveyed to him the knowledge of it simply as the negation of life. The latter hypothesis is to be preferred, for several reasons. First, it is the more economical mode of instruction. Such knowledge may be imparted to man without anticipating experience. He was already conscious of life as a pure blessing. He was therefore capable of forming an idea of its loss. And death in the physical sense of the cessation of animal life and the disorganization of the body, he would come to understand in due time by experience. Secondly, death in reference to man is regarded in Scripture much more as the privation of life in the sense of a state of favor with God and consequent happiness than as the mere cessation of animal life Genesis 28:13; Exodus 3:6; Matthew 22:32. Thirdly, the presence and privilege of the tree of life would enable man to see how easily he could be deprived of life, especially when he began to drink in its life-sustaining juices and feel the flow of vitality rushing through his veins and refreshing his whole physical nature. Take away this tree, and with all the other resources of nature he cannot but eventually droop and die. Fourthly, the man would thus regard his exclusion from the tree of life as the earnest of the sentence which would come to its fullness, when the animal frame would at length sink down under the wear and tear of life like the beasts that perish. Then would ensue to the dead but perpetually existing soul of man the total privation of all the sweets of life, and the experience of all the ills of penal death.

III. Man has here evidently become acquainted with his Maker. On the hearing and understanding of this sentence, at least, if not before, he has arrived at the knowledge of God, as existing, thinking, speaking, permitting, commanding, and thereby exercising all the prerogatives of that absolute authority over people and things which creation alone can give. If we were to draw all this out into distinct propositions, we should find that man was here furnished with a whole system of theology, ethics, and metaphysics, in a brief sentence. It may be said, indeed, that we need not suppose all this conveyed in the sentence before us. But, at all events, all this is implied in the few words here recorded to have been addressed to Adam, and there was not much time between his creation and his location in the garden for conveying any preliminary information. We may suppose the substance of the narrative contained in Genesis 1:2-3, to have been communicated to him in due time. But it could not be all conveyed yet, as we are only in the sixth

day, and the record in question reaches to the end of the seventh. It was not, therefore, composed until after that day had elapsed.

It is to be noticed here that God reserves to himself the administration of the divine law. This was absolutely necessary at the present stage of affairs, as man was but an individual subject, and not yet spread out into a multitude of people. Civil government was not formally constituted till after the deluge.

We can hardly overestimate the benefit, in the rapid development of his mind, which Adam thus derived from the presence and converse of his Maker. If no voice had struck his car, no articulate sentence had reached his intellect, no authoritative command had penetrated his conscience, no perception of the Eternal Spirit had been presented to his apprehension, he might have been long in the mute, rude, and imperfectly developed state which has sometimes been ascribed to primeval man. But if contact with a highly-accomplished master and a highly-polished state of society makes all the difference between the savage and the civilized, what instantaneous expansion and elevation of the primitive mind, while yet in its virgin purity and unimpaired power, must have resulted from free converse with the all-perfect mind of the Creator himself! To the clear eye of native genius a starting idea is a whole science. By the insinuation of a few fundamental and germinant notions into his mind, Adam shot up at once into the full height and compass of a master spirit prepared to scan creation and adore the Creator.

Verse 18

- XIII. The Naming of the Animals

Here man‘s intellectual faculties proceed from the passive and receptive to the active and communicative stage. This advance is made in the review and designation of the various species of animals that frequent the land and skies.

A new and final need of man is stated in Genesis 2:18. The Creator himself, in whose image he was made, had revealed himself to him in language. This, among many other effects, awakened the social affection. This affection was the index of social capacity. The first step towards

communication between kindred spirits was accomplished when Adam heard and understood spoken language. Beyond all this God knew what was in the man whom he had formed. And he expresses this in the words, “It is not good for the man to be alone.” He is formed to be social, to hold converse, not only with his superior, but also with his equal. As yet he is but a unit, an individual. He needs a mate, with whom he may take sweet counsel. And the benevolent Creator resolves to supply this want. “I will make him a helpmeet for him” - one who may not only reciprocate his feelings, but take an intelligent and appropriate part in his active pursuits.

Verse 19

Here, as in several previous instances Genesis 1:5; Genesis 2:4, Genesis 2:8-9, the narrative reverts to the earlier part of the sixth day. This is, therefore, another example of the connection according to thought overruling that according to time. The order of time, however, is restored, when we take in a sufficient portion of the narrative. We refer, therefore, to the fifth verse, which is the regulative sentence of the present passage. The second clause in the verse, however, which in the present case completes the thought in the mind of the writer, brings up the narrative to a point subsequent to that closing the preceding verse. The first two clauses, therefore, are to be combined into one; and when this is done, the order of time is observed.

Man has already become acquainted with his Maker. He has opened his eyes upon the trees of the garden, and learned to distinguish at least two of them by name. He is now to be introduced to the animal kingdom, with which he is connected by his physical nature, and of which he is the constituted lord. Not many hours or minutes before have they been called into existence. They are not yet, therefore, multiplied or scattered over the earth, and so do not require to be gathered for the purpose. The end of this introduction is said to be to see what he would call them. To name is to distinguish the nature of anything and do denote the thing by a sound bearing some analogy to its nature. To name is also the prerogative of the owner, superior, or head. Doubtless the animals instinctively distinguished man as their lord paramount, so far as his person and eye came within their actual observation. God had given man his first lesson in speech, when he caused him to hear and understand the spoken command. He now places

him in a condition to put forth his naming power, and thereby go through the second lesson.

With the infant, the acquisition of language must be a gradual process, inasmuch as the vast multitude of words which constitute its vocabulary has to be heard one by one and noted in the memory. The infant is thus the passive recipient of a fully formed and long-established medium of converse. The first man, on the other hand, having received the conception of language, became himself the free and active inventor of the greatest part of its words. He accordingly discerns the kinds of animals, and gives each its appropriate name. The highly-excited powers of imagination and analogy break forth into utterance, even before he has anyone to hear and understand his words but the Creator himself.

This indicates to us a twofold use of language. First, it serves to register things and events in the apprehension and the memory. Man has a singular power of conferring with himself. This he carries on by means of language, in some form or other. He bears some resemblance to his Maker even in the complexity of his spiritual nature. He is at once speaker and hearer, and yet at the same time he is consciously one. Secondly, it is a medium of intelligent communication between spirits who cannot read another‘s thoughts by immediate intuition. The first of these uses seems to have preceded the second in the case of Adam, who was the former of the first language. The reflecting reader can tell what varied powers of reason are involved in the use of language, and to what an extent the mind of man was developed, when he proceeded to name the several classes of birds and beasts. He was evidently suited for the highest enjoyments of social contact.

Among the trees in the garden God took the initiative, named the two that were conspicuous and essential to man‘s well being, and uttered the primeval command. Adam has now made acquaintance with the animal world, and, profiting by the lesson of the garden, proceeds himself to exercise the naming power. The names he gives are thenceforth the permanent designations of the different species of living creatures that appeared before him. These names being derived from some prominent quality, were suited to be specific, or common to the class, and not special to the individual.

Verse 20

We find, however, there was another end served by this review of the animals. “There was not found a helpmeet for the man” - an equal, a companion, a sharer of his thoughts, his observations, his joys, his purposes, his enterprises. It was now evident, from actual survey, that none of these animals, not even the serpent, was possessed of reason, of moral and intellectual ideas, of the faculties of abstracting and naming, of the capacities of rational fellowship or worship. They might be ministers to his purposes, but not helpers meet for him. On the other hand, God was the source of his being and the object of his reverence, but not on a par with himself in needs and resources. It was therefore apparent that man in respect of an equal was alone, and yet needed an associate. Thus, in this passage the existence of the desire is made out and asserted; in keeping with the mode of composition uniformly pursued by the sacred writer Genesis 1:2; Genesis 2:5.

Verse 21-22

- XIV. The Woman

21. תרדמה Septuagint ἔκστασις *ekstasis* “deep sleep,” *tardēmâh*. צלע “rib, side, wing of a building” *tsēlāʿ*.

23. פעם anvil, stroke, tread, “beat *paʿam*. אשה man,” vir′ איש *îysh* “be strong′ אנש *ānash*; “be firm as a substance ישה *yāshah*; “be firm, as a foundation′ אוש *ûsh* “to give help: hence, the strong, the brave, the defender, the nourisher.” אשה *îśâh* “woman,” feminine of the above;′ “wife”.

The second creative step in the constitution of man as the natural head of a race is now described. This supplies the defect that was drawn forth into consciousness in the preceding passage. Man here passes out of solitude into society, out of unity into multiplicity.

Here we find ourselves still in the sixth day. This passage throws a new light on Genesis 1:27. It is there stated that man was first created in the image of God, and then that he was created male and female. From the present passage we learn that these two acts of creation were distinct in point of time. First, we see man was really one in his origin, and contained

in this unity the perfection of manhood. It does not appear, however, that man was so constituted by nature as to throw off another of the same kind by his inherent power. In fact, if he had, the other should have been, not a female, but another human being in every respect like himself; and he would thus have resembled those plants that are capable of being propagated by a bud. Besides, he would have been endowed with a power different from his actual posterity; and thus the head would not have corresponded with the members of the race.

The narrative, however, is opposed to this view of man‘s nature. For the change, by which the woman comes into existence, is directly ascribed to the original Maker. A part of the man is taken for the purpose, which can be spared without interfering with the integrity of his nature. It manifestly does not constitute a woman by the mere act of separation, as we are told that the Lord God built it into a woman. It is needless, therefore, to speculate whether the part taken were literally a rib, or some other side piece designedly put there by the provident Creator, for the purpose of becoming the rudiment of a full-grown woman. It is expressly called, not A rib, but one of his ribs; and this evidently implies that he had other similar parts. This binds us, we conceive, to the literal rib of bone and flesh. And thus, in accordance with the account in the foregoing chapter, we have, first, the single man created, the full representative and potential fountain of the race, and then, out of this one, in the way now described, we have the male and the female created.

The original unity of man constitutes the strict unity of the race. The construction of the rib into a woman establishes the individuality of man‘s person before, as well as after, the removal of the rib. The selection of a rib to form into a woman constitutes her, in an eminent sense, a helpmeet for him, in company with him, on a footing of equality with him. At the same time, the after building of the part into a woman determines the distinct personality and individuality of the woman. Thus, we perceive that the entire race, even the very first mother of it, has its essential unit and representative in the first man.

The Almighty has called intelligent beings into existence in two ways. The angels he seems to have created as individuals Mark 12:25, constituting

an order of beings the unity of which lies in the common Creator. Man he created as the parent of a race about to spring from a single head, and having its unity in that head. A single angel then stands by himself, and for himself; and all his actions belong only to himself, except so far as example, persuasion, or leadership may have involved others in them. But the single man, who is at the same time head of a race, is in quite a different position. He stands for the race, which is virtually contained in him; and his actions belong not only to him as an individual, but, in a certain sense, to the whole race, of which he is at present the sum. An angel counts only for the unit of his order. The first man counts for the whole race as long as he is alone. The one angel is responsible only for himself. The first man is not only an individual, but, as long as he is alone, the sum total of a race; and is therefore so long responsible, not only for himself, but for the race, as the head of which he acts. This deep question of race will meet us again at a future stage of man‘s history.

Since the All-wise Being never does anything without reason, it becomes an interesting question, why the creation of woman was deferred to this precise juncture in human history. First, man‘s original unity is the counterpart of the unity of God. He was to be made in the image of God, and after his likeness. If the male and the female had been created at once, an essential feature of the divine likeness would have been missing. But, as in the absolute One there is no duality, whether in sex or in any other respect, so is there none in the original form and constitution of man. Hence, we learn the absurdity of those who import into their notions of the deity the distinction of sex, and all the alliances which are involved in a race of gods. Secondly, the natural unity of the first pair, and of the race descended from them, is established by the primary creation of an individual, from whom is derived, by a second creative process, the first woman.

The race of man is thus a perfect unity, flowing from a single center of human life. Thirdly, two remarkable events occur in the experience of man before the formation of the woman, - his installment in the garden as its owner, keeper, and dresser; and his review of the animals, as their rational superior, to whom they yield an instinctive homage. By the former he is prepared to provide for the sustenance and comfort of his wife; by the latter,

he becomes aware of his power to protect her. Still further, by the interview with his Maker in the garden he came to understand language; and by the inspection of the animals to employ it himself. Speech implies the exercise of the susceptive and conceptive powers of the understanding. Thus, Adam was qualified to hold intelligent converse with a being like himself. He was competent to be the instructor of his wife in words and things. Again, he had met with his superior in his Creator, his inferiors in the animals; and he was now to meet his equal in the woman. And, lastly, by the divine command his moral sense had been brought into play, the theory of moral obligation had been revealed to his mind, and he was therefore prepared to deal with a moral being like himself, to understand and respect the rights of another, to do unto another as he would have another do to him. It was especially necessary that the sense of right should grow up in his breast, to keep in due check that might in which he excelled, before the weaker and gentler sex was called into being, and intrusted to his charge. These are some of the obvious reasons for delaying the formation of the woman to the present crisis.

Verse 23

Whether the primeval man was conscious of the change in himself, and of the work of the Supreme Being while it was going on, or received supernatural information of the event when he awoke, does not appear. But he is perfectly aware of the nature of her who now for the first time appears before his eyes. This is evinced in his speech on beholding her: "This, now" - in contrast with the whole animal creation just before presented to his view, in which he had failed to find a helpmeet for him - "is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh;" whence we perceive that the rib included both bone and flesh. "To this" counterpart of myself "shall be called woman;" the word in the original being a feminine form of "man," to which we have no exact equivalent, though the word "woman" (womb-man, or wife-man), proves our word "man" to have been originally of the common gender. "Because out of a man was she taken;" being taken out of a man, she is human; and being a perfect individual, she is a female man.

Verse 24

These might be the words of the first man Genesis 2:24. As he thoroughly understood the relation between himself and the woman, there is no new difficulty in conceiving him to become acquainted at the same time

with the relationship of son to father and mother, which was in fact only another form of that in which the newly-formed woman stood to himself. The latter is really more intimateand permanent than the former, and naturally therefore takes its place, especially as the practical of the filial tie, - that of being trained to maturity, - is already accomplished, when the conjugal one begins.

But it seems more probable that this sentence is the reflection of the inspired author on the special mode in which the female was formed from the male. Such remarks of the writer are frequently introduced by the word "therefore" (על־כן *kēn -ʿal*). It is designed to inculcate on the race that was to spring from them the inviolable sanctity of the conjugal relation. In the primeval wedlock one man was joined to one woman only for life. Hence, in the marriage relation the animal is subordinate to the rational. The communication of ideas; the cherishing of the true, the right, the good; the cultivation of the social affections; the spontaneous outflow of mutual good offices; the thousand nameless little thoughts, looks, words, and deeds that cheer the brow and warm the heart; the common care of children, servants, and dependents; the constant and heartfelt worship of the Father of all, constitute the main ends and joys of the married state.

After the exclamation of the man on contemplating the woman, as bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, and therefore physically, intellectually, and morally qualified to be his mate, we may suppose immediately to follow the blessing of man, and the general endowment of himself and the animals with the fruits of the soil as recorded in the preceding chapter Genesis 1:28-30. The endowment of man embraces every tree in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed. This general grant was of course understood by man to exclude the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which was excepted, if not by its specific nature, yet by the previous command given to man. This command we find was given before the formation of the woman, and therefore sometime before the events recorded in the second and third clauses of Genesis 1:27. Hence, it preceded the blessing and the endowment. It was not special, however, to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to be intended for other purposes than the food of man, as there are very many other trees that afford no proper nutriment to man. The endowment, therefore, refers to such trees as were at the same time nutritive and not expressly and previously forbidden.

This chapter is occupied with the "generations, issues or products of the skies and the land," or, in other words, of the things created in the six days. It is the meet preface to the more specific history of man, as it records his constitution, his provision, his moral and intellectual cultivation, and his social perfection. It brings us up to the close of the sixth day. As the Creator pronounced a sentence of approbation on all that he had made at the end of that day, we have reason to believe that no moral derangement had yet taken place in man's nature.

Verse 25

This is corroborated by the statement contained in Genesis 2:25. "They were both naked, and were not ashamed." Of nakedness in our sense of the term they had as yet no conception. On the contrary, they were conscious of being sufficiently clothed in a physical sense by nature's covering, the skin - and, in a spiritual point of view, they were clad as in a panoply of steel with the consciousness of innocence, or, indeed, the unconsciousness of evil existing anywhere, and the simple ignorance of its nature, except so far as the command of God had awakened in them some speculative conception of it. Hence, they were not ashamed. For shame implies a sense of guilt, which they did not have, and an exposedness to the searching eye of a condemning judge, from which they were equally free. With the sentence terminates all we know of primeval innocence. May we surmise from it that the first pair spent at least the Sabbath, if not some days, or weeks, or years, in a state of integrity?

From what has been said, it is evident that this sentence was written after the fall; for it speaks in language which was not intelligible till after that event had occurred. Contemplated in this point of view, it is the most melancholy sentence in the book of God. For it is evidently placed here to foreshadow the dark event to be recorded in the next chapter.

Two hallowed institutions have descended to us from the days of primeval innocence, - the wedding and the Sabbath. The former indicates communion of the purest and most perfect kind between equals of the same class. The latter implies communion of the highest and holiest kind between the Creator and the intelligent creature. The two combined import communion with each other in communion with God.

Wedded union is the sum and type of every social tie. It gives rise and scope to all the nameless joys of home. It is the native field for the cultivation of all the social virtues. It provides for the due framing and checking of the overgrowth of interest in self, and for the gentle training and fostering of a growing interest in others. It unfolds the graces and charms of mutual love, and imparts to the susceptible heart all the peace and joy, all the light and fire, all the frankness and life of conscious and constant purity and good-will. Friendship, brotherly-kindness, and love are still hopeful and sacred names among mankind.

Sabbath-keeping lifts the wedded pair, the brethren, the friends, the one-minded, up to communion with God. The joy of achievement is a feeling common to God and man. The commemoration of the auspicious beginning of a holy and happy existence will live in man while memory lasts. The anticipation also of joyful repose after the end of a work well done will gild the future while hope survives. Thus, the idea of the Sabbath spans the whole of man‘s existence. History and prophecy commingle in its peaceful meditations, and both are linked with God. God IS: he is the Author of all being, and the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him. This is the noble lesson of the Sabbath. Each seventh day is well spent in attending to the realization of these great thoughts.

Hence, it appears that the social principle lies at the root of a spiritual nature. In the very essence of the spiritual monad is the faculty of self-consciousness. Here is the curious mystery of a soul standing beside itself, cognizing itself, and taking note of its various faculties and acts, and yet perfectly conscious of its unity and identity. And the process does not stop here. We catch ourselves at times debating with ourselves, urging the pros and cons of a case in hand, enjoying the sallies or sorry for the poverty of our wit, nay, solemnly sitting in judgment on ourselves, and pronouncing a sentence of approval or disapproval on the merit or demerit of our actions. Thus, throughout the whole range of our moral and intellectual nature, memory for the past and fancy for the future furnish us with another self, with whom we hold familiar converse. Here there is the social principle living and moving in the very center of our being. Let the soul only look out through the senses and descry another like itself, and social converse

between kindred spirits must begin. The Sabbath and the wedding touch the inner springs of the soul, and bring, the social principle into exercise in the two great spheres of our relation to our Maker and to one another.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-7
- Section III - The Fall
- The Fall

1. נחשׁ *nachash* "serpent; related: hiss," Gesenius; "sting," Mey ערום *ārûm* "subtle, crafty, using craft for defence".

7. תפר *tāpar* "sew, stitch, tack together חגורה *chăgôrâh* "girdle, not necessarily apron".

This chapter continues the piece commenced at Genesis 2:4. The same combination of divine names is found here, except in the dialogue between the serpent and the woman, where God (אלהים *'ĕlohîym*) alone is used. It is natural for the tempter to use only the more distant and abstract name of God. It narrates in simple terms the fall of man.

Genesis 3:1

The serpent is here called a "beast of the field"; that is, neither a domesticated animal nor one of the smaller sorts. The Lord God had made it, and therefore it was a creature called into being on the same day with Adam. It is not the wisdom, but the wiliness of the serpent which is here noted. This animal is destitute of arms or legs by which to escape danger. It is therefore thrown back upon instinct, aided by a quick and glaring eye, and a rapid dart and recoil, to evade the stroke of violence, and watch and seize the unguarded moment for inflicting the deadly bite. Hence, the wily and insidious character of its instinct, which is noticed to account for the mode of attack here chosen, and the style of the conversation. The whole is so deeply designed, that the origin and progress of evil in the breast is as nearly as possible such as it might have been had there been no prompter. No startling proposal of disobedience is made, no advice, no persuasion to partake of the fruit is employed. The suggestion or assertion of the false only is plainly offered; and the bewildered mind is left to draw its own false inferences, and pursue its own misguided course. The tempter addresses the woman as the more susceptible and unguarded of the two creatures he would betray. He ventures upon a half-questioning, half-insinuating remark: "It is so, then, that God hath said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the

garden." This seems to be a feeler for some weak point, where the fidelity of the woman to her Maker might be shaken. It hints at something strange, if not unjust or unkind, on the part of God. "Why was any tree withheld?" he would insinuate.

Genesis 3:2-3

The woman gives the natural and distinct answer of unaffected sincerity to this suggestion. The deviations from the strict letter of the law are nothing more than the free and earnest expressions of her feelings. The expression, "neither shall ye touch it," merely implies that they were not to meddle with it, as a forbidden thing.

Genesis 3:4-5

The serpent now makes a strong and bold assertion, denying the deadly efficacy of the tree, or the fatal consequence of partaking of it, and affirming that God was aware that on the eating of it their eyes would be opened, and they would be like himself in knowing good and evil.

Let us remember that this was the first falsehood the woman ever heard. Her mind was also infantile as yet, so far as experience was concerned. The opening mind is naturally inclined to believe the truth of every assertion, until it has learned by experience the falsehood of some. There was also in this falsehood what gives the power to deceive, a great deal of truth combined with the element of untruth. The tree was not physically fatal to life, and the eating of it really issued in a knowledge of good and evil. Nevertheless, the partaking of what was forbidden issued in the legal and actual privation of life. And it did not make them know good and evil altogether, as God knows it, but in an experimental sense, as the devil knows it. In point of knowledge, they became like God; in point of morality, like the tempter.

Genesis 3:6

And the woman saw. - She saw the tree, no doubt, and that it was likely to look upon, with the eye of sense. But only with the eye of fancy, highly excited by the hints of the tempter, did she see that it was good for food, and to be desired to make one wise. Appetite, taste, and philosophy, or the love of wisdom, are the great motives in the human breast which fancy assumes this tree will gratify. Other trees please the taste and the sight. But this one has the pre-eminent charm of administering not only to the sense, but also to the reason.

It would be rash to suppose that we can analyze that lightning process of instinctive thought which then took place in the mind of the woman; and worse than rash, it would be wrong, to imagine that we can show the rationale of what in its fundamental point was a violation of right reason. But it is evident from this verse that she attached some credit to the bold statement of the serpent, that the eating of the fruit would be attended with the extraordinary result of making them, like God himself, acquainted with good and evil, especially as it did not contradict any assertion of Yahweh, God, and was countenanced by the name, "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." It was evidently a new thought to her, that the knowledge of good and evil was to result from the eating of it. That God should know this, if a fact, was undeniable. Again, to know good and evil as the effect of partaking of it, implied that the consequence was not a cessation of existence, or of consciousness; for, if so, how could there be any knowledge? And, if death in her conception implied merely exclusion from the favor of God and the tree of life, might she not imagine that the new knowledge acquired, and the elevation to a new resemblance, or even equality to God himself in this respect, would be more than a compensation for such losses; especially as the disinterestedness of the divine motives had been at least called in question by the serpent? Here, no doubt, is a fine web of sophistry, woven by the excited fancy in an instant of time.

It is easy to say the knowledge of good and evil was not a physical effect of eating of the fruit; that the obtaining of this knowledge by partaking of it was an evil, and not a good in itself and in its consequences, as it was the origin of an evil conscience, which is in itself an unspeakable ill, and attended with the forfeiture of the divine favor, and of the tree of life, and with the endurance of all the positive misery which such a condition involves; and that the command of God was founded on the clearest right - that of creation - occasioned by the immediate necessity of defining the rights of man, and prompted by disinterested benevolence toward His intelligent creatures, whom He was framing for such intellectual and moral perfection, as was by them attainable. It is easy to cry out, How unreasonable was the conduct of the primeval pair! Let us not forget that any sin is unreasonable, unaccountable, essentially mysterious. In fact, if it were wholly reasonable, it would no longer be sin. Only a moment before, the woman had declared that God had said, "Of the fruit of the tree in the

midst of the garden, ye shall not eat." Yet she now sees, and her head is so full of it that she can think of nothing else, that the tree is good for food and pleasant to the eyes, - as if there were no other good and pleasant trees in the garden, and, as she fancies, desirable to make one wise, like God; as if there were no other way to this wisdom but an unlawful one, and no other likeness to God but a stolen likeness - and therefore takes of the fruit and eats, and gives to her husband, and he eats! The present desire is without any necessity gratified by an act known to be wrong, at the risk of all the consequences of disobedience! Such is sin.

Genesis 3:7

Their eyes were opened. - Certain immediate effects of the act are here stated. This cannot mean literally that they were blind up to this moment; for Adam, no doubt, saw the tree in the garden concerning which he received a command, the animals which he named, and the woman whom he recognized as bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. And of the woman it is affirmed that she saw that the tree possessed certain qualities, one of which at least was conspicuous to the eye.

It must therefore mean that a new aspect was presented by things on the commission of the first offence. As soon as the transgression is actually over, the sense of the wrongfulness of the act rushes on the mind. The displeasure of the great Being whose command has been disobeyed, the irretrievable loss which follows sin, the shame of being looked upon by the bystanders as a guilty thing, crowd upon the view. All nature, every single creature, seems now a witness of their guilt and shame, a condemning judge, an agent of the divine vengeance. Such is the knowledge of good and evil they have acquired by their fall from obedience - such is the opening of the eye which has requited their wrong-doing. What a different scene had once presented itself to the eyes of innocence! All had been friendly. All nature had bowed in willing obedience to the lords of the earth. Neither the sense nor the reality of danger had ever disturbed the tranquility of their pure minds.

They knew that they were naked. - This second effect results immediately from the consciousness of guilt. They now take notice that their guilty persons are exposed to view, and they shrink from the glance of every condemning eye. They imagine there is a witness of their guilt in every creature, and they conceive the abhorrence which it must produce in

the spectator. In their infantile experience they endeavor to hide their persons, which they feel to be suffused all over with the blush of shame.

Accordingly, "they sewed the leaves of the fig," which, we may suppose, they wrapped round them, and fastened with the girdles they had formed for this purpose. The leaves of the fig did not constitute the girdles, but the coverings which were fastened on with these. These leaves were intended to conceal their whole persons from observation. Job describes himself sewing sackcloth on his skin Job 16:15, and girding on sackcloth 1 Kings 20:32; Lamentations 2:10; Joel 1:8 is a familiar phrase in Scripture. The primitive sewing was some sort of tacking together, which is not more particularly described. Every operation of this sort has a rude beginning. The word "girdle" חגורה *chăgôrâh*) signifies what girds on the dress.

Here it becomes us to pause for a moment that we may mark what was the precise nature of the first transgression. It was plainly disobedience to an express and well-understood command of the Creator. It matters not what was the nature of the command, since it could not be other than right and pure. The more simple and easy the thing enjoined, the more blameworthy the act of disobedience. But what was the command? Simply to abstain from the fruit of a tree, which was designated the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, upon pain of death. We have seen already that this command arose from the necessity of immediate legislation, and took its shape as the only possible one in the circumstances of the case. The special attraction, however, which the forbidden tree presented, was not its excellence for the appetite or pleasantness to the eyes, since these were common to all the trees, but its supposed power of conferring moral knowledge on those who partook of it, and, according to the serpent's explanation, making them like God in this important respect.

Hence, the real and obvious motive of the transgressor was the desire of knowledge and likeness to God. Whatever other lusts, therefore, may have afterwards come out in the nature of fallen man, it is plain that the lust after likeness to God in moral discernment was what originally brought forth sin in man. Sexual desire does not appear here at all. The appetite is excited by other trees as well as this. The desire of knowledge, and the ambition to be in some sense, divine, are alone special and prevalent as motives. Hence, it appears that God proved our first parents, not through any of the animal

appetites, but through the higher propensities of their intellectual and moral nature. Though the occasion, therefore, may at first sight appear trivial, yet it becomes awfully momentous when we discover that the rectitude of God is impugned, his prerogative invaded, his command disregarded, his attribute of moral omniscience and all the imaginable advantages attendant thereupon grasped at with an eager and wilful hand. To disobey the command of God, imposed according to the dictates of pure reason, and with the authority of a Creator, from the vain desire of being like him, or independent of him, in knowledge, can never be anything but an offence of the deepest dye.

We are bound, moreover, to acknowledge and maintain, in the most explicit manner, the equity of the divine procedure in permitting the temptation of man. The only new thing here is the intervention of the tempter. It may be imagined that this deciever should have been kept away. But we must not speak with inconsiderate haste on a matter of such import. First. We know that God has not used forcible means to prevent the rise of moral evil among his intelligent creatures. We cannot with reason affirm that he should have done so; because, to put force on a voluntary act, and yet leave it voluntary, seems to reason a contradiction in terms, and, therefore, impossible; and unless an act be voluntary, it cannot have any moral character; and without voluntary action, we cannot have a moral agent. Second. We know that God does not immediately annihilate the evil-doer. Neither can we with reason that he ought to have done so; for, to lay an adequate penalty on sin, and then put the sinner out of existence, so that this penalty can never be exacted, seems to reason a moral inconsistency, and, therefore, impossible in a being of moral perfection.

Third. We know that God does not withdraw the evil-doer from all contact with other moral agents. Here, again, reason does not constrain us to pronounce that it is expedient so to do; for the innocent ought, and it is natural that they should, learn a holy abhorrence of sin, and a salutary dread of its penalty, from these waifs of society, rather than follow their pernicious example. The wrong-doers are not less under the control of God than if they were in the most impenetrable dungeon; while they are at the same time constant beacons to warn others from transgression. He leaves them to fill up the measure of their inequity, while the intelligent world are

cognizant of their guilt, that they may acknowledge the justice of their punishment, and comprehend the infinite holiness of the judge of all the earth. Fourth. We know that God tries his moral creatures. Abraham, Job, and all his saints have to undergo their trial.

He suffered the Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam, to be tempted. And we must not expect the first Adam to be exempted from the common ordeal. We can only be assured that his justice will not allow his moral creatures to be at any disadvantage in the trial. Accordingly, first, God himself in the first instance speaks to Adam, and gives him an explicit command not arbitrary in its conception, but arising out of the necessity of the case. And it is plain that Eve was perfectly aware that he had himself imposed this prohibition. Second. The tempter is not allowed to appear in his proper person to our first parents. The serpent only is seen or heard by them - a creature inferior to themselves, and infinitely beneath the God who made them, and condescended to communicate with them with the authority of a father. Third. The serpent neither threatens nor directly persuades; much less is he permitted to use any means of compulsion: he simply falsities. As the God of truth had spoken to them before, the false insinuation places them at no disadvantage.

Man has now come to the second step in morals - the practice. Thereby he has come to the knowledge of good and evil, not merely as an ideal, but as an actual thing. But he has attained this end, not by standing in, but by falling from, his integrity. If he had stood the test of this temptation, as he might have done, he would have come by the knowledge of good and evil equally well, but with a far different result. As he bore the image of God in his higher nature, he would have resembled him, not only in knowledge, thus honorably acquired by resisting temptation, but also in moral good, thus realized in his own act and will. As it is, he has gained some knowledge in an unlawful and disastrous way; but he has also taken in that moral evil, which is the image, not of God, but of the tempter, to whom he has yielded.

This result is rendered still more lamentable when we remember that these transgressors constituted the human race in its primeval source. In them, therefore, the race actually falls. In their sin the race is become

morally corrupt. In their guilt the race is involved in guilt. Their character and doom descend to their latest posterity.

We have not yet noticed the circumstance of the serpent‘s speaking, and of course speaking rationally. This seems to have awakened no attention in the tempted, and, so far as we see, to have exercised no influence on their conduct. In their inexperience, it is probable that they did not yet know what was wonderful, and what not; or, in preciser terms, what was supernatural, and what natural. But even if they had known enough to be surprised at the serpent speaking, it might have told in opposite ways upon their conclusions. On the one hand, Adam had seen and named the serpent, and found in it merely a mute, irrational animal, altogether unfit to be his companion, and therefore he might have been amazed to hear him speak, and, shall we say, led to suspect a prompter. But, on the other hand, we have no reason to suppose that Adam had any knowledge or suspicion of any creature but those which had been already brought before him, among which was the serpent. He could, therefore, have no surmise of any superior creature who might make use of the serpent for its own purposes. We question whether the thought could have struck his mind that the serpent had partaken of the forbidden fruit, and thereby attained to the marvellous elevation from brutality to reason and speech. But, if it had, it would have made a deep impression on his mind of the wonderful potency of the tree. These considerations apply with perhaps still greater force to Eve, who was first deceived.

But to us who have a more extensive experience of the course of nature, the speaking of a serpent cannot be regarded otherwise than as a preternatural occurrence. It indicates the presence of a power above the nature of the serpent, possessed, too, by a being of a malignant nature, and at enmity with God and truth; a spiritual being, who is able and has been permitted to make use of the organs of the serpent in some way for the purposes of temptation. But while for a wise and worthy end this alien from God‘s home is permitted to test the moral character of man, he is not allowed to make any appearance or show any sign of his own presence to man. The serpent alone is visibly present; the temptation is conducted only through words uttered by bodily organs, and the tempted show no suspicion of any other tempter. Thus, in the disposal of a just Providence, man is

brought into immediate contact only with an inferior creature, and therefore has a fair field in the season of trial. And if that creature is possessed by a being of superior intelligence, this is only displayed in such a manner as to exert no influence on man but that of suggestive argument and false assertion.

Verses 8-21

- XVI. The Judgment

15. שׁוּף *shûp* "bruise, wound." τηρεῖν (= τερεῖν ?) *tērein* ἐκτρίβειν *ektribein* Job 9:17, καταπατεῖν *katapatein* Psalm 139:11, συντρίβειν *suntribein* Romans 16:20.

16. תְּשׁוּקָה *teshûqâh* "desire, inclination." αποστροφή *apostrofee* ἐπιστροφή *epistrophē* Genesis 3:8-13; the sentence pronounced upon each, Genesis 3:14-19; and certain particulars following thereupon, Genesis 3:20-21.

Genesis 3:8-9

The voice, we conceive, is the thunder of the approach of God and his call to Adam. The hiding is another token of the childlike simplicity of the parents of our race under the shame and fear of guilt. The question, "Where art thou?" implies that the Lord was aware of their endeavor to hide themselves from him.

Genesis 3:10-12

Adam confesses that he was afraid of God, because he was naked. There is an instinctive hiding of his thoughts from God in this very speech. The nakedness is mentioned, but not the disobedience from which the sense of it arose. To the direct interrogatory of the Almighty, he confesses who made him acquainted with his nakedness and the fact of his having eaten of the forbidden fruit: "The woman" gave me of the tree, and "I did eat."

Genesis 3:13

The woman makes a similar confession and a similar indication of the source of her temptation. She has now found out that the serpent "beguiled her." The result has not corresponded to the benefit she was led to anticipate.

There seems not to be any disingenuousness in either case. Sin does not take full possession of the will all at once. It is a slow poison. It has a growth. It requires time and frequent repetition to sink from a state of purity

into a habit of inveterate sin. While it is insensibly gathering strength and subjugating the will, the original integrity of the moral nature manifests a long but fading vitality. The same line of things does not always occupy the attention. When the chain of events linked with the act of sin does not force the attention of the mind, and constrain the will to act a selfish part, another train of things comes before the mind, finds the will unaffected by personal considerations, and therefore ready to take its direction from the reason. Hence, the consciousness of a fallen soul has its lucid intervals, in which the conscience gives a verdict and guides the will. But these intervals become less frequent and less decisive as the entanglements of ever-multiplying sinful acts wind round the soul and aggravate its bondage and its blindness.

Genesis 3:14-15

Here begins the judgment. Sentence is pronounced upon the serpent in the presence, no doubt, of the man and woman. The serpent is not examined, first, because it is a mute, unreasoning animal in itself, and therefore incapable of judicial examination, and it was the serpent only that was palpable to the senses of our first parents in the temptation; and, secondly, because the true tempter was not a new, but an old offender.

This sentence has a literal application to the serpent. The curse (Genesis 9:25, see the note) of the serpent lies in a more groveling nature than that of the other land animals. This appears in its going on its belly and eating the dust. Other animals have at least feet to elevate them above the dust; the serpent tribe does not have even feet. Other animals elevate the head in their natural position above the soil: the serpent lays its head naturally on the sod, and therefore may be said to eat the dust, as the wounded warrior bites the dust in death. The earthworm is probably included in the description here given of the serpent group. It goes upon its belly, and actually does eat the dust. Eating the dust, like feeding upon ashes, is an expression for signal defeat in every aim. The enmity, the mode of its display, and the issue are also singularly characteristic of the literal serpent.

It is the custom of Scripture jurisprudence to visit brute animals with certain judicial consequences of injuries they have been instrumental in doing to man, especially if this has arisen through the design or neglect of the owner, or other responsible agent Genesis 9:5; Exodus 21:28-36. In the present case the injury done was of a moral, not a physical nature. Hence,

the penalty consists in a curse; that is, a state of greater degradation below man than the other land animals. The serpent in the extraordinary event here recorded exercised the powers of human speech and reasoning. And it is natural to suppose that these exhibitions of intelligence were accompanied with an attitude and a gesture above its natural rank in the scale of creation. The effect of the judicial sentence would be to remand it to its original groveling condition, and give rise to that enmity which was to end in its destruction by man.

However, since an evil spirit must have employed the serpent, since the animal whose organs and instincts were most adapted to its purpose, and has accordingly derived its name from it as presenting the animal type most analogous to its own spiritual nature, so the whole of this sentence has its higher application to the real tempter. "Upon thy belly shalt thou go." This is expressive of the lowest stage of degradation to which a spiritual creature can be sunk. "Dust shalt thou eat." This is indicative of disappointment in all the aims of being. "I will put enmity." This is still more strictly applicable to the spiritual enemy of mankind. It intimates a hereditary feud between their respective races, which is to terminate, after some temporary suffering on the part of the woman's seed, in the destruction of the serpent's power against man. The spiritual agent in the temptation of man cannot have literally any seed. But the seed of the serpent is that portion of the human family that continues to be his moral offspring, and follows the first transgression without repentance or refuge in the mercy of God. The seed of the woman, on the other hand, must denote the remnant who are born from above, and hence, turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

Let us now mark the lessons conveyed in the sentence of the serpent to our first parents, who were listening and looking on. First. The serpent is styled a mere brute animal. All, then, that seemed to indicate reason as inherent in its nature or acquired by some strange event in its history is thus at once contradicted. Second. It is declared to be lower than any of the other land animals; as being destitute of any members corresponding to feet or hands. Third. It is not interrogated as a rational and accountable being, but treated as a mere dumb brute. Fourth. It is degraded from the airs and attitudes which may have been assumed, when it was possessed by a

serpent-like evil spirit, and falls back without a struggle to that place of debasement in the animal kingdom for which it was designed. Fifth. It is fated to be disappointed in its aims at usurpation. It shall bite the dust. Sixth. it is doomed to ultimate and utter defeat in its hostile assaults upon the seed of the woman.

All this must have made a deep impression on our first parents. But two things must have struck them with special force. First, it was now evident how vain and hollow were its pretensions to superior wisdom, and how miserably deluded they had been when they listened to its false insinuations. If, indeed, they had possessed maturity of reflection, and taken time to apply it, they would have been strangely bewildered with the whole scene, now that it was past. How the serpent, from the brute instinct it displayed to Adam when he named the animals, suddenly rose to the temporary exercise of reason and speech, and as suddenly relapsed into its former bestiality, is, to the mere observer of nature, an inexplicable phenomenon. But to Adam, who had as yet too limited an experience to distinguish between natural and preternatural events, and too little development of the reflective power to detect the inconsistency in the appearance of things, the sole object of attention was the shameless presumption of the serpent, and the overwhelming retribution which had fallen upon it; and, consequently, the deplorable folly and wickedness of having been misguided by its suggestions.

A second thing, however, was still more striking to the mind of man in the sentence of the serpent; namely, the enmity that was to be put between the serpent and the woman. Up to a certain point there had been concord and alliance between these two parties. But, on the very opening of the heavenly court, we learn that the friendly connection had been broken. For the woman said, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” This expression indicates that the woman was no longer at one with the serpent. She was now sensible that its part had been that, not of friendship, but of guile, and therefore of the deepest and darkest hostility. When God, therefore, said, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman,” this revulsion of feeling on her part, in which Adam no doubt joined, was acknowledged and approved. Enmity with the enemy of God indicated a return to friendship with God, and presupposed incipient feelings of repentance toward him, and reviving

confidence in his word. The perpetuation of this enmity is here affirmed, in regard not only to the woman, but to her seed. This prospect of seed, and of a godly seed, at enmity with evil, became a fountain of hope to our first parents, and confirmed every feeling of returning reverence for God which was beginning to spring up in their breast. The word heard from the mouth of God begat faith in their hearts, and we shall find that this faith was not slow to manifest itself in acts.

We cannot pass over this part of the sentence without noticing the expression, "the seed of the woman." Does it not mean, in the first instance, the whole human race? Was not this race at enmity with the serpent? And though that part only of the seed of the woman which eventually shared in her present feelings could be said to be at enmity with the serpent spirit, yet, if all had gone well in Adam's family, might not the whole race have been at enmity with the spirit of disobedience? Was not the avenue to mercy here hinted at as wide as the offer of any other time? And was not this universality of invitation at some time to have a response in the human family? Does not the language of the passage constrain us to look forward to the time when the great mass, or the whole of the human race then alive on the earth, will have actually turned from the power of Satan unto God? This could not be seen by Adam. But was it not the plain import of the language, that, unless there was some new revolt after the present reconciliation, the whole race would, even from this new beginning, be at enmity with the spirit of evil? Such was the dread lesson of experience with which Adam now entered upon the career of life, that it was to be expected he would warn his children against departing from the living God, with a clearness and earnestness which would be both understood and felt.

Still further, do we not pass from the general to the particular in the sentence, "He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel?" Is not the seed of the woman here individualized and matched in deadly conflict with the individual tempter? Does not this phraseology point to some pre-eminent descendant of the woman, who is, with the bruising of his lower nature in the encounter, to gain a signal and final victory over the adversary of man? There is some reason to believe from the expression, "I have gotten a man from the Lord" Genesis 4:1, that Eve herself had caught a glimpse of this meaning, though she applied it to the wrong party. The Vulgate also, in

what was probably the genuine reading, *"ipse"* (he himself) points to the same meaning. The reading *"ipsa"* (she herself) is inconsistent with the gender of the Hebrew verb, and with that of the corresponding pronoun in the second clause (his), and is therefore clearly an error of the transcriber.

Lastly, the retributive character of the divine administration is remarkably illustrated in the phrase. The serpent, in a wily but dastardly spirit, makes the weaker sex the object of his attack. It is the seed of the woman especially that is to bruise his head. It is singular to find that this simple phrase, coming in naturally and incidentally in a sentence uttered four thousand years, and penned at least fifteen hundred years, before the Christian era, describes exactly and literally Him who was made of woman without the intervention of man, that He might destroy the works of the devil. This clause in the sentence of the tempter is the first dawn of hope for the human family after the fall. We cannot tell whether to admire more the simplicity of its terms, the breadth and comprehensiveness of its meaning, or the minuteness of its application to the far-distant event which it mainly contemplates.

The doom here pronounced upon the tempter must be regarded as special and secondary. It refers to the malignant attack upon man, and foretells what will be the issue of this attempt to spread disaffection among the intelligent creation. And it is pronounced without any examination of the offender, or investigation of his motives. If this had been the first offence against the majesty of heaven, we humbly conceive a solemn precognition of the case would have taken place, and a penalty would have been adjudicated adequate to the magnitude of the crime and analagous to the punishment of death in the case of man. The primary act of defiance and apostasy from the Creator must have been perpetrated without a tempter, and was, therefore, incomparably more heinous than the secondary act of yielding to temptation. Whether the presence of the tempter on earth intimates that it was the place of his abode in a state of innocence, or that he visited it because he had heard of the creation of man, or that he was there from some altogether different reason, is a vain and unprofitable inquiry.

Genesis 3:16

The sentence of the woman Genesis 3:16 consists of three parts: the former two regard her as a mother, the last as a wife. Sorrow is to be

multiplied in her pregnancy, and is also to accompany the bearing of children. This sorrow seems to extend to all the mother‘s pains and anxieties concerning her offspring. With what solicitude she would long for a manifestation of right feeling toward the merciful God in her children, similar to what she had experienced in her own breast! What unutterable bitterness of spirit would she feel when the fruits of disobedience would discover themselves in her little ones, and in some of them, perhaps, gather strength from year to year!

The promise of children is implicitly given in these two clauses. It came out also incidentally in the sentence of the serpent. What a wonderful conception is here presented to the minds of the primeval pair! Even to ourselves at this day the subject of race is involved in a great deal of mystery. We have already noticed the unity of the race in its head. But the personality and responsibility of individuals involve great and perplexing difficulties. The descent of a soul from a soul is a secret too deep for our comprehension. The first man was potentially the race, and, so long as he stands alone, actually the whole race for the time. His acts, then, are those not merely of the individual, but of the race. If a single angel were to fall, he falls alone. If the last of a race were to fall, he would in like manner involve no other in his descent. But if the first of a race falls, before he has any offspring, the race has fallen. The guilt, the depravity, the penalty, all belong to the race. This is a great mystery. But it seems to follow inevitably from the constitution of a race, and it has clear evidences of its truth both in the facts and the doctrines of the Bible.

When we come to view the sin of our first parents in this light, it is seen to entail tremendous consequences to every individual of the race. The single transgression has involved the guilt, the depravity, and the death, not only of Adam, but of that whole race which was in him, and thus has changed the whole character and condition of mankind throughout all time.

In the instructions going before and coming after are found the means of training up these children for God. The woman has learned that God is not only a righteous judge, but a forbearing and merciful Father. This was enough for her at present. It enabled her to enter upon the journey of life with some gleams of hope amidst the sorrows of the family. And in the experience of life it is amazing what a large proportion of the agreeable is

mingled with the troubles of our fallen race. The forbearance and goodness of God ought in all reason and conscience to lead us back to a better feeling toward him.

The third part of her sentence refers to her husband - "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." This is evidently a piece of that retributive justice which meets us constantly in the administration of God. The woman had taken the lead in the transgression. In the fallen state, she is to be subject to the will of her husband. "Desire" does not refer to sexual desire in particular. Genesis 4:7. It means, in general, "turn," determination of the will. "The determination of thy will shall be yielded to thy husband, and, accordingly, he shall rule over thee." The second clause, according to the parallel structure of the sentence, is a climax or emphatic reiteration of the first, and therefore serves to determine its meaning. Under fallen man, woman has been more or less a slave. In fact, under the rule of selfishness, the weaker must serve the stronger. Only a spiritual resurrection will restore her to her true place, as the help-meet for man.

Genesis 3:17-19

The keyword in the sentence of the man is the "soil." The curse (Genesis 9:25, see the note) of the soil is the desire of the fruit trees with which the garden was planted, and of that spontaneous growth which would have rendered the toil of man unnecessary. The rank growth of thorns and thistles was also a part of the curse which it occasioned to man when fallen. His sorrow was to arise from the labor and sweat with which he was to draw from the ground the means of subsistence. Instead of the spontaneous fruits of the garden, the herb of the field, which required diligent cultivation, was henceforth to constitute a principal part of his support. And he had the dreary prospect before him of returning at length to the ground whence he was taken. He had an element of dust in him, and this organic frame was eventually to work out its own decay, when apart from the tree of life.

It is to be observed that here is the first allusion to that death which was the essential part of the sentence pronounced on the fallen race. The reasons of this are obvious. The sentence of death on those who should eat of the forbidden fruit had been already pronounced, and was well known to our first parents. Death consisted in the privation of that life which lay in the light of the divine countenance, shining with approving love on an innocent child, and therefore was begun on the first act of disobedience, in the shame

and fear of a guilty conscience. The few traits of earthly discomfort which the sentences disclose, are merely the workings of the death here spoken of in the present stage of our existence. And the execution of the sentence, which comes to view in the following passage, is the formal accomplishment of the warning given to the transgressor of the divine will.

In this narrative the language is so simple as to present no critical difficulty. And, on reviewing the passage, the first thing we have to observe is, that the event here recorded is a turning-point of transcendent import in the history of man. It is no less than turning from confidence in God to confidence in his creature when contradicting him, and, moreover, from obedience to his express and well-remembered command to obedience to the dictates of misguided self-interest. It is obvious that, to the moral character of the transaction, it is of no consequence who the third party was who dared to contradict and malign his Maker. The guilt of man consists simply in disobeying the sole command of his beneficent Creator. The only mitigating circumstance is the suggestion of evil by an external party. But the more insignificant the only ostensible source of temptation, the more inexcusable the guilt of man in giving way to it.

This act altered fundamentally the position and character of man. He thereby descended from innocence to guilt in point of law, and at the same time from holiness to sin in point of character. Tremendous was the change, and equally tremendous the consequence. Death is, like most scriptural terms, a pregnant word, and here to be understood in the full compass of its meaning. It is the privation, not of existence, as is often confusedly supposed, but of life, in all its plenitude of meaning. As life includes all the gratifications of which our human susceptibilities are capable, so death is the privation of all the sources of human enjoyment, and among them of the physical life itself, while the craving for ease and the sense of pain retain all their force in the spiritual part of our nature. These poignant emotions reach their highest pitch of intensity when they touch the conscience, the tenderest part of our being, and forebode the meeting of the soul, in its guilty state, with a just and holy God.

This event is real. The narrative expresses in its strongest terms its reality. The event is one of the two alternatives which must follow from the

preceding statements concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and affords an explanation of their nature. It is no less essential to account for what follows. The problem of the history and condition of man can only be solved by this primeval fact. Conscience still remains an imperishable monument, on the one hand, of his having been formed after a perfect model; and, on the other, of his having fallen from his high estate. And all the facts of his history carry up his fall as far as the traditions of human memory reach.

And the narrative here is a literal record of the details of this great event. So far as regards God and man, the literality has never been questioned by those who acknowledge the event to be real. Some, however, have taken the serpent to be, not a literal, but a figurative serpent; not an animal, but a spiritual being. The great dragon, indeed, is identified with "the ancient serpent called the devil and Satan." And hence we know that a being of a higher nature than the mere animal was present and active on this occasion. And this spiritual being was with great propriety called the serpent, both from its serpentine qualities and from choosing the serpent as the most suitable mask under which to tempt our first parents. But we cannot thence infer that a literal serpent was not employed in the temptation. The serpent is said to be "more subtle than any beast of the field." First. The obvious meaning of this is, that it was itself a beast of the field.

Thus, Joseph, whom Israel loved "more than all his children," was one of his children Genesis 37:8. He that was "higher than any of the people," was himself one of the people 2 Samuel 9:2. Second. If the serpent be here figurative, and denote a spirit, the statement that it was subtle above all the beasts of the field is feeble and inadequate to the occasion. It is not so, that man is distinguished from the other animals. In much more forcible language ought the old serpent to be distinguished from the unreasoning brute. Third. We have seen a meetness in a being of flesh, and that not superior, or even equal to man, being permitted to be employed as the medium of temptation. Man was thereby put at no disadvantage. His senses were not confounded by a supersensible manifestation. His presence of mind was not disturbed by an unusual appearance. Fourth. The actions ascribed to the tempter agree with the literal serpent. Wounding the heel, creeping on the belly, and biting the dust, are suitable to a mere animal, and

especially to the serpent. The only exception is the speaking, and, what is implied in this, the reasoning. These, however, do not disprove the presence of the literal serpent when accompanied with a plain statement of its presence. They only indicate, and that to more experienced observers than our first parents, the presence of a lurking spirit, expressing its thoughts by the organs of the serpent.

It may be thought strange that the presence of this higher being is not explicitly noticed by the sacred writer. But it is the manner of Scripture not to distinguish and explain all the realities which it relates, but to describe the obvious phenomena as they present themselves to the senses; especially when the scope of the narrative does not require more, and a future revelation or the exercise of a sanctified experience will in due time bring out their interpretation. Thus, the doings of the magicians in Egypt are not distinguished from those of Moses by any disparaging epithet Exodus 7:10-12. Only those of Moses are greater, and indicate thereby a higher power. The witch of Endor is consulted, and Samuel appears; but the narrative is not careful to distinguish then and there whether by the means of witchcraft or by the very power of God. It was not necessary for the moral training of our first parents at that early stage of their existence to know who the real tempter was. It would not have altered the essential nature of the temptation, of the sentence pronounced on any of the parties, or of the hopes held out to those who were beguiled.

This brings into view a system of analogy and mutual relation pervading the whole of Scripture as well as nature, according to which the lower order of things is a natural type of the higher, and the nearer of the more remote. This law displays itself in the history of creation, which, in the creative work of the six days, figures to our minds, and, as it were, lays out in the distance those other antecedent processes of creative power that have intervened since the first and absolute creation; in the nature of man, which presents on the surface the animal operations in wonderful harmony with the spiritual functions of his complex being; in the history of man, where the nearer in history, in prophecy, in space, in time, in quality, matter, life, vegetative and animate, shadow forth the more remote. All these examples of the scriptural method of standing on and starting from the near to the far are founded upon the simple fact that nature is a rational system of things,

every part of which has its counterpart in every other. Hence, the history of one thing is, in a certain form, the history of all things of the same kind.

The serpent is of a crafty instinct, and finds, accordingly, its legitimate place at the lowest step of the animal system. Satan seeks the opportunity of tempting Adam, and, in the fitness of things, turns to the serpent as the ready medium of his assault upon human integrity. He was limited to such a medium. He was not permitted to have any contact with man, except through the senses and in the way of speech. He was also necessitated to have recourse to the serpent, as the only creature suited to his purpose.

The place of the serpent in the scale of animals was in keeping with the crookedness of its instinct. It was cursed above all cattle, since it was inferior to them in the lack of those limbs which serve for rising, moving, and holding; such as legs and arms. This meaning of cursed is familiar to Scripture. "Cursed is the ground for thy seed" Genesis 3:17. It needed the toil of man to repress thorns and thistles, and cultivate plants more useful and needful to man. "This people who knoweth not the law are cursed" John 7:49. This is a relative use of the word, by which a thing is said to be cursed in respect of its failing to serve a particular end. Hence, the serpent's condition was a fit emblem of the spiritual serpent's punishment for its evil doings regarding man.

Through the inscrutable wisdom of the Divine Providence, however, it was not necessary, or may not have been necessary, to change in the main the state of the natural serpent or the natural earth in order to carry out the ends of justice. The former symbolized in a very striking manner the helplessness and disappointment of the enemy of man. The latter exacted that labor of man which was the just consequence of his disobedience. This consequence would have been avoided if he had continued to be entitled to the tree of life, which could no doubt have been propagated beyond its original bounds. But a change in the moral relation of the heart toward God brings along with it in the unsearchable ways of divine wisdom a change as great in the bearing of the events of time on the destiny of man. While the heart is with God, all things work together for good to us. When the heart is estranged from him, all things as inevitably work together for evil, without any material alteration in the system of nature.

We may even ascend a step higher into the mysteries of providence; for a disobedient heart, that forms the undeserving object of the divine compassion, may be for a time the unconscious slave of a train of circumstances, which is working out its recovery from the curse as well as the power of sin through the teaching of the Divine Spirit. The series of events may be the same in which another is floating down the stream of perdition. But to the former these events are the turning points of a wondrous moral training, which is to end in reconciliation to God and restoration to his likeness.

A race, in like manner, that has fallen from communion with God, may be the subject of a purpose of mercy, which works out, in the providence of God, the return of some to his home and love, and the wandering of others away further and further into the darkness and misery of enmity with God.

And though this system of things is simple and uniform in the eyes of the only wise God, yet to human view parts of it appear only as special arrangements and retributions, exactly meeting the case of man and serving for his moral education. No doubt they are so. But they are also parts of a constant course of nature, pursued with undeviating regularity, yet ordered with such infallible wisdom as to accomplish at the same time both general and special ends. Hence, without any essential change in the serpent‘s natural instincts, it serves for a striking monument of the defeat and destruction of the devil and his works. The ground, without any change in its inherent nature, but merely by the removal, it may be, of the tree of life, is cursed to man, as it demands that toil which is the mark of a fallen race.

The question of miracles, or special interpositions of the divine will and power which cross the laws of nature, is not now before us. By the very definition of miracles they transcend the laws of nature; that is, of that system of events which is known to us by observation. But it does not follow that they transcend a higher law of the divine plan, which may, partly by revelation and partly even by a deeper study of ourselves and things around us, be brought to light. By the investigations of geology we seem compelled to acknowledge a succession of creations at great intervals of time, as a law of the divine procedure on our globe. But, thousands of

years before geology was conceived, one such creation, subsequent to the great primal act by which the universe was called into existence, was made known to us by divine revelation. And beside periodical miracle, we find recorded in the Book of Revelation a series of miracles, which were performed in pursuance of the divine purpose of grace toward the fallen race of man. These are certainly above nature, according to the largest view of it which has ever been current among our philosophers. But let us not therefore imagine that they are above reason or grace - above the resources and determinations of the divine mind and will concerning the development of the universe.

Genesis 3:20

This verse and the next one record two very significant acts consequent upon the judgment: one on the part of Adam, and another on the part of God.

The man here no doubt refers to two expressions in the sentences he had heard pronounced on the serpent and the woman. "He," the seed of the woman, "shall bruise thy head." Here it is the woman who is to bear the seed. And this seed is to bruise the serpent's head; that is, in some way to undo what had been done for the death of man, and so re-invest him with life. This life was therefore to come by the woman. Again, in the address of the judge to the woman he had heard the words, "Thou shalt bear children." These children are the seed, among whom is to be the bruiser of the serpent's head, and the author of "life". And in an humbler, nearer sense, the woman is to be the mother of children, who are the living, and perpetuate the life of the race amid the ravages which death is daily committing on its individual members. These glimmerings of hope for the future make a deep impression upon the father of mankind. He perceives and believes that through the woman in some way is to come salvation for the race. He gives permanent expression to his hope in the significant name which he gives to his wife. Here we see to our unspeakable satisfaction the dawn of faith - a faith indicating a new beginning of spiritual life, and exercising a salutary influence on the will, faintly illuminating the dark bosom of our first parent. The mother of mankind has also come to a better mind. The high and holy Spirit has in mercy withdrawn the cloud of misconception from the minds of both, and faith in the Lord and repentance have sprung up in their new-born souls.

Genesis 3:21

As Genesis 3:20 records an instance of humble, apprehending faith in the divine word, so here we have a manifest act of mercy on the part of God, indicating the pardon and acceptance of confessing, believing man, rejoicing in anticipation of that future victory over the serpent which was to be accomplished by the seed of the woman. This act is also suitable to the present circumstances of man, and at the same time strikingly significant of the higher blessings connected with restoration to the divine favor. He had discovered his nakedness, and God provides him with a suitable covering. He was to be exposed to the variations of climate, and here was a durable protection against the weather. But far more than this. He had become morally naked, destitute of that peace of conscience which is an impenetrable shield against the shame of being blamed and the fear of being punished; and the coats of skin were a faithful emblem and a manifest guarantee of those robes of righteousness which were hereafter to be provided for the penitent in default of that original righteousness which he had lost by transgression. And, finally, there is something remarkable in the material out of which the coats were made. They were most likely obtained by the death of animals; and as they do not appear yet to have been slain for food, some have been led to conjecture that they were offered in sacrifice - slain in prefiguration of that subsequent availing sacrifice which was to take away sin. It is the safer course, however, to leave the origin of sacrifice an open question. Scripture does not intimate that the skins were obtained in consequence of sacrifice; and apart from the presumption derived from these skins, it seems to trace the origin of sacrifice to the act of Habel recorded in the next chapter.

This leads us to a law, which we find frequently exhibited in Sacred Scripture, that some events are recorded without any connection or significance apparent on the surface of the narrative, while at the same time they betoken a greater amount of spiritual knowledge than we are accustomed to ascribe to the age in which they occurred. The bare fact which the writer states, being looked at with our eyes, may have no significance. But regarded, as it ought to be, with the eyes of the narrator, cognizant of all that he has to record up to his own time, it becomes pregnant with a new meaning, which would not otherwise have been discovered. Even this, however, may not exhaust the import of a passage contained in an inspired writing. To arrive at the full sense it may need to be contemplated with the eyes of the Holy Spirit, conscious of all that is to

become matter of revelation to the end of time. It will then stand forth in all the comprehensiveness of meaning which its relation to the whole body of revealed truth imparts, and under the guise of an everyday matter-of-fact will convey some of the sublimest aspects of divine truth. Hence, the subsequent scripture, which is the language of the Holy Spirit, may aid us in penetrating the hidden meaning of an earlier part of revelation.

God is the Prime Mover in this matter. The mercy of God alone is the source of pardon, of the mode in which he may pardon and yet be just, and of the power by which the sinner may be led to accept it with penitence and gratitude. In the brevity of the narrative the results only are noted; namely, the intimation and the earnest of pardon on the side of God, and the feelings and doings of faith and repentance on the side of the parents of mankind. What indications God may have given by the impressive figure of sacrifice or otherwise of the penalty being paid by another for the sinner, as a necessary condition of forgiveness, we are not here informed, simply because those for whom a written record was necessary would learn it more fully at a subsequent stage of the narrative. This suggests two remarks important for interpretation: First. This document is written by one who omits many things done and said to primeval man, because they are unnecessary for those for whom he writes, or because the principles they involve will come forward in a more distinct form in a future part of his work.

This practice speaks for Moses being not the mere collector, but the composer of the documents contained in Genesis, out of such preexistent materials as may have come to his hand or his mind. Second. We are not to import into the narrative a doctrine or institution in all the development it may have received at the latest period of revelation. This would be contrary to the manner in which God was accustomed to teach man. That concrete form of a great principle, which comported with the infantile state of the early mind, is first presented. The germ planted in the opening, fertile mind, springs forth and grows. The revelations and institutions of God grow with it in compass and grandeur. The germ was truth suited for babes; the full-grown tree is only the same truth expanded in the advancing development of people and things. They equally err who stretch the past to the measure of the present, and who judge either the past or the future by the standard of

the present. Well-meaning but inconsiderate critics have gone to both extremes.

Verses 22-24

- XVII. The Execution

24. כרוב *kerûb* ברך in Aramaic: "carve, plow"; Persian: "grip, grasp." This word occurs about eighty-seven times in the Hebrew scriptures; in sixty of which it refers to carved or embroidered figures; in twenty-two to the living being in the vision of Ezekiel Ezekiel 28:14, Ezekiel 28:16; in two to a being on which the Lord is poetically described as riding 2 Samuel 22:11; Psalm 18:11; and in the present passage unequivocally to real and well-known beings. The root is not otherwise extant in Hebrew proper. But from the class of actions to which it refers, and from a review of the statements of Scripture concerning these creatures, we are led to the following conclusions:

First. The cherubim are real creatures, and not mere symbols. In the narrative of the fall they are introduced as real into the scenes of reality. Their existence is assumed as known; for God is said to place or station the cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden. The representation of a cherub too in vision, as part of a symbolic figure, implies a corresponding reality Ezekiel 10:14. A symbol itself points to a reality.

Second. They are afterward described as "living creatures," especially in the visions of Ezekiel Ezekiel 1:10. This seems to arise, not from their standing at the highest stage of life, which the term does not denote, but from the members of the various animals, which enter into their variously-described figure. Among these appear the faces of the man, the lion, the ox, and the eagle, of which a cherubic form had one, two or four Exodus 25:20; Ezekiel 41:18; Ezekiel 1:16. They had, besides, wings, in number two or four Exodus 25:20; 1 Kings 6:27; Ezekiel 1:6. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides Ezekiel 1:8; Ezekiel 10:8. Ezekiel also describes their feet as being straight, and having the sole like that of a calf. They sometimes appear too with their bodies, hands, wings, and even accompanying wheels full of eyes Ezekiel 1:18; Ezekiel 10:12. The variety in the figuration of the cherubim is owing to the variety of aspects in which they stand, and of offices or services they have to perform in the varying

posture of affairs. This figuration is evidently symbolic. For the real being has not a varying number or order of its constituent parts in the same stage of its existence, though it may be readily represented by a diversity of symbols, according to the diversity of the circumstances in which it appears, and of operations it has to perform. The figuration is merely intended to shadow forth its nature and office in sensible forms to those who have not entered the spiritual world.

Third. The cherubim are intelligent beings. This is indicated by their form, movement, and conduct. In their visible appearance the human form predominates: "They had the likeness of a man" Ezekiel 1:5. The human face is in front, and has therefore the principal place. The "hands of a man" determine the erect posture, and therefore the human form of the body. The parts of other animal forms are only accessory, and serve to mark the possession of qualities which are not prominent in man. The lion indicates the active and destructive powers; the ox, the patient and productive; the eagle denotes rapid motion, with which the wings coincide, and quick sight with which the many eyes accord; and the man signifies reason, which rationalizes all these otherwise physical qualities.

The four faces indicate powers of observation that sweep the whole horizon. The straight feet, with soles like those of a calf, mark an elasticity of step appertaining only to beings unaffected by the force of gravitation. Their motion, "straight forward," combined with the four faces, and the wheel within a wheel going according to its quarters, points to a capacity of moving in any direction without turning by the mere impulse of the will. The intelligence of their conduct will appear from the nature of the duties they have to discharge.

Fourth. Their special office seems to be "intellectual and potential" rather than moral. They have to do with the physical more than the moral aspect of being. Hence, they stand related, on the one side, to God, as אלהים *'ĕlohîym* "the Everlasting, the God of omnipotence;" and, on the other, to the universe of created things, in its material, animal, and intellectual departments, and to the general administration of the divine will in this comprehensive sphere. The radical meanings of the terms "carve, plow, grasp," point to the potential. The hand symbolizes intelligent agency. The

multiplicity of eyes denotes many-sided intelligence. The number four is evidently normal and characteristic. It marks their relation to the cosmos - universe of system of created things.

Fifth. Their place of ministry is about the throne, and in the presence of the Almighty. Accordingly, where he manifests himself in a stated place, and with all the solemnity of a court, there they generally appear.

Sixth. Their special functions correspond with these indications of their nature and place. They are stationed at the east of the garden of Eden, where God had condescended to walk with man before his fall, and where he still lingers on earth to hold communion with man, for the purpose of mercy, and their business is to keep the way of the tree of life. They are figured in the most holy place, which was appropriated to the divine presence, and constructed after the pattern seen in the mount. They stand on the mercy-seat, where God sits to rule his people, and they look down with intelligent wonder on the mysteries of redemption. In the vision of the likeness of the glory of God vouchsafed to Ezekiel, they appear under the expanse on which rests the throne of God, and beside the wheels which move as they move. And when God is represented as in movement for the execution of his judgments, the physical elements and the spiritual essences are alike described as the vehicles of his irresistible progress Psalm 18:11. All these movements are mysteries to us, while we are in a world of sense. We cannot comprehend the relation of the spiritual and the physical. But of this we may be assured, that material things are at bottom centers of multiform forces, or fixed springs of power, to which the Everlasting Potentate has given a local habitation and a name, and therefore cognate with spiritual beings of free power, and consequently manageable by them.

Seventh. The cherubim seem to be officially distinct from angels or messengers who go upon special errands to a distance from the presence-chamber of the Almighty. It is possible that they are also to be distinguished in function from the seraphim and the living beings of the Apocalypse, who like them appear among the attendants in the court of heaven.

Here we enter upon the record of the steps taken to carry into effect the forfeiture of life by man, consequent upon his willful transgression of the

divine command.

Genesis 3:22

As one of us. - This is another indication of the plurality in unity which is evidently inherent in the Eternal Spirit. It is still more significant than the expression of concert in the creation of man, as it cannot be explained by anything short of a personal distinction.

Behold, the man is become as one of us to know good and evil. - We are now prepared to understand the nature of the two trees which were in the midst of the garden. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil effected a change, not in the physical constitution of man, but in his mental experience - in his knowledge of good and evil. There do not appear to have been any seeds of death - any poisonous or malignant power in the tree. "The woman saw that the tree was good for food, and likely to the eyes," as well as a tree to be desired to make one wise. Neither does it appear that the virtue of making wise on the particular point of moral distinctions lay in the digestion of its fruit when received into the stomach. The natural effect of food is on the body, not on the understanding. The moral effect lay rather in the conduct of man in regard to the tree, as a thing prohibited. The result of his conduct, whether in the way of obedience or disobedience to the divine command, was to be the knowledge of good and evil. If man had obeyed, he would have come to this knowledge in a legitimate way. For he would have perceived that distrust of God and disobedience to his will, as they were externally presented to his view in the suggestions of the tempter, were evil; and that confidence and obedience, internally experienced in himself in defiance of such suggestions, were good. And this was the germ of the knowledge of good and evil. But, by disregarding the express injunction of his Maker with respect to this tree, he attained to the knowledge of good and evil in an unlawful and fatal way. He learned immediately that he himself was the guilty party, whereas, before, he was free from guilt; and thus became aware, in his own person and to his own condemnation, of good and evil, as distinct and opposite qualities.

This view of the tree is in accordance with all the intimations of Scripture. First. The terms in which it is prohibited are, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat; for in the day thou eatest of it, die surely shalt thou." Here it is important to mark the consequence which is pointed out as flowing from the eating of it. It is not, Thou shalt know good and evil by any physical virtue of the tree, a process by which

knowledge comes not at all; but, “Thou shalt surely die.” Now, this is not any physical result of the fruit being received into the system, since man did not die for centuries after, but a penal result, in fact, the awful sanction of that divine command by which man‘s probation was to be accomplished. Second. The points brought out by the serpent are to the same effect. He suggests that God had not given permission to eat of every tree of the garden.

There was some reserve. This reserve is an injury to man, which he makes out by denying that death is the consequence of eating of the tree reserved, and asserting that special benefits, such as the opening of the eyes, and being as God in knowing good and evil, would follow. In both of these statements there is equivocation. Death is not indeed the natural, but it is the legal consequence of disobedience. The eyes of them both were opened, and they became like God in knowing good and evil; but, in both instances, to their own shame and confusion, instead of their glory and honor. They saw that they were “naked,” and they were “ashamed” and “afraid.” They knew good and evil; but they knew the evil to be present with them, and the good to have departed from them. Third. The interview of God with the culprits is also in keeping with the same view. The question to the man is, “Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee not to eat?” Mark the tenor of this question. It is not, Hast thou eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? but, “of which I commanded thee not to eat;” by which it is indicated that, not the physical character of the tree, but the moral character of the action, is the point of the interrogatory.

The tree, then, was the ordained occasion of man‘s becoming as God in knowing good and evil. He had now reached the second, or experimental lesson in morals. When God gave him the theoretical lesson in the command, he expected that the practical one would follow. He now says, “Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.” In the style of his word he notes the result, without marking the disobedience of man as the means. This is understood from the circumstances. Man is therefore guilty, and the law must be vindicated.

Hence, it is added, “Lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever.” This sentence is completed by an act, not a word, as we shall see in the next verse. Measures must be taken to prevent his access to this tree, now that he has incurred the penalty of death.

From this sentence it follows that the tree of life must have had some virtue by which the human frame was to be kept free from the decrepitude of age, or the decay that terminates in death. Its name, the tree of life, accords with this conclusion. Only on such a ground could exclusion from it be made the penalty of disobedience, and the occasion of death. Thus, also may we meet and answer all the difficulties which physiology presents to the immortality of unfallen man. We have it on record that there was an herbal virtue in paradise capable of counteracting the effects of the wear and tear of the animal frame. This confirms our account of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Death, which, it is to be remembered, is, to a moral and responsible being, in a comprehensive sense, exclusion from the blessings of conscious existence, and pre-eminently from that of the divine complacence, was not the physical effect of its fruit being eaten, but the penal consequence of a forbidden act. And this consequence is brought about by a special judicial process, recorded in the next verse:

The two trees stand related to one another in a way that touches the very center of man‘s moral being. “Do this and live” is the fundamental dictum of the moral law. Its implied counterpart is, “If thou do it not, thou shalt die.” The act of disobedience is evidently decisive for the whole conduct, character, and relation to God. It therefore necessarily forfeits that life which consists in the favor of God and all consequent blessings. The two trees correspond with the condition and the benefit in this essential covenant of law. The one is the test of man‘s obedience, or disobedience; the other, the benefit which is retained by obedience and lost by disobedience. Man fails in obedience, and loses the blessing. Hence, forth both the legal and the beneficial parts of the covenant must come from a higher source to all that are saved. Christ bestows both the one and the other by his obedience and by his Spirit. In the old form of the covenant of grace, the Passover typifies the one, and circumcision the other; in the new, the Lord‘s Supper and baptism have a similar import. These all, from first to last, betoken the two essential parts of salvation, redemption, and

regeneration. This is a clear example of the unity and constancy which prevail in the works of God.

It is evident that the idea of immortality is familiar to the early chapters of Genesis. The primeval command itself implies it. Mortality, moreover, applies to the נפשׁ *nephesh* the organic living body; not to the particles of matter in that body, nor to the נשׁמת חיים *nîshmat chayîym* "breath of life" which came from God. It means not annihilation, but dissolution. Still further, the first part of death is exclusion from the tree of life, which takes place on the very day of disobedience. This indicates its nature. It is not annihilation of the spiritual essence, which does not in fact take place, but the withdrawal from it of the blessings and enjoyments in communion with God of which it is capable. And, lastly, the whole tenor of the narrative is, that death is a penalty for transgression; whereas annihilation is not a penalty, but a release from the doom of perdition. Accordingly, the tempter is not annihilated, but left to bear his doom; and so man‘s existence is perpetuated under partial privation - the emblem and earnest of that death which consists in the total privation of life. Death is, no doubt, in its primary meaning, the dissolution of the living body. But even in the execution of the primeval sentence it begins to expand into that compass of meaning which all the great primitives of the scriptural language sooner or later express. Earth, sky, good, evil, life, and death are striking specimens of this elasticity of signification. Hence, we perceive that the germs of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul lie even in these primeval documents. And more we could not expect, unless we were to concentrate the whole fullness of revelation on this subject into its opening pages.

Genesis 3:23

In consequence of man‘s disobedience the tree of life is withdrawn from the reach of man as a forfeited boon, and the dissolution of the present life allowed to take place according to the laws of nature, still remaining in force in regard to other animated beings; aided, indeed, and accelerated in their operation, by the sinful abuse of human passions. And thus the expression, "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die," receives its simple application. It is a conditional sentence, pronounced antecedently as a warning to the responsible party. On the very day of transgression it becomes legally valid against him, and the first step toward its regular execution in the ordinary course of things is taken. This step is his exclusion

from the tree of life. This is effected by sending man out of the garden into the common, to until the soil whence he was taken.

Genesis 3:24

So he drove out the man. - This expresses the banishment of man from the garden as a judicial act. While he is left to the fruits of his labor for the means of subsistence until his return to the dust, his access to the source of perpetual life and vigor is effectually barred by a guard stationed east of the garden, where was no doubt its only entrance, consisting of the cherubim and the flame of a sword waving in all directions. The flaming sword is the visible form of the sword of justice, repelling the transgressors from the seat and source of happiness and life. The cherubim, who are here mentioned as well-known objects, whose figure does not require description, are the ministers of the divine presence and judgment - of his presence which was not entirely withdrawn from man; and of his judgment, by which he was excluded from the garden of delight.

There is unspeakable mercy here in every respect for the erring race. This present life in the flesh was now tainted with sin, and impregnated with the seeds of the curse, about to spring forth into an awful growth of moral and physical evil. It is not worth preserving for itself. It is not in any way desirable that such a dark confusion of life and death in one nature should be perpetuated. Hence, there is mercy as well as judgment in the exclusion of man from that tree which could have only continued the carnal, earthly, sensual and even devilish state of his being. Let it remain for a season, until it be seen whether the seed of spiritual life will come to birth and growth, and then let death come and put a final end to the old man.

Still further, God does not annihilate the garden or its tree of life. Annihilation does not seem to be his way. It is not the way of that omniscient One who sees the end from the beginning, of that infinite Wisdom that can devise and create a self-working, self-adjusting universe of things and events. On the other hand, he sets his cherubim to keep the way of the tree of life. This paradise, then, and its tree of life are in safe keeping. They are in reserve for those who will become entitled to them after an intervening period of trial and victory, and they will reappear in all their pristine glory and in all their beautiful adaptedness to the high-born and new-born perfection of man. The slough of that serpent nature which has been infused into man will fall off, at least from the chosen number who

take refuge in the mercy of God; and in all the freshness and freedom of a heaven-born nature will they enter into all the originally congenial enjoyments that were shadowed forth in their pristine bloom in that first scene of human bliss.

We have now gone over the prelude to the history of man. It consists of three distinct events: the absolute creation of the heavens and the earth, contained in one verse; the last creation, in which man himself came into being, embracing the remainder of the first chapter; and the history of the first pair to the fall, recorded in the second and third chapters. The first two fall into one, and reveal the invisible everlasting Elohim coming forth out of the depths of his inscrutable eternity, and manifesting himself to man in the new character of Yahweh, the author and perpetuator of a universe of being, and pre-eminently of man, a type and specimen of the rational order of beings. Whenever moral agents come into existence, and wherever they come into contact, there must be law, covenant, or compact. Hence, the command is laid upon man as the essential prerequisite to his moral deportment; and Yahweh appears further as the vindicator of law, the keeper of covenant, the performer of promise.

Man, being instructed by him in the fundamental principle of all law, namely, the right of the Creator over the creature, and the independence of each creature in relation to every other, takes the first step in moral conduct. But it is a false one, violating this first law of nature and of God in both its parts. “Thus, by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” Hence, the prospect of man‘s future history is clouded, and it cannot be darker than it afterward turns out to be. But still it is tinged even in its early dawn with some rays of heavenly hope. The Lord God has held out signals of mercy to the tempted and fallen pair. The woman and the man have not been slow to acknowledge this, and to show symptoms of returning faith and repentance. And though they have been shut out of the garden, yet that region of bliss and its tree of life are not swept out of existence, but, in the boundless mercy of God, reserved in safe keeping for those who shall become heirs of glory, honor, and immortality.

Let it be observed that we here stand on the broad ground of our common humanity. From this wide circumference Scripture never recedes.

Even when it recounts the fortunes of a single individual, family, or nation, its eye and its interest extend to the whole race; and it only dwells on the narrower circle of men and things as the potential spring of nascent, growing, and eternal life and blessing to the whole race. Let us endeavor to do justice to this ancient record, in the calm and constant grandeur and catholicity of its revelations concerning the ways of God with man.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-16
- Section IV - The Family of Adam
- Cain and Abel

qānah "set up, establish, קנה *qayîn* Qain (Cain), "spear-shaft," and קין .1
qan "set up, erect, gain." The קן gain, buy," contain the biliteral root relations of root words are not confined to the narrow rules of our common etymology, but really extend to such instinctive usages as the unlettered speaker will invent or employ. A full examination of the Hebrew tongue leads to the conclusion that a biliteral root lies at the base of many of those triliterals that consist of two firm consonants and a third weaker one *qayîn* קין *ṭôb* So טיב *yāṭab* and יטב ,varying in itself and its position. Thus .*qānah* grow from one root קנה and

".*hebel* Habel (Abel), "breath, vapor הבל .2

zebach it זבח *mînchâh* "gift, offering, tribute." In contrast with מנחה .3 ."means a "bloodless offering

rābats "lie, couch as רבץ ".*chaṭā't* "sin, sin-penalty, sin-offering חטאת .7 ".an animal

".*nôd* Nod, "flight, exile; related: flee נוד .16

This chapter is a continuation of the second document. Yet it is distinguished from the previous part of it by the use of the name Yahweh alone, and, in one instance, אלהים *'ĕlohîym* alone, to designate the Supreme Being. This is sufficient to show that distinct pieces of composition are included within these documents. In the creation week and in the judgment, God has proved himself an originator of being and a keeper of his word, and, therefore, the significant personal name Yahweh is ready on the lips of Eve and from the pen of the writer. The history of fallen man now proceeds. The first family comes under our notice.

Genesis 4:1

In this verse the first husband and wife become father and mother. This new relation must be deeply interesting to both, but at first especially so to the mother. Now was begun the fulfillment of all the intimations she had received concerning her seed. She was to have conception and sorrow multiplied. But she was to be the mother of all living. And her seed was to bruise the serpent‘s head. All these recollections added much to the intrinsic interest of becoming a mother. Her feelings are manifested in the name given to her son and the reason assigned for it. She “bare Cain and said, I have gained a man from Yahweh.” Cain occurs only once as a common noun, and is rendered by the Septuagint δόρυ *doru* “spear-shaft.” The primitive meaning of the root is to set up, or to erect, as a cane, a word which comes from the root; then it means to create, make one‘s own, and is applied to the Creator Genesis 14:19 or the parent Deuteronomy 32:6. Hence, the word here seems to denote a thing gained or achieved, a figurative expression for a child born. The gaining or bearing of the child is therefore evidently the prominent thought in Eve‘s mind, as she takes the child‘s name from this. This serves to explain the sentence assigning the reason for the name. If the meaning had been, “I have gained a man, namely, Yahweh,” then the child would have been called Yahweh. If Jehovah had even been the emphatic word, the name would have been a compound of Yahweh, and either איש *'îysh* “man,” or קנה *qînâh* “qain,” such as Ishiah or Coniah. But the name Cain proves קניתי *qānîytîy* “I have gained” to be the emphatic word, and therefore the sentence is to be rendered “I have gained (borne) a man (with the assistance) of Yahweh.”

The word “man” probably intimates that Eve fully expected her son to grow to the stature and maturity of her husband. If she had daughters before, and saw them growing up to maturity, this would explain her expectation, and at the same time give a new significance and emphasis to her exclamation, “I have gained a man (heretofore only women) from Yahweh.” It would heighten her ecstasy still more if she expected this to be the very seed that should bruise the serpent‘s head.

Eve is under the influence of pious feelings. She has faith in God, and acknowledges him to be the author of the precious gift she has received. Prompted by her grateful emotion, she confesses her faith, She also employs a new and near name to designate her maker. In the dialogue with the tempter she had used the word God אלהים *'ĕlohîym* But now she adopts

Yahweh. In this one word she hides a treasure of comfort. “He is true to his promise. He has not forgotten me. He is with me now again. He will never leave me nor forsake me. He will give me the victory.” And who can blame her if she verily expected that this would be the promised deliverer who should bruise the serpent‘s head?

Genesis 4:2

His brother Habel. - Habel means “breath, vanity.” Does a sense of the vanity of earthly things grow in the minds of our first parents? Has the mother found her sorrow multiplied? Has she had many daughters between these sons? Is there something delicate and fragile in the appearance of Habel? Has Cain disappointed a mother‘s hopes? Some of all these thoughts may have prompted the name. There is something remarkable in the phrase “his brother Habel.” It evidently points with touching simplicity to the coming outrage that was to destroy the peace and purity of the first home.

The two primitive employments of men were the agricultural and the pastoral. Here is the second allusion to some use which was made of animals soon after the fall. Coats of skin were provided for the first pair; and now we have Habel keeping sheep. In the garden of Eden, where the tree of life was accessible, an exclusively vegetable diet was designed for man. Whether this continued after the fall, we are not informed. It is certain that man had dominion over the whole animal kingdom. It can scarcely be doubted that the outer coverings of animals were used for clothing. Animals are presently to be employed for sacrifice. It is not beyond the bounds of probability that animal food may have been used before the flood, as a partial compensation for the desire of the tree of life, which may have been suited to supply all the defects of vegetable and even animal fare in sustaining the human frame in its primeval vigor.

Man in his primitive state, then, was not a mere gatherer of acorns, a hunter, or a nomad. He began with horticulture, the highest form of rural life. After the fall he descended to the culture of the field and the tending of cattle; but still he had a home, and a settled mode of living. It is only by a third step that he degenerates to the wandering and barbarous state of existence. And only by the predominance of might over right, the selfish lust of power, and the clever combinations of rampant ambition, comes that form of society in which the highest state of barbaric civilization and the lowest depth of bondage and misery meet.

Genesis 4:3

At the end of days. - This may denote the end of the week, of the year, or of some longer period. The season of the year was probably the ingathering, when the fruits of the earth and the firstlings of the flock would come in, and when it was not unnatural for the first family to celebrate with a subdued thankfulness the anniversary of their creation. And the present occasion seems to have been the time when Cain and Habel, have arrived at the years of discretion and self-dependence, solemnly come forward with their first voluntary offerings to the Lord. Hitherto they may have come under their parents, who were then the actual offerers. Now they come on their own account.

Here, accordingly, we ascend from the secular to the eternal. We find a church in the primeval family. If Cain and Habel offer to God, we may imagine it was the habit of their parents, and has descended to them with all the sanction of parental example. But we may not venture to affirm this in all its extent. Parental example they no doubt had, in some respects; but whether Adam and Eve had yet ascended so far from the valley of repentance and humiliation as to make bold to offer anything to the Lord, admits of question. Right feeling in the first offenders would make the confidence of faith very slow of growth. It is even more natural for their children, being one remove from the actual transgressors, to make the first essay to approach God with an offering.

Cain brings of the fruits of the soil. We cannot say this was the mere utterance of nature giving thanks to the Creator for his benefits, and acknowledging that all comes from him, and all is due to him. History, parental instruction, and possibly example, were also here to give significance to the act. The offering is also made to Yahweh, the author of nature, of revelation, and now, in man‘s fallen state, of grace. There is no intimation in this verse of the state of Cain‘s feelings toward God. And there is only a possible hint, in the “coats of skin,” in regard to the outward form of offering that would be acceptable. We must not anticipate the result.

Genesis 4:4-5

And Habel brought. - Habel‘s offering differs from that of his brother in outward form. It consists of the firstlings of his flock. These were slain; for their fat is offered. Blood was therefore shed, and life taken away. To us who are accustomed to partake of animal food, there may appear nothing

strange here. We may suppose that each brother offered what came to hand out of the produce of his own industry. But let us ascend to that primeval time when the fruit tree and the herb bearing seed were alone assigned to man for food, and we must feel that there is something new here. Still let us wait for the result.

And the Lord had respect unto Habel and his offering, - but not unto Cain. We have now the simple facts before us. Let us hear the inspired comment: " Πίστελ *pistei* ‹by faith' Abel offered unto God πλείονα Θυσίαν *pleiona thusian* ‹a more excellent sacrifice' than Cain" Hebrews 11:4. There was, then, clearly an internal moral distinction in the intention or disposition of the offerers. Habel had faith - that confiding in God which is not bare and cold, but is accompanied with confession of sin, and a sense of gratitude for his mercy, and followed by obedience to his will. Cain had not this faith. He may have had a faith in the existence, power, and bounty of God; but it wanted that penitent returning to God, that humble acceptance of his mercy, and submission to his will, which constitute true faith. It must be admitted the faith of the offerer is essential to the acceptableness of the offering, even though other things were equal.

However, in this case, there is a difference in the things offered. The one is a vegetable offering, the other an animal; the one a presentation of things without life, the other a sacrifice of life. Hence, the latter is called πλείων θυσία *pleiōn thusia* there is "more in it" than in the former. The two offerings are therefore expressive of the different kinds of faith in the offerers. They are the excogitation and exhibition in outward symbol of the faith of each. The fruit of the soil offered to God is an acknowledgment that the means of this earthly life are due to him. This expresses the barren faith of Cain, but not the living faith of Habel. The latter has entered deeply into the thought that life itself is forfeited to God by transgression, and that only by an act of mercy can the Author of life restore it to the penitent, trusting, submissive, loving heart. He has pondered on the intimations of relenting mercy and love that have come from the Lord to the fallen race, and cast himself upon them without reserve. He slays the animal of which he is the lawful owner, as a victim, thereby acknowledging that his life is due for sin; he offers the life of the animal, not as though it were of equal value with his own, but in token that another life, equivalent to his own, is due to justice if he is to go free by the as yet inscrutable mercy of God.

Such a thought as this is fairly deducible from the facts on the surface of our record. It seems necessary in order to account for the first slaying of an animal under an economy where vegetable diet was alone permitted. We may go further. It is hard to suppose the slaying of an animal acceptable, if not previously allowed. The coats of skin seem to involve a practical allowance of the killing of animals for certain purposes. Thus, we arrive at the conclusion that there was more in the animal than in the vegetable offering, and that more essential to the full expression of a right faith in the mercy of God, without borrowing the light of future revelation. Hence, the nature of Habel‘s sacrifice was the index of the genuineness of his faith. And the Lord had respect unto him and his offering; thereby intimating that his heart was right, and his offering suitable to the expression of his feelings. This finding is also in keeping with the manner of Scripture, which takes the outward act as the simple and spontaneous exponent of the inward feeling. The mode of testifying his respect to Habel was by consuming his offering with fire, or some other way equally open to observation.

And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. - A feeling of resentment, and a sense of disgrace and condemnation take possession of Cain‘s breast. There is no spirit of inquiry, self-examination, prayer to God for light, or pardon. This shows that Cain was far from being in a right frame of mind.

Genesis 4:6-7

Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? - The Lord does not yet give up Cain. In great mercy he expostulates with him. He puts a question which implies that there is no just cause for his present feelings. Neither anger at his brother, because his offering has been accepted, nor vexation in himself, because his own has not, is a right feeling in the presence of the just and merciful God, who searches the heart. Submission, self-examination, and amendment of what has been wrong in his approach to God, alone benefit the occaslon. To this, accordingly, the Lord directs his attention in the next sentence.

If thou do well, shalt thou not be accepted? - To do well is to retrace his steps, to consider his ways, and find out wherein he has been wrong, and to amend his offering and his intention accordingly. He has not duly considered the relation in which he stands to God as a guilty sinner, whose life is forfeited, and to whom the hand of mercy is held out; and accordingly he has not felt this in offering, or given expression to it in the nature of his

offering. Yet, the Lord does not immediately reject him, but with longsuffering patience directs his attention to this, that it may be amended. And on making such amendment, he holds out to him the clear and certain hope of acceptance still. But he does more than this. As Cain seems to have been of a particularly hard and unheedful disposition, he completes his expostulation, and deepens its awful solemnity, by stating the other alternative, both in its condition and consequence.

And if thou do not well, at the door is sin lying. - Sin past, in its unrequited and unacknowledged guilt; sin present, in its dark and stubborn passion and despair; but, above all, sin future, as the growing habit of a soul that persists in an evil temper, and therefore must add iniquity unto iniquity, is awaiting thee at the door, as a crouching slave the bidding of his master. As one lie borrows an endless train of others to keep up a vain appearance of consistency, so one sin if not repented of and forsaken involves the dire necessity of plunging deeper and deeper into the gulf of depravity and retribution. This dread warning to Cain, expressed in the mildest and plainest terms, is a standing lesson written for the learning of all mankind. Let him who is in the wrong retract at once, and return to God with humble acknowledgment of his own guilt, and unreserved submission to the mercy of his Maker; for to him who perseveres in sin there can be no hope or help. Another sentence is added to give intensity to the warning.

And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. - This sentence has all the pithiness and familiarity of a proverb. It has been employed before, to describe part of the tribulation the woman brought upon herself by disobedience, namely, the forced subjection of her will to that of her husband in the fallen state of humanity Genesis 3:16. It is accordingly expressive of the condition of a slave under the hard bondage and arbitrary caprice of a master and a tyrant. Cain is evidently the master. The question is, Who is the slave? To whom do the pronouns “his” and “him” refer? Manifestly, either to sin or to Habel. If to sin, then the meaning of the sentence is, the desire, the entire submission and service of sin will be yielded to thee, and thou wilt in fact make thyself master of it. Thy case will be no longer a heedless ignorance, and consequent dereliction of duty, but a willful overmastering of all that comes by sin, and an unavoidable going on from sin to sin, from inward to outward sin, or, in specific terms, from wrath to murder, and from disappointment to defiance, and so from unrighteousness to ungodliness. This is an awful picture of his fatal end, if

he do not instantly retreat. But it is necessary to deal plainly with this dogged, vindictive spirit, if by any means he may be brought to a right mind.

If the pronouns are referred to Habel, the meaning will come to much the same thing. The desire, the forced compliance, of thy brother will be yielded unto thee, and thou wilt rule over him with a rigor and a violence that will terminate in his murder. In violating the image of God by shedding the blood of thy brother, thou wilt be defying thy Maker, and fiercely rushing on to thy own perdition. Thus, in either case, the dark doom of sin unforsaken and unremitted looms fearfully in the distance.

The general reference to sin, however, seems to be the milder and more soothing form of expostulation. The special reference to Habel might only exasperate. It appears, moreover, to be far-fetched, as there is no allusion to his brother in the previous part of the address. The boldness of the figure by which Cain is represented as making himself master of sin, when he with reckless hand grasps at all that comes by sin, is not unfamiliar to Scripture. Thus, the doer of wickedness is described as the master of it Ecclesiastes 8:8. On these grounds we prefer the reference to sin, and the interpretation founded on it.

There are two other expositions of this difficult sentence which deserve to be noticed. First. "And as to thy brother, unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him with all the right of the first born." But (1) the reference to his brother is remote; (2) the rights of primogeniture are perhaps not yet established; (3) the words do not express a right, but an exercise of might against right arising in a fallen state Genesis 3:16; (4) the Judge of all the earth is not accustomed to guarantee the prerogatives of birth to one who is in positive rebellion against him, but, on the other hand, he withdraws them from the unworthy to confer them on whom he will. For these reasons we conceive this exposition is to be rejected. Second. "And unto thee shall be sin's desire; but thou shalt overcome it." But (1) the parallelism between the two members of the sentence is here neglected; (2) a different meaning is assigned to the words here and in Genesis 3:16,, (3) the connection between the sentence thus explained and what goes before is not clear; (4) the lesson taught is not obvious; and (5) the assurance given is not fulfilled. On these grounds we cannot adopt this explanation.

The above address of the Lord to Cain, expressed here perhaps only in its substance, is fraught with the most powerful motives that can bear on the mind of man. It holds out acceptance to the wrong-doer, if he will come with a broken heart and a corresponding expression of repentance before God, in the full faith that he can and will secure the ends of justice so that he can have mercy on the penitent. At the same time it points out, with all clearness and faithfulness to a soul yet unpractised in the depths of iniquity, the insidious nature of sin, the proneness of a selfish heart to sin with a high hand, the tendency of one sinful temper, if persisted in, to engender a growing habit of aggravated crime which ends in the everlasting destruction of the soul. Nothing more than this can be done by argument or reason for the warning of a wrong-doer. From the mouth of the Almighty these words must have come with all the evidence and force they were capable of receiving.

Genesis 4:8

And Cain talked with Abel his brother. - Cain did not act on the divine counsel. He did not amend his offering to God, either in point of internal feeling or external form. Though one speak to him from heaven he will not hear. He conversed with Habel his brother. The topic is not stated. The Septuagint supplies the words, "Let us go into the field." If in walking side by side with his brother he touched upon the divine communication, the conference did not lead to any better results. If the divine expostulation failed, much more the human. Perhaps it only increased his irritation. When they were in the field, and therefore out of view, he rose up against his brother and killed him. The deed is done that cannot be recalled. The motives to it were various. Selfishness, wounded pride, jealousy, and a guilty conscience were all at work 1 John 3:12. Here, then, is sin following upon sin, proving the truth of the warning given in the merciful forbearance of God.

Genesis 4:9

Where is Habel thy brother? - The interrogatory here reminds us of the question put to the hiding Adam, "Where art thou?" It is calculated to strike the conscience. The reply is different from that of Adam. The sin has now advanced from hasty, incautious yielding to the tempter, to reiterated and deliberate disobedience. Such a sinner must take different ground. Cain, therefore, attempts to parry the question, apparently on the vain supposition

that no eye, not even that of the All-seeing, was present to witness the deed. "I know not." In the madness of his confusion he goes further. He disputes the right of the Almighty to make the demand. "Am I my brother's keeper?" There is, as usual, an atom of truth mingled with the amazing falsehood of this surly response. No man is the absolute keeper of his brother, so as to be responsible for his safety when he is not present. This is what Cain means to insinuate. But every man is his brother's keeper so far that he is not himself to lay the hand of violence on him, nor suffer another to do so if he can hinder it. This sort of keeping the Almighty has a right to demand of every one - the first part of it on the ground of mere justice, the second on that of love. But Cain's reply betrays a desperate resort to falsehood, a total estrangement of feeling, a quenching of brotherly love, a predominence of that selfishness which freezes affection and kindles hatred. This is the way of Cain Jude 1:11.

Genesis 4:10

What hast thou done? - The Lord now charges him with his guilt: "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the soil." In the providence of God blood has a voice crying to him to which he cannot but give heed. It is vain, then, to attempt concealment.

Genesis 4:11-12

The curse (Genesis 9:25, note) which now fell on Cain was in some sense retributive, as it sprang from the soil which had received his brother's blood. The particulars of it are the withdrawal of the full strength or fruitfulness of the soil from him, and the degradation from the state of a settled dweller in the presence of God to that of a vagabond in the earth. He was to be banished to a less productive part of the earth, removed from the presence of God and the society of his father and mother, and abandoned to a life of wandering and uncertainty. The sentence of death had been already pronounced upon man.

Genesis 4:13-14

My iniquity is more than I can bear. - To bear iniquity is in Hebrew phrase to undergo the punishment of it. And the prospect of this, as it presents itself to the eyes of Cain, is so appalling that he shrinks from it as intolerable. To be driven from the face of the soil, inhabited by the other surviving members of the human family, to an unknown and therefore terrible region; to be hidden from the face of God, who manifested himself still to the race of Adam in their present abode; to be a vagabond and a

fugitive in the earth, far away from the land of his birth; and to be liable to be slain in just revenge by anyone who should find him - such is the hard fate he sees before him. It is dark enough in itself, and no doubt darker still in the exaggeration which an accusing conscience conjures up to his imagination. The phrase, "every one finding me," implies that the family of Adam had now become numerous. Not only sons and daughters, but their children and grandchildren may have been growing up when Cain was sent into exile. But in his present terror even an excited fancy suggested an enemy at every turn.

Genesis 4:15

The reply of the Lord is suited to quell the troubled breast of Cain. "Therefore." Because thy fears of what thou deservest go beyond what it is my purpose to permit, I give thee assurance of freedom from personal violence. "To be avenged seven-fold" is to be avenged fully. Cain will no doubt receive even-handed justice from the Almighty. The assurance given to Cain is a sign, the nature of which is not further specified.

This passage unfolds to us a mode of dealing with the first murderer which is at first sight somewhat difficult to be understood. But we are to bear in mind that the sentence of death had been already pronounced upon man, and therefore stood over Adam and all his posterity, Cain among the rest. To pronounce the same sentence therefore upon him for a new crime, would have been weak and unmeaning. Besides, the great crime of crimes was disobedience to the divine will; and any particular form of crime added to that was comparatively unimportant. Wrong done to a creature, even of the deepest dye, was not to be compared in point of guilt with wrong done to the Creator. The grave element in the criminality of every social wrong is its practical disregard of the authority of the Most High. Moreover, every other sin to the end of time is but the development of that first act of disobedience to the mandate of heaven by which man fell; and accordingly every penalty is summed up in that death which is the judicial consequence of the first act of rebellion against heaven.

We are also to bear in mind that God still held the sword of justice in his own immediate hands, and had not delegated his authority to any human tribunal. No man was therefore clothed with any right from heaven to call Cain to account for the crime he had committed. To fall upon him with the high hand in a willful act of private revenge, would be taking the law into

one‘s own hands, and therefore a misdemeanor against the majesty of heaven, which the Judge of all could not allow to pass unpunished. It is plain that no man has an inherent right to inflict the sanction of a broken law on the transgressor. This right originally belongs to the Creator, and derivatively only to those whom he has intrusted with the dispensation of civil government according to established laws.

Cain‘s offences were great and aggravated. But let us not exaggerate them. He was first of all defective in the character of his faith and the form of his sacrifice. His carnal mind came out still more in the wrath and vexation he felt when his defective offering was not accepted. Though the Almighty condescends now to plead with him and warn him against persisting in impenitent silence and discontent, lest he should thereby only become more deeply involved in sin, does not retreat, but, on the contrary, proceeds to slay his brother, in a fit of jealousy; and, lastly, he rudely and falsely denies all knowledge of him, and all obligation to be his protector. Notwithstanding all this, it is still to be remembered that the sentence of death from heaven already hung over him. This was in the merciful order of things comparatively slow of execution in its full extent, but at the same time absolutely certain in the end. The aggravation of the first crime of man by the sins of self-will, sullenness, envy, fratricide, and defiant falsehood, was but the natural fruit of that beginning of disobedience. It is accordingly visited by additional tokens of the divine displeasure, which manifest themselves in this life, and are mercifully calculated to warn Cain still further to repent.

Cain‘s guilt seems now to have been brought home in some measure to his conscience; and he not only stands aghast at the sentence of banishment from the divine presence, but instinctively trembles, lest, upon the principle of retributive justice, whoever meets him may smite him to the death, as he had done his brother. The longsuffering of God, however, interferes to prevent such a catastrophe, and even takes steps to relieve the trembling culprit from the apprehension of a violent death. This leads us to understand that God, having formed a purpose of mercy toward the human family, was sedulously bent upon exercising it even toward the murderer of a brother. Hence, he does not punish his repeated crimes by “immediate death,” which would have defeated his design of giving him a long day of grace and

opportunity to reflect, repent, return to God, and even yet offer in faith a typical atonement by blood for his sin. Thus, the prohibition to slay him is sanctioned by a seven-fold, that is, an ample and complete vengeance, and a sign of protection mercifully vouchsafed to him. The whole dealing of the Almighty was calculated to have a softening, conscience-awakening, and hope-inspiring effect on the murderer‘s heart.

Genesis 4:16

The presence of the Lord - seems to have been at the entrance of the garden where the cherubim were stationed. There, probably, the children of men still lingered in faith and hope before the Lord, whom they still regarded as their Maker and merciful Saviour. They acknowledged his undeserved goodness in the form of sacrifice. The retreat of Cain from the scene of parental affection, of home associations, and of divine manifestation, must have been accompanied with many a deep, unuttered pang of regret and remorse. But he has deeply and repeatedly transgressed, and he must bear the consequence. Such is sin. Many a similar deed of cruelty and bloodshed might the sacred writer have recorded in the later history of man. But it is the manner of Scripture to note the first example, and then to pass over in silence its subsequent repetitions, unless when a particular transaction has an important bearing on the ways of God with man.

Verses 17-24

- XIX. The Line of Cain

17. חניך *chenôk* Chanok, “initiation, instruction”.

18. עירד *îyrād* ‹Irad, “fleet as the wild ass, citizen‘ מחויאל *mechûya'el* Mechujael, “smitten of ‹El, or life of ‹El”. מתושאל *metûshā'ēl* Methushael, “man of ‹El, or man asked”. למך *lāmek* Lemek, “man of prayer, youth”.

19. עדה *ādâh* ‹Adah, “beauty′ צלה *tsîlâh* Tsillah, “shade or tinkling”.

20. יבל *yābāl* Jabal, “stream, leader of cattle, produce, the walker or wanderer”. אהל *ohel* plural′ אהלים *ohālîym* for′ אהלים *ăhālîym* “tent,′ awning, covering” of goats‘ hair over the poles or timbers which constituted the original booth”, סכה *sŭkâh* יובל *yûbāl* Jubal, “player on an instrument”?

tûbal -qayîn Tubal-qain, “brass-smith?” The scion or son of תּוּבַל־קַיִן .22
”.*naʿămâh* Naʻamah, “pleasant, lovely נעמה .the lance

Mankind is now formally divided into two branches - those who still abide in the presence of God, and those who have fled to a distance from him. Distinguishing names will soon be given to these according to their outward profession and practice Genesis 6:1. The awful distinction according to the inward state of the feelings has been already given in the terms, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

Genesis 4:17

Cain is not unaccompanied in his banishment. A wife, at least, is the partner of his exile. And soon a son is born to him. He was building a city at the time of this birth. The city is a keep or fort, enclosed with a wall for the defense of all who dwell within. The building of the city is the erection of this wall or barricade. Here we find the motive of fear and self-defense still ruling Cain. His hand has been imbrued in a brother‘s blood, and he expects every man‘s hand will be against him.

He calls his son Henok (Enoch), and his city after the name of his son. The same word is employed as a name in the lines of Seth Genesis 5:18, of Midian Genesis 25:4, and of Reuben Genesis 46:9. It signifies dedication or initiation, and, in the present case, seems to indicate a new beginning of social existence, or a consciousness of initiative or inventive power, which necessity and self-reliance called forth particularly in himself and his family. It appears, from the flocks kept by Habel, the fear of persons meeting and slaying the murderer, the marriage and family of Cain, and the beginning of a city, that a considerble time had elapsed since the fall. The wife of Cain was of necessity his sister, though this was forbidden in after times, for wise and holy reasons, when the necessity no longer existed.

Genesis 4:18

The names in this verse seem to denote, respectively, fleet as a wild ass, stricken by God, man of prayer, and youth. They indicate a mingling of thoughts and motives in men‘s minds, in which the word אל *'el* “mighty” as a name of God occurs. This name is a common noun, signifying hero or potentate, and also power or might, and is transferred to God as “the Potentate,” or “Almighty One.” It is distinguished from אלהים *'ĕlohîym* “God,” since they are put in apposition Joshua 22:22; and seems to be properly an epithet applied to God by way of pre-eminence. The

denomination, “stricken of the Mighty,” is a recognition of the divine power. “The man of prayer,” or “asking,” may also have reference to an act of worship. Among these higher thoughts we also find a value put upon youth and physical superiority, as the fleetness of the wild ass. This is all we can learn from these imperfectly understood names.

Genesis 4:19

This is the first record and probably the first instance of polygamy. The names of the two wives, Adah, “beauty,” and Zillah, “shade or tinkling,” seem to refer to the charms which attracted Lamek. Superabundance of wealth and power perhaps led Lamek to multiply wives.

Genesis 4:20 is the first notice of the tent and of cattle. The tent was the thin shining and shading canvas of goats‘ hair, which was placed over the poles or timbers that constituted the original booth. In process of time it would supplant the branches and foliage of the booth as a covering from the sun or the wind. The cattle are designated by a word denoting property, as being chattels personal, and consisting chiefly of sheep and oxen. The idea of property had now been practically realized. The Cainites were now prosperous and numerous, and therefore released from that suspicious fear which originated the fortified keep of their progenitor. The sons of Jabal rove over the common with their tents and cattle, undismayed by imaginary terrors.

Genesis 4:21

Here is the invention of musical instruments in their two leading varieties, the harp and the pipe. This implies the previous taste for music and song. It seems not unlikely that Zillah, the mother of Jubal, was a daughter of song. The fine arts follow in the train of the useful. All this indicates the easy circumstances in which the Cainites now found themselves.

Genesis 4:22

The three names Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal are formed from root signifying to “flow, run, go forth,” perhaps “blow,” from which comes יובל *yôbēl* the “blast” or trumpet-note of joy and release. Accordingly, all sorts of going forth, that were suitable to the life of a nomad, seem to have distinguished this family. The addition of Cain to the name of Tubal may have been a memorial of his ancestor, or an indication of his pursuit. Tubal of the spear or lance may have been his familiar designation. The making of tents implies some skill in carpentry, and also in spinning and weaving. The

working in brass and iron furnishes implements for war, hunting, or husbandry. The construction of musical instruments shows considerable refinement in carving and moulding wood. Naamah, the lovely, seems to be mentioned on account of her personal charms.

Genesis 4:23-24

In this fragment of ancient song, we have Lamek, under the strong excitement of having slain a man in self-defense, reciting to his wives the deed, and at the same time comforting them and himself with the assurance that if Cain the murderer would be avenegd sevenfold, he the manslayer in self-defense would be avenged seventy and seven-fold. This short ode has all the characteristics of the most perfect Hebrew poetry. Every pair of lines is a specimen of the Hebrew parallelism or rhythm of sentiment and style. They all belong to the synthetic, synonymous, or cognate parallel, the second member reiterating with emphasis the first. Here we observe that Lamek was a poet; one of his wives was probably a songstress, and the other had a taste for ornament. One daughter was the lovely, and three sons were the inventors of most of the arts which sustain and embellish life. This completes the picture of this remarkable family.

It has been noticed that the inventive powers were more largely developed in the line of Cain than in that of Sheth. And it has been suggested that the worldly character of the Cainites accounts for this. The Shethites contemplated the higher things of God, and therefore paid less attention to the practical arts of life. The Cainites, on the other hand, had not God in their thoughts, and therefore gave the more heed to the requisites and comforts of the present life.

But besides this the Cainites, penetrating into the unknown tracts of this vast common, were compelled by circumstances to turn their thoughts to the invention of the arts by which the hardships of their condition might be abated. And as soon as they had conquered the chief difficulties of their new situation, the habits of industry and mental activity which they had acquired were turned to the embellishments of life.

We have no grounds, however, for concluding that the descendants of Cain were as yet entirely and exclusively ungodly on the one hand, or on the other that the descendants of Sheth were altogether destitute of inventive genius or inattentive to its cultivation. With the exception of the

assault that seemed to have provoked the homicidal act of Lamek, and the bigamy of Lamek himself, we find not much to condemn in the recorded conduct of the race of Cain; and in the names of some of them we discover the remembrance and recognition of God. Habel had a keeper of cattle before Jabal. The Cainites were also an older race than the Shethites. And when Noah was commissioned to build the ark, we have no reason to doubt that he was qualified in some measure by natural ability and previous training for such a task.

The line of Cain is traced no further than the seventh generation from Adam. We cannot tell whether there were any more in that line before the flood. The design of tracing it thus far, is to point out the origin of the arts of life, and the first instances of bigamy and homicide in self-defense.

Verse 25-26
- XX. Sheth

.25 שֵׁת *shēt* Sheth, "placed, put".

.26 אֱנוֹשׁ *enôsh* Enosh, "man, sickly; בְּשֵׁם קָרָא *qero' beshēm* means, first, to call an object by its name Isaiah 40:26; Isaiah 43:1; Isaiah 45:3-4; second, to call an object by the name of another, who is the parent, leader, husband, owner Numbers 32:42; Judges 18:29; Psalm 49:12; Isaiah 43:7; Isaiah 44:5; Isaiah 48:1; Isaiah 65:1; third, to proclaim the name of Exodus 33:19; Exodus 35:5-6; fourth, to call upon the name of God, to address him by his proper name with an audible voice in the form of prayer. This is the most common meaning of the phrase. In this sense it is followed by Yahweh as the proper name of the true God among the Hebrews. It is not to be forgotten that names were still significant, at this early period.

This passage completes the account of Adam's family. Henceforth, we generally meet with two parallel lines of narrative, as the human family is divided into two great branches, with opposing interests and tendencies. The main line refers to the remnant of the race that are on terms of open reconciliation with God; while a collateral line notes as far as necessary the state of those who have departed from the knowledge and love of the true God.

Genesis 4:25

The narrative here reverts to a point subsequent to the death of Habel, when another son is born to Adam, whom his mother Eve regards as a substitute for Habel, and names Sheth in allusion to that circumstance. She is in a sadder, humbler frame than when she named her first-born, and therefore does not employ the personal name of the Lord. Yet her heart is not so much downcast as when she called her second son a breath. Her faith in God is sedate and pensive, and hence she uses the more distant and general term אלהים *'ĕlohîym* God.

Yet there is a special significance in the form of expression she employs. "For God" hath given me another seed instead of Habel. He is to be instead of Habel, and God-fearing like Habel. Far above this consideration, God hath given him. This son is from God. She regards him as God's son. She receives this gift from God, and in faith expects him to be the seed of God, the parent of a godly race. Her faith was not disappointed. His descendants earn the name of the sons of God. As the ungodly are called the seed of the serpent, because they are of his spirit, so the godly are designated the seed of God, because they are of God's Spirit. The Spirit of God strives and rules in them, and so they are, in the graphic language of Scripture, the sons of God Genesis 6:1.

Genesis 4:26

A son is born to Sheth also, whom he calls Enosh. In this name there is probably an allusion to the meaning of sickliness and dependence which belongs to the root. These qualities were now found to be characteristic of man in his present state.

The closing sentence signalizes a remarkable event, which took place at the birth of Enosh, about two hundred and forty years after the creation of Adam. "Then was it begun to call upon the name of the Lord." The solemn invocation of God by his proper name in audible and social prayer and praise is the most usual meaning of the phrase now before us, and is to be adopted unless there be something in the context or the circumstances demanding another meaning. This involves also the first of the meanings given above, as we call God by his name in oral worship. It includes the third in one of its forms, as in praise we proclaim the name of our God. And it leads to the second, as those who call on the name of the Lord are themselves called the children of God.

Some change is here intimated in the mode of approaching God in worship. The gist of the sentence, however, does not lie in the name "Yahweh". For this term was not then new in itself, as it was used by Eve at the birth of Cain; nor was it new in this connection, as the phrase now appears for the first time, and Yahweh is the ordinary term employed in it ever afterward to denote the true God. As a proper name, Yahweh is the fit and customary word to enter into a solemn invocation. It is, as we have seen, highly significant. It speaks of the Self-existent One, the Author of all existing things, and in particular of man; the Self-manifest, who has shown himself merciful and gracious to the returning penitent, and with him keeps promise and covenant. Hence, it is the custom itself of calling on the name of Yahweh, of addressing God by his proper name, which is here said to have been commenced.

At first sight, with our habits and associations, it seems a very strange thing that calling upon the name of the Lord should only begin two hundred and forty years after the creation of man. But let us endeavor to divest ourselves of these limitations, and rise to the primeval simplicity of man's thoughts in regard to God. We read of God speaking to man in paradise, but not of man speaking to God. In the examination that preceded the sentence passed upon the transgressors, we hear Adam and Eve replying to the questions of God, but not venturing to open a conversation with the Most High. If the feeling of reverence and solemn awe did not permit such a liberty before the fall, much more would the super-added sense of guilt after that event restrain man from making any advances toward the infinitely holy Being whom he had so wantonly offended. The rebuking examination, the judicial sentence, and the necessary execution of this sentence in its preliminary form, were so prominent and impressive as to throw into the background any intimations of the divine mercy with which they were accompanied. The latter, however, were not unnoticed, or without a salutary effect on the primeval pair. Adam believed the indications of mercy, whether in word or deed, which God gave him. Faith was prompt and natural in that early stage of comparative nearness to God, to his manifest presence and his conspicuous wonders of creative power. It was also a native tendency of the human breast, and would be so still, had we not become so sophisticated by education that doubt has come to be the prominent attitude of our minds. This faith of the first pair led to

confession; not directly, however, to God, but indirectly in the names Adam gave his wife, and Eve her first-born son. Here humble, distant, self-condemning faith solilloquizes, or, at most, the penitent pair converse in humble hope about the mercy of the Most High.

The bringing of an offering to God was a step in advance of this penitent, humble, submissive, self-accusing faith. It was the exact counterpart and representation by a well-devised symbol of the nature of the offerer‘s faith. It was therefore a confession of faith and certain accompanying feelings toward God by a symbolic act. It was quite natural that this mute sign should precede the actual address. The consequences, however, of the approach of Cain and Habel were calculated to deepen again the feeling of dread, and to strike the onlooker mute in the presence of the High and Holy One. Still would this be so in that infantile state of man when one thought would take full possession of the soul, until another was plainly and directly brought before the attention. In this simple, unsophisticated state of the penitent, we can conceive him to resign himself passively to the merciful will of that Maker whom he has grievously offended, without venturing to breathe a wish or even to lift up a note of thanksgiving. Such mute acquiescence in the divine will for two hundred and forty years was well-befitting the humble penitents of that infantile age, standing in solemn awe under a sense of their own demerit and of the infinite holiness of the Majesty on high. There were even an eloquent pathos and power in that tacit reverence suited to move the heart of the All-searching Spirit more than ten thousand voices less deeply penetrated with a sense of the guilt of sin and the beauty of holiness.

At length, however, Sheth was given to Eve, and accepted by her as a substitute for Habel. Enosh, the child of sorrow, was born to him. Collateral with this line of descent, and all the anxieties and desires which it involved, was the growth of a class of men who were of the spirit of Cain, and receded further and further from God. In these circumstances of growing iniquity on the one hand, and growing faith on the other, believing reason comes to conceive the full import of the mercy of God, freely and fully accepts of pardon, and realizes the peace and privilege which it bestows. Growing man now comprehends all that is implied in the proper name of God, יהוה *yehovâh* “Jehovah,” the Author of being, of promise, and of

performance. He finds a tongue, and ventures to express the desires and feelings that have been long pent up in his breast, and are now bursting for utterance. These petitions and confessions are now made in an audible voice, and with a holy urgency and courage rising above the depressing sense of self-abasement to the confidence of peace and gratitude. These adorations are also presented in a social capacity, and thereby acquire a public notoriety. The father, the older of the house, is the master of words, and he becomes the spokesman of the brotherhood in this new relationship into which they have spontaneously entered with their Father in heaven. The spirit of adoption has prompted the confiding and endearing terms, "Abba, Father," and now the winged words ascend to heaven, conveying the adorations and aspirations of the assembled saints. The new form of worship attracts the attention of the early world, and the record is made, "Then began they to call upon the name of the Lord," that keepeth covenant and mercy.

Here we perceive that the holy race has passed beyond its infancy. It has learned to speak with God in the language of faith, of conscious acceptance, of freedom, of hope, of love. This is a far nobler attainment than the invention of all the arts of life. It is the return from that revulsive dread with which the conscious sinner shrank back from the felt holiness of God. It is the drawing of the divine mercy and love let into the penitent soul, by which it has come to itself, and taken courage to return to the merciful Yahweh, and speak to him the language of penitence, of confession, of gratitude. These believing penitents, chiefly it is to be supposed in the line of Sheth, of which this paragraph speaks, began to be distinguished as the followers of the Lord; whereas others at the same time had forgotten the Lord, and renounced even the form of reverence for him. The seed of the woman was now distinguished from the seed of the serpent. The latter are in a spiritual sense called "the seed of the serpent," because they cling to the principles of the tempter; and the former may in the same sense be designated "the seed or sons of God," because they follow after him as the God of mercy and truth. Thus, the lamentable fact obtrudes itself upon our view that a portion of the human family have persisted in the primeval apostasy, and are no longer associated with their fellows in acknowledging their common Maker.

The progress of moral evil in the antediluvian world was manifested in fratricide, in going out from the presence of the Lord, in personal violence, and in polygamy. The first is the normal character of all murder; the second gave scope for the third, the daring and presumptuous violence of the strong; and the fourth ultimately led to an almost total corruption of manners. It is curious to observe that ungodliness, in the form of disobedience and departure from God and therefore of the practical breach of the first commandment, and unrighteousness in the form of murder, the crime of masterful passion and violence, which is the transgression of the first commandment concerning our neighbor, are the starting-points of sin in the world. They do not seem to have yet reached idolatry and adultery. This appears to point out that the prohibitions into which the law is developed in the Ten Commandments are arranged in the order of time as well as of nature.

The preceding chapters, if written in substance by Adam, formed the primeval Bible of mankind. But, whether written at that time or not, they contain the leading facts which occurred in the early history of man in relation to his Maker. These facts were well known to the antediluvian world, and formed the rule by which it was to be guided in approaching to God, presenting to him an acceptable offering, calling upon his name, and so walking with him in peace and love. Here we have all the needful germs of a gospel for the infantile race. If we ask why they were not effectual, the answer is at hand. They were effectual with a few, and are thereby proved sufficient to recover man from sin, and vindicate the mercy of God. But the All-wise Being, who made man a moral agent, must thoroughly guard his freedom, even in the dealings of mercy. And in the folly and madness of their self-will, some will revolt more and more. The history was written for our learning. Let its lessons be pondered. Let the accumulated experience of bygone wanderings recorded in the Book of God be our warning, to return at length with our whole heart to our merciful Father.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-32
- Section V - The Line to Noah
- The Line of Sheth

1. ספר *sepher* "writing, a writing, a book".

9. קינן *qēynān* Qenan, "possessor, or spearsman".

12. מהללאל *mahelal'ēl* Mahalalel, "praise of ‹El".

15. ירד *yerĕd* Jered, "going down".

21. מתושלה *metûshālach* Methushelach, "man of the missile".

29. נה *noach* Noach, "rest", נחם *nācham* "sigh; repent; pity; comfort oneself; be revenged".

32. שם *shēm* Shem, "name, fame; related: be high", חם *chām* Cham, "hot". יפת *yāpet* Japheth, "spreading; related: spread out".

We now enter upon the third of the larger documents contained in Genesis. The first is a diary, the second is a history, the third a genealogy. The first employs the name אלהים *'ĕlohîym* exclusively; the second uses יהוה אלהים *yehovâh'ĕlohîym* in the second and third chapters, and יהוה *yehovâh* usually in the fourth; the third has אלהים *'ĕlohîym* in the first part, and יהוה *yehovâh* in the second part. The name אלהים *'ĕlohîym* is employed in the beginning of the chapter with a manifest reference to the first document, which is here quoted and abridged.

This chapter contains the line from Adam to Noah, in which are stated some common particulars concerning all, and certain special details concerning three of them. The genealogy is traced to the tenth in descent from Adam, and terminates with the flood. The scope of the chapter is to mark out the line of faith and hope and holiness from Adam, the first head

of the human race, to Noah, who became eventually the second natural head of it.

Genesis 5:1-2

These verses are a recapitulation of the creation of man. The first sentence is the superscription of the new piece of composition now before us. The heading of the second document was more comprehensive. It embraced the generations, evolutions, or outworkings of the skies and the land, as soon as they were called into existence, and was accordingly dated from the third day. The present document confines itself to the generations of man, and commences, therefore, with the sixth day. The generations here are literal for the most part, though a few particulars of the individuals mentioned are recorded. But taken in a large sense this superscription will cover the whole of the history in the Old and New Testaments. It is only in the prophetic parts of these books that we reach again in the end of things to the wider compass of the heavens and the earth Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1. Then only does the sphere of history enlarge itself to the pristine dimensions in the proper and blessed sense, when the second Adam appears on earth, and re-connects heaven and earth in a new, holy, and everlasting covenant.

The present superscription differs from the former one in the introduction of the word ספר *sepher* "book". There is here some ground in the text for supposing the insertion by Moses of an authentic document, handed down from the olden time, in the great work which he was directed to compose. The chapter before us could not have been completed, indeed, until after the birth of Shem, Ham, and Japheth. But if we except the last verse, there is no impossibility or improbability in its being composed before the deluge.

The invention of writing at that early period is favored by some other circumstances connected with these records. We cannot say that it is impossible for oral tradition to preserve the memory of minute transactions - sayings, songs, names, and numbers of years up to a thousand - especially in a period when men‘s lives exceeded nine hundred years. But we can easily see that these details could be much more easily handed down if there was any method of notation for the help of the memory. The minute records of this kind, therefore, which we find in these early chapters, though not

very numerous, afford a certain presumption in favor of a very early knowledge of the art of writing.

Genesis 5:2

And called their name man. - This name seems to connect man אדם *'ādām* with the soil from which he was taken ארמה *'ădāmâh* Genesis 2:7. It is evidently a generic or collective term, denoting the species. God, as the maker, names the race, and thereby marks its character and purpose.

Genesis 5:3-5

In the compass of Genesis 5:3-5 the course of Adam‘s life is completed. And after the same model the lines of all his lineal descendants in this chapter are drawn up. The certain particulars stated are the years he lived before the birth of a certain son, the number of years he afterward lived during which sons and daughters were born to him, and his death. Two sons, and most probably several daughters, were born to Adam before the birth of Sheth. But these sons have been already noticed, and the line of Noah is here given. It is obvious, therefore, that the following individuals in the genealogy may, or may not, have been first-born sons. The stated formula, “and he died,” at the close of each life except that of Henok, is a standing demonstration of the effect of disobedience.

The writer, according to custom, completes the life of one patriarch before he commences that of the next; and so the first event of the following biography is long antecedent to the last event of the preceding one. This simply and clearly illustrates the law of Hebrew narrative.

The only peculiarity in the life of Adam is the statement that his son was “in his likeness, after his image.” This is no doubt intended to include that depravity which had become the characteristic of fallen man. It is contrasted with the preceding notice that Adam was originally created in the image of God. If it had been intended merely to indicate that the offspring was of the same species with the parent, the phrase, “after his kind” (למינהו *lemîynâh* would have been employed, as in the first chapter. This is one of the mysteries of the race, when the head of it is a moral being, and has fallen. His moral depravity, affecting the essential difference of his nature, descends to his offspring.

As this document alludes to the first in the words, “in the day of God‘s creating man, in the likeness of God made he him,” quotes its very words in

the sentence, “male and female created he them, refers to the second in the words, and called their name man” Genesis 2:7, and also needs this second for the explication of the statement that the offspring of man bore his likeness, it presupposes the existence and knowledge of these documents at the time when it was written. If it had been intended for an independent work, it would have been more full and explanatory on these important topics.

Genesis 5:21-24

The history of the Shethite Henok is distinguished in two respects: First, after the birth of Methushelah, “he walked with the God.” Here for the first time we have God אלהים *'ĕlohîym* with the definite article, with which it occurs more than four hundred times. By this he is emphatically distinguished as the God, now made known by his acts and manifestations, in opposition to atheism, the sole God in opposition to polytheism, and the true God in opposition to all false gods or notions of God. It is possible that in the time of Henok some had forsaken the true God, and fallen into various misconceptions concerning the Supreme Being. His walking with “the God” is a hint that others were walking without this God.

The phrase “walked with God” is rendered in the Septuagint εὐηρέστησε τῷ Θεῷ *euērestēse tō Theō* “pleased God,” and is adduced in the Epistle to the Hebrews Genesis 2:5-6 as an evidence of Henok‘s faith. Walking with God implies community with him in thought, word, and deed, and is opposed in Scripture to walking contrary to him. We are not at liberty to infer that Henok was the only one in this line who feared God. But we are sure that he presented an eminent example of that faith which purifies the heart and pleases God.

He made a striking advance upon the attainment of the times of his ancestor Sheth. In those days they began to call upon the name of the Lord. Now the fellowship of the saints with God reaches its highest form, - that of walking with him, doing his will and enjoying his presence in all the business of life. Hence, this remarkable servant of God is accounted a prophet, and foretells the coming of the Lord to judgment Jude 1:14-15. It is further to be observed that this most eminent saint of God did not withdraw from the domestic circle, or the ordinary duties of social life. It is related of him as of the others, that during the three hundred years of his walking with God he begat sons and daughters.

Secondly, the second peculiarity of Henok was his teleportation. This is related in the simple language of the times. “And he was not, for God took him;” or, in the version of the Septuagint, “and he was not found, for God translated him.” Hence, in the New Testament it is said, Hebrews 11:5, “By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death.” This passage is important for the interpretation of the phrase ואיננו *ve'ēynenû* καί ουχ εὑρίσκετο *kai ouch heurisketo* “and he was not (found).” It means, we perceive, not absolutely, he was not, but relatively, he was not extant in the sphere of sense. If this phrase do not denote annihilation, much less does the phrase “and he died.” The one denotes absence from the world of sense, and the other indicates the ordinary way in which the soul departs from this world. Here, then, we have another hint that points plainly to the immortality of the soul (see on Genesis 3:22).

This glimpse into primeval life furnishes a new lesson to the men of early times and of all succeeding generations. An atonement was shadowed forth in the offering of Habel. A voice was given to the devout feelings of the heart in the times of Sheth. And now a walk becoming one reconciled to God, calling upon his name, and animated by the spirit of adoption, is exhibited. Faith has now returned to God, confessed his name, and learned to walk with him. At this point God appears and gives to the antediluvian race a new and conclusive token of the riches and power of mercy in counteracting the effects of sin in the case of the returning penitent. Henok does not die, but lives; and not only lives, but is advanced to a new stage of life, in which all the power and pain of sin are at an end forever. This crowns and signalizes the power of grace, and represents in brief the grand finale of a life of faith. This renewed man is received up into glory without going through the intermediate steps of death and resurrection. If we omit the violent end of Habel, the only death on record that precedes the translation of Henok is that of Adam. It would have been incongruous that he who brought sin and death into the world should not have died. But a little more than half a century after his death, Henok is wafted to heaven without leaving the body. This translation took place in the presence of a sufficient number of witnesses, and furnished a manifest proof of the presence and reality of the invisible powers. Thus, were life and immortality as fully brought to light as was necessary or possible at that

early stage of the world‘s history. Thus, was it demonstrated that the grace of God was triumphant in accomplishing the final and full salvation of all who returned to God. The process might be slow and gradual, but the end was now shown to be sure and satisfactory.

Genesis 5:25-27

Methushelah is the oldest man on record. He lived to be within 31 years of a millenium, and died in the year of the flood.

Genesis 5:28-31

In the biography of Lamek the name of his son is not only given, but the reason of it is assigned. The parents were cumbered with the toil of cultivating the ground. They looked forward with hope to the aid or relief which their son would give them in bearing the burden of life, and they express this hope in his name. In stating the reason of the name, they employ a word which is connected with it only by a second remove. נוּח *nûach* and נחם *nācham* are stems not immediately connected; but they both point back to a common root נח (*n -ch*) signifying “to sigh, to breathe, to rest, to lie down.”

This is only another recorded instance of the habit of giving names indicative of the thoughts of the parents at the time of the child‘s birth. All names were originally significant, and have still to this day an import. Some were given at birth, others at later periods, from some remarkable circumstance in the individual‘s life. Hence, many characters of ancient times were distinguished by several names conferred at different times and for different reasons. The reason of the present name is put on record simply on account of the extraordinary destiny which awaited the bearer of it.

Which the Lord hath cursed. - Here is another incidental allusion to the second document, without which it would not be intelligible. If the present document had been intended to stand alone, this remark would have had its explanation in some previous part of the narrative.

Genesis 5:32

And Noah was the son of five hundred years. - A man is the son of a certain year, in and up to the close of that year, but not beyond it. Thus, Noah was in his six hundredth year when he was the son of six hundred years Genesis 7:11, Genesis 7:6, and a child was circumcised on the eighth day, being then the son of eight days Leviticus 12:3; Genesis 17:12.

When the phrase indicates a point of time, as in Leviticus 27, it is the terminating point of the period in question. The first part only of the biography of Noah is given in this verse, and the remainder will be furnished in due time and place. Meanwhile, Noah is connected with the general history of the race, which is now to be taken up. His three sons are mentioned, because they are the ancestors of the postdiluvian race. This verse, therefore, prepares for a continuation of the narrative, and therefore implies a continuator or compiler who lived after the flood.

From the numbers in this chapter it appears that the length of human life in the period before the deluge was ten times its present average. This has seemed incredible to some, and hence they have imagined that the years must have consisted of one month, or at least of a smaller number than twelve. But the text will not admit of such amendment or interpretation. In the account of the deluge the tenth month is mentioned, and sixty-one days are afterward indicated before the beginning of the next year, whence we infer that the primeval year consisted of twelve lunar months at least. But the seemingly incredible in this statement concerning the longevity of the people before the flood, will be turned into the credible if we reflect that man was made to be immortal. His constitution was suited for a perpetuity of life, if only supplied with the proper nutriment. This nutriment was provided in the tree of life. But man abused his liberty, and forfeited the source of perpetual life. Nevertheless, the primeval vigor of an unimpaired constitution held out for a comparatively long period. After the deluge, however, through the deterioration of the climate and the soil, and perhaps much more the degeneracy of man‘s moral and physical being, arising from the abuse of his natural propensities, the average length of human life gradually dwindled down to its present limits. Human physiology, founded upon the present data of man‘s constitution, may pronounce upon the duration of his life so long as the data are the same; but it cannot fairly affirm that the data were never different from what they are at present. Meanwhile, the Bible narrative is in perfect keeping with its own data, and is therefore not to be disturbed by those who still accept these without challenge.

The following table presents the age of each member of this genealogy, when his son and successor was born and when he himself died, as they

stand in the Hebrew text, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Septuagint, and Josephus:

d **Line of Noah**

d

d **HebrewSam. Pent.SeptuagintJosephusDate**

d

d Son‘s BirthOwn DeathSon‘s BirthOwn DeathSon‘s BirthOwn DeathSon‘s BirthOwn DeathOf BirthOf Death

d

d 1. Adam

d 130930130 9302309302309300930

d

d 2. Sheth

d 105912105912205912205912130104 2

d

d 3. Enosh

d 90905909051909051909052351140

d

d 4. Kenan

d 709107091017091017091032512 35

d

d 5. Mahalalel

d 658956589516589516589539512 90

d

d 6. Jared

d 162962628471629621629624601422

d

d 7. Henok

d 653656536516536516536562298 7

d

d 8. Methuselah

d 187969677201879691879696871656

d

d 9. Lamek

d 182777536531887531827778741651

d

d 10. Noah

d 500950500950500950500950105620 06

d

d

d 100100100100

d

d Deluge

d 1656130722622256

d

d On comparing the series of numbers in the Hebrew with those in the Samaritan, the Septuagint, and Josephus, it is remarkable that we have the main body of the original figures in all. In the total ages of the first five and the seventh, and in that of Noah at the flood, they all agree. In those of the sixth and eighth, the Hebrew, Septuagint, and Josephus agree. In that of the ninth, the Hebrew and Josephus agree, while the Samaritan and Septuagint differ from them and from each other. On examining the figures of the Samaritan, it appears that the sixth, eighth, and ninth total ages would have reached beyond the flood, if the numbers found in the other authorities had been retained. And they are so shortened as to terminate all in the year of the flood. This alteration betrays design. The totals in the Hebrew, then, have by far the preponderating authority.

Of the numbers before the birth of a successor, which are chiefly important for the chronology, the units agree in all but Lamek, in regard to whom the Hebrew and Josephus agree, while the Samaritan and the Septuagint differ from them and from each other. The tens agree in all but two, Methushelah and Lamek, where the Hebrew, the Septuagint, at least in the Codex Alexandrinus, and Josephus agree, while the Samaritan differs from them all. In the hundreds a systematic and designed variation occurs. Still they agree in Noah. In Jared, Methushelah, and Lamek, the Hebrew, Septuagint, and Josephus agree in a number greater by a hundred than the Samaritan. In the remaining six the Hebrew and Samaritan agree; while the

Septuagint and Josephus agree in having a number greater by a hundred. On the whole, then, it is evident that the balance of probability is decidedly in favor of the Hebrew. To this advantage of concurring testimonies are to be added those of being the original, and of having been guarded with great care.

These grounds of textual superiority may be supported by several considerations of less weight. The Samaritan and the Septuagint follow a uniform plan; the Hebrew does not, and therefore has the mark of originality. Josephus gives the sum total to the deluge as two thousand six hundred and fifty-six years, agreeing with the total of the Hebrew in three figures, with that of the Septuagint only in two, and with that of the Samaritan in none. Some MSS. even give one thousand six hundred and fifty-six, which is the exact sum of the Hebrew numbers. Both these readings, moreover, differ from the sum of his own numbers, which itself agrees with the Hebrew in two figures and with the Septuagint in the other two. This looks like a studied conformation of the figures to those of the Septuagint, in which the operator forgot to alter the sum total. We do not at present enter into the external arguments for or against the Hebrew text. Suffice it to observe, that the internal evidence is at present clearly in its favor, so far as the antediluvian figures go.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-8

- The Growth of Sin

3. דון *dîyn* "be down, strive, subdue, judge". בשגם *bāshagām* "inasmuch, *beshāgām* בשגם as also." The rendering "in their error" requires the pointing and the plural form of the following pronoun. It is also unknown to the Septuagint.

4. נפילים *nepîlîym* "assailants, fellers, men of violence, tyrants".

Having traced the line of descent from Adam through Sheth, the seed of God, to Noah, the author proceeds to describe the general spread and growth of moral evil in the race of man, and the determination of the Lord to wipe it away from the face of the earth.

Genesis 6:1-4

There are two stages of evil set forth in Genesis 6:1-4 - the one contained in the present four verses, and the other in the following. The former refers to the apostasy of the descendants of Sheth, and the cause and consequences of it. When man began to multiply, the separate families of Cain and Sheth would come into contact. The daughters of the stirring Cainites, distinguished by the graces of nature, the embellishments of art, and the charms of music and song, even though destitute of the loftier qualities of likemindedness with God, would attract attention and prompt to unholy alliances. The phrase "sons of God," means an order of intelligent beings who "retain the purity of moral character" originally communicated, or subsequently restored, by their Creator. They are called the sons of God, because they have his spirit or disposition. The sons of God mentioned in Job 38:7, are an order of rational beings existing before the creation of man, and joining in the symphony of the universe, when the earth and all things were called into being. Then all were holy, for all are styled the sons of God. Such, however, are not meant in the present passage. For they were not created as a race, have no distinction of sex, and therefore no sexual desire; they "neither marry nor are given in marriage" Matthew 22:30. It is contrary to the law of nature for different species even on earth to cohabit in a carnal way; much more for those in the body, and those who have not a body of flesh. Moreover, we are here in the region of humanity, and not in

the sphere of superhuman spirits; and the historian has not given the slightest intimation of the existence of spiritual beings different from man.

The sons of God, therefore, are those who are on the Lord‘s side, who approach him with duly significant offerings, who call upon him by his proper name, and who walk with God in their daily conversation. The figurative use of the word “son” to denote a variety of relations incidental, and moral as well as natural, was not unfamiliar to the early speaker. Thus, Noah is called “the son of five hundred years” Genesis 5:32. Abraham calls Eliezer בן־בותי *ben -bēytîy* “son of my house” Genesis 15:3. The dying Rachel names her son Ben-oni, “son of my sorrow,” while his father called him Benjamin, “son of thy right hand” Genesis 35:18. An obvious parallel to the moral application is presented in the phrases “the seed of the woman” and “the seed of the serpent.” The word “generations” תולדות *tôledot* Genesis 5:1) exhibits a similar freedom and elasticity of meaning, being applied to the whole doings of a rational being, and even to the physical changes of the material world Genesis 2:4. The occasion for the present designation is furnished in the remark of Eve on the birth of Sheth. God hath given me another seed instead of Habel. Her son Sheth she therefore regarded as the son of God. Accordingly, about the birth of his son Enosh, was begun the custom calling upon the name of the Lord, no doubt in the family circle of Adam, with whom Sheth continued to dwell. And Enok, the seventh from Adam in the same line, exhibited the first striking example of a true believer walking with God in all the intercourse of life. These descendants of Sheth, among whom were also Lamek who spoke of the Lord, and Noah who walked with God, are therefore by a natural transition called the sons of God, the godlike in a moral sense, being born of the Spirit, and walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit Psalm 82:6; Hosea 2:1.

Some take “the daughters of man” to be the daughters of the Cainites only. But it is sufficient to understand by this phrase, the daughters of man in general, without any distinction of a moral or spiritual kind, and therefore including both Cainite and Shethite females. “And they took them wives of all whom they chose.” The evil here described is that of promiscuous intermarriage, without regard to spiritual character. The godly took them wives of all; that is, of the ungodly as well as the godly families, without any discrimination. “Whom they chose,” not for the godliness of their lives,

but for the goodliness of their looks. Ungodly mothers will not train up children in the way they should go; and husbands who have taken the wrong step of marrying ungodly wives cannot prove to be very exemplary or authoritative fathers. Up to this time they may have been consistent as the sons of God in their outward conduct. But a laxity of choice proves a corresponding laxity of principle. The first inlet of sin prepares the way for the flood-gates of iniquity. It is easy to see that now the degeneracy of the whole race will go on at a rapid pace.

Genesis 6:3

My Spirit - , in contradistinction to the spirit of disobedience which, by the fall, obtained entrance into the soul of man. "Shall not strive with man forever." To strive דון *dîyn* is to keep down, rule, judge, or strive with a man by moral force. From this passage we learn that the Lord by his Spirit strives with man up to a certain point. In this little negative sentence streams out the bright light of God‘s free and tender mercy to the apostate race of man. He sends his Spirit to irradiate the darkened mind, to expostulate with the conscience, to prompt and strengthen holy resolve, and to bring back the heart, the confidence, the affection to God. He effects the blessed result of repentance toward God in some, who are thus proved to be born of God. But it is a solemn thought that with others he will not strive perpetually. There is a certain point beyond which he will not go, for sufficient reasons known fully to himself, partly to us. Two of these we are to notice for our instruction: First, he will not touch the free agency of his rational creatures. He can put no force on the volitions of men. An involuntary or compulsory faith, hope, love, obedience, is a contradiction in terms; and anything that could bear the name can have no moral validity whatsoever. Secondly, after giving ample warning, instruction, and invitation, he will, as a just judgment on the unbelieving and the impenitent, withdraw his Spirit and let them alone. The antediluvian world was fast approaching to this point of final perversity and abandonment.

Inasmuch as he is also flesh - , in contradistinction to spirit, the breath of life which the Almighty breathed Into his nostrils. These two parts of man‘s complex being were originally in true and happy adjustment, the corporeal being the fit organ and complement of the spiritual as it is in him. But now by the fall the flesh has gained the upper hand, and the spirit is in the bondage of corruption. The fact that he is flesh also as well as spirit, has

therefore come out into sad prominence. The doctrine of the carnal mind in the Epistle to the Romans Genesis 6:4

Two classes of men, with strong hand and strong will, are here described. “The giants,” the well-known men of great stature, physical force, and violent will, who were enabled by these qualities to claim and secure the supremacy over their fellow-men. “Had been in the land in those days.” In the days when those intermarriages were beginning to take place, the warriors were asserting the claim of might. Violence and rapine were becoming rampant in the land. “And after that.” The progeny of the mixed marriages were the second and subsequent class of leading men. “The sons of God” are here contradistinguished from the “nephilim, or giants,” who appear therefore to have belonged to the Cainites. The offspring of these unhallowed unions were the heroes, the gallants, the mighty men, the men of renown. They were probably more refined in manners and exalted in thought than their predecessors of pure Cainite descent. “Men of name,” whose names are often in men‘s mouths, because they either deserved or required to be named frequently on account of their influential or representative character. Being distinguished from the common herd by prominent qualities or memorable exploits, they were also frequently marked out by a special name or surname, derived from such trait of character or deed of notoriety. “Of old” (מעולם *mē'ôlām*). This has been sometimes explained “of the world,” in the sense of αἰών *aiōn* but the meaning is too late for the present passage. The phrase uniformly means “of old,” covering a more or less extensive length of time. This note of time implies a writer probably after the deluge, who could speak of antediluvian affairs, as happening of old.

It is remarkable that we have no hint of any kind of government in the antediluvian world. It is open to us to suppose that the patriarchal polity would make its appearance, as it is an order based upon natural relations. But it is possible that God himself, being still present and manifest, was recognized as the governor. To him offerings were brought, and he deals with Cain on his first and second transgression. In that case the lawless violence of the strong and willful is to be regarded as rebellion, not only against the patriarchal rule, but the divine supremacy. A notice of civil law and government would not of course affect the authority of the book. But the absence of such notice is in favor of its divine origin. It is obvious that higher things than these have the attention of the sacred writer.

Genesis 6:5-8

In these verse we are to conceive the 120 years of respite to be at an end. The iniquity of the race is now full, and the determination of the Lord is therefore announced, with a statement of the grounds on which it rests, and a glance at the individual to be excepted from the general destruction.

Genesis 6:5

And God saw. - The course of the primeval world was a great experiment going on before the eye of God, and of all intelligent observers, and manifesting the thorough depravity and full-grown degeneracy of the fallen race, when left to the bent of its perverted inclinations. "Every imagination" (יצר *yētser*). Here the object of thought is distinguished from the thought itself. This is a distinction not generally or constantly recognized by the mental philosopher, though of essential importance in the theory of the mind. The thought itself is a real phase or attitude of mind; the form, idea, species, object of thought may have matter, real content, or it may not. "Only evil every day." This is an unlimited condemnation of the state and process of the carnal man. The reason is obvious. Homage to God, to truth, to right, to love, does not reign in his heart; and the imaginations or purposes that are not regulated by this, however excellent and praiseworthy in other respects, are destitute of the first the essential principle of moral good. This is now made palpable to the eye of observation by the almost universal predominance of the ungodly spirit. This accordingly forms the ground of the divine procedure.

Genesis 6:6

And it repented the Lord - that he had made man. The Scripture is frank and unreserved; some people would say, imprudent or regardless of misconstruction, in its statements of truth. Repentance ascribed to the Lord seems to imply wavering or change of purpose in the Eternal Self-existent One. But the sublime dictate of the inspired word is, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good?" Numbers 23:19. In sooth, every act here recorded - the observation, the resolve, the exception - seems equally with the repentance to jar with the unchangeableness of God. To go to the root of the matter, every act of the divine will, of creative power, or of interference with the order of nature, seems at variance with inflexibility of purpose. But, in the first place, man has a finite mind and a limited sphere of observation, and therefore is not

able to conceive or express thoughts or acts exactly as they are in God, but only as they are in himself. Secondly, God is a spirit, and therefore has the attributes of personality, freedom, and holiness; and the passage before us is designed to set forth these in all the reality of their action, and thereby to distinguish the freedom of the eternal mind from the fatalism of inert matter. Hence, thirdly, these statements represent real processes of the Divine Spirit, analogous at least to those of the human. And, lastly, to verify this representation, it is not necessary that we should be able to comprehend or construe to ourselves in all its practical detail that sublime harmony which subsists between the liberty and the immutability of God. That change of state which is essential to will, liberty, and activity, may be, for aught we know, and from what we know must be, in profound unison with the eternity of the divine purpose.

Genesis 6:7

I will wipe away man from the face of the soil. - The resolve is made to sweep away the existing race of man. Heretofore, individuals had departed this life. Adam himself had long since paid the debt of nature. These solemn testimonies to the universal doom had not made any salutary or lasting impression on the survivors. But now a general and violent destruction is to overtake the whole race - a standing monument of the divine wrath against sin, to all future generations of the only family saved.

From man to cattle, creeper and fowl of the sky. - These classes of animated nature being mingled up with man are involved in the same ruin with him. This is of a piece with the curse laid upon the serpent, which was the unconscious organ of the tempter. It is an instance of a law which runs through the whole course of nature, as we observe that it is the method of the divine government to allow for the time the suffering inflicted on an inferior animal, or even on a fellow-creature, by selfish passion. It has an appearance to some minds of harshness and unfairness. But we must remember that these animated creatures are not moral, and, therefore, the violent termination of their organic life is not a punishment; that the pain incidental to this, being apart from guilt, is in itself a beneficial provision for the conservation of life; and that it was not intended that the life of animals should be perpetual. The return of the land to a state of desolation by the destruction of animal and vegetable life, however, has its lesson for man, for whom ultimately all of this beauty and fertility were designed, and from whom it is now withdrawn, along with all the glories it foreshadows,

as part of the punishment of his guilt. The tenant has become unworthy of the tabernacle, and accordingly he is dispossessed, and it is taken down and removed.

Genesis 6:8

And Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. - Noah and his family are the only exceptions to this sweeping destruction. Hitherto we have met with distant and indirect intimations of the divine favor, and significant deeds of regard and acceptance. Now for the first time grace itself finds a tongue to express its name. Grace has its fountain in the divine breast. The stream has been flowing forth to Adam, Eve, Habel, Henok, and others, we hope, unknown to fame. By the time it reaches Noah it has found a name, by which it is recognized among people to this day. It is opposed to works as a source of blessing. Whither grace comes there merit cannot be. Hence, we learn even from the case of Noah that original sin asserts its presence in the whole race of Adam. This completes the circle of saving doctrine in regard to God that comes down from the antediluvian times. He intimates that the seed of the woman, an individual pre-eminently so called, will bruise the serpent‘s head. He clothes our first parents with coats of skin - an earnest and an emblem of the better, the moral clothing of the soul. He regards Habel and his offering. He accepts him that in faith does well. He translates Enok, who walked with him. His Spirit, we learn, has been striving with antediluvian man. Here are the Spirit of God and the seed of the woman. Here are clothing, regarding, accepting, translating. Here, then, is salvation provided and applied, begun, continued, and completed. And last, though not least, grace comes out to view, the eternal fountain of the whole. On the part of man, also, we have repenting, believing, confessing, offering, calling on the name of the Lord, and walking with God.

The two parts of the document which is now closed are as distinct from each other as it is from the following one. They combine, in fact, to form the needful preliminary to the fourth document. The genealogy brings us to the leading agent in the succeeding narrative; the description of the corruption of the human race furnishes the occasion for his agency. The third is therefore the prologue, as the fifth is the epilogue, to the fourth document, in which the main action lies.

Verses 9-22

- Section VI - The Deluge

- XXIII. The Ark

9. דור *dôr* "age, time from birth to death," applied either to an individual or the whole contemporary race, running parallel with some leading individual. Hence, the "race" or "generation" living during that time.

14. תבה *tēbâh* "chest, ark." It is used only of this vessel of Noah's construction, and of the little vessel in which Moses was put Exodus 2:3, אבה a′ *ēbeh* ".Exodus 2:5. The root, according to Furst, means "to be hollow גפר . *goper* α. cognate word, signifies "a reed;" κιβωτός *kibōtos* Septuagint λ., perhaps "fir, cypress, resinous wood קן: related: cognate *qēn* "nest, room; prepare, rear up".

16. צהר *tsohar* "shining, light;" not the same as the חלון *chalôn* Genesis 8:6, or the aperture through which Noah let out the raven.

18. ברית *berîyt* "covenant; related: cut, eat, choose, decide".

The close of the preceding document introduces the opening topic of this one. The same rule applies to all that have gone before. The generations of the skies and the land Genesis 2:4 are introduced by the finishing of the skies and the land Genesis 2:1; the generations of man in the line of Sheth Genesis 5:1, by the birth of Sheth Genesis 4:25; and now the generations of Noah, by the notice that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. The narrative here also, as usual, reverts to a point of time before the stage of affairs described in the close of the preceding passage. Yet there is nothing here that seems to indicate a new author. The previous paragraph is historical, and closely connected with the end of the fourth chapter; and it suitably prepares for the proceedings of Noah, under the divine direction, on the eye of the deluge. We have now a recapitulation of the agent and the occasion, and then the divine commission and its execution.

Genesis 6:9-12

Here are the man and the occasion.

Genesis 6:9-10

The generations of Noah. - In the third document we had the generations of man; now we are limited to Noah, because he is himself at peace with God, and is now the head and representative of those who are in

the same blessed relation. The narrative, therefore, for the first time, formally confines itself to the portion of the human family in communion with God, Noah is here characterized by two new and important epithets - "just" and "perfect." It is to be remembered that he had already found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Adam was created good; but by disobedience he became guilty, and all his race, Noah among the rest, became involved in that guilt. To be just is to be right in point of law, and thereby entitled to all the blessings of the acquitted and justified. When applied to the guilty, this epithet implies pardon of sin among other benefits of grace. It also presupposes that spiritual change by which the soul returns from estrangement to reconciliation with God. Hence, Noah is not only just, but perfect. This attribute of character imports not only the turning from darkness to light, from error to truth, from wrong to right, but the stability of moral determination which arises from the struggle, the trial, the victory of good over evil, therein involved. The just is the right in law; the perfect is the tested in holiness. "In his ages;" among the men of his age. This phrase indicates the contrast between Noah and the men of his day. It is probable, moreover, that he was of pure descent, and in that respect also distinguished from his contemporaries who were the offspring of promiscuous intermarriage between the godly and the ungodly. "Noah walked with God," like Henok. This is the native consequence of his victory over sin, and his acceptance with God. His sons are mentioned, as they are essentially connected with the following events.

Genesis 6:11-12

And the land was corrupt. - In contrast with Noah, the rest of the race were corrupt - entirely depraved by sin. "It was filled with violence" - with the outward exhibition of inward carnality. "And God saw this." It was patent to the eye of Heaven. This is the ground of the following commission.

Genesis 6:13-21

The directions concerning the ark embrace the purpose to destroy the race of man Genesis 6:13, the plan and specification of the ark Genesis 6:14-16, the announcement of the deluge Genesis 6:17, the arrangements for the preservation of Noah and his family, and certain kinds of animals Genesis 6:18-21.

Genesis 6:13

The end of all flesh. - The end may mean either the point to which it tends, or the extermination of the race. The latter is the simpler. All flesh is to be understood of the whole race, while yet it does not preclude the exception of Noah and his family. This teaches us to beware of applying an inflexible literality to such terms as all, when used in the sense of ordinary conversation. "Is come before me," is in the contemplation of my mind as an event soon to be realized. "For the land is filled with violence." The reason. "I will destroy them." The resolve. There is retribution here, for the words "corrupt" and "destroy" are the same in the original.

Genesis 6:14-16

The ark. - Reckoning the cubit at 1.8 feet, we find the length to be about 540, the breadth 90, and the height 54 feet. The construction of such a vessel implies great skill in carpentry. The lighting apparatus is not described so particularly that we can form any conception of it. It was probably in the roof. The roof may have been flat. "And to a cubit shalt thou finish it above." The cubit is possibly the height of the parapet round the lighting and ventilating aperture. The opening occupied, it may be, a considerable portion of the roof, and was covered during the rain with an awning מכסה *mîksēh* Genesis 8:13. If, however, it was in the sides of the ark, the cubit was merely its height. It was then finished with a strong railing, which went round the whole ark, and over which the covering, above mentioned, hung down on every side. The door was in the side, and the stories were three. In each were of course many "nests" or chambers, for animals and stores. It may be curious to a mechanical mind to frame the details of this structure from the general hints here given; but it could not serve any practical end. Only the animals necessary to man, or unusual to the region covered by the deluge, required to be included in the ark. It seems likely that wild animals in general were not included. It is obvious, therefore, that we cannot calculate the number of animals preserved in the ark, or compare the space they would require with its recorded dimensions. We may rest assured that there was accommodation for all that needed to be there.

Genesis 6:17

The method of destruction is now specified. A water flood shall cover the land, in which all flesh shall perish. I, "behold," I. This catastrophe is due to the interposition of the Creator. It does not come according to the ordinary laws of physics, but according to the higher law of ethics.

Genesis 6:18-21

The covenant with Noah. Here is the first appearance of a covenant between God and man on the face of Scripture. A covenant is a solemn compact, tacit or express, between two parties, in which each is bound to perform his part. Hence, a covenant implies the moral faculty; and wherever the moral faculty exists, there must needs be a covenant. Consequently, between God and man there was of necessity a covenant from the very beginning, though the name do not appear. At first it was a covenant of works, in regard to man; but now that works have failed, it can only be a covenant of grace to the penitent sinner. "My covenant." The word "my" points to its original establishment with Adam. My primeval covenant, which I am resolved not to abandon. "Will I establish." Though Adam has failed, yet will I find means of maintaining my covenant of life with the seed of the woman. "With thee." Though all flesh be to perish through breach of my covenant, yet will I uphold it with thee. "Go into the ark." This is the means of safety. Some may say in their hearts, this is a clumsy way to save Noah. But if he is to be saved, there must be some way. And it is not a sign of wisdom to prescribe the way to the All-wise. Rather let us reflect that the erection of this ark was a daily warning to a wicked race, a deepening lesson of reliance on God to Noah and his household, and a most salutary occupation for the progenitors of the future race of mankind. "And thy sons, etc." Noah's household share in the covenant.

Genesis 6:19-20

And of all the living. - For the sake of Noah, the animal species also shall be preserved, "two of each, male and female." They are to come in pairs for propagation. The fowl, the cattle, the creeping thing or smaller animals, are to come. From this it appears that the wild animals are not included among the inmates of the ark. (See Genesis 7:2-3, Genesis 7:8.) The word "all" is not to be pressed beyond the specification of the writer. As the deluge was universal only in respect to the human race, it was not necessary to include any animals but those that were near man, and within the range of the overwhelming waters. Fodder and other provisions for a year have to be laid in.

Genesis 6:22

The obedience of Noah and the accomplishment of his task are here recorded. The building of so enormous a fabric must have occupied many years.

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CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-9

- The Ark Was Entered

”.ṭâhôr “clean, fit for food or sacrifice טהור .2

yeqûm “standing thing; what grows up, whether animal or plant.” יקום .4

”.*qāmâh* “stalk, or standing corn קמה Compare

Genesis 7:1-4

Here is found the command to enter the ark. The general direction in the preceding chapter was given many years ago, before the ark was commenced. Now, when it is completed, a more specific command is issued. “For thee have I seen righteous before me.” Noah has accepted the mercy of God, is therefore set right in point of law, and walks aright in point of practice. The Lord recognizes this indication of an adopted and renewed son. “In this age” he and his were the solitary family so characterized.

Genesis 7:2-3

Of all clean cattle. - Here the distinction of clean and unclean animals meets us without any previous notice. How it became known to Noah we are not informed. From the former direction it appears that the animals were to enter by pairs. Now it is further arranged that there are to be seven pairs of the clean cattle and fowl, and only one pair of the unclean.

Genesis 7:4

Seven days after the issue of the command the rain is to commence, and continue for forty days and nights without ceasing. “Every standing thing” means every plant and animal on the land.

Genesis 7:5-9

The execution of the command is recorded and fully particularized with the additional circumstance of the age of Noah. “The son of six hundred years,” in his six hundredth year. “Went they unto Noah.” They seem to have come under the influence of a special instinct, so that Noah did not require to gather them. Seven days were employed in receiving them, and storing provisions for them.

Verses 10-16

- XXV. The Flood

The date is here given, at which the flood commenced and the entrance into the ark was completed. “In seven days.” On the seventh day from the command. “In the second month.” The primeval year commenced about the autumnal equinox; we may say, on the nearest new moon. The rains began about a month or six weeks after the equinox, and, consequently, not far from the seventeenth of the second month. “All the fountains of the great deep, and the windows of the skies.” It appears that the deluge was produced by a gradual commotion of nature on a grand scale. The gathering clouds were dissolved into incessant showers. But this was not sufficient of itself to effect the overwhelming desolation that followed. The beautiful figure of the windows of the skies being opened is preceded by the equally striking one of the fountains of the great deep being broken up. This was the chief source of the flood. A change in the level of the land was accomplished. That which had emerged from the waters on the third day of the last creation was now again submerged. The waters of the great deep now broke their bounds, flowed in on the sunken surface, and drowned the world of man, with all its inhabitants. The accompanying heavy rain of forty days and nights was, in reality, only a subsidiary instrument in the deluging of the land. We may imagine the sinking of the land to have been so gradual as to occupy the whole of these forty days of rain. There is an awful magnificence in this constant uplifting of the billows over the yielding land.

Genesis 7:13-16

There is a simple grandeur in the threefold description of the entrance of Noah and his retinue into the ark, first in the command, next in the actual process during the seven days, and, lastly, in the completed act on the seventh day. “Every living thing after its kind” is here unaccompanied with the epithet רעה *rāʿâh* evil, or the qualifying term of the land or of the field, and therefore may, we conceive, be taken in the extent of Genesis 6:20; Genesis 7:2-3, Genesis 7:6. At all events the whole of the wild animals did not need to be included in the ark, as their range was greater than that of antediluvian man or of the flood. “And the Lord shut him in.” This is a fitting close to the scene. The whole work was manifestly the Lord‘s doing, from first to last. The personal name of God is appropriately introduced here. For the Everlasting now shows himself to be the causer or effecter of the covenant blessing promised to Noah. In what way the Lord shut him in is an idle question, altogether unworthy of the grandeur of the occasion. We

can tell nothing more than what is written. We are certain that it would be accomplished in a manner worthy of him.

Verses 17-24

The prevalence of the waters. The forty days are now completed. And at the end of this period the ark had been afloat for a long time. It was drifted on the waters in the direction in which they were flowing, and toward what was formerly the higher ground.

Genesis 7:19

Upon the land. - The land is to be understood of the portion of the earth‘s surface known to man. This, with an unknown margin beyond it, was covered with the waters. But this is all that Scripture warrants us to assert. Concerning the distant parts of Europe, the continents of Africa, America, or Australia, we can say nothing. “All the high hills were covered.” Not a hill was above water within the horizon of the spectator or of man. There were ten generations from Adam to Noah inclusive. We cannot tell what the rate of increase was. But, supposing each couple to have ten children, and therefore the common ratio to be five, the whole number of births would be about five million, and the population in the time of Noah less than four million. It is probable that they did not scatter further than the necessities and conveniences of life demanded. In a fertile region, an area equal to that of the British Isles would be amply sufficient for four million men, women, and children.

Let us suppose, then, a circle of five hundred miles in diameter inhabited by man. Let this occupy the central region of a concentric circle of eight hundred miles in diameter. With a center a little southwest of Mosul, this larger circle would reach fifty miles into the Mediterranean, the Euxine, and the Caspian, and would probably have touched the Persian Gulf at the time of the deluge. If this region were covered with water, it is obvious that no land or mountain would be visible to a spectator within the inner circle of five hundred miles in diameter. “Fifteen cubits upward.” This was half the depth of the ark. It may have taken this draught of water to float it. If so, its grounding on a hill under water would indicate the depth of water on its summit. The gradual rise of the waters was accomplished by the depression of the land, aided, possibly, by a simultaneous elevation of the bed of the ocean. The water, by the mere necessity of finding its level, overflowed the former dry land. The extent of this oscillation of the solid crust of the earth is paralleled by the changes of level which geology

indicates, the last of which took place at the time of the six days‘ creation. It is possible that most of the land that was then raised was now again temporarily submerged in the returning waters; while distant continents may have all along existed, which never came within the ken of antediluvian man. The sobriety and historical veracity of the narrative are strikingly exhibited in the moderate height to which the waters are said to have risen above the ancient hills.

Genesis 7:21-23

There expired all flesh. - The resulting death of all by drowning is here recounted. “All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of live died.” This statement refers solely to man, whose higher life is exclusively expressed by the phrase נשׁמת חיים *nîshmat chayîym* “breath of life” Genesis 2:7. It affirms the death of the whole of mankind. The sum total of animal and vegetable life, with the exception of those in the ark, is here declared to be extinguished.

Genesis 7:24

Fifty and a hundred days. - These, and the forty days of rain, make one hundred and ninety days: about six lunar months and thirteen days. If to this we add the month and seventeen days before the commencement of the rain, we have eight months completed, and are therefore brought to the first day of the ninth month. The waters may be said to prevail as long as the ark had its full draught of water. It is probable they were still rising during the first half of the hundred and fifty days, and then gradually sinking during the other half.

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CHAPTER 8

Verses 1-14
- The Land Was Dried

1. שׁכך *shākak* "stoop, assuage".

3. חסר *chāsar* "want, fail, be abated".

4. אררט *ărārāṭ* "Ararat," a land forming part of Armenia. It is mentioned in 2 Kings 19:37, and Isaiah 37:38, as the retreat of Adrammelek and Sharezer after the murder of their father; and in Jeremiah 51:27 as a kingdom.

8. קלל *qālal* "be light, lightened, lightly esteemed, swift".

10. חוּל *chûl* "twist, turn, dance, writhe, tremble, be strong, wait" יחל *yāchal* "remain, wait, hope".

13. חרב *chāreb* "be drained, desolated, amazed".

Genesis 8:1-3

The waters commence their retreat. "And God remembered Noah." He is said to remember him when he takes any step to deliver him from the waters. The several steps to this end are enumerated.

A wind. - This would promote evaporation, and otherwise aid the retreat of the waters. "The fountains of the deep and the windows of the skies were shut." The incessant and violent showers had continued for six weeks. It is probable the weather remained turbid and moist for some time longer. In the sixth month, however, the rain probably ceased altogether. Some time before this, the depressing of the ground had reached its lowest point, and the upheaving had set in. This is the main cause of the reflux of the waters. All this is described, as we perceive, according to appearance. It is probable that the former configuration of the surface was not exactly restored. At all events it is not necessary, as the ark may have drifted a considerable space in a hundred and fifty days. Some of the old ground on which primeval man had trodden may have become a permanent water bed, and a like amount of new land may have risen to the light in another place. Hence, it is vain to seek for a spot retaining the precise conditions of the primitive Eden. The

Euphrates and Tigris may substantially remain, but the Pishon and Gihon may have considerably changed. The Black Sea, the Caspian, the lakes Van and Urumiah may cover portions of the Adamic land. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the prevalence of the waters begins to turn into a positive retreat.

Genesis 8:4-5

The ark rested. - It is stranded on some hill in Ararat. This country forms part of Armenia. As the drying wind most probably came from the east or north, it is likely that the ark was drifted toward Asia Minor, and caught land on some hill in the reaches of the Euphrates. It cannot be supposed that it rested on either of the peaks now called Ararat, as Ararat was a country, not a mountain, and these peaks do not seem suitable for the purpose. The seventh month began usually with the new moon nearest the vernal equinox, or the 21st of March. "The tenth month." The waters ceased to prevail on the first of the ninth month. The ark, though grounded six weeks before, was still deep in the waters. The tops of the hills began to appear a month after. The subsiding of the waters seems to have been very slow.

Genesis 8:6-12

The raven and the dove are sent out to bring tidings of the external world. "Forty days." Before Noah made any experiment he seems to have allowed the lapse of forty days to undo the remaining effect of the forty days' rain. "The window." He seems to have been unable to take any definite observations through the aperture here called a window. The raven found carrion in abundance, floated probably on the waters, and did not need to return. This was such a token of the state of things as Noah might expect from such a messenger. He next sends the dove, who returns to him. "Yet other seven days." This intimates that he stayed seven days also after the raven was sent out. The olive leaf plucked off was a sign of returning safety to the land. It is said by Theophrastus (Hist. Plant. 4,7) and Pliny (H. N. 13,50) that the olive strikes leaves even under water. From this event, the olive branch became the symbol of peace, and the dove the emblem of the Comforter, the messenger of peace. After seven other days, the dove being despatched, returns no more. The number seven figures very conspicuously in this narrative. Seven days before the showers commence the command to enter the ark is given; and at intervals of seven days the winged messengers are sent out. These intervals point evidently to the period of seven days,

determined by the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest. The clean beasts also and the birds are admitted into the ark by seven pairs. This points to the sacredness associated with the number arising from the hallowed character of the seventh day. The number forty also, the product of four, the number of the world or universe, and ten the number of completeness, begins here to be employed for a complete period in which a process will have run its course.

Genesis 8:13-14

Noah delays apparently another month, and, on the first day of the new year, ventures to remove the covering of the ark and look around. The date of the complete drying of the land is then given. The interval from the entrance to the exit consists of the following periods:

d Rain continued

d 40 days

d

d Waters prevailed

d 150 days

d

d Waters subside

d 99 days

d

d Noah delays

d 40 days

d

d Sending of the raven and the dove

d 20 days

d

d Another month

d 29 days

d

d Interval until the 27th of the 2nd month

d 57 days

d

d Sum-total of days

d 365 days

d

d

Hence, it appears that the interval was a lunar year of three hundred and fifty-six days nearly, and ten days; that is, as nearly as possible, a solar year. This passage is important on account of the divisions of time which it brings out at this early epoch. The week of seven days is plainly intimated. The lunar month and year are evidently known. It is remarkable that the ten additional days bring up the lunar year in whole numbers to the solar. It seems a tacit agreement with the real order of nature. According to the Hebrew text, the deluge commenced in the 1656th year of the race of man. According to all texts it occurred in the time of Noah, the ninth in descent from Adam.

Verses 15-22

- XXVII. The Ark Was Evacuated

19. מִשְׁפָחָה *mîshpāchah* "kind, clan, family". שִׁפְחָה *shîpchâh* "maid-servant; related: spread".

20. מִזְבֵּחַ *mîzbēach* "altar; related: slay animals, sacrifice".

21. עֹלָה *olâh* "whole burnt-offering." That which goes up. "Step;′ עלה related: go up".

Genesis 8:15-19

The command to leave the ark is given and obeyed. As Noah did not enter, so neither does he leave the ark, without divine direction. "The fowl, the cattle, and the creeper." Here, again, these three classes are specified under the general head of every living tiring. They are again to multiply on the earth. "Every living thing." This evidently takes the place of the cattle mentioned before. "After their families." This word denotes their tribes. It is usually applied to families or clans.

Genesis 8:20-22

The offering of Noah accepted. The return to the dry land, through the special mercy of God to Noah and his house, is celebrated by an offering of thanksgiving and faith. "Builded an altar." This is the first mention of the altar, or structure for the purpose of sacrifice. The Lord is now on high, having swept away the garden, and withdrawn his visible presence at the same time from the earth. The altar is therefore erected to point toward his dwelling-place on high. "Unto the Lord." The personal name of God is especially appropriate here, as he has proved himself a covenant keeper and a deliverer to Noah. "Of all clean cattle, and every clean fowl." The mention of clean birds renders it probable that these only were taken into the ark by seven pairs Genesis 7:3. Every fit animal is included in this sacrifice, as it is expressive of thanksgiving for a complete deliverance. We have also here the first mention of the burnt-offering עלה *'olâh* the whole victim, except the skin, being burned on the altar. Sacrifice is an act in which the transgressor slays an animal and offers it in whole, or in part as representative of the whole, to God. In this act he acknowledges his guilt, the claim of the offended law upon his life, and the mercy of the Lord in accepting a substitute to satisfy this claim for the returning penitent. He at

the same time actually accepts the mercy of the Most High, and comes forward to plead it in the appointed way of reconciliation. The burnt-offering is the most perfect symbol of this substitution, and most befitting the present occasion, when life has been granted to the inmates of the ark amidst the universal death.

Genesis 8:21

The effect of this plea is here described. The Lord smelled the sweet savor. He accepted the typical substitute, and, on account of the sacrifice, the offerers, the surviving ancestors of the post-diluvian race. Thus, the re-entrance of the remnant of mankind upon the joys and tasks of life is inaugurated by an articulate confession of sin, a well-understood foreshadowing of the coming victim for human guilt, and a gracious acceptance of this act of faith. "The Lord said in his heart." It is the inward resolve of his will. The purpose of mercy is then expressed in a definite form, suited to the present circumstances of the delivered family. "I will not again curse the soil any more on account of man." This seems at first sight to imply a mitigation of the hardship and toil which man was to experience in cultivating the ground Genesis 3:17. At all events, this very toil is turned into a blessing to him who returns from his sin and guilt, to accept the mercy, and live to the glory of his Maker and Saviour. But the main reference of the passage is doubtless to the curse of a deluge such as what was now past. This will not be renewed. "Because the imagination of his heart is evil from his youth." This is the reason for the past judgment, the curse upon the soil: not for the present promise of a respite for the future. Accordingly, it is to be taken in close connection with the cursing of the soil, of which it assigns the judicial cause. It is explanatory of the preceding phrase, on account of man. The reason for the promise of escape from the fear of a deluge for the future is the sacrifice of Noah, the priest and representative of the race, with which the Lord is well pleased. The closing sentence of this verse is a reiteration in a more explicit form of the same promise. "Neither will I again smite all living as I have done." There will be no repetition of the deluge that had just overswept the land and destroyed the inhabitants.

Genesis 8:22

Henceforth all the days of the earth. - After these negative assurances come the positive blessings to be permanently enjoyed while the present

constitution of the earth continues. These are summed up in the following terms:

d HEATSowing, beginning in October

d

d Reaping, ending in June

d

d COLDEarly fruit, in July

d

d Fruit harvest, ending in September

d

d

The cold properly occupies the interval between sowing and reaping, or the months of January and February. From July to September is the period of heat. In Palestine, the seedtime began in October or November, when the wheat was sown. Barley was not generally sown until January. The grain harvest began early in May, and continued in June. The early fruits, such as grapes and figs, made their appearance in July and August; the full ingathering, in September and October. But the passage before us is not limited to the seasons of any particular country. Besides the seasons, it guarantees the continuance of the agreeable vicissitudes of day and night. It is probable that even these could not be distinguished during part of the deluge of waters. At all events, they did not present any sensible change when darkness reigned over the primeval abyss.

The term of this continuance is here defined. It is to last as long as the order of things introduced by the six days‘ creation endures. This order is

not to be sempiternal. When the race of man has been filled up, it is here hinted that the present system of nature on the earth may be expected to give place to another and a higher order of things.

Here it is proper to observe the mode of Scripture in the promise of blessing. In the infancy of mankind, when the eye gazed on the present, and did not penetrate into the future, the Lord promised the immediate and the sensible blessings of life, because these alone are as yet intelligible to the childlike race, and they are, at the same time, the immediate earnest of endless blessings. As the mind developes, and the observable universe becomes more fully comprehended, these present and sensible sources of creature happiness correspondingly expand, and higher and more ethereal blessings begin to dawn upon the mind. When the prospect of death opens to the believer a new and hitherto unknown world of reality, then the temporal and corporeal give way to the eternal and spiritual. And as with the individual, so is it with the race. The present boon is the earnest in hand, fully satisfying the existing aspirations of the infantile desire. But it is soon found that the present is always the bud of the future; and as the volume of promise is unrolled, piece by piece, before the eye of the growing race, while the present and the sensible lose nothing of their intrinsic value, the opening glories of intellectual and spiritual enjoyment add an indescribable zest to the blessedness of a perpetuated life. Let not us, then, who flow in the full tide of the latter day, despise the rudiment of blessing in the first form in which it was conferred on Noah and his descendants; but rather remember that is not the whole content of the divine good-will, but only the present shape of an ever-expanding felicity, which is limited neither by time nor sense.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verses 1-7

- The Blessing of Noah

chat "dread, breaking of חת ".*môrā'* "fear, reverence, awful deed מורא .2
".the courage

Noah is saved from the deluge. His life is twice given to him by God. He had found grace in the sight of the Lord, and now he and his family have been graciously accepted when they approached the Lord with burnt-offerings. In him, therefore, the race of man is to be begun anew. Accordingly, as at the beginning, the Lord proceeds to bless him. First. The grant of increase is the same as at first, but expressed in ampler terms. Second. Dominion over the other animals is renewed. But some reluctance on their part to yield obedience is intimated. "The fear and dread of you." These terms give token of a master whose power is dreaded, rather than of a superior whose friendly protection is sought. "Into your hand are they given." They are placed entirely at the disposal of man.

Genesis 9:3

The grant of sustenance is no longer confined to the vegetable, but extended to the animal kinds, with two solemn restrictions. This explains how fully the animals are handed over to the will of man. They were slain for sacrifice from the earliest times. Whether they were used for food before this time we are not informed. But now "every creeper that is alive" is granted for food. "Every creeper" is everything that moves with the body prone to the earth, and therefore in a creeping posture. This seems to describe the inferior animals in contradistinction to man, who walks erect. The phrase "that is alive" seems to exclude animals that have died a natural death from being used as food.

Genesis 9:4

The first restriction on the grant of animal food is thus expressed: "Flesh with its life, its blood, shall ye not eat." The animal must be slain before any part of it is used for food. And as it lives so long as the blood flows in its veins, the life-blood must be drawn before its flesh may be eaten. The design of this restriction is to prevent the horrid cruelty of mutilating or cooking an animal while yet alive and capable of suffering pain. The draining of the blood from the body is an obvious occasion of death, and

therefore the prohibition to eat the flesh with the blood of life is a needful restraint from savage cruelty. It is also intended, perhaps, to teach that the life of the animal, which is in the blood, belongs not to man, but to God himself, who gave it. He makes account of it for atonement in sacrifice; otherwise it is to be poured on the ground and covered with dust Leviticus 17:11-13.

Genesis 9:5-6

The second restriction guards human life. The shedding of human blood is sternly prohibited. "Your blood of your lives." The blood which belongs to your lives, which constitutes the very life of your corporeal nature. "Will I require." I, the Lord, will find the murderer out, and exact the penalty of his crime. The very beast that causes the death of man shall be slain. The suicide and the homicide are alike accountable to God for the shedding of man's blood. The penalty of murder is here proclaimed - death for death. It is an instance of the law of retaliation. This is an axiom of moral equity. He that deprives another of any property is bound to make it good or to suffer the like loss.

The first law promulgated in Scripture was that between Creator and creature. If the creature refuse to the Creator the obedience due, he forfeits all the Creator has given him, and, therefore, his life. Hence, when Cain murdered his brother, he only displayed a new development of that sin which was in him, and, being already condemned to the extreme penalty under the first transgression, had only a minor punishment annexed to his personal crime. And so it continued to be in the antediluvian world. No civil law is on record for the restriction of crime. Cain, indeed, feared the natural vengeance which his conscience told him his sin deserved. But it was not competent in equity for the private individual to undertake the enforcement of the penalties of natural law. So long as the law was between Creator and creature, God himself was not only the sole legislator, but the sole administrator of law.

The second law is that between creature and creature, which is here introduced on the occasion of giving permission to partake of animal food, as the first was published on that of granting the use of vegetable diet. In the former case, God is the administrator of the law, as he is the immediate and sovereign party in the legal compact. In the latter case, man is, by the express appointment of the Lord of all, constituted the executive agent. "By

man shall his blood be shed." Here, then, is the formal institution of civil government. Here the civil sword is committed to the charge of man. The judgment of death by the executioner is solemnly delegated to man in vindication of human life. This trust is conveyed in the most general terms. "By man." The divine legislator does not name the sovereign, define his powers, or determine the law of succession. All these practical conditions of a stable government are left open questions.

The emphasis is laid solely on "man." On man is impressively laid the obligation of instituting a civil constitution suited to his present fallen condition. On the nation as a body it is an incumbent duty to select the sovereign, to form the civil compact between prince and people, to settle the prerogative of the sovereign and the rights of the subjects, to fix the order of succession, to constitute the legislative, judicial, and administrative bodies, and to render due submission to the constituted authorities. And all these arrangements are to be made according to the principles of Scripture and the light of nature.

The reason why retribution is exacted in the case of man is here also given. "For in the image of God has he made man." This points on the one hand to the function of the magistrate, and on the other to the claims of the violated law; and in both respects illustrates the meaning of being created in the image of God. Man resembles God in this, that he is a moral being, judging of right and wrong, endowed with reason and will, and capable of holding and exercising rights. Hence, he is in the first place competent to rule, and on his creation authorized to exercise a mild and moral sway over the inferior creatures. His capacity to govern even among his fellow-men is now recognized. The function of self-government in civil things is now conferred upon man. When duly called to the office, he is declared to be at liberty to discharge the part of a ruler among his fellow-men, and is entitled on the ground of this divine arrangement to claim the obedience of those who are under his sway. He must rule in the Lord, and they must obey in the Lord.

However, in the next place, man is capable of, and has been actually endowed with, rights of property in himself, his children, his industrial products, his purchases, his receipts in the way of gift, and his claims by

covenant or promise. He can also recognize such rights in another. When, therefore, he is deprived of anything belonging to him, he is sensible of being wronged, and feels that the wrongdoer is bound to make reparation by giving back what he has taken away, or an equivalent in its place. This is the law of requital, which is the universal principle of justice between the wrongdoer and the wrong-sufferer. Hence, the blood of him who sheds blood is to be shed. And, in setting up a system of human government, the most natural and obvious case is given, according to the manner of Scripture, as a sample of the law by which punishment is to be inflicted on the transgressor in proportion to his crime. The case in point accordingly arises necessarily out of the permission to use animal food, which requires to be guarded on the one hand by a provision against cruelty to animals, and, on the other, by an enactment forbidding the taking away of human life, on the pain of death, by order of the civil magistrate. This case, then, turns out to be the most heinous crime which man can commit against his fellow-man, and strikingly exemplifies the great common principle of retributive justice.

The brute is not a moral being, and has, therefore, no proper rights in itself. Its blood may therefore be shed with impunity. Nevertheless, man, because he is a moral being, owes a certain negative duty to the brute animal, because it is capable of pain. He is not to inflict gratuitous or unnecessary suffering on a being susceptible of such torture. Hence, the propriety of the blood being shed before the flesh is used for food. Life, and therefore the sense of pain, is extinguished when the blood is withdrawn from the veins.

Verses 8-17

- XXIX. The Covenant with Noah

13. קֶשֶׁת *qeshet* "bow; related: be bent".

14. עָנָן *ānan* "cover, cast over; noun: cloud".

The covenant made with Noah Genesis 6:18 is now formally confirmed. The purpose conceived in the heart Genesis 8:21 now receives significant expression. Not only a new blessing is bestowed, but also a new covenant is formed with Noah. For he that has offered an acceptable sacrifice is not

only at peace with God, but renewed in mind after the image of God. He is therefore a fit subject for entering into a covenant.

Genesis 9:8-11

Unto Noah and to his sons. - God addresses the sons of Noah as the progenitors of the future race. "I establish." He not merely makes כרת *kārat* but ratifies, his covenant with them. "My covenant." The covenant which was before mentioned to Noah in the directions concerning the making of the ark, and which was really, though tacitly, formed with Adam in the garden.

Genesis 9:9-10

The party with whom God now enters into covenant is here fully described. "You and your seed after you, and every breathing living thing;" the latter merely "on account of the former." The animals are specially mentioned because they partake in the special benefit of preservation from a flood, which is guaranteed in this covenant. There is a remarkable expression employed here - "From all that come out of the ark, to every beast of the land." It seems to imply that the beast of the land, or the wild beast, was not among those that came out of the ark, and, therefore, not among those that went in. This coincides with the view we have given of the inmates of the ark.

Genesis 9:11

The benefits conferred by this form of God's covenant are here specified. First, all flesh shall no more be cut off by a flood; secondly, the land shall no more be destroyed by this means. The Lord has been true to his promise in saving Noah and his family from the flood of waters. He now perpetuates his promise by assuring him that the land would not again be overwhelmed with water. This is the new and present blessing of the covenant. Its former blessings are not abrogated, but only confirmed and augmented by the present. Other and higher benefits will flow out of this to those who rightly receive it, even throughout the ages of eternity. The present benefit is shared by the whole race descended from Noah.

Genesis 9:12-16

The token of the covenant is now pointed out. "For perpetual ages." This stability of sea and land is to last during the remainder of the human period. What is to happen when the race of man is completed, is not the question at present. "My bow." As God's covenant is the well-known and still remembered compact formed with man when the command was issued in

the Garden of Eden, so God‘s bow is the primeval arch, coexistent with the rays of light and the drops of rain. It is caused by the rays of the sun reflected from the falling raindrops at a particular angle to the eye of the spectator. A beautiful arch of reflected and refracted light is in this way formed for every eye. The rainbow is thus an index that the sky is not wholly overcast, since the sun is shining through the shower, and thereby demonstrating its partial extent. There could not, therefore, be a more beautiful or fitting token that there shall be no more a flood to sweep away all flesh and destroy the land.

It comes with its mild radiance only when the cloud condenses into a shower. It consists of heavenly light, variegated in hue, and mellowed in lustre, filling the beholder with an involuntary pleasure. It forms a perfect arch, extends as far as the shower extends, connects heaven and earth, and spans the horizon. In these respects it is a beautiful emblem of mercy rejoicing against judgment, of light from heaven irradiating and beatifying the soul, of grace always sufficient for the need of the reunion of earth and heaven, and of the universality of the offer of salvation. “Have I given.” The rainbow existed as long as the present laws of light and air. But it is now mentioned for the first time, because it now becomes the fitting sign of security from another universal deluge, which is the special blessing of the covenant in its present form. “In the cloud.” When a shower-cloud is spread over the sky, the bow appears, if the sun, the cloud, and the spectator are in the proper relation to one another. 16. “And I will look upon it to remember.” The Scripture is most unhesitating and frank in ascribing to God all the attributes and exercises of personal freedom. While man looks on the bow to recall the promise of God, God himself looks on it to remember and perform this promise. Here freedom and immutability of purpose meet.

The covenant here ostensibly refers to the one point of the absence, for all time to come, of any danger to the human race from a deluge. But it presupposes and supplements the covenant with man subsisting from the very beginning. It is clearly of grace; for the Lord in the very terms affirms the fact that the imagination of man‘s heart is evil from his youth, while at the same time the original transgression belonged to the whole race. The condition by which any man becomes interested in it is not expressed, but easily understood from the nature of a covenant, a promise, and a sign, all

of which require of us consenting faith in the party who covenants, promises, and gives the sign. The meritorious condition of the covenant of grace is dimly shadowed forth in the burnt-offerings which Noah presented on coming out of the ark. One thing, however, was surely and clearly revealed to the early saints; namely, the mercy of God. Assured of this, they were prepared humbly to believe that all would rebound to the glory of his holiness, justice, and truth, as well as of his mercy, grace, and love, though they might not yet fully understand how this would be accomplished.

Genesis 9:17

God seems here to direct Noah‘s attention to a rainbow actually existing at the time in the sky, and presenting to the patriarch the assurance of the promise, with all the impressiveness of reality.

Verses 18-29

- XXX. The Prophecy of Noah

18. כנען *kenaʿan* “Kena‹an, bowed down”.

19. נפץ *nāpats* “break, scatter, spread” פוץ *pûts* “break, scatter, flow”.

20. כרם *kerem* “orchard, vineyard”.

21. יין *yayîn* “wine; related: ferment”.

After the blessing on the new heads of the human race has been pronounced, and the covenant with them renewed, we are prepared for a new development of human action. This appears, however, in the form of an event which is itself a meet preliminary to the subsequent stage of affairs. The prophecy of Noah, delivered in the shape of a solemn paternal doom, pronounced upon his three sons, sketches in a few striking traits the future history of the separate families of mankind.

Genesis 9:18-19

These two verses form a connecting link between the preceding and the following passage. After the recital of the covenant, comes naturally the statement, that by the three sons of Noah, duly enumerated, was the whole land overspread. This forms a fit conclusion to the previous paragraph. But the penman of these sentences had evidently the following paragraph in

view. For he mentions that Ham was the father of Kenaan; which is plainly the preface to the following narrative.

Genesis 9:20-27

Then comes the prediction Genesis 9:20-27, which has a special interest, as the first prophetic utterance of man recorded in the Old Testament. The occasion of it is first stated. Noah becomes "a man of the soil." If he was before a mechanic, it is evident he must now attend to the cultivation of the soil, that he may draw from it the means of subsistence. "He planted a vineyard." God was the first planter Genesis 2:8; and since that time we hear nothing of the cultivation of trees until Noah becomes a planter. The cultivation of the vine and the manufacture of wine might have been in practice before this time, as the mention of them is merely incidental to the present narrative. But it seems likely from what follows, that, though grapes may have been in use, wine had not been extracted from them. "And was drunken." We are not in a position to estimate the amount of Noah's guilt in this case, as we do not know how far he was acquainted with the properties of wine.

But we should take warning by the consequences, and beware of the abuse of any of God's gifts. "Ham the father of Kenaan." It is natural to suppose, as some have done, that Kennan had something to do with the guilt of this act. But there is no clear indication of this in the text, and Kenann's relationship to Ham may be again mentioned simply in anticipation of the subsequent prophecy. Ham is punished in his youngest son, who was perhaps a favorite. The intention of this act is eminently pure and befitting dutiful sons. "The garment." The loose mantle or shawl which was used for wrapping round the body when going to sleep. The actions of the sons in this unpleasant occurrence, especially that of Ham, give occasion to the following prophetic sentence: "His youngest son." This seems plainly the meaning of the phrase בנו הקטן *benô haqāṭān* "his son, the little." He must be regarded here as contrasted with the other two, and therefore distinguished as the youngest.

The manner of Scripture here is worthy of particular remark. First, the prediction takes its rise from a characteristic incident. The conduct of the brothers was of comparatively slight importance in itself, but in the disposition which it betrayed it was highly significant. Secondly, the prediction refers in terms to the near future and to the outward condition of

the parties concerned. Thirdly, it foreshadows under these familiar phrases the distant future, and the inward, as well as the outward, state of the family of man. Fourthly, it lays out the destiny of the whole race from its very starting-point. These simple laws will be found to characterize the main body of the predictions of Scripture.

Genesis 9:25-27

The prophecy consists of two parts - a malediction and a benediction. "Cursed be Kenaan." A curse Genesis 3:14, Genesis 3:17; Genesis 4:11 is any privation, inferiority, or other ill, expressed in the form of a doom, and bearing, not always upon the object directly expressed, but upon the party who is in the transgression. Thus, the soil is cursed on account of Adam the transgressor Genesis 3:17. It is apparent that in the present ease the prime mover was Ham, who is therefore punished in the prospect of a curse resting on his posterity, and especially on a particular line of it. Let us not imagine, however, that the ways of the Lord are not equal in this matter; for Kenaan and his descendants no doubt abundantly deserved this special visitation. And as the other descendants of Ham are not otherwise mentioned in the prophecy, we may presume that they shared in the curse pronounced upon Kenaan. At all events, they are not expressly included in the blessing pronounced on the other two divisions of the human family, It is proper to observe, also, that this prediction does not affirm an absolute perpetuity in the doom of Ham or Kenaan. It only delineates their relative condition until the whole race is again brought within the scope of prophecy.

A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. - The curse here consists in servitude, which is in itself an inferiority, and, among the children of self-will, tends more and more to all the horrid ills of slavery. Slavery originated in war and conquest. The mere warrior put the captives to death, the cannibal devoured them, the economist fed them for their labor. Accordingly, slavery soon made its appearance in all countries which were trodden by the conqueror. A system of slavery, imposed without consent and for no crime, is a dire evil. Besides the direct injustice of robbing a fellow-man of his personal liberty, it dissolves wedlock, breaks the family tie, and disregards the conscience. It trades, therefore, in the souls as well as the bodies of mankind. It is a historical fact that the degradation of slavery has fallen especially upon the race of Ham. A portion of the Kenaanites became bondsmen among the Israelites, who were of the

race of Shem. The early Babylonians, the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, and Egyptians, who all belonged to the race of Ham, were subjugated by the Assyrians, who were Shemites, the Persians, the Macedonians, and the Romans, who were all Japhethites. And in modern times it is well known that most of the nations of Europe traded in African slaves. "A servant of servants" means a slave of the most abject kind. "Unto his brethren." If the doom of slavery be referred to the race of Ham, then his brethren are the descendants of Japheth and Shem, who have held many of the Hamites in bondage. If we limit the sentence to Kenaan, then his brethren may include the other descendants of Ham. It is said that the servile tribe is also the most tyrannical; and it is the fact that the Africans have lent themselves to the forcible seizing and selling into slavery in distant lands of their own kinsmen and fellow-countrymen.

Genesis 9:26, Genesis 9:27

And he said. - The prediction concerning the other two brothers is a distinct utterance of Noah. "Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Shem." The characteristic boon of Shem is that Yahweh, the one true, living, known God, is his God. The knowledge and worship of the Creator is preserved in the family of Shem, when it is lost or fatally obscured among the other descendants of Noah. The prophet is so conscious of the unspeakable blessing of knowing and loving the true God, that he breaks out into thanksgiving in the very act of announcing the transcendent privilege of Shem. There is a dark side, however, to this prophetic thought, as it implies that the two other families of mankind, at least for part of the period under the prophet's view, were estranged from the true and living God. History corroborates both aspects of this prophetic sentence for the space of two thousand four hundred years. During the most part of this long period the Holy Yahweh Omnipotent was unknown to the great mass of the Japhethites, Hamites, and even Shemites. And it was only by the special election and consecration of an individual Shemite to be the head of a special people, and the father of the faithful, that he did not cease to be the God of even a remnant of Shem.

Then follows the refrain, "And Kenaan shall be servant unto them." The phrase "unto them" proves that Shem here comprehends the race descended from him, and consisting of many individuals. Scripture sees the race in the father, traces up its unity to him, discerns in him the leading traits of character that often mark his remotest posterity, and identifies with him in

destiny all those of his race who continue to take after him. Thus, Adam denotes the whole race, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, its three great branches. Attention to this law of the unity, continuity, and identity of a race, will aid us much in understanding the dealings of Providence with the several branches of the human family. We learn also from the same phrase that this solemn sentence is no mere ebullition of the personal feelings of Noah. He is not speaking of Shem and Kenaan merely, but of the future races that are to spring from them. This appears still more plainly from the fact that Japheth, as well as Ham, is described as long estranged from the true God. And now that we are on spiritual ground, it ought to be observed that Kenaan‘s curse is not exclusion, either present or prospective, from the mercy of God. That is an evil he brings on himself by a voluntary departure from the living God. The curse merely affects the body - the personal liberty. It is a mere degradation from some of the natural rights of our common humanity; and does not of itself cut him off from any offer of mercy, or benefit of repentant faith.

God shall enlarge Japheth. - God is here spoken of by his generic name. This intimates, or at least coincides, with the fact that Japheth did not continue that nearness of approach to him which is implied in the use of the personal name. There is in the original a play upon the word “Japheth”, which itself signifies enlargement. This enlargement is the most striking point in the history of Japheth, who is the progenitor of the inhabitants of Europe, Asia, and America, except the region between the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean, the Euxine, the Caspian, and the mountains beyond the Tigris, which was the main seat of the Shemites. This expansive power refers not only to the territory and the multitude of the Japhethites, but also to their intellectual and active faculties. The metaphysics of the Hindus, the philosophy of the Greeks, the military prowess of the Romans, and the modern science and civilization of the world, are due to the race of Japheth. And though the moral and the spiritual were first developed among the Shemites, yet the Japhethites have proved themselves capable of rising to the heights of these lofty themes, and have elaborated that noble form of human speech, which was adopted, in the providence of God, as best suited to convey to mankind that further development of Old Testament truth which is furnished in the New.

And he shall dwell in the tents of Shem. - We regard Japheth as the subject of this sentence; because, if God were its subject, the meaning

would be substantially the same as the blessing of Shem, already given, and because this would intermingle the blessing of Shem with that of Japheth, without any important addition to our information. Whereas, when Japheth is the subject of the sentence, we learn that he shall dwell in the tents of Shem - an altogether new proposition. This form of expression does not indicate a direct invasion and conquest of the land of Shem, which would not be in keeping with the blessing pronounced on him in the previous sentence: it rather implies that this dwelling together would be a benefit to Japheth, and no injury to Shem. Accordingly, we find that when the Persians conquered the Babylonian empire, they restored the Jews to their native land; when Alexander the Great conquered the Persians, he gave protection to the Jews; and when the Romans subdued the Greek monarchy, they befriended the chosen nation, and allowed them a large measure of self-government. In their time came the Messiah, and instituted that new form of the church of the Old Testament which not only retained the best part of the ancient people of God, but extended itself over the whole of Europe, the chief seat of Japheth; went with him wherever he went; and is at this day, through the blessing of God on his political and moral influence, penetrating into the moral darkness of Ham, as well as the remainder of Shem and Japheth himself. Thus, in the highest of all senses, Japheth is dwelling in the tents of Shem.

Again comes the refrain, "And Keenan shall be servant unto them." A portion of Japheth still holds a portion of Ham in bondage. But this very bondage has been the means of bringing some of the sons of Ham to dwell in the tents of Shem; and the day is not far distant when Japheth will relinquish altogether the compulsory hold upon his brother, and consecrate his entire moral influence over him to the revival in his race of the knowledge and love of God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus, it appears that the destiny of these three great branches of the Noachic family, during the time of their separation on the high question of their relation to God, is traced out with great fidelity in this remarkable prediction. Ham is aptly represented by Kenaan, the slave, who is seized, enslaved, and sold even by his kinsmen to one another, and to the descendants of Shem and Japheth. Shem includes within his posterity the select family who know God as the Lord, the God of promise, of mercy, of salvation. Japheth is enlarged by God, and at length becomes acquainted

with him whom he once ignorantly worshipped. The historian recognizes these as salient points in the experience of the three races, so long as they continue apart. The time is approaching when this strange intermediate development will come to a happy issue, in the reunion of all the members of the human family, according to clearer and further-reaching prophecies yet to be delivered.

Genesis 9:28, Genesis 9:29

The history of Noah is now closed, in the customary form of the fifth chapter. This marks a connection between the third and fourth documents, and points to one hand as the composer, or at least compiler, of both. The document now closed could not have had the last paragraph appended to it until after the death of Noah. But, with the exception of these two verses, it might have been composed hundreds of years before. This strongly favors the notion of a constant continuator, or, at all events, continuation of the sacred history. Every new prophet and inspired writer whom God raised up added the necessary portion and made the necessary insertions in the sacred record. And hence, the Word of God had a progressive growth and adaptation to the successive ages of the church.

The present document stands between the old world and the new world. Hence, it has a double character, being the close of the antediluvian history, and the introduction to that of the postdiluvian race. It records a great event, pregnant with warning to all future generations of men. And it notes the delegation, by God to man, of authority to punish the murderer by death, and therefore to enforce all the minor sanctions of law for breaches of the civil compact. It therefore points out the institution of civil government as coming from God, and clearly exhibits the accountability of all governments to God for all the powers they hold, and for the mode in which they are exercised. This also is a great historical lesson for all ages.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verses 1-5
- Section VIII - The Nations
- Japheth

2. גמר *gomer* "Gomer, completion; related: complete;" Κιμμέριοι *Kimmerioi* מגוג *māgôg* "Magog, Caucasian, Skyth מדי *māday* "Madai, יון *yāvān* "Javan"; Ἰάων *Iaōn* "Sanskrit, Javana; Old middle: Mede תבל *tubāl* "Tubal"; Τιβαρηνοὶ *Tibareenoi* משך *meshek* "Meshek, drawing possession, valor"; Μόσχοι *Moschoi* תירס *tîyrās* "Tiras;" Θρᾷξ *Thrax* אשכנז *ashkenaz* "Ashkenaz," Ἀσκάνιος *Askanios'* תגרמה *togarmâh* "Togarmah, Thorgom, ריפת *rîypat* "Riphath," ὄρη Ῥίπαια *oree Ripaia* ancestor of the Armenians.

4. אלישה *elîyshâh* "Elishah;" Ἦλις *Eelis* Ἑλλὰς *Hellas* Αἰολεῖς *Aioleis'* תרשיש *tarshîysh* "Tarshish, breaking, fastness: Tartessus, Tarsus, Tyrseni כתים *kîtîym* "Kittim, smiters; Citienses;" Κᾶρες *Kares* דדנים *dodānîym* "Dodanim, Dodona, Dardani."

5. אי *îy* "meadow, land reached by water, island; related: be marked off' גוי *gôy* "nation; related: be born;" γεγάασι *gegaasi* or bounded (by a water line). fifth document relates to the generations of the sons of Noah. It presents first a genealogy of the nations, and then an account of the distribution of mankind into nations, and their dispersion over the earth. This is the last section which treats historically of the whole human race. Only in incidental, didactic, or prophetic passages do we again meet with mankind as a whole in the Old Testament.

The present chapter signalizes a new step in the development of the human race. They pass from the one family to the seventy nations. This great process covers the space of time from Noah to Abraham. During this period the race was rapidly increasing under the covenant made with Noah. From Shem to Abraham were ten generations inclusive; and, therefore, if we suppose the same rate of increase after as we have supposed before, there would be about fifteen million inhabitants when Abraham was thirty years of age. If, however, we take eight as the average of a family, and

suppose eleven generations after Shem at the one hundredth year of Abraham‘s life, we have about thirty million people on the earth. The average of the three sons of Noah is higher than this; for they had sixteen sons, and we may suppose as many daughters, making in all thirty-two, and, therefore, giving ten children to each household. The present chapter does not touch on the religious aspect of human affairs: it merely presents a table of the primary nations, from which all subsequent nationalities have been derived.

Genesis 10:1-2

The sons of Japheth. - Japheth is placed first, because he was, most probably, the oldest brother Genesis 9:24; Genesis 10:21, and his descendants were the most numerous and most widely spread from the birthplace of mankind. The general description of their territory is “the isles of the nations.” These were evidently maritime countries, or such as were reached by sea. These coastlands were pre-eminently, but not exclusively, the countries bordering on the north side of the Mediterranean and its connected waters. They are said to belong to the nations, because the national form of association was more early and fully developed among them than among the other branches of the race. There is, probably, a relic of Japheth in the, Ιαπετὸς *Iapetos* Japetus of the Greeks, said to be the son of Uranus (heaven), and Gaea (earth), and father of Prometheus, and thus in some way connected with the origin or preservation of the human race.

Fourteen of the primitive nations spring from Japheth. Seven of these are of immediate descent.

(1) Gomer is mentioned again, in Ezekiel Ezekiel 38:6, as the ally of Gog, by which the known existence of the nation at that period is indicated. Traces of this name are perhaps found in the Κιμμέριοι *Kimmerioi* (Homer, Odyssey Ezekiel 11:14; Herodotus Ezekiel 1:15; Ezekiel 4:12), who lay in the dark north, in the Krimea, the Kimbri who dwelt in north Germany, the Kymry, Cambri, and Cumbri who occupied Britain. These all belong to the race now called Keltic, the first wave of population that reached the Atlantic. Thus, the Γομαρεῖς *Gomareis* of Josephus (Ant. 1:6.1) may even be identified with the Galatae. This nation seems to have lain to the north of the Euxine, and to have spread out along the southern coasts of the Baltic into France, Spain, and the British Isles.

(2) Magog is mentioned, by Ezekiel Ezekiel 38:6, as the people of which Gog was the prince. It is introduced in the Apocalypse Revelation 20:8, as a designation of the remote nations who had penetrated to the ends or corners of the earth. This indicates a continually progressing people, occupying the north of Europe and Asia, and crossing, it may be, over into America. They seem to have been settled north of the Caspian, and to have wandered north and east from that point. They are accordingly identified by Josephus (Ant. 1:6.1) with the Skyths, and include the Mongols among other Skythic tribes.

(3) Madai has given name to the Medes, who occupied the southern shore of the Caspian. From this region they penetrated southward to Hindostan.

(4) Javan is traced in the Ιάονες *Iaones* Iones, who settled in the coasts of the Aegean, in Peloponnesus, Attica, and subsequently on the coast of Asia Minor, and accordingly denotes the Greeks in the language of the Old Testament Isaiah 66:19; Ezekiel 27:13; Daniel 8:21. The name Yunau is found in the cuneiform inscriptions of the times of Sargon, referring to a western people.

(5) Tubal and (6) Meshek are generally associated. (Ezekiel 27:13; 38; 39) connects them, on the one hand, with Magog, and on the other, with Javan. Josephus (Ant. 1:6.1) finds Tubal in Iberia, and Meshek in Cappadocia, tracing the name in Mazaca. Their names are seemingly detected in the Tibareni and Moschi, and their seat was probably between the Euxine and the Caspian, whence they spread themselves northward and westward. The names of the rivers Tobal and Mosqua bear a strong resemblance to these patriarchal names.

(7) Tiras is referred by Josephus to Thrace. The name is perhaps discernible in the Tyras or Dniester. The seat of the nation was east of the Euxine, whence it spread to the north. Thus, we have the original starting-points of these seven nations about the Caspian, the Euxine, and the Aegean Seas.

Genesis 10:3

Gomer has three sons, who are the founders of as many nations.

(8) Ashkenaz is supposed to have lain south of the Euxine, and to be traceable in its original name ἄξενος *axenos* and in the Ascanius and Ascania of Bithynia, perhaps in Scandinavia. Part of the nation may have migrated to Germany, which is called Ashkenaz by the Jews, and where the word Sachsen (Saxon) occurs. It perhaps contains the root of the name Asia.

(9) Riphath seems to have travelled north, and left his name in the Rhipaean mountains. Josephus, however, places him in Paphlagonia, where the name Tobata occurs (Diphath) 1 Chronicles 1:6.

(10) Togarmah is said to have been settled in Armenia. By a tradition in Moses Chorenensis, Haik, the ancestor of the Armenians, is the son of Thorgom, the son of Gomer. At all events, the Black Sea might convey colonies from Gomer to Asia Minor and Armenia.

Genesis 10:4

Javan has four sons, who are the heads of nations.

(11) Elishah is noted by Ezekiel Ezekiel 27:7 as a nation whose maritime country produced purple, which agrees with the coast of Laconia or the Corinthian Gulf. The name has been variously sought in Elis, Hellas, and Aeolis. The last is due to Josephus. It is possible that Elea or Velia, in the south of Italy, may contain some reference to the name.

(12) Tarshish is conjectured by Josephus to be the people of Cilicia; which, he affirms, was anciently called Tharsus, and the capital of which was Tarsus. But whether this be the primitive seat of Tarshish or not, it is almost certain that Spain retains the name, if not in Tarraco, at least in Tartessus.

(13) Kittim is discovered, by Josephus, in Cyprus, where we meet with the town of Citium Κίτιον *Kition* He adds, however, that all the islands and the greater part of the seacoasts are called Χεδίμ *Chedim* by the Hebrews. We may therefore presume that the Kittim spread into northern Greece, where we have a Κίτιον *Kition* in Macedonia, and ultimately into Italy, which is designated as "the isles of Kittim" Numbers 24:24; Isaiah 23:1; Jeremiah 2:10; Ezekiel 27:6; Daniel 11:30.

(14) Dodanim leaves a trace, perhaps, in Dodona, an ancient site of the Hellenes in Epirus, and perhaps in Dardania, a district of Illyricum.

Genesis 10:5

Thus, we have discovered the ancient seats of Japheth,

d **Iapetos -** , around the Caspian, the Euxine, the Aegean, and the north of the Mediterranean. From these coastlands they seem to have spread over Europe, northern, western, and southern Asia, and, both by Behring‘s Straits and the Atlantic, they at length poured into America. So true is it that Japheth was enlarged, and that by them were “the isles of the nations divided.”

In their nations. - We here note the characteristics of a nation. First. It is descended from one head. Others may be occasionally grafted on the original stock by intermarriage. But there is a vital union subsisting between all the members and the head, in consequence of which the name of the head is applied to the whole body of the nation. In the case of Kittim and Dodanim we seem to have the national name thrown back upon the patriarchs, who may have themselves been called Keth and Dodan. Similar instances occur in the subsequent parts of the genealogy. Second. A nation has a country or “land” which it calls its own. In the necessary migrations of ancient tribes, the new territories appropriated by the tribe, or any part of it, were naturally called by the old name, or some name belonging to the old country. This is well illustrated by the name of Gomer, which seems to reappear in the Cimmerii, the Cimbri, the Cymri, the Cambri, and the Cumbri. Third. A nation has its own “tongue.” This constitutes at once its unity in itself and its separation from others. Many of the nations in the table may have spoken cognate tongues, or even originally the same tongue. Thus, the Kenaanite, Phoenician, and Punic nations had the same stock of languages with the Shemites. But it is a uniform law, that one nation has only one speech within itself. Fourth. A nation is composed of many “families,” clans, or tribes. These branch off from the nation in the same manner as it did from the parent stock of the race.

Verses 6-20

- XXXII. Ham

.6 מצרים *mîtsrayîm* “Mitsraim מצר *mêtser*.” מצור *mātsôr*.” מצרים *mîtsrayîm* “perhaps double Egypt, lower and upper“. פוט *pûṭ*.” Put, troubled

7. סבא *sebā′* “Seba, drinking (man, Ethiopian)”. סבתה *sabtâh* “Sabtah”.
רעמה *raʿmâh* “Ra‹mah, shaking, trembling”. סבתכא *sabtekā′* “Sabtekha”.
שׁבא *shēbā′* “Sheba, captive”? דדן *dedān* “Dedan, going slowly”?

8. נמרד *nîmrod* “Nimrod, strong, rebel”.

10. בבל *bābel* “Babel; related: pour, mingle, confound”. ארך *erek* “Erek,′ length”. אכד *akad* “Akkad, fortress′”. כלנה *kalneh* “Kalneh”. שׁנער *shînʿār* “Shin‹ar”.

11. נינוה *nîynevēh* “Nineveh, dwelling”? עיר רחבח *rechobot ′îyr* “Rechoboth ‹ir, streets of a city”. כלח *kelach* “Kelach, completion, end, age”.

12. רסן *resen* “Resen, bridle, bit”.

13. לודים *lûdîym* “Ludim, born”? ענמים *ănāmîym* “‹Anamim, possession,ʿ sheep”. להבים *lîhābîym* “Lehabim, fiery, flaming”? נפתהים *naptuchîym* “Naphtuchim, opening”.

14. פתרסים *patrusîym* “Pathrusim”. כסלחים *kasluchîym* “Kasluchim”.
פלשׁתים *pelîshtîym* “Pelishtim”, Αλλόφυλοι *Allophuloi* “related: break, scatter; Aethiopic “migrate”. כפתרים *kaptorîym* “Kaphtorim; related: crown, capital”.

15. צידון *tsîydon* “Tsidon, hunting, affrighting”. צת *chēt* “Cheth, breaking,”.

16. יבוסי *yebûsîy* “Jebusi; related: tread”. אמרי′ *emorîy* “Emori; related: Say, be high”. גגשׁי *gîrgāshîy* “Girgashi; related: clay, clod”.

17. צוי *chîvîy* “Chivvi; related: live”. ערקי *arqîy* “‹Arqi; related: gnaw,ʿ sting”. סיני *sîynîy* “Sini; related: mud, clay”.

18. ארודי′ *arvādîy* “Arvadi; related: roam, ramble”. צמרי *tsemārîy* ; חמתי *chāmātîy* “Chamathi; noun: fastness; verb: guard”. “Tsemari; noun: wool; verb: cover”.

azâh ‹Azzah,′ עזה ”.*gerār* “Gerar; related: draw, saw, abide גרר .19
amorâh “‹Amorah;′ עמרה ”.*sedom* “Sodom; related: shut, stop סדם ”.strong
”.*admâh* “Admah; adjective: red; noun: soil′ אדמה ”.noun: sheaf; verb: bind
*lesha*ʿ “Lesha; לשע ”.*tseboyîm* “Tseboim, gazelles; verb: go forth, shine צבים
”.verb: pierce, cleave

Genesis 10:6

And the sons of Ham. - Ham the youngest of the three brothers Genesis 9:24, is placed here because he agrees with Japheth in becoming estranged from the true God, and because the last place as the more important is reserved for Shem. As the name of Japheth is preserved in the Ιαπετος *Iapetos* of the Greeks, so Chain is supposed to appear in Chemi of the Coptic, χημία *cheemia* of Plutarch, Chine of the Rosetta Stone, an old name of Egypt. This country is also called the land of Ham in Scripture Psalm 78:51; Psalm 105:23, Psalm 105:27; Psalm 106:22. But this term was of more comprehensive import, as we find some ancient inhabitants of a region in the south of Judah, said to have come from Ham 1 Chronicles 4:40. Thirty primitive nations sprang from Ham. Of these, only four were immediate descendants.

(15) Kush has left traces of his name perhaps in the Caucasus, the Caspian, and the Cossaei of Khusistan. There is an allusion in Amos (Amos 9:7) to his migration to the land south of Egypt which bears his name. This name is preserved in Gheez, the name of the ancient language of the people, and some say even in Habesh. It is possible, that some of the Kushites went toward India. To Ethiopia, however, the name generally refers in Scripture. The Ethiopians were called by Homer (Odyssey I. 23), ἔσχατοι ἀνδρῶν *eschatoi andrōn* “remotest of men.”

(16) Mizraim is the ordinary name for Egypt in the Hebrew scriptures. The singular form, Mazor, is found in later books 2 Kings 19:24; Isaiah 19:6; Isaiah 37:25.

(17) Put has with one consent been placed beyond Egypt, in the north of the continent of Africa. He is mentioned along with Lubim as the helper of Nineveh (Nab. Isaiah 3:9), and with Kush, as forming part of the army of Neko Jeremiah 46:9. His descendants penetrated far westward. A river bearing the name of Phutes has been mentioned in Mauretania, and an

inland country is designated by the name of Futa. The name may be preserved also in Buto, the capital of lower Egypt, on the Sebennytic mouth of the Nile.

(18) Kenaan settled in the country called after his name. There are some grounds for believing that this land was previously inhabited by Shemites, as the land was Shemitic. If so, the Kenaanites came in as intruders, and followed the language of their predecessors. But of this hereafter.

Genesis 10:7

Kush had five sons and two grandsons, who were reckoned among the founders of nations.

(19) Seba is associated with Kush Isaiah 43:3; Isaiah 45:14. Josephus (Ant. I. 6,2; II. 10,2) places him in Meroe, a country almost insulated by the Nile and its branches, the Astapus (Blue Nile) and Astaboras (Atbarah).

(20) Havilah occurs as the name of a country in the antediluvian times. The present Havilah may refer to a tribe in Africa, called Avalitae, lying south of Bab-el-mandeb, which corresponds very well with the situation of Kush and Seba. This nation, however, may also have a representative in the Χαυλοταῖοι *Chaulotaioi* of Strabo (xvi. 728), situated on the Persian Gulf, where some other Kushites were to be found. The fragments of this nation may have separated by migration, and left its name in both localities.

(21) Sabtah, Josephus finds in the Astaborans of Ethiopia, others in Sabota, a town in southwest Arabia.

(22) Ramah is traced in Rhegma on the southeast of Arabia.

(23) Sabteka is the third name, beginning with the same syllable. Such names are frequent from the Persian Gulf to the coast of Africa. Some find this place on the coast of Abyssinia, others in Samydake on the east side of the Persian Gulf. From Ramah are two tribes descended.

(24) Sheba, and (25) Dedan, lying in the south of Arabia or on the Persian Gulf. Daden, an island in the gulf, now Barhein, may represent the latter.

Genesis 10:8-12

In this episode Genesis 10:8-12, the author turns aside from the table of nations to notice the origin of the first great empires that were established on the earth. “And Kush begat Nimrod.” The author had before enumerated the sons of Kush, who were heads of nations. Here he singles out one of his sons or descendants, who became the first potentate of whom we have any record. He notices his qualities for rising to this position among men. “He began to be a mighty one in the land. He was mighty in hunting, before the Lord.” Hunting is a comprehensive term, indicating the taking of any species of animal, whether of the air, the sea, or the land. Nimrod‘s distinction in this respect was so great as to become proverbial. The expression, “before the Lord,” intimates, not merely that the Lord was cognizant of his proceedings, for he knoweth all things, but that Nimrod himself made no secret his designs, pursued them with a bold front and a high hand, and at the same time was aware of the name and will of Yahweh. This defiant air gives a new character to his hunting, which seems to have extended even to man, as the term is sometimes so applied (1 Samuel 24:12 (1 Samuel 24:11), Jeremiah 16:16). His name, which literally means “we shall rebel,” is in keeping with the practice of an arbitrary and violent control over men‘s persons and property.

Genesis 10:10

The beginning or first seat and the extent of his kingdom among men are then described. It consists of four towns - Babel and Erek and Akkad and Kalneh, in the land of Shinar. The number four is characteristic of Nimrod‘s kingdom. It is the mark of the four quarters of the earth, of universality in point of extent, and therefore of ambition. The site of Babel (Babylon) has been discovered in certain ruins near Hillah, chiefly on the opposite or eastern bank of the Euphrates, where there is a square mound called Babil by the natives. Erek has been traced also on the east bank of the Euphrates, about one hundred miles southeast of Babil, or half way between the city and the confluence of the rivers. It is the Orchoe of the Greeks, and the ruins now bear the name of Urka, or Warka. This name appears as Huruk on the cuneiform inscriptions of the place. Akkad, in the Septuagint. Archad, Col. Taylor finds in Akkerkoof, north of Babel, and about nine miles west of the Tigris, where it approaches the Euphrates. Here there is a hill or mound of ruins called Tel Nimrud. Rawlinson finds the name Akkad frequent in the inscriptions, and mentions Kingi Akkad as part of the kingdom of Urukh, but without identifying the site. Kalneh, Kalno, Isaiah

10:9; Kanneh, Ezekiel 27:23, is regarded by Jerome, and the Targum of Jonathan, as the same with Ktesiphon on the Tigris, in the district of Chalonitis. Its ruins are near Takti Kesra. Rawlinson identifies it with Niffer, but without assigning satisfactory grounds. The sites of these towns fix that of Shinar, which is evidently the lower part of Mesopotamia, or, more precisely, the country west of the Tigris, and south of Is, or Hit, on the Euphrates, and Samara on the Tigris. It is otherwise called Babylonia and Chaldaea.

Genesis 10:11, Genesis 10:12

Out of that land came he forth to Asshur. - This may be otherwise rendered, "out of that land came forth Asshur." The probabilities in favor of the former translations are the following: First. The discourse relates to Nimrod. Second. The words admit of it. Third. The word Asshur has occurred hitherto only as the name of a country. Fourth. Asshur, the person, was considerably older than Nimrod, and had probably given name to Asshur before Nimrod's projects began. Fifth. Asshur would have been as great a man as Nimrod, if he had founded Nineveh and its contiguous towns; which does not appear from the text. Sixth. "The beginning of his kingdom" implies the addition to it contained in these verses. Seventh. And the phrases "in the land of Shinar, out of that land," and the need of some definite locality for the second four cities, are in favor of the former rendering.

Asshur was a country intersected by the Tigris. It included the part of Mesopotamia north of Shinar, and the region between the Tigris and Mount Zagros. Its extension westward is undefined by any natural boundary, and seems to have varied at different times. Nineveh was a well-known city of antiquity, situated opposite Mosul on the Tigris. The country in which it was placed is called by Strabo Aturia, a variation seemingly of Asshur. It's remains are now marked by the names Nebbi-yunus and Koyunjik. Rehoboth-ir, the city broadway or market, has not been identified. Kelah is said to be now marked by the ruin called Nimrud. This lies on the left bank of the Tigris, near its confluence with the greater Zab, Its name seems to be preserved in the Calachene of Strabo. It was about twenty miles south of Nineveh. It is possible, however, so far as we can conjecture from conflicting authorities, that Kelah may be Kileh Sherghat, about fifty miles south of Mosul, on the right bank of the Tigris. Resen is placed by the text, between Nineveh and Kelah, and is therefore probably represented by

Selamiyeh, a village about half way between Koyunjik and Nimrud. If Kelah, however, be Kileh Sherghat, Resen will coincide with Nimrud. "That is the great city."

This refers most readily to Resen, and will suit very well if it be Nimrud, which was evidently extensive. It may, however, refer to Nineveh. This completion of Nimrod's kingdom, we see, contains also four cities. The Babylonian and Assyrian monarchies were akin in origin, and allied in their history and in their fall. They were too near each other to be independent, and their mutual jealousies at length brought about the ruin of the northern capital. A Kushite, and therefore a Hamite, founded this first world-monarchy or tyranny. Another Hamite power arose simultaneously in Egypt. A branch of the Kushites seem to have gone eastward, and spread over India. But another branch spread through the South of Arabia, and, crossing into Africa, came into contact, sometimes into alliance, and sometimes into collision with the Egyptian monarchy. The eastern empire is noticed particularly, because it intruded into Shemitic ground, and aimed continually at extending its sway over the nations descended from Shem.

Genesis 10:13-14

Mizraim has seven sons, from whom are derived eight nations.

(26) the Ludim are probably mentioned in Isaiah 66:19, in connection with Tarshish and Put; in Jeremiah 46:9, in connection with Kush and Put; and in Ezekiel 27:10; Ezekiel 30:5, in connection with Put. In all these instances the name is in the singular, but in our text in the plural, expressly denoting the nation of which Lud was the progenitor. The Ludim were distinguished for the use of the bow. They were, doubtless, an African tribe, related to the Egyptians, and well known to the prophets, though their country cannot now be pointed out. Josephus intimates that they were destroyed, as well as other tribes descended from Mizraim, in the Ethiopic war of the time of Moses; but they still existed in the times of Ezekiel. Movers finds them in the Lewatah, a tribe of Berbers. Others place them in Mauretania. Pliny mentions a river Laud in Tingitana.

(27) the Anamim are not elsewhere mentioned.

(28) the Lehabim are generally identified with the Lubim 2 Chronicles 12:3; 2 Chronicles 16:8; Daniel 2:43; Nahum 3:9, who are introduced in

connection with the Kushim. They are probably the Libyans, who lay to the west of Egypt, and, extending from the Mediterranean indefinitely to the south, came into contact with the Kushites of Abyssinia.

(29) the Naphtuhim Bochart places in Nephthys, near Pelusium on the Lake Sirbonis. Others find a trace of them in Napata, a town of Meroe. This agrees with the indications of Josephus and the Targum of Jonathan.

(30) the Pathrusim have their place in Pathros, a name of upper Egypt or the Thebais. It is arranged by Isaiah Isaiah 2:11 between Egypt and Kush.

(31) the Kasluhim are supposed by some to be represented by the Colchians, whom Herodotus (ii. 104) traces to Egypt. It is possible the Colchians may have been a colony from them. But their original seat must have been somewhere on the coast of the Red Sea.

(32) Philistim, who came from (31). The Philistines dwelt on the coast of the Mediterranean, from the border of Egypt to Joppa. They had five principal cities, - Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron. They gave the name פלשת *peleshet* Pelesheth, to the whole of Kenaan, from which is derived the Greek name Παλαιστὶνη *Palaistinee* "Palaestina." They are stated by the text to be a colony or offshoot of the Kasluhim.

(33) Kaphtorim. From Jeremiah 47:4, it appears that Kaphtor was a coastland. From Amos 9:7, we learn that the Philistines came from this land. Hence, we conclude that the Kaphtorim dwelt on the coast of the Red Sea, adjacent to the Kasluchim, and left their name, perhaps, in Koptos and Αἴγυπτος *Aiguptos* Cappadocia, Crete, and Cyprus only slightly resemble the name, and have no other recommendation. The Kasluhim may have been their southern neighbors, and thus the Philistines may have occupied a part of Kaphtor, before their settlement on the coast of the Great Sea, within the borders of Kenaan, where they would, of course, be another tribe (ἀλλόφυλοι *allophuloi*). This account of these descendants of Mizraim agrees best with the hint of Josephus, that many of them bordered on the Ethiopians; and perished, or perhaps were forced to migrate, in the Ethiopic or other wars (i. 6,3). Thus, it appears that the descendants of Mizraim were

settled in Africa, with the exception of the Philistines, who migrated into the country to which they gave their name.

Genesis 10:15-19

From Kenaan are descended eleven nations:

(34) Zidon is styled his first-born. The name is retained in the well-known town on the coast of Phoenicia, which is accordingly of the highest antiquity among the cities of that region. The Sidonians were reckoned co-extensive with the Phoenicians, and are mentioned by Homer (Iliad 23:743; Odyssey 4:618).

(35) Heth. This tribe dwelt about Hebron and in the mountains around, and perhaps still further north in the districts extending toward the Euphrates Genesis 23:3; Numbers 13:29; Joshua 1:4. Esau took wives from the Hittites Genesis 26:34-35, and some part of the nation existed even after the captivity Ezra 9:1.

(36) the Jebusite has his chief seat in and around Jerusalem, which was called Jebus, from his chief; and the citadel of which was wrested from him only in the time of David 2 Samuel 5:7.

(37) the Amorite was one of the most important and extensive tribes of Kenaan. Five kings of this nation dwelt in the mountains afterward occupied by Judah Genesis 14:7, Genesis 14:13; Numbers 13:29; Joshua 10:5, and two on the east of the Jordon, in Heshbon and Bashan, north of Moab Numbers 21:13; Deuteronomy 4:47. The eastern Amorites were conquered under Moses, the western under Joshua. A remnant of them were made bondsmen by Solomon 1 Kings 9:20. They survived the captivity Ezra 9:1.

(38) the Girgashite seems to have lain on the west of the Jordan, and the name may be preserved in the reading Γεργεσηνῶν *Gergesēnōn* of Matthew 8:28. The town of the Gergesenes is supposed to have been at the southeast of the lake of Gennesaret Genesis 15:21; Deuteronomy 7:1; Joshua 24:11.

(39) the Hivite was found at Shalem, Gibeon, and also at the foot of Hermon and Antilibanus Genesis 34:2; Joshua 9:7; Joshua 11:3; Judges 3:3. The former were also classed under the Amorites Genesis 48:22; 2 Samuel

21:2. With the exception of four cities of the Gibeonites, they were conquered by Joshua Joshua 9:17; Joshua 11:3, Joshua 11:19.

(40) the Arkite probably dwelt near a town called Arke or Caesarea Libani, lying some miles north of Tripolis, at the foot of Lebanon. Its ruins are still extant at Tel Arka.

(41) the Sinite is supposed to have dwelt in Sinna, a town mentioned by Strabo, called Sine by Jerome, and Syn in the fifteenth century (Strab. xvi. 2,18; Hieron. Quaest. in Gen., Breitenbach, Travels, p. 47), not far from Arke.

(42) the Arvadite dwelt in Arvad, Aradus, now Ruad, a Phoenician town on an island of the same name.

(43) the Zemarite has been traced in the town Σίμυρα *Simura* the ruins of which were found by Shaw at the western foot of Lebanon, under the name of Sumra.

(44) the Hamathite was the inhabitant of Hamath, called Hamath Rabbah (the great), by the Greeks Epiphaneia, and at present Hamah. It is situated on the Orontes, and held an important place in the history of Israel. The land of Hamath was of great extent, including the town of Riblab 2 Kings 25:21 and reaching even to Antioch. The entrance of Hamath חמת בוא *bô' chamāt* the northern part of the valley between Lebanon and Antilibanus, formed the utmost boundary of Palestine to the north Numbers 13:21; Joshua 13:5; 1 Kings 8:65. Its king was in alliance with David 2 Samuel 8:10.

And afterward were the families of the Kenaanites spread abroad. - After the confusion of tongues were these nations formed; and after the formation of these Kenaanic tribes occurred the dispersion spoken of in the text. We do not know what was the original seat of the Kenaanites; or whether the dispersion here mentioned was violent or not. Its primary result, however, seems to have been their settlement in the country of which the boundaries are next described. It is not improbable that this land was allotted to a portion of the Shemites, and occupied by them when the Kenaanites entered and established themselves among them Genesis 40:15.

The Kenaanites probably had the same grasping tendency which displayed itself in Nimrod, their kinsman; and therefore seized upon the country with a high hand, and called it after their name. Their expulsion, on the conquest of the land by the Israelites, and their commercial activity, led to a still further dispersion; as colonies were sent out by them to the distant shores of the Mediterranean, to Asia Minor, Greece, Africa, Spain, and even the British Isles. But it can scarcely be supposed that reference is here made to these subsequent events in their history.

Genesis 10:19

The border of Kenaan, as here described, extends along the coast from Zidon in the direction of (as thou goest unto) Gerar, which lay between Kadesh and Shur Genesis 20:1, and has its name preserved in the Wady el-Jerur, which is nearly in a line connecting Ain el-Weibeh and Suez. It turns at Azzah (Gaza), and passes to the cities of the plain, of which the later history is so memorable. Its terminating point is Lesha, which is generally supposed to be Callirrhoe, to the northeast of the Dead Sea, so called from the hot springs which form a stream flowing into the lake. It is possible, however, that Lesha is only another variation of Laish and Leshem, a city belonging to the Sidonians, and situated near the sources of the Jordan. Thus, we have the western, southern, and eastern border briefly given in this verse. It is manifest, however, that they did not confine themselves to these limits, but "afterward spread abroad" into the adjacent regions. The Hittite went to the northeast; the Amorite crossed the Jordan, and occupied a great part of Peraea; the Hivite, the Arkite, the Sinite, the Arvadite, the Zemarite, and the Hamathite stretched far north of the boundary.

Genesis 10:20

The list of the Hamites is summed up Genesis 10:20 in the usual form. It appears that Ham occupied Africa and a certain portion of Asia along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, in the south of Arabia, about the lower valley of the Frat and Diljah, and perhaps along the south of Asia. In extent of territory, Japheth ultimately far exceeded, as he occupied most of Asia and almost all of Europe and the New World. Ham is next to him, as he inherited Africa and a portion of Asia. Some of his descendants have also been forcibly transplanted to the New Hemisphere. But in point of political contact with Shem, Japheth, in early times, sinks comparatively into the shade, and Ham assumes the prominent place. Babylon, Kush, Egypt, and Kenaan are the powers which come into contact with Shem, in that central

line of human history which is traced in the Bible. Hence, it is that in the table of nations special attention is directed to Kush, Nimrod, Mizraim, and to the tribes and borders of Kenaan.

Verses 21-32

- XXXIII. Shem

21. אבר′ ‹Eber, yonder side; verb: pass, cross “*eber*.”

22. עילם′ ‹Elam “*eylām*.” עוּל‘ suckle “*ûl*.” עלם‘ hide; be mature “*ālam*.”
ארפכשד′ Arpakshad “*arpakshad*.” כשד ארף′ boundary of Kesed, “*arp keśed*
or (von-Bohlen) Arjapakshata, beside Aria “*ărām*.” ארם′ Aram, high; verb: be high.”

23. עוץ‘ ‹Uts; verb: counsel; be firm, solid “*ûts*.” חול′ Chul; verb: “*chûl*
rub, twist, writhe, be strong, await “*geter*.” גתר Gether, bridge “?*meshek*
Mash; related: feel, touch.” מש

24. שלח Shelach, missile, shoot “*shelach*.”

25. פלג Peleg; noun: brook, canal; verb: divide “*peleg*.” יקטן Joctan, small.” *yāqṭān*

26. אלמודד′ Almodad “measure.” *almôdād*. למד learn “*lāmad*.” מדד measure.” *mādad*
שלף′ Sheleph; verb: draw out or off “*shelep*.” חצרמות Chatsarmāvet “court of death
Jerach, moon, month.” ירח *yerach*

27. הדורם Hadoram, “majesty, beauty;” verb: “swell, honor *hadôrām*.”
אוזל′ Uzal; verb: “go out or away *ûzāl*.” דקלה Diclah, “palm *dîqlâh*.”

28. עובל‘ ‹Obal, “bare, bald *ôbāl*.” אבימאל′ father of *ăbîymā'ēl* Abimael,
(circumcision) Mael.”

29. אופיר′ Ophir; verb: “break, veil *ôpîr*.” יובב Jobab; verb: “cry, call.”

30. משא Mesha *mēshā'*, שאה *shā'âh* = שוא roar, crash “*shô'*.” ספר *sepār*
Sephar, “counting. writing.”

From Japheth, who penetrated into the remotest regions, the writer proceeds to Ham, who came into close contact with Shem. From Ham, he passes to Shem, in whom the line of history is to be continued.

Genesis 10:21

Shem is here distinguished by two characteristics - the former referring to a subsequent, the latter to an antecedent event. He is "the father of all the sons of Heber." It is evident from this that the sons of Heber cast luster on the family of Shem, and therefore on the whole human race. It is unnecessary to anticipate the narrative, except so far as to note that the sons of Heber include most of the Arabians, a portion of those who mingled with the race and inhabited the land of Aram, and, most probably, the original element of the population in the land of Kenaan. This characteristic of Shem shows that the table in which it is found was composed after the Hebrews had become conspicuous among the descendants of Shem.

Shem is next distinguished as the "older brother of Japheth"; that is, older than Ham. This interpretation of the words is most agreeable to the Hebrew idiom, and is the only one which affords an important sense. That Shem was the second son appears from the facts that Ham was the youngest Genesis 9:24, that Shem was born in the five hundred and third year of Noah Genesis 11:10, and, therefore, Japheth must have been the one born when Noah was in his five hundredth year Genesis 5:32. The reason for inserting this statement is to prevent the order in which the brothers are introduced in the pedigree from being taken as that of their age, instead of that of the historical relationship subsisting among the nations descended from them.

Genesis 10:22

Twenty-six of the primitive nations are descended from Shem, of which five are immediate.

(45) Elam was settled in a part of the modern Persia, to which he gave name. This name seems to be preserved in Elymais, a province of that country bordering on the Dijlah, and now included in Khusistan. It was early governed by its own kings Genesis 14:1, and continued to occupy a distinct place among the nations in the time of the later prophets Isaiah 22:6; Jeremiah 49:34; Ezekiel 32:24. Its capital was Shushan or Susa Daniel 8:2, now Shuster.

(46) Asshur seems to have originally occupied a district of Mesopotamia, which was bounded on the east by the Tigris Genesis 2:14. The inviting plains and slopes on the east of the Tigris would soon occasion a migration of part of the nation across that river. It is possible there may have been an ancient Asshur occupying the same region even before the flood Genesis 2:14.

(47) Arpakshad is traced in Ἀῤῥαπαχῖτις *Arrapachitis* Arrhapachitis, a region in the north of Assyria. V. Bohlen and Benfey identify it with Ariapakshata, denoting a country beside Aria. Gesenius renders it border or stronghold of the Kasdim; but the components of the word are uncertain. The nations descended from Arpakshad are noted at the close on account of their late origin, as well as their import for the subsequent narrative.

(48) Lud is usually identified with the Lydians, Λυδοὶ *Ludoi* who by migration at length reached and gave their name to a part of the west coast of Asia Minor.

(49) Aram gave name to the upper parts of Mesopotamia and the parts of Syria north of Palestine. Hence, we read of Aram Naharaim (of the two rivers), Aram Dammesek (of Damascus), Aram Maakah on the southwest border of Damascus, about the sources of the Jordan, Aram Beth Rechob in the same neighborhood, and Aram Zoba to the north of Damascus. The name is perhaps varied in the Ἄριμοι *Arimoi* of Homer (Iliad 2:783) and Strabo (xiii. 4,6). From Aram are descended four later nations.

Genesis 10:23

(50) Uz (Ἀνσῖτις *Ausitis* Septuagint.) the chief of a people having their seat in the north of Arabia Deserta, between Palestine and the Euphrates. From this Uz it is possible that the sons of Nahor and of Seir Genesis 22:21; Genesis 36:28 obtained their name. Job dwelt in this land.

(51) Hul is supposed to have his settlement about the sources of the Jordan in Huleh. Others trace this nation in the Hylatae (Pliny 5:19) near Emesa.

(52) Gether is of uncertain position, probably in Arabia.

(53) Mash may have left a trace of his name in Mons Masius, Karajah Dagh, south of Diarbekir, and perhaps also in the Mysians and Moesians, who may have wandered westward from under this mountain.

Genesis 10:24

Arpakshad begat (54) Shelah. We know nothing of the nation of which he was the founder. He begat

(55) Heber. He is the progenitor of the Hebrews, the race to which Abraham belonged. He is marked out very prominently for reasons partly unknown to us at this distance of time, but partly no doubt because he was the ancestor of the chosen race who immediately preceded the confusion of tongues, and to whom belonged that generic Hebrew tongue, which afterward branched into several dialects, of which the Hebrew, now strictly so called, was one. It is probable that most of the diversified modes of speech retained the substance of the primeval speech of mankind. And it is not improbable, for various reasons, that this Hebrew tongue, taken in its largest sense, deviated less from the original standard than any other. The Shemites, and especially the Hebrews, departed less from the knowledge of the true God than the other families of man, and, therefore, may be presumed to have suffered less from the concussion given to the living speech of the race.

The knowledge previously accumulated of the true God, and of his will and way, would have been lost, if the terms and other modes of expressing divine things had been entirely obliterated. It is consonant with reason, then, to suppose that some one language was so little shaken from its primary structure as to preserve this knowledge. We know as a fact, that, while other nations retained some faint traces of the primeval history, the Hebrews have handed down certain and tangible information concerning former things in a consecutive order from the very first. This is a proof positive that they had the distinct outline and material substance of the primeval tongue in which these things were originally expressed. In keeping with this line of reasoning, while distinct from it, is the fact that the names of persons and things are given and explained in the Hebrew tongue, and most of them in that branch of it in which the Old Testament is composed. We do not enter further into the special nature of the Hebrew family of languages, or the relationship in which they are found to stand with the

other forms of human speech than to intimate that such investigations tend to confirm the conclusions here enunciated.

Genesis 10:25

This nation was very extensive, and accordingly branched out into several, of which the immediate ones are Peleg and Joctan.

(56) Peleg is remarkable on account of the origin assigned to his name. "In his days was the land divided." Here two questions occur. What is the meaning of the earth being divided, and what is the time denoted by "his days?" The verb "divide" (פלג *pālag*) occurs only three times elsewhere in the Hebrew scriptures 1 Chronicles 1:19; Job 38:25; Psalm 55:10. The connection in which this rare word is used in the Psalm, "divide their tongues," seems to determine its reference in the present passage to the confusion of tongues and consequent dispersion of mankind recorded in the following chapter. This affords a probable answer to our first question. The land was in his days divided among the representative heads of the various nations. But to what point of time are we directed by the phrase "in his days?" Was the land divided at his birth, or some subsequent period of his life? The latter is possible, as Jacob and Gideon received new names, and Joshua an altered name, in later life.

The phrase "in his days" seems to look the same way. And the short interval from the deluge to his birth appears scarcely to suffice for such an increase of the human family as to allow of a separation into nations. Yet, on the other hand, it is hard to find any event in later life which connected this individual more than any other with the dispersion of man. It is customary to give the name at birth. The phrase "in his days" may, without any straining, refer to this period. And if we suppose, at a time when there were only a few families on the earth, an average increase of ten children in each in four generations, we shall have a thousand, or twelve hundred full-grown persons, and, therefore, may have five hundred families at the birth of Peleg. We cannot suppose more than fifty-five nations distinguished from one another at the dispersion, as Heber is the fifty-fifth name, and all the others are descended from him.

And if three families were sufficient to propagate the race after the flood, nine or ten were enough to constitute a primeval tribe or nation. We see some reason, therefore, to take the birth of Peleg as the occasion on

which he received his name, and no stringent reason for fixing upon any later date. At all events the question seems to be of no chronological importance, as in any case only four generations preceded Peleg, and these might have been of comparatively longer or shorter duration without materially affecting the number of mankind at the time of his birth. Peleg is also remarkable as the head of that nation out of which, at an after period, the special people of God sprang. Of the Palgites, as a whole, we hear little or nothing further in history.

(57) Joctan, if little or insignificant as an individual or a nation, is the progenitor of a large group of tribes, finding their place among the wandering races included afterward under the name Arabic. Cachtan, as the Arabs designate him in their traditions, may have given name to Cachtan, a town and province mentioned by Niebuhr.

Genesis 10:26-29

The thirteen tribes of the Joctanites or primitive Arabs are enumerated here in Genesis 10:26-29.

(58) Almodad is usually referred to Yemen. The first syllable may be the Arabic article. Mudad is the name of one celebrated in Arab story as the stepfather of Ishmael and chief of the Jurhum tribe of Joctanites. The Ἀλλουμαιῶται *Alloumaiōtai* of Ptolemy belonged to the interior of Arabia Felix.

(59) Sheleph is traced in the Σαλαπηνοὶ *Salapeenoi* of Ptolemy (vi. 7), belonging to the interior.

(60) Hazarmaveth gives name to a district on the Indian Ocean, abounding in spices, now called Hadramaut. This tribe is the Chatramitae of Greek writers.

(61) Jerah occupied a district where are the coast and mountain of the moon, near Hadramaut.

(62) Hadoram is preserved in the tribe called Ἀδραμῖται *Adamitai* Atramitae, placed by Pliny (vi. 28) between the Homerites and the Sachalites on the south coast of Arabia.

(63) Uzal perhaps gave the ancient name of Azal to Sana, the capital of Yemen, a place still celebrated for the manufacture of beautiful stuffs.

(64) Diclah settled possibly in the palm-bearing region of the Minaei in Hejaz.

(65) Obal is otherwise unknown.

(66) Abimael is equally obscure. Bochart supposes there is a trace of the name in Μάλι *Mali* a place in Arabia Aromatifera.

(67) Sheba is the progenitor of the Sabaei in Arabia Felix, celebrated for spices, gold, and precious stones, and noted for the prosperity arising from traffic in these commodities. A queen of Sheba visited Solomon. The dominant family among the Sabaeans was that of Himjar, from whom the Himjarites (Homeritae) of a later period descended.

(68) Ophir gave name to a country celebrated for gold, precious stones, and almug wood, which seems to have lain on the south side of Arabia, where these products may be found. What kind of tree the almug is has not been clearly ascertained. Some suppose it to be the sandal wood which grows in Persia and India; others, a species of pine. If this wood was not native, it may have been imported from more distant countries to Ophir, which was evidently a great emporium. Others, however, have supposed Ophir to be in India, or Eastern Africa. The chief argument for a more distant locality arises from the supposed three years‘ voyage to it from Ezion-geber, and the products obtained in the country so reached. But the three years‘ voyage 1 Kings 10:22; 2 Chronicles 9:21 seems to be in reality to Tarshish, a very different region.

(69) Havilah here is the founder of a Joctanite tribe of Arabs, and therefore his territory must be sought somewhere in the extensive country which was occupied by these wandering tribes. A trace of the name is probably preserved in Khawlan, a district lying in the northwest of Yemen, between Sana and Mecca, though the tribe may have originally settled or extended further north.

(70) Jobab has been compared with the Ἰωβαρῖται *Iōbaritai* of Ptolemy (vi. 7). Bochart finds the name in the Arabic: *yobab* a desert.

Genesis 10:29

The situation of Mesha is uncertain. But it is obviously the western boundary of the settlement, and may have been in the neighborhood of Mecca and Medina. Sephar is perhaps the Arabic Zaphari, called by the natives Isfor, a town on the south coast near Mirbat. It seems, however, to be, in the present passage, the "mount of the east" itself, a thuriferous range of hills, adjacent, it may be, to the seaport so-called. Gesenius and others fix upon Mesene, an island at the head of the Persian Gulf, as the Mesha of the text. But this island may have had no existence at the time of the Joctanite settlement. These boundaries include the greater part of the west and south coast of the peninsula, and are therefore sufficient to embrace the provinces of Hejaz (in part), Yemen, and Hadramaut, and afford space for the settlements of the thirteen sons of Joctan. The limits thus marked out determine that all these settlers, Ophir among the rest, were at first to be found in Arabia, how far soever they may have wandered from it afterward.

Genesis 10:31-32

Genesis 10:31 contains the usual closing formula for the pedigree of the Shemite tribes; and Genesis 10:32 contains the corresponding form for the whole table of nations.

From a review of these lands it is evident that Shem occupied a much smaller extent of territory than either of his brothers. The mountains beyond the Tigris, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Levant, the Archipelago, and the Black Sea, bound the countries that were in part peopled by Shem. Arabia, Syria, and Assyria contained the great bulk of the Shemites, intermingled with some of the Hamites. The Kushites, Kenaanites, and Philistines trench upon their ground. The rest of the Hamites peopled Africa, and such countries as were supplied from it. The Japhethites spread over all the rest of the world.

In this table there are 70 names, exclusive of Nimrod, of heads of families, tribes, or nations descended from the 3 sons of Noah - 14 from Japheth, 30 from Ham, and 26 from Shem. Among the heads of tribes descended from Japheth are 7 grandsons. Among those from Ham are 23 grandsons and 3 great-grandsons. Among those of Shem are 5 grandsons, one great-grandson, 2 of the fourth generation, and 13 of the fifth. Whence,

it appears that the subdivisions are traced further in Ham and much further in Shem than in Japheth, and that they are pursued only in those lines which are of importance for the coming events in the history of Shem.

It is to be observed, also, that, though the different races are distinguished by the diversity of tongues, yet the different languages are much less numerous than the tribes. The eleven tribes of Kenaanites, and the thirteen tribes of Joctanites, making allowance for some tribal peculiarities, most probably spoke at first only two dialects of one family of languages, which we have designated the Hebrew, itself a branch of, if not identical with, what is commonly called the Shemitic. Hence, some Hamites spoke the language of Shem. A similar community of language may have occurred in some other instances of diversity of descent.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verses 1-9

- The Confusion of Tongues

1. נסע *nāsaʿ* "pluck out, break up, journey" *nāsa*. מקדם "*mîqedem* "eastward, or on the east side" as in Genesis 2:14; Genesis 13:11; Isaiah 9:11 (12).

6. החלם *hachîlām* "their beginning", for החלם *hăchîlām* the regular form of this infinitive with a suffix. יזמו *yāzmû* as if from יזם *yāzam* = זמם *zāmam* usually said to be for נבלה *nābelâh* from נבלה *nābolâh* but בלל *bālal* evidently designed by the punctuator to be the third singular feminine נבל *nābal* "to be confounded," having for its subject שׂפה *śāpâh* perfect of נבל "and there let their lip be confounded." The two verbs have the same root.

9. בבל *bābel* Babel, "confusion," derived from בל *bl* the common root of בלל *bālal* and נבל *nābel* by doubling the first radical.

Having completed the table of nations, the sacred writer, according to his wont, goes back to record an event of great moment, both for the explanation of this table and for the future history of the human race. The point to which he reverts is the birth of Peleg. The present singular passage explains the nature of that unprecedented change by which mankind passed from one family with a mutually intelligible speech, into many nations of diverse tongues and lands.

Genesis 11:1

The previous state of human language is here briefly described. "The whole land" evidently means the whole then known world with all its human inhabitants. The universality of application is clearly and constantly maintained throughout the whole passage. "Behold, the people is one." And the close is on this point in keeping with the commencement. "Therefore was the name of it called Babel, because the Lord had there confounded the lip of all the land."

Of one lip, and one stock: of words. - In the table of nations the term "tongue" was used to signify what is here expressed by two terms. This is not undesigned. The two terms are not synonymous or parallel, as they form the parts of one compound predicate. "One stock of words," then, we conceive, naturally indicates the matter, the substance, or material of

language. This was one and the same to the whole race. The term "lip," which is properly one of the organs of articulation, is, on the other hand, used to denote the form, that is, the manner, of speaking; the mode of using and connecting the matter of speech; the system of laws by which the inflections and derivations of a language are conducted. This also was one throughout the human family. Thus, the sacred writer has expressed the unity of language among mankind, not by a single term as before, but, with a view to his present purpose, by a combination of terms expressing the two elements which go to constitute every organic reality.

Genesis 11:2-4

The occasion of the linguage change about to be described is here narrated. "As they journeyed eastward." The word "they" refers to the whole land of the previous verse, which is put by a common figure for the whole race of man. "Eastward" is proved to be the meaning of the phrase מקדם *mîqedem* by Genesis 13:11, where Lot is said to journey (מקדם *mîqedem*) from Bethel to the plain of the Jordan, which is to the east. The human race, consisting it might be of five hundred families, journeys eastward, with a few points of deflection to the south, along the Euphrates valley, and comes to a plain of surpassing fertility in the land of Shinar (Herod. 1:178,193). A determination to make a permanent abode in this productive spot is immediately formed.

Genesis 11:3-4

A building is to be erected of brick and asphalt. The Babylonian soil is still celebrated for these architectural materials. There is here a fine clay, mingled with sand, forming the very best material for brick, while stones are not to be found at a convenient distance. Asphalt is found boiling up from the soil in the neighborhood of Babylon and of the Dead Sea, which is hence called the "lacus Asphaltites." The asphalt springs of Is or Hit on the Euphrates are celebrated by many writers. "Burn them thoroughly." Sun-dried bricks are very much used in the East for building purposes. These, however, were to be burned, and thereby rendered more durable. "Brick for stone." This indicates a writer belonging to a country and an age in which stone buildings were familiar, and therefore not to Babylonia. Brickmaking was well known to Moses in Egypt; but this country also abounds in quarries and splendid erections of stone, and the Sinaitic peninsula is a mass of granitic hills. The Shemites mostly inhabited countries abounding in

stone. “Asphalt for mortar.” Asphalt is a mineral pitch. The word rendered mortar means at first clay, and then any kind of cement.

Genesis 11:4

The purpose of their hearts is now more fully expressed. “Let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may be in the skies.” A city is a fortified enclosure or keep for defense against the violence of the brute creation. A tower whose top may be in the skies for escape from the possibility of a periodical deluge. This is the language of pride in man, who wishes to know nothing above himself, and to rise beyond the reach of an over-ruling Providence. “And let us make us a name.” A name indicates distinction and pre-eminence. To make us a name, then, is not so much the cry of the multitude as of the few, with Nimrod at their head, who alone could expect what is not common, but distinctive. It is here artfully inserted, however, in the popular exclamation, as the people are prone to imagine the glory even of the despot to be reflected on themselves. This gives the character of a lurking desire for empire and self-aggrandizement to the design of the leaders - a new form of the same selfish spirit which animated the antediluvian men of name Genesis 6:4. But despotism for the few or the one, implies slavery and all its unnumbered ills for the many. “Lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole land.” The varied instincts of their common nature here speak forth. The social bond, the tie of kinsmanship, the wish for personal safety, the desire to be independent, perhaps even of God, the thirst for absolute power, all plead for union; but it is union for selfish ends.

Genesis 11:5-7

These verses describe the nature of that change by which this form of human selfishness is to be checked. “The Lord came down.” The interposing providence of God is here set forth in a sublime simplicity, suited to the early mind of man. Still there is something here characteristic of the times after the deluge. The presence of the Lord seems not to have been withdrawn from the earth before that event. He walked in the garden when Adam and Eve were there. He placed the ministers and symbols of his presence before it when they were expelled. He expostulated with Cain before and after his awful crime. He said, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” He saw the wickedness of man; and the land was corrupt before him. He communicated with Noah in various ways, and finally established his covenant with him. In all this he seems to have been present with man

on earth. He lingered in the garden as long as his forbearance could be expected to influence man for good. He at length appointed the limit of a hundred and twenty years. And after watching over Noah during the deluge, he seems to have withdrawn his visible and gracious presence from the earth. Hence, the propriety of the phrase, "the Lord came down." He still deals in mercy with a remnant of the human race, and has visited the earth and manifested His presence in a wondrous way. But He has not yet taken up His abode among people as He did in the garden, and as He intimates that He will sometime do on the renovated earth.

Genesis 11:6

In like simplicity is depicted the self-willed, God-defying spirit of combination and ambition which had now budded in the imagination of man. "The People is one" - one race, with one purpose. "And they have all one lip." They understand one another's mind. No misunderstanding has arisen from diversity of language. "This is their beginning." The beginning of sin, like that of strife, is as when one letteth out water. The Lord sees in this commencement the seed of growing evil. All sin is dim and small in its first rise; but it swells by insensible degrees to the most glaring and gigantic proportions. "And now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." Now that they have made this notable beginning of concentration, ambition, and renown, there is nothing in this way which they will not imagine or attempt.

Genesis 11:7

Here is announced the means by which the defiant spirit of concentration is to be defeated. From this and the previous verse we learn that the lip, and not the stock of words, is the part of language which is to be affected, and hence, perceive the propriety of distinguishing these two in the introductory statement. To confound, is to introduce several kinds, where before there was only one; and so in the present case to introduce several varieties of form, whereas language was before of one form. Hence, it appears that the one primitive tongue was made manifold by diversifying the law of structure, without interfering with the material of which it was composed. The bases or roots of words are furnished by instinctive and evanescent analogies between sounds and things, on which the etymological law then plays its part, and so vocables come into existence. Thus, from the root "fer," we get "fer, ferre, ferens, fert, ferebat, feret, ferat, ferret;" φέρε *phere* φέρειν *pherein* φέρων *pherōn* φέει *pherei* ἔφερε *ephere*

φέρῃ *pherē* φέροι *pheroi* etc.; ברה *perēh* ברה *pāroh* פרה o *poreh* שפרה *pārâh* יפרה *yîpreh* etc., according to the formative law of each language.

It is evident that some roots may become obsolete and so die out, while others, according to the exigencies of communication and the abilities of the speaker, may be called into existence in great abundance. But whatever new words come into the stock, are made to comply with the formative law which regulates the language of the speaker. This law has been fixed as the habitude of his mind, from which he only deviates on learning and imitating some of the formative processes of another tongue. In the absence of any other language, it is not conceivable that he should on any account alter this law. To do so would be to rebel against habit without reason, and to put himself out of relation with the other speakers of the only known tongue.

The sacred writer does not care to distinguish the ordinary from the extraordinary in the procedure of Divine Providence, inasmuch as he ascribes all events to the one creating, superintending, and administering power of God. Yet there is something beyond nature here. We can understand and observe the introduction of new words into the vocabulary of man as often as the necessity of designating a new object or process calls the naming faculty into exercise. But the new word, whether a root or not, if engrafted into the language, invariably obeys the formative law of the speech into which it is admitted. A nation adds new words to its vocabulary, but does not of itself, without external influence, alter the principle on which they are formed. Here, then, the divine interference was necessary, if the uniform was ever to become multiform. And accordingly this is the very point in which the historian marks the interposition of the Almighty.

Philologists have distinguished three or four great types or families of languages. The first of these was the Shemitic or Hebrew family. It is probable that most of the Shemites spoke dialects of this well-defined type of human speech. Aram (the Syrians), Arpakshad, (the Hebrews and Arabs), and Asshur (the Assyrians), certainly did so. Elam (Elymais), succumbed first to the Kushite race (Κίσσιοι *Kissioi* Κοσσαῖοι *Kossaioi*) and afterward to the Persian, and so lost its language and its individuality among the nations. Lud (the Lydians) was also overrun by other nationalities. But this type of language was extended beyond the Shemites

to the Kenaanites and perhaps some other Hamites. It includes the language of the Old Testament.

The second family of languages has been variously designated Japhetic, Indo-Germanic, Indo-European and Arian. It is spoken by the great bulk of the descendants of Japheth, and embraces a series of cognate modes of communication, extending from India to the various European colonies of America. It includes Greek, the tongue of the New Testament.

A third class, including the Kushite (Babylonian), Egyptian, and other African languages, has been termed Hamitic. Some of its stocks have affinities both with the Shemitic and Japhetic families.

It is probable that the congeries of unclassed languages (Allophylian, Sporadic, Turanian), including even the Chinese tongues, have relations more or less intimate with one or other of these three tolerably definite families. But the science of comparative philology is only approaching the solution of its final problem, the historical or natural relationship of all the languages of the world. It is evident, however, that the principle of classification is not so much the amount of roots in common, as the absence or presence of a given form. The diversity in the matter may be brought about by assignable natural causes; but the diversity in the form can only arise from a preternatural impulse. Forms may wear off; but they do not pass from one constituent law to another without foreign influence. The speech of a strong and numerous race may gradually overbear and annihilate that of a weak one; and in doing so may adopt many of its words, but by no means its form. So long as a national speech retains any of its forms, they continue to be part of that special type by which it is characterized.

Hence, we perceive that the interposition of Providence in confounding the lip of mankind, is the historical solution of the enigma of philology; the existence of diversity of language at the same time with the natural persistency of form and the historical unity of the human race. The data of philology, indicating that the form is the side of language needing to be touched in order to produce diversity, coincide also with the facts here narrated. The preternatural diversification of the form, moreover, marks the

order amid variety which prevailed in this great revolution of mental habitude. It is not necessary to suppose that seventy languages were produced from one at the very crisis of this remarkable change, but only the few generic forms that sufficed to effect the divine purpose, and by their interaction to give origin to all subsequent varieties of language or dialect. Nor are we to imagine that the variant principles of formation went into practical development all at once, but only that they started a process which, in combination with other operative causes, issued in all the diversities of speech which are now exhibited in the human race.

That they may not understand one another‘s lip. - This is the immediate result of diversifying the formative law of human speech, even though the material elements were to remain much the same as before. Further results will soon appear.

Genesis 11:8-9

The effect of the divine interposition is noted in Genesis 11:8-9. “And the Lord scattered them abroad.” Not understanding one another‘s mode of speech, they feel themselves practically separated from one another. Unity of counsel and of action becomes impossible. Misunderstanding naturally follows, and begets mistrust. Diversity of interest grows up, and separation ensues. Those who have a common speech retreat from the center of union to a sequestered spot, where they may form a separate community among themselves. The lack of pasture for their flocks and provision for themselves leads to a progressive migration. Thus, the divine purpose, that they should be fruitful and multiply and replenish the land Genesis 9:1 is fulfilled. The dispersion of mankind at the same time put an end to the ambitious projects of the few. “They left off to build the city.” It is probable that the people began to see through the plausible veil which the leaders had cast over their selfish ends. The city would henceforth be abandoned to the immediate party of Nimrod. This would interrupt for a time the building of the city. Its dwellings would probably be even too numerous for its remaining inhabitants. The city received the name of Babel (confusion), from the remarkable event which had interrupted its progress for a time.

This passage, then, explains the table of nations, in which they are said to be distinguished, not merely by birth and land, but “every one after his tongue.” It is therefore attached to the table as a needful appendix, and thus completes the history of the nations so far as it is carried on by the Bible. At this point the line of history leaves the universal, and by a rapid contraction

narrows itself into the individual, in the person of him who is to be ultimately the parent of a chosen seed, in which the knowledge of God and of his truth is to be preserved, amidst the degeneracy of the nations into the ignorance and error which are the natural offspring of sin.

Here, accordingly, ends the appendix to the second Bible, or the second volume of the revelation of God to man. As the first may have been due to Adam, the second may be ascribed in point of matter to Noah, with Shem as his continuator. The two joined together belong not to a special people, but to the universal race. If they had ever appeared in a written form before Moses, they might have descended to the Gentiles as well as to the Israelites. But the lack of interest in holy things would account for their disappearance among the former. The speakers of the primitive language, however, would alone retain the knowledge of such a book if extant. Some of its contents might be preserved in the memory, and handed down to the posterity of the founders of the primeval nations. Accordingly we find more or less distinct traces of the true God, the creation, the fall and the deluge, in the traditions of all nations that have an ancient history.

But even if this two-volumed Bible were not possessed by the nations in a written form, its presence here, at the head of the writings of divine truth, marks the catholic design of the Old Testament, and intimates the comprehension of the whole family of man within the merciful purposes of the Almighty. In the issues of Providence the nations appear now to be abandoned to their own devices. Such a judicial forsaking of a race, who had a second time heard the proclamation of his mercy, and a second time forsaken the God of their fathers, was naturally to be expected. But it is never to be forgotten that God twice revealed his mercy “to the whole human race” before they were left to their own ways. And even when they were given over to their own willful unrighteousness and ungodlincss, it was only to institute and develop the mystery by which they might be again fully and effectually brought back to reconciliation with God.

The new developments of sin during this period are chiefly three - drunkenness, dishonoring of a parent, and the ambitious attempt to be independent of God‘s power, and to thwart his purpose of peopling the land. These forms of human selfishness still linger about the primary commands

of the two tables. Insubordination to the supreme authority of God is accompanied with disrespect to parental authority. Drunkenness itself is an abuse of the free grant of the fruit of the trees orignally made to man. These manifestations of sin do not advance to the grosser or more subtle depths of iniquity afterward explicitly forbidden in the ten commandments. They indicate a people still comparatively unsophisticated in their habits.

The additional motives brought to bear on the race of man during the interval from Noah to Abraham, are the preaching of Noah, the perdition of the unbelieving antediluvians, the preservation of Noah and his family, the distinction of clean and unclean animals, the permission to partake of animal food, the special prohibition of the shedding of man‘s blood, the institution thereupon of civil government, and the covenant with Noah and his seed that there should not be another deluge.

The preaching of Noah consisted in pressing the invitations and warnings of divine mercy on a wicked race. But it bore with new power on the succeeding generations, when it was verified by the drowning of the impenitent race and the saving of the godly household. This was an awful demonstration at the same time of the divine vengeance on those who persisted in sin, and of the divine mercy to the humble and the penitent. The distinction of the clean and the unclean was a special warning against that conformity with the world by which the sons of God had died out of the human race. The permission to partake of animal food was in harmony with the physical constitution of man, and seems to have been delayed until this epoch for moral as well as physical reasons. In the garden, and afterward in Eden, the vegetable products of the soil were adequate to the healthy sustenance of man. But in the universal diffusion of the human race, animal food becomes necessary.

In some regions where man has settled, this alone is available for a great portion of the year, if not for the whole. And a salutary dread of death, as the express penalty of disobedience, was a needful lesson in the infancy of the human race. But the overwhelming destruction of the doomed race was sufficient to impress this lesson indelibly on the minds of the survivors. Hence, the permission of animal food might now be safely given, especially when accompanied with the express prohibition of manslaying, under the

penalty of death by the hands of the executioner. This prohibition was directly intended to counteract the bad example of Cain and Lamek, and to deter those who slew animals from slaying men; and provision was made for the enforcement of its penalty by the institution of civil government. The covenant with Noah was a recognition of the race being reconciled to God in its new head, and therefore suited to be treated as a party at peace with God, and to enter on terms of communion with him. Its promise of security from destruction by a flood was a pledge of all greater and after blessings which naturally flow from amity with God.

Thus, we perceive that the revelation of God to the antediluvian world was confirmed in many respects, and enlarged in others, by that made to the postdiluvians. The stupendous events of the deluge were a marvelous confirmation of the justice and mercy of God revealed to Adam. The preaching of Noah was a new mode of urging the truths of God on the minds of men, now somewhat exercised in reflective thought. The distinction of clean and unclean enforced the distinction that really exists between the godly and the ungodly. The prohibition of shedding human blood is the growth of a specific law out of the great principle of moral rectitude in the conscience, apace with the development of evil in the conduct of mankind. The covenant with Noah is the evolution into articulate utterance of that federal relation which was virtually formed with believing and repentant Adam. Adam himself was long silent in the depth of his self-abasement for the disobedience he had exhibited. In Noah the spirit of adoption had attained to liberty of speech, and accordingly, God, on the momentous occasion of his coming out of the ark and presenting his propitiatory and eucharistic offering, enters into a covenant of peace with him, assuring him of certain blessings.

There is something especially interesting in this covenant with Noah, as it embraces the whole human race, and is in force to this day. It is as truly a covenant of grace as that with Abraham. It is virtually the same covenant, only in an earlier and less developed form. Being made with Noah, who had found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and added to the former expression of the divine favor to man, it explicitly mentions a benefit which is merely the first and most palpable of the series of benefits, temporal and eternal, flowing from the grace of God, all of which are in due time made over to

the heirs of salvation. We cannot tell how many of the Gentiles explicitly or implicitly consented to this general covenant and partook of its blessings. But it is only just to the God of Noah to be thankful that there was and is an offer of mercy to the whole family of man, all who accept of which are partakers of his grace, and that all subsequent covenants only help to the ultimate and universal acceptance of that fundamental covenant which, though violated by Adam and all his ordinary descendants, was yet in the fullness of time to be implemented by him who became the seed of the woman and the second Adam.

Verses 10-26
- Section IX - The Line to Abram
- XXXV. The Line of Abram

18. רעוּ *reʿû* Re‹u, "friend;" verb: "feed, delight in, enjoy".

20. שׂרוּג *śerûg* Serug, "vine-shoot".

22. נחור *nāchôr* Nachor, "snorting".

24. תרה *terach* Terach, "delay?" Aramaic.

26. אברם *abrām* Abram, "high father′". הרן *hārān* Haran, "mountaineer".

The usual phrase, "These are the generations," marks the beginning of the fifth document. Accordingly, we now enter upon a new phase of human development. The nations have gradually departed from the living God. They have not, however, stopped at this negative stage of ungodliness. They have fallen into polytheism and idolatry. And the knowledge of the one true God, the Maker, Possessor, and Upholder of heaven and earth, is on the verge of being entirely lost. Nevertheless the promises, first to the race of Adam, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent‘s head, and next to the family of Noah, that the Lord should be the God of Shem, were still in force. It is obvious, from the latter promise, that the seed of the woman is to be expected in the line of Shem.

The present passage contains the pedigree of Abram from Shem. From this it appears that the sacred writer here reverts to the second year after the flood - a point of time long before the close of the preceding narrative. “Shem was the son of a hundred years,” or in his hundredth year, two years after the flood, and therefore in the six hundred and third year of Noah, and consequently three years after Japheth. Abram was the twentieth, inclusive, from Adam, the tenth from Shem, and the seventh from Heber. A second Kenan is inserted after Arpakshad in the Septuagint, and in the Gospel according to Luke. But this name does not occur even in the Septuagint in 1 Chronicles 1:24, where the genealogy of Abram is given. It is not found in the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Targums, or the ancient versions. It does not appear in Josephus or Philo. Neither is it found in the Codex Bezae in the Gospel of Luke. It must therefore be regarded as an interpolation.

The following table is a continuation of that given at the fifth chapter, and will serve for the comparison of the different forms in which the numbers are presented:

d **Line of Abram**

d

d **HebrewSam. Pent.SeptuagintJosephusDate**

d

d Son's
BirthOwn
DeathSon's
BirthOwn
DeathSon's
BirthOwn
DeathSon's
BirthOwn
DeathOf
BirthOf

Death

d

d 11. Shem

d (97) 2600(97) 2600(97) 2600(97) 1215592150

d

d 12. Arpakshad (Καινᾶν)

d 3543813543813553513516582096

d

d 13. Shelah

d 3043313043313046013016932126

d

d 14. Heber

d 3446413440413440413417232187

d

d 15. Peleg

d 3023913023913033913017571996

d

d 16. Reu

d 3223913223913233913017872096

d

d 17. Serug

d 30230130230130330132181920 49

d

d 18. Nahor

d 29148791481753041201849 1997

d

d 19. Terah

(Haran)

d 70

6020570

6014570

6020570

29220518782083

d

d 20. Abram cd.

Enters Ken.

d 70

7570

7570

75130

7520082078

d

d Sum

d 42210721302422

d

d D. of Flood

d 1656130722622256

d

d D. of Call

d 2078237935642678

d

d

From this table it appears that in the total years of life the Hebrew, Samaritan, and Septuagint agree on Shem; the Hebrew and Septuagint on Terah; the Samaritan and Septuagint on Heber; and the Hebrew and Samaritan on all the rest. In regard, however, to the years of paternity, the Hebrew stands alone, against the Samaritan and Septuagint agreeing, except in Terah, where they all agree. The difference is not in units or tens, but in the addition to the Hebrew numbers of a hundred years, except in the case

of Nahor, where the addition is fifty years, or a hundred and fifty according to the Codex Vaticanus (B) of the Septuagint. Here, again, it is remarkable that Josephus while agreeing with the Samaritan and Septuagint in most of the separate numbers before paternity, agrees with the Hebrew in the sum of years from the flood to the 70th year of Terah (292 years, Josephus I. 6,5). In Reu and Serug the numbers are transposed, seemingly by a mistake arising from the inverted order in which he gives the numbers.

In Nahor he, or his transcriber, seems to have added one hundred years according to the uniform law, and neglected the nine. To make up for this omission, the inexact round number 10 has been apparently added to the number of years after the flood, when Arpakshad was born. We have already noticed that some MSS. of Josephus gave 1656 as the sum-total of years from the creation to the flood, in which case the sums of Josephus and the Hebrew exactly agree. We find him also stating (viii. 3,1) that the world was created 3102 years before Solomon began to build the temple, and that the deluge took place 1440 before the same point of time. Hence, we obtain 1662 years between the creation and the deluge; and this, if we only deduct from it the six years added to Lamek, agrees with the Hebrew. In the same passage he states that the entrance of Abram into Kenaan was 1020 years before the building of the temple.

Hence, we infer that 420 years elapsed from the flood to the call of Abram, which, if we count from the birth of Arpakshad, allow sixty years to elapse between the births of Haran and Abram, and date the call of Abram at 70, will exactly tally with the Hebrew. These sums cannot in any probable way be reconciled with the details in his own text, or in the Septuagint, or Samaritan. Again, Josephus calculates (x. 8,5) that the temple was burnt 3513 years from the creation, and 1957 from the flood. Hence, the interval from the creation to the deluge would be 1556 years, differing from the Hebrew by 100 years, and reconcilable with it, if we suppose the 500th year of Noah to be the terminating date. He also concludes that the burning of the temple took place 1062 years after the exodus, thus making the interval from the flood to the Exodus 895 years, while the Hebrew makes it 852. If we reckon the 100 years from the 500th year of Noah to the flood, the 292 which Josephus gives from the flood to the birth of Abraham, the 75 years to the call of Abraham, and the 430 from that to the exodus, we

have 897 years, which will be reduced to Josephus‘s number by omitting the 2 years from the flood to the birth of Arpakshad; and to the Hebrew number by omitting the 100 years before the flood, adding the 60 between Haran and Abram, which Josephus here neglects, and dating the call of Abram at 70 years. But by no process that we are aware of can these calculated numbers of Josephus be reconciled with the details of his own text, or the Samaritan, or Septuagint. It seems perfectly clear that the Hebrew numbers lie at the basis of these calculations of our author.

The age of paternity in the Samaritan from Peleg down is beyond the middle age of life, which is contrary to all experience. The editor of the Septuagint seems to have observed this anomaly, and added 100 years to three of these lives, and 156 to that of Nahor, against the joint testimony of the Hebrew and Samaritan. If the year of paternity in the Vatican be the correct reading, a much greater number should have been here added. The Samaritan deducts 60 years from the age of Terah, against the joint testimony of the Hebrew, Samaritan, and Josephus, seemingly because the editor conceived that Abram was born in his seventieth year.

From the Targum of Onkelos and the Peshito it is evident that the Hebrew text was the same as now up to the Christian era. Before that time there was no conceivable reason for shortening the chronology, while national vanity and emulation might easily prompt men to lengthen it. It is acknowledged that the text of the Septuagint is inferior to that of the Hebrew.

The age of puberty in the Hebrew affords more scope for the increase of population than that in the other texts. For if a man begin to have a family at thirty, it is likely to be larger than if he began a hundred years later and only lived the same number of years altogether. Now the Hebrew and Samaritan agree generally, against the Septuagint, in the total years of life; and in two instances, Heber and Terah, the Samaritan has even a less number than the Hebrew. It is to be remembered, also, that the number of generations is the same in every case. Hence, in all human probability the Hebrew age of paternity will give the greater number of inhabitants to the world in the age of Abram. If we take the moderate average of five pairs for each family, we shall have for the estimated population 4 X 5(to the 9th power) pairs, or

15,625,000 souls. This number is amply sufficient for all the kingdoms that were in existence in the time of Abram. If we defer the time of becoming a father for a whole century, we shall certainly diminish, rather than increase, the chance of his having so large a family, and thereby the probability of such a population on the earth in the tenth generation from Noah.

In these circumstances we are disposed to abide by the Hebrew text, that has descended to us in an original form, at least until we see some more cogent reasons for abandoning any of its numbers than chronologers have yet been able to produce. And we content ourselves, meanwhile, with the fact that the same system of numbers manifestly lay at the basis of all our present texts, though it may be difficult in some cases to determine to the satisfaction of all what was the original figure. The determination of the chronology of ancient history is neither a question of vital importance, nor, to us now, a part of the primary or direct design of the Hebrew records.

Verses 27-32
- Section X - Abraham
- XXXVI. The Father of Abram

27. לוט *lôṭ* Lot, "veil;" verb: "cover.

28. אור *ûr* Ur, "light, flame; כשׂדים *kaśdîym* Kasdim, Cardi, Kurds, כסד *kesed* "gain?" Arabic. Ur Kasdim has been identified Χαλδαῖοι *Kaldaioi* with Hur, now called Mugheir (the bitumened), a heap of ruins lying south of the Euphrates, nearly opposite its jucnction with the Shat el-Hie. Others place it at Edessa, now Orfa, a short way north of Carrhae.

29. שׂרי *sāray* Sarai, "strife; שׂרה *śārâh* "strive, rule. מלכה *mîlkâh* Milkah, "counsel, queen;" verb: "counsel, reign. יסכה *yîsekâh* Jiskah, "one who spies, looks out."

31. הרן *hārān* Haran, "burnt place." Χαῤῥαι *Charran* Κάῤῥαι *Karrai* a town on the Bilichus (Bililk), a tributary of the Frat, still called Harran. This has been identified by some with Harae, on the other side of the Frat, not far from Tadmor or Palmyra.

This passage forms the commencement of the sixth document, as is indicated by the customary phrase, “These are the generations.” The sense also clearly accords with this distinction; and it accounts for the repetition of the statement, “Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.” Yet the scribe who finally arranged the text makes no account of this division; as he inserts neither the Hebrew letter פ (*p*) nor even the Hebrew letter ס (*s*) at its commencement, while he places the threefold פ (*p*), marking the end of a Sabbath lesson, at its close. We learn from this that the Jewish rabbis did not regard the opening phrase as a decided mark of a new beginning, or any indication of a new author. Nevertheless, this passage and the preceding one form the meet prelude to the history of Abram - the one tracing his genealogy from Shem and Heber, and the other detailing his relations with the family out of which he was called.

God has not forsaken the fallen race. On the contrary, he has once and again held out to them a general invitation to return, with a promise of pardon and acceptance. Many of the descendants of Noah have already forsaken him, and he foresees that all, if left to themselves, will sink into ungodliness. Notwithstanding all this, he calmly and resolutely proceeds with his purpose of mercy. In the accomplishment of this eternal purpose he moves with all the solemn grandeur of longsuffering patience. One day is with him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Out of Adam‘s three sons he selects one to be the progenitor of the seed of the woman; out of Noah‘s three sons he again selects one; and now out of Terah‘s three is one to be selected. Among the children of this one he will choose a second one, and among his a third one before he reaches the holy family. Doubtless this gradual mode of proceeding is in keeping with the hereditary training of the holy nation, and the due adjustment of all the divine measures for at length bringing the fullness of the Gentiles into the covenant of everlasting peace.

The history here given of the postdiluvians has a striking resemblance in structure to that of the antediluvians. The preservation of Noah from the waters of the flood, is the counterpart of the creation of Adam after the land had risen out of the roaring deep. The intoxication of Noah by the fruit of a tree corresponds with the fall of Adam by eating the fruit of a forbidden tree. The worldly policy of Nimrod and his builders is parallel with the city-

building and many inventions of the Cainites. The pedigree of Abram the tenth from Shem, stands over against the pedigree of Noah the tenth from Adam; and the paragraph now before us bears some resemblance to what precedes the personal history of Noah. All this tends to strengthen the impression made by some other phenomena, already noticed, that the book of Genesis is the work of one author, and not a mere file of documents by different writers.

The present paragraph is of special interest for the coming history. Its opening word and intimates its close connection with the preceding document; and accordingly we observe that the one is merely introductory to the other. The various characters brought forward are all of moment. Terah is the patriarch and leader of the migration for part of the way. Abram is the subject of the following narrative. Nahor is the grandfathcr of Rebekah. Haran is the father of Lot the companion of Abram, of Milcah the wife of Nahor and grandmother of Rebekah, and of Iskah. Iskah alone seems to have no connection with the subsequent narrative. Josephus says Sarai and Milkah were the daughters of Haran, taking no notice of Iskah. He seems, therefore, to identify Sarai and Iskah. Jerome, after his Jewish teachers, does the same. Abram says of Sarai, "She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother" Genesis 20:12.

In Hebrew phrase the granddaughter is termed a daughter; and therefore this statement might be satisfied by her being the daughter of Haran. Lot is called the brother‘s son and the brother of Abram Genesis 14:12, Genesis 14:16. If Sarai be Haran‘s daughter, Lot is Abram‘s brother-in-law. This identification would also explain the introduction of Iskah into the present passage. Still it must be admitted, on the other hand, that persons are sometimes incidentally introduced in a history of facts, without any express connection with the course of the narrative, as Naamah in the history of the Cainites. The studied silence of the sacred writer in regard to the parentage of Sarai, in the present connection, tells rather in favor of her being the actual daughter of Terah by another wife, and so strictly the half-sister of Abram. For the Mosaic law afterward expressly prohibited marriage with "the daughter of a father" Leviticus 18:9. And, lastly, the text does not state of Iskah, "This is Sarai," which would accord with the manner of the sacred writer, and is actually done in the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan.

Genesis 11:28

And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah. - There is reason to believe that Haran was the oldest son of Terah. Though mentioned in the third place, like Japheth the oldest son of Noah, yet, like Japheth, also, his descendants are recounted first. He is the father of Lot, Milkah, and Iskah. His brother Nahor marries his daughter Milkah. If Iskah be the same as Sarai, Haran her father must have been some years older than Abram, as Abram was only ten years older than Sarai; and hence her father, if younger than Abram, must have been only eight or nine when she was born, which is impossible. Hence, those who take Iskah to be Sarai, must regard Abram as younger than Haran.

In the land of his birth. - The migration of Terah, therefore, did not take place until after the death of Haran. At all events, his three grandchildren, Lot, Milkah, and Iskah, were born before he commenced his journey. Still further, Milkah was married to Nahor for some time before that event. Hence, allowing thirty years for a generation, we have a period of sixty years and upwards from the birth of Haran to the marriage of his daughter. But if we take seventy years for a generation, which is far below the average of the Samaritan or the Septuagint, we have one hundred and forty years, which will carry us beyond the death of Terah, whether we reckon his age at one hundred and forty-five with the Samaritan, or at two hundred and five with the other texts. This gives another presumption in favor of the Hebrew average for a generation.

In Ur of the Kasdim. - The Kasdim, Cardi, Kurds, or Chaldees are not to be found in the table of nations. They have been generally supposed to be Shemites. This is favored by the residence of Abram among them, by the name Kesed, being a family name among his kindred Genesis 22:22, and by the language commonly called Chaldee, which is a species of Aramaic. But among the settlers of the country, the descendants of Ham probably prevailed in early times. Nimrod, the founder of the Babylonian Empire, was a Kushite. The ancient Babylonish language, Rawlinson (Chaldaea) finds to be a special dialect, having affinities with the Shemitic, Arian, Turanian, and Hamitic tongues. The Chaldees were spread over a great extent of surface; but their most celebrated seat was Chaldaea proper, or the land of Shinar. The inhabitants of this country seem to have been of mixed descent, being bound together by political rather than family ties.

Nimrod, their center of union, was a despot rather than a patriarch. The tongue of the Kaldees, whether pure or mixed, and whether Shemitic or not, is possibly distinct from the Aramaic, in which they addressed Nebuchadnezzar in the time of Daniel Daniel 1:4; Daniel 2:4. The Kaldin at length lost their nationality, and merged into the caste or class of learned men or astrologers, into which a man might be admitted, not merely by being a Kaldai by birth, but by acquiring the language and learning of the Kasdim Daniel 1:4; Daniel 5:11. The seats of Chaldee learning were Borsippa (Birs Nimrud), Ur, Babylon, and Sepharvaim (Sippara, Mosaib). Ur or Hur has been found by antiquarian research (see Rawlinson's Ancient Monarchies) in the heap of ruins called Mugheir, "the bitumened." This site lies now on the right side of the Frat; but the territory to which it belongs is mainly on the left. And Abram coming from it would naturally cross into Mesopotamia on his way to Haran. Orfa, the other supposed site of Ur, seems to be too near Haran. It is not above twenty or twenty-five miles distant, which would not be more than one day's journey.

Genesis 11:29, Genesis 11:30

But Sarai was barren. - From this statement it is evident that Abram had been married for some time before the migration took place. It is also probable that Milkah had begun to have a family; a circumstance which would render the barrenness of Sarai the more remarkable.

Genesis 11:31, Genesis 11:32

And Terah took Abram. - Terah takes the lead in this emigration, as the patriarch of the family. In the Samaritan Pentateuch Milkah is mentioned among the emigrants; and it is not improbable that Nahor and his family accompanied Terah, as we find them afterward at Haran, or the city of Nahor Genesis 24:10. "And they went forth with them." Terah and Abram went forth with Lot and the other companions of their journey. "To go into the land of Kenaan. It was the design of Terah himself to settle in the land of Kenaan. The boundaries of this land are given in the table of nations Genesis 10:19. The Kenaanites were therefore in possession of it when the table of nations was drawn up. It is certain, however, that there were other inhabitants, some of them Shemites probably, anterior to Kenaan, and subjected by his invading race. The prime motive to this change of abode was the call to Abram recorded in the next chapter. Moved by the call of God, Abram "obeyed; and he went out not knowing whither he went" Hebrews 11:8.

But Terah was influenced by other motives to put himself at the head of this movement. The death of Haran, his oldest son, loosened his attachment to the land of his birth. Besides, Abram and Sarai were no doubt especially dear to him, and he did not wish to lose their society. The inhabitants also of Ur had fallen into polytheism, or, if we may so speak, allotheism, the worship of other gods. Terah had himself been betrayed into compliance with this form of impiety. It is probable that the revelation Abram had received from heaven was the means of removing this cloud from his mind, and restoring in him the knowledge and worship of the true God. Hence, his desire to keep up his connection with Abram, who was called of God. Prayerful conversation with the true and living God, also, while it was fast waning in the land of the Kasdim, seems to have been still maintained in its ancient purity in some parts of the land of Kenaan and the adjacent countries. In the land of Uz, a Shemite, perhaps even at a later period, lived Job; and in the neighboring districts of Arabia were his several friends, all of whom acknowledged the true God. And in the land of Kenaan was Melkizedec, the king of Salem, and the priest of the Most High God. A priest implies a considerable body of true worshippers scattered over the country. Accordingly, the name of the true God was known and revered, at least in outward form, wherever Abram went, throughout the land. The report of this comparatively favorable state of things in the land of Kenaan would be an additional incentive to the newly enlightened family of Terah to accompany Abram in obedience to the divine call.

Terah set out on his journey, no doubt, as soon after the call of Abram as the preparatory arrangements could be made. Now the promise to Abram was four hundred and thirty years before the exodus of the children of Israel out of Egypt Exodus 12:40. Of this long period his seed was to be a stranger in a land that was not theirs for four hundred years Genesis 15:13. Hence, it follows that Isaac, his seed, was born thirty years after the call of Abram. Now Abram was one hundred years old when Isaac was born, and consequently the call was given when he was seventy years of age - about five years before he entered the land of Kenaan Genesis 12:4. This whole calculation exactly agrees with the incidental statement of Paul to the Galatians Galatians 3:17 that the law was four hundred and thirty years after the covenant of promise. Terah was accordingly two hundred years old when he undertook the long journey to the land of Kenaan; for he died at

two hundred and five, when Abram was seventy-five. Though proceeding by easy stages, the aged patriarch seems to have been exhausted by the length and the difficulty of the way. “They came to Haran and dwelt there.” Broken down with fatigue, he halts for a season at Haran to recruit his wasted powers. Filial piety, no doubt, kept Abram watching over the last days of his venerable parents, who probably still cling to the fond hope of reaching the land of his adoption. Hence, they all abode in Haran for the remainder of the five years from the date of Abram‘s call to leave his native land. “And Terah died in Haran.” This intimates that he would have proceeded with the others to the land of Kenaan if his life had been prolonged, and likewise that they did not leave Haran until his death.

We have already seen that Abram was seventy-five years of age at the death of Terah. It follows that he was born when Terah was one hundred and thirty years old, and consequently sixty years after Haran. This is the reason why we have placed one hundred and thirty (seventy and sixty), in the genealogical table opposite Terah, because the line of descent is not traced through Haran, who was born when he was seventy, but through Abram, who by plain inference was born when he was one hundred and thirty years old. It will be observed, also, that we have set down seventy opposite Abram as the date of his call, from which is counted the definite period of four hundred and thirty years to the exodus. And as all our texts agree in the numbers here involved, it is obvious that the same adjustment of years has in this case to be made, whatever system of chronology is adopted. Hence, Abram is placed first in the list of Terah‘s sons, simply on account of his personal pre-eminence as the father of the faithful and the ancestor of the promised seed; he and his brother Nahor are both much younger than Haran, are married only after his death, and one of them to his grown-up daughter Milkah; and he and his nephew Lot are meet companions in age as well as in spirit.

Hence, also, Abram lingers in Haran, waiting to take his father with him to the land of promise, if he should revive so far as to be fit for the journey. But it was not the lot of Terah to enter the land, where he would only have been a stranger. He is removed to the better country, and by his departure contributes no doubt to deepen the faith of his son Abram, of his grandson Lot, and of his daughter-in-law Sarai. This explanation of the order of

events is confirmed by the statement of Stephen: “The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Charran; and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell” Acts 7:2-4.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-9

- The Call of Abram

shekem Shekem, “the upper part of the back.” Here it is the name שׁכם .6
of a person, the owner of this place, where afterward is built the town called
ēlôn “the′ אלון .at first Shekem, then Flavia Neapolis, and now Nablous
môreh In Onkelos “plain;” Moreh, מורה ”.oak;” related: “be lasting, strong
“archer, early rain, teacher.” Here the name of a man who owned the oak
that marked the spot. In the Septuagint it is rendered ὑψηγήν *hupseegeen*
עי ”.*yam* “sea, great river, west ים ”.*bēyt -'êl* Bethel, “house of God בית־אל
”.*ay* ‹Ai, “heap‹

”.*negeb* “south נגב .9

The narrative now takes leave of the rest of the Shemites, as well as the other branches of the human family, and confines itself to Abram. It is no part of the design of Scripture to trace the development of worldliness. It marks its source, and indicates the law of its downward tendency; but then it turns away from the dark detail, to devote its attention to the way by which light from heaven may again pierce the gloom of the fallen heart. Here, then, we have the starting of a new spring of spiritual life in the human race.

Genesis 12:1-3

Having brought the affairs of Terah‘s family to a fit resting point, the sacred writer now reverts to the call of Abram. This, we have seen, took place when he was seventy years of age, and therefore five years before the death of Terah. “The Lord said unto Abram.” Four hundred and twenty-two years on the lowest calculation after the last recorded communication with Noah, the Lord again opens his mouth, to Abram. Noah, Shem, or Heber, must have been in communication with heaven, indeed, at the time of the confusion of tongues, and hence, we have an account of that miraculous interposition. The call of Abram consists of a command and a promise. The command is to leave the place of all his old and fond associations, for a land which he had not yet seen, and therefore did not know. Three ties are to be severed in complying with this command - his country, in the widest range of his affections; his place of birth and kindred comes closer to his

heart; his father‘s house is the inmost circle of all his tender emotions. All these are to be resigned; not, however, without reason. The reason may not be entirely obvious to the mind of Abram. But he has entire faith in the reasonableness of what God proposes. So with reason and faith he is willing to go to the unknown land. It is enough that God will show him the land to which he is now sent.

Genesis 12:2-3

The promise corresponds to the command. If he is to lose much by his exile, he will also gain in the end. The promise contains a lower and higher blessing. The lower blessing has three parts: “First, I will make of thee a great nation.” This will compensate for the loss of his country. The nation to which he had hitherto belonged was fast sinking into polytheism and idolatry. To escape from it and its defiling influence was itself a benefit; but to be made himself the head of a chosen nation was a double blessing. Secondly, “And bless thee.” The place of his birth and kindred was the scene of all his past earthly joys. But the Lord will make up the loss to him in a purer and safer scene of temporal prosperity. Thirdly, “And make thy name great.” This was to compensate him for his father‘s house. He was to be the patriarch of a new house, on account of which he would be known and venerated all over the world.

The higher blessing is expressed in these remarkable terms: “And be thou a blessing.” He is to be not merely a subject of blessing, but a medium of blessing to others. It is more blessed to give than to receive. And the Lord here confers on Abram the delightful prerogative of dispensing good to others. The next verse expands this higher element of the divine promise. “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee.” Here the Lord identifies the cause of Abram with his own, and declares him to be essentially connected with the weal or woe of all who come into contact with him. “And blessed in thee shall be all the families of the ground.” The ground was cursed for the sake of Adam, who fell by transgression. But now shall the ground again participate in the blessing. “In thee.” In Abram is this blessing laid up as a treasure hid in a field to be realized in due time. “All the families” of mankind shall ultimately enter into the enjoyment of this unbounded blessing.

Thus, when the Lord saw fit to select a man to preserve vital piety on the earth and be the head of a race suited to be the depository of a revelation

of mercy, he at the same time designed that this step should be the means of effectually recalling the sin-enthralled world to the knowledge and love of himself. The race was twice already since the fall put upon its probation - once under the promise of victory to the seed of the woman, and again under the covenant with Noah. In each of these cases, notwithstanding the growing light of revelation and accumulating evidence of the divine forbearance, the race had apostatised from the God of mercy, with lamentably few known exceptions. Yet, undeterred by the gathering tokens of this second apostasy, and after reiterated practical demonstration to all people of the debasing, demoralizing effect of sin, the Lord, with calm determination of purpose, sets about another step in the great process of removing the curse of sin, dispensing the blessing of pardon, and eventually drawing all the nations to accept of his mercy. The special call of Abram contemplates the calling of the Gentiles as its final issue, and is therefore to be regarded as one link in a series of wonderful events by which the legal obstacles to the divine mercy are to be taken out of the way, and the Spirit of the Lord is to prevail with still more and more of men to return to God.

It is sometimes inadvertently said that the Old Testament is narrow and exclusive, while the New Testament is broad and catholic in its spirit. This is a mistake. The Old and New Testaments are of one mind on this matter. Many are called, and few chosen. This is the common doctrine of the New as well as of the Old. They are both equally catholic in proclaiming the gospel to all. The covenant with Adam and with Noah is still valid and sure to all who return to God; and the call of Abram is expressly said to be a means of extending blessing to all the families of man. The New Testament does not aim at anything more than this; it merely hails the approaching accomplishment of the same gracious end. They both concur also in limiting salvation to the few who repent and believe the gospel. Even when Abram was called there were a few who still trusted in the God of mercy. According to the chronology of the Masoretic text, Heber was still alive, Melkizedec was contemporary with Abram, Job was probably later, and many other now unknown witnesses for God were doubtless to be found, down to the time of the exodus, outside the chosen family. God marks the first symptoms of decaying piety. He does not wait until it has died out before he calls Abram. He proceeds in a leisurely, deliberate manner with his eternal purpose of mercy, and hence, a single heir of promise suffices

for three generations, until the set time comes for the chosen family and the chosen nation. Universalism, then, in the sense of the offer of mercy to man, is the rule of the Old and the New Testament. Particularism in the acceptance of it is the accident of the time. The call of Abram is a special expedient for providing a salvation that may be offered to all the families of the earth.

In all God‘s teachings the near and the sensible come before the far and the conceivable, the present and the earthly before the eternal and the heavenly. Thus, Abram‘s immediate acts of self-denial are leaving his country, his birthplace, his home. The promise to him is to be made a great nation, be blessed, and have a great name in the new land which the Lord would show him. This is unspeakably enhanced by his being made a blessing to all nations. God pursues this mode of teaching for several important reasons. First, the sensible and the present are intelligible to those who are taught. The Great Teacher begins with the known, and leads the mind forward to the unknown. If he had begun with things too high, too deep, or too far for the range of Abram‘s mental vision, he would not have come into relation with Abram‘s mind. It is superfluous to say that he might have enlarged Abram‘s view in proportion to the grandeur of the conceptions to be revealed.

On the same principle he might have made Abram cognizant of all present and all developed truth. On the same principle he might have developed all things in an instant of time, and so have had done with creation and providence at once. Secondly, the present and the sensible are the types of the future and the conceivable; the land is the type of the better land; the nation of the spiritual nation; the temporal blessing of the eternal blessing; the earthly greatness of the name of the heavenly. And let us not suppose that we are arrived at the end of all knowledge. We pique ourselves on our advance in spiritual knowledge beyond the age of Abram. But even we may be in the very infancy of mental development. There may be a land, a nation, a blessing, a great name, of which our present realizations or conceptions are but the types. Any other supposition would be a large abatement from the sweetness of hope‘s overflowing cup.

Thirdly, these things which God now promises are the immediate form of his bounty, the very gifts he begins at the moment to bestow. God has his gift to Abram ready in his hand in a tangible form. He points to it and says, This is what thou presently needest; this I give thee, with my blessing and favor. But, fourthly, these are the earnest and the germ of all temporal and eternal blessing. Man is a growing thing, whether as an individual or a race. God graduates his benefits according to the condition and capacity of the recipients. In the first boon of his good-will is the earnest of what he will continue to bestow on those who continue to walk in his ways. And as the present is the womb of the future, so is the external the symbol of the internal, the material the shadow of the spiritual, in the order of the divine blessing. And as events unfold themselves in the history of man and conceptions in his soul within, so are doctrines gradually opened up in the Word of God, and progressively revealed to the soul by the Spirit of God.

Genesis 12:4-5

Abram obeys the call. He had set out from Ur under the revered guardianship of his aged father, Terah, with other companions, "as the Lord had spoken unto him." Lot is now mentioned as his companion. Terah's death has been already recorded. Sarai is with him, of course, and therefore it is unnecessary to repeat the fact. But Lot is associated with him as an incidental companion for some time longer. The age of Abram at the second stage of his journey is now mentioned. This enables us to determine, as, we have seen, that he departed from Ur five years before.

Genesis 12:5

This is the record of what is presumed in the close of Genesis 12:4; namely, the second setting out for Kenaan. "Abram took." He is now the leader of the little colony, as Terah was before his death. Sarai, as well as Lot, is now named. "The gaining they had gained" during the five years of their residence in Haran. If Jacob became comparatively rich in six years Genesis 30:43, so might Abram, with the divine blessing, in five. "The souls they had gotten" - the bondservants they had acquired. Where there is a large stock of cattle, there must be a corresponding number of servants to attend to them. Abram and Lot enter the land as men of substance. They are in a position of independence. The Lord is realizing to Abram the blessing promised. They start for the land of Kenaan, and at length arrive there. This event is made as important as it ought to be in our minds by the mode in which it is stated.

Genesis 12:6-9

Abram does not enter into immediate possession, but only travels through the land which the Lord had promised to show him Genesis 12:1. He arrives at "the place of Shekem." The town was probably not yet in existence. It lay between Mount Gerizzim and Mount Ebal. It possesses a special interest as the spot where the Lord first appeared to Abram in the land of promise. It was afterward dedicated to the Lord by being made a Levitical town, and a city of refuge. At this place Joshua convened an assembly of all Israel to hear his farewell address. "So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shekem" Genesis 4:26. Some of these former inhabitants will meet us in the course of the narrative. It admits also of the supposition that the Kenaanites afterward ceased to be its inhabitants. Hence, some have inferred that this could not have been penned by Moses, as they were expelled after his death. If this supposition were the necessary or the only one implied in the form of expression, we should acquiesce in the conclusion that this sentence came from one of the prophets to whom the conservation, revision, and continuation of the living oracles were committed. But we have seen that two other presuppositions may be made that satisfy the import of the passage. Moreover, the first of the three accounts for the fact that Abram does not instantly enter on possession, as there was an occupying tenant. And, finally, the third supposition may fairly be, not that the Kenaanites afterward ceased, but that they should afterward cease to be in the land. This, then, as well as the others, admits of Moses being the writer of this interesting sentence.

We are inclined to think, however, that the term "Kenaanite" here means, not the whole race of Kenaan, but the special tribe so called. If the former were meant, the statement would be in a manner superfluous, after calling the country the land of Kenaan. If the proper tribe be intended, then we have evidence here that they once possessed this part of the land which was afterward occupied by the Hivite and the Amorite Genesis 34:2; Joshua 11:3; for, at the time of the conquest by Abram's descendants, the mountainous land in the center, including the place of Shekem, was occupied by the Amorites and other tribes, while the coast of the Mediterranean and the west bank of the Jordan was held by the Kenaanites proper (Josephus v. 1; xi. 3). This change of occupants had taken place before the time of Moses.

Genesis 12:7

And the Lord appeared unto Abram. - Here, for the first time, this remarkable phrase occurs. It indicates that the Lord presents himself to the consciousness of man in any way suitable to his nature. It is not confined to the sight, but may refer to the hearing 1 Samuel 3:15. The possibility of God appearing to man is antecedently undeniable. The fact of his having done so proves the possibility. On the mode of his doing this it is vain for us to speculate. The Lord said unto him, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." "Unto thy seed," not unto thee. To Abram himself "he gave none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on" Acts 7:5. "This land" which the Lord had now shown him, though at present occupied by the Kenaanite invader. "An altar." This altar is erected on the spot which is hallowed by the appearance of the Lord to Abram. The place of Shekem might have been supposed to have received its name from Shekem, a son of Gilead Numbers 26:31, did we not meet with Shekem, the son of Hamor, in this very place in the time of Jacob Genesis 34:2. We learn from this the precariousness of the inference that the name of a place is of later origin because a person of that name lived there at a later period. The place of Shekem was doubtless called after a Shekem antecedent to Abram. Shekem and Moreh may have preceded even the Kenaanites, for anything we know.

Genesis 12:8-9

From the oak of Moreh Abram now moves to the hill east of Bethel, and pitches his tent, with "Bethel on the west and Ai on the east." These localities are still recognized - the former as Beiten, and the latter as Tell er-Rijmeh (the mount of the heap). Bethel was "a place," adjacent to which was the town called "Luz at the first" Genesis 28:19. Jacob gave this name to the place twice Genesis 28:19; Genesis 35:15. The name, then, was not first given at the second nomination by him. It follows that it may not have been first given at his first nomination. Accordingly we meet with it as an existing name in Abram's time, without being constrained to account for it by supposing the present narrative to have been composed in its present form after the time of Jacob's visit. On the other hand, we may regard it as an interesting trace of early piety having been present in the land even before the arrival of Abram. We shall meet with other corroborating proofs. Bethel continued afterward to be a place hallowed by the presence of God, to which the people resorted for counsel in the war with Benjamin Judges

20:18, Judges 20:26, Judges 20:31; Judges 21:2, and in which Jeroboam set up one of the golden calves 1 Kings 12:29.

On the hill east of this sacred ground Abram built another altar; and called upon the name of the Lord. Here we bare the reappearance of an ancient custom, instituted in the family of Adam after the birth of Enok Genesis 4:26. Abram addresses God by his proper name, Yahweh, with an audible voice, in his assembled household. This, then, is a continuation of the worship of Adam, with additional light according to the progressive development of the moral nature of man. But Abram has not yet any settled abode in the land. He is only surveying its several regions, and feeding his flocks as he finds an opening. Hence, he continues his journey southward.

Verses 10-20

- XXXVIII. Abram in Egypt

15. פרעה *parʿoh* Par‹oh, "ouro." Coptic for "king," with the masculine article pi. or p. P-ouro, "the king." If we separate the article p. from the *reʿoh* for king, which may be compared with רעה Hebrew form, we have *roʿeh* "pastor, leader," and the Latin *rex*, king. This is the common title רעה of the Egyptian sovereigns, to which we have the personal name occasionally added, as Pharaoh-Necho, Pharaoh-Hophrah.

Genesis 12:10

This first visit of Abram to Mizraim, or Egypt, is occasioned by the famine in the land of promise. This land is watered by periodical rains. A season of drought arrests the progress of vegetation, and brings on a famine. But in Egypt, the fertility of the loamy soil depends not on local showers, but on the annual rise of the Nile, which is fed by the rains of a far-distant mountain range. Hence, when the land of Kenaan was wasted by drought and consequent famine, Egypt was generally so productive as to be the granary of the neighboring countries. As Kenaan was the brother of Mizraim, the contact between the two countries in which they dwelt was natural and frequent. Dry seasons and dearth of provisions seem to have been of frequent occurrence in the land of Kenaan Genesis 26:1; Genesis 41:56-57. Even Egypt itself was not exempt from such calamitous visitations. Famine is one of God‘s rods for the punishment of the wicked and the correction of the penitent 2 Samuel 24:13. It visits Abram even in the land of promise. Doubtless the wickedness of the inhabitants was great even in his day. Abram himself was not out of the need of that tribulation

that worketh patience, experience, and hope. He may have been left to himself under this trial, that he might find out by experience his own weakness, and at the same time the faithfulness and omnipotence of Yahweh the promiser. In the moment of his perplexity he flees for refuge to Egypt, and the Lord having a lesson for him, there permits him to enter that land of plenty.

Gen 12:11-13

It is not without misgivings, however, that Abram approaches Egypt. All the way from Ur to Haran, from Haran to the land of Kenaan, and from north to south of the land in which he was a stranger, we hear not a word of apprehension. But now he betakes himself to an expedient which had been preconcerted between him and Sarai before they set out on their earthly pilgrimage Genesis 20:13. There are some obvious reasons for the change from composure to anxiety he now betrays. Abram was hitherto obeying the voice of the Lord, and walking in the path of duty, and therefore he was full of unhesirating confidence in the divine protection. Now he may be pursuing his own course, and, without waiting patiently for the divine counsel, venturing to cross the boundary of the land of promise. He may therefore be without the fortifying assurance of the divine approval. There is often a whisper of this kind heard in the soul, even when it is not fully conscious of the delinquency which occasions it.

Again, the countries through which be had already passed were inhabited by nomadic tribes, each kept in check by all the others, all unsettled in their habits, and many of them not more potent than himself. The Kenaanites spoke the same language with himself, and were probably only a dominant race among others whose language they spoke, if they did not adopt. But in Egypt all was different. Mizraim had seven sons, and, on the average, the daughters are as numerous as the sons. In eight or nine generations there might be from half a million to a million of inhabitants in Egypt, if we allow five daughters as the average of a family. The definite area of the arable ground on the two sides of the Nile, its fertilization by a natural cause without much human labor, the periodical regularity of the inundation, and the extraordinary abundance of the grain crops, combined both to multiply the population with great rapidity, and to accelerate amazingly the rise and growth of fixed institutions and a stable government. Here there were a settled country with a foreign tongue, a prosperous

people, and a powerful sovereign. All this rendered it more perilous to enter Egypt than Kenaan.

If Abram is about to enter Egypt of his own accord, without any divine intimation, it is easy to understand why he resorts to a device of his own to escape the peril of assassination. In an arbitrary government, where the will of the sovereign is law, and the passions are uncontrolled, public or private resolve is sudden, and execution summary. The East still retains its character in this respect. In these circumstances, Abram proposes to Sarai to conceal their marriage, and state that she was his sister; which was perfectly true, as she was the daughter of his father, though not of his mother. At a distance of three or four thousand years, with all the development of mind which a completed Bible and an advanced philosophy can bestow, it is easy to pronounce, with dispassionate coolness, the course of conduct here proposed to be immoral and imprudent. It is not incumbent on us, indeed, to defend it; but neither does it become us to be harsh or excessive in our censure. In the state of manners and customs which then prevailed in Egypt, Abram and Sarai were not certainly bound to disclose all their private concerns to every impertinent inquirer. The seeming simplicity and experience which Abram betrays in seeking to secure his personal safety by an expedient which exposed to risk his wife‘s chastity and his own honor, are not to be pressed too far. The very uncertainty concerning the relation of the strangers to each other tended to abate that momentary caprice in the treatment of individuals which is the result of a despotic government. And the prime fault and folly of Abram consisted in not waiting for the divine direction in leaving the land of promise, and in not committing himself wholly to the divine protection when he did take that step.

It may seem strange that the Scripture contains no express disapprobation of the conduct of Abram. But its manner is to affirm the great principles of moral truth, on suitable occasions, with great clearness and decision; and in ordinary circumstances simply to record the actions of its characters with faithfulness, leaving it to the reader‘s intelligence to mark their moral quality. And God‘s mode of teaching the individual is to implant a moral principle in the heart, which, after many struggles with temptation, will eventually root out all lingering aberrations.

Sarai was sixty-five years of age Genesis 17:17 at the time when Abram describes her as a woman fair to look upon. But we are to remember that beauty does not vanish with middle age; that Sarai‘s age corresponds with twenty-five or thirty years in modern times, as she was at this time not half the age to which men were then accustomed to live; that she had no family or other hardship to bring on premature decay; and that the women of Egypt were far from being distinguished for regularity of feature or freshness of complexion.

Genesis 12:14-16

The inadequacy of Abram‘s expedient appears in the issue, which is different from what he expected. Sarai is admired for her beauty, and, being professedly single, is selected as a wife for Pharaoh; while Abram, as her brother, is munificently entertained and rewarded. His property seems to be enumerated according to the time of acquirement, or the quantity, and not the quality of each kind. Sheep and oxen and he-asses he probably brought with him from Kenaan; men-servants and maid-servants were no doubt augmented in Egypt. For she-asses the Septuagint has mules. These, and the camels, may have been received in Egypt. The camel is the carrier of the desert. Abram had now become involved in perplexities, from which he had neither the wisdom nor the power to extricate himself. With what bitterness of spirit he must have kept silence, received these accessions to his wealth which he dared not to refuse, and allowed Sarai to be removed from his temporary abode! His cunning device had saved his own person for the time; but his beautiful and beloved wife is torn from his bosom.

Genesis 12:17

The Lord, who had chosen him, unworthy though he was, yet not more unworthy than others, to be the agent of His gracious purpose, now interposes to effect his deliverance. “And the Lord plagued Pharaoh.” The mode of the divine interference is suited to have the desired effect on the parties concerned. As Pharaoh is punished, we conclude he was guilty in the eye of heaven in this matter. He committed a breach of hospitality by invading the private abode of the stranger. He further infringed the law of equity between man and man in the most tender point, by abstracting, if not with violence, at least with a show of arbitrary power which could not be resisted, a female, whether sister or wife, from the home of her natural guardian without the consent of either. A deed of ruthless self-will, also, is often rendered more heinous by a blamable inattention to the character or

position of him who is wronged. So it was with Pharaoh. Abram was a man of blameless life and inoffensive manners. He was, moreover, the chosen and special servant of the Most High God. Pharaoh, however, does not condescend to inquire who the stranger is whom he is about to wrong; and is thus unwittingly involved in an aggravated crime. But the hand of the Almighty brings even tyrants to their senses. "And his house." The princes of Pharaoh were accomplices in his crime Genesis 12:15, and his domestics were concurring with him in carrying it into effect. But even apart from any positive consent or connivance in a particular act, men, otherwise culpable, are brought into trouble in this world by the faults of those with whom they are associated. "On account of Sarai." Pharoah was made aware of the cause of the plagues or strokes with which he was now visited.

Genesis 12:18-20

Pharaoh upbraids Abram for his deception, and doubtless not without reason. He then commands his men to dismiss him and his, unharmed, from the country. These men were probably an escort for his safe conduct out of Egypt. Abram was thus reproved through the mouth of Pharaoh, and will be less hasty in abandoning the land of promise, and betaking himself to carnal resources.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verses 1-18

- Abram and Lot Separate

7. פרזי *perîzîy* Perizzi, "descendant of Paraz פרז *pārāz* "leader," or inhabitant of the plain or open country.

10. ככר *kîkar* "circle, border, vale, cake, talent;" related: "bow, bend, go round, dance." ירדן *yardēn* Jardan, "descending." Usually with the article in prose. צער *tsoʿar* Tso‹ar, "smallness."

18. ממרא *mamrē'* Mamre, "fat, strong, ruler." חברון *chebrôn* Chebron, "conjunction, confederacy."

Lot has been hitherto kept in association with Abram by the ties of kinmanship. But it becomes gradually manifest that he has an independent interest, and is no longer disposed to follow the fortunes of the chosen of God. In the natural course of things, this under-feeling comes to the surface. Their serfs come into collision; and as Abram makes no claim of authority over Lot, he offers him the choice of a dwelling-place in the land. This issues in a peaceable separation, in which Abram appears to great advantage. The chosen of the Lord is now in the course of providence isolated from all associations of kindred. He stands alone, in a strange land. He again obeys the summons to survey the land promised to him and his seed in perpetuity.

Genesis 13:1-4

Went up out of Mizraim. - Egypt is a low-lying valley, out of which the traveler ascends into Arabia Petraea and the hill-country of Kenaan. Abram returns, a wiser and a better man. When called to leave his native land, he had immediately obeyed. Such obedience evinced the existence of the new power of godliness in his breast. But he gets beyond the land of promise into a land of carnality, and out of the way of truth into a way of deceit. Such a course betrays the struggle between moral good and evil which has begun within him. This discovery humbles and vexes him. Self-condemnation and repentance are at work within him. We do not know that all these feelings rise into consciousness, but we have no doubt that their

result, in a subdued, sobered, chastened spirit, is here, and will soon manifest itself.

And Lot with him. - Lot accompanied him into Egypt, because he comes with him out of it. The south is so called in respect, not to Egypt, but to the land of promise. It acquired this title before the times of the patriarch, among the Hebrew-speaking tribes inhabiting it. The great riches of Abram consist in cattle and the precious metals. The former is the chief form of wealth in the East. Abram‘s flocks are mentioned in preparation for the following occurrence. He advances north to the place between Bethel and Ai, and perhaps still further, according to Genesis 13:4, to the place of Shekem, where he built the first altar in the land. He now calls on the name of the Lord. The process of contrition in a new heart, has come to its right issue in confession and supplication. The sense of acceptance with God, which he had before experienced in these places of meeting with God, he has now recovered. The spirit of adoption, therefore, speaks within him.

Genesis 13:5-7

The collision. Lot now also abounded in the wealth of the East. The two opulent sheiks (elders, heads of houses) cannot dwell together anymore. Their serfs come to strife. The carnal temper comes out among their dependents. Such disputes were unavoidable in the circumstances. Neither party had any title to the land. Landed property was not yet clearly defined or secured by law. The land therefore was in common - wherever anybody availed himself of the best spot for grazing that he could find unoccupied. We can easily understand what facilities and temptations this would offer for the strong to overbear the weak. We meet with many incidental notices of such oppression Genesis 21:25; Genesis 26:15-22; Exodus 2:16-19. The folly and impropriety of quarreling among kinsmen about pasture grounds on the present occasion is enhanced by the circumstance that Abram and Lot are mere strangers among the Kenaanites and the Perizzites, the settled occupants of the country.

Custom had no doubt already given the possessor a prior claim. Abram and Lot were there merely on sufferance, because the country was thinly populated, and many fertile spots were still unoccupied. The Perizzite is generally associated with, and invariably distinguished from, the Kenaanite Genesis 15:20; Genesis 34:30; Exodus 3:8, Exodus 3:17. This tribe is not found among the descendants of Kenaan in the table of nations. They stand side by side with them, and seem therefore not to be a subject, but an

independent race. They may have been a Shemite clan, roaming over the land before the arrival of the Hamites. They seem to have been by name and custom rather wanderers or nomads than dwellers in the plain or in the villages. They dwelt in the mountains of Judah and Ephraim Judges 1:4; Joshua 17:15. They are noticed even so late as in the time of Ezra Ezra 9:1. The presence of two powerful tribes, independent of each other, was favorable to the quiet and peaceful residence of Abram and Lot, but not certainly to their living at feud with each other.

Genesis 13:8-9

The strife among the underlings does not alienate their masters. Abram appeals to the obligations of brotherhood. He proposes to obviate any further difference by yielding to Lot the choice of all the land. The heavenly principle of forbearance evidently holds the supremacy in Abram‘s breast. He walks in the moral atmosphere of the sermon on the mount Matthew 5:28-42.

Genesis 13:10-13

Lot accepts the offer of his noble-hearted kinsman. He cannot do otherwise, as he is the companion, while his uncle is the principal. He willingly concedes to Abram his present position, and, after a lingering attendance on his kinsman, retires to take the ground of self-dependence. Outward and earthly motives prevail with him in the selection of his new abode. He is charmed by the well-watered lowlands bordering on the Jordan and its affluents. He is here less liable to a periodical famine, and he roams with his serfs and herds in the direction of Sodom. This town and Amorah (Gomorrah), were still flourishing at the time of Lot‘s arrival. The country in which they stood was of extraordinary beauty and fertility. The River Jordan, one of the sources of which is at Panium, after flowing through the waters of Merom, or the lake Semechonitis (Huleh), falls into the Sea of Galilee or Kinnereth, which is six hundred and fifty-three feet below the level of the Mediterranean, and thence descends into the basin of the Salt Sea, which is now thirteen hundred and sixteen feet beneath the same level, by a winding course of about two hundred miles, over twenty-seven threatening rapids.

This river may well be called the Descender. We do not know on what part of the border of Jordan Lot looked down from the heights about Shekem or Ai, as the country underwent a great change at a later period. But its appearance was then so attractive as to bear comparison with the

garden of the Lord and the land of Egypt. The garden of Eden still dwelt in the recollections of men. The fertility of Egypt had been recently witnessed by the two kinsmen. It was a valley fertilized by the overflowing of the Nile, as this valley was by the Jordan and its tributary streams. "As thou goest unto Zoar." The origin of this name is given in Genesis 19:20-22. It lay probably to the south of the Salt Sea, in the wady Kerak. "And Lot journeyed east" מקדם *mîqedem* From the hill-country of Shekem or Ai the Jordan lay to the east.

Genesis 13:12

The men of Sodom were wicked. - The higher blessing of good society, then, was missing in the choice of Lot. It is probable he was a single man when he parted from Abram, and therefore that he married a woman of Sodom. He has in that case fallen into the snare of matching, or, at all events, mingling with the ungodly. This was the damning sin of the antediluvians Genesis 6:1-7. "Sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Their country was as the garden of the Lord. But the beauty of the landscape and the superabundance of the luxuries it afforded, did not abate the sinful disposition of the inhabitants. Their moral corruption only broke forth into greater vileness of lust, and more daring defiance of heaven. They sinned "exceedingly and before the Lord." Lot had fallen into the very vortex of vice and blasphemy.

Genesis 13:14-18

The man chosen of God now stands alone. He has evinced an humble and self-renouncing spirit. This presents a suitable occasion for the Lord to draw near and speak to His servant. His works are re-assuring. The Lord was not yet done with showing him the land. He therefore calls upon him to look northward and southward and eastward and westward. He then promises again to give all the land which he saw, as far as his eye could reach, to him and to his seed forever. Abram is here regarded as the head of a chosen seed, and hence, the bestowment of this fair territory on the race is an actual grant of it to the head of the race. The term "forever," for a perpetual possession, means as long as the order of things to which it belongs lasts. The holder of a promise has his duties to perform, and the neglect of these really cancels the obligation to perpetuate the covenant. This is a plain point of equity between parties to a covenant, and regulates all that depends on the personal acts of the covenanter. Thirdly, He announces that He will make his seed "as the dust of the earth." This

multitude of seed, even when we take the ordinary sense which the form of expression bears in popular use, far transcends the productive powers of the promised land in its utmost extent. Yet to Abram, who was accustomed to the petty tribes that then roved over the pastures of Mesopotamia and Palestine, this disproportion would not be apparent. A people who should fill the land of Canaan, would seem to him innumerable. But we see that the promise begins already to enlarge itself beyond the bounds of the natural seed of Abram. He is again enjoined to walk over his inheritance, and contemplate it in all its length and breadth, with the reiterated assurance that it will be his.

Genesis 13:18

Abram obeys the voice of heaven. He moves his tent from the northern station, where he had parted with Lot, and encamps by the oaks of Mamre, an Amorite sheik. He loves the open country, as he is a stranger, and deals in flocks and herds. The oaks, otherwise rendered by Onkelos and the Vulgate "plains of Mamre," are said to be in Hebron, a place and town about twenty miles south of Jerusalem, on the way to Beersheba. It is a town of great antiquity, having been built seven years before Zoan (Tanis) in Egypt Numbers 13:22. It was sometimes called Mamre in Abram's time, from his confederate of that name. It was also named Kiriath Arba, the city of Arba, a great man among the Anakim Joshua 15:13-14. But upon being taken by Kaleb it recovered the name of Hebron. It is now el-Khulil (the friend, that is, of God; a designation of Abram). The variety of name indicates variety of masters; first, a Shemite it may be, then the Amorites, then the Hittites Genesis 23, then the Anakim, then Judah, and lastly the Muslims.

A third altar is here built by Abram. His wandering course requires a varying place of worship. It is the Omnipresent One whom he adores. The previous visits of the Lord had completed the restoration of his inward peace, security, and liberty of access to God, which had been disturbed by his descent to Egypt, and the temptation that had overcome him there. He feels himself again at peace with God, and his fortitude is renewed. He grows in spiritual knowledge and practice under the great Teacher.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verses 1-24

- Abram Rescues Lot

1. אמרפל′ *amrāpel* Amraphel; related: unknown אלריוך′, *aryôk* Ariok, ארי′ :"leonine?" related *arîy* "a lion:" a name re-appearing in the time of אלסר′ *elāsār* Ellasar (related: unknown) is identified Daniel. Daniel 2:14 with Larsa or Larancha, the Λάρισσα *Larissa* or Λαράχων *Larachōn* of the Greeks, now Senkereh, a town of lower Babylonia, between Mugheir (Ur) כדרלעמר *kedārlāʿomer* .and Warka (Erek) on the left bank of the Frat Kedorla'omer, was compared by Col. Rawlinson with *Kudur -mapula* or *mabuk* whose name is found on the bricks of Chaldaea, and whose title is *Apda martu* ravager of the west. He translates it "servant of Lagamer," one of the national divinities of Susiana. It is also compared with Kedar el-*tîdʿāl* Tid'al, תדעל .Ahmar, "Kedar the Red," a hero in Arabian story גוים *gôyîm* Goim, "nations ".".terror

2. ברע *bera*ʿ Bera‹, "gift ברשע? *bîrsha* Birsha‹, "long and thick?" אדמה′ *admâh* Admah, "red soil" שנאב *shîn'āb* Shinab, "coolness Arabic צביים; *tsebôyîym* Tseboim, שמאבר *shem'ēber* Shemeber, "high-soaring" בלע *belaʿ* Bela‹, "devouring ".".gazelles

3. שדים *śîdîym* Siddim, "plains, fields".

5. רפאים *repā'îym* Rephaim, "the still, the shades, the giants" קרנים עשתרת *ashterot -qarnayîm* ‹Ashteroth-Qurnaim, "ewes of the two horns";) according to Gesenius, "stars of the two horns." The first word may be singular, "ewe," or "star." The latter meaning is gained by connecting the word with the Persian sitareh and the Greek ἀστήρ *astēr* "star." Ashteroth is זוזים *zûzîym* Zuzim; related: .the moon or the planet Venus, whence Astarte אימים′ *eymîym* Emim, הם *hām* Ham, "rush, sound, crowd ".".glance, gush שיח־קריתים *shāvēh -qîryātāyîm* Shaveh, "plain"; Qiriathaim, "two ".".terrible ".cities;" related: "meet

6. חרי *chorîy* Chori, troglodyte; verb: "bore;" noun: "cave שעיר *sēʿîyr* ".Se‹ir, "rough, shaggy פארן איל′ *eyl -pā'rān* El, "tree, oak, terebinth, palm"; ".Paran, "bushy, or cavernous

7. מִשְׁפַּט עֵין ‹En-mishpat, "well of judgment'. *eyn -mîshpāṭ*". קָדֵשׁ Qadesh, "consecrated *qādēsh*". עֲמָלֵקִי ‹Amaleki, "a people that licks up' *ămālēkîy*". חֲצַצֹן תָּמָר Chatsatson-tamar, "cuttiny of the palm *chatstson -tāmār*".

13. עִבְרִי ‹Ibri, a descendant of Eber' *îbrîy*. אֶשְׁכֹּל Eshkol, "cluster' of grapes". עָנֵר ‹Aner; related: unknown' *ăner*.

14. דָּן Dan, "ruler, judge *dan*".

15. חִיבָה Chobah, "hidden *chôbâh*". דַּמֶּשֶׂק Dammeseq. a quadraliteral; related: "hasty, active, alert".

18. מַלְכִּיצֶדֶק Malkitsedeq, "king of righteousness *malkîy -tsedeq*". שָׁלֵם Shalem. "peace *shālēm*". אֵל El, "lasting, strong; strength' *êl*".

20. מָגֵן "give, deliver;" related: "mag, may *mîgēn*".

The community of feeling and of faith was not yet wholly broken up between Abram and Lot, or between them and the nations out of whom Abram had been called. An interesting glimpse is at the same time presented of the daring and doing of fierce ambition in those early times. A confederacy of potentates enter upon an extensive raid or foray, in which Lot is taken captive. This rouses the clannish or family affection of Abram, who pursues, overtakes, and defeats the retreating enemy, and recovers his friend, as well as all the prisoners, and property that had been taken. On his return he receives refreshment and blessing from a native prince who is priest to the most high God.

Genesis 14:1-12

The raid is minutely described in Genesis 14:1-12. The dominant confederacy consists of four kings. Many generations back the first world power, consisting of four cities, was established by Nimrod in the land of Shinar Genesis 10:8-10. This has now given way to a world-confederacy, consisting of four kings. From the vicinity of the places in which they reigned it is evident that they were petty princes of domains varying from a town and its suburbs to a comparatively extensive territory. The first, Amraphel, is king of Shinar. He is therefore the successor of Nimrod, and

the sovereign of the most ancient kingdoms, and on these grounds occupies the first place in the list. But this kingdom is no longer the sole or even the supreme power. Amraphel is probably the descendant of Nimrod, and a Kushite. The second, Ariok, is king of Ellasar. If this town be the same as Larsa, lying between the Frat and the Shat el-Hie, the land of Shinar has been divided between two sovereigns, and no longer belongs entirely to the successor of Nimrod. Lower Shinar includes also Ur of the Kasdim; and hence, Ariok probably represents that race.

The third, Kedorlaomer, is king of Elam, or Elymais, a country east of the lower Tigris, and separated by it from Shinar. He is probably a Shemite, as the country over which he ruled received its name from a son of Shem Genesis 10:22. He is the lord paramount of the others, and commander-in-chief of the united forces. Hence, the Hamite seems to have already succumbed to the Shemite. The fourth, Tidel, is designated "king of Goim." Goim means nations; and it is doubtful whether it denotes here a special nation or a congeries of tribes. The Gentiles, especially so called, seem to have been Japhethites Genesis 10:5. It is obvious that four nationalities are here leagued together, corresponding probably to the Kiprat arbat, four nations or tongues mentioned by Rawlinson (Anc. Mon. I. p. 69). But Kedorlaomer, king of Elam, is clearly not a Kushite. The only question seems to be whether he is a Shemite or a Japhethite, or Arian, in which race the Shemite was ultimately absorbed. If the former alternative be adopted, we may have two Shemite languages among the four. If the latter be accepted, Kedorlaomer is an Arian; Tidal, a Turanian; Amraphel, a Hamite; and Ariok, a Shemite. In either case the Kushite has become subordinate, and a Japhethite or a Shemite has attained the predominance.

Genesis 14:2-3

They made war. - Shinar was the central region from which the different branches of the human family dispersed after the confusion of tongues. It is possible that the mother country claimed some supremacy over the colonies. Shinar was also a great center of commerce, and the cities of the dale of Siddim formed another, of secondary importance. Intercourse between the two countries was therefore frequent. Abram himself had come from Ur Kasdim. The spirit of despotism had descended from Nimrod to the present potentates of the East, and prompted them to aim at universal empire. The five kings are the petty sovereigns, each of a single town and its neighborhood. The area in which these towns lay was very

circumscribed. With the exception of the territory of Bela it was afterward submerged and formed part of the basin of the Salt Sea. Hence, Siddim is said to be the Salt Sea. The dale is the deep valley or glen in which these kings dwelt on the banks of the Jordan, or the salt lake into which it flowed. Of the five cities, Sodom was the chief in power, luxury, and wickedness; whence it is mentioned first. Bela is also called Zoar, "the little," and, hence, is placed last; even the name of its king is not given. "All these joined together." They formed a league in self-defense, and marched out to meet the enemy in the dale of Siddim.

Genesis 14:4-7

The narrative here reverts to the previous circumstances which gave occasion to the present raid. "Twelve years had they served Kedorlaomer." These years date probably from the commencement of his reign. They may have been previously dependent on the dominant power in Shinar, and connected with it by national descent. If Kedorlaomer had wrested the supremacy from the king of Shinar, and so was regarded as an alien by the princes of Siddim, their coolness might gradually ripen into disaffection. In the thirteenth year they rebelled, and in the fourteenth Kedorlaomer came to quell the revolt. This military expedition embraced far loftier objects than the mere subjugation of the Pentapolis in the dale of Siddim. In passing from Shinar the invaders must have marched in a northwesterly direction along the Frat, touching upon Tadmor and Damascus. We are not informed whether they held any sway or made any conquest in these intervening regions. But they overran the country that stretches along the whole cast side of the Jordan, and the parts south and west of the Salt Sea.

The Rephaim lay in Peraea. Some of them also were once found on the west side of the Jordan Genesis 15:20, where they gave name to the valley of Rephaim (Wady el-Werd), southwest of Jerusalem, on the way to Bethlehem Joshua 15:8, occupied part of Mount Ephraim Joshua 17:15, and lingered for a long time among the Philistines (2 Samuel 21:16, ff.). They were a tall or gigantic race. They were not Kenaanites, but seem to have entered the country before them. They were conquered in Peraea by the Amorites, a branch of the Kenaanite family; and by the descendants of Lot, the Ammonites and Moabites. A remnant of them only lingered in the country when the Israelites arrived Deuteronomy 2:20; Deuteronomy 3:11, Deuteronomy 3:13. They may have been Shemites or Japhethites. The site of Ashteroth Carnaim has not been ascertained. Ritter finds it in Tell

Ash‘areh. Porter suggests ‹Afineh, eight miles from Busrah, as the Samaritan version has ‹Aphinit for ‹Ashtaroth.

The Zuzim dwelt between the Jabbok and the Arnon. They are supposed to be the same as the Zamzummin, who were dispossessed by the Ammonites. If so, they were a branch of the Rephaim Deuteronomy 2:20. Their town, Ham, is of unknown site.

The Emim were also accounted Rephaim. They lay on the east of the Salt Sea, and were afterward conquered by the Moabites, who gave them this name Deuteronomy 2:10-11. Of Shaveh Kiriathaim, the plain of the two cities, the name probably remains in el-Kureiyat, a site near Jebel Attarus in Moab.

The Horites were perhaps a Shemite tribe, the aboriginal inhabitants of Mount Seir, where they dwelt in caves; such as are still to be seen in Petra and other places around. They were afterward absorbed into the Edomites. Mount Seir stretches between the Salt Sea and the Elanitic Gulf. El-Paran, terebinth of Paran, is perhaps the same as Elath, at the head of the gulf of Aelana or Akaba. Paran lay west of Mount Seir and south of Palestine, and stretched into the peninsula of Sinai, where the name may yet be preserved in Wady Feiran. El-Paran would thus be by the wilderness of that name, now et-Tih.

Genesis 14:7

This was the extreme point of their march southward. They now turned back by another route. Enmishpat, which is Kadesh, lay between Mount Hor and the Salt Sea, at a site now called Ain el-Welbch. “The field of the Amalekite” was some part of the country lying between Palestine and Egypt, which was afterward occupied by the Amalekites. Instead of “field,” the Septuagint has ἄρχοντας *archontas* “rulers” of Amalek; but this reading is not supported. The tribe is descended from Amalek, thc son of Eliphaz and grandson of Esau Genesis 36:12. Traces of them are found as far north as Ephraim Judges 5:14; Judges 12:15. Balaam calls Amalek the beginning of the nations Numbers 24:20; but this cannot be understood absolutely, as the name does not even occur in the table of nations. It is therefore well explained to mean that Amalek was the first that attacked Israel on coming out of Egypt. The invading host advance still further, to Hazazon-tamar,

cutting of the palm, which is En-gedi (well of the kid, 2 Chronicles 20:2), situated on the western shore of the Salt Sea, and now called Ain Jidy. This was a settlement of the Amorites.

Genesis 14:8-12

We have now arrived again at the point we had reached in Genesis 14:3. The five kings came out and joined battle with the four in the dale of Siddim. This dale abounded in pits of mineral pitch, or asphalt. The kings of Sodom and Amorah fled toward these pits, and seem to have fallen into them and perished. The others betook themselves to the mountain - probably the heights on the cast of the dale.

Genesis 14:11

The provisions and other movable property of the vanquished are carried away from Sodom and Amorah. For רכוש *rekush* "goods," the Septuagint has here and in the 21st verse τὴν ἵππσν *tēn hippon* "the cavalry." This implies the reading רכב *rekeb* which is not supported by other authorities, nor suitable to the context. Among the prisoners is Lot, the son of Abram's brother. This designation prepares us for what is to follow. It is added that he was "dwelling in Sodom," to explain why he was among the captives. "They went away." The invaders were now laden with booty. Their first concern was to transfer this to their native country, and deposit it in a place of safety. It was not prudent to delay while they were encumbered with so much valuable property. The terms on which the conquered tribes were to "serve" them could be settled by negotiation. If these terms were not accepted, they would be quite ready for another predatory incursion.

This great foray is only incidentally introduced into our narrative, on account of the capture of Lot. It was not the first visit probably of these marauders to the same lands. It is interesting to the historian, as a sample of the mode in which conquest was made. It opens up to the view one of the ancient scenes of human activity. It teaches us that the wave of war often flowed over the lands of the ancient world, and left more or less lasting marks of its disturbing power. Tribes were not unfrequently moved from place to place, intermingled with one another, and enslaved by other tribes. The actual state of things in the land of Abram's pilgrimage is suddenly presented to us under a new light. The Rephaim, including the Zuzim and the Emim, occupy the east of the Jordan, and had once a place on the west. The Perizzites also dwell side by side with the Kenaanites in the western district. The Horites are found in Mount Seir. As none of these were

Kenaan‘s descendants, we have the undeniable traces of a Shemitic population before and along with the Kenaanites. The language of Heber, therefore, was in the country before the latter arrived.

Genesis 14:13-16

Abram rescues Lot. הפליט *hapālîyṭ* “the fugitive” party, as “the Kenaanite” for the whole nation. The escaped party inform Abram when one of their number does so. “The Hebrew.” This designation is given to Abram plainly for the purpose of connecting him with Lot. The Septuagint translates the word by περα της *peratees* one who passes. This has been explained by *transfluvialis*, one who has come across the river; namely, the Frat. This no doubt applies to Lot as well as Abram; but it also applies to every other tribe in the country, inasmuch as all had originally migrated across the Euphrates. Besides, the word is nowhere else used in this sense, but always as a patronymic. And, moreover, Abram is here distinguished as the Hebrew, just as his confederate Mamre is distinguished as the Amorite. The object of these designations is to mark, not only their relation to each other, but also their connection with those who were carried off as prisoners of war. The term “Hebrew” does not come into the narrative by hap-hazard. “The sons of Heber” are distinctly mentioned in the table of nations among the descendants of Shem. Its introduction here intimates that there were other descendants of Heber besides Abram already in the land. They could not but be a widespread race. One branch of them, the Joctanites, were the first stock of Arabia‘s inhabitants, and the Palgites may have been the earliest settlers in the adjacent Palestine. How many of the non-Kenaanites belong to them we cannot tell; but we learn from the statement now before us that the Hebrew was at this time a known patronymic. The way between Mesopotamia and Palestine has been often trodden.

Abram was dwelling by the oaks of Mamre, near Hebron, therefore not far from the scene of war. He was also in league with Mamre and his brothers Eshkol and Aner. This league was, it is evident from the result, for mutual defense.

Genesis 14:14

His brother. - This is a customary extension of the term, whether we regard Lot as his brother‘s son, or at the same time his brother-in-law. “His trained men.” Abram had now a company of three hundred and eighteen trained men, born in his own house; which implies a following of more than one thousand men, women, and children. His flocks and herds must have

corresponded in extent to such an establishment. “Unto Dan.” This name is found in the Hebrew, Samaritan, Septuagint, and Onkelos. It might naturally be supposed that the sacred reviser of the text had inserted it here, had we not grounds for a contrary supposition. The custom of the reviser was to add the other name without altering the original; of which we have several examples in this very chapter Genesis 14:2-3, Genesis 14:7-8, Genesis 14:17. We are, therefore, led to regard Dan as in use at the time of Abram. Held at that remote period perhaps by some Hebrew, it fell at length into the hands of the Sidonians 2 Samuel 24:6. The former is not on the road to Damascus, while the latter was north of Gilead, and may have been near the route either by the south of the sea of Kinnereth, or of the waters of Merom. This is possible, and deserves consideration. But there may have been a third way to Damascus, passing Tell el-Kady; this place itself is on the east side of the main stream of the Jordan, and the expression רען דנה *dānâh ya'an* is confessedly obscure.

Genesis 14:15-16

Abram and his confederates found the enemy secure and at their ease, not expecting pursuit. They attack them on two quarters; Abram, probably, on the one, and his allies on the other; by night, defeat and pursue them unto Hobah. “On the left hand of Damascus.” Hobah was on the north of Damascus. An Eastern, in fixing the points of the heavens, faces the rising sun, in which position the east is before him, the west behind, the south at the right hand, and the north at the left. Hobah is referred by the Jews to Jobar, a place northeast of Damascus. J. L. Porter suggests a place due north, called Burzeh, where there is a Muslim wely or saint‘s tomb, called Makam Ibrahim, the sanctuary of Abraham (Handbook, p. 492). This route, by the north of Damascus, illustrates the necessity of advancing far north to get round the desert intervening between Shinar and the cities of the plain.

Damascus, Dimishk, esh-Sham, is a very ancient city of Aram. The choice of the site was probably determined by the Abana (Barada) and Pharpar (Awaj), flowing, the one from Anti-Libanus, and the other from Mount Hermon, and fertilizing a circuit of thirty miles. Within this area arose a city which, amidst all the changes of dynasty that have come over it, has maintained its prosperity to the present day, when it has one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants. It was originally occupied by the descendants of Aram, and may have been built, as Josephus informs us, by Uz his son.

Abram, with his allies, succeeded in defeating the enemy and recovering the property, with the prisoners, male and female, that had been carried away, and, among the rest, Lot, the object of his generous and gallant adventure.

Verse 7-24

Abram‘s reception on his return. “The king of Sodom.” This is either Bera, if he survived the defeat, or, if not, his successor. “The dale of Shaveh, which is the King‘s dale.” The word עמק *ʿēmeq* is rendered here uniformly by the familiar term “dale.” The dale of Shaveh is here explained by the “King‘s dale.” This phrase occurs at a period long subsequent as the name of the valley in which Absalom reared his pillar 2 Samuel 18:18. There is nothing to hinder the identity of the place, which must, according to the latter passage, have been not far from Jerusalem. Josephus makes the distance two stadia, which accords with the situation of Absalom‘s tomb, though the building now so-called, in the valley of Jehoshaphat, seems to be of later origin. The identity of the King‘s dale with the valley cast of Jerusalem, through which the Kedron flows, corresponds very well with the present passage.

Genesis 14:18-20

An incident of the deepest interest here takes us by surprise. The connecting link in the narrative is obviously the place where the king of Sodom meets with Abram. The King‘s dale is plainly adjacent to the royal residence of Melkizedec, who therefore comes forth to greet and entertain the returning victor. This prince is the king of Shalem. This is apparently an ancient name of Jerusalem, which is so designated in Psalm 76:8. The other Shalem, which lay in the vicinity of Shekem (Genesis 33:18, if this be a proper name) is far away from the King‘s dale and the town of Sodom. Jerusalem is convenient to these localities, and contains the element Shalem in its composition, as the name signifies the foundation of peace (Shalom).

The king of Shalem, by name king of righteousness, and by office king of peace, “brought forth bread and wine.” These are the standing elements of a simple repast for the refreshment of the body. In after times they were by divine appointment placed on the table of the presence in the tabernacle Exodus 25:29-30. They were the accompaniments of the Paschal lamb Matthew 26:26-27, and they were adopted by the Messiah as the sacred symbols of that heavenly fare, of which, if a man partake, he shall live

forever John 6:48-58. The Author of revelation has made all nature intrinsically good and pure. He has realized therein a harmony of the laws of intelligence and design; everything meets and matches all that comes into contact with it; and all together form a cosmos, a system of things, a unity of types and antitypes. His word cannot but correspond to His work. Bread and wine are common things, familiar to the eye, the touch, and the taste of men. The Great Teacher takes them up out of the hands of man as emblems of grace, mercy, and peace, through an accepted ransom, of the lowliest as well as the loftiest boon of an everlasting salvation, and they have never lost their significance or appropriateness.

And he was priest to the most high God. - From this we are assured that the bread and wine refreshed not only the body, but the soul of Abram. In close connection with the preceding sentence, it seems to intimate that the bringing forth of bread and wine was a priestly act, and, accordingly, the crowning part of a sacred feast. The כהן *kohen* or priest, who is here mentioned for the first time in Scripture, was one who acted in sacred things on the part of others. He was a mediator between God and man, representing God holding out the hand of mercy, and man reaching forth the hand of faith. The necessity of such an orifice grew out of the distance between God and man produced by sin. The business of the priest was to offer sacrifice and to intercede; in the former making amends to the law, in the latter appealing to the mercy of God. We do not learn by express statement what was the mode of intervention on the part of Melkizedec. But we know that sacrifice was as early as Habel, and that calling on the name of the Lord was commenced in the time of Enosh. These were early forms of approach to God. The offices of king and priest were combined in Melkizedec - a condition of things often exemplified in after times.

The most high God. - Here we meet with a new name of God, El, the Lasting, the Mighty, cognate with Elohim, and previously occurring in the compound proper names Mebujael, Mahalalel, and Bethel. We have also an epithet of God, "Elion the most high," now appearing for the first time. Hence, we perceive that the unity, the omnipotence, and the absolute pre-eminence of God were still living in the memory and conscience of a section at least of the inhabitants of this land. Still more, the worship of God was not a mere domestic custom, in which the father or head of the family officiated, but a public ordinance conducted by a stated functionary. And, lastly, the mode of worship was of such a nature as to represent the

doctrine and acknowledge the necessity of an atonement, since it was performed by means of a priest.

Genesis 14:18

And he blessed him. - Here it comes out clearly that Melkizedec acts not only in a civil but in a sacred capacity. He blesses Abram. In the form of benediction employed we have two parts: the former of which is strictly a blessing or asking of good things for the person in question. "Blessed be Abram." It is the part of the father to bless the child, of the patriarch or superior to bless the subject or inferior, and of the priest to bless the people Hebrews 7:7. Here, accordingly, Melkizedec assumes and Abram concedes to him the superiority. The Most High God is here further designated as the Founder of heaven and earth, the great Architect or Builder, and, therefore, Possessor of all things. There is here no indistinct allusion to the creation of "heaven and earth," mentioned in the opening of the Book of God. This is a manifest identification of the God of Melkizedec with the one Creator and Upholder of all things. We have here no mere local or national deity, with limited power and province, but the sole and supreme God of the universe and of man.

Genesis 14:20

The second part of this benedictory prayer is a thanksgiving to the common God of Melkizedec and Abram for the victory which had been vouchsafed to the latter. "Thy foes." Here Abram is personally addressed. Melkizedec as a priest first appeals to God on behalf of Abram, and then addresses Abram on behalf of God. Thus, he performs the part of a mediator.

And he gave him a tithe of all. - This is a very significant act. In presenting the tenth of all the spoils of victory, Abram makes a practical acknowledgment of the absolute and exclusive supremacy of the God whom Melkizedec worshipped, and of the authority and validity of the priesthood which he exercised. We have here all the indications of a stated order of sacred rites, in which a costly service, with a fixed official, is maintained at the public expense, according to a definite rate of contribution. The gift in the present case is the tenth of the spoils of war. This act of Abram, though recorded last, may have taken place at the commencement of the interview. At all events, it renders it extremely probable that a sacrifice had been offered to God, through the intervention

of Melkizedec, before he brought forth the bread and wine of the accepted feast.

It is obvious that here we stand on broader ground than the special promise made to Abram. Melkizedec was not a partner in the call of Abram, and yet the latter acknowledges him as a priest of the Most High God. Hence, we must fall back on the covenant made with Noah - the representative of the whole race after the deluge - as the broad basis of authority on which Melkizedec acted. That covenant, then, was not a dead letter. It still lived in the heart and will of a part of the nations. Its hallowing and exalting truths had produced at least one center of pure and spiritual worship on the earth. Even Abram, the called of God, acknowledges its constituted head. And the Most High God, Founder and Upholder of heaven and earth, thereby guarantees its validity for all who in every place call on his name in sincerity and truth. And his special call to Abram is given with a view to the final removal of all obstacles to the acceptance and application of this his everlasting covenant. We are thankful for this glimpse into the comprehensive grandeur of the divine purpose concerning man, which is for some time forward cast into the shade, until it begins to break forth again in the anticipations of the prophets, and at length shines forth with imperishable splendor in the revelations of the New Testament.

The genealogy of Melkizedec seems designedly veiled in impenetrable obscurity. To lift this veil entirely is therefore hopeless. Yet we may venture to hint the possibility that here we have another Shemite chieftain in the land of Kenaan. The indefinite statement of Josephus, that he was a potentate of the Kenaanites, is no proof to the contrary, even if it were of much value. The address of Ezekiel to Jerusalem: “Thy origin and thy birth are of the land of Kenaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite” Ezekiel 16:3, may refer to the period immediately before the entrance of Israel into the land. At and after that time the Amorite and the Jebusite seem to have been in possession of the city Joshua 10:5; Judges 1:21. But in the time of Abram, more than four hundred years before, it may have been different. We have discovered other tribes in this land that were not of the race of Kenaan. It is not likely that Kenaan would furnish a priest of the most high God. It is evident that Melkizedec was not in the confederacy of the Pentapolis with the king of Sodom. He comes out

separately and suddenly to meet Abram, who was one of "the children of Heber," of whom Shem was the father.

And he is the acknowledged head of the worshippers of the most high God, who is "the Lord, the God of Shem." But be this as it may, it is only a secondary question here. The matter of primary importance, as has been already noted, is the existence of a community of pure worshippers of the true God in the land of Kenaan, antecedent to Abram. If this community be descendants of Kenaan, it only renders the discovery the more striking and impressive. The knowledge of the true God, the confession of the one everlasting supreme Creator of heaven and earth, the existence of a stated form of worship by means of a priest and a ritual attested by Abram the elect of God, in a community belonging to the Gentiles, form at once a remarkable vindication of the justice and mercy of God in having made known to all mankind the mode of acceptable approach to himself, and a singular evidence that such a revelation had been made to Noah, from whom alone it could have descended to the whole race, and consequently to this particular branch of it.

We have reason to believe that this was not the sole line in which this precious tradition was still preserved in comparative purity and power. Job and his companions belong to one other known line in which the knowledge of the one God was still vital. The fundamental principles of divine truth planted in the human breast by this and antecedent revelations were never afterward wholly eradicated; and from the hereditary germs of a primitive theology, cherished by contact with the Sidonians and other Phoenicians, were Homer, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and other sages of the East and West, enabled to rise to the exalted conceptions which they occasionally formed of the unity, purity, spirituality, and supremacy of the Divine Being. The idea of God, conveyed into a soul of any power and freedom, is wonderfully prolific. It bursts the bonds of the animal nature, and expands and elevates the rational to some shadowy semblance of its primeval glory. Where it has become altogether extinct, the human has sunk down under the debasing bondage of the brutal. During the four centuries that elapsed from the arrival of Abram to the conquest of the country by his descendants, this interesting relic of a pure Gentile worship seems to have disappeared. But the traces of such a purifying and elevating knowledge of God were not

even then effaced from the memories, the customs, and the phrases of the people.

Genesis 14:21-24

The king of Sodom concedes to Abram, according to custom, the spoils of conquest as his right, and claims for himself only his subjects who had been rescued from the foe. Abram however declines any personal advantage from the enterprise, or material recompense for his services. To this he was led partly by the present disposition of his mind, in which the spiritual prevailed over the carnal, and partly by the character of the one with whom he had to deal; since the Sodomites were notorious for their wickedness. On other occasions he accepted unmerited gifts Genesis 12:16; Genesis 20:14, Genesis 20:16. On the present occasion, he, no doubt, felt himself amply rewarded by the recovery of his own kinsman, and the blessing of Melkizedec. Disinterestedness has had another victory in Abram. And, accordingly, the minister of God meets him on the field of a common humanity, and pronounces on him a blessing. The unselfish, unsectarian heart of the heir of special promise, bows in acknowledgment of the representative of the universal and anterior covenant of God with Noah.

Genesis 14:22

I have lifted up my hand. - This is a serious matter with Abram. Either before, or then and there, he made an oath or solemn asseveration before God, with uplifted hand, that he would not touch the property of Sodom. He must have felt that there was danger of moral contamination in coming into any political relationship with the cities of the vale. "The Lord, the Most High God, the Founder of heaven and earth." In this conjunction of names Abram solemnly and expressly identifies the God of himself and of Melkizedec in the presence of the king of Sodom. The Most High God of Melkizedec is the God of the first chapter of Genesis, and the Yahweh of Adam, Noah, and Abram.

Genesis 14:24

While Abram refrains from accepting any part of the spoils beyond what had been consumed in supplying the necessities of his followers in the expedition, he expressly excepts the portion to which his confederates, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, became entitled by their share in the recovery of the property. This is sufficient to prove that the transaction regarding the spoil was not an offer of generosity on the part of the king of Sodom, but an act of disinterestedness on the part of Abram.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verses 1-21

- The Faith of Abram

.*dābār* "a word, a thing;" the word being the sign of the thing דבר .1

ădonāy "Adonai, the Lord;" related: "bring down, lay down."′ אדני .2 This is the name usually read in place of Yahweh; but when, as in the *ĕlohîym′* אלהים ,*ădonāy* are in apposition′ אדני *yehovâh* and יהוה ,present case is read instead of the former. The Jews from a feeling of reverence avoided the utterance of this sacred name except on the most solemn occasions. This is said to have arisen from a stringent interpretation of Leviticus 24:16. According to some, this name was pronounced only once a year by the high priest, on the day of atonement, in the Holy of Holies, and according to others only in the solemn benedictions pronounced by the priests. At an earlier period, however, the name must have been freely used by the people, *ădôn* in the′ אדן since it enters into the composition of proper names. Adon ",*mesheq* "possession משׁק .singular and plural is used as a common name דמשׁק *ben -mesheq* "possessor." This forms a paronomasia with בן־משׁק *elîy'ezer* "Eliezer, God of" אליעזר *damaśqîy* דמשׁקי *dameśeq* which is for ".help, or mighty to help

qenîzîy קנזי .*qayîn* Kain קין *qēynîy* Kenite, patronymic of קיני .19 *qademonîy* קדמני ".*qenaz* Kenaz, "hunter קנז Kenizzite, patronymic of ".Kadmonite, "eastern, old

The events recorded in the preceding chapter manifest the sway of the new nature in Abram, and meet the approval of the Lord. This approval is exhibited in a heavenly visit to the patriarch, in which the Lord solemnly reiterates the promise of the seed and the land. Abram believes in the Lord, who thereupon enters into covenant with him.

Genesis 15:1-6

After these things, - - the victory, the blessing, and the self-denial recorded in the previous chapter. "The word of the Lord," manifesting himself by speech to his servant. "In the vision" the intelligent observer passes from the merely sensible to the supersensible sphere of reality. "Fear not, Abram." The patriarch had some reason to fear. The formidable allies

had indeed been defeated, and the fruits of their marauding enterprise wrested from them. But they might resume their purpose, and return with an overwhelming force. And Abram was still a stranger in a foreign land, preoccupied by tribes of another race, who would combine against him as soon as they suspected him of being an intruder. But the Lord had stood by him and given him the victory, and now speaks to him in the language of encouragement. "I am thy shield, thy exceeding great reward." The word I is separately expressed, and, therefore, emphatic in the original.

I, Jehovah (Yahweh), the Self-existent One, the Author of existence, the Performer of promise, the Manifester of myself to man, and not any creature however exalted. This was something beyond a seed, or a land, or any temporal thing. The Creator infinitely transcends the creature. The mind of Abram is here lifted up to the spiritual and the eternal. (1) thy shield. (2) thy exceeding great reward. Abram has two fears - the presence of evil, and the absence of good. Experience and conscience had begun to teach him that both of these were justly his doom. But Yahweh has chosen him, and here engages himself to stand between him and all harm, and himself to be to him all good. With such a shield from all evil, and such a source of all good, he need not be afraid. The Lord, we see, begins, as usual, with the immediate and the tangible; but he propounds a principle that reaches to the eternal and the spiritual. We have here the opening germ of the great doctrine of "the Lord our righteousness," redeeming us on the one hand from the sentence of death, and on the other to a title to eternal life.

Genesis 15:2-3

Notwithstanding the unbounded grandeur and preciousness of the promise, or rather assurance, now given, Abram is still childless and landless; and the Lord has made as yet no sign of action in regard to these objects of special promise. "Lord Jehovah (Yahweh)." The name אדני *'ădonāy* is here for the first time used in the divine records. It denotes one who has authority; and, therefore, when applied to God, the Supreme Lord. Abram hereby acknowledges Yahweh as Supreme Judge and Governor, and therefore entitled to dispose of all matters concerning his present or prospective welfare. "What wilt thou give me?" Of what use will land or wealth be to me, the immediate reward specified by the promise? Eliezer of Damascus is master of my house. "To me thou hast given no seed." This was the present shield mentioned also in former words of promise. There is something strikingly human in all this. Abram is no enthusiast or fanatic.

He fastens on the substantive blessings which the Lord had expressly named.

Genesis 15:4-5

The Lord reiterates the promise concerning the seed. As he had commanded him to view the land, and see in its dust the emblem of the multitude that would spring from him, so now, with a sublime simplicity of practical illustration, he brings him forth to contemplate the stars, and challenges him to tell their number, if he can; adding, "So shall thy seed be." He that made all these out of nothing, by the word of his power, is able to fulfill his promise, and multiply the seed of Abram and Sarai. Here, we perceive, the vision does not interfere with the notice of the sensible world, so far as is necessary Daniel 10:7; John 12:29.

Genesis 15:6

And Abram believed in the Lord. - Thus, at length, after many throes of labor, has come to the birth in the breast of Abram "faith in Yahweh," on his simple promise in the absence of all present performance, and in the face of all sensible hinderance. The command to go to the land which the Lord would show him, accompanied with the promise to make of him a great nation, had awakened in him a certain expectation; which, however, waited for some performance to ripen it into faith. But waiting in a state of suspense is not faith, but doubt; and faith after performance is not faith, but sight. The second and third renewal of the promise, while performance was still unseen in the distance, was calculated to slay the expectancy that still paused for realization, to give it the vitality of a settled consent and acquiescence in the faithfulness of God, and mature it into conviction and confession.

What was there now, then, to call forth Abram's faith more than at the first promise? There was the reiteration of the promise. There was the withholding of the performance, leaving room for the exercise of pure faith. There was time to train the mind to this unaccustomed idea and determination. And, lastly, there was the sublime assurance conveyed in the sentence, "I am thy shield, thy exceeding great reward," transcending all the limits of time and place, comprehending alike the present and the eternal, the earthly and the heavenly. This, coupled with all the recorded and unrecorded dealings of the Lord, leads him to conceive the nobler feeling of faith in the Promiser, antecedent to any part of the execution, any unfolding of the plan, or any removal of the obvious difficulty. The moment of

deliverance draws nigh, when Abram at length ventures to open his mouth and lay bare, in articulate utterance, the utmost questionings of his soul before the Lord. And then, in due time is effected the birth of faith; not by commencing the accomplishment of the promise, but by the explicit reassertion of its several parts, in the light of that grand assurance which covers it in its narrowest and in its most expanded forms. Thus, faith springs solely from the seed of promise. And from that moment there stands up and grows within the breast of man the right frame of mind toward the God of mercy - the germ of a mutual good understanding between God and man which will spread its roots and branches through the whole soul, to the exclusion of every noxious plant, and blossom forth unto the blessed fruit of all holy feelings and doings.

And he counted it to him for righteousness. - First. From this confessedly weighty sentence we learn, implicitly, that Abram had no righteousness. And if he had not, no man had. We have seen enough of Abram to know this on other grounds. And here the universal fact of man‘s depravity comes out into incidental notice, as a thing usually taken for granted, in the words of God. Second. Righteousness is here imputed to Abram. Hence, mercy and grace are extended to him; mercy taking effect in the pardon of his sin, and grace in bestowing the rewards of righteousness. Third. That in him which is counted for righteousness is faith in Yahweh promising mercy. In the absence of righteousness, this is the only thing in the sinner that can be counted for righteousness. First, it is not of the nature of righteousness. If it were actual righteousness, it could not be counted as such. But believing God, who promises blessing to the undeserving, is essentially different from obeying God, who guarantees blessing to the deserving. Hence, it has a negative fitness to be counted for what it is not. Secondly, it is trust in him who engages to bless in a holy and lawful way. Hence, it is that in the sinner which brings him into conformity with the law through another who undertakes to satisfy its demands and secure its rewards for him. Thus, it is the only thing in the sinner which, while it is not righteousness, has yet a claim to be counted for such, because it brings him into union with one who is just and having salvation.

It is not material what the Almighty and All-gracious promises in the first instance to him that believes in him, whether it be a land, or a seed, or any other blessing. All other blessing, temporal or eternal, will flow out of that express one, in a perpetual course of development, as the believer

advances in experience, in compass of intellect, and capacity of enjoyment. Hence, it is that a land involves a better land, a seed a nobler seed, a temporal an eternal good. The patriarchs were children to us in the comprehension of the love of God: we are children to those who will hereafter experience still grander manifestations of what God has prepared for them that love him. The shield and exceeding great reward await a yet inconceivable enlargement of meaning.

Genesis 15:7-21

The Lord next confirms and explains the promise of "the land" to Abram. When God announces himself as Yahweh, who purposed to give him the land, Abram asks, Whereby "shall I know that I shall possess it?" He appears to expect some intimation as to the time and mode of entering upon possession. The Lord now directs him to make ready the things requisite for entering into a formal covenant regarding the land. These include all the kinds of animals afterward used in sacrifice. The number three is sacred, and denotes the perfection of the victim in point of maturity. The division of the animals refers to the covenant between two parties, who participate in the rights which it guarantees. The birds are two without being divided. "Abram drove them away." As the animals slain and divided represent the only mean and way through which the two parties can meet in a covenant of peace, they must be preserved pure and unmutilated for the end they have to serve.

Genesis 15:12-17

And the sun was about to set. - This visit of the Lord to Abram continues for two nights, with the intervening day. In the former night he led him forth to view the stars Genesis 15:5. The second night sets in with the consummation of the covenant Genesis 15:17. The revelation comes to Abram in a trance of deep sleep. The Lord releases the mind from attention to the communications of sense in order to engage it with higher things. And he who makes the loftier revelation can enable the recipient to distinguish the voice of heaven from the play of fancy.

Genesis 15:13-15

Know, know thou. - Know certainly. This responds to Abram's question, Whereby shall I know? Genesis 15:8. Four hundred years are to elapse before the seed of Abram shall actually proceed to take possession of the land. This interval can only commence when the seed is born; that is, at the birth of Isaac, when Abram was a hundred years of age and therefore

thirty years after the call. During this interval they are to be, "first, strangers in a land not theirs" for one hundred and ninety years; and then for the remaining two hundred and ten years in Egypt: at first, servants, with considerable privilege and position; and at last, afflicted serfs, under a hard and cruel bondage. At the end of this period Pharaoh and his nation were visited with a succession of tremendous judgments, and Israel went out free from bondage "with great wealth" Genesis 15:16

In the fourth age. - An age here means the average period from the birth to the death of one man. This use of the word is proved by Numbers 32:13 - "He made them wander in the wilderness for forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was consumed." This age or generation ran parallel with the life of Moses, and therefore consisted of one hundred and twenty years. Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. Four such generations amount to four hundred and eighty or four hundred and forty years. From the birth of Isaac to the return to the land of promise was an interval of four hundred and forty years. Isaac, Levi, Amram, and Eleazar may represent the four ages.

For the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full. - From this simple sentence we have much to learn. First. The Lord foreknows the moral character of people. Second. In his providence he administers the affairs of nations on the principle of moral rectitude. Third. Nations are spared until their iniquity is full. Fourth. They are then cut off in retributive justice. Fifth. The Amorite was to be the chief nation extirpated for its iniquity on the return of the seed of Abram. Accordingly, we find the Amorites occupying by conquest the country east of the Jordan, from the Arnon to Mount Hermon, under their two kings, Sihon and Og Numbers 21:21-35. On the west of Jordan we have already met them at En-gedi and Hebron, and they dwelt in the mountains of Judah and Ephraim Numbers 13:29, whence they seem to have crossed the Jordan for conquest Numbers 21:26. Thus had they of all the tribes that overspread the land by far the largest extent of territory. And they seem to have been extinguished as a nation by the invasion of Israel, as we hear no more of them in the subsequent history of the country.

Genesis 15:17

And the sun went down. - The light of day is gone. The covenant is now formally concluded. Abram had risen to the height of faith in the God of promise. He is come into the position of the father of the faithful. He is

therefore qualified for entering into this solemn compact. This covenant has a uniqueness which distinguishes it from that with Noah. It refers to a patriarch and his seed chosen out of a coexisting race. It is not, however, subversive of the ancient and general covenant, but only a special measure for overcoming the legal and moral difficulties in the way, and ultimately bringing its comprehensive provisions into effect. It refers to the land of promise, which is not only a reality, but a type and an earnest of all analogous blessings.

The oven of smoke and lamp of flame symbolize the smoke of destruction and the light of salvation. Their passing through the pieces of the victims and probably consuming them as an accepted sacrifice are the ratification of the covenant on the part of God, as the dividing and presenting of them were on the part of Abram. The propitiatory foundation of the covenant here comes into view, and connects Abram with Habel and Noah, the primeval confessors of the necessity of an atonement.

Genesis 15:18-21

In that instant the covenant was solemnly completed. Its primary form of benefit is the grant of the promised land with the extensive boundaries of the river of Egypt and the Euphrates. The former seems to be the Nile with its banks which constitute Egypt, as the Phrat with its banks describes the land of the East, with which countries the promised land was conterminous.

Genesis 15:19-21

The ten principal nations inhabiting this area are here enumerated. Of these five are Kenaanite, and the other five probably not. The first three are new to us, and seem to occupy the extremities of the region here defined. The Kenite dwelt in the country bordering on Egypt and south of Palestine, in which the Amalekites also are found Numbers 24:20-22; 1 Samuel 15:6. They dwelt among the Midianites, as Hobab was both a Midianite and a Kenite Numbers 10:29; Judges 1:16; Judges 4:11. They were friendly to the Israelites, and hence some of them followed their fortunes and settled in their land 1 Chronicles 2:55. The Kenizzite dwelt apparently in the same region, having affinity with the Horites, and subsequently with Edom and Israel Genesis 36:11, Genesis 36:20-23; Joshua 15:17; 1 Chronicles 2:50-52. The Kadmonite seems to be the Eastern, and, therefore, to hold the other extreme boundary of the promised land, toward Tadmor and the Phrat. These three tribes were probably related to Abram, and, therefore,

descendants of Shem. The other seven tribes have already come under our notice.

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CHAPTER 16

Verses 1-16

- The Birth of Ishmael

.*hāgār* Hagar, "flight." Hejrah, the flight of Muhammed הגר .1

mal'ak "messenger, angel." A deputy commissioned to discharge מלאך .7
a certain duty for the principal whom he represents. As the most usual task is that of bearing messages, commands, or tidings, he is commonly called a "messenger" ἄγγελος *angelos*). The word is therefore a term of office, and does not further distinguish the office-bearer than as an intelligent being. *mal'ak* may be a man deputed by a man Genesis 32:3; Job מלאך Hence, a 1:14, or by God Haggai 1:13; Malachi 3:1, or a superhuman being delegated in this case only by God. The English term "angel" is now .especially appropriated to the latter class of messengers

1st. The nature of angels is spiritual Hebrews 1:14. This characteristic ranges over the whole chain of spiritual being from man up to God himself. The extreme links, however, are excluded: man, because he is a special class of intelligent creatures; and God, because he is supreme. Other classes of spiritual beings may be excluded - as the cherubim, the seraphim - because they have not the same office, though the word "angelic" is sometimes used by us as synonymous with heavenly or spiritual. They were all of course originally good; but some of them have fallen from holiness, and become evil spirits or devils Matthew 25:31, Matthew 25:41; Jude 1:6; Revelation 12:7. The latter are circumscribed in their sphere of action, as if confined within the walls of their prison, in consequence of their fallen state and malignant disposition Job 1:2; 1 Peter 2:4; Revelation 20:2. Being spiritual, they are not only moral, but intelligent. They also excel in strength Psalm 103:20. The holy angels have the full range of action for which their qualities are adapted. They can assume a real form, expressive of their present functions, and affecting the senses of sight, hearing, and touch, or the roots of those senses in the soul. They may even perform innocent functions of a human body, such as eating Genesis 18:8; Genesis 19:3. Being spirits, they can resolve the material food into its original elements in a way which we need not attempt to conceive or describe. But this case of eating stands altogether alone. Angels have no distinction of sex Matthew

22:30. They do not grow old or die. They are not a race, and have not a body in the ordinary sense of the term.

2d. Their office is expressed by their name. In common with other intelligent creatures, they take part in the worship of God Revelation 7:11; but their special office is to execute the commands of God in the natural world Psalm 103:20, and especially to minister to the heirs of salvation Hebrews 1:14; Matthew 18:10; Luke 15:10; Luke 16:22. It is not needful here to enter into the uniquenesses of their ministry.

3d. The angel of Jehovah. This phrase is especially employed to denote the Lord himself in that form in which he condescends to make himself manifest to man; for the Lord God says of this angel, "Beware of him, and obey his voice; provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in his inmost" Exodus 23:21; that is, my nature is in his essence. Accordingly, he who is called the angel of the Lord in one place is otherwise denominated the Lord or God in the immediate context (Genesis 16:7, Genesis 16:13; Genesis 22:11-12; Genesis 31:11, Genesis 31:13; Genesis 48:15-16; Exodus 3:2-15; Exodus 23:20-23; with Exodus 33:14-15). It is remarkable, at the same time, that the Lord is spoken of in these cases as a distinct person from the angel of the Lord, who is also called the Lord. The phraseology intimates to us a certain inherent plurality within the essence of the one only God, of which we have had previous indications Genesis 1:26; Genesis 3:22. The phrase "angel of the Lord," however, indicates a more distant manifestation to man than the term Lord itself. It brings the medium of communication into greater prominence. It seems to denote some person of the Godhead in angelic form. שׁוּר *shûr* Shur, "wall." A city or place probably near the head of the gulf of Suez. The desert of Shur is now Jofar.

11. יִשְׁמָעֵאל *yîshmāʿē'l* Jishmael, "the Mighty will hear".

13. רָאִי אֵל *êl rŏ'îy* "God of vision or seeing".

14. בְּאֵר לַחַי רֹאִי *be'ēr -lachay -ro'îy* Beer-lachai-roi, "well of vision to the living". בֶּרֶד *bered* Bered, "hail." The site is not known.

Sarah has been barren probably much more than twenty years. She appears to have at length reluctantly arrived at the conclusion that she would never be a mother. Nature and history prompted the union of one man to one wife in marriage, and it might have been presumed that God would honor his own institution. But the history of the creation of man was forgotten or unheeded, and the custom of the East prompted Sarai to resort to the expedient of giving her maid to her husband for a second wife, that she might have children by her.

Genesis 16:1-6

A Mizrite handmaid. - Hagar was probably obtained, ten years before, during their sojourn in Egypt. "The Lord hath restrained me." It was natural to the ancient mind to recognize the power and will of God in all things. "I shall be builded by her," אבנה *'îbāneh* built as the foundation of a house, by the addition of sons or daughters (בנים *bānîym* or בנית *bānôt*). She thought she had or wished to have a share in the promise, if not by herself personally, yet through her maid. The faith of Sarah had not yet come fully to the birth. Abram yields to the suggestion of his wife, and complies with the custom of the country. Ten years had elapsed since they had entered the land they were to inherit. Impatience at the long delay leads to an invention of their own for obtaining an heir. The contempt of her maid was unjustifiable. But it was the natural consequence of Sarai's own improper and imprudent step, in giving her to her husband as a concubine. Unwilling, however, to see in herself the occasion of her maid's insolence, she transfers the blame to her husband, who empowers or reminds her of her power still to deal with her as it pleased her. Hagar, unable to bear the yoke of humiliation, flees from her mistress.

Genesis 16:7-12

The angel of the Lord either represents the Lord, or presents the Lord in angelic form. The Lord manifests himself to Hagar seemingly on account of her relationship to Abram, but in the more distant form of angelic visitation. She herself appears to be a believer in God. The spring of water is a place of refreshment on her journey. She is on the way to Shur, which was before Mizraim as thou goest rewards Asshur Genesis 25:18, and therefore fleeing to Egypt, her native land. The angel of the Lord interrogates her, and requires her to return to her mistress, and humble herself under her hands.

Genesis 16:10

I will multiply. - This language is proper only to the Lord Himself, because it claims a divine prerogative. The Lord is, therefore, in this angel. He promises to Hagar a numerous offspring. "Ishmael." "El," the Mighty, will hear; but "Jehovah," the Lord (Yahweh), heard her humiliation. Yahweh, therefore, is the same God as El. He describes Ishmael and his progeny in him as resembling the wild ass. This animal is a fit symbol of the wild, free, untamable Bedouin of the desert. He is to live in contention, and yet to dwell independently, among all his brethren. His brethren are the descendants of Heber, the Joctanites, composing the thirteen original tribes of the Arabs, and the Palgites to whom the descendants of Abram belonged. The Ishmaelites constituted the second element of the great Arab nation, and shared in their nomadic character and independence. The character here given of them is true even to the present day.

Genesis 16:13-16

God of my vision - (El-roi). Here we have the same divine name as in Ishmael. "Have I even still seen" - continued to live and see the sun after having seen God? Beer-lahai-roi, the well of vision (of God) to the living. To see God and live was an issue contrary to expectation Exodus 33:20. The well is between Kadesh and Bered. The site of the latter has not been ascertained. R. Jonathan gives חוּצא *chelûtsā'* the Ἕλουσα *elousa* of Ptolemy, now *el -Khulasa* about twelve miles south of Beersheba. Rowland finds the well at Moyle or Muweilah, still further south in the same direction. The birth of Ishmael is in the sixteenth year after Abram's call, and the eleventh after his arrival in Kenaan.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verses 1-27

- The Sealing of the Covenant

1. שׁדי *shaday* Shaddai, "Irresistible, able to destroy, and by inference to שׁדד *shādad* "be strong, destroy." This name is found six times in Genesis, and thirty-one times in Job. "make, Almighty

5. אברהם′ *abrâhām* Abraham, from אברם′ *abrām* "high-father," and המון *hāmôn* a "multitude," is obtained by a euphonic המין *hām* the radical part of אברהם′ abbreviation רהם *abrâhām* "father of a multitude." The root *rhm* is a רום variation of המה sense with the root *hāmôn* a "multitude." The confluence of the biliterals רם *rm* and הם *hm* המון *hāmâh* "hum, be tumultuous," from which comes *rhm* occurring in Arabic, though not elsewhere in רהם yields the triliteral our written Hebrew. The law of formation here noticed is interesting and real, though רהם may not have been an actual result of it *rhm*.

11. נמלתם *nemaltem* formed from נמל *nāmal* "circumcised מול *mûl* "cut, circumcise".

15. שׂרה *śārâh* Sarah, "princess".

19. יצחק *yîtschāq* Jitschaq, "laughing".

The present form of the covenant is not identical with the former. That referred chiefly to the land; this chiefly to the seed. That dwelt much on temporal things; this rises to spiritual things. That specifies only Abram; this mentions both Abram and Sarai. At the former period God formally entered into covenant with Abram כרת ברית *kārat berîyt* Genesis 15:18); at present he takes the first step in the fufillment of the covenant נתן ברית *nātan berîyt* seals it with a token and a perpetual ordinance, and gives Abram and Sarai new names in token of a new nature. There was an interval of fourteen years at least between the ratification of the covenant and the preparation for the fulfillment of its conditions, during which Abraham's faith had time to unfold.

Genesis 17:1-8

The covenant in its spiritual aspect. “The Lord,” the Author of existence and performance. “God Almighty,” El Shaddai. “El,” the Lasting, Eternal, Absolute. “Shaddai,” the Irresistible, Unchangeable, Destructive Isaiah 13:6; Joel 1:15. This term indicates on the one hand his judicial, punitive power, and points to his holiness; and on the other hand, his alterative, reconstructive power, and points to his providence. The complex name, therefore, describes God as the Holy Spirit, who works in the development of things, especially in the punishment and eradication of sin and its works, and in the regeneration and defense of holiness. It refers to potence, and potence combined with promise affords ground for faith.

Walk before me and be perfect. - In the institution of the covenant we had “fear not” - an encouragement to the daunted or the doubting. In its confirmation we have a command, a rule of life, prescribed. This is in keeping with the circumstances of Abraham. For, first, he has now faith in the Lord, which is the fruit of the new man in him prevailing over the old, and is therefore competent to obey; and, next, the Lord in whom he believes is God Almighty, the all-efficient Spirit, who worketh both to will and to do in the destroying of sin and building up of holiness. “Walk” - act in the most comprehensive sense of the term; “before me,” and not behind, as one conscious of doing what is, not displeasing, but pleasing to me; “and be perfect,” not sincere merely, unless in the primitive sense of duty, but complete, upright, holy, not only in walk, which is provided for in the previous clause, but in heart, the spring of action.

Genesis 17:2

My covenant - which I have already purposed and formally closed. “I will grant,” carry into effect, the provisions of it. “Multiply thee.” The seed is here identified with the head or parent seat of life. The seed now comes forward as the prominent benefit of the covenant.

Genesis 17:3-6

Abram fell on his face. - This is the lowliest form of reverence, in which the worshipper leans on his knees and elbows, and his forehead approaches the ground. Prostration is still customary in the East. Abram has attained to loftier notions of God. “God talked with him.” Yahweh, El Shaddai, is here called God. The Supreme appears as the Author of existence, the Irresistible and Everlasting, in this stage of the covenant relation.

Genesis 17:4

As for me. - The one party to the covenant is here made prominent, as in Genesis 17:9 the other party is brought out with like emphasis. The exalted Being who has entered into it imparts a grandeur, solemnity, and excellence to the covenant. "Father of many nations." The promise of seed is here expanded and particularized. A multitude of nations and kings are to trace their descent from Abram. This is true in a literal sense. The twelve tribes of Israel and many Arab tribes, the twelve princes of Ishmael, Keturah's descendants, and the dukes of Edom sprang from him. But it is to be more magnificently realized in a spiritual sense. "Nations" is a term usually applied, not to the chosen people, but to the other great branches of the human race. This points to the original promise, that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed. "Abraham." The father of many nations is to be called by a new name, as he has come to have a new nature, and been elevated to a new dignity. The high father has become the father of the multitude of the faithful.

Genesis 17:7

Next, the spiritual part of the covenant comes into view. "To be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Here we find God, in the progress of human development, for the third time laying the foundations of a covenant of grace with man. He dealt with Adam and with Noah, and now be deals with Abraham. "A perpetual covenant." This covenant will not fail, since God has originated it, notwithstanding the moral instability of man. Though we cannot as yet see the possibility of fulfilling the condition on man's side, yet we may be assured that what God purposes will somehow be accomplished. The seed of Abraham will eventually embrace the whole human family in fellowship with God.

Genesis 17:8

Thirdly, the temporal and the spiritual are brought together. The land of promise is made sure to the heir of promise, "for a perpetual possession," and God engages to "be their God." The phrase "perpetual possession" has here two elements of meaning - first, that the possession, in its coming form of a certain land, shall last as long as the co-existing relations of things are continued; and, secondly, that the said possession in all the variety of its ever grander phases will last absolutely forever. Each form will be perfectly adequate to each stage of a progressive humanity. But in all its forms and at every stage it will be their chief glory that God is their God.

Genesis 17:9-14

The sign of the covenant. “And thou.” The other party to the covenant now learns his obligation. “Every male of you shall be circumcised.” Circumcision, as the rainbow, might have been in existence before it was adopted as the token of a covenant. The sign of the covenant with Noah was a purely natural phenomenon, and therefore entirely independent of man. That of the Abrahamic covenant was an artificial process, and therefore, though prescribed by God, was dependent on the voluntary agency of man. The former marked the sovereignty of God in ratifying the covenant and insuring its fulfillment, notwithstanding the mutability of man; the latter indicates the responsibility of man, the trust he places in the word of promise, and the assent he gives to the terms of the divine mercy. As the former covenant conveys a common natural blessing to all mankind and contemplates a common spiritual blessing, so the latter conveys a special spiritual blessing and contemplates its universal acceptance. The rainbow was the appropriate natural emblem of preservation from a flood; and the removal of the foreskin was the fit symbol of that removal of the old man and renewal of nature, which qualified Abraham to be the parent of a holy seed. And as the former sign foreshadows an incorruptible inheritance, so the latter prepares the way for a holy seed, by which the holiness and the heritage will at length be universally extended.

It is worthy of remark that in circumcision, after Abraham himself, the parent is the voluntary imponent, and the child merely the passive recipient of the sign of the covenant. Hereby is taught the lesson of parental responsibility and parental hope. This is the first formal step in a godly education, in which the parent acknowledges his obligation to perform all the rest. It is also, on the command of God, the formal admission of the believing parents‘ offspring into the privileges of the covenant, and therefore cheers the heart of the parent in entering upon the parental task. This admission cannot be reversed but by the deliberate rebellion of the child.

Still further, the sign of the covenant is to be applied to every male in the household of Abraham. This indicates that the servant or serf stands in the relation of a child to his master or owner, who is therefore accountable for the soul of his serf, as for that of his son. It points out the applicability of the covenant to others, as well as the children of Abraham, and therefore its capability of universal extension when the fulness of time should come.

It also intimates the very plain but very often forgotten truth, that our obligation to obey God is not cancelled by our unwillingness. The serf is bound to have his child circumcised as long as God requires it, though he may be unwilling to comply with the divine commandments.

Genesis 17:12-14

The time of circumcision is the eighth day. Seven is the number of perfection. Seven days are therefore regarded as a type of perfectage and individuality. At this stage, accordingly, the sign of sanctification is made on the child, betokening the consecration of the heart to God, when its rational powers have come into noticeable activity. To be "cut off from his people" is to be excluded from any part in the covenant, and treated simply as a Gentile or alien, some of whom seem to have dwelt among the Israelites. It was sometimes accompanied with the sentence of death Exodus 31:14; and this shows that it did not of itself imply such a doom. Excommunication, however, for the omission of circumcision, would be extremely rare, as no parent would intentionally neglect the sacred interest of his child. Yet the omission of this rite has not been unprecedented, as the children of Israel did not generally circumcise their children in the wilderness Joshua 5:5.

Genesis 17:15-22

Sarai is now formally taken into the covenant, as she is to be the mother of the promised seed. Her name is therefore changed to Sarah, "princess." Aptly is she so named, for she is to bear the child of promise, to become nations, and be the mother of kings. "Abraham fell upon his face and laughed." From the reverential attitude assumed by Abraham we infer that his laughter sprang from joyful and grateful surprise. "Said in his heart." The following questions of wonder are not addressed to God; they merely agitate the breast of the astonished patriarch. Hence, his irrepressible smile arises not from any doubt of the fulfillment of the promise, but from surprise at the unexpected mode in which it is to be fulfilled. Laughing in Scripture expresses joy in the countenance, as dancing does in the whole body.

Genesis 17:18-20

Abraham seems up to this time to have regarded Ishmael as the promised seed. Hence, a feeling of anxiety instantly penetrates his breast. It finds utterance in the prayer, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee." He asks "life" for his beloved son - that is, a share in the divine favor; and that

“before God” - that is, a life of holiness and communion with God. But God asseverates his purpose of giving him a son by Sarah. This son is to be called Isaac - he that laughs or he shall laugh, in reference to the various emotions of surprise and delight with which his parents regarded his birth. Abram‘s prayer for Ishmael, however, is not unanswered. He is to be fruitful, beget twelve princes, and become a great nation. But Isaac is to be the heir of promise. At the present season next year he is to be born. The communication being completed, “God went” up from Abram.

Genesis 17:23-27

In the self-same day. - In this passage we have the prompt and punctual fulfillment of the command concerning circumcision detailed with all the minuteness due to its importance. Ishmael was thirteen years of age when he was circumcised. Josephus relates that the Arabs accordingly delay circumcision until the thirteenth year (Ant. I. 12. 2).

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Verses 1-33

- The Visit of the Lord to Abraham

2. השׁתחיה *vayîśtachû* "bow," or bend the body in token of respect to God or man. The attitude varies from a slight inclination of the body to entire prostration with the forehead touching the ground.

6. סאה *se'ah* a "seah," about an English peck, the third part of an ephah. The ephah contained ten omers. The omer held about five pints.

This chapter describes Abraham's fellowship with God. On the gracious assurance of the Redeemer and Vindicator, "Fear not, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward," he ceased to fear, and believed. On the solemn announcement of the Conqueror of evil and the Quickener of the dead, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be perfect," he began anew to walk with God in holiness and truth. The next step is, that God enters into communion with him as a man with his friend Isaiah 41:8; John 14:23. Hitherto he has appeared to him as God offering grace and inclining the will to receive it. Now, as God who has bestowed grace, he appears to him who has accepted it and is admitted into a covenant of peace. He visits him for the twofold purpose of drawing out and completing the faith of Sarah, and of communing with Abraham concerning the destruction of Sodom.

Genesis 18:1-15

The Lord visits Abraham and assures Sarah of the birth of a son. Abraham is sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day, reposing. "Three men stood before him." Whenever visitants from the celestial world appear to men, they have the form of man. This is the only form of a rational being known to us. It is not the design of God in revealing his mercy to us to make us acquainted with the whole of the nature of things. The science of things visible or invisible he leaves to our natural faculties to explore, as far as occasion allows. Hence, we conclude that the celestial visitant is a real being, and that the form is a real form. But we are not entitled to infer that the human is the only or the proper form of such beings, or that they have any ordinary or constant form open to sense. We only discern that they are intelligent beings like ourselves, and, in order to manifest themselves to us as such, put on that form of intelligent creatures with which we are familiar,

and in which they can intelligibly confer with us. For the same reason they speak the language of the party addressed, though, for ought we know, spiritual beings use none of the many languages of humanity, and have quite a different mode of communicating with one another. Other human acts follow on the occasion. They accept the hospitality of Abraham and partake of human food. This, also, was a real act. It does not imply, however, that food is necessary to spiritual beings. The whole is a typical act representing communion between God and Abraham. The giving and receiving of a meal was the ground of a perpetual or inviolable friendship.

He ran to meet him. - This indicates the genuine warmth of unsophisticated nature. "Bowed himself to the earth." This indicates a low bow, in which the body becomes horizontal, and the head droops. This gesture is employed both in worship and doing obeisance.

Genesis 18:3-5

O Lord. - Abraham uses the word אדני *'adonāy* denoting one having authority, whether divine or not. This the Masorites mark as sacred, and apply the vowel points proper to the word when it signifies God. These men in some way represent God; for "the Lord" on this occasion appeared unto Abraham Genesis 18:1. The number is in this respect notable. Abraham addresses himself first to one person Genesis 18:3, then to more than one Genesis 18:4-5. It is stated that "‹they‘ said, So do Genesis 18:5, ‹they‘ did eat Genesis 18:8, ‹ they‘ said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife" Genesis 18:9. Then the singular number is resumed in the phrase "‹and he said‘" Genesis 18:10, and at length, "The Lord said unto Abraham" Genesis 18:13, and then, "and he said" Genesis 18:15. Then we are told "‹the men‘ rose up, and Abraham went with them" Genesis 18:16. Then we have "The Lord said" twice Genesis 18:17, Genesis 18:20. And lastly, it is said Genesis 18:22 "‹the men‘ turned their faces and went toward Sodom, and Abraham was yet standing before the Lord." From this it appears that of the three men one, at all events, was the Lord, who, when the other two went toward Sodom, remained with Abraham while he made his intercession for Sodom, and afterward he also went his way. The other two will come before us again in the next chapter. Meanwhile, we have here the first explicit instance of the Lord appearing as man to man, and holding familiar conversation with him.

The narrative affords a pleasing instance of the primitive manners of the East. The hospitality of the pastoral tribes was spontaneous and unreserved.

The washing of the feet, which were partly at least uncovered in walking, the reclining under the tree, and the offer of refreshment, are indicative of an unchanging rural simplicity. The phrases "a little water, a morsel of bread," flow from a thoughtful courtesy. "Therefore are ye come." In the course of events it has so fallen out, in order that you might be refreshed. The brief reply is a frank and unaffected acceptance of the hospitable invitation.

Genesis 18:6-8

Abraham hastened. - The unvarying customs of Eastern pastoral life here come up before us. There is plenty of flour and of live cattle. But the cakes have to be kneaded and baked on the hearth, and the calf has to be killed and dressed. Abraham personally gives directions, Sarah personally attends to the baking, and the boy or lad - that is, the domestic servant whose business it is - kills and dresses the meat. Abraham himself attends upon his guests. "Three seahs." About three pecks, and therefore a superabundant supply for three guests. An omer, or three tenths of a seah, was considered sufficient for one man for a day Exodus 16:16. But Abraham had a numerous household, and plentifulness was the character of primitive hospitality. "Hearth cakes," baked among the coals. "Butter" - seemingly any preparation of milk, cream, curds, or butter, all of which are used in the East.

Genesis 18:9-15

The promise to Sarah. The men now enter upon the business of their visit. "Where is Sarah thy wife?" The jealousy and seclusion of later times had not yet rendered such an inquiry uncourteous. Sarah is within hearing of the conversation. "I will certainly return unto thee." This is the language of self-determination, and therefore suitable to the sovereign, not to the ambassador. "At the time of life;" literally the living time, seemingly the time of birth, when the child comes to manifest life. "Sarah thy wife shall have a son." Sarah hears this with incredulous surprise, and laughs with mingled doubt and delight. She knows that in the nature of things she is past child-bearing. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Sarah laughed within herself, within the tent and behind the speaker; yet to her surprise her internal feelings are known to him. She finds there is One present who rises above the sphere of nature. In her confusion and terror she denies that she laughed. But he who sees what is within, insists that she did laugh, at least

in the thought of her heart. There is a beautiful simplicity in the whole scene. Sarah now doubtless received faith and strength to conceive.

Verse 16-33

The conference concerning Sodom. The human manner of the interview is carried out to the end. Abraham convoys his departing guests. The Lord then speaks, apparently debating with himself whether he shall reveal his intentions to Abraham. The reasons for doing so are assigned. First. Abraham shall surely become a nation great and mighty, and therefore has the interest of humanity in this act of retribution on Sodom. All that concerns man concerns him. Second. Blessed in him shall be all the nations of the earth. Hence, he is personally and directly concerned with all the dealings of mercy and judgment among the inhabitants of the earth. Third. "I have known him." The Lord has made himself known to him, has manifested his love to him, has renewed him after his own image; and hence this judgment upon Sodom is to be explained to him, that he may train his household to avoid the sins of this doomed city, "to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; and all this to the further intent that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what he hath spoken of him." The awful judgments of the Lord on Sodom, as before on the antediluvian world, are a warning example to all who are spared or hear of them. And those who, notwithstanding these monuments of the divine vengeance, will cease to do justice and judgment, may be certain that they will not continue to enjoy the benefits of the covenant of grace. For all these reasons it is meet that the secret of Lord be with him Psalm 25:11.

Genesis 18:20-22

The Lord now proceeds to unfold his design. There is justice in every step of the divine procedure. He comes down to inquire and act according to the merits of the case. The men now depart on their errand; but Abraham still stands before the Lord.

Genesis 18:23-33

Abraham intercedes for Sodom. His spiritual character is unfolded and exalted more and more. He employs the language of a free-born son with his heavenly Father. He puts forward the plea of justice to the righteous in behalf of the city. He ventures to repeat his intervention six times, every time diminishing the number of the righteous whom he supposes to be in it. The patience of the Lord is no less remarkable than the perseverance of Abraham. In every case he grants his petition. "Dust and ashes." This may

refer to the custom of burning the dead, as then coexistent with that of burying them. Abraham intimates by a homely figure the comparative insignificance of the petitioner. He is dust at first, and ashes at last.

This completes the full and free conversation of God with Abraham. He accepts his hospitable entertainment, renews his promise of a son by Sarah, communicates to him his counsel, and grants all his requests. It is evident that Abraham has now fully entered upon all the privileges of the sons of God. He has become the friend of God James 2:23.

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CHAPTER 19

Verses 1-38

- The Destruction of Sodom and Amorah

.9 גֹּשׁ־הלאה> *gesh -hāl'âh* “approach to a distant point,” stand back

.11 סנורים *sanevērîym* “blindness,” affecting the mental more than the ocular vision.

.37 מואב Moab *mô'āb*; מאב *mē'āb* “from a father”. בן־עמי *ben -ʿamîy* Ben-‹ammi, “son of my people”. עמון ʿ*amôn* ‹Ammon, “of the people”.

This chapter is the continuation and conclusion of the former. It records a part of God‘s strange work - strange, because it consists in punishment, and because it is foreign to the covenant of grace. Yet it is closely connected with Abraham‘s history, inasmuch as it is a signal chastisement of wickedness in his neighborhood, a memorial of the righteous judgment of God to all his posterity, and at the same time a remarkable answer to the spirit, if not to the letter, of his intercessory prayer. His kinsman Lot, the only righteous man in Sodom, with his wife and two daughters, is delivered from destruction in accordance with his earnest appeal on behalf of the righteous.

Genesis 19:1-3

The two angels. - These are the two men who left Abraham standing before the Lord Genesis 18:22. “Lot sat in the gate,” the place of public resort for news and for business. He courteously rises to meet them, does obeisance to them, and invites them to spend the night in his house. “Nay, but in the street will we lodge.” This is the disposition of those who come to inquire, and, it may be, to condemn and to punish. They are twice in this chapter called angels, being sent to perform a delegated duty. This term, however, defines their office, not their nature. Lot, in the first instance, calls them “my lords,” which is a term of respect that may be addressed to men Genesis 31:35. He afterward styled one of them Adonai, with the special vowel pointing which limits it to the Supreme Being. He at the same time calls himself his servant, appeals to his grace and mercy, and ascribes to him his deliverance. The person thus addressed replies, in a tone of independence and authority, “I have accepted thee.” “I will not overthrow

this city for which thou hast spoken." "I cannot do anything until thou go thither." All these circumstances point to a divine personage, and are not so easily explained of a mere delegate. He is pre-eminently the Saviour, as he who communed with Abraham was the hearer of prayer. And he who hears prayer and saves life, appears also as the executor of his purpose in the overthrow of Sodom and the other cities of the vale. It is remarkable that only two of the three who appeared to Abraham are called angels. Of the persons in the divine essence two might be the angels or deputies of the primary in the discharge of the divine purpose. These three men, then, either immediately represent, or, if created angels, mediately shadow forth persons in the Godhead. Their number indicates that the persons in the divine unity are three.

Lot seems to have recognized something extraordinary in their appearance, for he made a lowly obeisance to them. The Sodomites heed not the strangers. Lot's invitation; at first declined, is at length accepted, because Lot is approved of God as righteous, and excepted from the doom of the city.

Genesis 19:4-11

The wicked violence of the citizens displays itself. They compass the house, and demand the men for the vilest ends. How familiar Lot had become with vice, when any necessity whatever could induce him to offer his daughters to the lust of these Sodomites! We may suppose it was spoken rashly, in the heat of the moment, and with the expectation that he would not be taken at his word. So it turned out. "Stand back." This seems to be a menace to frighten Lot out of the way of their perverse will. It is probable, indeed, that he and his family would not have been so long safe in this wicked place, had he not been the occasion of a great deliverance to the whole city when they were carried away by the four kings. The threat is followed by a taunt, when the sorely vexed host hesitated to give up the strangers. "He will needs be a judge." It is evident Lot had been in the habit of remonstrating with them. From threats and taunts they soon proceed to violence. His guests now interfere. They rescue Lot, and smite the rioters with blindness, or a wandering of the senses, so that they cannot find the door. This ebullition of the vilest passion seals the doom of the city.

Genesis 19:12-23

The visitors now take steps for the deliverance of Lot and his kindred before the destruction of the cities. All that are related to him are included

in the offer of deliverance. There is a blessing in being connected with the righteous, if men will but avail themselves of it. Lot seems bewildered by the contemptuous refusal of his connections to leave the place. His early choice and his growing habits have attached him to the place, notwithstanding its temptations. His married daughters, or at least the intended husbands of the two who were at home ("who are here"), are to be left behind. But though these thoughts make him linger, the mercy of the Lord prevails. The angels use a little violence to hasten their escape. The mountain was preserved by its elevation from the flood of rain, sulphur, and fire which descended on the low ground on which the cities were built. Lot begs for a small town to which he may retreat, as he shrinks from the perils of a mountain dwelling, and his request is mercifully granted.

Genesis 19:24-26

Then follows the overthrow of the cities. "The Lord rained brimstone and fire from the Lord from the skies." Here the Lord is represented as present in the skies, whence the storm of desolation comes, and on the earth where it falls. The dale of Siddim, in which the cities were, appears to have abounded in asphalt and other combustible materials Genesis 14:10. The district was liable to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions from the earliest to the latest times. We read of an earthquake in the days of king Uzziah Amos 1:1. An earthquake in 1759 destroyed many thousands of persons in the valley of Baalbec. Josephus (De Bell. Jud. iii. 10,7) reports that the Salt Sea sends up in many places black masses of asphalt, which are not unlike headless bulls in shape and size. After an earthquake in 1834, masses of asphalt were thrown up from the bottom, and in 1837 a similar cause was attended with similar effects.

The lake lies in the lowest part of the valley of the Jordan, and its surface is about thirteen hundred feet below the level of the sea. In such a hollow, exposed to the burning rays of an unclouded sun, its waters evaporate as much as it receives by the influx of the Jordan. Its present area is about forty-five miles by eight miles. A peninsula pushes into it from the east called the Lisan, or tongue, the north point of which is about twenty miles from the south end of the lake. North of this point the depth is from forty to two hundred and eighteen fathoms. This southern part of the lake seems to have been the original dale of Siddim, in which were the cities of the vale. The remarkable salt hills lying on the south of the lake are still called Khashm Usdum (Sodom). A tremendous storm, accompanied with

flashes of lightning, and torrents of rain, impregnated with sulphur, descended upon the doomed cities.

From the injunction to Lot to "flee to the mountain," as well as from the nature of the soil, we may infer that at the same time with the awful conflagration there was a subsidence of the ground, so that the waters of the upper and original lake flowed in upon the former fertile and populous dale, and formed the shallow southern part of the present Salt Sea. In this pool of melting asphalt and sweltering, seething waters, the cities seem to have sunk forever, and left behind them no vestiges of their existence. Lot's wife lingering behind her husband, and looking back, contrary to the express command of the Lord, is caught in the sweeping tempest, and becomes a pillar of salt: so narrow was the escape of Lot. The dashing spray of the salt sulphurous rain seems to have suffocated her, and then encrusted her whole body. She may have burned to a cinder in the furious conflagration. She is a memorable example of the indignation and wrath that overtakes the halting and the backsliding.

Genesis 19:27-29

Abraham rises early on the following morning, to see what had become of the city for which he had interceded so earnestly, and views from afar the scene of smoking desolation. Remembering Abraham, who was Lot's uncle, and had him probably in mind in his importunate pleading, God delivered Lot from this awful overthrow. The Eternal is here designated by the name Elohim, the Everlasting, because in the war of elements in which the cities were overwhelmed, the eternal potencies of his nature were signally displayed.

Genesis 19:30-38

The descendants of Lot. Bewildered by the narrowness of his escape, and the awful death of his wife, Lot seems to have left Zoar, and taken to the mountain west of the Salt Sea, in terror of impending ruin. It is not improbable that all the inhabitants of Zoar, panic-struck, may have fled from the region of danger, and dispersed themselves for a time through the adjacent mountains. He was now far from the habitations of people, with his two daughters as his only companions. The manners of Sodom here obtrude themselves upon our view. Lot's daughters might seem to have been led to this unnatural project, first, because they thought the human race extinct with the exception of themselves, in which case their conduct

may have seemed a work of justifiable necessity; and next, because the degrees of kindred within which it was unlawful to marry had not been determined by an express law. But they must have seen some of the inhabitants of Zoar after the destruction of the cities; and carnal intercourse between parent and offspring must have been always repugnant to nature. "Unto this day." This phrase indicates a variable period, from a few years to a few centuries: a few years; not more than seven, as Joshua 22:3; part of a lifetime, as Numbers 22:30; Joshua 6:25; Genesis 48:15; and some centuries, as Exodus 10:6. This passage may therefore have been written by one much earlier than Moses. Moab afterward occupied the district south of the Arnon, and east of the Salt Sea. Ammon dwelt to the northeast of Moab, where they had a capital called Rabbah. They both ultimately merged into the more general class of the Arabs, as a second Palgite element.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Verses 1-18

- Abraham in Gerar

2. אבימלך .2 *ăbîymelek* Abimelekh, "father of the king′".

7. נביא *nābîy′* "prophet," he who speaks by God, of God, and to God, who declares to people not merely things future, but also things past and present, that are not obvious to the sense or the reason; related: "flow, go forth".

13. התעו *hîtʿû* is plural in punctuation, agreeing grammatically with אלהים *ĕlohîym′* (w) ו, however, may be regarded as the third radical, and the verb may thus really be singular.

16. נכהת *nokachat* an unusual form, either for נכחת *nokaḥat* the second person singular feminine perfect or נכחה *nokeḥâh* the third person singular feminine perfect, from a verb signifying in hiphil, "make straight, right".

17. אמה *āmâh* "hand-maid," free or bond′ שׁפחה *shîpchâh* "bond-maid" 1 Samuel 25:41.

The concealment of his relation to Sarah calls to our mind a similar act of Abraham recorded not many pages back. We are to remember, however, that an interval of twenty-four years has elapsed since that event. From the present passage we learn that this was an old agreement between him and his wife, while they were wandering among strangers. It appears that Abraham was not yet conscious of anything wrong or even imprudent in this piece of policy. He therefore practises it without any hesitation. On this occasion he appears for the first time as a prophet. He is the first of this order introduced to our notice in the Old Testament, though Henok had prophesied at an earlier period Jude 1:14, and Noah's benediction was, at the same time, a prediction.

Genesis 20:1-7

Abimelek takes Sarah. Abraham had been dwelling near Hebron. But the total separation between him and Lot, and the awful overthrow of Sodom and Amorah in the vicinity, may have loosened his tie to Hebron,

and rendered it for the present not an agreeable place of residence. He therefore travels southward and takes up his abode at Gerar (see note on Genesis 10:19). Sarah, though now eighty-nine years of age, was as youthful in look as a person of forty would now be. She had, moreover, had no family, was remarkable for her good looks, and was at present, no doubt, renewed in health and vigor Genesis 12:11-16.

Genesis 20:3-7

The Supreme Being here appears as God אלהים *'ĕlohîym* and therefore in his eternal power and independence, as he was antecedent to the creation of man. He communicates with Abimelek in a dream. This prince addresses him as אדני *'ădonāy* "Lord." We have already seen that the knowledge of the true God had not yet disappeared from the Gentile world, who were under the Noachic covenant. "Thou wilt die." Thou art dying or at the point of death if thou persist. A deadly plague was already in the body of Abimelek, on account of Sarah. "Wilt thou slay a righteous nation also?" Abimelek associates his nation with himself, and expects that the fatal stroke will not be confined to his own person. He pleads his integrity in the matter, which the Lord acknowledges. Gentiles sometimes act according to the dictates of conscience, which still lives in them, though it be obscured by sin. Abimelek was innocent in regard to the "great sin" of seizing another man's wife, of which God acquitted him. He was wrong in appropriating a woman to himself by mere stretch of power, and in adding wife to wife. But these were common customs of the time, for which his conscience did not upbraid him in his pleading with God. "And the God." The presence of the definite article seems to intimate a contrast of the true God with the false gods to which the Gentiles were fast turning. Abimelek was at least in the doubtful ground on the borders of polytheism.

Genesis 20:7

Abraham is here designated by the Lord a prophet. This constituted at once the gravity of Abimelek's offence Psalm 105:15, and the ground of his hope of pardon. It is at the same time a step in advance of all the previous spiritual attainments of Abraham. A prophet is God's spokesman, who utters with authority certain of the things of God Exodus 7:1; Exodus 4:15. This implies two things: first, the things of God are known only to him, and therefore must be communicated by him; secondly, the prophet must be enabled of God to announce in correct terms the things made known to him. These things refer not only to the future, but in general to all such matters

as fall within the purpose and procedure of God. They may even include things otherwise known or knowable by man, so far as these are necessary to the exposition of the divine will. Now Abraham has heretofore received many communications from God. But this did not constitute him a prophet. It is the divinely-authorized utterance of new truth which raises him to this rank. And Abraham‘s first exercise in prophecy is not in speaking to men of God, but to God for men. “He shall pray for thee.” The prophetic and the priestly offices go together in the father of the faithful. These dignities belong to him, not from any absolute merit, for this he has not, but from his call to be the holder of the promise, and the father of that seed to whom the promises were made.

Genesis 20:8-13

Abimelek retraces his steps, and rectifies his conduct. He makes known his dream to his assembled court, who are filled with astonishment and apprehension. He then calls Abraham, and in bold and manly style remonstrates with him for leading him into error and sin. Abraham is apparently silent from confusion and self-condemnation. Abimelek, after a pause, demands of him his reason for so doing. Abraham now replies with great simplicity and candor. He had said within himself, “The fear of God is not in this place.” This is another indication that polytheism was setting in. He concluded that his life would be in danger on account of his wife, and resorted to his wonted expedient for safety. He had learned to trust in the Lord in all things; but he did not think this inconsistent with using all lawful means for personal security, and he was not yet fully alive to the unlawfulness of his usual pretence. He pleads also in extenuation that she is in reality his sister (see Genesis 12:19-20). “Caused me to wander.” The verb here is not necessarily plural. But if it be, it is only an instance of the literal, meaning of אלהים *'ĕlohîym* the Eternal Supernatural Powers, coming into view. “Thy kindness.” The old compact of Abraham with Sarah tended to palliate his conduct in the eyes of Abimelek, as he would see that it had no special reference to himself.

Genesis 20:14-18

Abimelek seems to have accepted his apology, as he probably felt that there was truth in the character Abraham gave of his people, and was precluded from resenting it by the salutary impression of his dream; while at the same time Abraham‘s mode of avoiding danger appeared warrantable according to his own and the common code of morals. He therefore hastens

to make honorable amends for his conduct. He makes Abraham a valuable present, restores his wife, and makes him free to dwell in any part of his dominions. He then accosts Sarah in respectful terms, informing her that he had presented her brother with one thousand silver pieces, probably shekels, on her account. He does not offer this directly to herself, that it may be distinctly understood that her honor was unstained. This may refer either to Abraham or to the sum of money. The latter is more natural, as the sentence then affords a reason for addressing Sarah, and mentioning this particular gift. "A covering of the eyes" does not mean a veil, the proper word for which is צעיף *tsāʿîyp* but is a figurative phrase for a recompense or pacificatory offering, in consideration of which an offence is overlooked. "Unto all that are with thee." All her family were concerned in this public vindication of her character. "And all this that thou mayest be righted." The original of this is most naturally taken as a part of Abimelekʻs speech, and then it is to be translated as above. All this has been done or given that the injury to Sarah may be redressed. If the original be regarded as a part of the narrative, it must be rendered, "And all this (was done) that she might be righted." The sense is the same in substance. In the former case the verb is in the second person, in the latter in the third.

Genesis 20:17-18

These verses record the fact of Abrahamʻs intercession for Abimelek, and explain in what sense he was on the point of dying (Genesis 20:3). "They bare" means that they were again rendered capable of procreating children, and in the natural course of things did so. The verb is in the masculine form, because both males and females were involved in this judicial malady. The name Yahweh is employed at the end of the chapter, because the relation of the Creator and Preserver to Sarah is there prominent.

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CHAPTER 21

Verses 1-34

- The Birth of Isaac

.*mîlēl* “speak,” an ancient and therefore solemn and poetical word מלל .7

chāmâh “surround, enclose,” and חמה *chêmet* “bottle,” akin to חמת .14
”.*beêr -sheba*ʿ Beer-sheba‹, “well of seven באר שבע .*chûm* “black הום

”.*pîykol* Pikhol, “mouth or spokesman of all פיכל .22

neked נכד ”.*nîyn* “offspring, kin;” related: “sprout, flourish נין .23
ngd “be before” (the נגד “progeny,” perhaps “acquaintance,” cognate with
”.*nqd* “mark נקד eyes) and

îylābâh “a′ אילבה ;.*êshel* “grove;” ἄρουρα *aroura* Septuagint′ אשל .33
.tree,” Onkelos

This chapter records the birth of Isaac with other concomitant circumstances. This is the beginning of the fulfillment of the second part of the covenant with Abraham - that concerning the seed. This precedes, we observe, his possession of even a foot-breadth of the soil, and is long antecedent to the entrance of his descendants as conquerors into the land of promise.

Genesis 21:1-8

Isaac is born according to promise, and grows to be weaned. “The Lord had visited Sarah.” It is possible that this event may have occurred before the patriarchal pair arrived in Gerar. To visit, is to draw near to a person for the purpose of either chastising or conferring a favor. The Lord had been faithful to his gracious promise to Sarah. “He did as he had spoken.” The object of the visit was accomplished. In due time she bears a son, whom Abraham, in accordance with the divine command, calls Isaac, and circumcises on the eighth day. Abraham was now a hundred years old, and therefore Isaac was born thirty years after the call. Sarah expressed her grateful wonder in two somewhat poetic strains. The first, consisting of two sentences, turns on the word laugh. This is no longer the laugh of delight mingled with doubt, but that of wonder and joy at the power of the Lord

overcoming the impotence of the aged mother. The second strain of three sentences turns upon the object of this admiring joy. The event that nobody ever expected to hear announced to Abraham, has nevertheless taken place; "for I have borne him a son in his old age." The time of weaning, the second step of the child to individual existence, at length arrives, and the household of Abraham make merry, as was wont, on the festive occasion. The infant was usually weaned in the second or third year 1 Samuel 1:22-24; 2 Chronicles 31:16. The child seems to have remained for the first five years under the special care of the mother Leviticus 27:6. The son then came under the management of the father.

Genesis 21:9-21

The dismissal of Hagar and Ishmael. "The son of Hagar … laughing." The birth of Isaac has made a great change in the position of Ishmael, now at the age of at least fifteen years. He was not now, as formerly, the chief object of attention, and some bitterness of feeling may have arisen on this account. His laugh was therefore the laugh of derision. Rightly was the child of promise named Isaac, the one at whom all laugh with various feelings of incredulity, wonder, gladness, and scorn. Sarah cannot brook the insolence of Ishmael, and demands his dismissal. This was painful to Abraham. Nevertheless, God enjoins it as reasonable, on the ground that in Isaac was his seed to be called. This means not only that Isaac was to be called his seed, but in Isaac as the progenitor was included the seed of Abraham in the highest and utmost sense of the phrase. From him the holy seed was to spring that was to be the agent in eventually bringing the whole race again under the covenant of Noah, in that higher form which it assumes in the New Testament. Abraham is comforted in this separation with a renewal of the promise concerning Ishmael Genesis 17:20.

He proceeds with all singleness of heart and denial of self to dismiss the mother and the son. This separation from the family of Abraham was, no doubt, distressing to the feelings of the parties concerned. But it involved no material hardship to those who departed, and conferred certain real advantages. Hagar obtained her freedom. Ishmael, though called a lad, was at an age when it is not unusual in the East to marry and provide for oneself. And their departure did not imply their exclusion from the privileges of communion with God, as they might still be under the covenant with Abraham, since Ishmael had been circumcised, and, at all events, were under the broader covenant of Noah. It was only their own voluntary

rejection of God and his mercy, whether before or after their departure, that could cut them off from the promise of eternal life. It seems likely that Hagar and Ishmael had so behaved as to deserve their dismissal from the sacred home. “A bottle of water.”

This was probably a kid-skin bottle, as Hagar could not have carried a goat-skin. Its contents were precious in the wilderness, but soon exhausted. “And the lad.” He took the lad and gave him to Hagar. The bread and water-skin were on her shoulder; the lad she held by the hand. “In the wilderness of Beer-sheba.” It is possible that the departure of Hagar occurred after the league with Abimelek and the naming of Beer-sheba, though coming in here naturally as the sequel of the birth and weaning of Isaac. The wilderness in Scripture is simply the land not profitable for cultivation, though fit for pasture to a greater or less extent. The wilderness of Beer-sheba is that part of the wilderness which was adjacent to Beer-sheba, where probably at this time Abraham was residing. “Laid the lad.” Ishmael was now, no doubt, thoroughly humbled as well as wearied, and therefore passive under his mother‘s guidance. She led him to a sheltering bush, and caused him to lie down in its shade, resigning herself to despair. The artless description here is deeply affecting.

Genesis 21:17-21

The fortunes of Ishmael. God cares for the wanderers. He hears the voice of the lad, whose sufferings from thirst are greater than those of the mother. An angel is sent, who addresses Hagar in the simple words of encouragement and direction. “Hold thy hand upon him.” Lay thy hand firmly upon him. The former promise Genesis 16:10 is renewed to her. God also opened her eyes that she saw a well of water, from which the bottle is replenished, and she and the lad are recruited for their further journey. It is unnecessary to determine how far this opening of the eyes was miraculous. It may refer to the cheering of her mind and the sharpening of her attention. In Scripture the natural and supernatural are not always set over against each other as with us. All events are alike ascribed to an ever-watchful Providence, whether they flow from the ordinary laws of nature or some higher law of the divine will. “God was with the lad.” Ishmael may have been cured of his childish spleen. It is possible also his father did not forget him, but sent him a stock of cattle with which to begin the pastoral life on his account. “He became an archer.” He grew an archer, or multiplied into a

tribe of archers. Paran Genesis 14:6 lay south of Palestine, and therefore on the way to Egypt, out of which his mother took him a wife. The Ishmaelites, therefore, both root and branch, were descended on the mother‘s side from the Egyptians.

Genesis 21:22-34

According to the common law of Hebrew narrative, this event took place before some of the circumstances recorded in the previous passage; probably not long after the birth of Isaac. Abimelek, accompanied by Phikol, his commander-in-chief, proposes to form a league with Abraham. The reason assigned for this is that God was with him in all that he did. Various circumstances concurred to produce this conviction in Abimelek. The never-to-be-forgotten appearance of God to himself in a dream interposing on behalf of Abraham, the birth of Isaac, and the consequent certainty of his having an heir, and the growing retinue and affluence of one who, some ten years before, could lead out a trained band of three hundred and eighteen men-at-arms, were amply sufficient to prove that God was the source of his strength. Such a man is formidable as a foe, but serviceable as an ally. It is the part of sound policy, therefore, to approach him and endeavor to prevail upon him to swear by God not to deal falsely with him or his. “Kin and kith.” We have adopted these words to represent the conversational alliterative phrase of the original. They correspond tolerably well with the σπέρμα *sperma* and ὄνομα *onoma* “seed” and “name,” of the Septuagint. Abraham frankly consents to this oath. This is evidently a personal covenant, referring to existing circumstances. A similar confederacy had been already formed with Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre. Abraham was disposed to such alliances, as they contributed to peaceful neighborhood. He was not in a condition to make a national covenant, though it is a fact that the Philistines were scarcely ever wholly subjugated by his descendants.

Genesis 21:25-26

Abraham takes occasion to remonstrate with Abimelek about a well which his people had seized. Wells were extremely valuable in Palestine, on account of the long absence of rain between the latter or vernal rain ending in March, and the early or autumnal rain beginning in November. The digging of a well was therefore a matter of the greatest moment, and often gave a certain title to the adjacent fields. Hence, the many disputes about wells, as the neighboring Emirs or chieftains were jealous of rights so

acquired, and often sought to enter by the strong hand on the labors of patient industry. Hence, Abraham lays more stress on a public attestation that he has dug, and is therefore the owner of this well, than on all the rest of the treaty. Seven is the number of sanctity, and therefore of obligation. This number is accordingly figured in some part of the form of confederation; in the present case, in the seven ewe-lambs which Abraham tenders, and Abimelek, in token of consent, accepts at his hand. The name of the well is remarkable as an instance of the various meanings attached to nearly the same sound. Even in Hebrew it means the well of seven, or the well of the oath, as the roots of seven, and of the verb meaning to swear, have the same radical letters. Bir es-Seba means "the well of seven or of the lion."

Genesis 21:32-34

Returned unto the land of the Philistines. - Beer-sheba was on the borders of the land of the Philistines. Going therefore to Gerar, they returned into that land. In the transactions with Hagar and with Abimelek, the name God is employed, because the relation of the Supreme Being with these parties is more general or less intimate than with the heir of promise. The same name, however, is used in reference to Abraham and Sarah, who stand in a twofold relation to him as the Eternal Potentate, and the Author of being and blessing. Hence, the chapter begins and ends with Yahweh, the proper name of God in communion with man. "Eshel is a field under tillage" in the Septuagint, and a tree in Onkelos. It is therefore well translated a grove in the King James Version, though it is rendered "the tamarisk" by many. The planting of a grove implies that Abraham now felt he had a resting-place in the land, in consequence of his treaty with Abimelek. He calls upon the name of the Lord with the significant surname of the God of perpetuity, the eternal, unchangeable God. This marks him as the "sure and able" performer of his promise, as the everlasting vindicator of the faith of treaties, and as the infallible source of the believer's rest and peace. Accordingly, Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines many days.

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CHAPTER 22

Verses 1-24

- Abraham Was Tested

2. מריה Samaritan; מוראה: *morîyâh* "Moriah," Septuagint, "*môr'âh* ὑψηλή *hupsēlē* Onkelos, "worship." Some take the word to be a simple derivative, as the Septuagint and Onkelos, meaning "vision, high, worship." יה a Jah, *yâh* It might mean "rebellious." Others regard it as a compound of מראה name of God," and מורה or מורא *môreh* "teacher," *mîr'eh*, "shown "*môrā'* "fear.

14. יראה Jireh, will provide "*yîr'ēh*.

16, נאם low speak: related; "*ne'um* ῥῆμα *rēma* "dictum, oracle.

21. בוז Buz, scoffing "*bûz*. קמואל God of Qemuel, gathered "*qemû'ēl*.

22. חזו Chazo, vision "*chăzô*. פלדש Pildash, steelman? "*pîldâsh* wanderer?" ידלף related: trickle, weep, Jidlaph "*yîdlâp*. בתואל God of dwelling, Bethuel "*betû'ēl*.

23. רבקה noose, Ribqah "*rîbqâh*.

24. ראומה exalted, Reumah "*re'ûmâh*. טבה slaughter, Tebach "*ṭebach*. תחש seal or badger, Tachash "*tachash*. גחם brand, Gacham "*gacham*. מעכה Ma‹akah; related: press, crush, "*maʿăkâh*.

The grand crisis, the crowning event in the history of Abraham, now takes place. Every needful preparation has been made for it. He has been called to a high and singular destiny. With expectant acquiescence he has obeyed the call. By the delay in the fulfillment of the promise, he has been taught to believe in the Lord on his simple word. Hence, as one born again, he has been taken into covenant with God. He has been commanded to walk in holiness, and circumcised in token of his possessing the faith which purifieth the heart. He has become the intercessor and the prophet. And he has at length become the parent of the child of promise. He has now something of unspeakable worth, by which his spiritual character may be

thoroughly tested. Since the hour in which he believed in the Lord, the features of his resemblance to God have been shining more and more through the darkness of his fallen nature - freedom of resolve, holiness of walk, interposing benevolence, and paternal affection. The last prepares the way for the highest point of moral likeness.

Verse 1-19

God tests Abraham‘s unreserved obedience to his will. “The God.” The true, eternal, and only God, not any tempter to evil, such as the serpent or his own thoughts. “Tempted Abraham.” To tempt is originally to try, prove, put to the test. It belongs to the dignity of a moral being to be put to a moral probation. Such assaying of the will and conscience is worthy both of God the assayer, and of man the assayed. “Thine only one.” The only one born of Sarah, and heir of the promise. “Whom thou lovest.” An only child gathers round it all the affections of the parent‘s heart. “The land of Moriah.” This term, though applied in 2 Chronicles 3:1 to the mount on which the temple of Solomon was built, is here the name of a country, containing, it may be, a range of mountains or other notable place to which it was especially appropriated. Its formation and meaning are very doubtful, and there is nothing in the context to lend us any aid in its explanation. It was evidently known to Abraham before he set out on his present journey. It is not to be identified with Moreh in Genesis 12:6, as the two names occur in the same document, and, being different in form, they naturally denote different things. Moreh is probably the name of a man. Moriah probably refers to some event that had occurred in the land, or some characteristic of its inhabitants. If a derivative, like בריה *porîyâh* “fruitful,” it may mean the land of the rebellious, a name not inapposite to any district inhabited by the Kenaanites, who were disposed to rebellion themselves Genesis 14:4, or met with rebellion from the previous inhabitants. If a compound of the divine name, Jah, whatever be the other element, it affords an interesting trace of the manifestation and worship of the true God under the name of Jab at some antecedent period. The land of Moriah comprehended within its range the population to which Melkizedec ministered as priest.

And offer him for a burnt-offering. - Abraham must have felt the outward inconsistency between the sacrifice of his son, and the promise that in him should his seed be called. But in the triumph of faith he accounted that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead. On no other principle can the prompt, mute, unquestioning obedience of Abraham be

explained. Human sacrifice may have been not unknown; but this in no way met the special difficulty of the promise. The existence of such a custom might seem to have smoothed away the difficulty of a parent offering the sacrifice of a son. But the moral difficulty of human sacrifice is not so removed. The only solution of this, is what the ease itself actually presents; namely, the divine command. It is evident that the absolute Creator has by right entire control over his creatures. He is no doubt bound by his eternal rectitude to do no wrong to his moral creatures. But the creature in the present case has forfeited the life that was given, by sin. And, moreover, we cannot deny that the Almighty may, for a fit moral purpose, direct the sacrifice of a holy being, who should eventually receive a due recompense for such a degree of voluntary obedience. This takes away the moral difficulty, either as to God who commands, or Abraham who obeys. Without the divine command, it is needless to say that it was not lawful for Abraham to slay his son.

Upon one of the hills of which I will tell thee. - This form of expression dearly shows that Moriah was not at that time the name of the particular hill on which the sacrifice was to be offered. It was the general designation of the country in which was the range of hills on one of which the solemn transaction was to take place. "And Abraham rose up early in the morning." There is no hesitation or lingering in the patriarch. If this has to be done, let it be done at once.

Genesis 22:4-10

The story is now told with exquisite simplicity. "On the third day." From Beer-sheba to the Shalem of Melkizedec, near which this hill is supposed to have been, is about forty-five miles. If they proceeded fifteen miles on the first broken day, twenty on the second, and ten on the third, they would come within sight of the place early on the third day. "Lifted up his eyes." It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader of the Bible that this phrase does not imply that the place was above his point of view. Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the vale of Jordan Genesis 13:10, which was considerably below the position of the observer. "And return unto you." The intimation that he and the lad would return, may seem to have rested on a dim presentiment that God would restore Isaac to him even if sacrificed. But it is more in keeping with the earnestness of the whole transaction to regard it as a mere concealment of his purpose from his servants. "And he bound Isaac his son." There is a wonderful pathos in the words his son, his father,

introduced in the sacred style in this and similar narratives. Isaac, when the trying moment came, seems to have made no resistance to his father‘s will. The binding was merely a sacrificial custom. He must have concluded that his father was in all this obeying the will of God, though he gave him only a distant hint that it was so. Abraham is thoroughly in earnest in the whole procedure.

Genesis 22:11-14

At this critical moment the angel of the Lord interposes to prevent the actual sacrifice. “Lay not thy hand upon the lad.” Here we have the evidence of a voice from heaven that God does not accept of human victims. Man is morally unclean, and therefore unfit for a sacrifice. He is, moreover, not in any sense a victim, but a doomed culprit, for whom the victim has to be provided. And for a typical sacrifice that cannot take away, but only shadow forth, the efficacious sacrifice, man is neither fit nor necessary. The lamb without blemish, that has no penal or protracted suffering, is sufficient for a symbol of the real atonement. The intention, therefore, in this case was enough, and that was now seen to be real. “Now I know that thou fearest God.” This was known to God antecedent to the event that demonstrated it. But the original “I have known” denotes an eventual knowing, a discovering by actual experiment; and this observable probation of Abraham was necessary for the judicial eye of God, who is to govern the world, and for the conscience of man, who is to be instructed by practice as well as principle. “Thou hast not withheld thy son from me.” This voluntary surrender of all that was dear to him, of all that he could in any sense call his own, forms the keystone of Abraham‘s spiritual experience. He is henceforth a tried man.

Genesis 22:13-14

A ram behind. - For “behind” we have “one” in the Samaritan, the Septuagint, Onkelos, and some MSS. But neither a “single ram” nor a “certain ram” adds anything suitable to the sense. We therefore retain the received reading. The voice from heaven was heard from behind Abraham, who, on turning back and lifting up his eyes, saw the ram. This Abraham took and offered as a substitute for Isaac. Both in the intention and in the act he rises to a higher resemblance to God. He withholds not his only son in intent, and yet in fact he offers a substitute for his son. “Jehovah-jireh”, the Lord will provide, is a deeply significant name. He who provided the ram caught in the thicket will provide the really atoning victim of which the ram

was the type. In this event we can imagine Abraham seeing the day of that pre-eminent seed who should in the fullness of time actually take away sin by the sacrifice of himself. “In the mount of the Lord he will be seen.” This proverb remained as a monument of this transaction in the time of the sacred writer. The mount of the Lord here means the very height of the trial into which he brings his saints. There he will certainly appear in due time for their deliverance.

Genesis 22:15-19

Abraham has arrived at the moral elevation of self-denial and resignation to the will of God, and that in its highest form. The angel of the Lord now confirms all his special promises to him with an oath, in their amplest terms. An oath with God is a solemn pledging of himself in all the unchangeableness of his faithfulness and truth, to the fulfillment of his promise. The multitude of his seed has a double parallel in the stars of heaven and the sands of the ocean. They are to possess the gate of their enemies; that is, to be masters and rulers of their cities and territories. The great promise, “and blessed in thy seed shall be all the nations of the earth,” was first given absolutely without reference to his character. Now it is confirmed to him as the man of proof, who is not only accepted as righteous, but proved to be actually righteous after the inward man; “because thou hast obeyed my voice” Genesis 26:5. The reflexive form of the verb signifying to bless is here employed, not to denote emphasis, but to intimate that the nations, in being blessed of God, are made willing to be so, and therefore bless themselves in Abraham‘s seed. In hearing this transcendent blessing repeated on this momentous occasion, Abraham truly saw the day of the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the Son of man. We contemplate him now with wonder as the man of God, manifested by the self-denying obedience of a regenerate nature, intrusted with the dignity of the patriarchate over a holy seed, and competent to the worthy discharge of all its spiritual functions.

With the nineteenth verse of this chapter may be said to close the main revelation of the third Bible given to mankind, to which the remainder of this book is only a needful appendix. It includes the two former Bibles or revelations - that of Adam and that of Noah; and it adds the special revelation of Abraham. The two former applied directly to the whole race; the latter directly to Abraham and his seed as the medium of an ultimate blessing to the whole race. The former revealed the mercy of God offered to

all, which was the truth immediately necessary to be known; the latter reveals more definitely the seed through whom the blessings of mercy are to be conveyed to all, and delineates the leading stage in the spiritual life of a man of God. In the person of Abraham is unfolded that spiritual process by which the soul is drawn to God. He hears the call of God and comes to the decisive act of trusting in the revealed God of mercy and truth; on the ground of which act he is accounted as righteous. He then rises to the successive acts of walking with God, covenanting with him, communing and interceding with him, and at length withholding nothing that he has or holds dear from him. In all this we discern certain primary and essential characteristics of the man who is saved through acceptance of the mercy of God proclaimed to him in a primeval gospel. Faith in God Genesis 22:20-24

This family notice is inserted as a piece of contemporaneous history, to explain and prepare the way for the marriage of Isaac. "Milkah, she also," in allusion to Sarah, who has borne Isaac. So far as we know, they may have been sisters, but they were at all events sisters-in-law. The only new persons belonging to our histoy are Bethuel and Rebekah. Uz, Aram, and Kesed are interesting, as they show that we are in the region of the Shemites, among whom these are ancestral names Genesis 10:23; Genesis 11:28. Buz may have been the ancestor of Elihu Jeremiah 25:23; Job 32:2. Maakah may have given rise to the tribes and land of Maakah Deuteronomy 3:14; 2 Samuel 10:6. The other names do not again occur. "And his concubine." A concubine was a secondary wife, whose position was not considered disreputable in the East. Nahor, like Ishmael, had twelve sons, - eight by his wife, and four by his concubine.

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CHAPTER 23

Verses 1-20

- The Death of Sarah

2. ארבע קרית *arba'* ארבע ".*qîryat -'arba'* "Qirjath-arba‹, city of Arba ".“Arba‹, four

8. עפרון *tshochar* צחר ".*eprôn* "‹Ephron, of the dust, or resembling a calf' ".“Tsochar, whiteness

9. מכפלה ".*makpêlâh* "Makpelah, doubled

The death and burial of Sarah are here recorded. This occasions the purchase of the field of Makpelah, in the cave of which is her sepulchre.

Genesis 23:1-2

Sarah is the only woman whose age is recorded in Scripture. She meets with this distinction as the wife of Abraham and the mother of the promised seed. “A hundred and twenty and seven years,” and therefore thirty-seven years after the birth of her son. “In Kiriatharba.” Arba is called the father of Anak Joshua 15:13; Joshua 21:11; that is, of the Anakim or Bene Anak, a tall or gigantic tribe Numbers 13:22; 28; 33, who were subsequently dispossessed by Kaleb. The Anakim were probably Hittites. Abraham had been absent from Hebron, which is also called Mamre in this very chapter Genesis 23:17, Genesis 23:19, not far from forty years, though he appears to have still kept up a connection with it, and had at present a residence in it. During this interval the sway of Arba may have commenced. “In the land of Kenaan,” in contradistinction to Beer-sheba in the land of the Philistines, where we last left Abraham. “Abraham went to mourn for Sarah,” either from Beer-sheba or some out-field where he had cattle pasturing.

Genesis 23:3-16

Abraham purchases a burying-ground in the land. “The sons of Heth.” These are the lords of the soil. “A stranger and a sojourner.” He is a stranger, not a Hittite; a sojourner, a dweller in the land, not a mere visitor or traveller. The former explains why he has no burial-ground; the latter, why he asks to purchase one. “Bury my dead out of my sight.” The bodies of those most dear to us decay, and must be removed from our sight. Abraham makes his request in the most general terms. In the somewhat

exaggerated style of Eastern courtesy, the sons of Heth reply, “Hear us, my lord.” One speaks for all; hence, the change of number. “My lord” is simply equivalent to our “Sir,” or the German “mein Herr.” “A prince of God” in those times of simple faith was a chief notably favored of God, as Abraham had been in his call, his deliverance in Egypt, his victory over the kings, his intercession for the cities of the vale, and his protection the court of Abimelek. Some of these events were well known to the Hittites, as they had occurred while he was residing among them.

Genesis 23:7-9

Abraham now makes a specific offer to purchase the field of Makpelah from Ephron the son of Zohar. “Treat for me” - deal, use your influence with him. Abraham approaches in the most cautious manner to the individual with whom he wishes to treat. “The cave of Makpelah.” The burial of the dead in caves, natural and artificial, was customary in this Eastern land. The field seems to have been called Makpelah (doubled) from the double form of the cave, or the two caves perhaps communicating with each other, which it contained. “For the full silver.” Silver seems to have been the current medium of commerce at this time. God was known, and mentioned at an earlier period Genesis 2:11; Genesis 13:2. “A possession of a burying-ground.” We learn from this passage that property in land had been established at this time. Much of the country, however, must have been a common, or unappropriated pasture ground.

Genesis 23:10-16

The transaction now comes to be between Abraham and Ephron. “Was sitting.” The sons of Heth were seated in council, and Ephron among them. Abraham seems to have been seated also; for he stood up to make his obeisance and request Genesis 23:7. “Before all that went in at the gate of his city.” The conference was public. The place of session for judicial and other public business was the gate of the city, which was common ground, and where men were constantly going in and out. “His city.” This implies not that he was the king or chief, but simply that he was a respectable citizen. If Hebron was the city of the Hittites here intended, its chief at the time seems to have been Arba. “The field give I thee.” Literally, have I given thee - what was resolved upon was regarded as done. “In the sight of the sons of my people.” This was a public declaration or deed before many witnesses.

He offers the field as a gift, with the Eastern understanding that the receiver would make an ample recompense. This mode of dealing had its origin in a genuine good-will, that was prepared to gratify the wish of another as soon as it was made known, and as far as it was reasonable or practicable. The feeling seems to have been still somewhat fresh and unaffected in the time of Abraham, though it has degenerated into a mere form of courtesy. “If thou wilt, hear me.” The language is abrupt, being spoken in the haste of excitement. “I give silver.” “I have given” in the original; that is, I have determined to pay the full price. If the Eastern giver was liberal, the receiver was penetrated with an equal sense of the obligation conferred, and a like determination to make an equivalent return. “The land is four hundred shekels.” This is the familiar style for “the land is worth so much.” The shekel is here mentioned for the first time. It was originally a weight, not a coin. The weight at least was in common use before Abraham. If the shekel be nine pennyweights and three grains, the price of the field was about forty-five pounds sterling. “And Abraham weighed.” It appears that the money was uncoined silver, as it was weighed. “Current with the merchant.” The Kenaanites, of whom the Hittites were a tribe, were among the earliest traders in the world. The merchant, as the original imports, is the traveller who brings the wares to the purchasers in their own dwellings or towns. To him a fixed weight and measure were necessary.

Genesis 23:17-20

The completion of the sale is stated with great formality. No mention is made of any written deed of sale. Yet Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob remained in undisturbed possession of this burial-ground. Undisputed tenure seems to have been acknowledged as a title. The burial of Sarah is then simply noted. The validity of Abraham‘s title is practically evinced by the actual burial of Sarah, and is recited again on account of the importance of the fact.

This chapter is interesting as containing the first record of mourning for the dead, of burial, of property in land, of purchase of land, of silver as a medium of purchase, and of a standard of weight. Mourning for the dead was, no doubt, natural on the first death. Burial was a matter of necessity, in order, as Abraham says, to remove the body out of sight, as soon as it was learned by experience that it would be devoured by beasts of prey, or become offensive by putrefaction. To bury or cover it with earth was a more easy and natural process than burning, and was therefore earlier and more

general. Property in land was introduced where tribes became settled, formed towns, and began to practise tillage. Barter was the early mode of accommodating each party with the articles he needed or valued. This led gradually to the use of the precious metals as a “current” medium of exchange - first by weight, and then by coins of a fixed weight and known stamp.

The burial of Sarah is noted because she was the wife of Abraham and the mother of the promised seed. The purchase of the field is worthy of note, as it is the first property of the chosen race in the promised land. Hence, these two events are interwoven with the sacred narrative of the ways of God with man.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Verses 1-67

- The Marriage of Isaac

”.*shâchâh* “bow the body השׁתחוה ”.*qādad* “bow the head קרד .26

”.*lābān* “Laban, white לבן .29

In this circumstantial account of the marriage of Isaac, we have a beautiful picture of ancient manners in the East, the living original of which the present customs of that cradle of mankind are a striking copy.

Genesis 24:1-9

Abraham binds the chief servant of his house to seek a wife for his son Isaac among his kindred. The first movement in this matrimonial arrangement is on the part of the father, who does not consult his son, but the chief manager of his household affairs. Abraham is now a hundred and forty years of age, and Sarah has been three years dead. Isaac seems to have been of an easy, sedate turn of mind, and was not in circumstances to choose a partner for life such as his father would approve. The promise of a numerous offspring by the son of Sarah is before the mind of the patriarch. All these considerations impel him to look out for a suitable wife for his son, and the blessing of the Lord encourages him to proceed. The person whom Abraham intrusted with this delicate task has a threefold designation. First, he is “his servant” or minister. Secondly, he is the old man, ancient, or elder of his house. Here the term “elder” approaches its official signification. In early times age was taken into account, along with good conduct and aptitude, as the qualification for services of trust. Thirdly, he “ruled over all that he had.” He was therefore a master as well as a minister. If this be Eliezer of mascus Genesis 15:2, he was the steward of Abraham before the birth of Ishmael fifty-four Years ago. “Under my thigh.” The thigh was the seat of generative power, and the region of sacramental consecration, and to put the hand under the thigh was to acknowledge and pledge obedience to him who requires the oath.

Genesis 24:3-4

The appeal is to God as “Yahweh, God of heaven and God of the earth.” Yahweh is the personal name of God, which is properly used by those who are in fellowship with him. He is the Author of all being, and therefore of

heaven and earth; and hence the arbiter of the destiny of the oath-taker, both in spiritual and material things, both in this life and in what is to come. "Not of the daughters of the Kenaanite," a race sinking fast into ungodliness and unrighteousness, doomed to extirpation, to whom the promised seed is to succeed. The kindred of Abraham were Shemites, Hebrews, and still retained some knowledge of the true God, and some reverence for him and his will. The experienced elder of Abraham's house does not wish to bind himself by an oath to what it may be impossible to fulfill. He makes the supposition of the unwillingness of the bride whom he may select, and obtains a quittance from his oath in that ease. The patriarch, however, charges him not to bring his son back to the land of his fathers, and expresses his confidence in the God of promise, that he will direct his servant to the suitable wife for his son. "His angel" Genesis 16:7. This is the Lord in the function of an angel or messenger opening the way for the servant of Abraham. He does not make any appearance to the servant, though a superintending Providence is strikingly displayed in the whole affair. The faithful elder now understands and takes the required oath.

Genesis 24:10-14

He proceeds on his journey. "Took ten camels." These are designed for conducting the bride and her companions home to his master. "All the best belonging to his master in his hand." This refers to the presents for the bride and her friends, and to the accommodations for her comfort on the journey. "Aram-Naharaim." Aram was an extensive area, embracing not only the country west of the Frat and north of Palestine, but the northern part of Mesopotamia, or the country between the Frat and the Dijlah. The latter region is for the sake of distinction called Aram of the two rivers. It did not include the southern part of Mesopotamia, which was called Shinar Genesis 11:2, and probably extended only to the Chaboras, Khabour. The part of it in which Haran was situated was called Padan-aram Genesis 28:2. "The city of Nahor." It is probable that Nahor accompanied his father, Terah, to Haran Genesis 11:31. If not, he must have followed him very soon.

Genesis 24:11

Made the camels kneel, - for repose. "The time when the maidens that draw water come out." The evening was the cool part of the day. The simple maidens of primitive days attended personally to domestic affairs. The experienced steward might therefore naturally expect to see the high-born damsels of the land at the public well, which had probably given rise to the

neighboring town. The prayer of the aged servant is conceived in a spirit of earnest, childlike faith. The matter in hand is of extraordinary importance. A wife is to be found for the heir of promise. This was a special concern of God, and so the single-hearted follower of Abraham makes it. He takes upon himself the choice of a maiden among those that come to draw, to whom he will make the request of a particular act of kindness to a stranger, and he prays God that the intended bride may be known by a ready compliance with his request. The three qualifications, then, in the mind of the venerable domestic for a bride for his master‘s son, are a pleasing exterior, a kindly disposition, and the approval of God.

Genesis 24:15-21

The answer is immediate and direct. “He had not yet done speaking,” when the answer came. A damsel “very fair to look upon,” satisfying the taste of the old man, appears. He thereupon prefers his request, with which she promptly complies. The old man waits in wonder and silence to see if the Lord‘s approval will follow.

Genesis 24:22-28

Rebekah makes herself known in reply to his inquiries. “A ring of gold.” The single ring was worn in the nose, the side cartilage of which was pierced for the purpose. This is a custom of the East. “A beka” was half a shekel, somewhat less than a quarter of an ounce. “Ten of gold in weight.” Ten bekas would be about two ounces and a quarter. If shekels, however, be understood, the weight will be double. These were merely a reward for her kindness and courtesy to a stranger. Two questions are now asked by the stranger - the one relating to her kindred, and the other to the means and the inclination they had to entertain a stranger, when inns were not yet in existence. She announces herself to be the daughter of his master‘s nephew, and assures him of the requisite accommodation.

Genesis 24:26-27

Bowed his head and worshipped. - The bowing of the head and of the body are here combined to indicate the aged servant‘s deep thankfulness for the guidance of the Lord. The utterance of the mouth accompanies the external gesture of reverence. “Her mother‘s house;” those who were in the department of the females. We may imagine with what excitement and alacrity Rebekah would communicate the extraordinary intelligence.

Genesis 24:29-33

The reception of Abraham‘s servant. Laban now comes on the scene. He is ready to run with his sister to find the man, and invite him, as a matter of course, to his father‘s house. “When he saw the ring.” The presents to his sister assure him that this is the envoy of some man of wealth and position. “Thou blessed of the Lord.” The name of Yahweh was evidently not unfamiliar to Laban‘s ears. He calls this stranger “blessed of Yahweh,” on account of his language, demeanor, and manifest prosperity. The knowledge and worship of the living God, the God of truth and mercy, was still retained in the family of Nahor. Being warmly invited, the man enters the house. “And he ungirded the camels.” Laban is the actor here, and in the following duties of hospitality. “The men‘s feet that were with him.” It comes out here, incidentally, as it was reasonable to infer from the number of camels, that Abraham‘s steward had a retinue of servants with him. The crowning act of an Eastern reception is the presenting of food. But the faithful servant must deliver his message before partaking of the friendly meal.

Verse 34-49

The servant‘s errand is told. He explains his business in a singularly artless and pleasing manner. He then leaves the matter in the hands of the family. “Given unto him all that he hath.” His children by Hagar and Keturah were dismissed with portions during his life, and the main bulk of his property was conveyed to Isaac.

Genesis 24:50-61

The servant‘s return with Rebekah. So plain an interposition of Providence admits of no refusal on the part of those who revere the Lord. Bethuel now appears as a concurring party. Laban, as the full brother of Rebekah, has a voice in the disposal of her hand; but the father only has the power to ratify the contract. The patriarch‘s servant first bows in acknowledgment to the Lord, who had now manifested his approval of the choice he had made, and then proceeds to distribute costly gifts to the bride, and to her brother and mother. Now at length the thankful guest partakes of the fare set before him along with his entertainers, and after the night‘s repose requests to be dismissed. “A few days;” perhaps a week or ten days. The mother and brother naturally plead for a little time to prepare for parting with Rebekah. They could not expect the servant, however, to stay months.

“Inquire at her mouth.” This is the only free choice in the matter that seems to be given to Rebekah. Her consent may have been modestly indicated, before her family ratified the contract. It is plain, however, that it was thought proper that the parents should receive and decide upon a proposal of marriage. The extent to which the maiden‘s inclinations would be consulted would depend very much on the custom of the country, and the intelligence and good feeling of the parents. In later times the custom became very arbitrary. Rebekah‘s decision shows that she concurred in the consent of her relatives. “And her nurse.” Her name, we learn afterward Genesis 35:8, was Deborah. The nurse accompanied the bride as her confidential adviser and faithful attendant, and died in her service; a beautiful trait of ancient manners. The blessing consists in a boundless offspring, and the upper hand over their enemies. These are indicative of a thin population, and a comparatively rude state of society. “And her damsels.” We here learn, again, incidentally, that Rebekah had more female attendants than her nurse.

Genesis 24:62-67

Isaac receives his bride. He had been at Beer-lahai-roi, the scene of the interview of Hagar with the angel of the Lord - a spot calculated to awaken thoughts of an overruling Providence. “To meditate.” This is a characteristic of Isaac‘s retiring, contemplative mood. Abraham was the active, authoritative father; Isaac was the passive, submissive son. To meditate was to hold converse with his own thoughts, to ponder on the import of that never-to-be-forgotten scene when he was laid on the altar by a father‘s hand, and a ram caught in the thicket became his substitute, and to pour out his soul unto the God of his salvation. In this hour of his grave reflection comes his destined bride with her faithful escort upon his view. Rebekah lights off the camel. Doubtless the conversation by the way with the elder of Abraham‘s house had made her aware of their approach to the residence of her future husband.

She concludes at once that this must be he, and, alighting, asks if it be. On being informed by the servant that this is his young master, she puts on the veil, which covers the head, and hangs down gracefully both behind and before. The aged servant reports the success of his mission, and presents Rebekah. Isaac brings his cousin‘s daughter into the apartments formerly occupied by his mother, and accepts her as his wife. The formalities of the interview, and of her presentation to Abraham as his daughter-in-law, are all

untold. “And he loved her.” This is the first mention of the social affections. It comes in probably because Isaac had not before seen his bride, and now felt his heart drawn toward her, when she was presented to his view. All things were evidently done in the fear of God, as became those who were to be the progenitors of the seed of promise. We have here a description of the primeval marriage. It is a simple taking of a woman for a wife before all witnesses, and with suitable feelings and expression of reverence toward God, and of desire for his blessing. It is a pure and holy relation, reaching back into the realms of innocence, and fit to be the emblem of the humble, confiding, affectionate union between the Lord and his people.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 25

Verses 1-11
- The Death of Abraham

1. קטורה "Qeturah, incense" *qeṭûrâh*.

2. זמרן "Zimran, celebrated in song" *zîmrān*. יקשן "Joqshan, yāqshān" מדן "Medan, judge, fowler" *medān*. מדין "Midian, one who measures" *mîdyān*. שוח "Shuach, pit" *shûach*. לאבק "Jishbaq, he leaves" *yîshbāq*.

3. לטושם "Letushim, hammered, sharpened" *leṭûshîym*. לאמים "Leummim, peoples" *le'umîym*.

4. עיפה "‹Ephah, darkness‹" *êypâh*. עפר "‹Epher, dust‹" *êper*. אבידע "Abida‹, father of knowledge′ knowing?" *ăbîydā‹*. אלדעה "Elda‹ah,′" *eldā‹âh*.

Another family is born to Abraham by Keturah, and portioned off, after which he dies and is buried.

Genesis 25:1-6

Added and took a wife. - According to the laws of Hebrew composition, this event may have taken place before that recorded in the close of the previous chapter. Of this law we have several examples in this very chapter. And there is nothing contrary to the customs of that period in adding wife to wife. We cannot say that Abraham was hindered from taking Keturah in the lifetime of Sarah by any moral feeling which would not also have hindered him from taking Hagar. It has been also noticed that Keturah is called a concubine, which is thought to imply that the proper wife was still living; and that Abraham was a very old man at the death of Sarah. But, on the other hand, it is to be remembered that these sons were in any case born after the birth of Isaac, and therefore after Abraham was renewed in vital powers. If this renewal of vigor remained after the birth of Isaac, it may have continued some time after the death of Sarah, whom he survived thirty-eight years. His abstinence from any concubine until Sarah gave him Hagar is against his taking any other during Sarah‘s lifetime. His loneliness on the death of Sarah may have prompted him to seek a companion of his old age. And if this step was delayed until Isaac was married, and therefore

separated from him, an additional motive would impel him in the same direction. He was not bound to raise this wife to the full rights of a proper wife, even though Sarah were dead. And six sons might be born to him twenty-five years before his death. And if Hagar and Ishmael were dismissed when he was about fifteen years old, so might Keturah when her youngest was twenty or twenty-five. We are not warranted, then, still less compelled, to place Abraham‘s second marriage before the death of Sarah, or even the marriage of Isaac. It seems to appear in the narrative in the order of time.

Genesis 25:2

The endeavors to ascertain the tribes that descended from these six sons of Keturah have not been very successful. Zimran has been compared with Ζαβράμ *Zabram* (Ptol. vi. 7,5), situated west of Mecca on the Red Sea. Jokshan with the Κασσανῖται *Kassanitai* (Ptol. vi. 7,6), and with the tribe Jakish among the Himyarites in South Arabia. Medan with Μοδιάνα *Modiana* on the east coast of the Aelanitic Gulf. Midian is found in two localities west of the Aelanitic Gulf and east of the Salt Sea. Among the former, Moses afterward found refuge. The latter are probably east of Abraham‘s residence. Ishbak is compared with Shobek, a place in Idumaea. Shuah probably belongs to the same region. He may be the ancestor of Bildad the Shuhite Job 2:11. Of these, Midian alone appears to be ascertained. The others may have been absorbed in that congeries of tribes, the Arabs.

Genesis 25:3-4

Sheba, Dedan, and Asshurim are recurring names Genesis 10:7, Genesis 10:22, Genesis 10:28, describing other tribes of Arabs equally unknown. The three sons of Dedan may be traced in the tribe Asir of the south of Hejaz, the Beni Leits of Hejaz, and the Beni Lam of the borders of Mesopotamia. Of the sons of Midian, Epha is mentioned in Isaiah 60:6 along with Midian. Epher is compared with Beni Ghifar in Hejaz, Henok with Hanakye north of Medinah, Abida with the Abide, and Eldaah with the Wadaa. These conjectures of Burckhardt are chiefly useful in showing that similar names are still existing in the country. There are here six sons of Abraham, seven grandsons, and three great-grandsons, making sixteen descendants by Keturah. If there were any daughters, they are not noticed. It is not customary to mention females, unless they are connected with leading historical characters. These descendants of Abraham and Keturah are the

third contribution of Palgites to the Joktanites, who constituted the original element of the Arabs, the descendants of Lot and Ishmael having preceded them. All these branches of the Arab nation are descended from Heber.

Genesis 25:5-6

Abraham makes Isaac his heir Genesis 24:36. He gives portions to the sons of the concubines during his lifetime, and sends them away to the East. Ishmael had been portioned off long before Genesis 21:14. The East is a general name for Arabia, which stretched away to the southeast and east of the point where Abraham resided in the south of Palestine. The northern part of Arabia, which lay due east of Palestine, was formerly more fertile and populous than now. The sons of Keturah were probably dismissed before they had any children. Their notable descendants, according to custom, are added here before they are dismissed from the main line of the narrative.

Genesis 25:7-11

The death of Abraham. His years were a hundred and seventy-five. He survived Sarah thirty-eight years, and Isaac‘s marriage thirty-five. His grandfather lived a hundred and forty-eight years, his father two hundred and five, his son Isaac a hundred and eighty, and his grandson Jacob a hundred and forty-seven; so that his years were the full average of that period. “Expired” - breathed his last. “In a happy old age,” in external and internal blessedness Genesis 15:15. “Old and full” - having attained to the standard length of life in his days, and being satisfied with this life, so that he was ready and willing to depart. “Gathered to his peoples” Genesis 15:15. To be gathered is not to cease to exist, but to continue existing in another sphere. His peoples, the departed families, from whom he is descended, are still in being in another not less real world. This, and the like expression in the passage quoted, give the first fact in the history of the soul after death, as the burial is the first step in that of the body.

Genesis 25:9-10

Isaac and Ishmael, - in brotherly cooperation. Ishmael was the oldest son, dwelt in the presence of all his brethren, and had a special blessing. The sons of Keturah were far away in the East, very young, and had no particular blessing. Ishmael is therefore properly associated with Isaac in paying the last offices to their deceased father. The burying-place had been prepared before. Its purchase is here rehearsed with great precision as a

testimony of the fact. This burial-ground is an earnest of the promised possession.

Genesis 25:11

This verse is an appendix to the history of Abraham, stating that the blessing of God, which he had enjoyed until his death, now descended upon his son Isaac, who abode at Beer-lahai-roi. The general name "God" is here employed, because the blessing of God denotes the material and temporal prosperity which had attended Abraham, in comparison with other men of his day. Of the spiritual and eternal blessings connected with Yahweh, the proper name of the Author of being and blessing, we shall hear in due time.

The section now completed contains the seventh of the documents commencing with the formula, "these are the generations." It begins in the eleventh chapter and ends in the twenty-fifth, and therefore contains a greater number of chapters and amount of matter than the whole of the preceding narrative. This is as it should be in a record of the ways of God with man. In the former sections, things anterior and external to man come out into the foreground; they lie at the basis of his being, his mental and moral birth. In the present section, things internal to man and flowing from him are brought into view. These are coincident with the growth of his spiritual nature. The latter are no less momentous than the former for the true and full development of his faculties and capacities.

In the former sections the absolute being of God is assumed; the beginning of the heavens and the earth asserted. The reconstruction of skies and land and the creation of a new series of plants and animals are recorded. This new creation is completed by the creating of man in the image of God and after his likeness. The placing of man in a garden of fruit trees prepared for his sustenance and gratification; the primeval command, with its first lessons in language, physics, ethics, and theology; the second lesson in speaking when the animals are named; and the separation of man into the male and the female, are followed by the institutions of wedlock and the Sabbath, the fountain-heads of sociality with man and God, the foreshadows of the second and first tables of the law. The fall of man in the second lesson of ethics; the sentence of the Judge, containing in its very bosom the intimation of mercy; the act of fratricide, followed by the general corruption of the whole race; the notices of Sheth, of calling on the name of Yahweh begun at the birth of Enosh, of Henok who walked with God, and

of Noah who found grace in his sight; the flood sweeping away the corruption of man while saving righteous Noah; and the confusion of tongues, defeating the ambition of man, while preparing for the replenishing of the earth and the liberties of men - these complete the chain of prominent facts that are to be seen standing in the background of man‘s history. These are all moments, potent elements in the memory of man, foundation-stones of his history and philosophy. They cannot be surmounted or ignored without absurdity or criminality.

In the section now completed the sacred writer descends from the general to the special, from the distant to the near, from the class to the individual. He dissects the soul of a man, and discloses to our view the whole process of the spiritual life from the newborn babe to the perfect man. Out of the womb of that restless selfish race, from whom nothing is willingly restrained which they have imagined to do, comes forth Abram, with all the lineaments of their moral image upon him. The Lord calls him to himself, his mercy, his blessing, and his service. He obeys the call. That is the moment of his new birth. The acceptance of the divine call is the tangible fact that evinces a new nature. Henceforth he is a disciple, having yet much to learn before he becomes a master, in the school of heaven. From this time forward the spiritual predominates in Abram; very little of the carnal appears.

Two sides of his mental character present themselves in alternate passages, which may be called the physical and the metaphysical, or the things of the body and the things of the soul. In the former only the carnal or old corrupt nature sometimes appears; in the latter, the new nature advances from stage to stage of spiritual growth unto perfection. His entrance into the land of promise is followed by his descent into Egypt, his generous forbearance in parting with Lot, his valorous conduct in rescuing him, and his dignified demeanor toward Melkizedec and the king of Sodom. The second stage of its spiritual development now presents itself to our view; on receiving the promise, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, thy exceeding great reward, he believes in the Lord, who counts it to him for righteousness, and enters into covenant with him. This is the first fruit of the new birth, and it is followed by the birth of Ishmael. On hearing the authoritative announcement, I am God Almighty; walk before me and be

perfect, he performs the first act of that obedience which is the keystone of repentance, by receiving the sign of covenant, and proceeds to the high functions of holding communion and making intercession with God. These spiritual acts are followed by the destruction of the cities of the Jordan vale, with the preservation of Lot, the sojourning in Gerar, the birth of Isaac, and the league with Abimelek. The last great act of the spiritual life of Abraham is the surrender of his only son to the will of God, and this again is followed by the death and burial of Sarah, the marriage of Isaac, and the second marriage of Abraham.

It is manifest that every movement in the physical and ethical history of Abraham is fraught with instruction of the deepest interest for the heirs of immortality. The leading points in spiritual experience are here laid before us. The susceptibilities and activities of a soul born of the Spirit are unfolded to our view. These are lessons for eternity. Every descendant of Abraham, every collateral branch of his family, every contemporary eye or ear-witness, might have profited in the things of eternity by all this precious treasury of spiritual knowledge. Many of the Gentiles still had, and all might have had, a knowledge of the covenant with Noah, and a share in its promised blessings. This would not have precluded, but only promoted, the mission of Abraham to be the father of the seed in whom all the families of man should effectually be blessed. And in the meantime it would have caused to be circulated to the ends of the earth that new revelation of spiritual experience which was displayed in the life of Abraham for the perfecting of the saints.

Verses 12-18
- Section XI. - Isaac
- LII. History of Ishmael

13. נבית *nebāyot* Nebajoth, "heights". קדר *qēdār* Qedar, "black". אדבאל *adbe'ēl*? Adbeel, "miracle of God'. מבשם *mîbśām* Mibsam, "sweet odor".

14. משמע *mîshma'* Mishma', "hearing". דומה *dûmâh* Dumah, "silence". משא *maśā'* Massa, "burden".

15. חדר or חדד *chădar* Chadar, "chamber;" *chădad* Chadad, "sharpness";
תימא *tēymā′* Tema יטור *yeṭûr* Jetur, "enclosure," akin to טור *ṭûr* "a wall,"
נפיש *nāpîysh* Naphish, "breathing". טירה *ṭîyrâh* "a wall
קדמה *qēdemâh* Qedemah, "before, eastward".

16. חצר *chātsēr* "court, village, town".

According to custom, before the history of the principal line is taken up, that of the collateral branch is briefly given. Thus, Cain's history is closed before Sheth's is commenced; Japheth and Ham are before Shem; Haran and Nahor before Abram. And so the sons of Keturah are first dismissed from the pages of history, and then Ishmael.

Genesis 25:12

The present passage begins with the formula, "and these are the generations," and forms the eighth document so commencing. The appearance of a document consisting of seven verses is clearly against the supposition that each of these documents is due to a different author. The phrase points to a change of subject, not of author.

Genesis 25:13-16

Nebaioth - Isaiah 60:7 is preserved in the Nabataei inhabiting Arabia Petraea, and extending far toward the East. "Kedar" Isaiah 21:17 appears in the Cedrei of Pliny (H. N. 5,12) who dwell east of Petraea. "Adbeel Mibsam," and "Mishma are otherwise unknown. The last is connected with the Μαισαιμενεῖς *Maisaimeneis* of Ptol. (v. 7,21). "Dumah" Isaiah 21:11 is probably Δούμεθα *Doumetha* (Ptol. vi. 19,7) and Domata (Plin. H. N. 6,32) and Dumat el-Jendel in Nejd and the Syrian desert. "Massa" may be preserved in the Μασανοὶ *Masanoi* of Ptolemy (v. 19,2), northeast of Duma. "Hadar" is Hadad in 1 Chronicles 1:30, the Samaritan Pentateuch, Onkelos, perhaps the Septuagint, and many codices. It is supposed to be Χαττηνία *Chatteenia* (Polyb.), Attene, and to lie between Oman and Bahrein. "Tema" Job 6:19; Isaiah 21:14; Jeremiah 25:23 lay on the borders of Nejd and the Syrian desert. "Jetur" remains in Ituraea, Jedur, northeast of the sea of Galilee. Some suppose the Druses descended from him. "Naphish" 1 Chronicles 6:19, 1 Chronicles 6:22 lay in the same quarter. "Kedemah" is otherwise unknown. "In their towns and in their castles." The former are unwalled collections of houses or perhaps tents; the latter,

fortified keeps or encampments. “Twelve princes,” one for each tribe, descended from his twelve sons.

Genesis 25:17-18

Ishmael dies at the age of a hundred and thirty-seven. “From Havilah,” on the borders of Arabia Petraea and Felix. “Unto Shur,” on the borders of Arabia and Egypt. This was the original seat of the Ishmaelites, from which they wandered far into Arabia. “In the presence of all his brethren” - the descendants of Abraham by Sarah and Keturah, those of Lot, and the Egyptians who were his brethren or near kindred by his mother and wife. “He had fallen” into the lot of his inheritance. Thus was fulfilled the prediction uttered before his birth Genesis 16:12.

Verses 19-34

- LIII. Birth of Esau and Jacob

20. פדן *padān* Paddan, “plowed field;” related: “cut, plow”.

25. עשׂי *ʿêśâv* ‹Esaw, “hairy, or made”.

26. יעקב *yaʿăqôb* Ja‘aqob, “he shall take the heel”.

27. תם *tām* “perfect, peaceful, plain.” The epithet refers to disposition, and contrasts the comparatively civilized character of Jacob with the rude temper of Esau.

30. אדים *ʿĕdôm* Edom, “red”.

The ninth document here begins with the usual phrase, and continues to the end of the thirty-fifth chapter. It contains the history of the second of the three patriarchs, or rather, indeed, as the opening phrase intimates, of the generations of Isaac; that is, of his son Jacob. Isaac himself makes little figure in the sacred history. Born when his mother was ninety, and his father a hundred years of age, he is of a sedate, contemplative, and yielding disposition. Consenting to be laid on the altar as a sacrifice to God, he had the stamp of submission early and deeply impressed on his soul. His life corresponds with these antecedents. Hence, in the spiritual aspect of his character he was the man of patience, of acquiescence, of susceptibility, of obedience. His qualities were those of the son, as Abraham‘s were those of the father. He carried out, but did not initiate; he followed, but did not lead;

he continued, but did not commence. Accordingly, the docile and patient side of the saintly character is now to be presented to our view.

Genesis 25:19-26

The birth of Esau and Jacob. "The son of forty years." Hence, we learn that Isaac was married the third year after his mother's death, when Abraham was in his hundred and fortieth year. "Bethuel the Aramaean." As Bethuel was a descendant of Arpakshad, not of Aram, he is here designated, not by his descent, but by his adopted country Aram. By descent he was a Kasdi or Kaldee. Sarah was barren for at least thirty years; Rebekah for nineteen years. This drew forth the prayer of Isaac in regard to his wife. The heir of promise was to be a child of prayer, and accordingly when the prayer ascended the fruit of the womb was given. Rebekah had unwonted sensations connected with her pregnancy. She said to herself, "If it be so," if I have conceived seed, "why am I thus," why this strange struggle within me? In the artlessness of her faith she goes to the Lord for an explanation. We are not informed in what way she consulted God, or how he replied. The expression, "she went to inquire of the Lord," implies that there was some place of worship and communion with God by prayer. We are not to suppose that she went to Abraham, or any other prophet, if such were then at hand, when we have no intimation of this in the text. Her communication with the Lord seems to have been direct. This passage conveys to us the intimation that there was now a fixed mode and perhaps place of inquiring at the Lord. The Lord answers the mother of the promised seed. Two children are in her womb, the parents of two nations, differing in their dispositions and destinies. The one is to be stronger than the other. The order of nature is to be reversed in them; for the older will serve the younger. Their struggles in the womb are a prelude to their future history.

Genesis 25:24-26

The twins are born in due time. The difference is manifest in the outward appearance. The first is red and hairy. These qualities indicate a passionate and precocious nature. He is called "Esau the hairy," or "the made up," the prematurely developed. His brother is like other children. An act takes place in the very birth foreshadowing their future history. The second has a hold of his brother's heel, as if he would trip him up from his very birth. Hence, he is called "Jacob the wrestler," who takes hold by the heel.

Genesis 25:27-34

The brothers prove to be different in disposition and habit. The rough fiery Esau takes to the field, and becomes skilled in all modes of catching game. Jacob is of a homely, peaceful, orderly turn, dwelling in tents and gathering round him the means and appliances of a quiet social life. The children please their parents according as they supply what is lacking in themselves. Isaac, himself so sedate, loves the wild, wandering hunter, because he supplies him with pleasures which his own quiet habits do not reach. Rebekah becomes attached to the gentle, industrious shepherd, who satisfies those social and spiritual tendencies in which she is more dependent than Isaac. Esau is destructive of game; Jacob is constructive of cattle.

Genesis 25:29-34

A characteristic incident in their early life is attended with very important consequences. "Jacob sod pottage." He has become a sage in the practical comforts of life. Esau leaves the field for the tent, exhausted with fatigue. The sight and smell of Jacob's savory dish of lentile soup are very tempting to a hungry man. "Let me feed now on that red, red broth." He does not know how to name it. The lentile is common in the country, and forms a cheap and palatable dish of a reddish brown color, with which bread seems to have been eaten. The two brothers were not congenial. They would therefore act each independently of the other, and provide each for himself. Esau was no doubt occasionally rude and hasty. Hence, a selfish habit would grow up and gather strength. He was probably accustomed to supply himself with such fare as suited his palate, and might have done so on this occasion without any delay. But the free flavor and high color of the mess, which Jacob was preparing for himself, takes his fancy, and nothing will do but the red red. Jacob obviously regarded this as a rude and selfish intrusion on his privacy and property, in keeping with similar encounters that may have taken place between the brothers.

It is here added, "therefore was his name called Edom," that is, "Red." The origin of surnames, or second names for the same person or place, is a matter of some moment in the fair interpretation of an ancient document. It is sometimes hastily assumed that the same name can only owe its application to one occasion; and hence a record of a second occasion on which it was applied is regarded as a discrepancy. But the error lies in the interpreter, not in the author. The propriety of a particular name may be marked by two or more totally different circumstances, and its application

renewed on each of these occasions. Even an imaginary cause may be assigned for a name, and may serve to originate or renew its application. The two brothers now before us afford very striking illustrations of the general principle. It is pretty certain that Esau would receive the secondary name of Edom, which ultimately became primary in point of use, from the red complexion of skin, even from his birth. But the exclamation "that red red," uttered on the occasion of a very important crisis in his history, renewed the name, and perhaps tended to make it take the place of Esau in the history of his race. Jacob, too, the holder of the heel, received this name from a circumstance occurring at his birth. But the buying of the birthright and the gaining of the blessing, were two occasions in his subsequent life on which he merited the title of the supplanter or the holder by the heel Genesis 27:36. These instances prepare us to expect other examples of the same name being applied to the same object, for different reasons on different occasions.

"Sell me this day thy birthright." This brings to light a new cause of variance between the brothers. Jacob was no doubt aware of the prediction communicated to his mother, that the older should serve the younger. A quiet man like him would not otherwise have thought of reversing the order of nature and custom. In after times the right of primogeniture consisted in a double portion of the father's goods Deuteronomy 21:17, and a certain rank as the patriarch and priest of the house on the death of the father. But in the case of Isaac there was the far higher dignity of chief of the chosen family and heir of the promised blessing, with all the immediate and ultimate temporal and eternal benefits therein included. Knowing all this, Jacob is willing to purchase the birthright, as the most peaceful way of bringing about that supremacy which was destined for him. He is therefore cautious and prudent, even conciliating in his proposal.

He availed himself of a weak moment to accomplish by consent what was to come. Yet he lays no necessity on Esau, but leaves him to his own free choice. We must therefore beware of blaming him for endeavoring to win his brother's concurrence in a thing that was already settled in the purpose of God. His chief error lay in attempting to anticipate the arrangements of Providence. Esau is strangely ready to dispose of his birthright for a trivial present gratification. He might have obtained other

means of recruiting nature equally suitable, but he will sacrifice anything for the desire of the moment. Any higher import of the right he was prepared to sell so cheap seems to have escaped his view, if it had ever occurred to his mind. Jacob, however, is deeply in earnest. He will bring this matter within the range of heavenly influence. He will have God solemnly invoked as a witness of the transfer. Even this does not startle Esau. There is not a word about the price. It is plain that Esau‘s thoughts were altogether on “the morsel of meat.” He swears unto Jacob. He then ate and drank, and rose up and went his way, as the sacred writer graphically describes his reckless course. Most truly did he despise his birthright. His mind did not rise to higher or further things. Such was the boyhood of these wondrous twins.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 26

Verses 1-35

- The Events of Isaac‘s Life

5. מִשְׁמֶרֶת *mîshmeret* “charge, ordinance”. מִצְוָה *mîtsvâh* “command,” special order. חֹק *choq* “decree, statute,” engraven on stone or metal. תּוֹרָה *tôrâh* “law,” doctrine, system of moral truth.

10. עֵשֶׂק ‹Eseq, “strife‹ *êśeq*”.

21. שִׂטְנָה Sitnah, “opposition *śîṭnâh*”.

22. רְחֹבוֹת Rechoboth, “room *rechobôt*”.

26. אֻחֻזַּת Achuzzath, “possession′ *ăchuzat*”.

33. שִׁבְעָה Shib‘ah, “seven; oath *shîb‘âh*”.

34. יְהוּדִית Jehudith, “praised *yehûdîyt*”. בְּאֵרִי Beeri, “of a well *be′ērîy*”. בָּשְׂמַת Basemath, “sweet smell *bāśemat*”. אֵילוֹן Elon, “oak′ *êylon*”.

This chapter presents the leading events in the quiet life of Isaac. It is probable that Abraham was now dead. In that case, Esau and Jacob would be at least fifteen years of age when the following event occurred.

Genesis 26:1-5

Renewal of the promise to Isaac. “A famine in the land.” We left Isaac, after the death of Abraham, at Beer-lahai-roi Genesis 25:11. The preceding events have only brought us up to the same point of time. This well was in the land of the south Genesis 24:62. The present famine is distinguished from what occurred in the time of Abraham Genesis 12:10. The interval between them is at least a hundred years. The author of this, the ninth document, is, we find, acquainted with the seventh document; and the famine to which he refers is among the earliest events recorded in it. There is no reason to doubt, then, that he has the whole history of Abraham before his mind. “Unto Abimelek unto Gerar.” The Abimelek with whom Abraham had contact about eighty years before may have been the father of the present sovereign. Both Abimelek and Phikol seem to have been official

names. Gerar Genesis 10:19 was apparently on the brook of Mizraim Numbers 34:5, the Wady el-Arish, or the Wady el-Khubarah, a northern affluent of the former, or in the interval between them. It is on the way to Egypt, and is the southern city of the Philistines, who probably came from Egypt Genesis 10:14. Isaac was drawing toward Egypt, when he came to Gerar.

Genesis 26:2-5

Isaac is now the heir, and therefore the holder, of the promise. Hence, the Lord enters into communication with him. First, the present difficulty is met. "Go not down into Mizraim," the land of corn, even when other lands were barren. "Dwell in the land of which I shall tell thee." This reminds us of the message to Abraham Genesis 12:1. The land here spoken of refers to "all these lands" mentioned in the following verses. "Sojourn in this land:" turn aside for the present, and take up thy temporary abode here. Next, the promise to Abraham is renewed with some variety of expression. "I will be with thee" Genesis 21:22, a notable and comprehensive promise, afterward embodied in the name Immanuel, "God with us. Unto thee and unto thy seed." This was fulfilled to his seed in due time. All these lands, now parcelled out among several tribes. "And blessed in thy seed" Genesis 12:3; Genesis 22:18.

This is the great, universal promise to the whole human race through the seed of Abraham, twice explicitly announced to that patriarch. "All the nations." In constancy of purpose the Lord contemplates, even in the special covenant with Abraham, the gathering in of the nations under the covenant with Noah and with Adam Genesis 9:9; Hosea 6:7. "Because Abraham hearkened to my voice," in all the great moments of his life, especially in the last act of proceeding on the divine command to offer Isaac himself. Abraham, by the faith which flows from the new birth, was united with the Lord, his shield and exceeding great reward Genesis 15:1, with God Almighty, who quickened and strengthened him to walk before him and be perfect Genesis 17:1. The Lord his righteousness worketh in him, and his merit is reflected and reproduced in him Genesis 22:16, Genesis 22:18. Hence, the Lord reminds Isaac of the oath which he had heard at least fifty years before confirming the promise, and of the declaration then made that this oath of confirmation was sworn because Abraham had obeyed the voice of God. How deeply these words would penetrate into the soul of Isaac, the intended victim of that solemn day! But Abraham's obedience was

displayed in all the acts of his new life. He kept the charge of God, the special commission he had given him; his commandments, his express or occasional orders; his statutes, his stated prescriptions, graven on stone; his laws, the great doctrines of moral obligation. This is that unreserved obedience which flows from a living faith, and withstands the temptations of the flesh.

Genesis 26:6-11

Rebekah preserved from dishonor in Gerar. Gerar was probably a commercial town trading with Egypt, and therefore Isaac‘s needs during the famine are here supplied. “The men of the place” were struck with the appearance of Rebekah, “because she was fair.” Isaac, in answer to their inquiries, pretends that she is his sister, feeling that his life was in peril, if she was known to be his wife. Rebekah was at this time not less than thirty-five years married, and had two sons upwards of fifteen years old. She was still however in the prime of life, and her sons were probably engaged in pastoral and other field pursuits. From the compact between Abraham and Sarah Genesis 20:13, and from this case of Isaac about eighty years after, it appears that this was a ready pretence with married people among strangers in those times of social insecurity.

Genesis 26:8-11

Abimelek observes Isaac sporting with Rebekah as only husband and wife should, constrains him to confess that she is his wife, charges him with the impropriety of his conduct, and commands his people to refrain from harming either of them on pain of death. We see how insecure a female‘s honor was in those days, if she was in a strange land, and had not a band of men to keep back the hand of violence. We perceive also that God mercifully protects his chosen ones from the perils which they bring upon themselves by the vain self-reliance and wicked policy of the old corrupt nature. This remnant of the old man we find in the believers of old, as in those of the present time, though it be different and far less excusable in its recent manifestations.

Genesis 26:12-16

The growing prosperity of Isaac. “And Isaac sowed in that land.” This does not imply a fixed property in the soil, but only an annual tenancy. “A hundred-fold.” The rates of increase vary from thirty to a hundred. Sixty-fold is very good, and was not unusual in Palestine. A hundred-fold was rare, and only in spots of extraordinary fertility. Babylonia, however,

yielded two hundred and even three hundred-fold, according to Herodotus (I. 193). Thus, the Lord began to "bless him." The amazing growth of the stranger's wealth in flocks and herds and servants awakens the envy of the inhabitants. The digging of the well was an enterprise of great interest in rural affairs. It conferred a sort of ownership on the digger, especially in a country where water was precious. And in a primeval state of society the well was the scene of youthful maidens drawing water for domestic use, and of young men and sometimes maidens watering the bleating flocks and lowing herds, and therefore the gathering center of settled life. Hence, the envious Philistines were afraid that from a sojourner he would go on to be a settler, and acquire rights of property. They accordingly took the most effectual means of making his abiding place uncomfortable, when they stopped up the wells. At length the sovereign advised a separation, if he did not enjoin the departure of Isaac.

Genesis 26:17-22

Isaac retires, and sets about the digging of wells. He retreats from Gerar and its suburbs, and takes up his abode in the valley, or wady of Gerar. These wadys are the hollows in which brooks flow, and therefore the well-watered and fertile parts of the country. He digs again the old wells, and calls them by the old names. He commences the digging of new ones. For the first the herdmen of Gerar strive, claiming the water as their property. Isaac yields. He digs another; they strive, and he again yields. He now removes apparently into a distinct region, and digs a third well, for which there is no contest. This he calls Rehoboth, "room" - a name which appears to be preserved in Wady er-Ruhaibeh, near which is Wady esh-Shutein, corresponding to Sitnah. "For now the Lord hath made room for us." Isaac's homely realizing faith in a present and presiding Lord here comes out.

Genesis 26:23-25

Isaac now proceeds to Beer-sheba. "Went up." It was an ascent from Wady er-Ruhaibeh to Beer-sheba; which was near the watershed between the Mediterranean and the Salt Sea. "In that night" - the night after his arrival, in a dream or vision. "I am the God of Abraham thy father." Isaac is again and again reminded of the relation in which his father stood to God. That relation still subsists; for Abraham still lives with God, and is far nearer to him than he could be on earth. "The God of Abraham" is another name for Yahweh. "Fear not," as he had said to Abraham after his victory

over the four kings Genesis 15:1. Then follow the reasons for courage: I, with thee, blessing thee, multiplying thy seed; a reassurance of three parts of the promise involving all the rest. Then comes the instructive reason for this assurance - "for the sake of Abraham my servant." "An altar" - the first on record erected by Isaac. "Called on the name of the Lord" - engaged in the solemn and public invocation of Yahweh Genesis 4:26; Genesis 12:8. "His tent there." It was hallowed ground to his father Genesis 21:33, and now to himself. "Digged a well," and thereby took possession of the soil at least for a time. We hear of this well again in the next passage.

Genesis 26:26-33

The treaty with Abimelek. This is an interview similar to what Abraham had with the king of Gerar; and its object is a renewal of the former league between the parties. Besides Phikol, the commander-in-chief, he is now accompanied by Ahuzzath, his privy counsellor. Isaac upbraids him with his unkindness in sending him away, and his inconsistency in again seeking a conference with him. "We clearly saw." His prosperity was such as to be a manifest token of the Lord's favor. Hence, they desired the security of a treaty with him by an oath of execration on the transgressor. "Do us no hurt." The covenant is one-sided, as expressed by Abimelek. "As we have not touched thee." This implies the other side of the covenant. "Thou art now blessed of Yahweh." This explains the one-sidedness of the covenant. Isaac needed no guarantee from them, as the Lord was with him. Abimelek is familiar with the use of the name Yahweh. Isaac hospitably entertains and lodges the royal party, and on the morrow, after having sworn to the treaty, parts with them in peace. On the same day Isaac's servants report concerning the well they had digged Genesis 26:25 that they had found water. This well he calls Sheba, "an oath," and hence the town is called Beer-sheba, "the well of the oath." Now the writer was aware that this place had received the same name on a former occasion Genesis 21:31. But a second well has now been dug in like circumstances in the same locality. This gives occasion for a new application of the name in the memories of the people. This is another illustration of the principle explained at Genesis 25:30. Two wells still exist at this place to attest the correctness of the record.

Genesis 25:34-35

Esau at forty years of age forms matrimonial connections with the Hittites. Heth was the second son of Kenaan, and had settled in the hills

about Hebron. Esau had got acquainted with this tribe in his hunting expeditions. From their names we learn that they spoke the same language with himself. They belonged to a family far gone in transgression and apostasy from God. The two wives chosen from such a stock were a source of great grief to the parents of Esau. The choice manifested his tolerance at least of the carnal, and his indifference to the spiritual.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Verses 1-46

- Isaac Blessing His Sons

The life of Isaac falls into three periods. During the first seventy-five years he is contemporary with his father. For sixty-one years more his son Jacob remains under the paternal roof. The remaining forty-four years are passed in the retirement of old age. The chapter before us narrates the last solemn acts of the middle period of his life.

Genesis 27:1-4

Isaac was old. - Joseph was in his thirtieth year when he stood before Pharaoh, and therefore thirty-nine when Jacob came down to Egypt at the age of one hundred and thirty. When Joseph was born, therefore, Jacob was ninety-one, and he had sojourned fourteen years in Padan-aram. Hence, Jacob‘s flight to Laban took place when he was seventy-seven, and therefore in the one hundred and thirty-sixth year of Isaac. “His eyes were dim.” Weakness and even loss of sight is more frequent in Palestine than with us. “His older son.” Isaac had not yet come to the conclusion that Jacob was heir of the promise. The communication from the Lord to Rebekah concerning her yet unborn sons in the form in which it is handed down to us merely determines that the older shall serve the younger. This fact Isaac seems to have thought might not imply the transferrence of the birthright; and if he was aware of the transaction between Esau and Jacob, he may not have regarded it as valid. Hence, he makes arrangements for bestowing the paternal benediction on Esau, his older son, whom he also loves. “I am old.” At the age of one hundred and thirty-six, and with failing sight, he felt that life was uncertain. In the calmness of determination he directs Esau to prepare savory meat, such as he loved, that he may have his vigor renewed and his spirits revived for the solemn business of bestowing that blessing, which he held to be fraught with more than ordinary benefits.

Genesis 27:5-13

Rebekah forms a plan for diverting the blessing from Esau to Jacob. She was within hearing when the infirm Isaac gave his orders, and communicates the news to Jacob. Rebekah has no scruples about primogeniture. Her feelings prompt her to take measures, without waiting to consider whether they are justifiable or not, for securing to Jacob that blessing which she has settled in her own mind to be destined for him. She

thinks it necessary to interfere that this end may not fail of being accomplished. Jacob views the matter more coolly, and starts a difficulty. He may be found out to be a deceiver, and bring his father‘s curse upon him. Rebekah, anticipating no such issue; undertakes to bear the curse that she conceived would never come. Only let him obey.

Verse 14-29

The plan is successful. Jacob now, without further objection, obeys his mother. She clothes him in Esau‘s raiment, and puts the skins of the kids on his hands and his neck. The camel-goat affords a hair which bears a great resemblance to that of natural growth, and is used as a substitute for it. Now begins the strange interview between the father and the son. “Who art thou, my son?” The voice of Jacob was somewhat constrained. He goes, however, deliberately through the process of deceiving his father. “Arise, now, sit and eat.” Isaac was reclining on his couch, in the feebleness of advancing years. Sitting was the posture convenient for eating. “The Lord thy God prospered me.” This is the bold reply to Isaac‘s expression of surprise at the haste with which the dainty fare had been prepared. The bewildered father now puts Jacob to a severer test. He feels him, but discerns him not. The ear notes a difference, but the hand feels the hairy skin resembling Esau‘s; the eyes give no testimony. After this the result is summarily stated in a single sentence, though the particulars are yet to be given. “Art thou my very son Esau?” A lurking doubt puts the definite question, and receives a decisive answer. Isaac then calls for the repast and partakes.

Genesis 27:26-29

He gives the kiss of paternal affection, and pronounces the benediction. It contains, first, a fertile soil. “Of the dew of heaven.” An abundant measure of this was especially precious in a country where the rain is confined to two seasons of the year. “Of the fatness of the earth;” a proportion of this to match and render available the dew of heaven. “Corn and wine,” the substantial products, implying all the rest. Second, a numerous and powerful offspring. “Let peoples serve thee” - pre-eminence among the nations. “Be lord of thy brethren” - pre-eminence among his kindred. Isaac does not seem to have grasped the full meaning of the prediction, “The older shall serve the younger.” Third, Prosperity, temporal and spiritual. He that curseth thee be cursed, and he that blesseth thee be blessed. This is the only part of the blessing that directly comprises spiritual things; and even this of a special form. It is to be recollected that it was

Isaac‘s intention to bless Esau, and he may have felt that Esau, after all, was not to be the progenitor of the holy seed. Hence, the form of expression is vague enough to apply to temporal things, and yet sufficiently comprehensive to embrace the infliction of the ban of sin, and the diffusion of the blessing of salvation by means of the holy seed.

Genesis 27:30-41

Esau‘s blessing. Esau comes in, but it is too late. “Who then?” The whole illusion is dispelled from the mind of Isaac. “Yea, blessed he shall be.” Jacob had no doubt perpetrated a fraud, at the instigation of his mother; and if Esau had been worthy in other respects, and above all if the blessing had been designed for him, its bestowment on another would have been either prevented or regarded as null and void. But Isaac now felt that, whatever was the misconduct of Jacob in interfering, and especially in employing unworthy means to accomplish his end, he himself was culpable in allowing carnal considerations to draw his preference to Esau, who was otherwise unworthy. He knew too that the paternal benediction flowed not from the bias of the parent, but from the Spirit of God guiding his will, and therefore when so pronounced could not be revoked. Hence, he was now convinced that it was the design of Providence that the spiritual blessing should fall on the line of Jacob. The grief of Esau is distressing to witness, especially as he had been comparatively blameless in this particular instance. But still it is to be remembered that his heart had not been open to the paramount importance of spiritual things. Isaac now perceives that Jacob has gained the blessing by deceit. Esau marks the propriety of his name, the wrestler who trips up the heel, and pleads pathetically for at least some blessing. His father enumerates what he has done for Jacob, and asks what more he can do for Esau; who then exclaims, “Hast thou but one blessing?”

Genesis 27:39-41

At length, in reply to the weeping suppliant, he bestows upon him a characteristic blessing. “Away from the fatness.” The preposition (מִי *mîy*) is the same as in the blessing of Jacob. But there, after a verb of giving, it had a partitive sense; here, after a noun of place, it denotes distance or separation; for example, Proverbs 20:3 The pastoral life has been distasteful to Esau, and so it shall be with his race. The land of Edom was accordingly a comparative wilderness (Malachi 1:3). “On thy sword.” By preying upon others. “And thy brother shalt thou serve.” Edom was long independent; but

at length Saul was victorious over them 1 Samuel 14:47, and David conquered them 2 Samuel 8:14. Then followed a long struggle, until John Hyrcanus, 129 b.c., compelled them to be circumcised and incorporated into Judaism. “Break his yoke.” The history of Edom was a perpetual struggle against the supremacy of Israel. Conquered by Saul, subdued by David, repressed by Solomon, restrained after a revolt by Amaziah, they recovered their independence in the time of Ahab. They were incorporated into the Jewish state, and furnished it with the dynasty of princes beginning with Antipater. Esau was now exasperated against his brother, and could only compose his mind by resolving to slay him during the days of mourning after his father‘s death.

Genesis 27:42-46

Rebekah hearing this, advises Jacob to flee to Laban her brother, and await the abatement of his brother‘s anger. “That which thou hast done to him.” Rebekah seems not to have been aware that she herself was the cause of much of the evil and of the misery that flowed from it. All the parties to this transaction are pursued by a retributive chastisement. Rebekah, especially, parts with her favorite son to meet him only after an absence of twenty years, if ever in this life. She is moreover grievously vexed with the connection which Esau formed with the daughters of Heth. She dreads a similar matrimonial alliance on the part of Jacob.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 28

Verses 1-22

- Jacob‘s Journey to Haran

3. קהל *qâhāl* “congregation”.

9. מחלת *māchălat* Machalath, “sickness, or a harp”.

19. לוז *lûz* Luz, “almond”.

The blessing of his sons was the last passage in the active life of Isaac, after which he retires from the scene. Jacob now becomes the leading figure in the sacred history. His spiritual character has yet come out to view. But even now we can discern the general distinction in the lives of the three patriarchs. Abraham‘s is a life of authority and decision; Isaac‘s, of submission and acquiescence; and Jacob‘s, of trial and struggle.

Genesis 28:1-5

Isaac has now become alive to the real destiny of Jacob. He therefore calls for him to bless him, and give him a command. The command is to take a wife, not from Kenaan, but from the kindred of his parents. The blessing comes from “God Almighty” (Genesis 17:1). It is that belonging to the chosen seed, “the blessing of Abraham.” It embraces a numerous offspring, the land of promise, and all else that is included in the blessing of Abraham. “A congregation of peoples.” This is the word “congregation” (קהל *qâhāl*) which is afterward applied to the assembled people of God, and to which the Greek ἐκκλησία *ekklēsia* “ecclesia,” corresponds. Jacob complies with his mother‘s advice and his father‘s command, and, at the same time, reaps the bitter fruit of his fraud against his brother in the hardship and treachery of an exile of twenty years. The aged Isaac is not without his share in the unpleasant consequences of endeavoring to go against the will of God.

Genesis 28:6-9

Esau is induced, by the charge of his parents to Jacob, the compliance of the latter with their wishes, and by their obvious dislike to the daughters of Kenaan, to take Mahalath, a daughter of Ishmael, in addition to his former wives. “Went unto Ishmael;” that is, to the family or tribe of Ishmael, as Ishmael himself was now thirteen years dead. Esau‘s hunting and roving

career had brought him into contact with this family, and we shall presently find him settled in a neighboring territory.

Genesis 28:10-22

Jacob‘s dream and vow. Setting out on the way to Haran, he was overtaken by night, and slept in the field. He was far from any dwelling, or he did not wish to enter the house of a stranger. He dreams. A ladder or stair is seen reaching from earth to heaven, on which angels ascend and descend. This is a medium of communication between heaven and earth, by which messengers pass to and fro on errands of mercy. Heaven and earth have been separated by sin. But this ladder has re-established the contact. It is therefore a beautiful emblem of what mediates and reconciles John 1:51. It here serves to bring Jacob into communication with God, and teaches him the emphatic lesson that he is accepted through a mediator. “The Lord stood above it,” and Jacob, the object of his mercy, beneath. First. He reveals himself to the sleeper as “the Lord” Genesis 2:4, “the God of Abraham thy father, and of Isaac.” It is remarkable that Abraham is styled his father, that is, his actual grandfather, and covenant father. Second. He renews the promise of the land, of the seed, and of the blessing in that seed for the whole race of man. Westward, eastward, northward, and southward are they to break forth. This expression points to the world-wide universality of the kingdom of the seed of Abraham, when it shall become the fifth monarchy, that shall subdue all that went before, and endure forever. This transcends the destiny of the natural seed of Abraham. Third. He then promises to Jacob personally to be with him, protect him, and bring him back in safety. This is the third announcement of the seed that blesses to the third in the line of descent Genesis 12:2-3; Genesis 22:18; Genesis 26:4.

Genesis 28:16-19

Jacob awakes, and exclaims, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.” He knew his omnipresence; but he did not expect a special manifestation of the Lord in this place, far from the sanctuaries of his father. He is filled with solemn awe, when he finds himself in the house of God and at the gate of heaven. The pillar is the monument of the event. The pouring of oil upon it is an act of consecration to God who has there appeared to him Numbers 7:1. He calls the name of the place Bethel, “the house of God.” This is not the first time it received the name. Abraham also worshipped God here, and met with the name already existing (see on Genesis 12:8; Genesis 13:3; Genesis 25:30.)

Genesis 28:20-22

Jacob‘s vow. A vow is a solemn engagement to perform a certain duty, the obligation of which is felt at the time to be especially binding. It partakes, therefore, of the nature of a promise or a covenant. It involves in its obligation, however, only one party, and is the spontaneous act of that party. Here, then, Jacob appears to take a step in advance of his predecessors. Hitherto, God had taken the initiative in every promise, and the everlasting covenant rests solely on his eternal purpose. Abraham had responded to the call of God, believed in the Lord, walked before him, entered into communion with him, made intercession with him, and given up his only son to him at his demand. In all this there is an acceptance on the part of the creature of the supremacy of the merciful Creator. But now the spirit of adoption prompts Jacob to a spontaneous movement toward God. This is no ordinary vow, referring to some special or occasional resolve.

It is the grand and solemn expression of the soul‘s free, full, and perpetual acceptance of the Lord to be its own God. This is the most frank and open utterance of newborn spiritual liberty from the heart of man that has yet appeared in the divine record. “If God will be with me.” This is not the condition on which Jacob will accept God in a mercenary spirit. It is merely the echo and the thankful acknowledgment of the divine assurance, “I am with thee,” which was given immediately before. It is the response of the son to the assurance of the father: “Wilt thou indeed be with me? Thou shalt be my God.” “This stone shall be God‘s house,” a monument of the presence of God among his people, and a symbol of the indwelling of his Spirit in their hearts. As it comes in here it signalizes the grateful and loving welcome and entertainment which God receives from his saints. “A tenth will I surely give unto thee.” The honored guest is treated as one of the family. Ten is the whole: a tenth is a share of the whole. The Lord of all receives one share as an acknowledgment of his sovereign right to all. Here it is represented as the full share given to the king who condescends to dwell with his subjects. Thus, Jacob opens his heart, his home, and his treasure to God. These are the simple elements of a theocracy, a national establishment of the true religion. The spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind, has begun to reign in Jacob. As the Father is prominently manifested in regenerate Abraham, and the Son in Isaac, so also the Spirit in Jacob.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 29

Verses 1-35
- Jacob‘s Marriage

6. רחל Rachel, “a ewe *rāchēl*.”

16. לאה Leah, “wearied *lê'âh*.”

24. זלפה Zilpah, “drop *zîlpâh*?”

29. בלהה Bilhah, “timidity *bîlhâh*.”

32. ראובן Reuben, “behold a son.” A paronomasia in allusion to *re'uvbēn* בעניי ראה the phrase *beʿānyîy rā'âh* Derivatives and compounds, being formed by the common speaker, are sometimes founded upon resemblance in sound, and not always on precise forms of the original sentence which prompted them.

33. שמעין Shim‹on, “hearing, answer *shîmʿôn*.”

34. לוי Levi, “junction, union *lêvîy*.”

35. יהודה Jehudah, “praised *yehûdâh*.”

In this chapter and the following, Jacob grows from a solitary fugitive with a staff in his hand Genesis 32:10 to be the father of a large family and the owner of great wealth. He proves himself to be a man of patience and perseverance, and the Lord according to promise is with him.

Genesis 29:1-8

Jacob arrives at the well of Haran. “The land of the sons of the east.” The points of the heavens were defined by the usage of practical life, and not by the standard of a science yet unknown. Hence, the east means any quarter toward the sunrising. Haran was about four degrees east of Beer-sheba, and five and a half degrees north. The distance was about four hundred and fifty miles, and therefore it would take Jacob fifteen days to perform the journey at thirty miles a day. If he reached Bethel the first night, he must have travelled about fifty miles the first day. After this he

proceeds on his journey without any memorable incident. In the neighborhood of Haran he comes upon a well, by which lay three flocks. This is not the well near Haran where Abraham‘s servant met Rebekah. It is in the pasture grounds at some distance from the town. On its mouth was a large stone, indicating that water was precious, and that the well was the common property of the surrounding natives. The custom was to gather the flocks, roll away the stone, which was too great to be moved by a boy or a female, water the flocks, and replace the stone. Jacob, on making inquiry, learns that Haran is at hand, that Laban is well, and that Rachel is drawing nigh with her father‘s flocks. Laban is called by Jacob the son of Nahor, that is, his grandson, with the usual latitude of relative names in Scripture Genesis 28:13. “The day is great.” A great part of it yet remains. It is not yet the time to shut up the cattle for the night; “water the sheep and go feed them.” Jacob may have wished to meet with Rachel without presence of the shepherds. “We cannot.” There was a rule or custom that the flocks must be all assembled before the stone was rolled away for the purpose of watering the cattle. This may have been required to insure a fair distribution of the water to all parties, and especially to those who were too weak to roll away the stone.

Genesis 29:9-14

Jacob‘s interview with Rachel, and hospitable reception by Laban. Rachel‘s approach awakens all Jacob‘s warmth of feeling. He rolls away the stone, waters the sheep, kisses Rachel, and bursts into tears. The remembrance of home and of the relationship of his mother to Rachel overpowers him. He informs Rachel who he is, and she runs to acquaint her father. Laban hastens to welcome his relative to his house. “Surely my bone and my flesh art thou.” This is a description of kinsmanship probably derived from the formation of the woman out of the man Genesis 2:23. A month here means the period from new moon to new moon, and consists of twenty-nine or thirty days.

Genesis 29:15-20

Jacob serves seven years for Rachel. “What shall thy wages be?” An active, industrious man like Jacob was of great value to Laban. “Two daughters.” Daughters in those countries and times were also objects of value, for which their parents were accustomed to receive considerable presents Genesis 24:53. Jacob at present, however, is merely worth his labor. He has apparently nothing else to offer. As he loves Rachel, he offers

to serve seven years for her, and is accepted. Isaac loved Rebekah after she was sought and won as a bride for him. Jacob loves Rachel before he makes a proposal of marriage. His attachment is pure and constant, and hence the years of his service seem but days to him. The pleasure of her society both in the business and leisure of life makes the hours pass unnoticed. It is obvious that in those early days the contact of the sexes before marriage was more unrestrained than it afterward became.

Genesis 29:21-30

Jacob is betrayed into marrying Leah, and on consenting to serve other seven years obtains Rachel also. He claims his expected reward when due. "Made a feast." The feast in the house of the bride's father seems to have lasted seven days, at the close of which the marriage was completed. But the custom seems to have varied according to the circumstances of the bridegroom. Jacob had no house of his own to which to conduct the bride. In the evening: when it was dark. The bride was also closely veiled, so that it was easy for Laban to practise this piece of deceit. "A handmaid." It was customary to give the bride a handmaid, who became her confidential servant Genesis 24:59, Genesis 24:61. In the morning Jacob discovers that Laban had overreached him. This is the first retribution Jacob experiences for the deceitful practices of his former days. He expostulates with Laban, who pleads the custom of the country.

It is still the custom not to give the younger in marriage before the older, unless the latter be deformed or in some way defective. It is also not unusual to practise the very same trick that Laban now employed, if the suitor is so simple as to be off his guard. Jacob, however, did not expect this at his relative's hands, though he had himself taken part in proceedings equally questionable. "Fulfill the week of this." If this was the second day of the feast celebrating the nuptials of Leah, Laban requests him to Complete the week, and then he will give him Rachel also. If, however, Leah was fraudulently put upon him at the close of the week of feasting, then Laban in these words proposes to give Rachel to Jacob on fulfilling another week of nuptial rejoicing. The latter is in the present instance more likely. In either case the marriage of Rachel is only a week after that of Leah. Rather than lose Rachel altogether, Jacob consents to comply with Laban's terms.

Rachel was the wife of Jacob‘s affections and intentions. The taking of a second wife in the lifetime of the first was contrary to the law of nature, which designed one man for one woman Genesis 2:21-25. But the marrying of a sister-in-law was not yet incestuous, because no law had yet been made on the subject. Laban gives a handmaid to each of his daughters. To Rebekah his sister had been given more than one Genesis 24:61. Bondslaves had been in existence long before Laban‘s time Genesis 16:1. “And loved also Rachel more than Leah.” This proves that even Leah was not unloved. At the time of his marriage Jacob was eighty-four years of age; which corresponds to half that age according to the present average of human life.

Genesis 29:31-35

Leah bears four sons to Jacob. “The Lord saw.” The eye of the Lord is upon the sufferer. It is remarkable that both the narrator and Leah employ the proper name of God, which makes the performance of promise a prominent feature of his character. This is appropriate in the mouth of Leah, who is the mother of the promised seed. “That Leah was hated” - less loved than Rachel. He therefore recompenses her for the lack of her husband‘s affections by giving her children, while Rachel was barren. “Reuben” - behold a son. “The Lord hath looked on my affliction.” Leah had qualities of heart, if not of outward appearance, which commanded esteem. She had learned to acknowledge the Lord in all her ways. “Simon” - answer. She had prayed to the Lord, and this was her answer. “Levi” - union, the reconciler. Her husband could not, according to the prevailing sentiments of those days, fail to be attached to the mother of three sons. “Judah” - praised. Well may she praise the Lord; for this is the ancestor of the promised seed. It is remarkable that the wife of priority, but not of preference, is the mother of the seed in whom all nations are to be blessed. Levi the reconciler is the father of the priestly tribe. Simon is attached to Judah. Reuben retires into the background.

Reuben may have been born when Jacob was still only eighty-four, and consequently Judah was born when Jacob was eighty-seven.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 30

Verses 1-43
- Jacob‘s Family and Wealth

6. דן *dān* Dan, “judge, lord”.

8. נפתלי *naptālîy* Naphtali, “wrestling”.

11. גד *gād* Gad, “overcoming, victory” בגד *bāgād* “in victory or” גד בא= *bā′ gād* “victory cometh”. גוד *gûd* “press down” גדוד *gedûd* “troop”.

13. אשׁר′ *ăashēr* Asher, “prosperity, happiness”.

18. ישׂשכר *yîśāskār* Jissakar, “reward.” The second Hebrew letter (*s* ש) seems to have been merely a full mode of writing the word, instead of the abbreviated form ישׂכר *yîśākār* זבלון *zebulûn* Zebulun, “dwelling.” There is זבל *zābal* “to dwell,” the latter of which, however, prevails in the name. They occur only here as verbs. זבד *zābad* “to endow” and זבד here a play upon the two words.

21. דינה *dîynâh* Dinah, “judgment”.

24. יסף *yôsêph* Joseph, “he shall add.” There is, however, an obvious allusion to the thought. “God hath taken away my reproach.” (אסף *āsap′*) Double references, we find, are usual in the giving of names (see Genesis 25:30).

This chapter is the continuation of the former, and completes the history of Jacob in Haran. The event immediately following probably took place after Leah had borne two of her sons, though not admitted into the narrative until she had paused for a short time.

Genesis 30:1-8

Bilhah, Rachel‘s maid, bears two sons. Rachel becomes impatient of her barrenness and jealous of her sister, and unjustly reproaches her husband, who indignantly rebukes her. God, not he, has withheld children from her. She does what Sarah had done before her Genesis 16:2-3, gives her handmaid to her husband. No express law yet forbade this course, though

nature and Scripture by implication did Genesis 2:23-25. “Dan.” “God hath judged me.” In this passage Jacob and Rachel use the common noun, God, the Everlasting, and therefore Almighty, who rules in the physical relations of things - a name suitable to the occasion. He had judged her, dealt with her according to his sovereign justice in withholding the fruit of the womb, when she was self-complacent and forgetful of her dependence on a higher power; and also in hearing her voice when she approached him in humble supplication. “Naphtali.” “Wrestlings of God,” with God, in prayer, on the part of both sisters, so that they wrestled with one another in the self-same act. Rachel, though looking first to Jacob and then to her maid, had at length learned to look to her God, and then had prevailed.

Genesis 30:9-13

Leah having stayed from bearing, resorts to the same expedient. Her fourth son was seemingly born in the fourth year of Jacob‘s marriage. Bearing her first four sons so rapidly, she would the sooner observe the temporary cessation. After the interval of a year she may have given Zilpah to Jacob. “Gad.” “Victory cometh.” She too claims a victory. “Asher.” Daughters will pronounce her happy who is so rich in sons. Leah is seemingly conscious that she is here pursuing a device of her own heart; and hence there is no explicit reference to the divine name or influence in the naming of the two sons of her maid.

Genesis 30:14-21

“Reuben” was at this time four or five years of age, as it is probable that Leah began to bear again before Zilpah had her second son. “Mandrakes” - the fruit of the “mandragora vernaIis,” which is to this day supposed to promote fruitfulness of the womb. Rachel therefore desires to partake of them, and obtains them by a compact with Leah. Leah betakes herself to prayer, and bears a fifth son. She calls him “Issakar,” with a double allusion. She had hired her husband with the mandrakes, and had received this son as her hire for giving her maid to her husband; which she regards as an act of generosity or self-denial. “Zebulun.” Here Leah confesses, “God hath endowed me with a good dowry.” She speaks now like Rachel of the God of nature. The cherished thought that her husband will dwell with her who is the mother of six sons takes form in the name. “Dinah” is the only daughter of Jacob mentioned Genesis 46:7, and that on account of her subsequent connection with the history of Jacob Genesis 30:22-24

“God remembered Rachel,” in the best time for her, after he had taught her the lessons of dependence and patience. “Joseph.” There is a remote allusion to her gratitude for the reproach of barrenness taken away. But there is also hope in the name. The selfish feeling also has died away, and the thankful Rachel rises from Elohim, the invisible Eternal, to Yahweh, the manifest Self-existent. The birth of Joseph was after the fourteen years of service were completed. He and Dinah appear to have been born in the same year.

Genesis 30:25-36

Jacob enters into a new contract of service with Laban. “When Rachel had borne Joseph.” Jacob cannot ask his dismissal until the twice seven years of service were completed. Hence, the birth of Joseph, which is the date of his request, took place at the earliest in the fifteenth year of his sojourn with Laban. Jacob now wishes to return home, from which he had been detained so long by serving for Rachel. He no doubt expects of Laban the means at least of accomplishing his journey. Laban is loath to part with him. “I have divined” - I have been an attentive observer. The result of his observation is expressed in the following words. “Appoint.” Laban offers to leave the fixing of the hire to Jacob. “Thy hire upon me,” which I will take upon me as binding. Jacob touches upon the value of his services, perhaps with the tacit feeling that Laban in equity owed him at least the means of returning to his home. “Brake forth” - increased. “At my foot” - under my guidance and tending of thy flocks.

“Do” - provide. “Thou shalt not give me anything.” This shows that Jacob had no stock from Laban to begin with. “I will pass through all thy flock today” with thee. “Remove thou thence every speckled and spotted sheep, and every brown sheep among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats.” These were the rare colors, as in the East the sheep are usually white, and the goats black or dark brown. “And such shall be my hire.” Such as these uncommon party-colored cattle, when they shall appear among the flock already cleared of them; and not those of this description that are now removed. For in this case Laban would have given Jacob something; whereas Jacob was resolved to be entirely dependent on the divine providence for his hire. “And my righteousness will answer for me.” The color will determine at once whose the animal is. Laban willingly consents to so favorable a proposal, removes the party-colored animals from the flock, gives them into the hands of his sons, and puts an interval of

three days‘ journey between them and the pure stock which remains in Jacob‘s hands. Jacob is now to begin with nothing, and have for his hire any party-colored lambs or kids that appear in those flocks, from which every specimen of this rare class has been carefully removed.

Genesis 30:37-43

Jacob devises means to provide himself with a flock in these unfavorable circumstances. His first device is to place party-colored rods before the eyes of the cattle at the rutting season, that they might drop lambs and kids varied with speckles, patches, or streaks of white. He had learned from experience that there is a congruence between the colors of the objects contemplated by the dams at that season and those of their young. At all events they bare many straked, speckled, and spotted lambs and kids. He now separated the lambs, and set the faces of the flock toward the young of the rare colors, doubtless to affect them in the same way as the pilled rods. “Put his own folds by themselves.” These are the party-colored cattle that from time to time appeared in the flock of Laban. In order to secure the stronger cattle, Jacob added the second device of employing the party-colored rods only when the strong cattle conceived. The sheep in the East lamb twice a year, and it is supposed that the lambs dropped in autumn are stronger than those dropped in the spring. On this supposition Jacob used his artifice in the spring, and not in the autumn. It is probable, however, that he made his experiments on the healthy and vigorous cattle, without reference to the season of the year. The result is here stated. “The man brake forth exceedingly” - became rapidly rich in hands and cattle.

It is obvious that the preceding and present chapters form one continuous piece of composition; as otherwise we have no account of the whole family of Jacob from one author. But the names אלהים *'ĕlohîym* and יהוה *yehovâh* are both employed in the piece, and, hence, their presence and interchange cannot indicate diversity of authorship.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 31

Verses 1-55

- Jacob‘s Flight from Haran

19. תרפים *terāpîym* Teraphim. This word occurs fifteen times in the Old Testament. It appears three times in this chapter, and nowhere else in the Pentateuch. It is always in the plural number. The root does not appear in Biblical Hebrew. It perhaps means “to live well,” intransitively (Gesenius, Roedig.), “to nourish,” transitively (Furst). The teraphim were symbols or representatives of the Deity, as Laban calls them his gods. They seem to have been busts (προτομαί *protomai* Aquila) of the human form, sometimes as large as life 1 Samuel 19:13. Those of full size were probably of wood; the smaller ones may have been of metal. In two passages Judges 17:1-13; 18; Hosea 3:4 they are six times associated with the ephod. This intimates either that they were worn on the ephod, like the Urim and Thummim, or more probably that the ephod was worn on them; in accordance with which they were employed for the purposes of divination Genesis 30:27; Zechariah 10:2. The employment of them in the worship of God, which Laban seems to have inherited from his fathers Joshua 24:2, is denounced as idolatry 1 Samuel 15:23; and hence, they are classed with the idols and other abominations put away by Josiah 2 Kings 23:24.

47. יגר שׂהדוּתא *yegar -śâhădûtā'* Jegar-sahadutha, “cairn of witness” in the Aramaic dialect of the old Hebrew or Shemite speech גלעד *galʿēd* Gil‹ad, “cairn of witness” in Hebrew especially so called (see Genesis 11:1-9). גלעד *gîlʿād* Gal‹ed; and

49. מצפה *mîtspâh* Mizpah, “watch-tower”.

Jacob had now been twenty years in Laban‘s service, and was therefore, ninety-six years of age. It has now become manifest that he cannot obtain leave of Laban to return home. He must, therefore, either come off by the high hand, or by secret flight. Jacob has many reasons for preferring the latter course.

Genesis 31:1-13

Circumstances at length induce Jacob to propose flight to his wives. His prosperity provokes the envy and slander of Laban‘s sons, and Laban

himself becomes estranged. The Lord now commands Jacob to return, and promises him his presence to protect him. Jacob now opens his mind fully to Rachel and Leah. Rachel, we observe, is put first. Several new facts come out in his discourse to them. Ye know - Jacob appeals to his wives on this point - "that with all my might I served your father." He means, of course, to the extent of his engagement. During the last six years he was to provide for his own house, as the Lord permitted him, with the full knowledge and concurrence of Laban. Beyond this, which is a fair and acknowledged exception, he has been faithful in keeping the cattle of Laban. "Your father deceived me, and changed my wages ten times;" that is, as often as he could.

If, at the end of the first year, he found that Jacob had gained considerably, though he began with nothing, he might change his wages every following half-year, and so actually change them ten times in five years. In this case, the preceding chapter only records his original expedients, and then states the final result. "God suffered him not to hurt me." Jacob, we are to remember, left his hire to the providence of God. He thought himself bound at the same time to use all legitimate means for the attainment of the desired end. His expedients may have been perfectly legitimate in the circumstances, but they were evidently of no avail without the divine blessing. And they would become wholly ineffectual when his wages were changed. Hence, he says, God took the cattle and gave them to me. Jacob seems here to record two dreams, the former of which is dated at the rutting season. The dream indicates the result by a symbolic representation, which ascribes it rather to the God of nature than to the man of art. The second dream makes allusion to the former as a process still going on up to the present time. This appears to be an encouragement to Jacob now to commit himself to the Lord on his way home. The angel of the Lord, we observe, announces himself as the God of Bethel, and recalls to Jacob the pillar and the vow. The angel, then, is Yahweh manifesting himself to human apprehension.

Genesis 31:14-19

His wives entirely accord with his view of their father‘s selfishness in dealing with his son-in-law, and approve of his intended departure. Jacob makes all the needful preparations for a hasty and secret flight. He avails himself of the occasion when Laban is at a distance probably of three or more days‘ journey, shearing his sheep. "Rachel stole the teraphim." It is

not the business of Scripture to acquaint us with the kinds and characteristics of false worship. Hence, we know little of the teraphim, except that they were employed by those who professed to worship the true God. Rachel had a lingering attachment to these objects of her family‘s superstitious reverence, and secretly carried them away as relics of a home she was to visit no more, and as sources of safety to herself against the perils of her flight.

Genesis 31:20-24

Laban hears of his flight, pursues, and overtakes him. “Stole the heart,” κλέπτειν νοῦν *kleptein noun* The heart is the seat of the understanding in Scripture. To steal the heart of anyone is to act without his knowledge. The river. The Frat, near which, we may conclude, Jacob was tending his flocks. Haran was about seventy miles from the river, and therefore, Laban‘s flocks were on the other side of Haran. “Toward mount Gilead;” about three hundred miles from the Frat. “On the third day.” This shows that Laban‘s flocks kept by his sons were still three days‘ journey apart from Jacob‘s. His brethren - his kindred and dependents. “Seven days‘ journey.” On the third day after the arrival of the messenger, Laban might return to the spot whence Jacob had taken his flight. In this case, Jacob would have at least five days of a start; which, added to the seven days of pursuit, would give him twelve days to travel three hundred English miles. To those accustomed to the pastoral life this was a possible achievement. God appears to Laban on behalf of Jacob, and warns him not to harm him. “Not to speak from good to bad” is merely to abstain from language expressing and prefacing violence.

Genesis 31:25-32

Laban‘s expostulation and Jacob‘s reply. What hast thou done? Laban intimates that he would have dismissed him honorably and affectionately, and therefore, that his flight was needless and unkind; and finally charges him with stealing his gods. Jacob gives him to understand that he did not expect fair treatment at his hands, and gives him leave to search for his gods, not knowing that Rachel had taken them.

Genesis 31:33-42

After the search for the teraphim has proved vain, Jacob warmly upbraids Laban. “The camel‘s saddle.” This was a pack-saddle, in the recesses of which articles might be deposited, and on which was a seat or couch for the rider. Rachel pleads the custom of women as an excuse for

keeping her seat; which is admitted by Laban, not perhaps from the fear of ceremonial defilement Leviticus 15:19-27, as this law was not yet in force, but from respect to his daughter and the conviction that in such circumstances she would not sit upon the teraphim. “My brethren and thy brethren” - their common kindred. Jacob recapitulates his services in feeling terms. “By day the drought;” caused by the heat, which is extreme during the day, while the cold is not less severe in Palestine during the night. “The fear of Isaac” - the God whom Isaac fears. Judged - requited by restraining thee from wrong-doing.

Genesis 31:43-47

Laban, now pacified, if not conscience-stricken, proposes a covenant between them. Jacob erects a memorial pillar, around which the clan gather a cairn of stones, which serves by its name for a witness of their compact. “Jegar-sahadutha.” Here is the first decided specimen of Aramaic, as contradistinguished from Hebrew. Its incidental appearance indicates a fully formed dialect known to Jacob, and distinct from his own. Gilead or Galeed remains to this day in Jebel Jel‘ad, though the original spot was further north.

Genesis 31:48-54

The covenant is then completed. And Mizpah. This refers to some prominent cliff from which, as a watch-tower, an extensive view might be obtained. It was in the northern half of Gilead Deuteronomy 3:12-13, and is noticed in Judges 11:29. It is not to be confounded with other places called by the same name. The reference of this name to the present occurrence is explained in these two verses. The names Gilead and Mizpah may have arisen from this transaction, or received a new turn in consequence of its occurrence. The terms of the covenant are now formally stated. I have cast. The erection of the pillar was a joint act of the two parties; in which Laban proposes, Jacob performs, and all take part. “The God of Abraham, Nahor, and Terah.” This is an interesting acknowledgment that their common ancestor Terah and his descendants down to Laban still acknowledged the true God even in their idolatry. Jacob swears by the fear of isaac, perhaps to rid himself of any error that had crept into Laban‘s notions of God and his worship. The common sacrifice and the common meal ratify the covenant of reconciliation.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 32

Verses 1-32

- Jacob Wrestles in Prayer

3. מחנים *machănāyîm* Machanaim, "two camps".

22. יבק *yaboq*: Jabboq; related בקק or אבק *bāqaq* "gush or gurgle out" *ābaq* in niphal, "wrestle." Now Wady Zurka′.

29. ישׂראל *yîśrā'ēl* Jisrael, "prince of God".

31. פניאל *penîy'ēl* = פנואל *penû'ēl* Peniel, Penuel, "face of God".

After twenty years spent in Aram, Jacob now returns to Kenann. As his departure was marked by a great moment in his spiritual life, so he is now approaching to a crisis in his life of no less significance

Genesis 32:1-3

Jacob has a vision of the heavenly host. This passage, recording Laban‘s farewell and departure, closes the connection of Jacob with Haran and all its toils of servitude, and is hence, annexed to the previous chapter in the English version. In the distribution of the original text, it is regarded as the counterpart of the two following verses, in which Jacob‘s onward progress is mentioned, and so placed with them at the beginning of a new chapter. "The angels of God met him." Twenty years ago Jacob saw the mystical ladder connecting heaven and earth, and the angels of God thereupon ascending and descending from the one to the other. Now, in circumstances of danger, he sees the angels of God on earth, encamped beside or around his own camp Psalm 34:8. He recognizes them as God‘s camp, and names the place Mahanaim, from the double encampment. This vision is not dwelt upon, as it is the mere sequel of the former scene at Bethel. Mahanaim has been identified with Mahneh, about eight miles from the cairn of Laban and Jacob.

Genesis 32:4-9

Jacob now sends a message to Esau apprising him of his arrival. Unto the land of Seir. Arabia Petraea, with which Esau became connected by his marriage with a daughter of Ishmael. He was now married 56 years to his first two wives, and 20 to his last, and therefore, had a separate and

extensive establishment of children and grandchildren. Jacob endeavors to make amends for the past by an humble and respectful approach to his older brother, in which he styles himself, "thy servant" and Esau, "my lord." He informs him of his wealth, to intimate that he did not expect anything from him. "Four hundred men with him." This was a formidable force. Esau had begun to live by the sword Genesis 27:40, and had surrounded himself with a numerous body of followers. Associated by marriage with the Hittites and the Ishmaelites, he had rapidly risen to the rank of a powerful chieftain. It is vain to conjecture with what intent Esau advanced at the head of so large a retinue. It is probable that he was accustomed to a strong escort, that he wished to make an imposing appearance before his brother, and that his mind was in that wavering state, when the slightest incident might soothe him into good-will, or arouse him to vengeance. Jacob, remembering his own former dealings with him, has good cause for alarm. He betakes himself to the means of deliverance. He disposes of his horde into two camps, that if one were attacked and captured, the other might meanwhile escape. He never neglects to take all the precautions in his power.

Genesis 32:10-13

Next, he betakes himself to prayer. He appeals to the God of Abraham and Isaac, to Yahweh the God of promise and performance. "I am less than;" unworthy of all the mercy and truth of God. "With my staff." Jacob seems to have left his home without escort and without means. It was evidently intended that he should return in a short time; but unforeseen circumstances lengthened the period. "Me, the mother with the children." Me is used here in that pregnant sense which is familiar in Scripture, to include his whole clan; as Ishmael, Israel, Edom, often stand for their respective races. He then pleads the express promise of God Genesis 28:13-15; Genesis 31:3.

Genesis 32:14-22

Jacob sends forward a present to Esau. "He lodged there that night." Mahanaim may have been about twenty-five miles from the Jabbok. At some point in the interval he awaited the return of his messengers. Abiding during the night in the camp, not far from the ford of the Jabbok, he selects and sends forward to Esau his valuable present of five hundred and fifty head of cattle. "That which was come into his hand," into his possession. The cattle are selected according to the proportions of male and female which were adopted from experience among the ancients (Varro, de re rust.

II. 3). “Every drove by itself,” with a space between, that Esau might have time to estimate the great value of the gift. The repetition of the announcement of the gift, and of Jacob himself being at hand, was calculated to appease Esau, and persuade him that Jacob was approaching him in all brotherly confidence and affection. “Appease him.” Jacob designs this gift to be the means of propitiating his brother before he appears in his presence. “Lift up my face,” accept me. “Lodged that night in the camp;” after sending this present over the Jabbok. This seems the same night referred to in Genesis 32:14.

Genesis 32:23-32

Jacob wrestles with a man. “Passed over the ford of Jabbok.” The Jabbok rose near Rabbath Ammon, and flowed into the Jordan, separating North Gilead from South, or the kingdom of Og from that of Sihon. “Jacob was left alone,” on the north side, after all had passed over. “A man wrestled with him.” When God has a new thing of a spiritual nature to bring into the experience of man, he begins with the senses. He takes man on the ground on which he finds him, and leads him through the senses to the higher things of reason, conscience, and communion with God.

Jacob seems to have gone through the principles or foundations of faith in God and repentance toward him, which gave a character to the history of his grandfather and father, and to have entered upon the stage of spontaneous action. He had that inward feeling of spiritual power which prompted the apostle to say, “I can do all things.” Hence, we find him dealing with Esau for the birthright, plotting with his mother for the blessing, erecting a pillar and vowing a vow at Bethel, overcoming Laban with his own weapons, and even now taking the most prudent measures for securing a welcome from Esau on his return. He relied indeed on God, as was demonstrated in many of his words and deeds; but the prominent feature of his character was a strong and firm reliance on himself. But this practical self-reliance, though naturally springing up in the new man and highly commendable in itself, was not yet in Jacob duly subordinated to that absolute reliance which ought to be placed in the Author of our being and our salvation. Hence, he had been betrayed into intrusive, dubious, and even sinister courses, which in the retributive providence of God had brought, and were yet to bring him, into many troubles and perplexities. The hazard of his present situation arose chiefly from his former unjustifiable practices

toward his brother. He is now to learn the lesson of unreserved reliance on God.

"A man" appeared to him in his loneliness; one having the bodily form and substance of a man. Wrestled with him - encountered him in the very point in which he was strong. He had been a taker by the heel from his very birth, and his subsequent life had been a constant and successful struggle with adversaries. And when he, the stranger, saw that he prevailed not over him. Jacob, true to his character, struggles while life remains, with this new combatant. touched the socket of his thigh, so that it was wrenched out of joint. The thigh is the pillar of a man's strength, and its joint with the hip the seat of physical force for the wrestler. Let the thigh bone be thrown out of joint, and the man is utterly disabled. Jacob now finds that this mysterious wrestler has wrested from him, by one touch, all his might, and he can no longer stand alone. Without any support whatever from himself, he hangs upon the conqueror, and in that condition learns by experience the practice of sole reliance on one mightier than himself. This is the turning-point in this strange drama. Henceforth Jacob now feels himself strong, not in himself, but in the Lord, and in the power of his might. What follows is merely the explication and the consequence of this bodily conflict.

And he, the Mighty Stranger, said, Let me go, for the dawn ariseth. The time for other avocations is come: let me go. He does not shake off the clinging grasp of the now disabled Jacob, but only calls upon him to relax his grasp. "And he, Jacob, said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me". Despairing now of his own strength, he is Jacob still: he declares his determination to cling on until his conqueror bless him. He now knows he is in the hand of a higher power, who can disable and again enable, who can curse and also bless. He knows himself also to be now utterly helpless without the healing, quickening, protecting power of his victor, and, though he die in the effort, he will not let him go without receiving this blessing. Jacob's sense of his total debility and utter defeat is now the secret of his power with his friendly vanquisher. He can overthrow all the prowess of the self-reliant, but he cannot resist the earnest entreaty of the helpless.

Genesis 32:28-30

"What is thy name?" He reminds him of his former self, Jacob, the supplanter, the self-reliant, self-seeking. But now he is disabled, dependent

on another, and seeking a blessing from another, and for all others as well as himself. No more Jacob shall thy name be called, but Israel - a prince of God, in God, with God. In a personal conflict, depending on thyself, thou wert no match for God. But in prayer, depending on another, thou hast prevailed with God and with men. The new name is indicative of the new nature which has now come to its perfection of development in Jacob. Unlike Abraham, who received his new name once for all, and was never afterward called by the former one, Jacob will hence, be called now by the one and now by the other, as the occasion may serve. For he was called from the womb Genesis 25:23, and both names have a spiritual significance for two different aspects of the child of God, according to the apostle's paradox, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" Philemon 2:12-13. "Tell now thy name."

Disclose to me thy nature. This mysterious Being intimates by his reply that Jacob was to learn his nature, so far as he yet required to know it, from the event that had just occurred; and he was well acquainted with his name. And he blessed him there. He had the power of disabling the self-sufficient creature, of upholding that creature when unable to stand, of answering prayer, of conferring a new name, with a new phase of spiritual life, and of blessing with a physical renovation, and with spiritual capacity for being a blessing to mankind. After all this, Jacob could not any longer doubt who he was. There are, then, three acts in this dramatic scene: first, Jacob wrestling with the Omnipresent in the form of a man, in which he is signally defeated; second, Jacob importunately supplicating Yahweh, in which he prevails as a prince of God; third, Jacob receiving the blessing of a new name, a new development of spiritual life, and a new capacity for bodily action.

Genesis 32:31-32

Peniel - the face of God. The reason of this name is assigned in the sentence, "I have seen God face to face." He is at first called a man. Hosea terms him the angel (Hosea 12:4-5 (3,4). And here Jacob names him God. Hence, some men, deeply penetrated with the ineffable grandeur of the divine nature, are disposed to resolve the first act at least into an impression on the imagination. We do not pretend to define with undue nicety the mode of this wrestling. And we are far from saying that every sentence of Scripture is to be understood in a literal sense. But until some cogent reason be assigned, we do not feel at liberty to depart from the literal sense in this

instance. The whole theory of a revelation from God to man is founded upon the principle that God can adapt himself to the apprehension of the being whom he has made in his own image. This principle we accept, and we dare not limit its application "further than the demonstrative laws of reason and conscience demand." If God walk in the garden with Adam, expostulate with Cain, give a specification of the ark to Noah, partake of the hospitality of Abraham, take Lot by the hand to deliver him from Sodom, we cannot affirm that he may not, for a worthy end, enter into a bodily conflict with Jacob. These various manifestations of God to man differ only in degree. If we admit anyone, we are bound by parity of reason to accept all the others.

We have also already noted the divine method of dealing with man. He proceeds from the known to the unknown, from the simple to the complex, from the material to the spiritual, from the sensible to the super-sensible. So must he do, until he have to deal with a world of philosophers. And even then, and only then, will his method of teaching and dealing with people be clearly and fully understood. The more we advance in the philosophy of spiritual things, the more delight will we feel in discerning the marvelous analogy and intimate nearness of the outward to the inward, and the material to the spiritual world. We have only to bear in mind that in man there is a spirit as well as a body; and in this outward wrestling of man with man we have a token of the inward wrestling of spirit with spirit, and therefore, an experimental instance of that great conflict of the Infinite Being with the finite self, which grace has introduced into our fallen world, recorded here for the spiritual edification of the church on earth.

"My life is preserved." The feeling of conscience is, that no sinner can see the infinitely holy God and live. "And he halted upon his thigh." The wrenching of the tendons and muscles was mercifully healed, so as to leave a permanent monument, in Jacob's halting gait, that God had overcome his self-will.

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CHAPTER 33

Verses 1-20

- Jacob and Esau Meet

17. סכת *sûkkôth* Sukkoth, "booths," consisting of poles forming a roof covered with branches, leaves, or grass.

19. חמור *chămôr* Chamor, "ass, red, heap". קשיטה *qeśîyṭâh* Qesitah, weighed or measured. Ἀμνὸς *Amnos* Septuagint and Onkelos

Jacob has a friendly interview with Esau, and re-+enters Kenaan.

Genesis 33:1-3

Jacob, upon seeing Esau approach with his four hundred men, advances with circumspection and lowly obeisance. He divided his family, arranged them according to their preciousness in his eyes, and walks himself in front. In drawing near, he bows seven times, in token of complete submission to his older brother. Esau, the wild hunter, is completely softened, and manifests the warmest affection, which is reciprocated by Jacob. The *puncta extraordinaria* over וישקהו *vayîshēqēhû* "and kissed him," seemingly intimating a doubt of the reading or of the sincerity of Esau, are wholly unwarranted. Esau then observes the women and children, and inquires who they are. Jacob replies that God had granted, graciously bestowed on him, these children. They approach in succession, and do obeisance. Esau now inquires of the caravan or horde he had already met. He had heard the announcement of the servants; but he awaited the confirmation of the master. "To find grace in the eyes of my lord." Jacob values highly the good-will of his brother. The acceptance of this present is the security for that good-will, and for all the safety and protection which it involved. Esau at first declines the gift, but on being urged by Jacob accepts it, and thereby relieves Jacob of all his anxiety. His brother is now his friend indeed. "Therefore, have I seen thy face," that I might give thee this token of my affection. "As if I had seen the face of God." The unexpected kindness with which his brother had received him was a type and proof of the kindness of the All-provident, by whom it had been added to all his other mercies. My blessing; my gift which embodies my good wishes. I have all; not only enough, but all that I can wish.

Genesis 33:12-16

They now part for the present. “I will qo with thee;” as an escort or vanguard. Jacob explains that this would be inconvenient for both parties, as his tender children and suckling cattle could not keep pace with Esau‘s men, who were used to the road. “At the pace of the cattle;” as fast as the business (מלאכה *melā'kâh*) of traveling with cattle will permit. Unto Selr. Jacob is travelling to the land of Kenaan, and to the residence of his father. But, on arriving there, it will be his first duty to return the fraternal visit of Esau. The very circumstance that he sent messengers to apprise his brother of his arrival, implies that he was prepared to cultivate friendly relations with him. Jacob also declines the offer of some of the men that Esau had with him. He had, doubtless, enough of hands to manage his remaining flock, and he now relied more than ever on the protection of that God who had ever proved himself a faithful and effectual guardian.

Genesis 33:17

“Sukkoth” was south of the Jabbok, and east of the Jordan, as we learn from Judges 8:4-9. From the same passage it appears to have been nearer the Jordan than Penuel, which was at the ford of Jahbok. Sukkoth cannot therefore, be identified with Sakut, which Robinson finds on the other side of the Jordan, about ten miles north of the mouth of the Jabbok. “And built him a house.” This indicates a permanent residence. Booths, or folds, composed of upright stakes wattled together, and sheltered with leafy branches. The closed space in the text is properly introduced here, to indicate the pause in the narrative, while Jacob sojourned in this place. Dinah, who is not noticed on the journey, was now not more than six years of age. Six or seven years more, therefore, must have elapsed before the melancholy events of the next chapter took place. In the interval, Jacob may have visited his father, and even returned the visit of Esau.

Genesis 33:18-20

Jacob at length crosses the Jordan, and enters again the land of Kenaan. “In peace.” The original word (שׁלם *shālēm* “safe, in peace”) is rendered Shalem, the name of the town at which Jacob arrived, by the Septuagint. The rendering safe, or in peace, is here adopted, because (1) the word is to be taken as a common noun or adjective, unless there be a clear necessity for a proper name; (2) “the place” was called Shekem in the time of Abraham Genesis 12:6, and the “town” is so designated in the thirty-fifth chapter Genesis 35:4; and (3) the statement that Jacob arrived in safety accounts for the additional clauses, “which is in the land of Kenaan,” and

“when he went from Padan-aram,” and is in accordance with the promise Genesis 28:21 that he would return in peace. If, however, the Salim found by Robinson to the west of Nablous be the present town, it must be called the city of Shekem, because it belonged to the Shekem mentioned in the following verse and chapter. “Pitched before the city.”

Jacob did not enter into the city, because his flocks and herds could not find accommodation there, and he did not want to come into close contact with the inhabitants. “He bought a parcel of the field.” He is anxious to have a place he may call his own, where he may have a permanent resting-place. “For a hundred kesitahs.” The kesitah may have been a piece of silver or gold, of a certain weight, equal in value to a lamb (see Gesenius). “El-Elohe-Israel.” Jacob consecrates his ground by the erection of an altar. He calls it the altar of the Mighty One, the God of Israel, in which he signalizes the omnipotence of him who had brought him in safety to the land of promise through many perils, the new name by which he himself had been lately designated, and the blessed communion which now existed between the Almighty and himself. This was the very spot where Abraham, about one hundred and eighty-five years ago, built the first altar he erected in the promised land Genesis 12:6-7. It is now consecrated anew to the God of promise.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 34

Verses 1-31

- Dinah‘s Dishonor

This chapter records the rape of Dinah and the revenge of her brothers.

Genesis 34:1-5

Dinah went out to see the daughters of the land. The Jewish doctors of a later period fix the marriageable age of a female at twelve years and a day. It is probable that Dinah was in her thirteenth year when she went out to visit the daughters of the land. Six or seven years, therefore, must have been spent by Jacob between Sukkoth, where he abode some time, and the neighborhood of Shekerm, where he had purchased a piece of ground. If we suppose Dinah to have been born in the same year with Joseph, who was in his seventeenth year at the time of his being sold as a bondslave Genesis 37:2, the events of this chapter must have occurred in the interval between the completion of her twelfth and that of her sixteenth year. “Shekem.” This name is hereditary in the family, and had taken hold in the locality before the time of Abraham. The Hivite was a descendant of Kenaan. We find this tribe now occupying the district where the Kenaanite was in possession at a former period Genesis 12:6. “Spake to the heart of the damsel.” After having robbed her of her honor, he promises to recognize her as his wife, provided he can gain the consent of her relatives. “Shekem spake unto his father Hamor.” He is in earnest about this matter. “Jacob held his peace.” He was a stranger in the land, and surrounded by a flourishing tribe, who were evidently unscrupulous in their conduct.

Genesis 34:6-17

A conference takes place between the parties. Hamer and Jacob, the parents on both sides, are the principals in the negotiation. The sons of Jacob, being brothers of the injured damsel, are present, according to custom. “Wrought fully in Israel;” a standing phrase from this time forward for any deed that was contrary to the sanctity which ought to characterize God‘s holy people. Israel is used here to designate the descendants of Israel, the special people. Hamer makes his proposal. “Shekem, my son.” These words are a nominative pendent, for which “his soul” is substituted. He proposes a political alliance or amalgamation of the two tribes, to be sealed and actually effected by intermarriage. He offers to make them joint-

possessors of the soil, and of the rights of dwelling, trading, and acquiring property. Shekem now speaks with becoming deference and earnestness.

He offers any amount of dowry, or bridal presents, and of gift to the mother and brothers of the bride. It must be acknowledged that the father and the son were disposed to make whatever amends they could for the grievous offence that had been committed. The sons of Jacob answer with deceit. They are burning with resentment of the wrong that "ought not to have been done," and that cannot now be fully repaired. Yet they are in presence of a superior force, and therefore, resort to deceit. "And spake." This goes along with the previous verb "answered," and is meant to have the same qualification "with deceit." The last clause of the verse then assigns the cause of this deceitful dealing. Their speech, for the matter of it, is reasonable. They cannot intermarry with the uncircumcised. Only on condition that every male be circumcised will they consent. On these terms they promise to "become one people" with them. Otherwise they take their daughter, and depart. Our daughter. They here speak as a family or race, and therefore, call Dinah their daughter, though her brothers are the speakers.

Genesis 34:18-24

Hamor and Shekem accept the terms, and immediately proceed to carry them into effect. It is testified of Shekem, that he delayed not to do the thing, and that he was more honorable than all his house. They bring the matter before their fellow-citizens, and urge them to adopt the rite of circumcision, on the ground that the men are peaceable, well-conducted, and they and their cattle and goods would be a valuable addition to the common wealth of their tribe. Hence, it appears that the population was still thin, that the neighboring territory was sufficient for a much larger number than its present occupants, and that a tribe found a real benefit in an accession to his numbers. The people were persuaded to comply with the terms proposed. There is nothing said here of the religious import of the rite, or of any diversity of worship that may have existed between the two parties. But it is not improbable that the Shekemites were prepared for mutual toleration, or even for the adoption of the religion of Israel in its external forms, though not perhaps to the exclusion of their own hereditary customs. It is also possible that the formal acknowledgment of the one true God was not yet extinct. Circumcision has been in use among the Egyptians, Colchians (Herodotus ii. 104), and other eastern nations; but

when and how introduced we are not informed. The present narrative points out one way in which it may have spread from nation to nation.

Genesis 34:25-31

Simon and Levi, at the head no doubt of all their father‘s men, now fall upon the Shekemites, when feverish with the circumcision, and put them to the sword. Simon and Levi were the sons of Leah, and therefore, full brothers of Dinah. If Dinah was of the same year as Joseph, they would be respectively seven and six years older than she was. If she was in her thirteenth year, they would therefore, be respectively in their twentieth and nineteenth years, and therefore, suited by age and passion for such an enterprise. All the sons of Jacob joined in the sacking of the city. They seized all their cattle and goods, and made captives of their wives and little ones. Jacob is greatly distressed by this outrage, which is equally contrary to his policy and his humanity. He sets before his sons, in this expostulation, the danger attendant upon such a proceeding. The “Kenaanite and the Perizzite,” whom Abraham found in the land on his return from Egypt Genesis 13:7. “I am a few men” - men of number that might easily be counted. I here denotes the family or tribe with all its dependents. When expanded, therefore, it is, “I and my house.” Simon and Levi have their reply. It justifies the retribution which has fallen on the Shekemites for this and all their other crimes. But it does not justify the executioners for taking the law into their own hands, or proceeding by fraud and indiscriminate slaughter. The employment of circumcision, too, which was the sign of the covenant of grace, as a means of deception, was a heinous aggravation of their offence.

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CHAPTER 35

Verses 1-29

- The Death of Isaac

8. דברה *deborâh* Deborah, "bee *alôn -bākût* Allon-bakuth,′ בכות אלון". "oak of weeping"

16. כברה a *kîbrâh* "length stretch." A certain but unknown distance, a stadium or furlong (Josephus) a hippodrome (Septuagint) which was somewhat longer, a mile (Kimchi) אפרת *ephrâth* Ephrath, "fruitful or′ .ashy"

18. בן־אוני *ben -'ônîy* Ben-oni, "son of my pain בנימין *bînyāmîyn* Binjamin, "son of the right hand".

19. לחם בית *bēyt -lechem* Beth-lechem, "house of bread".

21. עדר ‹Eder, "flock, fold‹ *ĕder*".

This chapter contains the return of Jacob to his father‘s house, and then appends the death of Isaac.

Genesis 35:1-8

Jacob returns to Bethel. "And God said unto Jacob." He receives the direction from God. He had now been six years lingering in Sukkoth and Sleekem. There may have been some contact between him and his father‘s house during this interval. The presence of Deborah, Rebekah‘s nurse, in his family, is a plain intimation of this. But Jacob seems to have turned aside to Shekem, either to visit the spot where Abraham first erected an altar to the Lord, or to seek pasture for his numerous flocks. "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there." In his perplexity and terror the Lord comes to his aid. He reminds him of his former appearance to him at that place, and directs him to erect an altar there. This was Abraham‘s second resting-place in the land. He who had there appeared to Jacob as the Yahweh, the God of Abraham and Isaac, is now described as (house of El), the Mighty One, probably in allusion to Bethel (house of El), which contains this name, and was at that time applied by Jacob himself to the place. "His house;" his

wives and children. “All that were with him;” his men-servants and maid-servants.

The strange gods, belonging to the stranger or the strange land. These include the teraphim, which Rachel had secreted, and the rings which were worn as amulets or charms. Be clean; cleanse the body, in token of the cleaning of your souls. Change your garments; put on your best attire, befitting the holy occasion. The God, in contradistinction to the strange gods already mentioned. Hid them; buried them. “The oak which was by Shekem.” This may have been the oak of Moreh, under which Abraham pitched his tent Genesis 12:6. The terror of God; a dread awakened in their breast by some indication of the divine presence being with Jacob. The patriarch seems to have retained possession of the land he had purchased and gained by conquest, in this place. His flocks are found there very shortly after this time Genesis 37:12, he alludes to it, and disposes of it in his interview with Joseph and his sons Genesis 48:22, and his well is there to this day.

“Luz, which is in the land of Kenaan.” This seems at first sight to intimate that there was a Luz elsewhere, and to have been added by the revising prophet to determine the place here intended. Luz means an almond tree, and may have designated many a place. But the reader of Genesis could have needed no such intimation, as Jacob is clearly in the land of Kenaan, going from Shekem to Hebron. It seems rather to call attention again Genesis 33:18 to the fact that Jacob has returned from Padan-aram to the land of promise. The name Luz still recurs, as the almond tree may still be flourishing. “And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el.” Thus has Jacob obeyed the command of God, and begun the payment of the vow he made twenty-six years before at this place Genesis 38:20-22. “There God revealed himself unto him.” The verb here נגלו *nîglû* is plural in the Masoretic Hebrew, and so it was in the copy of Onkelos. The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint have the singular. The reading is therefore, various. The original was probably singular, and may have been so even with its present letters. If not, this is one of the few instances in which Elohim is construed grammatically with a plural verb. Deborah dies in the family in which she began life. She is buried under “the well-known oak” at Bethel. Jacob drops a natural tear of sorrow over the grave of this faithful servant, and hence, the oak is called the oak of

weeping. It is probable that Rebekah was already dead, since otherwise we should not expect to find Deborah transferred to Jacob‘s household. She may not have lived to see her favorite son on his return.

Genesis 35:9-15

God appears to Jacob again at Bethel, and renews the promise made to him there Genesis 28:13-14. Again. The writer here refers to the former meeting of God with Jacob at Bethel, and thereby proves himself cognizant of the fact, and of the record already made of it. “When he went out of Padan-aram.” This corroborates the explanation of the clause, Genesis 35:6, “which is in the land of Kenaan.” Bethel was the last point in this land that was noticed in his flight from Esau. His arrival at the same point indicates that he has now returned from Padan-aram to the land of Kenaan. “He called his name Israel.” At Bethel he renews the change of name, to indicate that the meetings here were of equal moment in Jacob‘s spiritual life with that at Penuel. It implies also that this life had been declining in the interval between Penuel and Bethel, and had now been revived by the call of God to go to Bethel, and by the interview.

The renewal of the naming aptly expresses this renewal of spiritual life. “I am God Almighty.” So he proclaimed himself before to Abraham Genesis 17:1. “Be fruitful, and multiply.” Abraham and Isaac had each only one son of promise. But now the time of increase is come. Jacob has been blessed with eleven sons, and at least one daughter. And now he receives the long-promised blessing, “be fruitful and multiply.” From this time forth the multiplication of Israel is rapid. In twenty-six years after this time he goes down into Egypt with seventy souls, besides the wives of his married descendants, and two hundred and ten years after that Israel goes out of Egypt numbering about one million eight hundred thousand. “A nation and a congregation of nations,” such as were then known in the world, had at the last date come of him, and “kings” were to follow in due time. The land, as well as the seed, is again promised.

Jacob now, according to his wont, perpetuates the scene of divine manifestation with a monumental stone. “God went up;” as he went up from Abraham Genesis 17:22 after a similar conferencc with him. He had now spoken to Jacob face to face, as he communed with Abraham. “A pillar” in the place where he talked with him, a consecrated monument of this second interview, not in a dream as before, but in a waking vision. On this he pours

a drink-offering of wine, and then anoints it with oil. Here, for the first time, we meet with the libation. It is possible there was such an offering when Melkizedec brought forth bread and wine, though it is not recorded. The drink-offering is the complement of the meat-offering, and both are accompaniments of the sacrifice which is offered on the altar. They are in themselves expressive of gratitude and devotion. Wine and oil are used to denote the quickening and sanctifying power of the Spirit of God. "Bethel." We are now familiar with the repetition of the naming of persons and places. This place was already called Bethel by Jacob himself; it is most likely that Abraham applied this name to it: and for aught we know, some servant of the true God, under the Noachic covenant, may have originated the name.

Genesis 17:16-22.

On the journey, Rachel dies at the birth of her second son. "A stretch." It was probably a few furlongs. "Fear not." The cause for encouragement was that the child was born, and that it was a son. Rachel's desire and hope expressed at the birth of Joseph were therefore, fulfilled Genesis 30:24. "When her soul was departing." This phrase expresses not annihilation, but merely change of place. It presupposes the perpetual existence of the soul. "Ben-oni," son of my pain, is the natural expression of the departing Rachel. "Benjamin." The right hand is the seat of power. The son of the right hand is therefore, the child of power. He gave power to his father, as he was his twelfth son, and so completed the number of the holy family. "Ephrath and Beth-lehem" are names the origin of which is not recorded. "The pillar of Rachel's grave." Jacob loves the monumental stone. "Unto this day." This might have been written ten or twenty years after the event, and therefore, before Jacob left Kenaan (see on Genesis 19:37). The grave of Rachel was well known in the time of Samuel 1 Samuel 10:2, and the Kubbet Rahil, dome or tomb of Rachel, stands perhaps on the identical spot, about an English mile north of Bethlehem.

Genesis 35:21-22

Eder - The tower of the flock was probably a watch-tower where shepherds guarded their flocks by night. It was a mile (Jerome) or more south of Bethlehem. Here Reuben was guilty of the shameful deed which came to the knowledge of his father, and occasions the allusion in Genesis 49:4. He was by this act degraded from his position in the holy family. The

division of the open parashah in the text here is more in accordance with the sense than that of the verse.

Genesis 35:22-29

Jacob‘s return and his father‘s death. The family of Jacob is now enumerated, because it has been completed by the birth of Benjamin. “In Padan-aram.” This applies to all of them but Benjamin; an exception which the reader of the context can make for himself. Jacob at length arrives with his whole establishment at Hebron, the third notable station occupied by Abraham in the land Genesis 13:1. Here also his father sojourns. The life of Isaac is now closed. Joseph must have been, at the time of Jacob‘s return, in his thirteenth year, and therefore, his father in his hundred and fourth. Isaac was consequently in his hundred and sixty-third year. He survived the return of Jacob to Hebron about seventeen years, and the sale of Joseph his grandson about thirteen. “Esau and Jacob his sons buried him.” Hence, we learn that Esau and Jacob continued to be on brotherly terms from the day of their meeting at the ford of Jabbok.

This chapter closes the ninth of the pieces or documents marked off by the phrase “these are the generations.” Its opening event was the birth of Isaac Genesis 25:19, which took place in the hundreth year of Abraham, and therefore, seventy-five years before his death recorded in the seventh document. As the seventh purports to be the generations of Terah Genesis 11:27 and relates to Abraham who was his offspring, so the present document, containing the generations of Isaac, refers chiefly to the sons of Isaac, and especially to Jacob, as the heir of promise. Isaac as a son learned obedience to his father in that great typical event of his life, in which he was laid on the altar, and figuratively sacrificed in the ram which was his substitute. This was the great significant passage in his life, after which he retires into comparative tranquillity.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 36

Verses 1-43
- Section XII - Jacob
- The History of Esau

2. אהלבמה *ohŏlîybâmâh* Oholibamah, "tent of the high place′ ענה *ănâhʿ* ‹Anah, "answering צבעון *tsîbʿôn* Tsib‹on, "dyer, colored".

4. אליפז *ĕlîyphaz* Eliphaz, "God of strength′ רעואל *reʿû'êl* Re‹uel, "friend of God".

5. יעוש *yeʿûsh* Je‹ush, "haste יעלם *yaʿlâm* Ja‹lam, "hiding קרח *qôrach* Qorach, "ice".

11. תימן *têymân* Teman, "right-hand man אומר *ômār* Omar, "eloquent′ צפו *tsephô* Tsepho, "watch געתם *gaʿtâm* Ga‹tam, "touch קנז *qenaz* Qenaz, "hunting".

12. תמנע *tîmnâ* (Timna‹, "restraint עמלקʿ *ămâlêq* ‹Amaleq, "licking up, laboring".

13. נחת *nachath* Nachath, "going down, rest זרח *zerach* Zerach, "rising" (of light) שמח *shammâh* Shammah, "wasting מזה *mîzzâh* Mizzah, "fear, sprinkling".

20. ליטן *lôṭân* Lotan, "covering, veiled שובל *shôbâl* Shobal, "flowing, a shoot".

21. דשון *dîyshôn* Dishon, "a kind of gazelle, fat אצר′ *etser* Etser, "store". דישן *dîyshân* Dishan, "threshing".

22. חרי *chôrîy* Chori, "troglodyte הימם *hēmām* Hemam, "noise, commotion".

23. עלון *alvân* ‹Alvan, "loftyʿ מנחת *mânachath* Manachath, "rest עיבל *êybâl* ‹Ebal, "stripped of leavesʿ שפו *shephô* Shepho, "bare אונם′ *ônâm′*

”.Onam, “strong

24. איה′ *ayâh* Ajjah, “cry, hawk”. ימם (פידים *yêm* “hot springs.” Not mules (אימים′ *êymîym* nor giants (*peyādîym*).

26. חמדן *chemdân* Chemdan, “pleasant”. אשבן′ *eshbân* Eshban, “thought”? יתרן *yîthrân* Jithran, “gain”. כרן *kerân* Keran, “harp”?

27. בלהן *bîlhân* Bilhan, “timid”. זעון *zaʿăvân* Za‹avan, “troubled”? עקן *âqân* ‹Aqan, “twistinqʿ”.

28. ארן′ *ărân* Aran, “wild-goat”?

32. בלע *belaʿ* Bela‹ “devouring”. בעור *beʿôr* Be‹or, “torch”. דנהבה *dînhâbâh* Dinhabah.

33. יובב *yôbâb* Jobab, “shout”. בצרה *bātsrâh* Botsrah, “fold, fort”.

34. חשם *chûshâm* Chusham, “haste”.

35. הדד *hădad* Hadad, “breaking, shout”. בדד *bedad* Bedad, “separation”. עוית *ăvîyth* ‹Avith, “twistingʿ”.

36. שמלה *śamlâh* Samlah, “garment”. משרקה *maśrêqâh* Masreqah, “vineyard”.

37. שאול *shâ'ûl* Shaul, “asked”.

38. חנן בעל *baʿal -chānān* Ba‹al-chanan, “lord of grace”. עכבור *akbôrʿ* ‹Akbor, “mouse”.

39. הדר *hădar* Hadar, “honor”. פעו *pâʿû* Pa‹u, “bleeting”. מחיטאל *mehêyṭab'êl* Mehetab‘el, “God benefiting”. מטרד *maṭrêd* Matred, “push”. זהב מי *mēy -zâhāb* Me-zahab, “water of gold”.

40. יתת *yethêth* Jetheth, “a nail”?

41. אלה ʹ*êlâh* Elah, “terebinth.” פינון *pîynôn*? Pinon, “dark”

42. מבצר *mîbtsâr* Mibtsar, “fortress.”

43. מגדיאל *magdîy'êl* Magdiel, “prince of God.” עירם *îyrâm* ‹Iram, “civic‹ or naked.”

The two documents that now remain run parallel to one another in point of time. They relate to the two sons of Isaac; and, as usual, the record of the one, who, though first born, falls into the ranks of paganism, is first given briefly, and thus dismissed, in order to make way for the more elaborate history of the chosen seed. The latter document does not terminate with the book of Genesis. We do not again meet with the phrase, “and these are the generations,” until we come to the third chapter of Numbers, and even then it is only applied in a subordinate sense to the family of Aaron and Moses, and the priesthood connected with them. Hence, the latter document may be regarded as extending through the remaining books of the Pentateuch. The former may therefore, be of like extent in regard to time. The last of the eight kings, of whom it is not said that he died, seems to have been the contemporary of Moses, who made application to him for leave to pass through his land. If this be so, it follows that the remainder of Genesis comes immediately from the hand of Moses; a result which is in accordance with other indications that have presented themselves in the previous part of this book. This interesting monument of antiquity, from its extreme brevity, leaves many questions which it suggests to our minds unanswered, and in the absence of all other information, we must rest contented with the meagre notices of the race of Edom which it has furnished. And where we cannot ascertain the actual connection of the events and individuals mentioned, we must be satisfied with any possible relation in which they may be placed. The notice, notwithstanding its brevity, we shall find to be arranged with admirable precision.

Genesis 36:1-8

This passage is introductory, and records the settlement of Esau with his family in Mount Seir. “Esau, who is Edom.” This is a fact of which we were informed in the previous history Genesis 25:25, Genesis 25:30. It is mentioned here because the latter name gave origin to the national designation; namely, the Edomites or Idumaeans. The occurrence of this

explanatory or definitive clause here and in other parts of this chapter throws light on the manner in which this work was composed. Such parenthetical explanations are sometimes ascribed to the reviser or redactor of the original text. And to this there is no theoretic objection, provided the reviser be allowed to be of equal authority with the original author, and the explanatory addition be necessary for the reader of a later period, and could not have been furnished by the original author. Otherwise, such a mode of accounting for these simple clauses is unnecessary, and therefore, unwarrantable. The present case the writer has already explained, and the latest reader requires the clause no more than the earliest, as he is aware from the previous notices that Esau is Edom. We are thus led to regard these explanatory clauses as marks of an early or artless simplicity of style, and not as any clear or certain traces of revision.

Genesis 36:2-5

Esau took his wives. - From the word "his" we conclude that this sentence does not refer to his marrying these wives, but to his taking them with him when he removed from Kenaan. Hence, the sentence, after being interrupted by the intervening particulars, is resumed and completed in the sixth verse. The date of this event is therefore, some time after Jacob's flight to Padan-aram, and before his return. The daughter of Ishmael he only married after Jacob's departure, and by her he had one son who was born in Kenaan. We may therefore, suppose that, about eighteen years after Jacob's flight, Isaac had assigned to Esau a sufficient stock of cattle and goods for a separate establishment, the extent of Esau's portion and of that which Isaac had reserved for Jacob had become so great as to demand pasture grounds widely removed from one another, and Esau's former habits and his last matrimonial alliances had drawn him toward Mount Seir. He married his first wives when he was forty years of age Genesis 26:34, and as Jacob was seventy-seven when he left his home, at eighteen years after that date, Esau had been fifty-five years married to his first two wives, and somewhat less than eighteen to Ishmael's daughter.

Of the daughters of Kenaan. - This refers to the two following wives mentioned in this verse, and distinguishes them from the third, mentioned in the following verse, who is of the family of Ishmael. "Adah, daughter of Elon the Hittite." On comparing the account of his two wives whom he married at forty with the present, the first, namely, Judith, daughter of Beeri the Hittite, no longer appears either by her own name, that of her father, or

that of her tribe. Hence, we presume that in the course of the past forty-seven years she has died without male issue. This presumption is favored by the circumstance that the daughter of Elon the Hittite is now advanced into the first place. If it seems undesirable to anyone to make any presumption of this kind, we have only to say that in the absence of the connecting links in a historical statement like this, we must make some supposition to show the possibility of the events related. The presumption we have made seems easier and therefore, more likely than that the names of the individual, the father and the tribe, should be all different, and the order of the two wives reversed, and yet that the same person should be intended; and hence, we have adopted it as a possible arrangement, leaving to others the preference of any other possibility that may be suggested. For after all it should be remembered that testimony only could determine what were the actual circumstances. She who was formerly called Basemath appears here with the name of Adah. At a time when proper names were still significant, the application of more than one name to the same individual was not unusual.

Oholibamah, daughter of Anah, daughter of Zibon the Hivite. - This may have been the fourth wife of Esau in the order of time, though she is here classed with the daughter of Elon, because she was of the daughters of Kenaan. "Daughter of Zibon" means his granddaughter, by the mother's side. "The Hivite" Genesis 10:17. Zibon is thus distinguished from the Horite of the same name Genesis 36:20. The Hivite race we have already met with at Shekem Genesis 34:2. They also held four cities a short way north of Jerusalem, of which Gihon was the chief Joshua 9:3, Joshua 9:7, Joshua 9:17. It was easy, therefore, for Anah the Horite to marry the daughter of Zibon the Hivite. "Basemath," previously called Mahalath.

Genesis 36:4-5

Five sons were born to Esau in Kenaan, of whom Adah and Basemath bare each one. As Oholibamah bare him three sons before leaving Kenaan, she must have been married to him four or five years before that event, perhaps on the death of his first wife, and in consequence of his connection with the south.

Genesis 36:6-8

The sentence that was left incomplete in Genesis 36:2 is now resumed and completed. His departure from Kenaan is ascribed to the abounding wealth of himself and his brother. What remained in the hands of Isaac was virtually Jacob's, though he had not yet entered into formal possession of it.

Mount Seir is the range of hills extending from the Elanitic Gulf to the Salt Sea; the northern part of which is called Jebal Γεβαλήνη *Gebalénē* and the southern part esh-Sherah, and parallel to which on the west lies Wady Arabah. In this range is situated the celebrated rock city, Sela or Petra, adjacent to Mount Hor.

Genesis 36:9-14

After the removal to Mount Seir the race of Esau is traced further. It is remarkable that the phrase, "And these are the generations of Esau," is now repeated. This is sufficient to show us that it does not necessarily indicate diversity of authorship, or is a very distinct piece of composition. Here it merely distinguishes the history of Esau's descent in Mount Seir from that in Kenaan. "Father of Edom." Edom here denotes the nation sprung from him. Eliphaz has five sons by his wife, and by a concubine a sixth, named Amalek, most probably the father of the Amalekites Genesis 14:7. "Timna" was probably a very young sister of Lotan Genesis 36:22, perhaps not older than her niece Oholibamah Genesis 36:25. Eliphaz was at least forty-one years younger than Esau. Yet it is curious that the father takes the niece to wife, and the son the aunt. "Teman" is the father of the Temanites, among whom we find Eliphaz the Temanite mentioned in Job Job 2:11. The name Kenaz may indicate some affinity of Edom with the Kenizzites Genesis 25:19, though these were an older tribe. The other tribes are not of any note in history. Zepho is Zephi in Chronicles, by the change of a feeble letter. Such variations are not unusual in Hebrew speech, and so make their appearance in writing. Thus, in Genesis itself we have met with Mehujael and Mehijael, Peniel and Penuel Genesis 4:18; Genesis 32:30-31. The sons of Esau by Oholibamah are younger than the other two, and hence, these sons are not enumerated along with those of the latter.

Genesis 36:15-19

The first dukes of Edom. The Alluph or duke is the head of the tribe among the Edomites, like the Nasi or prince among the Israelites. The ten grandsons of Esau by Adah and Basemath take rank with his three sons by Oholibamah. This favors the presumption that she was his fourth and latest wife. "Duke Corah." This appears to be inserted by a slip of the pen, though it occurs in the Septuagint and Onkelos. It is missing, however, in the Samaritan Pentateuch. It would make twelve dukes, whereas it appears from the closing verses of the chapter that there were only eleven. It is possible, however, that there may have been a Corah descended from

Eliphaz who attained to a dukedom; and that Amalek separated himself from the rest of the Edomites and asserted his independence. In the absence of explanatory testimony we must leave this point undecided as we find it.

Genesis 36:20-30

This notice of the Horites is in matter more distinct from what precedes, than the second is from the first paragraph in the chapter. "Seir the Horite." The Horite Genesis 14:6, was the cave-dweller, and probably got his name from the cave hewn out of the solid rock in which he was accustomed to dwell. Sela was a city of such excavated dwellings. If Seir here mentioned be the original Seir, then he is the remote father of the seven Horite dukes who belonged to the time of Esau. If he be their immediate parent, then he is named after that earlier Seir who gave name to the mountain range. "Who dwelt in the land." The sons of Seir dwelt in this land before the coming of the Edomites. Here follow the descendants of the then living dukes of the Horim. Hori, Lotan's son, bears the name of the nation. "Hemam," in Chronicles Homam, by a change of letter. "Timna," the concubine of Eliphaz Genesis 36:12. "Alvan" and "Shepho", in Chronicles Aljan and Shephi, by a reverse change of the same letters (see Genesis 36:11).

"Zibon." This we suppose to be different from Zibon the Hivite Genesis 36:2, Genesis 36:14. "Anah" is of course different from his uncle Anah the brother of Zibon the Horite. "The hot springs in the wilderness." There were various hot springs in the vicinity, as Kallirrhoe in Wady Zurka Main, those in Wady Hemad between Kerak and the Salt Sea, and those in Wady el-Ahsy. "Sons of Anah." The plural, sons, here is used according to the general formula, though only one son is mentioned. Oholibamah, being the daughter of Anah, and wife of Esau, while Eliphaz is married to her aunt Timna, is not likely to be the granddaughter by the mother's side of her uncle Zibon. This is in favor of Zibon the Hivite and Zibon the Horite being different individuals Genesis 36:2. "Anah" is here the brother of Zibon. The nephew Anah Genesis 36:24, bears the name of his uncle Genesis 36:20. "Dishon" is an example of the same community of name Genesis 36:21. All Dishon's and Ezer's sons have names ending in "-an." "Acan" יעקן *yaʿăqân* (Jaacan) in 1 Chronicles 1:41 is a graphic error for ועקן *vaʿăqân* (and Acan). Uz; see Genesis 10:23; Genesis 22:21. In Genesis 36:29-30, the dukes are formally enumerated. "According to their dukes;" the seven officials of pre-eminent authority among the Horites. The official is here distinguished from the personal. This is a distinction familiar to Scripture.

Genesis 36:31-39

The series of eight kings here enumerated are plainly elective, as not one succeeds his father. The king co-exists with the dukes, who are again enumerated at the close of the list, and are mentioned in the song of Moses Exodus 15:15. These dukes are no doubt the electors of the common sovereign, who is designed to give unity and strength to the nation. It is natural to suppose that no sovereign was elected until after the death of Esau, and, therefore, if he lived as long as Jacob, after the children of Israel had been seventeen years in Egypt. As we calculate that they were two hundred and ten years in that country, and forty years afterward in the wilderness, this would allow two hundred and thirty-three (25017) years for seven reigns, and a part of the eighth, during which Moses and his host marched along the borders of Edom. Allowing some interval before the first election, we have an average of thirty-three years for each reign. "Before a king reigned over the children of Israel." This simply means before there was a monarchy established in Israel. It does not imply that monarchy began in Israel immediately after these kings; as Lot's beholding the vale of Jordan to be well-watered before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Amorah, does not imply that the cities were destroyed immediately after Lot beheld this sight Genesis 13:10.

Nor does it imply that monarchy in Israel had begun in the time of the writer; as Isaac's saying, "That my soul may bless thee before I die" Genesis 27:4 does not imply that he was dead at the time of his saying so. It merely implies that Israel was expected to have kings Genesis 35:11, as Isaac was expected to die. Of the several sovereigns here mentioned we have no other historical notice. "Beor" is also the name of Balaam's father Numbers 22:5. This indicates affinity of language between their respective tribes. The site of "Dinhabah," the capital of Bela, though the name is applied to many towns, has not been ascertained. "Bozrah" is el-Busaireh, about twenty-one miles nearly south of the Salt Sea. "The land of the Temanite" has its name from Teman, son of Eliphaz. His town was, according to Jerome, five miles from Petra. "Hadad" is a name of frequent recurrence among the Aramaeans. "Who smote Midian in the field of Moab." This records an event not otherwise known, and indicates external conquest on the part of the Idumaean state. "Avith" or Ajuth (1 Chronicles 1:46, probably a graphic error) is not otherwise known.

“Masrecah” is likewise unknown. “Rehoboth by the river.” If the river be the Phrat (Onkelos), Rehoboth may be er-Rahabah, not far from the mouth of the Khabur. Otherwise it may be er-Ruhaibeh on a wady joining the Sihor or el-Arish Genesis 26:22, or the Robotha of Eusebius and Jerome, the site of which is not known. “Hadar” is probably a colloquial variation of Hadad Genesis 36:35 which is found in Chronicles. Pau or Pai is unknown. Matred is the father of his wife. Mezahab her mother‘s father. The death of all these sovereigns is recorded except the last, who is therefore, supposed to have been contemporary with Moses.

Genesis 36:40-43

The hereditary dukes who were contemporaneous with this sovereign, and formed no doubt his council, are now enumerated. Timna, once the name of a female, now appears as a male, unless we allow a duchess in her own right to have occurred among them. The same applies to Oholibamah. Alva or Aljah is near akin to Alvan or Allan Genesis 36:23. Jetheth, Elah, Pinon, Mibzar, Magdiel, Iram, are new names. Four of the old names reappear. One is only slightly different. The number of dukes is eleven. It is probable that Amalek separated from the family confederacy; and the number of tribes may have been originally twelve. The seven Horite dukedoms probably merged into the Idumaean eleven.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 37

Verses 1-36

- Joseph Was Sold into Egypt

17. דתין (Gesenius) "two wells?" Dothain, *dotayîn*

25. נכאת *neko't* "tragacanth" or goat's-thorn gum, yielded by the צרי *tsērîy* "astragalus gummifer", a native of Mount Lebanon "opobalsamum," the resin of the balsam tree, growing in Gilead, and having לט *lot* λῆδον *lēdon* "ledum, ladanum," in the Septuagint healing qualities στακτή *staktē* The former is a gum produced from the cistus rose. The latter is a gum resembling liquid myrrh.

36. פוטיפר "belonging to the sun Potiphar, *pôṭîyphar*".

The sketch of the race of Edom, given in the preceding piece, we have seen, reaches down to the time of Moses. Accordingly, the history of Jacob's seed, which is brought before us in the present document, reverts to a point of time not only before the close of that piece, but before the final record of what precedes it. The thread of the narrative is here taken up from the return of Jacob to Hebron, which was seventeen years before the death of Isaac.

Genesis 37:1-5

Joseph is the favorite of his father, but not of his brethren. "In the land of his father's sojournings." This contrasts Jacob with Esau, who removed to Mount Seir. This notice precedes the phrase, "These are the generations." The corresponding sentence in the case of Isaac is placed at the end of the preceding section of the narrative Genesis 25:11. "The son of seventeen years;" in his seventeenth year Genesis 37:32. "The sons of Bilhah." The sons of the handmaids were nearer his own age, and perhaps more tolerant of the favorite than the sons of Leah the free wife. Benjamin at this time was about four years of age. "An evil report of them." The unsophisticated child of home is prompt in the disapproval of evil, and frank in the avowal of his feelings. What the evil was we are not informed; but Jacob's full-grown sons were now far from the paternal eye, and prone, as it seems, to give way to temptation. Many scandals come out to view in the chosen family. "Loved Joseph." He was the son of his best-loved wife, and of his

old age; as Benjamin had not yet come into much notice. “A Coat of many colors.” This was a coat reaching to the hands and feet, worn by persons not much occupied with manual labor, according to the general opinion. It was, we conceive, variegated either by the loom or the needle, and is therefore, well rendered χιτὼν ποικίλος *chitōn poikilos* a motley coat. “Could not bid peace to him.” The partiality of his father, exhibited in so weak a manner, provokes the anger of his brothers, who cannot bid him good-day, or greet him in the ordinary terms of good-will.

Genesis 37:5-11

Joseph‘s dreams excite the jealousy of his brothers. His frankness in reciting his dream to his brothers marks a spirit devoid of guile, and only dimly conscious of the import of his nightly visions. The first dream represents by a figure the humble submission of all his brothers to him, as they rightly interpret it. “For his dreams and for his words.” The meaning of this dream was offensive enough, and his telling of it rendered it even more disagreeable. A second dream is given to express the certainty of the event Genesis 41:32. The former serves to interpret the latter. There the sheaves are connected with the brothers who bound them, and thereby indicate the parties. The eleven stars are not so connected with them. But here Joseph is introduced directly without a figure, and the number eleven, taken along with the eleven sheaves of the former dream, makes the application to the brothers plain. The sun and moon clearly point out the father and mother. The mother is to be taken, we conceive, in the abstract, without nicely inquiring whether it means the departed Rachel, or the probably still living Leah. Not even the latter seems to have lived to see the fulfillment of this prophetic dream Genesis 49:31. The second dream only aggravated the hatred of his brothers; but his father, while rebuking him for his speeches, yet marked the saying. The rebuke seems to imply that the dream, or the telling of it, appears to his father to indicate the lurking of a self-sufficient or ambitious spirit within the breast of the youthful Joseph. The twofold intimation, however, came from a higher source.

Genesis 37:12-17

Joseph is sent to Dothan. Shekem belonged to Jacob; part of it by purchase, and the rest by conquest. Joseph is sent to inquire of their welfare (שׁלום *shālom* “peace,” Genesis 37:4). With obedient promptness the youth goes to Shekem, where he learns that they had removed to Dothan, a town about twelve miles due north of Shekem.

Genesis 37:18-24

His brothers cast him into a pit. “This master of dreams;” an eastern phrase for a dreamer. “Let us slay him.” They had a foreboding that his dreams might prove true, and that he would become their arbitrary master. This thought at all events would abate somewhat of the barbarity of their designs. It is implied in the closing sentence of their proposal. Reuben dissuades them from the act of murder, and advises merely to cast him into the pit, to which they consent. He had a more tender heart, and perhaps a more tender conscience than the rest, and intended to send Joseph back safe to his father. He doubtless took care to choose a pit that was without water.

Genesis 37:25-30

Reuben rips his clothes when he finds Joseph gone. “To eat bread.” This shows the cold and heartless cruelty of their deed. “A caravan” - a company of travelling merchants. “Ishmaelites.” Ishmael left his father‘s house when about fourteen or fifteen years of age. His mother took him a wife probably when he was eighteen, or twenty at the furthest. He had arrived at the latter age about one hundred and sixty-two years before the date of the present occurrence. He had twelve sons Genesis 25:13-15, and if we allow only four other generations and a fivefold increase, there will be about fifteen thousand in the fifth generation. “Came from Gilead;” celebrated for its balm Jeremiah 8:22; Jeremiah 46:11. The caravan road from Damascus to Egypt touches upon the land of Gilead, goes through Beth-shean, and passes by Dothan. “Spicery.” This gum is called tragacanth, or goats-thorn gum, because it was supposed to be obtained from this plant. “Balm,” or balsam; an aromatic substance obtained from a plant of the genus Amyris, a native of Gilead. “Myrrh” is the name of a gum exuding from the balsamodendron myrrha, growing in Arabia Felix. “Lot,” however, is supposed to be the resinous juice of the cistus or rock rose, a plant growing in Crete and Syria. Judah, relenting, and revolting perhaps from the crime of fratricide, proposes to sell Joseph to the merchants.

Midianites and Medanites Genesis 37:36 are mere variations apparently of the same name. They seem to have been the actual purchasers, though the caravan takes its name from the Ishmaelites, who formed by far the larger portion of it. Midian and Medan were both sons of Abraham, and during one hundred and twenty-five years must have increased to a small clan. Thus, Joseph is sold to the descendants of Abraham. “Twenty silver pieces;” probably shekels. This is the rate at which Moses estimates a male

from five to twenty years old Leviticus 27:5. A man-servant was valued by him at thirty shekels Exodus 21:32. Reuben finding Joseph gone, rends his clothes, in token of anguish of mind for the loss of his brother and the grief of his father.

Genesis 37:31-36

The brothers contrive to conceal their crime; and Joseph is sold into Egypt. "Torn, torn in pieces is Joseph." The sight of the bloody coat convinces Jacob at once that Joseph has been devoured by a wild beast. "All his daughters." Only one daughter of Jacob is mentioned by name. These are probably his daughters-in-law. "To the grave." Sheol is the place to which the soul departs at death. It is so called from its ever craving, or being empty. "Minister." This word originally means eunuch, and then, generally, any officer about the court or person of the sovereign. "Captain of the guards." The guards are the executioners of the sentences passed by the sovereign on culprits, which were often arbitrary, summary, and extremely severe. It is manifest, from this dark chapter, that the power of sin has not been extinguished in the family of Jacob. The name of God does not appear, and his hand is at present only dimly seen among the wicked designs, deeds, and devices of these unnatural brothers. Nevertheless, his counsel of mercy standeth sure, and fixed is his purpose to bring salvation to the whole race of man, by means of his special covenant with Abraham.

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CHAPTER 38

Verses 1-30

- The Family of Judah

1. עדלם ‹Adullam, "righteousness‘ *ădûllâm*". חירה Chirah, *chîyrâh* "nobility‘?"

2. שׁוּע Shua‹, "luck, riches, cry *shûa*‘".

3. ער ‹Er, "watching‘ *êr*".

4. אונן Onan, "strong′ *ônân*".

5. שׁלה Shelah, "request? rest *shēlâh*". כזיב Kezib, "falsehood *kezîyb*".

6. תמר Tamar, "palm *tāmār*".

12. תמנה Timnah, "counted or assigned *tîmnâh*".

14. עינים ‹Enaim, "two fountains′ *êynayîm*".

29. פרץ Perets, "breach *perets*".

This strange narrative is an episode in the history of Joseph; but an integral part of the "generations" of Jacob. It is loosely dated with the phrase "at that time." This does not indicate a sequel to the preceding record, the proper phrase for which is "after these things" (אחר האלה הדברים *'achar hadebārîym hâ'ēleh* Genesis 22:1). It implies rather a train of events that commenced at least in the past, some time before the closing incident of the previous narrative Genesis 21:22. But the sale of Joseph, which alone is recorded in the last chapter, only occupied some few weeks or months of a year. Hence, the circumstances contained in this memoir of Judah‘s family must have taken their rise before that event. The date "at that time," is rendered indefinite also by being attached to the phrase, "And it came to pass," which covers at least all the events in the first eleven verses of the chapter.

All this is in accordance with the customary mode of arranging parallel lines of events in Hebrew narrative. We shall see reason afterward for placing the birth of Er at as early a date as possible in the life of Judah Genesis 46:12. Now Judah, we conceive, was born when his father was eighty-seven, and Joseph when he was ninety-one, and hence, there is a difference about four years in their ages. We suppose Er to have been born in Judah‘s fourteenth year, when Joseph and Dinah were in their tenth, and therefore, about three years before the rape of Dinah, and shortly after Jacob arrived at the town of Shekem. The dishonor of Dinah, and the cruel treatment of Joseph, being of essential moment in the process of things, had to be recorded in the main line of events. The commencement of Judah‘s family, having no particular influence on the current of the history, is fitly reserved until the whole of the circumstances could be brought together into a connected narrative. And the private history of Judah‘s line is given, while that of the others is omitted, simply because from him the promised seed is descended. As soon as Jacob is settled in the promised land, the contact with Hebron and its neighborhood seems to have commenced. A clear proof of this is the presence of Deborah, Rebekah‘s nurse, in Jacob‘s family Genesis 35:8. The great thoroughfare from Damascus to Egypt runs through Shekem and Hebron, and we know that when Jacob was residing at Hebron, his sons fed their flocks at Shekem and Dothan, and the youthful Joseph was sent to inquire after their welfare.

Genesis 38:1-11

Judah marries and has three sons. “Went down from brethren.” This seems to have been an act of willful indiscretion in Judah. His separation from his brethren, however, extends only to the matter of his new connection. In regard to property and employment there seems to have been no long or entire separation until they went down into Egypt. He went down from the high grounds about Shekem to the lowlands in which Adullam was situated Joshua 15:33-35. “A certain Adullamite.” He may have become acquainted with this Hirah, when visiting his grandfather, or in some of the caravans which were constantly passing Shekem, or even in the ordinary wanderings of the pastoral life. Adullam was in the Shephelah or lowland of Judah bordering on Philistia proper. “A certain Kenaanite.” This connection with Shua‘s daughter was contrary to the will of God and the example of his fathers. Onan was born, we conceive, in Judah‘s fifteenth year, and Shelah in his sixteenth.

At Kezib. - This appears the same as Akzib, which is associated with Keilah and Mareshah Joshua 15:44, and therefore, lay in the south of the lowland of Judah. This note of place indicates a change of residence since her other children were born. In the year after this birth the dishonor of Dinah takes place. "Took a wife for Er." Judah chose a wife for himself at an early age, and now he chooses for his first-born at the same age. "Was evil in the eyes of the Lord." The God of covenant is obliged to cut off Er for his wickedness in the prime of life. We are not made acquainted with his crime; but it could scarcely be more vile and unnatural than that for which his brother Onan is also visited with death. "And be a husband to her." The original word means to act as a husband to the widow of a deceased brother who has left no issue. Onan seems to have been prompted to commit his crime by the low motive of turning the whole inheritance to his own house. At the time of Er's death Judah must have been in his twenty-seventh year; Joseph was consequently in his twenty-third, and Jacob had for ten years past had his headquarters at Hebron. Hence, the contact with Timnah, Adullam, and Enaim was easy.

Genesis 38:12-23

Judah now comes into criminal, and, though unknown to him, incestuous sexual intercourse with Tamar. "And many were the days," a year or somewhat more. "To Timnah." This town is about twenty miles northwest of Hebron. There is another, however, in the hills about seven miles south of Hebron. "Put on a veil;" to conceal her face from Judah, or any other beholder. "The qate of Enaim." This is supposed to be the same as Enam Joshua 15:34. "And thy lace." This is the cord by which the signet was suspended round his neck. "Courtesan." The original word קדֹשה *qedêshâh* means one consecrated to the worship of Ashtoreth, in which chastity is sacrificed.

Genesis 38:24-30

Tamar bears Perez and Zerah to Judah. After three months her pregnancy was manifest. "Let her be burnt." It is manifest Judah had the power to execute this punishment. The life of the widow of his son was in his hands. Stoning was the mode of punishment by the law of Moses Deuteronomy 22:20-24; burning, only in aggravated cases Leviticus 20:14; Leviticus 21:9. He is a severe judge in a case where he is equally criminal. "She hath been more righteous than I. Tamar was less culpable in this matter than Judah. For he was moved by lust to commit fornication, and

was the indirect occasion of Tamar‘s conduct by withholding Selah. But Tamar, though wronged, was not free from blame in her mode of righting herself. The youthful indiscretion of Judah in forming an intermarriage with a Canaanitish family, without the concurrence of his brothers or his father, has been fruitful of crime. If this immorality goes on, the chosen family will be speedily absorbed in the surrounding paganism. Hence, we begin to see the necessity of an immediate removal to another land, where they may be kept more distinct from the native superstition. By the disclosure of Tamar Judah is brought to acknowledgment of his fault, and, we may infer, to repentance. His abstaining from all further sexual intercourse with her may be accepted as a proof of this. “A scarlet thread.” The right of primogeniture here manifests its importance. “Perez” - a breach. Slight incidents become the foundation of names, and are often the hinges on which great events turn. The minutest circumstances connected with the progenitors of the promised seed have a lasting interest.

Judah was at the close of his twenty-ninth year when Perez and Zerah were born. The dates in his family history may be arranged as underneath, on the supposition that the first child was born when the father was in his fourteenth year. This hypothesis is fairly allowable when we take into consideration not only other cases, but the early willfulness of Judah, and the example he gave to his children. The command also to be fruitful and multiply Genesis 35:11, which was given especially to Jacob, may have had a tendency to encourage early marriages. It is certain that the Jewish rabbis considered a man to have transgressed a divine precept who passed the age of twenty without being married. They also fixed the marriageable age for males at thirteen years and a day. King Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah when he was not more than twelve 2 Kings 16:2; 2 Kings 18:2; and King Josiah the father of Jehoiakim, when fourteen years of age 2 Kings 22:1; 2 Kings 23:36.

Judah 23:36.

13 years 6 months when Er was born.

Judah 14 years 4 12 months when Onan was born.

Judah 15 years 3 months when Shelah was born.

Judah 28 years 9 months when Perez was born.

Judah 42 years 3 months when Hezron was born to Perez.

Judah 43 years 2 months when Hamul was born.

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CHAPTER 39

Verses 1-23

- Joseph in Potiphar‘s House

According to our reckoning, Perez and Zerah were born when Judah was in his twenty-eighth year, and therefore, Joseph in his twenty-fourth. Here, then, we go back seven years to resume the story of Joseph.

Genesis 39:1-6

Joseph fares well with his first master. “Potiphar.” This is a racapitulation of the narrative in Genesis 12:3. “Beautiful in form and look” Genesis 29:17. This prepares the way for the following occurrence.

Genesis 39:7-10

Joseph resists the daily solicitations of his master‘s wife to lie with her. “None greater in this house than I.” He pleads the unreserved trust his master had reposed in him. He is bound by the law of honor, the law of chastity (this great evil), and the law of piety (sin against God). Joseph uses the common name of God in addressing this Egyptian. He could employ no higher pleas than the above.

Genesis 39:11-18

“At this day,” the day on which the occurrence now to be related took place. “To do his business.” He does not come in her way except at the call of duty. He hath brought in. She either does not condescend, or does not need to name her husband. “A Hebrew to mock us.” Her disappointment now provokes her to falsehood as the means of concealment and revenge. A Hebrew is still the only national designation proper to Joseph Genesis 14:13. Jacob‘s descendants had not got beyond the family. The term Israelite was therefore, not yet in use. The national name is designedly used as a term of reproach among the Egyptians Genesis 43:32. “To mock us,” - to take improper liberties, not only with me, but with any of the females in the house. “I cried with a loud voice.” This is intended to be the proof of her innocence Deuteronomy 22:24, Deuteronomy 22:27. “Left his garments by me;” not in her hand, which would have been suspicious.

Genesis 39:19-23

Her husband believes her story and naturally resents the supposed unfaithfulness of his slave. His treatment of him is mild. He puts him in ward, probably to stand his trial for the offence. The Lord does not forsake

the prisoner. He gives him favor with the governor of the jail. The same unlimited trust is placed in him by the governor as by his late master.

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CHAPTER 40

Verses 1-23

- Joseph in Prison

An uncomplaining patience and an unhesitating hopefulness keep the breast of Joseph in calm tranquillity. There is a God above, and that God is with him. His soul swerves not from this feeling. Meanwhile, new and distinguished prisoners are introduced into his place of confinement.

Genesis 40:1-4

The chief butler and chief baker, high officials in Pharaoh‘s court, come under the displeasure of their sovereign. “In the house of the captain of the guards.” It appears that this officer‘s establishment contained the keep in which Joseph and these criminals were confined. “Charged Joseph with them.” As Joseph was his slave, and these were state prisoners, he appointed him to wait upon them. It is probable that Joseph‘s character had been somewhat re-established with him during his residence in the prison.

Genesis 40:5-8

These prisoners dream, “each according to the interpretation of his dream,” the imagery of which was suited to indicate his future state. They were sad - anxious to know the meaning of these impressive dreams. “Why are your forces bad today?” Joseph keeps up his character of frank composure. “Do not interpretations belong to God?” In his past history he had learned that dreams themselves come from God. And when he adds, “Tell them now to me,” he intimates that God would enable him to interpret their dreams. Here again he uses the general name of God, which was common to him with the pagan.

Genesis 40:9-15

The chief butler now recites his dream. “Pressed them into Pharaoh‘s cup.” The imagery of the dream is not intended to intimate that Pharaoh drank only the fresh juice of the grape. It only expresses by a natural figure the source of wine, and possibly the duty of the chief butler to understand and superintend the whole process of its formation. Egypt was not only a corn, but a vine country. The interpretation of this dream was very obvious and natural; yet not without a divine intimation could it be known that the “three branches were three days.” Joseph, in the quiet confidence that his interpretation would prove correct, begs the chief butler to remember him and endeavor to procure his release. “Stolen, stolen was I.” He assures him

that he was not a criminal, and that his enslavement was an act of wrongful violence - a robbery by the strong hand. “From the land of the Hebrews;” a very remarkable expression, as it strongly favors the presumption that the Hebrews inhabited the country before Kenaan took possession of it. “I have not done aught.” Joseph pleads innocence, and claims liberation, not as an unmerited favor, but as a right. “The pit.” The pit without water seems to have been the primitive place of confinement for culprits.

Genesis 40:16-19

The chief baker is encouraged by this interpretation to tell his dream. “I also.” He anticipates a favorable answer, from the remarkable likeness of the dreams. “On my head.” It appears from the monuments of Egypt that it was the custom for men to carry articles on their heads. “All manner of baked meats” were also characteristic of a corn country. “Lift up thy head from upon thee.” This part of the interpretation proves its divine origin. And hang thee - thy body, after being beheaded. This was a constant warning to all beholders.

Genesis 40:20-23

The interpretations prove correct. “The birthday of Pharaoh.” It is natural and proper for men to celebrate with thanksgiving the day of their birth, as life is a pure and positive blessing. The benign Creator gives only a happy and precious form of existence to those whom he endows with the capacity of estimating its value. A birthday feast cannot be without a chief butler and a chief baker, and hence, the fate of these criminals must be promptly decided. “Lifted up the head;” a phrase of double meaning. The chief butler remembers not Joseph. This is a case of frequent occurrence in this nether world. But there is One above who does not forget him. He will deliver him at the proper time.

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CHAPTER 41

Verses 1-57

- Joseph Was Exalted

1. יאר *ye'or* "river, canal," mostly applied to the Nile. Some suppose the word to be Coptic.

2. אחוּ′ *āchû* "sedge, reed-grass, marsh-grass." This word is probably Coptic.

8. חרטמים *charṭumîym* ἐξηγηταὶ *exēgētai* ἱερογραμματεῖς *hierogrammateis* "sacred scribes, hieroglyphs". חרט a *chereṭ* "stylus," graving tool.

43. אברך′ *abrēk* הברך *habrēk* "bend the knee." In this sense it is put for *bārak* ברך imperative hiphil of it variously - "bow all, bow the head, cast thyself down".

45. פענח צפנת *tsāpenat -paʿnēach* Tsaphenath-pa‹neach, in the Septuagint ψονθομ-φανήχ *Psonthom -Fanēch* "Revelator occulti," Kimchi. This is founded on an attempted Hebrew derivation. Σωτήρ κόσμου *Sōtēr kosmou* in Oxford MS., "servator mundi," Jerome. These point to a Coptic origin. Recent Egyptologists give P-sont-em-ph-anh, "the-salvation-of-the-life or world." This is a high-flowing title, in keeping with Eastern phraseology. אסנת′ *âsnath* Asenath, perhaps belonging to Neith, or worshipper of Neith, a goddess corresponding to Athene of the Greeks. פוטי פרע *pôṭîy -peraʿ* Potiphera‹, seems to be a variation of פוטיפר *Pôṭîyphar* Potiphar Genesis 37:36. אן′ *ôn* or און′ *ôn* On =Oein, "light, sun;" on the monuments TA-RA, Heliopolis, בית שמש *bêyth shemesh* Jeremiah 43:13, "house of the sun". north of Memphis, on the east bank of the Nile.

51. מנשה *menasheh* Menasheh, "causing to forget".

52. אפרים′ *eprâyîm* Ephraim, "double fruit".

Here we have the double dream of Pharaoh interpreted by Joseph, in consequence of which he is elevated over all the land of Egypt.

Genesis 41:1-8

The dreams are recited. “By the river.” In the dream Pharaoh supposes himself on the banks of the Nile. “On rite green.” The original word denotes the reed, or marsh grass, on the banks of the Nile. The cow is a very significant emblem of fruitful nature among the Egyptians, the hieroglyphic symbol of the earth and of agriculture; and the form in which Isis the goddess of the earth was adored. “Dreamed a second time.” The repetition is designed to confirm the warning given, as Joseph afterward explains Genesis 41:32. Corn (grain) is the natural emblem of fertility and nurture. “Blasted with the east wind The east wind”. The east wind is any wind coming from the east of the meridian, and may be a southeast or a northeast, as well as a direct east. The Hebrews were accustomed to speak only of the four winds, and, therefore, must have used the name of each with great latitude. The blasting wind in Egypt is said to be usually from the southeast. “And, behold, it was a dream.” The impression was so distinct as to be taken for the reality, until he awoke and perceived that it was only a dream. “His spirit was troubled.” Like the officers in the prison Genesis 40:6, he could not get rid of the feeling that the twofold dream portended some momentous event. “The scribes” - the hieroglyphs, who belonged to the priestly caste, and whose primary business was to make hieroglyphic and other inscriptions; while they were accustomed to consult the stars, interpret dreams, practise soothsaying, and pursue the other occult arts. The sages; whose chief business was the cultivation of the various arts above mentioned, while the engraving or inscribing department strictly belonged to the hieroglyphs or scribes. “His dream;” the twofold dream. “Interpreted them” - the two dreams.

Genesis 41:9-13

The chief butler now calls Joseph to mind, and mentions his gift to Pharaoh. “My sins.” His offence against Pharaoh. His ingratitude in forgetting Joseph for two years does not perhaps occur to him as a sin. “A Hebrew lad.” The Egyptians were evidently well acquainted with the Hebrew race, at a time when Israel had only a family. “Him he hanged.” The phrase is worthy of note, as a specimen of pithy brevioquence. Him he declared that the dream foreboded that Pharaoh would hang.

Genesis 41:14-24

Pharaoh sends for Joseph, who is hastily brought from the prison. “He shaved.” The Egyptians were accustomed to shave the head and beard,

except in times of mourning (Herod. 2:32). “Canst hear a dream to interpret it” - needest only to hear in order to interpret it. “Not I God shall answer.” According to his uniform habit Joseph ascribes the gift that is in him to God. “To the peace of Pharaoh” - so that Pharaoh may reap the advantage. In form. This takes the place of “in look,” in the former account. Other slight variations in the terms occur. “And they went into them” - into their stomachs.

Genesis 41:25-36

Joseph now proceeds to interpret the dream, and offer counsel suitable to the emergency. “What the God is about to do.” The God, the one true, living, eternal God, in opposition to all false gods. “And because the dream was repeated.” This is explained to denote the certainty and immediateness of the event. The beautiful elucidation of the dream needs no comment. Joseph now naturally passes from the interpreter to the adviser. He is all himself on this critical occasion. His presence of mind never forsakes him. The openness of heart and readiness of speech, for which he was early distinguished, now stand him in good stead. His thorough self-command arises from spontaneously throwing himself, with all his heart, into the great national emergency which is before his mind. And his native simplicity of heart, practical good sense, anti force of character break forth into unasked, but not unaccepted counsel. “A man discreet” - intelligent, capable of understanding the occasion; wise, prudent, capable of acting accordingly. “Let Pharaoh proceed” - take the following steps: “Take the fifth” of the produce of the land. “Under the hand of Pharaoh.” Under his supreme control.

The measures here suggested to Pharaoh were, we must suppose in conformity with the civil institutions of the country. Thee exaction of a fifth, or two tithes, during the period of plenty, may have been an extraordinary measure, which the absolute power of the monarch enabled him to enforce for the public safety. The sovereign was probably dependent for his revenues on the produce of the crown lands, certain taxes on exports or imports, and occasional gifts or forced contributions from his subjects. This extraordinary fifth was, probably, of the last description, and was fully warranted by the coming emergency. The “gathering up of all the food” may imply that, in addition to the fifth, large purchases of corn were made by the government out of the surplus produce of the country.

Genesis 41:37-46

Pharaoh approves of his counsel, and selects him as “the discreet and wise man” for carrying it into effect. “In whom is the Spirit of God.” He acknowledges the gift that is in Joseph to be from God. “All my people behave” - dispose or order their conduct, a special meaning of this word, which usually signifies to kiss. “His ring.” His signet-ring gave Joseph the delegated power of the sovereign, and constituted him his prime minister or grand vizier. “Vestures of fine linen.” Egypt was celebrated for its flax, and for the fineness of its textures. The priests were arrayed in official robes of linen, and no man was allowed to enter a temple in a woolen garment (Herodotus ii. 37,81). “A gold chain about his neck.” This was a badge of office worn in Egypt by the judge and the prime minister. It had a similar use in Persia and Babylonia Daniel 5:7. “The second chariot.” Egypt was noted for chariots, both for peaceful and for warlike purposes (Herodotus ii. 108). The second in the public procession was assigned to Joseph. “Bow the knee.” The various explications of this proclamation agree in denoting a form of obeisance, with which Joseph was to be honored. I am Pharaoh, the king Genesis 12:15. “Without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot.” Thou art next to me, and without thee no man shall act or move. “Zaphenath-paneah.” Pharaoh designates him the preserver of life, as the interpreter of the dream and the proposer of the plan by which the country was saved from famine. He thus naturalizes him so far as to render his civil status compatible with his official rank. “Asenath.” The priests were the highest and most privileged class in Egypt. Intermarriage with this caste at once determined the social position of the wonderous foreigner. His father-in-law was priest of On, a city dedicated to the worship of the sun.

With our Western and modern habit we may at the first glance be surprised to find a stranger of a despised race suddenly elevated to the second place in the kingdom. But in ancient and Eastern governments, which were of a despotic character, such changes, depending on the will of the sovereign, were by no means unusual. Secondly, the conviction that “the Spirit of God was in” the mysterious stranger, was sufficient to overbear all opposing feelings or customs. And, lastly, it was assumed and acted on, as a self-evident fact, that the illustrious stranger could have no possible objection to be incorporated into the most ancient of nations, and allied with its noblest families. We may imagine that Joseph would find an insuperable difficulty in becoming a citizen of Egypt or a son-in-law of the priest of the sun. But we should not forget that the world was yet too young to have

arrived at the rigid and sharplydefined systems of polytheism or allotheism to which we are accustomed. Some gray streaks of a pure monotheism, of the knowledge of the one true God, still gleamed across the sky of human memory. Some faint traces of one common brotherhood among mankind still lingered in the recollections of the past. The Pharaoh of Abraham‘s day feels the power of him whose name is Yahweh Genesis 12:17. Abimelek acknowledges the God of Abraham and Isaac Genesis 20:3-7; Genesis 21:22-23; Genesis 26:28-29. And while Joseph is frank and faithful in acknowledging the true God before the king of Egypt, Pharaoh himself is not slow to recognize the man in whom the Spirit of God is. Having experienced the omniscience and omnipotence of Joseph‘s God, he was prepared, no doubt, not only himself to offer him such adoration as he was accustomed to pay to his national gods, but also to allow Joseph full liberty to worship the God of his fathers, and to bring up his family in that faith.

Joseph was now in his thirtieth year, and had consequently been thirteen years in Egypt, most part of which interval he had probably spent in prison. This was the age for manly service Numbers 4:3. He immediately enters upon his office.

Genesis 41:47-49

The fulfillment of the dream here commences. “By handfuls.” Not in single stalks or grains, but in handfuls compared with the former yield. It is probable that a fifth of the present unprecedented yield was sufficient for the sustenance of the inhabitants. Another fifth was rendered to the government, and the remaining three fifths were stored up or sold to the state or the foreign broker at a low price. “He left numbering because there was no number.” This denotes that the store was immense, and not perhaps that modes of expressing the number failed.

Genesis 41:50-52

Two sons were born to Joseph during the seven years of plenty. “Menasseh.” God made him forget his toil and his father‘s house. Neither absolutely. He remembered his toils in the very utterance of this sentence. And he tenderly and intensely remembered his father‘s house. But he is grateful to God, who builds him a home, with all its soothing joys, even in the land of his exile. His heart again responds to long untasted joys. “Fruitful in the land of my affliction.” It is still, we perceive, the land of his affliction. But why does no message go from Joseph to his mourning

father? For many reasons. First, he does not know the state of things at home. Secondly, he may not wish to open up the dark and bloody treachery of his brothers to his aged parent. But, thirdly, he bears in mind those early dreams of his childhood. All his subsequent experience has confirmed him in the belief that they will one day be fulfilled. But that fulfillment implies the submission not only of his brothers, but of his father. This is too delicate a matter for him to interfere in. He will leave it entirely to the all-wise providence of his God to bring about that strange issue. Joseph, therefore, is true to his life-long character. He leaves all in the hand of God, and awaits in anxious, but silent hope, the days when he will see his father and his brethren.

Genesis 41:53-57

The commencement and the extent of the famine are now noted. "As Joseph had said." The fulfillment is as perfect in the one part as in the other. "In all the lands" - all the lands adjacent to Egypt; such as Arabia and Palestine. The word all in popular discourse is taken in a relative sense, to be ascertained by the context. We are not aware that this famine was felt beyond the distance of Hebron. "Go unto Joseph" Pharaoh has had reason to trust Joseph more and more, and now he adheres to his purpose of sending his people to him. "All the face of the land of Egypt." "And Joseph opened all places in which there was food" - all the stores in every city. "And sold unto Mizaim." The stores under Pharaoh's hand were public property, obtained either by lawful taxation or by purchase. It was a great public benefit to sell this grain, that had been providently kept in store, at a moderate price, and thus preserve the lives of a nation during a seven years' famine. "All the land." This is to be understood of the countries in the neighborhood of Egypt. Famines in these countries were not unusual. We have read already of two famines in Palestine that did not extend to Egypt Genesis 12:10; Genesis 26:1.

The fertility of Egypt depends on the rise of the waters of the Nile to a certain point, at which they will reach all the country. If it fall short of that point, there will be a deficiency in the crops proportioned to the deficiency in the rise. The rise of the Nile depends on the tropical rains by which the lake is supplied from which it flows. These rains depend on the clouds wafted by the winds from the basin of the Mediterranean Sea. The amount of these piles of vapor will depend on the access and strength of the solar heat producing evaporation from the surface of that inland sea. The same

cause, therefore, may withhold rain from central Africa, and from all the lands that are watered from the Mediterranean. The duration of the extraordinary plenty was indeed wonderful. But such periods of excess are generally followed by corresponding periods of deficiency over the same area. This prepares the way for the arrival of Joseph‘s kindred in Egypt.

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CHAPTER 42

Verses 1-38

- Joseph and Ten of His Brethren

1. שֹׁבר *sheber* "fragment, crumb, hence, grain" בר *bar* "pure," "winnowed," hence, "corn" (grain).

6. שׁליט *shallîyṭ* "ruler, governor, hence," Sultan. Not elsewhere found in the Pentateuch.

25. כלי *kelîy* "vessel," here any portable article in which grain may be conveyed. שׂק *śaq* "sack," the very word which remains in our language to this day. אמתחת *amtachath* "bag′".

Twenty years, the period of Joseph‘s long and anxious waiting, have come to an end. The dreams of his boyhood are now at length to be fulfilled. The famine has reached the chosen family, and they look at one another perplexed and irresolute, not knowing what to do.

Genesis 42:1-5

The aged Jacob is the only man of counsel. "Behold, I have heard there is grain in Mizraim:" go down and buy. The ten brothers are sent, and Benjamin, the youngest, is retained, not merely because of his youth, for he was now twenty-four years of age, but because he was the son of his father‘s old age, the only son of Rachel now with him, and the only full brother of the lost Joseph. "Lest mischief befall him," and so no child of Rachel would be left. "Among those that went." The dearth was widespread in the land of Kenaan.

Genesis 42:6-17

The ten brothers meet with a rough reception from the lord of the land. "The governor" - the sultan. This, we see, is a title of great antiquity in Egypt or Arabia. Joseph presided over the cornmarket of the kingdom. "Bowed down to him with their faces to the earth." Well might Joseph think of those never-to-be-forgotten dreams in which the sheaves and stars bowed down to him. "And knew them." How could he fail to remember the ten full-grown men of his early days, when they came before him with all their peculiarities of feature, attitude, and mother tongue. "And he made himself strange unto them." All that we know of Joseph‘s character heretofore, and

throughout this whole affair, goes to prove that his object in all his seemingly harsh treatment was to get at their hearts, to test their affection toward Benjamin, and to bring them to repent of their unkindness to himself.

"They knew not him." Twenty years make a great change in a youth of seventeen. And besides, with his beard and head shaven, his Egyptian attire, his foreign tongue, and his exalted position, who could have recognized the stripling whom, twenty years ago, they had sold as a slave? "Spies are ye." This was to put a color of justice on their detention. To see the nakedness of the land, not its unfortified frontier, which is a more recent idea, but its present impoverishment from the famine. "Sons of one man are we." It was not likely that ten sons of one man would be sent on the hazardous duty of spies. "And behold the youngest is with our father this day." It is intensely interesting to Joseph to hear that his father and full brother are still living. "And one is not." Time has assuaged all their bitter feelings, both of exasperation against Joseph and of remorse for their unbrotherly conduct. This little sentence, however, cannot be uttered by them, or heard by Joseph, without emotion. "By the life of Pharaoh." Joseph speaks in character, and uses an Egyptian asseveration. "Send one of you." This proposal is enough to strike terror into their hearts. The return of one would be a heavy, perhaps a fatal blow to their father. And how can one brave the perils of the way? They cannot bring themselves to concur in this plan. Sooner will they all go to prison, as accordingly they do. Joseph is not without a strong conviction of incumbent duty in all this. He knows he has been put in the position of lord over his brethren in the foreordination of God, and he feels bound to make this authority a reality for their moral good.

Genesis 42:18-25

After three days, Joseph reverses the numbers, allowing nine to return home, and retaining one. "This do and live." Joseph, notwithstanding the arbitrary power which his office enabled him to exercise, proves himself to be free from caprice and unnecessary severity. He affords them a fair opportunity of proving their words true, before putting them to death on suspicion of espionage. "The God do I fear." A singular sentence from the lord paramount of Egypt! It implies that the true God was not yet unknown in Egypt. We have heard the confession of this great truth already from the lips of Pharaoh Genesis 41:38-39. But it intimates to the brothers the

astonishing and hopeful fact that the grand vizier serves the same great Being whom they and their fathers have known and worshipped; and gives them a plain hint that they will be dealt with according to the just law of heaven.

"Carry grain for your houses." The governor then is touched with some feeling for their famishing households. The brothers, though honoring their aged father as the patriarch of their race, had now their separate establishments. Twelve households had to be supplied with bread. The journey to Egypt was not to be undertaken more than once a year if possible, as the distance from Hebron was upwards of two hundred miles. Hence, the ten brothers had with them all their available beasts of burden, with the needful retinue of servants. We need not be surprised that these are not especially enumerated, as it is the manner of Scripture to leave the secondary matters to the intelligence and experience of the reader, unless, as in the case of Abraham's three hundred and eighteen trained servants, they happen to be of essential moment in the process of events. "Your youngest brother." Joseph longs to see his full brother alive, whom he left at home a child of four summers. "Verily guilty are we concerning our brother."

Their affliction is beginning to bear the fruit of repentance. "Because we saw the distress of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear." How vividly is the scene of Joseph's sale here brought before us. It now appears that he besought them to spare him, and they would not hear! "This distress." Retribution has come at last. "His blood is required." Reuben justly upbraids them with their hardness of heart. Their brother's blood is required; for murder was intended, and when he was sold his death was pretended. "The interpreter was betwixt them." The dragoman was employed in holding conversation with them. But Joseph heard the spontaneous expressions of remorse, coming unprompted from their lips. The fountain of affection is deeply stirred. He cannot repress the rising tear. He has to retire for a time to recover his composure. He now takes, not Reuben, who was not to blame, but Simon, the next oldest, and binds him before them: a speaking act. He then gives orders to supply them with corn (grain), deposit their money in their sacks without their knowledge, and furnish them with provision for the way. Joseph feels, perhaps, that he cannot take money from his father. He will pay for the corn out of his own

funds. But he cannot openly return the money to his brothers without more explanation than he wishes at present to give.

Genesis 42:26-34

The nine brothers return home and record their wonderful adventure. “In the inn;” the lodge or place where they stopped for the night. This place was not yet perhaps provided with even the shelter of a roof. It was merely the usual place of halting. They would probably occupy six or seven days on the journey. Apparently at the first stage one opened his sack to give provender to his ass. The discovery of the silver in its mouth strikes them with terror. In a strange land and with an uneasy conscience they are easily alarmed. It was not convenient or necessary to open all the bags on the way, and so they make no further discovery.

Genesis 42:35-38

Upon emptying the other sacks all the silver turns up, to their great amazement and consternation. Jacob laments the loss of his son. Reuben offers two of his sons to Jacob as pledges for Benjamin, to be slain if he did not bring him back in safety. The sorrowing parent cannot yet bring himself to consent to Benjamin‘s departure on this hazardous journey. “And ye shall bring down.” Jacob either speaks here in the querulous tone of afflicted old age, or he had come to know or suspect that his brothers had some hand in the disappearance of Joseph.

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CHAPTER 43

Verses 1-34

- Joseph and His Eleven Brethren

11. דבש *debash* "honey," from the bee, or sirup from the juice of the grape. בטנים *bôṭen* "pistachio nuts." שׁקד *shâqêd* "almond tree;" related: לוּז *lûz* Some refer the former to the fruit, לוּז "awake." The tree is also called the latter to the tree.

The eleven brothers are now to bow down before Joseph.

Genesis 43:1-10

The famine was severe. The pressure began to be felt more and more. The twelve households had at length consumed all the corn they had purchased, and the famine still pressed heavily upon them. Jacob directs them to return. "And Judah said." Reuben had offended, and could not come forward. Simon and Levi had also grieved their father by the treacherous slaughter of the Shekemites. Judah therefore, speaks. "Is your father yet alive?" "Have ye a brother?" These questions do not come out in the previous narrative, on account of its brevity. But how pointed they are, and how true to Joseph's yearnings! They explain how it was that these particulars came out in the replies of the brothers to Joseph. For the charge of being spies did not call for them in exculpation. Judah now uses all the arguments the case would admit of, to persuade his father to allow Benjamin to go with them. He closes with the emphatic sentence, If I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me have sinned against thee all my days; that is, let me bear the blame, and of course the penalty of having sinned against thee in so tender a point. Both Judah and his father knew that this was a matter that touched the interest of the former very deeply. Reuben was bearing the blame of a grievous sin, and had no hope of the birthright. Simon and Levi were also bearing blame, and, besides, had not the natural right, which belonged only to Reuben. Judah came next, and a failure in securing the safe return of Benjamin might set him also aside. He undertakes to run this risk.

Genesis 43:11-15

Jacob at length reluctantly sends Benjamin with them. He employs all means, as is usual with him, of securing a favorable result. "The best of the land" - the sung or celebrated products of the land. "A little honey."

Palestine abounded with bee honey. A sirup obtained by boiling down the juice of the grape was also called by the same name, and formed an article of commerce. “Nuts.” These are supposed to be pistachio nuts, from the pistacia vera, a tree resembling the terebinth, a native of Anatolia, Syria, and Palestine. “Almonds.” The almond tree buds or flowers earlier in the spring than other trees. It is a native of Palestine, Syria, and Persia. For the other products see Genesis 37:25. “Other silver;” not double silver, but a second sum for the new purchase. “God Almighty” - the Great Spirit, who can dispose the hearts of men as he pleases. Jacob looks up to heaven for a blessing, while he uses the means. “If I am bereaved, I am bereaved.” This is the expression of acquiescence in whatever may be the will of Providence. “Double silver,” - what was returned and what was to pay for a second supply of corn.

Genesis 43:16-18

The invitation into Joseph‘s house fills the brothers with alarm. “Saw with them Benjamin.” This was an unspeakable relief to Joseph, who was afraid that his full brother, also the favorite of his father, might have incurred the envy and persecution of the brothers. “Brought the men to Joseph‘s house.” This he eventually did, but not until after the conference between him and them took place. The men were afraid of a plot to rob them of their liberty and property.

Genesis 43:19-25

They are encouraged by the steward of Joseph‘s house to lay aside their fears, and prepare their present. “Spake to him at the door of the house.” This was, of course, before they entered. “When we came to the inn.” The relater is prone to lump matters in the narration, for the sake of brevity. They began to “open their bags” at the first lodging-place, and finished the process at the last when they got home. Other silver. This explains the phrase “second silver” in Genesis 43:12. “Peace be to you.” Be at rest. All is well. Your God. The steward of Joseph expresses himself as one who fears and trusts God, the God of the Hebrews, who had displayed his omniscience and omnipotence in Egypt. “He brought out unto them Simon.” While they still linger at the entrance, the considerate steward bethought himself of bringing out Simon to them, which reassured their hearts, and induced them to enter willingly. He now succeeds therefore, in bringing them in, and then bestows upon them the usual attentions of Eastern hospitality. They now “make ready their present.”

Genesis 43:26-34

They are now entertained by Joseph. They brought the present, and made a lowly obeisance before him. “They bent the head.” See Genesis 24:26. “God be gracious unto thee, my son.” His kind treatment of Benjamin, on whose presence he had so much insisted, was calculated to reassure the brothers. The latter was born in his thirteenth year, and therefore, he was entitled to assume the paternal style in regard to him. Joseph still appeals with a natural and unconstrained reverence to his own God. “And Joseph hastened away.” The little touch of tenderness he had involuntarily thrown into his address to Benjamin, is too much for his feelings, which yearn toward his brother, and he is obliged to retreat to his chamber to conceal his tears and compose his countenance. “They set for him by himself.” As the governor, or as connected by affinity with the priestly caste, Joseph does not eat with the other Egyptians. The Egyptians cannot eat with the Hebrews. “That is an abomination to the Mizrites.” For the Hebrews partook of the flesh of kine, both male and female.

But Herodotus informs us (ii. 41), that “male kine, if clean, are used by the Egyptians, but the females they are not allowed to sacrifice, since they are sacred to Isis.” And he adds that “a native of Egypt will not kiss a Greek, use his knife, his spit, or his cauldron, or taste the flesh cut with a Greek knife.” They considered all foreigners unclean, and therefore, refused to eat with them (see Rawlinson‘s Herodotus on p. q.). They sat in his presence; arranged according to the order of their birth, to their great amazement. Egypt was to them a land of wonders, and Egypt‘s sultan a man of wonder. “Benjamin‘s mess.” The honored guest was distinguished by a larger or daintier portion of the fare (1 Samuel 9:23-24; Homer, ii. 7,321). A double portion was assigned to the Spartan kings. The fivefold division was prominent in Egyptian affairs Genesis 41:34; Genesis 45:22; Genesis 47:2, Genesis 47:24, Genesis 47:26. “And were merry.” They drank freely, so as to be exhilarated, because their cares were dissipated by the kindness they were receiving, the presence of Simon, and the attention paid to Benjamin.

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CHAPTER 44

Verses 1-34

- The Ten Brothers Were Tested

Joseph has had the satisfaction of seeing his brother Benjamin safe and well. He has heard his brothers acknowledging their guilt concerning himself. He resolves to put their attachment to Benjamin, and the genuineness of their change of disposition, to a test that will at the same time expose Benjamin to no hazard.

Genesis 44:1-5

And my cup. - Besides returning each man‘s money as before, a silver cup of Joseph‘s is put in Benjamin‘s bag, after which, when daylight comes, they are dismissed. They are scarcely out of the town when Joseph‘s steward is ordered to overtake them, and charge them with stealing the cup. “And whereby indeed he divineth.” Divining by cups, we learn from this, was a common custom in Egypt (Herodotus ii. 83). It is here mentioned to enhance the value of the cup. Whether Joseph really practised any sort of divination cannot be determined from this passage.

Genesis 44:6-12

The cup is found in Benjamin‘s bag. “Spake unto them these words.” The words of Joseph, supplying of course the mention of the cup which is expressed in the text only by the pronoun this. “We brought back to thee.” Silver that we might have retained, and to which you made no claim when we tendered it, we brought back. How or why should we therefore, steal silver? “Now also according to your words let it be.” He adopts their terms with a mitigation. He with whom the cup is found shall become a slave for life, and the rest be acquitted. The steward searches from the oldest to the youngest. The cup is found where it was put.

Genesis 44:13-17

“They rent their garments;” the natural token of a sorrow that knows no remedy. “And Judah went.” He had pledged himself for the safety of Benjamin to his father. And he was yet there; awaiting no doubt the result which he anticipated. “They fell before him on the earth.” It is no longer a bending of the head or bowing of the body, but the posture of deepest humiliation. How deeply that early dream penetrated into the stern reality! “Wot ye not that such a man as I doth certainly divine?” Joseph keeps up the show of resentment for a little longer, and brings out from Judah the

most pathetic plea of its kind that ever was uttered. “The God,” the great and only God, “hath found out the iniquity of thy servants;” in our dark and treacherous dealing with our brother. “Behold, we are servants to my lord.” He resigns himself and all to perpetual bondage, as the doom of a just God upon their still-remembered crime. “He shall be my servant; and ye, go up in peace to your father.” Now is the test applied with the nicest adjustment. Now is the moment of agony and suspense to Joseph. Will my brothers prove true? says he within himself. Will Judah prove adequate to the occasion? say we. His pleading with his father augured well.

Verse 18-34

“And Judah came near unto him.” He is going to surrender himself as a slave for life, that Benjamin may go home with his brothers, who are permitted to depart. “Let thy servant now speak a word in the ears of my lord.” There is nothing here but respectful calmness of demeanor. “And let not thine anger burn against thy servant.” He intuitively feels that the grand vizier is a man of like feelings with himself. He will surmount the distinction of rank, and stand with him on the ground of a common humanity. “For so art thou as Pharaoh.” Thou hast power to grant or withhold my request. This forms, the exordium of the speech. Then follows the plea. This consists in a simple statement of the facts, which Judah expects to have its native effect upon a rightly-constituted heart. We will not touch this statement, except to explain two or three expressions. A young lad - a comparative youth. “Let me set mine eyes upon him” - regard him with favor and kindness. “He shall leave his father and he shall die.” If he were to leave his father, his father would die. Such is the natural interpretation of these words, as the paternal affection is generally stronger than the filial. “And now let thy servant now abide instead of the lad a servant to my lord.” Such is the humble and earnest petition of Judah. He calmly and firmly sacrifices home, family, and birthright, rather than see an aged father die of a broken heart.

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CHAPTER 45

Verses 1-28

- Joseph Made Himself Known to His Brethren

geshem גשם Arabias related perhaps to) *gôshen* Goshen, Gesem גשן .10
a region on the borders of Egypt and Arabia, near the gulf ,(”“rain, shower
.of Suez

The appeal of Judah is to Joseph irresistible. The repentance of his brothers, and their attachment to Benjamin, have been demonstrated in the most satisfactory manner. This is all that Joseph sought. It is evident, throughout the whole narrative, that he never aimed at exercising any supremacy over his brothers. As soon as he has obtained an affecting proof of the right disposition of his brothers, he conceals himself no longer. And the speech of Judah, in which, no doubt, his brothers concurred, does equal credit to his head and heart.

Genesis 45:1-15

Joseph now reveals to his brothers the astonishing fact that he himself, their long-lost brother, stands before them. “He could not refrain himself.” Judah has painted the scene at home to the life; and Joseph can hold out no longer. “Have every man out from me.” Delicacy forbids the presence of strangers at this unrestrained outburst of tender emotion among the brothers. Besides, the workings of conscience, bringing up the recollections of the past, and the errors, to which some reference is now unavoidable, are not to be unveiled to the public eye. “He lifted up his voice in weeping.” The expression of the feelings is free and uncontrolled in a simple and primitive state of society. This prevails still in the East. And Mizraim heard. The Egyptians of Joseph‘s house would hear, and report to others, this unusual utterance of deep feeling. “I am Joseph.” The natural voice, the native tongue, the long-remembered features, would, all at once, strike the apprehension of the brothers.

The remembrance of their crime, the absolute power of Joseph, and the justice of revenge, would rush upon their minds. No wonder they were silent and troubled at his presence. “Is my father yet alive?” This question shows where Joseph‘s thoughts were. He had been repeatedly assured of his father‘s welfare. But the long absence and the yearning of a fond heart bring the question up again. It was reassuring to the brethren, as it was far

away from any thought of their fault or their punishment. “Come near unto me.” Joseph sees the trouble of his brothers, and discerns its cause. He addresses them a second time, and plainly refers to the fact of their having sold him. He points out that this was overruled of God to the saving of life; and, hence, that it was not they, but God who had mercifully sent him to Egypt to preserve all their lives. “For these two years.” Hence, we perceive that the sons of Jacob obtained a supply, on the first occasion, which was sufficient for a year. “To leave to you a remnant in the land.”

This is usually and most naturally referred to a surviving portion of their race. “Father to Pharaoh;” a second author of life to him. Having touched very slightly on their transgression, and endeavored to divert their thoughts to the wonderful providence of God displayed in the whole affair, he lastly preoccupies their minds with the duty and necessity of bringing down their father and all their families to dwell in Egypt. “In the land of Goshen.” This was a pasture land on the borders of Egypt and Arabia, perhaps at some distance from the Nile, and watered by the showers of heaven, like their own valleys. He then appeals to their recollections and senses, whether he was not their very brother Joseph. “My mouth that speaketh unto you;” not by an interpreter, but with his own lips, and in their native tongue. Having made this needful and reassuring explanation, he breaks through all distance, and falls upon Benjamin‘s neck and kisses him, and all his other brothers; after which their hearts are soothed, and they speak freely with him.

Genesis 45:16-20

The intelligence that Joseph‘s brethren are come reaches the ears of Pharaoh, and calls forth a cordial invitation to come and settle in Egypt. “It was good in the eyes of Pharaoh.” They highly esteemed Joseph on his own account; and that he should prove to be a member of a respectable family, and have the pleasure of again meeting with his nearest relatives, were circumstances that afforded them a real gratification. “The good of the land of Mizraim.” The good which it produces. Wagons; two-wheeled cars, fit for driving over the rough country, where roads were not formed. “Let not your eye care for your stuff;” your houses, or pieces of furniture which must be left behind. The family of Jacob thus come to Egypt, not by conquest or purchase, but by hospitable invitation, as free, independent visitors or settlers. As they were free to come or not, so were they free to stay or leave.

Genesis 45:21-24

The brothers joyfully accept the hospitable invitation of Pharaoh, and set about the necessary arrangements for their journey. “The sons of Israel;” including Joseph, who had his own part to perform in the proposed arrangement. “At the mouth of Pharaoh;” as he had authorized him to do. “Changes of raiment;” fine raiment for change on a high or happy day. To Benjamin he gives special marks of fraternal affection, which no longer excite any jealous feeling among the brothers, as the reasonableness of them is obvious. “Fall out.” The original word means to be stirred by any passion, whether fear or anger, and interpreters explain it as they conceive the circumstances and the context require. The English version corresponds with the Septuagint ὀργίζεσθε *orgizesthe* and with Onkelos. It refers, perhaps, to the little flashes of heat, impatience, and contention that are accustomed to disturb the harmony of companions in the East, who behave sometimes like overgrown children. Such ebullitions often lead to disastrous consequences. Joseph‘s exile arose from petty jealousies among brethren.

Genesis 45:25-28

The returning brothers inform their father of the existence and elevation of Joseph in Egypt. The aged patriarch is overcome for the moment, but at length awakens to a full apprehension of the joyful news. His heart fainted; ceased to beat for a time, fluttered, sank within him. The news was too good for him to venture all at once to believe it. But the words of Joseph, which they recite, and the wagons which he had sent, at length lead to the conviction that it must be indeed true. He is satisfied. His only thought is to go and see Joseph before he dies. A sorrow of twenty-two years‘ standing has now been wiped away.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 46

Verses 1-34

- Jacob Goes Down to Egypt

9. פלוא *pallû'* Pallu, "distinguished". כרמי *karmîy* Karmi, "vine-dresser". חצרון *chetsrôn* Chetsron, of the "court," or "village

10. ימואל *yemû'êl* Jemuel, "day of El". ימין *yâmîyn* Jamin, "right hand". אהד *ôhad* Ohad, "joining together'. יכין *yâkîyn* Jakin, "he shall establish". צחר *tsôchar* Tsochar, "whiteness

11. גרשון *gêreshôn* Gereshon, "expelling". קהת *qehâth* Qehath, "assembly". מרארי *merârîy* Merari, "flowing, bitter

12. חמול *châmûl* Chamul, "pitied, treated with mercy

13. תולע *tôlâʿ* Tola‹, "worm, scarlet". פוה *pû'âh* Puvvah, "mouth"? יוב *yôb* Job, "enemy". שמרון *śîmrôn* Shimron, "watch

14. סרד *sered* Sered, "fear". אלון *êlôn* Elon, "oak'. יחלאל *yachle'êl* Jachleel, "El shall sicken or inspire with hope.

16. צפיון *tsîphyôn* Tsiphjon, "watcher". חגי *chaggîy* Chaggi, "festive". עצבון *etsbôn* Etsbon, "toiling'? ערי *êrîy* ‹Eri,ʿ. שוני *shûnîy* Shuni, "quiet". ארודי *ărôdîy* Arodi, rover'? אראלי *ar'êlîy* Areli, "lion of El'. "watcher"

17. ימנה *yîmnâh* Jimnah, "prosperity". ישוה *yîshvâh* Jishvah, ישוי *yîshvîy* Jishvi, "even, level. בריעה *berîyʿâh* Beri‹ah, "in evil". שרח *śerach* Serach, "overflow". חבר *cheber* Cheber, "fellowship". מלכיאל *malkîy'êl* Malkiel, "king of EL"

21. בלע *belaʿ* Bela‹, "devouring". בכר *beker* Beker, "a young camel". גרא *gêrâ'* Gerah, "a grain". אשבל *ashbêl* Ashbel, "short'? אחי *êchîy* Echi, "brotherly'. נעמן *naʿămân* Na‹aman, "pleasant". ראש *rô'sh* Rosh, "head". ארד *ard* Ard,' חפים *chûppîym* Chuppim, "covering, מפים *mûppîym* Muppim, "fugitive, rover".

”.*chûshîym* Chushim, “haste צֹשִׁים .23

”.*gûnîy* Guni, “dyed גּוּנִי ”.*yachtse'êl* Jachtseel, “El will divide יַחְצְאֵל .24
”.*śîllêm* Shillem, “retribution שִׁלֵּם ”.*yêtser* Jetser, “form יֵצֶר

The second dream of Joseph is now to receive its fulfillment. His father is to bow down before him. His mother is dead. It is probable that also Leah is deceased. The figure, by which the dream shadows forth the reality, is fulfilled, when the spirit of it receives its accomplishment.

Genesis 46:1-4

Jacob arriving at Beer-sheba is encouraged by a revelation from God. Beer-sheba may be regarded as the fourth scene of Abraham‘s abode in the land of promise. “Offered sacrifices.” He had gathered from the words of the Lord to Abraham Genesis 15:13, and the way in which the dreams of Joseph were realized in the events of Providence, that his family were to descend into Egypt. He felt therefore, that in taking this step he was obeying the will of Heaven. Hence, he approaches God in sacrifices at an old abode of Abraham and Isaac, before he crosses the border to pass into Egypt. On this solemn occasion God appears to him in the visions of the night. He designates himself EL the Mighty, and the God of his father. The former name cheers him with the thought of an all-sufficient Protector. The latter identifies the speaker with the God of his father, and therefore, with the God of eternity, of creation, and of covenant. “Fear not to go down into Mizraim.” This implies both that it was the will of God that he should go down to Egypt, and that he would be protected there. “A great nation.”

Jacob had now a numerous family, of whom no longer one was selected, but all were included in the chosen seed. He had received the special blessing and injunction to be fruitful and multiply Genesis 28:3; Genesis 35:11. The chosen family is to be the beginning of the chosen nation. “I will go down with thee.” The “I” is here emphatic, as it is also in the assurance that he will bring him up in the fullness of time from Egypt. If Israel in the process of growth from a family to a nation had remained among the Kenaanites, he would have been amalgamated with the nation by intermarriage, and conformed to its vices. By his removal to Egypt he is kept apart from the demoralizing influence of a nation, whose iniquity became so great as to demand a judicial extirpation Genesis 15:16. He is also kept from sinking into an Egyptian by the fact that a shepherd, as he

was, is an abomination to Egypt; by his location in the comparatively high land of Goshen, which is a border land, not naturally, but only politically, belonging to Egypt; and by the reduction of his race to a body of serfs, with whom that nation would not condescend to intermingle. "Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes." His long-lost son shall be present to perform the last offices to him when deceased.

Genesis 46:5-7

The descent into Egypt is now described. "His daughters, and his sons' daughters." In the following list only one daughter of Jacob is mentioned, Dinah, and only one son's daughter, Serah. It is possible, but not probable, that there were more daughters than these at the time in his family. But even if there were no others, the plural is adopted in order to correspond with the general form of classification, from which the one daughter and the one granddaughter are merely accidental deviations. The same principle applies to the sons of Dan Genesis 46:23, and to other instances in Scripture 1 Chronicles 2:8, 1 Chronicles 2:42.

Verse 2:42.

8-27

The list given here of the family of Jacob as it came down into Egypt is not to be identified with a list of their descendants two hundred and fifty years after, contained in Genesis 46:7 distinguished from sons' sons and other descendants.

"Jacob and his sons." From this expression we perceive the progenitor is to be included with the sons among those who descended to Egypt. This also is historically exact. For the sake of clearness it is proper here to state the approximate ages of these heads of Israel at the time of the descent. Jacob himself was 130 years of age Genesis 47:9. Joseph was in his thirtieth year when he stood before Pharaoh to interpret his dreams and receive his commission as governor-general of Egypt, Genesis 41:46. At the end of the second year of the famine nine full years were added to his life. He was therefore, we may suppose, 39 years old when Jacob arrived in Egypt, and born when his father was 91. As we conceive that he was born in the fifteenth year of Jacob's sojourn in Padan-aram, and Reuben in the eighth, we infer that Reuben was at the time of the descent into Egypt seven years older than Joseph, or 46, Simon 45, Levi 44, Judah 43, Dan about 43, Naphtali about 42, Gad about 42, Asher about 41, Issakar about 41, Zebulun

about 40, Dinah about 39, Benjamin about 26. "Jacob's first-born Reuben." This refers to the order of nature, without implying that the rights of first-birth were to be secured to Reuben 1 Chronicles 5:1-2.

Genesis 46:9-15

The sons of Leah and their descendants are here enumerated. Reuben has four sons, who appear without variation in the other two lists Numbers 26:5-6; 1 Chronicles 5:3. Of the six sons of Simon, Ohad appears in the other lists, and Nemuel and Zerah appear as colloquial variations of Jemuel and Zohar. Such diversities in oral language are usual to this day in the East and elsewhere. "Son of a Kenaanitess." This implies that intermarriage with the Kenaanites was the exception to the rule in the family of Jacob. Wives might have been obtained from Hebrew, Aramaic, or at all events Shemite tribes who were living in their vicinity. The three sons of Levi are common to all the lists, with the slight variation of Gershom for Gershon. The sons of Judah are also unvaried. We are here reminded that Er and Onon died in the land of Kenaan Genesis 46:12, and of course did not come down into Egypt. The extraordinary circumstances of Judah's family are recorded in Genesis 46:16-18

Next are enumerated the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid. The seven sons of Gad recur in Genesis 46:19-22

The sons of Rachel. It is remarkable that she alone is called the wife of Jacob, because she was the wife of his choice. Yet the children of the beloved, we perceive, are not placed before those of the less loved Deuteronomy 21:15-16. Joseph's two sons are the same in all lists. Of the ten sons of Benjamin only five appear in Numbers Numbers 26:38-41, Bela and Ashbel being the same, and Ahiram, Shupham, and Hupham, being variants of Ehi, Muppim, and Huppim. In two hundred and fifty years the other five have become extinct. Naaman and Ard seem to have died early, as two sons of Bela, named after them, take their places as heads of families or clans. In Chronicles 1 Chronicles 7:6-12 we have two lists of his descendants which do not seem to be primary, as they do not agree with either of the former lists, or with one another, though some of the names recur. The descendants of Rachel are fourteen - two sons and twelve grandsons.

Genesis 46:23-25

The sons of Bilhah, Rachel‘s handmaid, come last. Hushim, the son of Dan, appears in Numbers Numbers 26:42 as Shuham, and perhaps in Chronicles 1 Chronicles 7:12 in an obscure connection. The four sons of Naphtali occur in all the lists, Shallum being the variant in Chronicles 1 Chronicles 7:13 for Shillem. The descendants of Bilhah are seven - two sons and five grandsons.

Genesis 46:26-27

All the souls that went with Jacob into Egypt, “that came out of his loins,” were eleven sons, one daughter, fifty grandchildren, and four great-grandsons; in all, sixty-six. Jacob, Joseph and his two sons, are four; and thus, all the souls belonging to the family of Jacob which went into Egypt were seventy. This account, with its somewhat intricate details, is expressed with remarkable brevity and simplicity.

The Septuagint gives seventy-five as the sum-total, which is made out by inserting Makir the son, and Gilead the grandson of Menasseh, Shuthelah and Tahan, sons, and Edom or Eran, a grandson of Ephraim Deuteronomy 32:8. This curious sentence may have an immediate reference to the providential distribution of the human family over the habitable parts of the earth, according to the number of his church, and of his dispensation of grace; but at all events it conveys the great and obvious principle that all things whatsoever in the affairs of men are antecedently adapted with the most perfect exactitude to the benign reign of grace already realized in the children of God, and yet to be extended to all the sons and daughters of Adam.

Genesis 46:28-34

The settlement in Goshen is now narrated. “Judah he sent before him.” We have already seen why the three older sons of Jacob were disqualified for taking the lead in important matters relating to the family. “To lead the way before him into Goshen” - to get the requisite directions from Joseph, and then conduct the immigrants to their destined resting-place. “And went up.” Egypt was the valley of the Nile, and therefore, a low country. Goshen was comparatively high, and therefore, at some distance from the Nile and the sea. “And he appeared unto him.” A phrase usually applied to the appearance of God to men, and intended to intimate the unexpectedness of the sight, which now came before the eyes of Jacob. “I will go up.” In a courtly sense, to approach the residence of the sovereign is to go up. Joseph intends to make the “occupation” of his kindred a prominent part of his

communication to Pharaoh, in order to secure their settlement in Goshen. This he considers desirable, on two grounds: first, because Goshen was best suited for pasture; and secondly, because the chosen family would thus be comparatively isolated from Egyptian society.

The two nations were in some important respects mutually repulsive. The idolatrous and superstitious customs of the Egyptians were abhorrent to a worshipper of the true God; and "every shepherd was the abomination of Egypt." The expression here employed is very strong, and rises even to a religious aversion. Herodotus makes the cowherds the third of the seven classes into which the Egyptians were divided (Herodotus ii. 164). Others include them in the lowest class of the community. This, however, is not sufficient to account for the national antipathy. About seventeen or eighteen centuries before the Christian era it is probable that the Hyksos, or shepherd kings, were masters of the southern part of the country, while a native dynasty still prevailed in lower Egypt. The religion of these shepherd intruders was different from that of the Egyptians which they treated with disrespect. They were addicted to the barbarities which are usually incident to a foreign rule. It is not surprising, therefore, that the shepherd became the abomination of Egypt.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 47

Verses 1-31
- Jacob in Goshen

11. רעמסס "son of the sun" Ra‹meses ʿra*mesês*".

31. מטה "bed" *mîṭṭāh*. מטה "staff" *maṭṭeh*.

Arrangements are now made for the settlement of Israel in Goshen. The administration of Joseph during the remaining years of the famine is then recorded. For the whole of this period his father and brothers are subject to him, as their political superior, according to the reading of his early dreams. We then approach to the death-bed of Jacob, and hear him binding Joseph by an oath to bury him in the grave of his fathers.

Genesis 47:1-12

Joseph announces to Pharaoh the arrival of his kindred. "Of the whole of his brethren," more exactly from the end of his brethren. Five men, a favorite number in Egypt. Shepherds, owners and feeders of sheep and other cattle. "Pasture." Hence, it appears that the drought had made the grazing extremely scanty. Men of ability, competent to take the oversight of others. "Jacob his father," he presents before Pharaoh, after he has disposed of all business matters. "Jacob blessed Pharaoh." This is the patriarch‘s grateful return for Pharaoh‘s great kindness and generosity toward him and his house. He is conscious of even a higher dignity than that of Pharaoh, as he is a prince of God; and as such he bestows his precious benediction. Pharaoh was struck with his venerable appearance, and inquired what was his age. "Pilgrimage" - sojourning, wandering without any constant abode or fixed holding.

Such was the life of the patriarchs in the land of promise Hebrews 11:13. "Few and evil." Jacob‘s years at this time were far short of those of Abraham and Isaac, not to speak of more ancient men. Much bitterness also had been mingled in his cup from the time that he beguiled his brother of the birthright and the blessing, which would have come to him in a lawful way if he had only waited in patience. Obliged to flee for his life from his father‘s house, serving seven years for a beloved wife, and balked in his expected recompense by a deceitful father-in-law, serving seven long years more for the object of his affections, having his wages changed ten times

during the six years of his further toil for a maintenance, afflicted by the dishonor of his only daughter, the reckless revenge taken by Simon and Levi, the death of his beloved wife in childbed, the disgraceful incest of Reuben, the loss of Joseph himself for twenty-two years, and the present famine with all its anxieties - Jacob, it must be confessed, has become acquainted with no small share of the ills of life. "Blessed Pharaoh." It is possible that this blessing is the same as that already mentioned, now reiterated in its proper place in the narrative. "According to the little ones." This means either in proportion to the number in each household, or with all the tenderness with which a parent provides for his infant offspring.

Genesis 47:13-26

Joseph introduces remarkable changes into the relation of the sovereign and the people of Egypt. "There was no bread in all the land." The private stores of the wealthy were probably exhausted. "And Joseph gathered up all the silver." The old stores of grain and the money, which had flowed into the country during the years of plenty, seem to have lasted for five years. "And Joseph brought the silver into Pharaoh's house." He was merely the steward of Pharaoh in this matter, and made a full return of all the payments that came into his hands. "The silver was spent." The famishing people have no more money; but they must have bread. Joseph is fertile in expedients. He proposes to take their cattle. This was really a relief to the people, as they had no means of providing them with fodder. The value of commodities is wholly altered by a change of circumstances. Pearls will not purchase a cup of water in a vast and dreary wilderness. Cattle become worthless when food becomes scarce, and the means of procuring it are exhausted. For their cattle Joseph supplies them with food during the sixth year.

Genesis 47:18-20

The seventh year is now come. The silver and cattle are now gone. Nothing remains but their lands, and with these themselves as the serfs of the soil. Accordingly they make this offer to Joseph, which he cannot refuse. Hence, it is evident that Pharaoh had as yet no legal claim to the soil. In primeval times the first entrants into an unoccupied country became, by a natural custom, the owners of the grounds they held and cultivated. The mere nomad, who roamed over a wide range of country, where his flocks merely cropped the spontaneous herbage, did not soon arrive at the notion of private property in land. But the husbandman, who settled on a

promising spot, broke up the soil, and sowed the seed, felt he had acquired by his labor a title to the acres he had cultivated and permanently occupied, and this right was instinctively acknowledged by others. Hence, each cultivator grew into the absolute owner of his own farm. Hence, the lands of Egypt belonged to the peasantry of the country, and were at their disposal. These lands had now become valueless to those who had neither provisions for themselves nor seed for their ground. They willingly part with them, therefore, for a year‘s provision and a supply of seed. In this way the lands of Egypt fell into the hands of the crown by a free purchase. “And the people he removed into the cities.” This is not an act of arbitrary caprice, but a wise and kind measure for the more convenient nourishment of the people until the new arrangements for the cultivation of the soil should be completed. The priestly class were sustained by a state allowance, and therefore, were not obliged to alienate their lands. Hence, they became by this social revolution a privileged order. The military class were also exempted most probably from the surrender of their patrimonial rights, as they were maintained on the crown lands.

Genesis 47:23-26

I have bought you. - He had bought their lands, and so they might be regarded, in some sort, as the servants of Pharaoh, or the serfs of the soil. “In the increase ye shall give the fifth to Pharaoh.” This explains at once the extent of their liability, and the security of their liberty and property. They do not become Pharaoh‘s bondmen. They own their land under him by a new tenure. They are no longer subject to arbitrary exactions. They have a stated annual rent, bearing a fixed ratio to the amount of their crop. This is an equitable adjustment of their dues, and places them under the protection of a statute law. The people are accordingly well pleased with the enactment of Joseph, which becomes henceforth the law of Egypt.

Genesis 47:27-31

And they were possessed thereof. - They become owners or tenants of the soil in Goshen. The Israelites were recognized as subjects with the full rights of freemen. “They grew and multiplied exceedingly.” They are now placed in a definite territory, where they are free from the contamination which arises from promiscuous intermarriage with an idolatrous race; and hence, the Lord bestows the blessing of fruitfulness and multiplication, so that in a generation or two more they can intermarry among themselves. It is a remarkable circumstance that until now we read of only two daughters

in the family of Jacob. The brothers could not marry their sisters, and it was not desirable that the females should form affinity with the pagan, as they had in general to follow the faith of their husbands. Here the twelfth section of the Pentateuch terminates.

Genesis 47:28-31

Jacob lives seventeen years in Egypt, and so survives the famine twelve years. "He called his son Joseph." Joseph retained his power and place near Pharaoh after the fourteen years of special service were completed; hence, Jacob looks to him for the accomplishment of his wishes concerning the place of his burial. "Put thy hand under my thigh" Genesis 24:2. He binds Joseph by a solemn asseveration to carry his mortal remains to the land of promise. "And Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed." On receiving the solemn promise of Joseph, he turns toward the head of the bed, and assumes the posture of adoration, rendering, no doubt, thanks to God for all the mercies of his past life, and for this closing token of filial duty and affection. The Septuagint has the rendering: ἐπί τὸ ἄκρον τῆς ῥάβδον αὐτοῦ *epi to ākron akron tēs rabdou autou* "on the top of his staff," which is given in the Epistle to the Hebrews Hebrews 11:21. This is obtained by a mere change in the vowel pointing of the last word.

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CHAPTER 48

Verses 1-22

- Joseph Visits His Sick Father

The right of primogeniture has been forfeited by Reuben. The double portion in the inheritance is now transferred to Joseph. He is the first-born of her who was intended by Jacob to be his first and only wife. He has also been the means of saving all his father‘s house, even after he had been sold into slavery by his brethren. He has therefore, undeniable claims to this part of the first-born‘s rights.

Genesis 48:1-7

After these things. - After the arrangements concerning the funeral, recorded in the chapter. “Menasseh and Ephraim.” They seem to have accompanied their father from respectful affection to their aged relative. “Israel strengthened himself” - summoned his remaining powers for the interview, which was now to him an effort. “God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz.” From the terms of the blessing received it is evident that Jacob here refers to the last appearance of God to him at Bethel Genesis 35:11. “And now thy sons.” After referring to the promise of a numerous offspring, and of a territory which they are to inherit, he assigns to each of the two sons of Joseph, who were born in Egypt, a place among his own sons, and a separate share in the promised land. In this way two shares fall to Joseph. “And thy issue.” We are not informed whether Joseph had any other sons. But all such are to be reckoned in the two tribes of which Ephraim and Menasseh are the heads. These young men are now at least twenty and nineteen years of age, as they were born before the famine commenced. Any subsequent issue that Joseph might have, would be counted among the generations of their children. “Rachel died upon me” - as a heavy affliction falling upon me. The presence of Joseph naturally leads the father‘s thoughts to Rachel, the beloved mother of his beloved son, whose memory he honors in giving a double portion to her oldest son.

Genesis 48:8-16

He now observes and proceeds to bless the two sons of Joseph. “Who are these?” The sight and the observant faculties of the patriarch were now failing. “Bring them now unto me, and I will bless them.” Jacob is seated on the couch, and the young men approach him. He kisses and folds his arms around them. The comforts of his old age come up before his mind. He had

not expected to see Joseph again in the flesh, and now God had showed him his seed. After these expressions of parental fondness, Joseph drew them back from between his knees, that he might present them in the way that was distinctive of their age. He then bowed with his face to the earth, in reverential acknowledgment of the act of worship about to be performed. Joseph expected the blessing to be regulated by the age of his sons, and is therefore, careful to present them so that the right hand of his dim-sighted parent may, without any effort, rest on the head of his first-born. But the venerable patriarch, guided by the Spirit of him who doth according to his own will, designedly lays his right hand on the head of the younger, and thereby attributes to him the greater blessing.

The imposition of the hand is a primitive custom which here for the first time comes into notice. It is the natural mode of marking out the object of the benediction, signifying its conveyance to the individual, and implying that it is laid upon him as the destiny of his life. It may be done by either hand; but when each is laid on a different object, as in the present case, it may denote that the higher blessing is conveyed by the right hand. The laying on of both hands on one person may express the fulness of the blessing conveyed, or the fullness of the desire with which it is conveyed.

Genesis 48:15-16

And he blessed Joseph. - In blessing his seed he blesses himself. In exalting his two sons into the rank and right of his brothers, he bestows upon them the double portion of the first-born. In the terms of the blessing Jacob first signalizes the threefold function which the Lord discharges in effecting the salvation of a sinner. “The God before whom walked my fathers,” is the Author of salvation, the Judge who dispenses justice and mercy, the Father, before whom the adopted and regenerate child walks. From him salvation comes, to him the saved returns, to walk before him and be perfect. “The God, who fed me from my being unto this day,” is the Creator and Upholder of life, the Quickener and Sanctifier, the potential Agent, who works both to will and to do in the soul. “The Angel that redeemed me from all evil,” is the all-sufficient Friend, who wards off evil by himself satisfying the demands of justice and resisting the devices of malice. There is a beautiful propriety of feeling in Jacob ascribing to his fathers the walking before God, while he thankfully acknowledges the grace of the Quickener and Justifier to himself. The Angel is explicitly applied to the Supreme Being in this ministerial function. The God is the emphatic

description of the true, living God, as contradistinguished from all false gods. “Bless the lads.” The word bless is in the singular number. For Jacob‘s threefold periphrasis is intended to describe the one God who wills, works, and wards. “And let my name be put upon them.” Let them be counted among my immediate sons, and let them be related to Abraham and Isaac, as my other sons are. This is the only thing that is special in the blessing. “Let them grow into a multitude.” The word grow in the original refers to the spawning or extraordinary increase of the finny tribe. The after history of Ephraim and Menasseh will be found to correspond with this special prediction.

Genesis 48:17-22

Joseph presumes that his father has gone astray through dulness of perception, and endeavors to rectify his mistake. He finds, however, that on the other hand a supernatural vision is now conferred on his parent, who is fully conscious of what he is about, and therefore, abides by his own act. Ephraim is to be greater than Menasseh. Joshua, the successor of Moses, was of the tribe of Ephraim, as Kaleb his companion was of Judah. Ephraim came to designate the northern kingdom of the ten tribes, as Judah denoted the southern kingdom containing the remaining tribes; and each name was occasionally used to denote all Israel, with a special reference to the prominent part. “His seed shall be the fullness of the nations.” This denotes not only the number but the completeness of his race, and accords with the future pre-eminence of his tribe. In thee, in Joseph, who is still identified with his offspring.

At the point of death Jacob expresses his assurance of the return of his posterity to the land of promise, and bestows on Joseph one share or piece of ground above his brethren, which, says he, I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow. This share is, in the original, שׁכם *shekem* Shekem, a shoulder or tract of land. This region included “the parcel of the field where he had spread his tent” Genesis 33:19. It refers to the whole territory of Shekem, which was conquered by his sword and his bow, inasmuch as the city itself was sacked, and its inhabitants put to the sword by his sons at the head of his armed retainers, though without his approval Genesis 37:13. The incidental conquest of such a tract was no more at variance with the subsequent acquisition of the whole country than the purchase of a field by Abraham or a parcel of ground by Jacob himself. In accordance with this gift Joseph‘s bones were deposited in Shekem, after

the conquest of the whole land by returning Israel. The territory of Shekem was probably not equal in extent to that of Ephraim, but was included within its bounds.

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CHAPTER 49

Verses 1-33

- Jacob Blesses His Sons

kārāh dig. "Device, כרה *kārar* or כיר :*mekêrāh* "weapon;" related מכרה .5
".*mākar* "sell," in Arabic "take counsel. Habitation מכר :design?" related

mechoqēq "lawgiver, judge, dispenser of laws." This word מחקק .10 occurs in six other places - Numbers 21:18; Deuteronomy 33:21; Jud. Deuteronomy 5:14; Psalm 60:9; Psalm 108:9; Isaiah 33:22; in five of which it clearly denotes ruler, or judge. The meaning "sceptre" is therefore *shîylôn* a derivative שׁילון *shîylôh* Shiloh, a softened form of שׁילה .doubtful שׁלט *shālam* and possibly שׁלם *shālâh* שׁלה *shol* the ultimate root of שׁל of *shālaṭ* and hence, denoting "the peacemaker, the prince of peace." It is not employed as an appellative noun. But it is used afterward as the name of a town, now identified as Seilun. This town probably had its name, like many other ancient places from a person of the same name who built or possessed .it

From the special conference with Joseph we now pass to the parting address of Jacob to his assembled sons. This is at the same time prophetic and benedictory. Like all prophecy, it starts from present things, and in its widest expanse penetrates into the remotest future of the present course of nature.

Genesis 49:1-2

And Jacob called his sons - This is done by messengers going to their various dwellings and pasture-grounds, and summoning them to his presence. And he said. These words introduce his dying address. "Gather yourselves together." Though there is to be a special address to each, yet it is to be in the audience of all the rest, for the instruction of the whole family. "That which shall befall you in the after days." The after days are the times intervening between the speaker and the end of the human race. The beginning of man was at the sixth day of the last creation. The end of his race will be at the dissolution of the heavens and the earth then called into being, and the new creation which we are taught will be consequent thereupon. To this interval prophecy has reference in general, though it

occasionally penetrates beyond the veil that separates the present from the future creation.

The prophet has his mind filled with the objects and events of the present and the past, and from these he must draw his images for the future, and express them in the current language of his day. To interpret his words, therefore, we must ascend to his day, examine his usage of speech, distinguish the transient forms in which truth may appear, and hold fast by the constant essence which belongs to all ages. “Hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken to Israel your father.” This is a specimen of the synthetic or synonymous parallel. It affords a good example of the equivalence, and at the same time the distinction, of Jacob and Israel. They both apply to the same person, and to the race of which he is the head. The one refers to the natural, the other to the spiritual. The distinction is similar to that between Elohim and Yahweh: the former of which designates the eternal God, antecedent to all creation, and therefore, equally related to the whole universe; the latter, the self-existent God, subsequent to the creation of intelligent beings, and especially related to them, as the moral Governor, the Keeper of covenant, and the Performer of promise.

Genesis 49:3-4

Reuben, as the first-born by nature, has the first place in the benedictory address. My might. In times and places in which a man‘s right depends on his might, a large family of sons is the source of strength and safety. “The excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power” - the rank and authority which belong to the first-born. “Boiling over as water.” That which boils over perishes at the same time that it is pernicious. This is here transferred in a figure to the passionate nature of Reuben. “Thou shalt not excel.” There is here an allusion to the excellency of dignity and power. By the boiling over of his unhallowed passions Reuben lost all the excellence that primogeniture confers. By the dispensation of Providence the double portion went to Joseph, the first-born of Rachel; the chieftainship to Judah; and the priesthood to Levi. The cause of this forfeiture is then assigned. In the last sentence the patriarch in a spirit of indignant sorrow passes from the direct address to the indirect narrative. “To my couch he went up.” The doom here pronounced upon Reuben is still a blessing, as he is not excluded from a tribe‘s share in the promised land. But, as in the case of the others, this blessing is abated and modified by his past conduct. His tribe has its

seat on the east of the Jordan, and never comes to any eminence in the commonwealth of Israel.

Genesis 49:5-7

"Simon and Levi are brethren," by temper as well as by birth. Their weapons. This word is rendered plans, devices, by some. But the present rendering agrees best with the context. Weapons may be properly called instruments of violence; but not so plots. "Habitations" requires the preposition in before it, which is not in the original, and is not to be supplied without necessity. "Into their counsel." This refers to the plot they formed for the destruction of the inhabitants of Shekem. "They houghed an ox." The singular of the original is to be understood as a plural denoting the kind of acts to which they were prompted in their passion for revenge. Jacob pronounces a curse upon their anger, not because indignation against sin is unwarrantable in itself, but because their wrath was marked by deeds of fierceness and cruelty. "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." He does not cut them off from any part in the promised inheritance; but he divides and scatters them.

Accordingly they are divided from one another in their after history, the tribe of Simon being settled in the southwest corner of the territory of Judah, and Levi having no connected territory, but occupying certain cities and their suburbs which were assigned to his descendants in the various provinces of the land. They were also scattered in Israel. For Simon is the weakest of all the tribes at the close of their sojourn in the wilderness Numbers 26:14; he is altogether omitted in the blessing of Moses Joshua 19:1-9; and he subsequently sends out two colonies, which are separated from the parent stock, and from one another Genesis 49:8-12

Judah, the fourth son of Jacob, comes in for the supremacy after the three former have been set aside. His personal prowess, the perpetuity of his dominion, and the luxuriance of his soil are then described. "Thee shall thy brethren praise." This is an allusion to his name, which signifies praise Genesis 29:35. As his mother praised the Lord for her fourth son, so shall his brethren praise him for his personal excellence. Ardor of temperament, decision of character, and frankness of acknowledgment are conspicuous even in the blemishes of his early life. Tenderness of conscience, promptitude in resolve, capacity for business, and force of eloquence come out in his riper years. These are qualities that win popular esteem. "Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies." They shall flee before him, but

shall not escape his powerful grasp. They shall be compelled to yield to his overwhelming power. "Thy father's sons shall bow down to thee." Not only his enemies, but his friends, shall acknowledge his sway. The similar prediction concerning Joseph Genesis 37:6-8 was of a personal nature, and referred to a special occasion, not to a permanent state of affairs. It had already received its main fulfillment, and would altogether terminate with the lifetime of Joseph. The present announcement refers to Judah not as an individual, but as the head of a tribe in Israel, and will therefore, correspond in duration with that commonwealth.

Genesis 49:9

A lion's whelp is Judah. - In physical strength Judah is compared to the lion, the king of beasts. At first he is the lion's whelp, the young lion, giving promise of future vigor; then the full-grown lion, exulting in his irresistible force, seizing and overmastering the prey, and after reaping the fruits of his victory, ascending to his mountain lair and reposing in undisturbed security. The lioness is brought into the comparison with propriety, as in defense of her cubs she is even more dangerous than the male to the unwary assailant. After being satiated with prey, the lion, reposing in his majesty, will not disturb the passer-by; but who shall rouse him up and escape?

Genesis 49:10

From his physical force we now pass to his moral supremacy. "The sceptre," the staff of authority. "Shall not depart from Judah." The tribe scepter did not leave Judah so long as there was a remnant of the commonwealth of Israel. Long after the other tribes had lost their individuality, Judah lingered in existence and in some measure of independence; and from the return his name supplanted that of Israel or Jacob, as the common designation of the people. "Nor the lawgiven from between his feet." This is otherwise rendered, "nor the judicial staff from between his feet;" and it is argued that this rendering corresponds best with the phrase "between his feet" and with the parallel clause which precedes. It is not worth while contending for one against the other, as the meaning of both is precisely the same. But we have retained the English version, as the term מחקק *mechoqēq* has only one clear meaning; "between the feet" may mean among his descendants or in his tribe; and the synthetic parallelism of the clauses is satisfied by the identity of meaning.

Lawgiver is to be understood as judge, dispenser or administrator of law. Judah had the forerank among the tribes in the wilderness, and never

altogether lost it. Nahshon the son of Amminadab, the prince of his tribe, was the ancestor of David, who was anointed as the rightful sovereign of all Israel, and in whom the throne became hereditary. The revolt of the ten tribes curtailed, but did not abolish the actual sovereignty of Rehoboam and his successors, who continued the acknowledged sovereigns until some time after the return from the captivity. From that date the whole nation was virtually absorbed in Judah, and whatever trace of self-government remained belonged to him until the birth of Jesus, who was the lineal descendant of the royal line of David and of Judah, and was the Messiah, the anointed of heaven to be king of Zion and of Israel in a far higher sense than before. "Until Shiloh come."

This is otherwise translated, "until he come to Shiloh," the place so called. This is explained of the time when "the whole assembly of the children of Israel was convened at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there" Joshua 18:1. We hold by the former translation:

1. Because Shiloh has not yet been named as a known locality in the land of promise.

2. Judah did not come to Shiloh in any exclusive sense.

3. His coming thither with his fellows had no bearing whatever on his supremacy.

4. He did not come to Shiloh as the seat of his government or any part of his territory; and

5. The real sovereignty of Judah took place after this convention at Shiloh, and not before it.

After the rejection of the second translation on these grounds, the former is accepted as the only tenable alternative.

6. Besides, it is the natural rendering of the words.

7. Before the coming of Shiloh, the Prince of Peace, the highest pitch of Judah's supremacy in its primary form has to be attained.

8. On the coming of Shiloh the last remnant of that supremacy was removed, only to be replaced by the higher form of pre-eminence which the Prince of Peace inaugurates.

And unto him be the obedience of the peoples. - "Unto him" means naturally unto Shiloh. "The obedience" describes the willing submission to the new form of sovereignty which is ushered in by Shiloh. The word is otherwise rendered "gathering;" but this does not suit the usage in Proverbs 30:17. "The obedience" intimates that the supremacy of Judah does not cease at the coming of Shiloh, but only assumes a grander form.

Of the peoples. - Not only the sons of Israel, but all the descendants of Adam will ultimately bow down to the Prince of Peace. This is the seed of the woman, who shall bruise the serpent's head, the seed of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed, presented now under the new aspect of the peacemaker, whom all the nations of the earth shall eventually obey as the Prince of Peace. He is therefore, now revealed as the Destroyer of the works of evil, the Dispenser of the blessings of grace, and the King of peace. The coming of Shiloh and the obedience of the nations to him will cover a long period of time, the close of which will coincide with the limit here set to Judah's earthly supremacy in its wider and loftier stage. This prediction therefore, truly penetrates to the latter days.

Genesis 49:11-12

The exuberant fertility of Judah's province is now depicted. We now behold him peacefully settled in the land of promise, and the striking objects of rural plenty and prosperity around him. The quiet ass on which he perambulates is tied to the vine, the juice of whose grapes is as copious as the water in which his robes are washed. The last sentence is capable of being rendered, "Red are his eyes above wine, and white his teeth above milk." But a connection as well as a comparison seems to be implied in the original. Judea is justly described as abounding in the best of wine and milk. This fine picture of Judah's earthly abode is a fitting emblem of the better country where Shiloh reigns.

Genesis 49:13

Zebulun means "dwelling," to which there is an allusion in the first clause of the verse. "At the haven of seas." This tribe touched upon the coast of the sea of Kinnereth and of the Mediterranean. It probably possessed some havens for shipping near the promontory of Karmel: and its northwestern boundary touched upon Phoenicia, the territory of Zidon. He

is placed before Issakar, who was older, because the latter sank into a subordinate position.

Genesis 49:14-15

"An ass of bone," and therefore, of strength. "Couching between the hurdles" - the pens or stalls in which the cattle were lodged. Rest in a pleasant land he felt to be good; and hence, rather than undertake the struggle for liberty and independence, he became like the strong ass a bearer of burdens, and a payer of tribute. He is thus a hireling by disposition as well as by name Genesis 30:18.

Genesis 49:16-18

The sons of the handmaids follow those of Leah. "Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel." He will maintain his position as a tribe in the state. When threatened by overwhelming power he will put forth his native force for the discomfiture of the foe. The adder is the cerastes or horned serpent, of the color of the sand, and therefore, not easily recognized, that inflicts a fatal wound on him that unwarily treads on it. The few facts in the history of Dan afterward given correspond well with the character here drawn. Some of its features are conspicuous in Samson Genesis 49:19

Gad also shall be subject to the assaults of the enemy. But he shall resist the foe and harass his rear. This brief character agrees with his after history. He is reckoned among the valiant men in Scripture 1 Chronicles 5:18.

Genesis 49:20

Asher shall have a soil abounding in wheat and oil. He occupies the low lands along the coast north of Karmel. Hence, the products of his country are fit to furnish the table of kings. Gad and Asher are placed before Naphtali, the second son of Bilhah. We cannot tell whether they were older, or for what other reason they occupy this place. It may be that Naphtali was of a less decisive or self-reliant character.

Genesis 49:21

Naphtali is a hind let loose. The hind or "gazelle" is agile and nimble. When free on its native hills, it roams with instinctive confidence and delight. It is timid and irresolute in confinement. This is probably the character of Naphtali. "He giveth goodly words." Here we pass from the figure to the reality. Eloquence in prose and verse was characteristic of this particular tribe. The only important historical event in which they are concerned is the defeat of Jabin's host, which is celebrated in the song of

Deborah and Barak Judges 4:5. In this passage we may study the character of the tribe.

Genesis 49:22-26

Jacob had doubtless been made acquainted with the history of his beloved son Joseph from the time of his disappearance until he met him on the borders of Egypt. It had been the meditation and the wonder of his last seventeen years. When he comes to Joseph, therefore, the mingled emotions of affection and gratitude burst forth from his heart in language that cannot be restrained by the ordinary rules of speech. The first thing connected with Joseph in the patriarch‘s mind is fruitfulness. The image is vivid and striking. “Son of a fruitful tree.” A branch or rather a shoot transplanted from the parent stem. “By a well;” from which it may draw the water of life. “Whose daughters” - luxuriant branches. Run over a wall - transcend all the usual boundaries of a well-enclosed garden. This fruitfulness attaches to Joseph in two respects. First, he is the prudent gatherer and the inexhaustible dispenser of the produce of Egypt, by which the lives of his father and brethren were preserved. And then he is in prospect the twofold tribe, that bursts the bounds assigned to a twelfth of the chosen people, and overspreads the area of two tribes.

Genesis 49:23-24

The memory then reverts to the past history of Joseph. A new figure is now called up. A champion is assailed by a host of archers. They vex him, shoot at him, and in every way act the part of an enemy. But his bow continues elastic, and his arms are enabled to bend it, because he receives strength from the God of his fathers, “the Might of Jacob, the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel.” Such is the rich and copious imagery that flows from the lips of Jacob. “The Might,” the exalted upholder; “the Shepherd, the Stone,” the fostering guardian as well as the solid foundation of his being. His great hands upheld Joseph against the brother and the stranger. “From him.” This seems the free rendering of the word requisite to bring the two members of the parallel into harmony.

Genesis 49:25-26

These two thoughts - the peaceful abundance of his old age, which he owed to Joseph, and the persecutions his beloved son had endured - stir the fountains of his affections until they overflow with blessings. “From the God of thy father” - the Eternal One who is the source of all blessing. “And the Almighty,” who is able to control all adverse influences. “Blessings of

heaven above" - the air, the rain, and the sun. "Blessings of the deep" - the springs and streams, as well as the fertile soil. "Blessings of the breasts and the womb" - the children of the home and the young of the flocks and herds. "Have prevailed." The benedictions of Jacob pronounced upon Joseph exceed those that came upon Jacob himself from his fathers. To Joseph is given a double portion, with a double measure of affection from a father's heart. "Unto the bound of the perpetual hills." Like an overflowing flood they have risen to the very summits of the perpetual hills in the conceptions of the venerable patriarch. "Of him who was distinguished from his brethren;" not only by a long period of persecution and humiliation, but by a subsequent elevation to extraordinary dignity and pre-eminence.

It is to be noted that this benediction, when fairly interpreted, though it breathes all the fondness of a father's heart, yet contains no intimation that the supremacy or the priesthood were to belong to Joseph, or that the Messiah was to spring from him. At the same time Joseph was in many events of his history a remarkable type of the Messiah, and by intermarriage he, as well as many foreigners, was no doubt among the ancestors of the Messiah 2 Kings 8:18, 2 Kings 8:26.

Genesis 49:27

Benjamin is described as a wolf who is engaged morning and evening, that is, all day long, in hunting after prey. He was warlike by character and conduct Genesis 49:28-33

After the benediction Jacob gives directions concerning his burial. "All these are the twelve tribes". This implies that the benedictions refer not to the heads only, but to the whole tribes. "Each according to his blessing." All are blessed, but the form of the blessing is suited to the character of the individual "Bury me with my fathers" - with Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Leah. This dying command he now lays on the twelve, as he had before bound Joseph by oath to its performance. "Gathered up his feet into the bed." He had been sitting upright while pronouncing the benedictory address and giving his last directions. He now lies down and calmly breathes his last.

GENSIS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 50

Verses 1-26
- The Burial of Jacob

10. אטד′ *ātâd* Atad, "the buck-thorn".

11. מצרים אבל′ *ābêl -mîtsrayîm* Abel-Mitsraim, "mourning of Mizraim," or meadow of Mizraim.

This chapter records the burial of Jacob and the death of Joseph, and so completes the history of the chosen family, and the third bible for the instruction of man.

Genesis 50:1-3

After the natural outburst of sorrow for his deceased parent, Joseph gave orders to embalm the body, according to the custom of Egypt. "His servants, the physicians." As the grand vizier of Egypt, he has physicians in his retinue. The classes and functions of the physicians in Egypt may be learned from Herodotus (ii. 81-86). There were special physicians for each disease; and the embalmers formed a class by themselves. "Forty days" were employed in the process of embalming; "seventy days," including the forty, were devoted to mourning for the dead. Herodotus mentions this number as the period of embalming. Diodorus (i. 91) assigns upwards of thirty days to the process. It is probable that the actual process was continued for forty days, and that the body lay in natron for the remaining thirty days of mourning. See Hengstenberg's B. B. Mos. u. Aeg., and Rawlinson's Herodotus.

Genesis 50:4-6

Joseph, by means of Pharaoh's courtiers, not in person, because he was a mourner, applies for leave to bury his father in the land of Kenaan, according to his oath. This leave is freely and fully allowed.

Genesis 50:7-14

The funeral procession is now described. "All the servants of Pharaoh." The highest honor is conferred on Jacob for Joseph's sake. "The elders of Pharaoh, and all the elders of the land of Mizraim." The court and state officials are here separately specified. "All the house." Not only the heads, but all the sons and servants that are able to go. Chariots and horsemen accompany them as a guard on the way. "The threshing-floor of Atari, or of

the buck-thorn." This is said to be beyond Jordan. Deterred, probably, by some difficulty in the direct route, they seem to have gone round by the east side of the Salt Sea. "A mourning of seven days." This is a last sad farewell to the departed patriarch. Abel-Mizraim. This name, like many in the East, has a double meaning. The word Abel no doubt at first meant mourning, though the name would be used by many, ignorant of its origin, in the sense of a meadow. "His sons carried him." The main body of the procession seems to have halted beyond the Jordan, and awaited the return of the immediate relatives, who conveyed the body to its last resting-place. The whole company then returned together to Egypt.

Genesis 50:15-21

His brethren supplicate Joseph for forgiveness. "They sent unto Joseph," commissioned one of their number to speak to him. now that our common father has given us this command. "And Joseph wept" at the distress and doubt of his brothers. He no doubt summons them before him, when they fall down before him entreating his forgiveness. Joseph removes their fears. "Am I in God's stead?" that I should take the law into my own hands, and take revenge. God has already judged them, and moreover turned their sinful deed into a blessing. He assures them of his brotherly kindness toward them.

Genesis 50:22-26

The biography of Joseph is now completed. "The children of the third generation" - the grandsons of grandsons in the line of Ephraim. We have here an explicit proof that an interval of about twenty years between the births of the father and that of his first-born was not unusual during the lifetime of Joseph. "And Joseph took an oath." He thus expressed his unwavering confidence in the return of the sons of Israel to the land of promise. "God will surely visit." He was embalmed and put in a coffin, and so kept by his descendants, as was not unusual in Egypt. And on the return of the sons of Israel from Egypt they kept their oath to Joseph Exodus 13:19, and buried his bones in Shekem Joshua 24:32.

The sacred writer here takes leave of the chosen family, and closes the bible of the sons of Israel. It is truly a wonderful book. It lifts the veil of mystery that hangs over the present condition of the human race. It records the origin and fall of man, and thus explains the co-existence of moral evil and a moral sense, and the hereditary memory of God and judgment in the soul of man. It records the cause and mode of the confusion of tongues, and

thus explains the concomitance of the unity of the race and the specific diversity of mode or form in human speech. It records the call of Abraham, and thus accounts for the preservation of the knowledge of God and his mercy in one section of the human race, and the corruption or loss of it in all the rest. We need scarcely remark that the six days‘ creation accounts for the present state of nature. It thus solves the fundamental questions of physics, ethics, philology, and theology for the race of Adam. It notes the primitive relation of man to God, and marks the three great stages of human development that came in with Adam, Noah, and Abraham. It points out the three forms of sin that usher in these stages - the fall of Adam, the intermarriage of the sons of God with the daughters of men, and the building of the tower of Babel. It gradually unfolds the purpose and method of grace to the returning penitent through a Deliverer who is successively announced as the seed of the woman, of Shem, of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah. This is the second Adam, who, when the covenant of works was about to fall to the ground through the failure of the first Adam, undertook to uphold it by fulfilling all its conditions on behalf of those who are the objects of the divine grace.

Hence, the Lord establishes his covenant successively with Adam, Noah, and Abraham; with Adam after the fall tacitly, with Noah expressly, and with both generally as the representatives of the race descending from them; with Abraham especially and instrumentally as the channel through which the blessings of salvation might be at length extended to all the families of the earth. So much of this plan of mercy is revealed from time to time to the human race as comports with the progress they have made in the education of the intellectual, moral, and active faculties. This only authentic epitome of primeval history is worthy of the constant study of intelligent and responsible man.

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CHAPTER TWO
Exodus

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EXODUS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Exodus

1. The book of Exodus consists of two distinct portions. The first Exodus 19:6.

The name "Exodus" (ἔξοδος *exodos*), i. e. "the going forth," assigned to it by the Alexandrian Jews, applies rather to the former portion than to the whole book.

The narrative is closely connected with that of Genesis, and shows not only that it was written by the same author, but that it formed part of one general plan. Still it is a distinct section. The first events which it relates are separated from the last chapter in Genesis by a considerable interval, and it presents the people of Israel under totally different circumstances. Its termination is marked with equal distinctness, winding up with the completion of the tabernacle.

The book is divided into many smaller sections; each of which has the marks which throughout the Pentateuch indicate a subdivision. They are of different lengths, and were probably written on separate parchments or papyri, the longest not exceeding the dimensions of contemporary documents in Egypt. They were apparently thus arranged for the convenience of public reading.

This general view of the structure of the book is what might have been expected.

2. Some of the most convincing evidences of the Mosaic authorship are supplied by the contents of this book.

One argument is drawn from the representation of the personal character and qualifications of Moses, a representation perfectly intelligible as proceeding from Moses himself.

What other men have seen in Moses is - the chief agent in the greatest work ever entrusted to man, an agent whose unique and unparalleled qualifications are admitted alike by those who accept and by those who

deny the divine interposition: what the writer himself sees in Moses is - a man whose only qualification is an involuntary and reluctant surrender to the will of God. The only rational account of the matter is, that we have Moses‘ own history of himself and of his work.

Another argument rests on external facts. The Book of Exodus could not have been written by any man who had not passed many years in Egypt, and who did not also have a thorough knowledge, such as could only be acquired by personal observation, of the Sinaitic Peninsula.

We have no probable alternative but to admit that the narrative in its substance came from Moses, or from a contemporary; and we can have little hesitation as to our choice between these alternatives, when we consider that none of the contemporaries of Moses had equal opportunities of observation, and that none were likely to have received the education and training which would have enabled them to record the events.

3. A weighty argument is drawn from the accounts of the miracles, by which Moses was expressly commanded to attest his mission, and by which he was enabled to accomplish the deliverance of his people.

We have throughout the miracles the characteristics of local coloring, of adaptation to the circumstances of the Israelites, and of repeated announcements followed by repeated postponements, which enabled and indeed compelled the Israelites to complete that organization of their nation, without which their departure might have been, as it has been often represented, a mere disorderly flight.

There are some who fear to compromise the miraculous character of events by admitting any operation of natural causes to a share of them. Yet the inspired writer does not fail to record that it was by the east wind that the Lord brought the locusts Exodus 10:13 and sent back the sea Exodus 14:21, and, by the mighty strong west wind Exodus 10:19, took back the plague that he had sent. Nor is the miracle at all lessened, because the winds of heaven were made God‘s messengers and instruments in the doing of it. The miracles in Egypt were supernatural in their greatness, in their concentration upon one period, in their coming and going according to the

phases of the conflict between the tyrant and the captive race, in their measured gradation from weak to strong, as each weaker wonder failed to break Pharoah‘s stubborn heart. King and people so regarded them; they were accustomed perhaps to frogs and lice and locusts; but to such plagues, so intense, so threatened, accomplished, and withdrawn, as it were so disciplined to a will, they were not accustomed; and they rightly saw them as miraculous and divinely sent. And further it will be noticed that the phenomena that are put to this use are such as mark the country where this great history is laid. No Jewish writer, who had lived in Palestine alone, could have imagined a narrative so Egyptian in its marks. All evidence tends to prove that the history was written by someone who was well conversant with Egypt; and we shall look in vain for anyone, other than Moses himself, who possessed this qualification for writing the history of the emancipation of the Israelites under divine guidance.

The narrative which records them, remarkable as it is for artlessness and simplicity, is moreover not one which could have been concocted from documents of different ages, constructed on different principles, and full of internal discrepancies and contradictions. It is the production of one mind, written by one man, and by one who had alone witnessed all the events which it records, who alone was at that time likely to possess the knowledge or ability required to write the account.

4. The portion of the book, which follows the account of the departure from Egypt, has characteristics marked with equal distinctness, and bearing with no less force upon the question of authorship. These chapters also are pervaded by a unique tone, a local coloring, an atmosphere so to speak of the desert, which has made itself felt by all those who have explored the country.

Modern travelers point out the following coincidences between the narrative and their own experiences. Absence of water where no sources now exist, abundance of water where fountains are still found, and indications of a far more copious supply in former ages; tracts, occupying the same time in the journey, in which food would not be found; and, in some districts, a natural production similar to manna, most abundant in rainy seasons (such as several notices show the season of the Exodus to

have been), but not sufficient for nourishment, nor fit for large consumption, without such modifications in character and quantity as are attributed in the narrative to a divine intervention. The late explorations of the Peninsula of Sinai have thrown much light upon the fact that the route taken by the Israelites was probably determined by conditions agreeing with incidental notices in the history; and when we come to the chapters in which the central event in the history of Israel, the delivery of God‘s law, is recorded, we find localities and scenery which travelers concur in declaring to be such as fully correspond to the exigencies of the narrative, and which in some accounts (remarkable at once for scientific accuracy and graphic power) are described in terms which show that they correspond, so far as mere outward accessories can correspond, to the grandeur of the manifestation.

5. A very valuable argument of the same evidential character is drawn from the account of the tabernacle. In form, structure, and materials the tabernacle belongs altogether to the wilderness. The whole was a tent, not a fixed structure, such as would naturally have been set up, and in point of fact was set up very soon in Palestine. The metals, bronze, silver and gold, were those which the Israelites knew, and doubtless brought with them from Egypt; the names of many of the materials and implements which they used, and the furniture and accessories of the tabernacle, the dress and ornaments of the priests, are Egyptian; and it is also certain that the arts required for the construction of the tabernacle, and for all its accessories, were precisely those for which the Egyptians had been remarkable for ages; such as artizans who had lived under the influence of Egyptian civilization would naturally have learned.

Two separate accounts of the erection of the tabernacle are given. In the first Moses relates the instructions which he received, in the second he describes the accomplishment of the work. Nothing would be less in accordance with the natural order of a history written at a later period than this double account. It is however fully accounted for by the obvious hypothesis that each part of the narrative was written at the time, and on the occasion, to which it immediately refers.

6. The chronology of Exodus involves two questions, the duration of the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt, and the date of their departure. So far as regards the direct statements in the Hebrew text, the answers to both questions are positive and unambiguous. Exodus 12:40 gives 430 years for the sojourn, Genesis 15:13 gives 400 years for the whole, or the greater portion, of the same period. Again, the First Book of Kings, 1 Kings 6:1, fixes the Exodus at 480 years before the building of the Temple in the fourth year of Solomon‘s reign. This would settle the date within a few years - about 1490 b.c., a date which appears, on the whole, to be reconcileable with the facts of history, and to rest on higher authority than any other which has been proposed.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

Now - Literally, "And," indicating a close connection with the preceding narrative. In fact this chapter contains a fulfillment of the predictions recorded in Genesis 46:3 and in Genesis 15:13.

Every man and his household - It may be inferred from various notices that the total number of dependents was considerable, a point of importance in its bearings upon the history of the Exodus (compare Genesis 13:6; Genesis 14:14).

Verse 5

Seventy - See Genesis 46:27. The object of the writer in this introductory statement is to give a complete list of the heads of separate families at the time of their settlement in Egypt. See the note at Numbers 26:5.

Verse 7

In no province does the population increase so rapidly as in that which was occupied by the Israelites. See the note at Genesis 47:6. At present it has more flocks and herds than any province in Egypt, and more fishermen, though many villages are deserted. Until the accession of the new king, the relations between the Egyptians and the Israelites were undoubtedly friendly. The expressions used in this verse imply the lapse of a considerable period after the death of Joseph.

The land was filled with them - i. e. the district allotted to them Genesis 45:10.

Verse 8

The expressions in this verse are special and emphatic. "A new king" is a phrase not found elsewhere. It is understood by most commentators to imply that he did not succeed his predecessor in the natural order of descent and inheritance. He "arose up over Egypt," occupying the land, as it would seem, on different terms from the king whose place he took, either by usurpation or conquest. The fact that he knew not Joseph implies a complete separation from the traditions of Lower Egypt. At present the generality of Egyptian scholars identify this Pharaoh with Rameses II, but all the conditions of the narrative are fulfilled in the person of Amosis I (or, Aahmes), the head of the 18th Dynasty. He was the descendant of the old Theban sovereigns, but his family was tributary to the Dynasty of the

Shepherds, the Hyksos of Manetho, then ruling in the North of Egypt. Amosis married an Ethiopian princess, and in the third year of his reign captured Avaris, or Zoan, the capital of the Hyksos, and completed the expulsion of that race.

Verse 10

Any war - The Northeastern frontier was infested by the neighboring tribes, the Shasous of Egyptian monuments, and war was waged with Egypt by the confederated nations of Western Asia under the reigns of the successors of Amosis. These incursions were repulsed with extreme difficulty. In language, features, costume, and partly also in habits, the Israelites probably resembled those enemies of Egypt.

Out of the land - The Pharaohs apprehended the loss of revenue and power, which would result from the withdrawal of a peaceful and industrious race.

Verse 11

Taskmasters - The Egyptian "Chiefs of tributes." They were men of rank, superintendents of the public works, such as are often represented on Egyptian monuments, and carefully distinguished from the subordinate overseers. The Israelites were employed in forced labor, probably in detachments, but they were not reduced to slavery, properly speaking, nor treated as captives of war. Amosis had special need of such laborers, as proved by the inscriptions.

Treasure cities - "Magazines," depots of ammunition and provisions 1 Kings 9:19; 2 Chronicles 8:4; 2 Chronicles 32:28.

Pithom and Raamses - Both cities were situated on the canal which was dug or enlarged in the 12th Dynasty. The former is known to have existed under the 18th Dynasty. Both were in existence at the beginning of the reign of Rameses II, by whom they were fortified and enlarged. The name "Pithom" means "House or temple of Tum," the Sun God of Heliopolis (see Exodus 13:20). The name of Raamses, or Rameses, is generally assumed to have been derived from Rameses II, the Sesostris of the Greeks, but it was previously known as the name of the district. See Genesis 45:10; Genesis 47:11.

Verse 14

The use of brick, at all times common in Egypt, was especially so under the 18th Dynasty. An exact representation of the whole process of brickmaking is given in a small temple at Thebes, erected by Tothmosis III,

the fourth in descent from Amosis. Immense masses of brick are found at Belbeis, the modern capital of Sharkiya, i. e. Goshen, and in the adjoining district.

All manner of service in the field - Not merely agricultural labor, but probably the digging of canals and processes of irrigation which are peculiarly onerous and unhealthy.

Verse 15

Hebrew midwifes - Or "midwives of the Hebrew women." This measure at once attested the inefficacy of the former measures, and was the direct cause of the event which issued in the deliverance of Israel, namely, the exposure of Moses. The women bear Egyptian names, and were probably Egyptians.

Verse 16

Upon the stools - Literally, "two stones." The word denotes a special seat, such as is represented on monuments of the 18th Dynasty, and is still used by Egyptian midwives.

Verse 21

Made them houses - i. e. they married Hebrews and became mothers in Israel. The expression is proverbial. See the margin reference.

Verse 22

The extreme cruelty of the measure does not involve improbability. Hatred of strangers was always a characteristic of the Egyptians (see Genesis 43:32), and was likely to be stronger than ever after the expulsion of an alien race.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

A man … a daughter of Levi - Amram and Jochebed. See Exodus 6:20.

Verse 2

Bare a son - Not her firstborn; Aaron and Miriam were older than Moses. The object of the writer is simply to narrate the events which led to the Exodus, and he mentions nothing that had no direct bearing upon his purpose.

A goodly child - See the marginal references. Probably Jochebed did not call in a midwife Exodus 1:15, and she was of course cautious not to show herself to Egyptians. The hiding of the child is spoken of as an act of faith in Hebrews 11:23. It was done in the belief that God would watch over the child.

Verse 3

The ark was made of the papyrus which was commonly used by the Egyptians for light and swift boats. The species is no longer found in the Nile below Nubia. It is a strong rush, like the bamboo, about the thickness of a finger, three cornered, and attains the height of 10 to 15 feet. It is represented with great accuracy on the most ancient monuments of Egypt.

Slime and pitch - The "slime" is probably the mud, of which bricks were usually made in Egypt, and which in this case was used to bind the stalks of the papyrus into a compact mass, and perhaps also to make the surface smooth for the infant. The pitch or bitumen, commonly used in Egypt, made the small vessel water-tight.

In the flags - This is another species of the papyrus, called tuff, or sufi (an exact equivalent of the Hebrew סוּף *sûph*), which was less in size and height than the rush of which the ark was made.

Verse 5

The traditions which give a name to the daughter of Pharaoh are merely conjectural. Egyptian princesses held a very high and almost independent position under the ancient and middle empire, with a separate household and numerous officials. This was especially the case with the daughters of the first sovereigns of the 18th Dynasty.

Many facts concur in indicating that the residence of the daughter of Pharaoh and of the family of Moses, was at Zoan, Tanis, now San, the

ancient Avaris (Exodus 1:8 note), on the Tanitic branch of the river, near the sea, where crocodiles are never found, and which was probably the western boundary of the district occupied by the Israelites. The field of Zoan was always associated by the Hebrews with the marvels which preceded the Exodus. See Psalm 78:43.

To wash - It is not customary at present for women of rank to bathe in the river, but it was a common practice in ancient Egypt. The habits of the princess, as well as her character, must have been well known to the mother of Moses, and probably decided her choice of the place.

Verse 6

She had compassion on him - The Egyptians regarded such tenderness as a condition of acceptance on the day of reckoning. In the presence of the Lord of truth each spirit had to answer, "I have not afflicted any man, I have not made any man weep, I have not withheld milk from the mouths of sucklings" (‹Funeral Ritual‘). There was special ground for mentioning the feeling, since it led the princess to save and adopt the child in spite of her father‘s commands.

Verse 10

He became her son - See the margin reference. His training and education was, humanly speaking, all but indispensable to the efficient accomplishment of his work as the predestined leader and instructor of his countrymen. Moses probably passed the early years of his life in Lower Egypt, where the princess resided. However, there may be substantial grounds for the tradition in Josephus that he was engaged in a campaign against the Ethiopians, thus showing himself, as Stephen says, "mighty in word and deed."

Moses - The Egyptian origin of this word is generally admitted. The name itself is not uncommon in ancient documents. The exact meaning is "son," but the verbal root of the word signifies "produce," "draw forth." The whole sentence in Egyptian would exactly correspond to our King James Version. She called his name Moses, i. e. "son," or "brought forth," because she brought him forth out of the water.

Verse 11

Went out unto his brethren - At the end of 40 years. The Egyptian princess had not concealed from him the fact of his belonging to the oppressed race, nor is it likely that she had debarred him from contact with

his foster-mother and her family, whether or not she became aware of the true relationship.

An Egyptian - This man was probably one of the overseers of the workmen, natives under the chief superintendent Exodus 1:11. They were armed with long heavy scourges, made of a tough pliant wood imported from Syria.

Verse 12

The slaying of the Egyptian is not to be justified, or attributed to a divine inspiration, but it is to be judged with reference to the provocation, the impetuosity of Moses‘ natural character, perhaps also to the habits developed by his training at the court of Pharaoh. The act involved a complete severance from the Egyptians, but, far from expediting, it delayed for many years the deliverance of the Israelites. Forty years of a very different training prepared Moses for the execution of that appointed work.

Verse 13

Thy fellow - "Thy neighbor." the reproof was that of a legislator who established moral obligations on a recognized principle. Hence, in the following verse, the offender is represented as feeling that the position claimed by Moses was that of a Judge. The act could only have been made known by the Hebrew on whose behalf Moses had committed it.

Verse 15

No Egyptian king would have left; such an offence unpunished. But the position of Moses, as an adopted son of a princess, made it necessary even for a despotic sovereign to take unusual precautions.

The land of Midian - The Midianites occupied an extensive district from the eastern coast of the Red Sea to the borders of Moab.

Verse 16

The Priest of Midian - Reuel Exodus 2:18. His name, and the detailed notices in Exodus 2:17 may indicate that his person and office were lightly regarded by the idolatrous tribes in his immediate neighborhood.

Verse 18

Reuel - Or, as in Numbers 10:29, "Raguel." The name means "friend of God." It appears to have been not uncommon among Hebrews and Edomites; e. g. Genesis 36:4, Genesis 36:10. If Reuel be identified with Jethro, a point open to grave objection (see Exodus 3:1), then Reuel was his proper name, and Jether or Jethro, which means "excellency," was his official designation.

Verse 19

An Egyptian - They judged from his costume, or language.

Verse 21

Moses tells us nothing of what he may have learned from his father-in-law, but he must have found in him a man conversant with the traditions of the family of Abraham; nor is there any improbability in the supposition that, as hereditary priest, Reuel may have possessed written documents concerning their common ancestors.

Verse 22

Gershom - The first syllable "Ger" is common to Hebrew and Egyptian, and means "sojourner." The second syllable "Shom" answers exactly to the Coptic "Shemmo," which means "a foreign or strange land."

Verse 23

In process of time - Nearly forty years Acts 7:30. This verse marks the beginning of another section. We now enter at once upon the history of the Exodus.

Their cry came up unto God - This statement, taken in connection with the two following verses, proves that the Israelites retained their faith in the God of their Fathers. The divine name, "God," אלהים *'ĕlohîym* is chosen because it was that which the Israelites must have used in their cry for help, that under which the covenant had been ratified with the Patriarchs (compare James 5:4).

Verse 24

Remembered - This means that God was moved by their prayers to give effect to the covenant, of which an essential condition was the faith and contrition involved in the act of supplication. The whole history of Israel is foreshadowed in these words: God heard, remembered, looked upon, and knew them. It evidently indicates the beginning of a crisis marked by a personal intervention of God.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

This chapter marks the commencement of the series of events which immediately preceded the Exodus. Hitherto, the narrative has been studiously brief, stating only what was necessary to be known as preparatory to those events; but from this point Moses dwells minutely on the details, and enables us to realize the circumstances of the catastrophe which in its immediate and remote consequences stands alone in the world‘s history.

Verse 1

Jethro his father-in-law - Or “brother-in-law.” The word in the Hebrew is a word signifying relative by marriage. When Moses arrived in Midian, Reuel was an elderly man Exodus 2:16; 40 years later (Exodus 2:23 note), Reuel‘s son, Jethro, had probably succeeded him.

The backside - i. e. “to the west of the district.” Among the Hebrews the East is before a man, the west behind him, the south and north on the right and left hand.

Desert - Or wilderness, not a barren waste, but a district supplying pasturage. The district near Sherm, on the west of the gulf of Akabah, where Jethro may have resided, is described as barren and parched; on the west and east are rocky tracts, but to the northwest lies the district of Sinai, where the pasturage is good and water abundant. The Bedouins drive their flocks there from the lowlands at the approach of summer. From this it may be inferred that the events here recorded took place at that season.

To Horeb - More exactly, toward Horeb. Moses came to the mountain of God, i. e. Sinai, on his way toward Horeb, a name given to the northern part of the Sinaitic range. Moses calls Sinai “mountain of God” by anticipation, with reference to the manifestation of God. There is no authority for assuming that the spot was previously held sacred (see Exodus 5:5); but it has been lately shown that the whole Peninsula was regarded by the Egyptians as specially consecrated to the gods from a very early time.

Verse 2

The angel of the Lord - See the note at Genesis 12:7. What Moses saw was the flame of fire in the bush; what he recognized therein was an intimation of the presence of God, who maketh a flame of fire His angel. Compare Psalm 104:4. The words which Moses heard were those of God

Himself, as all ancient and most modern divines have held, manifested in the Person of the Son.

Of a bush - Literally, of the bush or "seneh," a word which ought perhaps to be retained as the proper name of a thorny shrub common in that district, a species of acacia.

Verse 4

The Lord saw - The interchange of the two divine names is to be observed; "Jehovah" (Yahweh) saw, "God" called.

Verse 5

Put off thy shoes - The reverence due to holy places thus rests upon God's own command. The custom itself is well known from the observances of the temple, it was almost universally adopted by the ancients, and is retained in the East.

Holy ground - This passage is almost conclusive against the assumption that the place was previously a sanctuary. Moses knew nothing of its holiness after some 40 years spent on the Peninsula. It became holy by the presence of God.

Verse 6

Our Saviour adduces this passage as a proof that the doctrine of the Resurrection was taught in the Old Testament Matthew 22:32, and He calls this book "the Book of Moses" Mark 12:26, two points to be borne in mind by readers of the Pentateuch.

Verse 7

Taskmasters - Oppressors. A different word from that in Exodus 1:11.

I know - The expression implies personal feeling, tenderness, and compassion (compare Exodus 2:25 margin).

Verse 8

The natural richness of Palestine, the variety and excellence of its productions, are attested by sacred (compare Jeremiah 32:22; Ezekiel 20:6) and ancient writers, whose descriptions are strongly in contrast with those of later travelers. The expression "flowing with milk and honey" is used proverbially by Greek poets.

The Canaanites … - This is the first passage in this book where the enumeration, so often repeated, of the nations then in possession of Palestine, is given. Moses was to learn at once the extent of the promise, and the greatness of the enterprise. In Egypt, the forces, situation, and character of these nations were then well known. Aahmes I had invaded the

south of Palestine in his pursuit of the Shasous; Tothmosis I had traversed the whole land on his campaign in Syria and Mesopotamia; representations of Canaanites, and of the Cheta, identified by most Egyptologers with the Hittites, are common on monuments of the 18th and 19th Dynasties, and give a strong impression of their civilization, riches, and especially of their knowledge of the arts of war. In this passage, the more general designations come first - Canaanites probably includes all the races; the Hittites, who had great numbers of chariots (892 were taken from them by Tothmosis III in one battle), occupied the plains; the Amorites were chiefly mountaineers, and, in Egyptian inscriptions, gave their name to the whole country; the name Perizzites probably denotes the dwellers in scattered villages, the half-nomad population; the Hivites, a comparatively unwarlike but influential people, held 4 cities in Palestine proper, but their main body dwelt in the northwestern district, from Hermon to Hamath (see Joshua 11:3; Judges 3:3); the Jebusites at that time appear to have occupied Jerusalem and the adjoining district. Soon after their expulsion by Joshua, they seem to have recovered possession of part of Jerusalem, probably Mount Zion, and to have retained it until the time of David.

Verse 11

Who am I - These words indicate humility (compare Numbers 12:3), not fear. He feared failure, owing to incompetency, especially in the power of expression.

Verse 12

A token unto thee - Or the sign. The word means a declaration or promise of God, which rests absolutely on His word, and demands faith. The promise that God would have the people serve Him in that place was an assurance, if fully believed, that all intervening obstacles would be removed by His power.

Verse 13

What is his name - The meaning of this question is evidently: “By which name shall I tell them that the promise is confirmed?” Each name of the Deity represented some aspect or manifestation of His attributes (compare the introduction to Genesis). What Moses needed was not a new name, but direction to use that name which would bear in itself a pledge of accomplishment. Moses was familiar with the Egyptian habit of choosing from the names of the gods that which bore specially upon the wants and circumstances of their worshippers, and this may have suggested the

question which would be the first his own people would expect him to answer.

Verse 14

I am that I am - That is, "I am what I am." The words express absolute, and therefore unchanging and eternal Being. The name, which Moses was thus commissioned to use, was at once new and old; old in its connection with previous revelations; new in its full interpretation, and in its bearing upon the covenant of which Moses was the destined mediator.

Verse 15

The Lord God … - Better, Jehovah יהוה *yehovâh* God of your fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob. It corresponds exactly to the preceding verse, the words "I am" and "Jehovah" (Yahweh) being equivalent. This name met all the requirements of Moses, involving a two-fold pledge of accomplishment; the pledges of ancient benefits and of a new manifestation.

Name … memorial - The name signifies that by which God makes Himself known, the memorial that by which His people worship Him.

Verse 18

Three days' journey - i. e. a journey which would occupy three days in going and returning. This was a demand quite in accordance with Egyptian customs. The refusal of Pharaoh and the subsequent proceedings were revealed to Moses at once; but it is important to observe that the first request which Pharaoh rejected could have been granted without any damage to Egypt, or any risk of the Israelites passing the strongly-fortified frontier.

Verse 19

No, not - See the marginal rendering. Others explain it to mean, Pharaoh will not let the people go even when severely smitten.

Verse 22

Shall borrow - shall ask. The Egyptians had made the people serve "with rigor," and the Israelites when about to leave the country for ever were to ask or claim the jewels as a just, though very inadequate, remuneration for services which had made "their lives bitter." The Egyptians would doubtless have refused had not their feelings toward Moses (see Exodus 11:3) and the people been changed, under God's influence, by calamities in which they recognized a divine interposition, which also they rightly attributed to the obstinacy of their own king (see

Exodus 10:7). The Hebrew women were to make the demand, and were to make it of women, who would of course be especially moved to compliance by the loss of their children, the fear of a recurrence of calamity, perhaps also by a sense of the fitness of the request in connection with a religious festival.

Jewels - Chiefly, trinkets. These ornaments were actually applied to the purpose for which they were probably demanded, being employed in making the vessels of the sanctuary (compare Exodus 35:22).

Sojourneth in her house - This indicates a degree of friendly and neighborly contact, in accordance with several indirect notices, and was a natural result of long and peaceable sojourn in the district. The Egyptians did not all necessarily share the feelings of their new king.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

With this chapter begins the series of miracles which resulted in the deliverance of Israel. The first miracle was performed to remove the first obstacle, namely, the reluctance of Moses, conscious of his own weakness, and of the enormous power with which he would have to contend.

Verse 2

A rod - The word seems to denote the long staff which on Egyptian monuments is borne by men in positions of authority. It was usually made of acacia wood.

Verse 3

A serpent - This miracle had a meaning which Moses could not mistake. The serpent was probably the basilisk or Uraeus, the Cobra. This was the symbol of royal and divine power on the diadem of every Pharaoh. The conversion of the rod was not merely a portent, it was a sign, at once a pledge and representation of victory over the king and gods of Egypt!

Verse 6

Leprous - The instantaneous production and cure of the most malignant and subtle disease known to the Israelites was a sign of their danger if they resisted the command, and of their deliverance if they obeyed it. The infliction and cure were always regarded as special proofs of a divine intervention.

Verse 10

Eloquent - See the margin. The double expression "slow of speech (Ezekiel 3:5 margin) and of a slow tongue" seems to imply a difficulty both in finding words and in giving them utterance, a very natural result of so long a period of a shepherd's life, passed in a foreign land.

Since thou hast spoken - This expression seems to imply that some short time had intervened between this address and the first communication of the divine purpose to Moses.

Verse 12

Compare with this our Lord's promise to His Apostles; Matthew 10:19; Mark 13:11.

Verse 13

And he said - The reluctance of Moses is in accordance with the inner law of man's spiritual development, and specially with his own character;

but, under the circumstances, it indicated a weakness of faith.

Verse 14

Anger - The words of Moses Exodus 4:13 indicated more than a consciousness of infirmity; somewhat of vehemence and stubbornness.

Aaron - This is the first mention of Aaron. The words "he can speak well," probably imply that Aaron had both the power and will to speak. Aaron is here called "the Levite," with reference, it may be, to the future consecration of this tribe.

He cometh forth - i. e. is on the eve of setting forth. Not that Aaron was already on the way, but that he had the intention of going to his brother, probably because the enemies of Moses were now dead. See Exodus 4:19.

Verse 15

Thou shalt speak - Moses thus retains his position as "mediator;" the word comes to him first, he transmits it to his brother.

Verse 16

Instead of a mouth - We may bear in mind Aaron's unbroken habitude of speaking Hebrew and his probable familiarity with Egyptian.

Instead of God - The word "God" is used of persons who represent the Deity, as kings or judges, and it is understood in this sense here: "Thou shalt be to him a master."

Verse 20

An ass - Literally, "the ass," which, according to Hebrew idiom, means that he set them upon asses. This is the first notice of other sons besides Gershom.

The rod of God - The staff of Moses was consecrated by the miracle Exodus 4:2 and became "the rod of God."

Verse 21

I will harden - Calamities which do not subdue the heart harden it. In the case of Pharaoh, the hardening was at once a righteous judgment, and a natural result of a long series of oppressions and cruelties.

Verse 22

My firstborn - The expression would be perfectly intelligible to Pharaoh, whose official designation was "son of Ra." In numberless inscriptions the Pharaohs are styled "own sons" or "beloved sons" of the deity. It is here applied for the first time to Israel; and as we learn from Exodus 4:23, emphatically in antithesis to Pharaoh's own firstborn.

Verse 24

In the inn - Or "resting place." See Genesis 42:27 note.

Met him, and sought to kill him - Moses was attacked by a sudden and dangerous illness, which he knew was inflicted by God. The word "sought to kill" implies that the sickness, whatever might be its nature, was one which threatened death had it not been averted by a timely act. Zipporah believed that the illness of Moses was due to his having neglected the duty of an Israelite, and to his not having circumcised his own son; the delay was probably owing to her own not unnatural repugnance to a rite, which though practiced by the Egyptians, was not adopted generally in the East, even by the descendants of Abraham and Keturah. Moses appears to have been utterly prostrate and unable to perform the rite himself.

Verse 25

Sharp stone - Not "knife," as in the margin. Zipporah used a piece of flint, in accordance with the usage of the patriarchs. The Egyptians never used bronze or steel in the preparation of mummies because stone was regarded as a purer and more sacred material than metal.

Cast it at his feet - Showing at once her abhorrence of the rite, and her feeling that by it she had saved her husband's life.

A bloody husband - Literally, "a husband of blood," or "bloods." The meaning is: The marriage bond between us is now sealed by blood. By performing the rite, Zipporah had recovered her husband; his life was purchased for her by the blood of her child.

Verse 26

So he let him go - i. e. God withdrew His visitation from Moses.

Moses sent Zipporah and her children back to Jethro before he went to Egypt, Exodus 18:2. The journey would have been delayed had he waited for the healing of the child.

Verse 29

All the elders - The Israelites retained their own national organization; their affairs were administered by their own elders, who called a public assembly Exodus 4:31 to hear the message brought by Moses and Aaron.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

Pharaoh - This king, probably Tothmosis II, the great grandson of Aahmes Exodus 1:8, the original persecutor of the Israelites, must have been resident at this time in a city, probably Tanis Exodus 2:5, of Lower Egypt, situated on the Nile.

The Lord God - Yahweh God of Israel demanded the services of His people. The demand, according to the general views of the pagans, was just and natural; the Israelites could not offer the necessary sacrifices in the presence of Egyptians.

Verse 2

I know not the Lord - Either Pharaoh had not heard of Yahweh, or he did not recognize Him as a God.

Verse 3

Three days‘ journey - See the Exodus 3:18 note.

With pestilence, or with the sword - This shows that the plague was well known to the ancient Egyptians. The reference to the sword is equally natural, since the Israelites occupied the eastern district, which was frequently disturbed by the neighboring Shasous.

Verse 4

Let - i. e. hinder.

Verse 6

Their officers - Or scribes. Hebrews able to keep accounts in writing, appointed by the Egyptian superintendents, and responsible to them for the work; see Exodus 5:14. Subordinate officers are frequently represented on Egyptian monuments, giving in written accounts to their immediate superiors.

Verse 7

Some of the most ancient buildings in Egypt were constructed of bricks not burned, but dried in the sun; they were made of clay, or more commonly of mud, mixed with straw chopped into small pieces. An immense quantity of straw must have been wanted for the works on which the Israelites were engaged, and their labors must have been more than doubled by this requisition.

Verse 12

Stubble instead of straw - Rather, for the straw: i. e. to be prepared as straw. This marks the season of the year, namely, early spring, after the barley or wheat harvest, toward the end of April. Their suffering must have been severe: at that season the pestilential sand-wind blows over Egypt some 50 days, hence, its name - Chamsin. (compare Genesis 41:6 note).

Verse 17

Ye are idle - The old Egyptian language abounds in epithets which show contempt for idleness. The charge was equally offensive and ingenious; one which would be readily believed by Egyptians who knew how much public and private labors were impeded by festivals and other religious ceremonies. Among the great sins which, according to Egyptian belief, involved condemnation in the final judgment, idleness is twice mentioned.

Verse 23

The earnestness of this remonstrance, and even its approach to irreverence, are quite in keeping with other notices of Moses‘ naturally impetuous character. See Exodus 3:13.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 2-3

There appears to have been an interval of some months between the preceding events and this renewal of the promise to Moses. The oppression in the meantime was not merely driving the people to desperation, but preparing them by severe labor, varied by hasty wanderings in search of stubble, for the exertions and privations of the wilderness. Hence, the formal and solemn character of the announcements in the whole chapter.

Exodus 6:2

I am the Lord … - The meaning seems to be this: "I am Jehovah (Yahweh), and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai, but as to my name Jehovah, I was not made known to them." In other words, the full import of that name was not disclosed to them. See Exodus 3:14.

Exodus 6:3

God Almighty - Rather, "El Shaddai," (אל שדי *'êl shadday*), it is better to keep this as a proper name.

Verse 6

With a stretched out arm - The figure is common and quite intelligible; it may have struck Moses and the people the more forcibly since they were familiar with the hieroglyphic which represents might by two outstretched arms.

Verse 9

They hearkened not - The contrast between the reception of this communication and that recorded in Exodus 4:31 is accounted for by the change of circumstances. On the former occasion the people were comparatively at ease, accustomed to their lot, sufficiently afflicted to long for deliverance, and sufficiently free in spirit to hope for it.

For anguish - See the margin; out of breath, as it were, after their cruel disappointment, they were quite absorbed by their misery, unable and unwilling to attend to any fresh communication.

Verse 11

Go out of his land - Moses is now bidden to demand not a permission for a three days' journey (Exodus 3:18 note), which might be within the boundaries of Egypt, but for departure from the land.

Verse 12

Uncircumcised lips - An uncircumcised ear is one that does not hear clearly; an uncircumcised heart one slow to receive and understand warnings; uncircumcised lips, such as cannot speak fluently. The recurrence of the hesitation of Moses is natural; great as was the former trial this was far more severe; yet his words always imply fear of failure, not of personal danger (see Exodus 3:11).

Verse 13

Unto Moses and unto Aaron - The final and formal charge to the two brothers is given, as might be expected, before the plagues are denounced. With this verse begins a new section of the history.

Verse 14

These be the heads - We have in the following verses, not a complete genealogy, but a summary account of the family of the two brothers. Moses records for the satisfaction of Hebrew readers, to whom genealogical questions were always interesting, the descent and position of the designated leaders of the nation. See Exodus 6:26-27.

Verse 20

Amram - This can scarcely be the same person who is mentioned in Exodus 6:18; but his descendant and representative in the generation immediately preceding that of Moses. The intervening links are omitted, as is the rule where they are not needed for some special purpose, and do not bear upon the history.

Jochebed - The name means "the glory of Jehovah (Yahweh)," one clear instance of the use of the sacred name before the Exodus.

Father's sister - This was within the prohibited degrees after the law was given Leviticus 18:12 but not previously.

Verse 26-27

This emphatic repetition shows the reason for inserting the genealogy. The names of Moses and Aaron are given twice and in a different order; used in Exodus 6:26 probably to mark Aaron as the older in the genealogy, and used in Exodus 6:27 to denote the leadership of Moses.

Verse 28

This and the following verses belong to the next chapter. They mark distinctly the beginning of a subdivision of the narrative.

Verse 30

See Exodus 6:12.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

With this chapter begins the series of miracles performed in Egypt. They are progressive. The first miracle is performed to accredit the mission of the brothers; it is simply credential, and unaccompanied by any infliction. Then come signs which show that the powers of nature are subject to the will of Yahweh, each plague being attended with grave consequences to the Egyptians, yet not inflicting severe loss or suffering; then in rapid succession come ruinous and devastating plagues, murrain, boils, hail and lightning, locusts, darkness, and lastly, the death of the firstborn. Each of the inflictions has a demonstrable connection with Egyptian customs and phenomena; each is directly aimed at some Egyptian superstition; all are marvelous, not, for the most part, as reversing, but as developing forces inherent in nature, and directing them to a special end. The effects correspond with these characteristics; the first miracles are neglected; the following plagues first alarm, and then for a season, subdue, the king, who does not give way until his firstborn is struck. Even that blow leaves him capable of a last effort, which completes his ruin, and the deliverance of the Israelites.

I have made thee a god - Or "appointed thee." See the margin reference. Moses will stand in this special relation to Pharaoh, that God will address him by a prophet, i. e. by one appointed to speak in His name. The passage is an important one as illustrating the primary and essential characteristic of a prophet, he is the declarer of God's will and purpose.

Verse 3

Wonders - A word used only of portents performed to prove a divine interposition; they were the credentials of God's messengers.

Verse 9

Thy rod - Apparently the rod before described Exodus 4:2, which Moses on this occasion gives to Aaron as his representative.

A serpent - A word different from that in Exodus 4:3. Here a more general term, תנין *tannîyn* is employed, which in other passages includes all sea or river monsters, and is more specially applied to the crocodile as a symbol of Egypt. It occurs in the Egyptian ritual, nearly in the same form, "Tanem," as a synonym of the monster serpent which represents the principle of antagonism to light and life.

Verse 11

Three names for the magicians of Egypt are given in this verse. The "wise men" are men who know occult arts. The "sorcerers" are they who "mutter magic formulae," especially when driving away crocodiles, snakes, asps, etc. It was natural that Pharaoh should have sent for such persons. The "magicians" are the "bearers of sacred words," scribes and interpreters of hieroglyphic writings. Books containing magic formulae belonged exclusively to the king; no one was permitted to consult them but the priests and wise men, who formed a council or college, and were called in by the Pharaoh on all occasions of difficulty.

The names of the two principal magicians, Jannes and Jambres, who "withstood Moses," are preserved by Paul, 2 Timothy 3:8. Both names are Egyptian.

Enchantments - The original expression implies a deceptive appearance, an illusion, a juggler's trick, not an actual putting forth of magic power. Pharaoh may or may not have believed in a real transformation; but in either case he would naturally consider that if the portent performed by Aaron differed from that of the magicians, it was a difference of degree only, implying merely superiority in a common art. The miracle which followed Exodus 7:12 was sufficient to convince him had he been open to conviction. It was a miracle which showed the truth and power of Yahweh in contrast with that of others.

Verse 13

And he hardened - Or Pharaoh's heart was hardened. See Exodus 4:21.

Verse 15

He goeth out unto the water - The Nile was worshipped under various names and symbols; at Memphis especially, as Hapi, i. e. Apis, the sacred bull, or living representation of Osiris, of whom the river was regarded as the embodiment or manifestation. If, as is probable, the king went to offer his devotions, the miracle would have special force and suitableness. It was also the season of the yearly overflowing, about the middle of June; and the daily rise of the water was accurately recorded, under the personal superintendence of the king. In early inscriptions the Nilometer is the symbol of stability and providential care.

Verse 17

Turned to blood - This miracle would bear a certain resemblance to natural phenomena, and therefore be one which Pharaoh might see with

amazement and dismay, yet without complete conviction. It is well known that before the rise the water of the Nile is green and unfit to drink. About the 25th of June it becomes clear, and then yellow, and gradually reddish like ochre; an effect due to the presence of microscopic cryptogams and infusoria. The supernatural character of the visitation was tested by the suddenness of the change, by its immediate connection with the words and act of Moses, and by its effects. It killed the fish, and made the water unfit for use, neither of which results follows the annual discoloration.

Verse 18

Shall lothe - The water of the Nile has always been regarded by the Egyptians as a blessing unique to their land. It is the only pure and wholesome water in their country, since the water in wells and cisterns is unwholesome, while rain water seldom falls, and fountains are extremely rare.

Verse 19

The "streams" mean the natural branches of the Nile in Lower Egypt. The word "rivers" should rather be "canals"; they were of great extent, running parallel to the Nile, and communicating with it by sluices, which were opened at the rise, and closed at the subsidence of the inundation. The word rendered "ponds" refers either to natural fountains, or more probably to cisterns or tanks found in every town and village. The "pools", literally "gathering of waters," were the reservoirs, always large and some of enormous extent, containing sufficient water to irrigate the country in the dry season.

In vessels of wood - The Nile water is kept in vessels and is purified for use by filtering, and by certain ingredients such as the paste of almonds.

Verse 21

The fish … - The Egyptians subsisted to a great extent on the fish of the Nile, though salt-water fish were regarded as impure. A mortality among the fish was a plague that was much dreaded.

Verse 25

Seven days - This marks the duration of the plague. The natural discoloration of the Nile water lasts generally much longer, about 20 days.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 2

With frogs - Some months appear to have elapsed between this and the former plague, if the frogs made their appearance at the usual time, that is in September. The special species mentioned here is of Egyptian origin. This plague was, like the preceding, in general accordance with natural phenomena, but marvelous both for its extent and intensity, and for its direct connection with the words and acts of God‘s messengers. It had also apparently, like the other plagues, a direct bearing upon Egyptian superstitions. There was a female deity with a frog‘s head, and the frog was connected with the most ancient forms of nature-worship in Egypt.

Verse 3

Into thine house - This appears to have been special to the plague, as such. It was especially the visitation which would be felt by the scrupulously-clean Egyptians.

Kneadingtroughs - Not dough, as in the margin. See Exodus 12:34.

Verse 7

The magicians would seem to have been able to increase the plague, but not to remove it; hence, Pharaoh‘s application to Moses, the first symptoms of yielding.

Verse 9

Glory over me - See the margin, “have honor over me,” i. e. have the honor, or advantage over me, directing me when I shall entreat God for thee and thy servants.

When - Or by when; i. e. for what exact time. Pharaoh‘s answer in Exodus 5:10 refers to this, by tomorrow. The shortness of the time would, of course, be a test of the supernatural character of the transaction.

Verse 13

Villages - Literally, enclosures, or courtyards.

Verse 16

It is observed by Hebrew commentators that the nine plagues are divided into three groups: distinct warnings are given of the first two plagues in each group; the third in each is inflicted without any previous notice; namely, the third, lice, the sixth, boils, the ninth, darkness.

The dust of the land - The two preceding plagues fell upon the Nile. This fell on the earth, which was worshipped in Egypt as the father of the

gods. An special sacredness was attached to the black fertile soil of the basin of the Nile, called Chemi, from which the ancient name of Egypt is supposed to be derived.

Lice - The Hebrew word occurs only in connection with this plague. These insects are generally identified with mosquitos, a plague nowhere greater than in Egypt. They are most troublesome toward October, i. e. soon after the plague of frogs, and are dreaded not only for the pain and annoyance which they cause, but also because they are said to penetrate into the body through the nostrils and ears.

Verse 19

The finger of God - This expression is thoroughly Egyptian; it need not imply that the magicians recognized Yahweh, the God who performed the marvel. They may possibly have referred it to as a god that was hostile to their own protectors.

Verse 20

Cometh forth to the water - See the Exodus 7:15 note. It is not improbable that on this occasion Pharaoh went to the Nile with a procession in order to open the solemn festival, which was held 120 days after the first rise, at the end of October or early in November. At that time the inundation is abating and the first traces of vegetation are seen on the deposit of fresh soil.

The plague now announced may be regarded as connected with the atmosphere, also an object of worship.

Verse 21

Swarms of flies - Generally, supposed to be the dog-fly, which at certain seasons is described as a plague far worse than mosquitos. Others, however, adopt the opinion that the insects were a species of beetle, which was reverenced by the Egyptians as a symbol of life, of reproductive or creative power. The sun-god, as creator, bore the name Chepera, and is represented in the form, or with the head, of a beetle.

Verse 22

I will sever … - This severance constituted a specific difference between this and the preceding plagues. Pharaoh could not of course attribute the exemption of Goshen from a scourge, which fell on the valley of the Nile, to an Egyptian deity, certainly not to Chepera (see the last note), a special object of worship in Lower Egypt.

Verse 25

To your God - Pharaoh now admits the existence and power of the God whom he had professed not to know; but, as Moses is careful to record, he recognizes Him only as the national Deity of the Israelites.

In the land - i. e. in Egypt, not beyond the frontier.

Verse 26

The abomination - i. e. an animal which the Egyptians held it sacrilegious to slay. The ox, bull, or cow, is meant. The cow was never sacrificed in Egypt, being sacred to Isis, and from a very early age the ox was worshipped throughout Egypt, and more especially at Heliopolis and Memphis under various designations, Apis, Mnevis, Amen-Ehe, as the symbol or manifestation of their greatest deities, Osiris, Atum, Ptah, and Isis.

Verse 27

Three days' journey - See the Exodus 3:18 note.

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CHAPTER 9

Verse 3

A very grievous murrain - Or "pestilence;" but the word "murrain," i. e. "a great mortality," exactly expresses the meaning. This terrible visitation struck far more severely than the preceding, which had caused distress and suffering; it attacked the resources of the nation.

The camels - These animals are only twice mentioned, here and Genesis 12:16, in connection with Egypt. Though camels are never represented on the monuments, they were known to the Egyptians, and were probably used on the frontier.

Verse 6

All the cattle - i. e. which were left in the field; compare Exodus 9:19-21.

Verse 7

Was hardened - See Exodus 4:21. Pharaoh probably attributed the exemption of the Israelites to natural causes. They were a pastoral race, well acquainted with all that pertained to the care of cattle; and dwelling in a healthy district probably far more than the rest of Lower Egypt.

Verse 8

This marks a distinct advance and change in the character of the visitations. Hitherto, the Egyptians had not been attacked directly in their persons. It is the second plague which was not preceded by a demand and warning, probably on account of the special hardness shown by Pharaoh in reference to the murrain.

Ashes of the furnace - The act was evidently symbolic: the ashes were to be sprinkled toward heaven, challenging, so to speak, the Egyptian deities. There may possibly be a reference to an Egyptian custom of scattering to the winds ashes of victims offered to Typhon.

Verse 9

A boil - Means probably a burning tumor or carbuncle breaking out in pustulous ulcers. The miracle consisting in the severity of the plague and its direct connection with the act of Moses.

Verse 11

This verse seems to imply that the magicians now formally gave way and confessed their defeat.

Verses 13-34

With the plague of hail begins the last series of plagues, which differ from the former both in their severity and their effects. Each produced a temporary, but real, change in Pharaoh‘s feelings.

Exodus 9:14

All my plagues - This applies to all the plagues which follow; the effect of each was foreseen and foretold. The words “at this time” point to a rapid and continuous succession of blows. The plagues which precede appear to have been spread over a considerable time; the first message of Moses was delivered after the early harvest of the year before, when the Israelites could gather stubble, i. e. in May and April: the second mission, when the plagues began, was probably toward the end of June, and they went on at intervals until the winter; this plague was in February; see Exodus 9:31.

Exodus 9:15

For now … - Better, For now indeed, had I stretched forth my hand and smitten thee and thy people with the pestilence, then hadst thou been cut off from the earth. Exodus 9:16 gives the reason why God had not thus inflicted a summary punishment once for all.

Exodus 9:16

Have I raised thee up - See the margin. God kept Pharaoh “standing”, i. e. permitted him to live and hold out until His own purpose was accomplished.

Exodus 9:18

A very grievous hail - The miracle consisted in the magnitude of the infliction and in its immediate connection with the act of Moses.

Exodus 9:19

In Egypt the cattle are sent to pasture in the open country from January to April, when the grass is abundant. They are kept in stalls for the rest of the year.

Exodus 9:20

The word of the Lord - This gives the first indication that the warnings had a salutary effect upon the Egyptians.

Exodus 9:27

The Lord - Thus, for the first time, Pharaoh explicitly recognizes Yahweh as God (compare Exodus 5:2).

Exodus 9:29

The earth is the Lord‘s - This declaration has a direct reference to Egyptian superstition. Each god was held to have special power within a

given district; Pharaoh had learned that Yahweh was a god, he was now to admit that His power extended over the whole earth. The unity and universality of the divine power, though occasionally recognized in ancient Egyptian documents, were overlaid at a very early period by systems alternating between Polytheism and Pantheism.

Exodus 9:31

The flax was bolled - i. e. in blossom. This marks the time. In the north of Egypt the barley ripens and flax blossoms about the middle of February, or at the latest early in March, and both are gathered in before April, when the wheat harvest begins. The cultivation of flax must have been of great importance; linen was preferred to any material, and exclusively used by the priests. It is frequently mentioned on Egyptian monuments.

Exodus 9:32

Rie - Rather, "spelt," the common food of the ancient Egyptians, now called "doora" by the natives, and the only grain represented on the sculptures: the name, however, occurs on the monuments very frequently in combination with other species.

Verse 35

Hardened - Different words in the Hebrew. In Exodus 9:34 the word means "made heavy," i. e. obtuse, incapable of forming a right judgment; in Exodus 9:35 it is stronger, and implies a stubborn resolution.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 4

The locusts - The locust is less common in Egypt than in many eastern countries, yet it is well known, and dreaded as the most terrible of scourges. They come generally from the western deserts, but sometimes from the east and the southeast. No less than nine names are given to the locust in the Bible, of which the word used here is the most common (ארבה *'arbeh*); it signifies "multitudinous," and whenever it occurs reference is made to its terrible devastations.

Verse 5

The face - Literally, cover "the eye of the earth," alluding to the darkness which follows, when the whole atmosphere is filled on all sides and to a great height by an innumerable quantity of these insects.

Shall eat every tree - Not only the leaves, but the branches and even the wood were attacked and devoured. The Egyptians were passionately fond of trees.

Verse 6

Fill thy houses - The terraces, courts, and even the inner apartments are said to be filled in a moment by a locust storm. Compare Joel 2:9.

Verse 7

For the first time the officers of Pharaoh intervene before the scourge is inflicted, showing at once their belief in the threat, and their special terror of the infliction. Also, for the first time, Pharaoh takes measures to prevent the evil; he does not indeed send for Moses and Aaron, but he permits them to be brought into his presence.

Let the men go - i. e. the men only, not all the people. See Exodus 10:8.

Verse 9

With our young … - The demand was not contrary to Egyptian usage, as great festivals were kept by the whole population.

Verse 10

Evil is before you - i. e. "your intentions are evil." Great as the possible infliction might be, Pharaoh held it to be a less evil than the loss of so large a population.

Verse 13

An east wind - See Exodus 10:4. Moses is careful to record the natural and usual cause of the evil, portentous as it was both in extent and in

connection with its denouncement.

Verse 14

Went up - At a distance the locusts appear hanging, as it were, like a heavy cloud over the land; as they approach they seem to rise, and they fill the atmosphere overhead upon their arrival.

Over all the land - Travelers mention a cloud of locusts extending over 500 miles, and so compact while on the wing that it completely hid the sun. This passage describes a swarm unprecedented in extent.

Verse 17

This death only - Pliny calls locusts a pestilence brought on by divine wrath. Pharaoh now recognizes the justice of his servants‘ apprehensions, Exodus 10:7.

Verse 19

West wind - Literally, “a sea wind,” a wind blowing from the sea on the northwest of Egypt.

Red sea - The Hebrew has the “Sea of Suph”: the exact meaning of which is disputed. Gesenius renders it “rush” or “seaweed;” but it is probably an Egyptian word. A sea-weed resembling wood is thrown up abundantly on the shores of the Red Sea. The origin of the name “Red” Sea is uncertain: (naturalists have connected it with the presence of red infusoria, Exodus 7:17).

Verse 21

Darkness - This infliction was specially calculated to affect the spirits of the Egyptians, whose chief object of worship was the Sun-god; and its suddenness and severity in connection with the act of Moses mark it as a preternatural withdrawal of light. Yet, it has an analogy in physical phenomena. After the vernal equinox the southwest wind from the desert blows some 50 days, not however, continuously but at intervals, lasting generally some two or three days. It fills the atmosphere with dense masses of fine sand, bringing on a darkness far deeper than that of our worst fogs in winter. The consternation of Pharaoh proves that, familiar as he may have been with the phenomenon, no previous occurrence had prepared him for its intensity and duration, and that he recognized it as a supernatural visitation.

Verse 23

Had light in their dwellings - The sandstorm, if such were the cause, may not have extended to the district of Goshen; but the expression clearly

denotes a miraculous intervention, whether accomplished or not by natural agencies.

Verse 24

Your flocks and your herds - Pharaoh still exacts what would of course be a complete security for their return: but the demand was wholly incompatible with the object assigned for the journey into the wilderness.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

The Lord said - Or "the Lord had said." The first three verses of this chapter are parenthetical. Before Moses relates the last warning given to Pharaoh, he feels it right to recall to his readers' minds the revelation and command which had been previously given to him by the Lord.

When he shall let you go … - When at last he lets you depart with children, flocks, herds, and all your possessions, he will compel you to depart in haste. Moses was already aware that the last plague would be followed by an immediate departure, and, therefore, measures had probably been taken to prepare the Israelites for the journey. In fact, on each occasion when Pharaoh relented for a season, immediate orders would of course be issued by Moses to the heads of the people, who were thus repeatedly brought into a state of more or less complete organization for the final movement.

Verse 2

Every man - In Exodus 3:22 only women were named; the command is more explicit when the time has come for its execution.

Borrow - "ask." See Exodus 3:22 note.

Verse 4

And Moses said - The following words must be read in immediate connection with the last verse of the preceding chapter.

About midnight - This marks the hour, but not the day, on which the visitation would take place. There may have been, and probably was, an interval of some days, during which preparations might be made both for the celebration of the Passover, and the departure of the Israelites.

Verse 5

Two points are to be noticed:

1. The extent of the visitation: the whole land suffers in the persons of its firstborn, not merely for the guilt of the sovereign, but for the actual participation of the people in the crime of infanticide Exodus 1:22.

2. The limitation: Pharaoh's command had been to slay ALL the male children of the Israelites, but only one child in each Egyptian family was to die. If Tothmosis II was the Pharaoh, the visitation fell with special severity on his family. He left no son, but was succeeded by his widow.

The mill - This consisted of two circular stones, one fixed in the ground, the other turned by a handle. The work of grinding was extremely laborious, and performed by women of the lowest rank.

Firstborn of beasts - This visitation has a special force in reference to the worship of beasts, which was universal in Egypt; each district having its own sacred animal, adored as a manifestation or representative of the local tutelary deity.

Verse 7

Shall not a dog move his tongue - A proverb expressive of freedom from alarm and immunity front assault.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

This chapter was written some time after the Exodus, probably when Moses put together the portions of the book toward the end of his life. The statements that these instructions were given in the land of Egypt, and that they were given to Moses and Aaron, are important: the one marks the special dignity of this ordinance, which was established before the Sinaitic code; the other marks the distinction between Moses and Aaron and all other prophets. They alone were prophets of the law, i. e. no law was promulgated by any other prophets.

Verse 2

This month - Abib Exodus 13:4. It was called "Nisan" by the later Hebrews, and nearly corresponds to our April. The Israelites are directed to take Abib henceforth as the beginning of the year; the year previously began with the month Tisri, when the harvest was gathered in; see Exodus 23:16. The injunction touching Abib or Nisan referred only to religious rites; in other affairs they retained the old arrangement, even in the beginning of the Sabbatic year; see Leviticus 25:9.

Verse 3

A lamb - The Hebrew word is general, meaning either a sheep or a goat - male or female - and of any age; the age and sex are therefore epecially defined in the following verse. The direction to select the lamb on the tenth day, the fourth day before it was offered, was intended to secure due care in the preparation for the great national festival. The custom certainly fell into desuetude at a later period, but probably not before the destruction of the temple.

Verse 4

Tradition specifies ten as the least number; but the matter was probably left altogether to the discretion of the heads of families.

The last clause should be rendered: "each man, according to his eating, ye shall count for the lamb."

Verse 5

Without blemish - This is in accordance with the general rule (margin reference): although in this case there is a special reason, since the lamb was in place of the firstborn male in each household. The restriction to the

first year is unique, and refers apparently to the condition of perfect innocence in the antitype, the Lamb of God.

Verse 6

Until the fourteenth day - It should be observed that the offering of our Lord on the self-same day is an important point in determining the typical character of the transaction. A remarkable passage in the Talmud says: "It was a famous and old opinion among the ancient Jews that the day of the new year which was the beginning of the Israelites' deliverance out of Egypt should in future time be the beginning of the redemption by the Messiah."

In the evening - The Hebrew has between the two evenings. The meaning of the expression is disputed. The most probable explanation is that it includes the time from afternoon, or early eventide, until sunset. This accords with the ancient custom of the Hebrews, who killed the paschal lamb immediately after the offering of the daily sacrifice, which on the day of the Passover took place a little earlier than usual, between two and three p.m. This would allow about two hours and a half for slaying and preparing all the lambs. It is clear that they would not wait until sunset, at which time the evening meal would take place. The slaying of the lamb thus coincides exactly with the death of our Saviour, at the ninth hour of the day Matthew 27:46.

Verse 7

The upper door post - Or lintel, Exodus 12:23. This direction was understood by the Hebrews to apply only to the first Passover: it was certainly not adopted in Palestine. The meaning of the sprinkling of blood is hardly open to question. It was a representation of the offering of the life, substituted for that of the firstborn in each house, as an expiatory and vicarious sacrifice.

Verse 8

In that night - The night is thus clearly distinguished from the evening when the lamb was slain. It was slain before sunset, on the 14th, and eaten after sunset, the beginning of the 15th.

With fire - Among various reasons given for this injunction the most probable and satisfactory seems to be the special sanctity attached to fire from the first institution of sacrifice (compare Genesis 4:4).

And unleavened bread - On account of the hasty departure, allowing no time for the process of leavening: but the meaning discerned by Paul, 1

Corinthians 5:7-8, and recognized by the Church in all ages, was assuredly implied, though not expressly declared in the original institution. Compare our Lord‘s words, Matthew 16:6, Matthew 16:12, as to the symbolism of leaven.

Bitter herbs - The word occurs only here and in Numbers 9:11, in reference to herbs. The symbolic reference to the previous sufferings of the Israelites is generally admitted.

Verse 9

Raw - i. e. “half-cooked.”

Sodden … with water - It was probably more common to seethe meat than to roast meat; hence, the regrets expressed by the Israelites for the seething pots of Egypt.

The purtenance thereof - or its intestines. This verse directs that the lamb should be roasted and placed on the table whole. No bone was to be broken (see Exodus 12:46, and margin reference). The bowels were taken out, washed and then replaced. The Talmud prescribes the form of the oven of earthenware, in which the lamb was roasted, open above and below with a grating for the fire. Lambs and sheep are roasted whole in Persia, nearly in the same manner.

This entire consumption of the lamb constitutes one marked difference between the Passover and all other sacrifices, in which either a part or the whole was burned, and thus offered directly to God. The whole substance of the sacrificed lamb was to enter into the substance of the people, the blood only excepted, which was sprinkled as a propitiatory and sacrificial offering. Another point of subordinate importance is noticed. The lamb was slain and the blood sprinkled by the head of each family: no separate priesthood as yet existed in Israel; its functions belonged from the beginning to the father of the family: when the priesthood was instituted the slaying of the lamb still devolved on the heads of families, though the blood was sprinkled on the altar by the priests; an act which essentially belonged to their office. The typical character of this part of the transaction is clear. Our Lord was offered and His blood shed as an expiatory and propitiatory sacrifice, but His whole Humanity is transfused spiritually and effectually into His Church, an effect which is at once symbolized and assured in holy communion, the Christian Passover.

Verse 10

This was afterward a general law of sacrifices; at once preventing all possibility of profanity, and of superstitious abuse. The injunction is on both accounts justly applied by our Church to the eucharist.

Burn with fire - Not being consumed by man, it was thus offered, like other sacrifices Exodus 12:8, to God.

Verse 11

These instructions are understood by the Jews to apply only to the first Passover, when they belonged to the occasion. There is no trace of their observance at any later time. Each of the directions marks preparation for a journey; the long flowing robes are girded round the loins; shoes or sandals, not worn in the house or at meals, were fastened on the feet; and the traveler‘s staff was taken in hand.

The Lord‘s passover - The great and most significant name for the whole ordinance. The word Passover renders as nearly as possible the true meaning of the original, of which the primary sense is generally held to be “pass rapidly,” like a bird with outstretched wings, but it undoubtedly includes the idea of sparing Exodus 12:13. See Isaiah 31:5, which combines the two great ideas involved in the word.

Verse 12

I will pass through - A word wholly distinct from that which means “pass over.” The “passing through” was in judgment, the “passing over” in mercy.

Against all the gods of Egypt - Compare the margin reference. In smiting the firstborn of all living beings, man and beast, God struck down the objects of Egyptian worship (compare Exodus 12:5).

Verse 14

A memorial - A commemorative and sacramental ordinance of perpetual obligation. As such, it has ever been observed by the Hebrews. By the Christian it is spiritually observed; its full significance is recognized, and all that it foreshadowed is realized, in the sacrament of holy communion.

Verse 15

Cut off - The penalty inflicted on those who transgressed the command may be accounted for on the ground that it was an act of rebellion; but additional light is thrown upon it by the typical meaning assigned to leaven by our Lord, Matthew 16:6.

Verse 16

An holy convocation - An assembly called by proclamation for a religious solemnity. See Leviticus 23:2; Numbers 10:2-3. In the East the proclamation is made by the Muezzins from the minarets of the mosques.

Save that … - In this the observance of the festival differed from the Sabbath, when the preparation of food was prohibited. The same word for "work" is used here and in the fourth commandment: it is very general, and includes all laborious occupation.

Verse 19

Born in the land - A stranger or foreigner might be born in the land, but the word here used means "a native of the land," belonging to the country by virtue of descent, that descent being reckoned from Abraham, to whom Canaan was promised as a perpetual inheritance.

Verse 21

Draw out - i. e. draw the lamb from the fold and then take it to the house.

The passover - The word is here applied to the lamb; an important fact, marking the lamb as the sign and pledge of the exemption of the Israelites.

Verse 22

A bunch of hyssop - The species here designated does not appear to be the plant now bearing the name. It would seem to have been an aromatic plant, common in Palestine and near Mount Sinai, with a long straight stalk and leaves well adapted for the purpose of sprinkling.

Bason - The rendering rests on good authority and gives a good sense: but the word means "threshold" in some other passages and in Egyptian, and is taken here in that sense by some versions. If that rendering be correct it would imply that the lamb was slain on the threshold.

None … shall go out … - There would be no safety outside the precincts protected by the blood of the lamb; a symbolism explained by the margin reference.

Verse 27

It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover - or This is the sacrifice of the Passover to Yahweh. The most formal and exact designation of the festival is thus given: but "the Passover" may mean either the act of God's mercy in sparing the Israelites, or the lamb which is offered in sacrifice: more probably the latter, as in Exodus 12:21. This gives a clear sense to the expression "to Yahweh;" the Passover lamb was a sacrifice offered to Yahweh by His ordinance.

Verse 29

This plague is distinctly attributed here and in Exodus 12:23 to the personal intervention of the Lord; but it is to be observed that although the Lord Himself passed through to smite the Egyptians, He employed the agency of "the destroyer" Exodus 12:23, in whom, in accordance with Hebrews 11:28, all the ancient versions, and most critics, recognize an Angel (compare 2 Kings 19:35; 2 Samuel 24:16).

Verse 32

Bless me also - No words could show more strikingly the complete, though temporary, submission of Pharaoh.

Verse 34

Kneadingtroughs - (Compare the margin and Deuteronomy 28:5). The troughs were probably small wooden bowls in which the cakes when baked were preserved for use. The Hebrews used their outer garment, or mantle, in the same way as the Bedouins at present, who make a bag of the voluminous folds of their burnous. See Rth 3:15 ; 2 Kings 4:39.

Verse 35

Borrowed - "Asked of." See Exodus 3:22 note.

Verse 36

Lent - Or gave. The word in the Hebrew means simply "granted their request." Whether the grant is made as a loan, or as a gift, depends in every instance upon the context. Here the word "spoiled" ought to be regarded as conclusive that the grant was a gift, a moderate remuneration for long service, and a compensation for cruel wrongs.

Verse 37

Rameses - See Exodus 1:11 note. Rameses was evidently the place of general rendezvous, well adapted for that purpose as the principal city of Goshen. The Israelites were probably settled in considerable numbers in and about it. Pharaoh with his army and court were at that time near the frontier, and Rameses, where a large garrison was kept, was probably the place where the last interview with Moses occurred. The first part of the journey appears to have followed the course of the ancient canal. The site of Succoth cannot be exactly determined, but it lay about halfway between Rameses and Etham Exodus 13:20. The name Succoth (i. e. "tents" or "booths" in Hebrew), may have been given by the Israelites, but the same, or a similar word, occurs in Egyptian in connection with the district.

600,000 - This includes all the males who could march. The total number of the Israelites should therefore be calculated from the males above twelve or fourteen, and would therefore amount to somewhat more than two millions. This is not an excessive population for Goshen, nor does it exceed a reasonable estimate of the increase of the Israelites, including their numerous dependants.

Verse 38

A mixed multitude - Probably remains of the old Semitic population, whether first brought into the district by the Hyksos or not is uncertain. As natural objects of suspicion and dislike to the Egyptians who had lately become masters of the country, they would be anxious to escape, the more especially after the calamities which preceded the Exodus.

Very much cattle - This is an important fact, both as showing that the oppression of the Israelites had not extended to confiscation of their property, and as bearing upon the question of their maintenance in the Wilderness.

Verse 40

Who dwelt - Read, which they sojourned. The obvious intention of Moses is to state the duration of the sojourn in Egypt.

Verse 43

And the Lord said - From this verse to Exodus 13:16 are instructions regarding the Passover. Such instructions were needed when the Israelites were joined by the "mixed multitude:" of strangers; and they were probably given at Succoth, on the morning following the departure from Rameses.

No stranger - Literally, "son of a stranger." The term is general; it includes all who were aliens from Israel, until they were incorporated into the nation by circumcision.

Verse 44

Servant - The circumcision of the slave, thus enjoined formally on the first day that Israel became a nation, in accordance with the law given to Abraham, (see the margin reference) made him a true member of the family, equally entitled to all religious privileges. In the household of a priest the slave was even permitted to eat the consecrated food: Leviticus 22:11.

Verse 45

A foreigner - or sojourner: one who resides in a country, not having a permanent home, nor being attached to an Israelitish household.

Verse 46

In one house - i. e. “in one company.” Each lamb was to be entirely consumed by the members of one company, whether they belonged to the same household or not.

Break a bone - The typical significance of this injunction is recognized by John, (see the margin reference.) It is not easy to assign any other satisfactory reason for it. This victim alone was exempt from the general law by which the limbs were ordered to be separated from the body.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 2

Sanctify unto me - The command is addressed to Moses. It was to declare the will of God that all firstborn were to be consecrated to Him, set apart from all other creatures. The command is expressly based upon the Passover. The firstborn exempt from the destruction became in a new and special sense the exclusive property of the Lord: the firstborn of man as His ministers, the firstborn of cattle as victims. In lieu of the firstborn of men the Levites were devoted to the temple services.

Verse 4

Abib - April. Compare Exodus 12:2. It is uncertain whether this name was ancient or given then for the first time. It is found only in the Pentateuch, six times as the name of the first month, twice in the sense of young wheat, hence its etymology, namely, the month when the wheat began to ripen. The name resembles the Egyptian Epiphi, and may possibly have been derived from it.

Verse 5

The Canaanites - Five nations only are named in this passage, whereas six are named in Exodus 3:8, and ten in the original promise to Abraham, Genesis 15:19-21. The first word "Canaanite" is generic, and includes all the Hamite races of Palestine.

Verse 9

Hebrew writers have generally regarded this as a formal injunction to write the precepts on slips of parchment, and to fasten them on the wrists and forehead; but other commentators are generally agreed that it is to be understood metaphorically. The words appear to be put into the mouths of the parents. They were to keep all the facts of the Passover constantly in mind, and, referring to a custom prevalent ages before Moses in Egypt, to have them present as though they were inscribed on papyrus or parchment fastened on the wrists, or on the face between the eyes. If, as may be inferred from Deuteronomy 6:7-8, Moses adopted this custom, he would take care to warn the people against the Egyptian superstition of amulets. Modern Israelites generally allege this precept as a justification for the use of phylacteries.

Verse 13

An ass - The ass could not be offered in sacrifice, being an unclean animal: possibly the only unclean animal domesticated among the Israelites at the time of the Exodus. This principle was extended to every unclean beast; see Numbers 18:15.

Thou shalt redeem - The lamb, or sheep, was given to the priest for the service of the sanctuary.

Firstborn of man - The price of redemption was fixed at five shekels of the sanctuary: Numbers 3:47, where see the note.

Verse 18

Harnessed - More probably, "marshalled" or "in orderly array." There is not the least indication that the Israelites had been disarmed by the Egyptians, and as occupying a frontier district frequently assailed by the nomads of the desert they would of necessity be accustomed to the use of arms. Compare Exodus 1:10.

Verse 20

Etham - The house or "sanctuary of Tum" (the Sun God worshipped especially by that name in Lower Egypt), was in the immediate vicinity of Heliopolis, called by the Egyptians the fortress of Zar, or Zalu (i. e. of foreigners); the frontier city where the Pharaohs of the 18th dynasty reviewed their forces when about to enter upon a campaign on Syria. The name Pithom (see Exodus 1:11) has precisely the same meaning with Etham, and may possibly be identified with it.

Verse 21

Pillar of cloud - The Lord Himself did for the Israelites by preternatural means that which armies were obliged to do for themselves by natural agents. The Persians and Greeks used fire and smoke as signals in their marches, and in a well-known papyrus, the commander of an Egyptian expedition is called "A flame in the darkness at the head of his soldiers." By this sign then of the pillar of cloud, the Lord showed Himself as their leader and general Exodus 15:3, Exodus 15:6.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verse 2

That they turn - i. e. away from the wilderness, and go southwards, to the west of the Bitter Lakes, which completely separated them from the desert.

Pi-hahiroth - The place is generally identified with Ajrud, a fortress with a very large well of good water, situated at the foot of an elevation commanding the plain which extends to Suez, at a distance of four leagues. The journey from Etham might occupy two, or even three days.

Migdol - A tower, or fort, the "Maktal" of Egyptian monuments; it is probably to be identified with Bir Suweis, about two miles from Suez.

Baal-zephon - The name under which the Phoenicians, who had a settlement in Lower Egypt at a very ancient period, worshipped their chief Deity. There can be no doubt it was near Kolsum, or Suez. From the text it is clear that the encampment of the Israelites extended over the plain from Pi-hahiroth: their headquarters being between Bir Suweis and the sea opposite to Baal-Zephon. At Ajrud the road branches off in two directions, one leading to the wilderness by a tract, now dry, but in the time of Moses probably impassable (see next note); the other leading to Suez, which was doubtless followed by the Israelites.

Verse 3

They are entangled … - The original intention of Moses was to go toward Palestine by the wilderness: when that purpose was changed by God‘s direction and they moved southwards, Pharaoh, on receiving information, was of course aware that they were completely shut in, since the waters of the Red Sea then extended to the Bitter Lakes. It is known that the Red Sea at some remote period extended considerably further toward the north than it does at present. In the time of Moses the water north of Kolsum joined the Bitter Lakes, though at present the constant accumulation of sand has covered the intervening space to the extent of 8000 to 10,000 yards.

Verse 5

The people fled - This was a natural inference from the change of direction, which indicated a determination to escape from Egypt. Up to the time when that information reached Pharaoh both he and his people understood that the Israelites would return after keeping a festival in the

district adjoining Etham. From Etham the intelligence would be forwarded by the commander of the garrison to Rameses in less than a day, and the cavalry, a highly-disciplined force, would be ready for immediate departure.

Verse 7

Six hundred chosen chariots - The Egyptian army comprised large numbers of chariots, each drawn by two horses, with two men, one bearing the shield and driving, the other fully armed. The horses were thoroughbred, renowned for strength and spirit. Chariots are first represented on the monuments of the 18th dynasty. By "all the chariots of Egypt" we are to understand all that were stationed in Lower Egypt, most of them probably at Rameses and other frontier garrisons near the headquarters of Pharaoh.

Captains - The word שׁלישׁ *shâlîysh* literally "third or thirtieth," may represent an Egyptian title. The king had about him a council of thirty, each of whom bore a title, Mapu, a "thirty man." The word occurs frequently in the Books of Kings. David seems to have organized the Shalishim as a distinct corps (see 2 Samuel 23:8 Hebrew), retaining the old name, and adopting the Egyptian system.

Verse 9

And his horsemen - See Exodus 14:5.

Verse 11

No graves in Egypt - This bitter taunt was probably suggested by the vast extent of cemeteries in Egypt, which might not improperly be called the land of tombs.

Verse 12

Let us alone - This is a gross exaggeration, yet not without a semblance of truth: for although the Israelites welcomed the message of Moses at first, they gave way completely at the first serious trial. See the reference in the margin. The whole passage foreshadows the conduct of the people in the wilderness.

Verse 13

For the Egyptians whom … - The true sense is, ye shall never see the Egyptians in the same way, under the same circumstances.

Verse 15

Wherefore criest thou unto me? - Moses does not speak of his intercession, and we only know of it from this answer to his prayer.

Verse 19

The angel of God - Compare the margin reference, and see Exodus 3:2.

Verse 21

A strong east wind - The agency by which the object effected was natural (compare Exodus 15:8 note): and the conditions of the narrative are satisfied by the hypothesis, that the passage took place near Suez.

The waters were divided - i. e. there was a complete separation between the water of the gulf and the water to the north of Kolsum.

Verse 22

Were a wall unto them - Compare Nahum 3:8. The waters served the purpose of an intrenchment and wall; the people could not be attacked on either flank during the transit; to the north was the water covering the whole district; to the south was the Red Sea.

Verse 24

In the morning watch - At sunrise, a little before 6 a.m.in April.

Troubled - By a sudden panic.

Verse 26

That the waters may come - A sudden cessation of the wind, possibly coinciding with a spring tide (it was full moon) would immediately convert the low flat sand-banks first into a quicksand, and then into a mass of waters, in a time far less than would suffice for the escape of a single chariot, or horseman loaded with heavy corslet.

Verse 27

Overthrew the Egyptians - Better as in the margin, The Lord shook them off, hurled them from their chariots into the sea.

Verse 28

Not so much as one of them - Escape would be impossible Exodus 14:26. Pharaoh‘s destruction, independent of the distinct statement of the Psalmist, Psalm 136:15, was in fact inevitable. The station of the king was in the vanguard: on every monument the Pharaoh is represented as the leader of the army. The death of the Pharaoh, and the entire loss of the chariotry and cavalry accounts for the undisturbed retreat of the Israelites through a district then subject to Egypt and easily accessible to their forces. If, as appears probable, Tothmosis II was the Pharaoh, the first recorded expedition into the Peninsula took place 17 years after his death; and 22 years elapsed before any measures were taken to recover the lost ascendancy of Egypt in Syria. So complete, so marvelous was the deliverance: thus the Israelites were “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” 1 Corinthians 10:2. When they left Baal-Zephon they were

separated finally from the idolatry of Egypt: when they passed the Red Sea their independence of its power was sealed; their life as a nation then began, a life inseparable henceforth from belief in Yahweh and His servant Moses, only to be merged in the higher life revealed by His Son.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verses 1-18

With the deliverance of Israel is associated the development of the national poetry, which finds its first and perfect expression in this magnificent hymn. It was sung by Moses and the people, an expression which evidently points to him as the author. That it was written at the time is an assertion expressly made in the text, and it is supported by the strongest internal evidence. In every age this song gave the tone to the poetry of Israel; especially at great critical epochs of deliverance: and in the book of Revelation Exodus 15:3 it is associated with the final triumph of the Church.

The division of the song into three parts is distinctly marked: Exodus 15:1-5; Exodus 15:6-10; Exodus 15:11-18: each begins with an ascription of praise to God; each increases in length and varied imagery unto the triumphant close.

Exodus 15:1

He hath triumphed gloriously - Literally, He is gloriously glorious.

The horse and his rider - The word "rider" may include horseman, but applies properly to the charioteer.

Exodus 15:2

The Lord is my strength and song - My strength and song is Jah. See Psalm 68:4. The name was chosen here by Moses to draw attention to the promise ratified by the name "I am."

I will prepare Him an habitation - I will glorify Him. Our Authorized Version is open to serious objection, as suggesting a thought (namely, of erecting a temple) which could hardly have been in the mind of Moses at that time, and unsuited to the occasion.

Exodus 15:3

A man of war - Compare Psalm 24:8. The name has on this occasion a special fitness: man had no part in the victory; the battle was the Lord's.

The Lord is his name - "Jah is His name." See Exodus 15:2.

Exodus 15:4

Hath He cast - "Hurled," as from a sling. See Exodus 14:27.

His chosen captains - See Exodus 14:7 note.

Exodus 15:5

As a stone - The warriors in chariots are always represented on the monuments with heavy coats of mail; the corslets of "chosen captains" consisted of plates of highly tempered bronze, with sleeves reaching nearly to the elbow, covering the whole body and the thighs nearly to the knee. The wearers must have sunk at once like a stone, or as we read in Exodus 5:10, like lumps of lead.

Exodus 15:7

Thy wrath - Literally, Thy burning, i. e. the fire of Thy wrath, a word chosen expressly with reference to the effect.

Exodus 15:8

The blast of God's nostrils corresponds to the natural agency, the east wind Exodus 14:21, which drove the waters back: on the north the waters rose high, overhanging the sands, but kept back by the strongwind: on the south they laid in massive rollers, kept down by the same agency in the deep bed of the Red Sea.

Exodus 15:9

The enemy said - The abrupt, gasping utterances; the haste, cupidity and ferocity of the Egyptians; the confusion and disorder of their thoughts, belong to the highest order of poetry. They enable us to realize the feelings which induced Pharaoh and his host to pursue the Israelites over the treacherous sandbanks.

Exodus 15:10

Thou didst blow with thy wind - Notice the solemn majesty of these few words, in immediate contrast with the tumult and confusion of the preceding verse. In Exodus 14:28, we read only, "the waters returned," here we are told that it was because the wind blew. A sudden change in the direction of the wind would bring back at once the masses of water heaped up on the north.

They sank as lead - See the note at Exodus 15:5.

Exodus 15:11

Among the gods - Compare Psalm 86:8; Deuteronomy 32:16-17. A Hebrew just leaving the land in which polytheism attained its highest development, with gigantic statues and temples of incomparable grandeur, might well on such an occasion dwell upon this consummation of the long series of triumphs by which the "greatness beyond compare" of Yahweh was once for all established.

Exodus 15:13

Thy holy habitation - Either Palestine, regarded as the land of promise, sanctified by manifestations of God to the Patriarchs, and destined to be both the home of God‘s people, and the place where His glory and purposes were to be perfectly revealed: or Mount Moriah.

Exodus 15:14

The inhabitants of Palestina - i. e. the country of the Philistines. They were the first who would expect an invasion, and the first whose district would have been invaded but for the faintheartedness of the Israelites.

Exodus 15:15

The dukes of Edom - See Genesis 36:15. It denotes the chieftains, not the kings of Edom.

The mighty men of Moab - The physical strength and great stature of the Moabites are noted in other passages: see Jeremiah 48:29, Jeremiah 48:41.

Canaan - The name in this, as in many passages of Genesis, designates the whole of Palestine: and is used of course with reference to the promise to Abraham. It was known to the Egyptians, and occurs frequently on the monuments as Pa-kanana, which applies, if not to the whole of Palestine, yet to the northern district under Lebanon, which the Phoenicians occupied and called “Canaan.”

Exodus 15:17

In the mountain of thine inheritance - See Exodus 15:13.

Verse 19

For the horse … - This verse does not belong to the hymn, but marks the transition from it to the narrative.

Verse 20

And Miriam the prophetess - The part here assigned to Miriam and the women of Israel is in accordance both with Egyptian and Hebrew customs. The men are represented as singing the hymn in chorus, under the guidance of Moses; at each interval Miriam and the women sang the refrain, marking the time with the timbrel, and with the measured rhythmical movements always associated with solemn festivities. Compare Judges 11:34; 2 Samuel 6:5, and marginal references. The word used in this passage for the timbrel is Egyptian, and judging from its etymology and the figures which are joined with it in the inscriptions, it was probably the round instrument.

Miriam is called a prophetess, evidently Numbers 12:2 because she and Aaron had received divine communications. The word is used here in its

proper sense of uttering words suggested by the Spirit of God. See Genesis 20:7. She is called the sister of Aaron, most probably to indicate her special position as coordinate, not with Moses the leader of the nation, but with his chief aid and instrument.

Verse 22

So Moses - Literally, And Moses. The history of the journey from the Red Sea to Sinai begins in fact with this verse, which would more conveniently have been the commencement of another chapter.

From the Red sea - The station where Moses and his people halted to celebrate their deliverance is generally admitted to be the Ayoun Musa, i. e. the fountains of Moses. It is the only green spot near the passage over the Red Sea. There are several wells there, which in the time of Moses were probably enclosed and kept with great care by the Egyptians, for the use of the frequent convoys to and from their ancient settlements at Sarbutel Khadem and the Wady Mughara.

The wilderness of Shur - This name belongs to the whole district between the northeastern frontier of Egypt and Palestine. The word is undoubtedly Egyptian, and is derived probably from the word Khar which designated all the country between Egypt and Syria proper.

Three days - The distance between Ayoun Musa and Huwara, the first spot where any water is found on the route, is 33 geographical miles. The whole district is a tract of sand, or rough gravel.

Verse 23

Marah - Now identified with the fount of Huwara. The fountain rises from a large mound, a whitish petrifaction, deposited by the water, and is considered by the Arabians to be the worst in the whole district.

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Verse 25

A tree … - The statement points to a natural agency, but the result was manifestly supernatural.

He made … - The Lord then set before them the fundamental principle of implicit trust, to be shown by obedience. The healing of the water was a symbol of deliverance from physical and spiritual evils.

Verse 27

Elim - The valley of Gharandel, two hours‘ journey south of Huwara.

Twelve wells - Read springs; the Hebrew denotes natural sources. These springs may have been perennial when a richer vegetation clothed the adjacent heights.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verse 1

The the wilderness of Sin - The desert tract, called Debbet er Ramleh, extend nearly across the peninsula from the Wady Nasb in a south-easterly direction, between the limestone district of Et Tih and the granite of Sinai. The journey from the station at Elim, or even from that on the Red Sea, could be performed in a day: at that time the route was kept in good condition by the Egyptians.

Verse 2

Murmured - The want of food was first felt after six weeks from the time of the departure from Egypt, see Exodus 16:1: we have no notice previously of any deficiency of bread.

Verse 3

By the hand of the Lord - This evidently refers to the plagues, especially the last, in Egypt: the death which befell the Egyptians appeared to the people preferable to the sufferings of famine.

Flesh pots, and … bread - These expressions prove that the servile labors to which they had been subjected did not involve privations: they were fed abundantly, either by the officials of Pharaoh, or more probably by the produce of their own fertile district.

Verse 4

That I may prove them - The trial consisted in the restriction to the supply of their daily wants.

Verse 5

It shall be twice as much - They should collect and prepare a double quantity.

Verse 7

The glory of the Lord - the visible appearance described in Exodus 16:10.

Verse 10

Appeared in the cloud - Or, "was seen in a cloud." The definite article would imply that the cloud was the same which is often mentioned in connection with the tabernacle. The people saw the cloud here spoken of beyond the camp.

Verse 13

Quails - This bird migrates in immense numbers in spring from the south: it is nowhere more common than in the neighborhood of the Red Sea. In this passage we read of a single flight so dense that it covered the encampment. The miracle consisted in the precise time of the arrival and its coincidence with the announcement.

Verse 15

It is manna - "Man" or "man-hut," i. e. white manna, was the name under which the substance was known to the Egyptians, and therefore to the Israelites. The manna of the Peninsula of Sinai is the sweet juice of the Tarfa, a species of tamarisk. It exudes from the trunk and branches in hot weather, and forms small round white grains. In cold weather it preserves its consistency, in hot weather it melts rapidly. It is either gathered from the twigs of tamarisk, or from the fallen leaves underneath the tree. The color is a greyish yellow. It begins to exude in May, and lasts about six weeks. According to Ehrenberg, it is produced by the puncture of an insect. It is abundant in rainy seasons, many years it ceases altogether. The whole quantity now produced in a single year does not exceed 600 or 700 pounds. It is found in the district between the Wady Gharandel, i. e. Elim, and Sinai, in the Wady Sheikh, and in some other parts of the Peninsula. When therefore the Israelites saw the "small round thing," they said at once "this is manna," but with an exclamation of surprise at finding it, not under the tamarisk tree, but on the open plain, in such immense quantities, under circumstances so unlike what they could have expected: in fact they did not know what it really was, only what it resembled.

Verse 16

An omer - i. e. the tenth part of an Ephah, see Exodus 16:36. The exact quantity cannot be determined, since the measures varied at different times. Josephus makes the omer equal to six half-pints. The ephah was an Egyptian measure, supposed to be about a bushel or one-third of a hin. The word omer, in this sense, occurs in no other passage. It was probably not used at a later period, belonging, like many other words, to the time of Moses. It is found in Old Egyptian. See Leviticus 19:36.

Verse 17

Some more, some less - It is evidently implied that the people were in part at least disobedient and failed in this first trial.

Verse 18

Had nothing over - Whatever quantity each person had gathered, when he measured it in his tent, he found that he had just as many omers as he needed for the consumption of his family.

Verse 20

It bred worms - This result was supernatural: no such tendency to rapid decomposition is recorded of common manna.

Verse 21

It melted - This refers to the manna which was not gathered.

Verse 22

Twice as much bread - See Exodus 16:5.

From this passage and from Exodus 16:5 it is inferred that the seventh day was previously known to the people as a day separate from all others, and if so, it must have been observed as an ancient and primeval institution.

Verse 23

Tomorrow … - Or, Tomorrow is a rest, a Sabbath holy to Yahweh: i. e. tomorrow must be a day of rest, observed strictly as a Sabbath, or festal rest, holy to Jehovah.

Bake … - These directions show that the manna thus given differed essentially from the natural product. Here and in Numbers 11:8 it is treated in a way which shows that it had the property of grain, could be ground in a mortar, baked and boiled. Ordinary manna is used as honey, it cannot be ground, and it melts when exposed to a moderate heat, forming a substance like barley sugar, called "manna tabulata." In Persia it is boiled with water and brought to the consistency of honey. The Arabs also boil the leaves to which it adheres, and the manna thus dissolved floats on the water as a glutinous or oily substance. It is obvious that these accounts are inapplicable to the manna from heaven, which had the characteristics and nutritive properties of bread.

Verse 25

Eat that today - The practical observance of the Sabbath was thus formally instituted before the giving of the law. The people were to abstain from the ordinary work of every day life: they were not to collect food, nor, as it would seem, even to prepare it as on other days.

Verse 27

There went out some of the people - This was an act of willful disobedience. It is remarkable, being the first violation of the express

command, that it was not visited by a signal chastisement: the rest and peace of the "holy Sabbath" were not disturbed by a manifestation of wrath.

Verse 28

How long - The reference to Exodus 16:4 is obvious. The prohibition involved a trial of faith, in which as usual the people were found wanting. Every miracle formed some part, so to speak, of an educational process.

Verse 29

Abide ye every man in his place - The expression in Hebrew is unique and seems almost to enjoin a position of complete repose: "in his place" is literally under himself, as the Oriental sits with his legs drawn up under him. The prohibition must however be understood with reference to its immediate object; they were not to go forth from their place in order to gather manna, which was on other days without the camp. The spirit of the law is sacred rest. The Lord gave them this Sabbath, as a blessing and privilege. It was "made for man." Mark 2:27.

Verse 31

manna - It was not indeed the common manna, as they then seem to have believed, but the properties which are noted in this passage are common to it and the natural product: in size, form and color it resembled the seed of the white coriander, a small round grain of a whitish or yellowish grey.

Verse 33

A pot - The word here used occurs in no other passage. It corresponds in form and use to the Egyptian for a casket or vase in which oblations were presented.

Verse 34

The Testimony - See the marginal references.

Verse 35

Did eat manna forty years - This does not necessarily imply that the Israelites were fed exclusively on manna, or that the supply was continuous during forty years: but that whenever it might be needed, owing to the total or partial failure of other food, it was given until they entered the promised land. They had numerous flocks and herds, which were not slaughtered (see Numbers 11:22), but which gave them milk, cheese and of course a limited supply of flesh: nor is there any reason to suppose that during a considerable part of that time they may not have cultivated some spots of fertile ground in the wilderness. We may assume, as in most cases of

miracle, that the supernatural supply was commensurate with their actual necessity. The manna was not withheld in fact until the Israelites had passed the Jordan.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

According to their journeys - The Israelites rested at two stations before they reached Rephidim, namely, Dophkah and Alush Numbers 33:12-14. Dophkah was in the Wady Sih, a day‘s journey from the Wady Nasb. The wilderness of Sin Exodus 16:1 properly speaking ends here, the sandstone ceases, and is replaced by the porphyry and granite which belong to the central formation of the Sinaitic group. Alush may have been near the entrance to the Wady Sheikh.

Rephidim - (Variously placed at Feiran at the base of Mount Serbal, or at the pass of El Watiyeh.)

Verse 2

Tempt the Lord - It is a general characteristic of the Israelites that the miracles, which met each need as it arose, failed to produce a habit of faith: but the severity of the trial, the faintness and anguish of thirst in the burning desert, must not be overlooked in appreciating their conduct.

Verse 6

The rock in Horeb - (a rock situated, according to Arab tradition, in Wady Feiran. Horeb was a name given to the whole desert of Sinai and subsequently attached to the mountain. Palmer).

It is questioned whether the water thus supplied ceased with the immediate occasion; see 1 Corinthians 10:4, the general meaning of which appears to be that their wants were ever supplied from Him, of whom the rock was but a symbol, and who accompanied them in all their wanderings.

Verse 7

Massah … Meribah - See the margin. On the importance of this lesson see our Lord‘s words, Matthew 4:7.

Verse 8

Then came Amalek - The attack occurred about two months after the Exodus, toward the end of May or early in June, when the Bedouins leave the lower plains in order to find pasture for their flocks on the cooler heights. The approach of the Israelites to Sinai would of course attract notice, and no cause of warfare is more common than a dispute for the right of pasturage. The Amalekites were at that time the most powerful race in the Peninsula; here they took their position as the chief of the pagans. They

were also the first among the pagans who attacked God‘s people, and as such were marked out for punishment (see the marginal references).

Verse 9

Joshua - This is the first mention of the great follower and successor of Moses. He died at the age of 110, some 65 years after this transaction. His original name was Hosea, but Moses calls him by the full name, which was first given about forty years afterward, as that by which he was to be known to succeeding generations. From this it may perhaps be inferred that this portion of Exodus was written, or revised, toward the end of the sojourn in the wilderness.

The rod of God - See Exodus 4:20. The hill is supposed to be the height now called Feria an the north side of the plain Er Rahah; (or, Jebel Tahuneh over Feiran. Palmer).

Verse 10

Hur - Again mentioned with Aaron, in Exodus 24:14. He was grandfather of Bezaleel, the great sculptor and artificer of the tabernacle, Exodus 31:2-5, and belonged to the tribe of Judah. (See 1 Chronicles 2:18-20.)

Verse 11

The act represents the efficacy of intercessory prayer - offered doubtless by Moses - a point of great moment to the Israelites at that time and to the Church in all ages.

Verse 12

Until the going down of the sun - The length of this first great battle indicates the strength and obstinacy of the assailants. It was no mere raid of Bedouins, but a deliberate attack of the Amalekites, who had been probably thoroughly trained in warfare by their struggles with Egypt.

Verse 13

With the edge of the sword - This expression always denotes a great slaughter of the enemy.

Verse 14

In a book - in the book, i. e. the book which contained the history of God‘s dealings with His people. Moses was further instructed to impress the command especially on the mind of Joshua, as the leader to whom the first step toward its accomplishment would be entrusted on the conquest of Canaan. The work was not actually completed until the reign of Hezekiah, 1 Chronicles 4:43.

Verse 15

Jehovah-nissi - See the margin, "Jehovah my banner." As a proper name the Hebrew word is rightly preserved. The meaning is evidently that the name of Yahweh is the true banner under which victory is certain; so to speak, the motto or inscription on the banners of the host. Inscriptions on the royal standard were well known. Each of the Pharaohs on his accession adopted one in addition to his official name.

Verse 16

Because the Lord hath sworn - This rendering is incorrect. Our translators regard the expression as a solemn asseveration by the throne of God. However, to this the objections are insuperable; it has no parallel in Scriptural usage: God swears by Himself, not by His Throne. As the Hebrew text now stands the meaning is more satisfactorily given in the margin.

An alteration, slight in form, but considerable in meaning, has been proposed with much confidence, namely, נס *nês* "standard" for כסא *kîssê'* "throne"; thus connecting the name of the altar with the sentence. Conjectural emendations are not to be adopted without necessity, and the obvious a priori probability of such a reading makes it improbable that one so far more difficult should have been substituted for it. One of the surest canons of criticism militates against its reception. As it stands, the text was undoubtedly that which was alone known to the Targumists, the Samaritan, the Syriac, the Latin and the Arabic translators. The Septuagint appears to have had a different reading: ἐν χειρὶ κρυφαίᾳ πολεμεῖ *en cheiri kruphē polemeō* f0.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Introduction

The events recorded in this chapter could not have occupied many days - only 15 days elapsed between the arrival of the Israelites in the wilderness of Sin and their final arrival at Sinai, see Exodus 16:1; Exodus 19:1. This leaves, however, sufficient time for the interview and transactions between Moses and Jethro.

Verse 1

Jethro was, in all probability, the "brother-in-law" of Moses Exodus 3:1. On the parting from Zipporah, see Exodus 4:26.

Verse 5

The wilderness - i. e., according to the view which seems on the whole most probable, the plain near the northern summit of Horeb, the mountain of God. The valley which opens upon Er Rahah on the left of Horeh is called "Wady Shueib" by the Arabs, i. e. the vale of Hobab.

Verse 6

And he said … - Or according to the Greek Version, "And it was told to Moses, saying, Lo, thy father in law Jether is come."

Verse 7

Asked each other of their welfare - Addressed each other with the customary salutation, "Peace be unto you."

Verse 11

Greater than all gods - See Exodus 15:11. The words simply indicate a conviction of the incomparable might and majesty of Yahweh.

For in … above them - i. e. the greatness of Yahweh was shown in those transactions wherein the Egyptians had thought to deal haughtily and cruelly against the Israelites. Jethro refers especially to the destruction of the Egyptian host in the Red Sea.

Verse 12

A burnt offering and sacrifices - This verse clearly shows that Jethro was recognized as a priest of the true God, and is of great importance in its bearings upon the relation between the Israelites and their congeners, and upon the state of religion among the descendants of Abraham.

Verse 13

From the morning unto the evening - It may be assumed as at least probable that numerous cases of difficulty arose out of the division of the

spoil of the Amalekites Exodus 17:13, and causes would have accumulated during the journey from Elim.

Verse 15

To enquire of God - The decisions of Moses were doubtless accepted by the people as oracles. The internal prompting of the Spirit was a sufficient guidance for him, and a sufficient authority for the people.

Verse 18

Thou wilt surely wear away - From decay and exhaustion.

Verse 19

Counsel - Jethro draws the distinction between the functions of the legislator and the judge.

To God-ward - Literally, "before God," standing between them and God, both as His minister or representative and also as the representative of the people, their agent, so to speak, or deputy before God.

Verse 20

Teach them - The Hebrew word is emphatic, and signifies "enlightenment." The text gives four distinct points:

(a) the "ordinances," or specific enactments,

(b) "the laws," or general regulations,

(c) "the way," the general course of duty,

(d) "the works," each specific act.

Verse 21

Able men - The qualifications are remarkably complete, ability, piety, truthfulness, and unselfishness. From Deuteronomy 1:13, it appears that Moses left the selection of the persons to the people, an example followed by the Apostles; see Acts 6:3.

Rulers of thousands … - The numbers appear to be conventional, corresponding nearly, but not exactly, to the military, or civil divisions of the people: the largest division (1,000) is used as an equivalent of a gens under one head, Numbers 1:16; Numbers 10:4; Joshua 22:14.

The word "rulers," sometimes rendered "princes," is general, including all ranks of officials placed in command. The same word is used regularly on Egyptian monuments of the time of Moses.

Verse 23

To their place - i. e. to Canaan, which is thus recognized by Jethro as the appointed and true home of Israel. Compare Numbers 10:29-30.

Verse 24

Hearkened - Nothing can be more characteristic of Moses, who combines on all occasions distrust of himself and singular openness to impressions, with the wisdom and sound judgment which chooses the best course when pointed out.

Verse 27

Into his own land - Midian Exodus 2:15.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Verse 1-2

The wilderness … the desert of Sinai - If the mount from which the law was delivered be the rock of Ras Safsafeh, then the spacious plain of Er Rahah would be the "desert" of Sinai (see Exodus 5:17).

Verse 3

Moses went up unto God - This seems to imply that the voice was heard by Moses as he was ascending the mount.

House of Jacob - This expression does not occur elsewhere in the Pentateuch. It has a special fitness here, referring doubtless to the special promises made to the Patriarch.

Verse 4

On eagles' wings - Both in the law Deuteronomy 32:11 and in the Gospel Matthew 23:37, the Church is compared to fledgelings which the mother cherishes and protects under her wings: but in the law that mother is an eagle, in the Gospels "a hen"; thus shadowing forth the diversity of administration under each covenant: the one of power, which God manifested when He brought His people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and led them into the promised land; the other of grace, when Christ came in humility and took the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Compare also Revelation 12:14.

Verse 5

A peculiar treasure - A costly possession acquired with exertion, and carefully guarded. The special relation in which Israel stands, taken out of the pagan world and consecrated to God, as His slaves, subjects, and children, determines their privileges, and is the foundation of their duties. The same principle applies even in a stronger sense to the Church. See Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Peter 2:9.

All the earth is mine - It was a point of great practical importance, to impress upon the Jews that their God was no mere national Deity. Compare Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalm 24:1.

Verse 6

A kingdom of priests - Israel collectively is a royal and priestly race: a dynasty of priests, each true member uniting in himself the attributes of a king and priest. Compare 1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 1:6.

An holy nation - The holiness of Israel consisted in its special consecration to God: it was a sacred nation, sacred by adoption, by covenant, and by participation in all means of grace. Compare Deuteronomy 7:6; Deuteronomy 26:19; Deuteronomy 28:9; 1 Corinthians 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:27.

Verse 8

All that the Lord … - By this answer the people accepted the covenant. It was the preliminary condition of their complete admission into the state of a royal priesthood.

Verse 10

Sanctify them - The injunction involves bodily purification and undoubtedly also spiritual preparation. Compare Hebrews 10:22. The washing of the clothes was an outward symbol well understood in all nations.

Verse 12

Set bounds unto the people - The low line of alluvial mounds at the foot of the cliff of Ras Safsafeh exactly answers to the bounds which were to keep the people off from touching the mount: but the bounds here spoken of were to be set up by Moses.

Verse 13

Touch it - Rather "touch him." The person who had touched the mount was not to be touched, since the contact would be pollution.

Verse 17

Out of the camp - The encampment must have extended far and wide over the plain in front of the mountain. From one entrance of the plain to the other there is space for the whole host of the Israelites.

Verse 18

A furnace - The word in the original is Egyptian, and occurs only in the Pentateuch.

Verse 22

The priests also - Sacrifices had hitherto been offered by firstborn, or the heads of families. See Genesis 14:18 note.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Verses 1-17

The Hebrew name which is rendered in our King James Version as the ten commandments occurs in Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13; Deuteronomy 10:4. It literally means "the Ten Words." The Ten Commandments are also called the law, even the commandment Exodus 24:12, the words of the covenant Exodus 34:28, the tables of the covenant Deuteronomy 9:9, the covenant Deuteronomy 4:13, the two tables Deuteronomy 9:10, Deuteronomy 9:17, and, most frequently, the testimony (e. g. Exodus 16:34; Exodus 25:16), or the two tables of the testimony (e. g. Exodus 31:18). In the New Testament they are called simply the commandments (e. g. Matthew 19:17). The name decalogue is found first in Clement of Alexandria, and was commonly used by the Fathers who followed him.

Thus we know that the tables were two, and that the commandments were ten, in number. But the Scriptures do not, by any direct statements, enable us to determine with precision how the Ten Commandments are severally to be made out, nor how they are to be allotted to the Two tables. On each of these points various opinions have been held (see Exodus 20:12).

Of the Words of Yahweh engraven on the tables of Stone, we have two distinct statements, one in Exodus Deuteronomy 5:7-21, apparently of equal authority, but differing principally from each other in the fourth, the fifth, and the tenth commandments.

It has been supposed that the original commandments were all in the same terse and simple form of expression as appears (both in Exodus and Deuteronomy) in the first, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth, such as would be most suitable for recollection, and that the passages in each copy in which the most important variations are found were comments added when the books were written.

The account of the delivery of them in Exodus 20:18-21 is in accordance with their importance as the recognized basis of the covenant between Yahweh and His ancient people (Exodus 34:27-28; Deuteronomy

4:13; 1 Kings 8:21, etc.), and as the divine testimony against the sinful tendencies in man for all ages. While it is here said that "God spake all these words," and in Deuteronomy 5:4, that He "talked face to face," in the New Testament the giving of the law is spoken of as having been through the ministration of Angels Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2. We can reconcile these contrasts of language by keeping in mind that God is a Spirit, and that He is essentially present in the agents who are performing His will.

Exodus 20:2

Which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage - It has been asked: Why, on this occasion, was not the Lord rather proclaimed as "the Creator of Heaven and Earth"? The answer is, Because the Ten Commandments were at this time addressed by Yahweh not merely to human creatures, but to the people whom He had redeemed, to those who had been in bondage, but were now free men Exodus 6:6-7; Exodus 19:5. The commandments are expressed in absolute terms. They are not sanctioned by outward penalties, as if for slaves, but are addressed at once to the conscience, as for free men. The well-being of the nation called for the infliction of penalties, and therefore statutes were passed to punish offenders who blasphemed the name of Yahweh, who profaned the Sabbath, or who committed murder or adultery. (See Leviticus 18:24-30 note.) But these penal statutes were not to be the ground of obedience for the true Israelite according to the covenant. He was to know Yahweh as his Redeemer, and was to obey him as such (Compare Romans 13:5).

Exodus 20:3

Before me - Literally, "before my face." The meaning is that no god should be worshipped in addition to Yahweh. Compare Exodus 20:23. The polytheism which was the besetting sin of the Israelites did not in later times exclude Yahweh, but associated Him with false deities. (Compare the original of 1 Samuel 2:25.)

Exodus 20:4

Graven image - Any sort of image is here intended.

As the first commandment forbids the worship of any false god, seen or unseen, it is here forbidden to worship an image of any sort, whether the figure of a false deity Joshua 23:7 or one in any way symbolic of Yahweh (see Exodus 32:4). The spiritual acts of worship were symbolized in the furniture and ritual of the tabernacle and the altar, and for this end the forms

of living things might be employed as in the case of the Cherubim (see Exodus 25:18 note): but the presence of the invisible God was to be marked by no symbol of Himself, but by His words written on stones, preserved in the ark in the holy of holies and covered by the mercy-seat. The ancient Persians and the earliest legislators of Rome also agreed in repudiating images of the Deity.

A jealous God - Deuteronomy 6:15; Joshua 24:19; Isaiah 42:8; Isaiah 48:11; Nahum 1:2. This reason applies to the First, as well as to the second commandment. The truth expressed in it was declared more fully to Moses when the name of Yahweh was proclaimed to him after he had interceded for Israel on account of the golden calf (Exodus 34:6-7; see the note).

Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children - (Compare Exodus 34:7; Jeremiah 32:18). Sons and remote descendants inherit the consequences of their fathers‘ sins, in disease, poverty, captivity, with all the influences of bad example and evil communications. (See Leviticus 26:39; Lamentations 5:7 following) The “inherited curse” seems to fall often most heavily on the least guilty persons; but such suffering must always be free from the sting of conscience; it is not like the visitation for sin on the individual by whom the sin has been committed. The suffering, or loss of advantages, entailed on the unoffending son, is a condition under which he has to carry on the struggle of life, and, like all other inevitable conditions imposed upon men, it cannot tend to his ultimate disadvantage, if he struggles well and perseveres to the end. The principle regulating the administration of justice by earthly tribunals Deuteronomy 24:16, is carried out in spiritual matters by the Supreme Judge.

Exodus 20:6

Unto thousands - unto the thousandth generation. Yahweh‘s visitations of chastisement extend to the third and fourth generation, his visitations of mercy to the thousandth; that is, forever. That this is the true rendering seems to follow from Deuteronomy 7:9; Compare 2 Samuel 7:15-16.

Exodus 20:7

Our translators make the Third commandment bear upon any profane and idle utterance of the name of God. Others give it the sense, “Thou shalt not swear falsely by the name of Jehovah thy God.” The Hebrew word which answers to “in vain” may be rendered either way. The two abuses of the sacred name seem to be distinguished in Leviticus 19:12 (see Matthew 5:33). Our King James Version is probably right in giving the rendering

which is more inclusive. The caution that a breach of this commandment incurs guilt in the eyes of Yahweh is especially appropriate, in consequence of the ease with which the temptation to take God‘s name “in vain” besets people in their common conversation with each other.

Exodus 20:8

Remember the sabbath day - There is no distinct evidence that the Sabbath, as a formal ordinance, was recognized before the time of Moses (compare Nehemiah 9:14; Ezekiel 20:10-12; Deuteronomy 5:15). The word “remember” may either be used in the sense of “keep in mind” what is here enjoined for the first time, or it may refer back to what is related in Exodus 16:22-26.

Exodus 20:10

The sabbath … - a Sabbath to Yahweh thy God. The proper meaning of “sabbath” is, “rest after labor.” Compare Exodus 16:26.

Thy stranger that is within thy gates - Not a “stranger,” as is an unknown person, but a “lodger,” or “sojourner.” In this place it denotes one who had come from another people to take up his permanent abode among the Israelites, and who might have been well known to his neighbors. That the word did not primarily refer to foreign domestic servants (though all such were included under it) is to be inferred from the term used for “gates,” signifying not the doors of a private dwelling, but the gates of a town or camp.

Exodus 20:12

Honour thy father and thy mother - According to our usage, the fifth commandment is placed as the first in the second table; and this is necessarily involved in the common division of the commandments into our duty toward God and our duty toward men. But the more ancient, and probably the better, division allots five commandments to each table (compare Romans 13:9), proceeding on the distinction that the First table relates to the duties which arise from our filial relations, the second to those which arise from our fraternal relations. The connection between the first four commandments and the fifth exists in the truth that all faith in God centers in the filial feeling. Our parents stand between us and God in a way in which no other beings can. On the maintenance of parental authority, see Exodus 21:15, Exodus 21:17; Deuteronomy 21:18-21.

That thy days may be long upon the land - Filial respect is the ground of national permanence (compare Jeremiah 35:18-19; Matthew 15:4-6;

Mark 7:10-11). The divine words were addressed emphatically to Israel, but they set forth a universal principle of national life Ephesians 6:2.

Exodus 20:13-14

Matthew 5:21-32 is the best comment on these two verses.

Exodus 20:15

The right of property is sanctioned in the eighth commandment by an external rule: its deeper meaning is involved in the tenth commandment.

Exodus 20:17

As the sixth, seventh, and eighth commandments forbid us to injure our neighbor in deed, the ninth forbids us to injure him in word, and the tenth, in thought. No human eye can see the coveting heart; it is witnessed only by him who possesses it and by Him to whom all things are naked and open Luke 12:15-21. But it is the root of all sins of word or deed against our neighbor James 1:14-15.

Verses 18-21

Compare Deuteronomy 5:22-31. Aaron Exodus 19:24 on this occasion accompanied Moses in drawing near to the thick darkness.

Exodus 20:22 to Exodus 23:33 is a series of laws which we may identify with what was written by Moses in the book called the book of the covenant, and read by him in the audience of the people Exodus 24:7.

The document cannot be regarded as a strictly systematic whole. Portions of it were probably traditional rules handed down from the patriarchs, and retained by the Israelites in Egypt.

Verses 22-26

Nothing could be more appropriate as the commencement of the book of the covenant than these regulations for public worship. The rules for the building of altars must have been old and accepted, and are not inconsistent with the directions for the construction of the altar of the court of the tabernacle, Exodus 27:1-8 (compare Joshua 22:26-28).

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Verse 1

Judgments - i. e. decisions of the law.

Verse 2

A Hebrew might be sold as a bondman in consequence either of debt Leviticus 25:39 or of the commission of theft Exodus 22:3. But his servitude could not be enforced for more than six full years. Compare the marginal references.

Verse 3

If a married man became a bondman, his rights in regard to his wife were respected: but if a single bondman accepted at the hand of his master a bondwoman as his wife, the master did not lose his claim to the woman or her children, at the expiration of the husband‘s term of service. Such wives, it may be presumed, were always foreign slaves.

Verse 6

Forever - That is, most probably, until the next Jubilee, when every Hebrew was set free. See Leviticus 25:40, Leviticus 25:50. The custom of boring the ear as a mark of slavery appears to have been a common one in ancient times, observed in many nations.

Unto the judges - Literally, “before the gods אלהים *'ĕlohîym* The word does not denote “judges” in a direct way, but it is to be understood as the name of God, in its ordinary plural form, God being the source of all justice. The name in this connection always has the definite article prefixed. See the marginal references. Compare Psalm 82:1, Psalm 82:6; John 10:34.

Verse 7

A man might, in accordance with existing custom, sell his daughter to another man with a view to her becoming an inferior wife, or concubine. In this case, she was not “to go out,” like the bondman; that is, she was not to be dismissed at the end of the sixth year. But women who were bound in any other way, would appear to have been under the same conditions as bondmen. See Deuteronomy 15:17.

Verse 11

If he do not these three unto her - The words express a choice of one of three things. The man was to give the woman, whom he had purchased from her father, her freedom, unless

(i) he caused her to be redeemed by a Hebrew master Exodus 21:8; or,

(ii) gave her to his son, and treated her as a daughter Exodus 21:9; or,

(iii) in the event of his taking another wife Exodus 21:10, unless he allowed her to retain her place and privileges.

These rules Exodus 21:7-11 are to be regarded as mitigations of the then existing usages of concubinage.

Verse 12

The case of murder of a free man and of a bondman. See Exodus 21:20 note. The law was afterward expressly declared to relate also to foreigners, Leviticus 24:17, Leviticus 24:21-22; compare the marginal references.

Verse 13-14

There was no place of safety for the guilty murderer, not even the altar of Yahweh. Thus all superstitious notions connected with the right of sanctuary were excluded. Adonijah and Joab 1 Kings 1:50; 1 Kings 2:28 appear to have vainly trusted that the common feeling would protect them, if they took hold of the horns of the altar on which atonement with blood was made Leviticus 4:7. But for one who killed a man "at unawares," that is, without intending to do it, the law afterward appointed places of refuge, Deuteronomy 4:41-43; Deuteronomy 19:2-10; Joshua 20:2-9. It is very probable that there was some provision answering to the cities of refuge, that may have been based upon old usage, in the camp in the Wilderness.

Verse 15-16

The following offences were to be punished with death:

Striking a parent, compare Deuteronomy 27:16.

Cursing a parent, compare the marginal references.

Kidnapping, whether with a view to retain the person stolen, or to sell him, compare the marginal references.

Verse 19

Quit - i. e. if one man injured another in a quarrel so as to oblige him to keep his bed, he was free from the liability to a criminal charge (such as might be based upon Exodus 21:12): but he was required to compensate the latter for the loss of his time, and for the cost of his healing.

Verse 20-21

The Jewish authorities appear to be right in referring this law, like those in Exodus 21:26-27, Exodus 21:32, to foreign slaves (see Leviticus 25:44-46). The protection here afforded to the life of a slave may seem to us but a slight one; but it is the very earliest trace of such protection in legislation, and it stands in strong and favorable contrast with the old laws of Greece, Rome, and other nations. If the slave survived the castigation a day or two, the master did not become amenable to the law, because the loss of the slave was accounted, under the circumstances, as a punishment.

Verses 22-25

The rule would seem to refer to a case in which the wife of a man interfered in a quarrel. This law, "the jus talionis," is elsewhere repeated in substance, compare the marginal references. and Genesis 9:6. It has its root in a simple conception of justice, and is found in the laws of many ancient nations. It serves in this place as a maxim for the magistrate in awarding the amount of compensation to be paid for the infliction of personal injury. The sum was to be as nearly as possible the worth in money of the power lost by the injured person. Our Lord quotes Exodus 21:24 as representing the form of the law, in order to illustrate the distinction between the letter and the spirit Matthew 5:38. The tendency of the teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees was to confound the obligations of the conscience with the external requirements of the law. The law, in its place, was still to be "holy and just and good," Romans 7:12, but its direct purpose was to protect the community, not to guide the heart of the believer, who was not to exact eye for eye, tooth for tooth, but to love his enemies, and to forgive all injuries.

Verse 26-27

Freedom was the proper equivalent for permanent injury.

Verses 28-32

The animal was slain as a tribute to the sanctity of human life (Compare the marginal references and Genesis 4:11). It was stoned, and its flesh was treated as carrion. Guilty negligence on the part of its owner was reckoned a capital offence, to be commuted for a fine.

In the case of a slave, the payment was the standard price of a slave, thirty shekels of silver. See Leviticus 25:44-46; Leviticus 27:3, and the marginal references for the New Testament application of this fact.

Verse 33-34

The usual mode of protecting a well in the East was probably then, as now, by building round it a low circular wall.

Verse 35-36

The dead ox in this case, as well as in the preceding one, must have been worth no more than the price of the hide, as the flesh could not be eaten. See Leviticus 17:1-6.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 22

Verse 1

The theft of an ox appears to have been regarded as a greater crime than the theft of a sheep, because it showed a stronger purpose in wickedness to take the larger and more powerful animal. It may have been on similar moral ground that the thief, when he had proved his persistency in crime by adding to his theft the slaughter, or sale, of the animal, was to restore four times its value in the case of a sheep (compare the marginal references), and five times its value in the case of an ox; but if the animal was still in his possession alive (see Exodus 22:4) he had to make only twofold restitution.

Verses 2-4

If a thief, in breaking into a dwelling in the night, was slain, the person who slew him did not incur the guilt of blood; but if the same occurred in daylight, the slayer was guilty in accordance with Exodus 21:12. The distinction may have been based on the fact that in the light of day there was a fair chance of identifying and apprehending the thief.

Verse 5

Shall put in his beast, and shall feed - Rather, shall let his beast go loose, and it shall feed.

Verse 8

It would appear that if the master of the house would clear himself of imputation, the loss of the pledged article fell upon its owner.

Verse 9

All manner of trespass - He who was accused, and he who had lost the stolen property, were both to appear before the judges Exodus 18:25-26.

Verses 10-13

This law appears to relate chiefly to herdsmen employed by the owners of cattle. When an animal was stolen Exodus 22:12, it was presumed either that the herdsman might have prevented it, or that he could find the thief and bring him to justice (see Exodus 22:4). When an animal was killed by a wild beast, the keeper had to produce the mangled carcass, not only in proof of the fact, but to show that he had, by his vigilance and courage, deprived the wild beast of its prey.

Verse 15

It came for his hire - The sum paid for hiring was regarded as covering the risk of accident.

Verse 16-17

See the marginal references.

Verse 18

Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live - See the marginal references. and Leviticus 20:27. The witch is here named to represent the class. This is the earliest denunciation of witchcraft in the law. In every form of witchcraft there is an appeal to a power not acting in subordination to the divine law. From all such notions and tendencies true worship is designed to deliver us. The practice of witchcraft was therefore an act of rebellion against Yahweh, and, as such, was a capital crime. The passages bearing on the subject in the Prophets, as well as those in the law, carry a lesson for all ages. Isaiah 8:19; Isaiah 19:3; Isaiah 44:25; Isaiah 47:12-13; Micah 5:12, etc.

Verse 20

This was probably an old formula, the sense of which, on its ethical side, is comprised in the first and second commandments.

Shall be utterly destroyed - The Hebrew word here used is חרם *châram* (i. e. devoted). See Leviticus 27:28.

Verse 21

A stranger - See Exodus 20:10 note.

Verse 22

Afflict - A word including all cold and contemptuous treatment. See Deuteronomy 10:18. Contrast the blessing, Deuteronomy 14:29.

Verse 25

See the notes at Leviticus 25:35-43; compare Deuteronomy 23:19.

Verse 26-27

The law regarding pledges is expanded, Deuteronomy 24:6, Deuteronomy 24:10-13.

Verse 28

The gods - Heb. אלהים *'ĕlôhîym* See Exodus 21:6 note. Many take it as the name of God (as in Genesis 1:1), and this certainly seems best to represent the Hebrew, and to suit the context.

Curse the ruler … - See Acts 23:5.

Verse 29-30

The offering of firstfruits appears to have been a custom of primitive antiquity and was connected with the earliest acts of sacrifice. See Genesis 4:3-4. The references to it here and in Exodus 23:19 had probably been handed down from patriarchal times. The specific law relating to the

firstborn of living creatures was brought out in a strong light in connection with the deliverance from Egypt Exodus 13:2, Exodus 13:12-13; compare Exodus 23:19; Leviticus 22:27; Deuteronomy 26:2-11; Nehemiah 10:35.

The first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors - See the margin. The rendering of our King James Bible is a paraphrase.

Verse 31

The sanctification of the nation was emphatically symbolized by strictness of diet as regards both the kind of animal, and the mode of slaughtering. See Leviticus 11; 17.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 23

Verses 1-3

These four commands, addressed to the conscience, are illustrations of the ninth commandment, mainly in reference to the giving of evidence in legal causes. Compare 1 Kings 21:10; Acts 6:11.

Exodus 23:2

This verse might be more strictly rendered, "Thou shalt not follow the many to evil; neither shalt thou bear witness in a cause so as to incline after the many to pervert justice."

Exodus 23:3

Countenance - Rather, show partiality to a man's cause because he is poor (compare Leviticus 19:15).

These four commands, addressed to the conscience, are illustrations of the ninth commandment, mainly in reference to the giving of evidence in legal causes. Compare 1 Kings 21:10; Acts 6:11.

Verse 4-5

So far was the spirit of the law from encouraging personal revenge that it would not allow a man to neglect an opportunity of saving his enemy from loss.

Exodus 23:5

The sense appears to be: "If thou see the ass of thine enemy lying down under his burden, thou shalt forbear to pass by him; thou shalt help him in loosening the girths of the ass."

Verses 6-9

Four precepts evidently addressed to those in authority as judges:

(a) To do justice to the poor. Comparing Exodus 23:6 with Exodus 23:3, it was the part of the judge to defend the poor against the oppression of the rich, and the part of the witness to take care lest his feelings of natural pity should tempt him to falsify evidence.

(b) To be cautious of inflicting capital punishment on one whose guilt was not clearly proved. A doubtful case was rather to be left to God Himself, who would "not justify the wicked," nor suffer him to go unpunished though he might be acquitted by an earthly tribunal. Exodus 23:7.

(c) To take no bribe or present which might in any way pervert judgment Exodus 23:8; compare Numbers 16:15; 1 Samuel 12:3; Acts 26:26.

(d) To vindicate the rights of the stranger Exodus 23:9 - rather, the foreigner. (Exodus 20:10 note.) This verse is a repetition of Exodus 22:21, but the precept is there addressed to the people at large, while it is here addressed to the judges in reference to their official duties. The caution was perpetually necessary. Compare Ezekiel 22:7; Malachi 3:5. The word rendered "heart" is more strictly "soul," and would be better represented here by feelings.

Verses 10-12

This is the first mention of the Sabbatical year; the law for it is given at length in Leviticus 25:2. Both the Sabbatical year and the weekly Sabbath are here spoken of exclusively in their relation to the poor, as bearing testimony to the equality of the people in their covenant with Yahweh. In the first of these institutions, the proprietor of the soil gave up his rights for the year to the whole community of living creatures, not excepting the beasts: in the latter, the master gave up his claim for the day to the services of his servants and cattle.

Exodus 23:12

May be refreshed - Literally, "may take breath."

Verse 13

Compare Deuteronomy 4:9; Joshua 22:5; Ephesians 5:15.

Verses 14-17

This is the first mention of the three great Yearly Festivals. The feast of Unleavened bread, in its connection with the Paschal Lamb, is spoken of in Exodus 34:23), and that he should take with him an offering for Yahweh, presenting himself before his King with his tribute in his hand. That this condition belonged to all the feasts, though it is here stated only in regard to the Passover, cannot be doubted. See Deuteronomy 16:16.

Exodus 23:15-16

On the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or the Passover, see Exodus 12:43-50; Exodus 13:3-16; Exodus 34:18-20; Leviticus 23:4-14. On the Feast of the Firstfruits of Harvest, called also the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Pentecost, see Exodus 34:22; Leviticus 23:15-21. On the Feast of

Ingathering, called also the Feast of Tabernacles, see Leviticus 23:34-36, Leviticus 23:39-43.

Exodus 23:16

In the end of the year - Compare Exodus 34:22. The year here spoken of must have been the civil or agrarian year, which began after harvest, when the ground was prepared for sowing. Compare Leviticus 23:39; Deuteronomy 16:13-15. The sacred year began in spring, with the month Abib, or Nisan. See Exodus 12:2 note, and Leviticus 25:9.

When thou hast gathered - Rather, when thou gatherest in.

Verse 18

The blood of my sacrifice - It is generally considered that this must refer to the Paschal Lamb. See Exodus 12:7, Exodus 12:11, Exodus 12:13, Exodus 12:22-23, Exodus 12:27.

The fat of my sacrifice - Strictly, the fat of my feast; the "best part" of the feast, that is, the Paschal lamb itself. Compare Exodus 34:25.

Verse 19

The first of the firstfruits of thy land - The "best," or "chief" of the firstfruits, that is, the two wave loaves described Leviticus 23:17. As the preceding precept appears to refer to the Passover, so it is likely that this refers to Pentecost. They are called in Leviticus, "the firstfruits unto the Load;" and it is reasonable that they should here be designated the "chief" of the firstfruits. If, with some, we suppose the precept to relate to the offerings of firstfruits in general, the command is a repetition of Exodus 22:29.

Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk - This precept is repeated. See the marginal references. If we connect the first of the two preceding precepts with the Passover, and the second with Pentecost, it seems reasonable to connect this with the Feast of Tabernacles. The only explanation which accords with this connection is one which refers to a superstitious custom connected with the harvest; in which a kid was seethed in its mother's milk to propitiate in some way the deities, and the milk was sprinkled on the fruit trees, fields and gardens, as a charm to improve the crops of the coming year. Others take it to be a prohibition of a custom of great antiquity among the Arabs, of preparing a gross sort of food by stewing a kid in milk, with the addition of certain ingredients of a stimulating nature: and others take it in connection with the prohibitions to slaughter a cow and a calf, or a ewe and her lamb, on the same day

Leviticus 22:28, or to take a bird along with her young in the nest Deuteronomy 22:6. It is thus understood as a protest against cruelty and outraging the order of nature.

Verse 20

An Angel - See Exodus 3:2, Exodus 3:8; Joshua 5:13; Isaiah 63:9.

Verse 22

The rendering in the margin is better. Cf. Deuteronomy 20:4.

Verse 23

I will cut them off - The national existence of the Canaanites was indeed to be "utterly" destroyed, every trace of their idolatries was to be blotted out, no social contact was to be held with them while they served other gods, nor were alliances of any kind to be formed with them. (See Deuteronomy 12:1-4, Deuteronomy 12:29-31.) But it is alike contrary to the spirit of the divine law, and to the facts bearing on the subject scattered in the history, to suppose that any obstacle was put in the way of well disposed individuals of the denounced nations who left their sins and were willing to join the service of Yahweh. The spiritual blessings of the covenant were always open to those who sincerely and earnestly desired to possess them. See Exodus 20:10; Leviticus 19:34; Leviticus 24:22.

Verse 27

Destroy - Rather, overthrow. See Exodus 23:23.

Verse 28

Hornets - Compare the marginal references. The word is used figuratively for a cause of terror and discouragement. Bees are spoken of in the like sense, Deuteronomy 1:44; Psalm 118:12.

Verse 29

Beast of the field - i. e. destructive animals.

Verse 31

In Exodus 23:23, the limits of the Land of Canaan, strictly so called, are indicated; to this, when the Israelites were about to take possession of it, were added the regions of Gilead and Bashan on the left side of the Jordan Numbers 32:33-42; Joshua 13:29-32. These two portions made up the holy land, of which the limits were recognized, with inconsiderable variations, until the final overthrow of the Jewish polity. But in this verse the utmost extent of Hebrew dominion, as it existed in the time of David and Solomon, is set forth. The kingdom then reached to Eloth and Ezion-geber on the AElanitic Gulf of the Red Sea 1 Kings 9:26, and to Tiphsah on the "River,"

that is, the River Euphrates 1 Kings 4:24, having for its western boundary "the Sea of the Philistines," that is, the Mediterranean, and for its southern boundary "the desert," that is, the wildernesses of Shur and Paran (compare Genesis 15:18; Deuteronomy 1:7; Deuteronomy 11:24; Joshua 1:4).

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Verse 1-2

Are placed by some with great probability between Exodus 24:8-9.

Verse 4

Twelve pillars - As the altar was a symbol of the presence of Yahweh, so these twelve pillars represented the presence of the Twelve tribes with whom He was making the covenant.

Verse 5

Young men of the children of Israel - See Exodus 19:22; Exodus 28:1; Leviticus 1:5.

Burnt offerings … peace offerings - The burnt offerings Leviticus 1 figured the dedication of the nation to Yahweh, and the peace offerings Leviticus 3 their communion with Yahweh and with each other.

Verse 6

He sprinkled - Rather, he cast. See Leviticus 1:5.

Verse 7

The book of the covenant - See Exodus 20:22 note. The people had to repeat their assent to the book of the covenant before the blood was thrown upon them. Compare 2 Kings 23:2, 2 Kings 23:21; 2 Chronicles 34:30.

Verse 8

The blood which sealed the covenant was the blood of burnt offerings and peace offerings. The sin-offering Romans 3:20.

Upon the people - Either upon the elders or those who stood foremost; or, upon the twelve pillars representing the Twelve tribes, as the first half had been cast upon the altar, which witnessed to the presence of Yahweh. The blood thus divided between the two parties to the covenant signified the sacramental union between the Lord and His people. Cf. Psalm 50:5; Zechariah 9:11.

Verse 9

It would appear that Moses, Aaron with his two sons, and seventy of the elders Exodus 19:7 went a short distance up the mountain to eat the meal of the covenant (compare Genesis 31:43-47), which must have consisted of the flesh of the peace offerings Exodus 24:5. Joshua accompanied Moses as his servant Exodus 24:13.

Verse 10

And they saw the God of Israel - As they ate the sacrificial feast, the presence of Yahweh was manifested to them with special distinctness. In the act of solemn worship, they perceived that He was present with them, as their Lord and their Deliverer. It is idle to speculate on the mode of this revelation. That no visible form was presented to their bodily eyes, we are expressly informed, Deuteronomy 4:12; see Exodus 33:20; compare Isaiah 6:1. The latter part of this verse may be read: "under His feet, it was like a work of bright sapphire stone, and like the heaven itself in clearness." On the sapphire, see Exodus 28:18; compare Ezekiel 1:26. The pure blue of the heaven above them lent its influence to help the inner sense to realize the vision which no mortal eye could behold.

Verse 11

He laid not his hand - i. e. He did not strike them. It was believed that a mortal could not survive the sight of God Exodus 33:20; Genesis 32:30; Judges 6:22; Judges 13:22: but these rulers of Israel were permitted to eat and drink, while they were enjoying in an extraordinary degree the sense of the divine presence, and received no harm.

Verse 12

Many Jews understand the "tables of stone" to denote the Ten Commandments; "a law," the law written in the Pentateuch; and the "commandments" (or "the commandment"), the oral or traditional law which was in after ages put into writing in the Mishna and the Gemara. But it is more probable that the Ten Commandments alone are spoken of, and that the meaning is, "the tables of stone with the law, even the commandment."

Verse 18

During this period of forty days, and the second period when the tables were renewed, Moses neither ate bread nor drank water. Compare marginal references. In like manner, Elijah fasted for forty days, when he visited the same spot 1 Kings 19:8. The two who met our Saviour on the Mount of Transfiguration Matthew 17:3, the one representing the law, the other representing the Prophets, thus shadowed forth in their own experience the Fast of Forty days in the wilderness of Judaea.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 25

Verses 1-9

Yahweh had redeemed the Israelites from bondage. He had made a covenant with them and had given them laws. He had promised, on condition of their obedience, to accept them as His own "peculiar treasure," as "a kingdom of priests and an holy nation" Exodus 19:5-6. And now He was ready visibly to testify that He made his abode with them. He claimed to have a dwelling for Himself, which was to be in external form a tent of goats' hair Exodus 19:4, to take its place among their own tents, and formed out of the same material (see Exodus 26:7 note). The special mark of His presence within the tent was to be the ark or chest containing the Ten Commandments on two tables of stone Exodus 31:18, symbolizing the divine law of holiness, and covered by the mercy-seat, the type of reconciliation. Moses was divinely taught regarding the construction and arrangement of every part of the sanctuary. The directions which were given him are comprised in Exodus 25:2

An offering - The word is used here in its general sense, being equivalent to korban, κορβᾶν *korban* (compare Mark 7:11). On the marginal rendering "heave offering," see the note at Exodus 29:27.

That giveth it willingly with his heart - The public service of Yahweh was to be instituted by freewill offerings, not by an enforced tax. Compare 1 Chronicles 29:3, 1Chronicles 29:9,1 Chronicles 29:14; Ezra 2:68-69; 2 Corinthians 8:11-12; 2 Corinthians 9:7. On the zeal with which the people responded to the call, see Exodus 35:21-29; Exodus 36:5-7.

Exodus 25:3

Gold, and silver, and brass - The supply of these metals possessed by the Israelites at this time probably included what they had inherited from their forefathers, what they had obtained from the Egyptians Exodus 12:35, and what may have been found amongst the spoils of the Amalekites Exodus 17:8-13. But with their abundant flocks and herds, it can hardly be doubted that they had carried on important traffic with the trading caravans that traversed the wilderness, some of which, most likely, in the earliest times were furnished with silver, with the gold of Ophir (or gold of Sheba, as it seems to have been indifferently called), and with the "brass" (the alloy of copper and tin, called bronze) of Phoenicia and Egypt. Compare Exodus 38:24 note.

Exodus 25:4

Blue, and purple, and scarlet - i. e. the material dyed with these colors. The Jewish tradition has been very generally received that this material was wool. Compare Hebrews 9:19 with Leviticus 14:4, Leviticus 14:49, etc. When spun and dyed by the women, it was delivered in the state of yarn; and the weaving and embroidering was left to Aholiab and his assistants, Exodus 35:25, Exodus 35:35. The "blue" and "purple" dye are usually thought to have been obtained from shell-fish, the "scarlet" from the cochineal insect of the holm-oak.

Fine linen - The fine flax or the manufactured linen, for which Egypt was famous Ezekiel 27:7, and which the Egyptians were in the habit of using for dresses of state Genesis 41:42. It was used as the groundwork of the figured curtains of the tabernacle as well as of the embroidered hangings of the tent and the court. See Exodus 35:35.

Exodus 25:5

Rams' skins dyed red - Skins tanned and colored like the leather now known as red morocco.

Badgers' skins - Rather, leather, probably of a sky-blue color, formed from the skins of the תחש *tachash* (a general name for marine animals), which was well adapted as a protection against the weather.

Shittim wood - The word שטים *shîṭṭâm* is the plural form of שטה *shîṭâh* which occurs as the name of the growing tree, Isaiah 41:19. The tree is satisfactorily identified with the Acacia seyal, a gnarled and thorny tree, somewhat like a solitary hawthorn in its habit and manner of growth, but much larger. It flourishes in the driest situations, and is scattered more or less numerously over the Sinaitic Peninsula. It appears to be the only good wood produced in the wilderness. No other kind of wood was employed in the tabernacle or its furniture. In the construction of the temple cedar and fir took its place 1 Kings 5:8; 1 Kings 6:18; 2 Chronicles 2:8.

Exodus 25:6-7

See the notes to Exodus 25:8

sanctuary - i. e. a hallowed place. This is the most comprehensive of the words that relate to the place dedicated to Yahweh. It included the tabernacle with its furniture, its tent, and its court.

That I may dwell among them - The purpose of the sanctuary is here definitely declared by the Lord Himself. It was to be the constant witness of His presence among His people. Compare the marginal references.

Exodus 25:9

According to all that I shew thee - The tabernacle and all that pertained to it were to be in strict accordance with the ideas revealed by the Lord to Moses (compare Exodus 25:40; Exodus 26:30; Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:5). The word here translated "pattern" is also used to denote the plans for the temple which were given by David to Solomon 1 Chronicles 28:11-12, 1 Chronicles 28:19; it is elsewhere rendered "form, likeness, similitude," Deuteronomy 4:16-17; Ezekiel 8:3, Ezekiel 8:10.

The tabernacle - The Hebrew word signifies the "dwelling-place." It here denotes the wooden structure, containing the holy place and the most holy place, with the tent which sheltered it. See Exodus 26:1 note.

Verses 10-16

(compare Exodus 37:1-5). The ark is uniformly designated in Exodus the ark of the testimony. Elsewhere it is called the testimony, the ark of the covenant (most frequently in Deuteronomy and the other books of the Old Testament), the ark of the lord, the ark of god, the ark of the strength of the lord, and the holy ark.

The ark of the covenant was the central point of the sanctuary. It was designed to contain the testimony Exodus 25:16; Exodus 40:20; Deuteronomy 31:26, that is, the tables of the divine law, the terms of the covenant between Yahweh and His people: and it was to support the mercy-seat with its cherubim, from between which He was to hold communion with them Exodus 25:22. On this account, in these directions for the construction of the sanctuary, it is named first of all the parts. But on the other hand, in the narrative of the work as it was actually carried out, we find that it was not made until after the tabernacle Exodus 37:1-9. It was suitable that the receptacle should be first provided to receive and shelter the most sacred of the contents of the sanctuary as soon as it was completed. The order in which the works were executed seems to be given in Exodus 31:7-10, and Exodus 35:11-19. The completion of the ark is recorded in Exodus 37:1-5. On its history, see the concluding $$note to Exodus 25:10

An ark - Taking the cubit at 18 inches (see Genesis 6:15 note), the ark of the covenant was a box 3 ft. 9 in. long, 2 ft. 3 in. wide, and 2 ft. 3 in. deep.

Exodus 25:11

Overlay it with pure gold - Words descriptive of the common process of gilding. The Egyptians in early times were acquainted with both the art of gilding and that of covering a substance with thin plates of gold.

A crown of gold - That is, an edging or moulding of gold round the top of the ark, within which the cover or mercy-seat Exodus 25:17 may have fitted (compare Exodus 38:2). There were golden mouldings, called by the same name, to the table of showbread Exodus 25:24; Exodus 37:11-12, and to the golden altar Exodus 30:3; Exodus 37:26.

Exodus 25:12

Four corners thereof - Rather, its four bases, or feet. It is not unlikely that there were low blocks, or plinths, placed under the corners to which the rings were attached (see Exodus 25:26), and that it is to them the word is here applied. The ark, when it was carried, must thus have been raised above the shoulders of the bearers.

Exodus 25:15

They shall not be taken from it - This direction was probably given in order that the ark might not be touched by the hand (compare 2 Samuel 6:6).

Exodus 25:16

The testimony - Literally, "something spoken again and again." The stone tables of the Ten Commandments are called the Testimony, or, the tables of the Testimony, as the ark which contained them is called the ark of the Testimony, and the tabernacle in which the ark was placed, the tabernacle of the testimony. Taking this in connection with the prohibitory form of the commandments, the name must have been understood as signifying the direct testimony of Yahweh against sin in man Deuteronomy 31:26-27.

The ark of the covenant has been most generally likened to the arks, or moveable shrines, which are represented on Egyptian monuments. The Egyptian arks were carried by poles on the shoulders, and some of them had on the cover two winged figures not unlike what we conceive the golden cherubim to have been. Thus far the similarity is striking. But there were points of great dissimilarity. Between the winged figures on the Egyptian arks there was placed the material symbol of a deity, and the arks themselves were carried about in religious processions, so as to make a show in the eyes of the people. We know not what they contained. As regards the ark of the covenant, the absence of any symbol of God was one

of its great characteristics. It was never carried in a ceremonial procession: when it was moved from one place to another, it was closely packed up, concealed from the eyes even of the Levites who bore it. When the tabernacle was pitched, the ark was never exhibited, but was kept in solemn darkness. Rest, it is evident, was its appointed condition. It was occasionally moved out of its place in the holy of holies, but only so long as the nation was without a settled capital, and had something of the character of an army on the march. Not less was it distinguished from all other arks in the simple grandeur of its purpose: it was constructed to contain the plain text of the Ten Commandments written on stone in words that were intelligible to all.

Verses 17-22

A mercy seat of pure gold - (Compare Exodus 37:6-9.) In external form, the mercy-seat was a plate of gold with the cherubim standing on it, the whole beaten out of one solid piece of metal Exodus 37:7; it was placed upon the ark and so took the place of a cover. "mercy" seat expresses well the distinct significance and recognized designation of the Hebrew name.

Exodus 25:18-20

The cherubim of the mercy-seat were human figures, each having two wings. They must have been of small size, proportioned to the area of the mercy-seat. Comparing the different references to form in this place, in 2 Samuel 22:11 Psalm 18:10, in Revelation 4:1-11, it would appear that the name "cherub" was applied to various combinations of animal forms. Among the Egyptians, the Assyrians and the Greeks, as well as the Hebrews, the creatures by far most frequently introduced into these composite figures, were man, the ox, the lion, and the eagle, as being types of the most important and familiarly known classes of living material beings. Hence, the cherubim, described by Ezekiel, have been regarded as representing the whole creation engaged in the worship and service of God (compare Revelation 4:9-11; Revelation 5:13); and it would be in harmony with this view to suppose that the more strictly human shape of the cherubim of the mercy seat represented the highest form of created intelligence engaged in the devout contemplation of the divine law of love and justice. (Compare 1 Peter 1:12.) It is worthy of notice that the golden cherubim from between which Yahweh spoke Exodus 25:22 to His people bore witness, by their place on the mercy-seat, to His redeeming mercy;

while the cherubim that took their stand at the gate of Eden, Genesis 3:24, to keep the way to the tree of life, witnessed to His condemnation of sin in man.

Exodus 25:18

Of beaten work - i. e. elaborately worked with the hammer.

Exodus 25:19

Even of the mercy seat - See the margin. The sense appears to be that the cherubim and the mercy-seat were to be worked out of one mass of gold. (Compare Exodus 37:7.)

Exodus 25:21

The testimony - See Exodus 25:16 note. Compare Exodus 40:20.

Verses 23-30

(Compare Exodus 37:10-16.) The table and the candlestick figured on the Arch of Titus at Rome are those of the Maccabaean times, but made as nearly as possible after the ancient models reproduced under the direction of Solomon and Zerubbabel. The details and size of the figure, and the description of Josephus, appear to agree very nearly with the directions here given to Moses, and to illustrate them in several particulars. Josephus says that the table was like the so-called Delphic tables, richly ornamented pieces of furniture in use amongst the Romans, which were sometimes, if not always, covered with gold or silver.

Exodus 25:24

See Exodus 25:11 note. The moulding of the table is still seen at the ends of the sculptured figure.

Exodus 25:25

A border - Rather a framing, which reached from leg to leg so as to make the table firm, as well as to adorn it with a second moulding of gold. Two fragments of such framing are still seen in the sculpture attached to the legs halfway down.

Exodus 25:27

Over against the border - Rather, Over against the framing; that is, the rings were to be placed not upon the framing itself, but at the extremities of the legs answering to each corner of it.

Exodus 25:29

Dishes - deep vessels like "bowls," similar to the large silver vessels (or chargers) which were filled with fine flour, and formed part of the offerings of the Princes of Israel (Numbers 7:13 following).

Spoons - Rather, the small gold cups that were filled with frankincense in the offerings of the Princes Numbers 7:14, and represented on the table in the sculpture.

Covers … bowls - Or flagons and chalices, such as were used for the rite of the drink offering, which appears to have regularly accompanied every Meat offering (Leviticus 23:18; Numbers 6:15; Numbers 28:14, etc.). The subject is important in its bearing upon the meaning of the showbread: the corrected rendering of the words tends to show that it was a true Meat offering.

To cover withal - See the margin. The first part of the verse might be better rendered: And thou shalt make its bowls and its incense-cups and its flagons and its chalices for pouring out "the drink offerings."

Exodus 25:30

The showbread table was placed in the holy place on the north side Exodus 26:35. Directions for preparing the showbread are given in Leviticus 24:5-9. It consisted of twelve large cakes of unleavened bread, which were arranged on the table in two piles, with a golden cup of frankincense on each pile. It was renewed every Sabbath day. The stale loaves were given to the priests, and the frankincense appears to have been lighted on the altar for a memorial. The showbread, with all the characteristics and significance of a great national Meat offering, in which the twelve tribes were represented by the twelve cakes, was to stand before Yahweh "perpetually," in token that He was always graciously accepting the good works of His people, for whom atonement had been made by the victims offered on the altar in the court of the sanctuary. The showbread or bread which is set forth would be more fairly rendered "bread of the presence." See the notes at Leviticus 24:5-9.

Verses 31-39

Exodus 25:31

A candlestick of pure gold - (Compare Exodus 37:17-24.) A lampstand rather than a candlestick. Its purpose was to support seven oil-lamps. Its height appears to have been about three feet, and its width two feet. The original foot was lost or stolen when the candlestick was taken out of the temple, and the pedestal in the sculpture was added by some Roman artist to set off the trophy.

His shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers - Or, its base, its stem, its flower cups, its knobs, and its lilies.

Exodus 25:33

Three bowls made like unto almonds - Three cups of almond flowers. These appear to be the cups in immediate contact with the knobs as shown in the sculpture.

A flower - A lily; and this rendering well agrees with the sculpture.

The candlestick - Here, and in the two following verses, the word appears to denote "the stem," as the essential part of the candlestick. It would seem from Exodus 25:33-35 that the ornamentation of the candlestick consisted of uniform members, each comprising a series of an almond flower, a knob and a lily; that the stem comprised four of these members; that each pair of branches was united to the stem at one of the knobs; and that each branch comprised three members. In comparing the description in the text with the sculptured figure, allowance must be made for some deviation in the sculptor's copy.

Exodus 25:37

Seven lamps - These lamps were probably like those used by the Egyptian and other nations, shallow covered vessels more or less of an oval form, with a mouth at one end from which the wick protruded. The candlestick was placed on the south side of the holy place Exodus 26:35, with the line of lamps parallel with the wall, or, according to Josephus, somewhat obliquely. If the wick-mouths of the lamps were turned outwards, they would give light over against the candlestick; that is, toward the north side (see Numbers 8:2).

Light was of necessity required in the tabernacle, and wherever light is used in ceremonial observance, it may of course be taken in a general way as a figure of the Light of Truth; but in the sanctuary of the covenanted people, it must plainly have been understood as expressly significant that the number of the lamps (seven) agreed with the number of the covenant. The covenant of Yahweh was essentially a covenant of light.

They shall light - See the margin and the note at Leviticus 1:9.

Exodus 25:38

The tongs - Used to trim and adjust the wicks. (Compare Isaiah 6:6.)

The snuff-dishes - These were shallow vessels used to receive the burnt fragments of wick removed by the tongs. The same Hebrew word is translated, in accordance with its connection, "fire pans," Exodus 27:3; Exodus 38:3; and "censers," Numbers 4:14; Numbers 16:6.

Exodus 25:39

A talent of pure gold - about 94 lbs.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 26

Verses 1-37

(Compare Exodus 26:1-6, more strictly so-called, its tent Exodus 26:7-13, and its covering Exodus 26:14 (Compare Exodus 35:11; Exodus 39:33-34; Exodus 40:19, Exodus 40:34; Numbers 3:25, etc.). These parts are very clearly distinguished in the Hebrew, but they are confounded in many places of the English Version (see Exodus 26:7, Exodus 26:9, etc.). The tabernacle itself was to consist of curtains of fine linen woven with colored figures of cherubim, and a structure of boards which was to contain the holy place and the most holy place; the tent was to be a true tent of goats‘ hair cloth to contain and shelter the tabernacle: the covering was to be of red rams‘ skins and “tachash” skins Exodus 25:5, and was spread over the goats‘ hair tent as an additional protection against the weather. On the external form of the tabernacle and the arrangement of its parts, see cuts at the end of the chapter.

Exodus 26:1

The tabernacle - The מִשְׁכָּן *mîshkân* i. e. the dwelling-place; the definite article regularly accompanies the Hebrew word when the dwelling-place of Yahweh is denoted. But in this place the word is not used in its full sense as denoting the dwelling-place of Yahweh: it denotes only the tabernacle-cloth Exodus 26:6. The word is, in fact, employed with three distinct ranges of meaning,

(1) in its strict sense, comprising the cloth of the tabernacle with its woodwork (Exodus 25:9; Exodus 26:30; Exodus 36:13; Exodus 40:18, etc.);

(2) in a narrower sense, for the tabernacle-cloth only (Exodus 26:1, Exodus 26:6; Exodus 35:11; Exodus 39:33-34, etc.);

(3) in a wider sense, for the tabernacle with its tent and covering (Exodus 27:19; Exodus 35:18, etc.).

With ten curtains - Rather, of ten breadths. Five of these breadths were united so as to form what, in common usage, we should call a large curtain Exodus 26:3. The two curtains thus formed were coupled together by the loops and taches to make the entire tabernacle-cloth Exodus 26:6.

Of cunning work - More properly, of the work of the skilled weaver. The colored figures of cherubim (see Exodus 25:4, Exodus 25:18) were to

be worked in the loom, as in the manufacture of tapestry and carpets (see Exodus 26:36 note). On the different kinds of workmen employed on the textile fabrics, see Exodus 35:35.

Exodus 26:3

Each curtain formed of five breadths (see Exodus 26:1), was 42 feet in length and 30 feet in breadth, taking the cubit at 18 inches.

Exodus 26:4

The meaning appears to be, "And thou shalt make loops of blue on the edge of the one breadth (which is) on the side (of the one curtain) at the coupling; and the same shalt thou do in the edge of the outside breadth of the other (curtain) at the coupling." The "coupling" is the uniting together of the two curtains: ("selvedge" is the translation of a word signifying extremity or end).

Exodus 26:5

The words "in the edge," etc. mean, "on the edge of the breadth that is at the coupling in the second (curtain)."

Exodus 26:6

Taches of gold - Each "tache," or clasp, was to unite two opposite loops.

Couple the curtains - i. e. couple the two outside breadths mentioned in Exodus 26:4.

Exodus 26:7

A covering upon the tabernacle - A tent over the tabernacle. The Hebrew word here used, is the regular one for a tent of skins or cloth of any sort.

Exodus 26:9

tabernacle - tent, not tabernacle. The passage might be rendered, "thou shalt equally divide the sixth breadth at the front of the tent." In this way, half a breadth would overhang at the front and half at the back.

Exodus 26:10

Or: "And thou shalt make fifty loops on the edge of the outside breadth of the one (curtain) at the coupling, and fifty loops on the edge of the outside breadth of the other (curtain) at the coupling."

Exodus 26:11

In the tent, clasps of bronze were used to unite the loops of the two curtains; in the tabernacle, clasps of gold, compare Exodus 26:6, Exodus 26:37.

Couple the tent together - Not "covering," as in the margin. By "the tent" is here meant the tent-cloth alone.

Exodus 26:13

The measure of the entire tabernacle-cloth was about 60 ft. by 42; that of the tent-cloth was about 67 ft. by 45. When the latter was placed over the former, it spread beyond it at the back and front about 3 ft. (the "half-curtain," Exodus 26:9, Exodus 26:12) and at the sides 18 inches.

Exodus 26:16

The board would therefore be about 15 ft. long, and 27 in. broad.

Exodus 26:18

The entire length of the structure was about 45 ft. in the clear, and its width about 15 ft.

The south side southward - Or, the south side on the right. As the entrance of the tabernacle was at its east end, the south side, to a person entering it, would be on the left hand: but we learn from Josephus that it was usual, in speaking of the temple, to identify the south with the right hand and the north with the left hand, the entrance being regarded as the face of the structure and the west end as its back.

Exodus 26:19

Sockets - More literally, bases, or foundations. Each base weighed a talent, that is, about 94 lbs. (see Exodus 38:27), and must have been a massive block. The bases formed a continuous foundation for the walls of boards, presenting a succession of sockets or mortices (each base having a single socket), into which the tenons were to fit. They served not only for ornament but also for the protection of the lower ends of the boards from the decay which would have resulted from contact with the ground.

Exodus 26:22

The sides of the tabernacle westward - Rather, the back of the tabernacle toward the west. See Exodus 26:18.

Exodus 26:23

In the two sides - Rather, at the back.

Exodus 26:24

The corner boards appear to have been of such width, and so placed, as to add 18 in. to the width of the structure, making up with the six boards of full width Exodus 26:22 about 15 ft. in the clear (see Exodus 26:18). The "ring" was so formed as to receive two bars meeting "beneath" and "above" at a right angle.

Exodus 26:27

For the two sides westward - For the back toward the west. Compare Exodus 26:22,

Exodus 26:28

In the midst of the boards - If we suppose the boards to have been of ordinary thickness Exodus 26:16, the bar was visible and passed through an entire row of rings. In any case, it served to hold the whole wall together.

Exodus 26:31

Vail - Literally, separation (see Exodus 35:12 note).

Exodus 26:33

Taches - Not the same as the hooks of the preceding verse, but the clasps of the tabernacle-cloth (see Exodus 26:6).

Exodus 26:34-35

See Exodus 25:10-16, Exodus 25:23, Exodus 25:31.

Exodus 26:36

The door of the tent - The entrance to the tent, closed by the "hanging" or curtain Exodus 27:16.

Wrought with needlework. - The work of the embroiderer. The entrance curtain of the tent and that of the court Exodus 27:16 were to be of the same materials, but embroidered with the needle, not made in figures in the loom (see Exodus 26:1; Exodus 35:35).

Exodus 26:37

Rice pillars - These, it should be observed, belonged to the entrance of the tent, not, in their architectural relation, to the entrance of the tabernacle.

Sockets of brass - Their bases (see Exodus 26:19) were of bronze (like the taches of the tentcloth, Exodus 26:11), not of silver, to mark the inferiority of the tent to the tabernacle.

We are indebted to Mr. Fergusson for what may be regarded as a satisfactory reconstruction of the sanctuary in all its main particulars. He holds that what sheltered the Mishkan was actually a tent of ordinary form, such as common sense and practical experience would suggest as best suited for the purpose.

According to this view the five pillars at the entrance of the tent Exodus 26:37 were graduated as they would naturally be at the entrance of any large tent of the best form, the tallest one being in the middle to support one end of a ridge-pole.

Such a ridge-pole, which must have been sixty feet in length, would have required support, and this might have been afforded by a plain pole in the middle of the structure. Over this framing of wood-work the tent-cloth of goats‘ hair was strained with its cords and tent-pins in the usual way. (See cut.)

Above the tent-cloth of goats‘ hair was spread the covering of red rams‘ skins.

The five pillars, to reach across the front of the tent, must have stood five cubits (about 7 1/2 ft.) apart. Their heads were united by connecting rods (“fillets” Exodus 27:10) overlaid with gold Exodus 36:38. The spaces at the sides and back may have been wholly or in part covered in for the use of the officiating priests, like the small apartments which in after times skirted three sides of the temple. It was probably here that those portions of the sacrifices were eaten which were not to be carried out of the sacred precincts Leviticus 6:16, Leviticus 6:26. We may also infer that priests lodged in them. Compare 1 Samuel 3:2-3.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Verses 1-8

(Compare Exodus 38:1-7.) The great altar which stood in the court immediately in front of the tabernacle was commonly called the altar of burnt-offering, because on it were burnt the whole burnt-offerings, and all those parts of the other animal sacrifices which were offered to the Lord. It was also called the brazen altar, because it was covered with bronze, in distinction from the golden altar or altar of incense Exodus 39:38-39; Exodus 40:5-6.

Exodus 27:2

His horns shall be of the same - These horns were projections pointing upward in the form either of a small obelisk, or of the horn of an ox. They were to be actually parts of the altar, not merely superadded to it. On them the blood of the sin-offering was smeared Exodus 29:12; Leviticus 4:7; Leviticus 8:15; Leviticus 9:9; Leviticus 16:18. To take hold of them appears to have been regarded as an emphatic mode of laying claim to the supposed right of sanctuary (Exodus 21:14 note; 1 Kings 1:50).

Exodus 27:3

Pans - Rather pots as in Exodus 38:3; 1 Kings 7:45. On the use to which these pots were put in disposing of the ashes of the altar, see Leviticus 1:16.

Basons - Vessels used for receiving the blood of the victims and casting it upon the altar (see Exodus 24:6; Leviticus 1:5; etc.).

Fleshhooks - These were for adjusting the pieces of the victims upon the altar (compare 1 Samuel 2:13).

Firepans - The same word is rendered snuffdishes, Exodus 25:38; Exodus 37:23: censers, Leviticus 10:1; Leviticus 16:12; Numbers 4:14; Numbers 16:6, etc. These utensils appear to have been shallow metal vessels which were employed merely to carry burning embers from the brazen altar to the altar of incense.

Exodus 27:5

The compass of the altar - A shelf or projecting ledge, of convenient width, carried round the altar half way between the top and the base. It was supported all round its outer edge by a vertical net-like grating of bronze that rested on the ground.

Exodus 27:8

Hollow with boards - Slabs, or planks, rather than boards. The word is that which is used for the stone tables of the law Exodus 24:12; Exodus 31:18, not that applied to the boards of the tabernacle Exodus 26:15.

The brazen altar was a hollow casing, formed of stout acacia planks covered with plates of bronze, seven feet six in length and width and four feet six in height. Jewish as well as Christian authorities have supposed that, when it was fixed for use, it was filled up with earth or rough stones. If we connect this suggestion with the old rule regarding the altar of earth and the altar of stone given in Exodus 20:24-25, the woodwork might in fact be regarded merely as the case of the altar on which the victims were actually burned. The shelf round the sides Exodus 27:5 was required as a stage for the priests to enable them to carry on their work conveniently on the top of the altar. Hence, it is said of Aaron that he came down from the altar Leviticus 9:22. According to rabbinical tradition, there was a slope of earth at the south side banked up for the priest to ascend to the stage (compare Exodus 20:26).

Verses 9-19

The court of the tabernacle - (Compare Exodus 38:9-20)

Exodus 27:9

The south side southward - The south side on the right. See Exodus 26:18.

Exodus 27:10

Sockets - Bases. See Exodus 26:19.

Fillets - Rather, Connecting rods; curtain-rods of silver connecting the heads of the pillars. The hangings were attached to the pillars by the silver hooks; but the length of the space between the pillars would render it most probable that they were also in some way fastened to these rods.

Exodus 27:13

The east side eastward - On the front side eastward.

Exodus 27:16

An hanging - An entrance curtain, which, unlike the hangings at the sides and back of the court, could be drawn up, or aside, at pleasure. The words are rightly distinguished in our Bible in Numbers 3:26.

Wrought with nedlework - The work of the embroiderer. See Exodus 26:36; Exodus 35:35. On the materials, see Exodus 25:4.

Exodus 27:17

Filleted with silver - Connected with silver rods. See Exodus 27:10, **Exodus 27:19**

All the vessels … - All the tools of the tabernacle used in all its workmanship, and all its tent-pins, and all the tent-pins of the court, shall be of bronze. The working tools of the sanctuary were most probably such things as axes, knives, hammers, etc. that were employed in making, repairing, setting up and taking down the structure. Compare Numbers 3:36.

The tabernacle - The word is here to be taken as including both the מִשְׁכָּן *mîshkân* and the tent, as in Numbers 1:51, Numbers 1:53, etc. (see Exodus 26:1 note).

The pins - tent-pins.

Verse 20

Pure oil olive beaten - The oil was to be of the best kind. It is called beaten, because it was obtained by merely bruising the olives in a mortar or mill, without the application of heat. The finest oil is now thus obtained from young fruit freshly gathered. The inferior kind is pressed from unselected fruit under stronger pressure, and with the application of heat.

The lamp - i. e. the lamps of the golden candlestick. (See Exodus 25:37.)

To burn - See the margin "to ascend up." It should be observed that the word does not properly mean to burn in the sense of to consume, but is the word regularly used to express the action of fire upon what was offered to Yahweh (see Leviticus 1:9).

Always - i. e. every night "from evening until morning." Compare Exodus 30:8.

Verse 21

The tabernacle of the congregation - More literally, the tent of meeting. This is the first occurrence of this designation of the tabernacle, and the idea connected with it is that of Yahweh meeting with either Moses, or the priests, or (in a few cases) with the people gathered into a congregation at the entrance of the tent.

Without the rail, which is before the testimony - i. e. the holy place (see Exodus 25:16).

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 28

Verses 1-43

(Compare Exodus 13:2; Numbers 3:12-13. Moses, as the divinely-appointed and acknowledged leader of the nation, had, on a special occasion, appointed those who were to offer sacrifice, and had himself sprinkled the consecrating blood of the victims on the people Exodus 24:5-6, Exodus 24:8. On the completion of the tabernacle, after Aaron and his sons had been called to the priesthood, he took chief part in the daily service of the sanctuary Exodus 40:23-29, Exodus 40:31-32 until the consecration of the family of Aaron, on which occasion he appears to have exercised the priest‘s office for the last time (Numbers 3:5-13; 8:5-26; 18:1-32.

Exodus 28:1

Nadab and Abihu, the two older sons of Aaron, had accompanied their father and the seventy Elders when they went a part of the way with Moses up the mountain Exodus 24:1, Exodus 24:9. Soon after their consecration they were destroyed for offering “strange fire before the Lord” Leviticus 10:1-2. Eleazar and Ithamar are here mentioned for the first time, except in the genealogy, Exodus 6:23. Eleazar succeeded his father in the High priesthood, and was himself succeeded by his son Phinehas Judges 20:28. But Eli, the next high priest named in the history, was of the line of Ithamar. The representatives of both families held office at the same time in the days of David. See 1 Chronicles 24:1-3; 2 Samuel 8:17.

Exodus 28:3

The spirit of wisdom - See Exodus 31:3 note. What may be especially noticed in this place is, that the spirit of wisdom given by the Lord is spoken of as conferring practical skill in the most general sense.

Garments to consecrate him - A solemn recognition of the significance of an appointed official dress. It expresses that the office is not created or defined by the man himself Hebrews 5:4, but that he is invested with it according to prescribed institution. The rite of anointing was essentially connected with investiture in the holy garments Exodus 29:29-30; Exodus 40:12-15. The history of all nations shows the importance of these forms.

Exodus 28:5

With the exception of the gold, the materials were the same as those of the tabernacle-cloth, the veil of the tabernacle and the entrance-curtain of

the tent Exodus 26:1, Exodus 26:31, Exodus 26:36; Exodus 25:4. The gold was made into thin flat wires which could either be woven with the woolen and linen threads, or worked with the needle. In regard to the mixture of linen and woollen threads in the High priest‘s dress, see Leviticus 19:19.

Exodus 28:6-12

The ephod - Exodus 39:2-7. The Hebrew word has the same breadth of meaning as our word vestment. The garment was worn over the shoulders, and was the distinctive vestment of the High priest, to which “the breast-plate of judgment” was attached Exodus 28:25-28.

Cunninq work - Skilled work, or work of a skilled man Exodus 35:35.

Exodus 28:7

Compare Exodus 39:4. The ephod consisted of two principal pieces of cloth, one for the back and the other for the front, joined together by shoulder straps (see Exodus 28:27 note). Below the arms, probably just above the hips, the two pieces were kept in place by a band attached to one of the pieces. On the respect in which the ephod of the High priest was held, see 1 Samuel 2:28; 1 Samuel 14:3; 1 Samuel 21:9; 1 Samuel 23:6-9; 1 Samuel 30:7. But an ephod made of linen appears to have been a recognized garment not only for the common priests 1 Samuel 22:18, but also for those who were even temporarily engaged in the service of the sanctuary 1 Samuel 2:18; 2 Samuel 6:14; 1 Chronicles 15:27.

Exodus 28:8

The curious girdle … - Rather: the band for fastening it, which is upon it, shall be of the same work, of one piece with it. This band being woven on to one of the pieces of the ephod, was passed round the body, and fastened by buttons, or strings, or some other suitable contrivance.

Exodus 28:11

Like the engravings of a signet - Compare Exodus 28:21, Exodus 28:36. These words probably refer to a special way of shaping the letters, adapted for engraving on a hard substance. Seal engraving on precious stones was practiced in Egypt from very remote times.

Ouches of gold - Gold settings formed not of solid pieces of metal, but of woven wire, wreathed round the stones in what is called cloisonnee work, a sort of filigree, often found in Egyptian ornaments. These stones, as well as those on the breastplate, were perhaps in the form of ovals, or rather ellipses, like the cartouches, containing proper names, in hieroglyphic

inscriptions. The word "ouches" is used by Shakespeare, Spenser, and some of their contemporaries in the general sense of "jewels."

Exodus 28:12

Upon the shoulders - i. e. upon the shoulder pieces of the ephod. See Exodus 28:7.

Upon his two shoulders - Compare Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 22:22. The high priest had to represent the Twelve tribes in the presence of Yahweh; and the burden of his office could not be so aptly symbolized anywhere as on his shoulders, the parts of the body fittest for carrying burdens.

Verse 13-30

Compare Exodus 39:8-21.

Exodus 28:14

Rather, two chains of pure gold shalt thou make of wreathen work, twisted like cords. They were more like cords of twisted gold wire than chains in the ordinary sense of the word. Such chains have been found in Egyptian tombs.

Exodus 28:15

The breastplate of judgment - The meaning of the Hebrew word rendered "breastplate," appears to be simply "ornament". The term breastplate relates merely to its place in the dress.

Exodus 28:16

Doubled - To give it stability, or to form what was used as a bag for the Urim and Thummim: the latter appears to be the more likely.

Exodus 28:17

Settings - Ouches of "cloisonnec" work, like those mentioned in Exodus 28:11.

A sardius - i. e. "the red stone." The Sardian stone, or sard, was much used by the ancients for seals; and it is perhaps the stone of all others the best for engraving.

Topaz - Not the stone now called the topaz: it may have been the chrysolite, a stone of a greenish hue.

A carbuncle - More probably the beryl, which is a kind of emerald.

Exodus 28:18

An emerald - Rather the garnet, which when cut with a convex face is termed the carbuncle.

A sapphire - Not the stone now called the sapphire; the lapis-lazuli is most probably meant.

A diamond - There is no trace of evidence that the ancients ever acquired the skill to engrave on the diamond, or even that they were acquainted with the stone. The "diamond" here may possibly be some variety of chalcedony, or (perhaps) rock crystal.

Exodus 28:19

A ligure - Amber, which came from Liguria.

Exodus 28:20

A beryl - Supposed to be a brilliant yellow stone, identified with what is now nown as the Spanish topaz.

A jasper - Probably the green jasper.

Exodus 28:22

Chains … - See Exodus 28:14.

Exodus 28:23

On the two ends of the breastplate - The extremities spoken of here, and in the next verse, must have been the upper corners of the square. The chains attached to them Exodus 28:25 suspended the breastplate from the ouches of the shoulder pieces Exodus 28:9, Exodus 28:11-12.

Exodus 28:27

"And two rings of gold shalt thou make and put them on the two shoulder pieces of the ephod, low down in the front of it, near the joining, above the band for fastening it." It would seem that the shoulder pieces were continued down the front of the ephod as far as the band (see Exodus 28:8); the joining appears to have been the meeting of the extremities of the shoulder pieces with the band. These rings were attached to the shoulder pieces just above this joining.

Exodus 28:28

The curious girdle of the ephod - The band for fastening it (see Exodus 28:8 note).

Exodus 28:29

See Exodus 28:12; the same names engraved on the stones of the breastplate were worn over the heart, the seat of the affections, as well as of the intellect, to symbolize the relation of love and of personal interest which the Lord requires to exist between the priest and the people.

Exodus 28:30

The Urim and the Thummim - "The Light and the Truth, or perfection."

From the way in which they are spoken of here and in Leviticus 8:8, compared with Exodus 28:15-21, it would appear that the Urim and the Thummim were some material things, previously existing and familiarly known, that they were separate from the breastplate itself, as well as from the gems that were set upon it, and were kept in the bag of the breastplate Exodus 28:16.

By means of them the will of Yahweh, especially in what related to the wars in which His people were engaged, was made known. They were formally delivered by Moses to Aaron Leviticus 8:8, and subsequently passed on to Eleazar Numbers 20:28; Numbers 27:21. They were esteemed as the crowning glory of the tribe of Levi Deuteronomy 33:8. There is no instance on record of their being consulted after the time of David.

The opinion has prevailed to a great extent that the Urim and the Thummim were of Egyptian origin, and two small images of precious stone, and that the divine will was manifested through them by some physical effect addressed to the eye or the ear.

Others prefer the view that they were some means for casting lots. Appeals to lots were made under divine authority by the chosen people on the most solemn occasions Leviticus 16:8; Numbers 26:55; Joshua 7:14-18; Joshua 13:6; Joshua 18:8; 1 Samuel 14:41-42; Acts 1:26, and it must have been a truth commonly recognized by the people that though "the lot was cast into the lap, the whole disposing thereof was of the Lord" Proverbs 16:33.

Exodus 28:31-35

The robe of the ephod - Exodus 39:22-26. A frock or robe of the simplest form, woven without seam, wholly of blue. It was put on by being drawn over the head. It appears to have had no sleeves. It probably reached a little below the knees. It must have been visible above and below the ephod, the variegated texture of which it must have set off as a plain blue groundwork.

Exodus 28:32

An habergeon - Corselets of linen, such as appear to be here referred to, were well known amongst the Egyptians.

Exodus 28:35

His sound - Its sound, i. e. the sound of the robe, that the people, who stood without, when they heard the sound of the bells within the tabernacle, might have a sensible proof that the high priest was performing the sacred rite in their behalf, though he was out of their sight.

That he die not - The bells also bore witness that the high priest was, at the time of his ministration, duly attired in the dress of his office, and so was not incurring the sentence of death (see also Exodus 28:43). An infraction of the laws for the service of the sanctuary was not merely an act of disobedience; it was a direct insult to the presence of Yahweh from His ordained minister, and justly incurred a sentence of capital punishment. Compare Exodus 30:21; Leviticus 8:35; Leviticus 10:7.

Exodus 28:36-43

Compare Exodus 39:27-31.

Exodus 28:36

Holiness to the Lord - This inscription testified in express words the holiness with which the high priest was invested in virtue of his sacred calling.

Exodus 28:37

A blue lace - The plate was fastened upon a blue band or fillet, so tied round the mitre as to show the plate in front.

The mitre - A twisted band of linen Exodus 28:39 coiled into a cap, to which the name mitre, in its original sense, closely answers, but which, in modern usage, would rather be called a turban.

Exodus 28:38

Bear the iniquity of the holy things - The Hebrew expression "to bear iniquity" is applied either to one who suffers the penalty of sin (Exodus 28:43; Leviticus 5:1, Leviticus 5:17; Leviticus 17:16; Leviticus 26:41, etc.), or to one who takes away the sin of others (Genesis 50:17; Leviticus 10:17; Leviticus 16:22; Numbers 30:15; 1 Samuel 15:25, etc.). In several of these passages, the verb is rightly rendered to forgive. The iniquity which is spoken of in this place does not mean particular sins actually committed, but that condition of alienation from God in every earthly thing which makes reconciliation and consecration needful. Compare Numbers 18:1. It belonged to the high priest, as the chief atoning mediator between Yahweh and His people (see the note at Exodus 28:36), to atone for the holy things that they might be "accepted before the Lord" (compare Leviticus 8:15, note; Leviticus 16:20, Leviticus 16:33, note): but the common priests also,

in their proper functions, had to take their part in making atonement (Leviticus 4:20; Leviticus 5:10; Leviticus 10:17; Leviticus 22:16; Numbers 18:23, etc.).

Exodus 28:39

The coat of fine linen - A long tunic, or cassock. Josephus says that it was worn next the skin, that it reached to the feet, and that it had closely fitting sleeves. The verb translated "embroider" appears rather to mean weave in diaper work. The tissue consisted of threads of one and the same color diapered in checkers, or in some small figure.

The girdle of needlework - The girdle of the work of the embroiderer Exodus 26:1; Exodus 35:35. The word translated "girdle" is different from that so rendered in Exodus 28:8 (see the note), and is probably Egyptian. Josephus says that it was wound several times round the body, and that its ends ordinarily hung down to the feet, but were thrown over the shoulder when the priest was engaged in his work.

Exodus 28:40

Bonnets - Caps of a simple construction which seem to have been cup-shaped.

Exodus 28:41-43

The dress of white linen was the strictly sacerdotal dress common to the whole body of priests Ezekiel 44:17-18. "These were for glory and for beauty" not less than "the golden garments" (as they were called by the Jews) which formed the high priest's dress of state Exodus 28:2. The linen suit which the high priest put on when he went into the most holy place on the day of atonement, appears to have been regarded with unique respect (Compare Exodus 31:10; Leviticus 16:4, Leviticus 16:23), though it is nowhere stated that it was distinguished in its make or texture, except in having a girdle Exodus 28:39 wholly of white linen, instead of a variegated one. The ancient Egyptian priests, like the Hebrew priests, wore nothing but white linen garments in the performance of their duties.

Exodus 28:43

That they bear not iniquity and die - See Exodus 28:35, note; Exodus 28:38 note.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 29

Verses 1-37

The consecration of the priests. See the notes to Exodus 29:4

Door of the tabernacle - Entrance of the tent. See Leviticus 8:3.

Exodus 29:27

The "waving" was the more solemn process of the two: it was a movement several times repeated, while "heaving" was simply a "lifting up" once.

Exodus 29:33

A stranger - One of another family, i. e. in this case, one not of the family of Aaron.

Verses 38-46

Exodus 29:38

The continual burnt-offering - The primary purpose of the national altar is here set forth. The victim slain every morning and every evening was an acknowledgment that the life of the people belonged to Yahweh; the offering of meal was an acknowledgment that all their works rightly done were His due (see Exodus 29:39

At even - See Exodus 12:6.

Exodus 29:40

A tenth deal - i. e. the tenth part of an Ephah; it is sometimes called an Omer (Exodus 16:36; see Leviticus 23:13). The Ephah seems to have been rather less than four gallons and a half (see Leviticus 19:36 note); and the tenth deal of flour may have weighed about 3 lbs. 2 oz.

An hin - The word appears to be Egyptian. The measure was one-sixth of an ephah. The quarter of a bin was therefore about a pint and a half. See Leviticus 19:36 note.

Beaten oil - See Exodus 27:20.

Wine for a drink offering - The earliest mention of the drink-offering is found in connection with Jacob's setting up the stone at Bethel Genesis 35:14. But it is here first associated with the rites of the altar. The law of the drink-offering is stated Numbers 15:5 following. Nothing whatever is expressly said in the Old Testament regarding the mode in which the wine was treated: but it would seem probable, from the prohibition that it should not be poured upon the altar of incense Exodus 30:9, that it used to be poured on the altar of burnt-offering.

Exodus 29:42

At the door of the tabernacle - At the entrance of the tent.

Exodus 29:43

The (tabernacle) shall be sanctified - The word "tabernacle" is certainly not the right one to be here supplied. What is probably meant is the spot in which Yahweh promises to meet with the assembly of His people. The verse may be rendered, And in that place will I meet with the children of Israel, and it shall be sanctified with my glory. See also the margin.

Exodus 29:44-45

The purpose of the formal consecration of the sanctuary and of the priests who served in it was, that the whole nation which Yahweh had set free from its bondage in Egypt might be consecrated in its daily life, and dwell continually in His presence as "a kingdom of priests and an holy nation." Exodus 19:6.

Exodus 29:46

Compare Genesis 17:7.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 30

Verses 1-10

Exodus 37:25-28; Exodus 40:26-27. The altar of incense was to be a casing of boards of shittim wood Exodus 25:5, Exodus 25:18 inches square and three feet in height (taking the cubit as 18 inches), entirely covered with plates of gold. Four "horns" were to project upward at the corners like those of the altar of burnt-offering Exodus 27:2. A crown or moulding of gold was to run round the top. On each of two opposite sides there was to be a gold ring through which the staves were to be put when it was moved from place to place.

Exodus 30:4

By the two corners thereof - Not corners. See the margin. The sense appears to be: And two gold rings shalt thou make for it under its moulding; on its two sides shalt thou make them (i. e. one ring on each side).

Exodus 30:6

The place for the altar of incense was outside the veil, opposite to the ark of the covenant and between the candlestick on the south side and the showbread table on the north Exodus 40:22-24. It appears to have been regarded as having a more intimate connection with the holy of holies than the other things in the holy place; and the mention of the mercy-seat in this verse, if we associate with it the significance of incense as figuring the prayers of the Lord's people Psalm 141:2; Revelation 5:8; Revelation 8:3-4, seems to furnish additional pound for an inference that the incense altar took precedence of the table of showbread and the candlestick.

Exodus 30:7

The lamps - See Exodus 25:37.

Exodus 30:7-8

The offering of the incense accompanied that of the morning and evening sacrifice. The two forms of offering symbolized the spirit of man reaching after communion with Yahweh, both in act and utterance. See Psalm 141:2.

Exodus 30:9

By this regulation, the symbolism of the altar of incense was kept free from ambiguity. atonement was made by means of the victim on the brazen altar in the court ontside; the prayers of the reconciled worshippers had their type within the tabernacle.

Exodus 30:10

See the marginal references.

Verses 11-16

The Ransom of Souls. - Exodus 38:25-28. On comparing these words with those of Numbers 1:1-3, we may perhaps infer that the first passage relates to a mere counting of the adult Israelites at the time when the money was taken from each, and that what the latter passage enjoins was a formal enrolment of them according to their genealogies and their order of military service.

A ransom for his soul - What the sincere worshipper thus paid was at once the fruit and the sign of his faith in the goodness of Yahweh, who had redeemed him and brought him into the covenant. Hence, the payment is rightly called a ransom inasmuch as it involved a personal appropriation of the fact of his redemption. On the word soul, see Leviticus 17:11.

That there be no plague - i. e. that they might not incur punishment for the neglect and contempt of spiritual privileges. Compare Exodus 28:35; 1 Corinthians 11:27-30; and the exhortation in our communion Service.

Exodus 30:13

Half a shekel - The probable weight of silver in the half-shekel would now be worth about 1 shilling, 3 1/2d. (Compare Genesis 23:16. See Exodus 38:24 note.) Gerah is, literally, a bean, probably the bean of the carob or locust-tree. It was used as the name of a small weight, as our word grain came into use from a grain of wheat.

Exodus 30:15

Every Israelite stood in one and the same relation to Yahweh. See Exodus 30:11-12.

Exodus 30:16

tabernacle of the congregation - tent of meeting, here and in Exodus 30:18, Exodus 30:20,

A memorial unto the children of Israel - The silver used in the tabernacle was a memorial to remind each man of his position before the Lord, as one of the covenanted people.

Verses 17-21

Exodus 38:8. The bronze for the "Laver of brass" and its foot was supplied from the bronze mirrors of the women who voluntarily gave up these articles of luxury. Bronze mirrors were much used by the ancient Egyptians. No hint is given as to the form of the laver. The brazen sea and

the ten lavers that served the same purpose in the temple of Solomon, were elaborately worked in artistic designs and are minutely described 1 Kings 7:23-29.

Exodus 30:19

Wash their hands and their feet - On certain solemn occasions he was required to bathe his whole person Exodus 29:4; Leviticus 16:4. The laver must also have furnished the water for washing those parts of the victims that needed cleansing Leviticus 1:9.

Exodus 30:20

That they die not - See Exodus 28:35 note.

Verses 22-33

Compare Exodus 37:29.

Exodus 30:23

Principal spices - i. e. the best spices.

Pure myrrh - Is a gum which comes from the stem of a low, thorny, ragged tree, that grows in Arabia Felix and Eastern Africa, called by botanists Balsamodendron myrrha. The word here rendered pure, is literally, "freely flowing", an epithet which is explained by the fact that the best myrrh is said to exude spontaneously from the bark, while that of inferior quality oozes out in greater quantity from incisions made in the bark.

Five hundred shekels - Probably rather more than 15 1/4 lbs. See Exodus 38:24.

Cinnamon - is obtained from a tree allied to the laurel that grows in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and other islands of the Indian Ocean, known in Botany as the Cinnamomum zeylanicum. It is the inner rind of the tree dried in the sun. It was imported from India in very early times by the people of Ophir, and brought with other spices from the south part of Arabia by the trading caravans that visited Egypt and Syria. The mention of these spices in Exodus may be taken as the earliest notice we have connected with commerce with the remote East.

Two hundred and fifty shekels - about 7 lbs. 14 oz.

Sweet calamus - The fragrant cane (or rush) was probably what is now known in India as the Lemon Grass.

Exodus 30:24

Cassia - is the inner bark of an Indian tree (Cinnamomum cassia), which differs from that which produces cinnamon in the shape of its leaves and some other particulars. It was probably in ancient times, as it is at present,

by far less costly than cinnamon, and it may have been on this account that it was used in double quantity.

An hin - Probably about six pints. See Leviticus 19:36.

Exodus 30:25

An oil of holy ointment - Rather, a holy anointing oil.

After the art of the apothecary - According to Jewish tradition, the essences of the spices were first extracted, and then mixed with the oil. The preparation of the anointing oil, as well as of the incense, was entrusted to Bezaleel Exodus 37:29, and the care of preserving it to Eleazar, the son of Aaron Numbers 4:16. In a later age, it was prepared by the sons of the priests 1 Chronicles 9:30.

Exodus 30:32

Upon man's flesh - i. e. on the persons of those who were not priests who might employ it for such anointing as was usual on festive occasions (Psalm 104:15; Proverbs 27:9; Matthew 6:17, etc.).

Exodus 30:33

A stranger - See Exodus 29:33.

Cut off from his people - See Exodus 31:14.

Verses 34-38

Exodus 37:29. The incense, like the anointing oil, consisted of four aromatic ingredients.

Stacte - supposed to be either the gum of the Storax tree (Styrax officinale) found in Syria and the neighboring countries, or the gum known as Benzoin, or Gum Benjamin, which is an important ingredient in the incense now used in churches and mosques, and is the produce of another storax tree (Styrax benzoin) that grows in Java and Sumatra.

Onycha - , a perfume perhaps made from the cap of the strombus, or wing-shell, which abounds in the Red Sea.

Galbanum - , a gum of a yellowish brown color, in the form of either grains or masses. It is imported from India, Persia, and Africa; but the plant from which it comes is not yet certainly known.

Pure frankincense - This was the most important of the aromatic gums. Like myrrh, it was regarded by itself as a precious perfume Matthew 2:11, and it was used unmixed with other substances in some of the rites of the law. The tree from which it is obtained is not found in Arabia, and it was most likely imported from India by the Sabaeans, like Cinnamon, Cassia, and Calamus (see Exodus 30:23). The tree is now known as the Boswellia

serrata, or B. thurifera, and grows abundantly in the highlands of India. The frankincense of commerce is a different substance, the resin of the spruce and of some other kinds of fir.

Exodus 30:35

See Exodus 30:25.

Tempered together - The four substances were perhaps pounded and thoroughly mixed together, and then fused into a mass. This rendering is to be preferred to that in the margin.

Exodus 30:36

See Exodus 30:6.

Exodus 30:37-38

Compare Exodus 30:32-33.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 31

Verses 1-11

Exodus 35:30-35. This solemn call of Bezaleel and Aholiab is full of instruction. Their work was to be only that of handicraftsmen. Still it was Yahweh Himself who called them by name to their tasks, and the powers which they were now called upon to exercise in their respective crafts, were declared to have been given them by the Holy Spirit. Thus is every effort of skill, every sort of well-ordered labor, when directed to a right end, brought into the very highest sphere of association.

There appears to be sufficient reason for identifying Hur, the grandfather of Bezaleel, with the Hur who assisted Aaron in supporting the hands of Moses during the battle with Amalek at Rephidim Exodus 17:10, and who was associated with Aaron in the charge of the people while Moses was on the mountain Exodus 24:14. Josephus says that he was the husband of Miriam. It is thus probable that Bezaleel was related to Moses. He was the chief artificer in metal, stone, and wood; he had also to perform the apothecary‘s work in the composition of the anointing oil and the incense Exodus 37:29. He had precedence of all the artificers, but Aholiab appears to have had the entire charge of the textile work Exodus 35:35; Exodus 38:23.

Exodus 31:3

Wisdom, understanding, Knowledge - Or, that “right judgment in all things” for which we especially pray on Whitsunday; the perceptive faculty; and experience, a practical acquaintance with facts.

Exodus 31:4

To devise cunning works - Rather, to devise works of skill. The Hebrew phrase is not the same as that rendered “cunning work” in respect to textile fabrics in Exodus 26:1.

Exodus 31:10

And the cloths of service - Rather, And the garments of office; that is, the distinguishing official garments of the high priest. The three kinds of dress mentioned in this verse appear to be the only ones which were unique to the sanctuary. They were:

(1) The richly adorned state robes of the high priest (see Exodus 39:1 following).

(2) the "holy garments" of white linen for the high priest, worn on the most solemn occasion in the year (see Exodus 28:39; Leviticus 16:4).

(3) the garments of white linen for all the priests, worn in their regular ministrations (see Exodus 28:40-41).

Verses 12-17

The penal law of the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2-3. In the fourth commandment the injunction to observe the seventh day is addressed to the conscience of the people (see Exodus 20:8 note): in this place, the object is to declare an infraction of the commandment to be a capital offence. The two passages stand in a relation to each other similar to that between Exodus 31:14

See Numbers 15:32-36. The distinction between the meaning of the two expressions, "to be cut off from the people", and "to be put to death", is here indicated. He who was cut off from the people had, by his offence, put himself out of the terms of the covenant, and was an outlaw. On such, and on such alone, when the offence was one which affected the well-being of the nation, as it was in this case, death could be inflicted by the public authority.

Exodus 31:17

Was refreshed - Literally, "he took breath". Compare Exodus 23:12; 2 Samuel 16:14. The application of the word to the Creator, which occurs nowhere else, is remarkable.

Verse 18

Two tables of testimony - See Exodus 25:16; Exodus 32:15.

The tables of stone which represented the covenant between Yahweh and His people, and which, when covered with the mercy-seat were to give the sanctuary its significance, are now delivered to Moses in accordance with the promise in Exodus 24:12.

The history of what relates to the construction of the sanctuary is here interrupted, and is taken up again in Exodus 35:1.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 32

Verses 1-6

In all probability these three chapters originally formed a distinct composition. The main incidents recorded in them follow in the order of time, and are therefore in their proper place as regards historical sequence.

The golden calf - The people had, to a great extent, lost the patriarchal faith, and were but imperfectly instructed in the reality of a personal unseen God. Being disappointed at the long absence of Moses, they seem to have imagined that he had deluded them, and had probably been destroyed amidst the thunders of the mountain Exodus 24:15-18. Accordingly, they gave way to their superstitious fears and fell back upon that form of idolatry which was most familiar to them (see Exodus 32:4 note). The narrative of the circumstances is more briefly given by Moses at a later period in one of his addresses to the people Deuteronomy 9:8-21, Deuteronomy 9:25-29; Deuteronomy 10:1-5, Deuteronomy 10:8-11. It is worthy of remark, that Josephus, in his very characteristic chapter on the giving of the law, says nothing whatever of this act of apostacy, though he relates that Moses twice ascended the mountain.

Exodus 32:1

Unto Aaron - The chief authority during the absence of Moses was committed to Aaron and Hur Exodus 24:14.

Make us gods - The substantive אלהים *'elôhîym* is plural in form and may denote gods. But according to the Hebrew idiom, the meaning need not be plural, and hence, the word is used as the common designation of the true God (Genesis 1:1, etc. See Exodus 21:6 note). It here denotes a god, and should be so rendered.

Exodus 32:2

Break off the golden earrings - It has been very generally held from early times, that Aaron did not willingly lend himself to the mad design of the multitude; but that, overcome by their importunity, he asked them to give up such possessions as he knew they would not willingly part with, in the hope of putting a check on them. Assuming this to have been his purpose, he took a wrong measure of their fanaticism, for all the people made the sacrifice at once Exodus 32:3. His weakness, in any case, was unpardonable and called for the intercession of Moses Deuteronomy 9:20.

Exodus 32:4

The sense approved by most modern critics is: and he received the gold at their hand and collected it in a bag and made it a molten calf. The Israelites must have been familiar with the ox-worship of the Egyptians; perhaps many of them had witnessed the rites of Mnevis at Heliopolis, almost; on the borders of the land of Goshen, and they could not have been unacquainted with the more famous rites of Apis at Memphis. It is expressly said that they yielded to the idolatry of Egypt while they were in bondage Joshua 24:14; Ezekiel 20:8; Ezekiel 23:3, Ezekiel 23:8; and this is in keeping with the earliest Jewish tradition (Philo). In the next verse, Aaron appears to speak of the calf as if it was a representative of Yahweh - "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord." The Israelites did not, it should be noted, worship a living Mnevis, or Apis, having a proper name, but only the golden type of the animal. The mystical notions connected with the ox by the Egyptian priests may have possessed their minds, and, when expressed in this modified and less gross manner, may have been applied to the Lord, who had really delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians. Their sin then lay, not in their adopting another god, but in their pretending to worship a visible symbol of Him whom no symbol could represent. The close connection between the calves of Jeroboam and this calf is shown by the repetition of the formula, "which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" 1 Kings 12:28.

These be thy gods - This is thy god. See Exodus 32:1 note.

Verses 7-35

The faithfulness of Moses in the office that had been entrusted to him was now to be put to the test. It was to be made manifest whether he loved his own glory better than he loved the brethren who were under his charge; whether he would prefer that he should himself become the founder of a "great nation," or that the Lord's promise should be fulfilled in the whole people of Israel. This may have been especially needful for Moses, in consequence of his natural disposition. See Numbers 12:3; and compare Exodus 3:11. With this trial of Moses repeated in a very similar manner Numbers 14:11-23, may be compared the trial of Abraham Matthew 4:8-10.

Exodus 32:8

These be thy gods … have brought - This is thy god, O Israel, who has brought …

Exodus 32:10

Let me alone - But Moses did not let the Lord alone; he wrestled, as Jacob had done, until, like Jacob, he obtained the blessing Genesis 32:24-29.

Exodus 32:14

This states a fact which was not revealed to Moses until after his second intercession when he had come down from the mountain and witnessed the sin of the people Exodus 32:30-34. He was then assured that the Lord‘s love to His ancient people would prevail God is said, in the language of Scripture, to “repent,” when His forgiving love is seen by man to blot out the letter of His judgments against sin (2 Samuel 24:16; Joel 2:13; Jonah 3:10, etc.); or when the sin of man seems to human sight to have disappointed the purposes of grace (Genesis 6:6; 1 Samuel 15:35, etc.). The awakened conscience is said to “repent,” when, having felt its sin, it feels also the divine forgiveness: it is at this crisis that God, according to the language of Scripture, repents toward the sinner. Thus, the repentance of God made known in and through the One true Mediator reciprocates the repentance of the returning sinner, and reveals to him atonement.

Exodus 32:17-18

Moses does not tell Joshua of the divine communication that had been made to him respecting the apostasy of the people, but only corrects his impression by calling his attention to the kind of noise which they are making.

Exodus 32:19

Though Moses had been prepared by the revelation on the Mount, his righteous indignation was stirred up beyond control when the abomination was before his eyes.

Exodus 32:20

See Deuteronomy 9:21. What is related in this verse must have occupied some time and may have followed the rebuke of Aaron. The act was symbolic, of course. The idol was brought to nothing and the people were made to swallow their own sin (compare Micah 7:13-14).

Exodus 32:22

Aaron‘s reference to the character of the people, and his manner of stating what he had done Exodus 32:23

Make us gods - Make us a god.

Exodus 32:25

Naked - Rather unruly, or “licentious”.

Shame among their enemies - Compare Psalm 44:13; Psalm 79:4; Deuteronomy 28:37.

Exodus 32:26-29

The tribe of Levi, Moses‘ own tribe, now distinguished itself by immediately returning to its allegiance and obeying the call to fight on the side of Yahweh. We need not doubt that the 3,000 who were slain were those who persisted in resisting Moses. The spirit of the narrative forbids us to conceive that the act of the Levites was anything like an indiscriminate massacre. An amnesty had first been offered to all by the words: “Who is on the Lord‘s side?” Those who were forward to draw the sword were directed not to spare their closest relations or friends; but this must plainly have been with an understood qualification as regards the conduct of those who were to be slain. Had it not been so, they who were on the Lord‘s side would have had to destroy each other. We need not stumble at the bold, simple way in which the statement is made.

Exodus 32:29

Consecrate yourselves to day to the Lord … - The margin contains the literal rendering. Our version gives the most probable meaning of the Hebrew, and is supported by the best authority. The Levites were to prove themselves in a special way the servants of Yahweh, in anticipation of their formal consecration as ministers of the sanctuary (compare Deuteronomy 10:8), by manifesting a self-sacrificing zeal in carrying out the divine command, even upon their nearest relatives.

Exodus 32:31

Returned unto the Lord - i. e. again he ascended the mountain.

Gods of gold - a god of gold.

Exodus 32:32

For a similar form of expression, in which the conclusion is left to be supplied by the mind of the reader, see Daniel 3:15; Luke 13:9; Luke 19:42; John 6:62; Romans 9:22. For the same thought, see Romans 9:3. It is for such as Moses and Paul to realize, and to dare to utter, their readiness to be wholly sacrificed for the sake of those whom God has entrusted to their love. This expresses the perfected idea of the whole burnt-offering.

Thy book - The figure is taken from the enrolment of the names of citizens. This is its first occurrence in the Scriptures. See the marginal references. and Isaiah 4:3; Daniel 12:1; Luke 10:20; Philemon 4:3; Revelation 3:5, etc.

Exodus 32:33, Exodus 32:34

Each offender was to suffer for his own sin. Compare Exodus 20:5; Ezekiel 18:4, Ezekiel 18:20. Moses was not to be taken at his word. He was to fulfill his appointed mission of leading on the people toward the land of promise.

Exodus 32:34

Mine Angel shall go before thee - See the marginal references and Genesis 12:7.

In the day when I visit … - Compare Numbers 14:22-24. But though the Lord chastized the individuals, He did not take His blessing from the nation.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 33

Verse 2-3

See Exodus 3:8.

For I will not go up in the midst of thee - The covenant on which the original promise Exodus 23:20-23 was based had been broken by the people. Yahweh now therefore declared that though His Angel should go before Moses, He would withhold His own favoring presence. The nation should be put on a level with other nations, to lose its character as the people in special covenant with Yahweh (see the note at Exodus 33:16). Thus were the people forcibly warned that His presence could prove a blessing to them only on condition of their keeping their part of the covenant Exodus 33:3. If they failed in this, His presence would be to them "a consuming fire" (Deuteronomy 4:24; compare Exodus 32:10).

Verse 5

I will come up … - Better; If I were to go up for one moment in the midst of thee, I should consume thee.

That I may know … - By that sign of their repentance Yahweh would decide in what way they were to be punished.

Verse 6

By the mount Horeb - From Mount Horeb onward. They ceased to wear their ornaments from the time they were at Mount Horeb.

Verse 7

The tabernacle - The tent. The only word in the Old Testament which ought to be rendered "tabernacle" מִשְׁכָּן *mîshkān* does not occur once in this narrative Exodus 26:1. What is here meant is a tent appointed for this temporary purpose by Moses, possibly that in which he was accustomed to dwell.

Pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp - That the people might feel that they had forfeited the divine presence (see Exodus 25:8). This tent was to be a place for meeting with Yahweh, like the tabernacle which was about to be constructed.

The tent of meeting (as it should be called, see Exodus 27:21 note, and note at end of Exodus 33:11.

Verse 10

The tabernacle door - The entrance of the tent.

The people by their act of worship gave another proof of their penitence.

Verse 11

Face to face - See Exodus 33:20 note.

Verse 13

Thy way - He desires not to be left in uncertainty, but to be assured, by Yahweh's mode of proceeding, of the reality of the promises that had been made to him.

Verse 14

Rest - This was the common expression for the possession of the promised land. Deuteronomy 3:20; Joshua 1:13, Joshua 1:15; compare Hebrews 4:8.

Verse 16

Thou goest with us - It was this which alone distinguished (rather than "separated") them from other nations, and which alone would render the land of promise a home to be desired. Compare 2 Samuel 7:23.

Verse 17

Compare Exodus 33:13. His petition for the nation, and his own claims as a mediator, are now granted to the full.

Verse 18

Shew me thy glory - The faithful servant of Yahweh, now assured by the success of his mediation, yearns, with the proper tendency of a devout spirit, for a more intimate communion with his divine Master than he had yet enjoyed. He seeks for something surpassing all former revelations.

Verse 19-20

But his request could not be granted in accordance with the conditions of human existence. The glory of the Almighty in its fulness is not to be revealed to the eye of man. Compare Judges 6:22; Isaiah 6:5. A further revelation of the divine goodness was however possible (see Exodus 33:6-7).

It was vouchsafed to Paul, as it had been to Moses, to have special "visions and revelations of the Lord" 2 Corinthians 12:1-4. But he had, also like Moses, to find the narrow reach of the intellect of man in the region of Godhead 1 Timothy 6:16. However intimate may be our communion with the Holy One, we are still, as long as we are in the flesh, "to see through a glass darkly," waiting for the time when we shall see, with no figure of

speech, “face to face” 1 Corinthians 13:12. Then we know “that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” 1 John 3:2.

Exodus 33:19

Will be gracious … - Yahweh declares His own will to be the ground of the grace which He is going to show the nation. Paul applies these words to the election of Jacob in order to overthrow the self-righteous boasting of the Jews Romans 9:15.

Exodus 33:20

Such passages as this, being clearly in accordance with what we know of the relation of spiritual existence to the human senses, show how we are to interpret the expressions “face to face” Exodus 33:11; Deuteronomy 34:10, “mouth to mouth” Numbers 12:8, and others of the like kind. See Exodus 24:10; Isaiah 6:1; and compare John 14:9.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 34

Verse 1

Hew thee - The former tables are called "the work of God;" compare Exodus 32:16.

The words - See Exodus 34:28.

Verse 6-7

This was the second revelation of the name of the God of Israel to Moses. The first revelation was of Yahweh as the self-existent One, who purposed to deliver His people with a mighty hand Exodus 3:14; this was of the same Yahweh as a loving Saviour who was now forgiving their sins. The two ideas that mark these revelations are found combined, apart from their historical development, in the second commandment, where the divine unity is shown on its practical side, in its relation to human obligations (compare Exodus 34:14; Exodus 20:4). Both in the commandment and in this passage, the divine love is associated with the divine justice; but in the former there is a transposition to serve the proper purpose of the commandments, and the justice stands before the love. This is strictly the legal arrangement, brought out in the completed system of the ceremonial law, in which the sin-offering, in acknowledgment of the sentence of justice against sin, was offered before the burnt-offering and the peace-offering. But in this place the truth appears in its essential order; the retributive justice of Yahweh is subordinated to, rather it is made a part of, His forgiving Love (see Exodus 32:14 note). The visitation of God, whatever form it may wear, is in all ages the working out purposes of Love toward His children. The diverse aspects of the divine nature, to separate which is the tendency of the unregenerate mind of man and of all paganism, are united in perfect harmony in the Lord Yahweh, of whom the saying is true in all its length and breadth, "God is love" 1 John 4:8. It was the sense of this, in the degree to which it was now revealed to him, that caused Moses to bow his head and worship Exodus 34:8. But the perfect revelation of the harmony was reserved for the fulness of time when "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" Revelation 13:8 was made known to us in the flesh as both our Saviour and our Judge.

Verse 9

This yearning struggle after assurance is like the often-repeated utterance of the heart, when it receives a blessing beyond its hopes, "can

this be real?”

Verse 10

Marvels - Explained in the following verse. Compare 2 Samuel 7:23; Psalm 77:14.

Verses 12-27

The precepts contained in these verses are, for the most part, identical in substance with some of those which follow the Ten Commandments and are recorded in “the Book of the covenant” (Exodus 24:7).

Exodus 34:13

Cut down their groves - This is the first reference to what is commonly known as grove-worship. The original word for “grove” in this connection אשרה *'ăshêrāh* is different from that so rendered in Genesis 21:33. Our translators supposed that what the law commands is the destruction of groves dedicated to the worship of false deities Judges 6:25; 2 Kings 18:4; but inasmuch as the worship of asherah is found associated with that of Astarte, or Ashtoreth Judges 2:13; Judges 10:6; 1 Samuel 7:4, it seems probable that while Astarte was the personal name of the goddess, the asherah was a symbol of her, probably in some one of her characters, made in wood in some conventional form.

Exodus 34:15-16

An expansion of Exodus 34:12. The unfaithfulness of the nation to its covenant with Yahweh is here for the first time spoken of as a breach of the marriage bond. The metaphor is, in any case, a natural one, but it seems to gain point, if we suppose it to convey an allusion to the abominations connected with pagan worship, such as are spoken of in Numbers 25:1-3.

Exodus 34:21

See Exodus 20:9; Exodus 23:12. There is here added to the commandment a particular caution respecting those times of year when the land calls for most labor. The old verb “to ear” (i. e. to plow) is genuine English.

Exodus 34:24

Neither shall any man desire etc. - Intended to encourage such as might fear the consequences of obeying the divine law in attending to their religious duties. Compare Proverbs 16:7.

Verse 28

He wrote - i. e. Yahweh wrote Exodus 34:1.

Verse 29

The two tables of testimony - Compare Exodus 31:18.

The skin of his face shone - Compare Matthew 17:2. The brightness of the Eternal Glory, though Moses had witnessed it only in a modified manner Exodus 33:22-23, was so reflected in his face, that Aaron and the people were stricken with awe, and feared to approach him until he gave them words of encouragement.

The word translated "shine" is closely connected with a word translated "horn"; and hence, the Latin version and others have rendered the verb "to be horned." From this rendering of the word has arisen the popular representation of Moses with horns on his forehead; e. g. in Michaelangelo's statue at Rome.

Verses 33-35

Paul refers to this passage as showing forth the glory of the law, though it was but a "ministration of condemnation," and was to be done away, in order to enhance the glory of the gospel, "the ministration of the spirit," which is concealed by no veil from the eyes of believers, and is to last forever 2 Corinthians 3:7-15.

Exodus 34:33

When rather than until should be supplied. Moses did not wear the veil when he was speaking to the people, but when he was silent. See Exodus 34:35.

Exodus 34:34

Moses went in - i. e. to the tent of meeting.

EXODUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 35

Verse 1

The narrative of what relates to the construction of the sanctuary is now resumed from Exodus 31:18.

Verse 2

See Exodus 31:12.

Verse 3

This prohibition is here first distinctly expressed, but it is implied Exodus 16:23.

Verse 11

See Exodus 25:10 that in the instructions for making the sanctuary, the ark of the covenant, as the principal thing belonging to it, is mentioned first; but in the practical order of the work, as it is here arranged, the tabernacle with its tent and covering come first.

Verse 12

The covering - This is not the same as the covering of Exodus 35:11, which denotes the covering of the tent (see Exodus 26:14): the word is used here for the entrance curtains (see Exodus 26:36; Exodus 27:16).

Verse 18

The word "tabernacle" מִשְׁכָּן *mîshkān* is here used for the full name, the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. It denotes the entire structure.

Verse 19

The cloths of service to do service in the holy place - Rather; the garments of office to do service in the sanctuary, etc. See Exodus 31:10.

Verse 22

Bracelets - Rather, brooches.

Earrings - The Hebrew word signifies a ring, either for the nose (see Genesis 24:22) or for the ear Exodus 32:2; Genesis 35:4. That ear-rings, not nose-rings, are here meant is confirmed by what we know of early Hebrew and Egyptian customs.

Rings - Signet rings.

Tablets - More probably, armlets. It is most likely that all the articles mentioned in this verse were of gold. The indulgence of private luxury was thus given up for the honor of the Lord. Compare Exodus 30:18 note.

Verse 27

The precious stones Exodus 28:9 and spices were contributed by the rulers, who were more wealthy than the other Israelites.

Verse 32-33

Curious works, cunning work - Works of skill. Compare Exodus 30:4.

Verse 35

The engraver - The artificer, literally "one who cuts": a general name for the workman, to which was added the name of the material in which he worked; thus the artificer in wood, or carpenter; the artificer in iron, or smith, etc. Exodus 35:32-33; Exodus 31:4-5 enumerate the branches of work committed to Bezaleel. What was under the charge of Aholiab is here for the first time clearly distinguished into the work of the skilled weaver, that of the embroiderer, and that of the weaver.

The cunning workman - The skilled weaver, literally, "the reckoner". He might have been so called because he had nicely to count and calculate the threads in weaving figures after the manner of tapestry or carpet. His work was chiefly used in the curtains and veil of the tabernacle, in the ephod and the breastplate (Exodus 26:1, Exodus 26:31; Exodus 28:6, Exodus 28:15, etc.).

The embroiderer - He worked with a needle, either shaping his design in stitches of colored thread, or in pieces of colored cloth sewn upon the groundwork. His work was employed in the entrance curtains of the tent and the court, and in the girdle of the high priest Exodus 26:36; Exodus 27:16; Exodus 28:39.

The weaver - He appears to have worked in the loom in the ordinary way with materials of only a single color. The tissues made by him were used for the robe of the ephod and its binding, and for the coats of the priests Exodus 28:32; Exodus 39:22, Exodus 39:27.

These three classes of workers were men, while the spinners and dyers were women Exodus 35:25.

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CHAPTER 36

Verse 1
See the notes to Exodus 26.

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CHAPTER 37

Verse 1
See the notes to Exodus 25.

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CHAPTER 38

Verse 1

For Exodus 38:1-7 and Exodus 38:9-20 see the notes to Exodus 27.

Verse 8

See the marginal reference. The women who assembled at the entrance of the tent of meeting were most probably devout women who loved the public service of religion. The giving up of their mirrors for the use of the sanctuary was a fit sacrifice for such women to make (compare Exodus 35:22 note).

Verse 21

This is the sum … - "This is the reckoning of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the Testimony as it was reckoned up according to the commandment of Moses, by the service of the Levites, by the hand of Ithamar," etc. The weight of the metals was taken by the Levites, under the direction of Ithamar. The tabernacle is called the tabernacle of the testimony, or the depository of the testimony, i. e. the tables of the law Exodus 25:16.

Verse 23

See Exodus 35:35 note.

Verse 24

Of the holy place - Rather, of the sanctuary. The gold was employed not only in the holy place, but in the most holy place and in the entrance to the tent Exodus 36:38.

The gold of the offering - The gold of the wave offering.

Talents … the shekel of the sanctuary - The shekel was the common standard of weight and value with the Hebrews: and is probably to be estimated at 220 English grains (just over half an ounce avoirdupois) and its value in silver as 2s. 7d. The shekel of the sanctuary (or, the holy shekel) would seem to denote no more than an exact shekel, "after the king's weight" 2 Samuel 14:26, "current money with the merchant" Genesis 23:16.

In the reign of Joash, a collection similar to that here mentioned, apparently at the same rate of capitation, was made for the repairs of the temple 2 Chronicles 24:9. The tax of later times, called didrachma, στατήρ *statēr* Matthew 17:27, was not, like this and that of Joash, a collection for a

special occasion, but a yearly tax, for the support of the temple, of a whole shekel. See also Exodus 30:13.

The talent contained 3,000 shekels, as may be gathered from Exodus 38:25-26. According to the computation here adopted, the Hebrew talent was 94 2/7 lbs. avoirdupois. The Greek (Aeginetan) talent, from which the Septuagint and most succeeding versions have taken the name "talent," was 82 1/4 lbs. The original Hebrew word, ככר *kîkār* would denote a circular mass, and nearly the same word, kerker, was in use among the Egyptians for a mass of metal cast in the form of a massive ring with its weight stamped upon it.

Verse 26

A bekah - Literally, "a half": the words "half a shekel," etc. appear to be inserted only for emphasis, to enforce the accuracy to be observed in the payment. See Exodus 30:13. Respecting the capitation and the numbering of the people, see Exodus 30:12.

Verse 27

Sockets - Bases. See the margin reference.

Verse 28

The hooks, chapiters, and fillets here spoken of belonged to the pillars of the court. See Exodus 27:10, Exodus 27:17.

Verse 29

According to the estimate of the shekel that has here been adopted, the weight of the metals mentioned in this chapter would be nearly as follows, in avoirdupois weight:

d Gold1 ton4 cwt.2 qrs.13 lbs.

d

d Silver4 tons4 cwt.2 qrs. 20 lbs.

d

d Bronze2 tons19 cwt.2 qrs.11 lbs.

d

d

The value of the gold, if pure, in our money would be 175,075 British pounds, 13 shillings, and of the silver, 38,034British pounds, 15 shillings 10d. These quantities of the precious metals come quite within the limits of probability, if we consider the condition of the Israelites when they left Egypt (see Exodus 25:3 note), and the object for which the collection was made. Many have remarked that the quantities collected for the tabernacle are insignificant when compared with the hoards of gold and silver collected in the East in recent times, as well as in ancient times.

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CHAPTER 39

Verse 1
See the notes to Exodus 28.

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CHAPTER 40

Verse 2

See Exodus 40:17.

Verse 4

The directions given in Leviticus 24:5-9 are here presupposed, and must have been issued before this chapter was written.

Verse 9-10

Most holy - In Exodus 40:9 the tabernacle and its utensils are said to be rendered holy by the anointing; the altar and its utensils are in Exodus 40:10 said to be "most holy". The difference does not express a higher degree of holiness: it is only used as a caution. The position of the altar exposed it to the chance of being touched by the people when they assembled in the court, while they were not permitted to enter the tabernacle. The tabernacle itself, with all that belonged to it, is called most holy in Exodus 30:29.

Verse 17

On the first day of the month - That is, on the first of the month Nisan Exodus 12:2; Exodus 13:4, one year, wanting fourteen days, after the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. They had been nearly three months in reaching the foot of Mount Sinai Exodus 19:1; Moses had spent eighty days on the mountain Exodus 24:18; Exodus 34:28, and some time must be allowed for what is related in Exodus 24, as well as for the interval between the two periods which Moses spent on the mountain Exodus 33:1-23. The construction of the tabernacle and its furniture would thus appear to have occupied something less than half a year.

Verse 19

The tent-cloth was spread over the tabernacle-cloth, and the covering of skins was put over the tent-cloth. See Exodus 26:1 note.

Verse 20

The testimony - i. e. the tables of stone with the Ten Commandments engraved on them Exodus 25:16; Exodus 31:18. Nothing else is said to have been put into the ark. These were found there by themselves in the time of Solomon 1 Kings 8:9; 2 Chronicles 5:10. The pot of manna was "laid up before the testimony" Exodus 16:34; Aaron's rod was also placed "before the testimony" Numbers 17:10; and the book of the law was put at "the side of the ark" Deuteronomy 31:26. The expression "before the testimony" appears to mean the space immediately in front of the ark. Most interpreters

hold that the pot of manna and Aaron‘s rod were at first placed between the ark and the veil, and afterward within the ark Hebrews 9:4. It is very probable that the pot and the rod had been put into the ark before it was taken by the Philistines, but that they were not sent back with the ark and the tables. 1 Samuel 4:11; 1 Samuel 6:11.

Verses 23-29

Moses performed these priestly functions (Exodus 28:1 note), before the holy things with which they were performed were anointed. The things had been made expressly for the service of Yahweh, by His command, and in this fact lay their essential sanctity, of which the anointing was only the seal and symbol. Aaron and his sons, on similar ground, having had the divine call, took part in the service of the sanctuary as soon as the work was completed Exodus 40:31. But Moses took part with them, and most likely took the lead, until they were consecrated and invested Exodus 40:26

Before the vail - That is, opposite to the ark, in the middle between the table of showbread on the North and the candlestick on the South.

Verse 34-35

On the distinction between the tent as the outer shelter and the tabernacle as the dwelling-place of Yahweh, which is very clear in these verses, see Exodus 26:1 note. The glory appeared as a light within and as a cloud on the outside.

Exodus 40:35

Compare the entrance of the high priest into the holy of holies on the day of atonement, Leviticus 16:2, Leviticus 16:13. For special appearances of this glory in the tabernacle, see Numbers 14:10; Numbers 16:19, Numbers 16:42.

The tabernacle, after it had accompanied the Israelites in their wanderings in the wilderness, was most probably first set up in the holy land at Gilgal Joshua 4:19; Joshua 5:10; Joshua 9:6; Joshua 10:6, Joshua 10:43. But before the death of Joshua, it was erected at Shiloh Joshua 18:1; Joshua 19:51. Here it remained as the national sanctuary throughout the time of the Judges Joshua 18:8; Joshua 21:2; Joshua 22:19; Judges 18:31; Judges 21:19; 1 Samuel 1:3; 1 Samuel 4:3. But its external construction was at this time somewhat changed, and doors, strictly so called, had taken the place of the entrance curtain 1 Samuel 3:15: hence, it seems to have been sometimes called the temple 1 Samuel 1:9; 1 Samuel 3:3, the name by which the structure of Solomon was afterward commonly known. After the

time of Eli it was removed to Nob in the canton of Benjamin, not far from Jerusalem 1 Samuel 21:1-9. From thence, in the time of David, it was removed to Gibeon 1 Chronicles 16:39; 1 Chronicles 21:29; 2 Chronicles 1:3; 1 Kings 3:4; 1 Kings 9:2. It was brought from Gibeon to Jerusalem by Solomon 1 Kings 8:4. After this, it disappears from the narrative of Scripture. When the temple of Solomon was built, "the tabernacle of the tent" had entirely performed its work; it had protected the ark of the covenant during the migrations of the people until they were settled in the land, and the promise was fulfilled, that the Lord would choose out a place for Himself in which His name should be preserved and His service should be maintained Deuteronomy 12:14, Deuteronomy 12:21; Deuteronomy 14:24.

In accordance with its dignity as the most sacred object in the sanctuary, the original ark of the covenant constructed by Moses was preserved and transferred from the tabernacle to the temple. The golden altar, the candlestick and the showbread table were renewed by Solomon. They were subsequently renewed by Zerubbabel, and lastly by the Maccabees (see Exodus 25:23.) But the ark was preserved in the temple until Jerusalem was taken by the forces of Nebuchadnezzar 2 Chronicles 35:3; Jeremiah 3:16. It was never replaced in the second temple. According to a rabbinical tradition, its site was marked by a block of stone.

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CHAPTER THREE
Leviticus

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

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LEVITICUS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Leviticus

1. Leviticus, that is, the Levitical Book, is the name by which this portion of the Law of Moses has always been called by the Hellenistic Jews and the Christian Church.

Leviticus is closely connected with Exodus at its commencement, and with the Book of Numbers at its conclusion; but differs from those books in its general exclusion of historical narrative. The only historical portions are the accounts of the Consecration of the priests, with the deaths of Nadab and Abihu Leviticus 24:10-23. A large portion of it is occupied with instructions for the service of the Sanctuary.

2. The authorship of Leviticus is ascribed in the main to Moses.

The book has no pretension to systematic arrangement as a whole, nor does it appear to have been originally written all at one time. There are pre-Mosaic fragments, together with passages probably written by Moses on previous occasions and inserted in the places they now occupy when the Pentateuch was put together; insertions also occur of a later date which were written, or sanctioned, by the prophets and holy men who, after the captivity, arranged and edited the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

3. The instructions respecting the offerings for the altar contained in Leviticus were recorded with a view to the guidance of those who were practically conversant with the service of the tabernacle. They do not furnish a methodical statement for the information of those who are strangers to the subject. A short sketch of the ritual of the altar, may therefore well form part of an introduction to the study of this book.

The whole sacrificial system of the Hebrew law was intended for a people already brought into covenant with the living God, and every sacrifice was assumed to have a vital connection with the spirit of the worshipper. A Hebrew sacrifice, like a Christian sacrament, possessed the inward and spiritual grace, as well as the outward and visible sign; and may have borne to each man a very different amount of meaning, according to the religious conditions of the mind. One may have come in devout

obedience to the voice of the Law, with little more than a vague sense that his offering in some way expressed his own spiritual wants, and that the fact that he was permitted to offer it, was a sacramental pledge of God‘s good will and favor toward him. But to another, with clearer spiritual insight, the lessons conveyed in the symbols of the altar must have all converged with more or less distinctness toward the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Who was to come in the fullness of times that He might fullfil all righteousness, and realize in the eyes of men the true sin-offering, burnt-offering, and peace-offering. The general name for what was formally given up to the service of God was קרבן *qorbân* which exactly answers to the English words, offering and oblation. Whatever offerings were brought to be sacrificed on the altar, may be thus classed:

d **Offerings for the Altar**

d

d AnimalVegetable

d

d 1. Burnt-offerings 1. Meat and drink-offerings for the Altar in the Court

d

d 2. Peace-offerings 2. Incense and meat-offerings for the Holy Place within the Tabernacle.

d

d 3. Sin-offerings

d

d

The offerings for the altar were:

(1) public

(2) private sacrifices; the mode of conducting which was nearly the same. The first three chapters of Leviticus relate entirely to private voluntary offerings.

The external distinction between the three classes of animal sacrifices may be thus broadly stated: The burnt-offering was wholly burned upon the altar; the sin-offering was in part burned on the altar, and in part, either given to the priests or burned outside the camp; and the peace-offering was shared between the altar, the priests, and the sacrificer. This formal difference is immediately connected with the distinctive meaning of each kind of sacrifice.

Five animals are named in the Law as suitable for sacrifice, the ox, the sheep, the goat, the dove and the pigeon. It is worthy of notice that these were all offered by Abraham in the great sacrifice of the covenant.

Three conditions met in the sacrificial quadrupeds; (1) they were clean according to the Law; (2) they were commonly used as food; and, being domesticated, (3) they formed a part of the home wealth of the sacrificers.

Every animal offered in sacrifice was to be perfect, without spot or blemish; and might vary in age between not less than a week and three years.

The man who offered a private sacrifice led with his own hands the victim into the court of the sanctuary, and formally presented it to the priest in front of the tabernacle. The sacrificer then laid, or rather pressed, his hand upon its head, and according to Jewish traditions, always uttered a prayer or confession of some sort while his hand rested on the head of the victim, except in the case of peace-offerings.

The regular place for slaughtering the animals for burnt-offerings, sin-offerings and trespass-offerings, was the north side of the altar. Tradition tells us that before the sacrificer laid his hand upon the head of the victim, it was bound by a cord to one of the rings fixed for the purpose on the north

side of the altar, and that at the very instant when the words of the prayer, or confession, were ended, the fatal stroke was given. The peace-offerings and the paschal lambs, might, it would seem, be slain in any part of the court.

The mode of killing appears not to have differed from that of slaughtering animals for food. The throat was cut while a priest or assistant held a bowl under the neck to receive the blood. The sacrificer, or his assistant, then flayed the victim and cut it into pieces, probably while the priest was engaged in disposing of the blood.

In sacrificing the burnt-offerings, the peace-offerings and the trespass-offerings, the priests "sprinkled" or rather cast the blood about, so that the blood should be diffused over the sides of the altar. In the sin-offerings, the priest had to take some of the blood with his finger and put it upon the horns of the altar of burnt-offering, and to pour out what remained at the bottom of the altar, if the sin-offering was for one of the common people, or for a ruler: if the sin-offering was for the congregation or for the high priest, in addition to these two processes, the high priest himself had to bring a portion of the blood into the sanctuary, to sprinkle it with his finger seven times before the vail, and to put some of it upon the horns of the altar of Incense.

The great altar of the temple was furnished with two holes at its southwest corner through which the blood ran into a drain which conveyed it to the Cedron. There was probably some arrangement of this kind for taking the blood away from the altar in the wilderness.

When the blood was disposed of, the skin removed, and the animal cut into pieces, the sacrificer, or his assistant, washed the entrails and feet. In the case of a burnt-offering, all the pieces were then taken to the altar and salted. Next, the priest piled the pieces on the altar, the hind limbs being probably put at the base of the pile, then the entrails and other viscera with the fat, then the fore limbs, with the head at the top.

The parts burned upon the altar of the peace-offering, the sin-offering and the trespass-offering, were the same in each case; and consisted of the fat, and the kidneys, and the caul above the liver.

The parts of the victims which regularly fell to the priests were:

Of the burnt-offerings, only the hide, the whole of the flesh being consigned to the altar: of the peace-offerings, the breast and the right shoulder (or leg), which might be eaten by the priests and their families in any unpolluted place. The hide appears to have been retained by the sacrificer: of the sin-offerings and the trespass-offerings, the whole of the flesh (except the fat portions burned on the altar), and probably the hide. The flesh could only be eaten within the precinct of the Tabernacle. It was distinguished from the "holy" flesh of the peace-offerings as being "most holy."

Connected with the priests' breast and shoulder is the inquiry as to the two ceremonies called waving and heaving. The shoulder, which belonged to the officiating priest, was heaved, and the breast, which was for the common stock of the priests in general, was waved before the Lord. Each process appears to have been a solemn form of dedicating a thing to the use of the sanctuary. The term strictly rendered heave-offering appears to be used in as wide a sense as קרבן *qorbân* for offerings in general. That rendered wave-offering is not so broadly applied. The rabbis say that heaving was a moving up and down, waving a moving to and fro. But, as waving appears to have been the more solemn process of the two, it was probably, in accordance with its derivation, a movement several times repeated, while heaving was simply a lifting up once.

Every burnt-offering and peace-offering was accompanied by a meat-offering (rather vegetable-offering, see Exodus 29:43. There is no mention of this in Leviticus. The quantities of flour, oil and wine were proportioned to the importance of the victims.

The whole of the meat-offerings and drink-offerings, with the exception of what was burned, or poured, on the altar, fell to the lot of the priests. See Leviticus 2:3,

The sin-offering and the trespass-offering were sacrificed without either meat-offering or drink-offering.

4. In the earliest record of sacrifice Genesis 4:3-5 the name given in common to the animal and vegetable offerings is מנחה *mînchāh* (i. e. a gift), which the Law afterwards restricted to the vegetable-offerings (Leviticus 2:1 note).

The sacrifices of Noah after the flood consisted of burnt-offerings of clean beasts and birds offered upon an altar.

The covenant sacrifice of Abraham consisted of one of each of the five animals which the Law afterward recognized as fit for sacrifice. But the cutting in twain of the four-footed victims appears to mark it as a peculiar rite belonging to a personal covenant, and to distinguish it from the classes of sacrifices ordained by the Law.

Among the different aspects under which the offering up of Isaac Genesis 22 may be viewed, there is perhaps one which most directly connects it with the history of sacrifice. - Abraham had still one great lesson to learn. He did not clearly perceive that Jehovah did not require his gifts. The Law had not yet been given which would have suggested this truth to him by the single victim appointed for the burnt-offering and for the sin-offering, and by the sparing handful of the meat-offering. To correct and enlighten him, the Lord "tempted" him to offer up, as a burnt-offering, his most cherished possession, the center of his hopes. The offering, had it been completed, would have been an actual gift to Jehovah, not a ceremonial act of worship: it would have been not an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, but a stern reality in itself. Isaac was not, as regards his father's purpose, in any proper sense a symbol or representative. Nor is there any hint that would justify us in making the voluntary submission of Isaac a significant part of the transaction. The act of the patriarch in giving up his own flesh and blood was an analogue rather than a type of the sacrifice of the Great High Priest who gave up Himself as a victim. In order to instruct Abraham that the service of the altar fulfilled its purpose in being the expression of the spiritual condition of the worshipper, the Lord Himself provided a ram which was accepted instead of the beloved son. Abraham had already made the offering of himself in his ready faith and obedience;

the acceptable means for expressing this fact was appointed in the "ram caught in a thicket by his horns."

Isaac and Jacob built altars: and the sacrifices offered by Jacob at Mizpah appear to have been strictly peace-offerings.

Sacrificial worship was familiarly known to the Israelites in Egypt: and the history of Jethro seems to show that it was common to the two great branches of the Semitic stock.

We thus see that if we take the narrative of Scripture for our guide, the most ancient sacrifices were burnt-offerings: and that the radical idea of sacrifice is to be sought in the burnt-offering rather than in the peace-offering, or in the sin-offering. Assuming that the animal brought to the altar represented the person of him who offered it, and noting that the flesh was spoken of not as destroyed by burning, but as sent up in the fire like incense toward heaven; the act of sacrifice intimated that the believer confessed the obligation of surrendering himself, body, soul, and spirit, to the Lord of heaven and earth who had been revealed to him. The truth expressed then in the whole burnt-offering is the unqualified self-sacrifice of the person.

In the peace-offerings of the patriarchal age, before the institution of a national priesthood, there is no reason to doubt that, as in the peace-offerings of the Law, certain portions of the victim were burned upon the altar, and that the remainder of the flesh was eaten by the offerer and those who were associated with him by participation in the spirit of the sacrifice.

In the scriptural records there is no trace either of the sin-offering, or of any special treatment of the blood of victims, before the time of Moses. Not that we need imagine a single act of sacrifice to have been performed since the first transgression, without a consciousness of sin in the mind of the worshipper. Earnest devotion to a Holy God in a fallen creature must necessarily include a sense of sin and unworthiness. But the feeling which most prominently found its expression in the burnt-offerings of Noah (for example), must have been rather, the sense of present deliverance, of

thankfulness deeper than words, of complete self-surrender to the solemn bond now laid upon him in the Covenant.

The first instance of the blood of a sacrifice being noticed in any way occurs in the account of the institution of the Passover; the next is in connection with the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings of the covenant of Sinai.

We are left in no doubt as to the sacrificial meaning of the blood. As the material vehicle of the life of the victim, it was the symbol of the life of the offerer. In contrast with the flesh and bones it expressed in a distinct manner the immaterial principle which survives death. This is distinctly assigned as the reason for its appointed use in the rites of atonement.

The sin-offering is to be regarded as a creation of the Law. It was the voice of the Law that awakened the distinct consciousness of sin in the individual mind.

In the perfected sacrificial system, the three classes of offerings are to be regarded as representing distinct aspects of divine truth connected with man‘s relation to Jehovah. But it is important to observe that in no sacrifice was the idea of the burnt-offering left out.

The natural order of victims in the sacrificial service of the Law was, first the sin-offering, then the burnt-offering, and last the peace-offering. This answers to the spiritual process through which the worshipper had to pass. He had transgressed the Law, and he needed the atonement signified by the sin-offering: if his offering had been made in truth and sincerity, he could then offer himself to the Lord as an accepted person, as a sweet savor, in the burnt-offering, and in virtue of this acceptance, he could enjoy communion with the Lord and with his brethren in the peace-offering.

The main additions made to the ritual of sacrifice by the Levitical law consisted in the establishment of one national altar, the institution of the national Priesthood, and all those particulars that were peculiar to the sin-offerings and the trespass-offerings. In these particulars, which in spite of prophetic teaching must have been difficult and obscure to the Israelite, we

can now clearly trace the forecast shadows of the spotless Saviour who was to come, to stand for the sinful race as its head, to make the offering of Himself as both priest and victim, to perfect the work of redemption by Himself, and so to enter into the presence of God for us as a sweet savor.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The Lord - In the Hebrew text of Leviticus, Jehovah יהוה *yehovâh* is the name by which God is usually called. Where אלהים *'ĕlohîym* occurs, it is generally with a possessive pronoun, so as to designate Him as the God of the chosen people (Leviticus 2:13; Leviticus 11:45; Leviticus 18:21; Leviticus 19:12, Leviticus 19:14, Leviticus 19:32, etc.).

The tabernacle of the congregation - Rather, the tent of meeting. See Exodus 22:21 note. When Jehovah (Yahweh) was about to give His people the Law of the Ten Commandments Exodus 19:3 He called to Moses from the top of Mount Sinai in thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud. When He was now about to give them the laws by which their formal acts of worship were to be regulated, He called to Moses out of the tabernacle which had just been constructed at the foot of the mountain. Exodus 25:22.

Verse 2

Speak unto the children of Israel - It is important to observe that these first instructions Leviticus 22:17-24, and to perform other strictly prescribed duties Leviticus 4:2 note), which belonged to the religious education of the nation.

Offering - Hebrew: קרבן *qorbân* - the general name for what was formally given up to the service of God (compare Mark 7:11), and exactly corresponding to the words "offering" and "oblation."

Verse 3

burnt - literally, that (offering) which ascends (as a flame).

A male without blemish - Males were required in most offerings, since the stronger sex which takes precedence of the other. But females were allowed in peace-offerings Leviticus 3:1, Leviticus 3:6, and were expressly prescribed in the sin-offerings of the common people Leviticus 4:28, Leviticus 4:32; Leviticus 5:6.

At the door of the tabernacle of the congregation - Wherever these words occur, they should be rendered: "at the entrance of the tent of meeting." The place denoted is that part of the court which was in front of the tabernacle, in which stood the brass altar and the laver, and where alone sacrifices could be offered. See Cut to Exodus 26.

Verse 4

And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering - The usual ceremony. By it the sacrificer identified himself with his victim Leviticus 3:2, Leviticus 3:8; Leviticus 4:15; Leviticus 8:14; Romans 12:1.

To make atonement for him - This phrase belongs more especially to the sin-offerings and the trespass-offerings (compare Leviticus 4:20, Leviticus 4:26, Leviticus 4:31, Leviticus 4:35; Leviticus 5:16, Leviticus 5:18; Leviticus 6:7, etc.) It is not used in reference to the peace-offerings, and but rarely in reference to the burnt-offerings. It should be noticed that it is here introduced in close connection with the imposition of hands by the worshipper, not, as it is when it refers to the sin-offering, with the special functions of the priest, Leviticus 4:26, Leviticus 4:35; 2 Chronicles 29:23.

Verse 5

And he shall kill the bullock - Tradition states that before the laying on of the hand, the victim was bound by a cord to a ring on the north side of the altar; as the words of the prayer were ended, the throat was cut and the blood received into a bowl held by an assistant.

Sprinkle the blood - Rather, throw the blood, so as to make the liquid cover a considerable surface. (The Christian significance of this typical action is referred to in Hebrews 12:24; 1 Peter 1:2.)

By the door of the tabernacle - At the entrance of the tent.

Verse 6

And he shall flay - The sacrificer, or his assistant, had to skin and cut up the victim. The hide was the gratuity of the officiating priest. Leviticus 7:8.

His pieces - That is, its proper pieces, the parts into which it was usual for a sacrificed animal to be divided.

Verse 7

Put fire upon the altar - This must specifically refer to the first burnt-offering on the newly-constructed altar. The rule was afterward to be, "it shall never go out," Leviticus 6:13.

Verse 8

The parts of the victim were then salted by the priest in conformity with the rule, Leviticus 2:13; Ezekiel 43:24; Mark 9:49, and placed IN ORDER upon the wood, i. e. in the same relation to each other that they had in the living animal.

Verse 9

The parts which were washed were the stomach, and bowels, and feet, divided from the carcass at the knee-joint.

The priest shall burn - The verb here translated burn, is applied exclusively to the burning of the incense, to the lights of the tabernacle, and to the offerings on the altar. The primary meaning of its root seems to be to exhale odor. (See the margin of Leviticus 24:2; Exodus 30:8). The word for burning in a common way is quite different, and is applied to the burning of those parts of victims which were burned without the camp (Leviticus 4:12, Leviticus 4:21; Numbers 19:5, etc.). The importance of the distinction is great in its bearing on the meaning of the burnt-offering. The substance of the victim was regarded not as something to be consumed, but as an offering of a sweet-smelling savor sent up in the flame to Yahweh.

Verse 10

Of the flocks - These directions are more brief than those for the bullock. The burnt-offering of the sheep must have been that with which the people were most familiar in the daily morning and evening service. Exodus 29:38-42. Sheep were preferred for sacrifice when they could be obtained, except in some special sin-offerings in which goats were required Leviticus 4:23; Leviticus 9:3; Leviticus 16:5. The lamb "without blemish" is a well-known type of Christ. Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19.

Verse 11

Northward before the Lord - That is, on the north side of the altar. See also Leviticus 4:24, Leviticus 4:29, Leviticus 4:33; Leviticus 7:2. This was probably an arrangement of some practical convenience. On the west side of the altar stood the laver; on the east side was the place of ashes (see Leviticus 1:16 note); and the south side, where appears to have been the slope by which the priests went up to the altar, must have been left clear for a path.

Verse 14

Of turtledoves, or of young pigeons - The offering of a bird was permitted to one who was too poor to offer a quadruped. (Compare the marginal references.) But in certain rites of purification birds were appointed for all, whatever might be their circumstances. See Leviticus 15:14, Leviticus 15:29; Numbers 6:10. The limitation of the age of the pigeons may be accounted for by the natural habits of the birds. It would seem that the species which are most likely to have been the sacrificial dove and pigeon are the common turtle and the bluerock pigeon, a bird like our

stock-dove, and considerably larger than the turtle. The turtles come in the early part of April, but as the season advances they wholly disappear. The pigeons, on the contrary, do not leave the country; and their nests, with young ones in them, may be easily found at any season of the year. Hence, it would appear, that when turtledoves could not be obtained, nestling pigeons were accepted as a substitute.

Verse 16

His crop with his feathers - The weight of authority is in favor of the marginal rendering. It is most probable that the feathers were burned with the body, and that the wings, mentioned in Leviticus 1:17, were not mutilated.

The place of the ashes - The ashes were daily removed from the altar (except on certain holy days) and thrown into a heap on its eastern side. When the heap became inconveniently large, it was removed in vessels appropriated to the purpose (see Exodus 27:3) to a spot without the camp. Leviticus 4:12; Leviticus 6:11.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

A meat offering - Better translated in Leviticus 2:4 an oblation of a meat offering קרבן *qorbân* see Leviticus 1:2 מנחה *mînchāh* signifies literally a "gift"; and it appears to have been applied especially to what was given by an inferior to a superior Genesis 32:18-20; Genesis 43:11; Judges 3:15; 1 Samuel 10:27: but in the technical language of the Law, it regularly denoted the vegetable offerings as distinguished from the animal offerings. Our translators have rendered it "meat-offering", applying the word "meat", according to old usage, as a general term for food. Vegetable-offering or meal-offering would be a more convenient rendering.

The meaning of the מנחה *mînchāh* appears to be much more simple than that of the animal sacrifices. The מנחה *mînchāh* as a sacrifice, was something surrendered to God, which was of the greatest value to man as a means of living. It might thus seem to be merely eucharistic. But it should not be overlooked that the grain had been modified, and made useful, by man's own labor. Hence, it has been supposed that the מנחה *mînchāh* expressed a confession that all our good works are performed in God and are due to Him.

The order in which the kinds of offering are named agrees with their development in order of time. The burnt-offering and the מנחה *mînchāh* answer to the first two offerings on record Genesis 4:3-4; Amos 5:22.

Three kinds of מנחה *mînchāh* are here mentioned; (1) Leviticus 2:1-3; (2) Leviticus 2:4-7; (3) Leviticus 2:14-16. Of each of them a small portion was burned on the altar "for a memorial," and the remainder was given to the priests. The offerings of flour belonged to the priests at large, but those of cakes and wafers to the officiating priests, Leviticus 7:9-10. Instructions to the priests are given in Leviticus 6:14-23.

Fine flour - finely bolted flour of wheat. It was probably always presented in a bowl, compare Numbers 7:13.

Oil - For the purpose of anointing and as food; in both senses a symbol of divine grace.

Frankincense - See the Exodus 30:34 note.

Verse 2

Better: "And he shall bring it to Aaron's sons, the priests; and the (officiating) priest shall take from it," etc.

Memorial - The regular name not only for the portion of the מנחה *mînchāh* which was burned on the altar Leviticus 2:9, Leviticus 2:16; Leviticus 5:12; Leviticus 6:15; Numbers 5:26, but for the frankincense which was laid upon the showbread Leviticus 24:7. It is the word which is applied to the prayers and alms of Cornelius, Acts 10:4.

Verse 3

A thing most holy - literally, a holy of holies. All offerings were holy, including the portions of the peace-offerings which were eaten by the laity; but that was "most holy" of which every part was devoted either to the altar, or to the use of the priests. Such were the minchaahs, the showbread, the incense, and the flesh of the sin-offerings and trespass-offerings. Compare the similar distinction between places Exodus 26:33. The most holy food was eaten in "the holy place," that is the precinct of the tabernacle, probably in the priests' lodgings; but the priests' portion of the peace-offerings might be eaten by the priests and their families in any "clean place" Leviticus 10:12-14.

Verses 4-10

The four kinds of bread and the three cooking utensils which are mentioned in this section were probably such as were in common use in the daily life of the Israelites; and there appears no reason to doubt that they were such as are still used in the East. The variety of the offerings was most likely permitted to suit the different circumstances of the worshippers.

Leviticus 2:4

Oven - This was probably a portable vessel of earthenware; in shape a cone about 3 ft. 6 in. high, and 1 ft. 6 in. in diameter. Similar jars are now used for the same purpose by the Arabs. After the vessel has been thoroughly heated by a fire lighted in the inside, the cakes are placed within it, and the top is covered up until they are sufficiently baked. Meantime the outside of the vessel is turned to account. Dough rolled out very thin is spread over it, and a sort of wafer is produced considerably thinner than a Scotch oat-cake.

Leviticus 2:5

A pan - Rather, as in the margin, a flat plate. It was probably of earthenware, like the oven.

Leviticus 2:6

Part it in pieces - Break, not cut. The Bedouins are in the habit of breaking up their cakes when warm and mixing the fragments with butter when that luxury can be obtained.

Leviticus 2:7

Fryingpan - Rather, pan, commonly used for boiling. It is possible that the cakes here spoken of were boiled in oil. The "pan" and the "frying pan" Leviticus 2:5, Leviticus 2:7 may have been the common cooking implements of the poorest of the people.

Verse 11-12

As for the oblation of the firstfruits - Rather, As an oblation of firstfruits. The words refer to the leaven and honey mentioned in Leviticus 2:11 which might be offered among the firstfruits and tithes (Deuteronomy 26:2, Deuteronomy 26:12; compare 2 Chronicles 31:5). Honey, being used to produce fermentation, and leaven (or, a small piece of fermented dough) were excluded because fermentation was an apt symbol of the working of corruption in the human heart.

Verse 13

With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt - Not only every מנחה *mînchāh* but every animal offering was to be accompanied by salt. It was the one symbol which was never absent from the altar of burnt-offering, showing the imperishablness of the love of Yahweh for His people. In its unalterable nature, it is the contrary of leaven (yeast). The Arabs are said to retain in common use the expression, "a covenant of salt;" and the respect they pay to bread and salt in their rites of hospitality is well known.

Verse 14

Green ears of corn - Rather, "fresh ears of corn;" that is, just-ripe grain, freshly gathered. Parched grain, such as is here spoken of, is a common article of food in Syria and Egypt, and was very generally eaten in ancient times.

Beaten out - Not rubbed out by the hands, as described in Luke 6:1, but bruised or crushed so as to form groats.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

The peace-offering (like the burnt-offering, Leviticus 1:3, and the Minchah, Leviticus 2:1) is here spoken of as if it was familiarly known before the giving of the Law. "Peace-offering" seems preferable to "thank-offering," which occurs in several places in the margin of our Bible. "thank-offering" appears to be the right name for a subordinate class of peace-offering.

Verse 2

Kill it at the door … - See Leviticus 1:3. Tradition says that the peace-offerings might be killed in any part of the court.

Verse 3

"The fat that covereth the inwards" refers to the caul or transparent membrane which has upon it a network of fatty tissue: "the fat upon the inwards" refers to the small lumps of suet found upon the intestines of healthy animals.

Verse 4

The caul above the liver - Probably the membrane covering the upper part of the liver.

Verse 5

Upon the burnt sacrifice - Upon the ashes of the continual burnt-offering Exodus 29:38, in accordance with Leviticus 6:12.

Verse 7

A lamb - A sheep. The word signifies a full-grown sheep, in its prime.

Verse 8

See Leviticus 1:4-5 notes.

Verse 9

The whole rump - The whole fat tail: i. e., the tail of the kind of sheep well known in the East, and often weighing 15 lbs. and even as much as 50 lbs., when the sheep has been increased by artificial fattening.

Verse 11

Burn it - See Leviticus 1:9 note.

Verse 12

See Leviticus 1:10 note. Birds were not accepted as peace-offerings, most probably because they were, by themselves, insufficient to make up a sacrificial meal.

Verse 16

Rather, as food of an offering made by fire for a sweet savour, shall all the fat be for Yahweh. Our bodily taste and smell furnish figures of the satisfaction with which the Lord accepts the appointed symbols of the true worship of the heart. All that was sent up in the fire of the altar, including the parts of the sin-offering Leviticus 4:31, as well as the burnt-offering (Leviticus 1:9, etc.), was accepted for "a sweet savour": but the word food may here have a special fitness in its application to the peace-offering, which served for food also to the priests and the offerer, and so symbolized communion between the Lord, His ministers, and His worshippers.

The fat is the Lord's - The significance of this appears to consist in the fact that its proper development in the animal is, in general, a mark of perfection.

Verse 17

Blood - See Leviticus 17:11 note.

Throughout all your dwellings - The suet was neither to be eaten in sacrificial meals in the sanctuary, nor in ordinary meals in private houses.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1-2

And the Lord spake … Israel - This formula is the commencement of a distinct section of the Law.

Leviticus 4:2

If a soul shall sin - The sin-offering was a new thing, instituted by the Law. The older kinds of sacrifice Leviticus 2:1; Leviticus 3:1 when offered by individuals were purely voluntary: no special occasions were prescribed. But it was plainly commanded that he who was conscious that he had committed a sin should bring his sin-offering. In the abridged rules for sin-offerings in Numbers 15:22-31, the kind of sin for which sin-offerings were accepted is contrasted with that which cut off the perpetrator from among his people (compare Leviticus 4:22 with Leviticus 4:30). The two classes are distinguished in the language of our Bible as sin through ignorance and presumptuous sin. The distinction is clearly recognized in Psalm 19:12-13 and Hebrews 10:26-27. It seems evident that the classification thus indicated refers immediately to the relation of the conscience to God, not to outward practices, nor, immediately, to outward actions.

The presumptuous sinner, literally he who sinned "with a high hand," might or might not have committed such a crime as to incur punishment from the civil law: it was enough that he had with deliberate purpose rebelled against God (see Proverbs 2:13-15), and ipso facto was "cut off from among his people" and alienated from the divine covenant (see Leviticus 7:20; Exodus 31:14; compare Matthew 12:31; 1 John 5:16). But the other kind of sin, that for which the sin-offering was appointed, was of a more complicated nature. It appears to have included the entire range of "sins, negligences and ignorances" for which we are accustomed to ask forgiveness. sin-offerings were required not only when the conscience accused the offender of having yielded to temptation, but sometimes for what were breaches of the Law committed strictly in ignorance Leviticus 4:13, Leviticus 4:23, Leviticus 4:28; Leviticus 5:17, and sometimes on account of ceremonial pollution. They are thus to be regarded as protests against everything which is opposed to the holiness and purity of the divine Law. They were, in short, to be offered by the worshipper as a relief to the conscience whenever he felt the need of atonement.

Sin through ignorance - Sin through error; that is, through straying from the right way. See Psalm 119:67; Ecclesiastes 5:6.

Verse 3

The priest that is anointed - i. e. the high priest. (Compare Leviticus 8:12; Leviticus 21:10; Exodus 29:7). On the anointing of the other priests see the note at Leviticus 8:13.

The graduation of the sin-offerings is remarkable. It might seem that the distinction addressed itself more pointedly to each individual according to his rank and consequent responsibility (see Leviticus 4:32).

According to the sin of the people - Rather, to bring guilt on the people. The whole nation is concerned in every transgression of its representative.

Verse 5

The treatment of the blood was special in the sin-offerings. In the inferior sin-offerings it was smeared on the horns of the altar of burnt-offering Leviticus 4:25, Leviticus 4:30, Leviticus 4:34, while in this offering for the high priest, and in that for the nation, the high priest himself sprinkled the blood seven times within the tabernacle and smeared it on the horns of the altar of incense Leviticus 4:6-7, Leviticus 4:17-18. The different modes of sprinkling appear to have marked successive degrees of consecration in advancing from the altar of burnt-offering to the presence of Yahweh within the veil.

Verse 6

Before the vail of the sanctuary - This is generally understood to mean the floor of the holy place in front of the veil.

Verse 7

Pour - All the blood that was left after the sprinkling and the smearing should be disposed of in such a manner as to suit the decorum of divine service. It had no sacrificial significance.

Verse 12

A clean place where the ashes are poured out See Leviticus 1:16 note. It was a place free from impurities, not like those referred to in Leviticus 14:40, Leviticus 14:45. The flesh, though it was burned in an ordinary way, and not sent up in the fire of the altar (see Leviticus 1:9 note), was not to be confounded with carrion, but was associated with the remains of the sacrifices. The priests could not eat the flesh of this victim or of that offered for the sin of the congregation, as they ate that of other sin-offerings

Leviticus 6:26. Compare Leviticus 10:17-18, because they were in these cases in the position of offerers. Leviticus 16:27; Hebrews 13:11. The same rule was observed in regard to the meat-offering of the priests, Leviticus 6:23. It was only of the peace-offering that the offerer himself could partake.

Verse 13

Congregation … assembly - Each of the Hebrew words signifies the people in a collected body. It does not appear that there is any difference between them in the connection in which they are here used.

Verse 14

When the sin … is known - Compare 1 Samuel 14:31-35.

Verse 15

In this case the imposition of hands is performed by the elders in behalf of the nation. But in other respects the rites were performed by the high priest in the same manner as in the sin-offering for himself.

Verse 18

The altar … in the tabernacle - i. e. the altar of incense (compare Leviticus 4:5-7).

Verse 22

Ruler - Either the head of a tribe Numbers 1:4-16, or the head of a division of a tribe (Numbers 34:18; compare Joshua 22:30).

Verse 23

Or if his sin - Rather, And if his sin.

Come to his knowledge - i. e. when he had become conscious of his sin.

A kid of the goats - A shaggy he-goat, in distinction from a smooth-haired he-goat. It was the regular sin-offering at the yearly festivals Leviticus 16:9, Leviticus 16:15; Numbers 28:15, Numbers 28:22, Numbers 28:30, and at the consecration of the priests Leviticus 9:3; while the smooth-haired goat appears to have been generally offered for the other sacrifices Psalm 50:9; Isaiah 1:11.

Verse 24

See Leviticus 1:11.

Verse 27

The common people - literally, as in the margin, "the people of the land." Compare Leviticus 20:2, Leviticus 20:4; 2 Kings 11:18. It was the

ordinary designation of the people, as distinguished from the priests and the rulers.

Verse 28

A kid of the goats - A shaggy she-goat.

Verse 32

A lamb - A sheep. See Leviticus 3:7 note. Three points are to be observed in regard to the victims for sin-offerings.

(a) The common people had to offer a female, as the less valuable animaI; they might present either a sheep or a goat to suit their convenience:

(b) the rulers had always to offer a male-goat:

(c) the goat was preferred to the sheep, unlike the victim for a peace-offering or burnt-offering.

The sin-offerings were not accompanied by meat-offerings or drink-offerings. See Numbers 15:3-11.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-13

Special occasions are mentioned on which sin-offerings are to be made with a particular confession of the offence for which atonement is sought Leviticus 5:5.

Leviticus 5:1

Swearing - Adjuration. The case appears to be that of one who has been put upon his oath as a witness by a magistrate, and fails to utter all he has seen and heard (compare the marginal references. and Proverbs 29:24; Numbers 5:21).

Leviticus 5:2-3

Hid from him - Either through forgetfulness or indifference, so that purification had been neglected. In such a case there had been a guilty negligence, and a sin-offering was required. On the essential connection between impurity and the sin-offering, see Leviticus 12:1.

Leviticus 5:4

Pronouncing - Idly speaking Psalm 106:33. The reference is to an oath to do something uttered in recklessness or passion and forgotten as soon as uttered.

Leviticus 5:6

His trespass offering - Rather, as his forfeit, that is, whatever is due for his offence. The term "trespass-offering" is out of place here, since it has become the current designation for a distinct kind of sin-offering mentioned in the next section (see Leviticus 5:14 note).

A lamb or a kid of the goats - A sheep Leviticus 4:32 or a shaggy she-goat Leviticus 4:23.

Leviticus 5:7-10

See Leviticus 1:14-16; Leviticus 12:8. In the larger offerings of the ox and the sheep, the fat which was burned upon the altar represented, like the burnt-offering, the dedication of the worshipper; in this case, the same meaning was conveyed by one of the birds being treated as a distinct burnt-offering.

Leviticus 5:7

A lamb - One of the flock, either a sheep or a goat.

For his trespass, which he hath committed - As his forfeit for the sin he hath committed.

Leviticus 5:11

tenth part of an ephah i. e. - "the tenth deal;" probably less than half a gallon. See Leviticus 19:36 note. This sin-offering of meal was distinguished from the ordinary מנחה *mînchāh* Leviticus 2:1 by the absence of oil and frankincense.

Verse 14

(This comment exends through Leviticus 6:7). The trespass-offerings as they are described in this section and in Leviticus 7:1-7, are clearly distinguished from the ordinary sin-offerings in these particulars:

(1) They were offered on account of offences which involved an injury to some person (it might be the Lord Himself) in respect to property. See Leviticus 5:16; Leviticus 6:4-5.

(2) they were always accompanied by a pecuniary fine equal to the value of the injury done, with the addition of one-fifth. Compare Numbers 5:5-8.

(3) the treatment of the blood was more simple. Compare Leviticus 4:5.

(4) the victim was a ram, instead of a female sheep or goat.

(5) there was no such graduation of offerings to suit the rank or circumstances of the worshipper as is set forth in Leviticus 4:3, Leviticus 4:32, etc.

Verse 15

Commit a trespass - Rather, here and in Leviticus 6:2, perpetrate a wrong. The word is different from that rendered trespass elsewhere in these chapters.

Through ignorance - Through inadvertence. See Leviticus 4:2 note.

In the holy things of the Lord - The reference is to a failure in the payment of firstfruits, tithes or fees of any kind connected with the public service of religion by which the sanctuary suffered loss; compare Numbers 5:6-8.

Shekel of the sanctuary - See Exodus 38:24 note.

Verse 17

Though he wist it not - Ignorance of the Law, or even of the consequences of the act at the time that it was committed, was not to excuse him from the obligation to offer the sacrifice.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

In the Hebrew Bible Leviticus 6:1-7 form part of Leviticus 5. It is evident that they ought to do so.

Verse 5

In the day of his trespass offering - The restitution was thus to be associated with the religious act by which the offender testified his penitence.

Verse 9

Rather, "This, the burnt-offering, shall be upon the fire on the altar all night unto the morning." See Exodus 29:38-46, with the notes.

Verse 10

Ashes … with the burnt-offering - Rather, the ashes to which the fire hath consumed the burnt-offering.

Verse 13

The fire shall ever be burning - This was a symbol of the never-ceasing worship which Yahweh required of His people. It was essentially connected with their acts of sacrifice.

Verses 14-18

See Leviticus 2:1-10; Exodus 29:40-41.

Leviticus 6:16

With unleavened bread shall it be eaten - This should be, it (the remainder) shall be eaten unleavened.

Verse 20

See Leviticus 4:3. Aaron's sons here spoken of (as in Leviticus 6:22) must be the succession of high priests who succeeded him. The day of this offering was probably the eighth day of the ceremony of consecration Leviticus 8:35; Leviticus 9:1, when the high priest appears to have entered upon the duties of his office.

A meat offering perpetual - Jewish tradition is in favor of these words implying that this מנחה *mînchāh* was offered by the high priest as a daily rite from the time of his consecration.

Verse 21

In a pan - See Leviticus 2:5 note.

Verse 22

It shall be wholly burnt - literally, "it shall ascend in fire as a whole burnt-offering."

Verse 23

Not be eaten - Compare Leviticus 6:30; Leviticus 4:12 note.

Verse 25

The place where … - See Leviticus 1:11.

It is most holy - See Leviticus 2:3. The key to the special sanctity of the flesh of the sin-offering, as set forth in Leviticus 6:26-30, must, it would seem, be found in the words of Moses to the priests Leviticus 10:17. The flesh of the victim, which represented the sinner for whom atonement was now made, was to be solemnly, and most exclusively, appropriated by those who were appointed to mediate between the sinner and the Lord. The far-reaching symbolism of the act met its perfect fulfillment in the One Mediator who took our nature upon Himself. Philemon 2:7.

Verse 28

The earthen vessel - Unglazed pottery would absorb some of the juices of the meat: and a vessel made holy could not be put to any other purpose.

Verse 30

To reconcile withal generally rendered "to make atonement for."

The holy place - The outer apartment of the tabernacle. See the Leviticus 10:18 note.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-7

See Leviticus 5:14 note. In Leviticus 7:2 "sprinkle" should rather be cast Leviticus 1:5. All the details regarding the parts put on the altar are repeated for each kind of sacrifice, because the matter was one of paramount importance.

Verse 8

The skin of the burnt offering - It is most likely that the skins of the sin-offering and the trespass-offering also fell to the lot of the officiating priest.

Verse 9-10

See the marginal references.

Verse 11

See Leviticus 2:1, the classification of peace-offerings into:

(1) thank-offerings,

(2) vow-offerings and

(3) voluntary-offerings, and the conditions to be observed by the worshipper in eating the flesh.

Verse 12

For a thanksgiving - i. e., a thank-offering for mercies received.

Verse 13

For his offering - The leavened bread was a distinct offering.

Verse 14

Out of the whole oblation - Rather, out of each offering. That is, one loaf or cake out of each kind of meat-offering was to be a heave-offering Leviticus 7:32 for the officiating priest. According to Jewish tradition, there were to be ten cakes of each kind of bread in every thank-offering. The other cakes were returned to the sacrificer.

Verse 16

The vow-offering appears to have been a peace-offering vowed upon a certain condition; the voluntary-offering, one offered as the simple tribute of a devout heart rejoicing in peace with God and man offered on no external occasion (compare Leviticus 22:17-25).

Verse 18-19

It was proper that the sacrificial meat should not be polluted by any approach to putrefaction. But the exclusion of a mean-spirited economy may further have furnished the ground for the distinction between the thank-offerings and the others. The most liberal distribution of the meat of the offering, particularly among the poor who were invited to partake, would plainly be becoming when the sacrifice was intended especially to express gratitude for mercies received.

Verse 21

Unclean beast - that is, carrion of any kind. See Exodus 31:14 note.

Verse 23

This is emphatically addressed to the people. They were not to eat in their own meal what belonged to the altar of Yahweh, nor what was the perquisite of the priests. See Leviticus 7:33-36.

Verse 24

Compare Leviticus 11:39.

Verse 26

No manner of blood - See Leviticus 17:10-15.

Verses 30-32

Wave-offering … heave-offering - The latter appears to be used (like קרבן *qorbân* Leviticus 1:2) for offerings in general. Waving (a moving to and fro, repeated several times) or heaving (a lifting up once) the offering was a solemn form of dedicating a thing to the use of the sanctuary.

Verse 35

The portion of the anointing … - Rather, the appointed share of Aaron and of his sons.

Verse 37

Of the consecrations - That is, of the sacrifices which were to be offered in the consecration of the priests. See the marginal references.

Verse 38

wilderness of Sinai - Compare Exodus 19:1.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Introduction

Leviticus 24:10-23.

Verse 2

A bullock … two rams … a basket - compare Exodus 29:1-3. This shows the coherence of this part of Leviticus with the latter part of Exodus. The basket of unleavened bread used on this occasion appears to have contained:

(1) cakes or loaves of the ordinary unleavened bread;

(2) cakes of oiled bread, rather, oil bread (see Leviticus 2:1, Leviticus 2:4); and

(3) oiled wafers (see Leviticus 2:4, Leviticus 2:6).

Rabbinical tradition says that there were six cakes of each sort.

Verse 3

Gather … - Rather, gather all the assembly together toward the entrance of the tent of meeting. See Leviticus 4:13. The whole body of the people were summoned on this occasion, and the elders probably occupied the first places. The elders are especially called together in an unequivocal manner to receive directions to provide the first sacrifices for the nation to be offered by the newly consecrated priests Leviticus 9:1, and the body of the people afterward assemble as they do here Leviticus 9:5. The spot designated was the portion of the court in front of the tabernacle (see Leviticus 1:3 note). Toward this space the people were commanded to assemble to witness the great national ceremony of the consecration of the priesthood, the solemn setting apart of one of their families, the members of which were henceforth to stand as mediators between them and Yahweh in carrying out the precepts of the ceremonial law. Those who could do so, may have come into the court, and a great number of others may have occupied the heights which overlooked the enclosure of the court. As the series of ceremonies was repeated every day during a week Leviticus 8:33, it is natural to suppose that some of the people attended on one day and some on another.

Verse 6

Washed them with water - Moses caused them to bathe entirely (compare Leviticus 16:4), not merely to wash their hands and feet, as they

were to do in their daily ministrations. See the marginal reference. This bathing, which the high priest had also to go through on the day of atonement, was symbolic of the spiritual cleansing required of all 2 Corinthians 7:1, but especially of those who had to draw near to God to make reconciliation for the sins of the people Hebrews 7:26; Matthew 3:15.

Verses 7-9

See the notes at Leviticus 8:9

The holy crown - The golden plate of the mitre was so called as the distinctive badge of the high priest‘s consecration. See Leviticus 21:12.

Verse 10

Moses first anointed with the holy oil Exodus 30:25 the tabernacle and all therein, that is, the ark of the covenant, the table of showbread, the candlestick and the golden altar, with all the articles that belonged to them.

Verse 11

Sprinkled … the altar seven times - The altar of burnt-offering was distinguished by this sevenfold sprinkling with the holy oil. The number of the covenant was thus brought into connection with those acts of sacrifice by which the covenant between Yahweh and the worshipper was formally renewed and confirmed.

Verse 12

As investing the priest with official garments was a recognition before men of the official position of the person (see Exodus 28:3 note), so the anointing him with oil was an acknowledgment that all fitness for his office, all the powers with which he would rightly fulfill its duties, must come from the Lord.

So, again, with the sanctification of the holy things. Each of them was intended by divine wisdom to convey a spiritual meaning to the mind of man. They were means of grace to the devout worshipper. The oil poured upon them was a recognition of this fact, and at the same time it made them holy and set them apart from all profane and ordinary uses. On kindred grounds, though to express another idea, the altar was to be sanctified also by blood. See Leviticus 8:15 note.

Verse 13

Aaron‘s sons - The common priests. Nothing is said here, or in Exodus 29:7-9, of the anointing of the common priests, though it is expressly commanded in Exodus 28:41; Exodus 40:15, and is evidently implied as a

fact in Leviticus 7:36; Leviticus 10:7; Numbers 3:3. It would seem that the anointing of the common priests consisted in some rite common to them and the high priest Exodus 40:15, and this was the sprinkling mentioned in Leviticus 8:30. Compare further Leviticus 10:7 with Leviticus 21:12.

Verses 14-36

Moses as the mediator of the covenant of the Law Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 8:6 was called to perform the priestly functions, in consecrating those on whom henceforth those functions were to devolve, and in inaugurating the legal order of sacrifices. See Exodus 40:23 note. The sin-offering was now offered for the first time. The succession in which the sacrifices followed each other on this occasion, first the sin-offering, then the burnt-offering, and lastly the peace-offering, has its ground in the meaning of each sacrifice, and became the established custom in later ages. The worshipper passed through a spiritual process. He had transgressed the Law, and he needed the atonement signified by the sin-offering: if his offering had been made in truth and sincerity, he could then offer himself as an accepted person, as a sweet savour, in the burnt-offering; and in consequence, he could enjoy communion with the Lord and with his brethren in the peace-offering.

Leviticus 8:14-17

See the marginal references. The flesh of the sin-offering could not be eaten by any but a legally consecrated priest (Leviticus 6:25 note). Moses therefore could not eat of it himself, though he was, for the occasion, performing the duties of a priest. Those whom he was consecrating could not eat it, not only because they were not yet duly installed, but because the sacrifice was offered on their behalf, and the body of the victim stood to them in the same relation as that of the regular sin-offering afterward stood to the high priest.

Leviticus 8:15

Purified the altar … sanctified it, to make reconciliation upon it - The altar had been sanctified by the anointing oil Leviticus 8:11 like the priests who were to officiate at it; it was now, like them, sanctified by blood, in acknowledgment of the alienation of all nature, in itself, from God, and the need of a reconciliation to Him of all things by blood. Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 9:21-22. See Leviticus 17:11; Exodus 28:38.

Leviticus 8:18-21

Atonement having been made, Aaron and his sons were now permitted, by the laying on of their hands, to make themselves one with the victim, which was to be sent up to Yahweh as "a burnt sacrifice for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord." All was done strictly according to the ritual Leviticus 1:3-9, except that Moses performed the duties of the priest.

Leviticus 8:22

The ram of consecration - The sacrifice of this ram was by far the most unique part of the whole ceremony. The words may be literally rendered "the ram of the fillings", and the name has been supposed to have reference to the ceremony in which Moses filled the hands of the priests; see Leviticus 8:27. The offering was in the highest sense "the sacrifice of completion or fulfilling", as being the central point of the consecrating rite. The final perfection of the creature is consecration to the Lord.

Leviticus 8:23, Leviticus 8:24

Before casting forth the blood round the altar in the usual manner, Moses took a portion of the blood and put some of it on the right extremities of each of the priests. This, being performed with the blood of the peace-offering, has been supposed to figure the readiness of the priest who is at peace with Yahweh to hear with the ear and obey the divine word, to perform with the hand the sacred duties of his office, and to walk with the feet in the way of holiness.

Leviticus 8:25-28

In the rite of filling the hands of the priests, Moses took the portions of the victim which usually belonged to the altar, with the right shoulder (or leg); he placed upon them one cake of each of the three kinds of unleavened bread contained in the basket (see Leviticus 8:2 note), and then put the whole first upon the hands of Aaron and in succession upon the hands of his sons: in each case, according to Jewish tradition, he put his own hands under the hands of the priest, moving them backwards and forwards, so as to wave the mass to and fro.

In this remarkable ceremony the gifts of the people appear to have been made over to the priests, as if in trust, for the service of the altar. The articles were presented to Yahweh and solemnly waved in the hands of the priests, but not by their own act and deed. The mediator of the Law, who was expressly commissioned on this occasion, was the agent in the process.

Leviticus 8:25

The rump - See Leviticus 3:9 note.

Leviticus 8:29

The heave-shoulder was the ordinary perquisite of the officiating priest, but the wave-breast appears to have been awarded to Moses as the servant of Yahweh now especially appointed for the priestly service.

Leviticus 8:30

The sprinkling was on their garments as well as their persons, because it belonged to them in reference to the office with which they had been formally invested by putting on the garments. (See Exodus 28:3 note). The union of the two symbols of the atoning blood and the inspiring unction appears to be a fit conclusion of the entire rite.

Leviticus 8:33-36

The rites of consecration were to last a whole week, and thus, like the longer of the annual festivals, were connected in an emphatic manner with the sabbatical number of the covenant. During this period the priests were not to leave the holy precinct for the sake of any worldly business; and the whole series of ceremonies, including the sacrifice of the Ram of consecration, was to be gone through on each day. Compare the marginal references.

Leviticus 8:33

Rather, ye shall not go away from the entrance of the tent. With this agree Cranmer, the Geneva Bible, etc. The meaning is evidently that they were not to go out of the court, as is more clearly expressed in Leviticus 8:35.

Leviticus 8:35

That ye die not - See Exodus 28:35 note.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verses 1-6

Leviticus 9:1

On the eighth day - i. e., on the first day after the week of consecration.

Leviticus 9:2

A young calf - A bull calf, which might have been what we should call a yearling ox.

Leviticus 9:3

A kid of the goats - A shaggy he-goat. See Leviticus 4:23 note.

Leviticus 9:6

The glory of the Lord - Compare Exodus 16:7.

Verse 7

It is to be remarked that Aaron offers no peace-offering for himself. It was enough that he should participate in the peace-offerings of the consecration Leviticus 8:31, and in the two peace-offerings about to be sacrificed for the people.

His sin-offering was probably regarded not so much as a sacrifice for his own actual sins as a typical acknowledgment of his sinful nature and of his future duty to offer for his own sins and those of the People. See marginal references. "The law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated (in the margin perfected, see Leviticus 8:22 note) forevermore, Hebrews 7:28.

Verse 9

Aaron did not act according to the ordinary Law Leviticus 4:5-7, Leviticus 4:16-18, but as Moses had done in the sin-offering of the consecration ceremony (Leviticus 8:15; compare also Leviticus 4:25, Leviticus 4:30, Leviticus 4:34). The probable reason of this was that he had not yet been formally introduced as the high priest into the holy place of the tabernacle.

Brought the blood - They most likely held the basons in which the blood was received as it ran from the victim, and then handed them to their father. See Leviticus 1:5.

Verses 15-21

In this first complete series of offerings made by the high priest, the sacrifices take their appointed order; first, the sin-offering to make atonement; then the burnt-offering, to signify the surrender of the body, soul and spirit to Yahweh in heaven; and lastly the peace-offering, to show forth the communion vouchsafed to those who are justified and sanctified. See Leviticus 8:14 note.

Verse 22

Aaron having completed the offerings, before he came down from the stage surrounding the altar on which the priests used to stand to officiate (see Exodus 27:8), turned toward the people, and blessed them; probably using the form which became the established one for the priests Numbers 6:24-26, and which is still maintained in the synagogues.

Verse 23

Aaron, having now gone through the cycle of priestly duties connected with the brass altar, accompanies Moses into the tent of Meeting. It was reasonable that Moses, as the divinely appointed leader of the nation, should induct Aaron into the tabernacle.

Blessed the people - This joint blessing of the mediator of the Law and the high priest was the solemn conclusion of the consecration and Inauguration. (Compare 2 Chronicles 6:3-11.) According to one tradition, the form used by Moses and Aaron resembled Psalm 90:17. But another form is given in the Targum of Palestine, "May your offerings be accepted, and may the Lord dwell among you and forgive you your sins."

Verse 24

The very ancient Jewish tradition has been widely adopted that the sacred fire of the altar originated in this divine act, and that it was afterward preserved on the altar of the tabernacle until the dedication of the temple, when fire again "came down from heaven." 2 Chronicles 7:1. But according to the sacred narrative the altar-fire had been lighted in a natural way before this occasion. (Compare Leviticus 8:16; Leviticus 9:10, Leviticus 9:13, etc.; Exodus 40:29.) It would therefore seem that the fire which "came out from before the Lord" manifested itself, according to the words of Leviticus 9:24, not in kindling the fuel on the altar, but in the sudden consuming of the victim. For the like testimony to the acceptance of a sacrifice, see Judges 13:19-20; 1 Kings 18:38; 1 Chronicles 21:26, and probably Genesis 4:4. The phrase to turn a sacrifice to ashes, became equivalent to accepting it

(Psalm 20:3, see the margin). The fire of the altar was maintained in accordance with Leviticus 6:13.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Introduction

The events recorded in this chapter must have occurred immediately after the offering of the sacrifices of inauguration, in the evening of the same day. See Leviticus 10:19.

Verse 1

Nadab and Abihu - The two elder sons of Aaron Exodus 6:23; Numbers 3:2, who were among those invited to accompany Moses when he was going up Mount Sinai, but who were "to worship afar off," and not "come near the Lord." Exodus 24:1-2.

Censer - See Exodus 25:38 note.

Strange fire - The point of their offence is evidently expressed in this term. This may very probably mean that the incense was lighted at an unauthorized time. And we may reasonably unite with this the supposition that they were intoxicated (compare Leviticus 10:9), as well as another conjecture, that they made their offering of incense an accompaniment to the exultation of the people on the manifestation of the glory of the Lord Leviticus 9:24. As they perished not within the tabernacle, but in front of it, it seems likely that they may have been making an ostentatious and irreverent display of their ministration to accompany the shouts of the people on their way toward the tabernacle. The offence for which they were immediately visited with outward punishment was thus a flagrant outrage on the solemn order of the divine service, while the cause of their offence may have been their guilty excess.

Verse 2

The fire which had just before sanctified the ministry of Aaron as well pleasing to God, now brought to destruction his two eldest sons because they did not sanctify Yahweh in their hearts, but dared to perform a self-willed act of worship; just as the same Gospel is to one a savor of life unto life, and to another a savor of death unto death 2 Corinthians 2:16.

Verse 3

Rather, I will sanctify myself in them that come near to me (i. e. the priests), and I will glorify myself before all the people. The words used by Moses on this occasion are not found elsewhere in the Pentateuch. But the sense is implied in such passages as Exodus 19:22; Exodus 28:41; Exodus 29:1, Exodus 29:44.

Aaron's silence (compare Psalm 39:9) on this occasion may be compared with his reasonable and natural expostulation with Moses when his surviving sons were rebuked for not having eaten the flesh of the sin-offering Leviticus 10:19.

Verse 4

The first cousins of Aaron Exodus 6:22 are selected by Moses to convey the bodies of Nadab and Abihu out of the camp and bury them, probably because they were the nearest relations who were not priests. See Numbers 9:6.

Verse 5

Coats - See Exodus 28:39. Life had been extinguished as if by a flash of lightning, but neither the bodies nor the dresses were destroyed.

Verse 6-7

Aaron and his two surviving sons are forbidden to show the accustomed signs of mourning, or to leave the court of the tabernacle in order to attend the funeral, because, from their office, they were especially concerned as consecrated priests in outwardly maintaining the honor of Yahweh. They were to bear visible testimony to the righteousness of the punishment of Nadab and Abihu. The people, on the other hand, as not formally standing so near to Yahweh, were permitted to "bewail" as an acknowledgment that the nation had a share in the sin of its priests. (Compare 1 Corinthians 12:26.)

Leviticus 10:6

Uncover not your heads - Or, "set free … let go loose." It was a custom to let the hair grow long and fall loosely over the head and face Leviticus 13:45; 2 Samuel 15:30; 2 Samuel 19:4; and the substance of the command would thus be that they should not let the hair go disheveled. Ripping the clothes in front so as to lay open the breast was one of the most common manifestations of grief (see Genesis 37:29; Genesis 44:13; 2 Samuel 1:11; Job 1:20; Joel 2:13, etc.). The garments as well as the persons of the priests were consecrated; this appears to be the reason of the prohibition of these ordinary signs of mourning. Compare Leviticus 20:10.

Lest ye die - See Exodus 28:35 note.

Leviticus 10:7

The anointing oil … is upon you - See Leviticus 8:12, Leviticus 8:30. The holy oil, as the symbol of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Life and

immortality and joy, was the sign of the priests being brought near to Yahweh. It was therefore by its meaning connected both with the general law which forbade the high priest ever to put on signs of mourning on account of death Leviticus 21:10-12, and with the special reason for the prohibition on this occasion.

Verses 9-11

When the priest was on duty he was to abstain from wine and strong drink, lest he should commit excess (see Leviticus 10:1), and so become disqualified for carrying out the precepts of the ceremonial Law.

Leviticus 10:9

Strong drink - The Hebrew word is employed here to denote strong drinks of any kind except wine made from the grape.

Leviticus 10:10

Unholy … unclean - Common, as not consecrated; and what would occasion defilement by being touched or eaten. Compare Acts 10:14.

Leviticus 10:11

That is, "that you may, by your example in your ministrations, preserve the minds of the Israelites from confusion in regard to the distinctions made by the divine Law."

Verses 12-15

The argument is, that as such meals were appointed in honor of Yahweh Himself, they ought to be conducted with due reverence and discretion.

Leviticus 10:12

Beside the altar - What is called "the holy place" in Leviticus 10:13, Leviticus 10:17: it should be rather, a holy place, any part of the holy precinct, as distinguished from a merely "clean place" Leviticus 10:14, either within or without the court of the tabernacle.

Leviticus 10:14

Wave breast and heave shoulder - See Leviticus 7:30 note.

Verse 16

The Law on the point in question was clear. See Leviticus 2:3, note; Leviticus 4:5, note; Leviticus 4:15 note. But on this occasion, though the sin-offering which had been offered by Aaron was for the people Leviticus 9:15, its blood was not carried into the tabernacle. The priests might therefore have too readily supposed that their eating the flesh, or burning it, was a matter of indifference. Hence, Moses explains that the appropriation

of the flesh by the priests is an essential part of the act of atonement Leviticus 10:17.

It was burnt - It was consumed by fire in an ordinary way, not; in the fire of the altar. See Leviticus 1:9.

Verse 17

To bear the iniquity - See Exodus 28:38 note.

Verse 18

"The holy place," as it is called in our version, within the tabernacle (see Exodus 26:33; Exodus 28:29, etc.) into which the blood was carried, is regularly called in Hebrew, simply, "the holy" (as the innermost chamber is called "the holy of holies"), the adjective being used substantively; while the precinct in which the flesh of the sin-offering was eaten is generally called in full the holy place, the substantive being expressed Leviticus 10:13.

Verse 19

That is: "Behold this very day, in which we have done our part in sacrificing sin-offerings and burnt-offerings to the Lord, this great calamity has befallen me. Could it have been well-pleasing to the Lord if those who have been so humbled as I and my sons have been by the sin of our relations and the divine judgment, had feasted on the most holy flesh of the sin-offering?"

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

Yahweh speaks to Moses and Aaron conjointly. (Compare Leviticus 13:1; Leviticus 15:1.) The high priest, in regard to the legal purifications, is treated as co-ordinate with the legislator.

Verse 2

Rather, "These are the animals which ye may eat out of all the beasts;" that is, out of the larger creatures, the quadrupeds, as distinguished from birds and reptiles. See Genesis 1:24. Of quadrupeds, those only might be eaten which completely divided the hoof and chew the cud Leviticus 11:3-8.

Verse 3

Parteth … - Rather, is clovenfooted and completely separates the hoofs.

Verse 4

Divideth not the hoof - The toes of the camel are divided above, but they are united below in a sort of cushion or pad resting upon the hard bottom of the foot, which is "like the sole of a shoe." The Moslems eat the flesh of the camel, but it is said not to be wholesome.

Verse 5

The coney - The Old English name for a rabbit. The animal meant is the Hyrax Syriacus. It bears some resemblance to the guinea-pig or the marmot, and in its general appearance and habits Proverbs 30:26; Psalm 104:18, it might easily be taken for a rodent. But Cuvier discovered that it is, in its anatomy, a true pachyderm, allied to the rhinoceros and the tapir, inferior to them as it is in size.

He cheweth the cud - The Hyrax has the same habit as the hare, the rabbit, the guinea-pig, and some other rodents, of moving its jaws when it is at rest as if it were masticating. The rodents were familiarly spoken of as ruminating animals, just as the bat was reckoned among birds because it flies (see Leviticus 11:19), and as whales and their congeners are spoken of as fish, when there is no occasion for scientific accuracy.

Verse 7

He divide the hoof … - It is cloven-footed and completely, etc. See Leviticus 11:3 note. Of all the quadrupeds of which the Law forbids the flesh to be eaten, the pig seems to have been regarded as the most unclean. Compare the marginal references. Several other nations have agreed with

the Hebrews in this respect: the reason being that its flesh is unwholesome, especially in warm climates.

Verse 9

Any fish, either from salt water or fresh, might be eaten if it had both scales and fins. but no other creature that lives in the waters. Shellfish of all kinds, whether mollusks or crustaceans, and cetaceous animals, were therefore prohibited, as well as fish which appear to have no scales, like the eel; probably because they were considered unwholesome, and (under certain circumstances) found to be so.

Verses 13-19

As far as they can be identified, the birds here mentioned are such as live upon animal food. They were those which the Israelites might have been tempted to eat, either from their being easy to obtain, or from the example of other nations, and which served as types of the entire range of prohibited kinds.

Leviticus 11:13

The eagle - Rather, the great vulture, which the Egyptians are known to have ranked as the first among birds. Compare 2 Samuel 1:23; Psalm 103:5; Proverbs 23:5, etc.

The Ossifrage, or bone-breaker, was the lammer-geyer, and the "ospray" (a corruption of ossifrage) the sea-eagle.

Leviticus 11:14

The vulture - Rather, the (black) kite Isaiah 34:15: "the kite," rather the red kite, remarkable for its piercing sight Job 28:7.

Leviticus 11:15

Every raven after his kind - i. e. the whole family of corvidae.

Leviticus 11:16

And the owl … - Rather, "and the ostrich, and the owl, and the gull, and the hawk," etc.

Leviticus 11:18

The swan - More probably the ibis, the sacred bird of the Egyptians. "The gier eagle" is most likely the Egyptian vulture, a bird of unprepossessing appearance and disgusting habits, but fostered by the Egyptians as a useful scavenger.

Leviticus 11:19

The heron … the lapwing - Rather, the great plover the hoopoe, so called from its peculiar cry.

Verse 20

Rather, "All creeping things which have wings," etc. The word rendered creeping things may be regarded as coextensive with our word vermin. It is derived from a verb which signifies not only to creep, but to teem, or bring forth abundantly Genesis 1:21; Genesis 8:17; Exodus 8:3; Psalm 105:30, and so easily came to denote creatures which are apt to abound, to the annoyance of mankind.

Verse 21

Legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth - The families of the Saltatoria, of which the common cricket, the common grasshopper, and the migratory locust, may be taken as types.

Verse 22

In the uncertainty of identifying these four creatures, it has been suggested that some of the names may belong to locusts in an imperfect state of development. Most modern versions have taken a safer course than our translators, by retaining the Hebrew names.

Verses 24-28

Unclean - If the due purification was omitted at the time, through negligence or forgetfulness, a sin-offering was required. See Leviticus 5:2.

Verse 29-30

The identification of "the creeping things" here named is not always certain. They are most likely those which were occasionally eaten. For the "Tortoise" read "the great lizard," for the "ferret" the "gecko" (one of the lizard tribe), for the "chameleon" read the "frog" or the Nile lizard: by the word rendered "snail" is probably meant another kind of lizard, and by the "mole" the "chameleon."

Verse 33

Earthen vessel - See the marginal references.

Verse 35

See Leviticus 2:4. The word rendered "ranges for pots" has been conjectured to mean either an excavated fireplace, fitted to receive a pair of ovens, or a support like a pair of andirons.

Verse 42

Whatsoever goeth upon the belly - i. e. all footless reptiles, and mollusks, snakes of all kinds, snails, slugs, and worms. "Whatsoever goeth upon all four;" i. e. "creeping things," or vermin; such as the weasel, the

mouse or the lizard. Whatsoever hath more feet; i. e. all insects, except the locust family (Leviticus 11:22 note), myriapods, spiders, and caterpillars.

Verses 44-47

These verses set forth the spiritual ground on which the distinction between clean and unclean is based. Compare the marginal references and Leviticus 10:10; Leviticus 20:25-26; 1 Peter 1:15-16.

The basis of the obligation to maintain the distinction was the call of the Hebrews to be the special people of Yahweh. It was to he something in their daily life to remind them of the covenant which distinguished them from the nations of the world. By Jesus Christ it was revealed Matthew 15:11 to the elect people that they were no longer to he tied by the letter of the Law in regard to their food, but were to be left to the exercise of a regenerated judgment. They were to learn that the kingdom of God is not eating, or abstaining from, meats and drinks; but righteousness, and truth, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17. Compare Acts 10:15; 1 Timothy 4:4).

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Introduction

Numbers 19:11, etc., and as relates to the bodies of dead animals, in Leviticus 11:24-28, Leviticus 11:31-40.

Verses 1-8

This chapter would more naturally follow the 15th chapter of Leviticus. See the note to Leviticus 15:1.

Verse 3

On circumcision, see Genesis 17:5 note.

Verse 4

The Levitical law ascribed impurity exclusively to the mother, in no degree to the Child.

Verse 5

Some have thought that this doubling of each of the two periods was intended to remind the people of the fact that woman represents the lower side of human nature, and was the first to fall into temptation. 1 Timothy 2:13-15; 1 Peter 3:7. The ancients had a notion that the mother suffers for a longer time after the birth of a girl than after the birth of a boy. The period required for the restoration of her health in the one case was thirty days, and in the other, it was 40 or 42 days. This notion may have been connected with a general custom of observing the distinction as early as the time of Moses.

Verses 6-8

The sacrificial act expressed an acknowledgment of sin and a dedication of herself to Yahweh. See Leviticus 8:14.

Leviticus 12:6

Of the first year - literally, as in the margin, "a son of his year." This expression is supposed to mean one less than a year old, while the "son of a year" is one that has just completed its first year.

Leviticus 12:8

A lamb - Rather, one of the flock; either a sheep or a goat; it is not the same word as in Leviticus 12:6.

Two turtles, or two young pigeons - See the note at Leviticus 1:14. The Virgin Mary availed herself of the liberty which the Law allowed to the poor, and offered the inferior burnt-offering Luke 2:24.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Introduction

Exodus 4:6, at the contumacy of Miriam Numbers 12:10, at the dishonesty of Gehazi 2 Kings 5:27, and at the impious presumption of Uzziah 2 Chronicles 26:19-20. One of the denunciations against Joab, on account of the death of Abner, was that his children should be lepers 2 Samuel 3:29.

It is now considered by all the best authorities that the Hebrew word for the disease does not denote the disease which is more properly called the leprosy (see Leviticus 13:12), but that which is known to physicians as the elephantiasis: the origin of which is ascribed to an animal poison generated in or received into the blood, and accumulated therein probably by a process analogous to fermentation. This poison primarily affects either the skin, or the nerves and nervous centers. In this way, two forms of elephantiasis are distinguished, the "Tuberculated," and the "anaesthetic" or "non-tuberculated," of which the former is the more common.

Medical skill appears to have been more completely foiled by elephantiasis than by any other malady. The anaesthetic form alone seems to be in some degree amenable to remedies and regimen.

The question as to whether elephantiasis is contagious or not, is one of most unique interests in connection with the Levitical law. Many facts tend to prove that, as a rule, it was not; but that under certain circumstances (e. g. when the ulcers are running) contagion might be developed.

Verse 2

The skin of his flesh - An expression found nowhere but in this chapter. It probably denotes the cuticle or scarf skin, as distinguished from the curls or true skin.

Rising … scab … bright spot - The Hebrew words are the technical names applied to the common external signs of incipient elephantiasis.

Like the plague of leprosy - Like a stroke of leprosy.

Verse 3

The hair in the plague is turned white - The sparing growth of very fine whitish hair on leprous spots in the place of the natural hair, appears to

have been always regarded as a characteristic symptom.

the plague in sight be deeper than the skin of his flesh - Rather The stroke appears to be deeper than the scarf skin. The bright spot changed to a brownish color with a metallic or oily luster, and with a clearly-defined edge. This symptom, along with the whitish hair, at once decided the case to be one of leprosy.

Verse 5

And the plague spread not - Rather, advance not, so as to show that the disease is under the cuticle and assuming the symptoms of Leviticus 13:3.

Verse 6

Somewhat dark - Rather, somewhat dim: that is, if the spot is dying away.

Verse 7

Seen of the priest for his cleansing - The purport of these words is doubtful. They probably mean "seen by the priest and pronounced clean," and refer to the visit of the suspected leper to the priest at the end of the second week. But some have taken the words to mean "seen by the priest with a view to be pronounced clean," and regard the sentence of the priest as provisional, holding good only until the symptoms may appear to resume their progress. Compare Leviticus 13:35.

Verse 10

If the rising be white - Or, If there be a white rising. The term very probably denotes the white Bulla or patch of Anaesthetic elephantiasis when it has re-appeared.

Quick raw flesh in the rising - The margin gives the literal rendering. The symptom here noted exhibits a more advanced stage of the disease. The expression might denote an ulcer or open sore with "proud flesh" appearing in it.

Verses 12-17

The disease here indicated appears to be that now known as Lepra commonis, the common White Leprosy, or Dry Tetter. It first shows itself in reddish pimples, the surface of which becomes white and scaly, spreading in a circular form until they meet each other and cover large patches of the body. It scarcely affects the general health, and for the most part disappears of itself, though it often lasts for years.

From his head even to his foot, wheresoever. the priest looketh - The first appearance of the Lepra Commonis may take place in any part of the

body, especially, however, at the larger joints of the limbs; but the spots of elephantiasis are almost always first seen, on those parts which are habitually exposed, the face, ears and hands.

Leviticus 13:14

Raw flesh - See Leviticus 13:10.

Leviticus 13:15

Boil - Probably ulcer. In Job 2:7, and Deuteronomy 28:27, Deuteronomy 28:35, it would seem highly probable that the word expresses the ulcers of elephantiasis.

Verse 20-21

Lower than the skin - Rather, reaching below the scarf skin.

Verse 23

A burning boil - Rather, the scar of the ulcer; literally, "the burn of the ulcer."

Verse 24

The sense of this verse is: "Or if there be flesh of which the skin has been affected by severe inflammation, and the sore of the inflammation has become a glossy spot, somewhat reddish or white."

Verse 28

"And if the glossy spot continues unchanged and makes no advance in the skin, and is rather indistinct" (see the note at Leviticus 13:6), "it is the mark of the inflammation, and the priest shall pronounce him clean, for it is the (mere) hurt of inflammation."

Verse 30

Scall - As this is the name for another disease not allied to the leprosy, it would have been better to retain the original word נתק *netheq* It is a true elephantiasis, and is recognized by modern writers under the name of the Fox mange.

Verse 31

There is no black hair in it More probably, there is no yellow hair in it.

Verse 37

Be in his sight at a stay - Or, Does not alter in appearance.

Verse 39

Freckled spot - If Leviticus 13:12 refers to the Lepra commonis, the Hebrew בהק *bôhaq* here may denote some kind of eczema, a skin disease of a somewhat similar external character.

Leviticus 13:38, Leviticus 13:39 would seem more in their natural place between Leviticus 13:17-18.

Verse 42

Sore - Rather, stroke. It is the same word which elsewhere in this and the next chapter is rendered plague.

Verse 45

The leper was to carry about with him the usual signs of mourning for the dead. Compare Leviticus 10:6 and margin reference.

The leper was a living parable in the world of the sin of which death was the wages; not the less so because his suffering might have been in no degree due to his own personal deserts: he bore about with him at once the deadly fruit and the symbol of the sin of his race. Exodus 20:5. As his body slowly perished, first the skin, then the flesh, then the bone, fell to pieces while yet the animal life survived; he was a terrible picture of the gradual corruption of the spirit worked by sin.

His head bare - Rather, "his head neglected." See Leviticus 10:6 note.

Unclean, unclean - Compare the margin reference.

Verse 46

Dwell alone - More properly, dwell apart; that is, separated from the people.

Though thus excluded from general contact with society, it is not likely that lepers ceased to be objects of sympathy and kindness, such as they now are in those Christian and Moslem countries in which the leprosy prevails. That they associated together in the holy land, as they do at present, is evident from 2 Kings 7:3; Luke 17:12. It has been conjectured that a habitation was provided for them outside Jerusalem, on the hill Gareb (Bezetha), which is mentioned only in Jeremiah 31:39.

Without the camp - Compare the margin reference. A leper polluted everything in the house which he entered. A separate space used to be provided for lepers in the synagogues.

Verse 47

The garment - Rather, The clothing, referring to the ordinary dress of the Israelites in the wilderness; namely,, a linen tunic with a fringe Numbers 15:38 and a woolen cloak or blanket thrown on in colder weather.

Verse 48-49

Rather, “And the clothing in which there is a stroke of leprosy, whether the stroke is in clothing of wool or in clothing of linen; or in yarn for warp or in yarn for woof, either for linen clothing or for woolen clothing; or in a skin of leather or in any article made of leather.”

Verse 51

A fretting leprosy - i. e. a malignant or corroding leprosy. What was the nature of the leprosy in clothing, which produced greenish or reddish spots, cannot be precisely determined. It was most likely destructive mildew, perhaps of more than one kind.

Verse 56

Somewhat dark - Rather, somewhat faint. Compare Leviticus 13:6.

Verses 57-59

Either - in these verses, should be or. See Leviticus 13:47, Leviticus 13:49.

It should be noticed that no religious or symbolic rite is prescribed for leprosy in clothing. The priest had only to decide whether the process of decay was at work in the article presented to him and to pronounce accordingly. Compare the leprosy in houses, Leviticus 14:33-53.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verse 1

The leper was excluded not only from the sanctuary but from the camp. The ceremony of restoration which he had to undergo was therefore twofold. The first part, performed outside the camp, entitled him to come within and to mix with his brethren, Leviticus 14:3-9. The second part, performed in the court of the tabernacle and separated from the first by an interval of seven days, restored him to all the privileges of the covenant with Yahweh, Leviticus 14:10-32.

Verse 4

These birds were provided by the priest for the man. They were not, like the offerings for the altar, brought by the man himself (compare Leviticus 14:4 with Leviticus 14:10), they were not presented nor brought near the sanctuary, nor was any portion of them offered on the altar.

Cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop - These three substances were used as the common materials in rites of purification (compare Exodus 12:22; Numbers 19:8; Psalm 51:7; Hebrews 9:19): the "cedar", or juniper, the resin or turpentine of which was a preservative against decay, and employed in medicines for elephantiasis and other skin diseases: the "scarlet", a "tongue," or band, of twice-dyed scarlet wool, with which the living bird, the hyssop, and the cedar wood were tied together when they were dipped into the blood and water: the color expressing the rosiness associated with health and vital energy: and the "hyssop" (see Exodus 12:22), probably the Caper plant, whose cleansing virtues as a medicine, and use in the treatment of ulcers and diseases of the skin allied to leprosy, were known to the ancients. It has been conjectured that the scarlet band was used to tie the hyssop upon the cedar, so as to make a sort of brush, such as would be convenient for sprinkling.

Verse 5

Running water - literally, living water, i. e. water fresh from the spring Genesis 26:19; Numbers 19:17.

Verse 7

Seven times - The seal of the covenant, expressed in the number seven (compare Leviticus 14:9), was renewed in sprinkling him who, during his leprosy, had lived as an outcast. The details of a restoration to health and freedom appear to be well expressed in the whole ceremony. Each of the

birds represented the leper. They were to be of a clean kind, because they stood for one of the chosen race. The death-like state of the leper during his exclusion from the camp was expressed by killing one of the birds. The living bird was identified with the slain one by being dipped in his blood mixed with the spring water that figured the process of purification, while the cured leper was identified with the rite by having the same water and blood sprinkled over him. The bird then liberated was a sign that the leper left behind him all the symbols of the death disease and of the remedies associated with it, and was free to enjoy health and social freedom with his kind. Compare Colossians 2:12.

Verse 9

The best of all types of the healing of the Spirit, was the healing of the leper. In his formal cleansing, consecration, and atonement by sacrifice (see the notes at Leviticus 14:9-20), the ministers of the sanctuary bore public witness that he was restored to the blessing of communion with his brethren and with Yahweh. Hence, when the Son of God proved His divine mission by healing the lepers Matthew 11:5, He did not excuse them from going to the priest to "offer for the cleansing those things which Moses commanded" Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14 "for a testimony to the people" Matthew 8:4.

Verse 10-11

Two young rams from one to three years old (not lambs), a ewe lamb in her first year (see Leviticus 12:6), three-tenth parts of an ephah (something over ten pints and a half) of fine flour mingled with oil, and a log (about half a pint; see Leviticus 19:35) of oil. The priest presented both the man and his offerings to Yahweh at the entrance of the tent of meeting. See Leviticus 1:3.

Verse 12

This trespass-offering, with its blood and the oil, must be regarded as the main feature in the ceremony: no alteration being permitted even in the case of the poor Leviticus 14:21-23. There appears to be no other case in which an entire victim was waved (see Leviticus 7:30) before Yahweh. The Levites are spoken of as "a wave offering," Numbers 8:11-15 (see the margin). The man in this case, represented by his trespass-offering, was dedicated as a Wave-offering in like manner.

Verse 13

It is most holy - See Leviticus 6:25 note.

Verse 14

In the same way, and with the same significance as in Leviticus 8:23. It is said that a portion of the blood was caught by the priest in the palm of his hand as it ran from the victim.

Verse 16

The sevenfold sprinkling of the oil before the sanctuary, in addition to the waving of it, seems to have been intended to consecrate it to represent the spiritual gift consequent upon the covenant, the sealing of which had been figured by the sacramental blood of the offering.

Verse 17-18

Him that is to be cleansed - Of him that has been cleansed. The significance of the act is similar to that in Leviticus 8:11, Leviticus 8:15.

Verse 19-20

The cleansed leper was now in a position to avail himself of the accustomed law of sacrifice as one completely restored. The ewe lamb was now offered in his behalf as a sin-offering, one of the young rams as a burnt-offering, and the fine flour mingled with oil as a meat-offering.

Verses 33-53

This section is separated from that on leprosy in clothing Leviticus 13:47-59 with which it would seem to be naturally connected, and is placed last of all the laws concerning leprosy, probably on account of its being wholly prospective. While the Israelites were in the wilderness, the materials of their dwellings were of nearly the same nature as those of their clothing, and would be liable to the same sort of decay. They were therefore included under the same law.

I put the plague - Yahweh here speaks as the Lord of all created things, determining their decay and destruction as well as their production. Compare Isaiah 45:6-7; Jonah 4:7; Matthew 21:20.

Leviticus 14:37

Hollow strakes … - Rather, depressed spots of dark green or dark red, appearing beneath (the surface of) the wall.

Leviticus 14:49

Cleanse the house - Strictly, "purge the house from sin." The same word is used in Leviticus 14:52; and in Leviticus 14:53 it is said, "and make an atonement for it." Such language is used figuratively when it is applied to things, not to persons. The leprosy in houses, the leprosy in clothing, and the terrible disease in the human body, were representative forms of decay which taught the lesson that all created things, in their own nature, are

passing away, and are only maintained for their destined uses during an appointed period, by the power of Yahweh.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verse 1

This chapter would seem to take its place more naturally before Leviticus 12:1-8, with the subject of which it is inmediately connected. Compare especially Leviticus 12:2 with Leviticus 15:19. It stands here between two chapters, with neither of which has it any close connection.

Verse 13

The mere cessation of the issue does not make him clean: he must wait seven days, etc., preparatory to his offering sacrifice.

Verses 16-18

Most of the ancient religions made a similar recognition of impurity and of the need of purfication.

Leviticus 15:17

Every garment - Compare Jude 1:23.

Verse 24

This must refer to an unexpected occurrence. Intercourse during the acknowledged period was a heavy crime, and was to be punished by "cutting off" Leviticus 18:19; Leviticus 20:18; Ezekiel 18:6.

Verses 31-33

This solemn admonition is addressed to Moses and Aaron, see Leviticus 15:1.

Leviticus 15:31

My tabernacle - Strictly, "my dwelling-place" מִשְׁכָּן *mîshkān* as in Leviticus 8:10; Leviticus 17:4; Leviticus 26:11. The word rendered "tabernacle" elsewhere in Leviticus is properly "tent." See the Exodus 26:1 note.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Introduction

The day of atonement, or, as it is in the Hebrew, the day of atonements, is called by the rabbis "the day," and by Luke (probably) "the Fast." See Acts 27:9. Compare with this chapter Leviticus 23:26-32.

Verse 1

The reference to the death of Nadab and Abihu is a notice of the occasion on which the instructions were given, well calculated to add point and emphasis to the solemn admonition to the high priest in the second verse. The death of his sons Leviticus 10:2, for drawing near to Yahweh in an unauthorized manner, was to serve as a warning to Aaron himself never to transgress in this respect.

Verse 2

The holy place within the vail - See Exodus 26:33-34; Hebrews 9:3.

The cloud - Compare Exodus 16:10 note.

The mercy seat - See Exodus 25:17 note.

Verse 3

Holy place - This name here denotes the sanctuary, the whole sacred enclosure, the court of the tabernacle. The offerings were for Aaron and his sons, supplied by himself.

Verse 4

The high priest when he changed his dress on this day was required to bathe himself. In his "golden garments" he had, on this day, and for the previous week, to offer the regular daily sacrifices, and to perform the other sacerdotal duties of the sanctuary, which were usually performed by a common priest. The dress of white linen, which he now put on, appears to have been like the ordinary dress of the common priests, except in the substitution of a linen mitre for the bonnet (or cap), and of a plain linen girdle for the variegated one (Exodus 28:40-43 notes). In preparing to enter the holy of holies, he attired himself in spotless white as a token of the holiness without which none, in a spiritual sense, can enter the divine presence. He thus became a more distinct foreshadow of the greater high priest Hebrews 7:26; Hebrews 6:19-20. This significance belonged to the high priest only in his official capacity as mediator: in his own person he had infirmity, and was required "to offer up sacrifice, "first" for his own sins, and then for the people's." Hebrews 7:27. See the notes at Leviticus

9:7-14. On the same ground it was that, although as a mediator he had to enter the most holy place, as sinful man he needed the cloud of incense as a veil to come between him and the holiness of Yahweh. See Leviticus 16:13.

Verse 5

Take of the congregation - i. e. they were to be supplied at the public cost.

Two kids of the goats - This should be, two shaggy he-goats (Leviticus 4:23 note), of the same color, size, and value.

Verse 6

Shall offer - Rather, shall present, as in Leviticus 16:7, Leviticus 16:10, etc. The word expresses the formal act of placing the victims in front of the entrance of the tabernacle.

For himself, and for his house - i. e. for himself as the high priest and all the common priests. Compare Leviticus 9:7-14 note.

Verse 8

The two goats formed a single sin-offering, Leviticus 16:5. To bring out the meaning of the sacrifice it was necessary that the act of a living being should be performed after death. See Leviticus 16:22 note. As this could not possibly be visibly set forth with a single victim, two were employed, as in the case of the birds in the rite for the healed leper Leviticus 14:4-6.

For the scapegoat - Rather, for Azazel. The word occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament but in this chapter, and is probably derived from a root in use in Arabic, but not in Hebrew, signifying to "remove", or "to separate".

Azazel is the pre-Mosaic name of an evil personal being placed in opposition to Yahweh. Each goat, having been presented to Yahweh before the lots were cast, stood in a sacrificial relation to Him. The casting of lots was an appeal to the decision of Yahweh (compare Joshua 7:16-17; Joshua 14:2; Proverbs 16:33; Acts 1:26, etc.); it was therefore His act to choose one of the goats for His service in the way of ordinary sacrifice, the other for His service in carrying off the sins to Azazel (see the note at Leviticus 16:22). By this exppressive outward sign the sins were sent back to the author of sin himself, "the entirely separate one," who was banished from the realm of grace.

The goat itself did not lose the sacred character with which it had been endued in being presented before Yahweh. It was, as much as the slain goat,

a figure of Him who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, on whom the Lord laid the iniquity of us all Isaiah 53:4, Isaiah 53:6, that we might become a sanctified Church to be presented unto Himself, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing Ephesians 5:26-27.

Verse 10

On which the lot fell to be the scapegoat - Rather, on which the lot ‹for Azazel‘ fell.

An atonement with him - The goat "for Azazel" was to be considered as taking his part along with the other goat in the great symbol of atonement.

For a scapegoat into the wilderness - Rather, "to Azazel, into the wilderness."

Verses 11-25

It is important, in reference to the meaning of the day of atonement, to observe the order of the rites as they are described in these verses.

Leviticus 16:12

A censer - See Exodus 25:38 note.

The altar before the Lord - i. e. the altar of burnt-offering on which the fire was always burning.

Leviticus 16:14

The high priest must have come out from the most holy place to fetch the blood, leaving the censer smoking within, and then have entered again within the veil. He sprinkled the blood seven times upon the mercy-seat, on its east side (not "eastward"), and then seven times upon the floor in front of it. If the mercy-seat may be regarded as an altar, the holiest one of the three, on this one occasion in the year atonement was thus made for it, as for the other altars, with sacrificial blood.

Leviticus 16:15

Having completed the atonement in the holy of holies on behalf of the priests, the high priest had now to do the same thing on behalf of the people.

Leviticus 16:16

The "holy place" - Here the place within the veil, the holy of holies.

Tabernacle of the congregation - tent of meeting. atonement was now to be made for the tabernacle as a whole. The sense is very briefly expressed, but there seems to be no room to doubt that the high priest was

to sprinkle the blood of each of the victims before the altar of incense, as he had done before the mercy-seat within the veil; and also to touch with blood the horns of the altar of incense Exodus 30:10.

That remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness - Compare Leviticus 16:19. The most sacred earthly things which came into contact with the nature of man needed from time to time to be cleansed and sanctified by the blood of the sin-offerings which had been taken into the presence of Yahweh. See Exodus 28:38 note.

Leviticus 16:18

The order of the ceremony required that atonement should first be made for the most holy place with the mercy-seat, then for the holy place with the golden altar, and then for the altar in the court. See Leviticus 16:20, Leviticus 16:33. The horns of the brazen altar were touched with the blood, as they were in the ordinary sin-offerings. Leviticus 4:25, Leviticus 4:30, Leviticus 4:34.

Of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat - Some of the blood of the two victims was mingled together in a basin.

Leviticus 16:21

Confess over him - The form of confession used on this occasion in later times was: "O Lord, Thy people, the house of Israel, have transgressed, they have rebelled, they have sinned before Thee. I beseech Thee now absolve their transgressions, their rebellion, and their sin that they have sinned against Thee, as it is written in the law of Moses Thy servant, that on this day he shall make atonement for you to cleanse you from all your sins, and ye shall be clean."

A fit man - literally, a timely man, or a man at hand. Tradition says that the man was appointed for this work the year before.

Leviticus 16:22

Unto a land not inhabited - Unto a place cut off, or (as in the margin) a place "of separation."

It is evident that the one signification of the ceremony of this goat was the complete removal of the sins which were confessed over him. No symbol could so plainly set forth the completeness of Yahweh's acceptance of the penitent, as a sin-offering in which a life was given up for the altar, and yet a living being survived to carry away all sin and uncleanness.

Verses 26-28

Both he who led away the goat, and he who burned the parts of the sin-offerings had to purify themselves. They who went out of the camp during a religious solemnity incurred uncleanness; hence, the need of purification.

Leviticus 16:27

Shall burn in the fire - i. e., consume in the fire, not burn sacrificially. See Leviticus 1:9.

Verse 29

Seventh month, on the tenth day - The month Ethanim or Tisri, as being the seventh in the Sacred year, has been called the sabbatical month. On the first day was celebrated the Feast of Trumpets Leviticus 23:24, the tenth day was the Day of Atonement, and on the fourteenth day the Feast of tabernacles commenced (Leviticus 23:24 note; Exodus 23:16).

Afflict your souls - The old term for fasting; but its meaning evidently embraces, not only abstinence from food, but that penitence and humiliation which give scope and purpose to the outward act of fasting. The Day of Atonement was the only public fast commanded by the Law of Moses. See further directions in Leviticus 23:27-32. On fasts observed in later times, see Zechariah 8:19, and margin reference.

A stranger that sojourneth among you - Rather, the foreigner who dwelleth among you. See Exodus 20:10 note. The meaning is, one of foreign blood, who dwelt with the Israelites, had abjured false gods, and had become familiarly known to his neighbors, e. g. the Kenites (Judges 4:11, etc.); the Gibeonites Exodus 12:38, Exodus 12:48). As the foreigner had the blessing and protection of the Law he was bound to obey its statutes.

Verse 33-34

A summary of what was done on the day of atonement.

The day was intended as an occasion for expressing more completely than could be done in the ordinary sacrifices the spiritual truth of atonement, with a fuller acknowledgment of the sinfulness and weakness of man and of the corruptible nature of all earthly things, even of those most solemnly consecrated and devoted to the service of God. It belonged to its observances especially to set forth, by the entrance of the high priest into the holy of holies, that atonement could only he effected before the throne of Yahweh Himself (compare Matthew 9:6; Mark 2:7-10; Hebrews 4:16, etc.); and, by the goat sent into the wilderness, that the sins atoned for were not only forgiven, but carried wholly away. See Leviticus 16:22 note. The

rites were a solemn gathering up of all other rites of atonement, so as to make them point more expressively to the revelation to come of God‘s gracious purpose to man in sending His Son to be delivered for our offences, and to rise again for our justification; to be our great high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec, and to enter for us within the veil Romans 4:25; Hebrews 6:20. The Day of Atonement expanded the meaning of every sin-offering, in the same way as the services for Good Friday and Ash Wednesday expand the meaning of our litany days throughout the year, and Easter Day, that of our Sundays.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

This chapter, in its immediate bearing on the daily life of the Israelites, stands as the first of four Leviticus 1720 which set forth practical duties, directing the Israelites to walk, not in the way of the pagan, but according to the ordinances of Yahweh.

Verses 3-7

Every domesticated animal that was slain for food was a sort of peace-offering Leviticus 17:5. This law could only be kept as long as the children of Israel dwelt in their camp in the wilderness. The restriction was removed before they settled in the holy land, where their numbers and diffusion over the country would have rendered its strict observance impossible. See Deuteronomy 12:15-16, Deuteronomy 12:20-24.

Leviticus 17:4

Blood shall be imputed unto that man - i. e. he has incurred guilt in shedding blood in an unlawful manner.

Cut off - See Exodus 31:14 note.

Leviticus 17:5

Rather, May bring their beasts for slaughter, which they (now) slaughter in the open field. even that they may bring them before Yahweh to the entrance of the tent of meeting unto the priests, and slaughter them as peace-offerings to Yahweh.

Leviticus 17:7

Devils - The word in the original is the "shaggy goat" of Leviticus 4:23. But it is sometimes employed, as here, to denote an object of pagan worship or a demon dwelling in the deserts 2 Chronicles 11:15; Isaiah 13:21; Isaiah 34:14. The worship of the goat, accompanied by the foulest rites, prevailed in Lower Egypt; and the Israelites may have been led into this snare while they dwelt in Egypt.

This law for the slaughtering of animals was not merely to exclude idolatry from the chosen nation. It had a more positive and permanent purpose. It bore witness to the sanctity of life: it served to remind the people of the solemnity of the grant of the lives of all inferior creatures made to Noah Genesis 9:2-3; it purged and directed toward Yahweh the feelings in respect to animal food which seem to be common to man‘s nature; and it connected a habit of thanksgiving with the maintenance of our human life

by means of daily food. 1 Timothy 4:3-5. Having acknowledged that the animal belonged to Yahweh the devout Hebrew received back its flesh as Yahweh‘s gift.

Verse 8

The strangers which sojourn - The foreigners who dwell. See Leviticus 16:29 note.

Or sacrifice - i. e., a slaughtered offering of any kind, generally a peace-offering.

Verses 10-14

The prohibition to eat blood is repeated in seven places in the Pentateuch, but in this passage two distinct grounds are given for the prohibition: first, its own nature as the vital fluid; secondly, its consecration in sacrificial worship.

Leviticus 17:11

Rather, For the soul of the flesh is in the blood; and I have ordained it for you upon the altar, to make atonement for your souls, for the blood it is which makes atonement by means of the soul. In the Old Testament there are three words relating to the constitution of man;

(a) “life” as opposed to death Genesis 1:20; Deuteronomy 30:15;

(b) the “soul” as distinguished from the body; the individual life either in man or beast, whether united to the body during life, or separated from the body after death (compare Genesis 2:7);

(c) the “spirit” as opposed to the flesh Romans 8:6, and as distinguished from the life of the flesh; the highest element in man; that which, in its true condition, holds communion with God. The soul has its abode in the blood as long as life lasts. In Leviticus 17:14, the soul is identified with the blood, as it is in Genesis 9:4; Deuteronomy 12:23. That the blood is rightly thus distinguished from all other constituents of the body is acknowledged by the highest authorities in physiology.

“It is the fountain of life (says Harvey), the first to live, and the last to die, and the primary seat of the animal soul; it lives and is nourished of itself, and by no other part of the human body.” John Hunter inferred that it is the seat of life, because all the parts of the frame are formed and nourished from it. “And if (says he) it has not life previous to this operation, it must then acquire it in the act of forming: for we all give our assent to the

existence of life in the parts when once formed." Milne Edwards observes that, "if an animal be bled until it falls into a state of syncope, and the further loss of blood is not prevented, all muscular motion quickly ceases, respiration is suspended, the heart pauses from its action, life is no longer manifested by any outward sign, and death soon becomes inevitable; but if, in this state, the blood of another animal of the same species be injected into the veins of the one to all appearance dead, we see with amazement this inanimate body return to life, gaining accessions of vitality with each new quantity of blood that is introduced, eventual beginning to breathe freely, moving with ease, and finally walking as it was wont to do, and recovering completely." More or less distinct traces of the recognition of blood as the vehicle of life are found in Greek and Roman writers. The knowledge of the ancients on the subject may indeed have been based on the mere observation that an animal loses its life when it loses its blood: but it may deepen our sense of the wisdom and significance of the Law of Moses to know that the fact which it sets forth so distinctly and consistently, and in such pregnant connection, is so clearly recognized by modern scientific research.

Leviticus 17:14

Rather, For the soul of all flesh is its blood with its soul (i. e. its blood and soul together): therefore spake I to the children of Israel, Ye shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the soul of all flesh is its blood, etc.

Verse 15

This law appears to be grounded on the fact that the body of an animal killed by a wild beast, or which has died of itself, still retains a great portion of its blood. The importance ascribed to this law in later times may be seen in 1 Samuel 14:32-35; Ezekiel 4:14; Ezekiel 44:31, and still more in the apostolic decision regarding "things strangled," which are pointedly connected with blood Acts 15:20.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Verse 2

I am, the Lord your God - The frequent repetition of this formula in these parts of the Law may be intended to keep the Israelites in mind of their covenant with Yahweh in connection with the common affairs of life, in which they might be tempted to look at legal restrictions in a mere secular light.

Verse 3

See the Leviticus 18:24-30 note.

Verse 5

If a man keeps the "statutes" (i. e. the ordinances of Leviticus 18:4) and "judgments" of the divine law, he shall not be "cut off from his people" (compare Leviticus 18:29), he shall gain true life, the life which connects him with Yahweh through his obedience. See the margin reference and Luke 10:28; Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:12.

Verse 6

Near of kin - See the margin. The term was evidently used to denote those only who came within certain limits of consanguinity, together with those who by affinity were regarded in the same relationship.

To uncover their nakedness - i. e. to have sexual intercourse. The immediate object of this law was to forbid incest.

Verse 7

Or - It might be rendered "and", or rather, even; that is, which belongs to both parents as being "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24; compare Leviticus 18:8, Leviticus 18:14). These prohibitions are addressed to men.

Verse 8

Compare the case of Reuben, Genesis 49:3-4. See 1 Corinthians 5:1.

Verse 9

Thy sister - What was here spoken of was the distinguishing offence of the Egyptians.

Verse 12

Thy father's sister - The instance of Amram and Jochebed Exodus 6:20 seems to show that marriage with an aunt was not considered wrong by the Israelites when they were in Egypt.

Verse 16

Thy brother's wife - That is, if she had children. See Deuteronomy 25:5. The law here expressed was broken by Antipas in his connection with Herodias Matthew 14:3-4.

Verse 18

To vex her - literally, to "bind" or "pack together". The Jewish commentators illustrate this by the example of Leah and Rachel Genesis 29:30.

Verse 21

Molech - See the note at Leviticus 20:2-5.

Verses 24-30

The land designed and consecrated for His people by Yahweh Leviticus 25:23 is here impersonated, and represented as vomiting forth its present inhabitants, in consequence of their indulgence in the abominations that have been mentioned. The iniquity of the Canaanites was now full. See Genesis 15:16; compare Isaiah 24:1-6. The Israelites in this place, and throughout the chapter, are exhorted to a pure and holy life, on the ground that Yahweh, the Holy One, is their God and that they are His people. Compare Leviticus 19:2. It is upon this high sanction that they are peremptorily forbidden to defile themselves with the pollutions of the pagan. The only punishment here pronounced upon individual transgressors is, that they shall "bear their iniquity" and be "cut off from among their people." We must understand this latter phrase as expressing an "ipso facto" excommunication or outlawry, the divine Law pronouncing on the offender an immediate forfeiture of the privileges which belonged to him as one of the people in covenant with Yahweh. See Exodus 31:14 note. The course which the Law here takes seems to be first to appeal to the conscience of the individual man on the ground of his relation to Yahweh, and then Leviticus 20 to enact such penalties as the order of the state required, and as represented the collective conscience of the nation put into operation.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Verse 2

Ye shall be holy … - These words express the keynote to the whole book of Leviticus, being addressed to the whole nation. There does not appear to be any systematic arrangement in the laws which follow. They were intended as guards to the sanctity of the elect people, enforcing common duties by immediate appeal to the highest authority. Compare Leviticus 18:24-30 note.

Verse 3

Compare Exodus 20:8, Exodus 20:12; Exodus 31:13-14. The two laws repeated here are the only laws in the Decalogue which assume a positive shape, all the others being introduced by the formula, "Thou shalt not." These express two great central points, the first belonging to natural law and the second to positive law, in the maintenance of the well-being of the social body of which Yahweh was the acknowledged king.

Verse 5

Rather, ye shall offer it that you may be accepted.

Verse 9-10

See Deuteronomy 24:19-21. "Grape" signifies fallen fruit of any kind; and "vineyard" a fruit garden of any kind. Compare Deuteronomy 23:24.

The poor - is the poor Israelite - "the stranger" is properly the foreigner, who could possess no land of his own in the land of Israel.

Verses 11-13

Leviticus 19:11 forbids injuries perpetrated by craft; Leviticus 19:13, those perpetrated by violence or power, the conversion of might into right. In Leviticus 19:13 "defraud" should rather be, oppress.

Verse 14

The meaning appears to be, "Thou shalt not utter curses to the deaf because he cannot hear thee, neither shalt thou put a stumbling-block in the way of the blind because he cannot see thee (compare Deuteronomy 27:18), but thou shalt remember that though the weak and poor cannot resist, nor the deaf hear, nor the blind see, God is strong, and sees and hears all that thou doest." Compare Job 29:15.

Verse 16

Stand against the blood of thy neighbor - Either, to put his life in danger by standing up as his accuser (compare Matthew 26:60); or, to stand

by idly when thy neighbor‘s life is in danger. Whichever interpretation we adopt, the clause prohibits that which might interfere with the course of justice.

Verse 17

Not suffer sin upon him - Rather, not hear sin on his account; that is, either by bearing secret ill-will Ephesians 4:26, or by encouraging him to sin in withholding due rebuke Romans 1:32.

Verse 19

Linen and woolen - The original word is found only here and in Deuteronomy 22:11, where it is rendered “of divers sorts.” It may denote such tissues as linsey woolsey.

Verse 20

Betrothed to an husband - Rather, who has been betrothed to a man. The reference appears to be to a bondwoman who has been betrothed to a fellow-servant by her master. Death was the punishment for unfaithfulness in a betrothed woman in other cases. Compare Deuteronomy 22:23-24.

She shall be scourged - Or, They shall be chastized (see the margin). The trespass-offering was especially due from the man as having not only sinned with the woman, but inflicted an injury on the rights of the master.

Verse 23

Fruit … uncircumcised - i. e. unfit for presentation to Yahweh. In regard to its spiritual lesson, this law may be compared with the dedication of the first-born of beasts to Yahweh Exodus 13:12; Exodus 34:19. Its meaning in a moral point of view was plain, and tended to illustrate the spirit of the whole Law.

Verses 26-28

Certain pagan customs, several of them connected with magic, are here grouped together. The prohibition to eat anything with the blood may indeed refer to the eating of meat which had not been properly bled in slaughtering (Leviticus 7:26; Leviticus 17:10, etc.): but it is not improbable that there may be a special reference to some sort of magical or idolatrous rites. Compare Ezekiel 33:25.

Leviticus 19:26

Observe times - It is not clear whether the original word refers to the fancied distinction between lucky and unlucky days, to some mode of drawing omens from the clouds, or to the exercise of “the evil eye.”

Leviticus 19:27

Round the corners of your heads - This may allude to such a custom as that of the Arabs described by Herodotus. They used to show honor to their deity Orotal by cutting the hair away from the temples in a circular form. Compare the margin reference.

Mar the corners of thy beard - It has been conjectured that this also relates to a custom which existed among the Arabs, but we are not informed that it had any idolatrous or magical association. As the same, or very similar customs, are mentioned in Leviticus 21:5, and in Deuteronomy 14:1, as well as here, it would appear that they may have been signs of mourning.

Leviticus 19:28

Cuttings in your flesh for the dead - Compare the margin reference. Among the excitable races of the East this custom appears to have been very common.

Print any marks - Tattooing was probably practiced in ancient Egypt, as it is now by the lower classes of the modern Egyptians, and was connected with superstitious notions. Any voluntary disfigurement of the person was in itself an outrage upon God‘s workmanship, and might well form the subject of a law.

Verse 31

The devotion of faith, which would manifest itself in obedience to the commandment to keep God‘s Sabbaths and to reverence His sanctuary Leviticus 19:30, is the true preservative against the superstition which is forbidden in this verse. The people whose God was Yahweh were not to indulge those wayward feelings of their human nature which are gratified in magical arts and pretensions. Compare Isaiah 8:19.

Familiar spirits - literally, “bottles”. This application of the word is supposed to have been suggested by the tricks of ventriloquists, within whose bodies (as vessels or bottles) it was fancied that spirits used to speak. In other cases, the word is used for the familiar spirit which a man pretended to employ in order to consult, or to raise, the spirits of the dead. See 1 Samuel 28:7-8.

Wizard - A word equivalent to “a knowing man”, or, “a cunning man”.

Verse 32

The outward respect due to old age is here immediately connected with the fear of God. Compare the margin reference.

Verse 33-34

The stranger - The foreigner. See Leviticus 16:29 note; Exodus 23:9.

Verse 35-36

The ephah is here taken as the standard of dry measure, and the bin (see Exodus 29:40 note) as the standard of liquid measure. Of the two very different estimates of the capacities of these measures, the more probable is that the ephah did not hold quite four gallons and a half, and the hin not quite six pints. The log was a twelfth part of the hin Leviticus 14:10.

Leviticus 19:36

I am the Lord your God … - A full stop should precede these words. They intraduce the formal conclusion to the whole string of precepts in this chapter, which are all enforced upon the ground of the election of the nation by Yahweh who had delivered them from the bondage of Egypt.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Verse 1

The crimes which are condemned in Leviticus 18; 19 on purely spiritual ground, have here special punishments allotted to them as offences against the well-being of the nation.

Verses 2-5

Molech, literally, "the King", called also Moloch, Milcom, and Malcham, was known in later times as "the abomination of the Ammonites" 1 Kings 11:5. He appears to have been the fire-god of the eastern nations; related to, and sometimes made identical with, Baal, the sun-god. The nature of the rite and of the impious custom called passing children through the fire to Molech is very doubtful. The practices appear to have been essentially connected with magical arts, probably also with unlawful lusts, and with some particular form of profane swearing. The rite in the time of Moses belonged to the region rather of magic than of definite idolatrous worship, and may have been practiced as a lustral charm, or fire-baptism, for the children of incest and adultery.

Leviticus 20:2

Stone him with stones - The commonest form of capital punishment. It was probably preferred as being the one in which the execution was the act of the whole congregation.

Leviticus 20:3

Defile my sanctuary - i. e. pollute the people as identified with their sanctuary.

Verse 14

The burning under the sentence of the Law took place after the death of the criminal by stoning, or strangling. Joshua 7:25.

Verse 17

Cut off … - See Exodus 31:14 note. The more full expression here used probably refers to some special form of public excommunication, accompanied, it may be, by expulsion from the camp.

Verse 20

They shall die childless - Either the offspring should not be regarded as lawfully theirs, nor be entitled to any hereditary privileges, or they should have no blessing in their children.

Verses 22-26

The ground is here again stated on which all these laws of holiness should be obeyed. See Leviticus 18:24-30 note.

Leviticus 20:24

Compare the margin reference.

Leviticus 20:25, Leviticus 20:26

The distinction between clean and unclean for the whole people, and not for any mere section of it, was one great typical mark of "the kingdom of priests, the holy nation." See the Leviticus 11:42 note.

Leviticus 20:25

Any manner of living thing that creepeth - Rather, any creeping thing; that is, any vermin. See Leviticus 11:20-23. The reference in this verse is to dead animals, not to the creatures when alive.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Verse 4

The sense seems to be that, owing to his position in the nation, the priest is not to defile himself in any cases except those named in Leviticus 21:2-3. The Septuagint appear to have followed a different reading of the text which would mean, "he shall not defile himself for a moment." The explanation in the margin of our version is hardly in keeping with the prohibition to Ezekiel on a special occasion. See Ezekiel 24:16.

Verse 5

These prohibitions given to the people at large (compare the margin reference.) had a special fitness for the Hebrew priests. They were the instruments of the divine will for averting death, all their sacrifices were a type of the death of Christ, which swallowed up death in victory 1 Corinthians 15:54-57, and it would therefore have been unsuitable that they should have the same freedom as other people to become mourners.

Verse 6

The word here and in Leviticus 21:8 rendered "bread", is the same as is rendered food in Leviticus 3:11, Leviticus 3:16, etc., and meat in Leviticus 22:11. The reader of the English Bible should keep in view that bread, meat, and food, were nearly equivalent terms when our translation was made, and represent no distinctions that exist in the Hebrew.

Verse 7

Profane - A woman who has been seduced, or one of illegitimate birth. A somewhat stricter rule for the priests' marriages was revealed to the prophet in later times, Ezekiel 44:22.

Verse 8

The people of Israel are now addressed. They are commanded to regard the priests, who perform for them the service of the altar, as holy in respect of their office.

Verse 9

burnt with fire - See the Leviticus 20:14 note.

Verse 10

It was the distinguishing mark of the anointing of the high priest, that the holy oil was poured upon his head like a crown (compare Leviticus 8:12).

Uncover his head - Rather, let his hair be disheveled. See the note at Leviticus 10:6.

Verse 12

Go out of the sanctuary - i. e. not for the purpose to which reference is here made. The words do not mean, as some have imagined, that his abode was confined to the sanctuary.

Verse 15

Profane his seed - i. e. by a marriage which was not in keeping with the holiness of his office.

Verses 16-24

He was not treated as an outcast, but enjoyed his privileges as a son of Aaron, except in regard to active duties.

Leviticus 21:20

A dwarf - One who is small and wasted, either short, as in the text, or slender, as in the margin. It is hardly likely that dwarfishness would be overlooked in this enumeration. So most critical authorities.

Scurry or scabbed - These words most probably include all affected with any skin disease.

Leviticus 21:22

See Leviticus 2:3 note; Leviticus 6:25 note.

Leviticus 21:23

Sanctuaries - The places especially holy, including the most holy place, the holy place, and the altar.

This law is of course to be regarded as one development of the great principle that all which is devoted to the service of God should be as perfect as possible of its kind.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 22

Verse 2

"Speak … that they so abstain from touching the holy things (i. e. the sacrificial food of all kinds) of the children of Israel which they consecrate unto me, that they profane not my holy name." This law related to the daily life and the ordinary food of the priests.

Verse 3

Cut off from my presence - i. e. excluded from the sanctuary. See Leviticus 20:17.

Verse 4

See Leviticus 15:13-16.

Verse 5

Creeping things - i. e. dead vermin. Compare Leviticus 11:29.

Verse 6

The soul - Rather, the person. Compare the use of the word "body" in the Prayer Book version of Psalm 53:1, and in the compounds "somebody, nobody".

Verse 8

The pollution in the priests would be an aggravated one, inasmuch as they would have to forego their sacred functions. Compare Ezekiel 4:14; Ezekiel 44:31. The general prohibition occurs in Leviticus 11:39; Leviticus 17:15; Exodus 22:31.

Verse 10

Stranger - One of another family. See Exodus 29:33 note.

Verse 11

This shows how completely a purchased bondsman was incorporated into the household. See Exodus 21:2, note; Exodus 21:20-21, note.

Verse 12

A stranger - One of another family.

Verse 14

Unwittingly - Inadvertently, or "through ignorance." Compare Leviticus 4:2 note.

Verse 15-16

These verses are rather difficult. Their meaning appears to be: "The holy things of the children of Israel which are heaved before Yahweh" (see

Leviticus 7:30) “shall not be profaned; and they shall incur a sin of trespass who eat of their holy things (so as to profane them).”

Verse 19

Ye shall offer at your own will a male - Rather, That it may be accepted (so Leviticus 22:29) for you it shall be a male. See Leviticus 1:3. It is the same phrase as in Leviticus 22:20-21, Leviticus 22:27.

Verse 22-23

Compare Leviticus 21:19; Deuteronomy 15:21.

Verse 24

The literal meaning of the passage in italics is, and this shall ye not do in your land. It appears to have been understood by the Jews as a prohibition of the mutilation of animals.

Verse 25

A stranger‘s hand - The word here rendered “stranger”, is not the same as that in Leviticus 22:10, Leviticus 22:18: it means literally, “the son of the unknown”, and probably refers to one dwelling in another land who desired to show respect to the God of Israel. See 1 Kings 8:41.

Verse 27

No victim was to be offered in sacrifice until it was a week old. The meaning of this law appears to be that the animal should realise a distinct existence in becoming less dependent on its mother, and able to provide for its own wants.

Verse 28

A law intended to remind the Israelites of the sacredness of the relation between the parent and its offspring. Compare Exodus 23:19 note.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 23

Verse 1

The specified times for public worship according to the Law were;

(1) The daily morning and evening sacrifices, sometimes called "the continual burnt-offering."

(2) The weekly Sabbath.

(3) the day of the new moon.

(4) the "set feasts" Numbers 29:39 or appointed times of annual observance, of which there were five, the Passover, the Day of Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. For each of these occasions special sacrifices were appointed Numbers 28; 29.

Verse 2

The feasts - literally, the appointed times. So in Leviticus 23:4, Leviticus 23:37, etc. This section Exodus 12:16; Numbers 28:18, Numbers 28:25-26; Numbers 29:1, Numbers 29:12, Numbers 29:35, with a distinction between them as regards strictness of observance (compare Leviticus 23:3, Leviticus 23:28 with Leviticus 23:7).

Verse 3

The seventh day had been consecrated as the Sabbath of Yahweh, figuring His own rest; it was the acknowledged sign of the covenant between God and His people. See the Exodus 20:1-11 notes. As such it properly held its place at the head of the days of holy convocation.

Verse 4

The recurrence of the sabbatical number in the five annual days of holy convocation should be noticed.

Verses 5-8

In these verses, the Passover, or Paschal Supper, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, are plainly spoken of as distinct feasts. See Exodus 12:6, Exodus 12:15, Exodus 12:17; Numbers 28:16-17.

Leviticus 23:5

See Exodus 12:6. According to the Hebrew mode of reckoning, the 15th day of the month began on the evening of the 14th. The day of holy

convocation with which the Feast of Unleavened Bread commenced Leviticus 23:7 was the 15th, and that with which it terminated was the 21st. Compare Numbers 28:16-17.

Leviticus 23:6

Feast - The three festivals (often called the Great Festivals), Passover, Pentecost and tabernacles, to which the name חג *chag* i. e. a feast or rejoicing properly belongs Leviticus 23:6, Leviticus 23:34, Leviticus 23:39, Leviticus 23:41, were distinguished by the attendance of the male Israelites at the national sanctuary (compare Exodus 23:17; Exodus 34:23; Deuteronomy 16:16). In later times they were called by the rabbins "pilgrimage feasts." It is worthy of note that the Hebrew word is identical with the Arabic "haj", the name of the pilgrimage to Mecca, from which comes the well-known word for a pilgrim, "haji".

Leviticus 23:7

No servile work - literally, no work of labor, no work that belongs to one's worldly calling, such as labor in agriculture or handicraft. The preparation of food was permitted Exodus 12:16, a licence not granted on the weekly Sabbath, or on the day of atonement Leviticus 23:28, Leviticus 23:30; Exodus 20:10; Exodus 35:3.

Leviticus 23:8

The sacrifices here meant are named in Numbers 28:19-24.

Verses 9-22

These verses contain a distinct command regarding the religious services immediately connected with the grain harvest, given by anticipation against the time when the people were to possess the promised land.

Leviticus 23:10

Sheaf - The original word, "omer", means either a sheaf Deuteronomy 24:19; Rth 2:7 , or a measure Exodus 16:16. Our version is probably right in this place. The offering which was waved Leviticus 7:30 was most likely a small sheaf of barley, the grain which is first ripe. The first fruits of the wheat harvest were offered seven weeks later in the loaves of Pentecost. See Leviticus 23:15-17. The two offerings thus figure the very commencement and the completion of the grain harvest; compare Rth 1:22 ; Rth 2:23 .

Leviticus 23:11

On the morrow after the sabbath - It is most probable that these words denote the 16th of Abib, the day after the first day of holy convocation (see Leviticus 23:5-8 note), and that this was called "the Sabbath of the Passover", or, "the Sabbath of unleavened bread".

Leviticus 23:13

Two tenth deals - Two omers, or tenth parts of an ephah, about a gallon and three quarters. See Leviticus 19:36 note. The double quantity (contrast Exodus 29:40; Numbers 15:4; Numbers 28:19-21), implying greater liberality, was appropriate in a harvest feast.

Drink offering - This and Leviticus 23:18, Leviticus 23:37 are the only places in the book of Leviticus in which drink-offerings are mentioned. See the Exodus 29:40 note.

Leviticus 23:14

Bread … parched corn … green ears - These are the three forms in which grain was commonly eaten. The old name, Abib, signified "the month of green ears." See Joshua 5:11.

Leviticus 23:15

The morrow after the sabbath - See Leviticus 23:11 note.

Seven sabbaths - More properly, seven weeks (compare Deuteronomy 16:9). The word Sabbath, in the language of the New Testament as well as the Old, is used for "week" (Leviticus 25:8; Matthew 28:1; Luke 18:12, etc.).

Leviticus 23:16

The morrow after the seventh week was the 50th day after the conclusion of a week of weeks. The day is called in the Old Testament, "the feast of harvest" Exodus 23:16, "the feast of weeks," "the feast of the first fruits of wheat harvest" Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10, and "the day of the first fruits" Numbers 28:26. The word "Pentecost" used in the heading of this chapter in English Bibles is found only in the Apocrypha and the New Testament, Acts 2:1; Acts 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:8.

Leviticus 23:17

Habitations - Not strictly houses, but places of abode in a general sense. It seems here to denote the land in which the Israelites were to dwell so as to express that the flour was to be of home growth. The two loaves were to be merely waved before Yahweh and then to become the property of the priests. No bread containing leaven could be offered on the altar (see the Leviticus 2:11 note). The object of this offering seems to have been to

present to the Lord the best produce of the earth in the actual condition in which it is most useful for the support of human life. It thus represented in the fittest manner the thanksgiving which was proper for the season. The loaves appear to be distinctively called "the first fruits for Yahweh," and references to them are found in Romans 11:16; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 1 Corinthians 15:23; James 1:18; Revelation 14:4, etc. As these loaves offered before Yahweh sanctified the harvest of the year, so has "Christ the firstfruits" sanctified the Church, which, in its union with Him as the firstfruits, becomes also the Sanctifier of the world. See the services for Whitsuntide.

Leviticus 23:18

More properly, seven sheep of a year old (to be distinguished from the lamb in Leviticus 23:12), and a young bull which might be from one to three years old. Compare Numbers 28:26-27.

Leviticus 23:19

Properly, a shaggy he-goat Leviticus 4:23 and two sheep of a year old.

Leviticus 23:20

When living creatures were "waved" Leviticus 7:30 before Yahweh, it is said that they were led to and fro before the tabernacle according to an established form.

Leviticus 23:21

The self-same day - The Feast of Weeks was distinguished from the two other great annual feasts by its consisting, according to the Law, of only a single day. But in later times it is said that during the following six days the Israelites used to bring their offerings to the temple, and to give the week something of a festal character in the suspension of mourning for the dead.

Leviticus 23:22

The repetition of the Law (see the margin reference) is appropriately connected with the thanksgiving for the completed grain harvest.

Verse 24

A sabbath - Here and in Leviticus 23:39 a word which should rather be rendered a sabbatical rest.

Blowing of trumpets - Here and in Numbers 29:1, literally "shouting". There is no mention of trumpets in the Hebrew text of the Law in connection with the day. However, there is no reason to doubt the tradition that the day was distinguished by a general blowing of trumpets throughout

the land, and that the kind of trumpet generally used for the purpose was the curved horn of an animal or a cornet of metal, such as was used at Sinai Exodus 19:16, and on the Day of Jubilee Leviticus 25:9. It must have differed in this respect from the ordinary festival of the New moon when the long straight trumpet of the temple alone was blown (Numbers 10:2; Exodus 25:23; see cut).

Seventh month - Called by the Jews in later times it was called Tisri, but in the Old Testament Ethanim, 1 Kings 8:2. According to the uniform voice of tradition "the first day" of this month was the first day of the Civil year in use before the Exodus, and was observed as the festival of the New year. Some have viewed it as a commemoration of the Creation of the world Job 38:7: others, as the anniversary of the giving of the Law.

Verse 27

Also - Surely. On the special rites of the day, the tenth of Tisri, that is from the evening of the ninth day of the month to that of the tenth Leviticus 23:32, see Leviticus 16.

Verse 34

Seven days - Like the Passover, the feast of tabernacles commenced at the full moon, on the fifteenth day of the month, and lasted for seven days. The week of the feast was followed by an eighth day, forming strictly no part of it Leviticus 23:36, Numbers 29:35; Nehemiah 8:18, which was a day of holy convocation, and appears to have been generally distinguished by the word translated "solemn assembly" Deuteronomy 16:8; 2 Kings 10:20; Isaiah 1:13; Joel 1:14; Joel 2:15. From its derivation the word in the original appears strictly to denote a closing festival, and this rendering would apply with the most perfect fitness to the day after the week of the Feast of tabernacles, as the conclusion of the series of yearly festivals.

Verse 36

An offering made by fire - See Leviticus 23:8. The succession of sacrifices prescribed in Numbers 29:12-38, which forms such a marked feature in the Feast of Tabernacles, tends to show the distinctness of the "solemn assembly" from the festal week.

Verse 37-38

The meaning appears to be; "these are the yearly appointed times on which ye shall hold holy convocations and offer to Yahweh sacrifices, in addition to the Sabbath offerings Numbers 28:9-10 and to all your voluntary offerings." Compare Numbers 29:39.

Verse 39

Also - Surely. The mode in which the Feast of Tabernacles is here reintroduced, after the mention of it in Leviticus 23:34-36, may suggest that this passage originally formed a distinct document.

The fruit of the land - i. e. the produce, including the grain, the olives, the vintage and the fruits of all kinds. The time of year so indicated would answer in the holy land to the beginning of October. See Exodus 23:16 note.

Verse 40

The boughs of goodly trees - Or, the fruit (see the margin) of the citron trees. It is said that every Israelite at the Feast of tabernacles carried in one hand a bundle of branches and in the other a citron. The branches seem to have comprised the boughs of palm-trees, "thick trees" and willows here named. See the note to Leviticus 23:42; Nehemiah 8:15-16.

Verse 42

Booths - According to Jewish tradition, what were used at the Feast of Tabernacles were strictly "tabernacula," structures of boards, with a covering of boughs.

The "booth" in which the Israelite kept the Feast, and the "tent" which was his ordinary abode in the wilderness, had this in common - they were temporary places of sojourn, they belonged to camp-life. The seven days of abode in the booths of the festival was thus a fair symbol of the forty years of abode in tents in the wilderness. The Feast might well become the appointed memorial of this period of their history for the ages to come.

All that are Israelites born - The omission of the foreigners in this command is remarkable. Perhaps the intention was that on this joyous occasion they were to be hospitably entertained as guests. Compare Deuteronomy 16:14.

Verse 44

Feasts - Appointed times. See Leviticus 23:2 note.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Verses 1-9

The oil for the lamps of the tabernacle and the meal for the showbread were to be offerings from the Congregation, like the meal for the Pentecostal loaves, Leviticus 23:17. It appears that the responsibility of keeping up the lights rested on the high priest, but the actual service might be performed, on ordinary occasions, by the common priests. Compare margin reference.

Leviticus 24:5

Each cake or loaf of unleavened bread Leviticus 2:11 was to contain about six pounds and a quarter (see Exodus 29:40 note) of fine flour. The material was the same, both in quality and in quantity, with that of each one of the wave-loaves of Pentecost Leviticus 23:17. In the service of the temple the preparation and arrangement of the cakes was committed to the Levites 1 Chronicles 9:32; 1 Chronicles 23:29; 2 Chronicles 13:11.

Leviticus 24:6

Two rows, six on a row - Rather, two piles, six in a pile. On the table, see Exodus 25:23-30.

Leviticus 24:7

The frankincense as a memorial (like the handful of the meat-offering, Leviticus 2:2), was most likely cast upon the altar-fire as "an offering made by fire unto the Lord," when the bread was removed from the table on the Sabbath-day Leviticus 24:8; 1 Samuel 21:6. The frankincense was put into small gold cups, one of which was placed upon each pile of bread. (See Exodus 25:23-30 note.)

Leviticus 24:8

Being taken from the children of Israel - Each cake represented the offering of a tribe.

Leviticus 24:9

See Leviticus 2:3 note. It could have been only by a stretch of the law that Ahimelech gave a portion of the showbread to David and his men, on the ground that they were free from ceremonial defilement. 1 Samuel 21:4-6; Matthew 12:4.

The showbread was a true meat-offering (see Exodus 25:29). The special form in which it was offered, especially in its being brought into the

tabernacle and in its consisting of twelve loaves, distinguish it as an offering made on behalf of the nation.

Verse 12

The offender may already have been pronounced guilty by the rulers (see Exodus 18:21-22), and the case was referred to Moses in order that the punishment might be awarded by the divine decree. No law had as yet been enacted against blasphemy except by implication. See Exodus 21:17; Exodus 22:28.

Verse 14

Lay their hands upon his head - As a protest against the impiety of the criminal, symbolically laying the guilt upon his head. Compare the washing of hands, Deuteronomy 21:6; Matthew 27:24.

Let all the congregation stone him - See Leviticus 20:2 note.

Verse 16

Stranger - i. e. foreigner. See Leviticus 16:29 note.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 25

Verse 1

The sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee belong to that great sabbatical system which runs through the religious observances of the Law, but rest upon moral rather than upon formally religious ground. It is not, therefore, without reason that they are here set apart from the set times which fell strictly within the sphere of religious observances.

Verse 3

Vineyard - Rather, fruit-garden. The Hebrew word is a general one for a plantation of fruit-trees.

Verse 4

A sabbath of rest - See Leviticus 23:3 note. The express prohibition of sowing and reaping, and of pruning and gathering, affords a presumption in favor of the sabbatical year beginning, like the year of Jubilee Leviticus 25:9, in the first month of the civil year Leviticus 23:24, the seventh of the sacred year, when the land was cleared of the crops of the preceding year.

The great material advantage of the institution must have been the increased fertility of the soil from its lying fallow one year out of seven, at a time when neither the rotation of crops nor the art of manuring were understood. It must also have kept up a salutary habit of economy in the storing of grain. Compare Genesis 41:48-56. Its great spiritual lesson was that there was no such thing as absolute ownership in the land vested in any man, that the soil was the property of Yahweh, that it was to be held in trust for Him, and not to be abused by overworking, but to be made the most of for the good of every creature which dwelt upon it.

Verse 5

Vine undressed - That is, "unpruned"; literally "Nazarite vine", the figure being taken from the unshorn locks of the Nazarite. Numbers 6:5.

Verse 6

The sabbath of the land shall be meat for you - That is, the produce of the untilled land (its "increase," Leviticus 25:7) shall be food for the whole of you in common, rich and poor without distinction Exodus 23:11.

Verses 8-13

The land was to be divided by lot among the families of the Israelites when the possession of it was obtained. Numbers 26:52-56; Numbers

33:54, etc. At the end of every seventh sabbatical cycle of years, in the year of Jubilee, each field or estate that might have been alienated was to be restored to the family to which it had been originally allotted.

Leviticus 25:8

Seven sabbaths of years - seven weeks of years.

Leviticus 25:9

Cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound - Rather, cause the sound of the cornet to go through (the land). The word jubile does not occur in this verse in the Hebrew. The trumpet is the shofar שׁפר *shôphār* i. e. the cornet (rendered "shawm" in the Prayer-Book version of Psalm 98:7), either the horn of some animal or a tube of metal shaped like one. As the sound of the cornet (see Leviticus 25:10 note) was the signal of the descent of Yahweh when He came down upon Sinai to take Israel into covenant with Himself Exodus 19:13, Exodus 19:16, Exodus 19:19; Exodus 20:18, so the same sound announced, at the close of the great day of atonement, after the Evening sacrifice, the year which restored each Israelite to the freedom and the blessings of the covenant.

Leviticus 25:10

The fiftieth year - The Jubilee probably coincided with each seventh sabbatical year, and was called the fiftieth, as being the last of a series of which the first was the preceding Jubilee.

A jubile - Commonly spelled jubilee. The original word first occurs in Exodus 19:13, where it is rendered "trumpet," margin "cornet." It most probably denotes the sound of the cornet, not the cornet itself, and is derived from a root, signifying to flow abundantly, which by a familiar metaphor might be applied to sound.

Verse 14

Sell ought - i. e., any piece of ground.

Oppress one another - Rather, overreach one another. (Compare 1 Samuel 12:3-4).

Verse 15-16

The number of years of the fruits - i. e. according to the number of harvests. The average value of a yearly crop might of course be estimated, and the sabbatical years were to be deducted from the series.

Verse 18-19

In safety - i. e., secure from famine, Leviticus 26:5; Deuteronomy 12:10.

Verse 23-24

These verses express the principle on which the law of Jubilee, as it regards the land, was based. The land belonged to Yahweh, and it was He who allotted it among the families of Israel for their use. No estate could therefore be alienated in perpetuity, by any human authority, from the family to whose lot it might fall.

Leviticus 25:24

Grant a redemption for the land - i. e. grant power to recover the land to the original holder who had parted with it.

Verse 25

If thy brother be waxen poor - The Israelites never parted with their land except under the pressure of poverty. Compare the answer of Naboth, 1 Kings 21:3.

Verse 28

It shall go out - i. e. it shall be set free.

Verse 30

Not go out - Because most of the houses in cities were occupied by artificers and traders whose wealth did not consist in lands.

Verse 32-33

Rather, And concerning the cities of the Levites, the houses in the cities of their possession, etc. If one of the Levites redeems a house in the city, etc. The meaning appears to be, if a Levite redeemed a house which had been sold to a person of a different tribe by another Levite, it was to revert in the Jubilee to the latter Levite as its original possessor. The purchaser of a Levite‘s house was in fact only in the condition of a tenant at will, while the fields attached to the Levitical cities could never be alienated, even for a time.

For the application of the law of Jubilee to lands dedicated to the service of the sanctuary, see Leviticus 27:16-25.

Verse 35

Rather, And if thy brother (an Israelite) becomes poor and falls into decay with thee, thou shalt assist him and let him live with thee like a resident foreigner. He was not to be regarded as an outcast, but was to be treated with the same respect and consideration as a resident foreigner who, like him, could possess no land, but could accumulate property and live in comfort as a free man. See Leviticus 16:29 note.

Verse 37

Lend him thy victuals for increase - i. e. supply him with food for thy own profit.

Verse 38

Here, and in Leviticus 25:42, Leviticus 25:55, is expressed the principle which was to limit and modify the servitude of Hebrew servants.

Verse 39-40

The law here appears harmoniously to supplement the earlier one in Exodus 21:1-6. It was another check applied periodically to the tyranny of the rich. Compare Jeremiah 34:8-17.

Verse 43

Fear thy God - Yahweh was the Lord and Master of His people. To treat a Hebrew as a slave was therefore to interfere with the rights of Yahweh. Compare Romans 14:4.

Verses 44-46

Property in foreign slaves is here distinctly permitted. It was a patriarchal custom Genesis 17:12. Such slaves might be captives taken in war (Numbers 31:6 following; Deuteronomy 20:14), or those consigned to slavery for their crimes, or those purchased of foreign slave-dealers. The price of a slave is supposed to have varied from thirty to fifty shekels. See Leviticus 27:3-4, note; Exodus 21:32, note; Zechariah 11:12-13, note; Matthew 26:15, note. It was the object of Moses, not at once to do away with slavery, but to discourage and to mitigate it. The Law would not suffer it to be forgotten that the slave was a man, and protected him in every way that was possible at the time against the injustice or cruelty of his master. See the notes at Leviticus 25:46

Your bondmen forever - i. e. they were not necessarily to be released in the sabbatical year nor at the Jubilee.

Verses 47-54

A sojourner or stranger - Rather, a foreigner who has settled among you. See Leviticus 16:29, note; Exodus 20:10, note.

Leviticus 25:54

In these years - More properly, by one of these means. The extreme period of servitude in this case was six years, as when the master was a Hebrew Exodus 21:2.

Looking at the law of the Jubilee from a simply practical point of view, its operation must have tended to remedy those evils which are always

growing up in the ordinary conditions of human society. It prevented the permanent accumulation of land in the hands of a few, and periodically raised those whom fault or misfortune had sunk into poverty to a position of competency. It must also have tended to keep alive family feeling, and helped to preserve the family genealogies.

But in its more special character, as a law given by Yahweh to His special people, it was a standing lesson to those who would rightly regard it, on the terms upon which the enjoyment of the land of promise had been conferred upon them. All the land belonged to Yahweh as its supreme Lord, every Israelite as His vassal belonged to Him. The voice of the Jubilee horns, twice in every century, proclaimed the equitable and beneficent social order appointed for the people; they sounded that acceptable year of Yahweh which was to bring comfort to all that mourned, in which the slavery of sin was to be abolished, and the true liberty of God‘s children was to be proclaimed Luke 2:25; Isaiah 61:2; Luke 4:19; Acts 3:21; Romans 8:19-23; 1 Peter 1:3-4.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 26

Verse 1

Idols - literally, "things of nought." Hebrew אלילים *'ĕlîylîm* There appears to have been a play on the similarity in sound of this word to אלהים *'ĕlohîym* (God). Compare 1 Corinthians 8:4.

Standing image - Either an upright statue, or a pillar, such as an obelisk or a Celtic menhir, set up for an idolatrous purpose (compare Exodus 34:13 note). The public worship of Yahweh required, first, the exclusion of all visible symbols of deity as well as of all idolatrous objects, and next Leviticus 26:2, the keeping holy the times and the place appointed by the Law for His formal service. The word "sabbaths" must here include the whole of the set times. See Leviticus 23:3 note.

Verses 3-45

As "the book of the covenant" Exodus 23:20-33, so does this collection of laws contained in the Book of Leviticus. But the former passage relates to the conquest of the land of promise, this one to the subsequent history of the nation. The longer similar passage in Deuteronomy Leviticus 26:4

Rain in due season - The periodical rains, on which the fertility of the holy land so much depends, are here spoken of. There are two wet seasons, called in Scripture the former and the latter rain Deuteronomy 11:14; Jeremiah 5:24; Joel 2:23; Hosea 6:3; James 5:7. The former or Autumn rain falls in heavy showers in November and December. In March the latter or Spring rain comes on, which is precarious in quantity and duration, and rarely lasts more than two days.

Leviticus 26:5

Compare the margin reference; Joel 2:19; Job 11:18.

Leviticus 26:8

Five of you shall chase - A proverbial mode of expression for superiority in warlike prowess Deuteronomy 32:30; Isaiah 30:17.

Leviticus 26:9

Establish my covenant - All material blessings were to be regarded in the light of seals of the "everlasting covenant." Compare Genesis 17:4-8; Nehemiah 9:23.

Leviticus 26:10

Bring forth the old because of the new - Rather, clear away the old before the new; that is, in order to make room for the latter. Compare the

margin reference.

Leviticus 26:16

The first warning for disobedience is disease. "Terror" (literally trembling) is rendered trouble in Psalm 78:33; Isaiah 65:23. It seems here to denote that terrible affliction, an anxious temperament, the mental state ever at war with Faith and Hope. This might well be placed at the head of the visitations on a backslider who had broken the covenant with his God. Compare Deuteronomy 32:25; Jeremiah 15:8; Proverbs 28:1; Job 24:17; Psalm 23:4.

Consumption, and the burning ague - Compare the margin reference. The first of the words in the original comes from a root signifying to waste away; the latter (better, fever), from one signifying to kindle a fire. Consumption is common in Egypt and some parts of Asia Minor, but it is more rare in Syria. Fevers of different kinds are the commonest of all diseases in Syria and all the neighboring countries. The opposite promise to the threat is given in Exodus 15:26; Exodus 23:25.

Leviticus 26:18

For all this - i. e. for all the afflictions in Leviticus 26:16-17.

Seven times - The sabbatical number is here proverbially used to remind the people of the covenant. Compare Genesis 4:15, Genesis 4:24; Psalm 119:164; Proverbs 24:16; Luke 17:4.

Leviticus 26:19, Leviticus 26:20

The second warning is utter sterility of the soil. Compare Deuteronomy 11:17; Deuteronomy 28:18; Ezekiel 33:28; Ezekiel 36:34-35.

Leviticus 26:21, Leviticus 26:22

The third warning is the multiplication of destructive animals, etc. Compare Deuteronomy 32:24; Ezekiel 5:17; Ezekiel 14:15; Judges 5:6-7; Isaiah 33:8.

Leviticus 26:23-26

The fourth warning. Yahweh now places Himself as it were in a hostile position toward His people who "will not be reformed" (rather, brought unto God: Jeremiah 2:30). He will avenge the outraged cause of His covenant, by the sword, pestilence, famine, and captivity.

Leviticus 26:26

Omit "and." "To break the staff of bread," was a proverbial expression for cutting off the supply of bread, the staff of life (Psalm 105:16; Ezekiel 4:16; Ezekiel 5:16; Ezekiel 14:13; compare Isaiah 3:1). The supply was to

be so reduced that one oven would suffice for baking the bread maple by ten women for ten families, and when made it was to be dealt out in sparing rations by weight. See 2 Kings 6:25; Jeremiah 14:18; Lamentations 4:9; Ezekiel 5:12; Hosea 4:10; Micah 6:14; Haggai 1:6.

Leviticus 26:27-33

The fifth warning. For Leviticus 26:29 see 2 Kings 6:28-29; Jeremiah 19:8-9; Lamentations 2:20; Lamentations 4:10; Ezekiel 5:10, for Leviticus 26:30 see 2 Chronicles 34:3; Ezekiel 6:4; Jeremiah 14:19, for Leviticus 26:31 see 2 Kings 25:9; Psalm 74:6-7: for Leviticus 26:32-33 see Deuteronomy 28:37; Psalm 44:11; Jeremiah 9:16; Jeremiah 18:16; Jeremiah 4:7; Ezekiel 9:6; Ezekiel 12:15; Zechariah 7:14.

Leviticus 26:30

High places - There is no doubt that the word here denotes elevated spots dedicated to false worship (see Deuteronomy 12:2), and especially, it would seem, to that of Baal Numbers 22:41; Joshua 13:17. Such spots were, however, employed and approved for the worship of Yahweh, not only before the building of the temple, but afterward (Judges 6:25-26; Judges 13:16-23; 1 Samuel 7:10; 1 Samuel 16:5; 1 Kings 3:2; 1 Kings 18:30; 2 Kings 12:3; 1 Chronicles 21:26, etc.). The three altars built by Abraham at Shechem, between Bethel and Ai, and at Mamre, appear to have been on heights, and so was the temple.

The high places in the holy land may thus have been divided into those dedicated to the worship of Yahweh, and those which had been dedicated to idols. And it would seem as if there was a constant struggle going on. The high places polluted by idol worship were of course to be wholly condemned. They were probably resorted to only to gratify a degraded superstition. See Leviticus 19:31; Leviticus 20:2-5. The others might have been innocently used for prayer and religious teaching. But the temptation appears to have been too great for the temper of the people. They offered sacrifice and burnt incense on them; and hence, thorough reformers of the national religion, such as Hezekiah and Josiah, removed the high places altogether 2 Kings 18:4; 2 Kings 23:5.

Your images - The original word is rendered in the margin of our Bible sun images (2 Chronicles 14:5; Isaiah 17:8; Ezekiel 6:4, etc.). Phoenician inscriptions prove that the word was commonly applied to images of Baal and Astarte, the god of the sun and the goddess of the moon. This exactly explains 2 Chronicles 34:4 following.

Idols - The Hebrew word here literally means things which could be rolled about, such as a block of wood or a lump of dirt. It was no doubt a name given in derision. Compare Isaiah 40:20; Isaiah 44:19; 2 Kings 1:2.

Leviticus 26:31

Sanctuaries - The holy places in the tabernacle and the temple (Psalm 68:35. Compare Psalm 74:7).

I will not smell the savor … - See Leviticus 1:9.

Leviticus 26:35

More literally: All the days of its desolation shall it rest that time which it rested not in your Sabbaths while ye dwelt upon it. That is, the periods of rest of which the land had been deprived would be made up to it. Compare 2 Chronicles 36:20-21.

Leviticus 26:38

The land of your enemies shall eat you up - Compare Numbers 13:32; Ezekiel 36:13.

Leviticus 26:39

Iniquity - The meaning here is, in the punishment of their iniquity, and, in the next clause, in the punishment of the iniquity (as in Leviticus 26:41, Leviticus 26:43) of their fathers. In the next verse the same Hebrew word is properly represented by "iniquity." Our translators have in several places put one of the English words in the text and the other in the margin (Genesis 4:13; Genesis 19:15; 2 Kings 7:9; Psalm 69:27, etc.). The language of Scripture does not make that trenchant division between sin and punishment which we are accustomed to do. Sin is its own punishment, having in itself, from its very commencement, the germ of death. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" James 1:15; Romans 2:5; Romans 5:12.

Leviticus 26:40

trespass - The Hebrew word signifies an injury inflicted on the rights of a person, as distinguished from a sin or iniquity regarded as an outrage of the divine law. Every wrong act is of course both a sin and a trespass against God. In this place Yahweh takes the breach of the covenant as a personal trespass.

Leviticus 26:41

Uncircumcised hearts - The outward sign of the covenant might be preserved, but the answering grace in the heart would be wanting (Acts

7:51; Romans 2:28-29; Jeremiah 6:10; Jeremiah 9:26; compare Colossians 2:11).

Accept of the punishment of their iniquity - literally, enjoy their iniquity. The word here and in Leviticus 26:43 rendered "accept" in this phrase, is the same as is rendered "enjoy" in the expression "the land shall enjoy her sabbaths" Leviticus 26:34. The antithesis in Leviticus 26:43 is this: The land shall enjoy her sabbaths - and they shall enjoy the punishment of their iniquity. The meaning is, that the land being desolate shall have the blessing of rest, and they having repented shall have the blessing of chastisement. The feelings of a devout captive Israelite are beautifully expressed in Tobit 13:1-18.

LEVITICUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Verse 1

Dues. The position which this chapter holds after the formal conclusion, Leviticus 26:46, suggests that it is of a supplementary character. There seems, however, no reason to doubt its Mosaic origin.

Verse 2-3

Rather, When a man makes a special vow which concerns thy valuation of persons to Yahweh, if thy estimation shall be of the male, etc. The expression "thy estimation" is addressed either to Moses or to the priest Leviticus 27:12: it denoted a legal valuation. The vow of a person was perhaps most frequently made in cases of illness or danger, under the impulse of religions feeling, either in the way of thankfulness for blessings received, or of supplication for something desired. A man might dedicate himself, his wife, his child, or his bondservant. This might have been an old custom; but the Law ordained that he who had taken such a vow should pay a sum of money to the sanctuary, determined according to the age and sex of the person.

Verses 4-7

The relative values of the persons appear to be regulated according to an estimate of the probable value of their future work:

d **AgesMaleFemale**

d

d From a month to five years of age

d 5 shekels3 shekels

d

d From five years to twenty of age

d 20 shekels10 shekels

d

d From forty years to sixty of age

d 50 shekels30 shekels

d

d Sixty years of age and older:

d 15 shekels10 shekels

d

d

As regards the shekel of the sanctuary, see Exodus 38:24 note.

Verse 8

If he be poorer than thy estimation - Too poor (to pay) thy valuation. Compare Leviticus 27:7, Leviticus 27:11.

Verse 14

Sanctify - i. e. vow to devote. This law relates to houses in the country Leviticus 25:31, which were under the same general law as the land itself, with a right of redemption for the inheritor until the next Jubilee. See Leviticus 27:17-19. For houses in walled towns the right of redemption lasted for only one year Leviticus 25:29.

Verse 16

Some part of a field of his possession - Rather, a part of the land of his inheritance.

The seed thereof - i. e. the quantity of seed required to sow it properly. Thus the value of about 5 1/2 bushels (an homer) was about 6 pounds, 9 shillings, 2d. (50 shekels. See Exodus 38:24.)

Verse 21

Devoted - See Leviticus 27:28 note.

Verse 25

On the shekel and the gerah, see Exodus 30:13, note; Exodus 38:24, note.

Verse 28

Devoted thing - The primary meaning of the Heb. word חרם *chērem* is something cut off, or shut up. Its specific meaning in the Law is, that which is cut off from common use and given up in some sense to Yahweh, without the right of recal or commutation. It is applied to a field wholly appropriated to the sanctuary Leviticus 27:21, and to whatever was doomed to destruction 1 Samuel 15:21; 1 Kings 20:42. Our translators have often rendered the word by "cursed," or "a curse," which in some places may convey the right sense, but it should be remembered that the terms are not identical in their compass of meaning (Deuteronomy 7:26; Joshua 6:17-18; Joshua 7:1; Isaiah 34:5; Isaiah 43:28, etc. Compare Galatians 3:13).

Of man and beast - This passage does not permit human sacrifices. Man is elsewhere clearly recognized as one of the creatures which were not to be offered in sacrifice Exodus 13:13; Exodus 34:20; Numbers 18:15.

Therefore the application of the word חרם *chērem* to man is made exclusively in reference to one rightly doomed to death and, in that sense alone, given up to Yahweh. The man who, in a right spirit, either carries out a sentence of just doom on an offender, or who, with a single eye to duty, slays an enemy in battle, must regard himself as God's servant rendering up a life to the claim of the divine justice (compare Romans 13:4). It was in this way that Israel was required to destroy the Canaanites at Hormah (Numbers 21:2-3; compare Deuteronomy 13:12-18), and that Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord 1 Samuel 15:33. In all such instances, a moral obligation rests upon him whose office it is to take the life: he has to look upon the object of his stroke as under a ban to the Lord (compare Deuteronomy 20:4; Galatians 3:13). Therefore, there can be neither redemption nor commutation.

It is evident that the righteousness of this law is not involved in the sin of rash or foolish vows, such as Saul's 1 Samuel 14:24 or Jephthah's Judges 11:30.

And it seems hardly needful to add that sacrifice, as it is represented both in the Law and in the usage of the patriarchs, is something very different from consecration under a ban, though a tiring to be sacrificed

might come under the designation of חרם *chērem* in its wider sense. The sacrifice was always the offering up of the innocent life of a creature chosen, approved, and without spot or blemish.

Verse 32

Whatsoever passeth under the rod - According to rabbinical tradition, the animals to be tithed were enclosed in a pen, and as they went out one by one at the opening, every tenth animal was touched with a rod dipped in vermilion. Compare the margin reference.

For a more full explanation of what relates to tithes, see the margin reference and Genesis 14:20; Deuteronomy 14:22, Deuteronomy 14:28.

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CHAPTER FOUR
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NUMBERS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Numbers

The title commonly given to this book is evidently suggested by the two numberings of the people recorded in Leviticus 27:34, to their mustering in the plains of Moab for actual entry into the land of promise.

The incidents are generally given in their chronological order, except in the third part. The five chapters comprised in this part appear to deal with a long period, from which only isolated episodes are given; and of these the dates can only be conjectured.

Between the two dates "the first day of the second month of the second year after they were come out of Egypt" Numbers 1:1, and the death of Aaron Numbers 33:38, intervene no less than 38 years and 3 months (compare Deuteronomy 2:14), the long and dreary period of tarrying in the wilderness until the disobedient generation had wasted away.

From the death of Aaron to the date given in the opening verses of Deuteronomy Deuteronomy 1:1-3, occurred a space of exactly six months, in which all the events narrated in the fourth part of the Book of Numbers, from Numbers 20:1 to the end, would seem to have occurred, with the probable exception of the defeat of the king of Arad Numbers 21:1-3.

As regards the authorship and date of composition, the notes of time, the tenor of the contents, no less than the direct assertions of the text itself, lead to the conclusion that Moses is properly spoken of as the writer of the Book of Numbers. It is in substance his work; though many portions of it were probably committed to writing many years before the whole was completed; and the concluding chapters were not written until toward the close of the 40th year after the exodus.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verses 1-4

A month had passed away since the setting up of the tabernacle Exodus 40:2, Exodus 40:17: and the Sinaitic legislation was now complete (compare Leviticus 27:34).

A census ("sum") was commanded, to be based not upon any fresh registration of individuals, but upon that which had accompanied the previous collection of the offerings. Compare Exodus 30:11, etc.; Exodus 38:25-28. The offerings had been probably tendered by the people in groups, and if certificates of registration were furnished to such groups, the new census might be easily carried out by means of these documents, and got through Numbers 1:18 in a single day. The present registration enrolled persons "after their families, by the house of their fathers;" and was superintended not by the Levites (see Exodus 38:21 and note), but by Numbers 1:4 an assessor for each tribe to act in the business with Moses and Aaron. The purpose now in view was not religious only. The census now taken would serve as a basis for various civil and military arrangements.

Verses 5-16

The princes of the tribes, selected Numbers 1:4 under divine direction, were for the most part the same persons as those chosen a few months previously at the counsel of Jethro Exodus 18:21-26. Nahshon, prince of Judah, is mentioned in Exodus 6:23, and Elishama, in 1 Chronicles 7:26-27. The peers of men like these were no doubt entitled, among their fellows, to the epithet "renowned," Numbers 1:16.

Verses 20-46

The enrollment, being taken principally for military purposes (compare Numbers 1:3, Numbers 1:20), would naturally be arranged by hundreds, fifties, etc. (cf. 2 Kings 1:9, 2 Kings 1:11, 2 Kings 1:13). In eleven tribes the number enrolled consists of complete hundreds. The difference, in this respect, observable in the case of the tribe of Gad here Numbers 1:25, and of the tribe of Reuben at the later census Numbers 26:7, is probably to be accounted for by the pastoral, and consequently nomadic, habits of these tribes, which rendered it difficult to bring all their members together at once for a census. Judah already takes precedence of his brethren in point of

numbers (compare Genesis 49:8 note), and Ephraim of Manasseh (compare Genesis 48:19-20).

Verses 47-54

When a census of the tribe of Levi takes place. Numbers 3:15; Numbers 26:62, "all" the males are counted from a month old and upward, and not, as in the other tribes, those only who were of age for service in the field.

Numbers 1:48

had spoken - Render spake. The formal appointment is only now made, in reward for their zeal Exodus 32:26-29, though reference to their future office appears previously in Leviticus 25:32 ff, and they had already acted as assistants to the priests (compare Exodus 38:21).

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CHAPTER 2

Verse 2

standard … ensign - The "standard" marked the division, or camp (cf. Numbers 1:9, Numbers 1:16, Numbers 1:24, Numbers 1:31); the "ensign" the family. There would thus be four "standards" only, one for each "camp" of three tribes. The "standard" was probably a solid figure or emblem mounted on a pole, such as the Egyptians used. Tradition appropriates the four cherubic forms (Ezekiel 1:5-12; Revelation 4:7 ff), the lion, man, ox, and eagle, to the camps of Judah, Reuben, Ephraim, and Dan respectively; and this, as to the first, has a certain support from Genesis 49:9 (compare Revelation 5:5), and as to the third, from Deuteronomy 33:17.

Far off - See the margin, over against; i. e. facing the tabernacle on every side. The distance was perhaps 2,000 cubits or rather more than 14 mile: compare Joshua 3:4.

Verses 3-32

The following plan shows the general arrangement of the camp, which would vary in different places according to local exigencies. The area of the camp might be about three square miles:

Numbers 2:14

Reuel - Doubtless an error of transcription for Deuel Numbers 1:14.

Verse 33-34

Such was the ideal form of the encampment in the wilderness: a form reproduced in the square court with which the temple was eventually surrounded, and in the vision of the heavenly city as seen by Ezekiel Ezekiel 48:20, and by John (Revelation 21:16; compare Revelation 20:9). Thus the camp of God's earthly people was divinely ordered so as to set forth the completeness of His Church; and to illustrate by its whole arrangement, which was determined by the tabernacle in the center, both the dependance of all on God, and the access which all enjoyed to God.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

The "generations" (see Genesis 2:4) now given, though entitled those of Aaron and Moses (Aaron standing first as the older brother), are those of Aaron only. The personal dignity of Moses, though it gave him rank as at the head of his tribe, was not hereditary. He had, and desired to have Numbers 14:12; Exodus 32:10, no successor in his office but the distant prophet like unto himself Deuteronomy 18:18. Aaron was the ancestor of a regular succession of priests.

Verse 3

whom he consecrated - i. e. whom Moses consecrated, or literally as in the margin, whose "hand he filled," by conferring their office upon them (Leviticus 8:1 ff).

Verse 7

keep his charge - i. e. so assist him that the obligations incumbent on him and on the congregation may be fulfilled.

Verse 13

The concluding words are better expressed thus: "Mine shall they be, Mine, the Lord's." On the subject of the firstborn see the notes at Numbers 3:43-51.

Verse 26

the cords … the service thereof - i. e. of the tabernacle, not of the hangings of the court, for these, with their cords and other fittings, belonged to the charge of the Merarites Numbers 3:36-37. The tabernacle was under the care of the Gershonites.

Verses 27-32

Of the Levites, the Kohathites, the kinsmen of Moses and Aaron, and the most numerous, have the most important charge confided to them, namely, that of the ark, the altars, and the more especially sacred furniture generally.

Verse 39

twenty and two thousand - A number on which the commutation with the firstborn of the twelve tribes depends Numbers 3:43-46. The actual total of the male Levites is 22,300 (compare Numbers 3:22, Numbers 3:28, Numbers 3:34): and the extra 300 are considered by some to represent those who, being first-born themselves in the tribe of Levi, could not be available

to redeem the first-born in other tribes. Others consider the difference due to an error in the Hebrew text.

The tribe of Levi is shown by this census to have been by far the smallest of the tribes.

Verse 43

This result, when compared with the number of male adults (603,550, compare Numbers 2:32), is small, the usual proportion of first-born sons to a total male population being about one in four: and the explanation offered is that the law of Exodus 13:1-2, prescribed a dedication of those only who should be firstborn "thenceforward".

On the other hand, the number is very large to be born among two millions of persons in a single year; and it must be admitted, that some unusual causes must have been concerned. Such, not to mention the divine blessing, may be found in the sudden development of national energies which would immediately ensue on the Exodus. Before that event, the miserable estate of the people, and especially the inhuman order for the destruction of their first-born, would check very seriously the ratio of marriages and births; and this ratio would naturally, when the check was removed, exhibit a sudden and striking increase.

Verses 44-51

This redemption money (see the marginal references) would perhaps be exacted from the parents of the "youngest" children of the 22,273 Numbers 3:43. The cattle of the Levites was doubtless taken in the gross as an equivalent for the first-born cattle of the other tribes, which of course, no less than the first-born of men, belonged to the Lord; and in future would have to be redeemed Numbers 18:15; Deuteronomy 15:19.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 4

About the most holy things - Omit "about." The sense is, "this is the charge of the sons of Kohath, the most holy things:" i. e. the ark of the covenant, the table of showbread, the candlestick, and the golden altar, together with the furniture pertaining thereto. It appears, from a comparison of Numbers 4:16, Numbers 4:28, Numbers 4:33, that the ministry of the Kohathites was superintended by Eleazar, the older of the two surviving sons of Aaron; and that of the two other families by Ithamar.

Verse 6

wholly of blue - Compare Exodus 25:4 note. The third and external covering of the ark only was to be of this color. The table of showbread had Numbers 4:8 an outer wrapping of scarlet; the altar Numbers 4:13 one of purple.

Put in the staves - Probably, "put the staves in order." These were never taken out of the golden rings by which the ark was to be borne (see Exodus 25:14-15), but would need adjustment.

Verse 20

to see when the holy things are covered - Render: to see the holy things for an instant. The expression means Iiterally" as a gulp," i. e. for the instant it takes to swallow.

Verse 23

enter in to perform the service - literally, as in the margin, "to war the warfare," or, as the same phrase in part is rendered, Numbers 4:3, "enter into the host to do the work." The language is military. The service of God is a sacred warfare (Numbers 8:24-25 marginal reading).

Verses 28-33

The Gershonites and Merarites are superintended by Ithamar, Aaron's younger son, who had already had the oversight of the tabernacle in its construction Exodus 38:21. Thus, readily do the permanent offices of the leaders of the Israelite community spring out of the duties which, under the emergencies of the first year of the Exodus, they had been led, from time to time, to undertake.

Numbers 4:32

By name ye shall reckon the instruments - Or, assign them to their bearers singly, and "by name." These "instruments" comprised the heavier

parts of the tabernacle; and the order seems intended to prevent individual Merarites choosing their own burden, and so throwing more than the proper share on others.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-4

The general purpose of the directions given in this and the next chapter is to attest and to vindicate, by modes in harmony with the spirit of the theocratical law, the sanctity of the people of God. Thus, the congregation of Israel was made to typify the Church of God, within which, in its perfection, nothing that offends can be allowed to remain (compare Matthew 8:22; Revelation 21:27).

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Compare the marginal references. The precepts of Matthew 8:22; Revelation 21:27).

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Compare the marginal references. The precepts of Leviticus 13 and Leviticus 15 are now first fully carried out. They could hardly have been so earlier, during the hurry and confusion which must have attended the march out of Egypt, and the encampments which next followed.

Verses 5-10

The law of restitution: a passage supplementary to Leviticus 5:5, etc., Leviticus 6:5, etc.

Numbers 5:7

Recompense his trespass - i. e. make restitution to the person whom he has injured.

Numbers 5:8

Whereby an atonement shall be made for him - literally, "which shall clear him of guilt as to it," i. e. as to the trespass.

Numbers 5:10

And every man's hallowed things shall be his - i. e. the priest's. The heave offerings Numbers 5:9 and dedicatory offerings (e. g. first-fruits) were to be the perquisite of the officiating priests.

Verses 11-31

The trial of jealousy. Since the crime of adultery is especially defiling and destructive of the very foundations of social order, the whole subject is dealt with at a length proportionate to its importance. The process prescribed has lately been strikingly illustrated from an Egyptian "romance," which refers to the time of Rameses the Great, and may therefore well serve to illustrate the manners and customs of the Mosaic times. This mode of trial, like several other ordinances, was adopted by Moses from existing and probably very ancient and widely spread institutions.

Numbers 5:15

The offering was to be of the cheapest and coarsest kind, barley (compare 2 Kings 7:1, 2 Kings 7:16, 2 Kings 7:18), representing the abused condition of the suspected woman. It was, like the sin-offering Leviticus 5:11, to be made without oil and frankincense, the symbols of grace and acceptableness. The woman herself stood with head uncovered Numbers 5:18, in token of her shame.

Numbers 5:17

The dust that is in the floor of the tabernacle - To set forth the fact that the water was endued with extraordinary power by Him who dwelt in the tabernacle. Dust is an emblem of a state of condemnation Genesis 3:14; Micah 7:17.

Numbers 5:19

Gone aside … - literally, "gone astray from" thy husband by uncleanness; compare Hosea 4:12.

Numbers 5:23

Blot them out with the bitter water - In order to transfer the curses to the water. The action was symbolic. Travelers speak of the natives of Africa as still habitually seeking to obtain the full force of a written charm by drinking the water into which they have washed it.

Numbers 5:24

Shall cause the woman to drink - Thus was symbolised both her full acceptance of the hypothetical curse (compare Ezekiel 3:1-3; Jeremiah 15:16; Revelation 10:9), and its actual operation upon her if she should be guilty (compare Psalm 109:18).

Numbers 5:26

The memorial thereof - See the marginal reference. "Memorial" here is not the same as "memorial" in Numbers 5:15.

Numbers 5:27

Of itself, the drink was not noxious; and could only produce the effects here described by a special interposition of God. We do not read of any instance in which this ordeal was resorted to: a fact which may be explained either (with the Jews) as a proof of its efficacy, since the guilty could not be brought to face its terrors at all, and avoided them by confession; or more probably by the license of divorce tolerated by the law of Moses. Since a husband could put away his wife at pleasure, a jealous man would naturally prefer to take this course with a suspected wife rather than to call public attention to his own shame by having recourse to the trial of jealousy. The trial by red water, which bears a general resemblance to that here prescribed by Moses, is still in use among the tribes of Western Africa.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-21

The law of the Nazarite is appropriately added to other enactments which concern the sanctity of the holy nation. That sanctity found its highest expression in the Nazarite vow, which was the voluntary adoption for a time of obligations to high and strict modes of self-dedication resembling, and indeed in some particulars exceeding, those under which the priests were placed. The present enactments do not institute a new kind of observance, but only regulate one already familiar to the Israelites Numbers 6:2.

Numbers 6:2

A Nazarite - Strictly, Nazirite. This term signifies "separated" i. e., as the words following show, "unto God." It became a technical term at an early date; compare Judges 13:5, Judges 13:7; Judges 16:17.

Numbers 6:3

Liquor of grapes - i. e. a drink made of grape-skins macerated in water.

Numbers 6:4

From the kernels even to the husk - A sour drink was made from the stones of unripe grapes; and cakes were also made of the husks Hosea 3:1. This interdict figures that separation from the general society of men to which the Nazarite for the time was consecrated.

Numbers 6:5

Among the Jews the abundance of the hair was considered to betoken physical strength and perfection (compare 2 Samuel 14:25-26), and baldness was regarded as a grave blemish (compare Leviticus 21:20 note, Leviticus 13:40 ff; 2 Kings 2:23; Isaiah 3:24). Thus, the free growth of the hair on the head of the Nazarite represented the dedication of the man with all his strength and powers to the service of God.

Numbers 6:7

The consecration of his God - i. e. the unshorn locks: compare Leviticus 25:5 note, where the vine, left during the Sabbatical year untouched by the hand of man, either for pruning or for vintage, is called simply a "Nazarite."

The third rule of the Nazarite interdicted him from contracting any ceremonial defilement even under circumstances which excused such defilement in others: compare Leviticus 21:1-3.

Numbers 6:9-12

Prescriptions to meet the case of a sudden death taking place "by him" (i. e. in his presence). The days of the dedication of the Nazarite had to be recommenced.

Numbers 6:13

When the days of his separation are fulfilled - Perpetual Nazariteship was probably unknown in the days of Moses; but the examples of Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist, show that it was in later times undertaken for life. Again, Moses does not expressly require that limits should be assigned to the vow; but a rule was afterward imposed that no Nazarite vow should be taken for less than thirty days. To permit the vow to be taken for very short periods would diminish its solemnity and estimation.

Numbers 6:14, **Numbers 6:15**

The sin-offering (compare the marginal references), though named second, was in practice offered first, being intended to expiate involuntary sins committed during the period of separation. The burnt-offering (Leviticus 1:10 ff) denoted the self-surrender on which alone all acceptableness in the Nazarite before God must rest; the peace-offerings (Leviticus 3:12 ff) expressed thankfulness to God by whose grace the vow had been fulfilled. The offerings, both ordinary and additional, required on the completion of the Nazarite vow involved considerable expense, and it was regarded as a pious work to provide the poor with the means of making them (compare Acts 21:23 ff; Numbers 6:18

Shave the head - As the Nazarite had during his vow worn his hair unshorn in honor of God, so when the time was complete it was natural that the hair, the symbol of his vow, should be cut off, and offered to God at the sanctuary. The burning of the hair "in the fire under the sacrifice of the peace offering "represented the eucharistic communion with God obtained by those who realised the ideal which the Nazarite set forth (compare the marginal reference).

Numbers 6:20

The priest shall wave them - i. e. by placing his hands under those of the Nazarite: compare Leviticus 7:30.

Numbers 6:21

Beside that that his hand shall get - The Nazarite, in addition to the offerings prescribed above, was to present free-will offerings according to his possessions or means.

Verses 22-27

The priestly blessing (compare Leviticus 9:22 note). God Himself provides a formula, through which from time to time, as His people by obedience place themselves in true and right relationship to Him, the authorised mediators may pronounce and communicate His special blessing to them. It was a Jewish tradition that this blessing was given at the close of the daily sacrifice.

The structure of the blessing is remarkable. It is rhythmical, consists of three distinct parts, and mounts by gradual stages to that peace which forms the last and most consummate gift which God can give His people.

From a Christian point of view, and comparing the counterpart benediction of 2 Corinthians 13:14, it is impossible not to see shadowed forth the doctrine of the Holy Trinity (compare Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 28:19). And the three several sets of terms correspond fittingly to the office of the Three Persons in Their gracious work for the redemption of man.

Numbers 6:24

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee - The second clause here, as in the other three verses, defines more closely the general tenor of the preceding one. The singular number, which is observed throughout, indicates that the blessing is conferred on Israel "collectively."

Numbers 6:25

Make his face shine - This is an enhancement of the preceding benediction. "The face of God" imports not merely God's good will in general, but His active and special regard. With the "face" or "eye of the Lord accordingly is connected alike the judicial visitation of the wicked. Psalm 34:16, and His mercies to the righteous Psalm 4:6.

Numbers 6:26

Lift up his countenance upon thee - i. e. especially direct His thought and care toward thee: compare 2 Kings 9:32, and similar phrases in Genesis 43:29; Genesis 44:21. Through such loving providence alone could the peace of God in which the blessing closes be given.

Numbers 6:27

Put my name upon the children of Israel - i. e. pronounce My Sacred Name over them in blessing them. God will give effect to the benediction pronounced by the priests.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

On the day that - i. e. "at the time that," compare Genesis 2:4. The presentation of the gifts in fact occupied twelve days, as the sequel shows.

The enactments set forth in the chapters from Leviticus 10 to Numbers 6 inclusive, were doubtless promulgated at various times between the consecration of the tabernacle and the departure from Sinai, but are for convenience set out connectedly. The contents of the present chapter are accordingly placed after them. The order pursued throughout is justly noted as one which would naturally suggest itself to a narrator who was contemporary with the events.

Verse 3

Covered wagons - Some prefer to render "litter Isaiah 66:20 wagons:" i. e. litters which were not on wheels, but borne by two oxen, one in front and one behind. Such conveyances would probably be more convenient than wheeled wagons in the rough country to be traversed.

Verses 7-9

To the Gershonites, who had to transport the hangings and coverings of the tabernacle, two wagons are assigned: to the Merarites, who had the charge of the solid parts of the tabernacle, four wagons. The furniture and vessels the Kohathites were to carry on their own shoulders. Compare Numbers 3:25-26, Numbers 3:31, Numbers 3:36-37.

Verses 12-83

The several princes make their offerings in the order assigned to the tribes Numbers 2. It was doubtless the tribes themselves which presented these gifts through their chiefs. The twelve offerings are strictly alike, and were offered on twelve separate days.

Verses 84-88

The aggregate worth, by weight, of the whole of the offerings was about 438 British pounds: But the real worth of such a sum, when measured by the prices of clothing and food at that time, must have been vastly greater.

Verse 89

With him - i. e. as marginal, "with God," not (as some) with himself.

He heard the voice of one speaking - Rather, he heard the voice speaking, or conversing. The effect was as though Moses was audibly

addressed by another person: how this effect was produced we are not told.

Thus was the promise of Exodus 25:20-22 fulfilled; and that as an immediate response on the part of God to the cheerful readiness with which the tribes had made their offerings, and supplied everything needful for the Holy place and its service. All being now complete as God had appointed, and the camp purified from defilements, God meets Moses the mediator of the people, not as before on the peak of Sinai far away, but in the midst of them, in the dwelling-place which He henceforth vouchsafed to tenant.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verses 1-4

The actual lighting of the lamps (compare the marginal references) was to be done to set forth symbolically the special presence which God had now Numbers 7:89 actually established among His people.

Verses 5-22

The Levites could only undertake their duties Numbers 3:44-51.

The distinction between the "consecration" of the priests Numbers 8:21 of the Levites is marked. These rites of purification are similar to those incumbent on the priests of Egypt.

Numbers 8:7

Water of purifying - literally, "sin water:" i. e. water to cleanse from sin; no doubt taken from the laver of the sanctuary, which was used by the priests for purification before they went into the tabernacle to minister (compare Numbers 5:17; Exodus 30:18 ff).

The "sprinkling" of so large a body of men could have been only general, but tokens of individual purification are specified (compare also Leviticus 14:8).

Numbers 8:8

The two bullocks were "to make an atonement for the Levites," and therefore are presented in their name. These offerings are similar to those prescribed in Leviticus 8:14 ff at the consecration of the priests, except that the burnt-offering was on that occasion a ram. The larger victim corresponds to the larger number of the Levites.

Numbers 8:10

The children of Israel - i. e. through the heads of their tribes, who Numbers 7:2 no doubt acted for their tribesmen. This act, the distinguishing feature of the ceremony, represented the transfer to the Levites of the sacred duties originally incumbent on the whole people.

Numbers 8:11

Offer … offering - Compare the margin Aaron pointed to the Levites, and then waved his hands, indicating (compare Leviticus 7:30 note) that the offering was dedicated to God, and, again, by grant from Him, withdrawn for the use of the priests.

Numbers 8:19

Make an atonement for the children of Israel - i. e. by performing those services which were due from the children of Israel; the omission of which by the children of Israel would, but for the interposition of the Levites, have called down "wrath" from God, or Numbers 1:53 "plague." The institution of the Levites was an extension of that mediatorial system which the people themselves, terrified at the direct manifestations to them of the divine presence, desired; see Deuteronomy 5:25. Further, it is suggested to us here as an act of mercy on the part of God; yet even the priests and Levites themselves were not always sufficiently heedful and reverent. Compare Numbers 17:10; Leviticus 10:1 ff; 2 Samuel 6:6 following.

Numbers 8:21

Were purified - Rather, purified themselves; as directed in Numbers 8:7.

Verse 24

Twenty and five years old and upward - The permanent limit as distinguished from the temporary Numbers 4:3, Numbers 4:23, Numbers 4:30, though David found it necessary to extend the period of the Levites' service by causing it to commence at 20 years of age 1 Chronicles 23:24-28. This rule continued in force from the time of David downward (compare on 2 Chronicles 31:17; Ezra 3:8).

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CHAPTER 9

Verses 1-5

Passover at Sinai. This, as being kept in the first month, was prior in time to the numbering of Numbers 1:1 ff, and to the other events narrated in this book. It is, however, recorded here as introductory to the ordinance of Numbers 9:6-14 in this chapter respecting the supplementary Passover; the observance of which was one of the last occurrences during the halt at Sinai.

Numbers 9:5

In some details, the present Passover differed both from that kept at the Exodus itself and from all subsequent Passovers. For example, the direction of Exodus 12:22 could not be carried out in the letter while the people were dwelling in tents; and may be regarded as superseded by Leviticus 17:3-6 (compare Deuteronomy 16:5 ff).

In other points, such as how many lambs would be wanted, how the blood of the Paschal victims could be sprinkled upon the altar in the time specified, etc., the administrators of the Law of Moses would here, as elsewhere, have, from the nature of the case, power to order what might be requisite to carry the law into effect.

Verse 6

Certain men - Probably Mishael and Elizaphan, who buried their cousins, Nadab and Abihu, within a week of this Passover Leviticus 10:4-5.

Verse 11

The later Jews speak of this as the "little Passover." Coming, as it did, a month after the proper Passover, it afforded ample time for a man to purify himself from legal defilement, as also to return from any but a very distant journey. Compare Hezekiah's act 2 Chronicles 30:1-3.

Verse 12

According to all the ordinances - i. e. those relating to the Passover lamb, not those concerning the feast, for the Little Passover lasted, according to the Jews, only one day; nor was it held to be needful that at it leaven should be put away out of the houses.

Verse 15

The cloud … - The phenomenon first appeared at the Exodus itself, Exodus 13:21-22. The cloud did not cover the whole structure, but the "tent

of the testimony," i. e. the enclosure which contained the "ark of the testimony" Exodus 25:16, Exodus 25:22, and the holy place. The phenomenon is now again described in connection with the journeyings which are to be narrated in the sequel of the book.

Verse 22

A year - literally, "days," idiomatically a year Leviticus 25:29, an expression equivalent to "a full period," though not necessarily the period of a year.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 2

The trumpet was a straight instrument, differing in this respect from the curved horn or cornet; and is represented, among the other spoils of the temple, on the Arch of Titus. See Exodus 25:23 cut. From Egyptian monuments it appears that the Jewish trumpet was copied from that used in the armies of the Pharaohs. The cornet was at first a simple ram‘s horn Joshua 6:4, and the metal instrument of later times preserved the original shape.

Verse 5-6

Blow an alarm - i. e. along continuous peal. Compare Numbers 10:7, ye shall blow, but not sound an alarm: i. e. blow in short, sharp notes, not in a continuous peal. A third and a fourth alarm were probably blown as signals.

Verse 8

The sons of Aaron - As the trumpets were emblematic of the voice of God, the priests only were to use them. At this time there were only two “sons of Aaron;” but in later times, when the number of priests was greater, more trumpets were used; we read of seven in the times of Joshua and David (see the marginal references.); and of a hundred and twenty in that of Solomon 2 Chronicles 5:12.

Verse 9

For examples of the employment of trumpets in war compare marginal references and 2 Chronicles 20:28. By employment of them was signified the dependence of God‘s people on His aid.

Verse 10

In the day of your gladness - Compare Numbers 29:1; Leviticus 23:24; 2 Chronicles 29:27; Ezra 3:10; Nehemiah 12:35, Nehemiah 12:41; Psalm 81:3.

Verse 11

At this point commences the second great division of the book, extending to the close of Numbers 14. The remaining verses of the present chapter narrate the actual break up of the camp at Sinai and the order of the march.

Verse 12

The wilderness of Paran - See Genesis 14:6 note. The wilderness is mentioned here by anticipation. The earliest halting-places, Kibroth-hattaavah and Hazeroth, were not within its limits Numbers 11:35; Numbers 12:16.

Verse 13

Rather, And they journeyed (or, set forth) in the order of precedence according to (i. e. established by) the commandment of the Lord, etc., and described in Numbers 10:14-28.

Verse 14

According to their armies - Compare Numbers 1:3. There were three tribal hosts in each camp; and each tribe had of course its subdivisions.

Verse 17

A more precise determination of the method of executing the order given in Numbers 2:17. The appointed place of the tabernacle, in the midst of the host, was represented during the march by the ark, the holy vessels, etc. carried by the Kohathites. The actual structure of the tabernacle was borne in advance by the Gershonites and Merarites, immediately behind the camp of Judah; so as to be set up ready against the arrival of the sacred utensils borne by the Kohathites. Compare Numbers 2; 4,

Verse 29

Hobab, the son of Raguel - Or Reuel Exodus 2:18. Reuel was probably not identical with Jethro: and Hobab was the brother-in-law, not the father-in-law, of Moses; the Hebrew word translated in the King James Version "father-in-law," signifying simply any relation by marriage (Exodus 3:1 note). Hobab Judges 1:16; Judges 4:11 eventually accompanied the Israelites and obtained a settlement with them in the land of Canaan. Hobab and Jethro may have been brethren and sons of Reuel.

Verse 31

Thou mayest be to us instead of eyes - A proverbial expression still in use in the East. Hobab would indicate the spots where water, fuel, and pasture might be found, or warn them of the dangers from hurricanes, and point out localities infested by robbers.

Verse 33

Three days' journey - Probably a technical expression for such a distance as could not be traversed in a single day, and therefore not without intervals of encampment and due provision: compare Genesis 30:36; Exodus 3:18; Exodus 5:3; Exodus 8:27; Exodus 15:22. The technical use of

the phrase "Sabbath-day's journey" for another average distance, Acts 1:12, is similar.

The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them - From Numbers 10:21; Numbers 2:17 it would appear that the usual place of the ark during the march was in the midst of the host. It was evidently an exceptional case when, in Joshua 3:3, Joshua 3:6, the ark preceded the people into the bed of the Jordan. Hence, the words "went before them" do not here imply local precedence. The phrase, or its equivalent, is used of a leader going out in command of his troops, Numbers 27:17; Deuteronomy 31:3; 1 Samuel 18:16; 2 Chronicles 1:10; and similarly the ark may well be said to have gone at the head of the Israelites, when it was borne solemnly in the midst of them as the outward embodiment of the presence whose sovereign word was their law.

A resting place - literally, "rest." It is commonly understood of each successive encampment; or, in particular, of the first encampment. Yet the term would hardly be here employed, did it not carry with it a higher meaning, pointing to the promised rest of Canaan, for which the Israelites were now in full march, and from the speedy enjoyment of which no sentence of exclusion as yet debarred them. Compare the marginal references.

Verse 35-36

Each forward movement and each rest of the ark was made to bear a sacramental character. The one betokened the going forth of God against His enemies; the other, His gathering of His own people to Himself: the one was the pledge of victory, the other the earnest of repose.

Numbers 10:36 may be translated: "Restore" (i. e. to the land which their fathers sojourned in), "O Lord, the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel." (Compare Psalm 85:4, where the verb in the Hebrew is the same.)

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Introduction

This and the following three chapters recount the successive rebellions of the Israelites after their departure from Sinai; culminating in that by which they brought upon themselves the sentence of personal exclusion from the land of promise.

Verse 1

See the marginal rendering. They murmured against the privations of the march.

The fire of the Lord - Probably lightning; compare Psalm 78:21.

In the uttermost parts - Rather, in the end. The fire did not reach far into the camp. It was quickly quenched at the intercession of Moses.

Verse 3

Taberah - i. e. "burning:" not the name of a station, and accordingly not found in the list given in Numbers 11:34) to have occurred at the station called, from another still more terrible event which shortly followed, Kibroth-hattaavah.

Verses 4-35

Occurrences at Kibroth-hattavah.

Numbers 11:4

The mixt multitude - The word in the original resembles our "riff-raff," and denotes a mob of people scraped together. It refers here to the multitude of strangers (see Exodus 12:38) who had followed the Israelites from Egypt.

Numbers 11:5

The natural dainties of Egypt are set forth in this passage with the fullness and relish which bespeak personal experience.

Numbers 11:6-7

There is nothing at all … - literally, "Nought at all have we except that our eyes are unto this manna;" i. e. "Nought else have we to expect beside this manna." On the manna see Exodus 16:15 note; on bdellium see Genesis 2:12 note.

Numbers 11:10

The weeping was general; every family wept (compare Zechariah 12:12), and in a manner public and unconcealed.

Numbers 11:11-15

The complaint and remonstrance of Moses may be compared with that in 1 Kings 19:4 ff; Jonah 4:1-3, and contrasted with the language of Abraham (Genesis 18:23 ff) The meekness of Moses (compare Numbers 12:3) sank under vexation into despair. His language shows us how imperfect and prone to degeneracy are the best saints on earth.

Numbers 11:16

Seventy men of the elders of Israel - Seventy elders had also gone up with Moses to the Lord in the mount Exodus 24:1, Exodus 24:9. Seventy is accordingly the number of colleagues assigned to Moses to share his burden with him. To it, the Jews trace the origin of the Sanhedrim. Subsequent notices Numbers 16:25; Joshua 7:6; Joshua 8:10, Joshua 8:33; Joshua 9:11; Joshua 23:2; Joshua 24:1, Joshua 24:31 so connect the elders with the government of Israel as to point to the fact that the appointment now made was not a merely temporary one, though it would seem to have soon fallen into desuetude. We find no traces of it in the days of the Judges and the Kings.

Elders of the people, and officers over them - In English idiom, "elders and officers of the people." Both elders and officers appear in Egypt (Exodus 3:16; Exodus 5:6 ff): the former had headed the nation in its efforts after freedom; the latter were the subordinate, though unwilling, agents of Egyptian tyranny. The two classes no doubt were working together; and from those who belonged to either, perhaps from those who were both eiders and officers, the council of Seventy was to be selected.

Numbers 11:17

I will take of the spirit which is upon thee - Render rather separate from the spirit, etc.; i. e. they shall have their portion in the same divine gift which thou hast.

Numbers 11:25

They prophesied - i. e. under the extraordinary impulse of the Holy Spirit they uttered forth the praises of God, or declared His will. Compare the marginal references.

And did not cease - Rather, and added not, i. e. they prophesied at this time only and not afterward. The sign was granted on the occasion of their appointment to accredit them in their office; it was not continued, because their proper function was to be that of governing not prophesying.

Numbers 11:26

Of them that were written - i. e. enrolled among the Seventy. The expression points to a regular appointment duly recorded and permanent.

Numbers 11:29

Enviest thou for my sake? - (Compare Mark 9:38 ff) The other members of the Seventy had been with Moses (compare Numbers 6:16, Numbers 6:24-25) when the gift of prophecy was bestowed on them. They received "of the spirit that was upon him," and exercised their office visibly through and for him. Eldad and Medad prophesying in the camp seemed to Joshua to be acting independently, and so establishing a separate center of authority.

Numbers 11:31

The southeast wind, which blew from the neighboring Elanitic gulf of the Red Sea, brought the quails Exodus 16:13.

Two cubits high - Better, "two cubits above the face of the ground:" i. e. the quails, wearied with their long flight, flew about breast high, and were easily secured by the people, who spread them all abroad for themselves Numbers 11:32, in order to salt and dry them. The quail habitually flies with the wind, and low.

Numbers 11:32

Ten homers - About 55 bushels. Compare Leviticus 27:16.

Numbers 11:33

Ere it was chewed - Better, ere it was consumed. See Numbers 11:19-20. The surfeit in which the people indulged, as described in Numbers 11:32, disposed them to sickness. God's wrath, visiting the gluttonous through their gluttony, aggravated natural consequences into a supernatural visitation.

Numbers 11:34, Numbers 11:35

(Kibroth-hattaavah has been identified by Palmer with the extensive remains, graves, etc., at Erweis El Ebeirig, and Hazeroth "enclosures" with Ain Hadherah.)

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CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-15

Miriam, as a prophetess (compare Exodus 15:20-21) no less than as the sister of Moses and Aaron, took the first rank among the women of Israel; and Aaron may be regarded as the ecclesiastical head of the whole nation. But instead of being grateful for these high dignities they challenged the special vocation of Moses and the exclusive authority which God had assigned to him. Miriam was the instigator, from the fact that her name stands conspicuously first Numbers 12:1, and that the punishment Numbers 12:10 fell on her alone. She probably considered herself as supplanted, and that too by a foreigner. Aaron was misled this time by the urgency of his sister, as once before Numbers 12:1

The Ethiopian woman whom he had married - (Hebrew, "Cushite," compare Genesis 2:13; Genesis 10:6) It is likely that Zipporah Exodus 2:21 was dead, and that Miriam in consequence expected to have greater influence than ever with Moses. Her disappointment at his second marriage would consequently be very great.

The marriage of Moses with a woman descended from Ham was not prohibited, so long as she was not of the stock of Canaan (compare Exodus 34:11-16); but it would at any time have been offensive to that intense nationality which characterized the Jews. The Christian fathers note in the successive marriage of Moses with a Midianite and an Ethiopian a foreshadowing of the future extension to the Gentiles of God's covenant and its promises (compare Psalm 45:9 ff; Luke 15:29-30.

Numbers 12:2

Hath the Lord … - i. e. Is it merely, after all, by Moses that the Lord hath spoken?

Numbers 12:3

The man Moses was very meek - In this and in other passages in which Moses no less unequivocally records his own faults (compare Numbers 20:12 ff; Exodus 4:24 ff; Deuteronomy 1:37), there is the simplicity of one who bare witness of himself, but not to himself (compare Matthew 11:28-29). The words are inserted to explain how it was that Moses took no steps to vindicate himself, and why consequently the Lord so promptly intervened.

Numbers 12:8

Mouth to mouth - i. e. without the intervention of any third person or thing: compare the marginal references.

Even apparently - Moses received the word of God direct from Him and plainly, not through the medium of dream, vision, parable, dark saying, or such like; compare the marginal references.

The similitude of the Lord shall he behold - But, "No man hath seen God at any time," says John (John 1:18: compare 1 Timothy 6:16, and especially Exodus 33:20 ff). It was not therefore the Beatific Vision, the unveiled essence of the Deity, which Moses saw on the one hand. Nor was it, on the other hand, a mere emblematic representation (as in Ezekiel 1:26 ff, Daniel 7:9), or an Angel sent as a messenger. It was the Deity Himself manifesting Himself so as to be cognizable to mortal eye. The special footing on which Moses stood as regards God is here laid down in detail, because it at once demonstrates that the supremacy of Moses rested on the distinct appointment of God, and also that Miriam in contravening that supremacy had incurred the penalty proper to sins against the theocracy.

Numbers 12:12

As one dead - leprosy was nothing short of a living death, a poisoning of the springs, a corrupting of all the humors, of life; a dissolution little by little of the whole body, so that one limb after another actually decayed and fell away. Compare the notes at Numbers 12:13

Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee - Others render these words: "Oh not so; heal her now, I beseech Thee."

Numbers 12:14

If her father … - i. e. If her earthly parent had treated her with contumely (compare Deuteronomy 25:9) she would feel for a time humiliated, how much more when God has visited her thus?

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

And the Lord spake - The mission of the spies was first suggested by the Israelites themselves. See Deuteronomy 1:22.

Verse 2

A ruler - A comparison of the list with that of Numbers 13:1:5 following shows that they were not the princes of the tribes, but heads of houses or families Numbers 12:4.

Of the names here given those of Joshua and Caleb alone are otherwise known to us.

Verse 16

Oshea, Hoshea, or Hosea, the name also of the last king of Israel and the first minor prophet, means "deliverance" or and by the hand of him who bore the title of "God's salvation." Jehoshua was contracted (compare Nehemiah 8:17) into Jeshua.

Verse 17

Southward - Rather, "by the Negeb," or south-country; a well-defined tract of territory forming the southernmost and least fertile portion of the land of Canaan and of the subsequent inheritance of Judah. It extended northward from Kadesh to within a few miles of Hebron, and from the Dead Sea westward to the Mediterranean (see especially Joshua 15:21-32).

Into the mountain - The hill-country of southern and central Canaan, mostly within the borders of Judah and Ephraim. It commences a few miles south of Hebron, and extending northward to the plain of Jezreel, runs out eventually northwest-ward into the sea in the headland of Carmel.

Verse 19

In tents - i. e. in open unwalled villages.

Verse 20

The time … of the firstripe grapes - The first grapes ripen in Palestine in July and August: the vintage is gathered in September and October. This indication of date tallies with what we should have inferred from the previous narrative. For the Israelite host had quitted Sinai on the 20th day of the second month Numbers 13:10, Numbers 13:11, or about the middle of May: since then they had spent a month at Kibroth-hattaavah and a week at Hazeroth, and had accomplished, in all, from 150 to 200 miles of march:

it therefore must have been at least the beginning of July, and may have been a month later, when the spies were despatched into the land of promise.

Verse 21

The wilderness of Zin was the northeastern portion of the wilderness of Paran.

Rehob ("mod." Khurbeh) was probably the Beth-rehob of Judges 18:28, near Dan-Laish; and apparently to the north of it, since it gave its name to a Syrian kingdom 2 Samuel 8:3. The southern approach to Hamath from the plain of Coele-Syria, lay between those two ranges of Lebanon called Libanus and Antilibanus. A low screen of hills connects the northernmost points of these two ranges; and through this screen the Orontes bursts from the upper Coele-Syrian hollow into the open plain of Hamath.

Verse 22

The progenitor of the Anakim was Arba "the father of Anak" Joshua 15:13, from whom the city of Hebron took its name of Kirjath-Arba. Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai were probably not individual warriors, but names of three tribes of the Anakim. Hence, we find them still in existence half a century later, when Caleb, who now brought tidings of them, became their eventual destroyer Joshua 15:14.

Now Hebron … - This parenthesis explains that these two cities had a common founder, and were built, or perhaps, at least in the case of Zoan (Tanis, see Exodus 1:8, note; Exodus 2:5, note) rebuilt, by the Hyksos, to which nations, once the conquerors of Egypt, the Anakim perhaps belonged. The Hyksos fortified and garrisoned Zoan as a defense of their Eastern frontier.

Verse 23

The brook of Eshcol is by some identified with the rich valley immediately to the north of Hebron; (but by others with Wady Hanein to the south of Hebron). The valley was, in all likelihood, originally named after one of the three chiefs who were confederate with Abraham Genesis 14:24; but, as often came to pass, the Israelites, wittingly or unwittingly, took up in a new and significant sense the name which they found; and to them the valley thus became the Valley of the Cluster. Bunches of grapes are found in Palestine of many pounds weight.

Verse 25

After forty days - They had no doubt in this time explored the whole land. However, it was with the southern part that the Israelites expected to have to deal immediately: and accordingly it is that which is particularly referred to in the following verses, Hebron and its vicinity above all.

Verse 26

Kadesh is usually identified with Ain-el-Weibeh, which lies in the Arabah, about 10 miles north of the place in which Mount Hor abuts on that valley, (or with Ain-Gadis in Jebel Magrah).

Verse 29

The Amalekites - See Numbers 14:25 note.

The Canaanites - i. e. those of the Phoenician race: the word is here used in its narrow sense: compare Genesis 10:15-18 note.

Verse 32

A land that eateth up … - i. e. it is a land which from its position is exposed to incessant attacks from one quarter and another, and so its occupants must be always armed and watchful.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verse 5

Already Caleb had endeavored to still the people before Moses Numbers 13:30; already Moses himself (Deuteronomy 1:29 ff) had endeavored to recall the people to obedience. After the failure of these efforts Moses and Aaron cast themselves down in solemn prayer before God (compare Numbers 16:22); and the appearance of the glory of the Lord in the "tabernacle of the congregation" Numbers 14:10 was the immediate answer.

Verse 9

Their defense - literally, "their shadow," i. e. their shelter as from the scorching sun: an Oriental figure. Compare the marginal references.

Verse 12

And disinherit them - By the proposed extinction of Israel the blessings of the covenant would revert to their original donor.

Verses 13-17

The syntax of these verses is singularly broken. As did Paul when deeply moved, so Moses presses his arguments one on the other without pausing to ascertain the grammatical finish of his expressions. He speaks here as if in momentary apprehension of an outbreak of God's wrath, unless he could perhaps arrest it by crowding in every topic of deprecation and intercession that he could mention on the instant.

Verses 21-23

Render: But as truly as I live, and as all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord; Numbers 14:22 all those men, etc.; Numbers 14:23 shall not see, etc.

Numbers 14:22

These ten times - Ten is the number which imports completeness. Compare Genesis 31:7. The sense is that the measure of their provocation was now full: the day of grace was at last over. However, some enumerate 10 different occasions on which the people had tempted God since the exodus.

Psalm 90, which is entitled "a Prayer of Moses," has been most appropriately regarded as a kind of dirge upon those sentenced thus awfully by God to waste away in the wilderness.

Verse 24

My servant Caleb - Caleb only is mentioned here as also in Numbers 13:30 ff. Both passages probably form part of the matter introduced at a later period into the narrative of Moses, and either by Joshua or under his superintendence. Hence, the name of Joshua is omitted, and his faithfulness together with its reward are taken for granted. In Numbers 14:30, Numbers 14:38, both names are mentioned together; and these verses in all likelihood belong to the same original composition as Numbers 14:6-10.

Verse 25

Render: And now the Amalekites and the Canaanites are dwelling (or abiding) in the valley: wherefore turn you, etc. (that so ye be not smitten before them). The Amalekites were the nomad bands that roved through the open pastures of the plain Numbers 14:45: the Canaanites, a term here taken in its wider sense, were the Amorites of the neighboring cities (compare Numbers 14:45 with Deuteronomy 1:44), who probably lived in league with the Amalekites.

Tomorrow - Not necessarily the next day, but an idiom for "hereafter," "henceforward" (compare the marginal reading in Exodus 13:14; Joshua 4:6).

By the way of the Red sea - That is, apparently, by the eastern or Elanitic gulf.

Verse 33

Your whoredoms - Their several rebellions had been so many acts of faithless departure from the Lord who had taken them unto Himself. And as the children of the unchaste have generally to bear in their earthly careers much of the disgrace and the misery which forms the natural penalty of their parents' transgression; so here the children of the Israelites, although suffered to hope for an eventual entry into Canaan, were yet to endure, through many long years' wandering, the appropriate punishment of their fathers' willfulness.

Verse 34

My breach of promise - In the original, a word, found elsewhere only in Job 30:10, and meaning "my withdrawals" "my turning away." See the margin.

Verse 45

Unto Hormah - literally, "the Hormah:" i. e. "the banning," or "ban-place." Compare Numbers 21:3; Joshua 12:14. According to the view taken of Kadesh (see Numbers 13:26), Hormah is identified, through its earlier

name, Zephath Judges 1:17, with es-Safah on the southeastern frontier of Canaan, by which the Israelites quitted the Arabah for the higher ground, (or with Sebaita, which lies further to the west, about 25 miles north of Ain Gadis).

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verse 1

The contents of the next five chapters must apparently be referred to the long period of wandering to which Numbers 14:33 the people were condemned.

Verse 2

To the Israelites of the younger generation is conveyed the hope that the nation should yet enter into the land of promise. The ordinances that follow are more likely to have been addressed to adults than to children; and we may therefore assume that at the date of their delivery the new generation was growing up, and the period of wandering drawing toward its close. During that period the meat-offerings and drink-offerings prescribed by the Law had been probably intermitted by reason of the scanty supply of grain and wine in the wilderness. The command therefore to provide such offerings was a pledge to Israel that it should possess the land which was to furnish the wherewithal for them.

Verses 4-12

The meat-offering is treated in Exodus 29:40; Leviticus 23:13, hitherto an ordinary accessory to the former, is now prescribed forevery sacrifice.

Verse 18

The general principle which includes the ordinance of this and the three verses following is laid down in Exodus 22:29; Exodus 23:19.

Verse 20-21

Dough - "Coarse meal" Nehemiah 10:37; Ezekiel 44:30.

Verses 22-31

The heavy punishments which had already overtaken the people might naturally give rise to apprehensions for the future, especially in view of the fact that on the approaching entrance into Canaan the complete observance of the Law in all its details would become imperative on them. To meet such apprehensions a distinction is emphatically drawn between sins of ignorance (Leviticus 4:13 ff) and those of presumption Numbers 15:30-31. The passage deals separately with imperfections of obedience which would be regarded as attaching to the whole nation Numbers 15:22-26, and those of individuals Numbers 15:27-30.

Numbers 15:24

Without the knowledge of the congregation - literally, as marginal. The words point to an error of omission which escaped notice at the time: i. e. to an oversight.

Numbers 15:30

Presumptuously - The original (compare the margin, and Exodus 14:8) imports something done willfully and openly; in the case of a sin against God it implies that the act is committed ostentatiously and in bravado.

Reproacheth the Lord - Rather, revileth or blasphemeth the Lord: compare Ezekiel 20:27.

Verse 32

Moses mentions here, as is his wont (compare Leviticus 24:10-16), the first open transgression and its punishment in order to exemplify the laws which he is laying down. The offence of Sabbath-breaking was one for which there could be no excuse. This law at least might be observed even in the wilderness. Transgression of it was therefore a presumptuous sin, and was punished accordingly.

Verse 34

Death had indeed been assigned as the penalty Exodus 31:14; Exodus 35:2; but it had not been determined how that death was to be inflicted.

Verse 38

That they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue - Reader that they add to the fringes of the borders (or corners) a thread of blue (compare the marginal references). These fringes are considered to be of Egypttian origin. The ordinary outer Jewish garment was a quadrangular piece of cloth like a modern plaid, to the corners of which, in conformity with this command, a tassel was attached. Each tassel had a conspicuous thread of deep blue, this color being doubtless symbolic of the heavenly origin of the commandments of which it was to serve as a memento. Tradition determined that the other threads should be white - this color being an emblem of purity (compare Isaiah 1:18). The arrangement of the threads and knots, to which the Jews attached the greatest importance, was so adjusted as to set forth symbolically the 613 precepts of which the Law was believed to consist. In our Lord‘s time the Pharisees enlarged their fringes Matthew 23:5 in order to obtain reputation for their piety. In later times howerer, the Jews have worn the fringed garment (*tālīth*) of a smaller size and as an under-dress. Its use is still retained, especially at morning prayer in the Synagogue.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Introduction

The date of this rebellion cannot be determined, but Numbers 16:13-14 probably point to a period not much later than that of the rebellion at Kadesh.

Verse 1

Amram and Izhar were brothers (compare Exodus 6:18), and thus Korah, the "son," i. e. descendant of Izhar, was connected by distant cousinship with Moses and Aaron. Though being a Kohathite, he was of that division of the Levites which had the most honorable charge, yet as Elizaphan, who had been made "chief of the families of the Kohathites" Numbers 3:30, belonged to the youngest branch descended from Uzziel Numbers 3:27, Korah probably regarded himself as injured; and therefore took the lead in this rebellion. Of the others, On is not again mentioned. He probably withdrew from the conspiracy. Dathan, Abiram, and On were Reubenites; and were probably discontented because the birthright had been taken away from their ancestor Genesis 49:3, and with it the primacy of their own tribe among the tribes of Israel. The Reubenites encamped near to the Kohathites (compare Numbers 2:25 and plan), and thus the two families were conveniently situated for taking counsel together. One pretext of the insurrection probably was to assert the rights of primogeniture - on the part of the Reubenites against Moses, on the part of Korah against the appointment of Uzziel.

Verse 2

The "princes" appear to have belonged to the other tribes (compare Numbers 27:3).

Verse 3

All the congregation are holy - Compare the marginal reference. Korah's object was not to abolish the distinction between the Levites and the people, but to win priestly dignity for himself and his kinsmen Numbers 16:10. This ultimate design is masked for the present in order to win support from the Reubenites by putting forward claims to spiritual equality on behalf of every Israelite.

Verse 9

"Seemeth" is not in the original. Render it as: Is it too little for you, i. e. "is it less than your dignity demands?"

Verse 11

The words of Moses in his wrath are broken. The Aaronic priesthood was of divine appointment; and thus in rejecting it, the conspirators were really rebelling against God.

Verse 13

With perverse contempt for the promises, Dathan and Abiram designate Egypt by the terms appropriated elsewhere to the land of Canaan.

Verse 14

Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? - i. e. "blind them to the fact that you keep none of your promises;" "throw dust in their eyes."

Verse 24

The tent, "the tabernacle" of Korah, as a Kohathite, stood on the south side of the tabernacle of the Lord; and those of Dathan and Abiram, as Reubenites, in the outer line of encampment on the same side. Yet though the tents of these three were thus contiguous, they did not share the same fate. Korah and his company who dared to intrude themselves on the priestly office were destroyed by fire from the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the Lord Numbers 16:35; the Reubenites, who had reviled Moses for the failure of the promises about the pleasant land, were suddenly engulfed while standing at their own tent-doors in the barren wilderness Numbers 16:31-33.

Verse 27

Stood in the door of their tents - Apparently in contumacious defiance.

Verse 32

All the men … - Not his sons (see Numbers 26:11), but all belonging to him who had associated themselves with him in this rebellion.

Verse 35

Compare the marginal references The fire came out from the sanctuary or the altar.

Verse 37

Aaron as High Priest and as one of those that offered incense Numbers 16:17, could not be defiled by going among the dead.

The censers were not to be used again for censers, nor the coals on them for kindling the incense to be offered before the Lord. Yet neither of them could fittingly be employed for common purposes. The censers therefore were beaten into plates for the altar; the coals were scattered at a distance.

Verse 38

These sinners against their own souls - That is, "against their own lives." By their sin they had brought destruction upon themselves.

Verse 45

They fell upon their faces - In intercession for the people; compare Numbers 16:22; Numbers 14:5.

Verse 46

A censer - Rather, the censer. i. e. that of the high priest which was used by him on the great Day of Atonement: compare Leviticus 16:12; Hebrews 9:4.

Verse 47-48

A striking proof of the efficacy of that very Aaronic priesthood which the rebels had presumed to reject. The incense offering which had brought down destruction when presented by unauthorised hands, now in the hand of the true priest is the medium of instant salvation to the whole people. Aaron by his acceptable ministration and his personal self-devotion foreshadows emphatically in this transaction the perfect mediation and sacrifice of Himself made by Christ.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 2

Compare Ezekiel 37:16 ff.

Verse 3

Thou shalt write Aaron‘s name upon the rod of Levi - The Levites had taken part in the late outbreak. It was therefore necessary to vindicate the supremacy of the house of Aaron over them; and accordingly his name was written on the rod of Levi, although being the son of Kohath, the second son of Levi (Exodus 6:16 ff), he would not be the natural head of the tribe.

Verse 4

Before the testimony - See Numbers 17:10 note.

Verse 6

The whole number of rods was twelve exclusive of Aaron‘s, as the Vulgate expressly states.

Verse 8

Yielded almonds - "Ripened almonds," i. e. "brought forth ripe almonds." The name almond in Hebrew denotes the "waking-tree," the "waking-fruit;" and is applied to this tree, because it blossoms early in the season. It serves here, as in Jeremiah 1:11-12, to set forth the speed and certainty with which, at God‘s will, His purposes are accomplished. So again the blossoming and bearing of Aaron‘s rod, naturally impotent when severed from the parent tree, may signify the profitableness, because of God‘s appointment and blessing, of the various means of grace (e. g. the priesthood, the sacraments), which of themselves and apart from Him could have no such efficacy. Compare Isaiah 4:2; Isaiah 11:1; Isaiah 53:2; Jeremiah 33:5; Zechariah 6:12.

Verse 10

The testimony - i. e. the two tables of the Law; compare Exodus 25:16 note. No doubt the rod lay in front of the tables within the ark. In the days of Solomon 1 Kings 8:9 there was nothing in the ark save the Two tables. Aaron‘s rod was probably lost when the ark was taken by the Philistines.

Verse 12-13

A new section should begin with these verses. They are connected retrospectively with Numbers 16; and form the immediate introduction to Numbers 18. The people were terror-stricken by the fate of the company of

Korah and by the plague. Presumption passed by reaction into despair. Was there any approach for them to the tabernacle of the Lord? Was there any escape from death, except by keeping aloof from His presence? The answers are supplied by the ordinances which testified that the God of judgment was still a God of grace and of love.

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CHAPTER 18

Verse 1

The iniquity of the sanctuary - i. e. the guilt of the offences which an erring people would be continually committing against the majesty of God, when brought into contact, through the ordinances, with the manifestations of His presence. Compare the marginal reference.

The iniquity of your priesthood - As the priests themselves were but men, they were strengthened to bear the iniquity of their own unintentional offences, by being entrusted with the ceremonial means of taking it away (compare Leviticus 16). The word "bear" has, in the Old Testament, this double sense of "enduring" and "removing;" but in the person of Christ, who atoned by His own endurance, the two axe in effect one.

Verse 4

A stranger - i. e. every one not a Levite. So in Numbers 18:7, it denotes each one who was not a priest: compare Numbers 3:10; Numbers 16:40.

Verse 6-7

The Lord instructs here the priests that the office which they fill, and the help which they enjoy, are gifts from Him, and are to be viewed as such.

Verse 8

By reason of the anointing - See Leviticus 7:35.

Verse 10

In the most holy place - Rather, "among the most holy things;" as in Numbers 4:4: i. e. "As the most holy of things shalt thou eat it." Accordingly, only the males of the priestly families could eat of the things here specified.

Verse 15

Surely redeem … redeem - A stronger expression is intentionally used in reference to the redemption of the first-born of man than in reference to that of unclean beasts. For the rule as to the former admitted of no exception: the owner of the latter, if unwilling to redeem, might destroy the beasts. Compare the marginal references.

Verse 19

A covenant of salt - Compare the marginal reference. covenants were ordinarily cemented in the East by the rites of hospitality; of which salt was the obvious token, entering as it does into every article of diet. It indicates perpetuity: compare Leviticus 2:13 note.

Verse 20

I am thy part and thine inheritance - Compare the marginal references.

Verse 21

Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek: Jacob had promised the tithe of all wherewith God blessed him if he should return in peace to his father‘s house. But now first the Lord‘s tithes are assigned to the Levites for their support (compare Leviticus 27:30). The payment of tithes to them is recognized in Nehemiah 10:37; Nehemiah 12:44; Tobit 1:7.

Verse 23

Bear their iniquity - The words probably refer to the iniquity of the people; who would, had they approached the tabernacle have fallen, from their proneness to transgress, into overt acts of offence. Against such a result they were, through the ministrations of the Levites, mercifully protected. Compare Numbers 18:1.

Verse 24

Here the tithes (and in Numbers 18:26 the priestly tithes) are to be dedicated to their purpose by the ceremony of heaving them to the Lord. The tithes, being solemnly set apart for sacred purposes, became virtually a heave-offering, like the gifts for the tabernacle Exodus 25:2.

Verse 27

Reckoned unto you - Or, by you. The Levites were, of their tithes, to pay tithe to the priests, just as other Israelites paid tithe to the Levites.

Verse 29

Out of all your gifts - The spirit of this law would extend to all the revenues of the Levites; of the increase of their cattle, as well as of their tithes, a tithe would be paid by them for the Lord‘s service.

Verse 32

Neither shall ye pollute … - Rather, and by not polluting the holy things of the children of Israel, ye shall not die.

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CHAPTER 19

Verse 1

The principle that death and all pertaining to it, as being the manifestation and result of sin Genesis 2:17, are defiling, and so lead to interruption of the living relationship between God and His people, is not now introduced for the first time, nor is it at all peculiar to the Mosaic law. It was, on the contrary, traditional among the Israelites from the earliest times, it is assumed in various enactments made already (compare Numbers 5:2; Numbers 9:6 ff; Leviticus 10:1, Leviticus 10:7; Leviticus 11:8, Leviticus 11:11, Leviticus 11:24; Leviticus 21:1 ff), and it is traceable in various forms among many nations, both ancient and modern. Moses adopted, here as elsewhere, existing and ancient customs, with significant additions, as helps in the spiritual education of his people.

The ordinance was probably given at this time because the plague which happened Numbers 16:46-50 about the matter of Korah had spread the defilement of death so widely through the camp as to seem to require some special measures of purification, more particularly as the deaths through it were in an extraordinary manner the penalty of sin.

Verse 2

A red heifer - Red, in order to shadow forth man‘s earthly body, even as the name Adam bears allusion to the red earth of which man‘s body was fashioned.

Without spot, wherein is no blemish - As with sin-offerings generally Leviticus 4:3.

Upon which never came yoke - So here and elsewhere (see the marginal references), in the case of female victims.

Verse 3

The work would necessarily require a priest; yet as it rendered him unclean for the day Numbers 19:22, the high priest was relieved from performing it.

Without the camp - The defilement was viewed as transferred to the victim that was to be offered for its removal. Under these circumstances the victim, like the defiled persons themselves, would be removed outside the camp. The particular pollution to be remedied by this ordinance was the indirect one resulting from contact with tokens and manifestations of sin,

not the direct and personal one arising from actual commission of sin. So too the sinless antitype had to bear the reproach of associating with sinners Luke 5:30; Luke 15:2. And as the red heifer was expelled from the precincts of the camp, so was the Saviour cut off in no small measure during His Life from the fellowship of the chief representatives of the theocracy, and put to death outside Jerusalem between two thieves. Compare Hebrews 13:11-12.

Verse 6

Compare Leviticus 14:4 note.

Verse 9

Water of separation - In Numbers 8:7, the water of purification from sin is the "water of purifying." So that which was to remedy a state of legal separation is here called "water of separation."

Verse 10

He that gathered the ashes became equally unclean with the others. For the defilement of the people, previously transferred to the heifer, was regarded as concentrated in the ashes.

Verses 11-22

One practical effect of attaching defilement to a dead body, and to all that touched it, etc., would be to insure early burial, and to correct a practice not uncommon in the East, of leaving the deal to be devoured by the wild beasts.

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CHAPTER 20

Verse 1

Numbers 33:37-41). This formed the third and last stage of the progress of Israel from Sinai to Canaan, and took place in the fortieth year of the Exodus.

The incidents are apparently not narrated in a strictly chronological order (see Numbers 21:1). The leading purpose of Numbers 13:26; Numbers 14:1) points to a re-assembling of the people for the purpose of at last resuming the advance to the promised land. During the past 38 years the "congregation" had been bracken up. No doubt round the tabernacle there had continued an organised camp consisting of the Levites and others, which had been moved from time to time up and down the country (compare Deuteronomy 2:26-29; Psalm 74:14); and availing themselves of the resources of a district which were in ancient times vastly greater than they now are.

These natural resources were supplemented, where needful, by miraculous aid. The whole guidance of Israel through the wilderness is constantly referred to God‘s special and immediately superintending care (Deuteronomy 8:4 following; Deuteronomy 29:5; Nehemiah 9:21; Isaiah 63:11-14; Amos 2:10, etc.).

Yet though God‘s extraordinary bounty was vouchsafed to them, it is probable that this period was, among the perishing generation at all events, one of great religious declension, or even apostasy. To it must no doubt be referred such passages as Ezekiel 20:15 ff; Amos 5:25 following; Hosea 9:10.

Into the desert of Zin - The northeastern part of the wilderness of Paran (or, now definitely fixed by Palmer as the southeastern corner of the desert of Et-Tih, between Akabah and the head of Wady Garaiyeh.) The place of encampment was no doubt adjacent to the spring of Kadesh.

In the first month - i. e. of the fortieth year of the Exodus.

Verses 2-6

The language of the murmurers is noteworthy. It has the air of a traditional remonstrance handed down from the last generation. Compare marginal references.

Verse 8

Take the rod - That with which the miracles in Egypt had been performed (Exodus 7:8 ff; Exodus 7:19 ff; Exodus 8:5 ff, etc.), and which had been used on a similar occasion at Rephidim (Exodus 17:5 following). This rod, as the memorial of so many divine interpositions, was naturally laid up in the tabernacle, and is accordingly Numbers 20:9 described now as taken by Moses "from before the Lord."

Verse 11-12

The command Numbers 20:8 was "Speak ye unto the rock." The act of smiting, and especially with two strokes, indicates violent irritation on the part of Moses; as does also his unseemly mode of addressing the people: "Hear now, ye rebels." The form too of the question, "must we, etc.," directs the people not, as ought to have been the case, to God as their deliverer, but to Moses and Aaron personally. In fact the faithful servant of God, worn out by the reiterated perversities of the people, breaks down; and in the actual discharge of his duty as God's representative before Israel, acts unworthily of the great function entrusted to him. Thus, Moses did not "sanctify God in the eyes of the children of Israel." Aaron might have checked the intemperate words and acts of Moses, and did not. Hence, God punishes both by withdrawing them from their work for Him, and handing over its accomplishment to another.

Verse 13

The water of Meribah - i. e. "Strife." The place is called "Meribah in Kadesh" Numbers 27:14, and "Meribah-Kadesh" Deuteronomy 32:51. to distinguish it from the "Meribah" of Exodus 17:2 ff.

And he was sanctified in them - An allusion doubtless to the name "Kadesh" (holy), which though not now bestowed, acquired a new significance from the fact that God here vindicated His own sanctity, punishing Moses and Aaron who had trespassed against it.

Verse 14

Compare the marginal reference. It appears from comparing Numbers 20:1 with Numbers 33:38, that the host must have remained in Kadesh some three or four months. No doubt time was required for re-organization. In order to gain the banks of Jordan by the shortest route they had to march nearly due east from Kadesh, and pass through the heart of the Edomite mountains. These are lofty and precipitous, traversed by two or three narrow defiles. Hence, the necessity of the request in Numbers 20:17.

Thy brother - An appeal to the Edomites to remember and renew the old kindnesses of Jacob and Esau Judges 11:17 that a similar request was addressed to the Moabites.

Verse 16

An angel - See Genesis 12:7, note; Exodus 3:2, note. The term is to be understood as importing generally the supernatural guidance under which Israel was.

Verse 20

The Israelites, without awaiting at Kadesh the return of their ambassador, commenced their eastward march. At the tidings of their approach the Edomites mustered their forces to oppose them; and on crossing the Arabah they found their ascent through the mountains barred. The notice of this is inserted here to complete the narrative; but in order of time it comes after the march described in Numbers 20:22.

Verse 22

Mount Hor - The modern Jebel Harun, situated on the eastern side of the Arabah, and clause to Petra. This striking mountain, rising on a dark red bare rock, to a height of near 5,000 feet above the Mediterranean, is remarkable far and near for its two summits, on one of which is still shown a small square building, crowned with a dome, called the Tomb of Aaron.

Verse 26

The priestly garments, wherewith Moses had invested Aaron Leviticus 8:7-9, were put upon Eleazar by way of solemn transference of Aaron‘s office to him; compare 1 Kings 19:19.

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CHAPTER 21

Verse 1

King Arad the Canaanite - Rather, "the Canaanite, the king of Arad." Arad stood on a small hill, now called Tel-Arad, 20 miles south of Hebron.

In the south - See Numbers 13:17, Numbers 13:22.

By the way of the spies - i. e. through the desert of Zin, the route which the spies sent out by Moses 38 years before had adopted (compare Numbers 13:21).

He fought against Israel - This attack (compare Numbers 20:1 and note), can hardly have taken place after the death of Aaron. It was most probably made just when the camp broke up from Kadesh, and the ultimate direction of the march was not as yet pronounced. The order of the narrative in these chapters, as occasionally elsewhere in this book (compare Numbers 9:1, etc.), is not that of time, but of subject matter; and the war against Arad is introduced here as the first of the series of victories gained under Moses, which the historian now takes in hand to narrate.

Verse 3

He called the name of the place - Render it as: "the name of the place was called." The transitive verb here is, by a common Hebrew idiom, equivalent to an impersonal one.

Hormah - i. e. "Ban." See Numbers 14:45 and note. In Judges 1:17, we read that the men of Judah and Simeon "slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it;" and further, that "the name of the city was called Hormah." But it does not follow that the name "Hormah" was first bestowed in consequence of the destruction of the place in the time of the Judges, and that in Numbers its occurrence is a sign of a post-Mosaic date of composition. The text here informs us that this aggression of the king of Arad was repelled, and avenged by the capture and sack of his cities; and that the Israelites "banned" them (compare Leviticus 27:28-29). But it was not the plan of the Israelites in the time of Moses to remain in this district. They therefore marched away southeastward; and no doubt for the time the Canaanites resumed possession, and restored the ancient name (Zephath). But Joshua again conquered the king of this district, and finally in the time of the early Judges the ban of Moses and his contemporaries was fully executed. We have therefore in the passage before us the history of the actual origin of the name "Hormah."

Verse 4

The direct route to Moab through the valleys of Edom being closed against them Numbers 20:20-21, they were compelled to turn southward. Their course lay down the Arabah; until, a few hours north of Akaba (Ezion-Geber) the Wady Ithm opened to them a gap in the hostile mountains, allowed them to turn to their left, and to march northward toward Moab Deuteronomy 2:3. They were thus for some days (see Numbers 22:1 note) in the Arabah, a mountain plain of loose sand, gravel, and detritus of granite, which though sprinkled with low shrubs, especially near the mouths of the wadys and the courses of the winter-torrents, furnishes extremely little food or water, and is often troubled by sand-storms from the shore of the gulf. Hence, "the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way."

Verse 5

This light bread - i. e. "this vile, contemptible bread."

Verse 6

Fiery serpents - The epithet Deuteronomy 8:15; Isaiah 14:29; Isaiah 30:6 denotes the inflammatory effect of their bite. The peninsula of Sinai, and not least, the Arabah, abounds in mottled snakes of large size, marked with fiery red spots and wavy stripes, which belong to the most poisonous species, as the formation of the teeth clearly show.

Verse 8

Make thee a fiery serpent - i. e. a serpent resembling in appearance the reptiles which attacked the people. The resemblance was of the essence of the symbolism (compare 1 Samuel 6:5). As the brass serpent represented the instrument of their chastisement, so the looking unto it at God's word denoted acknowledgment of their sin, longing for deliverance from its penalty, and faith in the means appointed by God for healing. In the serpent of brass, harmless itself, but made in the image of the creature that is accursed above others Genesis 3:14, the Christian fathers rightly see a figure of Him John 3:14-15 who though "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" Hebrews 7:26, was yet "made sin" 2 Corinthians 5:21, and "made a curse for us" Galatians 3:13. And the eye of faith fixed on Him beholds the manifestation at once of the deserts of sin, of its punishment imminent and deprecated, and of the method of its remission devised by God Himself.

Verse 10-11

The earlier stations in this part of their journey were Zalmonah and Punon Numbers 33:41-42. Oboth was north of Punon, east of the northern part of Edom, and is pretty certainly the same as the present pilgrim halting-place el-Ahsa. Ije ("ruinous heaps") of Abarim, or Iim of Abarim, was so called to distinguish it from another Iim in southwestern Canaan Joshua 15:29. Abarim denotes generally the whole upland country on the east of the Jordan. The Greek equivalent of the name is Peraea.

Verse 12

The valley of Zared - Rather, the brook or watercourse of Zared "the willow." It is probably the present Wady Ain Franjy.

Verse 13

The Arnon, now the Wady Mojeb, an impetuous torrent, divided the territory which remained to the Moabites from that which the Amorites had wrested from them, Numbers 21:26.

Verse 14

Of "the book of the wars of the Lord" nothing is known except what may be gathered from the passage before us. It was apparently a collection of sacred odes commemorative of that triumphant progress of God's people which this chapter records. From it is taken the ensuing fragment of ancient poetry relating to the passage of the Arnon River, and probably also the Song of the Well, and the Ode on the Conquest of the Kingdom of Sihon Numbers 21:17-18, Numbers 21:27-30.

What he did … - The words which follow to the end of the next verse are a reference rather than a quotation. Contemporaries who had "the Book" at hand, could supply the context. We can only conjecture the sense of the words; which in the original are grammatically incomplete. The marg. is adopted by many, and suggests a better sense: supplying some such verb as "conquered," the words would run "He" (i. e. the Lord) "conquered Vaheb in Suphah, and the brooks, etc." Suphah would thus be the name of a district remarkable for its reeds and water-flags in which Vaheb was situated.

Verse 15

To the dwelling of Ar - Ar (compare Numbers 21:28; Isaiah 15:1) was on the bank of the Arnon, lower down the stream than where the Israelites crossed. Near the spot where the upper Arnon receives the tributary Nahaliel Numbers 21:19, there rises, in the midst of the meadow-land

between the two torrents, a hill covered with the ruins of the ancient city (Joshua 13:9, Joshua 13:16; compare Deuteronomy 2:36).

Verse 16

Beer is probably the "Well," afterward known as Beer-elim, the "well of heroes" Isaiah 15:8.

Verse 17-18

This song, recognized by all authorities as dating from the earliest times, and suggested apparently by the fact that God in this place gave the people water not from the rock, but by commanding Moses to cause a well to be dug, bespeaks the glad zeal, the joyful faith, and the hearty cooperation among all ranks, which possessed the people. In after time it may well have been the water-drawing song of the maidens of Israel.

Numbers 21:18

By the direction of the lawgiver - Some render, with the lawgiver's scepter; i. e. under the direction and with the authority of Moses; compare Genesis 49:10, and note.

Verse 19

Nahaliel - i. e. "brook of God;" the modern Wady Enkheileh. The Israelites must have crossed the stream not much above Ar.

Bamoth - Otherwise Bamoth-baal, "the high places of Baal" Numbers 22:41: mentioned as near Dibon (Dhiban) in Joshua 13:17, and Isaiah 15:2. See Numbers 32:34.

Verse 20

In the country of Moab - Rather, in the field of Moab: the upland pastures, or flat downs, intersected by the ravine of Wady Waleh.

Pisgah, which looketh toward Jeshimon - Or, "toward the waste." See Numbers 33:47. Pisgah was a ridge of the Abarim mountains, westward from Heshbon. From the summit the Israelites gained their first view of the wastes of the Dead Sea and of the valley of the Jordan: and Moses again ascended it, to view, before his death, the land of promise. The interest attaching to the spot, and the need of a convenient name for it, has led Christians often to designate it as "Nebo," rather than as "the mountain of, or near to, Nebo;" but the latter is the more correct: Nebo denoted the town Isaiah 15:2; Jeremiah 48:1, Jeremiah 48:22 on the western slope of the ridge.

Verse 24

Jabbok (now Wady Zerka: compare Genesis 32:22) runs eastward under Rabbah of the children of Ammon, thence westward, and reaches the Jordan, 45 miles north of the Arnon. It was between Rabbah and Gerasa that it formed the Ammonite boundary.

Verse 25

Heshbon - Now Heshban, a ruined city, due east of the point where the Jordan enters the Dead Sea; conspicuous from all parts of the high plateau on which it stands, but concealed, like the rest of the plateau, from the valley beneath.

Verse 27

They that speak in proverbs - The original word is almost equivalent to "the poets." The word supplies the title of the Book of Proverbs itself; and is used of the parable proper in Ezekiel 17:2; of the prophecies of Balsam in Numbers 23:7-10; Numbers 24:3-9; etc.; and of a song of triumph over Babylon in Isaiah 14:4.

Verse 29

Chemosh - The national God of the Moabites (compare the marginal references). The name probably means "Vanquisher," or "Master." The worship of Chemosh was introduced into Israel by Solomon 1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 23:13. It was no doubt to Chemosh that Mesha, king of Moab, offered up his son as a burnt-offering 2 Kings 3:26-27.

In the first six lines Numbers 21:27-28 the poet imagines for the Amorites a song of exultation for their victories over Moab, and for the consequent glories of Heshbon, their own capital. In the next lines Numbers 21:29 he himself joins in this strain; which now becomes one of half-real, half-ironical compassion for the Moabites, whom their idol Chemosh was unable to save. But in the last lines Numbers 21:30 a startling change takes place; the new and decisive triumph of the poet's own countrymen is abruptly introduced; and the boastings of the Arnorites fade utterly away. Of the towns Heshbon was the northernmost, and therefore, to the advancing Israelites, the last to be reached. Medeba, now Madeba, was four miles south of Heshbon (compare 1 Chronicles 19:7, 1 Chronicles 19:15).

Verse 32

Jaazer - To he identified probably with the ruins Sir or es-Numbers 32:35.

Verse 33

In these apparently unimportant words is contained the record of the Israelite Numbers 32:39 occupation of Gilead north of the Jabbok; a territory which, though populated, like southern Gilead, by the Amorites (Deuteronomy 3:9; Joshua 2:10, etc.), formed part of the domain of Og king of Bashan, who was himself of a different race Deuteronomy 3:2; Joshua 12:5; Joshua 13:11. We are not told whether they were led there by express warrant of God, or whether their advance upon Bashan was provoked by Og and his people.

At Edrei - Now Edhra‘ah, commonly Der‘a; situate on a branch of the Jarmuk. This river formed the boundary between Gilead and Bashan.

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CHAPTER 22

Introduction

With this chapter begins the fourth and last division of the Book of Numbers, comprising 14 chapters. In them are narrated the events which befell Israel while encamped in the plains of Moab, and certain instructions and arrangements are laid down by Moses with reference to their actual entry upon the promised inheritance.

Verse 1

The plains - Hebrew ערבה *ʿărābâh* the word is the plural of that which is used to denote the whole depressed tract along the Jordan and the Dead Sea, and onward, where it is still called the Arabah (compare Numbers 21:4 note), to the Elanitic gulf.

On this side Jordan by Jericho - Rather, across the Jordan of Jericho, i. e., that part of Jordan which skirted the territory of Jericho. This form of expression indicates the site of the camp in its relation to the well-known city of Jericho. See Deuteronomy 1:1.

Verse 2

Balak the son of Zippor - The comparison of Numbers 22:4 with Numbers 21:26 suggests that Balak was not the hereditary king but a Midianite, and that a change of dynasty had taken place. His father‘s name, Zippor, “Bird,” reminds us of those of other Midianites, e. g., Oreb, “Crow,” Zeeb, “Wolf.” Possibly the Midianite chieftains had taken advantage of the weakness of the Moabites after the Amorite victories to establish themselves as princes in the land.

Verse 5

Balaam the son of Beor was from the first a worshipper in some sort of the true God; and had learned some elements of pure and true religion in his home in the far East, the cradle of the ancestors of Israel. But though prophesying, doubtless even before the ambassadors of Balak came to him, in the name of the true God, yet prophecy was still to him as before a mere business, not a religion. The summons of Balak proved to be a crisis in his career: and he failed under the trial. When the gold and honors of Balak seemed to be finally lost, he became reckless and desperate; and, as if in defiance, counseled the evil stratagem by which he hoped to compass indirectly that ruin of God‘s people which he had been withheld from

working otherwise. He thus, like Judas and Ahithophel, set in motion a train of events which involved his own destruction.

The name Balaam signifies "destroyer," or "glutton," and is in part identical with "Bela, son of Beor," the first king of Edom Genesis 36:32. The name "Beor" ("to burn up") is that of the father, or possibly ancestor, of the prophet.

Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people - Rather, Pethor which was … land. Pethor (Pitru, Assyrian) was on the river Sagura (modern: Sajur) near its junction with the Euphrates.

Verse 7

Rewards of divination - Rightly interpreted in 2 Peter 2:15 as "the wages of unrighteousness."

Verse 8

Balaam must surely have known that God's blessing was on the people with whose marvelous march forth from Egypt he was acquainted Exodus 15:14; Exodus 18:1; Joshua 2:9, and from whom he had himself probably learned much (compare the language of Numbers 23:12 with Genesis 13:6, and that of Numbers 24:9 with Genesis 49:9). But his reply to the messengers next morning Numbers 22:13, betrays the desire to venture to the utmost of that which God would not forbid rather than to carry out God's will in hearty sincerity.

Verse 15

Balak, like the ancient pagan world generally, not only believed in the efficacy of the curses and incantations of the soothsayers, but regarded their services as strictly venal. Hence, when his first offer was declined, he infers at once that he had not bid high enough.

Verse 19

Ye also - i. e., as the other envoys before you. Had Balaam possessed a sincere spirit of obedience, he would have found in the first instructions Numbers 22:12 a final decision upon the matter. His hypocritical importunity with God when the fresh messengers came from Balak demonstrates his aversion to God's declared will.

Verse 22

The angel - i. e., the Angel that led the Israelites through the wilderness (compare Numbers 20:16 and references), and subsequently appeared as the Captain of the Lord's host to Joshua Joshua 6:13. In desiring to curse Israel, Balaam was fighting against Israel's Leader. The presence of the Angel in

his path was designed to open his eyes, blinded by sin, to the real character of his course of conduct.

Verse 24

In a path of the vineyards - i. e., in a path shut in by vineyard-walls on each side. The progress from the road through the open field Numbers 22:23 to that walled in, and thence to the strait place, where there was no room to turn Numbers 22:26, shows that Balaam was approaching a city, no doubt that which was the goal of his journey.

Verse 28

And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass - The account was perhaps given by Balaam to the Israelites after his capture in the war against Midian. Compare Numbers 31:8. That which is here recorded was apparently perceived by him alone among human witnesses. God may have brought it about that sounds uttered by the creature after its kind became to the prophet‘s intelligence as though it addressed him in rational speech. Indeed to an augur, priding himself on his skill in interpreting the cries and movements of animals, no more startling warning could be given than one so real as this, yet conveyed through the medium of his own art.

Verse 32

Is perverse - Rather, is headlong. Compare Peter‘s words 2 Peter 2:16, “the madness of the prophet.”

Verse 35

Go with the men - A command, not a permission merely. Balaam, no longer a faithful servant of God, was henceforth overruled in all his acts so that he might subserve the divine purpose as an instrument.

Numbers 22:26

A city of Moab - Or, Ir-Moab, probably the same with Ar-Moab Numbers 21:15. As Balaam in his journey would avoid the districts occupied by the Israelites, he must have approached this city from the east, by the course of the Nahaliel; and in the name Balu‘a, still borne by one of the upper branches of this stream, there is perhaps a reminiscence of the name of the prophet.

Verse 39

Kirjath-buzoth - i. e., “city of streets,” within Balak‘s dominions, south of the Arnon, and identified either with the ruins of Shihan, 4 miles west by south of the site assigned to Ar or Ir, or with Kirjathaim (Kureivat).

Verse 41

That thence he might see - Rather, and thence he saw.

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CHAPTER 23

Verse 1

Balaam, after the general custom of the pagan, prefaced his divinations by sacrifice. In the number of the altars regard was probably had to the number of the then known planets. Yet Balaam evidently intended his sacrifice as an offering to the true God.

Verse 3

Balaam apparently expected to mark some phenomenon in the sky or in nature, which he would be able, according to the rules of his art, to interpret as a portent. It was for such "auguries" (not as the King James Version "enchantments" Numbers 23:23) that he now departed to watch; contrast Numbers 24:1.

An high place - Or, "A bare place on the hill," as opposed to the high place with its grove of trees.

Verse 4

God met Balaam - God served His own purposes through the arts of Balaam, and manifested His will through the agencies employed to seek it, dealing thus with Balaam in an exceptional manner. To God's own people auguries were forbidden Leviticus 19:26.

I have prepared seven altars - And therefore Balaam expected that God on His part would do what was desired by the donor; compare Numbers 22:15 note.

Verse 7

Aram - Or, "highland." This term denotes the whole elevated region, from the northeastern frontier of Palestine to the Euphrates and the Tigris. The country between these streams was especially designated "Aram-naharaim," or "Aram of the two rivers:" the Greeks called it Mesopotamia; and here, according to Deuteronomy 23:4, was Balaam's home. Compare Numbers 22:5 note.

Verse 9

For from the top of the rocks … - The "for" indicates the constraint under which Balaam felt himself. He had been met by God in his own way; from the cliff he had watched for the expected augury; and by the light of this he here interprets, according to the rules of his art, the destiny of Israel.

Dwell alone - i. e., apart from others, undisturbed by their tumults, and therefore in safety and just security. Compare the same idea in marginal

reference; Jeremiah 49:31; and Micah 7:14. This tranquility was realized by the Israelites so long as they clave to God as their shelter and protection. But the inward "dwelling alone" was the indispensable condition of the outward "dwelling alone," and so soon as the influence of the pagan world affected Israel internally, the external power of paganism prevailed also. Balaam himself, when he eventually counseled tempting the people into sin, acted upon the knowledge that God's blessing and Israel's prosperity depended essentially on faithfulness to God.

Verse 10

The fourth part of Israel - i. e., each one of the four camps, into which the host of Israel was divided (see Genesis 13:16; Genesis 28:14.

The righteous - i. e., the ancestors of Israel, who "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off" Hebrews 11:13. With their histories Balaam was familiar, particularly with that of Abraham, "the righteous man" whom God had "raised up from the east (and) called to His foot" Isaiah 41:2.

Let my last end be like his - Render rather, "last estate," for the reference is not so much to the act of death, as to all that followed upon it - to the future, in which the name and influence of the deceased person would be perpetuated.

Verse 13

Balak seems to hope that the prophet's words in Numbers 23:10 reflected the impression conveyed by the scene before him at the moment of the augury; and so that the sight of a mere few straggling Israelites in the utmost part of the camp might induce a different estimate of their resources and prospects.

Verse 14

The field of Zophim - Or, "of watchers." It lay upon the top of Pisgah, north of the former station, and nearer to the Israelite camp; the greater part of which was, however, probably concealed from it by an intervening spur of the hill. Beyond the camp Balaam's eye would pass on to the bed of the Jordan. It was perhaps a lion coming up in his strength from the swelling of that stream (compare Jeremiah 49:19) that furnished him with the augury he awaited, and so dictated the final similitude of his next parable.

Verse 20

I have received commandment to bless - literally, "I have received to bless." The reason of his blessing lay in the augury which he acknowledged,

and in the divine overruling impulse which he could not resist, not in any "commandment" in words.

Verse 21

"Iniquity" and "perverseness" are found together again in the Hebrew of Psalm 10:7; Psalm 90:10, and elsewhere; and import wickedness together with that tribulation which is its proper result.

The shout - The word is used (Leviticus 23:24 note) to describe the sound of the silver trumpets. The "shout of a king" will therefore refer to the jubilant sounds by which the presence of the Lord as their King among them was celebrated by Israel.

Verse 22

An unicorn - A wild bull, the now extinct Aurochs, formidable for its size, strength, speed, and ferocity.

Verse 23

Enchantment … divination - More strictly "augury" and "soothsayer's token," or the omen that was superstitiously observed. "Soothsayer" is the term applied to Balaam in Joshua 13:22.

The verse intimates that the seer was at last, through the overruling of his own auguries, compelled to own what, had he not been blinded by avarice and ambition, he would have discerned before - that there Was an indisputable interference of God on Israel's behalf, against which all arts and efforts of man must prove vain. The sense suggested by margin (i. e., that the soothsayer's art was not practiced in Israel) would be strictly true (compare the Numbers 23:4 note).

According … - Rather, in due time it shall be told to Jacob, etc. God will, through His own divinely appointed means (e. g. the Urim and Thummim), reveal to Israel, as occasion may require, His will and purposes.

Verse 28

The position of Peor northward from Pisgah, along the Abarim heights, is approximately determined by the extant notices of Beth-peor.

Jeshimon - was the waste, in the great valley below, where stood Beth-jeshimoth, "the house of the wastes."

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CHAPTER 24

Verse 2

Balaam gazed over the camp of Israel that stretched before him, and allowed the spectacle to work its own influence upon him.

Verse 3

Whose eyes are open - i. e., opened in inward vision, to discern things that were hidden from ordinary beholders.

Verse 4

The "falling" of which Balaam speaks was the condition under which the inward opening of his eyes took place. It indicates the force of the divine inspiration overpowering the seer. The faithful prophets of the Lord do not appear to have been subject to these violent illapses Daniel 8:17; Revelation 1:17.

In Balaam and in Saul 1 Samuel 19:24 the word of God could only prevail by first subduing the alien will, and overpowering the bodily energies which the will ordinarily directs.

Verse 6

As gardens by the river's side - Balaam's language reflects the famous artificial gardens along the banks of his own river, the Euphrates.

As the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted - The latter words contain an apparent reference to Paradise (compare Genesis 2:8). The aloe, imported from China and the far distant east, furnished to the ancients one of the most fragrant and precious of spices; compare Psalm 45:8; Proverbs 7:17,

As cedar trees beside the waters - i. e., as the noblest of trees branching forth in the fairest of situations: an image of majestic beauty, as that of the last verse was of rare fecundity.

Verse 7

Balaam's native soil was ordinarily irrigated by water fetched from the neighboring Euphrates, and carried in buckets suspended from the two ends of a pole. Thus the metaphor would import that Israel should have his own exuberant and unfailing channels of blessing and plenty. Some take the word to be predictive of the future benefits which, through the means of Israel, were to accrue to the rest of the world.

Agag - The name, apparently hereditary (compare Numbers 24:20); but also to be far excelled by the future glories of Israel. The Amalekites never in fact recovered their crushing defeat by Saul (1 Samuel 15:2 ff), though they appear again as foes to Israel in the reign of David (1 Samuel 27:1-12 and 30). The remnant of them was destroyed in the reign of Hezekiah 1 Chronicles 4:43.

Verse 14

I will advertise thee - i. e., "I will advise thee," words which refer to the ensuing prophecy.

Verse 16

And knew, the knowledge of the Most High - With the addition of these words, which point to the greater importance and the more distinctly predictive character of what follows, the introduction to this last parable is the same as the introduction to the preceding parable.

Verse 17

Render, I see him, though he be not now: I behold him, though he be not near. Balaam here describes what is actually before him in inward vision.

Him - i. e., the prince, represented in the succeeding words by the Star and Scepter. The star has among all nations served as a symbol of regal power and splendour: and the birth and future glory of great monarchs were believed by the ancients to be heralded by the appearance of stars or comets: compare also Isaiah 14:12; Daniel 8:10; Revelation 1:16, Revelation 1:20; Revelation 2:1; Revelation 9:1.

The corners of Moab - literally, "the two sides of Moab," i. e., the length and breadth of the land: compare Jeremiah 48:45.

Destroy all the children of Sheth - Rather, "overthrow the sons of tumult," i. e., the warriors of Moab, whose valour and fierceness is frequently referred to elsewhere (compare Exodus 15:15; Isaiah 15:4; Isaiah 16:6, etc.) Compare Jeremiah 48:45.

Verse 18

Seir - The older name of the mountain-land, south of Moab, and east of the Arabah, which the Edomites inhabited Genesis 32:3; Genesis 36:8-9.

Verse 19

Destroy him that remaineth of the city - i. e., shall destroy those of every city that had previously escaped. The phrase tersely describes a conqueror who first defeats his enemies in battle, and then hunts out the fugitives until he has cut off all of every place (compare 1 Kings 11:16).

The victories of David were a partial accomplishment of the predictions Numbers 24:14, Numbers 24:18, but did not exhaust them.

It is apparent that Edom and Moab are named by Balaam, as they are also by the prophets (compare e. g., Isaiah 11:14), as representatives of the pagan nations Numbers 24:8 who were hostile to the theocracy. As Jacob therefore figures as a constant type of the kingdom of Messiah in the prophets, so do Edom and Joab of the enemies of that kingdom; and in the threatened ruin of Edom and Moab is indicated the eventual destruction of all that resist the kingdom of God in its power.

The "Star" and "Sceptre" of the prophecy, like the "Sceptre" and "Lawgiver" of Genesis 49:10, point also naturally to a line of princes rather than to an individual; or rather are emblems of the kingdom of Israel generally. Thus, the victories of David and his successors, generation after generation, over Edom and Moab, are unquestionably recurring and progressive accomplishments of what Balaam foretold; but in addition the prophecy reaches forward to some further and culminating accomplishment; and that too in "the latter days" Numbers 24:14, the ordinary prophetic designation for the time of the Messiah (compare the marginal references).

To a Christian the connection between the Star and Seeptre of Balaam and the Star of the king of the Jews, which the wise men saw Matthew 2:2, is self-evident.

Verse 20

When he looked - i. e., in spirit, as he saw the Star Numbers 24:17.

Amalek was the first of the nations - Rather, is pre-eminent among the neighboring nations: compare the same expression in Amos 6:1. Hence, the force of the words Numbers 24:7 "higher than Agag," i. e., than the king of this powerful nation (compare Numbers 14:45; Exodus 17:8). This rank, due to the warlike prowess of the tribe, Balaam contrasts with its approaching downfall and extinction.

Verse 21

The Kenites - First mentioned Genesis 15:19 as one of the tribes whose territory was promised to Abraham. In Judges 1:16, where we read of them

as moving with the children of Judah, to establish themselves in the pastures south of Arad, Moses‘ father-in-law is spoken of as a Kenite (compare Judges 4:11). It appears therefore, since Moses‘ father-in-law was a prince or priest of Midian (Exodus 2:15 ff), that the Kenites must have been of Midianite extraction, and so descended from Abraham through Keturah Genesis 25:2.

But it seems unlikely that the Kenites of Genesis 15:19, who were to be dispossessed by the descendants of Abraham, were identical with those of whom Balaam speaks, and who were, because of good offices rendered at the time of the Exodus, always regarded as kinsmen and friends by Israel (compare 1 Samuel 15:6; 1 Samuel 27:10). Rather, is it probable that the Kenites of Genesis 15:19 were a Canaanite people, who derived their name from the city Kain, which fell eventually within the borders of the tribe of Judah Joshua 15:22; and that the descendants of Hobab, who appear in Judges 1:16 as making war in this very district, possessed themselves of this city, and with it of the name Kenite also. This they would seem to have already done when Balsam uttered his prediction; and in the next verse it is, as the margin correctly indicates, not of the Kenite, but of Kain the city, that he speaks. Nor is it surprising to find them in possession of their new abode in the promised land, while the Israelites were yet in their tents. It may well be that this roving band of Midianites had already entered Canaan, perhaps along the shores of the Dead Sea, and by routes impracticable for the huge host of Israel, and had, as a kind of advanced guard, made a beginning of the conquest of the country.

From 1 Chronicles 2:54-55, we learn that the Rechabites were a branch of the Kenites; and the name Salmaites, always given to the Kenites in the Targums, connects them with Salma, the son of Caleb, there mentioned. Judges 1:16. But there is another site, about 10 miles south of Engedi, to which Balaam‘s words would be more appropriate, on the summit of the cliff rising perpendicularly from the level of the western shore of the Dead Sea, where was afterward built the city of Masada, the scene of the closing tragedy of the Jewish-Roman war. It is not likely that such a natural fortress would ever have been unoccupied, or even excluded from a place in the list of the cities of Judah. Nor is there any site in the Holy land which a rude but warlike people might more fittingly designate as either Ken, the Nest, or Kain, the Possession.

Verse 22

Render, For Kain shall surely not be destroyed (literally "be for destruction") until Asshur, etc. The words are not, as they appear in the King James Version, a prediction of evil to the Kenites, but a promise, on the contrary, of safety to be long continued to them (compare Numbers 10:32; Jeremiah 35:19).

Verse 23

When God doeth this - The eventual carrying away of the allies of Israel by Assyria presented itself to Balaam as the ruin of all peace and safety upon earth. One prediction was howerer, yet wanting, and is next given, namely, that the conquerors of the Kenites should fare no better than the Kenites themselves.

Verse 24

Chittim - i. e., Cyprus, the nearest of the western islands, the only one visible from Palestine, and so the representative to Balsam and to Israel of all those unknown western regions across the Mediterranean Sea, from which were at length to come the conquerors of the mighty empires of the East. Compare Isaiah 23:1, Isaiah 23:12; Jeremiah 2:10.

Eber - i. e., the descendants of Shem. Of these Asshur was one (compare marginal references), and is here specified by name, since the Assyrians attained, in the empires of Babylon and Nineveh, to an extraordinary grandeur, and were destined to a most signal and irretrievable fall.

He also - i. e., the conqueror of Asshur and Eber who should come across the sea. It is not revealed from where the blow should come that should overthrow in its turn the power that prevailed over the great monarchies of the East.

Verse 25

Returned to his own place - i. e., among the Midianites to plot by new means against the people of God, and to perish in his sin Numbers 31:8, Numbers 31:16; Revelation 2:14.

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CHAPTER 25

Verse 1

The records of the neighboring cities of the plain, and the circumstances of the origin of Moab (Genesis 19:30 ff) suggest that the people among whom Israel was now thrown were more than ordinarily licentious.

Verse 2

And they called - i. e., "the daughters of Moab called."

Verse 3

Joined himself - i. e., by taking part in the sacrificial meals as described in the last verse. Compare Exodus 34:15; 1 Corinthians 10:18. The worship of Baal was attended with the grossest impurity, and indeed partly consisted in it Hosea 4:14; Hosea 9:10.

Baal-peor - i. e., the Baal worshipped at Peer, the place mentioned in Numbers 23:28 (compare Baal-meon, Numbers 32:38). (The identification of this god with Chemosh in Numbers 21:29 is now given up.)

Verse 4

Take - i. e., assemble the chiefs of the people to thee (compare the phrase "took men," in Numbers 16:1). The offenders were to be first; slain by the hands of "the judges of Israel" Numbers 25:5, and afterward hung up "against the sun" (i. e., publicly, openly; compare 2 Samuel 12:12) as an aggravation of their punishment. This would be done by impaling the body or fastening it to a cross. Compare Deuteronomy 21:23 note, and 2 Samuel 21:9.

Verse 6

A Midianite woman - literally, "the Midianite woman," the particular one by whom he had been enticed (compare Numbers 25:15 and Numbers 31:18). Her high rank proves that Zimri had not fallen in with her by mere chance, but had been deliberately singled out by the Midianites as one whom they must at any price lead astray.

Weeping before the door of the tabernacle - The plague Numbers 25:9 had already broken out among the people: and the more God-fearing had assembled at the door of the tabernacle of God (compare the marginal reference.) to intercede for mercy, when Zimri committed the fresh and public outrage just described.

Verse 8

Into the tent - The inner recess in the tent, fashioned archwise, and appropriated as the sleeping-chamber and women‘s apartment.

Verse 9

Twenty and four thousand - Paul 1 Corinthians 10:8 says “three and twenty thousand,” following probably the Jewish tradition which deducted one thousand as the number slain by the hands of their brethren.

Verse 11

Hath turned my wrath away - The signal example thus made of a leading offender by Phinehas was accepted by God as an expiation (literally in Numbers 25:13 “covering;” see the note at the typical significance Leviticus 1:4), and the exterminating wrath which had gone forth against the whole people was arrested Psalm 106:30.

The act of Phinehas must be regarded as exceptional. It was an extraordinary deed of vengeance, justified by the singular atrocity of the crime which provoked it; but it does not confer the right to every man to punish summarily any gross and flagrant breach of divine law committed in his presence. Compare the act of Mattathias (Numbers 31:6; Joshua 22:13).

Verse 12

My covenant of peace - Equivalent to “the covenant of My peace.” God established with Phinehas in particular that covenant which He had made generally with all his people; and among its blessings peace is especially mentioned, because of the peace between God and the congregation which Phinehas had brought about. As an additional gift there is assigned to him and his seed forever the office of peace-making, the legitimate function of the priesthood (compare Ephesians 2:14); and the covenant was thus to him a covenant not only of peace but of life (compare the marginal reference). Phinehas became highpriest after the death of his father Eleazar, and the office, with a short interruption from the days of Eli to those of David, when for unknown reasons it was filled by the descendants of his uncle Ithamar, was perpetuated in his line; nor indeed is it known to have departed from that line again until the typical priesthood of the sons of Aaron was merged in the actual priesthood of the Saviour of mankind.

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CHAPTER 26

Introduction

The mustering of the tribes described in this chapter was immediately preparatory to the war against Midian, and to the invasion of Canaan wbich shortly followed. With a view also to an equitable allotment of the land to be conquered (compare Numbers 26:54) the numbers of the several tribes were taken according to their families.

Verse 1

After the plague - These words serve to show approximately the date at which the census was taken, and intimate the reason for the great decrease in numbers which was found to have taken place in certain tribes. Compare Deuteronomy 4:3 and Numbers 26:5 note in this chapter.

Verse 5

Following The tribes are mentioned in the same order as in the earlier census Numbers 25:14. Probably his tribesmen generally had followed his example, and had accordingly suffered most severely in the plague. In the parting blessing of Moses, uttered at no great interval from this date, the tribe of Simeon alone is omitted.

The families of all the tribes, excluding the Levites, number 57. The ancestral heads after whom these families are named correspond nearly with the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Jacob, enumerated in Genesis 46:8 ff. Both lists consist mainly of grandchildren of Jacob, both contain also the same two grandchildren of Judah, and the same two grandchildren of Asher. The document in Genesis should be regarded as a list, not of those who went down in their own persons with Jacob into Egypt, but of those whose names were transmitted to their posterity at the date of the Exodus as the heads of Israelite houses, and wire may thus be reckoned the early ancestors of the people.

Verse 10

Together with Korah - i. e., they were engulfed at the same time that Korah perished, for Korah himself appears to bare died among the two hundred and fifty incense offerers at the door of the tabernacle, not with Dathan and Abiram (compare Numbers 16:32 note).

Verse 11

The children of Korah died not - Compare Numbers 26:58. Samuel the prophet was of this family, and Heman, "the king's seer" 1 Chronicles 6:22, 1 Chronicles 6:33; 1 Chronicles 25:5. Several of the Psalms appear from the titles to have been composed for the sons of Korah: compare titles of Psalm 42:1-11; 44; 45, etc.

Verse 51

This shows a decrease of 1,820 from the number at Sinai; a decrease due to the recent plague.

Verse 56

According to the lot … - This method was adopted not only in order to preclude jealousies and disputes, but also that the several tribes might regard the territories as determined for them by God Himself: compare Proverbs 16:33.

Verse 59

whom her mother bare - literally, "whom she bare;" the subject is wanting, and the verb is in the feminine gender. The words "her mother" are merely conjectural. The text is probably imperfect.

Verse 62

The total number of male Levites, 23,000, shows an increase of 1,000 on the number at Sinai Numbers 3:39. It is doubtless to be taken as a round number; and, as before, includes the male children from a month old and upward, as well as the male adults.

Verse 64

It appears from Deuteronomy 2:14-15 that the generation numbered at the former census had perished before the host crossed the brook Zered.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Verse 1

Women in Israel had not, up to the present time, enjoyed any distinct right of inheritance. Yet a father, whether sons had been born to him or not, had the power, either before or at his death, to cause part of his estate to pass to a daughter; in which case her husband married into her family rather than she into his, and the children were regarded as of the family from which the estate had come. Thus, Machir, ancestor of Zelophehad, although he had a son Gilead, left also, as is probable, an inheritance to his daughter, the wife of Hezron of the tribe of Judah, by reason of which their descendants, among whom was Jair, were reckoned as belonging to the tribe of Manasseh (Numbers 32:41; 1 Chronicles 2:21 ff).

Verse 2

By the door of the tabernacle of the congregation - The place of solemn assembly of the elders. The daughters of Zelophehad made their suit to the princes, the heads of tribes and of families, who were making the census under the superintendence of Moses and Eleazar.

Verse 3

But died in his own sin - i. e., perished under the general sentence of exclusion from the land of promise passed on all the older generation, but limited to that generation alone. By virtue of the declaration in Numbers 14:31 the daughters of Zelophehad claim that their father‘s sin should not be visited upon them.

Verse 4

Give unto us - As representing our father; that so he, through us his representatives, may enjoy a like inheritance with his brethren.

Verse 12

Mount Abarim - See Numbers 21:20 note.

Verse 16

The God of the spirits of all flesh - An acknowledgment that man, who is but flesh (compare Genesis 6:3), is of himself helpless; and “lives and moves and has his being” in God Acts 17:28. The words are suitably employed here to introduce an entreaty that God would not leave the congregation without a guide and leader, and in Numbers 16:22 as a preface to an intercession that the whole people should not suffer for the sin of a, few.

Verse 18

In whom is the spirit Compare Genesis 41:38. Joshua was endowed by God with the requisite spiritual qualifications for the office. Moses howerer, was to lay his hands upon him, both in order to confer formal and public appointment, and also (compare Deuteronomy 34:9) to confirm and strengthen the spiritual gifts already bestowed. The previous reception of the inner grace did not dispense with that of the outward sign; compare the case of Cornelius Acts 10:44-48; and Paul‘s baptism after his miraculous conversion Acts 9:18.

Verse 20

Of thine honor - i. e., of thy dignity and authority (compare Numbers 11:17, Numbers 11:28). Joshua was constituted immediately vice-leader under Moses, by way of introduction to his becoming chief after Moses‘ death.

Verse 21

And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest … - Joshua was thus to be inferior to what Moses had been. For Moses had enjoyed the privilege of unrestricted direct contact with God: Joshua, like all future rulers of Israel, was to ask counsel mediately, through the High Priest and those means of inquiring of God wherewith the high priest was entrusted. Such counsel Joshua seems to have omitted to seek when he concluded his hasty treaty with the Gibeonites (Joshua 9:3 ff).

Judgment of Urim - See Exodus 28:30 note.

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CHAPTER 28

Verse 1

The daily offering had been already commanded Exodus 29:38, and no doubt additional offerings had become customary on festivals. But no such elaborate system as is here prescribed was or could possibly have been observed in the wilderness: compare Deuteronomy 12:8-9. The regulations of this and the next chapter therefore point to the immediate prospect of that settlement in Canaan which alone could enable the Israelites to obey them. Compare the ordinances in Numbers 15.

Verse 2

My offering, and my bread … - Or, my offering, even my bread, etc. Offering is here קרבן *qorbân* (compare Leviticus 1:2; Mark 7:11), a term in itself of quite general import, but often especially applied, as apparently in this instance, to the meat-offering which accompanied the sacrifices. This meat-offering connected itself, from its very nature, with the life of the Israelites in Canaan, not with their life in the wilderness; and it was annexed to the animal sacrifices as a token that the people must dedicate to God their property and the fruits of their labor as well as their own persons. See Numbers 15:2 note and Leviticus 21:6.

Verse 7

The original of the word "strong wine" שׁכר *shêkār* is a term usually employed to describe strong drink other than wine (Leviticus 10:9 note). The Israelites in the wilderness had, in their lack of wine, substituted shechar made from barley for it. They had thus observed the spirit, though not the letter of the ordinance. The drink-offering was either poured round the foot of the altar; or on the altar, and so upon the flesh of the sacrifice by which the altar was covered (compare Exodus 30:9).

Verse 9-10

The Sabbath-offering, not previously enjoined, consisted of two lambs, properly accompanied, in addition to the regular daily offering.

Verses 11-15

The New-moon offering is here also commanded for the first time. The goat as a sin-offering, though mentioned last, would seem in fact to have been offered first (compare the precedents in Numbers 15:22-26 had been contemplated in cases where a sin had been committed ignorantly without the knowledge of the congregation, was henceforth not to be offered merely

at discretion, as circumstances might seem to require, but to be regularly repeated, not less frequently than once a month.

Verses 16-25

The Passover offering was the same as that of the New moon, and was repeated on each of the seven days of the festival, thus marking the importance and the solemnity of the occasion. The details of the offering had not been previously prescribed.

Verses 26-31

The festival offering at the season of first-fruits was to be offered on one day only; and was the same with that of the new moon and Passover. It nearly though not entirely accords with the sacrificial offering prescribed in Leviticus 23:18 ff.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 29

Verses 1-6

The ordinance of the Feast of Trumpets was to be observed on the opening day of that month within which the great Day of the Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles fell (compare Leviticus 23:23 ff). The special offering for the day anticipated that of the great Day of Atonement.

Verses 7-11

The offering on the great Day of Atonement was the same with that just specified. The great ceremonies of the day are described in Leviticus 16.

Verses 12-34

Feast of tabernacles: compare Leviticus 23:33 ff. The offerings required at this feast were the largest of all. It was especially one of thankfulness to God for the gift of the fruits of the earth; and the quantity and the nature of the offerings (see Numbers 29:7-11) were determined accordingly.

Numbers 29:32

Stress is laid on the number seven, the holy symbolic covenant number, by way of intimation that the mercies of the harvest accrued by virtue of God‘s covenant. The diminishing number of bullocks sacrificed on the preceding days of the Feast (compare Numbers 29:13, Numbers 29:17, etc.), is adjusted simply to obtain the coincidence before us on the seventh day; but some have thought that the gradual evanescence of the Law until the time of its absorption in the Gospel is here presignified in the Law itself.

Verses 35-38

The offerings prescribed for the closing day of the Feast of tabernacles were the same with those appointed for the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement. The solemnities of the month thus terminated, as

A whole, with the same sacrifices with which, three weeks before, they had been introduced; and the Day of Atonement, even though succeeded by the rejoicings of the Feast of tabernacles, thus left its impress on the whole month.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 30

Verses 1-6

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CHAPTER 31

Verse 2

The Midianites - The Moabites are not included. It would thus seem that it was the Midianites, and they only, who deliberately set themselves to work the corruption of Israel.

Verse 3

Avenge the Lord of Midian - The war against the Midianites was no ordinary war. It was indeed less a war than the execution of a divine sentence against a most guilty people.

Doubtless there were many among the Midianites who were personally guiltless as regards Israel. But the rulers deliberately adopted the counsel of Balaam against Israel, and their behests had been but too readily obeyed by their subjects. The sin therefore was national, and the retribution could be no less so.

But the commission of the Israelites in the text must not be conceived as a general license to slay. They had no discretion to kill or to spare. They were bidden to exterminate without mercy, and brought back to their task Numbers 31:14 when they showed signs of flinching from it. They had no alternarive in this and similar matters except to fulfill the commands of God; an awful but doubtless salutary manifestation, as was afterward the slaughter of the Canaanites, of God‘s wrath against sin; and a type of the future extermination of sin and sinners from His kingdom.

Verse 5

Were delivered - Or, “were told off.”

Verse 6

Phinehas - He was marked out as the fitting director of the expedition by his conduct (compare Numbers 25:7-13) in the matter of Zimri and Cozbi.

With the holy instruments, and the trumpets - Or rather, “with the holy instruments, to wit, the trumpets,” for the trumpets themselves seem to be the instruments intended.

Verse 8

And they slew … were slain … - Render: And the kings of Midian they put to death, beside those that fell in the battle; namely, etc. From which it

would seem that beside these five, put to death after the battle, there were other Midianite kings who perished fighting. The five chieftains here mentioned were vassals of Sihon the Amorite Joshua 13:21.

Verse 10

Goodly castles - Rather, both here and in Genesis 25:16, hamlets. The word is derived from a word טוּר *ṭûr* signifying "a row" or "range" (compare Ezekiel 46:23); and probably indicates those collections of rude dwellings, made of stones piled one on another and covered with tent-cloths, which are used by the Arabs to this day; and which are frequently mentioned as douars in narratives of the French campaigns in Algeria. These dwellings would be formed usually in a circle. See the word "Hazeroth," in Numbers 11:35.

Verse 11

The "prey" refers to the captives and live-stock: the "spoil" to the ornaments and other effects.

Verse 16

Caused … to commit trespass - More literally, "became to the children of Israel for a cause (or, incitement) of treachery to the Lord."

Verse 22

Brass - Render copper. See Genesis 4:22 note. The verse is curious as illustrating the variety of metals in use at this early date for domestic purposes. All these metals were common in Egypt centuries before the date of the Exodus.

Verse 29

An heave-offering - Render simply an offering, and compare Numbers 18:24. The verb from which the word here rendered "heave-offering" is derived, is rightly translated "levy" in Numbers 31:28.

Verse 32

Compare Numbers 31:11, and render "And the prey" (i. e., the live prey) "in addition to the spoil which the men of war seized, etc." The "spoil" is described in Numbers 31:50.

The number of sheep, beeves, asses, and persons taken is given in this and following verses in round thousands. Hence, the Lord's tribute (Numbers 31:29, Numbers 31:37-38, etc.), being the 500th part of the half, comes out also in round numbers. The enormous amount both of live stock and of personal ornament was characteristic of the Midianites. When they invaded Israel in the days of the Judges, their wealth was still of the same

kind (Judges 6:5; Judges 8:24 ff). The Bedouins, notwithstanding their wild nomadic life, retain their ancestral love of finery to the present day.

Verse 49

There is no mention of any resistance on the part of the Midianites. The Israelites saw in this and in the preservation of all those engaged, proofs that the Lord had been with them in the work, and hence, the free-will oblation of Numbers 31:50.

Verse 50

The "chains" were "armlets" 2 Samuel 1:10. The "rings" were "finger-rings," or "seal-rings;" and the "tablets" were worn suspended from the neck Exodus 35:22.

To make an atonement for our souls before the Lord - Compare Exodus 30:11-16. The atonement was not for any special offence committed (which would have called for a sacrifice of blood-shedding), but rather like the half-shekel given at the census in the Book of Exodus (loc. cite), was an acknowledgment of having received undeserved mercies. These, if unacknowledged, would have entailed guilt on the soul.

Verse 52

The value of the offering was about 20,000 British pounds.

Verse 53

This verse seems to imply that the soldiers, as distinct from the officers (compare Numbers 31:49), did not make any offering from their plunder. Of course besides the gold there would be much spoil of less precious materials; see Numbers 31:20, Numbers 31:22.

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CHAPTER 32

Introduction

The record of the last war to the east of the Jordan is followed by the assignment of the lands already conquered to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and to certain families of the tribe of Manasseh.

Verse 1

Jazer - Compare the marginal reference. This district, although included in the land of Gilead, seems to have had special attractions for the Israelite settlers. All travelers in Gilead, the modern Belka, bear witness to its richness as compared with the country to the west of the Jordan. Its general character is that of an upland pasture, undulating and thickly timbered. In the last respect its northern portions excel its southern; but for fertility of soil the southern province is preferred by the Arabs, in whose lips it has passed into a proverb: "Thou canst not find a country like the Belka."

Verse 3

See Numbers 32:34-38 notes.

Verse 8

Your fathers - The generation of the Exodus was now substantially extinct. Compare Numbers 26:64-65.

Kadesh-barnea - See Numbers 13:26.

Verse 12

The Kenezite - Kenaz Genesis 36:11 was the name of one of the "dukes of Edom:" but Israel and Edom were of kindred origin, and the use of similar names by the two peoples is not surprising.

Verse 23

Be sure your sin will find you out - literally, "know ye your sin that it will find you out." Moses implies that their sin would eventually bring its own punishment along with it.

Verse 27

Before the Lord - i. e., immediately in front of the sacred tokens of the Lord's presence; compare Numbers 10:17 note.

Verse 33

Half the tribe of Manasseh - That is, (compare Numbers 32:39; Joshua 17:1) the families of Machir. Moses, when assigning to the pastoral tribes the inheritance which they desired, appropriated to these Manassites especially the district they had already subdued, as a reward for their valour

and exploits. Thus the whole of the conquered country was provisionally disposed of, and the forwardness anti valour of the Machirites rewarded. It seems clear from Numbers 32:39 and Joshua 17:1, that the claims of the Machirites arose simply out of their exploits.

Verses 34-36

The cities here named fall into three groups. On Dibon, compare Numbers 21:19. The Moabite stone was discovered here in 1868. This city, occupied on the first acquisition of the territory by the Gadites, and assigned by Joshua to the Reubenites, was eventually recaptured by the Moabites, in whose hands it remained. Ataroth, i. e., "crowns" (Attarus?) was seven miles northwest of Dibon. Aroer (Arair) lay between Dibon and the Arnon.

Atroth, Shophan - , was Atroth-Shophan, i. e., Atroth, or Ataroth of Shophan, or "of the burrow;" thus distinguished from the Ataroth named in the verse preceding from which it was probably not far distant. These four cities may be styled the Dibon settlement.

Numbers 32:35

Jaazer - (compare Numbers 32:1) with the neighboring "Jogbehah" (Jebeiha), seven miles to the northeast, formed the second group.

Numbers 32:36

The third Gadite settlement lay in the valley of the Jordan, to the west of the preceding. It comprised the cities of Bethnimrah (Nimrun) and "Beth-haran" (Beit-ha-ran).

Verse 37-38

The Reubenites established themselves more compactly than the Gadites. Elcalch (el-'Al) a mile to the northeast; Nebo (Nebbeh) probably three miles to the southwest; Baal-meon (Main) nearly two miles to the south; Kirjathaim (Kureiyat?): and Shibmah, more properly Sibmah, famous at a later period for its vines (compare Isaiah 16:8), four miles east of Heshbon; all clustered round the old Amorite Capital. The Reubenites probably retained at the partition all these cities with the exception of Heshbon, which, passing to the Levites, were thenceforth reckoned as within the tribe of Gad.

Neither the Reubenites nor the Gadites were "builders" in the sense of founders of the cities of which they thus took possession. They probably fortified them, for the first time or afresh, so as to render them places of

safety for their families during the campaigns on the other side of the Jordan; and provided them with all conveniences for their flocks and herds.

Verse 39

The children of Machir - Machir, the son of Manasseh, was long since dead: even his sons had been brought up upon Joseph‘s knees Genesis 50:23. But the renown acquired by his descendants raised his family almost to the dignity of a tribe; and the Machirites are in the next verse styled Machir, just as the children of Judah or of Ephraim are often spoken of as Judah or Ephraim. So in Judges 5:14 Machir is coupled with Ephraim and Zebulun.

Went - i. e., “had gone:” the statement is preparatory to the ensuing record of the grant to them of the land they had won.

Gilead - More strictly part of north Gilead; which, though inhabited by the Amorites, had belonged to the kingdom of Og. Gilead was the district from which had sprung the ancestress of the Machirites (compare 1 Chronicles 7:14).

Verse 41

The exploits of Jair - he was the conqueror of Argob Deuteronomy 3:14 - gave new. luster to his name; and the fame of the family is attested by the history of Jair the Israelite judge, doubtless a descendant; perhaps also by the mention of Jairus Luke 8:41, the ruler of the synagogue at the neighboring city of Capernaum.

Havoth-jair - That is, the villages, or rather groups of tents, or “kraals,” of Jair. Originally they were twenty-three in number 1 Chronicles 2:22: in the days of the youuger Jair, to whom they probably descended by inheritance, they either had increased to thirty, or were reckoned at that round number Judges 10:4.

Verse 42

Kenath - Now Kenawat, an important site near the southern extremity of the tract el-Lejah, and on the western slopes of the mountains of the Hauran. The name given to it by its conqueror, as in other cases, fell ere long into disuse, and the old name has held its ground to this day.

The notices, both Scriptural and traditional, of the conquest of northeastern Gilead and Bashan by the Machirites, plainly intimate that it was effected by a few chiefs of great military prowess, who overran rapidly a far larger district than they could colonize. The father of Jair, however,

Segub, was of the tribe of Judah (compare Numbers 27:1, and note; 1 Chronicles 2:21-22), and it is likely that the Manassite leaders induced many of the more adventurous of this tribe, and some possibly of other tribes, to join them in their enterprise against Bashan (see Joshua 19:34).

The Machirites did not exterminate the whole population of this district (see Joshua 13:15, etc.). The conquest of the district east of Jordan seems never to have been so effectually accomplished as that on the other side.

During the troublous times of the Judges the eastern Manassites rendered good service to the nation; compare Judges 5:14. Gideon, and probably Jephthah, were of this tribe, and reflect in a later generation the warlike and adventurous spirit which Jair and Nobah exhibited in the days of Moses.

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CHAPTER 33

Verses 1-49

This list was written out by Moses at God‘s command Numbers 33:2, doubtless as a memorial of God‘s providential care for His people throughout this long and trying period.

Numbers 33:3-6. For these places, see the marginal reference.

Numbers 33:8

Pi-hahiroth - Hebrew “Hahiroth,” but perhaps only by an error of transcription. However, the omitted “pi” is only a common Egyptian prefix.

Wilderness of Etham - i. e., that part of the great wilderness of Shur which adjoined Etham; compare Exodus 15:22 note.

The list of stations up to that at Sinai agrees with the narrative of Exodus except that we have here mentioned Numbers 33:10 an encampment by the Red Sea, and two others, Dophkah and Alush Numbers 33:12-14, which are there omitted. On these places see Exodus 17:1 note.

Numbers 33:16, Numbers 33:17

See the Numbers 11:35 note.

Numbers 33:18

Rithmah - The name of this station is derived from retem, the broom-plant, the “juniper” of the King James Version. This must be the same encampment as that which is said in Numbers 13:26 to have been at Kadesh.

Numbers 33:19

Rimmon-parez - Or rather Rimmon-perez, i. e., “Rimmon (i. e., the Pomegranate) of the Breach.” It may have been here that the sedition of Korah occurred.

Verse 19-36

The stations named are those visited during the years of penal wandering. The determination of their positions is, in many cases, difficult, because during this period there was no definite line of march pursued. But it is probable that the Israelites during this period did not overstep the boundaries of the wilderness of Paran (as defined in Numbers 10:12), except to pass along the adjoining valley of the Arabah; while the tabernacle and organized camp moved about from place to place among them (compare Numbers 20:1).

Rissah, Haradah, and Tahath are probably the same as Rasa, Aradeh, and Elthi of the Roman tables. The position of Hashmonah (Heshmon in Joshua 15:27) in the Azazimeh mountains points out the road followed by the children of Israel to be that which skirts the southwestern extremity of Jebel Magrah.

Numbers 33:34

Ebronah - i. e, "passage." This station apparently lay on the shore of the Elanitic gulf, at a point where the ebb of the tide left a ford across. Hence, the later Targum renders the word as "fords."

Numbers 33:35

Ezion-gaber - "Giant's backbone." The Wady Ghadhyan, a valley running eastward into the Arabah some miles north of the present head of the Elanitic gulf. A salt marsh which here overspreads a portion of the Arabah may be taken as indicating the limit to which the sea anciently reached; and we may thus infer the existence here in former times of an extensive tidal haven, at the head of which the city of Ezion-geber stood. Here it was that from the time of Solomon onward the Jewish navy was constructed 1 Kings 9:26; 1 Kings 22:49.

Numbers 33:41-49

Zalmonah and Punon are stations on the Pilgrim's road; and the general route is fairly ascertained by a comparison of these verses with Numbers 21:4, etc.

Verses 50-56

The expulsion of the Canaanites and the destruction of their monuments of idolatry had been already enjoined (see the marginal references); and Numbers 33:54 is substantially a repetition from Numbers 33:55-56 is new. A call for it had been furnished by their past transgressions in the matter of Baal-peor, and by their imperfect fulfillment, at the first, of Moses' orders in the Midianite war.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 34

Verse 2

The land of Canaan - The name Canaan is here restricted to the territory west of the Jordan.

Verses 3-5

The southern boundary commenced at the Dead Sea. The broad and desolate valley by which the depressed bed of that sea is protected toward the south, is called the Ghor. A deep narrow glen enters it at its southwest corner; it is called Wady-el-Fikreh, and is continued in the same southwestern direction, under the name of Wady el-Marrah; a wady which loses itself among the hills belonging to "the wilderness of Zin;" and Kadesh-barnea (see Numbers 13:26 note), which is "in the wilderness of Zin," will be, as the text implies, the southernmost point of the southern boundary. Thence, if Kadesh be identical with the present Ain el-Weibeh, westward to the river, or brook of Egypt, now Wady el-Arish, is a distance of about seventy miles. In this interval were Hazar-addar and Azmon; the former being perhaps the general name of a district of Hazerim, or nomad hamlets (see Deuteronomy 2:23), of which Adder was one: and Azmon, perhaps to be identified with Kesam, the modern Kasaimeh, a group of springs situate in the north of one of the gaps in the ridge, and a short distance west of Ain el-Kudeirat.

(Others consider the boundary line to have followed the Ghor along the Arabah to the south of the Azazimeh mountains, thence to Gadis round the southeast of that mountain, and thence to Wady el-Arish.)

Verses 7-9

The northern border. On the "Mount Hor," compare Numbers 20:22 note. Here the name denotes the whole western crest of Mount Lebanon, 80 miles in length, commencing east of Zidon, and terminating with the point immediately above the entrance of Hamath (compare Numbers 13:21). The extreme point in the northern border of the land was the city of Zedad (Sadad), about 30 miles east of the entrance of Hamath. Hence, the border turned back southwestward to Ziphron (Zifran), about 40 miles northeast of Damascus. Hazar-enan may be conjecturally identified with Ayun ed-Dara, a fountain situate in the very heart of the great central chain of Antilibanus.

Verses 10-12

Shepham, the first point after Hazar-enan, is unknown. The name Riblah is by some read Har-bel, i. e., "the Mountain of Bel;" the Har-baal-Hermon of Judges 3:3. No more striking landmark could be set forth than the summit of Hermon, the southernmost and by far the loftiest peak of the whole Antilibanus range, rising to a height of 10,000 feet, and overtopping every other mountain in the Holy land. Ain, i. e. the fountain, is understood to be the fountain of the Jordan; and it is in the plain at the southwestern foot of Hermon that the two most celebrated sources of that river, those of Daphne and of Paneas, are situate.

The "sea of Chinnereth" is better known by its later name of Gennesaret, which is supposed to be only a corruption of Chinnereth. The border ran parallel to this sea, along the line of hill about 10 miles further east.

Verses 16-29

Of the representatives now selected through Moses beforehand, who were all princes, i. e. heads of chief families, in their respective tribes (see Numbers 13:2), Caleb alone, of the tribe of Judah, is otherwise known to us (see Numbers 13:4 ff). The order in which the tribes are named is peculiar to this passage. If they be taken in pairs, Judah and Simeon, Benjamin and Dan, Manasseh and Ephraim, Zebulun and Issachar, Asher and Naphtali, the order of the pairs agrees with the order in which the allotments in the Holy land, taken also in couples, followed each other in the map from south to north.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 35

Verse 2

Suburbs - Rather, "pasture-grounds," required for their large cattle, for their sheep and goats, and for all their beasts whatever they might be Numbers 35:3.

Verse 5

From without the city - Omit "from." The demarcation here intended would run parallel to the wall of the city, outside which it was made. To guard against any restrictions of area, due to such causes as the irregular forms of the cities or the physical obstacles of the ground, it was ordained that the suburb should, alike on north, south, east, and west, present, at a distance of one thousand cubits (or, nearly one-third of a mile) from the wall, a front not less than two thousand cubits in length; and, by joining the extremities of these measured fronts according to the nature of the ground, a sufficient space for the Levites would be secured.

Verse 6

The Levitical cities were in an special manner the Lord's; and therefore the places of refuge, where the manslayer might remain under the protection of a special institution devised by divine mercy, were appropriately selected from among them. No doubt also the Priests and Levites would be the fittest persons to administer the law in the doubtful cases which would be sure to occur: compare Numbers 35:24 note.

Verse 8

Nine cities were eventually given to the Levites from the large joint inheritance of Judah and Simeon; three were taken from the territory of Naphtali, and the other tribes gave each four apiece.

Verse 12

The avenger - Hebrew גאל *gā'al* a term of which the original import is uncertain. The very obscurity of its etymology testifies to the antiquity of the office which it denotes. That office rested on the principle of Genesis 9:6, "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The unwritten code of the East conceded to the nearest kinsman of a murdered man the right of avenging the blood that had been shed. Such rude justice necessarily involved grave evils. It gave no opportunity to the person charged with crime of establishing is innocence; it recognized no distinction between murder, manslaughter, and accidental homicide; it perpetuated

family blood-feuds, the avenger of blood being liable to be treated in his turn as a murderer by the kinsman of the man whom he had slain. These grievances could not be removed as long as there was no central government, but they might be mitigated; and to do this was the object of the institution in the text (compare Exodus 21:13).

Among the Arab tribes, who are under the control of no central authority, the practice of blood-revenge subsists in full force to the present day.

The congregation - i. e. local court, consisting of the elders of the city Joshua 20:4.

Verses 16-25

The sense is: Inasmuch as to take another man‘s life by any means whatsoever is murder, and exposes the murderer to the penalty of retaliation; so, if the deed is done in hostility, it is in truth actual murder, and the murderer shall be slain; but if it be not done in hostility, then the congregation shall interpose to stop the avenger‘s hand.

Numbers 35:19

When he meeteth him - Provided, of course, it were without a city of refuge.

Numbers 35:24

The case of the innocent slayer is here contemplated. In a doubtful case there would necessarily have to be a judicial decision as to the guilt or innocence of the person who claimed the right of asylum.

Numbers 35:25

The homicide was safe only within the walls of his city of refuge. He became a virtual exile from his home. The provisions here made serve to mark the gravity of the act of manslaughter, even when not premeditated; and the inconveniences attending on them fell, as is right and fair, upon him who committed the deed.

Unto the death of the high priest - The atoning death of the Saviour cast its shadow before on the statute-book of the Law and on the annals of Jewish history. The high priest, as the head and representative of the whole chosen family of sacerdotal mediators, as exclusively entrusted with some of the chief priestly functions, as alone privileged to make yearly atonement within the holy of holies, and to gain, from the mysterious Urim and Thummim, special revelations of the will of God, was, preeminently, a type of Christ. And thus the death of each successive high priest presignified that

death of Christ by which the captives were to be freed, and the remembrance of transgressions made to cease.

Verse 30

By the mouth of witnesses - i. e. two witnesses, at the least (compare the marginal references). The provisions of this and the following verses protect the enactments of this chapter from abuse. The cities of refuge were not intended to exempt a criminal from deserved punishment.

Verse 31

No satisfaction - Rather, ransom (see Exodus 21:30). The permission to demand pecuniary compensation for murders (expressly sanctioned by the Koran) undoubtedly mitigates, in practice, the system of private retaliation; but it does so by sacrificing the principle named in Numbers 35:12, Numbers 35:33.

Verse 34

For I the Lord dwell … - An emphatic protest against all enactment or relaxation of laws by men for their own private convenience.

NUMBERS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 36

Verses 1-13

The daughters of Zelophehad had obtained an ordinance Numbers 28:6-11 which permitted the daughters of an Israelite dying without male issue to inherit their father‘s property. The chiefs of the Machirites, of whom Zelophehad had been one, now obtain a supplemental enactment, directing that heiresses should marry within their own tribe.

Numbers 36:4

Be taken away - i. e. be permanently taken away. The jubilee year, by not restoring the estate to the tribe to which it originally belonged, would in effect confirm the alienation.

Numbers 36:11

Unto their father‘s brothers‘ sons - Or more generally, “unto the sons of their kinsmen.”

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DEUTERONOMY INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Deuteronomy

The ordinary name of the book is derived, through the Septuagint and Vulgate from that sometimes employed by the Jews, “repetition of the Law,” and indicates correctly enough the character and contents of the book.

The bulk of Deuteronomy consists of addresses spoken within the space of 40 days, and beginning on the first day of the 11th month in the 40th year.

The speeches exhibit an unity of style and character which is strikingly consistent with such circumstances. They are pervaded by the same vein of thought, the same tone and tenor of feeling, the same peculiarities of conception and expression. They exhibit matter which is neither documentary nor traditional, but conveyed in the speaker‘s own words.

Their aim is strictly hortatory; their style is earnest, heart-stirring, and impressive. In some passages it is sublime, but rhetorical throughout. They keep constantly in view the circumstances present at that time and the crisis to which the fortunes of Israel had at last been brought throught. Moses had before him not the men to whom by God‘s command he delivered the law at Sinai, but the following generation which had grown up in the wilderness. Large portions of the Law necessarily stood in abeyance during the years of wandering; and of his present hearers many must have been strangers to various prescribed observances and ordinances. Now, however, upon their entry into settled homes in Canaan a thorough discharge of the various obligations laid on them by the covenant would become imperative; and it is to this state of things that Moses addresses himself. He speaks to hearers neither wholly ignorant of the Law, nor yet fully versed in it. Much is assumed and taken for granted in his speeches; but in other matters he goes into detail, knowing that instruction in them was needed. Sometimes little opportunity is taken of promulgating regulations which are supplementary or auxiliary to those of the preceding books; some few modifications arising out of different or altered circumstances are now made; and the whole Mosaic system is completed by the addition of several enactments in Deuteronomy 18:18 had no doubt its partial verifications in

successive ages, but its terms are satisfied in none of them. The prospect opened by it advances continually until it finds its rest in the Messiah, who stands alone as the only complete counterpart of Moses, and as the greater than he. Romans 10:8; Romans 15:11 argues from it at some length, and expressly quotes it as written by Moses; Peter and Stephen Acts 3:22; Acts 7:37 refer to the promise of "a prophet like unto" Moses, and regard it as given, as it professes to be, by Moses himself; our Lord, wielding "the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" against the open assaults of Satan, thrice resorts to Deuteronomy for the texts with which He repels the tempter, Matthew 4:4-10. To urge in reply that the inspiration of the apostles, and even the indwelling of the Spirit "without measure" in the Saviour, would not necessarily preserve them from mistakes on such subjects as the authorship of ancient writings, or to fortify such assertions by remarking that our Lord as the Son of Man was Himself ignorant of some things, is to overlook the important distinction between ignorance and error. To be conscious that much truth lies beyond the range of the intelligence is compatible with the perfection of the creature: but to be deceived by the fraud of others and to fall into error, is not so. To assert then that He who is "the Truth" believed Deuteronomy to be the work of Moses and quoted it expressly as such, though it was in fact a forgery introduced into the world seven or eight centuries after the Exodus, is in effect, even though not in intention, to impeach the perfection and sinlessness of His nature, and seems thus to gainsay the first principles of Christianity.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1-2

These verses are prefixed as a connecting link between the contents of the preceding books and that of Deuteronomy now to follow. The sense of the passage might be given thus: "The discourses of Moses to the people up to the eleventh month of the fortieth year" (compare Deuteronomy 1:3) "have now been recorded." The proper names which follow seem to belong to places where "words" of remarkable importance were spoken. They are by the Jewish commentators referred to the spots which witnessed the more special sins of the people, and the mention of them here is construed as a pregnant rebuke. The Book of Deuteronomy is known among the Jews as "the book of reproofs."

On this side of Jordan - Rather, "beyond Jordan" (as in Deuteronomy 3:20, Deuteronomy 3:25). The phrase was a standing designation for the district east of Jordan, and at times, when Greek became commonly spoken in the country, was exactly represented by the proper name Peraea.

In the wilderness, in the plain - The former term denotes the Desert of Arabia generally; the latter was the sterile tract (‹Arabah,' Numbers 21:4 note) which stretches along the lower Jordan to the Dead Sea, and is continued thence to the Gulf of Akaba.

Over against the Red Sea - Render it: "over against Suph." "Sea" is not in the original text. "Suph" is either the pass Es Sufah near Ain-el-Weibeh (Numbers 13:26 note), or the name of the alluvial district (the Numbers 21:14 note).

Tophel is identified with Tufileh, the Tafyle of Burckhardt, still a considerable place - some little distance southeast of the Dead Sea. Paran is probably "Mount Paran" Deuteronomy 33:2; or a city of the same name near the mountain. Compare Genesis 14:6.

Laban is generally identified with Libnah Numbers 33:20, and Hazeroth with Ain Hadherah (Numbers 11:34 note); but the position of Dizahab is uncertain.

Deuteronomy 1:2

For Kadesh see Numbers 13:26 note; and for Horeb see Exodus 3:1.

Verse 4

Astaroth - On this place compare Genesis 14:5 and note.

In Edrei - These words should, to render the sense clear, come next after "slain." The battle in which Sihon and Og were defeated took place at Edrei.

Verse 5

In the land of Moab - This district had formerly been occupied by the Moabites, and retained its name from them: but had been conquered by the Amorites. Compare Numbers 21:25, note; Numbers 22:5, note.

Declare - Render, explain the Law already declared.

Verse 6

The first and introductory address of Moses to the people is here commenced. It extends to Deuteronomy 4:40; and is divided from the second discourse by the Deuteronomy 1:4:41-49. A summary of the address is given in the chapter-headings usually found in English Bibles.

Verse 7

To the mount of the Amorites - i. e. to the mountain district occupied by the Amorites, reaching into the Negeb, and part of the territory assigned to the tribe of Judah.

Verses 9-15

This appointment of the "captains" (compare Exodus 18:21 ff) must not be confounded with that of the elders in Numbers 11:16 ff. The former would number 78,600; the latter were 70 only.

A comparison between this passage and that in Exodus makes it obvious that Moses is only touching on certain parts of the whole history, without regard to order of time, but with a special purpose. This important arrangement for the good government of the people took place before they left Horeb to march direct to the promised land. This fact sets more clearly before us the perverseness and ingratitude of the people, to which the orator next passes; and shows, what he was anxious to impress, that the fault of the 40 years' delay rested only with themselves!

Verse 19

That great and terrible wilderness - Compare Deuteronomy 8:15. This language is such as people would employ after having passed with toil and suffering through the worst part of it, the southern half of the Arabah (see Numbers 21:4 note); and more especially when they had but recently rested from their marches in the plain of Shittim, the largest and richest oasis in the whole district on the Eastern bank near the mouth of the Jordan.

Verse 22-23

The plan of sending the spies originated with the people; and, as in itself a reasonable one, it approved itself to Moses; it was submitted to God, sanctioned by Him, and carried out under special divine direction. The orator‘s purpose in this chapter is to bring before the people emphatically their own responsibilites and behavior. It is therefore important to remind them, that the sending of the spies, which led immediately to their complaining and rebellion, was their own suggestion.

The following verses to the end of the chapter give a condensed account, the fuller one being in Numbers 1314, of the occurrences which led to the banishment of the people for 40 years into the wilderness.

Verse 37

The sentence on Moses was not passed when the people rebelled during their first encampment at Kadesh, but some 37 years later, when they had re-assembled in the same neighborhood at Meribah (see the Numbers 20:13 note). He alludes to it here as having happened not many months previously, bearing on the facts which were for his purpose in pricking the conscience of the people.

Verse 41

Ye were ready to go up into the hill - Rather, perhaps, “ye made light of going up;” i. e. “ye were ready to attempt it as a trifling undertaking.” Deuteronomy 1:43 shows the issue of this spirit in action; compare marginal references.

Verse 44

The Amorites - In Numbers 14:45, it is “the Amalekites and the Canaanites” who are said to have discomfited them. The Amorites, as the most powerful nation of Canaan, lend their name here, as in other passages (eg. Deuteronomy 1:7) to the Canaanite tribes generally.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verses 1-3

Deuteronomy 2:1 seems to refer in general terms to the long years of wandering, the details of which were not for Moses‘ present purpose. The command of Deuteronomy 2:2-3 relates to their journey from Kadesh to Mount Hor Numbers 20:22; Numbers 33:37, and directs their march around to the southern extremity of Mount Seir, so as to “compass the land of Edom” Judges 11:18; Numbers 21:4, and so northward toward the Arnon, i. e., “by the way of the wilderness of Moab,” Deuteronomy 2:8. This circuitous path was followed because of the refusal of the Edomites to allow the people to pass through their territory.

Verse 4

Compare the marginal reference. Though the Edomites resisted the passage through the midst of their land, they did not, and probably could not, oppose the “passing through the coast” or along their eastern frontier.

Verse 5

I have given mount Seir to Esau - Though the descendants of Esau were conquered by David 2 Samuel 8:14, yet they were not dispossessed of their land, and in the reign of Jehoshaphat they regained their independence 2 Kings 8:20-22.

Verse 8

Elath (Akaba) is at the northern extremity of the eastern arm of the Red Sea, and gives to that arm the name of the Elanitic Gulf. The name means “trees;” and is still justified by the grove of palm-trees at Akaba.

Verse 9

The Moabites and the Ammonites Deuteronomy 2:19 being descended from Lot, the nephew of Abraham Genesis 19:30-38, were, like the Edomites, kinsmen of the Israelites.

Verses 10-12

For the Emims, Horims, and Anakims, see the marginal references. These verses are either parenthetical or the insertion of a later hand.

Verse 13

The words, “said I,” are not in the Hebrew. The words “rise up, and get you over the brook Zered” (Numbers 21:12 note) connect themselves with Deuteronomy 2:9, and form the conclusion of what God said to Moses.

Verses 20-23

These verses, like Deuteronomy 2:10-12, are in all likelihood an addition made by a later reviser.

Deuteronomy 2:20

Zamzummims - A giant race usually identified with the Zuzims of Genesis 14:5.

Deuteronomy 2:23

The Avims which dwelt in Hazerim, even unto Azzah - Read (Gaza, of which Azzah is the Hebrew form. "Hazerim" is not strictly a proper name, but means "villages," or "enclosures," probably such as are still common in the East. The Avims are no doubt identical with the Avites of Joshua 13:3, and were doubtless a scattered remnant of a people conquered by the Caphtorim (Genesis 10:14 note) and living in their "enclosures" in the neighborhood of Gerar. The word, which means "ruins," seems itself expressive of their fallen state.

Verse 26

Kedemoth - literally, "Easternmost parts;" the name of a town afterward assigned to the Reubenites, and given out of that tribe to the Levites. Compare Joshua 13:18; 1 Chronicles 6:79.

Verse 34

Utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city - Render, laid under ban (compare Leviticus 27:28 note) every inhabited city, both women and children: these last words being added by way of fuller explanation.

Verse 36

Aroer, which is by the brink of the river of Arnon - Aroer stood on the north bank of the river, and was assigned Joshua 13:9, Joshua 13:16 to the tribe of Reuben, of which it formed the most southerly city. The valley of the Arnon is here deep, and the descent to it abrupt. In Roman times it was spanned by a viaduct, the ruins of which still remain, and which was probably built on the lines of the original structure of Mesha 2 Kings 3:5. Aroer here must not be confounded with "Aroer, which is before Rabbah" Joshua 13:25. This latter place was "built," "i. e." rebuilt, by the Gadites Numbers 32:34; it belonged to that tribe, and was consequently far to the north of the Arnon. A third Aroer in the tribe of Judah is mentioned in 1 Samuel 30:28.

"The city that is by the river," literally, "in the midst of the river" (compare Joshua 13:9, Joshua 13:16) is Ar Moab (compare Numbers 21:15

note).

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 4

Threescore cities - Probably the cities of Jair in Bashan described in Deuteronomy 3:14 as Bashan-havoth-jair.

All the region of Argob - The Hebrew word here rendered "region," means literally "rope" or "cable"; and though undoubtedly used elsewhere in a general topographical sense for portion or district (e. g. Joshua 17:5), has a special propriety in reference to Argob (mod. Lejah). The name Argob means "stone-heap," and is paraphrased by the Targums, Trachonitis Luke 3:1, or "the rough country;" titles designating the more striking features of the district. Its borders are compared to a rugged shore-line; hence, its description in the text as "the girdle of the stony country," would seem especially appropriate. (Others identify Argob with the east quarter of the Hauran.)

Verse 5

Gates, and bars - literally, "Double gates and a bar." The stone doors of Bashan, their height pointing to a race of great stature, and the numerous cities (deserted) exist to illustrate the statements of these verses.

Verse 9

Hermon, the southern and culminating point of the range of Lebanon, was also the religious center of primaeval Syria. Its Baal sanctuaries not only existed but gave it a name before the Exodus. Hence, the careful specification of the various names by which the mountain was known. The Sidonian name of it might easily have become known to Moses through the constant traffic which had gone on from the most ancient times between Sidon and Egypt.

Verse 10

Salchah - Compare Joshua 12:5; 1 Chronicles 5:11, where it is named as belonging to the tribe of Gad. It lies seven hours' journey to the southeast of Bostra or Bozrah of Moab. As the eastern border city of the kingdom of Bashan it was no doubt strongly fortified.

Edrei - Compare Numbers 21:33 note.

Verse 11

Giants - Or Rephaim: see the marginal reference note.

A bedstead of iron - The "iron" was probably the black basalt of the country, which not only contains a large proportion, about 20 percent, of

iron, but was actually called "iron," and is still so regarded by the Arabians. Iron was indeed both known and used, principally for tools (see e. g. Deuteronomy 19:5 and compare Genesis 4:22 note), at the date in question by the Semitic people of Palestine and the adjoining countries; but bronze was the ordinary metal of which weapons, articles of furniture, etc., were made.

The word translated "bedstead" is derived from a root signifying "to unite" or "bind together," and so "to arch" or "cover with a vault." The word may then certainly mean "bier," and perhaps does so in this passage. Modern travelers have discovered in the territories of Og sarcophagi as well as many other articles made of the black basalt of the country.

Is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? - Probably after the defeat and death of Og at Edrei the remnant of his army fled into the territory of the friendly Ammonites, and carried with them the corpse of the giant king.

After the cubit of a man - i. e. after the usual and ordinary cubit, counted as people are accustomed to count. Taking 18 inches to the cubit, the bedstead or sarcophagus would thus be from thirteen to fourteen feet long.

Verse 14

These Geshurites held territory adjoining, if not included within, Bashan. They are not to be confounded with those mentioned in Joshua 13:2, who were neighbors of the Philistines 1 Samuel 17:8.

The exact position of Maachah like that of Geshur cannot be ascertained; but it was no doubt among the fastnesses which lay between Bashan and the kingdom of Damascus, and on the skirts of Mount Hermon.

Unto this day - This expression, like our "until now," does not, as used in the Bible, necessarily imply that the time spoken of as elapsed is long. It may here denote the duration to the time then present of that which had been already some months accomplished.

Verse 16

The sense is that the Reubenites and Gadites were to possess the district from the Jabbok on the north to the Arnon on the south, including the middle part of the valley of the Arnon, and the territory ("coast" or "border") thereto pertaining.

Verse 25

That goodly mountain - i. e., that mountainous district. The fiat districts of the East are generally scorched, destitute of water, and therefore sterile: the hilly ones, on the contrary, are of more tempered climate, and fertilized by the streams from the high grounds. Compare Deuteronomy 11:11.

The whole of this prayer of Moses is very characteristic. The longing to witness further manifestations of God‘s goodness and glory, and the reluctance to leave unfinished an undertaking which he had been permitted to commence, are striking traits in his character: compare Exodus 32:32 ff; Exodus 33:12, Exodus 33:18 ff; Numbers 14:12 ff.

Verse 26

The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes - Here, as in Deuteronomy 1:37; Deuteronomy 4:21; the sin of the people is stated to be the ground on which Moses‘ prayer is denied. In Deuteronomy 32:51; and in Numbers 27:14; the transgression of Moses and Aaron themselves is assigned as the cause of their punishment. The reason why one side of the transaction is put forward in this place, and the other elsewhere, is evident. Here Moses is addressing the people, and mentions the punishment of their leaders as a most impressive warning to them, whose principal fault it was. In Deuteronomy 32 and Numbers 27, God is addressing Moses, and visits on him, as is fitting, not the sin of the people hut his own.

Verse 29

Beth-peor, i. e., the house of Peor, no doubt derived its name from a temple of the Moabite god Peor which was there situated. It was no doubt near to Mount Peor Numbers 23:28, and also to the valley of the Jordan perhaps in the Wady Heshban.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

The general entreaty contained in this chapter is pointed by special mention and enforcement of the fundamental principles of the whole covenant Deuteronomy 4:9-40, the spiritual nature of the Deity, His exclusive right to their allegiance, His abhorrence of idolatry in every form, His choice of them for His elect people. Compare further Moses‘ third and last address, Deuteronomy 2730.

Verses 9-11

A full stop should end Deuteronomy 4:9; and Deuteronomy 4:10 begin, At the time that thou stoodest, etc. Deuteronomy 4:11 then ye came near, etc. Moses, exhorting to heedful observance of the Law, strives to renew the impressions of that tremendous scene which attended its promulgation at Sinai.

Verse 12

Hero worship exhibited itself in the practice of setting up images of human form as household gods (Penates, compare Genesis 31:19; Genesis 35:2), or as local and civic divinities: a practice forbidden by Deuteronomy 4:16. Nature worship in its baser shapes is seen in the Egyptian idolatry of animals and animal figures, and is condemned in Deuteronomy 4:17-18: while its less ignoble flight, the worship of the sun, moon, and stars, is forbidden in Deuteronomy 4:19. The great legislator may be regarded as taking in the passage before us a complete and comprehensive survey of the various forms of idolatrous and corrupt worship practiced by the surrounding Oriental nations, and as particularly and successively forbidding them every one.

Verse 19

Divided - i. e., “whose light God has distributed to the nations for their use and benefit, and which therefore being creatures ministering to man‘s convenience must not be worshipped as man‘s lords.”

Verses 25-28

Compare with these verses Leviticus 26:33-40, and Deuteronomy 28:64 ff.

Verses 29-40

Unwilling, as it might seem, to close his discourse with words of terror, Moses makes a last appeal to them in these verses in a different strain.

Deuteronomy 4:34

Temptations - Compare Deuteronomy 7:18-19; Deuteronomy 29:2-3; not, "i. e." the tribulations and persecutions undergone by the Israelites, out the plagues miraculously inflicted on the Egyptians.

Deuteronomy 4:37

He chose their seed after them - literally, "his seed after him." Speaking of the love of God to their fathers in general, Moses has more especially in mind that one of them who was called "the Friend of God" James 2:23.

Brought thee out in his sight - literally, "by His face:" "i. e." by the might of His personal presence. Compare Exodus 33:14; where God promises "My presence (literally ‹My face‘) shall go with thee."

Verses 41-43

These verses are inserted between two distinct and complete discourses for the reason to which they themselves call attention ("Then Moses severed three cities," etc.); i. e., the fact narrated took place historically after Moses spoke the one discourse and before he delivered the other. In thus severing the three cities of refuge Moses carried out a previous command of God (see the marginal references); and so followed up his exhortations to obedience by setting a punctual example of it, as far as opportunity was given him.

Deuteronomy 4:43

In the plain country - literally, "in the land of the Mishor." The word means a level tract of land; but when used (Deuteronomy 3:10; Joshua 13:9, etc.) with the article, seems to be the proper name for the smooth downs of Moab, which reach from the Jordan eastward of Jericho far into the Desert of Arabia, and which form a striking contrast alike to the rugged country west of the river, and to the higher and remarkable districts belonging to Bashan northward.

Bezer is, with little certainty, identified with Bostra, or (1 Maccabees 5:36) Bosor. Golan gave the name of Gaulonitis to a district of some extent east of the sea of Galilee and north of the Hieromax; but the exact site of the city if uncertain.

Verses 44-49

These verses would be more properly assigned to the next chapter. They are intended to serve as the announcement and introduction of the address

now to be commenced. Deuteronomy 4:44 gives a kind of general title to the whole of the weighty address, including in fact the central part and substance of the book, which now follows in 22 chapters, divided into two groups:

(a) Deuteronomy 4:46, the full fruition of which was to be consequent on their fulfillment of that covenant now again about to be rehearsed to them in its leading features.

Deuteronomy 4:48

Sion must not be confounded with Zion (compare Psalm 48:2.).

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 3

The "fathers" are, as in Deuteronomy 4:37, the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. With them God did indeed make a covenant, but not the particular covenant now in question. The responsibilites of this later covenant, made at Sinai by the nation as a nation, attached in their day and generation to those whom Moses was addressing.

Verses 6-21

Compare Mark 10:19 and Paul Ephesians 6:2-3 deal similarly with the same subject. Speaker and hearers recognized, however, a statutory and authoritative form of the laws in question, which, because it was familiar to both parties, needed not to be reproduced with verbal fidelity.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

The exhortation to observe the Sabbath and allow time of rest to servants (compare Exodus 23:12) is pointed by reminding the people that they too were formerly servants themselves. The bondage in Egypt and the deliverance from it are not assigned as grounds for the institution of the Sabbath, which is of far older date (see Genesis 2:3), but rather as suggesting motives for the religious observance of that institution. The Exodus was an entrance into rest from the toils of the house of bondage, and is thought actually to have occurred on the Sabbath day or "rest" day.

Deuteronomy 5:16

The blessing of general well-being here annexed to the keeping of the fifth commandment, is no real addition to the promise, but only an amplification of its expression.

Deuteronomy 5:21

The "field" is added to the list of objects specifically forbidden in the parallel passage Exodus 20:17. The addition seems very natural in one who was speaking with the partition of Canaan among his hearers directly in view.

Verse 22

He added no more - i. e., He spoke no more with the great voice directly to the people, but addressed all other communications to them through Moses. This unique and sublime phenomenon, followed up by the inscription of the Ten Words on the two tables by the finger of God, marks not only the holiness of God's Law in general, but the special eminence and

permanent obligation of the Ten Words themselves as compared with the rest of the Mosaic enactments. The giving of the two tables did not take place until Moses had been on the Mount 40 days and 40 nights, as appears from the fuller account of Deuteronomy 9:9-12.

Verses 23-33

These verses contain a much fuller narrative of the events briefly described in Exodus 20:18-21. Here it is important to call attention to the fact that it was on the entreaties of the people that Moses had taken on him to be the channel of communication between God and them. God approved Deuteronomy 5:28 the request of the people, because it showed a feeling of their own unworthiness to enter into direct communion with God. The terrors of Sinai had done their work; they had awakened the consciousness of sin.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

Moses proceeds to set forth more particularly and to enforce the cardinal and essential doctrines of the Decalogue, the nature and attributes of God, and the fitting mode of honoring and worshipping Him. Two objects are indicated Deuteronomy 6:2-3, the glory of God and the welfare of man, as the grand aims that he has in view.

Verse 3

In the land - Better: According as the Lord the God of thy fathers promised thee a land flowing with milk and honey.

sa40

Verse 4

These words form the beginning of what is termed the "Shema" ("Hear") in the Jewish Services, and belong to the daily morning and evening office. They may be called "the creed of the Jews."

This weighty text contains far more than a mere declaration of the unity of God as against polytheism; or of the sole authority of the revelation that He had made to Israel as against other pretended manifestations of His will and attributes. It asserts that the Lord God of Israel is absolutely God, and none other. He, and He alone, is Jehovah (Yahweh) the absolute, uncaused God; the One who had, by His election of them, made Himself known to Israel.

Verse 5

Since there is but One God, and that God is Israel's God, so Israel must love God unreservedly and entirely. The "heart" is mentioned as the seat of the understanding; the "soul" as the center of will and personality; the "might" as representing the outgoings and energies of all the vital powers.

The New Testament itself requires no more than this total self-surrender of man's being to his maker Matthew 22:37. The Gospel differs from the Law not so much in replacing an external and carnal service of God by an inward and spiritual one, as in supplying new motives and special assistances for the attainment of that divine love which was, from the first and all along, enjoined as "the first and great commandment."

Verse 8-9

By adopting and regulating customary usages (e. g. Egyptian) Moses provides at once a check on superstition and a means of keeping the Divine Law in memory. On the "frontlets," the "phylacteries" of the New Test. Matthew 23:5, see Exodus 13:16. On Deuteronomy 6:9; Deuteronomy 11:20 is based the Jewish usage of the mezuzah. This word denotes properly a door-post, as it is rendered here and in Exodus 12:7, Exodus 12:22; Exodus 21:6 etc. Among the Jews however, it is the name given to the square piece of parchment, inscribed with Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Deuteronomy 11:13-21, which is rolled up in a small cylinder of wood or metal, and affixed to the right-hand post of every door in a Jewish house. The pious Jew touches the mezuzah on each occasion of passing, or kisses his finger, and speaks Psalm 121:8 in the Hebrew language.

Verses 10-25

The Israelites were at the point of quitting a normal, life for a fixed and settled abode in the midst of other nations; they were exchanging a condition of comparative poverty for great and goodly cities, houses and vineyards. There was therefore before them a double danger;

(1) a God-forgetting worldliness, and

(2) a false tolerance of the idolatries practiced by those about to become their neighbors.

The former error Moses strives to guard against in the verses before us; the latter in Deuteronomy 7:1-11.

Deuteronomy 6:13

The command "to swear by His Name" is not inconsistent with the Lord's injunction Matthew 5:34, "Swear not at all." Moses refers to legal swearing, our Lord to swearing in common conversation. It is not the purpose of Moses to encourage the practice of taking oaths, but to forbid that, when taken, they should be taken in any other name than that of Israel's God. The oath involves an invocation of Deity, and so a solemn recognition of Him whose Name is made use of in it. Hence, it comes especially within the scope of the commandment Moses is enforcing.

Deuteronomy 6:25

It shall be our righteousness - i. e., God will esteem us as righteous and deal with us accordingly. From the very beginning made Moses the

whole righteousness of the Law to depend entirely on a right state of the heart, in one word, upon faith.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-11

See Deuteronomy 6:10 note.

Deuteronomy 7:5

Their groves - Render, their idols of wood: the reference is to the wooden trunk used as a representation of Ashtaroth; see Deuteronomy 7:13 and Exodus 34:13 note.

Deuteronomy 7:7

The fewest of all people - God chose for Himself Israel, when as yet but a single family, or rather a single person, Abraham; though there were already numerous nations and powerful kingdoms in the earth. Increase Deuteronomy 1:10; Deuteronomy 10:22 had taken place because of the very blessing of God spoken of in Deuteronomy 7:8.

Deuteronomy 7:10

Repayeth them that hate him to their face - i. e., punishes His enemies in their own proper persons.

Verse 13

Flocks of thy sheep - Render it instead: "the ewes of thy sheep." The phrase is unique to Deuteronomy. The Hebrew word for "ewes" is the plural form of Ashtoreth, the well-known name of the "goddess of the Zidonians" 1 Kings 11:5. This goddess, called by the Classical writers "Astarte," and identified with "Venus," represented the fruitfulness of nature.

Verse 15

There seems to be here not so much as a reference to the plagues inflicted miraculously by God on Egypt (compare Exodus 15:26), as to the terrible diseases with which, above other countries, Egypt was infested. Compare Deuteronomy 28:27, Deuteronomy 28:35. It is not without significance that Egypt, which represents in Scripture the world as contrasted with the Church, should thus above other lands lie under the power of disease and death.

Verse 25

The silver or gold that is on them - The silver and gold with which the statues of the gods were overlaid. Paul is probably alluding to this command in Romans 2:22; and his accusation of the Jew thus shows that the prohibition of the text was very necessary.

Lest thou be snared - As by the rich ephod made by Gideon: compare the marginal reference.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 3

But by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord - literally, "every outgoing of the mouth of the Lord." Compare Deuteronomy 29:5-6. The term "word" is inserted by the King James Version after the Septuagint, which is followed by Matthew and Luke (see the marginal references). On the means of subsistence available to the people during the wandering, see Numbers 20:1 note. The lesson was taught, that it is not nature which nourishes man, but God the Creator by and through nature: and generally that God is not tied to the particular channels ("bread only," i. e. the ordinary means of earthly sustenance) through which He is usually pleased to work.

Verse 4

They had clothes, it would seem, in abundance (compare Exodus 12:34-35) at the beginning of the 40 years; and during those years they had many sheep and oxen, and so must have had much material for clothing always at command. No doubt also they carried on a traffic in these, as in other commodities, with the Moabites and the nomadic tribes of the desert. Such ordinary supplies must not be shut out of consideration, even if they were on occasions supplemented by extraordinary providences of God, as was undoubtedly the case with their food.

Verses 7-9

See Exodus 3:8 note, and the contrast expressed in Deuteronomy 11:10-11, between Palestine and Egypt.

The physical characteristics and advantages of a country like Palestine must have been quite strange to Israel at the time Moses was speaking: compare Deuteronomy 3:25 note. To have praised the fertility and excellence of the promised land at an earlier period would have increased the murmurings and impatience of the people at being detained in the wilderness: whereas now it encouraged them to encounter with more cheerfulness the opposition that they would meet from the inhabitants of Canaan.

Deuteronomy 8:8

Vines - The abundance of wine in Syria and Palestine is dwelt upon in the Egyptian records of the campaigns of Thotmosis III. Only a little wine is

produced in Egypt itself. The production of wine has in later times gradually ceased in Palestine (circa 1880‘s).

Deuteronomy 8:9

For brass read copper (Genesis 4:22 note); and compare the description of mining operations in Job 28:1-11. Mining does not seem to have been extensively carried on by the Jews, though it certainly was by the Canaanite peoples displaced by them. Traces of iron and copper works have been discovered by modern travelers in Lebanon and many parts of the country; e. g., the district of Argob (see Deuteronomy 3:4 notes) contains iron-stone in abundance.

Verse 15

Render: “Who brought thee through that great and terrible wilderness, the fiery serpent and the scorpion, and the dry land where are no waters.” On the fiery serpents see Numbers 21:6 note.

Verse 16

To do thee good at thy latter end - This is presented as the result of God‘s dealings.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

The lesson of this chapter is exactly that of Ephesians 2:8, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

In referring to their various rebellions, Moses here, as elsewhere, has regard not so much for the order of time as to that of subject. (Compare Deuteronomy 1:9-15 note.) Such reasons as convenience and fitness to his argument sufficiently explain the variations observable when the statements of this chapter are minutely compared with those of Exodus 3234. In these variations we have simply such treatment of facts as is usual and warrantable between parties personally acquainted with the matters.

Verse 3

So shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly - This is not inconsistent with Deuteronomy 7:22, in which instant annihilation is not to be expected for the reasons assigned. Here Moses urges the people to trust in God's covenanted aid; since He would then make no delay in so destroying the nations attacked by them as to put them into enjoyment of the promises, and in doing so as fast as was for the well-being of Israel itself.

Verse 8

Also in Horeb - Rather, "even in Horeb." The time and circumstances made the apostasy at Horeb particularly inexcusable.

Verse 18

I fell down before the Lord, as at the first - Moses interceded for the people before he came down from the mountain the first time Exodus 32:11-13. This intercession is only briefly alluded to in this verse. Afterward he spent another 40 days on the mountain in fasting and prayer to obtain a complete restitution of the covenant Exodus 34:28. It is this second forty days, and the intercession of Moses made therein (compare Exodus 34:9), that is more particularly brought forward here and in Deuteronomy 9:25-29.

Verse 20

Israel could not even boast that its heads and representatives continued, faithful. Aaron had been already designated for the high priestly functions;

but he fell away with the rest of the people. It was due therefore solely to the grace of God and the intercession of Moses that Aaron himself and his promised priesthood with him were not cut off; just as at a later time, when Aaron had actually to die for a new sin Israel owed it still to the same causes that Eleazar was substituted and the High Priesthood perpetuated (compare Deuteronomy 10:6; Numbers 20:24-26).

Verse 22

See the marginal reference. Taberah was the name of a spot in or near the station of Kibroth-hattaavah, and accordingly is not named in the list of encampments given in Numbers 33:16. The separate mention of the two is, however, appropriate here, for each place and each name was a memorial of an act of rebellion. The instances in this and the next verse are not given in order of occurrence. The speaker for his own purposes advances from the slighter to the more heinous proofs of guilt.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verses 1-11

These verses are closely connected with the preceding chapter, and state very briefly the results of the intercession of Moses recorded in Deuteronomy 9:25-29. The people are reminded that all their blessings and privileges, forfeited by apostasy as soon as bestowed, were only now their own by a new and most unmerited act of grace on the part of God, won from Him by the self-sacrificing mediation of Moses himself Deuteronomy 10:10.

Deuteronomy 10:1-5. The order for making the ark and tabernacle was evidently given before the apostasy of the people (Deuteronomy 9:1 note) Moses connects transactions closely related to each other and to his purpose without regard to the order of occurrence.

Deuteronomy 10:6

There Aaron died - i. e., while the people were encamped in Mosera or Moseroth. In Deuteronomy 32:50; as well as in Numbers 20:25 ff Mount Hor is assigned as the place of Aaron‘s death. It is plain then that Moserah was in the neighborhood of Mount Hor. The appointment of Eleazar to minister in place of Aaron, is referred to as a proof of the completeness and fulness of the reconciliation effected between God and the people by Moses. Though Aaron was sentenced to die in the wilderness for his sin at Meribah, yet God provided for the perpetuation of the high priesthood, so that the people would not suffer. Compare Deuteronomy 9:20 and note.

Deuteronomy 10:8

At that time - i. e., that of the encampment at Sinai, as the words also import in Deuteronomy 10:1. Throughout the passage the time of the important events at Sinai is kept in view; it is reverted to as each incident is brought forward by Moses, alluded to sufficiently for his purpose, and dismissed.

Moses is evidently here speaking of the election by God of the tribe of Levi at large, priests and others also, for His own service.

Verse 12

After these emphatic warnings against self-righteousness the principal topic is resumed from Deuteronomy 10:12

What doth the Lord thy God require … - A noteworthy demand. God has in the Mosaic law positively commanded many things. However, these relate to external observances, which if need be can be enforced. But love and veneration cannot be enforced, even by God himself. They must be spontaneous. Hence, even under the law of ordinances where so much was peremptorily laid down, and omnipotence was ready to compel obedience, those sentiments, which are the spirit and life of the whole, have to be, as they here are, invited and solicited.

Verse 16

On "circumcision" see Genesis 17:10. This verse points to the spiritual import of circumcision. Man is by nature "very far gone from original righteousness," and in a state of enmity to God; by circumcision, as the sacrament of admission to the privileges of the chosen people, this opposition must be taken away ere man could enter into covenant with God. It was through the flesh that man first sinned; as it is also in the flesh, its functions, lusts, etc., that man's rebellion against God chiefly manifests itself still. It was fitting therefore that the symbol which should denote the removal of this estrangement from God should be worked in the body. Moses then fitly follows up the command "to circumcise the heart," with the warning "to be no more stiff-necked." His meaning is that they should lay aside that obduracy and perverseness toward God for which he had been reproving them, which had led them into so many transgressions of the covenant and revolts from God, and which was especially the very contrary of that love and fear of God required by the first two of the Ten Commandments. The language associated with circumcision in the Bible distinguishes the use made of this rite in the Jewish religion from that found among certain pagan nations. Circumcision was practiced by some of them as a religious rite, designed (e. g.) to appease the deity of death who was supposed to delight in human suffering; but not by any, the Egyptians probably excepted, at all in the Jewish sense and meaning.

The grounds on which circumcision was imposed as essential by the Law are the same as those on which Baptism is required in the Gospel. The latter in the New Testament is strictly analogous to the former under the Old; compare Colossians 2:11-12.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 2

And know … - Render it: And own ye this day (for I have not to do with your children which have not known and which have not seen) the chastisement of the Lord, his greatness, etc.

The "chastisement" consisted in the many mighty acts, both of punishment and mercy, through which God had guided them from Egypt to the borders of the promised land.

Verse 6

See the margin. literally, "every living thing at their feet." The expression does not mean their goods, which would be included in their "households and tents," but their followers Numbers 16:32.

Verse 10

Another motive for fidelity is added, namely, the entire dependence of the promised land upon God for its fertility. It was "a land flowing with milk and honey;" yet this its richness was not, as was that of Egypt, the reward of truman skill and labor, but was, on the contrary, the gift of God simply and entirely; the effect of "the former and the latter rains" sent by Him. The spiritual significance of these and many other such peculiarities of the promised land must not be overlooked.

Egypt and Canaan are distinguished in this and the following verses, by certain of their most remarkable physical traits. Canaan as a mountainous country (compare Deuteronomy 3:25 note) was well watered, but by the rains of heaven, on which it absolutely depended for its crops. Artificial irrigation could do nothing to remedy this dependence. Hence, it was a land on which, so long as God's people were faithful and consequently prosperous, "the eyes of God" would always be: i. e., He would supply at each successive season (compare Deuteronomy 11:14-15) the useful conditions of productiveness. But Egypt, fit emblem here as elsewhere of the world of nature in distinction from the world of grace, though of course deriving its all ultimately from the Giver of all good things, yet directly and immediately owed its riches and plenty to human ingenuity and capital. It enjoyed no rain worth speaking of, but drew its water supply from the annum overflowing of the Nile. This only lasts about a hundred days; but is rendered available for agricultural purposes throughout the year by an

elaborate and costly system of tanks, canals, forcing machines, etc. To these mechanical appliances allusion is made in Deuteronomy 11:10. The inhabitants of Egypt probably watered "with the foot" in two ways, namely, by means of tread-wheels working sets of pumps, and by means of artificial channels connected with reservoirs, and opened, turned, or closed by the feet. Both methods are still in use in Egypt.

Verse 14

The first rain and the latter rain - The former is the proper term for the autumn rain, falling about the time of sowing, and which may be named "the former," as occurring in the early part of the Hebrew civil year, namely, in October and November. The other word is applied to the spring rain, which falls in March and April, because it fits the earth for the ingathering of harvest. Between these two wet periods, and except them, there was little or no rain in Canaan.

Verse 21

The sense is: "Keep the covenant faithfully, and so shall your own and your children's days be multiplied as long as the heaven covers the earth." The promise of Canaan to Israel was thus a perpetual promise, but also a conditional one.

Verse 29

Thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim - literally, thou shalt give, i. e., "give" utterance to it. On the ceremony see Deuteronomy 27:14 ff.

Mount Gerizim, barren like Ebal, was probably selected as the hill of benediction because it was the southernmost of the two, the south being the region, according to Hebrew ideas, of light, and so of life and blessing. The situation of the mountains is described more accurately in Deuteronomy 11:30. The words "by the way where the sun goeth down," should run, beyond the road of the west; i. e., on the further side of the main track which ran from Syria and Damascus to Jerusalem and Egypt through the center of Palestine. This is called "the way of the west" in contrast to the ether main route from Damascus to the south which passed through the district east of Jordan. The further specifications "Gilgal" and "the plains (rather, the oaks, compare Genesis 12:6 note) of Moreh," are added to define more particularly the section of Canaanites intended.

This Gilgal is perhaps to be found in Jiljilia, a large village about twelve miles south of Gerizim.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

Moses now passes on to apply Deuteronomy 1226 the leading principles of the Decalogue to the ecclesiastical, civil, and social life of the people. Particulars will be noticed which are unique to the Law as given in Deuteronomy; and even in laws repeated from the earlier books various new circumstances and details are introduced. This is only natural. The Sinaitic legislation was nearly 40 years old and had been given under conditions of time, place, and circumstance different and distant from those now present. Yet the Sinaitic system, far from being set aside or in any way abrogated, is on the contrary throughout presupposed and assumed. Its existence and authority are taken as the starting-point for what is here prescribed, and an accurate acquaintance with it on the part of the people is taken for granted.

Verse 3

Their groves - Render their idols of wood: and see the Deuteronomy 7:5 note.

Verse 4

i. e., "The idolaters set up their altars and images on any high hill, and under every green tree at their pleasure, but ye shall not do so; the Lord Himself shall determine the spot for your worship, and there only shall ye seek Him." The religion of the Canaanites was human; its modes of worship were of man's devising. It fixed its holy places on the hills in the vain thought of being nearer heaven, or in deep groves where the silence and gloom might overawe the worshipper. But such superstitious appliances were not worthy of the true religion. God had revealed Himself to people in it, and manifested among them His immediate presence and power. He would Himself assign the sanctuary and the ritual of His own service.

Verse 5

"To put his name there" means to manifest to men His divine presence. The Targumists rightly refer to the Shechinah; but the expression comprehends all the various modes in which God vouchsafed to reveal Himself and His attributes to men.

The purpose of the command of the text is to secure the unity, and through unity the purity of the worship of God. That there should be one national center for the religion of the people was obviously essential to the

great ends of the whole dispensation. Corruption began as soon as the precepts of the text were relaxed or neglected: Compare the case of Gideon, Judges 8:27; of Micah, 1 Kings 12:26 ff.

The words "the place which the Lord shall choose to put His Name there" suggest Jerusalem and Solomon's temple to our minds. But though spoken as they were by a prophet, and interpreted as they are by the Psalms (e. g. Psalm 78:67-69), they have a proper application to the temple, yet they must not be referred exclusively to it. The text does not import that God would always from the first choose one and the same locality "to put His Name there," but that there would always be a locality so chosen by Him; and that there the people must bring their sacrifices, and not offer them at their pleasure or convenience elsewhere. Neither does the text forbid the offering of sacrifices to God at other places than the one chosen by Him "to put His Name there" on proper occasions and by proper authority (compare Deuteronomy 27:5-6; Judges 6:24; Judges 13:16; 1 Kings 3:4; 1 Kings 18:31). The text simply prohibits sacrifices at any other locality than that which should be appointed or permitted by God for the purpose.

Verse 6

Some have objected that this command cannot possibly have been ever carried out, at all events until in later (lays the territory which owned obedience to it was narrowed to the little kingdom of Judah. But in these and in other precepts Moses doubtless takes much for granted. He is here, as elsewhere, regulating and defining more precisely institutions which had long been in existence, as to many details of which custom superseded the necessity of specific enactment. No doubt the people well understood what Maimonides expressly tells us in reference to the matter, namely, that where immediate payment could not be made, the debt to God was to be reserved until the next great Feast, and then duly discharged. The thing especially to be observed was that no kind of sacrifice was to be offered except at the sacred spot fixed by God for its acceptance.

Verse 7

An injunction that the feasts which accompanied certain offerings (not specified) were to be also held in the same place.

Verse 8

Moses points out that heretofore they had not observed the prescribed order in their worship, because during their migratory life in the wilderness it had been impossible to do so. During their wanderings there were doubtless times when the tabernacle was not set up for days together, and when the daily sacrifice Numbers 28:3, together with many other ordinances, were necessarily omitted (compare Joshua 5:5). This consideration must be carefully borne in mind throughout Deuteronomy. It illustrates the necessity for a repetition of very much of the Sinaitic legislation, and suggests the reason why some parts are so urgently reiterated and impressed, while others are left unnoticed. Moses now warns the people that as they were about to quit their unsettled mode of life, God's purpose of choosing for Himself a place to set His Name there would be executed, and the whole of the sacred ritual would consequently become obligatory. The "rest and safety" of Canaan is significantly laid down Deuteronomy 12:10-11 as the indispensable condition and basis for an entire fulfillment of the Law: the perfection of righteousness coinciding thus with the cessation of wanderings, dangers, and toils.

Verse 15

While a stringent injunction is laid down that the old rule (compare Leviticus 17:3, etc.) must be adhered to as regards animals slain in sacrifice, yet permission is now given to slaughter at home what was necessary for the table. The ceremonial distinctions did not apply in such cases, anymore than to "the roebuck" (or gazelle) "and hart," animals allowed for food but not for sacrifice.

Verse 21

If the place … - Rather, "Because, or since, the place will be too far from thee." The permission given in Deuteronomy 12:15-16 is repeated, and the reason of it assigned.

Verse 30

This caution is based upon the notion generally entertained in the ancient pagan world, that each country had its own tutelary deities whom it would be perilous to neglect; compare 1 Kings 20:23; 2 Kings 17:26. Israel was to shun such superstitions as unworthy of the elect people of God.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Introduction

The admonition of the closing verse of the last chapter introduces a new series of warnings intended to serve as a further safeguard against violation of these duties. The true modes and forms of worship have been laid down: the next step is to legislate against the authors and abettors of false ones.

Verse 1

A prophet, or a dreamer of dreams - Compare Numbers 12:6. The "prophet" received his revelations by vision or direct oral communication Numbers 24:16; 2 Samuel 7:4; 2 Corinthians 12:2; "the dreamer of dreams" through the medium of a dream 1 Kings 3:5; Matthew 2:13.

Verse 2

The Lord had said, "Thou shalt have none other gods but Me." A prophet is here supposed who invites the people "to go after other gods." To such a one no credit is under any circumstances to be given, even should he show signs and wonders to authenticate his doctrine. The standing rule of faith and practice had been laid down once for all - that the people were to hold fast. The prophet who propounded another rule could only be an impostor.

A different case is considered in Deuteronomy 18:18, etc.

Verse 5

The context and parallel passages (compare Deuteronomy 17:7; Leviticus 20:2) indicate that there was to be a regular judicial procedure, and that the manner of the execution was to be by stoning. In this the community was to take its part in order to show its horror at the crime, and to clear itself of complicity therein.

Verse 6

If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers;

Verse 12

City was to keep jealous watch over city, as man over man. The clause "which the Lord thy God hath given thee to dwell in" significantly reminds them that the real ownership of their dwellings rested in the Lord (compare

Leviticus 25:23), and that they, the mere tenants, must not allow His property to become a center of rebellion against His just authority.

Verse 13

In Deuteronomy 15:9 and in Nahum 1:11 the word "Belial" is rendered in our translation by the adjective "wicked." The word means "worthlessness."

(from Barnes' Notes)

Verse 16

Every whit, for the Lord thy God - Some prefer: "as a whole offering to the Lord thy God."

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Introduction

The whole life and walk of the people were to be regulated by the principle "ye are the children of the Lord your God" Deuteronomy 14:1.

Verse 1

Make any baldness between your eyes - i. e. by shaving the forepart of the head and the eyebrows. The practices named in this verse were common among the pagan, and seem to be forbidden, not only because such wild excesses of grief (compare 1 Kings 18:28) would be inconsistent in those who as children of a heavenly Father had prospects beyond this world, but also because these usages themselves arose out of idolatrous notions.

Verses 3-21

Compare Deuteronomy 14:5

The "pygarg" is a species of gazelle, and the "wild ox" and "chamois" are swift types of antelope.

Deuteronomy 14:21

The prohibition is repeated from Leviticus 22:8. The directions as to the disposal of the carcass are unique to Deuteronomy, and their motive is clear. To have forbidden the people either themselves to eat that which had died, or to allow any others to do so, would have involved loss of property, and consequent temptation to an infraction of the command. The permissions now for the first time granted would have been useless in the wilderness. During the 40 years' wandering there could be but little opportunity of selling such carcasses; while non-Israelites living in the camp would in such a matter be bound by the same rules as the Israelites Leviticus 17:15; Leviticus 24:22. Further, it would seem (compare Leviticus 17:15) that greater stringency is here given to the requirement of abstinence from that which had died of itself. Probably on this, as on so many other points, allowance was made for the circumstances of the people. Flesh meat was no doubt often scarce in the desert. It would therefore have been a hardship to forbid entirely the use of that which had not been killed. However, now that the plenty of the promised land was before them, the modified toleration of this unholy food was withdrawn.

Verse 22

These words recall in general terms the command of the earlier legislation respecting tithes (compare Leviticus 27:30; Numbers 18:26), but

refer more particularly to the second or festival tithe, which was an exclusively vegetable one.

Verse 28-29

Compare the marginal references. The tithe thus directed in the third year to be dispensed in charity at home, was not paid in addition to that in other years bestowed on the sacred meals, but was substituted for it. The three years would count from the sabbatical year (see the next chapter), in which year there would of course be neither payment of tithe nor celebration of the feasts at the sanctuary. In the third year and sixth year of the septennial cycle the feasts would be superseded by the private hospitality enjoined in these verses.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verses 1-11

The year of release is no doubt identical with the sabbatical year of the earlier legislation (Exodus 23:10 ff, and Leviticus 25:2 ff), the command of the older legislation being here amplified. The release was probably for the year, not total and final, and had reference only to loans lent because of poverty (compare Deuteronomy 15:4, Deuteronomy 15:7). Yet even so the law was found to be too stringent for the avarice of the people, because it was one of those which the rabbis "made of none effect by their traditions."

Deuteronomy 15:2

Because it is called the Lord's release - Render, because proclamation has been made of the Lord's release. The verb is impersonal, and implies (compare Deuteronomy 31:10) that "the solemnity of the year of release" has been publicly announced.

Deuteronomy 15:3

The foreigner would not be bound by the restriction of the sabbatical year, and therefore would have no claim to its special remissions and privileges. He could earn his usual income in the seventh as in other years, and therefore is not exonerated from liability to discharge a debt anymore in the one than the others.

Deuteronomy 15:4

There is no inconsistency between this and Deuteronomy 15:11. The meaning seems simply to be, "Thou must release the debt for the year, except when there be no poor person concerned, a contingency which may happen, for the Lord shall greatly bless thee." The general object of these precepts, as also of the year of Jubilee and the laws respecting inheritance, is to prevent the total ruin of a needy person, and his disappearance from the families of Israel by the sale of his patrimony.

Deuteronomy 15:9

literally: "Beware that there be not in thy heart a word which is worthlessness" (compare Deuteronomy 13:13 note).

Verse 14

Thou shalt furnish him liberally - The verb in the Hebrew is remarkable. It means "thou shalt lay on his neck," "adorn his neck with thy gifts."

Verses 15-18

The commands here are repeated from Exodus 21:2-6, with amplifications relative to the maidservant Deuteronomy 15:12 and to the making (Deuteronomy 15:13 ff) liberal provision for launching the freedman on an independent course of life. The release of the servant is connected with the sabbatical principle though not with the sabbatical year. It is noteworthy also that the prospect of a gift of this sort, the amount of which was left to the master‘s discretion, would be likely to encourage diligence and faithfulness during the years of servitude.

Deuteronomy 15:18

He hath been worth a double hired servant to thee, in serving thee six years - "i. e." such a servant has earned twice as much as a common hired laborer would have done in the same time.

Verses 19-23

Compare Exodus 13:11 ff. The directions of the preceding legislation (see Numbers 18:15 ff) are here assumed, with the injunction added, that the animals thus set apart to God Deuteronomy 15:19 were not to be used by their owners for their earthly purposes. It is further allowed that firstborn animals which had a blemish should be regarded as exceptions, and instead of being given to God might be used as food Deuteronomy 15:21-22. The application of the firstborn of cattle is here directed as in Deuteronomy 12:6, Deuteronomy 12:17; Deuteronomy 14:23: they are to be consumed in the sacred Feasts at the sanctuary.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verses 1-8

The cardinal point on which the whole of the prescriptions in this chapter turn, is evidently the same as has been so often insisted on in the previous chapters, namely, the concentration of the religious services of the people round one common sanctuary. The prohibition against observing the great Feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and tabernacle, the three annual epochs in the sacred year of the Jew, at home and in private, is reiterated in a variety of words no less than six times in the first sixteen verses of this chapter Deuteronomy 16:2, Deuteronomy 16:6-7, Deuteronomy 16:11, Deuteronomy 16:15-16. Hence, it is easy to see why nothing is here said of the other holy days.

The Feast of Passover Numbers 9:1-14; Leviticus 23:1-8. A re-enforcement of this ordinance was the more necessary because its observance had clearly been intermitted for thirty-nine years (see Joshua 6:10). One Passover only had been kept in the wilderness, that recorded in Deuteronomy 16:2

Sacrifice the passover - "i. e." offer the sacrifices proper to the feast of the Passover, which lasted seven days. Compare a similar use of the word in a general sense in John 18:28. In the latter part of Deuteronomy 16:4 and in the following verses Moses passes, as the context again shows, into the narrower sense of the word Passover.

Deuteronomy 16:7

After the Paschal Supper in the courts or neighborhood of the sanctuary was over, they might disperse to their several "tents" or "dwellings" 1 Kings 8:66. These would of course be within a short distance of the sanctuary, because the other Paschal offerings were yet to be offered day by day for seven days and the people would remain to share them; and especially to take part in the holy convocation on the first and seventh of the days.

Verses 9-12

Feast of Weeks; and Deuteronomy 16:13-17, Feast of Tabernacles. Nothing is here added to the rules given in Leviticus and Numbers except the clauses so often recurring in Deuteronomy and so characteristic of it, which restrict the public celebration of the festivals to the sanctuary, and

enjoin that the enjoyments of them should be extended to the Levites, widows, orphans, etc.

Verses 18-22

These verses are closely connected in subject with the following chapter, and introduce certain directions for the administration of justice and the carrying on of the civil government of the people in Canaan. During the lifetime of Moses, he himself, especially inspired and guided by God, was sufficient, with the aid of the subordinate judges (compare Exodus 18:13 ff), for the duties in question. But now that Moses was to be withdrawn, and the people would soon be scattered up and down the land of Canaan, regular and permanent provision must be made for civil and social order and good government.

Deuteronomy 16:21

A grove … - Render, Thou shalt not plant for thee any tree as an idol: literally as an Asherah," "i. e." an image of Astarte or Ashtaroth, the Phoenician goddess (compare Deuteronomy 7:5 note, Deuteronomy 7:13 note). The word is rendered "grove" by the King James Version also in Deuteronomy 7:5; Deuteronomy 12:3; Exodus 34:13; Judges 6:25, but cannot be maintained, for the word is connected with various verbs which are quite inapplicable to a grove. The wooden idol in question was the stem of a tree, stripped of its boughs, set upright in the ground, and rudely carved with emblems.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

This verse belongs in subject to the last chapter. It prohibits once more (compare Deuteronomy 15:21) that form of insult to God which consists in offering to Him a blemished sacrifice.

Any evil-favoredness - Render any evil thing. The reference is to the faults or maims enumerated in Leviticus 22:22-24.

Verses 2-7

Compare Deuteronomy 13:1 ff. Here special reference is made to the legal forms to be adopted, Deuteronomy 17:5-7. The sentence was to be carried into effect at "the gates" (compare Genesis 19:1 note) of the town in which the crime was committed; because, as "all the people" were to take a part, an open space would be requisite for the execution. Note the typical and prophetical aspect of the injunction; compare Acts 7:58; Hebrews 13:12.

Verses 8-13

The cases in question are such as the inferior judges did not feel able to decide satisfactorily, and which accordingly they remitted to their superiors (compare Exodus 18:23-27).

The Supreme court Deuteronomy 17:9 is referred to in very general terms as sitting at the sanctuary Deuteronomy 17:8. "The judge" would no doubt usually be a layman, and thus the court would contain both an ecclesiastical and a civil element. Jehoshaphat 2 Chronicles 19:4-11 organized his judicial system very closely upon the lines here laid down.

Verse 14

No encouragement is given to the desire, natural in an Oriental people, for monarchical government; but neither is such desire blamed, as appears from the fact that conditions are immediately laid down upon which it may be satisfied. Compare the marginal references.

Verse 15

The king, like the judges and officers (compare Deuteronomy 16:18), is to be chosen by the people; but their choice is to be in accordance with the will of God, and to be made from among "their brethren." Compare 1 Samuel 9:15; 1 Samuel 10:24; 1 Samuel 16:1; 1 Kings 19:16.

Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee - The Jews extended this prohibition to all offices whatsoever (compare Jeremiah 30:21); and naturally attached the greatest importance to it: from where the significance of the question proposed to our Lord, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar?" Matthew 22:17. A Gentile head for the Jewish people, which it was a principal aim of the Law to keep special and distinct from others, was an anomaly.

Verse 16

The horse was not anciently used in the East for purposes of agriculture or traveling, but ordinarily for war only. He appears constantly in Scripture as the symbol and embodiment of fleshly strength and the might of the creature (compare Psalm 20:7; Psalm 33:16-17; Psalm 147:10; Job 39:19 ff), and is sometimes significantly spoken of simply as "the strong one" (compare Jeremiah 8:16). The spirit of the prohibition therefore is that the king of Israel must not, like other earthly potentates, put his trust in costly and formidable preparations for war (compare Hosea 1:7).

Egypt was the principal source from where the nations of western Asia drew their supplies of this animal (compare Exodus 14:5 ff; 1 Kings 10:28-29; 2 Kings 7:6); but contact, traffic, or alliance which would "cause the people to return to Egypt" would be to reverse that great and beneficent wonderwork of God which inaugurated the Mosaic covenant, the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt; and to bring about of set purpose that which God threatened Deuteronomy 28:68 as the most severe punishment for Israel's sin.

Verse 17

Multiplication of wives would lead to sensuality, and so to an apostasy no less fatal in effect than downright idolatry (compare Exodus 34:16). This rule, like the others, abridges to the ruler of Israel liberties usually enjoyed without stint by the kings of the East. The restriction was in the days of Moses unprecedented; and demanded a higher standard in the king of Israel than was looked for among his equals in other nations.

Neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold - In this third prohibition, as in the other two, excess is forbidden. Vast accumulation of treasure could hardly be effected without oppression; nor when effected fail to produce pride and a "trust in uncertain riches" 1 Timothy 6:17.

Verse 18

It is in striking consistency with the dignity which everywhere throughout the Mosaic legislation surrounds the chosen people of God, that even if they will be "like as all the nations about" Deuteronomy 17:14, and be governed by a king, care should nevertheless be taken that he shall be no Oriental despot. He is to be of no royal caste, but "one from among thy brethren" Deuteronomy 17:15; he is to bear himself as a kind of "primus inter pares," his heart "not being lifted up above his brethren" Deuteronomy 17:20; he is, like his subjects, to be bound by the fundamental laws and institutions of the nation, and obliged, as they were, to do his duty in his station of life with constant reference thereto. The spirit of the text is that of Matthew 23:9.

A copy of this law - The whole Pentateuch, or, at any rate, the legal portion of the Pentateuch.

A book … before the priests the Levites - Compare the marginal reference.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Verse 1

Better, "there shall not be to the priests, the Levites, yea the whole tribe of Levi, any inheritance, etc."

And his inheritance - i. e., God's inheritance, that which in making a grant to His people of the promised land with its earthly blessings He had reserved for Himself; more particularly the sacrifices and the holy gifts, such as tithes and first-fruits. These were God's portion of the substance of Israel; and as the Levites were His portion of the persons of Israel, it was fitting that the Levites should be sustained from these. On the principle here laid down, compare 1 Corinthians 9:13-14.

Verse 3

For "maw" read stomach, which was regarded as one of the richest and choicest parts. As the animal slain may be considered to consist of three principal parts, head, feet, and body, a portion of each is by the regulation in question to be given to the priest, thus representing the consecration of the whole; or, as some ancient commentators think, the dedication of the words, acts, and appetites of the worshipper to God.

The text probably refers to peace-offerings, and animals killed for the sacrificial meals held in connection with the peace-offerings.

Verses 6-8

These verses presuppose that part of the Levites only will be in residence and officiating at the place of the sanctuary, the others of course dwelling at their own homes in the Levitical cities, or "sojourning" elsewhere; compare the marginal references. But if any Levite out of love for the service of the sanctuary chose to resort to it when he might reside in his own home, he was to have his share in the maintenance which was provided for those ministering in the order of their course.

Deuteronomy 18:8

Beside that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony - The Levites had indeed "no part nor inheritance with Israel," but they might individually possess property, and in fact often did so (compare 1 Kings 2:26; Jeremiah 32:7; Acts 4:36). The Levite who desired to settle at the place of the sanctuary would probably sell his patrimony when quitting his former home. The text directs that he should, notwithstanding any such private

resources, duly enjoy his share of the perquisites provided for the ministers at the sanctuary, and as he was "waiting at the altar" should be "partaker with the altar" 1 Corinthians 9:13.

Verse 10

To pass through the fire - i. e., to Moloch; compare the Leviticus 20:2 note.

That useth divination - Compare Numbers 23:23 note.

Observer of times … enchanter - Compare Leviticus 19:26 note.

Witch - Rather "sorcerer," compare the Exodus 7:11 note.

Verse 11

A charmer - i. e., one who fascinates and subdues noxious animals or men, such as the famous serpent-charmers of the East Psalm 58:4-5.

A consulter with familiar spirits … a wizard - Compare Leviticus 19:31 note.

Recromancer - literally, "one who interrogates the dead." The purpose of the text is obviously to group together all the known words belonging to the practices in question. Compare 2 Chronicles 33:6.

Verse 13

Perfect - As in Genesis 17:1; Job 1:1; Matthew 5:48. The sense is that Israel was to keep the worship of the true God wholly uncontaminated by idolatrous pollutions.

Verses 15-19

The ancient fathers of the Church and the generality of modern commentators have regarded our Lord as the prophet promised in these verses. It is evident from the New Testament alone that the Messianic was the accredited interpretation among the Jews at the beginning of the Christian era (compare the marginal references, and John 4:25); nor can our Lord Himself, when He declares that Moses "wrote of Him" John 5:45-47, be supposed to have any other words more directly in view than these, the only words in which Moses, speaking in his own person, gives any prediction of the kind. But the verses seem to have a further, no less evident if subsidiary, reference to a prophetical order which should stand from time to time, as Moses had done, between God and the people; which should make known God's will to the latter; which should by its presence render it unnecessary either that God should address the people directly, as at Sinai (Deuteronomy 18:16; compare Deuteronomy 5:25 ff), or that the people themselves in lack of counsel should resort to the superstitions of the pagan.

In fact, in the words before us, Moses gives promise both of a prophetic order, and of the Messiah in particular as its chief; of a line of prophets culminating in one eminent individual. And in proportion as we see in our Lord the characteristics of the prophet most perfectly exhibited, so must we regard the promise of Moses as in Him most completely accomplished.

Verse 20

Compare the marginal references.

Verse 21

And if thou say in thine heart, How … - The passage evidently assumes such an occasion for consulting the prophet as was usual among the pagan, e. g., an impending battle or other such crisis (compare 1 Kings 22:11), in which his veracity would soon be put to the test. Failure of a prediction is set forth as a sure note of its being "presumptuous." But from Deuteronomy 13:2 ff we see that the fulfillment of a prediction would not decisively accredit him who uttered it: for the prophet or dreamer of dreams who endeavoured on the strength of miracles to seduce to idolatry was to be rejected and punished. Nothing therefore contrary to the revealed truth of God was to be accepted under any circumstances.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Verses 1-13

This and the next two chapters contain enactments designed to protect human life, and to impress its sanctity on Israel.

In Deuteronomy 19:1-13 the directions respecting the preparation of the roads to the cities of refuge, the provision of additional cities in case of an extension of territory, and the intervention of the elders as representing the congregation, are unique to Deuteronomy and supplementary to the laws on the same subject given in the earlier books (compare the marginal reference).

Deuteronomy 19:1, Deuteronomy 19:2

The three cities of refuge for the district east of Jordan had been already named. Moses now directs that when the territory on the west of Jordan had been conquered, a like allotment of three other cities in it should be made. This was accordingly done; compare Joshua 20:1 ff,

Deuteronomy 19:3

Thou shalt prepare thee a way - It was the duty of the Senate to repair the roads that led to the cities of refuge annually, and remove every obstruction. No hillock was left, no river over which there was not a bridge; and the road was at least 32 cubits broad. At cross-roads there were posts bearing the words Refuge, Refuge, to guide the fugitive in his flight. It seems as if in Isaiah 40:3 ff the imagery were borrowed from the preparation of the ways to the cities of refuge.

Deuteronomy 19:5

With the axe - literally, "with the iron." Note the employment of iron for tools, and compare Deuteronomy 3:11 note.

Deuteronomy 19:8, Deuteronomy 19:9

Provision is here made for the anticipated enlargement of the borders of Israel to the utmost limits promised by God, from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18, note; Exodus 23:31, note). This promise, owing to the sins of the people, did not receive its fulfillment until after David had conquered the Philistines, Syrians, etc.; and this but a transient one, for many of the conquered peoples regained independence on the dissolution of Solomon‘s empire.

Verse 14

As a man‘s life is to be held sacred, so are his means of livelihood; and in this connection a prohibition is inserted against removing a neighbor‘s landmark: compare the marginal references.

Verse 16

Testify against him that which is wrong - Margin, more literally, “a falling away.” The word is used Deuteronomy 13:5 to signify apostasy or revolt; here it is no doubt to be understood in the wider sense of any departure from the Law.

Verse 17

Both the men, between whom the controversy is - Not the accused and the false witness, but the plaintiff and defendant (compare Exodus 23:1) who were summoned before the supreme court held, as provided in Deuteronomy 17, at the sanctuary. The judges acted as God‘s representative; to lie to them was to lie to Him.

Verses 19-21

See the marginal references.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Verse 1

Horses, and chariots - The most formidable elements of an Oriental host, which the Canaanites possessed in great numbers; compare Joshua 17:16; Judges 4:3; 1 Samuel 13:5. Israel could not match these with corresponding forces (compare Deuteronomy 17:16 note and references), but, having the God of battles on its side, was not to be dismayed by them; the assumption being that the war had the sanction of God, and was consequently just.

Verse 2

The priest - Not the high priest, but one appointed for the purpose, and called, according to the rabbis, "the anointed of the war": hence, perhaps the expression of Jeremiah 6:4, etc. "prepare ye" (literally consecrate) "war." Thus, Phinehas went with the warriors to fight against Midian (Numbers 31:6; compare 1 Samuel 4:4, 1 Samuel 4:11; 2 Chronicles 13:12).

Verse 5

The officers dedicated it - See Exodus 5:6 note.

Compare the marginal references. The expression is appropriate, because various ceremonies of a religious kind were customary among the Jews on taking possession of a new house. The immunity conferred in this verse lasted, like that in Deuteronomy 20:7 (compare Deuteronomy 24:5), for one year.

Verse 6

See the margin and references. The fruit of newly-planted trees was set apart from common uses for four years.

Verse 9

The meaning is that the "officers" should then subdivide the levies, and appoint leaders of the smaller divisions thus constituted.

Verses 10-20

Directions intended to prevent wanton destruction of life and property in sieges.

Deuteronomy 20:16

Forbearance, however, was not to be shown toward the Canaanite nations, which were to be utterly exterminated (compare Deuteronomy 7:1-

4). The command did not apply to beasts as well as men (compare Joshua 11:11, Joshua 11:14).

Deuteronomy 20:19

The parenthesis may he more literally rendered "for man is a tree of the field," i. e., has his life from the tree of the field, is supported in life by it (compare Deuteronomy 24:6). The Egyptians seem invariably to have cut down the fruit-trees in war.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Verse 2

The elders represented the citizens at large, the judges the magistracy: priests Deuteronomy 21:5 from the nearest priestly town, were likewise to be at hand. Thus, all classes would be represented at the purging away of that blood-guiltiness which until removed attached to the whole community.

Verse 3

The requirements as regards place and victim are symbolic. The heifer represented the murderer, so far at least as to die in his stead, since he himself could not be found. As hearing his guilt the heifer must therefore be one which was of full growth and strength, and had not yet been ceremonially profaned by human use. The Christian commentators find here a type of Christ and of His sacrifice for man: but the heifer was not strictly a sacrifice or sin-offering. The transaction was rather figurative, and was so ordered as to impress the lesson of Genesis 9:5.

Verse 4

Eared - i. e., plowed; compare Genesis 45:6 note and references. The word is derived from the Latin, and is in frequent use by English writers of the fifteenth and two following centuries.

Strike off the heifer‘s neck - Rather, “break its neck” (compare Exodus 13:13). The mode of killing the victim distinguishes this lustration from the sin-offering, in which there would be of course shedding and sprinkling of the blood.

Verse 10

The regulations which now follow in the rest of this and throughout the next chapter bring out the sanctity of various personal rights and relations fundamental to human life and society.

Deuteronomy 21:10-14. The war supposed here is one against the neighboring nations after Israel had utterly destroyed the Canaanites (compare Deuteronomy 7:3), and taken possession of their land.

Verse 12

The shaving the head (a customary sign of purification, Leviticus 14:8; Numbers 8:7), and the putting away “the garment of her captivity,” were designed to signify the translation of the woman from the state of a pagan and a slave to that of a wife among the covenant-people. Consistency

required that she should "pare" (dress, compare 2 Samuel 19:24), not "suffer to grow," her nails; and thus, so far as possible, lay aside everything belonging to her condition as an alien.

Verse 13

Bewail her father and her mother a full month - This is prescribed from motives of humanity, that the woman might have time and leisure to detach her affections from their natural ties, and prepare her mind for new ones.

Verse 14

Thou shalt not make merchandise of her - Rather, thou shalt not constrain her: literally "treat her with constraint," or "treat her as a slave."

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Verses 15-17

Moses did not originate the rights of primogeniture (compare Genesis 25:31), but recognized them, since he found them pre-existing in the general social system of the East. Paternal authority could set aside these rights on just grounds Genesis 27:33, but it is forbidden here to do so from mere partiality.

Verses 18-21

The formal accusation of parents against a child was to be received without inquiry, as being its own proof. Thus the just authority of the parents is recognized and effectually upheld (compare Exodus 20:12; Exodus 21:15, Exodus 21:17; Leviticus 20:9); but the extreme and irresponsible power of life and death, conceded by the law of Rome and other pagan nations, is withheld from the Israelite father. In this, as in the last law, provision is made against the abuses of a necessary authority.

Verse 22

There were four methods of execution in use among the ancient Jews; stoning (Exodus 17:4; Deuteronomy 13:10, etc.), burning Leviticus 20:14; Leviticus 21:9, the sword Exodus 32:27, and strangulation. The latter, though not named in Scripture, is regarded by the rabbis as the most common, and the proper one to be adopted when no other is expressly enjoined by the Law. Suspension, whether from cross, stake, or gallows, was not used as a mode of taking life, but was sometimes added after death as an enhancement of punishment. Pharaoh's chief baker Genesis 40:19 was hanged after being put to death by the sword; and similarly Joshua appears

Joshua 10:26 to have dealt with the five kings who made war against Gibeon. Compare also Numbers 25:4.

Verse 23

He that is hanged is accursed of God - i. e. "Bury him that is hanged out of the way before evening: his hanging body defiles the land; for God's curse rests on it." The curse of God is probably regarded as lying on the malefactor because, from the fact of his being hanged, be must have been guilty of a especially atrocious breach of God's covenant. Such an offender could not remain on the face of the earth without defiling it (compare Leviticus 18:25, Leviticus 18:28; Numbers 35:34). Therefore after the penalty of his crime had been inflicted, and he had hung for a time as a public example, the holy land was to be at once and entirely delivered from his presence. See Galatians 3:13 for Paul's quotation of this text and his application of it.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 22

Verse 1

On the general character of the contents of this chapter see Deuteronomy 21:10 note.

Verse 5

That which pertaineth unto a man - i. e. not only his dress but all that especially pertains distinctively to his sex; arms, domestic and other utensils, etc.

The distinction between the sexes is natural and divinely established, and cannot be neglected without indecorum and consequent danger to purity (compare 1 Corinthians 11:3-15).

Verses 6-8

These precepts are designed to cultivate a spirit of humanity. Compare Deuteronomy 25:4; Leviticus 22:28; and 1 Corinthians 9:9-10.

Deuteronomy 22:8

The roofs of houses in Palestine were flat and used for various purposes. Compare Joshua 2:6; 2 Samuel 11:2; Acts 10:9, etc. A battlement was almost a necessary protection. It was to be, according to the rabbis, at least two cubits high (about 3 ft.).

Verses 9-11

Compare the marginal reference. The prohibition of Deuteronomy 22:10 was also dictated by humanity. The ox and the donkey being of such different size and strength, it would be cruel to the latter to yoke them together. These two animals are named as being those ordinarily employed in agriculture; compare Isaiah 32:20.

Verse 12

Compare Numbers 15:38 and its note.

Verse 19

The fine was to be paid to the father, because the slander was against him principally as the head of the wife‘s family. If the damsel were an orphan the fine reverted to herself. The fact that the penalties attached to bearing false witness against a wife are fixed and comparatively light indicates the low estimation and position of the woman at that time.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 23

Introduction

This chapter enjoins sanctity and purity in the congregation of Israel as a whole, and lays down certain rights and duties of citizenship.

Verse 1

Compare Leviticus 21:17-24. Such persons, exhibiting a mutilation of that human nature which was made in God‘s image, were rejected from the covenant entirely. However, they could be proselytes (compare Acts 8:27). The Old Testament itself foretells Isaiah 56:3-5 the removal of this ban when under the kingdom of Messiah the outward and emblematic perfection and sanctity of Israel should be fulfilled in their inner meaning by the covenanted presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

Verse 2

A bastard - Probably, a child born of incest or adultery.

Even to his tenth generation - i. e. (see the next verse and Nehemiah 13:1), forever. Ten is the number of perfection and completeness.

Verses 3-5

This law forbids only the naturalization of those against whom it is directed. It does not forbid their dwelling in the land; and seems to refer rather to the nations than to individuals. It was not understood at any rate to interdict marriage with a Moabitess; compare Rth 1:4 ; Rth 4:13 . Ruth however, and her sister were doubtless proselytes.

Deuteronomy 23:4

Compare the marginal reference. The Moabites and the Ammonites are to be regarded as clans of the same stock rather than as two independent nations, and as acting together. Compare 2 Chronicles 20:1.

Verse 6

i. e. “thou shalt not invite them robe on terms of amity with thee (compare Deuteronomy 20:10 ff), nor make their welfare thy care”: compare Ezra 9:12. There is no injunction to hatred or retaliation (compare Deuteronomy 2:9, Deuteronomy 2:19); but later history contains frequent record of hostility between Israel and these nations.

Verse 7-8

The Edomite, as descended from Esau the twin brother of Jacob (compare Deuteronomy 2:4), and the Egyptian, as of that nation which had for long shown hospitality to Joseph and his brethren, were not to be objects

of abhorrence. The oppression of the Egyptians was perhaps regarded as the act of the Pharaohs rather than the will of the people Exodus 11:2-3; and at any rate was not to cancel the memory of preceding hospitality.

Deuteronomy 23:8

In their third generation - i. e. the great grandchildren of the Edomite or Egyptian alien: compare the similar phrase in Exodus 20:5.

Verses 9-14

The whole passage refers not to the encampments of the nation while passing from Egypt through the wilderness, but to future warlike expeditions seat out from Canaan.

Verse 15-16

The case in question is that of a slave who fled from a pagan master to the holy land. It is of course assumed that the refugee was not flying from justice, but only from the tyranny of his lord.

Verse 17

Compare the marginal reference. Prostitution was a common part of religious observances among idolatrous nations, especially in the worship of Ashtoreth or Astarte. Compare Micah 1:7; Baruch 6:43.

Verse 18

Another Gentile practice, connected with the one alluded to in the preceding verse, is here forbidden. The word "dog" is figurative (compare Revelation 22:15), and equivalent to the "sodomite" of the verse preceding.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Verses 1-4

In this and the next chapter certain particular rights and duties, domestic, social, and civil, are treated. The cases brought forward have often no definite connection, and seem selected in order to illustrate the application of the great principles of the Law in certain important events and circumstances.

These four verses contain only one sentence, and should be rendered thus: If a man hath taken a wife, etc., and given her a bill of divorcement and Deuteronomy 24:2 if she has departed out of his house and become another man‘s wife; and Deuteronomy 24:3 if the latter husband hates her, then Deuteronomy 24:4 her former husband, etc.

Moses neither institutes nor enjoins divorce. The exact spirit of the passage is given in our Lord‘s words to the Jews‘, “Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives” Matthew 19:8. Not only does the original institution of marriage as recorded by Moses Genesis 2:24 set forth the perpetuity of the bond, but the verses before us plainly intimate that divorce, while tolerated for the time, contravenes the order of nature and of God. The divorced woman who marries again is “defiled” Deuteronomy 24:4, and is grouped in this particular with the adulteress (compare Leviticus 18:20). Our Lord then was speaking according to the spirit of the law of Moses when he declared, “Whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” Matthew 19:9. He was speaking too not less according to the mind of the prophets (compare Malachi 2:14-16). But Moses could not absolutely put an end to a practice which was traditional, and common to the Jews with other Oriental nations. His aim is therefore to regulate and thus to mitigate an evil which he could not extirpate.

Verse 6

Compare Exodus 22:25-26.

Verse 7

Compare Deuteronomy 21:14; and Exodus 21:16.

Verses 10-13

Compare Exodus 22:25-27.

Deuteronomy 24:13

Righteousness unto thee - Compare Deuteronomy 6:25 note.

Verse 16

A caution addressed to earthly judges. Among other Oriental nations the family of a criminal was commonly involved in his punishment (compare Esther 9:13-14). In Israel it was not to be so; compare marginal references.

Verses 17-22

Compare the marginal references. The motive assigned for these various acts of consideration is one and the same Deuteronomy 24:18, Deuteronomy 24:22.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 25

Verse 1-2

Render it:

(1) If there be a controversy between men, and they come to judgment, and the judges judge them, and justify the righteous and condemn the wicked (compare the marginal reference. and Exodus 23:7; Proverbs 17:15);

(2) then it shall be, etc.

Deuteronomy 25:2

Scourging is named as a penalty in Leviticus 19:20. The beating here spoken of would be on the back with a rod or stick (compare Proverbs 10:13; Proverbs 19:29; Proverbs 26:3).

Verse 3

The Jews to keep within the letter of the law fixed 39 stripes as the maximum (compare the marginal reference.). Forty signifies the full measure of judgment (compare Genesis 7:12; Numbers 14:33-34); but the son of Israel was not to be lashed like a slave at the mercy of another. The judge was always to be present to see that the Law in this particular was not overpassed.

Verse 4

Compare the marginal references. In other kinds of labor the oxen were usually muzzled. When driven to and fro over the threshing-floor in order to stamp out the grain from the chaff, they were to be allowed to partake of the fruits of their labors.

Verses 5-10

The law of levirate marriage. The law on this subject is not unique to the Jews, but is found (see Genesis 38:8) in all essential respects the same among various Oriental nations, ancient and modern. The rules in these verses, like those upon divorce, do but incorporate existing immemorial usages, and introduce various wise and politic limitations and mitigations of them. The root of the obligation here imposed upon the brother of the deceased husband lies in the primitive idea of childlessness being a great calamity (compare Genesis 16:4; and note), and extinction of name and family one of the greatest that could happen (compare Deuteronomy 9:14; Psalm 109:12-15). To avert this the ordinary rules as to intermarriage are in

the case in question (compare Leviticus 18:16) set aside. The obligation was onerous (compare Rth 4:6), and might be repugnant; and it is accordingly considerably reduced and restricted by Moses. The duty is recognized as one of affection for the memory of the deceased; it is not one which could be enforced at law. That it continued down to the Christian era is apparent from the question on this point put to Jesus by the Sadducees (see the marginal references).

Deuteronomy 25:5

No child - literally, "no son." The existence of a daughter would clearly suffice. The daughter would inherit the name and property of the father; compare Numbers 27:1-11.

Deuteronomy 25:9

Loose his shoe from off his foot - In token of taking from the unwilling brother all right over the wife and property of the deceased. Planting the foot on a thing was an usual symbol of lordship and of taking possession (compare Genesis 13:17; Joshua 10:24), and loosing the shoe and handing it to another in like manner signified a renunciation and transfer of right and title (compare Rth 4:7-8 ; Psalm 60:8, and Psalm 108:9). The widow here is directed herself, as the party slighted and injured, to deprive her brother-law of his shoe, and spit in his face (compare Numbers 12:14). The action was intended to aggravate the disgrace conceived to attach to the conduct of the man.

Deuteronomy 25:10

The house … - Equivalent to "the house of the barefooted one." To go barefoot was a sign of the most abject condition; compare 2 Samuel 15:30.

Verse 12

This is the only mutilation prescribed by the Law of Moses, unless we except the retaliation prescribed as a punishment for the infliction on another of bodily injuries Leviticus 24:19-20. The act in question was probably not rare in the times and countries for which the Law of Moses was designed. It is of course to be understood that the act was willful, and that the prescribed punishment would be inflicted according to the sentence of the judges.

Verses 13-19

Honesty in trade, as a duty to our neighbor, is emphatically enforced once more (compare Leviticus 19:35-36). It is noteworthy that John the Baptist puts the like duties in the forefront of his preaching (compare Luke

3:12 ff); and that "the prophets" (compare Ezekiel 45:10-12; Amos 8:5; Micah 6:10-11) and "the Psalms" Proverbs 16:11; Proverbs 20:10, Proverbs 20:23, not less than "the Law," especially insist on them.

Deuteronomy 25:13

Divers weights - i. e. stones of unequal weights, the lighter to sell with, the heavier to buy with. Stones were used by the Jews instead of brass or lead for their weights, as less liable to lose anything through rust or wear.

Deuteronomy 25:17-19

It was not after the spirit or mission of the Law to aim at overcoming inveterate opposition by love and by attempts at conversion (contrast Luke 9:55-56). The law taught God's hatred of sin and of rebellion against Him by enjoining the extinction of the obstinate sinner. The Amalekites were a kindred people Genesis 36:15-16; and living as they did in the peninsula of Sinai, they could not but have well known the mighty acts God had done for His people in Egypt and the Red Sea; yet they manifested from the first a persistent hostility to Israel (compare Exodus 17:8, and note; Numbers 14:45). They provoked therefore the sentence here pronounced, which was executed at last by Saul (1 Samuel 15:3 ff).

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 26

Verse 1

Two liturgical enactments having a clear and close reference to the whole of the preceding legislation, form a most appropriate and significant conclusion to it, namely,

(1) the formal acknowledgment in deed and symbol of God‘s faithfulness, by presentment of a basket filled with firstfruits, and in word by recitation of the solemn formula prescribed in Deuteronomy 26:3, Deuteronomy 26:5-10; and

(2) the solemn declaration and profession on the part of each Israelite on the occasion of the third tithe Deuteronomy 26:12.

Verse 2

On the subject of firstfruits see the notes at Leviticus 23:9 ff. The firstfruits here in question are to be distinguished alike from those offered in acknowledgment of the blessings of harvest (compare Exodus 22:29) at the Feasts of Passover and Pentecost, and also from the offerings prescribed in Numbers 18:8 ff. The latter consisted of preparations from the produce of the earth, such as oil, flour, wine, etc.; while those here meant are the raw produce: the former were national and public offerings, those of this chapter were private and personal. The whole of the firstfruits belonged to the officiating priest.

Verse 5

A Syrian ready to perish was my father - The reference is shown by the context to be to Jacob, as the ancestor in whom particularly the family of Abraham began to develop into a nation (compare Isaiah 43:22, Isaiah 43:28, etc.). Jacob is called a Syrian (literally, Aramaean), not only because of his own long residence in Syria with Laban Matthew 2:23, but because he there married and had his children (compare Hosea 12:12); and might be said accordingly to belong to that more than to any other land.

Verse 12

See the marginal reference to Numbers and note. A strict fulfillment of the onerous and complicated tithe obligations was a leading part of the righteousness of the Pharisees: compare Matthew 23:23.

Verse 14

I have not eaten thereof in my mourning - When the Israelite would be unclean (compare the marginal references).

Nor given ought thereof for the dead - The reference is not so much to the superstitious custom of placing food on or in tombs as to the funeral expenses, and more especially the usual feast for the mourners (compare Jeremiah 16:7; Ezekiel 24:17; Hosea 9:4; Tobit 4:17). The dedicated things were to be employed in glad and holy feasting, not therefore for funeral banquets; for death and all associated with it was regarded as unclean.

Verses 16-19

A brief and earnest exhortation by way of conclusion to the second and longest discourse of the book.

Deuteronomy 26:17

Thou hast avouched - literally, "made to say:" so also in the next verse. The sense is: "Thou hast given occasion to the Lord to say that He is thy God," i. e. by promising that He shall be so. Compare Exodus 24:7; Joshua 24:14-25,

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Verse 1

Moses in a third discourse Deuteronomy 27:1-10; and by next prescribing the liturgical form after which the blessings and cursings should be pronounced Deuteronomy 27:11-26.

Verse 2

The stones here named are not those of which the altar Deuteronomy 27:5 was to be built, but are to serve as a separate monument witnessing to the fact that the people took possession of the land by virtue of the Law inscribed on them and with an acknowledgment of its obligations.

Verse 3

All the words of this law - i. e. all the laws revealed from God to the people by Moses, regarded by the Jews as 613 (compare Numbers 15:38 note). The exhibition of laws in this manner on stones, pillars, or tables, was familiar to the ancients. The laws were probably graven in the stone ("very plainly," Deuteronomy 27:8 is by some rendered "scoop it out well"), as are for the most part the Egyptian hieroglyphics, the "plaister" being afterward added to protect the inscription from the weather.

Verse 4

In mount Ebal - Compare the marginal references. The Samaritan Pentateuch and Version read here Gerizim instead of Ebal; but the original text was probably, as nearly all modern authorities hold, altered in order to lend a show of scriptural sanction to the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim.

The erection of the altar, the offering thereon burnt-offerings and peace-offerings Deuteronomy 27:6-7, the publication of the Law in writing, form altogether a solemn renewal of the covenant on the entrance of the people into the promised land, and recall the ceremonies observed on the original grant of the covenant at Sinai (compare Exodus 24:5). And Ebal (the mount of "barrenness "),the mount of cursing, was the fitting spot on which to celebrate them. For the curses were the penalties under which the children of Israel bound themselves to keep the Law. Suitably also was the same place selected as that in which were to be set up both the monumental stones containing the Law, and the altar at which the covenant was to be renewed. We must note too the fact that Deuteronomy 27:15 ff set out verbatim the curses only, the blessings being omitted. The law because of

man‘s sinfulness brings on him first and chiefly a curse: compare Deuteronomy 31:16-17; Galatians 3:10.

Verses 11-26

Compare Joshua 8:32-35. The solemnity was apparently designed only for the single occasion on which it actually took place.

Deuteronomy 27:12, Deuteronomy 27:13

The tribes appointed to stand on Gerizim to bless the people all sprang from the two wives of Jacob, Leah and Rachel. All the four tribes which sprang from the handmaids Zilpah and Bilhah are located on Ebal. But in order, as it would seem, to effect an equal division, two tribes are added to the latter from the descendants of the wives, that of Reuben, probably because he forfeited his primogeniture Genesis 49:4; and of Zebulun, apparently because he was the youngest son of Leah.

The transaction presents itself as a solemn renewal of the covenant made by God with Abraham and Isaac, but more especially with Jacob and his family. Accordingly the genealogical basis of the “twelve patriarchs” (compare Acts 7:12; Revelation 7:4 ff), the sons of Jacob, is here assumed. The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh are merged in the name of Joseph, their father; and Levi regains on this occasion his place collaterally with the others. “The Levites” of Deuteronomy 27:14 are no doubt “the priests the Levites” (compare Joshua 8:33), in whom the ministerial character attaching to the tribe was more particularly manifested. It is noteworthy that the group of tribes which stood on Gerizim far exceeded the other in numbers and in importance, thus perhaps indicating that even by the Law the blessing should at length prevail.

Deuteronomy 27:15

The “Amen” attested the conviction of the utterers that the sentences to which they responded were true, just, and certain; so in Numbers 5:22, and in our own Commination Office, which is modelled after this ordinance of Moses.

Deuteronomy 27:15-26

Twelve curses against transgressions of the covenant. The first eleven are directed against special sins which are selected by way of example, the last comprehensively sums up in general terms and condemns all and every offence against God‘s Law. Compare the marginal references.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 28

Verses 1-14

A comparison of this chapter with Exodus 23:20-23 and Deuteronomy 28:5

The "basket" or bag was a customary means in the East for carrying about whatever might be needed for personal uses (compare Deuteronomy 26:2; John 13:29).

The "store" is rather the kneading-trough Exodus 8:3; Exodus 12:34. The blessings here promised relate, it will be observed, to private and personal life: in Deuteronomy 28:7 those which are of a more public and national character are brought forward.

Deuteronomy 28:9

The oath with which God vouchsafed to confirm His promises to the patriarchs (compare Genesis 22:16; Hebrews 6:13-14) contained by implication these gifts of holiness and eminence to Israel (compare the marginal references).

Verses 15-68

The curses correspond in form and number Deuteronomy 28:15-19 to the blessings Deuteronomy 28:3-6, and the special modes in which these threats should be executed are described in five groups of denunciations Deuteronomy 28:20-26

First series of judgments. The curse of God should rest on all they did, and should issue in manifold forms of disease, in famine, and in defeat in war.

Deuteronomy 28:20

Vexation - Rather, confusion: the word in the original is used Deuteronomy 7:23; 1 Samuel 14:20 for the panic and disorder with which the curse of God smites His foes.

Deuteronomy 28:22

"Blasting" denotes (compare Genesis 41:23) the result of the scorching east wind; "mildew" that of an untimely blight falling on the green ear, withering it and marring its produce.

Deuteronomy 28:24

When the heat is very great the atmosphere in Palestine is often filled with dust and sand; the wind is a burning sirocco, and the air comparable to the glowing heat at the mouth of a furnace.

Deuteronomy 28:25

Shalt be removed - See the margin. The threat differs from that in Leviticus 26:33, which refers to a dispersion of the people among the pagan. Here it is meant that they should be tossed to and fro at the will of others, driven from one country to another without any certain settlement.

Deuteronomy 28:27-37

Second series of judgments on the body, mind, and outward circumstances of the sinners.

Deuteronomy 28:27

The "botch" (rather "boil;" see Exodus 9:9), the "emerods" or tumors 1 Samuel 5:6, 1 Samuel 5:9, the "scab" and "itch" represent the various forms of the loathsome skin diseases which are common in Syria and Egypt.

Deuteronomy 28:28

Mental maladies shah be added to those sore bodily plagues, and should Deuteronomy 28:29-34 reduce the sufferers to powerlessness before their enemies and oppressors.

Blindness - Most probably mental blindness; compare Lamentations 4:14; Zephaniah 1:17; 2 Corinthians 3:14 ff.

Deuteronomy 28:30-33

See the marginal references for the fulfillment of these judgments.

Deuteronomy 28:38-48

Third series of judgments, affecting every kind of labor and enterprise until it had accomplished the total ruin of the nation, and its subjection to its enemies.

Deuteronomy 28:39

Worms - i. e. the vine-weevil. Naturalists prescribed elaborate precautions against its ravages.

Deuteronomy 28:40

Cast … - Some prefer "shall be spoiled" or "plundered."

Deuteronomy 28:43, Deuteronomy 28:44

Contrast Deuteronomy 28:12 and Deuteronomy 28:13.

Deuteronomy 28:46

Forever - Yet "the remnant" Romans 9:27; Romans 11:5 would by faith and obedience become a holy seed.

Deuteronomy 28:49-58

Fourth series of judgments, descriptive of the calamities and horrors which should ensue when Israel should be subjugated by its foreign foes.

Deuteronomy 28:49

The description (compare the marginal references) applies undoubtedly to the Chaldeans, and in a degree to other nations also whom God raised up as ministers of vengeance upon apostate Israel (e. g. the Medes). But it only needs to read this part of the denunciation, and to compare it with the narrative of Josephus, to see that its full and exact accomplishment took place in the wars of Vespasian and Titus against the Jews, as indeed the Jews themselves generally admit.

The eagle - The Roman ensign; compare Matthew 24:28; and consult throughout this passage the marginal references.

Deuteronomy 28:54

Evil - i. e. grudging; compare Deuteronomy 15:9.

Deuteronomy 28:57

Young one - The "afterbirth" (see the margin). The Hebrew text in fact suggests an extremity of horror which the King James Version fails to exhibit. Compare 2 Kings 6:29.

Deuteronomy 28:58-68

Fifth series of judgments. The uprooting of Israel from the promised land, and its dispersion among other nations. Examine the marginal references.

Deuteronomy 28:58

In this book - i. e. in the book of the Law, or the Pentateuch in so far as it contains commands of God to Israel. Deuteronomy is included, but not exclusively intended. So Deuteronomy 28:61; compare Deuteronomy 27:3 and note, Deuteronomy 31:9.

Deuteronomy 28:66

Thy life shall hang in doubt before thee - i. e. shall be hanging as it were on a thread, and that before thine own eyes. The fathers regard this passage as suggesting in a secondary or mystical sense Christ hanging on the cross, as the life of the Jews who would not believe in Him.

Deuteronomy 28:68

This is the climax. As the Exodus from Egypt was as it were the birth of the nation into its covenant relationship with God, so the return to the house of bondage is in like manner the death of it. The mode of conveyance, "in ships," is added to heighten the contrast. They crossed the sea from Egypt with a high hand. the waves being parted before them. They should go back again cooped up in slaveships.

There ye shall be sold - Rather, “there shall ye offer yourselves, or be offered for sale.” This denunciation was literally fulfilled on more than one occasion: most signally when many thousand Jews were sold into slavery and sent into Egypt by Titus; but also under Hadrian, when numbers were sold at Rachel‘s grave Genesis 35:19.

No man shall buy you - i. e. no one shall venture even to employ you as slaves, regarding you as accursed of God, and to be shunned in everything.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 29

Verse 1

This and the following chapter contain the address of Moses to the people on the solemn renewal of the covenant. Consult the marginal references for proof of historical statements or explanation of obscure words.

Verse 4

Ability to understand the things of God is the gift of God (compare 1 Corinthians 2:13-14); yet man is not guiltless if he lacks that ability. The people had it not because they had not felt their want of it, nor asked for it. Compare 2 Corinthians 3:14-15.

Verse 9

That ye may prosper - literally, "that ye may act wisely." The connection of the two ideas of wisdom in conduct and prosperity in circumstances is noteworthy.

Verse 11

The covenant was national, and therefore embraced all the elements which make up the nation. The "little ones" would of course be represented by their parents or guardians; the absent Deuteronomy 29:15 by those present; nor were the servants and proselytes to be excluded (compare Acts 2:39). The text is fairly alleged in justification of the Church's practice of admitting little ones into covenant with God by Baptism, and accepting promises made on their behalf by sponsors.

Verse 15

With him that is not here with us - i. e. as the Jews explain, posterity; which throughout all generations was to be taken as bound by the act and deed of those present and living.

Verse 17

Idols - See the margin, "dungy gods;" i. e. clods or stocks which can be rolled about (compare Leviticus 26:30).

Verse 18

The word here and in Deuteronomy 32:32 rendered "gall," is in Hosea 10:4 translated "hemlock." It is the name of a plant of intense bitterness, and of quick growth; and is therefore repeatedly used in conjunction with "wormwood" (compare Jeremiah 9:15; Lamentations 3:19; Amos 6:12), to express figuratively the nature and effects of sin (compare the marginal

references.). The herb is probably the poppy. Hence, the "water" (i. e. juice) "of gall" Jeremiah 8:14; Jeremiah 23:15 would be opium. This would explain its employment in the stupefying drink given to criminals at the time of execution (compare Psalm 69:21; Matthew 27:34), and the use of the word as synonymous with poison (compare Deuteronomy 32:33; Job 20:16).

Wormwood - is the plant "absinthium." It is used to denote metaphorically the distress and trouble which result from sin.

"The root that beareth gall and wormwood," means in this place any person lurking among them who is tainted with apostasy.

Verse 19

Compare on the thought Jeremiah 23:17. The secret and presumptuous sinner is meant who flatters himself that all is well and will be well with him, since he follows his own devices and prospers. Compare Psalm 73:11 ff.

To add drunkenness to thirst - The sense is probably: "Himself, drinking iniquity like water, Job 15:16, he corrupts and destroys others who are thirsting for it or prone to it."

The sense of the whole passage from Deuteronomy 29:16 onward to Deuteronomy 29:20 may be exhibited thus: "Ye have seen the abominations of idolatry among the pagan. Do you therefore look diligently that there be no secret idolater among you; a root of bitterness to all about him. Let there be no one, I say, who when he hears the curses of the Law against this sin, flatters himself, saying within himself, ‹All will be well, for I walk unmolested in my own self-chosen path; ‹ and thus acting, not only takes his own fill of sin, but destroys likewise every tempted brother within his reach, for the Lord will not spare him," etc.

Verse 23

The description is borrowed from the local features of the Dead Sea and its vicinity. The towns of the vale of Siddim were fertile and well watered (compare Genesis 13:10) until devastated by the wrath of God Genesis 19:24-25. The ruin of Israel and its land should be of the like sort (compare Leviticus 26:31-32; Psalm 107:34; Zephaniah 2:9). The desolate state of Palestine at present, and the traces of former fertility and prosperity, are attested by every traveler.

Verse 29

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God - This verse seems to be added as a solemn admonition on the part of Moses, in order to close the series of blessings and curses which he has delivered. The sense seems to be this: "The future, when and how these good and evil things will take effect, it lies with the Lord our God to determine; it pertains not to man's sphere and duty. God's revealed will is that which we must carry out." The 17th of our Articles of Religion concludes with much the same sentiment.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 30

Verses 1-10

The rejection of Israel and the desolation of the promised inheritance were not to be the end of God‘s dispensations. The closing words of the address therefore are words of comfort and promise. Compare marginal reference and Deuteronomy 4:29 ff; 1 Kings 8:46-50.

The chastisements of God would lead the nation to repent, and thereupon God would again bless them.

Deuteronomy 30:3

Will turn thy captivity - Will change or put an end to thy state of captivity or distress (compare Psalm 14:7; Psalm 85:2; Jeremiah 30:18). The rendering of the Greek version is significant; “the Lord will heal thy sins.”

The promises of this and the following verses had no doubt their partial fulfillment in the days of the Judges; but the fact that various important features are repeated in Jeremiah 32:37 ff, and in Ezekiel 11:19 ff, Ezekiel 34:13 ff, Ezekiel 36:24 ff, shows us that none of these was regarded as exhausting the promises. In full analogy with the scheme of prophecy we may add that the return from the Babylonian captivity has not exhausted their depth. The New Testament takes up the strain (e. g. in John 11:51-52. Then shall there be “one fold and one shepherd” John 10:16. But whether the general conversion of the Jews shall be accompanied with any national restoration, any recovery of their ancient prerogatives as the chosen people; and further, whether there shall be any local replacement of them in the land of their fathers, may be regarded as of “the secret things” which belong unto God Deuteronomy 29:29; and so indeed our Lord Himself teaches us Acts 1:6-7.

Deuteronomy 30:6

Circumcise thine heart - Compare Deuteronomy 10:16 note; Jeremiah 32:39; Ezra 11:19.

Verses 11-20

Ignorance of the requirements of the law cannot be pleaded Deuteronomy 30:10-14; hence, Deuteronomy 30:15-20 life and death, good and evil, are solemnly set before the people for their own choice; and an earnest exhortation to choose the better part concludes the address.

Deuteronomy 30:11-14. "The righteousness which is of faith" is really and truly described in these words of the Law; and, under Paul's guidance (see marginal references) we affirm was intended so to be. For the simplicity and accessibility which Moses here attributes to the Law of God neither is nor can be experimentally found in it except through the medium of faith; even though outwardly and in the letter that Law be written out for us so "that he may run that readeth," and be set forth in its duties and its sanctions as plainly as it was before the Jews by Moses. The seeming ease of the commandment, and yet its real impossibility to the natural man, form part of the qualifications of the Law to be our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.

Deuteronomy 30:11

Not hidden from thee - Rather, not too hard for thee, as in Deuteronomy 17:8.

Neither is it far off - Compare Luke 17:21.

Deuteronomy 30:13

The paraphrase of this verse in the Jerusalem Targum is noteworthy, and should be compared with Paul's rendering in Romans 10:7: "Neither is the law beyond the great sea, that thou shouldest say, Oh that we had one like Jonah the prophet who could descend into the depths of the sea and bring it to us!"

Deuteronomy 30:14

In thy mouth, and in, thy heart - Compare Deuteronomy 6:6; Deuteronomy 11:18-20.

Deuteronomy 30:20

That thou mayest love the Lord - Compare Deuteronomy 6:5. Love stands first as the essential and only source of obedience.

He is thy life - Or, "that" (i. e., "to love the Lord") "is thy life;" i. e., the condition of thy life and of its prolongation in the promised land. Compare Deuteronomy 4:40; Deuteronomy 32:47.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 31

Verse 2

I am an hundred and twenty years old - The 40 years of the wandering had passed since Moses, then 80 years old, "spake unto Pharaoh" (Exodus 7:7; Compare Deuteronomy 34:7).

I can, no more go out and come in - Render I shall not longer be able to go out and come in: i. e., discharge my duties among you. There is no inconsistency with Deuteronomy 34:7. Moses here adverts to his own age as likely to render him in future unequal to the active discharge of his office as leader of the people: the writer of Deuteronomy 34:1-12, one of Moses' contemporaries, remarks of him that up to the close of life "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" Deuteronomy 31:7; i. e. that he was to the last, in the judgment of others, in full possession of faculties and strength.

Verse 7-8

Moses hands over to Joshua that office as leader of the people, to which he had already been designated Deuteronomy 1:38; Numbers 27:23. He assigns also to the Levitical priests and the elders, as the ecclesiastical and civil heads of the nation, the responsibility of teaching the law and enforcing its observance Deuteronomy 31:10-13. Both these were symbolic acts, designed to mark the responsibility of the parties concerned after the death of Moses.

Verse 11

Compare the marginal references. It is not to be supposed that the whole of the Pentateuch was read, nor does the letter of the command require that it should be so. This reading could not be primarily designed for the information and instruction of the people, since it only took place once in seven years; but was evidently a symbolic transaction, intended, as were so many others, to impress on the people the conditions on which they held possession of their privileges and blessings.

Verses 14-23

The transaction recorded in these verses may be regarded as the solemn inauguration of Joshua to the office to which he had some time before Numbers 27:22 been called, and his recognition in it by God, which were manifested by his being summoned into the tabernacle with Moses while the Lord appeared in the pillar of cloud (compare Numbers 11:25; Numbers 12:5).

Deuteronomy 31:16

The future apostasy of the people is announced in the presence of Joshua that the latter might be fully aware of the danger and strive in his day to avert it. This he faithfully did (compare Joshua 24:31); but we find him in his own last address to Israel repeating Joshua 23:15-16 the self-same prediction and warning.

Deuteronomy 31:19

A witness for me against them - i. e., an attestation from their own mouths at once of God‘s benefits, their own duties, and their deserts when they should fall away. Being in verse it would be the more easily learned and kept in memory. The use of songs for such didactic purposes was not unknown to the legislators of antiquity. Compare also the advice of Paul, “teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” Colossians 3:16.

Deuteronomy 31:23

He gave - i. e., the Lord gave.

Verses 24-29

Moses completes the writing out of the book of the Law, and directs it to be placed by the ark of the covenant.

Deuteronomy 31:24

The “book” here spoken of would contain the whole Pentateuch up to this verse, and be “the Book of Moses,” called generally by the Jews “the Law” (compare Matthew 22:40; Galatians 4:21).

Deuteronomy 31:25

The Levites, which bare the ark - i. e., as in Deuteronomy 31:9, “the priests the sons of Levi.” The non-priestly Levites could not so much as enter the sanctuary or touch the ark (compare Numbers 4:15). Though in the journeys through the wilderness the ark was borne by the non-priestly Kohathites, yet on occasions of a more solemn and public character it was carried by the priests themselves (Joshua 3:3 ff, Joshua 4:9-10; Joshua 6:6, Joshua 6:12; Joshua 8:33; 1 Kings 8:3).

Deuteronomy 31:26

Put it in the side of the ark - Rather, by the side of the ark. The two tables of the Decalogue were in the ark 1 Kings 8:9; the Book of the Law was to be laid up in the holy of holies close by the ark of the covenant, probably in a chest. Compare 2 Kings 22:8.

Deuteronomy 31:27

How much more after my death - Hence, Deuteronomy 31:24 and the rest of the book (with the exception of the song, Deuteronomy 31:19) must be regarded as a kind of appendix added after Moses' death by another hand; though the Blessing Deuteronomy 33 is of course to be regarded as a composition of Moses.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 32

Verses 1-42

Song of Moses

If Deuteronomy 32:1-3 be regarded as the introduction, and Deuteronomy 32:43 as the conclusion, the main contents of the song may be grouped under three heads, namely,

(1) Deuteronomy 32:4-18, the faithfulness of God, the faithlessness of Israel;

(2) Deuteronomy 32:19-33, the chastisement and the need of its infliction by God;

(3) Deuteronomy 32:34-42, God‘s compassion upon the low and humbled state of His people.

The Song differs signally in diction and idiom from the preceding chapters; just as a lyrical passage is conceived in modes of thought wholly unlike those which belong to narrative or exhortation, and is uttered in different phraseology.

There are, however, in the Song numerous coincidences both in thoughts and words with other parts of the Pentateuch, and especially with Deuteronomy; while the resemblances between it and Deuteronomy 28:15; Leviticus 26:14), and describe it in general terms. If once we admit the possibility that Moses might foresee the future apostasy of Israel, it is scarcely possible to conceive how such foresight could be turned to better account by him than by the writing of this Song. Exhibiting as it does God‘s preventing mercies, His people‘s faithlessness and ingratitude, God‘s consequent judgments, and the final and complete triumph of the divine counsels of grace, it forms the summary of all later Old Testament prophecies, and gives as it were the framework upon which they are laid out. Here as elsewhere the Pentateuch presents itself as the foundation of the religious life of Israel in after times. The currency of the Song would be a standing protest against apostasy; a protest which might well check waverers, and warn the faithful that the revolt of others was neither unforeseen nor unprovided for by Him in whom they trusted.

That this Ode must on every ground take the very first rank in Hebrew poetry is universally allowed.

Deuteronomy 32:1-3

Introduction. Heaven and earth are here invoked, as elsewhere (see the marginal references), in order to impress on the hearers the importance of what is to follow.

Deuteronomy 32:4

He is the Rock, his work is perfect - Rather, the Rock, perfect is his work. This epithet, repeated no less than five times in the Song Deuteronomy 32:15, Deuteronomy 32:18, Deuteronomy 32:30-31, represents those attributes of God which Moses is seeking to enforce, immutability and impregnable strength. Compare the expression "the stone of Israel" in Genesis 49:24; and see 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 18:2; Matthew 16:18; John 1:42. Zur, the original of "Rock," enters frequently into the composition of proper names of the Mosaic time, e. g., Numbers 1:5-6, Numbers 1:10; Numbers 2:12; Numbers 3:35, etc. Our translators have elsewhere rendered it according to the sense "everlasting strength" Isaiah 26:4, "the Mighty One" Isaiah 30:29; in this chapter they have rightly adhered to the letter throughout.

Deuteronomy 32:5

Render: "It" (i. e. "the perverse and crooked generation") "hath corrupted itself before Him (compare Isaiah 1:4); they are not His children, but their blemish:" i. e., the generation of evil-doers cannot be styled God‘s children, but rather the shame and disgrace of God‘s children. The other side of the picture is thus brought forward with a brevity and abruptness which strikingly enforces the contrast.

Deuteronomy 32:6

Hath bought thee - Rather perhaps, "hath acquired thee for His own," or "possessed thee:" compare the expression "a peculiar people," margin "a purchased people," in 1 Peter 2:9.

Deuteronomy 32:8

That is, while nations were being constituted under God‘s providence, and the bounds of their habitation determined under His government (compare Acts 17:26), He had even then in view the interests of His elect, and reserved a fitting inheritance "according to the number of the children of Israel;" i. e., proportionate to the wants of their population. Some texts of

the Greek version have "according to the number of the Angels of God;" following apparently not a different reading, but the Jewish notion that the nations of the earth are seventy in number (compare Genesis 10:1 note), and that each has its own guardian Angel (compare Deuteronomy 32:9-14

These verses set forth in figurative language the helpless and hopeless state of the nation when God took pity on it, and the love and care which He bestowed on it.

Deuteronomy 32:10

In the waste howling wilderness - literally, "in a waste, the howling of a wilderness," i. e., a wilderness in which wild beasts howl. The word for "waste" is that used in Genesis 1:2, and there rendered "without form."

Deuteronomy 32:11

Compare Exodus 19:4. The "so," which the King James Version supplies in the next verse, should he inserted before "spreadeth," and omitted from Deuteronomy 32:12. The sense is, "so He spread out His wings, took them up," etc.

Deuteronomy 32:12

With him - i. e., with God. The Lord alone delivered Israel; Israel therefore ought to have served none other but Him.

Deuteronomy 32:13

i. e., God gave Israel possession of those commanding positions which carry with them dominion over the whole land (compare Deuteronomy 33:29), and enabled him to draw the richest provision out of spots naturally unproductive.

Deuteronomy 32:14

Breed of Bashan - Bashan was famous for its cattle. Compare Psalm 22:12; Ezekiel 39:18.

Fat of kidneys of wheat - i. e., the finest and most nutritious wheat. The fat of the kidneys was regarded as being the finest and tenderest, and was therefore specified as a part of the sacrificial animals which was to be offered to the Lord: compare Exodus 29:13, etc.

The pure blood of the qrape - Render, the blood of the grape, even wine. The Hebrew word seems (compare Isaiah 27:2) a poetical term for wine.

Deuteronomy 32:15

Jesbarun - This word, found again only in Deuteronomy 33:5, Deuteronomy 33:26, and Isaiah 44:2, is not a diminutive but an appellative

(containing an allusion to the root, "to be righteous"); and describes not the character which belonged to Israel in fact, but that to which Israel was called. Compare Numbers 23:21. The prefixing of this epithet to the description of Israel's apostasy contained in the words next following is full of keen reproof.

Deuteronomy 32:16

They provoked him to jealousy - The language is borrowed from the matrimonial relationship, as in Deuteronomy 31:16.

Deuteronomy 32:17

Devils - Render, destroyers. The application of the word to the false gods points to the trait so deeply graven in all pagan worship, that of regarding the deities as malignant, and needing to be propitiated by human sufferings.

Not to God - Rather, "not God," i. e., which were not God; see the margin and Deuteronomy 32:21. Compare Deuteronomy 13:7; Deuteronomy 29:25.

Deuteronomy 32:19

The anger of God at the apostasy of His people is stated in general terms in this verse; and the results of it are described, in words as of God Himself, in the next and following verses. These results consisted negatively in the withdrawal of God's favor Deuteronomy 32:20, and positively in the infliction of a righteous retribution.

Daughters - The women had their full share in the sins of the people. Compare Isaiah 3:16 ff; Isaiah 32:9 ff; Jeremiah 7:18; Jeremiah 44:15 ff.

Deuteronomy 32:20

I will see what their end shall be - Compare the similar expression in Genesis 37:20.

Deuteronomy 32:21

God would mete out to them the same measure as they had done to Him. Through chosen by the one God to be His own, they had preferred idols, which were no gods. So therefore would He prefer to His people that which was no people. As they had angered Him with their vanities, so would He provoke them by adopting in their stead those whom they counted as nothing. The terms, "not a people," and "a foolish nation," mean such a people as, not being God's, would not be accounted a people at all (compare Ephesians 2:12; 1 Peter 2:10), and such a nation as is destitute of that which alone can make a really "wise and understanding people"

Deuteronomy 4:6, namely, the knowledge of the revealed word and will of God (compare 1 Corinthians 1:18-28).

Deuteronomy 32:24

Burning heat - i. e., the fear of a pestilential disease. On the "four sore judgments," famine, plague, noisome beasts, the sword, compare Leviticus 26:22; Jeremiah 15:2; Ezekiel 5:17; Ezekiel 14:21.

Deuteronomy 32:26, Deuteronomy 32:27

Rather, I would utterly disperse them, etc., were it not that I apprehended the provocation of the enemy, i. e., that I should be provoked to wrath when the enemy ascribed the overthrow of Israel to his own prowess and not to my judgments. Compare Deuteronomy 9:28-29; Ezekiel 20:9, Ezekiel 20:14, Ezekiel 20:22.

Behave themselves strangely - Rather, misunderstand it, i. e., mistake the cause of Israel's ruin.

Deuteronomy 32:30

The defeat of Israel would be due to the fact that God, their strength, had abandoned them because of their apostasy.

Deuteronomy 32:31

Our enemies - i. e., the enemies of Moses and the faithful Israelites; the pagan, more especially those with whom Israel was brought into collision, whom Israel was commissioned to "chase," but to whom, as a punishment for faithlessness, Israel was "sold," Deuteronomy 32:30. Moses leaves the decision, whether "their rock" (i. e. the false gods of the pagan to which the apostate Israelites had fallen away) or "our Rock" is superior, to be determined by the unbelievers themselves. For example, see Exodus 14:25; Joshua 2:9 ff; 1 Samuel 4:8; 1 Samuel 5:7 ff; 1 Kings 20:28. That the pagan should thus be constrained to bear witness to the supremacy of Israel's God heightened the folly of Israel's apostasy.

Deuteronomy 32:32

Their vine - i. e., the nature and character of Israel: compare for similar expressions Psalm 80:8, Psalm 80:14; Jeremiah 2:21; Hosea 10:1.

Sodom … Gomorrah - Here, as elsewhere, and often in the prophets, emblems of utter depravity: compare Isaiah 1:10; Jeremiah 23:14,

Gall - Compare Deuteronomy 29:18 note.

Deuteronomy 32:35

Rather: "Vengeance is mine and recompence, at the time when their foot slideth.

Deuteronomy 32:36

Repent himself for - Rather, have compassion upon. The verse declares that God‘s judgment of His people would issue at once in the punishment of the wicked, and in the comfort of the righteous.

None shut up, or left - A proverbial phrase (compare 1 Kings 14:10) meaning perhaps “married and single,” or “guarded and forsaken,” but signifying generally “all men of all sorts.”

Deuteronomy 32:40-42

Render: For I lift up my hand to heaven and say, As I live forever, if I whet, etc. On Deuteronomy 32:40, in which God is described as swearing by Himself, compare Isaiah 45:23; Jeremiah 22:5; Hebrews 6:17. The lifting up of the hand was a gesture used in making oath (compare Genesis 14:22; Revelation 10:5).

Deuteronomy 32:42

From the beginning of revenges upon the enemy - Render, (drunk with blood) from the head (i. e. the chief) of the princes of the enemy.

Verse 43

Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people - Some prefer the marginal rendering.

In this profound passage, there is shadowed forth the purpose of God to overrule:

(1) the unbelief of the Jews to the bringing in of the Gentiles; and

(2) the mercy shown to the Gentries to the eventual restoration of the Jews (compare Romans 11:25-36).

The Song closes as it began Deuteronomy 32:1-3, with an invitation to praise. It has reached, through a long series of divine interpositions, its grandest theme in this call to the Gentiles, now pagan no more, to rejoice over God‘s restored people, the Jews.

Verses 44-52

These verses were, no doubt, added by the author of the supplement to Deuteronomy. For the statements contained in them, consult the marginal references.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 33

Introduction

The Blessing contains:

(1) an Introduction, Deuteronomy 33:1-5;

(2) the Benedictions pronounced on the tribes individually, Deuteronomy 33:26-29.

It was no doubt spoken by Moses, probably on the same day and to the same assembly as the Song Deuteronomy 32:48, and just before he ascended Mount Nebo. Like the Blessing of Jacob Genesis 49, to, which it has an intimate though independent correspondence throughout, it is the solemn farewell of the earthly head of the race. A comparison with Genesis (see the marginal references) will show how the blessings uttered by Moses over the several tribes partly repeat, partly enlarge and supplement, and sometimes modify or even reverse, the predictions of the dying Jacob.

This chapter, in striking contrast with the last, is pervaded by a tone of happy augury; and the total absence of warning and reproof has been rightly noted as indicating that Moses is here speaking of the ideal Israel, of the people of God as they might and would have been but for their perverseness, rather than foretelling what would in fact be the fate and fortunes of the twelve tribes. As the Song sets forth the calamities with which God‘s justice will visit Israel‘s fall, so does the Blessing describe the glory and greatness which would from His mercy crown Israel‘s faithfulness. The Song and the Blessing are therefore correspondent, and mutually supplementary. The form into which the Blessing is thrown exhibits the several tribes cooperating, each according to its special characteristics and circumstances, for the accomplishment of the national mission.

Verse 1

The title “the man of God” in the Old Testament is one who is favored with direct revelations, but not necessarily an official prophet. The occurrence of the title here is no doubt a token that the Blessing was not, as was the Song, transcribed by Moses himself. Compare Deuteronomy 31:27.

Verse 2

By "Seir" is to be understood the mountain-land of the Edomites, and by "mount Paran" the range which forms the northern boundary of the desert of Sinai (compare Genesis 14:6 note). Thus the verse forms a poetical description of the vast arena upon which the glorious manifestation of the Lord in the giving of the covenant took place.

With ten thousands of saints - Render, from amidst ten thousands of holy ones: literally from myriads of holiness, i. e., holy Angels (compare Zechariah 14:5). God is represented as leaving heaven where He dwells amidst the host of the Angels 1 Kings 22:19 and descending in majesty to earth Micah 1:3.

A fiery law - more literally as in the margin, with perhaps an allusion to the pillar of fire Exodus 13:21. The word is much disputed.

Verse 3

"The people" are the twelve tribes, not the Gentiles; and his saints refer to God's chosen people just before spoken of. Compare Deuteronomy 7:18, Deuteronomy 7:21; Exodus 19:6; Daniel 7:8-21.

Verse 5

He was king - i. e., not Moses but the Lord became king.

Verse 6

Let not his men be few - literally, "a number," i. e., "a small number," such as could be easily counted (compare Genesis 34:30 note). While the verse promises that the tribe shall endure and prosper, yet it is so worded as to carry with it a warning. The Reubenites, occupied with their herds and flocks, appear, soon after the days of Joshua, to have lost their early energy, until in later times its numbers, even when counted with the Gadites and the half of Manasseh, were fewer than that of the Reubenites alone at the census of 1 Chronicles 5:18 with Numbers 1:20.) No judge, prophet, or national hero arose out of this tribe.

The tribe of Simeon, which would according to the order of birth come next, is not here named. This omission is explained by reference to the words of Jacob concerning Simeon Genesis 49:7. This tribe with Levi was to he "scattered in Israel." The fulfillment of this prediction was in the case of Levi so ordered as to carry with it honor and blessing; but no such reversal of punishment was granted to Simeon. Rather had this latter tribe added new sins to those which Jacob denounced (compare Numbers 26:5 note). Accordingly, though very numerous at the Exodus, it had surprisingly

diminished before the death of Moses (compare Numbers 1:22-23 with Numbers 26:12-14); and eventually it found territory adequate for its wants within the limits of another tribe, Judah. Compare Joshua 19:2-9.

Verse 7

Bring him unto his people - Moses, taking up the promise of Jacob, prays that Judah, marching forth at the head of the tribes, might ever be brought back in safety and victory; arm intimates that God would grant help to accomplish this.

Verse 8

Thy holy one - i. e., Levi, regarded as the representative of the whole priestly and Levitical stock which sprang from him. The contrast between the tone of this passage and that of Genesis 49:5-7 is remarkable. Though the prediction of Jacob respecting the dispersion of this tribe held good, yet it was so overruled as to issue in honor and reward. The recovery of God‘s favor is to be traced to the faithfulness with which Moses and Aaron, who came of this tribe, served God in their high offices; and to the zeal and constancy which conspicuous persons of the tribe (e. g. Phinehas, Numbers 25:11 ff), and the whole tribe itself (compare Exodus 32:26), manifested on critical occasions in supporting the leaders of the people. The same reasons led to Levi‘s being selected for the special service of God in the sanctuary (Deuteronomy 10:8 ff, and Numbers 8:5 ff); and for the office of instructing their brethren in the knowledge of the Law. The events at Massah and Meribah, the one occurring at the beginning, the other toward the end, of the forty years‘ wandering, serve to represent the whole series of trials by which God proved and exercised the faith and obedience of this chosen tribe.

Verse 9

Who said unto his father and to his mother - Compare Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26.

Verse 11

Smite through the loins - Rather, strike the loins, i. e., the seat of their strength.

Verse 12

He shall dwell between his shoulders - i. e., be supported by God as a son who is carried by his father (compare Deuteronomy 1:31). Benjamin

was especially beloved of his father Genesis 35:18; Genesis 44:20; Moses now promises no less love to him from God Himself.

Verses 13-17

Comparing the words of Moses with those of Jacob, it will be seen that the patriarch dwells with emphasis on the severe conflicts which Joseph, i. e., Ephraim and Manasseh, would undergo (compare Genesis 49:23-24); while the lawgiver seems to look beyond, and to behold the two triumphant and established in their power.

Deuteronomy 33:17

Rather: "The first-born of his" (i. e. Joseph's) "bullock is his glory": the reference being to Ephraim, who was raised by Jacob to the honors of the firstborn (Genesis 48:20, and is here likened to the firstling of Joseph's oxen, i. e., of Joseph's offspring. The ox is a common emblem of power and strength.

Verse 18-19

Zebulun possessed a commodious sea-shore and the fisheries of the Lake of Tiberias: and was therefore to thrive by commerce, and to rejoice in his "going out," i. e., in his mercantile enterprises. Issachar possessed a fertile inland district, and would therefore dwell at home and prosper in agriculture. Both tribes distinguished themselves in the contest with Jabin (compare Judges 5:14-15, Judges 5:18): and of Zebulun it is particularly noted that it produced the officers and tacticians who led and marshalled the host which vanquished Sisera (see Judges 5:14, and compare 1 Chronicles 12:33).

Deuteronomy 33:19

Unto the mountain - Compare Exodus 15:17.

Sacrifices of righteousness - Sacrifices offered in a righteous spirit, and therefore well pleasing to God (compare Psalm 4:5; Psalm 51:19).

Treasures hid in the sand - The riches of the seas in general. However, it is noteworthy that the sand of these coasts was especially valuable in the manufacture of glass; and glass was a precious thing in ancient times (compare Job 28:17). The murex from which the highly-prized purple dye was extracted, was also found here. A typical reference to the conversion of the Gentiles is strongly suggested by Isaiah 60:5-6, Isaiah 60:16; Isaiah 66:11-12.

Verse 20

i. e., Blessed be God who shall grant to Gad a spacious territory. Compare the blessing of Shem Genesis 9:26.

With the crown - Rather, yea, the crown. The warlike character of this tribe is shown by their leading the van in the long campaigns of Joshua (compare Joshua 4:12-13; Joshua 22:1-4). Compare also 1 Chronicles 5:18-22; 1 Chronicles 12:8 ff, and the acts of Jehu, the Gadite, in 2 Kings 9; 10.

Verse 21

The first fruits of the conquest made by Israel were assigned to Gad and Reuben by Moses, at their own request.

Because … seated - Render, because there was the leader‘s portion reserved, i. e., there was reserved the fitting portion for Gad as a leader in war.

And he came … - i. e., he joined the other leaders to fulfill the commands of God respecting the conquest of Canaan (compare Numbers 32:17, Numbers 32:21, Numbers 32:32; Joshua 1:14). Moses regards the promise of the Gadites to do this as already redeemed.

Verse 22

Dan shall be like a lion which leaps forth from his covert in Bashan. Compare Song of Solomon 4:8.

Verse 23

Satisfied with favor - Compare Genesis 49:21 and note.

The west and the south - i. e., taking the words as referring not to geographical position but to natural characteristics, “the sea and the sunny district.” The possession of Naphtali included nearly the whole west coast of the Sea of Galilee, the Lake of Merom, the modern Bahr el Hulch, and the well watered district near the springs of Jordan. It contained some of the grandest scenery and some of the most fertile land in Palestine. Josephus speaks of the shore of Gennesaret as “an earthly paradise;” and Porter describes it as “the garden of Palestine.” The modern name for this district, “land of good tidings,” is significant.

Verse 24

Rather, “Blessed above the sons” (i. e. of Jacob-most blessed among the sons of Jacob) “be Asher; let him he the favored one of his brethren,” i. e., the one favored of God. The plenty with which this tribe should be blessed is described under the figure of dipping the foot in oil (compare the marginal reference).

Verse 25

The strength and firmness of Asher is as if he were shod with iron and brass (compare Revelation 1:15). The territory of this tribe probably contained iron and copper. Compare the marginal reference.

As thy days, so shall thy strength be - i. e., "thy strength" (some prefer "thy rest") "shall be continued to thee as long as thou shalt live: thou shalt never know feebleness and decay."

Verse 26

Rather, There is none like unto God, O Jeshurun! See marginal reference and note.

Verse 27

Thy refuge - Rather, "dwellingplace." Compare Psalm 90:1; Psalm 91:9.

Verse 28

The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine - The King James Version does not preserve the symmetry of the clauses. Render it: "Israel shall dwell in safety; alone shall the fountain of Jacob be" (compare Psalm 68:26; Isaiah 48:1); "in a land," etc.

Verse 29

Be found liars unto thee - Perhaps rather, "cringe before thee." The verb means to show a feigned or forced obedience: see the marginal references.

Tread upon their high places - i. e., occupy the commanding positions in their land, and so have it in subjection.

DEUTERONOMY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 34

Verse 1

Dan - This can hardly be the Dan (Dan-Laish) of Judges 18:27 ff, which was not in Gilead. It is probably a town of this name which stood in the north of Peraea; perhaps the same as Dan-jaan, 2 Samuel 24:6; and the Dan of Genesis 14:14.

Verse 3

Unto Zoar - Compare Genesis 19:22.

Verse 4

I have caused thee to see it - The sight thus afforded to Moses, like that of "all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time" Luke 4:5, was no doubt supernatural.

Verse 5

According to the word of the Lord - It denotes that Moses died, not because his vital powers were exhausted, but by the sentence of God, and as a punishment for his sin. Compare Deuteronomy 32:51.

Verse 6

No man knoweth of his sepulchre - Hardly, lest the grave of Moses should become an object of superstitious honor, because the Jews were not prone to this particular fore of error. Bearing in mind the appearance of Moses at the Transfiguration Matthew 17:1-10, and what is said by Jude Jude 1:9, we may conjecture that Moses after death passed into the same state with Enoch and Elijah; and that his grave could not be found because he was shortly translated (transported) from it.

Verse 9

Spirit of wisdom - The practical wisdom of the ruler is especially meant.

Verse 10

There arose not a prophet since in Israel - Words like these can only have been written some time, but not necessarily a long time, after the death of Moses. They refer more particularly to the wonders performed by the hand of Moses at the exodus and in the desert; and do but re-echo the declaration of God Himself (Numbers 12:6 ff). They may naturally enough be attributed to one of Moses' successors, writing perhaps soon after the settlement of the people in Canaan.

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Joshua

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JOSHUA INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Joshua

1. This book like several others of the historical books of Scripture derives its name from its contents. It takes up the history of the chosen people at the death of Moses, and continues it in a systematic and orderly narrative, through the leadership and government of his successor. It records (almost exclusively) the acts of Joshua in fulfillment of the commission laid upon him from God by the hand of Moses (compare Deuteronomy 31:7-8), and terminates with Joshua‘s death and burial.

The contents group themselves into two divisions of nearly equal length. The conquest of the land is described in twelve chapters, and then in twelve other chapters the subsequent partition of it together with Joshua‘s last acts and words.

The victories of Joshua described in the former of these portions were accompanied by repeated and stupendous interferences of God. This miraculous element has led some commentators to treat the book as altogether unhistorical. But it must not be forgotten that the miracles of the Book of Joshua do not stand alone. They grow, as it were, naturally out of the divine interpositions on behalf of Israel in the days of Moses, and are but the close of a series of extraordinary providences began in Egypt, and described in Exodus and the books following. No less do they stand intimately associated with the future history and development of the Jewish Church and nation, and even with the wider and more remote issues of God‘s counsels as manifested, or to be manifested, in the Christian Church to the end of all things. Thus, the conquest of Canaan by Joshua has other and vastly grander significances than its mere dimensions as a fact in history seem at first sight to suggest.

It is not to be regarded simply as the invasion of a little district about as large as three average English counties by a tribe of nomads from the Arabian deserts. It was also the accomplishment by God of a purpose revealed of old; it was an essential element in the plan ordained by Him for the preservation among men of His Law, Will, and Word; it was designed to foreshadow in many important particulars His future dealings with mankind at large. But for the special help of God, the Israelites could not have

effected the conquest at all, for they were hardly superior to the Canaanites in numbers, and were destitute of chariots and horses, and of all the more elaborate equipments for war, above all of the appliances requisite for reducing the cities (compare Numbers 13:28; Deuteronomy 1:28; Deuteronomy 9:1) in which Canaan abounded. God‘s promise was, however, pledged to their forefathers to give them this land; whatever then might be necessary to give effect to this promise it belonged to His faithfulness to accord; and the Book of Joshua consequently is an essential sequel to the Pentateuch as declaring the thorough fulfillment by God of the covenant made by Him through Moses with Israel, and thus as illustrating His inviolable faithfuless.

But important as the theocratical and theological characteristics of the Book of Joshua are, both in themselves and as (so to say) vindicating the miraculous elements of the narrative, we must nevertheless not lose sight of the internal evidences of common and historical fact which it presents.

The invasion of Canaan by Joshua was evidently a carefully and skillfully conducted enterprise. An army marching upon Canaan from the south would find its path intercepted by range after range of heights, each, in the days of Moses and Joshua, bristling with towns and fortresses. The progress of such an army could be but slow, and at every step would be met by better organized resistance from an increasing number of enemies. When Israel, after 40 years‘ expiation of the revolt at Kadesh, again arose at the command of God to resume the long deferred enterprise on Canaan, the host was conducted round the whole southeast corner of the land and directed upon its comparatively defenseless eastern flank above the Dead Sea. The whole of the strong military positions and fenced cities in the “south country” and the “hill country” of what was subsequently the territory of Judah were thus taken in reverse and rendered comparatively useless.

It is probable, too, that the southern Canaanites in particular were at this time greatly weakened by the invasions of Thotmes III, who had taken Gaza, apparently not many years previously, and no doubt had overrun the whole adjoining district (see the note at Joshua 13:3). No less able were the measures adopted by Joshua to execute the plan thus judiciously laid down.

The passage of the Jordan, by the special help of God, at a time of year when his enemies no doubt deemed the river to be an almost insurmountable obstacle to his advance (see the note at Joshua 3:15): the seizing Gilgal, to serve as his foothold in the land: the capture and destruction of Jericho: the fall of Ai: these events enabled him to throw the forces of Israel like a wedge through the very midst of the land almost to the western sea, and in its most vulnerable part, between the fastnesses of Judah on the south and the mountain district of Ephraim on the north. The Amorites on Joshua‘s left, cut off from the Hittites on his right by his whole army interposing between the two, were overpowered before Gibeon. The whole south was reduced into at least temporary subjection before the larger multitudes of the north could be mustered. These in their turn shared the fate of their brethren in the south; Joshua broke their vast host to pieces on the shores of Lake Merom.

In these campaigns of Joshua it is impossible not to see the traces of strategical skill no less conspicuously than that presence of immediate and divine suggestion and succor which the narrative asserts.

2. The leading trait in the character of Joshua is courage - the courage of the warrior: this must have been already remarkable at the time of the Exodus Exodus 17:9. Subsequently, Joshua appears as in constant attendance on Moses Exodus 24:13; Exodus 32:1; Exodus 33:11; he without doubt acquired on Sinai, and in the precincts of the sanctuary, that unswerving faithfulness of service and unshaken confidence in God which marked his after career. He was naturally selected as one of the twelve “rulers” sent by Moses Numbers 13:2 to explore the land before the invasion of it was undertaken; and the bold and truthful report brought back by him and Caleb Numbers 14:7-9, was no less characteristic than was his undaunted bearing before the incensed people Numbers 14:10. These qualities pointed him out as the fitting captain over the Lord‘s people, who should overthrow their enemies before them and put them in possession of the promised inheritance. Accordingly, at the express command of God, he was solemnly appointed to that office and duty by Moses before his death Numbers 27:16-23; Deuteronomy 31:23.

Joshua was not a prophet (Numbers 27:21), but a divinely-inspired leader. After the great and peculiar work of his life was accomplished, he no longer held the same exclusive place at the head of Israel as before. In making the arrangements for settling the people in their homes, and establishing the theocracy on the lines laid down in the law of Moses, he acted in conjunction with Eleazar, the high priest: and with the heads of the tribes (compare Joshua 14:1; Joshua 17:4; Joshua 21:1). This was but natural. The armies had done their work and were dispersed, or were ready to disperse, to their several inheritances; and the military authority of their general was consequently at an end. The latter years of his life were probably passed in retirement at Timnath-serah, whence, he would seem to have emerged in extreme old age to meet the princes and the people in the great gathering at Shechem Joshua 1:5-6. Joshua obeyed God‘s call unhesitatingly and to the end, but it was because he trusted wholly in the promise which accompanied it. Hence, along with his soldierly qualities, were found others seldom present in the same man. He combined justice as a magistrate with gentleness as a man Joshua 7:19; spirit as a ruler, with temper and discretion in dealing with the arrogant and exacting Joshua 17:14; diligence and equity in disposing of the fruits of victory with a complete unselfishness as regarded himself Joshua 19:49-51. Perhaps conspicuous above all was his humility. From first to last his valor and his victories are referred to God as their giver. Of his own personal work in the achievements of his life there is in his last addresses scarcely one word.

3. The chronological dates presented in this book are few:

a. Comparing Joshua 4:19 and Joshua 5:6, if the date of the Exodus be assumed to be 1490 B.C., that of the invasion of Canaan will be 1450 B.C.

b. The duration of Joshua‘s wars with the Canaanites is spoken of loosely in Joshua 11:18 as “a long time.” The words of Caleb (Joshua 14:7, Joshua 14:10: compare Numbers 13:17) - who was thirty-eight years old when he passed through the Red Sea, and seventy-eight when he passed through Jordan - help us to assign a period of seven years (in round numbers) for the campaigns of Joshua.

c. The duration of Joshua‘s rule, and consequently the number of years covered by the record of this book, is far more uncertain. He died when he was 110 Joshua 24:29. If (compare Exodus 33:11) we suppose him to have been about the same age as Caleb, he will have been about 78 years old when he invaded Canaan, and have been at the head of Israel not much less than thirty-two years altogether after the death of Moses, surviving about twenty-five years after his retirement to Timnath-serah (compare Joshua 23:1). Josephus, however, states that Joshua‘s rule after the death of Moses lasted for twenty-five years, and that he had previously been forty years associated with him. This would fix Joshua‘s age at the time of the Exodus at forty-five. On the whole, nothing more precise seems attainable now than this: that Joshua governed Israel from twenty-five to thirty years after the death of Moses, and that about the like number of years contains the events recorded in the book which bears his name.

4. No sufficient evidence exists to enable us with certainty to name the author. That he was one of “the elders that overlived Joshua” Joshua 24:31 is probable, for the book appears to have been written by one coeval with the events recorded, and, indeed, an eye-witness of them. The spirit of the narrative in the former or historical portion of the book, and the graphic yet spontaneous rendering of details, which it everywhere presents, bespeak one who saw what he describes. And the topographical information which abounds in the latter portion of the book is of such a nature, and is presented in such a form, as strongly to suggest the use of written, and apparently contemporary documents. Some parts of this information are minute and accurate (e. g. Joshua 5:6-7; Joshua 6:25; Joshua 10:2, a notice which plainly borrows its terms from the state of things in Canaan at the time of the invasion; and in the record of ancient Canaanite names of cities, though disused after the Israelites occupied them, Joshua 14:15; Joshua 15:9, Joshua 15:15, Joshua 15:49, Joshua 15:60.

The book cannot, in its present form at least, be ascribed to Joshua himself. The account of his death and that of Eleazar, with the few supplementary verses at the end of the book, might have been attached by another hand, as a conclusion to the historical work of Joshua, just as a like addition was made to the work of Moses. But there are up and down the book a number of historical notices, which point to a date clearly beyond

the death of Joshua (compare Joshua 15:13-20 and Judges 1:1-15; 15:63, and Judges 1:8; Judges 15:13-19 and Joshua 8:3), which is by no means of infrequent occurrence, than to the presence in the narrative of two or three different versions of the events which the final editor omitted to harmonize.

The contradiction said to exist between some passages which speak of the land as completely subdued by Joshua, and of the Canaanites as utterly extirpated (Joshua 11:16-17, Joshua 11:23; Joshua 12:7-8 etc.), and others which allude to "very much land," as still in possession of the native inhabitants (Joshua 13:1; Joshua 17:14 ff; Joshua 23:5, etc.), is to be explained partly by the theocratic view which the writer takes of his theme; a view which leads him to regard the conquest as complete when it was so "ex parte Dei," and when all was done that was needed to enable the Israelites to realize fully the promises (compare Joshua 21:43-45); partly also by the fact that territory was undoubtedly overrun by Joshua at the first onset, which was afterward recovered by the Canaanites, and only again and finally wrested from them at a subsequent, sometimes a long subsequent, date. That the early campaigns of Joshua were in the nature of sudden raids, overpowering for the moment, but not effectually subduing the country, has probably much truth in it.

Thus then, the Book of Joshua, though based upon pre-existing materials of various kinds, and sometimes incorporating them, appears to be a separate and complete work produced as a whole from one original hand. Its relation to the Pentateuch is that of an independent treatise by a distinct author, who resumes a theme of which the first great and important portion had been finished by a predecessor. The Pentateuch is not to be looked upon as principally a historical work. It is the statute book of the theocracy, and contains only such historical matter as illustrates the origin and import of God's covenant with Israel. Joshua records how the temporal promises of that covenant were accomplished; and describes how the basis was laid for the future development of the nation, under the special superintendence of God, by its settlement in Canaan. Thus, regarded, this book is no more an appendage to the Pentateuch than the books of Judges and Samuel are an appendage to it.

There is, assuredly, an intimate connection among these writings throughout, a connection which is expressly indicated by the connective conjunctions used in the beginning of each book (see the note at Judges 1:1). This is due to the fact that the several authors were moved to write by one and the same Spirit, and that their one purpose in successive ages was to record the dealings of God with their nation. Hence, they have selected whatever declares or illustrates the divine call of Israel; God‘s methods in educating that people for its functions in His world; the preparations made through the chequered history of Israel for future issues bearing on the salvation of all mankind. We find at one time periods of considerable length, and events of great importance to secular history cursorily alluded to, while other occurrences, often of a biographical character, are dwelt upon with anxious minuteness, because of their theocratic bearings. Accordingly, the name “Earlier prophets,” given to this and the following books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings by the Jewish Church which has handed them down to us as canonical, is appropriate. They were written by inspired men, and treat their subject from the prophetical point of view.

The Book of Joshua is repeatedly cited or referred to in the New Testament: compare Acts 7:45; Hebrews 3:5; Hebrews 4:8; Hebrews 11:30-31; James 2:25.

6. The land of Canaan was given as a free gift by God to the Israelites - they took possession of it because He bade them do so - and He no less bade them annihilate the Canaanite nations without mercy?

The question then occurs in unbroken force, all palliative explanations being disallowed: Is this merciless treatment of the Canaanites consistent with the attributes of the Deity, especially as those attributes are illustrated for us in the New Testament?

The destruction of the Canaanites is always presented in Scripture as a judgment of God sent on them because of their wickedness. They had not only fallen into total apostasy from God, but into forms of idolatry of the most degrading kind. Their false religion cannot be regarded as a mere error of judgment; cruelty the most atrocious, and unnatural crimes the most defiling were part and parcel of its observances. Moreover, they had proved

themselves to be incorrigible. They had had not only the general warning of the deluge, as had other nations of the earth, but the special one of the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah in the very midst of them. They had had also the example and instruction of Abraham and the patriarchs living for ages among them. Even after the miraculous providence of God had brought the Israelites out of Egypt and across the Jordan, and even when the sword was as it were hanging over their necks, it was but in one or two isolated cases that signs of repentance and recollection of God were manifested (compare Joshua 2:1; Joshua 9:24). God had forborne for ages in vain (compare Genesis 15:16); in the days of Joshua the time for mercy had passed, and that of judgment had come. It is impossible to acknowledge God as the moral Governor of the earth, and not to admit that it may be right or even necessary for Him to remove such nations. The fact, therefore, that God is described as having not only permitted, but even enjoined and caused the extirpation of the Canaanite nations, depraved as they were, is not inconsistent with His moral attributes. People, as was long ago pointed out by Dr. Butler (‹Anal.‘ ii. 3), have no right to either life or property, but what arises solely from the grant of God. When this grant is revoked they cease to have any right at all in either. And in the case before us the forfeiture decreed by God was merited, and the execution of it was therefore righteous.

God chose to inflict His righteous judgment by the hands of the Israelites, and expressly commissioned them to be His executioners. If it be objected that this is to represent God as sanctioning cruelty, the answer is obvious: it is no sanction of cruelty to direct a lawful sentence to be carried out by human agents (compare Numbers 31:3). Nor would obedience to God‘s command in this matter make the Israelites brutal and bloodthirsty. The behavior of the Israelites, on many occasions, proves that they shrank from a terrible duty of this sort when laid on them by God, and did it only so far as they were compelled to do it..

The slaughter of the Canaanites served various important purposes besides the mere removal of them from the face of the earth. To make and keep the Jewish people as much as possible isolated, was a marked and vital principle of the Old Testament dispensation. No more effectual means could have been adopted for inspiring God‘s people with an abhorrence for

Canaanite sins, to which they were not a little prone, than to make them the ministers of divine vengeance for those sins.

They learned by experiment that God would certainly root out those who fell away in apostasy from Him. They were warned also that if they fell into the sins of the Canaanites they would themselves be the victims of those same judgments of which they had been the reluctant executioners (compare e. g. Deuteronomy 28:25). And the whole was so ordered as to exhibit a type, fearful no doubt yet salutary, of what must be the fate of the impenitent and obdurate in the upshot of God‘s righteous government.

JOSHUA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Joshua 1:1-9 serves as an introduction to the history of the war, and pointedly call attention to the leading thought of the whole book - that the invasion and subjugation of Canaan were undertaken by the Israelites at God‘s direct command and completed in His never-failing strength.

Verse 1

Now … - Hebrew: “and, … ” The statement following is thus connected with some previous one, which is assumed to be known to the reader. So Judges, Ruth, 1Samuel, etc., are by the same means linked on to the books preceding them. The connection here is the closer, since the Book of Deuteronomy concludes, and the book of Joshua opens, by referring to the death of Moses.

Moses, the servant of the Lord - On the epithet, see the marginal reference “b.”

Moses‘ minister - It is impossible altogether to pass by the typical application of this verse. Moses, representing the law, is dead; Joshua, or, as that name is written in Greek, Jesus, is now bidden by God to do what Moses could not - lead the people into the promised land. Joshua was “Moses‘ minister,” just as Christ was “made under the Law;” but it was Joshua, not Moses, who worked out the accomplishment of the blessings which the Law promised. On the name Joshua, see Exodus 17:9 note, and Numbers 13:16.

Saying - No doubt directly, by an immediate revelation, but not as God spake to Moses, “mouth to mouth” Numbers 12:8. Though upon Joshua‘s appointment to be Moses‘ successor (Numbers 27:18 ff), it had been directed that “counsel should be asked” for him through the medium of Eleazar “after the judgment of Urim,” yet this was evidently a resource provided to meet cases of doubt and difficulty. Here there was no such case; but the appointed leader, knowing well the purpose of God, needed to be stirred up to instant execution of it; and the people too might require the encouragement of a renewed divine command to set out at once upon the great enterprise before them (compare Joshua 1:13).

Verse 4

Lebanon is spoken of as “this Lebanon,” because visible from the neighborhood in which Israel was encamped. (Compare Deuteronomy 3:8-

9.) "The wilderness" of the text is the Desert of Arabia, which forms the southern, as Lebanon does the northern, limit of the promised land. The boundaries on the east and west are likewise indicated; and the intervening territory is described generally as "all the land of the Hittites." The Hittites are properly the inhabitants of northern Canaan and Phoenicia (see Exodus 3:8 note), but the name appears to be used here for the Canaanites in general, as in 1 Kings 10:29. On the boundaries of the promised land compare Deuteronomy 11:24; Genesis 15:18.

Verse 7

Prosper - See the margin. The literal rendering should be retained here since the notion of prosperity is separately introduced by a different word in Joshua 1:8.

Verse 10

Officers - The "scribes." (See the Exodus 5:6 note, and Deuteronomy 16:18.)

Verse 11

Prepare you victuals - The order was probably given with the knowledge that the manna would cease when the host crossed the Jordan Exodus 16:35, and possibly because amidst their preparations there might not be opportunity to gather it in sufficient quantity. Nor does it appear that manna ever formed the whole and sole sustenance of the people. (Compare Numbers 20:1 note.)

It is the view of the majority of commentators - Jewish and Christian, ancient and modern - that the "three days" here named are identical with those of Joshua 3:2; and that the command of Joshua in the text was not in fact given until after the return of the spies. Here, as elsewhere in the Hebrew historical books and frequently in the Gospels, the order of time is superseded by the order of thought. For the purpose if the writer was not historical merely; it was, on the contrary, mainly religious and theoretical. Intending, then, to exhibit God as accomplishing His promises to the covenant-people, he begins by informing us that God gave the word and set Joshua and the host actually in motion to take possession of their inheritance. Having placed this leading fact in the forefront, he returns to mention in Deuteronomy 34:8. The order of events was probably the following - 3rd Nisan, the spies are sent out Joshua 2:1; 6th, the spies return Joshua 2:23; 7th, the camp is removed from Shittim to the bank of Jordan

Joshua 3:1, and the command Joshua 1:11 is issued; 10th, the river is crossed Joshua 4:19.

Verse 14
Armed - Rather, "arrayed" (see Exodus 13:18 note).
On this side Jordan - Compare Deuteronomy 1:1, note.

JOSHUA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

An harlot‘s house - In the face of the parallel passages (e. g. Leviticus 21:7: Jeremiah 5:7) the rendering advocated for obvious reasons, namely, “the house of a woman, an innkeeper,” cannot be maintained. Rahab must remain an example under the Law similar to that Luke 7:37 under the Gospel, of “a woman that was a sinner,” yet, because of her faith, not only pardoned, but exalted to the highest honor. Rahab was admitted among the people of God; she intermarried into a chief family of a chief tribe, and found a place among the best remembered ancestors of King David and of Christ; thus receiving the temporal blessings of the covenant in largest measure. The spies would of course betake themselves to such a house in Jericho as they could visit without exciting suspicion; and the situation of Rahab‘s, upon the wall Joshua 2:15, rendered it especially suitable. It appears from Joshua 2:4 that Rahab hid them before the King‘s messengers reached her house, and probably as soon as the spies had come to her house. It is therefore most likely that they met with Rahab outside of Jericho (compare Genesis 38:14), and ascertained where in the city she dwelt, and that they might entrust themselves to her care. Rahab (i. e. “spacious,” “wide.” Compare the name “Japheth” and Genesis 9:27, note) is regarded by the fathers as a type of the Christian Church, which was gathered out of converts from the whole vast circle of pagan nations.

Verse 4

I wist not whence they were - Rahab acted as she did from the belief in God‘s declared word, and conviction that resistance to His will would be both vain and wicked Joshua 2:9-11. Thus, she manifested a faith both sound and practical, and is praised accordingly Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25. The falsehood to which she had recourse may be excused by the pressure of circumstances and by her own antecedents, but cannot be defended.

Verse 6

Stalks of flax - literally, “the carded fibres of the tree.” The flax in Palestine grew to more than three feet in height, with a stalk as thick as a cane. It was probably with the flax stalks, recently cut (compare Exodus 9:31, note) and laid out on the house roof to dry, that Rahab hid the spies.

Verse 7

The sense is, that "they pursued along the way which leads to Jordan and across the fords;" probably those described in Judges 3:28.

Verse 11

The Lord your God, he is God - From the rumour of God's miraculous interpositions Rahab believed, and makes the self-same confession to which Moses endeavors to bring Israel by rehearsing similar arguments Deuteronomy 4:39. Rahab had only heard of what Israel had experienced. Her faith then was ready. It is noteworthy, too, that the same reports which work faith and conversion in the harlot, cause only terror and astonishment among her countrymen. (Compare Luke 8:37-39.)

Verse 12

A true token - literally, "a sign" or "pledge of truth; "something to bind them to keep their promise faithfully. The "token" was the oath which the spies take Joshua 2:14.

Verse 14

Our life for yours - See the margin. This is (see Joshua 2:17) a form of oath, in which God is in effect invoked to punish them with death if they did not perform their promise to save Rahab's life. Compare the more common form of oath, 1 Samuel 1:26, etc.

Verse 15

Upon the town wall - The town wall probably formed the back wall of the house, and the window opened therefore into the country. (Compare Paul's escape, 2 Corinthians 11:33).

Verse 18

The "line" or cord was spun of threads dyed with cochineal: i. e., of a deep and bright scarlet color. The color would catch the eye at once, and supplied an obvious token by which the house of Rahab might be distinguished. The use of scarlet in the Levitical rites, especially in those more closely connected with the idea of putting away of sin and its consequences (compare e. g., Leviticus 14:4, Leviticus 14:6, Leviticus 14:51; Numbers 19:6), naturally led the fathers, from Clement of Rome onward, to see in this scarlet thread, no less than in the blood of the Passover (Exodus 12:7, Exodus 12:13, etc.), an emblem of salvation by the Blood of Christ; a salvation common alike to Christ's messengers and to those whom they visit.

Verse 22

Unto the mountain - Probably the mountains to the west and north of Jericho, called afterward, from the belief that the 40 days of our Lord‘s temptation were passed among them, the Quarantania. The spies avoided at the first the neighhourhood of the Jordan, where the pursuers sought them: and amidst the grottoes of the limestone rocks, which in later ages were the abode of numerous hermits, they could readily shelter themselves for three days.

JOSHUA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

The contents of this and the next chapter, which record the miraculous passage of Israel over Jordan, are given in four sections:

(1) Joshua 3:1-6, describing the preliminary directions;

(2) Joshua 3:7-17, the commencement of the passage;

(3) Joshua 4:1-14, the accomplishment of it;

(4) Joshua 4:15-24, the conclusion of the passage and erection of a monument to commemorate it.

A certain completeness and finish is given to each division of the narrative, and to effect this the writer more than once repeats himself, anticipates the actual order of events, and distributes into parts occurrences which in fact took place once for all.

Verse 1

"The acacia groves" (Exodus 25:5 note) of Shittim on both sides of Jordan line the upper terraces of the valley (compare 2 Kings 6:4). They would be in this part at some six miles distance from the river itself.

Verse 2

These days (Joshua 1:11 note) were no doubt occupied in preparations of various kinds. The host consisted not of armed men only, but of women and children also; and many arrangements would be necessary before they actually advanced into a hostile country.

Verse 4

The ark, which was since the making of the covenant the special shrine and seat of God's presence, went before to show the people that God, through its medium, was their leader. They were to follow at a distance that they might the better observe and mark how the miracle was accomplished. This they would do to the greatest advantage while coming down the heights, the ark going on before them into the ravine.

Verse 6

They took up - i. e. on the day following. The course of events is anticipated.

Verse 7

This day will I begin to magnify thee - One cause why the miracle now to be narrated was performed is here suggested. As Moses was declared to he sent immediately from God with an extraordinary commission by the miracles which he worked, more especially that of dividing the Red Sea in two parts, so was Joshua both sent and accredited in a like manner. (Compare Joshua 1:5, and Joshua 4:14.) Other reasons are given in Joshua 3:10; Joshua 5:1.

Verse 10

The living God - Compare the marginal reference. The gods of the pagan are "dead idols." On the names of the seven nations, see Genesis 10:16, etc., note.

Verse 15

Jordan overfloweth all his banks - Rather "is full up to all his banks," i. e. "brim-full." This remark strikingly illustrates the suddenness and completeness, not less than the greatness, of the marvel. The Jordan River flows at the bottom of a deep valley, which descends to the water's edge on either side in two, occasionally in three, terraces. Within the lowest of these the stream, ordinarily less than 100 feet wide in this lower part of its course, is confined. The margin is overgrown with a jungle of tamarisks and willows, which in the spring is reached by the rising waters (compare the figure in Jeremiah 49:19; Jeremiah 50:44); and the river, occasionally at least, fills the ravine which forms its proper bed to the brim. Its highest rise takes place about the time when Joshua had to cross it. By the middle of April the river cannot be forded; and, if passed at all, can only be so by swimming. This, however, was a hazardous feat (compare 1 Chronicles 12:15); and though no doubt performed by the two spies, was utterly out of the power of the mixed multitude that followed Joshua. The mere fact that the whole vast host crossed the stream of Jordan at this season, is no small proof of the miracle here recorded. No human agency then known and available could have transported them speedily and safely from bank to bank.

Verse 16

The passage should run "rose up, an heap far away, by Adam, the city which is beside Zarthan."

The city of Adam is not named elsewhere, and Zarthan (mentioned here and in marginal references.) has also disappeared. It is, however, probably connected with the modern Kurn Sartabeh (Horn of Sartabeh), the name given to a lofty and isolated hill some 17 miles on the river above Jericho.

Verse 17

The miraculous passage to the holy land through Jordan is not less pregnant with typical meaning than that through the Red Sea (compare 1 Corinthians 10:1-2). The solemn inauguration of Joshua to his office, and his miraculous attestation, by the same waters with which Jesus was baptized on entering on the public exercise of His ministry (compare Matthew 3:16-17); the choice of twelve men, one from each tribe to be the bearers of the twelve stones, and the builders of the monument erected therewith (compare 1 Corinthians 3:10; Revelation 21:14): these were divinely-ordered occurrences, not without a further bearing than their more immediate one upon Israel. Nor must in this point of view the name "Adam," the place where the stream flowed to the people which cut them off from the promises, and the failure for the time under the rule of Joshua of the full and rapid flood which supplies the Dead Sea, be overlooked.

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CHAPTER 4

Verse 2

Take you twelve men - The order is given in the plural, because no doubt the tribes themselves were to choose their own representatives, the choice being approved by Joshua Joshua 4:4. These twelve would be left with Joshua on the hither bank of the river, waiting to receive his orders after the rest of the people had made their way across Joshua 3:17; Joshua 4:1.

Verse 8

Laid them down there - i. e. in Gilgal Joshua 4:20. Spoken of as the doers of this, because it was done by the twelve who acted for them.

Verse 9

Another set of stones is intended than that before mentioned. The one set was erected by the command of God at the spot where they passed the night Joshua 4:3; the other by Joshua on the spot where the priests‘ feet rested while they bore up the ark during the passage of the people. This spot was near, or perhaps on, the eastern brink (compare Joshua 3:8). These stones would therefore mark the spot at which the people crossed, as the others marked the place in which they lodged the night after the crossing; nor, as the stones would only be reached by the water in flood time, and then by the utmost edge of it, is there any reason why they could not both be seen, and continue in their place as the writer asserts they did up to the time when he wrote.

Verse 13

The plains of Jericho, consisting of the higher terrace of the Jordan valley, are almost seven miles broad. The mountains of Judaea here recede somewhat from the river, and leave a level and fertile space, which, at the time of Joshua‘s invasion, was principally occupied by a forest of palms. Hence, the name “city of palms,” Deuteronomy 34:3.

Verse 15

The passage of the priests to the further bank had been already referred to, Joshua 4:11; but the writer, in observance of his general plan (compare introductory remarks to Joshua 4:18, heightens the impression which is especially inculcated throughout - that the whole transaction was extraordinary and miraculous. The details and incidents of the passage are no doubt open to manifold discussion: but all such discussion will be futile

unless it proceed throughout on the admission that we have here before us the record of a distinctly supernatural interposition: compare the introduction to the Book of Joshua.

Verse 19

Gilgal, mentioned here by anticipation (compare Joshua 5:9), the modern Jiljulieh (Conder), was on rising ground (compare Joshua 5:3), and, according to Josephus, nearly five miles from the river, and consequently about two from the city itself. The site of the camp was no doubt fortified by Joshua, as it constituted for some time the abiding foothold in Canaan, from where he sallied forth to subdue the country. It was also the place of safety where the ark, and no doubt also the women, children, cattle, and other property of the people were left. Hence, the demolition of Jericho and Ai, strong fortresses in the neighborhood of Gilgal, was no doubt dictated by sound policy as well as by religious obligations.

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CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

The Amorites were the principal of those nations which occupied the hill country of Judaea (Genesis 10:16 note); the Canaanites of those that dwelt on the coast and low lands. These words are therefore equivalent to "all the kings of the highlanders, and all the kings of the lowlanders:" i. e. the kings of all the tribes of the country.

Until we were passed over - The use of the first person has been noted here, and in Joshua 5:6 (compare Acts 16:10), as suggesting the hand of one who himself shared in what he describes. But the text as read (though not written) by the Jewish authorities here, has the third person; as have some manuscripts, Septuagint, Vulgate, etc.: and a change of person like this in Hebrew, even if the text stand, does not of itself warrant the inference. (Compare Psalm 66:6.)

Verse 2

Make thee sharp knives - Render rather as marg., and compare marginal reference and note. Knives of flint or stone were in fact used for circumcision, and retained for that and other sacred purposes, even after iron had become in common use. The rendering of the margin is adopted by almost all ancient versions, by most commentators, and by the fathers generally, who naturally regarded circumcision performed by Joshua and by means of knives of stone or rock, as symbolic of the true circumcision performed by Christ, who is more than once spoken of as the Rock (compare 1 Corinthians 10:4; Romans 2:29; Colossians 2:11). See Joshua 21:42.

Circumcise again … - i. e. make that which once was a circumcised people but is not so now, once more a circumcised people. (See Joshua 4:4-7.)

Verse 3

The hill of the foreskins - i. e. the hill where the foreskins, the emblem of all worldly and carnal affections, were buried. (Compare Colossians 2:11-13; Colossians 3:1-6.)

Verses 4-7

Of the whole nation those only were already circumcised at the time of the passage of the Jordan who had been under twenty years of age at the time of the complaining and consequent rejection at Kadesh (compare the

marginal reference). These would have been circumcised before they left Egypt, and there would still survive of them more than a quarter of a million of thirty-eight years old and upward.

The statements of these verses are of a general kind. The "forty years" of Joshua 5:6 is a round number, and the statement in the latter part of Joshua 5:5 cannot be strictly accurate. For there must have been male children born in the wilderness during the first year after the Exodus, and these must have been circumcised before the celebration of the Passover at Sinai in the first month of the second year (compare Numbers 9:1-5, and Exodus 12:48). The statements of the verses are, however, sufficiently close to the facts for the purpose in hand; namely, to render a reason for the general circumcising which is here recorded.

The reason why circumcision was omitted in the wilderness, was that the sentence of Numbers 14:28 ff placed the whole nation for the time under a ban; and that the discontinuance of circumcision, and the consequent omission of the Passover, was a consequence and a token of that ban. The rejection was not, indeed, total, for the children of the complainers were to enter into the rest; nor final, for when the children had borne the punishment of the fathers' sins for the appointed years, and the complainers were dead, then it was to be removed, as now by Joshua. But for the time the covenant was abrogated, though God's purpose to restore it was from the first made known, and confirmed by the visible marks of His favor which He still vouchsafed to bestow during the wandering. The years of rejection were indeed exhausted before the death of Moses (compare Deuteronomy 2:14): but God would not call upon the people to renew their engagement to Him until He had first given them glorious proof of His will and power to fulfill His engagements to them. So He gave them the first fruits of the promised inheritance - the kingdoms of Sihon and Og; and through a miracle planted their feet on the very soil that still remained to be conquered; and then recalled them to His covenant. It is to be noted, too, that they were just about to go to war against foes mightier than themselves. Their only hope of success lay in the help of God. At such a crisis the need of full communion with God would be felt indeed; and the blessing and strength of it are accordingly granted.

The revival of the two great ordinances - circumcision and the Passover - after so long an intermission could not but awaken the zeal and invigorate the faith and fortitude of the people. Both as seals and as means of grace and God‘s good purpose toward them then, the general circumcision of the people, followed up by the solemn celebration of the Passover - the one formally restoring the covenant and reconciling them nationally to God, the other ratifying and confirming all that circumcision intended - were at this juncture most opportune.

Verse 8

The circumcision must have taken place on the day after the passage of Jordan, i. e. the 11th Nisan, and the Passover was kept on the 14th of the same month. For so long at least, they who had been circumcised would be disabled from war (compare the marginal reference), though they would not necessarily be debarred from keeping the feast. The submission of the people to the rite was a proof of faith, even though we remember that the panic of the Canaanites Joshua 5:1 would render any immediate attack from them unlikely, and that there must have been a large number of “men of war” who would not need to be circumcised at all (see the note at Joshua 5:4).

Verse 9

The reproach of Egypt - i. e. “reproach proceeding from Egypt.” The expression probably refers to taunts actually uttered by the Egyptians against Israel, because of their long wanderings in the desert and failures to acquire a settlement in Canaan (compare Exodus 32:12; Numbers 14:13-16; Deuteronomy 9:28; Deuteronomy 32:27). These reproaches were now to end, for they had actually entered Canaan, and the restoration of the covenant was a pledge from God to accomplish what was begun for them.

Verse 11

Old corn of the land - Rather “produce of the land,” the new grain just coming in at the time of the Passover. (So in Joshua 5:12.)

On the morrow after the passover - These words denote in Numbers 33:3 the 15th Nisan, but must here apparently mean the 16th. For the Israelites could not lawfully eat of the new grain until the first fruits of it had been presented, and this was done on “the morrow after the Sabbath,” i. e. the morrow after the first day of Unleavened Bread, which was to be

observed as a Sabbath, and is therefore so called. (Compare Leviticus 23:7, Leviticus 23:11, Leviticus 23:14.)

The term Passover, which is sometimes used for the lamb slain on the evening of the 14th Nisan, sometimes for the paschal meal, sometimes for the whole eight days‘ festival, here means the first great day of the eight, the Sabbath of the first holy convocation.

Verse 13

A man - See Genesis 12:7, note; Genesis 18:2, note. The appearance was that of God manifested in the Person of His Word. Hence, the command of Joshua 5:15. That the appearance was not in a vision merely is clear from the fact that Joshua “went unto Him” and addressed Him.

Verse 14

Captain of the host of the Lord - i. e. of the angelic host, the host of heaven (compare 1 Kings 22:19; 1 Samuel 1:3, etc.). The armed people of Israel are never called “the host of the Lord,” though once spoken of in Exodus 12:41 as “all the hosts of the Lord.” The Divine Person intimates that He, the Prince (see the marginal references) of the Angels had come to lead Israel in the coming strife, and to overthrow by heavenly might the armies and the strongholds of God‘s and Israel‘s enemies. Accordingly, the capture of Jericho and the destruction of the Canaanites generally form a fit type of a grander and more complete conquest and excision of the powers of evil which yet waits accomplishment. (Compare with this verse Matthew 25:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8.)

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CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

This verse is strictly parenthetical. It is inserted to explain the declaration commenced Joshua 5:14, and interrupted by Joshua‘s question and obeisance Joshua 5:14-15, but resumed in Joshua 6:2.

Straitly shut up - See the margin, i. e., not only shut, but barred and bolted.

Verses 3-6

The command of the Lord as to the mode in which the fall of Jericho should be brought about is given in these verses in a condensed form. Further details (see Joshua 6:8-10, Joshua 6:16-17, etc.), were, no doubt, among the commands given to Joshua by the Angel.

Joshua 6:4

Trumpets of ram‘s horns - Render rather here and in Joshua 6:5-6, Joshua 6:8, etc., “trumpets of jubilee” (compare Leviticus 25:10 note). The instrument is more correctly rendered “cornet” (see Leviticus 25:9, note). Various attempts have been made to explain the fall of Jericho by natural causes, as, e. g., by the undermining of the walls, or by an earthquake, or by a sudden assault. But the narrative of this chapter does not afford the slightest warrant for any such explanations; indeed it is totally inconsistent with them. It must be taken as it stands; and so taken it intends, beyond all doubt, to narrate a miracle, or rather a series of miracles.

In the belief that a record is not necessarily unhistorical because it is miraculous, never perhaps was a miracle more needed than that which gave Jericho to Joshua. Its lofty walls and well-fenced gates made it simply impregnable to the Israelites - a nomad people, reared in the desert, destitute alike of the engines of war for assaulting a fortified town, and of skill and experience in the use of them if they had had them. Nothing line a direct interference of the Almighty could in a week‘s time give a city like Jericho, thoroughly on its guard and prepared (compare Joshua 2:9 ff and Joshua 6:1), to besiegers situated as were Joshua and the Israelites.

The fall of Jericho cogently taught the inhabitants of Canaan that the successes of Israel were not mere human triumphs of man against man, and that the God of Israel was not as “the gods of the countries.” This lesson some of them at least learned to their salvation, e. g., Rahab and the

Gibeonites. Further, ensuing close upon the miraculous passage of Jordan, it was impressed on the people, prone ever to be led by the senses, that the same God who had delivered their fathers out of Egypt and led them through the Red Sea, was with Joshua no less effectually than He had been with Moses.

And the details of the orders given by God to Joshua Joshua 6:3-5 illustrate this last point further. The trumpets employed were not the silver trumpets used for signalling the marshalling of the host and for other warlike purposes (compare Numbers 10:2), but the curved horns employed for ushering in the Jubilee and the Sabbatical Year (Septuagint, σάλπιγγες ἱεραί *salpinges hierai* compare the Leviticus 23:24 note). The trumpets were borne by priests, and were seven in number; the processions round Jericho were to be made on seven days, and seven times on the seventh day, thus laying a stress on the sacred number seven, which was an emhlem more especially of the work of God. The ark of God also, the seat of His special presence, was carried round the city. All these particulars were calculated to set forth symbolically, and in a mode sure to arrest the attention of the people, the fact that their triumph was wholly due to the might of the Lord, and to that covenant which made their cause His.

Verse 7

He said - The reading in the Hebrew text is "they said." Joshua no doubt issued his orders through the "officers of the people" (compare Joshua 1:10).

Him that is armed - i. e. the warriors generally, not a division only. "The rereward" Joshua 6:9 was merely a detachment, and not a substantial portiere of the host; and was told off, perhaps, from the tribe of Dan (compare the marginal reference) to close the procession and guard the ark from behind. Thus the order would be

(1) the warriors,

(2) the seven priests blowing the cornets,

(3) the ark,

(4) the rear-guard.

Verse 15

On the seventh day - Most probably a Sabbath day. The rising early would be necessary to give time for encompassing the city seven times. Jericho appears to have been a city of considerable size and population; and each passage of the large host round it could hardly have taken less than an hour and a half. Thus, with the necessary intervals of rest, the evening would be at hand when Joshua gave the signal to shout Joshua 6:16; and the work of slaughter was probably commenced just as the hours of the Sabbath were passed.

Verse 17

Accursed - Better as in margin, ("devoted" (Leviticus 27:28 note). In other cases the inhabitants only of the towns were slain; their cattle and property became the booty of the victors. But Jericho, as the first Canaanite city that was captured, was devoted by Israel as first-fruits to God, as a token that Israel received all the land from Him. Every living thing was put to death (Rahab and her household excepted) as a sacrifice to God, and the indestructible goods were Joshua 6:19 brought into the treasury of the sanctuary.

Verse 23

The part of the wall adjoining Rahab's house had not fallen along with the rest. Rahab and "all that she had," i. e., the persons belonging to her household, were brought out and "left without the camp of Israel." These words literally "made to rest outside the camp of Israel" - indicate that being still in their paganism, they were separated from the camp of the Lord. This was only for a time. They desired, and eventually obtained, admission to the covenant of the chosen people of God Joshua 6:25.

Verse 25

Even unto this day - These words are rightly noted as implying that the narrative was written not long after the occurrences which it records.

Verse 26

Adjured - i. e. put an oath upon them; or, perhaps, actually caused them themselves to take an oath (compare Matthew 26:63). The words of the oath have in the original a rhythmical character which would tend to keep them on the lips and in the memory of the people.

Buildeth this city - i. e. rebuilds the fortifications. Jericho was at once occupied by the Benjamites. Joshua 18:21, and the natural advantages of the

situation were such that it would not be likely to be left long desolate. Joshua speaks in the text as a warrior. He lays a ban on the re-erection of those lofty walls which had bidden defiance to God‘s host, and been by God‘s signal interposition overthrown. Hiel, the Bethelite, reckless of the prophecy recorded in our text, began and completed the circumvallation of the city a second time (see the marginal reference). Hiel did not found a new city but only fortified an existing one.

He shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born - i. e. when he begins this work his eldest son shall die, when he completes it his youngest shall die (see 1 Kings 16:34 note).

This chapter read in the light of the New Testament has indications of a further import and bearing than such as concerned Joshua and the Jews. As Joshua, the leader and captain of the Jewish theocracy, is a type of Christ, so is Jericho to be taken (with all Christian expositors) as a type of the powers opposed to Christ and His cause. The times which prepare for the close of God‘s present dispensation are signified in the days during which the people obeyed and waited; as the number of those days, seven, the number of perfection, represents that “fullness of time,” known only to God, at which His dispensation will culminate and close. Thus the circumstances which lead up to the fall of Jericho are an acted prophecy, as was that fall itself, which sets forth the overthrow of all that resists the kingdom of which Christ is the head; and particularly the day of judgment, in which that overthrow will be fully and finally accomplished. Paul, in describing that day, seems to borrow his imagery from this chapter (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16).

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CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

Committed a trespass - (compare Leviticus 5:15 note), "acted treacherously and committed a breach of faith." This suitably describes the sin of Achan, who had purloined and hidden away that which had been dedicated to God by the ban Joshua 6:19.

The "trespass" was the act of one man, yet is imputed to all Israel, who also share in the penalty of it Joshua 7:5. This is not to be explained as though all the people participated in the covetousness which led to Achan's sin Joshua 7:21. The nation as a nation was in covenant with God, and is treated by Him not merely as a number of individuals living together for their own purposes under common institutions, but as a divinely-constituted organic whole. Hence, the sin of Achan defiled the other members of the community as well as himself. and robbed the people collectively of holiness before God and acceptableness with Him. Israel had in the person of Achan broken the covenant Joshua 7:11; God therefore would no more drive out the Canaanites before them.

The accursed thing - Rather "in that which had been devoted or dedicated." Achan in diverting any of these devoted things to his own purposes, committed the sin of sacrilege, that of Ananias and Sapphira. Acts 5:2-3.

Achan or Achar - (the marginal reference) the "n" and "r" being interchanged, perhaps for the sake of accommodating the name to עכר *ʿâkar* "trouble" Joshua 7:25. Zabdi is generally identified with the Zimri of 1 Chronicles 2:6. Zerah was twin brother of Pharez and son of Judah Genesis 38:30. In this genealogy, as in others, several generations are omitted, most likely those which intervened between Zerah and Zabdi, and which covered the space between the migration of Jacob's household to Egypt and the Exodus. (Numbers 26:5, see the note).

Verse 2

Ai, Bethel - See Genesis 12:8 note. (Modern travelers place the former at Khan Haiy, in the neighborhood of Deir Diwan.)

Verse 3

The total population of Ai was about twelve thousand Joshua 8:25. It could therefore hardly muster three thousand warriors.

Verse 5

Shebarim - Rather, perhaps, "the stone quarries." The smallness of the slaughter among the Israelites indicates that they fled early, probably without real conflict in battle.

Verse 6

On these signs of mourning, compare the marginal references and Leviticus 10:6; Numbers 20:6; 1 Samuel 4:12.

Verse 9

What wilt thou do unto thy great name? - i. e. "after the Canaanites have cut off our name what will become of Thy Name?" This bold expostulation, that of one wrestling in sore need with God in prayer, like the similar appeals of Moses in earlier emergencies (Compare the marginal references), is based upon God's past promises and mercies. What would be said of (God by the pagan if now He permitted Israel to be destroyed?

Verse 10

God's answer is given directly, and in terms of reproof. Joshua must not lie helpless before God; the cause of the calamity was to be discovered.

Verse 11

Also stolen, and dissembled also - The anger of God and the heinousness of Israel's sin are marked by the accumulation of clause upon clause. As a climax they had even appropriated to their own use the consecrated property purloined from God.

Verse 12

Accursed - Compare Joshua 6:17-18.

Verse 14

The Lord taketh - i. e. by lot. The Hebrew word for lot suggests that small stones, probably white and black ones, were used. These were probably drawn from a chest (compare the expressions in Joshua 18:11; Joshua 19:1). The lot was regarded as directed in its result by God (margin reference); and hence, was used on many important occasions by the Jews and by other nations in ancient times. For example:

(1), for apportionment, as of Canaan among the twelve tribes Numbers 26:55; of the Levitical cities (Joshua 21:4 ff); of spoil or captives taken in war Joel 3:3.

(2) for detection of the guilty, as in the case if Achan, Jonathan 1 Samuel 14:42, and Jonah Jonah 1:7.

(3) for determining the persons to undertake a dangerous or warlike enterprise Judges 20:10.

(4) for making appointment to important functions (Leviticus 16:8 ff; Acts 1:26); or for sharing the duties or privileges of an office among those concerned 1 Chronicles 24:31; Luke 1:9.

The casting of lots before Haman Esther 3:7 seems to have been with a view of determining the lucky day for his undertaking against the Jews. One passage Proverbs 18:18 perhaps points also to the employment of the lot to decide litigation.

Verse 15

burnt with fire - i. e. after he had been put to death by stoning Joshua 7:25; Leviticus 20:14.

Verse 19

Give glory to the Lord - A form of solemn adjuration by which the person addressed was called upon before God to declare the truth. The phrase assumes that the glory of God is always promoted by manifestation of the truth (compare the marginal references).

Verse 21

A goodly Babylonian garment - literally, "a robe or cloak of Shinar," the plain in which Babylon was situated Genesis 10:10. It was a long robe such as was worn by kings on state occasions Jonah 3:6, and by prophets 1 Kings 19:13; Zechariah 13:4. The Assyrians were in early times famous for the manufacture of beautiful dyed and richly embroidered robes (compare Ezekiel 23:15). That such a robe should be found in a Canaanite city is natural enough. The productions of the far East found their way through Palestine both southward toward Egypt and westward through Tyre to the countries bordering on the Mediterranean. (Compare Ezekiel 27:24 and the context.)

Wedge of gold - i. e. some implement or ornament of gold shaped like a wedge or tongue. The name lingula was given by the Romans to a spoon and to an oblong dagger made in shape of a tongue. The weight of this "wedge" was fifty shekels, i. e. about twenty-five ounces (see Exodus 38:24 note). The silver was under the rest of the stolen property. The mantle would naturally be placed uppermost, and be used to cover up the others.

Verse 24

The sin had been national (Joshua 7:1 note), and accordingly the expiation of it was no less so. The whole nation, no doubt through its usual representatives, took part in executing the sentence. Achan had fallen by his own act under the ban Joshua 6:18, and consequently he and his were treated as were communities thus devoted Deuteronomy 13:15-17. It would appear too that Achan‘s family must have been accomplices in his sin; for the stolen spoil could hardly have been concealed in his tent without their being privy thereto.

Verse 26

A great heap of stones - As a memorial of Achan‘s sin and its punishment. (Compare Joshua 8:29; 2 Samuel 18:17.)

The valley of Achor - Compare the marginal references. This valley formed part of the northern border of Judah Joshua 15:7; and must therefore have lain among the ridges which cross the plain to the south of Jericho. But its exact site is uncertain. (Conder identifies it with Wady Kelt.)

JOSHUA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

God rouses Joshua from his dejection Joshua 7:6, and bids him lmarch against Ai with the main body. Though Ai was but a small city (compare Joshua 8:25 and Joshua 7:3), yet the discouragement of the people rendered it inexpedient to send a second time a mere detachment against it; and the people of Ai had, as appears from Joshua 8:17, help from Bethel, and possibly from other places also. It was fitting too that all the people should witness with their own eyes the happy consequences of having faithfully put away the sin which had separated them from God.

Verse 3

Thirty thousand men - comparing Joshua 8:3 and Joshua 8:12 ("five thousand men"), there is probably a mistake in the numbers of this verse, where an early copyist may have written the sign for 30,000 instead of that for 5,000.

Sent them away by night - The selected 5,000 would accordingly post themselves in the main ravine between Ai and Bethel in the night and early morning. The neighhorhood in which Ai was situated is described as "a wild entanglement of hill and valley;" and amidst its recesses the detachment could easily shelter itself from observation until Joshua's other measures were taken.

Verse 10

Numbered the people - Rather, perhaps, "mustered" or "arrayed" them for their march. The distance from the camp at Gilgal to Ai is about fifteen miles. In the evening of the day after the despatch of the 5,000 liers in wait, Joshua and the host might make their appearance in the neighborhood of the city.

Verse 12

He took - Rather "had taken;" the words refer to the ambuscade which Joshua had detached during the previous night.

Verse 13

Joshua went down by night into the valley where He would be seen at daylight by the men of Ai, and was accompanied no doubt by a picked body of troops. The king of Ai, in the morning, would see neither the ambush in his rear, nor the whole of the great host of Israel among the hills away to the north on his left; but supposing, as it appears, that the Israelites before him

were a body detached as on the former occasion to assail his city, he sallied out promptly to attack them.

Verse 14

At a time appointed - Rather, "at the place appointed," i. e. some spot suitable for the drawing up of his men, which had been assigned beforehand. This was "before the plain," i. e. it was at the entrance of the depressed tract of land which runs down to the Jordan valley, up which lay the route of the Israelites from Gilgal to Ai.

Verse 17

Or Bethel - See the Joshua 8:1 note.

Verse 18

No doubt Joshua had ascended the heights, most likely those to the north of the valley, so as to separate himself from the flying Israelites on the lower ground, and to be visible to the men in ambush behind the city. He now, at the command of God, gives the appointed signal to the ambush.

Verse 29

Compare Deuteronomy 21:22-23 notes.

Verses 30-35

The account of this solemnity is very brief. An acquaintance with Joshua 8:29, and Joshua 9:1, is natural and obvious; and in Joshua 9:3, the fraud of the Gibeonites is represented as growing out of the alarm caused by the fall of Jericho and Ai. It is, moreover, extremely unlikely that a solemnity of this nature in the very center of the country should be undertaken by Joshua while the whole surrounding district was in the hands of the enemy; or that, if undertaken, it would have been carried out unmolested. "And the strangers that were conversant among them" Joshua 8:35, were present at it. The distance fromm Gilgal in the Jordan valley to Mount Ebal is fully 30 miles, unless - as is unlikely - another Gilgal (Deuteronomy 11:29 note) be meant; and so vast a host, with its non-effective followers Joshua 8:35, could certainly not have accomplished a march like this through a difficult country and a hostile population in less than three days. Moreover in Joshua 9:6; Joshua 10:6, Joshua 10:15, Joshua 10:43, the Israelites are spoken of as still encamping at Gilgal.

It is on the whole likely that, for these and other reasons, this passage does not, in our present Bible, stand in its proper context; and it has been conjectured that the place from which these six verses have been transferred is the end of Joshua 8:30 opens in our present text may well have served to

introduce the account of the solemnity on Gerizim and Ebal at the end of the record of Joshua‘s victories, to which indeed it forms a suitable climax.

Joshua 8:32

See the note marginal reference.

Joshua 8:34

All the words of the law - See Deuteronomy 31:11 ff It would seem that Joshua, on the present occasion, must have read at least all the legislative portion of the Pentateuch before the people (compare on Deuteronomy 27:3). The terms of this verse cannot be satisfactorily explained as importing only the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 2728.

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CHAPTER 9

Introduction

The two verses serve as a general introduction to Joshua 9:1, perhaps in consequence of the repulse of the Israelites before Ai. They resolved to make a league and to resist jointly the progress of the Israelites. The defection of Gibeon Joshua 10:1 ff). The other confederates subsequently gathered their armies together, Joshua 11:1-5, and were defeated at the waters of Merom (Joshua 11:6 ff). The former of these two great battles gave Joshua possession of the southern half of Palestine west of Jordan; the latter of the northern half.

Verse 1-2

In the hills - See the Numbers 13:17 note.

The valleys - Or "the vale" (the Shephelah, Deuteronomy 1:7), which imports the lowland country between the mountains and the sea coast.

Verse 3

Gibeon was the head of the four towns Joshua 9:17 occupied by the Hivites Joshua 11:19. The inhabitants were Amorites 2 Samuel 21:2; the name "Amorites" being used as a general name for the Canaanite population (Deuteronomy 1:44 note). The Hivites seem to have had a non-monarchical form of government (compare Joshua 9:3, Joshua 9:11), but their city was Joshua 10:2 in size and importance equal to those cities which the kings of the country made their capitals. Gibeon signifies "pertaining to a hill," i. e. built on a hill (compare Gibeah and Geba, towns in the same neighborhood), and describes the site, which is on two of the rounded hills unique to this district. It is still known as El-Jib, and lies about five miles north of Jerusalem by the most direct route. It stands at the head of the pass of Beth-horon, through which lies the main route from Jerusalem and the lower Jordan valley to Joppa and the sea coast. Thus from its position, no less than from the number and valor of its people Joshua 10:2, it was one of the most important cities of southern Canaan. Gibeon fell within the lot of Benjamin Joshua 18:25, and was one of the cities assigned to the priests Joshua 21:17. In later times it was famous as the scene of various events (2 Samuel 2:12-17; 2 Samuel 20:4-13; 1 Kings 2:28-29, compare with 1 Chronicles 16:39). It was for a long time the spot where the tabernacle of Moses, together with the brass altar of burnt offering 1 Chronicles 21:29 and other portions of the sacred furniture, were placed. It was the scene of

the magnificent ceremonial with which Solomon inaugurated his reign 1 Kings 3, but no doubt lost much of its importance after the tabernacle and its accompaniments were removed to the temple of Solomon.

Verse 4

They did work wilily - literally, "they also," or "they too, did work, etc." The "also" serves, apparently, to connect the stratagem of the Gibeonites with that employed by the Israelites before Ai. It hints that the Gibeonites resolved to meet craft with craft.

Rent and bound up - i. e. the wine skins were torn and roughly repaired by tying up the edges of the tear. The more thorough and careful way, hardly feasible in a hasty journey, would have been to insert a patch.

Verse 6

Camp at Gilgal - While Joshua was engaged in more distant enterprises, the women, children, and property of the Israelites were left with a sufficient guard at this place, where they had been established immediately after crossing the Jordan Joshua 5:9.

Verse 7

Compare the marginal references.

Verse 14

The elders of Israel Joshua 9:18, tasting what was offered them by the Gibeonites, pledged themselves according to the usage of Eastern nations to peace and friendship with them. They credited the story at once, instead of seeking the direction of God in the matter. The rendering of the margin is not to be preferred to that of the text.

At the mouth of the Lord - i. e. by the Urim and Thummim Exodus 28:30.

Verse 17

Chephirah (Kefir) is situated eight or nine miles west of Gibeon, and was an inhabited city in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah Ezra 2:25; Nehemiah 7:29.

Beeroth (Birch), about eight miles north of Jerusalem. Kirjath-jearim, i. e. "city of woods," is identified by Robinson with the modern Kuriet el Enab, nine miles from Jerusalem on the road to Jaffa (and by Conder with Soba). The town was numbered among those belonging to Judah, and was in the northern boundary of that tribe. Beyond this city the six hundred Danites encamped on their famous expedition to Laish Judges 18:12. Kirjath-jearim was also, and probably before the Israelite conquests

exclusively, called Baalah and Kirjath-baal Joshua 15:9, Joshua 15:60, names which seem to point to its early sanctity as a special seat of Baal-worship. To this place also the ark was brought from Beth-shemesh after it was sent back by the Philistines, and here it remained for twenty years 1 Samuel 6:20-21; 1 Samuel 7:2. It was fetched thence by David and deposited in the house of Obed-edom 2 Samuel 6:2. Hence, the allusion, Psalm 132:6, where David is said to have found the ark "in the fields of the wood."

Verse 21

Render "they shall be hewers of wood and drawers of water:" menial duties belonging to the lowest classes only (compare the marginal reference). The curse of Noah Genesis 9:25 on the children of Ham was thus fulfilled to the letter in the case of these Hivites.

Verse 22

Were the Israelites bound to respect an oath thus procured by fraud? Were they right in doing so? Dr. Sanderson ("Works," vol. iv. 4 pp. 269,300, Oxford edition), determines these questions in the affirmative; and rightly, since the oath, though unlawfully taken, was not an oath taken to do an unlawful thing, i. e. a thing in itself unlawful. It was the carelessness of the Israelites themselves which betrayed them into this league. It was therefore their duty when they found themselves entrapped into this unlawful covenant, to devise means by which they might respect both their own oath and God's purposes as intimated in His injunctions Deuteronomy 7:2 against sparing the Canaanites. This was accomplished by granting their lives to the Gibeonites, but reducing them to a servile condition, which might be expected to disable them from influencing the Israelites to do wrong. It may be added, that had the Israelites broken their oath, taken solemnly in the Name of the Lord, they would have brought that Name into contempt among the pagan; and, while punishing perfidy in others, would have themselves, the Lord's people, incurred the reproach of perjury. The result showed that Joshua and the princes judged rightly in this matter. God gave to Israel a notable victory, crowned with special miracles, over the kings who were confederated against Gibeon, because of the treaty made with Israel Joshua 10:4, Joshua 10:8, Joshua 10:13; and God punished as a national act of blood-guiltiness the slaughter of the Gibeonites by Saul, which was a distinct violation of the covenant here before us (compare 2

Samuel 21:1). This sparing of the Gibeonites, as well as the previous sparing of Rahab and her household, must be borne in mind when the massacre of the Canaanites by Joshua and the Israelites is discussed.

Verse 24

It was mere fear which drove the Gibeonites to act as they did. They sought for union with God‘s people, not for its own sake, but to save their lives. Rahab‘s motives were higher (Joshua 2:9 ff). Hence, she was adopted into Israel; the Gibeonites remained forever bondsmen of Israel.

JOSHUA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

Adoni-zedec - i. e "Lord of righteousness" (compare Melchizedek, "King of righteousness"); probably an official title of the Jebusite kings.

Jerusalem - i. e. "foundation of peace," compare Genesis 14:18. The city belonged to the inheritance of Benjamin Joshua 18:28, but was on the very edge of the territory of Judah Joshua 15:8. Hence, it was the strong and war-like tribe of Judah which eventually captured the lower part of the city, most likely in the days of Joshua's later conquests Judges 1:8, and after the warlike strength of the Jebusites had been weakened by the defeat in the open field, recorded in this chapter. The upper town, more especially the fortified hill of Zion, remained in the hands of the Jebusites, who accordingly kept a footing in the place, along with the men of Judah and Benjamin, even after the conquest Joshua 15:63; Judges 1:21; and would seem, indeed, to have so far, and no doubt gradually, regained possession of the whole, that Jerusalem was spoken of in the days of the Judges as a Jebusite city. David finally stormed "the stronghold of Zion," and called it "the City of David" 2 Samuel 5:6-9. It was, probably, only after this conquest and the adoption by David of the city as the religious and political metropolis of the whole nation, that the name Jerusalem came into use 2 Samuel 5:5 in substitution for Jehus.

Verse 3

For Hebron, see Genesis 13:18. Jarmuth, afterward one of the cities of Judah Joshua 15:35, is probably identified with the modern Yarmuk. Lachish was also a city of Judah Joshua 15:39, and, like Jarmuth, occupied by Jews after the captivity, 2 Chronicles 11:9, and seems to have been regarded as one of the safest places of refuge 2 Kings 14:19. Through Lachish the idolatry of Israel was imported into Judah Micah 1:13, and of this sin the capture of the city by Sennacherib was the punishment 2 Kings 18:14-17; 2 Kings 19:8. Lachish is by most authorities identified with Um Lakis, lying some twenty miles west of Eleutheropolis, on the road to Gaza (and by Conder with El Hesy).

Eglon is the modern Ajlan.

Verse 6

The language reflects the urgency of the crisis. Accordingly Joshua made a forced march, accompanied only by his soldiers Joshua 10:7, and accomplished in a single night the distance from Gilgal to Gibeon (about 15 miles in a direct line), which on a former occasion had been a three days' journey Joshua 9:17.

Verse 10

Beth-horon - The two places of this name, the upper and the lower Beth-horon (marginal reference), are identified with the villages Beit-ur el Foka (the upper) and Beit-ur et Tahta (the lower): Beit-ur being probably a corruption of Beth-horon. The name itself ("house of caves") points to the exceedingly rocky character of the district. Upper Beth-horon was between six and seven miles west of Gibeon; and "the way that goeth up to Beth-horon" must accordingly be the hilly road which leads from Gibeon to it. Between the two Beth-horons is a steep pass, "the going down to Beth-horon" Joshua 10:11; and here the Amorites were crushed by the hailstones. The main road from Jerusalem and the Jordan valley to the seacoast lay through the pass of Beth-horon; and, accordingly, both the Beth-horons were secured by Solomon with strong fortifications 2 Chronicles 8:5. It was in this pass that Judas Maccabaeus routed the Syrians under Seron (2 Kings 19:35.

Azekah, which has not been as yet certainly identified, was in the hill country, between the mountains around Gibeon and the plain (see the marginal reference). It was fortified by Rehoboam 2 Chronicles 11:9 and besieged by the Babylonians Jeremiah 34:7 shortly before the captivity. It was an inhabited city after the return from the exile Nehemiah 11:30.

Makkedah - The exact site of this town is uncertain. It was situated in the plain between the mountains and the line of seacoast which the Philistines held Joshua 15:41, and no great way northeast of Libnab Joshua 12:15-16. (Warren (Conder) identifies it with the modern el Mughhar, a village on the south side of the valley of Torek.)

Verse 11

Compare Exodus 9:24 and the tempest which fell on the Philistines at Ebenezer 1 Samuel 7:10.

Verses 12-15

These four verses seem to be a fragment or extract taken from some other and independent source and inserted into the thread of the narrative

after it had been completed, and inserted most probably by another hand than that of the author of the Book of Joshua.

It is probable that Joshua 10:12 and the first half of Joshua 10:13 alone belong to the Book of Jasher and are poetical, and that the rest of this passage is prose.

The writer of this fragment seems to have understood the words of the ancient song literally, and believed that an astronomical miracle really took place, by which the motion of the heavenly bodies was for some hours suspended. (Compare also Judges 5:20 and Psalm 18:9-15 are passages which no one construes as describing actual occurrences: they set forth only internal, although most sincere and, in a spiritual sense, real and true convictions. This explanation is now adopted by theologians whose orthodoxy upon the plenary inspiration and authority of holy Scripture is well known and undoubted.

Joshua 10:12

In the sight of Israel - literally, "before the eyes of Israel," i. e. in the sight or presence of Israel, so that the people were witnesses of his words. (Compare Deuteronomy 31:7.)

Sun, stand thou still - literally, as margin, "be silent" (compare Leviticus 10:3); or rather, perhaps, "tarry," as in 1 Samuel 14:9.

Thou, moon - The words addressed to the moon as well as to the sun, indicate that both were visible as Joshua spoke. Below and before him, westward, was the valley of Ajalon; behind him, eastward, were the hills around Gibeon. Some hours had passed, since in the early dawn he had fallen upon the host of the enemy, and the expression "in the midst of heaven" Joshua 10:13 seems to import that it was now drawing toward mid-day, though the moon was still faintly visible in the west. If the time had been near sunset, Joshua would have seen the sun, not, as he did, eastward of him, but westward, sinking in the sea.

The valley of Ajalon - i. e. "the valley of the gazelles." This is the modern Merj Ibn Omeir, described by Robinson, a broad and beautiful valley running in a westerly direction from the mountains toward the great western plain. The ancient name is still preserved in Yalo, a village situated on the hill which skirts the south side of the valley.

Joshua 10:13

Book of Jasher - i. e. as margin, "of the upright" or "righteous," a poetical appellation of the covenant-people (compare "Jeshurun" in Deuteronomy 32:15, and note; and compare Numbers 23:10, Numbers 23:21; Psalm 111:1). This book was probably a collection of national odes celebrating the heroes of the theocracy and their achievements, and is referred to again (marginal reference) as containing the dirge composed by David over Saul and Jonathan.

About a whole day - i. e. about twelve hours; the average space between sunrise and sunset.

Joshua 10:15

Joshua's return (compare Joshua 10:43) to Gilgal was not until after he had, by the storm and capture of the principal cities of south Canaan, completed the conquest of which the victory at Gibeon was only the beginning.

This verse is evidently the close of the extract from an older work, which connected the rescue of Gibeon immediately with the return to Gilgal, and omitted the encampment at Makkedah Joshua 10:21, and also the details given in Joshua 10:28-42.

Verse 16

The thread of the narrative, broken by the four intermediate verses, Joshua 10:12-15, is now resumed from Joshua 10:11.

Verse 21

Joshua himself remained at Makkedah with the guards set before the cave. The other warriors would not return from the pursuit until the evening of the overthrow of the Amorites; and the execution of the kings and the capture of Makkedah itself belong, no doubt, to the day following Joshua 10:27-28.

None moved his tongue - See the marginal reference and note.

Verse 24

Put your feet upon the necks of these kings - A symbol of complete subjugation (compare the marginal references and 1 Corinthians 15:25).

Verse 29

Libnah - The word means "white" or "distinct," and undoubtedly points to some natural feature of the spot, perhaps the "Garde Blanche" of the Crusaders, a castle which stood on or near the white cliffs which bound the plain of Philistia to the east opposite to Ascalon. It was in the southern part

of the hill-country of Judah Joshua 15:42, and was one of the cities afterward assigned to the priests Joshua 21:13.

Verse 33

Gezer lies on the southern border of the tribe of Ephraim Joshua 16:3. It was considerably to the northward of Joshua‘s present line of operations, and does not appear to have been captured at this time. He contented himself for the present with repulsing the attack made upon him, killed Horam (compare Joshua 12:12), inflicting a severe defeat upon his people, and then continued to pursue his conquests over the confederated kings and their allies in south Canaan.

Verse 37

The king thereof - No doubt the successor of the king slain at Makkedah Joshua 10:23.

All the cities thereof - i. e. the smaller towns dependent upon Hebron. The expression marks Hebron as the metropolis of other subject towns.

Verse 38

Joshua returned - The words mark a change in the direction of the march. Joshua from Hebron turned to the southwest, and attacked Debir or Kirjath-sepher and its dependencies Joshua 15:15.

Verse 40

See Joshua 9:1. “The south” was the Negeb Numbers 13:17. Render “the springs” “slopes.” The word here means the district of undulating ground between “the vale” (or שׁפלה *shephêlâh*) last named and “the hills.”

Verse 41

From Kadesh-barnea unto Gaza - Numbers 13:26 This limits Joshua‘s conquests on the west, as the other line, “all the country of Goshen unto Gibeon,” does on the east. Goshen Joshua 15:51 has not been identified. It was in the southern part of the territory of Judah, and is, of course, quite distinct from the Goshen of Genesis 46:28.

Verse 42

At one time - i. e. in one campaign or expedition, which no doubt lasted some days, or perhaps weeks (compare Joshua 11:18).

JOSHUA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

Jabin - Probably the hereditary and official title of the kings of Hazor (see Judges 4:2). The word means literally "he shall understand," and is equivalent to "the wise" or "intelligent."

Hazor - This name, which means "enclosed or "fortified," belonged also to two other towns in the south of Judah (compare Joshua 15:23, Joshua 15:25). The Hazor here in question, the head of the principalities of Northern Canaan Joshua 11:10 overlooked the lake of Merom, and was afterward assigned to the tribe of Naphtali Joshua 19:36. It doubtless was one of the strongest fortresses in the north, both by nature and art. It is mentioned in Egyptian inscriptions of an early date. Its situation in the midst of a plain, though itself on a hill, rendered it especially suitable as a stronghold for people whose main reliance was on horses and chariots Joshua 11:4; Judges 4:3. Its position on the northern frontier led to its being fortified by Solomon 1 Kings 9:15. Its people were carried away captive, with those of the other cities of Naphtali, by Tiglath-Pileser 2 Kings 15:29. By the "plain of Nasor," where (1 Maccabees 11:67) Jonathan gained a victory over the Syrians, is doubtless to be understood "the plain of Asor" (i. e. Hazor). Hazor is conjecturally identified with the modern Tell Kuraibeh.

Had heard those things - i. e. of the defeat of the southern Canaanites at Beth-horon and of the conquest of their country.

The sites of Madon, Shimron, and of Achshaph, are unknown.

Verse 2

On the north of the mountains - Rather, "northward in the mountains." The reference is to the mountain district of Galilee, called Joshua 20:7 "mount Naphtali."

On the plains south of Chinneroth - literally, "in the Arabah south of Chinneroth." The words describe the northern portion of the "Arabah" (see Deuteronomy 1:1), or depressed tract, which extends along the Jordan from the lake of Gennesaret southward.

Chinneroth - Identical with the later Gennesaret (see Numbers 34:10). The lake derived its name from a town on its banks (compare Joshua 19:35).

In the valley - The northern part of the same flat district mentioned in Joshua 9:1. This "valley" is the level plain adjacent to the sea and extending from Carmel southward.

Borders of Dor - Render "highlands of Dor." Dor was a royal city, and gave its name to the district around it (compare Joshua 12:23; 1 Kings 4:11). Its importance was derived from its having an excellent and well-sheltered haven, and from the abundance among its rocks of the shellfish which furnished the famous Tyrian purple. The site of Dor is identified by travelers as the modern Tantura or Dandora - a name which is itself only a corruption of the ancient Dor. It lies near the foot of Carmel some six miles north of Caesarea.

Verse 3

Hermon - See Deuteronomy 3:9 note.

The land of Mizpeh - or Mizpah," the land of the watch-tower" The locality is probably identified as a plain stretching at the foot of Hermon southwestward, from Hasbeya, toward the Bahr el Huleh. In a land abounding in striking points of view like Palestine, the name Mizpah was naturally, like "Belle Vue" among ourselves, bestowed on many places. The Mizpeh here mentioned must not be confounded with the Mizpeh of Gilead (Joshua 13:26, and Judges 11:29); nor with the Mizpeh of Judah Joshua 15:38; nor yet with that of Moab 1 Samuel 22:3.

Verse 5

Waters of Merom - i. e. "the upper waters," the modern Bahr el Huleh, the lake Semechonitis, or Samochonitis of Josephus. This lake occupies the southern half of the Ard el Huleh, a depressed basin some 15 miles long and 3 or 4 miles wide lying between the hills of Galilee on the west and the lower spurs of Hermon on the east. The size of the lake varies with the season, and the northern side of it ends in a large swamp. The shape of the lake is triangular, the point being at the south, where the Jordan, which enters it on the north, again quits it. There is a considerable space of tableland along the southwestern shore, and here probably the troops of Jabin and his confederates were encamped, preparing to move southward when Joshua and his army fell suddenly upon them.

Verse 6

Hough their horses - i. e. cut the sinews of the hinder hoofs. This sinew once severed cannot be healed, and the horses would thus be irreparably

lamed. This is the first appearance of horses in the wars with the Canaanites (Deuteronomy 17:16 and note).

Verse 7

Suddenly - As before, at Gibeon Joshua 10:9, so now Joshua anticipates his enemies. Taken by surprise, and hemmed in between the mountains and the lake, the chariots and horses would have no time to deploy and no room to act effectively; and thus, in all probability, the unwieldy host of the Canaanites fell at once into hopeless confusion.

Verse 8

One portion of the defeated host fled north-westward toward Zidon; the other northeastward up the Ard el Huleh.

Zidon, as the metropolis of various subject towns and territories, appears Joshua 19:28 to have been afterward assigned to Asher, but was not, in fact, conquered by that tribe Judges 1:31. It is mentioned in Egyptian papyri of great antiquity, and by Homer, and was in the most ancient times the capital of Phoenicia. In later times it was eclipsed by Tyre (compare 2 Samuel 5:11). The prophets frequently couple Tyre and Sidon together, as does also the New Testament (Isaiah 23:2, Isaiah 23:4, Isaiah 23:12; Jeremiah 27:3; Jeremiah 47:4; Matthew 11:22; Matthew 15:21, etc.).

Both the site and signification of Misre-photh-maim are uncertain. Some have thought it identical with "Zarephath which belongeth to Zidon" 1 Kings 17:9, the Sarepta of the New Test. The name is explained by some (see the margin) as meaning hot springs; by others as salt pits; i. e. pits where the sea water was evaporated for the sake of its salt; and again by others as "smelting factories near the waters." Some, tracing the word to quite another root, render it "heights of waters," or copious springs.

Verse 13

Render: "But the cities standing each on its own hill" (compare Jeremiah 30:18). The meaning is simply that, with the exception of Hazor, Joshua did not burn the cities, but left them standing, each on its former site. This site is spoken of as a hill, because such was the ordinary site chosen for cities in Canaan (compare Matthew 5:14).

Verse 17

The mount Halak - See the margin and reference. The name serves to mark the southern limit of Joshua's conquests. It suits equally well several

of the ranges near the south border of Palestine, and it is uncertain which of them is the one here indicated.

Baal-gad Joshua 12:7; Joshua 13:5 is probably Paneas, the Caesarea Philippi of later times. The name means "troop or city of Baal," or a place where Baal was worshipped as the giver of "good luck." Compare Isaiah 65:11. It was probably the same as Baal-Hermon (Judges 3:3; 1 Chronicles 5:23; and see Deuteronomy 3:9).

Verse 18

A long time - At least five years; according to others, seven years (see Joshua 14:10, and Introduction). This and the preceding chapter contain a very condensed account of the wars of Joshua, giving particulars about leading events only.

Verse 20

See the marginal references.

Verse 21

At that time - i. e. in course of the "long time" mentioned in Joshua 11:18.

The Anakims - See Numbers 13:22. As it was the report of the spies respecting the Anakims which, above all, struck terror into the Israelites in the wilderness, and caused their faithless complaining and revolt, so the sacred writer goes back here in his story to record pointedly the overthrow of this gigantic and formidable race. They had their chief settlements in the mountains around Hebron Joshua 10:3 or Debir. See Joshua 15:15.

Anab was a city in the mountain district of Judah, lying some distance south of Hebron. It still bears its ancient name.

Verse 22

Gaza, Gath, Ashdod - See the Joshua 13:3 note.

Verse 23

These words import that Joshua had overcome all overt resistance. There were, however, many districts by no means thoroughly and finally subdued Joshua 13:1-6.

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CHAPTER 12

Introduction

Consult the notes to the passages referred to in the margin.

Verses 1-6

All the plain on the east - i. e. the Arabah or depressed tract along the east bank of Jordan, the modern El-Ghor (see Numbers 22:1).

Joshua 12:2

From the middle of the river - i. e. as appears from Joshua 13:9, Joshua 13:16, "from the city that is in the midst of the river;" namely,, Ar Moab (see Deuteronomy 2:36).

Joshua 12:3

From the plain - Render "over the plain;" for the words describe not one of the boundaries of Sihon's kingdom, but part of the territory included in it, i. e. the eastern portion of the Ghor, between the Sea of Tiberias and the Dead Sea.

Verses 7-24

The names of the kings are given in the order of their actual encounter with Joshua. Those enumerated in Joshua 12:10-18 either belonged to the league of the southern Canaanites (Joshua 10:1 ff), the power of which was broken in the battle of Beth-horon, or were at any rate conquered in the campaign following that battle. Those mentioned in Joshua 12:19-24 were in like manner connected with the northern confederates (Joshua 11:1 ff), who were defeated at the Waters of Merom.

Joshua 12:13-20

The identification of several of these places is still uncertain: the same name (e. g. Aphek, Joshua 12:18) being applied to various places in various parts of Palestine. Geder, or Gedor Joshua 15:58, a city in the mountain district in the south of the territory of Judah, is no doubt the modern "Jedur".

Joshua 12:21

Taanach - A Levitical town Joshua 21:25 in the territory of Issachar, but assigned to the Manassites (Joshua 17:11; Compare 1 Chronicles 7:29), is identified with "Taanuk". It was here that Barak encountered the host of Sisera Judges 5:19. Megiddo was near it, and is thought to have been "el Lejjun" (the Roman Legion), (or Mujedd'a (Conder)).

Joshua 12:22

Kedesh - i. e. Kedesh Naphtali, a city of refuge, a Levitical city, and the home of Barak Judges 9:6.

Jokneam - A Levitical city in the territory of Zebulon Joshua 19:11; perhaps the modern "Kaimon". "Tell Kaimon" is a conspicuous and important position, commanding the main pass across the ridge of Carmel from Phoenicia to Egypt. This famous mountain range (about 15 miles long) no doubt received the name Carmel (the word means "a fruitful field" as opposed to "wilderness") as descriptive of its character; and thus the name became an emblem of beauty and luxuriance (Isaiah 35:2; 1 Kings 18:30 was an old one which had been broken down, Carmel was probably no less esteemed by the Israelites also. In later times the caves which abound toward the western bluffs of the range have been frequented by Christian, Jewish, and Mussulman anchorites. The order of Carmelite or barefooted friars took its rise from the convent founded by Louis, which still crowns the western headland.

Joshua 12:23

The king of the nations - See Genesis 14:1 and note. It means king of certain mixed and probably nomadic tribes, which regarded Gilgal Joshua 9:19 as their center and capital.

Joshua 12:24

Tirzah - This place, the capital of Jeroboam and his successors until the clays of Omri (1 Kings 14:17; 1 Kings 15:21, etc.), is identified by some with "Tulluzah", a town 3 miles northeast of Nablous, (by others with Teiasir).

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CHAPTER 13

Introduction

Here commences the second portion of the book, the statements of which were drawn from pre-existing documentary records (compare Joshua 18:9); the whole of the history being introduced by a command of God to Joshua to proceed to allot the land among the tribes.

Verse 1

Joshua is bidden to allot the whole of the promised land among the twelve tribes in faith that God would perfect in due time that expulsion of the Canaanites which Joshua himself could not carry further (see Joshua 11:23).

Verse 2

This and Joshua 13:3 name the still unconquered districts in the southern half of the land, Joshua 13:4-6 those in the north.

Geshuri - A district on the south of Philistia, the inhabitants of which are again named in 1 Samuel 27:8; but are not to be confounded with the land of the Geshurites mentioned in Joshua 13:13; Joshua 12:5.

Verse 3

Sihor is derived from a root signifying "to be black," and is suitable enough as an appellative of the Nile Isaiah 23:3. Here it most probably stands for "the river of Egypt" (Numbers 34:3 note), the modern "Wady el Arish".

Ekron ("Akir") lay on the northern boundary of Judah Joshua 15:11, and was actually conquered by the men of that tribe Judges 1:18, though assigned in the allotment of the land to Dan Joshua 19:43. It seems to have fallen again into the hands of the Philistines in the days of the Judges 1 Samuel 5:10, was reconquered by Samuel (compare 1 Samuel 7:14), but figures in subsequent times as a Philistine city only (compare 1 Samuel 17:52; 2 Kings 1:2, 2 Kings 1:16, etc.).

Lords - The Hebrew word סרן *seren* means "an axle," and is applied as a title special to the chiefs (compare Judges 3:3 and marginal references) of the Philistines Genesis 10:14.

Gaza was the most southern of the Philistine cities (compare Joshua 10:41; Joshua 11:22). It was allotted to the tribe of Judah Joshua 15:47, and was, with Askalon, taken by the warriors of that tribe Judges 1:18. Both cities were soon re-occupied by the Philistines, and subsequently are always

mentioned as Philistine cities. Gaza lay on the direct route of the Egyptian armies in their invasions of Syria, by whom it was captured more than once. Special judgments are denounced against Gaza for the cruelty of its people toward the Jews in the time of their humiliation Amos 1:6-7; Zephaniah 2:4; Zechariah 9:5, and in the time of Jerome the ancient city was a ruin of which the foundations could hardly be traced, and the then existing town was built on another site. Gaza was in later times an episcopal see, and is now a thriving place containing some 15,000 inhabitants, a larger population than that of Jerusalem.

Ashdod ("Esdud;" Azotus, Acts 8:40) was, like Gaza, allotted to Judah (see Joshua 15:46-47), but was soon regained by the Philistines, and became a principal seat of their Dagon worship. Here the ark of God was taken after its capture by the Philistines (1 Samuel 5:1 ff). Its name ("fortress," "castle"), no less than its history (compare 2 Chronicles 26:6; Isaiah 20:1; Nehemiah 4:7, etc.) indicates its importance as a stronghold; it withstood for twenty-nine years the longest siege on record by the Egyptian king Psammetichus. Like Gaza, it was doomed by the Jewish prophets to desolation, and it was utterly destroyed by the Maccabees (Judges 1:18), the birthplace of Herod the Great, figures as an important town and seaport in the history of the Crusades, and very massive ruins still attest the ancient strength and grandeur of the place. It is situated about midway between Gaza and Ashdod.

Gath seems to have been first taken by David 1 Chronicles 18:1. It is not named again in the book of Joshua. It was the town of Goliath 1 Samuel 17:4, and is mentioned in David's elegy over Saul as a leading Philistine city 2 Samuel 1:20. It was the nearest of the Philistine cities to Jerusalem, but both the name and the city have perished; its site is conjecturally placed (by Condor) at Tell es Safi.

Avites - See Deuteronomy 2:23 note.

Verse 4

Read "on the south," and connect the words with the verse preceding. They indicate the southern limit of the still unconquered territory in this neighborhood, as Joshua 13:3 gives the northern one.

Mearah - The "cave" (see the margin) has been referred to "Mugar Jczzin" ("cave of Jezzin"), between Tyre and Sidon, or to a district

characterized by deep cave-like ravines near Sidon and Dan-Laish.

Verse 5

Giblites - The people of Gebal ("Jebail", 22 miles north of Beyronut). They were "stone-squarers" 1 Kings 5:18 and (ship) "caulkers" Ezekiel 27:9.

Verse 6

The King James Version would exhibit the sense more clearly if the words from the beginning of Joshua 13:2 to the words "the Sidonians" in this verse were placed in a parenthesis, and the order of the words before us changed thus: "I will drive them out." The "them" meaning the inhabitants of the "very much land to be possessed," spoken of in Joshua 13:1.

Verses 8-33

The writer appends to the command of God Joshua 13:1-7 a statement that the other two tribes and a half had already had their inheritance marked out for them by Moses in the land east of Jordan. The boundaries of this territory as a whole are first set forth Joshua 13:8-14, and afterward the portions assigned within it to the two tribes and a half are severally described Joshua 13:14

See Deuteronomy 18:1-5 and notes.

Joshua 13:15-24

Inheritance of the tribe of Reuben. This territory was the most southerly of the trans-Jordanic possessions of Israel, and adjoined Moab, which lay only on the other side of the Arnon. Hence, the Reubenites became in after times much intermixed with the Moabites, who in fact eventually acquired much of the land, and several, if not all, of the cities here named as belonging to Reuben. This acquisition was probably assisted by the fact that the territory north of Arnon had formerly belonged to the Moabites, from whom it was wrested by the Amorites (see Numbers 21:27, etc. notes). It is not likely that the Amorite conquerors had completely extirpated the Moabite inhabitants. Hence, in the days when the Reubenites became engrossed in their pastoral pursuits, and probably not very long after the days of Joshua, the Moabites easily encroached on their inheritance, and in the end probably reoccupied nearly the whole of the ancient kingdom of Sihon (Compare Deuteronomy 33:6 note).

Joshua 13:17-21

See the marginal references for some of these names. Heshbon, Kedemoth, and Mephaath became eventually Levitical cities.

Joshua 13:21

Dukes of Sihon - Rather "vassals of Sihon," probably those "dedicated" or "appointed" with a libation.

Joshua 13:23

Jordan … - i. e. the Jordan and its territory (compare similar expressions in Numbers 34:6; Deuteronomy 3:16). The portion of the tribe of Reuben at its northern extremity touched the Jordan; the main part of his inheritance lay on the east of the Dead Sea.

Joshua 13:25

All the cities of Gilead - i. e. of Gilead in the narrower sense, included in the territory of Sihon, and distinct from Bashan Deuteronomy 3:10.

Half the land of the children of Ammon - i. e. that half of the Ammonite territory which had been conquered by the Amorites. This, after the overthrow of Sihon, the Israelites took for their own. The land which the Ammonites still held in the days of Moses, the Israelites were not permitted to attack.

Rabbah was a border fortress, the principal stronghold of the Ammonites Numbers 21:24, and the residence of their king. It was attacked and taken by Joab 1 Chronicles 20:1, but appears in later times again as an Ammonitish city Jeremiah 49:3; Ezekiel 25:5; Amos 1:13-15. In the third century B.C. it received from Ptolemy Philadelplus the name of Philadelphia, and was in later times the seat of a Christian bishop; but has now for many centuries been in ruins, remarkable for their grandeur and extent.

Joshua 13:26

The border of Debir - Rather perhaps "the border of Lidbir," which is regarded as identical with the Lo-debar of 2 Samuel 9:4; 2 Samuel 17:27, one of the towns from which provisions were brought to David at Mahanaim Genesis 32:2.

Joshua 13:29-33

On the conquest of Bashan, see especially Numbers 32:33, etc. and notes.

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CHAPTER 14

Verse 2

By lot - We are not told in what manner the lot was cast. Perhaps two urns were employed, one containing a description of the several districts to be allotted, the other the names of the tribes; and the portion of each tribe would then be determined by a simultaneous drawing from the two urns. Or a drawing might be made by some appointed person, or by a delegate of each tribe from one urn containing the description of the ten inheritances. The lot only determined in a general way the position in the country of the particular tribe concerned, whether north or south, etc.; the dimensions of each territory being left to be adjusted subsequently, according to the numbers and wants of the tribe to be provided for. Since the predilections and habits of two tribes and a half were consulted in the apportionment to them of the trans-Jordanic territory Numbers 32:1 there is no objection to the supposition that something of the same kind may have taken place, subject to the divine approval, in the distribution of the lands to the nine and a half other tribes; and the lot would thus be appealed to as finally deciding the matter and foreclosing jealousies and disputes.

It is apparent that the casting of the ten lots did not take place simultaneously. The tribe of Judah had precedence, whether by express appointment or because its lot "came up" first, does not appear. It was, as it seems, only after this tribe had settled upon its domains, that further lots were drawn for Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh. After this a pause, perhaps of some duration, appears to have occurred; the camp was moved from Gilgal to Shiloh; and the further casting of lots for the other seven tribes was proceeded with at the instigation of Joshua (see Joshua 18:10).

Verse 6

The children of Judah - No doubt, in particular, the kinsmen of Caleb, and perhaps other leading men of the tribe. These came before Joshua, with Caleb, in order to make it manifest that they supported his claim, to be secured in the possessions promised him by Moses before the general allotment should be made to the tribes (compare the marginal references).

Verse 9

Moses sware - i. e. God swore; and His promise, confirmed by an oath, was communicated, of course, through Moses.

Verse 10

Forty and five years - The word of God to Moses was spoken after the return of the spies in the autumn of the second year after the Exodus Numbers 13:25; subsequently, 38 years elapsed before the people reached the Jordan Numbers 20:1; after the passage of the Jordan seven more years had passed, when Caleb claimed Hebron, before the partition of the land among the nine tribes and a half. These seven years then correspond to the "long time" Joshua 11:18 during which Joshua was making war with the Canaanites. They are in the sequel of this verse added by Caleb to the years of wandering, since during them the people had no settled abodes.

Verse 12

The Anakims had in the course of Joshua's campaigns in the south been expelled from "this mountain," i. e. the mountain country round Hebron, but they had only withdrawn to the neighboring cities of Philistia Joshua 11:22. Thence, they had, as must be inferred from the text here, returned and reoccupied Hebron, probably when Joshua and the main force of the Israelites had marched northward to deal with Jabin and his confederates. Caleb finally drove out this formidable race and occupied Hebron and its dependent towns and district permanently. See Joshua 15:13 following.

Verse 15

A great man - literally, the great man; i. e. the renowned ancestor of the tribe, regarded as the founder of its greatness Joshua 15:13.

JOSHUA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verse 1

The inheritance of the tribe of Judah is described first by its general boundaries on all four sides Joshua 15:1-12; then reference is again made, for the sake of completeness, to the special inheritance of Caleb which lay within these boundaries Joshua 15:13-20; and lastly a list of the towns is given Joshua 15:21-63. Consult the marginal references.

Verse 6

The stone of Bohan - This stone perhaps commemorated some deed of valor belonging to the wars of Joshua (compare 1 Samuel 7:12). The stone was erected on the slope of a hill (see the marginal reference), no doubt one of the range which hounds the Jordan valley on the west. But its exact site is wholly uncertain.

Verse 7

The going up to Adummim - Rather, "the ascent or pass of Adummim" (compare Joshua 15:3, margin), on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Its name signifies "red" and is explained by Jerome as given because of the frequent bloodshed there by robbers. This road is the scene of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Possibly the name may be due to some aboriginal tribe of "red men," who held their ground in these fastnesses after the invaders had driven them from the face of the country elsewhere.

En-shemesh - i. e. "fountain of the sun;" no doubt that now called "the Fountain of the Apostles," about two miles from Jerusalem, and the only well on the road to Jericho.

En-rogel - i. e. "fountain of the fullers" near the walls of Jerusalem. It was here that Jonathan and Ahimaaz concealed themselves after the rebellion of Absalom, in order to procure tidings for David, and here Adonijah gave a feast to his adherents preparatory to making an attempt on the crown (compare the marginal references). It is probably the modern "Fountain of the Virgin," the only real spring near Jerusalem, from which the Pool of Siloam is supplied. Others identify it, less probably, with the "Well of Job," situated where the valleys of Kedron and Hinnom unite.

Verse 8

The valley of the son of Hinnom - This valley begins on the west of Jerusalem at the road to Joppa, and turning southeastward round the foot of Mount Zion joins the deeper valley of Kedron on the south of the city. It

was in this ravine, more particularly at Tophet in the more wild and precipitous part of it toward the east, that the later kings of Judah offered the sacrifices of children to Moloch (2 Chronicles 28:3; 2 Chronicles 33:6, etc.). After these places had been defiled by Josiah, Tophet and the whole valley of Hinnom were held in abomination by the Jews, and the name of the latter was used to denote the place of eternal torment Matthew 5:22. The Greek term Gehenna (γεέννα *geenna*) is in fact formed from the Hebrew גיא הנם *gay' hînnôm* "valley of Hinnom." Hinnom is regarded either as the name of some ancient hero, or as an appellative ("groaning" or "moaning"), bestowed on the spot because of the cries of the victims here offered to Moloch, and of the drums with which those cries were drowned.

The valley of the giants - Rather "the plain of Rephaim." This plain, named after an ancient and gigantic tribe of the land Genesis 14:5, lies southwestward of Jerusalem, and is terminated by a slight rocky ridge forming the brow of the valley of Hinnom. The valley is fertile Isaiah 17:5 and broad, and has been on more than one occasion the camping ground for armies operating against Jerusalem 2 Samuel 5:18, 2 Samuel 5:22; 2 Samuel 23:13.

Verse 9

Nephtoab is probably the modern "Ain Lifta", two miles and a half northwestward of Jerusalem: and Mount Ephron is conjecturally connected with the city Ephrain 2 Chronicles 13:19 or Ophrah Joshua 18:23.

Verse 10

Mount Seir is not the well-known range of Edom. The name ("shaggy mountain") is applicable to any rugged or well-wooded hill. Here it probably denotes the range which runs southwestward from Kirjath-jearim to the Wady Surar. Mount Jearim, i. e. "woody mountain," is through its other name, Chesalon, identified with the modern "Kesla".

Beth-shemesh - i. e. "house of the sun," called "Ir-shemesh" or "city of the sun" (Joshua 19:41; Compare 1 Kings 4:9), a place assigned to Dan, and one of the cities which fell by lot to the Levites Joshua 21:16. Beth-shemesh was the first place at which the ark rested after its return from the hands of the Philistines 1 Samuel 6:12. It was the residence of one of Solomon's purveyors 1 Kings 4:9, and was the spot where at a later date Amaziah was defeated and slain by Jehoash (2 Kings 14:11 ff). It is no doubt the modern "Ain Shems".

Timnah, called also Timnath, and Timnathah, belonged likewise to Dan, and is to be distinguished from other places of like name Genesis 38:12; Joshua 24:30. Timnah ("portion") was evidently, like Gilgal, Ramah, Kirjath, and several other towns, of frequent use in Canaanite topography.

Verse 11

Jabneel - The modern "Yebna", about three miles from the coast and twelve miles south of Joppa. It is called Jabneh in 2 Chronicles 26:6, where Uzziah is recorded to have taken it from the Philistines and destroyed its fortifications. The town is repeatedly mentioned with its haven in the wars of the Maccabees (1 Maccabees 4:15; 2 Maccabees 12:8), and by Josephus under the name of Jamnia. It is described by Philo as a very populous town; and after the destruction of Jerusalem was, for a long time, the seat of the Sanhedrin, and was a famous school of Jewish learning. Its ruins, which are still considerable, stand on the brink of the "Wady Rubin".

Verse 14

See the marginal references.

Verse 15

The name Debir belonged to two other places; namely,, that named in Joshua 15:7, between Jerusalem and Jericho, and the Gadite town mentioned in Joshua 13:26. The Debir here meant appears (and its site has been conjecturally placed at Dhaheriyeh (Conder)) to have been situated in the mountain district south of Hebron. It was one of the towns afterward assigned to the Levites. Its other name Joshua 15:49, "Kirjath-sannah", i. e. perhaps, "city of palm branches," or "city of law, or sacred learning," no less than the two given in the text, would indicate that Debir was an ancient seat of Canaanite learning, for Debir probably is equivalent to "oracle," and Kirjath-sepher means "city of books." This plurality of names marks the importance of the town, as the inducement held out in Joshua 15:16, by Caleb, to secure its capture (compare 1 Samuel 17:25; 1 Samuel 18:17), points to its strength.

Verse 17

Othniel was probably Caleb's younger brother; the expression "son of Kenaz" being only an equivalent for the "Kenezite" Joshua 14:6.

Verse 18

Afield - In Judges 1:14, "the field," i. e. the well-known field asked by Achsah and given by Caleb as a "blessing," i. e. as a token of goodwill,

which when the Book of Judges was written had become historical. The "field" in question was doubtless in the neighborhood of Debir, and was especially valuable because of its copious springs. Achsah's dismounting was a sign of reverence.

Verse 19

A south land - This term ("negeb") which is often equivalent to a proper name Joshua 15:21, importing the well-defined district which formed the south of the promised land (Numbers 13:17 note), seems here used in its more general sense Psalm 126:4, for a dry or barren land. The rendering of this passage adopted by Septuagint, several versions, and Commentators, etc., "thou hast given me into a south land," i. e. "hast given me in marriage into a south land" is forced; the construction of the verb "to give," with two accusatives, is natural and common to many languages.

Springs of water - The Hebrew words גלה מים *gûllâh mayîm* are found only here and in the parallel passage, Judges 1:15. Hence, some take it as a proper name, "Gulloth-maim," which like Beth-horon Joshua 16:3, Joshua 16:5, was applied to two distinct but adjoining places - distinguished as "the upper" and "the lower." The tract in question was no doubt a mountain slope which had springs both on its higher and lower ground; possibly the modern "Kurmul".

Verses 21-63

List of the towns of the tribe of Judah. These are arranged in four divisions, according to the natural features of the district; namely,, those of the Negeb or south country Joshua 15:21-32; of "the valley," or "the plain" ("Shephelah", Joshua 15:33-47); of "the mountains" Joshua 15:48-60; and of "the wilderness" Joshua 15:61-62. Many of the identifications are still conjectural only.

Joshua 15:21-32. The Negeb was for the most part rocky and arid, and cannot have been at any time very thickly populated.

Joshua 15:21

Kabzeel was the native place of Benaiah 2 Samuel 23:20, who was famous as a slayer of lions. The Negeb was a principal haunt of these beasts.

Joshua 15:24

Telem may be the Telaim of 1 Samuel 15:4, where Saul mustered his army for the expedition against the Amalekites. It is possibly to be looked for at "El-Kuseir", a spot where the various routes toward different parts of

the Negeb converge, and which is occupied by the Arab tribe the "Dhullam", a word identical with Telem in its consonants. Bealoth is probably the "Baalath-beer - Ramath of the south" Joshua 19:8, and was one of the towns afterward assigned to the Simeonites. It is identified with the modern Kurnub.

Joshua 15:25

And Hezron which is Hazor - In this verse are the names of two towns only, not of four. Two places bearing the common topographical appellation, Hazor ("enclosure") are here mentioned and distinguished as "Hazor Hadattah" and "Kerioth-Hezron," otherwise termed Hazor, simply: the former has been identified by some with "El-Hudhera"; the latter is probably the modern "El-Kuryetein". Kerioth, prefixed to a name, bespeaks military occupation, as Hazor points to pastoral pursuits. The place would therefore seem to be an ancient pastoral settlement which had been fortified by the Anakims, and called accordingly Kerioth; to which name the men of Judah, after they had captured it, added that of Hezron, in honor of one of their leading ancestors (compare Genesis 46:12; Rth 4:18). Kerioth was the home of Judas the traitor, if the ordinary derivation of Iscariot (= קריות איש *'îysh qerîyôth*), i. e. man of Kerioth) be accepted: Matthew 10:4.

Joshua 15:26

Moladah is probably the modern "El-Milh", and like Hazar-shual ("Berrishail" near Gaza) ("enclosure of foxes") occurs Joshua 19:2-3; 1 Chronicles 4:28, as a town belonging to Simeon, and Nehemiah 11:26-27 as a place occupied by Jews after the captivity.

Joshua 15:29-32

Baalah Joshua 19:3 is found in the modern "Deir-el-Belah", near Gaza. Iim, i. e. "ruinous heaps" or "conical hills" (Numbers 21:11 note) is by some connected with Azem; and the compound name, "Ije Azem", is traced in El-Aujeh, in the country of the Azazimeh Arabs, in whose name the ancient Azem may perhaps be traced. Eltolad is connected with "Wady-el-Thoula", in the extreme south of the Negeb. Chesil appears to be the town called Bethul Joshua 19:4, and probably the Bethel 1 Samuel 30:27 situated not far from Ziklag. The name Chesil ("fool") was most likely bestowed by way of opprobrium (compare the change of Bethel, house of God, into Bethaven, house of vanity, Hosea 4:15). As Chesil signifies the group of stars known as Orion (compare Job 38:31; Amos 5:8), probably it was the worship of the heavenly bodies in particular that was carried on here. Bethel

may have been the ancient name, and the spot was perhaps the very one near Beer-sheba where Abraham planted a tamarisk tree Genesis 21:33.

The place is probably "El Khulasah", the Elusa of ecclesiastical writers, situated some fifteen miles southwest of Beer-sheba. Jerome testifies to the fact, that the worship of Venus as the morning star was practiced there, and Sozomen appears to be speaking of this place, when he mentions a Bethel Βηθελια *Bēthelia* in the territory of Gaza, populous and famous for an ancient and splendid temple. The site of Ziklag is uncertain. Madmannah and Sansannah correspond to Beth-marcaboth ("house of chariots") and Hazar-susah ("horse enclosure") in Joshua 19:5 1 Chronicles 4:31. The latter names point to two stations of passage on or near the high road between Egypt and Palestine, and are represented by the modern "Minyay" and "Wady-es-Suny", on the caravan route south of Gaza. Shilhim or Sharuhen, Joshua 19:6, and Shaaraim 1 Chronicles 4:31 is traced in "Khirbet-es-Seram", near El Aujeh. Ain and Rimmon were possibly originally two towns, but in process of time became so connected as to be treated as one name Nehemiah 11:29. The place is probably the present "Um-er-Rummamim," i. e. "mother of pomegranates," a place about ten miles north of Beer-sheba.

Joshua 15:32

Twenty and nine - The King James Version gives 34 names. The difference is due either to the confusion by an early copyist of letters similar in form which were used as numerals; or to the separation in the King James Version of names which in the original were one (e. g. Joshua 15:25).

Joshua 15:33-47

"The valley" or the Shephelah, is bounded on the south by the Negeb, on the west by the Mediterranean, on the north by the plain of Sharon, on the east by "the mountains" Joshua 15:48. It is a well-defined district, of an undulating surface and highly fertile character, thickly dotted, even at the present time, with villages, which are for the most part situated on the different hills. The towns in this district, like those in the Negeb, are classed in four groups.

Joshua 15:33-36

First group of fourteen towns: these belong to the northeastern portion of the Shephelah. Eshtaol and Zoreah were afterward assigned to the tribe of Dan, and inhabited by Danites Judges 13:25; Judges 18:2, Judges 18:8, Judges 18:11. The latter place was the home of Samson Judges 13:2. It was

one of the cities fortified by Rehoboam 2 Chronicles 11:10, and was re-occupied by the Jews after the captivity Nehemiah 11:29. It is probably the modern Surah. (Eshtaol has been identified with Eshua (Conder)). Both places were in later times partly populated by Judahites from Kirjath-jearim; perhaps after the departure of the colony of Danites for Dan-Laish. Zanoah is the present "Zanna", not far from Surah. Socoh is the modern "Shuweikah". Sharaim is perhaps to be sought in the modern "Zakariya". Gederah ("wall" or "fortress") was a name borne with various terminations by several places.

Joshua 15:37-41

Second group of towns, containing those in the middle portion of the Shephelah, and of which some only Joshua 10:3, Joshua 10:10 can be identified.

Joshua 15:42-44

Third group; towns in the south of the Shephelah. For Libnah see Joshua 10:29. Mareshah is believed to be near Beit-jibrin, the ancient "Eleutheropolis."

Joshua 15:45-47

Fourth group: the towns of the Philistine seacoast: see Joshua 13:3.

Joshua 15:48-60

This highland district extends from the Negeb on the south to Jerusalem, and is bounded by the Shephelah on the west, and the "wilderness" Joshua 15:61-62 on the east. The mountains, which are of limestone, rise to a height of near 3,000 feet. At present, the highlands of Judah present a somewhat dreary and monotonous aspect. The peaks are for the most part barren, though crowned almost everywhere with the ruins of ancient towns, and bearing on their sides marks of former cultivation. Many of the valleys, especially toward the south, are, however, still very productive. The towns here enumerated are given in six groups.

Joshua 15:48-51

First group: towns on the southwest. Dannah (is identified with "Idnah" (Conder)). Jattir ("Attir"), and Eshtemoh ("Semua") were priestly cities Joshua 21:14; 1 Chronicles 6:57, and the place to which David, after routing the Amalekites, sent presents 1 Samuel 30:27-28. Socoh is "Suweikeh."

Joshua 15:52-54

Second group of nine towns, situated somewhat to the north of the last mentioned. Of these Dumah is perhaps the ruined village "Ed Daumeh," in the neighborhood of Hebron; and Beth-tappuah, i. e. "house of apples," "Teffuh," a place which has still a good number of inhabitants, is conspicuous for its olive groves and vineyards, and bears on every side the traces of industry and thrift.

Joshua 15:55-57

Third group; lying eastward of the towns named in the last two, and next to "the wilderness."

Joshua 15:55

The four towns retain their ancient names with but little change. Maon 1 Samuel 23:24; 1 Samuel 25:2, the home of Nabal, is to be looked for in the conical hill, "Main," the top of which is covered with ruins. It lies eight or nine miles southeast of Hebron Carmel 1 Samuel 25:2, the modern "Kurmul," is a little to the north of "Main." The name belongs to more than one place Joshua 12:22. Ziph gave its name to "the wilderness" into which David fled from Saul 1 Samuel 23:14.

Joshua 15:58, Joshua 15:59

Fourth group. Towns north of the last mentioned, of which Beth-zur and Gedor are represented by "Beit-sur" and "Jedur."

After Joshua 15:59 follows in the Greek version a fifth group of eleven towns, which appears to have dropped in very ancient times out of the Hebrew text, probably because some transcriber passed unawares from the word "villages" at the end of Joshua 15:59, to the same word at the end of the missing passage. The omitted group contains the towns of an important, well-known, and populous district lying immediately south of Jerusalem, and containing such towns as Tekoah 2 Samuel 14:2; Nehemiah 3:5, Nehemiah 3:27; Amos 1:1; Bethlehem, the native town of David and of Christ Genesis 35:19; and Aetan, a Grecised form of Etam 2 Chronicles 11:6.

Joshua 15:61, Joshua 15:62

This district, including the towns in "the wilderness," the scene of David's wanderings (1 Samuel 23:24; Psalm 63:1-11 title), and of the preaching of the Baptist Matthew 3:1, and perhaps of our Lord's temptation Joshua 15:62

"The city of Salt" is not mentioned elsewhere, but was no doubt connected with "the valley of salt" 2 Samuel 8:13. The name itself, and the

mention of En-gedi (Genesis 14:7 note) suggest that its site must be looked for near the Dead Sea.

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CHAPTER 16

Introduction

This and Joshua 16:1-4;

(2) the limits of Ephraim in particular Joshua 16:5-10)

(3); those of Manasseh Joshua 17:1-13; and

(4) the discontent of the descendants of Joseph with their inheritance is recorded, together with Joshua‘s answer to their complaints Joshua 17:14-18.

The territory allotted to these two powerful tribes comprises the central and, in every way, the choicest part of Canaan west of the Jordan. The hills of this district, making up what is called Joshua 20:7 “Mount Ephraim,” are less high and far less barren than those of Judah; the water supply is much larger; and the very rich and fertile plains of Sharon and Esdraelon are left between the rocky fastnesses of Benjamin on the south and the high lands of Galilee belonging to Issachar on the north.

Verse 1

To the wilderness - Strike out “to,” for the word is in apposition to “lot.” The wilderness is Joshua 18:12 “the wilderness of Bethaven.”

Verse 2

Of Archi - (Read “of the Archite,” also a designation of David‘s friend Hushai (2 Samuel 15:32; 2 Samuel 16:16, etc.). The word is derived from Erech Genesis 10:10. But whether there was in the neighborhood of Bethel a place bearing this Babylonian name, or whether a colony from the East had settled in this spot and brought the name with them, is unknown.

Ataroth - Called Joshua 16:5; Joshua 18:13 Ataroth-adar (= “crowns of fame or greatness”) perhaps to distinguish it from two other places bearing the same name but, situated on the other side of Jordan, in the territory of Gad Numbers 32:34. It is identified with Atara, near the road from Jerusalem to Nablous.

Verse 3

Of Japhleti - Rather “of the Japhletite.” All history of the name is lost.

Verses 5-8

From the abrupt manner in which the statements are introduced, as well as from their imperfect character, there is probability in the conjecture that some words have, in these verses, fallen out of the text. Few of the places are known for certain.

Verse 9

The verb "were," introduced by the King James Version in this verse should be omitted; and the full stop after Joshua 16:8 replaced by a colon. The purport of Joshua 16:9 is simply to add to the inheritance of Ephraim, defined by the preceding context, "the separate cities" or more properly "single cities" which were allotted to them in addition within the borders of Manasseh. The reasons for granting these additional cities to the Ephraimites can only be conjectured. Perhaps the territory assigned to this numerous tribe proved on experiment to be too small; and therefore some towns, which are named in 1 Chronicles 7:29, were given to them from the kindred Manassites, the latter being recompensed (Joshua 17:11 note) at the expense of Issachar and Asher.

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CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

Manasseh, as the "first-born," was to receive not only the territory on the east of Jordan won by the valor of the Machirites, but also a portion with the other tribes on the west of Jordan, the holy land of promise strictly so called. Thus, though Ephraim took precedence of Manasseh, according to the prediction of Joseph Genesis 48:20, yet Manasseh received "the double portion" which was the special privilege of the first-born Deuteronomy 21:17.

Verse 2

For the rest … - i. e. for those who were not settled on the east of Jordan.

Verse 5

Ten portions - i. e. five for the five families descended from the male children of Gilead, and five others for the five daughters of Zelophehad, who represented the sixth family, the Hepherites.

Verse 7

Asher - Not the tribe so called, but a place somewhere toward the eastern end of the boundary line here drawn: perhaps "Teyasir," on the road from Sichem to Beth-shean.

Verse 9

These cities … - The text is possibly corrupt. The intention seems to be to state that the cities lying south of the river, though within the limits of Manasseh, were in fact made over to Ephraim, and were among the "separate cities" Joshua 16:9. On the contrary, the north bank of the river, both land and towns, belonged to Manasseh exclusively.

Verse 10

Southward - i. e. of the river Kanah.

Render, "they (i. e. the two kindred tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the northern border being treated here as common to the two) reached unto Asher." (See the map.) The northern border is only indicated in general terms, perhaps because the Israelites were not yet completely masters of this part of the country, and so had not precisely determined it.

Verse 11

Perhaps Beth-shean (in Issachar) and the other five towns (in Asher) were given to the Manassites in compensation for towns in the Manassite territory allotted to the Ephraimites. (See Joshua 17:9. Compare Joshua 21:9.) To the wall of Beth-shean, or Bethshah ("Beisan," about 5 miles west of the Jordan), the bodies of Saul and his sons were fastened by the Philistines after the battle on Mount Gilboa. After the exile it received the Greek name of Scythopolis, perhaps because it was principally tenanted by a rude and pagan population, styled in contempt Scythians. It was a border city of Galilee, and the chief town of the Decapolis. In Christian times it was the see of a bishop, who is enumerated as present at Nicaea and other Councils of the Church.

Ibleam (Bileam, 1 Chronicles 6:70), perhaps "Jelameh," was a Levitical town (Joshua 21:25 note). Near this place Ahaziah was mortally wounded by Jehu (2 Kings 9:27), and fled to Megiddo, which was no doubt not far distant.

Three countries - Rather "the three hills." The district belonging to the last-mentioned three towns had a common name, derived no doubt from its natural features, and was called "the three hills." Compare Decapolis, Tripolis, etc.

Verse 14

Seeing I am a great people - The assertion can hardly have been warranted by facts, for at the census Judges 8:1; Judges 12:1; 2 Samuel 19:41; 2 Chronicles 28:7 etc.). A glance at the map shows that their complaint was in itself unreasonable. Their territory, which measured about 55 miles by 70 miles, was at least as large in proportion to their numbers as that of any other tribe, and moreover comprehended some of the most fertile of the whole promised land.

Verse 15

Joshua was himself of the tribe of Ephraim, but far from supporting the demands of his kinsmen he reproves them, and calls upon them to make good their great words by corresponding deeds of valor. He bids them clear the country of its woods and thus make room for settling their people. The "wood country" means probably the range which runs along the northern border of Manasseh, and which connects the mountains of Gilboa with Carmel. Mount Ephraim, (a name perhaps used by anticipation) called "the hill" Joshua 17:16, and "the mountain of Israel" Joshua 11:16, is the eastern

portion of the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh extending toward the Jordan. This was a hilly, though by no means barren, district.

Verse 16

The possession by the Canaanites of chariots strengthened and tipped with iron, such as were used by the Egyptians Exodus 14:7, is named here by the children of Joseph as a reason why they could not possess themselves of the plains. "The valley of Jezreel" is the broad low valley which sweeps from "Zerin" between the mountains of Gilboa and the range of little Hermon eastward down to the Jordan. It was most likely in this valley that the host of the Midianites was encamped, when attacked by Gideon Judges 7:1, Judges 7:8. The great plain of Jezreel, called the plain of Esdraelon (Esdrelom, Judith 1:8), extends from Carmel on the west to the hills of Gilboa, little Hermon, and Tabor on the east, a distance of full sixteen miles; and its breadth between the rocky mass of southern Palestine and the bolder mountains of Galilee on the north, is about twelve miles. Its position as well as its open area make it the natural battlefield of Palestine.

Verse 17

Thou shalt not have one lot only - i. e. by dispossessing the Canaanites, thou shalt double the portion of land at thy disposal. The "but" with which the King James Version begins Joshua 17:18 should be "for."

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CHAPTER 18

Verse 1

After all overt resistance was overcome, the tabernacle with its sacred contents was removed from its place of safety at Gilgal, in a corner of the land near the Jordan, to a central place, Shiloh, the modern Scilun, which is two or three miles east of the main road, and rather more than half way between Jerusalem and Nablous. Its choice as the national sanctuary may indeed have been determined by Joshua, no doubt under divine direction Deuteronomy 12:11, because of its insignificance, in order to avoid local jealousies, as well as because of its position in the very center of the whole land, and perhaps also because of its seclusion. Its very name ("rest") was probably bestowed at this juncture when God had given the people rest from their enemies. The tabernacle with its contents continued at Shiloh during the whole period of the Judges, until its capture by the Philistines. Shiloh 1 Samuel 4:3-4 seems to have fallen into desolation at an early date Jeremiah 7:12; Jeremiah 26:6.

Verse 2

Two tribes and a half had already received their portions on the east of Jordan; Judah, Ephraim, and the remaining half of Manasseh had also been provided for Joshua 1517. Thus there remained still seven tribes out of the twelve to be settled in their homes.

Verse 3

This backwardness probably arose from the indisposition of the people to abandon the nomad life in which they had been born and bred, and to settle in fixed abodes, and perhaps also from a dislike of the exterminating warfare incidental to a complete dispossessing of the Canaanites.

Verse 4

Three men for each tribe - i. e. 21 in all. Their duty would be to describe the land, especially with reference to the cities it contained Joshua 18:9, that Joshua might have the means of making a first apportionment among the tribes according to their varying numbers.

Verse 10

Cast lots - See the Joshua 14:2 note.

Verses 11-28

See the marginal references. There are many indications found in this and the next chapter that the text is in great disorder, and many of the places

are still unknown.

Joshua 18:14

And compassed the corner … - Render "and turned on the west side southward." The meaning is, that at lower Beth-horon the northern boundary-line of Benjamin curved round and ran southward - Beth-horon being its extreme westerly point.

Joshua 18:21

The "Valley of Keziz," or "Emek-Keziz," is perhaps the "Wady el Kaziz," at no great distance east of Jerusalem.

Joshua 18:22

Zemaraim, i. e. "two wooded hills," is supposed to be the ruins called "Es-Sumrah," on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho.

Joshua 18:23

Ophrah (Joshua 15:9 note), to be distinguished here and in 1 Samuel 13:17 from the Ophrah of Judges 6:11, is probably the Ephrain of 2 Chronicles 13:19, and the Ephraim of John 11:54. It is conjecturally identified with "Et-Taiyibeh," on the road from Jerusalem to Bethel.

Joshua 18:24

Gaba - This name, like Gibeah, Gibeon, etc. Joshua 9:3, indicates a town placed on a hill, and occurs repeatedly in various forms in the topography of Palestine. Gaba is the Gibeah (if 1 Samuel 13:15-16; 1 Samuel 14:5, where the Hebrew has גבע *Geba*ʿ which is undoubtedly the correct reading throughout. The city was one of those assigned to the Levites Joshua 21:17, and lay on the northern border of Judah. It is identified with the modern "Jeba," lying on the side of a deep ravine opposite to Michmash ("Mukhmas"). The famous "Gibeah of Saul," or "Giheah of Benjamin" (the Gibeath of Joshua 18:28) lay at no great distance southwest of Geba, on the high road from Jerusalem to Bethel, and is probably to be looked for in the lofty and isolated "Tulcil-el-Ful."

Joshua 18:25

Ramah - i. e. "lofty;" probably the native town and abode of Samuel 1 Samuel 1:19; 1 Samuel 25:1. Its exact site is uncertain.

Joshua 18:26

Mizpeh - See Joshua 11:3. Not the Mizpeh of Joshua 15:38, but the place where Samuel judged the people and called them together for the election of a king 1 Samuel 7:5-16; 1 Samuel 10:17. In the Chaldaean times

it was the residence of Gedaliah 2 Kings 25:22; Jeremiah 40:14. Its site is identified with “Neby Samwil,” about five miles northwest of Jerusalem.

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CHAPTER 19

Verses 1-9

The inheritance of Simeon was taken out of the portion of Judah, which proved on experience to be larger than the numbers of that tribe required. The Simeonite territory is described by its towns, of which fourteen were in the Negeb, and four others Joshua 19:7 partly in the Negeb and partly in "the valley." On the narrow confines here assigned to Simeon, and its insignificant position altogether among the Twelve tribes, see Deuteronomy 33:6 note.

Joshua 19:6

Thirteen - Fourteen names have been given. The error is probably due to the use of letters for numbers, which has led to many similar mistakes in other places (see Joshua 15:32).

Verse 10

Sarid, not yet identified, was evidently a leading topographical point on the south frontier of Zebulun. The boundary passed westward until it touched the Kishon, near "Tell Kaimon" (Joshua 12:22 note), and thence, turned northward, leaving Carmel, which belonged to Asher, on its west. The territory of Zebulun accordingly would not anywhere reach to the Mediterranean, though its eastern side abutted on the sea of Galilee, and gave the tribe those "outgoings" attributed to it in the Blessing of Moses (Deuteronomy 33:18). Daberath (Joshua 19:12) is probably "Deburieh."

Verse 13

Gittah (or Gath)- hepher, the birthplace of the prophet Jonah 2 Kings 14:25, is probably the modern village of El-Meshhad, where the tomb of the prophet is still shown, a short way from Nazareth, on the road to Tiberias.

Remmon-methoar to Neah - Read "and goeth out to Remmon, which reacheth to Neah." (See the margin.) Rimmon, a Levitical city Joshua 21:35; 1 Chronicles 6:77 is probably the modern "Rummaneh," in the plain of "El Buttauf," about six miles north of Nazareth.

Verse 14

Hannathon, more properly Channathon, has been supposed by some to be the Cana of Galilee of the New Testament, and Jiphthah-el is probably the present "Jefat"; the "Jotapata" of Roman times, which was so long and valiantly defended by Josephus against the legions of Vespasian. The

"Valley" is the "Wady Abilin"; and Bethlehem Joshua 19:15 is the present miserable village of "Beit-Lahin."

Verse 15

Twelve cities - Only five have been mentioned, and the names in the verses preceding are apparently not names of Zebulonite cities, but merely of points in or near the boundary line. It would therefore appear that seven names have disappeared from the text, and perhaps also the definition of the western frontier.

Verse 18

Jezreel and its famous and fertile plain are the choicest part of the inheritance of Issachar Joshua 17:16.

Shunem - Here the Philistines pitched before the battle of Gilboa 1 Samuel 28:4. The place is also known as the home of Abishag 1 Kings 1:3, and in connection with Elisha 2 Kings 4:8; 2 Kings 8:1. It is identified with "Solam" (or, Sulem), a small and poor village on the slope of Little Hermon.

Verse 21

En-gannim - i. e. "fountain of gardens;" also a Levitical city Joshua 21:29, and called Ahem 1 Chronicles 6:73, the modern "Jenin," a place on the main road from Jerusalem to Nazareth, just where it enters the plain of Jezreel. Many of the places enumerated in these verses are not known. Tabor Joshua 19:22 is perhaps not the famous mountain, but the town on it of the same name 1 Chronicles 6:77, given up to the Levites. Beth-shemesh (perhaps "Bessum") is not the same as Beth-shemesh of Judah Joshua 15:10, nor of Naphtali Joshua 19:38.

Verse 25-26

Helkath, a Levitical town Joshua 21:31, is probably Yerka, a village about seven or eight miles north-west of Acre, in a Wady of the same name. Alammelech was in the "Wady Melik," which joins the Kishon from the northeast, not far from the sea.

Shihor-libnath - i. e. "black-white." The two words are now generally admitted to be the name of a river, probably the modern "Nahr Zerka," or Blue River, which reaches the sea about 8 miles south of Dor, and whose name has a correspondence both to black and white. Possibly we have in the occurrence of the term Shihor here a trace of the contact, which was close and continuous in ancient times, between Phoenicia and Egypt Joshua

13:3. Cabul Joshua 19:27 still retains its ancient name; it lies between four and five miles west of Jotapata and about ten miles southeast of Acre.

Verses 28-30

These verses refer to the northern portion of the territory of Asher, on the Phoenician frontier. Some names may have dropped out of the text, the number Joshua 19:30 not tallying with the catalogue. Ramah still retains its ancient name, and lies about twelve miles southeast of Tyre. Achzib is the modern "Zib," on the coast, eight or nine miles north of Acre.

Verse 33

From Allon to Zaanannim - Render "from the oak forest at Zaanannim." From Judges 4:11 it appears that this oak or oak-forest was near Kedesh.

Adami, Nekeb - Render "Adami of the Pass." Possibly the ancient "Deir el Ahmar" ("red cloister"), which derives its name from the color of the soil in the neighborhood, as perhaps Adami did. The spot lies about 8 miles northwest of Baalbek.

Verse 34

Aznoth-tabor - This place ("ears of Tabor") was no doubt in the neighborhood of Mount Tabor - probably on the eastern slope; and Hukkok on the western slope.

To Judah upon Jordan - i. e. to the "Havoth-jair" Numbers 32:41, which were on the opposite side of Jordan. Jair, from whom these towns or villages were named, traced his ancestry in the male line through Hezron to Judah Numbers 27:1; and it is likely that he was assisted by large numbers of his kinsmen of that tribe in his rapid conquest of Bashan. Hence, the Havoth-jair were, in all likelihood, largely colonised by Judahites, especially perhaps that portion of them nearest the Jordan. Thus, that part of the river and its valley adjacent to these settlements was spoken of as "Judah upon Jordan," or more literally "Judah of the Jordan" (compare Numbers 22:1).

Verses 35-38

The number of the fortified cities of Naphtali is remarkable, though it does not tally with the catalogue. It was no doubt good policy to protect the northern frontier by a belt of fortresses, as the south was protected by the fenced cities of Judah. Hammath, a Levitical city (compare Joshua 21:32; 1 Chronicles 6:76), is not to be confounded with the Hamath on the northeastern frontier of the land Numbers 13:21. The name (from a root

signifying "to be warm") probably indicates that hot springs existed here; and is perhaps rightly traced in Ammaus, near Tiberias. Rakkath was, according to the rabbis, rebuilt by Herod and called Tiberias. The name ("bank, shore") suits the site of Tiberias very well. Migdal-el, perhaps the Magdala of Matthew 15:39, is now the miserable village of "El Mejdel."

Verse 46

Japho (the modern Jaffa, or Yafa), elsewhere (see the margin) called Joppa, is often mentioned in the history of the Maccabees and was, as it still is, the leading port of access to Jerusalem both for pilgrims and for merchandise. It is a very ancient town.

Verse 47

The words "too little" are an insertion of the King James Version Render rather, "the border of the children of Dan was extended." The Hebrew appears to mean "the children of Dan enlarged their border because they had not room enough."

The reason of this was that the Danites, a numerous tribe (Numbers 26:5 note), found themselves Judges 1:34-35 cooped up among the hills by the powerful and warlike Amorites. Hence, the Danite expedition (see the marginal reference), which surprised the Sidonion inhabitants of Leshem, an unwarlike and peaceable race, exterminated them, and annexed their city and territory to the portion of Dan.

Verse 50

Nothing is said of any express command of God respecting the inheritance of Joshua. But as such special portion appears to have been promised to Caleb at the time when he and Joshua alone out of the twelve spies remained faithful Joshua 14:6-9, it is probable that a like promise was made to Joshua. The name of the place is also written Timnath-heres Judges 2:9, by a transposition of the letters. The rabbinical explanation that the name Timnath-heres (i. e. "portion of the sun") was given because a representation of the sun was affixed to the tomb in memory of Joshua's command to the sun to stand still, appears to be an afterthought. The name Timnath-serah ("portion that remains") was perhaps conferred on the spot in consequence of its being allotted to Joshua, the last allotment made in the whole distribution of his conquests. The site has been conjectured to be "Tibneh," a village about five miles north-west of Lydda (or, by Conder, Kerr Hares, nine miles south of Nablous).

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CHAPTER 20

Verse 4

As soon as the manslayer presented himself at the city of refuge, the elders of the city were to hold an inquiry, and receive him provisionally into the city. Afterward, when the avenger of blood should have tracked his victim to the city, and appear to claim him, a more formal and thorough investigation Joshua 20:6 was to be made. Consult the marginal references.

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CHAPTER 21

Verse 1

A list of the Levitical cities, varying in some particulars from that given in this chapter, is also, given in 1 Chronicles 6:54-81.

Verse 4

Thirteen cities - This number is said to be too great for the single family of Aaron. But it appears Numbers 33:39, his sons‘ grandchildren and great grandchildren were no doubt living in the elapsing years of Joshua‘s course, and had to he provided with dwellings. They might altogether number several thousands. The “cities” of Canaan were for the most part small; as is manifest from the astonishing number of them in proportion to the area of the land, more particularly in the south, where the portion of the priests was situated. The priests or Levites would not occupy the whole of the dwellings in any city, nor all its “fields,” nor necessarily and always all its “villages” (compare Joshua 21:12). Non-Levites, to whom the cultivation of their land, and other secular concerns, were entrusted, no doubt resided in the Levitical cities or their precincts. It appears, further, that several of the cities here enumerated were only wrested from the Canaanites at a later date.

Verse 5

The non-priestly Kohathites had been diminished by the destruction of Korah and his company Numbers 26:57 following with Numbers 3:27 ff, two of the families of the Kohathites seem to have disappeared altogether. Hence, it is not surprising that the rest of the Kohathites were sufficiently accommodated in ten cities.

Verses 9-19

The thirteen priestly cities (see the marginal references) were all in the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin. Thus, as Calvin remarks, God so overruled it that the priestly families were placed upon the spot which He had determined before hand to choose as the site of His temple.

Verses 20-26

Of the cities of the non-priestly Kohathites, for Kibzaim we find Jokmeam in 1 Chronicles 6:68. This is perhaps another name for the same place, since both names may be derived from roots having a similar meaning; and for Gath-rimmon in 1 Chronicles 6:70, Bileam is given, and probably correctly; Gath-rimmon having apparently been repeated

inadvertently from the preceding verse. Bileam is but another form of Ibleam Joshua 17:11.

Verses 27-33

Compare Joshua 19:18, etc. Of the cities of the Gershonites, for Beeshterah read (Beeshterah.) The name is a contraction of Beth-Ashterah ("house of Ashterah") and the city is undoubtedly the Ashtaroth or Astaroth of Og Joshua 12:4; Deuteronomy 1:4; 1 Chronicles 6:71.

Verses 34-40

Merarite cities. Some of these places are not found in the list of Zebulonite cities in Joshua 19:10-16. The text is considered corrupt.

Verse 42

After this verse, the Septuagint introduces a passage (in part a repetition from Joshua 19:49-50), recording the grant of a special inheritance to Joshua, and also that he buried at Timnath-serah the flint-knives with which he had circumcised (Joshua 5:2 note) the people after the passage of Jordan. The latter statement, which has the authority of the Septuagint only, is a Jewish legend of early date.

Verses 43-45

There is no real inconsistency between the declarations of these verses and the fact that the Israelites had not as yet possessed themselves of all the cities allotted to the various tribes Numbers 34:1-12. God had fulfilled all His part of the covenant. It was no part of His purpose that the native population should be annihilated suddenly Deuteronomy 7:22; but they were delivered into the hand of Israel, and their complete dispossession could have been effected at any time by that divine aid which was never wanting when sought. At the time referred to in the text, the Canaanites were discouraged, broken in strength, holding fast in isolated spots only up and down the land in the very midst of the tribes of God‘s people. The conquest of Canaan was already "ex parte Dei" a perfect work; just as in the New Testament the triumph of the individual Christian and of the Christian Church in their warfare is often spoken of as accomplished in view of the divine will that it should be so, and of divine grace that it may be so. It was therefore, only the inertness and pusillanimity of the Israelites which prevented the completion of the conquest when the allotment of Canaan was made by Joshua; as it was their subsequent backslidings which caused God to turn the tide of victory against them and even to cast them out of the

land promised to their forefathers and actually won in the campaigns of Joshua. See the introduction to the Book of Joshua.

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CHAPTER 22

Verse 1

The events of this chap. are no doubt recorded in their proper historical order. The auxiliary forces of the trans-Jordanic tribes were not sent away immediately after the campaigns against the Canaanites were over. They set forth from Shiloh, Joshua 22:9, to which place the sanctuary had been removed Joshua 18:1 after the conquest and the settlement of the children of Judah and of Joseph in their possessions, and after the appointment of the Levitical cities.

Verse 7-8

The insertion of this explanation about the half tribe, and the repetition of Joshua‘s farewell, are examples of a marked characteristic of very ancient writers and of Hebrew writers as much as any - that of giving a completeness and finish to each section of their story. The Jewish historian scarcely ever quotes or reminds, but repeats so much as may be necessary to make his account of the transaction in hand fully intelligible by itself. (Compare also Joshua 13:14, Joshua 13:33; Joshua 14:3; Joshua 18:7.) It is quite possible, however, that the particulars special to Joshua 22:8, may be due to some other narrative of the whole event than that to which Joshua 22:5 belongs, and may have been interwoven by a later reviser.

Verse 9

Gilead - Here used in the widest sense for the whole trans-Jordanic district.

Verse 10

The two tribes and a half erected this altar in order to keep alive their claim to have the same interest as the other tribes had in the sanctuary of God, which was established on the west side of Jordan: and in order to forestall any assertion that the Jordan itself was a natural barrier of exclusion between them and the sanctuary, they built it on the west or Canaanite bank of the Jordan and not on the east.

The word rendered “borders” is noteworthy; it means circuits, arrondissements.

Verse 12

Gathered themselves together - The various tribes had already dispersed to their homes, and were now summoned together again.

Verse 17

From which we are not cleansed until this day - Phinehas, who had borne a conspicuous part in vindicating the cause of God against those who fell away to Baal-peor, means that terrible as the punishment had been, there were still those among them who hankered after Baal worship, and even practiced it in secret. (Compare Joshua's words, Joshua 24:14-23.)

Verse 19

Unclean - i. e. unholy because the sanctuary was not in it, but on the other side of Jordan.

Verse 22

The repeated invocation of God, and that by His three names - אל *'êl* אלהים *'ĕlohîym* יהוה *yehovâh* compare Psalm 50:1 - marks the earnestness of the protestation. The conduct of the two tribes and a half has often been noted as exemplary. They had had a grave and capital crime most unexpectedly laid to their charge, of which they were entirely innocent. Yet there is no word of reproach or recrimination in their vindication of themselves. They are contented simply to repudiate the false accusation and to explain the real motives of conduct perhaps suggested to them by a precedent set by Moses Exodus 17:15.

Save us not this day - The words are a direct appeal to God, exactly equivalent in effect to our form "So help me God."

Verse 34

The word עד *ʿêd* is not found after "altar" in the text of most manuscripts, nor is it represented in the Septuagint or Vulgate. The passage should probably run: "the children of Reuben and the children of Gad named the altar, that (as they said) it might be, etc." The title placed on the altar was perhaps simply a witness between them that the Lord was God (Wordsworth).

JOSHUA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 23

Verse 1

This and the next chapter contain the last addresses of Joshua. These addresses were no doubt among the closing acts of Joshua‘s life, but were evidently given on different occasions, and are of different character and scope. In the former Joshua briefly reminds the princes of the recent benefits of God toward them and their people, declares that God had fulfilled all His promises, and exhorts to faithfulness on their side to God that so His mercies may not be withdrawn: in the latter he takes a wider range, rehearses the gracious dealings of God with the nation from its very origin, and upon these as his grounds, he claims for God their sincere and entire service. But he grants them the option of withdrawing from the covenant if they so choose; and when they elect still to abide by it, it is solemnly renewed by the free consent of the whole people. Joshua‘s reproofs and warnings are in sum and substance identical with those with which Moses closed his career (Deuteronomy 31, etc.). Compare throughout the marginal references.

Verse 2

All Israel, and for their elders - Omit “and,” which is not in the Hebrew. The meaning is that Joshua summoned to him all Israel as represented by its elders, etc. Deuteronomy 1:15. This gathering probably took place at the tabernacle at Shiloh.

JOSHUA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Verse 1

Shechem, situated between those mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, which had already been the scene of a solemn rehearsal of the covenant soon after the first entry of the people into the promised land Joshua 8:30-35, was a fitting scene for the solemn renewal on the part of the people of that covenant with God which had been on His part so signally and so fully kept. The spot itself suggested the allusions to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, etc., in Joshua‘s address; and its associations could not but give special force and moving effect to his appeals. This address was not made to the rulers only but to the whole nation, not of course to the tribes assembled in mass, but to their representatives.

Verse 2

The other side of the flood - Better “On the other side of the river,” i. e. the Euphrates. See the marginal reference.

They served other gods - Possibly the “images,” or teraphim, which we find their ancestor Laban calling “his gods” (see the marginal reference); and of which it would seem that there were, as Joshua spoke, some secret devotees among the people Joshua 24:14, Joshua 24:25. It is not stated that Abraham himself was an idolater, though his fathers were. Jewish tradition asserts that Abraham while in Ur of the Chaldees was persecuted for his abhorrence of idolatry, and hence, was called away by God from his native land. The reference in the text to the original state of those who were the forefathers of the nation, is made to show that they were no better than others: God chose them not for their excellences but of His own mere motion.

Verse 15

Choose - Service of God in sincerity and truth can only result from a free and willing allegiance of the heart. This accordingly is what Joshua invites, as Moses had done before him (Deuteronomy 30:15 ff).

Verse 25

Made a covenant with the people - i. e. he solemnly ratified and renewed the covenant of Sinai, as Moses had done before him Deuteronomy 29:1. As no new or different covenant was made, no sacrifices were necessary.

Verse 26

Consult the marginal references.

That was by the sanctuary of the Lord - i. e. the spot where Abraham and Jacob had sacrificed and worshipped, and which might well be regarded by their posterity as a holy place or sanctuary. Perhaps the very altar of Abraham and Jacob was still remaining.

Verse 33

(Eleazar‘s burial-place is placed by Conder not at Tibneh but in the village of ‹Awertah.)

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CHAPTER SEVEN
Judges

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JUDGES INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Judges

The Book of Judges, like the other historical books of the Old Testament, takes its name from the subject to which it chiefly relates, namely, the exploits of those JUDGES who ruled Israel in the times between the death of Joshua and the rise of Samuel. The rule of the Judges Rth 1:1 in this limited sense was a distinct dispensation, distinct from the leadership of Moses and Joshua, distinct from the more regular supremacy of Eli, the High Priest, and from the prophetic dispensation inaugurated by Samuel 1 Samuel 3:19-21; Acts 3:24.

The book consists of three divisions: (1) The PREFACE, which extends to Judges 3:6 (inclusive). (2) the MAIN NARRATIVE, Judges 17:1-13; (b) Judges 2:15, Judges 2:20, etc.), in order both to vindicate the power and faithfulness of Jehovah the God of Israel, and to hold out a warning to the future generations for whose instruction the book was written. In the view which the writer was inspired to present to the Church, never was God‘s agency more busy in relation to the affairs of His people, than when, to a superficial observer, that agency had altogether ceased. On the other hand, the writer calls attention to the fact that those heroes, who wrought such wonderful deliverances for Israel, did it not by their own power, but were divinely commissioned, and divinely endowed with courage, strength, and victory. The writer of the preface also directs the minds of the readers of his history to that vital doctrine, which it was one main object of the Old Testament dispensation to keep alive in the world until the coming of Christ, namely,, the unity of God. All the calamities which he was about to narrate, were the fruit and consequence of idolatry. “Keep yourselves from idols,” was the chief lesson which the history of the Judges was intended to inculcate.

The preface consists of two very different portions; the recapitulation of events before, and up to, Joshua‘s death Judges 17:1 note.

Exact chronology forms no part of the plan of the book. The only guide to the chronology is to be found in the genealogies which span the period: and the evidence of these genealogies concurs in assigning an average of between seven and eight generations to the time from the entrance into

Canaan to the commencement of David‘s reign, which would make up from 240 to 260 years. Deducting 30 years for Joshua, 30 for Samuel, and 40 for the reign of Saul Acts 13:21, in all 100 years, we have from 140 to 160 years left for the events related in the Book of Judges. This is a short time, no doubt, but quite sufficient, when it is remembered that many of the “rests” and “servitudes” (Judges 3:8 note) therein related are not successive, but synchronize; and that no great dependence can be placed on the recurring 80,40, and 20 years, whenever they are not in harmony with historical probability.

The narratives which have the strongest appearance of synchronizing are those of the Moabite, Ammonite, and Amalekite servitude Judges 3:31; of the Ammonite servitude which lasted eighteen years, and was also closely connected with a Philistine invasion Judges 10:7-8; and of the Midianite and Amalekite servitude which lasted seven years Judges 6:1, all three of which terminated in a complete expulsion and destruction of their enemies by the three leaders Ehud, Jephthah, and Gideon, heading respectively the Benjamites, the Manassites and the northern tribes, and the tribes beyond Jordan: the conduct of the Ephraimites as related in Judges 8:1; Judges 12:1, being an additional very strong feature of resemblance in the two histories of Gideon and Jephthah. The 40 years of Philistine servitude mentioned in Judges 13:1, seems to have embraced the last 20 years of Eli‘s judgeship, and the first 20 of Samuel‘s, and terminated with Samuel‘s victory at Eben-ezer: and, if so, Samson‘s judgeship of 20 years also coincided in part with Samuel‘s. The long rests of 40 and 80 years spoken of as following the victories of Othniel, Barak, and Ehud, may very probably have synchronized in whole or in part. It cannot however be denied that the chronology of this book is still a matter of uncertainty.

The time of the compilation of this book, and the final arrangement of its component parts in their present form and in their present connection in the series of the historical books of Scripture, may with most probability be assigned to the latter times of the Jewish monarchy, included in the same plan. (The Book of Ezra, it may be observed, by the way, is a continuation, not of Kings, but of Chronicles.) There is not the slightest allusion in the Book of Judges, to the Babylonian captivity. Only Judges 3:5-6, as regards the Canaanite races mentioned, and the context, may be compared with

Ezra 9:1-2. The language of the Book of Judges points to the same conclusion. It is pure and good Hebrew, untainted with Chaldaisms or Persian forms, as are the later books.

The inference to which these and other such resemblances tends, is that the compilation of the Book of Judges is of about the same age as that of the books of Samuel and Kings, if not actually the work of the same hand. But no absolute certainty can be arrived at.

The chief allusions to it in the New Testament are those in Hebrews 11:32 following, and Acts 13:20. But there are frequent references to the histories contained in it in the Psalms and in the prophets. See Psalm 78:56, etc.; Psalm 83:9-11; Psalm 106:34-45, etc.; Isaiah 9:4; Isaiah 10:26; Nehemiah 9:27, etc. See also 1 Samuel 12:9-11; 2 Samuel 11:21. Other books to which it refers are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua. See the marginal references to Judges 2:1-3, Judges 2:6-10, Judges 2:15, Judges 2:20-23; Judges 4:11; Judges 6:8, Judges 6:13; Judges 10:11; Judges 11:13-26; Judges 13:5; Judges 16:17; Judges 18:30; Judges 19:23-24; Judges 20:26-27, etc.

JUDGES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

After the death of Joshua - But from Judges 1:1 to Judges 2:9 is a consecutive narrative, ending with the death of Joshua. Hence, the events in this chapter and in Judges 2:1-6 are to be taken as belonging to the lifetime of Joshua. See Judges 2:11 note.

Asked the Lord - The phrase is only found in Judges and Samuel. It was the privilege of the civil ruler, to apply to the high priest to consult for him the Urim and Thummim (marginal reference). (Compare Joshua 14:1; Joshua 18:1, Joshua 18:10; Joshua 19:51). Here it was not Phinehas, as Josephus concludes from placing these events after the death of Joshua, but Eleazar, through whom the children of Israel inquired "who" (or, rather), "which tribe of us shall go up!"

Verse 2

And the Lord said - i. e. answered by Urim and Thummim. The land was the portion which fell to Judah by lot, not the whole land of Canaan (see Judges 3:11). The priority given to Judah is a plain indication of divine direction. It points to the birth of our Lord of the tribe of Judah. Judah associated Simeon with him Judges 1:3 because their lots were intermingled Joshua 19:1.

Verse 4

The Canaanites and the Perizzites - See Genesis 12:6, note; Genesis 13:7, note. Bezek may be the name of a district. It has not yet been identified.

Verse 7

Threescore and ten kings - We may infer from this number of conquered kings, that the intestine wars of the Canaanites were among the causes which, under God's Providence, weakened their resistance to the Israelites. Adoni-Bezek's cruelty to the subject kings was the cause of his receiving (compare the marginal references) this chastisement. The loss of the thumb would make a man unfit to handle a sword or a bow; the loss of his big toe would impede his speed.

Verse 8

Render "and the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem, and took it, and smote it," etc. With regard to the capture of Jerusalem there is some obscurity. It is here said to have been taken, smitten with the edge of the

sword, and burned, by the children of Judah. In Joshua 12:8, Joshua 12:10 the Jebusite and the king of Jerusalem are enumerated among Joshua's conquests, but without any distinct mention of the capture of the city; and in the marginal reference we read that the Jebusites were not expelled from Jerusalem, but dwelt with the children of Judah (compare Judges 1:21). Further, we learn from Judges 19:10-12 that Jerusalem was wholly a Jebusite city in the lifetime of Phinehas Judges 20:28, and so it continued until the reign of David 2 Samuel 5:6-9. The conclusion is that Jerusalem was only taken once, namely, at the time here described, and that this was in the lifetime of Joshua; but that the children of Judah did not occupy it in sufficient force to prevent the return of the Jebusites, who gradually recovered complete possession.

Set the city on fire - A phrase found only at Judges 20:48; 2 Kings 8:12, and Psalm 74:7.

Verse 16

The children of the Kenite - See Numbers 24:21 note.

The city of palm trees - Jericho (see the marginal reference). The rabbinical story is that Jericho, with 500 cubits square of land, was given to Hobab. The use of the phrase "city of palm trees" for "Jericho," is perhaps an indication of the influence of Joshua's curse Joshua 6:26. Tbe very name of Jericho was blotted out. There are no palm trees at Jericho now, but Josephus mentions them repeatedly, as well as the balsam trees.

Verse 17

Hormah - See Numbers 21:1 note. The destruction then vowed was now accomplished. This is another decisive indication that the events here related belong to Joshua's lifetime. This would be about six years after the vow.

Verse 18

It is remarkable that Ashdod is not here mentioned, as it is in Joshua 15:46-47, in conjunction with Gaza and Ekron; but that Askelon, which is not in the list of the cities of Judah at all, is named in its stead. (See Joshua 13:3 note.) It is a curious fact that when Rameses III took Askelon it was occupied, not by Philistines, but apparently by Hebrews. Rameses began to reign in 1269 B.C., and reigned 25 years. At any time between 1269 and 1244 B.C. such occupation of Askelon by Hebrews agrees with the Book of Judges.

Verse 21

This verse is nearly identical with Joshua 15:63, except in the substitution of Benjamin for Judah. Probably the original reading Judah was altered in later times to Benjamin, because Jebus was within the border of Benjamin, and neither had the Benjamites expelled the Jebusites.

Verse 22

Bethel was within the borders of Benjamin, but was captured, as we here learn, by the house of Joseph, who probably retained it.

Verse 26

The site of this new Luz is not known, but "the land of the Hittites" was apparently in the north of Palestine, on the borders of Syria (Genesis 10:15 note).

Verse 31

Compare the marginal reference. Accho, afterward called Ptolemais, now Akka or St. Jean d'Acre, is named here for the first time.

Verse 32

It is an evidence of the power of the Canaanite in this portion of the land that it is not said (compare Judges 1:30) that the Canaanites dwelt among the Asherites, but that the Asherites (and Judges 1:33, Naphtali) "dwelt among the Canaanites;" nor are the Canaanites in Accho, Zidon, and the other Asherite cities, said to have become tributaries.

Verse 34

The Amorites are usually found in the mountain Numbers 13:29; Joshua 10:6. Here they dwell in the valley, of which the monuments of Rameses III show them to have been in possession when that monarch invaded Syria. It was their great strength in this district, and their forcible detention of the territory of Dan, which led to the expedition of the Danites Judges 18. The house of Joseph lent their powerful aid in subduing them, probably in the times of the Judges.

Verse 36

The going up to Akrabbim - See the margin and references; properly "the ascent of scorpions," with which the whole region abounds.

The rock - Petra, the capital of Idumea, so called from the mass of precipitous rock which encloses the town, and out of which many of its buildings are excavated. The original word "Selah" is always used of the rock at Kadesh-Barnea Numbers 20:8-11, near Petra (compare Obadiah 1:3). This leads us to look for "the ascent of scorpions," here coupled with סלע הס *has -sela*ʿ in the same neighborhood.

JUDGES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

The angel of the Lord (not an angel). - The phrase is used nearly 60 times to designate the Angel of God‘s presence. See Genesis 12:7 note. In all cases where “the angel of the Lord” delivers a message, he does it as if God Himself were speaking, without the intervening words “Thus saith the Lord,” which are used in the case of prophets. (Compare Judges 6:8; Joshua 24:2.)

When the host of Israel came up from Gilgal in the plain of Jericho, near the Jordan Joshua 4:19 to Shiloh and Shechem, in the hill country of Ephraim, the Angel who had been with them at Gilgal Exodus 23:20-23; Exodus 33:1-4; Joshua 5:10-15 accompanied them. The mention of Gilgal thus fixes the transaction to the period soon after the removal of the camp from Gilgal, and the events recorded in Judges 1:30-36, just after that removal). It also shows that it was the conduct of the Israelites, recorded in Joshua 16:1-10; 17, which provoked this rebuke.

Verse 2

The two articles of the covenant here specified (compare margin references) are those which the Israelites had at this time broken. The other important prohibition Deuteronomy 7:3 is not specified by the Angel, and this is an indication that at the time the Angel spoke, intermarriages with the pagan spoken of Judges 3:6 had not taken place; and this again is another evidence of the early date of this occurrence.

Verse 3

“Wherefore I also said” - Rather because ye have done the things mentioned in Judges 2:2, “I have now said (i. e. I now protest and declare) that I will not drive them out from before you” (compare Judges 19:29). And it was the annonncement of this resolution by the Angel that caused the people to weep.

The word thorns in this verse is supplied by the King James Version from the similar passage in Joshua (see the marginal reference). Other versions adopt a different reading of the original text, and prefer the sense “they shall be to you for adversaries” (compare the last words of Numbers 33:55).

Verse 5

Bochim - i. e. weepers. It was near Shechem, but the site is unknown. Compare the names given to places for similar reasons in Genesis 35:8; Genesis 50:11.

Verse 7

If Joshua was about 80 at the entrance into Canaan, 30 years would bring us to the close of his life. The "elders" would be all that were old enough to take part in the wars of Canaan Judges 3:1-2; and therefore, reckoning from the age of 20 to 70, a period of about 50 years may be assigned from the entrance into Canaan to the death of the elders, or 20 years after the death of Joshua.

The great works of the Lord - The overthrow of the Canaanite nations.

Verse 8

The servant of the Lord - This is a title especially given to Moses Deuteronomy 34:5; Joshua 1:1. In later books, the phrase "the servant of God" is used 1 Chronicles 6:49; Nehemiah 10:29; Daniel 9:11; Revelation 15:3. It is applied to Joshua only here and in Joshua 24:29. It is spoken of David (2 Timothy 2:24; James 1:1.

Verse 10

All that generation - i. e. the main body of those who were grown-up men at the time of the conquest of Canaan.

Verse 11

And the children of Israel - Here begins the narrative of what really did happen "after the death of Joshua," but of which Judges 2:7. But when Joshua was dead … "the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim, and forsook the God of their fathers." And then follows from Judges 2:14 to the end of the chapter, a summary of the whole contents of the book.

Did evil in the sight of the Lord - Through this book and all the historical books, this is the regular phrase for falling into idolatry. It occurs seven times in Judges, as descriptive of the seven apostasies of Israel, which drew down upon them the seven servitudes under

(1) Chushan-Rishathaim,

(2) Eglon,

(3) Jabin,

(4) Midian,

(5) the tyranny of Abimelech,

(6) the Ammonites,

(7) the Philistines.

The recurrence of the phrase marks the hand of one author and of one book. For the opposite phrase, see 1 Kings 15:5, 1 Kings 15:11, etc.

The plural of Baal, "Baalim," refers to the numerous images of Baal which they set up and worshipped, as does the plural form, "Ashtaroth" Judges 2:13, to those of the female divinity, Astarte.

Verse 12

Provoked the Lord to anger - A frequent expression in connection with idolatry, especially in Deuteronomy, in the Books of the Kings, and in Jeremiah.

Verse 14-15

Consult the marginal references. The phrase, "he sold them into the hands etc.," is first found in Deuteronomy 32:30.

Verse 16

Nevertheless - (rather "and") the Lord raised up judges This is the first introduction of the term judge, which gives its name to the book. (See the introduction to the Book of Judges.)

Verse 18

It repented the Lord - Rather, "the Lord was moved with compassion," or "was grieved," "because of their groanings." (Compare Judges 21:15.)

Verse 20

This verse is connected with Judges 2:13. The intermediate verses refer to much later times; they have the appearance of being the reflections of the compiler interspersed with the original narrative. But Judges 2:20 catches up the thread only to let it fall immediately. All that follows, down to the end of Judges 3:7, seems to be another digression, closing with words like those of Judges 2:13.

It does not appear how this message was given to Israel, whether by Angel, or prophet, or Urim, nor indeed is it certain whether any message was given. The words may be understood as merely explaining what passed through the divine mind, and expressing the thoughts which regulated the divine proceeding.

JUDGES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

Even as many of Israel … - These words show that the writer has especially in view the generation which came to man‘s estate immediately after the close of the wars with the Canaanites Joshua 23:1. Compare Judges 2:10.

Verse 3

Lords - Seranim, a title used exclusively of the princes of the five Philistine cities. The title is probably of Phoenician origin.

Joshua appears to have smitten and subdued the Hivites as far north as Baal-Gad, in the valley of Lebanon under Mount Hermon Joshua 11:17; Joshua 12:7, but no further Joshua 13:5. There was an unsubdued Hivite population to the north of Baal-hermon (probably Baal-Gad under Hermon, since it is not synonymous with Hermon; see 1 Chronicles 5:23), to the entering in of Hamath: i. e. in the fertile valley of Coele-Syria. Hamath is always spoken of as the extreme northern boundary of the land of Canaan. It was the gate of approach to Canaan from Babylon, and all the north Zechariah 9:2; Jeremiah 39:5. It formed part of the dominions of Solomon 2 Chronicles 8:4, and of the future inheritance of Israel, as described in vision by Ezekiel Ezekiel 47:16.

Verse 6

See Judges 2:2 note.

Verse 7

And the groves - literally, Asheroth, images of Asherah (the goddess companion of Baal): see Deuteronomy 16:21 note.

Verse 8

Here we hold again the thread of the proper narrative, which seems as if it ought to have run thus Judges 1:1: Now, etc. Judges 3:8, therefore (or “and”) etc.

Served Chushan-Rishathaim - This is the same phrase as in Judges 3:14. From it is derived the expression, “the times of servitude,” as distinguished from “the times of rest,” in speaking of the times of the Judges. Mesopotamia, or Aram-naharaim, was the seat of Nimrod‘s kingdom, and Nimrod was the son of Cush Genesis 10:8-12. Rishathaim is perhaps the name of a city, or a foreign word altered to a Hebrew form.

Nothing is known from history, or the cuneiform inscriptions, of the political condition of Mesopotamia at this time, though Thotmes I and III in the 18th Egyptian dynasty are known to have invaded Mesopotamia. It is, however, in accordance with such an aggressive Aramean movement toward Palestine, that as early as the time of Abraham we find the kings of Shinar and of Elam invading the south of Palestine. There is also distinct evidence in the names of the Edomite kings Genesis 36:32, Genesis 36:35, Genesis 36:37 of an Aramean dynasty in Edom about the time of the early Judges. Compare, too, Job 1:17.

Verse 9

Othniel was already distinguished in Joshua‘s lifetime as a brave and successful leader. See Joshua 15:16-17.

Verse 10

And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him - The phrase occurs frequently in this book and in the books of Samuel and Kings. It marks the special office of the Judges. They were saviors (Judges 3:9 margin; Nehemiah 9:27) called and directed by the Holy Spirit, who endued them with extraordinary wisdom, courage, and strength for the work which lay before them (compare Judges 6:34; Judges 11:29; Judges 13:25; Judges 14:6, Judges 14:19), and were in this respect types of Christ the “Judge of Israel” Micah 5:1, in whom “the Spirit of the Lord God” was “without measure” Isaiah 11:2; Isaiah 61:1; Matthew 12:18-21; Acts 13:2.

Verse 11

The land - means here, as in Judges 1:2, not the whole land of Canaan, but the part concerned, probably the land of the tribe of Judah. Forty years, here and elsewhere, is (like fourscore years, Judges 3:30) a round number, perhaps equivalent to a generation.

Verse 12

The “strengthening” Eglon was the special work of God, and because Israel “had done evil,” etc. Samuel‘s comment on the event is to the same effect 1 Samuel 12:9.

Verse 13

The children of Ammon (Bent-Ammon), almost always so spoken of from their ancestor Ben-ammi Genesis 19:38, seem to be under the leadership of the king of Moab, as do also the Amlekites: this is perhaps the strengthening spoken of in Judges 3:12. In Judges 11:24. The Amalekites appear as the constant and bitter foes of the Israelites (Exodus 17:8 notes

and references); and the naming a mountain in Ephraim, "the mount of the Amalekites" Judges 12:15 is probably a memorial of this joint invasion of Moabites and Amalekites, and marks the scene either of their occupation, or of some signal victory over them.

The city of palm trees: i. e. Jericho Judges 1:16, having been utterly destroyed by Joshua, and not rebuilt until the time of Ahab Joshua 6:24-26; 1 Kings 16:34, can only have existed at this time as an unwalled village, - like Jerusalem after its destruction by Nebuzaradan, until Nehemiah rebuilt its waits - and like its modern representative er-Riha, a village with a fortress for the Turkish garrison. This occupation of Jericho should be compared with the invasion in Judges 10:9, where two out of the three tribes named, Benjamin and Ephraim, are the same as those here concerned, and where Judges 10:7 the Philistines are coupled with the Ammonites, just as here Judges 3:31 the Philistines are mentioned in near connection with the Moabites. See Introduction.

Verse 15

But when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer - The very same words as are used at Judges 3:9. See, too, Judges 2:16, Judges 2:18, and Nehemiah 9:27.

Ehud "the Benjamite" was of the family or house of Gera 2 Samuel 16:5, the son of Bela, Benjamin's first-born, born before Jacob's descent into Egypt Genesis 46:21, and then included among "the sons of Benjamin." The genealogy in 1 Chronicles 8:6 intimates that Ehud (apparently written Abihud in Judges 3:3) became the head of a separate house.

Left-handed - See the margin. The phrase is thought to describe not so much a defect as the power to use left and right hands equally well (compare Judges 20:16; 1 Chronicles 12:2).

A present - i. e. tribute 2 Samuel 8:2, 2 Samuel 8:6; 1 Kings 4:21; Psalm 72:10. The employment of Ehud for this purpose points him out as a chief of some distinction. He would be attended by a numerous suite Judges 3:18. We may conclude that the destruction of the Benjamites Judges 20 had not taken place at this time.

Verse 16

Upon his right thigh - The proper side for a left-handed man. It would give him the appearance of being unarmed. The narrative shows clearly that

his action was premeditated Judges 3:21.

Verse 19

Gilgal was in the immediate neighborhood of Jericho Judges 2:1, where doubtless Eglon held his court at this time Judges 3:13.

Quarries - Some take the original of this word in its common meaning of carved images or idols (see the margin).

Verse 20

Probably Ehud‘s first message Judges 3:19 had been delivered to the attendants, and by them carried to the king. Now Ehud is admitted to the king‘s presence, into the cool upper chamber.

I have a message from God unto thee - Ehud believed himself to be accomplishing the divine mandate, and so his words were true in a certain sense. But it was also a stratagem to cause the king to rise, that the thrust might be sure. (The king rose at once, in true Oriental respect for a divine message, or from fear, compare Joshua 9:24.)

Verse 22

The King James Version and margin give different explanations of the last words of this verse. Others explain it of a vestibule or chamber, through which Ehud passed into the porch where the entrance doors were. He locked the doors, took the key with him; and then retired through the midst of the attendants below (or: more probably, through the door which communicated directly with the outside).

Verse 24

He covereth his feet - Compare the marginal references. The explanation of the phrase as “taking sleep” suits both passages best.

Verse 25

A key - literally, “an opener.” Probably a wooden instrument with which they either lifted up the latch within, or drew back the wooden bar or bolt. The chief officer of Eglon‘s household probably had a second key (compare Isaiah 22:15, Isaiah 22:20-22; Isaiah 37:2).

Verse 26

Seirath - “The forest” or “weald,” which evidently bordered on the cultivated plain near Gilgal, and extended into “the mountain or hill country of Ephraim.” Once there, he was safe from pursuit (compare 1 Samuel 13:6), and quickly collected a strong force of Ephraimires and probably the bordering Benjamites.

Verse 28

Ehud "went down" from the mountain of Ephraim into the Jordan valley beneath it, straight to the Jordan fords Joshua 2:7, so as to intercept all communication between the Moabites on the west side and their countrymen on the east.

Verse 30

The land - i. e. that portion of it which had suffered from the oppression of Moab, probably Benjamin and Ephraim chiefly (see Judges 3:11).

In judging of the nature of Ehud's act there are many considerations which must greatly modify our judgment. Acts of violence or cunning, done in an age when human society applauded such acts, when the best men of the age thought them right, and when men were obliged to take the law into their own hands in self-defense, are very different from the same acts done in an age when the enlightened consciences of men generally condemn them, and when the law of the land and the law of nations give individuals adequate security. We can allow faith and courage and patriotism to Ehud, without being blind to those defective views of moral right which made him and his countrymen glory in an act which in the light of Christianity is a crime. It is remarkable that neither Ehud nor Jael are included in Paul's list in Hebrews 11:32.

Verse 31

From this verse and Judges 5:6 we may gather that Shamgar was contemporary with Jael, and that he only procured a temporary and partial deliverance for Israel by his exploit. He may have been of the tribe of Judah.

An ox goad - An instrument of wood about eight feet long, armed with an iron spike or point at one end, with which to spur the ox at plow, and with an iron scraper at the other end with which to detach the earth from the plowshare when it became encumbered with it. The fact of their deliverer having no better weapon enhances his faith, and the power of his divine helper. At the same time it shows how low the men of Judah were brought at this time, being disarmed by their oppressors Judges 5:8, as was also the case later 1 Samuel 13:19.

JUDGES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 2

See Joshua 11:1 note. Since the events there narrated, Hazor must have been rebuilt, and have resumed its position as the metropolis of the northern Canaanites; the other cities must also have resumed their independence, and restored the fallen dynasties.

Harosheth (identified by Conder with El Harathlyeh, see Judges 4:6) is marked by the addition of the Gentiles, as in Galilee of the nations Genesis 14:1; Isaiah 9:1. The name Harosheth signifies workmanship, cutting and carving, whether in stone or wood Exodus 31:5, and hence, might be applied to the place where such works are carried on. It has been conjectured that this being a great timber district, rich in cedars and fir-trees, and near Great Zidon Joshua 11:8, Jabin kept a large number of oppressed Israelites at work in hewing wood, and preparing it at Harosheth for transport to Zidon; and that these woodcutters, armed with axes and hatchets, formed the soldiers of Barak‘s army.

Verse 3

Oppressed - The same word is used Exodus 3:9 of the oppression of Israel by the Egyptians. If they were put to task-work in hewing timber, their condition was very like that of their ancestors making bricks.

Verse 4

Deborah, a prophetess - Her name, meaning a bee, is the same as that of Rebekah‘s nurse (marginal reference). The reason of her preeminence is added. She was “a woman, a prophetess,” like Miriam Exodus 15:20; Huldah 2 Kings 22:14, etc. In Judges 4:6, Judges 4:9, Judges 4:14, we have examples of her prophetic powers, and in Judges 3:10 note).

Verse 5

She dwelt - Rather, “she sat,” namely, to judge the people Judges 4:10, but not in the usual place, “the gate” Rth 4:1-2 ; Proverbs 22:22. It suited her character, and the wild unsafe times better, that she should sit under a palm-tree in the secure heights of Mount Ephraim, between Ramah and Bethel (Judges 20:33 note). This verse shows that the Judges exercised the civil as well as military functions of rulers 1 Samuel 7:15-17.

Verse 6

The name Barak signifies lightning, an appropriate name for a warrior. It is found also as Barca or Barcas, among Punic proper names. Compare Mark 3:17. On Kedesh-Naphtali see the marginal reference.

Deborah speaks of God as Yahweh the God of Israel, because she speaks, as it were, in the presence of the pagan enemies of Israel, and to remind the Israelites, in the day of their distress, that He was ready to perform the mercy promised to their fathers, and to remember His holy covenant. This title, too, would recall to their memories in an instant all His past acts in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness, and in the conquest of Canaan.

The object of "drawing (toward Mount Tabor" rather, spreading out, compare Judges 20:37) was to effect a junction of the northern tribes with the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin, who were separated from them by the plain of Esdraelon, where Sisera's chariots would naturally congregate and be most effective. Mount Tabor rises from the plain of Esdraelon, about 1,865 ft. above the sea, and its broad top of nearly a mile in circumference afforded a strong position, out of reach of Sisera's chariots. If El Harathiyeh be Harosheth, Sisera must have marched from the west. Harathiyeh is a height in the range which separates Esdraelon from the plains of Acre, under which the Kishon breaks through in its course to the sea.

Verse 7

The brook or stream Kishon (Nahr Mukutta), so called from its winding course, caused by the dead level of the plain of Esdraelon through which it flows, rises, in respect to one of its sources or feeders, in Mount Tabor, and flows nearly due west through the plain, under Mount Carmel, and into the Bay of Acre. In the early or eastern part of its course, before it is recruited by the springs on Carmel, it is nothing but a torrent, often dry, but liable to swell very suddenly and dangerously, and to overflow its banks in early spring, after rain or the melting of snow. The ground on the banks of the Kishon near Megiddo (Mujedd'a, see Joshua 12:21 note) becomes an impassable morass under the same circumstances, and would be particularly dangerous to a large number of chariots.

Verse 8

Barak, like Gideon Judges 6:15, Judges 6:36, Judges 6:40, and Abraham Genesis 15:2-3; Genesis 17:18, and Moses Exodus 4:10, Exodus 4:13, and

Peter Matthew 14:30-31, exhibited some weakness of faith at first. But this only makes his example more profitable for our encouragement, though he himself suffered some lost by his weakness Judges 4:9.

Verse 9

Mark the unhesitating faith and courage of Deborah, and the rebuke to Barak‘s timidity, “the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman” (Jael, Judges 4:22). For a similar use of a weak instrument, that the excellency of the power might be of God, compare the history of Gideon and his 300, David and his sling, Shamgar and his ox-goad, Samson and the jawbone of the ass. (See 1 Corinthians 1:26, 1 Corinthians 1:31.) Barak would probably think the woman must be Deborah. The prophecy was only explained by its fulfillment. Her presence as a prophetess would give a divine sanction to Barak‘s attempt to raise the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. To Barak himself it would be a pledge of her truth and sincerity. She probably commissioned some chief to raise the tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh (Judges 5:14, compare Psalm 80:2), while she went with Barak and mustered Zebulun, Naphtali, and Issachar.

Verse 10

Rather, “and ten thousand men went up (to Tabor) at his feet;” i. e. as his followers (“after him,” Judges 4:14).

Verse 11

Read, “Heber the Kenitc had severed himself from the Kenites which were of the children of Hobab,” etc., “unto the oak (or terebinth tree) in Zaanaim” (or Bitzaanaim, which Conder identifies with Bessum, twelve miles southeast of Tabor, and near Kedesh on the Sea of Galilee). This migration of Heber the Kenite, with a portion of his tribe, from the south of Judah to the north of Naphtali, perhaps caused by Philistine oppression, had clearly taken place recently. It is mentioned here to account for the subsequent narrative, but possibly also because the news of the great muster of the Israelites at Kedesh had been carried to Sisera by some of the tribe Judges 4:12, whose tents we are here informed were in the immediate neighborhood of Kedesh.

Verse 15

Lighted down off his chariot - Probably his chariot stuck in the morass (see the note at Judges 4:7); or he might leave his chariot in order to mislead his pursuers, and in hope of gaining a place of safety while they were following the track of the chariot-wheels and the bulk of the host.

Verse 16

What with the overflowing of the Kishon Judges 5:21, by which numbers were drowned, and the panic which had seized the defeated army, and made them an easy prey to the sword of the pursuing Israelites, Sisera‘s whole force was cut to pieces and broken up.

Verse 17

Sisera went, not to Heber‘s tent, but to Joel‘s, as more secure from pursuit. Women occupied a separate tent. Genesis 18:6, Genesis 18:10; Genesis 24:67.

Verse 20

Stand in the door … - The characteristic duplicity of the Oriental character, both in Sisera and Joel, is very forcibly depicted in this narrative. It is only by the light of the Gospel that the law of truth is fully revealed.

Verse 21

If we can overlook the treachery and violence which belonged to the morals of the age and country, and bear in mind Jael‘s ardent sympathies with the oppressed people of God, her faith in the right of Israel to possess the land in which they were now slaves, her zeal for the glory of Yahweh as against the gods of Canaan, and the heroic courage and firmness with which she executed her deadly purpose, we shall be ready to yield to her the praise which is her due. See Judges 3:30 note.

Verse 24

See the margin. The meaning is, that Barak‘s great victory was the beginning of a successful resistance to Jabin, by which the Israelites recovered their independence, and finally broke the Canaanite power. Accordingly, we hear no more of Canaanite domination in the Book of Judges.

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CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

Deborah, as "a prophetess," both composed and sang this noble ode, which, for poetic spirit and lyric fire, is not surpassed by any of the sacred songs in the Bible. And, as Miriam took up the first verse of the song of Moses Exodus 15:21, and sang it as an antiphony, so Barak, with the chorus of men, answered the song of Deborah by singing Judges 5:2, which is also exactly suited for an antiphon, summing up as it does the subject matter of the whole ode. Compare David's example 2 Samuel 6:15.

Verse 2

Render "For the leading of the leaders in Israel (the princes), for the willingness of the people (to follow them) bless ye the Lord." See Deuteronomy 32:42 note, and compare Judges 5:9 and Judges 5:13, where the nobles and the people are again contrasted.

Verse 4

Compare Psalm 68:7-9, and Habakkuk 3:3-16. The three passages relate to the same events, and mutually explain each other. The subject of them is the triumphant march of Israel, with the Lord at their head, to take possession of Canaan, and the overthrow of Sihon, Og, and the Midianites. This march commenced from Kadesh, in the immediate neighborhood of Self, and the victories which followed were an exact parallel to the victory of Deborah and Barak, accompanied as it had been with the storm which made Kishon to overflow his banks.

Verse 6

Words dcscriptive of a state of weakness and fear, so that Israel could not frequent the highways. It is a graphic description of a country occupied by an enemy.

Verse 7

Render the word "villages" (here and in Judges 5:11) judgment, rule, or judges, rulers. The sense is "The princes (or magistrates) ceased in Israel," i. e. there was no one to do justice in the gate, or defend men from their oppressors.

Verse 8

The "war in the gates" describes the hostile attacks of the Canaanites, which were the punishment of the idolatry of the Israelites (compare the

marginal references), and the reduction of Israel to an unarmed and unresisting state under the Philistine dominion. See Judges 3:31 note.

Verse 9

My heart … - In this deplorable weakness of Israel how noble was the conduct of the governors who volunteered to lead the people against their oppressors. Deborah‘s heart was filled with admiration as she thought of their patriotic devotion, and broke out into thanksgiving to Yahweh.

Verse 10

Ye that ride on white donkeys … - i. e. nobles or magistrates. Deborah appeals to the classes mentioned in Judges 5:6-7, to bear witness to the happy change that had followed the overthrow of Jabin.

That sit in judgment - Rather "that sit on saddles, or horse-cloths," a further description of those who ride on asses.

Verse 11

The sense of the King James Version is that, whereas formerly they could not go in safety to draw water from their wells, but were shot at by the archers of the enemy, now they were delivered from such tumults; and standing round the wells in security rehearsed the righteous acts of the Lord in delivering them, and "the righteous acts of His government in Israel." (See Judges 5:7).

Then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates - Israelites, who had hid themselves in caves and deserts, could return in security to the gates of their own cities for justice, or commerce, or to dwell there, now that the Canaanite was subdued.

Verse 12

Deborah incites Barak to carry off as his prey the captive Canaanites and their sheep and cattle (their "captivity").

Verse 13

This verse is otherwise rendered: "then a remnant of the nobles came down; the people of the Lord came down for me against the mighty." The following verses mention in detail who this "remnant" were.

Verse 14

Render "Of Ephraim (Deborah‘s own tribe) came down those whose root is in Mount Amalek Judges 12:15; after thee (O Ephraim) came Benjamin among thy people; of Machir (the west-Jordanic milies of Manasseh. See Joshua 17:1-6) there came down the chiefs, and of Zebulon they that handle the staff of the officer" the military scribe, whose duty it

was, like that of the Roman tribunes, to keep the muster roll, and superintend the recruiting of the army. (See 2 Kings 25:19.)

Verse 15

Even Issachar … - i. e. "and, as well as Issachar, Barak also with the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, rushed down on foot from Mount Tabor into the valley to attack the iron chariots of Sisera."

For the divisions - Better: "among the brooks." Reuben ought to have followed in this catalogue of patriots, but with that abruptness for which this poem is so conspicuous, Deborah adverts to his absence instead.

Verse 16

Great searchings - (thoughts, Judges 5:15) of heart Deborah means to say that at first the Reubenites made magnanimous resolutions to help their brethren against Jabin. But they stayed at home, and let the opportunity slip.

Verse 17

The land of Gilead, on the east of Jordan, was divided between Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, who are both comprehended here. Joppa was in the territory of Dan Joshua 19:46, and was in later times the sea-port for Jerusalem.

His breaches - Rather havens; i. e. the creeks and bays and river-months by which their coast was broken. Joshua 19:29.

Verse 18

In contrast with the selfishness of the tribes just named, Deborah reverts with enthusiasm to the heroic prowess of Zebulun and Naphtali.

Verse 19

The Canaanite hosts are now described, led to battle by their numerous kings. (Compare Joshua 12:21.)

They took no gain of money - i. e. either they got no booty, as they expected, or, they did not fight for plunder, but for life and victory (compare Judges 4:16 and Judges 5:30).

Verse 20

God fought on the side of Israel, and gave them the victory. Josephus relates that, just as the battle began, a violent tempest came on with a great downfall of rain; and a hailstorm, which, driving full in the faces of the Canaanites, so blinded and benumbed them with cold, that they could neither use their bows with effect nor even hold their swords.

Verse 21

The word translated ancient occurs only here. The phrase probably means that Kishon was celebrated from ancient times on account of the battles fought on its banks.

Verse 22

Probably an allusion to the frantic efforts of the chariot-horses to disengage themselves from the morass (Judges 4:15 note).

Mighty ones - Applied to bulls Psalm 22:12 and horses Jeremiah 8:16; Jeremiah 47:3; Jeremiah 50:11; elsewhere, as probably here, to men.

Verse 23

The inhabitants of Meroz (a village 12 miles from Samaria) hung back, and gave no help in the day of battle, although it was Yahweh who called them. Hence, the curse pronounced by the Angel of the Lord.

Verse 24

The blessing here pronounced is in strong contrast with the curse of Meroz. Deborah speaks of Jael‘s deed by the light of her own age, which did not make manifest the evil of guile and bloodshed; the light in ours does.

Verse 25

Butter - Rather curdled milk, probably a fermented and intoxicating drink. All these marks of respect and friendship would lull Sisera into security.

Verse 26

Rather “she smote his head, and she struck and pierced through his temple.”

Verse 28

The scene is changed to the palace of Sisera.

Verse 30

Render the latter part of the verse “a booty of dyed garments for Sisera, a booty of dyed garments and of party-colored cloth, a dyed garment and two party-colored clothes for the necks of the booty,” the spoil or booty being either captive damsels, or captive cattle on whose necks these clothes are to be placed (either as ornament or as a burden; compare Judges 8:21, Judges 8:26). But possibly “the necks of the booty” may mean the backs or shoulders (of men or beasts) laden with booty.

Verse 31

A most striking conclusion, in which the spiritual truth, which the whole narrative is intended to convey, comes out. The enemies of the Lord will

perish like the host of Sisera, and all their hopes will end, like those of Sisera‘s mother, in bitter disappointment and shame; but all that love our Lord Jesus Christ shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Compare Matthew 13:43; Daniel 12:3.

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CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

Midian - See Genesis 25:2 note. They were remarkable not only for the vast number of their cattle Judges 6:5; Numbers 31:32-39, but also for their great wealth in gold and other metal ornaments, showing their connection with a gold country. (Compare Numbers 31:22, Numbers 31:50-54, with Judges 8:24:26.) At this time they were allies of the Amalekites and of the Arabian tribes called collectively "the children of the East" Judges 6:3. They seem to have extended their settlements to the east of Jordan, and to have belonged to the larger section of Arabs called Ishmaelites Judges 8:24.

Verse 2

The word rendered "dens" is only found in this passage. It is best explained of ravines hollowed out by torrents, which the Israelites made into hiding-places.

Verse 4

Gaza indicates the extreme point south to which they spread their devastations, crossing the Jordan near Bethshan (Scythopolls), and entering by the valley of Jezreel, and sweeping along the whole of the maritime plain or Shephelah.

Verse 5

Grasshoppers - Rather locusts (compare Exodus 10:4-6, Exodus 10:14-15; Psalm 78:46)

Verse 8

A prophet - His name is not given. (Compare Judges 2:1-3. The reference to Exodus 20:2 is plain, and supposes the people to whom the prophet addresses these words to be familiar with the facts recorded in that text.

Verse 10

A similar use of the name Amorite, instead of the more usual name Canaanite, occurs in Joshua 24:15, Joshua 24:18. Perhaps a special reason may be found for the use of Amorite, if the prophet was addressing those who dwelt in the mountains, where the Amorites chiefly dwelt. The idolatries of the Amorites seem, too, to have been preeminently abominable (see 2 Kings 21:11; 1 Kings 21:26). It should be observed that the prophet's language, as it traces the misery of Israel to their sins, so also intimates the necessity of repentance and of breaking off their sins - especially the sin of

idolatry - as preliminary to any deliverance. In exact accordance with this view, Gideon commences his work by throwing down the altar of Baal, and building up the altar of Yahweh Judges 6:24-25.

Verse 11

An oak - "The oak," indicating it as a well-known tree, still standing in the writer's days.

There was another Ophrah in Benjamin Joshua 18:23. This Ophrah was in Manasseh, and was the village of Joash, the head, apparently, of the family of Abiezer, which was one of the families of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh Numbers 26:30.

Verse 12

Thou mighty man of valor - Known to God to be such, though as yet not known to be such either by himself or his countrymen (compare Luke 1:28, Luke 1:30).

Verse 13

The extreme bitterness of the national sufferings under the Midianite occupation breaks out in Gideon's language. The Angel's words, suitable to times of prosperity, seemed to be a mockery, when it was evident the Lord was not with them. (Compare Deuteronomy 31:17.)

Verse 14

The Lord looked upon him - That gracious look conferred immediate strength (compare Ephesians 6:10; 2 Corinthians 12:9; John 20:22; Acts 3:6) The change of phrase from "the angel of the Lord" to "the Lord" is remarkable. When messages are delivered by the Angel of the Lord, the form of the message is as if God Himself were speaking (compare Judges 2:1).

The sending implied a valid commission and sufficient powers. Compare Exodus 3:10; Isaiah 44:26; Ezekiel 2:3; Zechariah 2:11; Malachi 3:1; Luke 10:3; John 20:21; and the term APOSTLE, as applied to our Lord Hebrews 3:1 and to the Twelve.

Verse 15

Gideon now perceived that the Lord was speaking to him by His angel. He saw, however, no qualifications in himself, or in his family or tribe, for the office of saviour to his people. He therefore desires some assurance that the message he had just received was indeed from God, and not a mere

dream or delusion. He asks as a sign Judges 6:18 that his mysterious visitor should tarry under the oak until he should return to Him with his gifts and offerings.

Verse 17

A sign - If the Angel ate of Gideon‘s present it would be a conclusive proof of the reality of the vision. (Compare John 21:9-13; Luke 24:37-43; Acts 10:41.) It would also be a token of God‘s goodwill to Gideon. Compare Genesis 18:3.

Verse 18

My present - My Minchah: the word used regularly, though not exclusively, for the meat and drink offering (Leviticus 2:1 note). Its double sense of an offering to God, and of a gift to man, suits the doubt in Gideon‘s mind as to who his visitor might be.

Verse 19

Unleavened cakes - As being much more quickly baked (compare Genesis 19:3) (and as connected with the meat offering). An ephah, containing 3 measures, was the quantity of flour commonly used at one baking Genesis 18:6; Exodus 16:16.

Presented it - A word especially, though not exclusively, proper for offerings to God. See Amos 5:25, where the same word is rendered offered.

Verse 20

Pour out the broth - Libations were a very ancient form of offering (compare Genesis 35:14). The drink offerings of wine under the Levitical law were poured upon the altar Exodus 30:9. The pouring of the broth upon the rock was evidently of the nature of a libation. It might also, like the water poured by Elijah upon his sacrifice, make the miracle of the fire that consumed the sacrifice more apparent. (Compare 1 Kings 18:33.)

Verse 22

Alas, O Lord GOD! - Compare Joshua 7:7. “because I have seen an angel of the Lord” Compare the marginal references, in which the notion that it was death for mortal man to see God appears clearly. The same notion prevailed among the pagan.

Verse 24

Gideon‘s naming the altar which he built, in commemoration of the words of peace spoken by the Angel, is very similar to what we read of Abraham Genesis 22:14, and of Moses (Exodus 17:15, when he named the altar Jehovah-nissi).

Verse 25

Even - Rather, as in the margin, and. Two bullocks are spoken of. The labor of both would be required for pulling down and removing the altar of Baal, and for bringing the materials for building the altar of Yahweh.

The grove by it - Rather, "the idol upon it," the Asherah, the wooden image of Astarte Judges 3:7.

Verse 26

In the ordered place - See the margin. "Build an altar, etc., with the materials," "the wood laid in order" (compare Genesis 22:9), that, namely, which he would find ready to hand in the altar of Baal which he was to throw down.

The wood of the grove - "The (blocks of) wood of the idol," i. e. the image of Astarte. The command from God Himself to build an altar, and sacrifice upon it, is analogous to Elijah's sacrifice 1 Kings 18, and was doubtless caused by the extraordinary circumstance of the defection of the Israelites from the worship of the true God. Possibly, too, the Midianite invasion had made the worship at Shiloh impossible at this time.

Verse 27

The mention of the "men of the city" by the side of Gideon's "father's household" suggests the probability of their being a remnant of the Canaanite population, and the special patrons of Baal-worship.

Verse 31

From the boldness of Joash in defending his son, it is likely that the majority of the Abi-ezrites sided with him against "the men of the city," and already felt drawn toward Gideon as their national and religious leader Judges 6:34. Joash appears as the chief magistrate of Ophrah.

Will ye plead … ? will ye save? - The emphasis is upon ye, as much as to say, What business is it of yours?

Verse 32

He called him - i. e. "He was called" Jerubbaal, as being the person against whom it was popularly said that Baal might strive. See margin.

Verse 33

A fresh invasion, and the last, of Midianites Amalekites, and Arabs (see Judges 6:3). But the Israelites, instead of hiding in dens and caves, and tamely leaving all their substance as pIunder to the invaders, now rally around their leader.

Verse 34

The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon - See the margin. The word contains a striking thought. It is different from that used in the case of Othniel Judges 3:10, Jephthah Judges 11:29, and Samson Judges 13:25; Judges 14:6, Judges 14:19.

Verse 35

His own tribe, Manasseh, and the three northern tribes of Asher, Zebulon, and Naphtali hastened to join him. Issachar was probably unable to do so, because the Midianites were encamped in the heart of their country. Asher no longer "abode in his breaches," as in the time of Jabin Judges 6:17, perhaps ashamed of their former backwardness, and stung by the rebuke of Deborah; perhaps, too, from feeling the Midianite yoke much more galling than that of Jabin.

Verse 36

The caution of Gideon, desirous of being assured that he really had a promise from God, does not imply doubts as to God's faithfulness or power to fulfill His promise. Of such doubts there is not a trace in Gideon's character. He is a worthy example of faith Hebrews 11:32.

Verse 37

The threshing floors were and still are under the open air, and usually circular. The second sign Judges 6:40, would be more convincing than the former, because it is the nature of fleeces to attract and retain moisture.

JUDGES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

The well of Harod - i. e. of trembling, evidently so called from the people who were afraid Judges 7:3. It is identified with great probability with Ain Jalud, a spacious pool at the foot of Gilboa; (by Conder, with Ain el Jem'ain (the spring of the two troops)).

Moreh was, probably, the little Hermon, the Jebel ed-Duhy of the Arabs, which encloses the plain two or three miles north of Gilboa, which shuts it in on the south.

Verse 3

The proclamation was in accordance with the Law (see the marginal reference). No mountain of the name of Gilead is known in this locality, and it has been conjectured that the right reading is Gilboa. Others think that this may be a form of proclamation customary in Manasseh.

Verse 4

Try - The word used for refining metals by separating the dross from the pure ore. They who threw themselves on the ground and drank freely were the more self-indulgent; while they who, remembering the near presence of the enemy, slaked their thirst with moderation, and without being off their guard for an instant, were the true soldiers of the army of God.

Verse 8

The sense is, "And they (the three hundred) took the victuals and trumpets of the people (all the people of Judges 7:7) into their hands." so that each of the three hundred should have a trumpet and a pitcher.

Verse 11

The armed men - The word is rendered harnessed in Exodus 13:18 (see the note). The most probable meaning of the word is arrayed in divisions or ranks.

Verse 13

A cake of barley bread - i. e. such a cake as could hardly be eaten by men, it was so vile: a term expressive of the contempt of the Midianites for the people of Israel.

A tent - The tent, meaning, probably, the tent of the king of Midian, or of the captain of the host.

Verse 14

This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon - The word rendered tumbled in Judges 7:13, is rather descriptive of a sword brandished (compare Genesis 3:24). Hence, the interpretation "the sword of Gideon." Hearing this dream and the interpretation would convince Gideon that he was indeed under the guidance of God, and so assure him of God's aid; and secondly, it would show him that a panic had already fallen npon the mind of the enemy.

Verse 16

Gideon himself took the command of one company, and sent the other two under their respective captains to different sides of the camp Judges 7:18, Judges 7:21.

Verse 19

The middle watch - The old Jewish division of the night was three watches of four hours each. They are alluded to in Exodus 14:24; 1 Samuel 11:11; Psalm 63:6; Psalm 90:4; Psalm 119:148; Psalm 130:6; Lamentations 2:19. After the Jews fell under the power of the Romans, they used the Roman division of four watches of three hours each Matthew 14:25; Mark 13:35.

"The beginning" of the watch would be about eleven o'clock at night.

Verse 21

The effect to the Midianites would be, that they were surrounded by a mighty host. Their own camp being in darkness, as soon as the confusion of flight began they would mistake friends for foes, and fleers for pursuers. When once fighting had begun by the first casual mistake, the clashing of swords and the shouts of the combatants in the camp, accompanied by the continuous blowing of Gideon's trumpets outside, would make it appear that the whole of the enemy was in the camp. Suspicion of treachery on the part of their allies would also be likely to arise in the minds of Midianites, Amalekites, and Arabs. Compare a similar scene in marginal references.

Verse 22

Beth-shittah - - "House of the acacias," the same trees which gave their name to "Shittim" Numbers 33:49 in the plains of Maab, and which grew plentifully also, in the peninsula of Sinai Exodus 25:5 perhaps "Shuttah", in the valley of Jezreel; or it may be another name of Scythopolis, or Beth-shan (compare 1 Kings 4:12). "Zererath or Zeredath", near Succoth Judges 8:5, the same as "Zeredah" in Ephraim the birth-place of Jeroboam 1 Kings

11:26, and "Zartauah" 1 Kings 4:12. "Abel-meholah" (field of the dance), the birth-place of Elisha 1 Kings 19:16 is in the Jordan valley, 10 miles from Scythopolis, if identified with Bethmaela: if the same as Abelmea, it lay between Nablous and Scythopolis. (But see 1 Kings 19:16 note.) "Tabbath" was apparently lower down the Jordan valley, i. e. further south.

Verse 24

The waters - The streams which run from the mountain district of Ephraim into the Jordan in the district of Beth-shan, forming great pools and marshes, which the Midianites fleeing south would have to cross before they could reach the Jordan fords.

All the men of Ephraim - They had taken no previous part in the rising against Midian: nor had Gideon, of the smaller tribe of Manasseh, presumed before to summon his more powerful and arrogant brethren of the great tribe of Ephraim (see Joshua 17:14-18).

JUDGES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

The success of Gideon‘s enterprise mortified the pride of Ephraim, as the chief tribe, seeing that they had played a subordinate part. Compare Judges 12:1.

Verse 2

A civil war with the great tribe of Ephraim would soon have turned Israel‘s victory into mourning. Gideon therefore soothes their wounded pride by confessing that Ephraim had done more, though they had joined him so late in the day, than he had been able to effect in the whole campaign. The grape-gleaning of Ephraim was better than the whole vintage of Abi-ezer.

Verse 5

Succoth was in the tribe of Gad which was entirely trans-Jordanic Joshua 13:27; and the ruins are at Sukkot, on the east of Jordan, a little south of Bethshan.

Give, I pray you etc. - Gideon might fairly expect so much aid from the trans-Jordanic tribes, and from so considerable a town as Succoth Judges 8:14.

Verse 6

The number of the followers of Zebah and Zalmunna was still so formidable, and Gideon‘s enterprise still so doubtful, that the men of Succoth (being on the same side of the Jordan) would not risk the vengeance of the Midianites by giving supplies to Gideon‘s men.

Verse 8

Succoth was in the valley or Ghor of the Jordan Judges 8:5, and Penuel apparently in the mountain. No identification of Penuel has taken place. It was south of the Brook Jabbok, and on Jacob‘s way to Succoth. Gideon, journeying in the opposite direction to Jacob, comes from Succoth to Penuel.

Verse 10

Zebah and Zalmunna seem to have fled nearly due east to Karkor, which was probably an enclosure of some kind (perhaps a walled sheepfold, compare Numbers 31:32 note). Its site is unknown; but it was near Nobah, in the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead Numbers 32:40, and Jogbehah was in the tribe of Gad Numbers 32:34-35. Gideon, perhaps taking a circuit so

as to come upon them from the east, fell suddenly upon them, apparently at night, surprised them, and smote them.

Verse 13

Before the sun was up - The translation of the words is doubtful, because of the rarity of the word rendered "sun" (חרס *cheres*). Many suppose it to be the name of a mountain pass, and render it from the ascent of Heres.

Verse 14

The written (see the margin) list would enable Gideon to punish the guilty and spare the innocent people. Succoth was governed by a sanhedrim or council of seventy elders (compare Numbers 11:16), with perhaps seven others of superior rank called princes.

Verse 16

He taught - Thought to be a false reading, for "he threshed," as in Judges 8:7 margin.

Verse 17

The men of the city - Perhaps the rulers; who, it is likely, had possession of the tower or citadel, and so could tyrannize over the people. Gideon killed the great men, and beat down their towers, but did not injure the inhabitants.

Verse 18

What manner of men - literally, "Where are the men?" The sense, "what manner of men", is merely gathered from the tenor of the answer. Gideon doubtless knew that his brethren had been killed by Zebah and Zalmunna, and the desire of avenging their death was one motive for his impetuous pursuit and attack. His question was rather a taunt, a bitter reproach to his captives, preparing them for their fate. Zebah and Zalmunna, in their answer, did not give evidence against themselves. Their hope was by a flattering answer to soothe Gideon‘s wrath.

Verse 19

The sons of my mother - A much closer relation than that of brothers by the father only. (Compare Genesis 43:29; Deuteronomy 13:6; Psalm 69:8). This is the only hint preserved of the transaction. We cannot say exactly when the slaughter of Gideon‘s brethren on Mount Tabor took place, whether before the outbreak of the war Judges 6:33, or in the retreat and flight of the Midianites Judges 7:22.

Verse 20

It was Gideon‘s place to act the part of the “avenger of blood” Numbers 35:12; Deuteronomy 19:6. The fierce manners of the age break out in the slaying of the captives (compare 1 Samuel 15:32-33), and in Gideon‘s attempt to initiate his youthful son Jether in the stern work of slaying his country‘s enemies.

Verse 21

The ornaments - See marg. and compare Isaiah 3:18. The custom of adorning the necks of their camels with gold chains and ornaments prevailed among the Arabs so late as the time of Mahomet.

Verse 24

In this desire for gold Gideon falls to the level of ordinary men, and we may see in it the first decline of his glory, leading to a sad tarnishing of the luster of his bright name. The idolatrous honor paid to Gideon‘s ephod was probably a source of revenue to his house. Contrast the conduct of Abraham Genesis 14:21-23, and of Elisha 2 Kings 5:16, 2 Kings 5:26.

The “ear-ring” here mentioned is properly a “nose-ring” (compare Genesis 24:22 note). The custom of wearing nose-rings prevails in Eastern countries to the present day. The circumstance of Job‘s friends each contributing a nose-ring of gold (Job 42:11 note) is a remarkable parallel to the incident in Gideon‘s history. Rings of gold were also used as money in Egypt, as appears on several early monuments, and by the Celts.

Verse 25

They spread … - The Septuagint reads “He spread his garment.”

Verse 26

If the Ishmaelite nose-rings were half a shekel in weight, then 1,700 shekels weight of gold implied that 3,400 persons wearing, gold rings had been slain. The “collars” were rather “ear-drops.”

Verse 27

The ephod was that particular part of the high priest‘s dress which was necessary to be worst when he inquired of God by Urim and Thummim. It seems that Gideon being now the civil ruler, desired to have an ephod of his own, kept in his own city, to he worn by the priest whenever Gideon might summon him to inquire of the Lord for him. His relations with the tribe of Ephraim probably made him unwilling to resort to Shiloh. Compare the act of Jeroboam 1 Kings 12:28.

Verse 31

Abimelech‘s mother was not reckoned among the wives, being, probably, one of the Canaanite population in Shechem Judges 9:28: neither was Abimelech himself reckoned with the 70 other sons of Jerubbaal (Judges 9:24. Compare Judges 11:1-2).

Verse 33

Turned again - Doubtless Gideon himself had no doubt prepared the way for this apostacy by his unauthorized ephod. The Law of Moses, with its strict unity of priesthood and altar, was the divinely-appointed and only effectual preservative from idolatry.

Baal-bereth - The god of covenants or sworn treaties, corresponding to the Zeus Orkius of the Greeks. The center of this fresh apostacy was at Shechem.

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CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

We are not told how soon after the death of Gideon these events happened. There must have been time for the apostacy and establishment of Baal-worship, and for the development of ill-will between Abimelech and his brethren.

Verse 2

The men of Shechem - literally, "the masters." Compare Joshua 24:11; 1 Samuel 23:11-12.

Verse 3

The Ephraimite pride revolted from Abi-ezrite rulers, and inclined them to one who was a Shechemite by birth. (Compare the same spirit in the time of David and Rehoboam, 2 Samuel 20:1; 1 Kings 12:16.)

Verse 5

Such wholesale slaughters have always been common in Eastern monarchies, and are among the fruits of polygamy.

Verse 6

Millo must have been a fortified place close to, but separate from, Shechem, and perhaps the same as the tower of Shechem mentioned in Judges 9:46-47. The building or enlarging of the better-known Millo, at Jerusalem was one of Solomon's great works 1 Kings 9:15, 1 Kings 9:24. The population dwelling in Millo though perhaps numerically small, had great weight from possessing the stronghold. Their giving Abimelech the title of king indicates the strong Canaanite influence at Shechem. All the Canaanite chiefs were called kings, but it was a title hitherto unknown in Israel. This title had not been named by those Israelites who offered to make Gideon their hereditary ruler Judges 8:22-23.

The plain of the pillar … - Rather "the oak of the garrison which is in Shechem." The oak in question was probably called the "garrison oak," from a garrison being stationed near it.

Verse 7

The top of Mount Gerizim - The ancient Shechem was perhaps situated there. The population of Shechem is supposed to have been keeping some public festival outside the city when Jotham addressed them.

Verses 8-20

This fable and that noted in the marginal reference are the only two of the kind found in Scripture. Somewhat different are the parables of the Old Testament, 2 Samuel 12:1-4; 2 Samuel 14:5-11; 1 Kings 20:39-40.

Judges 9:9

Honour God and man - Alluding to the constant use of oil in the meat-offerings Exodus 30:24-25. In like manner, the allusion in Judges 9:13 is to the drink-offerings of wine. See Leviticus 23:13; Numbers 15:10.

Judges 9:14

The bramble - Said to be the Rhamnus Paliurus of Linnaeus, otherwise called Spina-Christi, or Christ‘s Thorn, a shrub with sharp thorns. The application is obvious. The noble Gideon and his worthy sons had declined the proffered kingdom. The vile, base-born Abimelech had accepted it, and his act would turn out to the mutual ruin of himself and his subjects.

Judges 9:15

If in truth - i. e. consistently with truth, honor, and uprightness, as explained in the interpretation in Judges 9:16, Judges 9:19.

Let fire come out … - The propriety of the image is strictly preserved, for even the thorns of the worthless bramble might kindle a flame which would burn the stately cedars to the ground. See Psalm 58:9.

Judges 9:16-20

These verses contain the interpretation of the fable. In them Jotham points out the base ingratitude of the people in raising Abimelech upon the ruin of Gideon‘s house, and foretells the retribution which would fall upon both parties.

Verse 22

Had reigned - Rather, “had ruled.” It is not the phrase used in Judges 9:6. It looks as if the Shechemites alone had made him king, and the rest of Israel had submitted to his dominion, without allowing his title of king.

Verse 26

It does not appear who Gaal, son of Ebed, was; he may have been an officer sent by Abimelech with a force to bring the men of Shechem back to their allegiance, but who tried to turn the rebellion to his own account. He got into Shechem with a band of men, “his brethren,” unopposed by Zebul, Abimelech‘s officer, and soon gained the confidence of the Shechemites,

Verses 27-29

Seditious and lawless acts Judges 9:25-26 now broke out into open rebellion. It was at an idolatrous feast in the house of Baal-berith, on

occasion of the vintage, and when they were excited with wine, that the rebellion was matured. Those present began to "curse Abimelech," to speak insultingly of him, and to revile him (compare Leviticus 20:9; 2 Samuel 19:21; Isaiah 8:21). Gaal, the son of Ebed, who was watching the opportunity, immediately incited them to revolt from the dominion of Abimelech, offering himself to be their captain; adding a message of defiance to Abimelech, addressed, probably, to Zebul, who was present but too weak to resent it on the spot.

Judges 9:27

Made merry - The word translated "merry" occurs only here and in Leviticus 19:24. Its etymology gives the sense of "praises", "thanksgivings"; and its use in these two passages rather indicates that the fruits themselves which were brought to the House of God with songs of praise, and eaten or drunken with religious service, were so called. The thank-offerings would be a portion of the new wine of the vintage which they had just gathered in.

Judges 9:28

Shechem is another designation of Abimelech. Sheehem means the son and heir of Sheehem, Abimelech's mother being a Canaanite Judges 9:18.

Verse 31

Privily - See the margin. The word is probably the name of a place in "Tormah", some think the same as "Arumah" Judges 9:41. Zebul was faithful to Abimelech, but dissembled his sentiments, from being too weak to oppose Gaal, until Abimelech came with his army Judges 9:38.

Verse 37

The plain of Meonenim - Translate "the oak of the soothsayers" (see the margin). Some well-known oak, so called, but which is not mentioned elsewhere.

Verse 42

After Gaal's expulsion, "the people went out into the field," either to complete the vintage, or for some other agricultural operation. "They" (Zebul and his party) sent word of this to Abimelech.

Verse 44

This verse explains the purpose of both the present and the former division of Abimelech's forces into several companies, namely, that while some of the companies attacked the men of Shechem in the field, another

company, starting from their ambush, might occupy the approach to the city gate, and so cut off their retreat.

Verse 45

Sowed it with salt - Expressing by this action his hatred, and his wish, that when utterly destroyed as a city, it might not even be a fruitful field. Salt is the emblem of barrenness (see the marginal references).

Verse 46

An hold of the house of the god Berith - As combining the advantages of a "sanctuary" (compare 1 Kings 2:28) and a fortress. The word rendered "hold" occurs elsewhere only in 1 Samuel 13:6, where it is rendered "high-place." Its exact signification is uncertain.

Verse 48

Zalmon - A lofty and thickly-wooded hill, as the etymology of the name ("shady") implies, in the immediate neighborhood of Shechem: perhaps the same as Ebal. The setting fire to the hold, where the men of Shechem were all crowded together, with their wives and children, was the literal fulfillment of Jotham's curse in Judges 9:20.

Verse 50

The men of Thebez (modern Tubas) had, doubtless, joined the Shechemites in their rebellion against Abimelech.

Verse 52

Went hard unto the door … - i. e. went close to the door. An act of manifest danger, seeing the roof was covered with persons who would be likely to throw down missiles of all sorts on the heads of their assailants. But the hatred of Abimelech, and his thirst for revenge, made him despise danger.

Verse 53

The phrase "all" to is now obsolete, and means "quite," "entirely," as in Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton.

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CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

Defend - The marginal reading "to deliver," is far preferable. The word is the same as in Judges 2:16, Judges 2:18; Judges 3:9, Judges 3:15, Judges 3:31, etc., and is the technical word applied to the judges. Compare Nehemiah 9:27 ("saviours who saved them," the King James Version).

The term "there arose," also marks Tola as one of the Judges, properly so called, raised by divine providence.

Tola and Puah - Both names of heads of houses in the tribe of Issachar 1 Chronicles 7:1; Genesis 46:13.

Shamir - Not the same as that mentioned in Joshua 15:48, which was in the hill country of Judah. Issaehar would seem from this to have extended into the northern part of mount Ephraim.

Verse 2

Jair the Gileadite was probably the same person as is named in Numbers 32:41; Deuteronomy 3:14, as having given the name of "Havoth-jair" to certain villages in Bashan.

Verse 6

The gods of Syria - Or "Aram." In the times of the Judges the various tribes of Aramites, or Syrians, were not compacted into one state, nor were they until after the time of Solomon. The national gods of these various Aramean tribes were probably the same; and their worship would be likely to be introduced into the trans-Jordanic tribes. It has been remarked that the Hebrew words for "to divine," "to practice magic," "idolatrous priests," and other like words, are of Syrian origin. The Syriac ritual proved very attractive to king Ahaz 2 Kings 16:10-12. For the national gods of the Zidonians, Moabites, Ammonites, and Philistines, see 1 Kings 11:5, 1Kings 11:7,1 Kings 11:33; 1 Samuel 5:2-5.

Verse 7

The previous mention of the Philistines as oppressors of Israel Judges 3:31 seems to be restricted to the south of Judah, when they cooperated with Moab. They appear to have gradually increased in power until they reached their height in the time of Saul. In the present instance they were probably in alliance with the Ammonites, holding the western tribes in check, while the Ammonites subdued those on the east of Jordan.

Verse 8

That year - Perhaps the closing year of the oppression, when the Ammonites passed over the Jordan. For it was this crowning oppression which brought the Israelites to repentance Judges 10:10, Judges 10:15-16, and so prepared the way for the deliverance. Possibly in the original narrative from which this portion of the Book of Judges is compiled, "that year" was defined.

The land of the Amorites - Namely, of Sihon king of the Amorites, Numbers 21:21; Deuteronomy 1:4; Joshua 13:10; Psalm 135:11.

Verse 11

(See the marginal references). The Israelites were delivered from the "Egyptians" at the Exodus; from the "Amorites" in the victories over Sihon, and Og, and the five kings of the Amorites Joshua 10:5; from the "children of Ammon" by Ehud; and from the "Philistines," by the hand of Shamgar (compare 1 Samuel 12:9).

Verse 12

The Zidonians - An allusion to the time of Barak, when the Zidonians doubtless formed part of the great confederacy of Canaanites under Jabin king of Hazor. See Joshua 11:8.

The Amalekites - In the time of Gideon (marginal reference).

The Maonites - Probably one of the tribes of the "children of the East," who came with the Midianites and Amalekites in the time of Gideon, and may have been conspicuous for their hostility to Israel, and for the greatness of their discomfiture, though the record has not been preserved. The name is "Mehununs" in 2 Chronicles 26:7.

Verse 17

The historian, having related the preliminary incidents, now comes to the final issue which forms the subject matter of his narrative. On a certain occasion, as on many previous ones, the Ammonites were encamped in Gilead, with the intention of dispossessing the Israelites of the whole country, or at least as far as the river Jabbok Judges 11:13, and of invading the West-Jordanic tribes. The children of Israel on the East of Jordan assembled together to resist them, and pitched their camp in Mizpeh. The narrative proceeds to detail what happened.

Mizpeh - , as its name, "watch-tower" or "look-out" indicates was situated on a height of Mount Gilead, and was, as such, a strong post. It is almost always written, "THE Mizpeh," or watch-tower. Four or five places of the name occur in Scripture.

Verse 18

And the people and princes … - The inhabitants of Gilead appear as a separate and independent community, electing their own chief, without any reference to the West-Jordanic tribes.

JUDGES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

The history of Jephthah appears to be an independent history inserted by the compiler of the Book of Judges. Judges 11:4-5 introduce the Ammonite war without any apparent reference to Judges 10:17-18.

A genealogy of Manasseh 1 Chronicles 7:14-17 gives the families which sprang from Gilead, and among them mention is made of an "Aramitess" concubine as the mother of one family. Jephthah, the son of Gilead by a strange woman, fled, after his father's death, to the land of Tob Judges 11:3, presumably the land of his maternal ancestors (compare Judges 9:1) and an "Aramean" settlement (2 Samuel 10:6, 2 Samuel 10:8; 1 Maccabees 5:13). It is difficult to conceive that Jephthah was literally the son of Gilead, if Gilead was the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh. Possibly "Gilead" here denotes the heir of Gilead, the head of the family, whose individual name has not been preserved, nor the time when he lived.

Verse 3

The land of Tob - To the north of Gilead, toward Damascus. The readiness with which Jephthah took to the freebooter's life gives us a lively picture of the unsettled times in which he lived.

Verse 7

This gives a wider signification to Judges 11:2-3, and shows that Jephthah's "brethren" include his fellow tribesmen.

Verse 9

Jephthah made his own aggrandisement the condition of his delivering; his country. The circumstances of his birth and long residence in a pagan land were little favorable to the formation of the highest type of character. Yet he has his record among the faithful Hebrews 11:32.

Verse 11

Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh - This phrase designates the presence of the tabernacle, or the ark, or of the high priest with Urim and Thummim Judges 20:26; Judges 21:2; Joshua 18:8; 1 Samuel 21:7. The high priest waited upon Jephthah with the ephod, and possibly the ark, at his own house (see Judges 20:18 here). A trace of Jephthah's claim to unite all Israel under his dominion is found in Judges

12:2, and breathes through his whole message to the king of the Ammonites. See Judges 11:12, Judges 11:15, Judges 11:23, Judges 11:27.

Verse 13

From Arnon even unto Jabbok … - The land bounded by the Arnon on the south, by the Jabbok on the north, by the Jordan on the west, and by the wilderness on the east was, of old, the kingdom of Sihon, but then the territory of Reuben and Gad.

Verses 15-28

Consult the marginal references. If the ark with the copy of the Law Deuteronomy 31:26 was at Mizpeh, it would account for Jephthah's accurate knowledge of it; and this exact agreement of his message with Numbers and Deuteronomy would give additional force to the expression, "he uttered all his words before the Lord" Judges 11:11.

Judges 11:17

No mention is made of this embassy to Moab in the Pentateuch.

Judges 11:19

Into my place - This expression implies that the trans-Jordanic possessions of Israel were not included in the land of Canaan properly speaking.

Judges 11:21

The title "God of Israel" has a special emphasis here, and in Judges 11:23. in a narrative of transactions relating to the pagan and their gods.

Judges 11:24

Chemosh was the national god of the Moabites (see the marginal references); and as the territory in question was Moabitish territory before the Amorites took it from "the people of Chemosh," this may account for the mention of Chemosh here rather than of Moloch, or Milcom, the god of the Ammonites. Possibly the king of the children of Ammon at this time may have been a Moabite.

Judges 11:25, Judges 11:26

Jephthah advances another historical argument. Balak, the king of Moab, never disputed the possession of Sihon's kingdom with Israel.

Verse 29

Then the Spirit of the Lord … - This was the sanctification of Jephthah for his office of Judge and savior of God's people Israel. Compare Judges 6:34; Judges 13:25. The declaration is one of the distinctive marks which stamp this history as a divine history.

The geography is rather obscure, but the sense seems to be that Jephthah first raised all the inhabitants of Mount Gilead; then he crossed the Jabbok into Manasseh, and raised them; then he returned at the head of his new forces to his own camp at Mizpeh to join the troops he had left there; and thence at the head of the whole army marched against the Ammonites, who occupied the southern parts of Gilead.

Verse 31

The words of this verse prove conclusively that Jephthah intended his vow to apply to human beings, not animals: for only one of his household could be expected to come forth from the door of his house to meet him. They also preclude any other meaning than that Jephthah contemplated a human sacrifice. This need not, however, surprise us, when we recollect his Syrian birth and long residence in a Syrian city, where such fierce rites were probably common. The Syrians and Phoenicians were conspicuous among the ancient pagan nations for human sacrifices, and the transfer, under such circumstances, to Yahweh of the rites with which the false gods were honored, is just what one might expect. The circumstance of the Spirit of the Lord coming on Jephthah Judges 11:29 is no difficulty; as it by no means follows that because the Spirit of God endued him with supernatural valor and energy for vanquishing the Ammonites, He therefore also endued him with spiritual knowledge and wisdom. The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, but that did not prevent his erring in the matter of the ephod Judges 8:27. Compare 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Galatians 2:11-14.

Verse 33

As in the conflicts with the Moabites, Canaanites, and Midianites Judges 3; 4; 7, the battle was on Israelite territory, in self-defense, not in aggressive warfare.

The plain of the vineyards - Rather, "Abel-Ceramim" (compare Abel-Meholah), identified with an "Abel" situated among vineyards, 7 miles from Robbah. "Minnith" is "Maanith," 4 miles from Heshbon, on the road to Rab-bah.

Verse 34

His daughter came out to meet him - The precise phrase of his vow Judges 11:31. She was his "only child," a term of special endearment (see Jeremiah 6:26; Zechariah 12:10). The same word is used of Isaac Genesis 22:2, Genesis 22:12, Genesis 22:16.

Verse 35

Jephthah was right in not being deterred from keeping his vow by the loss and sorrow to himself (compare the marginal references), just as Abraham was right in not withholding his son, his only son, from God, when commanded to offer him up as a burnt-offering. But Jephthah was wholly wrong in that conception of the character of God which led to his making the rash vow. And he would have done right not to slay his child, though the guilt of making and of breaking such a vow would have remained. Josephus well characterizes the sacrifice as "neither sanctioned by the Mosaic law, nor acceptable to God."

Verse 36

The touching submission of Jephthah's daughter to an inevitable fate shows how deeply-rooted at that time was the pagan notion of the propriety of human sacrifice.

Verse 37

Bewail my virginity - To become a wife and a mother was the end of existence to an Israelite maiden. The premature death of Jephthah's daughter was about to frustrate this end.

Verse 40

There is no allusion extant elsewhere to this annual lamentation of the untimely fate of Jephthah's daughter. But the poetical turn of the narrative suggests that it may be taken from some ancient song (compare the marginal note 4).

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CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

Compare the similar complaint of the Ephraimites to Gideon Judges 8:1, when a civil war was only avoided by Gideon‘s wise and patriotic moderation. The overhearing pride of Ephraim comes out in both occurrences (see also Joshua 17:14-18).

We will burn thine house upon thee with fire - Compare the fierce threat of the Philistines to Samson‘s wife Judges 14:15, and the yet fiercer execution Judges 15:6. Burning appears as a mode of capital punishment Genesis 38:24; Joshua 7:25, and as a mode of desperate warfare (Judges 1:8; Judges 20:48; Joshua 8:8, Joshua 8:19, etc.).

Verse 2

When I called you … - This circumstance is not related in the main narrative. It is likely to have occurred when Jephthah was first chosen leader by the Gileadites, and when Ephraim would probably ignore his pretensions.

Verse 3

I put my life in my hands - Compare 1 Samuel 19:5; 1 Samuel 28:21. The phrase expresses the utmost possible risk, knowingly incurred.

Verse 4

Because they said … - This passage is extremely obscure. Render: - “The men of Gilead smote Ephraim, for they (the Gileadites) said, Ye are. the fugitives of Ephraim. (Gilead lies between Ephraim and Manasseh; and Gilead took the fords of Jordan before Ephraim, and it came to pass, when the fugitives of Ephraim said Let me pass over, and the Gileadites asked him, art thou an Ephraimite, and he answered No, Then (the Gileadites) said to him say Shibboleth, etc. So they (the Gileadites) killed them at the fords of Jordan”). All that is included in the parenthesis is explanatory of the brief statement “They smote them, for they said, Ye are the fugitives of Ephraim;” i. e. in spite of denial they ascertained that they were the fugitives of Ephraim, and so pitilessly slaughtered them when they endeavored to return to their own country through Gilead. This part of Gilead, where the fords were, was clearly not in Manasseh, but in Gad. “Slew” Judges 12:6 implies “slaughtering” in cold blood, not killing in battle (see Jeremiah 39:6). The word in the original text is the proper word for slaying animals for sacrifice.

Verse 6

Shibboleth; and he said Sibboleth - This is a curious instance of dialectic difference of pronunciation between the East and West Jordanic tribes. It is an evidence of the sound "sh" having passed into the Hebrew from the East of Jordan, possibly from the Arabians, with whom the sound is common.

Forty-two thousand - The number includes the slain in battle and those killed at the fords.

Verse 8

Ibzan of Bethlehem - Some have fancied him the same as Boaz Rth 2:1 of Bethlehem-Judah. Others, from the juxtaposition of Elon the Zebulonite Judges 12:11, understand Bethlehem in the tribe of Zebulon Joshua 19:15.

Verse 11

A Zebulonite - The tribe of Zebulon had shown its bravery, patriotism, and prowess in the time of Barak Judges 4:10; Judges 5:18.

Verse 13

A Pirathonite - He was, therefore, an Ephraimite 1 Chronicles 27:14. Its name still lingers in "Feratah," 6 miles west of Shechem. The 25 years, apparently consecutive, occupied by the judgeship of Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, seem to have been very uneventful and prosperous, since the only record of them, preserved in the annals of their country, relates to the flourishing families and peaceful magnificence of two of the number.

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CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

The Philistines have been mentioned as oppressors of Israel in Judges 3:31; Judges 10:7, Judges 10:11; and the Israelite worship of the gods of the Philistines is spoken of in Judges 10:6. But this is the first time that we have any detailed history in connection with the Philistines. They continned to be the prominent enemies of Israel until the time of David.

Forty years - The Philistine dominion began before the birth of Samson Judges 13:5, and was in force during Samson‘s twenty years‘ judgeship Judges 14:4; Judges 15:20. The 40 years are, therefore, about coincident with Samson‘s life.

Verse 2

Zorah - See the marginal reference.

His wife was barren - To mark more distinctly the high providential destiny of the child that was eventually born. Compare the similar circumstances of the birth of Isaac, Jacob, Samuel, and John the Baptist.

Verse 5

A Nazarite - See the marginal reference. and note. The common Nazarite vow was for a limited time, like Paul‘s Acts 18:18; Acts 21:23-26. Others, like Samuel 1 Samuel 1:11, were Nazarites for life.

Verse 6

A man of God - The designation of a prophet, of frequent use in the books of Samuel and Kings 1 Samuel 2:27; 1 Samuel 9:6-8, 1 Samuel 9:10; 1 Kings 12:22; 1 Kings 13:1, 1 Kings 13:5-6, 1 Kings 13:11, and applied to Timothy by Paul in the New Testament 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 3:17.

His countenance - Rather, “his appearance,” as the word is rendered in Daniel 10:18.

Verse 12

Translate, “What shall be the manner (or ordering) of the child, and what shall be his work (or exploits).” The original message of the Angel had given information on these two points:

(1) how the child was to be brought up, namely, as a Nazarite;

(2) what he should do, namely, begin to deliver Israel.

Manoah desires to have the information repeated (compare 1 Samuel 17:26-27, 1 Samuel 17:30). Accordingly, in Judges 13:13 the Angel refers to, and enlarges upon, his former injunctions.

Verse 14

Compare Numbers 6:4. In both passages the vine is described by the somewhat unusual though more accurate term, "vine of the wine" - the grape-bearing vine - to distinguish it from the wild cucumber vine 2 Kings 4:39, or other plants to which the name vine was applied.

Verse 15

The language of Manoah, like that of Gideon Judges 6:18, seems to indicate some suspicion that his visitor was more than human. The word rendered "made ready," is also the proper word for "offering a sacrifice," and is so used by the Angel in the next verse. By which it appears that the Angel understood Manoah to speak of offering a kid as a burnt-offering. Hence, his caution, "thou must offer it unto the Lord." (Compare Revelation 19:10; Revelation 22:8; Acts 10:25-26.)

Verse 17

Do thee honor - If applied to a man, it would be by gifts, such for instance as Balak promised to the prophet Balaam Numbers 22:17, and such as were usually given to seers 1 Samuel 9:7-8; 2 Kings 5:5, 2 Kings 5:15: if to God, it would be by sacrifices Isaiah 43:23.

Verse 18

Secret - Rather, "wonderful," as in the margin. In Judges 13:19 the Angel "did wondrously," probably as the Angel that Appeared to Gideon had done, bringing fire from the rock. See the marginal references and notes.

Verse 24

Samson - The etymology is doubtful. Perhaps it comes from a word signifying "to minister," in allusion to his Nazaritic consecration to the service of God.

Verse 25

In the camp of Dan - Rather, "Mahaneh-Dan" (see the margin). The impulses of the Spirit of the Lord perhaps took the shape of burning indignation at the subjection of his brethren, and thoughts and plans for their deliverance, but especially showed themselves in feats of strength (Judges 14:6; Judges 15:14; Judges 16:30. Compare Acts 7:23-25).

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CHAPTER 14

Verse 1

Timnath - See Joshua 15:10 and note. It was below Zorah Judges 13:2, about three miles S. W. of it.

Verse 2

Get her for me - namely, by Paying the requisite dowry (see marginal references) and gifts to relations. Hence, the frequent mention of parents taking wives for their sons Exodus 34:16; Nehemiah 10:30, because the parents of the bridegroom conducted the negotiation, and paid the dower to the parents of the bride.

Verse 3

The uncircumcised Philistines - Compare 1 Samuel 14:6; 1 Samuel 17:26; 1 Samuel 31:4, for a similar use of the term as one of reproach. Also Acts 11:3.

Verse 4

His father and mother very properly opposed Samson‘s marriage with a Pagan woman, the daughter of the oppressors of his race. But they could not prevail, because it was the secret purpose of God by these means to “seek occasion” against the Philistines; i. e. to make the misconduct of the father of Samson‘s wife, which He foresaw, the occasion of destruction to the Philistines. Compare the marginal references for similar statements.

Verse 8

The formal dowry and gifts having been given by Samson‘s father, an interval, varying according to the Oriental custom, from a few days to a full year, elapsed between the betrothal and the wedding, during which the bride lived with her friends. Then came the essential part of the marriage ceremony, namely, the removal of the bride from her father‘s house to that of the bridegroom or his father.

The carcase of the lion - The lion, slain by him a year or some months before, had now become a mere skeleton, fit for bees to swarm into. It was a universal notion among the ancients that bees were generated from the carcass of an ox.

Verse 10

Made a feast … - This was the wedding-feast, protracted in this instance seven days, in that of Tobias (Genesis 29:22; Esther 2:18; Matthew 22:2-4; Revelation 19:7, Revelation 19:9.

Verse 11

Thirty companions - These were "the children of the bride-chamber" (Matthew 9:15; see Judges 14:20). From the number of them it may be inferred that Samson's family was of some wealth and importance.

Verse 12

See the marginal references. Riddles formed one of the amusements of these protracted feasts.

Sheets - Rather "linen shirts;" the "garments" which follow are the outward garments worn by the Orientals.

Verse 14-15

Three days … on the seventh day - Proposed alterations, such as "six days … on the fourth day," are unnecessary if it be remembered that the narrator passes on first to the seventh day (at Judges 14:15), and then goes back at Judges 14:16 and beginning of Judges 14:17 to what happened on the 4th, 5th, and 6th days.

To take that we have - See the margin. They affirm that they were only invited to the wedding for the sake of plundering them by means of this riddle, and if Samson's wife was a party to plundering her own countrymen, she should suffer for it.

Verse 18

They try to give the answer in a way to make it appear that they had guessed it. Samson saw at once that she had betrayed him. He lets them know in a speech, which was of the nature of a riddle, that he had discovered the treachery.

Verse 20

His companion - Perhaps one of those mentioned in Judges 14:11. The transaction denotes loose notions of the sanctity of marriage among the Philistines. It should be noted carefully that the practical lesson against ungodly marriages comes out most strongly in this case and that the providential purpose which out of this evil brought discomfiture to the Philistines, has nothing to do with the right or wrong of Samson's conduct.

JUDGES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verse 1

Visited his wife with a kid - A common present (see Genesis 38:17; Luke 15:29). From Samson‘s wife being still in her father‘s house, it would seem that she was only betrothed, not actually married, to his companion.

Verse 2

I gave her - In marriage. Samson had probably not heard of this before. Samson‘s father had paid the dowry for the older sister; her father therefore offers her sister in her room. The fear of Samson probably also influenced him.

Verse 3

See the margin. Before, when the Philistines injured him he was in covenant with the Timnathites through his marriage and by the rites of hospitality, for which reason he went off to Ashkelon to take his revenge Judges 14:19. But now the Philistines themselves had broken this bond, and so he was free to take his revenge on the spot.

Verse 4

Foxes - Rather, “jackals,” which are still very common in Palestine, especially about Joppa and Gaza. 1 Samuel 13:17 and Joshua 15:28; Joshua 19:3, are indications of the abundance of foxes or jackals giving names to places, especially in the country of the Phililstines. It belongs to Samson‘s character, and agrees with the incident about the lion, that he should be an expert hunter. Ovid relates a very curious custom at Rome of letting loose foxes with lighted torches fastened to their tails in the circus at the Cerealia, in commemoration of the damage once done to the standing grain by a fox which a rustic had wrapped in hay and straw and set on fire, and which, running away, put the grain-fields in a blaze. This custom, which may have had a Phoenician origin, is a curious illustration of the narrative.

Verse 6

burnt her and her father - Out of revenge on Samson‘s nearest relations; or, as others think, as an act of justice in favor of Samson, and in hope of pacifying his anger. Burning was the punishment for adultery and kindred crimes among the Jews Genesis 38:24; Leviticus 20:14; Leviticus 21:9. Samson‘s wife brought upon herself the very punishment which she sought to escape by betraying her husband Judges 14:15.

Verse 8

Hip and thigh - A proverbial expression of doubtful origin, meaning all the "great" and "mighty," all the choice pieces like the thigh and shoulder.

In the top of the rock - Rather, "the cleft of the rock." These clefts of the rock were the natural fortresses and hiding places of the land. (Isaiah 2:21; Isaiah 57:5. Compare 1 Samuel 13:6; 1 Kings 18:13.)

Etam - Not the same as the place in the territory of Simeon 1 Chronicles 4:32. Its situation is uncertain, but a site near Eleutheropolis ("Beth-jibrin") is required; and there exist some extraordinary caverns in the soft limestone or chalky rock, fifteen or twenty feet deep, with perpendicular sides, opening into extensive excavations in the rock, about two hours from Eleutheropolis. (Conder conjectures it to be the same as Atab, a village 12 miles southwest of Jerusalem, in the ʿarkubor Ridge.)

Verse 9

Spread themselves - An expression used of the Philistine mode of war 2 Samuel 5:18, 2 Samuel 5:22, alluding to the compact way in which they came up the wadys, and then distpersed. Lehi is so called by anticipation (see Judges 15:17).

Verse 11

The dispirited men of Judah were prepared to give up their champion, in order to conciliate their masters. This shows how hard was the task of the Judge, whose office it was to restore his countrymen to freedom and independence.

Verse 14

The cords … became as flax … - i. e. were as weak against his strength as half-burned flax which yields to the least pressure.

Verse 15

Slew a thousand men therewith - Compare the marginal references. The Philistines, seized with a panic at seeing Samson suddenly burst his cords and rush at them, offered no resistance, but fell an easy prey to the blows of their mighty foe. Some perhaps were dashed down the cliffs in their flight.

Verse 16

There is a play upon the word, three times repeated, which means both "an ass" and also "a heap." The spirit of riddle-making Judges 14:12, Judges 14:18 is apparent in this song of triumph (compare Judges 5:1; Exodus 15:1; 1 Samuel 18:6-7).

Verse 17

Ramath-lehi - Either the "height or hill of Lehi," or, "of the jaw-bone;" or, as in the margin, "the crestlag away of the jaw-bone," with allusion to Samson casting it out of his hand, when he had finished his war-song.

Verse 19

An hollow place that was in the jaw - The right translation is, "the hollow place which is in Lehi." The word translated "hollow place," means a "mortar" Proverbs 27:22, and is here evidently a hollow or basin among the cliffs of Lehi, which, from its shape, was called "the mortar." A spring, on the way from Socho to Eleutheropolis, was commonly called Samson's spring in the time of Jerome and writers in the 7th, 12th, and 14th centuries.

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CHAPTER 16

Verse 1

Gaza - About 8 hours from Eleutheropolis, and one of the chief strongholds of the Philistines.

Verse 3

Instead of forcing the doors open, he tore the posts up, as it were, by the roots, with the barred doors attached to them. The word rendered "went away with them," means "to pluck up the tent-pins," and hence, "to remove." The present town of Gaza (Ghuzzeh) is an open town, without gates or walls, but the sites of the ancient gates still remain visible. One of these, on the southeast, is shown as the gate carried off by Samson.

A partially-isolated hill, about half-an-hour southeast of Gaza, and standing out from the chain that runs up to Hebron, bears the name of "Samson's Mount." But it may be doubted whether one of the hills overlooking Hebron is not rather meant.

Verse 4

A village to the north of Eleutheropolis, called Caphar-Sotek, was still existing in the time of Eusebius, near Zorah.

Verse 5

And the lords of the Philistines - See Judges 3:3 note.

His great strength lieth - Rather, "wherein his strength is great."

Eleven hundred pieces of silver - The greatness of the bribe offered to Delilah, 5,500 shekels of silver, nearly two talents (Exodus 38:24, note), shows the importance attached to Samson's capture.

Verse 11

Occupied - The margin, "wherewith work hath not been done," is better.

Verse 14

And she fastened it with the pin … - The meaning of the verses seems to be that the seven long plaits, in which Samson's hair was arranged, were to be woven as a woof into the threads of a warp which stood prepared on a loom in the chamber, which loom Delilah fastened down with a pin, so as to keep it firm and immoveable. But Samson, when he awoke, tore up the pin from its socket, and went away with the loom and the pin fastened to his hair.

The beam - Rather, the "loom," or "frame." The beam is the wooden revolving cylinder, on which the cloth is rolled as fast as it is woven, the Hebrew word for which 1 Samuel 17:7; 1 Chronicles 11:23; 1 Chronicles 20:5 is quite different from that here used.

Verse 20

The possession of his extraordinary strength is ascribed (e. g. Judges 13:25) to the presence of the Spirit of the Lord. Now the Lord, or the Spirit of the Lord, had departed from him, and so his strength had gone too. The practical lesson against the presumption of self-dependence, and the all-importance of a hearty dependence upon God's Holy Spirit, must not be overlooked.

Verse 21

Put out his eyes - Thus effectually, as they thought, preventing any future mischief on his part, while they prolonged their own triumph and revenge. (Compare Numbers 16:14; 2 Kings 25:7; Jeremiah 39:7.)

They applied to the two feet fetters of brass 2 Samuel 3:34; Jeremiah 52:11, and made him "grind" - the special task of slaves and captives Exodus 11:5; Isaiah 47:2; Lamentations 5:13.

Verse 23

Dagon was the national idol of the Philistines 1 Chronicles 10:10, so called from Dag, a fish. The description of Dagon, in his temple at Ashdod 1 Samuel 5:4, exactly agrees with the representations of a fish-god on the walls of Khorsabad, on slabs at Kouyunjik, and on sundry antique cylinders and gems. In these the figures vary. Some have a human form down to the waist, with that of a fish below the waist; others have a human head, arms, and legs, growing, as it were, out of a fish's body, and so arranged that the fish's head forms a kind of mitre to the man's head, while the body and fins form a kind of cloak, hanging down behind.

Verse 24

Our God … - A portion of the Philistine triumphal song. Compare Judges 5; Exodus 15.

Verse 25

That he may make us sport - Rather, "that he may play for us," i. e. dance and make music. At an idolatrous feast, dancing was always accompanied with vocal and instrumental music.

Verse 26

More literally, “let me rest, and let me feel the pillars, that I may lean upon them.” He feigned weariness with his dancing and singing, and asked to recover himself by leaning against the pillars. The flat roof, from the top of which, as well as under it, spectators could see what was being done on the stage in front, was mainly supported by two pillars. The lords and principal persons sat UNDER the roof, while the people, to the number of 3,000, stood ON the flat roof. When the pillars were removed, the weight of 3,000 people brought the roof down with a fearful crash, and those above fell together with the stones and timbers upon those below, and a great slaughter was the result, Samson himself perishing under the ruins.

Verse 28

At once avenged - “i. e. with one final revenge.” These words do not breathe the spirit of the Gospel, but they express a sentiment, natural to the age, knowledge, and character of Samson.

Verse 31

“All the house of his father,” in connection with “his brethren,” must mean the whole tribe of Dan, aiding his nearer relations. The Danites, taking advantage of the consternation of the Philistines, and of the death of their lords and chief men, went down in force to Gaza, and recovered the body of their great captain and judge, and buried him in his father‘s sepulchre.

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CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

See the introduction to the Book of Judges. The only point of contact with the preceding history of Samson is, that we are still concerned with the tribe of Dan. See Judges 18:1-2, note. Josephus combines in one narrative what we read here and in Judges 1:34, and places it, with the story in Judges 1821, immediately after the death of Joshua.

Verse 2

Thou cursedst - or, "adjuredst me by God." Compare Matthew 26:63; Leviticus 5:1.

Verse 3

Such a superstitious and unlawful mode of worshipping Yahweh is quite of a piece with Judges 8:27; Judges 11:31; 1 Kings 12:28, etc. It argues but slight acquaintance with the Ten Commandments, which, from the ignorance of reading and writing, were probably not familiar to the Israelites in those unsettled times. The mother intimates that the consecration of the silver was for the benefit of her son and his house, not for her own selfish advantage: and that she adheres to her original design of consecrating this silver for her son‘s benefit.

Verse 4

See Judges 8:27, note; Genesis 31:19, note.

Verse 6

In those days … - This phrase, indicating distinctly that the writer lived after the establishment of the kingly government in Israel, is unique to the author of these last five chapters.

Verse 7

The Hebrew words for "he sojourned there" are, גר שׁם *gêr shām* which words are used Judges 18:30 in the genealogy of this young Levite, whose name was "Jonathan, the son of Gershom" (גרשׁם *gêreshôm*). Hence, some read here, "the son of Gershom."

Verse 8

Jonathan‘s state without a home gives us vivid picture of what must have been the condition of many Levites.

Verse 10

Ten shekels - About 25 shillings to 26 shillings (see Exodus 38:24).

Verse 13

This shows the ignorance as well as the superstition of the age (compare 2 Kings 18:22), and gives a picture of the lawlessness of the times. The incidental testimony to the Levitical priesthood is to be noted; but the idolatrous worship in the immediate neighborhood of Shiloh is passing strange.

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CHAPTER 18

Verse 2

This identity of locality with the scene of Samson‘s birth and death indicates that both narratives are drawn from the same source, probably the annals of the tribe of Dan.

Verse 3

It does not follow that they had known him before, and recognized his voice, though it may be so. But the Hebrew equally bears the sense that they heard the voice of the Levite; and, attracted by it, went into the chapel Judges 18:18 where Jonathan was. They were probably just starting on their journey, but were still within the court or precincts of Micah‘s house. Micah had evidently not told them of his house of God, and his Levite. Their questions indicate surprise.

Verse 5

The sight of the ephod and teraphim suggested the notion of inquiring of God.

Verse 6

Before the Lord … - i. e. He looks favorably upon it. (Compare Ezra 8:21-22.)

Verse 7

Laish - Afterward called “Dan” Judges 18:29. The exact site has not been identified, but it was the northern extremity of Israel, near the sources of the Jordan, and about four miles from Panium, or Caesarea-Philippi. It is thought to have stood where the village Tell-el-Kadi now stands.

After the manner of the Zidonians - The genius of the Zidonians being mechanical and commercial, not military, their colonists were apt to neglect fortifications and similar warlike precautions. In Solomon‘s time the Zidonians were especially skillful in hewing timber 1 Kings 5:6; 1 Chronicles 22:4, and it is highly probable, from their proximity to Lebanon, that such was the occupation of the men of Laish.

Quiet and secure … - This is a very obscure and difficult passage. Translate thus: “Quiet and secure, and none of them doing any injury in the land, possessing wealth,” or “dominion.”

Verse 12

Kurjath-jearim - “City of forests,” otherwise called “Kirjath-Baal” (marginal reference.), identified by Robinson with the modern “Kurit-el-

Enab," on the road from Jaffa to Jerusalem and by Conder with Soba.

Verse 14

In these houses - This agrees with what we saw at Judges 18:2-3 that the "house of God" and Jonathan's house were detached from Micah's. There were other houses besides Judges 18:22. The whole settlement was probably called Beth-Micah, contained in one court, and entered by one gate Judges 18:16.

Verse 17

The five went back to Micah's chapel (Micah's house, Judges 18:18) and took the ephod, teraphim, etc., and brought them to the gate where the priest was talking to the 600 men.

Verse 21

And put the little ones, etc., before them - They expected a pursuit from Micah's people, and arranged their order of march accordingly.

The carriage - Rather, "the valuables." Some interpret it "the heavy baggage."

Verse 22

Were gathered together - literally, "were called together." The men, who were all Micah's workmen, were probably in the fields with their master at the time of the robbery. When the women saw what was done they gave the alarm, and Micah called the men together as quickly as possible, and pursued the Danites and overtook them.

Verse 27

The things which Micah had made - Rather, from Judges 18:24, "the gods which Micah had made." See Judges 18:31; Deuteronomy 27:15; Exodus 20:4.

Verse 28

Rehob (as Dan afterward) is mentioned as the northernmost point of the land of Canaan Numbers 13:21, and its position is defined with reference to the entering in of Hamath.

A city - Rather, "the" city. They rebuilt Laish, which they had burned down Judges 18:29.

Verse 30-31

In the Hebrew text the name here rendered Manasseh is written MN)-SH. Without the "N" (nun) suspended over the line, the word may be read: Moses, whose son was Gershom Exodus 2:22, whose son or descendant Jonathan clearly was. The Masoretes, probably grieved that a descendant of

Moses should have been implicated in idolatrous worship, adopted this expedient for disguising the fact without absolutely falsifying the text. The Vulgate has “Moses”, the Septuagint “Manasses”.

These verses seem to tell us that Jonathan‘s descendants were priests to the tribe of Dan until the captivity 2 Kings 15:29; 2 Kings 17:6; and that the graven image was in their custody until David‘s time, by whose order, perhaps, it was destroyed, though the idolatrous worship continued, or was revived, at Dan.

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CHAPTER 19

Introduction

This history has no connection whatever with the preceding. The note of time Judges 20:28 shows that the date of it is in the lifetime of the first generation of settlers in Canaan.

Verse 1

A concubine - See the margin. The name does not imply any moral reproach. A concubine was as much the man‘s wife as the woman so called, though she had not the same rights. See Judges 19:3-4.

Verse 2

Played the whore against him - Perhaps only meaning that she ran away from him, and left him, for she returned to her father‘s house.

Verse 9

This is a perfect picture of the manners of the time. It is probable that the father showed more than usual hospitality, in order to ensure the kind treatment of his daughter by her husband. These particulars are given to account for their journey running so far into the evening, which was the immediate cause of the horrible catastrophe which followed.

Verse 12

City of a stranger - This shows how completely, even in these early days, the Jebusite population had excluded both the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

Verse 14

Gibeah, which belongeth to Benjamin - See Joshua 18:24 note.

Verse 15

A street - Probably the square or place within the gates, where courts were held, bargains made, and where the chief men and strangers congregated.

Verse 16

Which was also of Mount Ephraim - i. e., of the country of the Levite. This single giver of hospitality was himself a stranger and sojourner at Gibeah.

Verse 18

The house of the Lord - Probably at Shiloh (marginal references). The Levite was probably one of those who ministered at the tabernacle. His two

donkeys and servant show him to have been in good circumstances, and he had a home of his own.

Verse 23

This man is come into mine house - He appeals to the sacred rights of hospitality, just as Lot did Genesis 19:8. Both cases betray painfully the low place in the social scale occupied by woman in the old world, from which it is one of the glories of Christianity to have raised her.

Verse 29

A knife - Rather, "the" "knife". The single household implement used, not like our knives at our meals, but for slaughtering and cutting up the animals into joints for eating Genesis 22:6, Genesis 22:10; Proverbs 30:14.

Together with her bones … - Rather, "into her bones", or "bone by bone, into twelve pieces". The "pieces" are synonymous with the "bones" (compare Ezekiel 24:4-5). There is something truly terrible in the stern ferocity of grief and indignation which dictated this desperate effort to arouse his countrymen to avenge his wrong. Compare 1 Samuel 11:7.

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CHAPTER 20

Verse 1

The "congregation" is the technical term for the whole community of the Israelite people. Its occurrence here is an indication of the early date of these transactions.

From Dan to Beer-sheba - We cannot safely infer from this expression that the settlement of Dan, recorded in Judges 21:8, Judges 21:10.

Unto the Lord in Mizpeh - The phrase "unto the Lord", implies the presence of the tabernacle (Judges 11:11 note). Mizpeh in Benjamin Joshua 18:26, from its connection with Bethel and Ramah, is probably meant here. It is the same as that which appears as a place of national assembly in 1 Samuel 7:5; 1 Samuel 10:17; 2 Kings 25:23-25. It must have been near Shiloh and Gibeah, and in the north of Benjamin. The Benjamites were duly summoned with the other tribes; so that their absence was contumacious Judges 20:3.

Verse 2

The chief - literally, "the corner stones." (Compare 1 Samuel 14:38.)

Verse 8

They bound themselves not to break up and disperse until they had punished the wickedness of Gibeah.

Verse 9

By lot - To determine who should go up first Judges 20:18. The shape of the ground probably made it impossible for the whole force to operate at once; and the question of spoil would have something to do with the arrangement. (Compare 1 Samuel 30:22-25.)

Verse 10

In order to make it possible for the force of Israel to keep the field, and do to the men of Gibeah what their wickedness deserved, every tenth man (40,000 in all) was appointed to find provisions for the whole army.

Verses 15-17

Comparing the numbers here with those in Judges 20:16

See Judges 3:15, and note. In the Septuagint and Vulgate the 700 chosen men of Gibeah are represented as the seven hundred left-handed slingers.

Verse 18

Went up to the house of God - It should be "to Bethel." At this time the ark was at Bethel (compare 1 Samuel 10:3), and not at Shiloh. It is not

unlikely that though Shiloh was the chief residence of the ark Jeremiah 7:12, yet the tabernacle, being moveable, was, either at stated times, or as occasion required, moved to where the Judge resided, or the congregation assembled (compare 1 Samuel 7:16). On the present occasion the ark may have been moved to Bethel for the convenience of proximity to the great national council at Mizpeh.

Verse 21

Gibeah, being on a hill, was difficult of access to an attacking army, and gave great advantage to the defenders, who fought from higher ground, and probably defended a narrow pass, while their companions on the walls could gall the assailants with their slingstones.

Verse 26

Fasted until even - The regular time for ending a fast among the Hebrews was sunset (compare 1 Samuel 14:24; 2 Samuel 1:12). Such national fasts are called by the rabbis "fasts of the congregation," and were enjoined in times of great affliction.

On the offerings, see Lev. i., 3.

Verse 28

Phinehas, the son of Eleazar … - A most important chronological statement, which makes it probable that these events occurred within twenty years of the death of Joshua.

To-morrow - The two former answers only bade them go up against Benjamin; now, for the first time, the promise is added, "Tomorrow," etc. (compare Joshua 8:1).

Verse 29

The stratagem described is exactly that by which Joshua took Ai (marginal reference).

Verse 31

To the house of God - "To Bethel," as in the margin. On "Gibeah in the field," see Joshua 18:24 note.

Verse 33

Baal-tamar is only mentioned here. It took its name from some palm-tree that grew there; perhaps the same as the "palm-tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel" Judges 4:5, the exact locality here indicated, since "the highway" Judges 20:31 along which the Israelites enticed the

Benjamites to pursue them, leads straight to Ramah, which lay only a mile beyond the point where the two ways branch off.

The meadows of Gibeah - The word rendered "meadow" is only found here. According to its etymology, it ought to mean a "bare open place", which is particularly unsuitable for an ambush. However, by a change in the vowel-points, without any alteration in the letters, it becomes the common word for "a cavern".

Verse 42

The way of the wilderness - i. e., the wilderness which extended from Jericho to the hills of Bethel.

Them which came out of the cities - These must be the Benjamites Judges 20:15. Hence, "in the midst of them" must mean "in their own cities", where they severally fled for refuge, but failed to find shelter Judges 20:48. Anathoth, Alemath, Ramah, Ataroth, Geba, Michmash, Ai, Bethel, Migron, etc., would probably be the cities meant, all lying east and north of Gibeah.

Verse 43

The language and construction of this verse is poetical; it seems to be an extract from a song, and to describe, in the language of poetry, the same event which the preceding verse described in that of prose.

With ease - Or "rest" Numbers 10:33; Psalm 95:11. The expression is very obscure. The margin takes it as the name of a place.

Verse 45

Rimmon - A village named "Rummon", situated on the summit of a conical chalky hill, still exists, and forms a remarkable object in the landscape, visible in all directions. It lies 15 miles north of Jerusalem. It is a different place from Rimmon in the south of Judah Joshua 15:32, and Remmon in Zebulon Joshua 19:13. Gidom, mentioned nowhere else, was evidently close to Rimmon.

Verse 46

In Judges 20:35 the number given is 25,100. Judges 20:44-46 give the details of the loss on that day: 18,000,5,000, and 2,000; in all 25,000. But as the Benjamites numbered 26,700 men Judges 20:15, and 600 escaped to the rock of Rimmon, it is clear that 1,100 are unaccounted for, partly from no account being taken of those who fell in the battles of the two first days, partly from the use of round numbers, or from some other cause. The

numbers given both here and in Judges 20:35 are expressly restricted to those who fell on “that” (the third) “day.”

Verse 48

They treated Benjamin as devoted to utter destruction, as Jericho had been Joshua 6:17, Joshua 6:21, and the whole tribe was all but actually extirpated. We see in the punishment inflicted the same ferocity which marked both the crime and the Levite‘s mode of requiring vengeance.

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CHAPTER 21

Verse 2

To the house of God - It should be, "to Bethel." See Judges 20:18.

Verse 3

The repetition of the name of Israel is very striking in connection with the title of Yahweh as "God of Israel." It contains a very forcible pleading of the covenant, and memorial of the promises. The very name "Israel" comprehended all the twelve tribes; with one of them blotted out, the remnant would not be Israel.

Verse 4

It is not certain whether the brass altar was at Bethel at this time, or whether it may not have been elsewhere, e. g., at Shiloh with the tabernacle. Some, however, think that the altar here mentioned was "additional" to the brass altar, in consequence of the unusual number of sacrifices caused by the presence of the whole congregation (compare 1 Kings 8:64 note).

Verse 8

Jabesh-Galead - Is here mentioned for the first time. (See marginal references.) The name of Jabesh survives only in the Wady Yabes (running down to the east bank of the Jordan), near the head of which are situated the ruins called Ed-Deir, which are identified with Jabesh-Gilead.

Verse 10

And the congregation sent 12,000 men - A thousand from each tribe; they followed the precedent of Numbers 31:4.

Verse 11

Ye shall utterly destroy - More exactly, "Ye shall devote to utter destruction," or "cherem" (Leviticus 27:28 note).

Verse 12

To Shiloh - Whither, as the usual place of meeting for the national assembly, the Israelites had moved from Bethel (a distance of about 10 miles), during the expedition of the 12,000 to Jabesh-Gilead.

Verse 18

For the children of Israel have sworn - See Judges 21:1. Compare Saul's rash oath 1 Samuel 14:24, and his breach of the oath made to the Gideonites 2 Samuel 21:2. For the guilt of a broken oath, see Ezekiel 17:15-20; Exodus 20:7.

Verse 19

The Feast was probably the Passover, or one of the three great Jewish Feasts. In these unsettled times men went up to Shiloh (Seilun) only once a year 1 Samuel 1:3 instead of thrice; only the males kept the Feasts, and therefore the virgins of Shiloh would naturally be the only maidens present, and the public festival would be a likely occasion for their festive dances. It is, however, possible that some particular feast unique to Shiloh is meant, like the yearly sacrifice of David‘s family in Bethlehem 1 Samuel 20:29.

Verse 22

Ye did not give … - i. e., they had not broken the oath mentioned in Judges 21:1, so as to be guilty of taking the Lord‘s name in vain. They did not give their daughters to Benjamin: the Benjamites had taken them by force. Such casuistry as this condemns the system of oaths, and illustrates the wisdom of our Lord‘s precept Matthew 5:33-37.

Verse 23

Compare the very similar account of the rape of the Sabine women by the Romero youths at the festival of the Consualia, as related by Livy.

Verse 25

The repetition of this characteristic phrase (compare Judges 17:6; Judges 18:1; Judges 19:1) is probably intended to impress upon us the idea that these disorders arose from the want of a sufficient authority to suppress them. The preservation of such a story, of which the Israelites must have been ashamed, is a striking evidence of the divine superintendence and direction as regards the Holy Scriptures.

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CHAPTER EIGHT
Ruth

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RUTH INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Ruth

The Book of Ruth is historically important as giving the lineage of David through the whole period of the rule of the Judges Rth 1:1 , i. e. from Salmon who fought under Joshua, to "Jesse the Bethlehemite" 1 Samuel 16:1; and as illustrating the ancestry of "Jesus Christ, the son of David," who "was born in Bethlehem of Judea" Matthew 1:1; Matthew 2:1. The care with which this narrative was preserved through so many centuries before the birth of Christ is a striking evidence of the providence of God, that "known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." The genealogy with which the Book closes Rth 4:18 , is also an important contribution to the chronology of Scripture history. We learn from it, with great distinctness, that Salmon, one of the conquering host of Joshua, was the grandfather of Obed, who was the grandfather of king David; in other words, that four generations, or about 200 years, span the "days when the Judges ruled."

But the Book of Ruth has another interest, from the charming view it gives us of the domestic life of pious Israelites even during the most troubled times. If we only had drawn our impressions from the records of violence and crime contained in the Book of Judges, we would have been ready to conclude that all the gentler virtues had fled from the land, while the children of Israel were alternately struggling for their lives and liberties with the tribes of Canaan, or yielding themselves to the seductions of Canaanite idolatry. But the Book of Ruth, lifting up the curtain which veiled the privacy of domestic life, discloses to us most beautiful views of piety, integrity, self-sacrificing affection, chastity, gentleness and charity, growing up amidst the rude scenes of war, discord, and strife.

Ruth, from its contents, as anciently by its place in the canon, belongs to the Book of Judges, and is a kind of appendix to it. In the present Hebrew Bible it is placed among the Kethubim (Hagiographa), in the group containing the Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther; but in the Greek Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate it occupies the same place as in our English Bibles, which was its ancient place in the Hebrew Bible.

The language of the Book of Ruth is generally pure Hebrew. But there are words of Aramaic form and origin, and other expressions unique to the later Hebrew. The inference would be that, the Book of Ruth was composed not before the later times of the Jewish monarchy; and this inference is somewhat strengthened by the way in which the writer speaks of the custom which prevailed in former times in Israel Rth 4:7 . Other expressions, which the book has in common with the Books of Samuel and Kings, and a certain similarity of narrative, tend to place it upon about the same level of antiquity with those Books.

The Books of the Old Testament, to the contents of which reference seems to be made in the Book of Ruth, are Judges, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Genesis, 1 and 2Samuel, and perhaps Job. Ruth is not quoted or referred to in the New Testament, except that the generations from Hezron to David in our Lord‘s genealogy seem to be taken from it.

No mystical or allegorical sense can be assigned to the history; but Ruth, the Moabitess, was undoubtedly one of the first-fruits of the ingathering of Gentiles into the Church of Christ, and so an evidence of God‘s gracious purpose in Christ, “also to the Gentiles to grant repentance unto life;” and the important evangelical lesson is as plainly taught in her case, as in that of Cornelius, “that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of Him.” The great doctrine of divine grace is also forcibly taught by the admission of Ruth, the Moabitess, among the ancestry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

RUTH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

In the days when the Judges ruled - "Judged." This note of time, like that in Rth 4:7 ; Judges 18:1; Judges 17:6, indicates that this Book was written after the rule of the judges had ceased. The genealogy Rth 4:17-22 points to the time of David as the earliest when the Book of Ruth could have been written.

A famine - Caused probably by one of the hostile invasions recorded in the Book of Judges. Most of the Jewish commentators, from the mention of Bethlehem, and the resemblance of the names Boaz and Ibzan, refer this history to the judge Ibzan Judges 12:8, but without probability.

The country of Moab - Here, and in Rth 1:2 , Rth 1:22 ; Rth 4:3 , literally, "the field" or "fields." As the same word is elsewhere used of the territory of Moab, of the Amalekites, of Edom, and of the Philistines, it would seem to be a term pointedly used with reference to a foreign country, not the country of the speaker, or writer; and to have been specially applied to Moab.

Verse 4

Marriages of Israelites with women of Ammon or Moab are nowhere in the Law expressly forbidden, as were marriages with the women of Canaan Deuteronomy 7:1-3. In the days of Nehemiah the special law Deuteronomy 23:3-6 was interpreted as forbidding them, and as excluding the children of such marriages from the congregation of Israel Nehemiah 13:1-3. Probably the marriages of Mahlon and Chilion would be justified by necessity, living as they were in a foreign land. Ruth was the wife of the older brother, Mahlon Rth 4:10 .

Verse 8

Accompanying their mother-in-law to the borders of their own land would probably be an act of Oriental courtesy. Naomi with no less courtesy presses them to return. The mention of the mother's house, which the separation of the women's house or tent from that of the men facilitates, is natural in her mouth, and has more tenderness in it than father's house would have had; it does not imply the death of their fathers Rth 2:11 .

Verses 11-13

See marginal references and notes. The Levirate law probably existed among the Moabites, and in Israel extended beyond the brother in the strict

sense, and applied to the nearest relations, since Boaz was only the kinsman of Elimelech Rth 3:12 .

Verse 14

The kiss at parting as well as at meeting is the customary friendly and respectful salutation in the East. The difference between mere kindness of manner and self-sacrificing love is most vividly depicted in the words and conduct of the two women. Ruth‘s determination is stedfast to cast in her lot with the people of the Lord (compare the marginal references and Matthew 15:22-28).

Verse 19

And they said - i. e. the women of Bethlehem said. “They” in the Hebrew is feminine.

Verse 20

See the margin. Similar allusions to the meaning of names are seen in Genesis 27:36; Jeremiah 20:3.

The Almighty - שׁדי *shadday* (see the Genesis 17:1 note). The name “Almighty” is almost unique to the Pentateuch and to the Book of Job. It occurs twice in the Psalms, and four times in the Prophets.

Verse 21

The Lord hath testified against me - The phrase is very commonly applied to a man who gives witness concerning (usually against) another in a court of justice Exodus 20:16; 2 Samuel 1:16; Isaiah 3:9. Naomi in the bitterness of her spirit complains that the Lord Himself turned against her, and was bringing her sins up for judgment.

RUTH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

A kinsman - More literally "an acquaintance"; here (and in the feminine, Rth 3:2) denoting the person with whom one is intimately acquainted, one's near relation. The next kinsman of Rth 2:20 , etc. גאל *gā'al* is a wholly different word.

Boaz - Commonly taken to mean, "strength is in him" (compare 1 Kings 7:21).

Verse 7

The house - The shed or booth where they took their meals, and were sheltered from the sun in the heat of the day (see Genesis 33:17).

Verse 8

The grammatical forms of the verbs "go hence" and "abide," are unique and Chaldaic. They are supposed to indicate the dialect used at Bethlehem in the time of Boaz.

Verse 9

After them - i. e. "after my maidens." The fields not being divided by hedges, but only by unplowed ridges, it would be easy for her to pass off Boaz's land without being aware of it, and so find herself among strangers where Boaz could not protect her.

Verse 10

She fell on her face - With Oriental reverence (compare Genesis 33:3, and the marginal reference).

Verse 12

The similarity of expression here to Genesis 15:1, and in Rth 2:11 to Genesis 12:1, makes it probable that Boaz had the case of Abraham in his mind.

The Lord God of Israel - "Jehovah the God of Israel." Compare Joshua 14:14, where, as here, the force of the addition, the God of Israel, lies in the person spoken of being a foreigner (see Judges 11:21 note).

Verse 14

To dip the morsel, or sop, whether it were bread or meat, in the dish containing the vinegar (compare Matthew 26:23; Mark 14:20: Exodus 25:29; Numbers 7:13) was, and still is, the common custom in the East.

Parched or "roasted" corn - Grain was the common food of the country then (compare 1 Samuel 17:17; 1 Samuel 25:18; 2 Samuel 17:28)

as it is now.

And left - Or "reserved" Rth 2:18 . Rather, "had some over" (compare Luke 15:17). Rth 2:18 tells us that she took to her mother-in-law what she had left over.

Verse 17

And beat out that she had gleaned - Namely, with a stick, as the word implies (compare Deuteronomy 24:20; Isaiah 27:12). This method is still commonly practiced. Ruth gleaned enough to support herself and her mother-in-law for five days Exodus 16:16.

sa40

Verse 20

Blessed be he of the Lord … - We may gather from Naomi's allusion to the dead that both her husband and son had been faithful servants of Jehovah, the God of Israel. His kindness to the dead consisted in raising up (as Naomi hoped) an heir to perpetuate the name; and, in general, in His care for their widows.

One of our next kinsmen - The word here is גאל *gā'al* the redeemer, who had the right:

(1) of redeeming the inheritance of the person;

(2) of marrying the widow;

(3) of avenging the death. (See Leviticus 25:25-31, Leviticus 25:47-55; Deuteronomy 25:5-10; Deuteronomy 19:1-13.)

Since these rights belonged to the next of kin, גאל *gā'al* came to mean the nearest kinsman.

RUTH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 2

Behold, he winnoweth barley … - The simple manners of Boaz and his times are here before us. This "mighty man of wealth" assists personally in the winnowing of his barley, which lies in a great heap on the floor Rth 3:15 , and sleeps in the open threshing-floor to protect his grain from depredation.

Tonight - For the sake of the breeze which springs up at sunset, and greatly facilitates the "cleansing" (separation) of the grain tossed up across the wind.

Verse 4

Uncover his feet - Rather, "the place of his feet;" the foot of his bed, as we should say. So also Rth 3:7-8 .

Verse 8

Turned himself - Rather, "bent forward," so as to feel what it was which was at his feet. The same word is translated "took hold of," in Judges 16:29.

Verse 9

Spread thy skirt … - The phrase indicates receiving and acknowledging her as a wife.

Verse 10

Thou hast shewed more kindness … - Literally, "Thou hast made thy last kindness better than the first." Her last kindness was her willingness to accept Boaz for her husband, advanced in years as he was.

Verse 12-13

By "kinsman," understand the גאל *gā'al* (Rth 2:20 note).

Verse 15

The vail - Quite a different word from that rendered "vail," in Genesis 38:14. It seems rather to mean a kind of loose cloak, worn over the ordinary dress (see the margin).

Six measures - i. e. six seahs, in all two ephahs, twice as much as she gleaned Rth 3:17 , and a heavy load to carry; for which reason he laid it on her, probably placed it on her head. It is well known that women can carry great weights when duly positioned on their heads.

And she went into the city - The Hebrew has "he went," namely, Boaz, where, accordingly, we find him Rth 4:1 .

Verse 16

Who art thou, my daughter? - In the dim twilight Rth 3:14 her mother was not sure at first who the young woman was, who sought admittance into the house.

RUTH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

The gate is the place of concourse, of business, and of justice in Oriental cities (see Judges 19:15 note; Genesis 34:20; Deuteronomy 16:18).

Ho, such a one! - Indicating that the name of the kinsman was either unknown or purposely concealed 1 Samuel 21:2; 2 Kings 6:8.

Verse 2

Every city was governed by elders (see Deuteronomy 19:12; Judges 8:14). For the number "ten," compare Exodus 18:25. Probably the presence of, at least, ten elders was necessary to make a lawful public assembly, as among modern Jews ten (a minyon) are necessary to constitute a synagogue.

Verse 3

According to the law Leviticus 25:25-28, if any Israelite, through poverty, would sell his possession, the next of kin (the גאל *gā'al*) had a right to redeem it by paying the value of the number of years remaining until the jubilee (see the marginal reference). This right Boaz advertises the גאל *gā'al* of, so as to give him the option which the law secured to him of redeeming "our brother Elimelech's" land, i. e. our kinsman's, according to the common use of the term brother, for near relation (see Genesis 13:8; Genesis 24:27; Leviticus 25:25; Numbers 27:4; Judges 9:1).

Verse 4

See the margin; a phrase explained by the act of removing the end of the turban, or the hair, in order to whisper in the ear (see 1 Samuel 9:15: 2 Samuel 7:27).

Verse 5

Observe the action of the Levirate law. If there had been no one interested but Naomi, she would have sold the land unclogged by any condition, the law of Levirate having no existence in her case. But there was a young widow upon whom the possession of the land would devolve at Naomi's death, and who already had a right of partnership in it, and the law of Levirate did apply in her case. It was, therefore, the duty of the גאל *gā'al* to marry her and raise up seed to his brother, i. e. his kinsman. And he could not exercise his right of redeeming the land, unless he was willing at the same time to fulfill his obligations to the deceased by marrying the widow. This he was unwilling to do.

Verse 6

I mar mine own inheritance - The meaning of these words is doubtful. Some explain them by saying that the גאל *gā'al* had a wife and children already, and would not introduce strife into his family. Others think that there was a risk (which he would not incur) of the go‘el‘s own name being blotted out from his inheritance Rth 4:10 . Others take the word translated as “mar” in a sense of wasting or spending. If he had to find the purchase-money, and support Naomi and Ruth, his own fortune would be broken down, if, as is likely, he was a man of slender means. Boaz, being “a mighty man of wealth,” could afford this.

Redeem thou my right … - Literally, redeem my redemption - perform that act of redemption which properly belongs to me, but which I cannot perform.

Verse 7

In former time in Israel - Showing that the custom was obsolete in the writer‘s days. The letter of the law (see the marginal reference) was not strictly followed. It was thought sufficient for the man to pull off his own shoe and give it to the man to whom he ceded his right, in the presence of the elders of his city.

Verse 11

See the margin. There is something of a poetical turn in this speech of the elders, and something prophetic in the blessing pronounced by them. It is unique and obscure. The Greek Version (lxx) is unintelligible. Jerome seems to have had a slightly different reading, since he applies both clauses to Ruth. “May she be a pattern of virtue in Ephratah, and have a name famous in Bethlehem.” The meaning of “be famous” seems to be, Get thyself a name which shall be celebrated in Bethlehem, as the head of a powerful and illustrious house: literally it is, “proclaim a name,” i. e. cause others to proclaim thy name, as in Rth 4:14 .

Verse 14

Without a kinsman - i. e. Boaz, not the infant Obed.

Verse 17

Obed - i. e. serving, with allusion to the service of love and duty which he would render to his grandmother Naomi.

Verse 18

It is probable that there was a family book for the house of Pharez, in which their genealogies were preserved, and important bits of history were

recorded; and that the Book of Ruth was compiled from it. (See the note at Genesis 2:4)

Verse 21

Salmon begat Boaz - Matthew has preserved the additional interesting information that the mother of Boaz was Rahab 1 Chronicles 2:10-12; Matthew 1:3-6; and Luke 3:32-33, and is of course of singular importance as being the genealogy of our Lord. One or two difficulties in it still remain unsolved.

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1 Samuel

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

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1 SAMUEL INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Samuel

The double name of these Books, the first and second book of samuel, as they are called in the printed Hebrew Bible, and the first and second book of kings, as they are called in the Vulgate, well marks the two principal features which characterize them. They contain the record of the life and ministry of samuel, the great prophet and judge of Israel, and they also contain the record of the rise of the kingdom of Israel. If again the Books of Samuel are taken as forming one history with the Books of Kings (the present line of division between 2Samuel and 1Kings being an arbitrary one), then the division into four Books of Kings is a natural one. But if these books are looked upon rather as an isolated history, then the name of Samuel is properly affixed to them, not only because he stands out as the great figure of that age, but because his administration of the affairs of Israel was the connecting link, the transitional passage, from the rule of the judges to the reign of the kings, distinct from each, but binding the two together.

The important place to be filled by Samuel in the ensuing history is seen at once in the opening chapters of the book which bears his name. Further, the fact that Samuel‘s birth of her that had been barren is represented in Hannah‘s song as typical of the triumphs of the Church and of the Kingdom of Christ, is another indication of the very distinguished place assigned to Samuel in the economy of the Old Testament, borne out by the mention of him in such passages as Psalm 99:6; Jeremiah 15:1; Acts 3:24. Though however, Samuel‘s personal greatness is thus apparent, it is no less clearly marked that his place is one not of absolute but of relative importance. When we view the history as a whole, the eye does not rest upon Samuel, and stop there, but is led on to the throne and person of David as typical of the Kingdom and Person of Christ. An incidental mark of this subordination may be seen in the fact that the Books of Samuel are really a continuation of the Book of Ruth; a Book which derived its significance from its containing a history of David‘s ancestors and genealogy. Clearly, therefore, in the mind of the sacred historian, the personal history of Samuel was only a link to connect DAVID with the Patriarchs, just as the subsequent history connects David himself with our Lord JESUS CHRIST.

But a still more remarkable and conclusive proof of the same subordination may be found in the circumstance, that it is only the closing years of Saul‘s reign of which any account whatever is given in this Book. For after having related a few facts connected with the beginning of Saul‘s reign, the historian passes over some 20 or 30 years Acts 13:21 to relate an occurrence in the last quarter of Saul‘s reign, God‘s rejection of Saul from the kingdom, and His choice of “a man after His own heart” to be king in Saul‘s room 1 Samuel 13:13-14.

The contents of the Books of Samuel consist mainly of three portions,

(1) the history of Samuel‘s life and judgeship from 1 Samuel 16:1 to the end of the second Book; this latter portion not being completed until 1 Kings 2:11.

The sources from which the narrative is derived, were probably:

(1) the Book of Jasher 2 Samuel 1:18;

(2) David‘s Psalms 1 Chronicles 27:24;

(4) the Book of Samuel the Seer;

(5) the Book of Nathan the Prophet;

(6) the Book of Gad the Seer 1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29;

(7) the national collection of genealogies.

Those sections which give full details of the sayings and doings of Samuel, are conjectured to be extracted from “the Book of Samuel the seer” (e. g. i - xii). Those sections which contain narratives in which Nathan bears a part 2 Samuel 22:5; 24; etc., are pretty certainly from the Book of Gad the Seer. We seem to see extracts from the Chronicles of the kingdom in such passages as 1 Samuel 13:1; 1 Samuel 11:1-11, 1 Samuel 11:15; 1 Samuel 14:47-52; 2 Samuel 2:8-11; 2 Samuel 3:1-5; 2 Samuel 5:4-16; 8; 2 Samuel 20:23-26; 2 Samuel 21:15-22; 23:8-39; while the song of Hannah 1 Samuel

2:1-10, the elegy on the death of Abner 2 Samuel 3:33-34, and the two Psalms 2 Samuel 23:1-7, may as well as the elegy on Saul and Jonathan, be taken from the Book of Jasher.

It is difficult to decide when the final arrangement of the Books of Samuel, in their present shape, was made. The series of historical books from Judges to the end of 2Kings is formed on one plan, so that each book is a part of a connected whole. This would point to the time of Jeremiah the prophet, as that when the whole historical series from judges to kings inclusive was woven into one work. In his use of the work of contemporary writers, the final compiler left out large portions of the materials before him.

The chief quotations and resemblances from the Books of Samuel in the New Testament are found in the writings of Luke and Paul. The title THE CHRIST ("the anointed"), given to the Lord Jesus Matthew 1:16; Matthew 2:4; Matthew 16:16; Luke 2:26; John 1:20, John 1:41; John 20:31; Acts 2:30, is first found in 1 Samuel 2:10; and the other designation of the Saviour as the SON OF DAVID Matthew 9:27; Matthew 15:22; Matthew 21:9, Matthew 21:15; Matthew 22:42, is derived from 2 Samuel 7:12-16. In these books are passages which occur in duplicate elsewhere, chiefly in the Books of Chronicles and Psalms; and a careful comparison of these duplicate passages throws great light upon the manner in which the sacred historians used existing materials, incorporating them word for word, or slightly altering them for the sake of explanation, as seemed most expedient to them. It illustrates also the errors and fluctuations of scribes in transcribing manuscripts, especially in regard to proper names.

For these duplicate passages, and also on the chief quotations from other books in the Old Testament, consult the marginal references. The style of the Books of Samuel is clear, simple, and forcible, and the Hebrew remarkably pure and free from Chaldaisms. The chief difficulties are the geographical statements of 2 Samuel 23:1-7; and the account of the mighty men which follows it, 1 Samuel 8:1, 1 Samuel 8:5Acts 13:212 Samuel 5:440

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

Ramathaim-zophim may signify "the two hills 1 Samuel 9:11-13 of the watchmen," so called from its being a post from which the watchmen looked out. But since Zuph is the name of the head of the family, it is more probable that Zophin means the Zuphites, the sons of Zuph (see Zophai, 1 Chronicles 6:26), from whom the land about Ramah was called "the land of Zuph," 1 Samuel 9:5.

There is reason to believe that Elkanah - an Ephrathite, or inhabitant of Bethlehem 1 Samuel 17:12; Rth 1:2 and of the territory of the tribe of Ephraim 1 Kings 11:26 - the father of Samuel, represents the fifth generation of settlers in Canaan, and therefore that Samuel was born about 130 years after the entrance into Canaan - four complete generations, or 132 years - and about 40 years before David.

Verse 2

He had two wives - Compare Genesis 4:19. This was permitted by the law Deuteronomy 21:15, and sanctioned by the practice of Jacob 1 Chronicles 4:5, Shaharaim 1 Chronicles 8:8, David 1 Samuel 25:43, Joash 2 Chronicles 24:3, and others.

Hannah - i. e. "Beauty or charm," is the same as "Anna" Luke 2:36.

Peninnah - i. e. "a Pearl," is the same name in signification as "Marqaret."

The frequent recurrence of the mention of barrenness in those women who were afterward famous through their progeny (as Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel) coupled with the prophetic language of Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2, justifies us in seeking a mystical sense. Besides the apparent purpose of marking the children so born as raised up for special purposes by divine Providence, the weakness and comparative barrenness of the Church of God, to be followed at the set time by her glorious triumph and immense increase, is probably intended to be foreshadowed.

Verse 3

It is likely that during the unsettled times of the Judges Judges 21:25 the attendance of Israelites at the three Festivals Exodus 34:23; Deuteronomy 16:16 fell into desuetude or great irregularity, and this one feast (see the

marginal reference), which may have coincided with the Feast of Pentecost or tabernacles, may have been substituted for them.

The Lord of Hosts - This title of Yahweh which, with some variations, is found upward of 260 times in the Old Testament, occurs here for the first time. The meaning of the word "hosts" is doubtless the same as that of "army" Daniel 4:35 and includes all the myriads of holy Angels who people the celestial spheres 1 Kings 22:19. It is probably with reference to the idolatrous worship of the Host of heaven that the title the "Lord of Hosts" was given to the true God, as asserting His universal supremacy (see Nehemiah 9:6). In the New Testament the phrase only occurs once James 5:4.

And the two sons … - It should be, "and there the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests to the Lord," i. e. performed the functions of priests, in the old age of Eli 1 Samuel 4:18, who is represented 1 Samuel 1:9 as sitting on a seat in the temple. The reading of the Greek Version "Eli was there, and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, priests of the Lord," is quite unnecessary, and indeed destroys the sense. The information here given concerning the sons of Eli is followed up in 1 Samuel 2:12 ff.

Verse 5

A worthy portion - Probably as in the margin. Naturally she would have had a single portion of the sacrifice (compare 1 Samuel 9:23), but because of his love to her he gave her a double portion, enough for two people (compare Genesis 43:34).

Verse 7

And as he did so … - It should rather be "And so she did year by year, as often as she went up to the House of the Lord, so she provoked her." Though the verb is masculine, Peninnah must be the subject, because as often as SHE went up follows. The Vulgate has "they went up."

Verse 9

After they had eaten … - Rather, "after she had eaten and after she had drunk," which is obviously right. Hannah, in the bitterness of her spirit, could not enjoy her feast, and so, after eating and drinking a little, she arose and went to the temple, leaving her husband and Peninnah and her children at table, where she still found them on her return 1 Samuel 1:18.

Upon a seat … - Rather, "upon the throne," the pontifical chair of state 1 Samuel 4:13, which was probably set at the gate leading into the inner

court of the tabernacle.

The temple of the Lord - The application of the word temple to the tabernacle is found only here, 1 Samuel 3:3; and Psalm 5:7; and the use of this word here is thought by some an indication of the late date of the composition of this passage.

Verse 11

vows are characteristic of this particular age of the Judges. (Compare Judges 11:30; Judges 21:5; 1 Samuel 14:24.) For the law of vows in the case of married women, see Numbers 30:6-16; and for the nature of the vow, see the marginal references.

Verse 15

See 1 Samuel 1:2 and note. She means that wine was not the cause of her present discomposure, but grief of heart.

Verse 18

A beautiful example of the composing influence of prayer. Hannah had cast her burden upon the Lord, and so her own spirit was relieved of its load. She now returned to the family feast, and ate her portion with a cheerful heart. Acts 2:46-47.

The word "sad" is not in the Hebrew text, but it fairly supplies the meaning intended.

Verse 20

Samuel - i. e. heard of God, because given in answer to prayer. The names "Ishmael" and "Elishama" have the same etymology.

Verse 22

Until the child be weaned - Hebrew mothers, as elsewhere in the East, usually suckled their children until the age of two complete years, sometimes until the age of three.

Verse 26

As thy soul liveth - This oath is unique to the Books of Samuel, in which it occurs six times, and to the Books of Kings, in which however, it is found only once. See the note to 1 Samuel 1:11.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

The song of Hannah is a prophetic Psalm. It is poetry. and it is prophecy. It takes its place by the side of the songs of Miriam, Deborah, and the Virgin Mary, as well as those of Moses, David, Hezekiah, and other Psalmists and prophets whose inspired odes have been preserved in the Bible. The special feature which these songs have in common is, that springing from, and in their first conception relating to, incidents in the lives of the individuals who composed them, they branch out into magnificent descriptions of the Kingdom and glory of Christ, and the triumphs of the Church, of which those incidents were providentially designed to be the types. The perception of this is essential to the understanding of Hannah‘s song. Compare the marginal references throughout.

Verse 2

Any rock … - The term rock as applied to God is first found in the song of Moses (see Deuteronomy 32:4 note), where the juxtaposition of rock and salvation in 1 Samuel 2:15, “he lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation,” seems to indicate that Hannah was acquainted with the song of Moses.

Verse 5

See an instance in 1 Samuel 2:36. See, too, in Ezekiel 13:19, another example of hire paid in bread.

Ceased - i. e. were at rest, did no work. The general sense is expressed by the translation of the Latin Version, “they were filled.”

Verse 10

He shall give strength … - This is a most remarkable passage, containing a clear and distinct prophecy of the Kingdom and glory of the Christ of God. (Compare Luke 1:69-70).

Verse 11

The word “minister” is used in three senses in Scripture:

(1) of the service or ministration of both priests and Levites rendered unto the Lord Exodus 28:35, Exodus 28:43:

(2) of the ministrations of the Levites as rendered to the priests, to aid them in divine Service Numbers 3:6:

(3) of any service or ministration, especially one rendered to a man of God, as that of Joshua to Moses Numbers 11:28.

The application of it to Samuel as ministering to the Lord before Eli the priest accords "most exactly" with Samuel's condition as a Levite.

Verse 12

Sons of Belial - See the marginal reference note. The phrase is very frequent in the books of Samuel. In the New Testament, Paul contrasts Christ and Belial, as if Belial were the name of an idol or the personification of evil 2 Corinthians 6:15. This probably led to the use of the term "Belial" in the the King James Version, instead of expressing its meaning, which is "mischief, wickedness."

Verse 13

The Law of Moses defined exactly what was to be the priest's portion of every peace offering Leviticus 7:31-35, as it also gave express directions about the burning of the fat Leviticus 7:23-25, Leviticus 7:31. It was therefore a gross act of disobedience and lawlessness on the part of Hophni and Phinehas to take more than the Law gave them. Incidental evidence is afforded by this passage to the existence of the Levitical law at this time.

Verse 17

The offering of the Lord - Minchah, here in the general sense of "gift or offering" to God (compare Malachi 1:10-11; Malachi 3:3). In its restricted sense, it is used of the meat offerings, the unbloody sacrifices, and is then coupled with bloody sacrifices, sacrifices of slain beasts. (See 1 Samuel 2:29.)

Verse 18

Girded with a linen ephod - This was the usual dress of the priests. It does not appear whether Levites wore an ephod properly. Possibly it was a mark of Samuel's special dedication to the Lord's service that he wore one. (See the marginal reference). The ephod was sometimes used as an idolatrous implement Judges 8:27.

Verse 19

A little coat - The robe of the ephod was also one of the garments worn by the High Priest (see Exodus 28:31 note). This pointed mention of the ephod and the robe as worn by the youthful Samuel, seems to point to an extraordinary and irregular priesthood to which he was called by God in an

age when the provisions of the Levitical law were not yet in full operation, and in which there was no impropriety in the eyes of his contemporaries, seeing that nonconformity to the whole Law was the rule rather than the exception throughout the days of the Judges.

Verse 21

See the marginal references. The words "before the" Lord have special reference to his residence at the tabernacle.

Verse 22

Women that assembled - Or, "Served." See the marginal reference and note. Probably such service as consisted in doing certain work for the fabric of the tabernacle as women are accustomed to do, spinning, knitting, embroidering, mending, washing, and such like.

Verse 25

The sense seems to be, If one man sin against another, the judge shall amerce him in the due penalty, and then he shall be free; but if he sin against the Lord, who shall act the part of judge and arbiter for him? His guilt must remain to the great day of judgment.

Because the Lord would slay them - There is a sense in which whatever comes to pass is the accomplishment of God's sovereign will and pleasure, and all the previous steps, even when they involve moral causes, by which this will and pleasure are brought about, are in this sense also brought about by God. How this truth, which reason and revelation alike acknowledge, consists with man's free will on the one hand; or, when the evil deeds and punishment of a sinner are some of the previous steps, with God's infinite mercy and love on the other, is what cannot possibly be explained. We can only firmly believe both statements,

(1) that God hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, and that He willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live;

(2) that the sins and the punishments of sin are accomplishments of God's eternal purpose (compare the marginal references, and Isaiah 6:9-10; Mark 4:12; Romans 9:15). It may be explained by saying that in the case of Hophni and Phinehas God's will to kill them was founded upon His foreknowledge of their impenitence; while from another point of view, in which God's will is the fixed point, that impenitence may be viewed in its

relation to that fixed point, and so dependent upon it, and a necessary step to it.

Verse 26

And the child Samuel … - The account of our Lord‘s growth Luke 2:52 is very similar; “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” The literal version of the passage before us is, “The child Samuel advanced and grew and was good (or acceptable), both with the Lord, and also with men.”

Verse 27

A man of God - See Judges 13:6 note. The sudden appearance of the only prophet of whom mention is made since Deborah, without name, or any notice of his country, is remarkable.

Verse 28

An ephod - The High Priest‘s ephod, in which was Urim and Thummim.

Did I give … - The bountiful provision made by God for His priests is mentioned as the great aggravation of the covetousness of Eli‘s sons (compare 2 Samuel 12:7-9).

Verse 29

Wherefore kick ye - See the marginal reference. The well-fed beast becomes unmanageable and refractory, and refuses the yoke, and bursts the bonds Jeremiah 5:5. So the priests, instead of being grateful for the provision made for them, in their pampered pride became dissatisfied, wantonly broke the laws of God which regulated their share of the offerings, and gave themselves up to an unbridled indulgence of their passions and their covetousness.

Honourest thy sons above me - What restrained Eli from taking vigorous action to vindicate God‘s honor, was his unwillingness to lose for his sons the lucrative office of the priesthood. He was willing to rebuke them, he was grieved at their misdeeds, but he was not willing to give up the wealth and plenty which flowed into his house from the offerings of Israel.

Verse 30

Be it far from me - The phrase so rendered is a favorite one in the Books of Samuel, where it occurs ten or eleven times. It is variously

rendered in the King James Version, “God forbid,” and “Be it far from me, thee, etc.” Literally, “Be it an abomination to me.”

Verse 31

I will cut off thine arm … - A strong phrase for breaking down the strength and power, of which the arm is the instrument in man (compare Zechariah 11:17). See 1 Samuel 2:33.

Verse 32

The original text is rather obscure and difficult of construction, but the King James Version probably gives the sense of it. The margin gives another meaning.

In all the wealth … - The allusion is particularly to Solomon‘s reign, when Zadok was made priest instead of Abiathar, 1 Kings 2:26-27. (See 1 Kings 4:20 ff) The enormous number of sacrifices then offered must have been a great source of wealth to the priests 1 Kings 8:63-66.

Verse 33

The meaning is explained by 1 Samuel 2:36. Those who are not cut off in the flower of their youth shall be worse off than those who are, for they shall have to beg their bread. (Compare Jeremiah 22:10.)

Thine eyes … thine heart - For a similar personification of the tribe or family see Judges 1:2-4.

Verse 35

Zadok is meant rather than Samuel. The High Priesthood continued in the direct descendants of Zadok as long as the monarchy lasted (see 1 Chronicles 6:8-15).

Mine anointed - in its first sense obviously means the kings of Israel and Judah Psalm 89:20; Zechariah 4:14. But doubtless the use of the term MESSIAH (Χριστὸς *Christos*) here and in 1 Samuel 2:10, is significant, and points to the Lord‘s Christ, in whom the royal and priestly offices are united (Zechariah 6:11-15: see the marginal references). In this connection the substitution of the priesthood after the order of Melchisedec for the Levitical may be foreshadowed under 1 Samuel 2:35 (see Hebrews 7).

Verse 36

A piece - The word is only found here; but is thought to be connected in etymology and in meaning with the “Gerah,” the smallest Hebrew coin, being the twentieth part of the shekel. The smallness of the sum asked for shows the poverty of the asker.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

See the margin reference note. Josephus says that Samuel‘s call to the prophetic office happened when he had just completed his twelfth year (compare Luke 2:42).

Was precious - (or rare) The song of Hannah, and the prophecy of the “man of God” (1 Samuel 2:27 note), are the only instances of prophecy since Deborah. Samuel is mentioned as the first of the series of prophets Acts 3:24.

No open vision - Better rendered, “There was no vision promulgated or published.” (Compare 2 Chronicles 31:5.)

Verse 2

The passage should be rendered thus: “And it came to pass at that time that Eli was sleeping in his place; and his eyes had begun to grow dim; he could not see. And the lamp of God was not yet gone out, and Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the Lord where the ark of God was; and the Lord called Samuel, etc.” Eli‘s old age and dimness of sight is probably mentioned as the reason why Samuel thought Eli had called him. Being a blind and feeble old man, he was likely to do so if he wanted anything, either for himself, or for the service of the temple.

Verse 7

Did not yet know the Lord - i. e. in His supernatural communication, as follows at the end of the verse. The text rendering of this verse is better than that of the margin.

Verse 10

A personal presence, not a mere voice, or impression upon Samuel‘s mind, is here distinctly indicated. (Compare Genesis 12:7 note; Revelation 1:1; Revelation 22:16.)

Verse 11

More accurately, “the which whosoever heareth both his ears shall tingle.” This expressive phrase occurs again twice (marginal references) with reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. It is remarkable that Jeremiah repeatedly compares the destruction of Jerusalem with the destruction of Shiloh (Jeremiah 7:12, Jeremiah 7:14; Jeremiah 26:6, Jeremiah 26:9; Compare Psalm 78:60-64).

Verse 12

When I begin … - literally, as in the margin: meaning, I will go through with the performance from first to last.

Verse 13

Made themselves vile - Rather, "have cursed themselves," i. e. brought curses upon themselves.

He restrained them not - In the sense of punishing. He did not remove them from their office, which he ought to have done.

Verse 14

See the marginal references. The sin of the sons of Eli could not be purged by the appointed sacrifices of the Law. In blessed contrast with this declaration is the assurance of the New Testament 1 John 1:7; Acts 13:39.

Verse 15

Opened the doors - We learn thus incidentally the nature of some of Samuel's duties. This duty was quite Levitical in its character. In the interval between Josh and David, when the tabernacle was stationary for the most part, it may have lost something of its "tent" character, and among other changes have had doors instead of the hanging.

Samuel feared to show Eli the vision - Here was Samuel's first experience of the prophet's cross: the having unwelcome truth to divulge to those he loved, honored, and feared. Compare the case of Jeremiah Jeremiah 15:10; Jeremiah 17:15-18; Jeremiah 20:7-18.

Verse 18

It is the Lord … - Compare the devout submission of Aaron Leviticus 10:3, and of Hezekiah 2 Kings 20:19. And, for the highest conceivable submission to the will of God, compare Luke 22:42.

Verse 20

From Dan … - See Judges 20:1 note.

Verse 21

The state described in 1 Samuel 3:7 was henceforth reversed. Samuel now knew the Lord, and the Word of the Lord was revealed unto him.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

Some attach the opening words to the close of 1 Samuel 7:5.) But this is not the natural interpretation of the words, which seem clearly to belong to what went before.

The mention of the Philistines connects the narrative with Judges 13:1, and seems to have terminated in the days of Samuel 1 Samuel 7:13-14 in about the 20th year of his judgeship 1 Samuel 7:2; and since it had already begun before the birth of Samson Judges 13:5, and Samson judged Israel for 20 years "in the days of the Philistines" Judges 15:20, it seems to follow that the latter part of the judgeship of Eli and the early part of that of Samuel must have been coincident with the lifetime of Samson.

Eben-ezer - (or, the stone of help) The place was afterward so named by Samuel. See the marginal references. "Aphek," or the "fortress," was probably the same as the "Aphek" of Joshua 12:18. It would be toward the western frontier of Judah, not very far from Mizpeh of Benjamin, and near Shiloh 1 Samuel 4:4.

Verse 3

In the evening of the defeat of the Israelites the elders held a council, and resolved to send for the ark, which is described in full, as implying that in virtue of the covenant God could not but give them the victory (compare Numbers 10:35; Joshua 3:10).

Verse 4

The people sent - The expression is very indicative of the political state so frequently noted by the writer of the Book of Judges, "In those days there was no king in Israel."

Verse 6

Of the Hebrews - This was the name by which the Israelites were known to foreign nations (compare Exodus 1:15; Exodus 2:6).

Verse 8

This is a remarkable testimony on the part of the Philistines to the truth of the events which are recorded in the Pentateuch. The Philistines would of course hear of them, just as Balak and the people of Jericho did Numbers 22:5; Joshua 2:10.

With all the plagues … - Rather, "with every kind of plague" equivalent to "with utter destruction.

Verse 12

Runners who were swift of foot, and could go long distances were important and well-known persons (compare 2 Samuel 18:19-31). There seem to have been always professional runners to act as messengers with armies in the field (2 Kings 11:4, 2Kings 11:6,2 Kings 11:19, the King James Version "guards").

Earth upon his head - In token of bitter grief. Compare the marginal references.

Verse 15

Dim - Rather, "set." The word is quite different from that so rendered in 1 Samuel 3:2. The phrase seems to express the "fixed" state of the blind eye, which is not affected by the light. Eli's blindness, while it made him alive to sounds, prevented his seeing the ripped garments and dust-besprinkled head of the messenger of bad news.

Verse 18

A comparison of 2 Samuel 18:4, explains exactly the meaning of the "side of the gate," and Eli's position. His seat or throne, without a back, stood with the side against the jamb of the gate, leaving the passage through the gate quite clear, but placed so that every one passing through the gate must pass in front of him.

Forty years - This chronological note connects this book with that of Judges. (Compare Judges 3:11, etc.) It is an interesting question, but one very difficult to answer how near to the death of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the High Priest, Eli's forty years of judgeship bring him. It is probable that at least one high priesthood intervened.

Verse 21

Is departed - Properly, "Is gone into captivity."

Verse 22

The lesson of the ruin brought upon Churches by the covetousness and profligacy of their priests, which is here taught us so forcibly, and which has been again and again illustrated in Jews and Christians, is too solemn and important to be overlooked. When the glory of holiness departs from what should be a holy community, the glory of God's presence has already departed, and the outward tokens of His protection may be expected to depart soon likewise. (Compare Ezekiel 10:18; Ezekiel 11:23; Revelation 2:5.) But though particular congregations may fall, our Lord's promise will never fail his people Matthew 28:20.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 2

They brought it into the house of Dagon (see the marginal reference) in order to enhance the triumph of the gods of the Philistines over the God of Israel. (Compare 1 Samuel 31:9; Judges 16:23; Isaiah 37:12.)

Verse 5

This custom still existed among the worshippers of Dagon so late as the reign of Josiah (see the marginal reference).

Verse 6

Emerods - A corruption of "hemorrhoids." It is mentioned Deuteronomy 28:27 among the diseases with which God threatened to punish the Israelites for disobedience.

Verse 8

The "lords" (see Judges 3:3) were very unwilling to give up their triumph, and, with the common pagan superstition, imagined that some local bad luck was against them at Ashdod. The result was to bring the whole Philistine community under the same calamity.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 2

The word for "priest" here is the same as that used for the priests of the true God; that for diviners is everywhere used of idolatrous or superstitious divining. Three modes of divination are described Ezekiel 21:21-22, by arrows, by teraphim, and by the entrails of beasts. (Compare Exodus 7:11; Daniel 2:2).

Verse 3

Send it not empty - See the marginal references. The pagan idea of appeasing the gods with gifts, and the scriptural idea of expressing penitence, allegiance, or love to God, by gifts and offerings to His glory and to the comfort of our fellow worshippers, coincide in the practical result.

Verse 4

It was a prevalent custom in pagan antiquity to make offerings to the gods expressive of the particular mercy received. Thus, those saved from shipwreck offered pictures of the shipwreck, etc., and the custom still exists among Christians in certain countries.

The plague of the mice is analogous to that of the frogs in Egypt. The destructive power of field-mice was very great.

Verse 7

A new cart … kine on which there hath come no yoke - This was so ordered in reverence to the ark, and was a right and true feeling. See Mark 11:2; Matthew 27:60. For the supposed special virtue of new things, see Judges 16:7, Judges 16:11.

Verse 9

Bethshemesh was the first Israelite town they would come to, being on the border of Judah. (See the marginal reference.)

Verse 12

Lowing as they went - Milking cows had been chosen on purpose to make the sign more significant. Nature would obviously dispose the cows to go toward their calves; their going in an opposite direction was therefore plainly a divine impulse overruling their natural inclination. And this is brought out more distinctly by the mention of their lowing, which was caused by their remembering their calves.

And the lords … - This circumstance of the five satraps of the Philistines accompanying the ark in person both made it impossible for the Israelites to practice any deceit (compare Matthew 27:63-66), and is also a striking testimony to the agitation caused among the Philistines by the plagues inflicted on them since the ark had been in their country.

Verse 13

The whole population was in the field. The harvest work was suspended in an instant, and all the workmen ran to where the ark was.

Verse 14

A great stone - (Compare Genesis 28:18; Judges 13:19). This great stone was probably used as an altar on this occasion, and the kine stopping at it of their own accord was understood by the Bethshemites as an intimation that they were to offer sacrifices on it to the Lord God of Israel, who had so wonderfully brought back the ark from its captivity.

And they clave the wood of the cart … - A similar expedient was resorted to by Araunah 2 Samuel 24:22, and by Elisha 1 Kings 19:21.

Verse 15

The word "Levites" here probably means priests Exodus 4:14, sons of Levi, since Bethshemesh was one of the cities of the priests Joshua 21:13-16. The burnt offering of the kine was not in any sense the offering of the men of Bethshemesh, but rather of the Philistine lords to whom the cart and the kine belonged. But the Bethshemites themselves, in token of their gratitude for such a signal mercy, now offered both burnt offerings and sacrifices, probably peace offerings, and doubtless feasted together with great joy and gladness (see 1 Kings 8:62-66; Ezra 6:16-17). There is nothing whatever in the text to indicate that these sacrifices were offered otherwise than in the appointed way by the priests.

Verse 18

The great stone of Abel … - Probably so called from the "lamentation" described in 1 Samuel 6:19.

Verse 19

Fifty thousand and three score and ten - Read "three" score and "ten", omitting "fifty thousand", which appears to have crept into the text from the margin. It is not improbable that in their festive rejoicing priests, Levites, and people may have fallen into intemperance, and hence, into presumptuous irreverence (compare Leviticus 10:1, Leviticus 10:9). God had just vindicated His own honor against the Philistines; it must now be

seen that He would be sanctified in them that come near Him Leviticus 10:3. It is obvious to observe how the doctrine of atonement, and its necessity in the case of sinners, is taught in this and similar lessons as to the awesome HOLINESS of God.

Verse 21

Kirjath-jearim - See Joshua 9:17 note. It has been thought that there was a high place at Kirjath-jearim (the hill, 1 Samuel 7:1), the remnant of its old pagan sanctity when it was called Kirjath-Baal, "the city of Baal" (see Joshua 18:14; 2 Samuel 6:2); and that for this reason it was selected as a proper place to send the ark to..

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

This verse belongs more properly to 1 Samuel 6. Abinadab and his sons were probably of the house of Levi. The catastrophe at Bethshemesh must inevitably have made the Israelites very careful to pay due honor to the ark in accordance with the Law: but to give the care of the ark to those who were not of the house of Levi would be a gross violation of the Law.

Verse 2

And all the house of Israel lamented … - The occupation of the country about Shiloh by the Philistines 1 Samuel 7:3 was partly the reason for the ark being kept so long at Kirjath-jearim. But another reason seems to have been the fall of the Israelites into idolatry, which made them neglect the ark, and brought upon them this Philistine servitude; probably the last 20 years of the Philistine oppression described in Judges 13:1, which is there expressly connected with Israelite idolatry. Now, probably, through the exhortations of Samuel, coupled with the chastening of the Philistine yoke, the Israelites repented and turned again to the God of their fathers.

Verses 3-5

Compare the marginal references. Twenty years of Samuel‘s life had passed away since the last mention of him 1 Samuel 4:1. Now he appears in the threefold character of prophet, Judge, and the acknowledged leader of the whole people. His words were an answer to a profession of repentance on the part of Israel, the practical proof of which would be the putting away all their false gods. (Compare Judges 6:10 note.)

Will pray for you … - So Moses prayed for the people at Rephidim Exodus 17:11-12; and for Miriam Numbers 12:13; so Elijah prayed at Carmel 1 Kings 18:36, 1 Kings 18:42; so Ezra prayed at the evening sacrifice Ezra 9:5; so the High Priest prayed for the house of Israel on the Day of Atonement; and so does our Lord Jesus Christ ever live at God‘s right hand to make intercession for us.

Verse 6

Two rites are brought together here which belong especially to the Feast of Tabernacles and the Day of Atonement, respectively, namely, drawing and pouring out water, and fasting. Hence, some think that Samuel chose the Feast of tabernacles, and the fast which preceded it, as the occasion for assembling the people. Others explain the pouring out water as the pouring

out the heart in penitence as it were water; or, as a symbolic act expressing their ruin and helplessness 2 Samuel 14:14; or as typifying their desire that their sins might be forgotten "as waters that pass away" Job 11:16.

And Samuel judged - This seems to denote the "commencement" of Samuel's Judgeship civil and military, as having taken place at Mizpeh on this occasion. As civil Judge he did exactly what Moses did Exodus 18:13-16; as military Judge he did what Othniel, Ehud, Barak, and Gideon had done before him, organized and marshalled the people for effectual resistance to their oppressors, and led them out to victory.

Verse 7

This implies a united invasion by the whole Philistine force. Hence, the terror of the Israelites. (Compare Judges 15:11.)

Verse 9

Samuel's preparation for intercessory prayer, namely, the offering up an atoning sacrifice, is most significant (compare Luke 1:9-10). The term here used for a "lamb" does not occur in the Pentateuch; indeed it is only found besides this place in Isaiah 65:25. The offering is in accordance with Leviticus 22:27.

The Lord heard him - Better as in margin. The "answer" was not simply the granting the asked-for deliverance, but the great thunder 1 Samuel 7:10, which was "the voice of the Lord," the same voice with which the Lord answered Moses Exodus 19:19; Psalm 99:6.

Verse 11

Beth-car - This place is nowhere else mentioned. It seems to have stood on a hill overhanging the road from the Philistine territory to Mizpeh, and close to Ebenezer, 1 Samuel 4:1.

Verse 12

Shen was a tooth-pointed or sharp-pointed rock (see 1 Samuel 14:4), nowhere else mentioned and not identified.

Verse 13

All the days of Samuel - Not (as in 1 Samuel 7:15), all the days of his life, but all the days of his "government", when as Judge he ruled over Israel, before they asked for a king.

Verse 14

This shows the vigour and success of Samuel's government. He seems not only to have expelled the Philistines from the interior of the Israelite country, but to have attacked them in their own land, and taken from them

the cities, with the adjacent territory, which properly belonged to Israel, but which the Philistines had taken possession of. In this war the Amorites, finding the Philistines worse masters than the Israelites, made common cause with Samuel, and assisted the Israelites in their wars against the Philistines.

Verse 15

Samuel judged Israel … - The repetition of the phrase in 1 Samuel 7:16-17, in connection with Samuel's circuit, is a proof that it is his civil judgeship which is meant. The military leadership of course belonged to Saul, when he became king.

Verse 16

Gilgal - It is uncertain whether Gilgal in the valley of the Jordan, or the modern Jiljulieh, the Gilgal of 2 Kings 2:1; 2 Kings 4:38, be meant; but far more probably the former (see 1 Samuel 11:14 and note).

Verse 17

And there he built an altar - Whether this altar was in connection with the tabernacle or not we have no means of deciding, since we are in complete ignorance as to where the tabernacle was at this time, or who was High Priest, or where he resided. It is quite possible that Samuel may have removed the tabernacle from Shiloh to some place near to Ramah; and indeed it is in itself improbable that, brought up as he was from infancy in the service of the tabernacle, he should have left it. At the beginning of Solomon's reign we know it was at Gibeon, close to Raimah 1 Kings 3:4; 2 Chronicles 1:3, 2 Chronicles 1:6. If the tabernacle had been at Shiloh at this time, it is likely that Shiloh would have been one of the places at which Samuel judged lsrael. But Shiloh was probably waste, and perhaps unsafe on account of the Philistines.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

This verse implies a long period, probably not less than 20 years, of which we have no account except what is contained in the brief notice in 1 Samuel 7:13-17. The general idea conveyed is of a time of peace and prosperity, analogous to that under other Judges.

Verse 2

The mention of Beer-sheba, on the extreme southern frontier of Judah, as the place where Samuel‘s sons judged Israel is remarkable. It was probably due to the recovery of territory from the usurpation of the Philistines 1 Samuel 7:14.

Verse 6

See the margin which implies that the thing spoken of caused anger, indignation, or some revulsion of feeling (see Genesis 21:11-12). The answer of the Lord 1 Samuel 8:7 shows that Samuel‘s personal feelings had been hurt. They were soothed by being reminded of the continued ingratitude of the people to God Himself, upon whom, in fact, a greater slight was put by this very request for a king “like all the nations,” than upon Samuel (compare Matthew 10:24; John 15:18, John 15:20). For a comment on this transaction, see Hosea 13:9-11; Acts 13:21-22.

Verse 12

This organization was as old as the time of Moses Numbers 31:14; Deuteronomy 1:15, and prevailed among the Philistines also 1 Samuel 29:2. The civil and military divisions were identical, and the civil officers were the same as the captains of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, in time of war.

To ear his ground - literally, “to plow his plowing.” “To ear” is an old English word, now obsolete, for to plow.

Verses 14-18

See illustrations in marginal references; 1 Kings 5:13-18; 1 Kings 12:4.

Verse 20

Fight our battles - It appears from 1 Samuel 12:12, that the warlike movements of Nahash had already begun to excite alarm.

Verse 22

A repetition for the third time 1 Samuel 8:7, 1 Samuel 8:9 of the expression of God‘s will in the matter, marks Samuel‘s great unwillingness

to comply with the people‘s request. Besides the natural aversion which he felt to being thrust aside after so many years of faithful and laborious service, and the natural prejudice which he would feel at his age against a new form of government, he doubtless saw how much of the evil heart of unbelief there was in the desire to have a visible king for their leader, instead of trusting to the invisible Lord who had hitherto led them. But God had His own purpose in setting up the kingdom which was to be typical of the kingdom of His only begotten Son.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

The genealogy of Saul is here given as far as Aphiah ("Abiah," 1 Chronicles 7:8), who was of the house of Becher the son of Benjamin Genesis 46:21. "Kish" 1 Chronicles 9:35-39 was the son of "Ner" the son of "Jehiel," (or, "Abiel" here and 1 Samuel 14:51), the first settler ("father," 1 Chronicles 9:35) at Gibeon, or Gibeah of Saul, and who married "Maachah," a daughter or granddaughter of Caleb. If so, it is obvious that the names of several generations are omitted between Kish and Abiel, and among them that from which the family of Matri 1 Samuel 10:21 was called.

Verse 4

The land of Shalisha was somewhere near Gilgal, i. e., Jiljulieh. It is thought to derive its name from "three" (Shalosh) wadys which unite in the wady of Karawa. The situation of Shalim is not known: its etymology connects it more probably with the land of Shual 1 Samuel 13:17, apparently round Taiyibeh, which was about nine miles from Gibeah.

Zuph - 1 Samuel 9:5, see 1 Samuel 1:1 note.

Verse 7

Presents of bread or meat were as common as presents of money. (Compare Ezekiel 13:19; Hosea 3:2.)

Verse 8

The fourth part of a shekel - In value about sixpence. Probably the shekel, like our early English silver coins, was divided into four quarters by a cross, and actually subdivided, when required, into half and quarter shekels.

Verse 9

This is manifestly a gloss inserted in the older narrative by the later editor of the sacred text, to explain the use of the term in 1 Samuel 9:11, 1 Samuel 9:18-19. It is one among many instances which prove how the very letter of the contemporary narratives was preserved by those who in later times compiled the histories. We cannot say exactly when the term "seer" became obsolete. See the marginal references.

Verse 13

Before he go up - By this phrase we see that the high place was in the highest part of the city. Like the "house of the god Berith" Judges 9:46, it

was probably the citadel of Ramah. There was connected with the altar a room large enough for thirty people to dine in 1 Samuel 9:22.

Verse 16

That he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines, etc. - These words are not very easily reconcileable with 1 Samuel 7:13. It is possible that the aggressive movements of the Philistines, after the long cessation indicated by 1 Samuel 7:13, coupled with Samuel‘s old age and consequent inability to lead them to victory as before, were among the chief causes which led to the cry for a king. If this were so the Philistine oppression glanced at in this verse might in a general survey be rather connected with Saul‘s times than with Samuel‘s.

Verse 21

The tribe of Benjamin, originally the smallest of all the tribes Numbers 1:36, if Ephraim and Manasseh are reckoned as one tribe, had been nearly annihilated by the civil war recorded in Judges 20. It had of course not recovered from that terrible calamity in the time of Saul, and was doubtless literally much the smallest tribe at that time. Nothing could be more improbable, humanly speaking, than that this weak tribe should give a ruler to the mighty tribes of Joseph and Judah.

Verse 22

The parlour - The “hall” or “cell” attached to the chapel on the high place, in which the sacrificial feast was accustomed to be held. (Compare 1 Chronicles 9:26.)

Verse 24

The shoulder and its appurtenances - would give the sense accurately. The right shoulder was the priest‘s portion in the Levitical sacrifices. Probably it was Samuel‘s own portion in this case, and he gave it to Saul as a mark of the highest honor.

Verse 26

To the top of the house - “On the top.” The bed on which Saul slept was on the top of the house. It is very common in the East to provide extra sleeping accommodation by placing a tent or awning on the house-top.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

Is it not because … - Samuel answers Saul‘s tacit or expressed wonder, by telling him why he did as he did. (Compare 1 Samuel 9:21.)

Verse 2

How should Saul know that what Samuel said was the word of the Lord? Samuel gives him a sign, “Thou shalt find two men,” etc. (Compare Judges 6:36-40; Isaiah 7:11-14; John 6:30; Mark 11:2; Mark 14:13, etc.)

Zelzah - A place absolutely unknown.

Verse 3

The plain of Tabor - It should be “the oak or terebinth”” of Tabor” (Judges 4:11 note). It has been ingeniously conjectured that “Tabor” is either a different form of “Deborah,” or a corruption of it, and that the “oak,” or “terebinth of Tabor,” is the same as “Allon-bachuth,” the oak under which Deborah was buried, and which lay “beneath Bethel” Genesis 35:8. The terebinth, where the three men came upon Saul, must have been at some point previous to that where the road leading northward from Jerusalem branches; when they reached that point they would go on with their offerings to Bethel, he would pursue his journey to Gibeah.

Verse 5

Hill of God - Rather, “Gibeah” of God, and so in 1 Samuel 10:10. Two things are clear; “one” that Saul had got home when he got to Gibeah of God, for there he found his uncle, and no further journeying is so much as hinted at, and the same word “Gibeah” describes his home at 1 Samuel 10:26. The “other” that there was a high place at Gibeah just above the city, from which he met the company of prophets “coming down.” Hence, it is obvious to conclude that the name “Gibeah of God” (which occurs nowhere else) was sometimes given to Gibeah of Saul on account of the worship on its high place, or, possibly, that the name “Gibeah of God” described the whole hill on a part of which the city Gibeah stood.

Where is the garrison of the Philistines - It seems strange that Samuel should give this description of Gibeah to Saul, who must have been so well acquainted with it. Possibly they may be explanatory words inserted by the narrator with reference to 1 Samuel 13:2.

Musical instruments were the accompaniments of the prophetic song 1 Chronicles 13:8; 1 Chronicles 25:3. The “Psaltery” is a kind of lyre with ten

strings, in the shape of an earthen wine bottle (נבל *nebel* whence νάβλα *nabla*) which was something like a sugar-loaf or a delta. The tabret is a kind of drum or tambourine, or timbrel, usually played by dancing women (Exodus 15:20; Judges 11:34. Compare Jeremiah 31:4). The pipe חליל *châlîyl* literally the "bored" or "pierced" instrument) is a kind of flute used on occasions of joy and mirth Isaiah 5:12; 1 Kings 1:40; Psalm 68:25. The "harp" כנור *kînnôr* whence the Greek κινύρα kinurawas a stringed instrument, and that played upon by David 1 Samuel 16:16; 1 Samuel 19:9; Psalm 43:4; Psalm 57:8.

Verse 6

Will come upon thee - The word rendered "come," means to "come" or "pass upon," as fire does when it breaks out and spreads Amos 5:6; hence, it is frequently used of the Spirit of God passing upon anyone. (See Judges 14:19; Judges 15:14; below 1 Samuel 10:10; 1 Samuel 11:6; 1 Samuel 16:13.)

Shalt be turned into another man - This is a remarkable expression, and occurs nowhere else. It describes the change in point of mental power and energy which would result from the influx of the Spirit of the Lord 1 Samuel 10:9. In the case of Samson it was a supernatural bodily strength; in the case of Saul a capacity for ruling and leading the people of which before he was destitute, and which the Spirit worked in him. (Compare Acts 1:8; Isaiah 11:2-4.)

Verse 8

Seven days shalt thou tarry … - The appointment here made is not to be confounded with that mentioned in marginal reference.

Verse 12

But who is their father - This is a very obscure phrase. If by "father" be intended the head or leader (compare 1 Chronicles 25:6; 2 Kings 2:12) of the prophets, the question means: "What kind of leader can they have to admit such a person as Saul into the company?" Some versions read "Who is his father?" in the sense: "Who would have expected Kish to have a son among the prophets?" (Compare Matthew 13:54-55.)

Verse 14

From the order of the narrative, and the mention of Saul's servant, it looks as if Saul found his uncle at the high place. Perhaps some solemnity

similar to that mentioned in 1 Samuel 9:19 was going on at this time, in which the prophets had been taking part.

Verse 19

For the use of "thousand" as equivalent to "family," see 1 Samuel 23:23; Judges 6:15 margin. In Numbers 1:16 it may mean whole tribes.

Verse 20

Caused … to come near … was taken - The Hebrew phrases are exactly the same as in Joshua 7:16-17, where the King James Version renders the first has "brought."

sa40

Verse 21

The family of Matri - This name occurs nowhere else among the families of Benjamin, or in the genealogy of Saul. (See 1 Samuel 9:1 note.)

Verse 22

Among the stuff - Rather, "the baggage." The assembly was like a camp, and the baggage (impedimenta) of the whole congregation was probably collected in one place, where the wagons were arranged for protection.

Verse 25

The manner of the kingdom - i. e., the just prerogative of the kingdom, the law, or bill of rights, by which the king's power was limited as well as secured. It is not improbable that what Samuel wrote was simply a transcript of Deuteronomy 17:14-20, which he "laid up before the Lord," i. e., placed by the side of the ark of the covenant with the copy of the Law (see Deuteronomy 31:26). It would be ready for reference if either king or people violated the "law of the kingdom."

Verse 26

A band of men - Rather, "the host," "men of valor," There seems to be an opposition intended between the "valiant men" and the "children of Belial" (1 Samuel 10:27).

Verse 27

Presents - The מנחה *mînchāh* was the token of homage and acknowledgment from the subject to the sovereign, and from the tributary nation to their suzerain. (See 2 Samuel 8:2, 2 Samuel 8:6; Judges 3:17-18; 1 Kings 4:21; 2 Kings 17:4, etc.; Psalm 72:10; Isaiah 16:1.) Saul dissembled his resentment, and waited for the favorable tide which soon came with the invasion of Nahash.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

Nahash was king of the children of Ammon, as appears from 1 Samuel 12:12. He seems to have been connected with the family of David, since Abigail, David's sister, was "the daughter (perhaps granddaughter) of Nahash" 2 Samuel 17:25; 1 Chronicles 2:16-17; and, perhaps, in consequence of this connection, he and his family were very friendly to David 2 Samuel 17:27.

Jabesh-Gilead must have been re-populated after its destruction (see marginal reference). The Ammonites and Moabites resented the possession of Gilead by the Israelites Judges 10:6-18; 11.

Verse 3

The elders - Observe the universal form of civil government among the Israelites, by elders (Judges 8:14, Judges 8:16, etc.).

Verse 4

They came to Gibeah on account of the connection between the Benjamites and the people of Jabesh 1 Samuel 11:5 shows how completely he was still in a private and humble station.

Verse 6

This time the Spirit of God came upon him, as upon the Judges before him, as a Spirit of supernatural energy and power.

Verse 7

Though not expressly stated, it is doubtless implied that he sent the portions by the messengers to the twelve tribes, after the analogy, and probably in imitation, of Judges 19:29. He made use of the revered name of Samuel to strengthen his own weak authority. Samuel accompanied Saul in the expedition 1 Samuel 11:12.

Verse 8

He numbered them - This was done to see who was absent (compare Judges 21:9).

Bezek has been conjectured to be the name of a district rather than of a town. Two villages retained the name in the time of Eusebius 17 miles from Nablous, on the way to Beth-shean.

The children of Israel and the men of Judah - This looks like the language of later times, times perhaps subsequent to the establishment of

the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Israel here (including Benjamin) is as ten to one compared with Judah. This is about the true proportion.

Verse 9

The distance from Bezek to Jabesh-Gilead would perhaps be about twenty miles.

Verse 10

Tomorrow - Probably the last of the "seven days' respite" 1 Samuel 11:3. Their words were spoken in guile, to throw the Ammonites off their guard.

Verse 11

The march from Bezek may have begun the night before. This disposition of the forces "in three companies" (imitating Gideon's strategy, compare the marginal reference.) would not have been made until the morning when they were very near the Ammonitish forces. "The morning watch" was the last of the three watches, of four hours each, into which the night was anciently divided by the Hebrews. (See Judges 7:19 note.) The time thus indicated would be between two and six in the morning.

Verse 13

There shall not a man … - An instance of great moderation, as well as good policy, on the part of Saul. Compare David's conduct (marginal reference).

Verse 14

Let us go to Gilgal - i. e., to Gilgal by Jericho, where was a famous sanctuary, in the tribe of Benjamin.

Verse 15

Made Saul king - The Septuagint has another reading, "and Samuel anointed Saul king there." The example of David, who, besides his original anointing by Samuel 1 Samuel 16:12-13, was twice anointed, first as king of Judah 2 Samuel 2:4, and again as king over all Israel 2 Samuel 5:3, makes it probable that Saul was anointed a second time; but this may be included in the word "made king" (see 1 Samuel 12:3, 1 Samuel 12:5).

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 2

My sons are with you - Possibly, however, a tinge of mortified feeling at the rejection of himself and his family, mixed with a desire to recommend his sons to the favor and goodwill of the nation, is at the bottom of this mention of them.

Verse 3

His anointed - i. e., king Saul. The title Messiah, Χριστὸς *Christos* unctus, or anointed, had been given to the High Priests (Leviticus 4:3: compare also 1 Samuel 2:10, 1 Samuel 2:35); but this is the earliest instance of an actual king of Israel bearing the title of God‘s Christ, and thus typifying the true Messiah or Christ of God.

Any bribe - literally, a “ransom,” the fine paid by a criminal in lieu of bonds or death Exodus 21:30, applied to the bribe paid to an unjust judge to induce him to acquit the guilty. (Compare Amos 5:12.)

To blind … - See the margin. The phrase is used of one who averts his eyes, as refusing assistance, or as showing contempt, or, as here, as winking at what is wrong.

Verse 6

Advanced - In the sense of appointing them to their office. It is, literally, “made” (see the margin; 1 Kings 12:31; Hebrews 3:2). Samuel‘s purpose is to impress the people with the conviction that Yahweh was their God, and the God of their fathers; that to Him they owed their national existence and all their national blessings, and that faithfulness to Him, to the exclusion of all other worship 1 Samuel 12:21 was the only safety of the newly-established monarchy. Observe the constant reference to the Exodus as the well-known turning-point of their national life (see 1 Samuel 4:8; 1 Samuel 6:6).

Verse 9

According to the present arrangement of the Book of Judges, and the common chronology, the oppression of Sisera must have occurred about 200 years after the entrance into Canaan. But Samuel here places it as the first great servitude, before that under Eglon king of Moab, or that from which Shamgar delivered them. And this is in accordance with the internal evidence of the Book of Judges itself. It is also the order of Judges 10:11,

except that there the Ammonites Judges 3:13 are placed before the Philistines.

Verse 11

Bedan - No such name occurs among the Judges who delivered Israel. Some versions and commentators read "Barak," the form of the letters of both words being in Hebrew somewhat similar.

And Samuel - There is nothing improper or out of place in Samuel mentioning his own judgeship. It had supplied a remarkable instance of God's deliverance 1 Samuel 7:12-15; and, as it was the last as well as one of the very greatest deliverances, it was natural he should do so. The passage in Hebrews 11:32 is quite as favorable to the mention of Samuel here as to that of "Samson," which some propose to read instead of "Samuel."

Verse 17

Wheat harvest - Between May 15 and June 15. Jerome's testimony (that of an eye-witness) "I have never seen rain in the end of June, or in July, in Judaea" is borne out by modern travelers.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

The text of this verse, omitted by the Septuagint, is held to be corrupt, and the numerals denoting Saul‘s age at his accession as well as the duration of his reign, are thought to be omitted or faulty. Saul may have been about 30 at his accession, and have reigned some 32 years, since we know that his grandson Mephibosheth was five years old at Saul‘s death 2 Samuel 4:4; and 32 added to the seven and a half years between the death of Saul and that of Ishbosheth, makes up the 40 years assigned to Saul‘s dynasty in Acts 13:21. Neither is there any clue to the interval of time between the events recorded in the preceding chapter, and those which follow in this and succeeding chapters. But the appearance of Jonathan as a warrior 1 Samuel 13:2 compared with the mention of Saul as “a young man” 1 Samuel 9:2, implies an interval of not less than ten or fifteen years, perhaps more. The object of the historian is to prepare the way for the history of David‘s reign. He therefore passes at once to that incident in Saul‘s reign, which led to his rejection by God, as recorded in 1 Samuel 13:13-14.

Verse 2

The state of things which preceded the events described in this chapter seems to have been a comparative peace between Israel and the Philistines, since Saul had only 3,000 men under arms. At the same time Philistine garrisons continued to occupy the country of the Israelites in certain strong places, whereof one was at Geba (Jeba), in the immediate neighborhood of Gibeah 1 Samuel 10:5; 1 Samuel 13:3, and exactly opposite Michmash (Mukhmas), which was on the northern edge of the great Wady Suweinit.

Verse 3

This was the first act in the war of independence, and probably the first feat in arms of the young hero Jonathan.

Verse 4

To Gilgal - The Wady Suweinit de-bouches into the plain of the Jordan in which Gilgal was situated. For the sanctity of Gilgal, see above, 1 Samuel 11:14 note.

Verse 5

Thirty thousand chariots - Probably a copyist‘s mistake for 300. (Compare, for a similar numerical variation, 1 Chronicles 18:4 with 2

Samuel 8:4.)

Eastward from Bethaven - Or more simply "to the east of Bethaven," which Joshua 7:2 lay "on the east side of Bethel." Bethaven (thought to be the same as Deir Diwan) lay between Bethel and Michmash, which had been evacuated by Saul.

Verse 6

In thickets - literally, "among thorns."

High places - Not the high places for worship, but holds or towers Judges 9:46, Judges 9:49; that particular kind of tower which was the work of the old Canaanite inhabitants, and which remained as ruins in the time of Saul.

Verse 7

The words "some of," which are the emphatic words in the King James Version, as distinguishing those who crossed the Jordan from those who hid themselves, are not in the Hebrew at all. The "Hebrews" seem to be distinguished from the "men of Israel" in 1 Samuel 13:6. (Compare 1 Samuel 14:21.)

Verse 8

Had appointed - This appointment has of course nothing whatever to do with that made years before 1 Samuel 10:8, the keeping of which is expressly mentioned at the natural time 1 Samuel 11:15. But Samuel had again, on this later occasion, made an appointment at the end of seven days. It seems to have been as a trial of faith and obedience, under which, this time, Saul unhappily broke down.

Verse 9

There is a difference of opinion among commentators whether Saul himself offered the sacrifices prepared for Samuel, thus entrenching upon the priest's office; or whether he ordered the priests to sacrifice, as Solomon did. In the latter case his sin consisted in disobeying the word of God, who had bidden him wait until Samuel came. And this is, on the whole, the more probable; since Samuel's rebuke says nothing of any assumption of priesthood, such as we read in the case of Uzziah 2 Chronicles 26:18.

Verse 11

Saul had come from Michmash to Gilgal, expecting to gather the force of the whole nation around him. Instead of that, the people fled, leaving him in the exposed plain with only 600 men 1 Samuel 13:15. The Philistines occupied Michmash, and might at any moment pour down the valley upon

Gilgal. Saul‘s situation was obviously one of extreme peril. A few hours‘ delay might prove fatal to him and his little army. Hence, he “forced” himself, etc.

Verse 13

Thou hast done foolishly … - Motives of worldly expediency were not to be weighed against the express commandment of God. All the circumstances and all the dangers were as well known to God as they were to Saul, and God had bidden him wait until Samuel came. Here was exactly the same sin of willful disobedience which broke out again, and was so severely reproved 1 Samuel 15:17-23.

Verse 15

Samuel arose - Saul could not return to his own station at Michmash, seeing it was occupied by the Philistines; so, perhaps by Samuel‘s advice (since, according to the text, he preceded him there), he effected a junction with Jonathan at Gibeah. Some would read “Saul” instead of “Samuel.”

Verse 17

The spoilers - “The devastator:” the same word is used of the destroying Angel Exodus 12:23. The verse describes the system adopted by the Philistines by which for a time they subjugated the Israelites. From their central camp at Michmash they sent out three bands to kill and lay waste and destroy. One took a northerly direction toward Ophrah - five miles east of Bethel, identified with “Ephrain” 2 Chronicles 13:19 and the modern “Taiyibeh,” - and toward the land of Shual, possibly the same as Shalim 1 Samuel 9:4; the second westward to Beth-horon; and the third eastward, by the unknown valley of Zeboim, toward the wilderness, i. e., the Jordan valley, toward Jericho.

Verse 19

There was no smith - This was the result of the fierce inroads described in the preceding verses, and the method adopted to make the Philistine conquests permanent.

Verse 20-21

The best rendering of the passage is perhaps as follows: “But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen etc. 1 Samuel 13:21, whenever there was bluntness of edge to their shares and coulters and prong-forks and axes, and to point their goads.” Coulters and mattocks were cutting instruments of the type of the share.

Verse 22

This seems to be mentioned here, in anticipation of the narrative in the next chapter, to enhance the victory gained, through God‘s help 1 Samuel 14:23, by the comparatively unarmed Israelites over their enemies. What with occasional skirmishes with the Philistines, the necessity of using their arms for domestic purposes, accidental losses, and the ordinary wear and tear, coupled with the impossibility of renewing their arms from the want of smiths and forges, the people that were with Saul and Jonathan came to be very imperfectly armed. It has been observed, moreover, that the Benjamites were more famous for the use of the sling than for any other weapon Judges 20:16, and this would be an additional cause of the paucity of swords and spears.

Verse 23

The passage of Michmash - The steep and precipitous path from Michmash to Geba, over the valley of Suweinit. The same term is used in Isaiah 10:28-29, where the march of the Assyrian army is described.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verse 1

Now … - Rather "and," since this verse is in immediate dependence upon the preceding. When Jonathan saw the garrison come out again and again, in defiance "of the armies of the living God," at length "upon a day" he determined to attack them.

Verse 2

Under a pomegranate - Compare 1 Samuel 22:6; Judges 4:5. Saul was at the northern extremity of Gibeah, about an hour's march from Geba, where Jonathan was.

Migron, if the reading is correct, must be a different place from the Migron of Isaiah 10:28.

Verse 3

Whether "Ahiah" or "Ahijah" is the same person as "Ahimelech the son of Ahitub" (see the marginal reference), or whether Ahimelech was the brother or son of Ahijah, and his successor in the priesthood, it is impossible to say certainly. Most probably "Ahijah" and "Ahimilech" are variations of the same name; the latter element in each alone being different, מלך *melek* (king) being substituted for the divine name יה *yâhh* Compare "Eliakim" and "Jehoiakim" 2 Kings 23:34, "Eliab" and "Eliel" 1 Chronicles 6:27, 1 Chronicles 6:34.

This fragment of a genealogy is a very valuable help to the chronology. The grandson of Phinehas, the son of Eli, was now High Priest; and Samuel, who was probably a few years older than Ahitub the son of Phinehas, was now an old man. All this indicates a period of about 50 years or upward from the taking of the ark by the Philistines.

The Lord's priest in Shiloh - But as Eli was so emphatically known and described in 1 Chronicles 13:3-5), it is better to refer these words to Eli, and not to Ahijah, to whom the next words, "wearing an ephod," apply. (See 1 Samuel 2:28; Judges 1:1 note.)

Verse 4

(The southern cliff was called "Seneh," or "the acacia," and the same name still applies to the modern valley, dotted by acacias. The northern cliff was named "Bozez" or "Shining." The valley runs nearly due east, and the

northern cliff is of ruddy and tawny tint, crowned with gleaming white chalk, and in the full glare of the sun almost all the day. (Conder.))

Verse 6

It is remarkable that the epithet "uncircumcised," used as a term of reproach, is confined almost exclusively to the Philistines. (Compare 1 Samuel 17:26, 1 Samuel 17:36; Judges 14:3; Judges 15:18, etc.) This is probably an indication of the long oppression of the Israelites by the Philistines and of their frequent wars.

Verse 10

Though it is not expressly said, as in the case of Gideon Judges 6:34, Othniel Judges 3:10, and others, that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, yet the whole course of the narrative, especially 1 Samuel 14:13-16, indicates an extraordinary divine interposition.

sa40

Verse 12

We will show you a thing - Said mockingly.

Verse 14

Within as it were an half acre … - The Hebrew text is extremely obscure. Hence, there is some probability that the true reading is preserved by the Septuagint which translates the clause "with darts and stones and flints of the field." Others take the words to mean: "in about half the time that a yoke of oxen draw a furrow in the field."

Verse 15

The earth quaked - This naturally increased the panic to the utmost. Compare 1 Samuel 7:10; Joshua 10:11; Psalm 114:4.

Verse 16

Multitude - The word is in 1 Samuel 14:19 (margin) rendered tumult. It must have the same meaning here. The sentence is obscure and probably corrupt; perhaps it means, "and behold the tumult! and it went on" (increased) "melting away and beating down."

Verse 18

For "the ark," some read "the ephod," owing to the improbability of the ark being with Saul at this time, and from the verb "Bring hither" being never applied to the ark, but regularly to the ephod 1 Samuel 23:9; 1 Samuel 30:7. Moreover, not the ark, but the ephod with Urim and Thummim, was the proper instrument for inquiring of the Lord. If, however, the Hebrew text is correct, they must have brought the ark into

Saul‘s camp from Kirjath-jearim 1 Samuel 7, possibly to be safe from the Philistines.

Verse 19

Withdraw thine hand - i. e., “Desist from what thou art about.” Saul in his impatience to join the battle would not wait for the answer from God, which he had desired Ahijah to inquire for; just as later 1 Samuel 14:35 he would not wait to finish the altar which he had begun to build. Had he now waited he would doubtless have avoided the error into which he fell.

Verse 20

Assembled themselves - See marg. Many versions give the sense “shouted,” which is far preferable, and only requires a different punctuation.

Verse 25

All they of the land - literally, all the land, probably meaning all those named in 1 Samuel 14:21-22, who now flocked to the wood as a rendezvous.

Verse 26

The honey dropped - Rather, “Behold a stream of honey.” The same thing may be seen in Spain, where in woody and rocky ground copious streams of honey are often found.

Verse 27

Were enlightened - i. e., he was refreshed, when he was faint.

Verse 28

And the people were faint - Read, “are faint,” the words are part of the man‘s complaint.

Verse 29

Hath troubled - The same word as was applied to Achan Joshua 7:25, and gave its name to the valley of Achor. This additional reference to Joshua is remarkable (compare 1 Samuel 14:24).

Verse 31

Aijalon. - The modern Yalo. It lies upon the side of a hill to the south of a fine valley which opens from between the two Bethhorons right down to the western plain of the Philistines, exactly on the route which the Philistines, when expelled from the high country about Michmash and Bethel, would take to regain their own country. Aijalon would be 15 or 20 miles from Michmash.

Verse 33

Sin against the Lord - See the marginal reference "u." But the prohibition was older than the Law of Moses Genesis 9:4. Compare Acts 15:20, Acts 15:29.

Verse 35

And Saul built … - i. e., of the great stone which they had rolled to kill the oxen and sheep upon, he began to build an altar to Yahweh (see the margin); but he did not finish it (compare 1 Chronicles 27:24), in his haste to pursue the Philistines that night.

Verse 36

Then said the priest … - Ahijah, with equal courage and faithfulness, worthy of his office as "the priest," when every one else yielded to Saul's humor, proposed that they should draw near to God to inquire of Him. (Compare 1 Kings 22:7.)

Verse 37

Asked counsel - The technical phrase for inquiring of God by Urim and Thummim, and applied also to inquiry of other oracles.

Verse 39

Saul's rashness becomes more and more apparent. He now adds an additional oath, to bring down yet further guilt in "taking God's name in vain" The expressions in 1 Samuel 14:36, 1 Samuel 14:40, indicate the fear in which the people stood of Saul. None dared to resist his will.

Verse 41

Give a perfect lot - The phrase is obscure, but the meaning is probably as in the margin.

Verse 47

Compare 2 Samuel 8:15. The preceding narrative shows that before this time Saul had been king in name only, since his country was occupied by the Philistines, and he could only muster 600 men, and those but half armed and pent up in a narrow stronghold. Now, however, on the expulsion of the Philistines from his country, and the return of the Israelites from their vassalage and from their hiding places 1 Samuel 14:21-22, Saul became king in deed as well as in name, and acted the part of a king through the rest of his reign in defending his people against their enemies round about. A comprehensive list of these enemies, including the Ammonite war which had already been described 1 Samuel 11:1-15, and the Amalekite war which follows in 1 Samuel 14:47-48. There is not the slightest indication from the words whether this "taking the kingdom" occurred soon or really years after

Saul‘s anointing at Gilgal. Hence, some would place the clause 1 Samuel 14:47-52 immediately after 1 Samuel 11:1-15, or 1 Samuel 31:1-13, preceded by the formulary, 1 Samuel 13:1, would then follow according to the common method of Hebrew historical narrative.

Zobah - This was one of the petty Ara-roman kingdoms flourishing at this time (Psalm 60:1-12 title). It seems to have been situated between Damascus and the Euphrates.

Verse 49

This enumeration of Saul‘s children and chief officers is according to the analogy of the subsequent annals of David and Solomen‘s reign. But the one here called Ishui, is elsewhere (marginal references) called Abi-nadab; and a fourth son, Esh-baal or Ish-bosheth, is here omitted.

Verse 50

The only other “Ahimaaz” mentioned in Scripture was the son of Zadok the priest. The word “Ahi” (brother) is frequently found in composition in names in the High Priest‘s family, e. g. in Ahijah, Ahimelech. It is not improbable that Ahimaaz may have been of this family, as marriages between the reval and priestly houses were not unusual 2 Kings 11:2; 2 Chronicles 22:11, and perhaps it may have been owing to such a connection that Ahijah was brought into prominence by Saul. If there be any truth in the above supposition, it would be an indication that Saul was not married until after his election to the throne.

Verse 51

Read, “And Kish the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner, were the sons of Abiel.” Ner was Saul‘s uncle.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verse 1

The absence of all chronology or note of time is remarkable.

Verse 2

Compare the marginal references. It appears 1 Samuel 14:48 that this expedition against Amalek was not made without fresh provocation. Probably some incursion similar to that described in 1 Samuel 30 was made by them upon the south country at a time when they thought the Israelites were weakened by their contests with the Philistines.

Verse 3

Utterly destroy - Rather, "devote to destruction" (Leviticus 27:28 note). When a city or people were thus made cherem, everything living was to be destroyed, and no part of the spoil fall to the conquerors (compare 1 Samuel 15:21). The valuables were put into the sacred treasury.

Verse 4

Telaim - Probably the same as "Telem" Joshua 15:24, one of the uttermost cities of Judah, toward the coast of Edom. The name means "lambs," and was probably so called from the numerous flocks.

Two hundred thousand … - A wonderful contrast with the six hundred men who composed his whole army before 1 Samuel 13:15, and a proof how completely for a time the Philistines had been driven back. The separate mention of the men of Judah shows how little union there was between Juduh and Ephraim even at this time; a circumstance which throws light upon the whole after history.

Verse 7

The district here described would stretch from Havilah on the extreme east to Shur, either near Suez, or further north on the coast road from Gaza to Egypt.

Verse 8

The saving Agag alive was in direct violation of the devotion to destruction.

Verse 9

The fatlings - The present Hebrew text cannot be so rendered. It can only mean "the second best" (compare the margin), i. e., sheep of the age to cut or shed the two teeth, sheep in their prime. But it is probable that the reading is corrupt, and that "fat or dainty bits" is the true reading.

Verse 11

It grieved Samuel - "Samuel was angry, or displeased," as Jonah was Jonah 4:1, and for a similar reason. Samuel was displeased that the king whom he had anointed should be set aside. It seemed a slur on his prophetic office.

He cried unto the Lord - With the wild scream or shriek of supplication. (See 1 Samuel 7:8-9; 1 Samuel 12:18.) The phrase and the action mark Samuel's fervent, earnest character.

Verse 12

A place - Rather, "a monument." The Hebrew word יד *yâd* means a "hand," but is used in the sense of "monument," or "trophy," in 2 Samuel 18:18, where we are told that the marble pillar which Absalom set up in his lifetime, was called "Yad Absalom."

Carmel - (see the marginal reference) would be on Saul's line of march on his return from the country of the Amalekites, more especially if he came from the neighborhood of Akaba.

Verse 13

Gilgal being within 15 miles of Ramah, Samuel might easily have come from Ramah that morning. Self-will and rashness had hitherto been Saul's chief faults. He now seems to add falsehood and hypocrisy.

Verse 15

There is something thoroughly mean in his attempt to shift the responsibility of what was done from his own kingly shoulders to those of the people. Every word uttered by Saul seems to indicate the breaking down of his moral character.

Verse 16

Samuel now acquiesces in the wisdom and justice of the sentence which 1 Samuel 15:11 he had so strenuously resisted at first. What before was known only to the Searcher of hearts, had now been displayed to Samuel by Saul himself.

Verse 18

The sinners - As though God would justify His commission to destroy them. (Compare Genesis 13:13.)

Verse 21

The Lord thy God - There is an implied censure of Samuel in this phrase. Saul says that Samuel blames him for what was done in honor of

Samuel‘s God; as if be had more zeal for the glory of God than was felt by Samuel.

Verse 22

Hath the Lord … - A grand example of the moral and spiritual teaching of the prophets (see the marginal references). The tension of Samuel‘s spirit, as he is about to pronounce the sentence of rejection, produces a lyrical turn of thought and language.

Verse 23

The meaning is “Rebellion is as bad as the sin of divination, and stubbornness is as bad as worshipping false gods (iniquity), and teraphim (idolatry).”

Verse 24

I have sinned - Compare 1 Samuel 15:25, 1 Samuel 15:30. How was it that these repeated confessions were unavailing to obtain forgiveness, when David‘s was? (See the marginal reference.) Because Saul only shrank from the punishment of his sin. David shrank in abhorrence from the sin itself Psalm 51:4.

Verse 29

The strength of Israel - A phrase which occurs only here. The word means, perpetuity, truth, glory, victory, and trust, or confidence.

Verse 30

The pertinacity with which Saul clings to Samuel for support is a striking testimony to Samuel‘s integrity. With all his worldly-mindedness Saul could perceive and appreciate the purity of Samuel‘s character as a man of God.

The Lord thy God - As above, 1 Samuel 15:15.

Verse 32

Delicately - This phrase is very obscure. The meaning of the word so rendered is “dainties, delights” Genesis 49:20; Proverbs 29:17; Lamentations 4:5, which hardly gives a tolerable sense here. Some understand it “fawningly, flatteringly,” with a view of appeasing Samuel. (Others alter the reading, and translate “in bonds.”)

Surely the bitterness … - Agag hopes that his life will be spared, and so expresses his confident belief that the bitterness of death is over.

Verse 33

Hewed in pieces - Only found in this passage. Samuel thus executed the חרם *chērem* 1 Samuel 15:3 which Saul had violated, and so both saved the

nation from the guilt of a broken oath, and gave a final example to Saul, but apparently in vain, of uncompromising obedience to the commandments of God. There is something awful in the majesty of the prophet rising above and eclipsing that of the king (compare 1 Kings 21:20; Jeremiah 38:14 ff; Daniel 2:46; Daniel 4:27).

Verse 35

Samuel came no more … - In the sense of visiting or conversing on public affairs.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verse 2

It was the purpose of God that David should be anointed at this time as Saul‘s successor, and as the ancestor and the type of His Christ. It was not the purpose of God that Samuel should stir up a civil war, by setting up David as Saul‘s rival. Secrecy, therefore, was a necessary part of the transaction. But secrecy and concealment are not the same as duplicity and falsehood. Concealment of a good purpose, for a good purpose, is clearly justifiable. There is therefore nothing in the least inconsistent with truth in the occurrence here related. Compare Exodus 7:16; Exodus 8:1; Exodus 9:13.

Verse 4

Trembled - There was evidently something unusual in Samuel‘s coming to Bethlehem; and the elders, knowing that Samuel was no longer at friendship with Saul, foreboded some evil.

Verse 10

Seven - i. e., including the three who had already passed. It appears that Jesse had eight sons; but in 1 Chronicles 2:13-15, only seven are ascribed to him.

Verse 11

We will not sit down … - . literally, we will not turn round to sit at the table.

Verse 13

The Spirit … came upon David - The exact phrase used of the Judges and Saul. See 1 Samuel 10:6, note; Judges 3:10, note; Judges 6:34, note; Judges 11:29, note; Judges 14:18, note; Judges 15:14, note.

Verse 15

The “evil” or “melancholy” spirit here spoken of was “the Spirit of God,” or “of Jehovah,” as being God‘s messenger and minister, sent by Him to execute His righteous purpose upon Saul (see 1 Kings 22:19-22 note).

Verse 16

The medicinal effects of music on the mind and body, especially as appeasing anger, and soothing and pacifying a troubled spirit, are well known. It is deeply interesting to have the youthful David thus brought before us, as using music for its highest purpose, that of turning the soul to

the harmony of peace and love. We may infer that some of his Psalms, such e. g. as Psalm 23:1-6, were already composed.

Verse 18

A mighty valiant man … - David‘s reputation for courage, skill, discretion, and manly beauty, was already great. Since “the Spirit of the Lord came upon him,” his natural qualities and powers had been greatly enhanced. His feat of killing the lion and the bear (see the marginal references) had been performed, like Samson‘s feats of strength Judges 14:6, Judges 14:19; Judges 15:14, under the same supernatural influence, and was probably more or less known.

Verse 21

The difficulty of reconciling this verse with 1 Samuel 17:55-58, is met thus: The words here are the ultimate sequence of David‘s first visit to Saul, and of his skill in music, and are therefore placed here; but they did not really come to pass until after David‘s victory over Goliath (see 1 Samuel 18:2). It is quite conceivable that if David had only played once or twice to Saul, and then returned to his father‘s house for some months, Saul might not recognize him.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

The narrative reverts to the Philistine wars 1 Samuel 14:52; the other introductory details concerning Saul‘s rejection, and David‘s introduction upon the stage of the history, having been disposed of in the intermediate chapters.

Shochoh which belongeth to Judah - See the marginal reference which places Shochoh and Azekah in the “Shephelah” or maritime plain, and 2 Chronicles 28:18, “Shochoh” now “Shuweikeh,” “nine miles from Eleutheropolis,” Jerome.

Ephes-dammim - Called “Happas-dammim” (Pas-dammim, 1 Chronicles 11:13), “the end of bloodshed,” now “Damun,” about 4 miles northeast of Shuweikeh.

Verse 2

The valley of Elah - i. e., of the terebinth, now called Wady es Sunt, from the acacias which are scattered in it.

Verse 3

(In the middle of the broad open valley 1 Samuel 17:2 is a deep trench 1 Samuel 17:3 with vertical sides, a valley within a valley: the sides and bed of the trench are strewn with water-worn pebbles. (Conder.))

Verse 4

A champion - literally, “a man between the two camps:” i. e., one who did not fight in the ranks like an ordinary soldier, but came forth into the space between the hostile camps to challenge the mightiest man of his enemies to come and fight him.

Goliath of Gath - One of the places mentioned in Joshua 11:22 as still retaining a remnant of the sons of Anak; Gaza and Ashdod being the others. The race of giants (the Rephaim, from רפא *râphâ'*) is mentioned again in the account of David‘s Philistine wars 2 Samuel 21:15-22; 1 Chronicles 20:4-8. It appears from these passages that Goliath had a brother Lahmi. Four are named as being “born to the giant in Gath.” See Deuteronomy 2:10-11, Deuteronomy 2:20-21; Deuteronomy 3:11-13.

Six cubits … - If the cubit, the length from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, is about 1 12 feet; and the span, the distance from the thumb to the middle or little finger, when stretched apart to the full length, be half

a cubit, six cubits and a span would equal about nine feet nine inches. The bed of Og king of Bashan was nine cubits long Deuteronomy 3:11.

Verse 5

Coat of mail - Or "breastplate of scales." A kind of metal shirt, protecting the back as well as the breast, and made of scales like those of a fish; as was the corselet of Rameses III, now in the British Museum. The terms, helmet, coat, and clothed (armed the King James Version) are the same as those used in Isaiah 59:17.

Five thousand shekels - Probably about 157 pounds avoirdupois (see Exodus 38:12). It is very probable that Goliath's brass coat may have been long preserved as a trophy, as we know his sword was, and so the weight of it ascertained.

Verse 6

A target … - Rather, "a javelin." as in 1 Samuel 17:45, and placed between the shoulders, as the quiver was.

Verse 7

Spear's-head - literally, "the flame of his spear," the metal part which flashed like a flame.

Six hundred shekels - i. e., between seventeen and eighteen pounds avoirdupois.

Verse 12

This and the following verses down to the end of 1 Samuel 17:31 are omitted in the Vatican copy of the Septuagint, as are 1 Samuel 17:55-58. The object of the omission was doubtless to avoid the apparent inconsistency with regard to Saul's acquaintance with David (see 1 Samuel 16:21 note).

Verse 15

David went … - "Was gone," referring to 1 Samuel 16:19-20. Had he been Saul's armour-bearer at this time it is highly improbable that he would have left him to feed sheep.

Verse 18

Take their pledge - i. e., bring back what they have to say in return.

Verse 20

The trench - Rather, "the wagons," which were all put together in the camp so as to form a kind of bulwark or fortification (see 1 Samuel 26:5, 1 Samuel 26:7). Here David left his "carriage" 1 Samuel 17:22, i. e., the things which he had carried, "his things" as we should say, or baggage

(translated stuff in 1 Samuel 10:22; 1 Samuel 25:13; 1 Samuel 30:24). There seems to have been an officer ("the keeper," 1 Samuel 17:22) in the Hebrew army whose charge it was to guard the baggage.

Verse 25

Free in Israel - In all the other passages (fifteen) where this word occurs, it means free, as opposed to being a slave (Deuteronomy 15:12-13, Deuteronomy 15:18, etc.) Here it may imply a freedom from all such services and burdens as are spoken of in 1 Samuel 8:11-17.

Verse 26

The living God - This fine expression occurs first in Deuteronomy (marginal reference), and next in Joshua 3:10, and 2 Kings 19:4. We find it twice in the Psalms of David Psalm 42:2; Psalm 84:2, four times in the prophets, and frequently in the New Testament. It is generally in contrast to false gods (1 Thessalonians 1:9, etc.).

Verse 28

Why camest thou down? - From the heights of Bethlehem to the valley of Elah.

Thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart - See the similar expression, Jeremiah 49. Compare the envy of Jacob's sons toward Joseph, and of the slanders heaped upon the Son of David in the days of His flesh.

Verse 29

Is there not a cause? - i. e., is not Saul's promise, and the insolence of Goliath, a sufficent cause for what I am about to do?

Verse 34

The narrative does not make it certain whether the lion and the bear came on one and the same, or on two different occasions. If it was on one occasion, the probability would be that the bear, having seized a lamb and carrying it off, a lion appeared to dispute the prize with the bear, or with David after he had taken it from the bear, and that David killed first one and then the other.

Verse 35

His beard - Put here for his throat, or under jaw; neither lion nor bear has a beard properly speaking.

Verse 45

A shield - "A javelin," see 1 Samuel 17:6 note.

Verse 47

The Lord saveth not with sword … - Observe the consistent teaching of such passages as 1 Samuel 14:6; Exodus 14:13-18; Judges 7:2, Judges 7:4, Judges 7:7; Psalm 44:6, etc., and their practical use to the Church as lessons of trust in God, and distrust of ourselves.

Verse 51

Champion - Quite a different word from that so rendered in 1 Samuel 17:4, 1 Samuel 17:23; better "warrior."

Verse 52

The men of Israel and Judah - See 1 Samuel 15:4 note.

Shaaraim - A town of Judah in the Shephelah (see the marginal reference), at this time probably in the possession of the Philistines.

Verse 54

Jerusalem - See Judges 1:8 note.

His tent - Perhaps the tabernacle. David had neither tent nor house of his own. It would be quite in accordance with David's piety that he should immediately dedicate to God the arms taken from the Philistine, in acknowledgment that the victory was not his own but the Lord's (compare 1 Samuel 21:9). His tabernacle, meaning the tabernacle which he had pitched (2 Samuel 6:17; compare Acts 15:16).

Verse 55

Whose son … - See the marginal reference note.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Verse 1

Was knit with the soul of David - The same forcible phrase occurs of Jacob‘s love for Benjamin (marginal reference). Jonathan‘s truly heroic character is shown in this generous love of David, and admiration of his great deed.

Verse 6

The Philistine - Rather as in the margin. The allusion is not to Goliath, but to one of the expeditions referred to in 1 Samuel 18:5.

Singing and dancing - Women used to dance to the sound of the timbrel, and to sing as they danced and played.

(instruments of music The word means, an instrument like the triangle, or with three cords.

Verse 7

As they played - Or danced with vocal and instrumental music (see Judges 16:25 note).

Verse 8

What can he have … - Rather, “There is only the kingdom left for him.” Compare for the same sentiment, 1 Kings 2:22. “A kingdom (says Camden) brooketh no companion, and majesty more heavily taketh injuries to heart.”

Verse 10

He prophesied - This, as the effect of the evil spirit coming upon him, is singular as regards Saul, but is borne out by what we read in 1 Kings 22:22. (Compare Acts 16:16-18; Acts 19:15; 1 John 4:1-3). It is impossible to give the sense of “raving” to the word “prophesied,” as though a merely natural state of frenzy were intended. The “prophesying” here was as directly the effect of the coming of the evil spirit upon Saul, as the “prophesying” in 1 Samuel 10:10 was the effect of the Spirit of God coming upon him. At the same time it is quite true that “madness” and “prophesyings” were considered as near akin (see Jeremiah 29:26; 2 Kings 9:11).

Verse 17

Saul had not hitherto fulfilled the promise of which David had heard (marginal reference); nor was it unnatural that Saul should delay to do so,

until the shepherd‘s boy had risen to a higher rank.

Verse 18

What is my life - i. e., condition, or means of living (Proverbs 27:27 margin).

Verse 19

Adriel the Meholathite - The five sons of this marriage perished by the hands of the Gibeonites (marginal reference), where we learn further that the name of Adriel‘s father, or ancestor, was Barzillai. His birth-place was Meholah, probably the same as Abel-Meholah. (See 1 Kings 19:16 note).

Verse 20

The thing pleased him - It partly relieved him from the charge of breaking his faith.

Verse 21

In the one of the twain - Some prefer “the second time” Job 33:14. The first contract had been broken by giving Merab to Adriel.

Verse 23

A poor man and lightly esteemed - Compare Psalm 119:141. Poor, and therefore unable to pay a sufficient dowry. See 1 Samuel 18:25.

Verse 25

An hundred foreskins - This is merely another expression of the spirit which led to the constant application of the epithet uncircumcised to the Philistines 1 Samuel 14:6.

Verse 26

The days were not expired - David was so rapid in his attack upon the Philistines that he was able to bring the required dowry within the time, and to receive his wife (Michal), before the time had expired within which he was to receive Merab.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Verse 10

David fled - This was the beginning of David‘s life as a fugitive and outcast, though for no “offence or fauIt” of his (Psalm 59:3, Prayer Book Version).

Verse 11

Saul‘s plan was to surround the house at night, and to have David killed as soon as he came abroad unsuspectingly in the morning.

Verse 13

An image - “Teraphim” (see the margin), an image, or bust in human form, and as large as life, of a kind of household god, to the worship of which the Israelites, and especially women, were much addicted.

A pillow - It was probably a quilt or blanket of goats‘ hair and of common use as a bed-covering. Whether Michal drew it over the head of the teraphim, as if for warmth, and so covered it, or whether she disposed it about the head so as to look like hair, is not clear.

Verse 17

Why should I kill thee? - To avert Saul‘s anger from herself, she pretended that David had threatened her life unless she facilitated his escape.

Verse 18

No such place as Naioth (or Nevaioth) is known, but the word means “dwellings.” Hence, it is considered that Naioth was the name of the collegiate residence of the prophets, in, or just outside, Ramah, to which Samuel removed with David from his own house, for greater safety, owing to the sanctity of the place and company.

Verse 20

Samuel standing as appointed - Rather, “as Overseer, or leader.”

Verse 22

To a great well - Some large well-known cistern at Sechu, the site of which is uncertain, which Saul passed on his way from Gibeah to Ramah.

Verse 24

Naked - i. e., without his robe and other outer garments, but only the shirt. Compare the marginal references.

The whole history affords another instance of the protection of God vouchsafed to His servants, which forms so frequent a topic of the Psalms

of David.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Verse 1

While Saul was under the constraining influence of the spirit of prophecy, David escaped from Naioth, and, probably by Samuel‘s advice, returned to Saul‘s court to commune with Jonathan. Nothing could be a better evidence of his innocence than thus putting himself in Jonathan‘s power. Perhaps something passed between Samuel and Saul on the subject, since it appears from 1 Samuel 20:5, 1 Samuel 20:25, 1 Samuel 20:27, that Saul expected David at the feast of the new moon.

Verse 2

It is not so - Jonathan‘s unwillingness to believe evil of his father is one of the many admirable traits in his character.

Verse 3

And David sware moreover - Rather, “yet again.” He met Jonathan‘s denial by repeating his statement and confirming it with an oath.

Verse 5

The new moon, or beginning of each month, was celebrated with especial sacrifices and blowing of trumpets (marginal references.) The feast was kept with great solemnity as “a day of gladness,” and we may presume that the “peace offerings” offered on the occasion furnished the tables of those that offered.

Verse 14-15

The general meaning is: Jonathan had a presentiment, doubtless from God, that David would be established upon the throne. By God‘s mercy he had the comfort, which he well deserved, of knowing that his own posterity would receive kindness at David‘s hand (see the marginal references).

Verse 19

The stone Ezel - It is not mentioned elsewhere, except possibly in 1 Samuel 20:41, where see the note.

Verse 26

He is not clean - The new moon being a religious feast, and the meat to be eaten being peace-offerings, no one could assist at the feast who had any ceremonial uncleanness upon him (marginal references).

Verse 30

The greatest insult and most stinging reproach that can be cast upon an Oriental is to reproach his parents or ancestors (see Job 30:8). Saul means

to intimate that Jonathan was stubborn from his mother‘s womb.

Verse 41

A place toward the south - An unintelligible description; one expects a repetition of the description of David‘s hiding-place in 1 Samuel 20:19. The Septuagint in both places has “argab,” a word meaning a “heap of stones.” If this be the true reading, David‘s hiding-place was either a natural cavernous rock which was called “Argab,” or some ruin of an ancient building, equally suited for a hiding-place.

Bowed himself three times - In token, doubtless, of his unshaken loyalty to Jonathan as the son of his king, as well as his friend; and in acknowledgment of Jonathan‘s power to kill him if he saw fit. (Compare Genesis 33:3).

David exceeded - His affection for Jonathan, coupled with his sense of Saul‘s injustice and his own injured innocence, fully accounts for his strong emotion.

Verse 42

Jonathan went into the city - From which one may infer, what the after history also indicates, that Jonathan‘s filial duty and patriotism prevented a complete rupture with his father. Jonathan‘s conduct in this, as in everything, was most admirable.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Verse 1

Nob was a city of the priests, the high priest resided there, and the tabernacle was pitched there 1 Samuel 21:4, 1Samuel 21:6,1 Samuel 21:9; 1 Samuel 22:10. It was situated on the road from the north to Jerusalem, near Anathoth, and within sight of the holy city Isaiah 10:32; Nehemiah 11:32. But the site has not been identified with certainty.

Verse 2

A fresh instance of David‘s unscrupulous readiness of invention (compare 1 Samuel 20:6).

Verse 4

Common - As opposed to holy. (See the marginal references, and compare the use of the word in Acts 10:14-15, Acts 10:28.) It gives an idea of the depressed and poor condition of the priesthood at that time, that Ahimelech should have had no bread at hand except the showbread.

Verse 5

The vessels of the young men … - i. e., their clothes Deuteronomy 22:5 or wallets (marginal reference), or other articles which might be Levitically unclean and need cleansing (Leviticus 13:58; Exodus 19:10, etc.; Mark 7:4), as well as the person.

And the bread … - The meaning is; “Though it is treating it like common bread to give it to me and my young men, there is fresh showbread baked and put on the table in place of what you give us;” the day being Friday. as is indicated in the verse following.

Verse 7

Detained before the Lord - Either to fulfill a vow Acts 21:23-27, or on account of uncleanness, or under the law of lepers Leviticus 13:4, Leviticus 13:11, Leviticus 13:21, or as a proselyte. It is not impossible that Doeg may have been in custody or in sanctuary for some crime.

Verse 9

Wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod - Rather, “in the cloak,” Goliath‘s military cloak, which was part of the dedicated trophy. The ephod was naturally hung up where the high priest alone could get at it.

Verse 10

Achish king of Gath - It appears from the title that Psalm 34 was composed on this occasion. (See the note there.) Nothing can give a more

lively impression of the straits to which David was reduced than the fact of his going to the country of the Philistines.

Verse 11

The king of the land - The Philistines gave him the title which their own lords bore.

Verse 13

Scrabbled - literally, made marks (margin), namely, the mark of the "tau" (t), which in the ancient Hebrew and Phoenician was in the shape of a cross. (See Ezekiel 9:4.)

On the doors of the gate - The gate of Achish's palace-yard or court, in which the attendants waited. The house itself stood in this court. (Compare Esther 2:19, Esther 2:21.)

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 22

Verse 1

To the cave Adullam - Or rather "of Adullam." Adullam was the name of a town of Judah in the "Shephelah," not far from Bethlehem, and below it. Innumerable caverns, one nearly 100 feet long, are excavated in the soft limestone hills in the neighborhood of Beit-Jibrin. (The cave is placed by Ganneau and Conder on the hill (500 feet high) over ‹Aid el Ma or Miyeh.) David‘s brethren and kinsmen joined him partly from sympathy with him, and partly because their own lives were in jeopardy front Saul‘s furious enmity.

Verse 2

Discontented - See the margin. (Compare 1 Samuel 30:6; 2 Samuel 17:8.) The phrase here denotes those who were exasperated by Saul‘s tyranny.

Verse 3

Mizpeh of Moab - A good conjecture connects it with "Zophim" (a word of the same root as Mizpeh) on the top of Pisgah Numbers 23:14. It is probable that David‘s descent from Ruth the Moabitess may have had something to do with his seeking an asylum for Jesse, Ruth‘s grandson, in the land of her birth. It would be very easy to get to the Jordan from the neighborhood of Bethlehem, and cross over near its embouchure into the Dead Sea.

Come forth, and be with you - The construction of the Hebrew is very strange. The Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic seem to have read "dwell" instead of "come forth."

Verse 4

He brought them before … - The Septuagint renders it "he persuaded (the face of) the king."

In the hold - Where David was after he left the cave of Adullam, probably in the land of Moab.

The phrase "all the while," would indicate that David sojourned a considerable time in Moab.

Verse 5

The prophet Gad - Mentioned here for the first time. One may conjecture that Samnel had sent him privately from Naioth to tell David not

to abide in the hold. Whether he stayed with David or returned to the College of the prophets does not appear. For later notices of him see marginal references.

The forest of Hareth is unknown.

Verse 6

Under a tree in Ramah - Rather, "under the tamarisk-tree on the high place," where he always held such meetings. It was a kind of parliament in the open air, and all his tribesmen gathered round him. (Compare Judges 4:5.)

Verse 7

Ye Benjamites - Showing how isolated the tribes still were, and how for the most part Saul was surrounded by his own tribesmen only.

Verse 10

He inquired of the Lord … - This was not true, but Ahimelech's going to fetch the sword from behind the ephod might have given occasion to the belief on Doeg's part that he had put on the ephod to inquire of the Lord for David.

Verse 14

Goeth at thy bidding - Better, "has access to thy (private) audience," or council (compare 2 Samuel 23:23, margin).

Verse 15

Did I then begin … - Some lay the stress upon the word "begin," as though Ahimelech's justification was that he had often before inquired of the Lord for David when employed on the king's affairs. But it is much better to understand the words as Ahimelech's solemn denial of having inquired of the Lord for David, a duty which he owed to Saul alone as king of Israel. The force of the word "begin" lies in this, that it would have been his first act of allegiance to David and defection from Saul. This he strenuously repudiates, and adds, "thy servant knew nothing of all this" conspiracy between Jonathan and David of which Saul speaks: he had acted quite innocently.

Verse 18

We are not to suppose that Doeg killed them all with his own hand. He had a band of men under his command, many or all of whom were perhaps foreigners like himself, and very likely of a Bedouin caste, to whom

bloodshed would be quite natural, and the priests of the Lord of no more account than so Early sheep or oxen.

Verse 19

Both men and women … - The language employed in the case of the Amalekites 1 Samuel 15:3 and of Jericho Joshua 6:21. Nothing could be more truculent than Saul‘s revenge.

Verse 20

Abiathar - He may have remained at Nob to take care of the sanctuary when the other priests went to Saul, and so escaped. He continued David‘s faithful friend throughout his reign 1 Samuel 23:9; 1 Samuel 30:7; 2 Samuel 15:24, 2 Samuel 15:29, 2 Samuel 15:35, but gave offence by taking Adonijah‘s part against Solomon 1 Kings 1:7, 1 Kings 1:19, 1 Kings 1:42, and in consequence was deprived of the high priesthood 1 Kings 2:26-27. In Mark 2:26, he is spoken of as the High Priest who gave the showbread to David. Perhaps he was the instigator of this act of kindness to David; and for this cause, as well as his constancy to David, is mentioned by our Lord instead of Ahimelech. It is also possible that, as sagan to his father, he may have performed most of the priestly functions, as Hophni and Phinehas did in the lifetime of Eli. Abiathar did not actually join David until he went to Keilah (marginal reference).

Verse 23

The characteristic generosity of David‘s disposition breaks out in these words. He never forgot a friend. (Compare 2 Samuel 1:26; 2 Samuel 9:1, etc.) David acknowledges that Saul‘s enmity against Abiathar is the consequence of his enmity against himself, and therefore David makes common cause with him.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 23

Verse 1

David‘s growing importance, fugitive as he was, is marked by this appeal to him for deliverance from the Philistines. The “threshing floors” were the natural objects of plunder Judges 6:11. Keilah was in the Shephelah (marginal reference), probably close to the Philistine border, but its site is uncertain.

Joshua 2:11 Samuel Joshua 23:1 PP1

Verses 2-4

If Gad was with David at the forest of Hareth 1 Samuel 22:5, and there inquired for him of the Lord 1Samuel 23:2,1 Samuel 23:4, but did not accompany him to Keilah, and if Abiathar‘s flight occurred at the time of David‘s being at Keilah, we have an additional striking instance of God‘s watchful providential care of David in thus sending Abiathar to supply the place of Gad at so critical a moment.

Verse 12

The conduct of the men of Keilah would be like that of the men of Judah to Samson their deliverer Judges 15:10-13.

Verse 14

Ziph is placed between Hebron and En-gedi (marginal references). (The “wood” 1 Samuel 23:15 is by Conder taken as a proper name, “Cheresh,” and identified with Khoreisa.)

Verse 16

A touching example of mutual fidelity between friends. The humility and unselfish love of Jonathan is apparent in 1 Samuel 23:17.

Verse 19

(Hachilah is thought by Conder to be the long ridge called El Kolah). For Jeshimon, see the margin and Numbers 21:20.

Verse 24

The plain - The Arabah, the desert tract which extends along the valley of the Jordan from the Dead Sea to the Lake of Gennesareth, now called El-Ghor. The word is now given by the Arabs to the valley between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Akaba.

Verse 28

Sela-hammahlekoth - See the margin. (Identified by Conder with a narrow and impassable gorge between El Kolah and Maon, called Malaky).

Verse 29

En-gedi (the fountain of the kid), anciently called Hazezon-Tamar Genesis 14:7 from the palm-trees which used to grow there, still preserves its name in Ain-Djedy. It is about 200 yards from the Dead Sea, about the center of its western shore. It is marked by great luxuriance of vegetation, though the approach to it is through most dangerous and precipitous passes. The country is full of caverns, which serve as lurking places for outlaws at the present day. One of these, a spacious one called Bir-el-Mauquouchieh, with a well in it suitable for watering sheep, close to the Wady Hasasa, may have been the identical cavern in which David cut off Saul‘s skirt.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Verse 2

The rocks of the wild goats - To signify the craggy precipitous character of the country.

Verse 3

Remained in the sides - Rather, "were in the sides of the cave dwelling or abiding there." Some of these caverns are very deep and spacious. Any one near the mouth of the cave would be visible, but those in the recesses would be quite in the dark and invisible, especially if the incident occurred at night. Psalm 67:1-7, according to the title, was composed on this occasion.

Verse 4

The day of which the Lord said … - This was the version by David's men of such divine predictions as 1 Samuel 15:28; 1 Samuel 16:1, 1 Samuel 16:12. Jonathan's words 1 Samuel 20:15; 1 Samuel 23:17 show clearly that these predictions were known.

Verse 5

David's heart smote him - He thought the action inconsistent with the respect which he owed to the king.

Verse 9

David was quite aware that there were flatterers at Saul's court who were continually inflaming the King's mind by their false accusations against him. This explains the language of many of the Psalms, e. g. Psalm 11:1-7; Psalm 12:1-8; 35; and many more.

Verse 11

My father - The respectful address of a junior and an inferior (see 2 Kings 5:13, and compare 1 Samuel 24:16; 1 Samuel 25:8).

Verse 14

After whom … - i. e., was it consistent with the dignity of the king of Israel to lead armies in pursuit of a weak and helpless individual like David?

Verse 21

Swear now … - The same request which Jonathan made 1 Samuel 20:15. The deep, genealogical feeling of the Israelites breaks out here as so often elsewhere.

Verse 22

Saul does not appear to have invited David to return to Gibeah, or to have given him any security of doing so with safety. David, with his intuitive sagacity, perceived that the softening of Saul‘s feelings was only momentary, and that the situation remained unchanged.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 25

erse 1

In his house at Ramah - Probably in the court or garden attached to his dwelling-house. (Compare 2 Chronicles 33:20; 2 Kings 21:18; John 19:41.)

The wilderness of Paran - The Septuagint has the far more probable reading "Maon." The wilderness of Paran lay far off to the south, on the borders of the wilderness of Sinai Numbers 10:12; 1 Kings 11:18, whereas the following verse 1 Samuel 25:2 shows that the scene is laid in the immediate neighborhood of Maon. If, however, Paran be the true reading, we must suppose that in a wide sense the wilderness of Paran extended all the way to the wilderness of Beersheba, and eastward to the mountains of Judah (marginal references).

Verse 2

Carmel - Not Mount Carmel on the west of the plain of Esdraelon, but the Carmel close to Maon (marginal references).

Shearing his sheep - Which was always a time of open-handed hospitality among flock-masters Genesis 38:12-13; 2 Samuel 13:23-24.

Verse 6

That liveth in prosperity - The Hebrew is obscure, and is variously interpreted. The simplest rendering is, "And ye shall say thus about (his) life," i. e., with reference to his life, health, circumstances, etc.

Verse 11

The mention of water indicates a country where water was scarce (compare Joshua 15:19). Or "bread and water" may be equivalent to "meat and drink."

Verse 14

Railed on them - The marginal reading, "flew upon them," is nearer to the original.

Verse 16

A wall - To protect them from the attacks of the Bedouins, etc. They had been as safe with David's men around them as if they had been dwelling in a walled town.

Verse 18

Two bottles - Rather, "two skins," each of which would contain many gallons. These leather vessels varied in size according to the skin they were made of, and the use they were to be put to. The smaller and more portable

kind, which may not improperly be called bottles, were made of the skin of a kid: larger ones of the skin of a he-goat. The Arabs invariably to this day carry their milk, water, etc., in such leather vessels. One skin of wine was a handsome present from Ziba, sufficient for David‘s household 2 Samuel 16:1. The provisions were all ready to Abigail‘s hand, having been provided for the sheep-shearing feast.

Verse 20

The covert of the hill - Probably a defile or glen, literally a “secret place,” as in 1 Samuel 19:2. She was riding down into this glen from one side, while David and his men were descending the opposite hill. It is perhaps mentioned that she came by this “secret place,” because she chose this path to escape the observation of her husband or of anyone else.

Verse 21

In vain - i. e., under false expectation.

Verse 22

The concluding phrase denotes the utter destruction of a family, and is rightly explained to mean “every male,” perhaps with the idea, “down to the very meanest member of the household.”

Verse 26

The passage should be rendered as follows: “And now my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth,” it is “the Lord” that “hath withholden thee from coming” into blood-guiltiness (as in 1 Samuel 25:33), “and from saving thyself with thine own hand;” and “now” all “thine enemies” shall be as Nabal (whom she considers as utterly impotent to hurt David, and as already thoroughly humbled before him), and (so shall be) all “that seek evil to my Lord.”

Verse 28

For the Lord will make … a sure house - Compare 1 Samuel 2:35, and 2 Samuel 7:16; 1 Kings 11:38. Abigail‘s firm persuasion of David‘s kingdom stands upon the same footing as Rahab‘s conviction of God‘s gift of Canaan to the Israelites Joshua 2:9-13. Both testified to God‘s revelation and their own faith. This is doubtless the reason why Abigail‘s speech is recorded.

Verse 29

In the bundle - Rather, “the bag,” in which anything precious, or important to be preserved, was put, and the bag was then tied up (compare Genesis 42:35).

The souls … shall he sling out - The comparison is especially appropriate as addressed to David, whose feat with his sling was so celebrated 1 Samuel 17:49.

Verse 37

He became as a stone - Probably his violent anger at hearing it brought on a fit of apoplexy to which he was disposed by the drunken revel of the night before. After lying senseless for ten days he died.

Verse 40

There is no note of the exact interval that elapsed between Nabal‘s death and David‘s hearing of it, or, again, between David‘s hearing of it and his message to Abigail; nor is there any reason to suppose that the marriage took place with unbecoming haste. The widow of such a husband as Nabal had been could not, however, be expected to revere his memory. After the usual mourning of seven days, she would probably feel herself free to act as custom allowed. (See 2 Samuel 11:26.)

Verse 43

In the list of David‘s wives Ahinoam is mentioned first 2 Samuel 3:2; 1 Chronicles 3:1. But this may be only because her son was the first-born. David‘s now taking two wives was an indication of his growing power and importance as a chieftain. The number was increased to six when he reigned in Hebron 1 Chronicles 3:1, and still further when he became king of all Israel 2 Samuel 5:12-13. See 1 Samuel 1:2 note.

Of Jezreel - Not the well-known city of Samaria, which gave its name to the plain of Esdraelon, but a town of Judah, near Carmel (marginal reference).

Verse 44

Saul‘s giving Michal to Phalti was intended to mark the final rupture of his own relations with David (compare Judges 14:20; 2 Samuel 3:7; 2 Samuel 16:21). Phalti or Phaltiel Was compelled by Abner to restore Michal to David 2 Samuel 3:15.

Gallin - A city of Benjamin, and in the neighborhood of another town called Laish.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 26

Verse 1

The incident related in this chapter of the meeting between Saul and David bears a strong general resemblance to that recorded in Genesis 2:4 ff; the two narratives of David‘s war, 2 Kings 9:27 ff; and 2 Chronicles 22:9.)

Verse 6

Ahimelech the Hittite - Only mentioned here. Uriah was also a Hittite.

Abishai - He was son of Zeruiah, David‘s sister, but probably about the same age as David. He because very famous as a warrior 2 Samuel 23:18, but was implicated with his brother Joab in the murder of Abner in retaliation for the death of their brother Asahel 2 Samuel 3:30.

Verse 15

This incidental testimony to Abner‘s great eminence as a warrior is fully borne out by David‘s dirge at Abner‘s death 2 Samuel 3:31-34, 2 Samuel 3:38, as well as by his whole history. At the same time David‘s bantering tone in regard to Abner, coupled with what he says in 1 Samuel 26:19, makes it proable that David attributed Saul‘s persecution of him in some degree to Abner. Abner would be likely to dread a rival in the young conqueror of Judah (compare 2 Samuel 2:8).

Verse 19

If the Lord have stirred thee up - The meaning is clear from the preceding history. “An evil spirit from God troubling him” was the beginning of the persecution. And this evil spirit was sent in punishment of Saul‘s sin 1 Samuel 16:1, 1 Samuel 16:14. If the continued persecution was merely the consequence of this evil spirit continuing to vex Saul, David advises Saul to seek God‘s pardon, and, as a consequence, the removal of the evil spirit, by offering a sacrifice. But if the persecution was the consequence of the false accusations of slanderers, then “cursed” be his enemies who, by their actions, drove David out from the only land where Yahweh was worshipped, and forced him to take refuge in the country of pagan and idolaters (compare Deuteronomy 4:27; Deuteronomy 28:36).

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Verse 5

David, with characteristic Oriental subtlety (compare 1 Samuel 21:2), suggests as a reason for leaving Gath that his presence was burdensome and expensive to the king. His real motive was to be more out of the way of observation and control, so as to act the part of an enemy of Saul, without really lifting up his hand against him and his own countrymen of Israel.

Verse 6

Ziklag - This was properly one of the cities of Simeon within the tribe of Judah (marginal references), but it had been taken possession of by the Philistines. The exact situation of it is uncertain.

Unto this day - This phrase, coupled with the title the kings of Judah, implies that this was written after the revolt of Jeroboam, and before the Babylonian captivity.

Verse 8

The Geshurites bordered upon the Philistines, and lived in the mountainous district which terminates the desert on the northeast (marginal reference). They were a different tribe, or, at least, a different branch of it, from the Geshurites who lived on the northeast border of Bashan, and were Arameans 2 Samuel 15:8. The Gezrites, or Gerzites, may be connected with those who gave their name to Mount Gerizim.

Verse 10

The Jerahmeelites - i. e. the descendants of Jerahmeel, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah (marginal references). They were therefore a portion of the "south of Judah."

The Kenites - See Numbers 24:21 note; Numbers 4:11; and for their near neighborhood to Amalek, see 1 Samuel 15:6.

Verse 11

Tidings - The word is not in the original. The sense rather is "to bring them to Gath," as captives and slaves. The prisoners taken would naturally have been part of the spoil, but David dared not to bring them to Gath lest his deceit should be discovered. Obviously these tribes were allies of the Philistines.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 28

Verse 2

Thou shalt know … - David dissembled (compare also 1 Samuel 29:8), hoping, no doubt, that something would happen to prevent his fighting against his king and country.

Keeper of mine head - Captain of his bodyguard.

Verse 3

It does not appear when Saul had suppressed witchcraft; it was probably in the early part of his reign.

Familiar spirits … wizards - i. e. ventriloquists … wise or cunning men. See Leviticus 19:31 note.

Verse 4

Gilboa - Now called Jebel Fukuak. But the ancient name is preserved in the village of Jelbon, situated on the south side of the mountain. It was separated from Shunem (see the marginal reference) by the deep valley of Jezreel. The Philistines either advanced along the seacoast, and then entered the valley of Jezreel from the west, or they came by the present road right through Samaria, starting from Aphek 1 Samuel 29:1.

Verse 6

When Saul inquired of the Lord … - It is said 1 Chronicles 10:14 that one reason why the Lord killed Saul, and gave his kingdom to David, was because he inquired not of the Lord. The explanation of this apparent discrepancy is to be found in the fact that inquiring of the familiar spirit was positively antagonistic to inquiring of the Lord. That Saul received no answer - when he "inquired of the Lord" by dreams, which was an immediate revelation to himself; by Urim, which was an answer through the high priest clothed in the ephod; or by prophets, which was an answer conveyed through some seer speaking by the Word of the Lord 1 Samuel 22:5 - was a reason for self-abasement and self-examination, to find out and, if possible, remove the cause, but was no justification whatever of his sin in asking counsel of familiar spirits.

Verse 7

Enquire - A different word from that in 1 Samuel 28:6, though nearly synonymous with it. It is more frequently applied to inquiry of a false god, as e. g. 2 Kings 1:2; Isaiah 8:19; Isaiah 19:3.

En-dor (see Joshua 11:2 note) was seven or eight miles from the slopes of Gilboa, on the north of little Hermon, where the Philistines were encamped; so that Saul must have run great risks in going there.

Verse 8

Divine - Compare to 1 Samuel 6:2, note; Numbers 23:23, note.

Bring me him up - The art of the ventriloquist seems to have been always connected with necromancy. The Greeks had necromancers who called up departed spirits to give answers to those who consulted them.

Verse 11

Bring me up Samuel - Dr. Trench observes, "All human history has failed to record a despair deeper or more tragic than his, who, having forsaken God and being of God forsaken, is now seeking to move hell; and infinitely guilty as he is, assuredly there is something unutterably pathetic in that yearning of the disanointed king to change words with the friend and counselor of his youth, and if he must hear his doom, to hear it from no other lips but his" (‹Shipwrecks of Faith, ‹ p. 47).

Verse 12

It is manifest both that the apparition of Samuel was real, and also that the woman was utterly unprepared for it.

Why hast thou deceived me … - She perhaps inferred that Samuel would have answered the call of none inferior to the king. Or it may be the presence of an inhabitant of the world of spirits brought a sudden illumination to her mind.

Verse 13

Gods - אלהים *'ĕlohîym* is here used in a general sense of a supernatural appearance, either angel or spirit. Hell, or the place of the departed (compare 1 Samuel 28:19; 2 Samuel 12:23) is represented as under the earth Isaiah 14:9-10; Ezekiel 32:18.

Verse 17

To him - Better, "for Himself," as in the margin.

Verse 19

Rather, "will deliver Israel also." Saul had not only brought ruin upon his own house but upon Israel also; and when Saul and Jonathan fell the camp (not "host") would be plundered by the conquerors 1 Samuel 31:8; 2 Samuel 1:10.

Verse 23

The bed - Rather, “the bench” or divan, such as in the East still runs along the wall, furnished with cushions, for those who sit at meals Esther 1:6; Ezekiel 23:41.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 29

Verse 1

A fountain - Probably, the fine spring Ain-Jalud. It is impossible to say what the special circumstances were which led to the struggle between Israel and the Philistines taking place so far north as the plain of Jezreel. Possibly it was connected with some movements of the Aramaic tribes to the north of Palestine. See 2 Samuel 8.

Verse 2

The lords - See Judges 3:3 note, as distinguished from ordinary "princes" 1 Samuel 29:3. The military divisions of the Philistine army were by hundreds and by thousands, like those of the Israelites 1 Samuel 8:12. David and his men formed a body-guard to Achish 1 Samuel 28:2.

Verse 3

He fell unto me - The regular word for deserting and going over to the other side. See Jeremiah 37:13; Jeremiah 38:19.

Verse 6

As the Lord liveth - The swearing by Yahweh seems strange in the mouth of a Philistine. But probably not the very words, but only the sense of this and such like speeches, is preserved.

Verse 8

See 1 Samuel 29:10 note.

Verse 10

With thy master's servants - The clue to this may be found in 1 Chronicles 12:19-21, where it appears that a considerable number of Manassites "fell" to David just at this time, and went back with him to Ziklag. It is therefore to these new comers that Achish applies the expression. It is impossible not to recognize here a merciful interposition of Providence, by which David was not only saved from fighting against his king and country, but sent home just in time to recover his wives and property from the Amalekites 1 Samuel 30. That David maintained his position by subtlety and falsehood, which were the invariable characteristics of his age and nation, is not in the least to be wondered at. No sanction is given by this narrative to the use of falsehood.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 30

Verse 1

On the third day - This indicates that Aphek was three days‘ march from Ziklag, say about 50 miles, which agrees very well with the probable situation of Aphek (1 Samuel 4:1 note). From Ziklag to Shunem would not be less than 80 or 90 miles.

The Amalekites, in retaliation of David‘s raids 1 Samuel 27:8-9, invaded “the south” of Judah Joshua 15:21; but owing to the absence of all the men with David there was no resistance, and consequently the women and children were carried off as prey, and uninjured.

Verse 7

Abiathar had continued to abide with David, ever since he joined him at Keilah 1 Samuel 23:6. On inquiry of the Lord by the ephod, see Judges 1:1 note. The answers were evidently given by the Word of the Lord in the mouth of the high priest (compare John 11:51).

Verse 9

Besor - Thought to be the stream of the Wady Sheriah which enters the sea a little south of Gaza.

Verse 12

Three days and three nights - Indicating that at least so long a time had elapsed since the sack of Ziklag.

Verse 14

The Cherethites - Here used as synonymous with Philistines 1 Samuel 30:16. In David‘s reign the body-guard commanded by Benaiah consisted of Cherethites and Pelethites (Philistines?) and a picked corps of six hundred men of Gath commanded by Ittai the Gittite. It would seem from this that the Cherethites and Philistines were two kindred and associated tribes, like Angles and Saxons, who took possession of the seacoast of Palestine. The Philistines, being the more powerful, gave their name to the country and the nation in general, though that of the Cherethites was not wholly extinguished. Many persons connect the name Cherethite with that of the island of Crete.

Verse 20

The meaning is, “and David took all the sheep and oxen which the Amalekites drove” (i. e. had in their possession) “before that acquisition of

cattle" (namely, before what they took in their raid to the south), "and they" (the people) "said, This is David's spoil." This was his share as captain of the band (compare Judges 8:24-26). All the other plunder of the camp - arms, ornaments, jewels, money, clothes, camels, accoutrements, and so on - was divided among the little army. David's motive in choosing the sheep and oxen for himself was to make presents to his friends in Judah 1 Samuel 30:26-31.

Verse 27

Bethel - i. e. Bethuel 1 Chronicles 4:30, quite in the south near Beer-sheba, Hormah, and Ziklag; or Bethul Joshua 19:4, one of the cities of the Simeonites.

South Ramoth - Rather, "Ramoth of the South country" 1 Samuel 27:10; 1 Samuel 30:1, 1 Samuel 30:14, so-called to distinguish it from Ramoth-Gilead, one of the Simeonite cities Joshua 19:8. Shimei, the Ramathite 1 Chronicles 27:27, who was over David's vineyards, was evidently a native of this Ramath. See below 1 Samuel 30:28.

Jattir - "In the mountains" of Judah, and one of the priests' cities, is identified with ‹Attir, ten miles south of Hebron.

Verse 28

Aroer - Not Aroer on the Arnon, but (if rightly written) some town in Judah, not elsewhere named.

Siphmoth, Rachal 1 Samuel 30:29, and Athach 1 Samuel 30:30, are unknown and not elsewhere mentioned; but Zabdi the Shiphmite 1 Chronicles 27:27, who was over David's wine-cellars, was evidently a native of the first-named place. It is a remarkable proof of the grateful nature of David, and of his fidelity to his early friendships, as well as a curious instance of undesigned coincidence, that we find among those employed by David in offices of trust in the height of his power so many inhabitants of those obscure places where he found friends in the days of his early difficulties. Ezri the son of Chelub, Shimei the Ramathite, and Zabdi the Shiphmite, as well as Ira and Gareb, and Ittai, and Hezrai, and many others, were probably among these friends of his youth.

Verse 30

Chor-ashan - Perhaps the same as Ashan Joshua 15:42, in the Shephelah of Judah, inhabited by Simeonites, and one of the priests' cities 1 Chronicles 4:32; 1 Chronicles 6:59.

Verse 31

Hebron - Now El-Khulil (see Genesis 23:2). Hebron was a city of refuge Joshua 20:7, and one of the cities of the Kohathites Joshua 21:11. It lies twenty miles south of Jerusalem.

1 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 31

Verse 3

He was sore wounded - Better, "he was sore afraid" (compare Deuteronomy 2:25). Saul's fear is explained in 1 Samuel 31:4.

Verse 6

All his men - This and similar expressions must not be taken too literally (compare 1 Chronicles 10:6). We know that Abner, and Ish-bosheth, and manymore survived the day of Gilboa.

Verse 7

The men on the other side of the valley - This must mean to the north of the plain of Jezreel, and would comprise the tribe of Naphtali, and Zabulon, and probably Issachar. But the text of 1 Chronicles 10:7 has "that were in the valley," limiting the statement to the inhabitants of the plain of Jezreel.

On the other side Jordan - This phrase most commonly means on the east of Jordan, the speaker being supposed to be on the west side. But it is also used of the west of Jordan, as here, if the text be sound.

The Philistines … dwelt in them - One of the principal cities, Beth-shan, fell into their power at once 1 Samuel 31:10.

Verse 10

In the house of Ashtaroth - This was doubtless the famous temple of Venus in Askelon mentioned by Herodotus as the most ancient of all her temples. Hence, the special mention of Askelon 2 Samuel 1:20. The placing Saul's armour as a trophy in the temple of Ashtaroth was a counterpart to the placing Goliath's sword in the tabernacle 1 Samuel 21:9. In 1 Chronicles 10:10 it is added that they "fastened Saul's head in the temple of Dagon," probably either in Gaza Judges 16:21, or in Ashdod 1 Samuel 5:1-3. This was, perhaps, in retaliation for the similar treatment of Goliath's head 1 Samuel 17:54. The variations seem to imply that both this narrative and that in 1 Chronicles 10:1-14 are compiled from a common and a fuller document.

Verse 11

When the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead heard … - See 1 Samuel 11:1-15. This is a touching and rare example of national gratitude.

Verse 12

burnt them - Burning was not the usual mode of sepulture among the Hebrews. But in this case from a pious desire to disguise the mutilation of the headless corpses, and exempt them from any possible future insult, the men of Jabesh burned the bodies, yet so as to preserve the bones 1 Samuel 31:13; 2 Samuel 21:12.

Verse 13

Under a tree - Rather, "Under the tamarisk," a well-known tree at Jabesh which was standing when this narrative was written.

They fasted seven days - In imitation of the mourning for Jacob (marginal reference). They would give full honor to Saul though he was fallen.

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2 SAMUEL INTRODUCTION

Introduction to 2Samuel

See the Introduction to Samuel in the notes on First Samuel (See below).

Introduction to Samuel

The double name of these Books, the first and second book of samuel, as they are called in the printed Hebrew Bible, and the first and second book of kings, as they are called in the Vulgate, well marks the two principal features which characterize them. They contain the record of the life and ministry of samuel, the great prophet and judge of Israel, and they also contain the record of the rise of the kingdom of Israel. If again the Books of Samuel are taken as forming one history with the Books of Kings (the present line of division between 2Samuel and 1Kings being an arbitrary one), then the division into four Books of Kings is a natural one. But if these books are looked upon rather as an isolated history, then the name of Samuel is properly affixed to them, not only because he stands out as the great figure of that age, but because his administration of the affairs of Israel was the connecting link, the transitional passage, from the rule of the judges to the reign of the kings, distinct from each, but binding the two together.

The important place to be filled by Samuel in the ensuing history is seen at once in the opening chapters of the book which bears his name. Further, the fact that Samuel‘s birth of her that had been barren is represented in Hannah‘s song as typical of the triumphs of the Church and of the Kingdom of Christ, is another indication of the very distinguished place assigned to Samuel in the economy of the Old Testament, borne out by the mention of him in such passages as Psalm 99:6; Jeremiah 15:1; Acts 3:24. Though however, Samuel‘s personal greatness is thus apparent, it is no less clearly marked that his place is one not of absolute but of relative importance. When we view the history as a whole, the eye does not rest upon Samuel, and stop there, but is led on to the throne and person of David as typical of the Kingdom and Person of Christ. An incidental mark of this subordination may be seen in the fact that the Books of Samuel are really a continuation of the Book of Ruth; a Book which derived its significance from its containing a history of David‘s ancestors and genealogy. Clearly, therefore,

in the mind of the sacred historian, the personal history of Samuel was only a link to connect DAVID with the Patriarchs, just as the subsequent history connects David himself with our Lord JESUS CHRIST.

But a still more remarkable and conclusive proof of the same subordination may be found in the circumstance, that it is only the closing years of Saul‘s reign of which any account whatever is given in this Book. For after having related a few facts connected with the beginning of Saul‘s reign, the historian passes over some 20 or 30 years Acts 13:21 to relate an occurrence in the last quarter of Saul‘s reign, God‘s rejection of Saul from the kingdom, and His choice of “a man after His own heart” to be king in Saul‘s room 1 Samuel 13:13-14.

The contents of the Books of Samuel consist mainly of three portions,

(1) the history of Samuel‘s life and judgeship from 1 Samuel 16:1 to the end of the second Book; this latter portion not being completed until 1 Kings 2:11.

The sources from which the narrative is derived, were probably:

(1) the Book of Jasher 2 Samuel 1:18;

(2) David‘s Psalms 1 Chronicles 27:24;

(4) the Book of Samuel the Seer;

(5) the Book of Nathan the Prophet;

(6) the Book of Gad the Seer 1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29;

(7) the national collection of genealogies.

Those sections which give full details of the sayings and doings of Samuel, are conjectured to be extracted from “the Book of Samuel the seer” (e. g. i - xii). Those sections which contain narratives in which Nathan bears a part 2 Samuel 22:5; 24; etc., are pretty certainly from the Book of Gad the

Seer. We seem to see extracts from the Chronicles of the kingdom in such passages as 1 Samuel 13:1; 1 Samuel 11:1-11, 1 Samuel 11:15; 1 Samuel 14:47-52; 2 Samuel 2:8-11; 2 Samuel 3:1-5; 2 Samuel 5:4-16; 8; 2 Samuel 20:23-26; 2 Samuel 21:15-22; 23:8-39; while the song of Hannah 1 Samuel 2:1-10, the elegy on the death of Abner 2 Samuel 3:33-34, and the two Psalms 2 Samuel 23:1-7, may as well as the elegy on Saul and Jonathan, be taken from the Book of Jasher.

It is difficult to decide when the final arrangement of the Books of Samuel, in their present shape, was made. The series of historical books from Judges to the end of 2Kings is formed on one plan, so that each book is a part of a connected whole. This would point to the time of Jeremiah the prophet, as that when the whole historical series from judges to kings inclusive was woven into one work. In his use of the work of contemporary writers, the final compiler left out large portions of the materials before him.

The chief quotations and resemblances from the Books of Samuel in the New Testament are found in the writings of Luke and Paul. The title THE CHRIST ("the anointed"), given to the Lord Jesus Matthew 1:16; Matthew 2:4; Matthew 16:16; Luke 2:26; John 1:20, John 1:41; John 20:31; Acts 2:30, is first found in 1 Samuel 2:10; and the other designation of the Saviour as the SON OF DAVID Matthew 9:27; Matthew 15:22; Matthew 21:9, Matthew 21:15; Matthew 22:42, is derived from 2 Samuel 7:12-16. In these books are passages which occur in duplicate elsewhere, chiefly in the Books of Chronicles and Psalms; and a careful comparison of these duplicate passages throws great light upon the manner in which the sacred historians used existing materials, incorporating them word for word, or slightly altering them for the sake of explanation, as seemed most expedient to them. It illustrates also the errors and fluctuations of scribes in transcribing manuscripts, especially in regard to proper names.

For these duplicate passages, and also on the chief quotations from other books in the Old Testament, consult the marginal references. The style of the Books of Samuel is clear, simple, and forcible, and the Hebrew remarkably pure and free from Chaldaisms. The chief difficulties are the geographical statements of 2 Samuel 23:1-7; and the account of the mighty

men which follows it, 1 Samuel 8:1, 1 Samuel 8:5Acts 13:212 Samuel 5:440

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

Now it came to pass … - There is no break whatever between the two books of Samuel, the division being purely artificial.

Verse 9

Anguish - The Hebrew word used here occurs nowhere else, and is of doubtful meaning (compare the margin). The rabbis interpret it as a cramp or giddiness.

Verse 10

The Amalekite was one of those who came "to strip the slain" on "the morrow" after the battle 1 Samuel 31:8, and had the luck to find Saul and possess himself of his crown and bracelet. He probably started off immediately to seek David, and invented the above story, possibly having heard from some Israelite prisoner an account of what really did happen.

Verse 12

For Saul … - David's thoroughly patriotic and unselfish character is strongly marked here. He looked upon the death of Saul, and the defeat of Israel by a pagan foe, with unmixed sorrow, though it opened to him the way to the throne, and removed his mortal enemy out of the way. For Jonathan he mourned with all the tenderness of a loving friend.

Verse 13-14

Whether David believed the Amalekite's story, or not, his anger was equally excited, and the fact that the young man was an Amalekite, was not calculated to calm or check it. That David's temper was hasty, we know from 1 Samuel 25:13, 1 Samuel 25:32-34.

Verse 16

David might well think his sentence just though severe, for he had more than once expressed the deliberate opinion that none could lift up his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless (see 1 Samuel 24:6; 1 Samuel 26:9, 1 Samuel 26:11, 1 Samuel 26:16).

Verse 17

The words lamented and lamentation must be understood in the technical sense of a funeral dirge or mournful elegy. (See similar dirges in 2 Samuel 3:33-34; and 2 Chronicles 35:25.) This and the brief stanza on the death of Abner are the only specimens preserved to us of David's secular poetry.

Verse 18

The use of the bow - Omit "the use of." "The bow" is the name by which this dirge was known, being so called from the mention of Jonathan's bow in 2 Samuel 1:22. The sense would then be: And he commanded them to teach the children of Israel the song called Kasheth (the bow), i. e. he gave directions that the song should be learned by heart (compare Deuteronomy 31:19). It has been further suggested that in the Book of Jasher there was, among other things, a collection of poems, in which special mention was made of the bow. This was one of them. 1 Samuel 2:1-10 was another; Numbers 21:27-30 was another; Psalm 46:1-11; Psalm 76:1-12, etc.; Zechariah 9:9-17, also belonged to it. The title by which all the poems in this collection were distinguished was קשת *qesheth* "the bow." When therefore the writer of 2Samuel transferred this dirge from the Book of Jasher to his own pages, he transferred it, as we might do any of the Psalms, with its title.

The book of Jasher - See the marginal reference note.

Verse 19

The beauty … - i. e. Saul and Jonathan who were the chief ornament and pride of Israel, and slain upon "high places" 2 Samuel 1:25, namely, on Mount Gilboa.

Verse 20

Gath, the royal city of Achish 1 Samuel 21:10; 1 Samuel 27:2. Askelon, the chief seat of worship (1 Samuel 31:10 note).

Verse 21

Let there be no dew … - For a similar passionate form of poetical malediction, compare Job 3:3-10; Jeremiah 20:14-18.

Nor fields of offerings - He imprecates such complete barrenness on the soil of Gilboa, that not even enough may grow for an offering of first-fruits. The latter part of the verse is better rendered thus: For there the shield of the mighty was polluted, the shield of Saul was not anointed with oil, but with blood). Shields were usually anointed with oil in preparation for the battle Isaiah 21:5.

Verse 24

The women of Israel are most happily introduced. They who had come out to meet king Saul with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music" in the day of victory, are now called to weep over him.

Verse 25

How are the mighty fallen - The recurrenee of the same idea 2 Samuel 1:19, 2 Samuel 1:25, 2 Samuel 1:27 is perfectly congenial to the nature of elegy, since grief is fond of dwelling upon the particular objects of the passion, and frequently repeating them. By unanimous consent this is considered one of the most beautiful odes in the Bible, and the generosity of David in thus mourning for his enemy and persecutor, Saul, enhances the effect upon the mind of the reader.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

Enquired of the Lord - Through Abiathar, the high priest. The death of Saul and Jonathan had entirely changed David‘s position, and therefore he needed divine guidance how to act under the new circumstances in which he was placed. Compare the marginal references.

Hebron was well suited for the temporary capital of David‘s kingdom, being situated in a strong position in the mountains of Judah, amidst David‘s friends, and withal having especially sacred associations (see the marginal references note). It appears to have also been the center of a district 2 Samuel 2:3.

Verse 4

David had already been anointed by Samuel 1 Samuel 16:13. His first anointing indicated God‘s secret purpose, his second the accomplishment of that purpose. (Compare the case of Saul, 1 Samuel 10:1; 1 Samuel 11:14.) David was anointed again king over Israel 2 Samuel 5:3. The interval between the anointing of the Lord Jesus as the Christ of God, and His taking to Himself His kingdom and glory, seems to be thus typified.

Verse 8

Mahanaim - See Genesis 32:2. From 2 Samuel 2:12 it would seem to have been Ish-bosheth‘s capital.

Verse 9

The Ashurites - If the tribe of Asher, the verse indicates the order in which Abner recovered the different districts from the Philistines, and added them to the dominions of Ish-bosheth, beginning with Gilead, and then gradually adding, on the west of Jordan, first the territory of Asher as far as Carmel and the whole plain of Esdraelon, and then the country of Ephraim and Benjamin, being in fact all Israel, as distinguished from Judah; and this reconquest may have occupied five years. Ish-bosheth‘s reign over Israel may not have been reckoned to begin until the conquest was complete.

Verse 10

Forty … two - The numerals are somewhat strange. First, as regards the 40 years. Even assuming that Ish-bosheth‘s reign did not commence until five and a half years after Saul‘s death, which must have been the case if

the two years in the text gives the true length of his reign, it is startling to hear of Saul‘s younger son being 35 years old at his father‘s death, born consequently some three years before his father‘s accession, and five years older than David, the bosom friend of his older brother Jonathan. The age, too, of Jonathan‘s child, Mephibosheth, who was five years old at his father‘s death, would lead one to expect rather a less age for his uncle. Next, as regards the two years. Since David (compare 2 Samuel 2:11; and marginal references) reigned seven years in Hebron over Judah only, it follows, if the two years in the text are correct, either that an interval of five years elapsed between Ish-bosheth‘s death and David‘s being anointed “king over all Israel,” or that a like interval elapsed between Saul‘s death and the commencement of Ish-bosheth‘s reign. Of the two the latter is the more probable, and has the advantage of diminishing Ish-bosheth‘s age by between five and six years. But the narrative in 2 Samuel 4:1-12 of the “long war,” of the birth of David‘s six sons, and of Abner‘s conspiracy and death, seems to imply a longer time than two years, in which case both the numerals would have to be corrected.

Verse 12

This expedition to Gibeon may have been for the purpose of shifting his metropolis to his own tribe of Benjamin, and to his family place, “Gibeah of Saul,” close to Gibeon, with the further purpose of attacking the kingdom of David. “To go out” 2 Samuel 2:12-13 is a technical phrase for going out to war 1 Samuel 18:30.

Verse 13

On the east of the hill (El-jib, the ancient Gibeon) is a copious spring, which issues in a cave excavated in the limestone rock, so as to form a large reservoir. In the trees further down are the remains of a pool or tank of considerable size (120 feet by 110 feet). This is doubtless “the pool of Gibeon.”

Sat down - i. e. halted and encamped.

Verse 14

Play - (Compare Judges 16:25; 1 Samuel 18:7). Here, the word is applied to the serious game of war, to be played by twelve combatants on each side, with the two armies for spectators.

Verse 16

Compare Livy‘s history of the battle between the Horatii and Curiatii. This combat, like that, may have been proposed as a means of avoiding the

effusion of blood of two nations united by consanguinity, and having a common powerful enemy in the Philistines.

Helkath-hazzurim - i. e. "the part, field, or plat Genesis 23:19 of the sharp edges or blades." This seems, on the whole, the best explanation of this rather obscure name.

Verse 17

Neither side had the advantage in the combat of twelve a side; hence, the quarrel was fought out with great fierceness by the two armies, and the victory was won by David.

Verse 21

His armour - Rather, as in the margin; i. e. content thyself with the spoil of some inferior soldier for a trophy.

Verse 23

With the hinder end … - i. e. the wooden end, which was more or less pointed to enable the owner to stick it in the ground 1 Samuel 26:7.

The fifth rib - The word so rendered here (and in marginal references) means the abdomen, and is not etymologically connected with the Hebrew for five, as the translation "fifth rib" supposes, but with a verb meaning to be fat, or strong.

Verse 24

Ammah … Giah - Local, and otherwise unknown names.

Verse 27

Joab's speech means either "unless thou hadst spoken (challenged us to fight, 2 Samuel 2:14), the people would have returned from the pursuit of their brethren (many hours ago, even) this morning;" or, "If thou hadst not spoken (asked for peace, 2 Samuel 2:26), surely the people would have returned, etc., in the morning, i. e. would not have ceased the pursuit until the morning." The latter interpretation is the more accordant with Joab's boastful character.

Verse 29

Through the plain - See 1 Samuel 23:24. Bithron is unknown. From the expression all (the) Bithron, it seems likely that it is a tract of country, intersected by ravines lying on the east side of Jordan.

Verse 32

Joab, having stopped the pursuit, passed the night with his army on the field of battle; the next morning he numbered the missing, and buried the dead; they carried the body of Asahel to Bethlehem and buried him there,

and then joined David at Hebron. Hebron would be about 14 miles from Bethlehem, or about five hours‘ march.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 3

Chileab - In the duplicate passage (see the margin.) David‘s second son is called Daniel (God is my judge), a name given to him in commemoration of the death of Nabal 1 Samuel 25:39. Chileab seems to be made up of the three first letters of the following Hebrew word, through an error of the transcriber, and intended to be erased.

Talmai king of Geshur - Talmai was the name of one of the sons of Anak at Hebron Numbers 13:22; this Talmai was perhaps of the same race.

Geshur - Where he reigned was in Bashan, and we know from Deuteronomy 3:11, that Og, king of Bashan, was of the “remnant of the giants.” See 1 Samuel 27:8 note.

Verse 4

Adonijah - The same who, when David was dying, aspired to the crown, and was put to death by Solomon.

Shephatiah - “God is judge.” This is the same name as Jehoshaphat, only with the two elements composing it placed in inverted order. Nothing more is known of him or of his brother Ithream.

Verse 6

Render, “And it came to pass, while the war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted, that Abner assisted the house of Saul.”

Verse 7

Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah - For the sequel of her history, see the marginal reference. Aiah, was an Edomite, or rather Horite name Genesis 36:24.

Verse 8

The words against Judah are very obscure. If the text be correct, the words would seem to be Ish-bosheth‘s, who in his anger had charged Abner with being a vile partisan of Judah: Abner retorts, “Am I (as you say) a dog‘s head which belongeth to Judah, or on Judah‘s side! This day I show you kindness, etc., and this day thou chargest me with a fault, etc.”

Verse 12

Whose is the land? - Meaning, Is not the land thine by God‘s promise?

Verse 13

David‘s motive in requiring the restitution of Michal was partly his affection for her, and his memory of her love for him; partly the wish to

wipe out the affront put upon him in taking away his wife, by obtaining her return; and partly, also, a politic consideration of the effect on Saul‘s partisans of a daughter of Saul being David‘s queen.

Verse 14

Sent messengers to Ish-bosheth - Not to Abner, for the league between David and Abner was a profound secret, but to Ish-bosheth who, David knew, must act, feeble as he was, at Abner‘s dictation. Abner‘s first act of overt allegiance to David was thus done at Ish-bosheth‘s bidding; and the effect of the humiliation laid upon Ish-bosheth in exposing his weakness to his own subjects, and so shaking their allegiance to him, was such that Abner needed to use no more disguise.

Verse 16

Bahurim - Best known as the residence of Shimei, and as the place where Jonathan and Ahimaaz were concealed in a well on the occasion of David‘s flight from Absalom 2 Samuel 16:5; 2 Samuel 17:18. It seems to have been situated in the southern border of the tribe of Benjamin, and on the route from Jerusalem to the Jordan fords, since Phaltiel came from Mahanaim 2 Samuel 2:8.

Verse 17

Ye sought for David … - Compare 1 Samuel 18:5. It was only by Abner‘s great influence that the elders of Israel had been restrained hitherto from declaring for David, and this accounts for Ish-bosheth‘s helpless submission to his uncle‘s dictation.

Verse 20

Twenty men - These were doubtless his official suite as Ish-bosheth‘s envoy to conduct Michal to David, but privy and consenting to his intrigue with David. It is remarkable that not a word should be said about the meeting of David and Michal.

Verse 21

Abner repeats the offer 2 Samuel 3:12; and the condition of Michal‘s return 2 Samuel 3:13 being now fulfilled, David accepts it, and the league between them was solemnly ratified at David‘s board, amidst the rites of hospitality.

Verse 24

Joab saw that if Abner was reconciled to David, his own post as second in the state would be forfeited; and then with characteristic unscrupulosity he proceeded to take Abner‘s life.

Verse 26

The well Sirah - Nowhere else mentioned; according to Josephus, about two and a half miles from Hebron.

Verse 29

The curse of David proves that Joab was not justified as blood-revenger or Goel 2 Samuel 3:27 in taking away Abner's life.

That leaneth on a staff - Rather, a crutch. The phrase denotes one lame or infirm. For similar instances of hereditary disease and poverty as a punishment of great sin, see 1 Samuel 2:31-33, 1 Samuel 2:36; 2 Kings 5:27; John 9:2.

Verse 33

Lamented - i. e. composed and sang the funeral dirge which follows (compare 2 Samuel 1:17).

Died Abner … - i. e. The great and noble and valiant Abner had died as ignobly and as helplessly as the meanest churl!

Verse 34

Thy hands were not bound … - This thought prepares the way for the solution; Abner had been treacherously murdered by wicked men.

Verse 35

To eat meat … - Fasting was a sign of the deepest mourning 2 Samuel 1:12. The fast lasted until the sun was set.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 2

Beeroth - See the marginal reference. From Joshua 9:17, it might have been expected that the population of Beeroth would be Canaanite. But from some unknown cause the Canaanite inhabitants of Beeroth had fled to Gittaim - perhaps the same as Gath - and continued there as sojourners. If this flight of the Beerothites took place at the time of Saul‘s cruel attack upon the Gibeonites 2 Samuel 21:1-2, Baanah and Reehab may have been native Beerothites, and have been instigated to murder the son of Saul by a desire to avenge the blood of their countrymen. The fact of their being reckoned as Benjamites is quite compatible with their being Canaanites by blood.

Verse 4

This mention of Mephibosheth seems to be inserted here partly to show that with the death of Ish-bosheth the cause of the house of Saul became hopeless, and partly to prepare the way for the subsequent mention of him 2 Samuel 9:1-13; 2 Samuel 16:1-4; 2 Samuel 19:25.

Verse 5

Lay on a bed at noon - Render, “was taking his midday rest,” according to the custom of hot countries.

Verse 6

As though they would have fetched wheat - This is a very obscure passage, and the double repetition in 2 Samuel 4:6-7 of the murder of the king and of the escape of the assassin, is hard to account for. Rechab and Baanah came into the house under the pretence of getting grain, probably for the band which they commanded out of the king‘s storehouse, and so contrived to get access into the king‘s chamber; or, they found the wheat-carriers (the persons whose business it was to carry in grain for the king‘s household) just going into the king‘s house, and by joining them got into the midst of the house unnoticed. If the latter be the sense, the literal translation of the words would be: “And behold (or, and there) there came into the midst of the house the carriers of wheat, and they (i. e. Rechab and Baanah) smote him, etc.”

Verse 12

Cut off their hands … - After they were dead. Their hands and feet were hung up in a place of public resort, both to deter others and also to let

all Israel know that David was not privy to the murder of Ish-bosheth.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

Compare the marginal reference. The chronicler adds some interesting details 2 Samuel 2:4 note).

Verse 3

Before the Lord - Abiathar and Zadok the priests were both with David, and the tabernacle and altar may have been at Hebron, though the ark was at Kirjath-jearim.

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Verse 4

The age of David is conclusive as to the fact that the earlier years of Saul‘s reign (during which Jonathan grew up to be a man) are passed over in silence, and that the events narrated from 1 Samuel 13 to the end of the book did not occupy more than 10 years. If David was 20 years old at the time he killed Goliath, four years in Saul‘s service, four years of wandering from place to place, one year and four months in the country of the Philistines, and a few months after Saul‘s death, would make up the 10 years necessary to bring him to the age of 30.

Verse 6

David immediately after being anointed king of Israel, probably wished to signalize his accession by an exploit which would be popular with all Israel, and especially with Saul‘s tribe, Benjamin. He discerned the importance of having Jerusalem for his capital both because it belonged as much to Benjamin as to Judah, and on account of its strong position.

Except thou take away the blind … - Rather, “and (the Jebusite) spake to David, saying, Thou shalt not come hither, but the blind and the lame shall keep thee off,” i. e. so far shalt thou be from taking the stronghold from us, that the lame and blind shall suffice to defend the place.

Verse 7

The stronghold of Zion - Or castle 1 Chronicles 11:5, 1 Chronicles 11:7. The ancient Zion was the hill on which the temple stood, and the castle seems to have been immediately to the north of the temple. The modern Zion lies to the southwest of the temple.

The same is the city of David - The name afterward given to it 2 Samuel 5:9, and by which it was known in the writer‘s time.

Verse 8

i. e. “Whosoever will smite the Jebusites, let him reach both the lame and the blind, who are the hated of David‘s soul, by the gutter or water-course, and he shall be chief.” The only access to the citadel was where the water had worn a channel (some understand a subterranean channel), and where there was, in consequence, some vegetation in the rock. Joab (see the marginal reference) took the hint, and with all the activity that had distinguished his brother Anabel 2 Samuel 2:18, climbed up first. The blind and the lame are either literally such, placed there in derision by the Jebusites who thought the stronghold impregnable, or they are the Jebusite garrison, so called in derision by David.

Wherefore they said … - i. e. it became a proverb (as in 1 Samuel 19:24). The proverb seems merely to have arisen from the blind and the lame being the hated of David‘s soul, and hence, to have been used proverbially of any that were hated, or unwelcome, or disagreeable.

Verse 9

David dwelt in the fort - or stronghold, (as in 2 Samuel 5:7) i. e. eventually, when the buildings were completed, which may not have been for two or three years. Millo appears to have been a fortress of some kind, the northern defense of the city of David, and to have been a part of the original Canaanite defenses of Zion, as appears probable also from there having been a fortress called the house of Millo in the Canaanite city of Shechem. (Judges 9:6 note, and 2 Samuel 9:1-13:20.) Millo may be the native name. Some identify it with the great platform called the Haram es Sherif.

David built round about - Probably meaning built his own house and other houses and streets, all, in short, that caused it to be coiled the city of David. (Compare 1 Chronicles 11:8.) The buildings were within, on the south of Millo, so as to be protected by it on the north, as they were east, west. and south, by the precipitous ravines.

Verse 11

Hiram king of Tyre - Now mentioned for the first time. He survived David, and continued his friendship to Solomon (marginal references). The news of the capture of the city of the Jebusites had doubtless reached Tyre, and created a great impression of David‘s power.

Verse 17

The hold - Not the same place which is so named in 2 Samuel 5:7, 2 Samuel 5:9, but probably the cave (or hold) of Adullam 2 Samuel 23:13.

The invasion most probably took place before David had completed his buildings in the city of David; and is probably referred to in 2 Samuel 23:8-17.

Verse 20

Baal-perazim - Master or possessor of breaches, equivalent to place of breaches. It was on a hill near Gibeon (see the marginal reference).

Verse 21

And there they left their images - An indication of the precipitancy of their flight, and the suddenness with which the Israelites burst upon them like a "breach of waters." The King James Version rendering "Burned them," does not give a translation (compare the margin), but a gloss, warranted by the explanation given in marginal references

Verse 23

The mulberry trees - Rather, the Bacah-tree, and found abundantly near Mecca. It is very like the balsam-tree, and probably derives its name from the exudation of the sap in drops like tears when a leaf is torn off. Some think the valley of Baca Psalm 84:6 was so called from this plant growing there.

Verse 25

Geba - Better, as in marginal reference "Gibeon." Gazer should be "Gezer" (Joshua 10:33, etc.); it lay between the nether Bethhoron and the sea; on the direct route therefore which the Philistines, fleeing from Gibeon, would take. The exact site has now been identified (1 Kings 9:16).

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

Again - It should be, "and David again gathered," etc., i. e. after the previous gathering, either for his election to the kingdom 2 Samuel 5:1-3 or for the Philistine war 2 Samuel 5:17-25, he assembled them again for the peaceful purpose of bringing up the ark to Mount Zion (see marginal reference). The whole narrative indicates the progressive consolidation of David's power, and the settlement of his monarchy on strong foundations.

Verse 2

From Baale of Judah - See the margin and 1 Samuel 6:21 note.

Whose name … - The literal rendering is, "Upon which is called the Name, the Name of Yahweh of Hosts, who sits upon the cherubim," i. e. the ark which is called after the Lord of Hosts and bears His Name (see Deuteronomy 28:10; 1 Kings 8:43; Isaiah 4:1).

Verse 3

The house of Abinadab in Gibeah - . Rather, on the hill (as in margin and 1 Samuel 7:1). It does not at all follow that Abinadab was still alive, nor can we conclude from Uzzah and Ahio being called sons of Abinadab, that they were literally his children. They may well have been sons of Eleazar and grandsons of Abinadab, or yet more remote descendants; since there is no distinct evidence that Abinadab was alive even when the ark was brought to Kirjath-jearim. The house may have retained the name of "the house of Abinadab" long after his death.

Verse 5

Played - i. e. danced to music vocal and instrumental (see Judges 16:25 note).

Cornets - Rather, from the etymology of the Hebrew word (to shake), and their being coupled with the cymbals, and being rendered sistra in the Vulgate, some kind of instrument with bells or rings, which gave a sound by being shaken.

Verse 6

Shook it - The use of the Heb. word here is unusual. Some take the word as in 2 Kings 9:33, and render the passage: "The oxen were throwing, or had thrown it down," very likely by turning aside to eat what grain there might be on the threshing-floor.

Verse 7

For his error - The Hebrew is difficult, and some prefer the reading of the parallel passage, "because … ask" 1 Chronicles 13:10.

Verse 8

Displeased - Grief allied to anger seems to be intended. Compare 1 Samuel 15:11 note. On the name of the place, compare 2 Samuel 5:20.

Verse 10

Obed-edom was a Levite of the family of Merari, being 1 Chronicles 15:18-24; 1 Chronicles 16:38 a son of Jeduthun, who was a Merarite. He was a porter, a player on the harp, and was one of the Levites especially designated to take part in the musical services on the occasion of bringing up the ark to Zion, and to minister before it when brought up. He is called a Gittite perhaps from Gath-Rimmon, in Manasseh, which belonged to the Kohathites Joshua 21:25. Marriage with a Kohathite, or some other cause, would account for his dwelling in a Kohathite city.

Verse 12

With gladness - Especially with joyful music and song (1 Chronicles 15:16, etc.).

Verse 13

The meaning is, not that they sacrificed oxen and fatlings every six steps, which would have been impossible, but that when - after the arrangement made by David for the Levites to carry the ark 1 Chronicles 15:2, 1 Chronicles 15:12, 1 Chronicles 15:15 they had borne it successfully and with visible tokens of God's favor, out of the house of Obed-edom and six "steps" on the road to the city of David to the sound of the musical instruments - then they stopped and offered solemn sacrifices. Possibly "the step" may have had a technical sense, and denoted a certain distance, say a stadium. Six such distances would have been nearly a mile, and if the ground was difficult and steep, the successful progress of "those that bare the ark," so far, would have been a fit cause for a thanksgiving sacrifice.

Verse 14

Danced - The Hebrew word is found only here and in 2 Samuel 6:16. It means "to dance in a circle," hence, simply to dance. The parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 15:27 gives a widely different sense.

Verse 16

She despised him in her heart - In the days of Saul the ark had been neglected 1 Chronicles 13:3, and Saul had in everything shown himself to be an irreligious king. Michal seems to have been of a like spirit.

The whole section, 1 Chronicles 15:29; 1 Chronicles 16:43.

The peace offerings were with a special view to feasting the people. (Compare 1 Kings 8:63-66.)

Verse 18

He blessed the people - So did Solomon 1 Kings 8:14.

Verse 19

A good piece of flesh - The word thus paraphrased is only found here and in marginal reference A piece of meat from the peace offerings is probably meant. From the fact that the chronicler explains the preceding cake by the more common word loaf, but leaves this obscure word unexplained, one might infer that it was already obsolete and unknown in his time. The Septuagint translates it: "a cake baked on the hearth;" the Vulgate "a piece of roast beef."

A flagon of wine - Rather, "a cake" of grapes or raisins Hosea 3:1; Song of Song of Solomon 2:5 , or made with oil or mead.

Verse 20

Then David returned … - He had passed his house to accompany the ark to the tabernacle he had pitched for it, when Michal saw him dancing. He now returns to bless his household. He had blessed the people 2 Samuel 6:18, but there were the inmates of his own house whom the customs of the age did not allow to be present, and so, with his usual considerate kindness and affection, David came to bless them also on this solemn occasion.

Verse 21

Play - See 2 Samuel 6:5 note. The speech might be paraphrased, Before the Lord which chose me, etc., yea, before the Lord have I danced. He humbles Michal's pride by the allusion to her father's rejection, and shows by Saul's example how little pride contributes to the stability of greatness. Therefore, for his part, he will not think anything done for the glory of God too mean for him; and if he cannot have honor from Saul's daughter, he will be content to be honored by the maid-servants.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

There is no indication how soon after the bringing up of the ark these things occurred, but it was probably at no long interval.

Verse 2

Nathan the prophet - Here first mentioned, but playing an important part afterward (e. g. 2 Samuel 12:1; 1 Kings 1:10; 1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29). From the two last passages it appears that he wrote the history of David‘s reign, and a part at least of Solomon‘s. His distinctive title is the prophet, that of Gad the seer (compare 1 Samuel 9:9). He was probably nuch younger than David. In 2 Samuel 7:3, he spoke his own private opinion; in 2 Samuel 7:4, this was corrected by the word of the Lord.

Verse 6

Have walked - Implying the frequent moving of the tabernacle, in the times of the Judges, as opposed to a settled resting in one place. The word tent, refers especially to the outward covering of skins, etc.: the tabernacle denotes the framework of beards and bars. Observe the constant reference to the Exodus and to the details as given in the books of Moses.

Verse 7

The tribes of Israel - The duplicate passage reads judges (see margin and compare 2 Samuel 7:11). But a comparison with such passages as Psalm 78:67-68; 1 Kings 8:16; and 1 Chronicles 28:4, favors the reading “tribes,” and the phrase is a condensed one, the meaning of which is, that whatever tribe had in times past supplied the ruler of Israel, whether Ephraim in the days of Joshua, or Benjamin in the time of Saul, or Judah in that of David, God had never required any of these tribes to build a house in one of their cities.

An house of cedar - See 1 Kings 7:2-3; 1 Kings 10:17, 1 Kings 10:21; Jeremiah 22:14, Jeremiah 22:23. Beams of cedar marked a costly building. The cedar of Lebanon is a totally different tree from what we improperly call the red or Virginian cedar, which supplies the sweet-scented cedar wood, and is really a kind of juniper. The cedar of Lebanon is a close-grained, light-colored, yellowish wood, with darker knots and veins.

Verse 10

Moreover I will appoint … - It should be: And I have appointed a place, etc., and have planted them, etc. This was already done by the consolidation of David‘s kingdom. The contrast between this and 2 Samuel 7:11 is that of the troubled, unsettled times of the Judges and the frequent servitudes of Israel in those times, with the settled prosperity and independence of the kingdom of David and Solomon.

Verse 12

The prophet, having detailed God‘s past mercies to David, now passes on to direct prophecy, and that one of the most important in the O d Testament.

I will set up the seed - In one sense this mannifestly refers to Solomon, David‘s successor and the builder of the temple. But we have the direct authority of Peter Acts 2:30 for applying it to Christ the seed of David, and His eternal kingdom; and the title the Son of David given to the Messiah in the rabbinical writings, as well as its special application to Jesus in the New Testament, springs mainly from the acknowledged Messianic significance of this prophecy. (See also Isaiah 55:3; Acts 13:34.)

Verse 13

He shall build an house … - For the fulfillment of this in the person of Solomon, see 1 Kings 8:16-20. For its application to Christ, see John 1:12; Ephesians 1:20-22; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6; etc.; and Zechariah 6:12-13.

I will stablish the throne of his kingdom forever - The words forever, emphatically twice repeated in 2 Samuel 7:16, show very distinctly that this prophecy looks beyond the succession of the kings of Judah of the house of David, and embraces the throne of Christ according to the Angel‘s interpretation given in Luke 1:31-33, where the reference to this passage cannot be mistaken. This is also brought out fully in Psalm 89:29, Psalm 89:36-37. See also Daniel 7:13-14; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Jeremiah 33:14-21; Ezekiel 34:24; Zechariah 12:7-8; Hosea 3:5, etc.

Verse 14

I will be his father … - In marginal reference the equivalent expressions are applied to David. In Hebrews 1:5, this text is applied to Christ. But in 1 Chronicles 17:13; 1 Chronicles 22:9-10; 1 Chronicles 28:6, it is expressly appropriated to Solomon.

With the rod of men … - i. e. such a chastisement as men inflict upon their children, to correct and reclaim them, not to destroy them. The whole

clause is omitted in 1 Chronicles 17:13.

Verse 15

My mercy shall not depart … - Hence, Isaiah‘s saying, the sure mercies of David Isaiah 55:3, i. e. unfailing, lasting mercies: mercies which are like streams of water that never dry up Isaiah 33:16; Jeremiah 15:18. This is explained in 2 Samuel 7:16, where the word established is the same word as is rendered sure in Isaiah.

Before thee - Before Me is probably the true reading in 2 Samuel 7:15-16 (if the rest of the text be sound), according to the analogy of Jeremiah 35:19; 1 Samuel 2:30, 1 Samuel 2:35; and many other places; whereas the idea contained in the reading, before thee, is unparalleled. But the reading in 1 Chronicles 17:13 is quite different: “As I took it from him that was before thee,” meaning Saul, which gives a very good sense, and suggests that the text here may have been corrupted.

Verse 18

Sat before the Lord - In the tent where the ark was. Standing or kneeling was the usual attitude of prayer (1 Kings 8:22, 1 Kings 8:54-55; but compare Exodus 17:12). Modern commentators mostly take the word here in the sense of waiting, abiding, not sitting: but sat is the natural rendering. David sat down to meditate, and then rose up to pray.

Verse 19

Is this the manner of man - Compare 1 Chronicles 17:17. Our passage may be thus understood: But this is the law (or prerogative) of a great man to found dynasties which are to last into the far future. David expresses his astonishment that he, of such humble birth, and one so little in his own eyes, should not only be raised to the throne, but be assured of the perpetuity of the succession in his descendants, as if he were a man of high degree.

Verse 23

The nations and their gods - i e. the people and the idols of Canaan.

Verse 27

Therefore hath thy servant found in his heart … - The promises of God are the true guide to the prayers of His people. We may dare to ask anything, how great soever it may be, which God has promised to give. In this and the two following verses David expresses the same wonder at the riches of God‘s grace, and the same expectation founded on that grace,

which Paul does. in such passages as Ephesians 1:5-7; Ephesians 2:7, etc. marginal references.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

Metheg-ammah must be the name of some stronghold which commanded Gath, and the taking of which made David master of Gath and her towns.

Verse 2

David took great numbers of the Moabites prisoners of war, and made them lie down on the ground, and then divided them by a measuring line into three parts, putting two-thirds to death, and saving alive one-third. The cause of the war with the Moabites, who had been very friendly with David 1 Samuel 22:3-4, and of this severe treatment, is not known. But it seems likely, from the tone of Psalm 60:1-12 that David had met with some temporary reverse in his Syrian wars, and that the Moabites and Edomites had treacherously taken advantage of it, and perhaps tried to cut off his retreat.

Verse 3

Hadadezer - Not (see the margin) Hadarezer. Hadadezer, is the true form, as seen in the names Benhadad, Hadad (1 Kings 15:18, etc.; 1 Kings 11:14, etc.). Hadad was the chief idol, or sun-god, of the Syrians.

To recover his border - literally, to cause his hand to return. The phrase is used sometimes literally, as e. g. Exodus 4:7; 1 Kings 13:4; Proverbs 19:24; and sometimes figuratively, as Isaiah 1:25; Isaiah 14:27; Amos 1:8; Psalm 74:11. The exact force of the metaphor must in each case be decided by the context. If, as is most probable, this verse relates to the circumstances more fully detailed in 2 Samuel 10:15-19, the meaning of the phrase here will be when he (Hadadezer) went to renew his attack (upon Israel), or to recruit his strength against Israel, at the river Euphrates.

Verse 4

Seven hundred horsemen - It should be seven thousand, as in 1 Chronicles 18:4.

Verse 5

Syrians of Damascus - The Syrians (Aram), whose capital was Damascus, were the best known and most powerful. Damascus (written Darmesek in marginal references, according to the late Aramean orthography) is first mentioned in Genesis 15:2. According to Nicolaus of Damascus, cited by Josephus, the Syrian king‘s name was Hadad.

Verse 6

Garrisons - The word is used for officers in 1 Kings 4:5, 1 Kings 4:19, and some think that that is its meaning here. Perhaps, however, it is best to take it with the King James Version in the same sense as in 1 Samuel 10:5; 1 Samuel 13:3.

Brought gifts - Rather, "tribute" (and in 2 Samuel 8:2); meaning they became subject and tributary.

Verse 8

Betah and Berothai - These names (see also margin) have not been identified with certainty.

Exceeding much brass - "Wherewith Solomon made the brazen sea, and the pillars, and the vessels of brass" 1 Chronicles 18:8. The Septuagint and Vulgate both add these words here, so that perhaps they have fallen out of the Hebrew text. For the existence of metals in Lebanon or Antilebanon, see Deuteronomy 8:9.

Verse 9

Hamath - This appears as an independent kingdom so late as the time of Senacherib Isaiah 37:13. But in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, both Hamath and Arpad appear to have been incorporated in the kingdom of Damascus Jeremiah 49:23.

Verse 10

Joram - Or, more probably, Hadoram. See the margin.

Verse 12

Syria - Rather, as in 1 Chronicles 18:11, Edom, which is manifestly the right reading, both because Edom, Moab, and Ammon are so frequently joined together, and because David's Syrian spoil is expressly mentioned at the end of the verse. (The Hebrew letters for Aram (Syria) and Edom are very similar.)

Verse 13

The Syrians - Read the Edomites, as in marginal references (compare Psalm 60:1-12 title), and as the context 2 Samuel 8:14 requires. For a further account of this war of extermination with Edom, see 1 Kings 11:15-16. The war with Edom was of some duration, not without serious reverses and dangers to the Israelites (2 Samuel 8:2 note). The different accounts probably relate to different parts of the campaign.

Verses 16-18

For a similar account of the officers of Solomon‘s kingdom, see 1 Kings 4:1-6, where Jehoshaphat is still the recorder, and Benaiah is advanced to be captain of the host in the room of Joab. The recorder seems to have been a high officer of state, a kind of chancellor, whose office was to keep a record of the events of the kingdom for the king‘s information, and hence, he would naturally be the king‘s adviser. See Esther 6:1-2; Isaiah 36:22; 2 Chronicles 34:8. Such an officer is found among the ancient Egyptians and Persians.

Ahimelech the son of Abiathar - According to 1 Samuel 22:9-23, Abiathar, Zadok‘s colleague, was the son of Ahimelech. Abiathar the son of Ahimelech continued to be priest through the reign of David. (Compare also 1 Kings 1:7, 1 Kings 1:42; 1 Kings 2:22-27.) It almost necessarily follows that there is some error in the text.

The scribe - Or secretary of state 2 Kings 12:10; 2 Kings 18:37, different from the military scribe (Judges 5:14 note).

2 Samuel 8:18

The Cherethites and the Pelethites - See the marginal reference note.

Chief rulers - The word כהן *kôhên* here rendered a “chief ruler,” is the regular word for a priest. In the early days of the monarchy the word כהן *kôhên* had not quite lost its etymological sense, from the root meaning to minister, or manage affairs, though in later times its technical sense alone survived.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 4

David reaped the fruit of his kindness to Mephibosheth, for, when he fled from Absalom, Machir, the son of Ammiel, was one of those who were most liberal in providing him and his army with necessaries (marginal reference). According to 1 Chronicles 3:5, Ammiel (called inversely Eliam, 2 Samuel 11:3) was the father of Bath-sheba. If this be the same Ammiel, Machir would be Bath-sheba‘s brother. However, the name is not a very uncommon one (Numbers 13:12; 1 Chronicles 26:5, etc.).

Lo-debar - Evidently on the east of Jordan River, and in the neighborhood of Ish-bosheth‘s capital, Mahanaim 2 Samuel 17:27, but not identified by any modern traveler. Thought by some, not improbably, to be the same as Debir Joshua 13:26.

Verse 6

Mephibosheth - Also called Merib-baal (and Meri-baal, probably by a clerical error, 1 Chronicles 9:40). The two names seem to have the same meaning: Bosheth, shame, being the equivalent for Baal, and Mephi (scattering or destroying, being equivalent to Merib (contending with). Compare Ish-bosheth and Esh-baal, Jerub-baal and Jerub-besheth.

He fell on his face - In fear. Such generosity to a fallen rival as David showed in restoring him his paternal property seemed to him scarcely credible.

Verse 8

Mephibosheth‘s humility of expression, even in the mouth of an Oriental, is painful. It was perhaps in part the result of his helpless lameness, and of the other misfortunes of his life.

A dead dog - The wild dogs of the East, which still abound in every town, are the natural objects of contempt and dislike.

Verse 9

Saul‘s servant - Josephus calls him one of Saul‘s freedmen. The difference this would make in Ziba‘s position would only be that instead of paying in the fruits of the confiscated land to David, he would have to pay them to Mephiboseth.

Verse 10

Fifteen sons … - See 2 Samuel 19:17, marginal reference.

Verse 11

Said the king - There is nothing in the Hebrew to warrant the insertion of these words. The words are: “So Mephibosheth ate at my table as one of the king‘s sons.” Only it follows that the narrator is David himself.

Verse 12

Mephibosheth was five years old at Saul‘s death. He may have been thirteen at David‘s accession to the throne of Israel. In the eighth year of David‘s reign over all Israel he would have been twenty-one. His having a son at this time indicates that we are about the 10th year of David‘s reign.

Micha - Or Micah; who, as far as we know, was Mephibosheth‘s only son, and had a numerous posterity (marginal references).

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Introduction

On comparing this whole chapter with 2 Samuel 8:3-13; and 2 Samuel 8:3-13 being inserted out of its chronological order. The numbers slain on both occasions, 42,000 2 Samuel 8:4-5,40,000 2 Samuel 10:18,700 2 Samuel 8:4; 2 Samuel 10:18, the seat of war, the mention of the Euphrates, the persons engaged - David, Joab, and Abishai on one side, Hadarezer and the vassal kings on the other - are too similar to make it probable that they belong to two different wars.

Verse 1

The king - In marginal reference. Nahash, king, etc. The interval between the two events, not less than 50 years, and possibly more, is against his being the same as the Nahash of 1 Samuel 11:1-15.

The Ammonites are almost always spoken of as the children of Ammon, from the name of their first ancestor Ben-ammi Genesis 19:38.

Hanun - The equivalent of the Carthaginian Hanno, from the same root as the Hebrew, Hananiah, Johanan, Hannah, etc. The same name appears in composition with Baal in Baal-Hanan, an Aramean king Genesis 36:38-39.

Verse 2

The history does not record any instance of Nahash‘s kindness to David, but the enmity of the house of Nahash against Saul may have disposed him favorably toward Saul‘s enemy David, and if there was any family connection between David‘s house and Nahash 2 Samuel 17:25 this may have increased the friendship.

Verse 3

The princes … - Compare Rehoboam‘s advisers 1 Kings 12:10-11. It is not improbable that David‘s severe treatment of Moab 2 Samuel 8:2 was in part the cause of the fear of the Ammonites that a similar treatment was in store for themselves.

Verse 4

In 1 Chronicles 19:4, more concisely “shaved.” Cutting off a person‘s beard is regarded by the Arabs as an indignity equal to flogging and branding among ourselves. The loss of their long garments, so essential to Oriental dignity, was no less insulting than that of their beards.

Verse 6

Stank … - A strong figure for to be odious or detested. Compare the marginal references

The Syrians of Beth-rehob - If identical with the Mesopotamians of 1 Chronicles 19:6, Beth-rehob is the same as Rehoboth by the river Genesis 36:37. Others think Beth-rehob (Rehob, 2 Samuel 10:8) the same as the Rehob and Beth-rehob of Numbers 13:21, near Hamath (perhaps the modern ruin of Hunin). If so, Beth-rehob, as well as Tob, must have been a colony of Aram Naharaim (compare the numbers in 1 Chronicles 19:7 and here).

Syrians of Zoba - Compare 1 Samuel 14:47 note.

King Maacah - Read the "King of Maacah" 1 Chronicles 19:6-7. For the position of Maacah, see Deuteronomy 3:14; Joshua 12:5. It appears to have been a very small state, since its king only brought a thousand men into the field.

Ish-tob - See the margin. Tob was the district where Jephthah fled when driven out by the Gileadites.

Verse 7

This sufficiently indicates the greatness of the danger to Israel from this formidable league of Ammonites and Syrians.

Verse 8

Came out - From their city, Rabbah Deuteronomy 3:11, Deuteronomy 3:15 or 20 miles from Medeba, where 1 Chronicles 19:7 the Syrian army was encamped. Medeba (modern Madeba) was taken from Sihon Numbers 21:30, and fell to Reuben Joshua 13:9, Joshua 13:16; in the reign of Ahaz it seems to have returned to Moab Isaiah 15:2, and in the time of the Maccabees to the Amorites (1 Maccabees 9:36,37). In church history it was a bishop's see.

In the field - i. e. in the plain below the round rocky hill on which the city stood.

Verse 9

The two armies of the Ammonites and the Syrians were drawn up facing one another; the Ammonites supported by the city Rabbah behind them; the Syrians in great force, with numerous chariots able to manoeuvre in the plain in front of Medeba. If Joab advanced against either, he would have the other in his rear.

Verse 12

For the cities of our God - This rather indicates that the relief of Medeba was one of the immediate objects in view, and consequently that at this time Medeba was still in the possession of the Reubenites. To prevent an Israelite city falling into the hands of a pagan people, and the rites of Moloch being substituted for the worship of Yahweh, was a very urgent motive to valor.

Verse 14

Joab returned - The great strength of Rabbah made it hopeless to take it by assault, and the Syrians were not sufficiently broken 2 Samuel 10:15 to make it safe to undertake a regular siege.

Verse 16

Helam - The place is unknown. Some prefer the translation of the Latin Vulgate: "their host came."

Verse 18

Seven hundred chariots - More probable than the "seven thousand" of 1 Chronicles 19:18. The frequent errors in numbers arise from the practice of expressing numerals by letters, with one or more dots or dashes to indicate hundreds, thousands, etc.

Verse 19

Servants to Hadarezer - This gives us an idea of the great power of Hadarezer, and consequently of the strength of Israel in David's victorious reign.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

After the year was expired - The next spring after the escape of the Ammonites into their city 2 Samuel 10:14.

The children of Ammon - The marginal reference supplies the word "the land of," which is obviously the right reading.

David tarried at Jerusalem - The Syrians being subdued, the war with Ammon was not of sufficient moment to require David's personal presence. The whole section relating to David's adultery and Uriah's death, from this verse to 2 Samuel 12:26, is omitted in the Book of Chronicles.

Verse 2

An eveningtide - The evening began at three o'clock in the afternoon.

Verse 3

Eliam - Or Ammiel, 1 Chronicles 3:5, the component words being placed in an inverse order. Bath-sheba was the granddaughter of Ahithophel 2 Samuel 23:34.

Verse 7

David was forced to stoop to falsehood and dissimulation in the vain hope of hiding his sin.

Verse 8

A mess of meat - Compare Genesis 43:34. The word denotes the honorable portion given by the host to his chief guest.

Verse 11

The ark - Perhaps there was a double purpose in taking the ark; one, to excite to the utmost the enthusiasm of the people for its defense and against the Ammonites; the other, to have the means at hand of inquiring of the Lord, which David had found so serviceable.

Verse 16

Observed the city - In the sense of besieging it closely.

Verse 17

The men of the city went out - i. e. they made a sally and attacked the troops which were blockading the city on that side, chiefly to entice them to pursue them, and so come within shot of the archers who lined the wall 2 Samuel 11:20, 2 Samuel 11:24.

There fell some of the people … - They, too, as well as the brave and faithful Uriah, were victims of David's cruel artifice.

Verse 21

Who smote Abimelech … - This reference indicates the existence in David‘s time of the national annals of that period in an accessible form, and the king‘s habit of reading, or having read to him, the history of his country. (Compare Esther 6:1.)

Verse 26

Bath-sheba‘s mourning, like that of Abigail 1 Samuel 25:39-42, was probably limited to the customary time of seven days.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

Nathan came to David as if to ask his judicial decision on the case about to be submitted to him (compare 2 Samuel 14:2-11; 1 Kings 20:35-41). The circumstances of the story are exquisitely contrived to heighten the pity of David for the oppressed, and his indignation against the oppressor 1 Samuel 25:13, 1 Samuel 25:22.

Verse 6

Fourfold - The exact number prescribed by the Law (see the marginal references), and acted upon by Zaccheus. The Septuagint has "sevenfold," as in Proverbs 6:31.

Verse 8

And thy master's wives … - According to Eastern custom, the royal harem was a part of the royal inheritance. The prophets spoke in such matters according to the received opinions of their day, and not always according to the abstract rule of right. (Compare Matthew 19:4-9.)

Verse 11

See the marginal references. In both the points of David's crime the retribution was according to his sin. His adultery was punished by Absalom's outrage, his murder by the bloodshed of domestic fights, which cost the lives of at least three of his favorite sons, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah.

Verse 13

For a comment on David's words, read Psalm 32:1-11.

Thou shalt not die - Not spoken of the punishment of death as affixed to adultery by the Mosaic Law: the application of that law Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22; John 8:5 to an absolute Eastern monarch was out of the question. The death of the soul is meant (compare Ezekiel 18:4, Ezekiel 18:13, Ezekiel 18:18).

Verse 16-17

The death of the infant child of one of the numerous harem of an Oriental monarch would in general be a matter of little moment to the father. The deep feeling shown by David on this occasion is both an indication of his affectionate and tender nature, and also a proof of the strength of his passion for Bath-sheba. He went into his most private chamber, his closet Matthew 6:6, and "lay upon the earth" 2 Samuel 13:31,

rather "the ground," meaning the floor of his chamber as opposed to his couch.

Verse 24

Solomon - Or "peaceable," a name given to him at his circumcision. Compare Luke 1:59. The giving of the name Jedidiah, by the Lord through Nathan, signified God's favor to the child, as in the cases of Abraham, Sarah, and Israel. The name Jedidiah (which contains the same root as the name David, namely, "to love") indicated, prophetically, what God's Providence brought about actually, namely, the succession and glorious reign of Solomon over Israel.

Verse 27

The city of waters - The lower town of Rabbah (the modern Ammam), so called from a stream which rises within it and flows through it. The upper town with the citadel lay on a hill to the north of the stream, and was probably not tenable for any length of time after the supply of water was cut off.

Verse 30

Their king's crown - The word rendered their king (Malcham) is also the name of the national idol of the Ammonites (Jeremiah 49:1, Jeremiah 49:3 margin; Amos 1:15; Zephaniah 1:5). Moreover, the weight of the crown, which is calculated to be equal to 100 or 125 pounds weight, is far too great for a man to wear. On the whole, it seems most probable that the idol Malcam is here meant.

Verse 31

For the saw as an implement of torture compare Hebrews 11:37.

Harrows of iron - Or rather thrashing-machines (Isaiah 28:27; Isaiah 41:15, etc.).

Axes - The word so rendered occurs only here and in 1 Chronicles 20:3. It evidently means some cutting instrument.

Made them pass through the brick-kiln - The phrase is that always used of the cruel process of making their children pass through the fire to Moloch, and it is likely that David punished this idolatrous practice by inflicting something similar upon the worshippers of Moloch. The cruelty of these executions belongs to the barbarous manners of the age, and was provoked by the conduct of the Ammonites 2 Samuel 10:1-4; 1 Samuel 11:1-2, but is utterly indefensible under the light of the Gospel. If Rabbah was taken before David's penitence, he may have been in an unusually

harsh and severe frame of mind. The unpleasant recollection of Uriah‘s death would be likely to sour and irritate him to the utmost.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

The history here, down to the end of 2 Samuel 23 (excepting a few particulars), is omitted in the Book of Chronicles.

sa40

Verse 3

Shimeah - Called Shamma (marginal reference), was Jesse‘s third son.

Subtil - literally, wise. The word is generally used in a good sense, but here, and in Job 5:13, it means crafty.

Verse 5

Make thyself sick - "Feign thyself to be ill." (Compare 2 Samuel 14:2.)

That I may see it - He was to feign that he could not fancy anything that came from the kitchen, but that if he saw it cooked he should be able to eat it.

Verses 6-9

Make me cakes … a pan - The words here used occur nowhere else, and the etymology is doubtful. Some particular kind of cake or pudding is meant 2 Samuel 13:8, called a לביבה *lābîybâh* according to some, it was, from its etymology, shaped like a heart.

2 Samuel 13:9

The dish into which she poured the לביבה *lābîybâh* was doubtless borne to him by one of the servants into the chamber where he lay, and from which, the doors being open, he could see the outer room where Tamar prepared the meat.

Verse 12

Tamar‘s words are a verbal quotation from Genesis 34:7. The natural inference is that Tamar knew the passage in Genesis, and wished to profit by the warning that it contained. (Compare also 2 Samuel 13:13.)

Verse 13

My shame - Better, "my reproach." Compare Genesis 30:23; Genesis 34:14; 1 Samuel 11:2.

Speak unto the king … - It cannot be inferred with certainty from this that marriages were usual among half brothers and sisters in the time of David. The Levitical law forbade them (marginal reference), and Tamar may have merely wished to temporize. On the other hand, the debasing and unhumanizing institution of the harem, itself contrary to the law of Moses

Deuteronomy 17:17, may well have led to other deviations from its precepts, and the precedent of Abraham Genesis 20:12 may have seemed to give some sanction to this particular breach of it.

Verse 16

The sense of the passage probably is, "And she spake with him on account of this great wrong in sending me away, greater than the other wrong which thou hast done me (said she), but he hearkened not unto her." The Hebrew text is probably corrupt, and the writer blends Tamar's words with his own narrative.

Verse 18

A garment of divers colors - See Genesis 37:3. Some prefer here (and there) "a tunic with sleeves," a tunic reaching to the extremities, i. e. the hands and feet, and worn over the common tunic, in room of a robe.

Verse 19

Laid her hand on her head - To hold on the ashes (see the marginal references).

Went on crying - i. e. "went away, crying out as she went."

Verse 21

The Septuagint adds, what is a good explanation, "but he did not vex the spirit of Amnon his son, because he loved him, because he was his first-born." This want of justice in David's conduct, and favoritism to Amnon, probably rankled in Absalom's heart, and was the first seed of his after rebellion.

Verse 23

Sheepshearing was always a time of feasting (marginal references). Baal-hazor is not known.

sa40

Verse 26

He mentions Amnon as being the king's first-born. If he could not have the king's company, let him at least have that of the heir apparent, and the king's other sons.

Verse 29

Upon his mule - So in 1 Kings 1:33, 1 Kings 1:38 the mule is the royal animal on which David himself rides. In 2 Samuel 18:9 Absalom rides upon a mule.

Verse 32

The history supplies another (compare 2 Samuel 13:3) instance of Jonadab‘s subtlety and sagacity. He at once gave the true explanation of the catastrophe at Baal-hazor, in spite of the false rumour.

By the appointment of Absalom … - Meaning that Absalom‘s resolution to slay Amnon had been formed at the time, and only waited an opportunity to give expression to it.

Verse 34

Absalom fled - This is the sequel to 2 Samuel 13:29. The king‘s sons rose from table and fled, and Absalom taking advantage of the confusion, also escaped and fled. This information is inserted here to account for the king‘s sons returning unmolested.

Verse 35

The watchman, as his duty was, had sent immediate notice to the king that he saw a crowd approaching (see 2 Kings 9:17-20). Jonadab, who was with the king, was prompt to give the explanation.

Verse 37

See the marginal reference.

Ammihur (see the margin) is found as a Punic name.

Verse 39

Longed to go forth - Rather, “longed after Absalom,” literally, was consumed in going forth, with a sense of disappointed hope.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verse 2

Tekoah - In the south of Judah, six miles from Bethlehem, the modern Tekua. The rough, wild district was well suited for the lawless profession of the wise woman; it abounds in caves, as does the country near Endor.

Verse 3

Come to the king - The king as a judge was accessible to all his subjects (2 Samuel 15:2; compare 1 Kings 3:16).

Verse 4

Spake - Seems to be an accidental error for came, which is found in many manuscipts and versions.

Help - literally, save (see the margin). It is the same cry as Hosanna, i. e. save now Psalm 118:25.

Verse 7

The whole family … - This indicates that all the king‘s sons, and the whole court, were against Absalom, and that the knowledge of this was what hindered David from yielding to his affection and recalling him.

Verse 8

I will give charge … - Indirectly granting her petition, and assenting that her son‘s life should be spared.

Verse 9

The iniquity be on me … - Compare the principle in Genesis 9:5-6; Numbers 35:30-34. The woman therefore says, if there is any such guilt in sparing my son, may it rest upon me and my house, not on David and his throne. Compare 2 Samuel 3:28. The cunning speech of the woman extracted a more direct promise of protection from the king 2 Samuel 14:1.

Verse 12

Having at last obtained what she wanted, the king‘s oath that her son should not die, she proceeds to the case of Absalom. The meaning of 2 Samuel 14:13 may be paraphrased thus: “If you have done right as regards my son, how is it that you harbor such a purpose of vengeance against Absalom as to keep him, one of God‘s people, an outcast in a pagan country, far from the worship of the God of Israel? Upon your own showing you are guilty of a great fault in not allowing Absalom to return.”

The king doth speak … - literally, “And from the king speaking this word (this sentence of absolution to my son) he is as one guilty; i. e. the

sentence you have pronounced in favor of my son condemns your own conduct toward Absalom."

Verse 14

His banished - The use of the word as applied to one of the people of God driven into a pagan land, is well illustrated by Deuteronomy 30:4-5; Jeremiah 40:12; Micah 4:6; Zephaniah 3:19.

Neither doth God respect any person - Some prefer the margin: "And God does not take away life, in the case of every sin that deserves death, e. g. David's own case 2 Samuel 12:13, but devises devices that the wanderer may not be forever expelled from him, i. e., for the return of penitent sinners."

Verse 15

The people have made me afraid - She pretends still that her suit was a real one, and that she was in fear of the people ("the whole family," 2 Samuel 14:7) setting upon her and her son.

Verse 17

As an angel of God - Rather, as "the" Angel of God; and therefore whatever David decided would be right.

Verse 24

Let him not see my face - We are not told why David adopted this half-measure. Possibly Bath-sheba's influence may have been exerted to keep Absalom in disgrace for the sake of Solomon.

Verse 26

Two hundred shekels … - The exact weight cannot be determined. If these "shekels after the king's weight" were the same as "shekels of the sanctuary," the weight would be about 6 lbs., which is incredible; "twenty" shekels is more probable.

Verse 27

Three sons - These probably died in infancy (see the marginal reference). From Tamar must have been born Maachah, the mother of Abijah, and the favorite wife of Rehoboam 1 Kings 15:2; 2 Chronicles 11:20-22.

Verse 33

Kissed - This was the pledge of reconciliation. (See the marginal references and Genesis 45:15.)

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verse 1

And it came to pass … - The working out of Nathan‘s prophecy (marginal reference) is the clue to the course of the narrative. How long after Absalom‘s return these events occurred we are not told.

Verse 2

Beside the way of the gate - See Rth 4:1 note.

Verse 3

To flatter each man by pronouncing a favorable verdict in his case, to excite a sense of grievance and discontent by censuring the king for remissness in trying the causes brought before him by his subjects, and to suggest a sure and easy remedy for all such grievances, namely, to make Absalom king; all this, coupled with great affability and courtesy, which his personal beauty and high rank made all the more effective, were the arts by which Absalom worked his way into favor with the people, who were light and fickle as himself.

Verse 6

Stole the hearts - i. e., deceived them, for so the same phrase means Genesis 31:20, Genesis 31:26.

Verse 7

Forty years - An obvious clerical error, though a very ancient one for four years, which may date from Absalom‘s return from Geshur, or from his reconciliation with David, or from the commencement of the criminal schemes to which 2 Samuel 15:1 refers.

Hebron - This, as having been the old capital of David‘s kingdom and Absalom‘s birthplace, was well chosen. It was a natural center, had probably many inhabitants discontented at the transfer of the government to Jerusalem, and contained many of the friends of Absalom‘s youth. As the place of his birth (compare 1 Samuel 20:6), it afforded a plausible pretext for holding there the great sacrificial feast (“the serving the Lord,” 2 Samuel 15:8), which Absalom pretended to have vowed to hold to the glory of God.

Verse 12

Ahithophel - It has been with great probability supposed that Ahithophel was estranged from David by personal resentment for his conduct in the matter of Bath-sheba and Uriah (see 2 Samuel 11:3).

While he offered sacrifices - Rather, that Absalom sent for Ahithophel to be present when he offered the sacrifices; the intention being that all who partook of the sacrifice should be bound together to prosecute the enterprise. Absalom, too, would take advantage of the excitement of the great feast to inflame the ardour of the guests, and pledge them irrevocably to his cause.

Verse 14

And smite the city - David‘s kind nature induced him to spare Jerusalem the horrors of a siege, and the risk of being taken by assault. He had no standing army with which to resist this sudden attack from so unexpected a quarter. Possibly too he remembered Nathan‘s prophecy 2 Samuel 12:10-12.

Verse 18

Passed on - Rather, “crossed” the Brook Kidron, as in 2 Samuel 15:22-23.

Gittites - During David‘s residence in the country of the Philistines he attached such a band to himself; and after the settlement of his kingdom, and the subjugation of the Philistines, the band received recruits from Gath, perhaps with the king of Gath‘s consent. They were now under the command of Ittai the Gittite, a foreigner 2 Samuel 15:19, and “his brethren” 2 Samuel 15:20. The number 600 probably indicates that this band or regiment of Gittites had its origin in David‘s band of 600 1 Samuel 23:13; 1 Samuel 27:2. They were at first, it is likely, all Israelites, then Gittites mixed with Israelites, and at last all Gittites.

Verse 20

Thou camest but yesterday - Meaning, “Thou art not a native Israelite, but only a sojourner for a few years, it is not reason therefore that thou shouldst share my calamities. Return to thy place, thy adopted home Jerusalem, and to the king, Absalom” 2 Samuel 15:34-35.

Verse 24

Abiathar went up - i. e., continued to ascend the Mount of Olives. Abiathar was high priest 1 Kings 2:35. Perhaps Zadok is addressed by David 2 Samuel 15:25 as the chief of those who were actually bearing the ark.

Verse 27

Art not those a seer? - If the text be correct, the sense would be, “Art thou not a seer? therefore go back to the city, and observe, and certify me of

what thou seest" 2 Samuel 15:28. Others, by a slight alteration of the original text, read "Art not thou a chief" (priest), etc.

Verse 30

His head covered - See the marginal references and Jeremiah 14:3-4; Ezekiel 24:17; the sign of deep mourning.

Verse 32

Render … "when David was come to the top of the mount where people worship God." The top here, and in 2 Samuel 16:1, is used almost as a proper name. No doubt there was a high-place upon the top of the Mount of Olives.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verse 1

A couple of donkeys saddled - Those that Mephibosheth and his servant should have ridden. See 2 Samuel 19:26 note.

Verse 3

Thy master‘s son - Meaning Saul‘s grandson 2 Samuel 9:6. David asks the question, evidently hurt at the apparent ingratitude of Mephibosheth. It is impossible to say whether Mephibosheth was quite guiltless or not. If 2 Samuel 16:11 may contain David‘s confession of his present hasty judgment 2 Samuel 16:4 in the matter.

Verse 5

Bahurim - See 2 Samuel 3:16 note. It seems to have lain off the road, on a ridge 2 Samuel 16:13, separated from it by a narrow ravine, so that Shimei was out of easy reach though within hearing, and within a stone‘s throw 2 Samuel 16:6, 2 Samuel 16:9.

Shimei, the son of Gera - In the title to Judges 3:15 note.

Verse 7

Come out - Rather, “Go out,” namely, of the land, into banishment. Compare Jeremiah 29:16.

Thou bloody man - See the margin. The Lord‘s word to David 1 Chronicles 22:8 was probably known to Shimei and now cast in David‘s teeth by him, with special reference to the innocent blood of Uriah.

Verse 8

All the blood of the house of Saul - Shimei probably put to David‘s account the death of Saul, and Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Melchishua, slain in battle by the Philistines with whom David was in league; of Ish-bosheth, slain in consequence of David‘s league with Abner; that of Abner himself, which he attributed to David‘s secret orders; and all the 360 slain in the battle between Joab and Abner 2 Samuel 2:31. Some, too, think that the death of seven men of Saul‘s immediate family 2 Samuel 21:8 had occurred before David‘s flight, and was referred to by Shimei. Shimei‘s hatred and virulence is an indication that the Benjamites resented the loss of royalty in their tribe, even in the palmiest days of David‘s monarchy.

Verse 9

This dead dog - See the marginal reference and 2 Samuel 9:8 note.

Go over - The ravine, possibly with a stream of water 2 Samuel 17:20, which lay between them and Shimei.

Verse 10

What have I to do … - See the marginal references compare Matthew 8:29; John 2:4, and a similar complaint about the sons of Zeruiah 2 Samuel 3:39. And for a like striking incident in the life of the Son of David, see Luke 9:52-56.

Verse 12

His cursing - Another reading has "my curse," i. e., the curse that has fallen upon me. David recognizes in every word and action that he was receiving the due reward of his sin, and that which Nathan had foretold.

Verse 21

Taking possession of the harem was the most decided act of sovereignty (see 1 Kings 2:22). It was also the greatest offence and insult that could be offered. Such an act on Absalom's part made reconciliation impossible. A further motive has been found in this advice, namely, the desire on the part of Ahithophel to make David taste the bitterness of that cup which he had caused others (Uriah and all Bath-sheba's family) to drink, and receive the measure which he had meted withal.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

This night - The night of the day on which David fled, and Absalom entered into Jerusalem. Ahithophel‘s idea was to fall upon David by surprise, and in the first confusion of the surprised army to seize and kill David only.

Verse 3

The man whom thou seekest - namely, David. Ahithophel means to say: “If I can only smite David, there will be no civil war, all the people will peaceably submit.”

Verse 7

At this time - Rather, “The counsel which Ahithophel has given this time is not good.” He contrasts it with that given before 2 Samuel 16:21, which was good. This gave an appearance of candour to his conduct, and so gave weight to his dissent. Observe the working of David‘s prayer 2 Samuel 15:31.

Verse 9

Some pit, or in some other place - The Hebrew has “in one of the pits,” or “in one of the places.” Hence, “place” must have some defined meaning. It probably is used here, as elsewhere, for a “dwelling-house” or “village,” which might in that district be fortified houses 2 Samuel 17:12; 1 Samuel 26:25.

Hushai‘s argument is that there was no chance of seizing David by surprise as Ahithophel suggested. There was sure to be sharp fighting, and the terror of the names of David, Joab, Abishai, Ittai, and their companions, would magnify the first few blows received into a victory, and Absalom‘s men would flee in panic. It is likely that Absalom was not a man of courage, and Hushai, knowing this, adroitly magnified the terror of the warlike prowess of David and his mighty men.

Verse 12

As the dew - Like the drops of dew, in the vast number of our host, and in our irresistible and unavoidable descent upon our enemies.

Verse 16

Hushai, like a wise and prudent man, knowing, too, Absalom‘s weak and fickle character, would not depend upon the resolution, taken at his

instigation, not to pursue the king, but took instant measures to advertise David of his danger.

Verse 17

En-rogel - See the marginal reference.

A wench - Hebrew "the maid servant," namely, of the high priest, either Zadok or Abiathar, or possibly one employed in some service in the temple courts. (1 Samuel 2:22 note.)

And they went and told king David - As related afterward 2 Samuel 17:21. Here mentioned by anticipation.

Verse 18

Bahurim - See the marginal reference. They were not all Shimeis in Bahurim.

Verse 19

A covering - Hebrew "the covering," perhaps "the hanging" or "awning" at the door of the house, as the word seems to mean when spoken of the tabernacle.

Ground corn - Or "peeled barley," which she spread out as if for the purpose of drying it in the sun.

Verse 20

As soon as ever she had hid the men she went into the house, as if busy about her usual occupations. Had Absalom's servants, who had had information from some of the people of Bahurim that the men had come to this house, found her in the court it might have directed their attention to the peeled barley.

Over the brook of water - Compare 2 Samuel 16:9 note. The word for "brook" ("Michal") occurs only here. One has been found in this very district, still so called. The woman showed great presence of mind and adroitness in not denying that they had been there.

Verse 23

To his city - To Giloh (marginal reference). Ahithophel was probably influenced by deep mortification at the slight put upon him by rejecting his counsel. He is a memorable example of the impotence of worldly wisdom. Compare the marginal reference.

Verse 24

Mahanaim - See 2 Samuel 2:8. The same reasons which induced Abner to choose it for Ishbosheth probablv made it a good rallying point for David. It was a strong city, in a well-provisioned country, with a

mountainous district for retreat in case of need, and with a warlike and friendly population.

Verse 25

Ithra an Israelite - Or "Jether the Ishmeelite" 1 Chronicles 2:17. "Ithra" and "Jether" are practically the same names. "Israelite" in the text is wrong. It should be either "Ishmaelite" or "Jezreelite" 2 Samuel 3:2.

Abigail the daughter of Nahash - If Zeruiah and Abigail were Jesse's daughters, the only probable way of reconciling our text with 1 Chronicles 2:16-17, is to suppose that Nahash was Jesse's wife. If Zeruiah and Abigail were only sisters of David by the mother, then Nahash might be the name of her first husband.

Verse 27

Shobi's father may have been the king of the Ammonites, and Shobi appointed by David as tributary king or governor of Ammon after he took Rabbah 2 Samuel 12:29. On the other hand, Nahash may have been a common name among the Ammonites, and the Nahash of 2 Samuel 17:25 may have been of that nation.

On Machir, see the marginal reference.

Barzillai was ancestor, through a daughter, to a family of priests, who were called after him "sons of Barzillai," and who returned from captivity with Zerubbabel, but were not allowed to officiate as priests, or eat of the holy things, through defect of a proper register Ezra 2:61-63. It is likely that being wealthy they had neglected their priestly privileges, as a means of maintenance, before the captivity.

Rogelim was situated in the highlands of Gilead, but the exact situation is not known. It means "the fullers," being the plural of the word "Rogel," in "En-Rogel," 2 Samuel 17:17.

Verse 29

Cheese of kine - Or, as others, "milch cows," which is more in accordance with the context, being coupled with "sheep," and is more or less borne out etymologically by the Arabic. God's care for David was evident in the kindness of these people.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Verse 2

A third part - This seems to have been a favorite division with the Hebrew commanders (see Judges 7:16; Judges 9:43; 1 Samuel 11:11; 2 Kings 11:5-6) and with the Philistines also 1 Samuel 13:17.

Verse 3

Succour us out of the city - David, with a reserve, would hold the city, and either support the bands in case of need, or receive them within the walls should they be compelled to flee.

Verse 6

Against Israel - Implying that the revolt was in a great measure that of the ten tribes, Saul‘s party, against the kingdom.

The wood of Ephraim - This would naturally be sought in the west of Jordan (marginal reference). But on the other hand it seems certain that the scene of this battle was on the east of Jordan. It seems therefore inevitable to conclude that some portion of the thick wood of oaks and terebinths which still runs down to the Jordan on the east side was for some reason called “the wood of Ephraim,” either because it was a continuation on the east side of the great Ephraimitic forests on the west, or because of some transaction there in which Ephraim had taken part, such as the slaughter of the Midianites Judges 7:24-25, or their own slaughter Judges 12:6.

Verse 8

The battle was scattered - Probably Absalom‘s forces were far more numerous than David‘s; but, most likely by Joab‘s skillful generalship, the field of battle was such that numbers did not tell, and David‘s veteran troops were able to destroy Absalom‘s rabble in detail. The wood entangled them, and was perhaps full of pits, precipices, and morasses 2 Samuel 18:17.

Verse 9

would seem that the two things which his vain-glory boasted in, the royal mule, and the magnificent head of hair by which he was caught in the “oak” (rather, terebinth or turpentine tree), both contributed to his untimely death.

Verse 11

Ten shekels - (About 25 shillings.) The word “shekel” is understood, as in Genesis 20:16; Genesis 37:28. See the Exodus 38:24 note.

A girdle - Girdles were costly articles of Hebrew dress used to put money in Matthew 10:9, and given as presents 1 Samuel 18:4.

Verse 13

The man gives a remarkable incidental testimony to David‘s sagacity and penetration (compare 2 Samuel 14:19), and to Joab‘s known unscrupulousness.

Verse 14

I may not tarry … - i. e., lose time in such discourse.

Verse 16

Blew the trumpet - To stop the pursuit and slaughter 2 Samuel 2:28; 2 Samuel 20:22.

Verse 17

A great heap of stones - See the marginal reference. This kind of monument is common to almost all early nations.

Verse 18

The king‘s dale - Anciently the “valley” of “Shaveh” (marginal reference), and apparently in the near neighborhood of Sodom; but the exact site is not known. It quite agrees with Absalom‘s preference for Hebron 2 Samuel 15:7, that his monument should be reared by him in the south. If Absalom‘s monument be placed in the ravine of the Kedron, the “king‘s dale” here is a different place from the “dale of Shaveh.”

Absalom‘s place - literally, “Absalom‘s hand.” (1 Samuel 15:12 note.)

Verse 19

Ahimaaz was a well-known runner 2 Samuel 18:27. Speed was a heroic virtue in those simple times (compare 2 Samuel 2:18). In Hezekiah‘s reign 2 Chronicles 30:6, 2 Chronicles 30:10 we find an establishment of running post-men; and the same name (“runners”) is given Esther 3:13 to the Persian posts, though at that time they rode on mules and camels.

Bear tidings - The original word is used almost exclusively of bearing good tidings, and hence, is rendered in the Septuagint (though not always) εὐαγγίζεσθαι *euangelizesthai* 2 Samuel 4:10; 1 Samuel 31:9. In 2 Samuel 18:21, it is not “carry the good tidings,” but “tell,” simply “announce.”

Verse 21

Cushi - “The Cushite,” a foreign slave, perhaps of Joab‘s, whom he did not scruple to expose to David‘s anger. If, however, it is a name, it must be rendered “Haccushi.” In the title to Psalm 7, “Cush, the Benjamite,” cannot

mean this Cushi, since the contents of the Psalm are not suitable to this occasion.

Verse 23

The plain - The floor of the valley through which the Jordan runs. The Cushite did not run by that road, but took the road over the hills, which may well have been the shorter but also the more difficult road. The two roads would probably meet a short distance from Mahanaim. These words, which have been thought to prove that the battle took place on the west of Jordan, are a clear proof that it took place on the east, because if the runners had had to cross the Jordan, they must both have come by the same road, which it is clear they did not.

Verse 28

Ahimaaz called - This marks the eager haste with which, before he had quite reached the king, he shouted out the pithy decisive word of good tidings, "Shalom!" Peace!

Hath delivered - See the margin. The figure seems to be that of confining a person within the power of his enemy, in opposition to "giving him his liberty" "in a large room," to work what mischief he pleases.

Verse 31

Tidings … - Rather, "Let my lord the king receive the good tidings."

Verse 33

There is not in the whole of the Old Testament a passage of deeper pathos than this. Compare Luke 19:41. In the Hebrew Bible this verse commences the nineteenth chapter. The King James Version follows the Greek and Latin versions.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Verse 5

Had Absalom gained the victory, it is likely that, according to the manner of Oriental despots, he would have sought to secure his throne by killing all possible competitors Judges 9:5; 1 Kings 15:29.

Verse 8

David saw the justice of what Joab said, and the new danger which threatened him if he did not rouse himself from his grief.

For Israel … - Not David‘s followers, but as before 2 Samuel 17:26; 2 Samuel 18:6, 2 Samuel 18:17, Absalom‘s army.

Verse 13

Of my bone … - Render as in preceding verse, “art thou not my bone and my flesh?” It is curious to note how the phrase is used in 2 Samuel 5:1 of common descent from Israel, in 2 Samuel 19:12 of the closer kindred of the tribe of Judah, and in this verse of the yet nearer kindred between David and Amasa his sister‘s son.

Captain … in the room of Joab - It is very plain that David felt the weight of Joab‘s overbearing influence to be very oppressive (compare 2 Samuel 19:22; 2 Samuel 3:39; 2 Samuel 16:10). He was, at this time, very angry with Joab for killing Absalom; and so, thinking it of vital importance to win over Amasa and the army of Judah, he did not scruple to offer him Joab‘s high post.

Verse 16

Shimei being aware that Judah was unanimous in recalling the king, lost no time in trying to make his peace with David, by bringing a large Benjamite force with him.

Verse 17

Before the king - i. e., “to meet the king.” Compare 2 Samuel 20:8. The king was on the east bank, and they crossed over (by the ford) from the west bank to go to him.

Verse 18

As he was come over Jordan - Render, “when he was crossing,” i. e., just embarking for the purpose of crossing. The scene still lies on the east bank. Shimei left nothing undone to soften, if possible, David‘s resentment.

Verse 20

This is the first time that the “house of Joseph,” or “Joseph,” stands for all the ten tribes of which Ephraim was the head and leader. While Saul of Benjamin was king, or while Mahanaim was the capital of his son‘s kingdom, it was not natural so to name them, nor does it seem so at first sight in the mouth of Shimei the Benjamite. But it is very possible that he used the phrase for the purpose of exculpating himself and his own tribe from having taken the initiative in the rebellion, anti of insinuating that they were drawn away by the preponderating influence of the great house of Joseph. On the other hand, the phrase may be an indication that the passage was written after the separation of the kingdom of Israel, when the phrase was a common one.

Verse 24

Beard - The “moustache,” the beard of the upper lip. The fact related in this verse tends to clear Mephibosheth from the suspicion of unfaithfulness to David.

Verse 26

What appears to have happened is, that when Mephibosheth ordered Ziba to saddle the donkeys and ride with him to join David, Ziba left him under pretence of obeying, but instead laded the donkeys with provisions, and went off alone with them, thus making it impossible for Mephibosheth to follow.

Verse 29

Unable to get to the bottom of the story, and perhaps unwilling to make an enemy of Ziba, David compromised the matter by dividing the land, thus partially revoking his hasty sentence 2 Samuel 16:4. We still see the impatient temper of David.

Verse 37

Chimham - From marginal references it appears that Chimham, having accepted David‘s offer, came and settled near Bethlehem. His house was still called after him at the time of the captivity.

Verse 39

The “people” is the term especially applied in this narrative to David‘s followers 2 Samuel 15:17; 2 Samuel 16:14; 2 Samuel 17:2; 2 Samuel 18:1-2; 2 Samuel 19:2-3. They crossed by the ford, while David and his household, accompanied by Barzillai and Chimham, came over in the ferry.

Verse 41

It seems that David and his whole party made a halt at Gilgal 2 Samuel 19:15; 1 Samuel 11:14, and possibly made some solemn agreement there about the kingdom. But while they were there, “all the men of Israel,” representatives from the tribes not included in “half the people of Israel” 2 Samuel 19:40, came up in great wrath at finding that the restoration had been accomplished without consulting them, and accused the men of Judah of unfair dealing.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Verse 1

The son of Bichri … - Rather, "a Bichrite," formed like the names "Ahohite," "Hachmonite," etc. 2 Samuel 23:8-9, and so called from Becher, the son of Benjamin Genesis 46:21; 1 Chronicles 7:6-8 Saul was also of this family. It is evident that the transfer of the royalty from their tribe to that of Judah still rankled in the hearts of many Benjamites (2 Samuel 16:8 note).

Verse 2

From Jordan … - The men of Israel only escorted David from Jordan to Gilgal, and there left him; but the men of Judah in a body went with him all the way to Jerusalem.

Verse 4

To Amasa … - Evidently feeling his way toward fulfilling the promise to Amasa (marginal reference).

Verse 5

He tarried - The cause of Amasa's delay is not stated. It may have been the unwillingness of the men of Judah to place themselves under his orders, or it may have been caused by a wavering or hesitation in loyalty. This last is evidently insinuated in 2 Samuel 20:11, and no doubt this was the pretext, whether grounded in fact or not, by which Joab justified the murder of Amasa before David.

Verse 6

To Abishai - Probably, as the king was on bad terms with Joab, and wished to deprive him of his post as Captain of the host, he gave his orders to Abishai, and weakly connived at the execution of them by Joab, which was inevitable.

Verse 8

Amasa went before them - Rather, "advanced to meet them." Amasa was no doubt returning to Jerusalem, according to his orders 2 Samuel 20:4, and was probably much surprised to meet the army in march. Joab's resolution was quickly taken.

And Joab's garment … - Render, "And Joab was girded with his military garment, as his clothing, and upon it" - i. e., the military garment - (or "him"), "the girdle of a sword fastened on his loins in its sheath, and as he went forth" (to meet Amasa) "it fell" out of the sheath. What appears to have happened is that, by accident or design, Joab's sword fell out of the

scabbard on the ground as he was going to meet Amasa, and that he picked it up with his left hand so as to have his right hand free for the customary salutation 2 Samuel 20:9. This awakened no suspicion in Amasa‘s mind. Compare the case of Ehud, Judges 3:21.

Verse 11

He that favoreth Joab … - This speech, addressed to Amasa‘s followers as well as Joab‘s, shows very distinctly that the rivalry between Joab and Amasa, and David‘s purpose to make Amasa captain in Joab‘s room, were well known; and shows also the real reason why Joab killed Amasa. What is added, “and he that is for David,” was intended to identify Joab‘s cause with David‘s, and also to insinuate that Amasa had not been loyal to David (2 Samuel 20:5 note).

Verse 12

All the people … - i. e., the levies which Amanda had been leading to Jerusalem; they were irresolute as to what they should do, and the stoppage at Amasa‘s body very nearly led to their refusing to follow Joab. But upon the prompt removal and hiding of the body they passed on and followed Joab, their old captain.

Verse 14

Abel - More commonly called 2 Samuel 20:15 “Abel-Beth-maachah” to distinguish it from other places of the name of “Abel” (a grassy plain). It is represented by the modern Abil-el-Kamh, a Christian village on the northwest of lake Huleh, the ancient Merom. Compare 2 Chronicles 16:4, “Abel-maim,” Abel by the water.

And all the Berites - What this means is utterly unknown. Many approve of the reading of the Latin Version, connecting it with what follows: “And all the choice young men mustered and followed him.”

Verse 15

Cast up a bank - See the marginal references. The throwing up of mounds against the walls of besieged places by the besiegers is well illustrated in the Assyrian sculptures.

The trench - The “pomoerium,” or fortified space outside the wall. When the mound was planted in the pomoerium the battering engines were able to approach close to the wall to make a breach.

Verse 18

This was an old proverb. Abel, like Teman, and some other places, was once famous for the wisdom of its inhabitants 1 Kings 4:30-31. The wise

woman was herself a remnant of this traditional wisdom.

Verse 19

I am one … - The woman speaks in the name of the whole city, which she means to say was peaceable and loyal.

Verse 20

Joab‘s character is strongly brought out in the transaction. Politic, decided, bold, and unscrupulous, but never needlessly cruel or impulsive, or even revengeful. No life is safe that stands in his way, but from policy he never sacrifices the most insignificant life without a purpose. (Compare 2 Samuel 2:27-30.)

Verse 23

Now Joab … - This is by no means an unmeaning repetition. Joab had been dismissed to make room for Amasa, and was now, as the result of his successful expedition against Sheba, and the death of Amasa, reinstated in his command. Moreover, this was a fresh beginning of David‘s reign, and therefore a statement of his chief officers is as proper as in 2 Samuel 8:16, when he had just established himself on the throne of Israel. Compare 1 Kings 4:2-6.

Verse 24

Adoram - Not mentioned before by name or office. Apparently, therefore, the office was not instituted until the latter part of David‘s reign, and its duties probably were the collection of the tribute imposed upon vanquished nations, or the command of the forced levies employed in public works. Adoram was stoned to death in the beginning of the reign of Rehoboam 1 Kings 12:18.

Verse 26

Ira the Jairite - Not mentioned before: perhaps the same as “Ira an Ithrite” (marginal reference), i. e., an inhabitant of Jattir in the hill country of Judah Joshua 15:48; 1 Samuel 30:27. Perhaps we ought to read “Ithrite,” for “Jairite.”

A chief ruler … about David - More simply and clearly, “was David‘s kohen” (2 Samuel 8:18 note). In the early part oph David‘s reign his own ons were כהן *kôhên* (chief rulers). The deaths of Amnon and Absalom, and the dissensions in the family, had probably caused the change of policy in this respect.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Verse 1

There is no note of time whatever, nor any clue as to what part of David‘s reign the events of this chapter ought to be assigned.

Enquired of the Lord - Hebrew “sought the face of the Lord,” quite a different phrase from that so often used in Judges (e. g. Judges 1:1) and the Books of Samuel, and probably indicating that this chapter is from a different source; an inference agreeing with the indefinite “in the days of David,” and with the allusion to the slaughter of the Gibeonites, which has not anywhere been narrated.

And for his bloody house - literally, “the house of blood,” i. e., the house or family upon which rests the guilt of shedding innocent blood.

Verse 2

The way in which the writer here refers to the history of the league with the Gibeonites Joshua 9:7; Joshua 11:19; and in many enumerations of the Canaanite nations the Hivites are distinguished from the Amorites. But “Amorite” is often used in a more comprehensive sense, equivalent to “Canaanite” (as Genesis 15:16; Deuteronomy 1:27), and denoting especially that part of the Canaanite nation which dwelt in the hill country Numbers 13:29; Deuteronomy 1:7, Deuteronomy 1:20, Deuteronomy 1:24, and so includes the Hivites.

Verse 4

No silver, nor gold … - Money payments as a compensation for blood-guilt were very common among many nations. The law, too, in Numbers 35:31-32, presupposes the existence of the custom which it prohibits. In like manner the speech of the Gibeonites implies that such a payment as they refuse would be a not unusual proceeding.

Neither … shalt thou kill any man in Israel - They mean that it is not against the nation of Israel, but against the individual Saul, that they cry for vengeance. The demand for Saul‘s sons is exactly similar to that which dictated David‘s own expression in 2 Samuel 24:17, “against me, and against my father‘s house.”

Verse 6

Seven men - Seven was a sacred number not only with the Hebrews but with other Oriental nations Numbers 23:1, Numbers 23:29, and is therefore brought in on this occasion when the judicial death of the sons of Saul was

a religious act intended to appease the wrath of God for the violation of an oath Numbers 25:4.

Whom the Lord did choose - Rather, "the Lord‘s chosen," or elect. The same phrase is applied to Moses Psalm 106:23, to the Israelites Isaiah 43:20, and to Christ Isaiah 42:1.

Verse 7

The Lord‘s oath - The calamity brought upon Israel by Saul‘s breach of the oath to the Gibeonites would make David doubly careful in the matter of his own oath to Jonathan.

Verse 8

Rizpah - See the marginal reference. A foreign origin was possibly the cause of the selection of Rizpah‘s sons as victims.

Sons of Michal - An obvious error for "Merab" (1 Samuel 18:19 note).

Verse 9

In the first days - The barley harvest (about the middle or toward the end of April) was earlier than the wheat harvest Exodus 9:31; Rth 1:22 .

Verse 10

Dropped - Rather, "poured," the proper word for heavy rain Exodus 9:33. The "early rain," or heavy rain of autumn, usually began in October, so that Rizpah‘s devoted watch continued about six months. How rare rain was in harvest we learn from 1 Samuel 12:17-18; Proverbs 26:1. The reason of the bodies being left unburied, contrary to Deuteronomy 21:23, probably was that the death of these men being an expiation of the guilt of a violated oath, they were to remain until the fall of rain should give the assurance that God‘s anger was appeased, and the national sin forgiven.

Birds of the air … beasts of the field - It is well known how in the East, on the death e. g. of a camel in a caravan, the vultures instantly flock to the carcass. (Compare Matthew 24:28.)

Verse 12

From the street of Beth-shan - This was the wide place just inside the gate of an Oriental city, bounded therefore by the city wall (compare the marginal reference). Here, as the place of concourse, the Philistines had fastened the bodies.

Verse 15

This, like the preceding paragraph 2 Samuel 21:1-14, is manifestly a detached and unconnected extract. It is probably taken from some history of

David‘s wars, apparently the same as furnished the materials for 1 Chronicles 20:4-8, but omits David‘s adventure 2 Samuel 21:15-17.

Verse 16

Ishbi-benob - A corrupt reading. The whole passage should perhaps run thus: “And David waxed faint. So they halted in Gob (as in 2 Samuel 21:18-19). And there was a man (in Gob) which was of the sons of the giant, etc.”

Sons of the giant - The “giant” here 2 Samuel 21:18, 2 Samuel 21:20, 2 Samuel 21:22 is “ha-Raphah,” whence, the “Rephaim” Genesis 14:5; Deuteronomy 2:11. The sons of Ha-raphah, or Rephaim, are different from the “Nephilim,” or Giants Genesis 6:4; Numbers 13:33. The sons of Anak were not strictly Rephaim, but Nephilim.

Three hundred shekels of brass - About eight pounds. Goliath‘s spear‘s head weighed “six hundred shekels of iron.”

Verse 18

A battle in Gob - In the parallel passage (marginal reference), “Gezer” is named as the field of this battle. However, Gath is named 2 Samuel 21:20, 2 Samuel 21:22 in a way to make it probable that Gath was the scene of all the battles. The Septuagint in this verse has “Gath.”

Verse 19

The Hebrew text is manifestly very corrupt. First, for “Jaare-oregim,” 1 Chronicles 20:5 gives us the reading Jair. “Oregim” has evidently got in by a transcriber‘s error from the line below, where “oregim” is the Hebrew for “weavers.” Again, the word the “Bethlehemite” is very doubtful. It is supported by 2 Samuel 23:24, but it is not found in the far purer text of 1 Chronicles 20:5, but instead of it we find the name of the Philistine slain by Elhanan, “Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite.” It is probable, therefore, that either the words “the Bethlehemite,” are a corruption of “Lahmi,” or that the recurrence of “Lahmi,” and the termination of “Beth-lehemite” has confused the transcriber, and led to the omission of one of the words in each text.

Verse 22

Four - Not necessarily meaning that they were brothers, but that they were all of the race of the Giant, all Rephaim. The word “four” is omitted in the parallel passage, only the three last being mentioned in that chapter.

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CHAPTER 22

Verse 1

This song, which is found with scarcely any material variation as 2 Samuel 22:44-46, Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Ammonites, and Edomites, was still fresh 2 Samuel 21. For a commentary on the separate verses the reader is referred to the commentary on Psalm 18.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 23

Verse 1

The last words of David - i. e., his last Psalm, his last "words of song" 2 Samuel 22:1. The insertion of this Psalm, which is not in the Book of Psalms, was probably suggested by the insertion of the long Psalm in Numbers 24:3-4, Numbers 24:15-16, and in Proverbs 30:1; and in all these places the words spoken are inspired words. The description of David is divided into four clauses, which correspond to and balance each other.

Verse 4

Comparisons illustrating the prosperity of the righteous king.

Verse 5

Although my house … - The sense of this clause (according to the the King James Version) will be that David comparing the actual state of his family and kingdom during the later years of trouble and disaster with the prophetic description of the prosperity of the righteous king, and seeing how far it falls short, comforts himself by the terms of God's covenant 2 Samuel 7:12-16 and looks forward to Messiah's kingdom. The latter clause, "although he make it not to grow," must then mean that, although at the present time the glory of his house was not made to grow, yet all his salvation and all his desire was made sure in the covenant which would be fulfilled in due time. But most modern commentators understand both clauses as follows: "Is not my house so with God that He has made with me an everlasting covenant," etc.? "For all my salvation and all my desire, will He not cause it to spring up?" namely, in the kingdom of Solomon, and still more fully in the kingdom of Christ.

Verse 8

The duplicate of this passage is in 2 Samuel 23:8-9 is perhaps to be corrected by comparison with 1 Chronicles 11:11-12.

Chief among the captains - There is great doubt about the exact meaning of this phrase.

(1) the title is given to two other persons, namely, to Abishai in 2 Samuel 23:18; 1 Chronicles 11:20, and to Amasa in 1 Chronicles 12:18.

(2) the word translated "captain," is of uncertain meaning, and the orthography repeatedly fluctuates throughout this and the duplicate passage

in 2 Samuel 23:18. Such variations in numerals are very frequent. Compare the numbers in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7.

Verse 9

Gone away - Rather, went up to battle (2 Samuel 5:19; 2 Kings 3:21, etc.) against them. These words and what follows as far as "troop" 2 Samuel 23:11 have fallen out of the text in Chronicles. The effect of this is to omit EIeazar's feat, as here described, to attribute to him Shammah's victory, to misplace the flight of the Israelites, and to omit Shammah altogether from the list of David's mighty men.

Verse 11

Hararite - Interpreted to mean "mountaineer," one from the hill country of Judah or Ephraim.

Verse 13

The feat at Bethlehem by three of the thirty was the occasion of their being formed into a distinct triad; Abishai 2 Samuel 23:18, Benaiah 2 Samuel 23:20, and a third not named, were probably the three.

In the harvest time - An error for "to the rock" (compare the marginal reference).

The troop of the Philistines - The word rendered "troop" occurs in this sense only here (and, according to some, in 2 Samuel 23:11), and perhaps in Psalm 68:11. In 2 Samuel 23:16 the reading is "host" or "camp," which may be the true reading here.

Pitched - The same Hebrew word as "encamped" in 1 Chronicles 11:15.

Valley of Rephaim - Or Giants. See 2 Samuel 21:16 note.

Verse 14

In an hold - In "the hold" 1 Chronicles 11:16 close to the cave of Adullam (marginal reference note). It shows the power and daring of the Philistines that they should hold a post so far in the country as Bethlehem.

Verse 15

A cistern of deep, clear, cool water, is called by the monks, David's Well, about three-quarters of a mile to the north of Bethlehem. Possibly the old well has been filled up since the town was supplied with water by the aqueduct.

Verse 16

Brake through the host - Their camp was pitched in the valley of Rephaim 2 Samuel 23:13; 1 Chronicles 11:15. It follows from this that the

way from Adullam to Bethlehem lay through or across the valley of Rephaim.

Poured it out unto the Lord - It was too costly for his own use, none but the Lord was worthy of it. For libations, see Judges 6:20 note.

Verse 17

Better as in 1 Chronicles 11:19.

Verse 18

Three - "The three" 2 Samuel 23:22. It was Abishai's prowess on this occasion that raised him to be chief of this triad.

Verse 19

i. e., "Was he not the most honorable of the three of the second order, howbeit, he attained not to the three," the triad, namely, which consisted of Jashobeam, Eleazar, and Shammah. That two triads are mentioned is a simple fact, although only five names are given.

Verse 20

Benaiah the son of Jehoiada - He commanded the Cherethites and Pelethites all through David's reign 2 Samuel 8:18; 2 Samuel 20:23, and took a prominent part in supporting Solomon against Adonijah when David was dying, and was rewarded by being made captain of the host in the room of Joab 1 Kings 1:8, 1 Kings 1:26, 1 Kings 1:32-40; 1 Kings 2:25-35; 1 Kings 4:4. It is possible that Jehoiada his father is the same as Jehoiada 1 Chronicles 12:27, leader of the Aaronites, since "Benaiah the son of Jehoiada" is called a "chief priest" 1 Chronicles 27:5.

Two lion-like men - The Hebrew word אריאל *'ărîy'êl* means literally "lion of God," and is interpreted to mean "an eminent hero." Instances occur among Arabs and Persians of the surname "lion of God" being given to great warriors. Hence, it is supposed that the same custom prevailed among the Moabites. But the Vulgate has "two lions of Moab," which seems to be borne out by the next sentence.

Slew a lion … - Rather, THE lion, one of those described above as "a lion of God," if the Vulgate Version is right. Apparently in a severe winter a lion had come up from its usual haunts to some village in search of food, and taken possession of the tank or cistern to the terror of the inhabitants, and Benaiah attacked it boldly and killed it.

Verse 23

David set him over his guard - "Made him of his privy council," would be a better rendering. See 1 Samuel 22:14 note. This position,

distinct from his office as captain of the Cherethites and Pelethites, is clearly indicated 1 Chronicles 27:34.

Verse 24

etc. The early death of Asahel 2 Samuel 2:32 would make it very likely that his place in the 30 would be filled up, and so easily account for the number 31 in the list. Compare throughout the list in 1 Chronicles 11.

Verse 36

It is remarkable that we have several foreigners at this part of the list: Igal of Zobah, Zelek the Ammonite, Uriah the Hittite, and perhaps Nahari the Beerothite. The addition of Zelek to the mighty men was probably the fruit of David‘s war with Ammon 2 Samuel 8:12; 10; 2 Samuel 12:26-31.

Verse 39

Thirty and seven in all - This reckoning is correct, though only 36 “names” are given, the names of only two of the second triad being recorded, but 31 names are given from 2 Samuel 23:24 to the end, which, added to the two triads, or six, makes 37. Joab as captain of the whole host stands quite alone. In 1 Chronicles 11:41-47; after Uriah the Hittite, there follow sixteen other names, probably the names of those who took the places of those in the former list, who died from time to time, or who were added when the number was less rigidly restricted to thirty.

2 SAMUEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Verse 1

And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel - This sentence is the heading of the whole chapter, which goes on to describe the sin which kindled this anger, namely, the numbering of the people 1 Chronicles 21:7-8; 1 Chronicles 27:24. There is no note of time, except that the word "again" shows that these events happened "after" those of 2 Samuel 24:25; 2 Samuel 21:14.)

And he moved David - In 1 Chronicles 21:1 the statement is, "and an adversary" (not "Satan," as the King James Version, since there is no article prefixed, as in Job 1:6; Job 2:1, etc.) "stood up against Israel and moved David," just as 1 Kings 11:14, 1 Kings 11:23, 1 Kings 11:25 first Hadad, and then Rezon, is said to have been "an adversary" (Satan) to Solomon and to Israel. Hence, our text should be rendered, "For one moved David against them." We are not told whose advice it was, but some one, who proved himself an enemy to the best interests of David and Israel, urged the king to number the people.

Verse 2

1 Chronicles 21:2, supplies some missing words. This passage should run, as at 2 Samuel 24:4, "And the king said to Joab and to the princes of the host who were with him," etc. (compare 1 Chronicles 27:22). They were employed "with Joab" as his assistants in the numbering, exactly as in the previous numbering Numbers 1:4 when a prince was appointed from each tribe to be "with" Moses and Aaron.

Verse 5

Aroer - Aroer on the Arnon (Deuteronomy 2:36 note). Aroer itself stood on the very edge of the precipitous cliff of the valley; and in the valley beneath, possibly in an island in the stream, stood another city which is here alluded to.

River - Rather, "the valley" (margin). They passed from Aroer, northward to Gad, and so pitched at Jazer (see the marginal references), which is on the frontier of Gad and Reuben.

Verse 6

To Gilead - Jazer was in the plain. They passed from there to the mountain district of Gilead.

The land of Tahtim-hodshi - The text here is corrupt, as no such land is known. Possibly the right reading is "the land of the Hittites" Judges 1:26; "hodshi" may be a fragment of a sentence which mentioned in what month חדֹשׁ *chôdesh* they arrived there, just as 2 Samuel 24:8 relates that they returned to Jerusalem at the end of nine "months."

Dan-jaan - The versions read "Dan-jaar," i. e., Dan in the wood. Whatever is the meaning of "Jaan," there can be little doubt that Dan (the ancient Laish) is meant (marginal references), both from its position and importance as the northern boundary of Israel, and from its connection with Zidon.

Verse 7

The strong hold of Tyre - "The fenced city," as it is generally rendered throughout the historical books.

The cities of the Hivites - Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim, and perhaps Shechem, besides those at the foot of Hermon and Lebanon, of which we do not know the names. This continuance of distinct communities of Hivites so late as the end of David's reign is remarkable.

Verse 9

1 Chronicles 27:23 indicates sufficiently why the numbering was sinful. It is also stated in 1 Chronicles 21:6, that Joab purposely omitted Levi and Benjamin from the reckoning.

Eight hundred thousand … five hundred thousand - In Chronicles the numbers are differently given. It is probable therefore that the Chronicler has included in his statement of the sum total some numbers which are not included here.

Verse 11

David's seer - Margin, references. From the latter passage it is probable that we have here Gad's narrative.

Verse 13

Compare Ezekiel 14:13-21. The "seven" years of famine correspond with the "seven" years of famine in Genesis 41:27, Genesis 41:30, and with the same number of years in 2 Kings 8:1. But in Chronicles, it is "three years," which agrees better with the "three" months and "three" days. The whole passage is amplified in Chronicles, which has less the aspect of an original text than this.

Verse 15

The time appointed - Perhaps "the time of the assembly," meaning the time of the evening sacrifice, at three o'clock, when the people assembled for prayer, more commonly described as "the time of the evening oblation" Daniel 9:21; 1 Kings 18:29, 1 Kings 18:36; Acts 3:1; Luke 1:10.

Seventy thousand - It is the most destructive plague recorded as having fallen upon the Israelites. In the plague that followed the rebellion of Korah there died 14,700 Numbers 16:49; in the plague, on account of Baal-Peor, 24,000 Numbers 25:9; 1 Corinthians 10:8.

Verse 17

Compare the passage in Chronicles. The account here is abridged; and 2 Samuel 24:18 has the appearance of being the original statement.

Verse 20

And his servants - In Chronicles "his four sons," namely, David's. It is very possible that David may have taken his sons with him, as well as his elders, and Gad's original narrative may have mentioned the circumstance, which the compiler of this chapter did not care to specify, and so used the general term "his servants."

Verse 22

Here be oxen - Those, namely, which were at that very time threshing out the grain in Araunah's threshing-floor 1 Chronicles 21:20; Deuteronomy 25:4.

Threshing-instruments - This was a kind of sledge with iron teeth Isaiah 41:15. It was drawn by two or four oxen over the grain on the floor.

Other instruments of the oxen - "i. e., the harness of the oxen," of which the yoke, and perhaps some other parts, would be made of wood (marginal references; 1 Samuel 6:14).

Verse 23

Either, "the whole O king does Araunah give unto the king;" or (2) "the whole did king Araunah give to the king." The former is preferable.

Verse 24

Fifty shekels of silver - In Chronicles, "six hundred shekels of gold by weight." In explanation, it is supposed - that the fifty shekels here mentioned were gold shekels, each worth twelve silver shekels, so that the fifty gold shekels are equal to the 600 silver; that our text should be rendered, "David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen for money," namely, "fifty shekels;" and that the passage in Chronicles should be rendered, "David qave to Ornan gold shekels of the value" (or weight) "of

600 shekels." What is certain is that our text represents the fifty shekels as the price of the threshing-floor and the oxen.

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Introduction to 1 and 2Kings

The Greek translators, known as the Septuagint, who separated the "Book of the Law of Moses" into five parts, and the "Book of Samuel" into two, made the division, which is now almost universally adopted, of the original "Book of Kings" into a "First" and a "Second Book." The separation thus made was followed naturally in the early Latin versions, which were formed from the Greek; and when Jerome set forth the edition now called "The Vulgate," he followed the custom which he found established. The general adoption of the Vulgate by the Western Church caused the arrangement introduced by the Septuagint to obtain almost universal acceptance.

The work is named from its contents, since the entire subject of the whole is the history of the "kings" of Israel and Judah from the accession of Solomon to the Babylonian captivity.

1. The unity of the work is proved by the marked and striking simplicity and regularity of the plan. The work is, from first to last a history of the kings in strict chronological order, on the same system, and on a uniform scale. Exceptions to this uniformity in the larger space bestowed on the reigns of a few monarchs are due to the principle of treating with the greatest fullness the parts of the history theocratically of most importance.

A second evidence of unity is the general uniformity of style and language - a uniformity admitted by all writers, and one which is only slightly infringed in two or three instances, where the irregularity may be accounted for by a diversity in the sources used by the author and a close following of the language which he found in those sources.

To these general heads of evidence may be added certain peculiarities of thought or expression which pervade the two books, all of them indicating with greater or less certainty a single author.

2. Some have thought from the continuity of the narrative, from the general resemblance of the style, and from the common employment of a certain number of words and phrases, that the six "books," commencing

with Judges and terminating with the Second Book of Kings, are the production of a single writer, and constitute in reality a single unbroken composition. Others consider these arguments far from conclusive. The continuity of the narrative is formal, and may be due to the after arrangements of a reviser, such as Ezra is commonly believed to have been.

So far as the mere idiom of the language goes, it is perhaps true that we cannot draw a marked line between Kings and Samuel. But many of the traits most characteristic of the writer of Kings are wholly wanting in the other (and probably earlier) composition. For these and other reasons the "Books of Kings" may claim distinctness and separateness.

3. There are two grounds upon which, apart from all traditional notices, the date of a historical work may be determined, namely, the peculiarities of the diction, and the contents.

The language of Kings belongs unmistakably to the period of the captivity. It is later than that of Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Joel, and Nahum, earlier than that of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah. In general character it bears a close resemblance to the language of Jeremiah and Ezekiel; and may be assigned to the sixth century before our era.

The result obtainable from the contents is similar, only somewhat more definite. Assuming the last detached section of the work 2 Kings 25:27-30 to be an integral portion of it, we obtain the year 561 B.C. - the first year of Evil-Merodach - as the earliest possible date of the completion of the composition. Again, from the fact that the work contains no allusion at all to the return of the Jews from their captivity, we obtain for the latest possible date the year 538 B.C., the year of the return under Zerubbabel: or in other words between the death of Nebuchadnezzar and the accession of Cyrus in Babylon. Linguistic and other considerations favor the belief that the actual completion was early in this period - about 560 B.C.; and it is not improbable that the greater part of the work was written as early as 580 B.C. - i. e. some twenty years previously.

4. Jewish tradition assigns the authorship of Kings to Jeremiah; and there are very weighty arguments in favor of this view. There is a very remarkable affinity between the language of Kings and that of the admitted writings of the prophet. The matter moreover, of the two works, so far as the same events are treated, is in the closest harmony, those points being especially singled out for insertion, of which Jeremiah had personal knowledge and in which he took a special interest. Another argument of very considerable force is drawn from the entire omission of any notice at all of Jeremiah in Kings, which would have been very strange and unnatural in any other historian, considering the important part which Jeremiah played in the transactions of so many reigns, but which is completely intelligible on the hypothesis of his authorship of Kings: it is then the natural fruit and sign of a becoming modesty and unselfishness.

Still, though Jeremiah‘s authorship appears, all things considered, to be highly probable, we must admit that it has not been proved, and is therefore to some extent uncertain.

5. The author of Kings cites as authorities on the subject matter of his history three works:

(1) the “book of the acts of Solomon” 1 Kings 11:41;

(2) the “book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel” (1 Kings 14:19, etc.); and

(3) the “Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah” (1 Kings 14:29, etc.).

His own history was, at least in part, derived from these works. Lesser works were also open to him. Further, the writer had probably access to a work of a different character from any of those quoted by the author of Chronicles, namely, a collection of the miracles of Elisha, made probably in one of the schools of the prophets.

Hence, the sources of Kings may be considered threefold, consisting, first, of certain general historical documents called the “Books of the

Chronicles of the Kings;" secondly, of some special treatises on the history of particular short periods; and, thirdly, of a single work of a very peculiar character, the private biography of a remarkable man.

The "books of the chronicles of the kings" were probably of the nature of public archives, - state-annals, that is, containing an account of the chief public events in the reign of each king, drawn up by an authorized person. With the Israelites the authorized person was probably in almost every case a prophet. The prophets regarded this as one of their principal duties, as we see by the examples of Isaiah 2 Chronicles 26:22; 1 Kings 6:1 seems to be a gloss of this character, and it may be suspected that to a similar origin is due the whole series of synchronisms between the dynasties of Israel and Judah. It is probable that the original work gave simply the years assigned to each king in the "books of the chronicles," without entering upon the further question, in what regnal year of the contemporary monarch in the sister kingdom each prince ascended the throne. The chief difficulties of the chronology, and almost all the actual contradictions, disappear if we subtract from the work these portions.

Excepting in this respect, the Books of Kings have come down to us, as to all essentials, in a thoroughly sound condition. The only place where the Septuagint Version differs importantly from the Hebrew text is in 1 Kings 12:24 and 1 Kings 12:25. But this passage is clearly no part of the original narrative. It is a story after the fashion of the apocryphal Esdras, worked up out of the Scripture facts, with additions, which the Alexandrian writer may have taken from some Jewish authority whereto he had access, but which certainly did not come from the writer of Kings. None of its facts except possibly a single one - the age, namely, of Rehoboam at his accession belongs to the real narrative of our historian.

7. The primary character of the work is undoubtedly historical. It is the main object of the writer to give an account of the kings of Israel and Judah from Solomon‘s accession to the captivity of Zedekiah.

The history is, however, written - not, like most history, from a civil, but from a religious point of view. The Jews are regarded, not as an ordinary nation, but as God‘s people. The historian does not aim at exhibiting the

mere political progress of the kingdoms about which he writes, but intends to describe to us God‘s treatment of the race with which lie had entered into covenant. Where he records the events of the civil history, his plan is to trace cut the fulfillment of the combined warning and promise which had been given to David 2 Samuel 7:12-16.

Hence, events, which an ordinary historian would have considered of great importance, may be (and are) omitted by our author from the narrative; or touched slightly and hastily.. He treats with the utmost brevity the conquest of Jerusalem by Shishak 1 Kings 14:25-26, the war between Abijam and Jeroboam 1 Kings 15:7, that of Amaziah with Edom 2 Kings 14:7, and that of Josiah with Pharaoh-Nechoh 2 Kings 23:29; events treated at length in the parallel passages of the Book of Chronicles.) As a general rule, the military history of the two kingdoms, which was no doubt carefully recorded in the “Books of the Chronicles,” is omitted by the writer of Kings, who is content for the most part to refer his readers to the state-annals for the events which would have made the greatest figure in an ordinary secular history.

On the other hand, the special aim of the writer induces him to assign a prominent piece and to give a full treatment to events which a secular historian would have touched lightly or passed over in silence. The teaching of the prophets, and their miracles, were leading points in the religious history of the time; it was owing to them especially that the apostasy of the people was without excuse; therefore the historian who has to show that, despite the promises made to David, Jerusalem was destroyed, and the whole twelve tribes carried into captivity, must exhibit fully the grounds for this severity, and must consequently dwell on circumstances which so intensely aggravated the guilt of the people.

The character of the history that he has to relate, its general tendency and ultimate issue, naturally throw over his whole narrative an air of gloom. The tone of the work tires harmonises with that of Jeremiah‘s undoubted writings, and furnishes an additional argument in favor of that prophet‘s authorship.

The style of Kings is, for the most part, level and uniform - a simple narrative style. Occasionally, a more lofty tone is breathed, the style rising with the subject matter, and becoming in places almost poetical 1 Kings 19:11-12; 2 Kings 19:21-31. The most striking chapters are 1 Kings 8; 18; 19; 2 Kings 5; 9; 18; 19; 20.

8. The general authenticity of the narrative contained in our books is admitted. Little is denied or questioned but the miraculous portions of the story, which cluster chiefly about the persons of Elijah and Elisha. Some critics admitting that the narrative generally is derived from authentic contemporary documents - either state-annals or the writings of contemporary prophets - maintain that the histories of Elijah and Elisha come from an entirely different source, being (they hold) collections of traditions respecting those persons made many years after their deaths, either by the writer of Kings or by some other person, from the mouths of the common people. Hence, according to them, their "legendary" or "mythical" character.

But there are no critical grounds for separating off the account of Elijah, or more than a small portion of the account of Elisha, from the rest of the composition. The history of Elijah especially is so intertwined with that of the kingdom of Israel, and is altogether of so public a nature, that the "chronicles of the kings of Israel" would almost necessarily have contained an account of it; and an important part of the history of Elisha is of a similar character. Further, it is quite gratuitous to imagine that the account was not a contemporary one, or that it was left for a writer living long subsequently to collect into a volume the doings of these remarkable personages. The probability is quite the other way. As the prophets themselves were the historians of the time, it would be only natural that Elisha should collect the miracles and other remarkable deeds of Elijah; and that his own should be collected after his decease by some one of the "sons of the prophets." Add to this that the miracles, as related, have all the air of descriptions derived from eye-witnesses, being full of such minute circumstantial detail as tradition cannot possibly preserve. The whole result would seem to be that (unless we reject miracles altogether as unworthy of belief on account of an "a priori" impossibility) the account of the two great Israelite prophets in

Kings must be regarded as entitled to acceptance equally with the rest of the narrative.

Both internal consistency and probability, and also external testimony, strongly support the general authenticity of the secular history contained in Kings. The empire of Solomon is of a kind with which early Oriental history makes us familiar; it occurs exactly at a period when there was room for its creation owing to the simultaneous weakness of Egypt and Assyria; its rapid spread, and still more rapid contraction, are in harmony with our other records of Eastern dominion; its art and civilization resemble these known to have prevailed about the same time in neighboring countries. The contact of Judaea with Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia, during the period covered by our books agrees with the Egyptian annals, and in some respects is most strikingly illustrated by the cuneiform inscriptions. Berosus, Manetho, Menander, Dius - the pagan historians of Babylon, Egypt, and Tyre - join with the monuments in the support which they furnish to our author‘s truthfulness and accuracy, as the comment appended to the text will prove abundantly.

Even the broader features of the chronology are both internally probable, and externally confirmed by the chronologies of other countries. The interval between the accession of Solomon and the captivity of Zedekiah is given as 433 12 years, which is divided among twenty-one monarchs, who belong to eighteen (or, excluding Jehoiachin, to seventeen) generations. This allows for each generation the very probable term of 25 12 years. During the portion of the history where the chronology is double, and where the chief internal difficulties occur, the divergence of the two schemes is but slight, amounting to no more than about twenty years in 240 or 250. Egyptian annals confirm approximately the Biblical dates for Shishak‘s invasion, and So‘s alliance. The Assyrian annals agree with the Hebrew in the date of the fall of Samaria, and in exhibiting Hazael and Jehu, Tiglath-Pileser and Ahaz, Sennacherib and Hezekiah, Esarhaddon and Manasseh, as contemporaries. The chronological difficulties, where such exist, do not at all exceed those with which every reader of profane historians is familiar, and which, in fact, pervade the whole of ancient chronology. They are partly to be accounted for by diversities in the mode

of reckoning; while occasionally no doubt they result from a corrupt reading, or from an unauthorized interpolation.

1 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

Now - Rather, "and." The conjunction has here, probably, the same sort of connecting force which it has at the opening of Joshua, Judges, 1Samuel, etc., and implies that the historian regards his work as a continuation of a preceding history.

King David - The expression "king David," instead of the simpler "David," is characteristic of the writer of Kings. (See the introduction to the Book of Kings) The phrase is comparatively rare in Chronicles and Samuel.

Stricken in, years - David was perhaps now in his first year. He was thirty years old when he was made king in Hebron 2 Samuel 5:4; he reigned in Hebron seven years and six months 2 Samuel 2:11; 1 Chronicles 3:4; and he reigned thirty-three years at Jerusalem 2 Samuel 5:5. The expression had here been used only of persons above eighty Genesis 18:11; Genesis 24:1; Joshua 13:1; Joshua 23:1: but the Jews at this time were not long-lived. No Jewish monarch after David, excepting Solomon and Manasseh, exceeded sixty years.

Clothes - Probably "bed-clothes." The king was evidently bed-ridden 1 Kings 1:47.

Verse 2

Since the Jewish law allowed polygamy, David‘s conduct in following - what has been said to have been - physician‘s advice, was blameless.

Verse 5

The narrative concerning - Abishag, the Shunammite (see the margin reference "a"), is introduced as necessary for a proper understanding of Adonijah‘s later history (see 1 Kings 2:13-25.) But even as it stands, it heightens considerably the picture drawn of the poor king‘s weak and helpless condition, of which Adonijah was not ashamed to take advantage for his own aggrandizement. Adonijah was born while David reigned at Hebron, and was therefore now between thirty-three and forty years of age. He was David‘s fourth son, but had probably become the eldest by the death of his three older brothers. He claimed the crown by right of primogeniture 1 Kings 2:15, and secretly to his partisans (compare 1 Kings 1:10) announced his intention of assuming the sovereignty. It was well known to him, and perhaps to the Jews generally, that David intended to make Solomon his successor 1 Kings 1:13.

To run before him - That is, he assumed the same quasi-royal state as Absalom had done, when he contemplated rebellion 2 Samuel 15:1.

Verse 6

Had not displeased him - i. e. "His father had never checked or thwarted him all his life."

A very goodly man - Here, too, Adonijah resembled Absalom 2 Samuel 14:25. The Jews, like the other nations of antiquity, regarded the physical qualities of rulers as of great importance, and wished their kings to be remarkable for strength, stature, and beauty 1 Samuel 9:2. Adonijah's personal advantages no doubt helped to draw the people to him.

His mother … - i. e. Haggith bare Adonijah after Maacah bare Absalom 2 Samuel 3:3-4. The words in italics are not in the original; hence, some, by a slight alteration, read "David begat him."

Verse 7

Joab's defection on this occasion, after his faithful adherence to David during the troubles caused by Absalom 1 Chronicles 22:9 and by his preference for the character of Adonijah. He may also have thought that Adonijah, as the eldest son 1 Kings 1:5, had almost a right to succeed.

Abiathar's defection is still more surprising than Joab's. For his history, see 1 Samuel 22:20 note. Hereto, David and he had been the firmest of friends. It has been conjectured that he had grown jealous of Zadok, and feared being supplanted by him.

Verse 8

There is some difficulty in understanding how Zadok and Abiathar came to be both "priests" at this time, and in what relation they stood to one another. The best explanation seems to be that Abiathar was the real high priest, and officiated at the sanctuary containing the ark of the covenant in Zion, while Zadok performed the offices of chief priest at the tabernacle of Witness at Gibeon 1 Chronicles 16:39.

For Benaiah, see 2 Samuel 8:18; 2 Samuel 20:23; 2 Samuel 23:20-21. For Nathan, see 2 Samuel 7:2-3, 2 Samuel 7:17; 2 Samuel 12:1-15, 2 Samuel 12:25. As privy to all David's plans 1 Kings 1:24, he had no doubt fully approved the order of succession which the king was known to intend.

Shimei and Rei - Shimei and Rei are perhaps David's two brothers, Shimma and Raddai 1 Chronicles 2:13-14.

Mighty men - Probably the company of 600, originally formed during David‘s early wanderings 1 Samuel 25:13; 1 Samuel 27:2, and afterward maintained as the most essential element of his standing army.

Verse 9

Adonijah‘s feast was probably of a sacrificial character, and intended to inaugurate him as king. Compare the “sacrifices” of Absalom 2 Samuel 15:12.

Zoheleth - No satisfactory explanation has been given of this name. Large blocks of stone always attract attention in the East, and receive names which are often drawn from some trivial circumstance. Sinai and Palestine are full of such “Hajars,” which correspond to the “Ebens” or “stones” of Holy Scripture. (Compare Genesis 28:22; Joshua 4:9; 1 Samuel 6:14.) For En-Rogel, see the margin reference.

Verse 11

The son of Haggith - Compare the margin reference. This expression was well chosen to touch the pride of Bath-sheba. “Adonijah; not thy son, but the son of thy rival, Haggith.”

Verse 12

It would have been in accordance with general Eastern custom for Solomon to suffer death, if Adonijah had succeeded in his attempt. But to have executed his mother also would have been an unusual severity. Still, such cases sometimes occurred: Cassander put to death Roxana, the widow of Alexander the Great, at the same time with her son, the young Alexander.

Verse 14

Confirm thy words - “Establish” them, by giving a second testimony. Nathan thinks it best to move David‘s affections first through Bath-sheba, before he comes in to discuss the matter as one of state policy, and to take the king‘s orders upon it.

Verse 15

Into the chamber - The “bed-chamber” or “inner chamber.” Abishag was a disinterested witness present, who heard all that Bath-sheba said to David.

Verse 16

Bath-sheba bowed, like the woman of Tekoah 2 Samuel 14:4, with the humble prostration of a suppliant. Hence, the king‘s question, “What wouldest thou?”

Verse 20

Tell them who shall sit on the throne - Side by side with what may be called the natural right of hereditary succession, there existed in the old world, and especially in the East, a right, if not of absolutely designating a successor, yet at any rate of choosing one among several sons. Thus, Cyrus designated Cambyses; and Darius designated Xerxes; and a still more absolute right of nomination was exercised by some of the Roman emperors.

Verse 21

Shall sleep - This euphemism for death, rare in the early Scriptures - being found only once in the Pentateuch (margin reference.), and once also in the historical books before Kings 2 Samuel 7:12 - becomes in Kings and Chronicles the ordinary mode of speech (see 1 Kings 2:10; 1 Kings 11:43, etc.; 2 Chronicles 9:31; 2 Chronicles 12:16, etc.). David uses the metaphor in one psalm Psalm 13:3. In the later Scriptures it is, of course, common. (Jeremiah 51:39; Daniel 12:2; Matthew 9:24; John 11:11; 1 Corinthians 11:30; 1 Corinthians 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:14, etc.)

Verse 22

Nathan came into the palace, not into the chamber, where he might not enter unannounced. Bath-sheba retired before Nathan entered, in accordance with Oriental ideas of propriety. So, when Bath-sheba was again sent for 1 Kings 1:28, Nathan retired (compare 1 Kings 1:32).

Verse 24

Hast thou said - Thou hast said. In the original no question is asked. Nathan assumes, as far as words go, that the king has made this declaration. He wishes to draw forth a disclaimer.

Verse 29

"As the Lord liveth" was the most common form of oath among the Israelites (e. g. Judges 8:19; 1 Samuel 14:39; 1 Samuel 19:6). It was unique to David to attach a further clause to this oath - a clause of thankfulness for some special mercy 1 Samuel 25:34, or for God's constant protection of him (here and in 2 Samuel 4:9).

Verse 31

A lower and humbler obeisance than before 1 Kings 1:16. In the Assyrian sculptures ambassadors are represented with their faces actually touching the earth before the feet of the monarch.

Verse 32

The combination of the high priest, the prophet, and the captain of the bodyguard (the Cherethites and Pelethites, 1 Kings 1:38), would show the people that the proceedings had the king‘s sanction. The order of the names marks the position of the persons with respect to the matter in hand.

Verse 33

Mules and horses seem to have been first employed by the Israelites in the reign of David, and the use of the former was at first confined to great personages 2 Samuel 13:29; 2 Samuel 18:9. The rabbis tell us that it was death to ride on the king‘s mule without his permission; and thus it would be the more evident to all that the proceedings with respect to Solomon had David‘s sanction.

Gihon - Probably the ancient name of the valley called afterward the Tyropoeum, which ran from the present Damascus Gate, by Siloam, into the Kedron vale, having the temple hill, or true Zion, on the left, and on the right the modern Zion or ancient city of the Jebusites. The upper “source” of the “waters of Gihon,” which Hezekiah stopped (see the margin reference), was probably in the neighborhood of the Damascus Gate.

Verse 34

Anoint him - Inauguration into each of the three offices (those of prophet, priest, and king) typical of the Messiah or Anointed One, was by anointing with oil. Divine appointment had already instituted the rite in connection with the kingly office 2 Samuel 2:4; but after Solomon we have no express mention of the anointing of kings, except in the three cases of Jehu, Joash, and Jehoahaz 2 Kings 9:6; 2 Kings 11:12; 2 Kings 23:30, who were all appointed irregularly. At the time of the captivity, kings, whose anointing has not been related in the historical books, still bear the title of “the anointed of the Lord.” Lamentations 4:20; Psalm 89:38, Psalm 89:51.

Verse 35

Over Israel and over Judah - There is no anticipation here of the subsequent division of the kingdom; the antithesis between Judah and Israel already existed in the reign of David 2 Samuel 2:9; 2 Samuel 19:11.

Verse 37

As the Lord hath been with my lord - This phrase expresses a very high degree of divine favor. It occurs first in the promises of God to Isaac Genesis 26:3, Genesis 26:24 and Jacob Genesis 28:13. See further margin reference.

Verse 39

The tabernacle - Probably that which David had made for the ark of the covenant on Mount Zion 2 Samuel 6:17. For the holy oil, see the margin reference. That it was part of the regular furniture of the tabernacle appears from Exodus 31:11; Exodus 39:38.

Verse 40

Piped with pipes - Some prefer "danced with dances" - a meaning which the Hebrew would give by a change in the pointing, and the alteration of one letter. But the change is unnecessary. (Flutepipes were known to the Israelites 1 Samuel 10:5; they were very ancient in Egypt, and were known also to the Assyrians.

The earth rent - If the present Hebrew text is correct we have here a strong instance of Oriental hyperbole. But it is suspected that there is a slight corruption, and that the verb really used meant "resounded."

Verse 42

Jonathan had acted in a similar capacity, as a carrier of intelligence, in the time of Absalom's attempt 2 Samuel 15:36; 2 Samuel 17:17; but at that time, like his father, he was faithful to David, and "a valiant man," "a virtuous man," or "a man of worth." (See 1 Kings 1:52; Proverbs 12:4.)

Verse 43

Verily - "Nay, but" (or, "Not so").

Verse 47

The king bowed himself - The king worshipped God and prayed that it might be so. Compare Genesis 47:31, with margin reference, Hebrews 11:21.

Verse 50

On the "horns" of the altar, see Exodus 27:2 note. The altar to which Adonijah fled was probably in the "tabernacle" already referred to 1 Kings 1:39.

Verse 52

There shalt not an hair … - This was a proverbial expression, meaning "he shall suffer no hurt at all." Solomon's clemency in pardoning Adonijah is very remarkable. In the East not only are pretenders almost always punished with death, but it has often been the custom for each king upon his accession to put to death all his brothers as mere possible pretenders.

1 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

The events related in 1 Chronicles 2829 had occurred in the interval which separates the last and this present chapter.

Verse 2

David appears to have in his thoughts the divine address to Joshua. Without following it servilely, he reproduces several of its leading expressions and sentiments (compare the margin reference). Solomon‘s youth clearly constituted one of the chief difficulties of his position. If he was about nineteen or twenty, and known to be of a pacific disposition 1 Chronicles 22:9, then to have to rule over the warlike and turbulent Hebrew nation, with a strong party opposed to him, and brothers of full age ready to lead it, was evidently a most difficult task. Hence, he is exhorted, though in years a boy, to show himself in Spirit “a man.”

Verse 3

The “statutes” have been explained to be the positive ordinances of the Law; the “commandments” the moral precepts, not to steal, etc.; the “judgments” the laws belonging to civil government; and the “testimonies” the laws directing the commemoration of certain events. Compare Psalm 19:7-8.

Verse 4

That the Lord may continue his word - The original promise given to David indirectly, through Nathan 2 Samuel 7:11-17, and apparently unconditional, afterward was made conditional upon continued obedience. (See the margin reference “f.”) David reminds Solomon of this, in order to impress upon him a powerful motive to continue faithful and obedient.

Verse 5

In his directions with respect to certain important persons, David, anxious for the security of his young successor‘s kingdom, allows old animosities to revive, and is willing to avenge himself indirectly and by deputy, though he had been withheld by certain scruples from taking vengeance in his own person. We must not expect Gospel morality from the saints of the Old Testament. They were only the best men of their several ages and nations. The maxim of “them of old time,” whether Jews or Gentiles, was “Love your friends and hate your enemies” (see Matthew 5:43); and David perhaps was not in this respect in advance of his age.

Joab‘s chief offence against David, besides his two murders, was no doubt his killing Absalom 2 Samuel 18:14. Another serious crime was his support of the treasonable attempt of Adonijah 1 Kings 1:7. But besides these flagrant misdemeanours, he seems to have offended David by a number of little acts. He was a constant thorn in his side. He treated him with scant respect, taking important steps without his orders 2 Samuel 3:26, remonstrating with him roughly and rudely 2 Samuel 2:24-25, almost betraying his secrets 2 Samuel 11:19-21, and, where he disliked the orders given him, disobeying them 1 Chronicles 21:6. David allowed his ascendancy, but he chafed against it, finding this “son of Zeruiah,” in particular “too hard” for him (margin reference).

Put the blood of war upon his girdle … - Meaning “The blood of Amasa spirited all over the girdle to which the sword of Joab was attached; and the sandals on his feet were reddened with the stains left by the falling corpse.”

Verse 6

His hoar head - Joab, though the nephew of David, was probably not very greatly his junior, David being the youngest of the family, and Zeruiah, as is most likely, one of the eldest.

Verse 7

One of the sons of Barzillai here intended was probably Chimham (see the margin reference). Who the others were is not known. The family continued down to the return from the captivity, and still held property in Israel (compare Ezra 2:61 and Nehemiah 7:63).

Verse 9

Hold him not guiltless - i. e. “Do not treat him as an innocent man. Punish him as in thy wisdom thou deemest best. Not capitally at once; but so that he may be likely to give thee in course of time a just occasion to slay him.” So, at least, Solomon seems to have understood the charge. (See 1 Kings 2:36-46.)

Verse 11

Forty years - In all forty years and six months. See 2 Samuel 5:5, and 1 Chronicles 3:4. The Jewish writers almost universally omit the fractions of a year.

Verse 12

The “establishment” of the kingdom here intended is probably its universal acceptance both by the tribe of Judah and the other Israelites.

Verse 16

Deny me not - literally, as in the margin, i. e. "make me not to hide my face through shame at being refused."

Verse 19

A seat - Or, "a throne." We have here a proof of the high dignity of the Queen-mother. Compare also 1 Kings 15:13; 2 Kings 11:1-3. In the Persian court the Queen-mother had often the chief power.

Verse 22

Ask for him the kingdom also - Bath-sheba had not seen anything dangerous or suspicious in Adonijah's request. Solomon, on the contrary, takes alarm at once. To ask for Abishag was to ask for the kingdom. To the Oriental mind a monarch was so sacred, that whatever was brought near to him was thenceforth separate from common use. This sacred and separate character attached especially to the Royal harem. The inmates either remained widows for the rest of their lives, or became the wives of the deceased king's successor. When a monarch was murdered, or dethroned, or succeeded by one whose title was doubtful, the latter alternative was almost always adopted (compare 2 Samuel 12:8; 2 Samuel 16:22). Public opinion so closely connected the title to the crown and the possession of the deceased monarch's wives, that to have granted Adonijah's request would have been the strongest encouragement to his pretensions. Solomon, seeing this, assumes that Adonijah cherishes a guilty purpose, that there has been a fresh plot, that Abiathar and Joab - Adonijah's counselors in the former conspiracy 1 Kings 1:7 - are privy to it, and that the severest measures are necessary to crush the new treason.

Verse 23

Against his own life - Adonijah had forfeited his life by his former conduct, and his pardon had been merely conditional 1 Kings 1:52.

Verse 24

The phrase "making a house" means "continuing the posterity" of a person, and, in the case of a royal person, "maintaining his descendants upon the throne."

Verse 26

For Anathoth and the allusions in this verse, see the margin reference.

Verse 27

That he might fulfil the word of the L RD - We need not understand this as stating that the fulfillment of the old prophecy was Solomon's

motive, or even one of his motives. The reference is to the overruling providence of God, which thus brought about the fulfillment of the prophecy. (Compare Matthew 1:22; Matthew 2:15; Matthew 27:35, etc.) The deposition of Abiathar involved the rejection of the house of Ithamar 1 Chronicles 24:3, to which Eli belonged, and the reestablishment of the high priesthood in the line of Eleazar.

Verse 28

Joab followed the example of Adonijab (margin reference). The tabernacle was now at Gibeon 1 Kings 3:4; 1 Chronicles 16:39.

Verse 31

It was only a murderer to whom the tabernacle was to be no protection (margin reference). Hence, the reference to the "innocent blood."

Verse 32

Shalt return his blood - i. e. "his shedding of blood."

Verse 33

Upon the head of his seed - Compare the margin reference. Nothing further is heard of Joab's descendants in the history.

Verse 34

Retribution overtook Joab on the very scene (Gibeon) of the most treacherous of his murders. It was at the "great stone which is in Gibeon" that Joab killed Amasa 2 Samuel 20:8-10.

Verse 35

The high priesthood had been for some time in a certain sense divided between Zadok and Abiathar. (See the 1 Kings 1:8 note). Henceforth, Zadok became sole high priest.

Verse 36

The object, apparently, was to keep Shimei under the immediate eye of the government. Shimei's old home, Bahurim, lay east of Jerusalem, on the road to Jericho, 2 Samuel 17:18, and could only be reached by crossing the Kedron valley. Solomon assumes, that, if he quits the city, it will probably be in this direction 1 Kings 2:37.

Verse 39

Achish - Possibly the Achish of the marginal reference, but more probably the grandson of the former Achish.

Verse 42

Did I not make thee to swear - The Septuagint add to 1 Kings 2:37 a clause stating that Solomon "made Shimei swear" on the day when he

commanded him to reside at Jerusalem.

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CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

What Pharaoh is meant is uncertain. It must have been a predecessor of Shishak (or Sheshonk), who invaded Judaea more than 40 years later 1 Kings 14:25; and probabilities are in favor, not of Psusennes II, the last king of Manetho‘s 21st dynasty, but of Psinaces, the predecessor of Psusennes. This, the Tanite dynasty, had become very weak, especially toward its close, from where we may conceive how gladly it would ally itself with the powerful house of David. The Jews were not forbidden to marry foreign wives, if they became proselytes. As Solomon is not blamed for this marriage either here or in 1 Kings 11:5-7 were in no case dedicated to Egyptian deities, it is to be presumed that his Egyptian wife adopted her husband‘s religion.

The city of David - The city, situated on the eastern hill, or true Zion, where the temple was afterward built, over against the city of the Jehusites (1 Kings 9:24; compare 2 Chronicles 8:11).

Verse 2

The word “only” introduces a contrast. The writer means to say that there was one exception to the flourishing condition of things which he has been describing, namely, that “the people sacrificed in high-places.” (Compare the next verse.) The Law did not forbid “high-places” directly, but only by implication. It required the utter destruction of all the high-places which had been polluted by idolatrous rites Deuteronomy 12:2; and the injunction to offer sacrifices nowhere except at the door of the tabernacle Leviticus 17:3-5 was an indirect prohibition of them, or, at least, of the use which the Israelites made of them; but there was some real reason to question whether this was a command intended to come into force until the “place” was chosen “where the Lord would cause His name to dwell.” (See Deuteronomy 12:11, Deuteronomy 12:14.) The result was that high-places were used for the worship of Yahweh, from the time of the Judges downward Judges 6:25; Judges 13:16; 1 Samuel 7:10; 1 Samuel 13:9; 1 Samuel 14:35; 1 Samuel 16:5; 1 Chronicles 21:26, with an entire unconsciousness of guilt on the part of those who used them. And God so far overlooked this ignorance that He accepted the worship thus offered Him, as appears from the vision vouchsafed to Solomon on this occasion. There were two reasons for the prohibition of high-places; first, the danger

of the old idolatry creeping back if the old localities were retained for worship; and, secondly, the danger to the unity of the nation if there should be more than one legitimate religious center. The existence of the worship at high places did, in fact, facilitate the division of the kingdom.

Verse 4

Gibeon - The transfer to Gibeon of the "tabernacle of the congregation," and the brass "altar of burnt offerings" made by Moses, which were removed there from Nob (compare 1 Samuel 21:6, with marginal references "i," "k"), had made it "the great high-place," more sacred, i. e., than any other in the holy land, unless it were Mount Zion where the ark had been conveyed by David. For the position of Gibeon, see Joshua 9:3 note.

A thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer - Solomon presented the victims. The priests were the actual sacrificers 1 Kings 8:5. A sacrifice of a thousand victims was an act of royal magnificence suited to the greatness of Solomon. So Xerxes offered 1,000 oxen at Troy. If the offerings in this case were "whole burnt offerings," and were all offered upon the altar of Moses, the sacrifice must have lasted several days.

Verse 5

The Lord appeared unto Solomon in a dream - Compare the marginal references and Genesis 15:1; Genesis 28:12; Genesis 37:5.

Verse 6

This great kindness - David himself had regarded this as God's crowning mercy to him 1 Kings 1:48.

Verse 7

See 1 Kings 2:2 note, and on the hyperbole contained in the phrase "little child," compare Genesis 43:8; Exodus 33:11.

How to go out or come in - This expression is proverbial for the active conduct of affairs. (See the marginal reference.)

Verse 8

Compare the marginal references. Solomon regards the promises as fulfilled in the existing greatness and glory of the Jewish nation.

Verse 9

One of the chief functions of the Oriental monarch is always to hear and decide causes. Hence, supreme magistrates were naturally called "judges." (See the introduction to the Book of Judges.) In the minds of the Jews the "judge" and the "prince" were always closely associated, the direct cognisance of causes being constantly taken by their chief civil governors.

(See Exodus 2:14; Exodus 18:16, Exodus 18:22; 1 Samuel 8:20; 2 Samuel 15:2-6.)

Good and bad - i. e. "right and wrong," "justice and injustice."

Verse 10

Although Solomon's choice was made "in a dream" 1 Kings 3:5, we must regard it as springing from his will in some degree, and therefore as indicative of his moral character.

Verse 11

Thine enemies - e. g. Hadad the Edomite 1 Kings 11:14-22 and Rezon the son of Eliadah 1 Kings 11:23-25, whom Solomon might well have wished to remove.

Verse 12

A wise and an understanding heart - Solomon's wisdom seems to have been both moral and intellectual (see 1 Kings 4:29-34). But it was moral wisdom alone which he requested, and which was promised him. The terms translated "wise" and "understanding," both denote practical wisdom. (See Genesis 41:33, Genesis 41:39; Deuteronomy 4:6; Proverbs 1:2, etc.)

Neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee - i. e. in the knowledge of what was in man, and in the wisdom to direct men's goings, he was to be the wisest of "all" mere men. In such wisdom the world would know one only "greater than Solomon" Matthew 12:42; Luke 11:31.

Verse 13

A striking illustration of that law of the divine government to which Christ referred (marginal reference).

Verse 14

I will lengthen thy days - The promise here was only conditional. As the condition was not observed 1 Kings 11:1-8, the right to the promise was forfeited, and it was not fulfilled. Solomon can scarcely have been more than fifty-nine or sixty at his death.

Verse 15

Solomon determined to inaugurate his reign by a grand religious ceremonial at each of the two holy places which at this time divided between them the reverence of the Jews. Having completed the religious service at Gibeon, where was the tabernacle of the congregation, he proceeded to Jerusalem, and sacrificed before the ark of the covenant, which was in Mount Zion 2 Samuel 6:12. A great feast naturally followed on a large sacrifice of peace-offerings. In these the sacrificer always partook

of the flesh of the victim, and he was commanded to call in to the feast the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow Deuteronomy 14:29. Compare 2 Samuel 6:19; 1 Chronicles 16:3.

Verse 28

The wisdom of God - i. e. "Divine wisdom," "a wisdom given by God" 1 Kings 3:12. The ready tact and knowledge of human nature exhibited in this pattern judgment, and its special fitness to impress Orientals, have generally been admitted.

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CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

Solomon, that is, was king over "all Israel" from the first; not like David, who for seven and a half years reigned over Judah only. This feature well introduces the glory of Solomon and the organisation of the court, of which the historian in this chapter intends to give us a general sketch. Solomon constitutes certain "princes" or officers of the first rank, deriving their station from him, and probably holding it during pleasure.

Verse 2

Azariah, the son of Zadok, the priest - "The priest" here belongs to Azariah, not to Zadok. The term used כהן *kôhên* means sometimes a priest, sometimes a civil officer, with perhaps a semi-priestly character. (See 2 Samuel 8:18 note.) In this place it has the definite article prefixed, and can only mean "the high priest." Azariah, called here the "son," but really the "grandson," of Zadok, seems to have succeeded him in the priesthood 1 Chronicles 6:10. His position as high priest at the time when this list was made out gives Azariah the foremost place in it.

Verse 3

Shisha, or Shavsha 1 Chronicles 18:16, seems also to have been called Sheva 2 Samuel 20:25, and Seraiah 2 Samuel 8:17.

The "scribes" were probably royal "secretaries" (margin), who drew up the king's edicts, wrote his letters, and perhaps managed his finances 1 Kings 12:10. They were among his most influential councillors.

By "recorder" or "remembrancer" (margin), we must understand "court annalist" (marginal reference "a").

Verse 4

It is curious to find Abiathar in this list of princes, after what has been said of his disgrace 1 Kings 2:27, 1 Kings 2:35. Some have supposed that after a while Solomon pardoned him. Perhaps the true explanation is that the historian here enumerates all those who were accounted "princes" in any part of Solomon's reign.

Verse 5

The son of Nathan - It is uncertain whether the Nathan of this verse is the prophet or the son of David 2 Samuel 5:14. While on the one hand the

position of "king's friend" is more likely to have been held by a contemporary, which the prophet's son would have been, than by one so much younger as the son of a younger brother; on the other hand the title "cohen" seems to point to a member of the royal family. (See the next note.) Azariah who was "over the officers" was chief, that is, of the "officers" mentioned in 1 Kings 4:8-19, as appears from the identity of the term here used with the title by which they are designated in 1 Kings 4:7.

Principal officer - Or, "cohen." The fact that the title כהן *kôhên* was borne by sons of David 2 Samuel 8:18, who could not be "priests" in the ordinary sense of the word, seems to identify the Nathan of this verse with David's son 2 Samuel 5:14 rather than with the prophet.

Verse 6

Over the household - Comptroller of the household, like the "Steward" of the Persian court. On the importance of this office, see 2 Kings 18:18, and compare Isaiah 22:15-25.

The tribute - The marginal reading, "levy," is preferable. The reference is to the forced laborers whom Solomon employed in his great works (marginal reference).

Verse 7

The requirement of a portion of their produce from subjects, in addition to money payments, is a common practice of Oriental monarchs. It obtained in ancient, and it still obtains in modern, Persia.

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Verse 8

In this arrangement of the territory into twelve portions, the divisions of the tribes seem to have been adopted as far as could be managed without unfairness. The prefecture of Ben-Hur corresponded nearly to the territory of Ephraim; that of Ben-Dekar to Dan; that of Ben-Hesed to Judah; those of Ben-Abinadab and Baana to Cis-Jordanic Manasseh; that of Ben-Geber to Manasseh beyond Jordan; of Abinadab to Gad; of Ahimaaz to Naphtali; of Baanah to Asher; of Jehoshaphat to Issachar; of Shimei to Benjamin; and of Geber to Reuben. The order in which the prefectures are mentioned is clearly not the geographical. Perhaps it is the order in which they had to supply the king's table.

Verse 9

For some of the names, see Joshua 19:41-43.

Verse 10

Sochoh - See Joshua 15:35.

Verse 11

Dor - See Joshua 11:2 note. It has always been a practice among Oriental potentates to attach to themselves the more important of their officers by giving them for wives princesses of the royal house. Hence, the union here between Ben-Abinadab (probably Solomon‘s first cousin, compare 1 Samuel 16:8) and Taphath. Compare 1 Kings 4:15.

Verse 12

On these cities see Joshua 12:21; Joshua 3:16; Judges 7:22; Joshua 21:22.

Verse 13

It will be observed that five out of the twelve prefects are designated solely by their father‘s names, Ben-Hur, etc., while one (Ahimaaz, 1 Kings 4:15) has no such designation. Probably the document, which the author of the Book of Kings consulted, had contained originally the proper name and father‘s name of each prefect; but it was mutilated or illegible in places at the time when he consulted it. If it was in the shape of a list, a single mutilation at one corner might have removed four of the six wanting names.

Verse 14

See the margin. Ahinadab had the territory from the places last mentioned as far as Mahanaim Genesis 32:2.

Verse 19

The meaning of the last clause is somewhat doubtful. On the whole, our King James Version may well stand as nearly correct. The writer has assigned to Geber a wide stretch of territory; and, anticipating surprise, assures his readers ” (there was but) one officer who (purveyed) in this land.”

Verse 20

There is some doubt about the proper arrangement of the remainder of this chapter. The best alteration, if we alter the Hebrew order at all, would be to place 1 Kings 4:20-21 after 1 Kings 4:25.

Many … - See 1 Kings 3:8 note; and compare Psalm 127:1-5, which is traditionally ascribed to Solomon, and which celebrates the populousness and security of Israel in his day.

Verse 21

Solomon‘s empire, like all the great empires of Asia down to the time of the Persians, consisted of a congeries of small kingdoms, all ruled by their

own kings 1 Kings 4:24, who admitted the suzerainty of the Jewish monarch, and paid him "presents," i. e., an annual tribute (see 1 Kings 10:25).

Unto the land of the Philistines - There is no word corresponding to "unto" in the Hebrew. The construction should be, "Solomon reigned over all the kingdoms from the river (i. e., the Euphrates: see the marginal references), over the land of the Philistines," etc. The writer draws attention to the fact that the extent of Solomon's kingdom was in accordance with the promises made to Abraham, Moses, and Joshua.

Verse 22

Thirty measures - (margin, cors) The cor, which was the same measure as the homer, is computed, on the authority of Josephus, at 86 English gallons, on the authority of the rabbinical writers at 44. Thirty cors, even at the lower estimate, would equal 1,320 gallons, or 33 of our "sacks;" and the 90 cors of fine and coarse flour would altogether equal 99 sacks. From the quantity of flour consumed, it has been conjectured that the number of those who fed at the royal board was 14,000.

Verse 23

Harts … - The exact sorts of wild land animals here intended are very uncertain. Perhaps it would be best to translate "wild-goats, gazelles, and wild oxen," which abounded in the wilder parts of Syria, from where Solomon would be supplied. (See 1 Kings 4:24.) (Yahmur, or the "roebuck," gives its name to a valley in a wooded district, south of Carmel (Conder).) The use of game at the royal banquets of Assyria appears in the sculptures.

Verse 24

On this side the river - i. e., the region west of the Euphrates.

Tiphsah, or Tiphsach, the place on the Euphrates called Thapsacus. The word means "ford," or "passage," being formed from פסח *pâsach* "to pass over" (compare "paschal"). It is the modern Suriyeh, forty-five miles below Balls, at the point where the Euphrates changes its course from south to southeast by east. The stream is fordable here, and nowhere else in this part of its course. Solomon's possession of Thapsacus would have been very favorable to his schemes of land commerce 1 Kings 9:19.

To Azzah - i. e., Gaza.

All the kings - Compare 1 Samuel 6:18. Syria was divided into numerous small states, as many as thirty-two kings being mentioned on one

occasion 1 Kings 20:1. The Hittites were ruled by a great number of chieftains or princes 1 Kings 10:29; 2 Kings 7:6. twelve are mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions.

Verse 25

Under his vine … - This phrase seems to have been common among the Jews, and even among neighboring nations 2 Kings 18:31, to express a time of quiet and security. It is used by the prophets in descriptions of the Messianic kingdom (marginal references).

Verse 26

In 2 Chronicles 9:25, the number of stalls for Solomon‘s chariot horses is stated at 4,000, instead of 40,000. The number in the present passage is probably a corruption. Solomon‘s chariots were but 1,400 1 Kings 10:26; 2 Chronicles 1:14, for which 40,000 horses could not possibly be required. The Assyrian chariots had at most three horses apiece, while some had only two. 4,000 horses would supply the full team of three to 1,200, and the smaller team of two to 200 chariots. The number 4,000 is in due proportion to the 12,000 horses for cavalry, and is in accordance with all that we know of the military establishments of the time and country. Compare 2 Chronicles 12:3; 2 Samuel 8:4.

Verse 28

Barley is to this day in the East the common food of horses.

Dromedaries - Coursers. The animal intended is neither a camel nor a mule, but a swift horse.

The place where the officers were - Rather, “places where the horses and coursers were,” i. e., to the different cities where they were lodged.

Verse 29

Largeness of heart - What we call “great capacity.” The expression which follows is common in reference to numerical multitude 1 Kings 4:20, but its use here to express mere amplitude or greatness is unique.

Verse 30

Children of the east country - Rather, “of the East” - the Beni Kedem - a distinct tribe, who occupied both sides of the Euphrates along its middle course (marginal reference). They were mostly nomads, who dwelt in tents Jeremiah 49:28-29. Job belonged to them Job 1:3, as did probably his three friends; and, perhaps, Balsam Numbers 23:7. They must have been either Arabs or Aramaeans. We may see in the Book of Job the character of their “wisdom.” Like Solomon‘s, it was chiefly gnomic but included some

knowledge of natural history. The "wisdom of Egypt" was of a different kind. It included magic Genesis 41:8; Exodus 7:11, geometry, medicine, astronomy, architecture, and a dreamy mystic philosophy, of which metempsychosis was the main principle. It is not probable that Solomon was, like Moses (marginal reference), deeply versed in Egyptian science. The writer only means to say that his wisdom was truer and more real than all the much-praised wisdom of Egypt.

Verse 31

It is most probable that the persons with whom Solomon is compared were contemporaries, men noted for "wisdom," though there is no other mention of them.

His fame was in all nations - See below, 1 Kings 10.

Verse 32

Proverbs - In the collection which forms the "Book of Proverbs," only a small portion has been preserved, less certainly than one thousand out of the three. Ecclesiastes, if it is Solomon's, would add between one hundred and two hundred more proverbs. But the great bulk of Solomon's proverbs has perished.

Songs - Of these, Canticles is probably one (marginal reference): Psalm 127:1-5 may also be of the number. Probably the bulk of Solomon's songs were of a secular character, and consequently were not introduced into the canon of Scripture.

Verse 33

Trees … - A keen appreciation of the beauties of nature, and a habit of minute observation, are apparent in the writings of Solomon that remain to us. The writer here means to say that Solomon composed special works on these subjects. The Lebanon cedars were the most magnificent of all the trees known to the Hebrews, and hence, represent in the Old Testament the grandest of vegetable productions. (Psalm 104:16; Ezekiel 31:3, etc.) For the hyssop, see Exodus 12:22 note.

Of beasts, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fishes - This is the usual Biblical division of the animal kingdom Genesis 1:26; Genesis 9:2; Psalm 148:10.

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CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

Hiram, king of Tyre - Menander of Ephesus, who wrote a history of Tyre in Greek, founded upon native Tyrian documents, about 300 B.C., mentioned this Hiram as the son of Abibaal king of Tyre, and said that he ascended the throne when he was nineteen; that he reigned thirty-four years, and, dying at the age of fifty-three, was succeeded by his son Baleazar. Menander spoke at some length of the dealings of Hiram with Solomon.

Sent his servants - This appears to have been an embassy of congratulation.

Verse 3

Solomon‘s presumption that Hiram knew David‘s design has not appeared in the previous history, but it is in accordance with 1 Chronicles 22:4.

Verse 4

The contrast is not between different periods of Solomon‘s reign, but between his reign and that of his father.

Evil occurrent - Rather, evil occurrence.

Verse 5

As the Lord spake - See the marginal references 1 Kings 7:13, and compare 1 Chronicles 22:10.

Verse 6

Solomon‘s message to Hiram and Hiram‘s answer 1 Kings 5:8-9 are given much more fully in 2 Chronicles 2:3-16.

Cedar-trees - The Hebrew word here and elsewhere translated “cedar,” appears to be used, not only of the cedar proper, but of other timber-trees also, as the fir, and, perhaps, the juniper. Still there is no doubt that the real Lebanon cedar is most commonly intended by it. This tree, which still grows on parts of the mountain, but which threatens to die out, was probably much more widely spread anciently. The Tyrians made the masts of their ships from the wood Ezekiel 27:5, and would naturally be as careful to cultivate it as we have ourselves been to grow oak. The Assyrian kings, when they made their expeditions into Palestine, appear frequently to have cut it in Lebanon and Hermon, and to have transported it to their own capitals.

Skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians - The mechanical genius and nautical skill of the Phoenicians generally, and of the Sidonians in particular, is noticed by Homer and Herodotus. In the reign of Hiram, Sidon, though perhaps she might have a king of her own, acknowledged the supremacy of Tyre.

Verse 9

See the marginal reference. The timber was first carried westward from the flanks of Lebanon to the nearest part of the coast, where it was collected into floats, or rafts, which were then conveyed southward along the coast to Joppa, now Jaffa, from where the land journey to Jerusalem was not more than about forty miles. A similar course was taken on the building of the second temple Ezra 3:7.

Food for my household - The Phoenician cities had very little arable territory of their own, the mountain range of Lebanon rising rapidly behind them; and they must always have imported the chief part of their sustenance from abroad. They seem commonly to have derived it from Judaea (marginal references). Hiram agreed now to accept for his timber and for the services of his workmen 1 Kings 5:6 a certain annual payment of grain and oil, both of them the best of their kind, for the sustentation of his court. This payment was entirely distinct from the supplies furnished to the workmen (marginal reference "l").

Verse 11

The number of measures of wheat was considerably less than Solomon's own annual consumption, which exceeded 32,000 cors 1 Kings 4:22; but the small amount of twenty cors of oil, which seems at first sight scarcely to match with the 20,000 cors of wheat, will not appear improbable, if we consider that the oil was to be" pure" - literally "beaten" - i. e., oil extracted from the olives by pounding, and not by means of the press.

Year by year - i. e., during all the years that Solomon was engaged in building and was helped by Hiram.

Verse 12

The Lord gave Solomon wisdom - It seems to be implied that Solomon's divine gift of wisdom enabled him to make such favorable arrangements with Hiram.

Verse 13

A levy out of all Israel - This was, apparently, the first time that the Israelites had been called upon to perform forced labor, though it had been

prophesied 1 Samuel 8:16. David had bound to forced service "the strangers" 1 Chronicles 22:2; but hitherto the Israelites had escaped. Solomon now, in connection with his proposed work of building the temple, with the honor of God as an excuse, laid this burden upon them. Out of the 1,300,000 able-bodied Israelites 2 Samuel 24:9, a band of 30,000 - one in forty-four - was raised, of whom one-third was constantly at work in Lebanon, while two-thirds remained at home, and pursued their usual occupations. This, though a very light form of task work, was felt as a great oppression, and was the chief cause of the revolt of the ten tribes at Solomon's death 1 Kings 12:4.

Verse 15

That bare burdens … - Compare the marginal references. These laborers, whose services were continuous, consisted of "strangers" - "the people that were left of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites" - whom Solomon, following the example of his father 1 Chronicles 22:2, condemned to slavery, and employed in this way.

Verse 16

Comparing this verse and 1 Kings 9:23 with 2 Chronicles 2:18; 2 Chronicles 8:10, the entire number of the overseers will be seen to be stated by both writers at 3,850; but in the one case nationality, in the other degree of authority, is made the principle of the division.

Verse 17

Some of these "great, hewed (no and) stones," are probably still to be seen in the place where they were set by Solomon's builders, at the southwestern angle of the wall of the Haram area in the modern Jerusalem. The largest found so far is 38 ft. 9 in. long, and weighs about 100 tons.

Verse 18

The stone-squarers - The Gebalites (see the margin), the inhabitants of Gebal, a Phoenician city between Beyrout and Tripolis, which the Greeks called Byblus, and which is now known as Jebeil.

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CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

In the four hundred and eightieth year - It is upon this statement that all the earlier portion of what is called the "received chronology" depends. Amid Minor differences there is a general agreement, which justifies us in placing the accession of Solomon about 1000 B.C. (1018 B.C. Oppert.) But great difficulties meet us in determining the sacred chronology anterior to this. Apart from the present statement, the chronological data of the Old Testament are insufficient to fix the interval between Solomon's accession and the Exodus, since several of the periods which make it up are unestimated. Hence, chronologists have based entirely the "received chronology" upon this verse. But the text itself is not free from suspicion.

(1) it is the sole passage in the Old Testament which contains the idea of dating events from an era.

(2) it is quoted by Origen without the date, and seems to have been known only in this shape to Josephus, to Theophilus of Antioch, and to Clement of Alexandria.

(3) it is hard to reconcile with other chronological statements in the Old and New Testament.

Though the books of Joshua, Judges, and Samuel furnish us with no exact chronology, they still supply important chronological data - data which seem to indicate for the interval between the Exodus and Solomon, a period considerably exceeding 480 years. For the years actually set down amount to at least 580, or, according to another computation, to 600; and though a certain deduction might be made from this sum on account of the round numbers, this deduction would scarcely do more than balance the addition required on account of the four unestimated periods. Again, in the New Testament, Paul (according to the received text) reckons the period from the division of Canaan among the tribes in the sixth year of Joshua Joshua 14:1-15, to Samuel the prophet, at 450 years, which would make the interval between the Exodus and the commencement of the temple to be 579 years. On the whole, it seems, therefore, probable that the words "in the

four hundred and eightieth year, etc.," are an interpolation into the sacred text, which did not prevail generally before the third century of our era.

Verse 2

The size of Solomon's temple depends upon the true length of the ancient cubit, which is doubtful. It has been estimated as somewhat less than a foot, and again as between 19 and 20 inches, a difference of nearly 8 inches, which would produce a variation of nearly 40 feet in the length of the temple-chamber, and of 46 in that of the entire building. It is worthy of remark that, even according to the highest estimate, Solomon's temple was really a small building, less than 120 feet long, and less than 35 broad. Remark that the measures of the temple, both "house" and porch 1 Kings 6:3, were exactly double those of the older tabernacle (Exodus 26:18 note). This identity of proportion amounts to an undesigned coincidence, indicating the thoroughly historical character of both Kings and Exodus.

Verse 4

Windows of narrow lights - Either (as in the margin) windows, externally mere slits in the wall, but opening wide within, like the windows of old castles: or, more probably, "windows with fixed lattices." The windows seem to have been placed high in the walls, above the chambers spoken of in 1 Kings 6:5-8.

Verse 5

Chambers - (Margin, floors). Rather, a lean-to, which completely surrounded three sides of the building, the north, the west, and the south.

Verse 6

In order to preserve the sanctity of the temple, and at the same time allow the attachment to it of secular buildings - sleeping apartments, probably, for the priests and other attendants - Solomon made "rebatements" in the wall of the temple, or in other words built it externally in steps, thus: The beams, which formed the roof of the chambers and the floors of the upper stories, were then laid on these steps or "rests" in the wall, not piercing the wall, or causing any real union of the secular with the sacred building. It resulted from this arrangement that the lowest; chambers were the narrowest, and the uppermost considerably the widest of all, the wall receding each time by the space of a cubit.

Verse 7

The spirit of the command (marginal references), was followed. Thus the fabric rose without noise.

Verse 8

The door for the middle chamber - i. e., the door which gave access to the mid-most "set of chambers." The chambers on the ground-floor were possibly reached each by their own door in the outer wall of the lean-to. The middle and upper floors were reached by a single door in the right or south wall, from which a winding staircase ascended to the second tier, while another ascended from the second to the third. The door to the stairs was in the outer wall of the building, not in the wall between the chambers and the temple. That would have desecrated the temple far more than the insertion of beams.

Verse 9

He built the house, and finished it - i. e., the external shell of the house. The internal fittings were added afterward. See 1 Kings 6:15-22.

Covered the house - Roofed it with a wooden roof, sloped like our roofs.

Verse 12

The meaning is, "So far as this house goes, thou art obedient (2 Samuel 7:13; 1 Chronicles 17:12, etc.); if thou wilt be obedient in other things also, then will I perform My word," etc., God's promises being always conditional. The promises made to David were:

(1) that he should be succeeded by one of his sons 2 Samuel 7:12; Psalm 132:11;

(2) that the kingdom should be established in the line of his descendants forever, if they were faithful Psalm 132:12; and

(3) that the Israelites should be no more afflicted as beforetime 2 Samuel 7:10.

These promises are now confirmed to Solomon, but on the express condition of obedience, and two further promises are added.

Verse 13

The first promise to "dwell among" the Israelites had been made to Moses Exodus 25:8; Exodus 29:45, but had not been repeated to David. The

next promise, “I will not forsake, etc.,” if not absolutely new, seems to have been more positive and general than previous similar promises Deuteronomy 31:6, Deuteronomy 31:8; Joshua 1:5. God will not at any time or under any circumstances wholly forsake Israel.

Verse 15

The description of this verse applies to the main chamber of the temple, the holy place, only. The writer in 1 Kings 6:16 describes the holy of holies.

The marginal rendering of this verse is right, and not the rendering in the text.

Fir - Rather, “juniper.” See 1 Kings 5:6 note.

Verse 16

The meaning is, that at the distance of 20 cubits, measured along the side walls of the house from the end wall, Solomon constructed a partition, which reached from the floor to the ceiling and had a doorway in it. He thus made within the house, a sanctuary for a holy of holies.

Verse 18

Knops and open flowers - Rather, “gourds and opening flower-buds.” Imitations of the vegetable world are among the earliest of architectural ornaments. They abound in the architecture of Egypt and Persia. In that of Assyria they occur more sparingly.

Verse 20

The fore part - Perhaps “the interior.”

And so covered … - Rather, “and he covered the altar (of incense) with cedar.” The altar was doubtless of stone, and was covered with cedar in preparation for the overlaying with gold. This overlaying was not gilding, but the attachment of thin plates of gold, which had to be fastened on with small nails. Such a mode of ornamentation was common in Babylonia, in Assyria, and in Media.

Verse 21

The house - i. e., the main chamber.

The chains of gold - Omit “the.” Their object was to form a barrier between the holy place and the holy of holies.

Verse 22

The lavish use of the precious metals in ornamentation was a special feature if early Oriental architecture. Recent researches have given reason to believe that two stages of the great temple at Borsippa - now known as the Bits Nimrud - had respectively a gold and a silver coating.

Verse 23

Two cherubims - The pattern of the tabernacle was followed (marginal reference), but without servile imitation. The original cherubs were entirely of gold. These, being so much larger, were of wood, merely overlaid with a golden plating. The arrangement of the wings, and the direction of the faces, seem also to have been different. Moses‘ cherubim “covered with their wings over the mercy seat;” Solomon‘s stretched out theirs to the full 1 Kings 6:27, so that the four wings, each five cubits long 1 Kings 6:24, extended across the whole sanctuary, the width of which was twenty cubits 1 Kings 6:20. The former looked toward one another, and were bent downward toward the mercy-seat; the latter looked outward, toward the great chamber. (See 2 Chronicles 3:13, and note.)

Of olive-tree - The oleaster or wild olive, not the cultivated species.

Verse 29

Palms, cherubs, and flowers - the main decorations of Solomon‘s temple - bear considerable resemblance to the ornamentation of the Assyrians, a circumstance which can scarcely be accidental.

Within and without - i. e., both in the inner chamber, or holy of holies, and in the outer one.

Verse 31

A fifth part - Better than the margin. The meaning seems to be that the lintel was one-fifth of the width of the wall, and each door-post one-fifth of its height. Thus the opening was a square of four cubits, or of six feet.

Verse 32

The two doors - i. e., two leaves which met in the middle, as in the Assyrian gate-ways generally.

Spread gold - The doors were not simply sheeted with gold, like the floors 1 Kings 6:30, but had the gold hammered to fit the forms of the palms, cherubs, and flowers carved upon them. 1 Kings 6:35. Such hammered metal-work, generally in bronze, has been found in tolerable abundance among the Assyrian remains.

Verse 33

The door of the temple - The door, that is, which led from the porch into the great chamber of the temple. Its posts were “a fourth part of the wall,” or, “five cubits high,” which was, therefore, the height of the doorway.

Verse 34

Fir-tree - Rather, juniper (1 Kings 5:6 note). Each door was made in two parts, which folded back one on the other like shutters, by means of hinges. The weight of the doors no doubt made it inconvenient to open the whole door on every occasion.

Verse 36

The inner court - An outer court is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 4:9. The inner court is probably identical with the "higher court" of Jeremiah Jeremiah 36:10, being raised above the outer, as were sometimes the inner courts of Assyrian palaces. The court seems to have surrounded the temple. Its dimensions may be reasonably presumed to have been double those of the court of the tabernacle, i. e., 100 cubits on each side of the temple, and 200 cubits at the ends; or, about 720 feet long by 360 broad.

With three rows of hewed stone - Either a fence enclosing the court, or the area of the court, which was possibly formed by three layers of hewn stone placed one above the other, and was then boarded on the top with cedar planks. Such a construction would no doubt be elaborate; but if it was desired to elevate the inner court above the outer, this is the way in which it would be likely to have been done. The temple would be placed, like the Assyrian palaces, on an artificial platform; and the platform, being regarded as a part of the sacred building, would be constructed of the best material.

Verse 38

Seven years - More exactly, "seven years and six months," since Zif was the second, and Bul the eighth month. 1 Kings 6:1.

1 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

Thirteen years - The thirteen years, i. e., counting from the end of the seven 1 Kings 6:38. Solomon‘s buildings thus occupied him twenty years 1 Kings 9:10; 2 Chronicles 8:1, from the fourth year of his reign to the twenty-fourth. The difference in the time taken by the temple and the palace is to be accounted for,

(1) by the long period of preparation which preceded the actual building of the former 1 Chronicles 22:2-4; 1 Kings 5:13-18; and

(2) by the greater size of the palace, which consisted of several large ranges of buildings. (See the next note.)

Verse 2

Many have supposed that the buildings mentioned in 1 Kings 7:1-2, 1 Kings 7:8, were three entirely distinct and separate buildings. But it is perhaps best to consider the “house” of 1 Kings 7:1 as the palace proper - Solomon‘s own dwelling-house (see 1 Kings 7:8); the house of 1 Kings 7:2, as the state apartments; and the house for Pharaoh‘s daughter as the hareem or zenana; and to regard these three groups of buildings as distinct, though interconnected, and as together constituting what is else-where termed “the king‘s house” 1 Kings 9:10.

The house of the forest of Lebanon - This name was probably given from the supposed resemblance of the mass of cedar pillars, which was its main feature, to the Lebanon cedar forest. Its length of “a hundred cubits,” or 150 feet, was nearly twice as long as the entire temple without the porch. Some of the great halls in Assyrian palaces were occasionally as much as 180 feet.

The breadth “of fifty cubits,” or 75 feet, is a breadth very much greater than is ever found in Assyria, and one indicative of the employment in the two countries of quite different methods of roofing. By their use of pillars the Jews, like the Persians, were able to cover in a very wide space.

Four rows - The Septuagint gives “three rows.” If the pillars were forty-five 1 Kings 7:3, fifteen in a row, there should have been but three rows, as seems to have been the case in the old palace of Cyrus at Pasargadae. If

there were four rows of fifteen, the number of pillars should have been sixty.

Verse 4

Either three ranges of windows, one above the other, on either side of the house; or perhaps the three ranges were one in either side wall, and the third in a wall down the middle of the hall, along the course of the midmost row of pillars. The windows were directly opposite one another, giving what we call a through light.

Verse 5

All the doors and posts - The doorways, and the posts which formed them, seem to be intended. These were square at top, not arched or rounded. In Assyrian buildings arched doorways were not uncommon. The doorways also, like the windows, exactly faced one another.

Verse 6

Probably the porch of the "House of the Forest." Porches of columns immediately in front of columnar chambers were a favorite feature of Persian architecture. The whole verse should be translated, "And he made the porch of the pillars in length 50 cubits, and in breadth 30 cubits, and a porch before them (i. e., the pillars), and pillars, and a base (or step) before them." Most of the Persepolitan porches had small pillared chambers at some little distance in front of them.

Verse 7

The porch or gate of justice still kept alive the likeness of the old patriarchal custom of sitting in judgment at the gate; exactly as the "Gate of justice" still recalls it at Granada, and the Sublime Porte - "the Lofty Gate" - at Constantinople.

Verse 8

Like unto this porch - i. e., of similar materials, hewn stone and cedar. The zenana could not have been a mere portico.

Verse 9

The stones were uniform - all cut to certain fixed measures of length, breadth, and thickness. They were not squared only on the face which showed, but also on the sides which fell within the wall and were not seen. Saws appear in Assyrian sculptures of the age of Sennacherib; and fragments of an iron saw have been found at Nimrud.

Verse 10

See the 1 Kings 5:17 note.

Verse 12

The palace, like the temple, had two courts 1 Kings 6:36, not, however, one immediately within the other. The lesser court of the palace seems to have been a private inner court among the buildings 1 Kings 7:8. The greater court was outside all the buildings, surrounding the palace on every side. Assyrian palaces had always such an external court, and had generally one or more inner courts or quadrangles.

Both for the inner court - By a slight alteration of the text, the meaning would be "as (was done) in the inner court, etc. and in the porch."

Verse 13

Hiram - A man who bore the same name as the king of Tyre, a master workman, known as Hiram Ab, i. e. Master Hiram 2 Chronicles 2:13; 2 Chronicles 4:16.

Verse 14

Hiram's mother, while by birth of the tribe of Dan, had had for her first husband a man of the tribe of Naphtali. (Compare this verse and margin reference.)

All his work - The work that he personally did for Solomon seems to have been limited to metal-work, and indeed to works in brass. (See below, 1 Kings 7:45, and compare 2 Chronicles 4:16.)

Verse 15

These famous pillars, which were broken in pieces by the Babylonians when they destroyed Jerusalem 2 Kings 25:13; Jeremiah 52:17, were probably for ornament, standing by themselves under or in front of the porch. It is certain that the Phoenicians used isolated metal columns as sacred ornaments, so that Hiram would be familiar with such a mode of ornamentation. Eighteen cubits appear to have been the height of the shaft only. Adding the capital 1 Kings 7:16, 1 Kings 7:19, the entire metal pillar was 27 cubits high; and if it had a stone base of eight cubits, which would not be greatly out of proportion, the height of 35 cubits (52 12 feet, 2 Chronicles 3:15) would have been reached. The height of some of the Persepolitan columns, with which these pillars may be best compared, is 67 feet. The circumference of 12 cubits (18 feet) implies a diameter of about 5 feet 9 inches at the base, which would make the column somewhat heavy in appearance. Egyptian pillars were, however, even thicker in proportion to their height. On the supposition that a portion of the original text has fallen out, this verse has been thus completed: "He cast two pillars of brass;

eighteen cubits was the height of the one pillar, and eighteen cubits was the height of the other pillar; and a line of twelve cubits compassed the one pillar, and a line of twelve cubits compassed the other pillar."

Verse 16

The general character of the "chapiters" or capitals, their great size in proportion to the shaft, which is as one to two, and their construction of two quite different members, remind us of the pillars used by the Persians in their palaces, which were certainly more like Jachin and Boaz than any pillars that have reached us from antiquity. The ornamentation, however, seems to have been far more elaborate than that of the Persian capitals.

Verse 17

Nets … - Rather "Nets chequerwise, and festoons chainwise," - probably a fine network over the whole, and chainwork hanging in festoons outside.

Seven for the one chapiter - The Septuagint reading is preferable. "A net for the one chapiter and a net for the other chapiter." Compare 1 Kings 7:41.

Verse 18

The pomegranate was one of the most common ornaments in Assyria. It was used on quivers, on spear-shafts, and maceheads, in patterns on doorways and pavements, etc. It is doubtful whether a symbolic meaning was attached to it, or whether it was merely selected as a beautiful natural form.

Verse 19

There is a cornice of (so-called) lilywork at Persepolis, consisting of three ranges of broadish rounded leaves, one over the other. Lilies are also represented with much spirit on a bas-relief from Koyunjik.

Verse 20

In this verse also a portion of the original text is supposed to have fallen out in consequence of the repetition of words. The full phrase of the original has been retained in 1 Kings 7:16-17. It may be restored thus: "And the pomegranates were two hundred in rows round about upon the one chapiter, and two hundred in rows round about upon the other chapiter." The "four hundred" 1 Kings 7:42; 2 Chronicles 4:13, are obtained by counting the pomegranates of both pillars together. In Jeremiah 52:23, is an account of the arrangement of a single row of pomegranates, whereof each pillar had two.

Verse 21

The Septuagint in the parallel passage (margin reference), translate Jachin and Boaz by Κατόρθωσις *Katorthōsis* and Ἰσχύς *Ischus* - "Direction" and "Strength." The literal meaning of the names is given in the margin. The meaning was probably "God will establish in strength" (i. e. firmly) the temple and the religion connected with it.

Verse 23

The "molten sea "of Solomon, so called from its great size, took the place of the laver of the tabernacle Exodus 30:18-21, which was required for the ablutions of the priests. It was ten cubits, or fully fifteen feet, in diameter at top, and therefore forty-seven feet in circumference, with a depth of 5 cubits, or 7 12 feet. As a vessel of these dimensions, if hemispherical, would certainly not hold 2,000 1 Kings 7:26, much less 3,000 2 Chronicles 4:3 baths, the bath equaling 8 12 gallons, it is now generally supposed that the bowl bulged considerably below the brim, and further, that it had a "foot," - or basin which received the water as it was drawn out by taps from the bowl. The "2,000 baths" may give the quantity of water ordinarily supplied to the "sea;" the "3,000 baths" the utmost that the laver could anyhow take. Bowls of a considerable size are represented in the Assyrian bas-reliefs; but none of such dimensions as Solomon's. The largest mentioned by the Greeks held only 5,400 gallons, less than one-third of the contents of the "molten sea," even according to the lowest estimate.

Verse 24

Knops - literally, "gourds," - i. e. a boss or ball ornament encircled the rim of the bowl in two rows.

Verse 25

Josephus charged Solomon with a breach of the Commandment Exodus 20:4-5, on account of the oxen here and the lions for his throne. The charge expresses the prohibition which some Jews have conceived the Commandment to urge against the arts of sculpture and painting.

Verse 26

The palm or hand-breadth seems to have a little exceeded three inches.

With flowers of lilies - Rather, "in the shape of a lily flower." The rim was slightly curved outward, like the rim of an ordinary drinking-cup, or the edge of a lily blossom. See 2 Chronicles 4:5 margin.

Verse 27

Ten bases of brass - These were for the ten lavers (1 Kings 7:38. See 2 Chronicles 4:6). In general terms the bases were square stands, 6 feet each way, and 4 12 feet high, elaborately ornamented on their four sides, and resting upon four wheels, 2 14 feet in diameter. Each stand supported a laver 6 feet high, which contained 40 baths 1 Kings 7:38, or about 340 gallons.

Verse 28

Borders - Rather, "panels" (so 1 Kings 7:32, 1 Kings 7:35), a set of square compartments between the "ledges" or borders, or mouldings. Below the panelling, with its ornamentation of lions, oxen (the two animal forms which occur most frequently in Assyrian decoration), and cherubim, was a space decorated with "additions of thin work" 1 Kings 7:29.

Upon the "ledges" 1 Kings 7:29 which surrounded the top of the base there was a stand for the laver, distinct from the upper surface of the base.

Verse 30

Plates of brass - Rather, "brazen axletrees."

The "undersetters" (literally, "shoulders") are conjectured to have been four brackets, or bars, proceeding from the four upper corners of the bases, and stretching upward to the outer rim of the laver, which thus rested partly upon them.

At the side of every addition - Rather, "each opposite garlands." The laver was ornamented with a garland at the place where the support reached it.

Verse 31

It seems impossible to determine what is meant by the "mouth" of the laver, or what by its "chapiter."

Verse 32

With the diameter (2 14 ft.) of the wheel here, may be compared that of the earliest Assyrian chariot-wheels, which was under 3 feet; and that of the front wheels seen in representations of Assyrian close carriages, which scarcely exceed 14th of the height of the entire vehicle. The wheels of these moveable lavers appear to have been a little less than 15th of the height of the whole structure.

Verse 34

The undersetters were cast with the base, not afterward attached to it, and were therefore stronger and better able to support the laver.

Verse 35

A round compass - A circular elevation, half a cubit high, rather than a circular depression, half a cubit deep. Compare 1 Kings 7:29. The "ledges" and "borders" of the top of the base were its "hands" and its "panels." These "hands," distinct from the "shoulders" 1 Kings 7:30, were probably supports, adorned with engraved plates 1 Kings 7:36, either of the elevated circle on which the laver stood, or of the lower part of the laver itself. Both panels and "hands" were "of the same," i. e. of one piece with the base, cast at the same time.

Verse 36

According to the proportion of every one - i. e. "as large as the room left for them allowed," implying that the panels were smaller than those on the sides of the base, and allowed scant room for the representations.

Verse 38

Every laver was four cubits - Assuming height to be intended, and taking the cubit at 20 inches, the entire height of the lavers as they stood upon their wheeled stands would seem to have been 13 ft. 9 in. It is evident, therefore, that the water must have been drawn from them, as from the "molten sea," through cocks or taps.

Verse 40

Lavers - Rather, according to the true reading, "pots." (Compare 1 Kings 7:45; 2 Chronicles 4:16.) The "pots" were the caldrons in which it was usual to boil the peace-offerings. See 1 Samuel 2:13-14,

Verse 46

Succoth and Zarthan - See Judges 7:22; Judges 8:5, note.

Verse 47

The brass of which the two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, the brass sea, and the various vessels were made had been taken by David from two cities belonging to Hadadezer, king of Zobah 1 Chronicles 18:8.

Verse 48

See the note to 1 Kings 6:20 and notes at 2 Chronicles 4:19-22.

Verse 49-50

See the notes to Exodus 25:31-38. The "bowls" of 1 Kings 7:50 were the "bowls" for the tables Exodus 37:16, large vases containing oil for the lamps.

Verse 51

The things which David had dedicated - Not only the things described in 1 Chronicles 28:14-18, but also the spoil of the nations which he had subdued (margin reference), and also the vessels of gold, silver, and brass, sent him by Toi king of Hamath, on his victory over Hadadezer. Solomon now brought these into the temple treasury. A sacred treasury had been established at least as early as the time of Saul, to which Saul himself, Abner, Joab, and others, had contributed 1 Chronicles 26:28.

1 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

There seems to be a contrast here between the more popular proceedings of David 2 Samuel 6:1, and the statelier system of his son, who merely summons the chief men as representatives of the nation. The rest of the people "assembled themselves" 1 Kings 8:2, and were mere spectators of the solemnity.

Verse 2

The feast in the month Ethanim - i. e. the Feast of Tabernacles, or the Feast of Ingathering, the commemoration of the dwelling in booths at the time of the Exodus (margin reference), and the festival of thanksgiving on account of the completion of harvest Exodus 23:16; Leviticus 23:39; Deuteronomy 16:13. It was one of the three on which the people were required to "appear before the Lord."

Verse 3

In 2 Chronicles 5:4, ""the Levites" took up the ark;" and by the Law the ark was the special charge of the Kohathites Numbers 3:31; Numbers 4:15. But all priests were Levites Joshua 3:3, though all Levites were not priests. And as Joshua had done Joshua 3:6; Joshua 6:6, so Solomon called upon the priests to bear the holy structure, allowing to mere Levites only the inferior honor of helping to transport the tabernacle and the vessels of the sanctuary.

Verse 4

And the tabernacle of the congregation - Not the tented structure erected for the ark on Mount Zion 2 Samuel 6:17 by David, but the original tabernacle made by Moses, which had hitherto remained at Gibeon (margin reference). The tabernacle and its holy vessels were probably placed in the treasury.

Verse 8

It was forbidden to withdraw the staves wholly from the rings (margin reference); but they appear to have been now drawn forward in such a way that their ends or heads could be seen from the holy place, or great chamber of the temple, though without their being visible from the porch or vestibule. Either the doorway into the holy of holies was not exactly opposite the ark, but a little on one side; or, though that doorway was in the middle, opposite the ark, the doorway from the porch into the main

chamber was not opposite to it. In Assyrian temples the arrangement of the outer door, the inner door, and the sanctuary, seems to have been designedly such that a mere passer-by on the outside should not obtain even a glimpse of the shrine. It is suggested that the withdrawal of the staves was intended as a sign that the ark had reached "the place of its rest," and was not to be borne about anymore.

There they are unto this day - This is a quotation from an author who lived while the temple was still standing. See also 1 Kings 9:21.

Verse 9

Comparing this statement with Hebrews 9:4, it would seem that Solomon, now that the sacred chest had reached its final resting-place, and stood in a large chamber surrounded by tables 2 Chronicles 4:8, removed the pot of manna and the rod from the interior, and set them elsewhere in the holy of holies.

Verse 10

The cloud - the visible symbol of the divine presence - the Shechinah of the Targums - which halt been promised before the ark was begun Exodus 29:43, and had filled the tabernacle as soon as it was completed Exodus 40:34, and which had probably been seen from time to time during the long interval when we have no express mention of it, now once more appeared in full magnificence, and took, as it were, possession of the building which Solomon was dedicating. The presence of God in the temple henceforth was thus assured to the Jews, and His approval of all that Solomon had done was signified.

Verse 11

As in the case of Moses Exodus 40:35, so now the glory of the Lord, the manifestation of the divine presence, which the cloud usually veiled, shone forth from it with such brilliancy, that mortal man could not bear the sight.

Verse 12

Rather, "The Lord spake of dwelling in the thick darkness" (margin reference). Solomon sees in the cloud the visible symbol of God's presence, and accepts the token as a proof that He has taken possession of the house built for Him, and will thenceforth dwell there 1 Kings 8:13.

Verse 14

Solomon had spoken the preceding words, addressed to God, with his face directed to the holy of holies. He now turned around and looked outward toward the people. The people "stood" to hear him the attitude of

respect and attention. This first blessing seems to have been without speech - an inward prayer accompanied by the ordinary gesture of blessing.

Verse 15

The exact words of 1 Kings 8:18, what was merely tacitly implied was regarded as actually "said."

Verse 16

The marginal reference completes the sense of this verse here. The passage is in accordance with archaic modes of speech, and is probably the more verbally accurate of the two.

Verse 22

The margin reference shows that the king was so placed as to be seen by all present, and that, before beginning his prayer, he knelt down upon his knees (compare 1 Kings 8:54).

Verse 23

Compare Deuteronomy 7:9.

Verse 25

Solomon's prayer is, perhaps, generally for the fulfillment of all the promises made to David in connection with the building of the temple. But there seems to be special allusion in this verse to the promise recorded in Psalm 132:14.

Verse 27

heaven of heavens - Compare Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalm 148:4. It seems to mean the heaven in its most extended compass. Solomon combines with his belief in Yahweh's special presence in the temple, the strongest conviction that He is no local or finite deity, but is ever present everywhere. Compare Psalm 139:7-10.

Verse 29

The choice of Jerusalem as the place seems to have been made by special revelation to David. See Psalm 78:68; Psalm 132:13; and compare 1 Chronicles 22:1.

Toward this place - Better (here and in 1 Kings 8:30) than the marginal "in." Wherever they were, the Jews always worshipped toward the temple. (See margin reference.)

Verse 30

And when thou hearest, forgive - literally, "both hear and forgive" - i. e., "hear the prayer, and forgive the sin" which alone causes God to chasten men or to withhold from them His choicest blessings.

Verse 31

The oath come before … - "The oath" is equivalent to "the man who swears the oath." A slight alteration in the present Hebrew text gives the sense "and he (the accused) go and swear before thine altar," etc. The threats and the promises, the punishments and calamities of 1 Kings 8:31-38 were distinctly named in the Law. See the margin reference.

Verse 36

Teach them … - Rather, "when thou art teaching them (by thy chastisement) the good way that they should walk in," i. e. when thou art still teaching, not taking vengeance.

Verse 37

In the land of their cities - literally, "in the land of their gates." Hence, the marginal translation "jurisdiction," because judgments were pronounced in the town gates Deuteronomy 16:18. Another reading gives "in one of their cities."

Verse 38

Know every man the plague of his own heart - i. e. perceive one's sinfulness, or recognize one's sufferings as divine chastisements, and sin as their cause.

Verse 41

Nothing is more remarkable in the Mosaic Law than its liberality with regard to strangers, both in general Exodus 22:21; Leviticus 25:35; Deuteronomy 10:19 and in religious matters Numbers 15:14-16; Deuteronomy 31:12. It is quite in the spirit of these enactments that Solomon, having first prayed to God on behalf of his fellow-countrymen, should next go on to intercede for the strangers, and to ask for their prayers the same acceptance which he had previously begged for the prayers of faithful Israelites.

For thy name's sake - i. e. "to visit the place where Thou hast set Thy name" (Compare Deuteronomy 12:5, Deuteronomy 12:11, etc.).

Verse 42

Great name - A somewhat rare expression. It does not occur at all in the Pentateuch; though "mighty hand" and the "stretched out arm" are so frequent Exodus 6:6; Exodus 13:9; Deuteronomy 9:29: only once in Joshua Joshua 7:9; and twice in the Psalms Psalm 76:1; Psalm 99:3. About the time of the captivity the use of the phrase became more common Ezekiel 36:23; Jeremiah 10:6; Jeremiah 44:26.

Verse 43

That all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee - Solomon prays that the result of Yahweh's hearing the prayers of pagans addressed toward the temple may be the general conversion of the world to the worship of Him. Compare Psalm 96:1-13; Psalm 98:1-9.

This house … - literally, as in the margin. In Scripture, when God's Name is said to be "called upon" persons or things, it seems to be meant that God is really present in them, upholding them and sanctifying them. This passage therefore means, that the pagan, when their prayers, directed toward the temple, are granted, will have a full assurance that God is present in the building in some very special way.

Verse 47

Bethink themselves - literally, as in the margin - i. e. "reflect," "consider seriously." Compare Deuteronomy 30:1.

Sinned, done perversely, committed wickedness - The words here used seem to have become the standard form of expressing contrition when the time of the captivity arrived and the Israelites were forcibly removed to Babylon (compare the margin reference). The three expressions are thought to form a climax, rising from negative to positive guilt, and from mere wrongful acts to depravation of the moral character.

Verse 50

Compassion … - Not merely such compassion as Evil-Merodach showed toward Jehoiachin 2 Kings 25:27-30; Jeremiah 52:31-34, but such as Cyrus and Artaxerxes showed in allowing the captive Jews to return to their own land Ezra 1:3; Nehemiah 2:6.

Verse 51

The furnace of iron - Egypt is so called as a place of severe trial and affliction.

Verse 54

If the prayer of Solomon be, as it has all the appearance of being, a genuine document of the time, preserved in the archives to which the authors of both Kings and Chronicles had access, all theories of the late origin of Deuteronomy must be regarded as baseless. While references are not infrequent to other portions of the Pentateuch, the language of the prayer is mainly modelled upon Deuteronomy, the promises and threats contained in which are continually before the mind of the writer. (See the margin reference).

Verse 58

Incline our hearts - This is a doctrine which first appears in Scripture in the Davidical Psalms (see the margin reference and Psalm 141:4). Solomon in this prayer seems to be thoroughly penetrated with his father's spirit.

Verse 61

As at this day - i. e. "as ye are now doing, in coming with pious intentions to this festival."

Verse 63

These numbers have been thought incredible, but they are not impossible. At least 100,000, or 120,000 men 1 Kings 8:65 were assembled; and as they all offered sacrifice with the king 1 Kings 8:62, the number of victims must have been enormous. Part of the flesh of so many victims would be eaten; but much of the meat may have been privately burned Leviticus 19:6, the object of the sacrifice being the glory of God, and not the convenience of the people. Profusion was a usual feature of the sacrifices of antiquity.

Verse 64

The middle of the court - Or, "the whole area of the court " - all the "mid" space within the enclosing walls, which thus became one huge altar, on any part of which victims might be offered at one and the same time.

Verse 65

A feast necessarily accompanied such a sacrifice as Solomon was holding. Compare Leviticus 19:5. On the present occasion there was a double festival - first, the Feast of the Dedication, from the 8th to the 15th of the month Ethanim (or Tisri), and then the Feast of tabernacles, from the 15th to the 22nd 1 Kings 8:2. On the day after this, "the eighth day," counting from the commencement of the second seven, and the twenty-third day of the month (margin reference "m"), Solomon dismissed the people to their homes.

The entering in of Hamath - Compare Numbers 13:21, note andmargin reference. The phrase marks the extreme northern boundary of the holy land.

The river of Egypt - The Wady-el-Arish, the only large water-course on this coast (margin reference).

Verse 66

Their tents - i. e. “their homes.” The word “tents” was used for “houses” from an old habit of speech, which had come down from the time when the Israelites were a nomadic nation.

1 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 2

This appearance is fixed by 1 Kings 9:1 to Solomon‘s twenty-fourth year, the year in which he completed his palace 1 Kings 6:37-38; 1 Kings 7:1. The fact seems to be that, though the temple was finished in Solomon‘s eleventh year, the dedication did not take place until his twenty-fourth year. The order of the narrative in Kings agrees with this view, since it interposes the account of the building of the palace 1 Kings 7:1-12, and of the making of the furniture 1 Kings 6:38 and the ceremony of the Dedication 1 Kings 8.

Verse 3

The answer given by God to Solomon‘s prayer is reported more fully in 2 Chronicles 7:12-22.

When God puts His Name in the temple He does it, in intention, “forever.” He will not arbitrarily withdraw it; there it will remain “forever,” so far as God is concerned. But the people may by unfaithfulness drive it away 1 Kings 9:7-9.

And mine eyes and my heart - An answer in excess of the prayer 1 Kings 8:29; “Not Mine eyes only, but Mine eyes and Mine heart.”

Verse 4

See 1 Kings 3:14. Solomon‘s subsequent fall lends to these repeated warnings a special interest.

Verse 6

At all turn - Rather, “If ye shall wholly turn from following Me.” (See 2 Chronicles 7:19.) The Israelites were not to be cut off, except for an entire defection.

Verse 8

The Hebrew text runs - “And this house shall be high: every one,” etc. The meaning appears to be, “This house shall be high” (i. e., conspicuous) “in its ruin as in its glory.”

And shall hiss - In contempt. This expression first appears in the time of Hezekiah 2 Chronicles 29:8; Micah 6:16. It is especially familiar to Jeremiah (Jeremiah 18:16; Jeremiah 19:8, etc.).

Verse 10

The “twenty years” are to be counted from the fourth year of Solomon, the year when he commenced the building of the temple. They are made up of the seven years employed in the work of the temple 1 Kings 6:38, and

the thirteen years during which Solomon was building his own house 1 Kings 7:1.

Verse 11

By the spirit, if not by the letter, of the Law, Solomon had no right to give away these cities, or any part of the inheritance of Israel Leviticus 25:13-34. But the exigences of a worldly policy caused the requirements of the Law to be set aside.

Verse 12

They pleased him not - It is a reasonable conjecture that, when a question arose with respect to a cession of land, Hiram had cast his eyes on the bay or harbour of Acco, or Ptolemais, and was therefore the more disappointed when he received an inland tract of mountain territory.

Verse 13

Cabul is said to be a Phoenician word, and signified "displeasing" (see margin). There is some reason to believe that the cities thus despised by Hiram were restored to Solomon 2 Chronicles 8:2, and that Solomon rebuilt them and colonized them with Israelites.

Verse 14

Hiram sent sixscore talents of gold - Apparently, to show that, although disappointed, he was not offended. The sum sent was very large - above a million and a quarter of our money, according to one estimate of the weight of the Hebrew gold talent; or about 720,000 according to the estimate adopted in Exodus 38:24-29 note. At any rate, it was more than equal to a sixth part of Solomon's regular revenue 1 Kings 10:14.

Verse 15

Levy - See the marginal reference note.

Millo - See 2 Samuel 5:9 note. The Septuagint commonly render the word ἡ ἄκρα *hē akra* "the citadel," and it may possibly have been the fortress on Mount Zion connected with the Maccabean struggles (2 Samuel 5:9; 1 Chronicles 11:8 had been hasty, and had now - fifty years later - fallen into decay. Solomon therefore had to "repair the breaches of the city of David" 1 Kings 11:27.

Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer were three of the most important sites in the holy land. For the two first places, compare the marginal references and notes.

Gezer was a main city of the south. It was situated on the great maritime plain, and commanded the ordinary line of approach from Egypt, which was along this low region. The importance of Gezer appears from Joshua 10:33; Joshua 12:12, etc. Its site is near Tell Jezer, and marked now by Abu Shusheh. Though within the lot of Ephraim Joshua 16:3, and especially assigned to the Kohathite Levites Joshua 21:21, it had never yet been conquered from the old inhabitants (marginal references), who continued to dwell in it until Solomon‘s time, and apparently were an independent people 1 Kings 9:16.

Pharaoh took it before the marriage of Solomon with his daughter, and gave it “for a present” - i. e., for a dowry. Though in the East husbands generally pay for their wives, yet dower is given in some cases. Sargon gave Cilicia as a dowry with his daughter when he married her to Ambris king of Tubal: and the Persian kings seem generally to have given satrapial or other high offices as dowries to the husbands of their daughters.

Verse 17

Beth-horon the nether - See the marginal reference note.

Verse 18

Tadmor - The Hebrew text here has, as written, Tamor (or Tamar), and as read, Tadmor. That the latter place, or Palmyra, was meant appears, first, from the distinct statement of Chronicles 2 Chronicles 8:4 that Solomon built Tadmor, and the improbability that the fact would be omitted in Kings; secondly, from the strong likelihood that Solomon, with his wide views of commerce, would seize and fortify the Palmy-rene Oasis: and thirdly, from the unanimity of the old versions in rendering Tamar here by Tadmor. The probability seems to be that Tamar was the original name of the place, being the Hebrew word for “a palm,” from where it is generally agreed that the town derived its name. Tadmor was a corrupt or dialectic variety of the word, which was adopted at the city itself, and prevailed over the original appellation. No reference is found to Tadmor in the Assyrian inscriptions, or in any Classical writer before Pliny.

Verse 19

“The cities of store” contained provisions stored up for the troops (compare 2 Chronicles 32:28). They seem to have been chiefly in the north

- in Hamath 2 Chronicles 8:4 and Naphtali 2 Chronicles 16:4. On the "cities for his chariots," see 1 Kings 10:26 note.

By "that which Solomon desired to build" (see the margin) seem to be intended "pleasaunces" in or near the capital, and in the Lebanon range, built especially for the enjoyment of the king.

Verse 21

See 1 Kings 5:15 note.

Verse 22

Comparing this with 1 Kings 5:13-14, it would seem that a modified service of forced labor for one-third of each year was not regarded as reducing those who were subject to it to the condition of bondmen.

sa40

Verse 23

Five hundred and fifty - See 1 Kings 5:16 note.

Verse 24

Compare the marginal reference. Solomon was not satisfied that Pharaoh's daughter should remain in the palace of David, which was on Mount Zion, in the immediate vicinity of the temple, because he regarded the whole vicinity of the temple as made holy by the presence of the ark of God. His own palace was on the other (western) hill, probably directly opposite to the temple, the valley of the Tyropoeum running between them.

Verse 25

Three times - i. e., (see the marginal reference) the three solemn Feasts - the Feast of unleavened bread, the Feast of weeks, and the Feast of tabernacles.

Did Solomon offer … and he burnt incense - Not with his own hand, but by his priests 1 Kings 8:6; 2 Chronicles 5:7-14. In sacred, as in ordinary, history, men are said to do that which they cause to be done.

Verse 26

On Ezion-geber and Eloth, see the notes to marginal references. As the entire tract about Elath (Akaba) is destitute of trees, it is conjectured that the wood of which Solomon built his fleet was cut in Lebanon, floated to Gaza by sea, and thence conveyed across to Ezion-geber, at the head of the E anitic Gulf, by land carriage. (Compare 2 Chronicles 2:16.)

Verse 27

Shipmen - See 1 Kings 5:6 note. With respect to the acquaintance of the Phoenicians with this particular sea, it may be observed that they are not unlikely to have had trading settlements there, as they had in the Persian Gulf, even at this early period. The commerce with Ophir was probably an established trade, previously either in their hands or in those of the Egyptians, when Solomon determined to have a share in it. The Egyptians had navigated the other arm of the Red Sea, and perhaps its lower parts, from a much more ancient period.

Verse 28

On Ophir, see the marginal reference note. Among the various opinions three predominate; all moderns, except a very few, being in favor of Arabia, India, or Eastern Africa. Arabia‘s claims are supported by the greatest number.

1 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

Doubt has arisen whether the "queen of Sheba" was an Ethiopian or an Arabian princess. Both countries profess to have traditions on the subject connecting the queen of Sheba with their history; and in both countries, curiously enough, government by queens was common. But the claims of Arabia decidedly preponderate. The Arabian Sheba was the great spice country of the ancient world; whereas Ethiopia furnished no spices. The Arabian Sheba was an important kingdom. Sheba in Ethiopia was a mere town, subject to Meroe. And it may be doubted whether the Cushite Sheba of Scripture Genesis 10:7 is not rather to be sought on the shores of the Persian Gulf (Genesis 10:7 note), from where no one supposes "the queen of Sheba" to have come. If Ophir be placed in Arabia, there will be an additional reason for regarding Sheba as in the same quarter, because then Solomon's trade with that place will account for his fame having reached the Sabaean princess.

"The fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord," has been variously explained, and is confessedly very obscure. May it not mean what we should call "his religious fame," as distinct from his artistic, literary, military, or political fame - "his fame with respect to God and the things of God" - or, in other words, "his moral and religious wisdom?" (compare 1 Kings 10:6).

Hard questions - Or "riddles" Judges 14:12, though not exactly riddles in our sense. The Orientals have always been fond of playing with words and testing each other's wit and intelligence by verbal puzzles of various kinds. This spirit seems to have been particularly rife in Solomon's time, for Josephus records other encounters with Hiram of Tyre and another Tyrian called Abdemonus.

Verse 2

See 1 Kings 10:10 note.

Verse 5

And the meat of his table - Compare 1 Kings 4:22-23. The scene here described receives very apt illustration from the Assyrian banquet scenes, where we have numerous guests sitting, dressed handsomely in fringed robes, with armlets upon their arms, and bracelets round their wrists, attendants standing behind them, and magnificent drinking-cups, evidently

of a costly metal, in the hands of the guests, which are filled from a great wine-bowl at one end of the chamber.

And his ascent by which he went up - A rendering preferable to "the burnt-offering which he cffered in." The "ascent" was probably a private way by which the king passed from his palace on the western hill, across the ravine (Tyropoeum) and up the eastern hill, to the west side of the temple area (compare the marginal reference).

Verse 9

Blessed be the Lord thy God - This acknowledgment of Yahweh falls below the confessions of Hiram 2 Chronicles 2:12 and Cyrus Ezra 1:3. It does not imply more than an admission of His power as a local deity; namely, that He is the God of the Jews and of their country.

Verse 10

Strabo relates that the Sabaeans were enormously wealthy, and used gold and silver in a most lavish manner in their furniture, their utensils, and even on the walls, doors, and roofs of their houses. That the gold of Sheba should be given to Solomon was prophesied by the writer of Psalm 72 (see the marginal reference). The immense abundance of spices in Arabia, and especially in the Yemen or Sabaean country, is noted by many writers. According to Strabo, the spice-trade of Arabia was in the hands of two nations, the Sabaeans and the Gerrhaeans. The spices in which they dealt seem to have been only in part the produce of Arabia itself; some of the most important kinds, as the cinnamon and the cassia, must have been imported from India, since Arabia does not yield them. The chief precious stones which Arabia now yields are the onyx and the emerald. Anciently she is said to have produced other gems. Pearls, too, were readily procurable in Arabia from the Persian Gulf fishery.

Verse 11

The navy of Hiram - i. e., Solomon's navy in the Red Sea, which was chiefly manned by subjects of Hiram. (see the marginal reference).

Almug-trees - Probably the sandal-wood tree (pterocarpus santalinus). The wood is very heavy, hard, and fine grained, and of a beautiful garnet color, which, according to the rabbinical writers, was the color of the algum. One of the names of the red sandal-wood, in its own native country (India) is "valguka," a word of which "algum" is a natural corruption.

Verse 12

Pillars - The Hebrew word signifies ordinarily a "prop" (margin). It is generally supposed to mean in this place a "railing," or "balustrade," a sense which connects and harmonises the present passage with the parallel passage in Chronicles (marginal reference), where Solomon is said to have made of the almug-wood "stairs" for the temple and for his own house.

Harps - The Jewish harp כנור *kînnôr* was of a triangular shape, and had ordinarily ten strings. It probably resembled the more ancient harp of the Assyrians, which was played with a plectrum, as was (ordinarily) the "kinnor."

Psalteries - The psaltery, or viol. Hebrew: נבל *nebel* Greek: νάβλα *nabla* was a stringed instrument played with the hand; perhaps a lyre, like those on Hebrew coins, the sounding-board of which is shaped like a jug; or, perhaps, a sort of guitar, with a hollow jug-shaped body at the lower end.

Verse 14

Six hundred threescore and six talents of gold - About 3,646,350 of our money. Solomon's annual revenue exceeded that of Oriental empires very much greater in extent than his, and must have made him one of the richest, if not the very richest, of the monarchs of his time.

Verse 15

There is no mention in the original of "spice merchants." Two classes of traders are spoken of; but both expressions are general.

Kings of Arabia - Rather, "kings of the mingled people" (compare Jeremiah 25:24). These were probably tribes half Jewish, half Arabian, on the borders of the western desert. They are regarded as Arabs by the author of Chronicles (marginal reference).

Governors - The word used here is thought to be of Aryan origin. It appears to have been a title given by the Persians to petty governors, inferior to the great satraps of provinces. We find it borne by, among others, Tatnai Ezra 5:6, Zerubbabel Haggai 1:1, and Nehemiah Nehemiah 5:14. It can scarcely have been in use among the Jews so early as Solomon, and we must therefore suppose it to have been substituted by the writer of Kings for some corresponding Semitic title. The empire of Solomon was not a state governed from a single center by an organisation of satrapies or provinces (1 Kings 4:21 note). But exceptionally, in some parts of the empire, the kings had been superseded by "governors" (compare 1 Kings 20:24).

Verse 16

The “targets” seem to have been long shields protecting the whole body, while the “shields” of the next verse were bucklers of a smaller size, probably round, and much lighter. They may be compared with the Assyrian long shield, and the ordinary Assyrian round shield. As the amount of gold used in each of the larger shields was only 600 shekels - worth from 650 to 700 of our money - and that used in the smaller ones was only half as much it is evident that the metal did not form the substance of the shields, but was laid as a coating or plating over them.

Verse 17

These shields, together with the 500 taken by David from Hadadezer 2 Samuel 8:7 were hung round the outer walls of a building, reckoned as belonging to the “house of the Forest of Lebanon,” but separate from it, and called sometimes “the Tower of David” Isaiah 22:8. The practice of hanging shields outside walls for ornamentation seems to have existed at Tyre Ezekiel 27:10-11, Rome, Athens, and elsewhere. Traces of it are thought to be found in the Assyrian sculptures.

Verse 18

It is, on the whole, probable that the substance of the throne was wood, and that the ivory, cut into thin slabs, and probably carved in patterns, was applied externally as a veneer. This is found to have been the practice in Assyria. The gold was probably not placed over the ivory, but covered other parts of the throne.

Verse 19

Representations of thrones are frequent in the Egyptian and Assyrian sculptures. They have no steps up to them, but frequently stand upon square bases. The back appears to be flat at the top, not rounded. Assyrian thrones have “stays” or arms on either side, and they stand generally upon lion‘s feet. They are always accompanied by a footstool.

Lions stood beside the stays - The arms of Assyrian thrones are occasionally supported by figures of animals. The throne of Rameses II at Medinet Abou has a sphinx at the side and a lion below the sphinx. The figure of the lion is naturally adopted by any imaginative race as an emblem of sovereignty. In the present case its adoption seems to have grown directly out of the poetic imagery of inspired prophets, who, living before the time of Solomon, had compared Israel Numbers 23:24; Numbers 24:9, and more particularly Judah Genesis 49:9, to a lion. The “twelve lions” of 1 Kings 10:20 were probably intended to be emblematic of the twelve tribes.

Josephus adds to the description of Solomon‘s throne here given, that the seat was supported by a golden ox or bull, with its head turned over its shoulder. As the lion was especially emblematic of Judah, so was the ox or bull of Ephraim. (Hosea 4:16; Hosea 10:11; Jeremiah 31:18, etc.)

Verse 20

Solomon‘s throne, as described, is certainly grander than any of which we have a representation, either in Assyria or Egypt. Much more, then, would it transcend the thrones in inferior kingdoms.

Verse 22

This is given as the reason of the great plentifulness of silver in the time of Solomon. The “navy of Tharshish” (not the same as the navy of Ophir, 1 Kings 9:26) must therefore have imported very large quantities of that metal. Tharshish, or Tartessus, in Spain, had the richest silver mines known in the ancient world, and had a good deal of gold also; apes and ivory were produced by the opposite coast of Africa; and, if north Africa did not produce “peacocks,” which is uncertain, she may have produced the birds called here “tukkiyim,” which some translate “parrots,” others “guinea-fowl” - the latter being a purely African bird. The etymology of the Hebrew words here rendered “ivory,” “apes,” and “peacocks,” is uncertain; but even if of Indian origin, the Jews may have derived their first knowledge of ivory, apes, and peacocks, through nations which traded with India, and may thus have got the words into their language long before the time of Solomon. The names once fixed would be retained, whatever the quarter from where the things were procured afterward.

Verse 23-24

See the marginal references. By “all the earth” we are, of course, only to understand the kings or people of neighboring nations.

Verse 25

His present - i. e., his tribute (1 Kings 4:21 note). A statement illustrated by Egyptian and Assyrian sculptures on slabs and obelisks. Tribute-bearers from the subject kings, bring not only the fixed rate of bullion, but a tribute in kind besides, consisting of the most precious products of their respective countries.

Verse 26

See 1 Kings 4:26 note. Until the time of Solomon, war-chariots had not been in use among the Jews, except to a very small extent 1 Chronicles

18:4. Hence, it was necessary for him to put himself on an equality in this respect with neighboring powers.

Cities for chariots - They were probably fortresses upon the borders of his territory, in which he maintained the standing army necessary for the support of his dominion.

Verse 27

Made silver as stones - This strong hyperbole marks in the most striking way the great wealth and prosperity of the capital during Solomon‘s reign. The lavish expenditure which impoverished the provinces, and produced, or helped to produce, the general discontent that led to the outbreak under Jeroboam, enriched the metropolis, which must have profited greatly by the residence of the court, the constant influx of opulent strangers, and the periodical visits of all Israelites not hindered by some urgent reason at the great festivals.

The “sycomore-trees in the vale” (Shephelah) are mentioned also in 1 Chronicles 27:28. Like the olives and the vines, they were placed by David under a special overseer, on account of their value. The tree meant seems to be the sycomore proper, or “fig-mulberry,” which is still common in Palestine, and is highly esteemed both on account of its fruit and its timber.

Verse 28

The word translated “linen yarn” is thought now by Hebraists to mean “a troop” or “company.” If the present reading is retained, they would translate the passage - “As for the bringing up of Solomon‘s horses out of Egypt, a band of the king‘s merchants fetched a band (or troop) of horses at a price.” But the reading is very uncertain. The Septuagint had before them a different one, which they render “and from Tekoa.” Tekoa, the home of Amos Amos 1:1, was a small town on the route from Egypt to Jerusalem, through which the horses would have naturally passed. The monuments of the 18th and of later dynasties make it clear that the horse, though introduced from abroad, became very abundant in Egypt. During the whole period of Egyptian prosperity the corps of chariots constituted a large and effective portion of the army. That horses were abundant in Egypt at the time of the Exodus is evident from Exodus 9:3; Exodus 14:9, Exodus 14:23, Exodus 14:28; Deuteronomy 17:16. That they continued numerous in later times appears from frequent allusions, both in the Historical Books of Scripture and in the prophets, as 2 Kings 7:6; 2 Kings 18:24; Isaiah 36:9;

Ezekiel 17:15, etc. The monuments show that the horse was employed by the Egyptians in peace no less than in war, private persons being often represented as paying visits to their friends in chariots.

Verse 29

Taking the shekel at about three shillings of our money, six hundred silver shekels would be equal to about 90; and 150 shekels to 22British pounds and 10 shillings. "Average" price seems to be in each case intended; and we may account for the comparatively high price of the chariot by supposing that by "chariot" is intended the entire equipage, including car, harness, and trained horses, of which there would be two at least, if not three. The "horses" mentioned separately from the chariots are not chariot-horses, but chargers for the cavalry.

The kings of the Hittites - See 2 Kings 7:6 note. The kings intended were probably Solomon's vassals, whose armies were at his disposal if he required their aid.

1 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

In noticing successively Solomon‘s excessive accumulation of silver and gold 1 Kings 10:14-25, his multiplication of horses 1 Kings 10:26-29, and his multiplication of wives, the writer has in mind the warning of Moses against these three forms of princely ostentation, all alike forbidden to an Israelite monarch (marginal reference).

Zidonians - i. e., Phoenician women. A tradition states that Solomon married a daughter of Hiram, king of Tyre.

Verse 2

Ye shall not go in unto them … - These words are not a quotation from the Pentateuch. They merely give the general meaning of the two passages prohibiting intermarriage with neighboring idolators (marginal references). Strictly speaking, the prohibition in the Law of intermarriage was confined to the Canaanite nations. But the principle of the prohibition applied equally to the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites who all bordered on the holy land; and was so applied by Ezra Ezra 9:1 and Nehemiah Nehemiah 13:23.

Verse 3

These numbers seem excessive to many critics, and it must be admitted that history furnishes no parallel to them. In Song of Song of Solomon 6:8 the number of Solomon‘s legitimate wives is said to be sixty, and that of his concubines eighty. It is, perhaps probable, that the text has in this place suffered corruption. For “700” we should perhaps read “70.”

Verse 4

Old - About fifty or fifty-five. From his age at his accession (1 Kings 2:2 note) he could not have been more than about sixty at his death.

The true nature of Solomon‘s idolatry was neither complete apostasy - an apostasy from which there could be no recovery; nor a mere toleration, rather praise-worthy than blameable. Solomon did not ever openly or wholly apostatize. He continued his attendance on the worship of Yahweh, and punctually made his offerings three times a year in the temple 1 Kings 9:25; but his heart was not “perfect” with God. The religious earnestness of his younger days was weakened by wealth, luxury, sensualism, an increasing worldliness leading him to worldly policy and latitudinarianism arising from contact with all the manifold forms of human opinion. His lapse into deadly sin was no doubt gradual. Partly from ostentation, partly

from that sensualism which is the most common failing of Oriental monarchs, he established a harem on a grand and extraordinary scale. To gratify "strange women," i. e., foreigners, admitted either from worldly policy, or for variety's sake, he built magnificent temples to their false gods, right over against Jerusalem, as manifest rivals to "the temple." He thus became the author of a syncretism, which sought to blend together the worship of Yahweh and the worship of idols - a syncretism which possessed fatal attractions for the Jewish nation. Finally, he appears himself to have frequented the idol temples 1 Kings 11:5, 1 Kings 11:10, and to have taken part in those fearful impurities which constituted the worst horror of the idolatrous systems, thus practically apostatising, though theoretically he never ceased to hold that Yahweh was the true God.

Verse 5

Went after - This expression is common in the Pentateuch, and always signifies actual idolatry (see Deuteronomy 11:28; Deuteronomy 13:2; Deuteronomy 28:14, etc.).

For Ashtoreth, or Astarte, the goddess of the Zidonians, see Exodus 34:13, note; Deuteronomy 16:21, note. On the tomb of a Phoenician king, discovered in 1855, on the site of Sidon, mention is made of a temple of Astarte there, which the monarch built or restored; and his mother is said to have been a priestess of the goddess.

Milcom or Molech 1 Kings 11:7 are variants of the term ordinarily used for "king" among the Semitic races of Western Asia, which appears in melkarth (Phoenic.), Abimelech (Hebrew), Andrammelek (Assyrian), Abd-ul-malik (Arabic), etc. On the character and worship of Molech, see Leviticus 20:2-5 note.

Verse 7

Chemosh (Numbers 21:29 note), seems to have been widely worshipped in Western Asia. His name occurs frequently on the "Moabite-Stone." Car-Chemish, "the fort of Chemosh," a great city of the northern Hittites, must have been under his protection. In Babylon he seems to have been known as Chomus-belus, or Chemosh-Bel.

The hill - Olivet. At present the most southern summit only (the "Mons Offensionis") is pointed out as having been desecrated by the idol

sanctuaries: but the early Eastern travelers tell us that in their time the most northern suburb was believed to have been the site of the high p ace of Chemosh, the southern one that of Moloch only.

Verse 13

One tribe - i. e., (marginal reference) the tribe of Judah. Benjamin was looked upon as absorbed in Judah, so as not to be really a tribe in the same sense as the others. Still, in memory of the fact that the existing tribe of Judah was a double one 1 Kings 12:2 l, the prophet Ahijah tore his garment into twelve parts, and kept back two from Jeroboam 1 Kings 11:30-31.

Verse 14

The writer has reserved for this place the various troubles of Solomon‘s reign, not allowing them to interrupt his previous narrative. He has, consequently, not followed chronological order. Hadad‘s 1 Kings 11:23 and Rezon‘s opposition belong to the early years of Solomon‘s reign.

Hadad was a royal title (perhaps, the Syriac name for “the Sun”) both in Syria and in Idumaea (compare Genesis 36:35; 1 Chronicles 1:51).

Verse 15

The verse gives certain additional particulars of David‘s conquest of Edom (marginal references). Joab was left, or sent, to complete the subjugation of the country, with orders to exterminate all the grown male inhabitants. It was not very often that David acted with any extreme severity in his wars; but he may have considered himself justified by policy, as he certainly was by the letter of the Law Deuteronomy 20:13, in adopting this fierce course against Edom.

Was in Edom - Or, according to another reading, “smote” Edom.

The slain - Probably the Israelites who had fallen in the strnggle. Translate, “when … Joab was gone up to bury the slain, and had smitten every male,” etc.

Verse 16

Every male in Edom - i. e., every male whom he could find. As did Hadad and his company 1 Kings 11:17, so others would escape in various directions. The Edomite nation was not destroyed on the occasion.

Verse 18

Midian - A town in the south of Judah. Paran is the desert tract immediately to the south of Judaea, the modern desert of et-Tih.

Pharaoh - King of the twenty-first (Tanite) dynasty; probably he was Psusennes I, Manetho‘s second king. It appears to have been the policy of the Pharaohs about this time to make friends and contract alliances with their eastern neighbors.

Verse 21

That Hadad should wait for the death of Joab before requesting leave to return to Idumaea shows how terrible an impression had been made by the severe measures which that commander had carried out twenty-five or thirty years previously 1 Kings 11:16. The inability of refugees to depart from an Oriental court without the king‘s leave, and his unwillingness ordinarily to grant leave, are illustrated by many passages in the history of Persia.

Verse 23

Rezon - Possibly the same as the Hezion of 1 Kings 15:18; but probably one who interrupted the royal line of the Damascene Hadads, which was restored after his death. We may arrange the Damascus-kings of this period as follows:

RE-DO THE NEXT PARAGRAPH!

Hadadezer (or Hadad I), about 1040 B.C. (conquered by David).

Rezon (usurper) was contemporary with Solomon.

Hezion (Hadad II) was contemporary with Rehoboam.

Tabrimon (Hadad III) was contemporary with Abijam.

Ben-hadad (Hadad IV) was contemporary with Asa.

Verse 24

And (they) reigned - A very slight emendation gives the sense, “they made him king at Damascus.”

Verse 26

Zereda - See Judges 7:22.

Lifted up his hand against the king - i. e., “he rebelled.” Compare marginal reference.

Verse 27

Millo was probably fortified in Solomon‘s twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth year.

Verse 28

A mighty man of valor - Here “a man of strength and activity.” It is a vague term of commendation, the exact force of which must be fixed by the context. See Rth 2:1 ; 1 Samuel 9:1, etc.

Solomon made Jeroboam superintendent of all the forced labor (“the charge”) exacted from his tribe - the tribe of Ephraim - during the time that he was building Millo and fortifying the city of Jerusalem 1 Kings 9:15.

Verse 29

At that time - Probably after Jeroboam‘s return from Egypt (see 1 Kings 11:40).

The Shilonite - An inhabitant of Shiloh in Mount Ephraim, the earliest and most sacred of the Hebrew sanctuaries (Joshua 18:10; Judges 18:31; 1 Samuel 4:3, etc.)

Verse 30

The first instance of the “acted parable.” Generally this mode was adopted upon express divine command (see Jeremiah 13:1-11; Ezekiel 3:1-3). A connection may be traced between the type selected and the words of the announcement to Solomon (1 Kings 11:11-13. Compare 1 Samuel 15:26-28).

Verse 34

Translate - “Howbeit I will not take ought of the kingdom out of his hand.” The context requires this sense.

Verse 36

That David may have a light - Compare the marginal references. The exact meaning of the expression is doubtful. Perhaps the best explanation is, that “light” here is taken as the essential feature of a continuing “home.”

Verse 38

See the marginal references. To “build a sure house,” or “give a house,” is to give a continuity of offspring, and so secure the perpetuity of a family. The promise, it will be observed, is conditional; and as the condition was not complied with, it did not take effect (see 1 Kings 14:8-14). The entire house of Jeroboam was destroyed by Baasha 1 Kings 15:29.

Verse 39

But not forever - David had been distinctly promised that God should never fail his seed, whatever their shortcomings Psalm 89:28-37. The fulfillment of these promises was seen, partly in the Providence which maintained David‘s family in a royal position until Zerubbabel, but mainly in the preservation of his seed to the time fixed for the coming of Christ, and in the birth of Christ - the Eternal King - from one of David‘s descendants.

Verse 40

Compare 1 Kings 11:26. The announcement of Ahijah was followed within a little while by rebellion on the part of Jeroboam. As Solomon‘s luster faded, as his oppression became greater and its objects more selfish, and as a prospect of deliverance arose from the personal qualities of Jeroboam 1 Kings 11:28, the tribe of Ephraim to which he belonged, again aspired after its old position (see Joshua 17:14 note). Jeroboam, active, energetic, and ambitious, placed himself at their head. The step proved premature. The power of Solomon was too firmly fixed to be shaken; and the hopes of the Ephraimites had to be deferred until a fitter season.

The “exact” date of Jeroboam‘s flight into Egypt cannot be fixed. It was certainly not earlier than Solomon‘s twenty-fourth year, since it was after the building of Millo 1 Kings 11:27. But it may have been several years later.

Shishak - This king is the first Pharaoh mentioned in Scripture who can be certainly identified with any known Egyptian monarch. He is the Sheshonk (Sheshonk I) of the monuments, and the Sesonchosis of Manetho. The Egyptian date for his accession is 980 or 983 B.C., which synchronizes, according to the ordinary Hebrew reckoning, with Solomon‘s 32nd or 35th year. Sheshonk I has left a record of his expedition against Judah, which accords well with what is related of Shishak 1 Kings 14:25-26; 2 Chronicles 12:2-4.

Verse 41

The book of the acts of Solomon - See the marginal reference and Introduction.

Verse 42

Josephus gave Solomon a reign of 80 years, either because he wished to increase the glory of his country‘s greatest king, or through his having a false reading in his copy of the Septuagint Version. It is, no doubt, remarkable that the three successive kings, Saul, David, and Solomon,

should have each reigned forty years Acts 13:21; 2 Samuel 5:4-5; but such numerical coincidences occur from time to time in exact history.

1 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

The first step taken by the new king was a most judicious one. If anything could have removed the disaffection of the Ephraimites, and caused them to submit to the ascendancy of Judah, it would have been the honor done to their capital by its selection as the scene of the coronation. Shechem (now Nablous) lay on the flank of Mount Gerizim, directly opposite to Mount Ebal, in a position second to none in all Palestine. Though Abimelech had destroyed the place Judges 9:45, it had probably soon risen again, and was once more a chief city, or perhaps "the" chief city, of Ephraim. Its central position made it a convenient place for the general assembly of the tribes, as it had been in the days of Joshua Joshua 8:30-35; 24:1-28; and this would furnish an additional reason for its selection.

Verse 2

Heard of it - i. e., of the death of Solomon and accession of Rehoboam. This would be more clear without the division into chapters; which division, it must be remembered, is without authority.

Dwelt in Egypt - By a change of the pointing of one word, and of one letter in another, the Hebrew text here will read as in 2 Chronicles 10:2, "returned out of Egypt; and they sent and called him."

In the Septuagint Version the story of Jeroboam is told in two different ways. The general narrative agrees closely with the Hebrew text; but an insertion into the body of 1 Kings 12 - remarkable for its minuteness and circumstantiality - at once deranges the order of the events, and gives to the history in many respects a new aspect and coloring. This section of the Septuagint, though regarded by some as thoroughly authentic, absolutely conflicts with the Hebrew text in many important particulars. In its general outline it is wholly irreconcileable with the other narrative; and, if both stood on the same footing, and we were free to choose between them, there could be no question about preferring the history as given in our Version.

Verse 4

The complaint was probably twofold. The Israelites no doubt complained in part of the heavy weight of taxation laid upon them for the maintenance of the monarch and his court 1 Kings 4:19-23. But their chief

grievance was the forced labor to which they had been subjected 1 Kings 5:13-14; 1 Kings 11:28. Forced labor has been among the causes leading to insurrection in many ages and countries. It helped to bring about the French Revolution, and it was for many years one of the principal grievances of the Russian serfs. Jeroboam‘s position as superintendent of the forced labors of the tribe of Ephraim 1 Kings 11:28 revealed to him the large amount of dissatisfaction which Solomon‘s system had produced, and his contemplated rebellion in Solomon‘s reign may have been connected with this standing grievance.

Verse 6

The old men, that stood before Solomon his father - Perhaps “the princes” of 1 Kings 4:2. Solomon placed great value upon good advisers Proverbs 11:14; Proverbs 15:22; Proverbs 24:6.

Verse 7

The advice was not that the king should permanently resign the office of ruler, but that he should “for once” be ruled by his people.

Verse 8

The age of Rehoboam at his accession is an interesting and difficult question. According to the formal statement of the present text of 1 Kings 14:21; 2 Chronicles 12:13, he had reached the mature age of 41 years, and would therefore be unable to plead youth as an excuse for his conduct. The general narrative, however, seems to assume that he was quite a young man (compare 2 Chronicles 13:7). Perhaps the best way of removing the whole difficulty would be to read in the above text “twenty-one” for “forty-one.” The corruption is one which might easily take place, if letters were used for numerals.

Verse 10

My little finger … - i. e., “You shall find my hand heavier on you than my father‘s - as much heavier as if my little finger were thicker than his loins.”

Verse 11

Scorpions - By this word some understand whips having leaden balls at the ends of their lashes with hooks projecting from them; others the thorny stem of the eggplant, or “the scorpion plant.” But it seems best to regard the expression as a figure of speech.

Verse 15

The cause was from the Lord - i. e., "the turn of events was from the Lord." Human passions, anger, pride, and insolence, worked out the accomplishment of the divine designs. Without interfering with man's free will, God guides the course of events, and accomplishes His purposes.

Verse 16

See the marginal reference. The words breathe unmistakeably the spirit of tribal jealousy and dislike (1 Kings 11:40 note).

Now see to thine own house, David - i. e., "Henceforth, house of David, look after thine own tribe, Judah, only." It is not a threat of war, but a warning against interference.

Verse 17

Israel … - The Israelites proper, or members of the other tribes, who happened to be settled within the limits of the land of Judah. These Israelites quietly submitted to Rehoboam. "Israel" through this chapter, and throughout the rest of Kings, designates ordinarily "the ten tribes," and is antithetical to "Judah."

Verse 18

Adoram has been identified with Adoniram (marginal references), and even with the Adoram of 2 Samuel 20:24. But it is highly improbable that the same person was chief superintendent of the forced labors during the whole of Solomon's long reign, and also during a part of David's and Rehoboam's. We may therefore conclude that the three names mark three distinct persons, perhaps of the same family, who were respectively contemporary with the three kings. Adoram was chosen, as best acquainted with the hardships whereof the rebels complained, to arrange some alleviation of their burthens.

Verse 19

Unto this day - This expression shows that the writer, who lived during the captivity, and consequently long after the rebellion of Israel had come to an end, is embodying in his history the exact words of an ancient document. His source, whatever it was, appears to have been also followed by the writer of Chronicles. (See 2 Chronicles 10:19.)

Verse 20

The first act of the Israelites, on learning what had occurred at Shechem, was to bring together the great "congregation" of the people (compare Judges 20:1), in order that, regularly and in solemn form, the crown might be declared vacant, and a king elected in the room of the monarch whose

authority had been thrown off. The congregation selected Jeroboam. The rank, the talent, and the known energy of the late exile, his natural hostility to the house of Solomon, his Ephraimitic descent, his acquaintance with the art of fortification, and the friendly relations subsisting between him and the great Egyptian king, pointed him out as the most suitable man for the vacant post. If, according to the Septuagint, Shishak had not only protected him against Solomon, but also given him an Egyptian princess, sister to his own queen, in marriage, his position must have been such that no other Israelite could have borne comparison with him. Again, the prophecy of Ahijah would have been remembered by the more religious part of the nation, and would have secured to Jeroboam their adhesion; so that every motive, whether of policy or of religion, would have united to recommend the son of Nebat to the suffrages of his countrymen.

Verse 21

The adhesion of Benjamin to Judah at this time comes upon us as a surprise. By blood Benjamin was far more closely connected with Ephraim than with Judah. All the traditions of Benjamin were antagonistic to Judah, and hitherto the weak tribe had been accustomed to lean constantly on its strong northern neighhour. But it would seem that, in the half-century which had elapsed since the revolt of Sheba, the son of Bichri 2 Samuel 20:1, the feelings of the Benjamites had undergone a complete change. This is best accounted for by the establishment of the religious and political capital at Jerusalem, on the border line of the two tribes Joshua 15:8; Joshua 18:16, from where it resulted that the new metropolis stood partly within the territory of either, and was in a certain sense common to both. One of the gates of Jerusalem was "the high gate of Benjamin" Jeremiah 20:2; and probably Benjamites formed a considerable part of the population. The whole tribe also, we may well believe, was sincerely attached to the temple worship, in which they could participate far more freely and more constantly than the members of remoter tribes, and to which the habits of forty years had now accustomed them.

On the number of the Israelites, see Exodus 12:37, notes; and 2 Samuel 24:9, notes. The number mentioned here is moderate, compared with the numbers given both previously and subsequently 2 Chronicles 13:3; 2 Chronicles 17:14-18.

Verse 22

Shemaiah was the chief prophet in Judah during the reign of Rehoboam, as Ahijah was in Israel. See the marginal references.

Verse 23

The remnant - i. e., "the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah" (1 Kings 12:17 note).

Verse 25

Built Shechem - In the sense of "enlarged and fortified." See Daniel 4:30. The first intention of Jeroboam seems to have been to make Shechem his capital, and therefore he immediately set about its fortification. So also he seems to have fortified Penuel for the better security of his Trans-Jordanic possessions (marginal reference).

Verse 26

Jeroboam's fear was lest a reaction should set in, and a desire for reunion manifest itself. He was not a man content to remain quiet, trusting simply to the promise made him 1 Kings 11:38. Hence, he gave way to the temptation of helping forward the plans of Providence by the crooked devices of a merely human policy. His measures, like all measures which involve a dereliction of principle, brought certain evils in their train, and drew down divine judgment on himself. But they fully secured the object at which he aimed. They prevented all healing of the breach between the two kingdoms. They made the separation final. They produced the result that not only no reunion took place, but no symptoms of an inclination to reunite ever manifested themselves during the whole period of the double kingdom.

Verse 27

Kill me - In case his subjects desired a reconciliation with Rehoboam, Jeroboam's death would at once facilitate the re-establishment of a single kingdom, and obtain favor with the legitimate monarch. (Compare 2 Samuel 4:7.)

Verse 28

The "calves of gold" were probably representations of the cherubic form, imitations of the two cherubim which guarded the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies. But being unauthorized copies, set up in places which God had not chosen, and without any divine sanction, the sacred writers call them "calves." They were not mere human figures with wings, but had at any rate the head of a calf or ox. (Hence, some attribute this calf-worship entirely to Assyrian and Phoenician influence.) Jeroboam, in setting them up, was probably not so much influenced by the Apis-worship of Egypt, as:

(1) by a conviction that the Israelites could not be brought to attach themselves to any worship which did not present them with sensible objects to venerate;

(2) by the circumstance that he did not possess any of the old objects of reverence, which had been concentrated at Jerusalem; and

(3) by the fact that he could plead for his "calves" the authority of so great a name as Aaron (marginal reference).

Verse 29

In the first place, Jeroboam consulted the convenience of his subjects, who would thus in no case have very far to go in order to reach one or the other sanctuary. Further, he avoided the danger of reminding them continually that they had no ark - a danger which would have been imminent, had the two cherubs been placed together in one shrine.

He selected Bethel (in the south) for one of his seats of worship, on account of its pre-eminent sanctity. (See the marginal reference; Judges 20:26-28; 1 Samuel 7:16.)

The north of Palestine did not furnish a spot possessing an equally sacred character, but still Dan had to some extent the character of a "holy city" (marginal reference).

Verse 30

This thing became a sin - i. e., this act of Jeroboam's became an occasion of sin to the people. The author perhaps wrote the following words thus: "The people went to worship before the one to Bethel and before the other to Dan."

Verse 31

He made an house of high places - i. e., "He built a temple, or sanctuary, at each of the two cities where the calves were set up." The writer uses the expression "house of high places" in contempt, meaning that the buildings were not real temples, or houses of God, like that at Jerusalem, but only on a par with the temples upon high places which had long existed in various parts of the land.

Made priests of the lowest of the people - More correctly, "from all ranks of the people." That the Levites did not accept Jeroboam's innovations, and transfer their services to his two sanctuaries, must have been the consequence of their faithful attachment to the true worship of Yahweh. In all probability Jeroboam confiscated the Levitical lands within his dominions for the benefit of the new priestly order 2 Chronicles 11:13-14.

Verse 32

A feast - Intended as a substitute for the Feast of tabernacles (marginal reference "c"). It may also have assumed the character of a feast of dedication, held at the same time, after the example of Solomon 1 Kings 8:2. His object in changing the month from the seventh to the eighth, and yet keeping the day of the month, is not clear. Perhaps it was on account of the later vintage of the more northern regions. It is remarkable that Josephus places the scene in the "seventh" month. He therefore, was not aware that the people of Israel kept the feast of tabernacles a month later than their brethren of Judah. The expression "he offered upon the altar" (see the margin and Exodus 20:26) shows that Jeroboam himself officiated as priest, and offered this sacrifice - at Bethel, not at Dan; where it is possible that the priests descended from Jonathan, the son of Gershom and grandson of Moses, undertook the services (Judges 18:30 note).

Verse 33

This verse belongs to 1 Kings 12:26 note.

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CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

Rather, "in the word of the Lord." The meaning seems to be, not merely that the prophet was bid to come, but that he came in the strength and power of God's word, a divinely inspired messenger. (Compare 1 Kings 13:2, 1Kings 13:5,1 Kings 13:32.)

By the altar - "On the altar;" i, e. on the ledge, or platform, halfway up the altar, whereupon the officiating priest always stood to sacrifice. Compare 1 Kings 12:32 note.

Verse 2

A child shall be born … Josiah by name - Divine predictions so seldom descend to such particularity as this, that doubts are entertained, even by orthodox theologians, with respect to the actual mention of Josiah's name by a prophet living in the time of Jeroboam. Only one other instance that can be considered parallel occurs in the whole of Scripture - the mention of Cyrus by Isaiah. Of course no one who believes in the divine foreknowledge can doubt that God could, if He chose, cause events to be foretold minutely by his prophets; but certainly the general law of his Providence is, that He does not do so. If this law is to be at any time broken through, it will not be capriciously. Here it certainly does not appear what great effect was to be produced by the mention of Josiah's name so long before his birth; and hence, a doubt arises whether we have in our present copies the true original text. The sense is complete without the words "Josiah by name;" and these words, if originally a marginal note, may easily have crept into the text by the mistake of a copyist. It is remarkable that, where this narrative is again referred to in Kings (marginal reference), there is no allusion to the fact that the man of God had prophesied of Josiah "by name."

Verse 3

He gave a sign - A sign of this kind - an immediate prophecy to prove the divine character of a remote prophecy - had scarcely been given before this. In the later history, however, such signs are not unfrequent (compare 2 Kings 19:29; Isaiah 7:14-16).

The ashes … shall be poured out - i. e., "The half-burnt remains of the offerings shall be ignominiously spilled upon the ground."

Verse 5

We need not suppose a complete shattering of the altar, but rather the appearance of a crack or fissure in the fabric, which, extending from top to bottom, caused the embers and the fragments of the victims to fall until they reached the ground.

Verse 7

I will give thee a reward - It was customary to honor a prophet with a gift, if he performed any service that was requested at his hands (see the marginal references).

Verse 9

Eat no bread, nor drink water - The reason of the command is evident. The man of God was not to accept the hospitality of any dweller at Bethel, in order to show in a marked way, which men generally could appreciate, God‘s abhorrence of the system which Jeroboam had “devised of his own heart.”

Nor turn again by the same way that thou camest - This command seems to have been given simply to test the obedience of the prophet by laying him under a positive as well as a moral obligation.

Verse 11

The truly pious Israelites quitted their homes when Jeroboam made his religious changes, and, proceeding to Jerusalem, strengthened the kingdom of Rehoboam 2 Chronicles 10:16-17. This “old prophet” therefore, who, without being infirm in any way, had remained under Jeroboam, and was even content to dwell at Bethel - the chief seat of the new worship - was devoid of any deep and earnest religious feeling.

Verse 14

Under an oak - literally, “under the oak,” or “the terebinth-tree.” There was a single well-known tree of the kind, standing by itself in the vicinity of Bethel, which the author supposed his readers to be acquainted with.

Verse 18

But he lied unto him - It is always to be remembered that the prophetic gift might co-exist with various degrees of moral imperfection in the person possessing it. Note especially the case of Balaam.

Verse 21

Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord - It was his duty not to have suffered himself to be persuaded. He should have felt that his obedience was being tried, and should have required, ere he considered himself released, “the same, or as strong, evidence,” as that on which he

had received the obligation. Disobedience to certain positive commands of God, was one which it was at this time very important to punish signally, since it was exactly the sin of Jeroboam and his adherents.

Verse 22

On the anxiety of the Hebrews to be buried with their fathers, see Genesis 47:30; Genesis 49:29, Genesis 49:1, Genesis 49:25; 2 Samuel 19:37, etc.

Verse 28

The lion had not eaten the carcase, nor torn the ass - These strange circumstances were of a nature to call men‘s attention to the matter, and cause the whole story to be bruited abroad. By these means an incident, which Jeroboam would have wished hushed up, became no doubt the common talk of the whole people.

Verse 30

He laid his carcase in his own grave - As Joseph of Arimathaea did the body of our Lord Matthew 27:60. The possession of rock-hewn tombs by families, or individuals, was common among the Jews from their first entrance into the holy land to their final expulsion. A sepulchre usually consisted of an underground apartment, into which opened a number of long, narrow “loculi,” or cells, placed side by side, each adapted to receive one body. The cells were 6 or 7 feet long, 2 feet wide, and 3 feet high. They were commonly closed by a stone placed at the end of each. Many such tombs still exist in Palestine.

Verse 32

Against all the houses of the high places - i. e., more than the two high places at Dan and Bethel. There were many lesser high places in the land, several of which would be likely to be in Israel 1 Kings 3:4.

In the cities of Samaria - The word Samaria cannot have been employed by the old prophet, in whose days Samaria did not exist 1 Kings 16:24. The writer of Kings has substituted for the term used by him that whereby the country was known in his own day.

Verse 33

Whosoever would, he consecrated him - i. e., he exercised no discretion, but allowed anyone to become a priest, without regard to birth, character, or social position. We may suspect from this that the office was not greatly sought, since no civil governor who cared to set up a priesthood would wish to degrade it in public estimation. Jeroboam did impose one

limitation, which would have excluded the very poorest class. The candidate for consecration was obliged to make an offering consisting of one young bullock and seven rams 2 Chronicles 13:9.

Verse 34

This persistence in wrong, after the warning given him, brought a judgment, not only on Jeroboam himself, but on his family. Jeroboam's departure from the path of right forfeited the crown 1 Kings 11:38; and in that forfeiture was involved naturally the destruction of his family, for in the East, as already observed, when one dynasty supplants another, the ordinary practice is for the new king to destroy all the males belonging to the house of his predecessor. See 1 Kings 15:29.

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CHAPTER 14

Verse 1

At that time - The phrase here connects the narrative which follows with Jeroboam‘s persistence in his evil courses. The event related is the first judgment upon him for his obduracy, the beginning of the cutting off of his house from the face of the earth.

Abijah - We see by this name that Jeroboam did not intend to desert the worship of Yahweh, since its signification is “Yahweh is my father,” or “Yahweh is my desire” Job 34:36.

Verse 2

Disguise thyself - Jeroboam fears that even Ahijah the Shilonite, who in some sort made him king, will scarcely give his queen a favorable answer. The king‘s conscience tells him that he has not performed the conditions on which he was promised “a sure house” 1 Kings 11:38.

Verse 3

See the marginal reference The presents here were selected for the purpose of deception, being such as a poor country person would have been likely to bring. Jeroboam counted also on Ahijah‘s blindness 1 Kings 14:4 as favoring his plan of deception (compare Genesis 27:1, Genesis 27:22).

Cracknels - See the margin. The Hebrew word is thought to mean a kind of cake which crumbled easily.

Verse 5

Feign herself to be another woman - literally, “she shall make herself strange,” i. e., “she shall come in disguised.” So 1 Kings 14:6.

Verse 6

For I am sent to thee - Rather, “I also am sent to thee.” As thou hast a message to me from thy husband, so have I a message to thee from the Lord.

Verse 7

As Jeroboam‘s appointment to the kingdom had been formally announced to him by the prophet Ahijah, so the same prophet is commissioned to acquaint him with his forfeiture of it. Compare 1 Samuel 15:26-28.

Verse 9

Above all that were before thee - i. e., above all previous rulers of the people, whether Judges or kings. Hereto none of the rulers of Israel had set

up the idolatrous worship of ephod, teraphim, and the like Judges 18:17, as a substitute for the true religion, or sought to impose an idolatrous system on the nation. Gideon‘s ephod “became a snare” contrary to his intention Judges 8:27. Solomon‘s high places were private - built for the use of his wives, and not designed to attract the people. Jeroboam was the first ruler who set himself to turn the Israelites away from the true worship, and established a poor counterfeit of it, which he strove to make, and succeeded in making, the religion of the great mass of his subjects.

And hast cast me behind thy back - A very strong and very rare expression, occurring again only in Ezekiel 23:35; where it is said of the Jews generally, shortly before the captivity. The expressions in the marginal references are similar but less fearful.

Verse 10

All the males of the family of Jeroboam were put to death by Baasha 1 Kings 15:28-29. The phrase “will cut off,” etc., appears to have been a common expression among the Jews from the time of David 1 Samuel 25:22 to that of Jehu 2 Kings 9:8, but scarcely either before or after. We may suspect that, where the author of Kings uses it, he found it in the documents which he consulted.

Him that is shut up and left in Israel - See the marginal reference note.

And will take away the remnant … - The idea is, that the whole family is to be cleared away at once, as men clear away ordure or any vile refuse.

Verse 11

The dogs are the chief scavengers of Oriental cities (compare Psalm 59:6, Psalm 59:14). And the vulture is the chief scavenger in the country districts, assisted sometimes by kites and crows (see Job 39:27-30, where the vulture, not the eagle, is intended). Vultures are very abundant in Palestine.

Verse 13

The child was evidently a prince of some promise. It is probable that he was heir to the throne.

Verse 14

The Hebrew text of this verse appears to be defective in this place. No satisfactory sense can be obtained from it. The true meaning of the original passage is possibly: “Yahweh shall raise up a king who will destroy the

house of Jeroboam on the day that he is raised up. What do I say? He will destroy it even now."

Verse 15

The general prophecy of Moses Deuteronomy 29:28, that the disobedient Israelites would be rooted up out of their land, and cast into another land, is here for the first time repeated, and is definitively applied to the ten tribes, which are to be removed "beyond the river" (the Euphrates, 1 Kings 4:21, 1 Kings 4:24), and "scattered." On the fulfillment of this prophecy, and especially on the "scattering" of the ten tribes, see 2 Kings 17:6 note.

Groves - See Exodus 34:13 note. The grove or, "asherah"-) worship, adopted from the Canaanite nations, appears to have died away after the fierce onslaught which Gideon made upon it Judges 6:25-31. It now revived, and became one of the most popular of the idolatries both in Israel and Judah (1 Kings 14:23, and compare the marginal references).

Verse 17

Jeroboam had by this time removed from Shechem, and established a new capital in Tirzah, one of the old Canaanite towns Joshua 12:24 - a town of great reputation for beauty, counted in that respect on a par with Jerusalem 1 Kings 16:23-24. Toward the close of the kingdom it appears again as the city of Menahem, who murdered Shallum and succeeded him 2 Kings 15:14.

The threshold of the door - literally," the threshold of the house." Compare the prophecy 1 Kings 14:12. The child actually died as she crossed the threshold of the palace. Probably the palace, like that of Sargon at Khorsabad, lay at the outer edge of the town.

Verse 19

The wars of Jeroboam may be divided into:

(1) his wars with Rehoboam (see 1 Kings 14:25, 1 Kings 14:30); and

(2) his war with Abijam (see the marginal reference).

The book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel - (of Judah, 1 Kings 14:29). See the Introduction.

Verse 21

On the age of Rehoboam at his accession, see 1 Kings 12:8 note. The 17 years of his reign must have been complete, or a little more than complete,

if Abijam ascended the throne in the "eighteenth" year of Jeroboam 1 Kings 15:1.

Verse 22

This defection of Judah did not take place until Rehoboam's fourth year (marginal reference).

They provoked him to jealousy - Compare Exodus 20:5; and on the force of the metaphor involved in the word, see Exodus 34:15 note.

Verse 23

The words "they also" are emphatic. Not only did the Israelites make themselves high places 1 Kings 12:31; 1 Kings 13:32, but the people of Judah also. The "high places," which are said to have been "built," were probably small shrines or tabernacles hung with bright-colored tapestry Ezekiel 16:16, like the "sacred tent" of the Carthaginians.

The "images" were rather "pillars" (Genesis 28:18 note).

Groves - See 1 Kings 14:15, note. The "groves," it will be observed, were "built" on high hills and "under green trees."

Under every green tree - i. e., under all those remarkable trees which, standing singly about the land, were landmarks to their respective neighborhoods, and places of resort to travelers, who gladly rested under their shade Deuteronomy 12:2.

Verse 24

Sodomites - literally, " (men) consecrated." The men in question were in fact "consecrated" to the mother of the gods, the famous "Dea Syra," whose priests, or rather devotees, they were considered to be. The nature of the ancient idolatries is best understood by recollecting that persons of this degraded class practiced their abominable trade under a religious sanction.

Verse 25

The examination of the famous inscription of Shishak at Karnak has resulted in the proof that the expedition commemorated was directed against Palestine, and has further thrown a good deal of light on the relations of the two kingdoms at the period. Of the fifteen fenced cities fortified by Rehoboam in the early part of his reign 2 Chronicles 11:5-12, three, Shoco, Adoraim, and Aijalon are distinctly mentioned among Shishak's conquests. Other towns of Judah or Benjamin also occur. Further, a considerable number of the captured cities are in the territory of Jeroboam: these cities "are either Canaanite or Levitical." Hence, we gather, that, during the four years which immediately followed the separation of the

kingdoms, Rehoboam retained a powerful hold on the dominions of his rival, many Canaanite and Levitical towns acknowledging his sovereignty, and maintaining themselves against Jeroboam, who probably called in Shishak mainly to assist him in compelling these cities to submission. The campaign was completely successful.

Verse 26

The circumstances of Shishak‘s invasion, related here with extreme brevity, are given with some fulness by the author of Chronicles (marginal reference). It is still a question whether the submission of the Jewish king is or is not expressly recorded in the Karnak inscription. Midway in the list of cities and tribes occurs the entry “YUDeH-MALK” which it has been proposed to translate “Judah, king.” Others regard it as the name of a Palestinian town not otherwise known to us.

Verse 28

It appears from this verse that Rehoboam, notwithstanding that he encouraged, and perhaps secretly practiced, idolatry (1 Kings 14:22-24, compare 1 Kings 15:3, 1 Kings 15:12; 2 Chronicles 12:1), maintained a public profession of faith in Yahweh, and attended in state the temple services. Compare the conduct of Solomon, 1 Kings 9:25.

Verse 31

Slept with his fathers and was buried … - Compare 1 Kings 11:43. The expression is a sort of formula, and is used with respect to all the kings of Judah, except two or three. The writer probably regards the fact, which he records so carefully, as a continuation of God‘s mercy to David.

His mother‘s name … - The mention of the queen-mother so regularly in the account of the kings of Judah is thought to indicate that she had an important position in the state. There are, however, only two instances where such a person seems to have exercised any power 1 Kings 15:13; 1 Kings 4:15, and perhaps of Jehoahaz into Ahaz (2 Kings 15:38 note).

1 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verse 2

Three years - More strictly, not much more than two years (compare 1 Kings 15:1, 1 Kings 15:9). Any part of a year may, however, in Jewish reckoning, be taken as a year.

His mother‘s name was Maachah - Or Michaiah, according to the present reading of marginal reference.

The daughter of Abishalom - Absalom seems to have had but one daughter, Tamar 2 Samuel 14:27, so that Maachah must have been, not his daughter, but his grand-daughter. Her father (see the margin) was Uriel of Gibeah whom, therefore, Tamar married. Maachah took her name from her great-grandmother 2 Samuel 3:3.

Verse 3

He walked in all the sins of his father - Yet Abijam prepared precious offerings for the temple service 1 Kings 15:15, probably to replace vessels which Shishak had carried off, and in his war with Jeroboam professed himself a faithful servant of Yahweh 2 Chronicles 13:10-12.

Verse 4

To set up his son - The idolatry of Abijam deserved the same punishment as that of Jeroboam 1 Kings 14:10-14, of Baasha 1 Kings 16:2-4, or of Zimri 1 Kings 16:19, the cutting off of his seed, and the transfer of the crown to another family. That these consequences did not follow in the kingdom of Judah, was owing to the “faithfulness” of David (see the marginal reference), which brought a blessing on his posterity. Few things are more remarkable and more difficult to account for on mere grounds of human reason, than the stability of the succession in Judah, and its excessive instability in the sister kingdom. One family in Judah holds the throne from first to last, during a space but little short of four centuries, while in Israel there are nine changes of dynasty within two hundred and fifty years.

Verse 6

The writer repeats what he had said in 1 Kings 14:30, in order to remind the reader that Abijam inherited this war from his father. Abijam‘s war is described in marginal reference That the author of Kings gives none of its details is agreeable to his common practice in mere military matters. Thus

he gives no details of Shishak‘s expedition, and omits Zerah‘s expedition altogether.

Verse 10

Mother‘s name - Rather, “grandmother‘s.” The Jews cal any male ancestor, however remote, a father, and any female ancestor a mother (compare 1 Kings 15:2; Genesis 3:20). This Maachah was the favorite wife of Rehoboam 2 Chronicles 11:21, and the mother of Abijam. The way in which she is here mentioned strongly favors the notion that the position of queen-mother was a definite one at the court, and could only be held by one person at a time.

Verse 13

Asa degraded Maachah from the rank and state of queen-mother.

The word translated “idol” both here and in the parallel passage (marginal reference), does not occur elsewhere in Scripture. It is derived from a root signifying “fear” or “trembling,” and may perhaps best be understood as “a fright, a horror.” Such a name would seem best to apply to a grotesque and hideous image like the Phthah of the Egyptians. She made it to serve in lieu of the ordinary “grove” - asherah, or idolatrous emblem of Astarte (Exodus 34:13 note). Asa cut it down, for like the usual “asherah,” Maachah‘s “horror” was fixed in the ground.

And burnt it at the brook Kidron - Similarly Josiah, when he removed Manasseh‘s “grove” - asherah - from the house of the Lord, brought it out to the brook Kidron, and burned it there. The object probably was to prevent the pollution of the holy city by even the ashes from the burning.

Verse 14

2 Chronicles 14:3 would seem at first sight to imply that he entirely put down the worship. But idolatry, if at one time put down, crept back afterward; or while Asa endeavored to sweep it wholly away, his subjects would not be controlled, but found a means of maintaining it in some places - not perhaps in the cities (see 2 Chronicles 14:5), but in remote country districts, where the royal authority was weaker, and secrecy more practicable.

Verse 15

Abijam‘s dedications were made after his victory over Jeroboam, and probably consisted of a portion of the spoils which were the fruit of the battle 2 Chronicles 13:16-19.

Asa‘s dedications may have been made from the spoils of Zerah the Ethiopian, who attacked him in his eleventh year (2 Chronicles 14:9, etc.). They were not deposited in the temple until his fifteenth year 2 Chronicles 15:10, 2 Chronicles 15:18.

Verse 16

Baasha became king of Israel in the third year of Asa 1 Kings 15:33. The petty warfare which ordinarily prevailed on the borders of the two kingdoms continued “all the days” of Asa and Baasha. During the first ten years of Asa‘s reign he was little molested 2 Chronicles 14:1, 2 Chronicles 14:6.

Verse 17

Ramah (perhaps “Er-Ram;” marginal reference) was situated halfway between Bethel and Jerusalem. Its distance from Jerusalem was no more than five miles so that its occupation was a menace to that capital. Baasha‘s seizure of Ramah implies a previous recovery of the towns taken by Abijam from Jeroboam, namely, Bethel, Jeshanah, and Ephrain 2 Chronicles 13:19, and was a carrying of the war into the enemy‘s country. Could his conquest have been maintained, it would have crippled Judah seriously, and have almost compelled a transfer of the capital to Hebron.

That he might not suffer any to go out or come in - Baasha, in seizing Ramah, professed to be acting on the defensive. His complaint seems to have been well founded (compare 2 Chronicles 15:9); but it was more than a defensive measure - it was the first step toward a conquest of the southern kingdom.

Verse 18

Left - Or, according to another reading, “found.” The wealthy condition of the temple treasury is sufficiently indicated in 1 Kings 15:15. Compare 2 Chronicles 15:18.

Asa‘s conduct in calling Benhadad to his aid, condemned by the seer Hanani 2 Chronicles 16:7, cannot, of course, be justified; but there was much to excuse it. An alliance, it appears, had existed between Abijam and Tabrimon, Benhadad‘s father 1 Kings 15:19 - an alliance which may have helped Abijam to gain his great victory over Jeroboam and achieve his subsequent conquests 2 Chronicles 13:17-20. This had been brought to an end by Baasha, who had succeeded in inducing Benhadad to enter into a league with him. It was only natural that Asa should endeavor to break up

this league; and, politically speaking, he had a full right to go further, and obtain, if he could, the support of the Syrian troops for himself. The Israelites had set the example of calling in a foreign power, when Jeroboam obtained the aid of Shishak.

To Benhadad - On the probable succession of the Damascene kings, and on the meaning of the name Hadad, see 1 Kings 11:14, 1 Kings 11:23.

Verse 19

Rather, "Let there be a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father."

Verse 20

Ijon is probably marked by the ruins called "Tel-Dibbin," which are situated a few miles northwest of the site of Dan, in a fertile and beautiful little plain which bears the name of "Merj' Ayun" or "meadow of fountains." On Abel-beth-maachah, or Abel-maim ("Abel-on-the waters") and Dan, see the marginal references

For Cinneroth or Genesareth see Joshua 11:2.

Verse 22

Geba, situated opposite to Michmash 1 Samuel 14:5, is almost certainly "Jeba," which stands picturesquely on the top of its steep terraced hill on the very edge of the "Wady Suweinit." Its position was thus exceedingly strong; and, as it lay further north than Ramah, Asa may have considered that to fortify and garrison it would be a better protection to his northern frontier than fortifying Ramah.

For Mizpah see the marginal reference From Jeremiah 41:9 we learn that Asa, besides fortifying the place, sank a deep well there to secure his garrison from want of water if the town should be besieged.

Verse 23

The rest of all the acts of Asa - A few of these are preserved in 2 Chronicles 15:9-15; 2 Chronicles 16:7-12. From the whole narrative of Chronicles we gather that the character of Asa deteriorated as he grew old, and that, while he maintained the worship of Yahweh consistently from first to last, he failed to maintain the personal faith and piety which had been so conspicuous in his early youth.

The cities which he built - Asa, during the earlier part of his reign, before any serious attack had been made upon him, had the prudence to

“build fenced cities in Judah,” with “walls and towers, gates and bars,” so strengthening himself against a possible evil day 2 Chronicles 14:6-7.

In the time of his old age - See the marginal reference. If it has been rightly supposed that Rehoboam was a young man of 21 or 22 at his accession 1 Kings 12:8, Asa‘s age at this time must have been less than 50. It may seem strange to speak of “old age” in such a case; but Solomon was regarded as “old” at about 50 (1 Kings 11:4 note).

Verse 24

Asa prepared his own sepulchre in his lifetime, as has been so often done by Oriental kings; and his funeral was conducted with great magnificence 2 Chronicles 16:14.

Verse 25

The sacred historian now gives an account of the contemporary kings of Israel, beginning with Nadab, who ascended the throne in Asa‘s second year, and concluding with Ahab, in whose fourth year Asa died. This narrative occupies him almost to the close of the first Book of Kings.

d **Chronology of Kingdoms**

d

d **Year of the Divided KingdomKings of JudahYears of ReignKings of IsraelYears of Reign**

d

d 1Rehoboam17Jeroboam22

d

d 5(Invasion of Shishak)

d

d 18Abijam3

d

d 20Asa41

d

d 22Nadab2

d

d 23Baasha21

d

d 31(Invasion of Zerah)

d

d 34(Great Feast at Jerusalem)

d

d 46Elah2

d

d 47Zimri

Omri12

d

d 58Ahab22

d

d 61(Last year of Asa)(4th year of Ahab)

d

d

Verse 27

Baasha … of the house of Issachar - It is curious to find Issachar furnishing a king. Tola, its one very undistinguished Judge Judges 10:1, on obtaining office had at once settled himself in the territory of Ephraim. The tribe was as little famous as any that could be named. The "ass crouching between two burthens" was a true symbol of the patient, plodding cultivators of the plain of Esdraelon Genesis 49:14-15. Baasha probably owed his rise neither to his tribe nor to his social position, but simply to his audacity, and his known valor and skill as a soldier 1 Kings 16:2.

Verse 32

An exact repetition of 1 Kings 15:16. From the book before him 1 Kings 15:31 the writer extracts a passage which happens to correspond exactly with one which he has already extracted from the "Book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah." He does not object to repeating himself (compare 1 Kings 14:21, 1 Kings 14:31; 1 Kings 14:30; 1 Kings 15:6; 2 Kings 17:6; 2 Kings 18:11).

1 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verse 1

Hanani, the father of Jehu, was seer to Asa in the kingdom of Judah 2 Chronicles 16:7-10. His son Jehu, who here discharges the same office in the kingdom of Israel, appears at a later date as an inhabitant of Jerusalem where he prophesied under Jehoshaphat, whom he rebuked on one occasion. He must have lived to a great age, for he outlived Jehoshaphat, and wrote his life (marginal references).

Verse 5

The "might" of Baasha is sufficiently indicated by those successes which drove Asa to call Ben-hadad to his aid. 1 Kings 15:17-21.

Verse 7

The natural position of this verse would be after 1 Kings 16:4 and before 1 Kings 16:5. But it may be regarded as added by the writer, somewhat irregularly, as an afterthought; its special force being to point out that the sentence on Baasha was intended to punish, not only his calf-worship, but emphatically his murder of Jeroboam and his family. Though the destruction of Jeroboam had been foretold, and though Baasha may be rightly regarded as God‘s instrument to punish Jeroboam‘s sins, yet, as he received no command to execute God‘s wrath on the offender, and was instigated solely by ambition and self-interest, his guilt was just as great as if no prophecy had been uttered. Even Jehu‘s commission 2 Kings 9:5-10 was not held to justify, altogether, his murder of Jehoram and Jezebel.

Verse 8

Two years - i. e., More than one year, or, at any rate, some portion of two distinct years (compare 1 Kings 16:10).

Verse 9

The conspiracy of Zimri - Elah‘s "servant" (i. e., "subject") - was favored by his position, which probably gave him military authority in the city, by the absence of a great part of the people and of the officers who might have checked him, at Gibbethon 1 Kings 16:15, and by the despicable character of Elah, who, instead of going up to the war, was continually reminding men of his low origin by conduct unworthy of royalty.

Steward - The office was evidently one of considerable importance. In Solomon‘s court it gave the rank of שׂר *śar* prince. In Persia the "steward of

the household" acted sometimes as a sort of regent during the king's absence.

Verse 11

Neither of his kinsfolks, nor of his friends - Zimri's measures were of much more than ordinary severity. Not only was the royal family extirpated, but the friends of the king, his councillors and favorite officers, were put to death. Omri, as having been in the confidence of the late monarch, would naturally fear for himself, and resolve to take the course which promised him at least a chance of safety.

Verse 13

Their vanities - The "calves." The Hebrews call an idol by terms signifying "emptiness," "vapor," or "nothingness." (Compare marginal references.)

Verse 16

All Israel made Omri, the captain of the host, king - This passage of history recalls the favorite practice of the Roman armies under the Empire, which, when they heard of the assassination of an emperor at Rome, were accustomed to invest their own commander with the purple.

Verse 17

Went up - The expression "went up" marks accurately the ascent of the army from the Shephelah, where Gibbethon was situated Joshua 19:44, to the hill country of Israel, on the edge of which Tirzah stood 1 Kings 14:17.

Verse 18

The palace of the king's house - The tower of the king's house. A particular part of the palace - either the "harem," or, more probably, the keep or citadel, a tower stronger and loftier than the rest of the palace.

Zimri's desperate act has been repeated more than once. That the last king of Assyria, the Sardanapalus of the Greeks, thus destroyed himself, is almost the only "fact" which we know concerning him.

Verse 19

Zimri's death illustrates the general moral which the writer of Kings draws from the whole history of the Israelite monarchs. that a curse was upon them on account of their persistence in Jeroboam's sin, which, sooner or later, brought each royal house to a bloody end.

Verse 22

From a comparison of the dates given in 1 Kings 16:15, 1 Kings 16:23, 1 Kings 16:29 it follows that the contest between the two pretenders lasted four years.

Tibni‘s death can scarcely be supposed to have been natural. Either he must have been slain in battle against Omri, or have fallen into his hands and been put to death.

There has probably been some derangement of the text here. The passage may have run thus: “So Tibni died, and Omri reigned in the thirty-first year of Asa, king of Judah. Omri reigned over Israel twelve years: six years reigned he in Tirzah.” Omri‘s reign of 12 years began in Asa‘s 27th 1 Kings 16:15-16, and terminated in his 38th 1 Kings 16:29. The event belonging to Asa‘s 31st year was the death of Tibni, and the consequent extension of Omri‘s kingdom.

The six years in Tirzah are probably made up of the four years of contention with Tibni, and two years afterward, during which enough of Samaria was built for the king to transfer his residence there.

Verse 24

“Samaria” represents the Greek form of the name Σαμάρεια *Samareia* the original is שֹׁמְרוֹן *shômerôn* (margin). The site is marked by the modern “Sebustiyeh,” an Arabic corruption of Sebaste, the name given by Herod to Samaria when he rebuilt it. Sebustiyeh is situated on a very remarkable “hill.” In the heart of the mountains of Israel occurs a deep basin-shaped depression, in the midst of which rises an oblong hill, with steep but not inaccessible sides, and a long flat top. This was the site which Omri chose for his new capital. Politically it was rather more central than Shechem, and probably than Tirzah. In a military point of view it was admirably calculated for defense. The country round it was especially productive. The hill itself possessed abundant springs of water. The result is that we find no further change. Shechem and Tirzah were each tried and abandoned; but through all the later alterations of dynasty Samaria continued uninterruptedly, to the very close of the independence, to be the capital of the northern kingdom.

Omri purchased the right of property in the hill, just as David purchased the threshing-floor (2 Samuel 24:24; compare 1 Kings 21:2). Two talents, or

6,000 shekels (Exodus 38:24 note) - about 500 British pounds (or perhaps 800 pounds) of our money - may well have been the full value of the ground. And while naming his city after Shemer, Omri may also have had in view the appropriateness of such a name to the situation of the place. Shomeron, to a Hebrew ear, would have necessarily conveyed the idea of a "watch-tower." This name, however, appears not to have been at first accepted by the surrounding nations. The earlier Assyrian kings knew the Israelite capital, not as Samaria, but as Beth-Khumri, i. e., "the city (house) of Omri." It is not until the time of Tiglath-pileser that they exchange this designation for that of "Sammirin."

Verse 25

Omri outwent his idolatrous predecessors in his zeal, reducing the calf-worship to a regular formal system, which went down to posterity (compare the marginal reference).

Verse 27

His might - Perhaps in the war between Israel and Syria of Damascus (1 Kings 20:1, etc.), during the reign of Omri. Its issue was very disadvantageous to him 1 Kings 20:34; 1 Kings 22:2.

Verse 29

Twenty and two years - Rather, from a comparison between 1 Kings 15:10 and 1 Kings 22:51, not more than 21 years. Perhaps his reign did not much exceed 20 years.

Verse 30

See 1 Kings 16:33. The great sin of Ahab - that by which he differed from all his predecessors, and exceeded them in wickedness - was his introduction of the worship of Baal, consequent upon his marriage with Jezebel, and his formal establishment of this gross and palpable idolatry as the religion of the state.

Verse 31

As if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam - Idolatries are not exclusive. Ahab, while he detested the pure worship of Yahweh, and allowed Jezebel to put to death every "prophet of the Lord" whom she could find 1 Kings 18:4, readily tolerated the continued worship of the "calves," which had no doubt tended more and more to lose its symbolic character, and to become a thoroughly idolatrous image-worship.

Eth-baal - Identified with the Ithobalus of Menander, who reigned in Tyre, probably over all Phoenicia, within 50 years of the death of Hiram. This Ithobalus, whose name means “With him is Baal,” was originally priest of the great temple of Astarte, in Tyre. At the age of 36 he conspired against the Tyrian king, Pheles (a usurping fratricide), killed him, and seized the throne. His reign lasted 32 years, and he established a dynasty which continued on the throne at least 62 years longer. The family-tree of the house may be thus exhibited:

d **Lineage of Eth-Baal**

d

d Eth-baal

d

d

d

d

d

d BadezorJezebel

d

d

d

d Matgen (Belus of Virgil)

d

d

d

d

d

d

d PygmalionDido (founder of Carthage)

d

d

Hence, Jezebel was great-aunt to Pygmalion and his sister Dido.

Served Baal - The worship of Baal by the Phoenicians is illustrated by such names as IthoBAL, HanniBAL, etc. Abundant traces of it are found in the Phoenician monuments.

Verse 34

This seems to be adduced as a proof of the general impiety of Ahab‘s time. The curse of Joshua against the man who should rebuild Jericho had hitherto been believed and respected. But now faith in the old religion had so decayed, that Joshua‘s malediction had lost its power. Hiel, a Bethelite of wealth and station, undertook to restore the long-ruined fortress. But he suffered for his temerity. In exact accordance with the words of Joshua‘s curse, he lost his firstborn son when he began to lay anew the foundations of the walls, and his youngest when he completed his work by setting up the gates. We need not suppose that Jericho had been absolutely uninhabited up to this time. But it was a ruined and desolate place without the necessary protection of walls, and containing probably but few houses (Judges 3:13 note). Hiel re-established it as a city, and it soon became once more a place of some importance 2 Chronicles 28:15.

1 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

The name Elijah means "Yahweh is my God." It is expressive of the truth which his whole life preached.

The two words rendered "Tishbite" and "inhabitant" are in the original (setting aside the vowel points) "exactly alike." The meaning consequently must either be "Elijah the stranger, of the strangers of Gilead," or (more probably) "Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbi of Gilead." Of Tishbi in Gilead there is no further trace in Scripture; it is to be distinguished from another Tishbi in Galilee. In forming to ourselves a conception of the great Israelite prophet, we must always bear in mind that the wild and mountainous Gilead, which bordered on Arabia, and was half Arab in customs, was the country wherein he grew up.

His abrupt appearance may be compared with the similar appearances of Ahijah 1 Kings 11:29, Jehu 1 Kings 16:1, Shemaiah 2 Chronicles 11:2, Azariah 2 Chronicles 15:1, and others. It is clear that a succession of prophets was raised up by God, both in faithful Judah and in idolatrous Israel, to witness of Him before the people of both countries, and leave them without excuse if they forsook His worship. At this time, when a grosser and more deadly idolatry than had been practiced before was introduced into Israel by the authority of Ahab, and the total apostasy of the ten tribes was consequently imminent, two prophets of unusual vigour and force of character, endowed with miraculous powers of an extraordinary kind, were successively raised up, that the wickedness of the kings might be boldly met and combated, and, if possible, a remnant of faithful men preserved in the land. The unusual efflux of miraculous energy at this time, is suitable to the unusual emergency, and in very evident proportion to the spiritual necessities of the people.

As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand - This solemn formula, here first used, was well adapted to impress the king with the sacred character of the messenger, and the certain truth of his message. Elisha adopted the phrase with very slight modifications 2 Kings 3:14; 2 Kings 5:16.

Drought was one of the punishments threatened by the Law, if Israel forsook Yahweh and turned after other gods (Deuteronomy 11:17;

Deuteronomy 28:23; Leviticus 26:19, etc.).

Verse 3

Brook Cherith - Rather, "the torrent course," one of the many which carry the winter rains from the highlands into that stream.

Verse 4

The ravens - This is the translation of most of the ancient versions; others, omitting the points, which are generally allowed to have no authority, read "Arabians;" others, retaining the present pointing, translate either "merchants" (compare the original of Ezekiel 27:9, Ezekiel 27:27), or "Orbites." Jerome took it in this last sense, and so does the Arabic Version.

Verse 9

The dependence of Zarephath (Sarepta) on Sidon is indicated in the inscriptions of Sennacherib, where it is mentioned as belonging to Luliya (Elulaeus), king of Sidon, and as submitting to the Assyrian monarch on Luliya's flight from his capital. Elijah may have been sent to this place, so near the city of Jezebel's father, as one which it was most unlikely that he would visit.

Verse 12

As the Lord thy God liveth - The words do not prove that the woman was an Israelite, or a worshipper of the true God; any Phoenician, recognizing in Elijah's appearance the garb and manner of a Jehovistic prophet, might have thus addressed him: Baal-worshippers would have admitted Yahweh to be "a" living God. The woman does not say "as the Lord my God liveth."

That we may eat it and die - Phoenicia always depended for its cereal supplies on the harvests of Palestine (1 Kings 5:9 note); and it is evident that the famine was afflicting the Phoenicians at this time no less than the Israelites.

Verse 16

This is the first recorded miracle of its kind - a supernatural and inexplicable multiplication of food (compare 2 Kings 4:42-44; Matthew 14:15-21; Matthew 15:32-38). The sacred record does not explain these miracles; but if the explanations sometimes suggested - that there was a transformation of previously existing matter into meal, oil, fish, and bread - be the true one, the marvel of the thing would not be much greater than that astonishing natural chemistry by which, in the growth of plants, particles of

water, air, and earth are transmuted into fruits and grains of corn, and so fitted to be human food. There would be a difference in the agency employed and in the time occupied in the transmutation, but the thing done would be almost the same.

Verse 17

No breath - Or, "no spirit," "no soul." (Compare Genesis 2:7). The word used is translated "spirit" in Proverbs 20:27; Ecclesiastes 3:21; Job 26:4; and elsewhere.

Verse 18

What have I to do with thee? - i. e., "What have we in common?" - implying a further question, "Why hast thou not left me in peace?" The woman imagines that Elijah's visit had drawn God's attention to her, and so to her sins, which (she feels) deserve a judgment - her son's death.

Thou man of God - In the mouth of the Phoenician woman this expression is remarkable. Among the Jews and Israelites 1 Kings 12:22; Judges 13:6, Judges 13:8 it seems to have become the ordinary designation of a prophet. We now see that it was understood in the same sense beyond the borders of the holy land.

Verse 19

Into a loft - Rather, "into the upper chamber;" often the best apartment in an Eastern house.

Verse 21

He stretched himself upon the child three times - This action of Elijah is different from that of Elisha (marginal reference), and does not imply the use of any natural means for the restoration of suspended animation. It is nearly parallel to the "touch," through which our Lord performed similar miracles Matthew 9:25; Luke 7:14.

1 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Verse 1

The third year - i. e., in the third year of his sojourn with the widow. The whole period of drought was three years and a half Luke 4:25; James 5:17: of this, probably about one year was passed by Elijah in the torrent-course of Cherith, and two years and a half at Sarepta.

Verse 3

Obadiah‘s name, “servant of Yahweh,” indicates his religious character. It corresponds to the modern Arabic name Abdallah. Ahab could scarcely have been ignorant of Obadiah‘s faithfulness to Yahweh; and it tells in favor of the monarch‘s tolerance that he should have maintained an adherent of the old religion in so important an office. There seems to be no doubt that the worst deeds of Ahab‘s reign sprang less from his own free will and natural disposition than from the evil counsels, or rather perhaps the imperious requirements, of his wife.

Verse 4

We have no details of Jezebel‘s deed of blood. Some have conjectured that it was the answer of Jezebel to Elijah‘s threat, and that the command given him to hide in Cherith alone saved him from being one of the victims. This view receives some support from Obadiah‘s act and words 1 Kings 18:13.

Fifty in a cave - The limestone formation of Judaea and Samaria abounds with large natural caverns, the size of which is easily increased by art. These “caves” play an important part in the history of the country, serving especially as refuges for political offenders and other fugitives Judges 6:2; 1 Samuel 13:6; Hebrews 11:38.

Verse 5

Unto all fountains of water and unto all brooks - Rather, “to all springs of water and to all torrent-courses.” The former are the perennial streams; the latter are the torrent-courses which become dry in an ordinary summer.

All the beasts - Rather, some, or, “a portion of our beasts.”

Verse 9

Obadiah thinks that to execute this commission will be fatal to him 1 Kings 18:12.

Verse 10

There is no nation … - This is expressed in the style of Oriental hyperbole. What Obadiah means is: "there is no nation nor kingdom, of those over which he has influence, whither the king has not sent." He could scarcely, for example, have exacted an oath from such countries as Egypt or Syria of Damascus. But Ahab may have been powerful enough to expect an oath from the neighboring Hittite, Moabite, and Edomite tribes, perhaps even from Ethbaal his father-in-law, and the kings of Hamath and Arpad.

Verse 17

Art thou he … - Meaning, "Can it possibly be that thou dost venture to present thyself before me, thou that troublest Israel by means of this terrible drought?" The charge of "troubling" had never before been brought against anyone but Achan (marginal reference "e"); it was one which must have called to the prophet's recollection Achan's miserable fate.

Verse 18

Instead of apologies, and pleas for pardon, Elijah meets the charge with a countercharge, and makes a sudden demand. "Gather to me," etc. This boldness, this high tone, this absence of the slightest indication of alarm, seems to have completely discomfited Ahab, who ventured on no reply, made no attempt to arrest the prophet, did not even press him to remove his curse and bring the drought to an end, but simply consented to do his bidding. There is no passage of Scripture which exhibits more forcibly the ascendancy that a prophet of the Lord, armed with His spiritual powers, could, if he were firm and brave, exercise even over the most powerful and most unscrupulous of monarchs.

Baalim - i. e., the various aspects under which the god, Baal, was worshipped, Baal-shamin, Baal-zebub, Baal-Hamman, etc.

Verse 19

Carmel (Joshua 12:22 note) was chosen by the prophet as the scene of the gathering to which he invited, or rather summoned, Ahab. Its thick jungles of copse and numerous dwarf-oaks and olives, would furnish abundant wood for his intended sacrifice. Here was a perennial fountain; and here again an ancient "altar of the Lord" 1 Kings 18:30, belonging probably to the old times of non-idolatrous high-place worship - perhaps an erection of one of the patriarchs. On the one hand, there would be a view of the Mediterranean, from where the first sign of rain was likely to come, and on the other of Jezreel, the residence of the court at the time, with its royal

palace and its idol-temples, so that the intended trial would take place in the sight (so to speak) of the proud queen and her minions.

The prophets of Baal - The priests of Baal are so called not so much because they claimed a power of foretelling the future, as because they were "teachers" of the false religion, and more especially because they stand here in antagonism to the "prophet of the Lord," with whom they are about to contend.

The prophets of the groves, four hundred - Rather, "of the grove" - the prophets, or priests, attached to the "grove" - אשרה *'ăshêrāh* - which Ahab had made, probably at Jezreel (marginal reference). The number 400 seems to have been one especially affected by Ahab. We again find 400 prophets at the close of his reign 1 Kings 22:6. The number 40 entered largely into the religious system of the Jews 1 Kings 6:17; Exodus 26:19; Deuteronomy 25:3; Ezekiel 41:2.

Which eat at Jezebel's table - Rather, "which eat from Jezebel's table." Oriental etiquette would not have allowed them to eat "at" the table of the queen, which was spread in the seraglio. They were fed from the superfluity of her daily provision, which was no doubt on a sumptuous scale. Compare 1 Kings 4:22-23.

Verse 20

Local tradition places the site of Elijah's sacrifice, not on the highest point of the mountain (1,728 ft.), but at the southeastern extremity (1,600 ft.) of the ridge, where a shapeless ruin, composed of great hewn stones, and standing amid thick bushes of dwarf-oak, in the near vicinity of a perennial spring, is known to the Arabs as "El-Maharrakah," "the burning," or "the sacrifice." All the circumstances of the locality adapt it for the scene of the contest.

Verse 21

The people were mute. They could not but feel the logical force of Elijah's argument; but they were not prepared at once to act upon it. They wished to unite the worship of Yahweh with that of Baal - to avoid breaking with the past and completely rejecting the old national worship, yet at the same time to have the enjoyment of the new rites, which were certainly sensuous, and probably impure.

Verse 22

I, even I, only remain - He means, "I only remain in the exercise of the office of a prophet." The others (Compare 1 Kings 18:4) had been forced to

fly and hide themselves in dens and caves of the earth; their voices were silenced; they had not ventured to come to Carmel. Elijah contrasts his solitary appearance on the side of Yahweh at the great gathering with the crowd of those opposed to him.

Verse 24

The God that answereth by fire - God had frequently before consumed offerings with supernatural fire Leviticus 9:24; Judges 6:21. The Baal-worshippers were no doubt in the habit of attributing thunder and lightning to their gods - the great Nature-power - and thus had no excuse for declining Elijah‘s challenge.

Verse 25

Elijah gives precedence in everything to the Baal-priests, to take away all ground for cavil in case of failure. It is his object to make an impression on king and people; and he feels rightly that the impression will depend greatly on the contrast between their inability and the power given to him.

Verse 26

And called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon - Compare the parallel in the conduct of the Greeks of Ephesus. Acts 19:34. The words “O Baal, hear us,” probably floated on the air as the refrain of a long and varied hymn of supplication.

They leaped upon the altar which was made - The marginal rendering is preferable to this. Wild dancing has always been a devotional exercise in the East, and remains so to this day; witness the dancing dervishes. It was practiced especially in the worship of Nature-powers, like the Dea Phrygia (Cybele), the Dea Syra (Astarte?), and the like.

Verse 27

The object of Elijah‘s irony was two-fold;

(1) to stimulate the priests to greater exertions, and so to make their failure more complete, and

(2) to suggest to the people that such failure would prove absolutely that Baal was no God.

The force of the expressions seems to be, “Cry on, only cry louder, and then you will make him hear, for surely he is a god; surely you are not mistaken in so regarding him.” He is “talking,” or “meditating;” the word used has both senses, for the Hebrews regarded “meditation” as “talking

with oneself;" "or he is pursuing;" rather, perhaps, "he hath a withdrawing," i. e., "he hath withdrawn himself into privacy for awhile," as a king does upon occasions. The drift of the whole passage is scornful ridicule of the anthropomorphic notions of God entertained by the Baal-priests and their followers (compare Psalm 50:21). The pagan gods, as we know from the Greek and Latin classics, ate and drank, went on journeys, slept, conversed, quarrelled, fought. The explanations of many of these absurdities were unknown to the ordinary worshipper, and probably even the most enlightened, if his religion was not a mere vague Pantheism, had notions of the gods which were largely tainted with a false anthropomorphism.

Verse 28

Elijah's scorn roused the Baal-priests to greater exertions. At length, when the frenzy had reached its height, knives were drawn, and the blood spirted forth from hundreds of self-inflicted wounds, while an ecstasy of enthusiasm seized many, and they poured forth incoherent phrases, or perhaps an unintelligible jargon, which was believed to come from divine inspiration, and constituted one of their modes of prophecy.

The practice of inflicting gashes on their limbs, in their religious exercises, was common among the Carians, the Syrians, and the Phrygians. We may regard it as a modification of the idea of human sacrifice. The gods were supposed to be pleased with the shedding of human blood.

Lancets - Lancets, in our modern sense of the word, can scarcely have been intended by our translators. The Hebrew word is elsewhere always translated "spears," or "lances;" and this is probably its meaning here.

Verse 29

And they prophesied - Compare 1 Kings 22:12. The expression seems to be used of any case where there was an utterance of words by persons in a state of religious ecstasy.

Until the time of the offering etc - Rather, "Until toward the time." Elijah had built his altar by the actual time of the offering 1 Kings 18:36.

Verse 32

He built an altar in the name of the Lord - i. e., calling, as he built it, on the name of Yahweh, and so dedicating it to His service.

Two measures of seed - literally, "two seahs of seed." The seah contained about three gallons.

Verse 33

And he put the wood in order … - He obeyed, that is, all the injunctions of the Law with respect to the offering of a burned sacrifice (marginal reference). He thus publicly taught that the ordinances of the Law were binding upon the kingdom of Israel.

Barrels - Rather, "pitchers" or "water-jars," such as the maidens used to carry on their heads (Genesis 24:14-20. Compare Judges 7:16, Judges 7:19). The flooding the sacrifice and the trench with water would at once do away with any suspicion of fraud, and greatly enhance in the eyes of the people the marvelousness of the miracle. The unfailing spring at the eastern end of Carmel 1 Kings 18:19, was capable of furnishing as much water as he needed.

Verse 36

At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice - i. e., probably "the ninth hour," or three o'clock. Thus there might still remain about five hours of light, during which the other events of the day were accomplished.

Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel - This solemn address would carry back the thoughts of the pious to the burning bush of Horeb, and the words there spoken (marginal references), for there only had this mysterious formula been used before. Its use now was calculated to stir their faith and prepare them in some degree for God's answering "by fire."

That I have done all these things at thy word - i. e., "That I have been divinely directed in all that I have done publicly as a prophet, in proclaiming the drought, in gathering this assembly, and in proposing this trial; that I have not done them of my own mind" (marginal reference).

Verse 37

That thou hast turned their heart - The hearts of the people were turning. Elijah speaks of them as already turned, anticipating the coming change, and helping it on.

Verse 38

The fire of the Lord fell - This cannot have been a flash of lightning. It was altogether, in its nature as well as in its opportuneness, miraculous. Compare the marginal references for the conduct of the people.

Verse 39

The Lord, he is the God - The people thus pronounced the matter to be clearly and certainly decided. Baal was overthrown; he was proved to be no god at all. The Lord Yahweh, He, and He alone, is God. Him would they henceforth acknowledge, and no other.

Verse 40

Elijah required the people to show their conviction by acts - acts which might expose them to the anger of king or queen, but which once committed would cause them to break with Baal and his worshippers forever.

Elijah is said to have slain the "prophets of Baal," because the people killed them by his orders. Why they were brought down to the torrent-bed of Kishon to be killed, is difficult to explain. Perhaps the object of Elijah was to leave the bodies in a place where they would not be found, since the coming rain would, he knew, send a flood down the Kishon ravine, and bear off the corpses to the sea. Elijah's act is to be justified by the express command of the Law, that idolatrous Israelites were to be put to death, and by the right of a prophet under the theocracy to step in and execute the Law when the king failed in his duty.

Verse 41

Get thee up, eat and drink - Ahab had descended the hill-side with Elijah, and witnessed the slaughter of the priests. Elijah now bade him ascend the hill again, and partake of the feast which was already prepared, and which always followed upon a sacrifice.

There is a sound of abundance of rain - Either the wind, which in the East usually heralds rain, had begun to rise, and sighed through the forests of Carmel - or perhaps the sound was simply in the prophet's ears, a mysterious intimation to him that the drought was to end, and rain to come that day.

Verse 42

Ahab could feast; Elijah could not, or would not. Ascending Carmel not quite to the highest elevation 1 Kings 18:43, but to a point, a little below the highest, from where the sea was not visible, he proceeded to pray earnestly for rain, as he had prayed formerly that it might not rain.

Verse 43

Tradition says that Elijah's servant was the son of the widow of Sarepta 1 Kings 17:23.

Verse 44

A little cloud … - Sailors know full well that such a cloud on the far horizon is often the forerunner of a violent storm.

Verse 46

Divinely directed, and divinely upheld, Elijah, instead of resting, ran in advance of the king‘s chariot the entire distance of at least 16 miles to the entrance of Jezreel. He thus showed himself ready to countenance and uphold the irresolute monarch, if he would turn from his evil courses, and proceed to carry out the religious reformation which the events of the day had inaugurated.

The entrance of Jezreel - Modern “Zerin.” Ahab had not removed the capital from Samaria 1 Kings 22:10, 1 Kings 22:37; but he had built himself a palace at Jezreel 1 Kings 21:1, and appears to have resided there ordinarily. A contemporary Assyrian inscription speaks of him as “Ahab of Jezreel.”

Elijah‘s caution in accompanying Ahab only to “the entrance” is like that of the modern Arabs, who can seldom be induced to trust themselves within walls. He rested on the outskirts of the town, waiting to learn what Jezebel would say or do, knowing that it was she, and not Ahab, who really governed the country.

1 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Verse 2

The prophet had not long to wait before learning the intentions of the queen. A priest‘s daughter herself, she would avenge the slaughtered priests; a king‘s wife and a king‘s child, she would not quail before a subject. That very night a messenger declared her determination to compass the prophet‘s death within the space of a day.

So let the gods … - A common oath about this time (marginal references). The Greek Version prefixes to this another clause, which makes the oath even more forcible, “As surely as thou art Elijah and I am Jezebel, so let the gods,” etc.

Verse 3

The rapid movement of the original is very striking. “And he saw (or, “feared,” as some read), and he rose, and he went, etc.” The fear and flight of Elijah are very remarkable. Jezebel‘s threat alone, had not, in all probability, produced the extraordinary change but, partly, physical reaction from the over-excitement of the preceding day; and, partly, internal disquietude and doubt as to the wisdom of the course which he had adopted.

Beer-sheba is about 95 miles from Jezreel, on the very borders of the desert et-Tih. Elijah cannot possibly have reached it until the close of the second day. It seems implied that he traveled both night and day, and did not rest until he arrived thus far on his way. It was one of the towns assigned to the tribe of Simeon Joshua 19:2. The Simeonites were, however, by this time absorbed into Judah.

Verse 4

Elijah did not feel himself safe until he was beyond the territory of Judah, for Ahab might demand him of Jehoshaphat 1 Kings 18:10, with whom he was on terms of close alliance 1 Kings 22:4. He, therefore, proceeds southward into the desert, simply to be out of the reach of his enemies.

A juniper-tree - The tree here mentioned רתם *rethem* is not the juniper but a species of broom (*Genista monosperma*), called “rethem” by the Arabs, which abounds in the Sinaitic peninsula. It grows to such a size as to afford shade and protection, both in heat and storm, to travelers.

Requested for himself that he might die - Like Moses and Jonah (marginal references). The prophet‘s depression here reached its lowest point. He was still suffering from the reaction of overstrained feeling; he was weary with nights and days of travel; he was faint with the sun‘s heat; he was exhausted for want of food; he was for the first time alone - alone in the awful solitude and silence of the great white desert. Such solitude might brace the soul in certain moods; but in others it must utterly overwhelm and crush. Thus the prophet at length gave way completely - made his prayer that he might die - and, exhausted sank, to sleep.

I am not better than my fathers - i. e., “I am a mere weak man, no better nor stronger than they who have gone before me, no more able to revolutionize the world than they.”

Verse 5

An angel touched him - The friendly ministration of angels, common in the time of the patriarchs Genesis 18:2-16; 19:1-22; Genesis 28:12; Genesis 32:1, Genesis 32:24-29, and known also under the Judges Judges 6:11-21; 13:3-20, was now extended to Elijah. Any other explanation of this passage does violence to the words. It is certainly not the intention of the writer to represent Elijah as relieved on this occasion by a human “messenger.”

Verse 6

A cake baken on the coals - It is not implied that Elijah found a fire lighted and the cake on it, but only that he found one of the usual baked cakes of the desert, which form the ordinary food of the Arab at the present day.

At his head - The Hebrew word means simply “the place on which the head lies;” hence, the marginal rendering, “bolster.”

Verse 7

Arise and eat … - i. e., “Eat a second time, for otherwise the journey will be beyond thy powers.” “The journey” was not simply a pilgrimage to Horeb, which was less than 200 miles distant, and might have been reached in six or seven days. It was to be a wandering in the wilderness, not unlike that of the Israelites when they came out of Egypt; only it was to last forty days instead of forty years.

Verse 8

The old commentators generally understood this to mean that Elijah had no other food at all, and compared this long fast with that of Moses and that

of our Lord (marginal references). But the words do not exclude the notion of the prophet‘s having obtained such nourishment from roots and fruits as the desert offers to a wanderer, though these alone would not have sustained him.

Verse 9

A cave - Rather, “the cave.” Some well-known cave must be intended - perhaps the “cliff of the rock” Exodus 33:22. The traditional “cave of Elijah” which is shown in the secluded plain immediately below the highest summit of the Jebel Mousa, cannot, from its small size, be the real cavern.

Verse 10

I, even I only, am left - The same statement as in 1 Kings 18:22, but the sense is different. There Elijah merely said that he alone remained to execute the prophet‘s office, which was true; here he implies that he is the only prophet left alive, whereas a hundred had been saved by Obadiah 1 Kings 18:4.

Verse 11

And behold, the Lord passed by - The remainder of this verse and the whole of the next are placed by the Septuagint, and by the Arabic translator, in the mouth of the Angel. But it seems best to regard the vision as ending with the words “before the Lord” - and the writer as then assuming that this was done, and proceeding to describe what followed.

Verse 12

A still small voice - literally, “a sound of soft stillness.” The teaching is a condemnation of that “zeal” which Elijah had gloried in, a zeal exhibiting itself in fierce and terrible vengeances, and an exaltation and recommendation of that mild and gentle temper, which “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” But it was so contrary to the whole character of the stern, harsh, unsparing Tishbite, that it could have found no ready entrance into his heart. It may have for a while moderated his excessive zeal, and inclined him to gentler courses; but later in his life the old harshness recurred in a deed in reference to which our Lord himself drew the well-known contrast between the spirits of the two Dispensations Luke 9:51-56.

Verse 13

Mantle - The upper garment, a sort of short cloak or cape - perhaps made of untanned sheepskin, which was, besides the strip of leather round

his loins, the sole apparel of the prophet (compare Matthew 3:4). For the action compare the marginal references.

There came a voice unto him … - The question heard before in vision is now put again to the prophet by the Lord Himself. Elijah gives no humbler and more gentle answer. He is still satisfied with his own statement of his case.

Verse 15

The answer is not a justification of the ways of God, nor a direct reproof of the prophet‘s weakness and despondency, nor an explanation or application of what Elijah had seen. For the present, he is simply directed back into the path of practical duty. His mission is not yet over, there is still work for him to do. He receives special injunctions with respect to Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha; and he is comforted with a revelation well adapted to rouse him from his despondency: there are seven thousand who will sympathize with him in his trials, and who need his care and attention.

The wilderness of Damascus - Probably the district north of the prophet‘s own country, between Bashan and Damascus itself, and which was known in later times as Iturea and Gaulanitis. Here the prophet might be secure from Jezebel, while he could readily communicate with both Israel and Damascus, and execute the commissions with which he was entrusted.

When thou comest, anoint - Rather, “and thou shalt go and anoint,” Elijah performed one only of the three commissions given to him. He appears to have been left free to choose the time for executing his commissions, and it would seem that he thought the proper occasion had not arisen either for the first or the second before his own translation. But he took care to communicate the divine commands to his successor, who performed them at the fitting moment (marginal references).

Verse 16

Jehu, the son of Nimshi - In reality the grandson of Nimshi. But he seems to have been commonly known by the above title 2 Kings 9:20; 2 Chronicles 22:7, perhaps because his father had died and his grand-father had brought him up.

Abel-meholah - See Judges 7:22 note. (Conder identifies it with Ain Helweh.)

Elisha … shalt thou anoint - This is almost the only place where we hear of the anointing of prophets (compare 1 Chronicles 16:22 and Psalm

105:15).

Verse 17

Compare the marginal references.

Shall Elisha slay - i. e., With a spiritual slaying by the "word of the Lord," which is "sharper than any two-edged sword," and may be said to slay those whose doom it pronounces (compare the marginal reference; Jeremiah 1:10). Elisha does not seem, like Elijah, to have executed God's judgments on the guilty.

Verse 18

Yet I have left me … - Rather, as in the margin. "Seven thousand" faithful Israelites shall survive all the persecutions of Ahab and Jezebel, and carry down the worship of Yahweh to another generation. Elijah is mistaken in supposing that he only is left. The number is manifestly a "round" number, not an exact estimate. Perhaps it is, moreover, a mystical or symbolic number. Compare Revelation 7:5-8. Of all the symbolic numbers used in Scripture, seven is the most common.

Every mouth which hath not kissed him - Idolaters sometimes kissed the hand to the object of their worship Job 31:26-27; at other times they kissed the actual image (marginal reference).

Verse 19

Plowing - Elisha's occupation is an indication of his character. He is emphatically a man of peace. He passes the year in those rural occupations which are natural to the son of a wealthy yeoman - superintending the field-laborers himself, and taking a share in their toils. He thus presents a strong contrast to the stern, harsh, rugged Gileadite, who is almost half an Arab, who seems to have no settled home, no quiet family circle, who avoids the haunts of men, and is content for months to dwell in a cavern instead of under a roof.

With twelve yoke of oxen - He was plowing in a field with eleven other plows at work, each drawn by one yoke of oxen. Plowing with a single pair of oxen was the practice in Egypt, in Assyria, in Palestine, and in modern times throughout Western Asia.

Passed by him - Rather, "crossed over to him." Perhaps it is meant that he crossed the stream of the Jordan.

Cast his mantle upon him - The action is explained as constituting a species of adoption, because a father naturally clothes his children. The

notion of fatherhood and sonship was evidently understood between them 2 Kings 2:9-12.

Verse 20

Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father … - Not an unnatural request before following his new spiritual father. Elijah sees in his address a divided heart, and will not give the permission or accept the service thus tendered. Hence, his cold reply. See Luke 9:61-62.

Go back again … - i. e., "Go, return to thy plowing … why shouldest thou quit it? Why take leave of thy friends and come with me? What have I done to thee to require such a sacrifice? for as a sacrifice thou evidently regardest it. Truly I have done nothing to thee. Thou canst remain as thou art."

Verse 21

Elisha returns to his oxen and laborers. He indicates his relinquishment of his home and calling by the slaughter of the particular yoke of oxen with which he had himself been plowing, probably the best beasts of the twelve, and by burning the "instruments," the p oughs and yokes, both made of wood. Next he feasts his people to show his gratitude for his call, Elijah apparently remaining the while; and then, leaving father and mother, cattle and land, good position and comfortable home, Elisha became the "minister" to the wanderer. Compare Exodus 24:13; Joshua 1:1.

1 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Verse 1

Ben-hadad, the king of Syria - Probably the son of the Ben-hadad who assisted Asa against Baasha (1 Kings 15:18 note).

Thirty and two kings with him - Not allies, but feudatories 1 Kings 20:24. Damascus had in the reign of this Ben-hadad become the center of an important monarchy, which may not improbably have extended from the Euphrates to the northern border of Israel. The Assyrian inscriptions show that this country was about the period in question parcelled out into a multitude of petty kingdoms, the chief tribes who possessed it being the Hittites, the Hamathites, and the Syrians of Damascus.

Horses and chariots - The Assyrian inscriptions show us how very important an arm of the service the chariot force was reckoned by the Syrians. A king, who has been identified with this Ben-hadad, brought into the field against Assyria nearly four thousand chariots.

Verse 2

It may be supposed that a considerable time had passed in the siege, that the city had been reduced to an extremity, and that ambassadors had been sent by Ahab to ask terms of peace short of absolute surrender, before Ben-hadad would make such a demand. He would expect and intend his demand to be rejected, and this would have left him free to plunder the town, which was evidently what he desired and purposed.

Verse 6

Ben-hadad, disappointed by Ahab‘s consent to an indignity which he had thought no monarch could submit to, proceeds to put a fresh construction on his former demands.

Verse 7

The political institution of a Council of elders (Exodus 3:16, etc.), which had belonged to the undivided nation from the sojourn in Egypt downward, had therefore been continued among the ten tribes after their separation, and still held an important place in the system of Government. The Council was not merely called together when the king needed it, but held its regular sittings at the seat of government; and hence, “all the elders of the land” were now present in Samaria. On the “elders of towns,” see 1 Kings 21:8-14.

Apparently the king had not thought it necessary to summon the Council when the first terms were announced to him, inasmuch as they touched only himself. The fresh demands affected the people at large, and it became necessary, or at any rate fitting, that "the elders" should be consulted.

Verse 8

"The people" had no distinct place in the ordinary Jewish or Israelite constitution; but they were accustomed to signify their approbation or disapprobation of the decisions of the elders by acclamations or complaints (Joshua 9:18; Judges 11:11, etc.).

Verse 10

If the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls … - In its general sense this phrase is undoubtedly a boast that the number of Ben-hadad's troops was such as to make resistance vain and foolish. We may parallel it with the saying of the Trachinian at Thermopylae, that the Persian arrows would darken the light of the sun. Probably the exact meaning is, "When your town is reduced to ruins, as it will be if you resist, the entire heap will not suffice to furnish a handful of dust to each soldier of my army, so many are they." There was a threat in the message as well as a boast.

Verse 11

Ahab's reply has the air of a proverb, with which Orientals always love to answer a foe.

Verse 12

Pavilions - "Booths" (Genesis 33:17 margin; Leviticus 23:42; Jonah 4:5). The term seems to be properly applied to a stationary "booth" or "hut," as distinguished from a moveable "tent." On military expeditions, and especially in the case of a siege, such "huts" were naturally constructed to shelter the king and his chief officers.

Verse 13

The rabbinical commentators conjecture that this prophet was Micaiah, the son of Imlah, who is mentioned below 1 Kings 22:8.

Hast thou seen all this great multitude? - The boast of Ben-hadad 1 Kings 20:10, was not without a basis of truth; his force seems to have exceeded 130,000 (compare 1 Kings 20:25, 1 Kings 20:29-30). In his wars with the Assyrians we find him sometimes at the head of 100,000 men.

Verse 14

The "princes of the provinces" are the governors of districts, many of whom may have fled to the capital, as the hostile army advanced through Galilee and northern Samaria. The "young men" are their attendants, youths unaccustomed to war.

Who shall order the battle? - i. e., "Who shal join battle, begin the attack? We or the enemy?" The reply was, that the Israelites were to attack.

Verse 15

Seven thousand - Considering how populous Palestine was in the time of the earlier Israelite kings (see 2 Chronicles 13:3; 2 Chronicles 14:8; 2 Chronicles 17:14-18), the smallness of this number is somewhat surprising. If the reading be sound, we must suppose, first, that Ben-hadad's attack was very sudden, and that Ahab had no time to collect forces from distant parts of the country; and secondly, that during the long siege the garrison of Samaria had been greatly reduced, until it now did not exceed 7,000 men fit for service.

Verse 16

drinking himself drunk - Ben-hadad meant probably to mark his utter contempt of his foe. Compare the contempt of Belshazzar Daniel 5:1-4.

Verse 17

Ben-hadad sent out, and they told him - The Septuagint has a better reading: "they sent and told the king of Syria."

Verse 22

Go, strengthen thyself … - That is, "collect troops, raise fortifications, obtain allies … take all the measures thou canst to increase thy military strength. Be not rash, but consider well every step … for a great danger is impending."

At the return of the year - i. e., "When the season for military operations again comes round." The wars of the Oriental monarchs at this time, like those of early Rome, were almost always of the nature of annual incursions into the territories of their neighbors, begun in spring and terminating in early autumn. Sustained invasions, lasting over the winter into a second or a third year, are not found until the time of Shalmaneser 2 Kings 17:5; 2 Kings 18:9-10, and do not become common until the Median and Babylonian period.

Verse 23

Their gods are gods of the hills - The local power and influence of deities was a fixed principle of the ancient polytheism. Each country was

considered to have its own gods; and wars were regarded as being to a great extent struggles between the gods of the nations engaged in them. This is apparent throughout the Assyrian inscriptions. Compare also 2 Kings 18:33-35; 2 Kings 19:12. The present passage gives an unusual modification of this view. The suggestion of the Syrian chiefs may have been a mere politic device - they being really anxious, "an military grounds," to encounter their enemy on the plain, where alone their chariots would be of much service. In the plain the Israelites had always fought at a disadvantage, and had proved themselves weaker than on the hills (see Judges 1:19, Judges 1:27, Judges 1:34).

Verse 24

The Syrian chiefs evidently thought that want of unity had weakened their army. They therefore proposed the deposition of the kings, and the substitution, in their place, of Syrian governors: not "captains." The term used always denotes a civil office.

Verse 26

Aphek - There were several places of this name in Palestine (see the marginal reference). This Aphek has been almost certainly identified with the modern Fik, a large village on the present high road from Damascus to Nablous and Jersalem. The expression "went up to Aphek" is appropriate, for Fik, though in a level country, is at a much higher elevation than Damascus.

Verse 27

Were all present - The marginal rendering is adopted by almost all critics.

Like two little flocks of kids - The word translated "little flocks" does not occur elsewhere in Scripture. It seems to mean simply "flocks." Compare the Septuagint, who render ὡσεί δύο ποίμνια αἰγῶν *hōsei duo poimnia aigōn* f0.

Verse 28

A man of God - Evidently not the prophet who had spoken to Ahab the year before 1 Kings 20:13, 1 Kings 20:22. He probably dwelt in the neighborhood of Samaria. Now that Ahab and his army had marched out into the Trans-Jordanic territory, another prophet, a native probably of that region, announced God's will to them.

Verse 30

A wall - "The wall," i. e., the wall of the town. We may suppose a terrific earthquake during the siege of the place, while the Syrians were manning the defenses in full force, which threw down the wall where they were most thickly crowded upon it, and buried them in its ruins. Ben-hadad fled from the wall, where he had been at the time of the disaster, into the inner parts of the city - probably to some massive stronghold - and there concealed himself.

Verse 31

And ropes upon our heads - "Ropes about our necks" is probably meant. They, as it were, put their lives at Ahab's disposal, who, if he pleased, might hang them at once.

Verse 32

Ben-hadad is now as humble as Ahab had been a year before 1 Kings 20:9. He professes himself the mere "slave" of his conqueror.

Verse 33

The meaning of this verse is that the men from the first moment of their arrival were on the watch to note what Ahab would say; and the moment he let fall the expression "He is my brother," they caught it up and repeated it, fixing him to it, as it were, and preventing his retreat. By the Oriental law of "dakheel" anyone is at any time entitled to put himself under the protection of another, be that other his friend or his greatest enemy; and if the man applied to does not at once reject him, if the slightest forms of friendly speech pass between the two, the bond is complete, and must not be broken. Ben-hadad's friends were on the watch to obtain for him "dakheel;" and the single phrase "He is my brother," having been accepted by them on his part, was sufficient to complete the bond, and secure the life of the captive. Ahab having called Ben-hadad his brother, treated him as he would a brother; he took him up into his chariot, than which there could not be a greater honor.

Verse 34

Ben-hadad, secure of his life, suggests terms of peace as the price of his freedom. He will restore to Ahab the Israelite cities taken from Omri by his father, among which Ramoth Gilead was probably the most important 1 Kings 22:3; and he will allow Ahab the privilege of making for himself "streets," or rather squares, in Damascus, a privilege which his own father had possessed with respect to Samaria. Commercial advantages, rather than any other, were probably sought by this arrangement.

So he made a covenant with him … - Ahab, without "inquiring of the Lord," at once agreed to the terms offered; and, without even taking any security for their due observance, allowed the Syrian monarch to depart. Considered politically, the act was one of culpable carelessness and imprudence. Ben-hadad did not regard himself as bound by the terms of a covenant made when he was a prisoner - as his after conduct shows 1 Kings 22:3. Ahab's conduct was even more unjustifiable in one who held his crown under a theocracy. "Inquiry at the word of the Lord" was still possible in Israel 1 Kings 22:5, 1 Kings 22:8, and would seem to have been the course that ordinary gratitude might have suggested.

Verse 35

The sons of the prophets - The expression occurs here for the first time. It signifies (marginal references), the schools or colleges of prophets which existed in several of the Israelite, and probably of the Jewish, towns, where young men were regularly educated for the prophetical office. These "schools" make their first appearance under Samuel 1 Samuel 19:20. There is no distinct evidence that they continued later than the time of Elisha; but it is on the whole most probable that the institution survived the captivity, and that the bulk of the "prophets," whose works have come down to us belonged to them. Amos Amos 7:14-15 seems to speak as if his were an exceptional case.

Said unto his neighbor - Rather, "to his friend" or "companion " - to one who was, like himself, "a prophet's son," and who ought therefore to have perceived that his colleague spoke "in the word of the Lord."

Verse 38

Ashes - Rather, "a bandage" (and in 1 Kings 20:41). The object of the wound and bandage was double. Partly, it was to prevent Ahab from recognizing the prophet's face; partly, to induce him to believe that the man had really been engaged in the recent war.

Verse 41

He was of the prophets - Josephus and others conjecture that this prophet was Micaiah, the son of Imlah (but compare 1 Kings 20:13 note).

Verse 42

A man whom I appointed to utter destruction - or to חרם *chērem* i. e., a man on whom My curse had been laid (Leviticus 27:28 note).

Verse 43

Heavy and displeased - Rather, “sullen and angry” (and so marginal reference), not repentant, as after Elijah‘s warning 1 Kings 21:27 - not acknowledging the justice of his sentence - but full of sullenness and suppressed anger.

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CHAPTER 21

Verse 1

A vineyard … in Jezreel - The name Jezreel is applied in Scripture, not merely to the town 1 Kings 18:46, but also to the valley or plain which lies below it, between Mount Gilboa and Little Hermon (2 Samuel 2:9; 2 Kings 9:10; Hosea 1:5; etc.).

The palace of Ahab at Jezreel was on the eastern side of the city, looking toward the Jordan down the valley above described. It abutted on the town wall 2 Kings 9:30-31. Immediately below it was a dry moat. Beyond, in the valley, either adjoining the moat, or at any rate at no great distance, was the plot of ground belonging to Naboth 2 Kings 9:21.

Verse 2

I will give thee the worth of it in money - literally, "I will give thee silver, the worth of it." Money, in our sense of the word, that is to say, coins of definite values, did not yet exist. The first coin known to the Jews was the Persian daric, with which they became acquainted during the captivity. (1 Chronicles 29:7 note).

Verse 3

The Lord forbid it me - Or, "Yahweh forbid it me." Naboth, as a worshipper of Yahweh, not of Baal, considers it would be wrong for him to comply with the king's request, as contrary to the Law (margin). His was not a mere refusal arising out of a spirit of sturdy independence, or one based upon the sentiment which attaches men to ancestral estates.

Verse 4

Upon his bed - That is, "upon his couch." The Jews, like other Orientals, reclined upon couches at their meals (Amos 6:4; Ezekiel 23:41, etc.). Ahab turns his face toward the back of the couch, rejecting all converse with others, and so remains, after the banquet is served, refusing to partake of it. Such an open manifestation of ill temper is thoroughly characteristic of an Oriental king.

Verse 7

The meaning is, "Art thou king, and yet sufferest thyself to be thwarted in this way by a mere subject? I, the queen, the weak woman, will give thee the vineyard, if thou, the king, the strong man, wilt do nothing."

Verse 8

Seal - The seal is a very ancient invention. Judah‘s signet and Pharaoh‘s signet-ring are mentioned in Genesis Genesis 38:18; Genesis 41:42. Signets of Egyptian kings have been found which are referred to about 2000 B.C. Sennacherib‘s signet, and an impression of Sargon‘s, are still extant. There can be no doubt that in the East, from a very remote antiquity, kings had seals and appended them to all documents which they set forth under their authority. (Compare also Esther 3:12; Esther 8:8; Daniel 6:17). The Hebrew mode of sealing seems to have been by attaching a lump of clay to the document, and impressing the seal thereupon Job 38:14.

His city - i. e., Jezreel 1 Kings 21:1. The mode in which it is spoken of here, and in 1 Kings 21:11, seems to imply that it was not the city from which Jezebel wrote. The court was evidently at this time residing at Samaria 1 Kings 20:43; and Ahab may either have met Naboth there, or have gone down (compare 1 Kings 21:16) to Jezreel to make his request, and then, on being refused, have returned to Samaria. The distance is not more than seven miles.

Verse 9

The object of this fast was at once to raise a prejudice against Naboth, who was assumed by the elders to have disgraced the town; and at the same time to give an air of religion to the proceedings, which might blind persons to their real injustice.

Set Naboth on high among his people - This was not an order to do Naboth any, even apparent, honor; but simply a command to bring him forward before a court or assembly, where he might be seen by all, tried, and condemned.

Verse 10

Sons of Belial - i. e., “worthless persons” (Deuteronomy 13:13 note). Witnesses must be two in number according to the Law Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6; Deuteronomy 19:15.

The word rendered “blaspheme” is that which commonly means “bless.” The opposite sense of “cursing,” seems, however, to be required here and in Job 1:5, Job 1:11; Job 2:5. Perhaps the best explanation of the bad sense of the original word is to be found in the practice of blessing by way of salutation, not only on meeting, but also on taking leave Genesis 47:7, Genesis 47:10. From the latter custom the word came to mean “bidding farewell to,” and so “renouncing,” “casting off,” “cursing.”

Carry him out and stone him - Naboth‘s offence would be twofold, and in both cases capital; blasphemy against God being punishable with death by the Law (marginal reference), and blasphemy against the king being a capital offence by custom 1 Kings 2:8; 2 Samuel 16:9; 2 Samuel 19:21. The punishment would be stoning, since the greater crime would absorb the lesser, and the Law made stoning the punishment for blasphemy against God. As stoning always took place outside the city (see Acts 7:58), Jezebel told the elders to “carry Naboth out.”

Verse 11

The ready submission of the elders and nobles implies a deep moral degradation among the Israelites, the fruit of their lapse into idolatry.

Verse 13

Naboth had sons who were also put to death at this time (marginal reference). It is not improbable that they were stoned together with their parent (compare Joshua 7:24-25). In the East, a parent‘s guilt constantly involves the punishment of his children. Contrast 2 Kings 14:6.

Verse 16

To take possession of it - The goods of traitors appear to have been forfeited to the crown by the Jewish law as they still are almost universally throughout the East. Compare 2 Samuel 16:4.

Verse 19

Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? - These words rebuke especially Ahab‘s indecent haste. He went to Jezreel the very day after Naboth‘s execution 2 Kings 9:26.

The prophecy following had a double fulfillment. The main fulfillment was by the casting of the dead body of Jehoram into Naboth‘s plot of ground at Jezreel, where, like Naboth‘s, it was left for the dogs to eat 2 Kings 9:25. This spot, which was just outside the city wall, and close to a gate 2 Kings 9:31, was probably the actual scene of Naboth‘s execution. Here did dogs lick Ahab‘s blood, that is, his son‘s blood, the execution of the full retaliatory sentence having been deferred to the days of his son, formally and explicitly, on Ahab‘s repentance 1 Kings 21:29. But, besides this, there was a secondary fulfillment of the prophecy, when, not at Jezreel but at Samaria (marginal reference), the actual blood of Ahab himself, was licked by dogs, only in a way that implied no disgrace. These two fulfillments are complementary to each other.

Verse 20

The words "O mine enemy," may refer partly to the old antagonism (marginal reference; 1 Kings 17:1; 1 Kings 19:2-3); but the feeling which it expresses is rather that of present oppositions - the opposition between good and evil, light and darkness John 3:20.

Thou hast sold thyself to work evil - Compare the marginal references. The metaphor is taken from the practice of men's selling themselves into slavery, and so giving themselves wholly up to work the will of their master. This was a widespread custom in the ancient world.

Verse 21

The prophet changes, without warning, from speaking in his own person to speaking in the person of God. The transition is abrupt, probably because the compiler follows his materials closely, compressing by omission. One fragment omitted here is preserved in 2 Kings 9:26.

Verse 23

And of Jezebel also spake the Lord, saying - These are not the words of Elijah, but of the writer, who notes a special prophecy against Jezebel, whose guilt was at least equal to her husband's.

Wall - The marginal rendering "ditch," is preferable. There is always in Oriental towns a space outside the walls which lies uncultivated, and which is naturally used for the deposit of refuse of every kind. Here the dogs prowl, and the kites and vultures find many a feast.

Verse 25

whom Jezebel stirred up - The history of Ahab's reign throughout exhibits him as completely governed by his imperious wife. Instances of her influence are seen in 1 Kings 21:7, 1 Kings 21:15, marginal reference, 1 Kings 18:4; 1 Kings 19:2.

Verse 26

The Amorites appear here as representatives of the old Canaanite nations (Genesis 15:16 note). It seems to be implied here that their idolatries were in the main identical with those of the Phoenicians which Ahab had adopted.

Verse 27

The repentance of Ahab resembles that of the Ninevites Jonah 3:5. It has the same outward signs - fasting and sackcloth - and it has much the same inward character. It springs, not from love, nor from hatred of sin, but from fear of the consequences of sin. It is thus, although sincere and real while it

lasts, shallow and exceedingly short-lived. God, however, to mark His readiness to receive the sinner who turns to Him, accepted the imperfect offering (as He likewise accepted the penitence of the Ninevites), and allowed it to delay the execution of the sentence 1 Kings 21:29. So the penitence of the Ninevites put off the fall of Nineveh for a century.

And lay in sackcloth - In this particular he seems to have gone beyond the usual practice. We do not read elsewhere of mourners passing the night in sackcloth.

And went softly - "As if he had no heart to go about any business" (Patrick).

Verse 29

The evil - i. e., the main evil. See 1 Kings 21:19 note; and compare 1 Kings 22:38 with marginal reference.

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CHAPTER 22

Verse 1

Three years - These must be counted from the close of the second campaign of Ben-hadad 1 Kings 20:34. They were not full years, as is evident from the next verse. Probably the first year is that of Ben-hadad‘s dismissal after his defeat; the second is a year of actual peace; while the third is that in which Jehoshaphat paid his visit, and the Ramoth-Gilead expedition took place. The pause, here noticed, in the war between Israel and Syria was perhaps the result of a common danger. It was probably in the year following Ben-hadad‘s dismissal by Ahab, that the first great Assyrian expedition took place into these parts. Shalmaneser II relates that on his first invasion of southern Syria, he was met by the combined forces of Ben-hadad, Ahab, the king of Hamath, the kings of the Hittites, and others, who gave him battle, but suffered a defeat.

Verse 2

This visit indicates an entire change in the relations which we have hitherto found subsisting between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The common danger to which the two kingdoms were exposed from the growing power of Syria had probably induced them to forget their differences. Jehoshaphat‘s eldest son, Jehoram, was married to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab: but apparently the bond between the two families had not hitherto led to any very close intimacy, much less to any joint military expeditions. Jehoshaphat seems to have taken no part in the former Syrian wars of Ahab, nor did he join in the great league against the Assyrians (1 Kings 22:1 note). His visit now was probably one of mere friendliness, without any political object. Ahab, however, turned the visit to political advantage. From this time until the displacement of Ahab‘s dynasty by Jehu, very intimate relations subsisted between the two kingdoms (1 Kings 22:49; 2 Kings 3:7; 2 Kings 8:28-29; 2 Chronicles 20:36, etc.).

Verse 3

By the terms of Ahab‘s covenant with Ben-hadad, Ramoth in Gilead ought, long ere this, to have been restored 1 Kings 20:34. Hence, the claim “is ours,” i. e., “it belongs to us of right though the Syrians still hold possession of it.”

Verse 4

Ahab, well aware of the military strength of Syria, and feeling that he cannot now expect divine aid 1 Kings 20:42; 1 Kings 21:21, asks the aid of Jehoshaphat, whose military resources were very great 2 Chronicles 17:12-19. Jehoshaphat's answer is one of complete acquiescence, without reserve of any kind (compare 2 Chronicles 18:3). Jehoshaphat was afterward rebuked for thus consenting to "help the ungodly" 2 Chronicles 19:2. He probably acted not merely from complaisance, but from a belief that the interests of his own kingdom would be advanced by the step which he agreed to take. The power of Syria was at this time very menacing.

Verse 5

Jehoshaphat, with characteristic piety 1 Kings 22:43 takes advantage of his position as Ahab's friend and ally, to suggest inquiry of the Lord (Yahweh) before the expedition is undertaken. Lest Ahab should consent in word and put off the inquiry in act, he asks to have the prophets called in at once: "today."

Verse 6

The prophets - i. e., In all probability the prophets attached to the worship of the calves; not real prophets of Yahweh. This seems evident both from Jehoshaphat's dissatisfaction 1 Kings 22:7, and from the strong antagonism apparent between the true Yahweh-prophet Micaiah, and these self-styled "prophets of the Lord" 1 Kings 22:22-25.

The Lord shall deliver it - In the Hebrew the word here used for "Lord" is אדני *'ădonāy* Later (i. e., in 1 Kings 22:11-12) Lord or יהוה *yehovâh* is used. It would seem as if the idolatrous prophets shrank from employing the latter title until they found that Jehoshaphat insisted on learning the will of Yahweh in the matter.

Verse 7

Jehoshaphat was dissatisfied. These men - creatures of Ahab, tainted with the worship of calves if not with Baal-worship - had promised victory, but not in the name of Yahweh. Jehoshaphat, therefore, asked, "Is there not here a true prophet of Yahweh besides these 400 professed prophets?"

Verse 8

There is yet one man, Micaiah - Elijah, it appears, had withdrawn again after the events of the last chapter, and there was no known prophet of Yahweh within reach of Samaria except Micaiah.

He doth not prophesy good concerning me but evil - Whether the tradition in 1 Kings 20:41 note be true or not, it is certain that Ahab had

imprisoned him 1 Kings 22:26, and probable that the imprisonment was on account of threatening prophecies. Ahab suggests to Jehoshaphat that Micaiah is one who allows his private feelings to determine the utterances which he delivers as if from Yahweh. Hence, the force of Jehoshaphat's answer, "Let not the king say so;" i. e., "Let not the king suppose that a prophet would be guilty of such impiety," - an impiety from which even Balaam shrank Numbers 22:18.

Verse 9

An officer - More properly, as in the margin, "a eunuch." Eunuchs seem to have been first introduced among the Israelites by David (1 Chronicles 28:1 note). They were a natural accompaniment of the seraglio of Solomon. The present passage is the first which shows that, after the separation of the kingdom, the kings of Israel employed them (compare 2 Kings 8:6; 2 Kings 9:32).

Verse 10

Sat each on his throne - Or, "were sitting." They had removed from the banquet 2 Chronicles 18:2 to the void place, or empty space at the entrance of the gate Rth 4:1 ; 2 Samuel 15:2, where Ahab daily sat to hear complaints and decide causes. Each was seated upon his throne, the Oriental kings having portable thrones, which they took with them upon their journeys.

Verse 11

Horns of iron - The horn in Scripture is the favorite symbol of power; and pushing with the horn is a common metaphor for attacking and conquering enemies (see Deuteronomy 33:17; Compare Psalm 44:5; Daniel 8:4). Zedekiah, in employing a symbolic action, was following the example of a former Israelite prophet 1 Kings 11:30.

Thus saith the Lord - Or, יהוה *yehovâh* Zedekiah lays aside the unmeaningful "Lord" אדני *'ădonāy* of the general company of Israelite prophets 1 Kings 22:6, and professes to have a direct message from Yahweh to Ahab. He may have believed his own words, for the "lying spirit" 1 Kings 22:22 may have seemed to him a messenger from Yahweh. All the rest followed his example 1 Kings 22:12.

Verse 13

And the messenger spake unto him … - There seems to have been a widespread notion among the irreligious and the half-religious of the ancient world, that their prophets were not the mere mouth-pieces of the

god, but that they were persons who had power with the god, and could compel, or at least induce, Him to work their will (compare Numbers 24:10; Isaiah 30:10). They saw that the prophet‘s word was accomplished; they did not understand that if he falsified his message the accomplishment would no longer follow.

Verse 14

Micaiah, as a true prophet of Yahweh, of course rejected the counsel offered him, which he felt to be at once wicked and foolish. Compare also the resolution of Balaam, marginal reference.

Verse 15

And he answered him … - Micaiah speaks the exact words of the 400 in so mocking and ironical a tone, that the king cannot mistake his meaning, or regard his answer as serious. The king‘s rejoinder implies that this mocking manner was familiar to Micaiah, who had used it in some former dealings with the Israelite monarch. Hence, in part, the king‘s strong feeling of dislike (compare 1 Kings 22:8).

Verse 17

Thus adjured, Micaiah wholly changes his tone. Ahab cannot possibly mistake the meaning of his vision, especially as the metaphor of “sheep and shepherd” for king and people was familiar to the Israelites from the prayer of Moses Numbers 27:17.

Verse 18

See 1 Kings 22:8. Ahab implies that he believes Micaiah to have spoken out of pure malevolence, without any authority for his prediction from God. By implication he invites Jehoshaphat to disregard this pseudo-prophecy, and to put his trust in the unanimous declaration of the 400. Micaiah, therefore, proceeds to explain the contradiction between himself and the 400, by recounting another vision.

Verse 19

David‘s Psalms had familiarised the Israelites with Yahweh sitting upon a throne in the heavens (Psalm 9:7; Psalm 11:4; Psalm 45:6; Psalm 103:19, etc.); but to be allowed to see in vision the ineffable glory of the Almighty thus seated, was a rare favor. It was granted to Isaiah, to Daniel (marginal references), to Ezekiel Ezekiel 1:26, and in Christian times to Stephen Acts 7:56, and John Revelation 4:2.

Verse 21

A spirit - "The spirit " - which some explain as "the evil spirit" - i. e. Satan; others as simply "the spirit" who should "persuade."

Verse 22

The difficulties which attach to this passage are considerable. On the one hand, it is hard to suppose one of the holy Angels a "lying spirit;" on the other, hard to find Satan, or an evil spirit, included among "the host of heaven" 1 Kings 22:19 and acting as the minister of God. Still, Job 1:6; Job 2:1, lend countenance to the latter point, and 2 Thessalonians 2:11 to the former. But it may be doubted whether we ought to take literally, and seek to interpret exactly, each statement of the present narrative. Visions of the invisible world can only be a sort of parables; revelations, not of the truth as it actually is, but of so much of the truth as can be shown through such a medium. The details of a vision, therefore, cannot safely be pressed, anymore than the details of a parable. Portions of each must be accommodations to human modes of thought, and may very inadequately express the realities which they are employed to shadow forth to us.

Verse 24

Smote Micaiah on the cheek - As Micaiah had been brought from prison 1 Kings 22:26, it is probable that his hands were bound.

The prophet, thus standing before the great ones of the earth, bound and helpless, bearing testimony to the truth, and for his testimony smitten on the face by an underling, whose blow he receives without either shame or anger, is a notable type of our Lord before Caiaphas suffering the same indignity.

Which way … - Zedekiah's meaning may perhaps be expounded as follows:

"The Spirit of Yahweh certainly came to me, and inspired me with the answer which I gave. If He afterward went to thee, as thou sayest that He did, perhaps thou canst tell us - as all the secrets of the invisible world are, thou pretendest, open to thee - which way He took."

Verse 25

Micaiah addresses himself not so much to Zedekiah's question, as to the main point which lies in dispute - which of them, namely, is a true prophet. "When the news, i. e., of Ahab's death, caused by his following thy counsels, reaches Samaria, and thou hast to hide thyself from the vengeance

of Ahaziah or Jezebel, then, in that day, thou wilt know whether I or thou be the true prophet."

Verse 26

Carry him back - literally, "cause him to return." Micaiah had been in custody before, and was brought by Ahab's messenger from his prison.

The governor of the city - This is one out of several notices respecting what may be called the "constitution" of the Israelite kingdom. The king consulted on important matters a Council of elders 1 Kings 20:7-8. The general administration was carried on by means of the governors of provinces 1 Kings 20:14 and of cities 2 Kings 10:5. The governors of cities, like the monarch, were assisted and checked by councils of elders, the wise men of the several towns 1 Kings 21:8-12; 2 Kings 10:5. Thus Samaria, as we see from the present passage, was under a special governor, who, among his other duties, had the control of the public prison, and directed the treatment of the prisoners.

The king's son - The phrase seems to designate a state office, rather than relationship to the sovereign. Compare 2 Chronicles 28:7.

Verse 27

Feed him with bread of affliction … - Micaiah is to be once more put in prison, but, in order to punish him for his uncomplying spirit, upon a poorer and scantier diet than he had been previously allowed. This is to continue until Ahab returns in peace. Ahab introduces this expression purposely, in order to show his entire disbelief of Micaiah's prophecy.

Verse 29

It might have been expected that Jehoshaphat would have withdrawn from the expedition when he heard Micaiah denounce it. He had, however, rashly committed himself to take part in the war by a solemn promise, before he bethought himself of inquiring what was the will of God in the matter. Now he was ashamed to draw back, especially as Ahab, whom the prophecy chiefly threatened, was resolved to brave it. He may also have had a personal affection for Ahab, and so have been loth to desert him in his need. Compare 2 Chronicles 19:2.

Verse 30

I will disguise myself - Ahab had probably heard of Ben-hadad's order to his captains 1 Kings 22:31.

Verse 31

Commanded - "Had commanded." Ben-hadad delivers his order in the hyperbolical style common in the East. His meaning is, "Make it your chief object to kill or take the king of Israel." Apparently, his own defeat and captivity were still rankling in his mind, and he wished to retaliate on Ahab, the humiliation which he considered himself to have suffered. He shows small appreciation of the generosity which had spared his life and restored him to his kingdom.

Verse 32

Surely it is the king of Israel - This was a natural supposition, as Jehoshaphat alone wore royal robes.

And Jehoshaphat cried out - Jehoshaphat called to his men for help, using perhaps his own special battle-cry, which would be distinct from that of Ahab, and would probably be known to the Syrians.

Verse 34

At a venture - literally, as in the margin, i. e. without intent to kill the king.

Between the joints of the harness - literally, as in the margin. The "joints" were probably pieces of armor which attached the breast-plate to the helmet or to the greaves. The arrow entered between the breastplate and one of these "joints." breastplates made of metal scales were common both in Egypt and Assyria.

Turn thine hand - literally, "turn thy hands." The driver of a chariot, both in Egypt and Assyria, held the reins with his two hands.

Verse 35

The battle increased - See the margin; i. e. the tide of battle rose higher. Compare Isaiah 8:7-8.

The king was stayed up in his chariot - The king's wound made it impossible for him to remain standing without help; he therefore had himself supported in his chariot by attendants, in order that his soldiers might not lose heart, as they would be sure to do, if they knew of his peril. Ahab must not be denied the credit of right princely fortitude on this occasion.

The midst of the chariot - literally, as in the margin. The "bosom" of the chariot is the rounded front, with the portion of the standing board that adjoined it. Here the blood would naturally collect, forming a pool, in which the king and his charioteer must have stood.

Verse 36

About the going down of the sun - i. e. as soon as Ahab was dead. The abandonment of the expedition and dispersion of the army on the death of the king is thoroughly Oriental.

The Septuagint version reads 1 Kings 22:36-37, "Every man to his city, and every man to his own country, for the king is dead: And they came to Samaria," etc.

Verse 38

They washed his armour - Rather, "the harlots bathed in it." The "pool of Samaria," which was stained with Ahab's blood by the washing of his chariot in it, was, according to Josephus, the usual bathing-place of the Samaritan harlots. A large tank or reservoir, probably identical with this pool, still remains on the slope of the hill of Samaria, immediately outside the walls.

Verse 39

The ivory house - So called from the character of its ornamentation. Ivory was largely used in the ancient world as a covering of wood-work, and seems to have been applied, not only to furniture, but to the doors and walls of houses.

Nothing is known of the cities built by Ahab; but the fact is important as indicating the general prosperity of the country in his time, and his own activity as a ruler. Prosperity, it is plain, may for a while co-exist with causes - such as, the decay of religions - which are sapping the vital power of a nation, and leading it surely, if slowly, to destruction.

The book of the chronicles … - See above, 1 Kings 14:19; 1 Kings 15:31; 1 Kings 16:5, 1 Kings 16:14, 1 Kings 16:20, 1 Kings 16:27.

Verse 41

The writer returns to the history of the kingdom of Judah (connect this verse with 1 Kings 15:24), sketching briefly a reign much more fully given by the writer of Chronicles 2 Chronicles 1720. Compare also the marginal references.

Verse 43

On the general piety of Asa, see above, 1 Kings 15:11-15 and references. Jehoshaphat seems to have been a still better king, for he did not, like Asa, fall away in his old age 2 Chronicles 16:2-12.

The high places were not taken away - This seems to contradict 2 Chronicles 17:6. Probably the writer of Chronicles refers to the desire and

intention of the monarch, while the author of Kings records the practical failure of his efforts.

Verse 44

This refers probably to an early period in Jehoshaphat‘s reign - about his eighth or his ninth year - when he closed the long series of wars between the two kingdoms by a formal peace, perhaps at once cemented by a marriage between Jehoram and Athaliah (1 Kings 22:2 note).

Verse 45

The book of the chronicles … - Compare 1 Kings 22:39 note. The biographer of Jehoshaphat appears to have been Jehu, the son of Hanani 2 Chronicles 20:34.

Verse 46

See the marginal references notes.

Verse 47

In the time of Solomon, Hadad 1 Kings 11:14, according to the Septuagint, “reigned over Edom.” It appears by the present passage that the country had been again reduced either by Jehoshaphat, or by an earlier king, and was dependent on the kingdom of Judah, being governed by a “deputy” or viceroy, who, however, was allowed the royal title (compare 2 Kings 3:9, 2 Kings 3:12, 2 Kings 3:26). This government of dependencies by means of subject-kings was the all but universal practice in the East down to the time of Cyrus (the 1 Kings 4:21 note).

Verse 48

The expression, “ships of Tharshish,” probably designates ships of a particular class, ships (i. e.) like those with which the Phoenicians used to trade to Tharshish (Tartessus, 1 Kings 10:22 note). Compare the use of “India-man” for a vessel of a certain class. Jehoshaphat‘s fleet was constructed at Ezion-Gaber, on the Red Sea 2 Chronicles 20:36, where Solomon had previously built a navy 1 Kings 9:26. Being lord-paramount of Edom, Jehoshaphat had the right of using this harbor.

Verse 49

2 Chronicles 20:35-36, explains that the two kings conjointly built the fleet with which the Ophir trade (1 Kings 9:28 note) was to be re-opened. Ahaziah had thus an interest in the ships; and when they were wrecked, attributing, as it would seem, the calamity to the unskillfulness of his ally‘s mariners, he proposed that the fleet should be manned in part by Israelite sailors - men probably accustomed to the sea, perhaps trained at Tyre. This

proposal Jehoshaphat refused, either offended at the reflection on his subjects‘ skill, or accepting the wreck of the ships, which Eliezer had prophesied, as a proof that God was against the entire undertaking.

Verse 51

Two years - According to our reckoning, not much more than a twelve-month year.

Verse 52

In the way of his mother - In this phrase, which does not occur anywhere else, we see the strong feeling of the writer as to the influence of Jezebel (compare 1 Kings 16:31).

Verses 1 Kings 22:51-53. It would be of advantage if these verses were transferred to the Second Book of Kings, which would thus open with the commencement of Ahaziah‘s reign. The division of the books does not proceed from the author. See the introduction to the Book of Kings

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Contents

Introduction to 1 and 2Kings

The Greek translators, known as the Septuagint, who separated the "Book of the Law of Moses" into five parts, and the "Book of Samuel" into two, made the division, which is now almost universally adopted, of the original "Book of Kings" into a "First" and a "Second Book." The separation thus made was followed naturally in the early Latin versions, which were formed from the Greek; and when Jerome set forth the edition now called "The Vulgate," he followed the custom which he found established. The general adoption of the Vulgate by the Western Church caused the arrangement introduced by the Septuagint to obtain almost universal acceptance.

The work is named from its contents, since the entire subject of the whole is the history of the "kings" of Israel and Judah from the accession of Solomon to the Babylonian captivity.

1. The unity of the work is proved by the marked and striking simplicity and regularity of the plan. The work is, from first to last a history of the kings in strict chronological order, on the same system, and on a uniform scale. Exceptions to this uniformity in the larger space bestowed on the reigns of a few monarchs are due to the principle of treating with the greatest fullness the parts of the history theocratically of most importance.

A second evidence of unity is the general uniformity of style and language - a uniformity admitted by all writers, and one which is only slightly infringed in two or three instances, where the irregularity may be accounted for by a diversity in the sources used by the author and a close following of the language which he found in those sources.

To these general heads of evidence may be added certain peculiarities of thought or expression which pervade the two books, all of them indicating with greater or less certainty a single author.

2. Some have thought from the continuity of the narrative, from the general resemblance of the style, and from the common employment of a certain number of words and phrases, that the six "books," commencing

with Judges and terminating with the Second Book of Kings, are the production of a single writer, and constitute in reality a single unbroken composition. Others consider these arguments far from conclusive. The continuity of the narrative is formal, and may be due to the after arrangements of a reviser, such as Ezra is commonly believed to have been.

So far as the mere idiom of the language goes, it is perhaps true that we cannot draw a marked line between Kings and Samuel. But many of the traits most characteristic of the writer of Kings are wholly wanting in the other (and probably earlier) composition. For these and other reasons the "Books of Kings" may claim distinctness and separateness.

3. There are two grounds upon which, apart from all traditional notices, the date of a historical work may be determined, namely, the peculiarities of the diction, and the contents.

The language of Kings belongs unmistakably to the period of the captivity. It is later than that of Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Joel, and Nahum, earlier than that of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah. In general character it bears a close resemblance to the language of Jeremiah and Ezekiel; and may be assigned to the sixth century before our era.

The result obtainable from the contents is similar, only somewhat more definite. Assuming the last detached section of the work 2 Kings 25:27-30 to be an integral portion of it, we obtain the year 561 B.C. - the first year of Evil-Merodach - as the earliest possible date of the completion of the composition. Again, from the fact that the work contains no allusion at all to the return of the Jews from their captivity, we obtain for the latest possible date the year 538 B.C., the year of the return under Zerubbabel: or in other words between the death of Nebuchadnezzar and the accession of Cyrus in Babylon. Linguistic and other considerations favor the belief that the actual completion was early in this period - about 560 B.C.; and it is not improbable that the greater part of the work was written as early as 580 B.C. - i. e. some twenty years previously.

4. Jewish tradition assigns the authorship of Kings to Jeremiah; and there are very weighty arguments in favor of this view. There is a very remarkable affinity between the language of Kings and that of the admitted writings of the prophet. The matter moreover, of the two works, so far as the same events are treated, is in the closest harmony, those points being especially singled out for insertion, of which Jeremiah had personal knowledge and in which he took a special interest. Another argument of very considerable force is drawn from the entire omission of any notice at all of Jeremiah in Kings, which would have been very strange and unnatural in any other historian, considering the important part which Jeremiah played in the transactions of so many reigns, but which is completely intelligible on the hypothesis of his authorship of Kings: it is then the natural fruit and sign of a becoming modesty and unselfishness.

Still, though Jeremiah‘s authorship appears, all things considered, to be highly probable, we must admit that it has not been proved, and is therefore to some extent uncertain.

5. The author of Kings cites as authorities on the subject matter of his history three works:

(1) the “book of the acts of Solomon” 1 Kings 11:41;

(2) the “book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel” (1 Kings 14:19, etc.); and

(3) the “Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah” (1 Kings 14:29, etc.).

His own history was, at least in part, derived from these works. Lesser works were also open to him. Further, the writer had probably access to a work of a different character from any of those quoted by the author of Chronicles, namely, a collection of the miracles of Elisha, made probably in one of the schools of the prophets.

Hence, the sources of Kings may be considered threefold, consisting, first, of certain general historical documents called the “Books of the

Chronicles of the Kings;" secondly, of some special treatises on the history of particular short periods; and, thirdly, of a single work of a very peculiar character, the private biography of a remarkable man.

The "books of the chronicles of the kings" were probably of the nature of public archives, - state-annals, that is, containing an account of the chief public events in the reign of each king, drawn up by an authorized person. With the Israelites the authorized person was probably in almost every case a prophet. The prophets regarded this as one of their principal duties, as we see by the examples of Isaiah 2 Chronicles 26:22; 1 Kings 6:1 seems to be a gloss of this character, and it may be suspected that to a similar origin is due the whole series of synchronisms between the dynasties of Israel and Judah. It is probable that the original work gave simply the years assigned to each king in the "books of the chronicles," without entering upon the further question, in what regnal year of the contemporary monarch in the sister kingdom each prince ascended the throne. The chief difficulties of the chronology, and almost all the actual contradictions, disappear if we subtract from the work these portions.

Excepting in this respect, the Books of Kings have come down to us, as to all essentials, in a thoroughly sound condition. The only place where the Septuagint Version differs importantly from the Hebrew text is in 1 Kings 12:24 and 1 Kings 12:25. But this passage is clearly no part of the original narrative. It is a story after the fashion of the apocryphal Esdras, worked up out of the Scripture facts, with additions, which the Alexandrian writer may have taken from some Jewish authority whereto he had access, but which certainly did not come from the writer of Kings. None of its facts except possibly a single one - the age, namely, of Rehoboam at his accession belongs to the real narrative of our historian.

7. The primary character of the work is undoubtedly historical. It is the main object of the writer to give an account of the kings of Israel and Judah from Solomon‘s accession to the captivity of Zedekiah.

The history is, however, written - not, like most history, from a civil, but from a religious point of view. The Jews are regarded, not as an ordinary nation, but as God‘s people. The historian does not aim at exhibiting the

mere political progress of the kingdoms about which he writes, but intends to describe to us God‘s treatment of the race with which lie had entered into covenant. Where he records the events of the civil history, his plan is to trace cut the fulfillment of the combined warning and promise which had been given to David 2 Samuel 7:12-16.

Hence, events, which an ordinary historian would have considered of great importance, may be (and are) omitted by our author from the narrative; or touched slightly and hastily.. He treats with the utmost brevity the conquest of Jerusalem by Shishak 1 Kings 14:25-26, the war between Abijam and Jeroboam 1 Kings 15:7, that of Amaziah with Edom 2 Kings 14:7, and that of Josiah with Pharaoh-Nechoh 2 Kings 23:29; events treated at length in the parallel passages of the Book of Chronicles.) As a general rule, the military history of the two kingdoms, which was no doubt carefully recorded in the “Books of the Chronicles,” is omitted by the writer of Kings, who is content for the most part to refer his readers to the state-annals for the events which would have made the greatest figure in an ordinary secular history.

On the other hand, the special aim of the writer induces him to assign a prominent piece and to give a full treatment to events which a secular historian would have touched lightly or passed over in silence. The teaching of the prophets, and their miracles, were leading points in the religious history of the time; it was owing to them especially that the apostasy of the people was without excuse; therefore the historian who has to show that, despite the promises made to David, Jerusalem was destroyed, and the whole twelve tribes carried into captivity, must exhibit fully the grounds for this severity, and must consequently dwell on circumstances which so intensely aggravated the guilt of the people.

The character of the history that he has to relate, its general tendency and ultimate issue, naturally throw over his whole narrative an air of gloom. The tone of the work tires harmonises with that of Jeremiah‘s undoubted writings, and furnishes an additional argument in favor of that prophet‘s authorship.

The style of Kings is, for the most part, level and uniform - a simple narrative style. Occasionally, a more lofty tone is breathed, the style rising with the subject matter, and becoming in places almost poetical 1 Kings 19:11-12; 2 Kings 19:21-31. The most striking chapters are 1 Kings 8; 18; 19; 2 Kings 5; 9; 18; 19; 20.

8. The general authenticity of the narrative contained in our books is admitted. Little is denied or questioned but the miraculous portions of the story, which cluster chiefly about the persons of Elijah and Elisha. Some critics admitting that the narrative generally is derived from authentic contemporary documents - either state-annals or the writings of contemporary prophets - maintain that the histories of Elijah and Elisha come from an entirely different source, being (they hold) collections of traditions respecting those persons made many years after their deaths, either by the writer of Kings or by some other person, from the mouths of the common people. Hence, according to them, their "legendary" or "mythical" character.

But there are no critical grounds for separating off the account of Elijah, or more than a small portion of the account of Elisha, from the rest of the composition. The history of Elijah especially is so intertwined with that of the kingdom of Israel, and is altogether of so public a nature, that the "chronicles of the kings of Israel" would almost necessarily have contained an account of it; and an important part of the history of Elisha is of a similar character. Further, it is quite gratuitous to imagine that the account was not a contemporary one, or that it was left for a writer living long subsequently to collect into a volume the doings of these remarkable personages. The probability is quite the other way. As the prophets themselves were the historians of the time, it would be only natural that Elisha should collect the miracles and other remarkable deeds of Elijah; and that his own should be collected after his decease by some one of the "sons of the prophets." Add to this that the miracles, as related, have all the air of descriptions derived from eye-witnesses, being full of such minute circumstantial detail as tradition cannot possibly preserve. The whole result would seem to be that (unless we reject miracles altogether as unworthy of belief on account of an "a priori" impossibility) the account of the two great Israelite prophets in

Kings must be regarded as entitled to acceptance equally with the rest of the narrative.

Both internal consistency and probability, and also external testimony, strongly support the general authenticity of the secular history contained in Kings. The empire of Solomon is of a kind with which early Oriental history makes us familiar; it occurs exactly at a period when there was room for its creation owing to the simultaneous weakness of Egypt and Assyria; its rapid spread, and still more rapid contraction, are in harmony with our other records of Eastern dominion; its art and civilization resemble these known to have prevailed about the same time in neighboring countries. The contact of Judaea with Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia, during the period covered by our books agrees with the Egyptian annals, and in some respects is most strikingly illustrated by the cuneiform inscriptions. Berosus, Manetho, Menander, Dius - the pagan historians of Babylon, Egypt, and Tyre - join with the monuments in the support which they furnish to our author‘s truthfulness and accuracy, as the comment appended to the text will prove abundantly.

Even the broader features of the chronology are both internally probable, and externally confirmed by the chronologies of other countries. The interval between the accession of Solomon and the captivity of Zedekiah is given as 433 12 years, which is divided among twenty-one monarchs, who belong to eighteen (or, excluding Jehoiachin, to seventeen) generations. This allows for each generation the very probable term of 25 12 years. During the portion of the history where the chronology is double, and where the chief internal difficulties occur, the divergence of the two schemes is but slight, amounting to no more than about twenty years in 240 or 250. Egyptian annals confirm approximately the Biblical dates for Shishak‘s invasion, and So‘s alliance. The Assyrian annals agree with the Hebrew in the date of the fall of Samaria, and in exhibiting Hazael and Jehu, Tiglath-Pileser and Ahaz, Sennacherib and Hezekiah, Esarhaddon and Manasseh, as contemporaries. The chronological difficulties, where such exist, do not at all exceed those with which every reader of profane historians is familiar, and which, in fact, pervade the whole of ancient chronology. They are partly to be accounted for by diversities in the mode

of reckoning; while occasionally no doubt they result from a corrupt reading, or from an unauthorized interpolation.

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The Moabites, who had once lorded over Israel Judges 3:12-14, were reduced to subjection by David, and treated with extreme severity (marginal reference). In the time of Ahab they were dependent on the kingdom of Israel, to which it has been generally supposed that they fell at the separation of Israel from Judah. The Moabite monument (see 2 Kings 3:4), discovered in 1869, has now given reason to believe that they then recovered their independence, but were again reduced by Omri, who, with his son Ahab, is said (in round numbers) to have "oppressed" them for "forty years." Ahab's death was seized upon as an occasion for revolt, and Moab (perhaps owing to Ahaziah's sickness) easily regained her independence.

Verse 2

A lattice - The "upper chamber" had probably a single latticed window, through which Ahaziah fell. Windows in the East are to this day generally closed by lattices of interlaced wood, which open outward; so that, if the fastening is not properly secured, one who leans against them may easily fall out.

Baal-zebub - literally, "Lord (i. e., averter) of flies." Flies in the East constitute one of the most terrible of plages Psalm 105:31; Exodus 8:24; and Orientals would be as likely to have a "god of flies" as a god of storm fand thunder. To inquire 2 Kings 1:3 of Baal-zebub was practically to deny Yahweh. Ahaziah cast aside the last remnant of respect for the old religion, and consulted a foreign oracle, as if the voice of God were wholly silent in his own country.

For Ekron see the marginal reference.

Verse 4

Therefore … - As a punishment for this insult to Yahweh.

Verse 8

An hairy man - Either in allusion to his shaggy cloak of untanned skin; or, more probably, an expression descriptive of the prophet's person, of his long flowing locks, abundant beard, and general profusion of hair. His costume was that of a thorough ascetic. Generally the Jews wore girdles of linen or cotton stuff, soft and comfortable. Under the girdle they wore one

or two long linen gowns or shirts, and over these they had sometimes a large shawl. Elijah had only his leather girdle and his sheepskin cape or "mantle."

Verse 9

Then the king sent unto him - i. e., in order to seize and punish him. Compare 1 Kings 18:10; 1 Kings 22:27.

Verse 10

The charge of cruelty made against Elijah makes it needful to consider the question: What was Elijah's motive? And the answer is: Sharply to make a signal example, to vindicate God's honor in a striking way. Ahaziah had, as it were, challenged Yahweh to a trial of strength by sending a band of fifty to arrest one man. Elijah was not Jesus Christ, able to reconcile mercy with truth, the vindication of God's honor with the utmost tenderness for erring men, and awe them merely by His presence (compare John 18:6). In Elijah the spirit of the Law was embodied in its full severity. His zeal was fierce; he was not shocked by blood; he had no softness and no relenting. He did not permanently profit by the warning at Horeb (1 Kings 19:12 note). He continued the uncompromising avenger of sin, the wielder of the terrors of the Lord, such exactly as he had shown himself at Carmel. He is, consequently, no pattern for Christian men Luke 9:55; but his character is the perfection of the purely legal type. No true Christian after Pentecost would have done what Elijah did. But what he did, when he did it, was not sinful. It was but executing strict, stern justice. Elijah asked that fire should fall - God made it fall; and, by so doing, both vindicated His own honor, and justified the prayer of His prophet.

Verse 17

The similarity of names in the two royal houses of Israel and Judah at this time, and at no other, seems to be the consequence of the close ties which united the two reigning families, and is well noted among the "undesigned coincidences" of the Old Testament. The accession of the Israelite Jehoram (Ahab's brother) took place, according to 2 Kings 3:1, in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat. Jehoram of Judah perhaps received the royal title from his father as early as his father's sixteenth year, when he was about to join Ahab against the Syrians; the same year might then be called either the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat or the second year of Jehoram.

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

The events of this chapter are related out of their chronological order. Elijah‘s translation did not take place until after the accession of Jehoram in Judah 2 Chronicles 21:12, which was not until the fifth year of Jehoram of Israel 2 Kings 8:16. The writer of Kings, having concluded his notices of the ministry of Elijah in chapter 1, and being about to pass in 2 Kings 4:38.

Verse 2

Tarry here - Elijah‘s motive in making this request is not clear. Perhaps he thought that so awful and sacred a scene as that which he was led to expect 2 Kings 2:9, should be kept as secret as possible.

The Lord hath sent me to Bethel - Elijah may have been directed to Bethel, because of the “School of the prophets” there, that the sight of him - if not his words - might console and encourage them before they lost him forever.

As the Lord liveth … - This double oath, repeated three times 2 Kings 2:4, 2 Kings 2:6, is very remarkable. The two clauses of it are separately used with some frequency (see Judges 8:19; Rth 3:13 ; 1 Samuel 1:26, etc.), but it is comparatively seldom that they are united (see the marginal references).

Verse 3

Came forth to Elisha - It does not appear that any interchange of speech took place between “the sons of the prophets” (see the marginal reference note) and Elijah; but independent revelations had been made to the two “schools” at Bethel and Jericho 2 Kings 2:5, and also to Elisha, with respect to Elijah‘s coming removal.

From thy head - i. e. from his position as teacher and master. The teacher sat on an elevated seat, so that his feet were level with the heads of his pupils (compare Acts 22:3).

Hold ye your peace - i. e. “Say nothing - disturb us not. The matter is too sacred for words.”

Verse 7

Fifty men of the sons of the prophets - We see by this how large were the prophetical schools. It is implied that the “fifty” were only a portion of the school of Jericho. They ascended the abrupt heights behind the town,

from where they would command a view of the whole course of the river and of the opposite bank for many miles.

Verse 8

They were divided … - The attestation to the divine mission of Elijah furnished by this miracle would tend to place him upon a par in the thoughts of men with the two great leaders of the nation named in the marginal references.

Verse 9

Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me - Like Solomon, Elisha asks for no worldly advantage, but for spiritual power to discharge his office aright. The "double portion" is that which denotes the proportion of a father‘s property which was the right of an eldest son Deuteronomy 21:17. Elisha therefore asked for twice as much of Elijah‘s spirit as should be inherited by any other of the "sons of the prophets." He simply claimed, i. e., to be acknowledged as Elijah‘s firstborn spiritual son.

Verse 10

It would be better to omit the words "when I am," which are not in the original. The sign was to be Elisha‘s seeing the actual translation, which he did 2 Kings 2:12.

Verse 11

Elijah went up … - No honest exegesis can explain this passage in any other sense than as teaching the translation of Elijah, who was taken from the earth, like Enoch Genesis 5:24, without dying. Compare Sirach 48:9.

Verse 12

The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof - These difficult words are probably said of Elijah, whom Elisha addresses as "the true defense of Israel, better than either the chariots or horsemen" which he saw. Hence, his rending his clothes in token of his grief.

Verse 14

Where … - Some prefer, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah, even he? And when he had smitten, etc." Or, according to others, "now when he, etc." Elisha‘s smiting of the waters seems to have been tentative. He was not sure of its result. Hence, the form of his invocation - "Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Is He here - i. e. - with me, or is He not?" Answered by the event, he appears never subsequently to have doubted.

Verse 16

Compare the marginal references. The words "cast him upon some mountain," rather imply that they expected to find the prophet alive.

Verse 17

Till he was ashamed - i. e. to refuse them any longer.

Verse 19

The water is naught - i. e. "bad."

And the ground barren - Translate "and the land apt to miscarry." The stream was thought to be the cause of untimely births, abortions, and the like, among the cattle, perhaps also among the people, that drank of it.

Verse 20

The "new cruse" and the "salt" are evidently chosen from a regard to symbolizm. The foul stream represents sin, and to cleanse it emblems of purity must he taken. Hence, the clean "new" dish previously unused, and thus untainted; and the salt, a common Scriptural symbol of incorruption (see Leviticus 2:13; Ezekiel 43:24; Matthew 5:13, etc.).

Verse 21

The spring of the waters - The spring intended is probably that now called Ain-es-Sultan, which is not much more than a mile from the site of the ancient town. It is described as a large and beautiful fountain of sweet and pleasant water. The springs issuing from the eastern base of the highlands of Judah and Benjamin are to this day generally brackish.

Verse 23

As Beth-el was the older seat of the calf-worship 1 Kings 12:32-33; 13:1-32, a prophet of Yahweh was not unlikely to meet with insult there.

By the way - i. e. "by the usual road," probably that which winds up the Wady Suweinit, under hills even now retaining some trees, and in Elisha's time covered with a dense forest, the haunt of savage animals. Compare 1 Kings 13:24; and for the general prevalence of beasts of prey in the country, both earlier and later than this, see Judges 14:5; 1 Samuel 17:31; 2 Kings 17:25; Amos 5:19, etc.

Verse 24

On this occasion only do we find Elisha a minister of vengeance. Perhaps it was necessary to show, at the outset of his career as a prophet, that he too, so mild and peaceful could, like Elijah, wield the terrors of God's judgments (1 Kings 19:19 note). The persons really punished were, not so much the children, as the wicked parents 2 Kings 2:23, whose

mouth-pieces the children were, and who justly lost the gift of offspring of which they had shown themselves unworthy.

Verse 25

Carmel - Where Elisha held gatherings for religious purposes 2 Kings 4:23-25 during one period of his life, if he did not actually reside there.

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

In the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat - This date agrees exactly with the statements that Jehoshaphat began to reign in the fourth year of Ahab 1 Kings 22:41, and Ahaziah in the 17th year of Jehoshaphat 1 Kings 22:51.

Verse 2

On the "evil" done by Ahab, see especially 1 Kings 16:30-34. Jehoram, warned by the fate of his brother (2 Kings 1:4 note), began his reign by a formal abolition of the Phoenician state religion introduced by Ahab - even if he connived at its continuance among the people 2 Kings 10:26-27; and by a re-establishment of the old worship of the kingdom as arranged by Jeroboam.

Verse 4

Moab, the region immediately east of the Dead Sea and of the lower Jordan, though in part suited for agriculture, is in the main a great grazing country. Mesha resembled a modern Arab Sheikh, whose wealth is usually estimated by the number of his flocks and herds. His tribute of the wool of 100,000 lambs was a tribute in kind, the ordinary tribute at this time in the East.

Mesha is the monarch who wrote the inscription on the "Moabite stone" (2 Kings 1:1 note). The points established by the Inscription are:

1. That Moab recovered from the blow dealt by David 2 Samuel 8:2, 2 Samuel 8:12, and became again an independent state in the interval between David's conquest and the accession of Omri;

2. That Omri reconquered the country, and that it then became subject to the northern kingdom, and remained so throughout his reign and that of his son Ahab, and into the reign of Ahab's son and successor, Ahaziah;

3. That the independence was regained by means of a war, in which Mesha took town after town from the Israelites, including in his conquests many of the towns which, at the original occupation of the holy land, had passed into the possession of the Reubenites or the Gadites, as Baal-Meon Numbers 32:38, Kirjathaim Numbers 32:37, Ataroth Numbers 32:34, Nebo Numbers 32:38, Jahaz Joshua 13:18, etc.;

4. That the name of Yahweh was well known to the Moabites as that of the God of the Israelites; and

5. That there was a sanctuary of Yahweh at Nebo, in the Trans-Jordanic territory, where "vessels" were used in His service.

Verse 7

The close alliance between the two kingdoms still subsisted. Jehoram therefore sends confidently to make the same request with respect to Moab that his father had made two years before with respect to Syria (marginal reference). Jehoshaphat consented at once, notwithstanding that his former compliance had drawn upon him the rebuke of a prophet 2 Chronicles 19:2. Perhaps Jehoram's removal of the Baal-worship 2 Kings 3:2 weighed with him. He had himself been attacked by the Moabites in the preceding year; and though the attempt had failed, Jehoshaphat would feel that it might be renewed, and that it was important to seize the opportunity of weakening his enemy which now offered itself.

Verse 8

The readiest and most natural "way" was across the Jordan near Jericho into the Arboth-Moab, and then along the eastern shore of the Dead Sea to Moab proper, the tract south of the Arnon. But the way chosen was that which led to the Edomite country, namely, round the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, and across the Arabah, or continuation of the Jordan and Dead Sea valley. Thus would be effected a junction with the forces of Edom, which had resumed its dependence on Judah, though the year before it had been in alliance with Moab 2 Chronicles 20:22; and they would come upon the Moabites unprepared.

Verse 9

Seven days' journey - The distance of the route probably followed is not much more than 100 miles. But the difficulties of the way are great; and the army might not be able to move along it at a faster rate than about 15 miles a day.

No water - The kings had probably expected to find sufficient water for both men and baggage animals in the Wady-el-Ahsy, which divides Edom from Moab, and which has a stream that is now regarded as perennial. But

it was dried up - quite a possible occurrence with any of the streams of this region.

Verse 11

A prophet of the Lord - i. e. of Yahweh. It was necessary to inquire thus definitely, as there were still plenty of prophets who were only prophets of Baal 2 Kings 3:13.

Here is Elisha - Jehoram appears to have been ignorant of his presence with the host, and one of his "servants," or officers, answered Jehoshaphat's inquiry.

Which poured water - An act signifying ministration or attendance (compare John 13:5 ff).

Verse 13

Jehoram's humility in seeking 2 Kings 3:12 instead of summoning Elisha, does not save him from rebuke. His reformation 2 Kings 3:2 had been but a half reformation - a compromise with idolatry.

Nay: for the Lord hath called … - The force of this reply seems to be - "Nay, reproach me not, since I am in a sore strait - and not only I, but these two other kings also. The Lord - Yahweh - is about to deliver us into the hand of Moab. If thou canst not, or wilt not help, at least do not reproach."

Verse 15

Music seems to have been a regular accompaniment of prophecy in the "schools of the prophets" (marginal reference), and an occasional accompaniment of it elsewhere Exodus 15:20.

Verse 16

Ditches - Or "pits" Jeremiah 14:3. They were to dig pits in the broad valley or wady, wherein the water might remain, instead of flowing off down the torrent course.

Verse 17

No rain was to fall where the Israelites and their enemies were encamped; there was not even to be that all but universal accompaniment of rain in the East, a sudden rise of wind (compare 1 Kings 18:45; Psalm 147:18; Matthew 7:25).

Cattle, and your beast - The former are the animals brought for food. The latter are the baggage animals.

Verse 19

Ye shall fell every good tree - This is not an infringement of the rule laid down in Deuteronomy 20:19-20. The Israelites were not forbidden to

fell the fruit trees in an enemy‘s country, as a part of the ravage of war, when they had no thoughts of occupying the country. The plan of thus injuring an enemy was probably in general use among the nations of these parts at the time. We see the destruction represented frequently on the Assyrian monuments and mentioned in the inscriptions of Egypt.

And stop all wells of water - The stoppage of wells was a common feature of ancient, and especially Oriental, warfare (compare Genesis 26:15-18).

Mar … with stones - The exact converse of that suggested in Isaiah 5:2. The land in and about Palestine is so stony that the first work of the cultivator is to collect the surface stones together into heaps. An army marching through a land could easily undo this work, dispersing the stones thus gathered, and spreading them once more over the fields.

Verse 20

When the meat offering was offered - i. e. about sunrise, when the morning sacrifice was offered. Compare 1 Kings 18:29.

There came water by the way of Edom - The Wady-el-Ahsy drains a considerable portion of northern Edom. Heavy rain had fallen during the night in some part of this tract, and with the morning a freshet of water came down the valley, filling the pits.

Verse 21

And stood in the border - On the north side of the wady, ready to defend their territory.

Verse 23

The sun had risen with a ruddy light, as is frequently the case after a storm (compare Matthew 16:3), nearly over the Israelite camp, and the pits, deep but with small mouths, gleaming redly through the haze which would lie along the newly moistened valley, seemed to the Moabites like pools of blood. The preceding year, they and their allies had mutually destroyed each other 2 Chronicles 20:23. It seemed to them, from their knowledge of the jealousies between Judah, Israel, and Edom, not unlikely that a similar calamity had now befallen their foes.

Verse 25

Kir-Haraseth, also Kir-Hareseth, is identified almost certainly with the modern Kerak, a strong city on the highland immediately east of the southern part of the Dead Sea. It was the great fortress of Moab, though not the capital, which was Rabbath or Rabbah. It was an important strong-hold

at the time of the Crusades, and is still a place of great strength. Kir seems to have meant "fortress." It is found in Cir-cesium, Car-chemish, etc.

Kir-Haraseth resisted all the attempts to dismantle it; but the slingers found places on the hills which surrounded it, from where they could throw their stones into it and harass the garrison, though they could not take the town.

Verse 26

To break through, even unto the king of Edom - Either because he thought that the king of Edom would connive at his escape or to take vengeance on him for having deserted his former allies (2 Kings 3:8 note).

Verse 27

Compare the marginal reference. Mesha, when his sally failed, took, as a last resource, his first born son, and offered him as a burnt-offering to appease the manifest anger of his god Chemosh, and obtain his aid against his enemies. This act was thoroughly in accordance with Moabitish notions.

And there was great indignation against Israel - Either the Israelites were indignant with themselves, or the men of Judah and the Edomites were indignant at the Israelites for having caused the pollution of this sacrifice, and the siege was relinquished.

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

The creditor is come … - The Law of Moses, like the Athenian and the Roman law, recognized servitude for debt, and allowed that pledging of the debtor‘s person, which, in a rude state of society, is regarded as the safest and the most natural security (see the marginal reference). In the present case it would seem that, so long as the debtor lived, the creditor had not enforced his right over his sons, but now on his death he claimed their services, to which he was by law entitled.

Verse 2

A pot of oil - Or, “an anointing of oil” - so much oil, i. e., as would serve me for one anointing of my person. The word used occurs only in this passage.

Verse 8

And it fell on a day - The original of the expression here used, which occurs three times in the present narrative 2 Kings 4:11, 2 Kings 4:18, is also found in Job 1:6, Job 1:13; Job 2:1. The character of the expression perhaps supports the view that the author of Kings has collected from various sources his account of the miracles of Elisha, and has kept in each case the words of the original writer.

A great woman - That is, “a rich woman.” Compare 1 Samuel 25:2; 2 Samuel 19:32.

Verse 10

A little chamber on the wall - The room probably projected like a balcony beyond the lower apartments - an arrangement common in the East.

A stool - Rather, “a chair.” The “chair” and “table,” unusual in the sleeping-rooms of the East, indicate that the prophet was expected to use his apartment for study and retirement, not only as a sleeping-chamber.

Verse 13

Thou hast been careful for us - For the prophet and his servant, who must have been lodged as well as his master.

I dwell among mine own people - The woman declines Elisha‘s offer. She has no wrong to complain of, no quarrel with any neighbor, in respect of which she might need the help of one in power. She “dwells among her own people” - her friends, and dependents, with whom she lives peaceably.

Verse 16

Do not lie - Compare a similar incredulity in Genesis 17:17; Genesis 18:12; Luke 1:20. The expression, "do not lie," which is harsh to us, accords with the plain, straightforward simplicity of ancient speech. It would not mean more than "deceive" (compare the marginal reference).

Verse 19

The child's malady was a sunstroke. The inhabitants of Palestine suffered from this (Psalm 121:6; Isaiah 49:10; Judith 8:3).

Verse 22

Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men and one of the asses - All the "young men" and all the "asses" were in the harvest field, the young men cutting and binding the sheaves, and placing them upon carts or wains, the donkeys drawing these vehicles fully laden, to the threshing-floor. Compare Amos 2:13.

Verse 23

Her husband did not connect the illness with his wife's demand, but thought she wished to attend one of the prophet's devotional services. It is evident that such services were now held with something like regularity on Carmel for the benefit of the faithfull in those parts.

New moon - By the Law the first day of each month was to be kept holy. Offerings were appointed for such occasions Numbers 28:11-15, and they were among the days on which the silver trumpets were to be blown Numbers 10:10; Psalm 81:3. Hence, "new moons" are frequently joined with "sabbaths" (see Isaiah 1:13; Ezekiel 45:17; Hosea 2:11; 1 Chronicles 23:31).

It shall be well - Rather, as in the margin, "Peace." i. e., "Be quiet - trouble me not with inquiries - only let me do as I wish."

Verse 24

Slack not thy riding - Translate, "delay me not in my riding, except I bid thee." The servant went on foot with the donkey to urge it forward, as is the ordinary custom in the East.

Verse 25

The distance was about sixteen or seventeen miles.

Verse 27

She caught him by the feet - To lay hold of the knees or feet has always been thought in the East to add force to supplication, and is practiced even at the present day. Compare Matthew 18:29; John 11:32.

Verse 28

Great grief shrinks from putting itself into words. The Shunammite cannot bring herself to say, "My son is dead;" but by reproaching the prophet with having "deceived" her, she sufficiently indicates her loss.

Verse 29

Salute him not - Compare the marginal reference. Salutation is the forerunner of conversation and one bent on speed would avoid every temptation to loiter.

Lay my staff upon the face of the child - Perhaps to assuage the grief of the mother, by letting her feel that something was being done for her child.

Verse 31

There was neither voice nor hearing - Compare 1 Kings 18:29.

The child is not awakened - See 2 Kings 4:20. The euphemism by which death is spoken of as a sleep was already familiar to the Jews (see 1 Kings 1:21 note).

Verse 33

Prayed - Prayer was the only remedy in such a case as this (compare the marginal reference and James 5:16), though it did not exclude the use of other means 2 Kings 4:34.

Verse 34

Be stretched himself - Or, "prostrated himself." The word is a different one from that used of Elijah, and expresses closer contact with the body. Warmth may have been actually communicated from the living body to the dead one; and Elisha's persistence Hebrews 11:35, may have been a condition of the child's return to life.

Verse 36

Take up thy son - Compare Elijah's action (marginal reference "t") and our Blessed Lord's Luke 7:15.

Verse 38

There was a dearth in the land - Rather, "The famine was in the land." The seven years' dearth of which Elisha had prophesied (marginal reference) had begun.

The sons of the prophets - See 1 Kings 20:35 note. They were sitting before him as scholars before their master, hearing his instructions.

Verse 39

A wild vine - Not a real wild vine, the fruit of which, if not very palatable, is harmless; but some climbing plant with tendrils. The plant was

probably either the Ecbalium elaterium, or "squirting cucumber," the fruit of which, egg-shaped, and of a very bitter taste, bursts at the slightest touch, when it is ripe, and squirts out sap and seed grains; or the Colocynthis, which belongs to the family of cucumbers, has a vine-shaped leaf, and bears a fruit as large as an orange, very bitter, from which is prepared the drug sold as colocynth. This latter plant grows abundantly in Palestine.

His lap full - literally, "his shawl full." The prophet brought the fruit home in his "shawl" or "outer garment."

Verse 41

Then bring meal - The natural properties of meal would but slightly diminish either the bitterness or the unwholesomeness of a drink containing colocynth. It is evident, therefore, that the conversion of the food from a pernicious and unsavory mess into palatable and wholesome nourishment was by miracle.

Verse 42

Baal-shalisha - Fifteen Roman miles north of Lydda, in the Sharon plain to the west of the highlands of Ephraim. It was, apparently, the chief city of the "land of Shalisha" (marginal reference).

Bread of the first fruits - It appears by this that the Levitical priests having withdrawn from the land of Israel (see 2 Chronicles 11:13-14), pious Israelites transferred to the prophets, whom God raised up, the offerings required by the Law to be given to the priests Numbers 18:13; Deuteronomy 18:4.

In the husk thereof - "In his bag." The word does not occur elsewhere in Scripture.

Verse 43

This miracle was a faint foreshadowing of our Lord's far more marvelous feeding of thousands with even scantier materials. The resemblance is not only in the broad fact, but in various minute particulars, such as the distribution through the hands of others; the material, bread; the surprised question of the servant; and the evidence of superfluity in the fragments that were left (see the marginal references). As Elijah was a type of the Baptist, so Elisha was in many respects a type of our Blessed Lord. In his peaceful, non-ascetic life, in his mild and gentle character, in his constant circuits, in his many miracles of mercy, in the healing virtue which abode in his bodily frame 2 Kings 13:21, he resembled, more than any other

prophet, the Messiah, of whom all prophets were more or less shadows and figures.

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

By him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria - An Assyrian monarch had pushed his conquests as far as Syria exactly at this period, bringing into subjection all the kings of these parts. But Syria revolted after a few years and once more made herself independent. It was probably in this war of independence that Naaman had distinguished himself.

But he was a leper - leprosy admitted of various kinds and degrees Leviticus 13; 14Some of the lighter forms would not incapacitate a man from discharging the duties of a courtier and warrior.

Verse 2

No peace had been made on the failure of Ahab‘s expedition 1 Kings 22:1-36. The relations of the two countries therefore continued to be hostile, and plundering inroads naturally took place on the one side and on the other.

Verse 4

One went in - Rather, “he went in,” i. e. Naaman went and told his lord, the king of Syria.

Verse 5

Six thousand pieces of gold - Rather, “six thousand shekels of gold.” Coined money did not exist as yet, and was not introduced into Judea until the time of Cyrus. Gold was carried in bars, from which portions were cut when need arose, and the value was ascertained by weighing. If the gold shekel of the Jews corresponded, as some think, to the doric of the Persians, the value of the 6,000 shekels would be about 6,837 British pounds If the weight was the same as that of the silver shekel (see Exodus 38:24 note), the value would exceed 12,000 British pounds.

The ancient practice of including clothes among gifts of honor in the East Genesis 41:42; Esther 6:8; Daniel 5:7 continues to the present day.

Verse 6

That thou mayest recover him - literally, “And thou shalt recover him.” The Syrian king presumes that, if there is a cure for leprosy to be had in Israel, the mode of obtaining it will be well known to his royal brother.

Verse 7

He rent his clothes - The action indicated alarm and terror quite as much as sorrow 2 Samuel 13:19; Ezra 9:3; 2 Chronicles 34:27; Jeremiah 36:22.

Consider, I pray you - Jehoram speaks to his chief officers, and bids them mark the animus of the Syrian monarch. Compare the conduct of Ahab 1 Kings 20:7.

Verse 8

He shall know … Israel - namely, "That which thou (the king of Israel) appearest to have forgotten, that there is a prophet - a real Yahweh prophet - in Israel."

Verse 10

Elisha was not deterred from personally meeting Naaman because he was a leper. He sent a messenger because Naaman had over-estimated his own importance 2 Kings 5:11), and needed rebuke.

And wash in Jordan - Compare the marginal references. A command is given which tests the faith of the recipient, and the miracle is not performed until such faith is openly evidenced.

Verse 11

He will surely come out to me - In the East a code of unwritten laws prescribes exactly how visits are to be paid, and how visitors are to be received, according to the worldly rank of the parties (compare 2 Kings 5:21). No doubt, according to such a code, Elisha should have gone out to meet Naaman at the door of his house.

And call on the name of the Lord his God - literally, "of Yahweh his God." Naaman is aware that Yahweh is the God of Elisha. Compare the occurrence of the name of Yahweh on the "Moabite Stone" (2 Kings 3:4 note).

Strike - Better, as in the margin, "pass the fingers up and down the place" at a short distance. It seems implied that the leprosy was partial.

Verse 12

The Abana is the Barada, or true river of Damascus, which, rising in the anti-Libanus, flows westward from its foot and forms the oasis within which Damascus is placed. The Pharpar is usually identified with the Awaaj.

Naaman thinks that, if washing is to cure him, his own rivers may serve the purpose. Their water was brighter, clearer, and colder than that of Jordan.

Verse 14

Seven times - Compare 1 Kings 18:43. In both cases a somewhat severe trial was made of the individual‘s faith. Compare the seven compassings of Jericho, and the sudden fall of the walls Joshua 6:3-20.

Verse 15

He returned - Naaman was grateful (compare Luke 17:15). From the Jordan to Samaria was a distance of not less than 32 miles. Naaman further went to Damascus, far out of his way, lengthening his necessary journey by at least three days. His special object in returning seems to have been to relieve his feelings of obligation by inducing the prophet to accept a “blessing,” i. e. a gift.

There is no God … - Compare the marginal references; but in none of them are the expressions quite so strong as here. Naaman seems absolutely to renounce all belief in any other God but Yahweh.

Verse 16

I will receive none - The prophets were in the habit of receiving presents from those who consulted them 1 Samuel 9:7-8; 1 Kings 14:3, but Elisha refused. It was important that Naaman should not suppose that the prophets of the true God acted from motives of self-interest, much less imagine that “the gift of God might be purchased with money” Acts 8:20.

Verse 17

Two mules‘ burden of earth - This earth, Naaman thought, spread over a portion of Syrian ground, would hallow and render it suitable for the worship of Yahweh.

Verse 18

Rimmon is known to us as a god only by this passage. The name is connected with a root “to be high.” Hadad-rimmon Zechariah 12:11, the name of a place near Megiddo, points to the identity of Rimmon with Hadad, who is known to have been the Sun, the chief object of worship to the Syrians.

When he leaneth on mine hand - The practice of a monarch‘s “leaning on the hand” of an attendant was not common in the East (compare the marginal reference). It probably implied age or infirmity.

The Lord pardon thy servant in this thing - Naaman was not prepared to offend his master, either by refusing to enter with him into the temple of Rimmon, or by remaining erect when the king bowed down and worshipped

the god. His conscience seems to have told him that such conduct was not right; but he trusted that it might be pardoned, and he appealed to the prophet in the hope of obtaining from him an assurance to this effect.

Verse 19

So he departed … - This clause should not be separated from the succeeding verse. The meaning is, "So he departed from him, and had gone a little way, when Gehazi bethought himself of what he would do, and followed after him."

Verse 20

This Syrian - The words are emphatic. Gehazi persuades himself that it is right to spoil a Syrian - that is, a Gentile, and an enemy of Israel.

As the Lord liveth - These words are here a profane oath. Gehazi, anxious to make himself believe that he is acting in a proper, and, even, in a religions spirit, does not scruple to introduce one of the most solemn of religious phrases.

Verse 21

He lighted down from the chariot - This was an act of quite uncalled-for courtesy. It indicates eagerness to honor the master in the person of his servant.

Verse 22

From mount Ephraim - Bethel and Gilgal 2 Kings 2:1, at both of which there were "schools of the prophets," were situated on Mount Ephraim.

A talent of silver - A large demand in respect of the pretended occasion; but small compared with the amount which Naaman had pressed on the prophet 2 Kings 5:4. Gehazi had to balance between his own avarice, on the one hand, and the fear of raising suspicion on the other.

Verse 23

Be content - i. e. "consent."

Verse 24

The tower - Rather, "the hill," the well-known hill by Elisha's house. The hill interrupted the view in the direction taken by Naaman, and Gehazi dismissed Naaman's servants at this point lest they should be seen from his master's residence.

Verse 25

Lest his absence should be noticed, Gehazi hastened, without being called, to appear before his master. In the East it is usual for servants to

remain most of the day in their lord‘s presence, only quitting it when given some order to execute.

Verse 26

Went not mine heart with thee? - i. e. “Was I not with thee in spirit - did I not see the whole transaction, as if I had been present at it?” He uses the verb “went,” because Gehazi has just denied his “going.”

Is it a time … - i. e. “Was this a proper occasion to indulge greed, when a Gentile was to be favorably impressed, and made to feel that the faith of the Israelites was the only true religion? Was it not, on the contrary, an occasion for the exhibition of the greatest unselfishness, that so a pagan might be won to the truth?”

And oliveyards and vineyards … - Gehazi‘s thoughts had probably run on to the disposition which he would make of his wealth, and the prophet here follows them, enumerating his servant‘s intended purchases.

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

The writer returns here to the series of miracles which Elisha performed for the benefit of the prophetical schools under his care. The connection, in this point of view, is with 2 Kings 4:44.

The place where we dwell with thee - literally, "the place where we sit before thee," i. e. "the place where we assemble and sit to bear thy teaching." Elisha visited the sons of the prophets in circuit, staying a short time at each place where a "school" was established. Perhaps he was now visiting Jericho. Compare 2 Kings 2:5.

Verse 2

Take every man a beam - Trees were rare in most parts of Palestine, but plentiful in the Jordan Valley. Jericho was known in early times as "the city of palms" Deuteronomy 34:3; Judges 1:16.

Verse 5

The ax head - literally, as in the margin. The Jews used iron for the heads of axes at a very early date (see Deuteronomy 19:5). They probably acquired a knowledge of the smelting process in Egypt, where iron was employed at least from the time of the third Rameses.

Verse 6

No doubt there is something startling in the trivial character of this miracle, and of the few others which resemble it. But, inasmuch as we know very little as to the laws which govern the exercise of miraculous powers, it is possible that they may be so much under their possessor's control that he can exercise them, or not exercise them, at pleasure. And it may depend on his discretion whether they are exercised in important cases only, or in trivial cases also. Elisha had evidently great kindness of heart. He could not see a grief without wishing to remedy it. And it seems as if he had sometimes used his miraculous power in pure good nature, when no natural way of remedying an evil presented itself.

Verse 8

The king of Syria - Probably the great Benhadad (see 2 Kings 6:24).

Verse 10

Saved himself - Rather, he "was ware." The verb used is the same which is translated "beware" in the preceding verse.

Verse 11

Benhadad supposed that there must be a traitor in his camp. He asks therefore, “Will no one denounce him?”

Verse 12

In thy bedchamber - literally, “in the secret place of thy bedchamber,” i. e.,” in the greatest possible secrecy.” The seclusion of the harem must be taken into account for the full appreciation of the force of the phrase. Probably the Syrian lord who answered Benhadad had received his intelligence from some of the Israelites.

Verse 13

Dothan - See the marginal reference note. It was at no great distance from Shechem. Its ancient name still attaches to a Tel or hill of a marked character (compare 2 Kings 6:17), from the foot of which arises a copious fountain.

Verse 16

They that be with us … - Elisha gave utterance to the conviction of all God‘s saints when the world persecutes them (compare marginal references). God - they know - is on their side; they need “not fear what flesh can do unto them.” His angels - an innumerable host - are ever guarding those who love Him.

Verse 17

Open his eyes that he may see - Elisha‘s servant lacked the faith of his master. Elisha therefore prays that he may be given a vision of the spiritual world, and see, as if with the bodily eye, the angelic host (marginal references) which he himself knows to be present.

Verse 18

They came down to him - The Syrians, who had been encamped on rising ground opposite the hill of Dothan, now descended and drew near to the city.

The blindness with which they were smitten was not real - blindness actual loss of sight - but a state of illusion in which a man sees things otherwise than as they are (compare 2 Kings 6:20).

Verse 21

My father - A term of respect used by Jehoram in his joy at seeing an army of Syrians delivered up to him by the prophet. That the king‘s character was not changed appears from 2 Kings 6:31-32.

Shall I smite them? shall I smite them? - The repetition of the words mean, "Shall I utterly smite them?" Compare similar repetitions with similar meanings in Genesis 22:17; Luke 22:15.

Verse 22

Wouldest thou smite … - It is doubtful whether this sentence is really interrogative. Others translate - "Smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword," etc. A contrast is intended between ordinary captives - those made with the sword and bow - and these particular prisoners who have been given into the king's hand by God. The former, Jehoram is told, he may slay, if he pleases Deuteronomy 20:13, the latter, he is informed, he must not slay (compare the marginal reference).

Verse 23

Jehoram did not merely follow the letter of the prophet's direction, but understood its spirit and acted accordingly. The plundering bands which had been in the habit of ravaging the territory 2 Kings 5:2 ceased their incursions in consequence either of the miracle, or of the kind treatment which Elisha had recommended.

Verse 24

After this - Perhaps some years after - when the miracle and the kind treatment were alike forgotten.

Verse 25

As the donkey was "unclean," it would not be eaten except in the last resort; and its head would be its worst and cheapest part.

Cab - This measure is not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. According to the rabbinical writers it was the smallest of all the dry measures in use among the Jews, being the sixth part of a seah, which was the third part of an ephah. If it was about equal to two of our quarts, the "fourth part of a cab" would be about a pint.

Dove's dung - Most commentators understand by this expression a sort of pulse which is called "dove's dung," or "sparrow's dung" in Arabic. But it is possible that the actual excrement of pigeons is meant. The records of sieges show that both animal and human excrement have been used as food - under circumstances of extreme necessity.

Verse 26

The walls of fortified towns had a broad space at the top, protected toward the exterior by battlements, along which the bulk of the defenders were disposed, and from which they hurled their missiles and shot their

arrows. The king seems to have been going his rounds, to inspect the state of the garrison and the defenses.

Verse 27

If the Lord do not help - The translation in the text is decidedly better than the marginal rendering. Some prefer to render - "Nay … let Jehovah help thee. Whence, shall I help thee?"

Out of the barnfloor … - The king means that both were empty - that he had no longer any food in store; and therefore could not help the woman. Compare Hosea 9:2.

Verse 28

The king had assumed that the cry of the woman was for food. Her manner indicated that it was not so. He therefore proceeded to inquire what she wanted of him.

This woman - Both women, it would seem, were present; and the aggrieved one pointed to the other.

Verse 29

The prophecy alluded to in the marginal references was now fulfilled, probably for the first time. It had a second accomplishment when Jerusalem was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar Lamentations 4:10, and a third in the final siege of the same city by Titus.

Verse 30

Sackcloth - Jehoram hoped perhaps to avert Yahweh's anger, as his father had done 1 Kings 21:29. But there was no spirit of self-humiliation, or of true pentitence in his heart 2 Kings 5:7. See the next verse.

Verse 31

God do so … - Jehoram uses almost the very words of his wicked mother, when she sought the life of Elijah (marginal reference).

The head of Elisha - Beheading was not an ordinary Jewish punishment. The Law did not sanction it. But in Assyria, Babylonia, and generally through the East, it was the most conmon form of capital punishment. It is not quite clear why Elisha was to be punished. Perhaps Jehoram argued from his other miracles that he could give deliverance from the present peril, if he liked.

Verse 32

But Elisha sat … - Translate, "And Elisha was sitting in his house, and all the elders were sitting with him, when the king sent, etc."

The “elders,” - either “the elders of the city” or “the elders of the land,” - who may have been in session at Samaria now, as they had been at the time of a former siege 1 Kings 20:7 - had gone to Elisha for his advice or assistance. Their imminent peril drove them to acknowledge the power of Yahweh, and to consult with His prophet.

This son of a murderer - i. e. of Ahab, the murderer, not only of Naboth, but also of all the prophets of the Lord (marginal reference), whom be allowed Jezebel to slay.

Hold him fast at the door - The elders, public officials, not private friends of Elisha, could not have been expected to resist the entrance of the executioner at the mere request of the prophet. He therefore assigns a reason for his request - “the king is coming in person, either to confirm or revoke his order - will they detain the headsman until his arrival?”

Verse 33

The messenger - It has been proposed to change “messenger” into “king,” the two words being in Hebrew nearly alike, and the speech with which the chapter ends being considered only suitable in the mouth of the king, whose presence is indicated in 2 Kings 7:2, 2 Kings 7:17. Others think that the words “and the king after him” have fallen out of the text.

Came down - The messenger came down from off the wall to the level of the streets.

Behold this evil … - Jehoram bursts into the prophet‘s presence with a justification of the sentence 2 Kings 6:31 he has pronounced against him. “Behold this evil - this siege with all its horrors - is from Yahweh - from Yahweh, Whose prophet thou art. Why should I wait for Yahweh - temporize with Him - keep as it were, on terms with Him by suffering thee to live - any longer? What hast thou to say in arrest of judgment?”

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

The division between the chapters is most awkward here. Elisha, in this verse, replies to the king‘s challenge in 2 Kings 6:33 - that his God, Yahweh, will give deliverance in the space of a day. On the morrow, by the same time in the day, the famine will have ceased, and food will be even cheaper than usual.

A measure of fine flour - literally, “a seah of fine flour;” about a peck and a half.

For a shekel - About 2 shillings 8 12 d.

Two measures of burley - Or, “two seahs of barley;” about three pecks.

In the gate - The “gates,” or “gateways,” of Eastern towns are favorite places for the despatch of various kinds of business. It would seem that at Samaria one of the gates was used for the grain market.

Verse 2

A lord - Rather, “the captain,” as in Exodus 14:7; 1 Kings 9:22; etc. The term itself, שׁליׁש *shâlîysh* (derived from שׁלוׁש *shâlôsh* “three,”) may be compared with the Latin “tribunus.”

Windows - Rather, “sluices” (compare Genesis 7:11). The “lord” means to say “If Yahweh were to open sluices in heaven, and pour down grain as He poured down rain in the time of the Deluge, even then could there be such abudnance as thou speakest of?”

Verse 3

The position of the lepers is in accordance with the Law of Moses (marginal references); and shows that the Law was still observed to some extent in the kingdom of Israel.

Verse 5

The twilight - The evening twilight (see 2 Kings 7:9).

The uttermost part of the camp - The extreme boundary of the camp toward the city, not its furthest or most distant portion. Compare 2 Kings 7:8.

Verse 6

It is a matter of no importance whether we say that the miracle by which God now performed deliverance for Samaria consisted in a mere illusion of the sense of hearing (compare 2 Kings 6:19-20); or whether there was any objective reality in the sound (compare the marginal references).

The king of Israel hath hired - The swords of mercenaries had been employed by the nations bordering on Palestine as early as the time of David 2 Samuel 10:6; 1 Chronicles 19:6-7. Hence, the supposition of the Syrians was far from improbable.

The kings of the Hittites - The Hittites, who are found first in the south Genesis 23:7, then in the center of Judea Joshua 11:3, seem to have retired northward after the occupation of Palestine by the Israelites. They are found among the Syrian enemies of the Egyptians in the monuments of the 19th dynasty (about 1300 B.C.), and appear at that time to have inhabited the valley of the Upper Orontes. In the early Assyrian monuments they form a great confederacy, as the most powerful people of northern Syria, dwelling on both banks of the Euphrates, while at the same time there is a second confederacy of their race further to the south, which seems to inhabit the anti-Lebanon between Hamath and Damascus. These southern Hittites are in the time of Benhadad and Hazael a powerful people, especially strong in chariots; and generally assist the Syrians against the Assyrians. The Syrians seem now to have imagined that these southern Hittites had been hired by Jehoram.

The kings of the Egyptians - This is a remarkable expression, since Egypt elsewhere throughout Scripture appears always as a centralised monarchy under a single ruler. The probability is that the principal Pharaoh had a prince or princes associated with him on the throne, a practice not uncommon in Egypt. The period, which is that of the 22nd dynasty, is an obscure one, on which the monuments throw but little light.

Verse 9

The lepers began to think that if they kept this important matter secret during the whole night for their own private advantage, when the morning came they would be found out, accused, and punished (see margin).

Verse 10

They called unto the porter … and told them - The word "porter" is used like our "guard" and the meaning here is, not that the lepers called to any particular individual, but that they roused the body of men who were keeping guard at one of the gates.

Verse 12

His servants - i. e., "high officers of the household," not mere domestics.

I will shew you what the Syrians have done - Jehoram sees in the deserted camp a stratagem like that connected with the taking of Ai Joshua 8:3-19. The suspicion was a very natural one, since the Israelites knew of no reason why the Syrians should have raised the siege.

Verse 13

Behold … - The Septuagint and a large number of the Hebrew MSS. omit the clause, "behold, they are as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it." But the text followed by our translators, which is that of the best maunscripts, is intelligible and needs no alteration. It is merely a prolix way of stating that the horsemen will incur no greater danger by going to reconnoitre than the rest of their countrymen by remaining in the city, since the whole multitude is perishing.

Verse 14

Two chariot horses - Translate, "two horse-chariots." They dispatched i. e. two war-chariots, with their proper complement of horses and men, to see whether the retreat was a reality or only a feint. The "horses" sent would be four or six, since chariots were drawn by either two or three horses.

Verse 15

The Syrians had fled probably by the great road which led from Samaria to Damascus through Geba, En-gannim, Beth-shean, and Aphek. It crosses the Jordan at the Jisr Mejamia, about thirty-five miles northeast of Samaria.

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

The famine here recorded, and the conversation of the monarch with Gehazi, must have been anterior to the events related in Ezekiel 36:29; Romans 4:17).

Verse 2

The country of the Philistines - the rich low grain-growing plain along the seacoast of Judah - was always a land of plenty compared with the highlands of Palestine. Moreover, if food failed there, it was easily imported by sea from the neighboring Egypt.

Verse 3

During the Shunammite‘s absence in Philistia, her dwelling and her grain-fields had been appropriated by some one who refused to restore them. She therefore determined to appeal to the king. Such direct appeals are common in Oriental countries. Compare 2 Kings 6:26; 2 Samuel 14:4; 1 Kings 3:16.

Verse 6

A certain officer - literally, “a certain eunuch” (margin). Eunuchs were now in common use at the Samaritan court (compare 2 Kings 9:32). They are ascribed to the court of David in Chronicles 1 Chronicles 28:1; and we may conjecture that they were maintained by Solomon. But otherwise we do not find them in the kingdom of Judah until the time of Hezekiah Isaiah 56:3-4.

Verse 7

The hour had come for carrying out the command given by God to Elijah (marginal reference “e”), and by him probably passed on to his successor. Elisha, careless of his own safety, quitted the land of Israel, and proceeded into the enemy‘s country, thus putting into the power of the Syrian king that life which he had lately sought so eagerly 2 Kings 6:13-19.

The man of God - The Damascenes had perhaps known Elisha by this title from the time of his curing Naaman. Or the phrase may be used as equivalent to “prophet,” which is the title commonly given to Elisha by the Syrians. See 2 Kings 6:12. Compare 2 Kings 5:13.

Verse 8

Hazael was no doubt a high officer of the court. The names of Hazael and Benhadad occur in the Assyrian inscription on the Black Obelisk now

in the British Museum. Both are mentioned as kings of Damascus, who contended with a certain Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, and suffered defeat at his hands. In one of the battles between this king and Benhadad, "Allah of Jezreel" is mentioned among the allies of the latter. This same Shalmaneser took tribute from Jehu. This is the point at which the Assyrian records first come in direct contact with those of the Jews.

Verse 9

Every good thing of Damascus - Probably, besides rich robes and precious metals, the luscious wine of Helbon, which was the drink of the Persian kings, the soft white wool of the anti-Libanus Ezekiel 27:18, damask coverings of couches Amos 3:12, and numerous manufactured articles of luxury, which the Syrian capital imported from Tyre, Egypt, Nineveh, and Babylon. Forty camels were laden with it, and this goodly caravan paraded the streets of the town, conveying to the prophet the splendid gift designed for him. Eastern ostentation induces donors to make the greatest possible show of their gifts, and each camel would probably bear only one or two articles.

Thy son Ben-hadad - A phrase indicative of the greatest respect, no doubt used at the command of Benhadad in order to dispose the prophet favorably toward him. Compare 2 Kings 6:21.

Verse 10

Translate - "Go, say unto him, Thou shalt certainly live: howbeit the Lord hath showed me that he shall certainly die." i. e.," Say to him, what thou hast already determined to say, what a courtier is sure to say (compare 1 Kings 22:15), but know that the fact will be otherwise."

Verse 11

That is, "And he (Elisha) settled his conntenance, and set it (toward Hazael), until he (Hazael) was ashamed." Elisha fixed on Hazael a long and meaning look, until the latter's eyes fell before his, and his cheek flushed. Elisha, it would seem, had detected the guilty thought that was in Hazael's heart, and Hazael perceived that he had detected it. Hence the "shame."

Verse 12

The evil that thou wilt do - The intention is not to tax Hazael with special cruelty, but only to enumerate the ordinary horrors of war, as it was conducted among the Oriental nations of the time. Compare the marginal references.

Verse 13

But what, is thy servant a dog? - This is a mistranslation, and conveys to the English reader a sense quite different from that of the original. Hazael‘s speech runs thus - “But what is thy servant, this dog, that he should do this great thing?” He does not shrink from Elisha‘s words, or mean to say that he would be a dog, could he act so cruelly as Elisha predicts he will. On the contrary, Elisha‘s prediction has raised his hopes, and his only doubt is whether so much good fortune (“this great thing”) can be in store for one so mean. “Dog” here, as generally (though not always) in Scripture, has the sense of “mean,” “low,” “contemptible.”

Verse 14

Hazael omitted the clause by which Elisha had shown how those words were to be understood. He thus deceived his master, while he could flatter himself that he had not uttered a lie.

Verse 15

A thick cloth - Probably, a cloth or mat placed between the head and the upper part of the bedstead, which in Egypt and Assyria was often so shaped that pillows (in our sense) were unnecessary.

The objection that Elisha is involved in the guilt of having suggested the deed, has no real force or value. Hazael was no more obliged to murder Benhadad because a prophet announced to him that he would one day be king of Syria, than David was obliged to murder Saul because another prophet anointed him king in Saul‘s room 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

Verses 16-19

The passage is parenthetic, resuming the history of the kingdom of Judah from 1 Kings 22:50.

2 Kings 8:16

The opening words are - “In the fifth year of Joram, son of Ahab, king of Israel, and of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah;” but they contradict all the other chronological notices of Jehoshaphat 1 Kings 22:42, 1 Kings 22:51; 2 Kings 3:1; 2 Chronicles 20:31, which give him a reign of at least twenty-three years. Hence, some have supposed that the words “Jehoshaphat being then king of Judah,” are accidentally repeated. Those, however, who regard them and 2 Kings 1:17 as sound, suppose that Jehoshaphat gave his son the royal title in his 16th year, while he advanced him to a real association in the empire seven years later, in his 23rd year. Two years afterward, Jehoshatphat died, and Jehoram became sole king.

2 Kings 8:17

The "eight years" are counted from his association in the kingdom. They terminate in the twelfth year of Johoram of Israel.

2 Kings 8:18

Jehoshaphat's alliance, political and social, with Ahab and Ahab's family had not been allowed to affect the purity of his faith. Jehoram his son, influenced by his wife, Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab, "walked in the way of the kings of Israel;" he allowed, i. e., the introduction of the Baal-worship into Judaea.

Among the worst of Jehoram's evil doings must be reckoned the cruel murder of his six brothers 2 Chronicles 21:4, whom he killed to obtain their wealth.

2 Kings 8:19

The natural consequence of Jehoram's apostasy would have been the destruction of his house, and the transfer of the throne of Judah to another family. Compare the punishments of Jeroboam 1 Kings 14:10, Baasha 1 Kings 16:2-4, and Ahab 1 Kings 21:20-22. But the promises to David (marginal references) prevented this removal of the dynasty; and so Jehoram was punished in other ways 2 Kings 8:22; 2 Chronicles 21:12-19.

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Verse 20

Edom, which had been reduced by David 2 Samuel 8:14; 1 Kings 11:15-16, but had apparently revolted from Solomon 1 Kings 11:14, was again subjected to Judah in the reign of Jehoshaphat Genesis 27:40, remaining from henceforth a separate and independent people (Jeremiah 25:21; Jeremiah 27:3; Amos 1:11, etc.). Kings of Edom, who seem to be independent monarchs, are often mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions.

Verse 21

Zair - Perhaps Seir, the famous mountain of Edom Genesis 14:6.

The people - i. e., The Edomites. Yet, notwithstanding his success, Joram was forced to withdraw from the country, and to leave the natives to enjoy that independence 2 Kings 8:22, which continued until the time of John Hyrcanus, who once more reduced them.

Verse 22

Libnah revolted - Libnah being toward the southwest of Palestine Joshua 15:42, its revolt cannot well have had any direct connection with that of Edom. It had been the capital of a small Canaanite state under a

separate king before its conquest by Joshua Joshua 10:30; Joshua 12:15, and may perhaps always have retained a considerable Canaanite population. Or its loss may have been connected with the attacks made by the Philistines on Jehoram‘s territories 2 Chronicles 21:16-17.

Verse 24

On the death of Jehoram, see 2 Chronicles 21:12-19. His son is also called Jehoahaz (margin) by a transposition of the two elements of the name.

Verse 26

Such names as Athaliah, Jehoram, and Ahaziah, indicate that the Baal-worshipping kings of Israel did not openly renounce the service of Yahweh. Athaliah is “the time for Yahweh;” Ahaziah “the possession of Yahweh;” Jehoram, or Joram, “exalted by Yahweh.”

The daughter of Omri - “Son” and “daughter” were used by the Jews of any descendants (compare Matthew 1:1). The whole race were “the children of Israel.” Athaliah was the grand-daughter of Omri (see the margin). Her being called “the daughter of Omri” implies that an idea of special greatness was regarded as attaching to him, so that his name prevailed over that of Ahab. Indications of this ideal greatness are found in the Assyrian inscriptions, where the early name for Samaria is Beth-Omri, and where even Jehu has the title of “the son of Omri.”

Verse 28

This war of the two kings against Hazael seems to have had for its object the recovery of Ramoth-gilead, which Ahab and Jehoshaphat had vainly attempted fourteen years earlier 2 Kings 9:14, and remained probably thenceforth in the hands of the Israelites.

The Syrians wounded Joram - According to Josephus, Joram was struck by an arrow in the course of the siege, but remained until the place was taken. He then withdrew to Jezreel 1 Kings 18:45; 1 Kings 21:1, leaving his army under Jehu within the walls of the town.

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

Box - Rather, "flask," or "vial" 1 Samuel 10:1. Oil and ointment were commonly kept in open-mouthed jars, vases, or bottles made of glass, alabaster, or earthen-ware. Many such vessels have been found both in Egypt and Assyria. The "oil" was the holy oil, compounded after the receipt given in Exodus Exodus 30:23-25.

Verse 3

Flee, and tarry not - The probable object of these directions was at once to prevent questioning, and to render the whole thing more striking.

Verse 5

The chief officers - the generals - were assembled together in Jehu's quarters, perhaps holding a council of war. The place of assembly seems to have been the great court. Hence, Jehu "went into the house" 2 Kings 9:6 entered, that is, one of the rooms opening into the court.

Verse 11

This mad fellow - The captains, seeing his excited look, his strange action, and his extreme haste, call him (as soldiers would) "this wild fellow."

Verse 13

Took every man his garment, and put it under him - The outer cloak of the Jews was a sort of large shawl or blanket, which might well serve for a carpet of state. Such a carpet is commonly represented on the seat of an Assyrian throne in the Nineveh sculptures.

The stairs rose against the walI of the house from the pavement of the court to the level of the upper story, or of the roof. At the top of the stairs would be a flat platform, and this would form a throne, on which the new king could exhibit himself to his subjects.

Blew with trumpets - On this recognized part of the ceremony of a coronation, see 2 Kings 11:14; 2 Samuel 15:10; 1 Kings 1:39.

sa40

Verse 14

Had kept - Rather, "was keeping watch." The city had been taken: but the war continuing, and there being a danger of the Syrians recovering it, Joram and all Israel (i. e., the whole military force) were guarding the recent conquest, while Hazael threatened it.

Verse 18

What hast thou to do with peace? - i. e., "What does it matter to thee whether my errand is one of peace or not?"

Verse 20

The driving … furiously - The word translated "driving" means "leading" or "conducting" a band. The watchman observed that the "company" (or, multitude) was led forward madly, and associated this strange procedure with the known character of Jehu. It is curious that some versions, as well as Josephus, give an opposite sense: "he driveth quietly."

Jehu was properly "the grandson" of Nimshi, who was probably a more famous person than Jehoshaphat 2 Kings 9:2.

sa40

Verse 21

Make ready - literally, (as in margin) "Blind," i. e., "Harness the horses to the chariot." The king had no suspicion of Jehu's treason. Probably he imagined that he was bringing him important news from the seat of war. Ahaziah's accompanying him is significant of the close friendship which united the uncle and the nephew. They went out not "against" Jehu, but rather "to meet him."

In the portion of Naboth - This is no longer called a "vineyard" 1 Kings 21:1-18; probably because it had been thrown into the palace garden, and applied to the purpose for which Ahab originally wanted it. The approach to the city on this side must have lain either through it, or close by it.

Verse 22

Joram had asked the usual question, "Is it peace?" - meaning simply, "Is all well?" In Jehu's reply, by "whoredoms" we are probably to understand "idolatries," acts of spiritual unfaithfulness; by "witchcrafts," dealings with the Baal prophets and oracles. Compare 2 Kings 1:2 note.

Verse 23

Turned his hands - The meaning is that Joram ordered his charioteer to turn round and drive back to the town.

Verse 24

Jehu drew a bow … - literally, as in the margin, i. e., "Jehu took a bow in his hand." The arrow struck Jehoram's back, between his two shoulders, as he fled.

Verse 25

Rode together after Ahab - The Assyrian sculptures make it probable that Josephus was right in interpreting this "rode side by side behind Ahab in his chariot." The Assyrian monarchs, when they go out to war, are frequently attended hy two guards, who stand behind them in the same chariot.

Burden - Compare the use of the same word in Isaiah (Isaiah 13:1; Isaiah 15:1, etc.), and in Lamentations Lamentations 2:14, for a denunciation of woe.

Verse 26

The passage from "Surely I have seen" to "Saith the Lord," is exegetical of 2 Kings 9:25, containing the "burden" there spoken of.

And the blood of his sons - The murder of Naboth's sons is here for the first time mentioned; but as the removal of the sons was necessary, if the vineyard was to pass to Ahab, we can well understand that Jezebel would take care to clear them out of the way.

Verse 27

By the way of the garden-house - Or "by the way of Beth-Gan," which has been conjectured to be another name for En-Gannim, "the spring of the gardens." Both are considered identical with Ginaea, the modern Jenin, which lies due south of Jezreeh The road from Jezreel (Zerin) to Jenin passes at first along the plain of Esdraelon, but after a while begins to rise over the Samaritan hills. Here probably was "the ascent of Gur, by Ibleam," which may have occupied the site of the modern Jelama. Whether the soldiers attacked him there or not is uncertain. The words, "And they did so," are not in the original.

Megiddo - On its situation, see Joshua 12:21 note; and on the possible reconcilement of this passage with 2 Chronicles 22:9, see the note there.

Verse 29

In the eleventh year - The twelfth according to 2 Kings 8:25. The discrepancy may be best explained from two ways of reckoning the accession of Ahaziah, who is likely to have been regent for his father during at least one year. See 2 Chronicles 21:19.

Verse 30

Painted her face - literally, "put her eyes in antimony " - i. e., dyed the upper and under eyelids, a common practice in the East, even at the present day. The effect is at once to increase the apparent size of the eye, and to give it unnatural brilliancy. Representations of eyes thus embellished occur

on the Assyrian sculptures, and the practice existed among the Jews (marginal reference; and Jeremiah 4:30).

Tired her head - Dressed (attired) her head, and no doubt put on her royal robes, that she might die as became a queen, in true royal array.

A window - Rather, "the window." The gate-tower had probably, as many of those in the Assyrian sculptures, one window only.

Verse 34

Leaving the mangled body on the bare earth, Jehu went to the banquet. It was, no doubt, important that he should at once show himself to the court as king. In calling Jezebel "this cursed one," Jehu means to remind his hearers that the curse of God had been pronounced upon her by Elijah 2 Kings 9:36, and so to justify his own conduct.

A king's daughter - Merely as the widow of Ahab and mother of Jehoram, Jehu would not have considered Jezebel entitled to buriah. But she was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians (marginal reference), and so a princess born. This would entitle her to greater respect. Wilfully to have denied her burial would have been regarded as an unpardonable insult by the reigning Sidonian monarch.

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

Seventy sons - i. e., descendants; there were included among them children of Jehoram (2 Kings 10:2-3, etc.).

Verse 2

A fenced city - Or, "fenced cities." If Samaria had refused to acknowledge Jehu, many other Israelite towns would have been sure to follow the example.

Verse 3

Jehu, placing his adversaries' advantages before them in the most favorable light, called upon them to decide what they would do. The unscrupulous soldier shows shrewdness as well as courage, a sharp wit as well as a bold heart.

Verse 4

Two kings - literally, "the two kings," i. e., Jehoram and Ahaziah 2 Kings 9:21-28.

Verse 5

The officer who had the charge of the place (1 Kings 4:6 note) and the governor of the town (1 Kings 22:26 note) seem to correspond to the "rulers" of 2 Kings 10:1.

Verse 6

The heads of rivals, pretenders, and other obnoxious persons are commonly struck off in the East, and conveyed to the chief ruler, in order that he may be positively certified that his enemies have ceased to live. In the Assyrian sculptures we constantly see soldiers conveying heads from place to place, not, however, in baskets, but in their hands, holding the head by the hair.

Verse 8

Two heaps - Probably placed one on either side of the gateway, to strike terror into the partisans of the late dynasty as they passed in and out of the town.

Verse 9

Ye be righteous - i. e., "Ye are just, and can judge aright." Jehu unfairly keeps back the fact that he had commanded the execution.

Verse 10

Shall fall to the earth - i. e., "Shall remain unfulfilled" (compare the marginal reference). Jehu and others were but executing the word of the Lord.

Verse 11

So Jehu slew - Rather, "And Jehu slew." The reference is to fresh executions (compare 2 Kings 10:17). He proceeded on his bloody course, not merely destroying the remainder of the kindred of Ahab, but further putting to death all the most powerful of Ahab's partisans.

His priests - Not the Baal priests generally, whose persecution came afterward 2 Kings 10:19, but only such of them as were attached to the court.

Verse 12

The shearing-house - literally, as in margin. Perhaps already a proper name, Beth-eked, identical with the Beth-akad of Jerome, which is described as between Jezreel and Samaria; but not yet identified.

Verse 13

The brethren of Ahaziah - Not the actual brothers of Ahaziah, who had all been slain by the Arabs before his accession to the throne 2 Chronicles 21:17; 2 Chronicles 22:1; but his nephews, the sons of his brothers (marginal reference). It is remarkable that they should have penetrated so far into the kingdom of Israel without having heard of the revolution.

The children of the king … - i. e." the sons of Jehoram, and the children (sons and grandsons) of the queen-mother, Jezebel." Some of both may well have been at Jezreel, though the younger branches of the royal family were at Samaria 2 Kings 10:1.

Verse 15

Jehonadab (compare the margin) belonged to the tribe of the Kenites, one of the most ancient in Palestine Genesis 15:19. Their origin is unknown, but their habits were certainly those of Arahs. Owing to their connection with Moses (Numbers 24:21 note), they formed a friendship with the Israelites, accompanied them in their wanderings, and finally receivcd a location in the wilderness of Judah Judges 1:16. The character of this chief, Jonadab, is best seen in the rule which he established for his descendants Jeremiah 35:6-7 - a rule said to be still observed at the present day. It would seem that he sympathised strongly with Jehu's proceedings, and desired to give the countenance of his authority, such as it was, to the new reign. According to the Hebrew text, Jehu "saluted" (or blessed)

Jehonadab. According to the Septuagint and Josephus, Jehonadab "saluted" (or blessed) the king. Further, the Hebrew text runs - "And Jehonadab answered, It is, it is. Give (me) thy hand. And he gave (him) his hand, and took him up to him into the chariot." Our translators appear to have preferred the Septuagint; but the Hebrew is more graphic. Jehu was no doubt glad to have the countenance of Jehonadab on his public entrance into Samaria. The ascetic had a reputation for sanctity, which could not fail to make his companionship an advantage to the but half-established monarch.

Verse 17

Compare 2 Kings 10:11. Thus was finally completed the political revolution which transferred the throne from the house of Omri to that of Nimshi, the fifth of the royal families of Israel.

According to the saying of the Lord - This emphatic reiteration (compare 2 Kings 10:10) marks, first, how in the mind of the writer all this history is viewed as deriving its special interest from its being so full and complete an accomplishment of Elijah's prophecies; and, secondly, how at the time Jehu carefully put forward the plea that what he did had this object. It does not indicate that a single-minded wish to execute God's will was Jehu's predominate motive. Probably, even where he most strictly fulfilled the letter of prophecies, he was working for himself, not for God; and hence, vengeance was denounced upon his house even for the very "blood of Jezreel" Hosea 1:4.

Verse 18

Though we cannot ascribe to Jehu a spirit of true piety (see 2 Kings 10:29), we can well enough understand how the soldier, trained in the Syrian wars, revolted against the unmanly and voluptuous worship of the Dea Syra, and wished to go back to the simple solemn service of Yahweh. These views and feelings it would have been dangerous to declare during the lifetime of Jezebel. Even after her death it was prudent to temporise, to wait until the party of Ahab was crushed politically, before broaching tbe religious question. Having now slain all the issue of Ahab in the kingdom of Israel, and all the influential men of the party 2 Kings 10:7, 2 Kings 10:11, 2 Kings 10:17, Jehu felt that he might begin his reformation of religion. But even now he uses "subtilty" rather than open violence. "Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much."

Verse 19

It appears from this verse that the “prophets” and “priests” of Baal were not identical. The former would correspond to the dervishes, the latter to the mullahs, of Muslim countries. By the “servants” of Baal are meant the ordinary worshippers.

Verse 20

A solemn assembly - Jehu applies to his proposed gathering the sacred name assigned in the Law to the chiefest festivals of Yahweh (see Leviticus 23:36; Numbers 29:35; Deuteronomy 16:8).

Verse 21

In order to understand how such numbers could find room, we must remember that the ancient temples had vast courts around them, which could contain many thousands.

Verse 22

The vestry - The sacred robes of the Baal priests seem to have been of linen, and were probably white. The vestry here mentioned may, probably, be the robe-chamber of the royal palace, from which the king gave a festal garment to each worshipper.

Verse 23

The presence of persons belonging to another religion was usually regarded by the ancients as a profanation of the rites. In the case of the Greek mysteries such intrusion is said to have been punished by death. Consequently Jehu could give these injunctions without arousing any suspicion.

Verse 25

As soon as he had made an end of offering - The actual sacrificers were no doubt the priests of Baal; but Jehu is considered to have made the offering, since he furnished the victims. Compare 1 Kings 8:62-63.

The guard - literally, “the runners.” This name seems to have been given to the royal body-guard as early as the time of Saul (1 Samuel 22:17, margin). It was their duty to run by the side of the king‘s chariot as he moved from plaze to place.

Cast them out, and went - Rather, “the captains hasted and went,” or “went hastily;” which gives a satisfactory sense. That the soldiers should have troubled themselves to cast the bodies of the slain out of the temple enclosure is very unlikely.

The city of the house of Baal - i. e., the temple itself, as distinguished from the court in which it stood, is intended. The guard having slain all who

were in the court, rushed on and entered the sanctuary, there no doubt completing the massacre, and further tearing down and bringing out the sacred objects mentioned in the next verse.

Verse 26

The images - Or "pillars" of wood. The Phoenician pillar idols were mere columns, obelisks, or posts, destitute of any shaping into the semblance of humanity (compare 1 Kings 14:23 note).

Verse 27

And they brake down the image of Baal - The other images, it appears, were not images of Baal, but of inferior deities. The image of Baal, which was "broken down," and not burned, would seem to have been of stone, perhaps erected in front of the temple.

Verse 29

To abolish the calf-worship was a thought which had probably never occurred to Jehu. He had religious feeling enough, and patriotism enough, to detest the utterly debasing Astarte worship; but the pure worship of Yahweh was altogether beyond and above him.

Verse 30

And the Lord said unto Jehu - Probably by the mouth of Elisha. To a certain extent Jehu's measures were acts of obedience, for which God might see fit to assign him a temporal reward.

Thy children … - This was accomplished in the persons of Jehoahaz, Joash, Jeroboam, and Zachariah, the son, grandson, great-grandson, and great-great-grandson of Jehu (compare the marginal references). No other family sat upon the throne of Israel so long. The house of Omri, which furnished four kings, held the crown for three generations only and for less than 50 years - that of Jehu reigned for five generations and for more than 100 years.

Verse 32

To cut Israel short - literally, "to cut off in Israel," i. e., to take away from Israel portions of its territory (see the marginal reference).

Verse 33

The loss of the entire trans-Jordanic territory seems to be intended, or at any rate its complete ruin and devastation (compare marginal reference "y"). This was the home of the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and of the half tribe of Manasseh Joshua 22:1-9. It was more accessible from Damascus than the region west of the river.

Aroer - There were several places of this name. The one here mentioned is the most famous (compare Deuteronomy 2:36 note).

Even Gilead and Bashan - The writer had previously called the whole territory "Gilead;" now he distinguishes it, more accurately, into Gilead, the southern, and Bashan, the northern region 1 Kings 4:13, 1 Kings 4:19.

Verse 34

All his might - It is remarkable that this expression, which is not used by the author of Kings in connection with any other king of Israel, should be applied to Jehu, whose ill success in his struggle with Hazael has just been noted, and who submitted to the Assyrians and consented to become a tributary. Perhaps the word is used here in the sense of "personal courage" rather than of "power."

Verse 36

In Samaria - The family of Ahab had made Jezreel a sort of second capital, and had reigned there, at least in part 2 Kings 13:1, 2 Kings 13:10; 2 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 15:8.

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

Athaliah, as wife of Joram and mother of Ahaziah, had guided both the internal and the external policy of the Jewish kingdom; she had procured the establishmeut of the worship of Baal in Judaea 2 Kings 8:18, 2 Kings 8:27, and had maintained a close alliance with the sister kingdom 2 Kings 8:29; 2 Kings 10:13. The revolution effected by Jehu touched her nearly. It struck away from her the support of her relatives; it isolated her religious system, severing the communication with Phoenicia; and the death of Ahaziah deprived her of her legal status in Judaea, which was that of queen-mother (the 1 Kings 15:13 note), and trausferred that position to the chief wife of her deceased son. Athaliah, instead of yielding to the storm, or merely standing on the defensive, resolved to become the assailant, and strike before any plans could be formed against her. In the absence of her son, hers was probably the chief anthority at Jerusalem. She used it to command the immediate destruction of all the family of David, already thinned by previous massacres 2 Kings 10:14; 2 Chronicles 21:4, 2 Chronicles 21:17, and then seized the throne.

Verse 2

Jehosheba … sister of Ahaziah - "Half-sister," according to Josephus - daughter of Joram, not by Athaliah, but by another wife. She was married to Jehoiada the high priest, and was thus in a position to save and conceal her nephew, Joash, who was only one year old (compare 2 Kings 11:3, 2 Kings 11:21).

In the bedchamber - literally, "in the chamber of mattresses" - probabIy a store-room in the palace in which mattresses were kept.

Verse 3

And Athaliah did reign over the land - In these words the writer dismisses the entire reign of Athaliah, whereof he scorns to speak. We gather incidentally from 2 Kings 12:5-12, compared with 2 Chronicles 24:7, that Athaliah used her power to establish the exclusive worship of BaaI through the kingdom of Judah, and to crush that of Yahweh. She stopped the temple service, gave over the sacred vessels of the sanctuary to the use of the Baal priests, and employed the temple itself as a quarry from which materials might be taken for the construction of a great temple to Baal, which rose in the immediate neighborhood.

Verse 4

See the marginal reference.

The captains - The word used here and in 2 Kings 11:19, הא־כרי *ha - kârîy* designates a certain part of the royal guard, probably that which in the earlier times was known under the name of Cherethites 1 Kings 1:38. Others see in the term an ethnic name - "Carians," who seem certainly to have been much inclined to take service as mercenaries from an early date. Render the whole passage thus - "And in the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the centurions of the Carians and the guardsmen (literally, ‹runners, ‹ 2 Kings 10:25), etc."

Verses 5-8

Five divisions of the guard under their five captains are distinguished here. Three of the five divisions "enter in" on the Sabbath; the other two "go forth" on the Sabbath 2 Kings 11:7. By the former phrase seems to be meant the mounting guard at the royal palace (the "king‘s house," where Athaliah then was); by the latter the serving of escort to the sovereign beyond the palace bounds. Jehoiada orders that of those whose business it would be to guard the palace on the ensuing Sabbath, one company or cohort should perform that task in the ordinary way, while another should watch the gate of Sur - or better, "the gate of the foundation" 2 Chronicles 23:5 - that by which the palace was usually quitted for the temple, and a third should watch another of the palace gates, called "the gate of the guard" (see 2 Kings 11:19). The two companies whose proper business it would be to serve as the royal escort beyond the palace walls, he orders to enter the temple, and surround the person of the young king.

2 Kings 11:6

That it be not broken down - The one word in the original text of which this is a translation occurs nowhere else; and its meaning is very doubtful.

2 Kings 11:8

Within the ranges - Rather, "within the ranks." If anyone tried to break through the soldiers‘ ranks to the king, or even to disturb their order, he was to be immediately slain.

Verse 11

From the right corner … - Rather, "from the right side of the temple buildings to the left side" - i. e., right across the temple court from the one side to the other, by the altar of burnt offerings, etc. This altar stood exactly

in front of the temple-porch. Here the king was stationed; and before him and behind him, ("round about" him) stood the soldiers, drawn up several ranks deep across the entire court, just in front of the sacred building.

Verse 12

The testimony - i. e., "The Book of the Law" which was kept in the ark of the covenant (Dent. 31:26). This Jehoiada placed ou the king's head at the moment of coronation, perhaps to indicate that the king was not to be above, but under, the direction of the Law of his country.

Verse 14

By a pillar - Rather, "upon the pillar" probably a sort of stand, or pulpit, raised on a pillar. Under the later monarchy the Jewish king seems to have had a special place assigned him in the temple-court, from which on occasions he addressed the people (marginal references).

Verse 15

Have her forth without the ranges - Rather, "Conduct her out between your ranks." Guard her, i. e., on all sides, that the people may not fall upon her and kill her as she passes through the court, thereby polluting the temple.

Verse 16

And they laid hands on her - Most modern critics render - "and they gave her space," i. e., they cleared a way for her, and allowed her to walk out of the temple not only unharmed but untonched.

Verse 17

A covenant - Rather, "the covenant," which either was already an established part of a coronation (marginal reference "k"), or at least became such afterward.

Verse 18

A temple had been built to Baal at Jerusalem itself by Athaliah, Ahaziah, or Jehoram. According to Josephus, it was constructed in the reign of Jehoram. Its exact position is uncertain.

Images - The word used here is not the same as in 2 Kings 10:26, but a word which implies likeness. The Phoenicians had fashioned images, besides their unfashioned pillar-idols.

The priest appointed … - The temple worship having been discontinued during Athaliah's rule, it devolved on Jehoiada now to re-establish it (see marginal reference). He had already summoned the Levites out of all the cities of Judah 2 Chronicles 23:2, and had made use of them in

the events of the day. He therefore proceeded at once to assign the custody of the temple to a particular course, before conducting the young king to the palace.

Verse 19

They conducted the king down from the temple hill, across the valley of the Tyropoeum, and up the opposite hill to the royal palace, entering it not by the "horse-gate" 2 Kings 11:16, where Athaliah had just been slain, but by the "gate of the guard" 2 Kings 11:6, which was probably the main gate of the palace on the eastern side (see 2 Chronicles 23:20).

Verse 20

They slew Athaliah with the sword - This is one of the many little repetitions which mark the manner of the writer, and which generally contain some little point which has not been mentioned before (compare 2 Kings 11:16).

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 2

All his days … - i. e., so long as Jehoiada was his adviser" (compare 2 Chronicles 24:15-22). Jehoida was, practically speaking, regent during the minority of Jehoash, i. e., 10 or 12 years. An increase of power to the priestly order was the natural consequence. Jehoiada bore the title of "high priest" 2 Kings 12:10, which had been dropped since the time of Eleazar Joshua 20:6, and the Levitical order from this time became more mixed up with public affairs and possessed greater influence than previously. Jehoiada's successors traced their office to him rather than to Aaron Jeremiah 29:26.

Verse 3

The worship on the "high places" seems to have continued uninterruptedly to the time of Hezekiah, who abolished it 2 Kings 18:4. It was, however, again established by Manasseh, his son 2 Kings 21:3. The priests at this time cannot have regarded it as idolatrous, or Jehoiada would have put it during his regency.

Verse 4

It is remarkable that the first movement toward restoring the fabric of the temple should have come, not from Jehoiada, but from Jehoash (compare 2 Chronicles 24:4). Jehoiada had, it seems, allowed the mischief done in Athaliah's time to remain unrepaired during the whole term of his government.

The money of every one … - Three kinds of sacred money are here distinguished - first, the half shekel required in the Law Exodus 30:13 to be paid by every one above twenty years of age when he passed the numbering; secondly, the money to be paid by such as had devoted themselves, or those belonging to them, by vow to Yahweh, which was a variable sum dependent on age, sex, and property Leviticus 27:2-8; and thirdly, the money offered in the way of free-will offerings.

Verse 5

The collection was not to be made in Jerusalem only, but in all "the cities of Judah" 2 Chronicles 24:5; the various priests and Levites being collectors in their own neighborhoods.

Breaches - The word in the original includes every kind and degree of ruin or dilapidation.

Verse 6

No money had for some time been brought in (marginal reference "g"). Perhaps it was difficult for the priests and Levites to know exactly what proportion of the money paid to them was fairly applicable to the temple service and to their own support; and what, consequently, was the balance which they ought to apply to the repairs.

Verse 9

The priests that kept the door - The north door into the priests' court Ezekiel 40:35-43 seems to be intended, not the door of the temple building. The chest must have been placed a little to the right of this north door, between it and the altar of burnt-offering, so that the people could see it from the doorway. The people were not ordinarily allowed to go within the doorway into this court, which belonged to the priests and Levites only.

Verse 10

The king's scribe - Or "secretary" (1 Kings 4:3 note). Such persons are often seen in the Assyrian sculptures, with a roll, apparently of parchment, in one hand and a pen in the other, taking account for the king of the spoil brought in from foreign expeditions.

Verse 13

Comparing this verse with the marginal reference, it will be seen that the author of Kings desires to point out, that the repairs were not delayed by any deductions from the money that flowed in. The writer of Chronicles describes what became of the surplus in the chest after the last repairs were completed.

The need of supplying fresh bowls, snuffers, etc., arose from the pollution of those previously used in the temple service by their application to the Baal worship during the reigns of Ahaziah and Athaliah (see 2 Chronicles 24:7).

Verse 16

The trespass money and the sin money - In all cases of injury done to another, a man was bound by the Law to make compensation, to the sufferer, if possible; if not, to his nearest kinsman. If the man was dead and had left no kinsman, then the compensation was to be made to the priest Numbers 5:8. This would form a part of the trespass and sin money. The remainder would accrue from the voluntary gifts made to the priests by

those who came to make atonement for sins or trespasses Numbers 5:10. On the difference between "sins" and "trespasses," see Leviticus 5:14 note.

Verse 17-18

There was probably a considerable interval between the conclusion of the arrangement for the repairs and the Syrian expedition related in these verses. For the events which had happened, see 2 Chronicles 24:15-22.

2 Kings 12:17

This is the first and last time that we hear of the Damascene Syrians undertaking so distant an expedition. Gath (see Joshua 13:3 note) could only be reached from Syria through Israel or Judah. It was not more than 25 or 30 miles from Jerusalem. It is uncertain whether the city belonged at this time to Judah or to the Philistines.

Hazael set his face … - This is a phrase for determination generally, but especially for determination to proceed somewhere (compare Jeremiah 42:15; Luke 9:51). Jerusalem can scarcely have been the primary object of this expedition, or it would have been attacked by a less circuitous route. Perhaps the Syrians were induced to make a sudden march against the Jewish capital, by learning, while at Gath, that a revolution had occurred there (compare 2 Chronicles 24:18-23).

2 Kings 12:18

Jehoash did not submit without a struggle. See the details in Chronicles. It was not until his army was defeated that he followed the example of his ancestor, Asa, and bought the friendship of the Syrians with the temple treasures (1 Kings 15:18. Compare the conduct of Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18:15-16).

Jehoram and Ahaziah - Though these two monarchs had been worshippers of Baal, yet they had combined with that idolatrous cult a certain amount of decent respect for the old religion. It is evident from this passage that they had made costly offerings to the temple.

Verse 20

A conspiracy - Compare the marginal reference Joash, either from a suspicion of intended treason, or from some other unknown cause, took up his abode in the fortress of Millo 1 Kings 9:24. This conspiracy was connected with religion. Soon after the death of Jehoiada, Joash had apostatised; had renewed the worship of Baal; and, despite of many prophetic warnings, had persisted in his evil courses, even commanding Zechariah to be slain when he rebuked them 2 Chronicles 24:18-27. The

conspirators, who wished to avenge Zechariah, no doubt wished also to put down the Baal worship. In this it appears that they succeeded. For, though Amaziah punished the actual murderers after a while 2 Kings 14:5, yet he appears not to have been a Baal-worshipper. The only idolatries laid to his charge are the maintenance of the high places 2 Kings 14:4, and a worship of the gods of Edom 2 Chronicles 25:14-20.

Silla - This place is quite unknown.

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

In this chapter the history of the kingdom of Israel is traced through the two reigns of Jehoahaz and Jehoash. In 2 Kings 13:10.

Verse 3

All their days - literally, "all the days." Not "all the days" of the two Syrian kings, for Ben-hadad lost to Joash all the cities which he had gained from Jehoahaz 2 Kings 13:25; but either "all the days of Jehoahaz" 2 Kings 13:22, or "all the days of Hazael" - both while he led his own armies, and while they were led by his son.

Verse 5

The Lord gave Israel a saviour - Not immediately on the repentance of Jehoahaz but after his death (see 2 Kings 13:25).

They went out from under the hand of the Syrians - i. e. they ceased to be oppressed by the Syrians; they shook off their yoke, and became once more perfectly independent.

Tents - See 1 Kings 8:66 note.

Verse 6

But walked therein - Rather, "he walked therein," meaning Joash, the "saviour" of the preceding verse.

There remained the grove also in Samaria - It seems strange that Jehu had not destroyed this when he put down the worship of Baal 2 Kings 10:26-28. Perhaps the "grove" or "Asherah" worship was too closely connected with the old worship in high places to be set aside with the same ease as the rites newly introduced from Phoenicia.

Verse 7

The meaning is that "he, the king of Syria" (2 Kings 13:4 Hazael) limited the standing army of Jehoahaz.

Like the dust by threshing - An expression not only employed metaphorically, and importing defeat, conquest, and grinding oppression Jeremiah 51:33; Micah 4:12, but implying also the literal use of threshing-instruments in the execution of prisoners of war (marginal reference, and compare 2 Samuel 12:31).

Verse 12-13

According to ordinary laws of historical composition, these verses should form the closing paragraph of the present chapter.

Verse 14

The closing scene of Elisha‘s life. It was now at least sixty-three years since his call, so that he was at this time very possibly above ninety. He seems to have lived in almost complete retirement from the time he sent the young prophet to anoint Jehu king 2 Kings 9:1. And now it was not he who sought the king, but the king who sought him. Apparently, the special function of the two great Israelite prophets (Elijah and Elisha) was to counteract the noxious influence of the Baalistic rites; and, when these ceased, their extraordinary ministry came to an end.

The chariot of Israel … - See the marginal reference. Joash must have known the circumstances of Elijah‘s removal, which were perhaps already entered in the “book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel;” and he must have intended to apply to Elisha his own words on that solemn occasion; “Thou too art about to leave us, and to follow Elijah - thou who hast been since his departure, that which he was while he remained on earth, the true defense of Israel.”

Verse 16

Elisha put his hands upon the king‘s hands - A symbolic act, indicating that the successes, which the shooting typified, were to come, not from human skill, or strength, or daring, but from the presence and the power of God.

Verse 17

Eastward - Syria of Damascus lay partly east, but still more north, of the holy land. The arrow was to be shot, eastward, not so much against Syria itself as against the scene of the recent Syrian successes, Gilead 2 Kings 10:33, which was also to be the scene of Joash‘s victories over them. Aphek is almost due east from Shunem, where it is not unlikely that Elisha now was.

The arrow … - literally, “An arrow of deliverance from the Lord, and an arrow of deliverance against Syria; and thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, even to consuming.”

Verse 18

Smite upon the ground - Some prefer to render - “Shoot to the ground;” i. e. “Shoot arrows from the window into the ground outside, as if thou wert shooting against an enemy.”

Verse 19

The unfaithfulness of man limits the goodness of God. Though Joash did the prophet‘s bidding, it was without any zeal or fervour; and probably without any earnest belief in the efficacy of what he was doing. Compare Mark 6:5-6. God had been willing to give the Israelites complete victory over Syria 2 Kings 13:17; but Joash by his non-acceptance of the divine promise in its fulness had checked the outflow of mercy; and the result was that the original promise could not be fulfilled.

Verse 20

The bands of the Moabites invaded the land - The Moabites had been increasing in strength ever since their revolt from Ahaziah 2 Kings 1:1. The defeat which they suffered at the hands of Jehoram and Jehoshaphat 2 Kings 3:24 did not affect their subjugation. They spread themselves into the country north of the Arnon Isaiah 16:2, and thence proceeded to make plundering expeditious year by year into Samaria, in Spring. This was the natural season for incursions, as then in Palestine the crops began to be ripe.

Verse 21

They cast the man - Rather, “they thrust the man.” The graves of the Jews were not pits dug in the ground, like ours, but caves or cells excavated in the side of a rock, the mouth of the cave being ordinarily shut by a heavy stone.

Stood up on his feet - Coffins were not used by the Jews. The body was simply wrapped or swathed in grave-clothes (compare Luke 7:15; John 11:44).

This miracle of Elisha‘s after his death is more surprising than any of those which he performed during his lifetime. The Jews regarded it as his highest glory (compare Ecclesiaticus 48:13,14). It may be said to belong to a class of Scriptural miracles, cases, i. e. where the miracle was not performed through the agency of a living miracle-worker, but by a material object in which, by God‘s will, “virtue” for the time resided (compare Acts 19:12). The primary effect of the miracle was, no doubt, greatly to increase the reverence of the Israelites for the memory of Elisha, to lend force to his teaching, and especially to add weight to his unfulfilled prophecies, as to that concerning the coming triumphs of Israel over Syria. In the extreme state of depression to which the Israelites were now reduced, a very signal miracle may have been needed to encourage and reassure them.

Verse 23

The writer regards the captivity of Israel as God‘s “casting them out of His sight” (see 2 Kings 17:18, 2 Kings 17:20); and notes that this extreme punishment, though deserved, was by God‘s mercy not allowed to fall on them as yet.

Verse 24

So Hazael … died - literally, “And Hazael died,” a fact not mentioned before.

Verse 25

The cities which … - Probably cities west of the Jordan, since the tract east of that river was conquered, mainly if not wholly, in the reign of Jehu 2 Kings 10:33.

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verse 1

The history of Judah is resumed 2 Kings 14:23-29. The earlier narrative runs parallel with 2 Chronicles 25.

Verse 2

Joash of Judah reigned forty years 2 Kings 12:1, and Joash of Israel ascended the throne in his namesake‘s thirty-seventh year 2 Kings 13:10; hence, we should have expected to hear that Amaziah succeeded his father in the fourth rather than in the second year of Joash (of Israel). The usual explanation of the discrepancy is to suppose a double accession of the Israelite Joash - as co-partner with his father in the thirty-seventh year of his namesake, as sole king two years afterward.

Verse 3

He did … as Joash - There is a curious parity between the lives of Joash and Amaziah. Both were zealous for Yahweh in the earlier portion of their reigns, but in the latter part fell away; both disregarded the rebukes of prophets; and both, having forsaken God, were in the end conspired against and slain (compare 2 Chronicles 24:25; 2 Chronicles 25:27).

Verse 5

The phrase, “confirmed in his hand” 2 Kings 15:19, usually expresses the authorisation of a new reign by an imperial superior (see 2 Kings 15:19 note); but here it describes the result when the troubles consequent upon the murder of Joash had passed away. The new king‘s authority was generally recognized by his subjects.

Verse 6

The children of the murderers he slew not - This seems to be noted as a rare instance of clemency (compare 2 Kings 9:26 note). It is strange at first sight, that, when the Law contained so very plain a prohibition (marginal references), the contrary practice should have established itself. But we must remember, first, that the custom was that of the East generally (see Daniel 6:24); and secondly, that it had the sanction of one who might be thought to have known thoroughly the mind of the legislator, namely, Joshua (see Joshua 7:24-25).

Verse 7

Amaziah‘s Idumaean war is treated at length by the writer of Chronicles (marginal reference).

The "Valley of Salt" is usually identified with the broad open plain called the Sabkah, at the southern end of the Dead Sea - the continuation of the Ghor or Jordan gorge. At the north-western corner of this plain stands a mountain of rock-salt, and the tract between this mountain and the sea is a salt-marsh. Salt springs also abound in the plain itself, so that the name would be fully accounted for. It is doubted, however, whether the original of the word "valley," commonly used of clefts and ravines, can be applied to such a sunk plain as the Sabkah; and it is certainly most unlikely that 10,000 prisoners would have been conveyed upward of eighty miles (the distance of the Sabkah from Petra), through a rough and difficult country, only in order to be massacred. On the whole, it is perhaps most probable that the "Valley of Salt" yet remains to be discovered, and that its true position was near Selah or Petra (see Judges 1:36 note). Amaziah gave to Petra the name Joktheel, "subdued by God," in a religious spirit as an acknowledgment of the divine aid by which his victory was gained. The name failed to take permanent hold on the place, because the Edomites, on not long afterward recovering their city, restored the old appellation (2 Chronicles 28:17; compare Isaiah 16:1, and Amos 1:11).

Unto this day - The writer of Kings evidently gives the exact words of his document, composed not later than the reign of Ahaz, before whose death the Edomites had recovered Petra.

Verse 8

Amaziah's success against Edom had so elated him that he thought himself more than a match for his northern neighbor. The grounds of the quarrel between them were furnished by the conduct of the hired, but dismissed, Israelite soldiers (see the marginal reference).

Let us look one another in the face - i. e. "let us meet face to face in arms, and try each other's strength" 2 Kings 14:11-12.

Verse 9

The Oriental use of apologues on the most solemn and serious occasions is well known to all, and scarcely needs illustration (compare marginal reference). It is a common feature of such apologues that they are not exact parallels to the case whereto they are applied, but only general or partial resemblances. Hence, there is need of caution in applying the several points of the illustration.

Verse 10

Glory of this … - literally, "Be honored;" i. e. "Enjoy thy honor … be content with it." "Why wilt thou meddle with misfortune?"

Verse 11

Jehoash did not wait to be attacked. Invading Judaea from the west, and so ascending out of the low coast tract, he met the army of Amaziah at Beth-shemesh (see Joshua 19:21 note), about 15 miles from Jerusalem.

Verse 12

The author of Chronicles notes that Amaziah's obstinacy, and his consequent defeat and captivity, were judgments upon him for an idolatry into which he had fallen after his conquest of Edom 2 Chronicles 25:14, 2 Chronicles 25:20.

Verse 13

The object of breaking down the wall was to leave Jerusalem at the mercy of her rival; and it must have been among the conditions of the peace that the breach thus made should not be repaired.

Gates in Oriental cities are named from the places to which they lead. The gate of Ephraim must therefore have been a north gate: perhaps also known, later on, by the name of the "gate of Benjamin" Jeremiah 37:13; Zechariah 14:10. The corner gate was probably a gate at the northwest angle of the city, where the north wall approached the Valley of Hinnom. The entire breach was thus in the north wall, on the side where Jerusalem was naturally the weakest. Josephus says that Joash drove his chariot through the breach into the town, a practice not unusual with conquerors.

Verse 14

This is the only distinct mention of "hostages" in the Old Testament. It would seem that the Oriental conquerors generally regarded the terror of their arms as sufficient to secure the performance of the engagements contracted toward them.

Verse 15-16

These two verses (repeated from 2 Kings 13:12-13) are out of place here, where they interrupt the history of Amaziah's reign.

Verse 20

They brought him on horses - i. e. they conveyed his body back to Jerusalem in the royal chariot. The combination of relentless animosity against the living prince with the deepest respect for his dead remains is very characteristic of an Oriental people.

Verse 21

All the people of Judah - The words imply that the conspiracy was one in which the general mass of the people did not participate. There was no confusion and trouble as on the occasion of the murder of Joash. Azariah ("the strength of Yahweh"), and Uzziah ("whom Yahweh assists"), were mere variants of one name.

Verse 22

Elath, or Eloth (marginal reference 1 Kings 9:26), was near Ezion-Geber, in the Gulf of Akabah. It had been lost to the Jews on the revolt of Edom from Joram 2 Kings 8:22. Uzziah's re-establishment of the place, rendered possible by his father's successes 2 Kings 14:7, was one of his first acts, and seems to imply a desire to renew the commercial projects which Solomon had successfully carried out, and which Jehoshaphat had vainly attempted 1 Kings 22:48.

Verse 23

Jeroboam - This is the only instance, in the history of either kingdom, of a recurrent royal appellation. We can scarcely doubt that Jeroboam II was named after the great founder of the Israelite kingdom by a father who trusted that he might prove a sort of second founder. Perhaps the prophecy of Jonah (see 2 Kings 14:25) had been already given, and it was known that a great deliverance was approaching.

Verse 25

He restored the coast of Israel - Jeroboam, in the course of his long reign, recovered the old boundaries of the holy land to the north, the east, and the southeast. The "entering in of Hamath" is spoken of as the northern boundary; the "sea of the plain," or the Dead Sea, is the southern boundary (see the marginal references): here Israel adjoined on Moab. The entire tract east of Jordan had been lost to Israel in the reign of Jehu and that of Jehoahaz 2 Kings 10:33; 2 Kings 13:3, 2 Kings 13:25. All this was now recovered: and not only so, but Moab was reduced Amos 6:14, and the Syrians were in their turn forced to submit to the Jews 2 Kings 14:28. The northern conquests were perhaps little less important than the eastern 2 Kings 14:28.

The word of the Lord … which he spake - Some have found the prophecy of Jonah here alluded to, or a portion of it, in Isaiah 15:1-9; Isaiah 16:1-14 (see 2 Kings 16:13); but without sufficient grounds.

This passage tends to fix Jonah‘s date to some period not very late in the reign of Jeroboam II, i. e. (according to the ordinary chronology) from 823 B.C. to 782 B.C. On Gath-hepher, see the marginal reference and note.

Verse 26

The affliction of Israel - That which the Israelites had suffered for two reigns at the hands of the Syrians 2 Kings 10:32-33; 2 Kings 13:3, 2Kings 13:7,2 Kings 13:22.

There was not any shut up, nor any left - A phrase implying complete depopulation (see the marginal reference note; 1 Kings 14:10), but here meaning no more than extreme depression and weakness.

Verse 27

And the Lord said not - Though the Israelites were brought thus low, yet the fiat did not as yet go forth for their destruction. God did not send a prophet to say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; but on the contrary sent two to announce that they should be delivered from their present enemies, and obtain triumphs over them (see 2 Kings 14:25; 2 Kings 13:17-19).

That he would blot out … - This is a Mosaic phrase, found only here and in Deuteronomy 2 Kings 9:14; 29:20.

Verse 28

He recovered Damascus - Jeroboam probably gained certain advantages over Benhadad, which induced the latter to make his submission and consent to such terms as those extorted by Ahab 1 Kings 20:34.

Hamath was probably among the actual conquests of Jeroboam. It was brought so low in his reign, as to have become almost a by-word for calamity (compare Amos 6:2).

Which belonged to Judah, for Israel - i. e. these cities were recovered to Judah, i. e. to the people of God generally, through or by means of being added to Israel, i. e. to the northern kingdom.

A few further facts in the history of Jeroboam II are recorded by the prophet Amos (compare Amos 7:10, etc.).

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verse 5

The Lord smote the king, so that he was a leper - The circumstances under which this terrible affliction befel one of the greatest of the Jewish kings, are given at some length by the author of Chronicles (marginal reference), who supplies us with a tolerably full account of this important reign, which the writer of Kings dismisses in half-a-dozen verses.

A several house - "A house of liberation," or, freedom. On the necessity, under which the Law placed lepers, of living apart from other men, see marginal reference Jotham became regent in his father's room, and exercised the functions of judge (1 Kings 3:9 note), from the time that his father became a leper.

Verse 8

In the thirty and eighth year - Rather, according to the previous numbers 2 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 15:2, the 27th year of Azariah. Some suppose an interregnum between Jeroboam and Zachariah, which, however, is very improbable.

Verse 10

Before the people - i. e. openly and publicly. The Septuagint turns the original of the above words into a proper name, Keblaam, and makes him the actual assassin, but without much ground.

Verse 14

Tirzah, the old capital, once more appears as a place of importance, giving birth to the pretender, who alone of all these later kings died a natural death, and left the crown to his son 2 Kings 15:22. It would seem from the present passage to have been on lower ground than Samaria.

Verse 16

With respect to the supposed inability of Menahem to lead an expedition to Tiphsah (Thapsacus, see the marginal reference) on the Euphrates, we may note in the first place that such an expedition was a natural sequel to Jeroboam's occupation of Hamath 2 Kings 14:28; and further, that it would have been greatly facilitated by the weakness of Assyria at this time, that empire having fallen into a state of depression about 780 B.C.

Verse 19

This is the first distinct mention which we find in Scripture of Assyria as an aggressive power. From the native monuments we learn that she had

been for above a century pushing her conquests beyond the Euphrates, and seeking to reduce under her dominion the entire tract between that river and Egypt. Jehu had paid tribute. Some - arguing from the use of the phrase "confirmed the kingdom" (here, and in 2 Kings 14:5) - think that Jehoahaz had acknowledged Assyrian suzerainty, and consented that her monarchs should receive their investiture from the hands of the Ninevite king. But hitherto there had been no hostile invasion of Jewish or Israelite soil by an Assyrian army. Now, however, the Assyrians are at last formally introduced into the history. A series of aggressions is related in this and the four following chapters, culminating, on the one hand, in the destruction of the northern kingdom, on the other, in the complete failure of Sennacherib's attempt upon Judaea and Egypt.

With respect to the present expedition, there are certain difficulties. The name of Pul does not appear among the Assyrian monumental kings, and it is absent from the copies of the Assyrian Canon, containing the entire list of monarchs from about 910 B.C. to 670 B.C. Assyria Proper, moreover, appears to have been in a state of depression for some 40 years before the accession of Tiglath-Pileser 2 Kings 15:29. It is probable that, during the depression of the Ninevite line, Pul, a Chaldaean and not an Assyrian king, established a second monarchy upon the Euphrates, which claimed to be the true Assyria, and was recognized as such by the nations of Syria and Palestine. His invasion was probably provoked by Menahem's conquest of Thapsacus, which he would view as a wanton aggression upon his territory.

A thousand talents of silver - Compared with the tribute of Hezekiah soon afterward 2 Kings 18:14, this seems a large sum; but it is not beyond the resources of such a State as Samaria at the period. The tie which had bound Samaria to Assyria from the reign of Jehu to that of Jeroboam II, had ceased to exist during the period of Assyrian depression. Menahem now renewed it, undertaking the duties of a tributary, and expecting the support which Assyria was accustomed to lend to her dependencies in their struggles with their neighbors. Hence, the reproaches of Hosea (marginal reference "n").

Verse 20

Menahem exacted the money - The kings of Israel had no such ready resource in difficulties as that possessed by the kings of Judah in the temple treasury 2 Kings 12:18; 2 Kings 16:8. Hence, the forced contribution from

the people, the odium of which was diminished by confining the levy to the comparatively rich.

Each man fifty shekels - As the silver talent contained 3,000 shekels, the levy of fifty shekels a head must have extended to 60,000 persons.

Verse 21

Assyrian inscriptions show that Menahem was subsequently redfaced to subjection by Tiglath-Pileser 2 Kings 15:29.

Verse 25

A captain of his - A mere "captain," a person, therefore, of very moderate rank. The low birth of Pekah is probably glanced at in Isaiah's favorite designation of him as "Remaliah's son" Isaiah 7:4-5, Isaiah 7:9; Isaiah 8:6.

From the fact that Pekah employed Gileadites to carry out his designs, it has been conjectured that he himself belonged to the trans-Jordanic region.

In the palace of the king's house - Rather, "In the tower of the king's palace;" or possibly "in the harem of the king's palace" (1 Kings 16:18 note).

Verse 29

Tiglath-Pileser is the first among the Assyrian monarchs of Scripture whom we can certainly identify with a king mentioned in the monuments. According to the Assyrian Dr. he reigned from 745 B.C. to 727 B.C.; and the monuments show us this energetic and powerful prince (though, probably, an usurper), building and repairing palaces, levying armies, and carrying on successful wars against Merodach-Baladan in Babylonia, Rezin at Damascus, Hiram at; Tyre, the Medes, the Armenians, the natives of Northern Mesopotamia, and the Arabs who bordered upon Egypt. His Assyrian name, Tiglat-pal-zira, is composed of the elements tiglat, "adoration," pal, "son," and zira, a word of uncertain meaning.

Ijon and Abel-beth-maachah - On the position of some of the towns mentioned in this verse see the marginal reference and Joshua 19:36. Janoah is not the Janohah of Joshua 16:6 (modern Yanun, southeast of Nablous), but a city (Hunin?) near the Sea of Merom. Gilead is, probably, to be limited here to a small district of Peraea, lying to the east of Lake Merom, and in later times known as Gaulanitis (the reading of Septuagint here). If so, we must suppose two expeditions of Tiglath-Pileser against Pekah, the first mentioned here, and the second recorded in Chronicles and Isaiah (see the marginal reference "q;" 2 Kings 16:9 note).

Verse 30

Hoshea, the son of Elah - One of Pekah's friends, according to Josephus.

The twentieth year of Jotham - According to 2 Kings 15:33 and 2 Chronicles 27:1, Jotham reigned only 16 years. See also the suggestion in the margin. Strangely enough, this first year of Hoshea is also called, not the fourth, but the twelfth of Ahaz 2 Kings 17:1. The chronological confusion of the history, as it stands, is striking.

Uzziah - i. e. Azariah. See 2 Kings 15:1-4.

Verse 31

The rest of the acts of Pekah - On these, see 2 Kings 16:5 note.

Verse 32

The writer here resumes the history of Judah from 2 Kings 15:7, to resume and conclude the history of Israel in 2 Kings 17.

Verse 34

Jotham imitated his father in all respects, excepting in his impious usurpation of the priestly functions (2 Kings 15:5 note; 2 Chronicles 27:2).

Verse 35

He built the higher gate - Jotham followed the example of his father in military, no less than in religious, matters (compare the marginal reference with 2 Chronicles 26:9). The "higher" or "upper gate" of the temple is thought to have been that toward the north; and its fortification would seem to indicate fear of an attack from that quarter.

Verse 37

The recent invasions of Pul and Tiglath-Pileser had effectually alarmed Pekah and Rezin, and had induced them to put aside the traditional jealousies which naturally kept them apart, and to make a league offensive and defensive. Into this league they were anxious that Judaea should enter; but they distrusted the house of David, which had been so long hostile both to Damascus and to Samaria. They consequently formed the design of transferring the Jewish crown to a certain Ben-Tabeal Isaiah 7:6, probably a Jewish noble, perhaps a refugee at one of their courts, whom they could trust to join heartily in their schemes (2 Kings 16:5 note).

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verse 3

Ahaz was the worst of all the kings of Judah. He imitated the worst of the Israelite kings - Ahab and Ahaziah - by a re-introduction of the Baal worship, which had been rooted out of Israel by Jehu and out of Judah by Jehoiada.

And made Iris son to pass through the fire - i. e. Ahaz adopted the Moloch worship of the Ammonites and Moabites 2 Kings 3:27; Micah 6:7, and sacrificed at least one son, probably his firstborn, according to the horrid rites of those nations, and the Canaanite tribes Deuteronomy 12:31; Psalm 106:37-38. Hereto, apparently, the Jews had been guiltless of this abomination. They had been warned against it by Moses (marginal reference; Deuteronomy 18:10); and if (as some think) they had practiced it in the wilderness Ezekiel 20:26; Amos 5:26, the sin must have been rare and exceptional; from the date of their entrance into the promised land they had wholly put it away. Now, however, it became so frequent (compare 2 Kings 17:17; 2 Kings 21:6) as to meet with the strongest protest from Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jeremiah 7:31-32; Jeremiah 19:2-6; Jeremiah 32:35; Ezekiel 16:20; Ezekiel 20:26; Ezekiel 23:37, etc.).

Verse 4

He sacrificed … - Other kings of Judah bad allowed their people to do so. Ahaz was the first, so far as we know, to countenance the practice by his own example.

Verse 5

Rezin and Pekah, who had already begun their attacks upon Judaea in the reign of Jotham 2 Kings 15:37, regarded the accession of a boy-king, only 16 years of age, as especially favorable to their projects, and proceeded without loss of time to carry them out. The earlier scenes of the war, omitted by the writer of Kings, are given at some length in 2 Chronicles 28:5-15.

Verse 6

Either during the siege, or on breaking up from before Jeruasalem, Rezin made an expedition to the lied Sea coast, and became master of the city which had belonged to Judaea about 70 years (marginal reference). Most moderns render this verse, “Rezin recovered (or restored) Elath to

Edom … and the Edomites came to Elath." On the resemblance of the words Aram and Edom in the original, see 2 Samuel 8:12 note.

Verse 7

Ahaz was threatened on all sides, on the north by Rezin and Pekah; on the southeast by Edom 2 Chronicles 28:17; and on the southwest by the Philistines 2 Chronicles 28:18. To these external dangers was added the still greater peril of disaffection at home. A large party in Judah was "weary" of the house of David Isaiah 7:13, ready to join the confederacy Isaiah 8:6, Isaiah 8:12, and to accept for king "the son of Tabeal." Ahaz saw no hope of safety unless he could obtain a powerful protector; and, Egypt being particularly weak at this time, he turned to Assyria.

Verse 8

Compare the marginal reference and 1 Kings 15:18. Political necessity was always held to justify the devotion of the temple treasure to secular purposes.

Verse 9

The submission of Judah, which Ahaz proffered, would be of the utmost importance in connection with any projects that might be entertained of Egyptian conquests. Naturally, Damascus was the first object of attack. It was the head of the confederacy, and it lay nearest to an army descending upon Lower Syria, as all Asiatic armies would descend, from the north. It appears from an inscription of Tiglath-pileser's, that Rezin met him in the field, was defeated, and slain. An attack upon Pekah followed. Now probably it was that the entire trans-Jordanic region was overrun: and that the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, were carried into captivity 1 Chronicles 5:26. Megiddo and Dor appear also to have been occupied, and the Arabs of the south chastised. Tiglathpileser then returned to Damascus, where a son of Rezin had assumed the crown; he besieged and took the city, and punished Rezin's son with death. Tiglath-pileser appears by one of his inscriptions to have held a court at Damascus, to which it is probable that the tributary kings of the neighborhood were summoned to pay their tributes and do homage for their kingdoms. Among the tributes brought to him at this time, those of Judaea, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Gaza, Ascalon, and Tyre, are mentioned.

Kir - Kir is mentioned by Amos Amos 9:7 as the country from which the Syrians came. It is joined by Isaiah Isaiah 22:6 with Elam or Elymais.

Its position can only be conjectured. Perhaps the word designates a region adjoining Elymais, in the extreme southeastern limits of Assyria.

Verse 10

And saw an altar - Rather, "The altar," i. e. an Assyrian altar, and connected with that formal recognition of the Assyrian deities which the Ninevite monarchs appear to have required of all the nations whom they received into their empire.

The fashion of the altar - Assyrian altars were not very elaborate, but they were very different from the Jewish. They were comparatively small, and scarcely suited for "whole burnt-offerings." One type was square, about half the height of a man, and ornamented round the top with a sort of battlement. Another had a triangular base and a circular top consisting of a single flat stone. A third was a sort of portable stand, narrow, and about the height of a man. This last was of the kind which the kings took with them in their expeditions.

Verse 14

Hereto the "Brasen altar" (marginal reference) had, it would seem, occupied a position directly in front of the temple porch, which it exactly equalled in width. Now Ahaz removed it from this place, and gave the honorable position to his new altar, which he designed to supersede the old far all ordinary purposes 2 Kings 16:15.

From between the altar … - Urijah, having received no official directions, had placed the new altar in front of the old, between it and the eastern gate of the court. Ahaz consequently on his arrival found the brasen altar "between the (new) altar and the house of the Lord."

Verse 15

The brasen altar shall be for me to inquire by - The bulk of modern commentators translate - "As for the Brasen altar, it will be for me to inquire (or consider) what I shall do with it."

Verse 16

The writer condemns the obsequiousness of Urijah, whose conduct was the more inexcusable after the noble example of his predecessor Azariah 2 Chronicles 26:17-20.

Verse 17

See the marginal references. The acts recorded here, were probably not mere wanton acts of mutilation, but steps in the conversion of these sacred objects to other uses, as to the ornamentation of a palace or of an idol

temple. The bases, the oxen, and the sea were not destroyed - they remained at Jerusalem until its final capture Jeremiah 52:17, Jeremiah 52:20. Probably they were restored to their original uses by Hezekiah 2 Chronicles 29:19.

A pavement of stones - Probably a pavement made expressly, for the stones of the court seem to have been covered with a planking of cedar 1 Kings 6:36; 1 Kings 7:12.

Verse 18

The covert … in the house - A canopied seat in the temple for the king and his family when they attended public worship on the sabbath. It stood no doubt in the inner court of the temple.

The king‘s entry without - This would seem to have been a private passage by which the king crossed the outer court to the east gate of the inner court when he visited the temple Ezekiel 46:1-2.

Turned he from the house of the Lord for the king of Assyria - This passage is very obscure. Some translate - “altered he in the house of the Lord, because of the kine of Assyria,” supposing the “covert” and the “passage” to have been of rich materials, and Ahaz to have taken them to eke out his “presents to the king of Assyria.” Others render, “removed he into the house of the Lord from fear of the king of Assyria.”

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Verse 19

The rest of the acts of Ahaz - Such as are described in Isaiah 7:10-13; 2 Chronicles 28:23-25; 2 Chronicles 29:3, 2 Chronicles 29:7.

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

In the twelfth year - Compare 2 Kings 15:30 note. The history of the kingdom of Israel is in this chapter brought to a close.

Verse 2

Not as the kings of Israel that were before him - The repentance of a nation like that of an individual, may be "too late." God is long-suffering; but after national sins have reached a certain height, after admonitions and warnings have been repeatedly rejected, after lesser punishments have failed - judgment begins to fall. Forces have been set in motion, which nothing but a miracle could stop; and God does not see fit to work a miracle in such a case. Compare Butler, ‹Analogy, ‹ Pt. I ch. 2 end.

Verse 3

Of Shalmaneser, the successor of Tiglath-pileser in the Assyrian Canon, we know little from Assyrian sources, since his records have been mutilated by his successors, the Sargonids, who were of a wholly different family. The archives of Tyre mention him as contemporary with, and warring against, a Tyrian king named Elulaeus. The expedition, referred to here, was probably in the first year of Shalmaneser (727 B.C.). Its main object was the reduction of Phoenicia, which had re-asserted its independence, but (except Tyre) was once more completely reduced. Shalmaneser probably passed on from Phoenicia into Galilee, where he attacked and took Beth-arbel (Arbela of Josephus, now Irbid), treating it with great severity Hosea 10:14, in order to alarm Hoshea, who immediately submitted, and became tributary (see the marginal rendering and 1 Kings 4:21 note). Shalmaneser then returned into Assyria.

Verse 4

So, king of Egypt, is generally identified with Shebek (730 B.C.), the Sabaco of Herodotus. Hoshea‘s application to him was a return to a policy which had been successful in the reign of Jeroboam I (1 Kings 12:20 note), but had not been resorted to by any other Israelite monarch. Egypt had for many years been weak, but Sabaco was a conqueror, who at the head of the swarthy hordes of Ethiopia had invaded Egypt and made himself master of the country. In the inscriptions of Shebek he boasts to have received tribute from "the king of Shara" (Syria), which is probably his mode of noticing Hoshea‘s application. References to the Egyptian proclivities of Hoshea are

frequent in the prophet Hosea Hosea 7:11; Hosea 11:1, Hosea 11:5; Hosea 12:4. King Hoshea, simultaneously with his reception as a vassal by Sabaco, ceased to pay tribute to Shalmaneser, thus openly rebelling, and provoking the chastisement which followed.

Verse 5

All the land - The second invasion of Shalmaneser (723 B.C., his fifth year), is here contrasted with the first, as extending to the whole country, whereas the first had afflicted only a part.

Three years - From the fourth to the sixth of Hezekiah, and from the seventh to the ninth of Heshea; two years, therefore, according to our reckoning, but three, according to that of the Hebrews. This was a long time for so small a place to resist the Assyrians but Samaria was favorably situated on a steep hill; probably Sabaco made some attempts to relieve his vassal; the war with Tyre must have distracted Shalmaneser; and there is reason to believe that before the capture was effected a revolt had broken out at Nineveh which must have claimed Shalmaneser‘s chief attention, though it did not induce him to abandon his enterprise.

Verse 6

The king of Assyria took Samaria - i. e., from the Assyrian inscriptions, not Shalmaneser but Sargon, who claims to have captured the city in the first year of his reign (721 B.C.). At first Sargon carried off from Samaria no more than 27,280 prisoners and was so far from depopulating the country that he assessed the tribute on the remaining inhabitants at the same rate as before the conquest. But later in his reign he effected the wholesale deportation here mentioned.

Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan - Rather, “on the Habor, the river of Gozan.” Halah is the tract which Ptolemy calls Chalcitis, on the borders of Gauzanitis (Gozan) in the vicinity of the Chaboras, or Khabour (Habor, the great affluent of the Euphrates). In this region is a remarkable mound called Gla, which probably marks the site, and represents the name, of the city of Chalach, from where the district Chalcitis was so called.

In the cities of the Medes - Sargon relates that he overran Media, seized and “annexed to Assyria” a number of the towns, and also established in the country a set of fortified posts or colonies.

Verse 7

The reasons for which God suffered the Israelites to be deprived of their land and carried into captivity were:

1. their idolatries;

2. their rejection of the Law;

3. their disregard of the warning voices of prophets and seers.

Verse 8

Idolatry was worse in the Israelites than in other nations, since it argued not merely folly and a gross carnal spirit, but also black ingratitude Exodus 20:2-3. The writer subdivides the idolatries of the Israelites into two classes, pagan and native - those which they adopted from the nations whom they drove out, and those which their own kings imposed on them. Under the former head would come the great mass of the idolatrous usages described in 2 Kings 17:9-11, 2 Kings 17:17; "the high places" 2 Kings 17:9, 2 Kings 17:11; the "images" and "groves" 2 Kings 17:10; the causing of their children to "pass through the fire" 2 Kings 17:17; and the "worship of the host of heaven" 2 Kings 17:16: under the latter would fall the principal points in 2 Kings 17:12, 2 Kings 17:16, 2 Kings 17:21.

Which they had made - "Which" refers to "statutes." The lsraelites had "walked in the statutes of the pagan, and in those of the kings of Israel, which (statutes) they (the kings) had made."

Verse 9

Literally, the words run thus - "And the children of Israel concealed (or ‹dissembled‘) words which were not so concerning the Lord their God;" the true meaning of which probably is, the Israelites cloaked or covered their idolatry with the pretence that it was a worship of Yahweh: they glossed it over and dissembled toward God, instead of openly acknowledging their apostasy.

From the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city - This phrase was probably a proverbial expression for universality, meaning strictly; "alike in the most populous and in the most desolate regions." "Towers of watchmen" were built for the protection of the flocks and herds which were pastured in waste and desert places 2 Chronicles 26:10; 2 Chronicles 27:4.

Verse 11

The burning of incense was a common religious practice among the Egyptians and the Babylonians; and from the present passage we gather that the Canaanite nations practiced it as one of their ordinary sacred rites. The

Israelites are frequently reproached with it Hosea 2:13; Hosea 4:13; Isaiah 65:3.

Verse 13

God raised up a succession of prophets and seers, who repeated and enforced the warnings of the Law, and breathed into the old words a new life. Among this succession were, in Israel, Ahijah the Shilonite 1 Kings 14:2, Jehu the son of Hanani 1 Kings 16:1, Elijah, Micaiah the son of Imlah 1 Kings 22:8, Elisha, Jonah the son of Amittai 2 Kings 14:25, Oded 2 Chronicles 28:9, Amos, and Hosea; in Judah, up to this time, Shemaiah 2 Chronicles 11:2; 2 Chronicles 12:5, Iddo 2 Chronicles 12:15; 2 Chronicles 13:22, Azariah the son of Oded 2 Chronicles 15:1, Hanani 2 Chronicles 16:7, Jehu his son 2 Chronicles 19:2, Jahaziel the son of Zechariah 2 Chronicles 20:14, Eliezer the son of Dodavah (2 Chronicles 20:37), Zechariah the son of Jehoiada 2 Chronicles 24:20, another Zechariah 2 Chronicles 26:5, Joel, Micah, and Isaiah, besides several whose names are not known. Some of these persons are called "prophets," others "seers." Occasionally, the same person has both titles (as Iddo and Jehu the son of Hanani), which seems to show that there was no very important distinction between them.

Probably the conjecture is right that "prophet" נביא *nâbîy'* in strictness designates the official members of the prophetical order only, while "seer" חזה *chôzeh* is applicable to all, whether members of the order or not, who receive a prophetical revelation.

Verse 14

To "harden" or "stiffen the neck" is a common Hebrew expression significative of unbending obstinacy and determined self-will. See the marginal references.

Verse 15

As idols are "vanity" and "nothingness," mere weakness and impotence, so idolators are "vain" and impotent. Their energies have been wasted, their time misspent; they have missed the real object of their existence; their whole life has been a mistake; and the result is utter powerlessness. Literally, the word rendered "vanity" seems to mean "breath" or "vapor" - a familiar image for nonentity. It occurs frequently in the prophets, and especially in Jeremiah (e. g. Jeremiah 2:5; Jeremiah 8:19; Jeremiah 14:22, etc.).

Verse 16

In 2 Kings 17:10 there is a reference to the old high-place worship, which was professedly a worship of Yahweh, but with unauthorized rites and emblems; here the reference is to Ahab‘s setting up a grove to Baal in the city of Samaria (marginal reference).

And worshipped all the host of heaven - Astral worship has not hitherto been mentioned as practiced by the Israelites. Moses had warned against it Deuteronomy 4:19; Deuteronomy 17:3, so that it no doubt existed in his day, either among the Canaanite nations or among the Arabians Job 31:26-28. Perhaps it was involved to some extent in the Baal worship of the Phoenicians, for Baal and Astarte were probably associated in the minds of their worshippers with the Sun and moon. Later in the history we shall find a very decided and well-developed astral worship prevalent among the Jews, which is probably Assyro-Babylonian (2 Kings 21:3 note).

Verse 17

Compare 2 Kings 16:3 note, and see Leviticus 20:2-5 note.

Verse 19

This verse and the next are parenthetical. Here again, as in 2 Kings 17:13, the writer is led on from his account of the sins and punishment of the Israelites to glance at the similar sins and similar punishment of the Jews.

It was the worst reproach which could be urged against any Jewish king, that he “walked in the way of the kings of Israel” 2 Kings 8:18; 2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chronicles 21:6; 2 Chronicles 28:2. The Baal worship is generally the special sin at which the phrase is leveled; but the meaning here seems to be wider. Compare Micah 6:16.

Verse 20

All the seed of Israel - The Jews, i. e. as well as the Israelites. God‘s dealings with both kingdoms were alike. “Spoilers” were sent against each, time after time, before the final ruin came on them - against Israel, Pul and Tiglath-pileser 2 Kings 15:19, 2 Kings 15:29; 1 Chronicles 5:26; against Judah, Sennacherib 2 Kings 18:13-16, Esar-haddon 2 Chronicles 33:11, and Nebuchadnezzar thrice.

Verse 21

The strong expression “drave Israel” is an allusion to the violent measures whereto Jeroboam had recourse in order to stop the efflux into

Judea of the more religious portion of his subjects 2 Chronicles 11:13-16, the calling in of Shishak, and the permanent assumption of a hostile attitude toward the southern kingdom.

Verse 23

As he had said by all his servants the prophets - The writer refers not only to the extant prophecies of Moses (Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 4:26-27; Deuteronomy 28:36, etc.), Ahijah the Shilohite (marginal reference), Hosea Hosea 9:3, Hosea 9:17, and Amos Amos 7:17, but also to the entire series of warnings and predictions which prophet after prophet in a long unbroken succession had addressed to the disobedient Israelites 2 Kings 17:13 on their apostasy, and so leaving them wholly "without excuse" (see the 2 Kings 17:13 note).

Unto this day - The words, taken in combination with the rest of the chapter, distinctly show that the Israelites had not returned to their land by the time of the composition of the Books of Kings. They show nothing as to their ultimate fate. But, on the whole, it would seem probable:

(1) that the ten tribes never formed a community in their exile, but were scattered from the first; and

(2) that their descendants either blended with the pagan and were absorbed, or returned to Palestine with Zerubbabel and Ezra, or became inseparable united with the dispersed Jews in Mesopotamia and the adjacent countries.

No discovery, therefore, of the ten tribes is to be expected, nor can works written to prove their identity with any existing race or body of persons be regarded as anything more than ingenious exercitations.

Verse 24

Sargon is probably the king of Assyria intended, not (as generally supposed) either Shalmaneser or Esar-haddon.

The ruins of Cutha have been discovered about 15 miles northeast of Babylon, at a place which is called Ibrahim, because it is the traditional site of a contest between Abraham and Nimrod. The name of Cuilia is found on the bricks of this place, which are mostly of the era of Nebuchadnezzar. The Assyrian inscriptions show that the special god of Cutha was Nergal (see the 2 Kings 17:30 note).

Ava or Ivah or Ahava Ezra 8:15 was on the Euphrates; perhaps the city in ancient times called Ihi or Aia, between Sippara (Sepharvaim) and Hena (Anah).

On Hamath, see 1 Kings 8:65 note.

Sepharvaim or Sippara is frequently mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions under the name of Tsipar (2 Kings 17:31 note). The dual form of the Hebrew name is explained by the fact that the town lay on both sides of the river. Its position is marked by the modern village of Mosaib, about 20 miles from the ruins of Babylon up the course of the stream.

The towns mentioned in this verse were, excepting Hamath, conquered by Sargon in his twelfth year, 709 B.C.; and it cannot have been until this time, or a little later, that the transplantation here recorded took place. Hamath had revolted, and been conquered by Sargon in his first year, shortly after the conquest of Samaria.

Instead of the children of Israel - This does not mean that the whole population of Samaria was carried off (compare 2 Chronicles 34:9). The writer here, by expressly confining the new-comers to the "cities of Samaria," seems to imply that the country districts were in other hands.

Verse 25

The depopulation of the country, insufficiently remedied by the influx of foreigners, had the natural consequence of multiplying the wild beasts and making them bolder. Probably a certain number had always lurked in the jungle along the course of the Jordan Jeremiah 49:19; Jeremiah 50:44; and these now ventured into the hill country, and perhaps even into the cities. The colonists regarded their sufferings from the lions as a judgment upon them from "the god of the land" (2 Kings 17:26; compare 1 Kings 20:23 note).

Verse 27

Carry one of the priests … ; let them go and dwell there, and let him teach - The double change of number is curious; but rise text needs no emendation. The priest would require to be accompanied by assistants, who would "go and dwell," but would not be qualified to "teach." The arcana of

the worship would be known to none excepting the priests who had ministered at the two national sanctuaries of Dan and Bethel.

Verse 28

The priest sent to the colonists was not a true Yahweh-priest, but one of those who had been attached to the calf-worship, probably at Bethel. Hence, he would be willing to tolerate the mixed religion, which a true Yahweh-priest would have unsparingly condemned.

Verse 29

The "Samaritans" here are the Israelites. The temples built by them at the high places 1 Kings 12:31; 1 Kings 13:32 had remained standing at the time of their departure. They were now occupied by the new-comers, who set up their own worship in the old sanctuaries.

Verse 30

Succoth-benoth probably represents a Babylonian goddess called Zir-banit, the wife of Merodach. She and her husband were, next to Bel and Beltis, the favorite divinities of the Babylonians.

Nergal, etymologically "the great man," or "the great hero," was the Babylonian god of war and hunting. His name forms an element in the Babylonian royal appellation, Nergal-shar-ezar or Neriglissar. The Assyrian inscriptions connect Nergal in a very special way with Cutha, of which he was evidently the tutelary deity.

Ashima is ingeniously conjectured to be the same as Esmun, the AEsculapius of the Cabiri or "great gods" of the Phoenicians.

Verse 31

Nibhaz and Tartak are either gods of whom no other notice has come down to us, or intentional corruptions of the Babylonian names Nebo and Tir, the great god of Borsippa, who was the tutelar deity of so many Babylonian kings. The Jews, in their scorn and contempt of polytheism, occasionally and purposely altered, by way of derision, the names of the pagan deities. Anammelech is possibly an instance of the same contemptuous play upon words.

Adrammelech, "the glorious king," signifies the sun. The Assyrian inscriptions commonly designate Tsipar, or Sepharvaim 2 Kings 17:24, "Sippara of the Sun." The title "Adrammelech" has not yet been found in

the inscriptions hitherto; but it would plainly be a fitting epithet of the great luminary.

The sun-god of the Babylonians, Shamas, was united at Sippara and elsewhere with a sun-goddess, Anunit, whose name may be represented in the Anammelech of the text. The Hebrews, taking enough of this name to show what they meant, assimilated the termination to that of the male deity, thus producing a ridiculous effect, regarded as insulting to the gods in question.

Verse 32

Of the lowest of them - Rather, "from all ranks." See marginal reference note.

Verse 33

Understand the passage thus: "They (the colonists) served their own gods after the manner of the nations from which they (the government) removed them," i. e., after the manner of their own countrymen at home.

Verse 34

They fear not the Lord - The new-comers in one sense feared Yahweh 2 Kings 17:33, 2 Kings 17:41. They acknowledged His name, admitted Him among their gods, and kept up His worship at the high place at Bethel according to the rites instituted by Jeroboam 2 Kings 17:28. But in another sense they did not fear Him. To acknowledge Yahweh together with other gods is not really to acknowledge Him at all.

Verse 37

Which he wrote for you - It is worth observing here, first, that the author regards the whole Law as given to the Israelites in a written form; and secondly, that he looks on the real writer as God.

Verse 41

Their graven images - The Babylonians appear to have made a very sparing use of animal forms among their religious emblems. They represented the male Sun, Shamas, by a circle, plain or crossed; the female Sun, Anunit, by a six-rayed or eight-rayed star; Nebo by a single wedge or arrow-head, the fundamental element of their writing; the god of the atmosphere by a double or triple thunderbolt. The gods generally were represented under human forms. A few of them had, in addition, animal emblems - the lion, the bull, the eagle, or the serpent; but these seem never

to have been set up for worship in temples. There was nothing intentionally grotesque in the Babylonian religion, as there was in the Egyptian and Phoenician.

So do they unto this day - The mixed worship, the union of professed reverence for Yahweh with the grossest idolatry, continued to the time of the composition of this book, which must have been as late as 561 B.C., or, at any rate, as late as 580 B.C. 2 Kings 25:27. It did not, however, continue much longer. When the Samaritans wished to join the Jews in rebuilding the temple (about 537 B.C.), they showed that inclination to draw nearer to the Jewish cult which henceforth marked their religious progress. Long before the erection of a temple to Yahweh on Mount Gerizim (409 B.C.) they had laid aside all their idolatrous rites, and, admitting the binding authority of the Pentateuch, had taken upon them the observance of the entire Law.

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CHAPTER 18

Introduction

The sacred writer, having now completed the history of the joint kingdom, and having east his glance forward over the religions history of the mixed race which replaced the Israelites in Samaria, proceeds to apply himself uuinterruptedly to the remaining history of the Jewish kingdom.

Verse 1

In the third year - If Hoshea ascended the throne toward the close of the 12th year of Ahaz 2 Kings 17:1, and if Ahaz reigned not much more than 15 years 2 Kings 16:2, the first of Hezekiah might synchronise in part with Hoshea‘s third year.

Hezekiah - The name given by our translators follows the Greek form, Ἐζεκίας *Ezekias* rather than the Hebrew, which is Hizkiah. Its meaning is "strength of Yahweh."

Verse 2

Twenty and five years old was he - This statement, combined with that of 2 Kings 16:2, would make it necessary that his father Ahaz should have married at the age of 10, and have had a child born to him when he was 11 years of age. This is not impossible; but its improbability is so great, that most commentators suggest a corruption in some of the numbers.

The Zachariah here mentioned was perhaps one of the "faithful witnesses" of Isaiah Isaiah 8:2.

Verse 3

He did that which was right … - This is said without qualification of only three kings of Judah, Asa 1 Kings 15:11, Hezekiah, and Josiah 2 Kings 22:2. See some details of Hezekiah‘s acts at the commencement of his reign in Jeremiah 26:18; Micah 3:12.

Verse 4

He removed the high places - This religious reformation was effected in a violent and tumultuous manner (marginal reference). The "high places," though forbidden in the Law (Deuteronomy 12:2-4, Deuteronomy 12:11-14; compare Leviticus 26:30), had practically received the sanction of Samuel 1 Samuel 7:10; 1 Samuel 9:12-14, David 2 Samuel 15:32, Solomon 1 Kings 3:4, and others, and had long been the favorite resorts of the mass of the people (see 1 Kings 3:2 note). They were the rural centers

for the worship of Yahweh, standing in the place of the later synagogue;, and had hitherto been winked at, or rather regarded as legitimate, even by the best kings. Hezekiah‘s desecration of these time-honored sanctuaries must have been a rude shock to the feelings of numbers; and indications of the popular discontent may be traced in the appeal of Rab-shakeh 2 Kings 18:22, and in the strength of the reaction under Manasseh 2 Kings 21:2-9; 2 Chronicles 33:3-17.

The brasen serpent - See the marginal reference. Its history from the time when it was set up to the date of Hezekiah‘s reformation is a blank. The present passage favors the supposition that it had been brought by Solomon from Gibeon and placed in the temple, for it implies a long continued worship of the serpent by the Israelites generally, and not a mere recent worship of it by the Jews.

And he called it Nehushtan - Rather, “And it was called Nehushtan.” The people called it, not “the serpent” נחשׁ *nāchâsh* but “the brass,” or “the brass thing” נחשׁתן *nechûshtān* Probably they did not like to call it “the serpent,” on account of the dark associations which were attached to that reptile (Genesis 3:1-15; Isaiah 27:1; Psalm 91:13; etc.).

Verse 5

After him was none like him - The same is said of Josiah (marginal reference). The phrase was probably proverbial, and was not taken to mean more than we mean when we say that such and such a king was one of singular piety.

Verse 6

Other good kings, as Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Joash, and Amaziah, had fallen away in their later years. Hezekiah remained firm to the last. The phrase “cleaving to God” is frequent in Deuteronomy, but rare elsewhere.

Verse 7

The Lord was with him - This had been said of no king since David (marginal reference). The phrase is very emphatic. The general prosperity of Hezekiah is set forth at some length by the author of Chronicles 2 Chronicles 32:23, 2 Chronicles 32:27-29. His great influence among the nations bordering on the northern kingdom, was the cause of the first expedition of Sennacherib against him, the Ekronites having expelled an Assyrian viceroy from their city, and delivered him to Hezekiah for safe keeping: an expedition which did not very long precede that of 2 Kings 18:13, which fell toward the close of Hezekiah‘s long reign.

Verse 8

Sargon had established the complete dominion of Assyria over the Philistines. Hence, the object of Hezekiah‘s Philistine campaign was not so much conquest as opposition to the Assyrian power. How successful it was is indicated in the Assyrian records by the number of towns in this quarter which Sennacherib recovered before he proceeded against Jerusalem.

Verses 9-12

These verses repeat the account given in the marginal reference. The extreme importance of the event may account for the double insertion.

Verse 13

In the fourteenth year - This note of time, which places the invasion of Sennacherib eight years only after the capture of Samaria, is hopelessly at variance with the Assyrian dates for the two events, the first of which falls into the first of Sargon, and the second into the fourth of Sennacherib, twenty-one years later. We have therefore to choose between an entire rejection of the Assyrian chronological data, and an emendation of the present passage. Of the emendations proposed the simplest is to remove the note of time altogether, regarding it as having crept in from the margin.

Sennacherib - This is the Greek form of the Sinakhirib of the inscriptions, the son of Sargon, and his immediate successor in the monarchy. The death of Sargon (705 B.C.) had been followed by a number of revolts. Hezekiah also rebelled, invaded Philistia, and helped the national party in that country to throw off the Assyrian yoke.

From Sennacherib‘s inscriptions we learn that, having reduced Phoenicia, recovered Ascalon, and defeated an army of Egyptians and Ethiopians at Ekron, he marched against Jerusalem.

The fenced cities - Sennacherib reckons the number taken by him at “forty-six.” He seems to have captured on his way to the holy city a vast number of small towns and villages, whose inhabitants he carried off to the number of 200,000. Compare Isaiah 24:1-12. The ground occupied by his main host outside the modern Damascus gate was thenceforth known to the Jews as “the camp of the Assyrians.” Details connected with the siege may be gathered from 2 Kings 18:14 had left his army to continue the siege, and gone in person to Lachish. The Jewish monarch sent his embassy to that town.

Verse 14

Return from me - Or “retire from me,” i. e., “withdraw thy troops.”

Three hundred talents … - According to Sennacherib's own account, the terms of peace were as follows:

(1) A money payment to the amount of 800 talents of silver and 30 talents of gold.

(2) the surrender of the Ekronite king.

(3) a cession of territory toward the west and the southwest, which was apportioned between the kings of Ekron, Ashdod, and Gaza.

Verse 16

Ahaz had already exhausted the treasuries 2 Kings 16:8; Hezekiah was therefore compelled to undo his own work.

Verse 17

An interval of time must be placed between this verse and the last. Sennacherib, content with his successes, had returned to Nineveh with his spoil and his numerous captives. Hezekiah, left to himself, repented of his submission, and commenced negotiations with Egypt 2 Kings 18:21, 2 Kings 18:24; Isaiah 30:2-6; Isaiah 31:1, which implied treason against his Assyrian suzerain. It was under these circumstances that Sennacherib appears to have made his second expedition into Palestine very soon after the first. Following the usual coast route he passed through Philistia on his way to Egypt, leaving Jerusalem on one side, despising so irony a state, and knowing that the submission of Egypt would involve that of her hangers-on. While, however, he was besieging Lachish on his way to encounter his main enemy, he determined to try the temper of the Jews by means of an embassy, which he accordingly sent.

Tartan and Rabsaris and Rab-shakeh - None of these are proper names. "Tartan" was the ordinary title of an Assyrian general; "Rab-saris" is "chief eunuch," always a high officer of the Assyrian court; Rab-shakeh is probably "chief cup-bearer."

By the conduit of the upper pool - Possibly a conduit on the north side of the city near the "camp of the Assyrians." The spot was the same as that on which Isaiah had met Ahaz Isaiah 7:3.

Verse 18

When they had called to the king - The ambassadors summoned Hezekiah, as if their rank were equal to his. Careful of his dignity, he

responds by sending officers of his court.

Eliakim … which was over the household - Eliakim had been promoted to fill the place of Shebna Isaiah 22:20-22. He was a man of very high character. The comptroller of the household, whose position 1 Kings 4:6 must have been a subordinate one in the time of Solomon, appears to have now become the chief minister of the crown. On the "scribe" or secretary, and the "recorder," see the 1 Kings 4:3 note.

Verse 19

The Rab-shakeh, the third in rank of the three Assyrian ambassadors, probably took the prominent part in the conference because he could speak Hebrew 2 Kings 18:26, whereas the Tartan and the Rabsaris could not do so.

The great king - This title of the monarchs of Assyria is found in use as early as 1120 B.C. Like the title, "king of kings," the distinctive epithet "great" served to mark emphatically the vast difference between the numerous vassal monarchs and the suzerain of whom they held their crowns.

Verse 20

Hezekiah no doubt believed that in the "counsel" of Eliakim and Isaiah, and in the "strength" promised him by Egypt, he had resources which justified him in provoking a war.

Vain words - literally, as in margin, i. e., a mere word, to which the facts do not correspond.

Verse 21

This bruised reed - The "tall reed of the Nile bulrush" fitly symbolized the land where it grew. Apparently strong and firm, it was quite unworthy of trust. Let a man lean upon it, and the rotten support instantly gave way, wounding the hand that stayed itself so insecurely. So it was with Egypt throughout the whole period of Jewish history (compare 2 Kings 17:4-6). Her actual practice was to pretend friendship, to hold out hopes of support, and then to fail in time of need.

Verse 22

The destruction of numerous shrines and altars where Yahweh had been worshipped 2 Kings 18:4 seemed to the Rab-shakeh conduct calculated not to secure the favor, but to call forth the anger, of the god. At any rate, it was conduct which he knew had been distasteful to many of Hezekiah's subjects.

Verse 23

The phrase translated "give pledges," or "hostages" (margin) may perhaps be best understood as meaning "make an agreement." If you will "bind yourself to find the riders" (i. e., trained horsemen), we will "bind ourselves to furnish the horses." The suggestion implied that in all Judaea there were not 2000 men accustomed to serve as cavalry.

Verse 25

The Rab-shakeh probably tries the effect of a bold assertion, which had no basis of fact to rest upon.

Verse 26

The Syrian language - i. e., Aramaic; probably the dialect of Damascus, a Semitic language nearly akin to their own, but suffciently different to be unintelligible to ordinary Jews

The people that are on the wall - The conference must have been held immediately outside the wall for the words of the speakers to have been audible.

Verse 27

That they may eat … - "My master hath sent me," the Rab-shakeh seems to say, "to these men, whom I see stationed on the wall to defend the place and bear the last extremities of a prolonged siege - these men on whom its worst evils will fall, and who have therefore the greatest interest in avoiding it by a timely surrender." He expresses the evils by a strong coarse phrase, suited to the rude soldiery, and well calculated to rouse their feelings. The author of Chronicles has softened down the words 2 Chronicles 32:11.

Verse 29-30

There were two grounds, and two only, on which Hezekiah could rest his refusal to surrender,

(1) ability to resist by his own natural military strength and that of his allies; and

(2) expectation based upon the language of Isaiah Isaiah 30:31; Isaiah 31:4-9, of supernatural assistance from Yahweh.

The Rab-shakeh argues that both grounds of confidence are equally fallacious.

Verse 31

Make an agreement … - Rather, "Make peace with me." The word, which primarily means "blessing," and secondarily "a gift," has also the meaning, though more rarely, of "peace." Probably it acquired this meaning from the fact that a peace was commonly purchased by presents.

eat … drink - A picture of a time of quiet and prosperity, a time when each man might enjoy the fruits of his land, without any fear of the spoiler's violence. The words are in contrast with the latter part of 2 Kings 18:27.

Cistern - Rather, "well" Deuteronomy 6:11. Each cultivator in Palestine has a "well" dug in some part of his ground, from which he draws water for his own use. "Cisterns," or reservoirs for rain-water, are comparatively rare.

Verse 33

The boast is natural. The Assyrians had had an uninterrupted career of success, and might well believe that their gods were more powerful than those of the nations with whom they had warred. It is not surprising that they did not understand that their successes hitherto had been allowed by the very God, Yahweh, against whom they were now boasting themselves.

Verse 34

Arpad was situated somewhere in southern Syria; but it is impossible to fix its exact position. Sargon mentions it in an inscription as joining with Hamath in an act of rebellion, which he chastised. It was probably the capture and destruction of these two cities on this occasion which caused them to be mentioned together here (and in 2 Kings 19:13, and again in Isaiah 10:9). Sennacherib adduces late examples of the inability of the nations' gods to protect their cities. On the other cities mentioned in this verse, see 2 Kings 17:24 notes.

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CHAPTER 19

Verse 1

Hezekiah, like his officers, probably rent his clothes on account of Rab-shakeh‘s blasphemies: and he put on sackcloth in self-humiliation and in grief. The only hope left was in Yahweh, for Egypt could not be trusted to effect anything of importance. Rab-shakeh‘s boldness had told upon Hezekiah. He was dispirited and dejected. He perhaps began to doubt whether he had done right in yielding to the bolder counsels of Eliakim and Isaiah. He had not lost his faith in God; but his faith was being severely tried. He wisely went and strove by prayer to strengthen it.

Verse 2

Isaiah is here for the first time introduced into the history. His own writings show us how active a part he had taken in it for many years previously. This was the fourth reign since he began his prophesyings; and during two reigns at least, those of Ahaz and Hezekiah, he had been a familiar counselor of the monarch. He had probably counseled the revolt from Assyria, and had encouraged the king and people to persevere in their resistance. The exact date of prophecies can seldom be fixed with any certainty; but we can scarcely he mistaken in regarding 2 Kings 10; 30; 31 as written about the time of Hezekiah‘s second revolt.

Verse 3

The “trouble” consisted in rebuke” (rather, “chastisement,”) for sins at the hand of God, and “blasphemy” (rather, “reproach,”) at the hands of man.

The children … - i. e., “we are in a fearful extremity - at the last gasp - and lack the strength that might carry us through the danger.”

Verse 4

Will hear - i. e., “will show that he has heard - will notice and punish.”

The living God - See 1 Samuel 17:26 note.

And will reprove the words - Rather, “will reprove him for the words.”

The remnant - i. e., for the kingdom of Judah, the only remnant of God‘s people that was now left, after Galilee and Gilead and Samaria had all been carried away captive.

Verse 7

Will send a blast upon him - Rather, “I will put a spirit in him “ - i. e., “I will take from him his present pride and will put in him a new spirit, a

spirit of craven fear." Men shall tell him of the destruction that has come upon his host 2 Kings 19:35, and he shall straightway return, etc.

Verse 8

On Lachish and Libnah, see Joshua 10:3, note; Joshua 10:29, note. The phrase, "he was departed from Lachish" is suggestive of successful resistance.

Verse 9

Tirhakah king of Ethiopia - The Tehrak or Teharka of the hieroglyphics. He was the last king of the 25th or Ethiopian dynasty, which commenced with Shebek or Sabaco, and he reigned upward of 26 years. The Assyrian inscriptions show that he still ruled in Egypt as late as 667 B.C., when Esarhaddon 2 Kings 19:37 died, and his son Asshur-bani-pal succeeded him. He probably ascended the Egyptian throne about 692 B.C., having previously ruled over Ethiopia before he became king of Egypt (compare Isaiah 37:9). Thus he was probably reigning in Ethiopia at the time of Sennacherib's expedition, while Sethos and perhaps other secondary monarchs bore rule over Egypt. His movements caused Sennacherib to send a second embassy, instead of marching in person against the Jewish king.

Verse 11

All lands - This boast is in strict accordance with the general tenor of the Assyrian inscriptions. Hyperbole is the general language of the East; but in this instance it was not so extreme as in some others. The Assyrians under Sargon and Sennacherib had enjoyed an uninterrupted series of military successes: they had succeeded in establishing their pre-eminence from the Median desert to the banks of the Nile, and from the shores of Lake Van to those of the Persian Gulf.

Verse 12

Haran - Harran, the Carrhae of the Greeks and Romans Genesis 11:31, was among the earliest conquests of the Assyrians; being subject to them from the 12th century. Its conquest would have naturally followed that of Gozan (Gauzanitis, 2 Kings 17:6), which lay between it and Assyria proper.

Rezeph - Probably the Rozappa of the Assyrian inscriptions, a city in the neighborhood of Haran.

The children of Eden - Or, "the Beni-Eden," who appear from the Assyrian inscriptions to have inhabited the country on the east bank of the Euphrates, about the modern Balis. Here they had a city called Beth-Adina,

taken by the Assyrians about 880 B.C. This is probably the "Eden" of marginal reference.

Thelasar - Or Telassar. Probably a city on the Euphrates, near Beth-Adina, called after the name of the god Asshur. The name would signify "the Hill of Asshur."

Verse 13

Compare the marginal reference 2 Kings 17:24. 2 Kings 19:12 refers to former Assyrian successes, 2 Kings 19:13 to comparatively recent ones.

Verse 14

Hezekiah received the letter - The inscriptions show that scribes accompanied the Assyrian armies, with the materials of their craft, so that such a dispatch might be easily drawn up. As Hezekiah himself "read" it, we may presume that it was in the Hebrew tongue.

Verse 15

Which dwellest between the cherubims - The reference is to the shechinah, or miraculous glory, which from time to time appeared above the mercy-seat from between the two cherubims, whose wings overshadowed the ark of the covenant (1 Kings 6:23-27; compare Exodus 25:22; Leviticus 16:2, etc.).

Thou art the God, even thou alone - This is the protest of the pure theist against the intense polytheism of Sennacherib's letter, which assumes that gods are only gods of particular nations, and that Hezekiah's God is but one out of an indefinite number, no stronger or more formidable than the rest.

Verse 18

Have cast their gods into the fire - In general the Assyrians carried off the images of the gods from the temples of the conquered nations, and deposited them in their own shrines, as at once trophies of victory and proof of the superiority of the Assyrian deities over those of their enemies. But sometimes the gods are said to have been "destroyed" or "burnt with fire;" which was probably done when the idols were of rude workmanship or coarse material; and when it was inconvenient to encumber an army with spoils so weighty and difficult, of transport.

Verse 19

If the mighty army of the great Assyrian king were successfully defied by a petty monarch like Hezekiah, it would force the surrounding nations to confess that the escape was owing to the protecting hand of Yahweh. They

would thus be taught, in spite of themselves, that He, and He alone, was the true God.

Verse 21

Concerning him - i. e., "concerning Sennacherib." 2 Kings 19:21-28 are addressed to the great Assyrian monarch himself, and are God's reply to his proud boastings.

The virgin, the daughter of Zion, - Rather, holy eastern city, is here distinguished from Jerusalem, the western one, and is given the remarkable epithet "virgin," which is not applied to her sister; probably because the true Zion, the city of David, had remained inviolable from David's time, having never been entered by an enemy. Jerusalem, on the other hand, had been taken, both by Shishak 1 Kings 14:26 and by Jehoash 2 Kings 14:13. The personification of cities as females is a common figure (compare marginal references).

Hath shaken her head at thee - This was a gesture of scorn with the Hebrews (compare the marginal references; Matthew 27:39).

Verse 22

The Holy One of Israel - This is a favorite phrase with Isaiah, in whose prophecies it is found 27 times, while it occurs five times only in the rest of Scripture Psalm 71:22; Psalm 78:41; Psalm 89:18; Jeremiah 50:29; Jeremiah 51:5. Its occurrence here is a strong proof - one among many - of the genuineness of the present passage, which is not the composition of the writer of Kings, but an actual prophecy delivered at this time by Isaiah.

Verse 23

And hast said - Isaiah clothes in words the thoughts of Sennacherib's heart - thoughts of the most extreme self-confidence. Compare Isaiah 10:7-14, where, probably at an earlier date, the same overweening pride is ascribed to this king.

With the multitude of my chariots - There are two readings here, which give, however, nearly the same sense. The more difficult and more poetical of the two is to be preferred. Literally, translated it runs - "With chariots upon chariots am I come up, etc."

To the sides of Lebanon - , "Lebanon," with its "cedars" and its "fir-trees," is to be understood here both literally and figuratively. Literally, the hewing of timber in Lebanon was an ordinary feature of an Assyrian expedition into Syria. Figuratively, the mountain represents all the more inaccessible parts of Palestine, and the destruction of its firs and cedars

denotes the complete devastation of the entire country from one end to the other.

The lodgings of his borders - literally, "the lodge of its (Lebanon's) end;" either an actual habitation situated on the highest point of the mountain-range, or a poetical periphrasis for the highest point itself.

The forest of his Carmel - Or, "the forest of its garden" - i. e., "its forest which is like a garden," etc.

Verse 24

Have digged and drunk … and dried up - The meaning seems to be - "Mountains do not stop me - I cross them even in my chariots. Deserts do not stop me - I dig wells there, and drink the water. Rivers do not stop me - I pass them as easily as if they were dry land."

The rivers of besieged places - Rather, "the rivers of Egypt." The singular form, Mazor (compare the modern Misr and the Assyrian Muzr), is here used instead of the ordinary dual form, Mizraim, perhaps because "Lower Egypt" only is intended. This was so cut up with canals and branches of the Nile, natural and artificial, that it was regarded as impassable for chariots and horses. Sennacherib, however, thought that these many streams would prove no impediments to him; he would advance as fast as if they were "dried up."

Verse 25

Hast thou not heard long ago … - Rather, "Hast thou not heard, that from long ago I did this, from ancient times I fashioned it? etc." The former part of the verse refers to the secret divine decrees, whereby the affairs of this world are determined and ordered from the very beginning of things. Sennacherib's boasting, however, proved that he did not know this, that he did not recognize himself simply as God's instrument - "the rod of His anger" Isaiah 10:5 - but regarded his victories as gained by his own "strength and wisdom" Isaiah 10:13.

Verse 26

The weakness of the nations exposed to the Assyrian attacks was as much owing to the divine decrees as was the strength of the Assyrians themselves.

The grass on the house tops - Compare the marginal reference. The vegetation on the flat roofs of Oriental houses is the first to spring up and the first to fade away.

Verse 27

See 1 Kings 3:7 note.

Verse 28

Thy tumult - Rather, "thy arrogance."

I will put my hook in nose - Rather, "my ring." The sculptures show that the kings of Babylon and Assyria were in the habit of actually passing a ring through the flesh of their more distinguished prisoners, of attaching a thong or a rope to it, and of thus leading them about as with a "bridle." In Assyria the ring was, at least ordinarily, passed through the lower lip; while in Babylonia it appears to have been inserted into the membrane of the nose. Thus Sennacherib would be here threatened with a punishment which he was perhaps in the habit of inflicting.

Verse 29

The prophet now once more addresses Hezekiah, and gives him a "sign," or token, whereby he and his may be assured that Sennacherib is indeed bridled, and will not trouble Judaea anymore. It was a sign of the continued freedom of the land from attack during the whole of the remainder of Sennacherib's reign - a space of 17 years.

Verse 30

The remnant that is escaped - Terrible ravages seem to have been committed in the first attack (2 Kings 18:13 note). And though the second invasion was comparatively harmless, yet it probably fell heavily on the cities of the west and the southwest. Thus the "escaped" were but "a remnant."

Bear fruit upward - The flourishing time of Josiah is the special fulfillment of this prophecy 2 Kings 23:15-20.

Verse 32

Nor come before it with shield - The "shields" of the Assyrians are very conspicuous in the sculptures, and were of great importance in a siege, since the assailing archers were in most instances defended, as they shot their weapons, by a comrade, who held before himself and his friend a shield of an enormous size. It was made of a framework of wood, filled in with wattling, and perhaps lined with skin; it was rested upon the ground, and it generally curved backward toward the top; ordinarily it somewhat exceeded the height of a man. From the safe covert afforded by these large defenses the archers were able to take deliberate aim, and deliver their volleys with effect.

Nor cast a bank against it - "Mounds" or "banks" were among the most common of the means used by the Assyrians against a besieged town. They were thrown up against the walls, and consisted of loose earth, trees, brushwood, stones, and rubbish. Sometimes the surface of the mound was regularly paved with several layers of stone or brick, which formed a solid road or causeway capable of bearing a great weight. The intention was not so much to bring the mounds to a level with the top of the walls, as to carry them to such a height as should enable the battering-ram to work effectively. Walls were made very solid toward their base, for the purpose of resisting the ram; halfway up their structure was comparatively weak and slight. The engines of the assailants, rams and catapults, where therefore far more serviceable if they could attack the upper and weaker portion of the defenses; and it was to enable them to reach these portions that the "mounds" were raised.

Verse 33

By the way that he came - i. e., through the low country of the Shephelah, thus avoiding not only Jerusalem, but even Judaea.

Verse 34

For mine own sake - God's honor was concerned to defend His own city against one who denied His power in direct terms, as did Sennacherib 2 Kings 18:35; 2 Kings 19:10-12. His faithfulness was also concerned to keep the promise made to David Psalm 132:12-18.

Verse 35

The camp of the Assyrians - Which was now moved to Pelusium, if we may trust Herodotus; or which, at any rate, was at some considerable distance from Jerusalem.

When they arose early in the morning, behold … - These words form the only trustworthy data that we possess for determining to any extent the manner of the destruction now worked. They imply that there was no disturbance during the night, no alarm, no knowledge on the part of the living that their comrades were dying all around them by thousands. All mere natural causes must be rejected, and God must be regarded as having slain the men in their sleep without causing disturbance, either by pestilence or by that "visitation" of which English law speaks. The most nearly parallel case is the destruction of the first-born, Exodus 12:29.

The Egyptian version of this event recorded in Herodotus is that, during the night, silently and secretly, an innumerable multitude of field-mice

spread themselves through the Assyrian host, and gnawed their quivers, bows, and shield-straps, so as to render them useless. When morning broke, the Assyrians fled hastily, and the Egyptians pursuing put a vast number to the sword.

Verse 36

Dwelt at Nineveh - The meaning is not that Sennacherib made no more expeditions at all, which would he untrue, for his annals show us that he warred in Armenia, Babylonia, Susiana, and Cilicia, during his later years; but that he confined himself to his own part of Asia, and did not invade Palestine or threaten Jerusalem anymore. Nineveh, marked by some ruins opposite Mosul, appears here unmistakably as the Assyrian capital, which it became toward the close of the 9th century B.C. It has previously been mentioned only in Genesis (marginal reference). Sennacherib was the first king who made it his permanent residence. Its great size and large population are marked in the description of Jonah Jonah 3:2-3; Jonah 4:11, whose visit probably fell about 760 B.C.

Verse 37

The death of Sennacherib, which took place many years afterward (680 B.C.), is related here, as, from the divine point of view, the sequel to his Syrian expeditions.

Nisroch his god - Nisroch has not been as yet identified with any known Assyrian deity. The word may not be the name of a god at all but the name of the temple, as Josephus understood it. Assyrian temples were almost all distinguished by special names. If this be the true solution, the translation should run - "As he was worshipping his god in the house Nisroch."

They escaped into the land of Armenia - literally, "the land of Ararat," or the northeastern portion of Armenia, where it adjoined Media. The Assyrian inscriptions show that Armenia was at this time independent of Assyria, and might thus afford a safe refuge to the rebels.

Esar-haddon (or Esar-chaddon), is beyond a doubt the Asshur-akh-iddin of the inscriptions, who calls himself the son, and appears to be the successor of Sin-akh-irib. He commenced his reign by a struggle with his brother Adrammelech, and occupied the throne for only thirteen years, when he was succeeded by his son, Sardanapalus or Asshur-bani-pal. He

warred with Phoenicia, Syria, Arabia, Egypt, and Media, and built three palaces, one at Nineveh, and the others at Calah and Babylon.

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Verse 1

In those days - Hezekiah seems to have died 697 B.C.; and his illness must belong to 713 or 714 B.C. (compare 2 Kings 20:6), a date which falls early in the reign of Sargon. The true chronological place of this narrative is therefore prior to all the other facts related of Hezekiah except his religious reforms.

The prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz - This full description of Isaiah (compare 2 Kings 19:2), by the addition of his father‘s name and of his office, marks the original independence of this narrative. The writer of Kings may have found it altogether separate from the other records of Hezekiah, and added it in the state in which he found it.

This history (compare Jonah 3:4-10) shows that the prophetic denunciations were often not absolute predictions of what was certainly about to happen, but designed primarily to prove, or to lead to repentance, those against whom they were uttered, and only obtaining accomplishment if this primary design failed.

Verse 2

He turned his face to the wall - Contrast 1 Kings 21:4. Ahab turned in sullenness, because he was too angry to converse; Hezekiah in devotion, because he wished to pray undisturbed.

Verse 3

Remember now - The old covenant promised temporal prosperity, including length of days, to the righteous. Hezekiah, conscious of his faithfulness and integrity 2 Kings 18:3-6, ventures to expostulate (compare also 2 Kings 21:1 note). According to the highest standard of morality revealed up to this time, there was nothing unseemly in the self vindication of the monarch, which has many parallels in the Psalms of David (Psalm 7:3-10; Psalm 18:19-26; Psalm 26:1-8, etc.).

Verse 4

The middle court - i. e., of the royal palace. This is preferable to the marginal reading.

Verse 5

The captain of my people - This phrase (which does not occur elsewhere in Kings) is remarkable, and speaks for the authenticity of this

full report of the actual words of the prophet‘s message (abbreviated in Isaiah 38:1, etc.). The title, “Captain נגיד *nāgîyd* of God‘s people,” commonly used of David, is applied to Hezekiah, as David‘s true follower 2 Kings 18:3.

Verse 6

The king of Assyria in 714 and 713 B.C. was Sargon (B.C. 721-705). If then the Biblical and Assyrian chronologies which agree exactly in the year of the taking of Samaria (721 B.C.), are to be depended on, the king of Assyria here must have been Sargon. It may be conjectured that he had taken offence at something in the conduct of Hezekiah, and have threatened Jerusalem about this time (compare Isaiah 20:6). There is, however, no evidence of actual hostilities between Judaea and Assyria in Sargon‘s reign.

Verse 7

A lump of figs - The usual remedy in the East, even at the present day, for ordinary boils. But such a remedy would not naturally cure the dangerous tumor or carbuncle from which Hezekiah suffered. Thus the means used in this miracle were means having a tendency toward the result performed by them, but insufficient of themselves to produce that result (compare 2 Kings 4:34 note).

Verse 8

And Hezekiah said - Previous to the actual recovery, Hezekiah, who at first may have felt himself no better, asked for a “sign” that he would indeed be restored to health.

Asking for a sign is a pious or a wicked act according to the spirit in which it is done. No blame is attached to the requests of Gideon Judges 6:17, Judges 6:37, Judges 6:39, or to this of Hezekiah, because they were real wishes of the heart expressed humbly. The “evil generation” that “sought for a sign” in our Lord‘s days did not really want one, but made the demand captiously, neither expecting nor wishing that it should be granted.

Verse 9

Ten degrees - literally, “ten steps.” It is not, perhaps, altogether certain whether the “dial of Ahaz” 2 Kings 20:11 was really a dial with a gnomon in the center, and “degrees” marked round it, or a construction fur marking time by means of “steps.” Sundials proper had been invented by the Babylonians before the time of Herodotus; but the instrument here was probably an instrument consisting of a set of steps, or stairs, with an obelisk

at the top, the shadow of which descended or ascended the steps according as the sun rose higher in the heavens or declined.

The question as to the mode whereby the return of the shadow was produced is one on which many opinions have been held. Recently, it has been urged that the true cause of the phenomenon was a solar eclipse, in which the moon obscured the entire upper limb of the sun; and it has been clearly shown that if such an occurrence took place a little before mid-day, it would have had the effect described as having taken place - i. e., during the obscuration of the sun‘s upper limb shadows would be sensibly lengthened, and that of the obelisk would descend the stairs; as the obscuration passed off the reverse would take place, shadows would shorten, and that of the obelisk would once more retire up the steps. If this be the true account, the miracle would consist in Isaiah‘s supernatural foreknowledge of an event which the astronomy of the age was quite incapable of predicting, and in the providential guidance of Hezekiah‘s will, so that he chose the “sign” which in the natural course of things was about to be manifested.

Verse 10

It is a light thing - It seemed to Hezekiah comparatively easy that the shadow, which had already begun to lengthen, should merely make a sudden jump in the same direction; but, wholly contrary to all experience that it should change its direction, advancing up the steps again when it had once begun to descend them.

Verse 12

Berodach-baladan - The correct form of this name, Merodach-baladan, is given in Isaiah Isaiah 39:1. It is a name composed of three elements, Merodach, the well-known Babylonian god Jeremiah 50:2, but (pal) “a son;” and iddin, or iddina, “has given;” or Baladan may be a form of Beliddin. This king of Babylon is mentioned frequently in the Assyrian inscriptions, and he was not unknown to the Greeks. He had two reigns in Babylon. First of all, he seized the throne in the same year in which Sargon became king of Assyria, 721 B.C., and held it for 12 years, from 721 B.C. to 709 B.C., when Sargon defeated him, and took him prisoner. Secondly, on the death of Sargon and the accession of Sennacherib, when troubles once more arose in Babylonia, be returned there, and had another reign, which lasted six months, during a part of the year 703 B.C. As the embassy

of Merodach-Baladan followed closely on the illness of Hezekiah, it would probably be in 713 B.C.

The son of Baladan - In the inscriptions Merodach-Baladan is repeatedly called the son of Yakin or Yagin. This, however, is a discrepancy which admits of easy explanation. The Assyrians are not accurate in their accounts of the parentage of foreign kings. With them Jehu is "the son of Omri." Yakin was a prince of some repute, to whose dominions Merodach-baladan had succeeded. The Assyrians would call him Yakin's son, though he might have been his son-in-law, or his grandson.

The embassy was not merely one of congratulation. Its chief object was to inquire with respect to the going back of the shadow, an astronomical marvel in which the Chaldaeans of Babylon would feel a keen interest 2 Chronicles 32:31. A political purpose is moreover implied in the next verse. Merodach-baladan was probably desirous of strengthening himself against Assyria by an alliance with Judaea and with Egypt.

Verse 13

Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them - The Jewish king lent a favorable ear to the proposals of the ambassadors, and exhibited to them the resources which he possessed, in order to induce them to report well of him to their master.

All the house of his precious things - literally, the "spice-house;" the phrase had acquired the more generic sense of "treasure-house" from the fact that the gold, the silver, and the spices were all stored together.

Verse 14

Hezekiah did not answer Isaiah's first question, "What said these men?" but only his second. Probably he knew that Isaiah would oppose reliance on an "arm of flesh."

Babylon now for the first time became revealed to the Jews as an actual power in the world, which might effect them politically. As yet even the prophets had spoken but little of the great southern city; up to this time she had been little more to them than Tyre, or Tarshish, or any other rich and powerful idolatrous city. Henceforth, all this was wholly changed. The prophetic utterance of Isaiah on this occasion 2 Kings 20:16-18 never was, never could be, forgotten. He followed it up with a burst of prophecy Habakkuk 1:6-11; Habakkuk 2:5-8; Micah 4:10. Babylon thus became

henceforth, in lieu of Assyria, the great object of the nation‘s fear and hatred.

Verse 18

This prophecy had two fulfillments, each complementary to the other. Manasseh, Hezekiah‘s actual son, was “carried to Babylon” 2 Chronicles 33:11, but did not become a eunuch in the palace. Daniel and others, not his actual sons, but of the royal seed Daniel 1:3, and therefore Hezekiah‘s descendants, are thought by some to have literally fulfilled the latter part of the prophecy, being eunuchs in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 19

Good is the word … - The language is, according to some, that of a true spirit of resignation and humility; according to others, that of a feeling of relief and satisfaction that the evil was not to come in his day. Such a feeling would be but natural, and though not according to the standard of Christian perfectness, would imply no very great defect of character in one who lived under the old Dispensation.

Peace and truth - Rather, “peace and continuance.” The evils threatened were war and the dissolution of the kingdom.

Verse 20-21

Consult the marginal references.

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Verse 1

Manasseh was twelve years old - Manasseh, therefore, was not born at the time of Hezekiah‘s dangerous illness; and it is probable that Hezekiah had at that time no son to succeed him. According to Josephus, this was the principal cause of his grief.

Hephzibah - Jewish tradition makes Hephzibah, Hezekiah‘s wife, the daughter of Isaiah; but this is scarcely probable. She was, however, no doubt, known to the prophet, and it may well have been in special compliment to her that Isaiah introduced her name Isaiah 62:4 as one that Jerusalem would bear after her restoration to God‘s favor. The name means, “My delight (is) in her.”

Verse 2

Manasseh during his minority naturally fell under the influence of the chief Jewish nobles, with whom the pure religion of Yahweh was always unpopular (compare 2 Chronicles 24:17-18; Jeremiah 8:1-2). They seem to have persuaded him, not only to undo Hezekiah‘s work, but to proceed to lengths in polytheism, magic, and idolatry, unknown before. The sins of Manasseh‘s reign appear to have been those which filled up the measure of Judah‘s iniquity, and brought down the final sentence of doom on the last remnant of the chosen people (2 Kings 23:26; compare Jeremiah 15:4).

Verse 3

The first step in the re-establishment of idolatry seems to have been the restoration of the high places where Yahweh was professedly worshipped 2 Kings 18:22, but with idolatrous rites 1 Kings 14:23. The next was to re-introduce the favorite idolatry of Israel, Baal-worship, which had formerly flourished in Judaea under Athaliah 2 Kings 11:18, and Ahaz 2 Chronicles 28:2. After this, Manasseh seems to have especially affected Sabaism, which had been previously unknown in Judaea (compare 2 Kings 17:16 and note).

Worshipped all the host of heaven - Sabaism, or pure star-worship, without images, and without astrological superstitions, included a reverence for the sun, the moon, the chief stars, and the twelve signs of the Zodiac (2 Kings 23:5 note). The main worship was by altars, on which incense was burned Jeremiah 19:13. These altars were placed either upon the ground 2 Kings 21:5, or upon the house-tops 2 Kings 23:12; Zephaniah 1:5. The sun

was worshipped with the face toward the east Ezekiel 8:16; chariots and horses were dedicated to him 2 Kings 23:11. The star-worship of the Jews has far more the character of an Arabian than an Assyrian or Chaldaean cult. It obtained its hold at a time when Assyria and Babylonia had but little communication with Judaea - i. e., during the reign of Manasseh. It crept in probably from the same quarter as the Molech worship, with which it is here (and in 2 Chronicles 33:3-6) conjoined.

Verse 4

The "altars" of this verse seem to be the same with those of 2 Kings 21:5, and consequently were not in the temple building, but in the outer and inner courts.

Verse 6

On the meaning of the phrase "passing through the fire," see 2 Kings 16:3, and Leviticus 20:2-5.

To "observe times" was forbidden in the Law (marginal references), and was no doubt among the modes of divination practiced by the Canaanite nations. It has been explained as,

(1) Predicting from the state of the clouds and atmosphere;

(2) Fascination with the eye;

(3) Watching and catching at chance words as ominous.

Dealt with familiar spirits - This practice was forbidden by Moses Leviticus 19:31 under the penalty of death Leviticus 20:27. Its nature is best learned from Saul's visit to the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:7, etc.).

Wizards - "Wizards" - literally, "wise men" - are always joined with those who have familiar spirits. Probably they were a sort of necromancers.

Verse 7

A graven image of the grove - Rather, "the carved work of the Asherah." This Asherah which Manasseh placed in the very temple itself, from where it was afterward taken by Josiah to be destroyed 2 Kings 23:6. Such a profanation was beyond anything that had been done either by Athaliah 2 Kings 11:18, or by Ahaz 2 Kings 16:14-18; 2 Chronicles 29:5-7.

Verse 9

During the long reign of Manasseh idolatry in all manner of varied forms took a hold upon the Jewish people such as had never been known

before. Compare Jeremiah 7:18, Jeremiah 7:31; Ezekiel 23:37; Zephaniah 1:5. The corruption of morals kept pace with the degradation of religion. Compare 2 Kings 23:7; Zephaniah 3:1-3; Jeremiah 2:8; Jeremiah 5:1.

Verse 10

The prophets - None of the prophets of this reign are certainly known. One may possibly have been Hosai or Hozai (2 Chronicles 33:19, margin), who perhaps wrote a life of Manasseh.

Verse 13

The general meaning is plain, but the exact force of the metaphor used is not so clear. If the "line" and the "plummet" be "symbols of rule" or law, the meaning will be - "I will apply exactly the same measure and rule to Jerusalem as to Samaria - I will treat both alike with strict and even justice."

Verse 16

Compare Jeremiah 2:30; Hebrews 11:37; Isaiah 57:1-4. According to tradition, Isaiah was among the first to perish. More than a century afterward, the final judgment upon Jerusalem was felt to be in an special way the punishment of Manasseh's bloody persecution of God's people (marginal reference).

Verse 17

The writer of Kings relates in eighteen verses the history of 55 years, and consequently omits numerous facts of great importance in the life of Manasseh. Among the most remarkable of the facts omitted are the capture of Manasseh by the king of Assyria, his removal to Babylon, his repentance there, his restoration to his kingdom, and his religious reforms upon his return to it. These are recorded only in Chronicles (marginal reference, see the note). The writer of Kings probably considered the repentance of Manasseh but a half-repentance, followed by a half-reformation, which left untouched the root of the evil.

Verse 18

Was buried - The catacomb of David was probably full, and the later kings, from Ahaz downward, had to find sepulture elsewhere. Ahaz was buried in Jerusalem, but not in the sepulchres of the kings 2 Chronicles 28:27. Hezekiah found a resting place on the way that led up to David's catacomb 2 Chronicles 32:33. Manasseh and Amon were interred in "the garden of Uzza," a portion (apparently) of the royal palace-garden; perhaps so called after the name of the previous owner. Josiah was buried in "his own sepulchre" 2 Kings 23:30.

Amon his son - This name, which occurs only at this time and in the reign of the idolatrous Ahab 1 Kings 22:26, is identical in form with the Hebrew representative of the great Egyptian god, Amen or Amun (Nahum 3:8 margin); and it is therefore probable that Manasseh selected it and gave it to his son in compliment to the Egyptians.

Verse 21

At Manasseh‘s death, the idolatrous party, held in some check during his later years 2 Chronicles 33:15-17, recovered the entire direction of affairs, and obtained authority from Amon to make once more all the changes which Manasseh had made in the early part of his reign. Hence, we find the state of things at Josiah‘s accession 2 Kings 23:4-14; Zephaniah 1:4-12; Zephaniah 3:1-7, the exact counterpart of that which had existed under Manasseh.

Verse 23

This conspiracy may have been due to the popular reaction against the extreme idolatry which the young king had established.

Verse 24

The intention of the conspirators had perhaps been to declare a forfeiture of the crown by the existing line, and to place a new dynasty on the throne. This the people would not suffer. They arrested them and put them to death; and insisted on investing with the royal authority the true heir of David, the eldest son of Amon, though he was a boy only 8 years old.

2 KINGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 22

Verse 3

In the eighteenth year - This is the date of the finding of the Book of the Law and of the Passover (marginal reference, and 2 Kings 23:23), but is not meant to apply to all the various reforms of Josiah as related in 2 Chronicles 34:3-8; 2 Chronicles 35:1. From these places it appear that at least the greater part of his reforms preceded the finding of the Book of the Law. He began them in the 12th year of his reign, at the age of 20, and had accomplishied all, or the greater part, by his 18th year, when the Book of the Law was found.

Shaphan is mentioned frequently by Jeremiah. He was the father of Ahikam, Jeremiah‘s friend and protector at the court of Jehoiakim Jeremiah 26:24, and the grandfather of Gedaliah, who was made governor of Judaea by the Babylonians after the destruction of Jeruslem 2 Kings 25:22. Several others of his sons and grandsons were in favor with the later Jewish kings Jeremiah 29:3; Jeremiah 36:10-12, Jeremiah 36:25; Ezekiel 8:11. Shaphan‘s office was one of great importance, involving very confidential relations with the king 1 Kings 4:3.

Verse 4

Hilkiah - Hilkiah was the father (or grandfather) of Seraiah (compare 1 Chronicles 6:13-14, with Nehemiah 11:11), high priest at the time of the captivity 2 Kings 25:18. and ancestor of Ezra the scribe Ezra 7:1.

It is evident from the expressions of this verse that a collection for the repairs of the temple, similar to that established in the reign of Joash 2 Kings 12:9-10, had been for some considerable time in progress (compare 2 Chronicles 34:3), and the king now sent to know the result.

Verse 5

See the marginal reference. The “doers” of the first part of the verse are the contractors, or overseers, who undertook the general superintendence; they are to be distinguished from a lower class of “doers,” the actual laborers, carpenters, and masons of the latter portion of the verse.

Which is in the house of the Lord - Rather, “who are,” etc.; i. e., the persons who were actually employed in the temple.

Verse 7

They dealt faithfully - Compare the marginal reference. The names of these honest overseers are given in Chronicles 2 Chronicles 34:12.

Verse 8

Some have concluded from this discovery, either that no "book of the law" had ever existed before, the work now said to have been "found" having been forged for the occasion by Hilkiah; or that all knowledge of the old "book" had been lost, and that a work of unknown date and authorship having been at this time found was accepted as the Law of Moses on account of its contents, and has thus come down to us under his name. But this is to see in the narrative far more than it naturally implies. If Hilkiah had been bold enough and wicked enough to forge, or if he had been foolish enough to accept hastily as the real "book of the law" a composition of which he really knew nothing, there were four means of detecting his error or his fraud:

(1) The Jewish Liturgies, which embodied large portions of the Law;

(2) The memory of living men, which in many instances may have extended to the entire five books, as it does now with the modern Samaritans;

(3) Other copies, entire or fragmentary, existing among the more learned Jews, or in the Schools of the prophets; and

(4) Quotations from the Law in other works, especially in the Psalmists and prophets, who refer to it on almost every page.

The copy of the Book of the Law found by Hilkiah was no doubt that deposited, in accordance with the command of God, by Moses, by the side of the ark of the covenant, and kept ordinarily in the holy of holies (marginal reference). It had been lost, or secreted, during the desecration of the temple by Manasseh, but had not been removed out of the temple building.

Verse 9

Have gathered - Rather, "have poured out" or "emptied out." The allusion probably is to the emptying of the chest in which all the money collected had been placed 2 Kings 12:9.

Verse 11

He rent his clothes - Partly grief and horror, like Reuben Genesis 37:29 and Job Job 1:20, partly in repentance, like Ahab 1 Kings 21:27.

Verse 13

Enquire of the Lord - As inquiry by Urim and Thummim had ceased - apparently because superseded by prophecy - this order was equivalent to an injunction to seek the presence of a prophet (compare 2 Kings 3:11; 1 Kings 22:5).

Because our fathers have not hearkened - Josiah, it will be observed, assumes that preceding generations had had full opportunity of hearing and knowing the Law. He thus regards the loss as comparatively recent (compare 2 Kings 22:8 note).

Verse 14

Went unto Huldah - It might have been expected that the royal commissioners would have gone to Jeremiah, on whom the prophetic spirit had descended in Josiah‘s 13th year Jeremiah 1:2, or five years previous to the finding of the Law. Perhaps he was at some distance from Jerusalem at the time; or his office may not yet have been fully recognized.

The prophetess - Compare the cases of Miriam Exodus 15:20; Numbers 12:2 and Deborah Judges 4:4.

Keeper of the wardrobe - literally, “of the robes.” Shallum had the superintendence, either of the vestments of the priests who served in the temple, or of the royal robe-room in which dresses of honor were stored, in case of their being needed for presents (see 2 Kings 5:5 note).

In the college - The marginal translation “in the second part” is preferable; and probably refers to the new or outer city - that which had been enclosed by the wall of Manasseh, to the north of the old city 2 Chronicles 33:14.

Verse 16

All the words of the book - The “words” here intended are no doubt the threatenings of the Law, particularly those of 2 Kings 22:11, and his hurried message to Huldah.

Verse 17

Have burned incense - In the marginal reference the corresponding phrase is: “have served other gods, and worshipped them.” Its alteration to “have bnrned incense” points to the fact that the favorite existing idolatry

was burning incense on the housetops to Baal Jeremiah 19:13; Jeremiah 32:29 and to the host of heaven 2 Kings 21:3.

Verse 19

See the marginal references.

Verse 20

In peace - The death of Josiah in battle 2 Kings 23:29 is in verbal contradiction to this prophecy, but not in real opposition to its spirit, which is simply that the pious prince who has sent to inquire of the Lord, shall be gathered to his fathers before the troubles come upon the land which are to result in her utter desolation. Now those troubles were to come, not from Egypt, but from Babylon; and their commencement was not the invasion of Necho in 608 B.C., but that of Nebuchadnezzar three years later. Thus was Josiah "taken away from the evil to come," and died "in peace" before his city had suffered attack from the really formidable enemy.

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CHAPTER 23

Verse 2

The prophets - The suggestion to regard this word an error of the pen for "Levites," which occurs in Chronicles (marginal reference), is unnecessary. For though Zephaniah, Urijah, and Jeremiah are all that we can name as belonging to the order at the time, there is no reason to doubt that Judaea contained others whom we cannot name. "Schools of the prophets" were as common in Judah as in Israel.

He read - The present passage is strong evidence that the Jewish kings could read. The solemn reading of the Law - a practice commanded in the Law itself once in seven years Deuteronomy 31:10-13 - had been intermitted, at least for the last 75 years, from the date of the accession of Manasseh.

Verse 3

By a pillar - Rather, "upon the pillar" (see 2 Kings 11:14, note).

Made a covenant - "The covenant." Josiah renewed the old covenant made between God and His people in Horeb Deuteronomy 5:2, so far at least as such renewal was possible by the mere act of an individual. He bound himself by a solemn promise to the faithful performance of the entire Law.

With all their heart - "Their" rather than "his," because the king was considered as pledging the whole nation to obedience with himself. He and they "stood to it," i. e., "accepted it, came into the covenant."

Verses 4-20

A parenthesis giving the earlier reforms of Josiah.

2 Kings 23:4

The priests of the second order - This is a new expression; and probably refers to the ordinary priests, called here "priests of the second order," in contrast with the high priest, whose dignity was reviving (2 Kings 12:2 note).

The vessels - This would include the whole apparatus of worship, altars, images, dresses, utensils, etc., for Baal, etc. (2 Kings 21:3-5 notes).

The ashes of the idolatrous objects burned in the first instance in the "fields of Kidron" (i. e., in the part of the valley which lies northeast of the city, a part much broader than that between the Temple Hill and the Mount of Olives) were actually taken to Bethel, as to an accursed place, and one

just beyond the borders of Judah; while those of other objects burned afterward were not carried so far, the trouble being great and the need not absolute, but were thrown into the Kidron 2 Kings 23:12, when there happened to be water to carry them away, or scattered on graves which were already unclean 2 Kings 23:6. Compare 1 Kings 15:13.

2 Kings 23:5

He put down … - or, "He caused to cease the idolatrous priests" (margin); i. e., he stopped them. The word translated "idolatrous priests" (see the margin) is a rare one, occurring only here and in marginal references. Here and in Zephaniah it is contrasted with כהן *kôhên* another class of high-place priests. The כהן *kôhên* were probably "Levitical," the כהן *kâhêm* "non-Levitical priests of the highplaces." כהן *kâhêm* appears to have been a foreign term, perhaps derived from the Syriac cumro, which means a priest of any kind.

Whom the kings of Judah had ordained - The consecration of non-Levitical priests by the kings of Judah (compare 1 Kings 12:31) had not been previously mentioned; but it is quite in accordance with the other proceedings of Manasseh and Amon.

The planets - See the marginal note, i. e., the "signs of the Zodiac." Compare Job 38:32 margin. The word in the original probably means primarily "houses" or "stations," which was the name applied by the Babylonians to their divisions of the Zodiac.

2 Kings 23:6

The ashes, being polluted and polluting, were thrown upon graves, because there no one could come into contact with them, since graves were avoided as unclean places.

2 Kings 23:7

By the house of the Lord - This did not arise from intentional desecration, but from the fact that the practices in question were a part of the idolatrous ceremonial, being regarded as pleasing to the gods, and, indeed, as positive acts of worship (compare the marginal reference).

The "women" were probably the priestesses attached to the worship of Astarte, which was intimately connected with that of the Asherah or "grove." Among their occupations one was the weaving of coverings (literally "houses" margin) for the Asherah, which seem to have been of various colors (marginal reference).

2 Kings 23:8

Josiah removed the Levitical priests, who had officiated at the various high-places, from the scenes of their idolatries, and brought them to Jerusalem, where their conduct might be watched.

From Geba to Beer-sheba - i. e., from the extreme north to the extreme south of the kingdom of Judah. On Geba see the marginal reference note. The high-place of Beer-sheba had obtained an evil celebrity Amos 5:5; Amos 8:14.

The high places of the gates … - Render, "He brake down the high-places of the gates, both that which was at the entering in of the gate of Joshua, the governor of the city (1 Kings 22:26 note), and also that which was on a man's left hand at the gate of the city." According to this, there were only two "high-places of the gates" (or idolatrous shrines erected in the city at gate-towers) at Jerusalem. The "gate of Joshua is conjectured to have been a gate in the inner wall; and the "gate of the city," the Valley-gate (modern "Jaffa-gate").

2 Kings 23:9

Nevertheless - Connect this verse with the first clause of 2 Kings 23:8. The priests were treated as if they had been disqualified from serving at the altar by a bodily blemish Leviticus 21:21-23. They were not secularised, but remained in the priestly order and received a maintenance from the ecclesiastical revenues. Contrast with this treatment Josiah's severity toward the priests of the high-places in Samaria, who were sacrificed upon their own altars 2 Kings 23:20. Probably the high-place worship in Judaea had continued in the main a worship of Yahweh with idolatrous rites, while in Samaria it had degenerated into an actual worship of other gods.

2 Kings 23:10

The word Topheth, or Topher - variously derived from toph, "a drum" or "tabour," because the cries of the sacrificed children were drowned by the noise of such instruments; or, from a root taph or toph, meaning "to burn" - was a spot in the valley of Hinnom (marginal reference note). The later Jewish kings, Manasseh and Amon (or, perhaps, Ahaz, 2 Chronicles 28:3), had given it over to the Moloch priests for their worship; and here, ever since, the Moloch service had maintained its ground and flourished (marginal references).

2 Kings 23:11

The custom of dedicating a chariot and horses to the Sun is a Persian practice. There are no traces of it in Assyria; and it is extremely curious to

find that it was known to the Jews as early as the reign of Manasseh. The idea of regarding the Sun as a charioteer who drove his horses daily across the sky, so familiar to the Greeks and Romans, may not improbably have been imported from Asia, and may have been at the root of the custom in question. The chariot, or chariots, of the Sun appear to have been used, chiefly if not solely, for sacred processions. They were white, and were drawn probably by white horses. The kings of Judah who gave them were Manasseh and Amon certainly; perhaps Ahaz; perhaps even earlier monarchs, as Joash and Amaziah.

In the suburbs - The expression used here פרברים *parbārîym* is of unknown derivation and occurs nowhere else. A somewhat similar word occurs in 1 Chronicles 26:18, namely, פרבר *parbār* which seems to have been a place just outside the western wall of the temple, and therefore a sort of "purlieu" or "suburb." The פרברים *parbārîym* of this passage may mean the same place or it may signify some other "suburb" of the temple.

2 Kings 23:12

The upper chamber of Ahaz - Conjectured to be a chamber erected on the flat roof of one of the gateways which led into the temple court. It was probably built in order that its roof might be used for the worship of the host of heaven, for which house-tops were considered especially appropriate (compare the marginal references).

Brake them down from thence - Rather as in the margin, i. e., he "hasted and cast the dust into Kidron."

2 Kings 23:13

On the position of these high-places see 1 Kings 11:7 note. As they were allowed to remain under such kings as Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah, they were probably among the old high-places where Yahweh had been worshipped blamelessly, or at least without any consciousness of guilt (see 1 Kings 3:2 note). Manasseh or Amon had however restored them to the condition which they had held in the reign of Solomon, and therefore Josiah would condemn them to a special defilement.

The mount of corruption - See the margin. It is suspected that the original name was Har ham-mishcah, "mount of anointing," and that this was changed afterward, by way of contempt, into Har ham-mashchith, "mount of corruption."

2 Kings 23:14

The Law attached uncleanness to the "bones of men," no less than to actual corpses Numbers 19:16. We may gather from this and other passages 2 Kings 23:20; 1 Kings 13:2, that the Jews who rejected the Law were as firm believers in the defilement as those who adhered to the Law.

2 Kings 23:15

And burned the high place - This "high place" is to be distinguished from the altar and the grove (אשרה *'ăshêrâh*). It may have been a shrine or tabernacle, either standing by itself or else covering the "grove" (2 Kings 23:7 note; 1 Kings 14:23 note). As it was "stamped small to powder," it must have been made either of metal or stone.

2 Kings 23:16

To burn human bones was contrary to all the ordinary Jewish feelings with respect to the sanctity of the sepulchre, and had even been denounced as a sin of a heinous character when committed by a king of Moab Amos 2:1. Joshua did it, because justified by the divine command (marginal reference).

2 Kings 23:17

What title is that? - Rather, "What pillar is that?" The word in the original indicates a short stone pillar, which was set up either as a way-mark Jeremiah 31:21, or as a sepulchral monument Genesis 35:20; Ezekiel 39:15.

2 Kings 23:19

The cities of Samaria - The reformation which Josiah effected in Samaria, is narrated in Chronicles. It implies sovereignty to the furthest northern limits of Galilee, and is explained by the general political history of the East during his reign. Between 632-626 B.C. the Scythians ravaged the more northern countries of Armenia, Media, and Cappadocia, and found their way across Mesopotamia to Syria, and thence, made an attempt to invade Egypt. As they were neither the fated enemy of Judah, nor had any hand in bringing that enemy into the country, no mention is made of them in the Historical Books of Scripture. It is only in the prophets that we catch glimpses of the fearful sufferings of the time Zephaniah 2:4-6; Jeremiah 1:13-15; Jeremiah 6:2-5; 2 Kings 23:20

Here, as in 2 Kings 23:16, Josiah may have regarded himself as bound to act as he did (marginal reference "b"). Excepting on account of the prophecy, he would scarcely have slain the priests upon the altars.

Verse 21

See 2 Kings 23:4 note. With this verse the author returns to the narrative of what was done in Josiah‘s 18th year. The need of the injunction, “as it was written in the book of this covenant,” was owing to the fact - not that Josiah had as yet held no Passover - but that the reading of the book had shown him differences between the existing practice and the letter of the Law - differences consequent upon negligence, or upon the fact that tradition had been allowed in various points to override the Law.

Verse 22

The details of the Passover are given by the author of Chronicles (the marginal reference). Its superiority to other Passovers seems to have consisted:

(1) in the multitudes that attended it; and

(2) in the completeness with which all the directions of the Law were observed in the celebration. Compare Nehemiah 8:17.

Verse 24

Perform - Rather, establish. Josiah saw that it was necessary, not only to put down open idolatry, but also to root out the secret practices of a similar character which were sometimes combined with the worship of Yahweh, notwithstanding that the Law forbade them (marginal references), and which probably formed, with many, practically almost the whole of their religion.

Verse 25

And like unto him … - See 2 Kings 18:5 note. We must not press the letter of either passage, but regard both kings as placed among the very best of the kings of Judah.

Verse 26

See the marginal references. True repentance might have averted God‘s anger. But the people had sunk into a condition in which a true repentance was no longer possible. Individuals, like Josiah, were sincere, but the mass of the nation, despite their formal renewal of the covenant 2 Kings 23:3, and their outward perseverance in Yahweh-worship 2 Chronicles 34:33, had feigned rather than felt repentance. The earlier chapters of Jeremiah are full at once of reproaches which he directs against the people for their insincerity, and of promises if they would repent in earnest.

Verse 27

It added to the guilt of Judah that she had had the warning of her sister Israel‘s example, and had failed to profit by it.

Verse 28

Josiah lived for 13 years after the celebration of his great Passover. Of this period we know absolutely nothing, except that in the course of it he seems to have submitted himself to Nabopolassar; who, after the fall of Nineveh, was accepted as the legitimate successor of the Assyrian monarchs by all the nations of the western coast. Josiah, after perhaps a little hesitation (see Jeremiah 2:18, Jeremiah 2:36), followed the example of his neighbors, and frankly accepted the position of an Assyro-Babylonian tributary. In this state matters remained until 608 B.C., when the great events happened which are narrated in 2 Kings 23:29.

Verse 29

Pharaoh-Nechoh - This king is well known to us both from profane historians, and from the Egyptian monuments. He succeeded his father Psammetichus (Psamatik) in the year 610 B.C., and was king of Egypt for 16 years. He was an enlightened and enterprising monarch. The great expedition here mentioned was an attempt to detach from the newly-formed Babylonian empire the important tract of country extending from Egypt to the Euphrates at Carchemish. Calculating probably on the friendship or neutrality of most of the native powers, the Egyptian monarch, having made preparations for the space of two years, set out on his march, probably following the (usual) coast route through Philistia and Sharon, from thence intending to cross by Megiddo into the Jezreel (Esdraelon) plain.

The king of Assyria - This expression does not imply that Nineveh had not yet fallen. The Jews, accustomed to Assyrian monarchs, who held their courts alternately at Nineveh and Babylon 2 Kings 19:36; 2 Chronicles 33:11, at first regarded the change as merely dynastic, and transferred to the new king, Nabopolassar, the title which they had been accustomed to give to their former suzerains. When, later on, Nebuchadnezzar invaded their country they found that he did not call himself “King of Assyria,” but “King of Babylon,” and thenceforth that title came into use; but the annalist who wrote the life of Josiah inmediately upon his death, and whom the author of Kings copied, used, not unnaturally, the more familiar, though less correct, designation.

Josiah went against him - Josiah probably regarded himself as in duty bound to oppose the march of a hostile force through his territory to attack

his suzerain. For further details see the account in Chronicles (marginal reference). On Megiddo, see Joshua 12:21 note.

Verse 30

Dead - It appears from a comparison of this passage with 2Chronicles (marginal reference) that Josiah was not actually killed in the battle.

Jehoahaz - Or Shallum (the marginal note). He may have taken the name of Jehoahaz ("the Lord possesses") on his accession. He was not the eldest son of Josiah (see 2 Kings 23:36 note). The mention of "anointing" here favors the view that there was some irregularity in the succession (see 1 Kings 1:34 note).

Verse 33

Pharaoh-Nechoh, after bringing Phoenicia and Syria under his rule, and penetrating as far as Carchemish, returned to Southern Syria, and learned what had occurred at Jerusalem in his absence. He sent orders to Jehoahaz to attend the court which he was holding at Riblah, and Jehoahaz fell into the trap Ezekiel 19:4.

Riblah still retains its name. It is situated on the Orontes, in the Coele-Syrian valley, near the point where the valley opens into a wide and fertile plain. Neco seems to have been the first to perceive its importance. Afterward Nebuchadnezzar made it his headquarters during his sieges of Jerusalem and Tyre 2 Kings 25:21; Jeremiah 39:5; Jeremiah 52:9-10, Jeremiah 52:26.

Verse 34

In the room of Josiah his father - Not "in the room of Jehoahaz his brother;" the phrase is intended to mark the fact, that Neco did not acknowedge that Jehoahaz had ever been king.

Turned his name to Jehoiakim - Compare 2 Kings 23:30 and 2 Kings 24:17. It seems likely, from their purely Jewish character, that the new names of the Jewish kings, though formally imposed by the suzerain, were selected by the individuals themselves. The change now made consisted merely in the substitution of יהוה *yehovâh* for אל *'êl* ("God, Yahweh, will set up"). Both names alike refer to the promise which God made to David 2 Samuel 7:12 and imply a hope that, notwithstanding the threats of the prophets, the seed of David would still be allowed to remain upon the throne.

Verse 36

Twenty and five years old - Jehoiakim was therefore two years older than his half-brother, Jehoahaz 2 Kings 23:31. See his character in 2 Kings 23:37; 2 Chronicles 36:8; Ezekiel 19:5-7; Jeremiah 22:13-17; Jeremiah 26:20-23,36:

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CHAPTER 24

Verse 1

In his days - i. e., 605 B.C., which was the third completed Daniel 1:1, and fourth commencing Jeremiah 25:1, year of Jehoiakim.

Nebuchadnezzar - or Nebuchadrezzar, which is closer to the original, Nabu-kudurri-uzur. This name, like most Babylonian names, is made up of three elements, Nebo, the well-known god Isaiah 46:1, kudur, of doubtful signification (perhaps "crown" perhaps "landmark"), and uzur "protects." Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar, and second monarch of the Babylonian empire, ascended the throne, 604 B.C., and reigned 43 years, dying 561 B.C. He married Amuhia (or Amyitis), daughter of Cyaxares, king of the Medes, and was the most celebrated of all the Babylonian sovereigns. No other pagan king occupies so much space in Scripture. He was not actual king at this time, but only Crown Prince and leader of the army under his father. As he would be surrounded with all the state and magnficence of a monarch, the Jews would naturally look upon him as actual king.

Came up - Nebuchadnezzar began his campaign by attacking and defeating Neco's Egyptians at Carchemish Jeremiah 46:2. He then pressed forward toward the south, overran Syria, Phoenicia, and Judaea, took Jerusalem, and carried off a portion of the inhabitants as prisoners Daniel 1:1-4: after which he proceeded southward, and had reached the borders of Egypt when he was suddenly recalled to Babylon by the death of his father.

Three years - Probably from 605 B.C. to 602 B.C. Jehoiakim rebelled because he knew Nebuchadnezzar to be engaged in important wars in some other part of Asia.

Verse 2

See the marginal references. Instead of coming up in person Nebuchadnezzar sent against Jehoiakim his own troops and those of the neighboring nations.

The ravages of the Moabites and the Ammonites are especially alluded to in the following passages: Jeremiah 48:26-27; Jeremiah 49:1; Ezekiel 25:3-6; Zephaniah 2:8.

Verse 5

Comparing Jeremiah 22:19; Jeremiah 36:6, Jeremiah 36:30; and Ezekiel 19:8-9, it would seem that Nebuchadnezzar must in the fifth or sixth year after Jehoiakim‘s revolt have determined to go in person to Riblah, to direct operations, first against Tyre and then against Jerusalem. Jehoiakim was taken prisoner, and brought in chains to Nebuchadnezzar, who at first designed to convey him to Babylon, but afterward had him taken to Jerusalem, where he was executed. Afterward, when the Babylonians had withdrawn, the remains were collected and interred in the burying-place of Manasseh, so that the king ultimately “slept with his fathers” 2 Kings 24:6.

Verse 6

Jehoiachin - Also called Jeconiah and Coniah. Jehoiachin and Jeconiah both mean “Yahweh will establish,” Coniah, “Yahweh establishes.” Probably his original name was Jehoiachin. When he ascended the throne, and was required to take a new name, anxious not to lose the good men contained in his old one, he simply transposed the two elements. Jeremiah shortened this new name from Jeconiah to Coniah, thus cutting off from it the notion of futurity, to imply that that would not be which the name declared would be. In other words, “Yahweh establishes,” but this prince he will not establish.

Verse 7

Neco, from the year of the battle of Carchemish, confined himself to his own country and made no efforts to recover Syria or Judaea.

Verse 8

His mother‘s name - On the position of the “queen mother” see 1 Kings 15:10 note. Nehushta‘s rank and dignity are strongly marked by the distinct and express mention which is made of her in almost every place where her son‘s history is touched (2 Kings 24:12; compare Jeremiah 22:26; Jeremiah 29:2).

Verse 10

Came up against Jerusalem - The cause and circumstances of this siege are equally obscure. Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar detected Jehoiachin in some attempt to open communications with Egypt.

Verse 12

The eighth year - Jeremiah calls it the seventh year Jeremiah 52:28, a statement which implies only a different manner of counting regnal years.

Verse 13

On the first capture of the city in the fourth (third) year of Jehoiakim Daniel 1:2; 2 Chronicles 36:7, the vessels carried off consisted of smaller and lighter articles; while now the heavier articles, as the table of showbread, the altar of incense, the ark of the covenant were stripped of their gold, which was carried away by the conquerors. Little remained more precious than brass at the time of the final capture in the reign of Zedekiah 2 Kings 25:13-17.

Verse 14

The entire number of the captives was not more than 11,000. They consisted of three classes:

(1) the "princes" or "mighty of the land," i. e., courtiers, priests, elders, and all who had any position or dignity - in number 3,000 (compare 2 Kings 24:14, 2 Kings 24:16).

(2) the "mighty men of valor" or "men of might," i. e., the soldier class, who were 7,000. And

(3) craftsmen or artisans, who numbered 1,000. The word here translated "craftsmen" denotes artisans in stone, wood, or metal, and thus includes our "masons, carpenters, and smiths." The word translated "smiths" means strictly "lock-smiths."

The object of carrying off these persons was twofold:

(1) it deprived the conquered city of those artisans who were of most service in war; and

(2) it gave the conqueror a number of valuable assistants in the construction of his buildings and other great works.

The Assyrian monarchs frequently record their removal of the skilled artisans from a conquered country. The population of the ancient city has been calculated, from its area, at 15,000. The remnant left was therefore about 5000 or 6,000.

Verse 15

The mighty of the land - Or "the great," "the powerful." The word used is quite distinct from that in 2 Kings 24:14, 2 Kings 24:16. It refers, not to bodily strength or fitness for war, hut to civil rank or dignity. The term would include all civil and all ecclesiastical functionaries - the nobles, courtiers, and elders of the city on the one hand, the priests, prophets (among them, Ezekiel), and Levites on the other.

Verse 17

Mattaniah, son of Josiah and brother of Jehoahaz, but thirteen years his junior, adopted a name significant of the blessings promised by Jeremiah to the reign of a king whose name should be "Yahweh, our righteousness" Jeremiah 23:5-8.

Verse 19

He did that which was evil - The character of Zedekiah seems to have been weak rather than wicked. Consult Jeremiah 34; 37: His chief recorded sins were:

(1) his refusal to be guided in his political conduct by Jeremiah's counsels, while nevertheless he admitted him to be a true Yahweh-prophet; and

(2) his infraction of the allegiance which he had sworn to Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 20

It came to pass - Some prefer "came this to pass:" in the sense. "Through the anger of the Lord was it that another had king ruled in Jerusalem and in Judah:" concluding the chapter with the word "presence;" and beginning the next chapter with the words, "And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon."

Rebelled - The Book of Jeremiah explains the causes of rebellion. In Zedekiah's early years there was an impression, both at Jerusalem Jeremiah 28:1-11 and at Babylon Jeremiah 29:3, and a personal visit Jeremiah 51:59, Zedekiah strove hard to obtain the restoration of the captives and the holy vessels. But he found Nebuchadnezzar obdurate. Zedekiah returned to his own country greatly angered against his suzerain, and immediately proceeded to plot a rebellion. He sought the alliance of the kings of Tyre, Sidon, Moab, Ammon, and Edom Jeremiah 27:3, and made overtures to Hophra, in Egypt, which were favorable received Ezekiel 17:15, whereupon

he openly revolted, apparently in his ninth year, 588 B.C. Tyre, it must be remembered, was all this time defying the power of Nebuchadnezzar, and thus setting an example of successful revolt very encouraging to the neighboring states. Nebuchadnezzar, while constantly maintaining an army in Syria, and continuing year after year his attempts to reduce Tyre (compare Ezekiel 29:18) was, it would seem, too much occupied with other matters, such, probably, as the reduction of Susiana Jeremiah 49:34-38, to devote more than a small share of his attention to his extreme western frontier. In that same year, however (588 B.C.), the new attitude taken by Egypt induced him to direct to that quarter the main force of the Empire, and to take the field in person.

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CHAPTER 25

Verse 1

In the ninth year … - As the final catastrophe approaches, the historian becomes more close and exact in his dates, marking not only the year, but the month and the day, on which the siege began, no less than those on which it closed 2 Kings 25:3. From Ezekiel 24:1 we find that on the very day when the host of Nebuchadnezzar made its appearance before Jerusalem the fact was revealed to Ezekiel in Babylonia, and the fate of the city announced to him Ezekiel 24:6-14. The army seems to have at first spread itself over all Judaea. It fought, not only against Jerusalem, but especially against Lachish and Azekah Jeremiah 34:7, two cities of the south 2 Chronicles 11:9, which had probably been strongly garrisoned in order to maintain the communication with Egypt. This division of the Babylonian forces encouraged Hophra to put his troops in motion and advance to the relief of his Jewish allies Jeremiah 37:5. On hearing this, Nebuchadnezzar broke up from before Jerusalem and marched probably to Azekah and Lachish. The Egyptians shrank back, returned into their own country Jeremiah 37:7; Ezekiel 17:17, and took no further part in the war. Nebuchadnezzar then led back his army, and once more invested the city. (It is uncertain whether the date at the beginning of this verse refers to the first or to the second investment.)

Forts - Probably moveable towers, sometimes provided with battering-rams, which the besiegers advanced against the walls, thus bringing their fighting men on a level with their antagonists. Such towers are seen in the Assyrian sculptures.

Verse 2

The siege lasted almost exactly a year and a half. Its calamities - famine, pestilence, and intense suffering - are best understood from the Lamentations of Jeremiah, written probably almost immediately after the capture.

Verse 4

The city was broken up - Rather, "broken into," i. e., A breach was made about midnight in the northern wall Ezekiel 9:2, and an entry effected into the second or lower city (see the 2 Kings 22:14 note), which was protected by the wall of Manasseh 2 Chronicles 33:14.

Precipitate flight followed on the advance of the Babylonians to the "middle gate," or gate of communication between the upper and the lower cities. This position was only a little north of the royal palace, which the king therefore quitted. He escaped by the royal garden at the junction of the Hinnom and Kidron valleys, passing between the two walls which skirted on either side the valley of the Tyropoeon.

Toward the plain - "The Arabah" or the great depression which bounds Palestine Proper on the east (Numbers 21:4 note). The "way toward the Arabah" is here the road leading eastward over Olivet to Bethany and Jericho.

Verse 5

Jeremiah Jeremiah 38:23 and Ezekiel Ezekiel 12:13 had prophesied this capture; and the latter had also prophesied the dispersion of the troops 2 Kings 25:14.

Verse 6

To Riblah - See 2 Kings 23:33 note. A position from where Nebuchadnezzar could most conveniently superintend the operations against Tyre and Jerusalem. In the absence of the monarch, the siege of Jerusalem was conducted by a number of his officers, the chief of whom were Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard, and Nergal-shar-ezer (Neriglissar), the Rab-mag Jeremiah 39:3, Jeremiah 39:13.

Verse 7

Before his eyes - This refinement of cruelty seems to have especially shocked the Jews, whose manners were less barbarous than those of most Orientals. It is noted by Jeremiah in two places Jeremiah 39:6; Jeremiah 52:10.

And put out the eyes of Zedekiah - Blinding has always been among the most common of secondary punishments in the East (compare Judges 16:2 l). The blinding of Zedekiah reconciled in a very remarkable way prophecies, apparently contradictory, which had been made concerning him. Jeremiah had prophesied distinctly that he would be carried to Babylon Jeremiah 32:5; Jeremiah 34:3. Ezekiel had said that he should not "see Babylon" Ezekiel 12:13. His deprivation of sight before he was carried to the conqueror's capital fulfilled the predictions of both prophets.

With fetters of brass - literally, (see Jeremiah 39:7 margin), "with two chains of brass." The Assyrians' captives are usually represented as bound hand and foot - the two hands secured by one chain, the two feet by another.

According to Jewish tradition Zedekiah was, like other slaves, forced to work in a mill at Babylon. Jeremiah tells us that he was kept in prison until he died Jeremiah 52:11.

Verse 8

The nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar - 586 B.C., if we count from the real date of his accession (604 B.C.); but 587 B.C., if, with the Jews, we regard him as beginning to reign when he was sent by his father to recover Syria and gained the battle of Carchemish (in 605 B.C.).

Captain of the guard - literally, "the chief of the executioners" Genesis 37:36.

Verse 9

He burnt the house of the Lord - Compare the prophecies of Jeremiah Jeremiah 21:10; Jeremiah 34:2; Jeremiah 38:18, Jeremiah 38:23. Psalm 79:1-13 is thought to have been written soon after this destruction of the temple.

Verse 11

The fugitives … - It was from a fear of the treatment which he would receive at the hands of these deserters that Zedekiah persisted in defending the city to the last Jeremiah 38:19.

Verse 12

There was probably an intention of seating colonists into the country from some other part of the Empire, as the Assyrians had done in Samaria 2 Kings 17:24.

Verse 13

The pillars of brass … - All the more precious treasures had been already removed from the temple 2 Kings 24:13. But there still remained many things, the list of which is given in Jeremiah 52:17-23 much more fully than in this place. Objects in brass, or rather bronze, were frequently carried off by the Assyrians from the conquered nations. Bronze was highly valued, being the chief material both for arms and implements. The breaking up of the pillars, bases, etc., shows that it was for the material, and not for the workmanship, that they were valued. On the various articles consult the marginal references.

Verse 16

Without weight - The Babylonians did not take the trouble to weigh the brass as they did the gold and silver. In the Assyrian monuments there are

representations of the weighing of captured articles in gold and silver in the presence of the royal scribes.

Verse 17

Compare with this description the accounts in marginal references. The height of the capital ("three cubits") must be corrected, in accordance with those passages, to "five cubits."

Verse 18

It devolved on Nebuzaradan to select for exemplary punishment the persons whom he regarded as most guilty, either in respect of the original rebellion or of the protracted resistance. Instead of taking indiscriminately the first comers, he first selected those who by their offices would be likely to have had most authority - the high priest; the second priest (2 Kings 23:4 note); three of the temple Levites; the commandant of the city; five members of the king's Privy Council (or seven, see 2 Kings 25:19 note); and the secretary (or adjutant) of the captain of the host. To these he added sixty others, who were accounted "princes." Compared with the many occasions on which Assyrian and Persian conquerers put to death hundreds or thousands after taking a revolted town, Nebuzaradan (and Nebuchadnezzar) must be regarded as moderate, or even merciful, in their vengeance. Compare Jeremiah 40:2-5.

The three keepers of the door - Rather, "three keepers." The Hebrew has no article. The temple "door-keepers" in the time of Solomon numbered twenty-four 1 Chronicles 26:17-18, who were probably under six chiefs. After the captivity the chiefs are either six Ezra 2:42; Nehemiah 7:45 or four 1 Chronicles 9:17.

Verse 19

Out of the city - This clause shows that the five persons mentioned in 2 Kings 25:18 were taken out of the temple.

Five men - Or, "seven men," according to Jeremiah 52:25. It is impossible to say which of the two numbers is correct.

Of them that were in the king's presence - See the margin. A mode of speech arising from the custom of Eastern rulers to withdraw themselves as much as possible from the view of their subjects.

Verse 21

So Judah was carried away - The kingdom of the two tribes was at an end; and the task of the historian might seem to be accomplished. He still, however, desires to notice two things:

(1) the fate of the remnant 2 Kings 25:22-26 left in the land by Nebuzaradan; and

(2) the fate of Johoiachin, who, of all those led into captivity, was the least to blame 2 Kings 25:27-30.

Verse 22

We may be allowed to conjecture that Jeremiah, in gratitude for Ahikam‘s service to himself Jeremiah 26:24, recommended his son Gedaliah to Nebuzaradan, and through him to Nebuchadnezzar, for the office of governor.

Verse 23

The captains of the armies - i. e., the officers of the troops who had fled from Jerusalem with Zedekiah 2 Kings 25:4, and had then dispersed and gone into hiding 2 Kings 25:5.

For Mizpah, see Joshua 18:26 note.

The Netophathite - Netophah, the city of Ephai (compare Jeremiah 40:8), appears to have been in the neighborhood of Bethlehem Nehemiah 7:26; Ezra 2:21-22. The name is perhaps continued in the modern Antubeh, about 2 12 miles S. S. E. of Jerusalem.

A Maachathite - Maachah lay in the stony country east of the upper Jordan, bordering upon Bashan Deuteronomy 3:14.

sa40

Verse 24

As rebels against the Babylonian king, their lives were forfeit. Gedaliah pledged himself to them by oath, that, if they gave no further cause of complaint, their past offences should be forgiven.

Verse 25-26

Jeremiah gives this history with much fullness of detail Jeremiah 4143.

Verse 27

The captivity of Jehoiachin commenced in the year 597 B.C. - the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar. It terminated 561 B.C. - the first year of Evil-merodach, the son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar. He reigned only two years, being murdered by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar, or Nergal-shar-ezer. He is said to have provoked his fate by lawless government and intemperance.

Verse 28

The kings that were with him - Probably captive kings, like Jehoiachin himself. Compare Judges 1:7.

Verse 29

Evil-merodach gave him garments befitting his rank. To dress a man suitably to his position was the first thought of an Oriental Genesis 41:42; Esther 8:15; Daniel 5:29; Luke 15:22. So again, Oriental kings regarded it as a part of their greatness to feed daily a vast multitude of persons at their courts (see 1 Kings 4:22-23). Of these, as here, a certain number had the special privilege of sitting actually at the royal board, while the others ate separately, generally at a lower level. See Judges 1:7; 2 Samuel 9:13; 1 Kings 2:7; Psalm 41:9.

Verse 30

Allowance - From the treasury, in order to enable him to maintain the state proper to his rank, and in addition to his food at the royal table. Jehoiachin, to the day of his death, lived in peace and comfort at the court of Babylon (compare Jeremiah 52:34).

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN
1 Chronicles

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

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MAIN CONTENTS

Contents

1 CHRONICLES INTRODUCTION

Introduction to 1 and 2Chronicles

1. Like the two Books of King, the two Books of Chronicles formed originally a single work, the separation of which into two "books" is referable to the Septuagint translators, whose division was adopted by Jerome, and from whom it passed to the various branches of the Western Church. In the Hebrew Bibles the title of the work means literally "the daily acts" or "occurrences," a title originally applied to the accounts of the reigns of the several kings, but afterward applied to general works made up from these particular narratives.

The Septuagint translators substituted one which they regarded as more suitable to the contents of the work and the position that it occupies among the historical books of the Bible. This was Paraleipomena, or "the things omitted " - a name intended to imply that Chronicles was supplementary to Samuel and Kings, written, i. e., mainly for the purpose of supplying the omissions of the earlier history.

The English title, "Chronicles," (derived from the Vulgate) is a term primarily significative of time; but in practical use it designates a simple and primitive style of history rather than one in which the chronological element is peculiarly prominent.

2. The "Book of Chronicles" stands in a position unlike that occupied by any other book of the Old Testament. It is historical, yet not new history. The writer traverses ground that has been already trodden by others.

His purpose in so doing is sufficiently indicated by the practical object he had in view, namely, that of meeting the special difficulties of his own day. The people had lately returned from the captivity and had rebuilt the temple; but they had not yet gathered up the threads of the old national life, broken by the captivity. They were therefore reminded, in the first place, of their entire history, of the whole past course of mundane events, and of the position which they themselves held among the nations of the earth. This was done, curtly and drily, but sufficiently, by genealogies, which have always possessed a special attraction for Orientals. They were then more especially reminded of their own past as an organized nation - a settled

people with a religion which has a fixed home in the center of the nation‘s life.

It was the strong conviction of the writer that the whole future prosperity of his countrymen was bound up with the preservation of the temple service, with the proper maintenance of the priests and Levites, the regular establishment of the “courses,” and the rightful distribution of the several ministrations of the temple among the Levitical families. He therefore drew the attention of his countrymen to the past history of the temple, under David, Solomon, and the later kings of Judah; pointing out that in almost every instance temporal rewards and punishments followed in exact accordance with the attitude in which the king placed himself toward the national religion. Such a picture of the past, a sort of condensed view of the entire previous history, written in the idiom of the day, with frequent allusions to recent events, and with constant reiteration of the moral intended to be taught, was calculated to affect the newly returned and still unsettled people far more strongly and deeply than the old narratives. The Book of Chronicles bridged over, so to speak, the gulf which separated the nation after, from the nation before, the captivity: it must have helped greatly to restore the national life, to revive hope and encourage high aspirations by showing to the nation that its fate was in its own hands, and that religious faithfulness would be certain to secure the divine blessing.

3. That the Book of Chronicles was composed after the return from the captivity is evident, not only from its closing passage, but from other portions of it.

The evidence of style accords with the evidence furnished by the contents. The phraseology is similar to that of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, all books written after the exile. It has numerous Aramaean forms and at least one word derived from the Persian. The date cannot therefore well be earlier than 538 B.C., but may be very considerably later. The very close connection of style between Chronicles and Ezra, makes it probable that they were composed at the same time, if not even by the same person. If Ezra was the author, as so many think, the date could not well be much later than 435 B.C., for Ezra probably died about that time. There is nothing in the contents or style of the work to make the date 450-435 B.C. improbable;

for the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 3:23-24, which appears to be later than this, may be a subsequent addition.

4. The writer of Chronicles cites, as his authorities, works of two distinct classes:

(a) His most frequent reference is to a general history - the “Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah,” This was a compilation from the two histories constantly mentioned in Kings - the “book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel,” and the “book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah,” which it had been found convenient to unite into one.

(b) The other works cited by him were 12-part or 13-part histories, the works of prophets who dealt with particular portions of the national annals. Of none of these works is the exact character known to us; but the manner in which they are cited makes it probable that for the most part they treated with some fullness the history - especially the religious history - of the times of their authors. They may be regarded as independent compositions - monographs upon the events of their times, written by individual prophets, of which occasionally one was transferred, not into our “Books of Kings,” but into the “book of the kings of Israel and Judah;” while the remainder existed for some centuries side by side with the “Book of the Kings,” and furnished to the writer of Chronicles much of the special information which he conveys to us.

There is also ample proof that the writer made use of the whole of the earlier historical Scriptures, and especially of the Books of Samuel and Kings, such as we have them. The main sources of 1 Chronicles 18, are the earlier Scriptures from Genesis to Ruth, supplemented by statements drawn from private sources, such as the genealogies of families, and numerous important points of family history, carefully preserved by the “chiefs of the fathers” in almost all the Israelite tribes; a main source of 1 Chronicles 1027 is Samuel; and a source, though scarcely a main source, of 2 Chronicles 136 is Kings (compare the marginal references and notes). But the writer has always some further authority besides these; and there is no section of the Jewish history, from the death of Saul to the fall of Jerusalem, which he has not illustrated with new facts, drawn from some source which has perished.

5. The indications of unity in the authorship preponderate over those of diversity, and lead to the conclusion that the entire work is from one and the same writer. The genealogical tendency, which shows itself so strongly in the introductory section 1 Chronicles 19, is remarkably characteristic of the writer, and continually thrusts itself into notice in the more purely historical portions of his narrative. Conversely, the mere genealogical portion of the work is penetrated by the same spirit as animates the historical chapters, and, moreover, abounds with phrases, characteristic of the writer.

That the historical narrative (1Chr. 102 Chronicles 36) is from one hand, can scarcely be doubted. One pointedly didactic tone pervades the whole - each signal calamity and success being ascribed in the most direct manner to the action of Divine Providence, rewarding the righteous and punishing the evil-doers. There is everywhere the same method of composition - a primary use of Samuel and Kings as bases of the narrative, the abbreviation of what has been narrated before, the omission of important facts, otherwise known to the reader; and the addition of new facts, sometimes minute, and less important than curious, at other times so striking that it is surprising that the earlier historians should have passed them over.

6. The abrupt termination of Chronicles, in the middle of a sentence, is an unanswerable argument against its having come down to us in the form in which it was originally written.

And the recurrence of the final passage of our present copies of Chronicles at the commencement of Ezra, taken in conjunction with the undoubted fact, that there is a very close resemblance of style and tone between the two books, suggests naturally the explanation, which has been accepted by some of the best critics, that the two works, Chronicles and Ezra, were originally one, and were afterwards separated: that separation having probably arisen out of a desire to arrange the history of the post-captivity period in chronological sequence.

7. The condition of the text of Chronicles is far from satisfactory. Various readings are frequent, particularly in the names of persons and places; omissions are found, especially in the genealogies; and the numbers

are sometimes self-contradictory, sometimes contradictory of more probable numbers in Samuel or Kings, sometimes unreasonably large, and therefore justly suspected.

The work is, however, free from defects of a more serious character. The unity is unbroken, and there is every reason to believe that we have the work, in almost all respects, exactly as it came from the hand of the author.

8. As compared with the parallel histories of Samuel and Kings, the history of Chronicles is characterized by three principal features:

(a) A greater tendency to dwell on the externals of religion, on the details of the temple worship, the various functions of the priests and Levites, the arrangement of the courses, and the like. Hence, the history of Chronicles has been called "ecclesiastical," while that of Samuel and Kings has been termed "political." This tendency does not detract from the credibility, or render the history undeserving of confidence.

(b) A marked genealogical bias and desire to put on record the names of persons engaged in any of the events narrated; and

(c) A more constant, open, and direct ascription of all the events of the history to the divine agency, and especially a more plain reference of every great calamity or deliverance to the good or evil deeds of the monarch, or the nation, which Divine Providence so punished or rewarded.

There is no reason to regard Chronicles as less trustworthy than Samuel or Kings. A due consideration of disputed points, the "Levitical spirit," contradictions, alleged mistakes, etc., does not, speaking generally, impugn the honesty of the writer or the authenticity of his work. The book may fairly be regarded as authentic in all its parts, with the exception of some of its members. These appear to have occasionally suffered corruption, though scarcely to a greater extent than those of other books of equal antiquity. From blemishes of this kind it has not pleased God to keep His Word free. It will scarcely be maintained at the present day that their occurrence affects in the very slightest degree the authenticity of the rest of the narrative.

The style of Chronicles is simpler and less elevated than that of Kings. Excepting the psalm of David in 1 Chronicles 16 and the prayer of Solomon in 2 Chronicles 6, the whole is prosaic, level, and uniform. There are no especially striking chapters, as in Kings; but it is less gloomy, being addressed to the restored nation, which it seeks to animate and inspirit. The captive people, weeping by the waters of Babylon, fitly read their mournful history in Kings: the liberated nation, entering hopefully upon a new life, found in Chronicles a review of its past, calculated to help it forward on the path of progress, upon which it was entering.

1 Chronicles 1

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

Compare the margin references and notes.

Verse 7

Dodanim - See the Genesis 10:4 note.

Verse 16

The Zemarite - See Genesis 10:18 note. The inscriptions of the Assyrian monarch, Sargon, (720 B.C.) mention Zimira, which is joined with Arpad (Arvad); and there can be little doubt that it is the city indicated by the term "Zemarite."

Verse 17

The sons of Shem - i. e., descendants. Uz, Hul, Gether, and Meshech (or Mash), are stated to have been "sons of Aram" Genesis 10:23. Meshech is the reading of all the MSS., and is supported by the Septuagint here and in Genesis 10:23. It seems preferable to "Mash," which admits of no very probable explanation. Just as Hamites and Semites were intermingled in Arabia (Genesis 10:7, note; Genesis 10:29, note), so Semites and Japhethites may have been intermingled in Cappadocia - the country of the Meshech or Moschi (Genesis 10:2 note); and this Aramaean ad-mixture may have been the origin of the notion, so prevalent among the Greeks, that the Cappadocians were Syrians.

Verse 28

Isaac and Ishmael - Isaac, though younger than Ishmael, is placed first, as the legitimate heir, since Sarah alone was Abraham's true wife (compare the 1 Chronicles 1:36 note).

sa40

Verse 29

These are their generations - As Shem was reserved until after Japheth and Ham 1 Chronicles 1:5-16, because in him the genealogy was to be continued (Genesis 10:2 note), so Isaac is now reserved until the other lines of descent from Abraham have been completed. The same principle gives the descendants of Esau a prior place to those of Jacob 1 Chronicles 2:1.

Verse 30

Hadad here and in 1 Chronicles 1:50 is the well-known Syrian name, of which Hadar (margin) is an accidental corruption, consequent on the close

resemblance between “d” (daleth) and “r” (resh) in Hebrew, the final letters of the two names.

Verse 32

Keturah, Abraham‘s concubine - This passage, and Genesis 25:6, sufficiently prove that the position of Keturah was not that of the full wife, but of the “secondary” or “concubine wife” Judges 19:1 so common among Orientals.

Verse 36

Timna - In Genesis 36:11, Eliphaz has no son Timna; but he has a concubine of the name, who is the mother of Amalek, and conjectured to be Lotan‘s sister 1 Chronicles 1:39. The best explanation is, that the writer has in his mind rather the tribes descended from Eliphaz than his actual children, and as there was a place, Timna, inhabited by his “dukes” (1 Chronicles 1:51; compare Genesis 35:40), he puts the race which lived there among his “sons.”

Verse 41

Amram (rather Hamran), and Hemdan (margin), differ in the original by the same letter only which marks the difference in 1 Chronicles 1:30.

Verses 43-54

The slight differences favor the view, that the writer of Chronicles has here, as elsewhere, abridged from Genesis (see the marginal references).

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

The sons of Israel - The order of the names here approximates to an order determined by legitimacy of birth. A single change - the removal of Dan to the place after Benjamin - would give the following result:

(1) The six sons of the first wife, Leah.

(2) the two sons of the second wife, Rachel.

(3) the two sons of the first concubine, Bilhah.

(4) the two sons of the second concubine, Zilpah.

Dan‘s undue prominency may, perhaps, be accounted for by his occupying the seventh place in the “blessing of Jacob” Genesis 49:16.

Verse 6

The sons of Zerah - Here, for the first time, the writer of Chronicles draws from sources not otherwise known to us, recording facts not mentioned in the earlier Scriptures. Ethan, Heman, Calcol, and Dara, sons of Zerah, are only known to us from this passage, since there are no sufficient grounds for identifying them with the “sons of Mahol” (marginal reference).

Verse 7

“Achan” Joshua 7:1 seems to have become “Achar,” in order to assimilate the word more closely to the Hebrew term for “troubler,” which was from the time of Achan‘s sin regarded as the true meaning of his name Joshua 7:25-26.

Verse 15

David the seventh - Jesse had eight sons, of whom David was the youngest 1 Samuel 16:10-11; 1 Samuel 17:12. Probably one of the sons shown to Samuel at Bethlehem did not grow up.

Verse 16

Sisters - i. e. half-sisters. Abigail and Zeruiah were daughters not of Jesse, but of a certain Nahash, whose widow Jesse took to wife 2 Samuel 17:25.

From the present passage, and from the fact that Abishai joined David as a comrade in arms before Joab 1 Samuel 26:6, it would seem that, although Joab was pre-eminent among the three 2 Samuel 2:13, 2 Samuel 2:16, Abishai was the eldest.

Verse 17

Jether the Ishmeelite - See the marginal note and reference.

Verse 18

In the remainder of this chapter the writer obtains scarcely any assistance from the earlier Scriptures, and must have drawn almost entirely from genealogical sources, accessible to him, which have since perished.

Azubah was Caleb‘s wife; Jerioth his concubine. He had children by both; but those of Azubah are alone recorded.

Verse 22

Jair, who had three and twenty cities - The places called “Havoth-Jair” in the earlier Scriptures (see Numbers 32:41 note), which appear to have been a number of “small towns,” or villages, in the Ledjah, the Classical “Trachonitis.”

Verse 23

Rather, “And Geshur and Aram (i. e. the Geshurites Deuteronomy 3:14 and Syrians) took the villages of Jair from them:” recovered, that is, from the new settlers the places which Jair had conquered.

All these belonged to the sons of Machir - Rather, “All these were sons of Machir,” i. e. Segub and Jair, with their descendants, were reckoned sons of Machir, rather than sons of Hezron, although only descended from Machir on the mother‘s side. The reason of this seems to have been that they cast in their lot with the Manassites, and remained in their portion of the trans-Jordanic region.

Verse 25

And Ahijah - There is no “and” in the original. Hence, some would read: “the sons” were born “of” or “from Ahijah,” the first wife of Jerahmeel (see the next verse).

Verse 42

A third line of descent from Caleb, the son of Hezron, the issue probably of a different mother, perhaps Jerioth 1 Chronicles 2:18. The supposed omissions in this verse have been supplied as follows:

(1) "Mesha, the father of Ziph; and the sons of Ziph, Mareshah, the father of Hebron;" or

(2) "Mareshah, the father of Ziph; and the sons of Mareshah, the father of Ziph, Hebron."

Ziph, like Jorkoam 1 Chronicles 2:44 and Beth-zur 1 Chronicles 2:45, is the name of a place where the respective chiefs ("fathers") settled. Similarly Madmannah, Machbenah, and Gibea 1 Chronicles 2:49, Kirjath-jearim (Joshua 9:17 note), Bethlehem and Beth-gader (Jedur, 1 Chronicles 2:51) are unmistakeable names of places in the list, names which it is not probable were ever borne by persons.

Verse 50

Caleb the son of Hur - Hur was the son, not the father, of Caleb 1 Chronicles 2:19. The text should perhaps be read: "These (the list in 1 Chronicles 2:42-49) were the sons of Caleb. The sons of Hur, the first-born of Ephratah, were Shobal, etc."

Verse 54

Ataroth, the house of Joab - Rather, "Ataroth-beth-Joab," probably so called, to distinguish it from Ataroth-Adar, a city of Benjamin Joshua 18:13. It is uncertain from what Joab it derived its distinctive appellation.

Verse 55

Kenites - It is remarkable that Kenites - people of a race quite distinct from the Israelites Genesis 15:19 - should be attached to, and, as it were, included in the descendants of Judah. It seems, however, that the friendly feeling between the two tribes - based on the conduct of the Kenites at the time of the Exodus Exodus 18:10-19; Numbers 10:29-32; 1 Samuel 15:6 - led to their intermixture and almost amalgamation with the Israelites, Kenite families not only dwelling among them but being actually regarded as of one blood with them.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

The sons of David - The writer returns to the point at which he had left the posterity of Ram 1 Chronicles 2:9, 1 Chronicles 2:15, and traces out the family of David - the royal house of the tribe of Judah.

Daniel - See the marginal note and reference.

There are three lists of the sons of David, born in Jerusalem.

d **2 Samuel 5:14-16 1 Chronicles 3:5-8 1 Chronicles 14:4-7**

d

d 1. ShammuahShimeah*Shammuah

d

d 2. ShobabShobabShobab

d

d 3. NathanNathanNathan

d

d 4. SolomonSolomonSolomon

d

d 5. IbharIbharIbhar

d

d 6. ElishuaElishama*Elishua

d

d 7. aEliphelet*Elpalet*

d

d 8. aNogahNogah

d

d 9. NephegNephegNepheg

d

d 10. JaphiaJaphiaJaphia

d

d 11. ElishamaElishamaElishama

d

d 12. EliadaEliadaBeeliada*

d

d 13. EliphelетEliphelетEliphelet

d

d (Differences are marked with an asterick).

d

d

A comparison of the three lists serves to show:

(1) that “Shimeah” and the first “Elishama” in the list of this chapter are corruptions;

(2) that David had really 13 sons born in Jerusalem, of whom two - the first Eliphelet and Nogah - probably died in their childhood; and

(3) that Eliada, the twelfth son, was also called Beeliada, the term Baal, “lord,” not having (previous to the introduction of the Baal worship) a bad sense, but being regarded as an equivalent with El, “God.”

Verse 5

Bathshua, the daughter of Ammiel - Both names are here given in an unusual form, but it may be doubted whether in either case there has been any corruption. In “Bathshua,” for “Bathsheba,” a ו (*v*) replaces the ב (*b*) of the earlier writer, “w” and “b” having nearly the same sound. In “Ammiel,” for “Eliam,” the two elements which form the name are inverted, as in Jehoiachin =Jechoniah, and the like.

Verse 10

Abia - Rather, “Abijah,” as in 2 Chronicles 1114, where the Hebrew word is exactly the same.

Verse 11

Ahaziah - Called “Jehoahaz” by a transposition of the elements composing the name, and “Azariah,” probably by a transcriber‘s error (see marginal notes and references).

Verse 12

Azariah - Elsewhere in Chronicles called uniformly “Uzziah” (2 Chronicles 26:1, 2Chronicles 26:3,2 Chronicles 26:9, 2 Chronicles 26:11, etc.), but called indifferently “Azariah” and “Uzziah” in Kings (“Azariah” in 2 Kings 14:21; 2 Kings 15:1, 2Kings 15:6,2 Kings 15:17, 2 Kings 15:23, 2 Kings 15:27, etc.; “Uzziah” in 2 Kings 15:13, 2 Kings 15:32, 2 Kings 15:34).

Verse 15

Of the sons of Josiah, Johanan, “the first-born,” who is mentioned in this place only, must, it would seem, have died before his father, or with him at Megiddo; and Shallum (also called Jehoahaz, marginal note and reference) was considerably older than Zedekiah, and was consequently the third, and

not the fourth, son. He is perhaps assigned the fourth place here by way of intentional degradation. Compare Jeremiah 22:10-12; Ezekiel 19:3-4.

Verse 17

Assir - Perhaps born in the captivity, and therefore so named, who either (died young, or was made a eunuch (Isaiah 39:7; compare Jeremiah 22:30). After Assir‘s decease, or mutilation, the line of Solomon became extinct, and according to the principles of the Jewish law Numbers 27:8-11 the inheritance passed to the next of kin, who were Salathiel and his brethren, descendants from David by the line of Nathan. Luke in calling Salathiel “the son of Neri” Luke 3:27, gives his real, or natural, descent; since no genealogy would assign to the true son and heir of a king any inferior and private parentage. Hence, “Malchiram,” etc., i. e. not Salathiel only, but his brothers also were reckoned “sons” of Jeconiah.

Verse 19

Zerubbabel, elsewhere always called “the son of Salathiel,” was only Salathiel‘s heir and legal son, being naturally his nephew, the son of his brother, Pedaiah.

Verse 22

Six - There are only five names in the Hebrew text. The Syriac anti Arabic versions supply “Azariah” between Neariah and Shaphat.

The question of the proper arrangement of the genealogy of the descendants of Zerubbabel 1 Chronicles 3:19-24 is important in its bearing on the interesting point of the time at which the canon of the Old Testament was closed. Assuming the average of a generation to be 20 years in the East, the genealogy of the present chapter, drawn out according to the Hebrew text, does not descend below about 410 B.C., and thus falls within the probable lifetime of Nehemiah.

If, further, we regard it as most probable that Ezra died before 431 B.C., and that this passage in question was not wholly written by him, this does not disprove the theory (see the introduction to Chronicles), that Ezra was the author of Chronicles. Deuteronomy is by Moses, though the last chapter cannot be from his hand. The “dukes of Edom” might he an insertion into the text of Genesis Genesis 36:40-43 without the authorship of the remainder of the work being affected by it. So here; Nehemiah, or Malachi, may have carried on the descent of the “sons of David” as far as it had

reached in their time, adding to the account given by Ezra one, or at the most two verses.

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CHAPTER 4

Verse 3

Read, "These are the sons of the father (i. e. chief) of Etam" 2 Chronicles 11:6, a city of Judah, not far from Bethlehem.

Verse 9

It is remarkable that Jabez should be introduced without description, or patronymic, as if a well-known personage. We can only suppose that he was known to those for whom Chronicles was written, either by tradition, or by writings which have perished. In 1 Chronicles 4:10 Jabez alludes to his name, "sorrowful" (margin): "Grant that the grief implied in my name may not come upon me!"

Verse 11-12

It has been conjectured from the strangeness of all the names in this list, that we have here a fragment of Canaanite record, connected with the family of the "Shua," whose daughter Judah took to wife 1 Chronicles 2:3; Genesis 38:2, and whose family thus became related to the tribe of Judah.

Verse 14

The words "and Meonothai" should he added to the end of 1 Chronicles 4:13; but they should be retained also at the commencement of 1 Chronicles 4:14. Or, see the marginal note.

Verse 17

She bare Miriam - Rather, "she conceived." The mother is not mentioned, and it seems impossible to restore the original text with any certainty.

Verse 18

His wife - i. e. Mered's. Mered, it would seem, had two wives, Bithiah, an Egyptian woman, and a Jewish wife (see the margin), whose name is not given. If Mered was a chief of rank, Bithlah may have been married to him with the consent of her father, for the Egyptian kings often gave their daughters in marriage to foreigners. Or she may have elected to forsake her countrymen and cleave to a Jewish husband, becoming a convert to his religion. Her name, Bithiah, "daughter of Yahweh," is like that of a convert.

Verse 19

His wife Hodiah - Not as in the margin, but rather, "the sons of the wife of Hodiah." Hodiah is elsewhere always a man's name Nehemiah 8:7; Nehemiah 9:5; Nehemiah 10:10, Nehemiah 10:13, Nehemiah 10:18.

Verse 22

Who had the dominion in Moab - Moab was conquered by David 2 Samuel 8:2, and again by Omri, after which it remained subject until the death of Ahab 2 Kings 3:5. But a more ancient rule, in times of which we have no further record, is probably intended.

Verse 23

Among plants and hedges - Rather, "in Netaim and Gederah" Joshua 15:36.

With the king - Or, probably, "on the king's property." Both David and several of the later kings had large territorial possessions in various parts of Judaea 1 Chronicles 27:25, 1 Chronicles 27:31; 2 Chronicles 26:10; 2 Chronicles 27:4; 2 Chronicles 32:28-29.

sa40

Verse 31

Unto the reign of David - It is not quite clear why this clause is added. Perhaps the writer is quoting from a document belonging to David's reign. Or, he may mean that some of the cities, as Ziklag 1 Samuel 27:6, were lost to Simeon about David's time.

Verse 33

And their genealogy - Rather, "and their register was according thereto" - they were registered, i. e. according to the places where they dwelt.

Verse 38

These mentioned by their names were princes - The registered chiefs of the cities in the first list 1 Chronicles 4:28-31, in the time of Hezekiah 1 Chronicles 4:41.

Verse 39

Gedor - Rather read, "Gerar" (Septuagint) a fertile district Genesis 26:6-12; 2 Chronicles 14:14-15 in Philistine country.

Verse 41

The habitations - Rather, "the Mehunim" (compare 2 Chronicles 36:7), called also "Maonites" (see Judges 10:12 note).

Verse 43

Unto this day - These words are probably taken from the record which the writer of Chronicles had before him, and do not imply that the Simeonites remained undisturbed in their conquests until after the return from the captivity. So 1 Chronicles 4:41.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

His birthright was given … - In particular, the right of the first-born to a double inheritance Deuteronomy 21:17 was conferred on Joseph, both by the expressed will of Jacob Genesis 48:22 and in the actual partition of Canaan Micah 5:2.

Verse 4

The sons of Joel - The line of succession here given must be broken by one great gap or several smaller ones, since nine generations before Tiglath-pileser would carry us back no further than the reign of Rehoboam.

Verse 9

He inhabited - i. e. Reuben. Eastward the Reubenites inhabited as far as the commencement of the great Syrian Desert, which extended all the way from the river Euphrates to their borders.

Verse 10

The "Hagarites" or "Hagarenes" are generally regarded as descendants of Hagar, and a distinct branch of the Ishmaelites 1 Chronicles 27:30-31; Psalm 83:6. They appear to have been one of the most wealthy 1 Chronicles 5:21 and widely-spread tribes of the Syrian Desert, being found on the side of the Euphrates in contact with the Assyrians, and also in the Hauran, in the neighborhood of Palestine, in contact with the Moabites and Israelites. If identical with the Agraei of the Classical writers, their name may be considered as still surviving in that of the district called Hejer or Hejera in northeastern Arabia, on the borders of the Persian Gulf. A full account of the war is given in 1 Chronicles 5:18-22.

Verse 11

From this passage and from the subsequent account of the Manassites 1 Chronicles 5:23-24, the Gadites extended themselves to the north at the expense of their brethren, gradually occupying a considerable portion of the tract originally allotted to the "half tribe."

Verse 17

The writer refers here to two registrations, one made under the authority of Jeroboam II when he was king and Israel flourishing, the other made under the authority of Jotham, king of Judah, during the troublous time which followed on the great invasion of Tiglath-pileser. There is nothing

surprising in a king of Judah having exercised a species of lordship over the trans-Jordanic territory at this period.

Verse 19

Jetur no doubt gave his name to the important tribe of the Ituraeans who inhabited the region southwest of the Damascene plain, between Gaulonitis (Jaulan) and the Ledjah. This tribe was noted for its thievish habits, and was regarded as savage and warlike.

Verse 23

"Baal-Hermon," "Senir" Deuteronomy 3:9, and "Mount Hermon," are here not so much three names of the one great snow-clad eminence in which the Anti-Lebanon terminates toward the south, as three parts of the mountain - perhaps the "three summits" in which it terminates.

Verse 26

"Habor" here seems to be a city or a district, and not a river, as in marginal reference There is some reason to believe that districts among the Assyrians were occasionally named from streams.

Hara is probably the same as "Haran" Genesis 11:31; 2 Kings 19:12; Ezekiel 27:23, being a softening down of the rugged original "Kharan."

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

The genealogy of the high priestly stem to the captivity.

Verse 9

Ahimaaz begat Azariah - It must, apparently, be this Azariah, and not the son of Johanan 1 Chronicles 6:10, who was high priest at the dedication of Solomon's Temple. For Zadok, who lived into the reign of Solomon 1 Kings 4:4 cannot have been succeeded by a great-great-grandson. The notice in 1 Chronicles 6:10, which is attached to the second Azariah, must, beyond a doubt, belong properly to the first.

Verse 11

Ahitub - Between Amariah and Hilkiah 1 Chronicles 6:13 this genealogy is most certainly defective, as it gives three generations only for a period for which nine generations are furnished by the list of the kings of Judah, and which cannot be estimated as much short of 200 years. Further, no one of the names in this part of the list occurs among the High priests of the period, several of whom are mentioned both in the Second Book of Chronicles and in Kings; the explanation of which seems to be that the present is not a list of high priests, but the genealogy of Jozadak or Jehozadak, whose line of descent partly coincided with the list of High priests, partly differed from it. Where it coincided, all the names are given; where it differed, some are omitted, in order (probably) to render the entire list from Phinehas a multiple of seven. See the note at 1 Chronicles 6:20.

Verse 15

Jehozadak - The meaning of the name is "Jehovah is righteous." It has been noted as remarkable that the heads of both the priestly and the royal stock carried to Babylon should have had names (Zedekiah and Jehozadak) composed of the same elements, and assertive of the "justice of God," which their sufferings showed forth so signally.

Verse 16

A general account of the several branches of the tribe of Levi.

Verse 20

Of Gershom - The names in this list are curiously different from those in 1 Chronicles 6:41-43, which yet appear to represent the same line reversed. Probably both lists are more or less corrupted, and, as in many genealogies, omission is made, to reduce the number of the names to seven.

Compare e. g. 1 Chronicles 6:22-28 with 1 Chronicles 6:33-38. Compare the other genealogy ties of this chapter; and see also Matthew 1:1-17.

Verse 28

Vashni - The true name of Samuel‘s first-born, which was “Joel” (see the margin and references), has here dropped out; and the word properly meaning “and his second (son)” has been taken as the name of the first.

Verses 31-48

The genealogies of David‘s three chief singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan or Jeduthun.

1 Chronicles 6:32

They waited on their office - On the establishment and continuance of the choral service in the temple, see 2 Chronicles 5:12, 2 Chronicles 29:27-30; 2 Chronicles 35:15.

1 Chronicles 6:33

Heman - In general Asaph takes precedence of Heman and Jeduthun, but here Heman is placed first, because his family, that of the Kohathites, had the highest priestly rank, being the family which furnished the high priests (see 1 Chronicles 6:2-15).

Shemuel - i. e. “Samuel.” Our translators have here given the Hebrew, while elsewhere they give uniformlv the Greek, form of the name. We learn by this genealogy that Heman was Samuel‘s grandson.

1 Chronicles 6:39

His brother Asaph - Not “brother” in the ordinary sense of the term, since Asaph was the son of Berachiah, and a Gershonite, not a Kohathite. “Brother” here may mean “fellow-craftsman” (compare 1 Chronicles 25:7).

1 Chronicles 6:44

Ethan - Or Jeduthun (see the margin). Corruption will scarcely account for the two forms of the name, since Ethan is used persistently up to a certain point 1 Chronicles 15:19, after which we have uniformly “Jeduthun.” The case seems to be rather one in which a new name was taken after a while, which thenceforth superseded the old. Compare Abraham, Sarah, Joshua, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, etc.

Verse 50

The sons of Aaron - This list, a mere repetition of that in 1 Chronicles 6:3-8, came, probably, from a different source - a source belonging to the time of David, with whom Ahimaaz (the last name on the list) was

contemporary. The other list 1 Chronicles 6:4-15 came, no doubt, from a document belonging to the time of the captivity (see 1 Chronicles 6:15).

Verse 54

Their's was the lot - i. e. "the first lot." The Kohathites had the first lot among the Levitical families, as being the family whereto the high priesthood was attached (compare Joshua 21:10).

Verses 56-81

The writer evidently had before him 1 Chronicles 6:58, 1 Chronicles 6:60, 1 Chronicles 6:72, etc.); in a few he substituted for the old an entirely new name, the modern apellation, probably, of the ancient site 1 Chronicles 6:70, 1 Chronicles 6:77. At one time, it would seem, his intention was to give the cities of the priests only, and to content himself with stating the mere number of the rest. His account of the matter was then brought to a conclusion, and summed up, in 1 Chronicles 6:64. But, afterward, either he or a later writer thought it best to add to the list of the priestly cities the information contained in Judges as to those which were not priestly, but merely Levitical. The passage 1 Chronicles 6:60. In the second list 1 Chronicles 6:67-70 there is likewise an omission of two cities, Eltekeh and Gibbethon, which are wanted to make up the number ten 1 Chronicles 6:61. The third list is complete, though some of the names are very different from these of Joshua. In the fourth, two names are again wanting, those of Jokneam and Kartah.

1 Chronicles 6:61

Unto the sons of Kohath which were left - i. e. to such of them as were not priests.

Out of the half tribe … ten cities - The half tribe furnished two cities only (1 Chronicles 6:70, and compare Joshua 21:25). It is evident therefore that something has fallen out. We may supply from Joshua the words "out of Ephraim and out of Dan, and" before "out of the half tribe."

1 Chronicles 6:77

Unto the rest of the children of Merari - Rather, "Unto the rest the children of Merari" - that is to say, "unto the remainder of the Levites, who were descendants of Merari": - the two other branches, the Kohathites and the Gershomites, having been treated of previously.

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CHAPTER 7

Verse 2

Whose number was in the days of David … - The writer would seem by this passage to have had access to the statistics of the tribes collected by David, when he sinfully "numbered the people" (marginal reference). The numbers given in 1 Chronicles 7:4-5 probably came from the same source.

Verse 6

Three - In Genesis, ten "sons" of Benjamin are mentioned; in Numbers, five (marginal references). Neither list, however, contains Jediael who was perhaps a later chieftain. If so, "son" as applied to him means only "descendant."

It is conjectured that Becher has disappeared from the lists in Numbers 26:35. He retains, however, his place here, because, by right of blood, he really belonged to Benjamin.

Verses 7-10

The lists here are remarkably different from those in marginal references Probably the persons here mentioned were not literally "sons," but were among the later descendants of the founders, being the chief men of the family at the time of David's census.

Verse 17

These were the sons of Gilead - i. e. these descendants of Machir were reckoned to the family of Gilead. The name "Gilead" prevailed above all others in the line of Manasseh, the term "Gileadite" almost taking the place of "Manassite."

Verse 18

Abiezer - His descendants formed one of the most important branches of the Manassites. They furnished to Israel the greatest of the Judges, Gideon Judges 6:11, Judges 6:24, Judges 6:34, and were regarded as the leading family among the so-called "sons of Gilead.

Verse 20

The sons of Ephraim - The genealogy is difficult. It is perhaps best to consider Ezer and Elead 1 Chronicles 7:21 as not sons of Zabad and brothers of the second Shuthelah, but natural sons of Ephraim. The passage would then run thusly:

"And the sons of Ephraim, Shuthelah (and Bered was his son, and Tahath his son and Eladah his son, and Tahath his son, and Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son) and Ezer and Elead, whom the men of Gath slew" (i. e. the settled inhabitants, as contrasted with the nomadic Hebrews, Amalekites, etc.).

Verse 24

Sherah could scarcely herself have built the Palestinian cities here mentioned, which must belong to a time not earlier than Joshua. By "she built" we must understand "her descendants built."

Verse 34

Shamer; Ahi, and Rohgah - Translate as: "The sons of Shamer 1 Chronicles 7:32, his brother, Rohgah, etc."

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CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

The reason of this return to the genealogy of the Benjamites seems to be the desire to connect the genealogical introduction with the historical body of the work. As the history is to begin with Saul, the genealogical portion is made to end with an account of the family of this Benjamite monarch.

Verse 6

And they removed them to Manahath - "They" has no antecedent; and it is difficult to supply one. Almost all commentators suppose that there has been some corruption here, from which, however, we may gather that the "sons of Ehud" (or, perhaps, of Ahoah, 1 Chronicles 8:4) were originally settled at Geba (Joshua 18:24 note), but afterward removed to a place called Manahath, probably a town in the vicinity. Gera 1 Chronicles 8:7 directed the movement.

Verse 8

After he had sent them away - Translate it: "after he had divorced his wives, Hushim and Baara."

Verse 28

These dwelt in Jerusalem - Jerusalem was partly within the limits of the tribe of Benjamin Joshua 18:28; but we do not hear of Benjamites inhabiting it until after the return from the captivity 1 Chronicles 9:3; Nehemiah 11:4.

Verse 33

This verse combined with 1 Chronicles 9:35-39, seems to show that the genealogy of Saul was:

d

d Abiel (= Jehiel?)

d

d

d

d

d

d Ner

d

d

d

d

d

d

d KishAbner

d

d

d

d Saul

d

d

Rather than that to be inferred from 1 Samuel 9:1; 1 Samuel 14:50-51.

In 1 Samuel 14:49 note, it is concluded that Saul‘s second son bore the two names of “Ishui” and “Abinadab.” But the order of the names here:

(1) Jonathan;

(2) Malchi-shua; and

(3) Abinadab - suggests another explanation, namely, that Ishui, the second son, died young, and that Abinadab was really the fourth son.

Esh-baal - Previous to the introduction of the Phoenician Baal-worship into Israel by Ahab, the word "Baal" בעל *baʿal* had no bad sense in Hebrew, but was simply an equivalent of the more ordinary אל *'êl* "God" (1 Chronicles 3:1 note). Hence, there is nothing strange in the use at this time of the names, "Esh-baal" ("man of God"), "Baal," "Beel-iada," "Merib-baal," etc. Later on such names became offensive to pious ears, and were changed for the better, or for the worse, "Beel-iada" becoming "El-iada" ("let God aid") - "Esh-baal," "Ish-bo-sheth" ("man of shame") - "Merib-baal," "Mephi-bosheth;" and the like.

Verse 40

Sons, and sons' sons - This genealogy of the house of Saul appears by the number of the generations to belong probably to the time of Hezekiah (compare 1 Chronicles 4:41). Ulam's "sons' sons" are in the 13th generation from Jonathan, as Hezekiah is in the 13th generation from David.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

Rather, "So all Israel were reckoned … the kings of Israel. And Judah was carried away captive to Babylon for their transgressions."

Verse 2

The first inhabitants - i. e. the first inhabitants of the holy land after the return from the captivity. They are enumerated under four heads:

(1) Israelites, i. e. the mass of the laity, whether belonging to the ten tribes or the two;

(2) priests;

(3) Levites; and

(4) the lowest order of the ministry, the Nethinims.

These last, whose name is derived from a root "to give," were a sort of sacred slaves - persons "given" to the Levites to perform the more laborious duties of the sanctuary. Some had been "given" as early as the time of Moses Numbers 31:47; and the number afterward increased Joshua 9:23; Ezra 8:20. At the time of the return from the captivity, owing to the small number of Levites who came back Ezra 2:40-42, the services of the Nethinims became very important. They are mentioned under the name of Nethinims only in Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

Verse 3

The correspondence and the diversity between the account here and in Nehemiah Nehemiah 11:4-19 are explained by the probability that both writers drew from a common and fuller document. They selected, in some instances, different names, or names which are now different through corruption; and they frequently expressed the genealogies of the same persons differently, both going on the principle of compression by means of omissions, but omitting from their lists different links of the chain.

Verse 9

The discrepancy between the numbers here and in Nehemiah Nehemiah 11:8 may arise from corruption. So in 1 Chronicles 9:13, 1 Chronicles 9:22.

Verse 10

"Jedaiah," "Jehoiarib," and "Jachin," are not here names of individuals but of priestly families. From 1 Chronicles 24:7-17, it appears that Jehoiarib was the original head of the first "course," Jedaiah of the second shift, and Jachin of the twenty-first shift.

Verse 18

Who hitherto waited - Translate, "Who to this day waits. These were the porters in the stations of the sons of Levi." The words of the first clause refer to Shallum, and imply that, whereas Shallum (or his house) had originally the general superintendence of the temple gates, a change had been made when the author wrote, and Shallum's charge had become the east gate only. The second clause means; "these were the porters in those fixed stations at the outer gates of the Temple, which corresponded to the camp stations of the Levites who guarded the tabernacle in the early times."

Verse 19

Shallum the son of Kore - A different person from the Shallum of 1 Chronicles 9:17, and with a different office, namely, the guarding the inner doors of the temple. The original Shallum, Shelemaiah, or Meshelemaiah, was a Levite of the time of David 1 Chronicles 26:14. His descendants were still called by his name, but had now a more important charge assigned to them.

Verse 22

The porters, like the singers Nehemiah 12:29, dwelt for the most part in the villages round Jerusalem. They were the descendants of those originally selected for the work by David. David's arrangements are here regarded as having had the sanction of Samuel - which would imply that he planned them in the lifetime of Saul, while he was still a fugitive and an outlaw.

Verse 25

See the marginal references. If the number of warders was, as stated in Nehemiah (Nehemiah 11:19) 172 (i. e. 168 besides the four chief warders), and the number employed at any one time was, as under David 1 Chronicles 26:17-18, twenty-four, then the turn of the courses to keep ward came every seven weeks.

Verse 26

Rather, "For the four chief porters, who were themselves Levites, were in trust, who also had the charge of the chambers, etc." A contrast seems

intended between the four chief porters, whose charge was constant, and the remainder, who kept watch by turns.

Verse 28

By tale - literally, "by number." The vessels for service taken out of the treasury were counted, that the same number should be returned to the treasury after the service was over,

Verse 31

Mattithiah … the first-born of Shallum the Korahite - This Shallum would seem to be the person mentioned in 1 Chronicles 9:19, whose actual first-born was Zechariah 1 Chronicles 26:2. Mattithiah may have been his eldest lineal descendant at the time here spoken of.

Verse 33

The singers - No names follow, and it is thought that they have fallen out.

Were free - "Free," i. e. from any special duties besides those of supervision, which was so arranged among the overseers that someone exercised it during every part of both day and night.

Verse 34

Chief throughout their generations - The superintendents, that is, were the genealogical head of the different Levitical divisions, and bore special rule, each over those of his own blood and race. The hereditary principle prevailed, not only in the high priesthood, but also in the priestly offices of the second rank.

Verses 35-44

An almost exact repetition of 1 Chronicles 8:29-38; and probably intentionally made by the author. In order to connect the genealogical section of his work with the historical, he re-introduces the genealogy of the person with whose death his historical section opens.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

The present chapter contains two facts not found in 1 Samuel 31:1-13 - the fastening of Saul‘s head in the temple of Dagon 1 Chronicles 10:10, and the burial of his bones, and those of his sons, under an oak 1 Chronicles 10:12. Otherwise the narrative differs from 1 Samuel 31:1-13 only by being abbreviated (see especially 1 Chronicles 10:6-7, 1 Chronicles 10:11-12), and by having some moral reflections attached to it 1 Chronicles 10:13-14.

Verse 6

All his house died together - Not the whole of his family, nor even “all his sons” (see 2 Samuel 2:8-15; 2 Samuel 3:6-15; 2 Samuel 4:1-12). The phrase is perhaps an abbreviation of the expression in the parallel passage of Samuel 1 Samuel 31:6.

Verse 13

For his transgression - Compare 1 Chronicles 9:1. The “transgression” intended is probably the disobedience with respect to Amalek, recorded in 1 Samuel 15:1-9 (compare 1 Samuel 28:17-18).

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

This chapter runs parallel with 1 Chronicles 11:9, after which it is to be compared with 1 Chronicles 11:40, the remainder 1 Chronicles 11:41-47 being an addition, to which Samuel has nothing corresponding. Compare throughout the notes in Samuel.

Verses 6-8

The narrative here given fills out a manifest defect in 2 Samuel 5:8 where something has evidently dropped out of the text.

The prowess of Joab on this occasion, and the part which he took in the building of the city of David 1 Chronicles 11:8, are known to us only from this passage of Chronicles.

Verse 10

Strengthened themselves - Or "exerted themselves" - "strenuously assisted with all Israel in making David king." This list of David's principal heroes belongs, therefore, to his reign at Hebron. In Samuel the list is not given until nearly the end of David's reign 2 Samuel 23:8-39.

Verse 11

Chief of the captains - Or, "of the thirty," according to another and better reading (see 1 Chronicles 11:15, 1 Chronicles 11:25; compare 2 Samuel 23:8 note). Jashobeam was the commander of the first monthly course of 24,090 soldiers 1 Chronicles 27:2. He is probably the warrior of the name who joined David at Ziklag 1 Chronicles 12:6.

Verse 13

Compare this passage with 2 Samuel 23:9-10.

Barley - In 2 Samuel 23:11, "lentiles." The words for barley and lentils are so similar in the Hebrew that we may fairly explain the diversity by an accidental corruption.

Verse 23

Five cubits high - About 7 ft. 6 in. high. The height is not so great as that recorded of other giants.

Verse 26

etc. The list of names here given corresponds generally with that in 1 Chronicles 11:10. The writer of Samuel does not assign his list to any definite period of David's reign, but probably delivers it to us as it was

constituted at a later date. It is quite possible therefore that the names which occur only in Chronicles are those of persons who had died or quitted the army before the other list was made out, and that the new names in Samuel are the names of those who had taken their places. See the 2 Samuel 23:39 note.

Verse 34

The sons of Hashem - It is impossible that this can be the true reading, since an individual warrior must be spoken of. Comparing 2 Samuel 23:32, perhaps the most probable conjecture is that the "Beni-Hashem" of Chronicles and the "Beni Jashen" of Samuel alike conceal some single name of a man which cannot now be recovered.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

This chapter is composed wholly of matter that is new to us, no corresponding accounts occurring in Samuel. It comprises four lists:

(1) One of men, chiefly Benjamites, who joined David at Ziklag 1 Chronicles 12:1-7;

(2) A second of Gadites who united themselves to him when he was in a stronghold near the desert 1 Chronicles 12:8-15;

(3) A third of Manassites who came to him when he was dismissed by the Philistines upon suspicion 1 Chronicles 12:19-22; and

(4) A fourth of the numbers from the different tribes who attended and made him king at Hebron 1 Chronicles 12:23-40.

Verse 2

The skill of the Benjamites as archers is noted in 1 Chronicles 8:40, and 2 Chronicles 14:8. Their proficiency in using the left hand appears in the narrative of Judges (Judges 3:15, and marginal reference) where their special excellency as slingers is also noticed.

Even of Saul‘s brethren - Compare 1 Chronicles 12:29. Even of Saul‘s own tribe there were some who separated themselves from his cause, and threw in their lot with David.

Verse 8

Into the hold to the wilderness - Rather, “into the hold toward the wilderness.” Some understand by this Ziklag, some En-gedi 1 Samuel 24:1-2; but it seems most probable that here and in 1 Chronicles 12:16 the stronghold of Adullam is intended 1 Chronicles 11:15-16.

Verse 14

The marginal rendering is preferable. (Compare Leviticus 26:8).

Verse 15

On the danger of the exploit, see the marginal reference note.

This passage 1 Chronicles 12:8-15 seems to be taken verbatim from an ancient source, the poetical expressions in 1 Chronicles 12:8, 1 Chronicles 12:14, being especially unlike the usual style of our author.

Verse 18

Amasai - The marginal reference identifies him with Amasa, David's nephew, but it seems unlikely that David would have misdoubted a band led by his own nephew.

The passionate earnestness of Amasai's speech is strongly marked in the original, and will be better seen by omitting the words which our Version adds in italics. Here, as in 1 Chronicles 12:8-15, we have manifestly the actual words of a very ancient record.

Verse 21

The band of the rovers - See the marginal reference.

Verse 23

Rather, "These are the numbers of the men, ready equipped for the host, that came to David, etc."

In the list which follows such points as

(1) The large mumber sent by the trans-Jordanic tribes;

(2) The large numbers from Zebulon, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan, all tribes somewhat remote, and generally speaking undistinguished;

(3) The small size of the contingent from Judah, which is generally represented as numerically superior to every other tribe, and which might have been expected to be especially zealous on behalf of its own prince and tribesman; throw some doubt upon the numbers, which may be suspected of having in some instances undergone corruption.

Verse 29

For hitherto … - Rather, "For still the greatest part of them maintained their allegiance to the house of Saul." This is given as the reason for so few coming to Hebron. It shows us that, even after the death of Ishbosheth, the Benjamites had hopes of furnishing a third king to the nation.

Verse 32

Men that had understanding of the times - This is best interpreted politically. Compare the marginal reference

Verse 33

Expert in war … - Rather "arrayed for battle with all harness of battle, who set the battle in array with no double heart," excelling, that is, in the matter of their arms and accoutrements. The writer notes in each tribe the point in which it was most admirable.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Introduction

Compare 2 Samuel 6:1-11 and notes.

Verse 1

The captains … - Such an organisation had probably been established generally through the tribes prior to the time of David: but David seems to have been the first to recognize in these officers of the host representatives of the people, to consult them on public affairs, and to give them a certain political position.

Verse 5

Shihor - See the marginal reference and the 1 Kings 8:65 note.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verse 1

Compare 2 Samuel 5:11-25, the only important variations from which are in 1 Chronicles 14:4-7, the list of the sons of David (see 1 Chronicles 3:1 note), and in 1 Chronicles 14:12, where the fact is added that the idols taken from the Philistines were burned.

Verse 12

When they had left their gods there - The practice of carrying images of the gods to battle was common among the nations of antiquity, and arose from the belief that there was virtue in the images themselves, and that military success would be obtained by means of them.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Introduction

The bulk of this chapter consists of new matter, which the writer of Chronicles found in his authorities.

Verse 1

And pitched for it a tent - The old "tent" or "tabernacle" was still in existence at Gibeon 1 Chronicles 16:39; 2 Chronicles 1:3; but the ark had long been separated from it, and David probably thought that something newer and more magnificent was requisite. He therefore allowed the former tabernacle to keep its place, and had another made and erected.

Verse 2

None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites - Compare marginal references. We can easily understand that David, after the "breach upon Uzza" 1 Chronicles 13:11, had carefully considered all the legal requirements with respect to moving the ark, and was anxious that they should be strictly observed (compare 1 Chronicles 15:13).

sa40

Verse 3

All Israel - Chosen men probably, like the 30,000 of 2 Samuel 6:1. See 1 Chronicles 15:25.

Verse 4

The children of Aaron - i. e., the priests.

Verse 5

The sons of Kohath - The order of the sons of Levi according to primogeniture is, Gershom, Kohath, Merari Genesis 46:11; Exodus 6:16. But the Kohathites, of whom came the priestly family of the Aaronites, had precedence in all respects. To them especially was committed the attendance upon the ark and the bearing of it. Of the six Levitical families mentioned 1 Chronicles 15:5-10 one only was descended from Gershom, one from Merari, and four (Uriel, Elizaphan, Hebron, and Uzziel) from Kohath.

Verse 13

The "due order" was that the ark should be borne on the shoulders of Kohathite Levites - not that it should be placed upon a cart, drawn by oxen, and rudely shaken.

Verse 16

The singers - Singing had long been recognized as appropriate to religious ceremonies Exodus 15:21; Judges 5:1; 1 Chronicles 13:8; but this is the first occasion on which we find the duty of conducting musical services expressly laid on the Levites. Henceforth, the services of the tabernacle and the temple were regularly choral, and a considerable section of the Levites was trained in musical knowledge, and set apart to conduct this portion of the national worship.

Verse 20

Psalteries on Alamoth - Probably, psalteries whose tone resembled the voices of girls (עלמות *ʿălâmôth*). Compare the "female flutes" of the Lydians.

Verse 21

Harps on the Sheminith - "Sheminith" properly means "the eighth," and has been compared with the modern musical term "octave." Further, "Sheminith" and "Alamoth" are regarded as contrasted, and the harps of Mattithiah and his companions are supposed to have been pitched an octave below the psalteries of Zechariah and his brethren.

The word translated "to excel," is taken as meaning "to lead," and Mattithiah, etc., as leaders of the singers.

Verse 22

For song - See the margin. Hebraists are still at variance as to the meaning of this passage, some supposing elevation or, delivery of the voice, others elevation of the ark, to be intended.

Verse 26

When God helped the Levites - The death of Uzza had deeply impressed both David and the Levites, and it was doubted whether God would allow the ark to be moved anymore. Sacrificial animals were held ready; and when it appeared - by the movement of the ark six paces 2 Samuel 6:13, without any manifestation of the divine displeasure - that God was not opposing but rather helping the Levites in their task, the victims were at once offered.

Verse 27

"Fine linen" (byssus) is here first spoken of as used for dress. It seems to have been reserved for nobles of the highest rank Esther 8:15, for kings, and for priests 2 Chronicles 5:12. David's robe was probably worn, like that of

the high priest, immediately under the ephod, and may, like that, have reached the feet.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verse 1

The first three verses form part of the narrative commenced at 1 Chronicles 15:25. Compare 2 Samuel 6:17-19, where the passage is not torn from its proper context.

Verses 4-42

This passage is interposed by the writer of Chronicles between two sentences of the parallel passage in Samuel. It contains a detailed account of the service which David instituted at this time, a service out of which grew the more elaborate service of the temple. The language of much of the passage is remarkably archaic, and there can be no reasonable doubt that it is in the main an extract from a record of the time of David.

1 Chronicles 16:5

The occurrence of the name "Jeiel" twice in this list is considered suspicious. Hence, the first "Jeiel" is thought to be a corrupt reading for "Aziel" 1 Chronicles 15:20, or "Jaaziel" 1 Chronicles 15:18.

1 Chronicles 16:8

The Psalm here put before us by the Chronicler, as sung liturgically by Asaph and his brethren on the day of the ark's entrance into Jerusalem, accords closely with the passages in the present Book of Psalms noted in the marg reff.

It is, apparently, a thanksgiving service composed for the occasion out of Psalms previously existing.

1 Chronicles 16:39

This is the first mention that we have of Gibeon as the place at which the tabernacle of the congregation now rested. Previously it had been at Nob 1 Samuel 21:1-6, from where it was removed probably at the time of the slaughter of the priests by Doeg 1 Samuel 22:18-19. It is uncertain whether Gibeon was regarded as a "high place" before the transfer to it of the tabernacle: hut thenceforth, until the completion of Solomon's Temple, it was the "great high place" 1 Kings 3:4 - a second center of the national worship which for above 50 years was divided between Gibeon and Jerusalem.

1 Chronicles 16:40

Upon the altar of the burnt offering - The original altar of burnt-offering Exodus 27:1-8 continued at Gibeon with the tabernacle 2

Chronicles 1:3, 2 Chronicles 1:5. David must have erected a new altar for sacrifice at Jerusalem 1 Chronicles 16:1. The sacrifices commanded by the Law were, it appears, offered at the former place; at the latter were offered voluntary additional sacrifices.

1 Chronicles 16:41

The rest … - Rather, "the rest of the chosen ones, who were mentioned by name." The "chosen ones" were "mentioned by name" in 1 Chronicles 15:17-24. A portion of them, namely, those named in 1 Chronicles 16:5-6, conducted the service in Jerusalem; the remainder were employed in the worship at Gibeon.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

Compare throughout 2 Samuel 7 and the notes found there.

Verse 13

My son - The minatory clause which occurs after this in Samuel is here omitted, because the writer is not about to record the sins of Solomon, or the sufferings 1 Kings 11:9-40 which he thereby brought upon himself.

Verse 17

Hast regarded me … - i. e., "Thou hast elevated me above other men, by making my kingdom perpetual, regarding me as if I were a man of high degree." Compare the 2 Samuel 7:19 note.

Verse 18

For the honor of thy servant - i. e., "for the honor which Thou hast done for Thy servant." The Septuagint omits "Thy servant," and renders it: "What can David say more to Thee to glorify Thee? For Thou knowest," etc.

Verse 24

Some prefer, "And let Thy name be established and magnified forever:" i. e., "Let not only Thy promise stand firm, but let Thy Name also stand firm (continue to be held in honor) and be magnified," etc.

Verse 27

The marginal rendering is preferable.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Introduction

This chapter is closely parallel with 2 Samuel 8.

Verse 1

Gath and her towns - In Samuel, Methegammah (see the marginal reference note).

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Verse 1

Compare the marginal references and notes. The writer here adds one or two touches, and varies in one or two of the numbers.

Verse 2

Hanun - A Philistine king of this name is mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions as paying tribute to Tiglath-pileser and warring with Sargon.

Verse 6

A thousand talents of silver - The price is not given in Samuel. On the practice of hiring troops about this time in western Asia, see 1 Kings 15:18; 2 Kings 7:6; 2 Chronicles 25:6.

Verse 7

They hired thirty and two thousand chariots - The reading is corrupt. Such a number as 32,000 chariots alone was never brought into battle on any occasion. Compare the numbers in Exodus 14:7; 1 Kings 10:26; 2 Chronicles 12:3. The largest force which an Assyrian king ever speaks of encountering is 3,940. The words "and horsemen" have probably fallen out of the text after the word "chariots" (compare 1 Chronicles 19:6). The 32,000 would be the number of the warriors serving on horseback or in chariots; and this number would agree closely with 2 Samuel 10:6, as the following table shows:

d **2 Samuel 10:6** **Men**

d

d Syrians of Beth-rehob and Zobah20,000

d

d Syrians of Ish-tob12,000

d

d Syrians of Maachah1,000

d

d Total33,000

d

d **1 Chronicles 19:7** **Men**

d

d Syrians of Zobah, etc.32,000

d

d Syrians of Machah (number not given)1,000

d

d **Total33,000**

d

d

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Verse 1

This chapter, containing such other warlike exploits belonging to David‘s reign as the writer of Chronicles thinks it important to put on record, is to be compared with the passages of Samuel noted in the marginal references.

Verse 4-5

See the marginal reference and notes.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Introduction

The resemblance to the parallel passage in Samuel is throughout less close than usual; the additions are more numerous, the supernatural circumstances of the narrative being brought out into greater prominence. The history is evidently not drawn from Samuel, but from some quite separate document, probably a contemporary account of the occurrence drawn up by Gad.

Verse 1

As the books of Scripture are arranged in our Version, Satan is here for the first time by name introduced to us. He appears not merely as an "adversary" who seeks to injure man from without, but as a Tempter able to ruin him by suggesting sinful acts and thoughts from within. In this point of view, the revelation made of him here is the most advanced that we find in the Old Testament.

The difficulty in reconciling the statement here, "Satan provoked David," etc. with that of Samuel, "the Lord moved David," etc. 2 Samuel 24:1 is not serious. All temptation is permitted by God. When evil spirits tempt us, they do so by permission (Job 1:12; Job 2:6; Luke 22:31, etc.). If Satan therefore provoked David to number the peopIe, God allowed him. And what God allows, He may be said to do. (Another view is maintained in the 2 Samuel 24:1 note).

Verse 5

In 2 Samuel 24:9 the numbers are different. The explanation there given is not so generally accepted as the supposition that the numbers have, in one passage or the other (or possibly in both), suffered corruption.

Verse 6

To omit the Levites would be to follow the precedent recorded in Numbers 1:47-49. The omission of Benjamin must he ascribed to a determination on the part of Joab to frustrate the king‘s intention, whereby he might hope to avert God‘s wrath from the people.

Verse 12

And the angel of the Lord destroying … - These words are not in Samuel, which puts the third alternative briefly. They prepare the way for

the angelic appearance 1 Chronicles 21:16, on which the author is about to lay so much stress.

Verse 16

Here a picture of awful grandeur takes the place of the bare statement of the earlier historian 2 Samuel 24:17. And here, as elsewhere, the author probably extracts from the ancient documents such circumstances as harmonize with his general plan. As the sanctity of the temple was among the points whereon he was most anxious to lay stress, he gives in full all the miraculous circumstances attending this first designation of what became the temple site (marginal reference "k") as a place "holy to the Lord."

David and the elders … clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces - Facts additional to the narrative of Samuel; But facts natural in themselves, and in harmony with that narrative. Similarly, the narrative in 1 Chronicles 21:20 is additional to the account in Samuel; but its parts hang together; and there is no sufficient ground for suspecting it.

Verse 18

It has been observed that it is only in books of a late period that Angels are brought forward as intermediaries between God and the prophets. This, no doubt, is true; and it is certainly unlikely that the records, from which the author of Chronicles drew, spoke of Gad as receiving his knowledge of God's will from an angel. The touch may be regarded as coming from the writer of Chronicles himself, who expresses the fact related by his authorities in the language of his own day (see Zechariah 1:9, Zechariah 1:14, Zechariah 1:19; Zechariah 2:3; Zechariah 4:1; Zechariah 5:5; etc.); language, however, which we are not to regard as rhetorical, but as strictly in accordance with truth, since Angels were doubtless employed as media between God and the prophet as much in the time of David as in that of Zechariah.

Verse 25

Compare the marginal reference and note. It may also be conjectured that we should read "six" for "six hundred" here; since, according to the later Jewish system, six gold shekels were nearly equal in value to fifty silver ones.

Verse 26

He answered him from heaven by fire - This fact is not mentioned by the author of Samuel, since his object is to give an account of the sin of David, its punishment, and the circumstances by which that punishment

was brought to a close, not to connect those circumstances with anything further in the history. With the writer of Chronicles the case is different. He would probably have omitted the whole narrative, as he did the sin of David in the matter of Uriah, but for its connection with the fixing of the temple site 1 Chronicles 22. It was no doubt mainly the fact that God answered him by fire from heaven on this altar, which determined David, and Solomon after him, to build the temple on the spot so consecrated.

Verse 30

David, knowing that by sacrifice on this altar he had caused the angel to stay his hand, was afraid to transfer his offerings elsewhere, lest the Angel should resume his task and pestilence again break out.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 22

Introduction

This chapter, which consists entirely of new matter, helps to fill up the gap which had been left by the earlier authors between 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Kings 1.

Verse 1

This is the house of the Lord God - The double miracle - that of the angelic appearance and that of the fire from heaven - had convinced David that here he had found the destined site of that "house" which it had been told him that his son should build 1 Chronicles 22:10. Hence, this public announcement.

Verse 2

The strangers - i. e., the aliens the non-Israelite population of the land. Compare 2 Chronicles 2:17.

Verse 3

For the joinings - i. e., the girders, or cramps - pieces of iron to be used in joining beams or stones together.

Verse 4

See the marginal references and notes; 1 Chronicles 14:1.

Verse 5

Young and tender - The exact age of Solomon at this time is uncertain; but it cannot have been more than 24 or 25. It may have been as little as 14 or 15. Compare the 1 Kings 2:2 note.

Verse 8

The word of the Lord came to me … - Not by Nathan 1 Chronicles 17:4-15, but on some other occasion 1 Chronicles 28:3. On the bloody character of David's wars, see 2 Samuel 8:2, 2 Samuel 8:5; 2 Samuel 10:18; 2 Samuel 12:31; and 1 Kings 11:16.

Verse 9

For the names of Solomon, compare 2 Samuel 12:24 note. The former name prevailed, probably on account of this prophecy, which attached to the name the promise of a blessing.

Verse 13

Be strong … - David adopts the words of Moses to the Israelites (compare the marginal references) and to Joshua.

Verse 14

In my trouble - See the margin. David refers to the manifold troubles of his reign, which had prevented him from accumulating very much treasure.

An hundred thousand talents of gold … - We do not know the value of the Hebrew talent at this period, and therefore these numbers may be sound. But in that case we must suppose an enormous difference between the pre-Babylonian and the post-Babylonian talents. According to the value of the post-Babylonian Hebrew talent, the gold here spoken of would be worth more than 1 billion of our British pounds sterling, while the silver would be worth ahove 400 million pounds. Accumulations to anything like this amount are inconceivable under the circumstances, and we must therefore either suppose the talents of David‘s time to have been little more than the 100th part of the later talents, or regard the numbers of this verse as augmentcd at least a hundredfold by corruption. Of the two the latter is certainly the more probable supposition.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 23

Verse 1

See the marginal references and notes. 1 Chronicles 23:28-32 give the most complete account in Scripture of the nature of the Levitical office.

Verse 24

From the age of twenty years - The Levites had hitherto not entered upon their regular functions until the age of thirty 1 Chronicles 23:3. Certain lighter duties were by the Law imposed on them at the age of twenty-five Numbers 8:24; but it was not until they were five years older that they became liable to the full service of the sanctuary. David appears now to have made a change. By his "last words" 1 Chronicles 23:27 the time for the Levites to enter on the full duties of their office was advanced from thirty to twenty years. This change was based upon the lighter character of the labors imposed on them now that the ark had ceased to be carried from place to place and obtained a permanent habitation 1 Chronicles 23:26. The limit of age continued in after times where David had fixed it (see Ezra 3:8).

Verse 27

By the "last words of David" some understand an historical work on the latter part of his reign, drawn up probably by Gad or Nathan (compare 1 Chronicles 27:24; 1 Chronicles 29:29). Others suppose that he left behind him a work containing directions for the service of the sanctuary.

Verse 31

Though the Levites were not allowed by themselves to offer sacrifice, yet there were many respects in which they assisted the priests when sacrifice was offered. See 2 Chronicles 29:34; 2 Chronicles 35:11-12.

The set feasts - The Passover, Feast of Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacles (marginal reference).

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Verse 3

Zadok and Ahimelech (rather Abiathar, see 1 Chronicles 24:6) assisted David in drawing up the priestly courses, as the "captains of the host" assisted him in making the divisions of the singers 1 Chronicles 25:1.

Verse 5

One sort with another - i. e., "the assignment of their order in the courses was made by lot to the families belonging to Eleazar, and to the families belonging to Ithamar, equally." Both houses had furnished functionaries of the highest class, and therefore no preference was now given to either over the other.

Verse 6

Wrote them before the king - i. e., "wrote down their names as the lots were drawn forth."

Ahimelech the son of Abiathar - A wrong reading. It should be "Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech." See the 2 Samuel 8:17 note.

Verse 19

These were the orderings … - i. e., "this was the numerical order fixed for their ministerial attendance in the house of the Lord - an attendance which was after the manner determined for them by their forefather Aaron, according to instructions which he received from God."

Verse 20

The object of this second enumeration of the Levitical families (compare 1 Chronicles 24:26-27 is also curious. It brings the number of families up to twenty-five, which is one more than we should have expected.

Verse 23

Neither "Hebron" nor "the first" is found in the present Hebrew text; but they seem to have been rightly supplied by our translators from 1 Chronicles 23:19. The four persons named appear to have been contemporaries of David, the heads of the Hebronite houses in his time (compare 1 Chronicles 26:31).

Verse 26-27

The sons of Jaaziah, Beno - Beno is not really a name. It is the Hebrew for "his son," and is to be attached to Jaaziah. Translate 1 Chronicles 24:27, "and the sons of Merari by Jaaziah his son (were) Shoham and Zaccur, and

Ibri." The meaning of the whole passage 1 Chronicles 24:26-30 seems to be that there were three branches of the Merarites the Beni-Mahli, the Beni-Mushi, and the Beni-Jaaziah.

Verse 31

The principal fathers over against their younger brethren - i. e., "all the Levitical houses enumerated drew lots in their courses on equal terms, the older families having no advantage over the younger ones." As there were 24 courses of the priests, so we must suppose that there were 24 of the Levites, though the number of the families as given in the text 1 Chronicles 24:20-30 is 25.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 25

Verse 1

The captains of the host - Rather, "the princes" of 1 Chronicles 23:2; 1 Chronicles 24:6.

Verse 2

Under the hands of Asaph … - That is to say, "under the direction of Asaph" - who himself "prophesied," or performed the sacred services, "under the direction of the king."

Verse 5

To lift up the horn - Some take this literally, and consider that Heman and his sons played on the born in the musical services; but there is no other evidence that the horn was so employed. Perhaps the most probable explanation is that it has been transferred from the next clause, where (as here) it followed the word "God," with the sense that "God, to exalt Heman's horn (or, increase his dignity), gave him fourteen sons and three daughters."

Verse 7

With their brethren - i. e., "with others of the tribe of Levi." Each son of Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman, was at the head of a band of twelve skilled musicians, consisting partly of his own sons, partly of Levites belonging to other families 1 Chronicles 23:5.

Verse 8

As well the small as the great - Compare 1 Chronicles 24:31. The lot was not applied indiscriminately to all the 24 courses, but was only used to settle which course of Asaph, which of Jeduthun, and which of Heman, should on each occasion be taken. Asaph was given the precedence over his brethren, and his four courses were assigned the first, and then each alternate place. Jeduthun took rank next, and received alternate places, first with Asaph, and then with Heman, until his courses were exhausted. After this, all the later places fell necessarily to Heman, whose courses continue without interruption from the 15th.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 26

Verse 1

The porters - See 1 Chronicles 9:17-27; 1 Chronicles 23:5.

Verse 4

Obed-edom and Hosah 1 Chronicles 26:10 had been "porters," or door - keepers, from the time of the bringing up of the ark into Jerusalem 1 Chronicles 15:24; 1 Chronicles 16:38.

Verse 12

This verse is obscure, but its probable meaning is the following: "To these divisions of the porters, principal men, (were assigned) the watches, together with their brethren, for service in the house of the Lord;" i. e., the "chief men" 1 Chronicles 26:1-11, amounting to no more than 93, kept the watch and ward of the house, together with a further number of their brethren (4,000, 1 Chronicles 23:5), who assisted them from time to time.

Verse 15

The house of Asuppim - literally, "the house of collections" (see the margin and compare Nehemiah 12:25 margin). A treasure-house of some kind or other is probably intended.

Verse 16

All recent commentators seem to be agreed that the words "to Shuppim" ought to be cancelled, the name having arisen from an accidental repetition of the preceding word, "Asuppim."

The gate Shallecheth - literally, "the gate of projection" - the gate, i. e., through which were "thrown out" the sweepings of the temple, the ashes, the offal of the victims, and the like.

The causeway of the going up - Compare the marginal reference note.

Ward against ward - Or, "watch opposite to watch." Hosah had in charge both the western gate of the temple, and also the gate Shallecheth, which was in the outer wall, opposite. Hence, he had to keep two watches, one over against the other.

Verse 17

Toward Asuppim two and two - It is conjectured that the "store-house" in question (1 Chronicles 26:15 note) had two doors, to each of which two porters were appointed.

Verse 18

"Parbar" must designate here the space between the western wall of the temple building and the wall of the court, which would be a sort of "precinct" or "purlieu" of the temple (2 Kings 23:11 note). Here were two gates, at one of which two guards were stationed; while at the Shallecheth, which gave upon the causeway, there were four. In this whole account, the temple is spoken of as if it were existing, when it was not as yet built. We must suppose that David formed the whole plan of the temple, and fixed the stations and numbers of the porters, though it was left for Solomon to carry out his instructions.

Verse 19

The divisions of the porters - The account of the porters here given makes them only twenty-four in number at any one time; 1 Chronicles 23:5 states that the duty was discharged by 4,000 persons. Perhaps of the 93 chief porters here spoken of 1 Chronicles 26:8-9, 1 Chronicles 26:11, 1 Chronicles 26:24 were always on guard as officers, while of the remaining 3,907, a certain proportion were each day on duty as their subordinates.

Verse 28

The foundations of a sacred treasury had therefore been laid as far back as the time of Samuel, when the Israelites began to recover from their last servitude. Such a treasury had been once before established, namely, under Joshua Joshua 6:24; but it appears to have been soon exhausted, and we hear nothing of it under any of the later judges until Samuel.

Verse 30

The "business of the Lord" in the provinces would consist especially in the collection of the tithes, the redemption-money, and the free-will offerings of the people. It may perhaps have included some religious teaching. Compare 2 Chronicles 17:7-9.

Verse 32

Rulers - This term is somewhat too strong. The same kind of office was assigned to Jerijah and his brethren in the trans-Jordanic region as to Hashabiah and his brethren in western Palestine 1 Chronicles 26:30, namely, a superintendence over religious matters and over the interests of the king.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Verse 1

This verse is a general heading to the list 1 Chronicles 27:2-15. The heading has been taken from some fuller and more elaborate description of David‘s army, whereof the writer of Chronicles gives us only an abridgement. Omitting the captains of thousands, the captains of hundreds, and the officers (probably “scribes”) who served the king, he contents himself with recording the “chief fathers” or heads of the divisions 1 Chronicles 28:1, and the number of Iraelites in each course.

Verse 2

Jashobeam - Jashobeam is mentioned in marginal references as the chief of David‘s mighty men. He is called in 1 Chronicles 11:11 “the son of Hachmoni.” We learn from 1 Chronicles 27:3 that he was of the tribe of Judah, being descended from Perez (or Pharez), the son of Judah, from whom David himself sprang. See 1 Chronicles 2:3-15.

Verse 4

Dodai The words “Eleazar, son of,” have probably fallen out before Dodai (or Dodo). According to Jewish tradition, EIeazar 1 Chronicles 11:12 was cousin to David; his father, Dodai, being Jesse‘s brother. Mikloth was probably second in command to Eleazar.

Verse 5

A chief priest - Rather, “the chief priest” - an expression by which is meant, not the high priest, but probably the high priest‘s deputy, who is sometimes called “the second priest” 2 Kings 25:18.

Verse 7

Asahel died before the courses, as here described, could have been instituted. Perhaps the arrangements of David in his later years were based upon institutions belonging to the period of his reign at Hebron.

Verses 16-22

Gad and Asher are omitted from this list of the tribes. Similarly, Dan and Zebulon are omitted from the genealogical survey of the tribes 1 Chronicles 48. We can only suppose that the lists, as they came down to the writer of Chronicles, were incomplete. The “rulers” or “princes” of the tribes appear to have been the oldest lineal descendants of the patriarchs according to the law of primogeniture.

Verse 23

David‘s numbering of the people was therefore a military arrangement in order to fix the amount of his standing army. To the general Oriental prejudice against numbering possessions, etc., there was added in the case of the Jews a special objection - a feeling that it would be irreverent to attempt to count what God had promised should be countless.

Verse 24

Because there fell wrath - literally, “And there fell wrath.” The falling of God‘s wrath was not the cause of Joab‘s ceasing. His motive is clearly stated in 1 Chronicles 21:6. See also the marginal references.

Neither was the number … - The meaning is, that in the portion of the chronicles of King David which treated of numbers - the number of the standing army, of the Levitical and priestly courses, the singers, etc. - the return of the number of the people made by Joab was not entered. The disastrous circumstances which followed on the taking of the census perhaps produced a feeling that God might he further provoked by its being put on record in the state archives. The numbers which have come down to us must therefore have been derived from private sources.

Verses 25-31

This section is important as showing that David, the younger son of a not very opulent family 1 Samuel 16:11, 1 Samuel 16:20, had now become a large landed proprietor, as well as a capitalist, possessed of much moveable wealth. We may perhaps see the sources of both these kinds of property, in the successful wars which he had waged 1 Samuel 27:8-9; 1 Samuel 30:20; 2 Samuel 8:4, 2 Samuel 8:7-8, 2 Samuel 8:12; in the revenue derived from subject kings 1 Samuel 8:2, 1 Samuel 8:14; 1 Samuel 10:19; and in the purchase and occupation of lands in different places. Further, he enjoyed, of course, the usual rights of a Jewish king over the landed property of his subjects, and was thus entitled to receive a tithe of the produce in tithes (1 Samuel 8:15, 1 Samuel 8:17) and in “benevolences.” Compare 1 Samuel 10:27; 1 Samuel 16:20, etc.

1 Chronicles 27:25

The castles - Probably the watchtowers in the border districts, exposed to raids from the plundering tribes of the desert 2 Chronicles 26:10; 2 Chronicles 27:4.

1 Chronicles 27:28

In the low plains - Rather, “in the Shephelah,” the proper name of the low tract between the hill country of Judaea and the Mediterranean.

Verses 32-34

A list - supplemental in character - of some chief officers of David, not mentioned before. The list cannot belong to a very late part of David‘s reign, since it contains the name of Ahithophel, who killed himself during Absalom‘s rebellion 2 Samuel 17:23.

1 Chronicles 27:33

Was the king‘s companion - or, “king‘s friend,” as in 1 Kings 4:5. Compare also 2 Samuel 16:17.

1 Chronicles 27:34

After Ahithophel - i. e., next in counsel to Ahithophel: inferior to him, but superior to all others.

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CHAPTER 28

Verse 1

Officer - literally, as in the margin. This is the only occasion in which eunuchs are mentioned in connection with David‘s reign; and it is to be remarked that they occupy, during the earlier period of the Jewish kingdom, a very subordinate position.

Verse 2

My brethren - David retains the modest phrase of a king not born in the purple, but raised from the ranks of the people (see 1 Samuel 30:23; 2 Samuel 19:12). No later Jewish monarch would have thus addressed his subjects.

The footstool of our God - David views the ark as God‘s “footstool,” because he was enthroned above it visibly in the Shechinah, or luminous cloud, present from time to time above the mercy seat and between the cherubim (compare the marginal references).

Verse 6

Besides the message sent to David through Nathan, he had a revelation, of which we have only the indirect account given here and in 1 Chronicles 22:8-10 (see the note). He was told that one of his sons should be raised up to fill his throne after him, and should build the temple. In the second revelation it was distinctly declared to him that the son intended was Solomon.

My house and my courts - i. e., the temple and the courts of the temple (see 2 Chronicles 4:9).

Verse 7

If he be constant - The conditional character of the promise made to David, as to the continuance of his posterity on the Jewish throne (marginal reference; 2 Samuel 7:14), is now clearly declared.

Verse 9

Know thou the God of thy father - “Knowing God,” in the sense of having a religious trust in Him, is an unusual phrase in the earlier Scriptures. It scarcely occurs elsewhere in the historical books. David, however, uses the phrase in his Psalms Psalm 36:10; and its occurrence here may be accepted as evidence that the entire speech is recorded in the actual words of the monarch.

Verse 11

Compare 1 Chronicles 28:19. As God had revealed to Moses the pattern of the tabernacle 1 Kings 6:17, 1 Kings 6:27, and 2 Chronicles 3:5, 2 Chronicles 3:8 "the greater house" and "the most holy house."

The upper chambers - Compare 2 Chronicles 3:9 note.

The inner parlours - The small rooms of the "lean-to" (1 Kings 6:5 note), entered one from another.

Verse 12

The pattern … - literally, "the pattern of all that was with him in the spirit;" perhaps to be paraphrased, "the form of all that floated before his mind." It seems to be David's spirit, not God's Spirit, that is here spoken of.

Verse 18

The chariot of the cherubims - The cherubim are themselves the chariot upon which Yahweh rides Psalm 18:10; Psalm 99:1.

1 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 29

Verse 1

The palace - The original word here used is the Hebrew form of a Persian word, and generally designates the residence of the Persian monarch Esther 1:2, Esther 1:5; Esther 2:3, Esther 2:8; Nehemiah 1:1; Daniel 8:2. It is only here and in 1 Chronicles 29:19 that it is applied to the temple.

Verse 2

Glistering stones - Rather, "colored stones;" or, "dark stones" - stones of a hue like that of the antimony wherewith women painted their eyes.

Marble stones - or, "white stones" - perhaps "alabaster," which is found near Damascus. On the use made of the "stones" in building the temple, see 2 Chronicles 3:6 note.

Verse 3

Of mine own proper good - i. e., from his own private estate. He makes the offering publicly in order to provoke others by his example 1 Chronicles 29:5.

Verse 4

The numbers here have also suffered to some extent from the carelessness of copyists (compare the 1 Chronicles 22:14 note). The amount of silver is not indeed improbable, since its value would not exceed three millions of our money; but as the gold would probably exceed in value thirty millions, we may suspect an error in the words "three thousand."

Verse 5

To consecrate his service - literally, as in the margin, "to fill his hand," i. e., "to come with full hands to Yahweh." The words contain an appeal to the assembly for voluntary offerings.

Verse 7

The word here translated "dram" is regarded by most critics as the Hebrew equivalent of the Persian "daric," or ordinary gold coin, worth about 22 shillings of British money (circa 1880's). Not, however, that the Jews possessed darics in David's time: the writer wished to express, in language that would be intelligible to his readers, the value of the gold subscribed, and therefore he translated the terms employed in his documents, whatever they were, into terms that were in use in his own day.

The doric became current in Palestine soon after the return from the captivity Ezra 2:69; Ezra 8:27; Nehemiah 7:70-72.

Verse 8

Compare Exodus 35:27. The same spirit prevailed now as at the setting up of the tabernacle. Each offered what he had that was most precious.

Verse 9

The people rejoiced for that they offered willingly - i. e., the munificence of the princes and officers 1 Chronicles 29:6 caused general joy among the people.

Verse 18

Keep this forever … - i. e., "Preserve forever this spirit of liberal and spontaneous giving in the hearts of Thy people, and establish their hearts toward Thee."

Verse 20

Worshipped the Lord, and the king - The same outward signs of reverence were accorded by the customs of the Jews (as of the Oriental nations generally) to God and to their monarchs (see 1 Kings 1:31). But the application of the terms to both in the same passage, which occurs nowhere in Scripture but here, is thought to indicate a time when a long servitude under despotic lords had orientalized men‘s mode of speech.

Verse 21

With their drink offerings - i. e., with the drink-offerings appropriate to each kind of burnt-offering, and required by the Law to accompany them (see Numbers 15:5, Numbers 15:7, Numbers 15:10, etc.).

Sacrifices - or, "thank-offerings," as the same word is translated in 2 Chronicles 29:31; 2 Chronicles 33:16. Of "peace-offerings for thanksgivings" only a small part was the priest‘s; the sacrificer and his friends feasted on the remainder Leviticus 7:15, Leviticus 7:29, Leviticus 7:34.

Verse 22

King the second time - Solomon‘s first appointment was at the time of Adonijah‘s rebellion (marginal reference). As that appointment was hurried and, comparatively speaking, private, David now thought it best formally to invest Solomon a second time with the sovereignty, in the face of all Israel. For a similar reason a second and public appointment of Zadok alone to the high priest‘s office took place. Abiathar was not as yet absolutely thrust out;

but it may be doubtful whether he was ever allowed to perform high priestly functions after his rebellion 1 Kings 1:7; 1 Kings 2:27.

Verse 23

The throne of David is called here "the throne of the Lord," as in 1 Chronicles 28:5 it is called "the throne of the kingdom of the Lord," because God had set it up and had promised to establish it.

Verse 28

See 1 Kings 1:1 note.

Verse 29

On the character of the works alluded to, see Introduction to Chronicles.

Gad the seer - Gad is not given here the same title as Samuel. Samuel's title is one, apparently, of higher dignity, applied only to him and to Hanani 2 Chronicles 16:7, 2 Chronicles 16:10. Gad's is a far commoner title; it is applied to his contemporaries Asaph 2 Chronicles 29:30, Heman 1 Chronicles 25:5, and Jeduthun 2 Chronicles 35:15, to Iddo 2 Chronicles 9:29; 2 Chronicles 12:15, to Jehu, the son of Hanani 2 Chronicles 19:2, and to the prophet Amos Amos 7:12. When "seers" are spoken of in the plural, it is the term almost universally used, only one instance Isaiah 30:10 occurring to the contrary.

Verse 30

The times that went over him - i. e., the events that happened to him. Compare Psalm 31:15.

All the kingdoms of the countries - The kingdoms, i. e., of Moab, Ammon, Damascus, Zobah, etc. See the full phrase in 2 Chronicles 17:10. Some account of these kingdoms would necessarily have been given in any history of David's reign.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN
2 Chronicles

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

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MAIN CONTENTS

Contents

2 CHRONICLES INTRODUCTION

Introduction to 1 and 2Chronicles

1. Like the two Books of King, the two Books of Chronicles formed originally a single work, the separation of which into two “books” is referable to the Septuagint translators, whose division was adopted by Jerome, and from whom it passed to the various branches of the Western Church. In the Hebrew Bibles the title of the work means literally “the daily acts” or “occurrences,” a title originally applied to the accounts of the reigns of the several kings, but afterward applied to general works made up from these particular narratives.

The Septuagint translators substituted one which they regarded as more suitable to the contents of the work and the position that it occupies among the historical books of the Bible. This was Paraleipomena, or “the things omitted “ - a name intended to imply that Chronicles was supplementary to Samuel and Kings, written, i. e., mainly for the purpose of supplying the omissions of the earlier history.

The English title, “Chronicles,” (derived from the Vulgate) is a term primarily significative of time; but in practical use it designates a simple and primitive style of history rather than one in which the chronological element is peculiarly prominent.

2. The “Book of Chronicles” stands in a position unlike that occupied by any other book of the Old Testament. It is historical, yet not new history. The writer traverses ground that has been already trodden by others.

His purpose in so doing is sufficiently indicated by the practical object he had in view, namely, that of meeting the special difficulties of his own day. The people had lately returned from the captivity and had rebuilt the temple; but they had not yet gathered up the threads of the old national life, broken by the captivity. They were therefore reminded, in the first place, of their entire history, of the whole past course of mundane events, and of the position which they themselves held among the nations of the earth. This was done, curtly and drily, but sufficiently, by genealogies, which have always possessed a special attraction for Orientals. They were then more especially reminded of their own past as an organized nation - a settled

people with a religion which has a fixed home in the center of the nation‘s life.

It was the strong conviction of the writer that the whole future prosperity of his countrymen was bound up with the preservation of the temple service, with the proper maintenance of the priests and Levites, the regular establishment of the “courses,” and the rightful distribution of the several ministrations of the temple among the Levitical families. He therefore drew the attention of his countrymen to the past history of the temple, under David, Solomon, and the later kings of Judah; pointing out that in almost every instance temporal rewards and punishments followed in exact accordance with the attitude in which the king placed himself toward the national religion. Such a picture of the past, a sort of condensed view of the entire previous history, written in the idiom of the day, with frequent allusions to recent events, and with constant reiteration of the moral intended to be taught, was calculated to affect the newly returned and still unsettled people far more strongly and deeply than the old narratives. The Book of Chronicles bridged over, so to speak, the gulf which separated the nation after, from the nation before, the captivity: it must have helped greatly to restore the national life, to revive hope and encourage high aspirations by showing to the nation that its fate was in its own hands, and that religious faithfulness would be certain to secure the divine blessing.

3. That the Book of Chronicles was composed after the return from the captivity is evident, not only from its closing passage, but from other portions of it.

The evidence of style accords with the evidence furnished by the contents. The phraseology is similar to that of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, all books written after the exile. It has numerous Aramaean forms and at least one word derived from the Persian. The date cannot therefore well be earlier than 538 B.C., but may be very considerably later. The very close connection of style between Chronicles and Ezra, makes it probable that they were composed at the same time, if not even by the same person. If Ezra was the author, as so many think, the date could not well be much later than 435 B.C., for Ezra probably died about that time. There is nothing in the contents or style of the work to make the date 450-435 B.C. improbable;

for the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 3:23-24, which appears to be later than this, may be a subsequent addition.

4. The writer of Chronicles cites, as his authorities, works of two distinct classes:

(a) His most frequent reference is to a general history - the “Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah,” This was a compilation from the two histories constantly mentioned in Kings - the “book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel,” and the “book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah,” which it had been found convenient to unite into one.

(b) The other works cited by him were 12-part or 13-part histories, the works of prophets who dealt with particular portions of the national annals. Of none of these works is the exact character known to us; but the manner in which they are cited makes it probable that for the most part they treated with some fullness the history - especially the religious history - of the times of their authors. They may be regarded as independent compositions - monographs upon the events of their times, written by individual prophets, of which occasionally one was transferred, not into our “Books of Kings,” but into the “book of the kings of Israel and Judah;” while the remainder existed for some centuries side by side with the “Book of the Kings,” and furnished to the writer of Chronicles much of the special information which he conveys to us.

There is also ample proof that the writer made use of the whole of the earlier historical Scriptures, and especially of the Books of Samuel and Kings, such as we have them. The main sources of 1 Chronicles 18, are the earlier Scriptures from Genesis to Ruth, supplemented by statements drawn from private sources, such as the genealogies of families, and numerous important points of family history, carefully preserved by the “chiefs of the fathers” in almost all the Israelite tribes; a main source of 1 Chronicles 1027 is Samuel; and a source, though scarcely a main source, of 2 Chronicles 136 is Kings (compare the marginal references and notes). But the writer has always some further authority besides these; and there is no section of the Jewish history, from the death of Saul to the fall of Jerusalem, which he has not illustrated with new facts, drawn from some source which has perished.

5. The indications of unity in the authorship preponderate over those of diversity, and lead to the conclusion that the entire work is from one and the same writer. The genealogical tendency, which shows itself so strongly in the introductory section 1 Chronicles 19, is remarkably characteristic of the writer, and continually thrusts itself into notice in the more purely historical portions of his narrative. Conversely, the mere genealogical portion of the work is penetrated by the same spirit as animates the historical chapters, and, moreover, abounds with phrases, characteristic of the writer.

That the historical narrative (1Chr. 102 Chronicles 36) is from one hand, can scarcely be doubted. One pointedly didactic tone pervades the whole - each signal calamity and success being ascribed in the most direct manner to the action of Divine Providence, rewarding the righteous and punishing the evil-doers. There is everywhere the same method of composition - a primary use of Samuel and Kings as bases of the narrative, the abbreviation of what has been narrated before, the omission of important facts, otherwise known to the reader; and the addition of new facts, sometimes minute, and less important than curious, at other times so striking that it is surprising that the earlier historians should have passed them over.

6. The abrupt termination of Chronicles, in the middle of a sentence, is an unanswerable argument against its having come down to us in the form in which it was originally written.

And the recurrence of the final passage of our present copies of Chronicles at the commencement of Ezra, taken in conjunction with the undoubted fact, that there is a very close resemblance of style and tone between the two books, suggests naturally the explanation, which has been accepted by some of the best critics, that the two works, Chronicles and Ezra, were originally one, and were afterwards separated: that separation having probably arisen out of a desire to arrange the history of the post-captivity period in chronological sequence.

7. The condition of the text of Chronicles is far from satisfactory. Various readings are frequent, particularly in the names of persons and places; omissions are found, especially in the genealogies; and the numbers

are sometimes self-contradictory, sometimes contradictory of more probable numbers in Samuel or Kings, sometimes unreasonably large, and therefore justly suspected.

The work is, however, free from defects of a more serious character. The unity is unbroken, and there is every reason to believe that we have the work, in almost all respects, exactly as it came from the hand of the author.

8. As compared with the parallel histories of Samuel and Kings, the history of Chronicles is characterized by three principal features:

(a) A greater tendency to dwell on the externals of religion, on the details of the temple worship, the various functions of the priests and Levites, the arrangement of the courses, and the like. Hence, the history of Chronicles has been called "ecclesiastical," while that of Samuel and Kings has been termed "political." This tendency does not detract from the credibility, or render the history undeserving of confidence.

(b) A marked genealogical bias and desire to put on record the names of persons engaged in any of the events narrated; and

(c) A more constant, open, and direct ascription of all the events of the history to the divine agency, and especially a more plain reference of every great calamity or deliverance to the good or evil deeds of the monarch, or the nation, which Divine Providence so punished or rewarded.

There is no reason to regard Chronicles as less trustworthy than Samuel or Kings. A due consideration of disputed points, the "Levitical spirit," contradictions, alleged mistakes, etc., does not, speaking generally, impugn the honesty of the writer or the authenticity of his work. The book may fairly be regarded as authentic in all its parts, with the exception of some of its members. These appear to have occasionally suffered corruption, though scarcely to a greater extent than those of other books of equal antiquity. From blemishes of this kind it has not pleased God to keep His Word free. It will scarcely be maintained at the present day that their occurrence affects in the very slightest degree the authenticity of the rest of the narrative.

The style of Chronicles is simpler and less elevated than that of Kings. Excepting the psalm of David in 1 Chronicles 16 and the prayer of Solomon in 2 Chronicles 6, the whole is prosaic, level, and uniform. There are no especially striking chapters, as in Kings; but it is less gloomy, being addressed to the restored nation, which it seeks to animate and inspirit. The captive people, weeping by the waters of Babylon, fitly read their mournful history in Kings: the liberated nation, entering hopefully upon a new life, found in Chronicles a review of its past, calculated to help it forward on the path of progress, upon which it was entering.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verses 2-6

The narrative here corresponds with 1 Kings 3:4; but is very much fuller. We learn from the present passage:

(1) that Solomon‘s sacrifice at Gibeon was a great public festivity, to which he collected vast numbers of the people;

(2) that it was made upon the brass altar of Bezaleel, which

(3) stood before the tabernacle; and

(4) that Solomon‘s vision was on the night of his sacrifice. Consult the marginal references

2 Chronicles 1:5

Sought unto it - i. e., “frequented it” - “were in the habit of making use of it.”

Verses 7-12

The verbal differences between this passage and the corresponding one of Kings 1 Kings 3:5-14 are very considerable, and indicate the general truth that the object of the sacred historians is to give a true account of the real bearing of what was said: not ordinarily to furnish us with all or the exact words that were uttered. The most important point omitted in Chronicles, and supplied by Kings, is the conditional promise of long life made to Solomon 1 Kings 3:14; while the chief point absent from Kings, and recorded by our author, is the solemn appeal made by Solomon to the promise of God to David his father 2 Chronicles 1:9, which he now called upon God to “establish,” or to perform.

2 Chronicles 1:12

I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honor - Remark that the writer says nothing of any promise to Solomon of “long life,” which, however, had been mentioned in 2 Chronicles 1:11 among the blessings which he might have been expected to ask. The reason for the omission would seem to lie in the writer‘s desire to record only what is good of this great king. Long life was included in the promises made to him; but it was granted conditionally; and Solomon not fulfilling the conditions, it did not take effect (1 Kings 3:14 note).

Verse 13

From his journey - These words are not in the original text, which is thought to be corrupt. It is best to correct the text, and then simply to translate: "And Solomon came from the high place that was at Gibeon to Jerusalem."

Verses 14-17

This passage is very nearly identical with 1 Kings 10:26-29.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 3

Huram, the form used throughout Chronicles (except 1 Chronicles 14:1) for the name both of the king and of the artisan whom he lent to Solomon 2 Chronicles 2:13; 2 Chronicles 4:11, 2 Chronicles 4:16, is a late corruption of the true native word, Hiram (marginal note and reference).

Verse 4

The symbolic meaning of "burning incense" is indicated in Revelation 8:3-4. Consult the marginal references to this verse.

The solemn feasts - The three great annnual festivals, the Passover, the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), and the Feast of tabernacles Leviticus 23:4-44; Deuteronomy 16:1-17.

Verse 5

See 1 Kings 6:2 note. In Jewish eyes, at the time that the temple was built, it may have been "great," that is to say, it may have exceeded the dimensions of any single separate building existing in Palestine up to the time of its erection.

Great is our God … - This may seem inappropriate as addressed to a pagan king. But it appears 2 Chronicles 2:11-12 that Hiram acknowledged Yahweh as the supreme deity, probably identifying Him with his own Melkarth.

Verse 6

Save only to burn sacrifice before him - Solomon seems to mean that to build the temple can only be justified on the human - not on the divine - side. "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands;" He cannot be confined to them; He does in no sort need them. The sole reason for building a temple lies in the needs of man: his worship must he local; the sacrifices commanded in the Law had of necessity to be offered somewhere.

Verse 7

See 1 Kings 5:6, note; 1 Kings 7:13, note.

Purple … - "Purple, crimson, and blue," would be needed for the hangings of the temple, which, in this respect, as in others, was conformed to the pattern of the tabernacle (see Exodus 25:4; Exodus 26:1, etc.). Hiram's power of "working in purple, crimson," etc., was probably a knowledge of the best modes of dyeing cloth these colors. The Phoenicians,

off whose coast the murex was commonly taken, were famous as purple dyers from a very remote period.

Crimson - כרמיל *karmîyl* the word here and elsewhere translated "crimson," is unique to Chronicles and probably of Persian origin. The famous red dye of Persia and India, the dye known to the Greeks as κόκκος *kokkos* and to the Romans as *coccum*, is obtained from an insect. Whether the "scarlet" שני *shânîy* of Exodus (Exodus 25:4, etc.) is the same or a different red, cannot be certainly determined.

Verse 10

Beaten wheat - The Hebrew text is probably corrupt here. The true original may be restored from marginal reference, where the wheat is said to have been given "for food."

The barley and the wine are omitted in Kings. The author of Chronicles probably filled out the statement which the writer of Kings has given in brief; the barley, wine, and ordinary oil, would be applied to the sustenance of the foreign laborers.

Verse 11

Josephus and others professed to give Greek versions of the correspondence, which (they said) had taken place between Hiram and Solomon. No value attaches to those letters, which are evidently forgeries.

Because the Lord hath loved his people - Compare the marginal references. The neighboring sovereigns, in their communications with the Jewish monarchs, seem to have adopted the Jewish name for the Supreme Being (Yahweh), either identifying Him (as did Hiram) with their own chief god or (sometimes) meaning merely to acknowledge Him as the special God of the Jewish nation and country.

Verse 12

The Lord … that made heaven and earth - This appears to have been a formula designating the Supreme God with several of the Asiatic nations. In the Persian inscriptions Ormazd is constantly called "the great god, who gave" (or made) "heaven and earth."

Verse 13

Of Huram my father's - A wrong translation. Huram here is the workman sent by the king of Tyre and not the king of Tyre's father (see 1 Kings 5:1 note). The words in the original are Huram Abi, and the latter

word is now commonly thought to be either a proper name or an epithet of honor, e. g., my master-workman.

Verse 14

To find out every device - Compare Exodus 31:4. The "devices" intended are plans or designs connected with art, which Huram could invent on any subject that was "put to him."

Verse 17

The strangers are the non-Israelite population of the holy land, the descendants (chiefly) of those Canaanites whom the children of Israel did not drive out. The reimposition of the bond-service imposed on the Canaanites at the time of the conquest Judges 1:28, Judges 1:30, Judges 1:33, Judges 1:35, but discontinued in the period of depression between Joshua and Saul, was (it is clear) due to David, whom Solomon merely imitated in the arrangements described in these verses.

Verse 18

On the numbers, see the 1 Kings 5:16 note.

To set the people a work - Or, "to set the people to work" - i. e., to compel them to labor. Probably, like the Egyptian and Assyrian overseers of forced labor, these officers carried whips or sticks, with which they quickened the movements of the sluggish.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

Where the Lord appeared unto David - The marginal rendering, or "which was shown to David," is preferred by some; and the expression is understood to point out to David the proper site for the temple by the appearance of the Angels and the command to build an altar 2 Samuel 24:17-25; 1 Chronicles 21:16-26.

In the place that David had prepared - This seems to be the true meaning of the passage, though the order of the words in the original has been accidentally deranged.

Verse 3

The marginal "founded" gives a clue to another meaning of this passage, which may be translated: "Now this is the ground-plan of Solomon for the building, etc."

Cubits after the first measure - i. e., cubits according to the ancient standard. The Jews, it is probable, adopted the Babylonian measures during the captivity, and carried them back into their own country. The writer notes that the cubit of which he here speaks is the old (Mosaic) cubit.

Verse 4

The height was an hundred and twenty cubits - This height, which so much exceeds that of the main building 1 Kings 6:2, is probably to be corrected by the reading of the Arabic Version and the Alexandrian Septuagint, "twenty cubits." But see 2 Chronicles 3:9.

Verse 5

The greater house - i. e., the holy place, or main chamber of the temple, intervening between the porch and the holy of holies (so in 2 Chronicles 3:7).

He cieled with fir tree - Rather, "he covered," or "lined." The reference is not to the ceiling, which was entirely of wood, but to the walls and floor, which were of stone, with a covering of planks (marginal reference). The word translated "fir" bears probably in this place, not the narrow meaning which it has in 2 Chronicles 2:8, where it is opposed to cedar, but a wider one, in which cedar is included.

Palm trees and chains - See 1 Kings 6:29. The "chains" are supposed to be garlands or festoons.

Verse 6

Precious stones for beauty - Not marbles but gems (compare 1 Chronicles 29:2). The phrase translated "for beauty" means "for its beautification," "to beautify it."

Parvaim is probably the name of a place, but what is quite uncertain.

Verse 8

The most holy house - i. e., the sanctuary, or holy of holies. On the probable value of the gold, see 1 Kings 10:14 note.

Verse 9

The upper chambers - Compare 1 Chronicles 28:11. Their position is uncertain. Some place them above the holy of holies, which was ten cubits, or fifteen feet lower than the main building (compare 1 Kings 6:2, 1 Kings 6:20); others, accepting the height of the porch 120 cubits 2 Chronicles 3:4, regard the "upper chambers" or "chamber" ὑπερῷον *huperōon* Septuagint), as having been a lofty building erected over the entrance to the temple; others suggest that the chambers intended are simply the uppermost of the three sets of chambers which on three sides surrounded the temple (see 1 Kings 6:5-10). This would seem to be the simplest and best explanation, though we cannot see any reason for the rich ornamentation of these apartments, or for David's special directions concerning them.

Verse 10

The word translated "image work," or, in the margin, "moveable work," occurs only in this passage, and has not even a Hebrew derivation. Modern Hebraists find an Arabic derivation, and explain the word to mean "carved work."

Verse 11-12

The wings of the cherubims - Compare 1 Kings 6:24-27.

Verse 13

Their faces were inward - literally, as in the margin. Instead of looking toward one another, with heads bent downward over the mercy Seat, like the cherubim of Moses Exodus 37:9, these of Solomon looked out from the sanctuary into the great chamber ("the house"). The cherubim thus stood upright on either side of the ark, like two sentinels guarding it.

Verse 14

This is an important addition to the description in Kings, where the veil is not mentioned. It was made of exactly the same colors as the veil of the tabernacle Exodus 26:31.

Verse 15

Of thirty and five cubits - See 1 Kings 7:15 note. Some suppose that there has been a corruption of the number in the present passage.

Verse 16

As in the oracle - This passage is probably corrupt. Our translators supposing that a single letter had fallen out at the beginning of the word translated "in the oracle," supplied "as." But we have no reason to suppose there were any "chains" or "festoons" in the "oracle" or most holy place.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

The supplementary character of Chronicles is here once more apparent. The author of Kings had omitted to record the dimensions of the brass altar. It stood in the great court 2 Chronicles 6:12-13.

Verse 3

For "oxen" we find in 1 Kings 7:24, "knops" or "gourds." An early copyist, not comprehending the comparatively rare word here used for "gourd," and expecting to hear of oxen, as soon as the molten sea was mentioned, changed the reading.

Verse 5

Three thousand baths - See 1 Kings 7:23 note. It is quite possible that either here or in Kings the text may have been accidentally corrupted.

Verse 7

According to their form - Rather, "after their manner" (compare 2 Chronicles 4:20). There is no allusion to the shape of the candlesticks, which were made, no doubt, after the pattern of the original candlestick of Moses.

Verse 8

The number of the tables (see 2 Chronicles 4:19) and of the basins, is additional to the information contained in Kings.

Verse 16

Huram his father - Or, "Huram his master-workman" (2 Chronicles 2:13 note).

Verse 17

Zeredathah - Or, Zarthan (marginal reference). The writer of Chronicles probably uses the name which the place bore in his own day.

Verse 19

The tables - A single table only is mentioned in 1 Kings 7:48; 2 Chronicles 29:18. It is supposed that Solomon made ten similar tables, any one of which might be used for the showbread; but that the bread was never placed on more than one table at a time.

Verse 22

The entry of the house - The text is, by some, corrected by 1 Kings 7:50, "the hinges" of the doors of the house, etc.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

This chapter contains one important addition only to the narrative of Kings (see the marginal references); namely, the account of the circumstances under which the manifestation of the Divine Presence took place 2 Chronicles 5:11-13.

Verse 4

The Levites took up the ark - i. e., such of the Levites as were also priests (compare 2 Chronicles 5:7; 1 Kings 8:3).

Verse 9

From the ark - Or, according to a different reading here and according to 1 Kings 8:8, some read, "the ends of the staves were seen from the Holy place."

There it is unto this day - This should be corrected as in the margin.

Verse 13

Even the house of the Lord - Or, according to another reading (Septuagint), which removes the superfluousness of these words - "The house was filled with a cloud of the glory of the Lord."

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-39

Compare Kings (marginal references).

Compare Kings (marginal references).

Verses 40-42

In Kings, a different conclusion takes the place of these verses. The document from which both writers copied contained the full prayer of dedication, which each givcs in a somewhat abbreviated form.

2 Chronicles 6:41

Thy resting place - i. e., the holy of holies. Solomon follows closely the words of David his father, spoken probably when he brought the ark into Jerusalem. See the marginal references.

2 Chronicles 6:42

Turn not away the face of thine anointed - i. e., make him not to hide his face through shame at having his prayers rejected (compare the 1 Kings 2:16 note).

The mercies of David - i. e., "God's mercies toward David."

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

The fire came down from heaven - As in the time of Moses on the dedication of the tabernacle Leviticus 9:24 The fact is omitted from the narrative of Kings; but omission is not contradiction.

Verse 8

Solomon kept the feast - i. e., Solomon kept at this same time, not the Feast of the Dedication only, but also the Feast of tabernacles. The former lasted seven days, from the 8th of Tisri to the 15th, the latter also seven days, from the 15th to the 22nd. On the day following the people were dismissed 2 Chronicles 7:10.

Verse 11

The narrative now runs parallel with 1 Kings 9:1-9, but is more full, and presents less of verbal agreement. 2 Chronicles 7:13-15 are additional to the earlier record.

Verse 12

An house of sacrifice - This expression does not elsewhere occur. Its meaning, however, is clear. God declares that Solomon‘s Temple is the place whereunto all Israelites were commanded to bring their burnt-offerings and sacrifices (see Deuteronomy 12:5-6).

Verse 15

The prayer that is made in this place - literally, as in the margin. The unsual phrase includes the two cases of prayers offered in 2 Chronicles 6:24 and toward 2 Chronicles 6:34, 2 Chronicles 6:38 the sanctuary.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

Compare the references to 1Kings.

Verse 2

The cities which Huram had restored to Solomon - These cities had not been mentioned previously by the writer of Chronicles, who, however, seems to assume that the fact of their having been given by Hiram to Solomon is known to his readers. See 1 Kings 9:11-13.

Verse 3

Hamath-zobah - Usually identified with the "great Hamath" Amos 6:2; the capital of Coele-Syria; but probably a town of Zobah otherwise unknown, which revolted from Solomon, and was reduced to subjection.

Verse 5

Built - "Rebuilt," or "repaired" (as in 2 Chronicles 8:2). The two Beth-borons were both ancient cities (see Joshua 10:10 note).

Verse 10

On the number compare 1 Kings 5:16 note.

Verse 11

Of Pharaoh - Here again the writer of Chronicles assumes in his reader a knowledge of the facts recorded in the marginal references

Verse 14

The man of God - This phrase, so common in Kings (see the introduction to Kings, 4th note), is rare in Chronicles, and is applied only to Moses 1 Chronicles 23:14, David, and one other prophet 2 Chronicles 25:7, 2 Chronicles 25:9.

Verse 18

It has been supposed that these ships were conveyed from Tyre to Ezion-geber, either

(1) round the continent of Africa, or

(2) across the isthmus of Suez.

But the writer probably only means that ships were given by Hiram to Solomon at this time, and in connection with the Ophir enterprise. These vessels may have been delivered at Joppa, and have been there carefully

studied by the Jewish shipwrights, who then preceeded to Ezion-geber, and, assisted by Phoenicians, constructed ships after their pattern.

Four hundred and fifty talents - "Four hundred and twenty talents" in Kings 1 Kings 9:28. One or other of the two texts has suffered from that corruption to which numbers are so especially liable.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verses 1-12

The narrative here is parallel with that in marginal reference, from which it varies but little, and to which it adds nothing.

2 Chronicles 9:11

Terraces - Rather, as in the margin, "stairs" (see the 1 Kings 10:12 note).

2 Chronicles 9:12

Beside that which she had brought unto the king - It is difficult to assign any sense to these words as they now stand in the Hebrew text. A slight alteration will give the meaning: "Beside that which the king had brought for her;" which is in conformity with 1 Kings 10:13.

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Verse 15-16

Comparing 1 Kings 10:16-17, it follows from the two passages together that the "pound of gold" was equal to 100 shekels.

Verse 18

The footstool (not mentioned in Kings) was an essential appendage to an Oriental throne; it appears everywhere in the Egyptian, Assyrian, and Persian sculptures.

Verse 23

All the kings of the earth - Rather, "all the kings of the land:" all the monarchs, that is, whose dominions were included in So omon‘s empire (see 1 Kings 4:21).

Verse 28

And out of all lands - An addition to the words in Kings. The principal countries would no doubt be Arabia and Armenia - the former always

famous for its excellent breed; the latter mentioned in Ezekiel Ezekiel 27:14 as trading with horses in the fairs of Tyre.

Verse 29

The book of Nathan … - On the "books" here mentioned, see the introduction to Chronicles, the second note.

We hear nothing of Iddo in Kings: but he is mentioned below twice 2 Chronicles 12:15; 2 Chronicles 13:22. In the latter of these passages he is called not "the seer," but "the prophet." He seems to have been the author of three works:

(1) Visions against Jeroboam;

(2) A book of genealogies; and

(3) A commentary or history.

According to some, he was identical with Oded, the father of Azariah, who prophesied in the reign of Asa (see the 2 Chronicles 15:1 note).

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verses 1-11

The narrative of Kings (marginal reference) is repeated with only slight verbal differences.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 5

Rehoboam was between two dangers: on the north he might be attacked by Jeroboam, on the south by Jeroboam‘s ally, Egypt. From this side was the greater peril, and therefore out of the 15 cities fortified, all but three were on the southern or western frontier, where Egypt would be most likely to attack.

Verse 6-7

See Joshua 15:33-36, notes; Joshua 15:48-51, notes; Joshua 15:58-59, notes.

For Adullam see 1 Samuel 22:1 note. It was in the near neighborhood of Socoh Joshua 15:35; but its site cannot be actually fixed. It was a place of great antiquity Genesis 38:1.

Verse 8

For Gath, see Joshua 13:3 note. Its native king, Achish 1 Kings 2:39, is to he regarded, not as an independent monarch, but as one of the many vassal-kings over whom Solomon reigned 2 Chronicles 9:23. For Mareshah, see Joshua 15:44, for Ziph, Joshua 15:55.

Verse 9-10

The site of Adoraim is uncertain. For Lachish, see Joshua 10:3; Azekah, Joshua 10:10; Zorah, Joshua 15:33; Aijalon, Joshua 10:12; Hebron, Joshua 14:15. No one of the cities was really within the limits of the tribe of Benjamin. The writer uses the phrase “Judah and Benjamin” merely as the common designation of the southern kingdom (compare 2 Chronicles 11:12 and 2 Chronicles 11:23).

Verse 14

Jeroboam probably confiscated the Levitical lands for the benefit of this new priesthood. Under these circumstances the priests and Levites emigrated in large numbers to the southern kingdom; an act which was followed by a general emigration of the more pious Israelites 2 Chronicles 11:16.

Verse 15

The high places - i. e., the two sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel.

For the devils - literally, “for the goats:” probably the word is used (as in Leviticus 17:7) for objects of idolatrous worship generally.

Verse 17

Three years - i. e., during the first three years of Rehoboam‘s reign. In the fourth year an apostasy took place, which neutralized all the advantages of the immigration (marginal reference). In the fifth the apostasy was punished by the invasion and success of Shishak 2 Chronicles 12:2.

Verse 18

This is probably an extract from the “genealogies” of Iddo 2 Chronicles 12:15.

As Jerimoth is not mentioned among the legitimate sons of David 1 Chronicles 3:1-8; 1 Chronicles 14:4-7, he must have been the child of a concubine.

Abihail was probably the “grand-daughter,” not “daughter,” of Eliab 1 Samuel 16:6; 1 Samuel 17:13; 1 Chronicles 2:13.

Verse 20

Maachah the daughter of Absalom - Rather, “grand-daughter” (see the 1 Kings 15:2 note).

Verse 22

Jeush was probably the oldest of Rehoboam‘s sons, and should naturally and according to the provisions of the Law Deuteronomy 21:15-17 have been his heir. But Rehoboam‘s affection for Maachah led him to transgress the Law.

Verse 23

Rehoboam‘s wisdom was shown:

(1) In dispersing his other sons instead of allowing them to remain together in Jerusalem, where they might have joined in a plot against Abijah, as Adonijah and his brothers had done against Solomon 1 Kings 1:5-10;

(2) In giving his sons positions which might well content them and prevent them from being jealous of Abijah.

He desired many wives - (Compare 2 Chronicles 11:21). Some prefer to connect the words with the preceding words. If so, they denote another point in which Rehoboam was careful to please his sons.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Introduction

This chapter runs parallel with Kings (see the marginal reference), but considerably enlarges the narrative.

Verse 1

All Israel with him - i. e., "all Judah and Benjamin" - all the Israelites of those two tribes.

Verse 2

Shishak … came up … because they had transgressed - The writer speaks from a divine, not a human, point of view. Shishak's motive in coming up was to help Jeroboam, and to extend his own influence.

Verse 3

twelve hundred chariots - This number is not unusnal (compare Exodus 14:7; 1 Kings 10:26). Benhadad brought 1,200 chariots into the field against Shalmaneser II; and Ahabhad at the same time a force of 2,000 chariots (compare the 1 Kings 20:1 note).

The Lubims or "Libyans" Daniel 11:43, were a people of Africa, distinct from the Egyptians and the Ethiopians dwelling in their immediate neighborhood. They were called Ribu or Libu by the Egyptians. See Genesis 10:13.

Sukkiims - This name does not occur elsewhere. The Septuagint, who rendered the word "Troglodytes," regarded the Sukkiim probably as the "cave-dwellers" along the western shore of the Red Sea; but the conjecture that the word means "tent-dwellers" is plausible, and would point rather to a tribe of Arahs (Scenitae).

Verse 4

See 1 the Kings 14:25 note.

Verse 6

They said, The Lord is righteous - i. e., they acknowledged the justice of the sentence which had gone forth against them 2 Chronicles 12:5.

Verse 7

Compare the repentance of Ahab (marginal reference) and that of the Ninevites Jonah 3:5-10 which produced similar revocations of divine decrees that had been pronounced by the mouth of a prophet.

Some deliverance - Rather, "deliverance for a short space" (see the margin). Because of the repentance, the threat cf immediate destruction was

withdrawn; but the menace was still left impending, that the people might be the more moved to contrition and amendment.

Verse 8

That they may know my service, and the service of the kingdom - i. e., that they may contrast the light burthen of the theocracy with the heavy yoke of a foreign monarch.

Verse 14

He prepared not his heart … - See the margin. Rehoboam‘s sin was want of earnestness and consistency.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

The history of Abijah's reign is here related far more fully than in Kings (marginal reference), especially as regards his war with Jeroboam.

Verse 2

See the 1 Kings 15:2 note.

Verse 3

It has been proposed to change the numbers, here and in 2 Chronicles 13:17, into 40,000,80,000, and 50,000 respectively - partly because these smaller numbers are found in many early editions of the Vulgate, but mainly because the larger ones are thought to be incredible. The numbers accord well, however, with the census of the people taken in the reign of David 1 Chronicles 21:5, joined to the fact which the writer has related 2 Chronicles 11:13-17, of a considerable subsequent emigration from the northern kingdom into the southern one. The total adult male population at the time of the census was 1,570,000. The total of the fighting men now is 1,200,000. This would allow for the aged and infirm 370,000, or nearly a fourth of the whole. And in 2 Chronicles 13:17, our author may be understood to mean that this was the entire Israelite loss in the course of the war, which probably continued through the whole reign of Abijah.

Verse 9

Seven rams - "A bullock and two rams" was the offering which God had required at the original consecration of the sons of Aaron Exodus 29:1; Leviticus 8:2. Jeroboam, for reasons of his own, enlarged the sacrifice, and required it at the consecration of every priest.

Verse 17

Slain - The word means strictly "pierced," and will include both the killed and the wounded. It is translated "wounded" in Lamentations 2:12.

Verse 18

Brought under - "Humbled" or "defeated," not reduced to subjection.

Verse 19

Jeshanah is probably identical with the "Isanas" of Josephus, where a battle took place in the war between Antigonus and Herod; but its situation cannot be fixed. For Ephrain, see Joshua 18:23 note.

Verse 20

Jeroboam‘s death was a judgment upon him for his sins. Chronologically speaking, his death is here out of place, for he outlived Abijah at least two years (compare the marginal reference and 1 Kings 15:9); but the writer, not intending to recur to his history, is naturally led to carry it on to its termination.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verse 1

Asa his son reigned - If Rehoboam was (1 Kings 12:8 note) not more than 21 years old at his accession, Asa, when he mounted the throne, must have been a mere boy, not more than 10 or 11 years of age.

The land was quiet ten years - The great blow struck by Abijah 2 Chronicles 13:15-19, his alliance with Syria 1 Kings 15:19, and the rapid succession of sovereigns in Israel during the earlier part of Asa‘s reign 1 Kings 15:25-33, would naturally prevent disturbance on the part of the northern kingdom. The tender age of Asa himself would be a bar to warlike enterprises on the part of Judah.

Verse 5

Images - See the margin, sun-images; and Leviticus 26:30 note.

Verse 7

The land is yet before us - i. e., “unoccupied by an enemy” - “the land is open to us to go where we please.” Compare Genesis 13:9. The fortification of the strongholds would be an act of rebellion against Egypt, and it might be expected that the Egyptians would endeavor to put a stop to it.

Verse 8

The men of Judah served as heavy-armed troops, while the Benjamites were light-armed. Their numbers accord well with those of 2 Chronicles 13:3. As the boundaries of Judah had been enlarged 2 Chronicles 13:19, and as for ten years at least there had been no war 2 Chronicles 14:1, the effective force had naturally increased. It was 400,000; it is now 580,000.

Verse 9

Zerah the Ethiopian is probably Usarken (Osorkon) II, the third king of Egypt after Shishak, according to the Egyptian monuments. Osorkon II may have been by birth an Ethiopian, for he was the son-in-law, not the son, of the preceding monarch, and reigned in right of his wife. The object of the expedition would be to bring Judaea once more under the Egyptian yoke.

An host of a thousand thousand - This is the largest collected army of which we hear in Scripture; but it does not exceed the known numbers of other Oriental armies in ancient times. Darius Codomannus brought into the field at Arbela a force of 1,040,000; Xerxes crossed into Greece with certainly above a million of combatants.

Verse 10

The "valley of Zephathah" - not elsewhere mentioned - is probably the broad Wady which opens out from Mareshah (marginal reference) in a northwesterly direction, leading into the great Philistine plain. Zerah, on the advance of Asa, drew off into the wider space of the Wady, where he could use his horsemen and chariots.

Verse 11

It is nothing … - i. e., "Thou canst as easily help the weak as the strong."

Verse 12

The defeat of Zerah is one of the most remarkable events in the history of the Jews. On no other occasion did they meet in the field and overcome the forces of either of the two great monarchies between which they were placed. It was seldom that they ventured to resist, unless behind walls. Shishak, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Nebuchadnezzar, were either unopposed or only opposed in this way. On the one other occasion on which they took the field - under Josiah against Necho - their boldness issued in a most disastrous defeat 2 Chronicles 35:20-24. Now, however, under Asa, they appear to have gained a complete victory over Egypt. The results which followed were nicest striking. The Southern power could not rally from the blow, and, for above three centuries made no further effort in this direction. Assyria, growing in strength, finally, under Sargon and Sennacherib, penetrated to Egypt itself. All fear of Egypt as an aggressive power ceased; and the Israelites learned instead to lean upon the Pharaohs for support (2 Kings 17:4; 2 Kings 18:21; Isaiah 30:2-4, etc.). Friendly ties alone connected the two countries: and it was not until 609 B.C. that an Egyptian force again entered Palestine with a hostile intention.

Verse 14

They smote all the cities round about Gerar - The Philistines of these parts had, it is probable, accompanied Zerah in his expedition.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verse 1

Oded is by some identified with Iddo, the prophet and historian of the two preceding reigns. In the Hebrew the two names differ very slightly.

Verse 3

"Israel" here is used generally for the whole people of God; and the reference is especially to the many apostasies in the days of the Judges, which were followed by repentance and deliverance.

Verse 6

The allusion is probably to the destructions recorded in Judges 9:45; 20:33-48.

Verse 8

Some versions have "the prophecy of Azariah the son of Oded," which is perhaps the true reading.

Verse 9

Strangers … - i. e. "Israelites of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh." The separation of the two kingdoms had made their Israelite brethren "strangers," or "foreigners," to Judah.

Verse 10

In the third month - i. e. the month Sivan Esther 8:9, corresponding with our June.

Verse 11

The prevalence of the number "seven" in the religious system of the Jews has been noticed often. Seven bullocks and seven rams were a common offering Numbers 29:32; 1 Chronicles 15:26; 2 Chronicles 29:21; Job 42:8; Ezekiel 14:23. At the larger sacrifices, however, it is seldom that we find the number seven at all prominent (compare 2 Chronicles 30:24; 2 Chronicles 35:7-9; 1 Kings 8:63).

Verse 12

Solemn renewals of the original covenant which God made with their fathers in the wilderness Exodus 24:3-8 occur from time to time in the history of the Jews, following upon intervals of apostasy. This renewal in the reign of Asa is the first on record. The next falls 300 years later in the reign of Josiah. There is a third in the time of Nehemiah (see the marginal references). On such occasions, the people bound themselves by a solem

oath to observe all the directions of the Law, and called down God‘s curse upon them if they forsook it.

Verse 17

Comparing this verse with marginal references, it would seem that in 2 Chronicles 14:3, 2 Chronicles 14:5 the intention and endeavors of the monarch are in the writer‘s mind, while here he is speaking of the practice of the people. However earnestly the most pious monarchs sought to root out the high-place worship, they failed of complete success. Compare a similar discrepancy, to be similarly explained, in the history of Jehoshaphat 2 Chronicles 17:6; 2 Chronicles 20:33.

The heart of Asa was perfect all his days - Not that Asa was sinless (see 2 Chronicles 16:2-10, 2 Chronicles 16:12); but that he was free from the sin of idolatry, and continued faithful to Yahweh all his life.

Verse 19

The five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa - This cannot be reconciled with the chronqlogy of Kings 1 Kings 16:8: and the suggestion in the marg. implies the adoption of a mode of marking time unknown either to himself or any other Scriptural writer. It is supposed that the figures here and in 2 Chronicles 16:1 are corrupt, and that in both verses “twentieth” should replace “thirtieth.” The attack of Baasha would then have been made in the last year of Asa‘s reign; and ten years of peace would have followed Asa‘s victory over Zerah.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verse 1

This passage runs parallel with Kings (see the marginal reference).

Verse 3

Compare the 1 Kings 15:19 note.

Verse 4

Abel-maim - or, "Abel-beth-maachah" 1 Kings 15:20. It was one of the towns most exposed to attack when an invader entered Israel from the north, and was taken from Pekah by Tiglath-pileser 2 Kings 15:29.

Store cities - See 1 Kings 9:19 note.

Verses 7-10

The rebuke of Hanani and his imprisonment by Asa, omitted by the writer of Kings, are among the most important of the additions to Asa's history for which we are indebted to the author of Chronicles.

2 Chronicles 16:7

Escaped out of thine hand - Hanani means, "Hadst thou been faithful, and opposed in arms the joint host of Israel and Syria, instead of bribing the Syrian king to desert to thy side, the entire host would have been delivered into thy hand, as was Zerah's. But now it is escaped from thee. Thou hast lost a glorious opportunity."

2 Chronicles 16:9

From henceforth thou shalt have wars - As peace had been the reward of Asa's earlier faith 2 Chronicles 14:5; 2 Chronicles 15:5, so his want of faith was now to be punished by a period of war and disturbance.

2 Chronicles 16:10

In a prison house - Or, "in the stocks." Compare 1 Kings 22:26-27.

Verse 12

Yet in his disease he sought not … - Rather, "and also in his disease he sought not." Not only in his war with Baasha, but also when attacked by illness, Asa placed undue reliance upon the aid of man.

Verse 14

The explanation of the plural - "sepulchres" - will be seen in 1 Kings 13:30 note.

The burning of spices in honor of a king at his funeral was customary (compare the marginal references).

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

Jehoshaphat ascended the throne in the fourth year of Ahab 1 Kings 22:41, probably after that monarch had contracted his alliance with the royal family of Sidon, and before he was engaged in war with Syria. It was thus not unnatural that Jehoshaphat should begin his reign by strengthening himself against a possible attack on the part of his northern neighbor.

Verse 3

The first ways of his father David - The Septuagint and several Hebrew manuscripts omit "David," which has probably crept in from the margin, for David's "first ways" are nowhere else contrasted with his later ways. The real meaning of the writer is, that Jehoshaphat followed the example set by his father Asa in his earlier years 2 Chronicles 14:1-15; 15.

Baalim - On the plural form, see 1 Kings 18:18 note.

Verse 4

The doings of Israel - i. e. the especially idolatrous doings of the time - the introduction and establishment of the worship of Baal and the groves.

Verse 5

Presents - i. e. "free-will offerings," in addition to the regular taxes. See 1 Samuel 10:27.

Verse 6

His heart was lifted up - This expression generally occurs in a bad sense Deuteronomy 8:14; 2 Chronicles 26:16; Psalm 131:1; Proverbs 18:12; but here it must be taken differently. The margin "was encouraged" expresses fairly the true meaning. He first began by setting an example of faithfulness to Yahweh. He then proceeded to use his best endeavors to extirpate idolatry.

He took away the high places - Compare 2 Chronicles 20:33, and see the 2 Chronicles 15:17 note.

Verse 7

The princes were not sent as teachers themselves, but had the duty committed to them of seeing that the people were taught. The actual teachers were the priests and Levites of 2 Chronicles 17:8.

Verse 9

There is no reasonable doubt that this "book of the law" was the Pentateuch - nearly, if not quite, in the shape in which we now have it.

Copies of the whole Law were, no doubt, scarce; and therefore Jehoshaphat's commission took care to carry a copy with them.

Verse 11

Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents - i. e. "some of the Philistines were among his tributaries." Compare 2 Samuel 8:2; 1 Kings 4:21.

Tribute silver - Or, "much silver" - literally "silver of burthen."

The Arabians - The Arab tribes who bordered Judaea to the south and the southeast paid Jehoshaphat a fixed tribute in kind. Compare 2 Kings 3:4 note.

Verse 14

The captains of thousands; Adnah the chief - literally, "princes of thousands, Adnah the prince." The writer does not mean that Adnah (or Johohanan, 2 Chronicles 17:15) was in any way superior to the other "princes," but only that he was one of them.

Three hundred thousand - This number. and those which follow in 2 Chronicles 17:15-18, have been with good reason regarded as corrupt by most critics. For:

(1) They imply a minimum population of 1,480 to the square mile, which is more than three times greater than that of any country in the known world (circa 1880's).

(2) they produce a total just double that of the next largest estimate of the military force of Judah, the 580,000 of 2 Chronicles 14:8.

(3) they are professedly a statement, not of the whole military force, but of the force maintained at Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 17:13; compare 2 Chronicles 17:19).

It is probable that the original numbers have been lost, and that the loss was suppplied by a scribe, who took 2 Chronicles 14:8 as his basis.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Verse 1

The present chapter runs parallel with Kings, which it closely follows, only adding a few touches.

Verse 2

After certain years - In Jehoshaphat‘s 17th year 1 Kings 22:51, not less than 8 years after the marriage (marginal reference note).

Verse 31

And the Lord helped him … - There is nothing correspondent to this passage in Kings. It is a pious reflection on the part of the author, who traces all deliverance to its real divine source.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Introduction

This chapter is entirely additional to Kings, and of great interest. It deals with three matters only,

(1) The rebuke addressed to Jehoshaphat by the prophet Jehu 2 Chronicles 19:1-3,

(2) Jehoshaphat‘s religious reformation 2 Chronicles 19:4, and

(3) his reform of the judicial system 2 Chronicles 19:5-11.

Verse 1

Jehoshaphat … returned to his house in peace - With the battle of Ramoth-Gilead, and the death of Ahab, the war came to an end. The combined attack of the two kings having failed, their troops had been withdrawn, and the enterprise in which they had joined relinquished. The Syrians, satisfied with their victory, did not press on the retreating foe, or carry the war into their enemies‘ country.

Verse 2

Jehu … went out to meet him - Compare 2 Chronicles 15:2. The monarch was therefore rebuked at the earliest possible moment, and in the most effective way, as he was entering his capital at the head of his returning army. Jehu, 35 years previously, had worked in the northern kingdom, and prophesied against Baasha 1 Kings 16:1-7, but had now come to Jerusalem, as prophet and historian (compare 2 Chronicles 20:34).

Shouldest thou help … - As a matter of mere human policy, the conduct of Jehoshaphat in joining Ahab against the Syrians was not only justifiable but wise and prudent. And the reasonings upon which such a policy was founded would have been unexceptionable but for one circumstance. Ahab was an idolater, and had introduced into his kingdom a false religion of a new and most degraded type. This should have led Jehoshaphat to reject his alliance. Military success could only come from the blessing and protection of Yahweh, which such an alliance, if persisted in, was sure to forfeit.

Verse 4

Jehoshaphat, while declining to renounce the alliance with Israel (compare the 2 Kings 3:7 note), was careful to show that he had no sympathy with idolatry, and was determined to keep his people, so far as he possibly could, free from it. He therefore personally set about a second reformation, passing through the whole land, from the extreme south to the extreme north 2 Chronicles 13:19.

Verse 5

What exact change Jehoshaphat made in the judicial system of Judah Deuteronomy 16:18; 1 Chronicles 23:4, it is impossible to determine. Probably he found corruption widely spread 2 Chronicles 19:7, and the magistrates in some places tainted with the prevailing idolatry. He therefore made a fresh appointment of judges throughout the whole country; concentrating judicial authority in the hands of a few, or creating superior courts in the chief towns ("fenced cities"), with a right of appeal to such courts from the village judge.

Verse 8

The "fathers of Israel" are the heads of families; the chief of the fathers" are the great patriarchal chiefs, the admitted heads of great houses or clans. They were now admitted to share in the judicial office which seems in David's time to have been confined to the Levites 1 Chronicles 23:4.

For the judgment of the Lord, and for controversies - By the former are meant disputed cases concerning the performance of religious obligations. In "controversies" are included all the ordinary causes, whether criminal or civil.

When they returned to Jerusalem - Rather, "and they returned to Jerusalem," a clause which if detached from the previous words and attached to 2 Chronicles 19:9, gives a satisfactory sense.

Verse 10

The Jews who "dwelt in the cities," if dissatisfied with the decision given by the provincial judges, might therefore remove the cause to Jerusalem, as to a court of appeal.

Verse 11

In religious causes, Amariah, the high priest, was to preside over the court; in civil or criminal causes, Zebadiah was to be president. And to Levites, other than the judges, he assigned the subordinate offices about the court.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Introduction

The narrative in 2 Chronicles 20:31-37, it runs parallel with 1 Kings 22:41-49.

Verse 1

The present Hebrew (and English) text mentions the Ammonites twice over. Hence, some adopt a different reading and translate "the children of Ammon, and with them certain of the Maonites," etc. Compare 2 Chronicles 20:10, note; Judges 10:12, note; 1 Chronicles 4:41, note.

Verse 2

Translate, "from beyond the sea, from Edom." The "sea" intended is, of course, the Dead Sea. "Syria" (Aram) is probably a mistake of a copyist for "Edom" (compare 2 Samuel 8:12 note).

On Engedi, see 1 Samuel 23:29 note.

Verse 3

General fasts had been previously observed by the Israelites (e. g. Judges 20:26; 1 Samuel 7:6); but we do not hear of any fast having been "proclaimed" by authority before this.

Verse 5

The new court - In Solomon's Temple there were two courts. One of these had probably been renovated by Jehoshaphat or by his father, Asa 2 Chronicles 15:8, and was known as "the new court."

Verses 6-9

Jehoshaphat's appeal is threefold:

(1) to God omnipotent 2 Chronicles 20:6;

(2) to "our God;"

(3) the God especially "of this house" the temple.

2 Chronicles 20:7

Abraham thy friend - Historically, this is the first use of this remarkable expression, afterward repeated (marginal references). The ground of the expression is to be found principally in Genesis 18:23-33, where Abraham spoke with God as a man with his friend (compare Exodus 33:11).

2 Chronicles 20:8, 2 Chronicles 20:9

The appeal recalls Solomon‘s prayer (marginal references), which God had formally accepted by sending down fire from heaven to consume the accompanying offering.

Verse 10

The Maonites of 2 Chronicles 20:1 are here, and in 2 Chronicles 20:22-23, called the “children” or inhabitants “of mount Seir.” Hence, we may gather that they were a tribe of Edomites, the inhabitants, probably of a city Maon (now Ma‘an) on the eastern side of the Wady el-Arabah.

Verse 14

“Mattaniah” is thought to be a corrupt reading for “Nethaniah,” who is mentioned among the sons of Asaph in 1 Chronicles 25:2, 1 Chronicles 25:12.

Verses 15-17

The prophet uses words familiar to the people, and connected with several great deliverances (see the marginal references).

2 Chronicles 20:16

By the “cliff (or, rather - as in the margin - ascent) of Ziz,” we must understand the mountain path which leads up from Engedi across the elevated tract still known as El-Husasah, in the direction of Tekoa 2 Chronicles 20:20.

At the end of the brook - Rather, “at the end of the gulley,” or dry torrent-course. No name like Jeruel has been as yet found in this district.

Verse 20

Tekoa (2 Samuel 14:2 note) lay on the borders of the desert which skirts the highlands of Judaea toward the east. The town was built on a hill of a considerable height.

Verse 21

Praise the beauty of holiness - Some render, “in the beauty of holiness” - i. e. in rich apparel and ornaments suitable to a holy occasion. Compare Psalm 29:2.

Verse 22

The Lord set ambushments - These liers in wait have been regarded as angels employed by God to confuse the host and cause its destruction, so that the Moabites and Ammonites first united to destroy the Edomites, and then turned upon each other.

Verse 24

The march of Judah from Jerusalem would take five or six hours. By the time they reached the watch-towers in the wilderness of Jeruel all was over.

Verse 25

Riches with the dead bodies - Several manuscripts give another reading: "riches, and garments."

Verse 26

The valley of Berachah - Probably, the Wady Bereikut, which lies at a short distance from Tekoa toward the northwest.

Verse 33

The latter clause of this verse helps to reconcile the first clause with the statement that Jehoshaphat "took away the high places" (see 2 Chronicles 15:17 note).

Verse 34

Who is mentioned … - Words which are now generally thought to mean "whose work was inserted into the Book of the Kings."

Of Israel - "Israel" is probably used here inexactly for "Judah" (compare 2 Chronicles 12:6; 2 Chronicles 21:2, 2 Chronicles 21:4).

Verse 35

After this - Jehoshaphat's history had been formally completed 2 Chronicles 20:34. Consequently we can lay no stress on the note of time contained in the words "after this," which are detached from the context to which they originally referred. On the history 2 Chronicles 20:35-37, see marginal references and notes.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Verse 1

Jehoram‘s sole reign now began. (See 2 Kings 8:16 note). His eight years 2 Chronicles 21:5 must be counted from the time of his association, in his father‘s 23rd year.

Verse 3

Jehoshaphat departed from Rehoboam‘s policy (2 Chronicles 11:23 note), actually making over to his sons the “fenced cities” in which they dwelt. This, it is probable, provoked the jealousy of Jehoram, and induced him to put them to death 2 Chronicles 21:4.

Because he was the firstborn - Compare Deuteronomy 21:15-17. Exceptions to this rule in the northern and southern kingdoms are Solomon, where divine appointment superseded the natural order, Abijah 2 Chronicles 11:22 note), and Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23:30 note).

Verse 4

The execution of several “princes of Israel” (i. e. of Judah; see 2 Chronicles 20:34 note) implies that Jehoram‘s brothers found supporters among the chief men of the country, and that Jehoram‘s sole sovereignty was not established without a struggle.

Verse 11

See 2 Kings 8:18. The writer of Kings only tells us in general terms that Jehoram “did evil in the sight of the Lord,” and “walked in the way of the house of Ahab.” Here, in 2 Chronicles 21:11, 2 Chronicles 21:13, we have particulars of his idolatry. Jehoram, it seems, seduced by the evil influence of his wife - Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab - permitted the introduction of Baal-worship, idolatrous altars in various high places, groves (Asherahs), images, and pillars; the people were not only allowed, but compelled to take part in the new rites. “To commit fornication” is a common metaphor, signifying idolatry or spiritual unfaithfulness (compare the 2 Kings 9:22 note).

Verse 12

This is the only notice which we have of Elijah in Chronicles. As a prophet of the northern kingdom, he engaged but slightly the attention of the historian of the southern one. The notice shows that Elijah did not confine his attention to the affairs of his own state, but strove to check the

progress of idolatry in Judah. And it proves that he was alive after the death of Jehoshaphat 2 Chronicles 21:13; a fact bearing

(1) upon the chronological order of 2 Kings 2:1 (see the note), and

(2) showing that Elisha, who prophesied in the time of Jehoshaphat. 2 Kings 3:11-19 commenced his public ministry before his master's translation.

Verse 14

The fulfillment of the threat is given in 2 Chronicles 21:16-17.

Verse 16

The Arabians, that were near the Ethiopians - Probably Joktanian Arabs from the neighborhood of the Cushites. Southern Arabia was originally occupied by Cushites, or Ethiopians Genesis 10:7, whose descendants still exist in a remnant of the Himyaritic Arabs.

Verse 17

Jehoahaz - The writer of Chronicles calls him indifferently Jeboahaz and Abaziah, which are equivalent names (2 Kings 8:24 note).

Verse 20

Not in the sepulchres of the kings - Compare the similar treatment of Joash 2 Chronicles 24:25 and Ahaz 2 Chronicles 28:27.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 22

Verse 2

For "42" read "22" (see the marginal reference). Ahaziah's father, Jehoram, was but 40 when be died 2 Chronicles 21:20.

Verse 7

The destruction of Ahaziah was of God - i. e. his untimely end was a judgment upon him for his idolatry.

Verse 9

Compare the marginal reference. Ahaziah after remaining a while at Megiddo, removed to Samaria, where his wounds could be better cared for and concealment might be easier; Jehu's emissaries discovered him there; they took him to Jehu, who happened at the time to be at Megiddo; and then and there Jehu put him to death. The narrative here is therefore supplementary to that of 2Kings, and finds its proper place between the clause," He fled to Megiddo," and the words "and died there."

And when they had slain him, they buried him - Jehu's emissaries killed him but allowed his servants to bury him (see 2 Kings 9:28).

No power … - As Ahaziah was but twenty-three at his death (2 Chronicles 22:2 note), he had no grown-up son to take the crown.

Verses 10-12

Compare the marginal reference and notes.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 23

Introduction

Compare the history in Kings (the marginal reference). Both accounts were probably drawn from a common source. The writer of Kings treated the points of civil and historic importance, the later author of Chronicles collected the notices of the part taken in the transactions by the sacred order to which he probably belonged.

Verse 1

The five names do not occur in Kings; only, and incidentally, the five divisions of the royal guard (2 Kings 11:5 note).

Verse 2

Jehoiada was unwilling to trust the success of the revolution wholly and entirely to the royal body-guard. Accordingly, the captains collected from the cities of Judah a strong body of Levites and the chief of the fathers of Israel (i. e. "Judah," see 2 Chronicles 20:34 note) who were brought up to Jerusalem.

Verse 3

By "all the congregation" here is meant the persons referred to in 2 Chronicles 23:2.

Verse 4

The writer of Chronicles relates the orders that were given to the Levites, the author of Kings those received by the royal body-guard (2 Kings 11:5 note).

Verse 6

Keep the watch of the Lord - i. e. guard against any attempt that might be made by the Baal-worshippers to force their way through the courts into the temple.

Verse 7

Compare 2 Kings 11:8, 2 Kings 11:11. The soldiers and the Levites in the temple were probably intermixed in about equal proportions.

Verse 8

And took every man his men … - i. e. the relief, already organized by Jehoiada into three bodies 2 Chronicles 23:4-5, was further strengthened by the members of the outgoing "course," who were associated in the work to be done.

Verse 13

At the entering in - i. e. at, or near, the opening from the main chamber of the temple into the holy of holies.

Verse 16

Between him … - In 2 Kings 11:17 the covenant is said to have been made "between the Lord," etc. To the writer of Chronicles Jehoiada was God's representative, and received the pledges of king and people.

Verse 18

The priests the Levites - Rather, with the versions, "the priests and the Levites." It was the duty of the priests alone to offer the burnt offerings Numbers 18:1-7, and of the Levites alone to praise God with singing and music 1 Chronicles 23:5; 1 Chronicles 25:1-7.

Verse 20

The high gate - See 2 Kings 11:19 note.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Verse 1

This chapter is parallel with 2 Kings 12, but treats the matters common to both narratives in a different and, apparently, supplemental way.

Verse 2

Jehoiada lived after the accession of Joash at least 23 years 2 Kings 12:6. Thus the idolatries of Joash 2 Chronicles 24:18 were confined to his last 10 or 15 years.

Verse 3

Athaliah‘s destruction of the seed royal had left Joash without a natural successor, and his marriage at the earliest suitable age, was, therefore, a matter of state policy. One of his wives in question was probably "Jehoaddan of Jerusalem," the mother of Amaziah 2 Chronicles 25:1, who must have been taken to wife by Joash as early as his 21st year.

Verse 6

It appears from 2 Kings 12:4 that Joash had assigned to the restoration-fund two other payments also.

Verse 11

The king‘s scribe … came and emptied … - Rather, "the king‘s scribe came … and they emptied" etc. i. e. the Levites who brought the chest from the temple emptied it in the presence of the scribe.

Verse 13

They set the house of God in his state - Some prefer, "they set up the house of God in its (old) measure" or "proportions."

Verse 15

An hundred and thirty years old - Most critics suppose the number in the text to be corrupt, and suggest 103 or 83 in its stead.

Verse 16

They buried him in the city of David among the kings - This unparalleled honor, due in part to the respect felt for Jehoiada‘s religious character, was probably, also, in part attributable to his connection with the royal family through his wife 2 Chronicles 22:11, and to the fact that, for 10 or 12 years, he had practically held the kingly office.

Toward his house - "i. e. toward God‘s house," the temple.

Verse 17

The nobles had taken part in the revolution which placed Joash on the throne 2 Chronicles 23:2, 2 Chronicles 23:13, 2 Chronicles 23:20, but probably on political rather than on religious grounds. They might dislike the rule of a woman and a foreigner without participating in the zeal of Jehoiada for purity of religion. They now petitioned for a toleration of idolatry, not for a return to the condition of things which prevailed under Athaliah. No doubt they carried a considerable party with them; but the temple-worship continued, as appears from the history of Zechariah 2 Chronicles 24:20. Nor is the king taxed personally with idolatry.

Verse 20

Stood above the people - Zechariah, the high priest, took up an elevated position, perhaps on the steps of the inner court, which was elevated above the outer court, where the people would be.

Verse 21

In the court of the house of the Lord - "Between the altar and the Temple," or directly in front of the temple porch, if it be this Zechariah of whom our Lord speaks Matthew 23:35. A horror of the impious deed long possessed the Jews, who believed that the b ood could not be effaced, but continued to bubble on the stones of the court, like blood newly shed, until the temple was entered, just prior to its destruction, by Nebuzaradan.

Verse 22

The Lord look upon it and require it - Compare Genesis 9:5; Genesis 42:22; and contrast the words of Christ Luke 23:34, and of Stephen Acts 7:60. Zechariah's prayer was prophetic (see 2 Chronicles 24:23, 2 Chronicles 24:25; Luke 11:51).

Verse 23

On the unusual character of this expedition, see the marginal reference note.

Verse 24

They executed judgment against Joash - By defeating his army, slaying his nobles, and pressing on against Jerusalem, etc. (2 Kings 12:18 note).

Verse 27

The greatness of the burdens laid upon him - Or, "And the multitude of burdens uttered against him." "Burdens" (2 Kings 9:25 note) are prophetical denunciations of coming evil.

The repairing - See the marginal rendering. Joash‘s repairs extended to the very base of the temple building.

The story of the book of the kings - See the introduction to Chronicles, the second note.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 25

Verse 1

This chapter is evidently taken to a large extent from the same document as Kings (see the marginal reference and the notes). At the same time it contains large and important additions; e. g. 2 Chronicles 25:5-10, 2 Chronicles 25:13-16.

Verse 5

Three hundred thousand - Asa's army had been nearly twice as numerous, amounting to 580,000 2 Chronicles 14:8. The diminution was due, in part, to wars 2 Chronicles 21:8, 2 Chronicles 21:16; 2 Chronicles 24:23-24; in part, to the general decadence of the kingdom.

Verse 8

If the present text is regarded as sound, this passage must be taken ironically. But most recent commentators supply a second negative, and render it: "But go thou alone, act, be strong for the battle - God shall then not make thee to fall."

Verse 10

Such a dismissal could not fail to arouse great indignation. The Israelites would suppose themselves dismissed because their good faith was suspected. On the consequences of their indignation, see 2 Chronicles 25:13.

Verse 11

The children of Seir - i. e. the Edomites (see the marginal reference "h").

Verse 12

The top of the rock - Rather, "the height of Selah" (or, Petra), near which the battle was probably fought. On the cruel features of the Edomite wars, see 1 Kings 11:15; Ezekiel 25:12; Obadiah 1:14.

Verse 13

To revenge the insult 2 Chronicles 25:10, the troops of Joash proceeded southward and ravaged all the Jewish towns and villages between the Israelite frontier and Bethboron. This invasion probably took place while Amaziah was still in Edom.

Verse 14

The practice of carrying off the images of the gods from a conquered country, or city, as trophies of victory, was common among the nations of

the East. Sometimes as with the Romans, the object was worship, especially when the gods were previously among those of the conquering country, and the images had the reputation of special sanctity.

Verse 16

Art thou made of the king‘s counsel? - A subtle irony: “Have I made thee one of my council? If not what entitles thee to offer thy advice?”

For the fulfillment of the prophecy, see 2 Chronicles 25:22-24, 2 Chronicles 25:27.

Verse 27

After the time … - The writer means that the violent death of Amaziah followed on his apostasy, not closely in point of time - for it must have been at least 15 years after 2 Chronicles 25:25 - nor as, humanly speaking, caused by it; but, in the way of a divine judgment, his death was a complete fulfillment of the prophecy of 2 Chronicles 25:16.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 26

Introduction

Almost the entirety of this chapter is additional to the narrative in Kings (marginal reference). It is not too much to say that we are indebted to Chronicles for our whole conception of the character of Uzziah, and for nearly our whole knowledge of the events of his reign.

Verse 1

Uzziah - This form of the name is found uniformly in Chronicles (except 1 Chronicles 3:12) and in the prophets. The writer of Kings prefers the form Azariah. Uzziah has been regarded as a phonetic corruption of the real name used by the common people.

Verse 5

Who had understanding in the visions of God - Another reading, supported by the Septuagint, and some ancient versions, is: "who instructed him in the fear of God."

Verse 6

Uzziah's expedition was the natural sequel to the Edomite war of Amaziah 2 Chronicles 25:11, which crushed the most formidable of all the tribes of the south. On Jabneh see Joshua 15:11 note; and on Ashdod see Joshua 13:3 note.

Verse 7

On the Mehunims or Maonites, see Judges 10:12 note.

Verse 10

He built towers in the desert - Refuges for the flocks and the herdsmen in the wild pasture country on the borders of the holy land, especially toward the south and southeast.

Wells - The marginal translation is preferable. Judaea depends largely for its water-supply on reservoirs in which the rain-fall is stored. These are generally cut in the natural rock, and covered at top.

For he had much cattle … - Some prefer, "for he had much cattle there, and in the low country, and on the dawns," with allusion to three pasture districts:

(1) The "wilderness," or high tract to the south and southeast, extending from the western shores of the Dead Sea to the vicinity of Beersheba;

(2) The "low country," or maritime plain on the west, between the hills of Judaea and the sea; and

(3) The "downs," or rich grazing land beyond the Jordan, on the plateau of Gilead. Uzziah's possession of this last-named district must have been connected with the submission of the Ammonites (see 2 Chronicles 26:8).

In the mountains, and in Carmel - These terms describe Judaea Proper - the hilly tract between the low maritime plain on the one side, and the wilderness and Jordan valley on the other. By "Carmel" we must understand, not the mountain of that name, which belonged to Samaria, but the cultivated portions of the Judaean hill-tract (see the margin).

Verse 13

Compare 2 Chronicles 25:5. It will be seen that Uzziah had not added much to the military strength of the nation by his conquests. His army exceeds that of his father Amaziah by 7,500 men only.

Verse 14

The sling was used in war by the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks, Romans, and others. Its employment by the Benjamites appears from Judges 20:16, and by the ten tribes, a century before Uzziah, from 2 Kings 3:25.

Verse 15

Uzziah's engines seem to have corresponded respectively to the Roman balista and catapulta. The balista, which threw stones, was known to the Assyrians as early as the time of Sardanapalus I, the contemporary of Jehoshaphat. The catapult is not represented either on the Assyrian or the Egyptian sculptures. It would seem on the whole most probable that both kinds of engines were invented in Assyria and introduced from thence into Palestine.

Verse 16

To his destruction - Rather, "to do wickedly." Uzziah appears to have deliberately determined to invade the priest's office (marginal reference "m"), thus repeating the sin of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram Numbers 16:1-35.

Verse 20

Death was denounced by the Law against those who invaded the office of the priest; and death had been the actual punishment of Korah and his company. Uzziah feared lest from him also the extreme penalty should be

exacted, and therefore hasted to quit the sacred building where his bare presence was a capital crime.

Verse 21

A several house - See the marginal reference "q" note; and compare Psalm 88, which is supposed by some to refer to Uzziah.

Verse 22

The acts of Uzziah … did Isaiah … write - Most critics regard Isaiah as about 20 when Uzziah died. He must, then, have written his history of Uzziah's reign from documents and accounts of others, rather than from his own knowledge.

Verse 23

In the field of the burial - i. e. in the same piece of ground, but in a separate sepulchre. As the Law separated off the leper from his fellows during life Leviticus 13:46, so Jewish feeling required that he should remain separate even in death.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Verse 1

This short chapter runs parallel with 2Kings (marginal reference), and is taken mainly from the same source or sources which it amplifies.

Verse 3

Ophel was the name given to the long, narrowish, rounded spur or promontory, which intervenes between the central valley of Jerusalem (the Tyropoeon) and the Kidron, or valley of Jehoshaphat. The anxiety of Uzziah and Jotham to fortify their territory indicates a fear of external attack, which at this time was probably felt mainly in connection with Samaria and Syria (2 Kings 15:37 note). The faithless trust put in fortifications was rebuked by the prophets of the time Hosea 8:14; Isaiah 2:15.

Verse 5

The Ammonites, who had submitted to Uzziah 2 Chronicles 26:8, revolted against Jotham. This revolt he firmly repressed; and, to punish it, he exacted a high rate of tribute for the three years following the termination of the war. The productiveness of the Ammonite country in grain, which is here indicated, has been remarked upon as extraordinary by modern travelers.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 28

Verse 1

This chapter is supplemental in character, The writer seems to assume that the narrative of Kings (marginal reference) is known, and is mainly anxious to add points which the author of that narrative has omitted.

Verse 2

Images for Baalim - Or, to serve as Baalim, i. e as representatives of the different forms or characters of the chief Phoenician deity.

Verse 3

Compare the 2 Kings 16:3 note.

Verse 4

He sacrificed also etc - Compare 2 Kings 16:4.

Verse 5

The two battles here mentioned, one with Rezin (king of Syria), and the other with Pekah (king of Israel) are additions to the narrative of the writer of Kings (marginal reference "g"). The events of the Syro-Israelite war were probably spread over several years.

Verse 6

The fearful loss here described may have been due to a complete defeat followed by panic.

Verse 7

Maaseiah was either an officer called "the king's son" (compare 1 Kings 22:26), or perhaps a son of Jotham, since Ahaz could hardly have had a son old enough to take part in the battle (compare 2 Chronicles 28:1).

Elkanah, as "second to the king," was probably the chief of the royal counselors.

Verse 9

Nothing more is known of this Oded. Compare 2 Chronicles 15:1.

He went out before the host - Rather, "He went out to meet the host," as the same phrase is translated in 2 Chronicles 15:2.

A rage that reacheth up to heaven - i. e. not merely an exceedingly great and violent rage, but one that has displeased God.

Verse 10

Are there not with you … sins against the Lord? - The ten tribes had fallen away from the true faith far more completely and more hopelessly

than the two. It was not for them to press hard against their erring brothers, and aggravate their punishment.

Verse 12

"Ephraim" is used herein the generic sense so common in the prophets, as synonymous with the ten tribes.

Verse 15

Jericho, which lies much farther from Samaria than many points of the territory of Judah, was perhaps selected because the captives had been carried off principally from this point; or because there may have been less danger of falling in with portions of Pekah's army on this than on the direct route.

Verse 17

The Edomites took advantage of the reverses of Ahaz, and were perhaps in league with Rezin (see 2 Kings 16:6 note). The pitilessness of Edom, and her readiness to turn against Judah in any severe distress, is noticed and sternly rebuked by the prophets (Amos 1:11; Ezekiel 35:5; Obadiah 1:10-14, etc.).

Verse 18

Philistia also, eager to retaliate the blows she had received from Uzziah 2 Chronicles 26:6, seized her opportunity. Ajalon and Shocho were among the cities fortified by Rehoboam 2 Chronicles 11:7, 2 Chronicles 11:10; Beth-shemesh Joshua 15:10 was famous as the scene of Amaziah's defeat 2 Chronicles 25:21. Gimzo, which is not elsewhere mentioned in Scripture has been probably identified with the modern Jimzu, a large village about 2 12 miles from Ludd (the ancient Lydda).

Verse 19

Ahaz king of Israel - An instance of the lax use of the word "Israel" 2 Chronicles 12:6; 2 Chronicles 21:2. It is simply equivalent to "king of Judah."

He made Judah naked - literally, "he had caused licentiousness in Judah" - i. e. he had allowed Judah to break loose from all restraints of true religion, and to turn to any idolatry that they preferred 2 Chronicles 28:2-4. In this and in the following expression there is implied an apostasy resembling the unfaithfulness of a wife.

Verse 20

Tilgath-pilneser - This form of the name is doubly corrupt. See the properly Hebraized form in 2 Kings 15:29.

Distressed him, but strengthened him not - This statement, and that at the end of 2 Chronicles 28:21, is supplemental to, and not contradictory of, 2 Kings 16:9. Here it is the writer‘s object to note that the material assistance rendered by Tiglath-pileser to Ahab, was no real “help” or “strength,” but rather a cause of “distress.”

Verse 23

His adoption of the Syrian gods, Hadad, Rimmon, and others, as objects of worship, no doubt preceded the destruction of Damascus by the Assyrians 2 Kings 16:9.

Israel - i. e. “Judah;” so in 2 Chronicles 28:27. Compare 2 Chronicles 28:19.

Verse 24

Compare 2 Kings 16:17 note. The temple-worship was suspended, the lamps put out, and the doors shut, to prevent the priests from entering. The Jews still celebrate a yearly fast in commemoration of this time of affliction.

Altars - As the one altar for sacrifice, which alone the Law allowed, symbolized the doctrine of one God, so these many altars spoke unmistakeably of the all-embracing polytheism affected by Ahaz.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 29

Verse 1

The treatment of Hezekiah‘s reign by the author of Chronicles is in marked contrast with that followed in the Book of Kings. The writer of Kings describes mainly civil affairs; the author of Chronicles gives a full account of Hezekiah‘s religious reformation. 2 Chronicles 2931 contain matter, therefore, which is almost wholly new.

Verse 3

By “the first month” is meant (compare 2 Chronicles 30:2-3) the month of Nisan, the first of the Jewish sacred year, not necessarily the first month of Hezekiah‘s reign.

Verse 4

The east street - Rather, some open space before the eastern gate of the outer temple court is intended.

Verse 5

Sanctify now yourselves - Compare the marginal reference. Hezekiah follows David‘s example, knowing, probably, that the priests had in the preceding time of idolatry contracted many defilements.

The “filthiness,” or “uncleanness” 2 Chronicles 29:16, might consist, in part, of mere dust and dirt, in part, of idolatrous objects introduced by Ahaz before he finally shut up the temple 2 Kings 16:10-16.

Verse 8

He hath delivered them to … hissing - See 1 Kings 9:8 note. It was an expression which Hezekiah might naturally use, for it had occurred in a prophecy of Micah Micah 6:16, his contemporary and monitor Jeremiah 26:18-19, which was probably uttered toward the close of the reign of Ahaz. In Jeremiah the phrase becomes common (marginal references).

Verse 12-13

On the triple division of the Levites, see 1 Chronicles 23:6; and on the musical Levites, see 1 Chronicles 25:1-6.

2 Chronicles 29:13

The descendants of Elizaphan - a grandson of Kohath Exodus 6:22, and chief of the Kohathites at the time of the census in the wilderness Numbers 3:30 - appear at all times to have formed a distinct branch of the Kohathites with special privileges 1 Chronicles 15:8.

Verse 15

By the words of the Lord - Rather, as suggested in the margin, "According to the commandment of the king in the business (or matters) of the Lord."

Verse 16

The "inner part" means here, not the holy of holies in particular, but the interior generally. The priests alone might enter the temple building. The Levites might penetrate no further than the inner court.

Verse 21

Hezekiah commenced his restoration of the Yahweh-worship with an unusually comprehensive sin-offering, embracing the four chief kinds of sacrificial animals, and seven animals of each kind: he intended to atone for the sins, both conscious and unconscious, of the king, the priests, the people of Judah, and the people of Israel. After the completion of these expiatory rites, he proceeded to the offering of the burnt-offering 2 Chronicles 29:27.

Verse 23

The he goats for the sin offering - Rather, "the he goats of the sin offering" - that portion of the Sin offering which had been reserved to the last.

Verse 24

All lsrael - Hezekiah aimed at reuniting once more the whole people of Israel, if not into a single state, yet, at any rate, into a single religious communion. The northern kingdom was in a condition approaching to anarchy. The end was evidently approaching. Hoshea, the king contemporary with Hezekiah 2 Kings 18:1, ruled, not as an independent monarch, but as an Assyrian feudatory 2 Kings 17:3. Under these circumstances Hezekiah designed to invite the revolted tribes to return, if not to their old temporal, at least to their old spiritual, allegiance 2 Chronicles 30:5-10. In order, therefore, to prepare the way for this return, he included "all Israel" in the expiatory sacrifice, by which he prefaced his restoration of the old worship.

Verse 27

All had hitherto been preparatory. Now Hezekiah gave orders that "the burnt offering" - i. e. the daily morning sacrifice - should be offered upon the brass altar in front of the porch, thus restoring and reinstituting the regular temple-service. A burst of music gave notice to the people of the moment when the old worship recommenced.

Verse 31

Hezekiah addresses, not the priests, but the congregation: "Now that by the atoning sacrifice which has been offered for you, you are consecrated once more to be a holy people to the Lord, approach with confidence and offer your free-will offerings as of old."

Burnt offerings - The term thus translated is applied especially to those victims which were to be wholly consumed upon the altar. In the "sacrifices," or peace offerings generally, and the "thank offerings" - a particular kind of peace offering Leviticus 7:12) - the greater part of the victim belonged to, and was consumed by, the worshipper. Hence, to offer "burnt offerings," was indicative of a "free heart."

Verse 34

The Levites were more upright etc - See the marginal reference. Urijah, the high priest, had participated to some extent in the impieties of Ahaz 2 Kings 16:10-16. He and many of the priests may, therefore, have looked coldly on the reforming zeal of Hezekiah.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 30

Verse 1

Compare 2 Chronicles 29:24 note.

Verse 2

In the second month - Hezekiah and his counselors considered that the permission of the Law (see the marginal reference) might, under the circumstances, be extended to the whole people. It had been found impossible to complete the cleansing of the temple until the fourteenth day of the first month was past 2 Chronicles 29:17. It was, therefore, determined to defer it to the 14th of the second month, which allowed time for the priests generally to purify themselves, and for proclamation of the festival to be made throughout all Israel.

Verse 3

At that time - i. e. in the first month, at the time of the events mentioned in 2 Chronicles 29.

Verse 5

They had not done it … - Some prefer, "they had not kept it in full numbers, as it was written" - i. e. "they (the Israelites of the northern kingdom) had not (for some while) kept the Passover in full numbers, as the Law required."

Verse 6

The posts went - The bearers of the letters were probably the "runners" who formed a portion of the king's body-guard (2 Kings 10:25 note).

The kings of Assyria - Pul, Tiglath-pileser, and Shalmaneser may all be referred to in this passage (compare the marginal reference and 2 Kings 17:3). The passage by no means implies that the fall of Samaria and final captivity of the Israelites had as yet taken place.

Verse 10

Ephraim and Manasseh are mentioned as the two tribes nearest to Judah, Zebulun as one of the furthest off.

Verse 11

Compare 2 Chronicles 30:18. Hence, five of the ten tribes certainly sent representatives. Two - Reuben and Gad - were in captivity. One - Dan - was absorbed into Judah. Simeon and Naphtali, which alone remained, seem to have been more than ordinarily idolatrous 2 Chronicles 34:6.

Verse 14

The continuance of the idolatrous altars to this time shows that Hezekiah had been more anxious to construct than to destroy, to establish the Yahweh-worship than to root out idolatry. Now, however, that the more important work was done, the temple open, and the daily service restored, attention could be turned to the secondary object of removing from the city all traces of the late apostasy.

Verse 15

The laggart priests and Levites, who from want of zeal for the Yahweh-worship, or from actual inclination to idolatry, had neglected to purify themselves (2 Chronicles 30:3 and marginal reference), were now shamed by the general ardor, and sanctified themselves for the Paschal festival.

And brought in the burnt offerings - Received them, i. e. from the offerers at the doors of the inner court, and took them up to the brass altar in front of the porch. No part of the burnt offerings was ever taken inside the temple building.

Verse 16

After their manner - According to the Mishna, the custom was for the priests to stand in two rows extending from the altar to the outer court, where the people were assembled. As each offerer killed his lamb the blood was caught in a basin, which was handed to the nearest priest, who passed it on to his neighbor, and he to the next; the blood was thus conveyed to the altar, at the base of which it was thrown by the last priest in the row. While basins full of blood were thus passed up, empty basins were passed down in a constant succession, so that there was no pause or delay.

Which they received of the hand of the Levites - Ordinarily, the blood was received at the hand of the offerer. But the greater number of the Israelites 2 Chronicles 30:17 who had come to keep the feast were involved in some ceremonial or moral defilement, from which there had not been time for them to purify themselves. On account of this uncleanness, they did not slay their own lambs, but delegated the office to the Levites.

Verse 22

The "knowledge" intended is perhaps chiefly ritualistic and musical - such knowledge as enabled them to conduct the service of the sanctuary satisfactorily.

They did eat throughout the feast - literally, "they did eat the feast;" i. e. "they kept the feast," which was essentially kept by the eating of unleavened bread. The Levites kept the feast during the full term appointed

for it, never failing in their duties, but taking their part day after day, both in the sacrifice of the victims and in singing praises to God.

Verse 23

To keep other seven days - This was a voluntary addition to the requirements of the Law - the fruit and sign of the abounding zeal which characterized the time. Hezekiah and the princes probably proposed it to the people, and presented them with sacrificial animals.

Verse 25

The strangers - See the 2 Chronicles 15:9 note.

Verse 26

Since the time of Solomon - Compare 2 Chronicles 7:8-10.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 31

Verse 1

Jerusalem had been cleansed 2 Chronicles 30:14; now the land had to be purged. Hezekiah therefore gave his sanction to a popular movement directed as much against the "high places" which had been maintained since the times of the patriarchs, as against the remnants of the Baal-worship, or the innovations of Ahaz. See 2 Kings 18:4 note. The invasion of the northern kingdom "Ephraim and Manasseh" by a tumultuous crowd from the southern one, and the success which attended the movement, can only be explained by the state of weakness into which the northern kingdom had fallen (see the note at 2 Chronicles 29:24).

Verse 2

The tents - literally, "the camps." The temple is called the "camp of Yahweh" by an apt metaphor: the square enclosure, with its gates and stations, its guards and porters, its reliefs, its orderly arrangement, and the tabernacle, or tent, of the great commander in the midst, very much resembled a camp.

Verse 3

The king's portion - Amid the general neglect of the observances commanded by the Law, the tithe system had naturally fallen into disuse. Hezekiah revived it; and, to encourage the people to give what was due, cheerfully set the example of paying the full proportion from his own considerable possessions (compare 2 Chronicles 32:28-29). His tithe was, it seems, especially devoted to the purposes mentioned in this verse (compare the marginal reference). There were needed for these purposes in the course of the year nearly 1,100 lambs, 113 bullocks, 37 rams, and 30 goats, besides vast quantities of flour, oil, and wine for the accompanying meat and drink offerings.

Verse 4

That they might be encouraged … - i. e. to devote themselves wholly to their proper work, the service of the sanctuary and the teaching of God's Law 2 Chronicles 17:7-9, and not engage in secular occupations. Compare Nehemiah 13:10-14.

Verse 5

Honey - See the margin. It is doubtful whether bee-honey was liable to first-fruits. The sort here intended may therefore be that which, according to

Josephus, was manufactured from dates.

Verse 6

By "the children of Israel" in 2 Chronicles 31:5, seem to be intended the inhabitants of Jerusalem only (see 2 Chronicles 31:4); by "the children of Israel and Judah that dwelt in the cities of Judah" in this verse, seem to be meant the Jews of the country districts and the Israelites who dwelt among them 2 Chronicles 30:25. Of these two classes, the first brought both first-fruits and tithes of "all things;" while the others, who had not been included in the command 2 Chronicles 31:4, brought in first-fruits and paid the tithe of sheep and oxen only, and of the things which they had vowed to God.

Verse 7

The third month - Compare 2 Chronicles 29:3; 2 Chronicles 30:2, 2 Chronicles 30:13. The events hitherto described - the destruction of the high places, the re-appointment of the courses, and the re-establishment of the tithes followed so closely upon the Passover, that a month had not elapsed from the conclusion of the Feast before the gifts began to pour in. In the seventh month the harvest was completed; and the last tithes and first-fruits of the year would naturally come in then.

Verse 9

"Hezekiah questioned" in order to know whether the ministering priests and Levites had had their maintenance out of the tithes, and whether the accumulation which he saw was clear surplus.

Verse 10

If this Azariah was the same as he who resisted Uzziah 2 Chronicles 26:17-20, he must have held his office at least 33 years. Compare 2 Chronicles 27:1; 2 Chronicles 28:1.

The Lord hath blessed his people - i. e. God has made the harvest unusually abundant, and hence the great amount of tithes and first-fruits.

Verse 14

The porter toward the east - i. e. the chief door-keeper at the east gate, where the proper number of the porters was six 1 Chronicles 26:17.

The most holy things - The sin-offerings and trespass-offerings Leviticus 6:25; Leviticus 7:1-6.

Verse 15

The cities of the priests - i. e. the Levitical cities (compare marginal reference). Of these, some had gone to decay, while others, as Libnah and

Beth-shemesh 2 Chronicles 21:10; 2 Chronicles 28:18, had been lost, so that the original number, thirteen, was now, apparently, reduced to six.

In their set office - Rather, as in marg. These six Levites were stationed at the Levitical cities, with the trust following committed to them.

Verse 16

Beside their genealogy of males … - Some translate it: "Excepting the list of males," etc. i. e. they distributed to all the members of the priestly families, excepting to those who at the time were performing the duties of their office at Jerusalem. These persons no doubt obtained their share at the temple itself.

Verse 17

Both to the genealogy of the priests … - Some prefer: "And as for the list of the priests, it was according to the houses of their fathers, and that of the Levites was from twenty years," etc. The writer states the nature of the lists which guided the officers who made the distributions. Three lists are enumerated one of the priests made out according to families; one of the Levites, including all above 20 years of age (see the marginal reference), and made out according to courses; and a third 2 Chronicles 31:18 of the priestly and Levitical families.

Verse 18

And to the genealogy of all their little ones … - Or, "And as to the list of all their little ones, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, it extended to the whole body, for they dealt with the holy things faithfully."

Verse 19

The country priests and Levites are here distinguished from those who dwelt in the towns. The writer means to note that not even were they neglected.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 32

Verse 1

The establishment thereof - literally, "the faithfulness thereof" or, in other words, "after these things had been faithfully accomplished."

2 Chronicles 32:1-8 form a passage supplementary to 2 Kings 18:13-16.

Verse 3

To stop the waters … - Compare 2 Chronicles 32:30. Hezekiah's object was probably twofold - to hide the springs outside the city in order to distress the Assyrians, and to convey their water underground into the city, in order to increase his own supply during the siege.

Verse 4

The "brook" intended is probably not the Kidron, but the natural water-course of the Gihon, which ran down the Tyropoeon valley (compare the 1 Kings 1:3 note).

Verse 5

The breaches in the wall of Jerusalem were not entirely due to the old hostility of Joash (marginal reference); but may have been caused either by neglect and carelessness in the reign of Ahaz Isaiah 22:10.

On Millo, see the marginal references notes.

Verse 6

The street of the gate … - Or, "the square at the gate" (compare 2 Chronicles 29:4 note). The gate intended is probably that of Ephraim 2 Chronicles 25:23 - the great northern gate, opposite the "Camp of the Assyrians " - represented by the modern Damascus gate.

Verse 7

On the language, compare the marginal references, for details, see Isaiah 22:5-13; Isaiah 29:3.

Verse 8

The faith, which Hezekiah's words express, presently wavered, died away, and was succeeded by despair and submission (compare 2 Kings 18:14-16 notes).

Verses 9-22

The author of Chronicles compresses into 13 verses the history which occupies in Kings a chapter and a half (2 Kings 18:17-19; where see the

notes).

2 Chronicles 32:10

In the siege - Perhaps "in straitness" (compare Jeremiah 19:9). Jerusalem is thought by some to have been not so much besieged at this time, as distressed and straitened for supplies, because the Assyrians were masters of the open country.

2 Chronicles 32:13

fathers - i. e. "predecessors." Sennacherib really belonged to a dynasty that had only furnished one king before himself.

2 Chronicles 32:22

Guided them … - A slight alteration of the existing text gives the sense - "gave them rest round about;" a common expression in Chronicles 2 Chronicles 15:15; 2 Chronicles 20:30.

Verse 24

Compare 2 Chronicles 32:31).

Verse 25

His heart was lifted up - Compare the marginal reference. Hezekiah's pride was shown in his unnecessarily exhibiting his treasures to the ambassadors from Babylon (see 2 Kings 20:13).

There was wrath upon him - Compare 2 Kings 20:17-18.

Verse 26

Hezekiah humbled himself - Perhaps this is the self-humiliation of which Jeremiah speaks (marginal reference) as following on a certain prophecy uttered by Micah. The prophecy Micah 3:12 is by some referred to the earlier part of the reign of Hezekiah; but there is nothing to show that it was not delivered about this time.

Verse 30

See 2 Chronicles 32:3 note. Either then or afterward, Hezekiah conducted the water of this spring by an underground channel down the Tyropoeon valley to a pool or reservoir (marginal reference).

Verse 32

And in the book - The "and" is not in the original. The meaning is, that the acts were recorded in the prophecy of Isaiah, which formed a part of the compilation known as "the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel." See Introduction.

Verse 33

The chiefest of the sepulchres - Most modern commentators render - "on the ascent to the sepulchres;" but some think that an excavation above all the other tombs - in the same repository, but at a higher level (see the margin) - is intended. The catacomb of David was full; and the later princes had sepulchres quite distinct from the old burial-place (see 2 Chronicles 33:20; 2 Kings 21:18, 2 Kings 21:26; 2 Kings 23:30).

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 33

Verse 1

Compare references and notes. The author of Chronicles differs chiefly from Kings in additions (see the 2 Kings 21:17 note). The central part of this chapter (2 Chronicles 33:11-19) is almost entirely new matter.

Verse 7

The idol - i. e. the Asherah (2 Kings 21:7 note), which receives here (and in Ezekiel 8:3, Ezekiel 8:5) the somewhat unusual name of semel, which some regard as a proper name, and compare with the Greek Σεμέλη *Semelē* f0.

Verse 11

The Assyrian monuments contain no record of this expedition; but there can be little doubt that it fell into the reign of Esarhaddon (2 Kings 19:37 note), who reigned at least thirteen years. Esarhaddon mentions Manasseh among his tributaries; and he was the only king of Assyria who, from time to time, held his court at Babylon.

Among the thorns - Translate - " with rings;" and see 2 Kings 19:28 note.

Verse 14

Rather, "he built the outer wall of the city of David on the west of Gihon-in-the-valley." The wall intended seems to have been that toward the northeast, which ran from the vicinity of the modern Damascus gate across the valley of Gihon, to the "fish-gate" at the northeast corner of the "city of David."

We may gather from this verse that, late in his reign, Manasseh revolted from the Assyrians, and made preparations to resist them if they should attack him. Assyria began to decline in power about 647 B.C., and from that time her outlying provinces would naturally begin to fall off. Manasseh reigned until 642 B.C.

Verse 17

Compare 2 Kings 21:2, note; 2 Kings 18:4, note.

Verse 18

The "prayer of Manasseh," preserved to us in some manuscripts of the Septuagint, has no claim to be considered the genuine utterance of the Jewish king. It is the composition of a Hellenistic Jew, well acquainted with

the Septuagint, writing at a time probably not much anterior to the Christian era.

The words of the seers that spake to him - See 2 Kings 21:11-15.

In the book of the kings of Israel - The writer of Chronicles usually speaks of "the book of the kings of, Judah and Israel" (or "Israel and Judah"). Here be designates the same compilation by a more compendious title, without (apparently) any special reason for the change. Compare 2 Chronicles 20:34.

Verse 19

The seers - Most moderns adopt the translation given in the margin of the Authorized Version, making Hosai (or rather, Chozai) a proper name. The point is a doubtful one.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 34

Verse 1

Compare the parallel history of 2 Kings 22 notes; 23:1-30 notes; the writer here being more full on the celebration of the Passover. The only approach to a discrepancy between the two narratives is with respect to the time of the religions reformation, which the writer of Chronicles distinctly places before, the author of Kings after, the repair of the temple. The best explanation seems to be, that the author of Kings has departed from the chronological order, to which he makes no profession of adhering.

Verse 3

He began to purge Judah - Jeremiah‘s first prophecies Jeremiah 23 appear to have been coincident with Josiah‘s earlier efforts to uproot idolatry, and must have greatly strengthened his hands.

Verse 4

The images - Margin, sun-images. See Leviticus 26:30 note.

Verse 6

The power of Assyria being now (629-624 B.C.) greatly weakened, if not completely broken, Josiah aimed not merely at a religious reformation, but at a restoration of the kingdom to its ancient limits (see the 2 Kings 23:19 note).

With their mattocks … - Or “in their desolate places” (compare Psalm 109:10). Another reading gives the sense, “he proved their house round about.”

Verse 11

The “houses” intended are either the “chambers” which surrounded the temple on three sides 1 Kings 6:5, or out-buildings attached to the courts. The “kings of Judah” intended are, no doubt, Manasseh and Amon.

Verse 13

Of the Levites there were scribes - Hereto the word “scribe” has never been used to designate a class (compare 1 Kings 4:3). But here an order of scribes, forming a distinct division of the Levitical body, has been instituted. The class itself probably originated in the reign of Hezekiah (compare Proverbs 25:1); and it is probably to the rise of this class that we are indebted for the preservation of so many prophecies belonging to Hezekiah‘s time, while the works of almost all previous prophets - Ahijah,

Iddo, Shemaiah, Jehu, the son of Hanani, and probably many others - have perished.

Verse 21

For them, that are left in Israel and in Judah - Compare the words in Kings 2 Kings 22:13. in both records the intention is to show that the king regarded the ten tribes as being under his care, no less than the two.

Verse 30

The writer has characteristically substituted "Levites" for the "prophets" of 2 Kings 23:2. No doubt Josiah was accompanied by priests, prophets, and Levites, but the writer of Kings thought it enough to mention the two former, and merged the Levites in the mass of the people. The writer of Chronicles, on the other hand, thinks the presence of Levites too important to he omitted, and as the prophets could be but few in number, passes them over.

Verse 32

And Benjamin - It is scarcely possible that the text here can be sound. "Benjamin" is never put in contrast with "Jerusalem," but always with Judah. The reading may be corrected from the parallel passage 2 Kings 23:3; "And he caused all those that were present in Jerusalem to stand to the covenant."

Verse 33

All his days they departed not - This must be understood in the letter rather than in the spirit. There was no open idolatry in the reign of Josiah, but the reformation was seeming rather than real, superficial rather than searching and complete (compare the marginal reference).

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 35

Verse 3

Put the holy ark etc - The ark of the covenant may have been temporarily removed from the holy of holies while Josiah effected necessary repairs.

It shall not be a burden upon your shoulders - The removing and replacing the ark Josiah means "shall not henceforth be your duty. The ark shall remain undisturbed in the holy of holies. You shall return to your old employments, to the service of God and the instruction of the people."

Verse 5

The sense of this verse probably is: "So divide yourselves that, for every distinct family among the people who come to the Passover, there shall be a portion of a Levitical family to minister."

Verse 6

Prepare your brethren … - i. e. "as you minister to your brethren the people, by killing and flaying their offerings and handing the blood to the priests, instruct them how they are to eat the Passover acceptably." It is implied that many would be ignorant of the requirements of the Law.

Verses 7-11

See the marginal references and note.

2 Chronicles 35:8

His princes - i. e. his ecclesiastical princes, the chief men of the priests and Levites. For the poor families of their own order the leading priests furnished both Passover-cattle and cattle for thank-offerings. The chief Levites acted similarly toward the poor Levitical families.

Verse 12

They removed the burnt offerings - They separated from the Paschal lambs those parts which were to be burned on the altar. These parts they gave to the offerers, who took them up to the altar and handed them to the officiating priests.

Verse 15

They might not depart - The singers and porters remained at their posts, while other Levites sacrificed for them and brought them their share of the lambs.

Verse 20

After all this - i. e. 13 years after, 608 B.C. See the 2 Kings 23:28-29 notes.

Verse 21

The house wherewith I have war - Necho viewed Babylon as the successor and representative of Assyria - the hereditary enemy of Egypt - and he means that he is merely continuing an old hostility with which Josiah has nothing to do. No doubt the Assyrian and Egyptian armies had often passed up and down Syria by the coast route, without approaching Jerusalem, or even touching the soil of Judaea.

God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God - These are remarkable words in the mouth of a pagan; but ancient inscriptions show that the Egyptian kings, in a certain sense, acknowledged a single supreme god, and considered their actions to be inspired by him. (e. g. The god Tum (compare) the name of his city, Pithom, Exodus 1:11 note) was worshipped as ankh, "the living One" (compare "Yahweh")). Hence, Necho merely expressed himself as Egyptian kings were in the habit of doing.

Verse 22

Disguised himself - Compare the marginal reference. But most modern critics are dissatisfied with this sense in this place, and prefer to render "equipped himself;" or - with the Septuagint - adopt another reading, and render "took courage."

The words of Necho from the mouth of God - The author apparently regarded Necho's words as actually prophetic - a warning to which Josiah ought to have listened - sent him by God to make him pause - though not spoken by divine inspiration, or in consequence of any supernatural revelation of the divine will to the Egyptian king. Compare the "prophecy" of Caiaphas, John 11:51.

Verse 24

The fate of Josiah was unprecedented. No king of Judah had, up to this time, fallen in battle. None had left his land at the mercy of a foreign conqueror. Hence, the extraordinary character of the mourning (compare Zechariah 12:11-14).

Verse 25

Some find Jeremiah's lament in the entire Book of Lamentations; others in a part of it Lamentations 4. But most critics are of opinion that the lament is lost. Days of calamity were commemorated by lamentations on their

anniversaries, and this among the number. The “Book of Dirges” was a collection of such poems which once existed but is now lost.

And made them an ordinance - Rather, “and they made them an ordinance,” they i. e. who had authority to do so, not the minstrels.

2 CHRONICLES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 36

Verse 1

The narrative runs parallel with 2Kings (marginal reference) as far as 2 Chronicles 36:13. The writer then emits the events following, and substitutes a sketch in which the moral and didactic element preponderates over the historical.

Verse 7

In his temple - Compare "the house of his god" Daniel 1:2. Nebuchadnezzars inscriptions show him to have been the special votary of Merodach, the Babylonian Mars. His temple, which the Greeks called the temple of Behus, was one of the most magnificent buildings in Babylon. Its ruins still remain in the vast mound, called Babil, which is the loftiest and most imposing of the "heaps" that mark the site of the ancient city.

Verse 8

His abominations which he did - See Jeremiah 7:9, Jeremiah 7:30-31; Jeremiah 19:3-13; Jeremiah 25:1 etc.; Jehoiakim appears to have restored all the idolatries which Josiah his father had swept away.

Verse 9

Eight years old - Rather, eighteen (see the marginal reference). Jehoiachin had several wives and (apparently) at least one child Jeremiah 22:28, when, three months later, he was carried captive to Babylon.

Verse 10

When the year was expired - literally, as in the margin, i. e. at the return of the season for military expeditions. The expedition against Jehoiakim took place probably late in the autumn of one year, that against Jehoiachin early in the spring of the next.

Strictly speaking, Zedekiah was uncle to Jehoiachin, being the youngest of the sons of Josiah (marginal note and reference). He was nearly of the same age with Jehoiachin, and is called here his "brother" (compare Genesis 14:14).

Verse 12

On Zedekiah‘s character, see 2 Kings 24:19 note.

Verse 13

The oath of allegiance was taken when he was first installed in his kingdom. On Zedekiah‘s sin in breaking his oath, see Ezekiel 17:18-20;

Ezekiel 21:25.

Verse 14

Polluted the house of the Lord - Toward the close of Zedekiah‘s reign idolatrous rites of several different kinds were intruded into the sacred precincts of the temple (compare Ezekiel 8:10-16).

Verse 16

Misused his prophets - Rather, “scoffed at his prophets.” The allusion is to verbal mockery, not to persecution.

Verse 17

The fearful slaughter took place at the capture of the city, in the courts of the temple itself (Ezekiel 9:6-7; compare Lamentations 2:7, Lamentations 2:20).

Verse 20

Servants - Or, “slaves.” They were probably employed by Nebuchadnezzar in the forced labor which his great works necessitated.

His sons - The word probably includes all Nebuchadnezzars successors in the independent sovereignty of Babylon.

Verse 21

See the marginal references. The 70 years of desolation prophesied by Jeremiah, commenced in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (Jeremiah 25:1, Jeremiah 25:12; compare Daniel 1:1), or 605 B.C.; and should therefore have terminated, if they were fully complete, in 536 B.C. As, however, the historical date of the taking of Babylon by Cyrus is 538 B.C., or two years earlier, it has been usual to suppose that the Jews reckoned “the reign of the kingdom of Persia” as commencing two years after the capture of Babylon, on the death or supersession of “Darius the Mede.” But the term “seventy” may be taken as a round number, and the prophecy as sufficiently fulfilled by a desolation which lasted 68 years.

Until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths - Between the time of Moses and the commencement of the captivity, there had been (about) 70 occasions on which the Law of the sabbatical year Leviticus 25:4-7 had been violated.

Verse 22

This and the next verse are repeated at the commencement of the book of Ezra Ezra 1:1-3, which was, it is probable, originally a continuation of Chronicles, Chronicles and Ezra together forming one work. See the introduction to Chronicles.

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EZRA INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Ezra

Though the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah were undoubtedly regarded as one book in two parts, both by the Jewish Church and by the early Christian Fathers, yet the judgment of modern criticism that Ezra and Nehemiah were originally two distinct works, seems to be, on the whole, deserving of acceptance.

The object of the writer of Ezra is to give an account of the return from the captivity, and of the subsequent fortunes of the Palestinian Jews until the eighth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, 457 B.C. - The matters to which he directs attention are only three:

(1) The number, family, and (to some extent) the names of those who returned from Babylonia with Ezra and with Zerubbabel Ezra 1:1-11; Ezra 8:22; and it applies this principle to particular points of the history not unfrequently.

In style, Ezra more resembles Daniel than any other book of Scripture, always excepting Chronicles. This may be accounted for by these two writers being both Babylonian Jews. The work contains also a considerable number of proper names and words which are either known or suspected to be Persian, and altogether, the language is such as might have been looked for under the circumstances of the time, when the contact into which the Jews had been brought with the Babylonians and the Persians had naturally introduced among them a good many foreign words and modes of speech.

The text of Ezra is not in a good condition. The general bearing of the narrative is, however, untouched by slight blemishes which affect chiefly such minute points as the names and numbers of those who returned from the captivity, the weight and number of the sacrificial vessels, and the like.

EZRA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

By the first year of Cyrus is to be understood the first year of his sovereignty over the Jews, or 538 B.C.

Verse 2

The Lord God of heaven - Or, "Yahweh, the God of heaven." In the original Persian, the document probably ran - " Ormazd, the God of heaven." The Hebrew transcript took "Yahweh" as the equivalent of "Ormazd." The Persian notion of a single Supreme Being - Ahura-Mazda, "the much-knowing, or much-bestowing Spirit" - did, in fact, approach nearly to the Jewish conception of Yahweh.

Hath given me all the kingdoms … - There is a similar formula at the commencement of the great majority of Persian inscriptions.

He hath charged me to build him an house - It is a reasonable conjecture that, on the capture of Babylon, Cyrus was brought into contact with Daniel, who drew his attention to the prophecy of Isaiah Isaiah 44:28; and that Cyrus accepted this prophecy as a "charge" to rebuild the temple.

Verse 4

Let the men of his place help him - i. e., "Let the pagan population help him" (see Ezra 1:6).

The freewill offering - Probably that made by Cyrus himself Ezra 1:7-11.

Verse 5

Only a portion of the Israelites took advantage of the permission of Cyrus. Many remained in Babylon, since they were disinclined to relinquish their property. They who returned were persons whom God had especially stirred up to make sacrifices for His glory.

Verse 7

The house of his gods - Rather, "of his god" Daniel 1:2, i. e., Merodach, "his lord" (see 2 Chronicles 36:7 note).

Verse 8

Mithredath - Or, "Mithridates." The occurrence of this name, which means "given by Mithra" or "dedicated to Mithra," is an indication that the sun-worship of the Persians was at least as old as the time of Cyrus.

Sheshbazzar - i. e., Zerubbabel. On his royal descent, see 1 Chronicles 3:19 note.

Verse 9

Chargers - The word in the original thus translated occurs only in this passage. Its meaning is doubtful. Some derive it from a Hebrew root, “to hollow out,” and translate “cup” or “vessel.”

Knives - This is another doubtful word, only used here. The etymology points to some employment of basket-work.

Verse 11

The sum of the numbers as they stand in the present Hebrew text is 2,499, instead of 5,400. In the Apocryphal Book of Esdras the sum given is 5,469, and with this sum the items in that place exactly agree (1 Esdras 2:13,14). Most commentators propose to correct Ezra by the passage of Esdras; but the items of Esdras are improbable. Probably the sum total in the present passage has suffered corruption.

EZRA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

The province - Judaea was no longer a kingdom, but a mere "province" of Persia. "The children of the province" are the Israelites who returned to Palestine, as distinct from those who remained in Babylonia and Persia.

Every one unto his city - That is, to the city whereto his forefathers had belonged. Of course, in the few cases where this was not known Ezra 2:59-62, the plan could not be carried out.

Two other copies of the following list have come down to us - one in Nehemiah 7:7-69, and the other in 1 Esdras 5:8-43. All seem to have been taken from the same original document, and to have suffered more or less from corruption. Where two out of the three agree, the reading should prevail over that of the third.

Verse 43

The Nethinims - The hieroduli or sacred slaves, "given" to the Levites to assist them in their work (see 1 Chronicles 9:2 note).

Verse 59

Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer, were probably cities, or villages, of Babylonia, at which the Jews here spoken of had been settled. The first and third have been reasonably identified with the Thelme and Chiripha of Ptolemy. Of the rest, nothing is known at present.

Verse 63

The Tirshatha - i. e., Zerubbabel. See margin. The word is probably old Persian, though it does not occur in the cuneiform inscriptions. Some derive it from a root "to fear." See the introduction to the Book of Ezra, first note.

A priest with Urim and with Thummim - See Exodus 28:30 note. According to the rabbinical writers, the second temple permanently lacked this glory of the first. Zerubbabel, it would seem by the present passage (compare Nehemiah 7:65), expected that the loss would be only temporary.

Verse 64

The sum total is given without any variation by Ezra, by Nehemiah (see the marginal reference), and by Esdras (1 Esdras 5:41), who adds, that in this reckoning only those of twelve years of age and upward were counted.

It is curious that the total 42,360, is so greatly in excess of the items. Ezra's items make the number 29,818; Nehemiah's 31,089, Esdras, 33,950.

The original document was probably illegible in places, and the writers were forced to make omissions.

Verse 69

The numbers here and in Nehemiah (see the marginal reference) vary.

Verse 70

All Israel - That the Israelites of the ten tribes returned to Palestine with Zerubbabel is apparent:

(1) from 1 Chronicles 9:3;

(2) from the enumeration of twelve chiefs (Nehemiah 7:7; Ezra 2:2, Ezra 2:59; Ezra 3:1.

EZRA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

The seventh month - i. e., the month Tisri (nearly our September), the most sacred month in the Jewish year Exodus 23:16; Leviticus 23:24-41.

Verse 2

Jeshua, the high priest, was the son of Jozadak, who was carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar 1 Chronicles 6:15.

Zerubbabel was really the son of Pedaiah, Shealtiel‘s (or Salathiel‘s) younger brother. But Shealtiel having no sons, and the royal line being continued in the person of his nephew, Zerubbabel, the latter was accounted Shealtiel‘s son.

Verse 3

Upon his bases - They restored the old altar of burnt-offerings, which stood directly in front of the temple-porch, upon the old foundation. This became apparent on the clearing away of the ruins, and on a careful examination of the site.

Verse 7

According to the grant - i. e., in accordance with the permission granted them by Cyrus to rebuild their temple Ezra 1:1-4.

Verse 8

Unto the house of God - i. e., to the place where the house of God had been, and where God was believed still to have His special dwelling.

And appointed the Levites - This is the emphatic clause of the present verse. Though so small a number of Levites had returned from Babylon Ezra 2:40, yet they were especially singled out to be entrusted with the task of superintending and advancing the building of the temple.

Verse 9

Jeshua - See the marginal reference. Not the high priest, but the head of one of the two Levitical houses which had returned.

Together - The Hebrew phrase is very emphatic - “they stood up as one man.”

Verse 10

They set the priests - Or, according to another reading, “The priests stood.”

The Levites the sons of Asaph - i. e., "such of the Levites as were descendants of Asaph." It would seem as if no descendants of Heman or Jeduthun had returned.

Verse 12

Wept … shouted … for joy - Compare the marginal reference and Zechariah 4:10. It is implied that the dimensions of the second temple were smaller than those of the first. Hence, the feeling of sorrow which came upon some. They, however, who had not seen the former temple, and so could not contrast the two, naturally rejoiced to see the sanctuary of their religion begin to rise from its ruins.

EZRA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

Adversaries - i. e., the Samaritans, a mixed race, partly Israelite but chiefly foreign, which had replaced to some extent the ancient inhabitants after they were carried into captivity by Sargon (see 2 Kings 17:6 note).

Verse 2

Compare 2 Kings 17:24-28 notes.

Since the days - Esar-haddon reigned from 681-668 B.C. Thus, the Samaritans speak of what had taken place at least 130 years previously. There appear to have been at least three colonizations of Samaria by the Assyrian kings. The first is mentioned in 2 Kings 17:24. Later in his reign Sargon added to these first settlers an Arabian element. Some 30 or 40 years afterward, Esarhaddon, his grandson, largely augmented the population by colonists drawn especially from the southeast parts of the Empire Ezra 4:10. Thus, the later Samaritans were an exceedingly mixed race.

Verse 3

Ye have nothing to do with us - Because the Samaritans had united idolatrous rites with the worship of Yahweh 2 Kings 17:29-41. To have allowed them a share in restoring the temple would have been destructive of all purity of religion.

As king Cyrus … commanded us - The exact words of the edict gave the right of building exclusively to those who should "go up" from Babylonia to Judaea Ezra 1:3.

Verse 5

Hired counselors - Rather, "bribed" officials at the Persian court to interpose delays and create difficulties, in order to hinder the work.

Darius - i. e., Darius, the son of Hystaspes

Verse 6

Ahasuerus - Or, Cambyses, the son and successor of Cyrus. Persian kings had often two names.

Verse 7

Artaxerxes - Gomates, the Pseudo-Smerdis. He succeeded Cambyses (521 B.C.), and reigned for seven months, when he was deposed and executed by Darius Hystaspis.

Written in the Syrian tongue … - Or, "written in Syriac characters and translated into Syriac." On the use of this tongue as a medium of

communication between the Jews and their Eastern neighbors, see 2 Kings 18:26 note.

Verse 8

The chancellor - literally, "Lord of judgment;" the title, apparently, of the Persian governor of the Samaritan province. Every Persian governor was accompanied to his province by a "royal scribe" or "secretary," who had a separate and independent authority.

Verse 9-10

These verses form the superscription or address of the letter (Ezra 4:11, etc.) sent to Artaxerxes.

The Dinaites were probably colonists from Dayan, a country often mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions as bordering on Cilicia and Cappadocia. No satisfactory explanation can be given of the name Apharsathchites (see Ezra 5:6 note). The Tarpelites were colonists from the nation which the Assyrians called Tuplai, the Greeks "Tibareni," and the Hebrews generally "Tubal." (It is characteristic of the later Hebrew language to insert the letter "r" (resh) before labials. Compare Darmesek for Dammesek, 2 Chronicles 28:23 margin). The Apharsites were probably "the Persians;" the Archevites, natives of Erech (Warka) Genesis 10:10; the Susanchites, colonists from Shushan or Susa; the Dehavites, colonists from the Persian tribe of the Dai; and the Elamites, colonists from Elam or Elymais, the country of which Susa was the capital.

Ezra 4:10

A snapper was perhaps the official employed by Esar-haddon Ezra 4:2 to settle the colonists in their new country.

On this side the river - literally, "beyond the river," a phrase used of Palestine by Ezra, Nehemiah, and in the Book of Kings, as designating the region west of the Euphrates.

And at such a time - Rather, "and so forth." The phrase is vague, nearly equivalent to the modern use of et cetaera. It recurs in marginal references.

Verse 13

Toll, tribute, and custom - Rather, "tribute, provision, and toll" (so Ezra 4:20). The "tribute" is the money-tax imposed on each province, and apportioned to the inhabitants by the local authorities; the "provision" is the payment in kind, which was an integral part of the Persian system; the "tolI" is probably a payment required from those who used the Persian highways.

The revenue - The word thus translated is not found elsewhere, and can only be conjecturally interpreted. Modern commentators regard it as an adverb, meaning "at last," or "in the end," and translate, "And so at last shall damage be done to the kings."

Verse 14

We have maintenance - See the margin. The phrase "to eat a man's salt" is common in the East to this day; and is applied not only to those who receive salaries, but to all who obtain their subsistence by means of another. The Persian satraps had no salaries, but taxed their provinces for the support of themselves and their courts.

Verse 15

The book of the records - Compare Esther 2:23; Esther 6:1; Esther 10:2. The existence of such a "book" at the Persian court is attested also by Ctesias.

Of thy fathers - i. e., thy predecessors ripen the throne, Cambyses, Cyrus, etc. If Artaxerxes was the Pseudo-Smerdis (Ezra 4:7 note), these persons were not really his "fathers" or ancestors; but the writers of the letter could not venture to call the king an impostor.

Verse 18

Hath been … read - It is doubtful if the Persian monarchs could ordinarily read. At any rate, it was their habit to have documents read to them (compare Esther 6:1). This is still the ordinary practice in Eastern courts.

Verse 19

The archives of the Babylonian kingdom would contain accounts of the insurrections raised, or threatened, by Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah 2 Kings 24:1, 2 Kings 24:10, 2 Kings 24:20. It does not appear that there had ever been any rebellion against Persia.

Verse 20

Mighty kings … - If this reference can scarcely have been to David or Solomon (see marginal reference), of whom neither the Babylonian nor the Assyrian archives would be likely to have had any account - it would probably be to Menahem 2 Kings 15:16 and Josiah (2 Chronicles 34:6-7; 2 Chronicles 35:18).

Verse 24

It ceased - The stoppage of the building by the Pseudo-Smerdis is in complete harmony with his character. He was a Magus, devoted to the

Magian elemental worship, and opposed to belief in a personal god. His religion did not approve of temples; and as he persecuted the Zoroastrian so would he naturally be hostile to the Jewish faith. The building was resumed in the second year of Darius (520 B.C.), and was only interrupted for about two years; since the Pseudo-Smerdis reigned less than one year.

EZRA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

Haggai and Zechariah stirred up Zerubbabel and Joshua Ezra 5:2; Haggai 1:14, and warned the people against neglecting the building of the temple, in order to give themselves to the beautifying of their own houses (see Haggai 1:4, Haggai 1:9). Zechariah was the son of Berechiah, and grandson of Iddo (see the marginal reference; Matthew 23:35). Compare a similar application of "son" in the case of Jehu (see the 2 Kings 9:20 note).

In the name of the God of Israel, even unto them - Rather, "in the name of the God of Israel, which was upon them." The two prophets addressed the Jews, in respect of their being God's people, or, in Hebrew phrase (see the Jeremiah 15:16 margin), "having God's name called upon them."

Verse 2

Began to build - i. e., "made a second beginning" - recommenced the uncompleted work.

Helping them - By infusing zeal into the people (see Haggai 1:12).

Verse 3

Governor on this side the river - Compare Ezra 4:10 note. Tatnai was apparently satrap of Syria, which included the whole tract west of the Euphrates from Cilicia to the borders of Egypt. Zerubbabel must have been, to some extent, under his authority.

Who hath commanded you to build? - There was no doubt a formal illegality in the conduct of Zerubbabel and Jeshua: since all edicts of Persian kings continued in force unless revoked by their successors. But they felt justified in disobeying the decree of the Pseudo-Smerdis (see the Ezra 4:7 note), because the opposition between his religious views and those of his successor was matter of notoriety.

Verse 4

Then said we - The Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions have "Then said they," which brings this verse into exact accordance with Ezra 5:10.

Verse 6

Apharsachites, like Apharsites, and Apharsathchites Ezra 4:9, are thought by some to be forms of the word "Persians," which is applied here generally to the foreign settlers in Samaria. (Others identify the first and the third names with the "Paretaceni," a people on the Medo-Persian border.)

Verse 8

Great stones - literally, as in the margin; i. e., stones so large that they were rolled along, not carried. Others translate "polished stones."

Verse 16

Since that time even until now - Sixteen years - from 536 B.C. to 520 B.C. The adversaries of the Jews here overstep the truth; since, in point of fact, the work had been suspended for a while Ezra 4:24.

Verse 17

Let there be search made … at Babylon - They perhaps doubted whether proof of the decree of Cyrus remained in the archives. The Pseudo-Smerdis had had the records in his power for seven months; and, when he reversed the policy of his predecessors, might have been expected to destroy their edicts. The decree was not found at Babylon, the most natural place for it, but in the provincial capital of Ecbatana, which Tatnai and his friends had not asked Darius to have searched (see Ezra 6:2).

EZRA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

A “house of the rolls” was discovered at Koyunjik, the ancient Nineveh, in 1850 - a set of chambers, i. e., in the palace devoted exclusively to the storing of public documents. These were in baked clay, and covered the floor to the depth of more than a foot. Such a “house” was probably that at Babylon.

Verse 2

“Achmetha” is the “Ecbatana,” or “Agbatana,” of the Greeks, the Persian name for which, as we find in the Behistun Inscription, was HaGMaTANa.

We must suppose that, when Babylon had been searched in vain, the other cities which possessed record-offices were visited, and the decree looked for in them. Ecbatana was the capital of Cyrus.

Verse 3

It is difficult to reconcile the dimentions here with expressions in Zechariah Zechariah 4:10, Haggai Haggai 2:3, and even Ezra Ezra 3:12, which imply that the second temple was smaller than the first (compare 1 Kings 6:2). Perhaps the dimensions here are those which Cyrus required the Jews not to exceed.

Verse 4

The word translated “row” occurs only in this passage. Some regard it as a “course,” and suppose that after every three courses of stone there followed a course of timber. Others understand three “storeys” of stone, with a fourth “storey” of woodwork on the summit (compare 1 Kings 6:5-6). Others consider that Cyrus intended to limit the thickness of the walls, which were not to exceed a breadth of three rows of stone, with an inner wooden wainscotting.

Let the expenses be given out of the king‘s house - i. e., “out of the Persian revenue,” a portion of the decree which was probably not observed during the later years of Cyrus and during the reign of Cambyses, and hence the burthen fell upon the Jews themselves Ezra 2:68-69.

Verse 6

This verse gives the words of the decree of Darius, which was grounded upon, and probably recited, the decree of Cyrus.

Verse 11

Being set up, let him be hanged thereon - Rather, "let him be lifted up and crucified upon it." Crucifixion was the most common form of capital punishment among the Persians.

Verse 12

Destroy all - A similar malediction is found at the end of the great inscription of this same king Darius at Behistun: If anyone injures the tablet which he has set up, he prays that Ormazd will be their enemy, and that they may have no offspring, and that whatever they do, Ormazd may curse it for them.

To alter and to destroy this house - i. e., to alter the decree, and then proceed to destroy the house.

Verse 14

Artaxerxes - The Artaxerxes of marginal reference seems to be meant (i. e., Longimanus); he was one of those who together with Cyrus and Darius helped forward the completion of the work.

Verse 15

"Adar" was the twelfth or last month of the Jewish year, corresponding nearly with our March. The sixth year of Darius was 516-515 B.C.

Verse 17

Compare with this modest sacrifice, which suits well "the day of small things" Zechariah 4:10, the lavish offering of Solomon (see the marginal reference "n").

Verse 19

With this verse the writer resumes the use of the Hebrew language, which he had discarded for the Chaldee from Ezra 4:8. With the exception of the letter of Artaxerxes Ezra 7:12-26, all the remainder of the book is in Hebrew.

Verse 20

Some render, "And the priests were purified; and the Levites, as one man, were all of them pure." A contrast is drawn between the universal purity of the Levites and the merely general purity of the priests 2 Chronicles 29:34; 2 Chronicles 30:3, which made it fitting that the former should undertake the slaughter of all the Paschal lambs, even of those which the priests were to consume. In later times the ordinary practice was for each head of a family to kill for himself.

Verse 22

The king of Assyria - i. e., Darius. Assyria had so long been the great monarchy of western Asia that the sacred writers continue the title to those who had inherited the old Assyrian power, as first to the Babylonians 2 Kings 23:29, and secondly to the Persians. With similar inexactness we find Herodotus calling Cyrus "king of the Medes."

EZRA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

After these things - The words mark an interval of 57 years; if, with most commentators, we take Artaxerxes to be Longimanus. See the introduction to the Book of Ezra. Three kings named Artaxerxes, the Greek rendering of the Hebrew Artakhshasta, and the Persian Artakhshatra, ruled over Persia, namely,: Longimanus, Mnemon, and Ochus. The evidence is in favor of the first being meant here: he was the grandson of Darius Hystaspis, Jeshua‘s contemporary.

The genealogy of Ezra here is incomplete. The time between the Exodus and Ezra must have exceeded one thousand years, and cannot have been covered by 16 generations. One gap may be filled up from 1 Chronicles 6:7-10, which supplies six names between Meraioth and Azariah Ezra 7:3: another gap probably occurs between Seraiah Ezra 7:1 and Ezra himself; since Seraiah appears to be the high priest of Zedekiah‘s time (marginal reference), who lived at least 130 years before Ezra. Three or four names are probably missing in this place. Another name (Meraioth) may be supplied from 1 Chronicles 9:11, between Zadok and Ahitub Ezra 7:2. These additions would produce 27 generations - a number nearly sufficient - instead of 16 generations.

Verse 6

A ready scribe - Or, “a ready writer” Psalm 45:1. The professional scribe was well known in Egypt from an early date (see Genesis 39:4 note); and under David and his successors “scribes” were attached to the court as the king‘s secretaries (2 Samuel 8:17; 2 Samuel 20:25; 2 Kings 12:10, etc.). It was scarcely, however, until the time of the captivity that the class to which Ezra belonged arose. The “scribes” of this time, and of later Jewish history, were students, interpreters, and copiers of the Law (see the marginal references and Jeremiah 8:8). They retained the knowledge of the old dialect, which was being rapidly superseded by a new one. The emphatic application of the title “the scribe” to Ezra marks the high honor in which the office was now held. Its glories eclipsed those of the priesthood.

The hand of the Lord … upon him - The use of this phrase in a good sense is rare elsewhere (compare 1 Kings 18:46), but is a favorite one with

both Ezra and Nehemiah (see the marginal references; Nehemiah 2:8, Nehemiah 2:18).

Verse 9

The direct distance of Babylon from Jerusalem is about 520 miles; and the circuitous route by Carchemish and the Orontes valley, which was ordinarily taken by armies or large bodies of men, is about 900 miles. The time occupied in the journey is long, and is perhaps to be accounted for by the dangers alluded to in Ezra 8:22, Ezra 8:31.

Verse 12

The title, "king of kings," is assumed by almost all the persian monarchs in their inscriptions.

Perfect peace - "Peace" is not in the original, and the word translated "perfect" occurs only in this place. Some prefer to take it as an adjective descriptive of Ezra (see margin); others (Septuagint) as the opening word of the first paragraph of the letter, and give it the meaning, "it is completed."

Verse 14

Seven counselors - Herodotus relates that there were seven families pre-eminent in Persia, those of the seven conspirators against the Pseudo-Smerdis (Ezra 4:7 note); and it is reasonable to suppose that the heads of these families formed the special council of the king; the "Achaemenidae," or royal family, being represented by the head of the branch next in succession to that of the reigning monarch (see the marginal reference).

Verse 21

All the treasurers - The Persian system of taxing the provinces through the satraps involved the establishment in each province of at least one local treasury.

Verse 22

This verse assigns limits to the permission of Ezra 7:20. As the Persian tribute was paid partly in money and partly in kind (see Ezra 4:13 note), the treasuries would be able to supply them as readily as they could furnish money.

Verse 23

Literally, as in the margin, i. e., Whatsoever is commanded in the Law with respect to the temple service.

Verse 24

The decree of Artaxerxes was more favorable to the Jews than those of all previous Persian monarchs. We hear of a similar exemption of

ecclesiastics from tribute, only to a less extent, under the Seleucidae.

Ministers - The rare word here used, which in Daniel has the sense of "worshippers," appears to designate in this place the lowest class of persons employed in the service of the temple.

Verse 26

Banishment - literally, as in the margin. Separation from the congregation is probably intended (compare Ezra 10:8).

Verse 27

An abrupt transition from the words of Artaxerxes to those of Ezra. Compare a similar abrupt change in Ezra 6:6. The language alters at the same time from Chaldee to Hebrew, continuing henceforth to be Hebrew until the close of the book.

EZRA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 2-3

Punctuate as follows:

Ezra 8:2. … of the sons of David, Hattush of the sons of Shechaniah.

Ezra 8:3. Of the sons of Pharosh, Zechariah … .

Hattush, the descendant of David, was the grandson of Shechaniah (see marginal reference).

Most of these names Ezra 8:2-14 occur also as those of heads of families in the list of the Jews who returned with Zerubbabel Ezra 2:3-15. The Septuagint and Syriac versions supply omissions in Ezra 8:5, Ezra 8:10.

Verse 15

Ahava was both a town and a river Ezra 8:21. The modern name of the place is Hit. It is famous for its bitumen springs, and is situated on the Euphrates, at a distance of about 80 miles from Babylon, toward the northwest.

None of the sons of Levi - The Levites appear to have been disinclined to return to Jerusalem (see Ezra 3:8 note).

Verse 17

Casiphia - Its situation is wholly unknown; but it cannot have been far from Ahava.

Verse 18

And Sherebiah - Either a name has fallen out before the words "a man of understanding," or the "and" here has crept into the text by accident. Sherebiah appears among the most earnest of the Levites under Nehemiah (see the marginal references).

Verse 22

What "enemy" menaced Ezra, and on what account, is wholly uncertain (compare Ezra 8:31). Perhaps robber-tribes, Arab or Syrian, were his opponents.

Verse 27

Twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams - Not of a thousand drams (i. e., darics) each, but worth altogether a thousand darics. As the

value of the daric was about 22 shillings of British money, each basin, or saucer, would have been worth (apart from the fashioning) 55 British pounds.

Of fine copper - The word translated "fine," which occurs here only, is thought to mean either "yellow" or "glittering" (see the margin). Probably the vessels were of orichalcum, an amalgam which was either brass or something nearly approaching to brass, but which was very rarely produced in the ancient world, and, when produced, was regarded as highly valuable.

Verse 31

The Jews with Ezra left Babylon on the first day of the first month Ezra 7:9. They reached Ahava in nine days, and, having remained there three Ezra 8:15, quitted it, and resumed their journey on the twelfth. They reached Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month Ezra 7:9, four months after the departure from Babylon.

Verse 35

Compare the marginal reference. The idea of offerings for all Israel pervades in this case the entire sacrifice, with the exception of the lambs, whose number (77) is unique, and has not been accounted for.

Verse 36

The kings commissions - i. e., the orders issued to all governors of provinces near Judaea by Artaxerxes, given in Ezra 7:21-24.

The kings lieutenants - literally, "the king's satraps." The word is used in its strict sense, referring to the chief rulers of Persian provinces, from which the "governors" or rulers of smaller districts are distinguished.

EZRA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

Abominations - The mixed marriages had prevented that complete separation of the people of God from the idolatrous rites, or "abominations," which the Law required, and which was necessary for purity of religion. See 1 Kings 11:2 note.

Verse 3

Plucking out the hair with the hands, so common among the Classical nations, is, comparatively speaking, rarely mentioned as practiced by Asiatics.

Verse 7

Very similar in tone to this are the confessions of Nehemiah Nehemiah 9:29-35 and of Daniel (see the marginal references). The captivity had done its work by deeply convincing of sin the Jewish nation that had previously been so proud and self-righteous.

Verse 8

The "little space" was above 60 years, counting from the second year of Darius Ezra 4:24, or about 80 years, counting from the first year of Cyrus Ezra 1:1. This does not seem to Ezra much in the "lifetime" of a nation.

A remnant to escape - Rather, "a remnant that has escaped." The "remnant" is the new community that has returned from the captivity.

A nail - Compare the marginal note and reference. The metaphor is probably drawn from a tent-pin, which is driven into the earth to make the tent firm and secure.

Verse 9

We were bondmen - Rather, "we are bondmen" (compare the marginal reference). The Israelites, though returned from the captivity, were still "bondmen." The Persian monarch was their absolute lord and master.

Verse 11

Saying - The words which follow in this verse are not quoted from any previous book of Scripture, but merely give the general sense of numerous passages. Compare the marginal references.

Verse 13

Deliverance - Or, "remnant," as in Ezra 9:8.

Verse 15

Some take “righteous” to mean here “kind” or “merciful.” Others give it the more usual sense of “just,” and understand the full meaning of the passage to be, “Thou art righteous, and hast punished us, because of our sin, the contraction of forbidden marriages, so that we are a mere remnant of what was once a great people.”

EZRA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

Before the house of God - i. e., in front of the temple, praying toward it 1 Kings 8:30, 1 Kings 8:35; Daniel 6:10, and thus in the sight of all the people who happened at the time to be in the great court.

Verse 2

Jehiel was one of those who had taken an idolatrous wife Ezra 10:26; and Shechaniah had therefore had the evil brought home to him.

Verse 3

Let it be done according to the law - i. e., let a formal "bill of divorcement" be given to each foreign wife, whereby she will be restored to the condition of an unmarried woman, and be free to marry another husband (see Deuteronomy 24:1-2). The facility of divorce among the Jews is well-known. According to many of the rabbis, a bill of divorcement might he given by the husband for the most trivial cause. Thus, no legal difficulty stood in the way of Shechaniah's proposition; and Ezra regarded it as necessary for the moral and religious welfare of the people.

Verse 6

The "chamber of Johanan" was probably one of those attached externally to the temple (see 1 Kings 6:5-6). Eliashib was the grandson of Jeshua Ezra 3:2, and was high priest under Nehemiah Nehemiah 3:1. He could assign chambers in the temple to whomever he pleased (see Nehemiah 13:4-5).

Verse 8

Separated from the congregation - i. e., "excommunicated" (compare Exodus 12:19; Numbers 19:20, etc.). The power assigned to Ezra is stated in Ezra 7:25-26.

Verse 9

It was the ninth month - Or, our December, a time when rain fails heavily in Palestine: four months, therefore, after Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem (compare Ezra 7:9).

The street - Rather, "the court," the "broad," "spacious, place" (compare the 2 Chronicles 29:4 note).

Verse 15

Some translate it: "Nevertheless, Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah opposed this." The opposition was useless Ezra

10:16.

Verse 17

The business occupied the commission full two months. In some cases, it may be presumed, they had to summon persons before them who did not wish to part with their foreign wives; in all, they had to assure themselves that the wives were foreign; finally, they had in every case where they decreed a divorce to make out the "writing of divorcement" Ezra 10:3.

Verses 18-44

Compare with the list in Ezra 10:19

They gave their hands - i. e., "solemnly pledged themselves" (compare the marginal references).

Ezra 10:44

The guilty persons, it would seem, were 113 in number. They comprised 4 members of the high priest's family, 13 other priests, 10 Levites, and 86 lay Israelites belonging to at least 10 distinct families. The fact noted in the second clause of the verse must have increased the difficulity of Ezra's task.

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Contents

NEHEMIAH INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Nehemiah

In the earliest form of the Hebrew canon known to us the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were united in one, under the name of â€œThe Book of Ezra.â€ After a while, a division was made, and the two books which we now recognize were distinguished as â€œthe First Book of Ezraâ€ and â€œthe Second Book of Ezraâ€ Later still - probably not until toward the close of the fourth century - the Second Book of Ezra came to be known as â€œthe Book of Nehemiah.â€

The Book of Nehemiah is composed of four quite distinct sections:

(1) Nehemiah 1-7 containing the record of the 20th year of Artaxerxes (or 445-444 B.C.), but composed by Nehemiah at least twelve years later Nehemiah 5:14.

(2) the second section of the work consists of Neh. 8- 10, and contains a narrative of some events belonging to the autumn of 444 B.C. In this portion Nehemiah is spoken of in the third person; he is called the Tirshatha," whereas in the earlier chapters his title is always pecha (" governor"); and Ezra holds the first and most prominent position. The style of this portion of the book is markedly different from that of the earlier and later chapters; and critics are generally agreed that it is NOT from the hand of Nehemiah. Some assign it to Ezra; others conjecture Zadok (or Zidkijah), Nehemiah' s scribe or secretary Nehemiah 13:13, to have been the author.

(3) Nehemiah 11-12:26, which consists of six important lists. List 1 Nehemiah 11:1-24 and List 2 Nehemiah 11:25-36 are probably either the work of Nehemiah himself or documents drawn up by his orders. Of the other lists Nehemiah 12:1-26 some may have been drawn up in the time (or even by the hand) of Nehemiah, and incorporated by him into his work as documents having an intrinsic value, though not connected very closely with the subject matter of his history. But the list in Nehemiah 12:10-11 cannot, in its present shape, have proceeded from his hand, or from that of a contemporary, since it mentions Jaddua, who lived about a century LATER THAN Nehemiah. Neither can Nehemiah 12:22-23 intruded between the 5th and 6th lists - lists closely interconnected - belong to Nehemiah' s time,

since they contain a mention of both Jaddua and Darius Codomannus, his contemporary. Possibly, the list in question and the intruded verses may have proceeded from the same hand.

The section may therefore be regarded as the compilation of Nehemiah himself, with the exception of Nehemiah 12:11, 22-23, which must have been added a century later. Or, it was first added at that period. In either case, the writer must be equally considered to have drawn the lists from contemporary state archives (see Nehemiah 12:23).

(4) Nehemiah 12:27 to the end. This section contains an account of the dedication of the wall, and of certain reforms which Nehemiah effected after his return from Babylon in 432-431 B.C.. It is allowed on all hands to be, in the main, the work of Nehemiah, and written soon after the events - probably in 431 B.C. or 430 B.C.

It is perhaps, on the whole, more probable that the various sections composing the â€œBook of Nehemiahâ€ were collected by Nehemiah himself, who had written, at any rate, two of them Nehemiah 12:27; Nehemiah 13:31. Having composed these two separate memoirs, and having perhaps drawn up also certain lists, he adopted from without an account of some religious transactions belonging to his first period, and, inserting this in its proper place, prefixed to the whole work the title, â€œThe words of Nehemiah, the son of Hachaliah,â€ as fitly designating its main contents. His work, thus formed, was subsequently added to by Jaddua, or a writer of that time, who inserted into it Nehemiah 12:11, Nehemiah 12:22-23. Or, possibly, this late writer may first have formed the book into a whole. The date of the compilation would, in the former case, be about 430 B.C.; in the latter, about one century later.

The authenticity of the history contained in the Book of Nehemiah is generally admitted: and the condition of the text is generally good.

NEHEMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah - The prophetical books commence generally with a title of this kind (see Jeremiah 1:1); but no other extant historical book begins thus. Nehemiah, while attaching his work to Ezra, perhaps marked in this manner the point at which his own composition commenced. (See the introduction of the Book of Nehemiah.)

Chisleu - The ninth month, corresponding to the end of November and beginning of December.

In the twentieth year - i. e. of Artaxerxes Longimanus (465-425 B.C.). Compare Nehemiah 2:1.

Shushan the palace - Compare Esther 1:2, Esther 1:5, etc.; Daniel 8:2. Shushan, or Susa, was the ordinary residence of the Persian kings. "The palace" or acropolis was a distinct quarter of the city, occupying an artificial eminence.

Verse 2

Hanani seems to have been an actual brother of Nehemiah Nehemiah 7:2.

Verse 3

The attempt to rebuild the wall in the time of the Pseudo-Smerdis Ezra 4:12-24 had been stopped. It still remained in ruins. The Assyrian sculptures show that it was the usual practice to burn the gates.

Verse 4

The God of heaven - This title of the Almighty, which is Persian rather than Jewish (see 2 Chronicles 36:23; Ezra 1:2 note; Ezra 6:10; Ezra 7:12, Ezra 7:21), is a favorite one with Nehemiah, who had been born and brought up in Persia.

Verse 11

A Persian king had numerous cup-bearers, each of whom probably discharged the office in his turn.

NEHEMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

Nisan was the name given by the Persian Jews to the month previously called "Abib," the first month of the Jewish year, or that which followed the vernal equinox. It fell four months after Chisleu Nehemiah 1:1.

The twentieth year - As Artaxerxes ascended the throne in 465 B.C., his 20th year would correspond to 445-444 B.C.

Verse 2

I was very sore afraid - A Persian subject was expected to be perfectly content so long as he had the happiness of being with his king. A request to quit the court was thus a serious matter.

Verse 3

The city … of my fathers' sepulchres - We may conclude from this that Nehemiah was of the tribe of Judah, as Eusebius and Jerome say that he was.

Verse 4

I prayed to the God of heaven - Mentally and momentarily, before answering the king.

Verse 6

The queen - Though the Persian kings practiced polygamy, they always had one chief wife, who alone was recognized as "queen." The chief wife of Longimanus was Damaspia.

I set him a time - Nehemiah appears to have stayed at Jerusalem twelve years from his first arrival Nehemiah 5:14; but he can scarcely have mentioned so long a term to the king. Probably his leave of absence was prolonged from time to time.

Verse 8

The king's forest - Rather, park. The word used פרדס *pardês* compare παράδεισος *paradeisos* found only here, in Ecclesiastes 2:5, and in Song of Song of Solomon 4:13), is of Persian, or at any rate of Aryan origin. The Persians signified by pariyadeza a walled enclosure, ornamented with trees, either planted or of natural growth, and containing numerous wild animals. The "paradise" here mentioned must have been in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, and may have corresponded to the earlier "gardens of Solomon."

The palace - Rather, "the fortress." The word in the original has the double meaning of "palace" and "fortress," the fact being that in ancient

times palaces were always fortified. “The fortress which pertained to the house (temple)” is first spoken of here. Under the Romans it was called “Antonia.”

Verse 10

The name Sanballat is probably Babylonian the first element being the same which commences “Sennacherib,” namely, “Sin,” the moon-God, and the second balatu, “eminent” (?),which is found in the Assyrian name, Bel-balatu. As a Horonite, he was probably a native of one of the Bethhorons, the upper or the lower (see Joshua 16:3, Joshua 16:5; 2 Chronicles 8:5), and therefore born within the limits of the old kingdom of Samaria. Tobiah seems to have been an Ammonite slave, high in the favor of Sanballat, whom he probably served as secretary Nehemiah 6:17-19 and chief adviser.

It grieved them - Compare Ezra 5:6-17. The revival of Jerusalem as a great and strong city, which was Nehemiah‘s aim, was likely to interfere with the prosperity, or at any rate the eminence, of Samaria.

Verse 13

The gate of the valley - A gate opening on the valley of Hinnom, which skirted Jerusalem to the west and south. The exact position is uncertain; as is also that of “the dragon well.”

The dung port - The gate by which offal and excrements were conveyed out of the city, and placed eastward of the valley-gate.

Verse 14

The gate of the fountain - A gate on the eastern side of the Tyropoeon valley, not far from the pool of Siloam (probably “the king‘s pool.” (Compare Nehemiah 3:15).

Verse 15

The brook - The Kidron watercourse, which skirted the city on the east.

Turned back - i. e. he turned westward, and having made the circuit of the city, re-entered by the valley-gate.

Verse 16

The rulers - The principal authorities of the city, in the absence of the special governor.

The rest that did the work - i. e. “the laboring class that (afterward) actually built the wall.”

Verse 18

The king‘s words - These have not been given; but the royal permission to restore the walls is implied in Nehemiah 2:5-6.

Verse 19

Geshem the Arabian - The discovery that Sargon populated Samaria in part with an Arab colony explains why Arabs should have opposed the fortification of Jerusalem.

NEHEMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

Eliashib (compare the marginal reference) was the grandson of Joshua, the high priest contemporary with Zerubbabel.

The sheep gate - This was a gate in the eastern wall, not far from the pool of Bethesda, marginal reference, which was perhaps originally a sheep-pool.

The exact line which the writer follows in describing the circuit of the wall will probably be always a matter of dispute. According to the view here taken, the line described commences near the pool of Bethesda, on the east of the city, and is traced thence, first, northward, then westward, then southward, and finally eastward, as far as the pool of Siloam Nehemiah 3:15. From this point, it seems to the writer of this note that the line of the outer wall is not followed, but, instead of this, the inner wall of the "city of David," which included the temple, is traced. This wall is followed northward from the pool of Siloam, past the "sepulchres of David" and Hezekiah's pool to the "armoury" Nehemiah 3:19 at its northwest corner; it is then followed eastward to "the tower which lieth out from the king's house" Nehemiah 3:25; from this it is carried southward, along the western edge of the Kidron valley to the "great tower which lieth out" Nehemiah 3:27, and then southwestward to the point at which it commenced near Siloam Nehemiah 3:27. The special wall of the "city of David" being thus completed, the writer finishes his entire account by filling up the small interval between the northeast angle of this fortification and the "sheep-gate" Nehemiah 3:28-32, from which he started.

They sanctified it - The priests commenced the work with a formal ceremony of consecration. When the work was completed, there was a solemn dedication of the entire circuit (see Nehemiah 12:27-43).

The tower of Hananeel is often mentioned; that of Meah, or rather Hammeah, or "the Hundred," in Nehemiah only. Both towers must have been situated toward the northeastern corner of the city.

Verse 2

The people of each provincial town were set to work for the most part on the portion of the wall nearest their city. Thus, "the men of Jericho," were employed at the northeast corner of Jerusalem.

Verse 3

The fish gate - The gate through which fish from the Jordan and the Sea of Galilee entered Jerusalem; a gate in the north wall, a little to the east of the modern Damascus gate.

Locks - The word used (here and in Nehemiah 3:6, Nehemiah 3:13-15) is thought to mean rather a "cross-bar" than a lock, while that translated "bars" is regarded as denoting the "hooks" or "catches" which held the cross-bar at its two ends.

Verse 5

Tekoites - See 2 Samuel 14:2 note.

Verse 6

The old gate - Either the modern Damascus gate, the main entrance to the city on the north side; or a gate a little further eastward.

Verse 7

Unto the throne … - The meaning is thought to be "the men of Gibeon and Mizpah, who, though they worked for Nehemiah, were not under his government, but belonged to the jurisdiction of the governor on this side the river."

Verse 11

The other piece - Rather, "another piece" (as in Nehemiah 3:19, Nehemiah 3:21, Nehemiah 3:27, Nehemiah 3:30). It is conjectured that a verse has fallen out in which Malchijah's and Hashub's "first piece" was mentioned.

The tower of the furnaces - Either a tower at the northwestern angle of the city; or, midway in the western wall. The origin of the name is uncertain.

Verse 13

Zanoah lay west of Jerusalem, at the distance of about 10 miles (Joshua 15:34 note).

Verse 15

The "pool of Siloah" lies at the southwestern foot of the temple hill, near the lower end of the Tyropoeon. It appears to have been at all times beyond the line of the city wall, but was perhaps joined to the city by a fortification of its own.

The king's gardens - See 2 Kings 25:4 note.

The stairs - A flight of steps, still to be seen, led from the low valley of the Tyropoeon up the steep sides of Ophel to the "city of David," which it

reached probably at a point not far south of the temple.

Verse 16

Beth-zur - Now Beit-sur, on the road from Jerusalem to Hebron Joshua 15:58.

By "the sepulchres of David" must be understood the burial place in which David and the kings his descendants to the time of Hezekiah were interred. This was an excavation in the rock, in the near vicinity of the temple Ezekiel 43:7-9, and on its western side. The position of the burial-place was well known until the destruction of the city by Titus; but modern research has not yet discovered it.

The pool - Probably that made by Hezekiah in the Tyropoeon valley, west of the temple area (marginal reference).

Verses 17-30

The constant mention of "priests," "Levites," and Nethinims," sufficiently indicates that the writer is here concerned with the sacerdotal quarter, that immediately about the temple.

Nehemiah 3:18

Bavai - Or, "Binnui" Nehemiah 3:24; Nehemiah 10:9.

The armoury at the turning of the wall - literally, "the armoury of the corner." The northwestern corner of the special wall of the "city of David" seems to be intended. See Nehemiah 3:1 note.

Nehemiah 3:20

The other piece - Rather, "another piece." The notice of Baruch's first piece, like that of Malchijah's and Hashub's Nehemiah 3:11, seems to have slipped out of the text.

Nehemiah 3:22

The word here translated "plain" is applied in the rest of Scripture almost exclusively to the Ghor or Jordan valley. Compare, however, Nehemiah 12:28.

Nehemiah 3:24

The turning of the wall - The northeastern angle of the "city of David" seems here to be reached. At this point a tower "lay out" Nehemiah 3:25, or projected extraordinarily, from the wall, being probably a watch-tower commanding the Kidron valley and all the approaches to the city from the southeast, the east, and the northeast.

Nehemiah 3:25

The “king‘s high house” is almost certainly the old palace of David, which was on the temple hill, and probably occupied a position directly north of the temple.

That was by the court of the prison - Prisons were in old times adjuncts of palaces. The palace of David must have had its prison; and the “prison gate” Nehemiah 12:39 was clearly in this quarter.

Nehemiah 3:26

The marginal reading is better. On the Nethinims see 1 Chronicles 9:2 note.

Ophel was the slope south of the temple (see the marginal reference “y” note); and the water-gate, a gate in the eastern wall, either for the escape of the superfluous water from the temple reservoirs, or for the introduction of water from the Kidron valley when the reservoirs were low.

Nehemiah 3:27

The foundations of an outlying tower near the southeast angle of the temple area in this position have been recently discovered.

Nehemiah 3:28

“The horse gate” was on the east side of the city, overlooking the Kidron valley. It seems to have been a gate by which horses approached and left the old palace, that of David, which lay north of the temple Nehemiah 3:25.

Verse 31

The gate Miphkad - Not elsewhere mentioned. It must have been in the east, or northeast, wall, a little to the south of the “sheep-gate”

NEHEMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 4

The parenthetical prayers of Nehemiah form one of the most striking characteristics of his history. Here we have the first. Other examples are Nehemiah 5:19; Nehemiah 6:9, Nehemiah 6:14; Nehemiah 13:14, Nehemiah 13:22, Nehemiah 13:29, Nehemiah 13:31.

Verse 6

Unto the half thereof - i. e. to half the intended height.

Verse 7

The Arabians … - Probably a band, composed largely of Arabians, Ammonites, and Ashdodites, which Sanballat maintained as a guard to his person, and which formed a portion of "the army of Samaria" Nehemiah 4:2. A quarrel between such a band and the people of Jerusalem might be overlooked by the Persian king.

Verse 9

Because of them - Or, "over against them," i. e. opposite to the place where they were encamped, probably on the north side of the city.

Verse 12

Ten times - i. e. repeatedly.

From all places … - Better as in the margin. The Jews who dwelt on the Samaritan border, came to Jerusalem and tried to withdraw their contingents of workmen from the work, representing to them the impending danger, and saying, "You must return to your homes, and so escape it."

Verse 13

The lower places - The places where those within the walls had the least advantage of elevation, the naturally weak places, where an enemy was likely to make his attack.

Verse 16

Habergeons - Or, "coats of mail." Coats of mail were common in Assyria from the ninth century B.C., and in Egypt even earlier. They were made of thin laminae of bronze or iron, sewn upon leather or linen, and overlapping one another.

Verse 22

Let every one … lodge within Jerusalem - i. e. Let none return to his own village or city at night, but let all take their rest in Jerusalem."

Verse 23

Saving … - The text here is probably unsound. It yields no satisfactory sense. See the margin.

NEHEMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 2

Are many - A slight emendation brings this verse into exact parallelism with the next, and gives the sense - "We have pledged our sons and our daughters, that we might get corn, and eat and live." Compare Nehemiah 5:5.

Verse 4

The king's tribute - The tax payable to the Persian monarch (compare Ezra 4:13; Esther 10:1). In ancient times, heavy taxation was often productive of debt and distress.

Verse 5

The power of a father to sell his daughter into slavery is expressly mentioned in the Law Exodus 21:7. The power to sell a son appears from this passage. In either case, the sale held good for only six years, or until the next year of jubilee (see the marginal references).

Verse 7

Ye exact usury - The phrase is unique to Nehemiah, and is best explained by the context, which shows the practice of the rich Jews at the time to have been not so much to lend on usury as to lend on mortgage and pledge.

Verse 8

Nehemiah contrasts his own example with that of the rich Jews. He had spent money in redeeming some countrymen in servitude among the pagan; they were causing others to be sold into slavery among the Jews.

Verse 10

I … might exact - Nehemiah had lent, but not upon pledge.

Verse 11

The hundredth part of the money … - i. e. the interest. It is conjectured that the 100th part was payable monthly, or, in other words, that interest was taken at the rate of twelve per cent. The Law altogether disallowed the taking of interest from Israelites (see Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:36, etc.).

Verse 13

I shook my lap - Compare the marginal references. By "lap" is meant a fold in the bosom of the dress, capable of serving as a pocket. Compare Isaiah 49:22 margin.

Verse 14

Have not eaten the bread of the governor - i. e. "have not, like other Persian governors, lived at the expense of the people under my government." See Ezra 4:14 note.

Verse 15

Forty shekels of silver - A daily sum from the entire province. For such a table as that kept by Nehemiah Nehemiah 5:18, this would be a very moderate payment.

Verse 16

I continued … land - i. e. - "I took my share in the work of the wall, as general superintendent. I did not take advantage of the general poverty to buy poor men's plots of ground."

Verse 18

Compare the far grander provision for Solomon's table (see the marginal reference).

NEHEMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

Upon the gates - Rather, "in the gates." This work would naturally be delayed until the last phase.

Verse 2

The choice made of Ono, on the skirts of Benjamin, 25 or 30 miles from Jerusalem, as the meeting-place, was, no doubt, in order to draw Nehemiah to a distance from his supporters, that so an attack might be made on him with a better chance of success.

Verse 5

The letter was "open," in order that the contents might be generally known, and that the Jews, alarmed at the threats contained in it, might refuse to continue the work.

Verse 10

Who was shut up - On account, probably, of some legal uncleaness. Compare Jeremiah 36:5.

Verse 11

Would go into the temple to save his life - Rather "could go into the temple and live." For a layman to enter the sanctuary was a capital offence (see Numbers 18:7).

Verse 12

The existence of a party among the Jews who sided with Sanballat and lent themselves to his schemes, is here for the first time indicated. Compare Nehemiah 6:14, Nehemiah 6:17-19; Nehemiah 13:4-5, Nehemiah 13:28.

Verse 14

Noadiah is not elsewhere mentioned. The examples of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Anna, show that the prophetical gift was occasionally bestowed upon women (2 Kings 22:14 note).

Verse 15

Elul - The sixth month, corresponding to the latter part of August and the beginning of September.

In fifty and two days - Josephus states that the repairs of the wall occupied two years and four months. But Nehemiah's narrative is thoroughly consistent with itself, and contains in it nothing that is improbable. The walls everywhere existed at the time that he commenced his task, and only needed repairs. The work was partitioned among at least

37 working parties, who labored simultaneously, with material ready at hand; and, notwithstanding all menaces, uninterruptedly.

Verse 18

Though Tobiah is called "the servant" or "slave" Nehemiah 2:10, Nehemiah 2:19, and was perhaps a bought slave of Sanballat's, yet he was in such a position that Jewish nobles readily contracted affinity with him. This is quite in harmony with the practice of the East, where slaves often fill high positions and make great marriages.

NEHEMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

Since the watch of the temple had hitherto been kept by porters, singers, and Levites 1 Chronicles 26:1-19, so now the watch of the entire city was committed to men of the same three classes, their experience pointing them out as the most suitable persons.

Verse 2

My brother Hanani - See Nehemiah 1:2.

The ruler of the palace - Or, "the governor of the fortress." See the marginal reference note.

He - i. e. Hananiah.

Verse 3

Until the sun be hot - An unusual precaution. The ordinary practice in the East is to open town gates at sunrise.

Verse 4

The people were few - The number of those who returned with Zerubbabel was no more than 42,360 Nehemiah 7:66. Less than 2,000 people had come with Ezra Ezra 8:1-20.

Verse 5

It is argued by some that the entire catalogue which follows Nehemiah 7:7 and Ezra 2:2 are, however, very positive in their support of the usual view; and some of the arguments against it are thought to be met by considering the Nehemiah of Nehemiah 7:7 and Ezra 2:2 a person different from Nehemiah the governor; and "Tirshatha" an official title likely to have belonged to others besides Nehemiah (see the Ezra 2:63 note.)

Verses 70-73

Compared with Ezra 2:69 there is considerable difference between the totals for gold, silver, and garments. The usual explanation is that of corruption in the one or the other of the passages.

Nehemiah 7:73

Dwelt in their cities - Nehemiah's quotation from Zerubbabel's register ends here, and the narration of events in Jerusalem in his own day is resumed from Nehemiah 7:3. The narrative Nehemiah 7:73 should stand as the beginning of Nehemiah 8 (as in the Septuagint). The text would then run: "And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel

were in their cities, the whole people gathered themselves together as one man," etc. Compare the margin reference.

NEHEMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

The street - Rather, "the square" or "court." So in Nehemiah 8:16 (compare Ezra 10:9). The court seems to have been one between the eastern gate of the temple and the watergate in the city-wall. It would thus lie within the modern Haram area.

Ezra the scribe - This is the first mention of Ezra in the present book, and the first proof we have had that he was contemporary with Nehemiah. Probably he returned to the court of Artaxerxes soon after effecting the reforms which he relates in Ezra 7:10, Ezra 7:25.

Verse 2

Upon the first day of the seventh month - The day of the "Feast of Trumpets" (see the margin reference note). The gathering together of the people, spoken of in Nehemiah 8:1, was probably to observe this feast.

Verse 4

The 13 persons mentioned were probably the chief priests of the course (shift) which was at the time performing the temple service.

Verse 5

Stood up - The attitude of attention and respect. Compare the existing practice of the Christian Church at the reading of the Gospel for the day.

Verse 7

The names here (and in Nehemiah 9:4, Nehemiah 9:5; Nehemiah 10:9) seem not to be the personal appellations of individuals, but rather designations of Levitical families, the descendants respectively of Jeshua, etc., who lived not later than the time of Zerubbabel Nehemiah 7:43; Nehemiah 12:8.

Verse 8

Gave the sense - Either by rendering the Hebrew into the Aramaic dialect, or perhaps simply by explaining obscure words or passages.

Caused them to understand - Either "they (the people) understood what was read;" or, "they (the Levites) expounded as they read."

Verse 9

Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha - Hereto, Nehemiah has called himself פחה *pechâh* Nehemiah 5:14-15, Nehemiah 5:18, which is the ordinary word for "governor." Now for the first time he is called ‹the Tirshatha‘" (see Ezra 2:63 note.)

The people wept … - Because the Law brought vividly before them their sins of omission and commission. In Nehemiah 8:10 the Jews were not forbidden to be sorry for their sins, but they were only prohibited from marring a festive occasion with the expression of their sorrow.

Verse 10

The "sending of portions" to the poor is not distinctly mentioned in any but the later historical Scriptures (compare the margin reference). The practice naturally grew out of this injunction of the Law Deuteronomy 16:11, Deuteronomy 16:14.

Verse 13

To understand - Rather, "to consider."

Verse 14

The Feast of tabernacles had fallen into abeyance either entirely, or as regarded the dwelling in booths Nehemiah 8:17, since the time when it was kept by Zerubbabel Ezra 3:4. It is evident that the observance of the Law, impossible during the captivity, was restored slowly and with difficulty after the return.

Verse 15

The mount - The "mount of Olives" is probably intended.

Pine branches - Rather, "branches of the wild olive." The actual trees named by the Law may have become scarce. It was probably considered that the spirit of the command was kept if branches of trees similar in general character to those named in Leviticus were employed.

Verse 17

It is not the intention of the writer to state that the Feast of tabernacles had not been kept from the time of Joshua until this occasion (see 1 Kings 8:2, 1 Kings 8:65; Ezra 3:4); but that there had been no such celebration as this since Joshua's time. Compare 2 Kings 23:22; 2 Chronicles 35:18.

NEHEMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

The festival lasted from the 15th day of the 7th month to the first. The 22nd day was a day of solemn observance Nehemiah 8:18. One day seems to have been allowed the people for rest; and then the work of repentance, for which they had shown themselves ready Nehemiah 8:9, was taken in hand, and a general fast was proclaimed.

Verse 4

The Septuagint and the Vulgate remove the comma after "stairs." By the "stairs (or scaffold) of the Levites" is to be understood as an elevated platform from which they could the better address and lead the people (compare Nehemiah 8:4).

Verse 5

Stand up - The people had knelt to confess and to worship God Nehemiah 9:3. They were now to take the proper attitude for praise. Compare throughout the margin reference.

Verse 6

The host of heaven worshippeth thee - i. e the angels. See 1 Kings 22:19; Psalm 103:21.

Verse 17

In their rebellion - The Septuagint and several maunscripts have "in Egypt" (the words in the original differing by one letter only), and translate - "And appointed a captain to return to their bondage in Egypt." Compare the margin reference. The appointment of a leader is regarded here as made, whereas we are only told in the Book of Numbers that it was proposed.

Verse 22

Thou didst divide them into corners - i. e., parts of the holy land; or as some prefer "thou didst distribute them on all sides."

Verse 25

Became fat. - i. e., "grew proud," or "wanton" - a phrase only occurring here, in the margin reference, and in Jeremiah 5:28.

Delighted themselves - Rather, "luxuriated." The word in the original does not occur elsewhere; but cognate terms make the sense clear.

Verse 26

Slew thy prophets - Compare 1 Kings 18:4; 1 Kings 19:10; 2 Chronicles 24:21. Jewish tradition further affirms that more than one of the

great prophets (e. g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel) were martyred by their countrymen.

Verse 27

Thou gavest them saviours - See Judges 3:15 etc.

Verse 38

Seal unto it - The exact force of the phrase used is doubtful; but its general sense must be that the classes named took part in the sealing. It was usual in the East to authenticate covenants by appending the seals of those who were parties to them (see Jeremiah 32:10).

NEHEMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

The "Zidkijah" of this passage is probably the same as "Zadok" Nehemiah 13:13. "Zadok" is expressly called "the scribe," and it was probably as the scribe who drew up the document that "Zidkijah" signed it immediately after Nehemiah.

Verses 2-8

The names are not personal, but designate families. The seal of the high-priestly house of Seraiah was probably appended either by Ezra or Eliashib, both of whom belonged to it.

Verse 31

Bring ware … on the sabbath day - Compare Nehemiah 13:16, where this desecration of the Sabbath is shown to have commonly taken place.

Leave the seventh year … - i. e., "let the land rest in the sabbatical year" (margin reference) and give up the "pledge-taking" Nehemiah 10:2-10.

Verse 32

The third part of a sheckel - This appears to have been the first occasion on which an annual payment toward the maintenance of the temple service and fabric was established. The half-shekel of the Law Exodus 30:13 was paid only at the time of a census (which rarely took place), and was thus not a recurring tax. In later times, the annual payment was raised from the third of a shekel to half a shekel Matthew 17:24.

Verse 34

No special provision was made by the Law, by David, or by Solomon, for the supply of wood necessary to keep fire ever burning upon the altar. Nehemiah established a system by which the duty of supplying the wood was laid as a burden in turn on the various clans or families, which were regarded as constituting the nation. The lot was used to determine the order in which the several families should perform the duty. A special day (the 14th of the fifth month, according to Josephus) was appointed for the bringing in of the supply; and this day was after a time regarded as a high festival, and called "the feast of the wood-offering."

NEHEMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

To bring one of ten - Artificial enlargements of capitals by forcible transfers of population to them, were not unusual in ancient times. About 500 B.C., Syracuse became a great city in this way. Tradition ascribed the greatness of Rome, in part, to this cause.

Verses 4-19

See the margin reference notes. Both accounts appear to be extracts from a public official register which Nehemiah caused to be made of his census. The census itself seems to have been confined to the dwellers at Jerusalem. The subjoined table exhibits the differences between the accounts of the entire population of Jerusalem as given in Nehemiah and in Chronicles:

d

d 1ChronNehemiah

d

d Tribes of Judah

d

d

d Of Pharez

d 468

d

d Of Zerah

d 690

d

d **Tribe of Benjamin**

d 956928

d

d **Tribe of Levi**

d

d

d Priests

d 17601192

d

d Levites

d 284

d

d Porters

d 212172

d

d

According to Nehemiah‘s numbers, supplemented from Chronicles, the entire adult male population of the city was 3,734, which would give a total

population of 14,936. According to Chronicles, supplemented from Nehemiah, the adult males were 4,370, and consequently the entire population, would have been 17,480. As the Nethinims and the Israelites of Ephraim and Manasseh 1 Chronicles 9:3 are not included in either list, we may conclude that the actual number of the inhabitants, after the efforts recorded in Nehemiah 11:1-2, was not much short of 20,000.

Nehemiah 11:16

The outward business of the house of God - Such as the collection of the newly-imposed tax Nehemiah 10:32, the providing of the regular sacrifices, the renewal of vestments, and the like.

Nehemiah 11:17

The principal to begin the thanksgiving - i. e., "the precentor," or "leader of the choir."

sa40

Verse 20

The returned community, though consisting mainly of members of the two tribes, represented the entire people of Israel. The ground, however, which they occupied, was not the whole land, but that which had constituted the kingdom of Judah.

Verse 21

Ophel, the southern spur of the temple hill, having a wall of its own Nehemiah 3:27 might be reckoned either in Jerusalem or outside it. Here it is made a separate place.

Verse 22

The business intended was probably the internal business, as distinct from the "outward business" Nehemiah 11:16: a part of which was the apportionment of the royal bounty among the members of the choir Nehemiah 11:23.

Verse 23

The goodwill of Artaxerxes toward the ministers employed in the temple service, had been previously shown by his exempting them from taxation of every kind Ezra 7:24. Now, it would seem, he had gone further and assigned to the singers an allowance from the royal revenue.

Verse 24

It is difficult to say what office Pethahiah filled. So far as we know, the only regular officers under the Persian system of government were the

satrap, the subsatrap, the permanent royal secretary, the commandant, and the occasional commissary.

Verse 25

Kirjath-arba - i. e., Hebron. In the absence of the Hebrews during the captivity, the place had recovered its old name Joshua 15:13.

Verses 26-35

Many of the places mentioned in these verses are mentioned in Joshua 15:27-39; Joshua 18:21-28.

Verse 36

Of the Levites were divisions - i. e., "the Levites were scattered among various towns both in Judah and Benjamin."

NEHEMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Introduction

This chapter is made up of two portions:

(a) lists of the leading priests and Levites at different periods Nehemiah 12:1-9;

(2) the succession of the high priests from Jeshua to Jaddua Nehemiah 12:10-11;

(3) the actual heads of the priestly families in the time of the high priest Joiakim Nehemiah 12:12-21;

(4) the chief Levitical families at the same period Nehemiah 12:24-26.

Of these lists, List 1, List 3, and List 4, may have been drawn up in the time of Nehemiah, but List 2, in its present form, must be much later. See the introduction of the Book of Nehemiah.

Verse 1

The priests - The number of the names here given, which is 22, is probably to be connected with that of the Davidic "courses," which was 24 1 Chronicles 24:7-18. Eight names are identical with those of the heads in David's time. On comparing the present list with that of the families who sealed to Nehemiah's covenant Nehemiah 10:2-8, we shall find that the first sixteen recur in that document nearly in the same order; but that the last six are absent from it. It would seem that as these six declined to seal to Nehemiah's covenant, they were placed below the rest here in a sort of supplementary list. Note especially the "and" which connects the second part of the lists with the earlier part, both in Nehemiah 12:6 and in Nehemiah 12:19.

Verse 8

Of the Levitical houses here mentioned, three only returned at first, those of Jeshua, Kadmiel, and Judah or Hodevah Nehemiah 7:43. The others must have returned subsequently.

Verse 10-11

The six generations of high priests covered a little more than two centuries (538-333 B.C.), or a little under thirty-five years to a generation. Jaddua was the high priest who (according to Josephus) had an interview with Alexander shortly after the battle of Issus.

Verse 22-23

These verses interrupt the account of the church officers in the time of Joiakim, resumed in Nehemiah 12:24. They appear to be an addition to the original text, made about the time of Alexander the Great, when the Books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah would seem to have first taken their existing shape. The same writer who introduced these verses, probably also added Nehemiah 12:11 to the original text.

Darius the Persian - Probably Darius Codomannus (336-331 B.C.), the antagonist of Alexander the Great. See the introduction of the Book of Nehemiah.

This passage shows that the practice of keeping a record of public events in state archives was continued after the return from the captivity, at least to the time of Johanan, the son, i. e., "the grandson," of Eliasbib.

Verse 24

Jeshua the son of Kadmiel - If the reading be sound, this Jeshua must have been the head of the Levitical family of Kadmiel in the time of Joiakim; but (compare Nehemiah 8:7; Nehemiah 9:4), some read "Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel," etc.

Ward over against ward - i. e., "alternately," one part of the choir corresponding the other.

Verse 25

In 1 Chronicles 9:17, 1 Chronicles 9:24, 1 Chronicles 9:26, four families of porters only are mentioned; six are implied here, in Nehemiah 7:45, and in Ezra 2:42. From 1 Chronicles 26:14-19 it appears that the temple had four chief gates, fronting the cardinal points, and two minor ones, "toward Asuppim," and "at Parbar."

Verse 27

The dedication of the wall - The ceremony had been deferred for the space of nearly 12 years Nehemiah 13:6. Perhaps Nehemiah required an express permission from the Persian king before he could venture on a solemnity which might have been liable to misrepresentation.

Out of all their places - i. e., out of the various cities of Judah and Benjamin in which they dwelt Nehemiah 11:36.

Verse 28

The plain country round about Jerusalem - Perhaps the valleys of Hinnom and Jehoshaphat, which enclose Jerusalem on three sides, are intended.

The villages of Netophathi - Rather, as in 1 Chronicles 9:16. Netophah lay near Bethlehem 1 Chronicles 2:54, and is perhaps represented by the modern Antubeh.

Verse 29

The house of Gilgal - Or, "Beth-Gilgal" - probably the Gilgal north of Jerusalem (now "Jiljilia).

Verse 31

I brought up - Note the resumption of the first person, which has been laid aside since Nehemiah 7:5, and which is confirmed now to the end of the book. It is generally allowed that we have here once more a memoir by Nehemiah himself.

The two "companies" or choirs, having ascended the wall on its western face, near the modern Jaffa Gate, stood looking eastward toward the city and temple; then the southern choir, being on the right, commenced the circuit of the southern wall, while the choir upon the left proceeded round the northern wall Nehemiah 12:38-39, until both met on the eastern wall, between the water and the prison gates.

Verse 34

"Judah and Benjamin" are the lay people of those two tribes.

Verse 37

Above the house of David - This choir or procession went above (or beyond) the old palace of David, following the line described in Nehemiah 3:16-26, on their way to the eastern wall.

Verse 44

Judah rejoiced - Judah's satisfaction with the priests and Levites took the shape of increased offerings, more ample tithes, and the like, from where the appointment of treasuries and treasurers became necessary.

Verse 45

The ward of the purification - The observances with respect to purification. Compare 1 Chronicles 23:28.

Verse 47

The intention is to compare the religious activity and strictness of Nehemiah‘s time with that which had prevailed under Zerubbabel, as described by Ezra Ezra 6:16, Ezra 6:22. It is implied that the intermediate period had been a time of laxity.

They sanctified holy things … - i. e, “the people paid their tithes regularly to the Levites, and the Levites paid the tithe of the tithes to the priests.”

NEHEMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

On that day - Or, "at that time," as in Nehemiah 12:44.

The entire Pentateuch is probably meant by "the Book of Moses".

Verse 3

A separation like that made by Ezra, some 20 years previously Ezra 10:15-44, seems to be intended. The pagan wives were divorced and sent back, with their offspring, to their own countries.

Verse 4

The relations of Eliashib, the high priest Nehemiah 3:1, with Tobiah and Sanballat will account for the absence of any reference to him either in 1 Kings 6:5-10.

Allied - i. e, "connected by marriage." Tobiah was married to a Jewess Nehemiah 6:18, who may have been a relation of Eliashib; and his son Johanan was married to another Nehemiah 6:18, of whom the same may be said.

Verse 5

The offerings of the priests - i e "the portion of the offerings assigned for their sustenance to the priests."

Verse 6

Artaxerxes king of Babylon - See Nehemiah 1:1. Compare Ezra 6:22, where Darius Hystaspis is called "king of Assyria."

After certain days - Or, "at the end of a year," which is a meaning that the phrase often has Exodus 13:10; Leviticus 25:29-30; Numbers 9:22. Nehemiah probably went to the court at Babylon in 433 B.C., and returned to Jerusalem 432 B.C.

Verse 9

The chambers - The "great chamber" assigned to Tobiah Nehemiah 13:5 contained, it would seem, more than one apartment.

Verse 10

etc. During Nehemiah's absence there had been a general falling away, and there was danger of a complete national apostasy.

Verse 11

I gathered them together - Nehemiah gathered the Levites from their lands, and reinstated them in their set offices.

Verse 15

The desecration of the Sabbath is first brought into prominence among the sins of the Jewish people by Jeremiah Jeremiah 17:21-27. It could not but have gained ground during the captivity, when foreign masters would not have allowed the cessation of labor for one day in seven. On the return from the captivity, the sabbatical rest appears to have been one of the institutions most difficult to re-establish.

In the day - Some render, "concerning the day."

Verse 16

Friendly relations subsisted between the Phoenicians and the Jews, after the captivity Ezra 3:7. It was, however, a new fact, and one pregnant with evil consequences, that the Tyrians should have established a permanent colony at Jerusalem. Its influence on the other inhabitants weakened the hold of the Law upon men's consciences, and caused it to be transgressed continually more and more openly.

Verse 19

The gates were closed at the sunset of the day before the Sabbath; since the Sabbath was regarded as commencing on the previous evening.

Verse 21

The lodging of the merchants with their merchandise just outside Jerusalem during the Sabbath, marked their impatience for the moment when they might bring their wares in. This was thought by Nehemiah to be unseemly, and to have an irreligious tendency.

Verse 22

I commanded the Levites - At first Nehemiah had employed his own retinue Nehemiah 13:19 in the work of keeping the gates. He now assigned the duty to the Levites, as one which properly belonged to them, since the object of the regulation was the due observance of the Sabbath.

Verse 24

The speech of Ashdod - The Philistine language, which was akin to that of Egypt.

According to the language of each people - The children spoke a mixed dialect - half-Philistine, half-Hebrew.

Verse 30

The wards - Rather, "the offices or observances." Nehemiah's arrangement is probably that described in Nehemiah 11:10-22.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
Esther

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Contents

ESTHER INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Esther

The Book of Esther is entitled by the Jews, “the volume of Esther,” or simply “the volume.” In ancient times, it was always written on a separate roll, which was read entirely at the Feast of Purim. The Greek translators retained only “Esther,” which thus became the ordinary title among Christians.

1. There is much controversy concerning the date of “Esther.” The extreme minuteness of the details and vividness of the portraits in “Esther” certainly suggest the hand of a contemporary far more decidedly than any occasional expressions suggest a composer who lived long after the events commemorated. And the tone of the book is in accord with the history which it narrates, and is not unlike that of Zechariah. Therefore, on the whole, there is no sufficient ground for placing the composition of Esther later than that of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, or the time of Artaxerxes Longimanus. On the other hand, there is no ground for regarding Esther as earlier than the other post-captivity historical books - much less for placing it in the reign of Xerxes. Assuming Ahasuerus to be Xerxes (see point number 3 below), it may be said that both the opening sentence and the conclusion of the work indicate that the reign of Xerxes was over. Consequently, the earliest date that can reasonably be assigned to the book is 464 B.C.; and it is, on the whole, most probable that it was composed 20 or 30 years later (444-434 B.C.).

2. There are no means of determining who was the author of “Esther.” He was not Ezra. He may have been Mordecai, or, more probably, a younger contemporary of Mordecai‘s.

The author, whoever he was, almost certainly wrote in Persia, where he had access to the royal archives, which contained an account, more or less full, of the transactions he was desirous of recording. Much also must have been derived from personal observation, and from communications with Mordecai and (perhaps) Esther. The book is more of a purely historical book than any other book in Scripture. Its main scope is simply to give an account of the circumstances under which the Feast of Purim was instituted. The absence of the name of God, and the slightness of the religious and

didactic elements are marked characteristics. The author‘s Persian breeding, together probably with other circumstances, has prevented his sharing the ordinary Jewish spirit of local attachment, while at the same time, it has taught him a reticence with respect to the doctrines of his religion very unusual with his countrymen.

The narrative is striking and graphic; the style remarkably chaste and simple; and the sentences clear and unambiguous. The vocabulary, on the contrary, is, as might have been expected, not altogether pure, a certain number of Persian words being employed, and also a few terms characteristic of the later Hebrew or “Chaldee” dialect.

3. The authenticity of the history of Esther has been inpugned; but the main circumstances of the narrative, which at first sight appear improbable, are not so if the especially extravagant and capricious character of the Persian monarch be taken into account. Etymologically, the name Ahasuerus is identical with the Persian “Khshayarsha” and the Greek “Xerxes”; and it is to this particular Persian monarch that the portrait of Ahasuerus exhibits a striking similarity. The chronological notices in the work also exactly fit this monarch‘s history; and the entire representation of the court and kingdom is suitable to his time and character. That we have no direct profane confirmation of the narrative of Esther must be admitted, for the identity of Mordecai with Matacas (see Esther 2:5) is too doubtful to be relied upon; but that we have none, is sufficiently accounted for by the fact that the accounts of the reign of Xerxes after his 6th year, and more particularly, of his domestic life, are scanty in the extreme, the native records being silent, and the Greek writers concerning themselves almost entirely with those public events which bore upon the history of Greece. “Esther” is, in fact, the sole authority for the period and circumstances of which it treats; if untrue, it might have easily been proved to be untrue at the time when it was published, by reference to the extant “book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia,” which it quotes Esther 2:23; Esther 10:2. It has, moreover, always been regarded by the Jews as an authentic account of the great deliverance which they celebrate annually by the feast of Purim.

4. In the Septuagint version occur “additions” to Esther consisting of five principal passages.

Their unauthentencity is very evident. They contradict the original document, and are quite different in tone and style from the rest of the book.

The principal intention of the “additions” is clear enough. They aim at giving a thoroughly religious character to a work in which, as originally written, the religious element was latent or only just perceptible. On the whole we may conclude that the Greek book of Esther, as we have it, was composed in the following way:

1. First, a translation was made of the Hebrew text, honest for the most part, but with a few very short additions and omissions;

2. Then, the markedly religious portions were added, the opening passage, the prayers of Mordecai and Esther, the exordium to Esther 5:1-14, the religious touches in Esther 6:1, Esther 6:13; and the concluding verses of Esther 10:1-3.

3. Finally, the “letters of Ahasuerus” were composed by a writer more familiar than most Hellenists with the true spirit of the Greek tongue, and these, being accepted as genuine, were inserted in Esther 3:1-15 and Esther 8.

ESTHER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

Ahasuerus - . Xerxes, the son of Darius Hystaspis. His empire is rightly described as from India even unto Ethiopia. The satrapies of Darius Hystaspis reached 29 in number, and the nations under Xerxes were about 60. The 127 "provinces" include probably sub-satrapies and other smaller divisions of the great governments.

Verse 3

In the third year - In this year, 483 B.C., Xerxes assembled the governors of provinces at Susa, in connection with his contemplated expedition against Greece.

The nobles - literally, "the first men." The Hebrew word used is one adopted from the Persian.

Verse 5

Feasts on this extensive scale were not unusual in the East. Cyrus is said on one occasion to have feasted "all the Persians." Even ordinarily, the later Persian monarchs entertained 15,000 persons at their table.

Verse 6

Rather, "where was an awning of fine white cotton and violet." White and blue (or violet) were the royal colors in Persia. Such awnings as are here described were very suitable to the pillared halls and porches of a Persian summer-palace, and especially to the situation of that of Susa.

The beds - Rather, "couches" or "sofas," on which the guests reclined at meals.

A pavement … - See the margin. It is generally agreed that the four substances named are stones; but to identify the stones, or even their colors, is difficult.

Verse 8

According to the law - An exception to the ordinary practice of compulsory drinking had been made on this occasion by the king's order.

Verse 9

Vashti - If Ahasuerus is Xerxes, Vashti would be Amestris, whom the Greeks regarded as the only legitimate wife of that monarch, and who was certainly married to him before he ascended the throne. The name may be explained either as a corruption of Amestris, or as a title, vahishta, (Sanskrit: vasishtha, the superlative of vasu, "sweet"); and it may be

supposed that the disgrace recorded (Esther 1:19-21, see the note) was only temporary; Amestris in the later part of Xerxes‘ reign recovering her former dignity.

Verse 11

To bring Vashti the queen - This command, though contrary to Persian customs, is not out of harmony with the character of Xerxes; and is evidently related as something strange and unusual. Otherwise, the queen would not have refused to come.

Verse 13

Wise men … - Not “astrologers,” who were unknown in Persia; but rather men of practical wisdom, who knew the facts and customs of former times.

For so was the king‘s manner - Some render it: “for so was the king‘s business laid before all that knew law … ”

Verse 14

In Marsena we may perhaps recognize the famous Mardonius, and in Admatha, Xerxes‘ uncle, Artabanus.

The seven princes - There were seven families of the first rank in Persia, from which alone the king could take his wives. Their chiefs were entitled to have free access to the monarch‘s person. See the margin reference note.

Verse 18

Translate it: “Likewise shall the princesses of Persia and Media, which have heard of the deed of the queen, say this day unto all the king‘s princes.”

Verse 19

That it be not altered - Compare the margin reference. This was the theory. Practically, the monarch, if he chose, could always dispense with the law. It was therefore quite within his power to restore Vashti to her queenly dignity notwithstanding the present decree, if he so pleased.

Verse 22

He sent letters - The Persian system of posts incidentally noticed in the present book Esther 3:12-15; Esther 8:9-14, is in entire harmony with the accounts of Herodotus and Xenophon.

Into every province according to the writing thereof - The practice of the Persians to address proclamations to the subject-nations in their own speech, and not merely in the language of the conqueror, is illustrated by the

bilingual and trilingual inscriptions of the Achaemenian monarchs, from Cyrus to Artaxerxes Ochus, each inscription being of the nature of a proclamation.

The decree was not unnecessary. The undue influence of women in domestic, and even in public, matters is a feature of the ancient Persian monarchy. Atossa completely ruled Darius. Xerxes himself was, in his later years, shamefully subject to Amestris. The example of the court would naturally infect the people. The decree therefore would be a protest, even if ineffectual, against a real and growing evil.

And that it should be published … - Render it: "and speak the language of his own people;" in the sense that the wife's language, if different from her husband's, should in no case be allowed to prevail in the household.

ESTHER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

These events must belong to the time between the great assembly held at Susa in Xerxes‘ third year (483 B.C.), and the departure of the monarch on his expedition against Greece in his fifth year, 481 B.C.

Verse 3

The house of the women - i. e. the “gynaeceon,” or “haram” - always an essential part of an Oriental palace (Compare 1 Kings 7:8). In the Persian palaces it was very extensive, since the monarchs maintained, besides their legitimate wives, as many as 300 or 400 concubines (compare Esther 2:14).

Verse 5

Mordecai, the eunuch Esther 2:7, Esther 2:11, has been conjectured to be the same as Matacas, who, according to Ctesias, was the most powerful of the eunuchs during the latter portion of the reign of Xerxes. Mordecai‘s line of descent is traced from a certain Kish, carried off by Nebuchadnezzar in 598 B.C. - the year of Jeconiah‘s captivity - who was his great-grandfather. The four generations, Kish, Shimei, Jair, Mordecai, correspond to the known generations in other cases, for example:

d **High priestskings of PersiaRoyal stock of Judah**

d

d SeraiahCambysesJeconiah

d

d JozadakCyrusSalathiel

d

d JeshuaDariusZerubbabel

d

d JoiakimXerxesHananiah

d

d

The age of Mordecai at the accession of Xerxes may probably have been about 30 or 40; that of Esther, his first cousin, about 20.

Verse 7

Hadassah, הדסה *hădassâh* from הדס *hădas* (“myrtle”) would seem to have been the Hebrew, and Esther the Persian, name of the damsel. Esther is thought to be connected through the Zend with ἀστήρ *astēr* “star.” But there is not at present any positive evidence of the existence in Old Persian of a kindred word.

Verse 10

The Persians had no special contempt for the Jews; but, of course, they despised more or less all the subject races. Esther, with her Aryan name, may have passed for a native Persian.

Verse 11

Mordecai occupied, apparently, a humble place in the royal household. He was probably one of the porters or doorkeepers at the main entrance to the palace Esther 2:21.

Verse 14

The second house of the women - i. e. Esther returned to the “house of the women,” but not to the same part of it. She became an inmate of the “second house,” or “house of the concubines,” under the superintendence of a distinct officer, Shaashgaz.

Verse 15

She required nothing - The other virgins perhaps loaded themselves with precious ornaments of various kinds, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, anklets, and the like. Esther let Hegai dress her as he would.

Verse 16

Tebeth (compare the corresponding Egyptian month, “Tobi” or “Tubi”), corresponded nearly to our January.

In the seventh year of his reign - In December, 479 B.C., or January, 478 B.C. Xerxes quitted Sardis for Susa in, or soon after, September, 479 B.C. It has been regarded as a "difficulty" that Vashti's place, declared vacant in 483 B.C., was not supplied until the end of 479 B.C., four years afterward. But since two years out of the four had been occupied by the Grecian expedition, the objection cannot be considered very weighty.

Verse 18

A release - Either remission of taxation, or of military service, or of both.

Verse 19

When the virgins … - Rather, "when virgins" etc. The words begin a new paragraph. There was a second collection of virgins (after that of Esther 2:8), and it was at the time of this second collection that Mordecai had the good fortune to save the king's life.

Verse 21

Conspiracies inside the palace were ordinary occurrences in Persia. Xerxes was ultimately murdered by Artabanus, the captain of the guard, and Aspamitras, a chamberlain and eunuch.

Verse 23

Both hanged on a tree - i. e. "crucified" or "impaled" the ordinary punishment of rebels and traitors in Persia.

The book of the chronicles - Ctesias drew his Persian history from them, and they are often glanced at by Herodotus.

ESTHER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

The name, Haman, is probably the same as the Classical Omanes, and in ancient Persian, "Umana", an exact equivalent of the Greek "Eumenes." Hammedatha is perhaps the same as "Madata" or "Mahadata", an old Persian name signifying "given by (or to) the moon."

The Agagite - The Jews generally understand by this expression "the descendant of Agag," the Amalekite monarch of Esther 9:7-9 and his father, would seem to have been a genuine Persian.

The Classical writers make no mention of Haman's advancement; but their notices of the reign of Xerxes after 479 B.C. are exceedingly scanty.

Verse 2

Mordecai probably refused the required prostration, usual though it was, on religious grounds. Hence, his opposition led on to his confession that he was a Jew Esther 3:4.

Verse 4

Whether Mordecai's matters would stand - Rather, "whether Mordecai's words would hold good" - whether, that is, his excuse, that he was a Jew, would be allowed as a valid reason for his refusal.

Verse 6

To destroy all the Jews - In the East massacres of a people, a race, a class, have at all times been among the incidents of history, and would naturally present themselves to the mind of a statesman. The Magophonia, or the great massacre of the Magi at the accession of Darius Hystaspis, was an event not then fifty years old, and was commemorated annually. A massacre of the Scythians had occurred about a century previously.

Verse 7

In the first month … - i. e. in March or April of 474 B.C.

"Pur" is supposed to be an old Persian word etymologically connected with the Latin "pars", and signifying "part" or "lot." The practice of casting lots to obtain a lucky day still obtains in the East, and is probably extremely ancient. A lot seems to have been cast, or a throw of some kind made, for each day of the month and each month of the year. The day and month which obtained the best throws were then selected. Assyrian calendars note

lucky and unlucky days as early as the eighth century B.C. Lots were in use both among the Oriental and the Classical nations from a remote antiquity.

"Adar," the twelfth month, corresponds nearly to our March. It seems to have derived its name from "adar", "splendor," because of the brightness of the sun and the flowers at that time.

Verse 9

Ten thousand talents of silver - According to Herodotus, the regular revenue of the Persian king consisted of 14,560 silver talents; so that, if the same talent is intended, Haman's offer would have exceeded two-thirds of one year's revenue (or two and one-half million British pound sterling). Another Persian subject, Pythius, once offered to present Xerxes with four millions of gold darics, or about four and one-half pounds.

Verse 11

The silver is given to thee - Some understand this to mean that Xerxes refused the silver which Haman had offered to him; but the passage is better explained as a grant to him of all the property of such Jews as should be executed Esther 3:13.

Verse 12

On the thirteenth day - Haman had, apparently (compare Esther 3:7 with Esther 3:13), obtained by his use of the lot the 13th day of Adar as the lucky day for destroying the Jews. This may have caused him to fix on the 13th day of another month for the commencement of his enterprise. So, the Jews throughout the empire had from 9 to 11 months of warning of the peril which threatened them.

Verse 13

Present, the Jews keep three days - the 13th, the 14th, and the 15th of Adar - as connected with "the Feast of Purim;" but they make the 13th a fast, commemorative of the fast of Esther Esther 4:16, and keep the feast itself on the 14th and 15th of Adar.

Verse 15

Shushan was perplexed - Susa was now the capital of Persia, and the main residence of the Persians of high rank. These, being attached to the religion of Zoroaster, would naturally sympathize with the Jews, and be disturbed at their threatened destruction. Even apart from this bond of

union, the decree was sufficiently strange and ominous to “perplex” thoughtful citizens.

ESTHER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 2

None might enter into the king‘s gate clothed with sackcloth - This law is not elsewhere mentioned; but its principle - that nothing of evil omen is to be obtruded on the monarch - has been recognized throughout the East in all ages.

Verse 4

Esther‘s maids … told it her - Esther‘s nationality and her relationship to Mordecai were probably by this time known to her attendants, though still concealed from the king. See Esther 7:4.

Verse 11

The golden scepter - In all the numerous representations of Persian kings at Persepolis the monarch holds a long tapering staff (probably the scepter of Esther) in his right hand. It was death to intrude on the privacy of the Persian king uninvited.

Verse 14

From another place - i. e. “from some other quarter.” Mordecai probably concluded from the prophetic Scriptures that God would NOT allow His people to be destroyed before His purposes with respect to them were accomplished, and was therefore satisfied that deliverance would arise from one quarter or another.

Thou and thy father‘s house shall be destroyed - i. e. “a divine vengeance will overtake thee and thine, if thou neglectest thy plain duty.” Though the name of God is not contained in the Book of Esther, there is in this verse a distinct, tacit allusion to God‘s promises, and to the direction of human events by Divine Providence.

Verse 16

Again the religious element shows itself. Esther‘s fast could have no object but to obtain God‘s favor and protection in the dangerous course on which she was about to enter.

ESTHER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

Over against the gate - This is the usual situation of the throne in the "throne-room" of an Oriental palace. The monarch, from his raised position, can see into the court through the doorway opposite to him, which is kept open.

Verse 3

It shall be even given thee … - Xerxes, on another occasion, when pleased with one of his wives, offered to grant her any request whatever, without limitation. Compare the margin reference.

Verse 4

Esther seems to have been afraid to make her real request of Xerxes too abruptly. She concluded that the king would understand that she had a real petition in the background, and would recur to it, as in fact he did Esther 5:6; Esther 7:2.

Verse 6

The banquet of wine - After the meats were removed, it was customary in Persia to continue the banquet for a considerable time with fruits and wine. During this part of the feast, the king renewed his offer.

Verse 9

He stood not up, nor moved for him - This was undoubtedly a serious breach of Persian etiquette, and may well have angered Haman.

Verse 10

Zeresh - This name is probably connected with the Zend zara, "gold." Compare the Greek "Chrysis."

Verse 11

The multitude of his children - Herodotus tells us that, next to prowess in arms, it was regarded as the greatest proof of manly excellence in Persia to be the father of many sons." Haman had ten sons (see the margin reference).

Verse 14

A gallows, in the ordinary sense, is scarcely intended, since hanging was not a Persian punishment. The intention, no doubt, was to crucify (see the Esther 2:23 note) or impale Mordecai; and the pale or cross was to be 75 feet high, to make the punishment more conspicuous.

Speak thou unto the king … - Requests for leave to put persons to death were often made to Persian kings by their near relatives, but only rarely by others.

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CHAPTER 6

Verse 3

It was a settled principle of the Persian government that "Royal Benefactors" were to receive an adequate reward. The names of such persons were placed on a special roll, and care was taken that they should be properly recompensed, though they sometimes waited for months or years before they were rewarded.

Verse 8

The honors here proposed by Haman were such as Persian monarchs rarely allowed to subjects. Each act would have been a capital offence if done without permission. Still, we find Persian monarchs allowing their subjects in these or similar acts under certain circumstances.

Verse 12

It is quite consonant with Oriental notions that Mordecai, after receiving the extraordinary honors assigned him, should return to the palace and resume his former humble employment.

ESTHER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 4

The king now learned, perhaps for the first time, that his favorite was a Jewess.

Although the enemy … - i. e. "although the enemy (Haman) would not (even in that case) compensate (by his payment to the treasury) for the king's loss of so many subjects."

Verse 8

Like the Greeks and Romans, the Persians reclined at their meals on sofas or couches. Haman, in the intensity of his supplication, had thrown himself upon the couch at Esther's feet.

They covered Haman's face - The Macedonians and the Romans are known to have commonly muffled the heads of prisoners before executing them. It may have also been a Persian custom.

ESTHER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

Give the house of Haman - Confiscation of goods accompanied public execution in Persia as in other Oriental countries.

Verse 2

His ring - i. e. the royal signet by which the decrees of the government were signed.

Over the house of Haman - Not only the building and the furniture, but the household - the vast train of attendants of all kinds that was attached to the residence of a Persian noble.

Verse 3

Though Haman was dead, his work was not yet undone. The royal decree had gone forth, and, according to Persian notions, could not be directly recalled or reversed Esther 8:8. Mordecai did not dare, without express permission from the king, to take any steps even to stay execution. And Esther, being in favor, once more took the initiative.

Verse 8

Write … as it liketh you … - (See the Esther 1:19 note. Practically, Ahasuerus reversed the "device" of Haman).

Verse 9

Sivan corresponds nearly to our June; it was the second month from the issue of the first edict Esther 3:12.

Verse 10

Riders on mules, camels and young dromedaries - Most moderns translate "riders upon coursers and mules, the offspring of mares;" but the words translated "mules" and "mares," are of very doubtful signification, since they scarcely occur elsewhere. The real meaning of the clause must remain doubtful; perhaps the true translation is, "riders upon coursers of the king's stud, offspring of high-bred steeds." So Esther 8:14.

Verse 11

This fresh decree allowed the Jews to stand on their defense, and to kill all who attacked them. It has been pronounced incredible that any king would thus have sanctioned civil war in all the great cities of his empire; but some even of the more skeptical critics allow that "Xerxes" might not improbably have done so.

Verse 14

Being hastened - Between Sivan, the third month (June), when the posts went out, and Adar, the twelfth month (March), when the struggle was to take place, the interval would be one of more than 8 months; but all haste was made, with the object of their being no misunderstanding.

Verse 15

See the Esther 1:6 note. The "crown" was not a crown like the king's, but a mere golden band or coronet.

A garment - Or, "an inner robe." The tunic or inner robe of the king was of purple, striped with white.

Verse 17

Became Jews - Joined the nation as proselytes, so casting in their lot with them.

ESTHER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

Drew near - Or, "arrived," or "reached the time" specified Esther 3:13; Esther 8:12.

Verse 3

All the rulers … helped the Jews - i. e. the Persians, who formed the standing army which kept the Empire in subjection, and were at the disposal of the various governors of provinces, took the Jews' side. The enemies of the Jews (e. g. Esther 9:16) were almost entirely to be found among the idolatrous people of the subject nations, for whose lives neither the Persians generally, nor their monarchs, cared greatly.

Verse 6

By "Shushan the palace (or the fort)," is probably meant the whole of the upper town, which occupied an area of more than 100 acres, and contained many residences besides the actual palace. The Jews would not have ventured to shed blood within the palace-precincts.

Verses 7-10

Most of these names are Persian, and readily traceable to Old Persian roots.

Esther 9:10

On the spoil laid they not their hand - As they might have done (see the margin reference).

Verse 15

Shushan - Here probably the lower town, which lay east of the upper one, and was of about the same size (compare the Esther 9:6 note).

Verse 16

Seventy and five thousand - The Septuagint gives the number as 15,000; and this amount seems more in proportion to the 800 slain in Susa.

Verse 18

See Esther 3:13 note.

Verse 19

The Jews of the villages … - Rather, "the Jews of the country districts, that dwelt in the country towns," as distinguished from those who dwelt in the metropolis.

Verse 29

This second letter of Purim - Mordecai‘s first letter Esther 9:20 was to some extent tentative, a recommendation. The Jews generally having accepted the recommendation Esther 9:23, Esther 9:27, he and Esther now wrote a second letter which was mandatory.

Verse 31

The matters of the fastings and their cry - The Jews of the provinces had added to the form of commemoration proposed by Mordecai certain observances with respect to fasting and wailing, and Mordecai‘s second letter sanctioned these.

Verse 32

As “the book” elsewhere in Esther always means a particular book - “the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia” - Esther 2:23; Esther 6:1; Esther 10:2 it seems best to give it the same sense here.

ESTHER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

A tribute - Perhaps an allusion to some fresh arrangement of the tribute likely to have followed on the return of Xerxes from Greece.

Upon the isles of the sea - Cyprus, Aradus, the island of Tyre, Platea, etc., remained in the hands of the Persians after the victories of the Greeks, and may be the "isles" here intended.

Verse 2

Power and … might - In the later years of Xerxes his "power and might" were chiefly shown in the erection of magnificent buildings, more especially at Persepolis. He abstained from military expeditions.

Kings of Media and Persia - Media takes precedence of Persia because the kingdom of Media had preceded that of Persia, and in the "book of the Chronicles" its history came first.

Verse 3

Mordecai … was next unto king Ahasuerus - See Esther 2:5 note. Artabanus (Esther 1:14 note) was favorite toward the end of Xerxes' reign, i. e. in his 20th and 21st years.

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Contents

JOB INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Job

In reference to no part of the Scriptures have so many questions arisen as to the Book of Job. The time of its composition; the author; the country where the scene was laid; the question whether Job was a real person; the nature and design of the poem; have been points on which a great variety of opinion has been entertained among expositors, and on which different views still prevail. It is important, in order to have a correct understanding of the book, that all the light should be thrown on these subjects which can be; and though amidst the variety of opinion which prevails among men of the highest distinction in learning absolute certainty cannot be hoped for, yet such advances have been made in the investigation that on some of these points we may arrive to a high degree of probability.

Section 1. The Question whether Job Was a Real Person

The first question which presents itself in the examination of the book is, whether Job had a real existence. This has been doubted on such grounds as the following:

(1) The book has been supposed by some to have every mark of an allegory. Allegories and parables, it is said, are not uncommon in the Scriptures where a case is supposed, and then the narrative proceeds as if it were real. Such an instance, it has been maintained, occurs here, in which the author of the poem designed to illustrate important truths, but instead of stating them in an abstract form, chose to present them in the more graphic and interesting form of a supposed case - in which we are led to sympathize with a sufferer; to see the ground of the difficulty in the question under discussion in a more affecting manner than could be presented in an abstract form; and where the argument has all to interest the mind which one has when occurring in real life.

(2) it has been maintained that some of the transactions in the book must have been of this character, or are such as could not have actually occurred. Particularly it has been said that the account of the interview of Satan with yahweh Job 1:6-12; Job 2:1-7 must be regarded merely as a supposed case, it being in the highest degree improbable that such an interview would occur, and such a conversation be held.

(3) the same conclusion has been drawn from the artificial character of the statements about the possessions of Job, both before and after his trials - statements which appear as if the case were merely supposed, and which would not be likely to occur in reality. Thus, we have only round numbers mentioned in enumerating his possessions - as 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 she-asses. So, also, there is something artificial in the manner in which the sacred numbers seven and three are used. He had 7,000 sheep, 7 sons - both before and after his trials; his three friends came and sat down 7 days and 7 nights without saying a word to condole with him Job 2:13; and both before and after his trials he had three daughters. The same artificial and parabolical appearance, it is said, is seen in the fact that after his recovery his possessions were exactly doubled, and he had again in his old age exactly the same number of 7 sons and 3 daughters which he had before his afflictions.

(4) that the whole narration is allegorical or parabolical has been further argued from the conduct of the friends of Job. Their sitting down 7 days and 7 nights without saying anything, when they had come expressly to condole with him, it is said, is a wholly improbable circumstance, and looks as if the whole were a supposed case.

(5) the same thing has been inferred from the manner in which the book is written. It is of the highest order of poetry. The speeches are most elaborate; are filled with accurate and carefully prepared argument; are arranged with great care; are expressed in the most sententious manner; embody the results of long and careful observation, and are wholly unlike what would be uttered in unpremeditated and extemporary debate. No men, it is said, talk in this manner; nor can it be supposed that beautiful poetry and sublime argument, such as abound in this book, ever fell in animated debate from the lips of men. See Eichorn, Einleitung in das Alte Tes. V. Band. 129-131. From considerations such as these the historical character of the book has been doubted, and the whole has been regarded as a supposed case designed to illustrate the great question which the author of the poem proposed to examine.

It is important, therefore, to inquire what reasons there are for believing that such a person as Job lived, and how far the transactions referred to in

the book are to be regarded as historically true.

(1) the fact of his existence is expressly declared, and the narrative has all the appearance of being a simple record of an actual occurrence. The first two chapters of the book, and a part of the last chapter, are simple historical records. The remainder of the book is indeed poetic, but these portions bare none of the characteristics of poetry. There are not to be found in the Bible more simple and plain historical statements than these; and there are none which, in themselves considered, might not be as properly set aside as allegorical. This fact should be regarded as decisive, unless there is some reason which does not appear on the face of the narrative for regarding it as allegorical.

(2) the account of the existence of such a man is regarded as historically true by the inspired writers of the Scriptures. Thus, in Ezekiel 14:14, God says, "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it (the land), they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God." Compare Ezekiel 14:16, Ezekiel 14:20. Here Job is referred to as a real character as distinctly as Noah and Daniel, and all the circumstances are just such as they would be on the supposition that he had a real existence. They are alike spoken of as real "men;" as having souls - "they should deliver but their own souls by their own righteousness;" as having sons and daughters - "they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, they only shall be delivered" Ezekiel 14:16; and are in all respects mentioned alike as real characters. Of the historic fact that there were such men as Noah and Daniel there can be no doubt, and it is evident that Ezekiel as certainly regarded Job as a real character as he did either of the others.

A parallel passage, which will illustrate this, occurs in Jeremiah 15:1: "Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people." Here Moses and Samuel are spoken of as real characters, and there is no doubt of their having existed. Yet they are mentioned in the same manner as Job is in the passage in Ezekiel. In either case it is incredible that a reference should have been made to a fictitious character. The appeal is one that could have been made only to a real character, and there can be no reasonable doubt that Ezekiel

regarded Job as having really existed; or rather, since it is God who speaks and not Ezekiel, that he speaks of Job as having actually existed. The same thing is evident from a reference to Job by the apostle James: "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy" James 5:11; that is, the happy issue to which the Lord brought all his trials, showing that he was pitiful to those in affliction, and of great mercy.

There can be no doubt that there is reference here to the sufferings of a real man, as there is to the real compassion which the Lord shows to one in great trials. It is incredible that this sacred writer should have appealed in this instance to the case of one whom he regarded as a fictitious character; and if the views of Ezekiel and James are to be relied on, there can be no doubt that Job had a real existence. Ezekiel mentions him just as he does Noah and Daniel, and James mentions him just as he does Elijah James 5:17; and so far as this historical record goes there is the same evidence of the actual existence of the one as of the other.

(3) the specifications of places and names in the book are not such as would occur in an allegory. Had it been merely a "supposed case," to illustrate some great truth, these specifications would have been unnecessary, and would not have occurred. In the acknowledged parables of the Scripture, there are seldom any very minute specifications of names and places. Thus, in the parable of the prodigal son, neither the name of the father, nor of the sons, nor of the place where the scene was laid, is mentioned. So of the nobleman who went to receive a kingdom; the unjust steward; the ten virgins, and of numerous others. But here we have distinct specifications of a great number of things which are in no way necessary to illustrate the main truth in the poem. Thus, we have not only the name of the sufferer, but the place of his residence mentioned, as if it were well known. We have the names of his friends, and the places of their residence mentioned - "Eliphaz the Temanite," and "Bildad the Shuhite," and "Zophar the Naamathite." and Elihu "the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram." Why are the places of residence of these persons mentioned unless it be meant to intimate that they were real persons, and not allegorical characters?

In like manner we have express mention of the Sabeans and the Chaldeans - specifications wholly unnecessary if not improbable if the work is an allegory. The single word “robbers” would have answered all the purpose, and would have been such as an inspired writer would have used unless the transaction were real, for an inspired writer would not have charged this offence on any class of men, thus holding them up to lasting reproach, unless an event of this kind had actually occurred. When the Savior, in the parable of the good Samaritan, mentions a robbery that occurred between Jerusalem and Jericho, the word “thieves,” or more properly “robbers”, is the only word used. No names are mentioned, nor is any class of men referred to, who would by such a mention of the name be held up to infamy. Thus, also we have the particular statement respecting the feasting of the sons and daughters of Job; his sending for and admonishing them; his offering up special sacrifices on their behalf; the account of the destruction of the oxen, the sheep, the camels, and the house where the sons and daughters of Job were - all statements of circumstances which would not be likely to occur in an allegory.

They are such particular statements as we expect to find respecting the real transactions, and they bear on the face of them the simple impression of truth. This is not the kind of information which we look for in a parable. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, almost the only one spoken by the Saviour where a name is mentioned, we have not that of the rich man; and though the name Lazarus is mentioned, yet that is all. We have no account of his family, of his place of residence, of his genealogy, of the time when he lived; and the name itself is so common that it would be impossible even to suspect whom the Savior had in his eye, if he had any real individual at all. Far different is this in the account of Job. It is true that in a romance, or in an extended allegory like the Pilgrim‘s Progress, we expect a detailed statement of names and places; but there is no evidence that there is any such extended fictitious narrative in the Bible, and unless the Book of Job be one there is no such extended allegory.

(4) the objections urged against this view are not such as to destroy the positive proof of the reality of the existence of Job. The objections which have been urged against the historical truth of the narrative, and which have already been in part alluded to, are principally the following:

The first is, the account of the interview between God and Satan in Job 2:1-13. It is alleged that this is so improbable a transaction as to throw an air of fiction over all the historical statements of the book. In reply to this, it may be observed, first, that even if this were not to be regarded as a literal transaction, it does not prove that no such man as Job lived, and that the transactions in regard to him were not real. He might have had an existence, and been stripped of his possessions, and subjected to these long and painful trials of his fidelity, even if this were a poetic ornament, or merely a figurative representation.

But, secondly, it is impossible to prove that no such transaction occurred. The existence of such a being as Satan is everywhere recognized in the Scriptures; the account which is here given of his character accords entirely with the uniform representation of him; he exerts no power over Job which is not expressly conceded to him; and it is impossible to prove that he does not even now perform the same things in the trial of good men, which it is said that he did in the case of Job. And even if it be admitted that there is somewhat of poetic statement in the form in which he is introduced, still this does not render the main account improbable and absurd. The Bible, from the necessity of the case, abounds with representations of this sort; and when it is said that God "speaks" to men, that he conversed with Adam, that he spake to the serpent Job 1:6-12.

A second objection to the historical truth of the transactions recorded in the book is, the poetic character of the work, and the strong improbability that addresses of this kind should ever have been made in the manner here represented. See Eichhorn, Einleit. v. 123,124. They are of the highest order of poetry; they partake not at all of the nature of extemporaneous effusions; they indicate profound and close thinking, and are such as must have required much time to have prepared them. Especially it is said that it is in the highest degree improbable that Job, in the anguish of his body and mind, should have been capable of giving utterance to poetry and argument of this highly finished character. In regard to this objection, it may be observed,

(1) that even if this were so, and it were to be supposed that the arguments of the various speakers have a poetic character, and were in reality never uttered in the form in which we now have them, still this would not invalidate the evidence which exists of the historic truth of the facts stated about the existence and trials of Job. It might be true that he lived and suffered in this manner, and that a discussion of this character actually occurred, and that substantially these arguments were advanced, though they were afterward wrought by Job himself or by some other hand into the poetic form in which we now have them. Job himself lived after his trials 140 years, and, in itself considered, there is no improbability in the supposition, that when restored to the vigorous use of his powers, and in the leisure which he enjoyed, he should have thought it worthy to present the argument which he once held on this great subject in a more perfect form, and to give to it a more poetic cast. In this case, the main historic truth would be retained, and the real argument would in fact be stated - though in a form more worthy of preservation than could be expected to fall extemporaneously from the lips of the speakers. But

(2) all the difficulty may be removed by a supposition which is entirely in accordance with the character of the book and the nature of the case. It is, that the several speeches succeeded each other at such intervals as gave full time for reflection, and for carefully framing the argument. There is no evidence that the whole argument was gone through with "at one sitting;" there are no proofs that one speech followed immediately on another, or that a sufficient interval of time may not have elapsed to give opportunity for preparation to meet the views which had been suggested by the previous speaker. Everything in the book bears the marks of the most careful deliberation, and is as free as possible from the hurry and bustle of an extemporaneous debate. The sufferings of Job were evidently of a protracted nature. His friends sat down "seven days and seven nights" in silence before they said anything to him.

The whole subject of the debate seems to be arranged with most systematic care and regularity. The speakers succeed each other in regular order in a series of arguments - in each of these series following the same method, and no one of them out of his place. No one is ever interrupted while speaking; and no matter how keen and sarcastic his invectives, how

torturing his reproaches, how bold or blasphemous what he said was thought to be, he is patiently heard until he has said all that he designed to say; and then all that he said is carefully weighed and considered in the reply. All this looks as if there might have been ample time to arrange the reply before it was uttered, and this supposition, of course, would relieve all the force of this objection. If this be so, then there is no more ground of objection against the supposition that these things were spoken, as it is said they were, than there is about the genuineness of the poems of the Grecian Rhapsodists, composed with a view to public recitation, or to the Iliad of Homer or the History of Herodotus, both of which, after they were composed, were recited publicly by their authors at Athens. No one can prove certainly that the several persons named in the book - Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zolphar, and Elihu - were incompetent to compose the speeches which are severally assigned to them, or that all the time necessary for such a composition was not taken by them.

Unless this can be done, the objection of its improbability, so confidently urged by Eichhorn (Einleit. v. 123ff.), and defended by Noyes (Intro. pp. xxi., xxi.), where he says that "the supposition that so beautiful and harmonious a whole, every part of which bears the stamp of the highest genius, was the casual production of a man brought to the gates of the grave by a loathsome disease, of three or four friends who had come to comfort him in his affliction, all of them expressing their thoughts in poetical and measured language; that the Deity was actually heard to speak half an hour in the midst of a violent storm; and that the consultations in the heavenly world were actual occurrences, is too extravagant to need refutation," is an objection really of little force.

A third objection has been derived from the round and doubled numbers which occur in the book, and the artificial character which the whole narrative seems to assume on that account. It is alleged that this is wholly an unusual and improbable occurrence; and that the whole statement appears as if it were a fictitious narrative. Thus Job's possessions of oxen and camels and sheep are expressed in round numbers; one part of these is exactly the double of another; and what is more remarkable still, all these are exactly doubled on his restoration to health. He had the same number of sons and the same number of daughters after his trial which he had before,

and the number of each was what was esteemed among the Hebrews as a sacred number.

In regard to this objection, we may observe:

(1) That as to the round numbers, this is no more than what constantly occurs in historical statements. Nothing is more common in the enumeration of armies, of the people of a country, or of herds and flocks, than such statements.

(2) in regard to the fact that the possessions of Job are said to have been exactly "doubled" after his recovery from his calamities, it is not necessary to suppose that this was in all respects literally true. Nothing forbids us to suppose that, from the gifts of friends and other causes, the possessions of Job came so near to being just twice what they were before his trials, as to justify this general statement. In the statement itself, there is nothing improbable. Job lived 140 after his trials. If he had then the same measure of prosperity which he had before, and with the assistance of his friends to enable him to begin life again, there is no improbability in the supposition that these possessions would be doubled.

These are substantially all the objections which have been urged against the historical character of the book, and if they are not well founded, then it follows that it should be regarded as historically true that such a man actually lived, and that he passed through the trials which are here described. A more extended statement of these objections, and a refutation of them, may be found in the following works: - Warburton's Divine Legation of Moses, Vol. V. p. 298ff. ed. 8vo, London, 1811; Prof. Lee on Job, Intro. Section 11; and Magee on atonement and Sacrifice, p. 212, following, ed. New York, 1813. It should be said, however, that not a few writers admit that such a man as Job lived, and that the book has an historical basis, while they regard the work itself as in the main poetic. In the view of such critics, the poet, in order to illustrate the great truth which he proposed to consider, made use of a tradition respecting the sufferings of a well-known person of distinction, and gave to the whole argument the high poetic cast which it has now. This supposition is in accordance with the methods frequently adopted by epic and tragic poets, and which is

commonly followed by writers of romance. This is the opinion of Eichhorn, Einleitung V. Section 638.

Section 2. The Question on Where Job Lived

In Job 1:1, it is said that Job dwelt "in the land of Uz." The only question, then, to be settled in ascertaining where he lived, is, if possible, to determine where this place was. From the manner in which the record is made ("the land of Uz") it would seem probable that this was a region of country of some considerable extent, and also that it derived its name from some man of that name who had settled there. The word Uz (עוּץ *ʿûts*), according to Gesenius, means a light, sandy soil; and if the name was given to the country with reference to this quality of the soil, it would be natural to fix on some region remarkable for its barrenness - a waste place or a desert. Gesenius supposes that Uz was in the northern part of Arabia Deserta - a place lying between Palestine and the Euphrates, called by Ptolemy Αἰσῖται *Aisitai* This opinion is defended by Rosenmuller (Prolegomena); and is adopted by Spanheim, Bochart, Lee, Umbreit, Noyes, and the authors of the Universal History. Dr. Good supposes that the Uz here referred to was in Arabia Petraea, on the southwestern coast of the Dead Sea, and that Job and all his friends referred to in the poem were Idumeans. Introductory Dissertation, Section 1.

Eichhorn also supposes that the scene is laid in Idumea, and that the author of the poem shows that he had a particular acquaintance with the history, customs, and productions of Egypt. Einleit. Section 638. Bochart (in Phaleg et Canaan), Michaelis (Spicileg. Geog. Hebraeo.), and Ilgen (Jobi, Antiquis. carminis Hebrew natura et indoles, p. 91), suppose that the place of his residence was the valley of Guta near Damascus, regarded as the most beautiful of the four Paradises of the Arabians. For a description of this valley, see Eichhorn, Einleit. V. s. 134. The word עוּץ *ʿûts* (Uz) occurs only in the following places in the Hebrew Bible: Genesis 10:23; Genesis 22:21; Genesis 36:28, and 1 Chronicles 1:17, 1 Chronicles 1:42; in each of which places it is the name of a man; and in Jeremiah 25:20; Lamentations 4:21, and in Job 1:1, where it is applied to a country. The only circumstances which furnish any probability in regard to the place where Job lived, are the following:

(1) Those which enable us to determine with some probability where the family of Uz was settled, who not improbably gave his name to the country

- as Sheba, and Seba, and Tema, and Cush, and Misraim, and others, did to the countries where they settled. In Genesis 10:23; Uz עוּץ *ʿûts* is mentioned as a grandson of Shem. In Genesis 22:21; an Uz (English Bible, "Huz") is mentioned as the son of Nahor, brother of Abraham, undoubtedly a different person from the one mentioned in Genesis 10:23. In Genesis 36:28, an individual of this name is mentioned among the descendants of Esau. In 1 Chronicles 1:17, the name occurs among the "sons of Shem;" and in 1 Chronicles 1:42, the same name occurs among the descendants of Esau. So far, therefore, as the name is concerned, it may have been derived from one of the family of Shem, or from one who was a contemporary with Abraham, or from a somewhat remote descendant Esau. It will be seen in the course of this introduction, that there is strong improbability that the name was given to the country because it was settled by either of the two latter, as such a supposition would bring down the time when Job lived to a later period than the circumstances recorded in his history will allow, and it is therefore probable that the name was conferred in honor of the grandson of Shem. This fact, of itself, will do something to determine the place.

Shem lived in Asia, and we shall find that the settlements of his descendants originally occupied the country somewhere in the vicinity of the Euphrates; Genesis 10:21-30. In Genesis 10:23; Uz is mentioned as one of the sons of Aram, who gave name to the country known as Aramea, or Syria, and from whom the Arameans descended. Their original residence, it is supposed, was near the river Kir, or Cyrus, from where they were brought, at some period now unknown, by a deliverance resembling that of the children of Israel from Egypt, and placed in the regions of Syria; see Amos 9:7. The inhabitants of Syria and Mesopotamia are always called by Moses "Arameus": as they had their seat in and near Mesopotamia, it is probable that Uz was located also not far from that region. We should, therefore, naturally be led to look for the country of Uz somewhere in that vicinity. In Genesis 10:30; it is further said of the sons of Shem, that "their dwelling was from Mesha, as thou goest unto Sephar, a mount of the East;" a statement which corresponds with what is said of Job himself, that he was "the greatest of all the men of the East" Job 1:8; manifestly implying that he was an inhabitant of the country so called.

Various opinions have been entertained of the places where Mesha and Sephar were. The opinion of Michaelis is the most probable (Spicileg. pt. 11, p. 214), "that Mesha is the region around Passora, which the later Syrians called Maishon, and the Greeks Mesene. Under these names they included the country on the Euphrates and the Tigris, between Seleucia and the Persian Gulf. Abulfeda mentions in this region two cities not far from Passora, called Maisan, and Mushan. Here, then, was probably the northeastern border of the district inhabited by the Joktanites. The name of the opposite limit, Sephar, signifies in the Chaldee shore or coast, and is probably the western part of Yemen, along the Arabian Gulf, now called by the Arabs Tchiainah. The range of high and mountainous country between these two borders, Moses calls "the Mount of the East," or eastern mountains. It is also called by the Arabs, Djebal, i. e., "mountains," to the present day. See Rosenmuller's Alterthumskunde, iii. 163,164.

The supposition that some portion of this region is denoted by the country where Uz settled, and is the place where Job resided is strengthened by the fact, that many of the persons and tribes mentioned in the book resided in this vicinity. Thus, it is probable that Eliphaz the Temanite had his residence there; see the notes at Job 2:11. The Sabeans probably dwelt not very remote from that region (see the notes at Job 1:15); the Chaldeans we know had their residence there (notes, Job 1:17), and this supposition will agree well with what is said of the tornado that came from the "wilderness," or desert; see the notes at Job 1:19. The residence of Job was so near to the Chaldeans and the Sabeans that he could be reached in their usual predatory excursions; a fact that better accords with the supposition that his residence was in some part of Arabia Deserta, than that it was in Idumea.

(2) this country is referred to in two places by Jeremiah, which may serve to aid us in determining its location; Lamentations 4:21:

"Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom,
That dwellest in the land of Uz;
The cup shall pass through unto thee:
Thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked."

At first view, perhaps, this passage would indicate that the land of Uz was a part of Edom, yet it more properly indicates that the land of Uz was

not a part of that land, but that the Edomites or Idumeans had gained possession of a country which did not originally belong to them. Thus, the prophet speaks of the "daughter of Edom," not as dwelling in her own country properly, but as dwelling "in the land of Uz" - in a foreign country, of which she had somehow obtained possession. The country of Edom, properly, was Mount Seir and the vicinity, south of the Dead Sea; but it is known that the Edomites subsequently extended their boundaries, and that at one period Bozrah, on the east of the Dead Sea, in the country of Moab, was their capital; see the Analysis of Isaiah 34:6. It is highly probable that Jeremiah refers to the period when the Idumeans, having secured these conquests, and made this foreign city their capital, is represented as dwelling there. If so, according to this passage in Lamentations, we should naturally look for the land of Uz somewhere in the countries to which the conquests of the Edomites extended - and these conquests were chiefly to the east of their own land. A similar conclusion will be derived from the other place where the name occurs in Jeremiah. It is in Jeremiah 25:20 ff. "And all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Askelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod, and Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon," etc. Two things are apparent here. One is, that the country of Uz was distinct from the land of Edom, since they are mentioned as separate nations; the other is, that it was a country of some considerable extent, since it is mentioned as being under several "kings." There is, indeed, in this reference to it no allusion to its situation; but it is mentioned as being well known in the time of Jeremiah.

(3) the same thing is evident from the manner in which the residence of Job is spoken of in Job 1:8. He is there said to have been the "greatest of all the men of the east." This implies that his residence was in the land which was known familiarly as the country of the East. It is true, indeed, that we have not yet determined where the poem was composed, and of course do not know precisely what the author would understand by this phrase, but the expression has a common signification in the Scriptures, as denoting the country east of Palestine. The land of Idumea, however, was directly south; and we are, therefore, naturally led to look to some other place as the land of Uz; compare the notes at Job 1:3. The expression "the East," as used in the Bible, would in no instance naturally lead us to look to Idumea.

(4) the Septuagint renders the word Uz in Job 1:1. by Ασίτις *Asitis* - a word which seems to have been formed from the Hebrew עוּץ *ʿûts* Utz, or Uz. Of course, their translation gives no intimation of the place referred to. But Ptolemy (Geog. Lib. v.) speaks of a tribe or nation in the neighborhood of Babylon, whom he calls Αὐσίται *Ausitai Ausitae* (or as it was perhaps written Αἰσίται *Aisitai*), the same word which is used by the Septuagint in rendering the word Uz. These people are placed by Ptolemy in the neighborhood of the Cauchebeni - ὑπὸ υὲν τοῖς Καυχαβηνοις *hupo men tois Kauchabēnois* - and he speaks of them as separated from Chaldea by a ridge of mountains. See Rosenm. Prolegomena, p. 27. This location would place Job so near to the Chaldeans, that the account of their making an excursion into his country Job 1:17 would be entirely probable. - It may be added, also, that in the same neighborhood we find a town called Sabas (Σάβας *Sabas*) in Diodorus Sic. Lib. iii. Section 46. Prof. Lee, p. 32. These circumstances render it probable that the residence of the patriarch was west of Chaldea, and somewhere in the northern part of Arabia Deserta, between Palestine, Idumea, and the Euphratcs.

(5) the monuments and memorials of Job still preserved or referred to in the East, may be adduced as some slight evidence of the fact that such a man as Job lived, and as an indication of the region in which he resided. It is true that they depend on mere tradition; but monuments are not erected to the memory of any who are not supposed to have had an existence, and traditions usually have some basis in reality. Arabian writers always make mention of Job as a real person, and his pretended grave is shown in the East to this day. It is shown indeed in six different places: but this is no evidence that all that is said of the existence of such a man is fabulous, anymore than the fact that seven cities contended for the honor of the birth of Homer is an evidence that there was no such man. The most celebrated tomb of this kind is that of the Trachonitis, toward the springs of the Jordan. It is situated between the cities still bearing the names of Teman, Shuah, and Naama - (Wemyss); though there is every reason to believe that these names have been given rather with reference to the fact that that was supposed to be his residence, than that they were the names of the places referred to in the book of Job. One of these tombs was shown to Niebuhr. He says (Reisebeschreib, i. 466, “Two or three hours east of Saada is a great mosque, in which, according to the opinion of the Arabs who reside there,

the sufferer Job lies buried." "On the eastern limits of Arabia, they showed me the grave of Job, close to the Euphrates, and near the Helleh, one hour south from Babylon." is of importance to remark here only that all of these tombs are outside the limits of Idumea. Among the Arabians there are numerous traditions respecting Job, many of them indeed stories that are entirely ridiculous, but all showing the firm belief prevalent in Arabia that there was such a man. See Sale's Koran, vol. ii. pp. 174,322; Magee on Atonement and Sacrifice, pp. 366,367; and D'Herbelot, Bibli. Orient. tom. i. pp. 75,432,438, as quoted by Magee.

(6) the present belief of the Arabians may be referred to as corroborating the results to which we have approximated in this inquiry, that the residence of Job was not in Idumea, but was in some part of Arabia Deserta, lying between Palestine and the Euphrates. Eli Smith stated to me (November, 1840) that there was still a place in the Houran called by the Arabians, Uz; and that there is a tradition among them that that was the residence of Job. It is northeast of Bozrah. Bozrah was once the capital of Idumea (notes on Isaiah 34:6), though it was situated without the limits of their natural territory. If this tradition is well founded, then Job was not probably an Idumean. There is nothing that renders the tradition improbable, and the course of the investigation conducts us, with a high degree of probability, to the conclusion that this was the residence of Job. On the residence of Job and his friends, consult also Abrahami Peritsol Itinera Mundi, in Ugolin, Thes. Sac. vii. pp. 103-106.

Section 3. The Time When Job Lived

There has been quite as much uncertainty in regard to the time when Job lived, as there has been in regard to the place where he lived. It should be observed here, that this question is not necessarily connected with the inquiry when the book was composed, and will not be materially affected, whether we suppose it to have been composed by Job himself, by Moses, or by a later writer. Whenever the book was composed, if at a later period than that in which the patriarch lived, the author would naturally conceal the marks of his own time, by referring only to such customs and opinions as prevailed in the age when the events were supposed to have occurred.

On this question, we cannot hope to arrive at absolute certainty. It is remarkable that neither the genealogical record of the family of Job nor that of his three friends is given. The only record of the kind occurring in the

book, is that of Elihu Job 32:2, and this is so slight as to furnish but little assistance in determining when he lived. The only circumstances which occur in regard to this question, are the following; and they will serve to settle the question with sufficient probability, as it is a question on which no important results can depend.

(1) the age of Job. According to this, the time when he lived, would occur somewhere between the age of Terah, the father of Abraham, and Jacob, or about 1,800 years before Christ, and about 600 years after the deluge. For the reasons of this opinion, see the notes at Job 42:16. This estimate cannot pretend to be entirely accurate, but, it has a high degree of probability. If this estimate is correct, he lived not far from 400 years before the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, and before the giving of the law on Mount Sinai; compare the notes at Acts 7:6.

(2) as a slight confirmation of this opinion, we may refer to the traditions in reference to the time when he lived. The account which is appended to the Septuagint, that he was a son of Zare, one of the sons of Esau, and the fifth in descent from Abraham, may be seen in the notes at Job 42:16. A similar account is given at the close of the Arabic translation of Job, so similar that the one has every appearance of having been copied from the other, or of their having had a common origin. "Job dwelt in the land of Uz, between the borders of Edom and Arabia, and was before called Jobab. He married a foreign wife, whose name was Anun. Job was himself a son of Zare, one of the sons of Esau; and his mother's name was Basra, and he was the sixth in descent from Abraham. But of the kings who reigned in Edom, the first who reigned over the land was Balak, the son of Beor; and the name of his city was Danaba. And after him Jobab, who is called Job; and after him the name of him who was prince of the land of Teman; and after him his son Barak, he who slew and put to flight Madian in the plain of Moab, and the name of his city was Gjates. And of the friends of Job who came to meet him, was Elifaz, of the sons of Esau, the king of the Temanites." These traditions are worthless, except as they show the prevalent belief when these translations were made, that Job lived somewhere near the time of the three great Hebrew patriarchs.

A nearly uniform tradition also has concurred in describing this as about the age in which he lived. The Hebrew writers generally concur in describing him as living in the days of Isaac and Jacob. Wemyss. Eusebius places him about two “ages” before Moses. The opinions of the Eastern nations generally concur in assigning this as the age in which he lived.

(3) from the representations in the book itself, it is clear that he lived before the departure from Egypt. This is evident from the fact that there is no direct allusion either to that remarkable event, or to the series of wonders which accompanied it, or to the journey to the land of Canaan. This silence is unaccountable on any other supposition than that he lived before it occurred, for two reasons. One is, that it would have furnished the most striking illustration occurring in history, of the interposition by God in delivering his friends and in destroying the wicked, and was such an illustration as Job and his friends could not have failed to refer to, in defense of their opinions, if it were known to them; and the other is, that this event was the great storehouse of argument and illustration for all the sacred writers, after it occurred. The deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and the divine interposition in conducting the nation to the promised land, is constantly referred to by the sacred writers. They derive from those events their most magnificent descriptions of the power and majesty of Yahweh. They refer to them as illustrating his character and government. They appeal to them in proof that he was the friend and protector of his people, and that he would destroy his foes. They draw from them their most sublime and beautiful poetic images, and are never weary with calling the attention of the people to their obligation to serve God, on account of his merciful and wonderful interposition. The very point of the argument in this book is one that would be better illustrated by that deliverance, than by any other event which ever occurred in history; and as this must have been known to the inhabitants of the country where Job lived, it is inexplicable that there is no allusion to these transactions, if they had already occurred.

It is clear, therefore, that even if the book was written at a later period than the exode from Egypt, the author of the poem meant to represent the patriarch as having lived before that event. He has described him as one who was ignorant of it, and in such circumstances, and with such opinions, that he could not have failed to refer to it, if he was believed to have lived

after that event. It is equally probable that Job lived before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. This event occurred in the vicinity of the country where he lived, and he could not have been ignorant of it. It was, moreover, a case not less in point in the argument than the deliverance from Egypt was; and it is not conceivable that a reference to so signal a punishment on the wicked by the direct judgment of the Almighty, would have been omitted in an argument of the nature of that in this book. It was the very point maintained by the friends of Job, that God interposed by direct judgments to cut off the wicked; and the world never furnished a more appropriate illustration of this than had occurred in their own neighborhood, on the supposition that the calamities of Job occurred after that event.

(4) the same thing is apparent also from the absence of all allusion to the Jewish rites, manners, customs, religious ceremonies, priesthood, festivals, fasts, sabbaths, etc. There will be occasion in another part of this introduction (Section 4) to inquire how far there is in fact such a lack of allusion to these things. All that is now meant is, that there is an obvious and striking lack of such allusions as we should expect to find made by one who lived at a later period, and who was familiar with the customs and religious rites of the Jews. The plan of the poem, it may be admitted, indeed, did not demand any frequent allusion to these customs and rites, and may be conceded to be adverse to such an allusion, even if they were known; but it is hardly conceivable that there should not have been some reference to them of more marked character than is now found. Even admitting that Job was a foreigner, and that the author meant to preserve this impression distinctly, yet his residence could not have been far from the confines of the Jewish people; and one who manifested such decided principles of piety toward God as he did, could not but have had a strong sympathy with that people, and could not but have referred to their rites in an argument so intimately pertaining to the government of yahweh. The representation of Job, and the allusions in the book, are in all respects such as would occur on the supposition that he lived before the special Jewish polity was instituted.

(5) the same thing is manifest from another circumstance. The religion of Job is of the same kind which we find prevailing in the time of Abraham, and before the institution of the Jewish system. It is a religion of sacrifices,

but without any officiating priest. Job himself presents the offering, as the head of the family, in behalf of his children and his friends; Job 1:5; Job 42:8. There is no priest appointed for this office; no temple, tabernacle, or sacred place of any kind; no consecrated altar. Now this is just the kind of religion which we find prevailing among the patriarchs, until the giving of the law on Mount Sinai; and hence, it is natural to infer that Job lived anterior to that event. Thus, we find Noah building an altar to the Lord, and offering sacrifices, Genesis 8:20; Abraham offering a sacrifice himself in the same manner, Genesis 15:9-11; compare Genesis 12:1-13; and this was undoubtedly the earliest form of religion. Sacrifices were offered to God, and the father of a family was the officiating priest.

These circumstances combined leave little doubt as to the time when Job lived. They concur in fixing the period as not remote from the age of Abraham, and there is no other period of history in which they will be found to unite. No question of great importance, however, depends on settling this question; and these circumstances determine the time with sufficient accuracy for all that is necessary, in an exposition of the book.

Section 4. The Author of the Book

A question of more vital importance than those which have been already considered, relates to the authorship of the book. As the name of the author is nowhere mentioned, either in the book itself or elsewhere in the Bible, it is of course impossible to arrive at absolute certainty; and after all that has been written on it, it is still and must be a point of mere conjecture. Still the question, as it is commonly discussed, opens a wide range of inquiry, and claims an investigation. If the name of the author cannot be discovered with certainty, it may be possible at least to decide with some degree of probability at what period of the world it was committed to writing, and perhaps with a degree of probability that may be sufficiently satisfactory, by whom it was done.

The first inquiry that meets us in the investigation of this point is, whether the whole book was composed by the same author, or whether the historical parts were added by a later hand. The slightest acquaintance with the book is sufficient to show, that there are in it two essentially different kinds of style - the poetic and prosaic. The body of the work, Job 2:1-13 and Job 42:7-17, is prose. The genuineness of the latter has been denied by many eminent critics, and particularly by DeWette, who regard it as the

addition of some later hand. Against the prologue and the epilogue DeWette urges, “that the perfection of the work requires their rejection, because they solve the problem which is the subject of the discussion, by the idea of trial and compensation; whereas it was the design of the author to solve the question through the idea of entire submission on the part of man to the wisdom and power of God;” see Noyes, Intro. pp. xxi., xxii.

To this objection it may be replied:

(1) That we are to learn the view of the author only by all that he has presented to us. It may have been a part of his plan to exhibit just this view - not to present an abstract argument, but such an argument in connection with a real case, and to make it more vivid by showing an actual instance of calamity falling upon a pious man, and by a state of remarkable prosperity succeeding it. The presumption is, that the author of the poem designed to throw all the light possible on a very obscure and dark subject; and in order to that, a statement of the facts which preceded and followed the argument seems indispensable.

(2) without the statement in the conclusion of the prosperity of Job after his trials, the argument of the book is incomplete. The main question is not solved. God is introduced in the latter chapters, not as solving by explicit statements the questions that had given so much perplexity, but as showing the duty of unqualified submission. But when this is followed by the historical statement of the return of Job to a state of prosperity, of the long life which he afterward enjoyed, and of the wealth and happiness which attended him for nearly a century and a half, the objections of his friends and his own difficulties are abundantly met, and the conclusion of the whole shows that God is not regardless of his people, but that, though they pass through severe trials, still they are the objects of his tender care.

(3) besides, the prologue is necessary in order to understand the character, the language, and the arguments of Job. In the harsh and irreverent speeches which he sometimes makes, in his fearful imprecations in Deuteronomy 34:1-12 must be supposed not to be the work of Moses himself, but of some later inspired writer.

If there is, therefore, reason to believe that the whole work, substantially as we have it now, was committed to writing by the same hand, the question arises, whether there are any circumstances by which it can be determined with probability who the author was. On no question, almost, pertaining to sacred criticism, have there been so many contradictory opinions as on this. Lowth, Magee, Prof. Lee, and many others, regard it as the work of Job himself. Lightfoot and others ascribe it to Elihu; some of the rabbinical writers, as also Kennicott, Michaelis, Dathe, and Good, to Moses; Luther, Grotius, and Doederlin, to Solomon; Umbreit and Noyes to some writer who lived not far from the period of the Jewish captivity; Rosenmuller, Spanheim, Reimar, Stauedlin, and C. F. Richter, suppose that it was composed by some Hebrew writer about the time of Solomon; Warburton regards it as the production of Ezra; Herder (Hebrew Poetry, i. 110) supposes that it was written by some ancient Idumean, probably Job himself, and was obtained by David in his conquests over Idumea. He supposes that in the later writings of David he finds traces of his having imitated the style of this ancient book.

It would be uninteresting and profitless to go into an examination of the reasons suggested by these respective authors for their various opinions. Instead of this, I propose to state the leading considerations which have occurred in the examination of the book itself, and of the reasons which have been suggested by these various authors, which may enable us to form a probable opinion. If the investigation shall result only in adding one more conjecture to those already formed, still it will have the merit of stating about all that seems to be of importance in enabling us to form an opinion in the case.

I. The first circumstance that would occur to one in estimating the question about the authorship of the book, is the foreign cast of the whole work - the fact that it differs from the usual style of the Hebrew compositions. The customs, allusions, figures of speech, and modes of thought, to one who is familiar with the writings of the Hebrews, have a foreign air, and are such as evidently show that the speakers lived in some other country than Judea. There is, indeed, a common Oriental cast diffused over the whole work, enough to distinguish it from all the modes of composition in the Occidental world; but there is, also, scarcely less to

distinguish it from the compositions which we know had their origin among the Hebrews. The style of thought, and the general cast of the book, is Arabian. The allusions; the metaphors; the illustrations; the reference to historical events and to prevailing customs, are not such as an Hebrew would make; certainly not, unless in the very earliest periods of history, and before the character of the nation became so formed as to distinguish it characteristically from their brethren in the great family of the East. Arabian deserts; streams failing from drought; wadys filled in the winter and dry in the summer; moving hordes and caravans that come regularly to the same place for water; dwellings of tents easily plucked up and removed; the dry and stinted shrubbery of the desert; the roaring of lions and other wild beasts; periodical rains; trees planted on the verge of running streams; robbers and plunderers that rise before day, and make their attack in the early morning; the rights, authority, and obligation of the גאל *gô'el* or avenger of blood; the claims of hospitality; the formalities of an Arabic court of justice, are the images which are kept constantly before the mind.

Here the respect due to an Emir; the courtesy of manners which prevails among the more elevated ranks in the Arabic tribes; the profound attention which listens to the close while one is speaking, and which never interrupts him (Herder i. 81), so remarkable among well-bred Orientals at the present day, appear everywhere. It is true, that many of these things may find a resemblance in the undoubted Hebrew writings - for some of them are the common characteristics of the Oriental people - but still, no one can doubt that they abound in this book more than in any other in the Bible, and that, as we shall see more particularly soon, they are unmixed as they are elsewhere, with what is indubitably of Hebrew origin. In connection with this, it may be remarked that there are in the book an unusual number of words, whose root is found now only in the Arabic, and which are used in a sense not common in the Hebrew, but usual in the Arabic. Of this all will be convinced who, in interpreting the book, avail themselves of the light which Gesenius has thrown on numerous words from the Arabic, or who consult the Lexicon of Castell, or who examine the Commentaries of Schultens and Lee. That more importance has been attached to this by many critics than facts will warrant, no one can deny; but as little can it be denied that more aid can be derived from the Arabic language in interpreting this book, than in the exposition of any other part of the Bible. On this point Gesenius

makes the following remarks "Altogether there is found in the book much resemblance to the Arabic, or which can be illustrated from the Arabic; but this is either Hebrew, and pertains to the poetic diction, or it is at the same time Aramaish, and was borrowed by the poet from the Aramaean language, and appears here not as Aramaean but as Arabic. Yet there is not here proportionably more than in other poetic books and portions of books. It would be unjust to infer from this that the author of this book had any immediate connection with Arabia, or with Arabic literature." Geschichte der hebr. Sprache und Schrift, S. 88. The fact of the Arabic cast of the work is conceded by Gesenius in the above extract; the inferences in regard to the connection of the book with Arabia and with Arabic literature which may be derived from this, is to be determined from other circumstances; compare Eichhorn, Einleitung, v. S. 163ff.

II. A second consideration that may enable us to determine the question respecting the authorship of the book is, the fact that there are in it numerous undoubted allusions to events which occurred before the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, and the establishment of the Jewish institutions. The point of this remark is, that if we shall find such allusions, and also that there are no allusions to events occurring after that period, this is a circumstance which may throw some light on the authorship. It will at least enable us to fix, with some degree of accuracy, the time when the book was committed to writing. Now that there are manifest allusions to events occurring before that period, the following references will show; Job 10:9, "Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay, and wilt thou bring me to dust again?" Here there is an allusion in almost so many words to the statements in Genesis 2:7; Genesis 3:19, respecting the manner in which man was formed - showing that Job was familiar with the account of the creation of man, Job 27:3, "All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils;" Job 33:4, "The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life;" Job 32:8, "But there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding."

Here there are undoubted allusions, also, to the manner in which man was formed - (compare Genesis 2:7) - allusions which show that the fact

must have been made known to the speakers by tradition, since it is not such a fact as man would readily arrive at by reasoning. The imbecility and weakness of man also, are described in terms which imply an acquaintance with the manner in which he was created. “How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth;” Job 4:19. In Job 31:33, there is probably an allusion to the fact that Adam attempted to hide himself from God when he had eaten the forbidden fruit. “If I covered my transgressions as Adam.” For the reasons for supposing that this refers to Adam, see the notes at the verse. In Job 22:15-16, there is a manifest reference to the deluge. “Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood?”

See the notes on that passage. In connection with this we may refer also to the fact that the description of the modes of worship, and the views of religion, found in this book, show an acquaintance with the form in which worship was offered to God before the exode from Egypt. They are of precisely such a character as we find in the time of Abel, Noah, and Abraham. These events are not such as would occur to one who was not familiar with the historical facts recorded in the first part of the book of Genesis. They are not such as would result from a train of reasoning, but could only be derived from the knowledge of those events which would be spread over the East at that early period of the world. They demonstrate that the work was composed by one who had had an opportunity to become acquainted with what is now recorded as the Mosaic history of the creation, and of the early events of the world.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

There was a man - This has all the appearance of being a true history. Many have regarded the whole book as a fiction, and have supposed that no such person as Job ever lived. But the book opens with the appearance of reality; and the express declaration that there was such a man, the mention of his name and of the place where he lived, show that the writer meant to affirm that there was in fact such a man. On this question see the Introduction, Section 1.

In the land of Uz - On the question where Job lived, see also the Introduction, Section 2.

Whose name was Job - The name Job (Hebrew איוב *'îyôb* Gr. Ἰώβ *Iōb* means properly, according to Gesenius, "one persecuted," from a root (איב *'âyab*) meaning to be an enemy to anyone, to persecute, to hate. The primary idea, according to Gesenius, is to be sought in breathing, blowing, or puffing at, or upon anyone, as expressive of anger or hatred, Germ. "Anschnauben." Eichhorn (Einleit. section 638. 1,) supposes that the name denotes a man who turns himself penitently to God, from a sense of the verb still found in Arabic "to repent." On this supposition, the name was given to him, because, at the close of the book, he is represented as exercising repentance for the improper expressions in which he had indulged during his sufferings. The verb occurs only once in the Hebrew Scriptures, Exodus 23:22: But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak, then "I will be an enemy" אויב *'ôyêb* "unto thine enemies" אויב את *'êth 'ôyêb* participle איב *'oyēb* is the common word to denote an enemy in the Old Testament, Exodus 15:6, Exodus 15:9; Leviticus 26:25; Numbers 35:23; Deuteronomy 32:27, Deuteronomy 32:42; Psalm 7:5; Psalm 8:2; Psalm 31:8; Lamentations 2:4-5; Job 13:24; Job 27:7; Job 33:10, "*et soepe al*." If this be the proper meaning of the word "Job," then the name would seem to have been given him by anticipation, or by common consent, as a much persecuted man. Significant names were very common among the Hebrews - given either by anticipation (see the notes at Isaiah 8:18), or subsequently, to denote some leading or important event in the life; compare Genesis 4:1-2, Genesis 4:25; Genesis 5:29; 1 Samuel 1:20. Such, too, was the case among the Romans, where the "agnomen" thus bestowed became the appellation by which the individual was best known. Cicero

thus received his name from a wart which he had on his face, resembling a "vetch," and which was called by the Latins, "cicer." Thus also Marcus had the name "Ancus," from the Greek word ανκὼν *ankōn* because he had a crooked arm; and thus the names Africanus, Germanicus, etc., were given to generals who had distinguished themselves in particular countries; see Univer. Hist. Anc. Part ix. 619, ed. 8vo, Lond. 1779. In like manner it is possible that the name "Job" was given to the Emir of Uz by common consent, as the man much persecuted or tried, and that this became afterward the appellation by which he was best known. The name occurs once as applied to a son of Issachar, Genesis 46:13, and in only two other places in the Bible except in this book; Ezekiel 14:14; James 5:11.

And that man was perfect - (תמם *tâmam*). The Septuagint have greatly expanded this statement, by giving a paraphrase instead of a translation. "He was a man who was true (ἀληθινός *alēthinos*), blameless (ἄμεμπτος *amemptos*), just (δίκαιος *dikaios*), pious (θεοσεβής *theosebēs*), abstaining from every evil deed." Jerome renders it, "simplex - simple," or "sincere." The Chaldee, שׁלם *shālam* "complete, finished, perfect." The idea seems to be that his piety, or moral character, was "proportionate" and was "complete in all its parts." He was a man of integrity in all the relations of life - as an Emir, a father, a husband, a worshipper of God. Such is properly the meaning of the word תם *tâm* as derived from תמם *tâmam* "to complete, to make full, perfect" or "entire," or "to finish." It denotes that in which there is no part lacking to complete the whole - as in a watch in which no wheel is missing. Thus, he was not merely upright as an Emir, but he was pious toward God; he was not merely kind to his family, but he was just to his neighbors and benevolent to the poor. The word is used to denote integrity as applied to the heart, Genesis 20:5: בתם לבבי *betām lebābîy* "In the honesty, simplicity, or sincerity of my heart (see the margin) have I done this." So 1 Kings 22:34, "One drew a bow לתמו *letumô* in the simplicity (or perfection) of his heart;" that is, without any evil intention; compare 2 Samuel 15:11; Proverbs 10:9. The proper notion, therefore, is that of simplicity. sincerity, absence from guile or evil intention, and completeness of parts in his religion. That he was a man absolutely sinless, or without any propensity to evil, is disproved alike by the spirit of complaining which he often evinces, and by his own confession, Job 9:20:

If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me;
If I say I am perfect, it shall prove me perverse.

So also Job 42:5-6:

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,
But now mine eye seeth thee;
Wherefore I abhor myself,
And repent in dust and ashes.

Compare Ecclesiastes 7:20.

And upright - The word יֹשֶׁר *yôshâr* from יָשַׁר *yâshar* to be straight, is applied often to a road which is straight, or to a path which is level or even. As used here it means upright or righteous; compare Psalm 11:7; Psalm 37:14,; Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 33:4.

And one that feared God - Religion in the Scriptures is often represented as the fear of God; Proverbs 1:7, Proverbs 1:29; Proverbs 2:5; Proverbs 8:13; Proverbs 14:26-27; Isaiah 11:2; Acts 9:31, "*et soepe al*."

And eschewed evil - "And departed from (סוּר *sûr*) evil." Septuagint, "Abstaining from every evil thing." These then are the four characteristics of Job's piety - he was sincere; upright; a worshipper of God; and one who abstained from all wrong. These are the essential elements of true religion everywhere; and the whole statement in the book of Job shows Job was, though not absolutely free from the sins which cleave to our nature, eminent in each of these things.

Verse 2

And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters - The same number was given to him again after these were lost, and his severe trials had been endured; see Job 42:13. Of his second family the names of the daughters are mentioned, Job 42:14. Of his first, it is remarkable that neither the names of his wife, his sons nor his daughters are recorded. The Chaldee, however, on what authority is unknown, says that the name of his wife was דינה *dîynâh* Job 2:9.

Verse 3

His substance - Margin, or "cattle." The word used here מקנה *mîqneh* is derived from קנה *qânâh* to gain or acquire, to buy or purchase, and properly means anything acquired or purchased - property, possessions, riches. The wealth of nomadic tribes, however, consisted mostly in flocks and herds, and hence the word in the Scripture signifies, almost exclusively, property in cattle. The word, says Gesenius, is used "strictly" to denote sheep, goats, and neat cattle, excluding beasts of burden (compare Greek κτῆνος *ktēnos*

herd, used here by the Septuagint), though sometimes the word includes asses and camels, as in this place.

Seven thousand sheep - In this verse we have a description of the wealth of an Arab ruler or chief, similar to that of those who are at this day called "Emirs." Indeed the whole description in the book is that which is applicable to the chief of a tribe. The possessions referred to in this verse would constitute no inconsiderable wealth anywhere, and particularly in the nomadic tribes of the East. Land is not mentioned as a part of this wealth; for among nomadic tribes living by pasturage, the right to the soil in fee simple is not claimed by individuals, the right of pasturage or a temporary possession being all that is needed. For the same reason, and from the fact that their circumstances require them to live in movable tents, houses are not mentioned as a part; of the wealth of this Emir. To understand this book, as well as most of the books of the Old Testament, it is necessary for us to lay aside our notions of living, and transfer ourselves in imagination to the very dissimilar customs of the East. The Chaldee has made a very singular explanation of this verse, which must be regarded as the work of fancy, but which shows the character of that version: "And his possessions were seven thousand sheep - a thousand for each of his sons; and three thousand camels - a thousand for each of his daughters; and five hundred yoke of oxen - for himself; and five hundred she-asses - for his wife."

And three thousand camels - Camels are well-known beasts of burden, extensively used still in Arabia. The Arabs employed these animals anciently in war, in their caravans, and for food. They are not unfrequently called "ships of the desert," particularly valuable in arid plains because they go many days without water. They carry from three to five hundred pounds, in proportion to the distance which they have to travel. Providence has adapted the camel with wonderful wisdom to sandy deserts, and in all ages the camel must be an invaluable possession there. The driest thistle and the barest thorn is all the food that he requires, and this he eats while advancing on his journey without stopping or causing a moment‘s delay. As it is his lot to cross immense deserts where no water is found, and where no dews fall, he is endowed with the power of laying in a store of water that will suffice him for days - Bruce says for thirty days.

To effect this, nature has provided large reservoirs or stomachs within him, where the water is kept pure, and from which he draws at pleasure as from a fountain. No other animal is endowed with this power, and were it

not for this, it would be wholly impracticable to cross those immense plains of sand. The Arabians, the Persians, and others, eat the flesh of camels, and it is served up at the best tables in the country. One of the ancient Arab poets, whose hospitality grew into a proverb, is reported to have killed yearly, in a certain month, ten camels every day for the entertainment of his friends. In regard to the hardihood of camels, and their ability to live on the coarsest fare, Burckhardt has stated a fact which may furnish an illustration. In a journey which he made from the country south of the Dead Sea to Egypt, he says, "During the whole of this journey, the camels had no other provender than the withered shrubs of the desert, my dromedary excepted, to which I gave a few handfuls of barley each evening." Trav. in Syria, p. 451; compare Bruce's Travels, vol. iv. p. 596; Niebuhr, Reise-beschreibung nach Arabien, 1Band, s. 215; Sandys, p. 138; Harmer's Obs. 4:415, ed. Lond. 1808,8vo; and Rob. Cal.

And five hundred yoke of oxen - The fact that Job had so many oxen implies that he devoted himself to the cultivation of the soil as well as to keeping flocks and herds; compare Job 1:14. So large a number of oxen would constitute wealth anywhere.

And five hundred she-asses - Bryant remarks (Observations, p. 61) that a great part of the wealth of the inhabitants of the East often consisted of she-asses, the males being few and not held in equal estimation. She-asses are early mentioned as having been in common use to ride on; Numbers 22:25; Judges 5:10. 2 Kings 4:24 (Hebrew). One reason why the ass was chosen in preference to the horse, was that it subsisted on so much less than that animal, there being no animal except the camel that could be so easily kept as the ass. She-asses were also regarded as the most valuable, because, in traversing the deserts of the country they would furnish travelers with milk. It is remarkable that "cows" are not mentioned expressly in this enumeration of the articles of Job's wealth, though "butter" is referred to by him subsequently as having been abundant in his family, Job 29:6. It is possible, however, that "cows" were included as a part of the "five hundred yoke of בקר *bâqâr* here rendered "oxen;" but which would be quite as appropriately rendered "cattle." The word is in the common gender, and is derived from בקר *bâqar* in Arabic to cleave, to divide, to lay open, and hence, to plow, to cleave the soil. It denotes properly the animals used in plowing; and it is well known that cows are employed as well as oxen for this purpose in the East; see Judges 14:18; Hosea 4:10; compare

Deuteronomy 32:14, where the word בקר *bâqâr* is used to denote a cow - "milk of kine," Genesis 33:13 (Hebrew).

And a very great household - Margin, "husbandry." The Hebrew word here (עבדה *ʿăbûddâh*)ambiguous. - It may denote service rendered, that is, work, or the servants who performed it; compare Genesis 26:14, margin. The Septuagint renders it ὑπηρεσία *hupēresia* Aquila δουλεία *douleia* and Symmachus, οἰκετία *oiketia* all denoting "service," or "servitude," or that which pertained to the domestic service of a family. The word refers doubtless to those who had charge of his camels, his cattle, and of his husbandry; see Job 1:15. It is not implied by the word here used, nor by that in Job 1:15, that they were "slaves." They may have been, but there is nothing to indicate this in the narrative. The Septuagint adds to this, as if explanatory of it, "and his works were great in the land."

So that this man was the greatest - Was possessed of the most wealth, and was held in the highest honor.

Of all the men of the East - Margin as in Hebrew "sons." The sons of the East denote those who lived in the East. The word "East" קדם *qedem* is commonly employed in the Scriptures to denote the country which lies east of Palestine. For the places intended here, see the Introduction, Section 2, (3). It is of course impossible to estimate with accuracy the exact amount of the value of the property of Job. Compared with many persons in modern times, indeed, his possessions would not be regarded as constituting very great riches. The Editor of the Pictorial Bible supposes that on a fair estimate his property might be considered as worth from thirty to forty thousand pounds sterling - equivalent to some 200,000 (circa 1880's). In this estimate the camel is reckoned as worth about 45.00 dollars, the oxen as worth about five dollars, and the sheep at a little more than one dollar, which it is said are about the average prices now in Western Asia. Prices, however, fluctuate much from one age to another; but at the present day such possessions would be regarded as constituting great wealth in Arabia. The value of the property of Job may be estimated from this fact, that he had almost half as many camels as constituted the wealth of a Persian king in more modern times.

Chardin says, "as the king of Persia in the year 1676 was in Mesandera, the Tartars fell upon the camels of the king and took away three thousand of them which was to him a great loss, for he had only seven thousand." - Rosenmuller, Morgenland, "in loc." The condition of Job we are to regard

as that of a rich Arabic Emir, and his mode of life as between the nomadic pastoral life, and the settled manner of living in communities like ours. He was a princely shepherd, and yet he was devoted to the cultivation of the soil. It does not appear, however, that he claimed the right of the soil in "fee simple," nor is his condition inconsistent with the supposition that his residence in any place was regarded as temporary, and that all his property might be easily removed. "He belonged to that condition of life which fluctuated between that of the wandering shepherd, and that of a people settled in towns. That he resided, or had a residence, in a town is obvious; but his flocks and herds evidently pastured in the deserts, between which and the town his own time was probably divided. He differed from the Hebrew patriarchs chiefly in this, that he did not so much wander about "without any certain dwelling place."

This mixed condition of life, which is still frequently exhibited in Western Asia, will, we apprehend, account sufficiently for the diversified character of the allusions and pictures which the book contains - to the pastoral life and the scenes and products of the wilderness; to the scenes and circumstances of agriculture; to the arts and sciences of settled life and of advancing civilization." - Pict. Bib. It may serve somewhat to illustrate the different ideas in regard to what constituted wealth in different countries, to compare this statement respecting Job with a remark of Virgil respecting an inhabitant of ancient Italy, whom he calls the most wealthy among the Ausonian farmers:

Seniorque Galaesua.
Dum paci medium se offert; justissimus unus
Qui fuit, Ausoniisque olim ditissimus arvis:

Quinque greges illi balantum. quina redibant

Armenta, et terram centurn vertebat aratris.
Aeneid 7:535-539.
Among the rest, the rich Galaesus lies;
A good old man, while peace he preached in vain,

Amid the madness of the unruly train:

Five herds, five bleating flocks his pasture filled,

His lands a hundred yoke of oxen tilted.
Dryden

Verse 4

And his sons went and feasted in their houses - Dr. Good renders this, "and his sons went to hold a banquet house." Tindal renders it, "made bankertea." The Hebrew means, they went and made a "house-feast;" and the idea is, that they gave an entertainment in their dwellings, in the ordinary way in which such entertainments were made. The word used here (מִשְׁתֶּה *mîshteh*) is derived from שָׁתָה *shâthâh* "to drink;" and then to drink together, to banquet. Schultens supposes that this was merely designed to keep up the proper familiarity between the different branches of the family, and not for purposes of revelry and dissipation; and this seems to accord with the view of Job. He, though a pious man, was not opposed to it, but he apprehended merely that they might have sinned in their hearts, Job 1:5. He knew the danger, and hence, he was more assiduous in imploring for them the divine guardianship.

Every one his day - In his proper turn, or when his day came round. Perhaps it refers only to their birthdays; see Job 3:1, where the word "day" is used to denote a birthday. In early times the birthday was observed with great solemnity and rejoicing. Perhaps in this statement the author of the Book of Job means to intimate that his family lived in entire harmony, and to give a picture of his domestic happiness strongly contrasted with the calamities which came upon his household. It was a great aggravation of his sufferings that a family thus peaceful and harmonious was wholly broken up. - The Chaldee adds, "until seven days were completed," supposing that each one of these feasts lasted seven days, a supposition by no means improbable, if the families were in any considerable degree remote from each other.

And sent and called for their three sisters - This also may be regarded as a circumstance showing that these occasions were not designed for revelry. Young men, when they congregate for dissipation, do not usually invite their "sisters" to be with them; nor do they usually desire the presence of virtuous females at all. The probability, therefore, is, that this was designed as affectionate and friendly family conversation. In itself there was nothing wrong in it, nor was there necessarily any danger; yet Job

felt it "possible" that they might have erred and forgotten God, and hence, he was engaged in more intense and ardent devotion on their account; Job 1:5.

Verse 5

And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about - Dr. Good renders this, "as the days of such banquets returned." But this is not the idea intended. It is, when the banquets had gone round as in a circle through all the families, "then" Job sent and sanctified them. It was not from an anticipation that they "would" do wrong, but it was from the apprehension that they "might" have sinned. The word rendered "were gone about" (נקף *nâqaph*) means properly to join together, and then to move round in a circle, to revolve, as festivals do; see the notes at Isaiah 29:1: "Let the festivals go round." Here it means that the days of their banqueting had gone round the circle, or had gone round the several families. Septuagint "When the days of the entertainment (or drinking, πότου *potou*) were finished." A custom of feasting similar to this prevails in China. "They have their fraternities which they call the brotherhood of the months; this consists of months according to the number of the days therein, and in a circle they go abroad to eat at one another's houses by turns. If one man has not conveniences to receive the fraternity in his own house, he may provide for them in another; and there are many public houses well furnished for this purpose." See Semedo's History of China, i chapter 13, as quoted by Burder in Rosenmuller's Morgenland. "in loc."

That Job sent - Sent for them, and called them around him. He was apprehensive that they might have erred, and he took every measure to keep them pure, and to maintain the influence of religion in his family.

And sanctified them - This expression, says Schultens, is capable of two interpretations. It may either mean that he "prepared" them by various lustrations, ablutions, and other ceremonies to offer sacrifice; or that he offered sacrifices for the purpose of procuring expiation for sins which they might actually have committed. The former sense, he remarks, is favored by the use of the word in Exodus 19:10; 1 Samuel 16:5, where the word means to prepare themselves by ablutions to meet God and to worship him. The latter sense is demanded by the connection. Job felt as every father should feel in such circumstances, that there was reason to fear that God had not been remembered as he ought to have been, and he was therefore more fervent in his devotions, and called them around him, that their own minds

might be affected in view of his pious solicitude. What father is there who loves God, and who feels anxious that his children should also, who does not feel special solicitude if his sons and his daughters are in a situation where successive days are devoted to feasting and mirth? The word here rendered "sanctified" (קדשׁ *qâdash*) means properly to be pure, clean, holy; in Pihel, the form used here, to make holy, to sanctify, to consecrate, as a priest; and here it means, that he took measures to make them holy on the apprehension that they had sinned; that is, he took the usual means to procure for them forgiveness. The Septuagint renders it ἐκάθαριζεν *ekatharizen* he purified them.

And rose up early in the morning - For the purpose of offering his devotions, and procuring for them expiation. It was customary in the patriarchal times to offer sacrifice early in the morning. See Genesis 22:3; Exodus 32:6.

And offered burnt-offerings - Hebrew "and caused to ascend;" that is, by burning them so that the smoke ascended toward heaven. The word rendered "burnt-offerings" (עולה *ʿôlâh*) is from עלה *ʿâlâh* "to ascend" (the word used here and rendered "offered"), and means that which was made to ascend, to wit, by burning. It is applied in the Scriptures to a sacrifice that was wholly consumed on the altar, and answers to the Greek word ὁλόκαυστον *holokauston* "Holocaust." See the notes at Isaiah 1:11. Such offerings in the patriarchal times were made by the father of a family, officiating as priest in behalf of his household. Thus, Noah officiated, Genesis 8:20; and thus also Abraham acted as the priest to offer sacrifice, Genesis 12:7-8; Genesis 13:18; Genesis 22:13. In the earliest times, and among pagan nations, it was supposed that pardon might be procured for sin by offering sacrifice. In Homer there is a passage which remarkably corresponds with the view of Job before us; Iliad 9:493:

The gods (the great and only wise)
Are moved by offerings, vows, and sacrifice;
Offending man their high compassion wins,

And daily prayers atone for daily sins.
Pope

According to the number of them all - Sons and daughters. Perhaps an additional sacrifice for each one of them. The Septuagint renders this, "according to their numbers, καί μόσχον ἕνα περὶ ἁμαπτίας περὶ τῶν ψυχῶν

αὐτῶν *kai moschon hena peri hamartias peri tōn psuchōn autōn* - a young bullock for sin or a sin-offering for their souls."

It may be that my sons have sinned - He had no positive or certain proof of it. He felt only the natural apprehension which every pious father must, that his sons might have been overtaken by temptation, and perhaps, under the influence of wine, might have been led to speak reproachfully of God, and of the necessary restraints of true religion and virtue.

And cursed God in their hearts - The word here rendered curse is that which is usually rendered "bless" ברך *bārak* It is not a little remarkable that the same word is used in senses so directly opposite as to "bless" and "to curse." Dr. Good contends that the word should be always rendered "bless," and so translates it in this place, "peradventure my sons may have sinned, "nor" blessed God in their hearts," understanding the Hebrew prefix ו (*v*) as a disjunctive or negative participle. So too in Job 2:9, rendered in our common translation, "curse God and die," he translates it, "blessing God and dying." But the interpretation which the connection demands is evidently that of cursing, renouncing, or forgetting; and so also it is in Job 2:9. This sense is still more obvious in 1 Kings 21:10: "Thou didst "blaspheme" ברך *bārak* God and the king." So also 1 Kings 21:13 of the same chapter - though here Dr. Good contends that the word should be rendered "bless," and that the accusation was that Naboth "blessed" or worshipped the gods, even Moloch - where he supposes the word מלך *melek* should be pointed מלך *môlek* and read "Molech." But the difficulty is not removed by this, and after all it is probable that the word here, as in Job 2:9, means to "curse." So it is understood by nearly all interpreters. The Vulgate indeed renders it singularly enough, "Lest perhaps my sons have sinned, and have blessed God (et benedixerint Deo) in their hearts." The Septuagint, "Lest perhaps my sons in their mind have thought evil toward God" - κακὰ ἐνεόησαν πρὸς Θεόν *kaka enenoēsan pros Theon* The Chaldee, "Lest my sons have sinned and provoked yahweh (יהוה וארגיזדקדם) in their hearts." Assuming that this is the sense of the word here, there are three ways of accounting for the fact that the same word should have such opposite significations.

(1) One is that proposed by Taylor (Concor.), that pious persons of old regarded blasphemy as so abominable that they abhorred to express it by the proper name, and that therefore by an "euphemism" they used the term "bless" instead of "curse." But it should be said that nothing is more

common in the Scriptures than words denoting cursing and blasphemy. The word אלה *'âlâh* in the sense of cursing or execrating, occurs frequently. So the word גדף *gâdaph* means to blaspheme, and is often used; 2 Kings 19:6, 2 Kings 19:22; Isaiah 37:6, Isaiah 37:23; Psalm 44:16. Other words also were used in the same sense, and there was no necessity of using a mere "euphemism" here.

(2) A second mode of accounting for this double use of the word is. that this was the common term of salutation between friends at meeting and parting. It is then supposed to have been used in the sense of the English phrase "to bid farewell to." And then, like that phrase, to mean "to renounce, to abandon, to dismiss from the mind, to disregard." The words χαίρειν *chairein* in Greek, and "valere" in Latin, are used in this way. This explanation is suggested by Schultens, and is adopted by Rosenmuller and Noyes, who refer to the following places as parallel instances of the use of the word. Virg. Ecl. 8,58. "*Vivite Sylvoe* " - a form, says the Annotator on Virgil (Delphin), of bidding farewell to, like the Greek χαίρετε *chairete* - "a form used against those whom we reject with hatred, and wish to depart." Thus, Catull. 11. 17: Cum suis vivat, valeatque moechis. So Aesch. Agam. 574:

Καὶ πολλὰ χαίρειν ξυμφοραῖς καταξιῶ *polla chairein cumforais kataciō* Plutarch, Dion. p. 975. So Cicero in a letter to Atticus (Psalm 8:8), in which he complains of the disgraceful flight of Pompey, applies to him a quotation from Aristophanes; πολλὰ χαίρειν εἰπὼν τῷ καλῷ *polla chairein eipōn tō kalō* - "bidding farewell to honour he fled to Brundusium;" compare Ter. And. 4:2. 14. Cicero de Nat. Deor. 1. 44. According to this interpretation, it means that Job apprehended they had renounced God in their hearts. that is, had been unmindful of him, and had withheld from him the homage which was due. - This is plausible: but the difficulty is in making out the use of this sense of the word in Hebrew. That the word was used as a mode of "parting salutation" among the Hebrews is undoubted. It was a solemn form of invoking the divine blessing when friends separated; compare Genesis 28:3; Genesis 47:10. But I find no use of the word where it is applied to separation in the sense of "renouncing," or bidding farewell to "in a bad sense;" and unless some instances of this kind can be adduced, the interpretation is unsound, and though similar phrases are used in Greek,

Latin, and other languages, it does not demonstrate that this use of the word obtained in the Hebrew.

(3) A third, and more simple explanation is that which supposes that the original sense of the word was "to kneel." This, according to Gesenius, is the meaning of the word in Arabic. So Castell gives the meaning of the word - "to bend the knees for the sake of honour;" that is, as an act of respect. So in Syriac, "*Genua flexit̂ procubuit* So "*Genu* the "knee." Then it means to bend the knee for the purpose of invoking God, or worshipping. In the Piel, the form used here, it means

(1) to bless God, to celebrate, to adore;

(2) to bless men - that is, to "invoke" blessings on them; to greet or salute them - in the sense of invoking blessings on them when we meet them; 1 Samuel 15:13; Genesis 47:7; 2 Samuel 6:20; or when we part from them; Genesis 47:10; 1 Kings 8:66; Genesis 24:60;

(3) to "invoke evil," in the sense of "cursing others." The idea is, that punishment or destruction is from God, and hence, it is "imprecated" on others. In one word, the term is used, as derived from the general sense of kneeling, in the sense of "invoking" either blessings or curses; and then in the general sense of blessing or cursing. This interpretation is defended by Selden, de jure Nat. et Gent. Lib. II. 100:11:p. 255, and by Gesenius, Lexicon. The idea here is, that Job apprehended that his sons, in the midst of mirth, and perhaps revelry, had been guilty of irreverence, and perhaps of reproaching God inwardly for the restraints of virtue and piety. What is more common in such scenes? What was more to be apprehended?

Thus did Job continually - It was his regular habit whenever such an occasion occurred. He was unremitted in his pious care; and his solicitude lest his sons should have sinned never ceased - a beautiful illustration of the appropriate feelings of a pious father in regard to his sons. The Hebrew is, "all day;" that is, at all times.

Verse 6

Now there was a day - Dr. Good renders this, "And the day came." Tindal." Now upon a time." The Chaldee paraphrasist has presumed to specify the time, and renders it, "Now it happened in the day of judgment (or scrutiny, דדינא ביומא), "in the beginning of the year," that hosts of angels

came to stand in judgment before yahweh, and Satan came." According to this, the judgment occurred once a year, and a solemn investigation was had of the conduct even of the angels. In the Hebrew there is no intimation of the frequency with which this occurred, nor of the time of the year when it happened. The only idea is, that "the sons of God" on a set or appointed day came to stand before God to give an account of what they had done, and to receive further orders in regard to what they were to do. - This is evidently designed to introduce the subsequent events relating to Job. It is language taken from the proceedings of a monarch who had sent forth messengers or ambassadors on important errands through the different provinces of his empire, who now returned to give an account of what they had observed, and of the general state of the kingdom. Such a return would, of course, be made on a fixed day when, in the language of the law, their report would be "returnable," and when they would be required to give in an account of the state of the kingdom. If it be said that it is inconsistent with the supposition that this book was inspired to suppose such a poetic fiction, I reply,

(1) That it is no more so than the parables of the Savior, who often supposes cases, and states them as real occurrences, in order to illustrate some important truth. Yet no one was ever led into error by this.

(2) It is in accordance with the language in the Scripture everywhere to describe God as a monarch seated on his throne, surrounded by his ministers, and sending them forth to accomplish important purposes in different parts of his vast empire.

It is not absolutely necessary, therefore, to regard this as designed to represent an actual occurrence. It is one of the admissible ornaments of poetry; - as admissible as any other poetic ornament. To represent God as a king is not improper; and if so, it is not improper to represent him with the usual accompaniments of royalty, - surrounded by ministers, and employing angels and messengers for important purposes in his kingdom. This supposition being admitted, all that follows is merely in "keeping," and is designed to preserve the verisimilitude of the conception. - This idea, however, by no means militates against the supposition that angels are in fact really employed by God in important purposes in the government of his kingdom, nor that Satan has a real existence, and is permitted by God to

employ an important agency in the accomplishment of his purposes toward his people. On this verse, however, see the Introduction, Section 1, (4).

The sons of God - Angels; compare Job 38:7. The whole narrative supposes that they were celestial beings.

Came to present themselves - As having returned from their embassy, and to give an account of what they had observed and done.

Before the Lord - Before יהוה *yehovâh* On the meaning of this word, see the notes at Isaiah 1:2. A scene remarkably similar to this is described in 1 Kings 22:19-23. Yahweh is there represented as "sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left." He inquires who would go and persuade Ahab that he might go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? "And there came forth a spirit and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him." This he promised to do by being "a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets."

And Satan came also among them - Margin, "The adversary" came "in the midst of them." On the general meaning of this passage, and the reasons why Satan is introduced here, and the argument thence derived respecting the age and authorship of the book of Job, see the Introduction, Section 4, (4). The Vulgate renders this by the name "Satan." The Septuagint: ὁ διάβολος *ho diabolos* - the devil, or the accuser. The Chaldee, סטנא *saṭenā'* "Satan." So the Syriac. Theodotion, ὁ ἀντικείμενος *ho antikeimenos* - "the adversary." The word rendered "Satan" שׂטן *śâṭân* is derived from שׂטן *śâṭan* "Satan," to lie in wait, to be an adversary, and hence, it means properly an adversary, an accuser. It is used to denote one who "opposes," as in war 1 Kings 11:14, 1 Kings 11:23, 1 Kings 11:25; 1 Samuel 29:4; onc who is an adversary or an accuser in a court of justice Psalm 109:6, and one who stands in the way of another; Numbers 22:22, "And the angel of yahweh stood in the way for an adversary against him" לה לשׂטן *leśâṭân lôh* "to oppose him."

It is then used by way of eminence, to denote the "adversary," and assumes the form of a proper name, and is applied to the great foe of God and man - the malignant spirit who seduces people to evil, and who accuses them before God. Thus, in Zechariah 3:1-2, "And he showed me Joshua the priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Loan said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan;" compare Revelation 12:10, "Now is come salvation - for the accuser ὁ κατηγορῶν *ho katēgorōn* - that is, Satan, see Revelation 12:9) of

our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." - The word does not often occur in the Old Testament. It is found in the various forms of a verb and a noun in only the following places. As a verb, in the sense of being an adversary, Psalm 71:13; Psalm 109:4, Psalm 109:20, Psalm 109:29; Zechariah 3:1; Psalm 38:20; as a noun, rendered "adversary" and "adversaries," 1 Kings 5:4; 1 Kings 11:14, 1 Kings 11:23, 1 Kings 11:25; Numbers 22:22, Numbers 22:32; 1 Samuel 29:4; 2 Samuel 19:22; rendered "Satan," 1 Chronicles 21:1; Psalm 109:6; Job 1:6-9, Job 1:12; Job 2:1-4, Job 2:6-7; Zechariah 3:2; and once rendered "an accusation," Ezra 4:6.

It was a word, therefore, early used in the sense of an adversary or accuser, and was applied to anyone who sustained this character, until it finally came to be used as a proper name, to denote, by way of eminence, the prince of evil spirits, as the adversary or accuser of people. An opinion has been adopted in modern times by Herder, Eichhorn, Dathe, Ilgen, and some others, that the being here referred to by the name of Satan is not the malignant spirit, the enemy of God, the Devil, but is one of the sons of God, "a faithful, but too suspicious servant of yahweh." According to this, God is represented as holding a council to determine the state of his dominions. In this council, Satan, a zealous servant of yahweh, to whom had been assigned the honorable office of visiting different parts of the earth, for the purpose of observing the conduct of the subjects of yahweh, makes his appearance on his return with others.

Such was the piety of Job, that it had attracted the special attention of yahweh, and he puts the question to Satan, whether in his journey be had remarked this illustrious example of virtue. Satan, who, from what he has observed on earth, is supposed to have lost all confidence in the reality and genuineness of the virtue which man may exhibit, suggests that he doubts whether even Job serves God from a disinterested motive; that God had encompassed him with blessings, and that his virtue is the mere result of circumstances; and that if his comforts were removed he would be found as destitute of principle as any other man. Satan, according to this, is a suspicious minister of yahweh, not a malignant spirit; he inflicts on Job only what he is ordered to by God, and nothing because he is himself

malignant. Of this opinion Gesenius remarks (Lexicon), that it "is now universally exploded."

An insuperable objection to this view is, that it does not accord with the character usually ascribed to Satan in the Bible, and especially that the disposition attributed to him in the narrative before us is wholly inconsistent with this view. He is a malignant being; an accuser; one delighting in the opportunity of charging a holy man with hypocrisy, and in the permission to inflict tortures on him, and who goes as far in producing misery as he is allowed - restrained from destroying him only by the express command of God. - In Arabic the word Satan is often applied to a serpent. Thus, Gjauhari, as quoted by Schultens, says, "The Arabs call a serpent Satan, especially one that is conspicuous by its crest, head, and odious appearance." It is applied also to any object or being that is evil. Thus, the Scholiast on Hariri, as quoted by Schultens also, says, "Everything that is obstinately rebellious, opposed, and removed from good, of genii, human beings, and beasts, is called Satan." - The general notion of an adversary and an opponent is found everywhere in the meaning of the word. - Dr. Good remarks on this verse, "We have here another proof that, in the system of patriarchal theology, the evil spirits, as well as the good, were equally amenable to the Almighty, and were equally cited, at definite periods, to answer for their conduct at his bar."

Rosenmuller remarks well on this verse, "It is to be observed, that Satan, no less than the other celestial spirits, is subject to the government of God, and dependent on his commands (compare Job 2:1) where Satan equally with the sons of God (בן אלהים *bên 'ĕlohîym*) is said to present himself before God (להיצב *lehîtyatsēb* that is, λειτουργεῖν *leitourgein*), to minister. Yahweh uses the ministry of this demon (hujus daemonis) to execute punishment, or when from any other cause it seemed good to him to send evil upon men. But he, although incensed against the race of mortals, and desirous of injuring, is yet described as bound with a chain, and never dares to touch the pious unless God relaxes the reins. Satan, in walking round the earth, could certainly attentively consider Job, but to injure him he could not, unless permission had been given him."

Verse 7

And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? - This inquiry does not appear to have been made as if it was improper that Satan should have appeared there, for no blame seems to have been attached to him for this. He came as a spirit that was subject to the control of yahweh; he came with others, not to mingle in their society, and partake of their happiness, but to give an account of what he had done, and of what he had observed. The poetic idea is, that this was done periodically, and that "all" the spirits employed by yahweh to dispense blessings to mortals, to inflict punishment, or to observe their conduct, came and stood before him. Why the inquiry is directed particularly to "Satan," is not specified. Perhaps it is not meant that there was any "special" inquiry made of him, but that, as he was to have so important an agency in the transactions which follow, the inquiry that was made of him only is recorded In respect to the others, nothing occurred pertaining to Job, and their examination is not adverted to. Or it may be, that, as Satan was known to be malignant, suspicious, and disposed to think evil of the servants of God, the design was to direct his attention particularly to Job as an illustrious and indisputable example of virtue and piety.

From going to and fro in the earth - Dr. Good renders this, "from roaming round." Noyes, "from wandering over." The word which is here used (שׁוּט *shûṭ*) means properly,

(1.) to whip, to scourge, to lash;

(2.) to row, that is, to lash the sea with oars;

(3.) to run up and down, to go here and there, or to and fro, so as to lash the air with one's arms as with oars, and hence, to travel over a land, or to go through it in order to see it, 2 Samuel 24:2, 2 Samuel 24:8.

Dr. Good, in conformity with the interpretation proposed by Schultens, says that "the word imports, not so much the act of going forward and backward, as of making a circuit or circumference; of going round about. The Hebrew verb is still in use among the Arabic writers, and in every instance implies the same idea of gyration or circumambulation." In Arabic, according to Castell, the word means "to heat, to burn, to cause to boil, to consume:" then to propel to weariness, as e. g. a horse, and then to make a circuit, to go about at full speed, to go with diligence and activity. Thus, in

Carnuso, as quoted by Schultens, "a course made at one impulse to the goal is called שׁוט *shôṭ* In 2 Samuel 24:2, the word is used in the sense of passing around through different places for the purpose of taking a census. "Go now (Margin, "compass") through all the tribes of Israel." In Numbers 11:8, it is applied to the Israelites going about to collect manna, passing rapidly and busily in the places where it fell for the purpose of gathering it.

In Zechariah 4:10, it is applied to "the eyes of Yahweh," which are said to "run to and fro through the earth," that is, he surveys all things as one does whose eye passes rapidly from object to object. The same phrase occurs in 2 Chronicles 16:9. In Jeremiah 5:1, it is applied to the action of a man passing rapidly through the streets of a city. "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem "compare Jeremiah 49:3. From these passages it is clear that the idea is not that of going "in a circuit" or circle, but it is that of passing rapidly; of moving with alacrity and in a hurry; and it is not improbable that the "original" idea is that suggested in the Arabic of "heat" - and thence applied to a whip or scourge because it produces a sensation like burning, and also to a rapid journey or motion, because it produces heat or a glow. It means that Satan had been active and diligent in passing from place to place in the earth to survey it. The Chaldee adds to this, "to examine into the works of the sons of men."

And from walking - That is, to investigate human affairs. On this verse it is observed by Rosenmullcr, that in the life of Zoroaster (see Zendavesta by John G. Kleukner, vol. 3: p. 11,) the prince of the evil demons, the angel of death, whose name is "Engremeniosch," is said to go far and near through the world for the purpose of injuring and opposing good people.

Verse 8

Hast thou considered my servant Job? - Margin, "Set thine heart on." The margin is a literal translation of the Hebrew. Schultens remarks on this, that it means more than merely to observe or to look at - since it is abundantly manifest from the following verses that Satan "had" attentively considered Job, and had been desirous of injuring him. It means, according to him, to set himself against Job, to fix the heart on him with an intention to injure him, and yahweh means to ask whether Satan had done this. But it seems more probable that the phrase means to consider "attentively," and that God means to ask him whether he had carefully observed him. Satan is represented as having no confidence in human virtue, and as maintaining

that there was none which would resist temptation, if presented in a form sufficiently alluring. God here appeals to the case of Job as a full refutation of this opinion. The trial which follows is designed to test the question whether the piety of Job was of this order.

That there is none like him in the earth - That he is the very highest example of virtue and piety on earth. Or might not the word כי *kîy* here be rendered "for?" "For there is none like him in the earth." Then the idea would be, not that he had considered "that" there was none like him, but God directs his attention to him "because" he was the most eminent among mortals.

A perfect and an upright man - See the Notes at Job 1:1. The Septuagint translates this verse as they do Job 1:1.

Verse 9

Doth Job fear God for nought? - "Is his religion disinterested? Would not anyone be willing to worship God in such circumstances?" The idea is that there was nothing genuine about his piety; that religion could not be tried in prosperity; that Job had an abundant compensation for serving God, and that if the favors conferred on him were taken away, he would be like the rest of mankind. Much of the apparent virtue and religion of the world is the result of circumstances, and the question here proposed "may," it is to be feared, be asked with great propriety of many professors of religion who are rich; it "should" be asked by every professed friend of the Most High, whether his religion is not selfish and mercenary. Is it because God has blessed us with great earthly advantages? Is it the result of mere gratitude? Is it because he has preserved us in peril, or restored us from sickness? Or is it merely because we hope for heaven, and serve God because we trust he will reward us in a future world? All this may be the result of mere selfishness; and of all such persons it may be appropriately asked, "Do they fear God for nought?" True religion is not mere gratitude, nor is it the result of circumstances. It is the love of religion for its own sake - not for reward; it is because the service of God is right in itself, and not merely because heaven is full of glory; it is because God is worthy of our affections and confidence, and not merely because he will bless us - and this religion will live through all external changes, and survive the destruction of the world. It will flourish in poverty as well as when surrounded by affluence; on a bed of pain as well as in vigorous health; when we are calumniated and despised for our attachment to it, as well as when the incense of flattery is burned

around us, and the silvery tones of praise fall on our ear; in the cottage as well as the palace; on the pallet of straw as well as on the bed of down.

Verse 10

Hast thou not made an hedge about him? - Dr. Good remarks, that to give the original word here its full force, it should be derived from the science of engineering, and be rendered, "Hast thou not raised a "palisado" about him?" The Hebrew word used here (שׂוּך *śûk*) properly means "to hedge"; to hedge in or about; and hence, to protect, as one is defended whose house or farm is hedged in either with a fence of thorns, or with an enclosure of stakes or palisades. The word in its various forms is used to denote, as a noun, "pricks in the eyes" Numbers 33:55; that is, that which would be like thorns; "barbed irons" Job 41:7, that is, the barbed iron used as a spear to take fish; and a hedge, and thorn hedge, Micah 7:4; Proverbs 15:19; Isaiah 5:5. The idea here is, that of making an enclosure around Job and his possessions to guard them from danger. The Septuagint renders it περιέφραξας *periephracas* to make a defense around," to "circumvallate" or inclose, as a camp is in war. In the Syriac and Arabic it is rendered, "Hast thou not protected him with thy hand? The Chaldee, "Hast thou protected him with thy word? The Septuagint renders the whole passage, "Hast thou not encircled the things which are without him" (τὰ ἔξω αὐτοῦ *ta exō autou*) that is, the things abroad which belong to him, "and the things within his house." The sense of the whole passage is, that he was eminently under the divine protection, and that God had kept himself, his family, and property from plunderers, and that therefore he served and feared him.

Thou hast blessed the work of his hands - Thou hast greatly prospered him.

And his substance is increased in the land - His property, Job 1:3. Margin, "cattle." The word "increased" here by no means expresses the force of the original. The word פרץ *pârats* means properly to break, to rend, then to break or burst forth as waters do that have been pent up; 2 Samuel 5:20, compare Proverbs 3:10, "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses "shall burst out" פרץ *pârats* with new wine;" that is, thy wine-fats shall be so full that they shall overflow, or "burst" the barriers, and the wine shall flow out in abundance. The Arabians, according to Schultens, employ this word still to denote the mouth or "embouchure" - the most; rapid part of a stream. So Golius, in proof of this, quotes from the Arabic

writer Gjanhari, a couplet where the word is used to denote the mouth of the Euphrates:

"His rushing wealth o'er flowed him with its heaps;
So at its mouth the mad Euphrates sweeps."

According to Sehultens, the word denotes a place where a river bursts forth, and makes a new way by rending the hills and rocks asunder. In like manner the flocks and herds of Job had burst, as it were, every barrier, and had spread like an inundation over the land; compare Genesis 30:43; 2 Chronicles 31:5; Exodus 1:7; Job 16:14.

Verse 11

But put forth thine hand now - That is, for the purpose of injuring him, and taking away his property.

And touch all that he hath - Dr. Good renders this, "and smite." The Vulgate and the Septuagint, "touch." The Hebrew word used here נגע *nâga*ʿ means properly to "touch;" then to touch anyone with violence Genesis 26:11; Joshua 9:19, and then to smite, to injure, to strike; see Genesis 32:26,33; 1 Samuel 6:9; Job 19:21; compare the notes at Isaiah 53:4. Here it means evidently to smite or strike; and the idea is, that if God should take away the property of Job, he would take away his religion with it - and the trial was to see whether this effect would follow.

And he will curse thee to thy face - He will do it openly and publicly. The word rendered "curse" here ברך *bārak* is the same as that used in Job 1:5, and which is usually rendered "bless;" see the notes at Job 1:5. Dr. Good contends that; it should be rendered here "bless," and translates it as a question: "Will he then, indeed, bless thee to thy face?" But in this he probably stands alone. The evident sense is, that Job would openly renounce God, and curse him on his throne; that all his religion was caused merely by his abundant prosperity, and was mere gratitude and selfishness; and that if his property were taken away, he would become the open and avowed enemy of him who was now his benefactor.

Verse 12

All that he hath is in thy power - Margin, as in Hebrew "hand." That is, all this is now committed to thee, for it is manifest that hitherto Satan had no power to injure even his property. He complained that God had made a hedge around all that Job possessed. Now it was all entrusted to him in order that he might make full trim of the faith of Job. The grant extended to his sons and daughters as well as to his property.

Only upon himself put not forth thine hand - Job himself was not to be visited with sickness nor was his life to be taken. The main accusation of Satan was, that Job was virtuous only because God encompassed him with so many blessings, and especially because he had endowed him with so much property. The trial, therefore, only required that it should be seen whether his piety was the mere result of these blessings.

So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord - That is from the council which had been convened; see the notes at Job 1:6.

Verse 13

And there was a day - That is, on the day on which the regular turn came for the banquet to be held in the house of the older brother; compare the notes at Job 1:4.

And drinking wine - This circumstance is omitted in Job 1:4. It shows that wine was regarded as an essential part of the banquet, and it was from its use that Job apprehended the unhappy results referred to in Job 1:5.

Verse 14

And there came a messenger unto Job - Hebrew מלאך *mal'âk* the word usually rendered "angel," appropriately rendered "messenger" here. The word properly means "one who is sent."

The oxen were plowing - Hebrew "the cattle" (בקר *bâqâr*) including not merely "oxen," but probably also "cows;" see the notes at Job 1:3.

And the asses - Hebrew אתון *'âthôn* "she-asses." The "sex" is here expressly mentioned and Dr. Good maintains that it should be in the translation. So it is in the Septuagint αἱ θήλειαι ὄνοι *hai thēleiai onoi* So Jerome, "asinoe." The reason why the sex is specified is, that female asses, on account of their milk, were much more valuable than males. On this account they were preferred also for traveling; see the notes at Job 1:3.

Beside them - Hebrew "By their hands," that is, by their sides, for the Hebrew יד *yâd* is often used in this sense; compare the notes at Isaiah 33:21.

Verse 15

And the Sabeans - Hebrew שׁבא *shebâ'* Vulgate, "Suboei." The Septuagint gives a paraphrase, καὶ ἐλθόντες οἱ αἰχμαλωτεύοντες ἠχμαλώτευσαν *kai elthonia hoi aichmalōteuontes ēchmalōteusan* "And the plunderers coming, plundered them," or made them captive. On the situation of Sheba and Seba, see Isaiah 43:3, note; Isaiah 45:14, note; Isaiah 9:6, note. The people here referred to were, undoubtedly, inhabitants of

some part of Arabia Felix. There are three persons of the name of Sheba mentioned in the Scriptures.

(1) A grandson of Cush; Genesis 10:7.

(2) A son of Joktan; Genesis 10:28.

(3) A son of Jokshan, the son of Abraham by Keturah.

"Calmet." The Sheba here referred to was probably in the southern part of Arabia, and from the narrative it is evident that the Sabeans here mentioned were a predatory tribe. It is not improbable that these tribes were in the habit of wandering for purposes of plunder over the whole country, from the banks of the Euphrates to the outskirts of Egypt. The Bedawin Arabs of the present day resemble in a remarkable manner the ancient inhabitants of Arabia, and for many centuries the manners of the inhabitants of Arabia have not changed, for the habits of the Orientals continue the same from age to age. The Syriac renders this simply, "a multitude rushed" upon them;" omitting the word "Sabean."

Fell upon them - With violence; or rushed unexpectedly upon them. This is the way in which the Arab tribes now attack the caravan, the traveler, or the village, for plunder.

And took them away - As plunder. It is common now to make such sudden incursions, and to carry off a large booty.

They have slain the servants - Hebrew נערים *naʿarîym* "the young men." The word נער *naʿar* properly means a "boy," and is applied to an infant just born, Exodus 2:6; Judges 13:5, Judges 13:7; or to a youth, Genesis 34:19; Genesis 41:12. It came then to denote a servant or slave, like the Greek παῖς *pais* Genesis 24:2; 2 Kings 5:20; compare Acts 5:6. So the word "boy" is often used in the Southern States of North America to denote a slave. Here it evidently means the servants that were employed in cultivating the lands of Job, and keeping his cattle. There is no intimation that they were slaves. Jerome renders it "pueros, boys;" so the Septuagint τοῦς παὶδας *tous paidas* And I only am escaped alone - By myself, בד *bad* There is no other one with me. It is remarkable that the same account is given by each one of the servants who escaped, Job 1:16-17, Job 1:19. The Chaldee has given a very singular version of this - apparently from the desire of accounting for everything, and of mentioning the "names" of all

the persons intended. “The oxen were plowing, and Lelath, queen of Zamargad, suddenly rushed upon them, and carried them away.”

Verse 16

While he was yet speaking - All this indicates the rapidity of the movement of Satan, and his desire to “overwhelm” Job with the suddenness and greatness of his calamities. The. object seems to have been to give him no time to recover from the shock of one form of trial before another came upon him. If an interval had been given him he might have rallied his strength to bear his trials; but afflictions are much more difficult to be borne when they come in rapid succession. - It is not a very uncommon occurrence, however, that the righteous are tried by the rapidity and accumulation as well as the severity of their afflictions. It has passed into a proverb that “afflictions do not come alone.”

The fire of God. - Margin, “A great fire;” evidently meaning a flash of lightning, or a thunderbolt. The Hebrew is “fire of God;” but it is probable that the phrase is used in a sense similar to the expression, “cedars of God,” meaning lofty cedars; I or “mountains of God,” meaning very high mountains. The lightning is I probably intended; compare Numbers 16:35; see the note at Isaiah 29:6.

From heaven - From the sky, or the air. So the word heaven is often used in the Scriptures; see the notes at Matthew 16:1.

And hath burnt up the sheep - That lightning might destroy herds and men no one can doubt; though the fact of their being actually consumed or burned up may have been an exaggeration of the much affrighted messenger. - The narrative leads us to believe that these things were under the control of Satan, though by the permission of God; and his power over the lightnings and the winds Job 1:19 may serve to illustrate the declaration, that he is the “Prince of the power of the air,” in Ephesians 2:2.

Verse 17

The Chaldeans - The Septuagint translates this, αἱ ἱππεῖς *hai hippeis*), “the horsemen.” Why they thus expressed it is unknown. It may be possible that the Chaldeans were supposed to be distinguished as horsemen, and were principally known as such in their predatory excursions. But it is impossible to account for all the changes made by the Septuagint in the text. Tho Syriac and the Chaldee render it correctly, “Chaldeans.” The Chaldeans (Hebrew כשׂדים *kaśdîym*) were the ancient inhabitants of Babylonia. According to Vitringa (Commentary in Isa. tom. i. p. 412, c. xiii. 19),

Gesenius (Commentary zu Isaiah 23:13), and Rosenmailer (Bib. Geog. 1,2, p. 36ff), the Chaldees or Casdim were a warlike people who orignally inhabited the Carduchian mountains, north of Assyria, and the northern part of Mesopotamia. According to Xenophon (Cyrop. iii. 2,7) the Chaldees dwelt in the mountains adjacent to Armenia and they were found in the same region in the campaign of the younger Cyrus, and the retreat of the ten thousand Greeks. Xen. Anaba. iv. 3,4; v. 5,9; viii. 8,14.

They were allied to the Hebrews, as appears from Genesis 22:22, where כשׂד *keśed* (whence "Kasdim") the ancestor of the people is mentioned as a son of Nabor, and was consequently the nephew of Abraham. And further, Abraham himself emigrated to Canaan from Ur of the Chaldees כשׂדים אור *'ûr kaśdîym* "Ur of the Kasdim"), Genesis 11:28; and in Ezekiel 1:3 "the land of the Chaldeans;" Jeremiah Jeremiah 5:15 calls them "an ancient nation;" see the notes at Isaiah 23:13. The Chaldeans were a fierce and warlike people, and when they were subdued by the Assyrians, a portion of them appear to have been placed in Babylon to ward off the incursions of the neighboring Arabians. In time "they" gained the ascendency over their Assyrian masters, and grew into the mighty empire of Chaldea or Babylonia. A part of them, however, appear to have remained in their ancient country, and enjoyed under the Persians some degree of liberty. Gesenius supposes that the Kurds who have inhabited those regions, at least since the middle ages, are probably the descendants of that people. - A very vivid and graphic description of the Chaldeans is given by the prophet Habakkuk, which will serve to illustrate the passage before us, and show that they retained until his times the predatory and fierce character which they had in the days of Job; Job 1:6-11:

For lo I raise up the Chaldeans,
A bitter and hasty nation,
Which marches far and wide in the earth.

To possess the dwellings which are not theirs.
They are terrible and dreadful,
Their judgments proceed only from themselves.
Swifter titan leopards are their horses,

And fiercer than the evening wolves.
Their horsemen prance proudly around;

And their horsemen shall come from afar and fly,
Like the eagle when he pounces on his prey.
They all shall come for violence,
In troops their glance is ever forward!
They gather captives like the sand!
And they scoff at kings,
And princes are a scorn unto them.
They deride every strong hold;
They cast up
d **mounds of -** earth and take it.

This warlike people ultimately obtained the ascendency in the Assyrian empire. About the year 597 B.C. Nabopolassar, a viceroy in Babylon, made himself independent of Assyria, contracted an alliance with Cyaxares, king of Media, and with his aid subdued Nineveh, and the whole of Assyria. From that time the Babylonian empire rose, and the history of the Chaldeans becomes the history of Babylon. - "Rob. Calmet." In the time of Job, however, they were a predatory race that seem to have wandered far for the sake of plunder. They came from the North, or the East, as the Sabeans came from the South.

Made out three bands - literally, "three heads." That is, they divided tbemselves, for the sake of plunder, into three parties. Perhaps the three thousand camels of Job Job 1:3 occupied three places remote from each other, and the object of the speaker is to say that the whole were taken.

And fell upon the camels - Margin, "And rushed." The word is different from that which in Job 1:15 is rendered "fell." The word used here פשט *pâshaṭ* means to spread out, to expand. It is spoken of hostile troops, 1 Chronicles 14:9, 1 Chronicles 14:13; of locusts which spread over a country, Nahum 3:15; and of an army or company of marauders. Judges 9:33, Judges 9:44; 1 Samuel 27:8. This is its sense here.

Verse 18

Eating and drinking wine - ; the notes at Job 1:4, Job 1:13.

Verse 19

There came a great wind - Such tornadoes are not less common in Oriental countries than in the United States. Indeed they abound more in regions near the equator than they do in those which are more remote; in hot countries than in those of higher latitude.

From the wilderness - Margin, "From aside." That is, from aside the wilderness. The word here rendered "from aside" in the margin (מדבר *mîdbâr*) means properly "from across," and is so rendered by Dr. Good. The word עבר *ʿâbar* means literally a region or country beyond, or on the other side, sc. of a river or a sea, which one must "pass;" Judges 11:18; Genesis 2:10-11; Deuteronomy 1:1, Deuteronomy 1:5. Then it means on the other side, or beyond; see the notes at Isaiah 18:1. Here it means that the tornado came sweeping across the desert. On the ample plains of Arabia it would have the opportunity of accumulating its desolating power, and would sweep everything before it. The Hebrew word here rendered "wilderness," מדבר *mîdbâr* does not express exactly what is denoted by our word. We mean by it usually, a region wholly uncultivated, covered with forests, and the habitation of wild beasts. The Hebrew word more properly denotes a "desert;" an uninhabited region, a sterile, sandy country, though sometimes adapted to pasture. In many places the word would be well translated by the phrases "open fields," or "open plains;" compare Joel 2:22; Psalm 65:13; Jeremiah 23:10; Isaiah 42:11; Genesis 14:6; Genesis 16:7; Exodus 3:1; Exodus 13:18; Deuteronomy 11:24; compare Isaiah 32:15; Isaiah 35:1-2.

And smote the four corners of the house - Came as a tornado usually does, or like a whirlwind. It seemed to come from all points of the compass, and prostrated everything before it.

And it fell upon the young men - The word here rendered" young men" is the same which is rendered in Job 1:15, Job 1:17, servants הנערים *hanaʿarîym* There can be no reasonable doubt, however, that the messenger by the word here refers to the children of Job. It is remarkable that his daughters are not particularly specified, but they may be included in the word used here נערים *naʿarîym* which may be the same in signification as our phrase "young people," including both sexes. So it is rendered by Etchhorn: Es sturtzo tiber den jungen Leuten zusammen.

Verse 20

Then Job arose - The phrase to arise, in the Scriptures is often used in the sense of beginning to do anything. It does not necessarily imply that the person had been previously sitting; see 2 Samuel 13:13.

And rent his mantle - The word here rendered "mantle" מעיל *meʿîyl* means an upper or outer garment. The dress of Orientals consists principally of an under garment or tunic - not materially differing from the "shirt" with

us - except that the sleeves are wider, and under this large and loose pantaloons. Niebuhr, Reisebescreib. 1. 157. Over these garments they often throw a full and flowing mantle or robe. This is made without sleeves; it reaches down to the ankles; and when they walk or exercise it is bound around the middle with a girdle or sash. When they labor it is usually laid aside. The robe here referred ire was worn sometimes by women, 2 Samuel 13:18; by men of birth and rank, and by kings, 1 Samuel 15:27; 1 Samuel 18:4; 1 Samuel 24:5, 1 Samuel 24:11; by priests, 1 Samuel 28:14, and especially by the high priest under the ephod, Exodus 28:31. See Braun de vest Sacerd. ii. 5. Schroeder de vest. muller.

Hebrew p. 267; Hartmann Ilcbraerin, iii. p. 512, and Thesau. Antiq. Sacra. by Ugolin, Tom. i. 509, iii. 74, iv. 504, viii. 90,1000, xii. 788, xiii. 306; compare the notes at Matthew 5:40, and Niebuhr, as quoted above. The custom of rending the garment as an expression of grief prevailed not only among the Jews but also among the Greeks and Romans. Livy i. 13. Suetonius, in "Jul. Caes." 33. It prevailed also among the Persians. Curtius, B. x. c. 5, section 17. See Christian Boldich, in Thesau. Antiq. Sacra. Tom. xii. p. 145; also Tom. xiii. 551,552,560, xxx. 1105,1112. In proof also that the custom prevailed among the Pagan, see Diod. Sic. Lib. i. p. 3, c. 3, respecting the Egyptians; Lib. xvii. respecting the Persians; Quin. Curt. iii. 11; Herod. Lib. iii. in Thalia, Lib. viii. in Urania, where he speaks of the Persians. So Plutarch in his life of Antony, speaking of the deep grief of Cleopatra, says, περίερῥηξατο τοῦς πέπλους επ᾽ αὐτῷ *perierrēcato tous piplous ep' autō* Thus, Herodian, Lib. i.: καῖ ῥηξαμένη εσθῆτα *kai rēcamenē esthēta* So Statius in Glaucum:

Tu mode fusus humi, lucem aversaris iniquam,
Nunc torvus pariter vestes, et pectora rumpis.

So Virgil:

Tune pins Aeneas humeris abscindere vestem,
Auxilioque vocare Deos, et tendere palmas.
Aeneid v. 685.
Demittunt mentes; it scissa veste Latinus,
Conjugis attonitus fatis, urbisque ruina,
Aeneid 12:609.

So Juvenal, Sat. x.:

ut primos edere planctus
Cassandra inciperet, scissaque Polyxena palla.

Numerous other quotations from the Classical writers, as well as from the Jewish writings, may be seen in Ugolin‘s Sacerdotium Hebraicum, cap. vi. Thesau. Antiq. Sacrar. Tom. xiii. p. 550ff.

And shaved his head - This was also a common mode of expressing great sorrow. Sometimes it was done by formally cutting off the hair of the head; sometimes by plucking it violently out by the roots, and sometimes also the beard was plucked out, or cut off. The idea seems to have been that mourners should divest themselves of that which was usually deemed most ornamental; compare Jeremiah 7:29; Isaiah 7:20. Lucian says that the Egyptians expressed their grief by cutting off their hair on the death of their god Apis, and the Syrians in the same manner at the death of Adonis. Olympiodorus remarks on this passage, that the people among whom long hair was regarded as an ornament, cut it off in times of mourning; but those who commonly wore short hair, suffered it on such occasions to grow long. See Rosenmuller, Morgenland, “in loc.” A full description of the customs of the Hebrews in times of mourning, and particularly of the custom of plucking out the hair, may be seen in Martin Geier, de Hebraeorum Luctu, especially in chapter viii.

Thesau. Antiq. Sacra. xxxiil. p. 147ff. The meaning here is that Job was filled with excessive grief, and that he expressed that grief in the manner that was common in his day. Nature demands that there should be “some” external expression of sorrow; and religion does not forbid it. He pays a tribute to the nature with which God has endowed him who gives an appropriate expression to sorrow; he wars against that nature who attempts to remove from his countenance, conversation, dress, and dwelling, everything that is indicative of the sorrows of his soul in a time of calamity. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus; and religion is not designed to make the heart insensible or incapable of grief. Piety, like every kind of virtue, always increases the susceptibility of the soul to suffering. Philosophy and sin destroy sensibility; but religion deepens it. Philosophy does it on principle - for its great object is to render the heart dead to all sensibility; sin produces the same effect naturally. The drunkard, the licentious man, and the man of avarice, are incapable of being affected by the tender scenes of life. Guilt has paralyzed their feelings and rendered tthem dead. But religion allows people to feel, and then shows its power in sustaining the soul, and in imparting its consolations to the heart that is broken and sad. It comes to dry up the tears of the mourner, not to forbid those tears to flow;

to pour the balm of consolation into the heart, not to teach the heart to be unfeeling.

And fell down upon the ground - So Joshua in a time of great calamity prostrated himself upon the earth and worshipped, Joshua 7:6. - The Orientals were then in the habit, as they are now, of prostrating themselves on the ground as an act of homage. Job seems to have done this partly as an expression of grief, and partly as an act of devotion - solemnly bowing before God in the time of his great trial.

And worshipped - Worshipped God. He resigned himself to his will. A pious man has nowhere else to go in trial; and he will desire to go nowhere else than to the God who has afflicted him.

Verse 21

And said, Naked came I out - That is, destitute of property, for so the connection demands; compare 1 Timothy 6:7; "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." A similar expression also occurs in Pliny, "Hominem natura tanturn nudism." Nat. Hist. proem. L. vii. Job felt that he was stripped of all, and that he must leave the world as destitute as he entered it.

My mother's womb - The earth - the universal mother. That he refers to the earth is apparent, because he speaks of returning there again. The Chaldee adds לבית קבורתא *lebēyt qebûratā'* - "to the house of burial." The earth is often called the mother of mankind; see Cic. de Nat. Deor. ii. 26; compare Psalm 139:15. Dr. Good remarks, that "the origin of all things from the earth introduced, at a very early period of the world, the superstitious worship of the earth, under the title of Dameter, or the "Mother-goddess," a Chaldee term, probably common to Idumea at the time of the existence of Job himself. It is hence the Greeks derive their Δημήτνρ *Dēmētēr* (Demeter), or as they occasionally wrote it Γημήτηρ *Gēmētēr* (Ge-meter), or Mother Earth, to whom they appropriated annually two religious festivals of extraordinary pomp and solemnity. Thus, Lucretius says,

Linquitur, ut merito materhum nomen adepta
Terra sit, e terra quoniam sunt cuneta creata.
v. 793.
- "Whence justly earth
Claims the dear name of mother, since alone
Flowed from herself whate'er the sight enjoys."

For a full account of the views of the ancients in regard to the "marriage" (ἱερός γάμος *gamos hieros*)of the "heaven" and the "earth," from which union all things were supposed to proceed, see Creuzer's Symbolik und Mythologie der alt. Volk. Erst. Theil, p. 26, fg.

And naked - Stripped of all, I shall go to the common mother of the race. This is exceedingly beautiful language; and in the mouth of Job it was expressive of the most submissive piety. It is not the language of complaint; but was in him connected with the deep feeling that the loss of his property was to be traced to God, and that he had a right to do as he had done.

The Lord gave - Hebrew יהוה *yehovâh* He had nothing when he came into the world, and all that he had obtained had been by the good providence of God. As "he" gave it, he had a right to remove it. Such was the feeling of Job, and such is the true language of submission everywhere. He who has a proper view of what he possesses will feel that it is all to be traced to God, and that he has a right to remove it when he pleases.

And the Lord hath taken away - It is not by accident; it is not the result of haphazard; it is not to be traced to storms and winds and the bad passions of people. It is the result of intelligent design, and whoever has been the agent or instrument in it, it is to be referred to the overruling providence of God. Why did not Job vent his wrath on the Sabeans? Why did he not blame the Chaldeans? Why did he not curse the tempest and the storm? Why did he not blame his sons for exposing themselves? Why not suspect the malice of Satan? Why not suggest that the calamity was to be traced to bad fortune, to ill-luck, or or to an evil administration of human affairs? None of these things occurred to Job. He traced the removal of his property and his loss of children at once to God, and found consolation in the belief that an intelligent and holy Sovereign presided over his affairs, and that he had removed only what he gave.

Blessed be the name of the Lord - That is, blessed be yahweh - the "name" of anyone in Hebrew being often used to denote the person himself. The Syriac, Arabic, and some manuscripts of the Septuagint here adds "forever." - "Here," says Schmid, "the contrast is observable between the object of Satan, which was to induce Job to renounce God, and the result of the temptation which was to lead Job to bless God." Thus, far Satan had been foiled, and Job had sustained the shock of the calamity, and showed that he did not serve God on account of the benefits which be had received from him.

Verse 22

In all this - In all his feelings and expressions on this occasion.

Job sinned not - He expressed just the feelings and manifested just the submission which he ought to do.

Nor charged God foolishly - Margin, "Attributed folly to God." Vulgate, "Neither did he speak any foolish thing against God." The Septuagint renders it, "and he did not impute (or give, ἐδωκεν *edōken*) folly (ἀφροσύνην *aphrosunēn*) (indiscretion, ‹Thompson‘) to God." Good renders this, "nor vented a murmur against God;" and remarks that the literal rendering would be, "nor vented froth against God. Tindal renders it, "nor murmured foolishly against God." The Hebrew word תפלה *tîphlâh* is derived from the obsolete root תפל *tâphêl* "to spit out;" and hence, to be insipid, tasteless, not seasoned. The noun, therefore, means properly that which is spit out; then that which is insipid or tasteless; and then folly. Wit and wisdom are represented by Oriental writers as pungent and seasoned; compare the expression among the Greeks of "Attic salt," meaning wit or wisdom. The word "folly" in the Scriptures often means wickedness, for this is supreme folly. Here it has this sense, and means that Job did not say anything "wrong." Satan was disappointed and had borne a false accusation before God. He did "not" charge God foolishly, and he did "not" curse him to his face.

From this instructive narrative of the manner in which Job received afflictions, we may learn

(1) That true piety will bear the removal of property and friends without murmuring. Religion is not based on such things, and their removal cannot shake it. It is founded deeper in the soul, and mere external changes cannot destroy it.

(2) When we are afflicted, we should not vent our wrath on winds and waves; on the fraud and perfidy of our fellow-men; on embarrassments and changes in the commercial world; on the pestilence and the storm. Any or all of these may be employed as instruments in taking away our property or our friends, but we should trace the calamity ultimately to God. Storms and winds and waves, malignant spirits and our fellow-men, do no more than God permits. They are all restrained and kept within proper limits. They are

not directed by chance, but they are under the control of an intelligent Being, and are the wise appointment of a holy God.

(3) God has a right to remove our comforts. He gave them - not to be our permanent inheritance, but to be withdrawn when he pleases. It is a proof of goodness that we have been permitted to tread his earth so long - though we should be allowed to walk it no more; to breathe his air so long - though we should be permitted to inhale it no more; to look upon his sun and moon and stars so long - though we should be permitted to walk by their light no more; to enjoy the society of the friends whom he has given us so long - though we should enjoy that society no longer. A temporary gift may be removed at the pleasure of the giver, and we hold all our comforts at the mere good pleasure of God.

(4) We see the nature of true resignation. It is not because we can always see the "reason" why we are afflicted; it consists in bowing to the will of a holy and intelligent God, and in the feeling that he has a "right" to remove what he has given us. It is his; and may be taken away when he pleases. It may be, and should be yielded, without a complaint - and to do this "because" God wills it, is true resignation.

(5) We see the true source of "comfort" in trials. It is not in the belief that things are regulated by chance and hap-hazard; or even that they are controlled by physical laws. We may have the clearest philosophical view of the mode in which tempests sweep away property, or the pestilence our friends; we may understand the laws by which all this is done, but this affords no consolation. It is only when we perceive an "intelligent Being" presiding over these events, and see that they are the result of plan and intention on his part, that we can find comfort in trial. What satisfaction is it for me to understand the law by which fire burns when my property is swept away; or to know "how" disease acts on the human frame when my child dies; or how the plague produces its effects on the body when friend after friend is laid in the grave? This is "philosophy;" and this is the consolation which this world furnishes. I want some higher consolation than that which results from the knowledge of unconscious laws. I want to have the assurance that it is the result of intelligent design, and that this design is connected with a benevolent end - and that I find only in religion.

(6) We see the “power” of religion in sustaining in the time of trial. How calm and submissive was this holy man! How peaceful and resigned! Nothing else but piety could have done this. Philosophy blunts the feelings, paralyses the sensibilities, and chills the soul; but it does not give consolation. It is only confidence in God; a feeling that he is right; and a profound and holy acquiescence in his will, that can produce support in trials like these. This we may have as well so Job; and this is indispensable in a world so full of calamity and sorrow as this is.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

Again there was a day … - See the notes at Job 1:6. These seasons are represented as periodical, when the angels came, as it were, to make report to God of what they had observed and done. The Chaldee renders this, "And there was a day of the great judgment (יום רבא דינא *yôm dîynā' rābā'*), a day of the remission of sins (שבוק יום סרחניא) and there came bands (כתי) of angels."

To present himself before the Lord - This does not occur in the former statement in Job 1:6. It here means that he came before the Lord after he had had permission to afflict; Job. The Chaldee renders it "that he might stand in judgment דין *dîyn* before the Lord."

Verse 2

And the Lord said unto Satan … - See the notes at Job 1:7.

Verse 3

Hast thou considered - Notes, Job 1:8.

That there is none like him in the earth - The same addition is made here by the Septuagint which occurs in Job 1:1; see the notes at that verse.

And still he holdeth fast his integrity - Notwithstanding all the efforts made to show that his piety was the result of mere selfishness. The word "integrity" here תמה *tûmmâh* means "perfection;" another form of the word which is rendered "perfect" in Job 1:1; see the notes at that verse.

Although thou movedst me - The word rendered "movedst" סוּת *sûth* means to incite, to impel, to urge, to irritate against anyone; Joshua 15:18; Judges 1:14; 2 Chronicles 18:2; 1 Samuel 26:19; Jeremiah 43:3. The Septuagint renders this in a special manner, "And thou hast ordered (εἶπας *eipas*) his property to be destroyed in vain" (διακενῆς *diakenēs*), that is, without accomplishing the purpose intended.

To destroy him - The word used here (from בלע *belaʿ*) means properly to swallow, to devour, with the idea of eagerness or greediness. It is then used in the sense of to consume, or destroy; compare Job 20:18; Proverbs 1:12; Numbers 16:30; Psalm 69:15. In the margin it is rendered "swallow him up."

Without cause - Without any sufficient reason. The cause assigned by Satan Job 1:9-11 was, that the piety of Job was selfish, and that if God should remove his possessions, he would show that he had no true religion.

God says now that it was demonstrated that there was no reason for having made the trial. The result had shown that the charge was unfounded, and that his piety still remained, though he was stripped of all that he had. This passage may remind us of the speech of Neptune in favor of Aeneas, Iliad v. 297:

And can ye see this righteous chief atone
With guiltless blood for vices not his own?
To all the gods his constant vows were paid;

Sure though he wars for Troy he claims our aid.

Fate wills not this - Pope

Verse 4

Skin for skin - This is a proverbial expression, whose origin is unknown, nor is its meaning as "a proverb" entirely clear. The general sense of the passage here is plain, for it is immediately explained that a man would give everything which he had to save his life; and the idea here is, that if Job was so afflicted in his body that he was likely to die, he would give up all his religion in order to purchase life. His religion, which had berne the comparatively trifling test before applied to it, would not bear the severer trial if his life was endangered. In regard to the proverb itself, a great variety of explanations has been given. The ancient versions throw no light on it. The Vulgate renders it, "Pellem pro pelle." The Septuagint Δέρμα ὑπέρ δέρυατος *derma huper dermatos* - skin for, or instead of, skin. The Chaldee renders it, "member for member," אברא אמטול אברא - and the author of that paraphrase seems to have supposed that it means that a man would give the members of his body or his limbs to preserve his life. Parkhurst renders it, "skin after skin," meaning, as he explains it, that a man may bear to part with all that he has, and even to have his skin, as it were, stripped off again and again, provided only that his life is safe. Noyes supposes that it means that any man will give the skin or life of another, whether animal or man, to save his own; and that: Job gave up all, without complaint, from the selfish fear of exposing his own life to danger. Dr. Good remarks on the passage, that the skins or spoils of beasts, in the rude and early ages of man, were the most valuable property he could acquire, and that for which he most frequently combated. Thus, Lucretius says,

Tam igitur "pelles," nunc aurum et purpura, curis
Exercent hominum vitam, belloque fatigant.
v. 1422.
"Then man for "skins" contended; purple now,
And gold, forever plunge him into war."

In various parts of the book of Job, however, Dr. Good remarks, the word skin imports the "person" of a man as well as his "property," the whole living body which it envelopes, as in Job 18:13; Job 19:26. "It is," says he, "upon the double meaning of the same term, and the play which is here given to it, by employing the term first in one sense and then in the other, that the gist of the proverb, as of a thousand others similarly constructed, depends. ‹Skin for skin' is in this view, in plain English, ‹property for person,' or ‹the skin forming property for the skin forming person.'" See a somewhat similar view presented by Callaway, in Bush's Illustrations, "in loco." The editor of the Pictorial Bible coincides mainly with this view, and supposes that the reference is to the time when trade was conducted by barter, and when the skins of animals, being a most frequent and valuable commodity, were used to represent property.

Tributes, ransoms, etc., he observes, were paid in skins. According to this, it means that a man would give "skin upon skin;" that is, would pile one piece of property upon another, and give "all" that he had, in order to save his life. It refers to the necessity of submitting to one great evil rather than incur a greater, answering to the Turkish proverb, "We must give our beards to save our heads." According to Gesenius, it means "life for life." Drusius explains it as meaning, that he would give the skin of others, as of his sons, to save his own; that is, that he was unmoved so long as his own skin or life was safe. The same view is given by Ephrem the Syrian. "Skin for skin; the skin not only of flocks, but even of his sons will he give, in order to save his own." This view also is adopted by Urnbreit. That is, his religion was supremely selfish. The loss of property and even of children he could bear, provided his person was untouched.

His own health, and life; his own skin and body were dearer to him than anything else. Other people would have been afflicted by the loss of children and property. But Job was willing to part with any or all of these, provided he himself was safe. Rosenmuller supposes that the word skin here is used for the whole body; and says that the sense is, that he would

give the body of another for his own, as in Exodus 21:23. “The meaning of this proverbial formula,” says he, “is, that any one would redeem his own safety by the skin of others; that is, not only by the skins or lives of oxen, camels, servants, but even of his own children.” Schultens supposes it means that a man would submit to any sufferings in order to save his life; that he would be willing to be flayed alive; to be repeatedly excoriated; to have, so to speak. one skin stripped off after another, if he might save his own life.

According to this, the idea is, that the loss of life was the great calamity to be feared, and that a man would give “any” thing in order to save it. Umbreit says, “there is nothing so valuable to a man that he will not exchange it - one thing for another; one outward good for another, ‹skin for skin.‘ But life, the inward good, is to him of no value that can be estimated. That he will give for nothing; and much more, he will offer everything for that.” Another solution is offered in the Biblische Untersuchungen ii. Th. s. 88. “Before the use of gold, traffic was conducted chiefly by barter. Men exchanged what was valuable to themselves for what others had which they wanted. Those who hunted wild beasts would bring their skins to market, and would exchange them for bows and arrows. Since these traffickers were exposed to the danger of being robbed, they often took with them those who were armed, who agreed to defend them on condition that they should have a part of the skins which they took, and in this way they purchased their property and life.”

That is, they gave the skins of animals for the safety of their own; all that they had they would surrender, in order that their lives might be saved. See Rosenmuller‘s Morgenland, “in loc.” None of these solutions appear to me perfectly satisfactory, and the proverb is involved in perplexity still. It seems to refer to some kind of barter or exchange, and to mean that a man would give up one thing for another; or one piece of property of less value in order to save a greater; and that in like manner he would be willing to surrender “everything,” in order that his life, the most valuable object, might be preserved. But the exact meaning of the proverb, I suspect, has not yet been perceived.

Yea, all that a man hath - This is evidently designed to express the same thing as the proverb, “skin for skin,” or to furnish an illustration of

that. The meaning is plain. A man is willing to surrender all that he has, in order to preserve his life. He will part with property and friends, in order that he may be kept alive. if a man therefore is to be reached in the most tender and vital part; if any thing is to be done that shall truly reveal his character, his life must be put in danger, and his true character will then be revealed. The object of Satan is to say, that a test had not been applied to Job of sufficient severity to show what he really was. What he had lost was a mere trifle compared with what would be if he was subjected to severe bodily sufferings, so that his life would be in peril. it is to be remembered that these are the words of Satan, and that they are not necessarily true.

Inspiration is concerned only in securing "the exact record" of what is said, not in affirming that all that is said is true. We shall have frequent occasion to illustrate this sentiment in other portions of the book. In regard to the sentiment here expressed, however, it is in general true. Men will surrender their property, their houses, and lands, and gold, to save their lives. Many, too, would see their friends perish, in order that they might be saved. It is not universally true, however. It is possible to conceive that a man might so love his property as to submit to any torture, even endangering life, rather than surrender it. Many, too, if endangered by shipwreck, would give up a plank in order to save their wives or children, at the risk of their own lives. Many will give their lives rather than surrender their liberty; and many would die rather than abandon their principles. Such were the noble Christian martyrs; and such a man was Job. Satan urged that if his life were made wretched, he would abandon his integrity, and show that his professed piety was selfish, and his religion false and hollow. The Syriac and Arabic add, "that he may be safe."

Verse 5

But put forth thine hand now - Satan felt that he had no power to afflict Job without permission. Malignant as he was, he knew that God only could subject the holy man to this trial - another proof that Satan is under the control of the Almighty, and acts only as he is "permitted" to act in tempting and trying the good.

And touch his bone - See the note at Job 1:11. Afflict his body so as to endanger his life. The words "bone" and "flesh" denote the whole body. The idea was, that the whole body should be subjected to severe pain.

And he will curse thee to thy face - Notes at Job 1:11.

Verse 6

Behold, he is in thine hand - He is at thy disposal; see Job 1:12, Margin.

But save his life - Margin, "only." This was to be the only limitation. It would seem that he had the power to make any selection of disease, and to afflict him in any manner, provided it did not terminate fatally. The keen sorrows which Job afterward endured showed the malignancy of the tempter; evinced his ingenuity in inflicting pain, and his knowledge of what thc human frame could be made to bear.

Verse 7

So went Satan forth - Job 1:12.

And smote Job with sore boils - The English word boil denotes the well-known turnout upon the flesh, accompanied with severe inflammation; a sore angry swelling. "Webster." The Hebrew word, however, is in the singular number שׁחין *shechîyn* and should have been so rendered in our translation. Dr. Good renders it "a burning ulceration." The Vulgate translates it, "ulcere pessimo." The Septuagint, ἕλκει πονηρῶ *helkei ponērō* - "with a foul ulcer." The Hebrew word שׁחין *shechîyn* means a burning sore; an inflamed ulcer, a bile. "Gesenius." It is derived from שׁכן *shâkan* an obsolete root, retained in Arabic, and meaning to be hot or inflamed. It is translated "bile" or "boil," in Exodus 9:9-11; Leviticus 13:18; 2 Kings 20:7;: Isaiah 28:21, (see the notes on that place), Leviticus 13:19-20; Job 2:7; and "botch," Deuteronomy 28:27, Deuteronomy 28:35. The word does not occur elsewhere in the Scriptures. In Deuteronomy 28:27, it means "the botch of Egypt," some species of leprosy, undoubtedly, which prevailed there.

In regard to the disease of Job, we may learn some of its characteristics, not only from the usual meaning of the word, but from the circumstances mentioned in the book itself. It was such that he took a potsherd to scrape himself with, Job 2:8; such as to make his nights restless, and full of tossings to and fro and to clothe his flesh with clods of dust, and with worms, and to break his flesh, or to constitute a running sore or ulcer, Job 7:4-5; such as to make him bite his flesh for pain, Job 13:14, and to make him like a rotten thing, or a garment that is moth eaten, Job 13:28; such that his face was foul with weeping, Job 16:16, and such as to fill him with wrinkles, and to make his flesh lean, Job 16:8; such as to make his breath corrupt, Job 17:1, and his bones cleave to his skin, Job 19:20, Job 19:26;

such as to pierce his bones with pain in the night, Job 30:17, and to make his skin black, and to burn up his bones with heat, Job 30:30.

It has been commonly supposed that the disease of Job was a species of black leprosy commonly called "elephantiasis," which prevails much in Egypt. This disease received its name from ἐλέφας *elefas* "an elephant," from the swelling produced by it, causing a resemblance to that animal in the limbs; or because it rendered the skin like that of the elephant, scabtons and dark colored. It is called by the Arabs *judhām* (Dr. Good), and is said to produce in the countenance a grim, distorted, and "lion-like" set of features, and hence has been called by some "Leontiasis." It is known as the black leprosy, to distinguish it from a more common disorder called "white leprosy" - an affection which the Greeks call "Leuce," or "whiteness." The disease of Job seems to have been a universal ulcer; producing an eruption over his entire person, and attended with violent pain, and constant restlessness. A universal bile or groups of biles ever the body would accord with the account of the disease in the various parts of the book. In the elephantiasis the skin is covered with incrustations like those of an elephant. It is a chronic and contagious disease, marked by a thickening of the legs, with a loss of hair and feeling, a swelling of the face, and a hoarse nasal voice. It affects the whole body; the bones as well as the skin are covered with spots and tumors, at first red, but afterward black. "Coxe, Ency. Webster." It should be added that the leprosy in all its forms was regarded as contagious, and of course involved the necessity of a separation from society; and all the circumstances attending this calamity were such as deeply to humble a man of the former rank and dignity of Job.

Verse 8

And he took him a potsherd - The word used here חרשׂ *chârâsh* means a fragment of a broken vessel; see the notes at Isaiah 45:9. The Septuagint renders it ὄστρακον *ostrakon* - "a shell." One object of taking this was to remove from his body the filth accumulated by the universal ulcer, compare Job 7:4-5; and another design probably was, to "indicate" the greatness of his calamity and sorrow. The ancients were accustomed to show their grief by significant external actions (compare the notes at Job 1:20), and nothing could more strongly denote the greatness of the calamity, than for a man of wealth, honor, and distinction, to sit down in the ashes, to take a piece of

broken earthen-ware, and begin to scrape his body covered over with undressed and most painful sores. It does not appear that anything was done to heal him, or any kindness shown in taking care of his disease. It would seem that he was at once separated from his home, as a man whom none would venture to approach, and was doomed to endure his suffering without sympathy from others.

To scrape himself withal - The word used here גרד *gârad* has the sense of grating, scraping, sawing; or to scrape or rasp with an edged tool. The same word identically, as to letters, is used at present among the Arabs; meaning to rasp or scrape with any kind of tool. The idea here seems to be, that Job took the pieces of broken pottery that he found among the ashes to scrape himself with.

And he sat down among the ashes - On the expressions of grief among the ancients, see the notes at Job 1:20. The general ideas of mourning among the nations of antiquity seem to have been, to strip off all their ornaments; to put on the coarsest apparel, and to place themselves in the most humiliating positions. To sit on the ground (see the note at Isaiah 3:26), or on a heap of ashes, or a pile of cinders, was a common mode of expressing sorrow; see the note at Isaiah 58:5. To wear sackcloth to shave their heads and their beards and to abstain from pleasant food and from all cheerful society, and to utter loud and long exclamations or shrieks, was also a common mode of indicating grief. The Vulgate renders this "*sedates in sterquilinio*," "sitting on a dunghill." The Septuagint, "and he took a shell to scrape off the ichor (ἰχῶρα *ichōra*) the "sanies," or filth produced by a running ulcer, and sat upon the ashes "out of the city,"" implying that his grief was so excessive that he left the city and his friends, and went out to weep alone.

Verse 9

Then said his wife unto him - Some remarkable additions are made by the ancient versions to this passage. The Chaldee renders it, "and "Dinah" (דינה *dîynâh*), his wife, said to him." The author of that paraphrase seems to have supposed that Job lived in the time of Jacob, and had married his daughter Dinah; Genesis 30:21. Drusius says, that this was the opinion of the Hebrews, and quotes a declaration from the Gemara to this effect: "Job lived in the days of Jacob, and was born when the children of Israel went down into Egypt; and when they departed thence he died. He lived therefore 210 years, as long as they were into Egypt." This is mere tradition, but it

shows the ancient impression as to the time when Job lived. The Septuagint has introduced a remarkable passage here, of which the following is a translation. "After much time had elapsed, his wife said unto him, How long wilt thou persevere, saying, Behold, I will wait a little longer, cherishing the trope of my recovery? Behold, the memorial of thee has disappeared from the earth - those sons and daughters, the pangs and sorrows of my womb, for whom I toiled laboriously in vain. Even thou sittest among loathsome worms, passing the night in the open air, whilst I, a wanderer and a drudge, from place to place, and from house to house, watch the sun until his going down, that I may rest from the toils and sorrows that now oppress me. But speak some word toward the Lord (τι ῥῆμα εἰς κύριον *ti rēma eis kurion*) and die."

Whence this addition had its origin, it is impossible now to say. Dr. Good says it is found in Theodotion, in the Syriac, and the Arabic (in this he errs, for it is not in the Syriac and Arabic in Waltoh's Polyglott), and in the Latin of Ambrose. Dathe suggests that it was probably added by some person who thought it incredible that an angry woman could be content with saying so "little" as is ascribed in the Hebrew to the wife of Job. It may have been originally written by some one in the margin of his Bible by way of paraphrase, and the transcriber, seeing it there, may have supposed it was omitted accidentally from the text, and so inserted it in the place where it now stands. It is one of the many instances, at all events, which show that implicit confidence is not to be placed in the Septuagint. There is not the slightest evidence that this was ever in the Hebrew text. It is not wholly unnatural, and as an exercise of the fancy is not without ingenuity and plausibility, and yet the simple but abrupt statement in the Hebrew seems best to accord with nature. The evident distress of the wife of Job, according to the whole narrative, is not so much that she was subjected to trials, and that she was compelled to wander about without a home, as that Job should be so patient, and that he did not yield to the temptation.

Dost thou still retain thine integrity? - Notes Job 2:3. The question implies that, in her view, he ought not to be expected to mantles, patience and resignation in these circumstances. He had endured evils which showed that confidence ought not to be reposed in a God who would thus inflict them. This is all that we know of the wife of Job. Whether this was her general character, or whether "she" yielded to the temptation of Satan and cursed God, and thus heightened the sorrows of Job by her unexpected

impropriety of conduct, is unknown. It is not conclusive evidence that her general character was bad; and it may be that the strength of her usual virtue and piety was overcome by accumulated calamities. She expressed, however, the feelings of corrupt human nature everywhere when sorely afflicted. The suggestion "will" cross the mind, often with almost irresistible force, that a God who thus afflicts his creatures is not worthy of confidence; and many a time a child of God is "tempted" to give vent to feelings of rebellion and complaining like this, and to renounce all his religion.

Curse God - See the notes at Job 1:11. The Hebrew word is the same. Dr. Good renders it, "And yet dost thou hold fast thine integrity, blessing God and dying?" Noyes translates it, "Renounce God, and die," Rosenmuller and Umbreit, "Bid farewell to God, and die." Castellio renders it, "Give thanks to God and die." The response of Job, however Job 2:10, shows that he understood her as exciting him to reject, renounce, or curse God. The sense is, that she regarded him as unworthy of confidence, and submission as unreasonable, and she wished Job to express this and be relieved from his misery. Roberts supposes that this was a pagan sentiment, and says that nothing is more common than for the pagan, under certain circumstances, to curse their gods. "That the man who has made expensive offerings to his deity, in hope of gaining some great blessing, and who has been disappointed, will pour out all his imprecations on the god whose good offices have (as he believes) been prevented by some superior deity. A man in reduced circumstances says, ‹Yes, yes, my god has lost his eyes; they are put out; he cannot look after my affairs.' ‹Yes, ‹ said an extremely rich devotee of the supreme god Siva, after he had lost his property, ‹Shall I serve him any more? What, make offerings to him! No, no. He is the lowest of all gods? ‹"

And die - Probably she regarded God as a stern and severe Being, and supposed that by indulging in blasphemy Job would provoke him to cut him off at once. She did not expect him to lay wicked hands on himself. She expected that God would at once interpose and destroy him. The sense is, that nothing but death was to be expected, and the sooner he provoked God to cut him off from the land of the living, the better.

Verse 10

As one of the foolish women speaketh - The word here rendered "foolish" נבל *nâbâl* from נבל *nâbêl* means properly stupid or foolish, and

then wicked, abandoned, impious - the idea of "sin" and "folly" being closely connected in the Scriptures, or sin being regarded as supreme folly; 1 Samuel 25:25; 2 Samuel 3:33; Psalm 14:1; Psalm 53:2. The Arabs still use the word with the same compass of signification. "Gesenius." The word is used here in the sense of "wicked;" and the idea is, that the sentiment which she uttered was impious, or was such as were on the lips of the wicked. Sanctius supposes that there is a reference here to Idumean females, who, like other women, reproached and cast away their gods, if they did not obtain what they asked when they prayed to them. Homer represents Achilles and Menelaus as reproaching the gods. Iliad i. 353, iii. 365. See Rosenmuller, Morgenland, "in loc."

What shall we receive good at the hand of God - Having received such abundant tokens of kindness from him, it was unreasonable to complain when they were taken away, and when he sent calamity in their stead.

And shall we not receive evil? - Shall we not expect it? Shall we not be willing to bear it when it comes? Shall we not have sufficient confidence in him to believe that his dealings are ordered in goodness and equity? Shall we at once lose all our confidence in our great Benefactor the moment he takes away our comforts, and visits us with pain? This is the true expression of piety. It submits to all the arrangements of God without a complaint. It receives blessings with gratitude; it is resigned when calamities are sent in their place. It esteems it as a mere favor to be permitted to breathe the air which God has made, to look upon the light of his sun, to tread upon his earth, to inhale the fragrance of his flowers, and to enjoy the society of the friends whom he gives; and when he takes one or all away, it feels that he has taken only what belongs to him, and withdraws a privilege to which we had no claim. In addition to that, true piety feels that all claim to any blessing, if it had ever existed, has been forfeited by sin. What right has a sinner to complain when God withdraws his favor, and subjects him to suffering? What claim has he on God, that should make it wrong for Him to visit him with calamity?

Wherefore doth a living man complain,
A man for the punishment of his sins?
Lamentations 3:39.

In all this did not Job sin with his lips - See the notes at Job 1:22. This remark is made here perhaps in contrast with what occurred afterward. He

subsequently did give utterance to improper sentiments, and was rebuked accordingly, but thus far what he had expressed was in accordance with truth, and with the feelings of most elevated piety.

Verse 11

Now when Job's three friends heard - It would seem from this that these men were his particular friends.

They came every one from his own place - His residence. This was the result of agreement or appointment thus to meet together.

Eliphaz the Temanite - This was the most prominent of his friends. In the ensuing discussion he regularly takes the lead, advances the most important and impressive considerations, and is followed and sustained by the others. The Septuagint renders this Ελιφὰζ ὁ Θαιμαινῶν βασιλεὺς *Elifaz ho Thaimainōn basileus* - Eliphaz, the king of the Themanites. The Hebrew does not intimate that he held any office or rank. The word rendered "Temanite" תימני *têymânîy* is a patronymic from תמן *têmân* meaning properly "at the right hand," and then "the South." The Hebrew geographers are always represented as looking to the East, and not toward the North, as we do; and hence, with them, the right hand denotes the South. Teman or Theman was a son of Eliphaz, and grandson of Esau; see Genesis 36:15, where he is spoken of as "duke" or prince אלוף *'alûph* a head of a family or tribe, a chieftain.

He is supposed to have lived on the east of Idumea. Eusebius places Thaeman in Arabia Petrara, five miles from Petra (see the notes at Isaiah 16:1), and says that there was a Roman garrison there. The Temanites were cclebrated for wisdom. "Is wisdom no more in Teman?" Jeremiah 49:7. The country was distinguished also for producing men of strength: "And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed;" Obadiah 1:9. That this country was a part of Idumea is apparent, not only from the fact that Teman was a descendant of Esau, who settled there, but from several places in the Scriptures. Thus, in Ezekiel 25:13, it is said, "I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and I will make it desolate from Toman, and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword." In Amos 1:12, Teman is mentioned as in the vicinity of Bozrah, at one time the capital of Idumea: "But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah;" see the notes at Isaiah 21:14. The inhabitants of this country were distinguished in early times for wisdom, and particularly for that kind of wisdom which is expressed in close observation of men and manners, and the course of

events, and which was expressed in proverbs. Thus, they are mentioned in the book of Baruch, 3:23: "The merchants of Meran and of Theman, the authors of fables, and searchers out of understanding," οἱ μυθολόγοι καὶ οἱ ἐκζητηταὶ τῆς συνέσεως *hoi muthologoi kai hoi ekzētētai tēs suneseōs* And Bildad the Shuhite - The second speaker uniformly in the following argument. The Septuagint renders this, "Bildad the sovereign of the Saucheans," Σαυχέων τύραννος *Saucheōn turannos* Shuah שׁוּח *shûach* (meaning a pit) was the name of a son of Abraham, by Keturah, and also of an Arabian tribe, descended from him, Genesis 25:2. "The country of the Shuhites," says Gesenius, "was not improbably the same with the Σακκαία *Sakkaia* of Ptolemy, v. 15, eastward of Batanea." But the exact situation of the Shubites is unknown. It is difficult to determine the geography of the tribes of Arabia, as many of them are migratory and unsettled. It would seem that Bildad did not reside very far from Eliphaz, for they made an "agreement" to go and visit Job.

And Zophar the Naamathite - An inhabitant of Naamah, whose situation is unknown. The Septuagint renders this, "Zophar, king of the Minaians - Μιναίων βασιλεύς *Minaiōn basileus* A place by the name of Naamah is mentioned in Joshua 15:41, as in the limits of the tribe of Judah. But this was a considerable distance from the residence of Job, and it is not probable that Zophar was far from that region. Conjecture is useless as to the place where he lived. The Editor of the Pictorial Bible, however, supposes that Zophar was from the town in Judah mentioned in Joshua 15:41. He observes that this town is "mentioned in a list of the uttermost cities of Judah's lot, ‹toward the coast of Edom southward; ‹ it is further among that portion of those towns that lay ‹in the valley' Joshua 15:33, wbich valley is the same that contained Joktheel Joshua 15:38, which is supposed to have been Petra. Naamah was probably, therefore, in or near the Ghor or valley which extends from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Akaba. - These considerations," he adds, "seem to establish the conclusion that the scene of this book is laid in the land of Edom." In the first part of this verse, a remarkable addition occurs in the Chaldee paraphrase. - It is as follows: "And the three friends of Job heard of all the evil which had come upon him, and when they saw the trees of his gardens (Chaldean, "Paradise" פרדסיהון) that they were dried up, and the bread of his support that it was turned into living flesh (לבסרא אתהפך סעודתחון ולחם חיא), and the wine of his drink turned into blood (אתהפך משתיחון וחמר לדמא)."

Here is evidently the doctrine of "transubstantiation," the change of bread into flesh, and of wine into blood, and bears the marks of having been interpolated by some friend of the papacy. But when or by whom it was done is unknown. It is a most stupid forgery. The evident intention of it was to sustain the doctrine of transubstantiation, by the plea that it was found far back in the times of Job, and that it could not be regarded, therefore, as an absurdity. To what extent it has ever been used by the advocates of that doctrine, I have no means of ascertaining. Its interpolation here is a pretty sure proof of the conviction of the author of it that the doctrine is not found in any fair interpretation of the Bible.

For they had made an appointment together - They had agreed to go together, and they evidently set out on the journey together. The Chaldee - or someone who has interpolated a passage in the Chaldee - has introduced a circumstance in regard to the design of their coming, which savors also of the Papacy. It is as follows: "They came each one from his place, and for the merit of this they were freed from the place destined to them in Gehenna," a passage evidently intended to defend the doctrine of "purgatory," by the authority of the ancient Chaldee Paraphrase.

To come to mourn with him, and to comfort him - To show the appropriate sympathy of friends in a time of special calamity. They did not come with an intention to reproach him, or to charge him with being a hypocrite.

Verse 12

And when they lifted up their eyes afar off - "When they saw him at the distance at which they could formerly recognize him without difficulty, disease had so altered his appearance that at first sight they knew him not" - Noyes.

They lifted up their voice - This is a common expression in the Scriptures, to denote grief; Genesis 27:38; Genesis 29:11; Judges 2:4; Rth 1:9 ; 1 Samuel 24:16, "*et soepe al*." We learn to suppress the expressions of grief. The ancients gave vent to their sorrows aloud. - They even hired persons to aid them in their lamentations; and it became a professional business of women to devote themselves to the office of making an outcry on occasions of mourning. The same thing prevails in the East at present. Friends sit around the grave of the dead, or go there at different times, and give a long and doleful shriek or howl, as expressive of their grief.

And they rent every one his mantle - See the notes at Job 1:20.

And sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven - Another expression of sorrow; compare Lamentations 2:10; Nehemiah 9:1; 1 Samuel 4:12; Joshua 7:6; Ezekiel 27:30. Thc indications of grief here referred to, were such as were common in ancient times. They resemble, in a remarkable manner, the mode in which Achilles gave utterance to his sorrow, when informed of the death of Patroclus. Iliad xviii. 21-27.

A sudden horror shot through all the chief,
And wrapp'd his senses in the cloud of grief;
Cast on the ground, with furious hands he spread
The scorching ashes o'er his graceful head,
His purple garments, and his golden hairs,
Those he deforms with dust, and these he tears:
On the hard soil his groaning breast he threw,
And roll'd and grovell'd as to earth he grew.
Pope

Thus far the feelings of the three friends were entirely kind, and all that they did was expressive of sympathy for the sufferer.

Verse 13

So they sat down with him upon the ground; - see Job 1:20, note; Job 2:8, note; compare Ezra 9:3, "I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head, and my beard, and sat down astonished."

Seven days and seven nights - Seven days was the usual time of mourning among the Orientals. Thus, they made public lamentation for Jacob seven days, Genesis 50:10. Thus, on the death of Saul, they fasted seven days, 1 Samuel 31:13. So the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus says," Seven days do men mourn for him that is dead;" Ecclesiastes 22:12. It cannot be supposed that they remained in the same place and posture for seven days and nights, but that they mourned with him during that time in the usual way. An instance of grief remarkably similar to this, continuing through a period of six days, is ascribed by Euripides to Orestes:

Ἐντεῦθεν ἀγρίᾳ ξυντακεὶς νόσῳ νοσεῖ
Τλήμων Ὀρέστης; ο δὲ πεσὼν ἐν δεμνίοις
Κεῖται.
Ἕκτου δὲ δὴ τόδ ἦμαρ, κ. τ. λ.
Enteuthen agriacuntakeis nosō nosei
Tlēmōn Orestēs ho de pesōn en demniois

Keitai Hekton de dē tod́ ēmar etc "‹Tis hence Orestes, agonized with griefs
And sore disease, lies on his restless bed
Delirious.
Now six morns have winged their flight,
Since by his hands his parent massacred
Burnt on the pile in expiatory flames.
Stubborn the while he keeps a rigid fast,
Nor bathes, nor dresses; but beneath his robes
He skulks, and if he steals a pause from rage,
‹Tis but to feel his weight of wo and weep."

And none spake a word to him - - That is, on the subject of his grief. They came to condole with him, but they had now nothing to say. They saw that his affliction was much greater than they had anticipated.

For they saw that his grief was very great - This is given as a reason why they were silent. But "how" this produced silence, or why his great grief was a cause of their silence, is not intimated. Perhaps one or all of the following considerations may have led to it.

(1) They were amazed at the extent of his sufferings. Amazement is often expressed by silence. We look upon that which is out of the usual course of events without being able to express anything. We are "struck dumb" with wonder.

(2) The effect of great calamity is often to prevent utterance. Nothing is more natural or common than profound silence when we go to the house of mourning. "It is the lesser cares only that speak; the greater ones find not language." Curae leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent.

(3) They might not have known what to say. They had come to sympathize with him, and to offer consolation. But their anticipated topics of consolation may have been seen to be inappropriate. The calamity was greater than they had before witnessed. The loss of property and children; the deep humiliation of a man who had been one of the most distinguished of the land; the severity of his bodily sufferings, and his changed and haggard appearance, constituted so great a calamity, that the usual topics of conversation did not meet the case. What "they" had to say, was the result of careful observation on the usual course or events, and it is by no means

improbable that they had never before witnessed sorrows so keen, and that they now saw that their maxims would by no means furnish consolation for "such" a case.

(4) They seem to have been very early thrown into doubt in regard to the real character of Job. They had regarded him as a pious man, and had come to him under that impression. But his great afflictions seem soon to have shaken their confidence in his piety, and to have led them to ask themselves whether so great a sufferer "could" be the friend of God. Their subsequent reasonings show that it was with them a settled opinion that the righteous would be prospered, and that very great calamities were proof of great criminality in the sight of God. It was not inconsistent with this belief to suppose that the righteous might be slightly afflicted, but when they saw "such" sorrows, they supposed they were altogether beyond what God could send upon his friends; and with this doubt on their minds, and this change in their views, they knew not what to say. How "could" they console him when it was their settled belief that great sufferings were proof of great guilt? They could say nothing which would not seem to be a departure from this, unless they assumed that he had been a hypocrite, and should administer reproof and rebuke for his sins.

(5) In this state of things, to administer "rebuke" would seem to be cruel. It would aggravate the sorrows which already were more than he could bear. They did, therefore, what the friends of the afflicted are often compelled to do in regard to specific sufferings; they kept silence. As they could not comfort him, they would not aggravate his grief. All they could have said would probably have been unmeaning generalities which would not meet his case, or would have been sententious maxims which would imply that he was a sinner and a hypocrite; and they were therefore dumb, until the bitter complaint of Job himself Job 3 gave them an opportunity to state the train of thought which had passed through their minds during this protracted silence. How often do similar cases occur now - cases where consolation seems almost impossible, and where any truths which might be urged, except the most abstract and unmeaning generalities, would tend only to aggravate the sorrows of the afflicted! When calamity comes upon a person as the result of his sins; when property is taken away which has been gained in an unlawful manner; when a friend dies, leaving no evidence that

he was prepared; when it is impossible to speak of that friend without recalling the memory of his irreligious, prayerless, or dissolute life, how difficult is it to administer consolation! How often is the Christian friend constrained to close his lips in silence, or utter only “torturing” general truths that can give no consolation, or refer to facts which will tend only to open the wound in the heart deeper! To be silent at such times is all that can be done; or to commend the sufferer in humble prayer to God, an expedient which seems not to have been resorted to either by Job or his friends, It is remarkable that Job is not represented as calling upon God for support, and it is as remarkable that his friends during these seven days of silent grief did not commend the case of their much afflicted friend to the Father of mercies. Had “Job” prayed, he might have been kept from much of the improper feeling to which he gave vent in the following chapter; had “they” prayed, they might have obtained much more just views of the government of God than they had hitherto possessed.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

After this - Dr. Good renders this, "at length." It means after the long silence of his friends, and after he saw that there was no prospect of relief or of consolation.

Opened Job his mouth - The usual formula in Hebrew to denote thc commencement of a speech; see Matthew 5:2. Schultens contends that it means boldness and vehemency of speech, παῤῥησία *parrēsia* or an opening of the mouth for the purpose of accusing, expostulating, or complaining; or to begin to utter some sententious, profound, or sublime maxim; and in support of this he appeals to Psalm 78:2, ard Proverbs 8:6. There is probably, however nothing more intended than to begin to speak. It is in accordance with Oriental views, where an act of speaking is regarded as a grave and important matter, and is entered on with much deliberation. Blackwell (Life of Homer, p. 43) remarks that the Turks, Arabs, Hindoos, and the Orientals in general, have little inclination to society and to general conversation, that they seldom speak, and that their speeches are sententious and brief, unless they are much excited. With such men, to make a speech is a serious matter, as is indicated by the manner in which their discourses are commonly introduced: "I will open my mouth," or they "opened the mouth," implying great deliberation and gravity. This phrase occurs often in Homer, Hesiod, Orpheus, and in Virgil (compare Aeneid vi. 75), as well as in the Bible. See Burder, in Rosenmuller's Morgenland, "in loc."

And cursed his day - The word rendered "curse" here, קלל *qâlal* is different from that used in Job 1:11; Job 2:9. It is the proper word to denote "to curse." The Syriac adds, "the day in which he was born." A similar expression occurs in Klopstock's Messias, Ges. iii.

Wenn nun, aller Kinder beraubt, die verzweifelude Mutter,
Wuthend dem Tag. an dem sie gebahr, und gebohren ward, fluchet.
"When now of all her children robbed, the desperate mother enraged
Curses the day in which she bare, and was borne."

Verse 2

And Job spake - Margin, as in Hebrew, "answered." The Hebrew word used here ענה *ʿânâh* "to answer," is often employed when one commences a discourse, even though no question had preceded. It is somewhat in the

sense of replying to a subject, or of speaking in a case where a question might appropriately be asked; Zechariah 3:4; Deuteronomy 26:5 (Hebrew), Deuteronomy 27:14 (Hebrew). The word "to answer" ἀποκρίνομαι *apokrinomai* is frequently used in this way in the New Testament; Matthew 17:4, Matthew 17:17; Matthew 28:5; Mark 9:5; Mark 10:51, et al.

Verse 3

Let the day perish - "Perish the day! O that there had never been such a day! Let it be blotted from the memory of man! There is something singularly bold, sublime, and "wild" in this exclamation. It is a burst of feeling where there had been long restraint, and where now it breaks forth in the most vehement and impassioned manner. The word "perish" here יאבד *yo'bad* expresses the "optative," and indicates strong desire. So the Septuagint, Ἀπόλοιτο *Apoloito* "may it perish," or be destroyed; compare Job 10:18. "O that I had given up the ghost." Dr. Good says of this exclamation, "There is nothing that I know of, ia ancient or modern poetry, equal to the entire burst, whether in the wildness and horror of the imprecations. or the terrible sublimity of its imagery." The boldest and most animated of the Hebrew poets have imitated it, and have expressed themselves in almost the same language, in scenes of distress. A remarkably similar expression of feeling is made by Jeremiah.

Cursed be the day wherein I was born:
Let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed!
Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying,
"A man child is born unto thee,"
Making him very glad.
Be that man as the cities which yahweh overthrew and repented not!
Yea, let him hear the outcry in the morning,
And the lamentation at noon day!
Jeremiah 20:14-16.

The sense of this expression in Job is plain. He wished there never had been such a day, and then he would not have been born. It is impossible to vindicate these expressions in Job and Jeremiah, unless it be on the supposition that it is highly worked poetic language, caused by sorrow so acute that it could not be expressed in prose. We are to remember, however, if this seems to us inconsistent with the existence of true piety, that Job had far less light than we have; that he lived at an early period of the world, when the views of the divine government were obscure, and that he was not

sustained by the hopes and promises which the Christian possesses now. What light he had was probably that of tradition, and of the result of careful observation on the course of events. His topics of consolation must have been comparatively few. He had few or no promises to sustain him. He had not had before him, as we have, the example of the patient Redeemer. His faith was not sustained by those strong assurances which we have of the perfect rectitude of the divine government. Before we blame him too severely, we must place ourselves in imagination in his circumstances, and ask what our piety would have done under the trials which afflicted "him." Yet with all allowances, it is not possible to vindicate this language; and while we cannot but admire its force and sublimity, and its unequalled power and boldness in expressing strong passion, we at the same time feel that there was a lack of proper submission and patience. - It is the impassioned language of a man who felt that he could bear no more; and there can be no doubt that it gave to Satan the hope of his anticipated triumph.

And the night in which it was said - Dr. Good renders this, "And the night which shouted." Noyes, "And the night which said." So Gesenius and Rosenmuller, "Perish the night which said, a man child is conceived." The Vulgate renders it, "The night in which it was said;" the Septuagint, "That night in which they said." The Chaldee paraphrases the verse, "Perish the day in which I was born, and the angel who presided ever my conception." Scott, quoted by Good, translates it, "The night which hailed the new-born man." The language throughout this imprecation is that in which the night is "personified," and addressed as if it were made glad by the birth of a son. So Schultens says, "*Inducitur enim "Nox illa quasi conscia mysterii, et exultans ob spem prolis virilis."* Such personifications of day and night are common among the Arabs; see Schultens. It is a representation of day and night as "sympathizing with the joys and sorrows of mankind, and is in the truest vein of Oriental poetry."

There is a man child conceived - Hebrew גבר *geber* - "a man;" compare John 16:21. The word "conceived" Dr. Good renders "brought forth" So Herder translates it. The Septuagint, Ἰδοὺ ἄρσεν *Idou arsen* - "lo, a male" The common translation expresses the true sense of the original. The joy at the birth of a male in Oriental countries is much greater than that at the birth of a female. A remarkable instance of an imprecation on the day of one's birth is found in a Muslim book of modern times, in which the

expressions are almost precisely the same as in Job. “Malek er Nasser Daub, prince of some tribes in Palestine, from which however he had been driven, after many adverse fortunes, died in a village near Damascus in the year 1258. When the crusaders had desolated his country, he deplored its misfortunes and his own in a poem, from which Abulfeda (Annals, p. 560) has quoted the following passage: ‹O that my mother had remained unmarried all the days of her life! That God had determined no lord or consort for her! O that when he had destined her to an excellent, mild, and wise prince, she had been one of those whom he had created barren; that she might never have known the happy intelligence that she had born a man or woman! Or that when she had carried me under her heart, I had lost my life at my birth; and if I had been born, and had seen the light, that, when the congratulating people hastened on their camels, I had been gathered to my fathers.‘” The Greeks and the Romans had their unlucky days (ἡμέραι ἀποφρύδες *hēmerai apofrudes* “dies infausti”); that is, days which were unpropitious, or in which they expected no success in any enterprise or any enjoyment. Tacitus (Annals, xiv. 12) mentions that the Roman Senate, for the purpose of flattering Nero, decreed that the birthday of Agrippina should be regarded as an accursed day; ut dies natalis Agrippinae inter nefastos esset. See Rosenmuller, All. u. neue Morgenland, “in loc” Expressions also similar to those before us, occur in Ovid, particularly in the following passage, “Epist. ad Ibin:”

Natus es infelix (ita Dii voluere), nec ulla
Commoda nascenti stella, levisve fuit.
Lux quoque natalis, ne quid nisi tristo videres,

Turpis, et inductis nubibus atra fuit.

Sedit in adverso nocturnas culmine bubo,
Funereoque graves edidit ore sonos.

We have now similar days, which by common superstition are regarded as unlucky or inauspicious. The wish of Job seems to be, that the day of his birth might be regarded as one of those days.

Verse 4

Let that day be darkness - Let it not be day; or, O, that it had not been day, that the sun had not risen, and that it had been night.

Let not God regard it from above - The word rendered here "regard" דרשׁ *dârash* means properly to seek or inquire after, to ask for or demand. Dr. Good renders it here, "Let not God inclose it," but this meaning is not found in the Hebrew. Noyes renders it literally, "Let not God seek it." Herder, "Let not God inquire after it." The sense may be, either that Job wished the day sunk beneath the horizon, or in the deep waters by which he conceived the earth to be surrounded, and prays that God would not seek it and bring it from its dark abode; or he desired that God would never inquire after it, that it might pass from his remembrance and be forgotten. What we value, we would wish God to remember and bless; what we dislike, we would wish him to forget. This seems to be the idea here. Job hated that day, and he wished all other beings to forget it. He wished it blotted out, so that even God would never inquire after it, but regard it as if it had never been.

Neither let the light shine upon it - Let it be utter darkness; let not a ray ever reveal it. It will be seen here that Job first curses "the day." The amplification of the curse with which he commenced in the first part of Job 3:3, continues through Job 3:4-5; and then he returns to the "night," which also (in the latter part of Job 3:3) he wished to be cursed. His desires in regard to that unhappy night, he expresses in Job 3:6-10.

Verse 5

Let darkness and the shadow of death - The Hebrew word צלמות *tsalmâveth* is exceedingly musical and poetical. It is derived from צל *tsêl* "a shadow," and מות *mâveth* "death;" and is used to denote the deepest darkness; see the notes at Isaiah 9:2. It occurs frequently in the sacred Scriptures; compare Job 10:21-22; Psalm 23:4; Job 12:22; Job 16:16; Job 24:17; Job 34:22; Job 38:17; Amos 5:8; Jeremiah 2:6. It is used to denote the abode of departed spirits, described by Job as "a land of darkness, as darkness itself; of the shadow of death without any order, and where the light is as darkness;" Job 10:21-22. The idea seems to have been, that "death" was a dark and gloomy object that obstructed all light, and threw a baleful shade afar, and that that melancholy shade was thrown afar over the regions of the dead. The sense here is, that Job wished the deepest conceivable darkness to rest upon it.

Stain it - Margin, or "challenge." Vulgate, "obscure it." Septuagint, "take or occupy it," Ἐκλάβοι *Eklaboi* Dr. Good, "crush it." Noyes, "redeem it." Herder, "seize it." This variety of interpretation has arisen in part from

the twofold signification of the word used here, גאל *gā'al* The word means either to "redeem," or to "defile," "pollute," "stain." These senses are not very closely connected, and I know not how the one has grown out of the other, unless it be that redemption was accomplishcd with blood, and that the frequent sprinkling of blood on an altar rendered it defiled, or unclean. In one sense, blood thus sprinkled would purify, when it took away sin; in another, it would render an object unclean or polluted. Gesenius says, that the latter signification occurs only in the later Hebrew. If the word here means to "redeem," the sense is, that Job wished darknessto resume its dominion over the day, and rcdeem it to itself, and thus wholly to exclude the light.

If the word means to defile or pollute, the sense is, that he desired the death-shade to stain the day wholly black; to take out every ray of light, and to render it wholly obscure. Gesenius renders it in the former sense. The sense which Reiske and Dr. Good give to the word, "crush it," is not found in the Hebrew. The word means to defile, stain, or pollute, in the following places, namely,: it is rendered "pollute" and "polluted" in Malachi 1:7, Malachi 1:12; Zephaniah 3:1; Lamentations 4:14; Ezra 2:62; Nehemiah 7:64; "defile" or "defiled" in Isaiah 59:3; Daniel 1:8; Nehemiah 13:29; and "stain" in Isaiah 63:3. It seems to me that this is the sense here, and that the meaning has been well explained by Schultens, that Job wished that his birthday should be involved in a deep "stain," that it should be covered with clouds and storms, and made dark and dismal. This imprecation referred not only to the day on which he was born, but to each succeeding birthday. Instead of its being on its return a bright and cheerful day, he wished that it might be annually a day of tempests and of terrors; a day so marked that it wouId excite attention as especially gloomy and inauspicious. It was a day whose return conveyed no pleasure to his soul, and which he wished no one to observe with gratitude or joy.

Let a cloud dwell upon it - There is, as Dr. Good and others have remarked, much sublimity iu this expression. The Hebrew word rendered "a cloud" ענּנה *ʿănânâh* occurs nowhere else in this form. It is the feminine form of the word ענן *ʿânân* "a cloud," and is used "collectively" to denote "clouds;" that is, clouds piled on clouds; clouds "condensed, impacted, heaped together" (Dr. Good), and hence, the gathered tempest, the clouds assembled deep and dark, and ready to burst forth in the fury of a storm. Theodotion renders it συννεφέα *sunnefea* "assembled clouds;" and hence,

"darkness," The Septuagint renders it γνόφος *gnophos* "tempest," or "thick darkness." So Jerome, "caligo." The word rendered "dwell upon it" שׁכן *shâkan* means properly to "settle down," and there to abide or dwell. Perhaps the original notion was that of fixing a tent, and so Schultens renders it, *"tentorium figat super eo Nubes,"* "Let the cloud pitch its tent over it;" rendered by Dr. Good, "The gathered tempest pavilion over it!" "This is an image," says Schultens, "common among the Arabs." The sense is, that Job wished clouds piled on clouds to settle down on the day permanently, to make that day their abode, and to involve it in deep and eternal night.

Let the blackness of the day terrify it - Margin, "Or, Let them terrify it as those who have a bitter day." There has been great variety in the interpretation of this passage. Dr. Good renders it, "The blasts of noontide terrify it." Noyes, "Let whatever darkens the day terrify it." Herder, "The blackness of misfortune terrify it." Jerome, Et involvatur amaritudine, "let it be involved in bitterness." The Septuagint, καταραθείη ἡ ἡμέρα *katarathein hē hēmera* "let the day be cursed." This variety has arisen from the difficulty of determining the sense of the Hebrew word used here and rendered "blackness," כמרירים *kîmrîyrîym* If it is supposed to be derived from the word כמר *kâmar* to be warm, to be hot, to burn, then it would mean the deadly heats of the day, the dry and sultry blasts which prevail so much in sandy deserts. Some writers suppose that there is a reference here to the poisonous wind Samum or Samiel, which sweeps over those deserts, and which is so much dreaded in the beat of summer. "Men as well as animals are often suffocated with this wind. For during a great heat, a current of air often comes which is still hotter; and when human beings and animals are so exhausted that they almost faint away with the heat, it seems that this little addition quite deprives them of breath. When a man is suffocated with this wind, or when, as they say, his heart is burst blood is said to flow from his nose and ears two hours after his death. The body is said to remain long warm, to swell, to turn blue and green, and if the arm or leg is taken hold of to raise it up, the limb is said to come off."

Burder's Oriental customs, No. 176. From the testimony of recent travelers, however, it would seem that the injurious effects of this wind have been greatly exaggerated. If this interpretation be the true one, then Job wished the day of his birth to be frightful and alarming, as when such a poisonous blast should sweep along all day, and render it a day of terror and

dread. But this interpretation does not well suit the parallelism. Others, therefore, understand by the word, "obscurations," or whatever darkens the day. Such is the interpretation of Gesenius, Bochart, Noyes, and some others. According to this, the reference is to eclipses or fearful storms which cover the day in darkness. The noun here is not found elsewhere; but the "verb" כמר *kâmar* is used in the sense of being black and dark in Lain. v. 10: "Our skin was black like an oven, because of the terrible famine;" or perhaps more literally, "Our skin is scorched as with a furnace, from the burning heat of famine."

That which is burned becomes black, and hence, the word may mean that which is dark, obscure, and gloomy. This meaning suits the parallelism, and is a sense which the Hebrew will bear. Another interpretation regards the Hebrew letter כ (*k*) used as a prefix before the word כמרירים *kîmrîyrîym* "bitterness," and then the sense is, "according to the bitterness of the day;" that is, the greatest calamities which can happen to a day. This sense is found in several of the ancient versions, and is adopted by Rosenmuller. To me it seems that the second interpretation proposed best suits the connection, and that the meaning is, that Job wished that everything which could render the day gloomy and obscure might rest upon it. The Chaldee adds here," Let it be as the bitterness of day - the grief with which Jeremiah was afflicted in being cut off from the house of the sanctuary, and Jonah in being cast into the sea of Tarshish."

Verse 6

As for "that night." Job, having cursed the day, proceeds to utter a malediction on the "night" also; see Job 3:3. This malediction extends to Job 3:9.

Let darkness seize upon it - Hebrew, Let it take it. Let deep and horrid darkness seize it as its own. Let no star arise upon it; let it be unbroken and uninterrupted gloom. The word "darkness," however, does not quite express the force of the original. The word used here אפל *'ôphel* is poetic, and denotes darkness more intense than is denoted by the word which is usually rendered "darkness" השך *chôshek* It is a darkness accompanied with clouds and with a tempest. Herder understands it as meaning, that darkness should seize upon that night and bear it away, so that it should not be joined to the months of the year. So the Chaldee. But the true sense is, that Job wished so

deep darkness to possess it, that no star would rise upon it; no light whatever be seen. A night like this Seneca beautifully describes in Agamemnon, verses 465ff:

Nox prima coeltum sparserat stellis,
Cum subito luna conditur, stellae cadunt;
In astra pontus tollitur, et coelum petit.
Nec una nox est, densa tenebras obruit
Caligo, et Omni luce subducta, fretum
Coelumque miscet …
Premunt tenebrae lumina, et dirae stygis
Inferna nox est.

Let it not be joined unto the days of the year - Margin, "rejoice among." So Good and Noyes render it. The word used here יחד *yîchad* according to the present pointing, is the apocopated future of חדה *chādâh* "to rejoice, to be glad." If the pointing were different יחד *yâchad* it would be the future of יחד *yachad* to be one; to be united, or joined to. The Masoretic points are of no authority, and the interpretation which supposes that the word means here to exult or rejoice, is more poetical and beautiful. It is then a representation of the days of the year as rejoicing together, and a wish is expressed that "that" night might never be allowed to partake of the general joy while the months rolled around. In this interpretation Rosenmuller and Gesenius concur. Dodwell supposes that there is an allusion to a custom among the ancients, by which inauspicious days were stricken from the calendar, and their place supplied by intercalary days. But there is no evidence of the existence of snell a custom in the time of Job.

Let it not come etc - Let it never be reckoned among the days which go to make up the number of the months. Let there be always a blank there; let its place always be lacking.

Verse 7

Lo, let that night be solitary - Dr. Good, "O! that night! Let it be a barren rock!" Noyes, "O let that night be unfruitful!" Herder, "Let that night be set apart by itself." The Hebrew word used here גלמוּד *galmûd* means properly "hard;" then sterile, barren, as of a hard and rocky soil. It does not mean properly solitary, but that which is unproductive and unfruitful. It is used of a woman who is barren, Isaiah 49:21, and also of that which is lean, famished, emaciated with hunger; Job 15:34; Job 30:3. According to this it means that that should be a night in which none would be born - a night of

loneliness and desolation. According to Jerome, it means that the night should be solitary, lonely, and gloomy; a night in which no one would venture forth to make a journey, and in which none would come together to rejoice. Thus interpreted the night would resemble that which is so beautifully describe by Virgil, Aeneid vi. 268:

Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbras,

Perque domos Ditis vacuas et inania regna.

It is probable, however, that the former is the correct interpretation.

Let no joyful voice come therein - Let there be no sound of praise and rejoicing. The Chaldee paraphrases this," Let not the crowing of a cock be heard in it." The sense of the whole is, that Job wished that night to be wholly desolate. He wished there might be no assembling for amusement, congratulation, or praise, no marriage festivals, and no rejoicing at the birth of children; he would have it as noiseless, solitary, and sad, as if all animals and human beings were dead, and no voice were heard. It was a night hateful to him, and he would have it in no way remembered.

Verse 8

Let them curse it who curse the day - This entire verse is exceedingly difficult, and many different expositions have been given of it. It seems evident that it refers to some well-known class of persons, who were accustomed to utter imprecations, and were supposed to have the power to render a day propitious or unpropitious - persons who had the power of divination or enchantment. A belief in such a power existed early in the world, and has prevailed in all savage and semi-barbarous nations, and even in nations considerably advanced in civilization. The origin of this was a desire to look into futurity; and in order to accomplish this, a league was supposed to be made with the spirits of the dead, who were acquainted with the events of the invisible world, and who could be prevailed on to impart their knowledge to favored mortals. It was supposed, also, that by such union there might be a power exerted which would appear to be miraculous.

Such persons also claimed to be the favorites of heaven, and to be endowed with control over the elements, and over the destiny of men; to have the power to bless and to curse, to render propitious or calamitous. Balsaam was believed to be endowed with this power, and hence, he was sent for by Balak, king of Moab, to curse the Israelites; Numbers 22:5-6; see the notes at Isaiah 8:19. The practice of cursing the day, or cursing the sun, is said by Herodotus to have prevailed among a people of Africa,

whom he calls the Atlantes, living in the vicinity of Mount Atlas. "Of all mankind," says he, "of whom we have any knowledge, the Atlantes alone have no distinction of names; the body of the people are termed Atlantes, but their individuals have no appropriate appellation. When the sun is at the highest they heap on it reproaches and execrations, because their country and themselves are parched by its rays; book iv. 184. The same account of them is found in Pliny, Nat. His. v. 8: Solem orientem occidentemque dira imprecatione contuentur, ut exitialem ipsis agrisque. See also Strabo, Lib. xvii. p. 780. Some have supposed, also, that there may be an allusion here to a custom which seems early to have prevailed of hiring people to mourn for the dead, and who probably in their official lamentation bewailed or cursed the day of their calamity; compare Jeremiah 9:17; 2 Chronicles 35:25. But the correct interpretation is doubtless that which refers it to pretended prophets, priests, or diviners - who were supposed to have power to render a day one of ill omen. Such a power Job wished exerted over that unhappy night when he was born. He desired that the curses of those who had power to render a day unpropitious or unlucky, should rest upon it.

Who are ready to raise up their mourning - This is not very intelligible, and it is evident that our translators were embarrassed by the passage. They seem to have supposed that there was an allusion here to the practice of employing professional mourners, and that the idea is, that Job wished that they might be employed to howl over the day as inauspicious, or as a day of ill omen. The margin is, as in the Hebrew, "a leviathan." The word rendered "ready" עתידים *ʿâthîydîym* means properly ready, prepared; and then practiced or skillful. This is the idea here, that they were practiced or skillful in calling up the "leviathan;" see Schultens "in loc." The word rendered in the text "mourning," and in the margin "leviathan" לויתן *lîvyâthân* in all other parts of the sacred Scriptures denotes an animal; see it explained in the notes at Isaiah 27:1, and more fully in the notes at Job 41: It usually denotes the crocodile, or some huge sea monster.

Here it is evidently used to represent the most fierce, powerful and frightful of all the animals known, and the allusion is to some power claimed by necromancers to call forth the most terrific monsters at their will from distant places, from the "vasty deep," from morasses and impenetrable forests. The general claim was, that they had control over all nature; that they could curse the day, and make it of ill omen, and that the most mighty and terrible of land or sea monsters were entirely under their control. If they

had such a power, Job wished that they would exercise it to curse the night in which he was born. On what pretensions they founded this claim is unknown. The power, however, of taming serpents, is practiced in India at this day; and jugglers bear around with them the most deadly of the serpent race, having extracted their fangs, and creating among the credulous the belief that they have control over the most noxious animals. Probably some such art was claimed by the ancients. and to some such pretension Job alludes here.

Verse 9

Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark - That is, be extinguished, so that it shall be total darkness - darkness not even relieved by a single star. The word here rendered "twilight" נשף *nesheph* means properly a breathing; and hence, the evening, when cooling breezes "blow," or gently breathe. It is used however, to denote both the morning and the evening twilight, though here probably it means the latter. He wishes that the evening of that night, instead of being in any way illuminated, should "set in" with total darkness and continue so. The Septuagint renders it, "night.

Let it look for light, but have none - Personifying the night, and representing it as looking out anxiously for some ray of light. This is a beautiful poetic image - the image of "Night," dark and gloomy and sad, anxiously looking out for a single beam or a star to break in upon its darkness and diminish its gloom.

Neither let it see the dawning of the day - Margin, more literally and more beautifully, "eyelids of the morning." The word rendered "dawning" עפעפים *ʿaphʿaphîym* means properly "the eyelashes" (from עוף *ʿûph* "to fly"), and it is given to them from their flying or fluttering. The word rendered "day" שחר *shachar* means the aurora, the morning. The sun when he is above the horizon is called by the poets the eye of day; and hence, his earliest beams, before he is risen, are called the eyelids or eyelashes of the morning opening upon the world. This figure is common in the ancient Classics, and occurs frequently in the Arabic poets; see Schultens "in loc." Thus, in Soph. Antiq. 104, the phrase occurs, Ἀμέρας βλέφυρον *Hameras blefaron* So in Milton's Lycidas,

" - Ere the high lawns appeared
Under the opening eyelids of the dawn,
We drive afield."

Job‘s wish was, that there might be no star in the evening twilight, and that no ray might illuminate that of the morning; that it might be enveloped in perpetual, unbroken darkness.

Verse 10

Because it shut not up … - That is, because the accursed day and night did not do it. Aben Ezra supposes that God is meant here, and that the complaint of Job is that he did not close his mother‘s womb. But the more natural interpretation is to refer it to the Νυχθήμεροι *Nuchthēmeroi* - the night and the day which he had been cursing, on which he was born. Throughout the description the day and the night are personified, and are spoken of as active in introducing him into the world. He here curses them because they did not wholly prevent his birth.

Nor hid sorrow from mine eyes - By preventing my being born. The meaning is, that he would not have known sorrow if he had then died.

Verse 11

Why died I not from the womb? - Why did I not die as soon as I was born? Why were any pains taken to keep me alive? The suggestion of this question leads Job in the following verses into the beautiful description, of what he would have been if he had then died. He complains, therefore, that any pains were taken by his friends to keep him alive, and that he was not suffered peacefully to expire.

Gave up the ghost - A phrase that is often used in the English version of the Bible to denote death; Genesis 49:33; Job 11:20; Job 14:10; Jeremiah 15:9; Matthew 27:50; Acts 5:10. It conveys an idea, however, which is not necessarily in the original, though the idea in itself is not incorrect. The idea conveyed by the phrase is that of yielding up the “spirit” or “soul,” while the sense of the original here and elsewhere is simply “to expire, to die.”

Verse 12

Why did the knees prevent me? - That is, the lap of the nurse or of the mother, probably the latter. The sense is, that if he had not been delicately and tenderly nursed, he would have died at once. He came helpless into the world, and but for the attention of others he would have soon died. Jahn supposes (Archae section 161) that it was a common custom for the father, on the birth of a son, to clasp the new-born child to his bosom, while music was heard to sound, and by this ceremony to declare it as his own. That there was some such recognition of a child or expression of paternal regard, is apparent from Genesis 50:23. Probably, however, the whole sense of the

passage is expressed by the tender care which is necessarily shown to the new-born infant to preserve it alive. The word rendered "prevent" here קדם *qâdam* means properly to anticipate, to go before, as the English word "prevent" formerly did; and hence, it means to go to meet anyone in order to aid him in any way. There is much beauty in the word here. It refers to the provision which God has made in the tender affection of the parent to "anticipate" the needs of the child. The arrangement has been made beforehand. God has taken care when the feeble and helpless infant is born, that tender affection has been already created and prepared to meet it. It has not to be created then; it is not to be excited by the suffering of the child; it is already in existence as an active, powerful, and self-denying principle, to "anticipate" the needs of the newborn babe, and to save it from death.

Verse 13

For now should I have lain still - In this verse Job uses four expressions to describe the state in which be would have been if he had been so happy as to have died when an infant. It is evidently a very pleasant subject to him, and he puts it in a great variety of form. He uses thc words which express the most quiet repose, a state of perfect rest, a gentle slumber; and then in the next verses he says, that instead of being in the miserable condition in which he then was, he would have been in the same state with kings and the most illustrious men of the earth.

I should have lain still - - שׁכב *shâkab* I should have been "lying down," as one does who is taking grateful repose. This is a word of less strength than any of those which follow.

And been quiet - - שׁקט *shâqaṭ* A word of stronger signification than that before used. It means to rest, to lie down, to have quiet. It is used of one who is never troubled, harassed, or infested by others, Judges 3:11; Judges 5:31; Judges 8:25; and of one who has no fear or dread, Psalm 76:9. The meaning is, that he would not only have lain down, but; would have been perfectly tranquil. Nothing would have harassed him, nothing would have given him any annoyance.

I should have slept - - ישׁן *yâshên* This expression also is in advance of those before used. There would not only have been "quiet," but there would have been a calm and gentle slumber. Sleep is often representcd as "the kinsman of death." Thus, Virgil speaks of it:

"*Tum consanguineus Leti sopor* - "

Aeneid vi. 278.

So Homer:

Enth' hupnō cumblēto chasignēto thanatoio -

Iliad, 14:231.

This comparsion is an obvious one, and is frequently used in the Classical writers. It is employed to denote the calmness, stillness, and quiet of death. In the Scriptures it frequently occurs, and with a significancy far more beautiful. It is there employed not only to denote the tranquility of death, but also to denote the Christian hopes of a resurrection and the prospect of being awakened out of the long sleep. We lie down to rest at night with the hopes of awaking again. We sleep calmly, with the expectation that it will be only a temporary repose, and that we shall be aroused, invigorated for augmented toil, and refreshed for sweeter pleasure. So the Christian lies down in the grave. So the infant is committed to the calm slumber of the tomb. It may be a sleep stretching on through many nights and weeks and years and centuries, and even cycles of ages, but it is not eternal. The eyes will be opened again to behold the beauties of creation; the ear will be unstoppod to hear the sweet voice of fricndship and the harmony of music; and the frame will be raised up beautiful and immortal to engage in the service of the God that made us; compare Psalm 13:3; Psalm 90:5; John 11:11; 1 Corinthians 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:10. Whether Job used the word in this sense and with this understanding, has been made a matter of question, and will be considered more fully in the examination of the passage in Job 19:25-27.

Then had I been at rest - Instead of the troubles and anxieties which I now experience. That is, he would have been lying in calm and honorable repose with the kings and princes of the earth.

Verse 14

With kings - Reposing as they do. This is the language of calm meditation on what would have been the consequence if he had died when he was an infant. He seems to delight to dwell on it. He contrasts it with his present situation. He pauses on the thought that that would have been an honorable repose. He would have been numbered with kings and princes. Is there not here a little spice of ambition even in his sorrows and humilation? Job had been an eminently rich man; a man greatly honored; an emir; a magistrate; one in whose presence even princes refrained talking, and before whom nobles held their peace; Job 29:9. Now he was stripped of his honors, and made to sit in ashes. But had he died when an infant, he would

have been numbered with kings and courtsellers, and would have shared their lot. Death is repulsive; but Job takes comfort in the thought that he would have been associated with the most exalted and honorable among people. There is some consolation in the idea that when an infant dies he is associated with the most honored and exalted of the race; there is consolation in the reflection that when we die we shall lie down with the good and the great of all past times, and that though our bodies shall moulder back to dust, and be forgotten, we are sharing the same lot with the most beautiful, lovely, wise, pious, and mighty of the race. To Christians there is the richest of all consolations in the thought that they will sleep as their Savior did in the tomb, and that the grave, naturally so repulsive, has been made sacred and even attractive by being the place where the Redeemer reposed.

Why should we tremble to convey
Their bodies to the tomb?
There the dear flesh of Jesus lay,

And left a long perfume.
The graves of all his saints he blessed,
And softened every bed:
Where should the dying members rest
But with the dying Head?

And counsellors of the earth - Great and wise men who were qualified to give counsel to kings in times of emergency.

Which built desolate places for themselves - Gesenius supposes that the word used here (חרבה *chorbâh*) means palaces which would soon be in ruins. So Noyes renders it, "Who build up for themselves - ruins!" That is, they build splendid palaces, or perhaps tombs, which are destined soon to fall to ruin. Dr. Good renders it, "Who restored to themselves the ruined wastes;" that is, the princes who restored to their former magnificence the ruins of ancient cities, and built their palaces in them But it seems to me that the idea is different. It is, that kings constructed for their own burial, magnificent tombs or mausoleums, which were lonely and desolate places, where they might lie in still and solemn grandeur; compare the notes at Isaiah 14:18. Sometimes these were immense excavations from rocks; and sometimes they were stupendous structurcs built as tombs. What more

desolate and lonely places could be conceived than the pyramids of Egypt - reared probably as the burial places of kings?

What more lonely and solitary than the small room in the center of one of those immense structures, where the body of the monarch is supposed to have been deposited? And what more emphatic than the expression - though" so nearly pleonastic that it may be omitted" ("Noyes") - "for themselves?" To my view, that is far from being pleonastic. It is full of emphasis. The immense structure was made for "them." It was not to be a common burial-place; it was not for the public good; it was not to be an abode for the living and a contributor to their happiness: it was a matter of supreme selfishness and pride - an immense structure built only run themselves. With such persons lying in their places of lonely grandeur, Job felt it would be an honor to be associated. Compared with his present condition it was one of dignity; and he earnestly wished that it might have been his lot thus early to have been consigned to the fellowship of the dead. It may be some confirmation of this view to remark, that the land of Edom, near which Job is supposed to have lived, contains at this day some of the most wonderful sepulchral monuments of the world; comp the notes at Isaiah 17:1.

Verse 15

Or with princes that had gold - That is, he would have been united with the rich and the great. Is there not here too also a slight evidence of the fondness for wealth, which might have been one of the errors of this good man? Would it not seem that such was his estimate of the importance of being esteemed rich, that he would count it an honor to be united with the affluent in death, rather than be subjected to a condition of poverty and want among the living?

Who filled their houses with silver - Rosenmuller supposes that there is reference here to the custom among the ancients of burying treasures with the dead, and that the word "houses" refers to the tombs or mausoleums which they erected. That such a custom prevailed, there can be no doubt. Josephus informs us that large quantities of treasure were buried in the tomb with David, which afterward was taken out for the supply of an army; and Schultens ("in loc.") says that the custom prevailed extensively among the Arabs. The custom of burying valuable objects with the dead was practiced also among the aborigines of N. America, and is to this day practiced in

Africa. If this be the sense here, then the idea of Job was, that he would have been in his grave united with those who even there were accompanied with wealth, rather than suffering the loss of all his property as he was among the living.

Verse 16

Or as an hidden untimely birth - As an abortion which is hid, or concealed; that is, which is soon removed from the sight. So the Psalmist, Psalm 58:8:

As a snail which melteth, let thom dissolve;

As the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun.

Septuagint ἔκτρωμα *ektrōma* the same word which is used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:8, with reference to himself; see the notes at that place.

I had not been - I should have perished; I should not have been a man, as I now am, subject to calamity. The meaning is, that he would have been taken away and concealed, as such an untimely birth is, and that he would never have been numbered among the living and the suffering.

As infants which never saw light - Job expresses here no opinion of their future condition, or on the question whether such infants had immortal souls. He is simply saying that his lot would have been as theirs was, and that he would have been saved from the sorrows which he now experienced.

Verse 17

There the wicked cease - from "troubling." In the grave - where kings and princes and infants lie. This verse is often applied to heaven, and the language is such as will express the condition of that blessed world. But as used by Job it had no such reference. It relates only to the grave. It is language which beautifully expresses the condition of the dead, and the "desirableness" even of an abode in the tomb. They who are there, are free from the vexations and annoyances to which people are exposed in this life. The wicked cannot torture their limbs by the fires of persecution, or wound their feelings by slander, or oppress and harass them in regard to their property, or distress them by thwarting their plans, or injure them by impugnlug their motives. All is peaceful and calm in the grave, and "there" is a place where the malicious designs of wicked people cannot reach us. The object of this verse and the two following is! to show the "reasons" why it was desirable to be in the grave, rather than to live and to suffer the

ills of this life. We are not to suppose that Job referred exclusively to his own case in all this. tie is describing, in general, the happy condition of the dead, and we have no reason to think that he had been particularly annoyed by wicked people. But the pious often are, and hence, it should be a matter of gratitude that there is one place, at least, where the wicked cannot annoy the good; and where the persecuted, the oppressed, and the slandered may lie down in peace.

And there the weary be at rest - Margin, "Wearied in strength." The margin is in accordance with the Hebrew. The meaning is, those whose strength is exhausted; who are worn down by the toils and eares of life, and who feel the need of rest. Never was more beautiful language employed than occurs in this verse. What a charm such language throws even over the grave - like strewing flowers, and planting roses around the tomb! Who should fear to die, if prepared, when such is to be the condition of the dead? Who is there that is not in some way troubled by the wicked - by their thoughtless, ungodly life; by persecution, contempt, and slander? compare 2 Peter 2:8; Psalm 39:1. Who is there that is not at some time weary with his load of care, anxiety, and trouble? Who is there whose strength does not become exhausted, and to whom rest is not grateful and refreshing? And who is there, therefore, to whom, if prepared for heaven, the grave would not be a place of calm and grateful rest? And though true religion will not prompt us to wish that we had lain down there in early childhood, as Job wished, yet no dictate of piety is violated when "we" look forward with calm delight to the time when we may repose where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary be at rest. O grave, thou art a peaceful spot! Thy rest is calm: thy slumbers are sweet.

Nor pain, nor grief, nor anxious fear
Invade thy bounds. No mortal woes
Can reach the peaceful sleeper here,

While angels watch the soft repose.

So Jesus slept; God‘s dying Son

Passed through the grave, and blest the bed.

Verse 18

There the prisoners rest together - Herder translates this, "There the prisoners rejoice in their freedom." The Septuagint strangely enough, "There they of old (ὁ αἰώνιοι *hoi aiōnioi*) assembled together (ὁμοθυμαδόν *homothumadon*) have not heard the voice of the exactor." The Hebrew word שׁאן *shâ'an* means "to rest, to be quiet, to be tranquil"; and the sense is, that they are in the grave freed from chains and oppressions.

They hear not the voice of the oppressor - Of him who exacted taxes, and who laid on them heavy burdens, and who imprisoned them for imaginary crimes. He who is bound in chains, and who has no other prospect of release, can look for it in the grave and will find it there. Similar sentiments are found respecting death in Seneca, ad Marcian, 20: "*Mots omnibus finis, multis remedium, quibusdam votum; haec servitutem invito domino remittit; haec captivorum catenas levat; haec a carcere reducit, quos exire imperium impofens vetuerat; haec exulibus, in pairtam semper animum oculosque tendentibus, ostendit, nibil interesse inter quos quisque jaceat; haec, ubi res communes fortuna male divisit, et aequo jure genitos allure alii donavit, exaequat omnia; haec est, quae nihil quidquam alieno fecit arbitrio; haec est, ea qua nemo humilitatem guam sensit; haec est, quae nuili paruit*." The sense in Job is, that all are at liberty in death. Chains no longer bind; prisons no longer incarccrate; the voice of oppression no longer alarms.

Verse 19

The small and the great are there - The old and the young, the high and the low. Death levels all. It shows no respect to age; it spares none because they are vigorous, young, or beautiful. This sentiment has probably been expressed in various forms in all languages, for all people are made deeply sensible of its truth. The Classic reader will recall the ancient proverb,

Mors sceptra ligonibus aequat,

And the language of Horace:

Aequae lege Necessitas
Sortitur insignes et imos.
Omne capax movet urna nomen.
Tristis unda scilicet omnibus,
Quicunque terrae munere vescimur,
Enaviganda, sive reges,

Sive inopes erimus coloni.
Divesne prisco natus ab lnacho
Nil interest, an pauper et infima
De gente sub dio moreris

Victima nil miserantis Orci.
Omnes codem cogimur. Omnium
Versatur urna. Serius, ocyus,
Sors exitura.
- Omnes una manet nox,
Et calcauda semel via leti. (Nullum)
Mista senum acjuvenum densantur funera.
Saeva caput Proserpina lugit. (tabernas)
Pallida mors aequo pulsat pede pauperum
Regumque turres.

And the servant is free from his master - Slavery is at an end in the grave. The master can no longer tax the powers of the slave, can no longer scourge him or exact his uncompensated toil. Slavery early existed, and there is evidence here that it was known in the time of Job. But Job did not regard it as a desirable institution; for assuredly that is not desirable from which death would be regarded as a "release," or where death would be preferable. Men often talk about slavery as a valuable condition of society, and sometimes appeal even to the Scriptures to sustain it; but Job felt that "it was worse than death," and that the grave was to be preferred because there the slave would be free from his master. The word used here and rendered "free" (חפשׁי *chophshîy*) properly expresses manumission from slavery. See it explained at length in my the notes at Isaiah 58:6.

Verse 20

Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery? - The word "light" here is used undoubtedly to denote "life." This verse commences a new part of Job's complaint. It is that God keeps people alive who would prefer to die; that he furnishes them with the means of sustaining existence, and actually preserves them, when they would consider it an inestimable blessing to expire. Schultens remarks, on this part of the chapter, that the tone of Job's complaint is considerably modified. He has given vent to his strong feelings, and the language here is more mild and gentle. Still it implies a reflection on God. It is not the language of humble submission. It

contains an implied charge of cruelty and injustice; and it laid the foundation for some of the just reproofs which follow.

And life unto the bitter in soul - Who are suffering bitter grief. We use the word "bitter" yet to denote great grief and pain.

Verse 21

Which long for death - Whose pain and anguish are so great that they would regard it as a privilege to die. Much as people dread death, and much as they have occasion to dread what is beyond, yet there is no doubt that this often occurs. Pain becomes so intense, and suffering is so protracted, that they would regard it as a privilege to be permitted to die. Yet that sorrow "must" be intense which prompts to this wish, and usually must be long continued. In ordinary cases such is the love of life, and such the dread of death and of what is beyond, that people are willing to bear all that human nature can endure rather than meet death; see the notes at Job 2:4. This idea has been expressed with unsurpassed beauty by Shakespeare:

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor‘s wrong, the proud man‘s contumely
The pangs of despised love. the law‘s delay,
The insolence of office. and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When be himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death -
The undiscovered country, from whose bourne
No traveler returns-puzzles the will;
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of.
Hamlet.

And dig for it - That is, express a stronger desire for it than people do who dig for treasures in the earth. Nothing would more forcibly express the intense desire to die than this expression.

Verse 22

Which rejoice exceedingly - Hebrew "Who rejoice upon joy or exultation" (אל־גיל *'el -gîyl*), that is, with exceedingly great joy.

When they can find the grave - What an expression! How strikingly does it express the intense desire to die, and the depth of a man‘s sorrow,

when it becomes a matter of exultation for him to be permitted to lie down in the corruption and decay of the tomb! A somewhat similiar sentiment occurs in Euripides, as quoted by Cicero, Tusc. Quaest. Lib. 1, cap. 48:

Nam nos decebat, doman
Lugere, ubi esset aliquis in lucem editus,
Humanae vitae varia reputantes mala;

At qui labores morte finisset graves

Hunc omni amicos laude et Lactitia exsequi.

Verse 23

Why is light given "to a man uhose way is hid?" That is, who does not know what way to take, and who sees no escape from the misery that surrounds him.

Whom God hath hedged in - See Notes, Job 1:10. The meaning here is, that God had surrounded him as with a high wall or hedge, so that he could not move freely. Job asks with impatience, why light, that is, life, should be given to such a man? Why should he not be permitted to die? This closes the complaint of Job, and the remaining verses of the chapter contain a statement of his sorrowful condition, and of the fact that he had now been called to suffer all that he had ever apprehended. - In regard to the questions here proposed by Job Job 3:20-23, we may remark, that; there was doubtless much impatience on his part, and not a little improper feeling. The language shows that Job was not absolutely sinless; but let us not harshly blame him. What he says, is a "statement" of feelings which often pass through the mind, though they are not often expressed. Who, in deep and protracted sorrows, has not found such questions rising up in his soul - questions which required all his energy and all his firmness of principle, and all the strength which he could gain by prayer, to suppress? To the questions themselves, it may be difficult to give an answer; and it is certain that none of the friends of Job furnished a solution of the difficulty. When it is asked, why man is kept in misery on earth, when he would be glad to be released by death, perhaps the following, among others, may be the reasons:

(1) Those sufferings may be the very means which are needful to develope the true state of the soul. Such was the case with Job.

(2) They may be the proper punishment of sin in the heart, of which the individual was not fully aware, but which may be distinctly seen by God. There may be pride, and the love of ease, and self-confidence, and ambition, and a desire of reputation. Such appear to have been some of the besetting sins of Job.

(3) They are needful to teach true submission, and to show whether a man is willing to resign himself to God.

(4) They may be the very things which are necessary to prepare the individual to die. At the same time that people often desire death, and feel that it would be a relief, it might be to them the greatest possible calamity. They may be wholly unprepared for it. For a sinner, the grave contains no rest; the eternal world furnishes no repose.

One design of God in such sorrows may be, to show to the wicked how "intolerable" will he future pain, and how important it is for them to be ready to die. If they cannot bear the pains and sorrows of a few hours in this short life. how can they endure eternal sufferings? If it is so desirable to be released from the sorrows of the body here, - if it is felt that the grave, with all that is repulsive in it, would be a place of repose, how important is it to find some way to be secured from everlasting pains! The true place of release from suffering for a sinner, is not the grave; it is in the pardoning mercy of God, and in that pure heaven to which he is invited through the blood of the cross. In that holy heaven is the only real repose from suffering and from sin; and heaven will be all the sweeter in proportion to the extremity of pain which is endured on earth.

Verse 24

For my sighing cometh before I eat - Margin, "My meat." Dr. Good renders this," Behold! my sighing takes the place of my daily food, and refers to Psalm 42:3, as an illustration:

My tears are my meat day and night.

So substantially Schultens renders it, and explains it as meaning, "My sighing comes in the manner of my food," *"Suspirium ad modum panis veniens"* - and supposes it to mean that his sighs and groans were like his

daily food; or were constant and unceasing. Dr. Noyes explains it as meaning, "My sighing comes on when I begin to eat, and prevents my taking my daily nourishment;" and appeals to a similar expression in Juvenal. Sat. xiii. 211:

Perpetua anxietas, nec mensae tempore cessat.

Rosenmuller gives substantially the same explanation, and remarks, also, that some suppose that the mouth, hands, and tongue of Job were so affected with disease, that the effort to eat increased his sufferings, and brought on a renewal of his sorrows. The same view is given by Origen; and this is probably the correct sense.

And my roarings - My deep and heavy groans.

Are poured out like the waters - That is,

(1) "in number" - they were like rolling billows, or like the heaving deep.

(2) Perhaps also in "sound" like them. His groans were like the troubled ocean, that can be heard afar. Perhaps, also,

(3.) he means to say that his groans were attended with "a flood of tears," or that his tears were like the waves of the sea.

There is some hyperbole in the figure, in whichever way it is understood; but we are to remember that his feelings were deeply excited, and that the Orientals were in the habit of expressing themselves in a mode, which to us, of more phlegmatic temperament, may seem extravagant in the extreme. We have, however, a similar expression when we say of one that "he burst into a "flood of tears.""

Verse 25

For the thing which I greatly feared - Margin, As in the Hebrew "I feared a fear, and it came upon me." This verse, with the following, has received a considerable variety of exposition. Many have understood it as referring to his whole course of life, and suppose that Job meant to say that he was always apprehensive of some great calamity, such as that which had now come upon him, and that in the time of his highest prosperity be had lived in continual alarm lest his property should be taken. away, and lest he should be reduced to penury and suffering. This is the opinion of Drusius

and Codurcus. In reply to this, Schultens has remarked, that such a supposition is contrary to all probability; that there was no reason to apprehend that such calamities as he now suffered, would come upon him; that they were so unusual that they could not have been anticipated; and that, thercfore, the alarm here spoken of, could not refer to the general tenor of his life.

That seems to have been happy and calm, and perhaps, if anything, too tranquil and secure. Most interpreters suppose that it refers to the state in which he was "during" his trial, and that it is designed to describe the rapid succession of his woes. Such is the interpretation of Rosenmuller, Schultens, Drs. Good, Noyes, Gill, and others. According to this, it means that his calamities came on him in quick succession. He had no time after one calamity to become composed before another came. When he heard of one misfortune, he naturally dreaded another, and they came on with overwhelming rapidity. If this be the correct interpretation, it means that the source of his lamentation is not merely the greatness of his losses and his trials considered in the "aggregate," but the extraordinary rapidity with which they succeeded each other, thus rendering them much more difficult to be borne; see Job 1: He apprehended calamity, and it came suddenly.

When one part of his property was taken, he had deep apprehensions respecting the rest; when all his property was seized or destroyed, he had alarm about his children; when the report came that they were dead, he feared some other affliction still. The sentiment is in accordance with human nature, that when we are visited with severe calamity in one form, we naturally dread it in another. The mind becomes exquisitely sensitive. The affections cluster around the objects of attachment which are left, and they become dear to us. When one child is taken away, our affections cling more closely to the one which survives, and any little illness alarms us, and the value of one object of affection is more and more increased - like the Sybil‘s leaves - as another is removed. It is an instinct of our nature, too, to apprehend calamity in quick succession when one comes "Misfortunes seldom come alone;" and when we suffer the loss of one endeared object, we instinctively feel that there may be a succession of blows that will remove all our comforts from us. Such seems to have been the apprehension of Job.

Verse 26

I was not in safety - That is, I have, or I had no peace. שׁלה *shâlâh* Septuagint, οὔτε εἰρήνευσα *oute eirēneusa* - "I had no peace." The sense is, that his mind had been disturbed with fearful alarms; or perhaps that at that time he was filled with dread.

Neither had I rest - Trouble comes upon me in every form, and I am a stranger wholly to peace. The accumulation of phrases here, all meaning nearly the same thing, is descriptive of a state of great agitation of mind. Such an accumulation is not uncommon in the Bible to denote any thing which language can scarcely describe. So in Isaiah 8:22:

And they shall look upward; And to the earth shall they look; And lo!
rouble and darkness, Gloom, oppression, and deepened darkness.

So Job 10:21-22:

To the land of darkness and the death-shade,
The land of darkness like the blackness of the death-shade,
Where is no order, and where the light is as darkness.

Thus, in the Hamasa (quoted by Dr Good), "Death, and devastation, and a remorseless disease, and a still heavier and more terrific family of evils." The Chaldee has made a remarkable addition here, arising from the general design in the author of that Paraphrase, to explain everything. "Did I not dissemble when the annunciation was made to me respecting the oxen and the asses? Was I not stupid (unalarmed, or unmoved, שדוכית), when the report came about the conflagration? Was I not quiet, when the report came respecting the camels? And did not indignation come, when the report was made respecting my sons?"

Yet trouble came - Or rather, "and trouble comes." This is one of the cumulative expressions to denote the rapidity and the intensity of his sorrows. The word rendered "trouble" (רגז *rôgez*) means properly trembling, commotion, disquiet. Here it signifies such misery as made him tremble. Once the word means wrath Habakkuk 3:2; and it is so understood here by the Septuagint, who renders it ὀργή *orgē* regard to this chapter, containing the first speech of Job, we may remark, that it is impossible to approve the spirit which it exhibits, or to believe that it was acceptable to God. It laid the foundation for the reflections - many of them exceedingly just - in the following chapters, and led his friends to doubt whether such a man could be truly pious. The spirit which is manifested in this chapter, is undoubtedly far from that calm submission which religion should have

produced, and from that which Job had before evinced. That he was, in the main, a man of eminent holiness and patience, the whole book demonstrates; but this chapter is one of the conclusive proofs that he was not absolutely free from imperfection. From the chapter we may learn,

(1) That even eminently good men sometimes give utterance to sentiments which are a departure from the spirit of religion, and which they will have occasion to regret. Such was the case here. There was a language of complaint, and a bitterness of expression, which religion cannot sanction, and which no pious man, on reflection, would approve.

(2) We see the effect of heavy affliction on the mind. It sometimes becomes overwhelming. It is so great that all the ordinary barriers against impatience are swept away. The sufferer is left to utter language of complaining, and there is the impatient wish that life was closed, or that he had not existed.

(3) We are not to infer that because a man in affliction makes use of some expressions which we cannot approve, and which are not sanctioned by the word of God, that therefore he is not a good man. There may be true piety, yet it may be far from perfection; there may be in general submission to God, yet the calamity may be so overwhelming as to overcome the usual restraints on our corrupt and fallen nature: and when we remember how feeble is our nature at best, and how imperfect is the piety of the holiest of men, we should not harshly judge him who is left to express impatience in his trials, or who gives utterance to sentiments different from those which are sanctioned by the word of God. There has been but one model of pure submission on earth - the Lord Jesus Christ; and after the contemplation of the best of men in their trials, we can see that there is imperfection in them, and that if we would survey absolute perfection in suffering, we must go to Gethsemane and to Calvary.

(4) Let us not make the expressions used by Job in this chapter our model in suffering. Let us not suppose that because he used such language, that therefore we may also. Let us not infer that because they are found in the Bible, that therefore they are right; or that because he was an unusually holy man, that it would be proper for us to use the same language that he did. The fact that this book is a part of the inspired truth of revelation, does

not make such language right. All that inspiration does, in such a case, is to secure an exact record of what was actually said; it does not, of necessity, sanction it any more than an accurate historian can be supposed to approve all that he records. There may be important reasons why it should be preserved, but he who makes the record is not answerable for the truth or propriety of what is recorded. The narrative is true; the sentiment may be false. The historian may state exactly what was said or done: but what was said or done, may have violated every law of truth and justice; and unless the historian expresses some sentiment of approbation, he can in no sense be held answerable for it. So with the narratives in the Bible. Where a sentiment of approbation or disapprobation is expressed, there the sacred writer is answerable for it; in other cases he is answerable only for the correctness of the record. This view of the nature of inspiration will leave us at liberty freely to canvass the speeches made in the book of Job, and make it more important that we compare the sentiments in those speeches with other parts of the Bible, that we may know what to approve, and what was erroneous in Job or his friends.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered - See the notes at Job 2:11.

Verse 2

If we assay to commune with thee - Margin, A word. Hebrew - הנסה דבר *dâbâr hanîcâh* "May we attempt a word with thee?" This is a gentle and polite apology at the beginning of his speech - an inquiry whether he would take it as unkind if one should adventure on a remark in the way of argument. Jahn, in characterizing the part which Job's three friends respectively take in the controversy, says: "Eliphaz is superior to the others in discernment and delicacy. He begins by addressing Job mildly; and it is not until irritated by opposition that he reckons him among the wicked."

Wilt thou be grieved? - That is, Wilt thou take it ill? Will it be offensive to you, or weary you, or tire your patience? The word used here (לאה *lâ'âh*) means to labor, to strive, to weary, to exhaust; and hence, to be weary, to try one's patience, to take anything ill. Here it is the language of courtesy, and is designed to introduce the subsequent remarks in the kindest manner. Eliphaz knew that he was about to make observations which might implicate Job, and he introduced them in as kind a manner as possible. There is nothing abrupt or harsh in his beginning. All is courteous in the highest degree, and is a model for debaters.

But who can withhold himself from speaking? - Margin, "Refrain from words." That is, "the subject is so important, the sentiments advanced by Job are so extraordinary, and the principles involved are so momentous, that it is impossible to refrain." There is much delicacy in this. He did not begin to speak merely to make a speech. He professes that be would not have spoken, if he had not been pressed by the importance of the subject, and had not been full of matter. To a great extent, this is a good rule to adopt: not to make a speech unless there are sentiments which weigh upon the mind, and convictions of duty which cannot be repressed.

Verse 3

Behold, thou hast instructed many - That is, thou hast instructed many how they ought to bear trials, and hast delivered important maxims to them on the great subject of the divine government. This is not designed to be irony, or to wound the feelings of Job. It is intended to recall to his mind the lessons which he had inculcated on others in times of calamity, and to show

him how important it was now that he should reduce his own lessons to practice, and show their power in sustaining himself.

Thou hast strengthened the weak hands - That is, thou hast aided the feeble. The hands are the instruments by which we accomplish anything, and when they are weak, it is an indication of helplessness.

Verse 4

Thy words have upholden him that was falling - That is, either falling into sin, or sinking under calamity and trial. The Hebrew will bear either interpretation, but the connection seems to require us to understand it of one who was sinking under the weight of affliction.

The feeble knees - Margin, "bowing." The knees support the frame. If they fail, we are feeble and helpless. Hence, their being weak, is so often used in the Bible to denote imbecility. The sense is, that Job, in the days of his own prosperity, had exhorted others to submit to God; had counselled them in such a manner as actually to give them support, and that the same views should now have sustained him which he had so successfully employed in comforting others.

Verse 5

But now it is come upon thee - That is, calamity; or, the same trial which others have had, and in which thou hast so successfully exhorted and comforted them. A similar sentiment to that which is here expressed, is found in Terence:

Facile omnes, cum valemus, recta consilia aegrotis damus.

And. ii. i. 9.

It toucheth thee - That is, affliction has come to yourself. It is no longer a thing about which you can coolly sit down and reason, and on which you can deliver formal exhortations.

And thou art troubled - Instead of evincing the calm submission which you have exhorted others to do, your mind is now disturbed and restless. You vent your complaints against the day of your birth, and you charge God with injustice. A sentiment resembling this, occurs in Terence, as quoted by Codurcus:

Nonne id flagitium est, te aliis consilium dare,

Foris sapere, tibi non posse te auxiliarier?

Something similar to this not unfrequently occurs. It is an easy thing to give counsel to others, and to exhort them to be submissive in trial. It is easy to utter general maxims, and to suggest passages of Scripture on the

subject of affliction, and even to impart consolation to others; but when trial comes to ourselves, we often fail to realize the power of those truths to console us. Ministers of the gospel are called officially to impart such consolations, and are enabled to do it. But when the trial comes on them, and when they ought by every solemn consideration to be able to show the power of those truths in their own case, it sometimes happens that they evince the same impatience and want of submission which they had rebuked in others; and that whatever truth and power there may have been in their instructions, they themselves little felt their force. It is often necessary that he who is appointed to comfort the afflicted, should be afflicted himself. Then he can "weep with those who weep;" and hence, it is that ministers of the gospel are called quite as much as any other class of people to pass through deep waters. Hence, too, the Lord Jesus became so pre-eminent in suffering, that he might be touched with the feelings of our infirmity, and be qualified to sympathize with us when we are tried; Hebrews 2:14, Hebrews 2:17-18; Hebrews 4:15-16. It is exceedingly important that when they whose office it is to comfort others are afflicted, they should exhibit an example of patience and submission. Then is the time to try their religion; and then they have an opportunity to convince others that the doctrines which they preach are adapted to the condition of weak and suffering man.

Verse 6

Is not this thy fear, thy confidence? - There has been considerable variety in the interpretation of this verse. Dr. Good renders it,

Is thy piety then nothing? thy hope
Thy contidence? or the uprightness of thy ways?

Noyes renders it,

Is not thy fear of God thy hope,
And the uprightness of thy ways the confidence?

Rosenmuller translates it,

Is not in thy piety and integrity of life
Thy confidence and hope?

In the Vulgate it is translated, "Where is thy fear, thy fortitude, thy patience, and the integrity of thy ways?" In the Septuagint, "Is not thy fear founded on folly, and thy hope, and the evil of thy way?"

Castellio translates it,

Nimirum tanturn religionis, quantum expectationis;

Quantum spei, tanturn habebas integritatis morum;

And the idea according to his version is, that he had as much religion as was prompted by the hope of reward; that his piety and integrity were sustained only by his hope, and were not the result of principle; and that of course his religion was purely selfish. If this be the sense, it is designed to be a reproach, and accords with the charge in the question of Satan Job 1:9, "Doth Job fear God for naught?" Rosenmuller adopts the opinion of Ludovicus de Dieu, and explains it as meaning," You seemed to be a man fearing God, and a man of integrity, and you were led hence to cherish high hopes and expectations; but now you perceive that you were deceived. Your piety was not sincere and genuine, for the truly pious do not thus suffer. Remember therefore that no one perishes being innocent." Codurcus renders it, "All thy hope was placed in thy religion, and thy expectation in the rectitude of thy ways; consider now, who perishes being innocent?" The true sentiment of the passage has undoubtedly been expressed by Good, Noyes. and Codurcus. The Hebrew rendered *thy fear* יראתך *yârê'tek* means doubtless *religious fear*, veneration, or piety, and is a word synonymous with εὐλάβεια *eulabeia* εὐσέβεια *eusebeia* religion. The sentiment is, that his confidence or hope was placed in his religion - in his fear of God, his respect and veneration for him, and in reliance on the equity of his government. This had been his stay in times past; and this was the subject which was naturally brought before him then. Eliphaz asks whether he should not put his trust in that God still, and not reproach him as unequal and unjust in his administration.

The uprightness of thy ways - Hebrew, The perfection of thy ways. Note Job 1:1. The idea is, that his hope was founded on the integrity of his life, and on the belief that the upright would be rewarded. The passage may be rendered,

Is not thy confidence and thy expectation
Founded on thy religion,
And on the integrity of thy ways?

This is the general sentiment which Eliphaz proceeds to illustrate and apply. If this was a just principle, it was natural to ask whether the trials of Job did not prove that he had no well grounded reason for such confidence.

Verse 7

Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? - The object of this question is manifestly to show to Job the inconsistency of the

feelings which he had evinced. He claimed to be a righteous man. He had instructed and counselled many others. He had professed confidence in God, and in the integrity of his own ways. It was to have been expected that one with such pretensions would have evinced resignation in the time of trial, and would have been sustained by the recollection of his integrity. The fact, therefore, that Job had thus "fainted," and had given way to impatient expressions, showed that he was conscious that he had not been altogether what he had professed to be. "There must have been," is the meaning of Eliphaz, "something wrong, when such calamities come upon a man, and when his faith gives way in such a manner. It would be contrary to all the analogy of the divine dealings to suppose that such a man as Job had professed to be, could be the subject of overwhelming judgments; for who, I ask, ever perished, being innocent? It is a settled principle of the divine government, that no one ever perishes who is innocent, and that great calamities are a proof of great guilt."

This declaration contains the essence of all the positions held by Eliphaz and his colleagues in this argument. This they considered as so established that no one could call it in question, and on the ground of this they inferred that one who experienced such afflictions, no matter what his professions or his apparent piety had been, could not be a good man. This was a point about which the minds of the friends of Job were settled; and though they seem to have been disposed to concede that some afflictions might happen to good men, yet when sudden and overwhelming calamities such as they now witnessed came upon them, they inferred that there must have been corresponding guilt. Their reasoning on this subject - which runs through the book - perplexed but did not satisfy Job, and was obviously based on a wrong principle - The word "perished" here means the same as cut off, and does not differ much from being overwhelmed with calamity. The whole sentence has a proverbial cast; and the sense is, that when persons were suddenly cut off it proved that they were not innocent. Job, therefore, it was inferred, could not be a righteous man in these unusual and very special trials.

Or where were the righteous cut off? - That is, by heavy judgment; by any special and direct visitation. Eliphaz could not mean that the righteous did not die - for he could not be insensible to that fact; but he must have referred to sudden calamities. This kind of reasoning is common - that when men are afflicted with great and sudden calamities they must be especially

guilty. It prevailed in the time of the Savior, and it demanded all his authority to settle the opposite principle; see Luke 13:1-5. It is that into which people naturally and easily fall; and it required much observation, and long experience, and enlarged views of the divine administration, to draw the true lines on this subject. To a certain extent, and in certain instances, calamity certainly does prove that there is special guilt. Such was the case with the old world that was destroyed by the deluge; such was the case with the cities of the plain; such is the case in the calamities that come upon the drunkard, and such too in the special curse produced by indulgence in licentiousness. But this principle does not run through all the calamities which befall people. A tower may fall on the righteous as well as the wicked; an earthquake may destroy the innocent as well as the guilty; the pestilence sweeps away the holy and the unholy, the profane and the pure, the man who fears God and him who fears him not; and the inference is now seen to be too broad when we infer, as the friends of Job did, that no righteous man is cut off by special calamity, or that great trials demonstrate that such sufferers are less righteous than others are. Judgments are not equally administered in this world, and hence, the necessity for a future world of retribution; see the notes at Luke 13:2-3.

Verse 8

Even as I have seen - Eliphaz appeals to his own observation, that people who had led wicked lives were suddenly cut off. Instances of this kind he might doubtless have observed - as all may have done. But his inference was too broad when he concluded that all the wicked are punished in this manner. It is true that wicked people are thus cut off and perish; but it is not true that all the wicked are thus punished in this life, nor that any of the righteous are not visited with similar calamities. His reasoning was of a kind that is common in the world - that of drawing universal conclusions from premises that are too narrow to sustain them, or from too few carefully observed facts.

They that plow iniquity - This is evidently a proverbial expression; and the sense is, that as people sow they reap. If they sow wheat, they reap wheat; if barley, they reap barley; if tares, they reap tares. Thus, in Proverbs 22:8:

"He that soweth iniquity shall reap also vanity."

So in Hosea 8:7:

"For they have sown the wind,

And they shall reap the whirlwind:
It hath no stalk; the bud shall yield no meal

If so be it yield, strangers shall swallow it up”

Thus, in the Persian adage:

“He that planteth thorns shall not gather roses.”
Dr. Good.
So Aeschylus:
Ἄτης ἄρουρα Θάνατον ἐκκαρπίζεται.
Atēs aroura thanaton ekkarpizetai The field of wrong brings forth death as its fruit.

The meaning of Eliphaz is, that people who form plans of wickedness must reap appropriate fruits. They cannot expect that an evil life will produce ultimate happiness.

sa40

Verse 9

By the blast of God - That is, by the judgment of God. The figure is taken from the hot and fiery wind, which, sweeping over a field of grain, dries it up and destroys it. In like manner Eliphaz says the wicked perish before God.

And by the breath of his nostrils - By his anger. The Scripture often speaks of breathing out indignation and wrath; Acts 9:1; Psalm 27:12; 2 Samuel 22:16; Psalm 18:15; Psalm 33:6; notes at Isaiah 11:4; notes at Isaiah 30:28; notes at Isaiah 33:11. The figure was probably taken from the violent breathing which is evinced when the mind is under any strong emotion, especially anger. It refers here to any judgment by which God cuts off the wicked, but especially to sudden calamity - like a tempest or the pestilence.

Verse 10

The roaring of the lion - This is evidently a continuation of the argument in the preceding verses, and Eliphaz is stating what had occurred under his own observation. The expressions have much of a proverbial cast, and are designed to convey in strong poetic language what he supposed usually occurred. There can be no reasonable doubt here that he refers to men in these verses, for

(1) It is not true that the lion is destroyed in this manner. No more frequent calamity comes upon him than upon other animals, and perhaps he is less frequently overcome than others.

(2) Such a supposition only would make the remarks of Eliphaz pertinent to his argument. He is speaking of the divine government in regard to wicked people, and he uses this language to convey the idea that they are often destroyed.

(3) It is common in the Scriptures, as in all Oriental writings, and indeed in Greek and Roman poetry, to compare unjust, cruel, and rapacious men with wild animals; see the notes at Psalm 10:9; Psalm 58:6.

Eliphaz, therefore, here by the use of the words rendered lion, means to say that men of savage temper, and cruel dispositions, and untamed ferocity, were cut off by the judgments of God. It is remarkable that he employs so many words to designate the lion in these two verses. No less than five are employed, all of them probably denoting originally some special and striking characteristics of the lion. It is also an illustration of the copiousness of the Hebrew language in this respect, and is a specimen of the custom of speaking in Arabia. The Arabic language is so copious that the Arabs boast that they have four hundred terms by which to designate the lion. A large part of them are, indeed, figurative expressions, derived from some quality of the animal, but they show a much greater copiousness in the language than can be found in Western dialects. The words used here by Eliphaz are about all the terms by which the "lion" is designated in the Scriptures. They are אריה *'aryêh* שחל *shachal* כפיר *kephîyr* ליש *layîsh* and לביא *lâbîy'* The word שחץ *shachats* elations, pride, is given to the lion, Job 28:8; Job 41:34, from his proud gait; and perhaps the word אריאל *'ărîy'êl* 1 Samuel 17:10; 1 Chronicles 11:22. But Eliphaz has exhausted the usual epithets of the lion in the Hebrew language. It may be of some interest to inquire, in a few words, into the meaning of those which he has used.

The roaring of the lion - The word used here (אריה *'aryêh*) or in a more usual form (ארי *'ărîy*), is from, ארה *'ârâh* to pull, to pluck, and is probably given to the lion as the puller in pieces, on account of the mode in which he devours his prey, Bochart, however, contends that the name is not from, ארה, because, says he, the lion does not bite or crop his food like grass,

which, he says, the word properly means, but is from the verb ראה *râ'âh* to see, because, says he, the lion is the most keen-sighted of the animals; or rather from the fire of his eyes - the terror which the glance of his eye inspires. So the Greeks derive the word lion, λέοντα *leonta* from λάω *laō* to see. See Beehart, Hieroz. Lib. iii. c. 1, p. 715.

The voice of the fierce lion - The word here translated "fierce lion" (שׁחל *shîchal*) is from שׁחל *shachal* to roar, and hence, given for an obvious reason to a lion. Bochart understands by it the swarthy lion of Syria; the lion which the Arabians call *adlamon* This lion, says he, is dark and dingy. The usual color of the lion is yellow, but Oppian says that the lion in Aethiopia is sometimes found of a dark color, μελανόχροος *melanochroos* see Bochart, Hieroz. Lib. i. c. 1, p. 717,718.

The teeth of the young lions - The word used here, כפיר *kephîyr* means a "young lion already weaned, and beginning to hunt for prey." - Gesenius. It thus differs from the גור *gûr* which means a whelp, still under the care of the dam; see Ezekiel 19:2-3; compare Bochart, Hieroz. Lib. iii. c. 1, p. 714. Some expression is here evidently to be understood that shall be applicable to the voice, or the roaring of the lion. Noyes supplies the words, "are silenced." The words "are broken" can be applicable only to the teeth of the young lions. It is unnatural to say that the "roaring" and the "voice" are broken. The sense is, that the lion roars in vain, and that calamity and destruction come notwithstanding his growl; and as applied to men, it means that men who resemble the lion are disappointed and punished.

Verse 11

The old lion - The word used here, ליש *layîsh* denotes a lion, "so called," says Gesenius," from his strength and bravery," or, according to Urnbreit, the lion in the strength of his old ago; see an examination of the word in Bochart, Hieroz. P. i. Lib. iii. c. 1, p. 720.

Perisheth for lack of prey - Not withstanding his strength and power. That is, such a thing sometimes occurs. Eliphaz could not maintain that it always happened. The meaning seems to be, that as the strength of the lion was no security that he would not perish for want, so it was with men who resembled the lion in the strength of mature age.

And the stout lion's whelps - The word here rendered "stout lion," לביא *lâbîy'* is probably derived from the obsolete root לבא *lâbâ'* "to roar," and it is given to the lion on account of his roaring. Bochart, Hieroz. P. i. Lib. iii. c. 1. p. 719, supposes that the word means a lioness. These words complete

the description of the lion, and the sense is, that the lion in no condition, or whatever name indicative of strength might be given to it, bad power to resist God when he came forth for its destruction. Its roaring, its strength, its teeth, its rage, were all in vain.

Are scattered abroad - That is, when the old lion is destroyed, the young ones flee, and are unable to offer resistance. So it is with men. When the divine judgments come upon them, they have no power to make successful resistance. God has them under control, and he comes forth at his pleasure to restrain and subdue them, as he does the wild beasts of the desert, though so fearful and formidable.

Verse 12

Now a thing - To confirm his views, Eliphaz appeals to a vision of a most remarkable character which he says he had had on some former occasion on the very point under consideration. The object of the vision was, to show that mortal man could not be more just than God, and that such was the purity of the Most High, that he put no confidence comparatively even in the angels. The design for which this is introduced here is, evidently, to reprove what he deemed the unfounded self-confidence of Job. He supposed that he had been placing an undue reliance on his own integrity; that he had not a just view of the infinite holiness of God, and had not been aware of the true state of his own heart. The highest earthly excellency, is the meaning of Eliphaz, fades away before God, and furnishes no ground for self-reliance. It is so imperfect, so feeble, so far from what it should be, that it is no wonder that a God so holy and exalted should disregard it: He designed also, by describing this vision, to reprove Job for seeming to be more wise than his Maker in arraigning him for his dealings, and uttering the language of complaint. The word "thing" here means a word (Hebrew), a communication, a revelation.

Was secretly brought to me - Margin, "by stealth." The Hebrew word (גנב *gânab*) means "to steal," to take away by stealth, or secretly. Here it means, that the oracle was brought to him as it were by stealth. It did not come openly and plainly, but in secrecy and silence - as a thief approaches a dwelling. An expression similar to this occurs in Lucian, in Amor. p. 884, as quoted by Schultens, κλεπτομένη λαλιὰ καί ψιθυρισμός *kleptomenē lalia kai psithurismos* And mine ear received a little thereof - Dr. Good translates this, "And mine ear received a whisper along with it." Noyes, "And mine ear caught a whisper thereof." The Vulgate, "And my ear received secretly

the pulsations of its whisper" - *venas susurri ejus*. The word rendered "a little," שׁמץ *shemets* occurs only here and in Job 26:14, where it is also rendered little. It means, according to Gesenius, a transient sound rapidly uttered and swiftly passing away. Symm. ψιθυρισμός *psithurismos* - a whisper. According to Castell, it means a sound confused and feeble, such as one receives when a man is speaking in a hurried manner, and when he cannot catch all that is said. This is probably the sense here. Eliphaz means to say that he did not get all that might have been said in the vision. It occurred in such circumstances, and what was said was delivered in such a manner, that he did not hear it all distinctly.

But he beard an important sentiment, which he proceeds to apply to the case of Job. - It has been made a question whether Eliphaz really had such a vision, or whether he only supposed such a case, and whether the whole representation is not poetic. The fair construction is, that he had had such a vision. In such a supposition there is nothing inconsistent with the mode in which the will of God was made known in ancient times; and in the sentiments uttered there is nothing inconsistent with what might have been spoken by a celestial visitant on such an occasion. All that was spoken was in accordance with the truth everywhere revealed in the Scriptures, though Eliphaz perverted it to prove that Job was insincere and hypocritical. The general sentiment in the oracle was, that man was not pure and holy compared with his Maker; that no one was free from guilt in his sight; that there was no virtue in man in which God could put entire confidence; and that, therefore, all were subjected to trials and to death. But this general sentiment he proceeds to apply to Job, and regards it as teaching, that since he was overwhelmed with such special afflictions, there must have been some secret sin of which he was guilty, which was the cause of his calamities.

Verse 13

In thoughts - Amidst the tumultuous and anxious thoughts which occur in the night. The Hebrew word rendered thoughts, (שׂעפים *śâʿîphîym*), means thoughts which divide and distract the mind.

From the visions of the night - On the meaning of the word visions, see the notes at Isaiah 1:1. This was a common mode in which the will of God was made known in ancient times. For an extended description of this

method of communicating the will of God, the reader may consult my Introduction to Isaiah, Section 7.

When deep sleep falleth on men - The word here rendered deep sleep, תרדמה *tardêmâh* commonly denotes a profound repose or slumber brought upon man by divine agency. So Schultens in loc. It is the word used to describe the "deep sleep" which God brought upon Adam when he took from his side a rib to form Eve, Genesis 2:21; and that, also, which came upon Abraham, when an horror of great darkness fell upon him; Genesis 15:12. It means here profound repose, and the vision which he saw was at that solemn hour when the world is usually locked in slumber. Umbreit renders this, "In the time of thoughts, before the night-visions," and supposes that Eliphaz refers to the time that was especially favorable to meditation and to serious contemplation before the time of sleep and of dreams. In support of this use of the preposition מן *mîn* he appeals to Haggai 2:16, and Noldius Concord. Part. p. 546.

Our common version, however, has probably preserved the true sense of the passage. It is impossible to conceive anything more sublime than this whole description. It was midnight. There was solitude and silence all around. At that fearful hour this vision came, and a sentiment was communicated to Eliphaz of the utmost importance, and fitted to make the deepest possible impression. The time; the quiet; the form of the image; its passing along, and then suddenly standing still; the silence, and then the deep and solemn voice - all were fitted to produce the proroundest awe. So graphic and so powerful is this description, that it would be impossible to read it - and particularly at midnight and alone - without something of the feeling of awe and horror which Eliphaz says it produced on his mind. It is a description which for power has probably never been equalled, though an attempt to describe an apparition from the invisible world has been often made. Virgil has attempted such a description, which, though exceedingly beautiful, is far inferior to this of the Sage of Teman. It is the description of the appearance of the wife of Aeneas:

Infelix simulacrum atque ipsius umbra Crousae
Visa mihi ante oculos, et nora major imago.
Obstupui, steteruntque comae, et vox faucibus haesit.
Aeneid ii. 772.
- "At length she hears,
And sudden through the shades of night appears;

Appears no more Creusa, nor my wife,

But a pale spectre, larger than the life.

Aghast, astonished, and struck dumb with fear,

I stood: like bristles rose my stiffened hair."
Dryden

In the poems of Ossian, there are several descriptions of apparitions or ghosts, probably more sublime than are to be found in any other uninspired writings. One of the most magnificent of these, is that of the Spirit of Loda, which I will copy, in order that it may be compared with the one before us. "The wan cold moon rose in the east. Sleep dcscended on the youths. Their blue helmets glitter to the beam; the fading fire decays. But sleep did not rest on the king. He rose in the midst of his arms, and slowly ascended the hill, to behold the flame of Sarno's tower. The flame was dim and distant: the moon hid her red flame in the east. A blast came from the mountain; on its wings was the Spirit or loda. He came to his place in his terrors, and shook his dusky spear. His eyes appear like flames in his dark face; his voice is like distant thunder. Fingal advanced his spear amid the night, and raised his voice on high. ‹Son of Night, retire: call thy winds, and fly! Why dost thou come to my presence with thy shadowy arms? Do I fear thy gloomy form, spirit of dismal Loda? Weak is thy shield of clouds; feeble is that meteor, thy sword! The blast rolls them together; and thou thyself art lost. Fly from my presence, Son of Night! Call thy winds and fly! ‹ ‹Dost thou force me from my place? ‹ replied the hollow voice. ‹The people bend before me. I turn the battle in the field of the brave. I look on the nations, and they vanish; my nostrils pour the blast of death. I come abroad on the winds; the tempests are before my face, but my dwelling is calm above the clouds; the fields of my rest are pleasant.'" Compare also, the description of the Ghost in Hamlet.

Verse 14

Fear came upon me - Margin, "Met me." The Chaldee Paraphrase renders this, "a tempest," זיקא . The Septuagint, φρίκη *frikē* - "shuddering," or "horror." The sense is, that he became greatly alarmed at the vision.

Which made all my bones to shake - Margin, as in Hebrew, the multitude of my bones. A similar image is employed by Virgil,

Obstupuere auimis, gelidusque per ima cucurrit
Ossa tremor;
Aeneid ii. 120.

"A cold tremor ran through all their bones."

Verse 15

Then a spirit passed before my face - He does not intimate whether it was the spirit of a man, or an angel who thus appeared. The belief in such apparitions was common in the early ages, and indeed has prevailed at all times. No one can demonstrate that God could not communicate his will in such a manner as this, or by a messenger deputed from his immediate presence to impart valuable truth to people.

The hair of my flesh stood up - This is an effect which is known often to be produced by fear. Sometimes the hair is made to turn white almost in an instant, as an effect of sudden alarm; but usually the effect is to make it stand on end. Seneca uses language remarkably similar to this in describing the effect of fear, in Hercule Oetoeo:

Vagus per artus errat excussos tremor;
Erectus horret crinis. Impulsis adhuc
Star terror animis. et cor attonitum salit,
Pavidumque trepidis palpitat venis jecur.

So Virgil,

Steteruntque comae, et vox faucibus haesit.
Aeneid ii. 774.

See also Aeneid iii. 48, iv. 289. So also Aeneid xii. 868:

Arrectaeque horrore comae.

A similar description of the effect of fear is given in the Ghost's speech to Hamlet:

"But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood.
Make thy two eyes like stars, start from their spheres,
Thy knotty and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine."

The fact here referred to - that fear or fright; causes the hair to stand on end - is too well established, and too common to admit a doubt. The cause may be, that sudden fear has the effect to drive the blood to the heart, as the seat of vitality, and the extremities are left cold, and the skin thus contracts, and the effect is to raise the hair.

Verse 16

It stood still - It took a fixed position and looked on me. It at first glided by, or toward him, then stood in an immovable position, as if to attract his attention, and to prepare him for the solemn announcement which it was about to make. This was the point in which most horror would be felt. We should be less alarmed at anything which a strange messenger should say, than to have him stand and fix his eyes steadily and silently upon us. Hence, Horatius, in "Hamlet," tortured by the imperturbable silence of the Ghost, earnestly entreated it to give him relief by speaking.

Hor. - What art thou that usurp'st this time of night,
Together with that fair and warlike form
In which the majesty of buried Denmark
Did sometime march? By heaven, I charge thee, speak.
Mar. - It is offended.
Ber. - See: It stalks away.
Hor. - Stay; speak: speak, I charge thee speak.
Act i. Sc. i.
Re-enter Ghost.
Hor. - But, soft; behold! lo, where it comes again!
I'll cross it, though it blast me. - Stay, illusion!
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,

Speak to me:

If there be any good thing to be done,

That may to thee do ease, and grace to me,

Speak to me:

Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,

If thou art privy to thy country‘s fate.

O speak!

Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life

Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,

For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,

Speak of it; stay, and speak.
Act i. Sc. i.
Enter Ghost
Hor. - Look, my lord; it comes!
Ham. - Angels and ministers of grace, defend us!
Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damn‘d,
Bring with thee airs from heaven, or blasts from hell,

Be thy intents wicked or charitable,

Thou com‘st in such a questionable shape,

That I will speak to thee: I‘ll call thee, Hamlet,

King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me;

Let me not burst in ignorance!
Act i: Sc. iv.

But I could not discern the form thereof - This might have arisen from fear, or from the darkness of the night, or because the spirit was not distinct enough in its outline to enable him to do it. There is here just the kind of obscurity which is essential to the sublime, and the statement of this circumstance is a master-stroke in the poet. A less perfect imagination would have attempted to describe the form of the spectre, and would have given an account of its shape, and eyes, and color. But none of these are here hinted at. The subject is left so that the imagination is most deeply impressed, and the whole scene has the aspect of the highest sublimity.

Noyes very improperly renders this, “Its face I could not discern.” But the word used, מראה *mar'eh* does not mean “face” here merely; it means the form, figure, aspect, of the spectre.

An image was before mine eyes - Some form; some appearance was before me, whose exact figure I could not mark or describe.

There was silence - Margin, “I heard a still voice.” So Rosenmuller says that the word here, דממה *demâmâh* does not mean silence, but a gentle breeze, or air - *auram lenem* - such as Elijah heard after the tempest had gone by, and when God spoke to him, 1 Kings 19:12-13. Grotins supposes that it means here the בת־קול *bath qôl* or “daughter of the voice,” of which the Jewish Robbins speak so often - the still and gentle voice in which God spoke to people. The word used דממה *demâmâh* usually means silence, stillness, as of the winds after a storm, a calm, Psalm 107:29. The Septuagint renders it, “I heard a gentle breeze, αυραν *auran* and a voice,” καί φωνὴν *kai phōnēn* But it seems to me that the common reading is preferable. There was stillness - a solemn, awful silence, and then he heard a voice impressively speaking. The stillness was designed to fix the attention, and to prepare the mind for the sublime announcement which was to be made.

Verse 17

Shall mortal man - Or, shall feeble man. The idea of “mortal” is not necessarily implied in the word used here, אנוש *'ĕnôsh* It means man; and is usually applied to the lower classes or ranks of people; see the notes at Isaiah 8:1. The common opinion in regard to this word is, that it is derived from אנשׁ *'ânash* to be sick, or ill at ease; and then desperate, or incurable - as of a disease or wound; Jeremiah 15:18; Micah 1:9; Job 34:6. Gesenius (Lex) calls this derivation in question; but if it be the correct idea, then the word used here originally referred to man as feeble, and as liable to sickness and calamity. I see no reason to doubt that the common idea is correct, and that it refers to man as weak and feeble. The other word used here to denote man (גבר *geber*) is given to him on account of his strength. The two words, therefore, embrace man whether considered as feeble or strong - and the idea is, that none of the race could be more pure than God.

Be more just than God - Some expositors have supposed that the sense of this expression in the Hebrew is, “Can man be pure before God, or in the sight of God?” They allege that it could not have been made a question whether man could be more pure than God, or more just than his Maker.

Such is the view presented of the passage by Rosenmuller, Good, Noyes, and Umbreit:

"Shall mortal man be just before God?

Shall man be pure before his Maker?"

In support of this view, and this use of the Hebrew preposition מ (*m*), Rosenmuller appeals to Jeremiah 51:5; Numbers 32:29; Ezekiel 34:18. This, however, is not wholly satisfactory. The more literal translation is that which occurs in the common version, and this accords with the Vulgate and the Chaldee. If so understood, it is designed to repress and reprove the pride of men, which arraigns the equity of the divine government, and which seems to be wiser and better than God. Thus, understood, it would be a pertinent reproof of Job, who in his complaint Job 3 had seemed to be wiser than God. He had impliedly charged him with injustice and lack of goodness. All people who complain against God, and who arraign the equity and goodness of the divine dispensations, claim to be wiser and better than he is. They would have ordered flyings more wisely, and in a better manner. They would have kept the world from the disorders and sins which actually exist, and would have made it pure and happy. How pertinent, therefore, was it to ask whether man could be more pure or just than his Maker! And how pertinent was the solemn question propounded in the hearing of Eliphaz by the celestial messenger - a question that seems to have been originally proposed in view of the complaints and murmurs of a self-confident race!

Verse 18

Behold, he put no trust in his servants - These are evidently the words of the oracle that appeared to Eliphaz; see Schultens, in loc. The word servants here refers to angels; and the idea is, that God was so pure that he did not confide even in the exalted holiness of angels - meaning that their holiness was infinitely inferior to his. The design is to state that God had the highest possible holiness, such as to render the holiness of all others, no matter how exalted, as nothing - as all lesser lights are as nothing before the glory of the sun. The Chaldee renders this, "Lo, in his servants, the prophets, he does not confide;" but the more correct reference is undoubtedly to the angels.

And his angels he charged with folly - Margin, Or," Nor in his angels, in whom he put light." The different rendering in the text and in the margin, has arisen from the supposed ambiguity of the word employed here - תהלה

tohŏlâh It is a word which occurs nowhere else, and hence, it is difficult to determine its true signification. Walton renders it, *gloriatio* glorying; Jerome, *pravitas*, wickedness; the Septuagint, σκολιόν *skolion* fault, blemish; Dr. Good. default, or defection; Noyes, frailty. Gesenius says that the word is derived from הלל *hâlăl* (No. 4), to be foolish. So also Kimchi explains it. According to this, the idea is that of foolishness - that is, they are far inferior to God in wisdom; or, as the word folly in the Scriptures is often synonymous with sin, it might mean that their purity was so far inferior to his as to appear like impurity and sin. The essential idea is, that even the holiness of angels was not to be compared with God. It is not that they were polluted and unholy, for, in their measure, they are perfect; but it is that their holiness was as nothing compared with the infinite perfection of God. It is to be remembered that a part of the angels had sinned, and they had shown that their integrity was not to be confided in; and whatever might be the holiness of a creature, it was possible to conceive that he might sin. But no such idea could for a moment enter the mind in regard to God. The object of this whole argument is to show, that if confidence could not be reposed in the angels, and if all their holiness was as nothing before God, little confidence could be placed in man; and that it was presumption for him to sit in judgment on the equity of the divine dealings.

Verse 19

How much less - (אף *'aph*). This particle has the general sense of addition, accession, especially of something more important;" yea more, besides, even." Gesenius. The meaning here is, "how much more true is this of man!" He puts no confidence in his angels; he charges them with frailty; how much more strikingly true must this be of man! It is not merely, as our common translation would seem to imply, that he put much less confidence in man than in angels; it is, that all he had said must be more strikingly true of man, who dwelt in so frail and humble a habitation.

In them that dwell in houses of clay - In man. The phrase "houses of clay" refers to the body made of dust. The sense is, that man, from the fact that he dwells in such a tabernacle, is far inferior to the pure spirits that surround the throne of God, and much more liable to sin. The body is represented as a temporary tent, tabernacle, or dwelling for the soul. That dwelling is soon to be taken down, and its tenant, the soul, to be removed to other abodes. So Paul 2 Corinthians 5:1 speaks of the body as ἡ ἐπίγειος ἡμῶν οἰκία τοῦ σκήνους *hē epigeios hēmōn oikia tou skēnous* - "our earthly

house of this tabernacle." So Plato speaks of it as γηΐνον σκῆνος *gēinon skēnos* - an earthly tent; and so Aristophanes (Av. 587), among other contemptuous expressions applied to people, calls them πλάσματα πηλοῦ *plasmata pēlou* "vessels of clay." The idea in the verse before us is beautiful, and as affecting as it is beautiful. A house of clay (חמר *chômer*) was little fitted to bear the extremes of heat and cold, of storm and sunshine, of rain, and frost, and snow, and would soon crumble and decay. It must be a frail and temporary dwelling. It could not endure the changes of the seasons and the lapse of years like a dwelling of granite or marble. So with our bodies. They can bear little. They are frail, infirm, and feeble. They are easily prostrated, and soon fall back to their native dust. How can they who dwelt in such edifices, be in any way compared with the Infinite and Eternal God?

Whose foundation is in the dust - A house to be firm and secure should be founded on a rock; see Matthew 7:25. The figure is kept up here of comparing man with a house; and as a house that is built on the sand or the dust may be easily washed away (compare Matthew 7:26-27), and could not be confided in, so it was with man. He was like such a dwelling; and no more confidence could be reposed in him than in such a house.

Which are crushed - They are broken in pieces, trampled on, destroyed (דכא *dâkâ'*), by the most insignificant objects.

Before the moth - See Isaiah 50:9, note; Isaiah 51:8, note. The word moth (עֹשׁ *ʿâsh*), Greek σής *sēs* Vulgate, tinea, denotes properly an insect which flies by night, and particularly that which attaches itself to woolen cloth and consumes it. It is possible, however, that the word here denotes the moth-worm. This "moth-worm is one state of the creature. which first is inclosed in an egg, and thence issues in the form of a worm; after a time, it quits the form of a worm, to assume that of the complete state of the insect, or the moth." Calmet. The comparison here, therefore, is not that of a moth flying against a house to overset it, nor of the moth consuming man as it does a garment, but it is that of a feeble worm that preys upon man and destroys him; and the idea is, that the most feeble of all objects may crush him. The following remarks from Niebuhr (Reisebeschreibung von Arabien, S. 133), will serve to illustrate this passage, and show that so feeble a thing as a worm may destroy human life. "There is in Yemen, in India, and on the coasts of the South Sea, a common sickness caused by the Guinea, or nerve-worm, known to European physicians by the name of vena Medinensis. It is

supposed in Yemen that this worm is ingested from the bad water which the inhabitants of those countries are under a necessity of using. Many of the Arabians on this account take the precaution to strain the water which they drink. If anyone has by accident swallowed an egg of this worm, no trace of it is to be seen until it appears on the skin; and the first indication of it there, is the irritation which is caused. On our physician, a few days before his death, five of these worms made their appearance, although we had been more than five months absent from Arabia. On the island of Charedsch, I saw a French officer, whose name was Le Page, who after a long and arduous journey, which he had made on foot, from Pondicherry to Surat, through the heart of India, found the traces of such a worm in him, which he endeavored to extract from his body.

He believed that be had swallowed it when drinking the waters of Mahratta. The worm is not dangerous, if it can be drawn from the body without being broken. The Orientals are accustomed, as soon as the worm makes its appearance through the skin, to wind it up on a piece of straw, or of dry wood. It is finer than a thread, and is from two to three feet in length. The winding up of the worm frequently occupies a week; and no further inconvenience is experienced, than the care which is requisite not to break it. If, however, it is broken, it draws itself back into the body, and then becomes dangerous. Lameness, gangrene, or the loss of life itself is the result." See the notes at Isaiah referred to above. The comparison of man with a worm, or an insect, on account of his feebleness and shortness of life, is common in the sacred writings, and in the Classics. The following passage from Pindar, quoted by Schultens, hints at the same idea:

Ἐπάμεροι, τί δέ τις; τί δ᾽ οὔ τις;

Σκιᾶς ὄναρ ἄνθρωποι.

Epameroi ti de tis ti d' ou tis Skias onar anthrōpoi of a day! What is anyone? What is he not? Men are the dream of a shadow!" - The idea in the passage before us is, that people are exceedingly frail, and that in such creatures no confidence can be placed. How should such a creature, therefore, presume to arraign the wisdom and equity of the divine dealings? How can he be more just or wise than God?

Verse 20

They are destroyed from morning to evening - Margin, "beaten in pieces." This is nearer to the Hebrew. The phrase "from morning to evening" means between the morning and the evening; that is, they live

scarcely a single day; see the notes at Isaiah 38:12. The idea is, not the continuance of the work of destruction from morning to evening; but that man‘s life is excecdingly short, so short that he scarce seems to live from morning to night. What a beautiful expression, and how true! How little qualified is such a being to sit in judgment on the doings of the Most High!

They perish forever - Without being restored to life. They pass away, and nothing is ever seen of them again!

Without any regarding it - Without its being noticed. How strikingly true is this! What a narrow circle is affected by the death of a man, and how soon does even that circle cease to be affected! A few relatives and friends feel it and weep over the loss; but the mass of men are unconcerned. It is like taking a grain of sand from the sea-shore, or a drop of water from the ocean. There is indeed one less, but the place is soon supplied, and the ocean rolls on its tumultuous billows as though none had been taken away. So with human life. The affairs of people will roll on; the world will be as busy, and active, and thoughtless as though we had not been; and soon, O how painfully soon to human pride, will our names be forgotten! The circle of friends will cease to weep, and then cease to remember us. The last memorial that we lived, will be gone. The house that we built, the bed on which we slept, the counting-room that we occupied, the monuments that we raised, the books that we made, the stone that we directed to be placed over our graves, will all be gone; and the last memento that we ever lived, will have faded away! How vain is man! How vain is pride! How foolish is ambition! How important the announcement that there is another world, where we may live on forever!

Verse 21

Doth not their excellency … - Dr. Good renders this, “Their fluttering round is over with them,” by a very forced construction of the passage. Translators and expositors have been very much divided in opinion as to its meaning; but the sense seems to be, that whatever is excellent in people is torn away or removed. Their excellence does not keep them from death, and they are taken off before they are truly wise. The word “excellency” here refers not only to moral excellency or virtue, but everything in which they excel others. Whatever there is in them of strength, or virtue, or influence, is removed. The word used here יתר *yether* means, literally, something hanging over or redundant (from יתר *yâthar* to hang over, be redundant, or to remain), and hence, it means abundance or remainder, and then that

which exceeds or abounds. It is thus applied to any distinguished virtue or excellency, as that which exceeds the ordinary limits or bounds. Men perish; and however eminent they may have been, they are soon cut off, and vanish away. The object here is to show how weak, and frail, and unworthy of confidence are people even in their most elevated condition.

They die, even without wisdom - That is, before they become truly wise. The object is to show, that people are so short-lived compared with angels, that they have no opportunity to become distinguished for wisdom. Their days are few; and however careful may be their observation, before they have had time to become truly wise they are hurried away. They are, therefore, wholly disqualified to sit in judgment on the doings of God, and to arraign, as Job had done, the divine wisdom.

Here closes the oracle which was addressed to Eliphaz. It is a description of unrivaled sublimity. In the sentiments that were addressed to Eliphaz, there is nothing that is contradictory to the other communications which God has made to people, or to what is taught by reason. Every reader of this passage must feel that the thoughts are singularly sublime, and that they are such as are adapted to make a deep impression on the mind. The error in Eliphaz consisted in the application which he makes of them to Job, and in the inference which he draws, that he must have been a hypocrite. This inference is drawn in the following chapter. As the oracle stands here, it is pertinent to the argument which Eliphaz had commenced, and just fitted to furnish a reproof to Job for the irreverent manner in which he had spoken, and the complaints which he had brought Job 3 against the dealings of God. Let us learn from the oracle:

(1) That man cannot be more just than God; and let this be an abiding principle of our lives;

(2) Not to complain at his dispensations, but to confide in his superior wisdom and goodness;

(3) That our opportunities of observation, and our rank in existence, are as nothing compared with those of the angels, who are yet so inferior to God as to be charged with folly;

(4) That our foundation is in the dust, and that the most insignificant object may sweep us away; and

(5) That in these circumstances humility becomes us.

Our proper situation is in the dust; and whatever calamities may befall us, we should confide in God, and feel that he is qualified to direct our affairs, and the affairs of the universe.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

Call now - The expressions used here, as Noyes has well observed, seem to be derived from the law, where the word "call" denotes the language of the complainant, and answer that of the defendant. According to this, the meaning of the words "call now" is, in jus voca: that is, call the Deity to account, or bring an action against him: or more properly, enter into an argument or litigation, as before a tribunal; see the notes at Isaiah 41:1, where similar language occurs.

If there be any that will answer thee - If there is anyone who will respond to thee in such a trial. Noyes renders this, "See if He will answer thee;" that is, "See if the Deity will condescend to enter into a judicial conroversy with thee, and give an account of his dealings toward thee." Dr. Good renders it, "Which of these can come forward to thee; that is, "Which of these weakly, ephemeral, perishing insects - which of these nothings can render thee any assistance?" The meaning is probably, "Go to trial, if you can find any respondent; if there is any one willing to engage in such a debate; and let the matter be fairly adjudicated and determined. Let an argument be entered into before a competent tribunal, and the considerations pro and con be urged on the point now under consideration." The desire of Eliphaz was, that there should be a fair investigation, where all that could be said on one side or the other of the question would be urged, and where there would be a decision of the important point in dispute. He evidently felt that Job would be foiled in the argument before whomsoever it should be conducted, and whoever might take up the opposite side; and hence, he says that he could get no one of "the saints" to assist him in the argument. In the expression, "if there be any that will answer thee," he may mean to intimate that he would find no one who would be willing even to go into an investigation of the subject. The case was so plain, the views of Job were so obviously wrong, the arguments for the opinion of Eliphaz were so obvious, that he doubted whether anyone could be found who would be willing to make it the occasion of a set and formal trial, as if there could be any doubt about it.

And to which of the saints wilt thou turn? - Margin, as in Hebrew "look." That is, to which of them wilt thou look to be an advocate for such sentiments, or which of them would be willing to go into an argument on so

plain a subject? Grotins supposes that Eliphaz, having boasted that he had produced a divine revelation in his favor Job 4, now calls upon Job to produce, if he can, something of the same kind in his defense, or to see if there were any of the heavenly spirits who would give a similar revelation in his favor. The word here rendered "saints" (קדֹשִׁים *qôdeshîym*) means properly those who are sanctified or holy; and it may be either applied to holy men, or to angels. It is generally supposed that it here refers to angels. So Schultens, Rosenmuller, Noyes, Good, and others, understand it. The word is often used in this sense in the Scriptures. So the Septuagint understands it here - ἢ εἴτινα ἀγγέλων ἁγίων ὄψῃ *ē eitina angelōn hagiōn opsē* Such is probably its meaning; and the sense of the passage is, "Call now upon anyone, and you will find none willing to be the advocate of such sentiments as you have urged. No holy beings - human beings or angels - would defend them." By this, probably, Eliphaz designed to show Job that he differed from all holy being, and that his views were not those of a truly pious man. If he could find no one, either among holy angels or pious men, to be the advocate of his opinions, it followed that he must be in error.

Verse 2

For wrath killeth the foolish man - That is, the wrath of God. The word foolish here is used as synonymous with wicked, because wickedness is supreme folly. The general proposition here is, that the wicked are cut off, and that they are overtaken with heavy calamities in this life. In proof of this, Eliphaz appeals in the following verses to his own observation: The implied inference is, that Job, having had all his possessions taken away, and having been overwhelmed with unspeakably great personal calamities, was to be regarded as having been a great sinner. Some suppose, however, that the word "wrath" here relates to the indignation or the repining of the individual himself, and that the reference is to the fact that such wrath or repining preys upon the spirit, and draws down the divine vengeance. This is the view of Schultens, and of Noyes. But it seems more probable that Eliphaz means to state the proposition, that the wrath of God burns against the wicked, and that the following verses are an illustration of this sentiment, derived from his own observation.

And envy - Margin, "indignation." Jerome, invidia, envy. Septuagint ζῆλος *zēlos* Castellio, severitas ac vehementia. The Hebrew word קנאה *qîn'âh* means jealousy, envy, ardor, zeal. It may be applied to any strong affection of the mind; any fervent, glowing, and burning emotion. Gesenius

supposes it means here envy, as excited by the prosperity of others. To me it seems that the connection requires us to understand it of wrath, or indignation, as in Deuteronomy 29:20; Psalm 79:5. As applied to God, it often means his jealousy, or his anger, when the affections of people are placed on other objects than himself; Numbers 25:11; Zephaniah 1:18, et al.

Slayeth the silly one - Good and Noyes render this, "the weak man." Jerome, parvulum, the little one. The Septuagint, πεπλανημένον *peplanēmenon* the erring. Walton, ardelionem, the busy-body. The Hebrew word פתה *poteh* is from פתה *pâthâh* to open, go expand; and hence, the participleis applied to one who opens his lips, or whose mouth is open; that is, a garrulous person, Proverbs 20:19; and also to one who is open-hearted, frank, ingenuous, unsuspicious; and hence, one who is easily influenced by others, or whose heart may be easily enticed. Thus, it comes to mean one who is simple and foolish. In this sense it is used here, to denote one who is so simple and foolish as to be drawn aside by weak arguments and unfounded opinions. I have no doubt that Eliphaz meant, by insinuation, to apply this to Job, as being a weak-minded man, for having allowed the views which he entertained to make such an impression on his mind, and for having expressed himself as he had done. The proposition is general; but it would be easy to undertand how he intended it to be applied.

Verse 3

I have seen the foolish - The wicked. To confirm the sentiment which he had just advanced, Eliphaz appeals to his own observation, and says that though the wicked for a time seem to be prosperous, yet he had observed that they were soon overtaken with calamity and cut down. He evidently means that prosperity was no evidence of the divine favor; but that when it had continued for a little time, and was then withdrawn, it was proof that the man who had been prospered was at heart a wicked man. It was easy to understated that he meant that this should be applied to Job, who, though he had been favored with temporary prosperity, was now revealed to be at heart a wicked man. The sentiment here advanced by Eliphaz, as the result of his observation, strikingly accords with the observation of David, as expressed in Psalm 23:1-6:

"I have seen the wicked in great power,
And spreading himself like a green bay-tree;
Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not:

Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found."

Psalm 23:1-6:35-36.

Taking root - This figure, to denote prosperous and rapid growth, is often used in the Scriptures. Thus, in Psalm 1:3:

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,
That bringeth forth his fruit in his season."

So Isaiah 27:6:

"Those that come out of Jacob shall he cause to take root;
Israel shall blossom and bud,
And shall fill the face of the world with fruit."

So Psalm 80:9-10:

"Thou preparedst room before it,
And didst cause it to take deep root,
And it filled the land.

The hills were covered with the shadow of it,
And the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars."

But suddenly - Meaning either that calamity came upon him suddenly - as it had upon Job, that is, without any apparent preparation, or that; calamity came before a great while, that is, that this prosperity did not continue. Probably there is an implied reference hereto the case of Job, meaning that he had known just such instances before; and as the case of Job accorded with what he had before seen, he hastened to the conclusion that Job must have been a wicked man.

I cursed his habitation - I had occasion to regard it as accursed; that is, I witnessed the downfall of his fortunes, and pronounced his habitation accursed. I saw that God regarded it as such, and that he had suddenly punished him. This accords with the observation of David, referred to above.

Verse 4

His children are far from safety - That is, this is soon manifest by their being cut off or subjected to calamity. The object of Eliphaz is, to state the result of his own observation, and to show how calamity overtook the wicked though they even prospered for a time. He begins with that which a man would feel most - the calamity which comes upon his children, and says that God would punish him in them. Every word of this would go to the heart of Job; for he could not but feel that it was aimed at him, and that

the design was to prove that the calamities that had come upon his children were a proof of his own wickedness and of the divine displeasure. It is remarkable that Job listens to this with the utmost patience. There is no interruption of the speaker; no breaking in upon the argument of his friend; no mark of uneasiness. Oriental politeness required that a speaker should be heard attentively through whatever he might say. See the Introduction, Section 7. Cutting and severe, therefore, as this strain of remark must have been, the sufferer sat meekly and heard it all, and waited for the appropriate time when an answer might be returned.

And they are crushed in the gate - The gate of a city in ancient times was the chief place of concourse, and was the place where public business was usually transacted, and where courts of justice were held; see Genesis 23:10; Deuteronomy 21:19; Deuteronomy 25:6-7; Rth 4:1 ff: Psalm 127:5; Proverbs 22:22. The Greeks also held their courts in some public place of business. Hence, the forum, ἀγορά *agora* was also a place for fairs. See Jahn's Archaeology, section 247. Some suppose that the meaning here is, that they were oppressed and trodden down by the concourse in the gate. But the more probable meaning is, that they found no one to advocate their cause; that they were subject to oppression and injustice in judicial decisions, and then when their parent was dead, no one would stand up to vindicate them from respect to his memory. The idea is, that though there might be temporary prosperity, yet that it would not be long before heavy calamities would come upon the children of the wicked.

Verse 5

Whose harvest the hungry eateth up - That is, they are not permitted to enjoy the avails of their own labor. The harvest field is subject to the depredations of others, who contrive to possess themselves of it, and to consume it.

And taketh it even out of the thorns - Or, he seizes it to the very thorns. That is, the famished robber seizes the whole of the harvest. He takes it all away, even to the thistles, and chaff, and cockle, and whatever impure substances there may be growing with the grain. He does not wait to separate the grain from the other substances, but consumes it all. He spares nothing.

And the robber swalloweth up their substance - Noyes renders this, as Gesenius proposes to do, "and a snare gapeth after his substance;" Dr. Good, "and rigidly swoopeth up their substance." Rosenmuller much better:

Cujusquo facultates oxhauriebant sitibundi, copying exactly the version of Castellio. The Vulgate in a similar manner, Et bibent sitientes divitias ejus - And the thirsty drink up his wealth. The Septuagint, ἐκσιφωνισθείη αὐτῶν ἡ ἰσχύς *eksifōnisthein autōn hē ischus* - "should their power be absorbed." The true sense, as I conceive, is, "the thirsty gasp, or pant, after their wealth;" that is, they consume it. The word rendered in our common version "the robber צמים *tsammîym* is, according to the ancient versions, the same as צמאים *tsâmê'îym* the thirsty, and this sense the parallelism certainly requires. So obvious is this, that it is better to suppose a slight error in the Hebrew text, than to give it the signification of a snare," as Noyes does, and as Gesenius (Lexicon) proposes. The word rendered "swalloweth up" (שׁאף *shâ'aph*) means, properly, to breathe hard, to pant, to blow; and then to yawn after, to desire, to absorb; and the sense here is, that the thirsty consume their property. The whole figure is taken from robbers and freebooters; and I have no doubt that Eliphaz meant impliedly to allude to the ease of Job, and to say that he had known just such cases, where, though there was great temporary prosperity, yet before long the children of the man who was prospered, and who professed to be pious, but was not, were crushed, and his property taken away by robbers. It was this similarity of the case of Job to the facts which he had observed, that staggered him so much in regard to his cbaracter.

Verse 6

Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust - Margin, "or iniquity." The marginal reading here has been inserted from the different meanings attached to the Hebrew word. That word (און *'âven*) properly means nothingness, or vanity; then nothingness as to worth, unworthiness, wickedness, iniquity; and then the consequences of iniquity - adversity, calamity, affliction; Psalm 55:4; Proverbs 22:8; Psalm 90:10; Job 15:35. The Septuagint renders it κόπος *kopos* "labor," or "trouble." The Vulgate, Nihil in terra, sine causa - "there is nothing on the earth without a cause." The general sense is plain. It is, that afflictions are not to be ascribed to chance, or that they are not without intelligent design. They do not come up like thistles, brambles, and thorns, from the unconscious earth. They have a cause. They are under the direction of God. The object of Eliphaz in the statement is, to show to Job that it was improper to complain, and that he should commit his cause to a God of infinite power and wisdom; Job 5:8 ff.

Afflictions, Eliphaz says, could not be avoided. Man was born unto them. He ought to expect them, and when they come, they should be submitted to as ordered by an intelligent, wise, and good Being. This is one true ground of consolation in afflictions. They do not come from the unconscious earth: they do not spring up of themselves. Though it is true that man is born to them, and must expect them, yet it is also true that they are ordered in infinite wisdom, and that they always have a design.

Neither doth trouble spring out of the ground - The Septuagint renders this, "Nor will affliction spring up from the mountains."

Verse 7

Yet man is born unto trouble - All this is connected with the sentiment in Job 5:8 ff. The meaning is, that "since afflictions are ordered by an intelligent Being, and since man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward, therefore it is wise to commit our cause to God, and not to complain against him." Margin, or labor. The word here (עמל *ʿâmâl*) rather means trouble, or affliction, than labor. The sense is, that as certainly as man is born, so sure is it that he will have trouble. It follows from the condition of our being, as certainly as that unconscious objects will follow the laws of their nature - that sparks will ascend. This seems to have a proverbial cast, and was doubtless regarded as a sentiment universally true. It is as true now as it was then; for it is still the great law of our being, that trouble as certainly comes sooner or later, as that material objects obey the laws of nature which God has impressed on them.

As the sparks fly upward - The Hebrew expression here is very beautiful - "as רשׁף בני *benēy reshep* - the sons of flame fly." The word used (רשׁף *reshep*) means flame, lightning; the sons, or children of the flame, are that which it produces; that is, sparks. Gesenius strangely renders it, "sons of the lightning; that is, birds of prey which fly as swift as the lightning." So Dr. Good, "As the bird-tribes are made to fly upwards." So Umbreit renders it, Gleichwie die Brut des Raubgeflugels sich hoch in Fluge hebt - "as a flock of birds of prey elevate themselves on the wing." Noyes adopts the construction of Gesenius; partly on the principle that man would be more likely to be compared to birds, living creatures, than to sparks. There is considerable variety in the interpretation of the passage. The Septuagint renders it, νεοσσοι δε γυπος *neossoi de gupos* - the young of the vulture. The Chaldee, מזיקי בני *benēy mezēyqēy* - "the sons of demons." Syriac "Sons of birds." Jerome, "Man is born to labor, and the bird to flight" - *et avis ad*

volatum. Schultens renders it, “glittering javelins,” and Arius Montanus, “sons of the live coal.” It seems to me that our common version has expressed the true meaning. But the idea is not essentially varied whichever interpretation is adopted. It is, that as sparks ascend, or as birds fly upward - following the laws of their being - so is trouble the lot of man. It certainly comes; and comes under the direction of a Being who has fixed the laws of the inferior creation. It would be wise for man, therefore, to resign himself to God in the times when those troubles come. He should not sit down and complain at this condition of things, but should submit to it as the law of his being, and should have sufficient confidence in God to believe that he orders it aright.

Verse 8

I would seek unto God - Our translators have omitted here the adversative particle אולם *'ûlâm* but, yet, nevertheless, and have thus marred the connection. The meaning of Eliphaz, I take to be, “that since affliction is ordered by an intelligent Being, and does not spring out of the ground, therefore he would commit his cause to God, and look to him.” Jerome has well expressed it, *Quam ob rem ego deprecabor Dominum*. Some have understood this as meaning that Eliphaz himself was in the habit of committing his cause to God, and that he exhorted Job to imitate his example. But the correct sense is that which regards it as counsel given to Job to look to God because afflictions are the result of intelligent design, and because God had shown himself to be worthy of the confidence of people. The latter point Eliphaz proceeds to argue in the following verses.

Verse 9

Which doeth great things - The object of this is, to show why Job should commit his cause to God. The reason suggested is, that he had showed himself qualified to govern the world by the great and wonderful acts which he performed. Eliphaz, therefore, proceeds to expatiate on what God had done, and thus states the ancient belief in regard to his sovereignty over the world. This strain of reasoning continues to the end of the chapter. There is great beauty and force in it; and though we have, through the revelations of the New Testament, some more enlarged views of the government of God and of the design of affliction, yet perhaps there can be found nowhere a more beautiful argument to lead people to put confidence in God. The reason here stated is, that God does “great things,” and, therefore, we should commit ourselves to him. His works are vast and

boundless; they are such as to impress the mind with a sense of his own immensity; and in such a being we should confide rather than in a feeble creature‘s arm. Who, when he contemplates the vast universe which God has made, and surveys the starry world under the light of the modern astronomy, can doubt that God does “great things,” and that the interests which we commit to him are safe?

And unsearchable - Margin, “There is no search.” Septuagint ἀνεξιχνίαστα *anecichniasta*) - “whose footsteps cannot be traced.” The Hebrew word חקר *chêqer* means searching out or examining; and the idea is here, that it is impossible fully to search out and comprehend what God does. See Job 11:7. This is stated as a reason why we should look to him. We should expect things in his administration which we cannot understand. The argument of Eliphaz seems to be, that it was a matter of indisputable fact that there are many things in the government of God which are above our comprehension; and when he afflicts us, we should feel that this is a part of the doings of the incomprehensible God. Such mysterious dealings are to be expected, and they should not be allowed for a moment to shake our confidence in him.

Marvellous things - Things that are wonderful, and are fitted to excite amazement. See the notes at Isaiah 9:6.

Without number - Margin, “Until there be no number.” The sense is, that it is impossible to estimate the number of those things in the universe over which he presides which are adapted to excite admiration. If the view of the universe entertained in the time of Eliphaz was fitted to overwhelm the mind by its vastness and by the number of the objects which were created, this astonishment is much greater now that the telescope has disclosed the wonders of the heavens above to man, and the microscope the not less amazing wonders of the world beneath him. Leuwenhoeck, by the aid of the microscope, discovered, he supposed, a thousand million animalculae, whose united bulk did not exceed the size of a grain of sand - all of whom are distinct formations, with all the array of functions necessary to life. Of the number also of the larger works of God, much interesting and overpowering truth is presented by the science of modern astronomy.

As an instance of this, we may refer to the Milky Way, or the whitish, irregular zone, that goes round the whole heavens, and that can be seen at any season of the year, but particularly in the months of August, September,

and November. “This vast portion of the heavens is found to consist wholly of stars, crowded into immense clusters. On first presenting a telescope of considerable power to this splendid zone, we are lost in astonishment at the number, the variety, and the beautiful configuration of the stars of which it is composed. In certain parts of it, every slight motion of the telescope presents now groups and new configurations; and the new and wondrous scene is continued over a space of many degrees in succession. In several fields of view, occupying a space of not more than twice the breadth of the moon, you perceive more of these twinkling luminaries, than all the stars visible to the naked eye throughout the whole canopy of heaven. The late Sir W. Herschel, in passing his telescope along a space of this zone fifteen degrees long, and two broad, descried at least fifty thousand stars, large enough to be distinctly counted; besides which, he suspected twice as many more, which could be seen only now and then by faint glimpses for lack of sufficient light; that is, fifty times more than the acutest eye can discern in the whole heavens during the clearest night; and the space which they occupy is only the one thousand three hundred and seventy-fifth part of the visible canopy of the sky.

On another occasion this astronomer perceived nearly six hundred stars in one field of view of his telescope; so that in the space of a quarter of an hour, one hundred and sixteen thousand stars passed in review before him. Now, were we to suppose every part of this zone equally filled with stars as the places now alluded to, there would be found in the Milky Way alone, no less than twenty million, one hundred and ninety thousand stars. In regard to the distance of some of these stars, it has been ascertained that some of the more remote are not less than five hundred times the distance of the nearest fixed star, or nearly two thousand billion of miles; a distance so great, that light, which flies at the rate of twelve million miles every minute, would require one thousand six hundred and forty years before it could traverse this mighty interval! The Milky Way is now, with good reason, considered to be the cluster of stars in which our sun is situated; and all the stars visible to the naked eye are only a few scattered orbs near the extremity of this cluster.

Yet there is reason also to believe that the Milky Way, of which our system forms a part, is no mere than a single nebula, of which several

thousands have already been discovered, which compose the universe; and that it bears no more proportion to the whole siderial heavens than a small dusky speck which our telescopes enable us to descry in the heavens. Three thousand nebulae have already been discovered. Suppose the number of stars in the whole Milky Way to be no more than ten million, and that each of the nebulae, at an average, contains the same number; supposing further, that only two thousand of the three thousand nebulae are resolvable into stars, and that the other thousand are masses of a shining fluid, not yet condensed by the Almighty into luminous globes, the number of stars or suns comprehended in that portion of the firmament which is within the reach of our telescopes, is twenty thousand million." Yet all this may be as nothing compared with the parts of the universe which we are unable to discover. See in the Christian Keepsake for 1840, an article by Thomas Dick, entitled" An Idea of the Universe;" compare the notes at Job 9:9.

Supplementary Note to Job 5:9

The labors of astronomers, aided by instruments of remarkable accuracy and power, and by improved methods of observation, are ever adding to our knowledge of the "wonderful things without number" which render the mechanism of the heavens such a spectacle of sublimity. Among the most interesting and beautiful of the celestial phenomena are the star clusters and nebulae. A small number of the star-clusters are bright enough to be distinguished by the naked eye, to which they appear as a faint cloudlike patch of light; but it is only when the telescope is used that their real character becomes known, and they are then seen to be vast conglomerations of stars-connected systems of suns. The greater number are of a rounded and apparently globular form, the stars being densely crowded together in the center; though others are very irregular in shape. Those of a globular form often consist of an astonishingly great number of stars. "Herschel has calculated that many clusters contain 5,000 collected in a space, the apparent dimensions of which are scarcely the tenth part of the surface of the lunar disk." "The beautiful cluster in Aquarius, which Sir John Herschel's drawing exhibits as fine luminous dust, when examined through the Earl of Rosse's powerful reflector, appeared like a magnificent globular cluster, entirely separated into stars. But the most beautiful specimen of this kind is without doubt the splendid cluster in Toucan, quite visible to the naked eye, in the vicinity of the smaller Magellanic cloud, in a region of the southern sky entirely void of stars. The condensation at the

center of this cluster is extremely decided; there are three perfectly distinct gradations, and the orange red color of the central agglomeration contrasts wonderfully with the white light of the concentric envelopes."

It was formerly supposed by many that all nebulae were resolvable into star-clusters, and that it was only the want of instruments of sufficient power that prevented this from being done; but spectrum analysis has now demonstrated what was before conjectured, that although there may be many nebulae that would appear as distinct stars if more powerful instruments were brought to bear upon them, there are others of a different nature, consisting, namely, of glowing masses of gaseous matter. The forms assumed by nebulae are extremely varied, and some of them very remarkable. The round or globular form is very common; others resemble rings, circular or oval; others are conical or fanshaped, resembling the tail of a comet; some consist of spirals, radiating from a common nucleus; while many assume forms so irregular and bizarre as to be difficult to describe. The names given to some of them, such as the Crab Nebula, the Dumb-bell Nebula, the Fish-mouth Nebula (Nebula in Orion, see Plate), sufficiently intimate the striking aspects that they sometimes present.

Many of the nebulae, in which the separate stars could not previously be distinguished, have been resolved by Lord Rosse‘s great telescope; while others as seen by it have very different shapes from what less powerful instruments gave them. This is the case with the Dumb-bell Nebula in particular, its form as described and figured by Sir John Herschel being considerably different from that in our engraving, which shows its aspect under Lord Rosse‘s telescope. "Two luminous masses symmetrically placed and bound together by a rather short neck, the whole surrounded with a light nebulous envelope of oval form, gave it a very marked appearance of regularity. This aspect was, however, modified by Lord Rosse‘s telescope of three feet aperture, and the nebulous masses showed a decided tendency to resolvability. Later still, with the six-feet telescope, numerous stars were observed standing out, however, on a nebulous ground. The general aspect retains its primitive shape, less regular, but striking nevertheless. "With regard to the nebula in Orion we extract the following passage from Guillemin‘s "The Heavens," edited by John N. Lockyer, F. R. A.S., the work from which the above passages are taken: - "Sir John Herschel compares the brightest portion to the head of a monstrous animal, the mouth

of which is open, and the nose of which is in the form of a trunk. Hence, its name, the Fish-mouth Nebula. It is at the edge of the opening, in a space free from nebula that the four brightest of the components of θ (*th*) (a sevenfold star, that is, a connected system of seven stars which appear to the naked eye a single luminous point) are to be found; around, but principally above the trapezium formed by these four stars is a luminous region, with a mottled appearance, which Lord Rosse and Bond have partly resolved. This region is remarkable on account, not only of the brilliancy of its lights, but also of the numerous centers where this light is condensed, and each of which appears to form a stellar cluster.

The rectangular form of the whole is also worthy of attention. The nebulous masses surrounding it, the light of which is much fainter than that of the central region, are lost gradually; according to Bond they assume a spiral form as indicated in the drawing executed by that astronomer" (from which our engraving is taken). Writing soon after Lord Rosse's observation had resolved the nebula of Orion, Dr. Nichol says: - "The great cluster in Hercules has long dazzled the heart with its splendors; but we have learned now, that among circular and compact galaxies, a class to which the nebulous stars belong, there are multitudes which infinitely surpass it; nay, that schemes of being rise above it, sun becoming nearer to sun, until their skies must be one blaze of light, a throng of burning activities! But far aloft stands Orion, the pre-eminent glory and wonder of the starry universe! - It would seem almost that if all other clusters, hitherto gauged, were collected and compressed into one, they would not surpass this mighty group, in which every wisp, every wrinkle, is a sand heap of stars. There are cases in which, though imagination has quailed, reason may still adventure inquiry, and prolong its speculations; but at times we are brought to a limit across which no human faculty has the strength to penetrate, and where, as if at the very footstool of the secret throne, we can only bend our heads, and silently adore!" "These facts furnish a most impressive commentary upon the words of Eliphaz - which doeth great things and unsearchable, "marvelous things until there be no number" (margin) - and become the more significant from their connection with the constellation of orion, which is more than once mentioned in the book of Job" Job 9:9; Job 38:31.

Verse 10

Who giveth rain upon the earth - In the previous verse, Eliphaz had said, in general, that God did wonderful things - things which are fitted to lead us to put our trust in him. In this and the succeeding verses, he descends to particulars, and specifies those things which show that God is worthy to be confided in. This enunciation continues to Job 5:16, and the general scope is, that the agency of God is seen everywhere; and that his providential dealings are adapted to impress man with elevated ideas of his justice and goodness. Eliphaz begins with the rain, and says that the fact that God sends it upon the earth was fitted to lead man to confide in him. He means, that while the sun, and moon, and seasons have stated times, and are governed by settled laws, the rain seems to be sent directly by God, and is imparted at such times as are best. It is wholly under his control, and furnishes a constant evidence of his benevolence. Without it, every vegetable would dry up, and every animal on the earth would soon die. The word earth here refers probably to the cultivated part of the earth - the fields that are under tillage. Thus, Eichhorn renders it, Angebauten Feldern. On the interest which the phenomena of rain excited among the ancient sages of Idumea, and the laws by which it is produced, see Job 37:6, note; Job 37:15-16, note; Job 38:22-28, note.

And sendeth waters - That is, showers.

Upon the fields - Margin, "out-places." Hebrew חוצות *chûtsôt* - out of doors, outside, abroad, meaning the fields out of cities and towns. Eichhorn renders it, "the pastures," auf Triften. The meaning is, that the whole country is watered; and the fact that God gives rain in this manner, is a reason why we should put confidence in him. It shows that he is a benevolent Being, since it contributes so essentially to human life and happiness, and since no other being but God can cause it.

Verse 11

To set up on high - That is, who sets up on high; or God exalts those who are low. From the works of nature, Eliphaz passes to the dealings of God with people, as designed to show that he was worthy of confidence. The first proof is, that he showed himself to be the friend of the humble and the afflicted, and often exalted those who were in lowly circumstances, in a manner which evinced his direct interposition. It is to be remembered here, that Eliphaz is detailing the result of his own observation, and stating the reasons which he had observed for putting confidence in God; and the meaning here is, that he had so often seen this done as to show that God

was the friend of the humble and the poor. This sentiment was afterward expressed with great beauty by Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus:

He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
And exalted them of low degree;
He hath filled the hungry with good things,

And the rich he hath sent empty away.
Luke 1:52-53.

That those which mourn may be exalted to safety - Or rather, they who mourn are exalted to a place of safety, The sense is, that God did this; and that, therefore, there was ground of confidence in him. The word rendered "those which mourn" קדרים *qoderîym* is from קדר *qâdar* to be turbid or foul as a torrent, Job 6:16; hence, to go about in filthy garments, like mourners, to mourn. The general sense of the Hebrew word, as in Arabic, is to be squalid, dark, filthy, dusky, obscure; and hence, it denotes those who are afflicted, which is its sense here. The Septuagint renders it, ἀπολώλοτας *apolōlotas* "the lost," or those who are perished. The sense is plain. God raises up the bowed down, the oppressed, and the afflicted. Eliphaz undoubtedly referred to instances which had come under his own observation, when persons who had been in very depressed circumstances, had been raised up to situations of comfort, honor, and safety: and that in a manner which was a manifest interposition of his Providence. From this he argued that those who were in circumstances of great trial, should put their trust in him. Cases of this kind often occur; and a careful observation of the dealings of God with the afflicted, would undoubtedly furnish materials for an argument like that on which Eliphaz relied in this instance.

Verse 12

He disappointeth the devices of the crafty - He foils them in their schemes, or makes their plans vain. This too was the result of close observation on the part of Eliphaz. He had seen instances where the plans of crafty, designing, and artful people had been defeated, and where the straightforward had been prospered and honored. Such cases led him to believe that God was the friend of virtue, and was worthy of entire confidence.

So that their hands - So that they. The hands are the instruments by which we accomplish our plans.

Their enterprise - Margin, Or, "anything." Hebrew תּשׁיה *tûshîyâh* This word properly means uprightness from ישׁע *yâshaʿ* then help, deliverance, Job 6:13; then purpose, undertaking, enterprise, that is, what one wishes to set up or establish. Gesenius. This is its meaning here. Vulgate, "Their hands cannot finish (implere) what they had begun." Septuagint, "Their hands cannot perform that which is true" - ἀληθές *alēthes* The Chaldee Paraphrase refers this to the defeat of the purposes of the Egyptians: "Who made vain the thoughts of the Egyptians, who acted wisely (or cunningly - דחכימו) that they might do evil to Israel, but their hands did not perform the work of their wisdom Job 5:13, who took the wise men of Pharaoh in their own wisdom, and the counsel of their perverse astrologers he made to return upon them." The general sense is, that artful and designing men - people who work in the dark, and who form secret purposes of evil, are disappointed and foiled. Eliphaz probably had seen instances of this, and he now attributes it to God as rendering him worthy of the confidence of people. It is still true. The crafty and the designing are often foiled in such a manner as to show that it is wholly of God. He exposes their designs in this way, and shows that he is the friend of the sincere and the honest; and in doing this, he shows that he is worthy the confidence of his people.

Verse 13

He taketh the wise in their own craftiness - This passage is quoted by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:19, with the usual formula in referring to the Old Testament, γέγραπται γάρ *gegraptai gar* "for it is written," showing that he regarded it as a part of the inspired oracles of God. The word "wise" here undoubtedly means the cunning, the astute, the crafty, and the designing. It cannot mean those who are truly wise in the Scripture sense; but the meaning is, that those who form plans which they expect to accomplish by cunning and craft, are often the victims of their own designs. The same sentiment not unfrequently occurs in the Scriptures and elsewhere, and has all the aspect of being a proverb. Thus, in Psalm 7:15:

He made a pit and digged it,
And is fallen into the ditch which he made."

So Psalm 9:15:

The pagan are sunk down into the pit that they made;
In the net which they hid is their own foot taken."

So Psalm 35:8:

Let his net that he hath bid catch himself

Into that very destruction let him fall."

So Psalm 37:15:

Their sword shall enter into their own heart,

And their bow shall be broken."

Compare Eurip. Med. 409:

Κακῶν δὲ πάντων τέκτονες σοφώταται

Kakōn de pantōn tektones sofōtatai also the same sentiment in Lucretius, v. 1151:

Circumretit enim visatque injuria quemque,

Atque, unde exorta cst, ad caim plerumque revertit.

"For force and rapine in their craftiest neta

Oft their own sons entangle; and the plague Ten-fold recoils."

It is to be remembered that Eliphaz here speaks of his own observation, and of that as a reason for putting confidence in God. The sentiment is, that he had observed that a straightforward, honest, and upright course, was followed with the divine favor and blessing; but that a man who attempted to carry his plans by intrigue and stratagem, would not be permanently successfu. Sooner or later his cunning would recoil upon himself, and he would experience the disastrous consequences of such a course. It is still true. A man is always sure of ultimate success and prosperity, if he is straightforward and honest. He never can be sure of it, if he attempts to carry his plans by management. Other men may evince as much cunning as himself; and when his net springs, it may include himself as well as those for whom he set it. It will be well for him if it is not made to spring on him, while others escape.

And the counsel of the froward - The design of the perverse. The word here rendered "froward," נפתלים *nîpâthalîym* is from פתל *pâthal* to twist, to twine, to spin. It then means, to be twisted, crooked, crafty, deceitful. Here it means those who are crooked, artful, designing. Septuagint, πολυπλόκων *poluplokōn* the involved - the much-entangled.

Is carried headlong - Hebrew is precipitated, or hastened. There is not time for it to be matured; there is a development of the scheme before it is ripe, and the trick is detected before there is time to put it in execution. Nothing can be more true than this often is now. Something that could not be anticipated develops the design, and brings the dark plot out to mid-day; and God shows that he is the foe of all such schemes.

Verse 14

They meet with darkness in the day-time - Margin, "run into;" compare the notes at Isaiah 59:10. The sense is, that where there is really no obstacle to the accomplishment of an honest plan - any more than there is for a man to walk in the day-time - they become perplexed and embarrassed, as much as a man would be, should sudden darkness come around him at mid-day. The same sentiment occurs in Job 12:25. A life of honesty and uprightness will be attended with prosperity, but a man who attempts to carry his plans by trick and art, will meet with unexpected embarrassments. The sentiment in all these expressions is, that God embarrasses the cunning, the crafty, and the artful, but gives success to those who are upright; and that, therefore, he is worthy of confidence.

Verse 15

But he saveth the poor from the sword - He shows himself to be the friend and protector of the defenseless. The phrase "from the sword, from their mouth," has been variously interpreted. Dr. Good renders it,

So he saveth the persecutors from their mouth,
And the helpless from the hand of the violent."

Noyes,

So he saveth the persecuted from their mouth,
The oppressed from the hand of the mighty."

This rendering is obtained by changing the points in the word מחרב *mēchereb* "from the sword," to מחרב *māchĕrāb* making it the Hophal participle from חרב *chârab* to make desolate. This was proposed by Capellus, and has been adopted by Durell, Michaelis, Dathe, Doederlein, and others. Rosenmuller pronounces it wholly unauthorized. Jerome renders it, a gladio otis eorum - "from the sword of their mouth." It seems to me that the whole verse may be literally rendered, "he saveth from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the strong, the poor." According to this version, the phrase "from their mouth" may either mean from the mouth, i. e. the edge of the sword, using the plural for the singular, or from the mouth of oppressors, using it to represent their violence, and their disposition to devour the poor. The latter is more probably the true interpretation, and there is no need of a ehange in the points in the Hebrew. Thus, interpreted, the sense is, that God preserves the poor from oppression; or, in other words, that he befriends them, and is therefore worthy of confidence. This sentiment accords with what is found everywhere in the Bible.

Verse 16

So the poor hath hope - From the interposition of God. They are not left in a sad and comfortless condition. They are permitted to regard God as their protector and friend, and to look forward to another and a better world. This sentiment accords with all that is elsewhere said in the Scriptures, that the offers of mercy are specially made to the poor, and that they are especially the objects of the divine compassion.

And iniquity stoppeth her mouth - That is, the wicked are confounded when they see all their plans foiled, and find themselves entangled in the snares which they have laid for others. A similar sentiment occurs in Psalm 107:41-42:

Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction,
And maketh him families like a flock.
The righteous shall see it and rejoice,
And all iniquity shall stop her mouth."

It is to be remembered that Eliphaz states this as the result of his own observation, and as clearly demonstrating in his view that there is a superintending and overruling Providence. A careful observation of the course of events would lead undoubtedly to the same conclusion, and this has been embodied in almost every language by some proverbial sentiment. We express it by saying that "honesty is the best policy;" a proverb that is undoubtcdly founded in wisdom. The sentiment is, that if a man wishes long to prosper, he should pursue a straight-forward and an honest course; that cunning, intrigue, underhanded dealing, and mere management, will sooner or later defeat itself, and recoil on the head of him who uses it; and that, therefore, if there were no higher motive than self-interest, a man should be honest, frank, and open. See this argument stated at greater length, and with great beauty, in Psalm 37.

Verse 17

Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth - This verse commences a new argument, designed to show that afflictions are followed by so important advantages as to make it proper that we should submit to them without a complaint. The sentiment in this verse, if not expressly quoted, is probably alluded to by the apostle Paul in Hebrews 12:5. The same thought frequently occurs in the Bible: see James 1:12; Proverbs 3:11-12. The sense is plain, that God confers a favor on us when he recalls us from our sins by the corrections of his paternal hand - as a father confers a

favor on a child whom he restrains from sin by suitable correction. The way in which this is done, Eliphaz proceeds to state at length. He does it in most beautiful language, and in a manner entirely in accordance with the sentiments which occur elsewhere in the Bible. The word rendered "correcteth" (יכח *yâkach*) means to argue, convince, reprove, punish, and to judge.

It here refers to any of the modes by which God calls people from their sins, and leads them to walk in the paths of virtue. The word "happy" here, means that the condition of such an one is blessed (אשרי *'ēshrēy*); Greek μακάριος *makarios* - not that there is happiness in the suffering. The sense is, that it is a favor when God recalls his friends from their wanderings, and from the error of their ways, rather than to suffer them to go on to ruin. He does me a kindness who shows me a precipice down which I am in danger of falling; he lays me under obligation to him who even with violence saves me from flames which would devour me. Eliphaz undoubtedly means to be understood as implying that Job had been guilty of transgression, and that God had taken this method to recall him from the error of his ways. That he had sinned, and that these calamities had come as a consequence, he seems never once to doubt; yet he supposes that the affliction was meant in kindness, and proceeds to state that if Job would receive it in a proper manner, it might be attended still with important benefits.

Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty - "Do not regret (תמאס *tîm'ās*). Septuagint, μή ἀπανάινου *mē apanainou* - the means which God is using to admonish you." There is direct allusion here undoubtedly to the feelings which Job had manifested Job 3; and the object of Eliphaz is, to show him that there were important benefits to be derived from affliction which should make him willing to bear it without complaining. Job had exhibited, as Eliphaz thought, a disposition to reject the lessons which afflictions were designed to teach him, and to spurn the admonitions of the Almighty. From that state of mind he would recall him, and would impress on him the truth that there were such advantages to be derived from those afflictions as should make him willing to endure all that was laid upon him without a complaint.

Verse 18

For he maketh sore - That is, he afflicts.

And bindeth up - He heals. The phrase is taken from the custom of binding up a wound; see Isaiah 1:6, note; Isaiah 38:21, note. This was a

common mode of healing among the Hebrews; and the practice of medicine appears to have been confined much to external applications. The meaning of this verse is, that afflictions come from God, and that he only can support, comfort, and restore. Health is his gift; and all the consolation which we need, and for which we can look, must come from him.

Verse 19

He shall deliver thee in six troubles - Six is used here to denote an indefinite number, meaning that he would support in many troubles. This mode of speech is not uncommon among the Hebrews, where one number is mentioned, so that an extreme number may be immediately added. The method is, to mention a number within the limit, and then to add one more, meaning that in all instances the thing referred to would occur. The limit here is seven, with the Hebrews a complete and perfect number; and the idea is, that in any succession of troubles, however numerous, God was able to deliver. Similar expressions not unfrequently occur. Thus, in Amos 1:3, Amos 1:6, Amos 1:9, Amos 1:11, Amos 1:13; Amos 2:1, Amos 2:4, Amos 2:6:

Thus saith the Lord:
For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four,
I will not turn away the punishment thereof.
Thus saith the Lord:
For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four,
I will not turn away, the punishment thereof.
Thus saith the Lord:
For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four,
I will not turn away the punishment thereof.
Thus in Proverbs 30:15:
There are three things that are never satisfied,
Yea, four things say not, It is enough.
There be three things that are too wonderful for me,

Yea, four which I know not. Proverbs 30:18.
For three things the earth is disquieted,
And for four which it cannot bear." Proverbs 30:21.
There be three things that go well,
Yea, four are comely in going:
A lion which is strongest among beasts,

And turneth not away for any;

A grey-hound;

An he-goat also;
And a king, against whom there is no rising up." Proverbs 30:29-31.
Compare Homer, Iliad vi. 174:
Εννήμαρ ξείνισσε καὶ ἐννέα βοῦς ἱέρευσεν
Ennēmar ceinisse kai ennea bous hiereusen enumeration, in regard to number similar to the one before us, occurs in Proverbs 6:16:
These six things doth the Lord hate;
Yea, seven are an abomination to him.

There shall no evil touch thee - That is, permanently; for he could not mean that he would not be subjected to calamity at all, since by the very supposition he was a sufferer. But the sense is, that God would save from those calamities.

Verse 20

In famine he shall redeem thee - That is, will deliver thee from death. On the meaning of the word "redeem," see the notes at Isaiah 43:1, Isaiah 43:3.

From the power of the sword - Margin, as in Hebrew "hands." That is, he should not be slain by armed men. A mouth is often attributed to the sword in the Scriptures, because it devours; "hands" are attributed to it here, because it is by the hand that we perform an undertaking, and the sword is personified, and represented as acting as a conscious agent; compare Ezekiel 35:5, margin. The meaning is that God would protect those who put their trust in him, in times of calamity and war. Doubtless Eliphaz had seen instances enough of this kind to lead him to this general conclusion, where the pious poor had been protected in a remarkable manner, and where signal deliverances had been vouchsafed to the righteous in danger.

Verse 21

Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue - Margin, Or, "when the tongue scourgeth." The word rendered "scourge" - שׁוט *shôṭ* - means properly a whip. It is used of God when he scourges people by calamities and punishments; Isaiah 10:26; Job 9:23. See the use of the verb שׁוט *shûṭ* in Job 2:7. Here it is used to denote a slanderous tongue, as being that which

inflicts a severe wound upon the reputation and peace of an individual. The idea is, that God would guard the reputation of those who commit themselves to him, and that they shall be secure from slander, "whose breath," Shakespeare says, "outvenoms all the worms of Nile."

Neither shalt thou be afraid when destruction cometh - That is, your mind shall be calm in those calamities which threaten destruction. When war rages, when the tempest howls, when the pestilence breathes upon a community, then your mind shall be at peace. A similar thought occurs in Isaiah 26:3: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee;" and the same sentiment is beautifully illustrated at length in Job 5:20: "In the famine in Egypt, he redeemed thee from death; and in the war with Amalek, from being slain by the sword;" Job 5:21: "In the injury inflicted by the tongue of Balaam thou wert hid among the clouds, and thou didst not fear from the desolation of the Midianites when it came;" Job 5:22: "In the desolation of Sihon, and in the famine of the desert, thou didst laugh; and of the camps of Og, who was like a wild beast of the earth, thou wert not afraid."

Verse 22

At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh - That is thou shalt be perfectly safe and happy. They shall not come upon thee; and when they approach with threatening aspect, thou shalt smile with conscious security. The word here rendered famine (כפן *kâphân*) is an unusual word, and differs from that occurring in Job 5:20, רעב *râʿâb* This word is derived from כפן *kâphan* - to languish, to pine from hunger and thirst. It then means the languid and feeble state which exists where there is a lack of proper nutriment. A sentiment similar to that which is here expressed occurs in Martial, iv. 19,4. Ridebis ventos line munere tectus, et imbres. "Neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth." Wild beasts in new countries are always objects of dread, and in the fastnesses and deserts of Arabia, they were especially so. They abounded there; and one of the highest images of happiness there would be, that there would be perfect safety from them. A similar promise occurs in Psalm 91:13:

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder;

The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot.

And a promise similar to this was made by the Savior to his disciples: "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them." The sentiment of Eliphaz is, that they who put their trust in God

would find protection, and have the consciousness that they were secure wherever they were.

Verse 23

For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field - In the Hebrew, "There shall be a covenant between thee and the stones of the field." The sense is, they shall not harm thee. They are here spoken of as enemies that were made to be at peace, and that would not annoy or injure. It is to be remembered that this was spoken in Arabia, where rocks and stones abounded, and where traveling, from that cause, was difficult and dangerous. The sense here is, as I understand it, that he would be permitted to make his way in ease and safety. Tindal renders it:

But the castels in the land shall be confederate with thee;
The beastes of the fealde shall give thee peace.

Some have supposed that the meaning is, that the land would be free from stones that rendered it barren, and would be rendered fertile if the favor of God was sought. Shaw, in his Travels, supposes that it refers to the custom of walking over stones, in which the feet are liable to be injured every moment, and that the meaning is, that that danger would be averted by the divine interposition. By others it has been conjectured that the allusion is to a custom which is known as skopelism, of which Egmont and Heyman (Reisen, II. Th. S. 156), give the following account: "that in Arabia, if anyone is living at variance with another he places on his land stones as a warning that no one should dare to plow it, as by doing it he would expose himself to the danger of being punished by him who had placed the stones there." This custom is also referred to by Ulpian (L. ix. de officio Proconsulis), and in the Greek Pandects, Lib. lx. Tit. xxii. Leg. 9. It may be doubted, however, whether this custom was as early as the time of Job, or was so common then as to make it probable that the allusion is to it. Rosenmuller supposes the meaning to be, "Thy field shall be free from stones, which would render it unfruitful." Alte u. neue Morgenland, in loc. Other explanations may be seen in Rosenmuller (Commentary), but it seems to me that the view presented above, that traveling would be rendered safe and pleasant, is the true one. Such a promise would be among the rich blessings in a country like Arabia.

Verse 24

And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace - Thy tent - אהלך *'âhelēkāh* - showing that it was common then to dwell in tents. The

sense is, that when he was away from home he would have confidence that his dwelling was secure, and his family safe. This would be an assurance producing no small degree of consolation in a country abounding in wild beasts and robbers. Such is the nature of the blessing which Eliphaz says the man would have who put his confidence in God, and committed his cause to him. To a certain extent this was, and is, undoubtedly true. A man cannot indeed have miraculous assurance when from home, that his wife and children are still alive, and in health; nor can he be certain that his dwelling is not wrapped in flames, or that it has been preserved from the intrusion of evil-minded men. But he may feel assured that all is under the wise control of God; that whatever occurs will be by his permission and direction, and will tend to ultimate good. He may also, with calmness and peace, commit his home with all that is dear to him to God, and feel that in his hands all is safe.

And thou shalt visit thy habitation - That is, on the return from a journey.

And not sin - This is a very unhappy translation. The true sense is thou shalt not miss thy dwelling; thou shalt not wander away lost, to return no more. The word used here, and which is rendered "sin" in our common version, is חטא *châṭâ'* It is true that it is commonly rendered to sin, and that it often has this sense. But it properly means "to miss;" that is, not to hit the mark, spoken of a slinger. Judges 20:16; then to make a false step, to stumble or fall, Proverbs 19:2. It thus accords exactly in sense with the Greek ἁμαρτάνω *hamartanō* Here the original sense of the Hebrew word should bo retained, meaning that he would not miss the way to his dwelling; that is, that he would be permitted to return to it in safety. Gesenius, however, renders it, "thou musterest thy pasture (flocks), and missest naught:" that is, nothing is gone; all thy flocks are there. But the more obvious sense, and a sense which the connection demands, is that which refers the whole description to a man who is on a journey, and who is exposed to the dangers of wild beasts, and to the perils of a rough and stony way, but who is permitted to visit his home without missing it or being disappointed. A great variety ofinterpretations have been given of the passage, which may be seen in Rosenmuller and Good. Many suppose it means that he should review his domestic aflfairs, and find all to his mind; or should find that everything was in its place, or was as it should be. It can, not be doubted that the Hebrew word "visit" (פקד *pâqad*) will bear this

interpretation, but that above proposed seems to me best to suit the connection. The margin correctly renders it, err.

Verse 25

Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great - Margin, "much." That is, thy posterity shall be numerous. This was one of the blessings supposed to be connected with the favor of God; see the notes at Isaiah 53:10.

And thine offspring as the grass of the earth - On the meaning of the word here rendered offspring, see the notes at Isaiah 48:19. Nothing is more common in the Scriptures, than to compare a prosperous and a happy man to a green and flourishing tree; see Psalm 1:3; Psalm 92:12-14. The idea here is, that the righteous would have a numerous and a happy posterity, and that the divine favor to them would bc shown by the blessing of God on their children; compare Psalm 128:1, Psalm 128:3.

Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord,
That walketh in his ways.
Thy wife shall be a fruitful vine by the side of thine house;
Thy children like olive-plants round about thy table.

Verse 26

Thou shalt come to thy grave in full age - That is, thou shalt have long life; thou shalt not be cut down prematurely, nor by any sudden calamity. It is to be remembered that long life was regarded as an eminent blessing in ancient times; see the notes at Isaiah 65:22.

Like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season - Margin, "ascendeth." As a sheaf of grain is harvested when it is fully ripe. This is a beautiful comparison, and the meaning is obvious. He would not be cut off before his plans were fully matured; before the fruits of righteousness had ripened in his life. He would be taken away when he was ripe for heaven - as the yellow grain is for the harvest. Grain is not cut down when it is green; and the meaning of Eliphaz is, that it is as desirable that man should live to a good old age before he is gathered to his fathers, as it is that grain should be suffered to stand until it is fully ripe.

Verse 27

Lo this - All this that I have said; the truth of all the remarks which I have made.

We have searched it - We have by careful observation of the course of events come to these conclusions. These are our views of the providence of

God, and of the principles of his government, as far as we have had the opportunity of observing, and they are well worthy of your attention. The sentiments in these two chapters indicate close and accurate observation; and if we think that the observation was not always wholly accurate, or that the principles were carried further than facts would warrant, or that Eliphaz applied them with somewhat undue severity to the case of Job, we are to remember that this was in the infancy of the world, that they had few historical records, and that they had no written revelation. If they were favored with occasional revelations, as Eliphaz claimed (Job 4:12 ff), yet they were few in number, and at distant intervals, and the divine communications pertained to but few points.

Though it may without impropriety be maintained that some of the views of Eliphaz and his friends were not wholly accurate, yet we may safely ask, Where among the Greek and Roman sages can views of the divine government be found that equal these in correctness, or that are expressed with equal force and beauty? For profound and accurate observation, for beauty of thought and sublimity of expression, the sage of Teman will not fall behind the sages of Athens; and not the least interesting thing in the contemplation of the book of Job, is the comparison which we are almost of necessity compelled to make between the observations on the course of events which were made in Arabia, and those which were made by the philosophers of the ancient pagan world. Is it improper to suppose that one design of this book was to show how far the human mind could go, with the aid of occasional revelations on a few points, in ascertaining the principles of the divine administration, and to demonstrate that, after all, the mind needed a fuller revelation to enable man to comprehend the truths pertaining to the kingdom of God? “Hear it for thy good.” Margin, as in Hebrew “thyself.” These principles are such that they are of importance for you to understand and to apply.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 2

O that my grief were thoroughly weighed - The word rendered "grief" here (כעשׂ *kaʿaś*) may mean either vexation, trouble, grief; Ecclesiastes 1:18; Ecclesiastes 2:23; or it may mean anger; Deuteronomy 32:19; Ezekiel 20:28. It is rendered by the Septuagint here, ὀργή *orgē* - anger; by Jerome, peccata - sins. The sense of the whole passage may either be, that Job wished his anger or his complaints to be laid in the balance with his calamity, to see if one was more weighty than the other - meaning that he had not complained unreasonably or unjustly (Rosenmuller); or that he wished that his afflictions might be put into one scale and the sands of the sea into another, and the one weighed against the other (Noyes); or simply, that he desired that his sorrows should be accurately estimated. This latter is, I think, the true sense of the passage. He supposed his friends had not understood and appreciated his sufferings; that they were disposed to blame him without understanding the extent of his sorrows, and he desires that they would estimate them aright before they condemned him. In particular, he seems to have supposed that Eliphaz had not done justice to the depth of his sorrows in the remarks which he had just made. The figure of weighing actions or sorrows, is not uncommon or unnatural. It means to take an exact estimate of their amount. So we speak of heavy calamities, of afflictions that crush us by their weight. etc.

Laid in the balances - Margin, "lifted up." That is, raised up and put in the scales, or put in the scales and then raised up - as is common in weighing.

Together - יחד *yachad* At the same time; that all my sorrows, griefs, and woes, were piled on the scales, and then weighed. He supposed that only a partial estimate had been formed of the extent of his calamities.

Verse 3

Heavier than the sand of the sea - That is, they would be found to be insupportable. Who could bear up the sands of the sea? So Job says of his sorrows. A comparison somewhat similar is found in Proverbs 27:3.

Heavy is a stone, and weighty the sand of the Sea,
But a fool‘s wrath is heavier than them both.

My words are swallowed up - Margin, "I want words to express my grief." This expresses the true sense - but not with the same poetic beauty.

We express the same idea when we say that we are choked with grief; we are so overwhelmed with sorrow that we cannot speak. Any very deep emotion prevents the power of utterance. So in Psalm 77:4:

Thou holdest mine eyes waking:

I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

So the well-known expressions in Virgil,

Obstupui, steteruntque comae, et vox faucibus haesit.

There has been, however, considerable variety in the interpretation of the word here rendered swallowed up - לוּעַ *lûaʿ* Gesenius supposes that it means to speak rashly, to talk at random, and that the idea is, that Job now admits that his remarks had been unguarded - "therefore were my words rash." The same sense Castell gives to the Arabic word. Schultens renders it, "therefore are my words tempestuous or fretful." Rosenmuller, "my words exceed due moderation." Castellio, "my words fail." Luther, "therefore it is vain that I speak." The Septuagint, "but my words seem to be evil." Jerome, "my words are full of grief." In this variety it is difficult to determine the meaning; but probably the old interpretation is to be retained, by which the word is derived from לוּעַ *lûaʿ* to absorb, to swallow up; compare Proverbs 20:25; Obadiah 1:16; Job 39:30; Proverbs 23:2. The word does not elsewhere occur.

Verse 4

For the arrows of the Almighty are within me - That is, it is not a light affliction that I endure. I am wounded in a manner which could not be caused by man - called to endure a severity of suffering which shows that it proceeds from the Almighty. Thus called to suffer what man could not cause, he maintains that it is right for him to complain, and that the words which he employed were not an improper expression of the extent of the grief.

The poison whereof drinketh up my spirit - Takes away my rigor, my comfort, my life. He here compares his afflictions with being wounded with poisoned arrows. Such arrows were not unfrequently used among the ancients. The object was to secure certain death, even where the wound caused by the arrow itself would not produce it. Poison was made so concentrated, that the smallest quantity conveyed by the point of an arrow would render death inevitable. This practice contributed much to the barbarity of savage war. Thus, Virgil speaks of poisoned arrows:

Ungere tela manu, ferrumque armare veneno.

Aeneid ix. 773

And again, Aen x. 140:

Vulnera dirigere, et calamos armare veneno.

So Ovid, Lib. 1. de Ponto, Eleg. ii. of the Scythians:

Qui mortis saevo geminent ut vulnere causas,

Omnia vipereo spicula felle linunt.

Compare Justin, Lib. ii. c. 10. section 2; Grotius, de Jure Belli et Pacis; and Virgil, En. xii. 857. In the Odyssey, i. 260ff we read of Ulysses that he went to Ephyra, a city of Thessaly, to obtain from Ilus, the son of Mermer, deadly poison, that he might smear it over the iron point of his arrows. The pestilence which produced so great a destruction in the Grecian camp is also said by Homer (Iliad i. 48) to have been caused by arrows shot from the bow of Apollo. The phrase "drinketh up the spirit" is very expressive. We speak now of the sword thirsting for blood; but this language is more expressive and striking. The figure is not uncommon in the poetry of the East and of the ancients. In the poem of Zohair, the third of the Moallakat, or those transcribed in golden letters, and suspended in the temple of Mecca, the same image occurs. It is thus rendered by Sir William Jones:

Their javelins had no share in drinking the blood of Naufel.

A similar expression occurs in Sophocles in Trachinn, verse 1061, as quoted by Schultens, when describing the pestilence in which Hercules suffered:

ἐκ δὲ χλωρὸν αἵμα μου Πέπωκεν ἤδη -

ek de chlōron haima mou Pepōken ēdē -

This has been imitated by Cicero in Tusculan. Disp. ii. 8:

Haec me irretivit veste furiali inscium,

Quae lateri inhaerens morsu lacerat viscera,

Urgensque graviter, pulmonum haurit spiritus,

Jam decolorem sanguinem omnem exsorbuit.

So Lucan, Pharsa. ix. 741ff gives a similar description:

Ecce subit virus taciturn, carpitque medullas

Ignis edax calidaque iacendit viscera tabe.

Ebibit humorem circa vitalia fusum

Pestis, et in sicco linguan torrere palato Coepit.

Far more beautiful, however, than the expressions of any of the ancient Classics - more tender, more delicate, more full of pathos - is the

description which the Christian poet Cowper gives of the arrow that pierces the side of the sinner. It is the account of his own conversion:

I was a stricken deer that left the herd
Long since. With many an artery deep infix'd
My panting side was charged when I withdrew
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
There I was found by one, who had himself
Been hurt by the archers. In his side he bore,
And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.
Task, b. iii.

Of such wounding he did not complain. The arrow was extracted by the tender hand of him who alone had power to do it. Had Job known of him; had he been fully acquainted with the plan of mercy through him, and the comfort which a wounded sinner may find there, we should not have heard the bitter complaints which he uttered in his trials. Let us not judge him with the severity which we may use of one who is afflicted and complains under the full light of the gospel.

The terrors of God do set themselves in array against me - Those things which God uses to excite terror. The word which is rendered "set in array" (ערך *ʿârak*) properly denotes the drawing up of a line for battle; and the sense is here, that all these terrors seem to be drawn up in battle array, as if on purpose to destroy him. No expression could more strikingly describe the condition of an awakened sinner, though it is not certain that Job used it precisely in this sense. The idea as he used it is, that all that God commonly employed to produce alarm seemed to be drawn up as in a line of battle against him.

Verse 5

Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? - On the habits of the wild ass, see the notes at Job 11:12. The meaning of Job here is, that he did not complain without reason; and this he illustrates by the fact that the wild animal that had a plentiful supply of food would be gentle and calm, and that when its bray was heard it was proof that it was suffering. So Job says that there was a reason for his complaining. He was suffering; and perhaps he means that his complaint was just as natural, and just as innocent, as the braying of the ass for its food. He should have remembered however, that he was endowed with reason, and that he was bound to evince a different spirit from the brute creation.

Or loweth the ox over his fodder? - That is, the ox is satisfied and uncomplaining when his needs are supplied. The fact that he lows is proof that he is in distress, or there is a reason for it. So Job says that his complaints were proof that he was in distress, and that there was a reason for his language of complaint.

Verse 6

Can that which is unsavoury - Which is insipid, or without taste.

Be eaten without salt - It is necessary to add salt in order to make it either palatable or wholesome. The literal truth of this no one can doubt, Insipid food cannot be relished, nor would it long sustain life. "The Orientals eat their bread often with mere salt, without any other addition except some dry and pounded summer-savory, which last is the common method at Aleppo." Russell's Natural History of Aleppo, p. 27. It should be remembered, also, that the bread of the Orientals is commonly mere unleavened cakes; see Rosenmuller, Alte u. neue Morgenland, on Genesis 18:6. The idea of Job in this adage or proverb is, that there was a fitness and propriety in things. Certain things went together, and were necessary companions. One cannot be expected without the other; one is incomplete without the other. Insipid food requires salt in order to make it palatable and nutritious, and so it is proper that suffering and lamentation should be united.

There was a reason for his complaints, as there was for adding salt to unsavory food. Much perplexity, however, has been felt in regard to this whole passage; Job 6:6-7. Some have supposed that Job means to rebuke Eliphaz severely for his harangue on the necessity of patience, which he characterizes as insipid, impertinent, and disgusting to him; as being in fact as unpleasant to his soul as the white of an egg was to the taste. Dr. Good explains it as meaning, "Doth that which has nothing of seasoning, nothing of a pungent or irritating power within it, produce pungency or irritation? I too should be quiet and complain not, if I had nothing provocative or acrimonious; but alas! the food I am doomed to partake of is the very calamity which is most acute to my soul, that which I most loathe, and which is most grievous or trying to my palate." But the real sense of this first part of the verse is, I think, that which is expressed above - that insipid food requires proper condiment, and that in his sufferings there was a real ground for lamentation and complaint - as there was for making use of salt

in that which is unsavory. I see no reason to think that he meant in this to reproach Eliphaz for an insipid and unmeaning address.

Or is there any taste in the white of an egg? - Critics and commentators have been greatly divided about the meaning of this. The Septuagint renders it, εἰ δέ καί ἐστί γεῦμα ἐν ῥήμασι κενοῖς *ei de kai esti geuma en rēmasi kenois* is there any taste in vain words? Jerome (Vulgate), "can anyone taste that which being tasted produces death?" The Targums render it substantially as it is in our version. The Hebrew word rendered "white" (ריר *rîyr*) means properly spittle; 1 Samuel 21:13. If applied to an egg, it means the white of it, as resembling spittle. The word rendered "egg" (חלמוּת *challâmûth*) occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. If it be regarded as derived from חלם *châlam* to sleep, or dream, it may denote somnolency or dreams, and then fatuity, folly, or a foolish speech, as resembling dreams; and many have supposed that Job meant to characterize the speech of Eliphaz as of this description.

The word may mean, as it does in Syriac, a species of herb, the "purslain" (Gesenius), proverbial for its insipidity among the Arabs, Greeks, and Romans, but which was used as a salad; and the whole phrase here may denote purslain-broth, and hence, an insipid discourse. This is the interpretation of Gesenius. But the more common and more probable explanation is that of our common version, denoting the white of an egg. But what is the point of the remark as Job uses it? That it is a proverbial expression, is apparent; but in what way Job meant to apply it, is not so clear. The Jews say that he meant to apply it to the speech of Eliphaz as being insipid and dull, without anything to penetrate the heart or to enliven the fancy; a speech as disagreeable to the mind as the white of an egg was insipid to the taste. Rosenmuller supposes that he refers to his afflictions as being as unpleasant to bear as the white of an egg was to the taste. It seems to me that the sense of all the proverbs used here is about the same, and that they mean, "there is a reason for everything which occurs. The ass brays and the ox lows only when destitute of food. That which is insipid is unpleasant, and the white of an egg is loathsome. So with my afflictions. They produce loathing and disgust, My very food Job 6:7 is disagreeable, and everything seems tasteless as the most insipid food would. Hence the language which I have used - language spoken not without reason, and expressive of this state of the soul."

Verse 7

The things that my soul refused to touch - That I refused to touch - the word "soul" here being used to denote himself. The idea here is, that those things which formerly were objects of loathing to him, had become his painful and distressing food. The idea may be either that he was reduced to the greatest pain and distress in partaking of his food, since he loathed that which he was obliged to eat (compare notes, Job 3:24), or more probably his calamity is described under the image of loathsome food in accordance with the Oriental usage, by which one is said to eat or taste anything; that is, to experience it. His sorrows were as sickening to him as the articles of food which he had mentioned were to the stomach. The Septuagint renders it strangely, "For my wrath - μοῦ ἡ ὀργή *mou hē orgē* - cannot cease. For I see my food offensive as the smell of a lion' - ὥσπερ ὀσμὴν λέοντος *hōsper osmēn leontos* f0.

Verse 8

Oh that I might have my request - To wit, death. This he desired as the end of his sorrows, either that he might be freed from them, or that he might be admitted to a happy world - or both.

Would grant me the thing that I long for - Margin, "My expectation." That is, death. He expected it; he looked out for it; he was impatient that the hour should come. This state of feeling is not uncommon - where sorrows become so accumulated and intense that a man desires to die. It is no evidence, however, of a preparation for death. The wicked are more frequently in this state than the righteous. They are overwhelmed with pain; they see no hope of deliverance from it and they impatiently wish that the end had come. They are stupid about the future world, and either suppose that the grave is the end of their being, or that in some undefinable way they will be made happy hereafter. The righteous, on the other hand, are willing to wait until God shall be pleased to release them, feeling that He has some good purpose in all that they endure, and that they do not suffer one pang too much. Such sometimes were Job's feelings; but here, as in some other instances, no one can doubt that he was betrayed into unjustifiable impatience under his sorrows, and that he expressed an improper wish to die.

Verse 9

Even that it would please God to destroy me - To put me to death, and to release me from my sorrows; compare Job 3:20-21. The word rendered

"destroy" here (דכא *dâkâ'*) means properly to break in pieces, to crush, to trample under foot, to make small by bruising. Here the sense is, that Job wished that God would crush him, so as to take his life. The Septuagint renders it "wound" - τρωσάτω *trōsatō* The Chaldee renders it, "Let God, who has begun to make me poor, loose his hand and make me rich."

That he would let loose his hand - Job here represents the hand of God as bound or confined. He wishes that that fettered hand were released, and were so free in its inflictions that he might be permitted to die.

And cut me off - This expression, says Gesenius (Lexicon on the word בצע *betsaʿ*), is a metaphor derived from a weaver, who, when his web is finished, cuts it off from the thrum by which it is fastened to the loom; see the notes at Isaiah 38:12. The sense is, that Job wished that God would wholly finish his work, and that as he had begun to destroy him he would complete it.

Verse 10

Then should I yet have comfort - Dr. Good renders this, "then would I already take comfort." Noyes, "yet it should still be my consolation." The literal sense is, "and there would be to me yet consolation;" or "my consolation would yet be." That is, he would find comfort in the grave (compare Job 3:13 ff), or in the future world.

I would harden myself in sorrow - Dr. Good renders this, "and I will leap for joy." In a similar way Noyes renders it, "I would exult." So Schultens understands the expression. The Hebrew word rendered "I would harden myself" (סלד *sâlad*) occurs nowhere else, and expositors have been divided in regard to its meaning. According to Castell, it means to strengthen, to confirm. The Chaldee (סלד) means to grow warm, to glow, to burn. The Arabic word is applied to a horse, and means to beat the earth with his feet, and then to leap, to exult, to spring up; and this is the idea which Gesenius and others suppose is to be retained here - an idea which certainly better suits the connection than the common one of hardening himself in sorrow. The Septuagint renders it ἡλλόμήν *hēllomēn* - "I would leap," or exult, although they have sadly missed the sense in the other part of the verse. They render it, "Let but my city be a grave, upon whose walls I will leap; I will not spare, for I have not falsified the holy words of my God." The Chaldee renders it, "and I will exult (ואבוע) when fury comes upon the wicked." The probable meaning is, that Job would exult or rejoice,

if be was permitted to die; he would triumph even in the midst of his sorrow, if he might lie down and expire.

Let him not spare - Let him not withhold or restrain those sufferings which would sink me down to the grave.

For I have not concealed the words of the Holy One - I have openly and boldly maintained a profession of attachment to the cause of God, and to his truth. I have, in a public and solemn manner, professed attachment to my Maker; I have not refused to acknowledge that I am his; I have not been ashamed of him and his cause. How much consolation may be found in such a reflection when we come to die! If there has been a consistent profession of religion; if there has been no shrinking back from attachment to God; if in all circles, high and low, rich and poor, frivolous and serious, there has been an unwavering and steady, though not ostentatious, attachment to the cause of God, it will give unspeakable consolation and confidence when we come to die. If there has been concealment, and shame, and shrinking back from a profession of religion, there will be shame, and regret, and sorrow; compare Psalm 40:9; Acts 20:20-27.

Verse 11

What is my strength, that I should hope? - Job had hitherto borne his trials without apprehension that he would lose his constancy of hope, or his confidence in God. He here seems to apprehend that his constancy might fail, and he therefore wishes to die before he should be left to dishonor God. He asks, therefore, what strength he had that he should hope to be able to sustain his trials much longer.

And what is mine end, that I should prolong my life? - Various interpretations have been given of this passage. Some suppose it means, "What is the limit of my strength? How long will it last?" Others, "What end is there to be to my miseries?" Others, "How distant is mine end? How long have I to live?" Noyes renders it, "And what is mine end that I should be patient?" Rosenmuller supposes that the word "end" here means the "end of his strength," or that he had not such fortitude as to be certain that he could long bear his trials without complaining or murmuring. The phrase rendered "prolong my life," probably means rather "to lengthen the patience," or to hold out under accumulated sorrows. The word rendered life נפשׁ *nephesh* often means soul, spirit, mind, as well as life, and the sense is, that he could not hope, from any strength that he had, to bear without complaining these trials until the natural termination of his life; and hence,

he wished God to grant his request, and to destroy him. Feeling that his patience was sinking under his calamities, be says that it would be better for him to die than be left to dishonor his Maker. It is just the state of feeling which many a sufferer has, that his trials are so great that nature will sink under them, and that death would be a relief. Then is the time to look to God for support and consolation.

Verse 12

Is my strength the strength of stones? - That is, like a rampart or fortification made of stones, or like a craggy rock that can endure assaults made upon it. A rock will bear the beatings of the tempest, and resist the floods, but how can frail man do it? The idea of Job is, that he had no strength to bear up against these accumulated trials; that he was afraid that he should be left to sink under them, and to complain of God; and that his friends were not to wonder if his strength gave way, and he uttered the language of complaint.

Or is my flesh of brass? - Margin, "brazen." The comparison used here is not uncommon. So Cicero, Aca. Qu. iv. 31, says, Non enim est e saxo sculptus, ant e robore dolatus homo; habet corpus, habet animum; movetur mente, movetur sensibus: - "for man is not chiselled out of the rock, nor cut from a tree; he has a body, he has a soul; he is actuated by mind, he is swayed by senses." So Theocritus, in his description of Amycus, Idyll. xxii. 47:

Στήθεα δ᾽ἐσφαίρωτο πελώρια και πλατὺ νῶτον,

Σαρκὶ σιδαρείῃ σφυρήλακος οἷα κολασσός.

Stēthea d' esfairōto pelōria kai platu nōton Sarki sidareiē sfurēlakos hoia kolossos Round as to his vast breast and broad back, and with iron flesh, he is as if a colossus formed with a hammer - So in Homer the expression frequently occurs - σιδήρειον ἦτορ *sidēreion ētor* - an iron heart - to denote courage. And so, according to Schultens, it has come to be a proverb, οὐκ ἀπὸ δρυὸς, οὐκ ἀπο πέτρης *ouk apo druos ouk apo petrēs* - not from a tree, not from a rock. The meaning of Job is plain. He had flesh like others. His muscles, and nerves, and sinews, could not bear a constant force applied to them, as if they were made of brass or iron. They must give way; and he apprehended that he would sink under these sorrows, and be left to use language that might dishonor God. At all events, he felt that these great sorrows justified the strong expressions which he had already employed.

Verse 13

Is not my help in me? - This would be better rendered in an affirmative manner, or as an exclamation. The interrogative form of the previous verses need not be continued in this. The sense is, "alas! there is no help in me!" That is, "I have no strength; I must give up under these sorrows in despair." So it is rendered by Jerome, Rosenmuller, Good, Noyes, and others.

And is wisdom quite driven from me? - This, also, should be read as an affirmation, "deliverance is driven from me." The word rendered wisdom (תּשׁיה *tûshîyâh*) means properly a setting upright; then help, deliverance; and then purpose, enterprise; see the notes at Job 5:12. Here it means that all hope of deliverance had fled, and that he was sinking in despair.

Verse 14

To him that is afflicted - Margin, "melteth." The word here used (מס *mâs*) is from מסס *mâsas* to melt, flow down, waste away, and here means one who pines away, or is consumed under calamities. The design of this verse is, to reprove his friends for the little sympathy which they had shown for him. He had looked for consolation in his trials, and he had a right to expect it; but he says that he had met with just the opposite, and that his calamity was aggravated by the fact that they had dealt only in the language of severity.

Pity should be showed from his friend - Good renders this, "shame to the man who despiseth his friend." A great variety of interpretations have been proposed of the passage, but our translation has probably expressed the true sense. If there is any place where kindness should be shown, it is when a man is sinking under accumulated sorrows to the grave.

But he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty - This may be either understood as referring to the language which Job says they had used of him - charging him with forsaking the fear of God, instead of consoling him; or it may mean that they had forsaken the fear of God in reproaching him, and in failing to comfort him; or it may mean that if such kindness were not shown to a friend in trial, he would be left to cast off the fear of God. This last interpretation is adopted by Noyes. Good supposes that it is designed to be a severe reproach of Eliphaz, for the course which he had pursued. It seems to me that this is probably the correct interpretation, and that the particle ו (*v*) here is used in an adversative sense, meaning that while it was an obvious dictate of piety to show kindness to a friend,

Eliphaz had forgotten this obligation, and had indulged himself in a strain of remark which could not have been prompted by true religion. This sentiment he proceeds to illustrate by one of the most beautiful comparisons to be found in any language.

Verse 15

My brethren - To wit, the three friends who had come to condole with him. He uses the language of brethren, to intimate what he had a right to expect from them. It is common in all languages to give the name brethren to friends.

Have dealt deceitfully - That is, I have been sadly disappointed. I looked for the language of condolence and compassion; for something to cheer my heart, and to uphold me in my trials - as weary and thirsty travelers look for water and are sadly disappointed when they come to the place where they expected to find it, and find the stream dried up. The simile used here is exquisitely beautiful, considered as a mere description of an actual occurrence in the deserts of Arabia. But its chief beauty consists in its exact adaptation to the case before him, and the point and pith of the reproof which it administers. “The fullness, strength, and noise of these temporary streams in winter, answer to the large professions made to Job in his prosperity by his friends. The dryness of the waters at the approach of summer, resembles the failure of their friendship in time of affliction.” Scott, as quoted by Noyes.

As a brook - That is, as a stream that is swelled by winter torrents, and that is dry in summer. Such streams abound in Arabia, and in the East generally. The torrents pour down from the hills in time of rain, or when swelled by the melting of the ice; but in summer they are dry, or their waters are lost in the sand. Even large streams are thus absorbed. The river Barrady, which waters Damascus, after passing to a short distance to the southeast of the city toward the Arabian deserts, is lost in the sand, or evaporated by the heat of the sun. The idea here is, that travelers in a caravan would approach the place where water had been found before, but would find the fountain dried up, or the stream lost in the sand; and when they looked for refreshment, they found only disappointment. In Arabia there are not many rivers. In Yemen, indeed, there are a few streams that flow the year round, and on the East the Euphrates has been claimed as belonging to Arabia. But most of the streams are winter torrents that become dry in summer, or rivulets that are swelled by heavy rains.

An illustration of the verse before us occurs in Campbell‘s Travels in Africa. “In desert parts of Africa it has afforded much joy to fall in with a brook of water, especially when running in the direction of the journey, expecting it would prove a valuable companion. Perhaps before it accompanied us two miles it became invisible by sinking into the sand; but two miles farther along it would reappear and raise hopes of its continuance; but after running a few hundred yards, would sink finally into the sand, no more again to rise.” A comparison of a man who deceives and disappoints one to such a Stream is common in Arabia, and has given rise, according to Schultens, to many proverbs. Thus, they say of a treacherous friend, “I put no trust in thy torrent;” and, “O torrent, thy flowing subsides.” So the Scholiast on Moallakat says, “a pool or flood was called Gadyr, because travelers when they pass by it find it full of water, but when they return they find nothing there, and it seems to have treacherously betrayed them. So they say of a false man, that he is more deceitful than the appearance of water” - referring, perhaps, to the deceitful appearance of the mirage in the sands of the desert; see the notes at Isaiah 35:7.

And as the stream of brooks they pass away - As the valley stream - the stream that runs along in the valley, that is filled by the mountain torrent. They pass away on the return of summer, or when the rain ceases to fall, and the valley is again dry. So with the consolations of false friends. They cannot be depended on. All their professions are temporary and evanescent.

Verse 16

Which are blackish - Or, rather, which are turbid. The word used here (קדרים *qoderîym*) means to be turbid, foul, or muddy, spoken of a torrent, and then to be of a dusky color, to be dark-colored, as e. g. the skin scorched by the sun, Job 30:28; or to be dark - as when the sun is obscured; Joel 2:10; Joel 3:15. Jerome renders it, Qui timent pruinam - “which fear the frost, when the snow comes upon them.” The Septuagint renders it, “they who had venerated me now rushed upon me like snow or hoar frost, which melting at the approach of heat, it was not known whence it was.” The expression in the Hebrew means that they were rendered dark and turbid by the accumulated torrents caused by the dissolving snow and ice.

By reason of the ice - When it melts and swells the streams.

And wherein the snow is hid - That is, says Noyes, melts and flows into them. It refers to the melting of the snow in the spring, when the

streams are swelled as a consequence of it. Snow, by melting in the spring and summer, would swell the streams, which at other times were dry. Lucretius mentions the melting of the snows on the mountains of Ethiopia, as one of the causes of the overflowing of the Nile:

Forsitan Aethiopum pentrue de montibus altis
Crescat, ubi in campos albas descendere ningues
Tahificiss subigit radiis sol, omnia lustrans.
vi. 734.
Or, from the Ethiop-mountains, the bright sun,
Now full matured, with deep-dissolving ray,

May melt the agglomerate snows, and down the plains

Drive them, augmenting hence the incipient stream.
Good
A similar description occurs in Homer, Iliad xi. 492:
Ὡς δ᾽ ὁπόε πλήφων ποταμός πεδίνδε κάτεισι
Χειμάῤῥους κατ᾽ ὄρεσφιν, κ. τ. λ.
Hōs d' hopote plēthōn potamos pedionde kateisi
Cheimarrous kat' oresfin etc in Ovid also, Fast. ii. 219:
Ecce, velut torrens andis pluvialibus auctus,
Ant hive, quae, Zephyro victa, repente fluit,
Per sara, perque vias, tertur; nec, ut ante solebat,
Riparum clausas margine finit aquas.

Verse 17

What time - In the time; or after a time.

They wax warm - Gesenius renders this word (יזרבו *yezorebû*) when they became narrow, and this version has been adopted by Noyes. The word occurs nowhere else. Taylor (Concord.) renders it, “to be dissolved by the heat of the sun.” Jerome, *fuerint dissipati* - “in the time in which they are scattered.” The Septuagint, τακεῖσα Θέρμης γενομένης *takeisa thermēs genomenēs* - “melting at the approach of heat.” The Chaldee, “In the time in which the generation of the deluge sinned, they were scattered.” Castell says that the word זרב *zârab* in the Piel, as the word in Chaldee (זרב *zerab*) means “to flow”; and also that it has the same signification as צרב *tsârab* to become warm. In Syriac the word means to be straitened, bound, confined. On the whole, however, the connection seems to require us to understand it

as it is rendered in our common translation, as meaning, that when they are exposed to the rays of a burning sun, they evaporate. They pour down from the mountains in torrents, but when they flow into burning sands, or become exposed to the intense action of the sun, they are dried up, and disappear.

They vanish - Margin, "are cut off." That is, they wander off into the sands of the desert until they are finally lost.

When it is hot - Margin, "in the heat thereof." When the summer comes, or when the rays of the sun are poured down upon them.

They are consumed - Margin, "extinguished." They are dried up, and furnish no water for the caravan.

Verse 18

The paths of their way are turned aside - Noyes renders this, "The caravans turn aside to them on their way." Good, "The outlets of their channel wind about." Rosenmuller, "The bands of travelers direct their journey to them." Jerome, "Involved are the paths of their steps." According to the interpretation of Rosenmuller, Noyes, Umbreit, and others, it means that the caravans on their journey turn aside from their regular way in order to find water there; and that in doing it they go up into a desert and perish. According to the other interpretation, it means that the channels of the stream wind along until they diminish and come to nothing. This latter I take to be the true sense of the passage, as it is undoubtedly the most poetical. It is a representation of the stream winding along in its channels, or making new channels as it flows from the mountain, until it diminishes by evaporation, and finally comes to nothing.

They go to nothing - Noyes renders this very singularly, "into the desert," - meaning that the caravans, when they suppose they are going to a place of refreshment, actually go to a desert, and thus perish. The word used here, however תהו *tôhû* does not occur in the sense of a desert elsewhere in the Scriptures. It denotes nothingness, emptiness, vanity (see Genesis 1:2), and very appropriately expresses the nothingness into which a stream vanishes when it is dried up or lost in the sand. The sense is, that those streams wander along until they become smaller and smaller, and then wholly disappear. They deceive the traveler who hoped to find refreshment there. Streams depending on snows and storms, and having no permanent fountains, cannot be confided in. Pretended friends are like them. In times of prosperity they are full of professions, and their aid is proffered to us.

But we go to them when we need their assistance, when we are like the weary and thirsty traveler, and they disappear like deceitful streams in the sands of the desert.

Verse 19

The troops of Tema looked - That is, looked for the streams of water. On the situation of Tema, see Notes, Job 2:11. This was the country of Eliphaz, and the image would be well understood by him. The figure is one of exquisite beauty. It means that the caravans from Tema, in journeying through the desert, looked for those streams. They came with an expectation of finding the means of allaying their thirst. When they came there they were disappointed, for the waters had disappeared. Reiske, however, renders this, "Their tracks (the branchings of the flood) tend toward Tema;" - a translation which the Hebrew will bear, but the usual version is more correct, and is more elegant.

The companies of Sheba waited for them - The "Sheba" here referred to was probably in the southern part of Arabia; see the notes at Isaiah 45:14. The idea is, that the caravans from that part of Arabia came and looked for a supply of water, and were disappointed.

Verse 20

They were confounded because they had hoped - The caravans of Tema and Sheba. The word "confounded" here means ashamed. It represents the state of feeling which one has who has met with disappointment. He is perplexed, distressed, and ashamed that he had entertained so confident hope; see the notes at Isaiah 30:5. They were downcast and sad that the waters had failed, and they looked on one another with confusion and dismay. There are few images more poetic than this, and nothing that would more strikingly exhibit the disappointment of Job, that he had looked for consolation from his friends, and had not found it. He was down-cast, distressed, and disheartened, like the travelers of Tema and of Sheba, because they had nothing to offer to console him; because he had waited for them to sustain him in his afflictions, and had been wholly disappointed.

Verse 21

For now ye are as nothing - Margin, "or, Ye are like to it, or them." In the margin also the word "nothing" is rendered "not." This variety arises from a difference of reading in the Hebrew text, many MSS. having instead of (לא *lô'*), not, (לו *lô'*), to him, or to it. Which is correct, it is not easy to

determine. Rosenmuller supposes that it is only a variety in writing the word לא *l′* where the waw is often used for.א The probability is, that it means, that they were as nothing - like the stream that had disappeared. This is the point of the comparison; and this Job now applies to his friends. They had promised much by their coming - like the streams when swollen by rains and melted ice. But now they were found to be nothing.

Ye see my casting down - חתת *chăthath* - my being broken or crushed; my calamity. Vulgate, plugam. Septuagint, τραῦμα *trauma* wound.

And are afraid - Are timid and fearful. You shrink back; you dare not approach the subject boldly, or come to me with words of consolation. You came with a professed intention to administer comfort, but your courage fails.

Verse 22

Did I say, Bring unto me? - Job proceeds to state that their conduct in this had been greatly aggravated by the fact that they had come voluntarily. He had not asked them to come. He had desired no gift; no favor. He had not applied to them in any way or form for help. They had come of their own accord, and when they came they uttered only the language of severity and reproach. If he had asked them to aid him, the case would have been different. That would have given them some excuse for interposing in the case. But now the whole was gratuitous and unasked. He did not desire their interference, and he implies by these remarks that if they could say nothing that would console him, it would have been kindness in them to have said nothing.

Or, Give a reward for me of your substance? - That is, did I ask a present from you out of your property? I asked nothing. I have on no occasion asked you to interpose and aid me.

Verse 23

Or, Deliver me out of the enemy‘s hand? - At no time have I called on you to rescue me from a foe.

Or, Redeem me? - That is, rescue me from the hand of robbers. The meaning is, that he was in no way beholden to them; he had never called on them for assistance; and there was therefore no claim which they could now have to afflict him further by their reflections. There seems to be something peevish in these remarks; and we need not attempt to justify the spirit which dictated them.

Verse 24

Teach me, and I will hold my tongue - That is, give me any real instruction, or show me what is my duty, and I will be silent. By this he means that Eliphaz had really imparted no instruction, but had dealt only in the language of reproof. The sense is, "I would willingly sit and listen where truth is imparted, and where I could be enabled to see the reason of the divine dealings. If I could be made to understand where I have erred, I would acquiesce."

Verse 25

How forcible are right words! - How weighty and impressive are words of truth! Job means that he was accustomed to feel their power, and to admit it on his soul. If their words were such, he would listen to them with profound attention, and in silence. The expression has a proverbial cast.

But what doth your arguing reprove? - Or rather, what doth the reproof from you reprove? or what do your reproaches prove? Job professes a readiness to listen to words of truth and wisdom; he complains that the language of reproach used by them was not adapted to instruct his understanding or to benefit his heart. As it was, he did not feel himself convinced, and was likely to derive no advantage from what they said.

Verse 26

Do ye imagine to reprove words? - A considerable variety of interpretation has occurred in regard to this verse. Dr. Good, following Schultens, supposes that the word translated wind here רוּח *rûach* means sighs, or groans, and renders it,

Would ye then take up words for reproof,
The mere venting the means of despair?

But Rosenmuller has well remarked that the word never has this signification. Noyes renders it,

Do ye mean to censure words?
The words of a man in despair are but wind.

In this, he has probably expressed the true sense. This explanation was proposed by Ludov. de Dieu, and is adopted by Rosenmuller. According to this, the sense is, "Do you think it reasonable to carp at mere words? Will you pass over weighty and important arguments and facts, and dwell upon the words merely that are extorted from a man in misery? Do you not know that one in a state of despair utters many expressions which ought not to be regarded as the result of his deliberate judgment? And will you spend your

time in dwelling on those words rather than on the main argument involved?" This is probably the true sense of the verse; and if so it is a complaint of Job that they were disposed to make him "an offender for a word" rather than to enter into the real merits of the case, and especially that they were not disposed to make allowances for the hasty expressions of a man almost in despair.

Verse 27

Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless - Job undoubtedly means that this should be applied to himself. He complains that they took advantage of his words, that they were disposed to pervert his meaning, and unkindly distorted what he said. The word rendered" fatherless" יתום *yâthôm* properly denotes an orphan; Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 10:18; Deuteronomy 14:29. But it is possible that it is not to be taken in this limited signification here. The word is still retained in the Arabic language - the language spoken in the country where Job lived, - where the word יתום *yâthôm* means to be lonely, bereaved, etc. It may be that this idea occurs under the form of the word used here, that Job was lonely and bereaved; that he was as desolate and helpless as a fatherless child; and especially that they manifested a spirit like that of those who would oppress an orphan. The word "overwhelm" תפילו *tapîylû* means properly, "ye fall upon;" that is, you deal with him violently. Or, it may mean here, in the Hiphil, "you cause to fall upon," referring to a net, and meaning, that they sprung a net for the orphan. So Rosenmuller and Noyes understand it. To do this was, in Oriental countries, regarded as a crime of special enormity, and is often so spoken of in the Bible; see the notes at Isaiah 1:17.

And ye dig a pit for your friend - You act toward your friend as hunters do toward wild beasts. They dig a pit and cover it over with brushwood to conceal it, and the hunted animal, deceived, falls into it unawares. So you endeavor to entrap your friend. You lay a plan for it. You conceal your design. You contrive to drive him into the pit that you have made, and urge him on until you have caught him in the use of unguarded language, or driven him to vent expressions that cover him with confusion. Instead of throwing a mantle of charity over his frailties and infirmities, you make the most of every word, take it out of its proper connection, and attempt to overwhelm him in shame and disgrace. On the method of hunting in ancient times, see the notes at Job 18:8-10.

Verse 28

Now, therefore, be content - Rosenmuller has better rendered this, "if it please you." The sense is, "if you are willing, look upon me." That is, "if you are disposed, you may take a careful view of me. Look me in the countenance. You can see for yourselves whether I am sincere or false. I am willing that my whole demeanor should be subjected to the utmost scrutiny."

For it is evident unto you if I lie - Margin, as in Hebrew before your face. That is, "you yourselves can see by my whole demeanor, by my sufferings, my patience, my manifest sincerity, that I am not playing the hypocrite." Conscious of sincerity, he believed that if they would look upon him, they would be convinced that he was a sincere and an upright man.

Verse 29

Return, I pray you - That is, return to the argument. Give your attention to it again. Perhaps he may have discerned a disposition in them to turn away from what he was saying, and to withdraw and leave him. Job expresses his belief that he could convince them; and he proposes more fully to state his views, if they would attend to him.

Let it not be iniquity - Let it not be considered as wrong thus to come back to the argument. Or, let it not be assumed that my sentiments are erroneous, and my heart evil. Job means, that it should not be taken for granted that he was a hypocrite; that he was conscious of sincerity, and that he was convinced that he could satisfy them of it if they would lend a listening ear. A similar sentiment he expresses in Job 19:28:

But ye should say, Why persecute we him?

Seeing the root of the matter is found in me.

My righteousness is in it - Margin, that is, this matter. The sense is, "my complete vindication is in the argument which I propose to state. I am prepared to show that I am innocent." On that account, he wishes them to return and attend to what he proposed to say.

Verse 30

Is there iniquity in my tongue? - This is a solemn appeal to their consciences, and their own deep conviction that he was sincere. Iniquity in the tongue means falsehood, deceit, hypocrisy - that which would be expressed by the tongue.

Cannot my taste discern perverse things? - Margin, palate. The word used here חך *chêk* means properly the palate, together with the corresponding lower part of the mouth, the inside mouth. Gesenius. Hence,

it means the organ of taste, residing in the mouth. The meaning is, that Job was qualified to discern what was true or false, sincere or hypocritical, just or unjust, in the same manner as the palate is fitted to discern the qualities of objects, whether bitter or sweet, pleasant or unpleasant, wholesome or unwholesome. His object is to invite attention to what he had to state on the subject. To this proposed vindication he proceeds in the following chapter, showing the greatness of his calamity, and his right, as he supposes, to complain. Their attention was gained. They did not refuse to listen to him, and he proceeds to a fuller statement of his calamity, and of the reasons why he had allowed himself to use the language of complaint. They listened without interruption until he was done, and then replied in tones of deeper severity still.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? - Margin, or, warfare. The word used here צבא *tsâbâ'* means properly a host, an army, see the notes, Isaiah 1:9; then it means warfare, or the hard service of a soldier; notes, Isaiah 40:2. Here it means that man on the earth was enlisted, so to speak, for a certain time. He had a certain and definite hard service to perform, and which he must continue to discharge until he was relieved by death. It was a service of hazard, like the life of a soldier, or of toil, like that of one who had been hired for a certain time, and who anxiously looked for the period of his release. The object of Job in introducing this remark evidently is, to vindicate himself for the wish to die which he had expressed. He maintains that it is as natural and proper for man in his circumstances to wish to be released by death, as for a soldier to desire that his term of service might be accomplished, or a weary servant to long for the shades of the evening. The Septuagint renders it, "Is not the life of man upon the earth peirateerion " - explained by Schleusner and rendered by Good, as meaning a band of pirates. The Vulgate renders it, *militia* - miltary service. The sense is, that the life of man was like the hard service of a soldier; and this is one of the points of justification to which Job referred in Job 6:29-30. He maintains that it is not improper to desire that such a service should close.

The days of an hireling - A man who has been hired to perform some service with a promise of a reward, and who is not unnaturally impatient to receive it. Job maintained that such was the life of man. He was looking forward to a reward, and it was not unnatural or improper to desire that that reward should be given to him.

Verse 2

As a servant earnestly desireth - Margin, gapeth after. The word here שׁאף *shâ'aph* means to breathe hard, to pant, to blow, and then to desire earnestly.

The shadow - This may refer either to a shade in the intense heat of the day, or to the night. Nothing is more grateful in oriental countries, when the sun pours down intensely on burning sands, than the shadow of a tree, or the shade of a projecting rock. The editor of the Pictorial Bible on this verse remarks, "We think we can say, that next to water, the greatest and deepest

enjoyment we could ever realize in the hot climates of the East was, when on a journey, any circumstance of the road brought us for a few minutes under some shade. Its reviving influence upon the bodily frame, and consequently upon the spirits, is inconceivable by one who has not had some experience of the kind. Often also during the hall of a caravan in the open air, when the writer has been enabled to secure a station for repose under the shelter of a rock or of an old wall, has his own exultation and strong sense of luxurious enjoyment reminded him of this and other passages of Scripture, in which shade is mentioned as a thing punted for with intense desire." Probably here, however, the reference is to the shades of night, the time when darkness falls upon the earth, and the servant is released from his toil. It is common in all languages to speak of night as enveloped with shadows. Thus, Virgil, En. iv. 7:

Humentemque aurora polo dimoverat urnbram.

The meaning of Job is, that as a servant looked impatiently for the shades of the evening when he would be dismissed from toil, so he longed for death.

And as an hireling looketh - That is, he anxiously desires his work to be finished, and expects the reward of his labors. So Job looked to the reward of a life of toil and piety. Is there not here an undoubted reference to a future state? Is it not manifest that Job looked to some recompense in the future world, as real and as sure, as a hired servant looks for the reward of his toils when his work is done?

Verse 3

So am I made to possess - Hebrew I am made to inherit. The meaning is, that such sad and melancholy seasons now were his only portion.

Months of vanity - That is, months which were destitute of comfort; in other words, months of affliction. How long his trials had continued before this, we have no means of ascertaining. There is no reason, however, to suppose that his bodily sufferings came upon him all at once, or that they had not continued for a considerable period. It is quite probable that his expressions of impatience were the result not only of the intensity, but the continuance of his sorrows.

And wearisome nights are appointed to me - Even his rest was disturbed. The time when care is usually forgotten and toil ceases, was to him a period of sleepless anxiety and distress - עמל *ʿâmâl* The Septuagint renders it, nights of pangs (νύκτες ὀδυνῶν *nuktes odunōn*), expressing

accurately the sense of the Hebrew. The Hebrew word עמל *ʿâmâl* is commonly applied to intense sorrow, to trouble and pain of the severest kind, such as the pains of parturition; see the notes at Isaiah 53:11.

Verse 4

When I lie down - I find no comfort and no rest on my bed. My nights are long, and I am impatient to have them passed, and equally so is it with the day. This is a description which all can understand who have been laid on a bed of pain.

And the night be gone - Margin, evening be measured. Herder renders this, "the night is irksome to me." The word rendered night (ערב *ʿereb*) properly means the early part of the night, until it is succeeded by the dawn. Thus, in Genesis 1:5," And the evening (ערב *ʿereb*) and the morning were the first day." Here it means the portion of the night which is before the dawning of the aurora - the night. The word rendered "be gone" and in the margin "be measured" (מדד *mîddad*), has been variously rendered. The verb מדד *mâdad* means to stretch, to extend, to measure; and, according to Gesenius, the form of the word used here is a noun meaning flight, and the sense is, "when shall be the flight of the night?" He derives it from נדד *nâdad* to move, to flee, to flee away. So Rosenmuller explains it. The expression is poetic, meaning, when shall the night be gone?

I am full of tossings to and fro - (נדדים *nâdûdîym*). A word from the same root. It means uneasy motions, restlessness. He found no quiet repose on his bed.

Unto the dawning - נשׁף *nesheph* from נשׁף *nâshaph* to breathe; hence, the evening twilight because the breezes blow, or seem to breathe, and then it means also the morning twilight, the dawn. Dr. Stock renders it, "until the morning breeze."

Verse 5

My flesh is clothed with worms - Job here undoubtedly refers to his diseased state, and this is one of the passages by which we may learn the nature of his complaint; compare the notes at Job 2:7. There is reference here to the worms which are produced in ulcers and in other forms of disease. Michaelis remarks that such effects are produced often in the elephantiasis. Bochart, Hieroz. P. II, Lib. IV. c. xxvi. pp. 619621, has abundantly proved that such effects occur in disease, and has mentioned several instances where death ensued from this cause; compare Acts 12:23. The same thing would often happen - and particularly in hot climates - if it

were not for the closest care and attention in keeping running sores as clean as possible.

And clods of dust - Accumulated on the ulcers which covered his whole body. This effect would be almost unavoidable. Dr. Good renders this, "worms and the imprisoning dust," and supposes that the image is taken from the grave, and that the idea in the whole passage is that of one who is "dead while he lives;" that is, of one who is undergoing putrefaction before he is buried. But the more common and correct interpretation is that which refers it to the accumulated filth attending a loathsome disease; see Job 2:8. The word which is used here and rendered clods (גוּשׁ *gûsh*) means a lump of earth or dust. Septuagint, βώλακας γῆς *bōlakas gēs* Vulgate, *sordes pulveris*," clods of earth." The whole verse is rendered by the Septuagint," My body swarms with the putrefaction of worms, and I moisten the clods of earth with the ichor (ἰχῶρος *ichōros*) of ulcers."

My skin is broken - - רגע *râga*ʿ This word means, to make afraid, to terrify; and then to shrink together from fear, or to contract. Here it means, according to Gesenius, that "the skin came together and healed, and then broke forth again and ran with pus." Jerome renders it, aruit - dries up. Herder, "my skin becometh closed." Dr. Good, "my skin becometh stiff;" and carries out his idea that the reference here is to the stiffened and rigid appearance of the body after death. Doederlin supposes that it refers to the rough and horrid appearance of the skin in the elephantiasis, when it becomes rigid and frightful by the disease. Jarchi renders it, cutis mea corrugata - my skin is rough, or filled with wrinkles. This seems to me to be the idea, that it was filled with wrinkles and corrugations; that it became stiff, fixed, frightful, and was such as to excite terror in the beholder.

And become loathsome - Gesenius, "runs again with pus." The word here used מאס *mâ'as* means properly to reject, contemn, despise. A second sense which it has is, to melt, to run like water; Psalm 58:7, "Let them melt away (ימאסו *yîmâ'asû*) as waters." But the usual meaning is to be preferred here. His skin became abhorrent and loathsome in the sight of others.

Verse 6

My days are swifter than a weaver‘s shuttle - That is, they are short and few. He does not here refer so much to the rapidity with which they were passing away as to the fact that they would soon be gone, and that he was likely to be cut off without being permitted to enjoy the blessings of a long life; compare the notes at Isaiah 38:12. The weaver‘s shuttle is the

instrument by which the weaver inserts the filling in the woof. With us few things would furnish a more striking emblem of rapidity than the speed with which a weaver throws his shuttle from one side of the web to the other. It would seem that such was the fact among the ancients, though the precise manner in which they wove their cloth, is unknown. It was common to compare life with a web, which was filled up by the successive days. The ancient Classical writers spoke of it as a web woven by the Fates. We can all feel the force of the comparison used here by Job, that the days which we live fly swift away. How rapidly is one after another added to the web of life! How soon will the whole web be filled up, and life be closed! A few more shoots of the shuttle and all will be over, and our life will be cut off, as the weaver removes one web from the loom to make way for another. How important to improve the fleeting moments, and to live as if we were soon to see the rapid shuttle flying for the last time!

And are spent without hope - Without hope of recovery, or of future happiness on earth. It does not mean that he had no hope of happiness in the world to come. But such were his trials here, and so entirely had his comforts been removed, that he had no prospect of again enjoying life.

Verse 7

O remember - This is evidently an address to God. In the anguish of his soul Job turns his eye and his heart to his Maker, and urges reasons why he should close his life. The extent of his sufferings, and the certainty that he must die Job 7:9-10, are the reasons on which he dwells why his life should be closed, and he released. The language is respectful, but it is the expression of deep anguish and sorrow.

That my life is wind - Life is often compared with a vapor, a shadow, a breath. The language denotes that it is frail, and soon passed - as the breeze blows upon us, and soon passes by; compare Psalm 78:39:

For he remembered that they were but flesh;

A wind that passeth away and cometh not again.

Mine eye shall no more - Margin, as in Hebrew not return. The idea is, that if he was cut off, he would not return again to behold the pleasant scenes of this life.

See good - Margin, To see, that is, to enjoy. The sense is that he would no more be permitted to look upon the things which now so much gratified the sight, and gave so much pleasure. There is some resemblance here to the

feelings expressed by Hezekiah in his apprehension of death; see the notes at Isaiah 38:10-11.

Verse 8

The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more - I shall be cut off from all my friends - one of the things which most distresses people when they come to die.

Thine eyes are upon me, and I am not - see Job 7:21. Dr. Good renders this, "let thine eye be upon me, and I am nothing." Herder, "thine eye will seek me, but I am no more." According to this the sense is, that he was soon to be removed from the place where he had dwelt, and that should he be sought there he could not be found. He would seem to represent God as looking for him, and not finding him; see Job 7:21. The margin has," I can live no longer." It may be possible that this is the meaning, that God had fixed an intense gaze upon him, and that he could not survive it. If this is the sense, then it accords with the descriptions given of the majesty of God everywhere in the Scriptures - that nothing could endure His presence, that even the earth trembles, and the mountains melt away, at his touch. Thus, in Psalm 104:32:

He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth;
He toucheth the hills, and they smoke.

Compare the representation of the power of the eye in Job 16:9:

He teareth me in his wrath who hateth me;
He gnasheth upon me with his teeth
Mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me.

On the whole, I think it probable that this is the sense here. There is an energy in the original which is greatly enfeebled in the common translation. God had fixed his eyes upon Job, and he at once disappeared; compare Revelation 20:11: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them."

Verse 9

As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away - This image is taken from the light and fleecy clouds, which become smaller and smaller until they wholly vanish. For an illustration of a similar phrase, see the notes at Isaiah 44:22.

To the grave - - שׁאול *she'ôl* Septuagint, εἰς ᾅδην *eis hadēn* to Hades. The word may mean grave, or the place of departed spirits; see Isaiah 5:14,

note; Isaiah 14:9, note; compare the notes at Job 10:21-22. Either signification will apply here.

Shall come up no more - Shall no more live on the earth. It would be pressing this too far to adduce it as proving that Job did not believe in the doctrine of the resurrection. The connection here requires us to understand him as meaning only that he would not appear again on the earth.

Verse 10

He shall return no more to his house - He shall not revisit his family. Job is dwelling on the calamity of death, and one of the circumstances most deeply felt in the prospect of death is, that a man must leave his own house to return no more. The stately palaces that he has built; the splendid halls which he has adorned; the chamber where he slept; the cheerful fireside where he met his family; the place at the table which he occupied, he will revisit no more. His tread will be no more heard; his voice will no more awaken delight in the happy family group; the father and husband returning from his daily toil will no more give pleasure to the joyous circle. Such is death. It removes us from all earthly comforts, takes us away from home and kindred - from children and friends, and bids us go alone to an unknown world. Job felt that it was a sad and gloomy thing. And so it is, unless there is a well-founded hope of a better world. It is the gospel only that can make us willing to leave our happy dwellings, and the embraces of kindred and friends, and to tread the lonely path to the regions of the dead. The friend of God has a brighter home in heaven. He has more numerous and better friends there. He has there a more splendid and happy mansion than any here on earth. He will be engaged in more blissful scenes there, than can be enjoyed by the most happy fireside here; will have more cheerful employments there, than any which can be found on earth; and will have higher and purer pleasures there, than can be found in parks, and lawns, and landscapes; in splendid halls, in music, and the festive board; in literary pursuits, and in the love of kindred. How far Job had the means of consolation from such reflections as these, it is not easy now to determine. The probability, however, is, that his views were comparatively dim and obscure.

Verse 11

Therefore I will not refrain my mouth - The idea in this verse is, "such is my distress at the prospect of dying, that I cannot but express it. The idea of going away from all my comforts, and of being committed to

the grave, to revisit the earth no more, is so painful that I cannot but give vent to my feelings."

Verse 12

Am I a sea? - That is, "am I like a raging and tumultuous sea, that it is necessary to restrain and confine me? The sense of the verse is, that God had treated him as if he were untamable and turbulent, as if he were like the restless ocean, or as if he were some monster, which could be restrained within proper limits only by the stern exercise of power. Dr. Good, following Reiske, renders this, "a savage beast," understanding by the Hebrew word ים *yâm* a sea-monster instead of the sea itself, and then any ferocious beast, as the wild buffalo. But it is clear, I think, that the word never has this meaning. It means properly the sea; then a lake or inland sea, and then it is applied to any great river that spreads out like the ocean. Thus, it is applied both to the Nile, and to the Euphrates; see Isaiah 11:15, note; Isaiah 19:15, note. Herder here renders it, "the river and its crocodile," and this it seems to me is probably the meaning. Job asks whether he is like the Nile, overflowing its banks, and rolling on impetuously to the sea, and, unless restrained, sweeping everything away. Some such flood of waters, and not a savage beast, is undoubtedly intended here.

Or a whale - תנין *tannîyn* Jerome, *cetus* - a whale. The Septuagint renders it, δράκων *drakōn* a dragon. The Chaldee paraphrases it, "Am I condemned as the Egyptians were, who were condemned and submerged in the Red sea; or as Pharaoh, who was drowned in the midst of it, in his sins, that thou placest over me a guard?" Herder renders it, "the crocodile." On the meaning of the word, see Isaiah 13:22, note; Isaiah 51:9, note. It refers here probably to a crocodile, or some similar monster, that was found either in the Nile or in the branches of the Red sea. There is no evidence that it means a whale. Harmer (Obs. iii. 536, Ed. Lond. 1808) supposes that the crocodile is meant, and observes that "Crocodiles are very terrible to the inhabitants of Egypt; when, therefore, they appear, they watch them with great attention, and take proper precautions to secure them, so as that they should not be able to avoid the deadly weapons the Egyptians afterward make use of to kill them." According to this, the expression in Job refers to the anxious care which is evinced by the inhabitants of countries where crocodiles abound to destroy them. Every opportunity would be anxiously watched for, and great solicitude would be manifested to take their lives. In countries, too, which were subject to inundation from waters, great anxiety

would be evinced. The rising waters would be carefully watched, lest they should burst over all barriers, and sweep away fences, houses, and towns. Such a constant vigilance Job represents the Almighty as keeping over him - watching him as if he were a swelling, roaring, and ungovernable torrent, or as if he were a frightful monster of the deep, whom he was anxious to destroy. In both respects the language is forcible, and in both instances scarcely less irreverent than it is forcible. For a description of the crocodile, see the notes at Job 41.

Verse 13

When I say, My bed shall comfort me - The idea in this verse and the following is, that there was no intermission to his sorrows. Even the times when people usually sought repose were to him times of distress. Then he was disturbed and alarmed by the most frightful dreams and visions, and sleep fled from him.

Shall ease my complaint - The word rendered "shall ease" יִשָּׂא *yîśâ'* means rather, shall bear; that is, shall lighten or sustain. The meaning is, that he sought relief on his bed.

Verse 14

Then thou scarest me - This is an address to God. He regarded him as the source of his sorrows, and he expresses his sense of this in language indeed very beautiful, but far from reverence.

With dreams - see Job 7:4. A similar expression occurs in Ovid:

Ut puto, cam requies medicinaque publica curae,
Somnus adest, soliris nox venit orba malis,
Somnia me terrent. veros imitantia casus,

Et vigilant sensus in mea damna mei.
Do Ponto, Lib. i. Eleg. 2.

And terrifiest me through visions - See the notes at Job 4:13. This refers to the visions of the fancy, or to frightful appearances in the night. The belief of such night-visions was common in the early ages, and Job regarded them as under the direction of God, and as being designed to alarm him.

Verse 15

So that my soul - So that I; the soul being put for himself.

Chooseth strangling - Dr. Good renders it "suffocation," and supposes that Job alludes to the oppression of breathing, produced by what is

commonly called the night-mare, and that he means that he would prefer the sense of suffocation excited at such a time to the terrible images before his mind. Herder renders it, death. Jerome, *suspendium*. The Septuagint, "Thou separatest (ἀπαλλάξεις *apallaceis*) my life from my spirit, and my bones from death;" but what idea they attached to it, it is impossible now to tell. The Syriac renders it, "Thou choosest my soul from perdition, and my bones from death." The word rendered strangling (מחנק *machănaq*) is from חנק *chânaq* to be narrow, strait, close; and then means to strangle, to throttle, Nahum 2:12; 2 Samuel 17:23. Here it means death; and Job designs to say that he would prefer even the most violent kind of death to the life that he was then leading. I see no evidence that the idea suggested by Dr. Good is to be found in the passage.

And death rather than my life - Margin, as in Hebrew, bones. There has been great variety in the exposition of this part of the verse. Herder renders it, "death rather than this frail body." Rosenmuller and Noyes, "death rather than my bones;" that is, he preferred death to such an emaciated body as he then had, to the wasted skeleton which was then all that he had left to him. This is probably the true sense. Job was a sufferer in body and in soul. His flesh was wasting away, his body was covered with ulcers, and his mind was harassed with apprehensions. By day he had no peace, and at night he was terrified by alarming visions and spectres; and he preferred death in any form to such a condition.

Verse 16

I loathe it - I loathe my life as it is now. It has become a burden and I desire to part with it, and to go down to the grave. There is, however, considerable variety in the interpretation of this. Noyes renders it, "I am wasting away." Dr. Good connects it with the previous verse and understands by it, "death in comparison with my sufferings do I despise." The Syriac is, - it fails to me, that is, I fail, or my powers are wasting away. But the Hebrew word מאס *mâ'as* means properly to loathe and contemn (see the note at Job 7:5), and the true idea here is expressed in the common version. The sense is, "my life is painful and offensive, and I wish to die."

I would not live alway - As Job used this expression, there was doubtless somewhat of impatience and of an improper spirit. Still it contains a very important sentiment, and one that may be expressed in the highest state of just religious feeling. A man who is prepared for heaven should not and will not desire to live here always. It is better to depart and

to be with Christ, better to leave a world of imperfection and sin, and to go to a world of purity and love. On this text, fully and beautifully illustrating its meaning, the reader may consult a sermon by Dr. Dwight. Sermons, Edinburgh, 1828, vol. ii. 275ff. This world is full of temptations and of sin; it is a world where suffering abounds; it is the infancy of our being; it is a place where our knowledge is imperfect, and where the affections of the best are comparatively grovelling; it is a world where the good are often persecuted, and where the bad are triumphant; and it is better to go to abodes where all these will be unknown. Heaven is a more desirable place in which to dwell than the earth; and if we had a clear view of that world, and proper desires, we should pant to depart and to be there. Most people live as though they would live always here if they could do it, and multitudes are forming their plans as if they expected thus to live. They build their houses and form their plans as if life were never to end. It is the privilege of the Christian, however, to EXPECT to die. Not wishing to live always here, he forms his plans with the anticipation that all which he has must soon be left; and he is ready to loose his hold on the world the moment the summons comes. So may we live; so living, it will be easy to die. The sentiments suggested by this verse have been so beautifully versified in a hymn by Muhlenberg, that I will copy it here:

I would not live alway; I ask not to stay
Where storm after storm rises dark o‘er the way;
The few fleeting mornings that dawn on us here
Are enough for life‘s sorrows - enough for its cheer.
I would not live alway; no, welcome the tomb;
Since Jesus hath lain there, I dread not its gloom;
There sweet be my rest, till he bid me arise,
To hail him in triumph descending the skies.
Who, who would live alway, away from his God,
Away from yon heaven, that blissful abode,
Where rivers of pleasure flow o‘er the bright plains,
And the noontide of glory eternally reigns?
Where the saints of all ages in harmony meet,
Their Saviour and brethren transported to greet;
While anthems of rapture unceasingly roll,
And the smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul.

Let me alone - This is an address to God. It means, "cease to afflict me. Suffer me to live out my little length of life with some degree of ease. It is short at best, and I have no desire that it should always continue." This sentiment he illustrates in the following verses.

For my days are vanity - They are as nothing, and are unworthy the notice of God. Life is a trifle, and I am not anxious that it should be prolonged. Why then may I not be suffered to pass my few days without being thus afflicted and pained?

Verse 17

What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? - That thou shouldst make him great, or that thou shouldst regard him as of so great importance as to fix thine eye attentively upon him. The idea here is, that it was unworthy the character of so great a being as God to bestow so much time and attention on a creature so insignificant as man; and especially that man could not be of so much importance that it was necessary for God to watch all his defects with vigilance, and take special pains to mark and punish all his offences. This question might be asked in another sense, and with another view. Man is so insignificant compared with God, that it may be asked why he should so carefully provide for his needs? Why make so ample provision for his welfare? Why institute measures so amazing and so wonderful for his recovery from sin? The answers to all these questions must be substantially the same.

(1) It is a part of the great plan of a condescending God. No insect is so small as to be beneath his notice. On the humblest and feeblest animalcula a care is bestowed in its formation and support as if God had nothing else to regard or provide for.

(2) Man is of importance. He has an immortal soul, and the salvation of that soul is worth all which it costs, even when it costs the blood of the Son of God.

(3) A creature who sins, always makes himself of importance. The murderer has an importance in the view of the community which he never had before. All good citizens become interested to arrest and punish him. There is no more certain way for a man to give consequence to himself, than to violate the laws, and to subject himself to punishment. An offending member of a family has an importance which he had not before, and all

eyes are turned to him with deep interest. So it is with man - a part of the great family of God.

(4) A sufferer is a being of importance, and man as a sufferer is worthy of the notice of God. However feeble may be the powers of anyone, or humble his rank, yet if he suffers, and especially if he is likely to suffer forever, he becomes at once an object of the highest importance: Such is man; a sufferer here, and liable to eternal pain hereafter; and hence, the God of mercy has interposed to visit him, and to devise a way to rescue him from his sorrows, and from eternal death. The Syriac renders this, "What is man, that thou shouldst destroy him?" - but the Hebrew means. "to magnify him, to make him great or of importance."

That thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? - Not with affection, but to punish him - for so the expression in this connection evidently means. The phrase itself might mean, "Why shouldst thou love him?" - implying that there was nothing in a creature so insignificant that could render him a proper object of the divine regard. But as used here by Job it means, "Why dost thou fix thy attention upon him so closely - marking the slightest offence, and seeming to take a special pleasure in inflicting pain and torture?" The Psalmist makes use of almost the same language, and not improbably copied it from this, though he employs it in a somewhat different sense. As used by him, it means that it was wonderful that the God who made the heavens should condescend to notice a creature so insignificant as man.

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers;
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
What is man, that thou art mindful of him?

And the son of man, that thou visitest him:
Psalm 8:3-4.

Verse 18

And that thou shouldest visit him? - That is, for the purpose of inflicting pain. This language Job intends undoubtedly to be applicable to himself, and he asks with impatience why God should take a pleasure in visiting with suffering each returning day a creature like him?

Every morning - Why is there no intermission even for a day? Why does not God allow one morning, or one moment, to pass without inflicting

pain on a creature so feeble and so frail?

And try him - Or, prove him; to wit, by afflictions.

Every moment - Constantly; without intermission.

Verse 19

How long wilt thou not depart? - How long is this to continue? The same word occurs in Job 14:6. The word rendered "depart" שׁעה *shâʿâh* means to look, to look around, and then to look away from anyone or anything. The idea here is, that God had fixed his eyes upon Job, and he asks with anxiety, how long this was to continue, and when he would turn his eyes away; compare the notes at Job 7:8. Schultens supposes that the metaphor here is taken from combatants, who never take their eyes from their antagonists.

Till I swallow down my spittle - For the shortest time. But there has been considerable variety in the explanation of this phrase. Herder renders it, "Until I draw my breath." Noyes, "Until I have time to breathe;" but he acknowledges that he has substituted this for the proverb which occurs in the original. The Hebrew is literally rendered in the common version, and the proverb is retained in Arabia to the present day. The meaning is, Give me a little respite; allow me a little time; as we would say, Suffer me to breathe. "This," says Burder, "is a proverb among the Arabians to the present day, by which they understand, Give me leave to rest after my fatigue. This is the favor which Job complains is not granted to him. There are two instances which illustrate this passage (quoted by Schultens) in Harris's Narratives entitled the Assembly. One is of a person, who, when eagerly pressed to give an account of his travels, answered with impatience, ‹Let me swallow down my spittle, for my journey hath fatigued me.' The other instance is of a quick return made to a person who used the proverb. ‹Suffer me, ‹ said the person importuned, ‹to swallow down my spittle;' to which the friend replied, ‹You may, if you please, swallow down even the Tigris and the Euphrates; ‹ that is, You may take what time you please."

The expression is proverbial, and corresponds to ours when we say, "in the twinkling of an eye," or, "until I can catch my breath;" that is, in the briefest interval. Job addresses this language to God. There is much impatience in it, and much that a pious man should not employ; but we are to remember that Job was beset with special trials, and that he had not the views of the divine existence and perfections, the promises and the high hopes, which as Christians we have under the fuller light of revelation; and

before harshly condemning him we should put ourselves in his situation, and ask ourselves how we would be likely to think and feel and speak if we were in the same circumstances.

Verse 20

I have sinned - חטאתי *châṭâ'tîy* This is a literal translation, and as it stands in the common version it is the language of a penitent - confessing that he had erred, and making humble acknowledgment of his sins. That such a confession became Job, and that he would be willing to admit that he was a sinner, there can be no doubt; but the connection seems rather to require a different sense - a sense implying that though he had sinned, yet his offences could not be such as to require the notice which God had taken of them. Accordingly this interpretation has been adopted by many, and the Hebrew will bear the construction. It may be rendered as a question, "Have I sinned; what did I against thee" Herder. Or, the sense may be, "I have sinned. I admit it. Let this be conceded. But what can that be to a being like God, that he should take such notice of it? Have I injured him? Have I deserved these heavy trials? Is it proper that he should make me a special mark, and direct his severest judgments against me in this manner?" compare the notes at Job 35:6-8. The Syriac renders it in this manner, "If I have sinned, what have I done to thee?" So the Arabic, according to Walton. So the Septuagint, Εἰ ἐγὼ ἥμαρτον *Ei egō hēmarton* - "if I have sinned." This expresses the true sense. The object is not so much to make a penitent confession, as it is to say, that on the worst construction of the case, on the admission of the truth of the charge, he had not deserved the severe inflictions which he had received at the hand of God.

What shall I do unto thee? - Or, rather, what have I done unto thee? How can my conduct seriously affect thee? It will not mar thy happiness, affect thy peace, or in any way injure a being so great as God. This sentiment is often felt by people - but not often so honestly expressed.

O thou Preserver of men - Or, rather, "O thou that dost watch or observe men." The word rendered "Preserver" נצר *notsēr* is a participle from נצר *nâtsar* which means, according to Gesenius, to watch, to guard, to keep, and is used here in the sense of observing one's faults; and the idea of Job is, that God closely observed the conduct of people; that he strictly marked their faults, and severely punished them; and he asks with impatience, and evidently with improper feeling, why he thus closely

watched people. So it is understood by Schultens, Rosenmuller, Dr. Good, Noyes, Herder, Kennicott, and others. The Septuagint renders it, "who knowest the mind of men?"

Why hast thou set me as a mark? - The word rendered "mark" מפגע *mîphgâʿ* means properly that which one impinges against - from פגע *pâgaʿ* to impinge against, to meet, to rush upon anyone - and here means, why has God made me such an object of attack or assault? The Septuagint renders it, κατεντευκτήν σου *katenteuktēn sou* "an accuser of thee."

So that I am a burden to myself - The Septuagint renders this, ἐπὶ σοὶ φορτίον *epi soi phortion* a burden to thee. The copy from which they translated evidently had עליך *ʿalēykā* - to thee, instead of עלי *ʿālay* - to me, as it is now read in the Hebrew. "The Masoretes also place this among the eighteen passages which they say were altered by transcribers." *Noyes*. But the Received Text is sustained by all the versions except the Septuagint and by all the Hebrew manuscripts hitherto examined, and is doubtless the true reading. The sense is plain, that life had become a burden to Job. He says that God had made him the special object of his displeasure, and that his condition was insupportable. That there is much in this language which is irreverent and improper no one can doubt, and it is not possible wholly to vindicate it. Nor are we called to do it by any view which we have of the nature of inspiration. He was a good, but not a perfect man. These expressions are recorded, not for our imitation, but to show what human nature is. Before harshly condemning him, however, we should ask what we would be likely to do in his circumstances; we should remember also, that he had few of the truths and promises to support him which we have.

Verse 21

And why dost thou not pardon my transgression? - Admitting that I have sinned Job 7:20, yet why dost thou not forgive me? I shall soon pass away from the land of the living. I may be sought but I shall not be found. No one would be injured by my being pardoned - since I am so short-lived, and so unimportant in the scale of being. No one can be benefited by pursuing a creature of a day, such as I am, with punishment. Such seems to be the meaning of this verse. It is the language of complaint, and is couched in language filled with irreverence. Still it is language such as awakened and convicted sinners often use, and expresses the feelings which often pass through their hearts. They admit that they are sinners. They know that they must be pardoned or they cannot be saved. They are distressed at the

remembrance of guilt, and under this state of mind, deeply convicted and distressed, they ask with a complaining spirit why God does not pardon them? Why does he allow them to remain in this state of agitation, suspense, and deep distress? Who could be injured by their being forgiven? Of what consequence to others can it be that they should not be forgiven? How can God be benefited by his not pardoning them? It may not be easy to answer these questions in a manner wholly satisfactory; but perhaps the following may be some of the reasons why Job had not the evidence of forgiveness which he now desired, and why the convicted sinner has not. The main reason is, that they are not in a state of mind to make it proper to forgive them.

(1) There is a feeling that they have a claim on God for pardon, or that it would be wrong for God not to pardon them. When people feel that they have a claim on God for pardon, they cannot be forgiven. The very notion of pardon implies that it must be when there is no claim existing or felt.

(2) There is no proper submission to God - to his views, his terms, his plan. In order that pardon may be extended to the guilty, there should be acquiescence in God‘s own terms, and time, and mode. The sinner must resign himself into his hands, to be forgiven or not as he pleases - feeling that the whole question is lodged in his bosom, and that if he should not forgive, still it would be right, and his throne would be pure. In particular, under the Christian method of pardon, there must be entire acquiescence in the plan of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ; a willingness to accept of forgiveness, not on the ground of personal claim, but on the ground of his merits; and it is because the convicted sinner is not willing to be pardoned in this way, that he remains unforgiven. There should be a feeling, also, that it would be right for God to pardon others, if he pleases, even though we are not saved; and it is often because the convicted sinner is not willing that that should be done, because he feels that it would be wrong in God to save others and not him, that he is not forgiven. The sinner is often suffered to remain in this state until he is brought to acquiesce in the right of a sovereign God to save whom he pleases.

(3) There is a complaining spirit - and that is a reason why the sinner is not forgiven. That was manifestly the case with Job; and when that exists, how can God forgive? How can a parent pardon an offending child, when

he is constantly complaining of his injustice and of the severity of his government? This very spirit is a new offence, and a new reason why he should be punished. So the awakened sinner murmurs. He complains of the government of God as too severe; of his law, as too strict; of his dealings, as harsh and unkind. He complains of his sufferings, and thinks they are wholly beyond his deserts. He complains of the doctrines of the Bible as mysterious, incomprehensible, and unjust. In this state how can he be forgiven? God often suffers the awakened sinner, therefore, to remain under conviction for sin, until he is willing to acquiesce in all his claims, and to submit without a complaint; and then, and not until then, he extends forgiveness to the guilty and troubled spirit.

For now shall I sleep in the dust - On the word sleep, as applied to death, see the notes at Job 3:13. The meaning is, that he was soon to die. He urges the shortness of the time which remained to him as a reason why his afflictions should be lightened, and why he should be pardoned. If God had anything that he could do for him, it must be done soon. But only a brief period remained, and Job seems to be impatient lest the whole of his life should be gone, and he should sleep in the dust without evidence that his sins were pardoned. Olympiodorus, as quoted by Rosenmuller, expresses the sense in the following manner: "If, therefore, I am so short-lived (or momentary, πρόσκαιρος *proskairos*) and obnoxious to death, and must die after a short time, and shall no more arise, as if from sleep, why dost not thou suffer the little space of life to be free from punishment?"

And thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be - That is, thou shalt seek to find me after I have slept in the dust, as if with the expectation that I should wake, but I shall not be found. My sleep will be perpetual, and I shall no more return to the land of the living. The idea seems to be, that if God were to show him any favor, it must be done soon. His death, which must happen soon, would put it out of the power even of God to show him mercy on earth, if he should relent and be inclined to favor him. He seems not to doubt that God would be disposed yet to show him favor; that he would be inclined to pardon him, and to relax the severity of his dealings with him, but he says that if it were done it must be done soon, and seems to apprehend that it would be delayed so long that it could not be done. The phrase "in the morning" here is used with reference to the sleep which he had just mentioned.

We sleep at night, and awake and arise in the morning. Job says it would not be so with him in the sleep of death. He would awake no more; he could no more be found. - In this chapter there is much language of bitter complaint, and much which we cannot justify. It should not be taken as a model for our language when we are afflicted, though Job may have only expressed what has passed through the heart of many an afflicted child of God. We should not judge him harshly. Let us ask ourselves how we would have done if we had been in similar circumstances. Let us remember that he had comparatively few of the promises which we have to comfort us, and few of the elevated views of truth as made known by revelation, which we have to uphold us in trial. Let us be thankful that when we suffer, promises and consolations meet us on every hand. The Bible is open before us - rich with truth, and bright with promise.

Let us remember that death is not as dark and dismal to us as it was to the pious in the time of the patriarchs - and that the grave is not now to us as dark and chilly, and gloomy, and comfortless an abode. To their view, the shadow of death cast a melancholy chillness over all the regions of the dead; to us the tomb is enlightened by Christian hope. The empire of Death has been invaded, and his power has been taken away. Light has been shed around the tomb, and the grave to us is the avenue to immortal life; the pathway on which the lamp of salvation shines, to eternal glory. Let us not complain, therefore, when we are afflicted, as if the blessing were long delayed, or as if it could not be conferred should we soon die. If withheld here, it will be imparted in a better world, and we should be willing to bear trials in this short life, with the sure promise that God will meet and bless us when we pass the confines of life, and enter the world of glory.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

Then answered Bildad the Shuhite - ; see the notes at Job 2:11.

Verse 2

How long wilt thou speak these things? - The flyings of murmuring and complaint, such as he had uttered in the previous chapters.

The words of thy mouth be like a strong wind? - The Syriac and Arabic (according to Walton) render this, "the spirit of pride fill thy mouth." The Septuagint renders it, "The spirit of thy mouth is profuse of words" - πολυῤῥῆμον *polurrēmon* But the common rendering is undoubtedly correct, and the expression is a very strong and beautiful one. His language of complaint and murmuring was like a tempest. It swept over all barriers, and disregarded all restraint. The same figure is found in Aristophanes, Ran. 872, as quoted by Schultens, Τυφὼς ἐχβαίειν παρασκενάξεται *Tuphōs ekbainein paraskeuacetai* - a tempest of words is preparing to burst forth. And in Silius Italicus, xxi. 581:

- *qui tanta superbo*
Facta sonas ore, et spumanti turbine perflas
Ignorantum aures.

The Chaldee renders it correctly רבא זעפא - a great tempest.

Verse 3

Doth God pervert judgment? - That is, Does God afflict people unjustly? Does he show favor to the evil, and punish the good? Bildad here undoubtedly refers to Job, and supposes that he had brought this charge against God. But he had not done it in so many words. He had complained of the severity of his sufferings, and had indulged in irreverent language toward God. But he had not advanced the charge openly that God had perverted right. Bildad strenuously maintains that God would do right. His argument is based on the supposition that God would deal with people in this life according to their character; and thus he infers that Job must have been guilty of some great wickedness, that punishment should come upon him in this manner.

Verse 4

If thy children have sinned against him - Bildad here assumes that the children of Job had been wicked, and had been cut off in their sins. This must have cut him to the quick, for there was nothing which a bereaved

father would feel more acutely than this. The meaning here is somewhat weakened by the word "if." The Hebrew אם *'îm* is rather to be taken in the sense of "since" - assuming it as an indisputable point, or taking it for granted. It was not a supposition that if they should now do it, certain other consequences would follow; but the idea is, that since they had been cut off in their sins, if Job would even now seek God with a proper spirit, he might be restored to prosperity, though his beginning should be small; Job 8:7.

And he have cast them away - Bildad supposes that they had been disowned by God, and had been put to death.

For their transgression - Margin, in the hand of their. The Hebrew is, by the hand of their transgression; i. e, their sin has been the cause of it, or it has been by the instrumentality of their sin. What foundation Bildad had for this opinion, derived from the life and character of the sons of Job, we have no means of ascertaining. The probability is, however, that he had learned in general that they had been cut off; and that, on the general principle which he maintained, that God deals with men in this life according to their character, he inferred that they must have been distinguished for wickedness. Men not unfrequently argue in this way when sudden calamity comes upon others.

Verse 5

If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes - If thou wouldest do it now. If even on the supposition that your sons have thus perished, and that God has come out in judgment against your family, you would look to God, you might be restored to favor. The word rendered "seek betimes" (שׁחר *shâchar*) means literally to seek in the morning, to seek early; and then, to make it the first business. It is derived from the word meaning aurora (שׁחר *shachar*) and has reference to the early light of the morning, and hence, to an early seeking. It may be applied to seeking him in early life, or as the first thing - looking to him immediately when help is needed, or before we apply to anyone else; compare Proverbs 7:15; Proverbs 8:17; Proverbs 13:24; Job 24:5; Psalm 63:1; Psalm 78:34; Isaiah 26:9; Hosea 5:15; compare the advice of Eliphaz, Job 5:8.

Verse 6

If thou wert pure and upright - There is something especially severe and caustic in this whole speech of Bildad. He first assumes that the children of Job were cut off for impiety, and then takes it for granted that Job himself was not a pure and upright man. This inference he seems to

have derived partly from the fact that he had been visited with so heavy calamities, and partly from the sentiments which Job had himself expressed. Nothing could be more unjust and severe, however, than to take it for granted that he was a hypocrite, and then proceed to argue as if that were a settled point. He does not make it a supposition that possibly Job might have erred - which would not have been improper; but he proceeds to argue as if it were a point about which there could be no hesitation.

He would awake for thee - He would arouse or excite himself יעיר *yāʿîr* on thy account. The image is that of arousing oneself from sleep or inactivity to aid another; and the idea is, that God had, as it were, slumbered over the calamities of Job, or had suffered them to come without interposing to prevent them, but that he would arouse himself if Job were pure, and would call upon him for aid.

And make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous - That is, if thy habitation should become righteous now, he would make it prosperous. Hitherto, is the idea of Bildad, it has been a habitation of wickedness. Thy children have been wicked, and are now cut off. Thou thyself hast been a wicked man, and in consequence art afflicted. If now thou wouldest become pure and seek unto God, then God would make thy habitation prosperous. What could more try the patience of a sufferer than such cold and unfeeling insinuations? And what could more beautifully illustrate the nature of true courtesy, than to sit unmoved and hear such remarks? It was by forbearance in such circumstances eminently that Job showed his extraordinary patience.

Verse 7

Though thy beginning was small - On the supposition that the children of Job had been cut off, his family now was small. Yet Bildad says, that if he were to begin life again, even with so small a family, and in such depressed and trying circumstances, if he were a righteous man he might hope for returning prosperity.

Yet thy latter end - From this, it is evident that Job was not now regarded as an old man. He would still have the prospect of living many years. Some have supposed, however that the meaning here is, that his former prosperity should appear small compared with that which he would hereafter enjoy if he were pure and righteous. So Noyes and Rosenmuller interpret it. But it seems to me that the former interpretation is the correct one. Bildad utters a general sentiment, that though when a man begins life

he has a small family and little property, yet if he is an upright man, he will be prospered and his possessions will greatly increase; compare Job 42:12: "Yahweh blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning."

Verse 8

For inquire thee of the former age - That is, attend to the results of observation. Ask the generations which have passed, and who in their poems and proverbs have left the records of their experience. The sentiment which Bildad proposes to confirm by this appeal is, that though the wicked should for a time flourish, yet they would be cut off, and that the righteous, though they may be for a time afflicted, yet if they seek God, they will ultimately prosper. It was common to make these appeals to the ancients. The results of observation were embodied in proverbs, parables, fables, and fragments of poems; and he was regarded as among the wisest of men who had the fruits of these observations most at command. To that Bildad appeals, and especially, as would appear, to the fragment of an ancient poem which he proceeds to repeat, and which, perhaps, is the oldest poem extant in any language.

And prepare thyself - Make an effort, or give diligent attention to it.

To the search of their fathers - Of the bygone generations, not only to the age immediately past, but to their ancestors. He would bring the results of the observation of far distant ages to confirm the sentiment which he had advanced.

Verse 9

For we are but of yesterday - That is, we are of short life. We have had but few opportunities of observation compared with those who have gone before us. There can be no doubt that Bildad here refers to the longevity of the antecedent ages compared with the age of man at the time when he lived; and the passage, therefore, is of importance in order to fix the date of the poem. It shows that human life had been reduced in the time of Job within comparatively moderate limits, and that an important change had taken place in its duration. This reduction began not long after the flood, and was probably continued gradually until it reached the present limit of seventy years. This passage proves that Job could not have lived in the time of the greatest longevity of man; compare the Introduction, Section 3.

And know nothing - Margin, not. So the Hebrew literally, "we do not know." The sense is, "we have had comparatively few opportunities for observation. From the comparative brevity of our lives, we see but little of

the course of events. Our fathers lived through longer periods, and could mark more accurately the result of human conduct." One suggestion may be made here, perhaps of considerable importance in explaining the course of argument in this book. The friends of Job maintained that the righteous would be rewarded in this life, and that the wicked would be overtaken by calamity. It may seem remarkable that they should have urged this so strenuously, when in the actual course of events as we now see them, there appears to be so slender a foundation for it in fact. But may this not be accounted for by the remark of Bildad in the verse under consideration? They appealed to their fathers.

They relied on the results of experience in those ancient times. When people lived 900 or 1,000 years; when one generation was longer than twelve generations are now, this fact would be much more likely to occur than as human life is now ordered. Things would have time to work themselves right. The wicked in that long tract of time would be likely to be overtaken by disgrace and calamity, and the righteous would outlive the detractions and calumnies of their enemies, and meet in their old age with the ample rewards of virtue. Should people now live through the same long period, the same thing substantially would occur. A man's character, who is remembered at all, is fully established long before a thousand years have elapsed, and posterity does justice to the righteous and the wicked. If people lived during that time instead of being merely remembered, the same thing would be likely to occur. Justice would be done to character, and the world would, in general, render to a man the honor which he deserved. This fact may have been observed in the long lives of the people before the flood, and the result of the observation may have been embodied in proverbs, fragments of poems, and in traditionary sayings, and have been recorded by the sages of Arabia as indubitable maxims. With these maxims they came to the controversy with Job, and forgetful of the change necessarily made by the abbreviation of human life, they proceed to apply their maxims without mercy to him; and because he was overwhelmed with calamity, they assumed that therefore he must have been a wicked man.

Our days upon earth are a shadow - Comparisons of this kind are quite common in the Scriptures; see the notes at Job 7:6. A similar figure occurs in 1 Chronicles 29:15:

For we are strangers before thee,
And sojourners, as were all our fathers:

Our days upon earth are as a shadow,

Yea, there is no abiding.

An expression similar occurs in Aeschylus, Agam. v. 488, as quoted by Drusius and Dr. Good:

- εἴδωλον σκιᾶς *eidōlon skias* -

- The image or semblance of a shade -

So in Pindar, man is called σκιᾶς ὄναρ *skias onar* - the dream of a shade; and so by Sophocles, καπνοῦ σκιὰ *kapnou skia* - the shadow of smoke. All these mean the same thing, that the life of man is brief and transitory. Bildad designs to apply it not to man in general, but to the age in which he lived, as being disqualified by the shortness of life to make extended observations.

Verse 10

Shall not they teach thee - The results of human conduct, and the great principles on which God governs the world.

And utter words out of their heart - Dr. Good renders this,

"And well forth the sayings of their wisdom,"

And supposes it means that the words of wisdom would proceed from them as water bubbles from a fountain. But this, I think, is a mere conceit. The true sense is, that they would not speak that merely which comes from the mouth, or that which comes upper most, and without reflection - as the Greeks say, λέγειν πᾶν ὅ τι ἐπὶ στόμα ἔλθῃ *legein pan ho ti epi stoma elthē* or, as the Latins, *Quicquid in buccam venerit loqui* - to speak whatever comes in the mouth; but they would utter that which came from the heart - which was sincere, and the result of deep and prolonged reflection. Perhaps, also, Bildad means to insinuate that Job had uttered what was uppermost in his mind, without taking time for reflection.

Verse 11

Can the rush - This passage has all the appearance of being a fragment of a poem handed down from ancient times. It is adduced by Bildad as an example of the views of the ancients, and, as the connection would seem to imply, as a specimen of the sentiments of those who lived before the life of man had been abridged. It was customary in the early ages of the world to communicate knowledge of all kinds by maxims, moral sayings, and proverbs; by apothegms and by poetry handed down from generation to generation. Wisdom consisted much in the amount of maxims and proverbs which were thus treasured up; as it now consists much in the knowledge

which we have of the lessons taught by the past, and in the ability to apply that knowledge to the various transactions of life. The records of past ages constitute a vast storehouse of wisdom, and the present generation is more wise than those which have gone before, only because the results of their observations have been treasured up, and we can act on their experience, and because we can begin where they left off, and, taught by their experience, can avoid the mistakes which they made. The word "rush" here גמא *gôme'* denotes properly a bulrush, and especially the Egyptian papyrus - papyrus Nilotica; see the notes at Isaiah 18:2. It is derived from the verb גמא *gâmâ'* to absorb, to drink up, and is given to this plant because it absorbs or drinks up moisture. The Egyptians used it to make garments, shoes, baskets, and especially boats or skiffs; Pithy, Nat. His. 13. 2126; see the notes at Isaiah 18:2. They also derived from it materials for writing - and hence, our word paper. The Septuagint renders it here, πάπυρος *papuros* Without mire - Without moisture. It grew in the marshy places along the Nile.

Can the flag - Another plant of a similar character. The word אחו *'âchû* flag, says Gesenius, is an Egyptian word, signifying marsh-grass, reeds, bulrushes, sedge, everything which grows in wet grounds. The word was adopted not only into the Hebrew, but also into the Greek idiom of Alexandria, where it is written, ἄχι *achi* ἄχει *achei* Jerome says of it, "When I inquired of the learned what this word meant, I heard from the Egyptians, that by this name everything was intended in their language which grew up in a pool." The word is synonymous with rush, or bulrush, and denotes a plant which absorbs a great quantity of water. What is the exact idea which this figure is designed to convey, is not very clear. I think it probable that the whole description is intended to represent a hypocrite, and that the meaning is, that he had in his growth a strong resemblance to such a rush or reed. There was nothing solid or substantial in his piety. It was like the soft, spongy texture of the water-reed, and would wilt under trial, as the papyrus would when deprived of water.

Verse 12

Whilst it is yet in his greenness - That is, while it seems to be in its vigor.

And is not cut down - Even when it is not cut down. If suffered to stand by itself, and if undisturbed, it will wither away. The application of this is obvious and beautiful. Such plants have no self sustaining power. They are dependent on moisture for their support. If that is withheld, they droop and

die. So with the prosperous sinner and the hypocrite. His piety, compared with that which is genuine, is like the spongy texture of the paper-reed compared with the solid oak. He is sustained in his professed religion by outward prosperity, as the rush is nourished by moisture; and the moment his prosperity is withdrawn, his religion droops and dies like the flag without water.

Verse 13

So are the paths of all that forget God - This is clearly a part of the quotation from the sayings of the ancients. The word "paths" here means ways, acts, doings. They who forget God are like the paper-reed. They seem to flourish, but they have nothing that is firm and substantial. As the paper-reed soon dies, as the flag withers away before any other herb, so it will be with the wicked, though apparently prosperous.

And the hypocrite's hope shall perish - This important sentiment, it seems, was known in the earliest periods of the world; and if the supposition above be correct, that this is a fragment of a poem which had come down from far distant times, it was probably known before the flood. The passage requires no particular philological explanation, but it is exceedingly important. We may remark on it,

(1) That there were hypocrites even in that early age of the world. They are confined to no period, or country, or religious denomination, or profession. There are hypocrites in religion - and so there are in politics, and in business, and in friendship, and in morals. There arc pretended friends, and pretended patriots, and pretended lovers of virtue, whose hearts are false and hol ow, just as there are pretended friends of religion. Wherever there is genuine coin, it will be likely to be counterfeited; and the fact of a counterfeit is always a tribute to the intrinsic worth of the coin - for who would be at the pains to counterfeit that which is worthless? The fact that there are hypocrites in the church, is an involuntary tribute to the excellency of religion.

(2) The hypocrite has a hope of eternal life. This hope is founded on various things. It may be on his own morality; it may be on the expectation that he will be able to practice a deception; it may be on some wholly false and unfounded view of the character and plans of God. Or taking the word "hypocrite" in a larger sense to denote anyone who pretends to religion and who has none, this hope may be founded on some change of feeling which

he has had, and which he mistook for religion; on some supposed vision which he had of the cross or of the Redeemer, or on the mere subsiding of the alarm which an awakened sinner experiences, and the comparative peace consequent on that. The mere cessation of fear produces a kind of peace - as the ocean is calm and beautiful after a storm - no matter what may be the cause, whether it be true religion or any other cause. Many a sinner, who has lost his convictions for sin in any way, mistakes the temporary calm which succeeds for true religion, and embraces the hope of the hypocrite.

(3) That hope will perish. This may occur in various ways.

(a) It may die away insensibly, and leave the man to be a mere professor of religion - a formalist, without comfort, usefulness, or peace.

(b) It may be taken away in some calamity by which God tries the soul, and where the man will see that he has no religion to sustain him.

(c) It may occur under the preaching of the gospel, when the hypocrite may be convinced that he is destitute of vital piety, and has no true love to God.

(d) It may be on a bed of death - when God comes to take away the soul, and when the judgment-seat appears in view.

(e) Or it will be at the bar of God. Then the hope of the hypocrite will certainly be destroyed. Then it will be seen that he had no true religion, and then he will be consigned to the awful doom of him who in the most solemn circumstances lived to deceive, and who assumed the appearance of that which he had the strongest reason to believe he never possessed. Oh! how important it is for every professor of religion to examine himself, that he may know what is the foundation of his hope of heaven!

Verse 14

Whose hope shall be cut off - Schultens supposes that the quotation from the ancients closes with Job 8:13, and that these are the comments of Bildad on the passage to which he had referred. Rosenmuller and Noyes

continue the quotation to the close of Job 8:19; Dr. Good closes it at Job 8:13. It seems to me that it is extended further than Job 8:13, and probably it is to be regarded as continued to the close of Job 8:18. The beginning of this verse has been very variously rendered. Dr. Good says that it has never been understood, and proposes to translate it, "thus shall his support rot away." Noyes renders it, "whose expectation shall come to naught;" Gesenius, "shall be cut off." Jerome, *Non ei placebit vecordia sua*. "his madness (do age, rage, or frenzy) shall not please him?" The Septuagint, "his house shall be uninhabitable, and his tent shall pass away as the spider."

The Hebrew word translated "cut off" (יקט *yāqôṭ*) is from קוט *kūṭ* usually meaning to loathe, to nauseate, to be offensive. Gesenius supposes that the word here is synonymous with the Arabic "to be cut off." But this sense does not occur elsewhere in the Hebrew, and it is doubtful whether this is the true sense of the phrase. In the Hebrew word there is probably always the idea of loathing, of being offensive, irksome, or disgusting; see Psalm 95:10, I was grieved; Job 10:1, is weary; Ezekiel 6:9, shall loathe; so Ezekiel 20:43; Ezekiel 36:31; Ezekiel 16:47, a tiresome, or disgusting object. Taylor (Concord) renders it here, "Whom his hope shall loathe or abominate, that is, who shall loathe or hate the thing that he hopes for." I have no doubt that the meaning here is, to be loathsome, offensive, or nauseous, and the correct sense is, "whose hope shall rot." The figure is continued from the image of the paper-reed and the flag, which soon decay; and the idea is, that as such weeds grow offensive and putrid in the stagnant water, so shall it be with the hope of the hypocrite.

And whose trust - Whose confidence, or expectation.

A spider's web - Margin, "house." So the Hebrew בית *bayîth* The spider's house is the web which it forms, a frail, light, tenuous substance which will sustain almost nothing. The wind shakes it, and it is easily brushed away. So it will be with the hope of the hypocrite.

Verse 15

He shall lean upon his house - This is an allusion to the web or house of the spider. The hope of the hypocrite is called the house which he has built for himself; his home, his refuge, his support. But it shall fail him. In times of trial he will trust to it for support, and it will be found to be as frail as the web of the spider. How little the light and slender thread which a spider spins would avail a man for support in time of danger! So frail and

unsubstantial will be the hope of the hypocrite! It is impossible to conceive any figure which would more strongly describe the utter vanity of the hopes of the wicked. A similar comparison occurs in the Koran, Sur. 28,40: "They who assume any other patrons to themselves besides God, are like the spider building his house; for the house of the spider is most feeble."

He shall hold it fast - Or, he shall lay hold on it to sustain him, denoting the avidity with which the hypocrite seizes upon his hope. The figure is still taken from the spider, and is an instance of a careful observation of the habits of that insect. The idea is, that the spider, when a high wind or a tempest blows, seizes upon its slender web to sustain itself. But it is insufficient. The wind sweeps all away. So the tempest of calamity sweeps away the hypocrite, though he grasps at his hope, and would seek security in that, as a spider does in the light and tenuous thread which it has spun.

Verse 16

He is green before the sun - Vulgate, *"antequam veniat sol - before the sun comes."* So the Chaldee, "before the rising of the sun." So Eichhorn renders it. According to this, which is probably the true interpretation, the passage means that he is green and flourishing before the sun rises, but that he cannot hear its heat and withers away. A new illustration is here introduced, and the object is to compare the hypocrite with a vigorous plant that grows up quick and sends its branches afar, but which has no depth of root, and which, when the intense heat of the sun comes upon it, withers away. The comparison is not with a tree, which would bear the heat of the sun, but rather with those succulent plants which have a large growth of leaves and branches, like a gourd or vine, but which will not bear a drought or endure the intense heat of the sun. "This comparison of the transitory nature of human hope and prosperity to the sudden blight which over throws the glory of the forest and of the garden," says the Editor of the Pictorial Bible (on Psalm 37:35), "is at once so beautiful and so natural, as to have been employed by poets of every age." One such comparison of exquisite finish occurs in Shakespeare:

This is the state of man! Today he puts forth
The tender leaves of hope; tomorrow blossoms,
And hears his blushing honours thick upon him:

The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,

And, when he thinks, good easy man, full surely

His greatness is a ripening, nips his shoot,
And then he falls, as I do.

And his branch shooteth forth … - A comparison of a prosperous person or nation with a vine which spreads in this manner, is common in the Scriptures. See Psalm 80:11:

She sent out her boughs unto the sea,
And her branches unto the river.

Compare the note at Isaiah 16:8. A similar figure occurs in Psalm 37:35:

I have seen the wicked in great power,
And spreading himself like a green bay tree.

Verse 17

His roots are wrapped about the heap - There has been great diversity of opinion in the interpretation of this passage. Jerome renders it, "over the heap of stones his roots are condensed." Walton, "*super fontem* - over a fountain." The Septuagint, "he lies down (or sleeps, κοιμᾶται *koimatai*) on a heap of stones; and he lives in the midst of flint-stones." According to some, the word rendered heap גל *gal* means a fountain; according to others, it means a heap or pile of stones; according to Dr. Good, it means a rock. According to the view of the former, it refers to the flourishing condition of a hypocrite or sinner, and means that he is like a tree that sends its roots by a fountain, and is nourished by it. According to others, the reference is to the fact that the hypocrite is like a plant that has no depth of earth for its roots, that wraps its rooks around anything, even a heap of stones, to support itself; and that consequently will soon wither under the intense heat of the sun. The word גל *gal* rendered "heap," means either

(1.) A heap, as a heap of stones, from גלל *gâlal* - to roll, as e. g. stones. It may denote a heap of stones, Joshua 7:26, but it commonly refers to the ruins of walls and cities, Jeremiah 9:11; Jeremiah 51:37; Isaiah 25:2. It means

(2.) A fountain or spring, so called from the rolling or welling up of the waters, Psalm 42:7; Psalm 89:9; Psalm 107:25, Psalm 107:29. The parallelism, if nothing else, demands that the usual signification should be given to it here; and the true sense is, that the prosperous wicked man or the hypocrite is like a plant which stands in the midst of rocks, rubbish, or old

ruins, and not like one that stands in a fertile soil where it may strike its roots deep. The reference is to the fact that a tree or plant which springs up on a rock, or in the midst of rocks, will send its roots afar for nutriment, or will wrap them around the projecting points of rocks in order to obtain support. All have observed this in trees standing on rocks; but the following extract from Sillinian‘s Journal for January, 1840, wil illustrate the fact referred to here more fully.

“About fifteen years ago, upon the top of an immense boulder of limestone, some ten or twelve feet in diameter, a sapling was found growing. The stone was but slightly imbedded in the earth; several of its sides were raised from four to six feet above its surface; but the top of the rock was rough with crevices, and its surface, which was sloping off, on one side, to the earth, was covered with a thin mould. From this mould the tree had sprung up, and having thrust its roots into the crevices of the rock, it had succeeded in reaching the height of some twelve or fifteen feet. But about this period the roots on one side became loosened from their attachment, and the tree gradually declined to the opposite side, until its body was in a parallel line with the earth. The roots on the opposite side, having obtained a firmer hold, afforded sufficient nourishment to sustain the plant; although they could not, alone, retain it in its vertical position. In this condition of things, the tree as if ‹conscious of its needs, ‹ adopted (if the term may be used) an ingenious process, in order to regain its former upright position. One of the most vigorous of the detached roots sent out a branch from its side, which, passing round a projection of the rock, again united with the parent stalk, and thus formed a perfect loop around this projection, which gave to the root an immovable attachment.

“The tree now began to recover from its bent position. Obeying the natural tendency of all plants to grow erect, and sustained by this root, which increased with unwonted vigor, in a few years it had entirely regained its vertical position, elevated, as no one could doubt who saw it, by the aid of the root which had formed this singular attachment. But this was not the only power exhibited by this remarkable tree.

“After its elevation it flourished vigorously for several years. Some of its roots had traced the sloping side of the rock to the earth, and were buried

in the soil below. Others, having embedded themselves in its furrows, had completely filled these crevices with vegetable matter. The tree still continuing to grow, concentric layers of vegetable matter were annually deposited between the alburnum and liber, until by the force of vegetable growth alone, the rock was split from the top to the bottom, into three nearly equal divisions, and branches of the roots were soon found, extending down, through the divisions into the earth below. On visiting the tree a few months since, to take a drawing of it, we found that it had attained an altitude of fifty feet, and was four and a half feet in circumference at its base."

The image here shows that the author of this beautiful fragment was a careful observer of nature, and the comparison is exceedingly pertinent and striking. What more beautiful illustration of a hypocrite can there be? His roots do not strike into the earth. His piety is not planted in a rich soil. It is on the hard rock of the unconverted human heart. Yet it sends out its roots afar; seems to flourish for a time; draws nutriment from remote objects; clings to a crag or a projecting rock, or to anything for support - until a tempest sweeps it down to rise no more! No doubt the idea of Bildad was, that Job was just such a man.

Seeth the place of stones - Septuagint, "and lives in the midst of flints," not an unapt rendering - and a very striking description of a hypocrite. So Castellio, "existit inter lapides." Its only nutriment is derived from the scanty earth in the stony soil on which it stands, or in the crevices of the rocks.

Verse 18

If he destroy him from his place - The particle here which is rendered "if (אם *'îm*) is often used to denote emphasis, and means here "certainly" - "he shall be certainly destroyed." The word rendered destroy, from בלע *belaʿ* means literally to swallow Job 7:19, to swallow up, to absorb; and hence, to consume, lay waste, destroy. The sense is, that the wicked or the hypocrite shall be wholly destroyed from his place, but the image or figure of the tree is still retained. Some suppose that it means that God would destroy him from his place; others, as Rosenmuller and Dr. Good, suppose that the reference is to the soil in which the tree was planted, that it would completely absorb all nutriment, and leave the tree to die; that is, that the dry and thirsty soil in which the tree is planted, instead of affording

nutriment, acts as a "sucker," and absorbs itself all the juices which would otherwise give support to the tree. This seems to me to be probably the true interpretation. It is one drawn from nature, and one that preserves the concinnity of the passage.

Then it shall deny him - That is, the soil, the earth, or the place where it stood. This represents a wicked man under the image of a tree. The figure is beautiful. The earth will be ashamed of it; ashamed that it sustained the tree; ashamed that it ever ministered any nutriment, and will refuse to own it. So with the hypocrite. He shall pass away as if the earth refused to own him, or to retain any recollection of him.

I have not seen thee - I never knew thee. It shall utterly deny any acquaintance with it. There is a striking resemblance here to the language which the Savior says he will use respecting the hypocrite in the day of judgment: "and then will I profess to them, I never knew you;" Matthew 7:23. The hypocrite has never been known as a pious man. The earth will refuse to own him as such, and so will the heavens.

Verse 19

Behold, this is the joy of his way - This is evidently sarcastic. "Lo! such is the joy of his course! He boasts of joy, as all hypocrites do, but his joy endures only for a little time. This is the end of it. He is cut down and removed, and the earth and the heavens disown him!"

And out of the earth shall others grow - This image is still derived from the tree or plant. The meaning is, that such a plant would be taken away, and that others would spring up in its place which the earth would not be ashamed of. So the hypocrite is removed to make way for others who will be sincere, and who will be useful. Hypocrites and useless people in the church are removed to make way for others who will be active and devoted to the cause of the Redeemer. A similar sentiment occurs in Job 27:16-17. This closes, as I suppose, the quotation which Bildad makes from the poets of the former age, and in the remainder of the chapter he states another truth pertaining to the righteous. This fragment is one of the most interesting that can be found any where. As a relic of the earliest times it is exceedingly valuable; as an illustration of the argument in hand; and of the course of events in this world, it is eminently beautiful. It is as true now as it was when uttered before the flood, and may be used now as describing the doom of the hypocrite, with as much propriety as then, and it may be regarded as one of the way-marks in human affairs, showing that the government of

God, and the manner of his dispensations, are always substantially the same.

Verse 20

Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man - On the meaning of the word perfect, see the note at Job 1:1. The sentiment of Bildad, or the inference which he draws from the whole argument is, that God will be the friend of the pious, but that he will not aid the wicked. This accords with the general sentiment maintained in the argument of the friends of Job.

Neither will he help the evil doers - Margin, "Take the ungodly by the hand." This is in accordance with the Hebrew. The figure is that of taking one by the hand in order to assist him; see Isaiah 42:6.

Verse 21

Till he fill thy mouth with laughing - Until he make thee completely happy. The word rendered "till" (עד *ʿad*), is rendered by Dr. Good, "even yet." Noyes, following Houbigant, DeWette, and Michaelis, proposes to change the pointing, and to read עד *ʿôd* instead of עד *ʿad* - meaning, "while." The verse is connected with that which follows, and the particle used here evidently means "while," or "even yet" - and the whole passage means, "if you return to God, he will even yet fill you with joy, while those who hate you shall be clothed with shame. God will show you favor, but the dwelling of the wicked shall come to naught." The object of the passage is to induce Job to return to God, with the assurance that if he did, he would show mercy to him, while the wicked should be destroyed.

With rejoicing - Margin, "Shouting for joy." The word used (תרועה *terûʿâh*) is properly that which denotes the clangor of a trumpet, or the shout of victory and triumph.

Verse 22

They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame - When they see your returning prosperity, and the evidences of the divine favor. They will then be ashamed that they regarded you as a hypocrite, and that they reproached you in your trials.

And the dwelling-place of the wicked … - The wicked shall be destroyed, and his family shall pass away. That is, God will favor the righteous, but punish the wicked. This opinion the friends of Job maintain all along, and by this they urge him to forsake his sins, repent, and return to God.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 2

I know it is so of a truth - Job here refers, undoubtedly, to something that had been said before; but whether it is to the general strain of remark, or to some particular expression, may be doubted. Rosenmuller supposes that he refers to what was said by Eliphaz in Job 4:17; but it seems more probable that it is to the general position which had been laid down and defended, that God was just and holy, and that his proceedings were marked with equity. Job admits this, and proceeds to show that it was a truth quite as familiar to him as it was to them. The object of his dwelling on it seems to be to show them that it was no new thing to him, and that he had some views on that important subject which were well worthy of attention.

But how should man be just with God? - Margin, "before." The meaning is, that he could not be regarded as perfectly holy in the sight of God; or that so holy and pure a being as God must see that man was a sinner, and regard him as such; see the sentiment explained in the notes at Job 4:17. The question here asked is, in itself, the most important ever propounded by man - "How shall sinful man be regarded and treated as righteous by his Maker?" This has been the great inquiry which has always been before the human mind. Man is conscious that he is a sinner. He feels that he must be regarded as such by God. Yet his happiness here and hereafter, his peace and all his hope, depend on his being treated as if he were righteous, or regarded as just before God. This inquiry has led to all forms of religion among people; to all the penances and sacrifices of different systems; to all the efforts which have been made to devise some system that shall make it proper for God to treat people as righteous.

The question has never been satisfactorily answered except in the Christian revelation, where a plan is disclosed by which God "may be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth." Through the infinite merits of the Redeemer, man, though conscious that he is personally a sinner, may be treated as if he had never sinned; though feeling that he is guilty, he may consistently be forever treated as if he were just. The question asked by Job implies that such is the evidence and the extent of human guilt, that man can never justify himself. This is clear and indisputable. Man cannot justify himself by the deeds of the law. Justification, as a work of law, is this: A man is charged, for example, with the crime of murder. He sets up in

defense that he did not kill, or that if he tools life it was in self-defense, and that he had a right to do it. Unless the fact of killing be proved, and it be shown that he had no right to do in the case as he has done, he cannot be condemned, and the law acquits him. It has no charge against him, and he is just or justified in the sight of the law. But in this sense man can never be just before God. He can neither show that the things charged on him by his Maker were not done, or that being done, he had a right to do them; and being unable to do this, he must be held to be guilty. He can never be justified therefore by the law, and it is only by that system which God has revealed in the gospel, where a conscious sinner may be treated as if he were righteous through the merits of another, that a man can ever be regarded as just before God; see Romans 1:17, note; Romans 3:24-25, note.

Verse 3

If he will contend with him - That is, if God enters into a controversy with man. If he chooses to charge crime on him, and to hold him responsible for his deeds. The language here is taken from courts of justice, and means that if a trial were instituted, where God should submit charges, and the matter were left to adjudication, man could not answer the charges against him; compare the notes at Isaiah 41:1.

He cannot answer him one of a thousand - For one of a thousand of the sins charged on him. The word "thousand" here is used to denote the largest number, or all. A man who could not answer for one charge brought against him out of a thousand, must be held to be guilty; and the expression here is equivalent to saying that he could not answer him at all. It may also be implied that God has many charges against man. His sins are to be reckoned by thousands. They are numerous as his years, his months, his weeks, his days, his hours, his moments; numerous as his privileges, his deeds, and his thoughts. For not one of those sins can he answer. He can give no satisfactory account before an impartial tribunal for any of them. If so, how deeply guilty is man before God! How glorious that plan of justification by which he can be freed from this long list of offences, and treated as though he had not sinned.

Verse 4

He is wise in heart - Herder renders this,

Even the wise and the powerful,
Who hath withstood him and prospered?

But the more common interpretation is to refer it to God. The meaning of Job appears to be, that God was a sagacious adversary; that he was able to manage his cause; that he could meet and refute all objections which could be urged; and that it would be in vain to engage in a litigation before him. He so well understood the whole ground of debate, and was so entirely skilled in the merits of the controversy, and could so successfully meet all that could be alleged, that it was useless to attempt to hold an argument with him.

And mighty in strength - He is able to execute all his designs, and to carry all his purposes into effect. Man is weak and feeble, and it is hopeless for him to attempt to contend with the Almighty.

Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered? - To harden oneself, here means to resist or withstand him. It refers to the firmness or resolution which one is obliged to adopt who opposes another. Here it means the opposition which man makes to the law and government of the Most High; and the affirmation is, that no one can make such opposition who will not be ultimately overcome. God is so great, so powerful, and so just, that a successful resistance cannot be made. The arrangements of God will take their course, and man must yield to his claims and his government, or be prostrated. None can successfully resist God; and the true policy of man, as well as his duty, is to yield to him, and be at peace with him.

And hath prospered - Or been successful. He has failed in his opposition, and been obliged to yield. Prosperity is not found in opposing God. It is only by falling in with his arrangements and following his designs. A prosperous voyage is made by falling in with winds and currents, and not in opposing them; prosperous agriculture is carried on by coinciding with the favorable seasons of the year, and taking advantage of the dews, and rains, and sunbeams that God sends, and not in opposing them; prosperity in regard to health is found in taking advantage of the means which God gives to secure it, and not in opposing them. And the sinner in his course has no more chance of success and prosperity, than a man would have who should make it a point or principle of life always to sail against tides, and currents, and head winds; or he who should set at defiance all the laws of husbandry, and plant on a rock, or in the dead of winter; or he who should feed himself on poison rather than on nutritious food, and cultivate the nightshade rather that wheat. The great principle is,

that if a man desires prosperity, he must fall in with the arrangements of God in his providence and grace; and wisdom is seen in studying these arrangements, and in yielding to them.

Verse 5

Which removeth the mountains - In order to show how vain it was to contend with God, Job refers to some exhibitions of his power and greatness. The "removal of the mountains" here denotes the changes which occur in earthquakes and other violent convulsions of nature. This illustration of the power of God is often referred to in the Scriptures; compare Judges 5:5; 1 Kings 19:11; Psalm 65:6; Psalm 114:4; Psalm 144:5; Isaiah 40:12; Jeremiah 4:24.

And they know not - This is evidently a Hebraism, meaning suddenly, or unexpectedly. He does it, as it were, before they are aware of it. A similar expression occurs in the Koran, "God overturns them, and they do not know it;" that is, he does it without their suspecting any such thing; compare Psalm 35:8. "Let destruction come upon him at unawares," or, as it is in the Hebrew and in the margin, "which he knoweth not of." Tindal renders this, "He translatethe the mountaynes or ever they be aware."

Which overturneth them in his anger - As if he were enraged. There could scarcely be any more terrific exhibition of the wrath of God than the sudden and tremendous violence of an earthquake.

Verse 6

Which shaketh the earth out of her place - This evidently refers to violent convulsions of nature, as if the earth were to be taken away. Objects on the earth's surface become displaced, and convulsion seems to seize the world. The Septuagint renders this, "who shaketh that which is under the heavens from its foundations" - ἐκ Θεμελίων *ek themeliōn* The change in the Hebrew would be very slight to authorize this rendering.

And the pillars thereof tremble - In this place the earth is represented as sustained like a building by pillars or columns. Whether this is a mere poetic representation, or whether it describes the actual belief of the speaker in regard to the structure of the earth, it is not easy to determine. I am inclined to think it is the former, because in another place where he is speaking of the earth, he presents his views in another form, and more in acoordance with the truth (see the notes at Job 26:7): and because here the illustration is evidently taken from the obvious and perceived effects of an earthquake. It would convulse and agitate the pillars of the most substantial

edifice, and so it seemed to shake the earth, as if its very supports would fall.

Verse 7

Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not - Schultens supposes that all this is a description of the deluge - when the mountains were removed, when the fountains of the deep were broken up, and when the sun was obscured and seemed not to rise. Others have supposed that it refers to the fact that the sun is darkened by clouds and tempests, and appears not to rise and shine upon the earth. Others suppose that the allusion is to an eclipse; and others, that it is to the power of God, and means that the rising of the sun depends on him, and that if he should choose to give the command, the heavenly bodies would rise and give light no more. It seems probable that the meaning is, that God has power to do this; that the rising of the sun depends on him; and that he could delay it, or prevent it, at his pleasure. His power over the sun was shown in the time of Joshua, when, at his command, it stood still; but it is not necessary to suppose that there is any reference to this fact here. The whole meaning of the language is met by the supposition that it refers to the power of God, and affirms what he could do, or if it refer to any fact that had been observed, that the allusion is to the darkening of the sun by an eclipse or a tempest. No argument can be derived, therefore, from the expression, in regard to the age of the book.

And sealeth up the stars - The word "seal" in the Scriptures (חתם *châtham*) is used with considerable latitude of signification. It is employed in the sense of shutting, closing, making fast - as when anything was sealed, it was shut up or made fast. The Hebrews often used a seal, where we would use a lock, and depended on the protection derived from the belief that one would not break open that which was sealed, where we are obliged to rely on the security of the lock against force. If there were honor and honesty among people everywhere, a seal would be as secure as a lock - as in a virtuous community a sealed letter is as secure as a merchant‘s iron "safe." To "seal up the stars," means so to shut them up in the heavens, as to prevent their shining; to hide them from the view. They are concealed, hidden, made close - as the contents of a letter, a package, or a room are by a seal, indicating that no one is to examine them, and concealing them from the view. So God hides from our view the stars by the interposition of clouds.

Verse 8

Which alone spreadeth out the heavens - As an expanse, or a curtain; see the notes at Isaiah 40:22.

And treadeth upon the waves of the sea - Margin, "Heights." So it is in the Hebrew. It means the "high waves;" that is, he walks upon the waves of the ocean when lifted up by a storm. This is spoken of here as a proof of the greatness of God; and the meaning of all is, that he is seen in the storm, in the heaving ocean, when the heavens are black with tempest, and when the earth is convulsed. It may be added here, that the Lord Jesus walked amidst the howling winds on the lake, and thus gave evidence that he was God; Matthew 14:25. "The Egyptian hieroglyphic for what was not possible to be done, was a man walking on the water." Burder. Dr. Good, and some others, render this, "on the mountains." But the more correct rendering is given in the common version. The Hebrew word rendered "waves" (במה *bâmâh*) indeed properly means a height, a lofty place, a mountain; but the comparison of waves with a mountain, is common in all languages. So we speak of waves "mountain-high," or as high as mountains. So Virgil, Aeneid i. 105,

Insequitur cumulo praeruptus aquae mons.

Similar to this, is the expression occurring in Homer, κύματα ἶσα ὄρεσσιν *kumata isa oressin* and so Apollonius, i. 521 - ἅλὸς ἄκρον c*halos akron* The Septuagint renders it, "who walketh upon the sea as upon a pavement."

Verse 9

Which maketh Arcturus - This verse, with others of the same description in the book of Job, is of special importance, as they furnish an illustration of the views which prevailed among the patriarchs on the subject of astronomy. There are frequent references to the sciences in this book (see the Introduction), and there is no source of illustration of the views which prevailed in the earliest times in regard to the state of the sciences, so copious as can be found in this poem. The thoughts of people were early turned to the science of astronomy. Not only were they led to this by the beauty of the heavens, and by the instinctive promptings of the human mind to know something about them, but the attention of the Chaldeans and of the other Oriental nations was early drawn to them by the fact that they were shepherds, and that they passed much of their time in the open air at night, watching their flocks.

Having nothing else to do, and being much awake, they would naturally contrive to relieve the tediousness of the night by watching the movements of the stars; and they early gave employment to their talents, by endeavoring to ascertain the influence which the stars exerted over the fates of people, and to their imagination, by dividing the heavens into portions, having a fancied resemblance to certain animals, and by giving them appropriate names. Hence, arose the arrangement of the stars into constellations, and the names which they still bear. The Hebrew word rendered Arcturus, is עִשׁ *ʿayîsh* The Septuagint renders it, Πλειάδα *Pleiada* - the Pleiades. Jerome, Arcturum. The Hebrew word usually means a moth, Job 4:19; Job 13:28; Job 27:18. It also denotes the splendid constellation in the northern hemisphere, which we call Ursa Major, the Great Bear, Arcturus, or the Wain; compare Niebuhr, Des. of Arabia, p. 114.

The word עִשׁ *ʿayîsh* does not literally mean a bear, but is made by aphaeresis from the Arabic nas, by the excision of the initial n - as is common in Arabic; see Bochart, Hieroz. P. II. Lib. I. c. xvi. p. 113,114. The word in Arabic means a bier, and is the name given to the constellation which we denominate Ursa Major, "because," says Bochart, "the four stars, which are a square, are regarded as a bier, on which a dead body is borne. The three following (the tail of the bear) are the daughters or sons which attend the funeral as mourners." This name is often given to this constellation in Arabic. The Arabic name is Elnaʻsch, the bier. "The expression," says Ideler, "denotes particularly the bier on which the dead are borne, and taken in this sense, each of the two biers in the Ursa Major and Ursa Minor is accompanied by three mourning-women. The biers and the mourning-women together, are called *Benâtna'sch* literally, daughters of the bier; that is, those who pertain to the bier."

Untersuchungen uber den Ursprung und die Bedeutung der Sternnamen, S. 419; compare Job 38:32: "Canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?" Schultens regards the word עִשׁ *ʿayîsh* as synonymous with the Arabic asson, night-vigil, from assa to go about by night, and supposes this constellation to be so called, because it always revolves around the pole, and never sets. The situation and figure of this constellation are well known. It is seen at all times in the northern part of the heavens, perpetually revolving around the North Star, and two of its principal stars point to the North Star always. Its

resemblance to a bear, is quite fanciful - as it might be imagined as well to resemble any other object. The design of this fancy was merely to assist the memory. The only thing which seems to have suggested it was its slight resemblance to an animal followed by its young. Thus, the stars, now known as the "tail," might have been supposed to resemble the cubs of a bear following their dam.

The comparison of the constellation to a bier, and the movement to a funeral procession, with the sons or daughters of the deceased following on in the mourning train, is much more poetical and beautiful. This constellation is so conspicuous, that it has been an object of interest in all ages, and has been one of the groups of stars most attentively observed by navigators, as a guide in sailing. The reason was, probably, that as it constantly revolved around the North Pole, it could always be seen in clear weather, and thus the direction in which they were sailing, could always be told. It has had a great variety of names. The name Ursa Major, or the Great Bear, is that which is commonly given to it. It is a remarkable fact, also, that while this name was given to it in the East a tribe of the American Indians - the Iroquois, also gave the same name of the Great Bear to it. This is remarkable, because, so far as known, they had no communication with each other, and because the name is perfectly arbitrary.

Is this an evidence that the natives of our country, North America, derived their origin from some of the nations of the East? In some parts of England the constellation is called "Charles' Wain," or Wagon, from its fancied resemblance to a waggon, drawn by three horses in a line. Others call it the Plow. The whole number of visible stars in this constellation is eighty seven, of which one is of the first, three of the second, seven of the third, and about twice as many of the fourth magnitude. The constellations of Ursa Major and Ursa Minor were represented by the ancients, under the image of a waggon drawn by a team of horses. This is alluded to by the Greek poet, Aratus, in an address to the Athenians:

The one called Helix, soon as day retires.
Observed with ease lights up his radiant fires;
The other smaller and with feebler beams,

In a less circle drives his lazy teams:

But more adapted for the sailor‘s guide,
Whene‘er by night he tempts the briny tide.

Among the Egyptians these two constellations are represented by the figures of bears, instead of waggons. Whence the Hebrew name is derived is not quite certain; but if it be from the Arabic, it probably means the same - a bier. There seems no reason to doubt, however, that the Ursa Major is intended; and that the idea here is, that the greatness of God is shown by his having made this beautiful constellation.

Orion - The Vulgate renders this *Orion*, the Septuagint, “ Εσπερον *Hesperon* Hesperus - that is, the evening star, Venus. The word כסיל *kesîyl* is from כסל *kâsal* to be fat or fleshy; to be strong, lusty, firm; and then to be dull, sluggish, stupid - as fat persons usually are. Hence, the word כסיל *kesîyl* means a fool, Psalm 49:11; Proverbs 1:32; Proverbs 10:1, It is used here, however, to denote a constellation, and by most interpreters it is supposed to denote the constellation Orion, which the Orientals call a giant. “They appear to have conceived of this constellation under the figure of an impious giant bound upon the sky.” Gesenius. Hence the expression, Job 38:31; “Canst thou loose the bands of Orion?” According to the Eastern tradition, this giant was Nimrod, the founder of Babylon, afterward translated to the skies; see the notes at Isaiah 13:10, where it is rendered constellation. Virgil speaks of it as the Stormy Orion:

Cam subito aseurgons fluctu nimbosus Orion.
Aeneid i. 535.

And again:

Dum pelago desaevit heims, et aquosus Orion.
Aeneid iv. 52.

In another description of Orion by Virgil, it is represented as armed with gold, or surrounded by a yellow light:

Arcturum, pluviasque Hyadas, geminosque Triones,
Armatumque auro circumspicit Oriona.
Aeneid iii. 516,517.

According to the fancy of the ancients, Orion was a mighty hunter, the attendant of Diana, who having offered violence to her was stung to death by a scorpion which she had provided for that purpose. After his death he was translated to heaven, and made a constellation. Others say that he was the son of Neptune and Queen Euryale, a famous Amazonian huntress; and

possessing the disposition of his mother, he became the greatest hunter in the world, and made a boast that there was no animal on earth that he could not subdue. To punish this vanity, it is said that a scorpion sprang out of the earth, and bit his foot, so that he died, but that at the request of Diana he was placed among the stars, and directly opposite to the scorpion that caused his death. On the names given to this constellation in Arabic, and the origin of the name Orion among the Greeks, see Ideler, Unter. uber den Urs. u. die Bedeut. der Stern. s. 212-227,331-336. The name *El -dscebbâr the giant*, or hero, is that which is commonly given to it in Arabic. The constellation Orion is usually mentioned by the ancients as connected with storms, and hence, is called nimbosus Orion by Virgil, and tristis Orion by Horace. The reason of this was, that its rising usually occurred at those seasons of the year when storms prevailed, and hence, it was supposed to be their cause - as we connect the rising of the dog-star with the idea of intense heat.

The situation of Orion is on the equator, midway between the poles of the heavens. It comes to the meridian about the 23d of January. The whole number of visible stars in it is seventy-eight, of which two are of the first magnitude, four of the second, three of the third, and fifteen of the fourth. It is regarded as the most beautiful of the constellations, and when it is on the meridian there is then above the horizon the most magnificent view of the celestial bodies that the firmament exhibits. On the celestial maps it is represented by the figure of a man in the attitude of assaulting the Bull, with a sword in his belt, a huge club in his right hand, and a lion-skin in the left to serve him for a shield. The principal stars are four, in the form of a long square or parallelogram, intersected by the “Three Stars” in the middle called “The Ell and the Yard.” The two upper ones are represented one on each shoulder, and of the two lower ones one is in the left foot, and the other on the right knee. The position of the constellation may be seen by anyone by remarking that the “Three Stars” in the belt are those which point to the Pleiades or seven stars on the one side, and to the dog star on the other. This constellation is mentioned by Homer, as it is indeed by most of the Classical writers:

Πληΐάδας θ᾽, Ὑάδος τε, τό τε σθένος Ὠρίωνος.

Plēiadas th' Huadas te to te sthenos Ōriōnos - Iliad, σ s*It may furnish an illustration of the vastness of the starry heavens to remark, that in the sword of the constellation Orion there is a nebula which is almost visible to the*

naked eye, which is computed to be 2,200,000,000,000,000,000, or two trillion, two hundred thousand billion times larger than the sun! Dr. Dick, Chr. Keepsake for 1840, p. 184. If, then, Job, with his limited views of astronomy, saw in this constellation an impressive proof of the greatness of the Almighty, how much more sublime should be our views of God! We see this constellation not merely as a beautiful object in the sky - a collection of bright and beautiful gems - but we see it as so vast as to surpass our comprehension, and behold in it a single nebula, or speck - not quite visible to the naked eye - that mocks all our powers of conception! It may be added, that by the aid of a telescope about two thousand stars have been seen in this constellation.

And Pleiades - *The seven stars. The Hebrew word is כימה kîymâh a heap or cluster. The name is given to the cluster of stars in the neck of the constellation Taurus, of which seven are the principal. Six or seven may be usually seen if the eye is directed toward it; but if the eye be turned carelessly aside while the attention is fixed on the group, many more may be seen. For, "it is a very remarkable fact," says Sir John Herschell, "that the center of the visual organ is by far less sensible to feeble impressions of light than the exterior portion of the retina." Ast. p. 398. Telescopes show fifty or sixty large stars there crowded together into a small space. Rheita affirms that he counted two hundred stars in this small cluster. In regard to the Pleiades, Ideler makes the following remarks. "These stars were by the ancients sometimes denoted by the singular,* Πλειὰς *Pleias and sometimes by the plural,* Πλειάδες *Pleiades (in metrical composition,* Πληΐάδες *Plēiades), Pleiades. They are mentioned by Homer, Iliad,* σ *s Odyssey* ε *e and by Hesiod,* Ἐργ *Erg 383,615. Hesiod mentions the cluster as the daughter of Atlas -* Ἀτλαγενεῖς *Atlageneis The name Atlantides, which so often occurs among the Romans, signifies the same thing. Their mythological names are Alcyone, Merope, Celaeno, Electra, Sterope or Asterope, Taygete, and Maia. There is some uncertainty among the ancient writers from where the name Pleiades is derived. Among most etymologists, the name has respect to navigation, and the derivation is from* ἀπὸ τοῦ πλεῖν *apo tou plein - because the time of navigation commenced with the rising of the Pleiades in the first part of May, and ended with their setting in the first part of November. But perhaps the name is derived simply from* πλέος *pleos* πλεῖος *pleios full, so that it merely denotes a condensed assemblage of stars, which Manilius, iv. 523, expresses by glomerabile*

sidus. Aratus, v. 257, says that the Pleiades were called ἑπτάποροι *heptaporoi - those which walked in seven paths, although but six stars can be seen. In a similar sense Ovid, speaking of the Pleiades, says,*

Quae septem dici, sex tamen esse solent.

Fast. iv. 170.

Hipparchus, on the contrary, affirms that in a clear night, when there is no moon, seven stars can be seen. The difference of these views is easily explained. The group consists of one star of the third magnitude, three of the fifth, two of the sixth, and many smaller stars. It requires a very keen vision to be able to distinguish in the group more than six stars. Since therefore, among the ancients, it was commonly believed that there were no more than six, and yet among them. as with us, the name the seven stars was given to them, the opinion arose that one star of the seven had been lost. Some supposed that it had been smitten by lightning, others thai it had united itself to the middle star in the tail of the Ursa Major, and others gave to the belief a mythic signification, as is mentioned by Ovid in the place above referred to. The Romans called the Pleiades *Vergiliae*, because they arose in the spring. The Arabians called those stars *El -thoreja* - meaning abundant, copious, and answering to the Greek Πλειὰς *Pleias* Pleias. The Asiatic poets Sadi, Hafiz, and others, always mention these stars as a beautiful rosette, with one brilliant. Sadi, in the description of a beautiful garden, says "The ground was strewed with pieces of enamel, and bands of Pleiades appeared to hang on the branches of the trees." Hafiz says, "The heavens bear up thy poems - the pearly rosette of the Pleiades as the seal of immortality. Beigel, who has translated these poets, adds, "In this genuine Oriental spirit must we understand the words of Job, ‹Canst thou bind the brilliant rosettes of the Pleiades? that is, Who can say that he has placed this collection of brilliants as a rosette in the sky?" Ideler, Untersuchungen u. den Urs. u. die Bedeut. der Sternnamen, s. 143147.

And the chambers of the south - What is the exact idea to be attached to this expression, it is not easy to say. Probably it means the remote regions of the south, or the part of the heavens which is not visible to the inhabitants of the northern hemisphere. The word rendered chambers means in the Scriptures a private apartment of a dwelling; a part that is separated from the rest by a curtain; a harem, etc. Hence, it may mean the abodes of the stars in the south - comparing the heavens with an immense tent, and regarding it as divided into separate apartments. It may mean here the stars

which are hidden, as it were, in the recesses of the southern hemisphere, like the private apartments of a house, which all were not allowed to enter. There are some intimations in the book of Job that the true structure of the earth was not unknown at that remote period of the world (compare the notes at Job 26:7); and if so, then this may refer to the constellations in the south which are invisible to an inhabitant of the northern hemisphere. There is no impropriety, at any rate, in supposing that those who had traveled into the south had brought reports of stars and constellations seen there which are invisible to an inhabitant of northern Arabia.

Verse 10

Which doeth great things - This is almost the sentiment which had been expressed by Eliphaz; see the notes, Job 5:9. It was evidently a proverb, and as such was used by both Eliphaz and Job.

Verse 11

Lo, he goeth by me - That is, he passes along - as in the silent movements of the heavenly bodies. "I see the evidence of his existence. I can see that God must be there - moving along by me in the orbs of night and in the march of the constellations, but I cannot see God himself. He passes by, or rather he passes over me (עלי *ʿālay*), as in the majestic movement of the heavenly bodies over my head." This is, I think, the idea, and the image is exceedingly poetic and beautiful. The heavens are seen to move in silent grandeur. The northern constellation rolls around the pole. The others move on as a marshalled army. They go in silent and solemn order, and God must be there. But, says Job, I cannot see him. I can feel that he must be there, and I look out on the heavens to see him, but my eyes fail, and I cannot behold him. He passes on, and I see him not. Who has ever looked upon the heavens in the still night, and seen the silent grandeur of such movements of the heavenly host, without some such feeling - some emotion of inexpressible awe - as if he, if I may so express it, COULD ALMOST SEE GOD?

Verse 12

Behold, he taketh away - Property, friends, or life.

Who can hinder him? - Margin, turn him away. Or, rather, "who shall cause him to restore?" that is, who can bring back what he takes away? He is so mighty, that what he removes, it is impossible for us to recover.

Who will say unto him, What doest thou? - A similar expression occurs in Daniel 4:35. The meaning is plain. God has a right to remove any

thing which we possess. Our friends, property, health, and lives, are his gift, and he has a right to them all. When he takes them away, he is but taking that which is his own, and which has been lent to us for a little time, and which he has a right to remove when it seems good to him. This truth Job fully admits, and in the calm contemplation of all his losses and his sorrows, he acknowledges that God had a right to do as he had done; see note, Job 1:21.

Verse 13

If God will not withdraw his anger - That is, if he perseveres in inflicting punishment. He will not turn aside his displeasure by any opposition or resistance made to him.

The proud helpers - Margin, Helpers of pride, or, strength. Jerome renders this, "under whom they who bear up the world bow down." The Septuagint, not less singularly, "by him the whales (or monsters - κήτος *ketos*) which are under heaven, are bowed down." Codurcus renders it, "aids of pride," and understands by it all the things on which proud men rely, as wealth, health, rank, talent. So Dr. Good renders it, "the supports of the proud." The meaning is, probably, that all those things which contribute to the support of pride, or all those persons who are allied together to maintain the dominion of pride on the earth, must sink under the wrath of God. Or it may refer to those who sustain the pride of state and empire - the men who stand around the thrones of monarchs, and who contribute, by their talent and power, to uphold the pomp and magnificence of courts. On the meaning of the word here rendered pride (רהב *rahab*), see the notes at Isaiah 30:7.

Verse 14

How much less shall I answer him? - I, who am so feeble, how can I contend with him? If the most mighty objects in the universe are under his control; if the constellations are directed by him; if the earth is shaken, and mountains moved from their places, by his power, and if the men of most exalted rank are prostrated by him, how can I presume to contend with God? This is the common view which is given of the passage, and is evidently that which our translators entertained. But I have given in the translation what appears to me to be a more literal version, and to express a better sense - though, I confess, the translation differs from all that I have seen. According to this, the sense is simply, that such was the veneration

which Job had for the character of God, that should he attempt to answer him, he would select his words with the utmost care and attention.

Verse 15

Whom, though I were righteous - That is, if I felt the utmost confidence that I was righteous, yet, if God judged otherwise, and regarded me as a sinner, I would not reply to him, but would make supplication to him as a sinner. I would have so much confidence in him, and would feel that he was so much better qualified than I am to judge, and that I am so liable to be deceived, that I would come to him as a sinner, if he judged and declared me to be one, and would plead for pardon. The meaning is, that God is a much better judge of our character than we can possibly be, and that his regarding us as sinners is the highest proof that we are such, whatever may be our views to the contrary. This shows the extent of the confidence which Job had in God and is an indication of true piety. And it is founded in reason as well as in piety. Men often suppose that they are righteous, and yet they know that God adjudges otherwise, and regards them as sinners. He offers them pardon as sinners. He threatens to punish them as sinners. The question is, whether they shall act on their own feelings and judgment in the case, or on his? Shall they adhere obstinately to their views, and refuse to yield to God, or shall they act on the truth of his declarations? Now that Job was right in his views of the case, may appear from the following considerations.

(1) God knows the heart. He cannot be deceived; we may be. In nothing are we more liable to be deceived than in regard to our own character. We should, therefore, distrust our own judgment in this case, but we should never distrust God.

(2) God is infinitely benevolent, and will not judge unkindly. He has no wish to find us sinners; he will have no pleasure in making us out to be transgressors. A heart of infinite benevolence would prefer to find all people holy, and would look on every favorable circumstance in the case with all the kindness which it would deserve. No being would be so likely to make a favorable decision in our case as the infinitely benevolent God; none would so delight to find that we were free from the charge of guilt.

(3) God will act on his own views of our character, and not on ours; and it is prudent and wise, therefore, for us to act on his views now. He will

judge us in the last day according to his estimate of our character, and not according to the estimate which we may form.

(4) At the same time, we cannot but accord with his views of our own character. Our reason and conscience tell us that we have violated his laws, and that we have no claim to his mercy. No man can persuade himself that he is wholly righteous; and being conscious of guilt, though in the slightest degree, he should make supplication to his Judge.

Verse 16

If I had called, and he had answered me - It is remarked by Schultens, that the expressions in these verses are all taken from courts of justice. If so, the meaning is, that even if Job should call the Almighty to a judicial action, and he should respond to him, and consent to submit the great question about his innocence, and about the justice of the divine dealings with him, to trial, yet that such was the distance between God and him, that he could not hope successfully to contend with him in the argument. He would, therefore, prostrate himself in a suppliant manner, and implore his mercy and compassion - submitting to him as having all power, and as being a just and righteous Sovereign.

Would I not believe - I cannot believe that he would enter into my complaint. He deals with me in a manner so severe; he acts toward me so much as a sovereign, that I have no reason to suppose that he would not continue to act toward me in the same way still.

Verse 17

For he breaketh me - He is overwhelming me with a tempest; that is, with the storms of wrath. He shows me no mercy. The idea seems to be, that God acted toward him not as a judge determining matters by rule of law, but as a sovereign - determining them by his own will. If it were a matter of law; if he could come before him as a judge, and maintain his cause there; if the case could be fairly adjudicated whether he deserved the calamities that came upon him, he would be willing to enter into such a trial. But where the matter was determined solely by will, and God acted as a sovereign, doing as he pleased, and giving no account of his matters to anyone, then it would be useless to argue the cause. He would not know what to expect, or understand the principles on which an adjudication would be made. It is true that God acts as a sovereign, but he does not act without reference to

law. He dispenses his favors and his judgments as he pleases, but he violates none of the rules of right. The error of Job was the common error which people commit, that if God acts as a sovereign, he must of course act regardless of law, and that it is vain to plead with him or try to please him. But sovereignty is not necessarily inconsistent with respect for law; and He who presides with the most absolute power over the universe, is He who is most directed by the rule of right. In Him sovereignty and law coincide; and to come to Him as a sovereign, is to come with the assurance that supreme rectitude will be done.

And multiplieth my wounds without cause - That is, without sufficient reason. This is in accordance with the views which Job had repeatedly expressed. The main ground of his complaint was, that his sufferings were disproportionate to his faults.

Verse 18

He will not suffer me to take my breath; - see the notes at Job 7:19.

Verse 19

If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong - There has been a considerable variety in the interpretation of this passage. The meaning seems to be this. It refers to a judicial contest, and Job is speaking of the effect if he and God were to come to a trial, and the cause were to be settled before judges. He is urging reasons why he would have no hope of success in such a case. He says, therefore, "If the matter pertained only to strength, or if it were to be determined by strength, lo, he is more mighty than I am, and I could have no hope of success in such a controversy: and if the controversy was one of judgment, that is, of justice or right, I have no one to manage my cause - no one that could cope with him in the pleadings - no one who could equal him in setting forth my arguments, or presenting my side of the case. It would, therefore, be wholly an unequal contest, where I could have no hope of success; and I am unwilling to engage in such a controversy or trial with God. My interest, my duty, and the necessity of the case, require me to submit the case without argument, and I will not attempt to plead with my Maker." That there was a lack of right feeling in this, must be apparent to all.

There was evidently the secret belief that God had dealt with him severely; that he had gone beyond his deserts in indicting pain on him, and that he was under a necessity of submitting not so much to justice and right as to mere power and sovereignty. But who has not had something of this

feeling when deeply afflicted? And yet who, when he has had it, has not felt that it was far from being what it should be? Our feeling should be, "we deserve all that we suffer, and more than we have yet endured. God is a sovereign; but He is right. Though he afflicts us much, and others little, yet it is not because he is unjust, but because he sees that there is some good reason why we should suffer. That reason may be seen yet by us, but if not, we should never doubt that it exists."

Who shall set me a time to plead? - Noyes renders this, "Who shall summon me to trial?" Dr. Good, "Who should become a witness for me?" The sense is, "Who would summon witnesses for me? If it was a mere trial of strength, God is too mighty for me; if it were a question of justice, who would compel witnesses to come on my side? Who could make them willing to appear against God, and to bear testimony for me in a controversy with the Almighty?"

Verse 20

If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me - That is, referring still to the form of a judicial trial, if I should undertake to manage my own cause, I should lay myself open to condemnation even in my argument on the subject, and should show that I was far from the perfection which I had undertaken to maintain. By passionate expressions; by the language of complaint and murmuring; by a want of suitable reverence; by showing my ignorance of the principles of the divine government; by arguments unsound and based on false positions; or by contradictions and self-refutations, I should show that my position was untenable, and that God was right in charging me with guilt. In some or in all of these ways Job felt, probably, that in an argument before God he would be self-condemned, and that even an attempt to justify himself, or to prove that he was innocent, would prove that he was guilty. And is it not always so? Did a man ever yet undertake to repel the charges of guilt brought against him by his Maker, and to prove that he was innocent, in which he did not himself show the truth of what he was denying? Did not his false views of God and of his law; his passion, complaining, and irreverence; his unwillingness to admit the force of the palpable considerations urged to prove that he was guilty, demonstrate that he was at heart a sinner, and that he was insubmissive and rebellious? The very attempt to enter into such an argument against God, shows that the heart is not right; and the manner in which such an argument is commonly conducted demonstrates that he who does it is sinful.

If I say, I am perfect - Should I attempt to maintain such an argument, the very attempt would prove that my heart is perverse and evil. It would do this because God had adjudged the contrary, and because such an effort would show an insubmissive and a proud heart. This passage shows that Job did not regard himself as a man absolutely free from sin. He was indeed said Job 1:1 to be "perfect and upright;" but this verse proves that that testimony in regard to him was not inconsistent with his consciousness of guilt. See the notes at that verse. And is not the claim to absolute perfection in this world always a proof that the heart is perverse? Does not the very setting up of such a claim in fact indicate a pride of heart, a self-satisfaction, and an ignorance of the true state of the soul, which is full demonstration that the heart is far from being perfect? God adjudges man to be exceedingly sinful; and if I do not mistake the meaning of the Scriptures, this is his testimony of every human heart - totally until renewed - partially ever onward until death. If this be the account in the Scriptures, then the claim to absolute perfection is prima facie, if not full proof, that the heart is in some way perverse. It has come to a different conclusion from that of God. It sets up an argument against him - and there can be no more certain proof of a lack of perfection than such an attempt. There is in this verse an energy in the original which is very feebly conveyed by our translation. It is the language of strong and decided indignation at the very idea of asserting that he was perfect. תם אני *tâm 'ănîy* - "perfect I!" or, "I perfect! The thought is absurd! It can only prove that I am perverse to attempt to set up any such claim!" Stuhlman renders this,

"However good I may be, I must condemn myself;
However free from guilt, I must call myself evil:"

And explains it as meaning, "God can through the punishments which he inflicts constrain me to confess, against the clear consciousness of my innocence, that I am guilty."

Verse 21

Though I were perfect - The same mode of expression occurs here again. "I perfect! I would not know it, or recognize it. If this were my view, and God judged otherwise, I would seem to be ignorant of it. I would not mention it."

Yet would I not know my soul - Or, "I could not know my soul. If I should advance such a claim, it must be from my ignorance of myself." Is not this true of all the claims to perfection which have ever been set up by

man? Do they not demonstrate that he is ignorant of his own nature and character? So clear does this seem to me, that I have no doubt that Job expressed more than three thousand years ago what will be found true to the end of time - that if a man advances the claim to absolute perfection, it is conclusive proof that he does not know his own heart. A superficial view of ourselves, mingled with pride and vanity, may lead us to think that we are wholly free from sin. But who can tell what he would be if placed in other circumstances? Who knows what latent depravity would be developed if he were thrown into temptations?

I would despise my life - Dr. Good, I think, has well expressed the sense of this. According to his interpretation, it means that the claim of perfection would be in fact disowning all the consciousness which he had of sinfulness; all the arguments and convictions pressed on him by his reason and conscience, that he was a guilty man. Schultens, however, has given an interpretation which slightly differs from this, and one which Rosenmuller prefers. "Although I should be wholly conscious of innocence, yet that clear consciousness could not sustain me against the infinite splendor of the divine glory and majesty; but I should be compelled to appear ignorant of my own soul, and to reprobate, condemn, and despise my life passed with integrity and virtue." This interpretation is in accordance with the connection, and may be sustained by the Hebrew.

Verse 22

This is one thing, therefore I said it - This may mean, "it is all the same thing. It makes no difference whether a man be righteous or wicked. God treats them substantially alike; he has one and the same rule on the subject. Nothing can be argued certainly about the character of a man from the divine dealings with him here." This was the point in dispute, this the position that Job maintained - that God did not deal with people here in strict accordance with their character, but that the righteous and the wicked in this world were afflicted alike.

He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked - He makes no distinction among them. That Job was right in this his main position there can be no doubt; and the wonder is, that his friends did not all see it. But it required a long time in the course of events, and much observation and discussion, before this important point was made clear. With our full views of the state of retribution in the future world, we can have no doubt on the subject. Heavy and sudden judgments do not necessarily prove that they who are cut

off are especially guilty, and long prosperity is no evidence that a man is holy. Calamity, by fire and flood, on a steamboat, or in the pestilence, does not demonstrate the unusual and eminent wickedness of those who suffer (compare Luke 13:1-5), nor should those who escape from such calamities infer that of necessity they are the objects of the divine favor.

Verse 23

If the scourge slay suddenly - If calamity comes in a sudden and unexpected manner. Dr. Good, following Reiske, translates this," if he suddenly slay the oppressor," understanding the word scourge שׁוט *shôṭ* as meaning an oppressor, or one whom God employs as a scourge of nations. But this is contrary to all the ancient versions. The word שׁוט *shôṭ* means properly a whip, a scourge (compare the notes at Job 5:21), and then calamity or affliction sent by God upon men. Such is clearly the case here.

He will laugh at the trial of the innocent - That is, he seems to disregard or to be pleased with their trials. He does not interpose to rescue them. He seems to look calmly on, and suffers them to be overwhelmed with others. This is a poetic expression, and cannot mean that God derides the trials of the innocent, or mocks their sufferings. It means that he seems to be inattentive to them; he suffers the righteous and the wicked to be swept away together as if he were regardless of character.

Verse 24

The earth is given into the hand of the wicked - This is evidently designed as an illustration of the sentiment that Job was maintaining - that there was not a distribution of rewards and punishments in this life according to character. In illustration of this, he says that the wicked are raised to places of trust and power. They exercise a wide dominion over the earth, and the world is under their control. Of the truth of this there can be no doubt. Rulers have been, in general, eminent for wickedness, and the affairs of nations have thus far been almost always under the control of those who are strangers to God. At the present time there is scarcely a pious man on any throne in the world, and the rulers of even Christian nations are in general eminent for anything rather than for personal religion.

He covereth the faces of the judges thereof - There has been considerable variety in the exposition of this expression. Some suppose that it refers to the wicked, meaning that they cover the faces of the judges under them so that they connive at and tolerate crime. Others, that it means that God blinds the eyes of wicked rulers, so that they connive at crime, and

are partial and unjust in their decisions. Others, that it means that God covers the faces of the judges of the earth with shame and confusion, that though he admits them to prosperity and honor for a time, yet that he overwhelms them at length with calamities and sorrows. Dr. Good supposes it to mean that the earth is given over into the hands of injustice, and that this hoodwinks the faces of the judges. The phrase properly means, to hoodwink, to blind, to conceal the face. It seems to me that the true sense is not expressed by either of the views above. The parallelism requires us to understand it as meaning that while the wicked had dominion over the earth, the righteous were in obscurity, or were not advanced to honor and power. The word "judges," therefore, I think, is to be understood of the righteous judges, of those who are qualified to administer justice. Their face is covered. They are kept in concealment. The wicked have the sway, and they are doomed to shame, obscurity, and dishonor. This interpretation accords with the tenor of the argument, and may be sustained by the Hebrew, though I have not found it in any of the commentaries which I have consulted.

If not, where, and who is he - If this is not a just view, who is God? What are his dealings? Where is he to be seen, and how is he to be known? Or, it may mean, "if it is not God who does these strange things, who is it that does them?" Rosenmuller. But I prefer the former interpretation. "Tell me who and what God is, if this is not a fair and just account of him. These things in fact are done, and if the agency of God is not employed in them, who is God? And where is his agency seen?

Verse 25

Now my days are swifter than a post - Than a courier, runner, or racer, רוּץ *rûts* Vulgate, *cursore*; Septuagint, δρομέως *dromeōs* a racer. The word is not unfrequently applied to the runners or couriers, that carried royal commands in ancient times. It is applied to the mounted couriers of the Persians who carried the royal edicts to the distant provinces, Esther 3:13, Esther 3:15; Esther 8:14, and to the body-guard and royal messengers of Saul and of David, 1 Samuel 22:17; 2 Kings 10:25. The common rate of traveling in the East is exceedingly slow. The caravans move little more than two miles an hour. Couriers are however, employed who go either on dromedaries, on horses, or on foot, and who travel with great rapidity. Lady Montague says that "after the defeat; at Peterwaradin, they (the couriers on dromedaries) far outran the fleetest horses, and brought the first news of the

battle at Belgrade." The messengers in Barbary who carry despatches, it is said, will run one hundred and fifty miles in twenty-four hours (Harmer's Observa. ii. 200, ed. 1808), and it has been said that the messengers among the American savages would run an hundred and twenty miles in the twenty-four hours. In Egypt, it is a common thing for an Arab on foot to accompany a rider, and to keep up with the horse when at full gallop, and to do this for a long time without apparent fatigue. The meaning of Job here is, that his life was short, and that his days were passing swiftly away, not like the slow caravan, but like the most fleet messenger compare the note at Job 7:6.

They see no good - I am not permitted to enjoy happiness. My life is a life of misery.

Verse 26

They are passed away as the swift ships - Margin, Ships of desire; or ships of Ebeh. Hebrew אבה אניה *'onîyâh 'êbeh* Vulgate, *Naves poma portantes*. Septuagint, "Is there any track left by ships in their passage?" The Chaldee renders it as the Vulgate, "Ships bearing good fruit;" that is, as such fruit was perishable, haste was required in order to reach the place of destination. Our translators were evidently perplexed by the word אבה *'êbeh* as appears by their placing two different phrases in the margin. "Ships of desire," denotes the value or desirableness of such ships; and the phrase, "Ships of Ebeh," denotes their confession of ignorance as to the meaning of the word. Gesenius explains the word to mean reed, bulrush, or papyrus - from an Arabic use of the word, and supposes that the reference is to the light vessels made of the papyrus, which were used on the Nile; see the note at Isaiah 18:2. Such vessels would be distinguished for the ease with which they might be rowed, and the rapidity of their motion. Chardin supposes that the reference is to vessels that were made to go on the Euphrates or the Tigris, and that were borne along with the rapid current. The supposition of an allusion to any boat or vessel under full sail, will be in accordance with the language here, though the probability is, that the reference is to the light vessels, made of reeds, that might be propelled with so much fleetness. Sails were frequently used, also, for such vessels.

As the eagle that hasteth to the prey - A striking emblem of rapidity. Few things can be more rapid than the motion of the eagle, as he darts upon his victim.

sa40

Verse 27

If I say, I will forget my complaint - If I resolve that I will leave off complaining, and will be more cheerful, I find it all in vain. My fears and sorrows return, and all my efforts to be cheerful are ineffectual

I will leave off my heaviness - The word rendered "my heaviness" here (פני *pânam*) denotes literally "my face;" and the reference is to the sad and sorrowful countenance which he had. "If I should lay that aside, and endeavor to be cheerful."

And comfort myself - The word rendered comfort here (בלג *bâlag*) in Arabic means to be bright, to shine forth; and it would here be better rendered by "brighten up." We have the same expression still when we say to one who is sad and melancholy, "brighten up; be cheerful." The meaning is, that Job endeavored to appear pleasant and cheerful, but it was in vain. His sorrows pressed heavily on him, and weighed down his spirits in spite of himself, and made him sad.

Verse 28

I am afraid of all my sorrows - My fears return. I dread the continuance of my griefs, and cannot close my eye to them.

Thou wilt not hold me innocent - God will not remove my sorrows so as to furnish the evidence that I am innocent. My sufferings continue, and with them continue all the evidence on which my friends rely that I am a guilty man. In such a state of things, how can I be otherwise than sad? He was held to be guilty; he was suffering in such a way as to afford them the proof that he was so, and how could he be cheerful?

Verse 29

If I be wicked, why then labour I in vain? - The word "if," here introduced by our translators, greatly obscures the sense. The meaning evidently is, "I am held to be guilty, and cannot answer to that charge. God regards me as such, and if I should attempt to meet him on the charge, it would be a vain attempt; and I must admit its truth. It would be labor in vain to deny it against one so mighty as he is." This interpretation accords with the argument in the whole chapter. Job maintains that it would be in vain to contend with God, and he gives up the argument in despair. It is quite evident, however, that he does not do it so much because he is convinced himself, as because he knows that God is great, and that it would be useless to contend with him. There is evidently implied all along the feeling that if he was able to cope with God in the argument, the result

would be different. As it is, he submits - not because he is convinced, but because he is weak; not because he sees that God is right, but because he sees that he is powerful. How much submission of this kind is there in the world - submision, not to right, but to power; submission to God, not because he is seen to be wise and good, but because he is seen to be almighty, and it is vain to attempt to oppose him! It is needless to say that such feelings evince no true submission.

Verse 30

If I wash myself with snow water - If I should make myself as pure as possible, and should become, in my view, perfectly holy. Snow water, it seems, was regarded as especially pure. The whiteness of snow itself perhaps suggested the idea that the water of melted snow was better than other for purification. Washing the hands formerly was an emblem of cleansing from guilt. Hence Pilate, when he gave up the Savior to death, took water and washed his hands before the multitude, and said that he was innocent of his blood; Matthew 27:24. The expression used here by Job, also is imitated by the Psalmist, to denote his innocence:

I will wash mine hands in innocency:
So will I compass thine altar, O Lord. Psalm 26:6.
Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain,

And washed my hands in innocency.
Psalm 73:13.
So in Shakespeare, Richard III:
How fain, like Pilate, would I wash my hands
Of this most grievous, guilty murder done!

And make my hands never so clean - Or, rather, should I cleanse my hands with lye, or alkali. The word בור *bôr* means properly purity, cleanliness, pureness; and then it is used to denote that which cleanses, alkali, lye, or vegetable salt. The ancients made use of this, mingled with oil, instead of soap, for the purpose of washing, and also in smelting metals, to make them melt more readily; see the note at Isaiah 1:25. The Chaldee renders it accurately, באהלא - in soap. I have no doubt that this is the sense, and that Job means to say, if he should make use of the purest water and of soap to cleanse himself, still he would be regarded as impure. God would throw him at once into the ditch, and he would be covered with moral filth and defilement again in his sight.

Verse 31

Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch - God would treat me as if he should throw me into the gutter, and as if I were wholly defiled and polluted. The meaning is, God would not admit the proofs which I should adduce of my innocence, but would overwhelm me with the demonstrations of my guilt. I doubt not that Job urged this with some degree of impatience, and with some improper feelings. He felt, evidently, that God was so great and powerful, that it was vain to contend with him. But it is true in a higher and more important sense than he seems to have understood it. After all the efforts which we can make to justify, vindicate, or purify ourselves, it is in the power of God to overwhelm us with the consciousness of guilt. He has access to the heart. He can show us our past sins. He can recall what we have forgotten, and overwhelm us with the remembrance of our deep depravity. It is in vain, therefore, for any man to attempt to justify himself before God. After the most labored argument to prove his own innocence, after all the confidence which he can repose in his own morality and his own righteousness, still God can with infinite ease overwhelm him with the consciousness of guilt. How many people that were once relying on their own morality for their salvation, have been bowed down with a consciousness of guilt in a revival of religion! How many who halve been trusting to their own righteousness have been overwhelmed with deep and awful conviction, when they have been brought to lie on a bed of death! Let no man, therefore, rely on his own righteousness, when God accuses him with being a sinner. Let no one trust to his own morality for salvation - for soon it will all be seen to be insufficient, and the soul must appear covered over with the consciousness of guilt at the awful bar of God.

And mine own clothes shall abhor me - Margin, Make me to be abhorred. That is, they shall be filthy and offensive - like one who has been rolled in the mire. God has power to make me seem defiled and loathsome, notwithstanding all my efforts to cleanse myself.

Verse 32

For he is not a man as I am - He is infinitely superior to me in majesty and power. The idea is, that the contest would be unequal, and that he might as well surrender without bringing the matter to an issue. It is evident that the disposition of Job to yield, was rather because he saw that God was superior in power than because he saw that he was right, and that he felt that if he had ability to manage the cause as well as God could, the matter

would not be so much against him as it was then. That there was no little impropriety of feeling in this, no one can doubt; but have we never had feelings like this when we have been afflicted? Have we never submitted to God because we felt that he was Almighty, and that it was vain to contend with him, rather than because he was seen to be right? True submission is always accompanied with the belief that God is RIGHT - whether we can see him to be right or not.

And we should come together in judgment - For trial, to have the case adjudicated. That is, that we should meet face to face, and have the cause tried before a superior judge. Noyes.

Verse 33

Neither is there any daysman - Margin, One that should argue, or, umpire. The word daysman in English means " "an umpire or arbiter, a mediator." Webster. Why such a man is called a daysman I do not know. The Hebrew word rendered "daysman" מוכיח *môkîyach* is from יכח *yâkach* not used in the Qal, to be before, in front of; and then to appear, to be clear, or manifest; and in the Hiphil, to cause to be manifest, to argue, prove, convince; and then to argue down, to confute, reprove; see the word used in Job 6:25: "What doth your arguing reprove?" It then means to make a cause clear, to judge, determine, decide, as an arbiter, umpire, judge, Isaiah 11:3; Genesis 31:37. Jerome renders it, "Non est qui utrumque valeat arguere." The Septuagint, "if there were, or, O that there were a mediator ὁ μεσίτης *ho mesitēs* and a reprover (καί ἐλέγχων *kai elengchōn*), and one to hear us both" (καί διακούων ἀναμέτον ἀυφοτέρων *kai diakouōn anameton amphoterōn*).

The word as used by Job does not mean mediator, but arbiter, umpire, or judge; one before whom the cause might be tried, who could lay the hand of restraint on either party. who could confine the pleadings within proper bounds, who could preserve the parties within the limits of order and propriety, and who had power to determine the question at issue. Job complains that there could be no such tribunal. He feels that God was so great that the cause could be referred to no other, and that he had no prospect of success in the unequal contest. It does not appear, therefore, that he desired a mediator, in the sense in which we understand that word - one who shall come between us and God, and manage our cause before him, and be our advocate at his bar. He rather says that there was no one above God, or no umpire uninterested in the controversy, before whom the cause

could be argued, and who would be competent to decide the matter in issue between him and his Maker. He had no hope, therefore, in a cause where one of the parties was to be the judge, and where that party was omnipotent; and he must give up the cause in despair.

It is not with strict propriety that this language is ever applied to the Lord Jesus, the great Mediator between God and man. He is not an umpire to settle a dispute, in the sense in which Job understood it; he is not an arbiter, to whom the cause in dispute between man and his Maker is to be referred; he is not a judge to listen to the arguments of the respective parties, and to decide the controversy. He is a mediator between us and God, to make it proper or possible that God should be reconciled to the guilty, and to propose to man the terms of reconciliation; to plead our cause before God, and to communicate to us the favors which he proposes to bestow on man.

That might lay his hand upon us both - It is not improbable that this may refer to some ancient ceremony in courts where, for some cause, the umpire or arbiter laid his hand on both the parties. Or, it may mean merely that the umpire had the power of control over both the parties; that it was his office to restrain them within proper limits, to check any improper expressions, and to see that the argument was fairly conducted on both sides. The meaning of the whole here is, that if there were such an umpire, Job would be willing to argue the cause. As it was, it was a hopeless thing, and he could do nothing more than to be silent. That there was irreverence in this language must be admitted; but it is language taken from courts of law, and the substance of it is, that Job could not hope to maintain his cause before one so great and powerful as God.

Verse 34

Let him take his rod away from me - Let him suspend my sufferings, and let us come together on equal terms. His terror now is upon me, and I can do nothing. I am oppressed, and broken down, and crushed under his hand, and I could not hope to maintain my cause with any degree of success. If my sufferings were lightened, and I could approach the question with the rigor of health and the power of reasoning unweakened by calamity, I could then do justice to the views which I entertain. Now there would be obvious disparity, while one of the parties has crushed and enervated the other by the mere exercise of power.

Verse 35

Then would I speak, and not fear him - I should then be able to maintain my cause on equal terms, and with equal advantages.

But it is not so with me - Margin, I am not so with myself. Noyes, "I am not so at heart." Good, "but not thus could I in my present state." Literally, "for not thus I with myself." The Syriac renders it, "for neither am I his adversary." Very various interpretations have been given of this phrase. The Jews, with Aben Ezra, suppose it means, "for I am not such as you suppose me to be. You take me to be a guilty man; but I am innocent, and if I had a fair opportunity for trial, I could show that I am." Others suppose it to mean, "I am held to be guilty by the Most High, and am treated accordingly. But I am not so. I am conscious to myself that I am innocent." It seems to me that Dr. Good has come nearer the true sense than any other interpreter, and certainly his exposition accords with the connection. According to this the meaning is, "I am not able thus to vindicate myself in my present circumstances. I am oppressed and crushed beneath a lead of calamities. But if these were removed, and if I had a fair opportunity of trial, then I could so state my cause as to make it appear to be just."

In this whole chapter, there is evidently much insubmission and improper feeling. Job submits to power, not to truth and right. He sees and admits that God is able to overwhelm him, but he does not seem disposed to admit that he is right in doing it. He supposes that if he had a fair and full opportunity of trial, he could make his cause good, and that it would be seen that he did not deserve his heavy calamities. There is much of this kind of submission to God even among good people. It is submission because they cannot help it, not because they see the divine dealings to be right. There is nothing cheerful or confiding about it. There is often a secret feeling in the heart that the sufferings are beyond the deserts, and that if the case could be fairly tried, the dealings of God would be found to be harsh and severe. Let us not blame Job for his impatience and irreverent language, until we have carefully examined our own hearts in the times of trial like those which he endured. Let us not infer that he was worse than other men, until we are placed in similar circumstances, and are able to manifest better feelings than he did.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

My soul is weary of my life - compare the note at Job 7:16. The margin here is, Or," cut off while I live." The meaning in the margin is in accordance with the interpretation of Schultens. The Chaldee also renders it in a similar way: אתגזרת נפשי - my soul is cut off. But the more correct interpretation is that in our common version; and the sense is, that his soul, that is, that he himself was disgusted with life. It was a weary burden, and he wished to die.

I will leave my complaint upon myself - Noyes, "I will give myself up to complaint." Dr. Good, "I will let loose from myself my dark thoughts." The literal sense is, "I will leave complaint upon myself;" that is, I will give way to it; I will not restrain it; compare Job 7:11.

I will speak in the bitterness of my soul - See the notes, Job 7:11.

Verse 2

I will say unto God, Do not condemn me - Do not hold me to be wicked - תרשיעני אל *'al tarshîyʿēnîy* The sense is, "Do not simply hold me to be wicked, and treat me as such, without showing me the reasons why I am so regarded." This was the ground of Job's complaint, that God by mere sovereignty and power held him to be a wicked man, and that he did not see the reasons why he was so considered and treated. He now desired to know in what he had offended, and to be made acquainted with the cause of his sufferings. The idea is, that it was unjust to treat one as guilty who had no opportunity of knowing the nature of the offence with which he was charged, or the reason why he was condemned.

Verse 3

Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress - The sense of this is, that it could not be with God a matter of personal gratification to inflict pain wantonly. There must be a reason why he did it. This was clear to Job, and he was anxious, therefore, to know the reason why he was treated in this manner. Yet there is evidently here not a little of the spirit of complaining. There is an insinuation that God was afflicting him beyond what he deserved; see Job 10:7. The state of his mind appears to have been this: he is conscious to himself that he is a sincere friend of God, and he is unwilling to believe that God can wantonly inflict pain - and yet he has no other way of accounting for it. He is in a sort driven to this painful

conclusion - and he asks with deep feeling, whether it can be so? Is there no other solution than this? Is there no way of explaining the fact that he suffers so much, than either the supposition that he is a hypocrite - which he feels assured he is not; or that God took a wanton pleasure in inflicting pain - which he was as little disposed to believe, if he could avoid it? Yet his mind rather verges to this latter belief, for he seems more disposed to believe that God was severe than that he himself was a hypocrite and a wicked man. Neither of these conclusions was necessary. If he had taken a middle ground, and had adverted to the fact that God might afflict his own children for their good, the mystery would have been solved. He could have retained the consciousness of his integrity, and at the same time his confidence in God.

That thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands - Margin, labor. That is, despise man, or treat him as if he were of no value. The idea is, that it would be natural for God to love his own work, and that his treatment of Job seemed as if he regarded his own workmanship - man - as of no value.

And shine upon the counsel of the wicked - By giving them health and prosperity.

Verse 4

Hast thou eyes of flesh? - Eyes like man. Dost thou look upon man with the same disposition to discern faults; the same uncharitableness and inclination to construe everything in the severest manner possible, which characterizes man? Possibly Job may have reference here to the harsh judgment of his friends, and means to ask whether it could be possible for God to evince the same feelings in judging of him which they had done.

Verse 5

Are thy days as the days of man - Does thy life pass on like that of man? Dost thou expect soon to die, that thou dost pursue me in this manner, searching out my sins, and afflicting me as if there were no time to lose? The idea is, that God seemed to press this matter as if he were soon to cease to exist, and as if there were no time to spare in accomplishing it. His strokes were unintermitted, as if it were necessary that the work should be done soon, and as if no respite could be given for a full and fair development of the real character of the sufferer. The whole passage Job 10:4-7 expresses the settled conviction of Job that God could not resemble man; Man was short lived, fickle, blind; he was incapable, from the brevity of his existence, and from his imperfections, of judging correctly of the

character of others. But it could not be so with God. He was eternal. He knew the heart. He saw everything as it was. Why, then, Job asks with deep feeling, did he deal with him as if he were influenced by the methods of judgment which were inseparable from the condition of imperfect and dying man?

Verse 6

That thou inquirest after mine iniquity - Art thou governed by hu man passions and prejudices, that thou dost thus seem to search out every little obliquity and error? Job here evidently refers to the conduct of man in strictly marking faults, and in being unwilling to forgive; and he asks whether it is possible that God could be governed by such feelings as these.

Verse 7

Thou knowest that I am not wicked - That is, that I am not a hypocrite, or an impenitent sinner. Job did not claim perfection (see the note at Job 9:20), but he maintained through all this argument that he was not a wicked man, in the sense in which his friends regarded him as such, and for the truth of this he could boldly appeal to God. The margin is, "It is upon thy knowledge." This is a literal translation of the Hebrew, but the sense is well expressed in the text. The meaning of the verse is, "Why dost thou thus afflict me, when thou knowest that I am not wicked? Why am I treated as if I were the worst of men? Why is occasion thus furnished for my friends to construct an argument as if I were a man of singular depravity?"

There is none that can deliver out of thine hand - I have no power to release myself. Job felt hat God had almighty power; and he seems to have felt that his sufferings were rather the simple exertion of power, than the exercise of justice. It was this that laid the foundation for his complaint.

Verse 8

Thine hands have made me - Job proceeds now to state that he had been made by God, and that he had shown great skill and pains in his formation. He argues that it would seem like caprice to take such pains, and to exercise such amazing wisdom and care in forming him, and then, on a sudden, and without cause, dash his own work to pieces. Who makes a beautiful vase only to be destroyed? Who moulds a statue from marble only to break it to pieces? Who builds a splendid edifice only to pull it down? Who plants a rare and precious flower only to have the pleasure of plucking it up? The statement in Job 10:8-12, is not only beautiful and forcible as an argument, but is especially interesting and valuable, as it may be presumed

to embody the views in the patriarchal age about the formation and the laws of the human frame. No inconsiderable part of the value of the book of Job, as was remarked in the Introduction, arises from the incidental notices of the sciences as they prevailed at the time when it was composed.

If it is the oldest book in the world, it is an invaluable record on these points. The expression, “thine hands have made me,” is in the margin, “took pains about me.” Dr. Good renders it, “have wrought me;” Noyes, “completely fashioned me;” Rosenmuller explains it to mean, “have formed me with the highest diligence and care.” Schultens renders it, *Manus tuae nervis colligarunt* - “thy hands have bound me with nerves or sinews;” and appeals to the use of the Arabic as authority for this interpretation. He maintains (De Defectibus hodiernis Ling. Hebr. pp. 142,144,151), that the Arabic word atzaba denotes “the body united and bound in a beautiful form by nerves and tendons;” and that the idea here is, that God had so constructed the human frame. The Hebrew word used here (עצב *ʿâtsab*) means properly to work, form, fashion. The primary idea, according to Gesenius, is, that of cutting, both wood and stone, and hence, to cut or carve with a view to the forming of an image. The verb also has the idea of labor, pain, travail, grief; perhaps from the labor of cutting or carving a stone or a block of wood. Hence it means, in the Piel, to form or fashion, with the idea of labor or toil; and the sense here is undoubtedly, that God had elaborated the bodies of men with care and skill, like that bestowed on a carved image or statue. The margin expresses the idea not badly - took pains about me.

And fashioned me - Made me. The Hebrew here means simply to make.

Together round about - יחד סביב *yachad sâbîyb* Vulgate, *totum in circuitu*. Septuagint simply, “made me.” Dr. Good, “moulded me compact on all sides.” The word יחד *yachad* rendered “together,” has the notion of oneness, or union. It may refer to the oneness of the man - the making of one from the apparently discordant materials, and the compact form in which the body, though composed of bones, and sinews, and blood-vessels, is constructed. A similar idea is expressed by Lucretius, as quoted by Schultens. Lib. iii. 358:

- *Qui coetu, conjugioque*

Corporis atque anirnae consistimus uniter apti.

Yet thou dost destroy me - Notwithstanding I am thus made, yet thou art taking down my frame, as if it were of no consequence, and formed with

no care.

Verse 9

Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay - There is evident allusion here to the creation of man, and to the fact that he was moulded from the dust of the earth - a fact which would be preserved by tradition; see Genesis 2:7. The fact that God had moulded the human form as the potter moulds the clay, is one that is often referred to in the Scriptures; compare Romans 9:20-21. The object of Job in this is, probably, to recall the fact that God, out of clay, had formed the noble structure, man, and to ask whether it was his intention to reduce that structure again to its former worthless condition - to destroy its beauty, and to efface the remembrance of his workmanship? Was it becoming God thus to blot out every memorial of his own power and skill in moulding the human frame?

Verse 10

Hast thou not poured me out as milk? - The whole image in this verse and the following, is designed to fur nish an illustration of the origin and growth of the human frame. The Note of Dr. Good may be transcribed, as furnishing an illustration of what may have possibly been the meaning of Job. "The whole of the simile is highly correct and beautiful, and has not been neglected by the best poets of Greece and Rome. From the well-tempered or mingled milk of the chyle, every individual atom of every individual organ in the human frame, the most compact and consolidated, as well as the soft and pliable, is perpetually supplied and renewed, through the medium of a system of lacteals or milk-vessels, as they are usually called in anatomy, from the nature of this common chyle or milk which they circulate. Into the delicate stomach of the infant it is introduced in the form of milk; but even in the adult it must be reduced to some such form, whatever be the substance he feed upon, by the conjoint action of the stomach and other chylifactive organs, before it can become the basis of animal nutriment.

It then circulates through the system, and either continues fluid as milk in its simple state, or is rendered solid as milk is in its caseous or cheese-state, according to the nature of the organ which it supplies with its vital current." True as this is, however, as a matter of physiology, now well understood, a doubt may arise whether Job was acquainted with the method thus described, in which man is sustained. The idea of Job is, that God was the author of the human frame, and that that frame was so formed as to

evince his wonderful and incomprehensible wisdom. A consultation of the works on physiology, which explain the facts about the formation and the growth of the human body, will show that there are few things which more strikingly evince the wisdom of God than the formation of the human frame, alike at its origin, and in every stage of its development. It is a subject, however, which cannot, with propriety, be pursued in a work of this kind.

Verse 11

Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh - This refers, undoubtedly, to the formation of man in his foetal existence, and is designed to denote that the whole organization of the human frame was to be traced to God. Grotius remarks that this is the order in which the infant is formed - that the skin appears first, then the flesh, then the harder parts of the frame. On this subject, the reader may consult Dunglison‘s Physiology, vol. ii. p. 340ff.

And hast fenced me - Margin, Hedged. Literally, Hast covered me. The sense is plain. God had formed him as he was, and to him he owed his life, and all that he had. Job asks with the deepest interest whether God would take down a frame formed in this manner, and reduce it again to dust? Would it not be more for his honor to preserve it still - at least to the common limit of human life?

Verse 12

Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit - Thy constant care; thy watchful providence; thy superintendence. The word rendered visitation (פקדה *peqûddâh*) means properly the mustering of an army, the care that is manifested in looking after those who are enlisted; and then denotes care, vigilance, providence, custody, watch. The idea is, that God had watched over him and preserved him, and that to his constant vigilance he owed the preservation of his life.

Verse 13

And these things hast thou hid in thine heart - This may either refer to the arrangements by which God had made him, or to the calamities which he had brought upon him. Most expositors suppose that the latter is intended. Such is the opinion of Rosenmuller, Good, Noyes, and Scott. According to this the idea is, that God had purposed in his heart to bring these calamities upon him. They were a part of his counsel and design. To hide in the heart, or to lay up in the heart, is a phrase expressive of a secret

purpose. I see no reason to confine it, however, to the calamities which Job had experienced. It may refer to all the plans and doings of the Most High, to which Job had just referred. All his acts in the creation and preservation of man, were a part of his secret counsel, He had formed the plan in his heart, and was now executing it in the various dispensations of his providence.

I know that this is with thee - That all this is a part of thy purpose. It has its origin in thee, and is according to thy counsel. This is the language of piety, recognizing the great truth that all things are in accordance with the purposes of God, or that his plans embrace all events - a doctrine which Job most assuredly held.

Verse 14

If I sin - The object of this verse and the following is, evidently, to say that he was wholly perplexed. He did not know how to act. He could not understand the reason of the divine dealings, and he was wholly unable to explain them, and hence, he did not know how to act in a proper manner. It is expressive of a state of mind where the individual wishes to think and feel right, but where he finds so much to perplex him, that he does not know what to do. Job was sure that his friends were not right in the position which they maintained - that he was a sinner of enormous character, and that his sufferings were proof of this, and yet he did not know how to answer their arguments. He desired to have confidence in God, and yet he knew not how to reconcile his dealings with his sense of right. He felt that he was a friend of God, and he did not know why he should visit one who had this consciousness in this distressing and painful manner. His mind was perplexed, vacillating, embarrassed, and he did not know what to do or say. The truth in this whole argument was, that he was more often right than his friends, but that he, in common with them, had embraced some principles which he was compelled to admit to be true, or which he could not demonstrate to be false, which gave them greatly the advantage in the argument, and which they pressed upon him now with overwhelming force.

Then thou markest me - Dost carefully observe every fault. Why he did this, Job could not see. The same difficulty he expressed in Job 7:17-19; see the notes at that place.

And wilt not acquit me - Wilt not pardon me. Job did not understand why God would not do this. It was exceedingly perplexing to him that God

held him to be guilty, and would not pardon him if he had sinned. The same perplexity he expressed in Job 7:21; see the note at that verse.

Verse 15

If I be wicked, woe unto me - The meaning of this in this connection is, "I am full of perplexity and sorrow. Whether I am wicked or righteous, I find no comfort. Whatever is my character, my efforts to be happy are unavailing, and my mind is full of anguish. Woe follows if I have been guilty of sin; and if I am not a sinful man, I am equally incapable of enjoyment. In every way I am doomed to wretchedness." And if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head. That is, with confidence and cheerfulness. The meaning is, that though he was conscious that he was not a hypocrite, yet he did not know what to do. God treated him as if he were wicked, and his friends regarded him as such, and he was overwhelmed with the perplexities of his situation. He could not lift up his head with confidence, though he was certain that he was not a sinner in the sense in which they charged him with being such; and yet since he was treated by God in a manner so similar to the mode in which the wicked are treated, he felt ashamed and confounded. Who has not felt the same thing? Who has not experienced a sense of shame and mortification at being sick, - a proof of guilt, and an expression of the hatred of God against sin? Who has not felt humbled that he must die, as the most vile of the race must die, and that his body must become the "prey of corruption" and "the banquet of worms," as a demonstration of guilt? Such humiliation Job experienced. He was treated as if he were the vilest of sinners. He endured from God sufferings such as they endure. He was so regarded by his friends. He felt humbled and mortified that he was brought into this situation, and was ashamed that he could not meet the arguments of his friends.

I am full of confusion - Shame, ignominy, distress, and perplexity. On every side there was embarrassment, and he knew not what to do. His friends regarded him as vile, and he could not but admit that he was so treated by God.

Therefore see thou mine affliction - The word rendered here "see" (ראה *râ'âh*) in the imperative, Rosenmuller, Gesenius, and others suppose should be regarded as in the infinitive absolute, the finite verb being understood; "seeing I see my affliction," that is, I certainly see it. So the Chaldee and the Syriac render it, and this agrees better with the connection of the passage. "I see the depth of my affliction. I cannot hide it from

myself. I see, and must admit, that God treats me as if I were a sinner, and I am greatly perplexed and embarrassed by that fact. My mind is in confusion, and I know not what to say."

Verse 16

For it increaseth - Our translators understand this as meaning that the calamities of Job, so far from becoming less, were constantly increasing, and thus augmenting his perplexity and embarrassment. But a somewhat different explanation is given to it by many interpreters. The word rendered "increaseth" (גאה *gâ'âh*) means properly, to lift up, to lift up oneself, to rise; and Gesenius supposes that it refers here to "the head," and that the meaning is, "if it lift up itself (sc. my head), thou huntest me as a lion." It cannot be denied that the notion of pride, elation, haughtiness, is usually connected with the use of the word, but it is not necessary here to depart from the common interpretation, meaning that the increase of his affliction greatly augmented his perplexity. Jerome, however, readers it, "and on account of pride, thou dost seize me as a lioness." The idea is, "my affliction, as it were, exalts itself, or, becomes more and more prominent." This is a better interpretation than to refer it to the raising up of his head.

Thou huntest me as a fierce lion - On the meaning of the word here rendered "fierce lion" שׁחל *shachal* see the notes at Job 4:10. The sense here is, that God hunted or followed him as a fierce lion pursued his prey.

And again thou showest thyself marvelous - Or rather, "thou turnest, and art wonderful toward me." The meaning is, that he did not at once spring upon his prey and then leave it, but he came back as if it had not been put to death when first seized, as if a lion should come back and torture his victim again. The meaning of the phrase "shewest thyself marvelous" is, that the dealings of God toward him were wonderful. They were wholly incomprehensible. He had no means of finding out the reasons of his doings. On the word used here, compare the notes at Isaiah 9:6.

Verse 17

Thou renewest thy witnesses against me - Margin, "that is, plagues." The Hebrew is, "thy witnesses" - עדיך *ʿēdeykā* So the Vulgate. The Septuagint is, "renewing against me my examination," τὴν ἐξέτασίν μου *tēn ecetasin mou* Rabbi Levi supposes that the plague of the leprosy is intended. But the true meaning seems to be, that God sent upon him calamities which were regarded by his friends as "proofs" or "witnesses" that he was wicked, the public and solemn attestation of God, as they

supposed, to the truth that he was eminently a bad man. New proofs of this kind were constantly occurring in his augmenting and protracted sorrows, and he could not answer the arguments which were brought from them by his friends.

Changes and war are against me - Or rather, are "with me," עמי *ʿîmy* There were with him such reverses of condition as laid the foundation for the argument which they had urged with so much pertinacity and force that he was punished by God. The word rendered "changes" (חליפה *chălîyphâh*) means properly "changes," or exchanges, and is applied to garments, 2 Kings 5:5, 2 Kings 5:22-23. It may be used also of soldiers keeping watch until they are relieved by a succeeding guard; see the note at Job 14:14. Here it is not improbably employed in the sense of a succession of attacks made on him. One succeeds another, as if platoon after platoon, to use the modern terms, or phalanx after phalanx, should come up against him. As soon as one had discharged its arrows, another succeeded in its place; or as soon as one became ex hausted, it was followed by a fresh recruit. All this Job could not endure. The succession wearied him, and he could not bear it. Dr. Good supposes that the word refers to the skirmishes by which a battle is usually introduced, in which two armies attempt to gall each other before they are engaged. But the true idea, as it seems to me, is, that afflictions succeeded each other as soldiers on a watch, or in a battle, relieve each other. When one set is exhausted on duty, it is succeeded by another. Or, when in battle one company has discharged its weapons, or is exhausted, it is succeeded by those who are brought fresh into the field. The word rendered "war" (צבא *tsâbâʹ*) properly means an army or a host; see the note at Job 7:1. Here it means that a whole host had rushed upon him. Not only had he been galled by the succession, the relief-guard of calamities, the attacks which had followed each other from an advanced guard, or from scouts sent out to skirmish, but the whole army was upon him. A whole host of calamities came rushing upon him alone, and he could not endure them.

Verse 18

Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth - See the notes at Job 3:11.

Verse 19

I should have been carried from the womb to the grave - See the notes at Job 3:16.

Verse 20

Are not my days few? - My life is short, and hastens to a close. Let not then my afflictions be continued to the last moment of life, but let thine hand be removed, that I may enjoy some rest before I go hence, to return no more. This is an address to God, and the meaning is, that as life was necessarily so short, he asked to be permitted to enjoy some comfort before he should go to the land of darkness and of death; compare the note at Job 7:21. A somewhat similar expression occurs in Psalm 39:13:

O spare me, that I may recover strength,
Before I go hence, and be no more.

Verse 21

Before I go - from where "I shall not return." To the grave, to the land of shades, to

"That undiscovered country, from whose bourne
No traveler returns."

To the land of darkness - This passage is important as furnishing an illustration of what was early understood about the regions of the dead. The essential idea here is that it was a land of darkness, of total and absolute night. This idea Job presents in a great variety of forms and phrases. He amplifies it, and uses apparently all the epithets which he can command to represent the utter and entire darkness of the place. The place referred to is not the grave, but the region beyond, the abode of departed spirits, the Hades of the ancients; and the idea here is, that it is a place where not a clear ray of light ever shines. That this was a common opinion of the ancients in regard to the world of departed spirits, is well known. Virgil thus speaks of those gloomy regions:

Oii, quibusimperium est animarum, umbraeque silentes,
Et Chaos, et Phlegethon, loca nocte tacentia late,
Sit mihi fas audita loqui; slt numine vestro

Pandere res alta terra et caligine mersas.
Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram,
Perque domos Ditis vacuas, et inania regna:
Quale per incertam lunam sub luce maligna

Est iter in silvis: ubi coelum condidit umbra

Jupiter, et rebus nox abstulit atra colorem

Aeneid vi. 259ff

A similar view of Hades was held by the Greeks. Thus, Theognis, 1007:

Ὡς μάκαρ εὐδυίμων τε και ὄλβιος, ὅστις ἄπειρος

Ἄθλων, εἰς ἥ δου δῶμα μέλαν κατέβη.

Hōs makar eudaimōn te kai olbios hostis apeiros

Athlōn eis h' dou dōma melan katebē is nowhere to be found, however, a description which for intensity and emphasis of expression surpasses this of Job.

Shadow of death - See this phrase explained in the note at Job 3:5.

Verse 22

A land of darkness - The word used here (עיפה *ʿêyphâh*) is different from that rendered "darkness" השך *chôshek* in the previous verse. That is the common word to denote darkness; this seldom occurs. It is derived from עוף *ʿûph* to fly; and then to cover as with wings; and hence, the noun means that which is shaded or dark; Amos 4:13; compare Job 17:13; Isaiah 8:22; Isaiah 9:1.

As darkness itself - This is still another word אפל *'ôphel* though in our common version but one term is used. We have not the means in our language of marking different degrees of obscurity with the accuracy with which the Hebrews did it. The word used here אפל *'ôphel* denotes a THICK darkness - such as exists when the sun is set - from אפל *'aphêl* to go down, to set. It is poetic, and is used to denote intense and deep darkness; see Job 3:6.

And of the shadow of death - I would prefer reading this as connected with the previous word - "the deep darkness of the shadow of death." The Hebrew will bear this, and indeed it is the obvious construction.

Without any order - The word rendered order (סדרים *sedārîym*) is in the plural. It is from סדר, obsolete, to place in a row or order, to arrange. The meaning is, that everything was mingled together as in chaos, and all was confusion. Milton has used similar language:

- "A vast immeasurable abyss."
- "dark, wasteful, wild."

Ovid uses similar language in speaking of chaos: "Unus chaos, rudis indigestaque moles."

And where the light is as darkness - This is a very striking and graphic expression. It means that there is no pure and clear light. Even all the light that shines there is dark, sombre, gloomy - like the little light of a total

eclipse, which seems to be darkness itself, and which only serves to render the darkness more distressing. Compare Milton:

"A dungeon horrible on all sides round,
As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames
No light; but rather darkness visible

Served only to discover sights of woe."
Par. Lost, 1.

The Hebrew here literally is, "And it shines forth (יתפע *yatophaʿ*) as darkness:" that is, the very shining of the light there, if there is any, is like darkness! Such was the view of Job of the abodes of the dead - even of the pious dead. No wonder he shrank back from it, and wished to live. Such is the prospect of the grave to man, until Christianity comes and reveals a brighter world beyond the grave - a world that is all light. That darkness is now scattered. A clear light shines even around the grave, and beyond there is a world where all is light, and where "there is no night," and where all is one bright eternal day; Revelation 21:23; Revelation 22:5. O had Job been favored with these views of heaven, he would not have thus feared to die!

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 2

Should not the multitude of words be answered? - As if all that Job had said had been mere words; or as if he was remarkable for mere garrulity.

And should a man full of talk be justified - Margin, as in Hebrew "of lips." The phrase is evidently a Hebraism, to denote a great talker - a man of mere lips, or empty sound. Zophar asks whether such a man could be justified or vindicated. It will be recollected that taciturnity was with the Orientals a much greater virtue than with us, and that it was regarded as one of the proofs of wisdom. The wise man with them was he who sat down at the feet of age, and desired to learn; who carefully collected the maxims of former times; who diligently observed the course of events; and who deliberated with care on what others had to say. Thus, Solomon says, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise;" Proverbs 10:19; so James 1:19, "let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak." It was supposed that a man who said much would say some foolish or improper things, and hence, it was regarded as a proof of prudence to be distinguished for silence. In Oriental countries, and it may be added also, in all countries that we regard as uncivilized, it is unusual and disrespectful to be hasty in offering counsel, to be forward to speak, or to be confident and bold in opinion; see the notes at Job 32:6-7. It was for reasons such as these that Zophar maintained that a man who was full of talk could not be justified in it; that there was presumptive proof that he was not a safe man, or a man who could be vindicated in all that he said.

Verse 3

Should thy lies - Margin, "devices." Rosenmuller renders this, "should men bear thy boastings with silence?" Dr. Good, "before thee would mankind keep silence?" Vulgate, "tibi soli tacebunt homines?" "Shall men be silent before thee alone? The Septuagint tenders the whole passage, "he who speaketh much should also hear in turn; else the fine speaker (εὔλαλος *eulalos*) thinketh himself just. - Blessed be the short-lived offspring of woman. Be not profuse of words, for there is no one that judges against thee, and do not say that I am pure in works and blameless before him?" How this was made out of the Hebrew, or what is its exact sense, I am unable to say. There can be no doubt, I think, that our present translation is

altogether too harsh, and that Zophar by no means designs to charge Job with uttering lies. The Hebrew word commonly used for lies, is wholly different from that which is used here. The word here (בד *bad*) denotes properly "separation;" then a part; and in various combinations as a preposition, "alone separate." "besides." Then the noun means empty talk, vain boasting; and then it may denote lies or falsehood. The leading idea is that of separation or of remoteness from anything, as from prudence, wisdom, propriety, or truth. It is a general term, like our word "bad," which I presume has been derived from this Hebrew word (בד *bad*), or from the Arabic "bad." In the plural (בדים *badîym*) it is rendered "liars" in Isaiah 44:25; Jeremiah 50:36; "lies" in Job 11:3; Isaiah 16:6; Jeremiah 48:30; and "parts" in Job 41:12. It is also often rendered "staves," Exodus 27:6; Exodus 25:14-15, Exodus 25:28, et sap, at. That it may mean "lies" here I admit, but it may also mean talk that is aside from propriety, and may refer here to a kind of discourse that was destitute of propriety, empty, vain talk.

And when thou mockest - That-is, "shalt thou be permitted to use the language of reproach and of complaint, and no one attempt to make thee sensible of its impropriety?" The complaints and arguments of Job he represented as in fact mocking God.

Shall no man make thee ashamed? - Shall no one show thee the impropriety of it, and bring thy mind to a sense of shame for what it has done? This was what Zophar now proposed to do.

Verse 4

My doctrine is pure - The Septuagint instead of the word "doctrine" here reads "deeds," ἔργοις *ergois* the Syriac, "thou sayest I have acted justly." But the word used here (לקח *leqach*) means properly "fair speech" or "taking arguments," that by which one is "taken" or captivated, from לקח *lâqach* "to take." Then it means doctrine, or instruction, Proverbs 1:5; Proverbs 9:9. Here it means the views which Job had expressed. Dr. Good supposes that it means "conduct," a word which would suit the connection, but the Hebrew is not used in this sense.

And I am clean in thine eyes - In the eyes of God, or in his sight. This was a false charge. Job had never maintained that he was perfect (compare the notes at Job 9:20); he had only maintained that he was not such a sinner as his friends maintained that he was, a hypocrite, and a man eminent for guilt. His lack of absolute perfection he was ever ready to admit and mourn over.

Verse 5

But oh that God would speak - Hebrew, "and truly, who will give that God should speak." It is the expression of an earnest wish that God would address him, and bring him to a proper sense of his ill desert. The meaning is, that if God should speak to him he would by no means find himself so holy as he now claimed to be.

Verse 6

And that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom - The hidden things that pertain to wisdom. The reference here is to the wisdom of God himself. The sense is this, "you now think yourself pure and holy. You have confidence in your own wisdom and integrity. But this apprehension is based on a short-sighted view of God, and on ignorance of him. If he would speak and show you his wisdom; if he would express his sense of what purity is, you would at once see how far you have come from perfection, and would be overwhelmed with a sense of your comparative vileness and sin."

That they are double to that which is - Noyes renders this," his wisdom which is unsearchable." Dr. Good, strangely enough, "for they are intricacies to iniquity." The expression, as it stands in our common version, is not very intelligible; and indeed it is difficult, to attach any idea to it. Of the words used in the Hebrew, the sense is not difficult. The word כפלים *kîplayîm* "double," is from כפל *kâphal* "to fold,"" to double;" and means a doubling Job 41:5; and then two folds, or double folds, and the sense here is, that the wisdom of God is "double-fold;" that is, complicated, inexplicable, or manifold. It is not spread out and plain, but is infolded, so that it requires to be unrolled to be understood. The word rendered "that which is" (תשיה *tûshîyâh*), means properly a setting upright, uprightness - from ישע *yâshaʿ* Hence, it means help, deliverance, Job 6:13; purpose, undertaking, see the notes at Job 5:12; and then counsel, wisdom, understanding, Job 12:16; Isaiah 28:29. It means here, I suppose, "understanding;" and the idea is, that the wisdom of God is "double of understanding;" that is, it is so infolded, so complex, that it greatly surpasses our comprehension. What we see is a small part of it; and the "secrets" of his wisdom - the parts of his wisdom which are not unfolded, are far above our grasp. His wisdom is like a vast roll or volume, only the first and a very small part of which is unrolled so that we can read it. But who can look into that that remains unopened, and penetrate between the

involutions, so as to perceive and read it all? It is but little that is now unrolled of the mighty volume - the remainder will be unfolded as years and ages shall pass on, and the entire unfolding of the book will be reserved for eternity.

Know, therefore, that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth - The word here rendered "exacteth" (ישׁה *yasheh*) more properly means "to forget" - from נשׁה *nâshâh* It also means to loan on usury, or to borrow; but the sense here is rather that of forgetting. It is not used in the sense of exacting. The true meaning is, "know, therefore, that for thee God hath caused to be forgotten a part of thy iniquity." That is, he has treated you as if he had caused a part of your sins to be out of mind, or as if they were not remembered. Instead of treating you, as you complain, with severity, he has by no means inflicted on you the calamities which you deserve. The ground of this unfeeling assertion is the abstract proposition that God is infinitely wiser than human beings; that he has a deeper insight into human guilt than people can have; and that if he should disclose to us all that he sees of the heart, we should be amazed at the revelations of our own sins. This sentiment is undoubtedly true, and accords almost cxactly with what Job had himself said Job 9:19-22, but there is something very harsh and severe in the manner in which Zophar applies it.

Verse 7

Canst then, by searching, find out God? - In order to illustrate the sentiment which he had just expressed, that the secrets of divine wisdom must be far above our comprehension, Zophar introduces here this sublime description of God - a description which seems to have the form and force of a proverb. It seems to have been a settled opinion that man could not find out the Almighty to perfection by his own powers - a sentiment, which is as true now, as it was then, and which is of the utmost importance in all our inquiries about the Creator. The sentiment is expressed in a most beautiful manner; and the language itself is not unworthy of the theme. The word "searching," חקר *chêqer* is from חקר *châqar* to search, to search out, to examine; and the primary sense, according to Gesenius, lies in searching in the earth by boring or digging - as for metals. Then it means to search with diligence and care. Here it means that by the utmost attention in examining the works of God, it would be impossible for man to find out the Almighty to perfection. All the investigations which have been made of God, have fallen short of the object; and at the present time it is as true as it was in the

days of Job, that we cannot, by searching, find him out. Of much that pertains to him and his plans we must be content to remain in ignorance, until we are admitted to the revelations of a higher world - happy and thankful now that we are permitted to know so much of him as we do, and that we are apprized of the existence of one infinite and perfect mind. It is an inexpressible privilege to know "anything" of God; and it is proof of the exalted nature of man, that he is now capable of becoming in any degree acquainted with the divine nature.

Verse 8

It is as high as heaven - That is, the knowledge of God; or the subject is as high as heaven. The idea is, that man is incompetent to examine, with accuracy, an object that is as far off as the heavens; and that as the knowledge of God must be of that character, it is vain for him to attempt to investigate it fully. There is an energy in the Hebrew which is lost in our common translation. The Hebrew is abrupt and very emphatic: "The heights of the heavens!" It is the language of one looking up with astonishment at the high heavens, and over-powered with the thought that the knowledge of God must be higher even than those distant skies. Who can hope to understand it? Who can be qualified to make the investigation? It is a matter of simple but sublime truth, that God must be higher than these heavens; and when we take into view the amazing distances of many of the heavenly bodies, as now known by the aid of modern astronomy, we may ask with deeper emphasis by far than Zophar did. "Can we, by searching, find out God?"

Deeper than hell - Hebrew "Than Sheol" - מִשְּׁאוֹל *meshe'ôl* The Septuagint renders this, "the heaven is high, what canst thou do? And there are things deeper than in Hades - βαθύτερα τῶν ἐν ᾅδου *bathutera tōn en Hadou* - what dost thou know?" On the meaning of the word Sheol, see Isaiah 5:14, note; Isaiah 14:9, note. It seems to have been supposed to be as deep as the heavens are high; and the idea here is, that it would be impossible for man to investigate a subject that was as profound as Sheol was deep. The idea is not that God was in Sheol, but that the subject was as profound as the abode of departed spirits was deep and remote. It is possible that the Psalmist may have had this passage in his eye in the similar expression, occurring in Psalm 139:

If I ascend into heaven, thou art there;
If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there.

Verse 9

The measure thereof is longer than the earth - The measure of the knowledge of God. The extent of the earth would be one of the longest measures known to the ancients. Yet it is now impossible to ascertain what ideas were attached, in the time of Job, to the extent of the earth - and it is not necessary to know this in order to understand this expression. It is morally certain that the prevailing ideas were very limited, and that a small part of the earth was then known. The general belief seems to have been, that it was a vast plain, surrounded by water - but how supported, and what were its limits, were evidently matters to them unknown. The earliest knowledge which we have of geography, as understood by the Arabs, represents the earth as wholly encompassed by an ocean, like a zone. This was usually characterized as a "Sea of Darkness;" an appellation usually given to the Atlantic; while to the Northern Sea was given the name of "The Sea of Pitchy Darkness." Edrisi imagined the land to be floating in the sea, and only part appearing above, like an egg in a basin of water. If these views prevailed so late as the tenth and eleventh centuries of the Christian era, it is reasonable to conclude that the views of the figure and size of the earth must have been extremely limited in the time of Job. On the ancient views of geography, see the notes at Job 26:7-10, and the maps there, also Murray's Encyclopaedia of Geography, Book I, and Eschenberg's Manual of Classical Literature, by Prof. Fiske, Part I.

And broader than the sea - What was the idea of the breadth of the sea, which was supposed to surround the earth, it is now wholly impossible to determine. Probably there were no ideas on the subject that could be regarded as settled and definite. The ancients had no means of ascertaining this, and they perhaps supposed that the ocean extended to an unlimited extent - or, perhaps, to the far distant place where the sky and the water appeared to meet. At all events it was an illustration then, as it is now, of a vast distance, and is not inappropriately used here to denote the impossibility of fully understanding God. This illustration would be far more striking then than now. We have crossed the ocean; and we do not deem it an impracticable thing to explore the remotest seas. But not so the ancients. They kept close to the shore. They seldom ventured out of sight of land. The enterprise of exploring and crossing the vast ocean, which they supposed encompassed the globe, was regarded by them as wholly

impracticable - and equally so they correctly supposed it was to find out God.

Verse 10

If he cut off - Margin, "Make a change." But neither of these phrases properly expresses the sense of the original. The whole image here is probably that of arresting a criminal and bringing him to trial, and the language is taken from the mode of conducting a prosecution. The word rendered "cut off" - יחלף *yachâlop* from חלף *châlaph* - means properly to pass along; to pass on; then to pass against anyone, to rush on, to assail; and in a remote sense in the Piel and the Hiphil, to cause to pass on or away, that is, to change. This is the sense expressed in the margin. The idea is not that of cutting off, but is that of making a rush upon a man, for the purpose of arresting him and bringing him to trial. There are frequent references to such trials in the book of Job. The Chaldee renders this, "if he pass on and shut up the heavens with clouds" - but the paraphrasist evidently did not understand the passage.

And shut up - That is, imprison or detain with a view to trial. Some such detention is always practiced of necessity before trial.

Or gather together - Gather together the parties for trial; or rather call the individual into court for trial. The word קהל *qâhal* means properly to call together, to convoke, as a people; and is used to denote the custom of assembling the people for a trial - or, as we would say, to "call the court," which is now the office of a crier.

Then who can hinder him? - Margin, "Who can turn him away?" He has all power, and no one can resist him. No one can deliver the criminal from his hands. Zophar here is in fact repeating in another form what Job had himself said (Job 9:3 ff), and the sentiment seems to be proverbial. The idea here is, that if God should call a man into judgment, and hold him guilty, he could neither answer nor resist him. God is so great; he so intimately knows the human heart; he has so thorough an acquaintance with all our past sins, that we cannot hope to answer him or escape. Zophar argues on this principle: "God holds you to be guilty. He is punishing you accordingly. You do not feel it so, or suppose that you deserve all this. But he sees your heart, and knows all your life. If he holds you to be guilty, it is so. You cannot answer him, and you should so regard it, and submit."

Verse 11

For he knoweth vain men - He is intimately acquainted with the heart; he knows human beings altogether. The word "vain" here (שׁוא *shâv'*), means properly vanity, emptiness, falsehood, a lie, iniquity. "Men of vanity," here may mean people whose opinions are valueless, or it may mean people of deceit, falsehood, hypocrisy. Most probably it means the latter, and the indirect reference may be to such men as Job. The sense is, that God is intimately acquainted with such men. They cannot deceive him, and their wickedness will be found out.

Will he not then consider it? - Various ways have been proposed of explaining this. By some it is supposed to mean, "He seeth iniquity, where they do not observe it;" that is, he perceives it, where people do not themselves. This would express a thought which would accord well with the connection, but it is doubtful whether the Hebrew will bear this construction. By another explanation it is supposed to mean, as in our common version, "Will not God observe it, and bring it to trial? Will he suffer it to pass unnoticed?" This makes good sense, and the Hebrew will admit of this interpretation. But there is another view still, which is preferable to either. According to this it means, that God perceives the iniquity in man, though he does not seem to notice it; see the notes at Job 11:6. He appears to pass over a part of it, but he sees it notwithstanding, and is intimately acquainted with all the depravity of the heart. The main reference here is to Job, and the object is to show him that he was guilty, though he had asserted his innocence in so decided a manner. Though he seemed to himself to be innocent, yet Zophar labors to show him that he must be guilty, and that he had seen but a small part of his sins.

Verse 12

For vain man - Margin, "empty." נבוב *nâbûb* according to Gesenius, from the root נבב *nâbab* to bore through, and then to be hollow; metaphorical, "empty," "foolish." The Septuagint, strangely enough, renders this," but man floats about with words." The Hebrew here means, manifestly, hollow, empty; then insincere and hypocritical. Zophar refers to a hollow-hearted man, who, though he was in fact like a wild ass's colt, attempted to appear mild and gentle, and to have a heart. The meaning is, that man by nature has a spirit untamed and unsubdued, and that with this, he assumes the appearance of gentleness and tenderness, and attempts to appear as if he was worthy of love and affection. God, seeing this hollow-heartedness, treats him accordingly. The reference here is to men like Job,

and Zophar undoubtedly meant to say that he was hollow-hearted and insincere, and yet that he wished to appear to be a man having a heart, or, having true piety.

Would be wise - Various interpretations have been given to this expression. The most simple and obvious seems to be the true one, though I have not seen it noticed by any of the commentators. The word rendered "would be wise" (ילבב *yîlâbēb*) is from לבב *lâbab* or לב *lêb* meaning "heart," and the sense here, as it seems to me, is, "vain, hollow, and insincere, man would wish to seem to have a heart;" that is, would desire to appear sincere, or pious. Destitute of that truly, and false and hollow, he would nevertheless wish to appear different, and would put on the aspect of sincerity and religion. This is the most simple exposition, and this accords with the drift of the passage exactly, and expresses a sentiment which is unquestionably true. Gesenius, however, and some others render it, "but man is hollow and wanteth understanding; yea, man is born like a wild ass's colt, signifying the weakness and dullness of the human understanding in comparison with the divine wisdom." Others render it, "but the foolish man becometh wise when the wild ass's colt shall become a man," that is, never, a most forced and unnatural construction. Dr. Good renders it:

Will he then accept the hollow-hearted person?
Or shall the wild ass-colt assume the man?

Schultens and Dathe translate it:

Let then vain man be wise,
And the wild ass's colt become a man.

Though man be born - Though man by nature, or in connection with his birth, is untamed, lawless, rebellious. The wild ass is a striking image of that which is untamed and unsubdued; compare the notes at Job 39:5. Thus, Jeremiah describes it, "a wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure," Jeremiah 2:24. Thus, it is said of Ishmael Genesis 16:12, "and he will be a wild man," אדם פרא *pârâ' 'âdâm* - a wild ass of a man. So Job 39:5:

Who hath sent out the wild ass free?
Or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass?

It is not quite easy for us to understand these allusions, for with us the ass is the proverbial image of stupidity, dullness, obstinacy, and immobility. But it was not so with the ancients. It is mentioned as distinguished for

velocity, for wildness, and for an unsubdued spirit. Thus, Oppian, as quoted by Bochart, Hieroz. Lib. i. c. ix. p. 63, says:

Κῥαιπνὸν, ἀελλοπόδην, κρατερώνυχον, ὀξύτατον Θεῖν. , *aellopodēn kraterōnuchon ocutaton thein* "Swift, rapid, with strong hoofs, and most fleet in his course."

And Aristotle mentions wild asses as τήν ταχυτῆτα διαφέροντες *tēn tachutēta diapherontes* Hist. Lib. vi. 6 c. 36. So Aelian says of them, ὤκιστοι δραμεῖν *ōkistoi dramein* fleet in their course. And Xenophon says of them, πολὺ τοῦ ἵππου θᾶττον ἔτρεχον *polu tou hippou thatton etrechon* they run much swifter than a horse. In describing the march of the younger Cyrus through Syria, he says, "The wild ass, being swifter of foot than our horses, would, in gaining ground upon them, stand still and look around; and when their pursuers got nearly up to them, they would start off, and repeat the same trick; so that there remained to the hunters no other method of taking them but by dividing themselves into dispersed parties which succeeded each other in the chase;" compare Bochart, Hieroz. P. I. Lib. iii. c. xvi. pp. 867-879. A similar statement is made by Aelian (Lib. xiv. cap. 10, as quoted by Bochart), "The wild asses of Maurusius ὄνοι Μανρούσιοι *onoi Maurousioi* are most fleet in their course, and at the commencement of their course they seem to be borne along by the winds, or as on the wings of a bird." "In Persia," says the Editor of the Pictorial Bible, "the wild ass is prized above all other animals as an object of chase, not only from its fleetness, but the delicacy of its flesh, which made it an article of luxury even at the royal tables."

"They are now most abundantly found in the deserts of Tartary, and of the countries between the Tigris and the Indus, more particularly in the central parts of the regions thus defined. We know that they were also anciently found in the regions of Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Syria, and Arabia Deserta; but from these regions they seem to have been, in the course of ages, almost entirely expelled or extirpated." Pict. Bib. on Job 39:5. The idea in the passage before us is, that man at his birth has a strong resemblance to a wild and untamed animal; and the passage undoubtedly indicates the early belief of the native proneness of man to wander away from God, and of his possessing by nature an insubmissive spirit.

Verse 13

If thou prepare thine heart - Zophar now proceeds to state that if Job even yet would return to God, he might hope for acceptance. Though he had sinned, and though he was now, as he supposed, a hollow-hearted and an insincere man, yet, if he would repent, he might expect the divine favor. In this he accords with the sentiment of Eliphaz, and he concludes his speech in a manner not a little resembling his; see Job 5:17-27.

And stretch out thine hands toward him - In the attitude of supplication. To stretch out or spread forth the hands, is a phrase often used to denote the act of supplication; see 1 Timothy 2:8, and the notes of Wetstein on that place. Horace, 3Carm. xxiii. 1, *Coelo supinas si tuleris manus*. Ovid, M. ix. 701, Ad sidera supplex Cressa manus tollens. Trist. i. 10,21, *Ipsc gubernator, tollens ad sidera palmas*; compare Livy v. 21. Seneca, Ep. 41; Psalm 63:4; Psalm 134:2; Psalm 141:2; Ezra 9:5.

Verse 14

If iniquity be in thine hand - If you have in your possession anything that has been unjustly obtained. If you have oppressed the poor and the fatherless, and have what properly belongs to them, let it be restored. This is the obvious duty of one who comes to God to implore his favor; compare Luke 19:8.

Verse 15

For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot - That is, thy face shall be bright, clear, and cheerful. Thus, we speak of a bright and happy countenance. Zophar undoubtedly designs to show what his appearance would be, contrasted with what it then was. Now his countenance was dejected and sad. It was disfigured by tears, and terror, and long continued anguish. But if he would put away iniquity, and return to God, his face would be cheerful again, and he would be a happy man.

Yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear - The word rendered "steadfast" (מצק *mutsaq*) is from יצק *yâtsaq* to pour, to pour out, and is applied to liquids, or to metals which are fused and poured into a mould, and which then become hard. Hence, it is used in the sense of firm, solid, intrepid. "Gesenius." Schultens supposes that the reference here is to metallic mirrors, made by casting, and then polished, and that the idea is, that his face would shine like such a mirror. But it may be doubted whether this interpretation is not too refined. The other and more common explanation well suits the sense, and should probably be retained.

Verse 16

And remember it as waters that pass away - As calamity that has completely gone by, or that has rolled on and will return no more. The comparison is beautiful. The water of the river is borne by us, and returns no more. The rough, the swollen, the turbid stream, we remember as it foamed and dashed along, threatening to sweep everything away; but it went swiftly by, and will never come back. So with afflictions. They are soon gone. The most intense pain soon subsides. The days of sorrow pass quickly away. There is an outer limit of suffering, and even ingenuity cannot prolong it far. The man disgraced, and whose life is a burden, will soon die. On the checks of the solitary prisoner doomed to the dungeon for life, a "mortal paleness" will soon settle down, and the comforts of approaching death will soothe the anguish of his sad heart. The rack of torture cheats itself of its own purpose, and the exhausted sufferer is released. "The excess (of grief) makes it soon mortal." "No sorrow but killed itself much sooner." Shakespeare. When we look back upon our sorrows, it is like thinking of the stream that was so much swollen, and was so impetuous. Its waters rolled on, and they come not back again; and there is a kind of pleasure in thinking of that time of danger, of that flood that was then so fearful, and that has now swept on to come back no more. So there is a kind of peaceful joy in thinking of the days of sorrow that are now fled forever; in the assurance that those sad times will never, never recur again.

Verse 17

And thine age - Thy life. This does not mean old age, but the idea is, that his life would be cheerful and happy.

Clearer than the noon-day - Margin, "Arise above the noon-day." The margin is a literal rendering; but the sense is clear in the text. The idea is, that the remainder of his life would be bright as the sun if he would return to God.

Thou shalt shine forth - Or rather, "thou art now in darkness, but thou shalt be as the morning." The word used here - תעפה *tāʿupâh* is from עוף *ʿûph* to cover - as with wings, to fly, to cover with darkness. In no instance does it mean to shine, or to be clear and bright; and why our translators attached that idea to it, it is now difficult to conjecture. The Chaldee and Syriac read the word as a noun, and render the passage, "and thy darkness shall be as the aurora." The Vulgate renders it, "and meridian splendor, as it were, shall arise upon thee at the evening." The Septuagint, "and thy prayer

shall be like the morning star, and life shall rise upon thee from noon-day." The sense in the Hebrew is plain. He was then in darkness. Clouds and calamities were round about him, but if he would return to God, he would be permitted to enjoy a bright day of prosperity. Such a day would return to him like the morning after a long and gloomy night.

Verse 18

And thou shalt be secure - You will feel confident that your prosperity will be permanent, and you will be free from the distressing anxieties and fears which you now have.

Thou shalt dig about thee - The Chaldee renders this, "thou shalt prepare for thyself a sepulchre, and shalt lie down in safety." The word used here (חפר *châphar*) has two significations. It means,

(1) "to dig" - as, e. g. a well, and under this signification to search out, to explore; and,

(2.) to be ashamed, to blush, Isaiah 1:29.

According to Gesenius, the latter here is the signification. "Now thou art ashamed, then thou shalt dwell in quiet," Lexicon. So Noyes renders it. Dr. Good translates it, "yea, thou shalt look around;" Rosenmuller, "thou art suffused with shame." This is, probably, the true sense; and the idea is, that though he was now covered with shame, yet he would lie down in peace and safety if he would return to the Lord.

Verse 19

Many shall make suit unto thee - Many shall come in a suppliant manner to ask counsel and advice. The meaning is, that he would be a man of distinction, to whom many would look for counsel. This was evidently an honor highly valued in the East, and one on which Job had formerly pridcd himself; see Job 29:7-13.

Verse 20

But the eyes of the wicked shall fail - That is, they shall be wearied out by anxiously looking for relief from their miseries. "Noyes." Their expectation shall be vain, and they shall find no relief. Perhaps Zophar here means to apply this to Job, and to say to him that with his present views and character, his hope of relief would fail. His only hope of relief was in a change - in turning to God - since it was a settled maxim that the wicked

would look for relief in vain. This assumption that he was a wicked man, must have been among the most trying things that Job had to endure. Indeed nothing could he more provoking than to have others take it for granted as a matter that did not admit of argument, that he was a hypocrite, and that God was dealing with him as an incorrigible sinner.

And they shall not escape - Margin, "Flight shall perish from them." The margin is a literal translation of the Hebrew. The sense is, escape for the wicked is out of the question. They must be arrested and punished.

And their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost - literally, "the breathing out of the life or soul." Their hope shall leave them as the breath or life does the body. It is like death. The expression does not mean that their hope would always expire at death, but that it would certainly expire as life leaves the body. The meaning is, that whatever hope a wicked man has of future happiness and salvation, must fail. The time must come when it will cease to comfort and support him. The hope of the pious man lives until it is lost in fruition in heaven. It attends him in health; supports him in sickness; is with him at home; accompanies him abroad; cheers him in solitude; is his companion in society; is with him as he goes down into the shades of adversity, and it brightens as he travels along the valley of the shadow of death. It stands as a bright star over his grave - and is lost only in the glories of heaven, as the morning star is lost in the superior brightness of the rising sun. Not so the hypocrite and the sinner. His hope dies - and he leaves the world in despair. Sooner or later the last ray of his delusive hopes shall take its departure from the soul, and leave it to darkness. No matter how bright it may have been; no matter how long he has cherished it; no matter on what it is founded - whether on his morals, his prayers, his accomplishments, his learning; if it be not based on true conversion, and the promised mercy of God through a Redeemer, it must; soon cease to shine, and will leave the soul to the gloom of black despair.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 2

No doubt but ye are the people - That is, the only wise people. You have engrossed all the wisdom of the world, and all else are to be regarded as fools. This is evidently the language of severe sarcasm; and it shows a spirit fretted and chafed by their reproaches. Job felt contempt for their reasoning. and meant to intimate that their maxims, on which they placed so much reliance, were common-place, and such as every one was familar with.

And wisdom shall die with you - This is ironical, but it is language such as is common perhaps every where. "The people of the East," says Roberts, "take great pleasure in irony, and some of their satirical sayings are very cutting. When a sage intimates that he has superior wisdom or when he is disposed to rally another for his meagrc attainments, he says, ‹Yes, yes, you are the man! ‹ ‹Your wisdom is like the sea.' ‹When you die, whither will wisdom go?'" In a serious sense, language like this is used by the Classical writers to describe the death of eminently great or good men. They speak of wisdom, bravery, piety, or music, as dying with them. Thus, Moschus, Idyll. iii. 12.

Ὅττι βίων τέθνηκεν ὁ βώκολος, ἔττι σὺν αὐτῷ
Καὶ τὸ μέλος τέθνακε, καὶ ὤλετο Δωρίς ἀειδός.
Hotti biōn tethnēken ho bōkolos esti sun autō
Kai to melos tethnake kai ōleto Dōris aeidos "Bion the swain is dead, and with him song
Has died, and the Doric muse has perished."

Expressions like these are common. Thus, in the "Pleasures of Hope" it is said:

And Freedom shrieked when Kosciusko fell.

Verse 3

But I have understanding as well as you - Margin, as in the Hebrew "an heart." The word "heart" in the Scriptures is often used to denote the understanding or mind. It seems to have been regarded as the source of that which was called life or soul. Indeed, I do not recollect a single instance in the Scriptures in which the word "head" is used, as with us, as the seat of the intellect, or where the distinction is adverted to that is so common with us, between the head and the heart. With us, the heart is the seat of the

affections and emotions; with the Hebrews, it was the seat of understanding, and the σπλάγχνα *splangchna* - the viscera, the bowels, were the seat of the emotions; see the notes at Isaiah 16:11. A more correct physiology has taught us that the brain is the organ of the intellect, and we now speak of "the heart" as the seat of the affections. The Romans regarded the "breast" as the seat of the soul. Thus, Virgil, speaking of the death of Lucagus by the hand of Aeneas, says:

Tum latebras animae pectus mucrone recludit

Aeneid x. 601.

I am not inferior to you - Margin, "fall not lower than." This is the literal translation: "I do not fall beneath you." Job claims to be equal to them in the power of quoting the sayings. of the ancients; and in order to show this, he proceeds to adduce a number of proverbial sayings, occupying the remainder of this chapter, to show that he was familiar with that mode of reasoning, and that in this respect he was fully their equal. This may be regarded as a trial of skill, and was quite common in the East. Wisdom consisted in storing up a large amount of proverbs and maxims, and in applying them readily and pertinently on all public occasions; and in this controversy, Job was by no means disposed to yield to them.

Yea, who knoweth not such things as these? - Margin, "With whom" are "not such as these?" The meaning is, that instead of being original, the sentiments which they advanced were the most commonplace imaginable. Job not only said that he knew them, but that it would be strange if every body did not know them.

Verse 4

I am as one mocked of his neighbour - There has been considerable variety in the interpretation of this verse. The general sense is, that Job felt himself to be a mere laughing-stock for his neighbors. They treated him as if he were not worth regarding. They had no sympathy for him in his sorrows, and they showed no respect for his opinions. Dr. Good understands this and the following verses as a part of the controversy in which Job proposes to show his skill in debate, and to adduce proverbs after the manner of his friends. But it is more probably an allusion to himself, and is designed to state that he felt that he was not treated with the respect which was due to him. Much difficulty has been felt in understanding the connection. Reiske contends that Job 12:2 has no connection with Job 12:3, and that Job 12:11-12, should be interposed between them. The connection

seems to me to be this: Job complains that he was not treated with due deference. They had showed no respect for his understanding and rank. They had urged the most common-place topics; advanced stale and trite apothegms, as if he had never heard them; dwelt on maxims familiar even to the meanest persons; and had treated him in this manner as if he were a mere child in knowledge. Thus, to be approached with vague common-places, and with remarks such as would be used in addressing children, he regarded as insult and mockery.

Who calleth upon God, and he answereth him - This phrase has given occasion to great variety in the interpretation. Umbreit renders it, "I, who once called upon God, and he answered me;" that is, I, who once was a happy man, and blessed of God. Schultens renders it, "I, who call upon God," that is, for trial, "and am ready to answer him.' Rosenmuller supposes that Job has reference to the assurances of his friends, that if he would call upon God, he would answer him, and that in view of that suggestion he exclaims, "Shall a man who is a laughing-stock to his neighbor call upon God, and will he answer him!' The probable meaning is, that he had been a man who had had constant communion with God. He had been a favorite of the Almighty, for he had lent a listening ear to his supplications. It was now a thing of which he might reasonably complain, that a man who had enjoyed such manifest tokens of the divine favor, was treated with reproach and scorn.

Verse 5

He that is ready to slip with his feet - The man whose feet waver or totter; that is, the man in adversity; see Proverbs 25:19. A man in prosperity is represented as standing firm; one in adversity as wavering, or falling; see Psalm 73:2.

But as for me, my feet were almost gone;
My steps had well nigh slipped.

There is much difficulty in this passage, and it has by no means been removed by the labor of critics. The reader may consult Rosenmuller, Good, and Schultens, on the verse, for a more full attempt to illustrate its meaning. Dr. Good, after Reiske and Parkhurst, has offered an explanation by rendering the whole passage thus:

The just, the perfect man is a laughing-stock to the proud,
A derision amidst the sunshine of the prosperous,
While ready to slip with his foot.

It does not appear to me, however, that this translation can be fairly educed from the Hebrew text, and I am disposed to acquiesce in the more common and obvious interpretation. According to that, the idea is, that a man in adversity, when failing from a high condition of honor, is regarded as an almost extinguished lamp, that is now held in contempt, and is cast away. When the torch was blazing, it was regarded as of value; when nearly extinguished, it would be regarded as worthless, and would be cast away. So when a man was in prosperity, he would be looked up to as a guide and example. In adversity, his counsels would be rejected, and he would be looked upon with contempt. Nothing can be more certain or more common than the fact here adverted to. The rich and the great are looked up to with respect and veneration. Their words and actions have an influence which those of no other men have. When they begin to fall, others are willing to hasten their fall. Long cherished but secret envy begins to show itself; those who wish to rise rejoice in their ruin, and they are looked upon with contempt in proportion to their former honor, rank, and power. They are regarded as an extinguished torch - of no value, and are cast away.

In the thought - In the mind, or the view.

Of him that is at ease - In a state of comfort and prosperity. He finds no sympathy from them. Job doubtless meant to apply this to his friends. They were then at ease, and were prosperous. Not suffering pain, and not overwhelmed with poverty, they now looked with the utmost composure on him - as they would on a torch which was burned out, and which there would be no hope of rekindling.

Verse 6

The tabernacles of robbers prosper - The tents or dwellings of robbers are safe and secure. This is Job‘s original proposition, to which he all along adheres. It is, that God does not deal with people in this life according to their character; and in support of this he now appeals to the fact that the tents or dwellings of robbers are safe. Arabia would furnish many illustrations of this, which could not be unknown to the friends of Job. The Arabs dwelt in tents, and they were then, as now, wandering, predatory tribes. They lived, to a great extent, by plunder, and doubtless Job could appeal to the observation of his friends for the proof of this. He affirms that so far from dealing with people according to their character, God often seemed to protect the public robber, and the blasphemer of his name.

Prosper - They are secure, tranquil, at rest - for so the Hebrew word means. They are not disturbed and broken in upon.

And they that provoke God - Or rather, "the tents are secure to those who provoke God." Dr. Good renders it, "and are fortresses to those who provoke God;" but the true idea is, that the tents of those who provoke God by their conduct are safe. God does not seem to notice them, or to come out in judgment against them.

Into whose hand God bringeth abundantly - Dr. Noyes renders this, "who carry their God in their hand;" but with much less accuracy, as it seems to me, than commonly characterizes his version. Eichhorn renders it in a sense somewhat similar:

Die ihre Faust fur ihre Gottheit achten -

"Who regard their fist as their God."

And so Stuhlman renders it:

Und wem die Faust fur Gottheit gilt -

"And to whom the fist avails for their God;"

That is, says he, Job means that this is the course of the world. Dr. Good renders it, "of him who hath created all these things with his hand" - still less accurately. In order to this, he is obliged to suppose an error in the text, but without the slightest authority. Jerome renders it as in our version. The Septuagint, "who provoke the Lord as if there would be no trial to them - ἔτασις αὐτῶν *etasis autōn* - here-after;" which certainly makes sense, but it was never obtained from the Hebrew. Rosenmuller renders it, "who have their own hand, that is, power for God;" a description, says he, of a wicked and violent man who thinks it right for him to do as he pleases. It seems to me, however, that the common interpretation, which is the most simple, is most in accordance with the Hebrew, and with the drift of the passage. According to this it means, that there is security to the man who lives to provoke that God who is constantly bringing to him in abundance the tokens of kindness. This is the fact on which Job is insisting - that God does not treat people in this world according to their real character, but that the wicked are prospered and the righteous are afflicted.

Verse 7

But ask now the beasts - Rosenmuller supposes that this appeal to the inferior creation should be regarded as connected with Job 12:3, and that the intermediate verses are parenthetical. Zophar had spoken with considerable parade of the wisdom of God. He had said (Job 11:7 ff) that

the knowledge of God was higher than the heavens, and had professed Job 12:6 to have himself exalted views of the Most High. In reply to this, Job says that the views which Zophar had expressed, were the most commonplace imaginable. He need not pretend to be acquainted with the more exalted works of God, or appeal to them as if his knowledge corresponded with them. Even the lower creation - the brutes - the earth - the fishes - could teach him knowledge which he had not now. Even from their nature, properties, and modes of life, higher views might he obtained than Zophar had. Others suppose, that the meaning is, that in the distribution of happiness, God is so far from observing moral relations, that even among the lower animals, the rapacious and the violent are prospered, and the gentle and the innocent are the victims.

Lions, wolves, and panthers are prospered - the lamb, the kid, the gazelle, are the victims. Either of these views may suit the connection, though the latter seems to me to be the more probable interpretation. The object of Job is to show that rewards and punishments are not distributed according to character. This was so plain in his view as scarcely to admit of argument. It was seen all over the world not only among people, but even in the brute creation. Every where the strong prey upon the weak; the fierce upon the tame; the violent upon the timid. Yet God does not come forth to destroy the lion and the hyaena, or to deliver the lamb and the gazelle from their grasp. Like robbers Job 12:6, - lions, panthers, and wolves prowl upon the earth; and the eagle and the vulture from the air pounce upon the defenseless, and the great robbers of the deep prey upon the feeble, and still are prospered. What a striking illustration of the course of events among people, and of the relative condition of the righteous and the wicked. Nothing could be more pertinent to the design of Job than this appeal, and nothing was more in accordance with the whole structure of the argument in the poem, where wisdom is seen mainly to consist in the result of careful observation.

And they shall teach thee - Shall teach thee that God does not treat all according to their character. He does not give security to the gentle, the tame, and the innocent, and punish the ferocious, the blood-thirsty, and the cruel.

And the fowls - They shall give thee information of the point under discussion. Those that prey upon others - as the eagle and the vulture - are not exposed at once to the divine displeasure, and the tender and harmless

are not protected. The general principle is illustrated in them, that the dealings of God are not always in exact accordance with character.

Verse 8

Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee - Perhaps this appeal to the earth may mean, as Stuhlman supposes, that the same thing is shown in the productions of the earth, as in the case of fierce animals. Noxious weeds and useless plants are more thrifty than the plants which are useful and the growth of poisonous or annoying things on the earth illustrates the same thing as the dealings of God with people - that his dealings are not in accordance with the real nature of objects.

And the fishes of the sea - The same thing is manifested in the sea, where the mighty prey upon the feeble, and the fierce and the ferocious overcome the defenseless. The sentiment is that it is a great principle which pervades all things that the ferocious the strong, the wicked, are often prospered, while the weak, the defenseless, the innocent, the pious, are subject to calamities, and that God does not apportion his dealings to the exact character of his creatures. Undoubtedly Job was right in this. and this general principle might be seen then as now, to pervade the world.

Verse 9

Who knoweth not in all these - Who cannot see in all these the proofs of the same divine and sovereign agency? Who cannot see the hand of the same God and the same great principles of administration? The meaning of Job is, that the position which he defends is so plain, that it may be learned from the very earth and the lowest orders of animals which God has made.

That the hand of the Lord hath wrought this - In this place the original word is יהוה *yehovâh* On the meaning of the word see the notes at Isaiah 1:2. The Chaldee also renders it here יה *yâhh* It is remarkable that this is the only place where the name yahweh occurs in poetical parts of the book of Job, in the printed editions. In Job 28:28, yahweh is found in some manuscripts, though the word "Adonai" is in the printed copies. Eichhorn, Einleit. section 644, Note. In Job 12:9, the word yahweh, though found in the printed editions, is missing in nine ancient manuscripts. Dr. John P. Wilson on the "Hope of Immortality," p. 57. The word yahweh constantly occurs in the historical parts of the book. On the argument derived from this, in regard to the antiquity of the Book of Job, see the introduction, Section 4.

Verse 10

In whose hand is the soul of every living thing - Margin, "Life." The margin is the more correct rendering. The idea is, that all are under the control of God. He gives life, and health, and happiness when he pleases, and when he chooses he takes them away. His sovereignty is manifested, says Job, in the inferior creation, or among the beasts of the field, the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of heaven.

And the breath of all mankind - Margin, "Flesh of man." The margin is in accordance with the Hebrew. The meaning is, that man is subjected to the same laws as the rest of the creation. God is a sovereign, and the same great principles of administration may be seen in all his works.

Verse 11

Doth not the ear try words? - The literal meaning of this, which is evidently a proverbial expression, is plain; but about its bearing here there is more difficulty. The literal sense is, that it is the office of the ear to mark the distinction of sounds, and to convey the sense to the soul. But in regard to the exact bearing of this proverb on the case in hand, commentators have not been agreed. Probably the sense is, that there ought to be a diligent attention to the signification of words, and to the meaning of a speaker, as one carefully tastes his food; and Job, perhaps, may be disposed to complain that his friends had not given that attention which they ought to have done to the true design and signification of his remarks. Or it may mean that man is endowed with the faculty of attending to the nature and qualities of objects, and that he ought to exercise that faculty in judging of the lessons which are taught respecting God or his works.

And the mouth - Margin, as in the Hebrew חך *chêk* - "palate." The word means not merely the palate, but the lower part of the mouth (Gesenius), and is especially used to designate the organ or the seat of taste; Psalm 119:103; Job 6:30.

His meat - Its food - the word "meat" being used in Old English to denote all kinds of food. The sense is, man is endowed with the faculty of distinguishing what is wholesome from what is unwholesome, and he should, in like manner, exercise the faculty which God has given him of distinguishing the true from the false on moral subjects. He should not suppose that all that had been said, or that could be said, must necessarily be true. He should not suppose that merely to string together proverbs, and to utter common-place suggestions, was a mark of true wisdom. He should separate the valuable from the worthless, the true from the false, and the

wholesome from the injurious. Job complains that his friends had not done this. They had shown no power of discrimination or selection. They had uttered common place apothegms, and they gathered adages of former times, without any discrimination, and had urged them in their arguments against him, whether pertinent or not. It was by this kind of irrelevant and miscellaneous remark that he felt that he had been mocked by his friends, Job 12:4.

Verse 12

With the ancient is wisdom - With the aged. The word יָשִׁישׁ *yâshîysh* used here, means an old man, one gray-headed. It is used chiefly in poetry, and is commonly employed in the sense of one who is decrepit by age. It is rendered "very aged" in Job 15:10; "him that stooped for age." 2 Chronicles 36:17; "very old," Job 32:6; and "the aged," Job 29:8 The Septuagint renders it, Ἐν πολλῷ χρόνῳ *En pollō chronō* "in much time." The sense is, that wisdom might be expected to be found with the man who had had a long opportunity to observe the course of events; who had conversed with a former generation, and who had had time for personal reflection. This was in accordance with the ancient Oriental views, where knowledge was imparted mainly by tradition, and where wisdom depended much on the opportunity of personal observation; compare Job 32:7.

Verse 13

With him is wisdom - Margin, correctly, "God." However much wisdom there may seem to be with aged men, yes the true wisdom - that which was supreme and worthy of the name - was to be found in God alone. The object of Job was to lead the thoughts up to God, and to bring his friends to a contemplation of the wisdom which he manifests in his works. Accordingly he goes on in the remainder of this chapter to state some of the illustrations of wisdom and power which God had exhibited, and particularly to show that he was a sovereign, and did his pleasure every where. He made all things; he sustains all things; he reverses the condition of people at his pleasure; he sets up whom he pleases, and when he chooses he casts them down. His works are contrary in many respects to what we should anticipate; and the sense of all is, that God was a holy and a righteous sovereign, and that such were the reverses under his administration that we could not argue that he treated all according to their character on earth.

Verse 14

Behold, he breaketh down - None can repair what he pulls down. Cities and towns he can devote to ruin by fire, or earthquake, or the pestilence, and so completely destroy them that they can never be rebuilt. We may now refer to such illustrations as Sodom, Babylon, Petra, Tyre, Herculaneum, and Pompeii, as full proof of what is here affirmed.

He shutteth up a man - He can shut up a man in such difficulties and straits that he cannot extricate himself; see Job 11:10. The Chaldee renders this, "he shuts up a man in the grave (בקבורתא) and it cannot be opened." But the more correct idea is, that God has complete control over a man, and that he can so hedge up his way that he cannot help himself.

Verse 15

He withholdeth the waters - From the clouds and springs. He has control over the rains and the fountains; and when these are withheld, rivers and lakes become dry. The Syriac renders this, - "if he rebuke the waters," supposing that there might perhaps be an allusion to the drying up of the Red Sea, or the formation of a passage for the Israelites. But it is remarkable that in the argument here there is no allusion to any historical fact, not to the flood, or to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, or to the passage through the Red Sea, though these occurrences would have furnished so appropriate illustrations of the points under discussion. Is it to be inferred that Job had never heard of any of those events? Or may it have been that the lessons which they were adapted to teach had been actually embodied in the proverbs which he was using, and furnished well-known illustrations or the basis of such apothegms?

He sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth - Such inundations may have occurred in the swollen torrents of Arabia, and indeed are so common everywhere as to furnish a striking illustration of the power and sovereign agency of God.

Verse 16

The deceived and the deceiver are his - This is designed to teach that all classes of people are under his control. All are dependent on him, and all are subject to him. He has power to keep them, and he can destroy them when he pleases. Dr. Good supposes that Job refers here to himself and his friends who had beguiled him into expressions of impatience and complaint. But it is more probably a general declaration that all classes of people were under the control of God.

Verse 17

He leadeth counsellors away spoiled - Plundered or captive. That is, the counsels of wise and great men do not avail against God. Statesmen who promised themselves victory as the result of their plans he disappoints, and leads away into captivity. The object of this is to show that God is superior over all, and also that people are not dealt with in exact accordance with their character and rank. God is a sovereign, and he shows his sovereignty when defeating the counsels and purposes of the wisest of men, and overturning the plans of the mighty.

And maketh the judges fools - He leaves them to distracted and foolish plans. He leaves them to the adoption of measures which result in their own ruin. He is a sovereign, having control over the minds of the great, and power to defeat all their counsels, and to render them infatuated. Nothing can be clearer than this. Nothing has been more frequently illustrated in the history of nations. In accordance with this belief is the well-known expression:

Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat.

"Whom God purposes to destroy, he first infatuates."

Verse 18

He looseth the bond of kings - The bond of kings (מוסר *mûsâr*) here means that by which they bind others. Their power over others he loosens or takes away.

And girdeth their loins with a girdle - That is, he girds them with a rope or cord, and leads them away as prisoners. The whole series of remarks here refers to the reverses and changes in the conditions of life. The meaning here is, that the bonds of authority which they imposed on others are unbound, and that their own loins are bound with a girdle, not a girdle of royal dignity and ornament, but such a one as they are bound with who are servants, or who travel. "Pict. Bib."

Verse 19

He leadeth princes away spoiled - That is, plundered. The word here rendered "princes" כהנים *kôhênîym* means properly priests, and it is usually so rendered in the Scriptures. The ancient Hebrew interpreters suppose that the word sometimes also means prince. The Chaldee paraphrasist has not unfrequently so rendered it, using the word רבא to express it; Genesis 41:45; Psalm 110:4. In this place, the Vulgate renders it, "*sacerdotes*;" and the Septuagint, ἱερεῖς *hiereis* "priests." So Luther renders it, "Priester." So Castellio. It can be applied to princes or statesmen only because priests

were frequently engaged in performing the functions of civil officers, and were in fact to a certain extent officers of the government. But it seems to me that it is to be taken in its usual signification, and that it means that even the ministers of religion were at the control of God, and were subject to the same reverses as other people of distinction and power.

And overthroweth - The word used here (סלף *sâlaph*) has the notion of slipping, or gliding. So in Arabic, the word means to slip by, and to besmear; see Proverbs 13:6: "Wickedness overthroweth תסלף *tesâlaph* causes to slip) the sinner;" compare Proverbs 21:12; Proverbs 22:12. Here it means to overthrow, to prostrate. The most mighty chieftains cannot stand firm before him, but they glide away and fall.

Verse 20

He removeth away the speech of the trusty - Margin, "lip of the faithful." "He takes away the lip," that is, he takes away the power of giving safe counsel or good advice. The "trusty" or "faithful" here refer to those of age and experience, and on whose counsel men are accustomed to rely. The meaning here is, that their most sagacious anticipations are disappointed, their wisest schemes are foiled. They fail-in their calculations of the coarse of events, and the arrangements of Providence are such that they could not anticipate what was to occur.

The understanding of the aged - To whom the young were accustomed to look up with deference and respect. The meaning here is, that they who were accustomed to give wise and sound advice, if left by God, give vain and foolish counsels.

Verse 21

He poureth contempt upon princes - He has power to hurl them from their thrones, and to overwhelm them with disgrace.

And weakeneth the strength of the mighty - Margin, as in Hebrew "looseth the girdle of the strong." The Orientals wore loose flowing robes, which were secured by a girdle around the loins. When they labored, ran, or traveled, their robes were girded up. But this is common everywhere. Wrestlers, leapers, and runners, put a girdle around them, and are able thus to accomplish much more than they otherwise could. To loosen that, is to weaken them. So Job says that God had power to loosen the strength of the mighty. He here seems to labor for expressions, and varies the form of the image in every way to show the absolute control which God has over

people, and the fact that his power is seen in the reverses of mankind. Lucretius has a passage strongly resembling this in the general sentiment:

Usque adeo res humanas vis abdita quaedam
Obterit; et pulchros fasces, saevasque secures,
Proculcare, atque ludibrio sibi habere, videtur.
Lib. v. 1232.
So from his awful shades, some Power unseen
O'erthrows all human greatness! Treads to dust

Rods, ensigns, crowns - the proudest pomps of state;

And laughs at all the mockery of mad!
Good.

Verse 22

He discovereth deep thirsts out of darkness - That is, God discloses truths which are wholly beyond the power of man to discover - truths that seem to be hidden in profound night. This may refer either to the revelation which God was believed to have furnished, or to his power of bringing out the most secret thoughts and purposes, or to his power of predicting future events by bringing them out of darkness to the clear light of day, or to his power of detecting plots, intrigues, and conspiracies.

And bringeth out to light the shadow of death - On the meaning of the word rendered "shadow of death," see the notes at Job 3:5. It here denotes whatever is dark or obscure. It is rather a favorite expression with the author of this poem (see Job 10:22; Job 16:16; Job 24:17; Job 34:22; Job 38:17), though it occurs elsewhere in the Scriptures. The deepest darkness, the obscurest night, are represented by it; and the idea is, that even from the most dark and impenetrable regions God could bring out light and truth. All is naked and open to the mind of God.

Verse 23

He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them - He has entire control over them. The sources of prosperity are in his hand, and at his pleasure he can visit them with famine, pestilence, or war, and diminish their numbers and arrest their prosperity. Dr. Good renders this very improperly, "He letteth the nations grow licentious;" but the word שגא *śâgâ'* never has this sense. It means, to make great; to multiply; to increase.

And straiteneth them again - Margin, "leadeth in." So the word נחה *nâchâh* means. The idea is, that he increases a nation so that it spreads abroad beyond its usual limits, and then at his pleasure leads them back again, or confines them within the limits from where they had emigrated.

Verse 24

He taketh away the heart - The word heart here evidently means mind, intelligence, wisdom; see the notes at Job 12:3.

Of the chief of the people - Hebrew "Heads of the people;" that is, of the rulers of the earth. The meaning is, that he leaves them to infatuated and distracted counsels. By withdrawing from them, he has power to frustrate their plans, and to leave them to an entire lack of wisdom; see the notes at Job 12:17.

And causeth them to wander in a wilderness - They are like persons in a vast waste of pathless sands without a waymark, a guide, or a path. The perplexity and confusion of the great ones of the earth could not be more strikingly represented than by the condition of such a lost traveler.

Verse 25

They grope in the dark - They are like persons who attempt to feel their way along in the dark; compare the notes at Isaiah 59:10.

And he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man - Margin, "wander." Their unstable and perplexed counsels are like the reelings of a drunken man; see Isaiah 19:14, note; Isaiah 24:20, note. This closes the chapter, and with it the controversy in regard to the ability to adduce pertinent and striking proverbial expressions; see the notes at Job 12:3. Job had showed them that he was as familiar with proverbs respecting God as they were, and that he entertained as exalted ideas of the control and government of the Most High as they did. It may be added, that these are sublime and beautiful expressions respecting God. They surpass all that can be found in the writings of the pagan; and they show that somehow in the earliest ages there prevailed views of God which the human mind for ages afterward, and in the most favorable circumstances, was not capable of originating. These proverbial sayings were doubtless fragments of revealed truth, which had come down by tradition, and which were thus embodied in a form convenient to be transmitted from age to age.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

Lo, mine eye hath seen all this - I have seen illustrations of all that I have said, or that you have said about the methods of divine providence.

Verse 2

What ye know … - See the note at Job 12:3.

Verse 3

Surely I would speak to the Almighty - I would desire to carry my cause directly up to God, and spread out my reasons before him. This Job often professed to desire; see Job 9:34-35. He felt that God would appreciate the arguments which he would urge, and would do justice to them. His friends he felt were censorious and severe. They neither did justice to his feelings, nor to his motives. They perverted his words and arguments; and instead of consoling him, they only aggravated his trials, and caused him to sink into deeper sorrows. But he felt if he could carry his cause to God, he would do ample justice to him and his cause. The views which he entertained of his friends he proceeds to state at considerable length, and without much reserve, in the following verses.

Verse 4

But ye are forgers of lies - The word lies here seems to be used in a large sense, to denote sophisms, false accusations, errors. They maintained false positions; they did not see the exact truth in respect to the divine dealings, and to the character of Job. They maintained strenuously that Job was a hypocrite, and that God was punishing him for his sins. They maintained that God deals with people in exact accordance with their charactor in this world, all of which Job regarded as false doctrine, and asserted that they defended it with sophistical arguments invented for the purpose, and thus they could be spoken of as "forgers of lies."

Physicians of no value - The meaning is, that they had come to give him consolation, but nothing that they had said had imparted comfort. They were like physicians sent for to visit the sick, who could do nothing when they came; compare Job 16:2.

Verse 5

Oh that ye would altogether hold your peace! - You would show your wisdom by silence. Since you can say nothing that is adapted to give comfort, or to explain the true state of the case, it would be wise to say

nothing; compare Proverbs 17:28: "Even a fool when he holdeth his peace is counted wise."

Verse 7

Will ye speak wickedly for God? - That is, will you maintain unjust principles with a view to honor or to vindicate God? Job refers doubtless to the positions which they had defended in regard to the divine administration - principles which he regarded as unjust, though they had employed them professedly in vindicating God. The sense is, that unjust principles ought not to be advanced to vindicate God. The great cause of truth and justice should always be maintained, and even in attempting to vindicate the divine administration, we ought to make use of no arguments which are not based on that which is right and true. Job means to reproach his friends with having, in their professed vindication of God, advanced sentiments which were at war with truth and justice, and which were full of fallacy and sophistry. And is this never done now? Are sophistical arguments never employed in attempting to vindicate the divine government? Do we never state principles in regard to him which we should esteem to be unjust and dishonorable if applied to man? Do not good people sometimes feel that that government must be defended at all events; and when they can see no reason for the divine dealings, do they not make attempts at vindicating them, which are merely designed to throw dust in the eyes of an opponent, and which are known to be sophistical in their nature? It is wrong to employ a sophistical argument on any subject; and in reasoning on the divine character and dealings, when we come, as we often do, to points which we cannot understand, it is best to confess it. God asks no weak or sophistical argument in his defense; still less can he be pleased with an argument, though in defense of his government, which is based on unjust principles.

And talk deceitfully for him - Use fallacies and sophisms in attempting to vindicate him. Everything in speaking of God, should be true, pure, and sound. Every argument should be free from any appearance of sophism, and should be such as will bear the test of the most thorough examination. No honor is done to God by sophistical arguments, nor can he be pleased when such arguments are employed even to vindicate and honor his character.

Verse 8

Will ye accept his person? - That is, will you be partial to him? The language is such as is used in relation to courts of justice, where a judge shows favor to one of the parties on account of birth, rank, wealth, or

personal friendship. The idea here is, “will you, from partiality to God, maintain unjust principles, and defend positions which are really untenable?” There was a controversy between Job and God. Job maintained that he was punished too severely; that the divine dealings were unequal and disproportioned to his offences. His friends, he alleges, have not done justice to the arguments which he had urged, but had taken sides with God against him, no matter what he urged or what he said. So little disposed were they to do justice to him and to listen to his vindication, that no matter what he said, they set it all down to impatience, rebellion, and insubmission.

They assumed that he was wrong, and that God was wholly right in all flyings. Of this position that God was right, no one could reasonably complain, and in his sober reflections Job himself would not be disposed to object to it; but his complaint is, that though the considerations which he urged were of the greatest weight, they would not allow their force, simply because they were determined to vindicate God. Their position was, that God dealt with people strictly according to their character; and that no matter what they suffered, their sufferings were the exact measure of their ill desert. Against this position, they would hear nothing that Job could say; and they maintained it by every kind of argument which was at their command - whether sound or unsound, sophistical or solid. Job says that this was showing partiality for God, and he felt that he had a right to complain. We need never show “partiality” even for God. He can be vindicated by just and equal arguments; and we need never injure others while we vindicate him. Our arguments for him should indeed be reverent, and we should desire to vindicate his character and government; but the considerations which we urge need not be those of mere partiality and favor.

Will ye contend for God? - Language taken from a court of justice, and referring to an argument in favor of a party or cause. Job asks whether they would undertake to maintain the cause of God, and he may mean to intimate that they were wholly disqualified for such an undertaking. He not only reproves them for a lack of candor and impartiality, as in the previous expressions, but he means to say that they were unfitted in all respects to be the advocates of God. They did not understand the principles of his administration. Their views were narrow, their information limited, and their arguments either common-place or unsound. According to this

interpretation, the emphasis will be on the word “ye” - “will YE contend for God?” The whole verse may mean, “God is not to be defended by mere partiality, or favor. Solid arguments only should be employed in his cause. Such you have not used, and you have shown yourselves to be entirely unfitted for this great argument.”

The practical inference which we should draw from this is, that our arguments in defense of the divine administration, should be solid and sound. They should not be mere declamation, or mere assertion. They should be such as will become the great theme, and such as will stand the test of any proper trial that can be applied to reasoning. There are arguments which will “vindicate all God‘s ways to men;” and to search them out should be one of the great employments of our lives. If ministers of the gospel would always abide by these principles, they would often do much more than they do now to commend religion to the sober views of mankind. No people are under greater temptations to use weak or unsound arguments than they are. They feel it to be their duty at all hazards to defend the divine administration. They are in circumstances where their arguments will not be subjected to the searching process which an argument at the bar will be, where a keen and interested opponent is on the alert, and will certainly sift every argument which is urged.

Either by inability to explain the difficulties of the divine government, or by indolence in searching out arguments, or by presuming on the ignorance and dullness of their hearers, or by a pride which will not allow them to confess their ignorance on any subject, they are in danger of attempting to hide a difficulty which they cannot explain, or of using arguments and resorting to reasoning, which would be regarded as unsound or worthless any where else. A minister should always remember that sound reasoning is as necessary in religion as in other things, and that there are always some people who can detect a fallacy or see through sophistry. With what diligent study then should the ministers of the gospel prepare for their work! How careful should they be, as the advocates of God and his cause in a world opposed to him, to find out solid arguments, to meet with candor every objection, and to convince people by sound reasoning, that God is right! Their work is to convince, not to denounce; and if there is any office of unspeakable responsibility on earth, it is that of undertaking to be the advocates of God.

Verse 9

Is it good that he should search you out? - Would it be well for you if he should go into an investigation of your character, and of the arguments which you adduce? The idea is, that if God should make such an investigation, the result would be highly unfavorable to them. Perhaps Job means to intimate that, if they were subjected to the kind of trial that he had been, it would be seen that they could not bear it. "Or as one man mocketh another." The idea here is, "it is possible to delude or deceive man, but God cannot be deceived. You may conceal your thoughts and motives from man, but you cannot from God. You may use arguments that may impose upon man - you may employ fallacies and sophisms which he cannot detect, but every such effort is vain with God;" compare Galatians 6:7.

Verse 10

He will surely reprove you, if ye do secretly accept persons - If you show partiality, you will incur his disapprobation. This seems to have much era proverbial cast, and to mean that under no possible circumstances was it right to show partiality. No matter for whom it may be done, it will be displeasing to God. Even if it be in favor of the righteous, the widow, the fatherless, or of himself, if there is not a disposition to judge according to truth and evidence, God will frown upon you. No matter who the parties might be; no matter what their rank; no matter what friendship there might be for one or the other of them, it was never to be assumed that one was right and the other wrong without evidence. The exact truth was to be sought after, and the judgement made up accordingly. Even when God was one of the parties, the same course was to be pursued. His character was capable of being successfully vindicated, and he would not be pleased to have his cause defended or decided by partiality, or by mere favor. Hence, he encourages people to bring forth their strong reasons, and to adduce all that can be said against his government and laws. See the notes at Isaiah 41:1-21.

Verse 11

Shall not his excellency - His exaltation שׁאת *śe'êth* from נשׂא *nâśâ'* to exalt, to lift up), or his majesty, Genesis 49:3.

Make you afraid - Fill you with awe and reverence. Shall it not restrain you from fallacy, from sophisms, and from all presumptuous and unfounded reasoning? The sense here is, that a sense of the greatness and majesty of

God should fill the mind with solemnity and reverence, and make us serious and sincere; should repress all declamation and mere assertion, and should lead us to adduce only those considerations which will bear the test of the final trial. The general proposition, however, is not less clear, that a sense of the majesty and glory of God should at all times fill the mind with solemn awe, and produce the deepest veneration. See Jeremiah 5:22; Jeremiah 10:7-10; Genesis 28:17.

And his dread - The fear of him. You should so stand in awe of him as not to advance any sentiments which he will not approve, or which will not bear the test of examination. Rosenmuller, however, and after him Noyes, supposes that this is not so much a declaration of what ought to be, implying that the fear of God ought to produce veneration, as a declaration of what actually occurred - implying that they were actually influenced by this slavish fear in what they said. According to this it means that they were actuated only by a dread of what God would do to them that led them to condemn. Job without proof, and not by a regard to truth. But the common interpretation seems to me most in accordance with the meaning of the passage.

Verse 12

Your remembrances are like unto ashes - There has been a considerable variety in the interpretation of this verse. The meaning in our common version is certainly not very clear. The Vulgate renders it, *Memoria vestra comparabitur cineri*. The Septuagint, Ἀποβήσεται δὲ ὑμῶν τὸ γαυρίαμα ἶσα σποδᾷ *Apobēsetai de humōn to gauriama isa spodō* - "your boasting shall pass away like ashes." Dr. Good renders it, "Dust are your stored-up sayings." Noyes, "Your maxims are words of dust." The word rendered "remembrances" זכרון *zîkrôn* means properly "remembrance, memory," Joshua 4:7; Ezekiel 12:14; then a "memento," or "record;" then a "memorable saying, a maxim." This is probably the meaning here; and the reference is to the apothegms or proverbs which they had so profusely uttered, and which they regarded as so profound and worthy of attention, but which Job was disposed to regard as most common-place, and to treat with contempt.

Are like unto ashes - That is, they are valueless. See the notes at Isaiah 44:20. Their maxims had about the same relation to true wisdom which ashes have to substantial and nutritious food. The Hebrew here (אפר משלי *mâshaly 'êpher*) is rather, "are parables of ashes;" - the word משל *mâshâl*

meaning similitude, parable, proverb. This interpretation gives more force and beauty to the passage.

Your bodies - - גביכם *gabēykem* Vulgate, "*cervices*." Septuagint, τὸ δὲ σῶμα πήλινον *to de sōma pēlinon* - but the body is clay. The Hebrew word גב *gab* means something gibbous (from where the word "gibbous" is derived), convex, arched; hence, the "back" of animals or human beings, Ezekiel 10:12; the boss of a shield or buckler - the "gibbous," or exterior convex part - Job 15:26; and then, according to Gesenius, an entrenchment, a fortress, a strong-hold. According to this interpretation, the passage here means, that the arguments behind which they entrenched themselves were like clay. They could not resist an attack made upon them, but would be easily thrown down, like mud walls. Grotius renders it, "Your towers (of defense) are tumult of clay." Rosenmuller remarks on the verse that the ancients were accustomed to inscribe sentences of valuable historical facts on pillars. If these were engraved on stone, they would be permanent; if on pillars covered with clay, they would soon be obliterated. On a pillar or column at Aleandria, the architect cut his own name at the base deep in the stone. On the plaster or stucco with which the column was covered, he inscribed the name of the person to whose honor it was reared. The consequence was, that that name became soon obliterated; his own then appeared, and was permanent. But the meaning here is rather, that the apothegms and maxims behind which they entrenched themselves were like mud walls, and could not withstand an attack.

Verse 13

Hold your peace - Margin, Be silent from me; see Job 13:5. It is possible that Job may have perceived in them some disposition to interrupt him in a rude manner in reply to the severe remarks which he had made, and he asked the privilege, therefore, of being permitted to go on, and to say what he intended, let come what would.

And let come on me what will - Anything, whether reproaches from you, or additional sufferings from the hand of God. Allow me to express my sentiments, whatever may be the consequences to myself. One cannot but be forcibly reminded by this verse of the remark of the Greek philosopher, "Strike, but hear me."

Verse 14

Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth - The meaning of the proverbial expressions in this verse is not very clear. They indicate a state of

great danger; but the exact sense of the proverbs it has been difficult to ascertain. Some have supposed that the phrase "to take the flesh in the teeth," is significant of a state of famine, where a man dying from this cause would cease upon his own flesh and devour it; others, that it refers to the contentions of voracious animals, struggling for a piece of flesh; others, that it refers to the fact that what is borne in the teeth is liable to be dropped, and that Job regarded his life as in such a perilous condition. Schultens regards it as denoting that bold courage in which a man exposes his life to imminent peril. He supposes that it is to be taken in connection with the previous verse, as intimating that he would go forward and speak at any rate, whatever might be the result.

He translates it, "Whatever may be the event, I will take my flesh in my teeth, and my life in my hand." In this interpretation Rosenmuller concurs. Noyes renders it, "I will count it nothing to bear my flesh in my teeth." Good, "Let what may - I will carry my flesh in my teeth; ‹ and supposes that the phrase is equivalent to saying, that he would incur any risk or danger. The proverb he supposes is taken from the contest which so frequently takes place between dogs and other carnivorous quadrupeds, when one of them is carrying a bone or piece of flesh in his mouth, which becomes a source of dispute and a prize to be fought for. The Vulgate renders it, "*Quare lacero carnes meus dentibus meis*." The Septuagint, "Taking my flesh in my teeth, I will put my life in my hand." It seems to me, that the language is to be taken in connection with the previous verse, and is not to be regarded as an interrogatory, but as a declaration. "Let come upon me anything - whatever it may be - מה *mâh* - Job 13:13 on account of that, or in reference to that - על־מה *ʿal -mâh* - Job 13:14, I will take my life in my hand, braving any and every danger."

It is a firm and determined purpose that he would express his sentiments, no matter what might occur - even if it involved the peril of his life. The word "flesh" I take to be synonymous with life, or with his best interests; and the figure is probably taken from the fact that animals thus carry their prey or spoil in their teeth. Of course, this would be a poor protection. It would be liable to be seized by others. It might even tempt and provoke others to seize it: and would lead to conflict and perils. So Job felt that the course he was pursuing would lead him into danger, but he was determined to pursue it, let come what might.

And put my life in mine hand - This is a proverbial expression, meaning the same as, I will expose myself to danger. Anything of value taken in the hand is liable to be rudely snatched away. It is like taking a casket of jewels, or a purse of gold, in the hand, which may at any moment be seized by robbers. The phrase is not uncommon in the Scriptures to denote exposure to great peril; compare Psalm 119:109, "My soul is continually in my hand;" 1 Samuel 19:5, "For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine;" Judges 12:3, "I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of Ammon." A similar expression occurs in the Greek Classics denoting exposure to imminent danger - ἐν τῇ χειρὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἔχει *en tē cheiri tēn psuchēn echei* - "he has his life in his hand;" see Rosenmuller on Psalm 119:109. The Arabs have a somewhat similar proverb, as quoted by Schultens, "His flesh is upon a butcher's block."

Verse 15

Though he slay me - "God may so multiply my sorrows and pains that I cannot survive them. I see that I may be exposed to increased calamities, yet I am willing to meet them. If in maintaining my own cause, and showing that I am not a hypocrite Job 13:16, it should so happen that my sufferings should be so increased that I should die, yet I will do it." The word "slay," or "kill," here refers to temporal death. It has no reference to punishment in the future world, or to the death of the soul. It means merely that Job was determined to maintain his cause and defend his character, though his sufferings should be so increased that life would be the forfeit. Such was the extent of his sufferings, that he had reason to suppose that they would terminate in death; and yet notwithstanding this, it was his fixed purpose to confide in God; compare the notes at Job 19:25-27. This was spoken in Job's better moments, and was his deliberate and prevailing intention. This deliberate purpose expresses what was really the character of the man, though occasionally, when he became impatient, he gave utterance to different sentiments and feelings. We are to look to the prevailing and habitual tenor of a man's feelings and declared principles, in order to determine what his character is, and not to expressions made under the influence of temptation, or under the severity of pain. On the sentiment here expressed, compare Psalm 23:4; Proverbs 14:32.

Yet will I trust in him - The word used here (יחל *yâchal*) means properly to wait, stay, delay; and it usually conveys the idea of waiting on one with an expectation of aid or help. Hence, it means to hope. The sense

here is, that his expectation or hope was in God; and if the sense expressed in our common version be correct, it implies that even in death, or after death, he would confide in God. He would adhere to him, and would still feel that beyond death he would bless him.

In him - In God. But there is here an important variation in the reading. The present Hebrew is לא *lo'* - "not." The Qeriy or marginal reading, is with a ו (*v*) - "in him." Jerome renders it as if it were לו *lô* - "*in ipso*," that is, in him. The Septuagint followed some reading which does not now appear in any copies of the Hebrew text, or which was the result of mere imagination: "Though the Almighty, as he hath begun, may subdue me - χειρώσεται *cheirōsetai* - yet will I speak, and maintain my cause before him." The Chaldee renders it, אצלי קדמוי - I will pray before him; evidently reading it as if it were לו *lô* "in him." So the Syriac, in him. I have no doubt, therefore, that this was the ancient reading, and that the true sense is retained in our common version though Rosenmuller, Good, Noyes, and others, have adopted the other reading, and suppose that it is to be taken as a negative.

Noyes renders it," Lo! he slayeth me, and I have no hope!" Good, much worse, "Should he even slay me, I would not delay." It may be added, that there are frequent instances where לא *lo'* and לו *lô* are interchanged, and where the copyist seems to have been determined by the sound rather than by a careful inspection of the letters. According to the Masoretes, there are fifteen places where לא *lo'* "not," is written for לו *lô* "to him." Exodus 21:8; Leviticus 11:21; Leviticus 25:30; 1 Samuel 2:3; 2 Samuel 16:18; Psalm 100:4; Psalm 139:16; Job 13:15; Job 41:4; Ezra 4:2; Proverbs 19:7; Proverbs 26:2; Isaiah 9:2; Isaiah 63:9. On the other hand, לו *lô* is put for לא *lo'* in 1 Samuel 2:16; 1 Samuel 20:2; Job 6:21. A mistake of this kind may have easily occurred here. The sentiment here expressed is one of the noblest that could fall from the lips of man. It indicates unwavering confidence in God, even in death.

It is the determination of a mind to adhere to him, though he should strip away comfort after comfort, and though there should be no respite to his sorrows until he should sink down in death. This is the highest expression of piety, and thus it is the privilege of the friends of God to experience. When professed earthly friends become cold toward us, our love for them also is chilled. Should they leave and forsake us in the midst of suffering and want, and especially should they leave us on a bed of death, we should

cease to confide in them. But not so in respect to God. Such is the nature of our confidence in him, that though he takes away comfort after comfort, though our health is destroyed and our friends are removed, and though we are led down into the valley and the shadow of death, yet still we never lose our confidence in him. We feel that all will yet be well. We look forward to another state, and anticipate the blessedness of another and a better world.

Reader, can you in sincerity lift the eye toward God, and say to him, "Though Thou dost slay me, though comfort after comfort is taken away, though the waves of trouble roll over me, and though I go down into the valley of the shadow of death, yet i will trust in thee; - Thine I will be even then, and when all is dark I will believe that God is right, and just, and true, and good, and will never doubt that he is worthy of my eternal affection and praise?" Such is religion. Where else is it found but in the views of God and of his government which the Bible reveals. The infidel may have apathy in his sufferings, the blasphemer may be stupid, the moralist or the formalist may be unconcerned; but that is not to have confidence in God. That results from religion alone.

But I will maintain mine own ways before him - Margin, "prove," or "argue." The sense is, I will "vindicate" my ways, or myself. That is, I will maintain that I am his friend, and that I am not a hypocrite. His friends charged him with insincerity. They were not able, Job supposed, to appreciate his arguments and to do justice to him. He had, therefore, expressed the wish to carry his cause directly before God Job 13:3; and he was assured that he would do justice to his arguments. Even should he slay him, he would still stand up as his friend, and would still maintain that his calamities had not come upon him, as his friends supposed, because he was a hypocrite and a secret enemy of his Maker.

Verse 16

He also shalt be my salvation - See the notes at Isaiah 12:2. Literally, "He is unto me for salvation," that is, "I put my trust in him, and he will save me. The opportunity of appearing before God, and of maintaining my cause in his presence, will result in my deliverance from the charges which are alleged against me. I shall be able there to show that I am not a hypocrite, and God will become my defender."

For an hypocrite shall not come before him - This seems to be a proverb, or a statement of a general and indisputable principle. Job admitted

this to be true. Yet he expected to be able to vindicate himself before God, and this gould prove that he was not an hypocrite - on the general principle that a man who was permitted to stand before God and to obtain his favor, could not be an unrighteous man. To God he looked with confidence; and God, he had no doubt, would be his defender. This fact would prove that he could not be an hypocrite, as his friends maintained.

Verse 17

Hear diligently my speech - That which I have made; that is, the declaration which I have made of my innocence. He refers to his solemn declaration, Job 13:15-16 that he had unwavering confidence in God, and that even should God slay him he would put confidence in him. This solemn appeal he wished them to attend to as one of the utmost importance.

Verse 18

I have ordered my cause - literally. "judgment?" - מִשְׁפָּט *mîshpâṭ* The Septuagint renders it, "I am near (ἐγγύς εἰμί *engus eimi*) to my judgment," or my trial. The meaning may be, that he had gone through the pleading, and had said what he wished in self-vindication, and he was willing to leave the cause with God, and did not doubt the issue. Or more probably, I think, the word ערכתי *ʿâraketîy* should be taken, as the word ידעתי *yādaʿtîy* is, in the present tense, meaning "I now set in order my cause; I enter on the pleading; I am confident that I shall so present it as to be declared righteous."

I know that I shall be justified - I have no doubt as to the issue. I shall be declared to be an holy man, and not a hypocrite. The word rendered "I shall be justified" (אצדק *'etsâdaq*) is used here in the proper and literal sense of the word justify. It is a term of law; and means, "I shall be declared to be righteous. I shall be shown not to be guilty in the form charged on me, and shall be acquitted or vindicated." This sense is different from that which so often occurs in the Scriptures when applied to the doctrine of the justification of a sinner. Then it means, to treat one AS IF he were righteous, though he is personally guilty and undeserving.

Verse 19

Who is he that will plead with me? - That is, "who is there now that will take up the cause, and enter into an argument against me? I have set my cause before God. I appeal now to all to take up the argument against me, and have no fear if they do as to the result. I am confident of a sucessful issue, and await calmly the divine adjudication."

For now, if I hold my tongue I shall give up the ghost - This translation, in my view, by no means expresses the sense of the original, if indeed it is not exactly the reverse. According to this version, the meaning is, that if he did not go into a vindication of himself he would die. The Hebrew, however is, "for now I will be silent, and die." That is, "I have maintained my cause, I will say no more. If there is anyone who can successfully contend with me, and can prove that my course cannot be vindicated, then I have no more to say. I will be silent, and die. I will submit to my fate without further argument, and without a complaint. I have said all that needs to be said, and nothing would remain but to submit and die."

Verse 20

Only do not two - things "unto me." The two things which are specified in the following verse. This is an address to God as Job argues his cause before him, and the request is, that he would remove every obstacle to his presenting his cause in the most favorable manner, and so that he may be on equal terms with him. See the notes at Job 9:34-35. He was ready to present his cause, and to plead before God, as Job 13:18 he had the utmost confidence that he would be able so to present it as to vindicate himself; and he asks of God that he would withdraw his hand for a time Job 13:21 and not terrify him Job 13:21, so that he could present his case with the full vigor of his mind and body, and so that he need not be overawed by the sense of the majesty and glory of the Most High. He wished to be free to present his cause without the impediments arising from a deeply distressing and painful malady. He wished to have his full intellectual and bodily vigor restored for a time to him, and then he was confident that he could successfully defend himself. He felt that, he was now enfeebled by disease, and incapacitated from making the effort for self-vindication and for maintaining his cause, which he would have been enabled to make in his palmy days.

Then will I not hide myself from thee - From God. I will stand forth boldly and maintain my cause. I will not attempt to conceal myself, or shun the trial and the argument. See Job 9:34-35.

Verse 21

Withdraw thine hand far from me - Notes Job 9:34. The hand of God here is used to denote the calamity or affliction which Job was suffering. The meaning is, "Remove my affliction; restore me to health, and I will then enter on the argument in vindication of my cause. I am now oppressed,

and broken down, and enfeebled by disease, and I cannot present it with the vigor which I might evince if I were in health."

And let not thy dread make me afraid - "Do not so overpower me by thy severe majesty, that I cannot present my cause in a calm and composed manner." See the notes at Job 9:34. Job felt that God had power to overawe him, and he asked, therefore, that he might have a calm and composed mind, and then he would be able to do justice to his own cause.

Verse 22

Then call thou, and I will answer - Call me to trial; summon me to make my defense. This is language taken from courts of justice, and the idea is, that if God would remove his calamity, and not overawe him, and would then call on him to make a defense, he would be ready to respond to his call. The language means, "be thou plaintiff in the case, and I will enter on my defense." He speaks now to God not as to a judge but as a party, and is disposed to go to trial. See the notes at Job 9:33-35.

Or let me speak, and answer thou me - "Let me be the plaintiff, and commence the cause. In any way, let the cause come to an issue. Let me open the cause, adduce my arguments, and defend my view of the subject; and then do thou respond." The idea is, that Job desired a fair trial. He was willing that God should select his position, and should either open the cause, or respond to it when he had himself opened it. To our view, there is something that is quite irreverent in this language, and I know not that it can be entirely vindicated. But perhaps, when the idea of a trial was once suggested, all the rest may be regarded as the mere filling up, or as language fitted to carry out that single idea, and to preserve the concinnity of the poem. Still, to address God in this manner is a wide license even for poetry. There is the language of complaint here; there is an evident feeling that God was not right; there is an undue reliance of Job on his own powers; there is a disposition to blame God which we can by no means approve, and which we are not required to approve. But let us not too harshly blame the patriarch. Let him who has suffered much and long, who feels that he is forsaken by God and by man, who has lost property and friends, and who is suffering under a painful bodily malady, if he has never had any of those feelings, cast the first stone. Let not those blame him who live in affluence and prosperity, and who have yet to endure the first severe trial of life. One of the objects, I suppose, of this poem is, to show human nature as it is; to show how good people often feel under severe trial; and it would not be

true to nature if the representation had been that Job was always calm, and that he never cherished an improper feeling or gave vent to an improper thought.

Verse 23

How many are mine iniquities and sins? - Job takes the place of the plaintiff or accuser. He opens the cause. He appeals to God to state the catalogue of his crimes, or to bring forward his charges of guilt against him. The meaning, according to Schultens, is, "That catalogue ought to be great which has called down so many and so great calamities upon my head from heaven, when I am conscious to myself of being guilty of no offence." God sorely afflicted him. Job appeals to him to show why it was done, and to make a statement of the number and the magnitude of his offences.

Make me to know - I would know on what account and why I am thus held to be guilty, and; why I am thus punished.

Verse 24

Wherefore hidest thou thy face - To hide the face, or to turn it away, is expressive of disapprobation. We turn away the face when we are offended with anyone. See the notes at Isaiah 1:15.

And holdest me for thine enemy - Regardest and treatest me as an enemy.

Verse 25

Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? - Job here means to say that the treatment of God in regard to him was like treading down a leaf that was driven about by the wind - an insigni ficant, unsettled, and worthless thing. "Wouldst thou show thy power against such an object?" - The sense is, that it was not worthy of God thus to pursue one so unimportant, and so incapable of offering any resistance.

And wilt thou pursue the dry stubble? - Is it worthy of God thus to contend with the driven straw and stubble of the field? To such a leaf, and to such stubble, he compares himself; and he asks whether God could be employed in a work such as that would be, of pursuing such a flying leaf or driven stubble with a desire to overtake it, and wreak his vengeance on it.

Verse 26

For thou writest bitter things against me - Charges or accusations of severity. We use the word "bitter" now in a somewhat similar sense. We speak of bitter sorrow, bitter cold, etc. The language here is all taken from courts of justice, and Job is carrying cut the train of thought on which he

had entered in regard to a trial before God. He says that the accusations which God had brought against him were of a bitter and severe character; charging him with aggravated offences, and recalling the sins of his youth, and holding him responsible for them. Rosenmuller remarks that the word "write" here is a judicial term, referring to the custom of writing the sentence of a person condemned (as in Psalm 149:9; Jeremiah 22:30); that is, decreeing the punishment. So the Greeks used the expression γράφεσθαι δίκην *graphesthai dikēn* meaning to declare a judicial sentence. So the Arabs use the word "kitab," writing, to denote a judicial sentence.

And makest me to possess - Hebrew Causest me to inherit - ותורישׁני *vetôrîyshēnîy* He was heir to them; or they were now his as a possession or an inheritance. The Vulgate renders it, *consumere me vis*, etc. "thou wishest to consume me with the sins of my youth." The Septuagint, "and thou dost charge against me" - περιέφηκας *perithēkas* The iniquities of my youth - The offences which I committed when young. He complains now that God recalled all those offences; that he went into days that were past, and raked up what Job had forgotten; that, not satisfied with charging on him what he had done as a man, he went back and collected all that could be found in the days when he was under the influence of youthful passions, and when, like other young men, he might have gone astray. But why should he not do it? What impropriety could there be in God in thus recalling the memory of long-forgotten sins, and causing the results to meet him now that he was a man? We may remark here,

(1) That this is often done. The sins and follies of youth seem often to be passed over or to be unnoticed by God. Long intervals of time or long tracts of land or ocean may intervene between the time when sin was committed in youth, and when it shall be punished in age. The man may himself have forgotten it, and after a youth of dissipation and folly he may perhaps have a life of prosperity for many years. But those sins are not forgotten by God. Far on in life the results of early dissipation, licentiousness, folly, will meet the offender, and overwhelm him in disgrace or calamity.

(2) God has power to recall all the offences of early life. He has access to the soul. He knows all its secret springs. With infinite ease he can reach the memory of a long-forgotten deed of guilt; and he can overwhelm the mind with the recollection of crimes that have not been thought of for years. He can fix the attention with painful intensity on some slight deed of past

criminality; or he can recall forgotten sins in groups; or he can make the remembrance of one sin suggest a host of others. No man who has passed a guilty youth can be certain that his mind will not be overwhelmed with painful recollections, and however calm and secure he may now be, he may in a moment be harassed with the consciousness of deep criminality, and with most gloomy apprehensions of the wrath to come.

(3) A young man should be pure. He has otherwise no security of respectability in future life, or of pleasant recollections of the past, should he reach old age. He who spends his early days in dissipation must expect to reap the fruits of it in future years. Those sins will meet him in his way, and most probably at an unexpected moment, and in an unexpected place. If he ever becomes a good man, he will have many an hour of bitter and painful regret at the follies of his early life; if he does not, he will meet the accumulated results of his sin on the bed of death and in hell. Somewhere, and somehow, every instance of folly is to be remembered hereafter, and will be remembered with sighs and tears.

(4) God rules among people, There is a moral government on the earth. Of this there is no more certain proof than in this fact. The power of summoning up past sins to the recollection; of recalling those that have been forgotten by the offender himself, and of placing them in black array before the guilty man; and of causing them to seize with a giant‘s grasp upon the soul, is a power such as God alone can wield, and shows at once that there is a God, and that he rules in the hearts of people. And

(5) If God holds this power now, he will hold it in the world to come. The forgotten sins of youth, and the sins of age, will be remembered then. The sinner walks over a volcano. It may be now calm and still. Its base may be crowned with verdure, its sides with orchards and vineyards; and far up its heights the tall tree may wave, and on its summit the snow may lie undisturbed. But at any moment that mountain may heave, and the burning torrent spread desolation every where. So with the sinner. He knows not how soon the day of vengeance may come; how soon he may be made to inherit the sins of his youth.

Verse 27

Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks - The word rendered "stocks" (סד *sad*), denotes the wooden frame or block in which the feet of a person were confined for punishment. The whole passage here is designed to describe the feet; as so confined in a clog or clogs, as to preclude the power of motion. Stocks or clogs were used often in ancient times as a mode of punishment. Proverbs 7:22. Jeremiah was punished by being confined in the stocks. Jeremiah 20:2; Jeremiah 29:2, Jeremiah 29:6. Paul and Silas were in like manner confined in the prison in stocks; Acts 16:24. Stocks appear to have been of two kinds. They were either clogs attached to one foot or to both feet, so as to embarrass, but not entirely to prevent walking, or they were fixed frames to which the feet were attached so as entirely to preclude motion. The former were often used with runaway slaves to prevent their escaping again when taken, or were affixed to prisoners to prevent their escape. The fixed kinds - which are probably referred to here - were of different sorts. They consisted of a frame, with holes for the feet only; or for the feet and the hands; or for the feet, the hands, and the neck. At Pompeii, stocks have been found so contrived that ten prisoners might be chained by the leg, each leg separately by the sliding of a bar. "Pict. Bible." The instrument is still used in India, and is such as to confine the limbs in a very distressing position, though the head is allowed to move freely.

And lookest narrowly unto all my paths - This idea occurs also in Job 33:11, though expressed somewhat differently, "He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths." Probably the allusion is to the paths by which he might escape. God watched or observed every way - as a sentinel or guard would a prisoner who was hampered or clogged, and who would make an attempt to escape.

Thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet - Margin, "roots." Such also is the Hebrew - רגלי שׁרשׁי *shereshy regely* Vulgate, "*vestigia*." Septuagint, "Upon the roots - εἰς δὲ ῥίζας *eis de rizas* - of my feet thou comest." The word שׁרשׁ *shârash* means properly "root;" then the "bottom," or the lower part of a thing; and hence, the soles of the feet. The word rendered" settest a print," from חקה *châqâh* means to cut in, to hew, to hack; then to engrave, carve, delineate, portray; then to dig. Various interpretations have been given of the passage here. Gesenius supposes it to mean, "Around the roots of my feet thou hast digged," that is, hast made a trench so that I can get no further. But though this suits the connection, yet

it is an improbable interpretation. It is not the way in which one would endeavor to secure a prisoner, to make a ditch over which he could not leap.

Others render it, "Around the soles of my feet thou hast drawn lines," that is, thou hast made marks how far I may go. Dr. Good supposes that the whole description refers to some method of clogging a wild animal for the purpose of taming him, and that the expression here refers to a mark on the hoof of the animal by which the owner could designate him. Noyes accords with Gesenius. The editor of the Pictorial Bible supposes that it may refer to the manner in which the stocks were made, and that it means that a seal was affixed to the parts of the plank of which they were constructed, when they were joined together. He adds that the Chinese have a portable pillory of this kind, and that offenders are obliged to wear it around their necks for a given period, and that over the place where it is joined together a piece of paper is pasted, that it may not be opened without detection. Rosenmuller supposes that it means, that Job was confined within certain prescribed limits, beyond which he was not allowed to go. This restraint he supposes was effected by binding his feet by a cord to the stocks, so that he was not allowed to go beyond a certain distance. The general sense is clear, that Job was confined within certain limits, and was observed with very marked vigilance. But I doubt whether either of the explanations suggested is the true one. Probably some custom is alluded to of which we have no knowledge now - some mark that was affixed to the feet to prevent a prisoner from escaping without being detected. What that was, I think, we do not know. Perhaps Oriental researches will yet disclose some custom that will explain it.

Verse 28

And he, as a rotten thing, consumeth - Noyes renders this, "And I, like an abandoned thing, shall waste away." Dr. Good translates it, "Well may he dissolve as corrupttion." Rosenmuller supposes that Job refers to himself by the word הוּא *hû'* - he, and that having spoken of himself in the previous verses, he now changes the mode of speech, and speaks in the third person. In illustration of this, he refers to a passage in Euripides, "Alcestes," verse 690. The Vulgate renders it in the first person, "Qui quasi putredo consumendus sum." The design seems to be, to represent himself as an object not worthy such consent surveillance on the part of God. God set his mark upon him; watched him with a close vigilance and a steady eye -

and yet he was watching one who was turning fast to corruption, and who would soon be gone. He regarded it as unworthy of God, to be so attentive in watching over so worthless an object. This is closely connected with the following chapter, and there should have been no interruption here. The allusion to himself as feeble and decaying, leads him into the beautiful description in the following chapter of the state of man in general. The connection is something like this: - "I am afflicted and tried in various ways. My feet are in the stocks; my way is hedged up. I am weak, frail, and dying. But so it is with man universally. My condition is like that of the man at large, for

"Man, the offspring of a woman,
Is short-lived, and is full of trouble."

As a rotten thing, - כרקב *kerâqâb* The word רקב *râqab* means rottenness, or caries of bones; Proverbs 12:4; Proverbs 14:30; Hosea 5:12. Here it means anything that is going to decay, and the comparison is that of man to anything that is thus constantly decaying, and that will soon be wholly gone.

Consumeth. - Or rather "decays," יבלה *yîbâlâh* The word בלה *bâlâh* is applied to that which falls away or decays, which is worn out and waxes old - as a garment; Deuteronomy 8:4; Isaiah 50:9; Isaiah 51:6.

As a garment that is moth-eaten - "As a garment the moth consumes it." Hebrew On the word moth, and the sentiment here expressed, see the notes at Job 4:19.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verse 1

Man that is born of a woman - See the notes at Job 13:28. The object of Job in these verses, is to show the frailty and feebleness of man. He, therefore, dwells on many circumstances adapted to this, and this is one of the most stirring and beautiful. He alludes to the delicacy and feebleness, of the female sex, and says that the offspring of one so frail must himself be frail; the child of one so feeble must himself be feeble. Possibly also there may be an allusion here to the prevailing opinion in the Oriental world of the inferiority of the female sex. The following forcible lines by Lord Bacon, express a similar sentiment:

The world‘s a bubble, and the life of man
Less than a span,
In his conception wretched, from the womb
So to the tomb.
Curst from the cradle, and brought up to years
With cares and fears.
Who then to frail mortality shall trust.
But limns the water, or but writes in dust.

Of few days - Hebrew “Brief of days;” compare Psalm 90:10; Genesis 47:9.

And full of trouble - Compare the notes at Job 3:17. Who cannot bear witness to this? How expressive a description is it of life! And even too where life seems most happy; where the sun of prosperity seems to shine on our way, and where blessings like drops of dew seem to descend on us, how true is it still theft life is full of trouble, and that the way of man is a weary way! Despite all that he can do - all his care, and skill, and learning and wealth, life is a weary pilgrimage, and is burdened with many woes. “Few and evil have the days of the years of my pilgrimage been, ‹ said the patriarch Jacob, and they who have advanced near the same number of years with him can utter with deep emotion the same beautiful language. Goethe, the celebrated German, said of himself in advanced age, “They have called me a child of fortune, nor have I any wish to complain of the course of my life. Yet it has been nothing but labor and sorrow, and I may truly say that in seventy-five years I have not had four weeks of true comfort. It was the constant rolling of a stone that was always to be lifted

anew. When I look back upon my earlier and middle life, and consider how few are left of those that were young with me, I am reminded of a summer visit to a watering-place. On arriving one makes the acquaintance of those who have been already some time there, and leave the week following. This loss is painful. Now one becomes attached to the second generation, with which one lives for a time and becomes intimately connected. But this also passes away and leaves us solitary with the third, which arrives shortly before our own departure, and with which we have no desire to have much contact." - Rauch's Psychology, p. 343.

Verse 2

He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down - Nothing can be more obvious and more beautiful than this, and the image has been employed by writers in all ages, but nowhere with more beauty, or with more frequency than in the Bible; see Isaiah 40:6; Psalm 37:2; Psalm 90:6; Psalm 103:15. Next to the Bible, it is probable that Shakespeare has employed the image with the most exquisite beauty of any poet:

This is the state of man; today he puts forth
The tender leaves of hope, tomorrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honors thick upon him;
The third day comes a frost a killing frost,
And - when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a ripening - nips his root,
And then he falls.

Henry viii. Act iii. Sc. 2.

He fleeth also as a shadow - Another exquisite figure, and as true as it is beautiful. So the Psalmist:

My days are like a shadow that declineth.

Psalm 102:11.

Man is like to vanity;
His days are as a shadowy that passeth away.

Psalm 144:4.

The idea of Job is, that there is no substance, nothing that is permanent. A shadow moves on gently and silently, and is soon gone. It leaves no trace of its being, and returns no more. They who have watched the beautiful shadow of a cloud on a landscape, and have seen how rapidly it passes ever meadows and fields of grain, and rolls up the mountain side and disappears, will have a vivid conception of this figure. How gently yet how rapidly it

moves. How soon it is gone. How void of impression is its course. Who can track its way; who can reach it? So man moves on. Soon he is gone; he leaves no trace of his being, and returns no more.

Verse 3

And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one? - Is one so weak, so frail, so short-lived, worthy the constant vigilance of the infinite God? In Zechariah 12:4, the expression "to open the eyes" upon one, means to look angrily upon him. Here it means to observe or watch closely.

And bringest me into judgment with thee - Is it equal or proper that one so frail and feeble should be called to a trial with one so mighty as the infinite God? Does God seek a trial with one so much his inferior, and so unable to stand before him? This is language taken from courts of justice, and the meaning is, that the parties were wholly unequal, and that it was unworthy of God to maintain a controversy in this manner with feeble man. This is a favorite idea with Job, that there was no equality between him and God, and that the whole controversy was, therefore, conducted on his part with great disadvantage; compare the notes at Job 9:34-35.

Verse 4

Who can bring a clean - thing "out of an unclean?" This is evidently a proverb or an adage; but its connection here is not very apparent. Probably, however, it is designed as a plea of mitigation for his conscious frailties and infirmities. He could not but admit that he had faults. But he asks, how could it be expected to be otherwise? He belonged to a race that was sinful and depraved. Connected with such a race, how could it be otherwise than that he should be prone to evil? Why then did God follow him with so much severity, and hold him with a grasp so close and so unrelenting? Why did he treat him as if he ought to be expected to be perfectly pure, or as if it were reasonable to suppose he would be otherwise than unholy? This passage is of great value as showing the early opinion of the world in regard to the native character of man. The sentiment was undoubtedly common - so common as to have passed into a proverb - that man was a sinner; and that it could not be expected that anyone of the race should be pure and holy.

The sentiment is as true as it is obvious - like will beget like all over the world. The nature of the lion, the tiger, the hyaena, the serpent is propagated, and so the same thing is true of man. It is a great law, that the offspring will resemble the parentage; and as the offspring of the lion is not a lamb but a young lion; of a wolf is not a kid but a young wolf, so the

offspring of man is not an angel, but is a man with the same nature, the same moral character, the same proneness to evil with the parent. The Chaldee renders this: "Who will give one pure from a man polluted in sin, except God, who is one, and who forgiveth him?" But this is manifestly a departure from the sense of the passage. Jerome, however, has adopted nearly the same translation. As a historical record, this passage proves that the doctrine of original sin was early held in the world. Still it is true that the same great law prevails, that the off-spring of woman is a sinner - no matter where he may be born, or in what circumstances he may be placed. No art, no philosophy, no system of religion can prevent the operation of this great law under which we live, and by which we die; compare the notes at Romans 5:19.

Verse 5

Seeing his days - are "determined" Since man is so frail, and so short-lived, let him alone, that he may pass his little time with some degree of comfort and then die; see the notes at Job 7:19-21. The word "determined" here means "fixed, settled." God has fixed the number of his days, so that they cannot be exceeded; compare the notes at Isaiah 10:23, and notes at Psalm 90:10.

The number of his months are with thee - Thou hast the ordering of them, or they are determined by thee.

Thou hast appointed his bounds - Thou hast fixed a limit, or hast determined the time which he is to live, and he cannot go beyond it. There is no elixir of life that can prolong our days beyond that period. Soon we shall come to that outer limit of life, and then we must die. When that is we know not, and it is not desirable to know. It is better that it should be concealed. If we knew that it was near, it would fill us with gloom, and deter us from the efforts and the plans of life altogether. If it were remote, we should be careless and secure, and should think there was time enough yet to prepare to die. As it is, we know that the period is not very far distant; we know not but that it may be very near at hand, and we would be always ready.

Verse 6

Turn from him - - שׁעה *shâʿâh* Look away from; or turn away the eyes; Isaiah 22:4. Job had represented the Lord as looking intently upon him, and narrowly watching all his ways. He now asks him that he would look away

and suffer him to be alone, and to spend the little time he had in comfort and peace.

That he may rest - Margin, "Cease." "Let him be ceased from" - ויחדל *veychâdal* The idea is not that of rest, but it is that of having God cease to afflict him; or, in other words, leaving him to himself. Job wished the hand of God to be withdrawn, and prayed that he might be left to himself.

Till he shall accomplish - - עד־ירצה *ʿad -yîrtseh* Septuagint, εἰδοκήσῃ τὸν βίον *eidokēsē ton bion* - "and comfort his life," or make his life pleasant. Jerome renders it, "until his desired day - "optata dies" - shall come like that of an hireling." Dr. Good, "that he may fill up his day." Noyes, "that he may enjoy his day." The word used here (רצה *râtsâh*) means properly to delight in, to take pleasure in, to satisfy, to pay off; and there can be no doubt that there was couched under the use of this word the notion of "enjoyment," or "pleasure." Job wished to be spared, that he might have comfort yet in this world. The comparison of himself with a hireling, is not that he might have comfort like a hireling - for such an image would not be pertinent or appropriate - but that his life was like that of an hireling, and he wished to be let alone until the time was completed. On this sentiment, see the notes at Job 7:1.

Verse 7

For there is hope of a tree - This passage to Job 14:12, is one of exquisite beauty. Its object is to state reasons why man should be permitted to enjoy this life. A tree, if cut down, might spring up again and flourish; but not man. He died to rise no more; he is cut down and lives not again. The passage is important as expressing the prevalent sentiment of the time in which Job lived about the future condition of man, and is one that deserves a close examination. The great question is, whether Job believed in the future state, or in the resurrection of the dead? On this question one or two things are clear at the outset.

(1) He did not believe that man would spring up from the grave in any sense similar to the mode in which the sprout or germ of a tree grows up when the tree is cut down.

(2) He did not believe in the doctrine of metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls; a doctrine that was so common among the ancients.

In this respect the patriarchal religion stood aloof from the systems of paganism, and there is not to be found, that I know of, any expression that would lead us to suppose that they had ever embraced it, or had even heard of it. The general sentiment here is, that if a tree is cut down, it may be expected to shoot up again, and another tree will be found in its place - as is the case with the chestnut, the willow, the oak. But Job says that there was nothing like this to happen to man. There was no root, no germ, no seminal principle from which he would be made to live again on the earth. He was to be finally cut off, from all his pleasures and his friends here, and to go away to return no more. Still, that Job believed in his continued existence beyond the grave - his existence in the dark and gloomy world of shades, is apparent from the whole book, and indeed from the very passage before us; see Job 14:13 - compare Job 10:21-22. The image here is one that is very beautiful, and one that is often employed by poets. Thus, Moschus, in his third Idyl, as translated by Gisborne:

The meanest herb we trample in the field,
Or in the garden nurture, when its leaf
At winter‘s touch is blasted, and its place
Forgotten, soon its vernal bud renews,
And from short slumber wakes to life again.
Man wakes no more! Man, valiant, glorious, wise,
When death once chills him, sinks in sleep profound.
A long, unconscious, never-ending sleep.

See also Beattie‘s Hermit:

‹Tis night, and the landscape is lovely no more;
I mourn, but ye woodlands, I mourn not for you;
For morn is approaching, your charms to restore,
Perfumed with fresh fragrance, and glittering with dew.
Nor yet for the ravage of winter I mourn;
Kind nature the embryo blossom will save;
But when shall spring visit the mouldering urn?
O when shall it dawn on the night of the grave?

The same image, also, has been beautifully employed by Dr. Dwight, though urged by him as an argument to prove the doctrine of the resurrection:

In those lone, silent realms of night,
Shall peace and hope no more arise?

No future morning light the tomb,
Nor day-star gild the darksome skies?
Shall spring the faded world revive?
Shall waning moons their light renew?
Again shall setting suns ascend,
And chase the darkness from our view?

The feeling of Job here is, that when man was removed from the earth, he was removed finally; that there was no hope of his revisiting it again, and that he could not be employed in the dark abode of departed spirits in the cheerful and happy manner in which he might be in this world of light. This idea is expressed, also, in a most tender manner by the Psalmist:

Wilt thou show wonders to the dead?
Shall the dead arise and praise thee?
Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave?
Or thy faithfulness in destruction?
Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?
And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?
Psalm 88:10-12.

And the same feelings were evinced by Hezekiah, the pious king of Israel:

For Sheol cannot praise thee;
Death cannot celebrate thee;
They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.

The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day;

The father to the children shall make known thy faithfulness.
Isaiah 38:18-19.

All these gloomy and desponding views arose from the imperfect conception which they had of the future world. It was to them a world of dense and gloomy shades - a world of night - of conscious existence indeed - but still far away from light, and from the comforts which people enjoyed on the earth. We are to remember that the revelations then made were very few and obscure; and we should deem it a matter of inestimable favor that we have a better hope, and have far more just and clear views of the employments of the future world. Yet probably our views of that world, with all the light which we have, are much further from the reality than the

views of the patriarchs were from those which we are permitted to cherish. Such as they are, however, they are fitted to elevate and cheer the soul. We shall not, indeed, live again on the earth, but we shall enter a world of light and glory, compared with which all that is glorious here shall fade away. Not far distant is that blessed world; and in our trials we may look to it not with dread, as Job did to the land of shades, but with triumph and joy.

Will not cease - Will not fail, or be missing. It will spring up and live.

Verse 8

Though the root thereof wax old - Though life becomes almost extinct. The idea is, though the root of the tree be very old, yet it does not become wholly lifeless. It is not like an old man, when life goes out altogether. In the very aged root there will be vitality still; but not so in man.

Though the stock thereof - The stump - literally that which is cut off - גזעו *gezaʿô* The meaning is, that when the trunk of the tree is cut down and dies altogether, life remains in the root; but when man fails, life is wholly extinct.

Verse 9

Yet through the scent of water - The word here rendered "scent" (ריח *rêyach*) means properly the odor or fragrance which anything exhales or emits; Genesis 27:27. The idea is very delicate and poetic. It is designed to denote a gentle and pleasant contact - not a rush of water - by which the tree is made to live. It inhales, so to speak, the vital influence from the water - as we are refreshed and revived by grateful odorifles when we are ready to faint.

It will bud - Or, rather, it will germinate, or spring up again - יפרח *yapârach* see the notes at Isaiah 55:10.

And bring forth boughs - קציר *qâtsîyr* This word usually means a harvest; Genesis 8:22; Genesis 30:14; Genesis 45:6. It also means, as here, a bough, or branch; compare Psalm 80:11; Job 18:16; Job 29:19.

Like a plant - Like a young plant - as fresh and vigorous as a plant that is set out.

Verse 10

But man dieth and wasteth away - Margin, "Is weakened, or cut off." The Hebrew word (חלש *châlash*) means to overthrow, prostrate, discomfit; and hence, to be weak, frail, or waste away. The Septuagint renders it Ἀνὴρ δὲ τελευτήσας ᾤχετο *Anēr de teleutēsas ōcheto* - "man dying goes away."

Herder renders it," his power is gone." The idea is, he entirely vanishes. He leaves nothing to sprout up again. There is no germ; no shoot; no living root; no seminal principle. Of course, this refers wholly to his living again on the earth, and not to the question about his future existence. That is a different inquiry. The main idea with Job here is, that when man dies there is no germinating principle, as there is in a tree that is cut down. Of the truth of this there can be no doubt; and this comparison of man with the vegetable world, must have early occurred to mankind, and hence, led to the inquiry whether he would not live in a future state. Other flyings that are cut down, spring up again and live. But man is cut down, and does not spring up again. Will he not be likely, therefore, to have an existence in some future state, and to spring up and flourish there? "The Romans," says Rosenmuller, "made those trees to be the symbol of death, which, being cut down, do not live again, or from whose roots no germs arise, as the pine and cypress, which were planted in burial-places, or were accustomed to be placed at the doors of the houses of the dead."

Man giveth up the ghost - Expires, or dies. This is all that the word (גוע *gâvaʿ*) means. The notion of giving up the spirit or the ghost - an idea not improper in itself - is not found in the Hebrew word, nor is it in the corresponding Greek word in the New Testament; compare Acts 5:10.

Verse 11

As the waters fail from the sea - As the waters evaporate wholly, and leave the bottom wholly dry, so it is with man, who passes entirely away, and leaves nothing. But to what fact Job refers here, is not known. The sea or ocean has never been dried up, so as to furnish a ground for this comparison. Noyes renders it, "the lake." Dr. Good, without the slightest authority, renders it, "as the billows pass away with the tides." Herder supposes it to mean that until the waters fail from the sea man will not rise again, but the Hebrew will not bear this interpretation. Probably the true interpretation is, that which makes the word rendered sea (ים *yâm*) refer to a lake, or a stagnant pool; see Isaiah 11:15, note; Isaiah 19:5, note. The word is applied not unfrequently to a lake, as to the lake of Genesareth, Numbers 34:11; to the Dead Sea, Genesis 14:3; Deuteronomy 4:49; Zechariah 14:8. It is used, also, to denote the Nile, Isaiah 19:5, and the Euphrates, Isaiah 27:1. It is also employed to denote the brass sea that was made by Solomon, and placed in front of the temple; 2 Kings 25:13. I see no reason to doubt, therefore, that it may be used here to denote the

collections of water, which were made by torrents pouring down from the mountains, and which would after a little while wholly evaporate.

And the flood decayeth - The river - נהר *nâhâr* Such an occurrence would be common in the parched countries of the East; see the notes at Job 6:15 ff. As such torrents vanish wholly away, so it was with man. Every vestige disappeared; compare 2 Samuel 14:14.

Verse 12

So man lieth down, and riseth not - He lies down in the grave and does not rise again on the earth.

Till the heavens be no more - That is, never; for such is the fair interpretation of the passage, and this accords with its design. Job means to say, undoubtedly, that man would never appear again in the land of the living; that he would not spring up from the grave, as a sprout does from a fallen tree; and that when he dies, he goes away from the earth never to return. Whether he believed in a future state, or in the future resurrection, is another question, and one that cannot be determined from this passage. His complaint is, that the present life is short, and that man when he has once passed through it cannot return to enjoy it again, if it has been unhappy; and he asks, therefore, why, since it was so short, man might not be permitted to enjoy it without molestation. It does not follow from this passage that he believed that the heavens ever would be no more, or would pass away.

The heavens are the most permanent and enduring objects of which we have any knowledge, and are, therefore, used to denote permanency and eternity; see Psalm 89:36-37. This verse, therefore, is simply a solemn declaration of the belief of Job that when man dies, he dies to live no more on the earth. Of the truth of this, no one can doubt - and the truth is as important and affecting as it is undoubted. If man could come back again, life would be a different thing. If he could revisit the earth to repair the evils of a wicked life, to repent of his errors, to make amends for his faults, and to make preparation for a future world, it would be a different thing to live, and a different thing to die. But when he travels over the road of life, he treads a path which is not to be traversed again. When he neglects an opportunity to do good, it cannot be recalled. When he commits an offence, he cannot come back to repair the evil. He falls, and dies, and lives no more. He enters on other scenes, and is amidst the retributions of another state. How important then to secure the passing moment, and to be prepared

to go hence, to return no more! The idea here presented is one that is common with the poets. Thus, Horace says:

Nobis, cum semel occidit brevis lux,
Nox est perpetua una dormienda.

Verse 13

Oh that thou wouldest hide me in the grave; - compare the notes at Job 3:11 ff. Hebrew "in Sheol" - ב־שׁאול *bî -she'ôl* Vulgate, "in inferno." Septuagint ἐν ἅδῃ *en Hadē* - "in Hades." On the meaning of the word "Sheol," see the notes at Isaiah 5:14. It does not mean here, I think, the grave. It means the region of departed spirits, the place of the dead, where he wished to be, until the tempest of the wrath of God should pass by. He wished to be shut up in some place where the fury of that tempest would not meet him, and where he would be safe. On the meaning of this passage, however, there has been considerable variety of opinion among expositors. Many suppose that the word here properly means "the grave," and that Job was willing to wait there until the wrath of God should be spent, and then that he desired to be brought forth in the general resurrection of the dead.

So the Chaldee interprets it of the grave - קבורתא . There is evidently a desire on the part of Job to be hid in some secret place until the tempest of wrath should sweep by, and until he should be safe. There is an expectation that he would live again at some future period, and a desire to live after the present tokens of the wrath of God should pass by. It is probably a wish for a safe retreat or a hiding-place - where he might be secure, as from a storm. A somewhat similar expression occurs in Isaiah 2:19, where it is said that people would go into holes and caverns until the storm of wrath should pass by, or in order to escape it. But whether Job meant the grave, or the place of departed spirits, cannot be determined, and is not material. In the view of the ancients the one was not remote from the other. The entrance to Sheol was the grave; and either of them would furnish the protection sought. It should be added, that the grave was with the ancients usually a cave, or an excavation from the rock, and such a place might suggest the idea of a hiding-place from the raging storm.

That thou wouldest appoint me a set time - When I should be delivered or rescued. Herder renders this, "Appoint me then a new term." The word rendered "a set time" - חק *chôq* - means, properly, something decreed, prescribed, appointed and here an appointed time when God would remember or revisit him. It is the expression of his lingering love of life. He

had wished to die. He was borne down by heavy trials, and desired a release. He longed even for the grave; compare Job 3:20-22. But there is the instinctive love of life in his bosom, and he asks that God would appoint a time, though ever so remote, in which he would return to him, and permit him to live again. There is the secret hope of some future life - though remote; and he is willing to be hid for any period of time until the wrath of God should pass by, if he might live again. Such is the lingering desire of life in the bosom of man in the severest trials, and the darkest hours; and so instinctively does man look on even to the most remote period with the hope of life. Nature speaks out in the desires of Job; and one of the objects of the poem is to describe the workings of nature with reference to a future state in the severe trials to which he was subjected. We cannot but remark here, what support and consolation would he have found in the clear revelation which we have of the future world, and what a debt of gratitude do we owe to that gospel which has brought life and immortality to light!

Verse 14

If a man die, shall he live again? - This is a sudden transition in the thought. He had unconsciously worked himself up almost to the belief that man might live again even on the earth. He had asked to be hid somewhere - even in the grave - until the wrath of God should be overpast, and then that God would remember him, and bring him forth again to life. Here he checks himself. It cannot be, he says, that man will live again on the earth. The hope is visionary and vain, and I will endure what is appointed for me, until some change shall come. The question here "shall he live again?" is a strong form of expressing negation. He will not live again on the earth. Any hope of that kind is, therefore, vain, and I will wait until the change come - whatever that may be.

All the days of my appointed time - צבאי *tsâbâ'îy* - my warfare; my enlistment; my hard service. See the notes at Job 7:1.

Will I wait - I will endure with patience my trials. I will not seek to cut short the time of my service.

Till my change come - What this should be, he does not seem to know. It might be relief from sufferings, or it might be happiness in some future state. At all events, this state of things could not last always, and under his heavy pressure of wo, he concluded to sit down and quietly wait for any change. He was certain of one thing - that life was to be passed over but once - that man could not go over the journey again - that he could not

return to the earth and go over his youth or his age again. Grotius, and after him Rosenmuller and Noyes, here quotes a sentiment similar to this from Euripides, in "Supplicibus," verses 1080ff.

Οἴμοί τί δὴ βροτοῖσιν οὐκ ἔστιν τόδε,

Νέους δὶς εἶναι, καὶ γέροντας αὐ πάλιν; κ. τ. λ.

Oimoí ti dē brotoisin ouk estin tode Neous dis einai kai gerontas au palin etc whole passage is thus elegantly translated by Grotius:

Proh fata! cur non est datum mortalibus

Duplici juventa, duplici senio frui?

Intra penates siquid habet incommode,

Fas seriore corrigi sententia;

Hoc vita non permittit: at qui bis foret

Juvenis senexque, siquid erratum foret

Priore, id emendaret in cursu altero.

The thought here expressed cannot but occur to every reflecting mind. There is no one who has not felt that he could correct the errors and follies of his life, if he were permitted to live it over again. But there is a good reason why it should not be so. What a world would this be if man knew that he might return and repair the evils of his course by living it over again! How securely in sin would he live! How little would he be restrained! How little concerned to be prepared for the life to come! God has, therefore, wisely and kindly put this out of the question; and there is scarcely any safeguard of virtue more firm than this fact. We may also observe that the feelings here expressed by Job are the appropriate expressions of a pious heart. Man should wait patiently in trial until his change comes. To the friend of God those sorrows will be brief. A change will soon come - the last change - and a change for the better. Beyond that, there shall be no change; none will be desirable or desired. For that time we should patiently wait, and all the sorrows which may intervene before that comes, we should patiently bear.

Verse 15

Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee - This is language taken from courts of justice. It refers, probably, not to a future time, but to the present. "Call thou now, and I will respond." It expresses a desire to come at once to

trial; to have the matter adjusted before he should leave the world. He could not bear the idea of going out of the world under the imputations which were lying on him, and he asked for an opportunity to vindicate himself before his Maker; compare the notes at Job 9:16.

Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands - To me, one of thy creatures. This should, with more propriety, be rendered in the imperative, "do thou have a desire." It is the expression of an earnest wish that God would show an interest in him as one of his creatures, and would bring the matter to a speedy issue. The word here rendered, "have a desire" (תכסף *tîkâsaph*), means literally to be or become "pale" (from כסף *keseph*), "silver," so called from its paleness, like the Greek ἄργυρος *arguros* from ἀγρός *agros* white); and then the verb means to pine or long after anything, so as to become pale.

Verse 16

For now thou numberest my steps - Thou dost make strict inquiry into all my conduct, that thou mayest mark my errors, and hold me bound to punishment. The sense is, that God treated him now with severity; and he besought him to have pity on him, and bring him to trial, and give him an opportunity to vindicate himself.

Verse 17

My transgression is sealed up - The verb rendered sealed up (חתם *châtham*) means to seal, to close, to shut up; see the notes at Isaiah 8:16; compare the notes at Job 9:7. It was common with the ancients to use a seal where we use a lock. Money was counted and put into a bag, and a seal was attached to it. Hence, a seal might be put to a bag, as a sort of certificate of the amount, and to save the necessity of counting it again.

In a bag - - בצרור *bîtserôr* So Jerome, "*in sacculo*." So the Septuagint, ἐν βαλαντίῳ *en balantiō* The word צרור *tserôr* means usually a "bundle" 1 Samuel 25:29; Job 26:8; Hosea 13:12; Exodus 12:34; Proverbs 26:8; Isaiah 8:16; Genesis 42:35; Proverbs 7:20); but here it is not improperly rendered a bag. The idea is, that they were counted and numbered like money, and then sealed up and carefully put away. God had made an accurate estimate of their number, and he seemed carefully to guard and observe them - as a man does bags of gold - so that none might be lost. His sins seemed to have become a sort of valuable treasure to the Almighty, none of which he allowed now to escape his notice.

And thou sewest up mine iniquity - Noyes renders this, "and thou addest unto mine iniquity." Good, "thou tiest together mine iniquity." The word used here טפל *ṭâphal* means properly to patch; to patch together; to sew to join together as carpenters do their work; and then to devise or forge - as a falsehood; - to join a malicious charge to a person. Thus, in Psalm 119:69, "The proud have "forged a lie" (שׁקר טפלו *ṭâphalô sheqer*) against me," that is, they have joined a lie to me, or devised this story about me. So in Job 13:4, "Ye are forgers of lies." The word does not occur elsewhere. The Greeks have a similar expression in the phrase ῥάπτειν ἔπη *raptein epē* - from where the word ῥαψῳδὸς *rapsōdos* The word here, it seems to me, is used in the sense of sewing up money in a bag, as well as sealing it. This is done when there are large sums, to avoid the inconvenience of counting it. The sum is marked on the bag, and a seal affixed to it to authenticate it, and it is thus passed from one to another without the trouble of counting. If a seal is placed on the bag, it will circulate for its assigned value, without being opened for examination. It is usual now in the East for a bag to contain five hundred piastres, and hence, such a sum is called "a purse," and amounts are calculated by so many "purses;" see Harmer, ii. 285, Chardin, and Pict. Bible in loc. The sense here is, that God had carefully numbered his sins, and marked them, and meant that none of them should escape. He regarded them as very great. They could now be referred to in the gross, without the trouble of casting up the amount again. The sins of a man's past life are summed up and marked with reference to the future judgment.

Verse 18

And surely the mountain falling - Margin, "Fadeth." The sense of this is, that the hope of man in regard to living again, must certainly fail - as a mountain falls and does not rise again; as the rock is removed, and is not replaced; or as the waters wear away the stones, and they disappear. The hope of dying man was not like the tree that would spring up again Job 14:7-9; it was like the falling mountain, the wasting waters Job 14:11, the rock that was removed. The reference in the phrase before us is, probably, to a mountain that settles down and disappears - as is sometimes the case in violent convulsions of nature. It does not rise again, but is gone to reappear no more. So Job says it was of man.

And the rock is removed - An earthquake shakes it, and removes it from its foundation, and it is not replaced.

Verse 19

The waters wear the stones - By their constant attrition they wear away even the hard rocks, and they disappear, and return no more. The sense is, that constant changes are going on in nature, and man resembles those objects which are removed to appear no more, and not the productions of the vegetable world that spring up again. It is possible that there may also be included the idea here, that the patience, constancy, firmness, and life of any man must be worn out by long continued trials, as even hard rocks would be worn away by the constant attrition of waters.

Thou washest away - Margin, "Overflowest." This is literally the meaning of the Hebrew תִּשְׁטֹף *tîshâṭaph* But there is included the sense of washing away by the inundation.

The things which grow out of the dust of the earth - Herder and Noyes translate this, "the floods overflow the dust of the earth," and this accords with the interpretation of Good and Rosenmuller. So Castellio renders it, and so Luther - "Tropfen flossen die Erde weg." This is probably the true sense. The Hebrew word rendered "the things which grow out" סְפִיחַ *sâphîyach* means properly that which "is poured out" - from סָפַח *sâphach* to pour out, to spread out - and is applied to grain produced spontaneously from kernels of the former year, without new seed. Leviticus 25:5-11; 2 Kings 19:29. See the notes at Isaiah 37:30. But here it probably means a flood - that which flows out - and which washes away the earth.

The dust of the earth - The earth or the land on the margin of streams. The sense is, that as a flood sweeps away the soil, so the hope of man was destroyed.

Thou destroyest the hope of man - By death - for so the connection demands. It is the language of despondency. The tree would spring up, but man would die like a removed rock, like land washed away, like a falling mountain, and would revive no more. If Job had at times a hope of a future state, yet that hope seems at times, also, wholly to fail him, and he sinks down in utter despondency. At best, his views of the future world were dark and obscure. He seems to have had at no time clear conceptions of heaven - of the future holiness and blessedness of the righteous; but he anticipated, at best, only a residence in the world of disembodied spirits - dark, dreary, sad; - a world to which the grave was the entrance, and where the light was as darkness. With such anticipations, we are not to wonder that his mind sank into despondency; nor are we to be surprised at the expressions which

he so often used, and which seem so inconsistent with the feelings which a child of God ought to cherish. In our trials let us imitate his patience, but not his despondency; let us copy his example in his better moments, and when he was full of confidence in God, and not his language of complaint, and his unhappy reflections on the government of the Most High.

Verse 20

Thou prevailest forever against him - Thou dost always show that thou art stronger than he is. He never shows that he is able to contend with God.

And he passeth - He cannot stand before thee, but is vanquished, and passes off the stage of being.

Thou changest his countenance - Possibly the allusion is to the change produced by death. The countenance that glowed with health and was flushed with beauty and hope - blooming as the rose - is made pale as the lily under the hand of God. What an affecting exhibition of the power of God!

And sendest him away - This language seems to be that of expectation that man would still live though he was sent away; but all his hopes on earth were blasted, and he went away from his friends and possessions to return no more.

Verse 21

His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not - He is unacquainted with what is passing on the earth. Even should that occur which is most gratifying to a parent‘s heart; should his children rise to stations of honor and influence, he would not be permitted to enjoy the happiness which every father feels when his sons do well. This is suggested as one of the evils of death.

They are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them - He is not permitted to sympathize with them, or to sustain them in their trials. This is another of the evils of death. When his children need his counsel and advice, he is not permitted to give it. He is taken away from his family, and revisits them no more.

Verse 22

But his flesh upon him shall have pain - Dr. Good renders this, “his flesh shall drop away from him.” This is evidently a representation of the state of the man after he was dead. He would be taken away from hope and from his friends. His body would be committed to the grave, and his spirit

would go to the world of shades. The image in the mind seems to have been, that his flesh would suffer. It would be cold and chill, and would be devoured by worms. There seems to have been an impression that the soul would be conscious of this in its distant and silent abode, and the description is given of the grave as if the body were conscious there, and the turning back to dust were attended with pain. This thought is that which makes the grave so gloomy now. We think of ourselves in its darkness and chilliness. We insensibly suppose that we shall be conscious there. And hence, we dread so much the lonely, sad, and gloomy residence in the tomb. The meaning of the word rendered "shall have pain" - כאב *kâ'ab* - is "to be sore, to be grieved, afflicted, sad." It is by the imagination, that pain is here attributed to the dead body. But Job was not alone in this. We all feel the same thing when we think of death.

And his soul within him shall mourn - The soul that is within him shall be sad; that is, in the land of shades. So Virgil, speaking of the death of Lausus, says,

Tum vita per auras
Concessit moesta ad manes, corpusque reliquit.
Aeneid x. 819.

The idea of Job is, that it would leave all the comforts of this life; it would be separate from family and friends; it would go lonely and sad to the land of shades and of night. Job dreaded it. He loved life; and in the future world, as it was presented to his view, there was nothing to charm and attract. There he expected to wander in darkness and sadness; and from that gloomy world he expected to return no more forever. Eichhorn, however, has rendered this verse so as to give a different signification, which may perhaps be the true one.

Nur uber sich ist er betrubt;
Nur sich betrauert er.

"His troubles pertain only to himself; his grief relates to himself alone." According to this, the idea is that he must bear all his sorrows alone, and for himself. He is cut off from the living, and is not permitted to share in the joys and sorrows of his posterity, nor they in his. He has no knowledge of anything that pertains to them, nor do they participate in his griefs. What a flood of light and joy would have been poured on his soul by the Christian hope, and by the revelation of the truth that there is a world of perfect light and joy for the righteous - in heaven! And what thanks do we owe to the

Great Author of our religion - to him who is “the Resurrection and the Life “ - that we are permitted to look upon the grave with hearts full of peace and joy!

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verse 2

Should a wise man - Referring to Job, and to his claims to be esteemed wise; see Job 12:3; Job 13:2, Job 13:6. The argument of Eliphaz here is, that the sentiments which Job had advanced were a sufficient refutation of his pretensions to wisdom. A wise man would not be guilty of "mere talk," or of using language that conveyed no ideas.

Utter - literally, answer. It refers to the replies which Job had made to the arguments of his friends.

Vain knowledge - Margin, "Knowledge of wind." So the Hebrew; see Job 6:26; Job 7:7. The "wind" is used to denote what is unsubstantial, vain, changing. Here it is used as an emblem of remarks which were vain, empty, and irrelevant.

And fill his belly - Fill his mind with unsubstantial arguments or sentiments - as little fitted for utility as the east wind is for food. The image is, "he fills himself with mere wind, and then blows it out under pretence of delivering the maxims of wisdom."

With the east wind - The east wind was not only tempestuous and vehement, but sultry, and destructive to vegetation. It passed over vast deserts, and was characterized by great dryness and heat. It is used here to denote a manner of discourse that had in it nothing profitable.

Verse 3

Should he reason with unprofitable talk? - It does not become a man professing to be wise to make use of words that are nothing to the purpose. The sense is, that what Job said amounted to just nothing.

Verse 4

Yea, thou castest off fear - Margin, Makest void. Fear here means the fear or reverence of God; and the idea is, that Job had not maintained a proper veneration or respect for his Maker in his argument. He had defended principles and made assertions which implied great disrespect for the Deity. If those doctrines were true; if he was right in his views about God, then he was not a being who could be reverenced. No confidence could be placed in his government; no worship of such a being could be maintained. Eliphaz does not refer here so much to what was personal with Job, as to his principles. He does not mean so much to affirm that he himself had lost all reverence for God, as that his arguments led to that. Job

had maintained that God did not in this life reward and punish people strictly according to their deserts. If this was so, Eliphaz says, then it would be impossible to honor him, and religion and worship would be at an end.

The Hebrew word rendered "castest off" - more accurately rendered in the margin "makest void" (תפר *tāpēr*) - implies this. "And restrainest prayer before God." Margin, "speech." The Hebrew word שׂיחה *śîychâh* means properly "meditation" - and particularly meditation about divine things: Psalm 119:97. Then it means "devotion" - as to meditate on divine things is a part of devotion. It may be applied to any part of devotion, and seems to be not improperly rendered "prayer." It is that devotion which finds utterance in the language of prayer. The word rendered "restrainest" - תגרע *tîgâraʿ* - means to shave off - like the beard; then to cut off, to take away, detract, withhold; and the idea here is, that the views which Job maintained were such as "to sap the very foundations of religion." If God treated the righteous and the wicked alike, the one would have nothing to hope and the other nothing to fear.

There could be no ground of encouragement, to pray to him. How could the righteous pray to him, unless there was evidence that he was the friend of virtue? How could they hope for his special blessing, if he were disposed to treat the good and the bad alike? Why was it not just as well to live in sin as to be holy? And how could such a being be the object of confidence or prayer? Eliphaz mistook the meaning of Job, and pressed his positions further than he intended; and Job was not entirely able to vindicate his position, or to show how the consequences stated by Eliphaz could be avoided. "They both wanted the complete and full view of the future state of retribution revealed in the gospel, and that would have removed the whole difficulty." But I see not how the considerations here urged by this ancient sage of the tendency of Job's doctrine can be avoided, if it be applied to the views of those who hold that all people will be saved at death. If that be the truth, then who can fail to see that the tendency must be to make people cast off the fear of God and to undermine all devotion and prayer? Why should people pray, if all are to be treated alike at death? How can people worship and honor a Being who will treat the good and the bad alike? How can we have confidence in a being who makes no distinction in regard to character? And what inducement can there be to be pious, when all people shall be made as happy as they can be forever whether they are

pious or not? We are not to wonder, therefore, that the system tends every where to sap the foundations of virtue and religion; that it makes no man better; and that where it prevails, it banishes religion and prayer from the world.

Verse 5

For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity - Margin, "teacheth." That is, "your whole argument shows that you are a guilty man. A man who can defend such positions about God cannot be a pious man, or have any proper veneration for the Most High." A man may pursue an argument, and defend positions, that shall as certainly show that he is destitute of religion as though he lived an abandoned life; and he who holds opinions that are dishonorable to God, can no more be a pious man than if he dishonored God by violating his law.

Thou choosest the tongue of the crafty - Instead of pursuing an argument with candor and sincerity, you have resorted to miserable sophisms, such as running disputants use. You have not showed a disposition to ascertain and defend the truth, but have relied on the arts and evasions of the subtle disputant and the rhetorician. His whole discourse, according to Eliphaz, was a work of mere art, designed to blind his hearers; to deceive them with a favorable opinion of his piety; and to give some plausible, but delusive view of the government of God.

Verse 6

Thine own mouth condemneth thee - That is, the sentiments which you have uttered show that you cannot be a pious man.

Verse 7

Art thou the first man that was born? - Hast thou lived ever since the creation, and treasured up all the wisdom of past times, that thou dost now speak so arrogantly and confidently? This question was asked, because, in the estimation of Eliphaz and his friends, wisdom was supposed to be connected with long life, and with an opportunity for extended and varied observation; see Job 15:10. Job they regarded as comparatively a young man.

Wast thou made before the hills - The mountains and the hills are often represented as being the oldest of created objects, probably because they are the most ancient things that appear on earth. Springs dry up, and waters change their beds; cities are built and decay; kingdoms rise and fall,

and all the monuments of human skill and art perish; but the hills and mountains remain the same from age to age. Thus, in Psalm 90:2:

Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.

So in Proverbs 8:25, in the description of wisdom:

Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills was I brought forth.

So the hills are called "everlasting" Genesis 49:26, in allusion to their great antiquity and permanence. And so we, in common parlance, have a similar expression when we say of anything that "it is as old as the hills." The question which Eliphaz intends to ask here of Job is, whether he had lived from the creation, and had observed everything?

Verse 8

Hast thou heard the secret of God? - literally, "in the secret of God hast thou heard" - הסוד *hasôd* The word rendered "secret" (סוד *sôd*) means properly a "couch" or "cushion," on which one reclines - whether for sleep or at a table, or as a divan. Hence, it means a divan, or circle of persons sitting together for familiar conversation, Jeremiah 6:11; Jeremiah 15:17; or of judges, counsellors, or advisers for consultation, as the word "divan" is now used in Oriental countries; Psalm 89:7; Jeremiah 33:18. Then it means any consultation, counsel, familiar conversation, or intimacy; Psalm 55:14; Proverbs 15:22. Here God is represented in Oriental language as seated in a "divan," or council of state: there is deliberation about the concerns of his government; important questions are agitated and decided; and Eliphaz asks of Job whether he had been admitted to that council, and had heard those deliberations; and whether, if he had not, he was qualified to pronounce as he had done, on the plans and purposes of the Almighty.

And dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself? - Having obtained the secret of that council, art thou now keeping it wholly to thyself - as a prime minister might be supposed to keep the purposes resolved on in the divan? "Hast thou listened in the council of yahweh, and dost thou now reserve all wisdom to thyself?"

Verse 9

What knowest thou that we know not? - What pretensions or claims to wisdom have you which we have not? We have had, at least, equal advantages, and may be presumed to know as much as you.

Verse 10

With us are both the gray headed - That is, some of us who are here are much older than thy father; or we express the sentiments of such aged men. Job had admitted Job 12:12, that with the aged was wisdom, and in length of days understanding; and Eliphaz here urges that on that principle he and his friends had a claim to be heard. It would seem from this, that Job was very far from being regarded as an old man, and would probably be esteemed as in middle life. The Targum (Chaldee) refers this to Eliphaz himself and his two friends. "Truly Eliphaz, who is hoary-headed (דסיב) and Bildad, the long-lived (דקשיש) are with us, and Zophar, who is older than thy father." But it is not certain that he meant to confine the remark to them. It seems to me probable that this whole discussion occurred in the presence of others, and perhaps was a public contest. It is clear, I think, that Elihu was present, and heard it all (see Job 32:4), and it would accord well with Oriental habits to suppose that this was a trim of skill, which many were permitted to witness, and which was continued for a considerable time. Eliphaz may, therefore, have meant to say that among his friends who had assembled to hear this debate, there were not a few who coincided with him in sentiment, who were much more aged than Job, and who had had much longer experience in the world.

Verse 11

Are the consolations of God small with thee? - The "consolations of God" here refer probably to those considerations which had been suggested by Eliphaz and his friends, and which he takes to be the "consolations" which God had furnished for the afflicted. He asks whether they were regarded by Job as of little value? Whether he was not willing to take such consolations as God had provided, and to allow them to sustain him instead of permitting himself to inveigh against God? The Septuagint renders this, "thou hast been chastised less than thy sins deserve. Thou hast spoken with excessive haughtiness!" But the true idea seems to be, that Eliphaz regarded the considerations adduced by him and his friends, as the gracious consolations which God had provided for people in affliction, and as the results of all former reflections on the design of God in sending trial. He now represents Job as regarding them as of no value, and maintaining sentiments directly at variance with them. "Is there any secret thing with thee?"

Noyes renders this," and words so full of kindness to thee," that is, are they of no account to you? So Dr. Good and Wemyss, "or the addresses of kindness to thyself?" Luther translates it, "but thou hast, perhaps, yet a secret portion with thee." Rosenmuller, "and words most guilty spoken toward thee." The Septuagint renders it, "and thou hast spoken proudly beyond measure" - μεγάλως ὑπερβαλλόντας λελάηκας *megalōs huperballontas lelalēkas* The word which occurs in the Hebrew - לאט *lâ'aṭ* when it is a single word, and used as a verb, means to wrap around, to muffle, to cover, to conceal, and then to be "secret" - whence the Greek: λάφω *lathō* and λανθάνω *lanthanō* and the Latin: *lateo*. In this sense it is understood here by our translators. But it may be also a compound word - from אט *'aṭ* - a gentle sound, murmur, whisper; from where it is used adverbially - לאט *le'at* and לאט *lâ'aṭ* - gently, softly, slowly - as of the slow gait of a mourner, 1 Kings 21:27; and of water gently flowing, as the water of Siloam, Isaiah 8:6. And hence, also, it may refer to words flowing kindly or gently toward anyone; and this seems to be the meaning here. Eliphaz asks whether Job could despise or undervalue the words spoken so gently and kindly toward him? A singular illustration, to be sure, of kindness, but still showing how the friends of Job estimated their own remarks.

Verse 12

Why doth thine heart carry thee away? - Why do you allow your feelings to control you in spite of the decisions of the understanding? Eliphaz means to represent him as wholly under the influence of passion, instead of looking calmly and cooly at things as they were, and listening to the results of past experience and observation.

And what do thy eyes wink at - This expression has given considerable perplexity to commentators. Rosenmuller (and after him Noyes) remarks that the expression indicates pride, haughtiness, and arrogance. In Psalm 35:19, it is an indication of joyfulness or triumph over a prostrate foe:

Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me;
Neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.

In Proverbs 6:13, it is an indication of a haughty, froward, self-confident person:

A haughty person, a wicked man,
Walketh with a froward mouth;
He winketh with his eyes,

He speaketh with his feet,
He teacheth with his fingers.

The Hebrew word (רזם *râzam*) occurs nowhere else, and it is therefore difficult to determine its true signification. The most probable meaning is, to wink with the eyes as a gesture of pride and insolence; compare the notes at Isaiah 3:16. The Vulgate renders it, *attonitos habes oculos?* - "Why, as though meditating great things, hast thou eyes of astonishment?" Septuagint, "Why are thine eyes elevated?" Schultens renders it, "Why do thine eyes roll fury?" - *Quid fremitum volvunt oculi tui?* Luther, "Why art thou so proud? There can be no reasonable doubt that the word conveys the idea of pride and haughtiness manifested in some way by the eyes.

Verse 13

That thou turnest thy spirit - That your mind is turned against God instead of acquiescing in his dealings. The views of Job he traces to pride and to overweening self-confidence, and perhaps not improperly.

Verse 14

What is man that he should be clean? - The object of Eliphaz in this is to overturn the positions of Job that he was righteous, and had been punished beyond his deserts. He had before maintained Job 4:7, that no one ever perished being innocent, and that the righteous were not cut off. This was with him a favorite position; and indeed the whole drift of the argument maintained by him and his friends was, to prove that uncommon calamities were proof of uncommon guilt. Job had insisted on it that he was a righteous man, and had not deserved the calamities which had come upon him - a position which Eliphaz seems to have regarded as an assertion of innocence. To meet this he now maintains that no one is righteous; that all that are born of women are guilty; and in proof of this he goes back to the oracle which had made so deep an impression on his mind, and to the declaration then made to him that no one was pure before God; Job 4: He does not repeat it exactly as the oracle was then delivered to him, but adverts to the substance of it, and regards it as final and indisputable. The meaning is, "What are all the pretensions of man to purity, when even the angels are regarded as impure and the heavens unclean?"

He which is born of a woman - Another mode of denoting man. No particular argument to maintain the doctrine of man‘s depravity is couched

in the fact that he is born of a woman. The sense is, simply, how can anyone of the human family be pure?

Verse 15

Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints - In Job 4:18, it is, "in his servants," but no doubt the same thing is intended. The reference is to the angels, called there servants, and here saints קדשים *qôdeshîym* holy ones; see the notes at Job 4:18.

Yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight - In Job 4:18, "and his angels he charged with folly." The general idea is the same. God is so holy that all things else seem to be impure. The very heavens seem to be unclean when compared with him. We are not to understand this as meaning that the heavens are defiled; that there is sin and corruption there, and that they are loathsome in the sight of God. The object is to set forth the exceeding purity of God, and the greatness of his holiness. This sentiment seemed to be a kind of proverb, or a commonplace in theology among the sages of Arabia. Thus, it occurs in Job 25:5, in the speech of Bildad, when he had nothing to say but to repeat the most common-place moral and theological adages -

Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not;
Yea, the stars are not pure in his sight:
How much less man, that is a worm,
And the son of man, which is a worm!

Verse 16

How much more abominable and filthy is man - How much more than the angels, and than the heavens. In Job 4:19, the image is somewhat different. There it is, how can man be the object of the divine confidence since he lives in a house of clay, and is so frail? Here the image is more striking and forcible. The word rendered filthy (אלח *'âlach*) means, in Arabic, to be sour, as milk, and then to be corrupt, in a moral sense; Psalm 14:3; Psalm 53:4. Here it means that man is defiled and polluted, and this declaration is a remarkable illustration of the ancient belief of the depravity of man.

Which drinketh iniquity like water - This is still a true, though a melancholy account of man. He loves sin, and is as greedy of it as a thirsty man is of water. He practices it as if it were his very nature - as much so as it is to drink. Perhaps too there may be an allusion, as Dr. Good supposes, to the large draught of water which the camel makes, implying that man is

exceedingly greedy of iniquity; compare Job 20:12; Job 34:7; Proverbs 19:28.

Verse 17

I will show thee … - The remainder of this chapter is a violent declamation, designed to overwhelm Job with the proofs of personal guilt. Eliphaz professes to urge nothing which had not been handed down from his ancestors, and was the result of careful observation. What he says is made up of apothegms and maxims that were regarded as containing the results of ancient wisdom, all meaning that God would punish the wicked, or that the wicked would be treated according to their deserts. The implied inference all along was, that Job, who had had so many proofs of the divine displeasure, must be a wicked man.

Verse 18

Which wise men have told from their fathers - Which they have received from their ancestors and communicated to others. Knowledge among the ancients was communicated chiefly by tradition from father to son. They had few or no written records, and hence, they embodied the results of their observation in brief, sententious maxims, and transmitted them from one generation to another.

And have not hid it - They have freely communicated the result of their observations to others.

Verse 19

Unto whom alone the earth was given - The land; the land or country where they dwelt. He refers to the period before they became intermingled with other nations, and before they imbibed any sentiments or opinions from strangers. The meaning is, "I will give you the result of the observations of the golden age of the world when our fathers dwelt alone, and it could not be pretended that they had been corrupted by foreign philosophy; and when in morals and in sentiment they were pure." Probably all nations look back to such times of primeval simplicity, and freedom from corruption, when the sentiments on morals and religion were comparatively pure, and before the people became corrupt by the importation of foreign opinions. It is a pleasing delusion to look back to such times - to some innocent Arcadia, or to a golden age - but usually all such retrospections are the mere work of fancy. The world really grows wiser as it grows older; and in the progress of society it is a rare thing when the present is not more pure and happy than its early stages. The comforts,

privileges, and intelligence of the patriarchal age were not to be compared with those which we enjoy - any more than the condition of the wandering Arab is to be preferred to the quiet, peace, intelligence, and order of a calm, Christian home.

No stranger passed among them - No foreigner came to corrupt their sentiments by an admixture of strange doctrines. "Eliphaz here speaks like a genuine Arab, whose pride is in his tongue, his sword, and his pure blood." Umbreit. It is possible, as Rosenmuller suggests, that Eliphaz means to insinuate that Job had been corrupted by the sentiments of the Chaldeans and Sabeans, and had departed from the pure doctrines of earlier times.

Verse 20

Travaileth with pain - That is, his sorrows are like the pains of parturition. Eliphaz means to say that he is a constant sufferer.

All his days - It seems difficult to see how they could have ever formed this universal maxim. It is certainly not literally true now; nor was it ever. But in order to convey the doctrine that the wicked would be punished in as pointed and striking a manner as possible, it was made to assume this universal form - meaning that the life of the wicked would be miserable. There is some reason to think that this and what follows to the close of the chapter, is an ancient fragment which Eliphaz rehearses as containing the sentiments of a purer age of the world.

And the number of years is hidden to the oppressor - Wemyss renders this, "and a reckoning of years is laid up for the violent." So, also, Dr. Good. The Vulgate renders it, "and the number of the years of his tyranny is uncertain." Rosenmuller, Cocceius, Drusius, and some others suppose that there should be understood here and repeated the clause occurring in the first hemistich, and that it means, "and in the number of years which are laid up for the violent man, he is tortured with pain." Luther renders it, "and to a tyrant is the number of his years concealed." It is difficult to tell what the passage means. To me, the most probable interpretation is one which I have not met with in any of the books which I have consulted, and which may be thus expressed," the wicked man will be tormented all his days." To one who is an oppressor or tyrant, the number of his years is hidden. He has no security of life. He cannot calculate with any certainty on its continuance. The end is hid. A righteous man may make some calculation, and can see the probable end of his days. He may expect to see an honored old age. But tyrants are so often cut down suddenly; they

so frequently perish by assassination, and robbers are so often unexpectedly overcome, that there is no calculation which can be formed in respect to the termination of their course. Their end is hid. They die suddenly and disappear. This suits the connection; and the sentiment is, in the main, in accordance with facts as they occur.

Verse 21

A dreadful sound is in his ears - Margin, "A sound of fears." He hears sudden, frightful sounds, and is alarmed. Or when he thinks himself safe, he is suddenly surprised. The enemy steals upon him, and in his fancied security he dies. This sentiment might be illustrated at almost any length by the mode of savage warfare in America, and by the sudden attacks which the American savage makes, in the silence of the night, on his unsuspecting foes. The Chaldee renders this, "the fear of the terrors in Gehenna are in his ears; when the righteous dwell in peace and eternal life, destruction comes upon him."

In prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him - When he supposes he is safe, and his affairs seem to be prosperous, then sudden destruction comes; see 1 Thessalonians 5:3. The history of wicked people, who have encompassed themselves with wealth, and as they supposed with every thing necessary to happiness, and who have been suddenly cut off, would furnish all the instances which would be necessary to illustrate this sentiment of Eliphaz. See an exquisitely beautiful illustration of it in Psalm 37:35-36:

I have seen the wicked in great power,
And spreading himself like a green bay-tree.
Yet he passed away, and lo he was not;
Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

So, also, in Psalm 73:18-20:

Surely thou didst set them in slippery places;
Thou castedst them down into destruction.
How are they brought into desolation as in a moment!

They are utterly consumed with terrors.

As a dream when one awaketh,
O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.

Verse 22

He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness - Darkness is used in the Bible, as elsewhere, to denote calamity; and the meaning here is, that the wicked man has not confidence (לא יאמין *lo' ya'amîyn*), that he shall return safely from impending danger. He is in constant dread of assassination, or of some fearful evil. He is never secure; his mind is never calm; he lives in constant dread. This is still an accurate description of a man with a guilty conscience; for such a man lives in constant fear, and never feels any security that he is safe.

And he is waited for of the sword - That is, he is destined for the sword. Gesenius.

Verse 23

He wandereth abroad for bread - The Septuagint renders this, "he is destined to be food for vultures" - κατατέτακται δὲ εἰς σῖτα γυψίν *katatetaktai de eis sitos gupsin* The meaning of the Hebrew is, simply, that he will be reduced to poverty, and will not know where to obtain a supply for his returning needs.

He knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand - He is assured that the period of calamity is not far remote. It must come. He has no security that it will not come immediately. The whole design of this is to show that there is no calmness and security for a wicked man; that in the midst of apparent prosperity his soul is in constant dread.

Verse 24

As a king ready to the battle - Fully prepared for a battle; whom it would be vain to attempt to resist. So mighty would be the combined forces of trouble and anguish against him, that it would be vain to attempt to oppose them.

Verse 25

For he stretcheth out his hand against God - The hand is stretched out for battle. It wields the spear or the sword against an enemy. The idea here is, that the wicked man makes God an adversary. He does not contend with his fellow-man, with fate, with the elements, with evil angels, but with God. His opponent is an Almighty Being, and he cannot prevail against him; compare the notes at Isaiah 27:4.

And strengtheneth himself - As an army does that throws up a rampart, or constructs a fortification. The whole image here is taken from the practice of war; and the sense is, that a wicked man is really making war on the Almighty, and that in that war he must be vanquished; compare Job 9:4.

Verse 26

He runneth upon him - That is, upon God. The image here is taken from the mode in which people rushed into battle. It was with a violent concussion, and usually with a shout, that they might intimidate their foes, and overcome them at first, with the violence of the shock. The mode of warfare is now changed, and it is the vaunted excellency of modern warfare that armies now go deliberately and calmly to put each other to death.

Even "on his neck - literally, "with the neck" - בצואר *betsavā'r* Vulgate, "With erect neck - *erecto collo*." Septuagint, contemptuously, or with pride - ὕβρει *hubrei* The idea seems to be, not that he ran "upon the neck" of his adversary - as would seem to be implied in our translation - but that he ran in a firm, haughty, confident manner; with a head erect and firm, as the indication of self confidence, and a determined purpose to overcome his foe. See Schultens in loc.

Upon the thick bosses - The word boss with us means a knob - a protuberant ornament of silver, brass, or ivory on a harness or a bridle; then a protuberant part, a prominence, or a round or swelling body of any kind. The Hebrew word used here (גב *gab*) means properly anything gibbous, convex, arched; and hence, "the back" - as of animals. Applied to a shield, it means the convex part or the back of it - the part which was presented to an enemy, and which was made swelling and strong, called by the Greeks ὀμφαλὸς *omfalos* or μεσομφάλιον *mesomfalion* Gesenius supposes that the metaphor here is taken from soldiers, who joined their shields together, and thus rushed upon an enemy. This was one mode of ancient warfare, when an army or a phalanx united their shields in front, so that nothing could penetrate them, or so united them over their heads when approaching a fortress, that they could safely march under them as a covering.

This, among the Romans and Greeks, was commonly practiced when approaching a besieged town. One form of the testudo - the χελώη στρατιωτῶν *chelōnē stratiōtōn* of the Greeks, was formed by the soldiers, pressed close together and holding their shields over their heads in such a manner as to form a compact covering. John H. Eschenburg, Manual of Classical Literature. by N. W. Fiske, pt. III, section 147. The Vulgate renders this, "and he is armed with a fat neck" - *pingui cervice armatus est*. Schultens expresses the idea that is adopted by Gesenius, and refers to Arabic customs to show that shields were thus united in defending an army from a foe, or in making an attack on them. He says, also, that it is a

common expression - a proverb - among the Arabs, “he turns the back of his shield” to denote that one is an adversary; and quotes a passage from Hamasa, “When a friend meets me with base suspicions, I turn to him the back of my shield - a proverb, whose origin is derived from the fact, that a warrior turns the back of his shield to his foes.”

Paxton supposes that the expression here is taken from single combat, which early prevailed. But the idea here is not that which our translation would seem to convey. It is not that he rushes upon or against the hard or thick shield “of the Almighty” - and that, therefore, he must meet resistance and be overcome: it is that he rushes upon God with his own shield. He puts himself in the attitude of a warrior. He turns the boss of his own shield against God, and becomes his antagonist. He is his enemy. The omission of the word “with” in the passage - or the preposition which is in the Hebrew (ב *b*) has led to this erroneous translation. The passage is often quoted in a popular manner to denote that the sinner rushes upon God, “and must meet resistance” from his shield, or be overcome. It should be quoted only to denote that the sinner places himself in an attitude of opposition to God, and is his enemy.

Of his bucklers - Of his shields (מגניו *megînāy*), that is, of the shields which the sinner has; not the shields of God. The shield was a well-known instrument of war, usually made with a rim of wood or metal, and covered with skins, and carried on the left arm; see the notes at Isaiah 21:5. The outer surface was made rounding from the center to the edge, and was smoothly polished, so that darts or arrows would glide off and not penetrate.

Verse 27

Because he covereth his face with his fatness - That is, he not only stretches out his hand against God Job 15:25 and rushes upon him as an armed foe Job 15:26, but he gives himself up to a life of luxury, gluttony, and licentiousness; and therefore, these calamities must come upon him. This is designed to be a description of a luxurious and licentious person - a man who is an enemy of God, and who, therefore, must incur his displeasure.

And maketh collops of fat - Like an ox that is fattened. The word collop properly means “a small slice of meat, a piece of flesh” (Webster), but here it means a thick piece, or a mass. The word is used in this sense in

New England. The sense is, that he becomes excessively fat and gross - as they usually do who live in sensual indulgence and who forget God.

Verse 28

And he dwelleth - Or rather, "therefore he shall dwell." As a consequence of his opposing God, and devoting himself to a life of sensuality and ease, he shall dwell in a desolate place. Instead of living in affluence and in a splendid city, he shall be compelled to take up his abode in places that have been deserted and abandoned. Such places - like Petra or Babylon now - became the temporary lodgings of caravans and travelers, or the abodes of outcasts and robbers. The meaning here is, that the proud and wicked man shall be ejected from his palace, and compelled to seek a refuge far away from the usual haunts of men.

Which are ready to become heaps - Which are just ready to tumble into ruin.

Verse 29

He shall not be rich - That is, he shall not continue rich; or he shall not again become rich. He shall be permanently poor.

Neither shall his substance continue - His property.

Neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof - Noyes renders this, "And his possessions shall not be extended upon the earth." Wemyss, "Nor shall he be master of his own desires." Good, "Nor their success spread abroad in the land." Luther, Und sein Gluck wird sich nicht ausbreiten im Lande- " And his fortune shall not spread itself abroad in the land." Vulgate, "Neither shall he send his root in the earth " - *nec mittet in terra radicem suam*. The Septuagint, οὐ μὴ βάλῃ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν σκιὰν *ou mē balē epi tēn gōn skian* - "and shall not cast a shadow upon the earth." The word rendered "perfection" (מנלם *mînlām*) is commonly supposed to be from מנלה *mînleh* from נלה *nâlâh* to finish, to procure, and hence, the noun may be applied to that which is procured - and thus may denote possessions. According to this the correct rendering is, "and he does not extend their possessions abroad in the land;" that is, his possessions do not extend abroad. Gesenius supposes, however, that the word is a corruption for מבלם - "their flocks." I see no objection, however, to its being regarded as meaning possessions - and then the sense is, that he would fail in that which is so much the object of ambition with every avaricious man - that his possessions should extend through the land; compare the notes at Isaiah 5:8.

Verse 30

He shall not depart out of darkness - He shall not escape from calamity; see Job 15:22. He shall not be able to rise again, but shall be continually poor.

The flame shall dry up his branches - As the fire consumes the green branches of a tree, so shall punishment do to him. This comparison is very forcible, and the idea is, that the man who has been prospered as a tree shall be consumed - as the fire consumes a tree when it passes through the branches. The comparison of a prosperous man with a tree is very common, and very beautiful. Thus, the Psalmist says,

I have seen the wicked in great power,
And spreading himself like a green bay tree. Psalm 37:35.

Compare Psalm 92:12-13. The aged Skenandoah - a chief of the Oneida tribe of Indians, said," I am an aged hemlock. The winds of an hundred winters have whistled through my branches. I am dead at the top. My branches are falling," etc.

And by the breath of his mouth shall he go away - That is, by the breath of the mouth of God. God is not indeed specified, but it is not unusual to speak of him in this manner. The image here seems to be that of the destruction of a man by a burning wind or by lightning. As a tree is dried up, or is rent by lightning, or is torn up from the roots by a tempest sent by the Deity, so the wicked will be destroyed.

Verse 31

Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity - The sense is, "Let him not trust in vanity. He will be deceived. Vanity will be his recompense." The idea is, that a man should not confide in that which will furnish no support. He should not rely on his wealth and rank; his houses and lands; his servants, his armies, or his power, if he is wicked, for all this is vain. He needs some better reliance, and that can be found only in a righteous life. The word vanity here means that which is unsubstantial; which cannot uphold or sustain; which will certainly give way.

For vanity will be his recompense - He will find only vanity. He will be stripped of all his honors and possessions.

Verse 32

It shall be accomplished before his time - Margin, "cut off." The image here is that of a tree, which had been suggested in Job 15:30. Here it is followed up by various illustrations drawn from the flower, the fruit, etc., all of which are designed to denote the same thing - that a wicked man will

not be permanently prosperous; he will not live and flourish as he would if he were righteous. He will be like a tree that is cut down before its proper time, or that casts its flowers and fruits and brings nothing to perfection. The phrase here literally is, "It shall not be filled up in its time;" that is, a wicked man will be cut off before he has filled up the measure of his days, like a tree that decays and falls before its proper time. A similar idea occurs in Psalm 55:23. "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." As a general fact this is all true, and the observation of the ancient Idumeans was correct. The temperate live longer than the intemperate; the chaste longer than the licentious; he that controls and governs his passions longer than he who gives the reins to them; and he who leads a life of honesty and virtue longer than he who lives for crime. Pure religion makes a man temperate, sober, chaste, calm, dispassionate, and equable in his temper; saves from broils, contentions, and strifes; subdues the angry passions, and thus tends to lengthen out life.

His branch shall not be green - It shall be dried up and withered away - retaining the image of a tree.

Verse 33

He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine - The idea here is, that the wicked man shall be like a vine that casts off its grapes while they are yet sour and green, and brings none to perfection; compare the notes at Isaiah 18:5. Scott renders this,

"As when the vine her half-grown berries showers,
Or poisoned olive her unfolding flowers."

It would seem from this passage that the vine might be so blasted by a hot wind or other cause, as to cast its unripe grapes to the earth. The employment of a figure of this kind to illustrate an idea supposes that such a case was familiar to those who were addressed. It is well known that in the East the grape and the olive might be blasted while in blossom, or when the fruit was setting, as all fruit may be. The injury is usually done in the flower, or when the fruit is just forming. Yet our observations of the effects of the burning winds that pass over the deserts on fruit that is half formed, in blasting it and causing it to fall, are too limited to allow us to come to any definite conclusion in regard to such effects in general. Anyone, however, can see the beauty of this image. The plans and purposes of wicked people are immature. Nothing is carried to perfection. They are cut off, their plans are blasted, and all the results of their living are like the

sour, hard, crabbed, and useless fruit that falls from the tree before it is ripe. The results of the life of the righteous, on the other hand, are like a tree loaded with ripe and mellow fruit - their plans are brought to maturity, and resemble the rich and heavy clusters of grapes, or the abundant fruits of the olive when ripe.

And shall cast off his flower as the olive - The olive is a well-known tree that abounds in the East. The fruit is chiefly valuable for the oil which it produces; compare the notes at Romans 11:17. The olive is liable to be blasted while the fruit is setting, or while the tree is in blossom. In Greece, a northeast wind often proves destructive to the olive, and the same may be true of other places. Dr. Chandler speaking of Greece, says, "The olive groves are now, as anciently, a principal source of the riches of Athens. The crops had failed five years successively when we arrived; the cause assigned was a northerly wind, called Greco-tramontane, which destroyed the flower. The fruit is set in about a fortnight, when the apprehension from this unpropitious quarter ceases. The bloom in the following year was unhurt, and we had the pleasure of leaving the Athenians happy in the prospect of a plentiful harvest." A wicked man is here elegantly compared with such a tree that casts its flowers and produces no fruit.

Verse 34

For the congregation of hypocrites - The word rendered "congregation" here (עדה *ʿêdâh*) means properly an appointed meeting; a meeting convened by appointment or at stated times (from ידה *yâdâh*), and hence, an assembly of any kind. It is commonly applied to an assembly for public worship; but it may refer to a more private company - a family, or circle of friends, dependents, etc. It refers here, I suppose, to such a community that a man can get around him in his own dwelling - his family, servants, dependents, etc. The word rendered "hypocrites" (חנף *chânêph*) is in the singular number, and should be so rendered here. It does not mean that a worshipping assembly composed of hypocrites would be desolate - which may be true - but that the community which a man who is a hypocrite can gather around him shall be swept away. His children, his dependents, and his retinue of servants, shall be taken away from him, and he shall be left to solitude. Probably there was an allusion here to Job, who had been stripped in this manner; or at any rate the remark was one, if it were a quotation from the ancient sayings of the Arabians, which Job could not but regard as applied to himself.

And fire shall consume - This has all the appearance of being a proverb. The meaning is, that they who received a bribe would be certainly punished.

The tabernacles of bribery - The tents or dwellings of those who receive bribes, and who therefore are easily corrupted, and have no solid principles. There is probably an allusion here to Job; and no doubt Eliphaz meant to apply this severe remark to him. Job was a Sheik, an Emir, a head of a tribe, and, therefore, a magistrate; see Job 29:7, seq. Yet a part of his possessions and servants had been cut off by fire from heaven Job 1:16; and Eliphaz means probably to imply that it had been because he had been guilty of receiving a bribe. This ancient proverb declared that the dwellings of the man who could be bribed would be consumed by fire; and now he presumes that the fact that Job had been visited by the fire of heaven was full proof that he had been guilty in this manner. It was about on principles such as these that the reasoning of the friends of Job was conducted.

Verse 35

They conceive mischief - The meaning of this verse is, that they form and execute plans of evil. It is the characteristic of such men that they form such plans and live to execute them, and they must abide the consequences. All this was evidently meant for Job; and few things could be more trying to a man‘s patience than to sit and hear those ancient apothegms, designed to describe the wicked, applied so unfeelingly to himself.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verse 2

Many such things - That is, either things fitted to provoke and irritate, or sentiments that are common-place. There was nothing new in what they said, and nothing to the purpose.

Miserable comforters - Compare Job 13:4. They had come professedly to condole with him. Now all that they said was adapted only to irritate, and to deepen his distress. He was disappointed; and he was deeply wounded and grieved.

Verse 3

Shall vain words? - Margin, As in Hebrew words of wind; that is, words which were devoid of thought-light, trifling. This is a retort on Eliphaz. He had charged Job Job 15:2-3 with uttering only such words. Such forms of expression are common in the East. "His promise, it is only wind." "Breath, breath: all breath." Roberts.

Or what emboldeneth thee? - "What provokes or irritates thee, that thou dost answer in this manner? What have I said, that has given occasion to such a speech - a speech so severe and unkind?" The Syriac reads this, "do not afflict me any more with speeches; for if you speak any more, I will not answer you."

Verse 4

I also could speak as ye do - In the same reproachful manner, and stringing together old proverbs and maxims as you have.

If your soul were in my soul's stead - If you were in my place. The idea is, that there is no difficulty in finding arguments to overwhelm the afflicted - a truth which most persons who have been unfortunate, have had opportunity to experience.

I could heap up words against you - Or, rather, "I could string together words against you." The idea is not that of heaping up, or accumulating; it is that of tying together, or uniting; and refers here to stringing together old maxims, saws, and proverbs, in the form of a set argument or discourse. The idea of Job is, that their discourses were nothing but ancient proverbs, thrown together, or strung along without regard to order, pertinency, or force. The Hebrew word used here (חבר *châbar*) means to bind, to bind together, to associate, to be confederate. It may be applied to friends - united in friendship; to nations - united in an alliance, etc. Gesenius

supposes that it means here that he "would make a league with words against them;" but the above seems to be the more probable interpretation. The Septuagint renders it, "then I could insult you - ἐναλοῦμαι *enaloumai* - with words." Jerome (Vulgate) "I would console you with words, and move my head over you." The Chaldee is as the Hebrew - חבר *châbar* Dr. Good renders it, "against you will I string together old sayings."

And shake mine head at you - An action common to all countries and ages, expressive of contempt, or of threatening; compare Jeremiah 18:16; Lamentations 2:15; Zephaniah 2:15; Matthew 27:39. So Lucretius ii. 1163:

Jamque caput quassans grandis suspirat ararat
Crebrius incassum magnum cecidisse laborem.

In like manner Virgil, Aeneid xii. 292:

Tum quassanos caput, haec effudit pectore dicta.

So, also, Homer, Odyssey ε *e* Κινήσας δὲ κάρη πρότι ὅν μυθήσατο Θυμόν.

Kinēsas de karē proti hon muthēsato thumon meaning of Job here is, that be could as easily have expressed contempt, reproach, and scorn, as they did. It required no uncommon talent to do it, and he felt that he would have been fully sufficient for the task.

Verse 5

(But I would strengthen you with my mouth With that which proceeds from the mouth - words.

And the moving of my lips - My speaking - implying that it would have been done in a mild, gentle, kind manner - so that the lips would appear just to move. Others, however, have given a different interpretation. Thus, Dr. Good renders it:

"With my own mouth will I overpower you,
Till the quivering of my lips shall fall."

But the common interpretation is to be preferred. The word rendered "moving" ניד *nîyd* is from נוד *nûd* - "to move," "agitate," and hence, denotes "motion." It denotes here the motion of the lips when we speak. Gesenius renders it, "consolation," "comfort" - because this is expressed by a motion of the head.

Should assuage your grief - The word used here (יחשׂך *yachâśak*) means properly "to hold back," "to restrain;" Job 7:11. Here it is correctly rendered, meaning that he would hold back, or check their sorrows. In other words, he would sustain them.

Verse 6

Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged - "But for me, it makes now no difference whether I speak or am silent. My sufferings continue. If I attempt to vindicate myself before people, I am reproached; and equally so if I am silent. If I maintain my cause before God, it avails me nothing, for my sufferings continue. If I am silent, and submit without a complaint, they are the same. Neither silence, nor argument, nor entreaty, avail me before God or man. I am doomed to suffering."

What am I eased? - Margin. "Goeth from me." Literally, "what goeth from me?" The sense is, that it all availed nothing.

Verse 7

But now he hath made me weary - That is, God has exhausted my strength. This verse introduces a new description of his sufferings; and he begins with a statement of the woes that God had brought on him. The first was, that he had taken away all his strength.

All my company - The word rendered "company" (עדה *ʿêdâh*) means properly an assembly that comes together by appointment, or at stated times; but here it is evidently used in the sense of the little community of which Job was the head and father. The sense is, that all his family had been destroyed.

Verse 8

And thou hast filled me with wrinkles - Noyes renders this, "and thou hast seized hold of me, which is a witness against me." Wemyss, "since thou hast bound me with chains, witnesses come forward." Good, "and hast cut off myself from becoming a witness." Luther, "he has made me "kuntzlich" (skillfully, artificially, cunningly,) and bears witness against me." Jerome, "my wrinkles bear witness against me." Septuagint, "my lie has become a witness, and is risen up against me." From this variety of explanations, it will be seen that this passage is not of easy and obvious construction. The Hebrew word which is here used and rendered, "thou hast filled me with wrinkles" (תקמטני *tîqâmaṭēnîy*), from קמט *qâmaṭ* - occurs only in one other place in the Bible; Job 22:16. It is there in the "Pual" form, and rendered "were cut down." According to Gesenius, it means, to lay fast hold of, to seize with the hands, and answers to the Arabic "to bind."

The word in Chaldee (קמט *qâmaṭ*) means to wrinkle, or collect in wrinkles; and is applied to anything that is "contracted," or rough. It is

applied in the form קימט *qâymaṭ* to the pupil of the eye as being "contracted," as in the declaration in Derek ‹Erets, c. 5, quoted by Castell. "The world is like the eye; where the ocean that surrounds the world is white; the world itself is black; the pupil is Jerusalem, and the image in the pupil is the sanctuary." Probably the true notion of the word is to be found in the Arabic. According to Castell, this means, to tie together the four feet of a sheep or lamb, in order that it might be slain; to bind an infant in swaddling clothes before it is laid in a cradle; to collect camels into a group or herd; and hence, the noun is used to denote a cord or rope twisted of wool, or of leaves of the palm, or the bandages by which an infant is bound. This idea is not in use in the Hebrew; but I have no doubt that this was the original sense of the word, and that this is one of the numerous places in Job where light may be cast upon the meaning of a word from its use in Arabic. The Hebrew word may be applied to the "collecting" or "contraction" of the face in wrinkles by age, but this is not the sense here. We should express the idea by "being "drawn up" with pain or affliction; by being straitened, or compressed." The meaning - is that of "drawing together" - as the feet of a sheep when tied, or twisting - as a rope; and the idea here is, that Job was drawn up, compressed, bound by his afflictions - and that this was a witness against him. The word "compressed" comes as near to the sense as any one that we have.

Which is a witness against me - That is, "this is an argument against my innocence. The fact that God has thus compressed, and fettered, and fastened me; that he has bound me as with a cord - as if I were tied for the slaughter, is an argument on which my friends insist, and to which they appeal, as a proof of my guilt. I cannot answer it. They refer to it constantly. It is the burden of their demonstration, and how can I reply to it?" The position of mind here is, that he could appeal to God for his uprightness, but these afflictions stood in the way of his argument for his innocence with his friends. They were the "usual" proofs of God‘s displeasure, and he could not well meet the argument which was drawn from them in his case, for in all his protestations of innocence there stood these afflictions - the usual proofs of God‘s displeasure against people - as evidence against him, to which they truimphantly appealed.

And my leanness rising up in me - Dr. Good renders this, "my calumniator." Wemyss, "false witnesses." So Jerome, "falsiloquus." The Septuagint renders it," my lie - τὸ ψευδός μου *to pseudos mou* - rises up

against me." The Hebrew word (כחשׁ *kachash*) means properly "a lie, deceit, hypocrisy." But it cannot be supposed that Job would formally admit that he was a liar and a hypocrite. This would have been to concede the whole point in dispute. The word, therefore, it would seem, "must" have some other sense. The verb כחשׁ *kâchash* is used to denote not only to "lie," but also to "waste away, to fail." Psalm 109:24, "my flesh "faileth" of fatness." The idea seems to have been, that a person whose flesh had wasted away by sickness, as it were, "belied himself;" or it was a "false testimony" about himself; it did not give "a fair representation" of him. That could be obtained only when he was in sound health. Thus, in Habakkuk 3:17, "the labour of the olive "shall fail."" Hebrew shall "lie" or "deceive;" that is, it shall belie itself, or shall not do justice to itself; it shall afford no fair representation of what the olive is fitted to produce. So the word is used Hosea 9:2. It is used here in this sense, as denoting "the false appearance of Job" - his present aspect - which was no proper representation of himself; that is, his emaciated and ulcerated form. This, he says, was a "witness" against him. It was one of the proofs to which they appealed, and he did not know how to answer it. It was usually an evidence of divine displeasure, and he now solemnly and tenderly addresses God, and says, that he had furnished this testimony against him - and he was overwhelmed.

Verse 9

He teareth me in his wrath - The language here is all taken from the ferocity of wild beasts; and the idea is, that his enemy had come upon him as a lion seizes upon its prey. Rosenmuller, Reiske, and some others suppose that this refers to God. Cocceius refers it to Satan. Schultens, Dr. Good, and some others, to Eliphaz, as the leading man among his adversaries. I have no doubt that this is the true reference. The connection seems to demand this; and we ought not to suppose that Job would charge this upon God, unless there is the clearest evidence. The whole passage is a description of the manner in which Job supposed his friends had come upon him. He says they had attacked him like wild beasts. Yet it must be admitted that he sometimes attributes these feelings to God, and says that he came upon him like a roaring lion see Job 10:16-17.

Who hateth me - Or rather, "and persecutes me, or is become my adversary," for so the word used here (שׂטם *śâṭam*) means; see the notes at Job 30:21.

He gnasheth upon me with his teeth - As an enraged wild animal does when about to seize upon its prey. A similar figure occurs in Otway, in his "Orphan:"

- For my Castalio's false;
False as the wind, the water, or the weather:
Cruel as tigers o'er their trembling prey:

I feel him in my breast, he tears my heart,
And at each sigh he drinks the gushing blood.

And so Homer, when he describes the wrath of Achilles as he armed himself to avenge the death of Patroclus, mentions among other signs of wrath his gnashing his teeth:

Τοῦ καὶ ὀδόντων μὲν καναχὴ πέλε.
Tou kai odontōn men kanachē pele Iliad xix. 364.

So Virgil describes his hero as
furens animis, dentibus infrendens.
Aeneid viii. 228.

Mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me - Looks fiercely; watches me narrowly - as an animal does his victim when about to seize upon it. The image is probably drawn from the intense gaze of the lion when about to pounce upon his prey. "He darts piercing looks at me; or looks at me with a fierce and penetrating eye."

Verse 10

They have gaped upon me - Changing the form from the singular to the plural, and including "all" his pretended friends. Such a change in the number is not uncommon. His mind seems to have passed from the particular instance which he was contemplating, to "all" his friends, and he suddenly felt that "all" had treated him alike. The meaning is, that, like wild beasts, they open their mouth to devour me.

They have gathered themselves together - They have entered into a conspiracy, and have "agreed" to oppose me. They are united in this thing, and all feel and act alike.

Verse 11

God hath delivered me - Margin "shut me up." The meaning is, that God had committed him to their hands as a prisoner or captive. They had power over him to do as they pleased.

To the ungodly - Into the hands of wicked people - meaning undoubtedly his professed friends.

And turned me over - The word used here (from ירט *yârat*) means to throw head long, to precipitate, to cast down. Here it means, "he has thrown me headlong into the hands of the wicked."

Verse 12

I was at ease - I was in a state of happiness and security. The word used here (שׁלו *shâlêv*) means sometimes to be "at ease" in an improper sense; that is, to be in a state of "carnal security," or living unconcerned in sin (Ezekiel 23:42; compare Proverbs 1:32); but here it is used in the sense of comfort. He had everything desirable around him.

But he hath broken me asunder - He has crushed me.

He hath also taken, me by my neck - Perhaps as an animal does his prey. We have all seen dogs seize upon their prey in this manner.

And set me up for his mark - Changing the figure, and saying that God had directed his arrows against him; so Jeremiah, Lamentations 3:12:

He hath bent his bow,
And set me as a mark for the arrow.

Verse 13

His archers - He does not come alone to shoot at me; he has employed a company of bowmen, who also direct "their" arrows against me. The word used here רב *rab* means properly "much, large," great; and is applied to that which is powerful or mighty. It is nowhere else used in the sense of "archers," and might be rendered "his many;" that is, his bands, hosts, or armies. But as all the ancient versions render it "arrows," or "archers," probably that sense is to be retained. Allusion is here made to those who claimed to be the friends of Job, but who now showed to his apprehension that they were merely sharp-shooters under the control of God, to deepen his woes.

He cleaveth my reins asunder - With his arrows. They penetrate quite through me.

He poureth out my gall - The word "gall" means the "bile" - the yellowish green bitter fluid secreted in the liver. A similar figure occcurs in Lamentations 2:11, "My liver is poured upon the earth." Among the pagan poets, also, the "liver" is represented as pierced, and as pouring out gore. Thus, Aesch. Agam. 442: θιγγάνει πρὸς ἧπαρ *thinganei pros hēpar* So also 801: Δῆγμα λύπης ἐφ᾽ ἧπαρ προσικνεῖται *Dēgma lupēs eph' hēpar*

prosikneitai So in the Iliad, xiii. 412, xx. 469,470. The meaning here is, "I am transfixed with a deadly wound, and must die. God has come upon me as an armed man, and has pierced my vitals."

Verse 14

He breaketh me - He crushes me.

With breach upon breach - He renews and repeats the attack, and thus completely overwhelms me. One blow follows another in such quick succession, that he does not give me time to recover.

He runneth upon me like a giant - With great and irresistible force - as some strong and mighty warrior whom his adversary cannot resist. The Hebrew is גבור *gîbbôr* - "a mighty one." Septuagint, "The mighty - δυνάμενοι *dunamenoi* - run upon me." Vulgate, "*gigas* " - a giant.

Verse 15

I have sewed sackcloth - I have put on the badges of humiliation and grief; see the notes at Isaiah 3:24. This was the usual emblem of mourning. In order more deeply to express it, or to make it a "permanent" memorial of sorrow, it would seem that it was "sewed" around the body - as we "sew" crape on the hat.

And defiled my horn in the dust - The word rendered "defiled" (from עלל *ʿâlal*) has, according to Gesenius, the notion of "repetition," derived from the use of the Arabic word. The Arabic means, to drink again, that is, after a former draught; and then, to drink deep. Hence, the word is applied to any action which is repeated - as to the second blow by which one already struck down is killed; to an after-harvest, or to gleaning in the fields. Here Gesenius supposes it means to "maltreat," to "abuse;" and the idea according to him is, that he had covered his whole head in the dust. The word "horn" is used in the Scriptures to denote strength and power. The figure is taken from horned animals, whose strength resides in their horns; and hence, as the horn is the means of defense, the word comes to denote that on which one relies; his strength, honor, dignity. A horn, made of "silver," was also worn as an ornament, or as an emblem, on the forehead of females or warriors.

It was probably used at first by warriors as a symbol of "power, authority," or "strength;" and the idea was undoubtedly derived from the fact that the strength of animals was seen to lie in the horn. Then it came to be a mere ornament, and as such is used still in the vicinity of Mount Lebanon. Oriental customs do not undergo those changes which are so

common in the Western world, and it is possible that this custom prevailed in the time of Job. The "horn" was usually worn by females; it is also a part of the ornament on the head of a male, and as such would be regarded doubtless as an emblem of honor. The custom is prevalent at the present day among the Druses of Lebanon, the Egyptian cavalry, and in some parts of Russia bordering on Persia. Dr. Macmichael, in his "Journey," says: "One of the most extraordinary parts of the attire of their females (Drusus of Lebanon), is a silver horn, sometimes studded with jewels, worn on the head in various positions, "distinguishing their different conditions."

A married woman has it affixed to the right side of the head, a widow on the left, and a virgin is pointed out by its being placed on the very crown. Over this silver projection the long veil is thrown, with which they so completely conceal their faces to rarely have more than an eye visible." The horn worn by females is a conical tube, about twelve inches long. Col. Light mentions the horn of the wife of an emir, made of gold, and studded with precious stones. Horns are worn by Abyssinian chiefs in military reviews, or on parade after a victory. They are much shorter than those of the females, and are about the size and shape of a candle extinguisher, fastened by a strong fillet to the head, which is often made of metal; they are not easily broken off. This special kind of horn is undoubtedly the kind made by the false prophet Zedekiah for Ahab, to whom he said, when Ahab was about to attack the enemy, "With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou hast conquered them;" 1 Kings 22:11; 2 Chronicles 18:10; compare Deuteronomy 33:17. The idea here is, that whatever once constituted the reliance or the glory of Job, was now completely prostrate. It was as if it were buried in the earth.

Verse 16

My face is foul with weeping - Wemyss, "swelled." Noyes, "red." Good, "tarnished." Luther, "ist geschwollen" - is swelled. So Jerome. The Septuagint, strangely enough, ἡ γαστήρ μον συνκέκαυται, κ. τ. λ. *hē gastēr mou sunkekautai* etc. "my belly is burned with weeping." The Hebrew word (חמר *châmar*) means to boil up, to ferment, to foam. Hence, it means to be red, and the word is often used in this sense in Arabic - from the idea of becoming heated or inflamed. Here it probably means either to be

“swelled,” as any thing does that “ferments,” or to be “red” as if “heated” - the usual effect of weeping. The idea of being “defiled” is not in the word.

And on my eyelid; is the shadow of death - On the meaning of the word rendered “shadow of death,” see the notes at Job 3:5. The meaning is, that darkness covered his eyes, and he felt that he was about to die. One of the usual indications of the approach of death is, that the sight fails, and everything seems to be dark. Hence, Homer so often describes death by the phrase, “and darkness covered his eyes;” or the form “a cloud of death covered his eyes” - θανάτου νέφος ὄσσε ἐκάλυψη *thanatou nephos osse ekalupsē* The idea here is, that he experienced the indications of approaching death.

Verse 17

Not for any injustice … - Still claiming that he does not deserve his sorrows, and that these calamities had not come upon him on account of any enormous sins, as his friends believed.

My prayer is pure - My devotion; my worship of God is not hypocritical - as my friends maintain.

Verse 18

O earth - Passionate appeals to the earth are not uncommon in the Scriptures; see the notes at Isaiah 1:2. Such appeals indicate deep emotion, and are among the most animated forms of personification.

Cover not thou my blood - Blood here seems to denote the wrong done to him. He compares his situation with that of one who had been murdered, and calls on the earth not to conceal the crime, and prays that his injuries may not be hidden, or pass unavenged. Aben Ezra, Dr. Good, and some others, however, suppose that he refers to blood shed “by” him, and that the idea is, that he would have the earth reveal any blood if he had ever shed any; or in other words, that it is a strong protestation of his innocence. But the former interpretation seems to accord best with the connection. It is the exclamation of deep feeling. He speaks as a man about to die, but he says that he would die as an innocent and a much injured man, and he passionately prays that his death may not pass unavenged. God had crushed him, and his friends had wronged him, and he now earnestly implores that his character may yet be vindicated. “According to the saying of the Arabs, the blood of one who was unjustly slain remained upon the earth without sinking into it; until the avenger of blood came up. It was regarded as a proof of innocence.” Eichhorn, “in loc” That there is much of irreverence in

all this must, I think, be conceded. It is not language for us to imitate. But it is not more irreverent and unbecoming than what often occurs, and it is designed to show what the human heart "will" express when it is allowed to give utterance to its real feelings.

And let my cry have no place - Let it not be hid or concealed. Let there be nothing to hinder my cry from ascending to heaven. The meaning is, that Job wished his solemn protestations of his innocence to go abroad. He desired that all might hear him. He called on the nations and heaven to hear. He appealed to the universe. He desired that the earth would not conceal the proof of his wrongs, and that his cry might not be confined or limited by any bounds, but that it might go abroad so that all worlds might hear.

Verse 19

My witness is in heaven - That is, I can appeal to God for my sincerity. He is my witness; and he will bear record for me. This is an evidence of returning confidence in God - to which Job always returns even after the most passionate and irreverent expressions. Such is his real trust in God, that though he is betrayed at times into expressions of impatience and irreverence, yet he is sure to return to calmer views, and to show that he has true confidence in the Most High. The strength, the power, and the point of his expressions of passion and impatience are against his "friends;" but they "sometimes" terminate on God, as if even he was leagued with them against him. But he still had "permanent" or "abiding" confidence in God.

My record is on high - Margin "in the high places." It means, in heaven. Luther renders this, und der mich kennet, ist in der Hohe- and he who knows me is on high. The Hebrew is שׂהדי *śâhêdîy* - "my witness;" properly an eye witness. The meaning is, that he could appeal to God as a witness of his sincerity.

Verse 20

My friends scorn me - Margin "are my scorners." That is, his friends had him in derision and mocked him, and he could only appeal with tears to God.

Mine eye poureth out tears unto God - Despised and mocked by his friends, he made his appeal to one who he knew would regard him with compassion. This shows that the heart of Job was substantially right. Notwithstanding, all his passionate exclamations; and notwithstanding, his expressions, when he was urged on by his sorrows to give vent to improper emotions in relation to God; yet he had a firm confidence in him, and

always returned to right feelings and views. The heart may sometimes err. The best of people may sometimes give expression to improper feelings. But they will return to just views, and will ultimately evince unwavering confidence in God.

Verse 21

Oh that one might plead for a man - A more correct rendering of this would be, "Oh that it might be for a man to contend with God;" that is, in a judicial controversy. It is the expression of an earnest desire to carry his cause at once before God, and to be permitted to argue it there. This desire Job had often expressed; see Job 13:3, note; Job 13:18-22, notes. On the grammatical construction of the passage, see Rosenmuller.

As a man pleadeth for his neighbour - Hebrew "the son of man;" that is, the offspring of man. Or, rather, as a man contendeth with his neighbor; as one man may carry on a cause with another. He desired to carry his cause directly before God, and to be permitted to argue the case with him, as one is permitted to maintain an argument with a man; see the notes at Job 13:20-21.

Verse 22

When a few years are come - Margin "years of number;" that is, numbered years, or a few years. The same idea is expressed in Job 7:21; see the notes at that place. The idea is, that he must soon die. He desired, therefore, before he went down to the grave, to carry his cause before God, and to have, as he did not doubt he should have, the divine attestation in his favor; compare the notes at Job 19:25-27. Now he was overwhelmed with calamities and reproaches, and was about to die in this condition. He did not wish to die thus. He wished that the reproaches might be wiped off, and that his character might be cleared up and made fair. He believed assuredly that if he could be permitted to carry his cause directly before God, he might be able to vindicate his character, and to obtain the divine verdict in his favor; and if he obtained that, he was not unwilling to die. It is the expression of such a wish as every man has, that his sun may not go down under a cloud; that whatever aspersions may rest on his character may be wiped away; and that his name, if remembered at all when he is dead, may go untarnished down to future times, and be such that his friends may repeat it without a blush.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

My breath is corrupt - Margin or "spirit is spent." The idea is, that his vital powers were nearly extinct; his breath failed; his power was weakened, and he was ready to die. This is connected with the previous chapter, and should not have been separated from it. There was no necessity of making a new chapter here, and we have one of those unfortunate breaks in the middle of a paragraph, and almost of a sentence, which are too common in the Scriptures.

The graves are ready for me - The Hebrew is plural, but why so used I know not. The Vulgate is singular - sepulchrum. The Septuagint renders it, "I pray for a tomb (singular, ταφῆς *taphēs*), but I cannot obtain it." Possibly the meaning is, "I am about to be united "to the graves," or "to tombs."" Schultens remarks that the plural form is common in Arabic poetry, as well as in poetry in general.

Verse 2

And doth not mine eye continue in their provocation? - Margin "lodge." This is the meaning of the Hebrew word used here - נלן *tālan* It properly denotes to pass the night or to lodge in a place, as distinguished from a permanent residence. The idea here seems to be, that his eye "rested" on their provocations. It remained fixed on them. It was not a mere glance, a passing notice, but was such a view as resulted from a careful observation. It was not such a view as a traveler would obtain by passing hastily by, but it was such as one would obtain who had encamped for a time, and had an opportunity of looking around him with care, and seeing things as they were. Thus explained, there is much poetic beauty in the passage. The Vulgate, however, renders it, "I have not sinned, and mine eye remains in bitterness." The Septuagint, "I supplicate in distress - κάμνων *kamnōn* - yet what have I done? Strangers came, and stole my substance: who is the man?" The simple meaning is, that Job had a calm view of their wickedness, and that he could not be deceived.

Verse 3

Lay down now - This is evidently an address to God - a repetition of the wish which he had so often expressed, that he might be permitted to bring his cause directly before him; see Job 13:3. The whole passage here is obscure, because we are in a great measure ignorant of the ancient practices

in courts of law, and of the ancient forms of trial. The general sense seems to be, that Job desires the Deity to enter into a judicial investigation, and to give him a "pledge" - or, as we should say, a "bond," or "security" - that he would not avail himself of his almighty power, but would place him on an equality in the trial, and allow him to plead his cause on equal terms; see the notes at Job 13:20-22. The phrase "lay down now" means, lay down a pledge, or something of that kind; and may have referred to some ancient custom of giving security on going to trial, that no advantage would be taken, or that the parties would abide by the decision in the case.

Put me in a surety with thee - The word used here (ערבני *ʿârabîyn*) is from ערב *ʿârab* to mix, mingle; to exchange, to barter and then to become surety for anyone - that is, to "exchange" places with him, or to stand in his place; Genesis 43:9; Genesis 44:32. Here the idea seems to be, that Job wished the Deity to give him some pledge or security that justice would be done, or that he would not take advantage of his power and majesty to overawe him. Or, as has been remarked, it may refer to some custom of furnishing security on a voluntary trial or arbitration, that the award of the referees would be observed. I think it most probable that this is the idea. The controversy here was to be voluntary. In a voluntary trial, or an arbitration, there is a necessity of some security by the parties that the decision shall be submitted to - a pledge to each other that they will abide by it. Such a pledge Job desired in this case. All this is language taken from courts, and should not be pressed too much, nor should Job be hastily charged with irreverence. Having once suggested the idea of a "trial" of the cause, it was natural for him to use the language which was commonly employed in reference to such trials; and these expressions are to be regarded as thrown in for the sake of "keeping," or verisimilitude.

Who is he that will strike hands with me? - Striking hands then, as now, seems to have been one mode of confirming an agreement, or ratifying a compact. The idea here is," Who is there that will be surety to me for thee?" that is, for the faithful observance of right and justice. There is an appearance of irreverence in this language, but it arises from carrying out the ideas pertaining to a form of trial in a court. In entering into "sureties," it was usual to unite hands; see Proverbs 6:1:

My son, if thou be surety for thy friend,
If thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger.

So Proverbs 17:18:

A man void of understanding striketh hands,
And becometh surety in the presence of his friend

Compare Proverbs 11:15; Proverbs 22:26. The same custom prevailed in the times of Homer and of Virgil. Thus, Homer (Iliad, β *b* says:

Ποῦ δὴ -
- δεξιαὶ ἧς ἐπέπιθμεν -
Pou de4 -
- *dexiai hēs epepithmen* -

And so Virgil (Aeneid 4:597) says;
- *en dextra fidesque*.

Verse 4

For thou hast hid their heart from understanding - That is, the heart of his professed friends. Job says that they were blind and perverse, and indisposed to render him justice; and he therefore pleads that he may carry his cause directly before God. He attributes their want of understanding to the agency of God in accordance with the doctrine which prevailed in early times, and which is so often expressed in the Scriptures, that God is the source of light and truth, and that when people are blinded it is in accordance with his wise purposes; see Isaiah 6:9-10. It is "because" they were thus blind and perverse, that he asks the privilege of carrying the cause at once up to God - and who could blame him for such a desire?

Therefore thou shalt not exalt them - By the honor of deciding a case like this, or by the reputation of wisdom. The name of sage or "wise" man was among the most valued in those times; but Job says that that would not be awarded to his friends. God would not exalt or honor people thus devoid of wisdom.

Verse 5

He that speaketh flattery to his friends - Noyes renders this, "He that delivers up his friend as a prey, the eyes of his children shall fail." So Wemyss, "He who delivers up his friends to plunder." Dr. Good, "He that rebuketh his friends with mildness, even the eyes of his children shall be accomplished." The Septuagint, "He announces evil for his portion; his eyes fail over his sons." The Vulgate, "He promises spoil to his companions, and the eyes of his sons fail." The word rendered "flattery" (חלק *chêleq*) properly means "that which is smooth, smoothness" (from חלק *châlaq* to be smooth); and thence it denotes "a lot" or "portion," because "a smooth stone" was anciently used to cast lots in dividing spoils; Deuteronomy 18:8.

Here it is synonymous with plunder or spoil; and the idea is, that he who betrayeth his friends to the spoil or to the spoiler, the eyes of his children shall fail. The meaning in this connection is, that the friends of Job had acted as one would who should announce the residence of his neighbors to robbers, that they might come and plunder them. Instead of defending him, they had acted the part of a traitor. Schultens says that this verse is "a Gordian knot;" and most commentators regard it as such; but the above seems to give a clear and consistent meaning. It is evidently a proverb, and is designed to bear on the professed friends of Job, and to show that they had acted a fraudulent part toward him. In Job 17:4, he had said that God had hid their heart from understanding, and that wisdom had failed them. He "here" says that in addition to a want of wisdom, they were like a man who should betray his neighbors to robbers.

Even the eyes of his children shall fail - He shall be punished. To do this is a crime, and great calamity shall come upon him, represented by the failure of the eyes of his children. Calamity is not unfrequently expressed by the loss of the eyes; see Proverbs 30:17.

Verse 6

He hath also - That is, God has done this.

Also a by-word - A proverb (משל *mâshâl*); a term of reproach, ridicule, or scorn. lie has exposed me to derision.

And aforetime - Margin "before them." The margin is the correct translation of the Hebrew, פנים *pânîym* It means, in their presence, or in their view.

I was as a tabret - This is an unhappy translation. The true meaning is," I am become their "abhorrence," or am to them an object of contempt." Vulgate, "I am an exampie ("*exemplum* ") to them." Septuagint, "I am become a laughter (γέλως *gelōs*) to them." The Chaldee renders it, "Thou hast placed me for a proverb to the people, and I shall be Gehenna (גיהנם *gayhînnôm*) to them." The Hebrew word תפת *tôpheth* - or "Tophet," is the name which is often given in the Scriptures to the valley of Hinnom - the place where children were sacrificed to Moloch; see the notes at Matthew 5:22. But there is no evidence or probability that the word was so used in the time of Job. It is never used in the Scriptures in the sense of a "*tabret*," that is a tabor or small drum; though the word תף *toph* is thus used; see the notes at Isaiah 5:12. The word used here is derived, probably, from the obsolete verb תיף *typ* - "to spit out;" and then to spit out with contempt. The

verb is so used in Chaldee. “Castell.” The meaning of the word probably still lives in the Arabic, The Arabic word means to spit out with contempt; and the various forms of the nouns derived from the verb are applied to anything detested, or detestable; to the parings of the nails; to an abandoned woman; to a dog, etc. See “Castell” on this word. I have no doubt that is the sense here, and that we have here a word whose true signification is to be sought in the Arabic; and that Job means to say that he was treated as the most loathsome and execrable object.

Verse 7

Mine eye is dim by reason of sorrow - Schultens supposes that this refers to his external appearance in general, as being worn down, exhausted, “defaced” by his many troubles; but it seems rather to mean that his eyes failed on account of weeping.

And all my members are as a shadow - “I am a mere skeleton, I am exhausted and emaciated by my sufferings.” It is common to speak of persons who are emaciated by sickness or famine as mere shadows. Thus, Livy (L. 21:40) says, Effigies, imo, “umbrce hominum;” fame, frigore, illuvie, squalore enecti, contusi, debilitati inter saxa rupesque. So Aeschylus calls Oedipus - Οἰδίπου σκιαν *Oidipou skian* - the shadow of Oedipus.

Verse 8

Upright men shall be astonished at this - At the course of events in regard to me. They will be amazed that God has suffered a holy man to be plunged into such calamities, and to be treated in this manner by his friends. The fact at which he supposes they would be so much astonished was, that the good were afflicted in this manner, and that no relief was furnished.

And the innocent shall stir up himself - Shall rouse himself, or assume vigor to resist the wicked.

The hypocrite - The wicked - alluding probably to his professed friends. The idea of hypocrisy which the sentence conveys arises from the fact, that they professed to be “his” friends, and had proved to be false; and that they had professed to be the friends of God, and yet had uttered sentiments inconsistent with any right views of him. He now says, that that could not go unnoticed. The world would be aroused at so remarkable a state of things, and a just public indignation would be the result.

Verse 9

The righteous also shall hold on his way - The meaning of this verse is plain; but the connection is not so apparent. It seems to me that it refers to

"Job himself," and is a declaration that "he," a righteous man, who had been so grievously calumniated, would hold on his way, and become stronger and stronger, while "they" would sink in the public esteem, and be compelled to abandon their position. It is the expression of a confident assurance that "he" would be more and more confirmed in his integrity, and would become stronger and stronger in God. Though Job intended, probably, that this should be applied to himself, yet he has expressed it in a general manner, and indeed the whole passage has a proverbial cast; and it shows that even then it was the settled belief that the righteous would persevere. As an expression of the early faith of the pious in one of the now settled doctrines of Christianity, "the perseverance of the saints," this doctrine is invaluable. It shows that that doctrine has traveled down from the earliest ages. It was one of the elementary doctrines of religion in the earliest times. It became a proverb; and was admitted among the undisputed maxims of the wise and good, and it was such a sentiment as was just adapted to the circumstances of Job - a much tried and persecuted man. He was in all the danger of apostasy to which the pious are usually exposed; he was tempted to forsake his confidence in God; he was afflicted for reasons which he could not comprehend; he was without an earthly friend to sustain him, and he seemed to be forsaken by God himself; yet he had the fullest conviction that he would be enabled to persevere. The great principle was settled, that if there was true religion in the heart, it would abide; that if the path of righteousness had been entered, he who trod it would keep on his way.

And he that hath clean hands - The innocent; the friend of God; the man of pure life; see the notes at Job 9:30; compare Psalm 24:4. "Clean hands" here, are designed to denote a pure and holy life. Among the ancients they were regarded as indicative of purity of heart. Porphyry remarks (*de antro Nympharum*) that in the "mysteries," those who were initiated were accustomed to wash their hands with honey instead of water, as a pledge that they would preserve themselves from every impure and unholy thing; see Burder, in Rosenmuller's Alte u. neue Morgenland, in loc.

Shall be stronger and stronger - Margin, as in Hebrew add strength. He shall advance in the strength of his attachment to God. This is true. The man of pure and blameless life shall become more and more established in virtue; more confirmed in his principles; more convinced of the value and the truth of religion. Piety, like everything else, becomes stronger by

exercise. The man who speaks truth only, becomes more and more attached to truth; the principle of benevolence is strengthened by being practiced; honesty, the more it is exhibited, becomes more the settled rule of the life; and he who prays, delights more and more in his appoaches to God. The tendency of religion in the heart is to grow stronger and stronger; and God intends that he who has once loved him, shall continue to love him forever.

Verse 10

But as for you all, do you return - This may mean, either, "return to the debate;" or, "return from your unjust and uncharitable opinion concerning me." The former seems to accord best with the scope of the passage. Tindal renders it, "Get you hence." Dr. Good, "Get ye hence, and begone, I pray." Wemyss, "Repeat your discourses as often as you may, I do not find a wise man among you." It is doubtful, however, whether the Hebrew will bear this construction.

For I cannot find one wise man among you - Perhaps the idea here is, "I have not yet found one wise man among you, and you are invited, therefore, to renew the argument. Hitherto you have said nothing that indicates wisdom. Try again, and see if you can say anything now that shall deserve attention." If this is the meaning, it shows that Job was willing to hear all that they had to say, and to give them credit for wisdom, if they ever evinced any.

Verse 11

My days are past - "I am about to die." Job relapses again into sadness - as he often does. A sense of his miserable condition comes over him like a cloud, and he feels that he must die.

My purposes are broken off - All my plans fail, and my schemes of life come to an end. No matter what they could say now, it was all over with him, and he must die; compare Isaiah 38:12:

"My habitation is taken away, and is removed from me
Like a shepherd's tent;
My life is cut off as by a weaver

Who severeth the web from the loom;
Between the morning and the night thou wilt make an end of me."

Even the thoughts of my heart - Margin, possessions. Noyes, "treasures." Dr. Good, "resolves." Dr. Stock, "the tenants of my heart." Vulgate, "torquen'es cor meum." Septuagint, τὰ ἄρθρα τῆς καρδίας μου *ta*

arthra tēs kardias mou - the strings of my heart. The Hebrew word (מורשׁ *môrâsh*) means properly possession (from ירשׁ *yârash* to inherit); and the word here means the dear possessions of his heart; his cherished plans and schemes; the delights of his soul - the purposes which he had hoped to accomplish. All these were now to be broken on by death. This is to man one of the most trying things in death. All his plans must be arrested. His projects of ambition and gain, of pleasure and of fame, of professional eminence and of learning, all are arrested midway. The farmer is compelled to leave his plow in the furrow; the mechanic, his work unfinished; the lawyer, his brief half prepared; the student, his books lying open; the man who is building a palace, leaves it incomplete; and he who is seeking a crown, is taken away when it seemed just within his grasp. How many unfinished plans are caused by death every day! How many unfinished books, sermons, houses, does it make! How many schemes of wickedness and of benevolence, of fraud and of kindness, of gain and of mercy, are daily broken in upon by death! Soon, reader, all your plans and mine will be ended - mine, perhaps, before these lines meet your eye; yours soon afterward. God grant that our purposes of life may be such that we shall be willing to have them broken in upon - all so subordinate to the GREAT PLAN of being prepared for heaven, that we may cheerfully surrender them at any moment, at the call of the Master summoning us into his awful presence!

Verse 12

They change - The word "they" in this place, some understand as referring to his friends; others, to his thoughts. Rosenmuller supposes it is to be taken impersonally, and that the meaning is, "night is become day to me." Wemyss translates it, "night is assigned me for day." So Dr. Good renders it. The meaning may be, that the night was to him as the day. He had no rest. The period when he had formerly sought repose, was now made like the day, and all was alike gloom and sadness.

The light is short because of darkness - Margin, near. The meaning is, probably, "even the day has lost its usual brilliancy and cheerfulness, and has become gloomy and sad. It seems to be like night. Neither night nor day is natural to me; the one is restless and full of cares like the usual employments of day, and the other is gloomy, or almost night, where there is no comfort and peace. Day brings to me none of its usual enjoyments. It

is short, gloomy, sad, and hastens away, and a distressing and restless night soon comes on."

Verse 13

If I wait - Or more accurately, "truly I expect that the grave will be my home." The word rendered "if" (אם *'îm*) is often used in such a sense. The meaning is, "I look certainly to the grave as my home. I have made up my mind to it, and have no other expectation."

The grave - Hebrew שׁאול *she'ôl* It may mean here either the grave, or the region of departed spirits, to which he expected soon to descend.

Mine house - My home; my permanent abode.

I have made my bed - I am certain of making my bed there. I shall soon lie down there.

In the darkness - In the grave, or in the dark world to which it leads; see the notes at Job 10:21-22.

Verse 14

I have said - Margin, cried, or called. The sense is, "I say," or "I thus address the grave."

To corruption - The word used here (שׁחת *shachath*) means properly a pit, or pit-fall, Psalm 7:15; Psalm 9:15; a cistern, or a ditch, Job 9:31; or the sepulchre, or grave, Psalm 30:9; Job 33:18, Job 33:30. The Septuagint renders it here by θανάτον *thanaton* - death. Jerome (Vulgate), *putredini dixi*. According to Gesenius (Lex), the word never has the sense of corruption. Schultens, however, Rosenmuller, and others, understand it in the sense of corruption or putrefaction. This accords, certainly, with the other hemistich, and better constitutes a parallelism with the "worm" than the word "grave" would. It seems probable that this is the sense here; and if the proper meaning of the word is a pit, or the grave, it here denotes the grave, as containing a dead and moulderling body.

Thou art my father - "I am nearly allied to it. I sustain to it a relation like that of a child to a father." The idea seems to be that of family likeness; and the object is to present the most striking and impressive view of his sad and sorrowful condition. He was so diseased, so wretched, so full of sores and of corruption (see Job 7:5), that he might be said to be the child of one mouldering in the grave, and was kindred to a family in the tomb!

To the worm - The worm that feeds upon the dead. He belonged to that sad family where the body was putrifying, and where it was covered with worms; see the notes at Isaiah 14:11.

My mother - I am so nearly allied to the worms, that the connection may be compared to that between a mother and her son.

And my sister - "The sister here is mentioned rather than the brother, because the noun rendered worm in the Hebrew, is in the feminine gender." Rosenmuller. The sense of the whole is, that Job felt that he belonged to the grave. He was destined to corruption. He was soon to lie down with the dead. His acquaintance and kindred were there. So corrupt was his body, so afflicted and diseased, that he seemed to belong to the family of the putrifying, and of those covered with worms! What an impressive description; and yet how true is it of all! The most vigorous frame, the most beautiful and graceful form, the most brilliant complexion, has a near relationship to the worm, and will soon belong to the mouldering family beneath the ground! Christian reader! such are you; such am I. Well, let it be so. Let us not repine. Be the grave our home; be the mouldering people there our parents, and brothers, and sisters. Be our alliance with the worms. There is a brighter scene beyond - a world where we shall be kindred with the angels, and ranked among the sons of God. In that world we shall be clothed with immortal youth, and shall know corruption no more. Then our eyes will shine with undiminished brilliancy forever; our cheeks glow with immortal health; our hearts beat with the pulsations of eternal life. Then our hands shall be feeble and our knees totter with disease or age no more; and then the current of health and joy shall flow on through our veins forever and eye! Allied now to worms we are, but we are allied to the angels too; the grave is to be our home, but so also is heaven; the worm is our brother, but so also is the Son of God! Such is man; such are his prospects here, such his hopes and destiny in the world to come. He dies here, but he lives in glory and honor hereafter forever.

Shall man, O God of light and life,
For ever moulder in the grave?
Canst thou forget thy glorious work,
Thy promise and thy power to save?
Shall life revisit dying worms,
And spread the joyful insects‘ wing;
And O shall man awake no more,
To see thy face, thy name to sing?
Faith sees the bright, eternal doors,
Unfold to make her children way;

They shall be clothed with endless life,
And shine in everlasting day.
The trump shall sound, the dead shall wake,
From the cold tomb the slumberers spring;
Through heaven with joy these myriads rise,
And hail their Savior and their King.
Dr. Dwight

Verse 15

And where is now my hope? - What hope have I of life? What possibility is there of my escape from death?

Who shall see it? - That is, who will see any hopes that I may now cherish fulfilled. If I cherish any, they will be disappointed, and no one will see them accomplished.

Verse 16

They shall go down - That is, my hopes shall go down. All the expectations that I have cherished of life and happiness, will descend there with me. We have a similar expression when we say, that a man "has buried his hopes in the grave," when he loses an only son.

To the bars of the pit - "Bars of Sheol" - שׁאול בד *bad she'ôl* Vulgate, "Profoundest deep." Septuagint, εἰς ᾅδην *eis hadēn* - to Hades. Sheol, or Hades, was supposed to be under the earth. Its entrance was by the grave as a gate that led to it. It was protected by bars - as prisons are - so that those who entered there could not escape; see the notes at Isaiah 14:9. It was a dark, gloomy dwelling, far away from light, and from the comforts which people enjoy in this life; see Job 10:21-22. To that dark world Job expected soon to descend; and though he did not regard that as properly a place of punishment, yet it was not a place of positive joy. It was a gloomy and wretched world - the land of darkness and of the shadow of death; and he looked to the certainty of going there not with joy, but with anguish and distress of heart. Had Job been favored with the clear and elevated views of heaven which we have in the Christian revelation, death to him would have lost its gloom.

We wonder, often, that so good a man expressed such a dread of death, and that he did not look more calmly into the future world. But to do him justice, we should place ourselves in his situation. We should lay aside all that is cheerful and glad in the views of heaven which Christianity has given us. We should look upon the future world as the shadow of death; a

land of gloom and spectres; a place beneath the ground - dark, chilly, repulsive; and we shall cease to wonder at the expressions of even so good a man at the prospect of death. When we look at him, we should remember with thankfulness the different views which we have of the future world, and the source to which we owe them. To us, if we are pious in any measure as Job was, death is the avenue, not to a world of gloom, but to a world of light and glory. It opens into heaven. There is no gloom, no darkness, no sorrow. There all are happy; and there all that is mysterious in this life is made plain - all that is sad is succeeded by eternal joy. These views we owe to that gospel which has brought life and immortality to light; and when we think of death and the future world, when from the midst of woes and sorrows we are compelled to look out on eternity, let us rejoice that we are not constrained to look forward with the sad forebodings of the Sage of Uz, but that we may think of the grave cheered by the strong consolations of Christian hope of the glorious resurrection.

When our rest together is in the dust - The rest of me and my hopes. My hopes and myself will expire together.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Verse 2

How long will it be ere ye make an end of words? - It has been made a question to whom this is addressed. It is in the plural number, and it is not usual in Hebrew when addressing an individual to make use of the plural form. Some have supposed that it is addressed to Job and to Eliphaz, as being both "long-winded" and tedious in their remarks. Others have supposed that it refers to Job "and the members of his family," who possibly interposed remarks, and joined Job in his complaints. Others suppose that it refers to Eliphaz and Zophar, as being silent during the speech of Job, and not arresting his remarks as they ought to have done. Rosenmuller supposes that it refers to Job and those similar to him, who were mere feigners of piety, and that Bildad means to ask how long it would be before they would be effectually silenced, and their complaints hushed. I see no great difficulty in supposing that the reference is to Job. The whole strain of the discourse evidently supposes it; and there is no evidence that any of the family of Job had spoken, nor does it seem at all probable that Bildad would reprove his own friends either for the length of their speeches, or for not interrupting an other. The custom in the East is to allow a man to utter all that he has to say without interruption.

Mark - Hebrew understand; or be intelligent - תבינו *tābîynû* that is, either speak distinctly, clearly, intelligently; or consider and weigh our arguments. The former is the interpretation of Schultens, and seems to me to be the true one. The idea is this: "You, Job, have been altering mere words. They are words of complaint, without argument. Speak now in a different manner; show that you understand the case; advance arguments that are worthy of attention, and then we will reply."

Verse 3

Wherefore are we counted as beasts? - "Why are we treated in your remarks as if we had no sense, and were unworthy of sound argument in reply to what we say?" It is possible that there may be reference here to what Job said Job 12:7 - that even the beasts could give them information about God. But the general idea is, that Job had not treated their views with the attention which they deserved, but had regarded them as unworthy of notice.

And reputed vile - The word used here (טמה *ṭâmâh*) means to be unclean, or polluted; and the idea is, that Job regarded them as worthless or impious.

Verse 4

He teareth himself - More correctly, "thou that tearest thyself in anger!" It is not an affirmation about Job, but it is a direct address to him. The meaning is, that he was in the paryoxysms of a violent rage; he acted like a madman.

Shall the earth be forsaken for thee? - A reproof of his pride and arrogance. "Shall everything be made to give way for you? Are you the only man in the world and of so much importance, that the earth is to be made vacant for you to dwell in? Are the interests of all others to be sacrificed for you, and is everything else to give place for you? Are all the laws of God's government to be made to yield rather than that you should be punished?" Similar modes of expression to denote the insignificance of anyone who is proud and arrogant, are still used among the Arabs. "Since Muhammed died, the Imams govern." "The world will not suffer loss on your account." "The world is not dependent on anyone man." T. Hunt, in Lowth's Lectures on Hebrew Poetry. Rosenmuller's Morgenland, in lec.

And shall the rock be removed out of his place? - "Shall the most firm and immutable things give way for your special accommodation? Shall the most important and settled principles of the divine administration be made to bend on your account?" These were not the principles and feelings of Job; and great injustice was done to him by this supposition. He was disposed to be submissive in the main to the divine arrangement. But this will describe the feelings of many a man of pride, who supposes that the divine arrangements should be made to bend for his special accommodation, and that the great, eternal principles of justice and right should give way rather than that he should be dealt with as common sinners are, and rather than that he should be cast into hell. Such people wish a special place of salvation for themselves. They are too proud to be saved as others are. They complain in their hearts that they are made to suffer, to lose their property, to be sick, to die - as others do. They would wish to be treated with special mercy, and to have special enactments in their favor, and would have the eternal laws of right made to bend for their special accommodation Such is the pride of the human heart!

Verse 5

Yea - Truly; or, behold. Bildad here commences his remarks on the certain destiny of the wicked, and strings together a number of apparently proverbial sayings, showing that calamity in various forms would certainly overtake the wicked. There is nothing particularly new in his argument, though the use of the various images which he employs shows how deep was the conviction of this doctrine at that time, and how extensively it prevailed.

The light of the wicked shall be put out - Light here is an emblem of prosperity.

The spark of his fire - Hebrew the flame of his fire. There may be an allusion here to the customs of Arabian hospitality. This was, and is, their national glory, and it is their boast that no one is ever refused it. The emblem of fire or flame here may refer to the custom of kindling a fire on an eminence, near a dwelling, to attract the stranger to share the hospitality of the owner of it; or it may refer to the fire in his tent, which the stranger was always at liberty to share. In the collection of the Arabian poems, called the Hamasa, this idea occurs almost in the words of Bildad. The extract was furnished me by the Rev. Eli Smith. It is a boast of Salamiel, a prince of Tema. In extolling the virtues of his tribe, he says, "No fire of ours was ever extinguished at night without a guest; and of our guests never did one disparage us." The idea here is, that the wicked would attempt to show hospitality, but the means would be taken away. He would not be permitted to enjoy the coveted reputation of showing it to the stranger, and the fire which might invite the traveler, or which might confer comfort on him, would be put out in his dwelling. The inability to extend the offer of a liberal hospitality would be equivalent to the deepest poverty or the most trying affliction.

Verse 6

And his candle - Margin, lamp. The reference is to a lamp that was suspended from the ceiling. The Arabians are fond of this image. Thus, they say, "Bad fortune has extinguished my lamp." Of a man whose hopes are remarkably blasted, they say, "He is like a lamp which is immediately extinguished if you let it sink in the oil." See Schultens. The putting out of a lamp is to the Orientals an image of utter desolation. It is the universal custom to have a light burning in their houses at night. "The houses of Egypt, in modern times, are never without lights; they burn lamps all the night long, and in every occupied apartment. So requisite to the comfort of

a family is this custom reckoned, and so imperious is the power which it exercises, that the poorest people. would rather retrench part of their food than neglect it." Paxton. It is not improbable that this custom prevailed in former times in Arabia, as it does now in Egypt; and this consideration will give increased beauty and force to this passage.

Verse 7

The steps of his strength - Strong steps. "Steps of strength" is a Hebraism, to denote firm or vigorous steps.

Shall be straitened - Shall be compressed, embarrassed, hindered. Instead of walking freely and at large, he shall be compressed and limited in his goings. "Large steps," "free movement," etc. are proverbial expressions among the Arabs, to denote freedom, prosperity, etc. RosenmulIer. Schultens quotes the following illustrations from the Arabic poets. From Ibn Doreid, "He who does not confine himself within human limits, his vast strides shall be straitened." And from Taurizius," After the battle of Bedrense, the steps were straitened." The meaning here is, that he would be greatly impeded in his movements, instead of going forth at large and in full vigor as he had formerly done.

And his own counsel - His own plans shall be the means of his fall.

Verse 8

For he is cast into a net by his own feet - He is caught in his own tricks, as if he had spread a net or dug a pitfall for another, and had fallen into it himself. The meaning is, that he would bring ruin upon himself while he was plotting the rain of others; see Psalm 9:16, "The wicked is snared by the work of his own hands;" compare the note at Job 5:13. The phrase "by his own feet" here means, that he walks there himself. He is not led or driven by others, but he goes himself into the net. Wild animals are sometimes driven, but he walks along of his own accord into the net, and has no one to blame but himself.

And he walketh upon a snare - Or a pitfall. This was formerly the mode of taking wild beasts. It was done by excavating a place in the earth, and covering it over with turf, leaves, etc. supported in a slender manner; so that the lion, or elephant or tiger that should tread on it, would fall through. These methods of taking wild beasts have been practiced from the earliest times, and are practiced everywhere.

Verse 9

The gin - Another method of taking wild beasts. It was a snare so made as to spring suddenly on an animal, securing him by the neck or feet. We use a trap for the same purpose. The Hebrew word (פח *pach*) may denote anything of this kind - a snare, net, noose, etc. with which birds or wild animals are taken.

By the heel - By the foot.

And the robber shall prevail - He shall be overpowered by the highwayman; or the plunderer shall make a sudden descent upon him, and strip him of his all. The meaning is, that destruction would suddenly overtake him. There can be no doubt that Bildad meant to apply all this to Job.

Verse 10

The snare is laid - All this language is taken from the modes of taking wild beasts; but it is not possible to designate with absolute certainty the methods in which it was done. The word used here (חבל *chebel*) means a cord, or rope; and then a snare, gin, or toil, such as is used by hunters. It was used in some way as a noose to secure an animal. This was concealed (Hebrew) "in the earth" - so covered up that an animal would not perceive it, and so constructed that it might be made to spring upon it suddenly.

And a trap - We have no reason to suppose that at that time they employed steel to construct traps as we do now, or that the word here has exactly the sense which we give to it. The Hebrew word (מלכדת *malkôdeth*) is from לכד *lâkad* - "to take," "to catch," and means a noose, snare, spring - by which an animal was seized. It is a general term; though undoubtedly used to denote a particular instrument, then well known. The general idea in all this is, that the wicked man would be suddenly seized by calamities, as a wild animal or a bird is taken in a snare. Independently of the interest of the entire passage Job 18:8-10 as a part of the argument of Bildad, it is interesting from the view which it gives of the mode of securing wild animals in the early periods of the world. They had no guns as we have; but they early learned the art of setting gins and snares by which they were taken. In illustrating this passage, it will not be inappropriate to refer to some of the modes of hunting practiced by the ancient Egyptians. The same methods were practiced then in catching birds and taking wild beasts as now, and there is little novelty in modern practices. The ancients had not only traps, nets, and springs, but also bird-lime smeared upon twigs, and made use of stalking-horses, setting dogs, etc. The various methods in

which this was done, may be seen described at length in Wilkinson's Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians, vol. iii. pp. 1-81. The noose was employed to catch the wild ox, the antelope, and other animals.

This seems to be a self-acting net, so constructed that the birds, when coming in contact with it, close it upon themselves.

This trap appears as if in a vertical position, although, doubtless, it is intended to represent a trap lying upon the ground.

There are other traps very similar to this, except that they are oval; and probably have a net like the former. They are composed of two arcs, which, being kept open by machinery in the middle, furnish the oval frame of the net; but when the bird flies in, and knocks out the pin in the center, the arcs collapse enclosing the bird in the net. One instance occurs, in a painting at Thebes, of a trap, in which a hyaena is caught, and carried on the shoulders of two men. It was a common method of hunting to enclose a large tract of land by a circle of nets, or to station men at convenient distances, and gradually to contract the circle by coming near to each other, and thus to drive all the wild animals into a narrow enclosure, where they could be easily slain. Some idea of the extent of those enclosures may be formed from the by no means incredible circumstance related by Plutarch, that when the Macedonian conquerors were in Persia, Philotos, the son of Armenio, had hunting-nets that would enclose the space of an hundred furlongs. The Oriental sovereigns have sometimes employed whole armies in this species of hunting. Picture Bible.

Verse 11

Terrors shall make him afraid - He shall be constantly subject to alarms, and shall never feel secure. "Terrors here are represented as allegorical persons, like the Furies in the Greek poets." Noyes. The idea here is substantially the same as that given by Eliphaz, Job 15:21-22.

And shall drive him to his feet - Margin, scatter. This is a literal translation of the Hebrew. The idea is, that he will be alarmed by such terrors; his self-composure will be dissipated, and he will "take to his heels."

Verse 12

His strength shall be hungerbitten - Shall be exhausted by hunger or famine.

And destruction shall be ready at his side - Hebrew "Shall be fitted" נכון *nākûn* "to his side." Some have supposed that this refers to some disease, like the pleurisy, that would adhere closely to his side. So Jerome understands it. Schultens has quoted some passages from Arabic poets, in which calamities are represented as "breaking the side." Bildad refers probably, to some heavy judgments that would crush a man; such that the ribs, or the human frame, could not bear; and the meaning is, that a wicked man would be certainly crushed by misfortune.

Verse 13

It shall devour the strength of his skin - Margin, bars. The margin is a correct translation of the Hebrew. The word used (בדי *badēy* construct with עורו *ʿôrô* - his skin) means bars, staves, branches, and here denotes his limbs, members; or, more literally, the bones, as supports of the skin, or the human frame. The bones are regarded as the bars, or the framework, holding the other parts of the body in their place, and over which the skin is stretched. The word "it" here refers to the "first-born of death" in the other hemistich of the verse; and the meaning is, that the strength of his body shal be entirely exhausted.

The first-born of death - The "first-born" is usually spoken of as distinguished for vigor and strength; Genesis 49:3, "Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength;" and the idea conveyed here by the "first-born of death" is the most fearful and destructive disease that death has ever engendered; compare Milton's description of the progeny of sin, in Paradise Los. Diseases are called "the sons or children of death" by the Arabs, (see Schultens in loc.,) as being begotten by it.

Verse 14

His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle - Security shall forsake his dwelling, and he shall be subject to constant alarms. There shall be nothing there in which he can confide, and all that he relied on as sources of safety shall have fled.

And it shall bring him - That is, he shall be brought.

To the king of terrors - There has been much variety in the explanation of this verse. Dr. Noyes renders it, "Terror pursues him like a king." Dr. Good, "Dissolution shall invade him like a monarch." Dr. Stock says. "I am

sorry to part with a beautiful phrase in our common version, the king of terrors, as descriptive of death, but there is no authority for it in the Hebrew text." Wemyss renders it, "Terror shall seize him as a king." So Schultens translates it, *"Gradientur in eum, instar regis, terrores."* Rosenmuller renders it as it is in our version. The Vulgate: *Et calcet super eum, quasi rex, interitus* - "destruction shall tread upon him as a king." The Septuagint "and distress shall lay hold on him with the authority of a king" - αἰτίᾳ βασιλικῃ *satia basilikē* The Chaldee renders it, "shall be brought to the king of terrors" - רגושתא למלך is not evident, therefore, that we are to give up the beautiful phrase, "king of terrors."

The fair construction of the Hebrew, as it seems to me, is that which is conveyed in our common version - meaning, that the wicked man would be conducted, not merely to death, but to that kind of death where a fearful king would preside - a monarch infusing terrors into his soul. There is something singularly beautiful and appropriate in the phrase, "the king of terrors." Death is a fearful monarch. All dread him. He presides in regions of chilliness and gloom. All fear to enter those dark regions where he dwells and reigns, and an involuntary shudder seizes the soul on approaching the confines of his kingdom. Yet all must be brought there; and though man dreads the interview with that fearful king, there is no release. The monarch reigns from age to age - reigns over all. There is but one way in which he will cease to appear as a terrific king. - It is by confidence in Him who came to destroy death; that great Redeemer who has taken away his "sting," and who can enable man to look with calmness and peace even on the chilly regions where he reigns. The idea here is not precisely that of the Roman and Grecian mythologists, of a terrific king, like Rhadamanthus, presiding over the regions of the dead but it is of death personified - of death represented as a king fitted to inspire awe and terror.

Verse 15

It shall dwell in his tabernacle - It is uncertain what is to be understood as referred to here. Some suppose that the word to be understood is soul, and that the meaning is "his soul," that is, he himself, "shall dwell in his tent." Rosenmuller, Noyes, Wemyss, and others, suppose that the word is terror. "Terror (בלהה *ballâhâh*) shall dwell in his tent," the same word which is used in the plural in the previous verse. This is undoubtedly the correct sense; and the idea is, that his forsaken tent shall be

a place of terror - somewhat, perhaps, as we speak of a forsaken house as "haunted." It may be that Bildad refers to some such superstitious fear as we sometimes, and almost always in childhood, connect with the idea of a house in which nobody lives.

Because it is none of his - It is no longer his. It is a forsaken, tenantless dwelling.

Brimstone shall be scattered - Brimstone has been always the image of desolation. Nothing will grow on a field that is covered with sulphur; and the meaning here is, that his house would be utterly desolate and forsaken. Rosenmuller and Noyes suppose that there is an allusion here to a sudden destruction, such as was that of Sodom and Gomorrha. Grotius doubts whether it refers to that or to lightning. Others suppose that lightning is referred to both here and in Genesis 19:24; Deuteronomy 29:23. I can see no evidence here, however, that there is any reference to Sodom and Gomorrha, or that there is any allusion to lightning. If the allusion had been to Sodom, it would have been more full. That was a case "just in point" in the argument; and the fact that was exactly in point, and would have furnished to the friends of Job such an irrefragalbe proof of the position which they were defending, and that it is not worked into the very texture of their argument, is full demonstration, to my mind, that that remarkable event is not referred to in this place. The only thing necessarily implied in the language before us is, that sulphur, the emblem of desolation, would be scattered on his dwelling, and that his dwelling would be wholly desolate.

Verse 16

His roots shall be dried up - Another image of complete desolation - where he is compared to a tree that is dead - a figure whose meaning is obvious, and which often occurs; see Job 15:30, note; Job 8:12-13, notes.

Above his branch - Perhaps referring to his children or family. All shall be swept away - an allusion which Job could not well hesitate to apply to himself.

Verse 17

His remembrance shall perish - His name - all recollection of him. Calamity shall follow him even after death; and that which every man desires, and every good man has, and honored name when he is dead, will be denied him. Men will hasten to forget him as fast as possible; compare Proverbs 10:7, "The name of the wicked shall rot."

No name in the street - Men when they meet together in highways and places of concourse - when traveler meets traveler, and caravan caravan, shall not pause to speak of him and of the loss which society has substained by his death. It is one of the rewards of virtue that the good will speak of the upright man when he is dead; that they will pause in their journey, or in their business, to converse about him; and that the poor and the needy will dwell with affectionate interest upon their loss. "This" blessing, Bildad says, will be denied the wicked man. The world will not feel that they have any loss to deplore when he is dead. No great plan of benvolence has been arrested by his removal. The poor and the needy fare as well as they did before. The widow and the fatherless make no grateful remembrance of his name, and the world hastens to forget him as soon as possible. There is no man, except one who is lost to all virtue, who does not desire to be remembered when he is dead - by his children, his neighbors, his friends, and by the stranger who may read the record on the stone that marks his grave. Where this desire is "wholly" extinguished, man has reached the lowest possible point of degradation, and the last hold on him in favor of virtue has expired.

Verse 18

He shall be driven from light into darkness - Margin, "They shall drive him." The meaning is, that he should be driven from a state of prosperity to one of calamity.

And chased out of the world - Perhaps meaning that he should not be conducted to the grave with the slow and solemn pomp of a respectful funeral, but in a hurry - as a malefactor is driven from human life, and hastily commited to the earth. The living would be glad to be rid of him, and would "chase" him out of life.

Verse 19

He shall neither have son … - All his family shall be cut off. He shall have no one to perpetuate his name or remembrance. All this Job could not help applying to himself, as it was doubtless intended he should. The facts in his case were just such as were supposed in these proverbs about the wicked; and hence, his friends could not but conclude that he was a wicked man; and hence, his friends could not but conclude that he was a wicked man; and hence, too, since these were undisputed maxims, Job felt so much embarrassment in answering them.

Verse 20

They that come after him - Future ages; they who may hear of his history and of the manner in which he was cut off from life. So the passage has been generally rendered; so, substantially, it is by Dr. Good, Dr. Noyes, Rosenmuller, and Luther. The Vulgate translates it *novissimi*; the Septuagint, ἔσχατοι *eschatoi* - "the last" - meaning those that should live after him, or at a later period. But Schultens supposes that the word used here denotes those in "the West," and the corresponding word rendered "went before," denotes those in "the East." With this view Wemyss concurs, who renders the whole verse:

"The West shall be astonished at his end;

The East shall be panic-struck."

According to this, it means that those who dwelt in the remotest regions would be astonished at the calamities which would come upon him. It seems to me that this accords better with the scope of the passage than the other interpretation, and avoids some difficulties which cannot be separated from the other view. The word translated in our version, "that come after him" אחרינים *'achăryônîym* is from אחר *'âchar* to be after, or behind; to stay behind, to delay, remain. It then means "after," or "behind;" and as in the geography of the Orientals the face was supposed to be turned to "the East," instead of being turned to the North, as with us - a much more natural position than ours - the word "after," or "behind," comes to denote West, the right hand the South, the left the North; see the notes at Job 23:8-9.

Thus, the phrase האחרין הים *hayâm hā'achăryôn* - "the sea behind, denotes the Mediterranean sea - the West; Deuteronomy 24:3; see also Deuteronomy 11:24; Deuteronomy 34:2; Joel 2:20, where the same phrase in Hebrew occurs. Those who dwelt in the "West," therefore, would be accurately referred to by this phrase.

Shall be astonied - Shall be "astonished" - the old mode of writing the word being "astonied;" Isaiah 52:14. It is not known, however, to be used in any other book than the Bible.

As they that went before - Margin, or "lived with him." Noyes, "his elders shall be struck with horror." Vulgate, "et primos invadet "horror." Septuagint, "amazement seizes "the first" - πρώτους *prōtous* But the more correct interpretation is that which refers it to the people of the East. The word קדמנים *qadmônîym* is from קדם *qâdam* to precede, to go before; and then the derivatives refer to that which goes before, which is in front, etc.; and as face was turned to the East by geographers, the word comes to

express that which is in the East, or near the sun-rising; see Joel 2:20; Job 23:8; Genesis 2:8. Hence, the phrase בני קדם *benēy qedem* - "sons of the East" - meaning the persons who dwelt east of Palestine; Job 1:3; Isaiah 11:14; Genesis 25:6; Genesis 29:1. The word used here, (קדמנים *qadmônîym*), is used to denote the people or the regions of the East; in Ezekiel 47:8, Ezekiel 47:18; Zechariah 14:8. Here it means, as it seems to me, the people of the East; and the idea is that people everywhere would be astonished at the doom of the wicked man. His punishment would be so sudden and entire as to hold the world mute with amazement.

Were affrighted - Margin, "laid hold on horror." This is a more literal rendering. The sense is, they would be struck with horror at what would occur to him.

Verse 21

Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked - The conclusion or sum of the whole matter. The meaning is, that the habitations of all that knew not God would be desolate - a declaration which Job could not but regard as aimed at himself; compare Job 20:29. This is the close of this harsh and severe speech. It is no wonder that Job should feel it keenly, and that he "did" feel it is apparent from the following chapter. A string of proverbs has been presented, having the appearance of proof, and as the result of the long observation of the course of events, evidently bearing on his circumstances, and so much in point that he could not well deny their pertinency to his condition. He was stung to the quick, and and gave vent to his agonized feelings in the following chapter.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Verse 2

How long will ye vex my soul? - Perhaps designing to reply to the taunting speech of Bildad; Job 18:2. "He" had asked "how long it would be ere Job would make an end of empty talk?" "Job" asks, in reply, "how long" they would torture and afflict his soul? Or whether there was on hope that this would ever come to an end!

And break me in pieces - Crush me, or bruise me - like breaking any thing in a mortar, or breaking rocks by repeated blows of the hammer. "Noyes." He says they had crushed him, as if by repeated blows.

Verse 3

These ten times - Many times; the word "ten" being used as we often say, "ten a dozen" or "twenty," to denote many; see Genesis 31:7, "And your father hath changed my wages "ten times." Leviticus 26:26, "and when I have broken your staff of bread, "ten women" shall bake your bread, in one oven;" compare Numbers 14:22; Nehemiah 4:6.

You are not ashamed that you make yourselves strange to me - Margin, "harden yourselves strange to me." Margin, "harden yourselves against me." Gesenius, and after him Noyes, renders this, "Shameless ye stun me." Wemyss, "Are ye not ashamed to treat me thus cruelly? The word used here (הכר *hâkar*) occurs no no where else, and hence, it is difficult to determine its meaning. The Vulgate renders it, "oppressing me." The Septuagint, "and you are not ashamed to press upon me." - ἐπίκεισθέ υοι *epikeisthe moi* Schultens has gone into an extended examination of its meaning, and supposes that the primary idea is that of being "stiff," or "rigid." The word in Arabic, he says, means to be "stupid with wonder." It is applied, he supposes, to those who are "stiff or rigid" with stupor; and then to those who have a stony heart and an iron an iron fore-head - and who can look on the suffering without feeling or compassion. This sense accords well with the connection here. Gesenius, however, supposes that the primary idea is that of beating or pounding; and hence, of stunning by repeated blows. In either case the sense would be substantially the same - that of "stunning." The idea given by our translators of making themselves "strange" was derived from the supposition that the word might be formed from נכר *nâkar* - to be strange, foreign; to estrange, alienate, etc. For a more

full examination of the word, the reader may consult Schultens, or Rosenmuller "in loco."

Verse 4

And be it indeed that I have erred - Admitting that I have erred, it is my own concern. You have a right to reproach and revile me in this manner.

Mine error abideth with myself - I must abide the consequences of the error." The design of this seems to be to reprove what he regarded as an improper and meddlesome interference with his concerns. Or it may be an expression of a willingness to bear all the consequences himself. He was willing to meet all the fair results of his own conduct.

Verse 5

If, indeed, ye will magnify yourselves against me - This is connected with the next verse. The sense is, "all these calamities came from God. He has brought them upon me in a sudden and mysterious manner. In these circumstances you ought to have pity upon me; Job 19:21. Instead of magnifying yourselves against me, setting yourselves up as censors and judges, overwhelming me with reproaches and filling my mind with pain and anguish, you ought to show to me the sympathy of a friend." The phrase, "magnify yourselves," refers to the fact that they had assumed a tone of superiority and an authoritative manner, instead of showing the compassion due to a friend in affliction.

And plead against me my reproach - My calamities as a cause of reproach. You urge them as a proof of the displeasure of God, and you join in reproaching me as a hypocrite. Instead of this, you should have shown compassion to me as a man whom God had greatly afflicted.

Verse 6

Know now that God - Understand the case; and in order that they might, he goes into an extended description of the calamities which God had brought upon him. He wished them to be "fully" apprised of all that he had suffered at the hand of God.

Hath overthrown me - The word used here (עות *ʿâvath*) means to bend, to make crooked or curved; then to distort, prevert: them to overturn, to destroy; Isaiah 24:1; Lamentations 3:9. The meaning here is, that he had been in a state of prosperity, but that God had completely "reversed" everything.

And hath compassed me with his net - Has sprung his net upon me as a hunter does, and I am caught. Perhaps there may be an allusion here to

what Bildad said in Job 18:8 ff, that the wicked would be taken in his own snares. Instead of that, Job says that "God" had sprung the snare upon him - for reasons which he could not understand, but in such a manner as should move the compassion of his friends.

Verse 7

Behold, I cry out of wrong - Margin, or "violence." The Hebrew word (חמס *châmâs*) means properly violence. The violence referred to is that which was brought upon him by God. It is, indeed, harsh language; but it is not quite sure that he means to complain of God for doing him injustice. God had dealt with him in a severe or violent manner, is the meaning, and he had cried unto him for relief, but had cried in vain.

No judgment - No justice. The meaning is, that he could obtain justice from no one God would not interpose to remove the calamities which he had brought upon him, and his friends would do no justice to his motives and character.

Verse 8

He hath fenced up my way - This figure is taken from a traveler, whose way is obstructed by trees, rocks, or fences, so that he cannot get along, and Job says it was so with him. He was traveling along in a peaceful manner on the journey of life, and all at once obstructions were put in his path, so that he could not go farther. This does not refer, particularly, to his spiritual condition, if it does at all. It is descriptive of the obstruction of his plans, rather than of spiritual darkness or distress.

And he hath set darkness in my paths - So that I cannot see - as if all around the traveler should become suddenly dark, so that he could not discern his way. The "language" here would well express the spiritual darkness which the friends of God sometimes experience, though it is by no means certain that Job referred to that. All the dealings of God are to them mysterious, and there is no light in the soul - and they are ready to sink down in despair.

Verse 9

He hath stripped me of my glory - Everything which I had that contributed to my respectability and honor, he has taken away. My property, my health, my family, the esteem of my friend - all is gone.

And taken the crown from my head - The crown is an emblem of honor and dignity - and Job says that God had removed all that contributed to his - and Job says that God had removed all that contributed to his former

dignity; compare Proverbs 4:9; Proverbs 17:6; Ezekiel 16:12; Lamentations 5:16.

Verse 10

He hath destroyed me on every side - He has left me nothing. The word which is used here is that which is commonly applied to which is used here is that which is commonly applied to destroying cities, towns, and houses. "Rosenmuller."

And I am gone - That is, I am near death. I cannot recover myself.

And mine hope hath he removed like a tree - A tree, which is plucked up by the roots, and which does not grow again. That is, his hopes of life and happiness, of an honored old age, and of a continuance of his prosperity, had been wholly destroyed. This does not refer to his "religious" hope - as the word hope is often used now - but to his desire of future comfort and prosperity in this life. It does not appear but that his religious hope, arising from confidence in God, remainned unaffected.

Verse 11

He hath also kindled his wrath - He is angry. Wrath in the Scriptures is usually represented as burning or inflamed - because like fire it destroys everything before it.

And he counteth me unto him as one of his enemies - He treats me as he would an enemy. The same complaint he elsewhere makes; see Job 13:24; perhaps also in Job 16:9. We are not to understand Job here as admitting that "he" was an enemy of God. He constantly maintained that he was not, but he was constrained to admit that God "treated him" as if he were his enemy, and he could not account for it. "On this ground," therefore, he now maintains that his friends ought to show him compassion, instead of trying to prove that he "was" an enemy of God; they ought to pity a man who was so strangely and mysteriously afflicted, instead of increasing his sorrows by endeavoring to demonstrate that he was a man of eminent wickedness.

Verse 12

His troops - The calamities which he had sent, and which are here represented as "armies" or "soldiers" to accomplish his work. It is not probable that he refers here to the bands of the Chaldeans and the Sabeans, that had robbed him of his property, but to the calamities that had come upon him, "as if" they were bands of robbers.

And raise up their way - As and army that is about to lay siege to a city, or that is marching to attack it, casts up a way of access to it, and thus obtains every facility to take it; see Isaiah 40:3, note; Isaiah 57:14, note.

And encamp round about my tabernacle - In the manner of an army besieging a city. Often an army is encamped in this manner for months or even years, in order to reduce the city by famine.

My tabernacle - My tent; my dwelling.

Verse 13

He hath put my brethren - This is a new source of afflication that he had not adverted to before, that God had caused all his children to be estranged from him - a calamity which he regarded as the crown of all his woes. The word rendered "my brethren" (אחי *'âchāy*) means means properly "my brothers" - but whether he means literally his brothers, or whether he designs it to be taken in a figuratie sense as denoting his intimate friends, or those of the same rank in life or calling, it is impossible now to determine.

And mine acquaintance - My friends - on whom I relied in time of calamity.

And verily estranged - They have forgotten me, and treat me as a stranger. What an accurate description is this of what often occurs! In prosperity a man will be surrounded by friends; but as soon as his prosperity is stripped away, and he is overwhelmed with calamity, they withdraw, and leave him to suffer alone. Proud of his acquaintance before, they now pass him by as a stranger, or treat him with cold civility, and when he "needs" their friendship, they are gone.

Verse 14

My kinsfolk have failed - My neighbors (קרובי *qârôbāy*), those who were near to me. It may refer to "nearness" of affinity, friendship, or residence. The essential idea is that of "nearness" - whether by blood, affection, or vicinity. In Psalm 38:11, it denotes near friends.

And my familiar friends - Those who knew me - מידעי *myudāʿay* The allusion is to those who were "intimately" acquainted with him, or who were his bosom friends.

Verse 15

They that dwell in mine house - The trials came to his very dwelling, and produced a sad estrangement there. The word used here גרי *gārēy* from גור *gûr* means properly those who "sojourn" in a house for a little time. It

may refer to guests, strangers, servants, clients, or tenants. The essential idea is, that they were not "permanent" residents, though for a time they were inmates of the family. Jerome renders the place, "*Inquilini domus meoe* - the tenants of my house." The Septuagint, Γείτονες οἰχιάς *Geitones oikias* - neighbors. Schultens supposes it means "clients," or those who were taken under the protection of a great man. He quotes from the Arabian poets to show that the word is used in that sense, and particularly a passage from the "Hamasa," which he thus translates:

Descendite sub alas meas, alasque gentis meae.

Ut sim praesidium vobis quum pugna con seritur.

Namque testamento injunxit mihi pater, ut reciperem vos hospites.

Omnemque oppressorem a vobis propulsarem.

There can be no doubt that Job refers to "dependents," but whether in the capacity of servants, tenants, or clients, it is not easy to determine, and is not material. Dr. Good renders it "sojourners," and this is a correct rendering of the word. This would be clearly the sense if the corresponding member of the parallelism were not "maids." or female servants. "That" requires us to understand here persons who were "somehow" engaged in the service of Job. Perhaps his clients, or those who came for protection, were under obligation to some sort of service as the return of his patronage.

And my maids - Female domestics. The Chaldee, however, renders this לחינתי - "my concubines;" but the correct reference is to female female servants.

I am an alien - That is, to them. They cease to treat me as the head of the family.

Verse 16

I called my servant - He lost all respect for me, and paid me no attention.

I entreated him - I ceased to expect "obedience," and tried to see what "persuasion" would do. I ceased to be master in my own house.

Verse 17

My breath is strange to my wife - Schultens renders this, "my breath is loathsome to my wife," and so also Noyes. Wemyss translates it, "my own wife turns aside from my breath." Dr Good, "my breath is scattered away by my wife." The literal meaning is, "my breath is "strange" (זרה *zârâh*) to my wife;" and the idea is, that there had been such a change in him from his disease, that his breath was not that which she had been accustomed to

breathe without offence, and that she now turned away from it as if it were the breath of a stranger. Jerome renders it, "Halitum meum exhorruit uxor mea - my wife abhors my breath." It may be worthy of remark here, that but "one" wife of Job is mentioned - a remarkable fact, as he probably lived in an age when polygamy was common.

I entreated her - I appealed to her by all that was tender in the domestic relation, but in vain. From this it would seem that even his wife had regarded him as an object of divine displeasure and had also left him to suffer alone.

For the children's sake of mine own body - Margin, "my belly." There is consideralbe variety in the interpretation of this passage. The word rendered "my own body" (בטני *beṭenîy*) means literally, "my belly or womb;" and Noyes, Gesenius, and some others, suppose it means the children of his own mother! But assuredly this was scarcely an appeal that Job would be likely to make to his wife in such circumstances. There can be no impropriety in supposing that Job referred to himself, and that the word is used somewhat in the same sense as the word "loins" is in Genesis 35:11; Genesis 46:26; Exodus 1:5; 1 Kings 8:19. Thus, understood, it would refer to his own children, and the appeal to his wife was founded on the relation which they had sustainded to them. Though they were now dead, he referred to their former united attachment to them, to the common affliction which they had experienced in their loss; and in view of all their former love to them, and all the sorrow which they had experienced in their death, he made an appeal to his wife to show him kindness, but in vain. Jerome renders this, "*Orabam filios uteri mei*." The Septuagint, not understanding it, and trying to "make" sense of it, introduced a statement which is undoubtedly false, though Rosenmuller accords with it. "I called affectionately (κολακεύων *kolakeuōn*) the sons of my concubines" - υἵους παλλακίδων μου *huious pallakidōn mou* But the whole meaning is evidently that he made a solemn and tender appeal to his wife, in view of all the joys and sorrows which they had experience as the united head of a family of now no more. What would reach the heart of an estranged wife, if such an appeal would not?

Verse 18

Yea, young children - Margin, or "the wicked." This difference between the text and the margin arises from the ambiguity of the original word - עוילים *ʿăvîylîym* The word עויל *ʿăvîyl* (whence our word "evil")

means sometimes the wicked, or the ungodly, as in Job 16:11. It may also mean a child, or suckling, (from עוּל *ʿûl* - to give milk, to suckle, 1 Samuel 7:7-10; Genesis 22:13: Isaiah 40:11; compare Isaiah 49:15; Isaiah 65:20,) and is doubtless used in this sense here. Jerome, however, renders it "*stulti* - fools." The Septuagint, strangely enough, "They renounced me forever." Dr. Good renders it, "Even the dependents." So Schultens, *Etiam clientes egentissimi* - "even the most needy clients." But the reference is probably to children who are represented as withholding from him the respect which was due to age.

I arose, and they spake against me - "When I rise up, instead of regarding and treating me with respect, they make me an object of contempt and sport." Compare the account of the respect which had formerly been shown him in Job 29:8.

Verse 19

All my inward friends - Margin, "the men of my secret." The meaning is those, who were admitted to the intimacy of friendship or who were permitted to be acquainted with his secret thoughts, purposes, and plans. The word uses here (סוד *sôd*) denotes properly "a couch, cushions, pillow," on which one reclines; then a "divan," a circle of persons sitting together for consultation or conversation; and hence, it refers to those who are sitting together in intimate counsel, (see Job 15:8, note; Job 29:4, note) and then familiar conversation, intimacy. Here the phrase "men of my intimacy" (סודי *sôdîy*) denotes those who were admitted to intimate friendship. All such persons had now forsaken him, and turned against him.

Verse 20

My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh - The meaning of this probably is, "my skin and flesh are dried up so that the bone seems adhere to the skin, and so tht the form of the bone becomes visible." It is designed to denote a state of great emaciation, and describes an effect which we often see.

And I am escaped with the skin of my teeth - A very difficult expression, and which has greatly perplexed commentators, and on whose meaning they are by no means agreed. Dr. Good renders it, "and in the skin of my teeth am I dissolved;" but what that means is as difficult of explanation as the original. Noyes, "and I have scarcely escaped with the skin of my teeth." Herde, (as translated by Marsh,) "and scarcely the skin in my teeth have I brought away as a spoil." He says that "the figure is taken

from the prey which wild beasts carry in their teeth; his skin is his poor and wretched body, which alone he had escaped with. His friends are represented as carnivorous animals which gnaw upon his skin, upon the poor remnant of life;" but the Hebrew will not bear this construction. Poole observes, quaintly enough, that it means, "I am scarcely sound and whole and free from sores in any part of my skin, except that of my jaws, which holdeth and covereth the roots of my teeth. This being, as divers observe, the devil's policy, to leave his mouth untouched, that be might more freely express his mind, and vent his blasphemies against God, which he supposed sharp pain would force him to do." Schultens has mentioned four different interpretations given to the phrase, none of which seems to be perfectly satisfactory. They are the following:

(1) That it means that the skin "about" the teeth alone was preserved, or the gums and the lips, so that he had the power of speaking, though every other part was wasted away, and this exposition is given, accompanied with the suggestion that his faculty of speech was preserved entire by Satan, in order that he might be "able" to utter the language of complaint and blasphemy against God.

(2) That he was emaciated and exhausted completely, "except" the skin about his teeth, that is, his lips, and that by them he was kept alive; that if it were not for them he could not breathe, but must soon expire.

(3) That the teeth themselves had fallen out by the force of disease, and that nothing was left but the gums. This opinion Schultens himself adopts. The image, be says, is taken from pugilists, whose teeth are knocked out by each other; and the meaning he supposes to be, that Job had been treated by his disease in the same manner. So violent had it been that he had lost all his teeth and nothing was left but his gums.

(4) A fourth opinion is, that the reference is to the "enamel" of the teeth, and that the meaning is, that such was the force and extent of his afflictions that all his teeth became hollow and were decayed, leaving only the enamel. It is difficult to determine the true sense amidst a multitude of learned conjectures; but probably the most simple and easy interpretation is the best. It may mean that he was "almost" consumed. Disease had preyed upon his frame until he was wasted away. Nothing was left but his lips, or his

gums; he was just able to speak, and that was all. So Jerome renders it, delicta sunt tantummodo labia circa dentes meos. Luther renders it, und kann meine Zahne mit der Haut nicht bedecken - "and I cannot cover my teeth with the skin;" that is, with the lips.

Verse 21

Have pity on me - A tender, pathetic cry for sympathy. "God has afflicted me, and stripped me of all my comforts, and I am left a poor, distressed, forsaken man. I make my appeal to you, my friends, and entreat you to have pity; to sympathize with me, and to sustain me by the words of consolation." One would have supposed that these words would have gone to the heart, and that we should hear no more of their bitter reproofs. But far otherwise was the fact.

The hand of God hath touched me - Hath smitten me; or is heavy upon me. The meaning is, that he had been subjected to great calamities by God, and that it was right to appeal now to his friends, and to expect their sympathy and compassion. On the usual meaning of the word here rendered, "hath touched" (נגעה *nâgaʿâh* from נגע *nâgaʿ*), see the notes at Isaiah 53:4.

Verse 22

Why do ye persecute me as God? - As God has done. That is, without giving me any reason for it; accusing me of crimes without proof, and condeming me without mitigation. That there is here an improper reflection on God, will be apparent to all. It accords with what Job frequently expresses where he speaks of him as judging him severly, and is on of the instances which prove that he was not entirely perfect.

And are not satisfied with my flesh - That is, are not contented that my "body" is subjected to inexpressible torment, and is wholly wasting away, but add to this the torment of the soul. Why is it not enough that my "body" is thus tormented without adding the severer tortures of the mind?

Verse 23

Oh that my words were now written! - Margin, as in Hebrew, "Who will give;" a common mode of expressing desire among the Hebrews. This expression of desire introduces one of the most important passages in the book of Job. It is the language of a man who felt that injustice was done by his friends, and that he was not likely to have justice done him by that generation. He was charged with hypocrisy; his motives were called in

question; his solemn appeals, and his arguments to assert his innocence, were disregarded; and in this state of mind he expresses the earnest wish that his expressions might be permanently recorded, and go down to far distant times. He desired that what he had said might be preserved, that future ages might be able to judge between him and his accusers, and to know the justice of his cause. The desire thus expressed has been granted, and a more permanent record bas been made than if, in accordance with his request, his sentiments had been engraved on lead or stone.

Oh that they were printed! - It is clear that this expression may convey wholly an erroneous idea. The art of "printing" was then unknown; and the passage has no allusion to that art. The original word (חקק *châqaq*) means properly, to cut in, to hew; then to cut - e. g. a sepulchre in a rock, Isaiah 22:16; then to cut, or engrave letters on a tablet of lead or stone, Isaiah 30:8; Ezekiel 4:1; and generally it implies the notion of engraving, or inscribing on a plate with an engraving tool. Anciently books were made of materials which allowed of this mode of making a record. Stone would probably be the first material; and then plates of metal, leaves, bark, skins, etc. The notion of engraving, however, is the proper idea here.

In a book - - בספר *besêpher* The word ספר drow *sêpher* is derived from ספר *sâphar* In Arabic the kindred word *shafar* means to scratch, to scrape; and hence, to engrave, write, record - and the idea was originally that ofinsculping or engraving on a stone. Hence, the word comes to denote a book, of any materials, or made in any form. Pliny, speaking of the materials of ancient books, says, *Olim in palmarum foliis scriptitatum, et libris quarundam arborum; postea publira monumenta plumbeis voluminibus, mox et privata lintels confici coepta aut ceris.* Lib. xiii. 11. "At first men wrote on the leaves of the palm, or the bark of certain trees; but afterward public documents were preserved in leaden volumes (or rolls), and those of a private nature on wax or linen." "Montfaucon purchased at Rome, in 1699, an ancient book entirely composed of lead. It was about four inches long, and three inches wide: and not only were the two pieces that formed the cover, and the leaves, six in number, of lead, but also the stick inserted through the rings to hold the leaves together, as well as the hinges and nails. It contained Egyptian Gnostic figures and unintelligible writing. Brass, as more durable, was used for the inscriptions designed to last the longest, such as treaties, laws, and alliances. These public documents were, however, usually written on large tablets. The style

for writing on brass and other hard substances was sometimes tipped with diamond."

The meaning of the word here is evidently a record made on stone or lead - for so the following verses indicate. The art of writing or engraving was known in the time of Job; but I do not know that there is evidence that the art of writing on leaves, bark, or vellum was yet understood. As books in the form in which they are now were then unknown; as there is no evidence that at that time anything like volumes or rolls were possessed; as the records were probably preserved on tablets of stone or lead; and as the entire description here pertains to something that was engraved; and as this sense is conveyed by the Arabic verb from which the word ספר *sêpher* book, is derived, the word tablet, or some kindred word, will better express the sense of the original than book - and I have, therefore, used it in the translation.

Assyrian records are found generally in stone or clay; and the latter being more easily and speedily engraven with a triangular instrument, was more frequently employed.

(1) An Assyrian terra-cotta cylinder from Khorsabad contains the annals of the reign of Sargon. It is dated about 721 B.C.

(2) A hexagonal terra cotta cylinder from Koyunjik contains the annals of the first eight years of the reign of Sennacherib (702 to 694 B.C.), with an account of the expedition against Hezekiah.

(3) The inscription shows Assyrian scribes making notes of prisoners, heads of slain, spoils, etc. It comes from Koyunjik.

Verse 24

That they were graven - Cut in, or sculptured - as is done on stones. That they might become thus a permanent record.

With an iron pen - A stylus, or an engraving tool - for so the word (עט ʿêṭ) means. The instrument formerly used for writing or engraying was a small, sharp-pointed piece of iron or steel, that was employed to mark on lead or stone - somewhat in the form of small graying tools now. When the

writing was on wax, the instrument was made with a flat head, that it could be obliterated by pressing it on or passing it over the wax.

The reason why Job mentions the iron pen here is, that he wished a perment record. He did not desire one made with paint or chalk, but one which would convey his sentiments down to future times.

And lead - That is, either engraved on lead, or more probably with lead. It was customary to cut the letters deep in stone, and then to fill fill them up with lead, so that the record became more permanent. This I take to be the meaning here. The Hebrew will scarcely allow of the supposition that Job meant that the records should be made on plates of lead - though such plates were used early, but perhaps not until after the time of Job.

In the rock - It was common, at an early period, to make inscriptions on the smooth surface of a rock. Perhaps the first thai were made were on stones, which were placed as way marks, or monuments over the dead - as we now make such inscriptions on grave-stones. Then it became common to record any memorable transaction - as a battle - on stones or rocks; and perhaps, also, sententious and apothegmatical remarks were recorded in this manner, to admonish travelers, or to transmit them to posterity. Numerous inscriptions of this kind are found by travelers in the East, on tombs, and on rocks in the desert. All that can be appropriate here is a notice of such early inscriptions of that kind in Arabia, as would render it probable that they existed in the time of Job, or such as indicate great antiquity. Happily we are at no loss for such inscriptions on rocks in the country where Job lived.

The Wady Mokatta, the cliffs of which bear these inscriptions, is a valley entering Wady Sheikh, and bordering the upper regions of the Sinai mountains. It extends for about three hours‘ march, and in most places its rocks present abrupt cliffs, twenty or thirty feet high. From these cliffs large masses have separated, and lie at the bottom of the valley. The cliffs and rocks are thickly covered with inscriptions, which are continued at intervals of a few hundred paces only, for at least the distance of two hours and a half. Burckhardt, in his travels from Akaba to Cairo, by Mount Sinai, observed many inscriptions on the rocks, part of which he has copied. See his Travels in Syria, Lond. Ed. pp. 506,581,582,606,613,614. Pococke, who also visited the regions of Mount Sinai in 1777, has given a description of the inscriptions which he saw on the rocks at Mount Sinai. Vol. i. 148, be says,” There are on many of the rocks, both near these mountains and in the road, a great many inscriptions in an ancient character; many of them I

copied, and observed that most of them were not cut, but stained, making the granite of a lighter color, and where the stone had scaled, I could see the stain had sunk into the stone."

Numerous specimens of these inscriptions may be seen in Pococke, vol. i. p. 148. These inscriptions were also observed by Robinson and Smith, and are described by them in Biblical Researches, vol. i. 108,118,119,123,161,167. They are first mentioned by Cosmas, about 535 a.d. He supposed them to be the work of the ancient Hebrews, and says that certain Jews, who had read them, explained them to him as noting "the journey of such an one, out of such a tribe, in such a year and month." They have also been noticed by many early travelers, as Neitzschitz, p. 149; Moncongs, i. p. 245; and also by Niebuhr in his Reisebeschr. i. p. 250. The copies of them given by Pococke and Niebuhr are said to be very imperfect; those by Seetzen are better, and those made by Burckhardt are tolerably accurate. Rob. Bib. Research. i. 553. A large number of them have been copied and published by Mr. Grey, in the Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature, vol. iii. pt. 1, Lond. 1832; consisting of one hundred and seventy-seven in the unknown character, nine in Greek, and one in Latin. These inscriptions, which so long excited the curiosity of travelers, have been recently deciphered (in the year 1839) by Professor Beer, of the University of Leipzig. He had turned his attention to them in the year 1833, but without success.

In the year 1839 his attention was again turned to them, and after several months of the most persevering application, he succeeded in making out the alphabet, and was enabled to read all the inscriptions which have been copied, with a good degree of accuracy. According to the results of this examination, the characters of the Sinaitic inscriptions belong to a distinct and independent alphabet. Some of the letters are wholly unique; the others have more or less affinity with the Palmyrene, and particularly with the Estrangelo and the Cufic. They are written from right to left. The contempts of the inscriptions, so far as examined, consist only of proper names, preceded by a word which is usually שׁלם *shâlôm* peace, though occasionally some other word is used. In one or two instances the name is followed by a sentence which has not yet been deciphered. The names are

those common in Arabic. It is a remarkable fact that not one Jewish or Christian name has been found.

The question, as to the writers of these inscriptions, receives very little light from their contents. A word at the end of some of them may be so read as to affirm that they were pilgrims, and this opinion Professor Beer adopts; but this is not certain. That the writers were Christians, seems apparent from many of the crosses connected with the inscriptions. The age, also, of the inscriptions, receives no light from their conents, as no date has yet been read. Beer supposes that the greater part of them could not have been written earlier than the fourth century. Little light, therefore, is cast upon the question who wrote them; what was their design; in what age they were written, or who were the pilgrims who wrote them. See Rob. Bib. Research. i. 552-556. That there were such records in the time of Job, is probable.

Verse 25

For I know that my Redeemer liveth - There are few passages in the Bible which have excited more attention than this, or in respect to which the opinions of expositors have been more divided. The importance of the passage Job 19:25-27 has contributed much to the anxiety to understand its meaning - since, if it refers to the Messiah, it is one of the most valuable of all the testimonials now remaining of the early faith on that subject. The importance of the passage will justify a somewhat more extended examination of its meaning than it is customary to give in a commentary of a single passage of Scripture; and I shall

(1.) Give the views entertained of it by the translators of the ancient and some of the modern versions;

(2.) Investigate the meaning of the words and phrases which occur in it; and

(3.) State the arguments, pro and con, for its supposed reference to the Messiah.

The Vulgate renders it, "For I know that my Redeemer - *Redemptor meus* - lives, and that in the last day I shall rise from the earth; and again, I shall be enveloped - *circumdabor* - with my skin, and in my flesh shall I see

my God. Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another - this, my hope, is laid up in my bosom." The Septuagint translate it, "For I know that he is Eternal who is about to deliver me - ὁ ἐκλύειν με μέλλων *ho ekluein me mellōn* - to raise again upon earth this skin of mine, which draws up these things - τὸ ἀναντλοῦν ταῦτα *to anantloun tauta* (the meaning of which, I believe, no one has ever been able to divine.) For from the Lord these things have happened to me of which I alone am conscious, which my eye has seen, and not another, and which have all been done to me in my bosom." Thompson's trans. in part. The Syriac is in the main a simple and correct rendering of the Hebrew. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the consummation he will be revealed upon the earth, and after my skin I shall bless myself in these things, and after my flesh. If my eyes shall see God, I shall see light." The Chaldee accords with our version, except in one phrase. "And afterward my skin shall be inflated, (משכי אתפת) - then in my flesh shall I see God." It will be seen that some perplexity was felt by the authors of the ancient versions in regard to the passage. Much more has been felt by expositors. Some notices of the views of the moderns, in regard to particular words and phrases, will be given in the exposition.

I know - I am certain. On that point Job desires to express the utmost confidence. His friends might accuse him of hypocrisy - they might charge him with lack of piety, and he might not be able to refute all that they said; but in the position referred to here he would remain fixed, and with this firm confidence he would support his soul. It was this which he wished to have recorded in the eternal rocks, that the record might go down to future times. If after ages should be made acquainted with his name and his sufferings - if they should hear of the charges brought against him and of the accusations of impiety which had been so harshly and unfeelingly urged, he wished that this testimony might be recorded, to show that he had unwavering confidence in God. He wished this eternal record to be made, to show that he was not a rejecter of truth; that he was not an enemy of God; that he had a firm confidence that God would yet come forth to vindicate him, and would stand up as his friend. It was a testimony worthy of being held in everlasting remembrance, and one which has had, and will have, a permanency much greater than he anticipated.

That my Redeemer - This important word has been variously translated. Rosenmuller and Schultens render it, *vindicem*; Dr. Good, Redeemer; Noyes and Wemyss, vindicator; Herder, avenger, Luther,

Erloser- Redeemer; Chaldee and Syriac, Redeemer. The Hebrew word, גאל *go'al* is from גאל *gā'al* "to redeem, to ransom." It is applied to the redemption of a farm sold, by paying back the price, Leviticus 25:25; Rth 4:4 , Rth 4:6 ; to anything consecrated to God that is redeemed by paying its value, Leviticus 27:13, and to a slave that is ransomed, Leviticus 25:48-49. The word גאל *go'el* is applied to one who redeems a field, Leviticus 25:26; and is often applied to God, who had redeemed his people from bondage, Exodus 6:6; Isaiah 43:1. See the notes at Isaiah 43:1; and on the general meaning of the word, see the notes at Job 3:5. Among the Hebrews, the גאל *go'el* occupied an important place, as a blood-avenger, or a vindicator of violated rights.

See Numbers 35:12, Numbers 35:19, Numbers 35:21, Numbers 35:24-25, Numbers 35:27; Deuteronomy 19:6-12; Rth 4:1 , Rth 4:6 ,Rth 4:8 ; Joshua 20:3. The word גאל *go'el* is rendered kinsman, Rth 4:1 , Rth 4:3 ,Rth 4:6 , Rth 4:8 ; near kinsman, Rth 3:9 , Rth 3:12 ; avenger, Numbers 35:12; Joshua 20:3; Redeemer, Job 19:25; Psalm 19:14; Isaiah 47:4; Isaiah 63:16; Isaiah 44:24; Isaiah 48:17; Isaiah 54:8; Isaiah 41:14; Isaiah 49:26; Isaiah 60:16; kin, Leviticus 25:25, et al. Moses found the office of the גאל *go'el* or avenger, already instituted, (see Michaelis's Commentary on laws of Moses, section cxxxvi.) and he adopted it into his code of laws. It would seem, therefore, not improbable that it prevailed in the adjacent countries in the time of Job, or that there may have been a reference to this office in the place before us. The גאל *go'el* is first introduced in the laws of Moses, as having a right to redeem a mortgaged field, Leviticus 25:25-26; and then as buying a right, as kinsman, to the restoration of anything which had been iniquitously acquired, Numbers 5:8.

Then he is often referred to in the writings of Moses as the blood-avenger, or the kinsman of one who was slain, who would have a right to pursue the murderer, and to take vengeance on him, and whose duty it would be to do it. This right of a near relative to pursues murderer, and to take vengeance, seems to have been one that was early conceded every where. It was so understood among the American Indians, and probably prevails in all countries before there are settled laws for the trial and punishment of the guilty. It was a right, however, which was liable to great abuse. Passion would take the place of reason, the innocent would be suspected, and the man who had slain another in self-defense was as likely

to be pursued and slain as he who had been guilty of willful murder. To guard against this, in the unsettled state of jurisprudence, Moses appointed cities of refuge, where the man-slayer might flee until he could bare a fair opportunity of trial.

It was impossible to put an end at once to the office of the גאל *go'el* The kinsman, the near relative, would feel himself called on to pursue the murderer; but the man-slayer might flee into a sacred city, and remain until he had a fair trial; see Deuteronomy 19:6-7. It was a humane arrangement to appoint cities of refuge, where the man who had slain another might be secure until he had an opportunity of trial - an arrangement which eminently showed the wisdom of Moses. On the rights and duties of the גאל *go'el* the reader may consult Michaelis's Com. on the laws of Moses, art. 136,137. His essential office was that of a vindicator - one who took up the cause of a friend, whether that friend was murdered, or was oppressed, or was wronged in any way. Usually, perhaps always, this pertained to the nearest male kin, and was instituted for the aid of the defenceless and the wronged.

In times long subsequent, a somewhat similar feeling gave rise to the institution of chivalry, and the voluntary defenee of the innocent and oppressed. It cannot now be determined whether Job in this passage has reference to the office of the גאל *go'el* as it was afterward understood, or whether it existed in his time. It seems probable that the office would exist at the earliest periods of the world, and that in the rudest stages of society the nearest of kin would feel himself called on to vindicate the wrong done to one of the feebler members of his family. The word properly denotes, therefore, either vindicator, or redeemer; and so far as the term is concerned, it may refer either to God, as an avenger of the innocent, or to the future Redeemer - the Messiah. The meaning of this word would be met, should it be understood as referring to God, coming forth in a public manner to vindicate the cause of Job against all the charges and accusations of his professed friends; or to God, who would appear as his vindicator at the resurrection; or to the future Messiah - the Redeemer of the body and the soul. No argument in favor of either of these interpretations can be derived from the use of the word.

Liveth - Is alive - חי *chay* Septuagint, immortal - ἀένναός *aennaos* He seems now to have forsaken me as if he were dead, but my faith is unwavering in him as a living vindicator. A similar expression occurs in Job 16:19. "My witness is in heaven, and my record is on high." It is a declaration of entire confidence in God, and will beautifully convey the emotions of the sincere believer in all ages. He may be afflicted with disease, or the loss of property, or be forsaken by his friends, or persecuted by his foes, but if he can look up to heaven and say, "I know that my Redeemer live's," he will have peace.

And that he shall stand - He will stand up, as one does who undertakes the cause of another. Jerome has rendered this as though it referred to Job," And in the last day I shall rise from the earth" - de terra surrecturus sum - as if it referred to the resurrection of the body. But this is not in accordance with the Hebrew, דקום *deqûm* - "he shall stand." There is clearly no necessary reference in this word to the resurrection. The simple meaning is, "he shall appear, or manifest himself, as the vindicator of my cause."

At the latter day - The word "day" here is supplied by the translators. The Hebrew is, יאחרין *ye'achăryôn* - and after, afterward, hereafter, at length. The word literally means, hinder, hinder part - opposite to foremost, former. It is applied to the Mediterranean sea, as being behind when the eye of the geographer was supposed to be turned to the East; (see the notes at Job 18:20;) then it means after, later, applied to a generation or age. Psalm 48:14, to a day - to future times - (יום אחרין *yôm 'achăryôn*), Proverbs 31:25; Isaiah 30:8. All that this word necessarily expresses here is, that at some future period this would occur. It does not determine when it would be. The language would apply to any future time, and might refer to file coming of the Redeemer, to the resurrection, or to some subsequent period in the life of Job. The meaning is, that however long he was to suffer, however protracted his calamities were, and were likely to be, be had the utmost confidence that God would at length, or at some future time, come forth to vindicate him. The phrase, "the latter day," has now acquired a kind of technical meaning, by which we naturally refer it to the day of judgment. But there is no evidence that it has any such reference here. On the general meaning of phrases of this kind, however, the reader may consult my notes at Isaiah 2:2.

Upon the earth - Hebrew על־עפר *ʿal ʿâphâr* - upon the dust. Why the word dust is used, instead of ארץ *'erets* earth, is unknown. It may be because

the word dust is emphatic, as being contrasted with heaven, the residence of the Deity. Noyes. What kited of an appearance God would assume when he should thus come forth, or how he would manifest himself as the vindicator and Redeemer of Job, he does not intimate, and conjecture would be useless. The words do not necessarily imply any visible manifestation - though such a manifestation would not be forbidden by the fair construction of the passage. I say, they do not necessarily imply it; see Psalm 12:5, "For the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, (Hebrew: stand up - אקום *'āqûm* saith the Lord." Psalm 44:26, "arise (Hebrew קומה *qûmāh* - stand up) for our help." Whether this refers to any visible manifestation in behalf of Job is to be determined in other words than by the mere meaning of this word.

Verse 26

And though - Margin, Or, after I shall awake, though this body be destroyed, yet out of my flesh shall I see God. This verse has given not less perplexity than the preceding. Noyes renders it,

And though with this skin this body be wasted away,
Yet in my flesh shall I see God.

Dr. Good renders it,

And, after the disease hath destroyed my skin,
That in my flesh I shall see God.

Rosenmuller explains it, "And when after my skin (scil. is consumed and destroyed) they consume (scil. those corroding, or consuming, that is, it is corroded, or broken into fragments) this, that is, this structure of my bones - my body (which he does not mention, because it was so wasted away that it did not deserve to be called a body) - yet without my flesh - with my whole body consumed, shall I see God." He translates it,

Et quum post cutem meam hoc fuerit consumptum,
Tamen absque carne mea videbo Deum.

The Hebrew is literally, "and after my skin." Gesenius translates it, "After they shall have destroyed my skin, this shall happen - that I will see God." Herder renders it,

Though they tear and devour this my skin,
Yet in my living body shall I see God.

The fair and obvious meaning, I think, is that which is conveyed by our translation. Disease had attacked his skin. It was covered with ulcers, and was fast consuming; compare Job 2:8; Job 7:5. This process of corruption and decay he had reason to expect would go on until all would be

consumed. But if it did, he would hold fast his confidence in God. He would believe that he would come forth as his vindicator, and he would still put his trust in him.

Worms - This word is supplied by our translators. There is not a semblance of it in the original. That is, simply, "they destroy;" where the verb is used impersonally, meaning that it would be destroyed; The agent by which this would be done is not specified. The word rendered "destroy" נקפו *nâqaphû* from נקף *nâqaph* means "to cut, to strike, to cut down" (compare the notes at Job 1:5, for the general meaning of the word), and here means to destroy; that is, that the work of destruction might go on until the frame should be wholly wasted away. It is not quite certain that the word here would convey the idea that he expected to die. It may mean that he would become entirely emaciated, and all his flesh be gone. There is nothing, however, in the word to show that he did not expect to die - and perhaps that would be the most obvious and proper interpretation.

This body - The word body is also supplied by the translators. The Hebrew is simply זאת *zô'th* - this. Perhaps he pointed to his body - for there can be no doubt that his body or flesh is intended. Rosenmuller supposes that he did not mention it, because it was so emaciated that it did not deserve to be called a body.

Yet in my flesh - Hebrew "From my flesh" - מבשׂרי *mîbâśârîy* Herder renders this, "In my living body." Rosenmuller, absque carne mea - "without my flesh;" and explains it as meaning, "my whole body being consumed, I shall see God." The literal meaning is, "from, or out of, my flesh shall I see God." It does not mean in his flesh, which would have been expressed by the preposition ב (*b*) - but there is the notion that from or out of his flesh he would see him; that is, clearly, as Rosenmuller has expressed it, tho' my body be consumed, and I have no flesh, I shall see him. Disease might carry its fearful ravages through all his frame, until it utterly wasted away, yet; he had confidence that he would see his vindicator and Redeemer on the earth. It cannot be proved that this refers to the resurrection of that body, and indeed the natural interpretation is against it. It is, rather, that though without a body, or though his body should all waste away, he would see God as his vindicator. He would not always be left overwhelmed in this manner with calamities and reproaches. He would be permitted to see God coming forth as his Goal or Avenger, and manifesting himself as his friend. Calmly, therefore, he would bear these reproaches and trials, and see his

frame waste away, for it would not always be so - God would yet undertake and vindicate his cause.

Shall I see God - He would be permitted to behold him as his friend and avenger. What was the nature of the vision which he anticipated, it is not possible to determine with certainty. If he expected that God would appear in some remarkable manner to judge the world and to vindicate the cause of the oppressed; or that he would come forth in a special manner to vindicate his cause; or if he looked to a general resurrection, and to the trial on that day, the language would apply to either of these events.

Verse 27

Whom I shall see for myself - It will not come to be by mere report. I shall not merely hear of the decision of God in my favor, but I shall myself behold him. He will at length come forth, and I shall be permitted to see him, and shall have the delightful assurance that he settles this controversy in my favor, and declares that I am his friend. Job was thus permitted to see God Job 42:5, and hear his voice in his favor. He spake to him from the whirlwind Job 38:1, and pronounced the sentence in his favor which he had desired.

And not another - Margin, a stranger. So in the Hebrew. The meaning is, that his own eyes would be permitted to see him. He would have the satisfaction of seeing God himself, and of hearing the sentence in his favor. That expectation he deemed worthy of a permanent record, and wished it transmitted to future times, that in his darkest days and severest trials - when God overwhelmed him, and man forsook him, he still firmly maintained his confidence in God, and his belief that he would come forth to vindicate his cause.

Though my reins - The margin renders this, "my reins within me are consumed with earnest desire for that day." Noyes translates it, "For this my soul panteth within me." Herder,

I shall see him as my deliverer,
Mine eyes shall behold him, as mine,
For whom my heart so long fainted.

So Wemyss, "My reins faint with desire of his arrival." Jerome renders it (Vulgate), *reposita est hoec spes mea in sinu meo* - "this, my hope, is laid up in my bosom." The Septuagint, "All which things have been done - συντετέλεσται *suntetelestai* - in my bosom," but what they understood by this it is difficult to say. The word rendered "reins" כליה *kîlyâh* - or in the

plural כליות *kîlyôth* - in which form only it is found), means properly the reins, or the kidneys Job 16:13. and then comes to denote the inward parts, and then the seat of the desires and affections, because in strong emotions the inward parts are affected. We speak of the heart as the seat of the affections, but with no more propriety than the Hebrews did of the upper viscera in general, or of the reins. In the Scriptures the heart and the reins are united as the seat of the affections. Thus, Jeremiah 11:20, God "trieth the reins and the heart;" Jeremiah 17:10; Jeremiah 20:12; Psalm 7:10. I see no reason why the word here may not be used to denote the viscera in general, and that the idea may be, that he felt that his disease was invading the seat of life, and his body, in all its parts, was wasting away. Our word vitals, perhaps, expresses the idea.

Be consumed - Gesenius renders this, "Pine away." So Noyes, Wemyss, and some others. But the proper meaning of the word is, to consume, to be wasted, to be destroyed. The word כלה *kâlâh* strictly means to finish, complete, render entire; and thence has the notion of completion or finishing - whether by making a thing perfect, or by destroying it. It is used with reference to the eyes that fail or waste away with weeping, Lamentations 2:11, or to the spirit or heart. as fainting with grief and sorrow. Psalm 84:3; Psalm 143:7; Psalm 69:4. It is used often in the sense of destroying. Jeremiah 16:4; Ezra 5:13; Psalm 39:11; Isaiah 27:10; Isaiah 49:4; Genesis 41:30; Jeremiah 14:12; *et soepe al*. This, I think, is the meaning here. Job affirms that his whole frame, external and internal, was wasting away, yet he had confidence that he would see God.

Within me - Margin, in my bosom. So the Hebrew. The word bosom is used here as we use the word chest - and is not improperly rendered "within me." In view of this exposition of the words, I would translate the whole passage as follows:

For I know that my Avenger liveth,
And that hereafter he shall stand upon the earth;
And though after my skin this (flesh) shall be destroyed,
Yet even without my flesh shall I see God:
Whom I shall see for myself,
And mine eyes shall behold, and not another,
Though my vitals are wasting away within me.

It has already been observed, that very various views have been entertained of this important passage of Scripture. The great question has

been, whether it refers to the Messiah, and to the resurrection of the dead, or to an expectation which Job had that God would come forth as his vindicator in some such way as he is declared afterward to have done. It may be proper, therefore. to give a summary of the arguments by which these opinions would be defended. I have not found many arguments stated for the former opinion, though the belief is held by many, but they would be probably such as the following: -

I. Arguments which would be adduced to show that the passage refers to the Messiah and to the future resurrection of the dead.

(1) The language which is used is such as would appropriately describe such events. This is undoubted, though more so in our translation than in the original; but the original would appropriately express such an expectation.

(2) The impression which it would make on the mass of readers, and particularly those of plain, sober sense, who had no theory to defend. It is probably a fact, that the great body of the readers of the Bible suppose that it has such a reference. It is usually a very strong presumptive proof of the correctness of an interpretation of Scripture when this can be alleged in its favor, though it is not an infallible guide.

(3) The probability that some knowledge of the Messiah would prevail in Arabia in the time of Job. This must be admitted, though it cannot be certainly demonstrated; compare Numbers 24:17. The amount of this is, that it could not be regarded as so improbable that any such knowledge would prevail as to demonstrate certainly that this could not be referred to the Messiah.

(4) The probability that there would be found in this book some allusion to the Redeemer - the great hope of the ancient saints, and the burden of the Old Testament But this is not conclusive or very weighty, for there are several of the books of the Old Testament which contain no distinct allusion to him.

(5) The pertinency of such a view to the case, and its adaptedness to give to Job the kind of consolation which he needed. There can be no doubt

of the truth of this; but the question is, not what would have imparted consolation, but what knowledge he actually had. There are many of the doctrines of the Christian religion which would have been eminently fitted to give comfort in such circumstances to a man in affliction, which it would be exceedingly unreasonable to expect to find in the book of Job, and which it is certain were wholly unknown to him and his friends.

(6) The importance which he himself attached to his declaration, and the solemnity of the manner in which he introduced it. His profession of faith on the subject he wished to have engraved in the eternal rocks. he wished it transmitted to future times. He wished a permanent record to be made, that succeeding ages might read it, and see the ground of his confidence and his hope. This, to my mind, is the strongest argument which has occurred in favor of the opinion that the passage refers to the Redeemer and to the resurrection. These are all the considerations which have occurred to me, or which I have found stated, which would go to sustain the position that the passage referred to the resurrection. Some of them have weight; but the prevailing opinion, that the passage has such a reference. will be found to be sustained, probably, more by the feelings of piety than by solid argument and sound exegesis. It is favored, doubtless, by our common version, and there can be no doubt that the translators supposed that it had such a reference.

II. On the other hand, weighty considerations are urged to show that the passage does not refer to the Messiah, and to the resurrection of the dead. They are such as the following:

(1) The language, fairly interpreted and translated, does not necessarily imply this. It is admitted that our translators had this belief, and without doing intentional or actual violence to the passage, or designing to make a forced translation, they have allowed their feelings to give a complexion to their language which the original does not necessarily convey. Hence, the word “Redeemer,” which is now used technically to denote the Messiah, is employed, though the original “may,” and commonly “does,” have a much more general signification; and hence, the phrase “at the latter day,” also a technical phrase, occurs, though the original means no more than “afterward” or “after this;” and hence, they have employed the phrase “in

my flesh," though the original means no more than "though my flesh be all wasted away." The following I believe to express fairly the meaning of the Hebrew:" I know that my deliverer, or avenger, lives, and that he will yet appear in some public manner on the earth; and though after the destruction of my skin, the process of corruption shall go on until "all" my flesh shall be destroyed, yet when my flesh is entirely wasted away, I shall see God; I shall have the happiness of seeing him for myself, and beholding him with my own eyes, even though my very vitals shall be consumed. He will come and vindicate me and my cause. I have such confidence in his justice, that I do not doubt that he will yet show himself to be the friend of him who puts his trust in him."

(2) It is inconsistent with the argument, and the whole scope and connection of the book, to suppose that this refers to the Messiah and to the resurrection of the body after death. The book of Job is strictly an "argument" - a train of clear, consecutive reasoning. It discusses a great inquiry about the doctrines of divine Providence and the divine dealings with people. The three friends of Job maintained that God deals with men strictly according to their character in this life - that eminent wickedness is attended with eminent suffering; and that when people experience any great calamity, it is proof of eminent wickedness. All this they meant to apply to Job, and all this Job denied. Yet he was perplexed and confounded. He did not know what to do with the "facts" in the case; but still he felt embarrassed. All that he could say was, that God would "yet" come forth and show himself to be the friend of those who loved him and that though they suffered now, yet he had confidence that be would appear for their relief.

Now, had they possessed the knowledge of the doctrine of the "resurrection of the dead," it would have ended the whole debate. it would not only have met all the difficulties of Job, but we should have found him perpetually recurring to it - placing it in every variety of form - appealing to it as relieving his embarrassments, and as demanding an answer from his friends. But, on the supposition that this refers to the resurrection, it is remarkable that the passage here stands alone. Job never adverted to it before, but allowed himself to be greatly embarrassed for the lack of just such an argument, and he never refers to it again. He goes on to argue again

“as if” he believed no such doctrine. He does not ask his friends to notice this: he expresses no surprise that they should pass by, in entire neglect, an argument which “must have been seen” to be decisive of the controversy. It is equally unaccountable that his friends should not have noticed it.

If the doctrine of the resurrection was true, it settled the case. It rendered all their arguments worthless, and would have met the case just as we meet similar cases now. It was incumbent on them to show that there was no evidence of the truth of any such doctrine as the resurrection, and that this could not be urged to meet their arguments. Yet they never allude to so important and unanswerable an argument, and evidently did not suppose that Job referred to any such event. It is equally remarkable that neither Elihu nor God himself, in the close of the book, make any such allusion, or refer to the doctrine of the resurrection at all, as meeting the difficulties of the case. In the argument with which the Almighty is represented as closing the book, the whole thing is resolved into a matter of “sovereignty,” and people are required to submit because God is great, and is inscrutable in his ways - not because the dead will be raised, and the inequalities of the present life will be recompensed in a future state. The doctrine of a “resurrection” - a great and glorious doctrine, such as, if once suggested, could not have escaped the profound attention of these sages - would have solved the whole difficulty; and yet, confessedly, it is never alluded to by them - never introduced - never examined - never admitted or rejected - never becomes a matter of inquiry, and is never referred to by God himself as settling the matter - never occurs in the book in any form, unless it be in this. This is wholly unaccountable on the supposition that this refers to the resurrection.

(3) The interpretation which refers this to the resurrection of the dead, is inconsistent with numerous passages where Job expresses a contrary belief. Of this nature are the following: Job 7:9,” As the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more;” Job 7:21, “I shall sleep in the dust thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be;” see Job 10:21-22, “I go whence I shall not return - to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death; a land of darkness as darkness itself;” Job 14:7, Job 14:9, Job 14:11-12,” For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not

cease. But man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up, so man lieth down and riseth not; until the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."

Job 16:22, "when a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return." These passages all imply that when he should die, he would not appear again on the earth. This is not such language as one would use who believed in the resurrection of the dead. It is true, that in the discourses of Job, various and sometimes apparently contradictory feelings are expressed. He was a severe sufferer; and under strong conflicting emotions he sometimes expressed himself in a manner which he at other times regrets, and gives vent to feelings which, on mature reflection, he confesses to have been wrong. But how is it "possible" to believe that a man, in his circumstances, would ever deny the doctrine of the resurrection if he held it? How could he forget it? How could he throw out a remark that "seemed" to imply a doubt of it? If he had known of this, it would have been a sheet-anchor to his soul in all the storms of adversity - an unanswerable argument to all that his friends advanced - atopic of consolation which he could never have lost sight of, much less denied. He would have clung to that hope as the refuge of his soul, and not for one moment would he have denied it, or expressed a doubt of its truth.

(4) I may urge as a distinct argument what has before been hinted at, that this is not referred to as a topic of consolation by either of the friends of Job, by Elihu, or by God himself. Had it been a doctrine of those times, his friends would have understood it, and it would have reversed all their theology. Had it been understood by Elihu, he would have urged it as a reason for resignation in affliction. Had God designed that it should be known in that age, no more favorable opportunity could be conceived for the purpose than at the end of the arguments in this book. What a flood of light would it have thrown on the design of afflictions! How effectually would it have rebuked the arguments of the friends of Job! And how clear is it, therefore, that God did not "intend" that it should then be revealed to man, but meant that it should be reserved for a more advanced state of the world, and particularly that it should be reserved as the grand doctrine of the Christian revelation.

(5) A fifth consideration is, that on the supposition that it refers to the resurrection, it would be inconsistent with the views which prevailed in the age when Job is supposed to have lived. It is wholly in advance of that age. It makes little difference in regard to this whether we suppose him to have lived in the time of Abraham, Jacob, or Moses, or even at a later period - such a supposition would be equally at variance with the revelations which had then been given. The clear doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, is one of the unique doctrines of Christianity - one of the last truths of revelation, and is one of the glorious truths which seem to have been reserved for the Redeemer himself to make known to man. There are, indeed, obscure traces of it in the Old Testament. Occasionally we meet with a hint on the subject that was sufficient to excite the hopes of the ancient saints, and to lead them to suppose that more glorious truths were in reserve to be communicated by the Messiah. But those hints occur at distant intervals; are obscure in their character, and perhaps if all in the Old Testament were collected, they would not be sufficient to convey any very intelligible view of the resurrection of the dead.

But on the supposition that the passage before us refers to that doctrine, we have here one of the most clear and full revelations on the subject, laid far back in the early ages of the world, originating in Arabia, and entirely in advance of the prevailing views of the age, and of all that had been communicated by the Spirit of inspiration to the generations then living. It is admitted, indeed, that it was "possible" for the Holy Spirit to communicate that truth in its fulness and completeness to an Arabian sage; but it is not the way in which revelation, in other respects, has been imparted. It has been done "gradually." Obscure intimations are given at first - they are increased from time to time - the light becomes clearer, until some prophet discloses the whole truth, and the doctrine stands complete before us. Such a course we should expect to find in regard to the doctrine of the resurrection, and such is exactly the course pursued, unless "this" passage teaches what was in fact the highest revelation made by the Messiah.

(6) All which the words and phrases fairly convey, and all which the argument demands, is fully met by the supposition that it refers to some

such event as is recorded in the close of the book. God appeared in a manner corresponding to the meaning of the words here upon the earth. He came as the Vindicator, the Redeemer, the גאל *gō'el* of Job. He vindicated his cause, rebuked his friends, expressed his approbation of the sentiments of Job, and blessed him again with returning prosperity and plenty. The disease of the patriarch may have advanced, as he supposed it would. His flesh may have wasted away, but his confidence in God was not misplaced, and he came forth as his vindicator and friend. It was a noble expression of faith on the part of Job; it showed that he "had" confidence in God, and that in the midst of his trials he truly relied on him; and it was a sentiment worthy to be engraved in the eternal rock, and to be transmitted to future times.

It was an invaluable lesson to sufferers, showing them that confidence could, and should be placed in God in the severest trials. So far as I can see, all that is fairly implied in the passage, when properly interpreted, is fully met by the events recorded in the close of the book. Such an interpretation meets the exigency of the case, accords with the strain of the argument and with the result, and is the most simple and natural that has been proposed. These considerations are so weighty in my mind that they have conducted me to a conclusion, contrary I confess to what I had "hoped" to have reached, that this passage has no reference to the Messiah and the doctrine of the resurrection. We do not "need" it - for all the truths respecting the Messiah and the resurrection which we need, are fully revealed elsewhere; and though this is an exquisitely beautiful passage, and piety would love to retain the belief that it refers to the resurrection of the dead, yet "truth" is to be preferred to indulgence of the wishes and desires of the heart, however amiable or pious, and the "desire" to find certain doctrines in the Bible should yield to what we are constrained to believe the Spirit of inspiration actually taught.

I confess that I have never been so pained at any conclusion to which I have come in the interpretation of the Bible, as in the case before us. I would like to have found a distinct prophecy of the Messiah in this ancient and venerable book. I would like to have found the faith of this eminent saint sustained by such a faith in his future advent and incarnation. I would like to have found evidence that this expectation had become incorporated

in the piety of the early nations, and was found in Arabia. I would like to have found traces of the early belief of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead sustaining the souls of the patriarchs then, as it does ours now, in trial. But I cannot. Yet I can regard it as a most beautiful and triumphant expression of confidence in God, and as wholly worthy to be engraved, as Job desired it might be, in the solid rock forever, that the passing traveler might see and read it; or as worthy of that more permanent record which it has received by being "printed in a book" - by an art unknown then, and sent down to the end of the world to be read and admired in all generations.

The opinion which has now been expressed, it is not necessary to say, has been held by a large number of the most distinguished critics. Grotius says that the Jews never applied it to the Messiah and the resurrection. The same opinion is held by Grotius himself, by Warburton, Rosenmuller, Le Clerc, Patrick, Kennicott, Dalthe, and Jahn. Calvin seems to be doubtful - sometimes giving it an interpretation similar to that suggested above, and then pursuing his remarks as if it referred to the Messiah. Most of the fathers, and a large portion of modern critics, it is to be admitted, suppose that it refers to the Messiah, and to the future resurrection.

Verse 28

But ye should say - Noyes renders this, "Since ye say, ‹How may we persecute him, and find grounds of accusation against him?'" Dr. Good,

Then shall ye say, "How did we persecute him?"

When the root of the matter is disclosed in me.

The Vulgate, "Why now do ye say, let us persecute him, and find ground of accusation - "*radicem verbi* " against him?" The Septuagint, "If you also say, What shall we say against him? and what ground of accusation - ῥίζαν λόγου *rizan logou* - shall we find in him?" Rosenmuller renders it, "When you say, let us persecute him, and see what ground of accusation we can find in him, then fear the sword." Most critics concur in such an interpretation as implies that they had sought a ground of accusation against him, and that they would have occasion to fear the divine displeasure on account of it. It seems to me, however, that our translators have given substantially the fair sense of the Hebrew. A slight variation would, perhaps, better express the idea: "For you will yet say, Why did we persecute him? The root of the matter was found in him - and since this will be the case,

fear now that justice will overtake you for it, for vengeance will not always slumber when a friend of God is wronged."

Seeing the root of the matter - Margin, "and" what "root of matter is found in me." The word rendered "matter" (דבר *dâbâr*), "word or thing." means, properly, word or thing - and may refer to "any" thing. Here it is used in one of the two opposite senses, "piety" or "guilt" - as being "the thing" under consideration. The interpretation to be adopted must depend on the view taken of the other words of the sentence. To me it seems that it denotes piety, and that the idea is, that the root of true piety was in him, or that he was not a hypocrite. The word root is so common as to need no explanation. It is used sometimes to denote the "bottom," or the lowest part of anything - as e. g., the foot (see Job 13:27, "margin"), the bottom of the mountains Job 28:9, or of the sea, Job 36:30, "margin." Here it means the foundation, support, or source - as the root is of a tree; and the sense, I suppose, is, that he was not a dead trunk, but he was like a tree that had a root, and consequently support and life. Many critics, however, among whom is Gesenius, suppose that it means that the root of the controversy, that is, the ground of strife, was in "him," or that he was the cause of the whole dispute.

Verse 29

Be ye afraid of the sword - Of the sword of justice, of the wrath of God. In taking such views, and using such language, you ought to dread the vengeance of God, for he will punish the guilty.

For wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword - The word "bringeth" is supplied by the translators, and as it seems to me improperly. The idea is, that wrath or anger such as they had manifested, was proper for punishment; that such malice as they had shown was a crime that God would not suffer to escape unpunished. They had, therefore, everything to dread. Literally, it is, "for wrath the iniquities of the sword;" that is, wrath is a crime for the sword.

That ye may know that there is a judgment - That there is justice; that God punishes injuries done to the character, and that he will come forth to vindicate his friends. Probably Job anticipated that when God should come forth to vindicate "him," he would inflict exemplary punishment on "them;" and that this would be not only by words, but by some heavy judgment, such as he had himself experienced. The vindication of the just is commonly attended with the punishment of the unjust; the salvation of the

friends of God is connected with the destruction of his foes. Job seems to have anticipated this in the case of himself and his friends; it will certainly occur in the great day when the affairs of this world shall be wound up in the decisions of the final judgment. See Matthew 25.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Verse 2

Therefore - לכן *lākên* "certainly, truly." In view of what has been just said. Or perhaps the word means merely certainly, truly.

Do my thoughts cause me to answer - This is variously rendered. The Vulgate renders it, *Idcirco cogitationes meae variae succedunt sibi, et mens in diversa rapitur* - "Therefore my various thoughts follow in succession, and the mind is distracted." The Septuagint, "I did not suppose that thou wouldst speak against these things, and you do not understand more than I." How this was ever made from the Hebrew it is impossible to say. On the word "thoughts," see the notes at Job 4:13. The word denotes thoughts which divide and distract the mind; not calm and collected reflections, but those which disturb, disconcert, and trouble. He acknowledges that it was not calm reflection which induced him to reply, but the agitating emotions produced by the speech of Job. The word rendered "cause me to answer" (ישׁיבוּני *yeshîybûnîy*), "cause me to return" - and Jerome understood it as meaning that his thoughts returned upon him in quick and troublesome succession, and says in his Commentary on Job, that the meaning is, "I am troubled and agitated because you say that you sustain these evils from God without cause, when nothing evil ought to be suspected of God."

And for this I make haste - Margin, "my haste is in me." The meaning is, "the impetuosity of my feelings urges me on. I reply on account of the agitation of my soul, which will admit of no delay." His heart was full, and he hastened to give vent to his feelings in impassioned and earnest language.

Verse 3

I have heard the check of my reproach - I have heard your violent and severe language reproaching us. Probably he refers to what Job had said in the close of his speech Job 19:29, that they had occasion to dread the wrath of God, and that they might anticipate heavy judgments as the result of their opinions. Or it may be, as Schultens supposes, that he refers to what Job said in Job 19:2, and the rebuke that he had administered there. Or possibly, and still more probably, I think, he may refer to what Job had said in reply to the former speech of Zophar Job 12:2, where he tauntingly says that "they were the people, and that wisdom would die with them." The Hebrew literally is, "the correction of my shame" (כלמה מוּסר *mûsâr kelîmmâh*), "the

correction of my shame." that is, the castigation or rebuke which tends to cover me with ignominy. The sense is, "you have accused me of that which is ignominious and shameful, and under the impetuous feelings caused by such a charge I cannot refrain from replying."

And the spirit of my understanding - Meaning, perhaps, "the emotion of his mind." The word "mind" or "soul" would better express the idea than the word "understanding;" and the word "spirit" here seems to be used in the sense of violent or agitating emotions - perhaps in allusion to the primary signification of the word (רוּח *rûach*), "mind."

Verse 4

Knowest thou not this of old - That is, dost thou not know that this has always happened from the beginning of the world, or that this is the invariable course of events. His purpose is to show that it was the settled arrangement of Providence that the wicked would be overtaken with signal calamity. It was "so" settled that Job ought not to be surprised that it had occurred in "his" case. Zophar goes on to show that though a wicked man might rise high in honor, and obtain great wealth, yet that the fall would certainly come, and he would sink to a depth of degradation corresponding to the former prosperity.

Since man was placed upon earth - Since the creation; that is, it has always been so.

Verse 5

That the triumphing - The word "triumphing" here (רנּנה *renânâh*)," shouting, rejoicing" - such a shouting as people make after a victory, or such as occurred at the close of harvesting. Here it means that the occasion which the wicked had for rejoicing would be brief. It would be but for a moment, and he then would be overwhelmed with calamity or cut off by death.

Short - Margin, as in Hebrew "from near." That is, it would be soon over.

And the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment? - This probably means, as used by Zophar, that the happiness of a hypocrite would be brief - referring to the happiness arising from the possession of health, life, property, friends, reputation. Soon God would take away all these, and leave him to sorrow. This, he said, was the regular course of events as they had been observed from the earliest times. But the "language" conveys most important truths in reference to the spiritual joys of the hypocrite at all

times, though it is not certain that Zophar used it in this sense. The truths are these.

(1) There is a kind of joy which a hypocrite may have - the counterfeit of that which a true Christian possesses. The word “hypocrite” may be used in a large sense to denote the man who is a professor of religion, but who has none, as well as him who intentionally imposes on others, and who makes pretensions to piety which he knows he has not. Such a man may have joy. He supposes that his sins are forgiven, and that he has a well-founded hope of eternal life. He may have been greatly distressed in view of his sin and danger, and when he supposes that his heart is changed, and that the danger is passed, from the nature of the case he will have a species of enjoyment. A man is confined in a dungeon under sentence of death. A forged instrument of pardon is brought to him. He does not know that it is forged, and supposes the danger is past, and his joy will be as real as though the pardon were genuine. So with the man who “supposes” that his sins are forgiven.

(2) The joy of the self-deceiver or the hypocrite will be short. There is no genuine religion to sustain it, and it soon dies away. It may be at first very elevated, just as the joy of the man who supposed that he was pardoned would fill him with exultation. But in the case of the hypocrite it soon dies away. He has no true love to God; he has never been truly reconciled to him; he has no real faith in Christ; he has no sincere love of prayer, of the Bible, or of Christians and soon the temporary excitement dies away, and he lives without comfort or peace. He may be a professor of religion, but with him it is a matter of form, and he has neither love nor zeal in the cause of his professed Master. Motives of pride, or the desire of a reputation for piety, or some other selfish aim may keep him in the church, and he lives to shed blighting on all around him. Or if, under the illusion, he should be enabled to keep up some emotions of happiness in his bosom, they must soon cease, for to the hypocrite death will soon end it all. How much does it become us, therefore, to inquire whether the peace which we seek and which we may possess in religion, is the genuine happiness which results from true reconciliation to God and a well founded hope of salvation. Sad will be the disappointment of him who has cherished a hope of heaven through life, should he at last sink down to hell! Deep the condemnation of him who has professed to be a friend of God, and who has

been at heart his bitter foe; who has endeavored to keep up the forms of religion, but who has been a stranger through life to the true peace which religion produces!

Verse 6

Though his excellency mount up to the heavens - Though he attain to the highest pitch of honor and prosperity. The Septuagint renders this, "Though his gifts should go up to heaven, and his sacrifice should touch the clouds;" a sentence conveying a true and a beautiful idea, but which is not a translation of the Hebrew. The phrases, to go up to heaven, and to touch the clouds, often occur to denote anything that is greatly exalted, or that is very high. Thus, in Virgil,

It clamor coelo.

So Horace,

Sublimi feriam sidera vertice.

And again,

Attingit solium Joyis.

Compare Genesis 11:4, "Let us build us a tower whose top may reach unto heaven." In Homer the expression not unfrequently occurs, τοῦ γὰρ κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει *tou gar kleos ouranon hikei* In Seneca (Thyest. Act. v. ver. 1,2,4,) similar expressions occur:

Aequalis astris gradior, et cunctos super

Altum superbo vertice attingens polum,

Dimitto superos: summa votorum attigi.

The "language" of Zophar would also well express the condition of many a hypocrite whose piety seems to be of the most exalted character, and who appears to have made most eminent attainments in religion. Such a man may "seem" to be a man of uncommon excellence. He may attract attention as having extraordinary sanctity. He may seem to have a remarkable spirit of prayer, and yet all may be false and hollow. Men who design to be hypocrites, aim usually to be "eminent" hypocrites; they who have true piety often, alas, aim at a much lower standard. A hypocrite cannot keep himself in countenance, or accomplish his purpose of imposing on the world, without the appearance of extraordinary devotedness to God; many a sincere believer is satisfied with much less of the appearance of religion. He is sincere and honest. He is conscious of true piety, and he attempts to impose on none. At the same time he makes no attempt scarcely

"to be" what the hypocrite wishes "to appear" to be; and hence, the man that shall appear to be the most eminently devoted to God "may" be a hypocrite - yet usually not long. His zeal dies away, or he is suffered to fall into open sin, and to show that he had no true religion at heart.

Verse 8

He shall fly away as a dream - As a dream wholly disappears or vanishes. This comparison of man with a dream is not uncommon, and is most impressive. See Psalm 73:20; see the notes at Isaiah 29:7-8.

As a vision of the night - As when one in a dream seems to see objects which vanish when he awakes. The parallelism requires us to understand this of what appears in a dream, and not of a spectre. In our dreams we "seem" to see objects, and when we awake they vanish.

Verse 9

The eye also which saw him - This is almost exactly the language which Job uses respecting himself. See Job 7:8, note; Job 7:10, note.

Verse 10

His children shall seek to please the poor - Margin, or, "the poor shall oppress his children." The idea in the Hebrew seems to be, that his sons shall be reduced to the humiliating condition of asking the aid of the most needy and abject. Instead of being in a situation to assist others, and to indulge in a liberal hospitality, they themselves shall be reduced to the necessity of applying to the poor for the means of subsistence. There is great strength in this expression. It is usually regarded as humiliating to be compelled to ask aid at all; but the idea here is, that they would be reduced to the necessity of asking it of those who themselves needed it, "or would be beggars of beggars."

And his hands shall restore their goods - Noyes renders this, "And their hands shall give back his wealth." Rosenmuller supposes it means, "And their hands shall restore his iniquity;" that is, what their father took unjustly away. There can be but little doubt that this refers to his "sons," and not to himself - though the singular suffix in the word (ידיו *yâdāy*), "his hands" is used. But the singular is sometimes used instead of the plural. The word rendered "goods" (און *'ôn*), means "strength, power, and then wealth;" and the idea here is, that the hands of his sons would be compelled to give back the property which the father had unjustly acquired. Instead of retaining and enjoying it, they would be compelled to make restitution, and thus be reduced to penury and want.

Verse 11

His bones are full of the sin of his youth - The words "of the sin" in our common translation are supplied by the translators. Gesenius and Noyes suppose that the Hebrew means, "His bones are full of youth;" that is, full of vigor and strength, and the idea according to this would be, that he would be cut off in the fulness of his strength. Dr. Good renders it forcibly,

"His secret lusts shall follow his bones,
Yea, they shall press upon him in the dust."

The Vulgate renders it, "His bones are full of the sins of his youth." The Septuagint, "His bones are full of his youth." The Chaldee Paraphrase, "His bones are full of his strength." The Hebrew literally is, "His bones are full of his secret things" (עלומו *ʿâlûmāy*) - referring, as I suppose, to the "secret, long-cherished" faults of his life; the corrupt propensities and desires of his soul which had been seated in his very nature, and which would adhere to him, leaving a withering influence on his whole system in advancing years. The effect is that which is so often seen, when vices corrupt the very physical frame, and where the results are seen long in future life. The effect would be seen in the diseases which they engendered in his system, and in the certainty with which they would bring him down to the grave. The Syriac renders it, "marrow," as if the idea were that he would die full of vigor and strength. But the sense is rather that his secret lusts would work his certain ruin.

Which shall lie down with him - That is, the results of his secret sins shall lie down with him in the grave. He will never get rid of them. He has so long indulged in his sins; they have so thoroughly pervaded his nature, and he so delights to cherish them, that they will attend him to the tomb. There is truth in this representation. Wicked people often indulge in secret sin so long that it seems to pervade the whole system. Nothing will remove it; and it lives and acts until the body is committed to the dust, and the soul sinks ruined into hell.

Verse 12

Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth - Though he has pleasure in committing it, as he has in pleasant food. The sense of this and the following verses is, that though a man may have pleasure in indulgence in sin, and may find happiness of a certain kind in it, yet that the consequences will be bitter - as if the food which he ate should become like gall, and he should cast it up with loathing. There are many sins which, from the laws of

our nature, are attended with a kind of pleasure. Such, for illustration, are the sins of gluttony and of intemperance in drinking; the sins of ambition and vanity; the sins of amusement and of fashionable life. To such we give the name of "pleasures." We do not speak of them as "happiness." That is a word which would not express their nature. It denotes rather substantial, solid, permanent joy - such joy as the "pleasures of sin for a season" do not furnish. It is this temporary "pleasure" which the lovers of vanity, fashion and dress, seek, and which, it cannot be denied, they often find. As long ago as the time of Zophar, it was admitted that such pleasure might be found in some forms of sinful indulgence and yet even in his time that was seen, which all subsequent observation has proved true, that such indulgence must lead to bitter results.

Though he hide it under his tongue - It is from this passage, probably, that we have derived the phrase, "to roll sin as a sweet morsel under the tongue," which is often quoted as if it were a part of Scripture. The "meaning" here is, that a man would find pleasure in sin, and would seek to prolong it, as one does the pleasure of eating that which is grateful to the palate by holding it long in the mouth, or by placing it under the tongue.

Verse 13

Though he spare it - That is, though he retains it long in his mouth, that he may enjoy it the more.

And forsake it not - Retains it as long as he can.

But keep it still within his mouth - Margin, as in Hebrew "in the midst of his palate." He seeks to enjoy it as long as possible.

Verse 14

Yet his meat - His food.

In his bowels is turned - That is, it is as if he had taken food which was exceedingly pleasant, and had retained it in his mouth as long as possible, that he might enjoy it, but when he swallowed it, it became bitter and offensive; compare Revelation 10:9-10. Sin may be pleasant when it is committed, but its consequences will be bitter.

It is the gall of asps - On the meaning of the word here rendered "asps" (פתן *pethen*), see the notes at Isaiah 11:8. There can be little doubt that the "asp," or aspic, of antiquity, which was so celebrated, is here intended. The bite was deadly, and was regarded as incurable. The sight became immediately dim after the bite - a swelling took place, and pain was felt in the stomach, followed by stupor, convulsions, and death. It is probably the

same as the "boetan" of the Arabians. It is about a foot in length, and two inches in circumference - its color being black and white. "Pict. Bib." The word "gall" (מרורה *merôrâh*), means "bitterness, acridness" (compare Job 13:26); and hence, bile or gall. It is not improbable that it was formerly supposed that the poison of the serpent was contained in the gall, though it is now ascertained that it is found in a small sack in the mouth. It is used here as synonymous with the "poison" of asps - supposed to be "bitter" and "deadly." The meaning is, that sin, however pleasant and grateful it may be when committed, will be as destructive to the soul as food would be to the body, which, as soon as it was swallowed, became the most deadly poison. This is a fair account still of the effects of sin.

Verse 15

He hath swallowed down riches - He has "glutted" down riches - or gormandized them - or devoured them greedily. The Hebrew word בלע *belaʿ* means "to absorb, to devour with the idea of greediness." It is descriptive of the voracity of a wild beast, and means here that he had devoured them eagerly, or voraciously.

And he shall vomit - As an epicure does that which he has drunk or swallowed with delight. "Noyes." The idea is, that he shall lose that which he has acquired, and that it will be attended with loathing. All this is to a great extent true still, and may be applied to those who aim to accumulate wealth, and to lay up ill gotten gold. It will be ruinous to their peace; and the time will come when it will be looked on with inexpressible loathing. Zophar meant, undoubtedly, to apply this to Job, and to infer, that since it was a settled maxim that such would be the result of the ill-gotten gain of a wicked man, where a result like this "had" happened, that there must have been wickedness. How cutting and severe this must have been to Job can be easily conceived. The Septuagint renders this, "Out of his house let an angel drag him."

Verse 16

He shall suck the poison of asps - That which he swallowed as pleasant nutriment, shall become the most deadly poison; or the consequence shall be as if he had sucked the poison of asps. It would seem that the ancients regarded the poison of the serpent as deadly, however, it was taken into the system. They seem not to have been aware that the poison of a wound may be sucked out without injury to him who does it; and that it is necessary that the poison should mingle with the blood to be fatal.

The viper‘s tongue shall slay him - The early impression probably was, that the injury done by a serpent was by the fiery, forked, and brandished tongue, which was supposed to be sharp and penetrating. It is now known, that the injury is done by the poison ejected through a groove, or orifice in one of the teeth, which is so made as to lie flat on the roof of the mouth, except when the serpent bites, when that tooth is elevated, and penetrates the flesh. The word “viper” here (אפעה *'ephʿeh*), “viper,” is probably the same species of serpent that is known among the Arabs by the same name still - *El Effah* See the notes at Isaiah 30:6. It is the most common and venomous of the serpent tribe in Northern Africa and in South-western Asia. It is remarkable for its quick and penetrating poison. It is about two feet long, as thick as a man‘s arm, beautifully spotted with yellow and brown, and sprinkled over with blackish specks. They have a large mouth, by which they inhale a large quantity of air, and when inflated therewith, they eject it with such force as to be heard a considerable distance. “Jackson.” Capt. Riley, in his “Authentic Narrative,” (New York, 1817,) confirms this account. He describes the viper as the “most beautiful object in nature,” and says that the poison is so virulent as to cause death in fifteen minutes.

Verse 17

He shall not see the rivers - That is, he shall not be permitted to enjoy plenty and prosperity. Rivers or rills of honey and butter are emblems of prosperity; compare Exodus 3:17; Job 29:6. A land flowing with milk, honey, and butter, is, in the Scripture, the highest image of prosperity and happiness. The word rendered “rivers” (פלגה *pelaggâh*), means rather “rivulets small streams - or brooks,” such as were made by “dividing” a large stream (from פלג *pâlag* to “cleave, divide”), and would properly be applied to canals made by separating a large stream, or dividing it into numerous watercourses for the purpose of irrigating lands. The word rendered “floods,” and in the margin, “streaming brooks” (נחלי נהרי *nâhârēy nachalēy*), means “the rivers of the valley,” or such as flow through a valley when it is swelled by the melting of snow, or by torrents of rain.

A flood, a rapid, swollen, full stream, would express the idea. These were ideas of beauty and fertility among the Orientals; and where butter and honey were represented as flowing in this manner in a land, it was the highest conception of plenty. The word rendered “honey” (דבש *debash*) may, and commonly does, mean “honey;” but it also means the juice of the

grape, boiled down to about the consistency of molasses, and used as an article of food. The Arabs make much use of this kind of food now, and in Syria, nearly two-thirds of the grapes are employed in preparing this article of food. It is called by the Arabs "*Dibs* which is the same as the Hebrew word used here. May not the word mean this in some of the places where it is rendered "honey" in the Scriptures? The word rendered "butter" (חמאה *chem'âh*) probably means, usually, "curdled milk." See the notes at Isaiah 7:15. It is not certain that the word is ever used in the Old Testament to denote "butter." The article which is used still by the Arabs is chiefly curdled milk, and probably this is referred to here. It will illustrate this passage to remark, that the inhabitants of Arabia, and of those who live in similar countries, have no idea of "butter," as it exists among us, in a solid state. What they call "butter," is in a fluid state, and is hence compared with flowing streams. An abundance of these articles was regarded as a high proof of prosperity, as they constitute a considerable part of the diet of Orientals. The same image, to denote plenty, is often used by the sacred writers, and by Classical poets; see Isaiah 7:22:

And it shall come to pass in that day
That a man shall keep alive a young cow and two sheep,
And it shall be that from the plenty of milk which they shall give,

He shall eat butter

For butter and honey shall every one eat,
Who is left alone in the midst of the land.

See also in Joel 3:18:

And it shall come to pass in that day,
The mountains shall drop down new wine,
And the hills shall flow with milk,
And all the rivers of Judah shall flow with water.

Thus, also Ovid, Metam. iii.

Flumina jam lactis, jam flumina nectaris ibant.

Compare Horace Epod. xvi. 41.

Mella cava manant ex ilice; montibus altis
Levis crepante lympha desilit pede.
From oaks pure honey flows, from lofty hills
Bound in light dance the murmuring rills.

Boscawen.

See also Euripides, Bacch. 142; and Theoc. Idyll. 5,124. Compare Rosenmuller‘s Alte u. neue Morgenland on Exodus 3:8, No. 194.

Verse 18

That which he laboured for shall he restore - This means that he shall give back the profit of his labor. He shall not be permitted to enjoy it or to consume it.

And shall not swallow it down - Shall not enjoy it; shall not eat it. He shall be obliged to give it to others.

According to his substance shall the restitution be - literally, according to Gesenius, “As a possession to be restored in which one rejoices not.” The sense is, that all that he has is like property which a man has, which he feels not to be his own, but which belongs to another and which is soon to be given “up.” In such property a man does not find that pleasure which he does in that which he feels to be his own. He cannot dispose of it, and he cannot look on it and feel that it is his. So Zophar says it is with the wicked man. He can look on his property only as that which he will soon be compelled to part with, and not having any security for retaining it, he cannot rejoice in it as if it were his own. Dr. Lee, however, renders this, “As his wealth is, so shall his restitution be; and he shall not rejoice.” But the interpretation proposed above, seems to me to accord best with the sense of the Hebrew.

Verse 19

Because he hath oppressed - Margin, “crushed.” Such is the Hebrew.

And forsaken the poor - He has plundered them, and then forsaken them - as robbers do. The meaning is, that he had done this by his oppressive manner of dealing, and then left them to suffer and pine in want.

He hath violently taken away an house which he builded not - That is, by overreaching and harsh dealings he has come in possession of dwellings which he did not build, or purchase in any proper manner. It does not mean that he had done this by violence - for Zophar is not describing a robber, but he means that he took advantage of the needs of the poor and obtained their property. This is often done still. A rich man takes advantage of the needs of the poor, and obtains their little farm or house for much less than it is worth. He takes a mortgage, and then forecloses it, and buys the property himself for much less than its real value, and thus practices a species of the worst kind of robbery. Such a man, Zophar says, must expect

punishment - and if there is any man who has occasion to dread the wrath of heaven it is he.

Verse 20

Surely he shall not feel quietness - Margin, as in the Hebrew "know." The sense is, he shall not know peace or tranquility. He shall be agitated and troubled. Wemyss, however, renders this, "Because his appetite could not be satisfied." Noyes, "Because his avarice was insatiable." So Rosenmuller explains it. So the Vulgate renders it, "Nec est satiatus renter ejus." The Septuagint, "Neither is there safety to his property, nor shall he be saved by his desire." But it seems to me that the former is the sense, and that the idea is, that he should not know peace or tranquility after he had obtained the things which he had so anxiously sought.

In his belly - Within him; in his mind or heart. The viscera in general in the Scriptures are regarded as the seat of the affections. We confine the idea now to the "heart."

He shall not save of that which he desired - literally, he shall not "escape" with that which was an object of desire. He shall not be "delivered" from the evils which threaten him by obtaining that which he desired. All this shall be taken from him.

Verse 21

"There shall none of his meat be left Margin, "or, be none left for his meat." Noyes renders it, "Because nothing escaped his greatness." Prof. Lee, "no surviver shall remain for his provision." But the meaning, probably, is, nothing shall remain of his food, or it shall all be wasted, or dissipated.

Therefore, shall no man look for his goods - Or rather, his goods or his property shall not endure. But a great variety of interpretations has been given to the passage. The Hebrew word rendered "shall look," יחיל *yāchîyl* is from חוּל *chûl* which means, "to turn round, to twist, to whirl;" and thence, arises the notion of being firm, stable, or strong - as a rope that is twisted is strong. That is the idea here; and the sense is, that his property should not be secure or firm; or that he should not prosper. Jerome renders it, "Nothing shall remain of his goods." The Septuagint, "Therefore his good things - αὐτοῦ τὰ ἀγκθά *autou ta agatha* - shall not flourish" - ἀνθήσει *anthēsei* f0.

Verse 22

In the fulness of his sufficiency - When he seems to have an abundance.

He shall be in straits - Either by the dread of calamity, or because calamity shall come suddenly upon him, and his property shall be swept away. When everything seemed to be abundant he should be reduced to want.

Every hand of the wicked shall come upon him - Margin, "or, troublesome" The meaning is, that all that the wretched or miserable endure should come suddenly upon him. Rosenmuller suggests, however, that it means that all the poor, and all who had been oppressed and robbed by him, would suddenly come upon him to recover their own property, and would scatter all that he had. The general meaning is clear, that he would be involved in misery from every quarter, or on every hand.

Verse 23

When he is about to fill his belly - Or rather, "there shall be enough to fill his belly." But what "kind" of food it should be, is indicated in the following part of the verse. "God" would fill him with the food of his displeasure. It is spoken sarcastically, as of a gormandizer, or a man who lived to enjoy eating, and the meaning is, that he should for once have enough. So Rosenmuller interprets it.

God shall cast the fury - This is the kind of food that he shall have. God shall fill him with the tokens of his wrath - and he shall have enough.

And shall rain it upon him while he is eating - Noyes renders this, "And rain it down upon him for his food." The meaning is, that God would pour down his wrath like a plentiful shower while he was in the act of eating. In the very midst of his enjoyments God would fill him with the tokens of his displeasure. There can be no doubt that Zophar designed that this should be understood to be applicable to Job. Indeed no one can fail to see that his remarks are made with consummate skill, and that they are such as would be fitted "to cut deep," as they were doubtless intended to do. The speaker does not, indeed, make a direct application of them, but he so makes his selection of proverbs that there could be no difficulty in perceiving that they were designed to apply to him, who, from such a height of prosperity, had been so suddenly plunged into so deep calamity.

Verse 24

He shall flee from the iron weapon - The sword, or the spear. That is, he shall be exposed to attacks, and shall flee in cowardice and alarm. Bands

of robbers shall come suddenly upon him, and he shall have no safety except in flight. Pref. Lee explains this as meaning, "While he flees from the iron weapon, the brass bow shall pierre him through." Probably the expression is proverbial, like that in Latin, *Incidit in Scyllam cupiens vitare Charybdin.*

The bow of steel shall strike him through - That is, the "arrow" from the bow of steel shall strike him down. Bows and arrows were commonly used in hunting and in war. To a considerable extent they are still employed in Persia, though the use has been somewhat superseded by the gun. "Bows" were made of various materials. The first were, undoubtedly, of wood. They were inlaid with horn, or ivory, or were made in part of metal. Sometimes, it would seem that the whole bow was made of metal, though it is supposed that the metal bow was not in general use. The "weight," if nothing else, would be an objection to it. The word which is here rendered "steel" (נחוּשׁה *nechûshâh*), means properly "brass or copper" - but it is certain that brass or copper could never have been used to form the main part of the bow, as they are destitute of the elasticity which is necessary. Jerome renders it, et irruet in arcum aereum - "he rushes on the brazen bow." So the Septuagint, τόξον χάλκειον *toxon chalkeion* So the Chaldee, דכוכומא קשתא - "the bow of brass." There is no certain proof that "steel" was then known - though "iron" is often mentioned. It is possible, however, that though the whole bow was not made of brass or copper, yet that such quantities of these metals were employed in constructing bows, that they might, without impropriety, be called bows of brass. The Oriental bow consists of three parts. The handle, or middle part - that on which the arrow rested - was straight, and might be made of wood, brass, copper, or any other strong substance. To this was affixed, at each end, pieces of horn, or of any other elastic substance, and, the string was applied to the ends of these horns. The straight piece might have been of brass, and so without impropriety it might be called a brass bow. It is not properly rendered "steel" at any rate, as the word used here is never employed to denote iron or steel.

Verse 25

It is drawn - Or rather, "he draws" - that is, he draws out the arrow that has been shot at him; or it may mean, as Prof. Lee supposes, that he draws, that is, "someone" draws the arrow from its quiver, or the sword from its sheath, in order to smite him. The object is to describe his death, and to

show that he should be certainly overtaken with calamity. Zophar, therefore, goes through the process by which he would be shot down, or shows that he could not escape.

And cometh out of the body - That is, the arrow, or the glittering blade. It has penetrated the body, and passed through it. He shall be pierced through and through.

The glittering sword - Hebrew ברק *bârâq* - "the glittering;" scil. thing, or weapon, and is given to the sword, because it is kept bright.

Cometh out of his gall - Supposed to be the seat of life. See the notes, Job 16:13.

Terrors are upon him - The terrors of death.

Verse 26

All darkness shall be hid in his secret places - The word "darkness" here, as is common, means evidently calamity. The phrase "is hid," means is treasured up for him. The phrase "in his secret places," may mean "for his treasures," or instead of the great treasures which he had laid up for himself. The Apostle Paul has a similar expression, in which, perhaps, he makes an allusion to this place. Romans 2:5, "but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath." Treasures formerly were laid up in secret places, or places of darkness, that were regarded as inaccessible; see the notes at Isaiah 45:3.

A fire not blown - A fire unkindled. Probably the meaning is, a fire that man has not kindled, or that is of heavenly origin. The language is such as would convey the idea of being consumed by lightning, and probably Zophar intended to refer to such calamities as had come upon the family of Job, Job 1:16. There is much "tact" in this speech of Zophar, and in the discourses of his friends on this point. They never, I believe, refer expressly to the calamities that had come upon Job and his family. They never in so many words say, that those calamities were proof of the wrath of heaven. But they go on to mention a great many similar "cases" in the abstract; to prove that the wicked would be destroyed in that manner; that when such calamities came upon people, it was proof that they were wicked, and they leave Job himself to make the application. The allusion, as in this case, was too broad to be misunderstood, and Job was not slow in regarding it as intended for himself. Prof Lee ("in loc.") supposes that there may be an allusion here to the "fire that shall not be quenched," or to the future punishment of the wicked. But this seems to me to be foreign to the design

of the argument, and not to be suggested or demanded by the use of the word. The argument is not conducted on the supposition that people will be punished in the future world. That would at once have given a new phase to the whole controversy, and would have settled it at once. The question was about the dealings of God "in this life," and whether men are punished according to their deeds here. Had there been a knowledge of the future world of rewards and punishments, the whole difficulty would have vanished at once, and the controversy would have been ended.

It shall go ill with him in his tabernacle - Hebrew שׂריד ירע *yâraʿ śârîyd* - "It shall be ill with whatever survives or remains in his tent." That is, all that remains in his dwelling shall be destroyed. Prof Lee renders it, "In his tent shall his survivor be broken" - supposing that the word ירע *yâraʿ* is from רעע *râʿaʿ* - "to break." But it is more probably from רוע *rûaʿ* - "to be evil; to suffer evil; to come off ill:" and the sense is, that evil, or calamity, would come upon all that should remain in his dwelling.

Verse 27

The heaven shall reveal his iniquity - The meaning here is, that the whole creation would conspire against such a man. Heaven and earth would be arrayed against him. The course of events would be so ordered as to seem designed to bring his character out, and to show what he was. He would attempt to conceal his sin, but it would be in vain. He would hide it in his bosom, but it would be developed. He would put on the air of piety and innocence, but his secret sin would be known. This seems to be the general sense of the verse; and it is not necessary to attempt to show "how" it would be done - whether by lightning from heaven, as Noyes supposes, or whether by some direct manifestation from the skies. Probably the meaning is, that the divine dispensations toward such a man - the overwhelming calamities which he would experience, would show what he was. The word "heaven" is not unfrequently put for God himself. Daniel 4:23, "the heavens do rule." Luke 15:21, "I have sinned against heaven."

The earth shall rise up against him - Calamities from the earth. The course of events here. Want of success - sterility of soil - blight and mildew, would rise up against such a man and show what he was. His real character would in some way be brought out, and it would be seen that he was a wicked man; compare Judges 5:20.

They fought from heaven;
The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

Verse 28

The increase of his house shall depart - Septuagint, "Destruction shall bring his house to an end." The word rendered "depart" (יגל *yîgel* from גלה *gâlâh*), means, properly, "shall go into captivity." The sense is, that whatever he had laid up in his house would entirely disappear.

His goods shall flow away - What he had gained would seem to flow away like water.

In the day of his wrath - The wrath of God - for so the connection demands.

Verse 29

This is the portion of a wicked man - This conclusion is similar to that which Bildad drew at the close of his speech, Job 18:21. Zophar intended, undoubtedly, that Job should apply it to himself, and that he should draw the inference, that one who had been treated in this manner, must be a wicked man.

And the heritage appointed - Margin, "of his decree from." The Hebrew is," Of his word" (אמרו *'êmerô*) - that is, of his "purpose." The idea is, that this is the divine rule, or arrangement. It is not a matter of chance. It is the result of appointment, and when people are afflicted in this manner, we are to conclude that "God" regards them as guilty. The whole object of the discussion was to arrive at the principles of the divine administration. Nothing is attributed to chance; and nothing is ascribed to second causes, except as indicating the will of God. It is assumed, that the course of events in the world was a sufficient exponent of the divine intention, and that when they understood how God "treated" a man, they could clearly understand how he regarded his character. The principle is a good one, when "the whole of existence" is taken into the account; the fault here was in taking in only a small part of existence - this short life - and hastening to the conclusion, that the character could be certainly determined by the manner in which God deals with people here.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Verse 2

Hear diligently - Hebrew "Hearing hear" - that is, hear attentively. What he was about to say was worthy of their solemn consideration.

And let this be your consolations - That is, "You came to me for the professed purpose of giving "me" consolation. In that you have wholly failed. You have done nothing to sustain or comfort me; but all that you have said has only tended to exasperate me, and to increase my sorrow. If you will now hear me attentively, I will take that as a consolation, and it shall be in the place of what I had a right to expect from you. It will be "some" comfort if I am permitted to express my sentiments without interruption, and I will accept it as a proof of kindness on your part."

Verse 3

Suffer me that I may speak - Allow me to speak without interruption, or bear with me while I freely express my sentiments - it is all that I now ask.

And after that I have spoken, mock on - Resume your reproaches, if you will, when I am done. I ask only the privilege of expressing my thoughts on a very important point, and when that is done, I will allow you to resume your remarks as you have done before, and you may utter your sentiments without interruption. Or it may be, that Job utters this in a kind of triumph, and that he feels that what he was about to say was so important that it would end the "argument;" and that all they could say after that would be mere mockery and reviling. The word rendered "mock on" (לעג *lâʿag*) means, originally, "to stammer, to speak unintelligibly" - then, "to speak in a barbarous or foreign language" - then, "to deride or to mock, to ridicule or insult." The idea is, that they might mock his woes, and torture his feelings as they had done, if they would only allow him to express his sentiments.

Verse 4

As for me, is my complaint to man? - There is some difficulty in the interpretation of this verse, and considerable variety of explanation may be seen among expositors. The "object" of the verse is plain. It is to state a reason why they should hear him with patience and without interruption. The meaning of this part of the verse probably is, that his principal difficulty was not with his friends, but with God. It was not so much what

they had said, that gave him trouble, as it was what God had done. Severe and cutting as were their rebukes, yet it was far more trying to him to be treated as he had been by God, "as if" he were a great sinner. That was what he could not understand. Perplexed and troubled, therefore, by the mysteriousness of the divine dealings, his friends ought to be willing to listen patiently to what he had to say; and in his anxiety to find out "why" God had treated him so, they ought not at once to infer that he was a wicked man, and to overwhelm him with increased anguish of spirit.

It will be recollected that Job repeatedly expressed the wish to be permitted to carry his cause at once up to God, and to have his adjudication on it. See Job 13:3, note; Job 13:18, notes. It is that to which he refers when he says here, that he wished to have the cause before God, and not before man. It was a matter which he wished to refer to the Almighty, and he ought to be allowed to express his sentiments with entire freedom. One of the difficulties in understanding this verse arises from the word "complaint." We use it in the sense of "murmuring," or "repining;" but this, I think, is not its meaning here. It is used rather in the sense of "cause, argument, reasoning, or reflections." The Hebrew word שִׂיחַ *śîyîch* means, properly, that which is "brought out" - from שִׂיחַ *śîyach* "to bring out, to put forth, to produce" - as buds, leaves, flowers; and then it means "words" - as brought out, or spoken; and then, meditations, reflections, discourses, speeches; and then it "may" mean "complaint." But there is no evidence that the word is used in that sense here. It means his reflections, or arguments. They were not to man. He wished to carry them at once before God, and he ought, therefore, to be allowed to speak freely. Jerome renders it, *"disputatio mea."* The Septuagint, ἔλεγξις *elengcis* - used here, probably, in the sense of "an argument to produce conviction," as it is often.

And if it were so, why should not my spirit be troubled? - Margin, "shortened," meaning the same as troubled, afflicted, or impatient. A more literal translation will better express the idea which is now lost sight of, "And if so, why should not my spirit be distressed?" That is, since my cause is with God - since my difficulty is in understanding his dealings with me - since I have carried my cause up to him, and all now depends on him, why should I not be allowed to have solicitude in regard to the result? If I manifest anxiety, who can blame me? Who would not, when his all was at stake, and when the divine dealings toward him were so mysterious?

Verse 5

Mark me - Margin, "look unto." Literally, "Look upon me. That is, attentively look on me, on my sufferings, on my disease, and my losses. See if I am a proper object of repreach and mockery - see if I have not abundant reason to be in deep distress when God has afflicted me in a manner so unusual and mysterious.

And be astonished - Silent astonishment should be evinced instead of censure. You should wonder that a man whose life has been a life of piety, should exhibit the spectacle which you now behold, while so many proud contemners of God are permitted to live in affluence and ease.

And lay your hand upon your mouth - As a token of silence and wonder. So Plutarch, de Iside et Osiride, "Wherefore, he had laid his finger on his mouth as a symbol of silence and admiration - ἐχεμυθίας καὶ σιωπῆς σύμβολον *echemuthias kai siōpēs sumbolon* f0."

Verse 6

Even when I remember, I am afraid - I have an internal shuddering and horror when I recall the scenes through which I have passed. I am myself utterly overwhelmed at the magnitude of my own sufferings, and they are such as should excite commiseration in your hearts. Some, however, have connected this with the following verse, supposing the idea to be, that he was horror-stricken when he contemplated the prosperity of wicked people. But there seems to me to be no reason for this interpretation. His object is undoubtedly to show them that there was enough in his ease to awe them into silence; and he says, in order to show that, that the recollection of his sufferings perfectly overwhelmed "him," and filled him with horror. They who have passed through scenes of special danger, or of great bodily suffering, can easily sympathize with Job here. The very recollection will make the flesh tremble.

Verse 7

Wherefore do the wicked live? - Job comes now to the main design of his argument in this chapter, to show that it is a fact, that the wicked often have great prosperity; that they are not treated in this life according to their character; and that it is not a fact that men of eminent wickedness, as his friends maintained, would meet, in this life, with proportionate sufferings. He says, that the fact is, that they enjoy great prosperity; that they live to a great age; and that they are surrounded with the comforts of life in an eminent degree. The meaning is, "If you are positive that the wicked are treated according to their character in this life - that great wickedness is

followed by great judgments, how is it to be accounted for that they live, and grow old, and are mighty in power?" Job assumes the fact to be so, and proceeds to argue as if that were indisputable. It is remarkable, that the fact was not adverted to at an earlier period of the debate. It would have done much to settle the controversy. The "question," "Why do the wicked live?" is one of great importance at all times, and one which it is natural to ask, but which it is not even yet always easy to answer. "Some" points are clear, and may be easily suggested. They are such as these - They live

(1) to show the forbearance and long suffering of God;

(2) to furnish a full illustration of the character of the human heart;

(3) to afford them ample space for repentance, so that there shall not be the semblance of a ground of complaint when they are called before God, and are condemned;

(4) because God intends to make some of them the monuments of his mercy, and more fully to display the riches of his grace in their conversion, as he did in the case of Paul, Augustine, John Bunyan, and John Newton;

(5) they may be preserved to be the instruments of his executing some important purpose by them, as was the case with Pharaoh, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar; or,

(6) he keeps them, that the great interests of society may be carried on; that the affairs of the commercial and the political world may be forwarded by their skill and talent.

For some, or all of these purposes, it may be, the wicked are kept in the land of the living, and are favored with great external prosperity, while many a Christian is oppressed, afflicted, and crushed to the dust. Of the "fact," there can be no doubt; of the "reasons" for the fact, there will be a fuller development in the future world than there can be now.

Become old - The friends of Job had maintained that the wicked would be cut off. Job, on the other hand, affirms that they live on to old age. The "fact" is, that many of the wicked are cut off for their sins in early life, but that some live on to an extreme old age. The argument of Job is founded on

the fact, that "any" should live to old age, as, according to the principles of his friends, "all" were treated in this life according to their character.

Yea, are mighty in power - Or, rather, "in wealth" - חיל *chayîl* Jerome, "Are comforted in riches" - *"confortatique divitiis."* So the Septuagint, ἐν πλούτῳ *en ploutō* The idea is, that they become very rich.

Verse 8

Their seed - Their children - their posterity.

Is established in their sight - Around them, where they may often see them - where they may enjoy their society. The friends of Job had maintained, with great positiveness and earnestness, that the children of wicked people would be cut off. See Job 18:19; Job 20:28. This position Job now directly controverts, and says that it is a fact, that so far from being cut off, they are often established in the very presence of their ungodly parents, and live and prosper. How, he asks, is this consistent with the position, that God deals with people in this life according to their character?

Verse 9

Their houses are safe from fear - Margin, "peace from." The friends of Job had maintained just the contrary; see Job 20:27-28; Job 15:21-24. Their idea was, that the wicked man would never be free from alarms. Job says, that they lived in security and peace, and that their houses are preserved from the intrusions of evil-minded people.

Neither is the rod of God upon them - The "rod" is an emblem of punishment. The idea is, that they were free from the chastisements which their sins deserved. There can be no doubt that there are cases enough in which the wicked live in security, to justify Job in all that he here affirms, as there are instances enough in which the wicked are cut off for their sins. to make what his friends said plausible. The truth is, good and evil are intermingled. There is a "general" course of events by which the wicked are involved in calamity in this life, and the righteous are prospered; but still, there are so many exceptions as to show the necessity of a future state of rewards and punishments. To us, who look to that future world, all is clear. But that view of the future state of retribution was not possessed by Job and his friends.

Verse 10

Their bull gendereth - See Rosenmuller and Lee on this verse; comp Bochart, Hieroz. P. 1, Lib. ii. c. xxx. The general idea is, that the wicked

were prospered as well as the pious. God did not interpose by a miracle to cut off their cattle, and to prevent their becoming rich.

Verse 11

They send forth their little ones - Their numerous and happy children they send forth to plays and pastimes.

Like a flock - In great numbers. This is an exquisitely beautiful image of prosperity. What can be more so than a group of happy children around a man‘s dwelling?

And their children dance - Dance for joy. They are playful and sportive, like the lambs of the flock. It is the skip of playfulness and exultation that is referred to here, and not the set and formal dance where children are instructed in the art; the sportiveness of children in the fields, the woods, and on the lawn, and not the set step taught in the dancing-school. The word used here (רקד *râqad*), means “to leap, to skip” - as from joy, and then to dance. Jerome has well rendered it, *“exultant lusibus”* - “they leap about in their plays.” So the Septuagint, προσπαίζουσιν *prospaizousin* - “they frolic” or “play.” There is no evidence here that Job meant to say that they taught their children to dance; that they caused them to be trained in anything that now corresponds to dancing-schools; and that he meant to say that such a training was improper and tended to exclude God from the heart.

The image is one simply of health, abundance, exuberance of feeling, cheerfulness, prosperity. The houses were free from alarms; the fields were filled with herds and flocks, and their families of happy and playful children were around them. The object of Job was not to say that all this was in itself wrong, but that it was a plain matter of fact that God did not take away the comforts of all the wicked and overwhelm them with calamity. Of the impropriety of training children in a dancing-school, there ought to be but one opinion among the friends of religion (see National Preacher for January 1844), but there is no evidence that Job referred to any such training here, “and” this passage should not be adduced to prove that dancing is wrong. It refers to the playfulness and the cheerful sports of children, and God has made them so that they “will” find pleasure in such sports, and so that they are benefited by them. There is not a more lovely picture of happiness and of the benevolence of God any where on earth than in such groups of children, and in their sportiveness and playfulness there is no more that is wrong than there is in the gambols of the lambs of the flock.

Verse 12

They take the timbrel - They have instruments of cheerful music in their dwellings; and this is an evidence that they are not treated as the friends of Job had maintained. Instead of being, as they asserted, overwhelmed with calamity, they are actually happy. They have all that can make them cheerful, and their houses exhibit all that is usually the emblem of contentment and peace. Rosenmuller and Noyes suppose this to mean, "They sing to the timbrel and harp;" that is, "they raise up" (ישׂאו *yîs'û*) "the voice" to accompany the timbrel. Dr. Good renders it, "They rise up to the tabor and harp, and trip merrily to the sound of the pipe." So Wemyss. It is literally, "They rise up with the tabor;" and the word "voice" may be understood, and the meaning may be that they accompany the timbrel with the voice. The Vulgate and the Septuagint, however, render it, they "Take up the timbrel." Dr. Good supposes that the allusion is to the modes of dancing; to their raising themselves in an erect position, and then changing their position - advancing and retreating as in alternate dances, and quotes the following exquisite piece of poetry as illustrating it:

"Now pursuing, now retreating,
Now in circling troops they meet;
To brisk notes, in cadence meeting.
Glance their many-twinkling feet."

Still, it seems to me, that the exact idea has not been expressed. It is this, "They raise, or elevate (ישׂאו *yîs'û*) *scil*. themselves;" that is, they become exhilarated and excited at the sound of music. It is in their dwellings, and it is one of the indications of joy. Instead of lamentations and wo, as his friends said there would be in such dwellings, Job says that there was there the sound of music and mirth; that they exhilarated themselves, and were happy. On the word rendered "timbrel" (תף *tôph*) and the word "harp" (כנור *kînnôr*), see the notes at Isaiah 5:12.

At the sound of the organ - The word "organ" we now apply to an instrument of music which was wholly unknown in the time of Job. With us it denotes an instrument consisting of pipes, which are filled with wind, and of stops touched by the fingers. It is the largest and most harmonious of the wind instruments, and is blown by bellows. That such an instrument was known in the time of Job, is wholly improbable, and it is not probable that it would be used for the purposes here referred to if it were known. Jerome

renders it, “organ;” the Septuagint, ψαλμοῦ *psalmou* “the sound of a song;” Noyes, “pipe;” Lee, “lyre;” Good and Wemyss, “pipe.” The Hebrew word (עוּגב *ʿûgâb*) is derived from עגב *ʿâgab* - to breathe, to blow; and it is manifest that the reference is to some wind instrument. Various forms of wind instruments were early invented, and this is expressly mentioned as having been early in use. Thus, it is said of Jubal Genesis 4:21, “He was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ” - עוּגב *ʿûgâb* It was probably at first a rude reed or pipe, which came ultimately to be changed to the fife and flute. It is here mentioned merely as an instrument exciting hilarity, and in the mere use of such an instrument there can be nothing improper. Job does not mean, evidently, to complain of it as wrong. He is simply showing that the wicked live in ease and prosperity, and are not subjected to trials and calamities as his friends maintained.

Verse 13

They spend their days in wealth - Margin, or, “mirth.” Literally, “they wear out their days in good” - בטוב *baṭôb* Vulgate *“in bonis.”* Septuagint, ἐν ἀγαθοῖς *en agathois* - “in good things;” in the enjoyment of good. They are not oppressed with the evils of poverty and want, but they have abundance of “the good things” of life.

And in a moment go down to the grave - Hebrew to שׁאול *she'ôl* - but here meaning evidently the grave. The idea is, that when they die they are not afflicted with lingering disease, and great bodily pain, but having lived to an old age in the midst of comforts, they drop off suddenly and quietly, and sleep in the grave. God gives them prosperity while they live, and when they come to die he does not come forth with the severe expressions of his displeasure, and oppress them with long and lingering sickness. The author of Psalm 73:3-4.

All that Job says here is predicated on the supposition that such a sudden removal is preferable to death accompanied with long and lingering illness. The idea is, that it is in itself “desirable” to live in tranquility; to reach an honorable old age surrounded by children and friends, and then quietly and suddenly to drop into the grave without being a burden to friends. The wicked, he says, often live such a life, and he infers, therefore, that it is not a fact that God deals with people according to their character in this life, and that it is not right to draw an inference respecting their moral character from his dealings with them in this world. There are instances enough

occurring in every age like those supposed here by Job, to justify the conclusion which he draws.

Verse 14

Therefore - This would seem to indicate that the "result" of their living in this manner was that they rejected God, or that one of the consequences of their being prospered would be that they would cast off his government and authority; that they renounced him "because" they were thus prosperous, or because they wished to train up their children in merriment and dancing. All this may be true in itself, but that idea is not in the Hebrew. That is simply "and they say" - ויאמרו *vayo'âmarû* So the Vulgate; the Septuagint; the Chaldee - ואמרו; and the Syriac. The word "therefore" should not have been inserted. Job is not affirming that their mode of life is a "reason" why they reject the claims of God, but that it is a simple "fact" that they "do" live, even in this prosperity, in the neglect of God. This is the gist of what he is saying, that being thus wicked they were in fact prospered, and not punished as his friends had maintained.

They say unto God - This is the language of their conduct. Men do not often formally and openly say this; but it is the language of their deportment.

Depart from us - This is about all that the wicked say of God. "They wish him to let them alone." They do not desire that he would come into their habitations; they would be glad never more to hear his name. Yet what a state of mind is this! What must be the condition and character of the human heart when this desire is felt?

We desire not the knowledge of thy ways - We have no wish to become acquainted with God. His "ways" here mean his government, his law, his claims - whatever God does. Never was there a better description of the feelings of the human heart than is here expressed. The ways of God are displeasing to people, and they seek to crowd from their minds all respect to his commandments and claims. Yet, if this is the character of man, assuredly he is very far from being a holy being. What higher proof of depravity can there be, than that a man has no desire to know anything about a pure and holy God; no pleasure in becoming acquainted with his Maker!

Verse 15

What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? - compare for similar expressions, Exodus 5:2; Proverbs 30:9. The meaning here is,

“What claim has the Almighty, or who is he, that we should be bound to obey and worship him? What authority has he over us? Why should we yield our will to his, and why submit to his claims?” This is the language of the human heart everywhere. Man seeks to deny the authority of God over him, and to feel that he has no claim to his service. He desires to be independent. He would cast off the claims of God. Forgetful that he made, and that he sustains him; regardless of his infinite perfections and of the fact that he is dependent on him every moment, he asks with contempt, what right God has to set up a dominion over him. Such is man - a creature of a day - dependent for every breath he draws on that Great Being, whose government and authority he so contemptuously disowns and rejects!

And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him? - What advantage would it be to us should we worship him? Men still ask this question, or, if not openly asked, they “feel” the force of it in their hearts. Learn hence,

(1) That wicked people are influenced by a regard to “self” in the inquiry about God, and in meeting his claims. They do not ask what is “right,” but what “advantage” will accrue to them.

(2) If they see no immediate benefit arising from worshipping God, they will not do it. Multitudes abstain from prayer, and from the house of God, because they cannot see how their self-interest would be promoted by it.

(3) Men “ought” to serve God, without respect to the immediate, selfish, and personal good that may follow to themselves. It is a good in itself to worship God. It is what is “right;” what the conscience says “ought” to be done yet

(4) It is not difficult to answer the question which the sinner puts. There is an advantage in calling upon God. There is

(a) the possibility of obtaining the pardon of sin by prayer - an immense and unspeakable “profit” to a dying and guilty man;

(b) a peace which this world cannot furnish - worth more than all that it costs to obtain it;

(c) support in trial in answer to prayer - in a world of suffering of more value than silver and gold;

(d) the salvation of friends in answer to prayer - an object that should be one of intense interest to those who love their friends:

(e) eternal life - the "profit" of which who can estimate? What are the few sacrifices which religion requires, compared with the infinite and immortal blessings which may be obtained by "asking" for them? ‹Profit! ‹ What can be done by man that will be turned to so good an account as to pray? Where can man make so good an investment of time and strength as by calling on God to save his soul, and to bless his friends and the world?

Verse 16

Lo, their good is not in their hand - Schultens, Rosenmuller, and Noyes, suppose, I think, correctly, that this is to be understood ironically, or as referring to what "they" had maintained. "Lo! you say, that their good is not in their hand! They do not enjoy prosperity, do they? They are soon overwhelmed with calamity, are they? How often have I seen it otherwise! How often is it a fact that they continue to enjoy prosperity, and live and die in peace!" The common interpretation, which Prof. Lee has adopted, seems to me to be much less probable. According to that it means that "their prosperity was not brought about or preserved by their own power. It was by the power of God, and was under his control. An inscrutable Providence governs all things." But the true sense is, that Job is replying to the arguments which they had advanced, and one of those was, that whatever prosperity they had was not at all secure, but that in a moment it might be, and often was, wrested from them. Job maintains the contrary, and affirms that it was a somewhat unusual occurrence Job 21:17, that the wicked were plunged into sudden calamity. The phrase "in their hand" means "in their power," or under their control, and at their disposal.

The counsel of the wicked is far from me - Or, rather, "far be it from me!" Perhaps the meaning is this, "Do not misunderstand me. I maintain that the wicked are often prospered, and that God does not in this life deal with them according to their deserts. They have life, and health, and property. But do not suppose that I am their advocate. Far be it from me to defend them. Far from me be their counsels and their plans. I have no

sympathy with them. But I maintain merely that your position is not correct that they are always subjected to calamity, and that the character of people can always be known by the dealings of Providence toward them." Or, it may mean, that he was not disposed to be united with them. They were, in fact, prospered; but though they were prospered, he wished to have no part in their plans and counsels. He would prefer a holy life with all the ills that might attend it.

Verse 17

How oft is the candle of the wicked put out? - Margin, "lamp." A light, or a lamp, was an image of prosperity. There is, probably, an allusion here to what had been maintained by Bildad, Job 18:5-6, that the light of the wicked would be extinguished, and their dwellings made dark; see the notes at those verses. Job replies to this by asking how often it occurred. He inquires whether it was a frequent thing. By this, he implies that it was not universal; that it was a less frequent occurrence than they supposed. The meaning is, "How often does it, in fact, happen that the light of the wicked is extinguished, and that God distributes sorrows among them in his anger? Much less frequently than you suppose, for he bestows upon many of them tokens of abundant prosperity." In this manner, by an appeal to "fact" and "observation," Job aims to convince them that their position was wrong, and that it was not true that the wicked were invariably overwhelmed with calamity, as they had maintained.

God distributeth sorrows - The word "God" here, is understood, but there can be no doubt that it is correct. Job means to ask, how often it was true in fact that God "apportioned" the sorrows which he sent on men in accordance with their character. How often, in fact, did he treat the wicked as they deserved, and overwhelm them with calamity. It was not true that he did it, by any means, as often as they maintained, or so as to make it a certain rule in judging of character.

Verse 18

They are as stubble before the wind - According to the interpretation proposed of the previous verse, this may be read as a question, "How often is it that the wicked are made like stubble? You say that God deals with people exactly according to their characters, and that the wicked are certainly subjected to calamities; but how often does this, in fact, occur? Is it a uniform law? Do they not, in fact, live in prosperity, and arrive at a good old age?" It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to compare the wicked

with stubble, and to affirm that they shall be driven away, as the chaff is driven by the wind; see the notes at Isaiah 17:13.

The storm carrieth away - Margin, "stealeth away." This is a literal translation of the Hebrew. The idea is that of stealing away before one is aware, as a thief carries off spoil.

Verse 19

God layeth up his iniquity for his children - Margin, that is, "the punishment of iniquity." This is a reference evidently to the opinion which "they" had maintained. It may be rendered, "You say that God layeth up iniquity," etc. They had affirmed that not only did God, as a great law, punish the wicked in this life, but that the consequences of their sins passed over to their posterity; or, if "they" were not punished, yet the calamity would certainly come on their descendants; see Job 18:19-20; Job 20:10, Job 20:28. This is the objection which Job now adverts to. The statement of the objection, it seems to me, continues to Job 21:22, where Job says, that no one can teach God knowledge, or prescribe to him what he should do, and then goes on to say, that the "fact" was far different from what they maintained; that there was no such exact distribution of punishments; but that one died in full strength, and another in the bitterness of his soul, and both laid down in the dust, together. This view seems to me to give better sense than any other interpretation which I have seen proposed.

He rewardeth him, and he shall know it - That is, you maintain that God will certainly reward him in this life, and that his dealings with him shall so exactly express the divine view of his conduct, that he shall certainly know what God thinks of his character. This opinion they had maintained throughout the argument, and this Job as constantly called in question.

Verse 20

His eyes shall see his destruction - That is, his own eyes shall see his destruction, or the calamities that shall come upon him. That is, "You maintain that, or this is the position which you defend." Job designs to meet this, and to show that it is not always so.

And he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty - Wrath is often represented as a cup which the wicked are compelled to drink. See the notes, Isaiah 51:17.

Verse 21

For what pleasure hath he … - That is, what happiness shall he have in his family? This, it seems to me, is designed to be a reference to their sentiments, or a statement by Job of what "they" maintained. They held, that a man who was wicked, could have none of the comfort which he anticipated in his children, for he would himself be cut off in the midst of life, and taken away.

When the number of his months is cut off in the midst? - When his "life" is cut off - the word "months" here being used in the sense of "life," or "years." This they had maintained, that a wicked man would be punished, by being cut off in the midst of his way; compare Job 14:21.

Verse 22

Shall any teach God knowledge? - This commences the reply of Job to the sentiments of his friends to which he had just adverted. The substance of the reply is, that no one could prescribe to God how he should deal with people, and that it; was not a FACT that people were treated as they had supposed. Instead of its being true, as they maintained, that wicked people would all be cut down in some fearful and violent manner, as a punishment for their sins, Job goes on Job 21:23-26 to show that they died in a great variety of ways - one in full age and prosperity, and another in another manner. This, he says, God directs as he pleases. No one can teach him knowledge; no one can tell him what he ought to do. The reasoning of his friends, Job seems to imply, had been rather an attempt to teach God how he "ought" to deal with people, than a patient and candid inquiry into the "facts" in the case, and he says the facts were not as they supposed they ought to be.

Seeing he judgeth those that are high - Or rather, he judges "among the things" that are high. He rules over the great affairs of the universe, and it is presumptuous in us to attempt to prescribe to him how he shall govern the world. The design of this and the following verses is to show, that, from the manner in which people actually die, no argument can be derived to determine what was their religious condition, or their real character. Nothing is more fallacious than that kind of reasoning.

Verse 23

One dieth in his full strength - Margin, "very perfection," or, "in the strength of his perfection." The meaning is, that he dies in the very prime and vigor of life, surrounded with everything that can contribute to comfort.

Of the truth of this position, no one can doubt; and the wonder is, that the friends of Job had not seen or admitted it.

Being wholly at ease and quiet - That is, having everything to make them happy, so far as external circumstances are concerned. He is borne down by no calamities; he is overwhelmed by no sudden and heavy judgments. The phrase in this verse rendered "full strength" (בעצם תמו *beʿetsem tômô*), is literally, "in the bone of his perfection." It means full prosperity.

Verse 24

His breasts - Margin, "milk pails." The marginal translation is much the most correct, and it is difficult to understand why so improbable a statement has been introduced into our common version. But there has been great variety in the translation. The Vulgate renders it, *Viscera ejus plena sunt adipe* - "his viscera are full of fat." So the Septuagint, τὰ ἔγκατα ἀυτοῦ πλήρη στέατος *ta engkata autou plērē steatos* The Syraic, "his sides;" Prof. Lee, "his bottles;" Noyes, "his sides;" Luther, "sein milkfass" - "his milk-pail;" Wemyss, "the stations of his cattle;" Good, "his sleek skin." In this variety of rendering, what hope is there of ascertaining the meaning of the word? It is not easy to account for this variety, though it is clear that Jerome and the Septuagint followed a different reading from the present, and instead of עטיניו *ʿăṭîynāyv* they read בטיניו *baṭîynāyv* - from בטן *beṭen* - "the belly;" and that instead of the word חלב *châlâb* as at present pointed, meaning "milk," they understood it as if it were pointed חלב *cheleb* - meaning "fat" - the same letters, but different vowels.

The word which is rendered "breast" (עטין *ʿăṭîyn*) occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures. It has become necessary, therefore, to seek its meaning in the ancient versions, and in the cognate languages. For a full examination of the word, the reader may consult Bochart, Hieroz. P. 1, Lib. ii. c. xliv., pp. 455,458; or Rosenmuller, where the remarks of Bochart are abridged; or Lee on Job, "in loc." The Chaldee renders it ביזיו, "his breasts." So Junius et Tre. Piscator, and others. Among the rabbis, Moses Bar Nackman, Levi, and others, render it as denoting the breasts, or *"mulctralia"* - "milk-vessels," denoting, as some have supposed, "the lacteals." This idea would admirably suit the connection, but it is doubtful whether it can be maintained; and the presumption is, that it would be in advance of the knowledge of physiology in the times of Job. Aben Ezra

explains it of the places where camels lie down to drink - an idea which is found in the Arabic, and which will well suit the connection.

According to this, the sense would be, that those places abounded with milk - that is, that he was prospered and happy. The Hebrew word עטין *ʿăṭîyn* as has been observed, occurs nowhere else. It is supposed to be derived from an obsolete root, the same as the Arabic "*atana* to lie down around water, as cattle do;" and then the derivative denotes a place where cattle and flocks lie down around water; and then the passage would mean, "the resting places of his herds are full, or abound with milk." Yet the primary idea, according to Castell, Golius, and Lee, is that of saturating with water; softening, "scil." a skin with water, or dressing a skin, for the purpose of using it as a bottle. Perhaps the word was used with reference to the place where camels came to drink, because it was a place that was "saturated" with water, or that abounded with water. The Arabic verb, also, according to Castell, is used in the sense of freeing a skin from wool and hairs - a lana pilisve levari pellem - so that it might be dressed for use.

From this reference to a "skin" thus dressed, Prof. Lee supposes that the word here means "a bottle," arid that the sense is, that his bottles were full of milk; that is, that he had great prosperity and abundance. But it is very doubtful whether the word will bear this meaning, and whether it is ever used in this sense. In the instances adduced by Castell, Schultens, and even of Prof. Lee, of the use of the word, I find no one where it means "a skin," or denotes a bottle made of a skin. The application of the "verb" to a skin is only in the sense of saturating and dressing it. The leading idea in all the forms of the word, and its common use in Arabic, is "that of a place where cattle kneel down for the purpose of drinking," and then a place well watered, where a man might lead his camels and flocks to water. The noun would then come to mean a watering place - a place that would be of great value, and which a man who had large flocks and herds would greatly prize. The thought here is, therefore, that the places of this kind, in the possession of the man referred to, would abound with milk - that is, he would have abundance.

Are full of milk - Milk, butter and honey, are, in the Scriptures, the emblems of plenty and prosperity. Many of the versions, however, here render this "fat." The change is only in the pointing of the Hebrew word.

But, if the interpretation above given be correct, then the word here means "milk."

And his bones are moistened with marrow - From the belief, that bones full of marrow are an indication of health and vigor.

Verse 26

They shall lie down alike in the dust - The emphasis here is on the word "alike" - יחד *yachad* The idea is, that they should die "in a similar manner." There would be no such difference in the mode of their death as to determine anything about their character or to show that one was the friend of God, and that the other was not. The friends of Job had maintained, that that could be certainly known by the divine dealings with people, either in their life, or in their death. Job combats this opinion, and says, that there is no such marked distinction in their life, nor is there any certain indication of their character in their death. Prosperity often attends the wicked as well as the righteous, and the death of the righteous and the wicked resemble each other.

And the worms shall cover them - Cover them "both." They shall alike moulder back to dust. There is no distinction in the grave. There is no difference in the manner in which they moulder back to dust. No argument can be drawn respecting their character from the divine dealings toward them when in life - none from the manner of their death - none from the mode in which they moulder back to dust. On the reference to the "worm" here, see the notes at Job 14:11.

Verse 27

Behold, I know your thoughts - That is, "I see that you are not satisfied, and that you are disposed still to maintain your former position. You will be ready to ask, Where "are" the proofs of the prosperity of the wicked? Where "are" the palaces of the mighty? Where "are" the dwelling places of ungodly men!"

And the devices which ye wrongfully imagine against me - The course of sophistical argument which you pursue, the tendency and design of which is to prove that I am a wicked man. You artfully lay down the position, that the wicked must be, and are in fact, overwhelmed with calamities, and then you infer, that because "I" am overwhelmed in this manner, I "must be" a wicked man.

Verse 28

For ye say, Where is the house of the prince? - That is, you maintain that the house of the wicked man, in a high station, will be certainly over thrown. The parallelism, as well as the whole connection, requires us to understand the word "prince" here as referring to a "wicked" ruler. The word used (נדיב *nâdîyb*) properly means, one willing, voluntary, prompt; then, one who is liberal, generous, noble; then, one of noble birth, or of elevated rank; and then, as princes often had that character, it is used in a bad sense, and means a "tyrant." See Isaiah 13:2.

And where are the dwelling places of the wicked - Margin, "tent of the tabernacles." The Hebrew is, "The tent of the dwelling places." The dwelling place was usually a "tent." The meaning is, that such dwelling places would be certainly destroyed, as an expression of the divine displeasure.

Verse 29

Have ye not asked them that go by the way? - Travelers, who have passed into other countries, and who have had an opportunity of making observations, and of learning the opinions of those residing there. The idea of Job is, that they might have learned from such travelers that such people were "reserved" for future destruction, and that calamity did not immediately overtake them. Information was obtained in ancient times by careful observation, and by traveling, and they who had gone into other countries would be highly regarded concerning point like this. They could speak of what they had observed of the actual dealings of God there, and of the sentiments of sages there. The idea is, that "they" would confirm the truth of what Job had said, that the wicked were often prosperous and happy.

And do ye not know their tokens - The signs, or intimations which they have given of the actual state of things in other countries, perhaps by the inscriptions, records, and proverbs, by which they had "signified" the result of their inquiries.

Verse 30

That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction? - He is not punished, as you maintain, at once. He is "kept" with a view to future punishment; and though calamity will certainly overtake him at some time, yet it is not immediate. This was Job's doctrine in opposition to theirs, and in this he was undoubtedly correct. The only wonder is, that they had not at all seen it sooner, and that it should have been necessary to make this appeal

to the testimony of travelers. Rosenmuller, Noyes, and Schultens, understand it as meaning that the wicked are "spared" in the day of destruction, that is, in the day when destruction comes upon other people. This accords well with the argument which Job is maintaining. Yet the word (חשׂך *châśak*) rather means, especially when followed by ל *l* hold back, reserve, or retain "for" something future; and this is the sentiment which Job was maintaining, that the wicked were not cut off at once, or suddenly overwhelmed with punishment. He did not deny that they would be punished at some period; and that exact justice would be done them. The point of the controversy turned upon the inquiry whether this would come "at once," or wheather the wicked might not live long in prosperity.

They shall be brought forth - יובלו *yûbālû* They shall be led or conducted - as one is to execution. This appears as if Job held to the doctrine of "future" retribution. But when that time would be, or what were his exact views in reference to the future judgment, is not certainly intimated. It is clear, however, from this discussion, that he supposed it would be "beyond" death, for he says that the wicked are prospered in this life: that they go down to the grave and sleep in the tomb; that the clods of the valley are sweet unto them, Job 21:32-33, yet that the judgment, the just retribution, would certainly come. This passage, therefore, seems to be decisive to prove that he held to a state of retribution beyond the grave, where the inequalities of the present life would be corrected, and where people, though prospered here, would be treated as they deserved. This, he says, was the current opinion.

It was that which was brought by travelers, who had gone into other lands. What impropriety is there in supposing that he may refer to some travelers who had gone into the country where Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob had lived, or then lived, and that they had brought this back as the prevalent belief there? To this current faith in that foreign land, he may now appeal as deserving the attention of his friends, and as meeting all that they had said. It "would" meet all that they said. It was the exact truth. It accorded with the course of events. And sustained, as Job says it was, by the prevailing opinion in foreign lands, it was regarded by him as settling the controversy. It is as true now as it was then; and this solution, which could come only from revelation, settles all inquiries about; the rectitude of the divine administration in the dispensation of rewards and punishments. It answers the question," How is it consistent for God to bestow so many blessings on

the wicked, while his own people are so much afflicted?" The answer is, they have "their" good things in this life, and in the future world all these inequalities will be rectified.

Day of wrath - Margin, as in Hebrew "wraths." The plural form here is probably employed to denote emphasis, and means the same as "fierce wrath."

Verse 31

Who shall declare his way to his face? - That is, the face of the wicked. Who shall dare to rise up and openly charge him with his guilt? The idea is, that none would dare to do it, and that, therefore, the wicked man was not punished according to his character here, and was reserved to a day of future wrath.

And who shall repay him what he hath done? - The meaning is, that many wicked people lived without being punished for their sins. No one was able to recompense them for the evil which they had done, and consequently they lived in security and prosperity. Such were the tyrants and conquerors, who had made the world desolate.

Verse 32

Yet shall he be brought to the grave - Margin, "graves." That is, he is brought with honor and prosperity to the grave. He is not cut down by manifest divine displeasure for his sins. He is conducted to the grave as other people are, not withstanding his enormous wickedness. The "object" of this is clearly to state that he would not be overwhelmed with calamity, as the friends of Job had maintained, and that nothing could be determined in regard to his character from the divine dealings toward him in this life.

And shall remain in the tomb - Margin, "watch in the heap." The marginal reading does not make sense, though it seems to be an exact translation of the Hebrew. Noyes renders it, "Yet he still survives upon his tomb." Prof. Lee, "For the tomb was he watchful;" that is, his anxiety was to have an honored and a splendid burial. Wemyss, "They watch over his tomb;" that is, he is honored in his death, and his friends visit his tomb with affectionate solicitude, and keep watch over his grave. So Dr. Good renders it. Jerome translates it; *"et in congerie mortuorum vigilabit."* The Septuagint, "And he shall be borne to the graves, and he shall watch over the tombs;" or, he shall cause a watch to be kept over his tomb - ἐπὶ σωρῶν ἠγρύπνησεν *epi sōrōn ēgrupnēsen* Amidst this variety of interpretation, it is

not easy to determine the true sense of the passage. The "general" meaning is not difficult.

It is, that he should be honored even in his death; that he would live in prosperity, and be buried with magnificence. There would be nothing in his death or burial which would certainly show that God regarded him as a wicked man. But there is considerable difficulty in determining the exact sense of the original words. The word rendered "tomb" in the text and "heap" in the margin (גדיש *gâdîysh*) occurs only in the following places, Exodus 22:6; Job 5:26; Judges 15:5, where it is rendered "a shock of corn," and in this place. The "verb" in the Syriac, Arabic, and in Chaldee, means "to heap up" (see Castell), and the noun may denote, therefore, a stack, or a heap, of grain, or a tomb, that was made by a pile of earth, or stones. The ancient "tumuli" were there heaps of earth or stone, and probably such a pile was made usually over a grave as a monument. On the meaning of the word used here, the reader may consult Bochart, Hieroz. P. i.

L. iii. c. xiii. p. 853. There can be little doubt that it here means a tomb, or a monument raised over a tomb. There is more difficulty about the word rendered "shall remain" (ישקוד *yîshqôd*). This properly means, to wake, to be watchful, to be sleepless. So the Chaldee שקד, and the Arabic "*dakash* " The verb is commonly rendered in the Scriptures, "watch," or "waketh." See Psalm 127:1 ; Psalm 102:7; Jeremiah 31:28; Jeremiah 1:12; Jeremiah 5:6; Jeremiah 44:27; Isaiah 29:20; Ezra 8:29; Daniel 9:14. There is usually in the word the notion of "watching," with a view to guarding, or protecting, as when one watches a vineyard, a house, or other property. The sense here is, probably, that his tomb should be carefully "watched" by friends, and the verb is probably taken impersonally, or used to denote that "someone" would watch over his grave. This might be either as a proof of affection, or to keep it in repair. One of the most painful ideas might have been then, as it is now among American savages (Bancroft's History of the United States, vol. iii. p. 299), that of having the grave left or violated, and it may have been regarded as a special honor to have had friends, who would come and watch over their sepulchre.

According to this view, the meaning is, that the wicked man was often honorably buried; that a monument was reared to his memory; and that every mark of attention was paid to him after he was dead. Numbers

followed him to his burial, and friends came and wept with affection around his tomb. The argument of Job is, that there was no such distinction between the lives and death of the righteous and the wicked as to make it possible to determine the character; and is it not so still? The wicked man often dies in a palace, and with all the comforts that every clime can furnish to alleviate his pain, and to soothe him in his dying moments. He lies upon a bed of down; friends attend him with unwearied care; the skill of medicine is exhausted to restore him, and there is every indication of grief at his death. So, in the place of his burial, a monument of finest marble, sculptured with all the skill of art, is reared over his grave. An inscription, beautiful as taste can make it, proclaims his virtues to the traveler and the stranger. Friends go and plant roses over his grave, that breathe forth their odors around the spot where he lies. Who, from the dying scene, the funeral, the monument, the attendants, would suppose that he was a man whom God abhorred, and whose soul was already in hell? This is the argument of Job, and of its solidity no one can doubt.

Verse 33

The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him - That is, he shall lie as calmly as others in the grave. The language here is taken from that delusion of which we all partake when we reflect on death. We think of "ourselves" in the grave, and it is almost impossible to divest our minds of the idea, that we shall be conscious there, and be capable of understanding our condition. The idea here is, that the person who was thus buried, might be sensible of the quiet of his abode, and enjoy, in some measure, the honors of the beautiful or splendid tomb, in which he was buried, and the anxious care of his friends. So we "think" of our friends, though we do not often "express" it. The dear child that is placed in the dark vault, or that is covered up in the ground - we feel as if we could not have him there. We insensibly shudder, as if "he" might be conscious of the darkness and chilliness, and "a part" of our trial arises from this delusion. So felt the American savage - expressing the emotions of the heart, which, in other cases, are often concealed. "At the bottom of a grave, the melting snows had left a little water; and the sight of it chilled and saddened his imagination. ‹You have no compassion for my poor brother‘ - such was the reproach of an Algonquin - ‹the air is pleasant, and the sun so cheering, and yet you do not remove the snow from the grave, to warm him a little,‘ and

he knew no contentment until it was done." - Bancroft's History, U. S. iii. 294,295. The same feeling is expressed by Fingal over the grave of Gaul:

Prepare, ye children of musical strings,
The bed of Gaul, and his sun-beam by him;
Where may be seen his resting place from afar

Which branches high overshadow,

Under the wing of the oak of greenest flourish,

Of quickest growth, and most durable form,

Which will shoot forth its leaves to the breeze of the shower,

While the heath around is still withered.
Its leaves, from the extremity of the land,
Shall be seen by the birds in Summer;
And each bird shall perch, as it arrives,

On a sprig of its verdant branch;

Gaul in this mist shall hear the cheerful note,
While the virgins are singing of Evirchoma.

Thus, also, Knolles (History of the Turks, p. 332) remarks of the Sultan Muted II, that "after his death, his son raised the siege, and returned back to Adrianople. He caused the dead to be buried with great solemnity in the Western suburbs of Broosa, in a chapel without a roof, in accordance with the express desire of the Sultan, in order that the mercy and blessing of God might descend on him, that the sun and the moon might shine on his grave, and the rain and the dew of heaven fall upon it." Rosenmuller's Alte u. neue Morgenland, "in loc." The word "clods" here, is rendered "stones" by Prof. Lee, but the more general interpretation is that of "sods," or "clods." The word is used only here, and in Job 38:38, where it is also rendered clods. The word "valley" (נחל *nachal*) means usually a stream, brook, or rivulet, and then a valley where such a brook runs. Notes Job 6:15. It is not improbable that such valleys were chosen as burial places, from the custom of planting shrubs and flowers around a grave, because they would flourish

best there. The valley of Jehoshaphat, near Jerusalem, was long occupied as a burial place.

And every man shall draw after him - Some suppose that this means, that he shall share the common lot of mortals - that innumerable multitudes have gone there before him - and that succeeding generations shall follow to the same place appointed for all the living. "Noyes." Others, however, suppose that this refers to a funeral procession and that the meaning is, that all the world is drawn out after him, and that an innumerable multitude precedes him when he is buried. Others, again, suppose it means, that his example shall attract many to follow and adopt his practices, as many have done before him in imitating similar characters. "Lee." It is clear, that there is some notion of honor, respect, or pomp in the language; and it seems to me more likely that the meaning is, that he would draw out every body to go to the place where he was buried, that they might look on it, and thus honor him. What multitudes would go to look on the grave of Alexander the Great! How many have gone to look on the place where Caesar fell! How many have gone, and will go, to look on the place where Nelson or Napoleon is buried! This, I think, is the idea here, that the man who should thus die, would draw great numbers to the place where he was buried, and that before him, or in his presence, there was an innumerable multitude, so greatly would he be honored.

Verse 34

How then comfort ye me in vain … - That is, how can you be qualified to give me consolation in my trials, who have such erroneous views of the government and dealings of God? True consolation could be founded only on correct views of the divine government; but such views, Job says, they had not. With their conceptions of the divine administration, they could not administer to him any real consolation. We may learn hence,

(1) That all real consolation in trial must be based on correct apprehensions of the divine character and plans. Falsehood, delusion, error, can give no permanent comfort.

(2) They whose office it is to administer consolation to the afflicted, should seek after the "truth" about God and his government.

They should endeavor to learn why he afflicts people, what purpose he proposes to accomplish, and what are the proper ends of trial. They should

have an unwavering conviction that he is right, and should see as far as possible "why" he is right, before they attempt to comfort others. Their own souls should be imbued with the fullest conviction that all the ways of God are holy, and then they should go and endeavor to pour their convictions into other hearts, and make them feel so too. A minister of the gospel, who has unsettled, erroneous, or false views of the character and government of God, is poorly qualified for his station, and will be a "miserable comforter" to those who are in trial. Truth alone sustains the soul in affliction. Truth only can inspire confidence in God. Truth only can break the force of sorrow, and enable the sufferer to look up to God and to heaven with confidence and joy.

(The end of Part One of the Commentary on Job)

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 22

Verse 2

Can a man be profitable unto God? - Can a man confer any favor on God, so as to lay him under obligation? Eliphaz supposes that Job sets up a "claim" to the favor of God, because he was of service to him, or because God had something to fear if he was cut off. He maintains, therefore, that a man can confer no favor on God, so as to lay him under obligation. God is independent and supreme. He has nothing to gain if man is righteous - he has nothing to apprehend if he is punished. He is not dependent at all on man.

As he that is wise - Margin, or, "if he may be profitable, doth his goodness depend thereon." The meaning of the passage is, a wise man may promote his own advantage, but he cannot be of advantage to God. All the result of his wisdom must terminate on himself, and not on God; compare Psalm 16:2. Of the correctness of this sentiment there can be no doubt. It accords with reason, and with all that is said in the Scriptures. God is too great to be benefited by man. He is infinite in all his perfections; he is the original fountain of blessedness; he is supremely wise; he has all resources in himself, and he cannot be dependent on his creatures. He cannot, therefore, be deterred from punishing them by any dread which he has of losing their favor - he cannot be induced to bless them because they have laid him under obligation. Eliphaz meant this as a reply to what Job had said. He had maintained, that God did "not" treat people according to their character in this life, but that, in fact, the wicked were often prospered, and suffered to live long. Eliphaz at once "infers," that if this were so, it must be because they could render themselves "serviceable" to God, or because he must have something to dread by punishing them. In the general sentiment, he was right; in the "inference" he was wrong - since Job had not affirmed that they are spared from any such cause, and since many other "reasons" may be assigned.

Verse 3

Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? - This is the same sentiment which was advanced in the previous verse. The meaning is, that it can be no advantage to God that a man is righteous. He is not dependent on man for happiness, and cannot be deterred from dealing justly with him because he is in danger of losing anything. In this sense, it is true.

God "has" pleasure in holiness wherever it is, and is pleased when people are righteous; but it is not true that he is dependent on the character of his creatures for his own happiness, or that people can lay him under obligation by their own righteousness. Eliphaz applies this general truth to Job, probably, because he understood him as complaining of the dealings of God with him, as if he had laid God under obligation by his upright life. He supposes that it was implied in the remarks of Job, that he had been so upright, and had been of so much consequence, that God "ought" to have continued him in a state of prosperity. This supposition, if Job ever had it, Eliphaz correctly meets, and shows him that he was not so profitable to God that he could not do without him. Yet, do people not often feel thus? Do ministers of the gospel not sometimes feel thus? Do we not sometimes feel thus in relation to some man eminent for piety, wisdom, or learning? Do we not feel as if God could not do without him, and that there was a sort of necessity that he should keep him alive? Yet, how often are such people cut down, in the very midst of their usefulness, to show

(1) that God is not dependent on them; and

(2) to keep them from pride, as if they were necessary to the execution of the divine plans; and

(3) to teach his people their dependence on "Him," and not on frail, erring mortals. When the church places its reliance on a human arm, God very often suddenly knocks the prop away.

Verse 4

Will he reprove thee for fear of thee? - Or, rather, will he come into trial, and argue his cause before a tribunal, because he is afraid that his character will suffer, or because he feels himself bound to appear, and answer to the charges which may be brought? The language is all taken from courts of justice, and the object is, to reprove Job as if he felt that it was necessary that God should appear and answer to what he alleged against him.

Will he enter with thee into judgment? - Will he condescend to enter on a trial with one like thee? Will he submit his cause to a trial with man, as if he were an equal, or as if man had any right to such an investigation? It is to be remembered, that Job had repeatedly expressed a desire to carry his

cause before God, and that God would meet him as an equal, and not take advantage of his majesty and power to overwhelm him; see Job 13:3, note; Job 13:20-21, notes. Eliphaz here asks, whether God could be expected to meet "a man," one of his own creatures, in this manner, and to go into a trial of the cause. He says that God was supreme; that no one could bring him into court; and that he could not be restrained from doing his pleasure by any dread of man. These sentiments are all noble and correct, and worthy of a sage. Soon, however, he changes the style, and utters the language of severe reproach, because Job had presumed to make such a suggestion. Perhaps, also, in this verse, a special emphasis should be placed on "thee." "Will God enter into trial with thee … a man whose wickedness is so great, and whose sin is infinite?" Job 22:4-5.

Verse 5

Is not thy wickedness great? - That is, "Is it not utter presumption and folly for a man, whose wickedness is undoubtedly so great, to presume to enter into a litigation with God?" Eliphaz here "assumes" it as an undeniable proposition, that Job was a great sinner. This charge had not been directly made before. He and his friends had argued evidently on that supposition, and had maintained that one who was a great sinner would be punished in this life for it, and they had left it to be implied, in no doubtful manner, that they so regarded Job. But the charge had not been before so openly made. Here Eliphaz argues as if that were a point that could not be disputed. The only "proof" that he had, so far as appears, was, that Job had been afflicted as they maintained great sinners "would be," and they, therefore, concluded that he must be such. No facts are referred to, except that he was a great sufferer, and yet, on the ground of this, he proceeds to take for granted that he "must have been" a man who had taken a pledge for no cause; had refused to give water to the thirsty; had been an oppressor, etc.

And thine iniquities infinite? - Hebrew "And there is no end to thine iniquities," that is, they are without number. This does not mean that sin is an "infinite evil," or that his sins were infinite in degree; but that if one should attempt to reckon up the number of his transgressions, there would be no end to them. This, I believe, is the only place in the Bible where sin is spoken of, in any respect, as "infinite;" and this cannot be used as a proof text, to show that sin is an infinite evil, for:

(1) that is not the meaning of the passage even with respect to Job;

(2) it makes no affirmation respecting sin in general; and

(3) it was untrue, even in regard to Job, and in the sense in which Zophar meant to use the phrase.

There is no intelligible sense in which it can be said that sin is "an infinite evil;" and no argument should be based on such a declaration, to prove that sin demanded an infinite atonement, or that it deserves eternal sufferings. Those doctrines can be defended on solid grounds - they should not be made to rest on a false assumption, or on a false interpretation of the Scriptures.

Verse 6

For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought - The only evidence which Eliphaz seems to have had of this was, that this was a heinous sin, and that as Job seemed to be severely punished, it was to be "inferred" that he must have committed some such sin as this. No way of treating an unfortunate and a suffering man could be more unkind. A "pledge" is that which is given by a debtor to a creditor, for security for the payment of a debt, and would be, of course, that which was regardcd as of value. Garments, which constituted a considerable part of the wealth of the Orientals, would usually be the pledge which would be given. With us, in such cases, watches, jewelry, notes, mortgages, are given as collateral security, or as pledges. The law of Moses required, that when a man took the garment of his neighbor for a pledge, it should be restored by the time the sun went down, Exodus 22:26-27. The crime here charged on Job was, that he had exacted a pledge from another where there was no just claim to it; that is, where no debt had been contracted, where a debt; had been paid, or where the security was far beyond the value of the debt. The injustice of such a course would be obvious. It would deprive the man of the use of the property which was pledged, and it gave him to whom it was pledged an opportunity of doing wrong, as he might retain it, or dispose of it, and the real owner see it no more.

And stripped the naked of their clothing - Margin, "clothes of the naked." That is, of those who were poorly clad, or who were nearly destitute of clothes. The word naked is often used in this sense in the

Scriptures; see the notes at John 21:7. The meaning here is, that Job had taken away by oppression even the garments of the poor in order to enrich himself.

Verse 7

Thou hast not given water to the weary - That is, thou hast withheld the rites of hospitality - one of the most grievous offences which could be charged on an Arabian; compare the notes at Isaiah 21:14. In all the Oriental world, hospitality was regarded, and is still, as a duty of the highest obligation.

Verse 8

But as for the mighty man - Hebrew as in the margin, "man of arm." The "arm," in the Scriptures, is the symbol of power; Psalm 10:15, "Break thou the arm of the wicked;" Ezekiel 30:21. "I have broken the arm of Pharaoh;" Psalm 89:13, "Thou hast a mighty arm;" Psalm 97:1, "His holy arm hath gotten him the victory." The reason of this is, that the sword and spear were principally used in war, and success depended on the force with which they were wielded by the arm. There can be no doubt that this is intended to be applied to Job, and that the meaning is, that he had driven the poor from their possessions, and he had taken forcible occupancy of what belonged to them. The idea is, that he had done this by power, not by "right."

Had the earth - Took possession of the land, and drove off from it those to whom it belonged, or who had an equal right to it with him.

And the honorable man - Margin, "eminent," or "accepted of countenance." Hebrew: "Lifted up of countenance;" that is, the man whose countenance was elevated either by honor or pride. It may be used to describe either; but, perhaps, there is more force in the former, in saying that it was the great man, the man of rank and office, who had got possession. There is, thus, some sarcasm in the severe charge: "The great man … the man of rank, and wealth, and office, has got possession, while the humble and poor are banished." Job had had great possessions; but this charge as to the manner in which he had acquired them seems to be wholly gratuitous. Eliphaz takes it for granted, since he was so severely punished, that it "must have been" in some such way.

Verse 9

Thou hast sent widows away empty - That is, without regarding their needs, and without doing anything to mitigate their sorrows. The oppression

of the widow and the fatherless is, in the Scriptures, every where regarded as a crime of special magnitude; see the notes at Isaiah 1:17.

The arms of the fatherless have been broken - Thou hast taken away all that they relied on. Thou hast oppressed them and taken advantage of their weak and defenseless condition to enrich yourself. This charge was evidently gratuitous and unjust. It was the result of an "inference" from the fact that he was thus afflicted, and about as just as inferences, in such cases, usually are. To all this, Job replies in beautiful language in Job 29:11-16, when describing his former condition, and in justice to him, we may allow him to speak "here," and to show what was, in fact, the course of his life.

When the ear heard me, then it blessed me;
And when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me:
Because I delivered the poor that cried,

And the fatherless, and him that had none to help him.
The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me:
And I caused the widow's heart to leap for joy.
I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;

My judgment was as a robe and a diadem.
I was eyes to the blind,
And feet was I to the lame;
I was a father to the poor,
And the cause which I knew not, I searched out

Verse 10

Therefore snares are round about thee - "Snares" were used for catching wild animals and birds, and the word then came to denote any sudden calamity; see Job 18:8-10. Eliphaz here says, that it "must be" that these calamities came upon Job in consequence of such sins as he had specified. About that he took it for granted there could be no dispute.

And sudden fear - The calamities of Job came upon him suddenly Job 1. It was to this, doubtless, that Eliphaz alluded.

Verse 11

Or darkness - Darkness and night in the Scriptures are emblems of calamity.

That thou canst not see - Deep and fearful darkness; total night, so that nothing is visible. That is, the heaviest calamities had overwhelmed him.

And abundance of waters - An emblem, also, of calamities; Job 27:20; Psalm 69:1-2; Psalm 73:10.

Verse 12

Is not God in the height of heaven? - In the highest heaven. That is, Is not God exalted over all worlds? This seems to be intended to refer to the sentiments of Job, as if he had maintained that God was so exalted that he could not notice what was occurring on earth. It should, therefore, be read in connection with the following verse: "God is so exalted, that thou sayest, How can he know? Can he look down through the thick clouds which intervene between him and man?" Job had maintained no such opinion, but the process of thought in the mind of Eliphaz seems to have been this. Job had maintained that God did "not" punish the wicked in this life as they deserved, but that they lived and prospered. Eliphaz "inferred" that he could hold that opinion only because he supposed that God was so exalted that he could not attend to worldly affairs. He knew no other way in which the opinion could be held, and he proceeds to argue "as if" it were so.

Job had in the previous chapter appealed to plain "facts," and had rested his whole argument on them. Eliphaz, instead of meeting the "facts" in the case, or showing that they did not exist as Job said they did, considered his discourse as a denial of Divine Providence, and as representing God to be so far above the earth that he could not notice what was occurring here. How common is this in theological controversy! One man, in defending his opinions, or in searching for the truth, appeals to "facts," and endeavors to ascertain their nature and bearing. His adversary, instead of meeting them, or showing that they are not so, at once appeals to some admitted doctrine, to some established article of a creed, or to some tradition of the fathers, and says that the appeal to fact is but a denial of an important doctrine of revelation. It is easier to charge a man with denying the doctrine of Providence, or to call him by a harsh name, than it is to meet an argument drawn from fact and from the plain meaning of the Bible.

And behold the height of the stars - Margin, as in Hebrew "head" - רֹאשׁ *rô'sh* God is more exalted than the highest of the stars. The stars are the highest objects in view, and the sense, therefore, is, that God is infinitely exalted.

Verse 13

And thou sayest, How doth God know? - That is, it "follows" from what you have said; or the opinion which you have advanced is "the same"

as if you had affirmed this. How common it is to charge a man with holding what we "infer," from something which he has advanced, he must hold, and then to proceed to argue "as if" he actually held that. The philosophy of this is plain. He advances a certain opinion. "We" infer at once that he can hold that only on certain grounds, or that if he holds that he must hold something else also. We can see that if "we" held that opinion, we should also, for the sake of consistency, be compelled to hold something which seems to follow from it, and we cannot see how this can be avoided, and we at once charge him with holding it. But the truth may be, that "he" has not seen that such consequences follow, or that he has some other way of accounting for the fact than we have; or that he may hold to the fact and yet deny wholly the consequences which legitimately follow from it. Now we have a right to show him "by argument" that his opinions, if he would follow them out, would lead to dangerous consequences, but we have a right to charge him with holding only what he "professes" to hold. He is not answerable for our inferences; and we have no right to charge them on him as being his real opinions. Every man has a right to avow what he actually believes, and to be regarded as holding that, and that only.

How doth God know? - That is, How can one so exalted see what is done on the distant earth, and reward and punish people according to their deserts? This opinion was actually held by many of the ancients. It was supposed that the supreme God did not condescend to attend to the affairs of mortals, but had committed the government of the earth to inferior beings. This was the foundation of the Gnostic philosophy, which prevailed so much in the East in the early ages of the Christian church. Milton puts a similar sentiment into the mouth of Eve in her reflections after she had eaten the forbidden fruit:

And I, perhaps, am secret: heaven is high,
High and remote from thence to see distinct
Each thing on earth; and other care perhaps

May have diverted from continual watch

Our great Forbidder, safe with all his spies about him.
Paradise Lost, B. ix.

Can he judge through the dark cloud? - Can he look down through the clouds which interpose between man and him? Eliphaz could not see

how Job could maintain his opinions without holding that this was impossible for God. He could see no other reason why God did not punish the wicked than because "he did not see them," and he, therefore, charges this opinion on Job.

Verse 14

Thick clouds are a covering to him - This is to be understood as expressing what Eliphaz regarded as the sentiment of Job - that so thick clouds intervened between him and man that he could not take cognizance of what was going forward on earth.

And he walketh in the circuit of heaven - Upon the arch of heaven, as it seems to be bent over our heads. He walks above that cerulean, so high, that he cannot see what occurs on earth, and to punish mortals. This was not an uncommon sentiment among the ancients, though it is here, with the greatest injustice, attributed to Job. A similar sentiment is expressed by Lucretius, as quoted by Rosenmuller and Noyes:

Omnis enim per se Divum natura necesse est
Immortali aevo summa cum pace fruatur,
Semota a nostris rebus, sejunctaque longe.

Nam privata dolore omni, privata periclis,

Ipsa suis pollens opibus, nihil in liga nostri,
Nec bene promeritus capitur, nec tangitur ira.

Compare Isaiah 29:15.

Verse 15

Hast thou marked the old way which wicked men have trodden? - Hast thou seen what has happened in former times to wicked people? Job had maintained that God did not deal with people in this world according to their character. To meet this, Eliphaz now appeals to ancient facts, and especially refers to the deluge, when the wicked were cut off by a flood for their sins. Schultens, Dr. Good, Noyes, and Reiske, however, suppose that tbe word here rendered "mark," means to "pursue," or "imitate," and that the sense is," Are you willing to adopt the principles of those wicked people who lived in the time of the deluge?" But the sense is not materially affected. The general design is to refer Job to the case of the impious generation that was swept off by a flood. The judgments of God on them were a full refutation, in his view, of the sentiments of Job.

Verse 16

Which were cut down - Who were suddenly destroyed by a flood. On the word used here (קמט *qâmaṭ*) see the notes at Job 16:8. It occurs only in that place and this. Its primary notion is that of drawing together or contracting - as the feet of a lamb or calf are drawn together and tied preparatory to being killed; and the meaning here is, probably, "who were huddled together by the waters," or who were driven in heaps by the deluge, so rapidly and suddenly did it come upon them.

Out of time - Hebrew "And there was no time;" that is, it was done in a moment, or suddenly. No time was given them; no delay was granted. The floods rushed over them, and nothing could stay them.

Whose foundation was overflown - Margin, or, "a flood was poured upon their foundation." That is, all on which they relied was swept away. The word "foundation" refers to that on which their happiness and security rested, as a house rests on its foundation, and when that is swept away the house falls.

With a flood - Hebrew (נהר *nâhâr*) "river." The word is commonly applied to a river; and in the Scriptures, by way of eminence, to the Euphrates; see Isaiah 7:20, note; Isaiah 8:7, note. It may be used, however, to denote a river which is swollen, and then a flood - and it is several times rendered "flood" in the Scriptures; Job 14:11; Jonah 2:3 (where it means the sea); Joshua 24:2-3, Joshua 24:14-15; Psalm 66:6; Job 28:11; Psalm 24:2; Psalm 93:3; Song of Song of Solomon 8:7 . Prof. Lee supposes that the allusion here is to some overflowing of the Euphrates, but the reference seems to be decidedly to the deluge in the time of Noah. The "language" is such as would be used in referring to that, and the fact is just such an one as would be pertinent to the argument of Eliphaz. The fact was undoubtedly well known to all, so that a bare allusion to it would be enough.

Verse 17

Which said unto God, Depart from us - Notes, Job 21:14. A very correct description of the old world. They had no wish to retain God in their knowledge. Probably Eliphaz here refers to what Job had said, Job 21:14-15. He had remarked, in describing the wicked, that they said unto God, "Depart from us," and yet they lived prosperously. "But see," says Eliphaz,'" a case" where they did this. It was done by the inhabitants of the world before the deluge, and their houses were filled, as you say the houses

of the wicked are, with good things, but God swept them all suddenly away."

And what can the Almighty do for them? - Margin, or," to." That is, they demanded what the Almighty could do for them. They did not feel their dependence on him; they did not admit that they needed his aid; they cast off all reliance on him. This whole passage is a most sarcastic retort on what Job had said in Job 21:14-15. He had affirmed that though wicked people used this language, yet that they prospered. Eliphaz takes the same language and applies it to the sinners before the deluge, and says that they expressed themselves just in this manner. The language which Job puts into the mouths of the wicked, had indeed, says Eliphaz, been used. But by whom? By those who lived in security and prosperity. "By the men before the deluge," says he, "the race that was so wicked that it was necessary to cut them off by the flood. These are the people to whose sentiments Job appeals; these the people with whom he has sympathy!"

Verse 18

Yet he filled their houses with good things - This is undoubtedly a biting sarcasm. Job had maintained that such people were prosperous. "Yes," says Eliphaz, "their houses were well filled! They were signally blessed and prospered!"

But the counsel of the wicked is far from me - This is the very language of Job, Job 21:16. It is used here sarcastically. "Far from me," you say, "be the counsel of the wicked. Thus you defend them, and attempt to show that they are the favorites of heaven! You attempt to prove that God must and will bless them! Far from me, say I, be the counsel of the wicked! With them I have no part, no lot. I will not defend them … I will not be their advocate!" The object is, to show that, notwithstanding all that Job had said, he was secretly the advocate of the wicked, and stood up as their friend.

Verse 19

The righteous see it, and are glad - see the destruction of the wicked; compare Revelation 15:3; Revelation 16:7; Revelation 19:1-2. This is designed by Eliphaz, probably, not only to state a fact about the righteous of other times who saw the wicked punished, but, also, to vindicate his own conduct and that of his two friends in regard to Job. If the righteous of other times had rejoiced when the wicked were punished, they inferred that it was not improper for them to manifest similar rejoicings when God had

overtaken one who was so signally depraved as they supposed Job to be. Their lack of sympathy for him, therefore, they would defend by a reference to the conduct of the people of other times. There is a sense in which good people rejoice when the wicked are detected and punished. It is not:

(1) that they rejoice that the sin was committed; nor

(2) that they rejoice in misery; nor

(3) that they would not rejoice more if the wicked had been righteous, and had escaped suffering altogether.

But it is the kind of joy which we have when a murderer, a robber, or a pirate is seized - when a counterfeiter is detected - when a man who prowls around the dwelling at night to murder its inmates is brought to punishment. It is joy, not that the sin was committed, but that the laws are executed; and who should not rejoice in that? We have joy in the character of an upright judge when he impartially and faithfully administers the laws; and why should we not rejoice in God when he does the same? We rejoice in the manifestation of truth and justice among people - why should we not in the exhibition of the same things in God? We rejoice in a police that can ferret out every form of iniquity, and bring offenders to justice; and why should we not rejoice in that government which is infinitely more perfect than any police ever was among people?

And the innocent laugh them to scorn - This is another way of saying that they exult or rejoice; compare Proverbs 1:26-27. No consideration can justify people in deriding and mocking those who are subjected to punishment; and it is by no means certain that the speaker meant to refer to such derision.

Verse 20

Whereas our substance is not cut down - Margin, or, "Estate" Gesenius supposes that this means our adversary or enemy. The word used here (קים *qîym*) he regards as derived from קוּם *qûm* - to rise, to rise up; and, hence, it may have the sense of rising up against, or an enemy. So Noyes understands it, and renders it:

"Truly, our adversary is destroyed;
And fire hath consumed his abundance."

Rosemmuller accords with this, and it seems to me to be the correct view. According to this, it is the language of the righteous Job 22:19 when exciting over the punishment of the wicked, saying, "Our foe is cut down." Jerome renders it, Nonne succisa est erectio eorum, etc. The Septuagint, "Has not their substance ὑπόστασις *hupostasis* disappeared?" The sense is not materially different. If the word "substance," or "property," is to be retained it should be read as a question, and regarded as the language of the righteous who exult. "Has not their substance been taken away. and has not the fire consumed their property?" Dr. Good strangely renders it, "For our tribe is not cut off."

But the remnant of them - Margin, "their excellency." Hebrew יתרם *yîthrām* Jerome, *"reliquias eorum"* - "the remnants of them." Septuagint, κατάλειμμα *kataleimma* - "the residue," or "what is left." The Hebrew word יתר *yether* means, "the remainder, the residue, the rest;" then, what is redundant, more than is needed, or that abounds; and then, "wealth," the superabundant property which a man does not "need" for his own use or family. The word here probably means that which the rich sinner possessed.

The fire consumeth - Or, hath consumed. It has been supposed by many that the allusion here is to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and it cannot be denied that such an allusion is possible. If it were "certain" that Job lived before that event, there could be little objection to such a supposition. The "only" objection would be, that a reference to such an event was not more prominent. It would be a case just in point in the argument of the three friends of Job, and one to which it might be supposed they would have appealed as decisive of the controversy. They lived in the vicinity. They could not have been strangers to so remarkable an occurrence, and it would have furnished just the argument which they wished, to prove that God punishes the wicked in this life. If they lived after that event, therefore, it is difficult to account for the fact, that they did not make a more distinct and prominent allusion to it in their argument. It is true, that the same remark may be made respecting the allusion to the flood, which was a case equally in point, and in reference to which the allusion, if it exist at all, is almost equally obscure. So far as the language here is concerned, the reference may be either to the destruction of Sodom, or to destruction by lightning, such as happened to the possessions of Job, Job 1:16; and it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine which is correct. The

general idea is, that the judgments of heaven, represented by fire, had fallen on the wicked, and that the righteous, therefore, had occasion to rejoice.

Verse 21

Acquaint now thyself with him - Margin, that is, "with God." Eliphaz takes it for granted now, that Job was a sinner wholly unreconciled to God, and unacquainted with him. This fact, he supposes, was the source of all his calamities. As long as he remained thus unreconciled to God, he must be miserable. He proceeds, therefore, in a most beautiful manner, to exhort him to be at peace with God, and portrays the benefits which would result from such a reconciliation. There are few passages in the Bible of more exquisite beauty than this, and nothing could be sounder advice, on the supposition that Job was, as he supposed, a stranger to God. In this beautiful exhortation, be shows:

(1) what he means by becoming acquainted with God Job 22:21-23; and then

(2) what would be the happy results of such reconciliation, Job 22:24-30.

The word rendered "acquaint thyself" הסכן *hasâkan* - from סכן *sâkan* means, properly, "to dwell," to be familiar with anyone, to associate with one - from the idea of dwelling in the same tent or house; and in the Hiphil, the form used here, to become familiar with anyone, to be on terms of friendship. The meaning here is, "Secure the friendship of God. Become truly acquainted with him. Be reconciled to him. You are now estranged. You have no just views of him. You murmur and complain, and you are suffering under his displeasure as a sinner. But it is not too late to repent, and to return to him; and in so doing you will find peace." An acquaintance with God, in the sense of this passage, implies:

(1) a correct knowledge of his true character, and

(2) reconciliation with him.

There are two great difficulties among people in regard to God. The first is, that they have no just views of his real character. They think him harsh, stern, tyrannical. They regard his law as severe, and its penalty as unjust.

They think his government to be arbitrary, and himself to be unworthy of confidence. This erroneous view must be corrected before people can be reconciled to him - for how can they be brought to lay aside their opposition to him while they regard him as unjust and severe? Secondly, even when the character of God is explained, and his true character is set before people, they are opposed to it. They are opposed to him because he is so holy. Loving sin, they cannot love one who has no sin, and who frowns on evil; and this opposition to the real character of God must be removed before they can be reconciled to him. This requires a change of heart - a change from sin to holiness; and this is the work performed in regeneration.

And be at peace - There can be no peace while you maintain a warfare with God. It is a war against your Maker, where he has control over your conscience, your intellect, your body, and all which can affect your welfare; and while this is maintained, there can be no peace. If the mind is reconciled to him, there will be peace. Peace of mind always follows reconciliation where there has been a variance, and nowhere is the peace so entire and full of joy as when man feels that he is reconciled to God. Eliphaz here has stated a doctrine which has been confirmed by all the subsequent revelations in the Bible, and by the experience of all those who have become reconciled to God; compare the notes at Romans 5:1: It is peace, as opposed to the agitation and conflict of the mind before; peace resulting from acquiescence in the claims of God; peace in the belief that he is wholly right, and worthy of confidence; and peace in the assurances of his friendship and favor forever. This doctrine, it seems, was thus understood in the early ages of the world, and, indeed, must have been known as early as religion existed after the fall. Man became alienated from God by the apostasy; peace was to be found again only by returning to God, and in reconciliation to him.

Thereby good shall come unto thee - The benefits which he supposed would result from such reconciliation, he proceeds to state in the following verses. They relate chiefly to temporal prosperity, or to proofs of the divine favor in this life. This was in accordance with the views which then prevailed, and especially with their limited and obscure conceptions of the future state. They saw a part - "we" see more; and yet we by no means see all. The "good" which results from reconciliation with God consists in:

(1) pardon of sin;

(2) peace of conscience;

(3) the assurance that we shall have all that is needful in this life;

(4) support in trial;

(5) peace and triumph in death;

(6) a part in the resurrection of the just; and

(7) a crown incorruptible and undefiled in heaven.

No man was ever "injured" by becoming reconciled to God; no one is reconciled to him who is not made a better and a happier man in this life, and who will not be crowned with immortal glory hereafter.

Verse 22

Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth - Listen to his commands, and obey his precepts.

And lay up his words in thine heart - Embrace his truth, and do not forget it. Let it abide with you, and let it influence your secret feelings and the purposes of the soul.

Verse 23

If thou return to the Almighty - Assuming that he was an impenitent sinner, and wholly unreconciled to him.

Thou shalt be built up - A figure taken from building up a house, in contradistinction from pulling one down, and denoting that he would be prospered and happy.

Thou shalt put away iniquity - Rosenmuller, Good, Noyes, and Wemyss, suppose correctly, as it seems to me, that the word "if" is to be understood here to complete the sense - "if thou shalt put away iniquity."

From thy tabernacle - From thy tent, or dwelling.

Verse 24

Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust - Margin, or, "on the dust." Dr. Good renders this, "Thou shalt then count thy treasure as dust" - implying that he would have much of it. Noyes, "Cast to the dust thy gold" - implying that he would throw his gold away as of no account, and put his

dependence on God alone. Kim-chi, and, after him, Grotius, suppose that it means, "Thy gold thou shalt regard no more than dust, and gold of Ophir no more than the stones of the brook; God shall be to thee better than gold and silver." The editor of the Pictorial Bible supposes that there is here a distinct reference to the sources from which gold was for merly obtained, as being washed down among the stones of the brooks. The word rendered "gold" here בצר *betser* is from בצר *bâtsar* - to cut off, Psalm 76:12, and was properly applied to the ore of precious metals in the rude state, as cut or dug out of mines.

Hence, it properly refers to the metals in their crude state, and before they were subjected to the fire. Then it comes to mean precious metals, and is parallel with gold of Ophir in the other hemistich. The word occurs only in the following places; Job 22:24; Job 36:19, where it is rendered "gold," and Job 22:25, where it is rendered "defense." The literal translation here would be, "Cast to the dust the precious metals; on the stones of the brooks (the gold of) Ophir." The Vulgate renders it, "He shall give for earth flint, and for flint golden torrents." The Septuagint, "Thou shalt be placed on a mount in a rock, and as a rock of the torrent of Ophir." Chaldaen: "And thou shalt place upon the dust thy strong tower תקיף כרך, and as a rock of the torrents the gold of Ophir." The word here is probably synonymous with "precious treasure," whether consisting in gold or silver; and the idea is, that he should cast to the dust all that treasure, or regard it as valueless; that he should cease to make it an object of solicitude to gain it, and "then" the Almighty would be to him a treasure of more value than gold. According to this, the idea is, not that he would be recompensed with gold and silver as the consequence of returning to God, but that God would afford him more happiness than he had found in the wealth which he had sought, and on which Eliphaz supposed his heart had been set. He regarded Job as covetous of property, as mourning over that which he had lost, and he entreats him now to cease to grieve on account of that, and to come and put his trust in God.

And the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks - Or, rather, "Cast the gold of Ophir to the stones of the valley, or let it remain in its native valley among the stones of the brook, as of no more value than they are." There is, probably, allusion here to the fact, that gold was then commonly found in such places, as it is often now. It was washed down by mountain torrents, and lodged among the stones of the valley, and was thence

collected, and the sand being washed out, the gold remained. Ophir is uniformly mentioned in the Scriptures as a place abounding in gold, and as well known; see 1 Kings 9:28; 2 Chronicles 8:18; 2 Chronicles 9:10; 1 Kings 10:11; 1 Kings 22:48; 1 Chronicles 29:4. Much perplexity has been felt in reference to its situation, and the difficulty has not been entirely removed. In regard to the opinions which have been held on the point, the reader may consult the notes at Isaiah 13:12, the note in the Pictorial Bible on 2 Chronicles 20:36, and the Dissertation of Martin Lipenius "de Ophir," in Ugolin's Thesaur. Sacr. Ant. Tom. vii. pp. 262-387; also, the Dissertation of John C. Wichmanshausen, "de navigatione Ophiritica," and Reland's Dissertation "de Ophir" in the same volume. From the mention of this place at a period so early as the time of Job, it is reasonable to suppose that it was not a very remote region, as there is no evidence that voyages were made then to distant countries, or that the knowledge of geography was very extensive. The presumption would be, that it was in the vicinity of Arabia.

Verse 25

Yea, the Almighty shall be - Or, rather, "then the Almighty shall be" - והיה *yehâyâh* The meaning is, that if he would return to God, and cast off his anxiety for gold, "then" the Almighty would be his real treasure, and would impart to him solid happiness.

Thy defense - Margin, "gold." The margin is the more correct translation. The word is the same which occurs in the previous verse בצר *betser* and there rendered "gold." The word may have the sense of "defense," as the verb בצר *bâtsar* is often used with such a reference; Numbers 13:28; Deuteronomy 1:28; Deuteronomy 3:5; Deuteronomy 9:1, et al. The meaning of such places, where the word is applied to walled towns or fortified places, is, that the enemy was, by means of walls, "cut off" from approach. Here, however, the idea of "gold" or "treasure" better suits the connection, and the meaning is, that "God" would be to him an invaluable "treasure" or source of happiness.

And thou shalt have plenty of silver - Margin, "silver of strength." The correct idea, however, is, "and the Almighty shall be treasures of silver unto thee;" that is, he shall be better to you than an abundance of the precious metals. The Hebrew is literally, "And silver of treasures unto thee."

Verse 26

Shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty - Instead of complaining of him as you now do, you would then find calm enjoyment in

contemplating his character and his moral government. This is a correct account of the effects of reconciliation. He who becomes truly "acquainted" with God has pleasure in his existence and attributes; in his law and administration. No longer disposed to complain, he confides in him when he is afflicted; flees to him when he is persecuted; seeks him in the day of prosperity; prefers him to all that this world can give, and finds his supremest joys in turning away from all created good to hold communion with the Uncreated One.

And shalt lift up thy face unto God - An emblem of prosperity, happiness, and conscious innocence. We hang our face down when we are conscious of guilt; we bow the head in adversity. When conscious of uprightness; when blessed with prosperity, and when we have evidence that we are the children of God, we look up toward heaven. This was the natural condition of human beings - made to look upward, while all other animals look grovelling on the earth. So Milton describes the creation of man:

There wanted yet the master-work, the end
Of all yet done; a creature, who, not prone
And brute as other creatures, but endued
With sanctity of reason, might erect
His stature, and upright with front serene
Govern the rest, self-knowing; and from thence
Magnanimous to correspond with heaven,
But grateful to acknowledge whence his good
Directed in devotion, to adore
And worship God supreme, who made him chief
Of all his works.

Paradise Lost, B. vii.

The Classic reader will instantly recollect the description in Ovid:

Pronaque cum spectent animalia caetera terram;
Os homini sublime dedit; coelumque tueri
Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.

Meta. 1:84.

Verse 27

Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him - God would then hear him, for he would be righteous. This was one of the blessings which would follow reconciliation. It is, in fact, one of the blessings of a return to God. He hears the cry of his people, and answers their supplications. To be permitted to go

to God and to tell him all our needs, to plead for all we need and to implore blessings on our families and friends, is a privilege of far higher value than anything which wealth can bestow; is worth more than all the honors of this world.

And thou shalt pay thy vows - That is, thy vows shall be accepted; thou shalt obtain those blessings for which thou didst make thy vows.

Verse 28

Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee - Thou shalt form a purpose or plan, and it shall not be frustrated. It shall not be opposed by the events of divine Providence, but whatever you undertake shall prosper.

And the light shall shine upon thy ways - Thou shalt be prospered in all things, instead of being overtaken with calamity.

Verse 29

When men are cast down - The meaning of this is, probably, when people are usually cast down, or in the times of trial and calamity, which prostrate others, you shall find support. You shall then be enabled to say, "there is lifting up, or there is support." Or, more probably still, it may mean, "in times when others are cast down and afflicted, thou shalt be able to raise them up, or to aid them. Thou shalt be able to go to them and say, ‹Be of good cheer. Do not be cast down. There is consolation.‘ And thou shalt be able to procure important blessings for them by thy counsels and prayers;" see the notes at Job 22:30.

And he shall save the humble person - That is, either, "Thou shalt save the humble person," by a change from the second person to the third, which is not uncommon in Hebrew; or, "thou shalt be able from thine own experience to say, "He," that is, "God," will save the humble person, or the one that is cast down." Margin, "him that hath low eyes." The Hebrew is like the margin. In affliction the eyes are cast upon the ground; and so, also, a casting the eyes to the ground is indicative of dejection, of humility, or of modesty. It refers here to one who experiences trials; and Eliphaz says that Job would be able to save such an one; that is, to support him in his afflictions, and furnish the helps necessary to restore him again to comfort.

Verse 30

He shall deliver the island of the innocent - Margin, "the innocent shall deliver the island." Never was there a more unhappy translation than this; and it is quite clear that our translators had no intelligible idea of the

meaning of the passage. What can be meant by "saving the island of the innocent?" The word rendered island (אי *'îy*) commonly means, indeed, an island, or a maritime country; see Isaiah 20:6, note. It is, however, used as a "negative" in 1 Samuel 4:21, in the name "I-chabod" - אי־כבוד *'îy -kâbôd* "And she named the child I-chabod (margin, that is, "where is the glory?" or, there is "no glory"), saying, the glory is departed from Israel." This sense is frequent in the Rabbinic Hebrew, where it is used as connected with an adjective in a privative sense, like the English "un." It is probably an abbreviated form of (אין *'ayîn*) "not, nothing;" and is used here as a "negative" to qualify the following word, "He shall deliver even him that is not innocent."

So it is rendered by the Chaldee, by Le Clerc, Rosenmuller, Gesenius, Noyes, and others. The Vulgate and the Septuagint render it, "He shall deliver the innocent." The sense is, that the man who returns to God, and who is regarded by him as his friend, will be able to intercede for the guilty, and to save them from the punishment which they deserved. His prayers and intercessions will be heard in their behalf, and on his account layouts will be shown to them, even when they did not personally deserve them. This sentiment accords with that expressed in Genesis 18:26, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes;" Ezekiel 14:14, "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they should deliver but their own souls;" compare Ezekiel 22:30; Jeremiah 5:1. The sentiment, also, had a beautiful illustration, though one which Eliphaz did not here think of, in his own case and that of his friends, where this very Job, to whom he was giving this counsel, was directed to intercede for them; Job 42:7-8. The sentiment, indeed, is found every where in the Scriptures, that the righteous are permitted to pray for others, and that they are thus the means of bringing down important blessings on them. In answer to those prayers, multitudes are saved from calamity here, and will be brought to eternal life hereafter.

And it is delivered by the pureness of thine hands - Or, rather, he, i. e., the wicked, for whom you pray, will be delivered by the pureness of thine hands. That is, God will save him in answer to the prayers of a righteous man. Your upright and holy life; your pure hands stretched out in supplication, shall be the means of saving him. No one can tell how many blessings are conferred on wicked people because the righteous pray for them. No one can tell how many a wicked son is spared, and ultimately

saved, in answer to the intercessions of a holy parent; nor can the wicked world yet know how much it owes its preservation, and the numberless blessings which it enjoys, to the intercessions of the saints. It is one of the innumerable blessings of being a child of God thus to be permitted to be the means of bringing down blessings on others, and saving sinners from ruin. All the friends of God may thus confer unspeakable benefits to others; and they who have "an interest at the throne of grace" should plead without ceasing for the salvation of guilty and dying people.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 23

Verse 2

Even to-day - At the present time. I am not relieved. You afford me no consolation. All that you say only aggravates my woes.

My complaint - See the notes at Job 21:3.

Bitter - Sad, melancholy, distressing. The meaning is, not that he made bitter complaints in the sense which those words would naturally convey, or that he meant to find fault with God, but that his case was a hard one. His friends furnished him no relief, and he had in vain endeavored to bring his cause before God. This is now, as he proceeds to state, the principal cause of his difficulty. He knows not where to find God; he cannot get his cause before him.

My stroke - Margin, as in Hebrew "hand;" that is, the hand that is upon me, or the calamity that is inflicted upon me. The hand is represented as the instrument of inflicting punishment, or causing affliction; see the notes at Job 19:21.

Heavier than my groaning - My sighs bear no proportion to my sufferings. They are no adequate expression of my woes. If you think I complain; if I am heard to groan, yet the sufferings which I endure are far beyond what these would secm to indicate. Sighs and groans are not improper. They are prompted by nature, and they furnish "some" relief to a sufferer. But they should not be:

(1) with a spirit of murmuring or complaining;

(2) they should not be beyond what our sufferings demand, or the proper expression of our sufferings. They should not be such as to lead others to suppose we suffer more than we actually do.

(3) they should - when they are extorted from us by the severity of suffering - lead us go look to that world where no groan will ever be heard.

Verse 3

Oh that I knew where I might find him! - Where I might find "God." He had often expressed a wish to bring his cause directly before God, and to be permitted to plead his cause there; see Job 13:3, note; Job 13:20, notes. But this he had not yet been able to do. The argument had been with his

three friends, and he saw that there was no use in attempting further to convince them. If he could get the cause before God, and be allowed go plead it there, he felt assured that justice would be done him. But he had not been able to do this. God had not come forth in any visible and public manner as he wished, so that the cause could be fairly tried before such a tribunal, and he was in darkness. The "language" used here will express the condition of a pious man in the times of spiritual darkness. Hc cannot find God. He has no near access as he once had to him. In such a state he anxiously seeks to find God, but he cannot. There is no light and no comfort to his soul. This language may further describe the state of one who is conscious of uprightness, and who is exposed to the suspicion or the unkind remarks of the world. His character is attacked; his motives are impugned; his designs are suspected, and no one is disposed to do him justice. In such a state, he feels that "God" alone will do him justice. "He" knows the sincerity of his heart, and he can safely commit his cause to him. It is always the privilege of the calumniated and the slandered to make an appeal to the divine tribunal, and to feel that whatever injustice our fellow-men may be disposed to do us, there is One who will never do a wrong.

That I might come even to his seat - To his throne, or tribunal. Job wished to carry the cause directly before him. Probably he desired some manifestation of God - such as he was afterward favored with - when God would declare his judgment on the whole matter of the controversy.

Verse 4

I would order my cause before him - Compare the notes at Isaiah 43:26. That is, I would arrange my arguments, or plead my cause, as one does in a court of justice. I would suggest the considerations which would show that I am not guilty in the sense charged by my friends, and that notwithstanding my calamities, I am the real friend of God.

And fill my mouth with arguments - Probably he means that he would appeal to the evidence furnished by a life of benevolence and justice, that he was not a hypocrite or a man of distinguished wickedness, as his friends maintained.

Verse 5

I would know the words which he would answer me - That is, I wish to understand what would be "his" decision in the case - and what would be his judgment in regard to me. That was of infinitely more importance than any opinion which "man" could form, and Job was anxious to have the

matter decided by a tribunal which could not err. Why should "we" not desire to know exactly what God thinks of us, and what estimate he has formed of our character? There is no information so valuable to us as that would be; for on "his" estimate hangs our eternal doom, and yet there is nothing which people more instinctively dread than to know what God thinks of their character. It would be well for each one to ask himself, "Why is it so?"

Verse 6

Will he plead against me with his great power? - "Will he make use of his mere power to overwhelm me and confound me? Will he take advantage of omnipotence to triumph over me, instead of argument and justice? No: he will not do it. The discussion would be fair. He would hear what I have to say, and would decide according to truth. Though he is Almighty, yet he would not take advantage of that to prostrate and confound me." When Job Job 13:3 wished to carry the cause directly before God, he asked of Him two conditions only. One was, that he would take off his hand from him, or remove his afflictions for a time, that he might be able to manage his own cause; and the other was, that He would not take advantage of his power to overwhelm him in the debate, and prevent his making a fair statement of his case; see the notes at Job 13:20-21. He here expresses his firm conviction that his wish in this respect would be granted. He would listen, says he, to what; I have to say in my defense as if I were an equal.

No; but he would put strength in me - The word "strength" is not improperly supplied by our translators. It means that he would enable him to make a fair presentation of his cause. So far from taking advantage of his mere "power" to crush him, and thus obtain an ascendency in the argument, he would rather "strengthen" him, that he might be able to make his case as strong as possible. He would rather aid him, though presenting his own cause in the controversy, than seek to weaken his arguments, or so to awe him by his dread majesty as to prevent his making the case as strong as it might be. This indicates remarkable confidence in God.

Verse 7

There the righteous might dispute with him - One who is conscious of his integrity might carry his cause there, with the assurance that he would be heard, and that justice would be done him. There can be no doubt that Job here refers to himself, though. he speaks in the third person, and advances this as a general proposition.

So shall I be delivered forever from my judge - From him who would judge or condemn me (מִשְׁפָּטִי *mîshâphaṭîy*). He does not here refer to "God," as if he would be delivered from him, but to anyone who would attempt to judge and condemn him, as his friends had done. The meaning is, that having, as he confidently expected he would, obtained the verdict of God in his favor, he would be ever after free from condemnation. The decision would be final. There was no higher tribunal, and no one would dare to condemn him afterward. This shows his consciousness of integrity. It may be applied to ourselves - to all. If we can obtain, at the last day, when our cause shall be brought before God, the divine verdict in our favor, it will settle the matter forever. No one, after that, will condemn us; never again shall our character or conduct be put on trial. The divine decision of that day will settle the question to all eternity. How momentous, then, is it that we should so live as to be acquitted in that day, and to have "an eternal sentence" in our favour!

Verse 8

Behold, I go forward - The meaning of these verses is, I go in all directions, but I cannot find God. I am excluded from the trial which I seek, and I cannot bring my cause to his throne. Job expresses his earnest desire to see some visible manifestation of the Deity, and to be permitted to argue his cause in his presence. But he says he sought this in vain. He looked to all points of the compass where he might rationally expect to find God, but all in vain. The terms here used refer to the points of the compass, and should have been so rendered. The Oriental geographers considered themselves as facing the East, instead of the North, as we do. Of course, the West was behind them, the South on the right hand, and on the left the North. This was a more natural position than ours, as day begins in the East, and it is natural to turn the face in that direction. There is no reason why our maps should be made so as to require us to face the "North," except that such is the custom.

The Hebrew custom, in this respect, is found also in the notices of geography in other nations. The same thing prevails among the Hindoos. Among them, Para, or Purra, signifying "before," denotes the East; Apara and Paschima, meaning "behind," the West; Dacshina, or "the right hand," the South; and Bama, or "the left hand," the North; see Wilford's Inquiry respecting the Holy Isles in the West, Asiatic Researches, vol. viii. p. 275. The same thing occurred among the ancient Irish; see an Essay on the

Antiquity of the Irish language, by an unknown author, Dublin, 1772; compare on this subject, Rosenmuller‘s Alterthumskunde i. s. 136-144. The same custom prevailed among the Mongols. “Gesenius.” On the notices of the science of geography exhibited in the book of Job, compare Introduction, Section 8. The phrase, therefore, “Behold, I go forward,” means, “I go to the East. I look toward the rising of the sun. I see there the most wonderful of the works of the Creator in the glories of the sun, and I go toward it in hopes of finding there some manifestation of God. But I find him not, and, disappointed, I turn to other directions.” Most of the ancient versions render this the East. Thus, the Vulgate, *“Si ad Orientem iero.”* The Chaldee למדינא, “to the sun-rising.”

But he is not there - There is no manifestation of God, no coming forth to meet me, and to hear my cause.

And backward - (ואחור *ve'âchôr*). To the West - for this was “behind” the individual when he stood looking to the East. Sometimes the West is denoted by this term “behind” (אחור *'âchôr*), and sometimes by “the sea” (ים *yâm*), because the Mediterranean was at the West of Palestine and Arabia; see the notes at Isaiah 9:12; compare Exodus 10:19; Exodus 27:13; Exodus 38:12; Genesis 28:14.

But I cannot perceive him - The meaning is, “Disappointed in the East, the region of the rising sun, I turn with longing to the West, the region of his setting, and hope, as his last beams fade from the view, that I shall be permitted to behold some ray that shall reveal God to my soul. Before the night settles down upon the world, emblem of the darkness in my soul, I would look upon the last lingering ray, and hope that in that I may see God. In that vast region of the West, illuminated by the setting sun, I would hope somewhere to find him; but I am disappointed there. The sun withdraws his beams, and darkness steals on, and the world, like my soul, is enveloped in gloom. I can see no indications of the presence of God coming forth to give me an opportunity to argue my cause before him.”

Verse 9

On the left hand - That is, in the North - at the left hand when the face was turned to the East. So the Chaldee, בצפונא - “on the North.” The other versions, the Vulgate, the Septuagint, the Syriac, Castellio, Luther, etc., render it “on the left hand.” The common term among the Hebrews for the “North” is צפון *tsâphôn* - (from צפן *tsâphan* - “to hide,” or “conceal”), meaning the hidden, concealed, or dark region, since the ancients regarded

the North as the seat of gloom and darkness, (Homer, Odyssey ix. 25ff), while they supposed the South to be illuminated by the sun. "Gesenius." Frequently, however, as here, the word "left," or "left hand," is used. The region of the North is intended.

Where he doth work - Where there are such wonderful manifestations of his majesty and glory. May Job here not refer to the "Aurora Borealis," the remarkable display of the power of God which is seen in those regions? May he not have felt that there was some special reason why he might hope to meet with God in that quarter, or to see him manifest himself amidst the brilliant lights that play along the sky, as if to precede or accompany him? And when he had looked to the splendor of the rising sun, and the glory of his setting, in vain, was it not natural to turn his eye to the next remarkable manifestation, as he supposed, of God, in the glories of the Northern lights, and to expect to find him there? There is reason to think that the ancient Chaldeans, and other pagans, regarded the regions of the North, illuminated with these celestial splendors, as the special residence of the gods (see the notes at Isaiah 14:13), and it seems probable that Job may have had allusion to some such prevailing opinion.

But I cannot behold him - I can see the exhibition of remarkable splendor, but still "God" is unseen. He does not come amidst those glories to give me an opportunity to carry my cause before him. The meaning, then, of this is, "Disappointed in the East and the West. I turn to the North. There I have been accustomed to witness extraordinary manifestations of his magnificence and glory. There beautiful constellations circle the pole. There the Aurora plays, and seems to be the manifestation of the glory of God. Next to the glory of the rising and setting sun, I turn to those brilliant lights, to see if there I may not find my God, but in vain. Those lights are cold and chilly, and reveal no God to my soul. Disappointed, then I turn to the last point, the South, to see if I can find him there."

He hideth himself on the right hand - On the South. The South was to the ancients an unknown region. The deserts of Arabia, indeed, stretched away in that region, and they were partially known, and they had some knowledge that the sea was beyond. But they regarded the regions farther to the South, if there was land there, as wholly impassable and uninhabitable on account of the heat. The knowledge of geography was slowly acquired, and, of course, it is impossible to tell what were the views which prevailed on the subject in the time of Job. That there was little accuracy of

information about remote countries must be regarded as an indisputable fact; and, probably, they had little conception of distant parts of the earth, except that formed by conjecture. Interesting details of the views of the ancients, on this subject, may be found in the Encyclopedia of Geography, vol. i. pp. 10-68; compare particularly the notes at Job 26:10.

The earth was regarded as encompassed with waters, and the distant southern regions, on account of the impossibility of passing through the heat of the torrid zone, were supposed to be inaccessible. To those hidden and unknown realms, Job says he now turned, when he had in vain looked to each other quarter of the heavens, to see if he could find some manifestation of God. Yet he looked to that quarter equally in vain. God "hid" or "concealed" himself in those inaccessible regions so that he could not approach him. The meaning is, "I am also disappointed here. He hides himself in that distant land. In the burning and impassable wastes which stretch themselves to an unknown extent there, I cannot find him. The feet of mortals cannot traverse those burning plains, and there I cannot approach him. To whatever point of the compass I turn, I am left in equal darkness." What a striking description is this of the darkness that sometimes comes over the Christian's soul, prompting to the language, "O that I knew where I might find him! That I could come to his throne!"

Verse 10

But he knoweth the way that I take - Margin, "is with me." That is, "I have the utmost confidence in him. Though I cannot see him, yet he sees me, and he knows my integrity; and whatever people may say, or however they may misunderstand my character, yet he is acquainted with me, and I have the fullest confidence that he will do me justice."

When he hath tried me - When he has subjected me to all the tests of character which he shall choose to apply.

I shall come forth as gold - As gold that is tried in the crucible, and that comes forth the more pure the intenser is the heat. The application of fire to it serves to separate every particle of impurity or alloy, and leaves only the pure metal. So it is with trials applied to the friend of God; and we may remark

(1) That all real piety will bear "any" test that may be applied to it, as gold will bear any degree of heat without being injured or destroyed.

(2) That the effect of all trials is to purify piety, and make it more bright and valuable, as is the effect of applying intense heat to gold.

(3) There is often much alloy in the piety of a Christian, as there is in gold, that needs to be removed by the fiery trial of affliction. Nothing else will remove it but trial, as nothing will be so effectual a purifier of gold as intense heat.

(4) A true Christian should not dread trial. It will not hurt him. He will be the more valuable for his trials, as gold is for the application of heat. There is no danger of destroying true piety. It will live in the flames, and will survive the raging heat that shall yet consume the world.

Verse 11

My foot hath held his steps - Roberts, in his Oriental Illustrations, and the Editor of the Pictorial Bible, suppose that there is an allusion here to the active, grasping power which the Orientals have in their feet and toes. By constant usage they accustom themselves to make use of them in holding things in a manner which to us seems almost incredible, and they make the toes perform almost the work of fingers. We bind ours fast from early childhood in our close shoes, and they become useless except for the purpose of walking. But the Orientals use theirs differently. They seize upon an object with their toes, and hold it fast. If in walking along they see anything on the ground which they desire to pick up, instead of stooping as we would, they seize it with their toes, and lift it up. Alypulle, a Kandian chief, was about to be beheaded. When he arrived at the place of execution, he looked round for some object on which to seize, and saw a small shrub, and seized it with his toes, and held it fast in order to be firm while the executioner did his office. "Roberts." So an Arab in treading firmly, or in taking a determined stand, seems to lay hold of, to grasp the ground with his toes, giving a fixedness of position inconceivable to those whose feet are cramped by the use of tight shoes. This may be the meaning here, that Job had fixed himself firmly in the footsteps of God, and had adhered tenaciously to him; or, as it is rendered by Dr. Good," In his steps will I rivet my feet."

And not declined - Turned aside.

Verse 12

Neither have I gone back - I have not put away or rejected.

The commandment of his lips - That which he has spoken, or which has proceeded out of his mouth.

I have esteemed - Margin, "hid," or, "laid up." The Hebrew is, "I have hid," as we hide or lay up that which is valuable. It is a word often applied to laying up treasures, or concealing them so that they would be safe.

More than my necessary food - Margin, "or, appointed portion." Dr. Good renders it, "In my bosom have I laid up the words of his mouth." So Noyes, "The words of his mouth I have treasured up in my bosom." So Wemyss; and so it is rendered in the Vulgate, and by the Septuagint. The variety in the translation has arisen from the difference of reading in regard to the Hebrew word מחקי *mēchôqîy* Instead of this meaning "more than my portion" or "allowance," the Septuagint and Vulgate appear to have read בחקי *bēchôqîy* - "in my bosom." But there is no authority for the change, and there seems to be no reason for it. The word חק *chôq* means something decreed, designated, appointed; then an appointed portion, as of labor, Exodus 5:14; then of food - an allowance of food, Proverbs 30:8; then a limit, bound, law, statute, etc. It seems to me that the word here means "purpose, intention, rule, or design," and that the idea is that he had regarded the commands of God more "than his own purposes." He had been willing to sacrifice his own designs to the will of God, and had thus shown his preference for God and his law. This sense seems to be the most simple of any, and it is surprising that it has not occurred to any expositors. So the same word is used in Job 23:14. If this be the meaning, it expresses a true sentiment of piety in all ages. He who is truly religious is willing to sacrifice and abandon his own plans at the command of God. Job says that he was conscious of having done this, and he thus had a firm conviction that he was a pious man.

Verse 13

But he is in one mind - He is unchangeable. He has formed his plans, and no one can divert him from them. Of the truth of this sentiment there can be no dispute. The only difficulty in the case is to see why Job adverted to it here, and how it bears on the train of thought which he was pursuing. The idea seems to be, that God was now accomplishing his eternal purposes in respect to him; that he had formed a plan far back in eternal ages, and that that plan must be executed; that he was a Sovereign, and that however mysterious his plans might be, it was vain to contend with them, and that

man ought to submit to their execution with patience and resignation. Job expected yet that God would come forth and vindicate him; but at present all that he could do was to submit. He did not pretend to understand the reason of the divine dispensations; he felt that he had no power to resist God. The language here is that of a man who is perplexed in regard to the divine dealings, but who feels that they are all in accordance with the unchangeable purpose of God.

And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth - He does what he pleases. None can resist or control him. It is vain, therefore, to contend against him. From this passage we see that the doctrine of divine sovereignty was understood at a very early age of the world, and entered undoubtedly into the religion of the patriarchs. It was then seen and felt that God was absolute; that he was not dependent on his creatures; that he acted according to a plan; that he was inflexible in regard to that plan, and that it was in vain to attempt to resist its execution. It is, when properly understood, a matter of unspeakable consolation that God has a plan - for who could honor a God who had "no" plan, but who did everything by hap-hazard? It is matter of rejoicing that he has "one" great purpose which extends through all ages, and which embraces all things - for then everything falls into its proper place, and has its appropriate bearing on other events. It is a matter of joy that God "does" execute all his purposes; for as they are all good and wise, it is "desirable" that they should be executed. It would be a calamity if a good plan were not executed. Why then should people complain at the purposes or the decrees of God?

Verse 14

For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me - "I am now meeting only what has been determined by his eternal plan. I know not what is the "reason" why it was appointed; but I see that God had resolved to do it, and that it is vain to resist him." So when we suffer, we may say the same thing. It is not by chance or hap-hazard that we are afflicted; it is because "God" has "appointed" that it should be so. It is not by passion or caprice on his part; not by sudden anger or wrath; but it is because he had determined to do it as a part of his eternal plan. It is much, when we are afflicted, to be able to make this reflection. I had rather be afflicted, feeling that it is "the appointment of God," than feeling that it is "by chance" or "hap-hazard." I had rather think that it is a part of a plan calmly and deliberately formed by God, than that it is the result of some unexpected

and uncontrollable cause. In the one case, I see that mind and thought and plan have been employed, and I infer that there is a "reason" for it, though I cannot see it; in the other, I can see no proof of reason or of wisdom, and my mind finds no rest. The doctrine of divine purposes or decrees, therefore, is eminently adapted to give consolation to a sufferer. I had infinitely rather be under the operation of a plan or decree where there "may" be a reason for all that is done, though I cannot see it, than to feel that I am subject to the tossings of blind chance, where there can possibly be no reason.

And many such things are with him - The purpose does not pertain to me alone. It is a part of a great plan which extends to others - to all things. He is executing his plans around me, and I should not complain that in the development of his vast purposes I am included, and that I suffer. The idea seems to be this, that Job found consolation in the belief that he was not alone in these circumstances; that he had not been marked out and selected as a special object of divine displeasure. Others had suffered in like manner. There were "many" cases just like his own, and why should he complain? If I felt that there was special displeasure against "me;" that no others were treated in the same way, it would make afflictions much more difficult to bear. But when I feel that there is an eternal plan which embraces all, and that I only come in for my share, in common with others, of the calamities which are judged necessary for the world, I can bear them with much more ease and patience.

Verse 15

Therefore am I troubled at his presence - The doctrine of divine purposes and decrees "is fitted to impress the mind with awe." So vast are the plans of God; so uncertain to us is it what will be developed next; so impossible is it to resist God when he comes forth to execute his plans, that they fill the mind with reverence and fear. And this is one of the objects for which the doctrine is revealed. It is designed to rebuke the soul that is filled with flippancy and self-conceit; to impress the heart with adoring views of God, and to secure a proper reverence for his government. Not knowing what may be the next development of his plan, the mind should be in a state of holy fear - yet ready to submit and bow in whatever aspect his purposes may be made known. A Being, who has an eternal plan, and who is able to accomplish all that he purposes, and who makes known none of his dealings beforehand, should be an object of veneration and fear. It will not be the

same "kind of dreadful fear" which we would have of one who had almighty power, but who had "no plan" of any kind, but profound veneration for one who is infinitely wise as well as almighty. The fear of an Almighty Being, who has an eternal plan, which we cannot doubt is wise, though it is inscrutable to us, is a fear mingled with confidence; it is awe leading to the profoundest veneration. His eternal counsels may take away "our" comforts, but they are right; his coming forth may fill us with awe, but we shall venerate and love him.

When I consider - When I endeavor to understand his dealings; or when I think closely on them.

I am afraid of him - This would be the effect on any mind. A man that will sit down alone and "think" of God, and on his vast plans, will see that there is abundant occasion to be in awe before him.

Verse 16

For God maketh my heart soft - That is, "faint." He takes away my strength; compare the notes at Isaiah 7:4. This effect was produced on Job by the contemplation of the eternal plan and the power of God.

Verse 17

Because I was not cut off before the darkness - Before these calamities came upon me. Because I was not taken away in the midst of prosperity, and while I was enjoying his smiles and the proofs of his love. His trouble is, that he was spared to pass through these trials, and to be treated as if he were one of the worst of men. This is what now perplexes him, and what he cannot understand. He does not know why God had reserved him to treat him as if he were the chief of sinners.

Neither hath he covered the darkness from my face - The word "neither" is supplied here by our translators, but not improperly. The difficulty with Job was, that God had not "hidden" this darkness and calamity so that he had not seen it. He could not understand why, since he was his friend, God had not taken him away, so that all should have seen, even in his death, that he was the friend of God. This feeling is not, perhaps, very uncommon among those who are called to pass through trials. They do not understand why they were reserved to these sufferings, and why God did not take them away before the billows of calamity rolled over them.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Verse 1

Why, seeing times are not hidden froth the Almighty - Dr. Good renders this,

"Wherefore are not doomdays kept by the Almighty.

So that his offenders may eye his periods?"

Dr. Noyes:

"Why are not times of punishment reserved by the Almighty.

And why do not they, who regard him, see his judgments?"

Jerome, "Times are not hidden from the Almighty; but they who know him are ignorant of his days." The Septuagint, "But why have set times - ὧραι *hōrai* escaped the notice - ἔλαθον *elathon* - of the Almighty, and the wicked transgressed all bounds? The word עתים *ʿêthîym* here translated "times," is rendered by the Chaldee (עדניא), "set times," times appointed for an assembly or a trial, beforehand designated for any purpose. The Hebrew word properly means, set time, fit and proper times; and in the plural, as used here, means "seasons," Esther 1:13; 1 Chronicles 12:32; and then vicissitudes of things, fortunes, destinies; Psalm 31:16; 1 Chronicles 29:30. Here it means, probably, the vicissitudes of things, or what actually occurs. All changes are known to God. He sees good and bad times; he sees the changes that take place among people. And since he sees all this, Job asks, with concern, Why is it that God does not come forth to deal with people according to their true character? That this was the fact, he proceeds to show further in illustration of the position which he had maintained in Job 21:30; Job 24:23-24. They would be punished in due time, but it was not a fact as his friends alleged, that they were punished in this life according to their deeds.

Do they that know him? - His true friends; the pious.

Not see his days - The days of his wrath, or the day when he punishes the wicked. Why are they not permitted to see him come forth to take vengeance on his foes? The phrase "his days" means the days when God would come forth to punish his enemies. They are called "his days," because at that time God would be the prominent object that would excite attention. They would be days when he would manifest himself in a manner so remarkable as to characterize the period. Thus, the day of judgment is called the day "of the Son of Man," or "his day" Luke 17:24, because at that

time the Lord Jesus will be the prominent and glorious object that shall give character to the day. The "question" here seems to have been asked by Job mainly to call attention to "the fact" which he proceeds to illustrate. The fact was undeniable. Job did "not" maintain, as Eliphaz had charged on him Job 22:12-14, that the reason why God did not punish them was, that he could not see their deeds. He admitted most fully that God did see them, and understood all that they did. In this they were agreed. Since this was so, the question was why the wicked were spared, and lived in prosperity. The fact that it was so, Job affirms. The "reason" why it was so, was the subject of inquiry now. This was perplexing, and Job could solve it only by referring to what was to come hereafter.

Verse 2

Some remove the land-marks - Landmarks are pillars or stones set up to mark the boundaries of a farm. To remove them, by carrying them on to the land of another, was an act of dishonesty and robbery - since it was only by marks that the extent of a man's property could be known. Fences were uncommon; the art of surveying was not well understood, and deeds describing land were probably unknown also, and their whole dependence, therefore, was on the stones that were erected to mark the boundaries of a lot or farm. As it was not difficult to remove them, it became a matter of special importance to guard against it, and to make it a crime of magnitude. Accordingly, it was forbidden in the strictest manner in the law of Moses. "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbor's land-mark;" Deuteronomy 27:17; compare Deuteronomy 19:14; Proverbs 22:28; Proverbs 23:10.

And feed thereof - Margin, "or, them." The margin is correct. The meaning is, that they drive off the flocks of others, and "pasture" them; that is, they are at no pains to conceal what they do, but mingle them with their own herds, and feed them as if they were their own. If they drove them away to kill, and removed them wholly from view, it would be less shameful than to keep and claim them as their own, and to make the robbery so public.

Verse 3

They drive away the ass of the fatherless - Of the orphan, who cannot protect himself, and whose only property may consist in this useful animal. Injury done to an orphan is always regarded as a crime of special magnitude, for they are unable to protect themselves; see the notes at Job 22:9.

They take the widow‘s ox for a pledge - See the notes at Job 22:6. The widow was dependent on her ox to till the ground, and hence, the crime of taking it away in pledge for the payment of a debt.

Verse 4

They turn the needy out of the way - They crowd the poor out of the path, and thus oppress and injure them. They do not allow them the advantages of the highway.

The poor of the earth hide themselves together - For fear of the rich and mighty man. Driven from the society of the rich, without their patronage and friendship, they are obliged to associate together, and find in the wicked man neither protector nor friend. And yet the proud oppressor is not punished.

Verse 5

Behold, as wild asses in the desert - In regard to the wild ass, see the notes at Job 6:5. Schultens, Good, Noyes, and Wemyss, understand this, not as referring to the haughty tyrants themselves, but to the oppressed and needy wretches whom they had driven from society, and compelled to seek a precarious subsistence, like the wild ass, in the desert. They suppose that the meaning is, that these outcasts go to their daily toil seeking roots and vegetables in the desert for a subsistence, like wild animals. But it seems to me that the reference is rather to another class of wicked people: to the wandering tribes that live by plunder - who roam through the deserts, and live an unrestrained and a lawless life, like wild animals. The wild ass is distinguished for its fleetness, and the comparison here turns principally on this fact. These marauders move rapidly from place to place, make their assault suddenly and unexpectedly, and, having plundered the traveler, or the caravan, as suddenly disappear. They have no home, cultivate no land, and keep no flocks. The only objection to this interpretation is, that the wild ass is not a beast of prey. But, in reply to this, it may be said, that the comparison does not depend on that, but on the fact that they resemble those animals in their lawless habits of life; see Job 11:12, note; Job 39:5, note.

Go they forth to their work - To their employment - to wit, plunder.

Rising betimes - Rising early. It is a custom of the Orientals everywhere to rise by break of day. In journeys, they usually rise long before day, and travel much in the night, and during the heat of the day they rest. As

caravans often traveled early, plunderers would rise early, also, to meet them.

For a prey - For plunder - the business of their lives.

The wilderness - The desert, for so the word wilderness is used in the Scriptures; see Isaiah 35:1, note; Matthew 3:1, note.

Yieldeth food - To wit, by plunder. They obtain subsistence for themselves and their families by plundering the caravans of the desert. The idea of Job is, that they are seen by God, and yet that they are suffered to roam at large.

Verse 6

They reap every one his corn - Margin, "mingled corn," or "dredge." The word used here (בליל *belîyl*) denotes, properly, "meslin," mixed provender, made up of various kinds of grain, as of barley, vetches, etc., prepared for cattle; see the notes at Isaiah 30:24.

In the field - They break in upon the fields of others, and rob them of their grain, instead of cultivating the earth themselves. So it is rendered by Jerome - *Agrum non suum deme-runt; et vineam ejus, quem vi. oppresserint vindemiant.* The Septuagint renders it, "A field, not their own, they reap down before the time - πρὸ ὥρας *pro hōras* They gather the vintage of the wicked - Margin, "the wicked gather the vintage." Rather, they gather the vintage of the oppressor. It is not the vintage of honest industry; not a harvest which is the result of their own labor, but of plunder. They live by depredations on others. This is descriptive of those who support themselves by robbery.

Verse 7

They cause the naked to lodge without clothing - They strip others of their clothing, and leave them destitute.

That they have no covering in the cold - All travelers tell us, that though the day is intensely hot in the deserts of Arabia, yet the nights are often intensely cold. Hence, the sufferings of those who are plundered, and who have nothing to defend themselves from the cold air of the night.

Verse 8

They are wet with the showers of the mountains - That is, the poor persons, or the travelers whom they have robbed. Hills collect the clouds, and showers seem to pour down from the mountains. These showers often collect and pour down so suddenly that there is scarcely time to seek a shelter.

And embrace the rock for want of a shelter - Take refuge beneath a projecting rock. The robbers drive them away from their homes, or plunder them of their tents, and leave them to find a shelter from the storm, or at night, beneath a rock. This agrees exactly with what Niebuhr says of the wandering Arabs near mount Sinai: "Those who cannot afford a tent, spread out a cloth upon four or six stakes; and others spread their cloth near a tree, or endeavor to shelter themselves from the heat and the rain in the cavities of the rocks. Reisebeschreib. i. Thes s. 233.

Verse 9

They pluck the fatherless from the breast - That is, they steal away unprotected children, and sell them, or make slaves of them for their own use. If this is the correct interpretation, then there existed at that time, what has existed since, so much to the disgrace of mankind, the custom of kidnapping children, and bearing them away to be sold as slaves. Slavery existed in early ages; and it must have been in some such way that slaves were procured. The wonder of Job is, that such people were permitted to live - that God did not come forth and punish them. The fact still exists, and the ground of wonder is not diminished. Africa bleeds under wrongs of this kind; and the vengeance of heaven seems to sleep, though the child is torn away from its mother, and conveyed, amid many horrors, to a distant land, to wear out life in hopeless servitude.

And take a pledge of the poor - Take that, therefore, which is necessary for the comfort of the poor, and retain it, so that they cannot enjoy its use; see the notes at Job 22:6.

Verse 10

And they take away the sheaf from the hungry - The meaning of this is, that the hungry are compelled to bear the sheaf for the rich without being allowed to satisfy their hunger from it. Moses commanded that even the ox should not be muzzled that trod out the grain Deuteronomy 25:4; but here was more aggravated cruelty than that would be, in compelling men to bear the sheaf of the harvest without allowing them even to satisfy their hunger. This is an instance of the cruelty which Job says was actually practiced on the earth, and yet God did not interpose to punish it.

Verse 11

Which made oil within their walls - Or rather, they compel them to express oil within their walls. The word יצהירו *yatshîyrû* rendered "made oil," is from צחר *tsachar* to shine, to give light; and hence, the derivatives of

the word are used to denote light, and then oil, and thence the word comes to denote to press out oil for the purpose of light. Oil was obtained for this purpose from olives by pressing them, and the idea here is, that the poor were compelled to engage in this service for others without compensation. The expression "within their walls," means probably within the walls of the rich; that is, within the enclosures where such presses were erected. They were taken away from their homes; compelled to toil for others; and confined for this purpose within enclosures erected for the purpose of expressing oil. Some have proposed to read this passage, "Between their walls they make them toil at noonday;" as if it referred to the cruelty of causing them to labor in the sweltering heat of the sun. But the former interpretation is the most common, and best agrees with the usual meaning of the word, and with the connection.

And tread their wine-presses and suffer thirst - They compel them to tread out their grapes without allowing them to slake their thirst from the wine. Such a treatment would, of course, be cruel oppression. A similar description is given by Addison in his letter from Italy:

Il povreo Abitante mira indarno
Il roseggiante Arancio e'l pingue grano,
Crescer dolente ei mira ed oli, e vini,

E de mirti odorar l' ombra ei sdegna.

In mezzo alla Bonta della Natura

Maledetto languisce, e deatro a cariche
Di vino vigne muore per la sete.
"The poor inhabitant beholds in vain
The reddening orange and the swelling grain;

Joyless he sees the growing oils and wines

And in the myrtle's fragrant shade repines;

Starves, in the midst of nature's bounty curst,
And in the loaden vineyard dies for thirst."
Addison's works, vol. i. pp. 51-53. Ed. Lond. 1721.

Verse 12

Men groan from out of the city - The evident meaning of this is, that the sorrows caused by oppression were not confined to the deserts and to solitary places; were not seen only where the wandering freebooter seized upon the traveler, or in the comparatively unfrequented places in the country where the poor were compelled to labor in the wine presses and the olive presses of others, but that they extended to cities also. In what way this oppression in cities was practiced, Job does not specify. It might be by the sudden descent upon an unsuspecting city, of hordes of freebooters, who robbed and murdered the inhabitants, and then fled, or it might be by internal oppression, as of the rich ever the poor, or of masters over their slaves. The idea which Job seems to wish to convey is, that oppression abounded. The earth was full of violence. It was in every place, in the city and the country, and yet God did not in fact come forth to meet and punish the oppressor as he deserved. There would be instances of oppression and cruelty enough occurring in all cities to justify all that Job here says, especially in ancient times, when cities were under the control of tyrants. The word which is translated "men" here is מתים *mathîym* which is not the usual term to denote men. This word is derived from מות *mûth* "to die"; and hence, there may be here the notion of "mortals," or of the "dying," who utter these groans.

And the soul of the wounded crieth out - This expression appears as if Job referred to some acts of violence done by robbers, and perhaps the whole description is intended to apply to the sufferings caused by the sudden descent of a band of marauders upon the unsuspection and slumbering inhabitants of a city.

Yet God layeth not folly to them - The word rendered "folly" תפלה *tîphlâh* means "folly"; and thence also wickedness. If this reading is to be retained, the passage means that God does not lay to heart, that is, does not regard their folly or wickedness. He suffers it to pass without punishing it; compare Acts 17:30. But the same word, by a change of the points, תפלה *tephîllâh* means "prayer;" and many have supposed that it means, that God does not regard the prayer or cry of those who are thus oppressed. This, in itself, would make good sense, but the former rendering agrees better with the connection. The object of Job is not to show that God does not regard the cry of the afflicted, but that he does not interpose to punish those who are tyrants and oppressors.

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Verse 13

They are of those that rebel against the light - That is, they hate the light: compare John 3:20. It is unpleasant to them, and they perform their deeds in the night. Job here commences a reference to another class of wicked persons - those who perform their deeds in the darkness of the night; and he shows that the same thing is true of them as of those who commit crimes in open day, that God does not interpose directly to punish them. They are suffered to live in prosperity. This should be rendered, "Others hate the light;" or, "There are those also who are rebellious against the light." There is great force in the declaration, that those who perform deeds of wickedness in the night are "rebels" against the light of day.

They know not the ways thereof - They do not see it. They work in the night.

Nor abide in the paths thereof - In the paths that the light makes. They seek out paths on which the light does not shine.

Verse 14

The murderer - One of the instances, referred to in the previous verse, of those who perform their deeds in darkness.

Rising with the light - Hebrew לאור *lā'ôr* Vulgate "*Mane primo* - in the earliest twilight." The meaning is, that he does it very early; by daybreak. It is not in open day, but at the earliest dawn.

Killeth the poor and needy - Those who are so poor and needy that they are obliged to rise early and go forth to their toil. There is a double aggravation - the crime of murder itself, and the fact that it is committed on those who are under a necessity of going forth at that early hour to their labor.

And in the night is as a thief - The same man. Theft is usually committed under cover of the night. The idea of Job is, that though these crimes cannot escape the notice of God, yet that he does not interpose to punish those who committed them. A striking incidental illustration of the fact stated here, occurred in the journey of Messrs. Robinson and Smith, on their way from Akabah to Jerusalem. After retiring to rest one night, they were aroused by a sudden noise; and they apprehended attack by robbers. "Our Arabs," says Dr. R. "were evidently alarmed. They said, if thieves, "they would steal upon us at midnight; if robbers they would come down upon towards morning." Bibl. Research. i. 270. It would seem, therefore,

that there was some settled time or order in which they are accustomed to commit their various depredations.

Verse 15

The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight; - compare the description in Proverbs 7:8-9, "He went the way to her house; in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night."

And disguiseth his face - Margin, "setteth his face in secret." The meaning is, that he put a mask on his face, lest he should be recognized. So Juvenal, Sat. viii. 144, as quoted by Noyes:

- *si nocturnus adulter*

Tempora Santonico velas adoperta cucullo.

These deeds of wickedness were then performed in the night, as they are still; and yet, though the eye of God beheld them, he did not punish them. The meaning of Job is, that people were allowed to commit the blackest crimes, but that God did not come forth to cut them off.

Verse 16

In the dark they dig through houses - This refers, probably, to another class of wicked persons. The adulterer steals forth in the night, but it is not his way to "dig" into houses. But the persons here referred to are robbers, who conceal themselves by day, and who at night secretly enter houses for plunder. The phrase "dig through" probably has reference to the fact that houses were made of clay, or of bricks dried in the sun - a species of mud cottages, and whose walls, therefore, could be easily penetrated. In the East, nearly all the houses are made of unburned brick, and there is little difficulty in making a hole in the wall large enough to admit the human body; compare Ezekiel 12:7. In Bengal, says Mr. Ward, it is common for thieves to dig through the walls of houses made of mud, or under the house floors, which are made merely of earth, and enter thus into the dwellings while the inmates are asleep. Rosenmuller's Alte u. neue Morgenland "in loc."

Which they had marked for themselves in the day-time - According to this translation the idea would be, that in the day-time they carefully observed houses, and saw where an entrance might be effected. But this interpretation seems contrary to the general sense of the passage. It is said that they avoid the light, and that the night is the time for accomplishing their purposes. Probably, therefore, the meaning of this passage is, "in the day time they shut themselves up." So it is rendered by Gesenius,

Rosenmuller, Noyes, and others. The word here used, and rendered "marked" (חתם *châtham*), means to seal, to seal up; and hence, the idea of shutting up, or making fast; see Job 9:7, note; Isaiah 8:17, note. Hence, it may mean to shut up close as if one was locked in; and the idea here is, that in the day-time they shut themselves up close in their places of concealment, and went forth to their depredations in the night.

They know not the light - They do not see the light. They do all their work in the dark.

Verse 17

For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death - They dread the light as one does usually the deepest darkness. The morning or light would reveal their deeds of wickedness, and they therefore avoid it.

As the shadow of death - As the deepest darkness; see the notes at Job 3:5.

If one know them - If they are recognized. Or, more probably, this means "they," that is, each one of them, "are familiar with the terrors of the shadow of death," or with the deepest darkness. By this rendering the common signification of the word (יכיר *yakîyr*) will be retained, and the translation will accord with the general sense of the passage. The meaning is, that they are familiar with the blackest night. They do not dread it. They dread only the light of day. To others the darkness is terrible; to them it is familiar. The word rendered "shadow of death" in the latter part of this verse, is the same as in the former. It may mean in both places the gloomy night that resembles the shadow, of death. Such a night is "terrible" to most people, to them it is familiar, and they feel secure only when its deep shades are round about them.

Verse 18

He is swift as the waters - Noyes renders this, "They are as swift as the skiff upon the waters." Dr. Good, "Miserable is this man upon the waters." Wemyss, "Such should be as foam upon the waters." Le Clerc says that there is scarcely any passage of the Scriptures more obscure than this, and the variety of rendering adopted will show at once the perplexity of expositors. Rosenmuller supposes that the particle of comparison (כ *k*) is to be understood, and that the meaning is, "he is as a light thing upon the waters;" and this probably expresses the true sense. It is a comparison of the thief with a light boat, or any other light thing that moves gently on the face of the water, and that glides along without noise. So gently and noiselessly

does the thief glide along in the dark. He is rapid in his motion, but he is still. It is not uncommon to describe one who is about to commit crime in the night as moving noiselessly along, and as taking every precaution that the utmost silence should be preserved. So Macbeth, when about to commit murder, soliloquizes:

Now o‘er the one half world
Nature seems dead -
And withered murder,

Alarm‘d by his sentinel, the wolf,

Who‘s howl‘d his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,

With Tarquin‘s ravishing strides, towards his design

Moves like a ghost.

Thou sure and firm-set earth,

Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
The very stones prate of my whereabout.

I do not know, however, that this comparison of a thief, with a light object on the waters, is to be found any where else, but it is one of great beauty. The word rendered “swift” (קל *qal*) may denote either that which is swift, or that which is light. In Isaiah 30:16, it is applied to a fleet horse. Here it may be rendered, “He is as a light thing upon the face of the waters.”

Their portion is cursed in the earth - That is, their manner of life, their way of obtaining a livelihood, is deserving of execration. The result of humble toil and honest labor may be said to be blessed; but not the property which they acquire. Rosenmuller and Noyes, however, suppose that the word “portion” here refers to their habitation, and that the idea is, they have their dwelling in wild and uncultivated places; they live in places that are cursed by sterility and barrenness. The Hebrew will bear either construction. The word lot, as it is commonly understood by us, may perhaps embrace both ideas. “Theirs is a cursed lot on earth.”

He beholdeth not the way of the vineyards - That is, they do not spend their lives in cultivating them, nor do they derive a subsistence from them. They live by plunder, and their abodes are in wild retreats, far away from quiet and civilised society. The object seems to be to describe marauders, who make a sudden descent at night on the possessions of others, and who have their dwellings far away from fields that are covered with the fruits of cultivation.

Verse 19

Drought and heat consume the snow-waters - Margin, "violently take;" see the notes at Job 6:17. The word rendered "consume," and in the margin "violently take" (יגזלו *yîgâzelû*), means properly to strip off, as skin from the flesh; and then to pluck or tear away by force; to strip, to spoil, to rob. The meaning here is, that the heat seems to seize and carry away the snow waters - to bear them off, as a plunderer does spoil. There is much poetic beauty in this image. The "snow-waters" here mean the waters that are produced by the melting of the snow on the hills, and which swell the rivulets in the valleys below. Those waters, Job says, are borne along in rivulets over the burning sands, until the drought and heat absorb them all, and they vanish away; see the beautiful description of this which Job gives in Job 6:15-18. Those waters vanish away silently and gently. The stream becomes smaller and smaller as it winds along in the desert until it all disappears. So Job says it is with these wicked people whom he is describing. Instead of being violently cut off; instead of being hurried out of life by some sudden and dreadful judgment, as his friends maintained, they were suffered to linger on calmly and peaceably - as the stream glides on gently in the desert - until they quietly disappear by death - as the waters sink gently in the sands or evaporate in the air. The whole description is that of a peaceful death as contradistinguished from one of violence.

So doth the grave those who have sinned - There is a wonderful terseness and energy in the original words here, which is very feebly expressed by our translation. The Hebrew is (חטאו שאול *she'ôl châṭâ'û*) "the grave, they have sinned." The sense is correctly expressed in the common version. The meaning is, that they who have sinned die in the same quiet and gentle manner with which waters vanish in the desert. By those who have sinned, Job means those to whom he had just referred - robbers, adulterers, murderers, etc., and the sense of the whole is, that they died a

calm and peaceful death; see the notes at Job 21:13, where he advances the same sentiment as here.

Verse 20

The womb shall forget him - His mother who bare him shall forget him. The idea here seems to be, that he shall fade out of the memory, just as other persons do. He shall not be overtaken with any disgraceful punishment, thus giving occasion to remember him by a death of ignominy. At first view it would seem to be a calamity to be soon forgotten by a mother; but if the above interpretation be correct, then it means that the condition of his death would be such that there would be no occasion for a mother to remember him with sorrow and shame, as she would one who was ignominiously executed for his crimes. This interpretation was proposed by Mercer, and has been adopted by Rosenmuller, Noyes, and others. It accords with the general scope of the passage, and is probably correct. Various other interpretations, however, have been proposed, which may be seen in Good, and in the Critici Sacri.

The worm shall feed sweetly on him - As on others. He shall die and be buried in the usual manner. He shall lie quietly in the grave, and there return to his native dust. He shall not be suspended on a gibbet, or torn and devoured by wild beasts; but his death and burial shall be peaceful and calm; see Job 21:26, note; Job 19:26, note.

He shall be no more remembered - As having been a man of eminent guilt, or as ignominiously punished. The meaning is, that there is nothing marked and distinguishing in his death. There is no special manifestation of the divine displeasure. There is some truth in this, that the wicked cease to be remembered. People hasten to forget them; and having done no good that makes them the objects of grateful reminiscence, their memory fades away. This, so far from being a calamity and a curse, Job regards as a favor. It would be a calamity to be remembered as a bad man, and as having died an ignominious death.

And wickedness shall be broken as a tree - Evil here or wickedness (עולה *ʿavlâh*) means an evil or wicked man. The idea seems to be, that such a man would die as a tree that is stripped of its leaves and branches is broken down. He is not like a green tree that is violently torn up by the roots in a storm, or twisted off in a tempest, but like a dry tree that begins to decay, and that falls down gently by its own weight. It lives to be old, and then quietly sinks on the ground and dies. So Job says it is with the wicked.

They are not swept away by the divine judgments, as the trees of the forest are torn up by the roots or twisted off by the tornado.

Verse 21

He evil entreateth the barren - The woman who has no children to comfort or support her. He increases her calamity by acts of cruelty and oppression. To be without children, as is well known, was regarded, in the patriarchal ages, as a great calamity.

And doeth not good to the widow - See the notes at Job 24:3. Notwithstanding all this, he is permitted to live in prosperity, and to die without any visible tokens of the divine displeasure.

Verse 22

He draweth also the mighty with his power - The word here rendered draweth (מָשַׁך *mâshak*), means to draw; and then, to lay hold of, to take, to take away, and, hence, to remove, to destroy; Psalm 28:3; Ezekiel 22:20. The idea here seems to be, that his acts of oppression and cruelty were not confined to the poor and the defenseless. Even the great and the mighty were also exposed, and he spared none. No one was safe, and no rights could be regarded as secure. The character here described is one that pertains to a tyrant, or a conqueror, and Job probably meant to describe some such mighty man, who was regardless alike of the rights of the high and the low.

He riseth up - When he rises up; that is, when he enters on an enterprise, or goes forth to accomplish his wicked purposes.

And no man is sure of life - From the dread of him even the great and mighty have no security. This language will well describe the character of an Oriental despot. Having absolute power, no man, not even the highest in rank, can feel that his life is safe if the monarch becomes in any way offended. Yet, Job says that even such a despot was permitted to live in prosperity, and to die without any remarkable proof of the divine displeasure.

Verse 23

Though it be given him to be in safety - That is, God gives him safety. The name God is often understood, or not expressed. The meaning is, that God gives this wicked man, or oppressor, safety. He is permitted to live a life of security and tranquility.

Whereon he resteth - Or, rather, "And he is sustained, or upheld" - (וישען *veyshâʿan*). The meaning is, that he is sustained or upheld by God.

Yet his eyes are upon their ways - "And the eyes of God are upon the ways of such men." That is, God guards and defends them. He seems to smile upon them, and to prosper all their enterprises.

Verse 24

They are exalted for a little while - This was the proposition which Job was maintaining. His friends affirmed that the wicked were punished for their sins in this life, and that great crimes would soon meet with great calamities. This Job denies, and says that the fact was, that they were "exalted." Yet he knew that it was to be but for a little time, and he believed that they would, at no distant period, receive the proper reward of their deeds. He maintains, however, that their death might be tranquil and easy, and that no extraordinary proof of the divine displeasure would be perceived in the manner of their departure.

But are gone and brought low - Margin, "not." Hebrew ואיננו *ve'ayînenû* - "and are not;" compare Genesis 42:13. "The youngest is this day with our father, and one is not;" Genesis 37:30. "The child is not, and I, whither shall I go?" That is, the child is dead; compare the expression Troja fuit. The meaning here is, that they soon disappear, or vanish.

They are taken out of the way as all other - They die in the same manner as other people do, and without any extraordinary expressions of the divine displeasure in their death. This was directly contrary to what his friends had maintained. The Hebrew word here (קפץ *qâphats*) means, "to gather", "to collect"; and is often used in the sense of "gathering to one's fathers," to denote death.

And cut off as the tops of the ears of corn - Of wheat, barley, or similar grain. Corn, in the sense in which the word is commonly used in this country, was not known in the time of Job. The allusion here is to the harvest. When the grain was ripe, it seems they were in the habit of cutting off the ears, and not of cutting it near the root, as we do. The body of the stalk was left, and, hence, there is so frequent allusion in the Scriptures to stubble that was burned. So, in Egypt, the children of Israel were directed to obtain the stubble left in the fields, in making brick, instead of having straw furnished them. The meaning of Job here is, that they would not be taken away by a violent death, or before their time, but that they would be like grain standing in the field to the time of harvest, and then peacefully gathered; compare Psalm 73:4.

Verse 25

And if it be not so now, who will make me a liar? - A challenge to anyone to prove the contrary to what he had said. Job had now attacked their main position, and had appealed to facts in defense of what he held. He maintained that, as a matter of fact, the wicked were prospered, that they often lived to old age, and that they then died a peaceful death, without any direct demonstration of the divine displeasure. He boldly appeals, now, to anyone to deny this, or to prove the contrary. The appeal was decisive. The fact was undeniable, and the controversy was closed. Bildad Job 25:1-6 attempts a brief reply, but he does not touch the question about the facts to which Job had appealed, but utters a few vague and irrelevant proverbial maxims, about the greatness of God, and is silent. His proverbs appear to be exhausted, and the theory which he and his friends had so carefully built up, and in which they had been so confident, was now overthrown. Perhaps this was one design of the Holy Spirit, in recording the argument thus far conducted, to show that the theory of the divine administration, which had been built up with so much care, and which was sustained by so many proverbial maxims, was false. The overthrow of this theory was of sufficient importance to justify this protracted argument, because:

(1) it was and is of the highest importance that correct views should prevail of the nature of the divine administration; and

(2) it is of special importance in comforting the afflicted people of God.

Job had experienced great aggravation, in his sufferings, from the position which his friends had maintained, and from the arguments which they had been able to adduce, to prove that his sufferings were proof that he was a hypocrite. But it is worth all which it has cost; all the experience of the afflicted friends of God, and all the pains taken to reveal it, to show that affliction is no certain proof of the divine displeasure, and that important ends may be accomplished by means of trial.

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CHAPTER 25

Verse 2

Dominion and fear are with him - That is, God has a right to rule, and he ought to be regarded with reverence. The object of Bildad is to show that He is so great and glorious that it is impossible that man should be regarded as pure in his sight. He begins, therefore, by saying, that he is a Sovereign; that he is clothed with majesty, and that he is worthy of profound veneration.

He maketh peace in his high places - "High places," here refer to the heavenly worlds. The idea is, that he preserves peace and concord among the hosts of heaven. Numerous and mighty as are the armies of the skies, yet he keeps them in order and in awe. The object is to present an image of the majesty and power of that Being who thus controls a vast number of minds. The phrase does not necessarily imply that there had been variance or strife, and that then God had made peace, but that he preserved or kept them in peace.

Verse 3

Is there any number of his armies? - The armies of heaven; or the hosts of angelic beings, which are often represented as arranged or marshalled into armies; see the notes at Isaiah 1:9. The word which is used here is not the common one which is rendered "hosts," (צבא *tsâbâ'*), but is גדוד *gedûd* which means properly a troop, band, or army. It may here mean either the constellations often represented as the army which God marshals and commands, or it may mean the angels.

And upon whom doth not his light arise? - This is designed evidently to show the majesty and glory of God. It refers probably to the light of the sun, as the light which he creates and commands. The idea is, that it pervades all things; that, as controlled by him, it penetrates all places, and flows over all worlds. The image is a striking and sublime one, and nothing is better fitted to show the majesty and glory of God.

Verse 4

How then can man be justified with God? - see Job 4:17-18; Job 15:15-16. Instead of meeting the facts to which Job had appealed, all that Bildad could now do was to repeat what had been said before. It shows that he felt himself unable to dispose of the argument, and yet that he was not willing to confess that he was vanquished.

Or how can he be clean? - This sentiment had been expressed by Job himself, Job 14:4. Perhaps Bildad meant now to adopt it as undoubted truth, and to throw it back upon Job as worthy of his special attention. It has no bearing on the arguments which Job had advanced, and is utterly irrelevant except as Bildad supposed that the course of argument maintained by Job implied that he supposed himself to be pure.

Verse 5

Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not - Or, behold even the moon shineth not. That is, in comparison with God it is dark and obscure. The idea is, that the most beautiful and glorious objects become dim and fade away when compared with him. So Jerome renders it, Ecce luna etiam non splendet. The word here rendered "shineth" (יאהיל *ya'âhalîyl*) frequently means to pitch or remove a tent, and is a form of the word אהל *'ôhel* uniformly rendered tent or tabernacle. Some have supposed that the meaning here is, that even the moon and the stars of heaven - the bright canopy above - were not fit to furnish a tent or dwelling for God. But the parallelism seems to demand the usual interpretation, as meaning that the moon and stars faded away before God. The word אהל *'ôhel* derives this meaning, according to Gesenius, from its relation to the word הלל *hâlal* to be clear or brilliant, from the mutual relation of the פא and עע verbs. The Arabic has the same meaning.

Yea, the stars are not pure in his sight - That is, they are not bright in comparison with him. The design is to show the glory of the Most High and that nothing could be compared with him; see the notes at Job 4:18.

Verse 6

How much less man - See Job 4:19. Man is mentioned here as a worm; in Job 4:19 he is said to dwell in a house of clay and to be crushed before the moth. In both cases the design is to represent him as insignificant in comparison with God.

A worm - רמה *rîmmâh* see Job 7:5. The word is commonly applied to such worms as are bred in putridity, and hence, the comparison is the more forcible.

And the son of man - Another mode of speaking of man. Any one of the children of man is the same. No one of them can be compared with God; compare the notes at Matthew 1:1.

Which is a worm - תולעה *tôlêʿâh* compare the notes at Isaiah 1:18. This word frequently denotes the worm from which the scarlet or crimson color

was obtained. It is, however, used to denote the worm that is bred on putrid substances, and is so used here; compare Exodus 16:20; Isaiah 14:11; Isaiah 66:24. It is also applied to a worm that destroys plants. Jonah 4:7; Deuteronomy 28:39. Here it means, that man is poor, feeble, powerless. In comparison with God he is a crawling worm. All that is said in this chapter is true and beautiful, but it has nothing to do with the subject in debate. Job had appealed to the course of events in proof of the truth of his position. The true way to meet that was either to deny that the facts existed as he alleged, or to show that they did not prove what be had adduced them to establish. But Bildad did neither; nor did he ingenuously confess that the argument was against him and his friends. At this stage of the controversy, since they had nothing to reply to what Job had alleged, it would have been honorable in them to have acknowledged that they were in error, and to have yielded the palm of victory to him. But it requires extraordinary candor and humility to do that; and rather than do it, most people would prefer to say something - though it has nothing to do with the case in hand.

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CHAPTER 26

Verse 2

How hast thou helped him that is without power? - It has been doubted whether this refers to Job himself, the two friends of Bildad, or to the Deity. Rosenmuller. The connection, however, seems to demand that it should be referred to Job himself. It is sarcastical. Bildad had come as a friend and comforter. He had, also, in common with Eliphaz and Zophar, taken upon himself the office of teacher and counsellor. He had regarded Job as manifesting great weakness in his views of God and of his government; as destitute of all strength to bear up aright under trials, and now all that he had done to aid one so weak was found in the impertinent and irrelevant generalities of his brief speech. Job is indignant that one with such pretensions should have said nothing more to the purpose. Herder, however, renders this as if it related wholly to God, and it cannot be denied that the Hebrew would bear this:

"Whom helpest thou? Him who hath no strength?
Whom dost thou vindicate? Him whose arm hath no power?
To whom give counsel? One without wisdom?
Truly much wisdom hast thou taught him."

How savest thou the arm that hath no strength? - That is, your remarks are not adapted to invigorate the feeble. He had come professedly to comfort and support his afflicted friend in his trials. Yet Job asks what there was in his observations that was fitted to produce this effect? Instead of declaiming on the majesty and greatness of God, he should have said something that was adapted to relieve an afflicted and a troubled soul.

Verse 3

How hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom? - As he had undertaken to give counsel to another, and to suggest views that might be adapted to elevate his mind in his depression, and to console him in his sorrows, he had a right to expect more than he had found in his speech.

And how hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is? - The word rendered "the thing as it is" (תּשׁיה *tûshîyâh*) denotes properly a setting upright, uprightness - from ישׁה *yāshah* then help, deliverance, Job 6:13; purpose, undertaking, enterprise, Job 5:12; then counsel, wisdom, understanding, Job 11:6; Job 12:16. Here it is synonymous with reason, wisdom, or truth. The word rendered "plentifully" (לרב *larôb*) means "for

multitude," or abundantly, and the sense here is, that Bildad had made extraordinary pretensions to wisdom, and that this was the result. This short, irrelevant speech was all; a speech that communicated nothing new, and that met none of the real difficulties of the case.

Verse 4

To whom hast thou uttered words? - Jerome renders this, Quem docere voluisti? "Whom do you wish to teach?" The sense is, "Do you attempt to teach me in such a manner, on such a subject? Do you take it that I am so ignorant of the perfections of God, that such remarks about him would convey any real instruction?"

And whose spirit came from thee? - That is, by whose spirit didst thou speak? What claims hast thou to inspiration, or to the uttering of sentiments beyond what man himself could originate? The meaning is, that there was nothing remarkable in what he had said that would show that he had been indebted for it either to God or to the wise and good on earth.

Verse 5

Dead things - Job here commences his description of God, to show that his views of his majesty and glory were in no way inferior to those which had been expressed by Bildad, and that what Bildad had said conveyed to him no real information. In this description he far surpasses Bildad in loftiness of conception, and sublimity of description. Indeed, it may be doubted whether for grandeur this passage is surpassed by any description of the majesty of God in the Bible. The passage here has given rise to much discussion, and to a great variety of opinion. Our common translation is most feeble, and by no means conveys its true force. The object of the whole passage is to assert the universal dominion of God. Bildad had said Job 25:1-6 that the dominion of God extended to the heavens, and to the armies of the skies; that God surpassed in majesty the splendor of the heavenly bodies; and that compared with him man was a worm. Job commences his description by saying that the dominion of God extended even to the nether world; and that such were his majesty and power that even the shades of the mighty dead trembled at his presence, and that hell was all naked before him. The word רפאים *râphâ'îym* - *Rephaim* - so feebly rendered "dead things," means the shades of the dead; the departed spirits that dwell in Sheol; see the word explained at length in the notes at Isaiah 14:9. They are those who have left this world and who have gone down to dwell in the world beneath - the great and mighty conquerors and kings; the

illustrious dead of past times, who have left the world and are congregated in the land of Shades. Jerome renders it, "gigantes," and the Septuagint, γίγαντες *gigantes* - *giants*; from a common belief that those shades were larger than life. Thus, Lucretius says:

Quippe et enim jam tum divum mortalia secla
Egregias animo facies vigilante videbant;
Et magis in somnis, mirando corporis aucter
Rer. Nat. ver. 1168.

The word "shades" here will express the sense, meaning the departed spirits that are assembled in Sheol. The Chaldee renders it, גבריא - mighty ones, or giants; the Syriac, in like manner, giants.

Are formed - The Syriac renders this, are killed. Jerome, *gemunt* - groan; Septuagint, "Are giants born from beneath the water, and the neighboring places?" What idea the authors of that version attached to the passage it is difficult to say. The Hebrew word used here (יחוֹלֵלוּ *yechôlālû* from חוּל *chûl*), means to twist, to turn, to be in anguish - as in child birth; and then it may mean to tremble, quake, be in terror; and the idea here seems to be, that the shades of the dead were in anguish, or trembled at the awful presence, and under the dominion of God. So Luther renders it - understanding it of giants - Die Riesen angsten sich unter den Wassern. The sense would be well expressed, "The shades of the dead tremble, or are in anguish before him. They fear his power. They acknowledge his empire."

Under the waters - The abode of departed spirits is always in this book placed beneath the ground. But why this abode is placed beneath the waters, is not apparent. It is usually under the ground, and the entrance to it is by the grave, or by some dark cavern; compare Virgil's Aeniad, Lib. vi. A different interpretation has been proposed of this verse, which seems better to suit the connection. It is to understand the phrase (תחת *tachath*) "under," as meaning simply beneath - "the shades beneath;" and to regard the word (מים *mayîm*) waters as connected with the following member:

"The shades beneath tremble;
The waters and the inhabitants thereof."

Thus explained, the passage means that the whole universe is under the control of God, and trembles before him. Sheol and its Shades; the oceans and their inhabitants stand in awe before him.

And the inhabitants thereof - Of the waters - the oceans. The idea is, that the vast inhabitants of the deep all recognize the power of God and

tremble before him. This description accords with that given by the ancient poets of the power and majesty of the gods, and is not less sublime than any given by them.

Verse 6

Hell - Hebrew שׁאול *she'ôl* Sheol; Greek ᾅδης *Hadēs* Hades. The reference is to the abode of departed spirits - the nether world where the dead were congregated; see the notes at Job 10:21-22. It does not mean here, as the word hell does with us, a place of punishment, but the place where all the dead were supposed to be gathered together.

Is naked before him - That is, be looks directly upon that world. It is hidden from us, but not from him. He sees all its inhabitants, knows all their employments, and sways a scepter over them all.

And destruction - Hebrew אבדון *'ăbaddôn* Abaddon; compare Revelation 9:11, "And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon." The Hebrew word means destruction, and then abyss, or place of destruction, and is evidently given here to the place where departed spirits are supposed to reside. The word in this form occurs only here and in Proverbs 15:11; Psalm 88:11; Job 26:6, in all which places it is rendered destruction. The idea here is, not that this is a place where souls are destroyed, but that it is a place similar to destruction - as if all life, comfort, light, and joy, were extinguished.

Hath no covering - There is nothing to conceal it from God. He looks down even on that dark nether world, and sees and knows all that is there. There is a passage somewhat similar to this in Homer, quoted by Longinus as one of unrivaled sublimity, but which by no means surpasses this. It occurs in the Iliad, xx. 61-66:

Εδδεισεν δ᾽ ὑτένερθεϹ ἄναξ ἐνέρων Αιδωνεὺς, κ. τ. λ.

Eddeisen d' hupenerthen anac enerōn Aidōneus etc Deep in the dismal regions of the dead

Th‘ infernal monarch reared his horrid head,

Leaped from his throne, lest Neptune‘s arm should lay

His dark dominions open to the day,

And pour in light on Pluto‘s drear abodes,

Abhorred by men, and dreadful e‘en to gods.
Pope

Verse 7

He stretcheth out the north - This whole passage is particularly interesting as giving a view of the cosmology which prevailed in those early times. Indeed, as has been already remarked, this poem, apart from every other consideration, is of great value for disclosing to us the prevailing views on the subject of astronomy, geography, and many of the arts, at a much earlier period than we have an account of them elsewhere. The word north here denotes the heavens as they appear to revolve around the pole, and which seem to be stretched out as a curtain. The heavens are often represented as a veil, an expanse, a curtain, or a tent; see Isaiah 34:4, note; Isaiah 40:22, note.

Over the empty place - על־תהו *ʿal -tôhû* "Upon emptiness, or nothing." That is, without anything to support it. The word used here (תהו *tôhû*) is one of those employed Genesis 1:2, "And the earth was wlthout form and void." But it seems here to mean emptiness, nothing. The north is stretched out and sustained by the mere power of God.

And hangeth the earth upon nothing. - It has nothing to support it. So Milton:

"And earth self-balaneed from her center hung."

There is no certain evidence here that Job was acquainted with the globular form of the earth, and with its diurnal and annual revolutions. But it is clear that he regarded it as not resting on any foundation or support; as lying on the vacant air, and kept there by the power of God. The Chaldee paraphrasist, in order to explain this, as that Paraphrase often does, adds the word waters. "He hangeth the earth מיא עלוי upon the waters, with no one to sustain it." The sentiment here expressed by Job was probably the common opinion of his time. It occurs also in Lucretius:

Terraque ut in media mundi regionne quieseat
Evallescere paullatim, et decrescere, pondus
Convenit; atque aliam naturam subter habere,

Et ineunte aevo conjunctam atque uniter aptam

Partibus aeriis mundi, quibus insita vivit

Propterea, non est oneri, neque deprimit auras;

Ut sua quoique homini nullo sunt pondere membra,

Nec caput est oneri collo, nec denique totum

Corporus in pedibus pondus sentimus inesse.
v. 535.

In this passage the sense is, that the earth is self-sustained; that it is no burden, or that no one part is burdensome to another - as in man the limbs are not burdensome, the head is not heavy, nor the whole frame burdensome to the feet. So, again, Lucretius says, ii. 602:

Hanc, veteres Grajum docti cecinere poetae,
Aeris in spatio magnam pendere -
Tellurem, neque posse in terra sistere terram.
- "In ether poised she hangs,
Unpropt by earth beneath."

So Ovid says:

Ponderibus librata suis.
Self-poised and self balanced.

And again, Fastor, vi. 269:

Terra pilae similis, nullo fulcimine nixa,
Aere subjecto tam grave pendet onus.

From passages like this occurring occasionally in the Classical writers, it is evident that the true figure of the earth had early engaged the attention of people, and that occasionally the truth on this subject was before their minds, though it was neither worked into a system nor sustained then by suffient evidence to make it an article of established belief The description here given is appropriate now; and had Job understood all that is now known of astronomy, his language would have been appropriate to express just conceptions of the greatness and majesty of God. It is proof of amazing power and greatness that he has thus "hung" the earth, the planets, the vast sun himself, upon nothing, and that by his own power he sustains and governs all.

Verse 8

He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds - That is, he seems to do it, or to collect the waters in the clouds, as in bottles or vessels. The clouds appear to hold the waters, as if bound up, until he is pleased to send them drop by drop upon the earth.

And the cloud is not rent under them - The wonder which Job here expresses is, that so large a quantity of water as is poured down from the clouds, should be held suspended in the air without seeming to rend the cloud, and falling all at once. His image is that of a bottle, or vessel, filled with water, suspended in the air, and which is not rent. What were the views which he had of the clouds, of course it is impossible now to say. If he regarded them as they are, as vapors, or if he considered them to be a more solid substance, capable of holding water, there was equal ground for wonder. In the former case, his amazement would have arisen from the fact, that so light, fragile, and evanescent a substance as vapor should contain so large a quantity of water; in the latter case, his wonder would have been that such a substance should distil its contents drop by drop. There is equal reason for admiring the wisdom of God in the production of rain, now that the cause is understood. The clouds are collections of vapors. They contain moisture, or vapor, which ascends from the earth, and which is held in suspension when in small particles in the clouds; as, when a room is swept, the small particles of dust will be seen to float in the room. When these small particles are attracted, and form masses as large as drops, the air will no longer sustain them, and they fall to the earth. Man never could have devised a way for causing rain; and the mode in which it is provided that large quantities of water shall be borne from one place to another in the air, and made to fall when it is needed, by which the vapors that ascend from the ocean shall not be suffered to fall again into the ocean, but shall be carried on to the land, is adapted to excite our admiration of the wisdom of God now, no less than it was in the time of Job.

Verse 9

He holdeth back the face of his throne - That is, he does not exhibit it - he covers it with clouds. The idea seems to be, that God sometimes comes forth and manifests himself to mankind, but that he comes encompassed with clouds, so that his throne cannot be seen. So in Psalm 18:11, “He made darkness his secret place, his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.” God is often represented as encompassed with clouds, or as accompanied with tempests.

And spreadeth his cloud upon it - That is, so that it cannot be seen. There is much poetic beauty in this image. It is, that the clouds are made to conceal the splendor of the throne of God from the sight of man, and that all their sublimity and grandeur, as they roll on one another, and all their beauty when painted with so many colors in the evening, are designed to hide that throne from mortal eyes. No one sees God; and though it is manifest that he is every where employed, and that he comes forth with amazing grandeur in the works of creation and providence, yet he is himself invisible.

Verse 10

He hath compassed the waters with bounds - The word rendered "compassed" (חוּג *chûg*), means to describe a circle - to mark out with a compass; and the reference is to the form of the horizon, which appears as a circle, and which seems to be marked out with a compass. A similar idea Milton has beautifully expressed in his account of the creation:

"Then staid the fervid wheels, and in his hand
He took the golden compasses, prepared
In God's eternal store, to circumscribe

This universe, and all created things:

One foot he centered, and the other turned

Round through the vast profundity obscure;

And said, ‹Thus far extend thy bounds,

This be thy just cirrumference, O world! ‹"

Paradise Lost, B. vii.

In the passage before us, we have a statement of the ancient views of geography, and of the outer limits of the world. The earth was regarded as a circular plane, surrounded by waters, and those waters encompassed with perpetual night. This region of night - this outer limit of the world, was regarded as at the outer verge of the celestial hemisphere, and on this the concave of heaven seemed to rest. See Virgil, Geor. i. 247.

Illie, ut perhibent, aut intempesta silet nox
Semper, et obtenta densantur, nocte tenebrae;

Aut redit a nobis Aurora, diemque redicited

No maps are preserved constructed at so early an age as the time of Job; but maps have been constructed from the descriptions in Strabo, Herodotus, and others, which furnish illustrations of the prevailing views on the subject of geography in their times. The oldest geographical writer among the Romans is Mela, who lived in the reign of Claudius, and who died 54 a.d. In his work, De Situ Orbis, he gives a description of the world according to the prevailing views, and probably embodied the results of former investigations and discoveries. “We find him adopting, in its fullest extent, the belief of a circumambient ocean; and when he speaks of the high earth in this middle part of it, and describes the sea as going under and washing round it, we are led to believe, that he viewed the earth as a sort of cone, or as a high mountain raised by its elevation above the abyss of waters. Having made a vague division of the world into East, West, and North, he distributed it into five zones, two temperate, one torrid, and two frigid. Only the first two were habitable; and that on the South was inacessible to man, on account of the torrid regions intervening. According to this system, however, there was on that side another earth, inhabited by people whom he calls Antichthones, from their opposite position with respect to that part which we inhabit.

The form and boundaries of the known and habitable earth are thus delineated: The Mediterranean, with its branches of the Straits, the Euxine, and the Palus Moeotis; its great tributaries, the Nile and the Tanais - these combine, in his conception, to form the grand line by which the universe is divided. The Mediterranean itself separates Europe from Africa; and these continents are bounded on the East, the former by the Tanais, the latter by the Nile; all beyond or to the East of these limits was Asia.” The following cut is probably a correct representation of his system, and gives the view of the world which prevailed in his time.

The ancient Arabs supposed the earth to be encompassed with an ocean. This ocean was called the “sea of darkness;” and the Northern sea was regarded as particularly pitchy and gloomy, and was called “the sea of pitchy darkness.” Edrisi, a distinguished Arabic geographer of the middle ages, supposed that the land floated on the sea, only a part of it appearing above the water, like an egg, floating in the water.

A map of the world, constructed during the Crusades, and embodying the views of the world prevailing then, exhibits the world, also, as surrounded by a dark ocean on every side - *mare tenebrosum* - and may be introduced as an illustration of this passage in Job. It is the map of Sanudo, annexed to Bongar‘s “Gesta Dei per Francos.” In this map, Jerusalem, according to the prevailing views, “is placed in the center of the world, as the point to which every other object is to be referred; the earth is made a circle, surrounded by the ocean, the shores of which are represented as every where nearly equidistant from that spiritual capital, the site of which is, indeed, remarkable for its relation to the three continents, Asia, Europe, and Africa. Persia stands in its proper place; but India, under the modifications of Greater and Lesser, is confusedly repeated at different points, while the river Indus is mentioned in the text as the Eastern boundary of Asia. To the North, the castle of Gog and Magog, an Arabian feature, crowns a vast range of mountains, within which, it is said, that the Tartars had been imprisoned by Alexander the Great. The Caspian appears, with the bordering countries of Georgia, Hyrcania, and Albania; but these features stand nearly at the Northern boundary of the habitable earth. Africa has a sea to the South, stated, however, to be inaccessible, on account of the intensity of the heat. The European countries stand in their due place, not even excepting Russia and Scandinavia, though some oversights are observable in the manner in which the two are connected together.”

A similar view prevails among the modern Egyptians. “Of geography, the Egyptians, in general, and with very few exceptions, the best instructed among them, have scarcely any knowledge. Some few of the learned venture to assert that the earth is a globe, but they are opposed by a great majority of the *'Ooláma* The common opinion of all the Moos‘lims is, that the earth is an almost plane expanse, surrounded by the ocean, which they say is encompassed by a chain of mountains called *Cka'f* Lane‘s Modern Egyptians, vol. i. p. 281. A similar view of the world prevails, also, now among the Independent Nestortans, which may be regarded as the ancient prevailing opinion in Persia, handed down by tradition. “According to their views of geography,” says Dr. Grant, “the earth is a vast plain, surrounded by the ocean, in which a leviathan plays around, to keep the water in motion, and prevent its becoming stagnant and putrid; and this leviathan is of such enormous length, that his head follows his tail in the circuit round

the earth! That I had crossed the ocean, where I must have encountered the monster, was a thing almost incredible."

The Nestortans, p. 100. In ancient times, it was regarded as impossible to penetrate far into the sea surrounding the earth, on account of the thick darkness, and it was believed that after sailing for any considerable distance on that sea, the light would wholly fail. In the ninth century, the Arabic historians tell us, that the brothers Almagrurim sailed from Lisbon due west, designing, if possible, to discover the countries beyond the "sea of darkness." For ten or eleven days, they steered westward; but, seeing a storm approaching, the light faint, and the sea tempestuous, they feared that they had come to the dark boundaries of the earth. They turned, therefore, south, sailed twelve days in that direction, and came to an island which they called Ganam, or the island of birds, but the flesh of these birds was too bitter to be eaten. They sailed on twelve days further, and came to another island, the king of which assured them that their pursuit was vain; that his father had sent an expedition for the same purpose; but that, after a month's sail, the light had wholly failed, and they had been obliged to return. A great amount of interesting and valuable information, on the ancient views of the geography of the world, may be seen in the Encyclopedia of Geography, vol. i. pp. 9-68. It is not easy to ascertain what were the exact views in the time of Job, but it is quite probable, from the passage before us, that the earth was supposed to be surrounded by an ocean, and that the outer limits were encompassed with deep and impenetrable darkness.

Until the day and night come to an end - Margin, "end of light with darkness." The true meaning is, to the confines of light and darkness. To the end, or extremity תכלית *taklîyth* - perfection, completions) of the light with the darkness; that is, where the light terminates in the darkness. Where that limit was, or how the sun was supposed to pass around it, or could pass over it, without illuminating it, it is now impossible to ascertain. The prevailing views on geography and astronomy must have been very obscure, and there must have been many things which they could not pretend to comprehend or explain.

Verse 11

The pillars of Heaven tremble - That is, the mountains, which seem to bear up the heavens. So, among the ancients. Mount Atlas was represented

as one of the pillars of heaven. Virgil speaks of "Atlas whose brawny back supports the skies." And Hesiod, ver. 785, advances the same notion:

"Atlas, so hard necessity ordains,
Great, the ponderous vault of stars sustains
Not far from the Hesperides he stands,
Nor from the load retracts his head or hands."

The word "reproof" in this verse refers to the language of God, as if spoken in anger to rebuke the mountains or the earth. Perhaps the reference is to thunder, to storms, and to winds, which seem to be the voice of God; compare Psalm 29:3-8. Similar descriptions of the majesty and glory of God abound in the Scriptures, where he speaks to the earth, the mountains, the hills, and they tremble. Thus, in Psalm 104:32;

He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth;
He toucheth the hills, and they smoke.

So in Habakkuk 3:10:

The mountains saw thee, and they trembled;
The overflowing of the water passed by;
The deep uttered his voice, and lift up his hands on high.

So in Nahum 1:5, "The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence."

Verse 12

He divideth the sea with His power - Herder renders this:

By his power he scourgeth the sea,
By his wisdom he bindeth its pride.

Jerome (Vulgate), "By his power the seas are suddenly congregated together The Septuagint, "By his power - κατέπαυσε την θάλασσαν *katepause tēn thalassan* - he makes the sea calm." Luther, Vor seiner Kraft wird das Meer plotzlich ungestum- "By his power the sea becomes suddenly tempestuous." Noyes renders it, "By his power he stilleth the sea." This is undoubtedly the true meaning. There is no allusion here to the dividing of the sea when the Israelites left Egypt; but the ideals, that God has power to calm the tempest, and hush the waves into peace. The word used here (רגע *râgaʿ*) means, to make afraid, to terrify; especially, to restrain by threats; see the notes at Isaiah 51:15; compare Jeremiah 31:35. The reference here is to the exertion of the power of God, by which he is able to calm the tumultuous ocean, and to restore it to repose after a storm -

one of the most striking exhibitions of omnipotence that can be conceived of.

By his understanding - By his wisdom.

He smiteth through - He scourges, or strikes - as if to punish.

The proud - The pride of the sea. The ocean is represented as enraged, and as lifted up with pride and rebellion. God scourges it, rebukes it, and makes it calm.

Verse 13

By his spirit - The word spirit here is either synonymous with wisdom, referring to the wisdom by which God made the heavens; or with breath - meaning, that he did it by his own command. There is no evidence that Job refers to the Third Person of the Trinity - the Holy Spirit - as being especially engaged in the work of creation. The word spirit is often used to denote one‘s self; and the meaning here is, that God had done it. This was one of the exhibitions of his power and skill.

He hath garnished the heavens - He has formed the stars which constitute so beautiful an ornament of the heavens.

His hand hath formed the crooked serpent - Or, rather, the fleeing serpent - ברח נחשׁ *nāchâsh bârîach* see the notes at Isaiah 27:1. There can be no doubt that Job refers here to one of the constellations, which it seems was then known as the serpent or dragon. The practice of forming pictures of the heavens, with a somewhat fanciful resemblance to animals, was one of the most early devices of astronomy, and was evidently known in the time of Job; compare the notes at Job 9:9. The object was, probably, to aid the memory; and though the arrangement is entirely arbitrary, and the resemblance wholly fanciful, yet it is still continued in the works of astronomy, as a convenient help to the memory, and as aiding in the description of the heavenly bodies. This is probably the same constellation which is described by Virgil, in language that strikingly resembles that here uscd by Job:

Maximus hic flexu sinuoso elabitur anguis
Circum, perque duas in morem fluminis Arctos,
Arctos oceani metuentes sequore tingi.
Geor. i. 244.
Around our pole the spiry Dragon glides,
And, like a winding stream, the Bears divides;
The less and greater, who by Fate‘s decree

Abhor to die beneath the Southern sea.

Dryden

The figure of the Serpent, or "the Dragon," is still one of the constellations of the heavens, and there can be little doubt that it is the same that is referred to in this ancient book. On the celestial globes it is drawn between the Ursa Major and Cepheus, and is made to embrace the pole of the ecliptic in its convolutions. The head of the monster is under the foot of Hercules; then there is a coil tending eastwardly about 17 degrees north of Lyra; then he winds northwardly about 14 degrees to the second coil, where he reaches almost to the girdle of Cepheus; then he loops down and makes a third coil somewhat in the shape of the letter "U," about 15 degrees below the first; and then he holds a westerly course for about 13 degrees, and passes between the head of the Greater and the tail of the Lesser Bear. The constellation has 80 stars; including four of the second magnitude, seven of the third, and twelve of the fourth.

The origin of the name given to this constellation, and the reason why it was given, are unknown. It has been supposed that the Dragon in his tortuous windings is symbolic of the oblique course of the stars, and particularly that it was designed to designate the motion of the pole of the equator around the pole of the ecliptic, produced by the precession of the equinoxes. It may be doubted, however, whether this is not a refinement; for the giving of a name for such a cause must have been based on knowledge much in advance of that which was possessed when this name was given. Mythologists say, that Draco was the watchful dragon which guarded the golden apples in the garden of the Hesperides, near Mount Atlas, in Africa, and which was slain by Hercules. Juno is said to have taken the Dragon up to heaven, and to have made a constellation of him, as a reward for his faithful services. The origin of the division of the stars into constellations is now unknown.

It has been known from the earliest times, and is found in all nations; and it is remarkable that about the same mode of division is observed, and about the same names are given to the constellations. This would seem to indicate that they had a common origin; and probably that is to be found in Chaldea, Arabia, or Egypt. Sir Isaac Newton regards Egypt as the parental point; Sir William Jones, Chaldea; Mr. Montucla, Arabia. There is probably

no book earlier than this of Job, and the mention here of the names of the constellations is probably the first on record. If so, then the first intimation that we have of them was from Arabia; but still it may have been that Job derived his views from Egypt or Chaldea. The sense in the passage before us is, that the greatness and glory of God are seen by forming the beautiful and the glorious constellations that adorn the sky.

Verse 14

Lo, these are parts of his ways - This is a small portion of his works. We see only the outlines, the surface of his mighty doings. This is still true. With all the advances which have been made in science, it is still true that we see but a small part of his works. What we are enabled to trace with all the aids of science, compared with what is unseen and unknown, may be like the analysis of a single drop of water compared with the ocean.

But how little a portion is heard of him? - Or, rather, "But what a faint whisper have we heard of him!" Literally, "What a whisper of a word," - דבר ומה־שמץ *yuvmah shėmets dâbâr* The word שמץ *shemets* means a transient sound rapidly passing away; and then a whisper; see the notes at Job 4:12. A "whisper of a word" means a word not fully and audibly spoken, but which is whispered into the ear; and the beautiful idea here is, that what we see of God, and what he makes known to us, compared with the full and glorious reality, bears about the same relation which the gentlest whisper does to words that are fully spoken.

The thunder of his power who can understand? - It is probable that there is here a comparison between the gentle "whisper" and the mighty "thunder;" and that the idea is, if, instead of speaking to us in gentle whispers, and giving to us in that way some faint indications of his nature, he were to speak out in thunder, who could understand him? If, when he speaks in such faint and gentle tones, we are so much impressed with a sense of his greatness and glory, who would not be overwhelmed if he were to speak out as in thunder? Thus explained, the expression does not refer to literal thunder, though there is much in the heavy peal to excite adoring views of God, and much that to Job must have been inexplicable. It may be asked, even now, who can understand all the philosophy of the thunder? But with much more impressiveness it may be asked, as Job probably meant to ask, who could understand the great God, if he spoke out with the full voice of his thunder, instead of speaking in a gentle whisper?

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Verse 1

Job continued - Margin, as in Hebrew "added to take up." Probably he had paused for Zophar to reply, but since he said nothing he now resumed his argument.

His parable - A parable properly denotes a comparison of one thing with another, or a fable or allegorical representation from which moral instruction is derived. It was a favorite mode of conveying truth in the East, and indeed is found in all countries; see the notes at Matthew 13:3. It is evident, however, that Job did not deliver his sentiments in this manner; and the word rendered "parable" here (מֹשָׁל *mâshâl*) means, as it often does, a sententious discourse or argument. The word is used in the Scriptures to denote a parable, properly so called; then a sententious saying; an apothegm; a proverb; or a poem or song; see the notes at Isaiah 14:4. It is rendered here by the Vulgate, parabolam; by the Septuagint, προοιμίῳ *prooimiō* - "Job spake by preface;" Luther, fuhr fort- Job continued; Noyes, discourse; Good, high argument. The meaning is, that Job continued his discourse; but there is in the word a reference to the kind of discourse which he employed, as being sententious and apothegmatical.

Verse 2

As God liveth - A form of solemn adjuration, or an oath by the living God. "As certainly as God lives." It is the form by which God himself often swears; see Ezekiel 14:16; Ezekiel 33:11, and is often employed by others; 1 Samuel 20:3; 1 Samuel 25:26.

Who hath taken away my judgment - Who hath rejected my cause, or who has refused me justice; that is, who has treated me as though I was guilty, and withholds from me relief. The language is forensic, and the idea is, that he would make his solemn appeal to him, even though he had rejected his cause. Perhaps there is implied here more than the solemnity of an ordinary oath. A man might be supposed to be willing to make his appeal to one who had shown himself friendly or favorable to him, but he would manifest more reluctance to making his appeal in an important case to a judge who had decided against him, especially if that decision was regarded as severe, and if that judge had refused to hear what he had to say in self-defense. But Job here says, that such was his confidence in his own sincerity and truth, that he could make his appeal to God, even though he

knew that he had hitherto gone against him, and treated him as if he were guilty.

Who hath vexed my soul - Margin, as in Hebrew "made my soul bitter." That is, who has greatly afflicted me; compare 2 Kings 4:27, margin, and Rth 1:20 .

Verse 3

And the spirit of God is in my nostrils - As long as I live. The "spirit of God" here means the breath that God breathed into man when he created him, Genesis 2:7. It would seem probable that there was an allusion to that fact by the language here, and that the knowledge of the way in which man was created was thus handed down by tradition.

Verse 4

My lips shall not speak wickedness - This solemn profession made on oath might have done something to allay the suspicions of his friends in regard to him, and to show that they had been mistaken in his character. It is a solemn assurance that he did not mean to vindicate the cause of wickedness, or to say one word in its favor; and that as long as he lived he would never be found advocating it.

Nor my tongue utter deceit - I will never make any use of sophistry; I will not attempt to make "the worse appear the better reason;" I will not be the advocate of error. This had always been the aim of Job, and he now says that no circumstance should ever induce him to pursue a different course as long as he lived. Probably he means, also, as the following verse seems to imply, that no consideration should ever induce him to countenance error or to palliate wrong. He would not be deterred from expressing his sentiments by any dread of opposition, or even by any respect for his friends. No friendship which he might have for them would induce him to justify what he honestly regarded as error.

Verse 5

God forbid - לי חלילה *châlîylâh lîy* "Far be it from me." Literally, "Profane be it to me;" that is, I should regard it as unholy and profane; I cannot do it.

That I should justify you - That I should admit the correctness of your positions, and should concede that I am an hypocrite. He was conscious of integrity and sincerity, and nothing could induce him to abandon that conviction, or to admit the correctness of the reasoning which they had

pursued in regard to him. Coverdale (1535 a.d.) has given this a correct translation, "God forbid that I should grant your cause to be right."

Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me - I will not admit that I am insincere and hypocritical. This is the language of a man who was conscious of integrity, and who would not be deprived of that consciousness by any plausible representations of his professed friends.

Verse 6

My righteousness I hold fast - I hold on to the consciousness of integrity and uprightness. I cannot, will not, part with that. Job had lost his property, his health, and his domestic comforts, but he had in all this one consolation - he felt that he was sincere. He had been subjected to calamity by God as if he were a wicked man, but still he was resolved to adhere to the consciousness of his uprightness. Property may leave a man; friends may forsake him; children may die; disease may attack him; slander may assail him; and death may approach him; but still he may have in his bosom one unfailing source of consolation; he may have the consciousness that his aim has been right and pure. That nothing can shake; of that, no storms or tempests, no malignant foe, no losses or disappointment, no ridicule or calumny, can deprive him.

My heart shall not reproach me - That is, as being insincere, false, hollow.

So long as I live - Margin, "from my days." So the Hebrew - מימי *mîyāmāy* Vulgate in *omni vita mea*. Septuagint, "I am not conscious to myself of having done anything amiss" - ἄτοπα τράξας *atopa pracas* compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 4:4. The idea is, that he had a consciousness of integrity, and that he meant to maintain it as long as he lived.

Verse 7

Let mine enemy be as the wicked - This is probably said that he might show that it was not his intention to justify the wicked, and that in all that he had said it was no part of his purpose to express approbation of their course. His friends had charged him with this; but he now solemnly disclaims it, and says that he had no such design. To show how little he meant to justify the wicked, he says that the utmost that he could desire for an enemy would be, that he would be treated as he believed the wicked would be. A similar expression occurs in Daniel 4:19, "My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies;"

that is, calamities are coming upon thee indicated by the dream, such as you would desire on your foes; so in Judges 5:31. After the mother of Sisera had anxiously looked for the return of her son from the battle, though he was then slain, the sacred writer adds, "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord." Thus, when a traitor is executed it is common for the executioner to hold up his head and say, "So let all the enemies of the king die." Job means to say that he had no sympathy with wicked people, and that he believed that they would be punished as certainly and as severely as one could desire his enemy to suffer. Schnurrer supposes that by the enemy here he refers to his friends with whom he had been disputing; but this is to give an unnecessarily harsh construction to the passage.

Verse 8

For what is the hope of the hypocrite? - The same sentiment which Job here advances had before been expressed by Bildad; see it explained in the notes at Job 8:13 following It had also been expressed in a similar manner by Zophar (see the notes on Job 20:5, and had been much insisted on in their arguments. Job now says that he fully accords with that belief. He was not disposed to defend hypocrisy; he had no sympathy for it. He knew, as they did, that all the joy of a hypocrite would be temporary, and that when death came it must vanish. He wishes that his remarks should not be construed so as to make him the advocate of hypocrisy or sin, and affirms that he relied on a more solid foundation of peace and joy than the hypocrite could possess. It was by explanations and admissions such as these that the controversy was gradually closed, and when they came fully to understand Job, they felt that they had nothing which they could reply to him.

Though he hath gained - - יבצע *yîbâtsaʿ* The Vulgate renders this, *si avare rapiat* - "if he avariciously seizes upon." The Septuagint, ὅτι *hoti* ἐπέχει *epechei* that he persisteth. Dr. Good, "That he should prosper;" and so Wemyss. The Hebrew word (בצע *bâtsaʿ*) means properly, to cut or dash in pieces; then to tear in pieces, or to plunder or spoil; then to cut off, to bring to an end, etc. It is applied to the action of a weaver, who, when his web is finished, cuts off the thrum that binds it to the beam. The web is then finished; it is all woven, and is then taken from the loom. Hence, it is elegantly used to denote the close of life, when life is woven or finished - by the rapid passing of days like the weavers shuttle Job 7:6, and when it is then, as it were, taken out of the loom; see this figure explained in the notes

at Isaiah 38:12. This is the idea here, that life would be cut off like the weaver‘s web, and that when that was done the hope of the hypocrite would be of no value.

When God taketh away his soul - When he dies. There has been much perplexity felt in regard to the Hebrew word here rendered “taketh away” - יֵשֵׁל *yēshel* A full explanation may be seen in Schultens and Rosenmuller. Some suppose it is the future from נשל for ישל - meaning to draw out, and that the idea is, that God draws out this life as a sword is drawn out of a sheath. Others, that it is from שלה - to be secure, or tranquil, or at rest: and that it refers to the time when God shall give rest in the grave, or that the meaning of the word שלה here is the same as שלל or נשל - to draw out; see Gesenius on the word שלה. Schnurrer conjectures that it is derived from שאל - to ask, to demand, and that the form here is contracted from the future ישאל . But the common supposition is, that it means to draw out - in allusion to drawing out a sword from a scabbard - thus drawing life or the soul from the body.

Verse 9

Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? - Coverdale has rendered this Job 27:8-9 so as to make excellent sense, though not strictly in accordance with the original. “What hope hath the hypocrite though he have great good, and though God give him riches after his heart‘s desire? Doth God hear him the sooner, when he crieth unto him in his necessity?” The object of the verse is to show the miserable condition of a wicked man or a hypocrite. This is shown by the fact which Job asserts, that God will not hear his cry when he feels his need of aid, and when he is induced to call upon him. This is true only when his object in calling upon God is merely for help. If he has no relentings for his sin, and no real confidence in God; if he calls upon him in trouble, intending to return to his sins as soon as the trouble is over, or if such is the state of his mind that God sees that he would return to his sins as soon as his calamities cease, then he cannot be expected to hear him. But if he comes with a penitent heart, and with a sincere purpose to forsake his sins and to devote himself to God, there is no reason to doubt that he would bear him. The argument of Job is in the main sound. It is, that if a man wishes the favor of God, and the assurance that he will hear his prayer, he must lead a holy life. A hypocrite cannot expect his favor: compare the notes at Isaiah 1:15.

Verse 10

Will he delight himself in the Almighty? - A truly pious man will delight himself in the Almighty. His supreme happiness will be found in God. He has pleasure in the contemplation of his existence, his perfections, his law, and his government. Coverdale renders this, "Hath he such pleasure and delight in the Almighty that he dare alway call upon God?" The idea of Job is that a hypocrite has not his delight in the Almighty; and, therefore, his condition is not such as he would defend or choose. Job bad been charged with defending the character of the wicked and with maintaining that they were the objects of the divine favor. He now says that he maintained no such opinion. He was aware that the only real and solid happiness was to be found in God, and he knew that a hypocrite would not find delight there. This is true to the letter. A hypocrite has no real happiness in God. He sees nothing in the divine perfections to love; nothing in the divine plan affections. The hypocrite, therefore, is a miserable man. He professes to love what he does not love; tries to find pleasure in what his heart hates; mingles with a people with whom he has no sympathy, and joins in services of prayer and praise which are disgusting and irksome to his soul. The pious man rejoices that there is just such a God as Yahweh is. He sees nothing in him which he desires to be changed, and he has supreme delight in the contemplation of his perfections.

Will he always call upon God? - That is, he will not always call upon God. This is literally true. The hypocrite pray:

(1) when he makes a profession of religion;

(2) on some extraordinary occasion - as when a friend is sick, or when he feels that he himself is about to die, but he does not always maintain habits of prayer.

He suffers his business to break in upon his times for prayer; neglects secret devotion on the slightest pretence, and soon abandons it altogether. One of the best tests of character is the feeling with which we pray, and the habit which we have of calling on God. The man who loves secret prayer has one of the most certain evidences that he is a pious man; compare the notes at Job 20:5.

Verse 11

I will teach you by the hand of God - Margin, "or, being in." Coverdale, "In the name of God." So Tindal, Noyes, "Concerning the hand of God." Good, "Concerning the dealings of God." The Chaldee renders it אלהא בנביאת - "By the prophecy of God." Luther, "I will teach you by the hand of God." The idea evidently is, that Job would instruct them by what God had done. He would appeal to his works, and to the dispensations of his providence; and by the indications of wisdom and skill which were to be found there, he would derive important lessons for their instruction on the great principles of his administration. Accordingly, in the remainder of this chapter, he makes his appeal to what actually occurs in the dispensations of Providence, and in the next, he refers to various scientific subjects, evincing the wisdom which God had shown in the mineral kingdom. The hand is the instrument by which we accomplish anything, and hence, it is used here to denote what God does.

That which is with the Almighty will I not conceal - That is, I will appeal to his works, and show what traces of wisdom there are in them.

Verse 12

Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it - You have had an opportunity of tracing the proofs of the wisdom of God in his works.

Why then are ye thus altogether vain - Why is it that you maintain such opinions - that you evince no more knowledge of his government and plans - that you argue so inconclusively about him and his administration! Why, since you have had an opportunity of observing the course of events, do you maintain that suffering is necessarily a proof of guilt, and that God deals with all people, in this life, according to their character? A close observation of the course of events would have taught you otherwise. Job proceeds to state what he supposes to be the exact truth on the subject, and particularly aims, in the following chapter, to show that the ways of God are inscrutable, and that we cannot be expected to comprehend them, and are not competent to pronounce upon them.

Verse 13

This is the portion of a wicked man with God - There has been much diversity of view in regard to the remainder of this chapter. The difficulty is, that Job seems here to state the same things which had been maintained by his friends, and against which he had all along contended. This difficulty has been felt to be very great, and is very great. It cannot be denied, that there is a great resemblance between the sentiments here expressed and

those which had been maintained by his friends, and that this speech, if offered by them, would have accorded entirely with their main position. Job seems to abandon all which he had defended, and to concede all which he had so warmly condemned. One mode of explaining the difficulty has been suggested in the "Analysis" of the chapter. It was proposed by Noyes, and is plausible, but, perhaps, will not be regarded as satisfactory to all. Dr. Kennicott supposes that the text is imperfect, and that these verses constituted the third speech of Zophar. His arguments for this opinion are:

(1) That Eliphaz and Bildad had each spoken three times, and that we are naturally led to expect a third speech from Zophar; but, according to the present arrangement, there is none.

(2) That the sentiments accord exactly with what Zophar might be expected to advance, and are exactly in his style; that they are expressed in "his fierce manner of accusation," and are "in the very place where Zophar's speech is naturally expected."

But the objections to this view are insuperable. They are:

(1) The entire lack of any authority in the manuscripts, or ancient versions, for such an arrangement or supposition. All the ancient versions and manuscripts make this a part of the speech of Job.

(2) If this had been a speech of Zophar, we should have expected a reply to it, or an allusion to it, in the speech of Job which follows. But no such reply or allusion occurs.

(3) If the form which is usual on the opening of a speech, "And Zophar answered and said," had ever existed here, it is incredible that it should have been removed. But it occurs in no manuscript or version; and it is not allowable to make such an alteration in the Scripture by conjecture.

Wemyss, in his translation of Job, accords with the view of Kennicott, and makes these verses Job 27:13-23 to be the third speech of Zophar. For this, however, he alleges no authority, and no reasons except such as had been suggested by Kennicott. Coverdale, in his translation of the Bible (1553 a.d.), has inserted the word "saying" at the close of Job 27:12, and

regards what follows to the end of the chapter as an enumeration or recapitulation of the false sentiments which they had maintained, and which Job regards as the "vain" things Job 27:12 which they had maintained. In support of this view the following reasons may be alleged:

(1) It avoids all the difficulty of transposition, and the necessity of inserting an introduction, as we must do, if we suppose it to be a speech of Zophar.

(2) It avoids the difficulty of supposing that Job had here contradicted the sentiments which he had before advanced, or of conceding all that his friends had maintained.

(3) It is in accordance with the practice of the speakers in this book, and the usual practice of debaters, who enumerate at considerable length the sentiments which they regard as erroneous and which they design to oppose.

(4) It is the most simple and natural supposition, and, therefore, most likely to be the true one. Still, it must be admitted, that the passage is attended with difficulty; but the above solution is, it seems to me, the most plausible.

This is the portion - This is what he receives; to wit, what he states in the following verses, that his children would be cut off.

And the heritage of oppressors - What tyrants and cruel people must expect to receive at the hand of God.

Verse 14

If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword - That is, they shall be slain in war. The first calamities which it is here said would come upon a man, relate to his family Job 27:14-18; the next are those that would come upon himself, Job 27:19-23. All the sentiments here expressed are found in the various speeches of the friends of Job, and, according to the interpretation suggested above, this is designed to represent their sentiments. They maintained that if a wicked man was blessed with a numerous family, and seemed to be prosperous, it was only that the punishment might come the more heavily upon him, for that they certainly would be cut off; see Job 18:19-20; Job 20:10.

And his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread - This sentiment was advanced by Zophar, Job 20:10; see the notes at that verse.

Verse 15

Those that remain of him - Those that survive him.

Shall be buried in death - Hebrew "shall be buried BY death" (במות *bamâveth*), that is. "Death shall be the grave-digger" - or, they shall have no friends to bury them; they shall be unburied. The idea is highly poetical, and the expression is very tender. They would have no one to weep over them, and no one to prepare for them a grave; there would be no procession, no funeral dirge, no train of weeping attendants; even the members of their own family would not weep over them. To be unburied has always been regarded as a dishonor and calamity (compare the notes at Isaiah 14:19), and is often referred to as such in the Scriptures; see Jeremiah 8:2; Jeremiah 14:16; Jeremiah 16:4, Jeremiah 16:6. The passage here has a striking resemblance to Jeremiah 22:18-19 -

"They shall not lament for him, saying,
Ah! my brother! or, Ah! sister!
They shall not lament for him, saying,

Ah! lord! or, Ah! his glory!

With the burial of an ass shall he be buried,
Drawn out and east beyond the gates of Jerusalem."

And his widows shall not weep - The plural here - "widows" - is a proof that polygamy was then practiced. It is probable that Job here alludes to the shrieks of domestic grief which in the East are heard in every part of the house among the females on the death of the master of the family, or to the train of women that usually followed the corpse to the grave. The standing of a man in society was indicated by the length of the train of mourners, and particularly by the number of wives and concubines that followed him as weepers. Job refers to this as the sentiment of his friends, that when a wicked man died, he would die with such evident marks of the divine displeasure, that even his own family would not mourn for him, or that they would be cut off before his death, and none would be left to grieve.

Verse 16

Though he heap up silver as the dust - That is, in great quantities - as plenty as dust; compare 1 Kings 10:27, "And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones."

And prepare raiment - Oriental wealth consisted much in changes of raiment. Sir John Chardin says that in the East it is common to gather together immense quantities of furniture and clothes. According to D'Herbelot, Bokteri, an illustrious poet; of Cufah in the ninth century, had so many presents made him in the course of his life, that when he died he was found possessed of an hundred complete suits of clothes, two hundred shirts, and five hundred turbans. compare Ezra 2:69, and Nehemiah 7:70 see Bochart IIieroz. P. II. Lib. iv. c. xxv. p. 617. This species of treasure is mentioned by Virgil;

Dives equom, dives pictai vestis et auri.

Aeneid ix. 26.

The reason why wealth consisted so much in changes of raiment, is to be found in the fondness for display in Oriental countries, and in the fact that as fashions never change there, such treasures are valuable until they are worn out. In the ever-varying fashions of the West such treasures are comparatively of much less value.

As the clay - As the dust of the streets; or as abundant as mire.

Verse 17

The just shall put it on - The righteous shall wear it. It shall pass out of the hands of him who prepared it, into the hands of others. The meaning is, that the wicked, though they become rich, would not live to enjoy their ill-gotten gains. These two verses contain a beautiful illustration of what Dr. Jebb calls the introverted parallelism - where the fourth member answers to the first, and the third to the second:

"Though he heap up silver as the dust,
And prepare raiment as the clay,
The just shall put it (raiment) on,
And the innocent shall divide the silver."

A similar instance occurs in Matthew 7:6:

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs,
Neither cast ye your pearls before swine,
Lest they (the swine) trample them under their feet.
And (the dogs) turn again and rend you."

For a full illustration of the nature of Hebrew poetry, the reader may consult DeWette, Einleitung in die Psalmen, translated in the Biblical Repository, vol. iii. pp. 445ff, and Nordheimer‘s Hebrew Grammar, vol. ii. pp. 319ff; see also the Introduction to Job, Section V.

The innocent shall divide the silver - That is, the righteous shall come into possession of it, and divide it among themselves. The wicked who had gained it shall not be permitted to enjoy it.

Verse 18

He buildeth his house as a moth - The house which the moth builds is the slight fabric which it makes for its own dwelling in the garment which it consumes. On this verse compare Job 8:14. The dwelling of the moth is composed of the materials of the garment on which it feeds, and there may be an allusion here not only to the fact that the house which the wicked reared for themselves would be temporary, and that it would soon pass away like the dwelling of the moth, but that it was obtained - like the dwelling of the moth - at the expense of others. The idea of frailty, however, and of its being only a very temporary habitation, is probably the main thought in the passage. The allusion here is to the moth-worm as it proceeds from the egg, before it is changed into the chrysalis, aurelia, or nymph. “The young moth, upon leaving the egg which a papilio has lodged upon a piece of stuff, or a skin well dressed, and commodious for her purpose, immediately finds a habitation and food in the nap of the stuff, or hair of the skin. It gnaws and lives upon the nap, and likewise builds with it its apartment, accommodated both with a front door and a back one: the whole is well fastened to the ground of the stuff, with several cords and a little glue. The moth sometimes thrusts her head out of one opening, and sometimes out of the other, and perpetually demolishes all about her; and when she has cleared the place about her, she draws out all the stakes of the tent, after which she carries it to some little distance, and then fixes it with her slender cords in a new situation.”

Burder. It is to the insect in its larvae or caterpillar state that Job refers here, and the slightness of the habitation will be easily understood by anyone who has watched the operations of the silkworm, or of the moths that appear in this country. The idea is, that the habitation which the wicked constructed was temporary and frail, and would soon be left. The Chaldee and Syriac render this “the spider;” and so does Luther - Spinne. The slight

gossamer dwelling of the spider would well correspond with the idea here expressed by Job.

And as a booth - A tent, or cottage.

That the keeper maketh - That one who watches vineyards or gardens makes as a temporary shelter from the storm or the cold at night. Such edifices were very frail in their structure, and were designed to be only temporary habitations; see the subject explained in the notes at Isaiah 1:8. Niebuhr, in his description of Arabia, p. 158, says, "In the mountains of Yemen they have a sort of nest on the trees, where the Arabs sit to watch the fields after they have been planted. But in the Kehama, where they have but few trees, they build a light kind of scaffolding for this purpose." Mr. Southey opens the fifth part of his Curse of Kehama with a similar allusion:

"Evening comes on: - arising from the stream
Homeward the tall flamingo wings his flight;
And when hc sails athwart the setting beam,

His scarlet plumage glows with deeper light.

The watchman, at the wish'd approach of night

Gladly forsakes the field, where he all day,

To scare the winged plunderers from their prey,

With shout and sling, on yonder clay-built height,
Hath borne the sultry ray.

Verse 19

The rich man - That is, the rich man who is wicked.

Shall lie down - Shalt die - for so the connection demands.

But he shall not be gathered - In an honorable burial. The slain in battle are gathered together for burial; but he shall be unburied. The expressions "to be gathered," "to be gathered to one's fathers," frequently occur in the Scriptures, and seem to be used to denote a peaceful and happy death and an honorable burial. There was the idea of a happy union with departed friends; of being honorably placed by their side in the grave, and admitted to companionship with them again in the unseen world; compare Genesis 25:8; Genesis 35:29; Genesis 49:29, Genesis 49:33; Numbers

27:13; Deuteronomy 32:50; Judges 2:10; 2 Kings 22:20. Among the ancients, the opinion prevailed that the souls of those who were not buried in the customary manner, were not permitted to enter Hades, or the abodes of the dead, but were doomed to wander for an hundred years upon the banks of the river Styx. Thus, Homer (Iliad, 23:71, following) represents the spirit of Patroclus as appearing to Achilles, and praying him that he would commit his body with proper honors to the earth. So Palinurus is represented by Virgil (Aeneid, vi. 365) as saying, "Cast earth upon me, that I may have a calm repose in death." The Hindoos, says Dr. Ward, believe that the souls of those who are unburied wander about and find no rest. It is possible that such views may have prevailed in the time of Job. The sentiment here is, that such an honored death would be denied the rich man of oppression and wickedness.

He openeth his eyes, and he is not - That is, in the twinkling of an eye he is no more. From the midst of his affluence he is suddenly cut off, and hurried away in a moment.

Verse 20

Terrors-take hold on him as waters - That is, as suddenly and violently as angry floods; compare the notes at Job 18:14.

A tempest stealeth him away - He is suddenly cut off by the wrath of God. A tempest comes upon him as unexpectedly as a thief or robber comes at night. Death is often represented as coming upon man with the silence of a thief, or the sudden violence of a robber at midnight; see the note at Job 21:17; compare Matthew 24:42-44.

Verse 21

The east wind carrieth him away - He is swept off as by the violence of a tempest. Severe storms are represented in this book as coming from the East; compare the notes at Job 15:2. The ancients believed that people might be carried away by a tempest or whirlwind; compare Isaiah 41:16; see also Homer, Odyssey xx. 63ff:

"Snatch me, ye whirlwinds far from human race,
Test through the void illimitable space;
Or if dismounted from the rapid cloud,

Me with his whelming wave let Ocean shroud!"
Pope

Compare the notes at Job 30:22. The parallelism here would seem to imply that the wind referred to was violent, but it is possible that the allusion may be to the burning winds of the desert, so well known in the East, and so frequently described by travelers. The Vulgate here renders the Hebrew word קדים *qâdîym ventus urens*, "burning wind;" the Septuagint in like manner, καύσων *kausōn* the Syriac simply wind. This east wind, or burning wind, is what the Arabians call Samum. It is a hot wind which passes over the desert, and which was formerly supposed to be destructive of life. More recent travelers however, tell us that it is not fatal to life, though exceedingly oppressive.

And as a storm - See Psalm 58:9.

Hurleth him out of his place - Takes him entirely away, or removes him from the earth.

Verse 22

For God shall cast upon him - That is, God shall bring calamities upon him, or cast his thunderbolts upon him, and shall not pity him.

He would fain flee - He would gladly escape from the wrath of God, but he is unable to do it.

Verse 23

Men shall clap their hands at him - That is, they shall combine to drive him out of the world, and rejoice when he is gone. The same sentiment was also expressed by Bildad, Job 18:18:

"He shall be driven fromm light into darkness,
And chased out of the world."

There can be no doubt, I think, that Job alludes to that sentiment, and that his object in quoting it is to show its incorrectness. He does not indeed go into a formal reply to it in the following chapters, but he seems to consider that he had already replied to it by the statements which he had made, and which showed the incorrectness of the views which his friends had taken. He had demonstrated in the previous chapters that their main position was incorrect, and he asks (in Job 27:12 of this chapter), how it was possible that they could hold such sentiments as these, in the midst of all the facts which surrounded them? The whole current of events was against their opinion, and in the close of this chapter he enumerates the sentiments which they had advanced, which he regarded as so strange, and which he felt that he had now shown to be erroneous. In deed, they seem to have regarded themselves as confuted, for they were silent. Job had

attacked and overthrown their main position, that people were treated according to their character in this life, and that consequently extraordinary sufferings were proof of extraordinary guilt, and, that being overthrown, they had nothing more to say. Having silenced them, and shown the error of the opinions which he has here enumerated, be proceeds in the following chapters to state his own views on important topics connected with the providence of God, mainly designed to show that we are not to expect fully to comprehend the reason of his dispensations.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 28

Verse 1

Surely there is a vein for silver - Margin, "mine" Coverdale renders this, "There are places where silver is molten." Prof. Lee renders it, "There is an outlet for the silver," and supposes it means the coming out or separation of the silver from the earthy particles by which it is surrounded in the ore, not the coming out from the mine. The word rendered "vein" (מוצא *môtsâ'*) means properly a going forth, as the rising of the sun, Psalm 19:6; the promulgation of an edict Daniel 9:25; then a place of going forth - as a gate, door; Ezekiel 42:11; Ezekiel 43:11, and thence a mine, a vein, or a place of the going forth of metals; that is, a place where they are procured. So the Septuagint here, Ἔστι γὰρ άργυρίῳ τό πος ὅθεν γίνεται *Esti gar arguriō topos hothen ginetai* - "there is a place for silver whence it is obtained." The idea here is that man had evinced his wisdom in finding out the mines of silver and working them. It was one of the instances of his skill that he had been able to penetrate into the earth, and bring out the ore of the precious metals, and convert it to valuable purposes.

And a place for gold - A workshop, or laboratory, for working the precious metals. Job says, that even in his time such a laboratory was a proof of the wisdom of man. So now, one of the most striking proofs of skill is to be found in the places where the precious metals are purified, and worked into the various forms in which they are adapted to ornament and use.

Where they fine it - - יזקו *yāzoqû* The word used here (זקק *zâqaq*) means properly to bind fast, to fetter; and then to compress, to squeeze through a strainer; and hence, to strain, filter; and thence to purify - as wine that is thus filtered, or gold that is purified Malachi 3:3. It may refer here to any process of purifying or refining. It is commonly done by the application of heat. One of the instructive uses of the book of Job is the light which it throws incidentally on the state of the ancient arts and sciences, and the condition of society in reference to the comforts of life at the early period of the world when the author lived. In this passage it is clear:

(1) that the metals were then in general use, and

(2) that they were so worked as to furnish, in the view of Job a striking illustration of human wisdom and skill.

Society was so far advanced as to make use not only of gold and silver, but also of copper and brass. The use of gold and silver commonly precedes the discovery of iron, and consequently the mention of iron in any ancient book indicates a considerably advanced state of society. It is of course, not known to what extent the art of working metals was carried in the time of Job, as all that would be indicated here would be that the method of obtaining the pure metal from the ore was understood. It may be interesting, however, to observe, that the art was early known to the Egyptians, and was carried by them to a considerable degree of perfection. Pharaoh arrayed Joseph in vestures of fine linen, and put a chain of gold about his neck; Genesis 41:42, and great quantities of gold and silver ornaments were borrowed by the Israelites of the Egyptians, when they were about to go to the promised land. Gold and silver are mentioned as known in the earliest ages; compare Genesis 2:11-12; Genesis 41:42; Exodus 20:23; Genesis 23:15-16. Iron is also mentioned as having been early known; Genesis 4:22. Tubal Cain was instructor in iron and brass. Gold and silver mines were early worked in Egypt, and if Moses was the compiler of the book of Job, it is possible that some of the descriptions here may have been derived from that country, and at all events the mode of working these precious metals was probably the same in Arabia and Egypt. From the mention of ear rings, bracelets, and jewels of silver and gold, in the days of Abraham, it is evident that the art of metallurgy was known at a very remote period. Workmen are noticed by Homer as excelling in the manufacture of arms, rich vases, and other objects inlaid or ornamented with vessels:

Πηλείδης δ᾽ ἆιψ ἄλλα τίθει ταχυτῆτος ἄεθλα Αργύρεον κρατῆρα τετυγμειον.

Pēleidēs d' aips alla tithei tachutēnos aethla class="translit">Argirepm kratēra tetugmeion *Iliad xxiii. 741.*

His account of the shield of Achilles (Iliad xviii. 474) proves that the art of working in the precious metals was well known in his time; and the skill required to delineate the various objects which he describes was such as no ordinary artisan, even at this time, could be supposed to possess. In Egypt, ornaments of gold and silver, consisting of rings, bracelets, necklaces, and trinkets, have been found in considerable abundance of the times of Osirtasen I, and Thothmes III, the contemporaries of Joseph and of Moses. Diodorus (i. 49) mentions silver mine of Egypt which produced 3,200

myriads of minae. The gold mines of Egypt remained long unknown, and their position has been ascertained only a few years since by M. Linant and M. Bonomi. They lie in the Bisharee desert, about seventeen days‘ journey to the South-eastward from Derow. The matrix in which the gold in Egypt was found is quartz, and the excavations to procure the gold are exceedingly deep.

The principal excavation is 180 feet deep. The quartz thus obtained was broken by the workmen into small fragments, of the size of a bean, and these were passed through hand mills made of granitic stone, and when reduced to powder the quartz was washed on inclined tables, and the gold was thus separated from the stone. Diodorus says, that the principal persons engaged in mining operations were captives, taken in war, and persons who were compelled to labor in the mines, for offences against the government. They were bound in fetters, and compelled to labor night and day. “No attention,” he says, “is paid to these persons; they have not even a piece of rag to cover themselves; and so wretched is their condition, that every one who witnesses it, deplores the excessive misery which they endure. No rest, no intermission from toil, are given either to the sick or the maimed; neither the weakness of age, nor women‘s infirmities, are regarded; all are driven to the work with the lash, until, at last, overcome with the intolerable weight of their afflictions, they die in the midst of their toil.”

Diodorus adds, “Nature indeed, I think, teaches that as gold is obtained with immense labor, so it is kept with difficulty, creating great anxiety, and attended in its use both with pleasure and with grief.” It was perhaps, in view of such laborious and difficult operations in obtaining the precious metals, and of the skill which man had evinced in extracting them from the earth, that Job alluded here to the process as a striking proof of human wisdom. On the early use of the metals among the ancient Egyptians, the reader may consult with advantage, Wilkinsoh‘s “Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians,” vol. iii. pp. 215ff.

Verse 2

Iron - As has been remarked above, iron was early known, yet probably its common use indicates a more advanced state of civilization than that of gold and silver. The Mexicans were ignorant of the use of iron, though ornaments of gold and silver elegantly worked abounded among them. Iron

is less easily discovered than copper, though more abundant, and is worked with more difficulty. Among the ancient nations, copper was in general use long before iron; and arms, vases, statues, and implements of every kind were made of this metal alloyed and hardened with tin, before iron came into general use. Tubal Cain is indeed mentioned Genesis 4:22 as the "instructor of every artificer in brass and iron," but no direct mention is made of iron arms Numbers 35:16 or tools Deuteronomy 27:5, until after the departure from Egypt. According to the Arundelian Marbles, iron was known one hundred and eighty-eight years before the Trojan war, about 1370 years B.C.; but Hesiod, Plutarch, and others, limit its discovery to a much later period. Homer, however, distinctly mentions its use, Iliad xxiii. 262:

Η δε γυνᾶικα ἐΰζώνα;, πολιον τε σίδηρον.

Hē de gunaikas euzōnas polion te sidēron by the "sideros" of the poet is meant iron, is clear, from a simile which he uses in the Odyssey, derived from the quenching of iron in water, by which he illustrates the hissing produced in the eye of Polyphemus by piercing it with the burning stake:

"And as when armorers temper in the ford
The keen edged pole-axe or the shining sword,
The red-hot metal hisses in the lake,

Thus in the eye-ball hissed the plunging stake."

Odyssey ix. 391; Pope

Iron is mentioned in the time of Og king of Bashan, 1450 B.C. It was at first, however, regarded as of great value, and its use was very limited. It was presented in the temples of Greece as among the most valuable offerings, and rings of iron have been found in the tombs of Egypt that had been worn as ornaments, showing the value of the metal. One of the reasons why this metal comes so slowly into use, and why it was so rare in early times, was the difficulty of smelting the ore, and reducing it to a malleable state "Its gross and stubborn ore," says Dr. Robertson (America, B. iv.) "must feel twice the force of fire, and go through two laborious pocesses, before it becomes fit for use." It was this fact which made it to Job such a proof of the wisdom of man that he had invented the process of making iron, or of separating it from the earthy portions in which it is found.

Is taken out of the earth - Margin, "dust." The form in which iron is found is too well known to need description. It is seldom, if ever, found in

its purity, and the ore generally has so much the appearance of mere earth, that it requires some skill to distinguish them.

And brass - נחושה *nechûshâh* Brass is early and frequently mentioned in the Bible (Genesis 4:22; Exodus 25:3; Exodus 26:11, et al.), but there is little doubt that copper is meant in these places. Brass is a compound metal, made of copper and zinc - containing usually about one third of the weight in zinc - and it is hardly probable that the art of compounding this was early known; compare the notes at Job 20:24. Dr. Good renders this, "And the rock poureth forth copper." Coverdale, "The stones resolved to metal." Noyes, "The stone is melted into copper." Prof. Lee, "Also the stone (is taken from the earth) from which one fuseth copper." The Hebrew is, literally," And stone is poured out יציק copper." The Septuagint renders it, "And brass is cut like stones;" that is, is cut from the quarry. The word "stone" here in the Hebrew (אבן *'eben*) means, doubtless, "ore" in the form of stone; and the fact mentioned here, that such ore is fused into the נחושה eht *nechûshâh* is clear proof that copper is intended. Brass is never found in ore, and is never compounded in the earth. A similar idea is found in Pliny, who probably uses the word *"aes"* to denote copper, as it is commonly employed in the ancient writings. *Aes fit ex lapide aeroso, quem vocant Cadmiam; et igne lapides in nes solvantur*. Nat. Hist. xxxiv. i. 22. On the general subject of ancient metallurgy, see Wilkinsoh's Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians, vol. iii. chapter ix.

Verse 3

He setteth an end to darkness - That is, man does. The reference here is undoubtedly to the operations of mining, and the idea is, that man delves into the darkest regions; he goes even to the outer limits of darkness; he penetrates everywhere. Probably the allusion is derived from the custom of carrying torches into mines.

And searcheth out all perfection - Makes a complete search; examines everything; carries the matter to the utmost. The idea is not that he searches out all perfection - as our translation would seem to convey; but that he makes a complete and thorough search - and yet after all he does not come to the true and highest wisdom.

The stones of darkness - The last stone, says Herder, in the mining investigations in the time of Job; the corner or boundary stone, as it were, of the kingdom of darkness and night. Prof. Lee supposes that there is allusion here to the fact that stones were used as "weights," and that the idea is, that

man had ascertained the "exact weight" of the gross darkness, that is, had taken an accurate admeasurement of it, or had wholly investigated it. But this solution seems far-fetched. Schultens supposes the center of the earth to be denoted by this expression. But it seems to me that the words "stone" and "darkness" are to be separated, and that the one is not used to qualify the other. The sense is, that man searches out everything; he perfectly and accurately penetrates everywhere, and examines all objects; "the stone" (אבן *'eben*), that is, the rocks, the mines; "the darkness" (אפל *'ôphel*), that is, the darkness of the cavern, the interior of the earth; "and the shadow of death" (צלמות *tsalmâveth*), that is, the most dark and impenetrable regions of the earth. So it is rendered by Coverdale: "The stones, the dark, and the horrible shadow."

Verse 4

The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant - It would be difficult to tell what idea our translators affixed to this sentence, though it seems to be a literal version of the Hebrew. There has been a great variety of rendering given to the passage. Noyes translates it:

"From the place where they dwell they open a shaft,
Unsupported by the feet,
They are suspended, they swing away from men."

Herder:

"A flood goeth out from the realm of oblivion,
They draw it up from the foot of the mountain,
They remove it away from men."

According to this, the meaning, Herder says, would be, that "the dwelling of the forgotten would be the kingdom of the dead, and at greater depth than the deepest mines have reached. Streams break forth from the river of eternal oblivion beneath, and yet are overcome by the miners, pumped dry, and turned out of the way. "Yet I confess," says he, "the passage remains obscure to my mind." Coverdale renders it, "With the river of water parteth he asunder the strange people, that knoweth no good neighborhood; such as are rude, unmannerly, and boisterous." The Septuagint renders it, "The channels of brooks are choked up with sand; when to such as know not the right way strength is unavailing, and they are removed from among men." The difficulty of interpreting the passage has been felt by every expositor to be great; and there are scarcely two expositions alike. There can be no doubt that Job refers to mining

operations, and the whole passage should be explained with reference to such works. But the obscurity may possibly arise from the fact that mining operations were then conducted in a manner different from what they are now, and the allusion may be to some custom which was then well understood, but of which we now know nothing. A plausible interpretation, at least, has been furnished by Gesenius, and one which seems to me to be more satisfactory than any other. An explanation of the words in the passage will bring out this view. The word rendered "breaketh out" (פרץ *pârats*) means to break, rend, tear through - and here refers to the act of breaking through the earth for the purpose of sinking a shaft or pit in a mine. The word rendered "flood" (נחל *nachal*) means properly a stream or brook; then a valley in which a brook runs along; and here Gesenius supposes it means a shaft or pit of a mine. It may be called a נחל *nachal* or valley, from the resemblance to a gully which the water has washed away by a mountain-torrent.

From the inhabitant - This conveys evidently no idea as it now stands. The Hebrew is מעם־גר *mēʿîm -gār* The word גור *gûr* from which גר *gār* is derived, means to sojourn for a time, to dwell, as a stranger or guest; and the phrase here means, "away from any dweller or inhabitant;" that is, from where people dwell, or from the surface of the ground as the home of men; that is, under ground. Or the idea is, that it is done where no one could dwell. It could not be the abode of man.

Even the waters forgotten of the foot - The words "even the waters" are supplied by the translators. The Hebrew is מני־רגל הנשכחים *hanîśkâchîym mînîy -regel* and refers to being unsupported by the foot. They go into a place where the foot yields no support, and they are obliged to suspend themselves in order to be sustained.

They are dried up - דלו *dâlû* The word דלל *dâlal* from which this is derived, means to hang down, to be pendulous, as boughs are on a tree, or as a bucket is in a well. According to this interpretation, the meaning is, that they "hang down" far from men in their mines, and swing to and fro like the branches of a tree in the wind.

They are gone away from men - The word נעו *nāʿû* from נוע *nûaʿ* means to move to and fro, to waver, to vacillate. Gr. and Latin νεύω *neuō nuo*, Germ. nicken, to nod backward and forward. The sense here is, that, far from the dwellings of people, they "wave to and fro" in their deep mines, suspended by cords. They descend by the aid of cords, and not by a

firm foothold, until they penetrate the deep darkness of the earth. Other interpretations may be seen, however, defended at length in Schultens, and in Rosenmuller - who has adopted substantially that of Schultens - in Dr. Good, and in other commentaries. Few passages in the Bible are more obscure.

Verse 5

As for the earth, out of it cometh bread - That is, it produces food, or the materials for bread. The idea of Job seems to be, that it was proof of great wisdom and skill on the part of man that he had carried the arts of agriculture so far. The earth in producing grain, and the arts of husbandry, were illustrative of wisdom and skill, but they did not impart the wisdom about the government of God which was desired. That was reserved to be imparted more directly by God himself, Job 28:23 ff.

And under it is turned up as it were fire - That is, on being turned up it discloses precious stones that seem to glow like coals of fire. This is the obvious sense of this passage, though a different interpretation has been given by most expositors. Job is speaking of mining. He describes the search for, gold, and silver, and precious stones. He says that one of the wonders of wisdom in the earth is, that it produces nutritious grain; another, that when the same earth is turned up it seems to rest on a bed of fire. The dark ground is made to glow by the quantity of jewels that are disclosed, and its deep recesses seem to be on fire. There is no reference here, therefore, as it seems to me. to any volcanic agency, or to any belief that the earth rests on a sea of fire. The idea has been expressed in Sergeant‘s “Mine:”

“Wheresoe‘er our footsteps turn,
Rubies blush and diamonds burn.”

Luther has given to the passage a different sense. Man bringet auch Feuer unten aus der Eerie, da oben Speise auf wachst- “They bring fire from the earth beneath, where food grows up above.” Coverdale, “He bringeth food out of the earth; that which is under he consumeth with fire.” Herder, “And underneath it is changed as by fire.” Dr. Good, “Below it (the earth) windeth a fiery region.”

Verse 6

The stones of it are the place - Among the stones of the earth sapphires are found. “The situation of the sapphire is in alluvial soil, in the vicinity of rocks, belonging to the secondary floetz trap formation, and imbedded in

gneiss." Jameson. "The sapphire occurs in considerable abundance in the granitic alluvion of Matura and Saffragam, in Ceylon." Davy.

Sapphires - Compare the note at Isaiah 54:11. The sapphire is a precious stone, usually of a blue color, though it is sometimes yellow, red, violet. green, or white. In hardness it is inferior to the diamond only:

"In unroll'd tufts, flowers purpled, blue and white,
Like sapphire, pearl, in rich embroidery."
Shakespeare
"He tinctures rubies with their rosy hue,
And on the sapphire spreads a heavenly blue."
Blackmore

The mineral is, next to the diamond, the most valuable of the precious stones. The most highly prized varieties are the crimson and carmine red; these are the "Oriental ruby" of the traveler, and next to the diamond are the most valuable jewels hitherto discovered. The blue varieties - the sapphire of the jeweler - are next in value to the red. The yellow varieties - the "Oriental Topaz" of the jeweler - are of less value than the blue or true sapphire. Edinburgh Encyclopedia, article "Mineralogy."

And it hath dust of gold - Margin, or "gold ore." Literally, "The dusts of gold are in it." Gold is often found in the form of dust. It is obtained by washing it from the sand, and passing it over a fleece of wool, to which the gold adheres.

Verse 7

There is a path which no fowl knoweth - That is, a path in searching for gold and precious stones. The miner treads a way which is unseen by the bird of keenest vision. He penetrates into the deep darkness of the earth. The object of Job is to show the wisdom and the intrepidity of man in penetrating these dark regions in searching for sapphires and gold. The most far-sighted birds could not find their way to them. The most intrepid and fearless beasts of prey dared not adventure to those dangerous regions. The word rendered "fowl" (עיט *ʿayîṭ*) means either a ravenous beast, Jeremiah 12:9, or more commonly a ravenous bird; see the notes at Isaiah 46:11. According to Bochart, Hieroz. P. 11. L. 11. c. viii. p. 195, the word here denotes a rapacious bird of any kind; a bird which has a keen vision.

Which the vulture's eye hath not seen - The vulture is distinguished for the remarkable keenness of its vision. On the deserts of Arabia, it is said, when a camel dies, there is almost immediately discerned far in the distant

sky, what seems at first to be a mere speck. As it draws nearer it is perceived to be a vulture that had marked the camel as he fell, and that comes to prey upon it. This bird is proverbial for the keenness of its sight.

Verse 8

The lion‘s whelps - The lion that ventures into the most dangerous places in pursuit of prey, has not dared to go where man has gone in pursuit of precious stones and gold. On the words used here to designate the lion, see Bochart Hieroz P. 1. Lib. iii. c. 1.

Verse 9

He putteth forth his hand - That is, the miner in securing the precious metals and gems.

Upon the rock - Margin, “flint.” The word used here (חלמיש *challâmîysh*) occurs also in Psalm 104:8. Deuteronomy 8:15; Deuteronomy 32:13. It means “flint, silex;” and the idea is, that the miner approaches the hardest substances. He penetrates even the flint in searching for precious stones. Dr. Good renders it, “Sparry ore.” Michaelis renders the same word in Deuteronomy 7:15, porphyry, or red granite. The idea is that nothing, however difficult, not even cutting down the hardest rocks, deters the miner from pursuing his work.

He overturneth the mountains by the roots - That is, he digs under them, and they fall. The root of a mountain means its base or foundation. The following passage from Pliny (Hist. Nat. xxxiii. c. iv. 21) furnishes an admirable illustration of this passage: *Tamen in silice facilior existimatur labor. Est namque terra ex quodam argillae genere glarae mixta, Candidam vocant, prope inexpugnabilis. Cuneis earn ferreis aggrediuntur, et iisdem mallets; nihilque durius putant, nisi quod inter omnia auri lama durissima est. Peracto opere cervices fornicum ab ultimo caedunt, dantque signun ruinrae, eamque solus intelligit in cacumine montis pervigil. Hic voce, ictuque, repente operarios revocari jubet, pariterque ipse devolat. Mons fractus cadit in scse Iongo fragore, qui concipi humana mente non possit, et flatu incredibili. Spectant victores ruinam naturae.*

Verse 10

He cutteth out rivers among the rocks - That is, in his operations of mining, he cuts channels for the water to flow off through the rocks. This was done, as it is now, for the purpose of drawing off the water that accumulates in mines.

His eye seeth every precious thing - Every valuable mineral or precious stone that lies imbedded in the rocks. It is evident from this, that mining operations were carried to a considerable extent in the time of Job. The art of thus penetrating the earth, and laying open its secret treasures, indicate an advanced stage of society - a stage much removed from barbarism.

Verse 11

He bindeth the floods from overflowing - Margin, Weeping The Hebrew also is "from weeping" מבכי *mîbekîy* referring to the water which trickles down the shaft of the mine. The idea is, that even the large streams which break out in such mines, the fountains and springs which the miner encounters in his operations, he so effectually restrains that they do not even trickle down or "weep" on the sides of the shaft, but it is left perfectly dry. This is necessary in opening mines of coal or minerals, and in making tunnels or other excavations. Yet anyone who has passed into a coal mine, through a tunnel, or into any one of the deep natural caves of the earth, will see how difficult it is to close all the places where water would trickle down. It is in fact seldom done; and if done literally in the time of Job, it indicates a very advanced state of the art of mining. In sinking a shaft, it is often necessary to pass at different depths through strata of earth where the water oozes out in abundance, and where the operations would be necessarily suspended if it could not be stopped or drawn off. The machinery necessary for this constitutes a considerable part of the expense of mining operations.

And the thing that is hid he bringeth forth to light - The concealed treasures; the gold and gems that are buried deep in the earth. He brings them out of their darkness, and converts them to ornament and to use. This ends the description which Job gives of the operations of mining in his time. We may remark in regard to this description:

(1) That the illustration was admirably chosen. His object was to show that true wisdom was not to be found by human science, or by mere investigation. He selects a case, therefore, where man had shown the most skill and wisdom, and where he had penetrated farthest into darkness. He penetrated the earth; drove his shaft through rocks; closed up gushing fountains, and laid bare the treasures that had been buried for generations in the regions of night. Yet all this did not enable him fully to explain the operations of the divine government.

(2) The art of mining was carried to a considerable degree of perfection in the time of Job. This is shown by the fact that his description would apply very well to that art even as it is practiced now. Substantially the same things were done then which are done now, though we cannot suppose with the same skill, or to the same extent, or with the same perfection of machinery.

(3) The time when Job lived was in a somewhat advanced period of society. The art of working metals to any considerable extent indicates such an advance. It is not found among barbarous tribes, and even where the art is to a considerable extent known, it is long before men learn to sink shafts in the earth, or to penetrate rocks, or to draw off water from mines.

(4) We see the wisdom and goodness which God has shown in regard to the things that are most useful to man. Those things which are necessary to his being, or which are very desirable for his comfort, are easily accessible; those which are less necessary, or whose use is dangerous, are placed in deep, dark, and almost inaccessible places. The fruits of the earth are near to man; water flows every where, and it is rare that he has to dig deep for it; and when found by digging, it is a running fountain, not soon exhausted like a mine of gold; and iron, also, the most valuable of the metals, is usually placed near the surface of the earth. But the pearl is at the bottom of the ocean; diamonds and other precious stones are in remote regions or imbedded in rocks; silver runs along in small veins, often in the fissures of rocks, and extending far into the bowels of the earth. The design of placing the precious metals in these almost inaccessible fissures of the rocks, it is not difficult to understand. Had they been easily accessible, and limited in their quantity, they would long since have been exhausted - causing at one time a glut in the market, and at others absolute want. As they are now, they exercise the utmost ingenuity of man, first to find them, and then to procure them; they are distributed in small quantities, so that their value is always great; they furnish a convenient circulating medium in all countries; they afford all that is needful for ornament.

(5) There is another proof of wisdom in regard to their arrangement in the earth, which was probably unknown in the time of Job. It is the fact that

the most useful of the metals are found in immediate connection with the fuel required for their reduction, and the limestone which facilitates that reduction. This is now perfectly understood by mineralogists, and it is an instance of the goodness of God, and of the wisdom of his arrangements, which ought not to be disregarded or overlooked. They who wish to examine this subject more at length, may find some admirable views in Buckland‘s Geology and Mineralogy (Bridgewater Treatises), vol. i. pp. 392-415.

Verse 12

But where shall wisdom be found? - That is, the full understanding of the plans of God - for this is the point of inquiry. The object of Job is to show that it is not to be found in the most profound science; by penetrating to the farthest extent of which man was capable in the earth, nor by any human investigations whatever. None of these things revealed the great plans of the Almighty in reference to his moral government, and particularly to the points which engrossed the attention of Job and his friends. Where true wisdom is to be found he proceeds to state in the subsequent verses.

Verse 13

Man knoweth not the price thereof - The word rendered “price” (ערך *ʿêrek*) means properly that which is set in a pile or row, or which is arranged in order. Here it means preparation, equipment - that is, anything put in order, or ready, Judges 17:10. It is also used in the sense of estimation or valuation, Leviticus 5:15, Leviticus 5:18. The word “price” here, however, seems to form no proper answer to the question in the previous verse, as the question is, “where” wisdom is to be found, not what is its “value.” Many expositors have, therefore, introduced a different idea in their interpretation. Dr. Good renders it, “Man knoweth not its source.” Prof. Lee, “Man knoweth not its equal.” Herder, “Man knoweth not the seat thereof.” Coverdale, “No man can tell how worthy a thing she is.” The Septuagint renders it, “Man knoweth not - ὁδὸν ἀυτῆς *hodon autēs* - her way.” But the word used here is not employed to denote a “place” or “way,” and the true interpretation doubtless is, that Job does not confine himself to a strict answer of the question proposed in Job 28:12, but goes on to say that man could not buy it; he could neither find it, nor had he the means of purchasing it with all the wealth of which he was the owner.

Neither is it found in the land of the living - That is, it is not found among human beings. We must look to a higher source than man for true wisdom; compare Isaiah 38:11; Isaiah 53:8.

Verse 14

The depth saith - This is a beautiful personification. The object of this verse and the following is, to show that wisdom cannot be found in the deepest recesses to which man can penetrate, nor purchased by anything which man possesses. It must come from God only. The word "depth" here (תהום *tehôm*) means properly a wave, billow, surge; then a mass of waters, a flood, or the deep ocean, Deuteronomy 8:7; Genesis 7:11; Psalm 36:6; and then a gulf, or abyss. It refers here to the sea, or ocean; and the idea is, that its vast depths might be sounded, and true wisdom would not be found there.

Verse 15

It cannot be gotten for gold - Margin, "fine gold shall not be given for it." The word which is here rendered "gold." and in the margin "fine gold" (סגור *segôr*), is not the common word used to denote this metal. It is derived from סגר *sâgar* to "shut," to "close," and means properly that which is "shut up" or "enclosed;" and hence, Gesenius supposes it means pure gold, or the most precious gold, as that which is shut up or enclosed with care. Dr. Good renders it "solid gold," supposing it means that which is condensed, or beaten. The phrase occurs in nearly the same form סגור זהב *zâhâb sâgûr* "gold shut up," Margin,) in 1 Kings 6:20-21; 1 Kings 7:49-50; 1 Kings 10:21; 2 Chronicles 4:21-22; 2 Chronicles 9:20, and undoubtedly denotes there the most precious kind of gold. Its relation to the sense of the verb "to shut up" is not certain. Prof. Lee supposes that the idea is derived from the use of the word, and of similar words in Arabic, where the idea of heating, fusing, giving another color, changing the shape, and thence of fixing, retaining, etc., is found; and that the idea here is that of fused or purified gold. Michaelis supposes that it refers to "native" gold that is pure and unadulterated, or the form of gold called "dendroides," from its shooting out in the form of a tree - "*baumartig gewachsenes Gold* " (from the Arabic, "a tree"). It is not known, however, that the Hebrew word סגר was always used to denote a tree. There can be no doubt that the word denotes "gold" of a pure kind, and it may have been given to it because gold of that kind was carefully "shut up" in places of safe keeping; but it would seem more probable to me that it was given to it for some reason

now unknown. Of many of the names now given by us to objects which are significant, and which are easily understood by us, it would be impossible to trace the reason or propriety, after the lapse of four thousand years.

Neither shall silver be weighed - That is, it would be impossible to weigh out so much silver as to equal its value. Before the art of coining was known, it was common to weigh the precious metals that were used as a medium of trade; compare Genesis 23:16.

Verse 16

The gold of Ophir - Uniformly spoken of as the most precious gold; see the notes at Job 22:24.

With the precious onyx - The onyx is a semi-pellucid gem, with variously colored veins or zones. It is a variety of the chalcedony. The Arabic word denotes that which was of two colors, where the white predominated. The Greeks gave the name "onyx" ὄνυξ *onux* to the gem from its resemblance to the color of the thumbnail; see Passow.

Or the sapphire - See the notes at Job 28:6.

Verse 17

The gold and the crystal - A crystal, in chemistry, is an inorganic body which, by the operation of affinity, has assumed the form of a regular solid, terminated by a number of plane and smooth surfaces. It is round in various forms and sizes, and is composed of a great variety of substances. The common "rock crystal" is a general name for all the transparent crystals of quartz, particularly of limpid or colorless quartz. "Webster." The word used here (זכוכית *zekûkîyth*) occurs nowhere else in the Bible. It is from זכה *zâkâh* to be clean, pure; and is given to the crystal on account of its transparency. In Arabic the word means either glass or crystal. Jerome translates it, *"vitrum"* - glass; the Septuagint ὕαλος *hualos* - crystal, or the *"lapis crystallinus."* Hesychius says that the crystal denotes λαμπρὸν κρύος *lampron kruos* - "clear ice" or, λίθον τίμιον *lithon timion* - "a precious stone." There is no reason to suppose that "glass" was known so early as this, and the probability is that the word here denotes something like the rock crystal, having a strong resemblance to the diamond, and perhaps then regarded as nearly of equal value. It cannot be supposed that the relative value of gems was then understood as it is now.

Jewels of fine gold - Margin, "vessels." The Hebrew word כלי *kelîy* properly means vessels, or instruments. It may refer here, however, to

ornaments for the person, as it was in that way chiefly that gold was employed.

Verse 18

No mention shall be made of coral - That is, as a price by which to purchase wisdom, or in comparison with wisdom. The margin here is, "Ramoth" - retaining the Hebrew word ראמה *râ'mâh* Jerome renders it, *"excelsa"* - exalted or valuable things. So the Septuagint, Μετέωρα *Meteōra* - exalted or sublime things; as if the word were from רום, to be exalted. According to the rabbis, the word here means "red coral." It occurs also in Ezekiel 27:16, where it is mentioned as a valuable commodity in merchandise in which Syria traded with Tyre, and occurs in connection with emeralds, purple, broidered work, fine linen, and agate. The coral is a well known marine substance, not valued now as if it were a precious stone, but probably in the time of Job regarded as of value sufficient to be reckoned with gems. It was not rare, though its uses were not known. As a beautiful object, it might at that time deserve to be mentioned in connection with pearls.

It is now found in abundance in the Red Sea, and probably that which was known to Job was obtained there. Shaw says, "In rowing gently over it (the port Tor), while the surface of the sea was calm, such a diversity of *"Madrepores Furuses,"* and other marine vegetables, presented themselves to the eye, that we could not forbear taking them, as Pliny (L. xiii. cap. 25) had done before us, for a forest under water. The branched Madrepores particularly contributed very much to authorize the comparison, for we passed over several that were eight or ten feet high, growing sometimes pyramidical like the cypress, and at other times had their branches more open and diffused, like the oak; not to speak of others which, like the creeping plants, spread themselves over the bottom of the sea;" Travels, p. 384, Ed. Oxford, 1738. It should be added, however, that there is no absolute certainty that Job referred here to coral. The Hebrew word would suggest simply that which was "exalted in value," or of great price; and it is not easy to determine to what particular substance Job meant to apply it.

Or of pearls - גביש *gâbîysh* This word occurs nowhere else, though אלגביש *'elgâbîysh* is found in Ezekiel 13:11, Ezekiel 13:13; Ezekiel 38:22, where it means hail-stones, or pieces of ice. Perhaps the word here means merely "crystal" - resembling ice. So Umbreit Gesenius, and others, understand it. Prof. Lee supposes that the word used here denotes that

which is “aggregated” and then what is “massive,” or “vast;” see his note on this place. Jerome renders it, *“eminentia”* - exalted, lofty things; the Septuagint retains the word without attempting to translate it - γαβὶς *gabis* - and the fact that they have not endeavored to render it, is a strong circumstance to show that it is now hopeless to attempt to determine its meaning.

Above rubies - The ruby is a precious stone of a carmine red color, sometimes verging to violet. There are two kinds of rubies, the oriental or corundum, and the spinelle. The ruby is next in hardness to the diamond, and approaches it in value. The oriental ruby is the same as the sapphire. The ruby is found in the kingdom of Pegu, in the Mysore country, in Ceylon, and in some other places, and is usually imbedded in gneiss. It is by no means certain, however, that the word used here (פנינים *pânîynîym*) means rubies. Many of the rabbis suppose that “pearls” are meant by it; and so Bochart, Hieroz. ii. Lib. v. c. 6,7, understands it. John D. Michaelis understands it to mean “red corals,” and Gesenius concurs with this opinion. Umbreit renders it, *“Perlen”* - “pearls.” The word occurs in Proverbs 3:15; Proverbs 8:11; Proverbs 20:15; Proverbs 31:10; Lamentations 4:7. In the Proverbs, as here, it is used in comparison with wisdom, and undoubtedly denotes one of the precious gems.

Verse 19

The topaz - The topaz is a precious stone, whose colors are yellow, green, blue, and red. Its natural place is in various primitive rocks, such as the topaz-rock, gneiss, and clay-slate. It is found in the granite and gneiss districts of Mar and Cairnaorta, in Cornwall, in Brazil, and in various other places. The most valuable stones of this kind now known are those which are found in Brazil. This gem is much prized by jewelers, and is considered as one of the more beautiful ornamental stones. The Hebrew word פטדה *pîṭdâh* occurs in Exodus 28:17; Exodus 39:10; Ezekiel 28:13. and in this place only. It is uniformly rendered topaz. It is not improbable that the English word “topaz,” and the Greek τοπάζιον *topazion* are derived from this, by a slight transposition of the letters - טפדה . The Vulgate and the Septuagint render this “topaz.”

Of Ethiopia - Hebrew כּוּשׁ *kûsh* - “Cush.” Coverdale here renders it, “India.” On the meaning of this word, and the region denoted by it, see the notes at Isaiah 11:11. It may mean either the part of Africa now known as Ethiopia, or Abyssinia and Nubia; the southern part of Arabia, or the

Oriental Cush in the vicinity of the Tigris. It is better, since the word has such ambiguity, to retain the original, and to translate it "Cush." For anything that appears, this may have denoted, in the time of Job, the southern part of Arabia. It is known that the topaz was found there. Thus, Pliny says, Lib. xxxvii. 32, *Reperta est - in Arabiae insula, quae Citis vocatur; in qua Troglodytae praedones, diutius fame - prossi cum herbas radicesque effoderant, eruerunt topazion.*

Verse 20

Whence then cometh wisdom? - This question is now repeated from Job 28:12, in order to give it greater emphasis. It is designed to fix the attention on the inquiry as one which found no solution in the discoveries of science, and whose solution was hidden from the most penetrating human intellect.

Verse 21

It is hid from the eyes of all living - That is, of all people, and of all animals. Man has not found it by the most sagacious of all his discoveries, and the keenest vision of beasts and fowls has not traced it out.

And kept close - Hebrew "concealed."

From the fowls of the air - Compare the notes at Job 28:7. Umbreit remarks, on this passage, that there is attributed to the fowls in Oriental countries a deep knowledge, and an extraordinary gift of divination, and that they appear as the interpreters and confidants of the gods. One cannot but reflect, says he, on the personification of the good spirit of Ormuzd through the fowls, according to the doctrine of the Persians (Compare Creutzer's Symbolik Thes 1. s. 723); upon the ancient fowlking (Vogelkonig) Simurg upon the mountain Kap, representing the highest wisdom of life; upon the discourses of the fowls of the great mystic poet of the Persians, Ferideddin Attar, etc. Among the ancient Greeks and Romans, also, a considerable part of their divinations consisted in observing the flight of birds, as if they were endowed with intelligence, and indicated coming events by the course which they took; compare also, Ecclesiastes 10:20, where wisdom or intelligence is ascribed to the birds of the air. "Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter."

Verse 22

Destruction - This is a personification which is exceedingly sublime. Job had spoken of the wonderful discoveries made by science, but none of them had disclosed true wisdom. It had not been discovered in the shaft which the miner sank deep in the earth; in the hidden regions which he laid open to day, nor by the birds that saw to the farthest distance, or that were regarded as the interpreters of the will of the gods. It was natural to ask whether it might not have been discovered in the vast profound of the nether world - the regions of death and of night; and whether by making a bold appeal to the king that reigned there, a response might not be heard that would be more satisfactory. In Job 28:14, the appeal had been made to the sea - with all its vast stores; here the appeal is to far deeper regions - to the nether world of darkness and of death. On the word used here (אבדון *'ăbaddôn*), "destruction," see the notes at Job 26:6. It is employed here, as in that place, to denote the nether world - the abode of departed spirits - the world where those are who have been destroyed by death, and to which the destruction of the grave is the entrance.

And death - Death is used here to denote "Sheol," or the abode of the spirits of the dead. The sense is, that those deep and dark regions had simply heard the distant report of wisdom but they did not understand it, and that if one went down there it would not be fully revealed to him. Perhaps there is an allusion to the natural expectation that, if one could go down and converse with the dead, he could find out much more than can be known on earth. It was to be presumed that they would understand much more about the unseen and future world, and about the plans and government of God, than man can know here. It was on this belief, and on the hope that some league or alliance could be made with the dead, inducing them to communicate what they knew, that the science of necromancy was founded; see the notes at Isaiah 8:19.

We have heard the fame thereof - We have heard the report of it, or a rumor of it. The meaning is, that they did not understand it fully, and that if man could penetrate to those dark regions, he could not get the information which he desired. Wisdom is still at such an immense distance that it is only a report, or rumor of it, which has reached us.

Verse 23

God understandeth the way thereof - These are doubtless the words of Job. The meaning is, that the reason of the divine dispensations could be known only to God himself. He had given no clew by which man could

discover this. He might carry his investigations far into the regions of science; he could penetrate the earth, and look on the stars, but still all his investigations fell short of disclosing the reasons of the divine dispensations. The secret was lodged in his bosom, and he only could communicate it where and when he pleased. It may be added here, that this is as true now as it was in the time of Job. Man has carried the investigations of science almost infinitely further than he had then, but still by the investigations of science he has by no means superseded the necessity of revelation, or shed light on the great questions that have, in all ages, so much perplexed the race. It is only by direct communication, by his word and by his Spirit, that man can be made to understand the reason of the divine doings, and nothing is better established by the course of events than the truth on which Job here so much insists, that science cannot answer the questions of so much interest to man about the divine government.

Verse 24

For he looketh to the ends of the earth - That is, God sees and knows everything. He looks upon the whole universe. Man sees objects dimly; he sees but a few, and he little understands the bearing of one thing or another.

Verse 25

To make the weight for the winds - That is, to weigh the winds and to measure the waters - things that it would seem most difficult to do. The idea here seems to be, that God had made all things by measure and by rule. Even the winds - so fleeting and imponderable - he had adjusted and balanced in the most exact manner, as if he had "weighed" them when he made them. The air has "weight," but it is not probable that this fact was known in the time of Job, or that he adverted to it here. It is rather the idea suggested above, that the God who had formed everything by exact rule. and who had power to govern the winds in the most exact manner, must be qualified to impart wisdom.

And he weigheth the waters - Compare the notes at Isaiah 40:12. The word rendered "weigheth" in this place (תכן *tâkan*) means either to "weigh," or to "measure," Isaiah 40:12. As the "measure" here is mentioned, it rather means probably to adjust, to apportion, than to weigh. The waters are dealt out by measure; the winds are weighed. The sense is, that though the waters of the ocean are so vast, yet God has adjusted them all with infinite skill, as if he had dealt them out by measure; and having done this, he is qualified to explain to man the reason of his doings.

Verse 26

When he made a decree for the rain - A statute or law (חק *chôq*) by which the rain is regulated. It is not sent by chance or hap-hazard. It is under the operation of regular and settled laws. We cannot suppose that those laws were understood in the time of Job, but the fact might be understood that the rain was regulated by laws, and that fact would show that God was qualified to impart wisdom. His kingdom was a kingdom of settled law and not of chance or caprice, and if the rain was regulated by statute, it was fair to presume that he did not deal with his people by chance, and that afflictions were not sent without rule; compare the notes at Job 5:6.

And a way - A path through which the rapid lightning should pass - referring, perhaps, to the apparent "opening" in the clouds in which the lightning seems to move along.

The lightning of the thunder - The word "lightning" here (חזיז *chăzîyz*) properly means "an arrow," from הזז *hāzaz* obsolete, to pierce through, to transfix, to performate; and hence, the lightning - from the rapidity with which it passes - like an arrow. The word "thunder" (קולות *qôlôt*) means voices, and hence, "thunder," as being by way of eminence the voice of God; compare Psalm 29:3-5. The whole expression here means "the thunder-flash." Coverdale renders this, "when he gave the mighty floods a law;" but it undoubtedly refers to the thunderstorm, and the idea is, that he who controls the rapid lightning, regulating its laws and directing its path through the heavens, is qualified to communicate truth to people, and can explain the great principles on which his government is administered.

Verse 27

Then did he see it - That is, then did he see wisdom. When in the work of creation he gave laws to the rain and the thunder storm; when he weighed out the winds and measured out the waters, then he saw and understood the principles of true wisdom. There is a remarkable similarity between the expression here and Proverbs 8:27-30, "When he prepared the heavens, I (wisdom) was there; when he set a compass upon the face of the depth; when he established the clouds above; when he strengthened the foundations of the deep; when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he appointed the foundations of the earth; then I was by him as one brought up with him; I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him."

And declare it - Margin, "number." The word (ספר *sâphar*) means, however, rather to "declare," or to "narrate;" and the idea is, that even then he made known to intelligent beings the true principles of wisdom, as consisting in the fear of the Lord, and in suitable veneration for the Most High. "In what way" this was made known, Job does not say; but there can be no doubt of the fact to which he adverts, that even in his time the great principles of all real wisdom were made known to created intelligences, as consisting in profound veneration of God, in a willingness to bow under his dispensations, and to confide in him.

He prepared it - Made it a matter of "thought" and "inquiry" to find out what was real wisdom, and communicated it in a proper way to his creatures. The idea is, that it was not the result of chance, nor did it spring up of its own accord, but it was a matter of "intelligent investigation" on the part of God to know what constituted true wisdom. Probably, also, Job here means to refer to the attempts of man to investigate it, and to say that its value was enhanced from the fact that it had even required "the search of God" to find it out. Beautiful eulogiums of Wisdom may be seen in the Apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus, of which the following is a specimen:

Wisdom shall praise herself,
And shall glory in the midst of her people.
In the congregation of the Most High shall she open her mouth,

And triumph before his power.

I came out of the mouth of the Most High,

And covered the earth as a cloud.

I dwell in high places,

And my throne is in a cloudy pillar.

I alone compassed the circuit of heaven,

And walked in the bottom of the deep.

In the waves of the sea, and in all the earth,

And in every people and nation, I got a possession.

He created me from the beginning, before the world,

And I shall never fall. Sirach 24

Verse 28

And unto man he said - At what time, or how, Job does not say. Prof. Lee supposes that this refers to the instruction which God gave in Paradise to our first parents; but it may rather be supposed to refer to the universal tenor of the divine communications to man, and to all that God had said about the way of true wisdom. The meaning is, that the substance of all that God had said to man was, that true wisdom was to be found in profound veneration of him.

The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom - The word "Lord" here is improperly printed in small capitals, as if the word were יהוה *yehovâh* The original word is, however, אדני *'ădonāy* and the fact is worthy of notice, because one point of the argument respecting the date of the book turns on the question whether the word Yahweh occurs in it; see the notes at Job 12:9. The fear of the Lord is often represented as true wisdom; Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 14:27; Proverbs 15:33; Proverbs 19:23; Psalm 111:10, et al. The meaning here is, that real wisdom is connected with a proper veneration for God, and with submission to him. We cannot understand his ways. Science cannot conduct us up to a full explanation of his government, nor can the most profound investigations disclose all that we would wish to know about God. In these circumstances, true wisdom is found in humble piety; in reverence for the name and perfections of God; in that veneration which leads us to adore him, and to believe that he is right, though clouds and darkness are round about him. To this conclusion Job, in all his perplexities, comes, and here his mind finds rest.

And to depart from evil is understanding - To forsake every evil way must be wise. In doing that, man knows that he cannot err. He walks safely who abandons sin, and in forsaking every evil way he knows that he cannot but be right. He may be in error when speculating about God, and the reasons of his government; he may be led astray when endeavoring to comprehend his dealings; but there can be no such perplexity in departing

from evil. There he knows he is right. There his feet are on a rock. It is better to walk surely there than to involve ourselves in perplexity about profound and inscrutable operations of the divine character and government. It may be added here, also, that he who aims to lead a holy life, who has a virtuous heart, and who seeks to do always what is right, will have a clearer view of the government and truth of God, than the most profound intellect can obtain without a heart of piety; and that without that, all the investigations of the most splendid talents will be practically in vain.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 29

Verse 1

Moreover, Job continued his parable - See the notes at Job 27:1. It is probable that Job had paused to see if anyone would attempt a reply. As his friends were silent, he resumed his remarks and went into a more full statement of his sufferings. The fact that Job more than once paused in his addresses to give his friends an opportunity to speak, and that they were silent when they seemed called upon to vindicate their former sentiments, was what particularly roused the wrath of Elihu and induced him to answer; Job 32:2-5.

Verse 2

Oh that I were - Hebrew "Who will give?" a common mode of expressing a wish; compare Job 6:8; Job 11:5; Job 13:5; Job 23:3.

As in months past - O that I could recall my former prosperity, and be as was when I enjoyed the protection and favor of God. Probably one object of this wish was that his friends might see from what a state of honor and happiness he had been brought down. They complained of him as impatient. He may have designed to show them that his lamentations were not unreasonable, when it was borne in mind from what a state of prosperity he had been taken, and to what a condition of wo he had been brought. He, therefore, goes into this extended description of his former happiness, and dwells particularly upon the good which he was enabled then to do, and the respect which was shown him as a public benefactor. A passage strikingly similar to this occurs in Virgil, Aeneid viii. 560:

O mihi praeteritos referat si Jupiter annos!
Quails eram, cum primam aciem Praeneste sub ipsa
Stravi, scutorumque incendi victor acervos.
"O would kind heaven my strength and youth recall,
Such as I was beneath Praeneste's wall;

There where I made the foremost foes retire,

And set whole heaps of conquered shields on fire!"

Verse 3

When his candle shined upon my head - Margin, or, "lamp;" compare notes Job 18:6. It was remarked in the note on that place, that it was common to have lamps or lights always burning in a house or tent. When Job speaks of the lamps shining "on his head," the allusion is probably to the custom of suspending a lamp from the ceiling - a custom which prevails among the wealthy Arabs. "Scott." Virgil speaks of a similar thing in the palace of Dido:

- *Dependent lychni laquearibus aureis Incensi*.

Aeneid i. 726.

"From gilded roofs depending lamps display
Nocturnal beams that imitate the day."

Dryden

See, also Lucretius, ii. 24. Indeed the custom is common everywhere and the image is a beautiful illustration of the divine favor - of light and happiness imparted by God, the great source of blessedness from above. The Hebrew word rendered "shined" בהלו *behilô*) has been the occasion of some perplexity in regard to its form. According to Ewald, Hebrew Gram. p. 471, and Gesenius, Lex, it is the Hiphil form of הלל *hâlal* - to shine, the He preformative being dropped. The sense is, "In his causing the light to shine." Others suppose that it is the infinitive of the Qal, with a pleonastic suffix; meaning "when it shined;" that is, the light. The sense is essentially the same; compare Schultens and Rosenmuller *in loc*.

And when by his light - Under his guidance and direction.

I walked through darkness - "Here is reference probably to the fires or other lights which were carried before the caravans in their nightly travels through the deserts." "Noyes." The meaning is, that God afforded him protection, instruction, and guidance. In places, and on subjects that would have been otherwise dark, he counselled and led him. He enjoyed the manifestations' of the divine favor; his understanding was enlightened, and he was enabled to comprehend subjects that would have been otherwise perplexing and difficult. He refers, probably, to the inquiries about the divine government and administration, and to the questions that came before him as a magistrate or an umpire - questions that he was enabled to determine with wisdom.

Verse 4

As I was in the days of my youth - The word here rendered "youth" (חרף *chôreph*), properly means "autumn - from" (חרף *châraph*), to "pluck,

pull," as being the time when fruits ace gathered. Then it means that which is mature; and the meaning here is probably "mature" or "manly" - "As I was in the days of my ripeness;" that is, of my vigor or strength. The whole passage shows that it does not mean "youth," for he goes on to describe the honor and respect shown to him when in mature life. So the Septuagint - Ὅτε ἤμην ἐπιβρίθων ὁδοὺς *Hote ēmēn epibrithōn hodous* - "When I made heavy or laded my ways," an expression referring to autumn as being laden with fruit. So we speak of the spring, the autumn, and the winter of life, and by the autumn denote the maturity of vigor, experience, and wisdom. So the Greeks used the word ὀπώρα *opōra* Pindar, Isthm. 2,7,8; Nem. 5,10, Aeschyl. Suppl. 1005,1022. So Ovid:

Excessit Autumnus posito fervore javentae
Maturus, mitisque inter juvenemque senemqae;
Temperie medius, sparsis per tempora canis.

Inde senilis hiems tremulo venit horrida passu.

Aut spoliata suos, aut. quos habet, alba capillos.
Metam. 15. 200.

The wish of Job was, that he might be restored to the vigor of mature life, and to the influence and honors which he had then, or rather, perhaps, it was that they might have a view of what he was then, that they might see from what a height he had fallen, and what cause he had of complaint and grief.

When the secret of God was upon my tabernacle - The meaning of this language is not clear, and considerable variety has obtained in the interpretation. The Septuagint renders it, "When God watched over - ἐπισκοπὴν ἐποιεῖτο *episkopēn epoieito* - my house." Vulgate, "When God was secretly in my tabernacle." Noyes, "When God was the friend of my tent." Coverdale renders the whole, "As I stood when I was wealthy and had enough; when God prospered my house." Umbreit, Als noch traulich Gott in meinem Zette weilte - "When God remained cordially in my tent." Herder, "When God took counsel with me in my tent." The word rendered "secret" (סוד *sôd*), means a "couch" or "cushion" on which one reclines, and then a divan, or circle of friends sitting together in consultation; see the word explained in the notes at Job 15:8. The idea here probably is, that God came into his tent or dwelling as a friend, and that Job was, as it were,

admitted to the secrecy of his friendship and to an acquaintance with his plans.

Verse 5

When the Almighty was yet with me - Job regarded God as withdrawn from him. He now looked back with deep interest to the time when he dwelt with him.

Verse 6

When I washed my steps with butter - On the word rendered "butter," see the notes at Isaiah 7:15. It properly means curdled milk. Umbreit renders it, Sahne; cream. Noyes, milk, and so Wemyss. The Septuagint, "When my ways flowed with butter" - βουτύρῳ *bouturō* So Coverdale, "When my ways ran over with butter." Herder, "And where I went a stream of milk flowed on." The sense may be, that cream or butter was so plenty that he was able to make use of it for the most common purposes - even for that of washing his feet. That butter was sometimes used for the purpose of anointing the feet - probably for comfort and health - as oil was for the head, is mentioned by Oriental travelers. Hassilquist (Travels in Palestine, p. 58), speaking of the ceremonies of the priests at Magnesia on holy Thursday, says, "The priest washed and dried the feet, and afterward besmeared them with butter, which it was alleged was made from the first milk of a young cow." Bruce says that the king of Abyssinia daily anointed his head with butter. Burder in Rosenmuller's alte u. neue Morgenland, *in loc*. It is possible that this use of butter was as ancient as the time of Job, and that he here alludes to it, but it seems more probable that the image is designed to denote superfluity or abundance; and that where he trod, streams of milk or cream flowed - so abundant was it round him. The word rendered "steps" הליכם *hâlîykam*) does not properly denote "the feet" but "the tread, the going, the stepping." This sense corresponds with that of the other member of the parallelism.

And the rock poured me out rivers of oil - Margin, "with me." The idea is, that the very rock near which he stood, seemed to pour forth oil. Instead of water gushing out, such seemed to be the abundance with which he was blessed, that the very rock poured out a running stream of oil. Oil was of great value among the Orientals. It was used as an article of food, for light, for anointing the body, and as a valuable medicine. To say, then, that one had abundance of oil, was the same as to say that he had ample means of comfort and of luxury. Perhaps by the word "rock" here, there is an

allusion to file places where olives grew. It is said that those which produced the best oil grew upon rocky mountains. There may be, also, an allusion to this in Deuteronomy 32:13: "He made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock." Prof. Lee, and some others, however, understand here by the rock, the press where oil was extracted from olives, and which it is supposed was sometimes made of stone.

Verse 7

When I went out to the gate - The "gate" of a city was a place of public concourse, and where courts were usually held. Job speaks here as a magistrate, and of the time when he went forth to sit as a judge, to try causes.

When I prepared my seat in the street - That is, to sit as a judge. The seat or tribunal was placed in the street, in the open air, before the gate of the city, where great numbers might be convened, and hear and see justice done. The Arabs, to this day, hold their courts of justice in an open place, under the heavens, as in a field or a market-place. Norden's Travels in Egypt, ii. 140. There has been, however, great variety of opinion in regard to the meaning of this verse. Schultens enumerates no less than ten different interpretations of the passage. Herder translates it:

"When from my house I went to the assembly,
And spread my carpet in the place of meeting."

Prof. Lee translates it, "When I went forth from the gate to the pulpit, and prepared my seat in the broad place." He supposes that Job refers to occasions when he addressed the people, and to the respect which was shown him then. Dr. Good renders it, "As I went forth, the city rejoiced at me." It is probable, however, that our common version has given the true signification. The word rendered "city" (קרת *qereth*), is a poetic form for (קריה *qiryâh*) "city," but does not frequently occur. It is found in Proverbs 8:3; Proverbs 9:3, Proverbs 9:14; Proverbs 11:11. The phrase "upon the city" - Hebrew עלי־קרת *ʿaly -qereth* - or, "over the city," may refer to the fact that the gate was in an elevated place, or that it was the chief place, and, as it were, over or at the head of the city. The meaning is, that as he went out from his house toward the gate that was situated in the most important part of the city, all did him reverence.

Verse 8

The young men saw me, and hid themselves - That is, they retired as if awed at my presence. They gave place to me, or reverently withdrew as I

passed along.

And the aged arose, and stood up - They not merely rose, but they continued to stand still until I had passed by. "This is a most elegant description, and exhibits most correctly the great reverence and respect which was paid, even by the old and the decrepit, to the holy man, in passing along the streets, or when he sat in public. They not only rose, which in men so old was a great mark of distinction, but they stood; and they continued to do it, though the attempt was so difficult." Lowth. The whole image presents a beautiful illustration of Oriental manners, and of the respect paid to a man of known excellence of character and distinction.

Verse 9

The princes refrained talking - As a mark of respect, or in awe of his presence.

And laid their hand on their mouth - To lay the finger or the hand on the mouth is every where an action expressive of silence or respect; Notes, Job 21:5. "In one of the subterranean vaults of Egypt, where the mummies lie buried, they found in the coffin an embalmed body of a woman, before which was placed a figure of wood, representing a youth on his knees, laying a finger on his mouth, and holding in his other hand a sort of chafing dish, which was placed on his head, and in which, without doubt, had been some perfumes." Maillet.

Verse 10

The nobles - Margin, "The voice of the nobles was hid." Literally, this may be rendered, "as to the voice the nobles hid themselves;" or the phrase here employed (נגידים קול נחבאו *nechâbâ'û qôl nāgîydiym*) may be rendered, "the voice of the nobles was hid" - it being common in the Hebrew when two nouns come together, of different numbers and gender, for the verb to conform to the latter. Rosenmuller. The word "nobles" here is to be understood in the sense of "counsellors," or men of rank. They would now be called "Emirs," or "Sheiks."

And their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth - They were so awed by my presence that they could not speak.

Verse 11

When the ear heard me. - A personification for "they who heard me speak, blessed me." That is, they commended or praised me.

And when the eye saw me - All who saw me.

It gave witness to me - That is, the fixed attention to what he said and the admiration which was shown by the eyes of the multitudes, were witnesses of the respect and honor in which he was held. Gray has a beautiful expression similar to this when he says,

"He reads his history in a nation's eyes."

Verse 12

Because I delivered the poor that cried - This is spoken of himself as a magistrate or judge - for the whole description relates to that. The meaning is, that when the poor man, who had no means of employing counsel, brought his cause before him, he heard him and delivered him from the grasp of the oppressor. He never made an appeal to him in vain; compare Proverbs 21:13; Proverbs 24:11-12.

And the fatherless - The orphan who brought his cause before him. He became the patron and protector of those whose natural protectors - their parents - had been removed by death; compare the notes at Isaiah 1:17.

And him that had none to help him - The poor man who had no powerful patron. Job says that, as a magistrate, he particularly regarded the cause of such persons, and saw that justice was done them - a beautiful image of the administration of justice in patriarchal times. This is the sense in which our translators understood this. But the parallelism seems rather to require that this should be applied to the fatherless who had no one to aid him, and the Hebrew, by understanding the ו (*w*) conjunctive as meaning "when," will bear this construction. So it is understood by Rosenmuller, Umbreit, Herder, and Noyes.

Verse 13

The blessing of him that was ready to perish … - Of the man who was falsely accused, and who was in danger of being condemned, or of him who was exposed to death by poverty and want.

And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy - By becoming her patron and friend; by vindicating her cause, and saving her from the oppressive exactions of others; compare Isaiah 1:17.

Verse 14

I put on righteousness - Or "justice" - as a magistrate, and in all his transactions with his fellow-men. It is common to compare moral conduct or traits of character with various articles of apparel; compare Isaiah 11:5, note; Isaiah 61:10, note.

And it clothed me - It was my covering; I was adorned with it. So we speak of being "clothed with humility;" and so, also, of the "garments of salvation."

My judgment - Or rather justice - particularly as a magistrate.

Was as a robe - The word "robe" (מעיל *meʿîyl*) denotes the "mantle" or outer garment that is worn by an Oriental. It constitutes the most elegant part of his dress; Notes at Isaiah 6:1. The idea is, that his strict justice was to him what the full flowing robe was in apparel. It was that for which he was best known; that by which he was distinguished, as one would be by an elegant and costly robe.

And a diadem - Or, "turban". The word used here צניף *tsânîyph* - is from צנף *tsânaph* to roll, or wind around, and is applied to the turban, because it was thus wound around the head. It is applied to the mitre of the high priest Zechariah 3:5, and may also be to a diadem or crown. It more properly here, however, denotes the "turban," which in the East is an essential part of dress. The idea is, that he was fully clad or adorned with justice.

Verse 15

I was eyes to the blind - An exceedingly beautiful expression, whose meaning is obvious. He became their counsellor and guide.

And feet was I to the lame - I assisted them, and became their benefactor. I did for them, in providing a support, what they would have done for themselves if they had been in sound health.

Verse 16

I was a father to the poor - I took them under my protection, and treated them as if they were my own children.

And the cause which I knew not I searched out - This is according to the interpretation of Jerome. But the more probable meaning is, "the cause of him who was unknown to me, that is, of the stranger, I searched out." So Rosenmuller, Herder, Umbreit, and Good. According to this, the sense is, that, as a magistrate, he gave particular attention to the cause of the stranger, and investigated it with care. It is possible that Job here designs specifically to reply to the charge brought against him by Eliphaz in Job 22:6 ff. The duty of showing particular attention to the stranger is often inculcated in the Bible, and was regarded as essential to a character of uprightness and piety among the Orientals.

Verse 17

And I brake the jaws of the wicked - Margin, "jaw-teeth, or, grinders." The Hebrew word מתלעה *methalleʿâh* the same, with the letters transposed, as מתלעות, is from לתע, to "bite" - and means "the biters," the grinders, the teeth. It is not used to denote the jaw. The image here is taken from wild beasts, with whom Job compares the wicked, and says that he rescued the helpless from their grasp, as he would a lamb from a lion or wolf.

And plucked - Margin, "cast." The margin is a literal translation, but the idea is, that he violently seized the spoil or prey which the wicked had taken, and by force tore it from him.

Verse 18

Then I said - So prosperous was I, and so permanent seemed my sources of happiness. I saw no reason why all this should not continue, and why the same respect and honor should not attend me to the grave.

I shall die in my nest - I shall remain where I am, and in my present comforts, while I live. I shall then die surrounded by my family and friends, and encompassed with honors. A "nest" is an image of quietness, harmlessness, and comfort. So Spenser speaks of a nest:

Fayre bosome! fraught with virtue's richest tresure,
The neast of love, the lodging of delight,
The bowre of bliss, the paradise of pleasure.
Sonnet LXXVI

The image here expresses the firm hope of a long life, and of a peaceful and tranquil death. The Septuagint renders it, "My age shall grow old like the trunk of a palm tree" - στέλεχος φοίνικος *stelechos phoinikos* - I shall live long; compare Bochart, Hieroz. P. ii. Lib. vi. c. v. p. 820, for the reason of this translation.

And I shall multiply my days as the sand - Herder renders this, "the Phoenix;" and observes that the Phoenix is obviously intended here, only through a double sense of the word, the figure of the bird is immediately changed for that of the palm-tree. The rabbis generally understand by the word here rendered "sand" (חול *chôl*) the Phoenix - a fabulous bird, much celebrated in ancient times. Osaia in the book "Bereshith Rabba," or Commentary on Genesis, says of this bird, "that all animals obeyed the woman (in eating the forbidden fruit) except one bird only by the name of חול *chûl* concerning which it is said in Job, ‹I will multiply my days as the כחול *kechûl* Jannai adds to this, that "this bird lives a thousand years, and in the end of the thousand years, a fire goes forth from its nest, and burns it up,

but there remains, as it were, an egg, from which again the members grow, and it rises to life:" compare Nonnus in Dionys. Lib. 40. Martial, Claudian, and others in Bochart, Hieroz. P. ii. Lib. vi. c. v. pp. 818-825. But the more correct rendering is, doubtless, the common one, and it is usual in the Scriptures to denote a great, indefinite number, by the sand; Genesis 22:17; Judges 7:12; Habakkuk 1:9. A comparison similar to this occurs in Ovid, Metam. Lib. xiv. 136ff:

- *Ego pulveris hausti*
Ostendens cumulum, quot haberet corpora pulvis,
Tot mihi natales contingere vana rogavi.

The meaning is, that he supposed his days would be very numerous. Such were his expectations - expectations so soon to be disappointed. Such was his condition - a condition so soon to be reversed. The very circumstances in which he was placed were fitted to beget a too confident expectation that his prosperity would continue, and the subsequent dealings of God with him should lead all who are in similar circumstances, not to confide in the stability of their comforts, or to suppose that their prosperity will be uninterrupted. It is difficult, when encompassed with friends and honors, to realize that there ever will be reverses; it is difficult to keep the mind from confiding in them as if they must be permanent and secure.

Verse 19

My root was spread out by the waters - Margin, as the Hebrew, "opened." The meaning is, that it was spread abroad or extended far, so that the moisture of the earth had free access to it; or it was like a tree planted near a stream, whose root ran down to the water. This is an image designed to denote great prosperity. In the East, such an image would be more striking than with us. Here green, large, and beautiful trees are so common as to excite little or no attention. In such a country as Arabia, however, where general desolation exists, such a tree would be a most beautiful object, and a most striking image of prosperity; compare DeWette on Psalm 1:3.

And the dew lay all night upon my branch - In the absence of rain - which seldom falls in deserts - the scanty vegetation is dependent on the dews that fall at night. Those dews are often very abundant. Volney (Travels i. 51) says, "We, who are inhabitants of humid regions, cannot well understand how a country can be productive without rain, but in Egypt, the dew which falls copiously in the night, supplies the place of rain." See, also,

Shaw‘s Travels, p. 379. “To the same cause also (the violent heat of the day), succeeded afterward by the coldness of the night, we may attribute the plentiful dews, and those thick, offensive mists, one or other of which we had every night too sensible a proof of. The dews, particularly, (as we had the heavens only for our covering), would frequently wet us to the skin.” The sense here is, as a tree standing on the verge of a river, and watered each night by copious dews, appears beautiful and flourishing, so was my condition. The Septuagint, however, renders this, “And the dew abode at night on my harvest” - καί δρόσος ἀυλισθήσεται ἐν τῷ θερισμῷ μου *kai drosos aulisthēsetai en tō therismō mou* So the Chaldee - וטלא בחצדי יבית. A thought, similar to the one in this passage, occurs in a Chinese Ode, translated by Sir William Jones, in his works, vol. ii. p. 351:

Vide illius aquae rivum
Virides arundines jucunde luxuriant!
Sic est decorus virtutibus princeps noster!
“Seest thou yon stream, around whose banks
The green reeds crowd in joyous ranks?
In nutrient virtue and in grace,

Such is the Prince that rules our race.”
Dr. Good

Verse 20

My glory was fresh in me - Margin, “new.” “As we say, the man shall not overlive himself.” Umbreit. The idea is, that he was not exhausted; he continued in vigor and strength. The image is probably taken from that suggested in the previous verse - from a tree, whose beauty and vigor were continued by the waters, and by the dew that lay on its branches.

And my bow - An emblem of vigor and strength. The ancients fought with the bow, and hence, a man who was able to keep his bow constantly drawn, was an image of undiminished and unwearied vigor; compare Genesis 49:24: “But his bow abode in strength.”

Was renewed in my hand - Margin, as in Hebrew “changed.” The meaning is, that it constantly renewed its strength. The idea is taken from a tree, which “changes” by renewing its leaves, beauty, and vigor; Isaiah 9:10; compare Job 14:7. The sense is that his bow gathered strength in his hand. The figure is very common in Arabic poetry, many specimens of which may be seen in Schultens *in loc*.

Verse 21

Unto me men gave ear - Job here returns to the time when he sat in the assembly of counsellors, and to the respectful attention which was paid to all that he said. They listened when he spoke; they waited for him to speak before they gave their opinion; and they were then silent. They neither interrupted him nor attempted a reply.

Verse 22

After my words they spake not again - The highest proof which could be given of deference. So full of respect were they that they did not dare to dispute him; so sagacious and wise was his counsel that they were satisfied with it, and did not presume to suggest any other.

And my speech dropped upon them - That is, like the dew or the gentle rain. So in Deuteronomy 32:2:

My doctrine shall drop as the rain;
My speech shall distil as the dew,
As the small rain upon the tender herb,
And as the showers upon the grass.

So Homer speaks of the eloquence of Nestor,

Τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέεν αὐδή.

Tou kai apo glōssēs melitos glukiōn rēn audē "Words sweet as honey from his lips distill'd."

Pope

So Milton, speaking of the eloquence of Belial, says,

- Though his tongue
Dropt manna, and could make the worse appear
The better reason, to perplex and dash

Maturest counsels.

Paradise Lost, B. ii.

The comparison in the Scriptures of words of wisdom or persuasion, is sometimes derived from honey, that drops or gently falls from the comb. Thus, in Proverbs 5:3:

For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honey-comb,
And her mouth is smoother than oil,

So in Song of Song of Solomon 4:11 :

Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb;
Honey and milk are under thy tongue.

Verse 23

And they waited for me as for the rain - That is, as the dry and thirsty earth waits for the rain. This is a continuation of the beautiful image commenced in the previous verse, and conveys the idea that his counsel was as necessary in the assemblies of people as the rain was to give growth to the seed, and beauty to the landscape.

And they opened their mouth wide - Expressive of earnest desire; compare Psalm 119:131: "I opened my mouth and panted."

As for the latter rain - The early and the latter rains are frequently spoken of in the Scriptures, and in Palestine and the adjacent regions are both necessary to the harvest. The early, or autumnal rains, commence in the latter half of October, or the beginning of November, not suddenly, but by degrees, so as to give the husbandman an opportunity to sow his wheat and barley. The rains come mostly from the west, or southwest, continuing for two or three days at a time, and failing especially during the nights. During the months of November and December, they continue to fall heavily; afterward they return only at longer intervals, and are less heavy; but at no period during the winter do they entirely cease to occur. Rain continues to fall more or less during the month of March, but it is rare after that period. The latter rains denote those which fall in the month of March, and which are so necessary in order to bring forward the harvest, which ripens early in May or June. If those rains fail, the harvest materially suffers, and hence, the expressions in the Scriptures, that "the husbandman waits for that rain;" compare James 5:7; Proverbs 16:15. The expression, "the early and the latter rain" seems, unless some material change has occurred in Palestine, not to imply that no rain fell in the interval, but that those rains were usually more copious, or were especially necessary, first for sowing, and then for bringing forward the harvest. In the interval between the "latter" and the "early" rains - between March and October - rain never falls, and the sky is usually serene; see Robinson's Bibl. Researches, vol. ii. pp. 96-100. The meaning here is, that they who were assembled in counsel, earnestly desired Job to speak, as the farmer desires the rain that will bring forward his crop.

Verse 24

If I laughed on them they believed it not - There is considerable variety in the interpretation of this member of the verse. Dr. Good renders it, "I smiled upon them, and they were gay." Herder, If I laughed at them,

they were not offended." Coverdale," When I laughed, they knew well it was not earnest." Schultens, "I will laugh at them, they are not secure." But Rosenmuller, Jun. et Trem., Noyes and Umbreit, accord with the sense given in our common translation. The Hebrew literally is, "Should I laugh upon them, they did not confide;" and, according to Rosenmuller, the meaning is, "Such was the reverence for my gravity, that if at any time I relaxed in my severity of manner, they would scarcely believe it, nor did they omit any of their reverence toward me, as if familiarity with the great should produce contempt." Grotius explains it to mean, "Even my jests, they thought, contained something serious." The word used here, however (שׂחק *śâchaq*), means not only to laugh or smile upon, but; to laugh at, or deride; Psalm 52:6; Job 30:1; compare Job 5:22; Job 39:7; Job 22:19. It seems to me, that the sense is that so great was his influence, that he was able to control them even with a smile, without saying a word; that if, when a measure was proposed in debate, he should even smile, though he said nothing, they would have no confidence in it, but would at once abandon it as unwise. No higher influence than this can be well conceived, and this exposition accords with the general course of remark, where Job traces along the various degrees of his influence until he comes to this, the highest of them all.

And the light of my countenance they cast not down - His smile of favor on an undertaking, or his smile at the weakness or lack of wisdom of any thing proposed, they could not resist. It settled the matter. They had not power by their arguments or moral courage to resist him even if he did not say a word, or even to change the aspect of his countenance. A look, a token of approbation or disapprobation from him, was enough.

Verse 25

I chose out their way - That is, I became their guide and counsellor. Rosenmuller and Noyes explain this as meaning, "When I came among them;" that is, when I chose to go in their way, or in their midst. But the former interpretation better agrees with the Hebrew, and with the connection. Job is speaking of the honors shown to him, and one of the highest which he could receive was to be regarded as a leader, and to have such respect shown to his opinions that he was even allowed to select the way in which they should go; that is, that his counsel was implicitly followed.

And sat chief - Hebrew "Sat head." He was at the head of their assemblies.

And dwelt as a king in the army - As a king, surrounded by a multitude of troops, all of whom were subservient to his will, and whom he could command at pleasure. It is not to be inferred from this, that Job was a king, or that he was at the head of a nation. The idea is, merely, that the same respect was shown to him which is to a monarch at the head of an army.

As one that comforteth the mourners - In time of peace I was their counsellor, and in time of war they looked to me for direction, and in time of affliction they came to me for consolation. There were no classes which did not show me respect, and there were no honors which they were not ready to heap on me.

It may seem, perhaps, that in this chapter there is a degree of self-commendation and praise altogether inconsistent with that consciousness of deep unworthiness which a truly pious man should have. How, it may be asked, can this spirit be consistent with religion? Can a man who has any proper sense of the depravity of his heart, speak thus in commendation of his own righteousness, and recount with such apparent satisfaction his own good deeds? Would not true piety be more distrustful of self, and be less disposed, to magnify its own doings? And is there not here a recalling to recollection of former honors, in a manner which shows that the heart was more attached to them than that of a map whose hope is in heaven should be? It may not be possible to vindicate Job in this respect altogether, nor is it necessary for us to attempt to prove that he was entirely perfect. We are to remember, also, the age in which he lived; we are not to measure what he said and did by the knowledge which we have, and the clearer light which shines upon us. We are to bear in recollection the circumstances in which he was placed, and perhaps we shall find in them a mitigation for what seems to us to exhibit such a spirit of self-reliance, and which looks so much like the lingering love of the honors of this world. Particularly we may recall the following considerations:

(1) He was vindicating himself from charges of enormous guilt and hypocrisy. To meet these charges, he runs over the leading events of his life, and shows what had been his general aim and purpose. He reminds them, also, of the respect and honor which had been shown him by those who best

knew him - by the poor the needy, the inhabitants of his own city, the people of his own tribe. To vindicate himself from the severe charges which had been alleged against him, it was not improper thus to advert to the general course of his life, and to refer to the respect in which he had been held. Who could know him better than his neighbors? Who could be better witnesses than the poor whom he had relieved; and the lame, the blind, the sorrowful, whom he had comforted? Who could better testify to his character than they who had followed his counsel in times of perplexity and danger? Who would be more competent witnesses than the mourners whom he had comforted?

(2) It was a main object with Job to show the greatness of his distress and misery, and for this purpose he went into an extended statement of his former happiness, and especially of the respect which had been shown him. This he contrasts beautifully with his present condition, and the colors of the picture are greatly heightened by the contrast. In forming our estimate of this chapter, we should take this object into the account, and should not charge him with a design to magnify his own righteousness, when his main purpose was only to exhibit the extent and depth of his present woes.

(3) It is not improper for a man to speak of his former prosperity and happiness in the manner in which Job did. He does not speak of himself as having any merit, or as relying on this for salvation. He distinctly traces it all to God Job 29:2-5, and says that it was because he blessed him that he had enjoyed these comforts. It was not an improper acknowledgment of the mercies which he had received from his hand, and the remembrance was fitted to excite his gratitude. And although there may seem to us something like parade and ostentation in thus dwelling on former honors, and recounting what he had done in days that were past, yet we should remember how natural it was for him, in the circumstances of trial in which he then was, to revert to past scenes, and to recall the times of prosperity, and the days when he enjoyed the favor of God.

(4) It may be added, that few people have ever lived to whom this description would be applicable. It must have required uncommon and very remarkable worth to have made it proper for him thus to speak, and to be able to say all this so as not to be exposed to contradiction. The description

is one of great beauty, and presents a lovely picture of patriarchal piety, and of the respect which then was shown to eminent virtue and worth. It is an illustration of the respect that will be, and that ought to be, shown to one who is upright in his dealings with people, benevolent toward the poor and the helpless, and steady in his walk with God.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 40

Verse 1

But now they that are younger than I - Margin, "of fewer days." It is not probable that Job here refers to his three friends. It is not possible to determine their age with accuracy, but in Job 15:10, they claim that there were with them old and very aged men, much older than the father of Job. Though that place may possibly refer not to themselves but to those who held the same opinions with them, yet none of those who engaged in the discussion, except Ehhu Job 32:6, are represented as young men. They were the contemporaries of Job; men who are ranked as his friends; and men who showed that they had had oppoptunities for long and careful observation. The reference here, therefore, is to the fact that while, in the days of his prosperity, even the aged and the honorable rose up to do him reverence, now he was the object of contempt even by the young and the worthless. The Orientals would feel this much. It was among the chief virtues with them to show respect to the aged, and their sensibilites were especially keen in regard to any indignity shown to them by the young.

Whose fathers I would have disdained - Who are the children of the lowest and most degraded of the community. How deep the calamity to be so fallen as to be the subject of derision by such men!

To have set with the dogs of my flock - To have associated with my dogs in guarding my flock. That is, they were held in less esteem than his dogs. This was the lowest conceivable point of debasement. The Orientals had no language that would express greater contempt of anyone than to call him a dog; compare Deuteronomy 23:18; 1 Samuel 17:43; 1 Samuel 24:14; 2 Samuel 3:8; 2 Samuel 9:8; 2 Samuel 16:9; 2 Kings 8:13; Note Isaiah 66:3.

Verse 2

Yea, whereto might the strength of their hands profit me - There has been much difference of opinion respecting the meaning of this passage. The general sense is clear. Job means to describe those who were reduced by poverty and want, and who were without respectability or home, and who had no power in any way to affect him. He states that they were so abject and worthless as not to be worth his attention; but even this fact is intended to show how low he was himself reduced, since even the most degraded ranks in life did not show any respect to one who had been honored by princes. The Vulgate renders this, "The strength - *virtus* - of

whose hands is to me as nothing, and they are regarded as unworthy of life." The Septuagint, "And the strength of their hands what is it to me? Upon whom perfection - συντέλεια *sunteleia* - has perished." Coverdale, "The power and strength of their hands might do me no good, and as for their age, it is spent and passed away without any profit." The literal translation is, "Even the strength of their hands, what is it to me?" The meaning is, that their power was not worth regarding. They were abject, feeble, and reduced by hunger - poor emaciated creatures, who could do him neither good nor evil. Yet this fact did not make him feel less the indignity of being treated by such vagrants with scorn.

In whom old age was perished - Or, rather, in whom vigor, or the power of accomplishing, anything, has ceased. The word כלה *kelach* means "completion," or the act or power of finishing or completing anything. Then it denotes old age - age as "finished" or "completed;" Job 5:26. Here it means the maturity or vigor which would enable a man to complete or accomplish anything, and the idea is, that in these persons this had utterly perished. Reduced by hunger and want, they had no power of effecting anything, and were unworthy of regard. The word used here occurs only in this book in Hebrew Job 5:26; Job 30:2, but is common in Arabic; where it refers to the "wrinkles," the "wanness," and the "austere aspect" of the countenance, especially in age. See "Castell's Lex."

Verse 3

For want and famine - By hunger and poverty their strength is wholly exhausted, and they are among the miserable outcasts of society. In order to show the depth to which he himself was sunk in public estimation, Job goes into a description of the state of these miserable wretches, and says that he was treated with contempt by the very scum of society, by those who were reduced to the most abject wretchedness, and who wandered in the deserts, subsisting on roots, without clothing, shelter, or home, and who were chased away by the respectable portion of the community as if they were thieves and robbers. The description is one of great power, and presents a sad picture of his own condition.

They were solitary - Margin, or, "dark as the night." Hebrew גלמוד *galmûd* This word properly means "hard," and is applied to a dry, stony, barren soil. In Arabic it means a hard rock. "Umbreit." In Job 3:7, it is applied to a night in which none are born. Here it seems to denote a countenance, dry, hard, emaciated with hunger. Jerome renders it, "steriles."

The Septuagint, ἄγονος *agonos* - "sterile." Prof. Lee, "Hardly beset." The meaning is, that they were greatly reduced - or dried up - by hunger and want. So Umbreit renders it, "gantz ausgedorrt- altogether dried up."

Fleeing into the wilderness - Into the desert or lonely wastes. That is, they "fled" there to obtain, on what the desert produced, a scanty subsistence. Such is the usual explanation of the word rendered "flee" - ערק *ʿâraq* But the Vulgate, the Syriac, and the Arabic, render it "gnawinq," and this is followed by Umbreit, Noyes, Schultens, and Good. According to this the meaning is, that they were "gnawers of the desert;" that is, that they lived by gnawing the roots and shrubs which they found in the desert. This idea is much more expressive, and agrees with the connection. The word occurs in Hebrew only in this verse and in Job 30:17, where it is rendered "My sinews," but which may more appropriately be rendered "My gnawing pains." In the Syriac and Arabic the word means to "gnaw," or "corrode," as the leading signification, and as the sense of the word cannot be determined by its usage in the Hebrew, it is better to depend on the ancient versions, and on its use in the cognate languages. According to this, the idea is, that they picked up a scanty subsistence as they could find it, by gnawing roots and shrubs in the deserts.

In the former time - Margin, "yesternight." The Hebrew word (אמשׁ *'emesh*) means properly last night; the latter part of the preceding day, and then it is used to denote night or darkness in general. Gesenius supposes that this refers to "the night of desolation," the pathless desert being strikingly compared by the Orientals with darkness. According to this, the idea is not that they had gone but yesterday into the desert, but that they went into the shades and solitudes of the wilderness, far from the homes of men. The sense then is, "They fled into the night of desolate wastes."

Desolate and waste - In Hebrew the same word occurs in different forms, designed to give emphasis, and to describe the gloom and solitariness of the desert in the most impressive manner. We should express the same idea by saying that they hid themselves in the "shades" of the wilderness.

Verse 4

Who cut up mallows - For the purpose of eating. Mallows are common medicinal plants, famous for their emollient or softening properties, and the size and brilliancy of their flowers. It is not probable, however, that Job referred to what we commonly understand by the word mallows. It has been

commonly supposed that he meant a species of plant, called by the Greeks Hallimus, a sunfish plant, or "salt wort," growing commonly in the deserts and poor land, and eaten as a salad. The Vulgate renders it simply *"herbas;"* the Septuagint, ἅλιμα *alima* The Hebrew word, according to Umbreit, means a common salad of a saltish taste, whose young leaves being cooked, constituted food for the poorer classes. The Hebrew word מלוח *mallûach* is from מלח *mâlach* "salt," and properly refers to a marine plant or vegetable.

By the bushes - Or among the bushes; that is, that which grew among the bushes of the desert. They wandered about in the desert that they might obtain this very humble fare.

And juniper-roots - The word here rendered "juniper" רתם *rethem* occurs only in this place, and in 1 Kings 19:4-5; Psalm 120:4. In each place it is rendered "juniper." In 1Kings it is mentioned as the tree under which Elijah sat down when he fled into the wilderness for his life; In Psalm 120:4, it is mentioned as a material for making coals. "Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper." It is rendered "juniper" by Jerome, and by the rabbis. The verb (רתם *râqab*) occurs in Micah 1:13, where it is rendered "bind," and means to bind on, to make fast; and probably the plant here referred to received its name in some way from the notion of "binding" - perhaps because its long, flexible, and slender twigs were used for binding, or for "withes." There is no evidence, however, that the "juniper" is in any case intended. It denotes a species of "broom - spartium junceum" of Linn., which grows abundantly in the deserts of Arabia. It is the *"Genista raetam"* of Forskal. "Flora" Egypt. Arab. p. 214.

It has small variegated blossoms, and grows in the water-courses of the Wadys. Dr. Robinson (Bibl. Researches, i. 299) says, "The *Retem* is the largest and most conspicuous shrub of these de sects, growing thickly in the water-courses and valleys. Our Arabs always selected the place of encampment (if possible) in a place where it grew, in order to be sheltered by it at night from the wind; and, during the day, when they often went on in advance of the camels, we found them not unfrequently sitting or sleeping under a bush of Retem, to protect them from the sun. It was in this very desert, a day‘s journey from Beersheba, that the prophet Elijah lay down and slept beneath the same shrub. The roots are very bitter, and are regarded by the Arabs as yielding the best charcoal. The Hebrew name רתם *rethem* is the same as the present Arabic name." Burckhardt remarks, that

he found several Bedouins in the Wady Genne collecting brushwood, which they burned into charcoal for the Egyptian market, and adds that they preferred for this purpose the thick roots of the shrub Rethem, which grew there in abundance. Travels in Syria, p. 483. It could have been only those who were reduced to the utmost penury and want that could have made use of the roots of this shrub for food, and this is doubtless the idea which Job means to convey. It is said to have been occasionally used for food by the poor. See Gesenius, Lex.; Umbreit *in loc*., and Schultens. A description of the condition of the poor, remarkably similar to this, occurs in Lucan, Lib. vii.;

- *Cernit miserabile vulgus*
In pecudum cecidisse cibos, et carpere dumos
Et morsu spoliare nemus.

Biddulph (in the collection of Voyages from the Library of the Earl of Oxford, p. 807), says he had seen many poor people in Syria gather mallows and clover, and when he had asked them what they designed to do with it, they answered that it was for food. They cooked and ate them. Herodotus, viii. 115, says, that the army of Xerxes, after their defeat, when they had consumed all the grain of the inhabitants in Thessaly, "fed on the natural produce of the earth, stripping wild and cultivated trees alike of their bark and leaves, to such an extremity of famine were they come."

Verse 5

They were driven forth from among men - As vagabonds and outcasts. They were regarded as unfit to live among the civilized and the orderly, and were expelled as nuisances.

(**They cried after them as after a thief.) -** The inhabitants of the place where they lived drove them out with a loud outcry, as if they were thieves and robbers. A class of persons are here described who were mere vagrants and plunderers, and who were not allowed to dwell in civilized society, and it was one of the highest aggravations of the calamities of Job, that he was now treated with derision by such outcasts.

Verse 6

To dwell in the cliffs of the valleys - The word here rendered "cliffs" (ערוץ *ʿârûts*) denotes rather "horror," or something "horrid," and the sense here is, that they dwelt in "the horrer of valleys;" that is, in horrid valleys. The idea is that of deep and frightful glens, where wild beasts ranged, far from the abodes of men, and surrounded by frightful wastes. The word

rendered "valleys" (נחל *nachal*) means properly a brook, stream, water-course - what is now called a wady; a place where the winter torrents run, but which is usually dry in summer; see the notes at Job 6:15.

In caves of the earth - Margin, as in Hebrew "holes." Septuagint "Whose houses are - πρῶγλαι πετρῶν *trōglai petrōn* - caverns of the rocks;" that is, who are "Troglodytes." Caves furnished a natural dwelling for the poor and the outcast, and it is well known that it was not uncommon in Egypt, and in the deserts of Arabia, to occupy such caves as a habitation; see Diod. Sic. Lib. iii. xiv. and Strabo, Lib. 16,

And in the rocks - The caverns of the rocks. Dr. Richardson found a large number of such dwellings in the vicinity of Thebes, many of which were large and beautifully formed and sculptured with many curious devices. Mr. Rich, also, saw a large number of such caves not far from Mousal. Residence in Koordistan, vol. ii. p. 94.

Verse 7

Among the bushes - Coverdale, "Upon the dry heath went they about crying." The Hebrew word is the same which occurs in Job 30:4, and means bushes in general. They were heard in the shrubbery that grew in the desert.

They brayed - ינהקו *yinâhaqû* The Vulgate renders this, "They were concealed." The Septuagint, "Amidst sweet sounds they cry out." Noyes, "They utter their cries." The Hebrew word properly means to "bray." It occurs only here and in Job 6:5, where it is applied to the ass. The sense here is, that the voices of this vagrant and wretched multitude was heard in the desert like the braying of asses.

Under the nettles - Dr. Good, "Under the briers." Prof. Lee, "Beneath the broom-pea." Noyes, "Under the thorns." The Hebrew word חרול *châr̂ûl* occurs only here and in Zephaniah 2:9, and Proverbs 24:31, in each of which places it is rendered "nettles." It is probably derived from חרר = חרל, to burn, to glow, and is given to nettles from the burning or prickling sensation which they produce. Either the word nettles, thistles, or thorns, would sufficiently answer to its derivation. It does not occur in the Arabic. Castell. Umbreit renders it, "unter Dornen- under thorns."

They were gathered together - Vulgate, "They accounted it a delicacy to be in a thorn-hedge." The word used here (ספח *sâphach*) means "to add;" and then to be added or assembled together. The idea is, that they were huddled together quite promiscuously in the wild-growing bushes of the desert. They had no home; no separate habitation. This description is

interesting, not only as denoting the depth to which Job had been reduced when he was the object of contempt by such vagrants, but as illustrative of a state of society existing then.

Verse 8

They were children of fools - The word rendered "fools" נבל *nâbâl* means,

(1) stupid, foolish; and

(2) abandoned, impious; compare 1 Samuel 25:3, 1 Samuel 25:25.

Here it means the worthless, the refuse of society, the abandoned. They had no respectable parentage. Umbreit, "A brood of infamy." Coverdale, "Children of fools and villains."

Children of base men - Margin, as in Hebrew, "men of no name." They were men of no reputation; whose ancestors had in no way been distinguished; possibly meaning, also, that they herded together as beasts without even a name.

They were viler than the earth - Gesenius renders this, "They are frightened out of the land." The Hebrew word (כאה) means "to chide, to upbraid," and then in the niphal "to be chidden away," or "to be driven off." The sense is, as an impious and low-born race they were driven out of the land.

Verse 9

And now am I their song - See Job 17:6; compare Psalm 69:12, "I was the song of the drunkards;" Lamentations 3:14, "I was a derision to all my people, and their song all the day." The sense is, that they made Job and his calamities the subject of low jesting, and treated him with contempt. His name and sufferings would be introduced into their scurrilous songs to give them pith and point, and to show how much they despised him now.

Yea, I am their by-word - See the notes at Job 17:6.

Verse 10

They abhor me - Hebrew, They regard me as abominable.

They flee far from me - Even such an impious and low born race now will have nothing to do with me. They would consider it no honor to be associated with me, but keep as far from me as possible.

And spare not to spit in my face - Margin, "withhold not spittle from." Noyes renders this "Before my face;" and so Luther Wemyss, Umbreit, and

Prof. Lee. The Hebrew may mean either to spit in the face, or to spit "in the presence" of anyone. It is quite immaterial which interpretation is adopted, since in the view of Orientals the one was considered about the same as the other. In their notions of courtesy and urbanity, he commits an insult of the same kind who spits in the presence of another which he would if he spit on him. Are they not right? Should it not be so considered every where? Yet how different their views from the more refined notions of the civilized Occidentals! In America, more than in any other land, are offences of this kind frequent and gross. Of nothing do foreigners complain of us more, or with more justice; and much as we boast of our intelligence and refinement, we should gain much if in this respect we would sit down at the feet of a Bedouin Arab, and incorporate his views into our maxims of politeness.

Verse 11

Because he hath loosed my cord - According to this translation, the reference here is to God, and the sense is, that the reason why he was thus derided and contemned by such a worthless race was, that God had unloosened his cord. That is, God had rendered him incapable of vindicating himself, or of inflicting punishment. The figure, according to this interpretation, is taken from a bow, and Job means to say that his bow was relaxed, his vigor was gone, and they now felt that they might insult him with impunity. But instead of the usual reading in the Hebrew text יתרי *yithriy* - "my nerve," another reading יתרו *yithriv* - "his nerve," is found in the qeri (margin). This reading has been adopted in the text by Jahn, and is regarded as genuine by Rosenmuller, Umbreit, and Noyes. According to this, the meaning is, that the worthless rabble that now treated him with so much contempt, had relaxed all restraint, and they who had hitherto been under some curb, now rushed upon him in the most unbridled manner. They had cast off all restraint arising from respect to his rank, standing, moral worth, and the dread of his power, and now treated him with every kind of indignity.

And afflicted me - By the disrespect and contempt which they have evinced.

They have also let loose the bridle before me - That is, they have cast off all restraint - repeating the idea in the first member of the verse.

Verse 12

Upon my right hand rise the youth - The right hand is the place of honor, and therefore it was felt to be a greater insult that they should occupy

even that place. The word rendered "youth" (פרחח *pirchach*) occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is probably from פרח *pârach* "to sprout, germinate, blossom"; and hence, would mean "a progeny," and would be probably applied to beasts. It is rendered by Jerome, "calamities;" by the Septuagint, "Upon the right hand of the progeny, or brood (βλαστοῦ *blastou*), they rise," where Schleusner conjectures that βλαστοι *blastoi* should be read, "On the right hand rise a brood or progeny." Umbreit renders it, "eine Brut … a brood." So Rosenmuller, Noyes, and Schultens. The idea then is, that this rabble rose up, even on his right hand, as a brood of wild animals - a mere rabble that impeded his way.

They push away my feet - Instead of giving place for me, they jostle and crowd me from my path. Once the aged and the honorable rose and stood in my presence, and the youth retired at my coming, but now this worthless rabble crowds along with me, jostles me in my goings, and shows me no manner of respect; compare Job 29:8.

And they raise up against me the ways of their destruction - They raise up against me destructive ways, or ways that tend to destroy me. The figure is taken from an advancing army, that casts up ramparts and other means of attack designed for the destruction of a besieged city. They were, in like manner, constantly making advances against Job, and pressing on him in a manner that was designed to destroy him.

Verse 13

They mar my path - They break up all my plans. Perhaps here, also, the image is taken from war, and Job may represent himself as on a line of march, and he says that this rabble comes and breaks up his path altogether. They break down the bridges, and tear up the way, so that it is impossible to pass along. His plans of life were embarrassed by them, and they were to him a perpetual annoyance.

They set forward my calamity - Luther renders this part of the verse, "It was so easy for them to injure me, that they needed no help." The literal translation of the Hebrew here would be, "they profit for my ruin;" that is, they bring as it were profit to my ruin; they help it on; they promote it. A similar expression occurs in Zechariah 1:15, "I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction;" that is, they aided in urging it forward. The idea here is, that they hastened his fall. Instead of assisting him in any way, they contributed all they could to bring him down to the dust.

They have no helper - Very various interpretations have been given of this phrase. It may mean, that they had done this alone, without the aid of others; or that they were persons who were held in abhorrence, and whom no one would assist; or that they were worthless and abandoned persons. Schultens has shown that the phrase, "one who has no helper," is proverbial among the Arabs, and denotes a worthless person, or one of the lowest class. In proof of this, he quotes the Hamasa, which he thus translates, *Videmus vos ignobiles, pauperes, quibus nullus ex reliquis hominibus adjutor*. See, also, other similar expressions quoted by him from Arabic writings. The idea here then is, probably, that they were so worthless and abandoned that no one would help them - an expression denoting the utmost degradation.

Verse 14

They came upon me as a wide breaking-in of waters - The Hebrew here is simply, "Like a wide breach they came," and the reference may be, not to an inundation, as our translators supposed, but to an irruption made by a foe through a breach made in a wall. When such a wall fell, or when a breach was made in it, the besieging army would pour in in a tumultuous manner, and cut down all before them; compare Isaiah 30:13. This seems to be the idea here. The enemies of Job poured in upon him as if a breach was made in a wall. Formerly they were restrained by his rank and office, as a besieging army was by lofty walls; but now all these restraints were broken down, and they poured in upon him like a tumultuous army.

In the desolation they rolled themselves upon me - Among the ruins they rolled tumultuous along; or they came pitching and tumbling in with the ruins of the wall. The image is taken from the act of sacking a city, where the besieging army, having made a breach in the wall, would seem to come tumbling into the heart of the city with the ruins of the wall. No time would be wasted, but they would follow suddenly and tumultuously upon the breach, and roll tumultuously along. The Chaldee renders this as if it referred to the rolling and tumultuous waves of the sea, and the Hebrew would admit of such a construction, but the above seems better to accord with the image which Job would be likely to use.

Verse 15

Terrors are turned upon me - As if they were all turned upon him, or made to converge toward him. Everything suited to produce terror seemed to have a direction given it toward him. Umbreit, and some others, however,

suppose that God is here referred to, and that the meaning is," God is turned against me terrors drive as a storm against me." The Hebrew will bear either construction; but it is more emphatic and impressive to suppose it means that everything adapted to produce terror seemed to be turned against him.

They pursue my soul as the wind - Margin, my principal one. The word "they" here, refers to the terrors. In the original text, the word תרדף *tirâdaph* agrees with בלהה *ballâhâh* terrors understood, for this word is often used as a collective noun, and with a singular verb, or it may agree with אהת כל - "each one of the terrors persecutes me." There is more difficulty about the word rendered "soul" in the text, and "principal one" in the margin - נדיבה *nedîybâh* It properly means willingness, voluntariness, spontaneity; then a free-will offering, a voluntary sacrifice; then largeness, abundance. Rosenmuller renders it, "My vigor." Noyes, "My prosperity," and so Coverdale. Jerome, "My desire," and the Septuagint, "My hope passes away as the wind." Schultens translates it, "They persecute my generous spirit as the wind." It seems probable that the word refers to a generous, noble nature; to a large and liberal soul, evincing its magnanimity in acts of generosity and hospitality; and the idea seems to be, that his enemies rushed against that generous nature like a tempest. They wholly disregarded it, and a nature most generous and noble was exposed to the fury of the storm.

And my welfare - Hebrew my salvation; or my safety.

As a cloud - As a cloud vanishes and wholly disappears.

Verse 16

And now my soul is poured out upon me - So in Psalm 42:4, "I pour out my soul in me." We say that one is dissolved in grief. The language is derived from the fact that the soul in grief seems to lose all firmness or consistence. The Arabs style a fearful person, one who has a watery heart, or whose heart melts away like water. Noyes.

Verse 17

My bones are pierced in me - The bones are often represented in the Scriptures as the seat of acute pain; Psalm 6:2; Psalm 22:14; Psalm 31:10; Psalm 38:3; Psalm 42:10; Proverbs 14:30; compare Job 20:11. The meaning here is, that he had had shooting or piercing pains in the night, which disturbed and prevented his rest. It is mentioned as a special aggravation of his sufferings that they were "in the night" - a time when we expect repose.

And my sinews take no rest - See the word here rendered sinews explained in the note at ver. 3. The word literally means gnawers, and hence, the teeth. The Vulgate renders it, *qui me comedunt, non dormiunt*, "they who devour me do not slumber." The Septuagint, νευρά μον *neura mou* - my sinews, or arteries. Schleusner. Luther, "They who gnaw me." Coverdale, Sinews. I see no reason to doubt that the teeth or the jaws are meant, and that Job refers to the violent pain in the tooth, among the acutest pains to which the body is subject. The idea is, that every part of the body was diseased and filled with pain.

Verse 18

By the great force of my disease - The words "of my disease" are not in the Hebrew. The usual interpretation of the passage is, that in consequence of the foul and offensive nature of his malady, his garment had become discolored or defiled - changed from being white and clear to filthiness and offensiveness. Some have understood it as referring to the skin, and as denoting that it was so affected with the leprosy, that he could scarcely be recognized. Umbreit supposes it to mean, "Through the omnipotence of God has my white robe of honor been changed into a narrow garment of grief" - trauerkleid. Dr. Good renders it, "From the abundance of the acrimony;" that is, of the fierce or acrimonious humor, "it is changed into a garment for me." Coverdale, "With all their power have they changed my garment, and girded me therewith, as it were with a coat." Prof. Lee, "With much violence doth my clothing bind me."

According to Schultens, it means, "My affliction puts itself on in the form of my clothing;" and the whole passage, that without and within, from the head to the feet, he was entirely diseased. His affliction was his outer garment, and it was his inner garment - his mantle and his tunic. The Hebrew is difficult. The phrase rendered "by the great force," means, literally, "by the multitude of strength" - and may refer to the strength of disease, or to the strength of God, or to the force with which his garment girded him. The word rendered "is changed" - יתחפשׂ *yitchâphaś* is from חפשׂ *châphaś* to seek, to search after in the Qal; in the Hithpael, the form used here, to let oneself be sought; to hide oneself; to disguise one's self; 1 Kings 20:38. According to this, it would mean that his garment was disquised; that is, its appearance was changed by the force of his disease. *Gesenius*. Jerome renders it, "In their multitude, my garment is consumed; the Septuagint, "With great force he took hold of my garment." Of these various

interpretations, it is impossible to determine which is the correct one. The prevailing interpretation seems to be, that by the strength of his disease his garment was changed in its appearance, so as to become offensive, and yet this is a somewhat feeble sense to give to the passage. Perhaps the explanation of Schultens is the best, "By the greatness of power, pain or disease has become my garment; it girds me about like the mouth of my tunic." He has shown, by a great variety of instances, that it is common in Arabic poetry to compare pain, sickness, anxiety, etc., to clothing.

It bindeth me about as the collar of my coat - The collar of my tunic, or under garment. This was made like a shirt, to be gathered around the neck, and the idea is, that his disease fitted close to him, and was gathered close around him.

Verse 19

He hath cast me into the mire - That is, God has done it. In this book the name of God is often understood where the speaker seems to avoid it, in order that it may not be needlessly repeated. On the meaning of the expression here, see the notes at Job 9:31.

And I am become like dust and ashes - Either in appearance, or I am regarded as being as worthless as the mire of the streets. Rosenmuller supposes it means, "I am more like a mass of inanimate matter than a living man."

Verse 20

I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me - This was a complaint which Job often made, that he could not get the ear of God; that his prayer was not regarded, and that he could not get his cause before him; compare Job 13:3, Job 13:19 ff, and Job 27:9.

I stand up - Standing was a common posture of prayer among the ancients; see Hebrews 11:21; 1 Kings 8:14, 1 Kings 8:55; Nehemiah 9:2. The meaning is, that when Job stood up to pray, God did not regard his prayer.

Verse 21

Thou art become cruel to me - Margin, turned to be. This language, applied to God, seems to be harsh and irreverent, and it may well be inquired whether the word cruel does not express an idea which Job did not intend. The Hebrew word אכזר *'akzâr* is from an obsolete root כזר - not found in Hebrew. The Arabic root, nearly the same as this, means to break with violence; to rout as an enemy; then to be enraged. In the Syriac, the

primary idea is, that of a soldier, and thence it may refer to such acts of violence as a soldier commonly commits. The word occurs in Hebrew in the following places, and is translated in the following manner. It is rendered "cruel" in Deuteronomy 32:33; Job 30:21; Proverbs 5:9; Proverbs 11:17; Proverbs 12:10; Proverbs 17:11; Proverbs 27:4; Isaiah 13:9; Jeremiah 6:23; Jeremiah 50:42; Jeremiah 30:14; and fierce in Job 41:10. Jerome renders it, *mutatus mihi in crudelem* - "thou art changed so as to become cruel to me;" the Septuagint renders it, ἀνελεημόως *aneleēmonōs* - unmerciful; Luther, Du bist mir verwandelt in einem Grausamen- "thou art changed to me into a cruel one;" and so Umbreit, Noyes, and translators generally. Perhaps the word fierce, severe or harsh, would express the idea; still it must be admitted that Job, in the severity of his sufferings, is often betrayed into language which cannot be a model for us, and which we cannot vindicate.

With thy strong hand - Margin, the strength. So the Hebrew. The hand is the instrument by which we accomplish anything; and hence, anything which God does is traced to his hand.

Thou opposest thyselph against me - - תשׂטמני *tiśâṭamēniy* The word שׂטם *śâṭam* means to lie in wait for anyone; to lay snares; to set a trap; see Job 16:9, where the same word occurs, and where it is rendered "who hateth me," but where it would be better rendered he pursues, or persecutes me. The meaning is, that God had become his adversary, or had set himself against him. There was a severity in his dealings with him as if he had become a foe.

Verse 22

Thou liftest me up to the wind - The sense here is, that he was lifted up as stubble is by a tempest, and driven mercilessly along. The figure of riding upon the wind or the whirlwind, is common in Oriental writers, and indeed elsewhere. So Milton says,

"They ride the air in whirlwind."

So Addison, speaking of the angel that executes the commands of the Almighty, says,

"Rides in the whirlwind, and directs the storm."

Coverdale renders this verse, "In times past thou didst set me up on high, as it were above the wind, but now hast thou given me a very sore fall." Rosenmuller thinks that the image here is not taken from straw or chaff that is driven by the wind, but that the meaning of Job is, that he is lifted up and borne aloft like a cloud. But the image of chaff or straw taken

up by the whirlwind and driven about, seems best to accord with the scope of the passage. The idea is, that the tempest of calamity had swept everything away, and had driven him about as a worthless object, until he was wasted away and ruined. It is possible that Job refers in this passage to the sand-storm which occurs sometimes in the deserts of Arabia. The following description of such a storm by Mr. Bruce (vol. 4:pp. 553,554), will furnish an illustration of the force and sublimity of the passage. It is copied from Taylor‘s Fragments, in Calmet‘s Dictionary, vol. 3:235: “On the fourteenth,” says Bruce, “at seven in the morning, we left Assa Nagga, our course being due north. At one o‘clock we alighted among some acacia trees at Waadiel Halboub, having gone twenty-one miles. We were here at once surprised and terrified by a sight, surely one of the most magnificent in the world. In that vast expanse of desert from west and to northwest of us, we saw a number of prodigious pillars of sand at different distances, at times moving with qreat celerity, at others stalking on with a majestic slowness; at intervals we thought they were coming in a very few minutes to overwhelm us, and small quantities of sand did actually more than once reach us. Again they would retreat so as to be almost out of sight - their tops reaching to the very clouds. There the tops often separated from the bodies; and these, once disjoined, dispersed in the air, and did not appear more.

Sometimes they were broken near the middle, as if struck with a large cannon shot. About noon they began to advance with considerable swiftness upon us, the wind being very strong at north. Eleven of them ranged alongside of us about the distance of three miles. The greatest diameter of the largest appeared to me at that distance as if it would measure two feet. They retired from us with a wind at southeast, leaving an im pression upon my mind to which I can give no name, though surely one ingredient in it was fear, with a considerable deal of wonder and astonishment. It was in vain to think of flying; the swiftest horse, or fastest sailing ship, could be of no use to carry us out of this danger, and the full persuasion of this riveted me as if to the spot where I stood, and let the camels gain on me so much in my state of lameness, that it was with some difficulty I could overtake them.

“The whole of our company were much disheartened, except Idris, and imagined that they were advancing into whirlwinds of moving sand, from which they should never be able to extricate themselves; but before four

o‘clock in the afternoon these phantoms of the plain had all of them fallen to the ground and disappeared. In the evening we came to Waadi Dimokea, where we passed the night, much disheartened, and our fear more increased, when we found, upon wakening in the morning, that one side was perfectly buried in the sand that the wind had blown above us in the night.

“The sun shining through the pillars, which were thicker, and contained more sand, apparently, than any of the preceding days, seemed to give those nearest us an appearance as if spotted with stars of gold. I do not think at any time they seemed to be nearer than two miles. The most remarkable circumstance was, that the sand seemed to keep in that vast circular space, surrounded by the Nile on our left, in going round by Chaigie toward Dougola, and seldom was observed much to the eastward of a meridian, passing along the Nile through the Magizan, before it takes that turn; whereas the simoom was always on the opposite side of our course, coming upon us from the southeast.

“The same appearance of moving pillars of sand presented themselves to us this day in form and disposition like those we had seen at Waadi Halboub, only they seemed to be more in number, and less in size. They came several times in a direction close upon us, that is, I believe, within less than two miles. They began, immediately after sunrise, like a thick wood, and almost darkened the sun; his rays shining through them for near an hour, gave them an appearance of pillars of fire.”

“If my conjecture,” says Taylor, “be admissible, we now see a magnificence in this imagery, not apparent before: we see how Job‘s dignity might be exalted in the air; might rise to great grandeur, importance, and even terror, in the sight of beholders; might ride upon the wind, which bears it about, causing it to advance or to recede; and, after all, when the wind diminishes, might disperse, dissipate, melt this pillar of sand into the undistinguished level of the desert. This comparison seems to be precisely adapted to the mind of an Arab; who must have seen, or have been informed of, similar phenomena in the countries around him.”

And dissolvest my substance - Margin, or wisdom. The word rendered “dissolvest,” means to melt, to flow down, and then to cause to melt, to cause to pine away and perish; Isaiah 64:7. It is applied to a host or army

that appears to melt away; 1 Samuel 14:16. It is also applied to one who seems to melt away with fear and terror; Exodus 15:15; Joshua 2:9, Joshua 2:24. Here the meaning probably is, that God caused Job to melt away, as it were, with terrors and alarms. He was like one caught up in a whirlwind, and driven along with the storm, and who, in such circumstances, would be dissolved with fear. The word rendered "substance" (תּשׁיה *tûshîyâh*) has been very variously interpreted. The word, as it is written in the text, means help, deliverance, purpose, enterprise, counsel, or understanding; see Job 5:12; Job 6:13; Job 11:6. But by some, and among others. Gesenius, Umbreit, and Noyes, it is supposed that it should be read as a verb, תשוה from שוה - to fear. According to this, the meaning is, "thou terrifiest me." This agrees better with the connection; is more abrupt and emphatic, and is probably the true interpretation.

Verse 23

For I know that thou wilt bring me to death - This is the language of despair. Occasionally Job seems to have had an assurance that his calamities would pass by, and that God would show himself to be his friend on earth (compare the notes at Job 19:25), and at other times he utters the language of despair. Such would be commonly the case with a good man afflicted as he was, and agitated with alternate hopes and fears. We are not to set these expressions down as contradictions. All that inspiration is responsible for, is the fair record of his feelings; and that he should have alternate hopes and fears is in entire accordance with what occurs when we are afflicted. Here the view of his sorrows appears to have been so overwhelming, that he says he knew they must terminate in death. The phrase "to death" means to the house of the dead, or to the place where the dead are. Umbreit.

And to the house appointed for all living - The grave; compare Hebrews 9:27. That house or home is "appointed" for all. It is not a matter of chance that we come there, but it is because the Great Arbiter of life has so ordained. What an affecting consideration it should be, that such a house is designated for all! A house so dark, so gloomy, so solitary, so repulsive! For all that sit on thrones; for all that move in the halls of music and pleasure; for all that roll along in splendid carriages; for all the beautiful, the happy, the vigorous, the manly; for all in the marts of business, in the low scenes of dissipation, and in the sanctuary of God; for every one who is young, and every one who is aged, this is the home! Here they come at last;

and here they lie down in the narrow bed! God‘s hand will bring them all there; and there will they lie until his voice summons them to judgment!

Verse 24

Howbeit he will not stretch out his hand to the grave - Margin, heap. In our common version this verse conveys no very clear idea, and it is quite evident that our translators despaired of giving it a consistent sense, and attempted merely to translate it literally. The verse has been rendered by every expositor almost in his own way; and though almost no two of them agree, yet it is remarkable that the versions given are all beautiful, and furnish a sense that agrees well with the scope of the passage. The Vulgate renders it, “But not to their consumption wilt thou send forth their hand; and if they fall, thou wilt save them.” The Septuagint,” For O that I could lay violent hands on myself, or beseech another, and he would do it for me Luther renders it, “Yet he shall not stretch out the hand to the charnelhouse, and they shall not cry before his destruction.” Noyes:

“When he stretcheth out his hand, prayer
availeth nothing,
When he bringeth destruction, vain is the
Cry for help.”

Umbreit renders it:

Nur mog‘ er nicht an den zerstorten Haufen
Hand anlegen!
Oder mussen jene selbst in ihrem
Tode schreien?
“Only if he would not lay his hand upon the
Heaps of the destroyed!
Or must these also cry out in their death?”

According to this interpretation, Job speaks here in bitter irony. “I would gladly die,” says he, “if God would only suffer me to be quiet when I am dead.” He would be willing that the edifice of the body should be taken down, provided the ruins might rest in peace. Rosenmuller gives the same sense as that expressed by Noyes. Amidst this variety of interpretation, it is by no means easy to determine on the true meaning of the passage. The principal difficulty in the exposition lies in the word בעי *beʿîy* rendered in the text “in the grave,” and in the margin “heap.” If that word is compounded of the preposition ב *beand* עי *ʿîy it means literally, “in ruins, or in rubbish” - for so the word* עי *ʿîy is used in* Micah 1:6; Jeremiah

26:18; Micah 3:12; Psalm 79:1; Nehemiah 4:2, Nehemiah 4:10. But Gesenius supposes it to be a single word, from the obsolete root בעה, Chaldee בעא, "to pray, to petition"; and according to this the meaning is, "Yea, prayer is nought when he stretches out his hand; and in his (God's) destruction, their cry availeth not."

Prof. Lee understands the word (בעי be'îy) in the same sense, but gives a somewhat different meaning to the whole passage. According to him the meaning is, "Nevertheless, upon prayer thou wilt not lay thine hand; surely, when he destroyeth, in this alone there is safety." Schultens accords very nearly in the sentiment expressed by Umbreit, and renders it, "Yet not even in the tomb would he relax his hand, if in its destruction an alleviation were there." This sentiment is very strong, and borders on impiety, and should not be adopted if it is possible to avoid it. It looks as if Job felt that God was disposed to pursue his animosity even into the regions of the dead, and that he would have pleasure in carrying on the work of destruction and affliction in the ruins of the grave. After the most careful examination which I have been able to give of this difficult passage, it seems probable to me that the following is the correct sense.

Job means to state a general and important principle - that there was rest in the grave. He said he knew that God would bring him down there, but that would be a state of repose. The hand of God producing pain, would not reach there, nor would the sorrows experienced in this world be felt there, provided there had been a praying life. Notwithstanding all his afflictions, therefore, and his certain conviction that he would die, he had unwavering confidence in God. Agreeably to this, the following paraphrase will convey the true sense. "I know that he will bring me to the grave. Nevertheless (אך 'ak), over the ruins (בעי be'îy) - of my body, the ruins in the grave - "he will not stretch out his hand" - to afflict me there or to pursue those who lie there with calamity and judgment; if in his destruction (בפידו bepîydô) - in the destruction or desolation which God brings upon people - among them (להן lâhên) - among those who are thus consigned to the ruins of the grave - there is prayer (שׁוע shûa'); if there has been supplication offered to him, or a cry for mercy has gone up before him." This paraphrase embraces every word of the original; saves the necessity of attempting to change the text, as has been often done, and gives a meaning which accords with the scope of the passage, and with the uniform belief of

Job, that God would ultimately vindicate him, and show that he himself was right in his government.

Verse 25

Did not I weep … - *Job here appeals to his former life, and says that it had been a characteristic of his life to manifest compassion to the afflicted and the poor. His object in doing this is, evidently, to show how remarkable it was that he was so much afflicted. "Did I deserve," the sense is, "such a hard lot? Has it been brought on me by my own fault, or as a punishment for a life where no compassion was shown to others?" So far from it, he says, that his whole life had been distinguished for tender compassion for those in distress and want.*

In trouble - *Margin, as in Hebrew, hard of day. So we say, "a man has a hard time of it," or has a hard lot.*

Verse 26

When I looked for good - *When I supposed that respect would be shown me; or when I looked forward to an honored old age. I expected to be made happy and prosperous through life, as the result of my uprightness and benevolence; but, instead of that, calamity came and swept all my comforts away. He experienced the instability which most people are called to experience, and the divine dealings with him showed that no reliance could be placed on confident plans of happiness in this life.*

Verse 27

My bowels boiled - *Or rather, My bowels boil - for he refers to his present circumstances, and not to the past. It is clear that by this phrase he designs to describe deep affliction. The bowels, in the Scriptures, are represented as the seat of the affections. By this is meant the upper bowels, or the region of the heart and the lungs. The reason is, that deep emotions of the mind are felt there. The heart beats quick; or it is heavy and pained; or it seems to melt within us in the exercise of pity or compassion; compare the notes at Isaiah 16:11. The idea here is, that the seat of sorrow and of grief was affected by his calamities. Nor was the feeling slight. His emotions he compared with agitated, boiling water. It is possible that there is an allusion here to the inflammatory nature of his disease, producing internal heat and pain; but it is more probable that he refers to the mental anguish which he endured.*

The days of affliction prevented me - *literally, "have anticipated me" - for so the word prevent was formerly used, and so it is uniformly used in the Bible; see the notes at Job 3:12; compare Psalm 59:10; lxxix. 8; Psalm 88:13; Psalm 119:148; 1 Thessalonians 4:15. There is in the Hebrew word (קדם qâdam) the idea that days of anguish came in an unexpected manner, or that they anticipated the fulfillment of his plans. All his schemes and hopes of life had been anticipated by these overwhelming sorrows.*

Verse 28

I went mourning - *Or rather, "I go," in the present tense, for he is now referring to his present calamities, and not to what was past. The word rendered "mourning," however (קדר qâdar), means here rather to be dark, dingy, tanned. It literally means to be foul or turbid, like a torrent, Job 6:16; then to go about in filthy garments, as they do who mourn, Job 5:11; Jeremiah 14:2; then to be dusky, or of a dark color, or to become dark. Thus, it is applied to the sun and moon becoming dark in an eclipse, or when covered with clouds, Jeremiah 4:28; Joel 2:10; Joel 3:15; Micah 3:6. Here it refers to the fact that, by the mere force of his disease, his skin had become dark and swarthy, though he had not been exposed to the burning rays of the sun. The wrath of God had burned upon him, and he had become black under it. Jerome, however, renders it moerens, mourning. The Septuagint, "I go groaning (* στένων *stenōn) without restraint, or limit" -* ἄνευ φιμοῦ *aneu fimou The Chaldee translates it* אוכם*, "black."*

Without the sun - *Without being exposed to the sun; or without the agency of the sun. Though not exposed, he had become as dark as if he had been a day-laborer exposed to a burning sun.*

I stood up - *Or, I stand up.*

And cried in the congregation - *I utter my cries in the congregation, or when surrounded by the assembled people. Once I stood up to counsel them, and they hung upon my lips for advice; now I stand up only to weep over my accumulated calamities. This indicates the great change which had come upon him, and the depth of his sorrows. A man will weep readily in private; but he will be slow to do it, if he can avoid it, when surrounded by a multitude.*

Verse 29

I am a brother to dragons - *That is, my loud complaints and cries resemble the doleful screams of wild animals, or of the most frightful monsters. The word "brother" is often used in this sense, to denote*

similarity in any respect. The word "dragons" here (תנין tannîyn), denotes properly a sea-monster, a great fish, a crocodile; or the fancied animal with wings called a dragon; see the notes at Isaiah 13:22. Gesenius, Umbreit, and Noyes, render this word here jackals - an animal between a dog and a fox, or a wolf and a fox; an animal that abounds in deserts and solitudes, and that makes a doleful cry in the night. So the Syriac renders it an animal resembling a dog; a wild dog. Castell. This idea agrees with the scope of the passage better than the common reference to a sea-monster or a crocodile. "The Deeb, or Jackal," says Shaw, "is of a darker color than the fox, and about the same bigness. It yelps every night about the gardens and villages, feeding upon roots, fruit, and carrion." Travels, p. 247, Ed. Oxford, 1738. That some wild animal, distinguished for a mournful noise, or howl, is meant, is evident; and the passage better agrees with the description of a jackal than the hissing of a serpent or the noise of the crocodile. Bochart supposes that the allusion is to dragons, because they erect their heads, and their jaws are drawn open, and they seem to be complaining against God on account of their humble and miserable condition. Taylor (Concord.) supposes it means jackals or thoes, and refers to the following places where the word may be so used; Psalm 44:19; Isaiah 13:22; Isaiah 34:13; Isaiah 35:7; Isaiah 43:20; Jeremiah 11:11; Jeremiah 10:22; Jeremiah 49:33; Jeremiah 51:37; Lamentations 4:3; Micah 1:8; Malachi 1:3.

And a companion to owls - *Margin, ostriches. The word companion here is used in a sense similar to brother in the other member of the parallelism, to denote resemblance. The Hebrew, here rendered owls, is, literally, daughters of answering, or clamor - בנות יענה benôth yaʿănâh The name is given on account of the plaintive and mournful cry which is made. Bochart. Gesenius supposes, however, that it is on account of its greediness and gluttony. The name "daughters of the ostrich." denotes properly the female ostrich. The phrase is, however, put for the ostrich of both sexes in many places; see Gesenius on the word יענה yaʿănâh compare the notes at Isaiah 13:21. For a full examination of the meaning of the phrase, see Bochart, Hieroz. P. ii. L. 2. cap. xiv. pp. 218-231; see also Job 39:13-17. There can be little doubt that the ostrich is here intended, and Job means to say that his mourning resembled the doleful noise made by the ostrich in the lonely desert. Shaw, in his Travels, says that during the night "they (the ostriches) make very doleful and hideous noises; which would sometimes be*

like the roaring of a lion; at other times it would bear a nearer resemblance to the hoarser voice of other quadrupeds, particularly of the bull and the ox. I have often heard them groan as if they were in the greatest agonies."

Verse 30

My skin is black upon me; - *see Job 30:28. It had become black by the force of the disease.*

My bones are burnt with heat - *The bones, in the Scriptures, are often represented as the seat of pain. The disease of Job seems to have pervaded the whole body. If it was the elephantiasis (see the notes at Job 2:7-8), these effects would be naturally produced.*

Verse 31

My harp also is turned to mourning - *What formerly gave cheerful sounds, now gives only notes of plaintiveness and lamentation. The harp was probably an instrument originally designed to give sounds of joy. For a description of it, see the notes at Isaiah 5:12.*

And my organ - *The form of what is here called the organ, is not certainly known. The word עגב ʿûgâb is doubtless from עגב ʿâgab "to breathe, to blow"; and most probably the instrument hero intended was the pipe. For a description of it, see the notes at Isaiah 5:12. This instrument, also, was played, as would appear, on joyous occasions, but Job now says that it was turned to grief. All that had been joyous with him had fled. His honor was taken away; his friends were gone; they who had treated him with reverence now stood at a distance, or treated him with contempt; his health was departed, and his former appearance, indicating a station of affluence, was changed for the dark complexion produced by disease, and the instruments of joyousness now gave forth only notes of sorrow.*

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 31

Verse 1

I made a covenant with mine eyes - The first virtue of his private life to which Job refers is chastity. Such was his sense of the importance of this, and of the danger to which man was exposed, that he had solemnly resolved not to think upon a young female. The phrase here, "I made a covenant with mine eyes," is poetical, meaning that he solemnly resolved. A covenant is of a sacred and binding nature; and the strength of his resolution was as great as if he had made a solemn compact. A covenant or compact was usually made by slaying an animal in sacrifice, and the compact was ratified over the animal that was slain, by a kind of imprecation that if the compact was violated the same destruction might fall on the violators which fell on the head of the victim. This idea of cutting up a victim on occasion of making a covenant, is retained in most languages. So the Greek ὅρκια τέμνειν, πέμνἔιν σπονδάς *horkia temnein temnein spondas* and the Latin *icere foedus* - to strike a league, in allusion to the striking down, or slaying of an animal on the occasion. And so the Hebrew, as in the place before us, כרת ברית *berîyth kârath* - to cut a covenant, from cutting down, or cutting in pieces the victim over which the covenant was made; see this explained at length in the notes at Hebrews 9:16. By the language here, Job means that he had resolved, in the most solemn manner, that he would not allow his eyes or thoughts to endanger him by improperly contemplating a woman.

Why then should I think upon a maid - Upon a virgin - על־בתולה *ʿal - bethûlâh* compare Proverbs 6:25, "Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids;" see, also, the fearful and solemn declaration of the Saviour in Matthew 5:28. There is much emphasis in the expression used here by Job. He does not merely say that he had not thought in that manner, but that the thing was morally impossible that he should have done it. Any charge of that kind, or any suspicion of it, he would repel with indignation. His purpose to lead a pure life, and to keep a pure heart, had been so settled, that it was impossible that he could have offended in that respect. His purpose, also, not to think on this subject, showed the extent of the restriction imposed on himself. It was not merely his intention to lead a chaste life, and to avoid open sin, but it was to maintain a pure heart, and not to suffer the mind to become corrupted by dwelling on impure images, or indulging in unholy desires. This strongly

shows Job‘s piety and purity of heart, and is a beautiful illustration of patriarchal religion. We may remark here, that if a man wishes to maintain purity of life, he must make just such a covenant as this with himself - one so sacred, so solemn, so firm, that he will not suffer his mind for a moment to harbor an improper thought. “The very passage of an impure thought through the mind leaves pollution behind it;” and the outbreaking crimes of life are just the result of allowing the imagination to dwell on impure images. As the eye is the great source of danger (compare Matthew 5:28; 2 Peter 2:14), there should be a solemn purpose that that should be pure, and that any sacrifice should be made rather than allow indulgence to a wanton gaze: compare Mark 9:47. No man was ever too much guarded on this subject; no one ever yet made too solemn a covenant with his eyes, and with his whole soul to be chaste.

Verse 2

For what portion of God is there from above? - Or, rather, “What portion should I then have from God who reigns above?” Job asks with emphasis, what portion or reward he should expect from God who reigns on high, if he had not made such a covenant with his eyes, and if he had given the reins to loose and wanton thoughts? This question he himself answers in the following verse, and says, that he could have expected only destruction from the Almighty.

Verse 3

Is not destruction to the wicked? - That is, Job says that he was well aware that destruction would overtake the wicked, and that if he had given indulgence to impure desires he could have looked for nothing else. Well knowing this, he says, he had guarded himself in the most careful manner from sin, and had labored with the greatest assiduity to keep his eyes and his heart pure.

And a strange punishment - - ונכר *weneker* The word used here, means literally strangeness - a strange thing, something with which we were unacquainted. It is used here evidently in the sense of a strange or unusual punishment; something which does not occur in the ordinary course of events. The sense is, that for the sin here particularly referred to, God would interpose to inflict vengeance in a manner such as did not occur in the ordinary dealings of his providence. There would be some punishment adopted especially to this sin, and which would mark it with his special displeasure. Has it not been so in all ages? The Vulgate renders it, *alienatio*,

and the Septuagint translates it in a similar manner - ἀπαλλοτρίωσις *apallotriōsis* - and they seem to have understood it as followed by entire alienation from God; an idea which would be every where sustained by a reference to the history of the sin referred to by Job. There is no sin that so much poisons all the fountains of pure feeling in the soul, and none that will so certainly terminate in the entire wreck of character.

Verse 4

Doth he not see my ways? - This either means that God was a witness of all that he did - his thoughts, words, and deeds, and would punish him if he had given indulgence to improper feelings and thoughts; or that since God saw all his thoughts, he could boldly appeal to him as a witness of his innocence in this matter, and in proof that his life and heart were pure. Rosenmuller adopts the latter interpretation; Herder seems to incline to the former. Umbreit renders it, "God himself must be a witness that I speak the truth." It is not easy to determine which is the true meaning. Either of them will accord well with the scope of the passage.

Verse 5

If I have walked with vanity - This is the second specification in regard to his private deportment. He says that his life had been sincere, upright, honest. The word vanity here is equivalent to falsehood, for so the parallelism demands, and so the word (שׁוא *shâv'*) is often used; Psalm 12:3; Psalm 41:7; Exodus 23:1; Deuteronomy 5:20; compare Isa, Deuteronomy 1:13. The meaning of Job here is, that he had been true and honest. In his dealings with others he had not defrauded them; he had not misrepresented things; he had spoken the exact truth, and had done that which was without deception or guile.

If my foot hath hasted to deceit - That is, if I have gone to execute a purpose of deceit or fraud. He had never, on seeing an opportunity where others might be defrauded, hastened to embrace it. The Septuagint renders this verse, "If I have walked with scoffers - μετα γελοιαστῶν *meta geloiastōn* - and if my foot has hastened to deceit."

Verse 6

Let me be weighed in an even balance - Margin, him weigh me in balances of justice. That is, let him ascertain exactly my character, and treat me accordingly. If on trial it be found that I am guilty in this respect, I consent to be punished accordingly. Scales or balances are often used as emblematic of justice. Many suppose, however, that this verse is a

parenthesis, and that the imprecation in Job 31:8, relates to Job 31:5, as well as to Job 31:7. But most probably the meaning is, that he consented to have his life tried in this respect in the most exact and rigid manner, and was willing to abide the result. A man may express such a consciousness of integrity in his dealings with others, without any improper self-reliance or boasting. It may be a simple fact of which he may be certain, that he has never meant to defraud any man.

Verse 7

If my step hath turned out of the way - The path in which I ought to walk - the path of virtue.

And mine heart walked after mine eyes - That is, if I have coveted what my eyes have beheld; or if I have been determined by the appearance of things rather than by what is right, I consent to bear the appropriate punishment.

And if any blot hath cleaved to mine hands - To have clean hands is emblematic of innocence; Job 17:9; Psalm 24:4; compare Matthew 27:24. The word blot here means stain, blemish: Daniel 1:4. The idea is, that his hands were pure, and that he had not been guilty of any act of fraud or violence in depriving others of their property.

Verse 8

Then let me sow, and let another eat - This is the imprecation which he invokes, in case he had been guilty in this respect. He consented to sow his fields, and let others enjoy the harvest. The expression used here is common in the Scriptures to denote insecurity of property or calamity in general; see Leviticus 26:16: "And ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it;" compare Deuteronomy 28:30; Amos 9:13-14.

Yea, let my offspring be rooted out - Or, rather, "Let what I plant be rooted up." So Umbreit, Noyes, Schultens, Rosenmuller, Herder, and Lee understand it. There is no evidence that he here alludes to his children, for the connection does not demand it, nor does the word used here require such an interpretation. The word צאצאים *tse'ĕtsâ'iym* - means properly shoots; that is, what springs out of anything - as the earth, or a tree - from יצא *yâtsâ'* - to go out, to go forth. It is applied to the productions of the earth in Isaiah 42:5; Isaiah 34:1, and to children or posterity, in Isaiah 22:24; Isaiah 61:9; Isaiah 65:23; Job 5:25; Job 21:8. Here it refers evidently to the productions of the earth; and the idea is, that if he had been guilty of

dishonesty or fraud in his dealings, he wished that all that he had sowed should be rooted up.

Verse 9

If mine heart have been deceived by a woman - If I have been enticed by her beauty. The word rendered "deceived" פתה *pâthâh* means to open, to expand. It is then applied to that which is open or ingenuous; to that which is unsuspicious - like a youth; and thence is used in the sense of being deceived, or enticed; Deuteronomy 11:16; Exodus 22:16; Proverbs 1:10; Proverbs 16:29. The word "woman" here probably means a married woman, and stands opposed to "virgin" in ver. 1. The crime which he here disclaims is adultery, and he says that his heart had never been allured from conjugal fidelity by the charms or the arts of a woman.

Or if I have laid wait at my neighbor's door - That is, to watch when he would be absent from home. This was a common practice with those who were guilty of the crime referred to here; compare Proverbs 7:8-9.

Verse 10

Then let my wife grined unto another - Let her be subjected to the deepest humiliation and degradation. Probably Job could not have found language which would have more emphatically expressed his sense of the enormity of this crime, or his perfect consciousness of innocence. The last thing which a man would imprecate on himself, would be that which is specified in this verse. The word "grind" (טחן *ṭâchan*) means to crush, to beat small; then to grind, as in a handmill; Judges 16:21; Numbers 11:8. This was usually the work of females and slaves; see the notes at Isaiah 47:2. The meaning here is, "Let my wife be the mill-wench to another; be his abject slave, and be treated by him with the deepest indignity." This passage has been understood by many in a different sense, which the parallelism might seem to demand, but which is not necessarily the true interpretation. The sense referred to is this: *Cogatur uxor mea ad patiendum alius concubitum, ut verbum molendi hoc loco eodem sensu sumatur, quo non raro a Latinis usurpatur ut in illo Horatii* (Satyr. L. i. Ecl. ii. verse 35), *alienas permolere uxores*.

In this sense the rabbinic writers understand Judges 16:21 and Lamentations 5:13. So also the Chaldee renders the phrase before us (חורן תשמשעם אנתתי) *coeat cure alio uxor mea*; and so the Septuagint seems to have understood it - ἀρέσαι ἄρα κὰι ἡ γυνή μου ἑτέρῳ *aresai ara kai hē gunē mou heterō* But probably Job meant merely that his wife should be

reduced to the condition of servitude, and be compelled to labor in the employ of another. We may find here an answer to the opinion of Prof. Lee (in his notes at Job 31:1), that the wife of Job was at this time dead, and that he was meditating the question about marrying again. May we not here also find an instance of the fidelity and forgiving spirit of Job toward a wife who is represented in the early part of this book as manifesting few qualities which could win the heart of an husband? There is no expression of impatience at her temper and her words on the part of Job, and he here speaks of it as the most serious of all calamities that could happen; the most painful of all punishments, that that same wife should be reduced to a condition of servitude and degradation.

Verse 11

For this is an heinous crime - This expresses Job‘s sense of the enormity of such an offence. He felt that there was no palliation for it; he would in no way, and on no pretence, attempt to vindicate it.

An iniquity to be punished by the judges - A crime for the judges to determine on and decide. The sins which Job had specified before this, were those of the heart; but here he refers to a crime against society - an offence which deserved the interposition of the magistrate. It may be observed here, that adultery has always been regarded as a sin “to be punished by the judges.” In most countries it has been punished with death; see the notes at John 8:5.

Verse 12

For it is a fire that consumeth to destruction - This may mean that such an offence would be a crime that would provoke God to send destruction, like a consuming fire upon the offender (Rosenmuller and Noyes), or more likely it is designed to be descriptive of the nature of the sin itself. According to this, the meaning is, that indulgence in this sin tends wholly to ruin and destroy a man. It is like a consuming fire, which sweeps away everything before it. It is destructive to the body, the morals, the soul. Accordingly, it may be remarked that there is no one vice which pours such desolation through the soul as licentiousness. See Rush on the Diseases of the Mind. It corrupts and taints all the fountains of morals, and utterly annihilates all purity of the heart. An intelligent gentleman, and a careful observer of the state of things in society, once remarked to me, that on coming to the city of Philadelphia, it was his fortune to be in the same

boarding-house with a number of young men, nearly all of whom were known to him to be of licentious habits. He has lived to watch their course of life; and he remarked, that there was not one of them who did not ultimately show that he was essentially corrupt and unprincipled in every department of morals. There is not any one propensity of man that spreads such a withering influence over the soul as this; and, however it may be accounted for, it is certain that indulgence in this vice is a certain evidence that the whole soul is corrupt, and that no reliance is to be placed on the man‘s virtue in any respect, or in reference to any relation of life.

And would root out all mine increase - By its desolating effects on my heart and life. The meaning is, that it would utterly ruin him; compare Luke 15:13, Luke 15:30. How many a wretched sensualist can bear testimony to the truth of this statement! How many a young man has been wholly ruined in reference to his worldly interests, as well as in reference to his soul, by this vice compare Proverbs 7: No young man could do a better service to himself than to commit the whole of that chapter to memory, and so engrave it on his soul that it never could be forgotten.

Verse 13

If I did despise the cause of my man-servant - Job turns to another subject, on which he claimed that his life had been upright. It was in reference to the treatment of his servants. The meaning here is, “I never refused to do strict justice to my servants when they brought their cause before me, or when they complained that my dealings with them had been severe.”

When they contended with me - That is, when they brought their cause before me, and complained that I had not provided for them comfortably, or that their task had been too hard. If in any respect they supposed they had cause of complaint, I listened to them attentively, and endeavored to do right. He did not take advantage of his sower to oppress them, nor did he suppose that they had no rights of any kind. It is evident, from this, that Job had those who sustained to him the relation of servants; but whether they were slaves, or hired servants, is not known. The language here will agree with either supposition, though it cannot be doubted that slavery was known as early as the time of Job. There is no certain evidence that he held any slaves, in the proper sense of the term, nor that he regarded slavery as right; compare the notes at Job 1:3. He here refers to the numerous persons that

had been in his employ in the days of his prosperity, and says that he had never taken advantage of his power or rank to do them wrong.

Verse 14

What then shall I do when God riseth up? - That is, when he rises up to pronounce sentence upon people, or to execute impartial justice. Job admits that if he had done injustice to a servant, he would have reason to dread the divine indignation, and that he could have no excuse. "I tremble," said President Jefferson, speaking of slavery in the United States "when I remember that God is just!" Notes on Virginia.

And when he visiteth - When he comes to inspect human conduct. Umbreit renders it "when he punishes." The word visit is often used in this sense in the Scriptures.

Verse 15

Did not he that made me in the womb make him? - Had we not one and the same Creator, and have we not consequently the same nature? We may observe in regard to this sentiment, (1.) That it indicates a very advanced state of view in regard to man. The attempt has been always made by those who wish to tyrannize over others, or who aim to make slaves of others, to show that they are of a different race, and that in the design for which they were made, they are wholly inferior. Arguments have been derived from their complexion, from their supposed inferiority of intellect, and the deep degradation of their condition, often little above that of brutes, to prove that they were originally inferior to the rest of mankind. On this the plea has been often urged, and oftener felt than urged, that it is right to reduce them to slavery. Since this feeling so early existed, and since there is so much that may be plausibly said in defense of it, it shows that Job had derived his views from something more than the speculations of people, and the desire of power, when he says that he regarded all people as originally equal, and as having the same Creator. It is in fact a sentiment which people have been practically very reluctant to believe, and which works its way very slowly even yet on the earth; compare Acts 17:26. (2.) This sentiment, if fairly embraced and carried out, would soon destroy slavery everywhere.

If people felt that they were reducing to bondage those who were originally on a level with themselves - made by the same God, with the same faculties, and for the same end; if they felt that in their very origin, in their nature, there was that which could not be made mere property, it would soon abolish the whole system. It is kept up only where people

endeavor to convince themselves that there is some original inferiority in the slave which makes it proper that he should be reduced to servitude and be held as property. But as soon as there can be diffused abroad the sentiment of Paul, that "God hath made of one blood all nations of men," Acts 17:26, or the sentiment of the patriarch Job, that "the same God made us and them in the womb," that moment the shackles of the slave will fall, and he will be free. Hence it is apparent, how Christianity, that carries this lesson on its fore-front, is the grand remedy for the evils of slavery, and needs only to be universally diffused to bring the system to an end.

And did not one fashion us in the womb - Margin, Or, did he not fashion us in one womb? The Hebrew will bear either construction, but the parallelism rather requires that given in the text, and most expositors agree in this interpretation. The sentiment is, whichever interpretation be adopted, that they had a common origin; that God would watch over them alike as his children; and that, therefore, they had equal rights.

Verse 16

If I have withheld the poor from their desire - Job now turns to another class of virtues, regarded also as of great importance in the patriarchal ages, kindness to the poor and the afflicted; to the fatherless and the widow. He appeals to his former life on this subject; affirms that he had a good conscience in the recollection of his dealings with them, and impliedly declares that it could not have been for any deficiency in the exercise of these virtues that his calamities had come upon him. The meaning here is, that he had not denied to the poor their wish. If they had come and desired bread of him, he had not withheld it; see Job 22:7.

Or caused the eyes of the widow to fail - That is, I have not frustrated her hopes, or disappointed her expectations, when she has looked intently upon me, and desired my aid. The "failing of the eyes" refers to failing of the object of their expectation; or the expression means that she had not looked to him in vain; see Job 11:20.

Verse 17

Or have eaten my morsel myself alone - If I have not imparted what I had though ever so small, to others. This was in accordance with the Oriental laws of hospitality. It is regarded as a fixed law among the Arabians, that the guest shall always be helped first, and to that which is best; and no matter how needy the family may be, or how much distressed with hunger, the settled laws of hospitality demand that the stranger-guest

shall have the first and best portion. Dr. Robinson, in his "Biblical Researches," gives an amusing instance of the extent to which this law is carried, and the sternness with which it is executed among the Arabs. In the journey from Suez to Mount Sinai, intending to furnish a supper for the Arabs in their employ, he and his fellow-travelers had bought a kid, and led it along to the place of their encampment. At night the kid was killed and roasted, and the Arabs were anticipating a savory supper.

But those of whom they had bought the kid, learned in some way that they were to encamp near, and naturally concluded that the kid was bought to be eaten, and followed them to the place of encampment, to the number of five or six persons. "Now the stern law of Arabian hospitality demands, that whenever a guest is present at a meal, whether there be much or little, the first and best portion must be laid before the stranger. In this instance the five or six guests attained their object, and had not only the selling of the kid, but also the eating of it, while our poor Arabs, whose mouths had long been watering with expectation, were forced to take up with the fragments." Vol. 1:118. There is often, indeed, much ostentation in the hospitality of the Orientals, but the law is stern and inflexible. "No sooner," says Shaw (Travels, vol. 1:p. 20), "was our food prepared, than one of the Arabs, having placed himself on the highest spot of ground in the neighborhood, called out thrice with a loud voice to all their brethren, the sons of the faithful, to come and partake of it; though none of them were in view, or perhaps within a hundred miles of them." The great law of hospitality Job says he had carefully observed, and had not withheld what he had from the poor and the fatherless.

Verse 18

For from my youth he was brought up with me - This verse is usually regarded as a parenthesis, though very various expositions have been given of it. Some have understood it as denying that he had in any way neglected the widow and the fatherless, and affirming that the orphan had always, even from his youth, found a father in him, and the widow a guide. Others, as our translators, suppose that it is a parenthesis thrown in to indicate his general course of life, although the imprecation which he makes on himself, if he had neglected the widow and the orphan, is found in Job 31:22. Luther reads the two previous verses as questions, and this as an answer to them, and so also do Rosenmuller and Noyes. Umbreit regards this verse as a

parenthesis. This is probably to be considered as the correct interpretation, for this better agrees with the Hebrew than the other proposed. It implies a denial of having neglected the widow and the orphan, but the full expression of his abhorrence of a charge of having done so, is to be found in the strong language in Job 31:22. The unusual Hebrew word גדלני *gâdalniy* probably stands for עמי גדל *gâdal ʿimy* - "he was brought up with me." This form of the word does not occur elsewhere.

As with a father - That is, he always found in me one who treated him as a father. The meaning is, that he had always had under his care those who were orphans; that from his very youth they had been accustomed to look up to him as a father; and that they had never been disappointed in him. It is the language of one who seems to have been born to rank, and who had the means of benefiting others, and who had done it all his life. This accords also with the Oriental notions of kindness - requiring that it should be shown especially to the widow and the fatherless.

I have guided her - Margin, "That is, the widow." The meaning is, that he had been her counsellor and friend.

From my mother's womb - This cannot be literally true, but it means that he had done it from early life; or as we would say, he had always done it.

Verse 19

If I have seen any perish … - He turns to another virtue of the same general class - that of providing for the poor. The meaning is clear, that he had always assisted the poor and needy.

Verse 20

If his loins have not blessed me - This is a personification by which the part of the body that had been clothed by the benevolence of Job, is supposed to speak and render him thanks.

Verse 21

If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless - That is, if I have taken advantage of my rank, influence, and power, to oppress and injure him.

When I saw my help in the gate - The gate of a city was a place of concourse; a place where debates were held, and where justice was administered. Job speaks here of that part of his life when he was clothed with authority as a magistrate, or when he had power and influence as a public man. He says that he had never abused this power to oppress the

fatherless. He had never taken advantage of his influence to injure them, because he saw he had a strong party under his control, or because he had power enough to carry his point, or because he had those under him who would sustain him in an oppressive measure. This is spoken with reference to the usually feeble and defenseless condition of the orphan, as one who is deprived of his natural protector and who is, therefore, liable to be wronged by those in power.

Verse 22

Then let mine arm - The strong language which Job uses here, shows his consciousness of innocence, and his detestation of the offences to which he here refers, Job 31:16-22. The word rendered "arm" here (כתף *kâthêph*) means properly the shoulder. Isaiah 46:7; Isaiah 49:22; Numbers 7:9; compare the notes at Isaiah 11:14. There is no instance, it is believed, unless this is one, in which it means arm, and the meaning here is, that he wished, if he had been guilty, his shoulder might separate from the blade. So Herder, Rosenmuller, Umbreit, and Noyes render it; and so the Vulgate and the Septuagint.

From my shoulder-blade - The scapula - the flat bone to which the upper arm is attached. The wish of Job is, that the shoulder might separate from that, and of course the arm would be useless. Such a strong imprecation implies a firm consciousness of innocence.

And mine arm - The word arm here denotes the forearm - the arm from the elbow to the fingers.

From the bone - Margin, "the chanelbone." Literally, "from the reed" - מקנה *miqâneh* Umbreit renders it, Schneller als ein Rohr- quicker than a reed. The word קנה *qâneh* means properly a reed, cane, *calamus* (see the notes at Isaiah 43:24), and is here applied to the upper arm, or arm above the elbow, from its resemblance to a reed or cane. It is applied, also, to the arm or branch of a chandelier, or candlestick, Exodus 25:31, and to the rod or beam of a balance, Isa. xlvi. 6. The meaning here is, that he wished that his arm should be broken at the elbow, or the forearm be separated from the upper arm, if he were guilty of the sins which he had specified. There is allusion, probably, and there is great force and propriety in the allusion, to what he had said in Job 31:2 l: "If his arm had been lifted up against an orphan, he prayed that it might fall powerless."

Verse 23

For destruction from God was a terror to me - The destruction which God would bring upon one who was guilty of the crime here specified, awed and restrained me. He was deterred from this crime of oppressing the fatherless by the fear of God. He could have escaped the judgment of people. He had power and influence enough not to dread the penalty of human law. He could have done it in such a way as not to have been arraigned before any earthly tribunal, but he remembered that the eye of God was upon him, and that he was the avenger of the fatherless and the widow.

And by reason of his highness - On account of his majesty, exaltation, glory.

I could not endure - לא אוכל *lo'ûkôl* - I could not; that is, I could not do it. I was so much awed by his majesty; I had such a veneration for him, that I could not be guilty of such an offence.

Verse 24

If I have made gold my hope - That is, if I have put my trust in gold rather than in God; if I have fixed my affections with idolatrous attachment on riches rather than on my Maker. Job here introduces another class of sins, and says that his conscience did not charge him with guilt in respect to them. He had before spoken mainly of social duties, and of his manner of life toward the poor, the needy, the widow, and the orphan. He here turns to the duty which he owed to God, and says that his conscience did not charge him with idolatry in any form. He had indeed been rich, but he had not fixed his affections with idolatrous attachment on his wealth.

Or have said to fine gold - The word used here (כתם *kethem*) is the same which is employed in Job 28:16, to denote the gold of Ophir. It is used to express that which was most pure - from the verb כתם *kâtham* - to hide, to hoard, and then denoting that which was hidden, hoarded, precious. The meaning is, that he had not put his trust in that which was most sought after, and which was deemed of the highest value by people.

Verse 25

If I have rejoiced because my wealth was great - That is, if I have rejoiced as if I might now confide in it, or put my trust in it. He had not found his principal joy in his property, nor had he attempted to find in that the happiness which he ought to seek in God.

And because mine hand had gotten much - Margin, found. Prof. Lee translates this, “When as a mighty man my hand prevailed.” But the usual

interpretation is given in our translation, and this accords better with the connection. The word found better expresses the sense of the Hebrew than gotten, but the sense is not materially varied.

Verse 26

If I beheld the sun when it shined - Margin, light. The Hebrew word (אור *'ôr*) properly means light, but that it here means the sun is manifest from the connection, since the moon occurs in the parallel member of the sentence. Why the word light is used here rather than sun, can be only a matter of conjecture. It may be because the worship to which Job refers was not primarily and originally that of the sun, the moon, or the stars, but of light as such, and that he mentions this as the essential feature of the idolatry which he had avoided. The worship of light in general soon became in fact the worship of the sun - as that is the principal source of light. There is no doubt that Job here refers to idolatrous worship, and the passage is particularly valuable, as it describes one of the forms of idolatry then existing, and refers to some of the customs then prevalent in such worship.

The word light is used, also, to denote the sun in Job 37:2 l; compare Isaiah 18:4; Habakkuk 3:4. So, also, Homer speaks of the sun not only as λαμπρὸν φάος ἠελίοιο *lampron faos hēelioio* - bright light of the sun, but simply as φάος *faos* - light. Odyssey r. 335. The worship here referred to is that of the heavenly bodies, and it is known that this existed in the early periods of the world, and was probably one of the first forms of idolatry. It is expressly mentioned by Ezekiel as prevailing in his time, Ezekiel 8:16, "And they worshipped the sun toward the east." That it prevailed in the time of Moses, is evident from the caution which he gives in Deuteronomy 4:19; compare 2 Kings 23:5. It is well known, also, that the worship of the heavenly bodies was common in the East, and particularly in Chaldea - near to which Job is supposed to have lived, and it was a remarkable fact that one who was surrounded with idolaters of this description had been enabled always to keep himself pure.

The principle on which this worship was founded was, probably, that of gratitude. People adored the objects from which they derived important benefits, as well as deprecated the wrath of those which were supposed to exert a malignant influence. But among the objects from which people derived the greatest benefits were the sun and moon, and hence, they were objects of worship. The stars, also, were supposed to exert important

influences over people, and hence, they also early became objects of adoration. An additional reason for the worship of the heavenly bodies may have been, that light was a natural and striking symbol of the divinity, and those shining bodies may have been at first honored as representatives of the Deity. The worship of the heavenly bodies was called Sabaism, from the Hebrew word צבא *tsâbâ'* - host, or army - as being the worship of the hosts of heaven.

It is supposed to have had its origin in Persia, and to have spread thence to the West. That the moon was worshipped as a deity, is abundantly proved by the testimony of the ancient writers. Hottinger, Hist. Orient. Lib. 1:c. 8, speaking of the worship of the Zabaists, adduces the testimony of Ali Said Vaheb, saying that the first day of the week was devoted to the sun; the second to the moon; the third to Mars, etc. Maimonides says that the Zabaists worshipped the moon, and that they also said that Adam led mankind to that species of worship. Mor. Nev. P. 3: Clemens Alexandr. says (in Protrepto) κὰι προσεκίνησαν ἥλιον ὡς ἰνδοὶ κὰι σελήνην ὡς φρύγες *kai prosekinēsan hēlion hōs indoi kai selēnēn hōs fruges* Curtius says of the people of Lybia (Liv. iv. in Melp.) θυὸνσι δὲ ἡλίῳ κὰι οελήνη μόυνοισι *thuousi de hēliō kai oelēnē mounoisi* Caesar says of the Germans, that they worshipped the moon, Lib. 6: de B. G. p. 158. The Romans had a temple consecrated to the moon, Taci. Ann. Lib. 15: Livy, L. 40: See Geor. Frid. Meinhardi Diss. de Selenolatria, in Ugolin‘s Thesau. Sacr. Tom. 23:p. 831ff. Indeed, we have a proof of the worship of the moon in our own language, in the name given to the second day of the week - Monday, i. e. moon-day, implying that it was formerly regarded as devoted to the worship of the moon. The word “beheld” in the passage before us must be understood in an idolatrous sense. “If I have looked upon the sun as an object of worship.” Schultens explains this passage as referring to splendid and exalted characters, who, on account of their brilliance and power, may be compared to the sun at noon-day, and to the moon in its brightness. But the more obvious and common reference is to the sun and moon as objects of worship.

Or the moon walking in brightness - Margin, bright. The word “walking,” here applied to the moon, may refer either to its course through the heavens, or it may mean, as Dr. Good supposes, advancing to her full; “brightly, or splendidly progressive.” The Septuagint renders the passage

strangely enough. “Do we not see the shining sun eclipsed? and the moon changing? For it is not in them.”

Verse 27

And my heart hath been secretly enticed - That is, away from God, or led into sin.

Or my mouth hath kissed my hand - Margin, my hand hath kissed my mouth. The margin accords with the Hebrew. It was customary in ancient worship to kiss the idol that was worshipped; compare 1 Kings 19:18, “I have left me seven thousand in Israel - and every mouth which hath not kissed him.” See, also, Hosea 13:2. The Muslims at the present day, in their worship at Mecca, kiss the black stone which is fastened in the corner of the Beat Allah, as often as they pass it, in going round the Caaba. If they cannot come near enough to kiss it, they touch it with the hand, and kiss that. An Oriental pays his respects to one of a superior station by kissing his hand and putting it to his forehead. Paxton. See the custom of kissing the hand of a Prince, as it exists in Arabia, described by Niebuhr, Reisebeschreib. 1, S. 414. The custom prevailed, also, among the Romans and Greeks. Thus, Pliny (Hist. Nat. 28:2) says, Inter adorandum dexterarm ad osculum referimus, et totum corpus circumagimus. So Lucian in the book, περὶ ὀρχήτεως *peri orchēseōs* says, “And the Indians, rising early, adore the sun - not as we, kissing the hand - τὴν χείρα κύσαντες *tēn cheira kusantes* - think that our vow is perfect.” The foundation of the custom here alluded to, is the respect and affection which is shown for one by kissing; and as the heavenly bodies which were worshipped were so remote that the worshippers could not have access to them, they expressed their veneration by kissing the hand. Job means to say, that he had never performed an act of homage to the heavenly bodies.

Verse 28

This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judqe - Note Job 31:11. Among the Hebrews idolatry was an offence punishable by death by stoning; Deuteronomy 17:2-7. It is possible, also, that this might have been elsewhere in the patriarchal times a crime punishable in this manner. At all events, Job regarded it as a heinous offence, and one of which the magistrate ought to take cognizance.

For I should have denied the God that is above - The worship of the heavenly bodies would have been in fact the denial of the existence of any

Superior Being. This, in fact, always occurs, for idolaters have no knowledge of the true God.

Verse 29

If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me - Job here introduces another class of offences, of which he says he was innocent. The subject referred to is the proper treatment of those who injure us. In respect to this, he says that he was entirely conscious of freedom from exultation when calamity came upon a foe, and that he had never even wished him evil in his heart. The word "destruction" here, means calamity, disappointment, or affliction of any kind. It had never been pleasant to him to see one who hated him suffer. It is needless to remark how entirely this accords with the New Testament. And it is pleasant to find such a sentiment as this expressed in the early age of the world, and to see how the influence of true religion is at all times the same. The religion of Job led him to act out the beautiful sentiment afterward embodied in the instructions of the Savior, and made binding on all his followers; Matthew 5:44. True religion will lead a man to act out what is embodied in its precepts, whether they are expressed in formal language or not.

Or lifted up myself - Been elated or rejoiced.

When evil found him - When calamity overtook him.

Verse 30

Neither have I suffered my mouth - Margin, as in Hebrew, palate. The word is often used for the mouth in general, and especially as the organ of the voice from the use and importance of the palate in speaking. Proverbs 8:7. "For my palate (חכי *chikiy*) speaketh truth." It is used as the organ of taste, Job 12:11; compare Job 6:30; Psalm 119:103.

By wishing a curse to his soul - It must have been an extraordinary degree of piety which would permit a man to say this with truth, that he had never harbored a wish of injury to an enemy. Few are the people, probably, even now, who could say this, and who are enabled to keep their minds free from every wish that calamities and woes may overtake those who are seeking their hurt. Yet this is the nature of true religion. It controls the heart, represses the angry and revengeful feelings, and creates in the soul an earnest desire for the happiness even of those who injure us.

Verse 31

If the men of my tabernacle - The men of my tent; or those who dwell with me. The reference is doubtless to those who were in his employ, and

who, being constantly with him, had an opportunity to observe his manner of life. On this verse there has been a great variety of exposition, and interpreters are by no means agreed as to its meaning. Herder connects it with the previous verse, and renders it,

"No! my tongue uttered no evil word,
Nor any imprecation against him,
When the men of my tent said,
‹O that we had his flesh, it would satisfy us.'"

That is, though he were the bitterest enemy of my house, and all were in open violence. Noyes translates it,

"Have not the men of my tent exclaimed,
‹Who is there that hath not been satisfied with his meat?'"

Umbreit supposes that it is designed to celebrate the benevolence of Job, and that the meaning is, that all his companions - the inmates of his house - could bear him witness that not one of the poor was allowed to depart without being satisfied with his hospitality. They were abundantly fed, and their needs supplied. The verse is undoubtedly to be regarded as connected, as Ikenius supposes, with the following, and is designed to illustrate the hospitality of Job. His object is to show that those who dwelt with him, and who had every opportunity of knowing all about him, could never say that the stranger was not hospitably entertained. The phrase, "If the men of my tabernacle said not," means, that a case never occurred in which they could not make use of the language which follows, they never could say that the stranger was not hospitably entertained.

Oh that we had - The phrase מי נתן *mîy nâthan* commonly means, "O that" - as the Latin *Utinam* - implying a wish or desire. See Job 19:23; Job 31:35. But here the phrase seems to be used in the sense of "Who will give, or who will show or furnish" (compare Job 14:4); and the sense is, "Who will refer to one instance in which the stranger has not been hospitably entertained?"

Of his flesh! we cannot be satisfied - Or, rather, "Who will refer to an instance in which it can be said that we have not been satisfied from his flesh, that is, from his table, or by his hospitality?" The word flesh here cannot mean, as our translation would seem to imply, the flesh of Job himself, as if it were to be torn and lacerated with a spirit of revenge, but that which his table furnished by a generous hospitality. The Septuagint renders this, "If my maid-servants have often said, O that we had some of

his flesh to eat! while I was living luxuriously." For a great variety of opinions on the passage, see Schultens *in loc*. The above interpretation of Ikenius is the most simple, natural, and obvious of any which have been proposed, and is adopted by Schultens and Rosenmuller.

Verse 32

The stranger did not lodge in the street - This is designed to illustrate the sentiment in the previous verse, and to express his consciousness that he had showed the most generous hospitality.

But I opened my doors to the traveler - Margin, or way. The word used here ארח *'ôrach* means properly way, path, road; but it also denotes those who travel on such a way; see Job 6:19, "The troops of Tema looked," Hebrew ארח תימא *têymâ' 'ôrach* - the ways, or paths of Tema; that is, those who traveled in those paths. Vulgate here, *viatori*. Septuagint, "To everyone that came" - παντί ἐλθόντι *panti elthonti* This was one of the methods of hospitality - the central and crowning virtue among the Arabs to this day, and among the Orientals in all ages. Among the boasts of hospitality, showing the place which this virtue had in their estimation, and the methods by which it was practiced, we may refer to such expressions as the following: "I occupy the public way with my tent;" that is, to every traveler without distinction, my tent is open and my table is spread. "He makes the public path the place for the cords of his tent;" that is, he fixed the pins and cords of his tent in the midst of the public highway, so that every traveler might enter. These examples are quoted by Schultens from the Hamasa. Another beautiful example may be taken from the same collection of Arabic poems. I give the Latin translation of Schultens:

Quam saepe latratum imitanti viatori, cui resonabat echo
Suscitavi ignem, cujus lignum luculentum
Properusque surrexi ad eum, ut praedae mihi loco esset,
Prae metu ne populus mens eum ante me occuparet.

That is, "How often to the traveler, imitating the bark of the dog, and the echo of whose voice was heard, have I kindled a fire, the shining wood of which I quick raised up to him, as one would hasten to the prey, in fear lest someone of my own people should anticipate me in the privileges and rites of hospitality." The allusion to the imitation of the barking of a dog here, refers to the custom of travelers at night, who make this noise when they need a place of rest. This sound is responded to by the dogs which watch around the tents of their masters, and the sound is the signal for a general

rush to show hospitality to the stranger. Burckhardt, speaking of the inhabitants of the Houran - the country east of the Jordan, and south of Damascus, says, “A traveler may alight at any house he pleases; a mat will be immediately spread for him, coffee made, and a breakfast or dinner set before him. In entering a village it has often happened to me, that several persons presented themselves, each begging that I would lodge at his house. It is a point of honor with the host never to receive the smallest return from a guest. Besides the private habitations, which offer to every traveler a secure night‘s shelter, there is in every village the Medhafe of the Sheikh, where all strangers of decent appearance are received and entertained. It is the duty of the Sheikh to maintain this Medhafe, which is like a tavern, with the difference that the host himself pays the bill. The Sheikh has public allowance to defray these expenses, and hence a man of the Houran, intending to travel about for a fortnight never thinks of putting a single para in his pocket; he is sure of being every where well received, and of living better, perhaps, than at his own home.” Travels in Syria, pp. 294,295.

Verse 33

If I covered my transgressions as Adam - That is, if I have attempted to hide or conceal them; if, conscious of guilt, I have endeavored to cloak my sins, and to appear righteous. There has been great variety of opinion about the meaning of this expression. The margin reads it, “After the manner of men.” Luther, renders it, “Have I covered my wickedness as a man” - Habe ich meine Schalkheit wie ein Menseh gedecht. Coverdale, “Have I ever done any wicked deed where through I shamed myself before men.” Herder, “Did I hide my faults like a mean man.” Schultens, “If I have covered my sin as Adam.” The Vulgate, *Quasi homo* - “as a man.” The Septuagint, “If when I sinned unwillingly (ἄκουσίως *akousiōs* - inadvertently, undesignedly) I concealed my sin.” Noyes, “After the manner of men.” Umbreit, Nach Menschenart- “After the manner of men.” Rosenmuller, As Adam. The Chaldee, כאדם, meaning, as Rosenmuller remarks, as Adam; and the Syriac, As men.

The meaning may either be, as people are accustomed to do when they commit a crime - referring to the common practice of the guilty to attempt to cloak their offences, or to the attempt of Adam to hide his sin from his Maker after the fall; Genesis 3:7-8. It is not possible to decide with certainty which is the correct interpretation, for either will accord with the Hebrew. But in favor of the supposition that it refers to the effort of Adam

to conceal his sin, we may remark, (1.) That there can be little or no doubt that that transaction was known to Job by tradition. (2.) it furnished him a pertinent and striking illustration of the point before him. (3.) the illustration is, by supposing that it refers to him, much more striking than on the other supposition. It is true that people often attempt to conceal their guilt, and that it may be set down as a fact very general in its character; but still it is not so universal that there are no exceptions. But here was a specific and well-known case, and one which, as it was the first, so it was the most sad and melancholy instance that had ever occurred of an attempt to conceal guilt. It was not an attempt, to hide it from man - for there was then no other man to witness it; but an attempt to hide it from God. From such an attempt Job says he was free.

By hiding mine iniquity in my bosom - By attempting to conceal it so that others would not know it. Adam attempted to conceal his fault even from God; and it is common with people, when they have done wrong, to endeavor to hide it from others.

Verse 34

Did I fear a great multitude - Our translators have rendered this as if Job meant to say that he had not been deterred from doing what he supposed was right by the fear of others; as if he had been independent, and had done what he knew to be right, undeterred by the fear of popular fury, or the loss of the favor of the great. This version is adopted also by the Vulgate, by Herder, and substantially by Coverdale and Luther. Another interpretation has, however, been proposed, and is adopted by Schultens, Noyes, Good, Umbreit, Dathe, and Scott, which is, that this is to be regarded as an imprecations, or that this is the punishment which he invoked and expected if he had been guilty of the crime which is specified in the previous verses. The meaning then would be "Then let me be confounded before the great multitude! Let the contempt of families cover me with shame! Let me keep silence, and let me never appear abroad!" The Hebrew will admit of either construction, and either of them will accord well with the connection. The latter, however, regarding it as an imprecation, seems to me to be preferable, for two reasons:

(1) It will accord more forcibly with what he had said in the previous verse. The sense then would be, as expressed by Patrick, "If I have studied to appear better than I am, and have not made a free confession, but, like our first parent, have concealed or excused my faults, and, out of self-love,

have hidden mine iniquity, because I dread what the people will say of me, or am terrified by the contempt into which the knowledge of my guilt will bring me with the neighboring families, then am I content my mouth should be stopped, and that I never stir out of my door any more."

(2) This interpretation seems to be required, in order to make a proper close of his remarks. The general course in this chapter has been to specify an offence, and then to utter an imprecation if he had been guilty of it. In the previous verses he had specified crimes of which he had declared himself innocent; but unless this verse be so regarded, there is no invocation of any corresponding punishment if he had been guilty. It seems probable, therefore, that this verse is so to be regarded. According to this, the phrase "Did I fear a great multitude" means, "Then let me be terrified by a multitude - by the opinions of the world, and let this be the punishment of my sin. Since by the fear of others I was led to hide my sin in my bosom, let it be my lot to lose all popular favor, and feel that I am the object of public scorn and contempt!"

Or did the contempt of families terrify me - Let the contempt of families crush me; let me be despised and abhorred by them. If I was led to hide sins in my bosom because I feared them, then let me be doomed to the total loss of their favor, and become wholly the object of their scorn.

That I kept silence - Or let me keep silence as a punishment. That is, let me not be admitted as a counsellor, or allowed to express my sentiments in the public assemblies.

And went not out at the door - That is, "Let me not go out at the door. Let me be confined to my dwelling, and never be allowed to appear in public, to mingle in society, to take part in public affairs - because by the fear of the world I attempted to hide my faults in my bosom. Such a punishment would be appropriate to such an offence. The retribution would be no more than a suitable recompense for such an act of guilt - and I would not shrink from it."

Verse 35

O that one would hear me! - This refers undoubtedly to God. It is, literally, "Who will give to me one hearing me;" and the wish is that which he has so often expressed, that he might get his cause fairly before God. He feels assured that there would be a favorable verdict, if there could be a fair judicial investigation; compare the notes at Job 13:3.

Behold, my desire is - Margin, "Or, my sign is that ‹the Almighty will answer me.‘" The word rendered in the text desire, and in the margin sign, (תו *tâv*), means properly a mark, or sign, and is also the name of the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Then the word means, according to Gesenius (Lex.), a mark, or cross, as subscribed to a bill of complaint; hence, the bill itself, or, as we should say, the pleading. According to this, Job means to say that he was ready for trial, and that there was his bill of complaint, or his pleading, or his bill of defense. So Herder renders it, "See my defense." Coverdale, "Lo, this is my cause." Miss Smith renders it, "Behold my gage!" Umbreit, Meinel Kagschrift- My accusation. There can be no doubt that it refers to the forms of a judicial investigation, and that the idea is, that Job was ready for the trial. "Here" says he, "is my defense, my argument, my pleading, my bill! I wait that my adversary should come to the trial." The name used here as given to the bill or pleading (תו *tâv* mark, or sign), probably had its origin from the fact that some mark was affixed to it - of some such significance as a seal - by which it was certified to be the real bill of the party, and by which he acknowledged it as his own. This might have been done by signing his name, or by some conventional mark that was common in those times.

That the Almighty would answer me - That is, answer me as on trial; that the cause might be fairly brought to an issue. This wish he had frequently expressed.

And that mine adversary - God; regarded as the opposite party in the suit.

Had written a book - Or, would write down his charge. The wish is, that what God had against him were in like manner entered in a bill or pleading that the charge might be fairly investigated. On the word book, compare the notes at Job 19:23. It means here a pleading in court, a bill, or charge against anyone. There is no irreverence in the language here. Job is anxious that his true character should be investigated, and that the great matter at issue should be determined; and he draws his language and illustrations from well-known practices in courts of law.

Verse 36

Surely, I would take it upon my shoulder - That is, the book or bill which the Almighty would write in the case. Job says that he has such confidence that what God would record in his case would be in his favor, such confidence that he had no charge of hypocrisy against him, and that he

who knew him altogether would not bring such an accusation against him, that he would bear it off triumphantly on his shoulders. It would be all that he could desire. This does not refer to what a judge would decide if the cause were submitted to him, but to a case where an opponent or adversary in court should bring all that he could say against him. He says that he would bear even such a bill on his shoulders in triumph, and that it would be a full vindication of his innocence. It would afford him the best vindication of his character, and would be that which he had long desired.

And bind it as a crown to me - I would regard it as an ornament - a diadem. I would bind it on my head as a crown is worn by princes, and would march forth exultingly with it. Instead of covering me with shame, it would be the source of rejoicing, and I would exhibit it every where in the most triumphant manner. It is impossible for anyone to express a more entire consciousness of innocence from charges alleged against him than Job does by this language.

Verse 37

I would declare unto him the number of my steps - That is, I would disclose to him the whole course of my life. This is language also appropriate to a judicial trial, and the meaning is, that Job was so confident of his integrity that he would approach God and make his whole course of life known to him.

As a prince would I go near unto him - With the firm and upright step with which a prince commonly walks. I would not go in a base, cringing manner, but in a manner that evinced a consciousness of integrity. I would not go bowed down under the consciousness of guilt, as a self-condemned malefactor, but with the firm and elastic foot-tread of one conscious of innocence. It must be remembered that all this is said with reference to the charges which had been brought against him by his friends, and not as claiming absolute perfection. He was accused of gross hypocrisy, and it was maintained that he was suffering the judicial infliction of heaven on account of that. So far as those charges were concerned, he now says that he could go before God with the firm and elastic tread of a prince - with entire cheerfulness and boldness. We are not, however, to suppose that he did not regard himself as having the common infirmities and sinfulness of our fallen nature. The discussion does not turn at all on that point.

Verse 38

If my land cry against me - This is a new specification of an offence, and an imprecation of an appropriate punishment if he had been guilty of it. Many have supposed that these closing verses have been transferred from their appropriate place by an error of transcribers, and that they should have been inserted between Job 31:23-24 - or in some previous part of the chapter. It is certain that Job 31:35-37 would make an appropriate and impressive close of the chapter, being a solemn appeal to God in reference to all the specifications, or to the general tenor of his life; but there is no authority from the MSS. to make any change in the present arrangement. All the ancient versions insert the verses in the place which they now occupy, and in this all versions agree, except, according to Kennicott, the Teutonic version, where they are inserted after Job 31:25. All the MSS. also concur in the present arrangement.

Schultens supposes that there is manifest pertinency and propriety in the present arrangement. The former specification, says he, related mainly to his private life, this to his more public conduct; and the design is to vindicate himself from the charge of injustice and crime in both respects, closing appropriately with the latter. Rosenmuller remarks that in a composition composed in an age and country so remote as this, we are not to look for or demand the observance of the same regularity which is required by the modern canons of criticism. At all events, there is no authority for changing the present arrangement of the text. The meaning of the phrase "if my land cry out against me" is, that in the cultivation of his land he had not been guilty of injustice. He had not employed those to till it who had been compelled to do it, nor had he imposed on them unreasonable burdens, nor had he defrauded them of their wages. The land had not had occasion to cry out against him to God, because fraud or injustice had been done to any in its cultivation; compare Genesis 4:10; Hab. ii. 11.

Or that the furrows likewise thereof complain - Margin, weep. The Hebrew is, "If the furrows weep together," or "in like manner weep." This is a beautiful image. The very furrows in the field are personified as weeping on account of injustice which would be done them, and of the burdens which would be laid on them, if they were compelled to contribute to oppression and fraud.

Verse 39

If I have eaten the fruits thereof - Margin, strength. The strength of the earth is that which the earth produces or which is the result of its strength.

We speak now of a “strong soil “ - meaning that it is capable of bearing much.

Without money - Hebrew “without silver “ - silver being the principal circulating medium in early times. The meaning here is, “without paying for it;” either without having paid for the land, or for the labor. “Or have caused the owners thereof.” Margin, the soul of the owners thereof to expire, or breathe out. The Hebrew is, “If I have caused the life of the owners (or lords) of it to breathe out.” The meaning is, if I have appropriated to myself the land or labor of others without paying for it, so that their means of living are taken away. He disclaims all injustice in the case. He had not deprived others of their land by violence or fraud, so that they had no means of subsistence.

Verse 40

Let thistles grow; - Genesis 3:18. Thistles are valueless; and Job is so confident of entire innocence in regard to this, that he says he would be willing, if he were guilty, to have his whole land overrun with noxious weeds.

And cockle - Cockle is a well known herb that gets into wheat or other grain. It has a bluish flower, and small black seed, and is injurious because it tends to discolor the flour. It is not certain by any means, however, that this is intended here. The margin is, noisome weeds. The Hebrew word בּאֹשׁה *bo'shâh* is from בּאַשׁ *bâ'ash* “to have a bad smell, to stink,” and was given to the weed here referred to on that account, compare Isaiah 34:3. The cockle however, has no unpleasant odor, and the word here probably means noxious weeds. So it is rendered by Herder and by Noyes. The Septuagint has βάτος *batos* bramble; the Vulgate, *spina*, thorn; Prof. Lee, prunus sylvestris, “a bramble resembling the hawthorn;” Schultens, *labrusca*, wild vine.

The words of Job are ended - That is, in the present speech or argument; his discussions with his friends are closed. He spoke afterward, as recorded in the subsequent chapters, but not in controversy with them. He had vindicated his character, sustained his positions, and they had nothing to reply. The remainder of the book is occupied mainly with the speech of Elihu, and with the solemn and sublime address which God himself makes.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 32

Verse 1

So these three men ceased to answer Job - Each had had three opportunities of replying to him, though in the last series of the controversy Zophar had been silent. Now all were silent; and though they do not appear in the least to have been convinced, or to have changed their opinion, yet they found no arguments with which to sustain their views. It was this, among other things, which induced Elihu to take up the subject.

Because he was righteous in his own eyes - Umbreit expresses the sense of this by adding, "and they could not convince him of his unrighteousness." It was not merely because he was righteous in his own estimation, that they ceased to answer him; it was because their arguments had no effect in convincing him, and they had nothing new to say. He seemed to be obstinately bent on maintaining his own good opinion of himself in spite of all their reasoning, and they sat down in silence.

Verse 2

Then was kindled the wrath - Wrath or anger is commonly represented as kindled, or as burning.

Of Elihu - The name Elihu (אליהוא *'ĕlîyhû'*) means, "God is he;" or, since the word He (הוא *hû'*) is often used by way of eminence to denote the true God or Yahweh, the name is equivalent to saying, "God is my God," or "my God is Yahweh." On what account this name was given to him, is now unknown. The names which were anciently given, however, were commonly significant, and it was not unusual to incorporate the name of God in those given to human beings. See the notes at Isaiah 1:1. This name was probably given as an expression of piety on the part of his parents.

The son of Barachel - The name Barachel ברכאל *bârak'êl* means "God blesses," and was also probably given as expressive of the piety of his parents, and as furnishing in the name itself a valuable motto which the child would remember. Nothing more is known of him than the name; and the only propriety of remarking on the philology of the names arises from the fact that they seem to indicate the existence of piety, or of the knowledge of God, on the part of the ancestors of Elihu.

The Buzite - Buz was the second son of Nahor, the brother of Abraham, Genesis 22:20-21. A city of the name Buz is mentioned in Jeremiah 25:23, in connection with Dedan and Tema, cities of Arabia, and it is probable that

Barachel, the father of Elihu, was of that city. If this name was given to the place after the son of Nahor, it will follow that Elihu, and consequently Job, must have lived after the time of Abraham.

Of the kindred of Ram - Of Ram nothing is certainly known. The Chaldee renders this גניסת מן אברהם, of the race of Abraham. Some have supposed that the Ram mentioned here is the same as the ancestor of David mentioned in Rth 4:19 , and in the genealogical table in Matthew 1:3-4, under the name of Aram. Others suppose that he was of the family of Nahor, and that the name is the same as ארם *'ărâm* mentioned in Genesis 22:21. Thus, by aphaeresis the Syrians are called רמים *rammîym* 2 Chronicles 22:5, instead of ארמים *'ărammîym* as they are usually denominated; compare 2 Kings 8:29. But nothing certain is known of him who is mentioned here. It is worthy of observation that the author of the book of Job has given the genealogy of Elihu with much greater particularity than he has that of either Job or his three friends. Indeed, he has not attempted to trace their genealogy at all. Of Job he does not even mention the name of his father; of his three friends he mentions merely the place where they dwelt. Rosenmuller infers, from this circumstance, that Elihu is himself the author of the book, since, says he, it is the custom of the Turks and Persians, in their poems, to weave in, near the end of the poem, the name of the author in an artificial manner. The same view is taken by Lightfoot, *Chronica temporum et ord*. Text. V. T. A circumstance of this kind, however, is too slight an argument to determine the question of the authorship of the book. It may have been that Elihu was less known than either of the other speakers, and hence, there was a propriety in mentioning more particularly his family. Indeed, this fact is morally certain, for he is not mentioned, as the others are, as the "friend" of Job.

Because he justified himself - Margin, his soul. So the Hebrew; the word נפשׁ *nephesh* soul, being often used to denote oneself.

Rather than God - Prof. Lee renders this, "justified himself with God;" and so also Umbreit, Good, and some others. And so the Vulgate renders it: - coram Deo. The Septuagint renders it, ἐναντίον κυρίου *enantion kuriou* - against the Lord; that is, rather than the Lord. The proper translation of the Hebrew (מאלהים *mē'ĕlôhîym*) is undoubtedly more than God: and this was doubtless the idea which Elihu intended to convey. He understood Job as vindicating himself rather than God; as being more willing that aspersions

should be cast on the character and government of God, than to confess his own sin.

Verse 3

Because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job - They held Job to be guilty, and yet they were unable to adduce the proof of it, and to reply to what he had said. They still maintained their opinion, though silenced in the argument. They were in that state of mind, not uncommon, in which they obstinately held on to an opinion which they could not vindicate, and believed another to be guilty, though they could not prove it.

Verse 4

Now Elihu had waited - Margin, as in Hebrew, expected Job in words. The meaning is plain, that he had waited until all who were older than himself had spoken.

Because they were elder than he - Margin, as in Hebrew, older for days. It appears that they were all older than he was. We have no means of determining their respective ages, though it would seem probable that Eliphaz was the oldest of the three friends, as he uniformly spoke first.

Verse 6

And Elihu - "said, I am young" Margin, few of days. The Hebrew is, "I am small (צעיר *tsâʿîyr*) of days;" that is, I am inexperienced. We have no means of ascertaining his exact age, though it is evident that there was a considerable disparity between them and him.

And ye are very old - יָשִׁישִׁים *yâshîyshiym* The word used here is probably derived from the obsolete root שוש, "to be white, hoary"; and hence, to be hoary-headed, or aged; compare 2 Chronicles 36:17. The whole of the discourses of the friends of Job seem to imply that they were aged men. They laid claim to great experience, and professed to have had opportunities of long observation, and it is probable that they were regarded as sages, who, by the long observation of events, had acquired the reputation of great wisdom.

Wherefore I was afraid - He was timid, bashful, diffident.

And durst not show you mine opinion - Margin, feared. He had that diffidence to which modesty prompts in the presence of the aged. He had formed his opinion as the argument proceeded, but he did not deem it proper that one so young should interfere, even when he thought he perceived that others were wrong.

Verse 7

I said, Days should speak - The aged ought to speak. They have had the advantage of long observation of the course of events; they are acquainted with the sentiments of past times; they may have had an opportunity of conversing with distinguished sages, and it is to them that we look up for counsel. This was eminently in accordance with the ancient Oriental views of what is right; and it is a sentiment which accords with what is obviously proper, however little it is regarded in modern times. It is one of the marks of urbanity and true politeness; of the prevalence of good breeding, morals, and piety, and of an advanced state of society, when respect is shown to the sentiments of the aged. They have had the opportunity of long observation. They have conversed much with people. They have seen the results of certain courses of conduct, and they have arrived at a period of life when they can look at the reality of things, and are uninfluenced now by passion. Returning respect for the sentiments of the aged, attention to their counsels, veneration for their persons, and deference for them when they speak, would be an indication of advancement in society in modern times; and there is scarcely anything in which we have deteriorated from the simplicity of the early ages, or in which we fall behind the Oriental world, so much as in the lack of this.

Verse 8

But there is a spirit in man - This evidently refers to a spirit imparted from above; a spirit from the Almighty. The parallelism seems to require this, for it responds to the phrase "the inspiration of the Almighty" in the other hemistich. The Hebrew expression here also seems to require this interpretation. It is, הוא רוח *rûach hû'* the Spirit itself; meaning the very Spirit that gives wisdom, or the Spirit of inspiration. He had said, in the previous verse, that it was reasonable to expect to find wisdom among the aged and the experienced. But in this he had been disappointed. He now finds that wisdom is not the attribute of rank or station, but that it is the gift of God, and therefore it may be found in a youth. All true wisdom, is the sentiment, is from above; and where the inspiration of the Almighty is, no matter whether with the aged or the young, there is understanding. Elihu undoubtedly means to say, that though he was much younger than they were, and though, according to the common estimate in which the aged and the young were held, he might be supposed to have much less acquaintance with the subjects under consideration, yet, as all true wisdom came from

above, he might be qualified to speak. The word "spirit" here, therefore, refers to the spirit which God gives; and the passage is a proof that it was an early opinion that certain men were under the teachings of divine inspiration. The Chaldee renders it נבואתא רוח, a spirit of prophecy.

And the inspiration of the Almighty - The breathing" of the Almighty - שׁדי נשׁמה *neshâmâh Shadday* The idea was, that God breathed this into man, and that this wisdom was the breath of God; compare Genesis 2:7; John 20:22. Septuagint, πνοή *pnoē* breath, breathing.

Verse 9

Great men are not always wise - Though wisdom may in general be looked for in them, yet it is not universally true. Great men here denote those who are distinguished for rank, age, authority.

Neither do the aged understand judgment - That is, they do not always understand it. The word judgment here means right, truth. They do not always understand what is the exact truth in regard to the divine administration. This is an apology for what he was about to say, and for the fact that one so young should speak. Of the truth of what he here said there could be no doubt, and hence, there was a propriety that one who was young should also be allowed to express his opinion on important subjects.

Verse 11

I gave ear to your reasons - Margin, "understandings." The meaning is, that he had given the most respectful attention to the views which they had expressed, implying that he had been all along present, and had listened to the debate.

Whilst ye searched out what to say - Margin, as in Hebrew, words. It is implied here that they had bestowed much attention on what they had said. They had carefully sought out all the arguments at their command to confute Job, and still had been unsuccessful.

Verse 12

There was none of you that convinced Job - There was no one to produce conviction on his mind, or rather, there was no one to reprove him by answering him - ענה מוכיח *môkiyach ʿânâh* They were completely silenced: and had nothing to reply to the arguments which he had advanced, and to his reflections on the divine government.

Verse 13

Lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom - That is, this has been permitted and ordered in such a manner that it might be manifest that the

truths which are to convince him come from God and not from man. You were not permitted to refute or convince him, for if you had been you would have been lifted up with pride, and would have attributed to yourselves what belongs to God. This is in accordance with the entire drift of the book, which is to introduce the Almighty himself to settle the controversy when human wisdom failed. They could not arrogate to themselves the claim that they had found out wisdom. They had been completely silenced by Job; they had no power to drive him from his positions; they could not explain the divine dealings so as to settle the great inquiry in which they had been engaged. Elihu proposes to do it, and to do it in such a way as to show that it could be accomplished only by that wisdom which is from above.

God thrusteth him down, not man - These are the words of Elihu. The meaning is, "God only can drive Job from his position, and show him the truth, and humble him. The wisdom of man fails. The aged, the experienced, and the wise have been unable to meet his arguments and bring him down from the positions which he has taken. That work can be done only by God himself, or by the wisdom which he only can give." Accordingly Elihu, who proposes to meet the arguments of Job, makes no appeal to experience or observation; he does not ground what he says on the maxims of sages or the results of reflection, but proposes to adduce the precepts of wisdom which God had imparted to him; Job 33:4, Job 33:6. Other interpretations have, however, been given of this verse, but the above seems to me the most simple, and most in accordance with the scope of the passage.

Verse 14

Now, he hath not directed his words against me - Margin, "ordered." The meaning of this expression is, "I can approach this subject in a wholly dispassionate and unprejudiced manner. I have had none of the provocations which you have felt; his harsh and severe remarks have not fallen on me as they have on you, and I can come to the subject with the utmost coolness." The object is to show that he was not irritated, and that he would be under no temptation to use words from the influence of passion or any other than those which conveyed the simple truth. He seems disposed to admit that Job had given some occasion for severe remarks, by the manner in which be had treated his friends.

Neither will I answer him with your speeches - They also had been wrong. They had given way to passion, and had indulged in severity of

language, rather than pursued a simple and calm course of argument. From all this, Eliha says he was free, and could approach the subject in the most calm and dispassionate manner. He had had no temptation to indulge in severity of language like theirs, and he would not do it.

Verse 15

They were amazed - There also are the words of Elihu, and are designed to express his astonishment that the three friends of Job did not answer him. He says that they were completely silenced, and he repeats this to call attention to the remarkable fact that men who began so confidently, and who still held on to their opinion, had not one word more to say. There is some reason to suppose, from the change of person here from the second to the third, that Elihu turned from them to those who were present, and called their attention to the fact that the friends of Job were completely silenced. This supposition, however, is not absolutely necessary, for it is not uncommon in Hebrew poetry to change from the second person to the third, especially where there is any censure or rebuke implied; compare Job 18:4.

They left off speaking - Margin, "removed speeches from themselves." The marginal reading accords with the Hebrew. The sense is the same as in the common version, though the Hebrew is more poetic. It is not merely that they ceased to speak, but that they put words at a great distance from them. They could say absolutely nothing. This fact, that they were wholly silent, furnished an ample apology for Elihu to take up the subject.

Verse 17

I also will show mine opinion - In this language, as in Job 32:6, there is a delicate expression of modesty in the Hebrew which does not appear in our translation. It is אף־אני *'aph 'ănîy* - even I. "Even one so young, and so humble as I, may be permitted to express my sentiments, when the aged and the great have nothing more to say. It will be no improper intrusion for even me to speak when no other one more aged and honorable desires to." In all this we may discern a degree of courtesy, and a delicate sense of propriety, which may be commended to the imitation of all, and especially to the young. In the manners of the pious men whose biography is recorded in the Bible, there is a degree of refinement, delicacy, and courtesy, in their treatment of others, such as will seldom be found even in the most elevated walks of life, and such as religion only can produce. The outward form may be obtained by the world; the living principle is found only in the heart which is imbued with love to God and man.

Verse 18

For I am full of matter - Margin, as in Hebrew words." The three friends of Job had been silenced. They had not one word more to say. Elihu says that the reverse was true of him. He was full of words, and felt constrained to speak. It was not because he forced himself to do it, nor because he did it as a mere matter of duty, but he was so impressed with the subject that it would be a relief for him to give utterance to his views.

The spirit within me - Referring, probably, to the conviction that it was the divine Spirit which urged him to speak; see the notes at Job 32:8; compare Job 33:4. A similar constraint in regard to the necessity of speaking, when under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is expressed in Jeremiah 20:9, "His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay;" compare Introduction to Isaiah, Section 7. The phrase "within me" is in the margin, as in Hebrew my belly - where the belly is spoken of as the seat of the mind; see Job 15:2. We speak of the head as the seat of the intellect, and the heart as the seat of the affections. The Hebrews were much in the habit of representing the region of the heart as the seat of all mental operations.

Verse 19

Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent - Margin, as in Hebrew, "is not opened" - לאיפתח *lo' yipâthach* The repherence is to a bottle, in which there is no opening, or no vent phor the phermenting wine to work itselph ophph. It is usual to leave a small hole in barrels and casks when wine, cider, or beer is phermenting. This is necessary in order to prevent the cask phrom bursting. Elihu compares himselph to a bottle in which new wine bad been put, and where there was no vent phor it, and when in consequence it was ready to burst. That new wine is here intended is apparent phrom the connection, and has been so understood by the ancient versions. So Jerome renders it, *Mustum*, must, or new wine. The Septuagint, ἀσκὸς γλεύκους ζέων δεδέυενος *askos gleukous zeōn dedemenos* - "a bottle filled with sweet wine, fermenting, bound;" that is, which has no vent.

It is ready to burst like new bottles - The Septuagint renders this, "As the torn (ἐῤῥηγώς *errēgōs*) bellows of a smith." Why this version was adopted. it is not easy to say. The comparison would be pertinent, but the version could not be made from the present Hebrew text. It is possible that the copy of the Hebrew text which the Septuagint had may have read: הרשים - "artificers," instead of: הדשים - new, and then the meaning would be, "as

the bottles, or skins of artificers;" that is, as their bellows, which were doubtless at first merely the skins of animals. The reference of Elihu, however, is undoubtedly to skins that were used as bottles, and new skins are mentioned here as ready to burst, not because they were more likely to burst than old ones - for that was by no means the case - but because new and unfermented wine would naturally be placed in them, thus endangering them. Bottles in the east, it is well known, are usually made of the skins of goats; see the notes at Matthew 9:17.

The process of manufacturing them at present is this: The skins of the goats are striped off whole except at the neck. The holes at the feet and tail are sewed up. They are first stuffed out full, and strained by driving in small billets and chips of oak wood; and then are filled with a strong infusion of oak bark for a certain time, until the hair becomes fixed, and the skin sufficiently tanned. They are sold at different prices, from fifteen up to fifty piastres. Robinson's Bibli. Research. ii. 440. Elihu, perhaps, could not have found a more striking illustration of his meaning. lie could no longer restrain himself, and he gave utterance, therefore, to the views which he deemed so important. The word "belly" in this verse (בטן *beṭen*) is rendered by Umbreit and Noyes, bosom. It not improbably has this meaning and the reference is to the fact that in the East the words are uttered forth much more ab imo pectore, or are much more guttural than with us. The voice seems to come from the lower part of the throat, or from the bosom, in a manner which the people of Western nations find it difficult to imitate.

Verse 20

I will speak, that I may be refreshed - Margin, "breathe." The meaning is, that he would then have room to breathe again; he would feel relieved.

Verse 21

Let me not, I pray you - This is not to be regarded as an address to them, or a prayer to God, but as an expression of his determination. It is similar to the phrase which we use when we say, "may I never do this;" implying the strongest possible purpose not to do it. Elihu means to say that on no account would he use partiality or flattery in what he said.

Accept any man's person - Treat any with partiality. That is, "I will not be influenced by rank, age, wealth, or personal friendship, in what I say. I

will state the truth impartially, and will deliver my sentiments with entire freedom;" see the phrase explained in the notes at Job 13:8.

Neither let me give flattering titles unto man - The word used here (כנה *kânâh* - not used in the Qal, but found only in the Piel), means to address in a friendly and soothing manner; to speak kindly to anyone, Isaiah 44:5; Isaiah 45:4; and then to flatter. That is, undoubtedly, its meaning here. Elihu says he did not know how to flatter anyone. He meant to state the exact truth; to treat each one impartially; and not to be influenced by the rank or wealth of those whom he addressed. He meant to deal in plain and simple truth.

Verse 22

For I know not to give flattering titles - I do not know how to flatter. It is not in my character; it has not been my habit. "In so doing." These words are not in the Hebrew, and they greatly mar the sense, and give a different idea from that which was intended by the speaker.

My Maker would soon take me away - Or, rather, "My Maker will soon take me away." That is, "I know that I must soon be removed, and must stand before my Maker. I must give an account for all that I say. Knowing that I am to go to the realities of another state of being, I cannot flatter people. I must tell them the exact and simple truth." There could be no better preventive of flattery than this. The conviction that we are soon to appear before God, where all are on a level, and where every mask will be stripped off, and everything appear as it is, would prevent us from ascribing to others qualities which we know they do not possess, and from giving them titles which will only exalt them in their own estimation, and hide the truth from their minds. Titles which properly belong to men, and which pertain to office, religion does not forbid us to confer - for the welfare of the community is promoted by a proper respect for the names and offices of those who rule. But no good end is answered in ascribing to men titles as mere matters of distinction, which serve to keep before them the idea of their own talents or importance; or which lead them to forget that they like others are soon to be "taken away," and called to give up their account in another world. The deep conviction that we are all soon to try the realities of a bed of death and of the grave, and that we are to go to a world where there is no delusion, and where the ascription of qualities to us here which do not belong to us will be of no avail, would prompt to a wish to state always the simple truth. Under that conviction, we should never so ascribe

to another any quality of beauty, strength, or talent, any name or title, as to leave him for one moment under a deception about himself. If this rule were followed, what a change would it produce in the social, the political, the literary, and even the religious world!

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 33

Verse 1

Wherefore, Job, I pray thee - In the next chapter he addresses the three friends of Job. This is addressed particularly to him.

My speeches - Hebrew, "my words" - מלה *millâh* This is the usual word in the Aramaen languages to express a saying or discourse, though in Hebrew it is only a poetic form. The meaning is, not that he would address separate speeches, or distinct discourses, to Job, but that he called on him to attend to what he had to say.

Verse 2

My tongue hath spoken in my mouth - Margin, "palate." The meaning is, that since he had ventured to speak, and had actually commenced, he would utter only that which was worthy to be heard. This is properly the commencement of his argument, for all that he had before said was merely an introduction. The word palate - "in my palate" (בחכי *bechêkiy*) is used here because of the importance of that organ in the act of speaking. Perhaps also, there may be reference to the fact that the Hebrews made much more use of the lower organs of enunciation - the palate, and the throat, than we do, and much less use of the teeth and lips. Hence, their language was strongly guttural.

Verse 3

My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart - I will speak in sincerity. I will utter nothing that shall be hollow and hypocritical. What I speak shall be the real suggestion of my heart - what I feel and know to be true. Perhaps Elihu was the more anxious to make this point entirely clear, because the three friends of Job might be supposed to have laid themselves open to the suspicion that they were influenced by passion or prejudice; that they had maintained their opinions from mere obstinacy and not from conviction; and that they had been sometimes disposed to cavil. Elihu claims that all that he was about to say would be entirely sincere.

Shall utter knowledge clearly - Shall state things just as they are, and give the true solution of the difficulties which have been felt in regard to the divine dealings. His object is to guard himself wholly from the suspicion of partiality.

Verse 4

The Spirit of God hath made me; - see the notes at Job 32:8. There is an evident allusion in this verse to the mode in which man was created, when God breathed into him the breath of life and he became a living being; Genesis 2:7. But it is not quite clear why Elihu adverts here to the fact that God had made him, or what is the bearing of this fact on what he proposed to say. The most probable supposition is, that he means to state that he is, like Job, a man; that both were formed in the same way - from the same breathing of the Almighty, and from the same clay Job 33:6; and that although he bad undertaken to speak to Job in God‘s stead Job 33:6, yet Job had no occasion to fear that he would be overawed and confounded by the Divine Majesty. He had dreaded that, if he should be permitted to bring his case before him (Notes, Job 33:7), but Elihu says that now he would have no such thing to apprehend. Though it would be in fact the same thing as carrying the matter before God - since he came in his name, and meant to state the true principles of his government, yet Job would be also really conducting the cause with a man like himself, and might, unawed, enter with the utmost freedom into the statement of his views.

Verse 5

If thou canst answer me - The meaning of this verse is this: “The controversy between you and me, if you choose to reply, shall be conducted in the most equitable manner, and on the most equal terms. I will not attempt, as your three friends have done, to overwhelm you with reproaches; nor will I attempt to overawe you as God would do, so that you could not reply. I am a man like yourself, and desire that if anything can be said against what I have to advance, it should be offered with the utmost fairness and freedom.”

Stand up - That is, “maintain your position, unless you are convinced by my arguments. I wish to carry nothing by mere authority or power.”

Verse 6

Behold, I am according to thy wish in Gods stead - Margin, as in Hebrew “mouth.” The mouth is that by which we express our desires, and the word here is equivalent to wish. Some have, however, rendered this differently. Umbreit translates it, ich bin, wie du, von Gott - I am, as thou art, from God. So Noyes, “I, like thee, am a creature of God.” Wemyss, “I am thine equal in the sight of God.” Coverdale, “Behold, before God am I even as thou, for I am fashioned and made even of the same mould.” The Vulgate renders it, “Behold God made me as he made thee; and of the same

clay am I formed." So the Septuagint, "From clay am I formed as well as thou, and we are formed from the same." This interpretation seems to be demanded also by the parallelism, where he says that he was made of the same clay with Job; that is, that he was a man like him. Still, it seems to me, that the fair and obvious meaning of the Hebrew is that which is expressed in our common version. The Hebrew is, הן־אני כפי לאל כפיך *hēn'ănîy kepiykā lā'ĕl* - "lo, I am, according to thy mouth (word, or wish) for God;" that is, I am in his place; I speak in his name; I am so commissioned by him that you may regard yourself as in fact speaking to him when you address his ambassador. This will also accord with what is said in Job 33:7, and with what Job had so earnestly desired, that he might be allowed to bring his cause directly before God; see the notes at Job 13:3.

I also am formed out of the clay - Margin, "cut." The figure is taken from the act of the potter, who cuts off a portion of clay which he moulds into a vessel, and there is manifest allusion here to the statement in Genesis, that God made man of the dust of the ground. The meaning in this connection is, "Though I am in the place of God, and speak in his name, yet I am also a man, made of the same frail material as yourself. In me, therefore, there is nothing to overawe or confound you as there would be if God spake himself."

Verse 7

Behold my terror shall not make thee afraid - Job had earnestly desired to carry his cause directly before God, but he had expressed the apprehension that he would overawe him by his majesty, so that he would not be able to manage his plea with the calmness and self-possession which were desirable. He had, therefore, expressed it as his earnest wish, that if he were so permitted, God would not take advantage of his majesty and power to confound him; see the notes at Job 13:21. Elihu now says, that the wish of Job in this could be amply gratified. Though he spake in the name of God, and it might be considered that the case was fairly carried before him, yet he was also a man. He was the fellow, the equal with Job. He was made of the same clay, and he could not overawe him as the Almighty himself might do. There would be, therefore, in his case all the advantage of carrying the cause directly up to God, and yet none of the disadvantage which Job apprehended, and which must ensue when a mere man undertook to manage his own cause with the Almighty.

Neither shall my hand be heavy upon, thee - Alluding, evidently, to what Job had said, Job 13:21, that the hand of God was heavy upon him, so that he could not conduct his cause in such a manner as to do justice to himself. He had asked, therefore (see the notes at that place), as a special favor, if he was permitted to carry his cause before God, that his hand would be so far lightened that he could be able to state his arguments with the force which they required. Elihu says now that that wish could be gratified. Though he was in the place of God, yet he was a man, and his hand would not be upon him to crush him down so that he could not do justice to himself. The noun rendered "hand" (אכף *'ekeph*) does not elsewhere occur. The verb אכף *'âkaph* occurs once in Proverbs 16:26, where it is rendered "craveth" - "He that laboreth, laboreth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him" - where the margin is boweth unto.

The word in Arabic means to lead a beast of burden; to bend, to make to bow under a lead; and then to impel, to urge on; and hence, it means, "his mouth, that is, hunger, impels, or urges him on to labor." In like manner the meaning of the word here (אכף *'ekeph*) may be a lead or burden, meaning "my lead, i. e., my weight, dignity, authority, shall not be burdensome or oppressive to you." But the parallel place in Job 13:21, is "hand," and that meaning seems to be required here. Kimchi supposes it is the same as כף *kaph* - hand, and the Septuagint has so rendered it, ἡ χείρ μου *hē cheir mou* In the view of the speech of Elihu thus far, we cannot but remark that there is much that is unique, and especially that he lays decided claim to inspiration. Though speaking for God, yet he was in human nature, and Job might speak to him as a friend, unawed and unterrifled by any dread of overwhelming majesty and power.

On what grounds Elihu based these high pretensions does not appear, and his claim to them is the more remarkable from his youth. It does not require the aid of a very lively imagination to fancy a resemblance between him and the Lord Jesus - the great mediator between God and man - and were that mode of interpretation which delights to find types and figures every where a mode that could be vindicated, there is no character in the Old Testament that would more obviously suggest that of the Redeemer than the character of Elihu. His comparative youth, his modesty, his humility, would suggest it. The fact that he comes in to utter his sentiments where age and wisdom had failed to suggest the truth, and when pretending

sages were confounded and silenced, would suggest it. The fact that he claims to be in the place of God, and that a cause might be managed before him as if it were before God and yet that he was a man like others, and that no advantage would be taken to overawe by mere majesty and power, are all circumstances that would constitute a strong and vivid resemblance. But I see no evidence that this was the design of the introduction of the character of Elihu, and interesting as the comparison might be, and desirable as it may seem that the book of Job should be found to contain some reference to the great work of mediation, yet the just and stern laws of interpretation exclude such a reference in the absence of proof, and do not allow us to luxuriate in the conceptions of fancy, however pious the reflections might be, or to search for typical characters where the Spirit of inspiration has not revealed them as such, however interesting or edifying might be the contemplation.

Verse 8

Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing - Margin, as in Hebrew "ears." This shows that Elihu had been present during the debate, and had attentively listened to what had been said. He now takes up the main point on which he supposed that Job had erred - the attempt to justify himself. He professes to adduce the very words which he had used, and disclaims all design of judging from mere hearsay.

Verse 9

I am clean - I am pure and holy.

Without transgression - Job had not used these very expressions, nor had he intended to maintain that he was absolutely free from sin; see Job 9:20. He had maintained that he was not chargeable with the transgressions of which his three friends maintained that he was guilty, and in doing that he had used strong language, and language which even seemed to imply that he was without transgression; see Job 9:30; Job 10:7; Job 13:23; Job 16:17.

I am innocent - The word used here (חף *chaph*) is from the verb חפף *chophaph* - to cover, to protect; and also, as a secondary meaning, from the Arabic, to rub, to wipe off; to wash away; to lave. Hence, it denotes that which is rubbed clean, washed, pure - and then innocent. The word occurs only in this place. It is not the exact language which Job had used, and there seems to be some injustice done him in saying that he had employed such

language. Elihu means, doubtless, that he had used language which implied this, or which was equivalent to it.

Verse 10

Behold, he findeth occasions against me - That is, God. This is not exactly the language of Job, though much that he had said had seemed to imply this. The idea is, that God sought opportunity to oppose him; that he was desirous to find in him some ground or reason for punishing him; that he wished to be hostile to him, and was narrowly on the watch to find an opportunity which would justify his bringing calamity upon him. The word rendered "occasions" - תנואה *tenû'âh* is from נוא *nû'* in the Hiphil, הניא *hāniy'* - to refuse, decline; to hinder, restrain, Numbers 30:6, Numbers 30:9, Numbers 30:12; and hence, the noun means, a holding back, a withdrawal, an alienation; and hence, the idea is, that God sought to be alienated from Job. The Vulgate renders it, "He seeks complaints (*querales*) against me." The Septuagint, μέμψιν *mempsin* - accusation. Umbreit, Feindshaft, enmity. So Gesenius and Noyes. "He counteth me for his enemy." This is language which Job had used; see Job 19:11.

Verse 11

He putteth my feet in the stocks - This also is language which Job had used; see Job 13:27. "He marketh all my paths;" in Job 13:27, "Thou lookest narrowly unto all my paths;" see the notes at that verse.

Verse 12

Behold, in this thou art not just - In this view of God, and in these reflections on his character and government. Such language in regard to the Deity cannot be vindicated; such views cannot be right. It cannot be that he wishes to be the foe of man; that he watches with a jealous eye every movement with a view to find something that will justify him in bringing heavy calamities upon his creatures, or that he sets himself as a spy upon the way in which man goes, in order to find out something that shall make it proper for him to treat him as an enemy. It cannot be denied that Job had indulged in language making substantially such representations of God, and that he had thus given occasion for the reproof of Elihu. It can as little be denied that such thoughts frequently pass through the minds of the afflicted, though they do not express them in words, nor is it less doubtful that they should be at once banished from the soul. They cannot be true. It cannot be that God thus regards and treats his crea tures; that he wishes to find

"occasion" in them to make it proper for him to bring calamity upon them, or that he desires to regard them as his foes.

I will answer thee - That is, I will show that this view is unjust." This he does in the subsequent verses by stating what he supposes to be the real design of afflictions, and by showing that God in these trials had a good and benevolent object.

That - - כי *kîy* Rather, "because," or "for." The object is not to show that God was greater than man - for that could not be a matter of information, but to show that because he was far above man he had great and elevated objects in his dealings with him, and man should submit to him without a complaint.

God is greater than man - The meaning of this is, that man should suppose that God has good reasons for all that he does, and that he might not be qualified to understand the reason of his doings. He should therefore acquiesce in his arrangements, and not call in question the equity of the divine dealings. In all our trials it is well to remember that God is greater than we are. He knows what is best; and though we may not be able to see the reason of his doings, yet it becomes us to acquiesce in his superior wisdom.

Verse 13

Why dost thou strive against him? - By refusing to submit to him, and by calling in question his wisdom and goodness.

For he giveth not account of any of his matters - Margin, as in Hebrew "answereth not." The idea is, that it is as useless as it is improper to contend with God. He does his own pleasure, and deals with man as he deems best and right. The reason of his doings he does not state, nor has man any power to extort from him a statement of the causes why he afflicts us. This is still true. The reason of his doings he does not often make known to the afflicted, and it is impossible to know now the causes why he has brought on us the calamity with which we are visited. The general reasons why men are afflicted may be better known now than they were in the time of Elihu, for successive revelations have thrown much light on that subject. But when he comes and afflicts us as individuals; when he takes away a beloved child; when he cuts down the young, the vigorous, the useful, and the pious, it is often impossible to understand why he has done it.

All that we can do then is to submit to his sovereign will, and to believe that though we cannot see the reasons why he has done it, yet that does not

prove that there are no reasons, or that we may never be permitted to understand them. We are required to submit to his will, not to our own reason; to acquiesce because he does it, not because we see it to be right. If we always understood the reasons why he afflicts us, our resignation would be not to the will of God, but to our own knowledge of what is right; and God, therefore, often passes before us in clouds and thick darkness to see whether we have sufficient confidence in him to believe that he does right, even when we cannot see or understand the reason of his doings. So a child reposes the highest confidence in a parent, when he believes that the parent will do right, though he cannot understand why he does it, and the parent does not choose to let him know. May not a father see reasons for what he does which a child could not understand, or which it might be proper for him to withhold from him?

Verse 14

For God speaketh once - The object of what is here said is, to show the reason why God brings affliction upon people, or to explain the principles of his government which Elihu supposed had been sadly misunder stood by Job and his friends. The reason why he brings affliction, Elihu says, is because all other means of reclaiming and restraining people fail. He communicates his will to them; he speaks to them again and again in dreams and visions; he warns them of the error of their course Job 33:14-17, and when this is all ineffectual he brings upon them affliction. He lays them upon their bed where they must reflect, and where there is hope that they may be reclaimed and reformed, Job 33:18-28.

Yea, twice - He does not merely admonish him once. He repeats the admonition when man refuses to hear him the first time, and takes all the methods which he can by admonition and warning to withdraw him from his wicked purpose, and to keep him from ruin.

Yet man perceiveth it not - Or, rather, "Although he does not perceive it or attend to it." Though the sinner is regardless of the admonition, yet still God repeats it, and endeavors to save him from the commission of the crimes which would lead him to ruin. This is designed to show the patience and forbearance of God, and how many means he takes to save the sinner from ruin. Of the truth of what Elihu here says, there can be no difference of opinion. It is one of the great principles of the divine administration that the sinner is often warned, though he heeds it not; and that God sends

repeated admonitions even when people will not regard them, but are bent on their own ruin.

Verse 15

In a dream - This was one of the methods by which the will of God was made known in the early periods of the world; see the notes at Job 4:12-17. And for a fuller account of this method of communicating the divine will, see the introduction to Isaiah, Section 7 (2).

In a vision of the night - Notes, Job 4:13; compare the introduction to Isaiah, Section 7 (4).

When deep sleep falleth upon men - This may be designed to intimate more distinctly that it was from God. It was not the effect of disturbed and broken rest; not such fancies as come into the mind between sleeping and waking, but the visitations of the divine Spirit in the profoundest repose of the night. The word rendered "deep sleep" (תרדמה *tardêmâh*) is one that denotes the most profound repose. It is not merely sleep, but it is sleep of the soundest kind - that kind when we do not usually dream; see the notes at Job 4:13. The Chaldee has here rendered it correctly, עמקתא שינתא - sleep that is deep. The Septuagint renders it, δεινὸς φόβος *deinos phobos* - dread horror. The Syriac renders this verse, "Not by the lips does he teach; by dreams and visions of the night," etc.

In slumberings upon the bed - The word rendered "slumberings" (בתנומה *bitenûmâh*) means a light sleep, as contradistinguished from very profound repose. Our word slumber conveys the exact idea. The meaning of the whole is, that God speaks to people when their senses are locked in repose - alike in the profound sleep when they do not ordinarily dream, and in the gentle and light slumbers when the sleep is easily broken. In what way, however, they were to distinguish such communications from ordinary dreams, we have no information. It is scarcely necessary to remark that what is here and elsewhere said in the Scriptures about dreams, is no warrant for putting any confidence in them now as if they were revelations from heaven.

Verse 16

Then he openeth the ears of men - Margin, as in Hebrew "revealeth," or "uncovereth." The idea is, that he then reveals to the ear of man important admonitions or counsels. He communicates valuable truth. We are not to understand this as saying that the sleeper actually hears God speak, but as the ear is the organ of hearing, it is employed here to denote

that God then communicates His will to human beinigs. In what way he had access to the souls of people by dreams, it is impossible to explain.

And sealeth their instruction - literally, "In their admonition he seals;" or he affixes a seal. The idea is, that he makes the admonition or instruction as secure as if a seal were affixed to it. A seal ratified or confirmed a contract, a will, or a deed, and the sense here is, that the communications of God to the soul were as firm as if they had been ratified in like manner. Or possibly it may mean, that the warnings of God were communicated to the soul like a sealed letter or message unknown to any other; that is, were made privately to the individual himself in the slumbers of the night. Others have understood the word rendered instruction, as denoting castigation, or punishment, and according to that explanation the meaning would be, that he announces to them certain punishment if they continued in sin; he made it as certain to them as if it were ratified by a seal. So Rosenmuller and Mercer. Schultens supposes it to be equivalent to inspires them, or communicates instruction by inspiration as if it were confirmed and ratified by a seal. He observes that the Arabic word *hhatham* is often used in the Koran, meaning to inspire. The Septuagint renders it, ἀυτοὺς ἐξεφόβησεν *autous exephobēsen* - "he terrifies them" - where they evidently read יחתם *yechathēm* instead of יחתם *yachthom* The sense is, that God communicates warnings to people on their beds, in a manner as solemn and impressive as if it were ratified with a seal, and made as secure as possible.

Verse 17

That he may withdraw man from his purpose - Margin, "work." The sense is plain. God designs to warn him of the consequences of executing a plan of iniquity. He alarms him by showing him that his course will lead to punishment, and by representing to him in the night visions, the dreadful woes of the future world into which he is about to plunge. The object is to deter him from committing the deed of guilt which he had contemplated, and to turn him to the paths of righteousness. Is it unreasonable to suppose that the same thing may occur now, and that God may have a purpose in the dreams which often visit the man who has formed a plan of iniquity, or who is living a life of sin? It cannot be doubted that such people often have alarming dreams; that these dreams are such as are fitted to deter them from the commission of their contemplated wickedness; and that in fact they not unfrequently do it.

What shall hinder us from supposing that God intends that the workings of the mind when the senses are locked in repose, shall be the means of alarming the guilty, and of leading them to reflection? Why should not mind thus be its own admonisher, and be made the instrument of restraining the guilty then, as really as by its sober reasonings and reflections when awake? Many a wicked man has been checked in a career of wickedness by a frightful dream; and not a few have been brought to a degree of reflection which has resulted in sound conversion by the alarm caused on the mind by having the consequences of a career of wickedness traced out in the visions of the night. The case of Colonel Gardiner cannot be forgotten - though in that instance it was rather "a vision of the night" than a dream. He was meditating an act of wickedness. and was alone in his room awaiting the appointed hour. In the silence of the night, and in the solitude of his room, he seemed to see the Savior on the cross. This view, however, it may be accounted for, restrained him from the contemplated act of wickedness, and he became an eminently pious man; see Doddridge's Life of Col. Gardiner. The mind, with all its faculties, is under the control of God, and no one can demonstrate that he does not make its actings, even in the wanderings of a dream, the designed means of checking the sinner, and of saving the soul.

And hide pride from man - Probably the particular thing which Elihu here referred to, was pride and arrogance toward God; or an insolent bearing toward him, and a reliance on one's own merits. This was the particular thing in Job which Elihu seems to have thought required animadversion, and probably he meant to intimate that all people had such communications from God by dreams as to save them from such arrogance.

Verse 18

He keepeth back his soul from the pit - The word soul in the Hebrew is often equivalent to self, and the idea is, that he keeps the man from the pit in this manner. The object of these warnings is to keep him from rushing on to his own destruction. The word rendered "pit" - שׁחת *shachath* properly means a pit, or pitfall, in which traps are laid for wild animals; Psalm 7:15; Psalm 9:15; then a cistern that is miry; Job 9:31; a prison, Isaiah 51:14; then the grave, or sepulchre, as being often a cavern; Job 17:13; Psalm 30:9; see Job 33:28, Job 33:30. It evidently means here the grave, and the sense is, that God thus warns people against pursuing a course of conduct which would lead them to destruction, or would speedily terminate their lives.

And his life from perishing by the sword - Margin, "passing by." The meaning of the Hebrew may be, "to keep his life from passing away by the sword;" as if the sword were the means by which the life or soul passed from the body. The word rendered sword here - שֶׁלַח *shelach* is from שָׁלַח *shâlach* - to send, cast, hurl, and the reference is rather to something sent, as of an arrow, dart, javelin, than to a sword. The sense is not materially varied, and the idea referred to is that of a violent death. The meaning is, that God by these warnings would keep a man from such a course of life as would lead to a death by violence - either by punishment for his crime, or by being cut off in war.

Verse 19

He is chastened also with pain - As another means of checking and restraining him from the commission of sin. When the warnings of the night fail, and when he is bent on a life of sin, then God lays him on a bed of pain, and he is brought to reflection there. There he has an opportunity to think of his life, and of all the consequences which must follow from a career of iniquity. This involves the main inquiry before the disputants. It was, why people were afflicted. The three friends of Job had said that it was a full proof of wickedness, and that when the professedly pious were afflicted it was demonstrative of insincerity and hypocrisy. Job had called this position in question, and proved that it could not be so, but still was at a loss why it was. Elihu now says, that affliction is a part of a disciplinary government; that it is one of the means which God adopts, when warnings are ineffectual, to restrain people and to bring them to reflection and repentance. This appears to have been a view which was almost entirely new to them.

And the multitude of his bones with strong pain - The bones, as has before been remarked, it was supposed might be the seat of the acutest pain; see the notes at Job 30:17; compare Job 20:11; Job 7:15; Job 30:30. The meaning here is, that the frame was racked with intense suffering in order to admonish men of sin, to save them from plunging into deeper transgression, and to bring them to repentance.

Verse 20

So that his life abhorreth bread - It is a common effect of sickness to take away the appetite. Elihu here regards it as a part of the wholesome discipline of the sufferer. He has no relish for the comforts of life.

And his soul dainty meat - Margin, "meat of desire." The Hebrew is, "food of desire." The word rendered "meat" (מאכל *ma'ăkâl*) does not denote animal food only, but any kind of food. So the Old English word meat was used. The idea is, that the sick man loathes the most delicate food. It is a part of his discipline that the pleasure which he had in the days of his health is now taken away.

Verse 21

His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen - He wastes away. His flesh, once vigorous, beautiful, and fair, now disappears. This is not a mere description of the nature of his sickness, but it is a description of the disciplinary arrangements of God. It is an important part of his affliction, as a part of the discipline, that his flesh vanishes, and that his appearance is so changed that he becomes repulsive to the view.

And his bones that were not seen, stick out - His bones were before invisible. They were carefully concealed by the rounded muscle, and by the fat which filled up the interstices, so that they were not offensive to the view. But now the protuberances of his bones can be seen, for God has reduced him to the condition of a skeleton. This is one of the common effects of disease, and this shows the strength of the discipline which God contemplates. The parts of the human frame which in health are carefully hid from the view, as being unsightly, become now prominent, and can be hidden no longer. One design is to humble us; to take away the pride which delighted in the round and polished limb, the rose on the cheek, the ruby lip, and the smooth forehead; and to show us what we shall soon be in the grave.

Verse 22

Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave - That is, he himself does, for the word soul is often used to denote self.

And his life to the destroyers - - לממתים *lammitiym* literally, "to those causing death." The interpretation commonly given of this is, "the angels of death" who were supposed to come to close human life; compare 2 Samuel 24:16-17. But it probably refers to diseases and pangs as having power to terminate life, and being the cause of the close of life. The meaning is, that the afflicted man comes very near to those acute sufferings which terminate life, and which by personification are here represented as the authors of death.

Verse 23

If there be a messenger with him - This part of the speech of Elihu has given rise to scarcely less diversity of opinion, and to scarcely less discussion, than the celebrated passage in Job 19:25-27. Almost every interpreter has had a special view of its meaning, and of course it is very difficult, if not impossible, to determine its true sense. Before the opinions which have been entertained are specified, and an attempt made to determine the true sense of the passage, it may be of interest to see how it is presented in the ancient versions, and what light they throw on it. The Vulgate renders it, "If there is for him an angel speaking, one of thousands, that he may announce the righteousness of the man; he will pity him, and say, Deliver him that he descends not into corruption: I have found him in whom I will be propitious to him" - *inveni in quo ei propitier*. The Septuagint translators render it, "If there be a thousand angels of death (ἄγγελοι θανατηφόροι *angeloi thanatēforoi*), not one of them can mortally wound him (τρώσῃ ἀυτόν *trōsē auton*). If he determine in his heart to turn to the Lord, when he shall have shown man his charge against him, and shown his folly, he will support him that he may not fall to death, and renew his body, like plastering on a wall (ὥσπερ ἀλοιφην ἐπὶ τοίχου *hōsper aloifēn epi toichou*), and will fill his bones with marrow, and make his flesh soft like an infant." The Chaldee renders it, "If there is merit זכותא **z-k-w-t-'in him, an angel is prepared, a comforter (**פרקליטא**, *Paraclete*, Gr.** παρύκλητος ***paraklētos*** **), one among a thousand accusers (**קטיגוריא**, Gr.** κατήγορός ***katēgoros*** **), that he may announce to man his rectitude. And he spares him, and says, Redeem him, that he may not descend to corruption; I have found a ransom." Schultens has divided the opinions which have been entertained of the passage into three classes. They are,**

I. The opinions of those who suppose that by the messenger, or angel, here, there is reference to a man. Of those who hold this opinion, he enumerates no less than seven classes. They are such as these:

(1) those who hold that the man referred to is some distinguished instructor sent to the sick to teach them the will of God, an opinion held by Munster and Isidorus;

(2) those who refer it to a prophet, as Junius et Tremillius:

(3) Codurcus supposes that there is reference to the case of Abimelech, who was made sick on account of Sarah, and that the man referred to was a prophet, who announced to him that God was righteous; Job 1:14; compare 1 Samuel 16:19;

(2) to a messenger sent from God, as e. g.,

(a) to angels, since angels were employed on messages of mercy or judgment to mankind, Exodus 23:20; 2 Samuel 24:16,

(b) to a prophet as sent from God, Haggai 1:13; Malachi 3:1;

(c) to a priest; Ecclesiastes 5:6; Malachi 2:7. It is rendered here by Jerome, angel, and by the Septuagint, angels bringing death.

So far as the word is concerned, it may apply to any messenger sent from God - whether an angel, a prophet, or the Messiah; anyone who should be commissioned to explain to man the reason why afflictions were sent, and to communicate the assurance that God was ready to pardon.

An interpreter - That is, an angel-interpreter, or a messenger who should be an interpreter. The word מליץ *mēliyts* is from לוץ *lûts* "to stammer"; to speak in a barbarous tongue; and then in the Hiphil, to cause to understand a foreign language, or to explain; to interpret. Hence, it means one who explains or interprets that which was obscure; and may mean here one who explains to the sufferer the true principles of the divine administration, or who interprets the design of the divine dealings. In 2 Chronicles 32:31, it is rendered "ambassadors" - referring to the ambassadors that came from Babylon to Hezekiah - rendered in the margin, interpreters; in Isaiah 43:27, it is rendered teachers, in the margin interpreters, referring to the religions teachers of the Jews, or those who were appointed to explain the law of God. Gesenius supposes that it means here the same as intercessor, or *internuncius*, and that the phrase denotes an interceding angel, or one interceding with God for people. But there is no instance in which the word מליץ *mēliyts* is so employed, and such an interpretation is not demanded by the connection here. The idea involved in the word here is immediately explained by Elihu himself. The word denotes one who would "show unto man his uprightness;" that is, who would be able to vindicate the righteousness of God, and explain his dealings. This word, also, may therefore be applicable to a prophet, a sage, an angel, or the Messiah - to anyone who would be able to explain and interpret the divine

dealings. So far as the language is concerned, there is no reason why it should not be applied to Elihu himself.

One among a thousand - Such an one as you would scarcely hope to find among a thousand; that is, one who was endowed with a knowledge of the ways of God, and who was qualified for this work in a much more eminent manner than the mass of people. We have now a similar phrase to denote a man eminent for wisdom, learning, skill, or moral worth. This language is such as would most properly be applicable to a human messenger. One would hardly think of making such distinctions among angelic beings, or of implying that any one of them might not be qualified to bear a message to man, or that it was necessary to make such a selection as is implied by the phrase here to explain the dealings of God.

To show unto man his uprightness - This is the office which the interpreting-messenger was to perform. The "uprightness" referred to here, I suppose, is that of God, and means the rectitude of his doings; or, in a more general sense, the justness of his character, the equity of his administration. So explained, it would mean that the messenger would come to show that God is worthy of confidence; that he is not harsh, stern, severe, and cruel. The afflicted person is supposed to have no clear views on this point, but to regard God as severe and unmerciful. Elihu in this undoubtedly had Job in his eye, as entertaining views of God which were far from correct. What was necessary, he said, was, that someone would come who could show to the sufferer that God is worthy of confidence, and that his character is wholly upright. Prof. Lee interprets this as referring wholly to the Messiah, and as denoting the "righteousness which this Mediator is empowered to give or impute to those who duly seek it; and thus, as a Mediator, between God and man, to make it out as their due, by means of the ransom so found, offered, and accepted."

Noyes explains it as meaning "his duty;" that is, "what reason and religion require of a man in his situation; repentance, submission, and prayer to God for pardon." But it seems to me more natural to refer it to the great principles of the divine government, as being worthy of confidence. Those principles it was desirable should be so explained as to inspire such confidence, and particularly this was what Elihu supposed was needed by Job. On the whole, then, it seems probable that Elihu, in this passage, by the messenger which he mentions, referred to someone who should perform the office which he himself purposed to perform - some man well acquainted

with the principles of the divine administration; who could explain the reasons why people suffer; who could present such considerations as should lead the sufferer to true repentance; and who could assure him of the divine mercy. The reasons for this interpretation may be summed up in few words. They are:

(1) That this is all that is fairly and necessarily implied in the language, or such an interpretation meets the obvious import of all the expressions, and leaves nothing unexplained.

(2) It accords with what Elihu supposed to be the views of Job. He regarded him as having improper apprehensions of the government of God, and of the reasons why afflictions were sent upon him. He had patiently listened to all that he had to say; had heard him give utterance to much that seemed to be in the spirit of complaint and murmuring; and it was manifest to Elihu that he had not had right apprehensions of the design of trials, and that they had not produced the proper effect on his mind. He still needed someone - an interpreter sent from God - to explain all this, and to present such views as should lead him to put confidence in God as a God of mercy and equity.

(3) It accords with the character which Elihu had assumed, and which he all along maintained. He professed to come from God, Job 32:8. He was in the place of God, Job 33:6. He came to explain the whole matter which had excited so long and so warm a debate - a debate to which he had attentively listened, and where neither Job nor his friends had stated the true principles of the divine administration. To represent himself now us having a clew to the reason why God afflicts people in this manner, and as being qualified to explain, the perplexing subject, was in accordance with the character which he maintained.

(4) It accords with the effect which he wished to produce on the mind of Job. He wished to bring him to confide in God; to show him that all these mysterious dealings were designed to bring him back to his Creator, and to restore peace and confidence to his agitated and troubled bosom.

While Elihu, therefore, advances a general proposition, I doubt not that he meant to represent himself as such a messenger sent from God; and though in the whole of his speech he manifested almost the extreme of modesty, yet he regarded himself as qualified to unravel the mystery. That it refers to the Messiah cannot be demonstrated, and is improbable because

(1) It is nowhere applied to him in the New Testament - a consideration not indeed decisive, but of some force, since it is not very safe to apply passages to him from the Old Testament without such authority. At least, the general rule is to be repudiated and rejected, that every passage is to be supposed to have such a reference which can be possibly made to apply to him, or where the language can be made to describe his person and offices.

(2) The work of the "interpreter," the "angel," or "messenger," referred to here, is not that of the Messiah. The effect which Elihu says would be produced would be, that the life of the sufferer would be spared, his disease removed, and his flesh restored with infantile freshness. But this is not the work which the Redeemer came to perform, and is not that which he actually does.

(3) The subject here discussed is not such as is applicable to the work of the Messiah. It is here a question solely about the design of affliction. That was the point to be explained; and explanation was what was needed, and what was proposed to be done. But this is not the special work of the Messiah. His was a much larger, wider office; and even if this had been his whole work, how would the reference to that have met the point under discussion? I am inclined, therefore, to the opinion, that Elihu had himself particularly in his view, and that he meant to represent himself as at that time sustaining the character of a messenger sent from God to explain important principles of his administration.

Verse 24

Then he is gracious unto him - That is, on the supposition that he hears and regards what the messenger of God communicates. If he rightly understands the reasons of the divine administration, and acquiesces in it, and if he calls upon God in a proper manner Job 33:26, he will show him mercy, and spare him. Or it may mean, that God is in fact gracious to him

by sending him a messenger who can come and say to him that it is the divine purpose to spare him; that he is satisfied, and will preserve him from death. If such a messenger should come, and so announce the mercy of God, then he would return to the rigoar of his former days, and be fully restored to his former prosperity. Elihu refers probably to some method of communication, by which the will of God was made known to the sufferer, and by which it was told him that it was God‘s design not to destroy, but to discipline and save him.

Deliver him - Hebrew, פדעהו *pâdaʿhû* “redeem him”. The word used here (פדע *pâdaʿ*) properly means “to let loose, to cut loose”; and then “to buy loose”; that is, “to redeem, to ransom for a price.” Sometimes it is used in the general sense of freeing or delivering, without reference to a price, compare Deuteronomy 7:8; Jeremiah 15:21; Psalm 34:22; Job 6:23; but usually there is a reference to a price, or to some valuable consideration, either expressed or implied; compare the notes at Isaiah 43:3. Here the appropriate idea is expressed, for it is said, as a reason for redeeming or rescuing him, “I have found a ransom.” That is, the “ransom” is the valuable consideration on account of which he was to be rescued from death.

From going down to the pit - The grave, the world of darkness. Notes, Job 33:18. That is, he would keep him alive, and restore him again to health. It is possible that by the word pit here, there may be a reference to a place of punishment, or to the abodes of the dead as places of gloom and horror especially in the case of the wicked but the more probable interpretation is, that it refers to death alone.

I have found - That is, there is a ransom; or, I have seen a reason why he should not die. The idea is, that God was looking for some reason on account of which it would be proper to release the sufferer, and restore him to the accustomed tokens of his favor and that such a ransom had now appeared. There was now no necessity why those sufferings should be prolonged, and he could consistently restore him to health.

A ransom - Margin, or, “an atonement.” Hebrew, כפר *kôpher* On the meaning of this word, see the notes at Isaiah 43:3. The expression here means that there was something which could be regarded as a valuable consideration, or a reason why the sufferer should not be further afflicted, and why he should be preserved from going down to the grave. What that price, or valuable consideration was, is not specified; and what was the

actual idea which Elihu attached to it, it is now impossible with certainty to determine. The connection would rather lead us to suppose that it was something seen in the sufferer himself; some change done in his mind by his trials; some evidence of acquiescence in the government of God, and some manifestation of true repentance, which was the reason why the stroke of punishment should be removed, and why the sufferer should be saved from death. This might be called by Elihu "a ransom" - using the word in a very large sense.

There can be no doubt that such "a fact" often occurs. God lays his hand on his erring and wandering children. He brings upon them afflictions which would consign them to the grave, if they were not checked. Those afflictions are effectual in the case. They are the means of true repentance; they call back the wanderer; they lead him to put his trust in God, and to seek his happiness again in him; and this result of his trials is a reason why they should extend no further. The object of the affliction has been accomplished, and the penitence of the sufferer is a sufficient reason for lightening the hand of affliction, and restoring him again to health and prosperity. This is not properly an atonement, or a ransom, in the sense in which the word is now technically used, but the Hebrew word used here would not be inappropriately employed to convey such an idea. Thus, in Exodus 32:30, the intercession of Moses is said to be that by which an atonement would be made for the sin of the people.

"Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin; and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement (אכפרה *'ekâpharâh* from כפר *kâphar*), for your sin." Here, it is manifest that the act of Moses in making intercession was to be the public reason, or the "ransom," why they were not to be punished. So the boldness, zeal, and fidelity of Phinehas in resisting idolatry, and punishing those who had been guilty of it, are spoken of as the atonement or ransom on account of which the plague was stayed, and the anger of God removed from his people; Numbers 25:12-13, "Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace - because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement (ויכפר *vaykâphar*) for the children of Israel." Septuagint, ἐξιλάσατο *exilasato* In this large sense, the sick man's repentance might be regarded as the covering, ransom, or public reason why he should be restored.

That word literally means that which covers, or overlays any thing; and then an atonement or expiation, as being such a covering. See Exodus 21:30. Cocceius, Calovius, and others suppose that the reference here is to the Messiah, and to the atonement made by him. Schultens supposes that it has the same reference by anticipation - that is, that God had purposed such a ransom, and that in virtue of the promised and pre-figured expiation, he could now show mercy. But it cannot be demonstrated that Elihu had such a reference; and though it was undoubtedly true that God designed to show mercy to people only through that atonement, and that it was, and is, only by this that release is ever given to a sufferer, still, it does not follow that Elihu fully understood this. The general truth that God was merciful, and that the repentance of the sick man would be followed by a release from suffering, was all that can reasonably be supposed to have been understood at that. period of the world. Now, we know the reason, the mode, and the extent of the ransom; and taking the words in their broadest sense, we may go to all sufferers, and say, that they may be redeemed from going down to the dark chambers of the eternal pit, for God has found a ransom. A valuable consideration has been offered, in the blood of the Redeemer, which is an ample reason why they should not be consigned to hell, if they are truly penitent.

Verse 25

His flesh shall be fresher than a child‘s - Margin, “childhood.” The meaning is obvious. He would be restored again to health. The calamity which had been brought upon him for purposes of discipline, would be removed. This was the theory of Elihu in regard to afflictions, and he undoubtedly meant that it should be applied to Job. If he would now, understanding the nature and design of affliction, turn to God, he would be recovered again, and enjoy the health and rigor of his youth. We are not to suppose that this is universally true, though it is undoubtedly often a fact now, that if those who are afflicted become truly penitent, and call upon God, the affliction will be removed. It will have accomplished its object, and may be withdrawn. Hence, they who pray that their afflictions may be withdrawn, should first pray that they may accomplish on their own hearts the effect which God designs, producing in them penitence, deadness to the world, and humiliation, and then that his hand may be withdrawn.

He shall return to the days of his youth - That is, to health and rigor.

Verse 26

He shall pray unto God … - That is, when he fully understands the design of affliction; and when his mind is brought to a proper state of penitence for his past conduct, then he will find God merciful and ready to show him kindness.

And he shall see his face with joy - The face of God. That is, he shall be able to look up to him with peace and comfort. This language is similar to that which is so frequently employed in the Scriptures, in which God is said to lift upon us the light of his countenance. The meaning here is, that the afflicted man would be again permitted to look by faith on God, being reconciled to him, and would see in his face no indication of displeasure.

For he will render unto man his righteousness - He will deal with him in justice and equity. When he sees evidence of penitence, he will treat him accordingly; and if in the afflicted man he discerns true piety, he will regard and treat him as his friend. The meaning is, that if there is in the sufferer any sincere love to God, he will not be indifferent to it, but will treat him as possessing it. This is still true, and universally true. If there is in the heart of one who is afflicted any real piety, God will not treat him as an impenitent sinner, but will manifest his mercy to him, and show to him the favors which he confers only on his friends.

Verse 27

He looketh upon men - Margin, "or, he shall look upon men, and say, I have sinned." Umbreit renders this, Nun singt er jubelnd zu den Menschen - "now he sings joyfully among men." So Noyes, "He shall sing among men, and say." Prof. Lee "He shall fully consider or pronounce right to men, so that one shall say, I have sinned." Coverdale, "Such a respect hath he unto men. Therefore let a man confess and say, I have offended." The Septuagint renders it, Εἶτα τότε ἀπιμέμψεται ἄνθρωπος ἀυτος ἑαυτῳ *Eita tote apomempsetai anthrōpos autos heautō* "then shall a man blame himself," etc. These various renderings arise from the difference of signification attached to the Hebrew word יָשׁר *yāshor* According to our interpretation, it is derived from שִׁיר *shîyr* "to sing," and then the meaning would be, "he sings before men," and thus the reference would be to the sufferer, meaning that he would have occasion to rejoice among men. See Gesenius on the word. According to the other view, the word is derived from שׁוּר *shûr* "to look round"; "to care for, or regard"; and according to this, the reference is to God, meaning that he carefully and attentively observes people in such

circumstances, and, if he sees evidence that there is true penitence, he has compassion and saves. This idea certainly accords better with the scope of the passage than the former, and it seems to me is to be regarded as correct.

And if any say, I have sinned - Hebrew "And says," that is, if the sufferer, under the pressure of his afflictions, is willing to confess his faults, then God is ready to show him mercy. This accords with what Elihu purposed to state of the design of afflictions, that they were intended to bring people to reflection, and to be a means of wholesome discipline. There is no doubt that he meant that all this should be understood by Job as applicable to himself, for he manifestly means to be understood as saying that he had not seen in him the evidence of a penitent mind, such as he supposed afflictions were designed to produce.

And perverted that which was right - That is, in regard to operations and views of the divine government. He had held error, or had cherished wrong apprehensions of the divine character. Or it may mean, that he had dealt unjustly with people in his contact with them.

And it profited me not - The word used here (שׁוה *shâvâh*) means properly to be even or level; then to be equal, or of like value; and here may mean, that he now saw that it was no advantage to him to have done wickedly, since it brought upon him such a punishment, or the benefit which he received from his life of wickedness was no equivalent for the pain which he had been called to suffer in consequence of it. This is the common interpretation. Rosenmuller, however, suggests another, which is, that he designs by this language to express his sense of the divine mercy, and that it means "my afflictions are in no sense equal to my deserts. I have not been punished as I might justly have been, for God has interposed to spare me." It seems to me, however, that the former interpretation accords best with the meaning of the words and the scope of the passage. It would then be the reflection of a man on the bed of suffering, that the course of life which brought him there had been attended with no advantage, but had been the means of plunging him into deserved sorrows. from which he could be rescued only by the grace of God.

Verse 28

He will deliver his soul - Margin, "He hath delivered my soul." There are various readings here in the text, which give rise to this diversity of interpretation. The present reading in the text is נפשׁי *nepheshay* - "my soul"; and according to this, it is to be regarded as the language of the sufferer

celebrating the mercy of God, and is language which is connected with the confession in the previous verse, "I have sinned; I found it no advantage; and he hath rescued me from death." Many manuscripts, however, read נפשׁו *nepheshô* - "his soul"; and according to this, the language would be that of Elihu, saying, that in those circumstances God would deliver him when he made suitable confession of his sin. The sense is essentially the same. The Vulgate has, "He will deliver his soul;" the Septuagint, "Save my soul."

From going into the pit - Notes Job 33:18.

And his life shall see the light - Here there is the same variety of reading which occurs in regard to the word soul. The present Hebrew text is (חיתי *chayātay*) "my life"; many manuscripts read (חיתו *chayātô*), "his life." The phrase "to see the light" is equivalent to live. Death was represented as going down into regions where there was no ray of light. See Job 3:5; Job 10:21-22.

Verse 29

Lo, all these things worketh God - That is, he takes all these methods to warn people, and to reclaim them from their evil ways.

Oftentimes - Hebrew as in the margin, twice, thrice. This may be taken either as it is by our translators, to denote an indefinite number, meaning that God takes frequent occasion to warn people, and repeats the admonition when they disregard it, or more probably Elihu refers here to the particular methods which he had specified, and which were three in number. First, warnings in the visions of the night, Job 33:14-17. Second, afflictions, Job 33:19-22. Third, the messenger which God sent to make the sufferer acquainted with the design of the affliction, and to assure him that he might return to God, Job 33:23-26. So the Septuagint understands it, which rendered it, ὁδοὺς τρεῖς *hodous treis* - three ways, referring to the three methods which Elihu had specified.

Verse 30

To bring back his soul from the pit - To keep him from descending to the grave, and to the dark world beneath. He takes these methods of warning people, in order that they may not bring destruction on themselves. See Job 33:18.

To be enlightened with the light of the living - That he may still enjoy life, and not descend to the world of shades.

Verse 31

Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me … - Elihu designs to intimate that he had much more to say which demanded close attention. He begged, therefore, that Job would hear him patiently through.

Verse 32

If thou hast anything to say, answer me - In the previous verse, Elihu had asked that Job would hear all that he had to say. Yet here, in view of what he had said, he asks of him that if there were any thing from which he dissented, he would now express his dissent. We may suppose that he paused at this part of his speech, and as what he had said related particularly to Job, he felt that it was proper that he should have an opportunity to reply.

For I desire to justify thee - I would do you justice. I would not pervert what you have said, or attribute to you any wrong opinions or any improper motives Perhaps there may be included also a wish to vindicate him, if he possibly could. He did not desire to dispute for the sake of disputing, or to blame him if he could avoid it, but his aim was the truth; and if he could, he wished to vindicate the character of Job from the aspersions which had been cast upon it.

Verse 33

If not, hearken unto me … - If nothing has been said from which you dissent, then listen to me, and I will explain further the perplexing subject which has excited so much discussion. These remarks of Elihu imply great confidence in the truth of what he had to say, but they are not arrogant and disrespectful. He treats Job with the utmost deference; is willing to hear all that could be said in opposition to his own views, and is desirous of not wounding his feelings or doing injustice to his cause. It may be supposed that he paused here, to give Job an opportunity to reply, but as he made no remarks, he resumed his discourse in the following chapter. The views which he had expressed were evidently new to Job, and were entirely at variance with those of his three friends, and they appear to have been received by all with profound and respectful silence.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 34

Verse 1

Furthermore, Elihu answered and said - That is, evidently, after a pause to see if Job had anything to reply. The word answered in the Scriptures often means "to begin a discourse," though nothing had been said by others; see Job 3:2; Isaiah 14:10; Zechariah 1:10; Zechariah 3:4; Zechariah 4:11-12. Sometimes it is used with reference to a subject, meaning that one replied to what could be suggested on the opposite side. Here it maybe understood either in the general sense of beginning a discourse, or more probably as replying to the sentiments which Job had advanced in the debate with his friends.

Verse 2

Hear my words, O ye wise men - Addressing particularly the three friends of Job. The previous chapter had been addressed to Job himself. He had stated to him his views of the design of affliction, and he had nothing to reply. He now addresses himself to his friends, with a particular view of examining some of the sentiments which Job had advanced, and of showing where he was in error. He addresses them as "wise men," or sages, and as endowed with "knowledge," to conciliate their attention, and because he regarded them as qualified to understand the difficult subject which he proposed to explain.

Verse 3

For the ear trieth words - Ascertains their meaning, and especially determines what words are worth regarding. The object of this is, to fix the attention on what he was about to say; to get the ear so that every word should make its proper impression. The word ear in this place, however, seems not to be used to denote the external organ, but the whole faculty of hearing. It is by hearing that the meaning of what is said is determined, as it is by the taste that the quality of food is discerned.

As the mouth tasteth meat - Margin, as in Hebrew "palate." The meaning is, as the organ of taste determines the nature of the various articles of food. The same figure is used by Job in Job 12:11.

Verse 4

Let us choose to us judgment - That is, let us examine and explore what is true and right. Amidst the conflicting opinions, and the sentiments

which have been advanced, let us find out what will abide the test of close investigation.

Verse 5

For Job hath said, I am righteous - see Job 13:18, "I know that I shall be justified;" compare Job 23:10-11, where he says, if he was tried he would come forth as gold. Elihu may have also referred to the general course of remark which he had pursued as vindicating himself.

And God hath taken away my judgment - This sentiment is found in Job 27:2; see the notes at that place.

Verse 6

Should I lie against my right? - These are also quoted as the words of Job, and as a part of the erroneous opinions on which Elihu proposes to comment. These words do not occur, however, as used by Job respecting himself, and Elihu must be understood to refer to what he regarded as the general strain of the argument maintained by him. In regard to the meaning of the words, there have been various opinions. Jerome renders them, "For in judging me there is falsehood - *mendacium est*; my violent arrow (the painful arrow in me) is without any sin." The Septuagint, "He the Lord hath been false in my accusation" - ἐψένσατο δὲ τῳ κρίματί μου *epseusato de tō krimati mou* - "my arrow is heavy without transgression." Coverdale, "I must needs be a liar, though my cause be right." Umbreit renders it, "I must lie if I should acknowledge myself to be guilty."

Noyes, "Though I am innocent, I am made a liar." Prof. Lee, "Should I lie respecting my case? mine arrow is mortal without transgression." That is, Job said he could not lie about it; he could use no language that would deceive. He felt that a mortal arrow had reached him without transgression, or without any adequate cause. Rosenmuller renders it, "However just may be my cause, I appear to be a liar." That is, he was regarded as guilty, and treated accordingly, however conscious he might be of innocence, and however strenuously he might maintain that he was not guilty. The meaning probably is, "I am held to be a liar. I defend myself; go over my past life; state my course of conduct; meet the accusations of my friends, but in all this I am still held to be a liar. My friends so regard me - for they will not credit my statements, and they go on still to argue as if I was the most guilty of mortals. And God also in this holds me to be a liar, for he treats me constantly as if I were guilty. He hears not my vindication, and he inflicts pain and woe upon me as if all that I had said about my own integrity were

false, and I were one of the most abandoned of mortals, so that on all hands I am regarded and treated as if I were basely false." The literal translation of the Hebrew is, "Concerning my judgment (or my cause) I am held to be a liar."

My wound is incurable - Margin, as in Hebrew "arrow." The idea is, that a deadly arrow had smitten him, which could not be extracted. So in Virgil:

Haeret lateri letalis arundo. Aeneid iv. 73.

The image is taken from an animal that had been pierced with a deadly arrow.

Without transgression - Without any sin that deserved such treatment. Job did not claim to be absolutely perfect; he maintained only that the sufferings which he endured were no proper proof of his character; compare Job 6:4.

Verse 7

What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water? - A similar image occurs in Job 15:16. The idea is, that he was full of reproachful speeches respecting God; of the language of irreverence and rebellion. He indulged in it as freely as a man drinks water; gathers up and imbibes all the language of reproach that he can find, and indulges in it as if it were perfectly harmless.

Verse 8

Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity - That is, in his sentiments. The idea is, that he advocated the same opinions which they did, and entertained the same views of God and of his government. The same charge had been before brought against him by his friends; see the notes at Job 21.

Verse 9

For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself in God - That is, there is no advantage in piety, and in endeavoring to serve God. It will make no difference in the divine dealings with him. He will be treated just as well if he lives a life of sin, as if he undertakes to live after the severest rules of piety. Job had not used precisely this language, but in Job 9:22, he had expressed nearly the same sentiment. It is probable, however, that Elihu refers to what he regarded as the general scope and tendency of his remarks, as implying that there was no respect paid to character in the divine dealings with mankind. It was easy to pervert the

views which Job actually entertained, so as to make him appear to maintain this sentiment, and it was probably with a special view to this charge that Job uttered the sentiments recorded in Job 21; see the notes at that chapter.

Verse 10

Therefore hearken unto me - Elihu proceeds now to reply to what he regarded as the erroneous sentiments of Job, and to show the impropriety of language which reflected so much on God and his government. Instead, however, of meeting the facts in the case, and showing how the actual course of events could be reconciled with justice, he resolves it all into a matter of sovereignty, and maintains that it is wrong to doubt the rectitude of the dealings of one so mighty as God. In this he pursues the same course substantially which the friends of Job had done, and does little more to solve the real difficulties in the case than they had. The facts to which Job had referred are scarcely adverted to; the perplexing questions are still unsolved, and the amount of all that Elihu says is, that God is a sovereign, and that there must be an improper spirit when people presume to pronounce on his dealings.

Ye men of understanding - Margin, as in Hebrew men of "heart." The word heart is used here as it was uniformly among the Hebrews; the Jewish view of physiology being that the heart was the seat of all the mental operations. They never speak of the head as the seat of the intellect, as we do. The meaning here is, that Elihu regarded them as sages, qualified to comprehend and appreciate the truth on the subject under discussion.

Far be it from God - Hebrew חלילה *châlîylâh* - "profane, unholy." It is an expression of abhorrence, as if the thing proposed were profane or unholy: 1 Samuel 20:2; Genesis 18:25; Joshua 24:16. The meaning here is, that the very idea that God would do wrong, or could patronize iniquity, was a profane conception, and was not to be tolerated for a moment. This is true enough, and in this general sentiment, no doubt, Job would himself have concurred.

Verse 11

For the work of a man shall he render unto him - He shall treat each man as he deserves - and this is the essence of justice. Of the truth of this, also, there could have been no question. Elihu does not, indeed, apply it to the case of Job, but there can be little doubt that he intended that it should have such a reference. He regarded Job as having accused God of injustice, for having inflicted woes on him which he by no means deserved. He takes

care, therefore, to state this general principle, that with God there must be impartial justice - leaving the application of this principle to the facts in the world, to be arranged as well as possible. No one can doubt that Elihu in this took the true ground, and that the great principle is to be held that God can do no wrong, and that all the facts in the universe must be consistent with this great principle, whether we can now see it to be so or not.

Verse 12

Yea, surely God will not do wickedly - So important does Elihu hold this principle to be, that he repeats it, and dwells upon it. He says, "it surely (אמנם *'omnâm*) must be so." The principle must be held at all hazards, and no opinion which contravenes this should be indulged for one moment. His ground of complaint against Job was, that he had not held fast to this principle, but, under the pressure of his sufferings, had indulged in remarks which implied that God might do wrong.

Neither will the Almighty pervert judgment - As Elihu supposed Job to have maintained; see Job 34:5. To "pervert judgment" is to do injustice; to place injustice in the place of right.

Verse 13

Who hath given him a charge over the earth? - That is, he is the great original Proprietor and Ruler of all. He has derived his authority to govern from no one; he is under subjection to no one, and he has, therefore, an absolute right to do his own pleasure. Reigning then with absolute and original authority, no one has a right to call in question the equity of what he does. The argument of Elihu here, that God would do right, is derived solely from his independence. If he were a subordinate governor, he would feel less interest in the correct administration of affairs, and might be tempted to commit injuries to gratify the feelings of his superior. As he is, however, supreme and independent, he cannot be tempted to do wrong by any reference to a superior will; as the universe is that which he has made, and which belongs to him, every consideration would lead him to do right to all. He can have no partiality for one more than another; and there can be no one to whom he would desire to do injustice - for who wishes to injure that which belongs to himself? Prof. Lee, however, renders this, "Who hath set a land in order against him?" He supposes that the remark is designed to show the folly of rebelling against God. But the former interpretation seems better to accord with the scope of the argument.

Or who hath disposed the whole world? - Who has arranged the affairs of the universe? The word rendered "world," usually means the habitable earth, but it is employed here in the sense of the universe, and the idea is, that God has arranged and ordered all things, and that he is the supreme and absolute Sovereign.

Verse 14

If he set his heart upon man - Margin, as in Hebrew "upon him" - meaning "man." That is, if he fixes his attention particularly on him, or should form a purpose in regard him. The argument seems to be tbis. "If God wished such a thing, and should set his heart upon it, he could easily cut off the whole race. He has power to do it, and no one can deny him the right. Man has no claim to life, but he who gave it has a right to withdraw it, and the race is absolutely dependent on this infinite Sovereign. Being such a Sovereign, therefore, and having such a right, man cannot complain of his Maker as unjust, if he is called to pass through trials." Rosenmuller, however, supposes this is to be taken in the sense of severe scrutiny, and that it means, "If God should examine with strictness the life of man, and mark all his faults, no flesh would be allowed to live. All would be found to be guilty, and would be cut off." Grotius supposes it to mean, "If God should regard only himself; if he wished only to be good to himself - that is, to consult his own welfare, he would take away life from all, and live and reign alone." This is also the interpretation of Umbreit, Schnurrer, and Eichhorn. Noyes regards it as an argument drawn from the benevolence of God, meaning if God were severe, unjust, and revengeful, the earth would be a scene of universal desolation. It seems to me, however, that it is rather an argument from the absolute sovereignty or power of the Almighty, implying that man had no right to complain of the divine dealings in the loss of health, property, or friends; for if he chose he might sweep away the whole race, and leave the earth desolate.

If he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath - The spirit of man is represented as having been originally given by God, and as returning to him when man dies; Ecclesiastes 12:7, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

Verse 15

All flesh shall perish together - If God chose, he would have a right to cut down the whole race. How then shall people complain of the loss of

health, comforts, and friends, and presume to arraign God as if he were unjust?

Verse 16

If now thou hast understanding hear this - This appears to be addressed to Job. The discourse before this had been directed to his three friends, but Elihu appears here to have turned to Job, and to have made a solemn appeal to him, whether this were not so. In the subsequent verses he remonstrates with him about his views, and shows him that what he had said implied severe reflections on the character and government of God.

Verse 17

Shall even he that hateth right govern? - Margin, as in Hebrew "bind." That is, shall he bind by laws. The argument in this verse seems to be an appeal to what must be the conviction of mankind, that God, the Great Governor of the universe, could not be unjust. This conviction, Elihu appears to have supposed, was so deep in the human mind, that he might appeal even to Job himself for its truth. The question here asked implies that it would be impossible to believe that one who was unjust could govern the universe. Such a supposition would be at variance with all the convictions of the human soul, and all the indications of the nature of his government to be found in his works.

And wilt thou condemn him that is most just? - The great and holy Ruler of the universe. The argument here is, that Job had in fact placed himself in the attitude of condemning him who, from the fact that he was the Ruler of the universe, must be most just. The impropriety of this he shows in the following verses.

Verse 18

Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? - The argument here is this: "There would be gross impropriety in arraigning the conduct of an earthly monarch, and using language severely condemning what he does. Respect is due to those of elevated rank. Their plans are often concealed. It is difficult to judge of them until they are fully developed. To condemn those plans, and to use the language of complaint, would not be tolerated, and would be grossly improper. How much more so when that language relates to the Great, the Infinite God, and to his eternal plans!" It may be added here, in accordance with the sentiment of Elihu, that people often indulge in thoughts and language about God which they would not tolerate respecting an earthly monarch.

Verse 19

How much less to him that accepteth not the person of princes - To accept the person of anyone is to treat him with special favor on account of his rank, his wealth, or from favoritism and partiality. This God often disclaims in respect to himself; (compare Galatians 2:6; Acts 10:34; 2 Chronicles 19:7; Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25), and solemnly forbids it in others; see James 2:1, James 2:3, James 2:9; Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:17; Deuteronomy 16:19. The meaning here is, that God is entirely impartial in his administration, and treats all as they ought to be treated. He shows favor to no one on account of wealth, rank, talent, office, or joyous apparel, and he excludes no one from favor on account of poverty, ignorance, or a humble rank in life. This it seems was an admitted sentiment in the time of Elihu, and on the ground of the fact that it was indisputable, he strongly argues the impropriety of calling in question the equity of his administration in language such as that which Job had used.

For they all are the work of his hands - He regards them all as his creatures. No one has any special claim on him on account of rank, talent, or wealth. Every creature that he has made, high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, may expect that impartial justice will be done him, and that his external circumstances will not control or modify the divine determinations in regard to him, or the divine dealings toward him.

Verse 20

In a moment shall they die - That is, the rich and the great. They pass suddenly off the stage of action. They have no power to compel God to favor them, and they have no permanency of existence here which can constitute a claim on his special favor. Soon they will lie undistinguished in the dust. All are in his hand; and when he wills it, they must lie down in the dust together. He exempts none from death; spares none on account of beauty, rank, wealth, talent, or learning, but consigns all indiscriminately to the grave-showing that he is disposed to treat them all alike. This is urged by Elihu as a proof that God has no partiality, but treats all people as being on the same level - and there is no more striking illustration of this than is furnished by death. All die. None are spared on account of title, wealth, rank, beauty, age, or wisdom. All die in a manner that shows that he has no favoritism. The rich man may die with a malady as painful and protracted as the poor man; the beautiful and accomplished with a disease as foul and loathsome as the beggar. The sad change that the body undergoes in the

tomb is as repulsive in the one case as in the other; and amidst all the splendor of rank, and the magnificence of dress and equipage, God intends to keep the great truth before the minds of people, that they are really on a level, and that all must share at his hand alike.

And the people shall be troubled - They shall be shaken, agitated, alarmed. They dread impending danger, or the prospect of sudden destruction.

At midnight - The image here is probably taken from an earthquake, or from a sudden onset made by a band of robbers on a village at night. The essential thought is that of the suddenness with which God can take away the mighty and the mean together. Nothing can resist him, and as he has this absolute control over people, and deals with all alike, there is great impropriety in complaining of his government.

And the mighty - Margin, "They shall take away the mighty." The idea is, that the great shall be removed - to wit, by sudden death or by overwhelming calamiiy. The argueat of Elihu in this passage Job 34:18-20 is, that it would be esteemed great presumption to arraign the conduct of a prince or king, and it must be much more so to call in question the doings of him who is so superior to princes and kings that he shows them no partiality on account of their rank, but sweeps them away by sudden calamity as he does the most humble of mankind.

Without hand - That is, without any human instrumentality, or without the use of any visible means. It is by a word - by an expression of his will - by power where the agency is not seen. The design is, to show that God can do it with infinite ease.

Verse 21

For his eyes are upon the ways of man - None can escape from his notice; compare Psalm 139:2-3.

Verse 22

There is no darkness - No dark cavern which can furnish a place of concealment. The guilty usually take refuge in some obscure place where people cannot detect them. But Elihu says that man has no power of concealing himself thus from God.

Nor shadow of death - A phrase here signifying deep darkness; see it explained in the notes at Job 3:5.

Where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves - That is, where they may conceal themselves so as not to be detected by God. They may

conceal themselves from the notice of man; they may escape the most vigilant police; they may elude all the officers of justice on earth. But they cannot be hid from God. There is an eye that sees their lurking places, and there is a hand that will drag them forth to justice.

Verse 23

For he will not lay upon man more than right - Very various translations have been given of this verse. According to our common version, it means that God will not deal with man in such a manner as to give him just reason for calling in question the rectitude of the divine dealings. He shall in no case receive more than his sins deserve, so as to give him cause for complaint. This is undoubtedly a correct sentiment; but it may be doubted whether it is the sense conveyed by the original. Umbreit renders it:

Denn er braucht auf einem Mann nicht lang zu achten
Um ihm vor Gott in das Gericht zn ziehen.

"For he needs not long to regard a man in order to bring him before God in judgment" - meaning that he has all power; that he can at once see all his character; and that he can bring him at once to his bar. This translation undoubtedly accords with the general scope of the argument. Noyes renders it:

He needeth not attend long to a man,
To bring him into judgment before God.

Wemyss renders it in a similar way:

He has no need of laborious inquiry,
In order to convict men at his tribunal.

Rosenmuller gives a similar sense to the passage. According to this, the meaning is, that there is no need that God should give long attention to a man, or go into a protracted investigation, in order that he may bring him to judgment. He knows him at a glance. He can at once convict him, and can decide the case in a moment without danger of error. Human tribunals are under a necessity of long and patient investigation, and then are often deceived; but no such necessity, and no such danger, pertains to God. This interpretation agrees with the scope of the passage (compare the notes at Job 34:24), and seems to me to be correct. The Hebrew literally is, "For not upon man will he place (scil. his mind or attention) long that he should go before God in judgment;" that is, there is no need of long and anxious

investigation on his part, in order that he may prove that it is right for him to cut man off. He may do it at once, and no one has a right to complain.

Verse 24

He shall break in pieces - He crushes or destroys the great. He is not intimidated by their wealth, their rank, or their number.

Without number - Margin, more correctly, "searching out." That is, he does it without the protracted process of a judicial investigation. The Hebrew word used here (חקר *chêqer*) means properly "a searching out," "an examination"; and the meaning here is, that there is no need of his going into a protracted investigation into the lives of wicked people before he brings them to punishment. He sees them at once; knows all their conduct, and may proceed against them without delay. Hence, it is that he comes often in such a sudden manner, and cuts them off. A human tribunal is under a necessity of examining witnesses and of attending to all the palliating circumstances, before it can pronounce a sentence on an offender. But it is not so with God. He judges at once and directly, and comes forth therefore in a sudden manner to cut down the guilty.

And set others in their stead - Place others in the situation which they now occupy. That is, he can with the utmost case make entire revolutions among people.

Verse 25

Therefore he knoweth their works - Or, "Because he knoweth their works." The word (לכן *lākên*) here rendered "therefore" is evidently used as denoting that since or because he was intimately acquainted with all which they did, he could justly bring vengeance upon them without long investigation.

And he overturneth them in the night - literally, "he turneth night;" meaning, probably, he turns night upon them; that is, he brings calamity upon them. The word "night" is often used to denote calamity, or ruin. Umbreit understands it in the sense of "turning about the night;" that is, that they had covered up their deeds as in the night, but that God "so turns the night about" as to bring them to the light of day. The Vulgate renders it *"et ideireo inducit noctem,"* "and therefore he brings night;" that is, he brings adversity and ruin. This is probably the correct interpretation.

So that they are destroyed - Margin, "crushed." The idea is, that when God thus brings adversity upon them, they are prostrated beneath his power.

Verse 26

He striketh them as wicked men - literally, "Under the wicked, or on account of the wicked, he smites them." That is, he deals with them "as if" they were wicked; he regards and treats them as such. He deals with them "under" the general character of wicked people, and punishes them accordingly.

In the open sight of others - Margin, as in Hebrew "in the place of beholders." The idea is, that it is done openly or publicly. Their sins had been committed in secret, but they are punished openly. The manifestation of the divine displeasure is in the presence of spectators, or is so open and public, that it cannot but be seen. It is very probable that in all this description Elihu had his eye upon the public calamities which had come upon Job, and that he meant to include him among the number of mighty men whom God thus suddenly overturned.

Verse 27

Because they turned back from him - Margin, "from after him." That is, they receded, or went away from God.

And would not consider any of his ways - They would not regard or attend to any of his commands. The word way, in the Scriptures, is often used to denote "religion." A "way" denotes the course of life which one leads; the path in which he walks. The "ways of God" denote his course or plan, his precepts or laws; and to depart from them, or to disregard them, is only another mode of saying that a man has no religion.

Verse 28

So that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him - - Their character is that of oppressors. They take away the rights of the poor; strip away their property without any just claims, and cause them to pour out their lamentations before God.

And he heareth the cry of the afflicted - They oppress the poor so that they appeal unto him, but God hears their cry, and brings punishment upon the oppressor. This is "a general remark" thrown in here, meaning that God "always" regards the cry of the oppressed. Its bearing on the case before us is, that God hears the appeal which the oppressed make to him, and as a consequence brings calamity upon those who are guilty of wrong.

Verse 29

When he giveth quietness - That is, when God designs to give rest, comfort, ease, or prosperity in any way to a man. The Hebrew word used here may refer to any kind of ease, rest, or peace. The idea which Elihu

intends to convey is, that God has all things under his control, and that he can bring prosperity or adversity upon an individual or a nation at his own pleasure.

Who then can make trouble? - literally, "Who can condemn, or hold guilty" - ירשע *yarâsha*ʿ The sense is, that no one can overwhelm him with the consciousness of guilt, to whom God intends to give the peace resulting from his favor and friendship. Or, no one can bring calamities upon a man "as if" he were guilty, or so as to "show" that he is guilty, when God intends to treat him as if he were not. This is as true now as it was in the time of Elihu. When God designs to give peace to a man's soul, and to impart to him the evidence that his sins are forgiven, there is no one who can excite in his mind the conviction of guilt, or take away the comfort that God gives. When he designs to "treat" a man as if he were his friend, and to impart to him such evidences of his favor as shall convince the world that he is his friend, there is no one who can prevent it. No one can so calumniate him, or so prejudice the world against him, or so arrest the descending tokens of the divine favor, as to turn back the proof of the favor of God; compare Proverbs 16:7.

And when he hideth his face - To "hide the face," is a common expression in the Scriptures to denote calamity, distress, and the lack of spiritual comfort, as the expression "to lift up the light of the countenance" is a common phrase to denote the opposite; compare Job 13:24.

Who then can behold him? - An expression denoting that no one can then have cheering and elevating views of God. No one can then have those clear conceptions of his character and government which will give peace to the soul. "This" is also as true now as it was in the time of Elihu. We are dependent on God himself for any just views of his own character, for any elevating and purifying conceptions of his government and plans, and for any consolation flowing in upon our souls from the evidence that he is our friend.

Whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only - The same truth pertains to nations and to individuals. The same laws respecting the sources of peace and happiness apply to both. Both are alike dependent on God, and neither can secure permanent peace and prosperity without him. Both are alike at his sovereign disposal; and neither can originate permanent sources of prosperity. This, too, is as true now as it was in the time of Elihu. Nations are more prone to forget it than individuals are, but

still it is a great truth which should never be forgotten, that neither have power to originate or perpetuate the means of happiness, but that both are alike dependent on God.

Verse 30

That the hypocrite reign not - All this is done to prevent wicked men from ruling over the people. The remarks of Elihu had had respect much to princes and kings, and he had shown that however great they were, they were in the hands of God, and were wholly at his disposal. He "now" says that the design of his dealings with them was to prevent their oppressing their fellow-men. The general scope of the remarks of Elihu is, that God is the universal Sovereign; that he has all people under his control, and that there are none so powerful as to be able to resist his will. The remark in this verse is thrown in, not as illustrating this general sentiment, but to show what was "in fact" the aim for which he thus interposed - to save people from being oppressed and crushed by those in authority.

Lest the people be ensnared - Hebrew "From their being snarers of the people." He thrusts down the mighty, in order that they may not be left to take the people as wild beasts are taken in the toils. They were disposed to make use of their power to oppress others, but God interposes, and the people are saved. For a fuller view of this verse, see the remarks of Rosenmuller.

Verse 31

Surely it is meet to be said unto God - It is evident that this verse commences a new strain of remark, and that it is designed particularly to bring Job to proper reflections in view of what had occurred. There has been, however, much diversity of opinion about the meaning of this and the following verses. Schultens enumerates no less than "fifteen" different interpretations which have been given of this verse. The "general" meaning seems to be, that a man who is afflicted ought to submit to God, and not to murmur or complain. He ought to suppose that there is some good reason for what God does, and to be resigned to his will, even where he cannot "see" the reason of his dispensations. The drift of all the remarks of Elihu is, that God is a great and inscrutable Severeign; that he has a right to reign, and that man should submit unqualifiedly to him. In this passage he does not reproach Job harshly.

He does not say that he had been guilty of great crimes. He does not affirm that the sentiments of the three friends of Job were correct, or

maintain that Job was a hypocrite. He states a "general" truth, which he considers applicable to all, and says that it becomes all who are afflicted to submit to God, and to resolve to offend no more; to go to God with the language of humble confession, and when everything is dark and gloomy in the divine dealings to implore "his" teachings, and to entreat him to shed light on the path. Hence, he says, "It is meet or proper to use this language before God. It becomes man. He should presume that God is right, and that he has some good reasons for his dealings, though they are inscrutable. Even when a sufferer is not to be reckoned among the most vile and wicked; when he is conscious that his general aim has been to do right: and when his external character has been fair, it is to be "presumed to be possible" that he may have sinned. He may not have wholly known himself. He may have indulged in things that were wrong without having been scarcely conscious of it. He may have loved the world too much; may have fixed his affections with idolatrous attachment on his property or friends; may have had a temper such as ought not to be indulged; or he may have relied on what he possessed, and thus failed to recognize his dependence on God. In such cases, it becomes man to have so much confidence in God as to go and acknowledge "his right" to inflict chastisement, and to entreat him to teach the sufferer "why" he is thus afflicted."

I have borne chastisement - The word "chastisement" is not in the Hebrew. The Hebrew is simply - נשׂאתי *nâśâ'tiy* "I have borne," or "I bear." Umbreit renders it, "I repent." Some word like "chastisement" or "punishment" must be understood after "I have borne." The idea evidently is, that a man who is afflicted by God, even when he cannot see the reason "why" he is afflicted, and when he is not conscious that he has been guilty of any particular sin that led to it, should be willing to regard it as "a proof" that he is guilty, and should examine and correct his life. But there is a great variety of opinion in regard to the meaning of this passage - no less than fifteen different interpretations being enumerated by Schultens.

I will not offend any more - לא אחבל *lo' 'châbal* - "I will not act wickedly; I will no more do corruptly." The sense is, that his afflictions should lead him to a resolution to reform his life, and to sin no more. This just and beautiful sentiment is as applicable to us now as it was to the afflicted in the time of Elihu. It is a common thing to be afflicted. Trial often comes upon us when we can see no particular sin which has led to it, and no special reason why we should be afflicted rather than others. We

should, however, regard it as a proof that there is something in our hearts or lives which may be amended, and should endeavor to ascertain what it. is, and resolve to offend no more. Anyone, if he will examine himself carefully, can find sufficient reasons why "he" should be visited with the rod of chastisement, and though we may not be able to see why others are preserved from such calamities, yet we can see that there are reasons in abundance why we should be recalled from our wanderings.

Verse 32

That which I see not, teach thou me - That is, in regard to my errors and sins. No prayer could be more appropriate than this. It is language becoming every one who is afflicted, and who does not see clearly the reason why it is done. The sense is, that with a full belief that he is liable to error and sin, that he has a wicked and deceitful heart, and that God never afflicts without reason, he should go to him and ask him to show him "why" he has afflicted him. He should not complain or repine; he should not accuse God of injustice or partiality; he should not attempt to cloak his offences, but should go and entreat him to make him acquainted with the sins of heart and life which have led to these calamities. Then only will he be in a state of mind in which he will be likely to be profited by trials.

If I have done iniquity, I will do no more - Admitting the possibility that he had erred. Who is there that cannot appropriately use this language when he is afflicted?

Verse 33

Should it be according to thy mind? - Margin, as in Hebrew "from with thee" - המעמך *hamēʿimekā* There has been much diversity of opinion in regard to the meaning of this verse. It is exceedingly obscure in the original, and has the appearance of being a proverbial expression. The general sense seems to be, that God will not be regulated in his dealings by what may be the views of man, or by what man might be disposed to choose or refuse. He will act according to his own views of what is right and proper to be done. The phrase, "should it be according to thy mind," means that it is not to be expected that God will consult the views and feelings of man rather than his own.

He will recompense it - He will visit with good or evil, prosperity or adversity, according as he shall judge to be right.

Whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose - Whatever may be your preferenccs or wishes. He will act according to his own views of right.

The idea is, that God is absolute and independent, and does according to his own pleasure. He is a just Sovereign, dispensing his favors and appointing calamity, not according to the will of individual people, but holding the scales impartially, and doing what "he" esteems to be right.

And not I - Rosenmuller, Drusius, DeWette, and Noyes, render this, "And not he," supposing that it refers to God, and means that the arrangements which are to affect people should be as "he" pleases, and not such as "man" would prefer. Umbreit explains it as meaning, "It is for you to determine in this matter, not for me. You are the person most interested. I am not particularly concerned. Do you, therefore, speak and determine the matter, if you know what is the truth." The Vulgate renders it, "Will God seek that from thee because it displeases thee? For thou hast begun to speak, not I: for if thou knowest anything better, speak." So Coverdale, "Wilt thou not give a reasonable answer? Art thou afraid of anything, seeing thou begannest first to speak, and not I?" The great difficulty of the whole verse may be seen by consulting Schultens, who gives no less than "seventeen" different interpretations, which have been proposed - his own being different from all others. He renders it," Lo, he will repay you in your own way; for thou art full of sores - *"namquesubulceratus es:"* which, indeed, thou hast chosen, and not I - and what dost thou know? speak." I confess that I cannot understand the passage, nor do any of the interpretations proposed seem to be free from objections. I would submit the following, however, as a paraphrase made from the Hebrew, and differing somewhat from any interpretation which I have seen, as possibly expressing the true sense of the whole verse. "Shall it be from thee that God will send retribution on it (that is, on human conduct), because thou refusest or art reluctant, or because it is not in accordance with thy views? For thou must choose, and not I. Settle this matter, for it pertains particularly to you, and not to me, and what thou knowest, speak. If thou hast any views in regard to this, let them be expressed, for it is important to know on what principles God deals with men."

Verse 34-35

Let men of understanding - Margin, as in Hebrew "heart." The "heart," as there has been frequent occasions to remark, in the Scriptures is often used to denote the seat of the mind or soul, as the head is with us. Rosenmuller, Umbreit, and Noyes, render this passage as if it were to be taken in connection with the following verse, "Men of understanding will

say, and a wise man who hears my views will unite in saying, ‹Job has spoken without knowledge, and his words are without wisdom.‘” According to this, the two verses express a sentiment in which Elihu supposes every wise man who had attended to him would concur, that what Job had said was not founded in knowledge or on true wisdom.

Verse 36

My desire is - Margin, “or, “my father, let Job be tried.”” This variation between the text and the margin, arises from the different interpretations affixed to the Hebrew word אבי *'âbiy* The Hebrew word commonly means “father,” and some have supposed that that sense is to be retained here, and then it would be a solemn appeal to God as his Father - expressing the earnest prayer of Elihu that Job might be fully tried. But the difficulties in this interpretation are obvious:

(1) Such a mode of appeal to God occurs nowhere else in the book, and it is little in the spirit of the poem. No particular reason can be assigned why that solemn appeal should be made here, rather than in many other places.

(2) The name “Father,” though often given to God in the Scriptures, is not elsewhere given to him in this book.

The probability is, therefore, that the word is from אבה *'âbâh* - “to breathe after, to desire,” and means that Elihu “desired” that Job should have a fair trial. No other similar form of the word, however, occurs The Vulgate renders it, “Pater mi, my father;” the Septuagint, “But learn, Job, no more to make reply like the foolish;” the Chaldee, צבינא - “I desire.”

May be tried - That his views may be fully canvassed and examined. He had expressed sentiments which Elihu thought should not be allowed to pass without the most careful examination into their truth and bearing. “Unto the end.” In the most full and free manner; that the matter should be pursued as far as possible, so that it might be wholly understood. Literally, it means “forever” - עד־נצח *ʿad -netsach* Because of his answers for wicked men - Because of the views which he has expressed, which seem to favor the wicked. Elihu refers to the opinions advanced by Job that God did not punish people in this life, or did not deal with them according to their characters, which “he” interpreted as giving countenance to wickedness, or as affirming the God was not the enemy of impiety. The Vulgate renders

this, “My Father, let Job be tried to the end; do not cease from the man of iniquity;” but the true meaning doubtless is, that Job had uttered sentiments which Elihu understood to favor the wicked, and he was desirous that every trial should be applied to him which would tend to correct his erroneous views.

Verse 37

For he addeth rebellion unto his sin - To the sin which he has formerly committed and which bas brought these trials upon him, he now adds the sin of complaining and rebellion against God. Of Job, this was certainly not true to the extent which Elihu intended, but it is a very common case in afflictions. A man is visited with calamity as a chastisement for his sins. Instead of searching out the cause why he is afflicted, or bowing with resignation to the superior wisdom of God when he cannot “see” any cause, he regards himself as unjustly dealt with; complains of the government of God as severe, and gives “occasion” for a severer calamity in some other form. The result is often that he is visited with severe affliction, and is made to see both his original offence and the accumulated guilt which has made a new form of punishment necessary.

He clappeth his hands amongst us - To clap the hands is either a signal of applause or triumph, or a mark of indignation, Numbers 24:10, or of derision, Job 27:23. It seems to be used in some such sense here, as expressing contempt or derision for the sentiments of his friends. The meaning is, that instead of treating the subject under discussion with a calm spirit and a disposition to learn the truth and profit by it, he had manifested in relation to the whole matter great disrespect, and had conductcd like one who attempts to silence others, or who shows his contempt for them by clapping his hands at them. It is scarcely necessary to say, that, notwithstanding all the professed candor and impartiality of Elihu, this is a most unfair representation of the general spirit of Job. That he had sometimes given vent to improper feelings there can be no doubt, but nothing had occurred to justify this statement.

And multiplieth his words against God - That is, his arguments are against the justice of his government and dealings. In the special phrase used here - “he multiplieth “words,”” Elihu means, probably, to say, that there was more of “words” than of argument in what Job had said, and that he was not content even with expressing his improper feelings once, but

that he piled words on words, and epithet on epithet, that he might more fully give utterance to his reproachful feelings against his Maker.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 35

Verse 1

Elihu spake - Hebrew, ויען *vayaʿan* "And he answered"; the word "answer" being used, as it is often in the Scriptures, to denote the commencement of a discourse. We may suppose that Elihu had paused at the close of his second discourse, possibly with a view to see whether there was any disposition to reply.

Verse 2

Thinkest thou this to be right? - This is the point which Elihu now proposes to examine. He, therefore, solemnly appeals to Job himself to determine whether he could himself say that he thought such a sentiment correct.

That thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's - Job had nowhere said this in so many words, but Elihu regarded it as the substance of what he had said, or thought that what he had said amounted to the same thing. He had dwelt much on his own sincerity and uprightness of life; he had maintained that he had not been guilty of such crimes as to make these calamities deserved, and he had indulged in severe reflections on the dealings of God with him; compare Job 9:30-35; Job 10:13-15. All this Elihu interprets as equivalent to saying, that he was more righteous than his Maker. It cannot be denied that Job had given occasion for this interpretation to be put on his sentiments, though it cannot be supposed that he would have affirmed this in so many words.

Verse 3

For thou saidst - Another sentiment of a similar kind which Elihu proposes to examine. He had already adverted to this sentiment of Job in Job 34:9, and examined it at some length, and had shown in reply to it that God could not be unjust, and that there was great impropriety when man presumed to arraign the justice of the Most High. He now adverts to it again in order to show that God could not be benefited or injured by the conduct of man, and that he was, therefore, under no inducement to treat him otherwise than impartially.

What advantage will it be unto thee? - see the notes at Job 34:9. The phrase "unto thee," refers to Job himself. He had said this to himself; or to his own soul. Such a mode of expression is not uncommon in the Scriptures.

And, What profit shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin - Margin, "or, by it" more than by my sin."" The Hebrew will admit of either of these interpretations, and the sense is not materially varied. The idea is, that as to good treatment or securing the favor of God under the arrangements of his government, a man might just as well be wicked as righteous. He would be as likely to be prosperous in the world, and to experience the tokens of the divine favor. Job had by no means advanced such a sentiment; but he had maintained that he was treated "as if" he were a sinner; that the dealings of Providence were "not" in this world in accordance with the character of people; and this was interpreted by Elihu as maintaining that there was no advantage in being righteous, or that a man might as well be a sinner. It was for such supposed sentiments as these, that Elihu and the three friends of Job charged him with giving "answers" for wicked people, or maintaining opinions which went to sustain and encourage the wicked; see Job 34:36.

Verse 4

I will answer thee - Margin, "return to thee words." Elihu meant to explain this more fully than it had been done by the friends of Job, and to show where Job was in error.

And thy companions with thee - Eliphaz, in Job 22:2, had taken up the same inquiry, and proposed to discuss the subject, but he had gone at once into severe charges against Job, and been drawn into language of harsh crimination, instead of making the matter clear, and Elihu now proposes to state just how it is, and to remove the objections of Job. It may be doubted, however, whether he was much more successful than Eliphaz had been. The doctrine of the future state, as it is revealed by Christianity, was needful to enable these speakers to comprehend and explain this subject.

Verse 5

Look unto the heavens, and see - This is the commencement of the reply which Elihu makes to the sentiment which he had understood Job to advance, and which Eliphaz had proposed formerly to examine. The general object of the reply is, to show that God is so great that he cannot be affected with human conduct, and that he has no interest in treating people otherwise than according to character. He is so exalted that their conduct cannot reach and affect his happiness. It ought to be "presumed," therefore, since there is no motive to the contrary, that the dealings of God with people would be impartial, and that there "would" be an advantage in serving him - not because people could lay him under "obligation," but because it was right

and proper that such advantage should accrue to them. To impress this view on the mind, Elihu directs Job and his friends to look to the heavens - so lofty, grand, and sublime; to reflect how much higher they are than man; and to remember that the great Creator is "above" all those heavens, and "thus" to see that he is so far cxalted that he is not dependent on man; that he cannot be affected by the righteousness or wickedness of his creatures; that his happiness is not dependent on them, and consequently that it is to bc presumed that he would act impartially, and treat all people as they deserved. There "would" be, therefore, an advantage in serving God.

And behold the clouds - Also far above us, and seeming to float in the heavens. The sentiment here is, that one view of the astonishing display of wisdom and power above us must extinguish every feeling that he will be influenced in his dealings as people are in theirs, or that he can gain or suffer anything by the good or bad behavior of his creatures.

Verse 6

If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? - This should not be interpreted as designed to justify sin, or as saying that there is no evil in it, or that God does not regard it. That is not the point or scope of the remark of Elihu. His object is to show that God is not influenced in his treatment of his creatures as people are in their treatment of each other. He has no "interest" in being partial, or in treating them otherwise than they deserve. If they sin against him his happiness is not so marred that he is under any inducement to interpose "by passion," or in any other way than that which is "right."

Verse 7

If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? - The same sentiment substantially as in the previous verses. It is, that God is supreme and independent. He does not desire such benefits from the services of his friends and is not so dependent on them; as to be induced to interpose in their favor, in any way beyond what is strictly proper. It is to be presumed, therefore, that he will deal with them according to what is right, and as it is right that they should experience proofs of his favor, it followed that there "would be" advantage in serving him, and in being delivered from sin; that it "would be" better to be holy than to lead a life of transgression. This reasoning seems to be somewhat abstract, but it is correct, and is as sound now as it was in the time of Elihu. There is no reason why God should not treat people according to their character. He is not so under obligations to

his friends, and has not such cause to dread his foes; he does not derive so much benefit from the one, or receive such injury from the other, that he is under any inducement to swerve from strict justice; and it follows, therefore, that where there ought to be reward there will be, where there ought to be punishment there will be, and consequently that there is an advantage in being righteous.

Verse 8

Thy wickedness may hurt a Man as thou art - That is, it may injure him, but not God. He is too far exalted above man, and too independent of man in his sources of happiness, to be affected by what he can do. The object of the whole passage Job 35:6-8 is, to show that God is independent of people, and is not governed in his dealings with them on the principles which regulate their conduct with each other. One man may be greatly benefited by the conduct of another, and may feel under obligation to reward him for it; or he maybe greatly injured in his person, property, or reputation, by another, and will endeavor to avenge himself. But nothing of this kind can happen to God. If he rewards, therefore, it must be of his grace and mercy, not because he is laid under obligation; if he inflicts chastisement, it must be because people deserve it, and not because God has been injured. In this reasoning Elihu undoubtedly refers to Job, whom he regards as having urged a "claim" to a different kind of treatment, because he supposed that he "deserved" it. The general principle of Elihu is clearly correct, that God is entirely independent of human beings; that neither our good nor evil conduct can effect his happiness, and that consequently his dealings with us are those of impartial justice.

Verse 9

By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry - It is not quite easy to see the connection which this verse has with what goes before, or its bearing on the argument of Elihu. It seems however, to refer to the "oppressed in general," and to the fact, to which Job had himself adverted Job 24:12, that people are borne down by oppression and that God does not interpose to save them. They are suffered to remain in that state of oppression - trodden down by people, crushed by the armor of a despot, and overwhelmed with poverty, sorrow, and want, and God does not interpose to rescue them. He looks on and sees all this evil, and does not come forth to deliver those who thus suffer. This is a common case, according to the view of Job; this was his own case, and he could not

explain it, and in view of it he had indulged in language which Elihu regarded as a severe reflection on the government of the Almighty. He undertakes, therefore, to "explain the reason" why people are permitted thus to suffer, and why they are not relieved.

In the verse before us, he states "the fact," that multitudes "do" thus suffer under the arm of oppression - for that fact could not be denied; in the following verses, he states "the reason" why it is so, and that reason is, that they do not apply in any proper manner to God, who could "give songs in the night," or joy in the midst of calamities, and who could make them acquainted with the nature of his government as intelligent beings, so that they would be able to understand it and acquiesce in it. The phrase "the multitude of oppressions" refers to the numerous and repeated calamities which tyrants bring upon the poor, the down-trodden, and the slave. The phrases "to cry" and "they cry out," refer to the lamentations and sighs of those under the arm of the oppressor. Elihu did not dispute the truth of "the fact" as it was alleged by Job. That fact could not then be doubted any more than it can now, that there were many who were bowed down under burdens imposed by hard-hearted masters, and groaning under the government of tyrants, and that all this was seen and permitted by a holy God. This fact troubled Job - for he was one of this general class of sufferers; and this fact Elihu proposes to account for. Whether his solution is satisfactory, however, may still admit of a doubt.

Verse 10

But none saith - That is, none of the oppressed and down-trodden say. This is the solution which Elihu gives of what appeared so mysterious to Job, and of what Elihu regarded as the source of the bitter complaints of Job. The solution is, that when people are oppressed they do not apply to God with a proper spirit, and look to him that they may find relief. It was a principle with Elihu, that if when a man was afflicted he would apply to God with a humble and penitent heart, he would hear him, and would withdraw his hand; see this principle fully stated in Job 33:19-26. This Elihu now says, was not done by the oppressed, and this, according to him, is the reason why the hand of God is still upon them.

Where is God my Maker - That is, they do not appeal to God for relief. They do not inquire for him who alone can help them. This is the reason why they are not relieved.

Who giveth songs in the night - Night, in the Scriptures, is an emblem of sin, ignorance, and calamity. Here "calamity" is particularly referred to; and the idea is, that God can give joy, or impart consolation, in the darkest season of trial. He can impart such views of himself and his government as to cause the afflicted even to rejoice in his dealings; he can raise the song of praise even when all external things are gloomy and sad; compare Acts 16:25. There is great beauty in this expression. It has been verified in thousands of instances where the afflicted have looked up through tears to God, and their mourning has been turned into joy. Especially is it true under the gospel, that in the day of darkness and calamity, God puts into the mouth the language of praise, and fills the heart with thanksgiving. No one who has sought comfort in affliction with a right spirit has found it withheld, and all the sad and sorrowful may come to God with the assurance that he can put songs of praise into their lips in the night of calamity; compare Psalm 126:1-2.

Verse 11

Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth - Who is able to teach us mere than the irrational creation; that is, in regard to the nature and design of affliction. They suffer without knowing why. They are subjected to toil and hardships; endure pain, and die, without any knowledge why all this occurs, and without any rational view of the government and plans of God. It is not, or need not be so, says Elihu, when man suffers. He is intelligent. He can understand why he is afflicted. He has only to make use of his superior endowments, and apply to his Maker, and he will see so much of the reason of his doings that he will acquiesce in the wise arrangement. Perhaps there is an implied reflection here on those who suffered generally, as if they manifested no more intelligence than the brute creation. They make no use of intellectual endowments. They do not examine the nature of the divine administration, and they do not apply to God for instruction and help. If they should do so, he would teach them so that they would acquiesce and rejoice in his government and dealings. According to this view, the meaning is, that if people suffer without relief and consolation, it is to be attributed to their stupidity and unwillingness to look to God for light and aid, and not at all to his injustice.

Verse 12

There they cry - They cry out in the language of complaint, but not for mercy.

Because of the pride of evil men - That is, of their own pride. The pride of men so rebellious, and so disposed to complain of God, is the reason why they do not appeal to him to sustain them and give them relief. This is still as true as it was in the time of Elihu. The pride of the heart, even in affliction, is the true reason with multitudes why they do not appeal to God, and why they do not pray. They have valued themselves on their independence of spirit. They have been accustomed to rely on their own resources. They have been unwilling to recognize their dependence on any being whatever. Even in their trials, the heart is too wicked to acknowledge God, and they would be ashamed to be known to do what they regard as so weak a thing as "to pray." Hence, they complain in their afflictions; they linger on in their sufferings without consolation, and then die without hope. However inapplicable, therefore, this solution of the difficulty may have been to the case of Job, it is "not" inapplicable to the case of multitudes of sufferers. "Many of the afflicted have no peace or consolation in their trials - no ‹songs in the night‘ - because they are too proud to pray!"

Verse 13

Surely God will not hear vanity - A vain, hollow, heartless petition. The object of Elihu here is to account for the reason why sufferers are not relieved - having his eye, doubtless, on the case of Job as one of the most remarkable of the kind. The solution which he here gives of the difficulty is, that it is not consistent for God to hear a prayer where there is no sincerity. Of the "truth" of the remark there can be no doubt, but he seems to have taken it for granted that all prayers offered by unrelieved sufferers are thus insincere and hollow. This was needfull in his view to account for the fact under consideration, and this he "assumes" as being unquestionable. Yet the very point indispensable to make out his case was, that "in fact" the prayers offered by such persons were insincere.

Verse 14

Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him - This is addressed to Job, and is designed to entreat him to trust in God. Elihu seems to refer to some remark that Job had made, like that in Job 23:8, where he said that he could not come near him, nor bring his cause before him. If he went to the east, the west, thc north, or the south, he could not see him, and could get no opportunity of bringing his cause before him: see the notes at that place. Elihu here says that though it is true in fact that God is invisible, yet this ought not to be regarded as a reason why he should not confide in him. The

argument of Elihu here - which is undoubtedly sound - is, that the fact that God is invisible should not be regarded as any evidence that he does not attend to the affairs of people, or that he is not worthy of our love.

Judgment is before him - He is a God of justice, and will do that which is right.

Therefore trust him - Though he is invisible, and though you cannot bring, your cause directly before him. The word which is used here (תחולל *tchûlēl* from חול *chûl*) means "to turn around"; to twist; to be firm - as a rope is that is twisted; and then to wait or delay - that is, to be firm in patience. Here it may have this meaning, that Job was to be firm and unmoved, patiently waiting for the time when the now invisible God would interpose in his behalf, though he could not now see him. The idea is, that we may trust the "invisible God," or that we should patiently "wait" for him to manifest himself in our behalf, and may leave all our interests in his hands, with the feeling that they are entirely safe. It must be admitted that Job had not learned this lesson as fully as it might have been learned, and that he had evinced an undue anxiety for some public "manifestation" of the favor and friendship of God, and that he had not shown quite the willingness which he should have done to commit his interests into his hands, though he was unseen.

Verse 15

But now, because it is not so - This verse, as it stands in our authorized translation, conveys no intelligible idea. It is evident that the translators meant to give a literal version of the Hebrew, but without understanding its sense. An examination of the principal words and phrases may enable us to ascertain the idea which was in the mind of Elihu when it was uttered. The phrase in the Hebrew here (ועתה כי־אין *kîy -'ayin veʿattâh*) may mean, "but now it is as nothing," and is to be connected with the following clause, denoting, "now it is comparatively nothing that he has visited you in his anger;" that is, the punishment which he has inflicted on you is almost as nothing compared with what it might have been, or what you have deserved. Job had complained much, and Elihu says to him, that so far from having cause of complaint, his sufferings were as nothing - scarcely worth noticing, compared with what they might have been.

He hath visited in his anger - Margin, that is, "God." The word rendered "hath visited" (פקד *pâqad*) means to visit for any purpose - for mercy or justice; to review, take an account of, or investigate conduct. Here

it is used with reference to punishment - meaning that the punishment which he had inflicted was trifling compared with the desert of the offences.

Yet he knoweth it not - Margin, that is, "Job." The marginal reading here is undoubtedly erroneous. The reference is not to Job, but to God, and the idea is, that he did not "know," that is, did not "take full account" of the sins of Job. He passed them over, and did not bring them all into the account in his dealings with him. Had he done this, and marked every offence with the utmost strictness and severity, his punishment would have been much more severe.

In great extremity - The Hebrew here is מאד בפשׁ *bapash me'ôd* The word פשׁ *pash* occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew. The Septuagint renders it παράπτωμα *paraptōma* "offence." and the Vulgate *"scelus,"* that is, "transgression." The authors of those versions evidently read it as if it were פשׁע *pesha*ʿ iniquity; and it may be that the final ע (ʿ) has been dropped, like שו for שׁוא *shâv'* in Job 15:31. Gesenius, Theodotion and Symmachus in like manner render it "transgression." Others have regarded it as if from פוש "to be proud," and as meaning "in pride" or "arrogance;" and others, as the rabbis generally, as if from פוש, to "disperse," meaning "on account of the multitude," scil. of transgressions. So Rosenmuller, Umbreit, Luther, and the Chaldee. It seems probable to me that the interpretation of the Septuagint and the Vulgate is the correct one, and that the sense is, that he "does not take cognizance severely (מאד *me'ôd*) of transgressions;" that is, that he had not done it in the case of Job. This interpretation agrees with the scope of the passage, and with the view which Elihu meant to express - that God, so far from having given any just cause of complaint, had not even dealt with him as his sins deserved. Without any impeachment of his wisdom or goodness, his inflictions "might" have been far more severe.

Verse 16

Therefore - In view of all that Elihu had now said, be came to the conclusion that the views of Job were erroneous, and that he had no just cause of complaint. He had suffered no more than he had deserved; he might have obtained a release or mitigation if he had applied to God; and the government of God was just, and was every way worthy of confidence. The remarks of Job, therefore, complaining of the severity of his sufferings and of the government of God, were not based on knowledge, and had in fact no solid foundation.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 36

Verse 1

Elihu also proceeded - Hebrew added - ויסף *vayâsaph* Vulgate *"addens;"* Septuagint, Ηροσθεὶς *Eerostheis* - "adding, or proceeding." The Hebrew commentators remark that this word is used because this speech is "added" to the number which it might be supposed he would make. There had been "three" series of speeches, by Job and his friends, and in each one of them Job had spoken three times. Each one of the three friends had also spoken thrice, except Zophar, who failed to reply when it came to his turn. Elihu had also now made three speeches, and here he would naturally have closed, but it is remarked that he "added" this to the usual number.

Verse 2

Suffer me a little - Even beyond the regular order of speaking; or, allow me to go on though I have fully occupied my place in the "number" of speeches. Jarchi remarks that this verse is "Chaldaic," and it is worthy of observation that the principal words in it are not those ordinarily used in Hebrew to express the same thought, but are such as occur in the Chaldee. The word rendered "suffer" (כתר *kâthar*) has here a signification which occurs only an Syriac and Chaldee. It properly means in Hebrew: to "surround," in a hostile sense; Judges 20:43; Psalm 22:12; then in the Hiphil to crown oneself. In Syriac and Chaldee, it means "to wait" - perhaps from the idea of going round and round - and this is the meaning here. He wished them not to remit their attention, but to have patience with what he would yet say.

And I will show thee that - Margin, "there are yet words for God." The Hebrew is, "And I will show you that there are yet words for God;" that is, that there were yet many. considerations which could be urged in vindication of his government. The idea of Elihu is not so much that "he" had much to say, as that in fact there was much that "could be" said for him. He regarded his character and government as having been attacked, and he believed that there were ample considerations which could be urged in its defense. The word which is here rendered "I will show thee" (אחוך *'achâvekā*), is also Chaldee in its signification. It is from חוה *châvâh* (Chaldee) not used in the Qal, but it occurs in other forms in the Chaldee portion of the Scriptures; see Daniel 2:11, Daniel 2:16, Daniel 2:24, Daniel 2:27. The use of these Chaldee words is somewhat remarkable, and perhaps

may throw some light on the question about the time and place of the composition of the book.

Verse 3

I will fetch my knowledge from afar - What I say shall not be mere commonplace. It shall be the result of reflection on subjects that lie out of the ordinary range of thought. The idea is, that he did not mean to go over the ground that had been already trodden, or to suggest such reflections as would occur to anyone, but that he meant to bring his illustrations from abstruser matters, and from things that had escaped their attention. He in fact appeals to the various operations of nature - the rain, the dew, the light, the instincts of the animal creation, the vicissitudes of the seasons, the laws of heat and cold, and shows that all these prove that God is inscrutably wise and gloriously great.

And will ascribe righteousness to my Maker - That is, I will show that these things to which I now appeal, "prove" that he is righteous, and is worthy of universal confidence. Perhaps, also, he means to contrast the result of his reflections with those of Job. He regarded him as having charged his Maker with injustice and wrong. Elihu says that it was a fixed principle with him to ascribe righteousness to God, and that he believed it could be fully sustained by an appeal to his works. Man should "presume" that his Maker is good, and wise, and just; he should be "willing" to find that he is so; he should "expect" that the result of the profoundest investigation of his ways and works will prove that he is so - and in such an investigation he will never be disappointed. A man is in no good frame of mind, and is not likely to be led to any good result in his investigations, when he "begins" his inquiries by believing that his Maker is unjust, and who "prosecutes" them with the hope and expectation that he will find him to be so. Yet do people never do this?

Verse 4

For truly my words shall not be false - This is designed to conciliate attention. It is a professed purpose to state nothing but truth. Even in order to vindicate the ways of God he would state nothing but what would bear the most rigid examination. Job had charged on his friends a purpose "to speak wickedly for God;" to make use of unsound arguments in vindicating his cause, (see the notes at Job 13:7-8), and Elihu now says that "he" will make use of no such reasoning, but that all that he says shall be founded in strict truth.

He that is perfect in knowledge is with thee - This refers undoubtedly to Elihu himself, and is a claim to a clear understanding of the subject. He did not doubt that he was right, and that he had some views which were worthy of their attention. The main idea is, that he was of "sound" knowledge; that his views were not sophistical and captious; that they were founded in truth, and were worthy, therefore. of their profound attention.

Verse 5

Behold, God is Mighty - This is the first consideration which Elihu urges, and the purpose seems to be to affirm that God is so great that he has no occasion to modify his treatment of any class of people from a reference to himself. He is wholly independent of all, and can therefore be impartial in his dealings. If it were otherwise; if he were dependent upon human beings for any share of his happiness, he might be tempted to show special favor to the great and to the rich; to spare the mighty who are wicked, though he cut off the poor. But he has no such inducement, as he is wholly independent; and it is to be presumed, therefore, that he treats all impartially; see the notes at Job 35:5-8.

And despiseth not any - None who are poor and humble. He does not pass them by with cold neglect because they are poor and power. less, and turn his attention to the great and mighty because he is dependent on them.

He is mighty in wisdom - Margin, "heart." The word "heart" in Hebrew is often used to denote the intellectual powers; and the idea here is, that God has perfect wisdom in the management of his affairs. He is acquainted with all the circumstances of his creatures, and passes by none from a defect of knowledge, or frown a lack of wisdom to know how to adopt his dealings to their condition.

Verse 6

He preserveth not the life of the wicked - Elihu here maintains substantially the same sentiment which the three friends of Job had done, that the dealings of God in this life are in accordance with character, and that strict justice is thus maintained.

But giveth right to the poor - Margin, "or afflicted." The Hebrew word often refers to the afflicted, to the humble, or the lowly; and the reference here is to the "lower classes" of society. The idea is, that God deals justly with them, and does not overlook them because they are so poor and feeble that they cannot contribute anything to him. In this sentiment Elihu was undoubtedly right, though, like the three friends of Job, he seems to have

adopted the principle that the dealings of God here are according to the "characters" of people. He had some views in advance of theirs. He saw that affliction is designed for "discipline" Job 33; that God is willing to show mercy to the sufferer on repentance; that he is not dependent upon human beings, and that his dealings "cannot" be graduated by any reference to what he would receive or suffer from people; but still he clung to the idea that the dealings of God here are a proof of the character of the afflicted. What was mysterious about it he resolved into sovereignty, and showed that man "ought" to be submissive to God, and to "believe" that he was qualified to govern. He lacked the views which Christianity has furnished, that the inequalities that appear in the divine dealings here will be made clear in the retributions of another world.

Verse 7

He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous - That is, he constantly observes them, whether they are in the more elevated or humble ranks of life. Even though he afflicts them, his eye is upon them, and he does not forsake them. It will be remembered that one of the difficulties to be accounted for was, that they who professed to be righteous are subjected to severe trials. The friends of Job had maintained that such a fact was in itself proof that they who professed to be pious were not so, but were hypocrites. Job had verged to the other extreme, and had said that it looked as if God had forsaken those that loved him, and that there was no advantage in being righteous; notes, Job 35:2. Elihu takes a middle ground, and says that neither was the correct opinion. It is true, he says, that the righteous are afflicted, but they are not forsaken. The eye of God is still upon them, and he watches over them, whether on the throne or in dungeons, in order "to bring good results" out of their trials.

But with kings are they on the throne - That is, if the righteous are in the state of the highest earthly honor and prosperity, God is with them, and is their protector and friend. The same thing Elihu, in the following verses, says is true respecting the righteous, when they are in the most down-trodden and depressed condition.

Yea, he doth establish them for ever - The meaning of this is, that they are regarded by God with favor. When righteous kings "are" thus prospered, and have a permanent and peaceful reign, it is God who gives this prosperity to them. They are under his watchful eye, and his protecting hand.

Verse 8

And if they be bound in fetters - That is, if the righteous are thrown into prison, and are subjected to oppressions and trials, or if they are chained down, as it were, on a bed of pain, or crushed by heavy calamities, the eye of God is still upon them. Their sufferings should not be regarded either as proof that they are hypocrites, or that God is regardless of them, and is indifferent whether people are good or evil. The true solution of the difficulty was, that God was then accomplishing purposes of discipline, and that happy results would follow if they would receive affliction in a proper manner.

Verse 9

Then he showeth them their work - What their lives have been. This he does either by a messenger sent to them Job 33:23, or by their own reflections Job 33:27, or by the influences of his Spirit leading them to a proper review of their lives. The object of their affliction, Elihu says, is to bring them to see what their conduct has been, and to reform what has been amiss. It should not be interpreted either as proof that the afflicted are eminently wicked, as the friends of Job maintained, or as furnishing an occasion for severe reflections on the divine government, such as Job had indulged in. It is all consistent with an equitable and kind administration; with the belief that the afflicted have true piety - though they have wandered and erred; and with the conviction that God is dealing with them in mercy, and not in the severity of wrath. They need only recal the errors of their lives; humble themselves, and exercise true repentance, and they would find afflictions to be among even their richest blessings.

Transgressions that they have exceeded - Or, rather, "he shows them their transgressions that they have been very great"; that they have made themselves great, mighty, strong - יתגברו *yitgâbarû* The idea is, that their transgressions had been allowed to accumulate, or to become strong, until it was necessary to interpose in this manner, and check them by severe affliction. All this was consistent, however, with the belief that the sufferer was truly pious and might find favor if he would repent.

Verse 10

He openeth also their ear to discipline - To teaching; or he makes them willing to learn the lessons which their afflictions are designed to teach; coral). See the notes at Job 33:16.

Verse 11

If they obey and serve him - That is, if, as the result of their afflictions, they repent of their sins, seek his mercy, and serve him in time to come, they shall be prospered still. The design of affliction, Elihu says, is, not to cut them off, but to bring them to repentance. This sentiment he had advanced and illustrated before at greater length; see the notes at Job 33:23-28. The object of all this is, doubtless, to assure Job that he should not regard his calamities either as proof that he had never understood religion - as his friends maintained; or that God was severe, and did not regard those that loved and obeyed him - as Job had seemed to suppose; but that there was something in his life and conduct which made discipline necessary, and that if he would repcnt of that, he would find returning prosperity, and end his days in happiness and peace.

Verse 12

But if they obey not - If those who are afflicted do not turn to God, and yield him obedience, they must expect that he will continue their calamities until they are cut off.

They shall perish by the sword - Margin, as in Hebrew "pass away." The word rendered "sword" (שלח *shelach*) means properly "anything sent" - as a spear or an arrow - "a missile" - and then an instrument of war in general. It may be applied to any weapon that is used to produce death. The idea here is, that the man who was afflicted on account of the sins which he had committed, and who did not repent of them and turn to God, would be cut off. God would not withdraw his hand unless he acknowledged his offences. As he had undertaken the work of discipline, he could not consistently do it, for it would be in fact "yielding" the point to him whom he chastised. This "may" be the case now, and the statement here made by Elihu may involve a principle which will explain the cause of the death of many persons, even of the professedly pious. They are devoted to gain or amusement; they seek the honors of the world for their families or themselves, and in fact they make no advances in piety, and are doing nothing for the cause of religion. God lays his hand upon them at first gently. They lose their health, or a part of their property. But the discipline is not effectual. He then lays his band on them with more severity, and takes from them an endeared child. Still, all is ineffectual. The sorrow of the affliction passes away, and they mingle again in the frivolous and busy scenes of life as worldly as ever, and exert no influence in favor of religion. Another blow is needful, and blow after blow is struck; but nothing

overcomes their worldliness, nothing makes them devotedly and sincerely useful, and it becomes necessary to remove them from the world.

They shall die without knowledge - That is, without any true knowledge of the plans and government of God, or of the reasons why he brought these afflictions upon them. In all their sufferings they never "saw" the design. They complained, and murmured, and charged God with severity, but they never understood that the affliction was intended for their own benefit.

Verse 13

But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath - By their continued impiety they lay the foundation for increasing and multiplied expressions of the divine displeasure. Instead of confessing their sins when they are afflicted, and seeking for pardon: instead of returning to God and becoming truly his friends, they remaian impenitent, unconverted, and are rebellious at heart. They complain of the divine government and plans, and their feelings and conduct make it necessary for God further to interpose, until they are finally cut off and consigned to ruin. Elihu had stated what was the effect in two classes of persons who were afflicted. There were those who were truly pious, and who would receive affliction as sent from God for purposes of discipline, and who would repent and seek his mercy; Job 36:11. There were those, as a second class, who were openly wicked, and who would not be benfited by afflictions, and who would thus be cut off, Job 36:12. He says, also, that there was a third class - the class of hypocrites, who also were not profited by afflictions, and who would only by their perverseness and rebellion heap up wrath. It is "possible" that he may have designed to include Job in this number, as his three friends had done, but it seems more probable that he meant merely to suggest to Job that there was such a class, and to turn his mind to the "possibility" that he might be of the number. In explaining the design and effect of afflictions, it was at least proper to refer to this class, since it could not be doubted that there were people of this description.

They cry not when he bindeth them - They do not cry to God with the language of penitence when he binds them down by calamities; see Job 36:8.

Verse 14

They die in youth - Margin, "Their soul dieth." The word "soul" or "life" in the Hebrew is used to denote oneself. The meaning is, that they

would soon be cut down, and share the lot of the openly wicked. If they amended their lives they might be spared, and continue to live in prosperity and honor; if they did not, whether openly wicked or hypocrites. they would be early cut off.

And their life is amnong the unclean - Margin, "Sodomites." The idea is, that they would be treated in the same way as the most abandoned and vile of the race. No special favor would be shown to them because they were "professors" of religion, nor would this fact be a shield against the treatment which they deserved. They could not be classed with the righteous, and must, therefore, share the fate of the most worth mss and wicked of the race. The word rendered "unclean" (קדֹשים *qâdêsh*) is from קדֹש *qâdash* "to be pure or holy"; and in the Hiphil to regard as holy, to consecrate, or devote to the service of God, as e. g. a priest; Exodus 28:41; Exodus 29:1. Then it means to consecrate or devote to "any" service or purpose, as to an idol god. Hence, it means one consecrated or devoted to the service of Astarte, the goddess of the Sidonians or Venus, and as this worship was corrupt and licentious, the word means one who is licentious or corrupt compare Deuteronomy 23:18; 1 Kings 14:24; Genesis 38:21-22. Here it means the licentious, the corrupt, the abandoned; and the idea is, that if hypocrites did not repent under the inflictions of divine judgment, they would be dealt with in the same way as the most abandoned and vile. On the evidence that licentiousness constituted a part of the ancient worship of idols, see Spencer "de Legg. ritual Hebraedor." Lib. ii. cap. iii. pp. 613,614, Ed. 1732. Jerome renders this, *"intereffoeminatos."* The Septuagint strangely enough has: "Let their life be wounded by angels."

Verse 15

He delivereth the poor in his affliction - Margin, "or afflicted." This accords better with the usual meaning of the Hebrew word (עני ʿ*ânîy*) and with the connection. The inquiry was not particularly respecting the "poor," but the "afflicted," and the sentiment which Elihu is illustrating is, that when the afflicted call upon God he will deliver them. The object is to induce Job to make such an application to God that he might be rescued from his calamities, and be permitted yet to enjoy life and happiness.

And openeth their ears - Causes them to understand the nature of his government, and the reasons why he visits them in this manner: compare Job 33:16, Job 33:23-27. The sentiment here is a mere repetition of what Elihu had more than once before advanced. It is his leading thought; the

"principle" on which he undertakes to explain the reason why God afflicts people, and by which he proposes to remove the difference between Job and his friends.

In oppression - This word expresses too much. It refers to God, and implies that there was something oppressive, harsh, or cruel in his dealings. This is not the idea of Elihu in the language which he uses. The word which he uses here (לחץ *lachats*) means "that which crushes"; then straits, distress. affliction. Jerome, "in tribulatione." The word "affliction" would express the thought.

Verse 16

Even so would he have removed thee - That is, if you had been patient and resigned, and if you had gone to him with a broken heart. Having stated the "principles" in regard to affliction which he held to be indisputable, and having affirmed that God was ever ready to relieve the sufferer if he would apply to him with a proper spirit, it was natural to infer from this that the reason why Job "continued" to suffer was, that he did not manifest a proper spirit in his trials. Had he done this, Elihu says, the hand of God would have been long since withdrawn, and his afflictions would have been removed.

Out of the strait into a broad place - From the narrow, pent up way, where it is impossible to move, into a wide and open path. Afflictions are compared with a narrow path, in which it is impossible to get. along; prosperity with a broad and open road in which there are no obstructions; compare Psalm 18:19; Psalm 31:8. "And that which should be set on thy table." Margin, "the rest of thy table." The Hebrew word (נחת *nachath* - from נוח *nûach* "to rest," and in the Hiphil to set down, to cause to rest) means properly a "letting," or "settling down;" and then that which is set down - as e. g. food on a table. This is the idea here. that the food which would be set on his table would be rich and abundant; that is, he would be restored to prosperity, if he envinced a penitent spirit in his trials, and confessed his sins to God. The same image of piety occurs in Psalm 23:5, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

Verse 17

But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked - Rosenmuller explains this as meaning, "If under divine inflictions and chastisements you wish to imitate the obduracy of the wicked, then the cause and the punishment will mutually sustain them selves; that is, the one will be commensurate with the other." But it is not necessary to regard this as a

"supposition." It has rather the aspect of; an affirmation, meaning to express the fact that Job "had," as Elihu feared, envinced the same spirit in his trials which the wicked do. He had not seen in him evidence of penitence and of a desire to return to God, but had heard complaints and murmurings, such as the wicked indulge in. He had "filled up," or "fulfilled," the judgment of the wicked; that is, he had in no way come short of the opinion which "they" expressed of the divine dealings. Still it is possible that the word "if" may be here understood, and that Elihu means merely to state that if Job should manifest the same spirit with the wicked, instead of a spirit of penitence, he would have reason to apprehend the same doom which they experience.

Judgment and justice take hold on thee - Margin, "or, should uphold thee." The Hebrew word here rendered "take" - יתמכו *yitmokû* is from תמך *tâmak* - "to take hold of, to obtain, to hold fast, to support." Rosenmuller and Gesenius suppose that the word here has a "reciprocal" sense, and means they take hold of each other, or sustain each other. Prof. Lee renders it, "Both judgment and justice will uphold this;" that is, the sentiment which he had just advanced, that Job had filled up the judgment of the wicked. Urnbrett renders it, "If thou art full of the opinion of the wicked, then the opinion and justice will rapidly follow each other."

Doch worm du yell bist yon des Frevlers Urtheil,
So werden Urthoil und Gericht schnell auf einander folgen.

According to this the meaning is, that if Job held the opinions of wicked people, he must expect that these opinions would be rapidly followed by judgment, or that they would go together, and support each other. This seems to me to be in accordance with the connection, and to express the thought which Elihu meant to convey. It is a sentiment which is undoubtedly true - that if a man holds the sentiments, and manifests the spirit of the wicked, he must expect to be treated as they are.

Verse 18

Because there is wrath - That is, the wrath of God is to be dreaded. The meaning is, that if Job persevered in the spirit which he had manifested, he had every reason to expect that God would suddenly cut him off. He might now repent and find mercy, but he had shown the spirit of those who were rebellions in affliction, and if he persevered in that, he had nothing to expect but the wrath of God.

With his stroke - With his smiting or chastisement; compare Job 34:26.

Then a great ransom cannot deliver thee - Margin, "turn thee aside." The meaning is, that a great ransom could not prevent him from being cut off. On the meaning of the word ransom, see the notes at Job 33:24. The idea here is, not that a great ransom could not deliver him "after" he was cut off and consigned to hell - which would be true; but that when he had manifested a spirit of insubmission a little longer, nothing could save him from being cut off from the land of the living. God would not spare him on account; of wealth, or rank, or age, or wisdom. None of these things would be a "ransom" in virtue of which his forfeited life would be preserved.

Verse 19

Will he esteem thy riches? - That is God will not regard thy riches as a reason why he should not cut you off, or as a ransom for your forfeited life. The reference here must be to the fact that Job "had been" a rich man, and the meaning is, either that God would not spare him because he "had been" a rich man, or that if he had now all the wealth which he once possessed, it would not be sufficient to be a ransom for his life.

Nor all the forces of his strength - Not all that gives power and influence to a man - wealth, age, wisdom, reputation, authority, and rank. The meaning is, that God would not regard any of these when a man was rebellious in affliction, and refused in a proper manner to acknowledge his Maker. Of the truth of what is here affirmed, there can be no doubt. Riches, rank, and honors cannot redeem the life of a man. They do not save him from the grave, and from all that is gloomy and revolting there. When God comes forth to deal with mankind, he does not regard their gold, their rank, their splendid robes or palaces, but he deals with them as "men" - and the "happy," the beautiful, the rich, the noble, moulder back, under his hand, to their native dust in the same manner as the most humble peasant. How forcibly should this teach us not to set our hearts on wealth, and not to seek the honors and wealth of the world as our portion!

Verse 20

Desire not the night - That is, evidently, "the night of death." The darkness of the night is an emblem of death, and it is not uncommon to speak of death in this manner; see John 9:4, "The night cometh, when no man can work." Elihu seems to have supposed that Job might have looked forward to death as to a time of release; that so far from "dreading" what he had said would come, that God would cut him off at a stroke, it might be the very thing which he desired, and which he anticipated would be an end of

his sufferings. Indeed Job had more than once expressed some such sentiment, and Elihu designs to meet that state of mind, and to charge him not to look forward to death as relief. If his present state of mind continued, he says, he would perish under the "wrath" of God; and death in such a manner, great as might be his sufferings here, could not be desirable.

When people are cut off in their place - On this passage, Schultens enumerates no less than "fifteen" different interpretations which have been given, and at the end of this enumeration remarks that he "waits for clearer light to overcome the shades of this night." Rosenmullcr supposes it means," Long not for the night, in which nations go under themselves;" that is, in which they go down to the inferior regions, or in which they perish. Noyes renders it, "To which nations are taken away to their place." Urnbroil renders it, "Pant not for the night, to go down to the people who dwell under thee;" that is, to the Shades, or to those that dwell in Sheol. Prof. Lee translates it, "Pant not for the night, for the rising of the populace from their places." Coverdale, "Prolong not thou the time, until there come a night for thee to set other people in thy stead." The Septuagint, "Do not draw out the night, that the people may come instead of them;" that is, to their assistance.

Dr. Good "Neither long thou for the night, for the vaults of the nations underneath them;" and supposes that the reference is to the "catacombs," or mummy-pits that were employed for burial-places. These are but specimens of the interpretations which have been proposed for this passage, and it is easy to see that there is little prospect of being able to explain it in a satisfactory manner. The principal difficulty in the passage is in the word rendered "cut off," (עלה *ʿâlâh*) which means "to go up, to ascend," and in the incongruity between that and the word rendered in their place (תחתם *tachthâm*), which literally means "under them." A literal translation of the passage is, "Do not desire the night to ascend to the people under them;" but I confess I cannot understand the passage, after all the attempts made to explain it. The trauslation given by Umbreit, seems best to agree with the connection, but I am unable to see that the Hebrew would bear this. See, however, his Note on the passage. The word עלה *ʿâlâh* he understands here in the sense of "going away," or "bearing away," and the pbrase the "people under them," as denoting the "Shades" in the world beneath us. The whole expression then would be equivalent to a wish "to die" - with the expectation that there would be a change for the better, or a release from

present sufferings. Elihu admonishes Job not to indulge such a wish, for it would be no gain for a man to die in the state of mind in which he then was.

Verse 21

Take heed, regard not iniquity - That is, be cautious that in the view which you take of the divine government, and the sentiments which you express, you do not become the advocate of iniquity. Elihu apprehended this from the remarks in which he had indulged, and regarded him as having become the advocate of the same sentiments which the wicked held, and as in fact manifesting the same spirit. It is well to put a man who is afflicted on his guard against this, when he attempts to reason about the divine administration.

For this hast thou chosen rather than affliction - That is, you have chosen rather to give vent to the language of complaint, than to bear your trials with resignation. "You have chosen rather to accuse divine Providence than to submit patiently to his chastisements." "Patrick." There was too much truth in this remark about Job; and it is still not an uncommon thing in times of trial, and indeed in human life in general. People often prefer iniquity to affliction. They will commit crime rather than suffer the evils of poverty; they will be guilty of fraud and forgery to avoid apprehended want. They will be dishonest to their creditors rather than submit to the disgrace of bankruptcy. They will take advantage of the widow and the fatherless rather than suffer themselves. "Sin is often preferred to affliction;" and many are the people who, to avoid calamity, would not shrink from the commission of wrong. Especially in times of trial, when the hand of God is laid upon people, they "prefer" a spirit of complaining and murmuring to patient and calm resignation to the will of God. They seek relief even in complaining; and think it "some" alleviation of their sufferings that they can "find fault with God." "They who choose iniquity rather than affliction, make a very foolish choice; they that ease their cares by sinful pleasures, escape their troubles by sinful projects, and evade sufferings for righteousness' sake by sinful compliances against their consciences; these make a choice they will repent of, for there is more evil in the least sin than in the greatest affliction." Henry.

Verse 22

Behold, God exalteth by his power - The object of Elihu is now to direct the attention of Job to God, and to show him that he has evinced such

power and wisdom in his works, that we ought not to presume to arraign him, but should bow with submission to his will. He remarks, therefore, that God "exalts," or rather that God is "exalted," or "exalts himself" (ישׂגיב *yaśagiyb*) by his power. In the exhibition of his power, he thus shows that he is great, and that people ought to be submissive to him. In support of this, he appeals, in the remainder of his discourse, to the "works" of God as furnishing extraordinary proofs of power, and full demonstration that God is exalted far above man.

Who teacheth like him? - The Septuagint renders this, δυνάστης *dunastēs* - "Who is so powerful as he?" Rosenmuller and Umbreit render it Lord: "Who is Lord like him?" But the Hebrew word (מורה *môreh*) properly means "one who instructs," and the idea is, that there is no one who is qualified to give so exalted conceptions of the government of God as he is himself. The object is to direct the mind to him as he is revealed in his works, in order to obtain elevated conceptions of his government.

Verse 23

Who hath enjoined him his way? - Who hath prescribed to him what he ought to do? Who is superior to him, and has marked out for him the plan which he ought to pursue? The idea is, that God is supreme and independent; no one has advised him, and no one has a right to counsel him. Perhaps, also, Elihu designs this as a reproof to Job for having complained so much of the government of God, and for being disposed, as he thought, to "prescribe" to God what he should do.

Who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity? - Thou hast done wrong. The object of Elihu is here to show that no one has a right to say this; no one could, in fact, say it. It was to be regarded as an indisputable point that God is always right, and that however dark his dealings with people may seem, the "reason" why they are mysterious "never is, that God is wrong."

Verse 24

Remember that thou magnify his work - Make this a great and settled principle, to remember that God is "great" in all that he does. He is exalted far above us, and all his works are on a scale of vastness corresponding to his nature, and in all our attempts to judge of him and his doings, we should bear this in remembrance. He is not to be judged by the narrow views which we apply to the actions of people, but by the views which ought to be taken when we remember that he presides over the vast universe, and that as the universal Parent, he will consult the welfare of the whole. In judging of his

doings, therefore, we are not to place ourselves in the center, or to regard ourselves as the "whole" or the creation, but we are to remember that there are other great interests to be regarded, and that his plans will be in accordance with the welfare of the whole. One of the best rules for taking a proper estimate of God is that proposed here by Elihu - to remember that he is great.

Which men behold - The Vulgate renders this, *"de quo cecinerunt viri"* - "concerning which men sing." The Septuagint, ὧν ἦρξαν ἄνδρες *hōn ērxan andres* - "over which men rule." Schultens accords with the Vulgate. So Coverdale renders it, "Whom all men love and praise." So Herder and Noyes understand it, "Which men celebrate with songs." This difference of interpretation arises from the ambiguity of the Hebrew word (שׁרוּ *shorerû*) some deriving it from שׁוּר *shûr* "to go round about, and then to survey, look upon, examine"; and some from שׁיר *shîyr* "to sing, to celebrate." The word will admit of either interpretation, and either will suit the connection. The sense of "seeing" those works, however, better agrees with what is said in the following verse, and perhaps better suits the connection. The object of Elihu is not to fix the attention on the fact that people "celebrate" the works of God, but to turn "the eyes to the visible creation," as a proof of the greatness of the Almighty.

Verse 25

Every man may see it - That is, every man may look on the visible creation, and see proofs there of the wisdom and greatness of God. All may look on the sun, the moon, the stars; all may behold the tempest and the storm; all may see the lightning and the rain, and may form some conception of the majesty of the Most High. The idea of Elihu here is, that every man might trace the evidences that God is great in his works.

Man may behold it afar off - His works are so great and glorious that they make an impression even at a vast distance. Though we are separated from them by a space which surpasses the power of computation, yet they are so great that they fill the mind with vast conceptions of the majesty and glory of their Maker. This is true of the heavenly bodies; and the more we learn of their immense distances from us, the more is the mind impressed with the greatness and glory of the visible creation.

Verse 26

Behold, God is great, and we know him not - That is, we cannot fully comprehend him; see the notes at Job 11:7-9.

Neither can the number of his years be searched out - That is, he is eternal. The object of what is said here is to impress the mind with a sense of the greatness of God, and with the folly of attempting fully to comprehend the reason of what he does. Man is of a few days, and it is presumption in him to sit in judgment on the doings of one who is from eternity. We may here remark that the doctrine that there is an Eternal Being presiding over the universe, was a doctrine fully held by the speakers in this book - a doctrine far in advance of all that philosophy ever taught, and which was unknown for ages in the lands on which the light of revelation never shone.

Verse 27

For he maketh small the drops of water - Elihu now appeals, as he proposed to do, to the works of God, and begins with what appeared so remarkable and inexplicable, the wisdom of God in the rain and the dew, the tempest and the vapor. That which excited his wonder was, the fact in regard to the suspension of water in the clouds, and the distilling of it on the earth in the form of rain and dew. This very illustration had been used by Eliphaz for a similar purpose (Notes, Job 5:9-10), and whether we regard it as it "appears" to people without the light which science has thrown upon it, or look at the manner in which God suspends water in the clouds and sends it down in the form of rain and dew, with all the light which has been furnished by science, the fact is one that evinces in an eminent degree the wisdom of God. The word which is rendered "maketh small" (גרע *gâraʿ*), means properly "to scrape off, to detract, to diminish, to take away from." In the Piel, the form used here, it means, according to Gesenius, "to take to one's self, to attract;" and the sense here, according to this, is, that God attracts, or draws upward the drops of water. So it is rendered by Herder, Noyes, Umbreit, and Rosenmuller. The idea is, that he "draws up" the drops of the water to the clouds, and then pours them down in rain. If the meaning in our common version be retained, the idea would be, that it was proof of great wisdom in God that the water descended in "small drops," instead of coming down in a deluge; compare the notes at Job 26:8.

They pour down rain - That is, the clouds pour down the rain.

According to the vapour thereof - - לאדו *le'êdô* The idea seems to be, that the water thus drawn up is poured down again in the form of a "vapory rain," and which does not descend in torrents. The subject of admiration in the mind of Elihu was, that water should evaporate and ascend to the

clouds, and be held there, and then descend again in the form of a gentle rain or fine mist. The reason for admiration is not lessened by becoming more fully acquainted with the laws by which it is done than Elihu can be supposed to have been.

Verse 28

Upon man abundantly - That is, upon many people. The clouds having received the ascending vapor, retain it, and pour it down copiously for the use of man. The arrangement, to the eye even of one who did not understand the scientific principles by which it is done, is beautiful and wonderful; the beauty and wonder are increased when the laws by which it is accomplished are understood. Elihu does not attempt to explain the mode by which this is done. The fact was probably all that was then understood, and that was sufficient for his purpose. The Septuagint has given a translation of this verse which cannot be well accounted for, and which is certainly very unlike the original. It is, "But when the clouds east a shade over the dumb creation, he impresseth a care on beasts, and they know the order for retiring to rest - κοίτης τάξιν *koitēs taxin* At all these things is not their understanding confounded? And is not thy heart starting from thy body?"

Verse 29

Also, can any understand the spreadings of the clouds? - The out spreading - the manner in which they expand themselves over us. The idea is, that the manner in which the clouds seem to "spread out," or unfold themselves on the sky, could not be explained, and was a striking proof of the wisdom and power of God. In the early periods of the world, it could not be expected that the causes of these phenomena would be known. Now that the causes "are" better known, however, they do not less indicate the wisdom and power of God, nor are these facts less fitted to excite our wonder. The simple and beautiful laws by which the clouds are suspended; by which they roll in the sky; by which they spread themselves out - as in a rising tempest, and by which they seem to unfold themselves over the heavens, should increase, rather than diminish, our conceptions of the wisdom and power of the Most High.

Or, the noise of his tabernacle - Referring, doubtless, to thunder. The clouds are represented as a tent or pavilion spread out for the dwelling of God (compare the notes at Isaiah 40:22), and the idea here is, that the noise

made in a thunder-storm is in the unique dwelling of God. Herder well expresses it, "The fearful thunderings in his tent," compare Psalm 18:11 -

He made darkness his secret place,

His pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.

The sense here is, who can understand and explain the cause of thunder? The object of Elihu in this is, to show how great and incomprehensible is God, and nature furnishes few more impressive illustrations of this than the crash of thunder.

Verse 30

Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it - That is, upon his tabernacle or dwelling-place - the clouds. The allusion is to lightning, which flashes in a moment over the whole heavens. The image is exceedingly beautiful and graphic. The idea of "spreading out" the light in an instant over the whole of the darkened heavens, is that which Elihu had in his mind, and which impressed him so forcibly. On the difficulty in regard to the translation of the Septuagint here, see Schleusner on the word ἡδὼ *hēdō* And covereth the bottom of the sea - Margin, "roots." The word roots is used to denote the bottom, as being the lowest part of a thing - as the roots of a tree. The meaning is that he covers the lowest part of the sea with floods of waters; and the object of Elihu is to give an exalted conception of the greatness of God, from the fact that his agency is seen in the higlest and the lowest objects. He spreads out the clouds, thunders in his tabernacle, diffuses a brilliant light over the heavens, and at the same time is occupied in covering the bottom of the sea with the floods. He is Lord over all, and his agency is seen every where. The highest and the lowest objects are under his control, and his agency is seen above and below. On the one hand, he covers the thick and dense clouds with light; and on the other, he envelopes the depth of the ocean in impenetrable darkness.

Verse 31

For by them judgeth he the people - By means of the clouds, the rain, the dew, the tempest, and the thunderbolt. The idea seems to be, that he makes use of all these to execute his purposes on mankind. He can either make them the means of imparting blessings, or of inflicting the severest, judgments. He can cause the tornado to sweep over the earth; he can arm the forked lightning against the works of art; he can withhold rain and dew, and spread over a land the miseries of famine.

He giveth meat in abundance - That is, by the clouds, the dew, the rain. The idea is, that he can send timely showers if he chooses, and the earth will be clothed with plenty. All these things are under his control, and he can, as he pleases, make them the means of comfort to man, or of punishing him for his sins; compare Psalm 65:11-13.

Verse 32

With clouds he covereth the light - The Hebrew here is, על־כפים *ʿal - kaphiym* - "upon his hands." Jerome, "In manibus abscondit lucem," "he hideth the light in his hands." Septuagint, Ἐπὶ χειρῶν ἐκάλυψε φῶς *Epi cheirōn ekalupse fōs* - "he covereth the light in his hands." The allusion is, undoubtedly, to the lightning, and the image is, that God takes the lightning in his hands, and directs it as he pleases. There has been great variety however, in the exposition of this verse and the following. Schultens enumerates no less than "twenty-eight" different interpretations, and almost every commentator has had his own view of the passage. It is quite evident that our translators did not understand it, and were not able to make out of it any tolerable sense. What idea they attached to the two verses Job 36:32-33, it would be very difficult to imagine, for what is the meaning Job 36:33 of the phrase, "the cattle also concerning the vapor?"

The general sense of the Hebrew appears to be, that God controls the rapid lightnings which appear so vivid, so quick, and so awful; and that he executes his own purposes with them, and makes them, when he pleases, the instruments of inflicting punishment on his foes. The object of Elihu is to excite admiration of the greatness of God who is "able" thus to control the lightning's flash, and to make it an obedient instrument in his hands. The particular expression before us, "By his hands he covereth the light," seems to mean that he seizes or holds the lightning in his hands (Herder), or that he covers over his hands with the lightning (Umbreit), and has it under his control. Prof. Lee supposes that it means, that he holds the lightning in the palms of his hands, or between his two hands, as a man holds a furious wild animal which he is about to let loose for the purpose of destroying. With this he compares the expression of Shakespeare, "Cry havock, and let slip the dogs of war. There can be no doubt, I think, that the phrase means that God has the lightning under his control that it is in his hands, and that he directs it as he pleases. According to Umbreit (Note) the allusion is to the "double use" which God makes of light, in one hand holding the lightning to destroy his foes, and in the other the light of the sun to bless his friends,

as he makes use of the rain either for purposes of destruction or mercy. But this idea is not conveyed in the Hebrew.

And commandeth it not to shine - The phrase "not to shine" is not in the Hebrew, and destroys the sense. The simple idea in the original is, "he commandeth it;" that is, he has it under his control, directs it as he pleases, makes use even of the forked lightning as an instrument to execute his pleasure.

By the cloud that cometh betwixt - The words "the cloud" are also inserted by our translators, and destroy the sense. There is no allusion to a cloud, and the idea that the light is intercepted by any object is not in the original. The Hebrew word (במפגיע *bemapgiyʿ*) means "in occurring, in meeting, in striking upon," (from פגע *pâgaʿ* - to strike upon, to impinge to fall upon, to light upon), and the sense here would be well expressedʿ by the phrase "in striking." The idea is exactly that which we have when we apply the word "strike" or "struck" to lightning, and the meaning is, that he gives the lightning commandment "in striking," or when "it strikes." Nothing could better answer the purpose of an illustration for Elihu in exciting elevated views of God, for there is no exhibition of his power more wonderful than that by which he controls the lightning.

Verse 33

The noise thereof showeth concerning it - The word "noise" here has been inserted by our translators as a version of the Hebrew word (רעו *rêʿô*), and if the translators attached any idea to the language which they have used, it seems to have been that the noise attending the lightning, that is, the thunder, furnished an illustration of the power and majesty of God. But it is not possible to educe this idea from the original, and perhaps it is not possible to determine the sense of the passage. Herder renders it, "He pointeth out to them the wicked." Prof. Lee, "By it he announceth his will." Umbreit, "He makes known to it his friend;" that is, he points out his friend to the light, so that it may serve for the happiness of that friend. Noyes, "He uttereth to him his voice; to the herds and the plants." Rosenmuller," He announces what he has decreed against people, and the flocks which the earth has produced."

Many other expositions have been proposed, and there is no reasonable ground of hope that an interpretation will be arrived at which will be free from all difficulty. The principal difficulty in this part of the verse arises from the word רעו *rêʿô* rendered in our version, "The noise thereof." This

may be from רוע *rûaʿ* and may mean a noise, or outcry, and so it is rendered here by Gesenius, "He makes known to him his thunder, that is, to man, or to his enemies." Or the word may mean "his friend," as the word רע *rêaʿ* is often used; Job 2:11; Job 19:21; Proverbs 27:17; Hosea 3:1. Or it may denote "will, thought, desire;" Psalm 139:2, Psalm 139:17. A choice must be made between these different meanings according to the view entertained of the scope of the passage. To me it seems that the word ""friend"" will better suit the connection than anyone of the other interpretations proposed. According to this, the idea is, that God points out "his friends" to the lightning which he holds in his hand, and bids it spare them. He has entire control of it, and can direct it where he pleases, and instead of sending it forth to work indiscriminate destruction, he carefully designates those on whom he wishes it to strike, but bids it spare his friends.

The cattle also concerning the vapour - Margin, "that which goeth up." What idea the translators attached to this phrase it is impossible now to know, and the probability is, that being conscious of utter inability to give any meaning to the passage, they endeavored to translate the "words" of the original as literally as possible. Coverdale evidently felt the same perplexity, for he renders it, "The rising up thereof showeth he to his friends and to the cattle." Indeed almost every translator and expositor has had the same difficulty, and each one has proposed a version of his own. Aa examination of the "words" employed is the only hope of arriving at any satisfactory view of the passage. The word rendered "cattle" (מקנה *miqneh*), means properly:

(1) expectation, hope, confidence; Ezekiel 28:26; Ezra 10:2;

(2) a gathering together, a collection, as

(a) of waters, Genesis 1:10; Exodus 7:19,

(b) a gathering together, a collection, or company of people, horses, etc. - a caravan. So it may possibly mean in 1 Kings 10:28, where interpreters have greatly differed.

The word "cattle," therefore, by no means expresses its usual signification. That would be better expressed by "gathering, collecting," or "assembling." The word rendered also (אף *'aph*), denotes:

(1) also, even, more, besides, etc., and

(2) “the nose,” and then “anger” - from the effect of anger in producing hard breathing, Proverbs 22:24; Deuteronomy 32:22; Deuteronomy 29:20.

Here it may be rendered, without impropriety, “anger,” and then the phrase will mean, “the collecting, or gathering together of anger.” The word rendered “vapour” (עולה *ʿovelâh* - if from עלה *ʿâlâh*), means that which “ascends,” and would then mean anything that ascends - as smoke, vapor; or as Rosenmuller supposes, what “ascends” or “grows” from the ground - that is, plants and vegetables, And so Umbreit, “das Gewachs” - “plants of any kind.” *Note.* But with a slight variation in the pointing עולה *ʿovelâh* - instead of עולה *ʿoleh*), the word means “evil, wickedness, iniquity” - from our word “evil;” Job 24:20; Job 6:29; Job 11:14; Job 13:7; and it may, without impropriety, be regarded as having this signification here, as the points have no authority. The meaning of the whole phrase then will be, “the gathering, or collecting of his wrath is upon evil, that is, upon the wicked;” and the sense is, that while, on the one hand, God, who holds the lightning in his hands, points out to it his friends, so that they are spared; on the other hand the gathering together, or the condensation, of his wrath is upon the evil. That is, the lightnings - so vivid, so mighty, and apparently so wholly beyond law or control, are under his direction, and he makes them the means of executing his pleasure. His friends are spared; and the condensation of his wrath is on his foes. This exposition of the passage accords with the general scope of the remarks of Elihu, and this view of the manner in which God controls even the lightning, was one that was adapted to fill the mind with exalted conceptions of the majesty and power of the Most High.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 37

Verse 1

At this also - That is, in view of the thunderstorm, for it is that which Elihu is describing. This description was commenced in Job 36:29, and is continued to Job 37:5, and should not have been separated by the division into chapters. Elihu sees a tempest rising. The clouds gather, the lightnings flash, the thunder rolls, and he is awed as with the conscious presence of God. There is nowhere to be found a more graphic and impressive description of a thunder-storm than this; compare Herder on Hebrew Poetry, vol. i., 85ff, by Marsh, Burlington, 1833.

My heart trembleth - With fear. He refers to the palpitation or increased action of the heart produced by alarm.

And is moved out of his place - That is, by violent palpitation. The heart seems to leave its calm resting place, and to burst away because of fright. The increased action of the heart under the effects of fear, as described here by Elihu, has been experienced by all. The "cause" of this increased action is supposed to be this. The immediate effect of fear is on the extremities of the nerves of the system, which are diffused ever the whole body. The first effect is to prevent the circulation of the blood to the extremities, and to drive it back to the heart, and thus to produce paleness. The blood thus driven back on the heart produces an increased action there to propel it through the lungs and the arteries, thus causing at the same time the increased effort of the heart, and the rapid action of the lungs, and of course the quick breathing and the palpitation observed in fear. See Scheutzer, Physica. Sacra, *in loc*. An expression similar to that which occurs here, is used by Shakespeare, in Macbeth:

"Why do I yield to that suggestion,
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
And make ray seated heart knock at my ribs

Against the use of nature."

Verse 2

Hear attentively - Margin, as in Hebrew "hear in hearing;" that is, bear with attention. It has been supposed by many, and not without probability, that the tempest was already seen rising, out of which God was to address

Job Psalm 29:1-11. The word rendered "noise" (רגז *rôgez*), means properly "commotion," that which is fitted to produce perturbation, or disquiet (see Job 3:17, Job 3:26; Isaiah 14:3), and is used here to denote the commotion, or "raging" of thunder.

And the sound - The word used here (הגה *hegeh*) means properly a "muttering growling" - as of thunder. It is often used to denote sighing, moaning, and meditation, in contradistinction from clear enunciation. Here it refers to the thunder which seems to mutter or growl in the sky.

Verse 3

He directeth it under the whole heaven - It is under the control of God, and he directs it where he pleases. It is not confined to one spot, but seems to be complaining from every part of the heavens.

And his lightning - Margin, as in Hebrew "light." There can be no doubt that the lightning is intended.

Unto the ends of the earth - Margin, as in Hebrew "wings." The word wings is given to the earth from the idea of its being spread out or expanded like the wings of a bird; compare Job 38:13; Ezekiel 7:2. The earth was spoken of as an expanse or plain that had corners or boundaries (see Isaiah 11:12, note; Isaiah 24:16, note; Isaiah 42:5, note), and the meaning here is, that God spread the lightning at pleasure over the whole of that vast expanse.

Verse 4

After it a voice roareth - After the lightning; that is, the flash is seen before the thunder is heard. This is apparent to all, the interval between the lightning and the hearing of the thunder depending on the distance. Lucretius, who has referred to the same fact, compares this with what occurs when a woodman is seen at a distance to wield an axe. The glance of the axe is seen long before the sound of the blow is heard:

Sed tonitrum fit uti post antibus accipiamus,
Fulgere quam cernunt ocuil, quia semper ad aures
Tardius adveniunt, quam visum, guam moveant res.

Nunc etiam licet id cognoscere, caedere si quem

Ancipiti videas ferro procul arboris actum.

Ante fit, ut cernas ictum, quam plaga per aures

Det sonitum: Sic fulgorem quoque cernimus ante.

Lib. vi.

He thundereth with the voice of his excellency - That is, with a voice of majesty and grandeur.

And he will not stay them - That is, he will not hold back the rain, hail, and other things which accompany the storm, when he begins to thunder. "Rosenmuller." Or, according to others, he will not hold back and restrain the lightnings when the thunder commences. But the connection seems rather to demand that we should understand it of the usual accompaniments of a storm - the wind, hail, rain, etc. Herder renders it, "We cannot explore his thunderings." Prof. Lee, "And none can trace them, though their voice be heard." According to him, the meaning is, that "great and terrific as this exhibition of God's power is, still the progress of these, his ministers, cannot be followed by the mortal eye." But the usual interpretation given to the Hebrew word is that of "holding back," or "retarding," and this idea accords well with the connection.

Verse 5

God thundereth marvelously - He thunders in a wonderful manner. The idea is, that the voice of his thunder is an amazing exhibition of his majesty and power.

Great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend - That is, not only in regard to the thunder and the tempest, but in other things. The description of the storm properly ends here, and in the subsequent verses Elihu proceeds to specify various other phenomena, which were wholly incomprehensible by man. The reference here to the storm, and to the other grand and incomprehensible phenomena of nature, is a most appropriate introduction to the manifestation of God himself as described in the next chapter, and could not but have done much to prepare Job and his friends for that sublime close of the controversy.

The passage before us Job 36:29-33; Job 37:1-5, is probably the earliest description of a thunderstorm on record. A tempest is a phenomenon which must early have attracted attention, and which we may expect to find described or alluded to in all early poetry. It may be interesting, therefore, to compare this description of a storm, in probably the oldest poem in the world, with what has been furnished by the masters of song in ancient and modern times, and we shall find that in sublimity and beauty the Hebrew

poet will suffer nothing in comparison. In one respect, which constitutes the chief sublimity of the description. he surpasses them all: I mean in the recognition of God. In the Hebrew description. God is every where in the storm He excites it; he holds the lightnings in both hands; he directs it where he pleases; he makes it the instrument of his pleasure and of executing his purposes. Sublime, therefore, as is the description of the storm itself, furious as is the tempest; bright as is the lightning: and heavy and awful as is the roar of the thunder, yet the description derives its chief sublimity from the fact that "God" presides over all, riding on the tempest and directing the storm as he pleases. Other poets have rarely attempted to give this direction to the thoughts in their description of a tempest, if we may except Klopstock, and they fall, therefore, far below the sacred poet. The following is the description of a storm by Elihu, according to the exposition which I have given:

Who can understand the outspreading of the clouds,
And the fearful thunderings in his pavilion?
Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it;

He also covereth the depths of the sea.

By these he executeth judgment upon the people,

By these he giveth food in abundance.

With his hands he covereth the lightning,

And commandeth it where to strike.

He pointeth out to his friends -

The collecting of his wrath is upon the wicked.

At this also my heart palpitates,

And is moved out of its place.

Hear, O hear, the thunder of his voice!

The muttering thunder that goes from his mouth!

He directeth it under the whole heaven.

And his lightning to the end of the earth.

After it, the thunder roareth;

He thundereth with the voice of his majesty,

And he will not restrain the tempest when his voice is heard.

God thundereth marvelously with his voice;
He doeth wonders, which we cannot comprehend.

The following is the description of a Tempest by Aeschylus, in the Prometh. Desm., beginning,

- Χθὼν αεσάλευται;
Βρυχία δ᾽ ἠχὼ παραμυκᾶται
Βροντῆς, κ.τ.λ.
- *Chthōn sesaleutai Bruchia d' ēchō paramukatai*
Brontēs etc - "I feel in very deed
The firm earth rock: the thunder's deepening roar
Rolls with redoubled rage; the bickering flames

Flash thick; the eddying sands are whirled on high;

In dreadful opposition, the wild winds

Rend the vex'd air; the boisterous billows rise

Confounding earth and sky: the impetuous storm

Rolls all its terrible fury."
Potter
Ovid's description is the following:
Aethera conscendit, vultumque sequentia traxit

Nubila; queis nimbos, immistaque fulgura ventis
Addidit, et tonitrus, et inevitabile fulmen.
Meta. ii.
The description of a storm by Lucretius, is the following:
Praeterea persaepe niger quoque per mare nimbus
Ut picis e coelo demissum flumen, in undas
Sic cadit, et fertur tenebris, procul et trahit atram

Fulminibus gravidam tempestatem, atque procellis.

Ignibus ac ventis cum primus ipse repletus:

In terris quoque ut horrescant ae tecta requirant.

S c igitur sutpranostrum caput esso putandum est

Tempestatem altam. Neque enim caligine tanta

Obruerat terras, nisi inaedificata superne

Multa forent multis exempto nubila sole.
Lib. vi.
The well-known description of the storm by Virgil is as follows:
Nimborum in patriam, loca foeta furentibus austris,
Aeoliam venit. Hic vasto Rex Aeolus antro
Luctantis ventos tempestatesque sonoras

Imperio premit, ac vinelis et carcere frenat.

Illi indignantes, magno cum murmure, montis

Circum claustra fremunt. Celsa sedet Aeolus arce,

Sceptra tenens: molliitque animos, et temperat iras.
- *Venti, velut agmine facto.*
Qua data petra, ruunt, et terras turbine perflant.
Incubuere mari, totumque a sedibus imis,

Una Eurusque Notusque ruunt, creberque procelis

Africus, et vastos volvunt ad litora fluctus.
Aeneid i. 51-57,82-86.

One of the most sublime descriptions of a storm to be found any where, is furnished by Klopstock. It contains a beautiful recognition of the presence and majesty of God, and a most tender and affecting description of the protection which his friends experience when the storm rushes by. It is in the Fruhlingsfeier - a poem which is regarded by many as his masterpiece. A small portion of it I will transcribe:

Wolken stromen herauf!
Sichtbar ist; der komant, der Ewige!
Nun schweben sie, rauschen sie, wirbeln die Winde!

Wie beugt sich der Wald! Wie hebet sich det Strom!

Sichtbar, wie du es Sterblichen seyn kannst,

Ja, das bist du, sichtbar, Unendlicher!

Zurnest du, Herr,

Weil Nacht dein Gewand ist?

Diese Nacht ist Segen der Erde.

Vater, du Zurnest nicht!

Seht ihr den Zeugendes Nahen, den zucken den Strahi?

Hort ihr Jehovah‘s Donner?

Hort ihr ihn? hort ihr ihn.

Der erschtternden Donner des Herrn?

Herr! Herr! Gott!

Barmhertzig, und gnadig!

Angebetet, gepriesen,

Sey dein herrlicher Name!

Und die Gowitterwinde! Sie tragen den Donner!

Wie sie rauschen! Wie sie mit lawter Woge den Wald du: chstromen!

Und nun schwiegen sie. Langsam wandelt

Die schwartze Wolke.

Seht ihr den neurn Zeugen des Nahen, den fliegenden Strahl!

Horet ihr hoch in Wolke den Donner dex Herrn?

Er ruft: Jehova! Jehova!

Und der geschmetterte Wald dampft!

Abet nicht unsre Hutte

Unser Vater gebot

Seinem Verderber,

Vor unsrer Hutte voruberzugehn!

Verse 6

For he saith to the snow - That is, the snow is produced by the command of God, and is a proof of his wisdom and greatness. The idea is, that; the formation of snow was an illustration of the wisdom of God, and should teach people to regard him with reverence. It is not to be supposed

that the laws by which snow is formed in the atmosphere were understood in the time of Elihu. The fact that it seemed to be the effect of the immediate creation of God, was the principal idea in the mind of Elihu in illustrating his wisdom. But it is not less fitted to excite our admiration of his wisdom now that the laws by which it is produced are better understood; and in fact the knowledge of those laws is adapted to elevate our conceptions of the wisdom and majesty of Him who formed them. The investigations and discoveries of science do not diminish the proofs of the Creator‘s wisdom and greatness. but every new discovery tends to change blind admiration to intelligent devotion; to transform wonder to praise. On the formation of snow, see the notes at Job 38:22.

Be thou on the earth - There is a strong resemblance between this passage and the sublime command in Genesis 1:3, “And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.” Each of them is expressive of the creative power of God, and of the ease with which he accomplishes his purposes.

Likewise to the small rain - Margin, “and to the shower of rain, and to the showers of rain of his strength.” The word which is used here in the Hebrew (גשם *geshem*), means “rain” in general, and the phrase “small rain” (גשם (מטר *mâṭâr geshem*), seems to be used to denote the “rain” simply, without reference to its violence, or to its being copious. The following phrase, “the great rain of his strength” (עזו מטרות גשם *geshem mâṭârôt ʿôzû*) refers to the rain when it has increased to a copious shower. The idea before the mind of Elihu seems to have been that of a shower, as it commences and increases until it pours down torrents, and the meaning is, that alike in the one case and the other, the rain was under the command of God, and obeyed his will. The whole description here is that which pertains to winter, and Elihu refers doubtless to the copious rains which fell at that season of the year.

Verse 7

He sealeth up the hand of every man - That is, in the winter, when the snow is on the ground, when the streams are frozen, and when the labors of the husbandman cease. The idea of “sealing up the hand” is derived from the common purpose of a seal, to make fast, to close up, to secure (compare Job 9:7, note; Job 33:16, note), and the sense is, that the hands can no more be used in ordinary toil. Every man in the snow and rain of winter is prevented from going abroad to his accustomed toil, and is, as it were, sealed up in his dwelling. The idea is exquisitely beautiful. God confines

human beings and beasts in their houses or caves, until the winter has passed by.

That all men may know his work - The Septuagint renders this," That every man may know his own weakness" - ἀσθένειαν *astheneian* Various interpretations have been given of the passage, but our common version has probably expressed in the main the true sense, that God thus interrupts the labors of man, and confines him in his home, that he may feel his dependence on God, and may recognize the constant agency of his Creator. The Hebrew literally is "For the knowledge of all the men of his making;" that is, that all the people whom he has created may have knowledge. The changing seasons thus keep before us the constant evidence of the unceasing agency of God in his works, and prevent the feeling which we might have, if everything was uniform that the universe was under the control of "fate." As it is, the succession of the seasons, the snow, the rain, the dew, and the sunshine, all bear marks of being under the control of an intelligent Being, and are so regulated that we need not forget that his unceasing agency is constantly round about us. It may be added, that when the farmer in the winter is laid aside from his usual toil, and confined to his dwelling, it is a favorable time for him to meditate on the works of God, and to acquaint himself with his Creator. The labors of man are thus interrupted; the busy affairs of life come to a pause, and while nature is silent around us, and the earth wrapped in her fleecy mantle forbids the labor of the husbandman, everything invites to the contemplation of the Creator, and of the works of his hands. The winter, therefore, might be improved by every farmer to enlarge his knowledge of God, and should be regarded as a season wisely appointed for him to cultivate his understanding and improve his heart.

Verse 8

Then the beasts go into dens - In the winter. This fact appears to have been early observed, that in the season of cold the wild animals withdrew into caves, and that many of them became torpid. This fact Elihu adverts to as an illustration of the wisdom and greatness of God. The proof of his superintending care was seen in the fact that they withdrew from the cold in which they would perish, and that provision is made for their continuance in life at a time when they cannot obtain the food by which they ordinarily subsist. In that torpid and inactive state, they need little food, and remain often for months with almost no nourishment.

Verse 9

Out of the south - Margin, "chamber." Jerome, "ab interioribus - from the interior," or "inner places." Septuagint, ἐκ ταυείων *ek taueiōn* - "from their chambers issue sorrows" - ὀωύνας *othunas* The Hebrew word used here (חדר *cheder*) denotes properly "an apartment," or "chamber," especially an inner apartment, or a chamber in the interior of a house or tent: Genesis 43:30; Judges 16:9, Judges 16:12. Hence, it means a bed-chamber, 2 Samuel 4:7, or a female apartment or harem, Job 9:9, it is connected with the "south" - "the chambers of the south" (see the notes at that place), and means some remote, hidden regions in that quarter. There can be little doubt that the word "south "is here also to be understood, as it stands in contrast with a word which properly denotes the north. Still there may have been reference to a supposed opinion that whirlwinds had their origin in deep, hollow caves, and that they were owing to the winds which were supposed to be pent up there, and which raged tumultuously until they broke open the doors of their prison, and then poured forth with violence over the earth; compare the description of the storm in Virgil, as quoted above in Job 37:5. There are frequent allusions in the Scriptures to the fact that whirlwinds come from the South; see the notes at Isaiah 21:1; compare Zechariah 9:14. Savary says of the south wind, which blows in Egypt from February to May, that it fills the atmosphere with a fine dust, rendering breathing difficult, and that it is filled with an injurious vapor. Sometimes it appears in the form of a furious whirlwind, which advances with great rapidity, and which is highly dangerous to those who traverse the desert. It drives before it clouds of burning sand; the horizon appears covered with a thick veil, and the sun appears red as blood. Occasionally whole caravans are buried by it in the sand. It is possible that there may be reference to such a whirlwind in the passage before us; compare Burder, in Rosenmuller's Alte u. neue Morgenland. No. 765.

The whirlwind - See Job 1:19, note; Job 30:22, note.

And cold out of the north - Margin, "scattering" winds. The Hebrew word used here (מזרים *mezâriym*) means literally, "the scattering," and is hence used for the north winds, says Gesenius which scatter the clouds, and bring severe cold. Umbreit thinks the word is used to denote the north, because we seem to see the north winds strewed on the clouds. Probably the reference is to the north wind as scattering the snow or hail on the ground. Heated winds come from the south; but those which scatter the snow, and

are the source of cold, come from the north. In all places north of the equator it is true that the winds from the northern quarter are the source of cold. The idea of Elihu is, that all these things are under the control of God, and that these various arrangements for heat and cold are striking proofs of his greatness.

Verse 10

By the breath of God frost is given - Not by the violent north wind, or by the whirlwind of the south, but God seems to "breathe" in a gentle manner, and the earth is covered with hoary frost. It appears in a still night, when there is no storm or tempest, and descends upon the earth as silently as if it were produced by mere breathing. Frost is congealed or frozen dew. On the formation and cause of dew, see the notes at Job 38:28. The figure is poetical and beautiful. The slight motion of the air, even when the frost appears, seems to be caused by the breathing of God.

And the breadth of the waters is straitened - That is, is contracted by the cold; or is frozen over. The waters are "compressed" into a solid mass (במוצק *bemûtsaq*), or are in a state of "pressure" or "compression" - or so the word used here means. What were before expanded rivers or arms of the sea, are now compressed into solid masses of ice. This, also, is proof of the greatness and power of God, for though the cause was not understood by Elihu, yet there was no doubt that it was produced by his agency. Though the laws by which this occurs are now better understood than they were then, it is no less clearly seen that it is by his agency; and all the light which we obtain in regard to the laws by which these things occur, only serve to exalt our conceptions of the wisdom and greatness of God.

Verse 11

Also by watering - Very various interpretations have been given of this phrase. Herder renders it, "His brightness rendeth the clouds." Umbreit, Und Heiterkeit vertreibt die Wolke - "and serenity or clearness drives away the clouds." Prof. Lee, "For irrigation is the thick cloud stretched out." Rosenmuller, "Splendor dispels the clouds." Luther, "The thick clouds divide themselves that it may be clear." Coverdale, "The clouds do their labor in giving moistness." The Vulgate, "The grain desires the clouds," and the Septuagint, "The cloud forms the chosen" - ἐκλεκτον *eklekton* This variety of interpretation arises from the uncertainty of the meaning of the original word - ברי *berîy* According to the Chaldee and the rabbis, this word means "clearness, serenity" of the heavens, and then the whole clause is to

be rendered, "serenity dispelleth the cloud." Or the word may be formed of the preposition ב (*be), and* רי *rîy meaning "watering" or "rain," the same as* רוי *reviy The word does not occur elsewhere in Hebrew, and hence, it is not easy to determine its meaning. The weight of authority is in favor of serenity, or clearness - meaning that the thick, dark cloud is driven away by the serenity or clearness of the atmosphere - as where the clear sky seems to light up the heavens and to drive away the clouds. This idea seems, also, to be demanded by the parallelism, and is also more poetical than that in the common version.*

Wearieth - *Or removes, or scatters. The verb used here (*טרח *ṭârach) occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures, though nouns derived from the verb are found in Isaiah 1:14, rendered "trouble," and Deuteronomy 1:12, rendered "cumbrance." In Arabic it means "to cast down, to project," and hence, to lay upon as a burden. But the word may mean to impel, drive forward, and hence, the idea that the dark thick cloud is propelled or driven forward by the serenity of the sky. This "appears" to be so, and hence, the poetic idea as it occurred to Elihu.*

He scattereth his bright cloud - *Margin, "the cloud of his light." The idea seems to be, that "his light," that is, the light which God causes to shine as the tempest passes off, seems to scatter or disperse the cloud. The image before the mind of Elihu probably was, that of a departing shower, when the light seems to rise behind it, and as it were to expel the cloud or to drive it away. We are not to suppose that this is philosophically correct, but Elihu represents it as it appeared, and the image is wholly poetical.*

Verse 12

And it is turned round about - *The word here rendered "it" (*הוא *hû') may refer either to the "cloud," and then it will mean that it is driven about at the pleasure of God; or it may refer to God, and then it will mean that "he" drives it about at pleasure. The sense is not materially varied. The use of the Hebrew participle rendered "turned about" (in Hithpael), would rather imply that it refers to the cloud. The sense then is, that it turns itself round about - referring to the appearance of a cloud in the sky that rolls itself about from one place to another.*

By his counsels - *By the counsels or purposes of God. It is not by any agency or power of its own, but it is by laws such as he has appointed, and so as to accomplish his will. The object is to keep up the idea that God presides over, and directs all these things. The word which is rendered*

"counsels" (תחבולה tachebûlâh) means properly a "steering, guidance, management," Proverbs 11:14. It is usually applied to the act of steering, as a vessel, and then to prudent management, wise counsel, skillful measures. It is rendered "wise counsels," and "counsels," Proverbs 1:5; Proverbs 11:14; Proverbs 12:5; Proverbs 24:6, and "good advice," Proverbs 20:18. It does not elsewhere occur in the Scriptures. The word is derived from חבל chebel "a rope," or חבל chôbêl "a sailor, pilot," and hence, the idea of "steering," or "directing." The meaning is, that the movements of the clouds are entirely under the "direction" of God, as the vessel is of the pilot or helmsman. The Septuagint appears not to have understood the meaning of the word, and have not attempted to translate it. They retain it in their version, writing it, θεεβουλαθὼ q theeboulathōth showing, among other instances, how the Hebrew was "pronounced" by them.

That they may do whatsoever he commandeth them *- See Psalm 147:17-18. The idea is, that even the clouds, which appear so capricious in their movements, are really under the direction of God, and are accomplishing his purposes. They do not move at haphazard, but they are under the control of one who intends to accomplish important purposes by them. Elihu had made this observation respecting the lightning Job 36:30-33, and he now says that the same thing was true of the clouds. The investigations of science have only served to confirm this, and to show that even the movements of the clouds are regulated by laws which have been ordained by a Being of infinite intelligence.*

Verse 13

He causeth it to come - *That is, the rain, or the storm. It is entirely under the hand of God, like the lightning Job 36:30, and designed to accomplish his purposes of mercy and of justice.*

Whether for correction - *Margin, as in Hebrew "a rod." The rod is often used as an emblem of punishment. The idea is, that God, when he pleases, can send the rain upon the earth for the purpose of executing punishment. So he did on the old world Genesis 7:11-12, and so the overflowing flood is often now sent to sweep away the works of man, to lay waste his fields, and to cut off the wicked.*

Or for his land - *When necessary to render the land productive. He waters it by timely rains. It is called "his land," meaning that the earth belongs to the Lord, and that he cultivates it as his own; Psalm 24:1.*

Or for mercy - *In kindness and benignity to the world. But for this, the earth would become baked and parched, and all vegetation would expire. The idea is, that the rains are entirely under the control of God, and that he can make use of them to accomplish his various purposes - to execute his judgments, or to express his benignity and love. These various uses to which the lightning, the storm, and the rain could be made subservient under the divine direction. seem to have been one of the main ideas in the mind of Elihu, showing the supremacy and the majesty of God.*

Verse 14

Hearken unto this, O Job - *That is, to the lesson which such events are fitted to convey respecting God.*

Stand still - *In a posture of reverence and attention. The object is to secure a calm contemplation of the works of God, so that the mind might be filled with suitable reverence for him.*

Verse 15

Dost thou know when God disposed them? - *That is, the winds, the clouds, the cold, the snow, the sky, etc. The question refers to the manner in which God arranges and governs them, rather than to the time when it was done. So the Hebrew implies, and so the connection demands. The question was not whether Job knew "when" all this was done, but whether he could explain "how" it was that God thus arranged and ordered the things referred to. Elihu asks him whether he could explain the manner in which the balancings of the clouds were preserved; in which the lightnings were directed; in which his garments were warm, and in which God had made and sustained the sky? The Septuagint renders this, "We know that God hath disposed his works that he hath made light out of darkness."*

And caused the light of his cloud to shine - *That is, Canst thou explain the cause of lightning? Canst thou tell how it is that it seems to break out of a dark cloud? Where has it been concealed? And by what laws is it now brought forth? Elihu assumes that all this was done by the agency of God, and since, as he assumes to be true, it was impossible for people to explain the manner in which it was done, his object is to show that profound veneration should be shown for a God who works in this manner. Somewhat more is known now of the laws by which lightning is produced than there was in the time of Job; but the question may still be asked of man, and is as much fitted to produce awe and veneration as it was then, whether he understands the way in which God produces the bright lightning from the*

dark bosom of a cloud. Can he tell what is the exact agency of the Most High in it? Can he explain all the laws by which it is done?

Verse 16

Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds? - *That is, Dost thou know how the clouds are poised and suspended in the air? The difficulty to be explained was, that the clouds, so full of water, did not fail to the earth, but remained suspended in the atmosphere. They were poised and moved about by some unseen hand. Elihu asks what kept them there; what prevented their falling to the earth; what preserved the equilibrium so that they did not all roll together. The phenomena of the clouds would be among the first that would attract the attention of man, and in the early times of Job it is not to be supposed that the subject could be explained. Elihu assumes that they were held in the sky by the power of God, but what was the nature of his agency, he says, man could not understand, and hence, he infers that God should be regarded with profound veneration. We know more of the facts and laws respecting the clouds than was understood then, but our knowledge in this, as in all other things, is fitted only to exalt our conceptions of the Deity, and to change blind wonder into intelligent adoration.*

The causes of the suspension of the clouds are thus stated in the Edinburgh Encyclopedia, Art. Meteorology: "When different portions of the atmosphere are intermixed so as to produce a deposition of moisture;" (compare the notes at Job 38:28), "the consequence will be the formation of a cloud. This cloud, from its increased specific gravity, will have a tendency to sink downward; and were the lower strata of the air of the same temperature with the cloud, and saturated with moisture, it would continue to descend until it reached the surface of the earth - in the form of rain, or what is commonly called mist. In general, however, the cloud in its descent passes through a warmer region, when the condensed moisture again passes into a vapor, and consequently ascends until it reaches a temperature sufficiently low to recondense it, when it will begin again to sink. This oscillation will continue until the cloud settles at the point where the temperature and humidity are such as that the condensed moisture begins to be dissipated, and which is found on an average to be between two and three miles above the surface of the earth." By such laws the "balancing" of the clouds is secured, and thus is shown the wisdom of Him that is "perfect in knowledge."

The wondrous works of him that is perfect in knowledge - *Particularly in the matter under consideration. He who can command the lightning, and hold the clouds suspended in the air, Elihu infers must be perfect in knowledge. To a Being who can do this, everything must be known. The reasoning of Elihu here is well-founded, and is not less forcible now than it was in the time of Job.*

Verse 17

How thy garments are warm - *What is the reason that the garments which we wear produce warmth? This, it would seem, was one of the philosophical questions which were asked at that time, and which it was difficult to explain. Perhaps it has never occurred to most persons to ask this apparently simple question, and if the inquiry were proposed to them, plain as it seems to be, they would find it as difficult to give an answer as Elihu supposed it would be for Job. Of the fact here referred to that the garments became oppressive when a sultry wind came from the south, there could be no dispute. But what was the precise difficulty in explaining the fact, is not so clear. Some suppose that Elihu asks this question sarcastically, as meaning that Job could not explain the simplest matters and the plainest facts; but there is every reason to think that the question was proposed with entire seriousness, and that it was supposed to involve real difficulty. It seems probable that the difficulty was not so much to explain why the garments should become oppressive in a burning or sultry atmosphere, as to show how the heated air itself was produced It was difficult to explain why cold came out of the north Job 37:9; how the clouds were suspended, and the lightnings caused Job 37:11, Job 37:15-16; and it was not less difficult to show what produced uncomfortable heat when the storms from the north were allayed; when the earth became quiet, and when the breezes blowed from the south. This would be a fair question for investigation, and we may readily suppose that the causes then were not fully known.*

When he quieteth the earth - *When the piercing blast from the north dies away, and the wind comes round to the south, producing a more gentle, but a sultry air. It was true not only that the whirlwind came from the south Job 37:9, but also that the heated burning air came also from that quarter, Luke 12:55. We know the reason to be that the equatorial regions are warmer than those at the north, and especially that in the regions where Job lived the air becomes heated by passing over extended plains of sand, but*

there is no reason to suppose that this was fully understood at the time referred to here.

Verse 18

Hast thou with him spread out the sky? - *That is, wert thou employed with God in performing that vast work, that thou canst explain how it was done? Elihu here speaks of the sky as it appears, and as it is often spoken of, as an expanse or solid body spread out over our heads, and as sustained by some cause which is unknown. Sometimes in the Scriptures it is spoken of as a curtain (Notes, Isaiah 40:22); sometimes as a "firmament," or a solid body spread out (Septuagint, Genesis 1:6-7); sometimes as a fixture in which the stars are placed (Notes, Isaiah 34:4), and sometimes as a scroll that may be rolled up, or as a garment, Psalm 102:26. There is no reason to suppose that the true cause of the appearance of an expanse was understood at that time, but probably the prevailing impression was that the sky was solid and was a fixture in which the stars were held. Many of the ancients supposed that there were concentric spheres, which were transparent but solid, and that these spheres revolved around the earth carrying the heavenly bodies with them. In one of these spheres, they supposed, was the sun; in another the moon; in another the fixed stars; in another the planets; and it was the harmonious movement of these concentric and transparent orbs which it was supposed produced the "music of the spheres."*

Which is strong - *Firm, compact. Elihu evidently supposed that it was solid. It was so firm that it was self-sustained.*

And as a molten looking-glass - *As a mirror that is made by being fused or cast. The word "glass" is not in the original, the Hebrew denoting simply "seeing," or a "mirror" (*ראי *re'îy). Mirrors were commonly made of plates of metal highly polished; see the notes at Isaiah 3:23; compare Wilkinson's Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians, vol. iii. p. 365. Ancient mirrors were so highly polished that in some which have been discovered at Thebes the luster has been partially restored, though they have been buried for many centuries. There can be no doubt that the early apprehension in regard to the sky was, that it was a solid expanse, and that it is often so spoken of in the Bible. There is, however, no direct declaration that it is so, and whenever it is so spoken of, it is to be understood as popular language, as we speak still of the rising or setting of the sun, though we know that the language is not philosophically correct. The*

design of the Bible is not to teach science, but religion, and the speakers in the Bible were allowed to use the language of common life - just as scientific men in fact do now.

Verse 19

Teach us what we shall say unto him - *This seems to be addressed to Job. It is the language of Elihu, implying that he was overawed with a sense of the majesty and glory of such a God. He knew not in what manner, or with what words to approach such a Being, and he asks Job to inform him, if he knew.*

We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness - *Job had repeatedly professed a desire to bring his cause directly before God, and to argue it in his presence. He felt assured that if he could do that, he should be able so to present it as to obtain a decision in his favor; see Job 13:3, note; Job 13:18-22, notes. Elihu now designs, indirectly, to censure that confidence. He says that he and his friends were so overawed by the majesty of God, and felt themselves so ignorant and so ill qualified to judge of him and his works, that they would not know what to say. They were in darkness. They could not understand even the works of his hands which were directly before them, and the most common operations of nature were inscrutable to them. How then could they presume to arraign God? How could they manage a cause before him with any hope of success? It is scarcely necessary to say, that the state of mind referred to here by Elihu is that which should be cultivated, and that the feelings which he expresses are those with which we should approach the Creator. We need someone to teach us. We are surrounded by mysteries which we cannot comprehend, and we should, therefore, approach our Maker with profound reverence and submission*

Verse 20

Shall it be told him that I speak? - *Still the language of profound awe and reverence, as if he would not have it even intimated to God that he had presumed to say anything in regard to him, or with a view to explain the reason of his doings.*

If a man speak - *That is, if he attempt to speak with God; to argue a case with him; to contend with him in debate; to oppose him. Elihu had designed to reprove Job for the bold and presumptuous manner in which he bad spoken of God, and for his wish to enter into a debate with him in order to vindicate his cause. He now says, that if anyone should attempt this, God*

had power at once to destroy him; and that such an attempt would be perilous to his life. But other interpretations have been proposed, which may be seen in Rosenmuller, Umbreit, and Lee.

Surely he shall be swallowed up - *Destroyed for his presumption and rashness in thus contending with the Almighty. Elihu says that on this account he would not dare to speak with God. He would fear that he would come forth in his anger, and destroy him. How much man by nature instinctively feels, when he has any just views of the majesty of God, that he needs a Mediator!*

Verse 21

And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds - *Either the lightning that plays on the clouds in an approaching tempest, or a glorious light spread over the sky on the approach of God. There is reason to believe that as Elihu delivered the sentiments recorded in the close of this chapter, he meant to describe God as if he were seen to be approaching, and that the symbols of his presence were discovered in the gathering tempest and storm. He is introduced in the following chapter with amazing sublimity and grandeur to speak to Job and his friends, and to close the argument. He comes in a whirlwind, and speaks in tones of vast sublimity. The tokens of his coming were now seen, and as Elihu discerned them he was agitated, and his language became abrupt and confused. His language is just such as one would use when the mind was overawed with the approach of God - solemn, and full of reverence, but not connected, and much less calm than in his ordinary discourse. The close of this chapter, it seems to me, therefore, is to be regarded as spoken when the tempest was seen to be gathering, and when in awful majesty God was approaching, the lightnings playing around him, the clouds piled on clouds attending him, the thunder reverberating along the sky, and an unusual brightness evincing his approach; Notes, Job 37:22. The idea here is, that people could not steadfastly behold that bright light. It was so dazzling and so overpowering that they could not gaze on it intently. The coming of such a Being strayed in so much grandeur, and clothed in such a light, was fitted to overcome the human powers.*

But the wind passeth, and cleanseth them - *The wind passes along and makes them clear. The idea seems to be, that the wind appeared to sweep along over the clouds as the tempest was rising, and they seemed to open or disperse in one part of the heavens, and to reveal in the opening a glory so*

bright and dazzling that the eye could not rest upon it. That light or splendor made in the opening cloud was the symbol of God, approaching to wind up this great controversy, and to address Job and his friends in the sublime language which is found in the closing chapters of the book, The word rendered "cleanseth" (טהר ṭâhêr) means properly to shine, to be bright; and then to be pure or clean. Here the notion of shining or brightness is to be retained; and the idea is, that a wind appeared to pass along, removing the cloud which seemed to be a veil on the throne of God, and suffering the visible symbol of his majesty to be seen through the opening; see the notes at Job 26:9, "He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it."

Verse 22

Fair weather - *Margin, "gold," The Hebrew word (זהב zâhâb) properly means "gold," and is so rendered by the Vulgate, the Syriac, and by most versions. The Septuagint renders it,* νέψη χρυσαυγουντα *nepsē chrusaugounta "clouds shining like gold." The Chaldee,* אסתניא*, the north wind, Boreas. Many expositors have endeavored to show that gold was found in the northern regions (see Schultens, in loc.); and it is not difficult so to establish that fact as to be a confirmation of what is here said, on the supposition that it refers literally to gold. But it is difficult to see why Elihu should here make a reference to the source where gold was found, or how such a reference should be connected with the description of the approaching tempest, and the light which was already seen on the opening clouds. It seems probable to me that the idea is wholly different and that Elihu means to say that a bright, dazzling light was seen in the northern sky like burnished gold, which was a fit symbol of the approaching Deity. This idea is hinted at in the Septuagint, but it has not seemed to occur to expositors. The image is that of the heavens darkened with the tempest, the lightnings playing, the thunder rolling, and then the wind seeming to brush away the clouds in the north, and disclosing in the opening a bright, dazzling appearance like burnished gold, that bespoke the approach of God. The word is never used in the sense of "fair weather." An ancient Greek tragedian, mentioned by Grotius, speaks of golden air -* χρυσωπός αἰθήρ *chrusōpos aithēr Varro also uses a similar expression - aurescit aer, "the air becomes like gold." So Thomson, in his Seasons:*

But yonder comes the powerful king of day
Rejoicing in the east. The lessening cloud.

The kindling azure, and the mountain's brow,

Illumed with fluid gold, his near approach

Betoken glad.
Summer

Out of the north - That is, the symbol of the approaching Deity appears in that quarter, or God was seen to approach from the north. It may serve to explain this, to remark that among the ancients the northern regions were regarded as the residence of the gods, and that on the mountains in the north it was supposed they were accustomed to assemble. In proof of this, and for the reasons of it, see the notes at Isaiah 14:13. From that region Elihu sees God now approaching, and directs the attention of his companions to the symbols of his advent. It is this which fills his mind with so much consternation, and which renders his discourse so broken and disconnected. Having, in a manner evincing great alarm, directed their attention to these symbols, he concludes what he has to say in a hurried manner, and God appears, to close the controversy.

With God is terrible majesty - This is not a declaration asserting this of God in general, but as he then appeared. It is the language of one who was overwhelmed with his awful majesty, as the brightness of his presence was seen on the tempest.

Verse 23

Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out - See the notes at Job 11:7-9. This sentiment accords with all that Elihu had said, and indeed is what he designed particularly to enforce. But it has a special emphasis here, where God is seen approaching in visible splendor, encompassed with clouds and tempests, and seated on a throne of burnished gold. Such a God, Elihu says, it was impossible to comprehend. His majesty was overwhelming, The passage is much more impressive and solemn, and accords much better with the original, by omitting the words which our translators have introduced and printed in italics. It would then be,

The Almighty! - We cannot find him out!

Great in power, and in justice, and in righteouness!

Thus, it expresses the overwhelming emotion, the awe, the alarm produced on the mind of one who saw God approaching in the sublimity of the storm.

He is excellent in power - He excels, or is vast and incomprehensible in power.

And in judgment - That is, in justice.

And in plenty of justice - Hebrew, "in multitude of righteousness." The meaning is, that there was an overflowing fulness of righteousness; his character was entirely righteous, or that trait abounded in him.

He will not afflict - Or, he will not oppress, he will not crush. It was true that he "did afflict" people, but the idea is, that there was not harshness or oppression in it. He would not do it for the mere sake of producing affliction, or when it was not deserved. Some manuscipts vary the reading here so as to mean "he will not answer;" that is, he will not give any account of what he does. The change has relation only to the points, but the above is the usual interpretation, and accords well with the connection.

Verse 24

Men do therefore fear him - There is reason why they should fear him, or why they should treat him with reverence.

He respecteth not any that are wise of heart - He pursues his own plans, and forms and executes his own counsels. He is not dependent upon the suggestions of people, and does not listen to their advice. In his schemes he is original and independent, and people should therefore regard him with profound veneration. This is the sum of all that Elihu had to say - that God was original and independent; that he did not ask counsel of people in his dealings; that he was great, and glorious, and inscrutable in his plans; and that people therefore should bow before him with profound submission and adoration. It was to be presumed that he was wise and good in all that he did, and to this independent and almighty Sovereign man ought to submit his understanding and his heart. Having illustrated and enforced this sentiment, Elihu, overwhelmed with the awful symbols of the approaching Deity, is silent, and God is introduced to close the controversy.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 38

Verse 1

Then the Lord answered Job - This speech is addressed particularly to Job, not only because he is the principal personage referred to in the book, but particularly because he had indulged in language of murmuring and complaint. God designed to bring him to a proper state of mind before he appeared openly for his vindication. It is the purpose of God, in his dealings with his people, "to bring them to a proper state of mind" before he appears as their vindicator and friend, and hence, their trials are often prolonged, and when he appears, he seems at first to come only to rebuke them. Job had indulged in very improper feelings, and it was needful that those feelings should be subdued before God would manifest himself as his friend, and address him in words of consolation.

Out of the whirlwind - The tempest; the storm - probably that which Elihu had seen approaching, Job 37:21-24. God is often represented as speaking to people in this manner. He spake amidst lightnings and tempests on Mount Sinai Exodus 19:16-19, and he is frequently represented as appearing amidst the thunders and lightnings of a tempest, as a symbol of his majesty; compare Psalm 18:9-13; Habakkuk 3:3-6. The word here rendered "whirlwind" means rather "a storm, a tempest." The Septuagint renders this verse, "After Elihu had ceased speaking, the Lord spake to Job from a tempest and clouds."

Verse 2

Who is this - Referring doubtless to Job, for he is specified in the previous verse. Some have understood it of Elihu (see Schultens), but the connection evidently demands that it should be understood as referring to Job. The object was, to reprove him for the presumptuous manner in which he had spoken of God and of his government. It was important before God manifested his approval of Job, that he should declare his sense of what he had said, and show him how improper it was to indulge in language such as he had used.

That darkeneth counsel - That makes the subject darker. Instead of explaining the reason of the divine dealings, and vindicating God from the objections alleged against him and his government, the only tendency of what he had said had been to make his government appear dark, and severe, and unjust in the view of his friends. It might have been expected of Job,

being a friend of God, that all that he said would have tended to inspire confidence in him, and to explain and vindicate the divine dealings; but, God had seen much that was the very reverse. Even the true friends of God, in the dark times of trial, may say much that will tend to make people doubt the wisdom and goodness of his government, and to prejudice the minds of the wicked against him.

By words without knowledge - Words that did not contain a true explanation of the difficulty. They conveyed no light about his dealings; they did not tend to satisfy the mind, or to make the subject more clear than it was before. There is much of this kind of speaking in the world; much that is written, and much that fails from the lips in debate, in preaching, and in conversation, that explains nothing, and that even leaves the subject more perplexed than it was before. We see from this verse that God does not and cannot approve of such "words." If his friends speak, they should vindicate his government; they should at least express their conviction that he is right; they should aim to explain his doings, and to show to the world that they are reasonable. If they cannot do this, they should adore in silence. The Savior never spoke of God in such a way as to leave any doubt that his ways could be vindicated, never so as to leave the impression that he was harsh or severe in his administration, or so as to lend the least countenance to a spirit of murmuring and complaining.

Verse 3

Gird up now thy loins like a man - To gird up the loins, is a phrase which has allusion to the mode of dress in ancient times. The loose flowing robe which was commonly worn, was fastened with a girdle when men ran, or labored, or engaged in conflict; see the notes at Matthew 5:38-41. The idea here is, "Make thyself as strong and vigorous as possible; be prepared to put forth the highest effort." God was about to put him to a task which would require all his ability - that of explaining the facts which were constantly occurring in the universe. The whole passage is ironical. Job had undertaken to tell what he knew of the divine administration, and God now calls upon him to show his claims to the office of such an expositor. So wise a man as he was, who could pronounce on the hidden counsels of the Most High with so much confidence, could assuredly explain those things which pertained to the visible creation. The phrase "like a man" means boldly, courageously; compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 16:13.

I will demand of thee, and answer thou me - Margin, as in Hebrew, "make me known." The meaning is, "I will submit some questions or subjects of inquiry to you for solution. Since you have spoken with so much confidence of my government, I will propose some inquiries as a test of your knowledge."

Verse 4

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? - The first appeal is to the creation. The question here, "Where wast thou?" implies that Job was not present. He had not then an existence. He could not, therefore, have aided God, or counselled him, or understood what he was doing. How presumptuous, therefore, it was in one so short-lived to sit in judgment on the doings of him who had formed the world! How little could he expect to be able to know of him! The expression, "laid the foundations of the earth," is taken from building an edifice. The foundations are first laid, and the super-structure is then reared. It is a poetic image, and is not designed to give any intimation about the actual process by which the earth was made, or the manner in which it is sustained.

If thou hast understanding - Margin, as in Hebrew "if thou knowest." That is, "Declare how it was done. Explain the manner in which the earth was formed and fixed in its place, and by which the beautiful world grew up under the hand of God." If Job could not do this, what presumption was it to speak as he had done of the divine adminisitration!

Verse 5

Who hath laid the measures thereof - That is, as an architect applies his measures when he rears a house.

If thou knowest - Or rather, "for thou knowest." The expression is wholly ironical, and is designed to rebuke Job's pretensions of being able to explain the divine administration.

Or who hath stretched the line upon it - As a carpenter uses a line to mark out his work; see the notes at Isaiah 28:17. The earth is represented as a building, the plan of which was laid out beforehand, and which was then made according to the sketch of the architect. It is not, therefore, the work of chance or fate. It is laid out and constructed according to a wise plan, and in a method evincing infinite skill.

Verse 6

Whereupon are the foundations - Margin, "sockets." The Hebrew word (אדן *'eden*) means "a basis," as of a column, or a pedestal; and then

also the foundation of a building. The language here is evidently figurative, comparing the earth with an edifice. In building a house, the securing of a proper foundation is essential to its stability; and here God represents himself as rearing the earth on the most permanent and solid basis. The word is not used in the sense of sockets, as it is in the margin.

Fastened - Margin, "made to sink." The margin rather expresses the sense of the Hebrew word הטבעו *hāṭâbaʿû* It is rendered "sink" and "sunk" in Psalm 69:2, Psalm 69:14; Psalm 9:15; Lamentations 2:9; Jeremiah 38:6, Jeremiah 38:22; "drowned" in Exodus 15:4; and were settled in Proverbs 8:25. The word does not elsewhere occur in the Scriptures, and the prevailing sense is that of "sinking," or "settling down," and hence, to "impress" - as a seal "settles down" into wax. The reference here is to a foundation-stone that sinks or settles down into clay or mire until it becomes solid.

Or who laid the corner stone thereof - Still an allusion to a building. The cornerstone sustains the principal weight of an edifice, as the weight of two walls is concentrated on it, and hence, it is of such importance that it should be solid and firmly fixed. The question proposed for the solution of Job is, On what the earth is founded? On this question a great variety of opinions waft entertained by the ancients, and of course no correct solution could be given of the difficulty. It was not known that it was suspended and held in its place by the laws of gravitation. The meaning here is, that if Job could not solve this inquiry, he ought not to presume to sit in judgment on the government of God, and to suppose that he was qualified to judge of his secret counsels.

Verse 7

When the morning-stars - There can be little doubt that angelic beings are intended here, though some have thought that the stars literally are referred to, and that they seemed to unite in a chorus of praise when another world was added to their number. The Vulgate renders it, *astra matutina*, morning-stars; the Septuagint, ὅτε ἐγενήθηναι ἄστρα *hote egenēthēnai astra* - " when the stars were made:" the Chaldee, "the stars of the zephyr," or "morning" - צפר כוכבי. The comparison of a prince, a monarch, or an angel, with a star, is not uncommon; compare the notes at Zechariah 4:7; Ezra 3:10.

And all the sons of God - Angels - called the sons of God from their resemblance to him, or their being created by him.

Shouted for joy - That is, they joined in praise for so glorious a work as the creation of a new world. They saw that it was an event which was fitted to honor God. It was a new manifestation of his goodness and power; it was an enlargement of his empire; it was an exhibition of benevolence that claimed their gratitude. The expression in this verse is one of uncommon, perhaps of unequalled beauty. The time referred to is at the close of the creation of the earth, for the whole account relates to the formation of this world, and not of the stars. At that period, it is clear that other worlds had been made, and that there were holy beings then in existence who were of such a rank as appropriately to be called "morning-stars" and "sons of God." It is a fair inference therefore, that the "whole" of the universe was not made at once, and that the earth is one of the last of the worlds which have been called into being.

No one can demonstrate that the work of creation may not now be going on in some remote part of the universe, nor that God may not yet form many more worlds to be the monuments of his wisdom and goodness, and to give occasion for augmented praise. Who can tell but that this process may be carried on forever, and that new worlds and systems may continue to start into being, and there be continually new displays of this inexhaustible goodness and wisdom of the Creator? When this world was made, there was occasion for songs of praise among the angels. It was a beautiful world. All was pure, and lovely, and holy. Man was made like his God, and everything was full of love. Surveying the beautiful scene, as the world arose under the plastic hand of the Almighty - its hills, and vales, and trees, and flowers, and animals, there was occasion for songs and rejoicings in heaven. Could the angels have foreseen, as perhaps they did, what was to occur here, there was also occasion for songs of praise such as would exist in the creation of no other world. This was to be the world of redeeming love; this the world where the Son of God was to become incarnate and die for sinners; this the world where an immense host was to be redeemed to praise God in a song unknown to the angels - the song of redemption, in the sweet notes which shall ascend from the lips of those who shall have been ransomed from death by the great work of the atonement.

Verse 8

Or who shut up the sea with doors - This refers also to the act of the creation, and to the fact that God fixed limits to the raging of the ocean. The

word "doors" is used here rather to denote gates, such as are made to shut up water in a dam. The Hebrew word properly refers, in the dual form which is used here דלתים *delethiym*), to "double doors," or to folding doors, and is also applied to the gates of a city; Deuteronomy 3:5; 1 Samuel 23:7; Isaiah 45:1. The idea is, that the floods were bursting forth from the abyss or the center of the earth, and were checked by placing gates or doors which restrained them. Whether this is designed to be a poetic or a real description of what took place at the creation, it is not easy to determine. Nothing forbids the idea that something like this may have occurred when the waters in the earth were pouring forth tumultuously, and when they were restrained by obstructions placed there by the hand of God, as if he had made gates through which they could pass only when he should open them. This supposition also would accord well with the account of the flood in Genesis 7:11, where it is said that "the fountains of the great deep were broken up," as if those flood-gates had been opened, or the obstructions which God had placed there had been suffered to be broken through, and the waters of their own accord flowed over the world. We know as yet too little of the interior of the earth, to ascertain whether this is to be understood as a literal description of what actually occurred.

When it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb - All the images here are taken from child-birth. The ocean is represented as being born, and then as invested with clouds and darkness as its covering and its swaddling-bands. The image is a bold one, and I do not know that it is any where else applied to the formation of the ocean.

Verse 9

When I made the cloud the garment thereof - Referring to the garment in which the new-born infant is wrapped up. This image is one of great beauty. It is that of the vast ocean just coming into being, with a cloud resting upon it and covering it. Thick darkness envelopes it, and it is swathed in mists; compare Genesis 1:2," And darkness was upon the face of the deep." The time here referred to is that before the light of the sun arose upon the earth, before the dry land appeared, and before annuals and people had been formed. Then the new-born ocean lay carefully enveloped in clouds and darkness under the guardian care of God. The dark night rested upon it, and the mists hovered over it.

Verse 10

And brake up for it my decreed place - Margin, "established my decree upon it." So Herder, "I fixed my decrees upon it." Luther renders it, "Da ich ihm den Lauf brach mit meinem Damm" - "then I broke its course with my barrier." Umbreit renders it, "I measured out to it my limits;" that is, the limits or bounds which I judged to be proper. So the Vulgate, *"Circumdedi illud terminis meis"* - "I surrounded it with my limits," or with such limits as I chose to affix. The Septuagint renders it, "I placed boundaries to it." Coverdale, "I gave it my commandment." This is undoubtedly the sense which: the connection demands; and the idea in the common version, that God had broken up his fixed plans in order to accommodate the new-born ocean, is not in accordance with the parallelism. The Hebrew word (שׁבר *shâbar*) indeed commonly means "to break, to break in pieces." But, according to Gesenius, and as the place here demands, it may have the sense of measuring off, defining, appointing, "from the idea of breaking into portions;" and then the sense will be, "I measured for it (the sea) my appointed bound."

This meaning of the word is, however, more probably derived from the Arabic, where the word שׁבר *shâbar* means to measure with the span (Castell), and hence, the idea here of measuring out the limits of the ocean. The sense is, that God measured out or determined the limits of the sea. The idea of breaking up a limit or boundary which had been before fixed, it is believed, is not in the text. The word rendered "my decreed place" (חקי *chuqiy*) refers commonly to a law, statute, or ordinance, meaning originally anything that was "engraved" (חקק *châqaq*) and then, because laws were engraved on tablets of brass or stone, any statute or decree. Hence, it means anything prescribed or appointed, and hence, a "bound," or "limit;" see the notes at Job 26:10; compare Proverbs 8:29, "When he gave to the sea his decree (חקו *chuqô*) that the waters should not pass his commandment." The idea in the passage before us is, that God fixed the limits of the ocean by his own purpose or pleasure.

And set bars - Doors were formerly fastened, as they are often now, by cross-bars; and the idea here is, that God had inclosed the ocean, and so fastened the doors from where, it would issue out, that it could not pass.

Verse 11

And said, Hitherto shalt thou come - This is a most sublime expression, and its full force can be felt only by one who has stood on the shores of the ocean, and seen its mighty waves roll toward the beach as if in

their pride they would sweep everything away, and how they are checked by the barrier which God has made. A voice seems to say to them that they may roll in their pride and grandeur so far, but no further. No increase of their force or numbers can sweep the barrier away, or make any impression on the limits which God has fixed.

And here shall they proud waves be stayed - Margin, as in Hebrew, "the pride of thy waves." A beautiful image. The waves seem to advance in pride and self-confidence, as if nothing could stay them. They come as if exulting in the assurance that they will sweep everything away. In a moment they are arrested and broken, and they spread out humbly and harmlessly on the beach. God fixes the limit or boundary which they are not to pass, and they lie prostrate at his feet.

Verse 12

Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days - That is, in thy lifetime hast thou ordered the light of the morning to shine, and directed its beams over the world? God appeals to this as one of the proofs of his majesty and power - and who can look upon the spreading light of the morning and be insensible to the force and beauty of the appeal? The transition from the ocean to the morning may have been partly because the light of the morning is one of the striking exhibitions of the power of God, and partly because in the creation of the world the light of the sun was made to dawn soon after the gathering together of the waters into seas; see Genesis 1:10, Genesis 1:14. The phrase "since thy days," implies that the laws determining the rising of the sun were fixed long before the time of Job. It is asked whether this had been done since he had an existence, and whether he had an agency in effecting it - implying that it was an ancient and established ordinance long before he was born.

Caused the day-spring to know his place - The day-spring (שׁחר *shachar*) means the "aurora, the dawn, the morning." The mention of its "place" here seems to be an allusion to the fact that it does not always occupy the same position. At one season of the year it appears on the equator, at another north, and at another south of it, and is constantly varying its position. Yet it always knows its place. It never fails to appear where by the long-observed laws it ought to appear. It is regular in its motions, and is evidently under the control of an intelligent Being, who has fixed the laws of its appearing.

Verse 13

That it might take hold of the ends of the earth - Margin, as in Hebrew "wings." Wings are in the Scriptures frequently given to the earth, because it seems to be spread out, and the expression refers to its extremities. The language is derived from the supposition that the earth was a plain, and had limits or bounds. The idea here is, that God causes the light of the morning suddenly to spread to the remotest parts of the world, and to reveal everything which was there.

That the wicked might be shaken out of it - Out of the earth; that is, by the light which suddenly shines upon them. The sense is, that the wicked perform their deeds in the darkness of the night, and that in the morning light they flee away. The effect of the light coming upon them is to disturb their plans, to fill them with alarm, and to cause them to flee. The idea is highly poetic. The wicked are engaged in various acts of iniquity under cover of the night. Robbers, thieves, and adulterers, go forth to their deeds of darkness as though no one saw them. The light of the morning steals suddenly upon them, and they flee before it under the apprehension of being detected. "The dawn," says Herder, "is represented as a watchman, a messenger of the Prince of heaven, sent to chase away the bands of robbers." It may illustrate this to observe that it is still the custom of the Arabs to go on plundering excursions before the dawn. When on their way this faithful watchman, the aurora, goes out to spread light about them, to intimidate them, and to disperse them; compare the notes at Job 24:13-17.

Verse 14

It is turned as clay to the seal - A great variety of interpretations has been given to this passage. Schultens enumerates no less than twenty, and of course it is not easy to determine the meaning. The Septuagint renders it, "Didst thou take clay of the earth, and form an animal, and place on the earth a creature endowed with speech?" Though this would agree well with the connection, yet it is a wide departure from the Hebrew. The reference is, undoubtedly, to some effect or impression produced upon the earth by the light of the morning, which bears a resemblance, in some respects, to the impression produced on clay by a seal. Probably the idea is, that the spreading light serves to render visible and prominent the forms of things, as the seal when impressed on clay produces certain figures.

One form of a Babylonian seal was an engraved cylinder, fixed on an axle, with a handle in the manner of a garden roller, which produced the impression "by being rolled on the softened wax. Mr. Rich (Second Memoir

on the Ruins of Babylon, p. 59) remarks, “The Babylonian cylinders are among the most interesting and remarkable of the antiques. They are from one to three inches in length; some are of stone, and others apparently of paste or composition of various kinds. Sculptures from several of these cylinders have been published in different works. Some of them have cuneiform writing,” (for the “arrow-headed” character, p. 48), “but it has the remarkable peculiarity that it is reversed, or written from right to left, every other kind of cuneiform writing being incontestably to be read from left to right. This can only be accounted for by supposing that they were intended to roll off impressions. The cylinders are said to be chiefly found in the ruins of Jabouiga. The people of America are fond of using them as amulets, and the Persian pilgrims who came to the shrines of Ali and Hossein frequently carry back with them some of these curiosities.”

It may be observed, also, in the explanation of the passage, that clay was often used for the purpose of a seal in Oriental countries. The manner in which it was used was to daub a mass of it over the door or lock of a house, a caravansera, a room, or any place where anything valuable was deposited, and to impress upon it a rude seal. This indeed would not make the goods safe from a robber, but it would be an indication that the place is not to be entered, and show that if it had been entered it was by violence; compare Matthew 27:66. This impression on clay would be produced by the “revolving” or Babyionian seal, by turning it about, or rolling it on clay, and thus bringing the figures out prominently, and this will explain the passage here. The passing of the light over the earth in the morning, seems to be like rolling a cylinder-seal on soft clay. It leaves distinct impressions; raises up prominent figures; gives form and beauty to what seemed before a dark undistinguished mass. The word rendered “it is turned” (תתהפך *tithâphak*), means properly “it turns itself” - and the idea is that, like the revolving seal, it seems to roll over the face of the earth, and to leave a distinct and beautiful impression. Before, the face of the earth was obscure. Nothing, in the darkness of the night, could be distinguished. Now, when the dawn arises and the light spreads abroad, the figures of hills, and trees, and tents, and cities, rise before it as if a seal had been rolled on yielding clay. The image is one, therefore, of high poetic character, and of great beauty. If this be the correct interpretation, the passage does not refer to the revolution of the earth on its axis, or to any change in appearance or form which it

assumes when the wicked are shaken out of it, as Schultens supposes, but to the beautiful change in appearance which the face of the earth seems to undergo when the aurora passes over it.

And they stand as a garment - This passage is perhaps even more difficult than the former part of the verse. Prof. Lee renders it, "And that men be set up as if accoutred for battle," and according to him the idea is, that people, when the light shines, set themselves up for the prosecution of their designs. Coverdale renders it, "Their tokens and weapons hast thou turned like clay, and set them up again as the changing of a garment." Grotius supposes it means that things by the aurora change their appearance and color like a variegated garment. The true idea of the passage is probably that adopted by Schultens, Herder, Umbreit, Rosenmuller, and Noyes, that it refers to the beautiful appearance which the face of nature seems to put on when the morning light shines upon the world. Before, all was dark and undistinguished. Nature seemed to be one vast blank, with no prominent objects, and with no variety of color. When the light dawns on the earth, the various objects - the hills, trees, houses, fields, flowers, seem to stand forth, or to raise themselves up (יתיצבו *yityâtsabû*), and to put on the appearance of gorgeous and variegated vestments. It is as if the earth were clothed with beauty, and what was before a vast blank were now arrayed in splendid vestments. Thus understood, there is no need of supposing that garments were ever made, as has been sometimes supposed, with so much in-wrought silver and gold that they would "stand upright themselves." It is a beautiful conception of poetry - that the spreading light seems to clothe the dark world with a gorgeous robe, by calling forth the objects of creation from the dull and dark uniformity of night to the distinctness of day.

Verse 15

And from the wicked their light is withholden - While the light thus spreads over the earth, rendering every object beautiful and blessing the righteous, light and prosperity are withheld from the wicked; see the notes at Job 24:17. Or, the meaning may be, that when the light shines upon the world, the wicked, accustomed to perform their deeds in the night, flee from it, and retreat to their dark hiding-places.

And the high arm - Of the wicked. The arm is a symbol of strength. It is that by which we accomplish our purposes, and the idea here is, that the haughty power of the oppressor shall be crushed. The connection here seems to be this. In Job 38:12-14, there is a beautiful description of the

light, and of its effects upon the appearance of natural objects. It was such as to clothe the world with beauty, and to fill the heart of the pious with gladness. In order now to show the greatness of the punishment of the wicked, it is added that all this beauty will be hidden from them. They will be driven away by the light into their dark hiding-places, and will be met there with the withdrawal of all the tokens of prosperity, and their power will be crushed.

Verse 16

Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? - The word here rendered "springs" (נבך *nêbek*), occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. It is rendered by the Vulgate *"profunda,"* the deep parts; and by the Septuagint πηγὴν *pēgēn* - "fountains." The reference seems to be to the deep fountains at the bottom of the sea, which were supposed to supply it with water. A large portion of the water of the ocean is indeed conveyed to it by rivers and streams that run on the surface of the earth. But it is known, also, that there are fountains at the bottom of the ocean, and in some places the amount of water that flows from them is so great, that its action is perceptible at the surface. One such fountain exists in the Atlantic ocean near the coast of Florida.

Or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? - Or, rather, in the deep places or caverns of the ocean. The word rendered "search" here (חקר *chêqer*), means "searching," investigation, and then an object that is to be searched out, and hence, that which is obscure, remote, hidden. Then it may be applied to the deep caverns of the ocean, or the bottom of the sea. This is to man unsearchable. No line has been found long enough to fathom the ocean, and of course what is there is unknown. It is adduced, therefore, with great propriety as a proof of the wisdom of God, that he could look on the deep caverns of the ocean, and was able to search out all that was there. A sentiment similar to this occurs in Homer, when speaking of Atlas:

Ὅατε θαλάσσης;

Πάσης βένθεα οἶδεν.

Hoate thalassēs class="translit">Pasēs *benthea oiden Odyssey* *Job 1:5*.

"Who knows the depths of every sea."

Verse 17

Have the gates of death been opened unto thee - That is, the gates of the world where death reigns; or the gates that lead to the abodes of the dead. The allusion here is to "Sheol," or "Hades," the dark abodes of the

dead. This was supposed to be beneath the ground, and was entered by the grave, and was inclosed by gates and bars; see the notes at Job 10:21-22. The transition from the reference to the bottom of the sea to the regions of the dead was natural, and the mind is carried forward to a subject further beyond the ken of mortals than even the unfathomable depths of the ocean. The idea is, that God saw all that occurred in that dark world beneath us, where the dead were congregated, and that his vast superiority to man was evinced by his being able thus to penetrate into, and survey those hidden regions. It is common in the Classical writers to represent those regions as entered by gates. Thus, Lucretius, i. 1105,

- *Haec rebus erit para janua letl,*

Hae se turba foras dabit omnis materai.

- "The doors of death are ope,

And the vast whole unbounded ruin whelms."

Good.

So Virgil, Aeneid ii. 661,

- *Pater isti janua leto*,

"The door of death stands open."

Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? - The doors which lead down to the gloomy realms where death spreads its dismal shades. This expression is more emphatic than the former, for the word צלמות *tsalmâveth* "shadow of death," is more intensive in its meaning than the word מות *mâveth* "death." There is the superadded idea of a deep and dismal shadow; of profound and gloomy darkness; see the word explained in the notes at Job 3:5; compare Job 10:21-22. Man was unable to penetrate those gloomy abodes and to reveal what was there; but God saw all with the clearness of noon-day.

Verse 18

Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? - How far the earth extends. To see the force of this, we must remember that the early conception of the earth was that it was a vast plain, and that in the time of Job its limits were unknown. One of the earliest and most obvious inquiries would naturally be, What was the extent of the earth? By what was it bounded? And what was the character of the regions beyond those which were then known? All this was hidden from man at that time, and God, therefore, asks with emphasis whether Job had been able to determine this

great inquiry. The knowledge of this is put on the same foundation as that of the depths of the sea, and of the dark regions of the dead, and in the time of Job the one was as much unknown as the other. God, who knew all this, must, therefore, be infinitely exalted above man.

Verse 19

Where is the way where light dwelleth? - Or, rather, where is the way or path to the place where light dwells? Light is conceived of as coming from a great distance, and as having a place which might be regarded as its home. It comes in the morning, and is withdrawn at evening, and it seems as if it came from some far distant dwelling-place in the morning to illuminate the world, and then retired to its home in the evening, and thus gave place for darkness to visit the earth. The idea is this, "Dost thou know, when the light withdraws from the world, to what place it betakes itself as its home? Canst thou follow it to its distant abodes, and tell where they are? And when the shadows of night come forth, and take its place, canst thou tell whence they come; and when they withdraw again in the morning, canst thou follow them, and tell where they are congregated together to abide?" The thought is highly poetic, and is not to be taken literally. The meaning is, that God only could know what was the great fountain of light, and where that was; and the question substantially may be asked of man with as much force and propriety now as in the time of Job. Who knows what is the great fountain of light to the universe? Who knows what light is? Who can explain the causes of its rapid flight from world to world? Who can tell what supplies it, and prevents it from being exhausted? Who but God, after all the discoveries of science, can fully understand this?

And as for darkness, where is the place thereof? - Darkness here is personified. It is represented as having a place of abode as coming forth to take the place of light when that is withdrawn, and again as retiring to its dwelling when the light reappears.

Verse 20

That thou shouldest take it to the bounds thereof - Margin, "or, at." The sense seems to be this: God asks Job whether he was so well acquainted with the sources of light, and the place where it dwelt, that he could take it under his guidance and reconduct it to its place of abode.

And that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof? - The same idea is repeated here. Light has a home; a place of abode. It was far distant - in some region unknown to man. Did Job know the way in which it

came, and the place where it dwelt so well, that he could conduct it back again to its own dwelling? Umbreit, Noyes, and Herder, suppose that this is to be understood ironically.

"For thou hast reached its boundaries!

For then knowest the path to its dwelling!"

But it has been commonly regarded as a question, and thus understood it accords better with the connection.

Verse 21

Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? - This may either be a question, or it may be spoken ironically. According to the former mode of rendering it, it is the same as asking Job whether he had lived long enough to understand where the abode of light was, or whether he had an existence when it was created, and knew where its home was appointed. According to the latter mode, it is keen sarcasm. "Thou must know all this, for thou art so old. Thou hast had an opportunity of observing all this, for thou hast lived through all these changes, and observed all the works of God." This latter method of interpreting it is adopted by Umbreit, Herder, Noyes, Rosenmuller, and Wemyss. The former, however, seems much better to accord with the connection, and with the dignity and character of the speaker. It is not desirable to represent God as speaking in the language of irony and sarcasm unless the rules of interpretation imperatively demand it.

Verse 22

Hast thou entered into the treasures of snow? - Snow is here represented as something which is laid up like treasure, and kept in reserve for use when God shall require it. Silver and gold were thus laid up for occasions when they would be wanted, and the figurative sentiment here is, that snow and hail were thus preserved for the use to which the Almighty might devote them, or for those great occasions when it would be proper to bring them forth to execute his purposes. Of course, it was to be expected that God would speak in the language which people commonly used when speaking of his works, and would not go into a philosophical or scientific explanation of the phenomena of nature. His object was not to teach science, but to produce a solemn impression of his greatness, and that is secured by such an appeal whether the laws of nature are understood or not. The simple appeal to Job here is, whether he could explain the phenomena of snow and hail?

Could he tell how they were formed? Whence they came? Where they were preserved, and how they were sent forth to execute the purposes of God? The idea is, that all that pertained to the snow was distinctly understood by God, and that these were facts which Job did not know of, and which he could not explain. The effect of time and of scientific investigation, in this as in other cases to which reference is made in this book, has been only to increase the force of this question. The effect of the discoveries which are made in the works of God is not to diminish our sense of his wisdom and majesty, but to change mere wonder to praise; to transform blind amazement to intelligent adoration. Every new discovery of a law of nature is fitted more to impress the mind with awe, and at the same time it becomes the basis of a new act of intelligent confidence in God. This is true of snow as of other things.

In the time and country of Job it came doubtless from the north. Vast quantities seemed to be poured forth from those regions at certain seasons of the year, as if it were reserved there in vast store-houses, or treasuries. Science has, however, told us that it is congealed vapor formed in the air, by the vapor being frozen there before it is collected into drops large enough to form hail. In the descent of the vapor to the earth it is frozen and descends in the numerous variety of crystallized forms in which the flakes appear. Perhaps there is nothing more fitted to excite pleasing conceptions of the wisdom of God - not even the variety of beauty in flowers - than the various forms of crystals in which snow appears. Those crystals present an almost endless variety of forms, Descartes and Dr. Hook were among the first whose minds seem to have been drawn to the figures of the crystals in snow, and since their investigations the suhject has excited great interest in others.

Captain Scoresby, who gave much attention to this subject and to other arctic phenomena, has given a delineation of 96 of these crystals. He adds, “The extreme beauty and the endless variety of the microsopic objects perceived in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, are perhaps fully equalled, if not surpassed, in both particulars of beauty and variety, by the crystals of snow. The principal configurations are the stelliform and the hexagonal; though almost every variety of shape of which the generating angle of 60 degrees and 120 degrees are susceptible, may, in the course of a few years‘

observation, be discovered. Some of the general varieties in the figures of the crystals may be referred to the temperature of the air; but the particular and endless modifications of the same classes of crystals can only be referred to the will and pleasure of the First Great Cause, whose works, even the most minute and evanescent, and in regions the most remote from human observation, are altogether admirable." See the Edinburgh Encyclopedia, "Snow."

Or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail - As if the hail were reserved in storehouses, like the weapons of war, to be called forth when God should please, in order to execute his purposes. Hail - so well known in its nature and form - consists of masses of ice or frozen vapor, falling from the clouds in showers or storms. These masses consist of little spherules united, but not all of the same consistence; some being as hard and solid as perfect ice, others soft like frozen snow. Hail-stones assume various figures; some are round, others angular, others pyramidal, others flat, and sometimes they are stellated, with six radii, like crystals of snow - Encylopedia as quoted in Webster's Dictionary. Snow and hail are formed in the clouds when they are at an elevation where the temperature is below 32 degrees. The particles of moisture become congealed and fall to the earth. When the temperature below the clouds is more than 32 degrees, the flakes of snow often melt, and descend in the form of rain.

But hailstones, from their greater solidity and more rapid descent, often reach the earth even when the temperature is much higher; and hence, we have storms of hail in the summer. The difference in the formation of snow and hail is, that in the former case the vapor in the clouds is congealed before it is collected into drops; in the case of hail, the vapor is collected into drops or masses, and then frozen. "If we examine," says Mr. Leslie, "the structure of a hailstone, we shall perceive a snowy kernel encased by a harder crust. It has very nearly the appearance of a drop of water suddenly frozen, the particles of air being driven from the surface toward the center, where they form a spongy texture. This circumstance suggests the probable origin of hail, which is perhaps occasioned by rain falling through a dry and very cold stratum of air" - Edinburgh Encyclopedia, "Meteorology."

All the facts about the formation of hail were unknown in the time of Job, and hence, God appeals to them as evidence of his superior wisdom and greatness, and in proof of the duty of man to submit to him. These

phenomena, which were constantly occurring, man could not explain; and how much less qualified, therefore, was he to sit in judgment on the secret counsels of the Almighty! The same observation may be made now, for though science has done something to explain the laws by which snow and hail are formed, yet those discoveries have tended to enlarge our conceptions of the wisdom of God, and have shown us, to an extent which was not then suspected, how much is still unknown. We see a few of the laws by which God does these things, but who is prepared to explain these laws themselves, or to tell why and how the particles of vapor arrange themselves into such beautiful crystallized forms?

Verse 23

Which I have reserved - As if they were carefully treasured up to be brought forth as they shall be needed. The idea is, that they were entirely under the direction of God.

The time of trouble - Herder "the time of need." The meaning probably is, that he had kept them in reserve for the time when he wished to bring calamity on his enemies, or that he made use of them to punish his foes; compare the notes at Job 36:31-33.

Against the day of battle and war - Hailstones were employed by God sometimes to overwhelm his foes, and were sent against them in time of battle; see Joshua 10:11; Exodus 9:22-26; Psalm 18:12-13; compare the notes at Isaiah 29:6.

Verse 24

By what way is the light parted - The reference here is to the light of the morning, that seems to come from one point, and to spread itself at once over the whole earth. It seems to be collected in the east, or, as it were, condensed or concentrated there, and then to divide itself, and to expand over the face of the world. God here asks Job whether he could explain this, or show in what manner it was done. This was one of the subjects which might be supposed early to excite inquiry, and is one which can be as little explained now as then. The causes of the propagation of light, which seems to proceed from a center and to spread rapidly in every direction, are perhaps as little known now as they were in the time of Job. Philosophy has done little to explain this, and the mode in which light is made to travel in eight minutes from the sun to the earth - a distance of ninety million miles - and the manner in which it is "divided" or "parted" from that great center,

and spread over the solar system, is as much of a real mystery as it was in the days of Job, and the question proposed here may be asked now with as much emphasis as it was then.

Which scattereth the east wind upon the earth - According to this translation, the idea would be that somehow light is the cause of the east wind. But it may be doubted whether this is the true interpretation, and whether it is meant to be affirmed that light has any agency in causing the wind to blow. Herder renders it:

"When doth the light divide itself,
When the east wind streweth it upon the earth?"

According to this, the idea would be that the light of the morning seemed to be borne along by the wind. Umbreit renders it, "Where is the way upon which the east wind flows forth upon the earth?" That is, the east wind, like the light, comes from a certain point, and seems to spread abroad over the world; and the question is, whether Job could explain this? This interpretation is adopted by Rosenmuller and Noyes, and seems to be demanded by the parallelism, and by the nature of the case. The cause of the rapid spreading of the wind from a certain point of the compass, was involved in as much obscurity as the propagation of the light, nor is that cause much better understood now. There is no reason to suppose that the spread of the light, has any particular agency in causing the east wind, as our common version seems to suppose, nor is that idea necessarily in the Hebrew text. The east wind is mentioned here either because the light comes from the east, and the wind from that quarter was more naturally suggested than any other, or because the east wind was remarkable for its violence. The idea that a strong east wind was somehow connected with the dawn of day or the rising of the sun, was one that prevailed, at least to some extent, among the ancients. Thus, Catullus (lxiv. 270ff) says:

Hic qualis flatu placidum mare matutino
Horrificans zephyrus proclivas incitat undas
Aurora exoriente, vagi sub lumina solis.

Verse 25

Who hath divided a water-course for the overflowing of waters - That is, for the waters that flow down from the clouds. The idea seems to be this, that the waters of heaven, instead of pouring down in floods, or all coming down together, seemed to flow in certain canals formed for them; as

if they had been cut out through the clouds for that purpose. The causes of rain, the manner in which water was suspended in the clouds, and the reasons why the rain did not come down altogether in floods, early attracted attention, and gave occasion to investigation. The subject is more than once referred to in this book; see the notes at Job 26:8.

Or a way for the lightning of thunder - For the thunder-flash. The idea is this: a path seems to be opened in the dark cloud for the passage of the flash of lightning. How such a path was made, by what agency or by what laws, was the question proposed for inquiry. The lightning seemed at once to burst through the dark cloud where there was no opening and no sign of a path before, and pursue its zig-zag journey as if all obstructions were removed, and it passed over a beaten path. The question is, who could have traced out this path for the thunder-flash to go in? Who could do it but the Almighty? And still, with all the light that science has cast on the subject, we may repeat the question.

Verse 26

To cause it to rain on the earth, where no man is - This is designed to heighten the conception of the power of God. It could not be pretended that this was done by man, for the rain was caused to fall in the desolate regions where no one dwelt. In the lonely desert, in the wastes remote from the dwellings of people, the rain is sent down, evidently by the providential care of God, and far beyond the reach of the agency of man. There is very great beauty in this whole description of God as superintending the falling rain far away from the homes of people, and in those lonely wastes pouring down the waters, that the tender herb may spring up, and the flowers bloom under his hand. All this may seem to be wasted, but it is not so in the eye of God. Not a drop of rain falls in the sandy desert or on the barren rock, however useless it may seem to be, that is not seen to be of value by God, and that is not designated to accomplish some important purpose there.

Verse 27

To satisfy the desolate and waste ground - As if it lifted an imploring voice to God, and he sent down the rain to satisfy it. The desert is thus like a thirsty pilgrim. It is parched, and thirsty, and sad, and it appeals to God, and he meets its needs, and satisfies it.

Or to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth - In the desert. There God works alone. No man is there to cultivate the extended wilds, and yet an unseen agency is going forward. The grass springs up; the bud

opens; the leaf expands; the flowers breathe forth their fragrance as if they were under the most careful cultivation. All this must be the work of God, since it cannot even be pretended that man is there to produce these effects. Perhaps one would be more deeply impressed with a sense of the presence of God in the pathless desert, or on the boundless prairie, where no man is, than in the most splendid park, or the most tastefully cultivated garden which man could make. In the one case, the hand of God alone is seen; in the other, we are constantly admiring the skill of man.

Verse 28

Hath the rain a father? - That is, it is produced by God and not by man. No one among men can claim that he causes it, or can regard it as his offspring. The idea is, that the production of rain is among the proofs of the wisdom and agency of God, and that it is caused in a way that demonstrates his own agency. It is not by any power of man; and it is not in such a way as to constitute a relation like that between a father and a son. The rain is often appealed to in this book as something whose cause man could not explain, and as demonstrating the wisdom and supremacy of God. Among philosophic and contemplative minds it would early excite inquiry, and give occasion for wonder. What caused it? Whence came the water which fell? How was it suspended? How was it borne from place to place? How was it made to descend in drops, and why was it not poured down at once in floods?

Questions like these would early excite inquiry, and we are not to suppose that in the time of Job science was so far advanced that they could be answered; see the notes at Job 26:8; compare Job 38:37 notes. The laws of the production of rain are now better understood, but like all other laws discovered by science, they are adapted to elevate, not to diminish, our conceptions of the wisdom of God. It may be of interest, and may serve to explain the passages in this book which refer to rain, as illustrating the wisdom of God, to state what is now the commonly received theory of its cause. That theory is the one proposed by Dr. James Hutton, and first published in the Philosophical Transactions of Edinburgh, in 1784. In this theory it is supposed that the cause consists in the vapor that is held dissolved in the air, and is based on this principle - “that the capacity of the air for holding water in a state of vapor increases in a greater ratio than its temperature;” that is, that if there are two portions of air which would contain a certain quantity of water in solution if both were heated in an

equal degree, the capacity for holding water would be alike; but if one of them be heated more than the other, the amount of water which it would hold in solution is not exactly in proportion to the heat applied, but increases much more rapidly than the heat.

It will hold much more water when the temperature is raised than is proportionate to the amount of heat applied. From the experiments which were made by Sanssure and others, it was found that while the temperature of the air rises in arithmetical progression, the dissolving power of the air increases nearly in geometrical progression; that is, if the temperature be represented by the figures 2,4,6,8,10, etc., the capacity for holding moisture will be nearly represented by the figures 2,8,16,32,64, etc. Rain is caused in the following manner. When two portions of air of different temperature, and each saturated with moisture, are intermixed, the quantity of moisture in the air thus intermixed, in consequence of the decrease of temperature, will be greater than the air will contain in solution, and will be condensed in a cloud or precipitated to the earth. This law of nature was of course unknown to Job, and is an arrangement which could have been formed only by the all-wise Author of nature; see "Edin. Ency., Art. Meteorology, p. 181."

Or who hath begotten the drops of the dew? - Who has produced them - implying that they were caused only by the agency of God. No one among mortals could claim that he had caused the dew to fall. God appeals to the dew here, the causes of which were then unknown, as an evidence of his wisdom and supremacy. Dew is the moisture condensed from the atmosphere, and that settles on the earth. It usually falls in clear and calm nights, and is caused by a reduction of the temperature of that on which the dew falls. Objects on the surface of the earth become colder than the atmosphere above them, and the consequence is, that the moisture that was suspended in the atmosphere near the surface of the earth is condensed - in the same way as in a hot day moisture will form on the outside of a tumbler or pitcher that is filled with water. The coldness of the vessel containing the water condenses the moisture that was suspended in the surrounding atmosphere.

The cold, therefore, which accompanies dew, precedes instead of following it. The reason why the surface of the earth becomes cooler than the surrounding atmosphere at night, so as to form dew, has been a subject

of considerable inquiry. The theory of Dr. Wells, which is now commonly adopted, is, that the earth is continually radiating its heat to the high and colder regions of the atmosphere; that in the day-time the effects of this radiation are not sensible, being more than counterbalanced by the greater influx of heat from the direct influence of the sun; but that during the night, when the counteracting cause is removed, these effects become sensible, and produce the reduction of temperature which causes dew. The surface of the earth becomes cool by the heat which is radiated to the upper regions of the atmosphere, and the moisture in the air adjacent to the surface of the earth is condensed. This occurs only in a clear and calm night. When the sky is cloudy, the clouds operate as a screen, and the radiation of the heat to the higher regions of the atmosphere is prevented, and the surface of the earth and the surrounding atmosphere are kept at the same temperature; see the Edinburgh Encyclopedia, "Meteorology," pp. 185-188. Of course, these laws were unknown to Job, but now that they are known to us, they constitute no less properly a proof of the wisdom of God.

Verse 29

Out of whose womb came the ice? - That is, who has caused or produced it? The idea is, that it was not by any human agency, or in any known way by which living beings were propagated.

And the hoary frost of heaven - Which seems to fall from heaven. The sense is, that it is caused wholly by God; see the notes at Job 37:10.

Verse 30

The waters are hid as with a stone - The solid ice is laid as a stone upon them, wholly concealing them from view.

And the face of the deep is frozen - Margin, "taken." The idea is, they seem to take hold of one another (יתלכדו *yitlâkadû*); they hold together, or cohere. The formation of ice is thus appealed to as a proof of the wisdom of God, and as a thing which Job could not explain. No man could produce this effect; nor could Job explain how it was done.

Verse 31

Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades? - The seven stars. On the meaning of the word used here (כימה *kîymâh*), see the notes at Job 9:9. In regard to the meaning of the word rendered "sweet influences," there has been considerable variety of interpretation. The Septuagint renders it, "Dost thou understand the band (δεσμόν *desmon*) of Pleiades?" The

Hebrew word (מעדנה *maʿădannâh*) is naturally derived from a word signifying "pleasures," or "delights" (מעדן *maʿâdan* from עדן *ʿâdan* "to be soft, or pliant; to enjoy pleasure or delight"; hence, the word "Eden"), and then it would mean, as in our translation, the delightful influences of the Pleiades; or the influences supposed to be produced by this constellation in imparting happiness, particularly the pleasures enjoyed in the spring time, when that constellation makes its appearance. But Gesenius supposes that the word is derived from ענד *ʿânad* "to bind," and that it is used by transposition for מענדות *māʿnadôth* would then refer to the "bands of Pleiades," and the question would be whether Job had created the band which united the stars composing that constellation in so close union; whether he had bound them together in a cluster or bundle. This idea is adopted by Rosenmuller, Umbreit, and Noyes. Herder renders it, "the brilliant Pleiades." The word "bands" applied to the Pleiades is not unfrequently used in Persian poetry. They were spoken of as a band or ornament for the forehead - or compared with a headband made up of diamonds or pearls. Thus, Sadi, in his Gullstan, p. 22, (Amsterdam, 1651), speaking of a garden, says," The earth is strewed, as it were, with emeralds, and the bands of Pleiades appear upon the boughs of the trees." So Hafiz, another Persian poet, says, in one of his odes, "Over thy songs heaven has strewed the bands of the Pleiades as a seal of immortality." The Greenlanders call the Pleiades killukturset, a name given to them because they appear to be bound together.

"Egede's Account of the Greenland Mission, p. 57;" see Rosenmuller, "Alte u. neue Morgenland, No. 768." There seems, however, no good reason for departing from the usual meaning of the word, and then the reference will be to the time when the Pleiades or the seven stars make their appearance - the season of spring. Then the winter disappears; the streams are unlocked; the earth is covered with grass and flowers; the air is sweet and balmy; and a happy influence seems to set in upon the world. There may be some allusion here to the influence which the stars were supposed to exert over the seasons and the affairs of this world, but it is not necessary to suppose this. All that is required in the interpretation of the passage is, that the appearance of certain constellations was connected with certain changes in the seasons; as with spring, summer, or winter. It was not unnatural to infer from that fact, that the constellations exerted an influence in causing those changes, and hence, arose the pretended science of

astrology. But there is no necessary connection between the two. The Pleiades appear in the spring, and seem to lead on that joyous season. These stars, so closely set together, seem to be bound to one another in a sisterly union (Herder), and thus joyously usher in the spring. God asks Job whether he were the author of that band, and had thus united them for the purpose of ushering in happy influences on the world.

Or loose the bands of Orion - In regard to this constellation, see the notes at Job 9:9. The word bands here has been supposed to refer to the girdle with which it is usually represented. Orion is here described as a man girded for action, and is the pioneer of winter. It made its appearance early in the winter, and was regarded as the precursor of storms and tempests; see the quotations in the notes at Job 9:9. Thus appearing in the autumn, this constellation seems to lead on the winter. It comes with strength. It spreads its influence over the air, the earth, the waters, and binds everything at its pleasure. God here asks Job whether he had power to disarm this giant; to unloose his girdle; to divest him of strength; to control the seasons? Had he power over summer and winter, so as to cause them to go or come at his bidding, and to control all those laws which produced them?

Verse 32

Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? - Margin, "the twelve signs;" that is, the twelve signs of the zodiac. There has been much diversity of opinion about the meaning of this word. It occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures, and of course it is not easy to determine its signification. The Septuagint retains the word μαξσυρὼθ *maxsurōth* without attempting to translate it. Jerome renders it, "*Luciferum* - Lucifer," the morning-star. The Chaldee, מזליא שטרי - the constellations of the planets. Coverdale, "the morning-star;" and so Luther renders it. Rosenmuller, *"signa celestia"* - the celestial signs, and so Herder, Umbreit, Gesenius, and Noyes, "the zodiac." Gesenius regards the word מזרה *mazzârâh* as the same as מזלה *mazzâlâh* properly "lodgings, inns;" and hence, the "lodgings" of the sun, or the places or "houses" in which he appears in the heavens, and thus as meaning the signs in the zodiac. Most of the Hebrew interpreters adopt this view, but it rests on no certain foundation, and as we are not certain as to the meaning of the word, the only safe way is to retain the original, as is done in our common version. I do not see how it is possible to determine its meaning with certainty, and probably it is to be regarded as a name given to some constellation or cluster of stars supposed to exert an influence over the

seasons, or connected with some change in the seasons, which we cannot now accurately understand.

Or canst thou guide Arcturus? - On the constellation "Arcturus" (עִשׁ *ʿayish*), see the notes at Job 9:9. The word rendered "guide" in the text, is in the margin "guide them." The Hebrew is, "and עִשׁ *ʿayish* upon (or near - עַל *ʿal*) her sons, canst thou lead them?" Herder and Umbreit render it, "And lead forth the Bear with her young," or her children. The reference is to the constellation Arcturus, or Ursa Major, in the northern sky. The "sons" referred to are the stars that accompany it, probably the stars that are now called the" tail of the bear." "Umbreit." Another interpretation is suggested by Herder, which is that this constellation is represented as a nightly wanderer - a mother, who is seeking her lost children, the stars that are no longer visible, and that thus revolves around the heavens. But the probable reference is to the constellation conducted round and round the pole as by some unseen hand, like a mother with her children, and the question is, whether Job had skill and power to do this? God appeals to it as a manifestation of his majesty and power, and as far above the skill of man. Who ever looked upon that beautiful constellation and marked its regular revolutions, without feeling that its position and movements were such as God only could produce?

Verse 33

Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? - The laws or statutes by which the motions of the heavenly bodies are governed. These were wholly unknown in the time of Job, and the discovery of some of those laws - for only a few of them are yet known - was reserved to be the glory of the modern system of astronomy. The suggestion of the great principles of the system gave immortality to the name Copernicus; and the discovery of those laws in modern times has conferred immortality on the names of Brahe, Kepler, and Newton. The laws which control the heavenly bodies are the most sublime that are known to man, and have done more to impress the human mind with a sense of the majesty of God than any other: discoveries made in the material universe. Of course, all those laws were known to God himself, and he appeals to them in proof of his greatness and majesty. The grand and beautiful movements of the heavenly bodies in the time of Job were fitted to produce admiration; and one of the chief delights of those that dwelt under the splendor of an Oriental sky was to contemplate those movements, and to give names to those moving lights. The discoveries of

science have enlarged the conceptions of man in regard to the starry heavens far toward immensity; have shown that these twinkling lights are vast worlds and systems, and at the same time have so disclosed the laws by which they are governed as to promote, where the heart is right, intelligent piety, and elevate the mind to more glorious views of the Creator.

Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? - That is, "dost thou assign the dominion of the heavens over the earth?" The reference is, undoubtedly, to the influence of the heavenly bodies upon sublunary objects. The exact extent of that cannot be supposed to have been known in the days of Job, and it is probable that much more was ascribed to the influence of the stars on human affairs than the truth would justify. Nor is its extent now known. It is known that the moon has an influence over the tides of the ocean; it may be that it has to some extent over the weather; and it is not impossible that the other heavenly bodies may have some effect on the changes observed in the earth which is not understood. Whatever it is, it was and is all known to God, and the idea here is, that it was a proof of his immense superiority over man.

Verse 34

Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? - That is, canst thou command the clouds so that they shall send down abundant rain? Bouillier supposes that there is an allusion here to the incantations which were pretended to be practiced by the Magi, by which they claimed the power of producing rain at pleasure; compare Jeremiah 14:22, "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles (the idols that they worship) that can cause rain? Art not thou he, O Lord our God?" The idea is, that it is God only who can cause rain, and that the control of the clouds from which rain descends is wholly beyond the reach of man.

Verse 35

Canst thou send lightnings? - That is, lightning is wholly under the control of God. So it is now; for after all that man has done to discover its laws, and to guard against it, yet still man has made no advances toward a power to wield it, nor is it possible that he ever should. It is one of the agencies in the universe that is always to be under the divine direction, and however much man may subsidize to his purposes wind, and water, and steam, and air, yet there can be no prospect that the forked lightning can be seized by human hands and directed by human skill to purposes of utility or destruction among people; compare the notes at Job 36:31-33.

And say unto thee, Here we are - Margin, "Behold us." That is, we are at your disposal. This language is derived from the condition, of servants presenting themselves at the call of their masters, and saying that they stood ready to obey their commands; compare 1 Samuel 3:4, 1Samuel 3:6,1 Samuel 3:9; Isaiah 6:8.

Verse 36

Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? - There is great variety in the interpretation of this passage. Jerome renders it, *Quis posuit in visceribus heminis sapienttam? Vel quis dedit gallo intelligentiam?* "Who hath put wisdom in the inner parts of man? Or who has given to the cock intelligence?" Just as strangely, the Septuagint has: "Who hath given to women skill in weaving, and a knowledge of the art of embroidering?." One of the Targums renders it, "Who has given to the woodcock intelligence that he should praise his Master?" Herder renders it,

"Who gave understanding to the flying clouds,
Or intelligence to the meteors of the air?"

Umbreit,

"Who placed wisdom in the dark clouds?
Who gave understanding to the forms of the air?"

Schultens and Rosenmuller explain it of the various phenomena that appear in the sky - as lightning, thunder, meteoric lights, etc. So Prof. Lee explains the words as referring to the "tempest" and the "thunder-storm." According to that interpretation, the idea is, that these phenomena appear to be endowed with intelligence, There is proof of plan and wisdom in their arrangement and connection, and they show that it is not by chance that they are directed. One reason assigned for this interpretation is, that it accords with the connection. The course of the argument, it is remarked, relates to the various phenomena that appear in the sky - to the lightnings, tempests, and clouds. It is unnatural to suppose that a remark would be interposed here respecting the intellectual endowments of man, when the appeal to the clouds is again Job 38:37 immediately resumed. There can be no doubt that there is much weight in this observation, and that the connection demands this interpretation, and that it should be adopted if the words which are used will admit of it.

The only difficulty relates to the words rendered "inward parts," and "heart." The former of these (טחות *ṭûchôt*) according to the Hebrew interpreters, is derived from טוח *ṭûach* "to cover over, to spread, to

besmear"; and is hence given to the veins, because covered with fat. It occurs only in this place, and in Psalm 51:6, "Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts," where it undoubtedly refers to the seat of the affections or thoughts in man. The verb is often used as meaning to daub, overlay, or plaster, as in Leviticus 14:42; Ezekiel 22:28; Ezekiel 13:12, Ezekiel 13:14. Schultens, Lee, Umbreit, and others, have recourse in the explanation to the use of the Arabic word of the same letters with the Hebrew, meaning to wander, to make a random shot, etc., and thence, apply it to lightning, and to meteors. Umbreit supposes that there is allusion to the prevalent opinion in the East that the clouds and the phenomena of the air could be regarded as furnishing prophetic indications of what was to occur; or to the custom of predicting future events by the aspects of the sky.

It is a sufficient objection to this, however, that it cannot be supposed that the Almighty would lend his sanction to this opinion by appealing to it as if it were so. After all that bas been written on the passage, and all the force of the difficulty which is urged, I do not see evidence that we are to depart from the common interpretation, to wit, that God means to appeal to the fact that he has endowed man with intelligence as a proof of his greatness and supremacy. The connection is, indeed, not very apparent. It may be, however, as Noyes suggests, that the reference is to the mind of Job in particular, and to the intelligence with which he was able to perceive, and in some measure to comprehend, these various phenomena. The connection may be something like this: "Look to the heavens, and contemplate these wonders. Explain them, if possible; and then ask who it is that has so endowed the mind of man that it can trace in them such proofs of the wisdom and power of the Almighty. The phenomena themselves, and the capacity to contemplate them, and to be instructed by them, are alike demonstrations of the supremacy of the Most High."

Understanding to the heart - To the mind. The common word to denote "heart" - לב *lêb* is not used here, but a word (שׂכוי *śekvîy* from שכה) meaning "to look at, to view"; and hence, denoting the mind; the intelligent soul. "Gesenius."

Verse 37

Who can number the clouds? - The word here rendered "clouds" (שׂחקים *shachaqiym*) is applied to the clouds as made up of "small particles" - as if they were composed of fine dust, and hence, the word number is

applied to them, not as meaning that the clouds themselves were innumerable, but that no one could estimate the number of particles which enter into their formation.

In wisdom - By his wisdom. Who has sufficient intelligence to do it?

Or who can stay the bottles of heaven? - Margin, as in Hebrew "cause to lie down." The clouds are here compared with bottles, as if they held the water in the same manner; compare the notes at Job 26:8. The word rendered "stay" in the text, and in the margin "cause to lie down," is rendered by Umbreit, "pour out," from an Arabic signification of the word. Gesenius supposes that the meaning to "pour out" is derived from the idea of "causing to lie down," from the fact that a bottle or vessel was made to lie down or was inclined to one side when its contents were poured out. This explanation seems probable, though there is no other place in the Hebrew where the word is used in this signification. The sense of pouring out agrees well with the connection.

Verse 38

When the dust groweth into hardness - Margin, "is poured, or, is turned into mire." The words used here relate often to metals, and to the act of pouring them out when fused, for the purpose of casting. The proper idea here is, "when the dust flows into a molten mass;" that is, when wet with rain it flows together and becomes hard. The sense is, that the rain operates on the clay as heat does on metals, and that when it is dissolved it flows together and thus becomes a solid mass. The object is to compare the effect of rain with the usual effect in casting metals.

And the clods cleave fast together - That is, they are run together by the rain. They form one mass of the same consistency, and then are baked hard by the sun.

Verse 39

Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? - The appeal here is to the instincts with which God has endowed animals, and to the fact that he had so made them that they would secure their own food. He asks Job whether he would undertake to do what the lion did by instinct in finding his food, and by his power and skill in seizing his prey. There was a wise adaptation of the lion for this purpose which man could neither originate nor explain.

Or fill the appetite of the young lions - Margin, as in Hebrew "life." The word life is used here for hunger, as the appetite is necessarily connected with the preservation of life. The meaning here is, "Wouldst thou

undertake to supply his needs? It is done by laws, and in a manner which thou canst not explain. There are in the arrangement by which it is accomplished marks of wisdom which far surpass the skill of man to originate, and the instinct and power by which it is done are proof of the supremacy of the Most High." No one can study the subject of the instincts of animals, or become in the least acquainted with Natural History, without finding every where traces of the wisdom and goodness of God.

Verse 40

When they couch in their dens - For the purpose of springing upon their prey.

And abide in the covert to lie in wait? - The usual posture of the lion when he seeks his prey. He places himself in some unobserved position in a dense thicket, or crouches upon the ground so as not to be seen, and then springs suddenly upon his victim. The common method of the lion in taking his prey is to spring or throw himself upon it from the place of his ambush, with one vast bound and to inflict the mortal blow with one stroke of his paw. If he misses his aim, however, he seldom attempts another spring at the same object, but deliberately returns to the thicket in which he lay in concealment. See the habits of the lion illustrated in the Edinburgh Encyclopedia, "Mazology."

Verse 41

Who provideth for the raven his food? - The same thought is expressed in Psalm 147:9,

He giveth to the beast his food,
And to the young ravens which cry.

Compare Matthew 6:26. Scbeutzer (*in loc.*) suggests that the reason why the raven is specified here rather than other fowls is, that it is an offensive bird, and that God means to state that no object, however regarded by man, is beneath his notice. He carefully provides for the needs of all his creatures.

When his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat - Bochart observes that the raven expels the young from the nest as soon as they are able to fly. In this condition, being unable to obtain food by their own exertions, they make a croaking noise, and God is said to hear it, and to supply their needs. "Noyes." There are various opinions expressed in regard to this subject by the rabbinical writers, and by the ancients generally. Eliezer (cap. 21) says that, "When the old ravens see the young

coming into the world which are not black, they regard them as the offspring of serpents, and flee away from them, and God takes care of them." Solomon says that in this condition they are nourished by the flies and worms that are generated in their nests, and the same opinion was held by the Arabian writers, Haritius, Alkuazin, and Damir. Among the fathers of the church, Chrysostom, Olympiodorus, Gregory, and Isidorus, supposed that they were nurtured by dew descending from heaven.

Pliny (Lib. x. c. 12) says, that the old ravens expel the strongest of their young from the nest, and compel them to fly. This is the time, according to many of the older commentators, when the young ravens are represented as calling upon God for food. See Scheutzer, Physica Sacra, *in loc*. and Bochart, Hieroz. P. ii. L. ii. c. ii. I do not know that there is now supposed to be sufficient evidence to substantiate this fact in regard to the manner in which the ravens treat their young, and all the circumstances of the place before us will be met by the supposition that young birds seem to call upon God, and that he supplies their needs. The last three verses in this chapter should not have been separated from the following. The appeal in this is to the animal creation, and this is continued through the whole of the next chapter. The proper place for the division would have been at the close of Job 38:38, where the argument from the great laws of the material universe was ended. Then commences an appeal to his works of a higher order - the region of instinct and appetites, where creatures are governed by other than mere physical laws.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 39

Verse 1

Knowest thou, the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? - That is, the particular season when the mountain goats bring forth their young. Of domestic animals - the sheep, the tame goat, etc., the habits would be fully understood. But the question here relates to the animals that roamed at large on inaccessible cliffs; that were buried in deep forests; that were far from the dwellings and observation of people; and the meaning is, that there were many facts in regard to such points of Natural History which Job could not explain. God knew all their instincts and habits, and on the inaccessible cliffs, in the deep dell, in the dark forest, he was with them, and they were the objects of his care. He not only regarded the condition of the domestic animals that had been brought into the service of man, and where man perhaps might be disposed to claim that they owed much of their comfort to his care, but he regarded also the wild, wandering beast of the mountain, where no such pretence could be advanced.

The providence of God is over them; and in the periods of their lives when they seem most to need attention, when every shepherd and herdsmen is most solicitous about his flocks and herds, then God is present, and his care is seen in their preservation. The particular point in the inquiry here is, not in regard to the time when these animals produced their young or the period of their gestation, which might probably be known, but in regard to the attention and care which was needful for them when they were so far removed from the observance of man, and had no human aid. The "wild goat of the rock" here referred to, is, doubtless, the Ibex, or mountain goat, that has its dwellings among the rocks, or in stony places. The Hebrew term is יעל *yâʿêl* from יעל *yaʿal* "to ascend, to go up." They had their residence in the lofty rocks of mountains; Psalm 104:18. "The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats."

Hebrew "For the goats of the rocks" - סלעים יעלים *yâʿêliym selaʿiym* So in 1 Samuel 24:2 (3), "Saul went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats;" that is, where were the wild goats - היעלים *hayâʿêliym* For a description of the wild goat, see Bochart, Hieroz. P. i. Lib. iii. c. xxiii. The animal here referred to is, doubtless, the same which Burckhardt saw on the summit of Mount Catharine, adjacent to Mount Sinai, and which he

thus describes in his Travels in Syria, p. 571: "As we approached the summit of the mountain (Catharine, adjacent to Mount Sinai), we saw at a distance a small flock of mountain goats feeding among the rocks. One of our Arabs left us, and by a widely circuitous route endeavored to get to the leeward of them, and near enough to fire at them. He enjoined us to remain in sight of them, and to sit down in order not to alarm them. He had nearly reached a favorable spot behind a rock, when the goats suddenly took to flight. They could not have seen the Arab, but the wind changed, and thus they smelt him. The chase of the beden, as the wild goat is called, resembles that of the chamois of the Alps, and requires as much enterprise and patience. The Arabs make long circuits to surprise them, and endeavor to come upon them early in the morning, when they feed.

The goats have a leader who keeps watch, and on any suspicious smell, sound, or object, makes a noise, which is a signal to the flock to make their escape. They have much decreased of late, if we may believe the Arabs; who say that fifty years ago, if a stranger came to a tent, and the owner of it had no sheep to kill, he took his gun and went in search of a beden. They are, however, even now more common here than in the Alps, or in the mountains to the east of the Red Sea. I had three or four of them brought to me at the convent, which I bought at three-fourths of a dollar each. The flesh is excellent, and has nearly the same flavor as that of the deer. The Bedouins make water bags of their skins, and rings of their horns, which they wear on their thumbs. When the beden is met with in the plains, the dogs of the hunters easily catch him; but they cannot come up with him among the rocks, where he can make leaps of 20 feet."

Or Canst thou mark when the hinds do calve? - The reference here is to the special care and protection of God manifested for them. The meaning is, that this animal seems to be always timid and apprehensive of danger, and that there is special care bestowed upon an animal so defenseless in enabling it to rear its young. The word hinds denotes the deer, the fawn, the most timid and defenseless, perhaps, of all animals.

Verse 2

Canst thou number the months … - That is, as they wander in the wilderness, as they live in inaccessible crags and cliffs of the rocks, it is impossible for man to be acquainted with their habits as he can with those of the domestic animals.

Verse 3

They bow themselves - literally, they curve or bend themselves; that is, they draw their limbs together.

They cast out their sorrows - That is, they cast forth the offspring of their pains, or the young which cause their pains. The idea seems to be, that they do this without any of the care and attention which shepherds are obliged to show to their flocks at such seasons. They do it when God only guards them; when they are in the wilderness or on the rocks far away from the abodes of man. The leading thought in all this seems to be, that the tender care of God was over his creatures, in the most perilous and delicate state, and that all this was exercised where man could have no access to them, and could not even observe them.

Verse 4

Their young ones are in good liking - Hebrew "they are fat;" and hence, it means that they are strong and robust.

They grow up with corn - Herder, Gesenius, Noyes, Umbreit, and Rosenmuller render this, "in the wilderness," or "field." The proper and usual meaning of the word used here (בר *bâr*) is corn (grain); but in Chaldee it has the sense of open fields, or country. The same idea is found in the Arabic, and this sense seems to be required by the connection. The idea is not that they are nurtured with grain, which would require the care of man, but that they are nurtured under the direct eye of God far away from human dwellings, and even when they go away from their dam and return no more to the place of their birth. This is one of the instances, therefore, in which the connection seems to require us to adopt a signification that does not elsewhere occur in the Hebrew, but which is found in the cognate languages.

They go forth, and return not unto them - God guards and preserves them, even when they wander away from their dam, and are left helpless. Many of the young of animals require long attention from man, many are kept for a considerable period by the side of the mother, but the idea here seems to be, that the young of the wild goat and of the fawn are thrown early on the providence of God, and are protected by him alone. The particular care of Providence over these animals seems to be specified because there are no others that are exposed to so many dangers in their early life. "Every creature then is a formidable enemy. The eagle, the falcon, the osprey, the wolf, the dog, and all the rapacious animals of the cat

kind, are in continual employment to find out their retreat. But what is more unnatural still, the stag himself is a professed enemy, and she, the hind, is obliged to use all her arts to conceal her young from him, as from the most dangerous of her pursuers." "Goldsmith's Nat. His."

Verse 5

Who hath sent out the wild ass free? - For a description of the wild ass, see the notes at Job 11:12. On the meaning of the word rendered "free" (חפשׁי *chophshîy*), see the notes at Isaiah 58:6. These animals commonly "inhabit the dry and mountainous parts of the deserts of Great Tartary, but not higher than about latitude 48 degrees. They are migratory, and arrive in vast troops to feed, during the summer, on the tracts to the north and east of the sea of Aral. About autumn they collect in herds of hundreds, and even thousands, and direct their course southward toward India to enjoy a warm retreat during winter. But they more usually retire to Persia, where they are found in the mountains of Casbin; and where part of them remain during the whole year. They are also said to penetrate to the southern parts of India, to the mountains of Malabar and Gelconda. These animals were anciently found in Palestine, Syria, Arabia Deserta, Mesopotamia, Phrygia, and Lycaonia, but they rarely occur in those regions at the present time, and seem to be almost entirely confined to Tartary, some parts of Persia and India, and Africa. Their manners resemble those of the wild horse.

They assembIe in troops under the conduct of a leader or sentinel; and are extremely shy and vigilant. They will, however, stop in the midst of their course, and even suffer the approach of man for an instant, and then dart off with the utmost rapidity. They have been at all times celebrated for their swiftness. Their voice resembles that of the common ass, but is shriller." "Rob. Calmet." The Onager or wild ass is doubtless "the parent stock from which we have derived the useful domestic animal, which seems to have degenerated the further it has been removed from its parent seat in Central Asia. It is greatly distinguished in spirit and grace of form from the domestic ass. It is taller and more dignified; it holds the head higher, and the legs are more elegantly shaped. Even the head, though large in proportion to the body, has a finer appearance, from the forehead being more arched; the neck by which it is sustained is much longer, and has a more graceful bend. It has a short mane of dark and woolly hair; and a stripe of dark bushy hair also runs along the ridge of the back from the

mane to the tail. The hair of the body is of a silver gray, inclining to flaxen color in some parts, and white under the belly.

The hair is soft and silken, similar in texture to that of the camel." - The Pictorial Bible. It is of this animal, so different in spirit, energy, agility, and appearance, from the domestic animal of that name, that we must think in order to understand this passage. We must think of them fleet as the wind, untamed and unbroken, wandering over vast plains in groups and herds, assembled by thousands under a leader or guide, and bounding off with uncontrollable rapidity on the approach of man, if we would feel the force of the appeal which is here made. God asks of Job whether he - who could not even subdue and tame this wild creature - had ordained the laws of its freedom; had held it as a captive, and then set it at liberty to exult over boundless plains in its conscious independence. The idea is, that it was one of the creatures of God, under no laws but such as he had been pleased to impose upon it, and wholly beyond the government of man.

Or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass? - As if he had been once a captive, and then set free. The illustration is derived from the feeling which attends a restoration to liberty. The freedom of this animal seems to be as productive of exhilaration as if it had been a prisoner or slave, and had been suddenly emancipated.

Verse 6

Whose house I have made - God had appointed its home in the desert.

And the barren land his dwellings - Margin, as in Hebrew "salt places." Such places were usually barren. Psalm 107:34, "he turneth a fruitful land into barrenness." Hebrew "saltness." Thus, Virgil, Geor. ii. 238-240:

Salsa antem tellus, et quae, perhibetur amara.
Frugibus infelix: ea nec mansuescit arando;
Nec Baccho genus, aut pomis sua nomina servat.

Compare Pliny, Nat. His. 31,7, Deuteronomy 29:23.

Verse 7

He scorneth the multitude of the city - That is, he sets all this at defiance; he is not intimidated by it. He finds his home far away from the city in the wild freedom of the wilderness.

Neither regardeth he the crying of the driver - Margin, "exacter." The Hebrew word properly means a collector of taxes or revenue, and hence, an

oppressor, and a driver of cattle. The allusion here is to a driver, and the meaning is, that he is not subject to restraint, but enjoys the most unlimited freedom.

Verse 8

The range of the mountains is his pasture - The word rendered "range" יתור *yâthûr* means properly a "searching out," and then that which is obtained by search. The word "range" expresses the idea with sufficient exactness. The usual range of the wild ass is the mountains. Pallas, who has given a full description of the habits of the Onager, or wild ass, states, that it, especially loves desolate hills as its abode. "Acts of the Society of Sciences of Petersburg," for the year 1777.

Verse 9

Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee? - In the previous part of the argument, God had appealed to the lion, the raven, the goats of the rock, the hind, and the wild ass; and the idea was, that in the instincts of each of these classes of animals, there was some special proof of wisdom. He now turns to another class of the animal creation in proof of his own supremacy and power, and lays the argument in the great strength and in the independence of the animal, and in the fact that man had not been able to subject his great strength to the purposes of husbandry. In regard to the animal here referred to, there has been great diversity of opinion among interpreters, nor is there as yet any one prevailing sentiment. Jerome renders it "rhinoceros;" the Septuagint, μονόκερως *monokerōs* the "unicorn;" the Chaldee and the Syraic retain the Hebrew word; Gesenius, Herder, Umbreit, and Noyes, render it the "buffalo;" Schultens, *"alticornem;"* Luther and Coverdale, the "unicorn;" Rosenmuller, the "onyx," a large and fierce species of the antelope; Calmet supposes that the rhinoceros is intended; and Prof. Robinson, in an extended appendage to the article of Calmet (art. Unicorn), has endeavored to show that the wild buffalo is intended.

Bochart, also, in a long and learned argument, has endeavored to show; that the rhinoceros cannot be meant. Hieroz. P. i. Lib. iii. chapter xxvi. He maintains that a species of antelope is referred to, the "rim" of the Arabs. DeWette (Com. on Psalm 22:21) accords with the opinion of Gesenius, Robinson, and others, that the animal referred to is the buffalo of the Eastern continent, the *bos bubalus* of Linnaeus, an animal which differs from the American buffalo only in the shape of the horns and the absence of the dewlap. The word which occurs here, and which is rendered "unicorn"

(רים *rêym* or ראם *re'êm* is used in the Scriptures only in the following places, where in the singular or plural it is uniformly rendered "unicorn," or "unicorns" - Numbers 23:22; Deuteronomy 33:17; Job 39:9-10; Psalm 22:21; Psalm 29:6; Psalm 92:10; and Isaiah 34:7. By a reference to these passages, it will be found that the animal had the following characteristics:

(1) It was distinguished for its strength; see Job 39:11 of this chapter. Numbers 23:22, "he (that is, Israel, or the Israelites) hath as it were the strength of a unicorn - ראם *re'êm* In Numbers 24:8, the same declaration is repeated. It is true that the Hebrew word in both these places (תועפה *tôʿâphâh*) may denote rapidity of motion, speed; but in this place the notion of strength must be principally intended, for it was of the power of the people, and their ability manifested in the number of their hosts, that Balaam is speaking. Bochart, however (Hieroz. P. i. Lib. iii. c. xxvii.), supposes that the word means, not strength, or agility, but height, and that the idea is, that the people referred to by Balaam was a lofty or elevated people. If the word means strength, it was most appropriate to compare a vast host of people with the vigor and force of an untamable wild animal. The idea of speed or of loftiness does not so well suit the connection.

(2) It was an animal that was not subjected to the service of tilling the soil, and that was supposed to be incapable of being so trained. Thus, in the place before us it is said, that he could not be so domesticated that he would remain like the ox at the crib; that he could not be yoked to the plow; that he could not be employed and safely left to pursue the work of the field; and that he could not be so subdued that it would be safe to attempt to bring home the harvest by his aid. From all these declarations, it is plain that he was regarded as a wild and untamed animal; an animal that was not then domesticated, and that could not be employed in husbandry. This characteristic would agree with either the antelope, the onyx, the buffalo, the rhinoceros, or the supposed unicorn, With which of them it will best accord, we may be able to determine when all his characteristics are examined.

(3) The strength of the animal was in his horns. This was one of his special characteristics, and it is evidently by this that he is designed to be distinguished. Deuteronomy 33:17, "his glory is like the firstling of a

bullock, and his horns like the horns of unicorns." Psalm 92:10, "my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn." Psalm 22:21, "thou hast heard me (saved me) from the horns of the unicorns." It is true, indeed, as Prof. Robinson has remarked (Calmet, art. "Unicorn"), the word ראם *re'êm* has in itself no reference to horns, nor is there in the Hebrew an illusion any where to the supposition that the animal here referred to has only one horn. Wherever, in the Scriptures, the animal is spoken of with any allusion to this member, the expression is in the plural, "horns." The only variation from this, even in the common version, is in Psalm 92:10, where the Hebrew is simply, "My horn shalt thou exalt like an unicorn, "where the word horn, as it stands in the English version, is not expressed. There is, indeed, in this passage, some obvious allusion to the horns of this animal, but all the force of the comparison will be retained if the word inserted in the ellipsis is in the plural number. The horn or horns of the ראם *re'êm* were, however, beyond question, the principal seat of strength, and the instruments of assault and defense. See the passage in Deuteronomy 33:17, "With them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth."

(4) There was some special majesty or dignity in the horns of this animal that attracted attention, and that made them the proper symbol of dominion and of royal authority. Thus, in Psalm 92:10, "My horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn," where the reference seems to be to a kingly authority or dominion, of which the horn was an appropriate symbol. These are all the characteristics of the animal referred to in the Scriptures, and the question is, With what known animal do they best correspond? The principal animals referred to by those who have examined the subject at length are, the onyx or antelope; the buffalo; the animal commonly referred to as the unicorn, and the rhinoceros. The principal characteristic of the unicorn was supposed to be, that it had a long, slender horn projecting from the forehead; the horn of the rhinoceros is on the snout, or the nose.

I. In regard to the antelope, or the "rim" of the modern Arabs, supposed by Bochart to be the animal here referred to, it seems clear that there are few characteristics in common between the two animals. The onyx or antelope is not distinguished as this animal is for strength, nor for the fact that it is especially untamable, nor that its strength is in its horns, nor that it is of such size and proportions that a comparison would naturally be

suggested between it and the ox. In all that is said of the animal, we think of one greater in bulk, in strength, in untamableness, than the onyx; an animal more distinguished for conquest and subduing other animals before him. Bochart has collected much that is fabulous respecting this animal, from the rabbis and the Arabic writers, which it is not needful here to repeat; see the Hieroz. P. i. Lib. iii. c. xxvii.; or Scheutzer, Physi. Sac. on Numbers 23:22.

II. The claims of the "buffalo" to be regarded as the animal here referred to, are much higher than those of the onyx, and the opinion that this is the animal intended is entertained by such names as those of Gesenius, DeWette, Robinson, Umbreit, and Herder. But the objections to this seem to me to be insuperable, and the arguments are not such as to carry conviction. The principal objections to the opinion are:

(1) That the account in regard to the horns of the ראם *re'êm* by no means agrees with the fact in regard to the bison, or buffalo. The buffalo is an animal of the cow kind (Goldsmith), and the horns are short and crooked, and by no means distinguished for strength. They do not in fact surpass in this respect the horns of many other animals, and are not such as would occur ordinarily as the prominent characteristic in their description. It is true that there are instances where the horns of the wild buffalo are large, but this does not appear to be the case ordinarily. Mr. Pennant mentions a pair of horns in the British Museum, which are six feet and a half long, and the hollow of which will hold five quarts. Lobo affirms that some of the horns of the buffalo in Abyssinia will hold ten quarts; and Dillon saw some in India that were ten feet long. But these were manifestly extraordinary cases.

(2) The animal here referred to was evidently a stronger and a larger animal than the wild ox or the buffalo. "The Oriental buffalo appears to be so closely allied to our common ox, that without an attentive examination it might be easily mistaken for a variety of that animal. In point of size, it is rather superior to the ox; and upon an accurate inspection, it is observed to differ in the shape and magnitude of the head, the latter being larger than in the ox." "Robinson, in Calmet." The animal here referred to was such as to make the contrast particularly striking between him and the ox. The latter

could be employed for labor; the former, though greatly superior in strength, could not.

(3) The ראם *re'êm* it was supposed, could not be tamed and made to subserve domestic purposes. The buffalo, however, can be made as serviceable as the ox, and is actually domesticated and employed in agricultural purposes. Niebuhr remarks that he saw buffalo not only in Egypt, but also at Bombay, Surat, on the Euphrates, Tigris, Orontes, and indeed in all marshy regions and near large rivers. Sonnini remarks that in Egypt the buffalo, though but recently domesticated, is more numerous than the common ox, and is there equally domestic, and in Italy they are known to be commonly employed in the Pontine marshes, where the fatal nature of the climate acts on common cattle, but affects buffalo less. It is true that the animal has been comparatively recently domesticated, and that it was doubtless known in the time of Job only as a wild, savage, ferocious animal; but still the description here is that of an animal not only that was not then tamed, but obviously of one that could not well be employed in domestic purposes.

We are to remember that the language here is that of God himself, and that therefore it may be regarded as descriptive of what the essential nature of the animal was, rather than what it was supposed to be by the persons to whom the language was addressed. One of the principal arguments alleged for supposing that the animal here referred to by the ראם *re'êm* was the buffalo, is, that the rhinoceros was probably unknown in the land where Job resided, and that the unicorn was altogether a fabulous animal. This difficulty will be considered in the remarks to be made on the claims of each of those animals.

III. It was an early opinion, and the opinion was probably entertained by the authors of the Septuagint translation, and by the English translators as well as by others, that the animal here referred to was the unicorn. This animal was long supposed to be a fabulous animal, and it has not been until recently that the evidences of its existence have been confirmed. These evidences are adduced by Rosenmuller, “Morgenland, ii. p. 269, following,” and by Prof. Robinson, “Calmet, pp. 908,909.” They are, summarily, the following:

(1) Pliny mentions such an animal, and gives a description of it, though from his time for centuries it seems to have been unknown. “His. Nat. 8,21.” His language is, *Asperrimam autem feram monocerotem reliquo corpore equo similem, capite cervo, pedibus elephanti, cauda apro, mugitu gravi, uno cornu nigro media fronte cubitorum duum eminente. IIanc feram vivam negant capi*. “The unicorn is an exceeding fierce animal, resembling a horse as to the rest of his body, but having the head like a stag, the feet like an elephant, and the tail like a wild boar; its roaring is loud; and it has a black horn of about two cubits projecting from the middle of the forehead.”

(2) The figure of the unicorn, in various attitudes, according to Niebuhr, is depicted on almost all the staircases in the ruins of Persepolis. “Reisebeschreib. ii. S. 127.”

(3) In 1530, Ludovice de Bartema, a Roman patrician, visited Mecca under the assumed character of a Mussulman, and among other curiosities that he mentions, he says, “On the other side of the caaba is a walled court, in which we saw two unicorns that were pointed out to us as a rarity; and they are indeed truly remarkable. The larger of the two is built like a three-year-old colt, and has a horn upon the forehead about three ells long. This animal has the color of a yellowish-brown horse, a head like a stag, a neck not very long, with a thin mane; the legs are small and slender like those of a hind or roe; the hoofs of the fore feet are divided, and resemble the hoofs of a goat. Rosenmuller. “Alte u. neue Morgenland, No. 377. Thes ii. S. 271,272.”

(4) Don Juan Gabriel, a Portuguese colonel, who lived several years in Abyssinia, assures us that in the region of Agamos, in the Abyssinian province of Darners, he had seen an animal of the form and size of a middle-sized horse, of a dark, chestnut-brown color, and with a whitish horn about five spans long upon its forehead; the mane and tail were black, and the legs long and slender. Several other Portuguese, who were placed in confinement upon a high mountain in the district Namna, by the Abyssinian king Saghedo, related that they had seen at the mountain several unicorns feeding. These accounts are confirmed by Lobe, who lived for a long time as a missionary in Abyssinia.

(5) Dr. Sparrman the Swedish naturalist, who visited the Cape of Good Hope and the adjacent regions in 1772-1776, gives, in his Travels, the following account: Jacob Kock an observing peasant on Hippopotamus river, who had traveled over a considerable part of Southern Africa, found on the face of a perpendicular rock, a drawing made by the Hotttentots of an animal with a single horn. The Hottentots told him that the animal there represented was very like the horse on which he rode, but had a straight horn upon the forehead. They added, that these one-horned animals were rare; that they ran with great rapidity, and that they were very fierce.

(6) A similar animal is described as having been killed by a party of Hottentots in pursuit of the savage Bushmen in 1791. The animal resembled a horse, was of a light grey color, and with white stripes under the jaw. It had a single horn directly in front, as long as one‘s arm, and at the base about as thick. Toward the middle the horn was somewhat flattened, but had a sharp point; it was not attached to the bone of the forehead, but was fixed only in the skin. The head was like that of the horse, and the size about the same. These authorities are collected by Rosenmuller, “Alte u. nerve Morgenland,” vol. ii. p. 269ff, ed. Leipz. 1818.

(7) To these proofs one other is added by Prof. Robinson. It is copied from the Quarterly Review for Oct. 1820 (vol. xxiv. p. 120), in a notice of Frazer‘s Tour through the Himalaya mountains. The information is contained in a letter from Maj. Latter, commanding in the rajah of Sikkim‘s territories, in the hilly country east of Nepaul. This letter states that the unicorn, so long considered as a fabulous animal, actually exists in the interior of Thibet, where it is well known to the inhabitants. “In a Thibetian manuscript,” says Maj. Latter, “containing the names of different animals, which I procured the other day from the hills, the unicorn is classed under the head of those whose hoofs are divided: it is called the one-horned “tso‘po.” Upon inquiring what kind of an animal it was, to our astonishment, the person who brought the manuscript described exactly the unicorn of the ancients; saying that it was a native of the interior of Thibet, about the size of a tattoo (a horse from twelve to thirteen hands high,) fierce and extremely wild; seldom if ever caught alive, but frequently shot; and that the flesh was used for food. They go together in herds, like wild

buffalo, and are frequently to be met with on the borders of the great desert, in that part of the country inhabited by wandering Tartars.‘

(8) To these proofs I add another, taken from the Narrative of the Rev. John Campbell, who thus speaks of it, in his “Travels in South Africa,” vol. ii. p. 294. “While in the Mashow territory, the Hottentots brought in a head different from any rhinoceros that had been previously killed. The common African rhinoceros has a crooked horn resembling a cock‘s spur, which rises about nine or ten inches above the nose, and inclines backward; immediately behind this is a short thick horn. But the head they brought us had a straight horn projecting three feet from the forehead, about ten inches above the tip of the nose. The projection of this great horn very much resembles that of the fanciful unicorn in the British arms. It has a small, thick, horny substance, eight inches long, immediately behind it, and which can hardly be observed on the animal at the distance of 100 yards, and seems to be designed for keeping fast that which is penetrated by the long horn; so that this species must look like the unicorn (in the sense ‹one-horned‘) when running in the field.

The head resembled in size a nine-gallon cask, and measured three feet from the mouth to the ear; and being much larger than that of the one with the crooked horn, and which measured eleven feet in length, the animal itself must have been still larger and more formidable. From its weight, and the position of the horn, it appears capable of overcoming any creature hitherto known.” A fragment of the skull, with the horn, is deposited in the Museum of the London Missionary Society. These testimonies from so many witnesses from different parts of the world, who write without concert, and yet who concur so almost entirely in the account of the size and figure of the animal, leave little room to doubt its real existence. That it is not better known, and that its existence has been doubted, is not wonderful. It is to be remembered that all accounts agree in the representation that it is an animal whose residence is in deserts or mountains, and that large parts of Africa and Asia are still unexplored. We are to remember, also, that the giraffe has been discovered only within a few years, and that the same is true of the gnu, which until recently was held to be a fable of the ancients.

At the same time, however, that the existence of such an animal as that of the unicorn is in the highest degree probable, it is clear that it is not the animal referred to in the passage before us; for

(1) It is in the highest degree improbable that it was so well known as is supposed in the description here; and

(2) The characteristics do not at all agree with the account of the ראם *re'êm* of the Scriptures. Neither in regard to the size of the animal, its strength, or the strength of its horns, does it coincide with the account of that animal in the Bible.

IV. If neither of the opinions above referred to be correct, then the only remaining opinion that has weight is, that it refers to the rhinoceros. Besides the considerations above suggested, it may be added that the characteristics of the animal given in the Scriptures all agree with the rhinoceros. In size, strength, wildness, untamableness, and in the power and use of the horn, those characteristics agree accurately with the rhinoceros. The only argument of much weight against this opinion is presented by Prof. Robinson in the following language: "The ראם *re'êm* was obviously an animal well known to the Hebrews, being everywhere mentioned with other animals common to the country, while the rhinoceros was never an inhabitant of the country, is nowhere else spoken of by the sacred writers, nor, according to Bochart, either by Aristotle in his treatise of animals, nor by Arabian writers." In reply to this we may observe:

(1) that the ראם *re'êm* is mentioned in the Scriptures only in seven places (see above), showing at least that it was probably an animal not very well known in that country, or it would have been alluded to more often;

(2) it is not clear that in those places it is "everywhere mentioned with other animals common to that country," as in the passage before us there is no allusion to any domestic animal; nor is there in Numbers 23:22; Numbers 24:8; Psalm 92:10. In Psalm 22:21, they are mentioned in the same verse with "lions;" in Psalm 29:6, in connection with "calves;" and in Isaiah 34:7, with bullocks and bulls - wild animals inhabiting Idumea. But

the entire account is that of an animal that was untamed and that was evidently a foreign animal.

(3) What evidence is there that the Hebrews were well acquainted, as Prof. Robinson supposes, with "the wild buffalo?" Is this animal an inhabitant of Palestine? Is it "elsewhere" mentioned in the Scriptures? Is there any more evidence from the Bible that they were acquainted with it than with the rhinoceros?

(4) It cannot be reasonably supposed that the Hebrews were so unacquainted with the rhinoceros that there could be no allusion to it in their writings. This animal was found in Egypt and in the adjacent countries, and whoever was the writer of the book of Job, there are frequent references in the book to what was well known in Egypt; and at all events, the Hebrews had lived too long in Egypt, and had had too much contact with the Egyptians, to be wholly ignorant of the existence and general character of an animal well known there, and we in fact find just about as frequent mention of it as we should on this supposition. It does not seem, therefore, to admit of reasonable doubt that the rhinoceros is referred to in the passage before us. This animal next to the elephant, is the most powerful of animals. It is usually about twelve feet long; from six to seven feet high; and the circumference of its body is nearly equal to its length.

Its bulk of body, therefore, is about that of the elephant. Its head is furnished with a horn, growing from the snout, sometimes three and a half feet long. This horn is erect, and perpendicular to the bone on which it stands, and it has thus a greater purchase or power than it could have in any other position. "Bruce." Occasionally it is found with a double horn, one above the other, though this is not common. The horn is entirely solid, formed of the hardest bony substance, and so firmly growing on the upper maxillary bone as seemingly to make but a part of it, and so powerful as to justify all the allusions in the Scriptures to the horn of the ראם *re'êm* The skin of this animal is naked, rough, and knotty, lying upon the body in folds, and so thick as to turn the edge of a scimetar, or to resist a musket-ball. The legs are short, strong, and thick, and the hoofs divided into three parts, each pointing forward. It is a native of the deserts of Asia and Africa, and is usually found in the extensive forests which are frequented by the

elephant and the lion. It has never been domesticated; never employed in agricultural purposes; and thus, as well as in size and strength, accords with the account which is given of the animal in the passage before us. The following cut will furnish a good illustration of this animal:

Be willing to serve thee. - In plowing and harrowing thy land, and conveying home the harvest, Job 39:12.

Or abide by thy crib - As the ox will. The word used here (ילין *yālîyn*) means properly to pass the night; and then to abide, remain, dwell. There is propriety in retaining here the original meaning of the word, and the sense is, Can he be domesticated or tamed? The rhinoceros never has been.

Verse 10

Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? - That is, with the common traces or cords which are employed in binding oxen to the plow.

Or will he harrow the valleys after thee? - The word "valleys" here is used to denote such ground as was capable of being plowed or harrowed. Hills and mountains could not thus be cultivated, though the spade was in common use in planting the vine there, and even in preparing them for seed, Isaiah 7:25. The phrase "after thee" indicates that the custom of driving cattle in harrowing then was the same as that practiced now with oxen, when the person who employs them goes in advance of them. It shows that they were entirely under subjection, and it is here implied that the ראם *re'êm* could not be thus tamed.

Verse 11

Wilt thou trust him? - As thou dost the ox. In the domestic animals great confidence is of necessity placed, and the reliance on the fidelity of the ox and the horse is not usually misplaced. The idea here is, that the unicorn could not be so tamed that important interests could be safely entrusted to him.

Because his strength is great? - Wilt thou consider his strength as a reason why important interests might be entrusted to him? The strength of the ox, the camel, the horse, and the elephant was a reason why their aid was sought by man to do what he could not himself do. The idea is, that man could not make use of the same reason for employing the rhinoceros.

Wilt thou leave thy labour to him? - Or, rather, the avails of thy labor - the harvest.

Verse 12

Wilt thou believe him? - That is, wilt thou trust him with the productions of the field? The idea is, that he was an untamed and unsubdued animal. He could not be governed, like the camel or the ox. If the sheaves of the harvest were laid on him, there would be no certainty that he would convey them where the farmer wished them.

And gather it into thy barn? - Or, rather, "to thy threshing-floor," for so the word used here (גרן *gôren*) means. It was not common to gather a harvest into a barn, but it was usually collected on a hard-trod place and there threshed and winnowed. For the use of the word, see Rth 3:2 ; Judges 6:37; Numbers 18:30; Isaiah 21:10.

Verse 13

Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? - In the previous verses the appeal had been to the wild and untamable animals of the desert. In the prosecution of the argument, it was natural to allude to the feathered tribes which resided there also, and which were distinguished for their strength or fleetness of wing, as proof of the wisdom and the superintending providence of God. The idea is, that these animals, far away from the abodes of man, where it could not be pretended that man had anything to do with their training, had habits and instincts special to themselves, which showed great variety in the divine plans, and at the same time consummate wisdom. The appeal in the following verses Job 39:13-18 is to the remarkable habits of the ostrich, as illustrating the wisdom and the superintending providence of God. There has been very great variety in the translation of this verse, and it is important to ascertain its real meaning, in order to know whether there is any allusion here to the peacock, or whether it refers wholly to the ostrich. The Septuagint did not understand the passage, and a part of the words they endeavored to translate, but the others are retained without any attempt to explain them. Their version is, Πτέρυξ τερπομένων νεέλασσα, ἐὰν συλλάβῃ ἀσιδα καὶνέσσα *Pterux terpomenōn neelassa ean sullabē asida kai nessa* - the wing of the exulting Neelassa if she conceives or comprehends the Asia and Nessa." Jerome renders it," The wing of the ostrich is like the wings of the falcon and the hawk." Schultens renders it, "The wing of the ostrich is exulting; but is it the wing and the plumage of the stork?" He enumerates no less than twenty different interpretations of the passage. Herder renders it,

"A wing with joyous cry is uplifted yonder;
Is it the wing and feather of the ostrich?"

Umbreit renders it,
"The wing of the ostrich, which lifts itselfjoyfully,
Does it not resemble the tail and feather of the stork?"
Rosenmuller renders it,
"The wing of the ostrich exults!
Truly its wing and plumage is like that of the stork!"

Prof. Lee renders it, "Wilt thou confide in the exulting of the wings of the ostrich? Or in her choice feathers and head-plumage, when she leaveth her eggs to the earth," etc. So Coverdale renders it, "The ostrich (whose feathers are fairer than the wings of the sparrow-hawk), when he hath laid his eggs upon the ground, he breedeth them in the dust, and forgetteth them." In none of these versions, and in none that I have examined except that of Luther and the common English version, is there any allusion to the peacock; and amidst all the variety of the rendering, and all the difficulty of the passage, there is a common sentiment that the ostrich alone is referred to as the particular subject of the description. It is certain that the description proceeds with reference only to the habits of the ostrich, and it is very evident to my mind that in the whole passage there is no allusion whatever to the peacock.

Neither the scope of the passage, nor the words employed, it is believed, will admit of such a reference. There is great difficulty in the Hebrew text, which no one has been able fully to explain, but it is sufficiently clear to make it manifest that the ostrich, and not the peacock, is the subject of the appeal. The word which is rendered "peacock," רננים *reneniym* is derived from רנן *rânan* "to give forth a tremulous and stridulous sound;" and then to give forth the voice in vibrations; to shake or trill the voice; and then, as in lamentation or joy the voice is often given forth in that manner, the word comes to mean to utter cries of joy; Isaiah 12:6; Isaiah 35:6; and also cries of lamentation or mourning, Lamentations 2:19. The prevailing sense of the word in the Scriptures is to rejoice; to shout for joy; to exult. The name is here given to the bird referred to, evidently from the sound which it made, and probably from its exulting or joyful cry.

The word does not elsewhere occur in the Scriptures as applicable to a bird, and there is no reason whatever, either from its etymology, or from the connection in which it is found here, to suppose that it refers to the peacock. Another reason is suggested by Scheutzer (Phys. Sac. *in loc*.), why the

peacock cannot be intended here. It is, that the peacock is originally an East Indian fowl, and that it was imported at comparatively a late period in the Jewish history, and was doubtless unknown in the time of Job. In 1 Kings 10:22, and 2 Chronicles 9:21, it appears that peacocks were among the remarkable productions of distant countries that were imported for use or luxury by Solomon, a fact which would not have occurred had they been common in the patriarchal times. To these reasons to show that the peacock is not referred to here, Bochart, whose chapters on the subject deserve a careful attention (Hieroz. P. ii. L. ii. c. xvi. xvii.), has added the following:

(1) That if the peacock had been intended here, the allusion would not have been so brief. Of so remarkable a bird there would have been an extended description as there is of the ostrich, and of the unicorn and the horse. If the allusion is to the peacock, it is by a bare mention of the name, and by no argument, as in other cases, from the habits and instincts of the fowl.

(2) The word which is used here as a description of the bird referred to, רננים *reneniym* derived from the musical properties of the bird, is by no means applicable to the peacock. It is of all fowls, perhaps, least distinguished for beauty of voice.

(3) The property ascribed to the fowl here of "exulting in the wing," by no means agrees with the peacock. The glory and beauty of that bird is in the tail, and not in the wing. Yet the wing is here, from some cause, particularly specified. Bochart has demonstrated at great length, and with entire clearness, that the peacock was a foreign fowl, and that it must have been unknown in Judea and Arabia, as it was in Greece and Rome, at a period long after the time in which the book of Job is commonly supposed to have been written. The proper translation of the Hebrew here then would be, The wing of the exulting fowls "moves joyfully" - נעלסה *neʿâlasâh* The attention seems to be directed to the wing, as being lifted up, or as vibrating with rapidity, or as being triumphant in its movement in eluding the pursuer. It is not its beauty particularly that attracts the attention, but its exulting, joyful, triumphant, appearance.

Or wings and feathers unto the ostrich? - Margin, "or, the feathers of the stork and ostrich." Most commentators have despaired of making any

sense out of the Hebrew in this place, and there have been almost as many conjectures as there have been expositors. The Hebrew is, ונצה חסידה אם־אברה *'im'ebrâh chăsîydâh venôtsâh* A literal translation of it would be, "Is it the wing of the stork, and the plumage," or feathers? The object seems to be to institute a comparison of some kind between the ostrich and the stork. This comparison, it would seem, relates partly to the wings and plumage of the two birds, and partly to their habits and instincts; though the latter point of comparison appears to be couched in the mere name. So far as I can understand the passage, the comparison relates first to the wings and plumage. The point of vision is that of the sudden appearance of the ostrich with exulting wing, and the attention is directed to it as in the bounding speed of its movements when in rapid flight.

In this view the usual name is not given to the bird - יענה בנות *benôth yaʿănâh* Isaiah 13:21; Isaiah 34:13; Isaiah 43:20; Jeremiah 50:39, but merely the name of fowls making a stridulous or whizzing sound - רננים *reneniym* The question is then asked whether it has the wing and plumage of the stork - evidently implying that the wing of the stork might be supposed to be adapted to such a flight, but that it was remarkable that without such wings the ostrich was able to outstrip even the fleetest animal. The question is designed to turn the attention to the fact that the ostrich accomplishes its flight in this remarkable manner without being endowed with wings like the stork, which is capable of sustaining by its wings a long and rapid flight. The other point of the comparison seems couched in the name given to the stork, and the design is to contrast the habits of the ostrich with those of this bird - particularly in reference to their care for their young. The name given to the stork is חסידה *chăsîydâh* meaning literally "the pious," a name usually given to it - *"avis pia,"* from its tenderness toward its young - a virtue for which it was celebrated by the ancients, Pliny "Hist. Nat. x;" Aelian "Hist. An. 3,23." On the contrary, the Arabs call the ostrich the impious or ungodly bird, on account of its neglect and cruelty toward its young. The fact that the ostrich thus neglects its young, is dwelt upon in the passage before us Job 39:14-17, and in this respect she is placed in strong contrast with the stork. The verse then, I suppose, may be rendered thus:

"A wing of exulting fowls moves joyfully!
Is it the wing and the plumage of the pious bird?"

This means that with both (in regard to the wing and the habits of the two) there was a strong contrast, and yet designing to show that what seems to be a defect in the size and rigor of the wing, and what seems to be stupid forgetfulness of the bird in regard to its young, is proof of the wisdom of the Creator, who has so made it as to be able to outstrip the fleetest horse, and to be adapted to its shy and timid mode of life in the desert. The ostrich, whose principal characteristics are beautifully and strikingly detailed in this passage in Job, is a native of the torrid regions of Arabia and Africa. It is the largest of the feathered tribes and is the connecting link between quadrupeds and fowls. It has the general properties and outlines of a bird, and yet retains many of the marks of the quadruped. In appearance, the ostrich resembles the camel, and is almost as tall; and in the East is called "the camel-bird" (Calmet).

It is covered with a plumage that resembles hair more nearly than feathers; and its internal parts bear as near a resemblance to those of the quadruped as of the bird creation - Goldsmith. See also Poiret's "Travels in the Barbary States," as quoted by Rosenmuller, "Alte u. neue Morgenland," No. 770. A full description is there given of the appearance and habits of the ostrich. Its head and bill resemble those of a duck; the neck may be compared with that of the swan, though it is much longer; the legs and thighs resemble those of a hen, but are fleshy and large. The end of the foot is cloven, and has two very large toes, which like the leg are covered with scales. The height of the ostrich is usually seven feet from the head to the ground; but from the back it is only four, so that the head and the neck are about three feet long. From the head to the end of the tail, when the neck is stretched in a right line, the length is seven feet.

One of the wings with the feathers spread out is three feet in length. At the end of the wing there is a species of spur almost like the quill of a porcupine. It is an inch long, and is hollow, and of a bony substance. The plumage is generally white and black, though some of them are said to be gray. There are no feathers on the sides of the thighs, nor under the wings. It has not, like most birds, feathers of various kinds, but they are all bearded with detached hairs or filaments, without consistence and reciprocal adherence. The feathers of the ostrich are almost as soft as down, and are therefore wholly unfit for flying, or to defend the body from external injury. The feathers of other birds have the web broader on one side than the other,

but those of the ostrich have the shaft exactly in the middle. In other birds, the filaments that compose the feathers of the wings are firmly attached to each other, or are "hooked together," so that they are adapted to catch and resist the air; on those of the ostrich no such attachments are found.

The consequence is, that they cannot oppose to the air a suitable resistance, as is the case with other birds, and are therefore incapable of flying, and in fact never mount on the wing. The wing is used (see the notes at Job 39:18) only to balance the bird, and to aid it in running. The great size of the bird - weighing 75 or 80 pounds - would require an immense power of wing to elevate it in the air, and it has, therefore, been furnished with the means of surpassing all other animals in the rapidity with which it runs, so that it may escape its pursuers. The ostrich is made to live in the wilderness, and it was called by the ancients "a lover of the deserts." It is shy and timorous in no common degree, and avoids the cultivated fields and the abodes of man, and retreats into the utmost recesses of the desert. In those dreary wastes its subsistence is the few tufts of coarse grass which are scattered here and there, but it will eat almost anything that comes in its way.

It is the most voracious of animals, and will devour leather, glass, hair, iron, stones, or anything that is given. Valisnieri found the first stomach filled with a quantity of incongruous substances; grass, nuts, cords, stones, glass, brass, copper, iron, tin, lead, and wood, and among the rest, a piece of stone that weighed more than a pound. It would seem that the ostrich is obliged to fill up the great capacity of its stomach in order to be at ease; but that, nutritious substances not occurring, it pours in whatever is at hand to supply the void. The flesh of the ostrich was forbidden by the laws of Moses to be eaten Leviticus 11:13, but it is eaten by some of the savage nations of Africa, who hunt them for their flesh, which they regard as a dainty. The principal value of the ostrich, however, and the principal reason why it is hunted. is in the long feathers that compose the wing and the tail, and which are used so extensively for ornaments, The ancients used these plumes in their helmets; the ladies, in the East, as well as in the West, use them to decorate their persons, and they have been extensively employed also as badges of mourning on hearses. The Arabians assert that the ostrich never drinks, and the chosen place of its habitation - the waste, sandy desert

- seems to confirm the assertion. As the ostrich, in the passage before us, is contrasted with the stork, the accompanying illustrations will serve to explain the passage.

Verse 14

Which leaveth her eggs in the earth - That is, she does not build a nest, as most birds do, but deposits her eggs in the sand. The ostrich, Dr. Shaw remarks, lays usually from thirty to fifty eggs. The eggs are very large, some of them being above five inches in diameter, and weighing fifteen pounds - Goldsmith. "We are not to consider," says Dr. Shaw, "this large collection of eggs as if they were all intended for a brood. They are the greatest part of them reserved for food, which the dam breaks, and disposeth of according to the number and cravings of her young ones." The idea which seems to be conveyed in our common version is, that the ostrich deposits her eggs in the sand, and then leaves them, without further care, to be hatched by the heat of the sun. This idea is not, however, necessarily implied in the original, and is contrary to fact. The truth is, that the eggs are deposited with great care, and with so much attention to the manner in which they are placed, that a line drawn from those in the extremities would just touch the tops of the intermediate ones (see Damir, as quoted by Bochart, "Hieroz." P. ii. Lib. ii. c. xvii. p. 253), and that they are hatched, as the eggs of other birds are, in a great measure by the heat imparted by the incubation of the parent bird.

It is true that in the hot climates where these birds live, there is less necessity for constant incubation than in colder latitudes, and that the parent bird is more frequently absent; but she is accustomed regularly to return at night, and carefully broods over her eggs. See Le Valliant, "Travels in the Interior of Africa," ii. 209,305. It is true also that the parent bird wanders sometimes far from the place where the eggs are deposited, and forgets the place, and in this case if another nest of eggs is seen, she is not concerned whether they are her own or not, for she is not endowed with the power of distinguishing between her own eggs and those of another. This fact seems to have given rise to all the fables stated by the Arabic writers about the stupidity of the ostrich; about her leaving her eggs; and about her disposition to sit on the eggs of others. Bochart has collected many of these opinions from the Arabic writers, among which are the following: Alkazuinius says, "They say that no bird is more foolish than the ostrich,

for while it forsakes its own eggs, it sits on the eggs of others; from the proverb, “Every animal loves its own young except the ostrich.”

Ottomanus says, “Every animal loves its own progeny except the ostrich. But that pertains only to the male. For although the common proverb imputes folly to the female, yet with her folly she loves her young, and feeds them, and teaches them to fly, the same as other animals.” Damir, an Arabic writer, says, “When the ostrich goes forth from her nest, that she may seek food, if she finds the egg of another ostrich, she sits on that, and forgets her own. And when driven away by hunters, she never returns; whence, it is that she is described as foolish, and that the proverb in regard to her has originated.

And warmeth them in dust - The idea which was evidently in the mind of the translators in this passage was, that the ostrich left her eggs in the dust to be hatched by the heat of the sun. This is not correct, and is not necessarily implied in the Hebrew, though undoubtedly the heat of the sand is made to contribute to the process of hatching the egg, and allows the parent bird to be absent longer from her nest than birds in colder climates. This seems to be all that is implied in the passage.

Verse 15

And forgetteth that the foot may crush them - She lays her eggs in the sand, and not, as most birds do, in nests made on branches of trees, or on the crags of rocks, where they would be inaccessible, as if she was forgetful of the fact that the wild beast might pass along and crush them. She often wanders away from them, also, and does not stay near them to guard them, as most parent birds do, as if she were unmindful of the danger to which they might be exposed when she was absent. The object of all this seems to be, to call the attention to the uniqueness in the natural history of this bird, and to observe that there were laws and arrangements in regard to it which seemed to show that she was deprived of wisdom, and yet that everything was so ordered as to prove that she was under the care of the Almighty. The great variety in the laws pertaining to the animal kingdom, and especially their lack of resemblance to what would have occurred to man, seems to give the special force and point to the argument used here.

Verse 16

She is hardened against her young ones - The obvious meaning of this passage, which is a fair translation of the Hebrew, is, that the ostrich is

destitute of natural affection for her young; or that she treats them as if she had not the usual natural affection manifested in the animal creation. This sentiment also occurs in Lamentations 4:3, "The daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness." This opinion is controverted by Buffon, but seems fully sustained by those who have most attentively observed the habits of the ostrich. Dr. Shaw, as quoted by Paxton, and in Robinson's Calmet, says, "On the least noise or trivial occasion she forsakes her eggs or her young ones, to which perhaps she never returns; or if she does, it may be too late either to restore life to the one, or to preserve the lives of the others." "Agreeable to this account," says Paxton, "the Arabs meet sometimes with whole nests of these eggs undisturbed, some of which are sweet and good, and others addle and corrupted; others again have their young ones of different growths, according to the time it may be presumed they have been forsaken by the dam. They oftener meet a few of the little ones, not bigger than well-grown pullets, half-starved, straggling and moaning about like so many distressed orphans for their mothers."

Her labour is in vain without fear - Herder renders this," In vain is her travail, but she regards it not." The idea in the passage seems to be this; that the ostrich has not that apprehension or provident care for her young which others birds have. It does not mean that she is an animal remarkably bold and courageous, for the contrary is the fact, and she is, according to the Arabian writers, timid to a proverb; but that she has none of the anxious solicitude for her young which others seem to have - the dread that they may be in want, or in danger, which leads them, often at the peril of their own lives, to provide for and defend them.

Verse 17

Because God hath deprived her of wisdom … - That is, he has not imparted to her the wisdom which has been conferred on other animals. The meaning is, that all this remarkable arrangement, which distinguished the ostrich so much from other animals was to be traced to God. It was not the result of chance; it could not be pretended that it was by a human arrangement, but it was the result of divine appointment. Even in this apparent destitution of wisdom, there were reasons which had led to this appointment, and the care and good providence of God could be seen in the preservation of the animal. Particularly, though apparently so weak, and timid, and unwise, the ostrich had a noble hearing Job 39:18, and when

aroused, would scorn the fleetest horse in the pursuit, and show that she was distinguished for properties that were expressive of the goodness of God toward her, and of his care over her.

Verse 18

What time she lifteth up herself on high - In the previous verses reference had been made to the fact that in some important respects the ostrich was inferior to other animals, or had special laws in regard to its habits and preservation. Here the attention is called to the fact that, notwithstanding its inferiority in some respects, it had properties such as to command the highest admiration. Its lofty carriage, the rapidity of its flight, and the proud scorn with which it would elude the pursuit of the fleetest coursers, were all things that showed that God had so endowed it as to furnish proof of his wisdom. The phrase "what time she lifteth up herself," refers to the fact that she raises herself for her rapid flight. It does not mean that she would mount on her wings, for this the ostrich cannot do; but to the fact that this timid and cowardly bird would, when danger was near, rouse herself, and assume a lofty courage and bearing. The word here translated "lifteth up" (תמריא *tamâriy'*) means properly "to lash, to whip," as a horse, to increase its speed, and is here supposed by Gesenius to be used as denoting that the ostrich by flapping her wings lashes herself up as it were to her course. All the ancient interpretations, however, as well as the common English version, render it as if it were but another form of the word רום *rûm* to raise oneself up, or to rise up, as if the ostrich aroused herself up for her flight. Herder renders it, "At once she is up, and urges herself forward." Taylor (in Calmet) renders it:

"Yet at the time she haughtily assumes courage;
She scorneth the horse and his rider."

The leading idea is, that she rouses herself to escape her pursuer; she lifts up her head and body, and spreads her wings, and then bids defiance to anything to overtake her.

She scorneth the horse and his rider - In the pursuit. That is, she runs faster than the fleetest horse, and easily escapes. The extraordinary rapidity of the ostrich has always been celebrated, and it is well known that she can easily outstrip the fleetest horse. Its swiftness is mentioned by Xenophon, in his Anabasis; for, speaking of the desert of Arabia, he says, that ostriches are frequently seen there; that none could overtake them; and that horsemen who pursued them were obliged soon to give over, "for they escaped far

away, making use both of their feet to run, and of their wings, when expanded, as a sail, to waft them along.” Marmelius, as quoted by Bochart (see above), speaking of a remarkable kind of horses, says, “that in Africa, Egypt, and Arabia, there is but one species of that kind which they call the Arabian, and that those are produced only in the deserts of Arabia. Their velocity is wonderful, nor is there any better evidence of their remarkable swiftness, than is furnished when they pursue the camel-bird.”

It is a common sentiment of the Arabs, Boehart remarks, that there is no animal which can overcome the ostrich in its course. Dr. Shaw says, “Notwithstanding the stupidity of this animal, its Creator hath amply provided for its safety by endowing it with extraordinary swiftness, and a surprising apparatus for escaping from its enemy. ‹They, when they raise themselves up for flight, laugh at the horse and his rider.‘ They afford him an opportunity only of admiring at a distance the extraordinary agility, and the stateliness likewise of their motions, the richness of their plumage, and the great propriety there was in ascribing to them an expanded, quivering wing. Nothing, certainly, can be more entertaining than such a sight; the wings, by their rapid but unwearied vibrations, equally serving them for sails and for oars; while their feet, no less assisting in conveying them out of sight, are no less insensible of fatigue.” “Travels,” 8vo., vol. ii. p. 343, as quoted by Noyes. The same representation is confirmed by the writer of a voyage to Senegal, who says,” She sets off at a hand gallop; but after being excited a little, she expands her wings, as if to catch the wind, and abandons herself to a speed so great, that she seems not to touch the ground.

I am persuaded she would leave far behind the swiftest English courser” - Rob. Calmet. Buffon also admits that the ostrich runs faster than the horse. These unexceptionable testimonies completely vindicate the assertion of the inspired writer. The proofs and illustrations here furnished at considerable length are designed to show that the statements here made in the book of Job are such as are confirmed by all the investigations in Natural History since the time the book was written. If the statements are to be regarded as an indication of the progress made in the science of Natural History at the time when Job lived, they prove that the observations in regard to this animal had been extensive and were surprisingly accurate. They show that the minds of sages at that time had been turned with much interest to this branch of science, and that they were able to describe the habits of animals

with an accuracy which would do the highest credit to Pliny or to Buffon. If, however, the account here is to be regarded as the mere result of inspiration, or as the language of God speaking and describing what he had done, then the account furnishes us with an interesting proof of the inspiration of the book. Its minute accuracy is confirmed by all the subsequent inquiries into the habits of the animal referred to, and shows that the statement is based on simple truth. The general remark may here be made, that all the notices in the Bible of the subjects of science - which are indeed mostly casual and incidental - are such as are confirmed by the investigations which science in the various departments makes. Of what other ancient book but the Bible can this remark be made?

Verse 19

Hast thou given the horse strength? - The incidental allusion to the horse in comparison with the ostrich in the previous verse, seems to have suggested this magnificent description of this noble animal - a description which has never been surpassed or equalled. The horse is an animal so well known, that a particular description of it is here unnecessary. The only thing which is required is an explanation of the phrases used here, and a confirmation of the particular qualities here attributed to the war-horse, for the description here is evidently that of the horse as he appears in war, or as about to plunge into the midst of a battle. The description which comes the nearest to this before us, is that furnished in the well known and exquisite passage of Virgil, Georg. iii. 84ff:

- *Turn, si qua sonum procul arma dedere,*
Stare loco nescitedmientauribns, et tremitartus,
Collectumq; premens volvit sub naribusignem.

Densa. iuba, et dextrojuctata recumbat in armo.

At duplex agitur, per lumbos spina; cavatque

Tellurem, et solidograviter sonat ungulacornu.
“But at the clash of arms, his ear afar
Drinks the deep sound, and vibrates to the war;
Flames from each nostril roll in gathered stream,

His quivering limbs with restless motion gleam;

O‘er his right shoulder, floating full and fair,

Sweeps his thick mane, and spreads his pomp of hair;

Swift works his double spine; and earth around

Rings to his solid hoof that wears the ground.”
Sotheby

Many of the circumstances here enumerated have a remarkable resemblance to the description in Job. Other descriptions and correspondences between this passage and the Classical writers may be seen at length in Bochart, “Hieroz.” P. i. L. i. c. viii.; in Scheutzer, “Physica Sacra, *in loc*.;” and in the “Scriptorum variorum Sylloge (Vermischte Schriften,” Goetting. l 82), of Godofr. Less. A full account of the habits of the horse is also furnished by Michaelis in his “Dissertation on the most ancient history of horses and horse-breeding,” etc. Appendix to Art. clxvi. of the Commentary of the Laws of Moses, vol. ii. According to the results of the investigations of Michaelis, Arabia was not, as is commonly supposed, the native country of the horse, but its origin is rather to be sought in Egypt; and in the account which is given of the riches of Job, Job 1:3; Job 42:12, it is remarkable that the horse is not mentioned. It is, therefore, in a high degree probable that the horse was not known in his time as a domestic animal, and that, in his country at least, it was employed chiefly in war.

Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? - There seems to be something incongruous in the idea of making thunder the clothing of the neck of a horse, and there as been considerable diversity in the exposition of the passage. There is evidently some allusion to the mane, but exactly in what respect is not agreed. The Septuagint renders it, “Hast thou clothed his neck with terror” - φόβον *phobon* Jerome refers it to the “neighing” of the horse - *”aut circumdabis collo ejus hinnitum”* Prof. Lee renders it, “Clothest thou his neck with scorn?” Herder, “And clothed its neckwith its flowing mane.” Umbreit, “Hast thou clothed his neck with loftiness?” Noyes, “Hast thou clothed his neck with its quivering mane?” Schultens, *“convestis cervicem ejus tremore alacri”* - “with rapid quivering;” and Dr.

Good, "with the thunder-flash." In this variety of interpretation, it is easy to perceive that the common impression has been that the mane is in some way referred to, and that the allusion is not so much to a sound as of thunder, as to some motion of the mane that attracted attention.

The mane adds much to the majesty and beauty of the horse, and perhaps it was in some way decorated by the ancients so as to set it off with increased beauty. The word which is used here, and which is rendered "thunder" (רעמה *raʿmâh*), is from the verb רעם *râʿam* meaning to rage, to roar, as applied to the sea, Psalm 96:11; Psalm 98:7, and then to thunder. It has also the idea of trembling or quaking, Ezekiel 27:35, and also of provoking to anger, 1 Samuel 1:6. The verb and the noun are more commonly referred to thunder than anything else, Job 37:4-5; Job 40:9; 2 Samuel 22:14; 1 Samuel 2:10; 1 Samuel 7:10; Psalm 18:13; Psalm 29:3; Psalm 77:18; Psalm 104:7; Isaiah 29:6. A full investigation of the meaning of the passage may be seen in Bochart, "Hieroz." P. i. Lib. ii. c. viii. It seems to me to be very difficult to determine its meaning, and none of the explanations given are quite satisfactory. The word used requires us to understand the appearance of the neck of the horse as having some resemblance to thunder, but in what respect is not quite so apparent.

It may be this; the description of the war-horse is that of an animal fitted to inspire terror. He is caparisoned for battle; impatient of restraint; rushing forward into the thickest of the fight; tearing up the earth; breathing fire from his nostrils; and it was not unnatural, therefore, to compare him with the tempest. The majestic neck, with the erect and shaking mane, is likened to the thunder of the tempest that shakes everything, and that gives so much majesty and tearfulness to the gathering storm, and the description seems to be this - that his very neck is fitted to produce awe and alarm, like the thunder of the tempest. We are required, therefore, it seems to me, to adhere to the proper meaning of the word; and though in the coolness of criticism there may appear to be something incongruous in the application of thunder to the neck of the horse, yet it might not appear to be so if we saw such a war-horse - and if the thought, not an unnatural one, should strike us, that in majesty and fury he bore a strong resemblance to an approaching tempest.

Verse 20

Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? - Or, rather, "as a locust" - כארבה *kā'arbeh* This is the word which is commonly applied to the locust considered as gregarious, or as appearing in great numbers (from רבה *râbâh* "to be multiplied"). On the variety of the species of locusts, see Bochart "Hieroz." P. ii. Lib. iv. c. 1ff The Hebrew word here rendered "make afraid" (רעשׁ *râʿash*) means properly "to be moved, to be shaken," and hence, to tremble, to be afraid. In the Hiphil, the form used here, it means to cause to tremble, to shake; and then "to cause to leap," as a horse; and the idea here is, Canst thou cause the horse, an animal so large and powerful, to leap with the agility of a locust? See Gesenius, "Lex." The allusion here is to the leaping or moving of the locusts as they advance in the appearance of squadrons or troops; but the comparison is not so much that of a single horse to a single locust, as of cavalry or a company of war-horses to an army of locusts; and the point of comparison turns on the elasticity or agility of the motion of cavalry advancing to the field of battle.

The sense is, that God could cause that rapid and beautiful movement in animals so large and powerful as the horse, but that it was wholly beyond the power of man to effect it. It is quite common in the East to compare a horse with a locust, and travelers have spoken of the remarkable resemblance between the heads of the two. This comparison occurs also in the Bible; see Joel 2:4, "The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen so shall they run;" Revelation 9:7. The Italians, from this resemblance, call the locust "cavaletta," or little horse. Sir W. Ouseley says, "Zakaria Cavini divides the locusts into two classes, like horsemen and footmen, ‹mounted and pedestrian.' "Niebuhr says that he heard from a Bedouin near Bassorah, a particular comparison of the locust with other animals; but he thought it a mere fancy of the Arabs, until he heard it repeated at Bagdad. He compared the head of a locust to that of a horse, the breast to that of a lion, the feet to those of a camel, the belly with that of a serpent, the tail with that of a scorpion, and the feelers with the hair of a virgin; see the Pictorial Bible on Joel 2:4.

The glory of his nostrils is terrible - Margin, as in Hebrew, "terrors." That is, it is fitted to inspire terror or awe. The reference is to the wide-extended and fiery looking nostrils of the horse when animated, and impatient, for action. So Lucretius, L. v.:

Et fremitum patulis sub naribus edit ad arma.

So Virgil, "Georg." iii. 87:

Collectumque premens voluit sub naribus ignem.

Claudian, in iv. "Consulatu Honorii:"

Ignescunt patulae nares.

Verse 21

He paweth in the valley - Margin, "or, His feet dig." The marginal reading is more in accordance with the Hebrew. The reference is to the well known fact of the "pawing" of the horse with his feet, as if he would dig up the ground. The same idea occurs in Virgil, as quoted above:

caavatque

Tellurem, et solido graviter solar ungula cornu.

Also in Apollonius, L. iii. "Argonauticon:"

Ὡς δ᾽ ἀρήΐος ἵππος, ἐελδόμενος πολεμοίο

Σκαρθμῷ ἐπιχρεμέθων κρούει πέδον.

Hōs d' arēios hippos eeldomenos polemoio class="translit">Skarthmō epichremethōn krouei pedon "As a war-horse, impatient for the battle,

Neighing beats the ground with bis hoofs"

He goeth on to meet the armed men - Margin, "armor." The margin is in accordance with the Hebrew, but still the idea is substantially the same. The horse rushes on furiously against the weapons of war.

Verse 22

He mocketh at fear - He laughs at that which is fitted to intimidate; that is, he is not afraid.

Neither turneth he back from the sword - He rushes on it without fear. Of the fact here stated, and the accuracy of the description, there can be no doubt.

Verse 23

The quiver rattleth against him - The quiver was a case made for containing arrows. It was usually slung over the shoulder, so that it could be easily reached to draw out an arrow. Warriors on horseback, as well as on foot, fought with bows and arrows, as well as with swords and spears; and the idea here is, that the war-horse bore upon himself these instruments of war. The rattling of the quiver was caused by the fact that the arrows were thrown somewhat loosely into the case or the quiver, and that in the rapid motion of the warrior they were shaken against each other. Thus, Virgil, Aeneid ix. 660:

- *pharetramque fuga sensere sonantem*.

Silius, L. 12:

Plena tenet et resonante pharetra.

And again:

Turba ruunt stridentque sagittiferi coryti.

So Homer ("Iliad, a."), when speaking of Apollo:

Τόξ ὤμοισιν ἔχων, ἀμφηρεφέα τε φαρέτρην

Ἔκλαγξαν δ᾽ ἄῤ ὀΐστοὶ ἐπ᾽ ὤμων χωομένοιο.

Tox́ ōmoisin echōn amfērefea te faretrēn

Eklangxan d' aŕ oistoi ep' ōmōn chōmenoio Seheutzer's "Phys. Sac., *in loc*."

Verse 24

He swalloweth the ground - He seems as if he would absorb the earth. That is, he strikes his feet into it with such fierceness, and raises up the dust in his prancing, as if he would devour it. This figure is unusual with us, but it is common in the Arabic. See Schultens, "*in loc*.," and Bochart, "Hieroz," P. i. L. ii. c. viii. pp. 143-145. So Statius:

Stare loco nescit, pereunt vestigia mille

Ante fugam, absentemque ferit gravis ungula campum.

Th' impatient courser pants in every' vein,

And pawing seems to beat the distant plain;

Hills, vales, and floods, appear already cross'd,

And ere he starts a thousand steps are lost.

Pope

Neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet - This translation by no means conveys the meaning of the original. The true sense is probably expressed by Umbreit. "He standeth not still when the trumpet soundeth; "that is, he becomes impatient; he no longer confides in the voice of the rider and remains submissive, but he becomes excited by the martial clangor, and rushes into the midst of the battle. The Hebrew word which is employed (יאמין *ya'âmiyn*) means properly "to prop, stay, support"; then "to believe, to be firm, stable"; and is that which is commonly used to denote an act of "faith," or as meaning "believing." But the original sense of the word is here to be retained, and then it refers to the fact that the impatient horse no longer stands still when the trumpet begins to sound for battle.

Verse 25

He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha - That is," When the trumpet sounds, his voice is heard "as if" he said, Aha - or said that he heard the sound calling him to the battle." The reference is to the impatient neighing of the war horse about to rush into the conflict.

And he smelleth the battle afar off - That is, he snuffs, as it were, for the slaughter. The reference is to the effect of an approaching army upon a spirited war-horse, as if he perceived the approach by the sense of smelling, and longed to be in the midst of the battle.

The thunder of the captains - literally, "the war-cry of the princes." The reference is to the loud voices of the leaders of the army commanding the hosts under them. In regard to the whole of this magnificent description of the war-horse, the reader may consult Bochart, "Hieroz." P. i. L. ii. c. viii., where the phrases used are considered and illustrated at length. The leading idea. here is, that the war-horse evinced the wisdom and the power of God. His majesty, energy, strength, impatience for the battle, and spirit, were proofs of the greatness of Him who had made him, and might be appealed to as illustrating His perfections. Much as people admire the noble horse, and much as they take pains to train him for the turf or for battle, yet how seldom do they refer to it as illustrating the power and greatness of the Creator; and, it may be added, how seldom do they use the horse as if he were one of the grand and noble works of God!

Verse 26

Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom - The appeal here is to the hawk, because it is among the most rapid of the birds in its flight. The particuIar thing specified is its flying, and it is supposed that there was something special in that which distinguished it from other birds. Whether it was in regard to its speed, to its manner of flying, or to its habits of flying at periodical seasons, may indeed be made a matter of inquiry, but it is clear that the particular thing in this bird which was adapted to draw the attention, and which evinced especially the wisdom of God, was connected with its flight. The word here rendered "hawk," (נץ *nêts*) is probably generic, and includes the various species of the falcon or hawk tribe, as the jet-falcon, the goshawk, the sparrow, hawk, the lanner, the saker, the hobby, the kestril, and the merlin. Not less than one hundred and fifty species of the hawk, it is said, have been described, but of these many are little known, and many of them differ from others only by very slight distinctions.

They are birds of prey, and, as many of them are endowed with remarkable docility, they are trained for the diversions of falconry - which has been quite a science among sportsmen. The falcon, or hawk, is often distinguished for fleetness. One, belonging to a Duke of Cleves, flew out of Westphalia into Prussia in one day; and in the county of Norfolk (England) one was known to make a flight of nearly thirty miles in an hour. A falcon which belonged to Henry IV. of France, having escaped from Fontainebleau, was found twenty-four hours after in Malta, the space traversed being not less than one thousand three hundred and fifty miles; being a velocity of about fifty-seven miles an hour, on the supposition that the bird was on the wing the whole time. It is this remarkable velocity which is here appealed to as a proof of the divine wisdom. God asks Job whether he could have formed these birds for their rapid flight. The wisdom and skill which has done this is evidently far above any that is possessed by man.

And stretch her wings toward the south - Referring to the fact that the bird is migratory at certain seasons of the year. It is not here merely the rapidity of its flight which is referred to, but that remarkable instinct which leads the feathered tribes to seek more congenial climates at the approach of winter. In no way is this to be accounted for, except by the fact that God has so appointed it. This great law of the winged tribes is one of the clearest proofs of divine wisdom and agency.

Verse 27

Doth the eagle mount up at thy command? - Margin, as in Hebrew, "by thy mouth." The meaning is, that Job had not power to direct or order the eagle in his lofty flight. The eagle has always been celebrated for the height to which it ascends. When Ramond had reached the summit of Mount Perdu, the highest of the Pyrenees, he perceived no living creature but an eagle which passed above him, flying with inconceivable rapidity in direct opposition to a furious wind. "Edin. Ency." "Of all animals, the eagle flies highest; and from thence the ancients have given him the epithet of "the bird of heaven." "Goldsmith." What is particularly worth remarking here is, the accuracy with which the descriptions in Job are made. If these are any indications of the progress of the knowledge of Natural History, that science could not have been then in its infancy. Just the things are adverted to here which all the investigations of subsequent ages have shown to characterize the classes of the feathered creation referred to.

And make her nest on high - "The nest of the eagle is usually built in the most inaccessible cliff of the rock, and often shielded from the weather by some jutting crag that hangs over it." "Goldsmith." "It is usually placed horizontally, in the hollow or fissure, of some high and abrupt rock, and is constructed of sticks of five or six feet in length, interlaced with pliant twigs, and covered with layers of rushes, heath, or moss. Unless destroyed by some accident, it is supposed to suffice, with occasional repairs, for the same couple during their lives." "Edin. Ency."

Verse 28

She dwelleth and abideth on the rock - "He rarely quits the mountains to descend into the plains. Each pair live in an insulated state, establishing their quarters on some high and precipitous cliff, at a respectful distance from others of the same species." "Edin. Ency." They seem to occupy the same cliff, or place of abode, during their lives; and hence, it is that they are represented as having a permanent abode on the lofty rock. In Damir it is said that the blind poet Besar, son of Jazidi, being asked, if God would give him the choice to be an animal, what he would be, said that he would wish to be nothing else than an "alokab," a species of the eagle, for they dwelt in places to which no wild animal could have access. Scheutzer, "Phys. Sac. *in loc*." The word rendered "abideth" means commonly "to pass the night," and here refers to the fact that the high rock was its constant abode or dwelling. By night as well as by day, the eagle had his home there.

Upon the crag of the rock - Hebrew, "Upon the tooth of the rock" - from the resemblance of the crag of a rock to a tooth.

Verse 29

From, thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off - "When far aloft, and no longer discernible by the human eye, such is the wonderful acuteness of its sight, that from the same elevation it will mark a hare, or even a smaller animal, and dart down on it with unerring aim." "Edin. Ency." "Of all animals, the eagle has the quickest eye; but his sense of smelling is far inferior to that of the vulture. He never pursues, therefore, but in sight." "Goldsmith." This power of sight was early known, and is celebrated by the ancients. Thus, Homer, **r' -** . verse 674.

- ὥστ᾽ ἀιετός ὄν ῥά τε φασὶν
Ὀξύσατον δέρκεσθαι ὑπουρανίων πετεηνῶν.
- *hōst' aietos on ra te fasin*

Oxusaton derkesthai hupouraniōn peteēnōn the eagle of whom it is said that it enjoys the keenest vision of

All the fowls under heaven."

So Aelian, II. L. i. 32. Also Horace "Serm." L. i. Sat. 3:

- *tam cernit acutum*

Quam aut aquila, aut serpeus Epidaurus.

The Arabic writers say that the eagle can see "four hundred parasangs." "Damir," as quoted by Scheutzer. It is now ascertained that birds of prey search out or discern their food rather by the sight than the smell. No sooner does a camel fall and die on the plains of Arabia, than there may be seen in the far-distant sky apparently a black speck, which is soon discovered to be a vulture hastening to its prey. From that vast distance the bird, invisible to human eye, has seen the prey stretched upon the sand and immediately commences toward it its rapid flight.

Verse 30

Her young ones also suck up blood - The word used here (יעלעו *yeʿâlʿû*) occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. It is supposed to mean, to sup up greedily; referring to the fact that the young ones of the eagle devour blood voraciously. They are too feeble to devour the flesh, and hence, they are fed on the blood of the victim. The strength of the eagle consists in the beak, talons, and wings; and such is their power, that they are able to convey animals of considerable size, alive, to their places of abode. They often bear away in this manner, lambs, kids, and the young of the gazelle. Three instances, at least, are known, where they have carried off children. In the year 1737, in Norway, a boy upward of two years of age was carried off by an eagle in the sight of his parents. Anderson, in his history of Iceland, asserts that in that island children of four and five years of age have experienced the same fate; and Ray mentions that in one of the Orkheys an infant of a year old was seized in the talons of an eagle, and conveyed about four miles to its eyry. "Edin. Ency." The principal food of the young eagle is blood. The proof of this fact may be seen in Scheutzer's "Phys. Sac., *in loc*."

And where the slain are, there is she - Hebrew, "the slain;" referring perhaps primarily to a field of battle - where horses, camels, and human beings, lie in confusion. It is not improbable that the Savior had this passage in view when he said, speaking of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, "For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together;

“ Matthew 24:28. Of the fact that they thus assemble, there can be no doubt. The “argument” in proof of the wisdom and majesty of the Almighty in these references to the animal creation, is derived from their strength, their instincts, and their special habits. We may make two remarks, in view of the argument as here stated:

(1) One relates to the remarkable accuracy with which they are referred to. The statements are not vague and general, but are minute and characteristic, about the habits and the instincts of the animals referred to. The very things are selected which are now known to distinguish those animals, and which are not found to exist in the same degree, if at all, in others. Subsequent investigations have served to confirm the accuracy of these descriptions, and they may be taken now as a correct account even to the letter of the natural history of the different animals referred to. If, therefore, as has already been stated, this is to be regarded as an indication of the state of natural science in the time of Job. it shows quite an advanced state; if it is not an indication of the existing state of knowledge in his time, if there was no such acquaintance with the animal creation as the result of observation, then it shows that these were truly the words of God, and are to be regarded as direct inspiration. At all events, the statement was evidently made under the influence of inspiration, and is worthy of the origin which it claims.

(2) The second remark is, that the progress of discovery in the science of natural history has only served to confirm and expand the argument here adverted to. Every new fact in regard to the habits and instincts of animals is a new proof of the wisdom and greatness of God and we may appeal now, with all the knowledge which we have on these subjects, with unanswerable force to the habits and instincts of the wild goats of the rock, the wild ass, the rhinoceros, the ostrich, the horse, the hawk, and the eagle, as each one furnishing some striking and special proof of the wisdom, goodness, superintending providence and power of the great Creator.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 40

Verse 1

Moreover, the Lord answered Job - The word "answered" is used here as it is often in the Scriptures, not to denote a reply to what had been immediately said, but to take up or continue an argument. What God said here was designed as a reply to the spirit which Job had so frequently manifested.

Verse 2

Shall he that contendeth with the A mighty instruct him? - Gesenius renders this, "Contending shall the reprover of God contend with the Almighty?" Prof. Lee, "Shall one by contending with the Almighty correct this?" On the grammatical construction, see Gesenius on the word יסור *yissôr* and Rosenmuller and Lee, *in loc*. The meaning seems to be this: "Will he who would enter into a controversy with the Almighty now presume to instruct him? He that was so desirous of arguing his cause with God, will he now answer?" All the language used here is taken from courts, and is such as I have had frequent occasion to explain in these notes. The reference is to the fact that Job had so often expressed a wish to carry his cause, as before a judicial tribunal, directly up to God. He had felt that if he could get it there, he could so argue it as to secure a verdict in his favor; that he could set arguments before the Almighty which would secure a reversal of the fearful sentence which had gone out against him, and which had caused him to be held as a guilty man. God now asks whether he who had been so anxious to have a legal argument, and to carry his cause himself before God - a man disposed to litigation before God (רוב *rûb*) - was still of the same mind, and felt himself qualified to take upon himself the office of an instructor, a corrector, an admonisher (יסור *yissôr*) of God? He had the opportunity now, and God here paused, after the sublime exhibition of his majesty and power in the previous chapters, to give him an opportunity, as he wished, to carry his cause directly before him. The result is stated in Job 40:3-4. Job had now nothing to say.

He that reproveth God - Or rather, "He that is disposed to carry his cause before God," as Job had often expressed a wish to do. The word used here (יכח *yâkach*) is often employed, especially in the Hiphil, in a "forensic sense," and means "to argue, to show, to prove" anything; then "to argue down, to confute, to convict;" see Job 6:25; Job 13:15; Job 19:5; Job 32:12;

Proverbs 9:7-8; Proverbs 15:12; Proverbs 19:25. It is evidently used in that sense here - a Hiphil participle מוכיח *môkiyach* - and refers, not to any man in general who reproves God, but to Job in particular, as having expressed a wish to carry his cause before him, and to argue it there.

Let him answer it - Or rather, "Let him answer him." That is, Is he now ready to answer? There is now an opportunity for him to carry his cause, as he wished, directly before God. Is he ready to embrace the opportunity, and to answer now what the Almighty has said? This does not mean, then, as the common version would seem to imply, that the man who reproves God must be held responsible for it, but that Job, who had expressed the wish to carry his cause before God, had now an opportunity to do so. That this is the meaning, is apparent from the next verses, where Job says that he was confounded, and had nothing to say.

Verse 4

Behold, I am vile: what shall I answer thee? - "Instead of being able to argue my cause, and to vindicate myself as I had expected, I now see that I am guilty, and I have nothing to say." He had argued boldly with his friends. He had, before them, maintained his innocence of the charges which they brought against him, and had supposed that he would be able to maintain the same argument before God. But when the opportunity was given, he felt that he was a poor, weak man; a guilty and miserable offender. It is a very different thing to maintain our cause before God, from what it is to maintain it before people; and though we may attempt to vindicate our own righteousness when we argue with our fellow-creatures, yet when we come to maintain it before God we shall be dumb. On earth, people vindicate themselves; what will they do when they come to stand before God in the judgment?

I will lay mine hand upon my mouth - An expression of silence. Catlin, in his account of the Mandan Indians, says that this is a common custom with them when anything wonderful occurs. Some of them laid their hands on their mouths and remained in this posture by the hour, as an expression of astonishment at the wonders produced by the brush in the art of painting; compare Job 21:5, note; Job 29:9, note.

Verse 5

Once have I spoken - That is, in vindicating myself. He had once spoken of God in an irreverent and improper manner, and he now saw it.

But I will not answer - I will not now answer, as I had expressed the wish to do. Job now saw that he had spoken in an improper manner, and he says that he would not repeat what he had said.

Yea, twice - He had not only offended once, as if in a thoughtless and hasty manner, but he had repeated it, showing deliberation, and thus aggravating his guilt. When a man is brought to a willingness to confess that he has done wrong once, he will be very likely to see that he has been guilty of more than one offence. One sin will draw on the remembrance of another; and the gate once open, a flood of sins will rush to the recollection. It is not common that a man can so isolate a sin as to repent of that alone, or so look at one offence against God as not to feel that he has been often guilty of the same crimes.

But I will proceed no further - Job felt doubtless that if he should allow himself to speak again, or to attempt now to vindicate himself, he would be in danger of committing the same error again. He now saw that God was right; that he had himself repeatedly indulged in an improper spirit, and that all that became him was a penitent confession in the fewest words possible. We may learn here:

(1) That a view of God is fitted to produce in us a deep sense of our own sins. No one can feel himself to be in the presence of God, or regard the Almighty as speaking to him, without saying, "Lo I am vile? There is nothing so much fitted to produce a sense of sinfulness and nothingness as a view of God.

(2) The world will be mute at the day of judgment. They who have been most loud and bold in vindicating themselves will then be silent, and will confess that they are vile, and the whole world "will become guilty before God." If the presence and the voice of God produced such an effect on so good a man as Job, what will it not do on a wicked world?

(3) A true penitent is disposed to use but few words; "God be merciful to me a sinner," or, "lo, I am vile," is about all the language which the penitent employs. He does not go into long arguments, into metaphysical distinctions, into apologies and vindications, but uses the simplest language of confession, and then leaves the soul, and the cause, in the hands of God.

(4) Repentance consists in stopping where we are, and in resolving to add no more sin. “I have erred,” is its language. “I will not add to it, I will do so no more,” is the immediate response of the soul. A readiness to go into a vindication, or to expose oneself to the danger of sinning again in the same way, is an evidence that there is no true repentance. Job, a true penitent, would not allow himself even to speak again on the subject, lest he should be guilty of the sin which he had already committed.

(5) In repentance we must be willing to retract our errors, and confess that we were wrong - no matter what favorite opinions we have had, or how tenaciously and zealously we have defended and held them. Job had constructed many beautiful and eloquent arguments in defense of his opinions; he had brought to bear on the subject all the results of his observation, all his attainments in science, all the adages and maxims that he had derived from the ancients, and from a long contact with mankind, but he was now brought to a willingness to confess that his arguments were not solid, and that the opinions which he had cherished were erroneous. It is often more difficult to abandon opinions than vices; and the proud philosopher when he exercises repentance has a more difficult task than the victim of low and debasing sensuality. His opinions are his idols. They embody the results of his reading, his reflections, his conversation, his observation, and they become a part of himself. Hence, it is, that so many abandoned sinners are converted, and so few philosophers; that religion spreads often with so much success among the obscure and the openly wicked, while so few of the “wise men of the world” are called and saved.

Verse 6

Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind - See the notes at Job 38:1. God here resumes the argument which had been interrupted in order to give Job an opportunity to speak and to carry his cause before the Almighty, as he had desired, see Job 40:2. Since Job had nothing to say, the argument, which had been suspended, is resumed and completed.

Verse 7

Gird up thy loins now like a man - An expression taken from the ancient mode of dress. That was a loose, flowing robe, which was secured by a girdle when traveling, or when one entered upon anything requiring

energy; see the notes at Matthew 5:38-41. The meaning here is, "Prepare thyself for the highest effort that can be made. Put forth all your strength, and explain to me what will now be said;" compare the notes at Isaiah 41:21.

I will demand of thee - Hebrew "I will ask of thee." That is, I will submit some questions to you to be answered.

And declare thou unto me - Hebrew "Cause me to know." That is, furnish a satisfactory answer to these inquiries, so as to show that you understand the subject. The object is to appeal to the proofs of divine wisdom, and to show that the whole subject was far above human comprehension.

Verse 8

Wilt thou disannul my judgment? - Wilt thou "reverse" the judgment which I have formed, and show that it should have been different from what it is? This was implied in what Job had undertaken. He had complained of the dealings of God, and this was the same as saying that he could show that those dealings should have been different from what they were. When a man complains against God, it is always implied that he supposes he could show why his dealings should be different from what they are, and that they should be reversed.

Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous? - Or, rather, probably, "Wilt thou show that I am wrong because thou art superior in justice?" Job had allowed himself to use language which strongly implied that God was improperly severe. He had regarded himself as punished far beyond what he deserved, and as suffering in a manner which justice did not demand. All this implied that "he" was more righteous in the case than God, for when a man allows himself to vent such complaints, it indicates that he esteems himself to be more just than his Maker. God now calls upon Job to maintain this proposition, since he had advanced it, and to urge the arguments which would prove that "he" was more righteous in the case than God. It was proper to demand this. It was a charge of such a nature that it could not be passed over in silence, and God asks, therefore, with emphasis, whether Job now supposed that he could institute such an argument as to show that he was right and his Maker wrong.

Verse 9

Hast thou an arm like God? - The arm is the symbol of strength. The question here is, whether Job would venture to compare his strength with

the omnipotence of God?

Or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? - Thunder is a symbol of the majesty of the Most High, and is often spoken of as the voice of God; see Psalm 29:1-11. The question here is, whether Job could presume to compare himself with the Almighty, whose voice was the thunder?

Verse 10

Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency - That is, such as God has. Put on everything which you can, which would indicate rank, wealth, power, and see whether it could all be compared with the majesty of God; compare Psalm 104:1, "O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honor and majesty."

Verse 11

Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath - That is, as God does. Show that the same effects can be produced by "your" indignation which there is in his. God appeals here to the effect of his displeasure in prostrating his foes as one of the evidences of his majesty and glory, and asks Job, if he would compare himself with him, to imitate him in this, and produce similar effects.

And behold every one that is proud, and abase him - That is, "look" upon such an one and bring him low, or humble him by a look. It is implied here that God could do this, and he appeals to it as a proof of his power.

Verse 12

And tread down the wicked in their place - Even in the very place where they are, crush them to the dust, as God can. It is implied that God was able to do this, and he appeals to it as a proof of his power.

Verse 13

Hide them in the dust together; - compare Isaiah 2:10. The meaning seems to be, that God had power to prostrate the wicked in the dust of the earth, and he calls upon Job to show his power by doing the same thing.

And bind their faces in secret - The word "faces" here is probably used (like the Greek πρίσωπα *prisōpa* to denote "persons." The phrase" to bind them," is expressive of having them under control or subjection; and the phrase "in secret" may refer to some secret or safe place - as a dungeon or prison. The meaning of the whole is, that God had power to restrain and control the haughty and the wicked, and he appeals to Job to do the same.

Verse 14

Then will I also confess unto thee … - If you can do all this, it will be full proof that you can save yourself, and that you do not need the divine interposition. If he could do all this, then it might be admitted that he was qualified to pronounce a judgment on the divine counsels and dealings. He would then show that he had qualifications for conducting the affairs of the universe.

Verse 15

Behold now behemoth - Margin, "or, the elephant, as some think." In the close of the argument, God appeals to two animals as among the chief of his works, and as illustrating more than any others his power and majesty - the behemoth and the leviathan. A great variety of opinions has been entertained in regard to the animal referred to here, though the "main" inquiry has related to the question whether the "elephant" or the "hippopotamus" is denoted. Since the time of Bochart, who has gone into an extended examination of the subject ("Hieroz." P. ii. L. ii. c. xv.), the common opinion has been that the latter is here referred to. As a "specimen" of the method of interpreting the Bible which has prevailed, and as a proof of the slow progress which has been made toward settling the meaning of a difficult passage, we may refer to some of the opinions which have been entertained in regard to this animal. They are chiefly taken from the collection of opinions made by Schultens, *in loc*. Among them are the following:

(1) That wild animals in general are denoted. This appears to have been the opinion of the translators of the Septuagint.

(2) Some of the rabbis supposed that a huge monster was referred to, that ate every day "the grass of a thousand mountains."

(3) It has been held by some that the wild bull was referred to. This was the opinion particularly of Sanctius.

(4) The common opinion, until the time of Bochart, has been that the elephant was meant. See the particular authors who have held this opinion enumerated in Schultens.

(5) Bochart maintained, and since his time the opinion has been generally acquiesced in, that the "riverhorse" of the Nile, or the

hippopotamus, was referred to. This opinion he has defended at length in the "Hieroz." P. ii. L. v. c. xv.

(6) Others have held that some "hieroglyphic monster" was referred to, or that the whole description was an emblematic representation, though without any living original. Among those who have held this sentiment, some have supposed that it is designed to be emblematic of the old Serpent; others, of the corrupt and fallen nature of man; others, that the proud, the cruel, and the bloody are denoted; most of the "fathers" supposed that the devil was here emblematically represented by the behemoth and the leviathan; and one writer has maintained that Christ was referred to!

To these opinions may be added the supposition of Dr. Good, that the behemoth here described is at present a genus altogether extinct, like the mammoth, and other animals that have been discovered in fossil remains. This opinion is also entertained by the author of the article on "Mazology," in the Edinburgh Encyclopaedia, chiefly for the reason that the description of the "tail" of the behemoth Job 40:17 does not well accord with the hippopotamus. There must be admitted to be some plausibility in this conjecture of Dr. Good, though perhaps I shall be able to show that there is no necessity for resorting to this supposition. The word "behemoth" (בהמות *behêmôth*), used here in the plural number, occurs often in the singular number, to denote a dumb beast, usually applied to the larger kind of quadrupeds. It occurs very often in the Scriptures, and is usually translated "beast," or collectively "cattle."

It usually denotes land animals, in opposition to birds or reptiles. See the Lexicons, and Taylor's "Hebrew Concordance." It is rendered by Dr. Nordheimer (Heb. Con.) in this place, "hippopotamus." The plural form is often used (compare Deuteronomy 32:24; Job 12:7; Jeremiah 12:4; Habakkuk 2:17; Psalm 50:10), but in no other instance is it employed as a proper name. Gesenius supposes that under the form of the word used here, there lies concealed some Egyptian name for the hippopotamus, "so modified as to put on the appearance of a Semitic word. Thus, the Ethiopian "*pehemout* " denotes "water-ox," by which epithet (*"bomarino"*) the Italians also designate the hippopotamus." The translations do not afford much aid in determining the meaning of the word. The Septuagint renders

it, θηρία *thēria* "wild beasts;" Jerome retains the word, "Behemoth;" the Chaldee, בעיריא, "beast;" the Syriac retains the Hebrew word; Coverdale renders it, "cruelbeast;" Prof. Lee, "the beasts;" Umbreit, "Nilpferd,""Nile-horse;" and Noyes, "river-horse." The only method of ascertaining, therefore, what animal is here intended, is to compare carefully the characteristics here referred to with the animals now known, and to find in what one these characteristics exist. We may here safely "presume" on the entire accuracy of the description, since we have found the previous descriptions of animals to accord entirely with the habits of those existing at the present day. The illustration drawn from the passage before us, in regard to the nature of the animal, consists of two parts:

(1) The "place" which the description occupies in the argument. That it is an "aquatic" animal, seems to follow from the plan and structure of the argument. In the two discourses of yahweh Job 39:26-30; and then follows the description of the behemoth and the leviathan. It would seem that an argument of this kind would not be constructed without some allusion to the principal wonders of the deep; and the fair presumption, therefore, is, that the reference here is to the principal animals of the aquatic race. The argument in regard to the nature of the animal from the "place" which the description occupies, seems to be confirmed by the fact that the account of the behemoth is immediately followed by that of the leviathan - beyond all question an aquatic monster. As they are here grouped together in the argument, it is probable that they belong to the same class; and if by the leviathan is meant the "crocodile," then the presumption is that the river-horse, or the hippopotamus, is here intended. These two animals, as being Egyptian wonders, are everywhere mentioned together by ancient writers; see Herodotus, ii. 69-71; Diod. Sic. i. 35; and Pliny, "Hist. Nat." xxviii. 8.

(2) The character of the animal may be determined from the "particular things" specified. Those are the following:

(a) It is an amphibious animal, or an animal whose usual resort is the river, though he is occasionally on land. This is evident, because he is mentioned as lying under the covert of the reed and the fens; as abiding in marshy places, or among the willows of the brook, Job 40:21-22, while at other times he is on the mountains, or among other animals, and feeds on

grass like the ox, Job 40:15, Job 40:20. This account would not agree well with the elephant, whose residence is not among marshes and fens, but on solid ground.

(b) He is not a carnivorous animal. This is apparent, for it is expressly mentioned that he feeds on grass, and no allusion is made to his at any time eating flesh, Job 40:15, Job 40:20. This part of the description would agree with the elephant as well as with the hippopotamus.

(c) His strength is in his loins, and in the navel of his belly, Job 40:16. This would agree with the hippopotamus, whose belly is equally guarded by his thick skin with the rest of his body, but is not true of the elephant. The strength of the elephant is in his head and neck, and his weakest part, the part where he can be most successfully attacked, is his belly. There the skin is thin and tender, and it is there that the rhinoceros attacks him, and that he is even annoyed by insects. Pliny, Lib. viii. c. 20; Aelian, Lib. xvii. c. 44; compare the notes at Job 40:16.

(d) He is distinguished for some unique movement of his tail - some slow and stately motion, or a certain "inflexibility" of the tail, like a cedar. This will agree with the account of the hippopotamus; see the notes at Job 40:17.

(e) He is remarkable for the strength of his bones, Job 40:18,

(f) He is remarkable for the quantity of water which he drinks at a time, Job 40:23; and

(g) he has the power of forcing his way, chiefly by the strength of his nose, through snares by which it is attempted to take him, Job 40:24.

These characteristics agree better with the hippopotamus than with any other known animal; and at present critics, with few exceptions, agree in the opinion that this is the animal which is referred to. As additional reasons for supposing that the "elephant" is not referred to, we may add:

(1) that there is no allusion to the proboscis of the elephant, a part of the animal that could not have failed to be alluded to if the description had pertained to him; and

(2) that the elephant was wholly unknown in Arabia and Egypt.

The hippopotamus Ἱπποπόταμος *hippopotamos* or "river horse" belongs to the mammalia, and is of the order of the *"pachydermata,"* or thick-skinned animals To this order belong also the elephant, the tapirus, the rhinoceros, and the swine. "Edin. Ency.," art. "Mazology." The hippopotamus is found principally on the banks of the Nile, though it is found also in the other large rivers of Africa, as the Niger, and the rivers which lie between that and the Cape of Good Hope. It is not found in any of the rivers which run north into the Mediterranean except the Nile, and there only at present in that portion which traverses Upper Egypt; and it is found also in the lakes and fens of Ethiopia. It is distinguished by a broad head; its lips are very thick, and the muzzle much inflated; it has four very large projecting curved teeth in the under jaw, and four also in the upper; the skin is very thick, the legs short, four toes on each foot inverted with small hoofs, and the tail is very short.

The appearance of the animal, when on land, is represented as very uncouth, the body being very large, flat, and round, the head enormously large in proportion, the feet as disproportionably short, and the armament of teeth in its mouth truly formidable. The length of a male has been known to be seventeen feet, the height seven, and the circumference fifteen; the head three feet and a half, and the mouth about two feet in width. Mr. Bruce mentions some in the lake Tzana that were twenty feet in length. The whole animal is covered with short hair, which is more thickly set on the under than the upper parts. The general color of the animal is brownish. The skin is exceedingly tough and strong, and was used by the ancient Egyptians for the manufacture of shields. They are timid and sluggish on land, and when pursued they betake themselves to the water, plunge in, and walk on the bottom, though often compelled to rise to the surface to take in fresh air.

In the day-time they are so much afraid of being discovered, that when they rise for the purpose of breathing, they only put their noses out of the

water; but in rivers that are unfrequented, by mankind they put out the whole head. In shallow rivers they make deep holes in the bottom to conceal their bulk. They are eaten with avidity by the inhabitants of Africa. The following account of the capture of a hippopotamus serves greatly to elucidate the description in the book of Job, and to show its correctness, even in those points which have formerly been regarded as poetical exaggerations. It is translated from the travels of M. Kuppell, the German naturalist, who visited Upper Egypt, and the countries still further up the Nile, and is the latest traveler in those regions ("Reisen in Nubia, Kordofan, etc.," Frankf. 1829, pp. 52ff). "In the province of Dongola, the fishermen and hippopotamus hunters form a distinct class or caste; and are called in the Berber language Hauauit (pronounced "Howowit.") They make use of a small canoe, formed from a single tree, about ten feet long, and capable of carrying two, and at most three men.

The harpoon which they use in hunting the hippopotamus has a strong barb just back of the blade or sharp edge; above this a long and strong cord is fastened to the iron, and to the other end of this cord a block of light wood, to serve as a buoy, and aid in tracing out and following the animal when struck. The iron is then slightly fastened upon a wooden handle, or lance, about eight feet long. The hunters of the hippopotamus harpoon their prey either by day or by night; but they prefer the former, because they can then better parry the ferocious assaults of the enraged animal. The hunter takes in his right hand the handle of the harpoon, with a part of the cord; in his left the remainder of the cord, with the buoy. In this manner he cautiously approaches the creature as it sleeps by day upon a small island, or he watches at night for those parts of the shore where he hopes the animal will come up out of the water, in order to feed in the fields of grain.

When he has gained the desired distance (about seven paces), he throws the lance with his full strength; and the harpoon, in order to hold, must penetrate the thick hide and into the flesh. The wounded beast conmmonly makes for the water, and plunges beneath it in order to conceal himself; the handle of the harpoon falls off, but the buoy swims, and indicates the direction which the animal takes. The harpooning of the hippopotamus is attended with great danger, when the hunter is perceived by the animal before he has thrown the harpoon. In such cases the beast sometimes

rushes, enraged, upon his assailant, and crushes him at once between his wide and formidable jaws - an occurrence that once took place during our residence near Shendi. Sometimes the most harmless objects excite the rage of this animal; thus; in the region of Amera, a hippopotamus once craunched in the same way, several cattle that were fastened to a water-wheel.

So soon as the animal has been successfully struck, the hunters hasten in their canoe cautiously to approach the buoy, to which they fasten a long rope; with the other end of this they proceed to a largo boat or bark, on board of which are their companions. The rope is now drawn in; the pain thus occasioned by the barb of the harpoon excites the rage of the animal, and he no sooner perceives the bark, than he rushes upon it; seizes it, if possible, with his teeth; and sometimes succeeds in shattering it, or oversetting it. The hunters, in the meantime, are not idle; they fasten five or six other harpoons in his flesh, and exert all their strength, by means of the cords of these, to keep him close alongside of the bark, in order thus to diminish, in some measure, the effects of his violence. They endeavor, with a long sharp iron, to divide the *"ligamentum lugi,"* or to beat in the skull - the usual modes in which the natives kill this animal.

Since the carcass of a fullgrown hippopotamus is too large to be drawn out of the water without quite a number of men, they commonly cut up the animal, when killed, in the water, and draw the pieces ashore. In the whole Turkish province of Dongola, there are only one or two hippopotami killed annually. In the years 1821-23, inclusive, there were nine killed, four of which were killed by us. The flesh of the young animal is very good eating; when full grown, they are usually very fat, and their carcass is commonly estimated as equal to four or five oxen. The hide is used only for making whips, which are excellent; and one hide furnishes from three hundred and fifty to five hundred of them. The teeth are not used. One of the hippopotami which we killed was a very old male, and seemed to have reached his utmost growth. He measured, from the snout to the end of the tail, about fifteen feet, and his tusks, from the root to the point, along the external curve, twenty-eight inches.

In order to kill him, we had a battle with him of four hours long, and that too in the night. Indeed, he came very near destroying our large bark, and with it, perhaps, all our lives. The moment he saw the hunters in the small canoe, as they were about to fasten the long rope to the buoy, in order to draw him in, he threw himself with one rush upon it, dragged it with him under water, and shattered it to pieces. The two hunters escaped the extreme danger with great difficulty. Out of twenty-five musketballs which were fired into the monster‘s head, at the distance of five feet, only one penetrated the hide and the bones near the nose; so that every time he breathed he snorted streams of blood upon the bark. All the other balls remained sticking in the thickness of his hide. We had at last to employ a small cannon, the use of which at so short a distance had not before entered our minds; but it was only after five of its balls, fired at the distance of a few feet, had mangled, most shockingly, the head and body of the monster, that he gave up the ghost.

The darkness of the night augmented the horrors and dangers of the contest. This gigantic hippopotamus dragged our large bark at will in every direction of the stream; and it was in a fortunate moment for us that he yielded, just as he had drawn the bark among a labyrinth of rocks, which might have been so much the more dangerous, because, from the great confusion on board, no one had observed them. Hippopotami of the size of the one above described cannot be killed by the natives, for want of a cannon. These animals are a real plague to the land, in consequence of their voraciousness. The inhabitants have no permanent means of keeping them away from their fields and plantations; all that they do is to make a noise during the night with a drum, and to keep up fires in different places. In some parts the hippopotami are so bold that they will yield up their pastures, or places of feeding, only when a large number of persons come rushing upon them with sticks and loud cries.”

The method of taking the hippopotamus by the Egyptians was the following: “It was entangled by a running noose, at the extremity of a long line wound upon a reel, at the same time that it was struck by the spear of the chasseur. This weapon consisted of a broad, flat blade, furnished with a deep tooth or barb at the side, having a strong rope of considerable length attached to its upper end, and running over the notched summit of a wooden

shaft, which was inserted into the head or blade, like a common javelin. It was thrown in the same manner, but on striking, the shaft fell and the iron head alone remained in the body of the animal, which, on receiving the wound, plunged into deep water, the rope having been immediately let out. When fatigued by exertion, the hippopotamus was dragged to the boat, from which it again plunged, and the same was repeated until it became perfectly exhausted: frequently receiving additional wounds, and being entangled by other nooses, which the attendants held in readiness, as it was brought within their reach." Wilkinson's "Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians," vol. iii. pp. 70,71.

Which I made with thee - That is, either "I have made him as well as you, have formed him to be a fellow-creature with thee," or, "I have made him near thee " - to wit, in Egypt. The latter Bochart supposes to be the true interpretation, though the former is the more natural. According to that, the meaning is, that God was the Creator of both; and he calls on Job to contemplate the power and greatness of a fellow-creature, though a brute, as illustrating his own power and majesty. The annexed engraving - the figures drawn from the living animal - shows the general appearance of the massive and unwieldy hippopotamus. The huge head of the animal, from the prominency of its eyes, the great breadth of its muzzle, and the singular way in which the jaw is placed in the head, is almost grotesque in its ugliness. When it opens its jaws its enormously large mouth and tongue, pinkish and fleshy, and armed with tusks of most formidable character, is particularly striking. In the engraving hippopotami are represented as on a river bank asleep, and in the water, only the upper part of the head appearing above the surface, and an old animal is conveying her young one on her back down the stream.

He eateth grass as an ox - This is mentioned as a remarkable property of this animal. The "reasons" why it was regarded as so remarkable may have been:

(1) that it might have been supposed that an animal so huge and fierce, and armed with such a set of teeth, would be carnivorous, like the lion or the tiger; and

(2) it was remarkable that an animal that commonly lived in the water should be graminivorous, as if it were wholly a land animal.

The common food of the hippopotamus is "fish." In the water they pursue their prey with great swiftness and perseverance. They swim with much force, and are capable of remaining at the bottom of a river for thirty or forty minutes. On some occasions three or four of them are seen at the bottom of a river, near some cataract, forming a kind of line, and seizing upon such fish as are forced down by the violence of the stream. "Goldsmith." But it often happens that this kind of food is not found in suffient abundance, and the animal is then forced on land, where it commits great depredations among plantations of sugar cane and grain. The fact here adverted to, that the food of the hippopotamus is grass or herbs, is also mentioned by Diodorus - Κατανέμεται τόν τε σῖτον και τόν χορτον *Katanemetai ton te siton kai ton chorton* The same thing is mentioned also by Sparrmann, "Travels through South Africa," p. 563, German Translation.

Verse 16

Lo now, his strength is in his loins - The inspection of the figure of the hippopotamus will show the accuracy of this. The strength of the elephant is in the neck; of the lion in the paw; of the horse and ox in the shoulders; but the principal power of the river-horse is in the loins; compare Nahum 2:1. This passage is one that proves that the elephant cannot be referred to.

And his force is in the navel of his belly - The word which is here rendered "navel" (שׁריר *shârîyr*) means properly "firm, hard, tough," and in the plural form, which occurs here, means the "firm," or "tough" parts of the belly. It is not used to denote the "navel" in any place in the Bible, and should not have been so rendered here. The reference is to the muscles and tendons of this part of the body, and perhaps particularly to the fact that the hippopotamus, by crawling so much on his belly among the stones of the stream or on land, acquires a special hardness or strength in those parts of the body. This clearly proves that the elephant is not intended. In that animal, this is the most tender part of the body. Pliny and Solinus both remark that the elephant has a thick, hard skin on the back, but that the skin of the belly is soft and tender. Pliny says ("Hist. Nat." Lib. viii. c. 20), that the rhinoceros, when about to attack an elephant, "seeks his belly, as if he knew that that was the most tender part." So Aelian, "Hist." Lib. xvii. c. 44; see Bochart, as above.

Verse 17

He moveth his tail like a cedar - Margin, "setteth up." The Hebrew word (חפץ *châphêts*) means "to bend, to curve;" and hence, it commonly denotes "to be inclined, favorably disposed to desire or please." The obvious meaning here is, that this animal had some remarkable power of "bending" or "curving" its tail, and that there was some resemblance in this to the motion of the cedar-tree when moved by the wind. In "what" this resemblance consisted, or how this was a proof of its power, it is not quite easy to determine. Rosenmuller says that the meaning is, that the tail of the hippopotamus was "smooth, round, thick, and firm," and in this respect resembled the cedar. The tail is short - being, according to Abdollatiph (see Ros.), about half a cubit in length. In the lower part, says he, it is thick, "equalling the extremities of the fingers;" and the idea here, according to this, is, that this short, thick, and apparently firm tail, was bent over by the will of the animal as the wind bends the branches of the cedar.

The point of comparison is not the "length," but the fact of its being easily bent over or curved at the pleasure of the animal. Why this, however, should have been mentioned as remarkable, or how the power of the animal in this respect differs from others, is not very apparent. Some, who have supposed the elephant to be here referred to, have understood this of the proboscis. But though "this would be" a remarkable proof of the power of the animal, the language of the original will not admit of it. The Hebrew word (זנב *zânâb*) is used only to denote the tail. It is "possible" that there may be here an allusion to the unwieldy nature of every part of the animal, and especially to the thickness and inflexibility of the skin and what was remarkable was, that notwithstanding this, this member was entirely at its command. Still, the reason of the comparison is not very clear. The description of the movement of the "tail" here given, would agree much better with some of the extinct orders of animals whose remains have been recently discovered and arranged by Cuvier, than with that of the hippopotamus. Particularly, it would agree with the account of the ichthyosaurus (see Buckland's "Geology, Bridgewater Treatise," vol. i. 133ff), though the other parts of the animal here described would not accord well with this.

The sinews of his stones are wrapped together - Good renders this, "haunches;" Noyes, Prof. Lee, Rosenmuller, and Schultens, "thighs;" and the Septuagint simply has: "his sinews." The Hebrew word used here (פחד *pachad*) means properly "fear, terror," Exodus 15:16; Job 13:11; and,

according to Gesenius, it then means, since "fear" is transferred to cowardice and shame, anything which "causes" shame, and hence, the secret parts. So it is understood here by our translators; but there does not seem to be any good reason for this translation, but there is every reason why it should not be thus rendered. The "object" of the description is to inspire a sense of the "power" of the animal, or of his capacity to inspire terror or dread; and hence, the allusion here is to those parts which were fitted to convey this dread, or this sense of his power - to wit, his strength. The usual meaning of the word, therefore, should be retained, and the sense then would be, "the sinews of his terror," that is, of his parts fitted to inspire terror, "are wrapped together;" are firm, compact, solid. The allusion then is to his thighs or haunches, as being formidable in their aspect, and the seat of strength. The sinews or muscles of these parts seemed to be like a hard-twisted rope; compact, firm, solid, and such as to defy all attempts to overcome them.

Verse 18

His bones are as strong pieces of brass - The circumstance here adverted to was remarkable, because the common residence of the animal was the water, and the bones of aquatic animals are generally hollow, and much less firm than those of land animals. It should be observed here, that the word rendered "brass" in the Scriptures most probably denotes "copper." Brass is a compound metal, composed of copper and zinc; and there is no reason to suppose that the art of compounding it was known at as early a period of the world as the time of Job. The word here translated "strong pieces" (אפיק *'âphîyq*) is rendered by Schultens "*alvei* - channels," or "beds," as of a rivulet or stream; and by Rosenmuller, Gesenius, Noyes, and Umbreit, "tubes" - supposed to allude to the fact that they seemed to be hollow tubes of brass. But the more common meaning of the word is "strong, mighty," and there is no impropriety in retaining that sense here; and then the meaning would be, that his bones were so firm that they seemed to be made of solid metal.

Verse 19

He is the chief of the ways of God - In size and strength. The word rendered "chief" is used in a similar sense in Numbers 24:20, "Amalek was the first of the nations;" that is, one of the most powerful and mighty of the nations.

He that made him can make his sword approach unto him - According to this translation, the sense is, that God had power over him, notwithstanding his great strength and size, and could take his life when he pleased. Yet this, though it would be a correct sentiment, does not seem to be that which the connection demands. That would seem to require some allusion to the strength of the animal; and accordingly, the translation suggested by Bochart, and adopted substantially by Rosenmuller, Umbreit, Noyes, Schultens, Prof. Lee, and others, is to be preferred - "He that made him furnished him with a sword." The allusion then would be to his strong, sharp teeth, hearing a resemblance to a sword, and designed either for defense or for the purpose of cutting the long grass on which it fed when on the land. The propriety of this interpretation may be seen vindicated at length in Bochart, "Hieroz." P. ii. Lib. v. c. xv. pp. 766,762. The ἅρπη *harpē* i. e. the sickle or scythe, was ascribed to the hippopotamus by some of the Greek writers. Thus, Nicander, "Theriacon," verse 566:

Η ἵππον, τὸν Νεῖλος ὑπερ Σάιν αἰθαλοεσσαν
Βόσκει, ἀρούρησιν δὲ κακὴν ἐπιβάλλεται
ΆΡΠΗΝ.
Ee hippon ton Neilos huper Sain aithaloessan
Boskei arourēsin de kakēn epiballetai Harpēn

On this passage the Scholiast remarks, "The ἅρπη *harpē* means a sickle, and the teeth of the hippopotamus are so called - teaching that this animal consumes (τρώγει *trōgei*) the harvest." See Bochart also for other examples. A slight inspection of the "cut" will show with what propriety it is said of the Creator of the hippopotamus, that he had armed him with a sickle, or sword.

Verse 20

Surely the mountains bring him forth food - That is, though he lies commonly among the reeds and fens, and is in the water a considerable portion of his time, yet he also wanders to the mountains, and finds his food there. But the point of the remark here does not seem to be, that the mountains brought forth food for him, but that he gathered it "while all the wild beasts played around him, or sported in his very presence." It was remarkable that an animal so large and mighty, and armed with such a set of teeth, should not be carnivorous, and that the wild beasts on the mountains should continue their sports without danger or alarm in his very presence. This fact could be accounted for partly because the "motions" of the

hippopotamus were so very slow and clumsy that the wild beasts had nothing to fear from him, and could easily escape from him if he were disposed to attack them, and partly from the fact that he seems to have "preferred" vegetable food. The hippopotamus is seldom carnivorous, except when driven by extreme hunger, and in no respect is he formed to be a beast of prey. In regard to "the fact" that the hippopotamus is sometimes found in mountainous or elevated places, see Bochart.

Verse 21

He lieth under the shady trees - Referring to his usually inactive and lazy life. He is disposed to lie down in the shade, and especially in the vegetable growth in marshy places on the banks of lakes and rivers, rather than to dwell in the open field or in the upland forest. This account agrees well with the habits of the hippopotamus. The word here and in Job 40:22 rendered "shady trees" (צאלים *tse'eliym*), is by Gesenius, Noyes, Prof. Lee, and Schultens, translated "lotus," and "wild lotus." The Vulgate, Syriac, Rosenmuller, Aben-Ezra, and others, render it "shady trees." It occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures, and it is difficult, therefore, to determine its meaning. According to Schultens and Gesenius, it is derived from the obsolete word צאל *tsā'al* "to be thin, slender;" and hence, in Arabic it is applied to the "wild lotus" - a plant that grows abundantly on the banks of the Nile, and that often serves the wild beasts of the desert for a place of retreat. It is not very important whether it be rendered the "lotus," or "shades," though the probable derivation of the word seems to favor the former.

In the covert of the reed - It is well known that reeds abounded on the banks of the Nile. These would furnish a convenient and a natural retreat for the hippopotamus.

And fens - בצה *bitstsâh* - "marsh, marshy places." This passage proves that the elephant is not here referred to. He is never found in such places.

Verse 22

The shady trees - Probably the "lote-trees;" see the note at Job 40:21. The same word is used here.

The willow-trees of the brook - Of the "stream," or "rivulet." The Hebrew word (נחל *nachal*) means rather "a wady;" a gorge or gulley, which is swollen with torrents in the winter, but which is frequently dry in summer; see the notes at Job 6:15. Willows grew commonly on the banks of rivers. They could not be cultivated in the desert; Isaiah 15:7.

Verse 23

Behold he drinketh up a river - Margin, "oppresseth." The margin expresses the proper meaning of the Hebrew word, עשׁק *ʿâshaq* It usually means to oppress, to treat with violence and injustice; and to defraud, or extort. But a very different sense is given to this verse by Bochart, Gesenius, Noyes, Schultens, Umbreit, Prof. Lee, and Rosenmuller. According to the interpretation given by them the meaning is, "The stream overfloweth, and he feareth not; he is secure, even though Jordan rush forth even to his mouth." The reference then would be, not to the fact that he was greedy in his mode of drinking, but to the fact that this huge and fierce animal, that found its food often on the land, and that reposed under the shade of the lotus and the papyrus, could live in the water as well as on the land, and was unmoved even though the impetuous torrent of a swollen river should overwhelm him.

The "names" by which this translation is recommended are a sufficient guarantee that it is not a departure from the proper meaning of the original. It is also the most natural and obvious interpretation. It is impossible to make good sense of the phrase "he oppresseth a river;" nor does the word used properly admit of the translation "he drinketh up." The word "river" in this place, therefore (נהר *nâhâr*), is to be regarded as in the nominative case to יעשׁק *yaʿâshaq* and the meaning is, that when a swollen and impetuous river rushes along and bears all before it, and, as it were, "oppresses" everything in its course, he is not alarmed; he makes no effort to flee; he lies perfectly calm and secure. What was "remarkable" in this appears to have been, that an animal that was so much on land, and that was not properly a fish, should be thus calm and composed when an impetuous torrent rolled over him. The Septuagint appears to have been aware that this was the true interpretation, for they render this part of the verse, Ἐάν γένηται πλνμμύρα, κ.τ.λ. *Ean genētai plēmmura etc* - "Should there come a flood, he would not regard it." Our common translation seems to have been adopted from the Vulgate - *"Ecceabsorbebit fluvium."*

He trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth - Or, rather, "He is confident, i. e. unmoved, though Jordan should rush forth to his mouth." The idea is, that though the whole river Jordan should seem to pour down upon him as "if" it were about to rush into his mouth, it would not disturb him. Even such an impetuous torrent would not alarm him. Being amphibious, he would not dread what would fill a land animal with alarm.

There is no evidence that the hippopotamus was ever found in the river Jordan, nor is it necessary to suppose this in order to understand this passage. The mention of the Jordan shows indeed that this river was known to the writer of this book, and that it was probably written by someone who resided in the vicinity. In speaking of this huge foreign animal, it was not unnatural to mention a river that was familiarly known, and to say that he would not be alarmed should such a river rush suddenly and impetuously upon him. Even though the hippopotamus is an inhabitant of the Nile, and was never seen in the Jordan, it was much more natural to mention this river in this connection than the Nile. It was better known, and the illustration would be better understood, and to an inhabitant of that country would be much more striking. I see no reason, therefore, for the supposition of Bechart and Rosenmuller, that the Jordan here is put for any large river. The illustration is just such as one would have used who was well acquainted with the Jordan - that the river horse would not be alarmed even though such a river should pour impetuously upon him.

Verse 24

He taketh it with his eyes - Margin, "Or, will any take him in his sight, or, bore his nose with a gin!" From this marginal reading it is evident that our translators were much perplexed with this passage. Expositors have been also much embarrassed in regard to its meaning, and have differed much in their exposition. Rosenmuller supposes that this is to be regarded as a question, and is to be rendered, "Will the hunter take him while he sees him?" - meaning that he could not be taken without some snare or guile. The same view also is adopted by Bochart, who says that the hippopotamus could be taken only by some secret snare or pitfall. The common mode of taking him, he says, was to excavate a place near where the river horse usually lay, and to cover it over with reeds and canes, so that he would fall into it unawares. The meaning then is, that the hunter could not approach him openly and secure him while he saw him, but that some secret plan must be adopted to take him. The meaning then is, "Can he be taken when he sees the hunter?"

His nose pierceth through snares - Or rather, "When taken in snares, can anyone pierce his nose?" That is, Can the hunter even then pierce his nose so as to put in a ring or cord, and lead him wherever he pleases? This was the common method by which a wild animal was secured when taken (see the notes at Isaiah 37:29), but it is here said that this could not be done

to this huge animal. He could not be subdued in this manner. He was a wild, untamed and fierce animal, that defied all the usual methods by which wild beasts were made captive. In regard to the difficulty of taking this animal, see the account of the method by which it is now done, in the notes at Job 40:15. That account shows that there is a striking accuracy in the description.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 41

Verse 1

Canst thou draw out - As a fish is drawn out of the water. The usual method by which fish were taken was with a hook; and the meaning here is, that it was not possible to take the leviathan in this manner. The whole description here is of an animal that lived in the water.

Leviathan - Much has been written respecting this animal, and the opinions which have been entertained have been very various. Schultens enumerates the following classes of opinions in regard to the animal intended here.

1. The opinion that the word leviathan is to be retained, without attempting to explain it - implying that there was uncertainty as to the meaning. Under this head he refers to the Chaldee and the Vulgate, to Aquila and Symmacbus, where the word is retained, and to the Septuagint, where the word Δράκοντα *Drakonta* "dragon," is used, and also the Syriac and Arabic, where the same word is used.

2. The fable of the Jews, who mention a serpent so large that it encompassed the whole earth. A belief of the existence of such a marine serpent or monster still prevails among the Nestorians.

3. The opinion that the whale is intended.

4. The opinion that a large fish called "Mular," or "Musar," which is found in the Mediterranean, is denoted. This is the opinion of Grotius.

5. The opinion that the crocodile of the Nile is denoted.

6. The opinion of Hasaeus, that not the whale is intended, but the "Orca," a sea-monster armed with teeth, and the enemy of the whale.

7. Others have understood the whole description as allegorical, as representing monsters of iniquity; and among these, some have regarded it as descriptive of the devil! See Schultens. To these may be added the description of Milton:

- That sea-beast

Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hug‘st that swim the ocean-stream,

Him, haply, slumb‘ring on the Norway foam,

The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff

Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,

With fixed anchor in his scaly rind

Moors by his side under the lee, while night

Invests the sea, and wished morn delays.
Paradise Lost, B. i.

For a full investigation of the subject, Bochart may be consulted, “Hieroz.” P. ii. Lib. v. c. xvi - xviii. The conclusion to which he comes is, that the crocodile of the Nile is denoted; and in this opinion critics have generally, since his time, acquiesced. The opinions which are entitled to most attention are those which regard the animal here described as either the whale or the crocodile. The objections to the supposition that the whale is intended are such as the following:

(1) That the whale tribes do not inhabit the Mediterranean, much less the rivers which empty into it - with which alone it is supposed Job could have been acquainted.

(2) That the animal here described differs from the whale in many essential particulars. “This family of marine monsters have neither proper snout nor nostrils, nor proper teeth. Instead of a snout, they have a mere spiracle, or blowing-hole, with a double opening on the top of the head; and for teeth, a hard expanse of horny laminae, which we call whalebone, in the upper jaw. The eyes of the common whale, moreover, instead of answering the description here given, are most disproportionately small, and do not exceed in size those of the ox. Nor can this monster be regarded as of fierce habits or unconquerable courage; for instead of attacking the larger sea-animals for plunder it feeds chiefly on crabs and medusas, and is often itself attacked by the ork or grampus, though less than half its size.” “Dr. Good.”

These considerations seem to be decisive in regard to the supposition that the animal here referred to is the whale. In fact, there is almost nothing in the description that corresponds with the whale, except the size.

The whole account, on the contrary, agrees well with the crocodile; and there are several considerations which may be suggested, before we proceed with the exposition, which correspond I with the supposition that this is the animal intended. They are such as these:

(1) The crocodile is a natural inhabitant of the Nile and of other Asiatic and African rivers, and it is reasonable to suppose that an animal is referred to that was well known to one who lived in the country of Job. Though the Almighty is the speaker, and could describe an animal wholly unknown to Job, yet it is not reasonable to suppose that such an unknown animal would be selected. The appeal was to what he knew of the works of God.

(2) The general description agrees with this animal. The leviathan is represented as wild, fierce, and ungovernable; as of vast extent, and as terrible in his aspect; as having a mouth of vast size, and armed with a formidable array of teeth; as covered with scales set near together like a coat of mail, as distinguished by the fierceness of his eyes, and by the frightful aspect of his mouth; as endowed with great strength, and incapable of being taken in any of the ordinary methods of securing wild beasts. This general description agrees well with the crocodile. These animals are found in the rivers of Africa, and also in the southern rivers of America, and are usually called the alligator. In the Amazon, the Niger, and the Nile, they occur in great numbers, and are usually from eighteen to twenty-seven feet long; and sometimes lying as close to each other as a raft of timber. "Goldsmith."

The crocodile grows to a great length, being sometimes found thirty feet long from the tip of the snout to the end of the tail; though its most usual length is about eighteen or twenty feet. "The armor, with which the upper part of the body is covered, may be numbered among the most elaborate pieces of Nature's mechanism. In the full-grown animal it is so strong and thick as easily to repel a musket-ball. The whole animal appears as if covered with the most regular and curious carved work. The mouth is of

vast width, the gape having a somewhat flexuous outline, and both jaws being furnished with very numerous, sharp-pointed teeth. The number of teeth in each jaw is thirty or more, and they are so disposed as to alternate with each other when the mouth is closed. The legs are short, but strong and muscular. In the glowing regions of Africa, where it arrives at its full strength and power, it is justly regarded as the most formidable inhabitant of the rivers." Shaw's "Zoology," vol. iii. p. 184. The crocodile seldom, except pressed with hunger, or for the purpose of depositing its eggs, leaves the water. Its usual method is to float along the surface, and seize whatever animals come within its reach; but when this method fails, it then goes nearer the bank. There it waits, among the sedges, for any animal that may come down to drink, and seizes upon it, and drags it into the water. The tiger is thus often seized by the crocodile, and dragged into the river and drowned.

(3) A third reason for supposing that the crocodile is here intended, arises from the former conclusion concerning the "behemoth," Job 40:15, following. The description of the leviathan immediately follows that, and the presumption is that they were animals that were usually found inhabiting the same district of country. If, therefore, the behemoth be the hippopotamus, there is a presumption that the leviathan is the crocodile - an inhabitant of the same river, equally amphibious, and even more terrible. "And this consideration," says the Editor of the Pictorial Bible, "is strengthened, when we consider that the two animals were so associated by the ancients. Some of the paintings at Herculaneum represent Egyptian landscapes, in which we see the crocodile lying among the reeds, and the hippopotamus browsing upon the plants on an island. So also in the famous Mosaic pavement at Praeneste, representing the plants and animals of Egypt and Ethiopia, the river-horse and the crocodile are associated in the same group, in the river Nile." The crocodile was formerly found in abundance in Lower Egypt and the Delta, but it now limits the extent of its visits northward to the districts about Manfaloot, and the hippopotamus is no longer seen in Lower Ethiopia. Neither the hippopotamus nor the crocodile appear to have been eaten by the ancient Egyptians. Pliny mentions the medicinal properties of both of them (xxviii. 8). and Plutarch affirms that the people of Apollinopolis used to eat the crocodile ("de Isid." s. 50); but this does not appear to have been a usual custom.

Herodotus says that "some of the Egyptians consider the crocodile sacred, while others make war upon it; and those who live about Thebes and the lake Moeris (in the Arsinoite "nome"), hold it in great veneration," ii. 69. In some cases the crocodile was treated with the greatest respect, and kept up at considerable expense; it was fed and attended with the most scrupulous care; geese, fish, and various meats were dressed purposely for it; they ornamented its head with earrings and its feet with bracelets and necklaces of gold and artificial stones; it was rendered tame by kind treatment, and after death the body was embalmed in a sumptuous manner. This was particularly the case in the Theban, Ombite, and Arsinoite nomes, and at a place now called Maabdeh, opposite the modern town of Manfaloot, are extensive grottoes cut far into the limestone mountain, where numerous crocodile mummies have been found, perfectly preserved and evidently embalmed with great care.

In other parts of Egypt, however, the animal was held in the greatest abhorrence, and so they lost no opportunity of destroying it. See Wilkinson's "Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians," vol. iii. pp. 75ff. The engraving opposite represents Egyptian crocodiles (*"Crocodilus vulgaris"*) disporting themselves on the banks of the Nile, or basking in the sun - one of their favorite practices. The figures were drawn from living animals. The word here rendered "leviathan" (לויתן *livyâthân*) occurs only in this place and in Job 3:8; Psalm 74:14; Psalm 104:26; Isaiah 27:1. In all these places it is rendered leviathan, except in Job 3:8, where it is rendered in the text, "their mourning," in the margin, "leviathan;" see the notes at that verse, and compare the notes at Isaiah 27:1. The connection of the word with the root is not certainly known. Gesenius regards it as derived from לוה *lâvâh* to join oneself to anyone, and then to wreathe, to fold, to curve; and in Arabic "to weave, to twist," as a wreath or garland; and that the word is appiled to an animal that is "wreathed," or that gathers itself "in folds" - a "twisted animal."

In Job 3:8, the word is used to denote some huge, untamable, and fierce monster, and will agree there with the supposition that the crocodile is intended; see the notes at that place. In Psalm 74:14. the allusion is to Pharaoh, compared with the leviathan, and the passage would agree best

with the supposition that the allusion was to the crocodile. The crocodile was an inhabitant of the Nile, and it was natural to allude to that in describing a fierce tyrant of Egypt. In Psalm 104:26, the allusion is to some huge animal of the deep, particularly of the Mediterranean, and the language would apply to any sea-monster. In Isaiah 27:1. the allusion is to the king and tyrant that ruled in Babylon, as compared with a dragon or fierce animal; compare the notes on that passage, and Revelation 12. Any of these passages will accord well with the supposition that the crocodile is denoted by the word, or that some fierce, strong, and violent animal that could involve itself, or that had the appearance of an extended serpent, is referred to. The resemblance between the animal here described and the crocodile, will be further indicated by the notes at the particular descriptions in the chapter.

With an hook - Implying that the animal here referred to was aquatic, and that it could not be taken in the way in which fish were usually caught. It is known now that the crocodile is occasionally taken with a hook, but this is not the usual method, and there is no evidence that it was practiced in the time of Job. Herodotus says that it was one of the methods which were used in his time. "Among the various methods," says he, "that are used to take the crocodile, I shall relate only one which deserves most attention; they fix a hook (ἄγκιστρον *agkistron*) on a piece of swine‘s flesh, and suffer it to float into the middle of the stream. On the banks they have a live hog, which they beat until it cries out. The crocodile, hearing the noise, makes toward it, and in the way encounters and devours the bait. They thus draw it on shore, and the first thing they do is to fill its eyes with clay; it is thus easily manageable, which it otherwise would not be."

B. ii. 70. "The manner of taking it in Siam is by throwing three or four strong nets across a river at proper distances from each other, so that if the animal breaks through the first, it may be caught by one of the rest. When it is first taken it employs the tail, which is the grand instrument of its strength, with great force; but after many unsuccessful struggles, the animal‘s strength is at length exhausted. Then the natives approach their prisoner in boats, and pierce him with their weapons in the most tender parts, until he is weakened with the loss of blood." "Goldsmith." From ancient sculptures in Egypt, it appears that the common method of attacking the crocodile was with a spear, transfixing it as it passed beneath the boat in shallow water, See Wilkinson‘s "Manners and Customs of the Ancient

Egyptians," vol. iii. pp. 75ff The most common method of taking the crocodile now is by shooting it. "Pococke." it is quite clear, therefore, that, agreeably to what is said in the passage before us, the common method of taking it was not by a hook, and it is probable that in the time of Job this method was not practiced.

Or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down - Or rather, "Canst thou sink his tongue with a cord?" - that is, Canst thou tame him by a thong or bit thrust into his mouth? "Gesenius." The idea is that of "pressing down" the tongue with a cord, so that he would be tractable.

Verse 2

Canst thou put a hook into his nose - Or rather, a "rope," or "cord." The word used here (אגמון *'agmôn*) means "a caldron," or "kettle" Job 41:20, also a reed, or bulrush, growing in marshy places, and thus a rope made of reeds, a rush-cord. The idea is, that he could not be led about by a cord, as tame animals may be. Mr. Vansittart, however, supposes that the words here are expressive of ornaments, and that the allusion is to the fact mentioned by Herodotus, that the crocodile was led about by the Egyptians as a divinity, and that in this state it was adorned with rings and various stately trappings. There can be no doubt that such a fact existed, but this does not accord well with the scope of the passage here. The object is to impress the mind of Job with a sense of the strength and untamableness of the animal, not to describe the honors which were paid to it.

Or bore his jaw through with a thorn - Or with a ring. The word here properly means a thorn, or thorn-bush, Job 31:40; Proverbs 26:9; and then also a ring that was put through the nose of an animal, in order to secure it. The instrument was probably made sharp like a thorn or spike, and then bent so as to become a ring; compare Isaiah 37:29. Mr. Bruce, speaking of the manner of fishing in the Nile, says that when a fisherman has caught a fish, he draws it to the shore, and puts a strong iron ring into its jaw. To this ring is fastened a rope by which the fish is attached to the shore, which he then throws again into the water. "Rosenmuller."

Verse 3

Will he make many supplications unto thee? - In the manner of a captive begging for his life. That is, will he quietly submit to you? Prof. Lee supposes that there is an allusion here to the well-known cries of the dolphin when taken; but it is not necessary to suppose such an allusion. The

idea is, that the animal here referred to would not tamely submit to his captor.

Will he speak soft words unto thee? - Pleading for his life in tones of tender and plaintive supplication.

Verse 4

Will he make a covenant with thee? - That is, will he submit himself to thee, and enter into a compact to serve thee? Such a compact was made by those who agreed to serve another; and the idea here is, that the animal here referred to could not be reduced to such service - that is, could not be tamed.

Wilt thou take him for a servant for ever? - Canst thou so subdue him that he will be a perpetual slave? The meaning of all this is, that he was an untamable animal, and could not be reduced, as many others could, to domestic use.

Verse 5

Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? - A bird that is tamed. The art of taming birds was doubtless early practiced, and they were kept for amusement. But the leviathan could not thus be tamed.

Or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? - For their amusement. For such purposes doubtless, birds were caught and caged. There is great force in this question, on the supposition that the crocodile is intended. Nothing could be more incongruous than the idea of securing so rough and unsightly a monster for the amusement of tender and delicate females.

Verse 6

Shall thy companions make a banquet of him? - This is one of the "vexed passages" about which there has been much difference of opinion. Gesenius renders it, "Do the companions ("i. e." the fishermen in company) lay snares for him?" So Noyes renders it. Dr. Harris translates it, "Shall thy partners spread a banquet for him?" The Septuagint renders it, "Do the nations feed upon him?" The Vulgate, "Will friends cut him up?" that is, for a banquet. Rosenmuller renders it, "Will friends feast upon him?" The word rendered "thy companions" (חברים *chabbâriym*) means properly those joined or associated together for any purpose, whether for friendship or for business. It may refer here either to those associated for the purpose of fishing or feasting. The word "thy" is improperly introduced by our translators, and there is no evidence that the reference is to the companions or friends of Job, as that would seem to suppose. The word rendered "make

a banquet" (יכרו *yikârû*) is from כרה *kârâh* "to dig," and then to make a plot or device against one - derived from the fact that a "pitfall" was dug to take animals (Psalm 7:15; Psalm 57:6; compare Job 6:27); and according to this it means, "Do the companions, "i. e." the fishermen in company, lay snares for him?" The word, however, has another signification, meaning to buy, to purchase, and also to give a feast, to make a banquet, perhaps from the idea of "purchasing" the provisions necessary for a banquet. According to this, the meaning is, "Do the companions, "i. e." those associated for the purpose of feasting, make a banquet of him?" Which is the true sense here it is not easy to determine. The majority of versions incline to the idea that it refers to a feast, and means that those associated for eating do not make a part of their entertainment of him. This interpretation is the most simple and obvious.

Shall they part him among the merchants? - That is, Shall they cut him up and expose him for sale? The word rendered "merchants" (כנענים *kenaʿanîym*) means properly "Canaanites." It is used in the sense of "merchants, or traffickers," because the Canaanites were commonly engaged in this employment; see the notes at Isaiah 23:8. The crocodile is never made a part of a banquet, or an article of traffic.

Verse 7

Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? - Referring to its thickness and impenetrability. A common method of taking fish is by the spear; but it is here said that the leviathan could not be caught in this manner. The common method of taking the crocodile now is by shooting him; see the notes at Job 41:1. Nothing is more remarkable in the crocodile than the thick and impenetrable skin with which it is covered; and the description here will agree better with this animal than with any other.

Or his head with fish spears - The word here rendered "fish-spears" (צלצל *tselâtsal*) means properly a "tinkling, clanging," as of metal or arms, and then any tinkling instrument. Here it evidently refers to some metal spear, or harpoon, and the name was given to the instrument on account of its clanging noise. The Septuagint renders this strangely, referring it to the "Phenicians," or merchants mentioned in the previous verse - "With their whole fleet they could not carry the first skin of his tail, nor his head in their fishing-barks."

Verse 8

Lay thine hand upon him - Prof. Lee renders this, very improperly, as it seems to me, "Lay thine hand on thy mouth respecting him," supposing it means that he should be awed into silence by dread of the animal referred to. But the meaning of the passage evidently is, "Endeavor to seize him by laying the hand on him, and you will soon desist from the fearful conflict, and will not renew it."

Remember the battle - Remember what a fearful conflict will ensue. Perhaps there is an allusion to some fact fresh in the mind of Job, where such an attempt had been made to secure the leviathan, attended with fearful disaster to those who had made the attempt.

Do no more - Or, rather, "Thou wilt not do it again." That is, he would be deterred from ever renewing the attempt, or the conflict would be fatal to him.

Verse 9

Behold, the hope of him is in vain - That is, the hope of taking him is vain.

Shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him? - So formidable is his appearance, that the courage of him who would attack him is daunted, and his resolution fails. This agrees well also with the crocodile. There is perhaps scarcely any animal whose appearance would be more likely to deter one from attacking him.

Verse 10

None is so fierce that dare stir him up - No one has courage to rouse and provoke him.

Who then is able to stand before me? - The meaning of this is plain. It is, "If one of my creatures is so formidable that man dare not attack it, how can he contend with the great Creator? This may perhaps be designed as a reproof of Job. He had expressed a desire to carry his cause before God, and to urge argument before him in vindication of himself. God here shows him how hopeless must be a contest with the Almighty. Man trembles and is disarmed of his courage by even the sight of one of the creatures of God. Overpowered with fear, he retires from the contemplated contest, and flees away. How then could he presume to contend with God? What hope could he have in a contest with him?

Verse 11

Who hath prevented me? - As this verse is here rendered, its meaning, and the reason why it is introduced, are not very apparent. It almost looks,

indeed, as if it were an interpolation, or had been introduced from some other place, and torn from its proper connection. Dr. Harris proposes to remove the principal difficulty by translating it,

"Who will stand before me, yea, presumptuously?
Whatsoever is beneath the whole heaven is mine.
I cannot be confounded at his limbs and violence,
Nor at his power, or the strength of his frame."

It may be doubted, however, whether the original will admit of this translation. Rosenmuller, Umbreit, and Noyes, unite in supposing the meaning to be, "Who has done me a favor, that I must repay him?" But perhaps the true idea of the passage may be arrived at by adverting to the meaning of the word rendered "prevented" - קדם *qâdam* It properly means in the Piel, to go before; to precede; to anticipate, Psalm 17:13; Psalm 119:148. Then it means to rush upon suddenly; to seize; to go to meet anyone either for succor, Psalm 59:11, or for a different purpose. Isaiah 37:33, "no shield shall come up against her." יקדמנה *yaqâdamenâh* "i. e." against the city. So Job 30:27, "The days of affliction prevented me." A similar meaning occurs in the Hiphil form in Amos 9:10, "The evil shall not overtake us nor prevent us;" that is, shall not rush upon us as if by anticipation, or when we are off our guard.

If some idea of this kind be supposed to be conveyed by the word here, it will probably express the true sense. "Who is able to seize upon me suddenly, or when I am off my guard; to anticipate my watchfulness and my power of resistance so as to compel me to recompense him, or so to overmaster me as to lay me under obligation to confer on him the favors which he demands?" There may be an allusion to the manner in which wild beasts are taken, when the hunter springs his gin suddenly, anticipates the power of the animal, rushes unexpectedly upon him, and compels him to yield. God says that no one could thus surprise and overpower him. Thus explained, the sentiment agrees with the argument which the Almighty is presenting. He is showing his right to reign and do all his pleasure. He appeals, in proof of this, to his great and mighty works, and especially to those specimens of the animal creation which "man" could not tame or overcome. The argument is this: "If man cannot surprise and subdue these creatures of the Almighty, and compel "them" to render him service, how can he expect to constrain the Creator himself to be tributary to him, or to grant him the favors which he demands?"

Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine - That is, "All belong to me; all are subject to me; all are mine, to be conferred on whom I please. No one can claim them as his own: no one can wrest them from me." This claim to the proprietorship of all created things, is designed "here" to show to Job that over a Being thus supreme man could exert no control. It is his duty, therefore, to submit to him without a complaint, and to receive with gratitude what he chooses to confer.

Verse 12

I will not conceal his parts - This is the commencement of a more particular description of the animal than had been before given. In the previous part of the chapter, the remarks are general, speaking of it merely as one of great power, and not to be taken by any of the ordinary methods. A description follows of the various parts of the animal, all tending to confirm this general impression, and to fill the hearer with a deep conviction of his formidable character. The words rendered, "I will not conceal," mean, "I will not be silent;" that is, he would speak of them. The description which follows of the "parts" of the animal refers particularly to his mouth, his teeth, his scales, his eyelids, his nostrils, his neck, and his heart.

Nor his comely proportion - The crocodile is not an object of beauty, and the animal described here is not spoken of as one of beauty, but as one of great power and fierceness. The phrase used here (חין ערכו *chîyn ʿêrekô*) means properly "the grace of his armature," or the beauty of his armor. It does not refer to the beauty of the animal as such, but to the armor or defense which it had. Though there might be no beauty in an animal like the one here described, yet there might be a "grace" or fitness in its means of defense which could not fail to attract admiration. This is the idea in the passage. So Gesenius, Umbreit, and Noyes render it.

Verse 13

Who can discern the face of his garment? - literally, "Who can reveal the face, that is, the appearance, of his garment?" This "garment" is undoubtedly his skin. The meaning seems to be, "His hard and rough skin is his defense, and no one can so strip off that as to have access to him." The word rendered "discover" (גלה *gâlâh*) means "to make naked"; then "to reveal"; and the idea is, that he cannot be made naked of that covering, or deprived of it so that one could attack him.

Or who can come to him with his double bridle? - Margin, "within" Gesenius renders this, "The doubling of his jaws;" that is. his double row of teeth. Umbreit, "His double bit." Noyes, "Who will approach his jaws?" So Rosenmuller. Schultens and Prof. Lee, however, suppose it means that no one can come near to him and "double the bit" upon him, "i. e." cast the bit or noose over his nose, so as to secure him by doubling it, or passing it around him. The former seems to me to be the true meaning. "Into the doubling of his jaws, who can enter?" That is, Who will dare approach a double row of teeth so formidable?" The word rendered "bridle" (רסן *resen*) means properly a curb or halter, which goes over a horse‘s nose, and hence, a bit or bridle. But it may be used to denote the interior of the mouth, the jaws, where the bit is placed, and then the phrase denotes the double row of teeth of the animal. Thus, the description of the "parts of defense" of the animal is kept up.

Verse 14

Who can open the doors of his face? - His mouth. The same term is sti 1 used to denote the mouth - from its resemblance to a door. The idea is, that no one would dare to force open his mouth. This agrees better with the crocodile than almost any other animal. It would not apply to the whale. The crocodile is armed with a more formidable set of teeth than almost any other animal; see the description in the notes at Job 41:1. Bochart says that it has sixty teeth, and those much larger than in proportion to the size of the body. Some of them, he says, stand out; some of them are serrated, or like a saw, fitting into each other when the mouth is closed; and some come together in the manner of a comb, so that the grasp of the animal is very tenacious and fearful; see a full description in Bochart.

Verse 15

His scales are his pride - Margin, "strong pieces of shields." The literal translation of this would be, "Pride, the strong of shields;" that is, the strong shields. There can be no doubt that there is reference to the scales of the animal, as having a resemblance to strong shields laid close to each other. But there is considerable variety of opinion as to its meaning. Umbreit and Prof. Lee take the word here rendered "pride" (גאוה *gê'voh*) to be the same as (גוה *gêvâh*), "back," and then the meaning would be that his back was armed as with a shield - referring, as Prof. Lee supposes, to the dorsal fin of the whale. But there is no necessity for this supposition, and it cannot be denied that it is somewhat forced. The "connection" requires that we should

understand it, not of the dorsal fin, but of the scales; for a description immediately follows in continuation of this, which will by no means apply to the fin. The obvious and proper meaning is, that the pride or glory of the animal - that on which his safety depended, and which was the most remarkable thing about him - was his "scales," which were laid together like firm and compact shields, so that nothing could penetrate them. This description accords better with the crocodile than with any other animal. It is covered with scales, "which are so hard as to resist a musket-ball." "Ed. Ency." The description cannot be applied to a whale, which has no scales; and accordingly Prof. Lee supposes that the reference in this verse and the two following is not to the "scales," but to the "teeth," and to "the setting in of the dorsal fin!"

Shut up together - Made close or compact.

As with a close seal - As if they had been sealed with wax, so that no air could come between them.

Verse 17

They are joined one to another - literally, "A man with his brother;" that is, each one is connected with another. There is no natural fastening of one scale with another, but they lie so close and compact that they seem thus to be fastened down on one another; see Bochart on this verse. It is this which makes the crocodile so difficult to be killed. A musket-ball will penetrate the skin under the belly, which is there less firmly protected; and accordingly the efforts of those who attempt to secure them are directed to that part of the body. A ball in the eye or throat will also destroy it, but the body is impervious to a spear or a bullet.

Verse 18

By his neesings a light doth shine - The word rendered "neesings" means properly sneezing, and the literal sense here would be, "His sneezings, light shines." Coverdale renders it, "His nesinge is like a glisteringe fyre." Bochart says that the meaning is, "that when the crocodile sneezes, the breath is driven through the nostrils with such force that it seems to scintillate, or emit fire." Probably the meaning is, that when the animal emits a sudden sound, like sneezing, the fire seems to flash from the eye. There is some quick and rapid motion of the eyes, which in the rays of the sun seem to flash fire. The sneezing of the crocodile is mentioned by Aristotle. Prof. Lee. Amphibious animals, the longer they hold their breath under water, respire so much the more violently when they emerge, and the

breath is expelled suddenly and with violence. Schultens. This is the action here referred to - the strong effort of the animal to recover breath when he rises to the surface, and when in the effort the eyes seem to scintillate, or emit light.

And his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning - The "eyelids of the morning" is a beautiful poetic phrase quite common in Hebrew poetry. The eyes of the crocodile are small, but they are remarkable. When he lifts his head above water, his staring eyes are the first things that strike the beholder, and may then with great beauty be compared with the morning light. There is a remarkable coincidence here, in the fact that when the Egyptians would represent the morning by a hieroglyphic, they painted a crocodile's eye. The reason assigned for this was, that before the whole body of the animal appeared, the eyes seemed to rise from the deep; see Bochart on the passage, "Hierez.," and also Herapollo, "Hieroglyph." i. c. 65.

Verse 19

Out of his mouth go burning lamps - The word "lamps" here is probably used to denote torches, or fire-brands. The animal is here described as in pursuit of his prey on land; and the description is exceedingly graphic and powerful. His mouth is then open; his jaws are distended; his breath is thrown out with great violence; his blood is inflamed, and the animal seems to vomit forth flames. The description is of course to be regarded as figurative. It is such as one would be likely to give who should see a fierce animal pressing on in pursuit of its prey.

And sparks of fire leap out - There is an appearance like sparks of fire. The animal, with an open throat highly inflamed, seems to breathe forth flames. The figure is a common one applied to a war-horse. Thus, Ovid:

"From their full racks the generous steeds retire,
Dropping ambrosial foam and snorting fire."

Dr. Good

The same thing is remarked by Achilles Tatius, of the hippopotamus, "With open nostrils, and breathing smoke like fire (πυρώδη καπνόν *purōdē kapnon*) as from a fountain of fire." And in Eustathius it is said, "They have an open nostril, breathing forth smoke like fire from a furnace " - πυρώδη καπνόν, ὡς ἐκ καμίνου πνέοντα *purōdē kapnon hōs ek kaminou pneonta* See Bochart.

Verse 20

Out of his nostrils goeth smoke - See the quotations on Job 41:19. This appearance of the crocodile, or alligator, has been often noticed. Bertram, in his "Travels in North and South Carolina," p. 116, says, "While I was seeking a place of rest, I encountered an alligator that in the neighboring lake rushed through the canes that grew on its banks. He inflated his enormous body, and swung his tail high in the air. A thick smoke streamed from his wide-open nostrils, with a sound that made the earth tremble." Rosenmuller, "Alte u. neue Morgenland," No. 778.

As out of a seething-pot - A pot that is boiling. Literally, "a blown pot;" that is, a pot under which the fire is blown, or kindled.

Or caldron - Any kettle. The same word is used to denote a reed or bulrush, or a rope made of reeds, Isaiah 9:14; Job 41:1.

Verse 21

His breath kindleth coals - It seems to be a flame, and to set on fire all around it. So Hesiod, "Theog." i. 319, describing the creation of the Chimera, speaks of it as

πνέουσαν ἀμαισάκετον πῦρ

pneousan amaimaketon pur unquenchable fire," So Virgil, "Georg." ii. 140:

Haec loca non tauri spirantes naribus ignem Invertere.

"Bulls breathing fire these furrows ne'er have known."

Warton

A similar phrase is found in a sublime description of the anger of the Almighty, in Psalm 18:8:

There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,
And fire out of his mouth devoured:
Coals were kindled by it.

Verse 22

In his neck remaineth strength - That is, strength is "permanently residing" there. It is not assumed for the moment, but his neck is so constructed as to be the abode of strength. The word here rendered "remaineth" (ילין *yālîyn*), means properly to pass the night; then to abide or dwell; and there is a designed contrast here with what is said of "sorrow" in this verse. This description of strength residing in the neck, agrees well with the crocodile; see the figure of the animal on p. 255. It is not easy, however, to see how this is applicable to the whale, as Prof. Lee supposes. The whale

is endowed, indeed, with great strength, as Prof. Lee has shown, but that strength is manifested mainly by the stroke of the tail.

And sorrow is turned into joy before him - Margin, "rejoiceth." The proper meaning of the word used here (תדוץ *tādûts*) is "to dance, to leap, to skip;" and the sense is, that "terror dances before him." It does not refer to the motion of the animal, as if he were brisk and rapid. but it is a poetic expression, as if terror played or pranced along wherever he came. Strength "resided" in his neck, but his approach made terror and alarm play before him wherever he went; that is, produced terror and dread. In his neck is permanent, calm strength; before him, everything trembles and is agitated. The beauty of the passage lies in this contrast between the strength and firmness which repose calmly in the neck of the animal, and the consternation which he everywhere produces, causing all to tremble as he approaches. Bochart has well illustrated this from the Classical writers.

Verse 23

The flakes of his flesh are joined together - Margin, "fallings." The Hebrew word used here means anything "falling," or "pendulous," and the reference here is, probably, to the pendulous parts of the flesh of the animal; the flabby parts; the dew-laps. In animals commonly these parts about the neck and belly are soft, pendulous, and contribute little to their strength. The meaning here is, that in the leviathan, instead of being thus flabby and pendulous, they were compact and firm. This is strikingly true of the crocodile. The belly is, indeed, more soft and penetrable than the other parts of the body, but there is nothing like the soft and pendulous dew-laps of most animals.

Verse 24

His heart is as firm as a stone - As hard; as solid. Bochart remarks that the word "heart" here is not to be regarded as denoting the "courage" of the animal, as it sometimes does, but the heart literally. The statement occurs in the description of the various parts of the animal, and the object is to show that there was special firmness or solidity in every one of his members. There is special firmness or strength needed in the "hearts" of all animals, to enable them to propel the blood through the arteries of the body; and in an animal of the size of the crocodile, it is easy to see that the heart must be made capable of exerting vast force. But there is no reason to suppose that the affirmation here is made on the supposition that there is need of extraordinary strength in the heart to propel the blood. The doctrine of the

circulation of the blood was not then known to mankind, and it is to be presumed that the argument here would be based on what "was" known, or what might be easily observed. The presumption therefore is, that the statement here is based on what had been "seen" of the remarkable compactness and firmness of the heart of the animal here referred to. Probably there was nothing so unique in the heart of the crocodile that this description would be applicable to that animal alone, but it is such doubtless as would apply to the heart of any animal of extraordinary size and strength.

Yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone - The mills commonly used in ancient times were hand-mills; see a description of them in the notes at Matthew 24:41. Why the lower stone was the hardest, is not quite apparent. Perhaps a more solid stone might have been chosen for this, because it was supposed that there was more wear on the lower than the upper stone, or because its weight would make the machine more solid and steady.

Verse 25

When he raiseth up himself - When he rouses himself for an attack or in self-defense.

The mighty are afraid - The Vulgate renders this "anqels." The meaning is, that he produces alarm on those who are unaccustomed to fear.

By reason of breakings they purify themselves - This, though a literal translation, conveys no very clear idea, and this rendering is not necessary. The word rendered "breakings" (שׁבר *sheber*) means properly "a breaking, breach, puncture"; "a breaking down, destruction"; and then it may mean "a breaking down of the mind, that is, terror." This is evidently the meaning here. "By reason of the prostration of their courage, or the crushing of the mind by alarm." The word rendered "purify themselves" (חטא *châṭâ'*) means in the Qal, "to miss," as a mark; "to sin; to err." In the form of Hithpael, which occurs here, it means to miss one's way; "to lose oneself;" and it may refer to the astonishment and terror by which one is led to miss his way in precipitate flight. "Gesenius." The meaning then is, "They lose themselves from terror." They know not where to turn themselves; they flee away with alarm; see Rosenmuller *in loc*.

Verse 26

The sword of him that layeth at him - The word "sword" here (חרב *chereb*) means undoubtedly "harpoon," or a sharp instrument by which an attempt is made to pierce the skin of the monster.

Cannot hold - That is, in the hard skin. It does not penetrate it.

The spear, the dart - These were doubtless often used in the attempt to take the animal. The meaning is, that "they" would not hold or stick to the animal. They flew off when hurled at him.

Nor the habergeon - Margin, "breastplate." Noyes, "javelin." Prof. Lee, "lance." Vulgate, "*thorax*, breastplate." So the Septuagint, θώρακα *thōraka* The word used here (שׁריה *shiryâh*), the same as שׁריון *shiryôn* 1 Samuel 17:5, 1 Samuel 17:38; Nehemiah 4:16; 2 Chronicles 26:14, means properly a "coat of mail," and is so called from its shining - from שׁרה *shârâh* "to shine." It is not used in the sense of spear or javelin elsewhere, though perhaps it may have that meaning here - denoting a "bright" or "shining" weapon. This agrees best with the connection.

Verse 27

He esteemeth iron as straw - He regards instruments made of iron and brass as if they were straw or rotten wood. That is, they make no impression on him. This will agree better with the crocodile than any other animal. So hard is his skin, that a musket-ball will not penetrate it; see numerous quotations proving the hardness of the skin of the crooodile, in Bochart.

Verse 28

The arrow - Hebrew "the son of the bow." So Lamentations 3:13, margin. This use of the word son is common in the Scriptures and in all Oriental poetry.

Sling-stones - The sling was early used in war and in hunting, and by skill and practice it could be so employed as to be a formidable weapon; see Judges 20:16; 1 Samuel 17:40, 1 Samuel 17:49. As one of the weapons of attack on a foe it is mentioned here, though there is no evidence that the sling was ever actually used in endeavoring to destroy the crocodile. The meaning is, that all the common weapons used by men in attacking an enemy had no effect on him.

Are turned with him into stubble - Produce no more effect on him than it would to throw stubble at him.

Verse 29

Darts are counted as stubble - The word rendered "darts" (תותח *tôthâch*) occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. It is from יתח, obsolete root, "to beat with a club." The word here probably means clubs. Darts and spears are mentioned before, and the object seems to be to enumerate all the

usual, instruments of attack. The singular is used here with a plural verb in a collective sense.

Verse 30

Sharp stones are under him - Margin, as in Hebrew, "pieces of pot sherd." The Hebrew word (חדוד *chaddûd*), means "sharp, pointed"; and the phrase used here means "the sharp points of a potsherd," or broken pieces of earthenware. The reference is, undoubtedly, to the scales of the animal, which were rough and pointed, like the broken pieces of earthenware. This description would not agree with the whale, and indeed will accord with no other animal so well as with the crocodile. The meaning is, that the under parts of his body, with which he rests upon the mire, are made up of sharp, pointed things, like broken pottery.

He spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire - That is, when he rests or stretches himself on the mud or slime of the bank of the river. The word used here and rendered "sharp pointed things" (חרוץ *châr̂ûts*) means properly something "cut in;" then something sharpened or pointed; and is used to denote "a threshing sledge;" see this instrument described in Isaiah 28:27-28, note; Isaiah 41:15, note. It is not certain, however, that there is any allusion here to that instrument. It is rather to anything that is rough or pointed, and refers to the lower part of the animal as having this character. The Vulgate renders this, "Beneath him are the rays of the sun, and he reposeth on gold as on clay." Dr. Harris, Dr. Good, and Prof. Lee, suppose it refers to what the animal lies on, meaning that he lies on splinters of rock and broken stone with as much readiness and ease as if it were clay. But the above seems to me to be the true interpretation. It is that of Gesenius, Rosenmuller, and Umbreit. Grotius understands it as meaning that the weapons thrown at him lie around him like broken pieces of pottery.

Verse 31

He maketh the deep to boil like a pot - In his rapid motion through it. The word "deep" (מצולה *metsôlâh*) may refer to any deep place - either of the sea, of a river, or of mire, Psalm 69:2. It is applied to the depths of the sea, Jonah 2:3; Micah 7:19; but there is nothing in the word that will prevent its application to a large river like the Nile - the usual abode of the crocodile.

He maketh the sea - The word "sea" (ים *yâm*) is often applied to a large river, like the Nile or the Euphrates; see the notes at Isaiah 19:5.

Like a pot of ointment - When it is mixed, or stirred together. Bochart supposes that there is an allusion here to the smell of musk, which it is said the crocodile has, and by which the waters through which he passes seem to be perfumed. But the allusion seems rather to be merely to the fact that the deep is agitated by him when he passes through it, as if it were stirred from the bottom like a pot of ointment.

sa40

Verse 32

He maketh a path to shine after him - This refers doubtless to the white foam of the waters through which he passes. If this were spoken of some monster that commonly resides in the ocean, it would not be unnatural to suppose that it refers to the phosphoric light such as is observed when the waters are agitated, or when a vessel passes rapidly through them. If it refers, however, to the crocodile, the allusion must be understood of the hoary appearance of the Nile or the lake where he is found.

One would think the deep to be hoary - Homer often speaks of the sea as πολιὴν θάλασσαν *poliēn thalassan* - "the hoary sea." So Apollonius, speaking of the Argonauts, Lib. i. 545:

- μακραὶ δ᾽ αἰὲν ἐλευκαίνοντο κέλευθοι -

- *makrai d' aien eleukainonto keleuthoi* -

"The long paths were always white"

So Catullus, in Epith. Pelei:

Totaque remigio spumis incanuit unda.

And Ovid, Epis. Oeno:

- *remis eruta canet aqua*.

The rapid motion of an aquatic animal through the water will produce the effect here referred to.

Verse 33

Upon earth there is not his like - Hebrew, "Upon the dust." The meaning is, that no other animal can be compared with him; or the land does not produce such a monster as this. For size, strength, ferocity, courage, and formidableness, no animal will hear a comparison with him. This can be true only of some such fierce creature as the crocodile.

Who is made without fear - Margin, "Or, behave themselves with fear." The meaning is, that he is created not to be afraid; he has no dread of others In this respect he is unlike other animals. The Septuagint renders this, "He is made to be sported with by my angels."

Verse 34

He beholdeth all high things - That is, he looks down on everything as inferior to him.

He is a king over all the children of pride - Referring, by "the children of pride," to the animals that are bold, proud, courageous - as the lion, the panther, etc. The lion is often spoken of as "the king of the forest," or "the king of beasts," and in a similar sense the leviathan is here spoken of as at the head of the animal creation. He is afraid of none of them; he is subdued by none of them; he is the prey of none of them. The whole argument, therefore, closes with this statement, that he is at the head of the animal creation; and it was by this magnificent description of the power of the creatures which God had made, that it was intended to impress the mind of Job with a sense of the majesty and power of the Creator. It had the effect. He was overawed with a conviction of the greatness of God, and he saw how wrong it had been for him to presume to call in question the justice, or sit in judgment on the doings, of such a Being. God did not, indeed, go into an examination of the various points which had been the subject of controversy; he did not explain the nature of his moral administration so as to relieve the mind from perplexity; but he evidently meant to leave the impression that he was vast and incomprehensible in his government, infinite in power, and had a right to dispose of his creation as he pleased. No one can doubt that God could with infinite ease have so explained the nature of his administration as to free the mind from perplexity, and so as to have resolved the difficulties which hung over the various subjects which had come into debate between Job and his friends. "Why" he did not do this, is nowhere stated, and can only be the subject of conjecture. It is possible, however, that the following suggestions may do something to show the reasons why this was not done:

(1) We are to remember the early period of the world when these transactions occurred, and when this book was composed. It was in the infancy of society, and when little light had gleamed on the human mind in regard to questions of morals and religion.

(2) In that state of things, it is not probable that either Job or his friends would have been able to comprehend the principles in accordance with which the wicked are permitted to flourish and the righteous are so much afflicted, if they had been stated. Much higher knowledge than they then

possessed about the future world was necessary to understand the subject which then agitated their minds. It could not have been done without a very decided reference to the future state, where all these inequalities are to be removed.

(3) It has been the general plan of God to communicate knowledge by degrees; to impart it when people have had full demonstration of their own imbecility, and when they feel their need of divine teaching; and to reserve the great truths of religion for an advanced period of the world. In accordance with this arrangement, God bas been pleased to keep in reserve, from age to age, certain great and momentous truths, and such as were particularly adapted to throw light on the subjects of discussion between Job and his friends. They are the truths pertaining to the resurrection of the body; the retributions of the day of judgment; the glories of heaven and the woes of hell, where all the inequalities of the present state may receive their final and equal adjustment. These great truths were reserved for the triumph and glory of Christianity; and to have stated them in the time of Job, would have been to have anticipated the most important revelations of that system. The truths of which we are now in possession would have relieved much of the perplexity then felt, and solved most of those questions; but the world was not then in the proper state for their revelation.

(4) It was a very important lesson to be taught to people, to bow with submission to a sovereign God, without knowing the reason of his doings. No lesson, perhaps, could be learned of higher value than this. To a proud, self-confident, philosophic mind, a mind prone to rely on its own resources, and trust to its own deductions, it was of the highest importance to inculcate the duty of submission to "will" and to "sovereignty." This is a lesson which we often have to learn in life, and which almost all the trying dispensations of Providence are fitted to teach us. It is not because God has no reason for what he does; it is not because he intends we shall never know the reason; but it is because it is our "duty" to bow with submission to his will, and to acquiesce in his right to reign, even when we cannot see the reason of his doings. Could we "reason it out," and then submit "because" we saw the reason, our submission would not be to our Maker‘s pleasure, but to the deductions of our own minds.

Hence, all along, he so deals with man, by concealing the reason of his doings, as to bring him to submission to his authority, and to humble all human pride. To this termination all the reasonings of the Almighty in this book are conducted; and after the exhibition of his power in the tempest, after his sublime description of his own works, after his appeal to the numerous things which are in fact incomprehensible by man, we feel that God is great - that it is presumptuous in man to sit in judgment on his works - and that the mind, no matter what he does, should bow before him with profound veneration and silence. These are the great lessons which we are every day called to learn in the actual dispensations of his providence; and the "arguments" for these lessons were never elsewhere stated with so much power and sublimity as in the closing chapters of the book of Job. We have the light of the Christian religion; we can look into eternity, and see how the inequalities of the present order of things can be adjusted there; and we have sources of consolation which neither Job nor his friends enjoyed; but still, with all this light, there are numerous cases where we are required to bow, not because we see the reason of the divine dealings, but because such is the will of God. To us, in such circumstances, this argument of the Almighty is adapted to teach the most salutary lessons.

JOB CONTENTS

CHAPTER 42

Verse 2

I know that thou canst do everything - This is said by Job in view of what had been declared by the Almighty in the previous chapters. It is an acknowledgment that God was omnipotent, and that man ought to be submissive, under the putting forth of his infinite power. One great object of the address of the Almighty was to convince Job of his majesty, and that object was fully accomplished.

And that no thought - No purpose or plan of thine. God was able to execute all his designs.

Can be withholden from thee - Margin, "or, of thine can be hindered." Literally, "cut off" - בצר *bâtsar* The word, however, means also "to cut off access to," and then to prevent, hinder, restrain. This is its meaning here; so Genesis 11:6, "Nothing will be restrained (יבצר *yibâtsar*) from them, which they have imagined to do."

Verse 3

Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? - This is repeated from Job 38:2. As used there these are the words of the Almighty, uttered as a reproof of Job for the manner in which he had undertaken to explain the dealings of God; see the notes at that verse. As repeated here by Job, they are an acknowledgment of the truth of what is there implied, that "he" had been guilty of hiding counsel in this manner, and the repetition here is a part of his confession. He acknowledges that he "had" entertained and expressed such views of God as were in fact clothing the whole subject in darkness instead of explaining it. The meaning is, "Who indeed is it, as thou saidst, that undertakes to judge of great and profound purposes without knowledge? I am that presumptuous man? Ilgen."

Therefore have I uttered that I understood not - I have pronounced an opinion on subjects altogether too profound for my comprehension. This is the language of true humility and penitence, and shows that Job had at heart a profound veneration for God, however much he had been led away by the severity of his sufferings to give vent to improper expressions. It is no uncommon thing for even good people to be brought to see that they have spoken presumptuously of God, and have engaged, in discussions and ventured to pronounce opinions on matters pertaining to the divine administration, that were wholly beyond their comprehension.

Verse 4

Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak - This is the language of humble, docile submission. On former occasions he had spoken confidently and boldly of God; he had called in question the equity of his dealings with him; he had demanded that he might be permitted to carry his cause before him, and argue it there himself; Notes, Job 13:3, and notes Job 13:20-22. Now he is wholly changed. His is the submissive language of a docile child, and he begs to be permitted to sit down before God, and humbly to inquire of him what was truth. "This is true religion."

I will demand of thee - Or rather, "I will ask of thee." The word "demand" implies more than there is of necessity in the original word (שׁאל *shâ'al*). That means simply "to ask," and it may be done with the deepest humility and desire of instruction. That was now the temper of Job.

And declare thou unto me - Job was not now disposed to debate the matter, or to enter into a controversy with God. He was willing to sit down and receive instruction from God, and earnestly desired that he would "teach" him of his ways. It should be added, that very respectable critics suppose that in this verse Job designs to make confession of the impropriety of his language on former occasions, in the presumptuous and irreverent manner in which he had demanded a trial of argument with God. It would then require to be rendered as a quotation from his own words formerly.

"I have indeed uttered what I understood not,
Things too wonderful for me, which I know not,
(When I said) Hear now, I will speak,
I will demand of thee, and do thou teach me"

This is adopted by Umbreit, and has much in its favor that is plausible; but on the whole the usual interpretation seems to be most simple and proper.

Verse 5

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear - Referring to the indistinct views which we have of anything by merely hearing of it, compared with the clear apprehension which is furnished by sight. Job had had such views of God as one may obtain by being told of him; he now had such views as are furnished by the sight. The meaning is, that his views of God before were dark and obscure.

But now mine eye seeth thee - We are not to suppose that Job means to say that he actually "saw" God, but that his apprehensions of him were

clear and bright "as if" he did. There is no evidence that God appeared to Job in any visible form. He is said, indeed, to have spoken from the whirlwind, but no visible manifestation of Yahweh is mentioned.

Verse 6

Wherefore I abhor myself - I see that I am a sinner to be loathed and abhorred. Job, though he did not claim to be perfect, had yet unquestionably been unduly exalted with the conception of his own righteousness, and in the zeal of his argument, and under the excitement of his feelings when reproached by his friends, had indulged in indefensible language respecting his own integrity. He now saw the error and folly of this, and desired to take the lowest place of humiliation. Compared with a pure and holy God, he saw that he was utterly vile and loathsome, and was not unwilling now to confess it. "And repent." Of the spirit which I have evinced; of the language used in self-vindication; of the manner in which I have spoken of God. Of the general sentiments which he had maintained in regard to the divine administration as contrasted with those of his friends he had no occasion to repent, for they were correct Job 42:8, nor had he occasion to repent "as if" he had never been a true penitent or a pious man. But he now saw that in the spirit which he had evinced under his afflictions, and in his argument, there was much to regret; and he doubtless saw that there had been much in his former life which had furnished occasion for bringing these trials upon him, over which he ought now to mourn.

In dust and ashes - In the most lowly manner, and with the most expressive symbols of humiliation. It was customary in times of grief, whether in view of sin or from calamity, to sit down in ashes (see the notes at Job 2:8; compare Daniel 9:3; Jonah 3:6; Matthew 11:21); or on such an occasion the sufferer and the penitent would strew ashes over himself; compare Isaiah 58:5. The philosophy of this was - like the custom of wearing "black" for mourning apparel - that the external appearance ought to correspond with the internal emotions, and that deep sorrow would be appropriately expressed by disfiguring the outward aspect as much as possible. The sense here is, that Job meant to give expression to the profoundest and sincerest feelings of penitence for his sins. From this effect produced on his mind by the address of the Almighty, we may learn the following lessons:

(1) That a correct view of the character and presence of God is adapted to produce humility and penitence; compare Job 40:4-5. This effect was

produced on the mind of Peter when, astonished by a miracle performed by the Savior which none but a divine being could have done, he said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord;" Luke 5:8. The same effect; was produced on the mind of Isaiah after he had seen Yahweh of Hosts in the temple: "Then said I, Wo is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of Hosts;" Isaiah 6:5. No man can have any elevated views of his own importance or purity, who has right apprehensions of the holiness of his Creator.

(2) Such a view of the presence of God will produce what no argument can in causing penitence and humility. The friends of Job had reasoned with him in vain to secure just this state of mind; they had endeavored to convince him that he was a great sinner, and "ought" to exercise repentance. But he met argument with argument; and all their arguments, denunciations, and appeals, made no impression on his mind. When, however, God manifested himself to him, he was melted into contrition, and was ready to make the most penitent and humble confession. So it is now. The arguments of a preacher or a friend often make no impression on the mind of a sinner. He can guard himself against them. He can meet argument with argument, or can coolly turn the ear away. But he has no such power to resist God, and when "he" manifests himself to the soul, the heart is subdued, and the proud and self-confident unbeliever becomes humbled, and sues for mercy.

(3) A good man will be willing to confess that he is vile, when he has any clear views of God. He will be so affected with a sense of the majesty and holiness of his Maker, that he will be overwhelmed with a sense of his own unworthiness.

(4) The most holy men may have occasion to repent of their presumptuous manner of speaking of God. We all err in the same way in which Job did. We reason about God with irreverence; we speak of his government as if we could comprehend it; we discourse of him as if he were an equal; and when we come to have any just views of him, we see that there has been much improper boldness, much self-confidence, much irreverence of thought and manner, in our estimation of the divine wisdom

and plans. The bitter experience of Job should lead us to the utmost carefulness in the manner in which we speak of our Maker.

Verse 7

And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job - Had the matter been left according to the record in Job 42:6, a wholly erroneous impression would have been made. Job was overwhelmed with the conviction of his guilt, and had nothing been said to his friends, the impression would have been that he was wholly in the wrong. It was important, therefore, and was indeed essential to the plan of the book, that the divine judgment should be pronounced on the conduct of his three friends.

The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite - Eliphaz had been uniformly first in the argument with Job, and hence, he is particularly addressed here. He seems to have been the most aged and respectable of the three friends, and in fact the speeches of the others are often a mere echo of his.

My wrath is kindled - Wrath, or anger, is often represented as enkindled, or burning.

For ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath - This must be understood comparatively. God did not approve of all that Job had said, but the meaning is, that his general views of his government were just. The main position which he had defended in contradistinction from his friends was correct, for his arguments tended to vindicate the divine character, and to uphold the divine government. It is to be remembered, also, as Bouiller has remarked, that there was a great difference in the circumstances of Job and the three friends - circumstances modifying the degrees of blameworthiness chargeable to each. Job uttered indeed, some improper sentiments about God and his government; he expressed himself with irreverence and impatience; he used a language of boldness and complaint wholly improper, but this was done in the agony of mental and bodily suffering, and when provoked by the severe and improper charges of hypocrisy brought by his friends. What "they" said, on the contrary, was unprovoked. It was when they were free from suffering, and when they were urged to it by no severity of trial. It was, moreover, when every consideration required them to express the language of condolence, and to comfort a suffering friend.

Verse 8

Therefore take unto you - Or, FOR yourselves.

Seven bullocks and seven rams - The number "seven" was a common number in offering animals for sacrifice; see Leviticus 23:18; Numbers 29:32. It was not a number, however, confined at all to Jewish sacrifices, for we find that Balaam gave the direction to Balak, king of Moab, to prepare just this number for sacrifice. "And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams;" Numbers 23:1, Numbers 23:29. The number "seven" was early regarded as a perfect number, and it was probably with reference to this that that number of victims was selected, with an intention of offering a sacrifice that would be complete or perfect.

And go to my servant Job - An acknowledgment of his superiority. It is probably to be understood, also, that Job would act as the officiating priest in offering up the sacrifice. It is observable that no allusion is made in this book to the priestly office, and the conclusion is obvious that the scene is laid before the institution of that office among the Jews; compare the notes at Job 1:5.

And offer up for yourselves - That is, by the aid of Job. They were to make the offering, though Job was evidently to be the officiating priest.

A burnt-offering - Notes, Job 1:5.

And my servant Job shall pray for you - In connection with the offering, or as the officiating priest. This is a beautiful instance of the nature and propriety of intercession for others. Job was a holy man; his prayers would be acceptable to God, and his friends were permitted to avail themselves of his powerful intercession in their behalf. It is also an instance showing the nature of the patriarchal worship. It did not consist merely in offering sacrifices. Prayer was to be connected with sacrifices, nor is there any evidence that bloody offerings were regarded as available in securing acceptance with God, except in connection with fervent prayer. It is also an instance showing the nature of the patriarchal "piety." It was "presumed" that Job would be ready to do this, and would not hesitate thus to pray for his "friends." Yet it could not be forgotten how much they had wounded his feelings; how severe had been their reproaches; nor how confidently they had maintained that he was an eminently bad man. But it was presumed now that Job would be ready to forgive all this; to welcome his friends to a participation in the same act of worship with him, and to pray for them that their sins might be forgiven. Such is religion, alike in the patriarchal age

and under the gospel, prompting us to be ready to forgive those who have pained or injured us, and making us ready to pray that God would pardon and bless them.

For him will I accept - Margin, "his face," or "person." So the Hebrew. So in Genesis 19:21 ("margin,") compare Deuteronomy 28:50. The word "face" is thus used to denote the "person," or man. The meaning is, that Job was so holy and upright that God would regard his prayers.

Lest I deal with you after your folly - As their folly had deserved. There is particular reference here to the sentiments which they had advanced respecting the divine character and government.

Verse 9

The Lord also accepted Job - Margin, as in Job 42:8, "the face of." The meaning is, that he accepted his prayers and offerings in behalf of his friends.

Verse 10

And the Load turned the captivity of Job - Restored him to his former prosperity. The language is taken from restoration to country and home after having been a captive in a foreign land. This language is often applied in the Scriptures to the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, and some writers have made use of it as an argument to show that Job lived "after" that event. But this conclusion is unwarranted. The language is so general that it might be taken from the return from "any" captivity, and is such as would naturally be employed in the early periods of the world to denote restoration from calamity. It was common in the earliest ages to convey captives in war to the land of the conqueror, and thus make a land desolate by the removal of its inhabitants; and it would be natural to use the language expressive of their return to denote a restoration from "any" great calamity to former privileges and comforts. Such is undoubtedly its meaning as applied to the case of Job. He was restored from his series of protracted trials to a state of prosperity.

When he prayed for his friends - Or after he had prayed for his friends. It is not implied of necessity that his praying for them had any particular effect in restoring his prosperity.

Also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before - Margin, "added all that" had been to "Job unto the double." The margin is a literal translation, but the meaning is the same. It is not to be understood that this occurred at once - for many of these blessings were bestowed gradually.

Nor are we to understand it in every respect literally - for he had the same number of sons and daughters as before; but it is a general declaration, and was true in all essential respects.

Verse 11

Then came there unto him all his brethren … - It seems remarkable that none of these friends came near to him during his afflictions, and especially that his "sisters" should not have been with him to sympathize with him. But it was one of the bitter sources of his affliction, and one of the grounds of his complaint, that in his trials his kindred stood aloof from him; so in Job 19:13-14, he says, "He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me." It is not easy to account for this. It may have been, however, that a part were kept from showing any sympathy, in accordance with the general fact that there are always professed friends, and sometimes kindred, who forsake a man in affliction; and that a part regarded him as abandoned by God, and forsook him on that account - from a mistaken view of what they regarded as duty, that they ought to forsake one whom God had forsaken. When his calamities had passed by, however, and he again enjoyed the tokens of the divine favor, all returned to him full of condolence and kindness; part, probably, because friends always cluster around one who comes out of calamity and rises again to honor, and the other portion because they supposed that as "God" regarded him now with approbation, it was proper for "them" to do it also. A man who has been unfortunate, and who is visited with returning prosperity, never lacks friends. The rising sun reveals many friends that darkness had driven away, or brings to light many - real or professed - who were concealed at midnight.

And did eat bread with him in his house - An ancient token of friendship and affection; compare Psalm 41:9; Proverbs 9:5; Proverbs 23:6; Jeremiah 41:1.

And every man also gave him a piece of money - This is probably one of the earliest instances in which money is mentioned in history. It is, of course, impossible now to determine the form or value of the "piece of money" here referred to. The Hebrew word (קשיטה *qeśîyṭâh*), occurs only in this place and in Genesis 33:19, where it is rendered "pieces of money," and in Joshua 24:32, where it is rendered "pieces of silver." It is evident, therefore, that it was one of the earliest names given to coin, and its use

here is an argument that the book of Job is of very early origin. Had it been composed at a later age, the word "shekel," or some word in common use to denote money, would have been used. The Vulgate here renders the word *"ovem,"* a sheep; the Septuagint in like manner, ἀμνάδα *amnada* "a lamb;" and so also the Chaldee. In the margin, in both the other places where the word occurs Genesis 33:19; Joshua 24:32, it is also rendered "lambs."

The reason why it is so rendered is unknown. it may have been supposed that in early times a sheep or lamb having something like a fixed value, might have been the standard by which to estimate the value of other things; but there is nothing in the etymology of the word to support this interpretation. The word in Arabic (*kasat*) means to divide out equally, to measure; and the Hebrew word probably had some such signification, denoting that which was measured or weighed out, and hence became the name of a certain "weight" or "amount" of money. It is altogether probable that the first money consisted of a certain amount of the precious metals "weighed out," without being "coined" in any way. It is not an improbable supposition, however, that the figure of a sheep or lamb was the first figure stamped on coins, and this may be the reason why the word used here was rendered in this manner in the ancient versions. On the meaning of the word, Bochart may be consulted, "Hieroz." P. i. Lib. c. xliii. pp. 433-437; Rosenmuller on Genesis 33:19; Schultens "*in loc*;" and the following work in Ugolin's "Thes. Antiq. Sacr." Tom. xxviii., "Otthonis Sperlingii Diss. de nummis non cusis," pp. 251-253,298-306. The arguments of Bochart to prove that this word denotes a piece of money, and not a lamb, as it is rendered by the Vulgate, the Septuagint, the Syriac, the Arabic, and by Onkelos, are briefly:

(1) That in more than an hundred places where reference is made in the Scriptures to a lamb or a sheep, this word is not used. Other words are constantly employed.

(2) The testimony of the rabbis is uniform that it denotes a piece of money. Akiba says that when he traveled into Africa he found there a coin which they called *kesita* So Rabbi Solomon, and Levi Ben Gerson, in their commentaries, and Kimchi, Pomarius, and Aquinas, in their Lexicons.

(3) The authority of the Masoretes in relation to the Hebrew word is the same. According to Bochart, the word is the same as קשׂט *qāshaṭ* or קשׁט *qoshe*ṭ changing the Hebrew letter שׂ for the Hebrew letter שׁ. The word means true, sincere, Psalm 60:6; Proverbs 22:21. According to this, the name was given to the coin because it was made of pure metal - unadulterated silver or gold. See this argument at length in Bochart.

(4) The feminine form of the noun used here shows that it does not mean a lamb - it being wholly improbable that the friends of Job would send him ewe lambs only.

(5) In the early times of the patriarchs - as early as the time of Jacob - money was in common use, and the affairs of merchandise were conducted by that as a medium; Genesis 17:12-13; Genesis 47:16.

(6) The statement in Acts 7:16, leads to the supposition that "money" is referred to by the word as used in Genesis 33:19. If, as is there supposed, the purchase of the same field is referred to in Genesis 23:16; Genesis 23:19, then it is clear that money is referred to by the word. In Genesis 23:16 it is said that Abraham paid for the field of Ephron iu Macpelah "four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant." And if the same purchase is referred to in both these places, then by a comparison of the two, it appears that the kesita was heavier than the shekel, and contained about four shekels. It is not easy, however, to determine its value.

And every one an earring of gold - The word rendered "earring" (נזם *nezem*) may mean a ring for the nose Genesis 24:47; Isaiah 3:21; Proverbs 11:22; Hosea 2:13, as well as for the ear, Genesis 35:4. The word "ring" would better express the sense here without specifying its particular use; compare Judges 8:24-25; Proverbs 25:12. Ornaments of this kind were much worn by the ancients (compare Genesis 24:22), and a contribution of these from each one of the friends of Job would constitute a valuable property; compare Exodus 32:2-3. It was not uncommon for friends thus to bring presents to one who was restored from great calamity. See the case of Hezekiah, 2 Chronicles 32:23.

Verse 12

So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job - To wit, by giving him double what he had possessed before his calamities came upon him; see Job

42:10.

For he had fourteen thousand sheep … - The possessions which are here enumerated are in each instance just twice as much as he possessed in the early part of his life. In regard to their value, and the rank in society which they indicated, see the notes at Job 1:3. The only thing which is omitted here, and which it is not said was doubled, was his "household," or "husbandry" (Job 1:3, "margin"), but it is evident that this must have been increased in a corresponding manner to have enabled him to keep and maintain such flocks and herds. We are not to suppose that these were granted to him at once, but as he lived an hundred and forty years after his afflictions, he had ample time to accumulate this property.

Verse 13

He had also seven sons and three daughters - The same number which he had before his trials. Nothing is said of his wife, or whether these children were, or were not, by a second marriage. The last mention that is made of his wife is in Job 19:17, where he says that "his breath was strange to his wife, though he entreated her for the children's sake of his own body." The character of this woman does not appear to have been such as to have deserved further notice than the fact, that she contributed greatly to increase the calamities of her husband. It falls in with the design of the book to notice her only in this respect, and having done this, the sacred writer makes no further reference to her. The strong presumption is, that the second family of children was by a second marriage. See Prof. Lee on Job, p. 26. It would not, however, have fallen in with the usual manner in which "a wife" is mentioned in the Scriptures, to represent her removal as "in any circumstances" a felicitous event, and, as it could have been represented in no other light, if it had actually occurred, it is delicately passed over in silence. Even under all these circumstanccs - with a former wife who was impious and unfeeling; who served only to aggravate the woes of her holy and much afflicted husband; who saw him pass through his trials without sympathy and compassion - a second marriage is not mentioned as a desirable event, nor is it referred to as one of the grounds on which Job could felicitate himself on his return to prosperity. The children are mentioned; the whole reference to the second marriage relation, if it occurred, is delicately passed over. Under no circumstances would the sacred penman mention it as an event laying the ground for felicitation.

Verse 14

And he called the name of the first, Jemima - It is remarkable that in the former account of the family of Job, the names of none of his children are mentioned, and in this account the names of the daughters only are designated. "Why" the names of the daughters are here specified, is not intimated. They are significant, and they are "so" mentioned as to show that they contributed greatly to the happiness of Job on the return of his prosperity, and were among the chief blessings which gladdened his old age. The name Jemima (ימימה *yemîymâh*) is rendered by the Vulgate *"Diem,"* and by the Septuagint, Ἡμέραν *Hēmeran* "Day." The Chaldee adds this remark: "He gave her the name Jemima, because her beauty was like the day." The Vulgate, Septuagint, and Chaldee, evidently regarded the name as derived from יום *yôm* "day," and this is the most natural and obvious derivation. The name thus conferred would indicate that Job had now emerged from the "night" of affliction, and that returning light shone again on his tabernacle. It was usual in the earliest periods to bestow names because they were significant of returning prosperity (see Genesis 4:25), or because they indicated hope of what would be in their time Genesis 5:29, or because they were a pledge of some permanent tokens of the divine favor; see the notes at Isaiah 8:18. Thomas Roe remarks ("Travels," 425), that among the Persians it is common to give names to their daughters derived from spices, unguents, pearls, and precious stones, or anything which is regarded as beautiful or valuable. See Rosenmuller, "Alte u. neue Morgenland," No. 779.

And the name of the second Kezia - The name Kezia (קציעה *qetsîyʿâh*) means cassia, a bark resembling cinnamon, but less aromatic. "Gesenius." It grew in Arabia, and was used as a perfume. The Chaldee paraphrasist explains this as meaning that he gave her this name because "she was as precious as cassia." Cassia is mentioned in Psalm 45:8. as among the precious perfumes. "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." The agreeableness or pleasantness of the perfume was the reason why the name was chosen to be given to a daughter.

And the name of the third, Keren-happuch - Properly, "horn of stibium." The "stibium" (פוך *pûk*), was a paint or dye made originally, it is supposed, from sea-weed, and afterward from antimony, with which females tinged their eye-lashes; see the notes at Isaiah 54:11. It was esteemed as an ornament of great beauty, chiefly because it served to make the eye appear larger. Large eyes are considered in the East as a mark of

beauty, and the painting of black borders around them gives them an enlarged appearance. It is remarkable that this species of ornament was known so early as the time of Job, and this is one of the cases, constantly occurring in the East, showing that fashions there do not change. It is also remarkable that the fact of painting in this manner should have been considered so respectable as to be incorporated into the name of a daughter; and this shows that there was no attempt at "concealing" the habit. This also accords with the customs which prevail still in the East. With us, the materials and instruments of personal adorning are kept in the back-ground, but the Orientals obtrude them constantly on the attention, as objects adapted to suggest agreeable ideas. The "process" of painting the eye is described by a recent traveler to be this: "The eye is closed, and a small ebony rod smeared with the composition is squeezed between the lids so as to tinge the edges with the color. This is considered to add greatly to the brilliancy and power of the eye, and to deepen the effect of the long black eye-lashes of which the Orientals are proud. The same drug is employed on their eye-brows; used thus, it is intended to elongate, not to elevate the arc, so that the inner extremities are usually represented as meeting between the eyes. To Europeans the effect is at first seldom pleasing; but it soon becomes so." The foregoing cuts give a representation of the vessels of stibium now in use.

Verse 15

And their father gave them inheritance among their brethren - This is mentioned as a proof of his special regard, and is also recorded because it was not common. Among the Hebrews the daughter inherited only in the case where there was no son, Numbers 27:8. The property was divided equally among the sons, with the exception that the oldest received a double portion; see Jahn's "Bib. Arch." section 168. This custom, prevailing still extensively in the East, it seems existed in the time of Job, and it is mentioned as a remarkable circumstance that he made his daughters heirs to his property with their brothers. It would also be rather implied in the passage before us that they were equal heirs.

Verse 16

After this Job lived an hundred and forty years - As his age at the time his calamities commenced is not mentioned, it is of course impossible to determine how old he was when he died. The Septuagint, however, has undertaken to determine this, but on what authority is unknown. They

render this verse, “And Job lived after this affliction an hundred and seventy years: so that all the years that he lived were two hundred and forty.” According to this, his age would have been seventy when his afflictions came upon him; but this is a mere conjecture. Why the authors of that version have added thirty years to the time which he lived after his calamities, making it an hundred and seventy instead of an hundred and forty as it is in the Hebrew text, is unknown. The supposition that he was about seventy years of age when his calamities came upon him, is not an unreasonable one.

He had a family of ten children, and his sons were grown so as to have families of their own, Job 1:4. It should be remembered, also, that in the patriarchal times, when people lived to a great age, marriages did not occur at so early a period of life as they do now. In this book, also, though the age of Job is not mentioned, yet the uniform representation of him is that of a man of mature years; of large experience and extended observation; of one who had enjoyed high honor and a wide reputation as a sage and a magistrate; and when these circumstances are taken into the account, the supposition of the translators of the Septuagint, that he was seventy years old when his afflictions commenced, is not improbable. If so, his age at his death was two hundred and ten years. The age to which he lived is mentioned as remarkable, and was evidently somewhat extraordinary. It is not proper, therefore, to assume that this was the ordinary length of human life at that time, though it would be equally improper to suppose that there was anything like miracle in the case.

The fair interpretation is, that he reached the period of old age which was then deemed most honorable; that he was permitted to arrive at what was then regarded as the outer limit of human life; and if this be so, it is not difficult to determine “about” the time when he lived. The length of human life, after the flood, suffered a somewhat regular decline, until, in the time of Moses, it was fixed at about threescore years and ten, Psalm 90:10. The following instances will show the regularity of the decline, and enable us, with some degree of probability, to determine the period of the world in which Job lived. Noah lived 950 years; Shem, his son, 600; Arphaxad, his son, 438 years; Salah, 433 years; Eber, 464; Peleg, 239; Reu, 239; Serug, 230; Nahor, 248; Terah, 205; Abraham, 175; Isaac, 180; Jacob, 147; Joseph, 110; Moses, 120; Joshua, 110. Supposing, then, the age of Job to have been

somewhat unusual and extraordinary, it would fall in with the period somewhere in the time between Terah and Jacob; and if so, he was probably contemporary with the most distinguished of the patriarchs.

And saw his sons, … - To see one‘s posterity advancing in years and honor, and extending themselves in the earth, was regarded as a signal honor and a proof of the divine favor in the early ages. Genesis 48:11, “and Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face; and lo, God hath also showed me thy seed.” Proverbs 17:6, “children‘s children are the crown of old men.” Psalm 128:6, “yea, thou shalt see thy children‘s children;” compare Psalm 127:5; Genesis 12:2; Genesis 17:5-6; Job 5:25; and the notes at Isaiah 53:10.

Verse 17

So Job died, being old and full of days - Having filled up the ordinary term of human life at that period of the world. He reached an honored old age, and when he died was not prematurely cut down. He was “regarded” as an old man. The translators of the Septuagint, at the close of their version, make the following addition: “And it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord will raise up.” This is translated out of a Syrian book. “He dwelt indeed in the land of Ausitis, on the confines of Idumea and Arabia. His first name was Jobab; and having married an Arabian woman, he had by her a son whose name was Ennon. He was himself a son of Zare, one of the sons of Esau; and his mother‘s name was Bosorra; so that he was the fifth in descent from Abraham. And these were the kings who reigned in Edom, over which country he also bore rule. The first was Balak, the son of Beor, and the name of his city was Dannaba. And after Balak, Jobab, who is called Job; and after him, Asom, who was governor (ἡγεμών *hēgemōn*) from the region of Thaimanitis; and after him, Adad, son of Barad, who smote Madian in the plain of Moab; and the name of his city was Getham. And the friends who came to him were Eliphaz of the sons of Esau, the king of the Thaimanites; Bildad, the sovereign (τύραννος *turannos*) of the Saueheans; and Sopher, the king of the Manaians.” What is the authority for this statement is now entirely unknown, nor is it known from where it was derived. The remark with which it is introduced, that it is written that he would be raised up again in the resurrection, looks as if it were a forgery made after the coming of the Savior, and has much the appearance of being an attempt to support the doctrine of the resurrection by the authority of this

ancient book. It is, at all events, an unauthorized addition to the book, as nothing like it occurs in the Hebrew.

Concluding Remarks

We have now gone through with an exposition of the most ancient book in the world, and the most difficult one in the sacred volume. We have seen how sagacious men reason on the mysterious events of Divine Providence, and how little light can be thrown on the ways of God by the profoundest thinking, or the acutest observation. We have seen a good man subjected to severe trials by the loss of all his property and children, by a painful and loathsome disease, by acute mental sorrows, by the reproaches of his wife, by the estrangement of his surviving kindred, and then by the labored efforts of his friends to prove that he was a hypocrite, and that all his calamities had come upon him as a demonstration that he was at heart a bad man. We have seen that man struggling with those arguments; embarrassed and perplexed by their ingenuity; tortured by the keenness of the reproaches of his friends; and under the excitement of his feelings, and the pressure of his woes, giving vent to expressions of impatience and irreverent reflection on the government of God, which he afterward had occasion abundantly to regret. We have seen that man brought safely through all his trials; showing that, after all that "they" had said and that "he" had said and suffered, he was a good man. We have seen the divine interposition in his favor at the close of the controversy; the divine approbation of his general character and spirit; and the divine goodness shown him in the removal of his calamities, in his restoration to health, in the bestowment on him of double his former possessions; and in the lengthening out his days to an honored old age. In his latter days we have seen his friends coming around him again with returning affection and confidence; and a happy family growing up to cheer him in his declining years, and to make him honored in the earth. In view of all these things, and especially of the statements in the chapter which closes the book, we may make the following remarks:

(1) The upright will be ultimately honored by God and man. God may bring afflictions upon them, and they may "seem" to be objects of his displeasure; but the period will arrive when he will show them marks of his favor. This may not "always," indeed, be in the present life, but there will be a period when all these clouds will be dissipated, and when the good, the pious, the sincere friends of God, shall enjoy the returning tokens of his friendship. If his approbation of them is declared in no intelligible way in

this life, it will be at the day of judgment in a more sublime manner even than it was announced to Job; if the whole of this life should be dark with storms, yet there is a heaven where, through eternity, there will be pure and unclouded day. In like manner, honor will be ultimately shown to the good and just by the world. At present friends may withdraw; enemies may be multiplied; suspicions may attach to a man‘s name; calumny and slander may come over his reputation like a mist from the ocean.

But things will ultimately work themselves right. A man in the end will have all the reputation which he ought to have. He who has a character that “ought” to be loved, honored, and remembered, will be loved, honored, and remembered; and he who has such a character that he ought to be hated or forgotten, will be. It may not “always,” indeed, be in the present life; but there is a current of public favor and esteem setting toward a good man while living, which always comes up to him when he is dead. The world will do justice to his character; and a holy man, if calumniated while he lives, may safely commit his character to God and to the “charitable speeches” (“Bacon,”) of men, and to distant times, when he dies. But in most instances, as in the case of Job, if life is lengthened out, the calumniated, the reproached, and the injured, will find justice done them before they die. Reproaches in early or middle life will be succeeded by a fair and wide reputation in old age; the returning confidence of friends will be all the compensation which this world can furnish for the injury which was done, and the evening of life spent in the enjoyment of friendship and affection, will but precede the entrance on a better life, to be spent in the eternal friendship of God and of all holy beings.

(2) We should adhere to our integrity when passing through trials. They may be long and severe. The storm that rolls over us may be very dark, and the lightning‘s flash may be vivid, and the thunder deep and long. Our friends may withdraw and reproach us; those who should console us may entreat us to curse God and die; one woe may succeed another in rapid succession, and each successive stroke be heavier than the last; years may roll on in which we may find no comfort or peace; but we should not despair. We should not let go our integrity. We should not blame our Maker. We should not allow the language of complaint or murmuring to pass our lips, nor ever doubt that God is good and true. There is a good reason for all

that he does; and in due time we shall meet the recompense of our trials and our fidelity. No pious and submissive sufferer ever yet failed of ultimately receiving the tokens of the divine favor and love.

(3) The expressions of divine favor and love are not to be expected in the midst of angry controversy and heated debate. Neither Job nor his friends appear to have enjoyed communion with God, or to have tasted much of the happiness of religion, while the controversy was going on. They were excited by the discussion; the argument was the main thing; and on both sides they gave vent to emotions that were little consistent with the reigning love of God in the heart, and with the enjoyment of religion. There were high words; mutual criminations and recriminations; strong doubts expressed about the sincerity and purity of each other‘s character; and many things were said on both sides, as there usually is in such cases, derogatory to the character and government of God. It was only after the argument was closed, and the disputants were silenced, that God appeared in mercy to them, and imparted to them the tokens of his favor.

Theological combatants usually enjoy little religion. In stormy debate and heated discussion there is usually little communion with God and little enjoyment of true piety. It is rare that such discussions are carried on without engendering feelings wholly hostile to religion; and it is rare that such a controversy is continued long, in which much is not said on both sides injurious to God - in which there are not severe reflections on his government, and in which opinions are not advanced which give abundant occasion for bitter regret. In a heated argument a man becomes insensibly more concerned for the success of his cause than for the honor of God, and will often advance sentiments even severely reflecting on the divine governmcnt, rather than confess the weakness of his own cause, and yield the point in debate. In such times it is not an inconceivable thing that even good people should be more anxious to maintain their own opinions than to vindicate the cause of God, and would be more willing to express hard sentiments about their Maker than to acknowledge their own defeat.

(4) From the chapter before us Job 42:11, we are presented with an interesting fact, such as often occurs. It is this: friends return to us, and become exceedingly kind “after” calamity has passed by. The kindred and

acquaintances of Job withdrew when his afflictions were heavy upon him; they returned only with returning prosperity. When afflicted, they lost their interest in him. Many of them, perhaps, had been dependent on him, and when his property was gone, and he could no longer aid them, they disappeared of course. Many of them, perhaps, professed friendship for him "because" he was a man of rank, and property, and honor; and when he was reduced to poverty and wretchedness, they also disappeared of course. Many of them, perhaps, had regarded him as a man of piety; but when these calamities came upon him, in accordance with the common sentiments of the age, they regarded him as a bad man, and they also withdrew from him of course.

When there were evidences of returning prosperity, and of the renewed favor of God, these friends and acquaintances again returned. Some of them doubtless came back "because" he was thus restored. "Swallow-friends, that are gone in the winter, will return in the spring, though their friendship is of little value." "Henry." That portion of them who had been sincerely attached to him as a good man, though their confidence in his piety had been shaken by his calamities, now returned, doubtless with sincere hearts, and disposed to do him good. They contributed to his needs; they helped him to begin the world again they were the means of laying the foundation of his future prosperity; and in a time of real need their aid was valuable, and they did all that they could to minister consolation to the man who had been so sorely afflicted. In adversity, it is said, a man will know who are his real friends. If this is true, then this distinguished and holy patriarch had few friends who were truly attached to him, and who were not bound to him by some consideration of selfishness. Probably this is always the case with those who occupy prominent and elevated situations in life. True friendship is oftenest found in humble walks and in lowly vales.

(5) We should overcome the unkindness of our friends by praying for them; see Job 42:8, note; Job 42:10, note. This is the true way of meeting harsh reproaches and unkind reflections on our character. Whatever may be the severity with which we are treated by others; whatever charges they may bring against us of hypocrisy or wickedness; however ingenious may be their arguments to prove this, or however cutting their sarcasm and retorts, we should never refuse to pray for them. We should always be

willing to seek the blessing of God upon them, and be ready to bear them on our hearts before the throne of mercy. It is one of the privileges of good people thus to pray for their calumniators and slanderers; and one of our highest honors, and it may be the source of our highest joys, is that of being made the instruments of calling down the divine blessing on those who have injured us. It is not that we delight to triumph over them; it is not that we are now proud that "we" have the evidence of divine favor; it is not that we exult that they are humbled, and that we now are exalted; it is that we may be the means of permanent happiness to those who have greatly injured us.

(6) The last days of a good man are not unfrequently his best and happiest days. The early part of his life may be harassed with cares; the middle may be filled up with trials; but returning prosperity may smile upon his old age, and his sun go down without, a cloud. His heart may be weaned from the world by his trials; his true friends may have been ascertained by their adhering to him in reverses of fortune, and the favor of God may so crown the evening of his life, that to him, and to all, it shall be evident that he is ripening for glory. God is often pleased also to impart unexpected comforts to his friends in their old age; and though they have suffered much and lost much, and thought that they should never "again see good," yet he often disappoints the expectations of his people, and the most prosperous times come when they thought all their comforts were dead. In the trials through which we pass in life, it is not improper to look forward to brighter and better days, as to be yet possibly our portion in this world; at all events, if we are the friends of God, we may look forward to certain and enduring happiness in the world that is to come.

(7) The book, through whose exposition we have now passed, is a most beautiful and invaluable argument. It relates to the most important subject that can come before our minds - the government of God, and the principles on which his administration is conducted. It shows how this appeared to the reflecting people of the earliest times. It shows how their minds were perplexed with it, and what difficulties attended the subject after the most careful observation. It shows how little can be accomplished in removing those difficulties by human reasoning, and how little light the most careful observation, and the most sagacious reflections, can throw on this

perplexing subject. Arguments more beautiful, illustrations more happy, sentiments more terse and profound, and views of God more large and comprehensive, than those which occur in this book, can be found in no works of philosophy; nor has the human mind in its own efforts ever gone beyond the reasonings of these sages in casting light on the mysterious ways of God. They brought to the investigation the wisdom collected by their fathers and preserved in proverbs; they brought the results of the long reflection and observation of their own minds; and yet they threw scarce a ray of light on the mysterious subject before them, and at the close of their discussions we feel that the whole question is just as much involved in mystery as ever. So we feel at the end of all the arguments of man without the aid of revelation, on the great subjects pertaining to the divine government over this world. The reasonings of philosophy now are no more satisfactory than were those of Eliphaz, Zophar, and Bildad, and it may be doubted whether, since this book was written, the slightest advance has been made in removing the perplexities on the subject of the divine administration, so beautifully stated in the book of Job.

(8) The reasonings in this book show the desirableness and the value of revelation. It is to be remembered that the place which the reasonings in this book should be regarded as occupying, is properly “before” any revelation had been given to people, or before any was recorded. If it is the most ancient book in the world, this is clear; and in the volume of revealed truth it should be regarded as occupying the first place in the order in which the books of revelation were given to man. As introductory to the whole volume of revelation - for so it should be considered - the book of Job is of inestimable worth and importance. It shows how “little” advance the human mind can make in questions of the deepest importance, and what painful perplexity is left after all the investigations that man can make. It shows what clouds of obscurity rest on the mind, whenever man by himself undertakes to explain and unfold the purposes of Deity. It shows how little philosophy and careful observation can accomplish to explain the mysteries of the divine dealings, and to give the mind solid peace in the contemplation of the various subjects that so much perplex man.

There was no better way of showing this than that adopted here. A great and good man falls. His comforts all depart. He sinks to the lowest degree

of wretchedness. To explain this, and all kindred subjects, his own mind is taxed to the utmost, and four men of distinguished sagacity and extent of observation are introduced - the representatives of the wisdom of the world - to explain the fact. They adduce all that they had learned by tradition, and all that their own observation had suggested, and all the considerations which reason would suggest to them; but all in vain. They make no advances in the explanation, and the subject at the close is left as dark as when they began. Such an effect, and such a train of discussion, is admirably fitted to prepare the mind to welcome the teachings of revelation, and to be grateful for that volume of revealed truth which casts such abundant light on the questions that so perplexed these ancient sages. Before the book of revelation was given, it was well to have on record the result of the best efforts which man could make to explain the mysteries of the divine administration.

As a specimen of early poetry, and an illustration of the early views of science and the state of the arts, of incomparable beauty and sublimity, also, this book is invaluable. Almost four thousand years have passed away since this patriarch lived, and since the arguments recorded in the book were made and recorded. Men have made great advances since in science and the arts. The highest efforts, probably, of which the human mind is capable, have since been made in the department of poetry, and works have been produced destined certainly to live on to the consummation of all things. But the sublimity and beauty of the poetry in this book stand still unsurpassed, unrivaled. As a mere specimen of composition, apart from all the questions of its theological bearing; as the oldest book in the world; as reflecting the manners, habits, and opinions of an ancient generation; as illustrating more than any other book extant the state of the sciences, the ancient views of astronomy, geology, geography, natural history, and the advances made in the arts, this book has a higher value than can be attached to any other record of the past, and demands the profound attention of those who would make themselves familiar with the history of the race.

The theologian should study it as an invaluable introduction to the volume of inspired truth; the humble Christian, to obtain elevated views of God; the philosopher, to see how little the human mind can accomplish on the most important of all subjects without the aid of revelation; the child of

sorrow, to learn the lessons of patient submission; the man of science, to know what was understood in the far distant periods of the past; the man of taste, as an incomparable specimen of poetic beauty and sublimity. It will teach invaluable lessons to each advancing generation; and to the end of time true piety and taste will find consolation and pleasure in the study of the Book of Job. God grant that this effort to explain it may contribute to this result. To that God who inclined my heart to engage in the attempt to explain this ancient book, and who has given me health, and strength, and the means to prosecute the study with advantage, I now devote this exposition. I trust it may do good to others; it has been profitable and pleasant to my own soul.

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MAIN CONTENTS

Contents

PSALMS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Psalm

Section 1. "The Title to the Book of Psalm."

The general title to the Book of Psalms in Hebrew is תהלים *Tehilliym* Psalms, or more fully, ספר תהלים *Sêpher Tehilliym* "Book of Psalms?" Sometimes a shorter title is used - תלים *Tilliym* Other terms are used as appropriate to particular psalms, as מזמורים *mizmôriym* or שׁירים *shîyriym* songs; or in the singular, מזמור *mizmôr* and שׁיר *shîyr* a song. These latter titles, however, are not given to the entire collection, but to particular psalms. The former title - מזמור *mizmôr* - is given to Psalm 3:1-8; Psalm 4:1-8; Psalm 5:1-12; Psalm 6:1-10; Psalm 8:1-9; Psalm 12:1-8; Psalm 13:1-6; Psalm 15:1-5; Psalm 19:1-14; Psalm 20:1-9; Psalm 21:1-13; Psalm 23:1-6; and to 39 others, the last being Psalm 143:1-12, rendered uniformly "a psalm." The latter title, שׁיר *shîyr* occurs in Psalm 30:1-12; Psalm 46:1-11; and in 27 other psalms, the last being Psalm 134:1-3, and is uniformly rendered "song," though it is sometimes connected with the word מזמור *mizmôr* psalm, and rendered "A song and psalm," as in Psalm 48:1-14; Psalm 65:1-13; Psalm 67:1-7; Psalm 75:1-10; Psalm 87:1-7; Psalm 122:1-9; Psalm 123:1-4; Psalm 124:1-8 it is connected with the word degrees: "A song of degrees."

The word תהלים *Tehilliym* is derived from the verb - הלל *hâlal* to praise, as in the word "Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah." The name is given to the general collection, because praise, more than anything else, is the characteristic of the book, and because the collection seems to have been designed to be used in the public praise or worship of God. They were all probably thus used in Hebrew worship.

The word "Psalms," as applied to the collection, we have derived from the Greek translation, the word ψαλμοὶ *psalmoi* in the plural - "psalmos" (a psalm) and "psalmoi" (psalms). This word is derived from ψάλλω *psallō* to touch, to twitch, to pluck - as the hair or beard; and then, to touch or twitch a string, "to twang," that is, to cause it to vibrate by touching or twitching it with the finger or with a "plectrum" (πλῆκτρον *plēktron*) - an instrument for striking the strings of a lyre, as a quill. Cic. N. D., 2. 59. Hence, the word is applied to instruments of music employed in praise, and then to acts of praise in general. The noun - ψαλμός *psalmos* - "psalm," means properly

"a touching, twang," as of a bowstring, or of stringed instruments; then a song, as accompanying stringed instruments; and then specifically a psalm or song of praise to God. Thus, the verb - ψάλλω *psallō* - is used in the New Testament as denoting "praise" in the following places: Romans 15:9, "I will confess … and "sing" unto Thy name;" 1 Corinthians 14:15, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding;" Ephesians 5:19, "Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;" James 5:13, "Is any merry? let him sing psalms."

The verb does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The "noun" - ψαλμός *psalmos* - is used in the New Testament in the following places as denoting psalms in general: 1 Corinthians 14:26, "Every one of you hath a psalm;" Ephesians 5:19, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms;" Colossians 3:16, "Admonishing one another in psalms." In the following places it is applied in the New Testament to the Book of Psalms, considered as a collection of songs of praise; - Luke 20:42, "David himself saith in the Book of Psalms;" - Luke 24:44, "All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me:" see the notes on that passage; - Acts 1:20, "It is written in the Book of Psalms;" - Acts 13:33, "It is also written in the second psalm." The word does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament.

Section 2. "The Authors of the Psalm."

The Psalms thus collected into a book are by no means the production of one poet or one age. They stretch through a long period of Jewish history, certainly from the time of Moses to the time of the return from the captivity of Babylon, and probably later, and they are modified by all the varieties incident to the peculiarities of their respective authors; to individual and national history; to the times in which they were composed. So many of them, however, are the composition of David, that it is customary to speak of them as "The Psalms of David," though it is probable that not much more than half of the psalms in the collection were written by him. Of the 150 psalms comprising the collection, according to the enumeration in the Hebrew manuscripts, not quite one half are usually ascribed to him. According to DeWette, 74; to Kennicott, 66; to DeRossi, 67; to Rosenmuller and Eichhorn, 71; and to Hengstenberg, 80. It is probable, however, that a portion of the psalms to which no name is prefixed in the title - but how great a portion it is impossible now to determine - is the

production of David. Still, so many are known to have been composed by him, and he was so eminent as a poet, as to justify the language which is so frequently employed when they are called familiarly "The Psalms of David."

The following persons are mentioned in the titles as authors of psalms:

(1) One psalm Psalm 75:1-10; Psalm 76:1-12; Psalm 79:1-13; Psalm 82:1-8; Psalm 1:1-6. The reason for this arrangement cannot now be known. DeWette (Einleitung, III. iii.) supposes that, with the exception of Psalm 1:1-6. and Psalm 79:1-13 to the destruction of the temple and the city; Psalm 42:1-11; Psalm 46:1-11; Psalm 47:1-9; Psalm 48:1-14; Psalm 84:1-12; Psalm 85:1-13; Psalm 87:1-7; Psalm 42:1-11. It is not certain whether these were composed by "the sons of Korah," or were composed for "the sons of Korah;" that is, for the company of musicians to whom the direction of the music in the temple was confided. It is obvious, however, that if the meaning is that they were composed by "the sons of Korah," this furnishes no information as to the individual authorship of the psalms. By which one of them they were composed, or whether by more than one, of course is not indicated by a title so general. DeWette supposes that most of these psalms pertain to the times of the Exile, or to a later period. There is nothing very unique in the character of these psalms; nothing which in themselves could lead us to conclude that they were composed by those to whom they are ascribed, rather than by David or Asaph.

(5) Two psalms, 1 Kings 4:31, they are mentioned among others as remarkable for their wisdom: "For he, Solomon, was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol." In 1 Chronicles 2:6, they are mentioned as "sons of Zerah:" "Zimri, and Ethan, and Heman, and Calcol, and Dara." In 1 Chronicles 6:33, a Heman is mentioned as one of the "sons of the Kohathites:" "Heman, a singer, the son of Joel." So, in 1 Chronicles 15:17, he is mentioned in connection with Ethan, who is there said to be the son of Kushaiah; and in 1 Chronicles 15:19, he is mentioned as associated with Asaph and Ethan: "So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were appointed to sound with cymbals of brass." In 1 Chronicles 25:1, Helman is mentioned with Jeduthun, as one of those whose sons "should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals." He is there referred to as

associated with Asaph. Compare 2 Chronicles 5:12; 2 Chronicles 29:13-14; 2 Chronicles 35:15. Ethan is twice mentioned - 1 Kings 4:31 as above, as a wise man, and 1 Chronicles 2:6, as above. Compare the notes on the introduction to Psalm 127:1-5, are ascribed to Solomon, or are "for Solomon." See the notes on the titles to those psalms (Psalm 120:1-7. They are grouped together because they appear to have been used on certain special occasions, rather than from anything special in the psalms themselves.

(8) Some of the psalms are ascribed in the Septuagint translation to Jeremiah, to Ezekiel, to Haggai, and to Zechariah. As there is nothing corresponding to this in the Hebrew titles, this must have been, of course, mere conjecture or tradition.

(9) There remains a pretty large number of the collection the names of whose authors are not mentioned; and, of course, there are now no means of determining the question in regard to the authorship. Such are s. 150. These, it will be seen, are irregularly scattered through the book, though they are, for the most part, near its close.

In regard to the origin and authority of the titles to the several psalms, see section 4.

Section 3. "The Formation of the Collection and Arrangement of the Book of Psalm."

The Jewish Talmud (Cod. Berachot, 1,9) ascribes the formation of the Psalter, or the assembling of the Book of Psalms, to David. It is unnecessary to remark that this cannot be a correct opinion, since many of the psalms are indubitably of a later date than the time of David. Most of the Christian fathers, and many critics of modern times, ascribe the collection and arrangement of the Book to Ezra, and this is now regarded as the most probable opinion; and if so the whole collection must have been formed about 450 years before Christ. But though this may be regarded as the correct opinion in regard to the completion of the whole as it now stands, yet there is evidence in the psalms themselves of the existence of smaller collections made before from which the general one was ultimately formed. By whom those smaller collections were made is not now known, nor can it

be ascertained what changes may have been made in them when the general collection was formed.

The Book is divided in the Hebrew text into five minor books or collections, sufficiently marked in their character, and so indicated at the close of each as to make it every way probable that these may have been "published," so to speak, in the form of different books, or that the later were additions to the first collection or volume. This division is found also in the Septuagint version - a fact which proves that it existed as early as the year 200 b.c. These portions bear marks of being not "arbitrary" divisions made at the time when the general collection was formed, but distinct and independent collections by different persons. The grouping is not precisely accurate, that is, in the first part, the "Psalms of David" Psalm 41:13. All the psalms in this collection, except Psalm 1:1-6; Psalm 2:1-12; Psalm 42:1-11 and Psalm 43:1-5; and Psalm 117:1-2). It is probable that this collection was early made, though DeWette has endeavored to show that it could not have been until after the exile, since he supposes that Psalm 14:1-7 and Proverbs 25:1; and as 2 Chronicles 29:30 he "commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David." (Kitto, Encyclopedia)

The second book in the general collection comprises Psalm 72:20 the following notice is given: "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended;" and some have supposed that this was the close of the entire psalms preceding it, as one book or collection, Psalm 53:1-6 is the same as Psalm 14:1-7; with only slight variations - the variations consisting mainly in the fact that the word אלהים *'Elohiym* is used as the name of God in the latter, in the place of יהוה *Yahweh* in the former. It cannot be supposed that a collector would have used the same psalm with such a variation in the same collection. So also Psalm 70:1-5 is only a repetition of Psalm 40:13-17, with only a similar change.

It may be "suggested" that these two collections may have been subsequently "united," and may have constituted as one before the more general collection was made. Thus, the natural "close" of this collection, as of the first collection Psalm 41:13, would be with the words "Amen, and Amen," Psalm 72:19. To the "entire" collection - the two combined - these words may have been added Psalm 72:20, "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended," meaning that "now" an entire and complete collection of

the Psalms of David had been made in the "two" combined; or, that "as many had been combined for public worship as were then intended to be used in that service." This idea would not prevent the supposition that there may have been at that time, in fact, other psalms of David in existence; or that they might have been subsequently introduced into the worship of God in "other" collections.

The third book Psalm 72:20, that "the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." It was evidently the design of the author of the compilation at the "close" of that book not to admit in the following book any of the psalms of David; perhaps it was the intention "not" to collect anymore of the psalms of David for the purpose of public worship. Possibly, as DeWette (Einleitung, p. 21) suggests, the author of the collection in the third book put the notice at the end of the second book that David's psalms ended there, it being his intention to make a collection of another kind. when this collection was made is unknown. From Psalm 85:1-13 it would seem probable that it was made as late as the return from the captivity at Babylon. That psalm may have been written by one of the company called "the sons of Korah;" or it may have been composed for their use in the sanctuary. This collection closes, like the two former, with the expressive "Amen, and Amen," Psalm 89:52,

The fourth collection Psalm 101:1-8; Psalm 106:48 with the expression "Amen, Hallelujah."

The fifth and last book Psalm 108:1-13; Psalm 110:1-7; Psalm 122:1-9; Psalm 124:1-8; Psalm 131:1-3; Psalm 133:1-3; the four last being among the "Songs of Degrees," Psalm 138:1-8; Psalm 140:1-13; Psalm 141:1-10; Psalm 142:1-7; Psalm 143:1-12; Psalm 144:1-15; Psalm 111:1-10; Psalm 112:1-10; Psalm 113:1-9; Psalm 114:1-8; Psalm 117:1-2; Psalm 137:1-9; Psalm 146:1-10; Psalm 148:1-14; Psalm 149:1-9; Psalm 150:1-6 are anonymous. By whom, and when this last collection was made is unknown. It may without improbability, however, be supposed perhaps that it was made by the person (Ezra?) who undertook to collect into one the entire "books" already existing, and who found many psalms that had not been included by the collectors of the previous books, and who, therefore,

grouped all these together in a single book, to be added in the general collection to those which had been already classified and arranged.

Section 4. "The Titles to the Several Psalm."

All the psalms, except Psalm 30:1-12; Psalm 52:1-9; Psalm 56:1-13; etc. Some combine several of these things together, the author, the occasion, the style of the poetry, the music to be used, etc., as Psalm 52:1-9; Psalm 53:1-6; Psalm 54:1-7; Psalm 56:1-13. The longest and fullest of these titles is that prefixed to Psalm 60:1-12; where we have the dedication to the chief musician, the name of the author, the style of the poetry, the design of the psalm, the instrument of music to be employed, and the historical occasion on which the psalm was composed.

(d) It is very difficult at this distance of time to explain the "meaning" of many of these titles, and critics have differed very materially in their conjectures on this subject. The difficulty arises in a considerable degree from our ignorance in regard to the temple-music, and to the instruments which were employed. The difficulty is the same which would exist two or three thousand years from the present time in explaining a book, now familiar, containing "tunes" of music, and a reference to the instruments of music which are now employed in the public service of God. It might be difficult, if not impossible, so to describe the exact instrument of music used as to be intelligible to a future age; and it would be obviously impossible to explain satisfactorily the "names" of many of the "tunes" which are now in common use - as "Mear," "Martin's," "Russia, "Windham," "Lenox." The difficulty, as has been remarked above, was felt even at the time when the Septuagint version was made, as in several instances the authors of that version have not attempted even to translate the title, but have expressed it in Greek letters answering to the Hebrew. Coverdale, who translated the Bible in 1535, felt the difficulty to be so great that he has omitted nearly all the titles except the names of the authors. In these notes, as far as an explanation can now be given that is satisfactory or probable, it will be offered in the exposition of the particular psalms.

(e) There has been a wide difference of opinion respecting the "authority" of these titles. Not a few modern critics, especially German critics, regard them as of no authority, and argue in respect to the authorship of the psalms, and the time and occasion on which they were composed, as if no such titles were found in the Hebrew. By most of the ancient critics

they were considered as genuine, and as having equal authority with the psalms themselves. They were wholly rejected at the close of the fourth century by Theodore of Mopsuestia, one of the ablest and most judicious of the ancient interpreters. Rosenmuller, Hist. Interp. Librorum Sacrorum, P. III, p. 256. Tholuck and Hengstenberg admit their authority. The "objections" to the authority of the title are such as these:

(1) That the "subscriptions" at the close of the epistles in the New Testament are now regarded as of no historical value, and it is asked why may not the same conclusion be adopted in regard to the titles "prefixed" to the psalms?

(2) that the ancient versions, the Syriac and the Greek especially, exhibit them with great variations, often altering the Hebrew, and sometimes giving a heading where the Hebrew has none. It is asked whether these ancient translators would have taken such liberties if the titles had been considered sacred like the psalms themselves? (Kitto). - It is added on this point, that "if ever Ezra settled them, the variations in versions and manuscripts have tended since to make them doubtful." Eichhorn, "Einleitung," III, p. 490.

(3) It is argued that the titles are at variance with the contents of the psalms. Thus, it is alleged that sometimes the name of the author is incorrectly given, "as when David is named over the psalms referring to the captivity," as in Psalm 14:1-7; Psalm 30:1-12.

It is to be observed, however, that these writers sometimes assume that a psalm refers to the time of the exile when it would be possible to explain it on the supposition that it was composed at an earlier date; and that it is not always safe to argue from the internal evidence of a psalm against the inscription. A critic affixes his own interpretation to a psalm, and then adopts that as a basis of argument in regard to its origin; whereas often, possibly in all cases, if the inscription were assumed to be correct, it would not be difficult to explain the psalm, by fair rules of interpretation, in accordance with that supposition.

On the whole, it seems to me that these inscriptions are to be regarded as a part of the inspired record, and as having the authority of inspiration. The

fact that they are found in the Hebrew - that they can be traced back to the earliest periods when we have any knowledge of the Hebrew text - that they have come down to us with that text - furnishes proof which it seems we cannot now set aside; that they are to be regarded as a part of the text, and that they should not be rejected, except as any other portion of the Hebrew text should be rejected, i. e., only when it can be demonstrated that an error has crept into the text by the fault of transcribers.

Section 5. “The General Character of the Book of Psalm.”

The Psalms are mostly lyrical poetry, that is, poetry adapted to the harp or lyre; to be used in connection with instrumental music; to be “sung,” not “read.” Such poetry was common among the ancients, as it is among the moderns. Anacreon, Alcaeus, Stesichous, Sappho, and Horace were eminent among the ancients as “lyric” poets; and the numerous writers of “songs,” sacred and secular, among the moderns, are to be ranked in the same class. The phrase “lyric poetry” now, however, is frequently applied to that species of poetry which “directly expresses the individual emotions of the poet” (Webster).

Lyric poetry is, for the most part, an expression of deep feeling, and has its foundation in feeling or emotion. It is not so much the fruit of the understanding as of the heart; not so much the creation of the imagination as the utterance of deep personal emotion. It embraces in its design and nature all kinds of feeling, and may be joyous, pensive, desponding, triumphant, according to the feelings of the author, or to the occasion, for all these utterances may be sung, or may be set to music, the varying tones of music being adapted to express them all. Hence, in the Psalms, 150 in number, and composed by a considerable variety of individuals, and on many different occasions, we have the varied feelings of trouble, anguish, fear, hope, joy, trust, thankfulness, devotion to God, penitence for sin, and the exultation of forgiveness - the heart moved, and finding vent for its feelings in words adapted to the melody of the lyre, or the musical tones of the voice. These feelings are expressed in a great variety of modes or forms, and the music was intended, doubtless, to be in accordance with these varied feelings. The Psalms, therefore, comprise compositions of the following classes or orders:

(1) Hymns in which the praise of God is the principal and leading object, as

(a) in general, God is praised as the God of nature and of men, Psalm 8:1-9; Psalm 19:1-14; Psalm 29:1-11; Psalm 65:1-13; Psalm 93:1-5; Psalm 47:1-9; Psalm 67:1-7; Psalm 75:1-10;

(d) as the helper and deliverer of his people, Psalm 46:1-11; Psalm 48:1-14; Psalm 75:1-10; Psalm 76:1-12; Psalm 30:1-12; Psalm 138:1-8.

(2) Psalms pertaining to the Hebrew nation; to its history; to the Divine interposition in its behalf; and to its relation to Yahweh. Ps. Psalm 114:1-8.

(3) temple psalms, or songs of Zion. Psalm 5:1-12; Psalm 15:1-5; Psalm 24:1-10; Psalm 87:1-7; Psalm 56:1-13; Psalm 79:1-13; Psalm 137:1-9; Psalm 12:1-8; Psalm 14:1-7; Psalm 36:1-12; and many others.

(5) Religious and moral psalms, Psalm 23:1-6; Psalm 121:1-8; Psalm 127:1-5; Psalm 128:1-6; Psalm 42:1-11; Psalm 43:1-5; Psalm 101:1-8; Psalm 131:1-3; Psalm 1:1-6; Psalm 133:1-3; Job 35:10; songs indicating the joy that may spring up in the soul of man in times of distress and sorrow; songs that show that there "is" joy in the darkness of this world; songs which illustrate the power and the value of religion; songs with which men cheer themselves and each other in their journey toward the grave; songs which even the guilty may pour forth from hearts softened into penitence, and filled with thankfulness in the assurance of pardon.

It is most remarkable that this rich poetry should have sprung up in Palestine, and that it should have been confined to that land. It was not that the land was better adapted to lyric poetry than other lands - for in this respect it could not compare favorably with many other countries, and particularly with Greece. It was not that the events of their history had been such as peculiarly to suggest this kind of composition - for poetry adapted to the lyre or to music abounded elsewhere, and especially in Greece. It was not that the Hebrews had a more poetic imagination than other people - for theirs did not, in this respect, surpass the Greek genius, and whatever there was of poetic imagination in the character of their minds was found with equal richness in Arabia and Persia. Nor was it that their language was especiallly favorable for this kind of poetry - for in very many respects it was far inferior in this point to the Greek, and had no superiority certainly over the Arabian and Persian.

The fact that their poetry took this turn; the fact that all which they had was religious; the fact that there was literally no poetry in their language that was designed and adapted to the dance, to festive amusements, to

Bacchanalian orgies, to scenes of gaiety, frivolity, and vanity; the fact that in all the lyric poetry of the Hebrews there is literally nothing in this respect that can be placed by the side of much in the Greek lyric poetry - much in Horace - much in Burns; by the side of the lyric poetry of all lands except Palestine, can be traced only to the idea that the new religion prevailed there, and can be best explained on the supposition that the authors of that poetry were inspired to prepare and transmit to future times that which, in all ages, would express the feelings of true devotion, and which might be permanently employed in the praises of God. He will fail to explain the fact that such poetry is found in Palestine alone, and will fail to appreciate its true nature, who does not admit that these "sweet singers" were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

On the general character of Hebrew poetry, see the introduction to the notes on the Book of Job, Section 5. On "the origin and culture of lyric poetry among the Hebrews," it may be proper to introduce here the following remarks from DeWette's "Commentar ueber die Psalmen," Einleitung, II, pp. 6-12. I copy from the elegant translation of the introduction of DeWette, by Prof. John Torrey, in the Biblical Repository, Vol. III, pp. 450-456:

"If we follow the titles of the Psalms and the common opinion, we must suppose the lyric poetry of the Hebrews, as well as the largest portion of the Psalms themselves, a production of David and his contemporaries. The few specimens of lyric composition which we find before David scarcely enter into consideration, compared with the fertility of his own period. In the earlier history it is but occasionally that the voice of poetry is heard, as in the songs of Moses at the Red Sea, of Deborah, and of Hannah. We are surprised, after so few attempts in lyric poetry, to see so accomplished and fruitful a poet rise up all at once, with several others in his company. So rapid a progress supposes some adequate occasion, some preparatory steps. Now, if we cast our eye over the history of the times immediately preceding the age of David, we are presented with a phenomenon which seems to explain the difficulty.

It is Samuel's school of the prophets. Many, as Herder, Eichhorn, Nachtigall, and Rosenmuller, suppose that the composition of psalms was

cultivated and brought to perfection in this seminary. Specious as this conjecture appears, it is hardly reconcilable with the facts of the history. It is not intimated that David, before his unction, had any connection with Samuel. The former tends his father‘s flock. Indeed Samuel appears to have had no acquaintance with David when he comes to anoint him, 1 Samuel 16:6 ff. Yet, David is already a skillful minstrel, and famed for his art, 1 Samuel 16:18; he was not, therefore, a disciple of Samuel, at least in minstrelsy. But it is well known that music and song at this period were not separated; we must therefore suppose that David was already a poet, and, as such, known and celebrated. Some time afterward, it is true, we find David in Samuel‘s school of the prophets, but it is only on the occasion of his flight from Saul, 1 Samuel 19:18 ff.

It may be possible that Samuel had some acquaintance with David prior to his unction, though no mention is made of it in the account of that transaction, Judges 11:34. At Shiloh the maidens held a yearly feast with dances, Judges 21:21. It may be questioned whether Samson was not a minstrel, for he is called out to play before the Philistines, Judges 16:25, which is commonly understood to refer to the dance, but excludes not the accompaniments of song and instrumental music. But even if he was not, strictly speaking, a musician and singer, yet we meet in him with the first “Mashal” poet, as we have also from the same period the masterly apologue of Jotham. Such facts, though insulated, presuppose among a people a considerably high degree of cultivation, or at least of poetical capacity.

Indeed, the song of Deborah alone proves that the poetic art was already arrived at a stage of improvement sufficient to account for the origin of the Davidian poetry. Whether a period produces one admirable poem or more is a matter of chance rather than the result of the state of culture. Besides, the times of the judges and of Samuel constituted the heroic age of the Hebrews, a period peculiarly favorable to the first beginnings and gradual improvement of poetry. ‹Such times,‘ says Eichhorn, ‹are poetical under every climate;‘ but I cannot add with him, ‹that poetry, in this case, is like the nation, wild and heroic, breathes only in the warlike trump, and knows no field for practice but that of valor and victory with their attendant train.‘ The occasions which first called forth the Hebrew poets were, probably enough, connected with war; but when poetry has once sprung into life, she

confines herself to no such narrow limits, and draws still other objects within her circle. With feasts of victory, sacrifices, dances, and other rites were united, which might easily have tempered the song to a tone of somewhat softer character. Even warlike songs admit of the gentler emotions, and the song of Deborah is rich in touches of amiable feeling. When it is said they sung to the trumpet, we are certainly not to understand it in the literal sense; the music of the harp, of the flute, and of the timbrel, was the accompaniment even of the songs of war, and these instruments are adapted to the softest tones. We are not then obliged to trace the origin of the sweet and amiable poetry of David‘s psalms exclusively to Samuel‘s school of the prophets.

“Unfortunately we know far too little about the prophetic school of Samuel to determine what influence it had on the cultivation of poetry. The passages relating to it are 1 Samuel 10:5; 1 Samuel 19:19-20. In the first of these it is undoubtedly implied that the disciples of the prophets had music among them. and their ‹prophesying‘ (התנבא *hitenabē'*) has been understood, not without grounds, in the sense of song, for the word נביא *nâbîy'* sometimes signifies poet, Exodus 15:20, and נבא *nibâ'* to sing, 1 Chronicles 25:1 ff. We may suppose, however, that this music was employed simply as a support and accompaniment of the prophetic delivery. The prophets probably delivered their messages, in the earlier times at least, in connection with music and a vehement action and declamation approaching to a dance. The passage in 2 Kings 3:15 ff. is remarkable. The prophet Elisha is about to pronounce the answer of the Lord to certain inquiries of Jehoshaphat; but before he does it, he asks for a minstrel; and as the latter strikes the harp, ‹the hand of Yahweh comes upon him,‘ and he utters his reply.

The case here, it is true, is different; the prophet does not play and sing himself, but submits to the performance of another; still it shows the constant connection of music with the prophetic office. Neither is it distinctly asserted in the passages above that the company of the prophets “sung” themselves. The word התנבא *hitenabē'* which is there employed, may not perhaps signify “to sing,” for Saul and Saul‘s messengers prophecy - התנבאו *hitenabe'û* - as soon as they hear the music, without preparation or practice. Their prophesying was perhaps nothing more than a vehement

action, dancing, and gesticulation, as we see from the circumstance of Saul‘s falling down naked. At the farthest, they might have joined in the choral song with the company of prophets. Such choral chants were perhaps sung in the school of Samuel, but only for the purposes of devotion and inspiration; and the proper design of this school was to educate youth for the prophetic office, that is, to give counsel from the Lord to a people under a theocratic government.

Samuel was a prophet, and history has preserved no remains of any poetical works of his. Is it not most probable that he was aiming to educate his disciples likewise for the prophetic office? Now, it is true that the Hebrews drew no accurate line of distinction between lyric poetry and prophetic eloquence; yet these two always differ, particularly in the mode of delivery, for the lyric poem was probably sung, while the prophetic message was only recited. Supposing, then, Samuel was employed in forming his disciples to be prophetic poets or speakers, what is more natural than to imagine that some of them might feel drawn by genius and inclination to lyric poetry, and succeed in perfecting themselves in this? Yet it lay out of the plan of the prophetic school, and was a thing quite accidental. It is hardly correct, therefore, to consider the prophetic school of Samuel simply as an institution for the cultivation of singing and poetry.

“There were other institutions which may have had an influence still more important and decided than this school of the prophets in promoting the culture of lyric poetry, especially of the religious kind. I refer particularly to those musical schools which, according to the account, 1 Chronicles 15:16 ff. were founded by David in aid of the public worship. Yet I cannot retract the unfavorable opinion I once pronounced upon these and similar narratives in the Chronicles; I must rather confirm it. Besides the reasons there alleged, which I may not repeat, it seems to me to be a circumstance particularly calculated to excite suspicion, that the psalms and fragments of psalms represented by the Chronicles to have been sung at the dedication of the tabernacle and on similar occasions can hardly have been penned by David, but belong rather to the later and less pure style of the temple poetry. The psalm which is sung, 1 Chronicles 16:8 ff, is composed Psalm 96:1-13; but both are productions of a later style. If the Chronicles had presented us on this occasion with a genuine song of David, such as the

elegy for which we are indebted to 1 Chronicles 16:41, and elsewhere, respecting the Levites who were appointed to give thanks to the Lord, ‹because his mercy endureth forever,‘ betrays the later poetry of the temple, an example of which we have in 1 Kings 4:32. It is singular, however, that with the exception of two which are quite uncertain, no psalms of Solomon are preserved in our present collection; nor do we find any psalm with the author‘s name belonging to the period after Solomon, not even one which admits of being referred with certainty and of necessity to any particular event in the history of those times; and yet such lyric poems as those of Hezekiah and of Habakkuk clearly evince, that during this period the culture of lyric composition had by no means fallen into neglect.

On the contrary, we have many psalms which, according to the results of a sound critical exegesis almost universally acknowledged, must be placed in the times of the captivity, and after the captivity; and these psalms rank, for purity of language, and for sublimity, beauty, and freshness of conception, in the highest class, and are, in no respect, inferior to the poems of David and his contemporaries, for example, Psalm 79:1-13; Psalm 5:10, "destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against thee."

Psalm 10:15, "break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man: seek out his wickedness until thou find none."

Psalm 18:40-42, "thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that might destroy them that hate me. They cried, but there was none to save them: even unto the Lord, but he answered them not. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in streets."

Psalm 28:4, "give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavors: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert."

Psalm 31:17, "let me not be ashamed, O Lord, for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave."

Psalm 35:3-8, “draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. Let them be founded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the Lord chase them. Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the Lord persecute them. For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul. Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.”

Psalm 40:14, “let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil.”

Psalm 55:9, “destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 1

Introduction

The first psalm has no title prefixed to it, which is the case, also, with many others, Psalm 117:1-2, and others. It is now in vain to attempt to search for the cause of this omission. On the origin and authority of the titles prefixed to the Psalms, see the introduction, Section 4. Some have supposed that the reason why no title was affixed to this psalm was that the general title, "The Psalms of David," was prefixed to the whole book, and that that was a sufficient indication of the author of this the first in the series. But this is mere conjecture, and this reason would no more make proper the omission of the title to the first psalm than of any other that came under that general title. In some manuscripts (2 codices of Rossi) this psalm is not numbered; in some others (4 codices of Kennicott, and 3 codices of Rossi) it is united with the second psalm, and the two are reckoned as one.

It is, however, manifestly a distinct composition from the second psalm. It has a unity of its own, as the second has also; and there are almost no two psalms in the whole collection which might not be united with as much propriety as these. It is impossible now to ascertain the authorship of the psalm, though the common opinion is probably the correct one, that it was composed by David. But on what occasion it was written it is now equally impossible to discover. There are no historical allusions in it which would enable us to determine the occasion on which it was written, as there is nothing in it which certainly determines its authorship. The terms employed are of the most general character, and the sentiments are applicable to all times and all lands. It has all the marks of being a general introduction to the Book of Psalms, and of having been designed to express in a few sentences the substance of the entire collection, or to state the great principle which would be found to run through the whole of it - that a righteous life will be attended with prosperity and happiness, and that the life of the wicked will be followed by sorrow and ruin. This was the great principle of the Jewish theocracy; and was of sufficient importance to be stated clearly in the commencement of a book that was designed to illustrate so fully the nature and the value of true religion. Compare Psalm 1:1-3. This consists also of two minor parts:

(1) His character Psalm 1:1-2, and this is described also in two forms - negatively and positively.

(a) Negatively. He does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful, Psalm 1:1.

(b) Positively. He delights in the law of the Lord, and he has pleasure in meditating continually on his truth, Psalm 1:2.

(2) his prosperity, as the result of being righteous, Psalm 1:3. His condition is compared with that of a tree planted in a well-watered place, whose leaves are always green, and whose fruit never fails; so whatever he does shall prosper.

II. The condition of the unrighteous, or the strong contrast between the unrighteous and the righteous, Psalm 1:4-6. Their condition and destiny are expressed in three forms:

(1) They are like chaff which the wind drives away, Psalm 1:4.

(2) They shall not be acquitted in the judgment, nor have a place among the righteous, Psalm 1:5.

(3) They shall not be approved by God, but shall perish, Psalm 1:6.

Verse 1

Blessed is the man - That is, his condition is a happy or a desirable one. The word used here, אשר *'esher* means properly, "happiness" or "blessedness." It is found, however, only in the plural form and in the construct state, and takes the nature and force of an interjection - " O the happiness of the man!" or "O happy man!" Deuteronomy 33:29: "happy art thou, O Israel!" 1 Kings 10:8: "happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants!" Job 5:17: "happy is the man whom God correcteth!" Psalm 2:12: "blessed are all they that put their trust in him!" See also Psalm 32:1-2; Psalm 33:12; Psalm 34:8; Psalm 40:4; Psalm 41:1; Psalm 65:4; Psalm 84:4-5, Psalm 84:12, et al., where it is rendered "blessed." The word is of the most general character, and, in itself, would embrace all that is supposed to constitute real happiness. The particular kind of blessedness referred to here, as explained in the subsequent part of the psalm, consists in the fact that he avoids the companionship of the wicked; that he has pleasure in the law of the Lord; that he will be prospered in this world; and that he will not perish at lasts. The word "man" here, also, is of the most general character, and is designed to include all people, of all times and of all conditions, who possess the character referred to. The term is applicable to the poor as well as to the rich; to the low as well as to the exalted; to the servant as well as to

the master; alike to the aged, the middle-aged, and the young. All who have the character here described come under the general description of the happy man - the man whose condition is a happy and a desirable one.

That walketh not - Whose character is that he does not walk in the manner specified. Prof. Alexander renders this, "Who has not walked." But it implies more than this; it refers to more than the past. It is the characteristic of the man, always and habitually, that he does not thus walk; it has not only been true in the past, but it is true in the present, and will be true in the future. It is that which distinguishes the man. The word "walk" is often used in the Scriptures to denote a way of life or conduct - since life is represented as a journey, and man as a traveler. Psalm 15:2: "who walketh uprightly." Compare 1 Kings 9:4; Deuteronomy 19:9; Deuteronomy 28:9; Psalm 81:12-13; Isaiah 33:15.

In the counsel - After the manner, the principles, the plans of this class of men. He does not take counsel of them as to the way in which he should live, but from the law of the Lord, Psalm 1:2. This would include such things as these: he does not follow the advice of sinners, 2 Samuel 16:20; 1 Kings 1:12; he does not execute the purposes or plans of sinners, Isaiah 19:3; he does not frame his life according to their views and suggestions. In his plans and purposes of life he is independent of them, and looks to some other source for the rules to guide him.

Of the ungodly - The wicked. The word used here is general, and would embrace all kinds and degrees of the unrighteous. It is not so specific, and would, in itself, not indicate as definite, or as aggravated depravity, as the terms which follow. The general sentiment here is, that the man referred to is not the companion of wicked men.

Nor standeth - This indicates more deliberation; a character more fixed and decided.

In the way - The path where they are found, or where they usually go. His standing there would be as if he waited for them, or as if he desired to be associated with them. Instead of passing along in his own regular and proper employment, he stations himself in the path where sinners usually go, and lingers and loiters there. Thus, he indicates a desire to be with them. This is often, in fact, illustrated by men who place themselves, as if they had nothing to do, in the usual situation where the wicked pass along, or where they may be met with at the corners of the streets in a great city.

Of sinners - חטאים *chaṭṭâ'iym* This word means literally, those who miss the mark; then, those who err from the path of duty or rectitude. It is often used to denote any kind or degree of sin. It is more specific than the former word rendered "ungodly," as denoting those who depart from the path of duty; who fail in regard to the great end of life; who violate positive and known obligations.

Nor sitteth - This implies still greater deliberation and determination of character than either of the other words employed. The man referred to here does not casually and accidentally walk along with them, nor put himself in their way by standing where they are ordinarily to be found; but he has become one of them by occupying a seat with them; thus deliberately associating with them. He has an established residence among the wicked; he is permanently one of their number.

In the seat - The seat which the scornful usually occupy; the place where such men converse and sit together - as in a ball-room, or in a "club," where wicked men hold their meetings, or where infidels and scoffers are accustomed to assemble.

Of the scornful - לצים *lētsiym* This word properly means those who mock, deride, scoff; those who treat virtue and religion with contempt and scorn. Proverbs 1:22; Proverbs 3:34; Proverbs 9:7-8; Proverbs 13:1; Proverbs 15:12, et saepe. It denotes a higher and more determined grade of wickedness than either of the other words employed, and refers to the consummation of a depraved character, the last stage of wickedness, when God and sacred things are treated with contempt and derision. There is hope of a man as long as he will treat virtue and religion with some degree of respect; there is little or none when he has reached the point in his own character in which virtue and piety are regarded only as fit subjects for ridicule and scorn. We have here, then, a beautiful double gradation or climax, in the nouns and verbs of this verse, indicating successive stages of character. There is, first, casual walking with the wicked, or accidentally falling into their company; there is then a more deliberate inclination for their society, indicated by a voluntary putting of oneself in places where they usually congregate, and standing to wait for them; and then there is a deliberate and settled purpose of associating with them, or of becoming permanently one of them, by regularly sitting among them.

So also it is in regard to the persons with whom they associate. They are, first, irreligious men in general; then, those who have so far advanced in

depravity as to disregard known duty, and to violate known obligations; and then, those who become confirmed in infidelity, and who openly mock at virtue, and scoff at the claims of religion. It is unnecessary to say that, in both these respects, this is an accurate description of what actually occurs in the world. He who casually and accidentally walks with the wicked, listening to their counsel, will soon learn to place himself in their way, and to wait for them, desiring their society, and will ultimately be likely to be feared identified with open scoffers; and he who indulges in one form of depravity, or in the neglect of religion in any way, will, unless restrained and converted, be likely to run through every grade of wickedness, until he becomes a confirmed scoffer at all religion. The sentiment in this verse is, that the man who is truly blessed is a man who does none of these things. His associations and preferences are found elsewhere, as is stated in the next verse.

Verse 2

But his delight - His pleasure; his happiness. Instead of finding his happiness in the society and the occupations of the wicked, he finds it in the truth of God. The law or truth of God is not distasteful to him, but he so delights in it as to desire to become more and more acquainted with it, and to have its truths impressed more and more on his heart.

In the law of the Lord - The law of Yahweh - the small capitals in the translation indicating here as elsewhere that the original word is Yahweh. The word law in the Scriptures is used in a considerable variety of significations. The Hebrew word תורה *tôrâh* properly means instruction, precept; and then, an injunction, command, law, in the usual sense of the word. It was applied particularly to the Pentateuch, or law of Moses (compare the notes at Luke 24:44), as containing the first written and recorded laws of God; and then the word came, in a more general sense, to be applied to all the books of the Old Testament, as being an exposition and application of the law. Here the word undoubtedly refers to the written revelation of the will of God as far as it was then made known. On the same principle, however, the declaration here made would apply to any part of a divine revelation; and hence, the sentiment is, that a truly pious man finds his highest delight in the revealed truths of God. This is often referred to as characteristic of true piety. Compare Psalm 19:10; Psalm 119:97, Psalm 119:99.

And in his law - On his law, or his truth. "He doth meditate." The word used here, הגה *hâgâh* means properly to complain, to mutter; then, to speak; then, to utter in a low complaining voice, as is often done by a person in deep meditation; hence, in the usual sense, to meditate on anything; to think of it. So Joshua 1:8: "Thou shalt meditate therein (the law) day and night." Psalm 77:12: "I meditate on all thy work." Proverbs 15:28: "the heart of the righteous meditateth what to answer." The meaning here is, he thinks of it; he endeavors to understand its meaning; he has pleasure in reflecting on it. It is not a subject which he puts away from him, or in respect to which he is indifferent, but he keeps it before his mind, and has satisfaction in doing it.

Day and night - That is, continually - as day and night constitute the whole of time. The meaning is:

(a) he does this habitually, or he intentionally forms the habit of meditating on divine truth, by disciplining his mind in order that he may do it;

(b) he takes time to do it - designedly setting apart suitable portions of each day, that, withdrawn from the cares of life, he may refresh his spirit by contemplating divine truth, or may become better acquainted with God, and with his duty to him, and may bring to bear upon his own soul more directly the truths pertaining to eternal realities;

(c) he does this in the intervals of business, the moments of leisure which he may have during the day - having thus an unfailing subject of reflection to which his mind readily reverts, and in which, amid the cares and toils of life, he finds relaxation and comfort; and

(d) he does it in the wakeful hours of night, when sick and tossed upon his bed, or when, for any other reason, his "eyes are held waking." Psalm 63:5-6: "my soul shall be upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches." Psalm 119:54: "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." Compare Psalm 119:23, Psalm 119:43; Psalm 143:5. It is probable that the psalmist had the injunction in his mind which is contained in Joshua 1:8.

Verse 3

And he shall be like a tree - A description of the happiness or prosperity of the man who thus avoids the way of sinners, and who delights

in the law of God, now follows. This is presented in the form of a very beautiful image - a tree planted where its roots would have abundance of water.

Planted by the rivers of water - It is not a tree that springs up spontaneously, but one that is set out in a favorable place, and that is cultivated with care. The word "rivers" does not here quite express the sense of the original. The Hebrew word פלג *peleg* from פלג *pâlag* to cleave, to split, to divide), properly means divisions; and then, channels, canals, trenches, branching-cuts, brooks. The allusion is to the Oriental method of irrigating their lands by making artificial rivulets to convey the water from a larger stream, or from a lake. In this way, the water was distributed in all directions. The whole land of Egypt was anciently sluiced in this manner, and it was in this way that its extraordinary fertility was secured. An illustration of the passage may be derived from the account by Maundrell of the method of watering the gardens and orchards in the vicinity of Damascus. "The gardens are thick set with fruit trees of all kinds, kept fresh and verdant by the waters of the Barady … . This river, as soon as it issues out of the cleft of the mountain before mentioned, into the plain, is immediately divided into three streams, of which the middlemost and largest runs directly to Damascus, and is distributed to all the cisterns and fountains of the ciy. The other two, which I take to be the work of art, are drawn round, the one to the right, and the other to the left, on the borders of the gardens, into which they are let out, as they pass, by little rivulets, and so dispersed over all the vast wood, insomuch that there is not a garden but has a fine, quick stream running through it." Trav., p. 122.

A striking allusion to trees cultivated in this manner occurs in Ezekiel 31:3-4: "Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon, with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of a high stature, and his top was among the thick boughs. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high, with his rivers running round about his plants, and sent out his little rivers unto all the trees of the field." So Ecclesiastes 2:4: "I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees." No particular kind of tree is referred to in the passage before us, but there are abundant illustrations of the passage in the rows of willow, oranges, etc., that stand on the banks of these artificial streams in the East. The image is that of a tree abundantly watered, and that was flourishing.

That bringeth forth his fruit in his season - Whose fruit does not fall by the lack of nutriment. The idea is that of a tree which, at the proper season of the year, is loaded with fruit. Compare Psalm 92:14. The image is one of great beauty. The fruit is not untimely. It does not ripen and fall too soon, or fall before it is mature; and the crop is abundant.

His leaf also shall not wither - By drought and heat. Compare Job 8:16, note; Job 15:32, note. It is green and flourishing - a striking image of a happy and a prosperous man.

And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper - This is a literal statement of what had just been put in a figurative or poetic form. It contains a general truth, or contains an affirmation as to the natural and proper effect of religion, or of a life of piety, and is similar to that which occurs in 1 Timothy 4:8: "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." This idea of the effect of a life of piety is one that is common in the Scriptures, and is sustained by the regular course of events. If a man desires permanent prosperity and happiness, it is to be found only in the ways of virtue and religion. The word "whatsoever" here is to be taken in a general sense, and the proper laws of interpretation do not require that we should explain it as universally true. It is conceivable that a righteous man - a man profoundly and sincerely fearing God - may sometimes form plans that will not be wise; it is conceivable that he may lose his wealth, or that he may be involved in the calamities that come upon a people in times of commercial distress, in seasons of war, of famine, and pestilence; it is conceivable that he may be made to suffer loss by the fraud and dishonesty of other men; but still as a general and as a most important truth, a life of piety will be followed by prosperity, and will constantly impart happiness. It is this great and important truth which it is the main design of the Book of Psalms to illustrate.

Verse 4

The ungodly are not so - literally, "Not thus the wicked." For the word ungodly, see the notes at Psalm 1:1. The statement that the "wicked are not so," is a general statement applicable alike to their character and destiny, though the mind of the author of the psalm is fixed immediately and particularly on the difference in their destiny, without specifying anything particularly respecting their character. It is as true, however, that the ungodly do walk in the counsel of the wicked, and stand in the way of

sinners, and sit in the seat of the scornful, as it is that the righteous do not; as true that they do not delight in the law of the Lord, as it is that the righteous do; as true that the wicked are not like a tree planted by the channels of water, as it is that the righteous are. This passage, therefore, may be employed to show what is the character of the ungodly, and in so applying it, what was before negative in regard to the righteous, becomes positive in regard to the wicked; what was positive, becomes negative. Thus it is true:

(a) that the wicked do walk in the counsel of the ungodly; do stand in the way of sinners; do sit in the seat of the scornful;

(b) that they do not delight in the law of the Lord, or meditate on his word; and

(c) that they are not like a tree planted by the waters, that is green and beautiful and fruitful.

Both in character and in destiny the ungodly differ from the righteous. The subsequent part of the verse shows that, while the general truth was in the mind of the writer, the particular thing on which his attention was fixed was, his condition in life - his destiny - as that which could not be compared with a green and fruitful tree, but which suggested quite another image.

But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away - When the wheat was winnowed. This, in Oriental countries, was commonly performed in the open field, and usually on an eminence, and where there was a strong wind. The operation was performed, as it is now in our country, when a fan or fanning-mill cannot he procured, by throwing up the grain as it is threshed with a shovel, and the wind scatters the chaff, while the grain falls to the ground. See the notes at Matthew 3:12.

This very naturally and appropriately furnished an illustration of the destiny of the wicked. Compared with the righteous, they were like the worthless chaff driven away by the wind. The image is often found in the Scriptures. See Job 21:18, note; Isaiah 17:13, note. Compare also Psalm 35:5; Isaiah 29:5; Isaiah 41:15; Daniel 2:35; Hosea 13:3. The idea here is, that the wicked are in no respect like the green and fruitful tree referred to in Psalm 1:3. They are not like a tree in any respect. They are not even like a decaying tree, a barren tree, a dead tree, for either of these would suggest

some idea of stability or permanency. They are like dry and worthless chaff driven off by the wind, as of no value to the farmer - a substance which he is anxious only to separate wholly from his grain, and to get out of his way. The idea thus suggested, therefore, is that of intrinsic worthlessness. It will be among other things, on this account that the wicked will be driven away - that they are worthless in the universe of God - worthless to all the purposes for which man was made. At the same time, however, there may be an implied contrast between that chaff and the useful grain which it is the object of the farmer to secure.

Verse 5

Therefore - Because they are thus worthless.

The ungodly - See the notes at Psalm 1:1. The wicked in general; the wicked of any kind or degree.

Shall not stand - Compare the notes at Psalm 1:1. The idea is, that they will not be found among those who are acquitted by the Judge, and approved by him. The idea seems to be derived from the act of standing up to be tried, or to receive a sentence.

In the judgment - The Aramaic Paraphrase renders this, "in the great day" - understanding it of the day of judgment. The Septuagint and Vulgate render it, "the wicked shall not rise - ἀναστήσονται *anastēsontai* - resurgent - in judgment." Most of the Jewish interpreters, following the Aramaic Paraphrase, understand this as referring to the last judgment. Rosenmuller, *in loc*. The truth stated, however, seems to be more general than that, though that is probably included. The meaning is, that they would not share the lot of the righteous: in all places, and at all times, where character is determined, and where the divine estimate of human character is manifested, it would be found that they could not stand the trial, or abide the result, so as to have a place with the righteous. Their true character would in all such cases be shown, and they would be treated like the chaff that is driven away. This would be true alike in those situations of trial in the present life when character is determined, and at the last judgment, when the sentence will be pronounced which will determine the final doom of mankind.

Nor sinners - See the notes at Psalm 1:1.

In the congregation of the righteous - Be reckoned or regarded as belonging to the righteous. That is, in all the places where the righteous, as

such, are assembled, they will have no place: where they assemble to worship God; where they meet as his friends; where they unitedly participate in his favor; when, in the last day, they shall be gathered together to receive their reward, and when they shall be assembled together in heaven. The sinner has no place in the congregations of the people of God.

Verse 6

For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous - This is given as a reason why the wicked would not stand in the judgment with the righteous. The reason is, that the Lord, the great Judge, fully understands the character of those who are his friends, and can discriminate between them and all others, whatever pretences others may make to that character. Only those whom God approves, and loves, as his friends, will be able to stand in the day when the great decision shall be made. No one can impose on him by any mere pretensions to piety; no one can force his way to his favor, or to the rewards of the just, by power; no one can claim this in virtue of rank and station. No one can be admitted to the favor of God, and to the rewards of heaven, whose character is not such that it will bear the scrutiny of the Omniscient eve. Compare the notes at 2 Timothy 2:19. Man may be deceived in judging character, but God is not. When it is said that "the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous," the word "way" seems to be used to denote the whole of life - the manner of living (Notes, Psalm 1:1), and hence, the whole character. Perhaps there is included also the idea that the Lord knows the result of their manner of life - the issue to which it leads - and that, therefore, he can properly judge the righteous and assign them to that place in the future world, to wit, heaven, to which their actions tend.

But the way of the ungodly shall perish - The way or manner in which the ungodly live shall tend to ruin; their plans, and purposes, and hopes, shall come to nought. Their course, in fact, tends to destruction. None of their plans shall prosper in regard to religion: none of their hopes shall be fulfilled. In this, as in all other respects, they stand in strong contrast with the righteous, alike in this world and the world to come.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 2

Introduction

Section 1

The author. This psalm, like the one preceding, is without any title prefixed to it, and, like that, is without anything in the psalm itself to indicate its authorship. Its authorship must be learned, therefore, elsewhere, if it can be ascertained at all. There is, however, every reason to suppose that David was the author; and by those who admit the authority of the New Testament this will not be doubted. The reasons for supposing that its authorship is to be traced to David are the following:

(a) It is expressly ascribed to him in Acts 4:25-26: "Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?" etc. There can be no doubt that this psalm is here referred to, and the quotation in this manner proves that this was the common understanding among the Jews. It may be presumed that in a matter of this kind the general tradition would be likely to be correct; and to those who admit the inspiration of the apostles as bearing on points like this, the fact of its being quoted as the production of David is decisive.

(b) This is the common opinion respecting its origin among Hebrew writers. Kimchi and Aben Ezra expressly ascribe it to David, and they are supposed in this to express the prevailing opinion of the Hebrew people.

(c) Its place among the Psalms of David may, perhaps, be regarded as a circumstance indicating the same thing. Thus, to the seventy-second psalm there are none which are ascribed expressly to any other author than David (except the Psalm 2:6, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." But this will be considered in another place.

Section 2

The time when written. As we cannot with absolute certainty determine who was the author, it is, of course, not possible to ascertain the exact time when it was composed; nor, if it be admitted that David was the author, can we now ascertain what was the occasion on which it was written. There are no names of the kings and people who are represented as conspiring against the Anointed One who is the chief subject of the psalm; and there is no local allusion whatever except in the single phrase the "hill of Zion," in Psalm

2:6. The probability would seem to be that the psalm was not designed to refer to anything which had occurred in the time of the author himself, but, as will be seen in another part of these introductory remarks (Section 4), that the writer intended to refer mainly to the Messiah, who was to come in a distant age, although this may have been suggested by something which took place in the time of the writer.

The opposition made to David himself by surrounding nations, their attempts to overwhelm the Hebrew people and himself as their king, the fact that God gave him the victory over his foes, and established him as the king of his people, and the prosperity and triumph which he had experienced, may have given rise to the ideas and imagery of the psalm, and may have led him to compose it with reference to the Messiah, between whose treatment and his own there would be so strong a resemblance, that the one might suggest the other. If conjecture may be allowed where it is impossible to be certain, it may be supposed that the psalm was composed by David after the termination of the wars in which he had been engaged with surrounding nations, and in which he had struggled for the establishment of his throne and kingdom; and after he had been peacefully and triumphantly established as ruler over the people of God. Then it would be natural to compare his own fortunes with those of the Son of God, the future Messiah, who was to be, in his human nature, his descendant; against whom the rulers of the earth would also "rage," as they had against himself; whom it was the purpose of God to establish on a permanent throne in spite of all opposition, as he had established him on his throne; and who was to sway a scepter over the nations of the earth, of which the scepter that he swayed might be regarded as an emblem.

Thus understood, it had, in its original composition, no particular reference to David himself, or to Solomon, as Paulus supposed, or to any other of the kings of Israel; but it is to be regarded as having sole reference to the Messiah, in language suggested by events which had occurred in the history of David, the author. It is made up of the peaceful and happy reflections of one who had been engaged, in the face of much opposition, in establishing his own throne, now looking forward to the similar scenes of conflict and of triumph through which the Anointed One would pass.

Section 3

The structure and contents of the psalm. The psalm is exceedingly regular in its composition, and has in its structure much of a dramatic character. It naturally falls into four parts, of three verses each.

I. In the first Psalm 2:1-3 the conduct and purposes of the raging nations are described. They are in the deepest agitation, forming plans against Yahweh and His Anointed One, and uniting their counsels to break their bands asunder, and to cast off their authority, that is, as Psalm 2:6 shows, to prevent the establishment of the Anointed One as King on the holy hill of Zion. The opening of the psalm is bold and abrupt. The psalmist looks out suddenly on the nations, and sees them in violent commotion.

II. In the second part Psalm 2:4-6 the feelings and purposes of God are described. It is implied that he had formed the purpose, by a fixed decree (compare Psalm 2:7), to establish his Anointed One as king, and he now calmly sits in the heavens and looks with derision on the vain designs of those who are opposed to it. He smiles upon their impotent rage, and goes steadily forward to the accomplishment of his plan. He solemnly declares that he had established his King on his holy hill of Zion, and consequently, that all their efforts must be vain.

III. In the third part Psalm 2:7-9 the King himself, the Anointed One, speaks, and states the decree which had been formed in reference to himself, and the promise which had been made to him. That decree was, that he should be declared to be the Son of Yahweh himself; the promise was that he should, at his own request, have the nations of the earth for a possession, and rule over them with an absolute scepter.

IV. In the fourth part Psalm 2:10-12 the psalmist exhorts the rulers of the nations to yield to the claims of the Anointed One, threatening divine wrath on those who should reject him, and promising a blessing on those who should put their trust in him.

The psalm is, therefore, regularly constructed, and the main thought is pursued through the whole of it - the exalted claims and ultimate triumph of him who is here called “the Anointed;” the vanity of opposition to his decrees; and the duty and advantage of yielding to his authority. “The several sentences are also very regular in form, exhibiting parallelisms of

great uniformity." - Prof. Alexander. The psalm, in its construction, is one of the most perfect in the Book of Psalms, according to the special ideal of Hebrew poetry.

Section 4. The question to whom the psalm refers. There can be but three opinions as to the question to whom the psalm was designed to refer:

(a) That in which it is supposed that it refers exclusively to David, or to some other one of the anointed kings of Israel;

(b) that in which it is supposed that it had this original reference, but has also a secondary reference to the Messiah; and

(c) that in which it is supposed that it has exclusive and sole reference to the Messiah.

There are few who maintain the first of these opinions. Even Grotius, in respect to whom it was said, in comparison with Cocceius, that "Cocceius found Christ everywhere, and Grotius nowhere," admits that while, in his view, the psalm had a primary reference to David, and to the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Idumeans, etc., as his enemies, yet, in a more "mystical and abstruse sense, it pertained to the Messiah." The reasons why the psalm should not be regarded as referring exclusively to any Hebrew king are conclusive. They are summed up in this one: that the expressions in the psalm are such as cannot be applied exclusively to any Hebrew monarch. This will appear in the exposition of this psalm. For like reasons, the psalm cannot be regarded as designed to refer primarily to David, and in a secondary and higher sense to the Messiah. There are no indications in the psalm of any such double sense; and if it cannot be applied exclusively to David, cannot be applied to him at all.

The psalm, I suppose, like Isaiah 53:1-12, had an original and exclusive reference to the Messiah. This may be shown by the following considerations:

(1) It is so applied in the New Testament, and is referred to in no other way. Thus, in Acts 4:24-27, the whole company of the apostles is

represented as quoting the first verses of the psalm, and referring them to Christ: "They lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God … who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things. The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together." If the authority of the apostles, therefore, is to be admitted in the case, there can be no doubt that the psalm was intended to refer to the Messiah. This statement of the apostles may also be adduced as proof that this was, probably, the prevailing mode of interpretation in their age.

Again, the psalm is quoted by Paul Acts 13:32-33 as applicable to Christ, and with reference to the fact that it was a doctrine of the Old Testament that the Messiah was to rise from the dead: "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And again, in Hebrews 1:5, the same passage is quoted by Paul to establish the exalted rank of the Messiah as being above the angels: "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" These quotations prove that in the estimation of the writers of the New Testament the psalm had an original reference to the Messiah; and the manner in which they make the quotation proves that this was the current belief of the Jews in their day, as they appear to have been under no apprehension that the propriety of the application which they made would be called in question.

(2) But, besides this, there is other evidence that such was the prevailing interpretation among the ancient Hebrews: "In the older Jewish writings, as the Sohar, the Talmud, etc., there is a variety of passages in which the Messianic interpretation is given to the psalm. See the collections by Raym. Martini, Pug. Fid. ed. Carpzov., in several places, and by Schottgen, de Messia, pp. 227ff. Even Kimchi and Jarchi confess that it was the prevailing interpretation among their forefathers; and the latter very honestly gives his reasons for departing from it, when he says he prefers to explain it of

David, for the refutation of the heretics; that is, in order to destroy the force of the arguments drawn from it by the Christians." (Hengstenberg, Christ., i. 77.)

(3) That it refers to the Messiah is manifest from the psalm itself. This will be apparent from a few subordinate considerations.

(a) It cannot be applied to David, or to any other earthly king; that is, there are expressions in it which cannot be applied with any degree of propriety to any earthly monarch whatever. This remark is founded particularly on the remarkable use of the word "Son" in the psalm, and the promise that "the uttermost parts of the earth" should be placed under the control of him to whom that word is applied. The word "son" is, indeed, of large signification, and is, in a certain sense, applied to the righteous in the plural number, as being the sons or the children of God by adoption; but it is not so applied in the singular number, and there is a peculiarity in its use here which shows that it was not intended to be applied to an earthly monarch, or to any pious man considered as a child of God. That appellation - the Son of God - properly denotes a nearer relation to God than can be applied to a mere mortal of any rank (compare the notes at John 5:18), and was so understood by the Jews themselves. It is not used in the Old Testament, as applied to an earthly monarch, in the manner in which it is employed here. The remark here made is entirely irrespective of the doctrine which is sometimes supposed to be taught in this passage, of "the eternal generation" of the Son of God, since what is here said is equally true, whether that doctrine is well-founded or not.

(b) There is an extent of dominion and a perpetuity of empire promised here which could not be applied to David or to any other monarch, but which is entirely applicable to the Messiah (see Psalm 2:8, Psalm 2:10).

(c) Such, too, is the nature of the promise to those who put their trust in him, and the threatening on those who do not obey him Psalm 2:12. This is language which will be seen at once to be entirely applicable to the Messiah, but which cannot be so regarded in respect of any earthly monarch.

(d) There is a strong probability that the psalm is designed to refer to the Messiah, from the fact that they who deny this have not been able to propose any other plausible interpretation, or to show with any degree of probability to whom it does refer. There were no Israelite kings or princes to whom it could be regarded with any show of probability as applicable, unless it were David or Solomon; and yet there are no recorded circumstances in their lives to which it can be regarded as adapted, and there is no substantial agreement among those who maintain that it does refer to either of them. It is maintained by both Rosenmuller and DeWette that it cannot relate to David or Solomon. Some of the modern Jews maintain that it was composed by David respecting himself when the Philistines came up against him 2 Samuel 5:17; but this is manifestly an erroneous opinion, for not only was there nothing in the occurrence there to correspond with the language of the psalm, but there was at that time no particular consecration of the hill of Zion Psalm 2:6, nor was that mount regarded as holy or sacred until after the tabernacle was erected on it, which was after the Philistine war. The same remark may be made substantially of the supposition that it refers to the rebellion of Absalom, or to any of the circumstances in which David was placed. And there is still less reason for supposing that it refers to Solomon, for there is no mention of any rebellion against him; of any general attempt to throw off his yoke; of any solemn consecration of him as king in consequence of, or in spite of such an attempt.

(e) The psalm agrees with the account of the Messiah, or is in its general structure and details applicable to him. This will be shown in the exposition, and indeed is manifest on the face of it. The only plausible objection to this view is, as stated by DeWette, "According to the doctrine of Christianity, the Messiah is no conqueror of nations, bearing an iron scepter; his kingdom is not of this world." But to this it may be replied, that all that is meant in Psalm 2:9 may be, that he will set up a kingdom over the nations of the earth; that all his enemies will be subdued under him; and that the scepter which he will sway will be firm and irresistible. See, for the applicability of this to the Messiah, the notes at Psalm 2:9.

(4) It may be added that the psalm is such as one might expect to find in the poetic writings of the Hebrews, with the views which they entertained

of the Messiah. The promised Messiah was the object of deepest interest to their minds. All their hopes centered in him. To him they looked forward as the Great Deliverer; and all their anticipations of what the people of God were to be clustered around him. He was to be a Prince, a Conqueror, a Deliverer, a Saviour. To him the eyes of the nation were directed; he was shadowed forth by their pompous religious rites, and their sacred bards sang his advent. That we should find an entire psalm composed with reference to him, designed to set forth his character and the glory of his reign, is no more than what we should expect to find among a people where poetry is cultivated at all, and where these high hopes were cherished in reference to his advent; and especially if to this view of their national poetry, in itself considered, there be added the idea that the sacred bards wrote under the influence of inspiration, nothing is more natural than that we should expect to find a poetic composition having such a sole and exclusive reference. Nothing would have been more unnatural than that, with these prevailing views and hopes, and with the fact before us that so much of the Old Testament is sacred poetry, we should have found no such production as the second psalm, on the supposition that it had an original and exclusive reference to the Messiah.

Verse 1

Why do the heathen rage - "Why do nations make a noise?" Prof. Alexander. The word "heathen" here - גוים *gôyim* - means properly "nations," with out respect, so far as the word is concerned, to the character of the nations. It was applied by the Hebrews to the surrounding nations, or to all other people than their own; and as those nations were in fact pagans, or idolators, the word came to have this signification. Nehemiah 5:8; Jeremiah 31:10; Ezekiel 23:30; Ezekiel 30:11; compare אדם *'âdâm* Jeremiah 32:20. The word Gentile among the Hebrews (Greek, ἔθνος *ethnos* expressed the same thing. Matthew 4:15; Matthew 6:32; Matthew 10:5, Matthew 10:18; Matthew 12:21, et soepe. The word rendered "rage" - רגשׁ *râgash* - means to make a noise or tumult, and would be expressive of violent commotion or agitation. It occurs in the Hebrew Scriptures only in this place, though the corresponding Chaldee word - רגשׁ *regash* is found in Daniel 6:6, Daniel 6:11, Daniel 6:15 - rendered in Daniel 6:6, "assembled together," in the margin "came tumultuously," - and in Daniel 6:11, Daniel 6:15, rendered "assembled." The psalmist here sees the nations in violent

agitation or commotion, as if under high excitement, engaged in accomplishing some purpose - rushing on to secure something, or to prevent something. The image of a mob, or of a tumultuous unregulated assemblage, would probably convey the idea of the psalmist. The word itself does not enable us to determine how extensive this agitation would be, but it is evidently implied that it would be a somewhat general movement; a movement in which more than one nation or people would participate. The matter in hand was something that affected the nations generally, and which would produce violent agitation among them.

And the people - לאמים *Le'umiym* A word expressing substantially the same idea, that of people, or nations, and referring here to the same thing as the word rendered "heathen" - according to the laws of Hebrew parallelism in poetry. It is the people here that are seen in violent agitation: the conduct of the rulers, as associated with them, is referred to in the next verse.

Imagine - Our word "imagine" does not precisely express the idea here. We mean by it, "to form a notion or idea in the mind; to fancy." Webster. The Hebrew word, הגה *hâgâh* is the same which, in Psalm 1:2, is rendered "meditate." See the notes at that verse. It means here that the mind is engaged in deliberating on it; that it plans, devises, or forms a purpose; - in other words, the persons referred to are thinking about some purpose which is here called a vain purpose; they are meditating some project which excites deep thought, but which cannot be effectual.

A vain thing - That is, which will prove to be a vain thing, or a thing which they cannot accomplish. It cannot mean that they were engaged in forming plans which they supposed would be vain - for no persons would form such plans; but that they were engaged in designs which the result would show to be unsuccessful. The reference here is to the agitation among the nations in respect to the divine purpose to set up the Messiah as king over the world, and to the opposition which this would create among the nations of the earth. See the notes at Psalm 2:2. An ample fulfillment of this occurred in the opposition to him when he came in the flesh, and in the resistance everywhere made since his death to his reign upon the earth. Nothing has produced more agitation in the world (compare Acts 17:6), and nothing still excites more determined resistance. The truths taught in this verse are:

(1) that sinners are opposed - even so much as to produce violent agitation of mind, and a fixed and determined purpose - to the plans and

decrees of God, especially with respect to the reign of the Messiah; and

(2) that their plans to resist this will be vain and ineffectual; wisely as their schemes may seem to be laid, and determined as they themselves are in regard to their execution, yet they must find them vain.

What is implied here of the particular plans against the Messiah, is true of all the purposes of sinners, when they array themselves against the government of God.

Verse 2

The kings of the earth - This verse is designed to give a more specific form to the general statement in Psalm 2:1. In the first verse the psalmist sees a general commotion among the nations as engaged in some plan that he sees must be a vain one; here he describes more particularly the cause of the excitement, and gives a nearer view of what is occurring. He now sees kings and rulers engaged in a specific and definite plot against Yahweh and against His Anointed. The word "kings" here is a general term, which would be applicable to all rulers - as the kingly government was the only one then known, and the nations were under the control of absolute monarchs. A sufficient fulfillment would be found, however, if any rulers were engaged in doing what is here described.

Set themselves - Or, take their stand. The latter expression would perhaps better convey the sense of the original. It is the idea of taking a stand, or of setting themselves in array, which is denoted by the expression; - they combine; they resolve; they are fixed in their purpose. Compare Exodus 2:4; Exodus 19:17; Exodus 34:5. The attitude here is that of firm or determined resistance.

And the rulers - A slight addition to the word kings. The sense is, that there was a general combination among all classes of rulers to accomplish what is here specified. It was not confined to any one class.

Take counsel together - Consult together. Compare Psalm 31:13, "While they took counsel together against me." The word used here, יחד *yachad* means properly to found, to lay the foundation of, to establish; then, to be founded (Niphal); to support oneself; to lean upon - as, for example, to lean upon the elbow. Thus used, it is employed with reference to persons reclining or leaning upon a couch or cushion, especially as deliberating

together, as the Orientals do in the divan or council. Compare the notes at Psalm 83:3. The idea here is that of persons assembled to deliberate on an important matter.

Against the Lord - Against Jehovah - the small capitals of "Lord" in our common version indicating that the original word is Yahweh. The meaning is, that they were engaged in deliberating against Yahweh in respect to the matter here referred to - to wit, his purpose to place the "Anointed One," his King (Psalm 2:6), on the hill of Zion. It is not meant that they were in other respects arrayed against him, though it is true in fact that opposition to God in one respect may imply that there is an aversion to him in all respects, and that the same spirit which would lead men to oppose him in any one of his purposes would, if carried out, lead them to oppose him in all things.

And against his Anointed - - משיחו *meshîychô* - his Messiah: hence, our word Messiah, or Christ. The word means "Anointed," and the allusion is to the custom of anointing kings and priests with holy oil when setting them apart to office, or consecrating them to their work. Compare Matthew 1:1, note; Daniel 9:26, note. The word Messiah, or Anointed, is therefore of so general a character in its signification that its mere use would not determine to whom it was to be applied - whether to a king, to a priest, or to the Messiah properly so called. The reference is to be determined by something in the connection. All that the word here necessarily implies is, that there was some one whom Yahweh regarded as his Anointed one, whether king or priest, against whom the rulers of the earth had arrayed themselves. The subsequent part of the psalm Psalm 2:6-7 enables us to ascertain that the reference here is to one who was a King, and that he sustained to Yahweh the relation of a Son. The New Testament, and the considerations suggested in the introduction to the psalm (Section 4), enable us to understand that the reference is to the Messiah properly so called - Jesus of Nazareth. This is expressly declared Acts 4:25-27 to have had its fulfillment in the purposes of Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, in rejecting the Saviour and putting him to death. No one can doubt that all that is here stated in the psalm had a complete fulfillment in their combining to reject him and to put him to death; and we are, therefore, to regard the psalm as particularly referring to this transaction. Their conduct was, however, an illustration of the common feelings of rulers and people concerning him,

and it was proper to represent the nations in general as in commotion in regard to him.

Verse 3

Let us break their bands asunder - The bands of Yahweh and of his Anointed. They who are engaged in this combination or conspiracy regard Yahweh and his Anointed as one, and as having one object - to set up a dominion over the world. Hence, they take counsel against both; and, with the same purpose and design, endeavor to cast off the authority of each. The word "bands" here refers to the restraints imposed by their authority. The figure is probably taken from fastening a yoke on oxen, or the bands or cords which were used in plowing - the bands of the yoke being significant of their subjection to the authority or will of another. The same figure is used by the Saviour in Matthew 11:29: "Take my yoke upon you." The idea here is, that it was the purpose of Yahweh and his Anointed to establish a dominion over men, and that it was equally the purpose of the kings and rulers here referred to that it should not be done.

And cast away their cords from us - The same idea under another form - the cords referring not to that which would bind them as prisoners, but to the ropes or thongs which bound oxen to the plow; and, hence, to that which would bind men to the service of God. The word translated "cords" is a stronger word than that which is rendered bands. It means properly what is twisted or interlaced, and refers to the usual manner in which ropes are made. Perhaps, also, in the words "let us cast away" there is the expression of an idea that it could be easily done: that they had only to will it, and it would be done. Together, the expressions refer to the purpose among men to cast off the government of God, and especially that part of his administration which refers to his purpose to establish a kingdom under the Messiah. It thus indicates a prevalent state of the human mind as being impatient of the restraints and authority of God, and especially of the dominion of his Son, anointed as King.

The passage Psalm 2:1-3 proves:

(1) that the government of Yahweh, the true God, and the Messiah or Christ, is the same;

(2) that opposition to the Messiah, or to Christ, is in fact opposition to the purposes of the true God;

(3) that it may be expected that men will oppose that government, and there will be agitation and commotion in endeavoring to throw it off.

The passage, considered as referring to the Messiah, had an ample fulfillment

(a) in the purposes of the high priests, of Herod, and of Pilate, to put him to death, and in the general rejection of him by his own countrymen;

(b) in the general conduct of mankind - in their impatience of the restraints of the law of God, and especially of that law as promulgated by the Saviour, demanding submission and obedience to him; and

(c) in the conduct of individual sinners - in the opposition of the human heart to the authority of the Lord Jesus.

The passage before us is just as applicable to the world now as it was to the time when the Saviour personally appeared on the earth.

Verse 4

He that sitteth in the heavens - God, represented as having his home, his seat, his throne in heaven, and thence administering the affairs of the world. This verse commences the second strophe or stanza of the psalm; and this strophe Psalm 2:4-6 corresponds with the first Psalm 2:1-3 in its structure. The former describes the feelings and purposes of those who would cast off the government of God; this describes the feelings and purposes of God in the same order, for in each case the psalmist describes what is done, and then what is said: the nations rage tumultuously Psalm 2:1-2, and then say Psalm 2:3, "Let us break their bands." God sits calmly in the heavens, smiling on their vain attempts Psalm 2:4, and then solemnly declares Psalm 2:5-6 that, in spite of all their opposition, he "has set his King upon his holy hill of Zion." There is much sublimity in this description. While men rage and are tumultuous in opposing his plans, he sits calm and undisturbed in his own heaven. Compare the notes at the similar place in Isaiah 18:4.

Shall laugh - Will smile at their vain attempts; will not be disturbed or agitated by their efforts; will go calmly on in the execution of his purposes. Compare as above Isaiah 18:4. See also Proverbs 1:26; Psalm 37:13; Psalm 59:8. This is, of course, to be regarded as spoken after the manner of men, and it means that God will go steadily forward in the accomplishment of his purposes. There is included also the idea that he will look with contempt on their vain and futile efforts.

The Lord shall have them in derision - The same idea is expressed here in a varied form, as is the custom in parallelism in Hebrew poetry. The Hebrew word לעג *lâʿag* means properly to stammer; then to speak in a barbarous or foreign tongue; then to mock or deride, by imitating the stammering voice of anyone. Gesenius, Lexicon Here it is spoken of God, and, of course, is not to be understood literally, anymore than when eyes, and hands, and feet are spoken of as pertaining to him. The meaning is, that there is a result in the case, in the Divine Mind, as if he mocked or derided the vain attempts of men; that is, he goes calmly forward in the execution of his own purposes, and he looks upon and regards their efforts as vain, as we do the efforts of others when we mock or deride them. The truth taught in this verse is, that God will carry forward his own plans in spite of all the attempts of men to thwart them. This general truth may lie stated in two forms:

(1) He sits undisturbed and unmoved in heaven while men rage against him, and while they combine to cast off his authority.

(2) He carries forward his own plans in spite of them. This he does:

(a) directly, accomplishing his schemes without regard to their attempts; and

(b) by making their purposes tributary to his own, so making them the instruments in carrying out his own plans. Compare Acts 4:28.

Verse 5

Then shall he speak unto them - That is, this seeming indifference and unconcern will not last forever. He will not always look calmly on, nor will he suffer them to accomplish their purposes without interposing. When he has shown how he regards their schemes - how impotent they are, how

much they are really the objects of derision, considered as an attempt to cast off his authority - he will interpose and declare his own purposes - his determination to establish his king on the hill of Zion. This is implied in the word "then."

In his wrath - In anger. His contempt for their plans will be followed by indignation against themselves for forming such plans, and for their efforts to execute them. One of these things is not inconsistent with the other, for the purpose of the rebels may be very weak and futile, and yet their wickedness in forming the plan may be very great. The weakness of the scheme, and the fact that it will be vain, does not change the character of him who has made it; the fact that he is foolish does not prove that he is not wicked. God will treat the scheme and those who form it as they deserve - the one with contempt, the other with his wrath. The word "wrath" here, it is hardly necessary to say, should be interpreted in the same manner as the word "laugh" in Psalm 2:4, not as denoting a feeling precisely like that which exists in the human mind, subject as man is to unreasonable passion, but as it is proper to apply it to God - the strong conviction (without passion or personal feeling) of the evil of sin, and the expression of his purpose in a manner adapted to show that evil, and to restrain others from its commission. It means that he will speak to them as if he were angry; or that his treatment of them will be such as men experience from others when they are angry.

And vex them - The word here rendered "vex" - בהל *bâhal* - means in the original or Qal form, to tremble; and then, in the form used here, the Piel, to cause to tremble, to terrify, to strike with consternation. This might be done either by a threat or by some judgment indicative of displeasure or anger. Psalm 83:15; Daniel 11:44; Job 22:10. The idea here is that he would alarm them, or make them quake with fear, by what is specified of his purpose; to wit, by his determination to set his King on his holy hill, and by placing the scepter of the earth in his hands. Their designs, therefore, would be frustrated, and if they did not submit to him they must perish (see Psalm 2:9-12).

In his sore displeasure - literally, in his "heat" or "burning," that is, in his anger; as we speak of one that is inflamed with anger, or that burns with indignation; or, as we speak of the passions, kindling into a flame. The meaning here is, that God would be displeased with their purposes, and that the expression of his design would be adapted to fill them with the deepest

alarm. Of course, all such words are to be interpreted in accordance with what we know to be the nature of God, and not in accordance with the same passions in men. God is opposed to sin, and will express his opposition as if he felt angry, but it will be in the most calm manner, and not as the result of passion. It will be simply because it ought to be so.

Verse 6

Yet have I set my king - The word "yet" is merely the translation of the conjunction "and." It is rendered in the Vulgate "but … *autem*;" and so in the Septuagint, δέ *de* It would be better rendered perhaps by the usual word "and:" "And I have set or constituted my king," etc. This is properly to be regarded as the expression of God himself; as what he says in reply to their declared purposes Psalm 2:3, and as what is referred to in Psalm 2:5. The meaning is, he would speak to them in his anger, and say, "In spite of all your purposes and all your opposition, I have set my king on the hill of Zion." That is, they had their plans and God had his; they meant to cast off his authority, and to prevent his purpose to set up the Messiah as king; he resolved, on the contrary, to carry out his purposes, and he would do it. The word rendered set - נסך *nâsak* - means, literally, to pour, to pour out, as in making a libation to the Deity, Exodus 30:9; Hosea 9:4; Isaiah 30:1; then, to pour out oil in anointing a king or priest, and hence, to consecrate, to inaugurate, etc. See Joshua 13:21; Psalm 83:11; Micah 5:5. The idea here is, that he had solemnly inaugurated or constituted the Messiah as king; that is, that he had formed the purpose to do it, and he therefore speaks as if it were already done. The words "my King" refer, of course, to the anointed One, the Messiah, Psalm 2:2. It is not simply a king, or the king, but "my king," meaning that he derived his appointment from God, and that he was placed there to execute his purposes. This indicates the very near relation which the anointed One sustains to him who had appointed him, and prepares us for what is said in the subsequent verse, where he is called His Son.

Upon my holy hill of Zion - Zion was the southern hill in the city of Jerusalem. See the notes at Isaiah 1:8. It was the highest of the hills on which the city was built. It was made by David the capital of his kingdom, and was hence called the city of David, 2 Chronicles 5:2. By the poets and prophets it is often put for Jerusalem itself, Isaiah 2:3; Isaiah 8:18; Isaiah 10:24; Isaiah 33:14, et al. It did not obtain this distinction until it was taken by David from the Jebusites, 2 Samuel 5:5-9; 1 Chronicles 11:4-8. To that place David removed the ark of the covenant, and there he built an altar to

the Lord in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, 2 Samuel 24:15-25. Zion became thenceforward the metropolis of the king dom, and the name was transferred to the entire city. It is to this that the passage here refers; and the meaning is, that in that metropolis or capital God had constituted his Messiah king, or had appointed him to reign over his people. This cannot refer to David himself, for in no proper sense was he constituted or inaugurated king in Jerusalem; that is, there was no such ceremony of inauguration as is referred to here. Zion was called the "holy hill," or "the hill of my holiness" (Hebrew), because it was set apart as the seat of the theocracy, or the residence of God, from the time that David removed the ark there. That became the place where God reigned, and where his worship was celebrated. This must refer to the Messiah, and to the fact that God had set him apart to reign over his people, and thence over all the earth. The truth taught in this passage is, that God will carry forward his own purposes in spite of all the opposition which men can make, and that it is his deliberate design to make his anointed One - the Messiah - King over all.

Verse 7

I will declare the decree - We have here another change in the speaker. The Anointed One is himself introduced as declaring the great purpose which was formed in regard to him, and referring to the promise which was made to him, as the foundation of the purpose of Yahweh Psalm 2:6 to set him on the hill of Zion. The first strophe or stanza Psalm 2:1-3 is closed with a statement made by the rebels of their intention or design; the second Psalm 2:4-6 with a statement of the purpose of Yahweh; the third is introduced by this declaration of the Messiah himself. The change of the persons speaking gives a dramatic interest to the whole psalm. There can be no doubt that the word "I" here refers to the Messiah. The word decree - חק *chôq* - means properly something decreed, prescribed, appointed. See Job 23:14. Compare Genesis 47:26; Exodus 12:24. Thus it is equivalent to law, statute, ordinance. Here it refers not to a law which he was to obey, but to an ordinance or statute respecting his reign: the solemn purpose of Yahweh in regard to the kingdom which the Messiah was to set up; the constitution of his kingdom. This, as the explanation shows, implied two things:

(a) that he was to be regarded and acknowledged as his Son, or to have that rank and dignity Psalm 2:7; and

(b) that the pagan and the uttermost parts of the earth were to be given him for a possession, or that his reign was to extend over all the world Psalm 2:8.

The word "declare" here means that he would give utterance to, or that he would now himself make a statement in explanation of the reason why Yahweh had determined to establish him as King on his holy hill of Zion. There is great beauty in thus introducing the Messiah himself as making this declaration, presenting it now in the form of a solemn covenant or pledge. The determination of Yahweh Psalm 2:6 to establish him as King on his holy hill is thus seen not to be arbitrary, but to be in fulfillment of a solemn promise made long before, and is therefore an illustration of his covenant faithfulness and truth. "The Lord hath said unto me." Yahweh hath said. See Psalm 2:2, Psalm 2:4. He does not intimate when it was that he had said this, but the fair interpretation is, that it was before the purpose was to be carried into execution to place him as King in Zion; that is, as applicable to the Messiah, before he became incarnate or was manifested to execute his purpose on earth. It is implied, therefore, that it was in some previous state, and that he had come forth in virtue of the pledge that he would be recognized as the Son of God. The passage cannot be understood as referring to Christ without admitting his existence previous to the incarnation, for all that follows is manifestly the result of the exalted rank which God purposed to give him as his Son, or as the result of the promise made to him then.

Thou art my Son - That is, Yahweh had declared him to be his Son; he had conferred on him the rank and dignity fairly involved in the title The Son of God. In regard to the general meaning of this, and what is implied in it, see Matthew 1:1, note; Hebrews 1:2, note; Hebrews 1:5, note; Romans 1:4, note; and John 5:18, note. The phrase "sons of God" is elsewhere used frequently to denote the saints, the children of God, or men eminent for rank and power (compare Genesis 6:2, Genesis 6:4; Job 1:6; Hosea 1:10; John 1:12; Romans 8:14, Romans 8:19; Philemon 2:15; 1 John 3:1); and once to denote angels Job 38:7; but the appellation "The Son of God" is not appropriated in the Scriptures to anyone but the Messiah. It does not occur before this in the Old Testament, and it occurs but once after this, Daniel 3:25. See the notes at that passage. This makes its use in the case before us the more remarkable, and justifies the reasoning of the author of the epistle

to the Hebrews Hebrews 1:5 as to its meaning. The true sense, therefore, according to the Hebrew usage, and according to the proper meaning of the term, is, that he sustained a relation to God which could be compared only with that which a son among men sustains to his father; and that the term, as thus used, fairly implies an equality in nature with God himself. It is such a term as would not be applied to a mere man; it is such as is not applied to the angels Hebrews 1:5; and therefore it must imply a nature superior to either.

This day - On the application of this in the New Testament, see the notes at Acts 13:33 and the notes at Hebrews 1:5. The whole passage has been often appealed to in support of the doctrine of the "eternal generation" of Christ, meaning that he was "begotten" from eternity; that is, that his divine nature was in some sense an emanation from the Father, and that this is from eternity. Whatever may be thought of that doctrine, however, either as to its intelligibility or its truth, there is nothing in the use of the phrase "this day," or in the application of the passage in the New Testament Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5, to sustain it. The language, indeed, in the connection in which it is found, does, as remarked above, demonstrate that he had a pre-existence, since it is addressed to him as the result of a decree or covenant made with him by Yahweh, and as the foundation of the purpose to set him as King on the hill of Zion. The words "this day" would naturally refer to that time when this "decree" was made, or this covenant formed; and as that was before the creation of the world, it must imply that he had an existence then.

The time referred to by the meaning of the word is, that when it was determined to crown him as the Messiah. This is founded on the relation subsisting between him and Yahweh, and implied when in that relation he is called his "Son;" but it determines nothing as to the time when this relation commenced. Yahweh, in the passage, is regarded as declaring his purpose to make him King in Zion, and the language is that of a solemn consecration to the kingly office. He is speaking of this as a purpose before he came into the world; it was executed, or carried into effect, by his resurrection from the dead, and by the exaltation consequent on that. Compare Acts 13:33 and Ephesians 1:20-22. Considered, then, as a promise or purpose, this refers to the period before the incarnation; considered as pertaining to the execution of that purpose, it refers to the time when he was raised from the dead and exalted over all things as King in Zion. In neither case can the words "this

day" be construed as meaning the same as eternity, or from eternity; and therefore they can determine nothing respecting the doctrine of" eternal generation."

Have I begotten thee - That is, in the matter referred to, so that it would be proper to apply to him the phrase "my Son," and to constitute him "King" in Zion. The meaning is, that he had so constituted the relationship of Father and Son in the case, that it was proper that the appellation "Son" should be given him, and that he should be regarded and addressed as such. So Prof. Alexander: "The essential meaning of the phrase "I have begotten thee" is simply this, "I am thy Father." This is, of course, to be understood in accordance with the nature of God, and we are not to bring to the interpretation the ideas which enter into that human relationship. It means that in some proper sense - some sense appropriate to the Deity - such a relation was constituted as would justify this reference to the most tender and important of all human relationships. In what sense that is, is a fair subject of inquiry, but it is not proper to assume that it is in anything like a literal sense, or that there can be no other sense of the passage than that which is implied in the above-named doctrine, for it cannot be literal, and there are other ideas that may be conveyed by the phrase than that of "eternal generation." The word rendered "begotten" (ילד *yâlad*) determines nothing certainly as to the mode in which this relationship was formed. It means properly:

(1) to bear, to bring forth as a mother, Genesis 4:1;

(2) to beget, as a father, Genesis 4:18; and then

(3) as applied to God it is used in the sense of creating - or of so creating or forming as that the result would be that a relation would exist which might be compared with that of a father and a son.

Deuteronomy 32:18: "of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful." Compare Jeremiah 2:27: "Saying to a block (idol), Thou art my father, thou hast begotten me." So Paul says, 1 Corinthians 4:15: "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel." The full meaning, therefore, of this word would be met if it be supposed that Yahweh had given the Messiah this place and rank in such a sense that it was proper to speak of himself as the Father and the Anointed One as the Son. And was there not enough in

designating him to this high office; in sending him into the world; in raising him from the dead; in placing him at his own right hand - appointing him as King and Lord - to justify this language? Is not this the very thing under consideration? Is it proper, then, in connection with this passage, to start the question about his eternal generation? Compare the notes at Romans 1:4. On this passage Calvin says (*in loc*.), "I know that this passage is explained by many as referring to the eternal generation of Christ, who maintain that in the adverb today there is, as it were, a perpetual act beyond the limits of time, denoted. But the Apostle Paul is a more faithful and competent interpreter of this prophecy, who in Acts 13:33 recalls us to that which I have called a glorious demonstration of Christ. He was said to be begotten, therefore, not that he might be the Son of God, by which he might begin to be such, but that he might be manifested to the world as such. Finally, this begetting ought to be understood not of the mutual relation of the Father and the Son, but it signifies merely that he who was from the beginning hidden in the bosom of the Father, and who was obscurely shadowed forth under the law, from the time when he was manifested with clear intimation of his rank, was acknowledged as the Son of God, as it is said in John 1:14." So Prof. Alexander, though supposing that this is founded on an eternal relation between the Father and the Son, says, "This day have I begotten thee may be considered as referring only to the coronation of Messiah, which is an ideal one," vol. i., p. 15. The result of the exposition of this passage may therefore be thus stated:

(a) The term "Son," as used here, is a special appellation of the Messiah - a term applicable to him in a sense in which it can be given to no other being.

(b) As used here, and as elsewhere used, it supposes his existence before the incarnation.

(c) Its use here, and the purpose formed, imply that he had an existence before this purpose was formed, so that he could be personally addressed, and so that a promise could be made to him.

(d) The term "Son" is not used here in reference to that anterior relation, and determines nothing as to the mode of his previous being - whether from

eternity essentially in the nature of God; or whether in some mysterious sense begotten; or whether as an emanation of the Deity; or whether created.

(e) The term, as Calvin suggests, and as maintained by Prof. Alexander, refers here only to his being constituted King - to the act of coronation - whenever that occurred.

(f) This, in fact, occurred when he was raised from the dead, and when he was exalted to the right hand of God in heaven Acts 13:33, so that the application of the passage by Paul in the Acts accords with the result to which we are led by the fair interpretation of the passage.

(g) The passage, therefore, determines nothing, one way or the other, respecting the doctrine of eternal generation, and cannot, therefore, be used in proof of that doctrine.

Verse 8

Ask of me - That is, of God. This is a part of the "decree" or purpose, as mentioned in Psalm 2:7. That decree embraced not only the design to constitute him as his Son, in the sense that he was to be king in Zion, but also the purpose to give him a dominion embracing "the heathen" and "the uttermost parts of the earth." This wide dominion was to be given him on condition that he would "ask" for it, thus keeping up the idea that Yahweh, as such, is the great source of authority and empire, and that the Messiah, as such occupies a rank subordinate to him. This relation of the Father and Son is everywhere recognized in the New Testament. As we may be sure that the Messiah will ask for this, it follows that the world will yet be brought under his scepter. It may be added that as this wide dominion is promised to the Messiah only on condition that he "asks" for it or prays for it, much more is it true that we can hope for this and for no favor from God, unless we seek it by earnest prayer.

And I shall give thee - I will give thee. That is, he would ultimately give him this possession. No time is specified when it would be done, and the prophecy will be fulfilled if it shall be accomplished in any period of the history of the world.

The heathen - The nations (notes, Psalm 2:1); that is, the world. In the time of the writer of the psalm, the world would be spoken of as divided into Hebrews and other nations; the people of God and foreigners. The same division is often referred to in the New Testament under the terms Jew and Gentile, as the Greeks divided all the world into Greeks and barbarians. The word would now embrace all the nations which are not under the influence of the true religion.

For thine inheritance - Thy heritage; thy portion as my Son. There is an allusion here to the fact that he had constituted him as his Son, and hence, it was proper to speak of him as the heir of all things. See the notes at Hebrews 1:4.

And the uttermost parts of the earth - The farthest regions of the world. This promise would properly embrace all the world as then known, as it is now known, as it shall be hereafter known.

For thy possession - That is, as king. This, on the earth, was be to his possession as the Son of Yahweh, constituted as king. It may be remarked here,

(a) that this can have its fulfillment only in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was not true of David nor of any other Hebrew monarch that he had conceded to him, in fact, any such possession. Their dominions extended, at any time, but little beyond the bounds of Palestine, and embraced a very limited part of the earth - but a small territory, even as compared with many then existing kingdoms. The phrase used here could never have been applied to the limited and narrow country of Palestine.

(b) The promise is to be understood as still in full force. It has never been cancelled or recalled, and though its fulfillment has seemed to be long delayed, yet as no time was specified, its spirit and meaning have not been disregarded. Events have shown that it was not intended that it should be speedily accomplished; and events, when no time is specified, should be allowed to be interpreters of the original meaning of the prophecy.

(c) The promise will yet be fulfilled. It is evidently supposed in the promise that the Messiah would ask for this; and it is solemnly affirmed that if he did, this wide inheritance would be granted to him. The world, then, is to be regarded as given by covenant to the Son of God, and in due time he will set up his dominion over the earth, and rule over mankind. The period

is coming when the actual scepter swayed over the nations of the earth will be that of the Son of God, and when his right to give laws and to reign will be acknowledged from the rising to the setting sun. This is the only thing in the future that is certainly known to us, and this is enough to make everything in that future bright.

Verse 9

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron - That is, evidently, thine enemies, for it cannot be supposed to be meant that he would sway such a scepter over his own people. The idea is that he would crush and subdue all his foes. He would have absolute power, and the grant which had been made to him would be accompanied with authority sufficient to hold it. That dominion which was to be conceded to him would be not only one of protection to his friends, but also of punishment on his enemies; and the statement here is made prominent because the former part of the psalm had respect to rebels, and the Messiah is here represented as being invested with power sufficient to punish and restrain them. The Vulgate renders this "thou shalt rule;" the Septuagint, "thou shalt feed - ποιμανεῖς *poimaneis* that is, thou shalt feed them as a shepherd does his flock; thou shalt exercise over them the care and protection of a shepherd. This rendering occurs by a slight change in the pointing of the Hebrew word, though the most approved mode of pointing the word is that which is followed in our common translation. DeWette, Hengstenberg, Alexander, Horsley, adopt the common reading. What is said in this verse has been urged as an objection to referring it to the Messiah. The remark of DeWette on this matter has been quoted in the introduction to this psalm, Section 4 (3). But it may be observed, while it is everywhere represented that the scepter of the Messiah over the earth will be a mild scepter, it is also everywhere stated that he will ultimately crush and overthrow all his foes.

Thus, in Isaiah 11:4: "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." So Psalm 110:6: "He shall judge among the heathen; he shall fill the places with the dead bodies." So, likewise, Revelation 19:15: "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." So also in Judges 7:20; Jeremiah 22:28. It is used to

denote the crushing of infants on stones, Psalm 137:9. The word "shiver" would well express the idea here - "thou shalt shiver them."

Like a potter's vessel - A vessel or instrument made by a potter; a vessel made of clay. This is easily broken, and especially with a rod of iron, and the idea here is that he would crush and subdue his enemies as easily as this could be done. No image could more happily express the ease with which he would subdue his foes; and this accords with all the representations of the New Testament - that with infinite case - with a word - Christ can subdue his enemies, and consign them to ruin. Compare Matthew 25:41, Matthew 25:46; Luke 19:27. The sense here is, simply, that the Messiah would be absolute; that he would have power to quell all rebellion against God, and to punish all those that rise up against him; and that on those who are incorrigibly rebellious he would exercise that power, and take effectual means to subdue them. This is merely what is done by all just governments, and is by no means inconsistent with the idea that such a government would be mild and gentle toward those who are obedient. The protection of the righteous makes the punishment of the wicked necessary in all governments, and the one cannot be secured without the other. This verse is applied to the Messiah in the Book of Revelation, Revelation 2:27, note; Revelation 19:15, note; compare Revelation 12:5, note (see the notes at these passages).

Verse 10

Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings - This is to be understood as the language of the psalmist. See introduction to the psalm, Section 3. It is an exhortation addressed to the rulers and princes whom the psalmist saw engaged in opposition to the purpose of Yahweh Psalm 2:1-3 - and hence, to all rulers and princes - to act the part of wisdom, by not attempting to resist the plans of God, but to submit to him, and secure his friendship. The psalmist cautions them to take warning, in view of what must certainly come upon the enemies of the Messiah; to cease their vain attempts to oppose his reign, and, by a timely submission to him, to ensure his friendship, and to escape the doom that must come upon his foes. The way of wisdom, then, was not to engage in an attempt in which they must certainly be crushed, but to secure at once the friendship of one appointed by God to reign over the earth.

Be instructed - In your duty to Yahweh and his Anointed One; that is, in the duty of submitting to this arrangement, and lending your influence to

promote it. The word used here, and rendered "be instructed," means properly to chastise, chasten, correct; and it here means, be admonished, exhorted, or warned. Compare Proverbs 9:7; Job 4:3; Psalm 16:7.

Ye judges of the earth - Ye who administer justice; that is, ye rulers. This was formerly done by kings themselves, as it is now supposed to be in monarchical governments, where the judges act in the name of the king. In Republics, justice is supposed to be administered by the people through those whom they have appointed to execute it. The word here is equivalent to rulers, and the call is on those who occupy posts of office and honor not to oppose the purposes of Yahweh, but to bring their influence to the promotion of his designs. At the same time, it cannot be doubted that it is implied that they should seek to be interested personally in his reign.

Verse 11

Serve the Lord with fear - With reverence, and with deep apprehensions of the consequences of not serving and obeying him. That is, serve him in not opposing, but in promoting his purpose of establishing a kingdom under the Messiah, with the deep apprehension that if you do not do it, he will arise and crush you in his wrath.

And rejoice - Prof. Alexander renders this "shout," and supposes that it refers to the customary recognition of a present sovereign. The word used - גיל *gîyl* - means properly to move in a circle, to revolve; and then to dance in a circle, to exult, to rejoice. Then, according to Gesenius, it means to tremble, to fear, from the leaping or palpitation of the heart Job 37:1; Hosea 10:5; Psalm 29:6. Gesenius renders it here "fear with trembling." The common translation, however, better expresses the sense. It means that they should welcome the purposes of Yahweh, and exult in his reign, but that it should be done with a suitable apprehension of his majesty and power, and with the reverence which becomes the public acknowledgment of God.

With trembling - With reverence and awe, feeling that he has almighty power, and that the consequences of being found opposed to him must be overwhelming and awful. The duty here enjoined on kings and rulers is that of welcoming the purposes of God, and of bringing their influence - derived from the station which they occupy - to bear in promoting the reign of truth upon the earth - a duty binding on kings and princes as well as on other men. The feelings with which this is to be done are those which belong to transactions in which the honor and the reign of God are concerned. They are mingled feelings, derived from the mercy of God on the one hand, and

from his wrath on the other; from the hope which his promise and purpose inspires, and from the apprehension derived from his warnings and threatenings.

Verse 12

Kiss the Son - Him whom God hath declared to be his Son Psalm 2:7, and whom, as such, he has resolved to set as King on his holy hill Psalm 2:6. The word "kiss" here is used in accordance with Oriental usages, for it was in this way that respect was indicated for one of superior rank. This was the ancient mode of doing homage or allegiance to a king, 1 Samuel 10:1. It was also the mode of rendering homage to an idol, 1 Kings 19:18; Hosea 13:2; Job 31:27. The mode of rendering homage to a king by a kiss was sometimes to kiss his hand, or his dress, or his feet, as among the Persians. DeWette. The practice of kissing the hand of a monarch is not uncommon in European courts as a token of allegiance. The meaning here is that they should express their allegiance to the Son of God, or recognize him as the authorized King, with suitable expressions of submission and allegiance; that they should receive him as King, and submit to his reign. Applied to others, it means that they should embrace him as their Saviour.

Lest he be angry - If you do not acknowledge his claims, and receive him as the Messiah.

And ye perish from the way - The word from in this place is supplied by the translators. It is literally, "And ye perish the way." See the notes at Psalm 1:6. The meaning here seems to be either "lest ye are lost in respect to the way," that is, the way to happiness and salvation; or "lest ye fail to find the way" to life; or "lest ye perish by the way," to wit, before you reach your destination, and accomplish the object you have in view. The design seems to be to represent them as pursuing a certain journey or path - as life is often represented (compare Psalm 1:1) - and as being cut down before they reached the end of their journey.

When his wrath is kindled - When his wrath burns. Applying to anger or wrath a term which is common now, as when we speak of one whose anger is heated, or who is hot with wrath.

But a little - Prof. Alexander renders this, "For his wrath will soon burn." This, it seems to me, is in accordance with the original; the word "little" probably referring to time, and not to the intensity of his anger. This accords better also with the connection, for the design is not to state that there will be degrees in the manifestation of his anger, but that his anger

would not long be delayed. In due time he would execute judgment on his enemies; and whenever his anger began to burn, his enemies must perish.

Blessed are all they that put their trust in him - Kings, princes, people; - all, of every age and every land; the poor, the rich, the bond, the free; white, black, copper-colored, or mixed; all in sickness or health, in prosperity or adversity, in life or in death; all, of every condition, and in all conceivable circumstances - are blessed who put their trust in him. All need him as a Saviour; all will find him to be a Saviour adapted to their wants. All who do this are happy (compare the notes at Psalm 1:1); all are safe in time and in eternity. This great truth is stated everywhere in the Bible; and to induce the children of men - weak, and guilty, and helpless - to put their trust in the Son of God, is the great design of all the communications which God has made to mankind.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 3

Introduction

Section 1. The author. This psalm purports in the title to be "A Psalm of David," and is the first one to which a title indicating authorship, or the occasion on which a psalm was composed, is prefixed. The title is found in the Aramaic Paraphrase, the Latin Vulgate, the Septuagint, the Syriac, the Arabic, and the Ethiopic versions. It is not, indeed, certain by whom the title was prefixed, but there is no reason to doubt its correctness. The sentiments in the psalm accord with the circumstances in which David was more than once placed, and are such as we may suppose he would express in those circumstances.

Section 2. The occasion on which the psalm was composed. The psalm, according to the title, purports to have been written by David, "when he fled from Absalom his son." That is, it was composed at the time when he fled from Absalom - or in view of that event, and as expressive of his feelings on that occasion, though it might have been penned afterward. Neither of these suppositions has any intrinsic improbability in it, for though at the time when he fled there was, of course, much tumult, agitation, and anxiety, yet there is no improbability in supposing that these thoughts passed through his mind, and that while these events were going forward, during some moments taken for rest, or in the nightwatches, he may have given vent to these deep feelings in this poetic form. Kimchi says that it was the opinion of the ancient rabbis that this psalm was actually composed when David, with naked feet, and with his head covered, ascended the Mount of Olives, as he fled from Jerusalem, 2 Samuel 15:30.

It is not necessary, however, to suppose that in these circumstances he would actually give himself to the task of a poetic composition; yet nothing is more probable than that such thoughts passed through his mind, and nothing would be more natural than that he should seize the first moment of peace and calmness - when the agitation of the scene should be in some measure over - to embody these thoughts in verse. Indeed, there is evidence in the psalm itself that it was actually penned on some such occasion. There is Psalm 3:1-2 an allusion to the great number of his foes, and to those who had risen up against him, and an expression of his agitation and anxiety in view of that; and there is then a statement that he had, in these

circumstances, cried unto the Lord, and that God had heard him out of his holy hill, and that, notwithstanding these alarms, he had been permitted to lie down and sleep, for the Lord had sustained him Psalm 3:4-5. In these circumstances - after preservation and peace during what he had apprehended would be a dreadful night - what was more proper, or more natural, than the composition of such a psalm as the one before us?

If the psalm was composed by David, it was most probably at the time supposed in the title - the time when he fled from Absalom his son. There is no other period of his life to which it could be regarded as fitted, unless it were the time of Saul, and the persecutions which he waged against him. Hitzig indeed supposes that the latter was the occasion on which it was written; but to this it may be replied:

(a) That there is no direct evidence of this.

(b) That the title should be regarded as good evidence, unless it can be set aside by some clear proofs.

(c) That the contents of the psalm are no more applicable to the time of Saul than to the time of Absalom.

(d) That in the time of the persecutions of Saul, David had not been in such circumstances as are implied in Psalm 3:4, "he heard me out of his holy hill." This, according to the fair construction of the language, must be understood as referring to Mount Zion (compare the notes at Psalm 2:6), and implies that David at the time referred to was the established king, and had made that the seat of his authority. This had not occurred in the time of Saul; and there can be no reason for supposing, as Hitzig does, that Mount Horeb is intended.

The flight of David, which is supposed to be referred to here, is described in 2 Samuel 18:5, 2 Samuel 18:12, 2 Samuel 18:14 - he poured forth all his heart in language such as had never been used before, and has never been equalled since, 2 Samuel 18:33.

Section 3. Analysis of the psalm. The psalm is naturally and regularly divided into four strophes or parts, each one embracing two verses; and in three of them closed by the word Selah, indicating a pause either in the sense, in the melody, or in both. See the notes at Psalm 3:2.

I. The first is expressive of the anxiety of the psalmist from the fact that many enemies had risen up against him, Psalm 3:1-2.

II. The second expresses his confidence in God in the midst of his troubles, Psalm 3:3-4. He was his shield and his helper, and he heard his prayer out of his holy hill.

III. The third refers to the fact that in his troubles he had, contrary to what there had been reason to apprehend, been permitted to lie down calmly and to sleep, and to arise again in the morning. In view of this, refreshed and invigorated by rest, and having this new proof of the divine favor and protection, he says that he would not be afraid though ten thousands of people should set themselves against him round about, Psalm 3:5-6.

IV. In the fourth part, the psalmist calls upon God to arise and save him for in other times he had smitten his enemies upon their cheek bone, and had broken the teeth of the ungodly, and salvation belonged only unto him, Psalm 3:7-8.

Verse 1

Lord, how are they increased - How are they multiplied; or, how numerous they are. Perhaps the idea is, that at first they seemed to be comparatively few in number, but had now so multiplied as to endanger his crown and life. This is an appropriate expression on the supposition that it refers to Absalom. At first the number of those who adhered to Absalom was not so great as to excite much alarm; but by the arts of a demagogue, by complaining of the government, by saying that if he were made a judge in tim land, every man would have justice done him 2 Samuel 15:4-5, he won the hearts of the people, and gathered so many under his standard as to make it necessary that the king should flee from Jerusalem to a place of safety.

That trouble me - literally, my enemies. The allusion is to those who were now enlisted under Absalom, and who were engaged in endeavoring to overthrow the government.

Many are they that rise up against me - That is, that have become my enemies.

Verses 1-8

:Title

A Psalm of David - literally, belonging to David; that is, belonging to him as the author. This is marked in the Hebrew as the first verse, and so in the Syriac version, the Latin Vulgate, and the Septuagint, making in the Hebrew, and in each of these versions, nine verses in the psalm instead of eight, as in our translation. This may have been prefixed to the psalm by the author himself, for it was not uncommon in ancient times for an author to prefix his name to his own composition, as is commonly done by the apostle Paul in his epistles. It is not absolutely certain, however, that this was done in the Psalms by the authors themselves, but it may have been done by him who collected and arranged the Psalms, indicating the prevalent belief in regard to the authorship, and under the Spirit of inspiration.

When he fled - On the occasion of his fleeing. That is, it was composed at that time, or was subsequently composed in remembrance of it. See Introduction, Section 2.

From Absalom his son - See the introduction, Section 2.

Verse 2

Many there be which say of my soul - Or rather, perhaps, of his "life," for so the word used here - נפשׁ *nephesh* - frequently means Leviticus 17:11; Deuteronomy 12:23; Genesis 9:4; Genesis 35:18; 1 Kings 17:21. The object of their persecution, as here stated, was not his soul, as such, in the sense in which we now understand the word, but his life; and they now said that they were secure of that, and that all things indicated that God would not now interfere to save him. They were perfectly sure of their prey. Compare 2 Samuel 17:1-4.

There is no help for him in God - He is entirely forsaken. He has no power of defending himself, and no hope of escaping from us now, and all the indications are, that God does not intend to interpose and deliver him. Circumstances, in the rebellion of Absalom (2 Samuel 16:1 ff), were such as to seem to justify this taunt. David had been driven away from his throne

and his capital. God had not protected him when he had his armed men and his friends around him, and when he was entrenched in a strong city; and now he was a forsaken fugitive, fleeing almost alone, and seeking a place of safety. If God had not defended him on his throne and in his capital; if he had suffered him to be driven away without interposing to save him, much less was there reason to suppose that he would now interpose in his behalf; and hence, they exultingly said that there was no hope for his life, even in that God in whom he had trusted. It is no uncommon thing in this world for good men to be in similar circumstances of trial, when they seem to be so utterly forsaken by God as well as men, that their foes exultingly say they are entirely abandoned.

Selah - סלה *selâh* Much has been written on this word, and still its meaning does not appear to be wholly determined. It is rendered in the Targum, or Aramaic Paraphrase, לעלמין *leʿalemiyn* forever, or to eternity. In the Latin Vulgate it is omitted, as if it were no part of the text. In the Septuagint it is rendered Διάψαλμα *Diapsalma* supposed to refer to some variation or modulation of the voice in singing. Sehleusner, *Lexicon*. The word occurs seventy-one times in the Psalms, and three times in the Book of Habakkuk, Habakkuk 3:3, Habakkuk 3:9, Habakkuk 3:13. It is never translated in our version, but in all these places the original word "Selah" is retained. It occurs only in poetry, and is supposed to have had some reference to the singing or cantillation of the poetry, and to be probably a musical term. In general, also, it indicates a pause in the sense, as well as in the musical performance. Gesenius (Lexicon) supposes that the most probable meaning of this musical term or note is silence, or pause, and that its use was, in chanting the words of the psalm, to direct the singer to be silent, to pause a little, while the instruments played an interlude or harmony.

Perhaps this is all that can now be known of the meaning of the word, and this is enough to satisfy every reasonable inquiry. It is probable, if this was the use of the term, that it would commonly correspond with the sense of the passage, and be inserted where the sense made a pause suitable; and this will doubtless be found usually to be the fact. But any one acquainted at all with the character of musical notation will perceive at once that we are not to suppose that this would be invariably or necessarily the fact, for the musical pauses by no means always correspond with pauses in the sense. This word, therefore, can furnish very little assistance in determining the

meaning of the passages where it is found. Ewald supposes, differing from this view, that it rather indicates that in the places where it occurs the voice is to be raised, and that it is synonymous with up, higher, loud, or distinct, from סל *sal* סלה *sâlâh* to ascend. Those who are disposed to inquire further respecting its meaning, and the uses of musical pauses in general, may be referred to Ugolin, ‹Thesau. Antiq. Sacr.,‘ tom. xxii.

Verse 3

But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me - Not only in these dangers, but in all dangers. The declaration here has a general form, as if he could trust in him at all times. It shows what his feelings were on the occasion here referred to, when dangers stood thick around him, and what his feelings habitually were in times of peril. The shield was a well-known part of ancient armor, of use, according to the ancient modes of warfare, when swords, and spears, and arrows were employed, but of use only then, since they would constitute no defense against a musket or cannonball. They were usually made of tough and thick hides, fastened to a rim, and so attached to the left arm that they could be readily thrown before the body when attacked, or so that, as they were usually held, the vital parts of the body would be protected. See the notes at Ephesians 6:14-16. From this use of the shield it was natural to speak of God as the "shield," or the "Protector" of his people - an appellation which is often given to him in the Scriptures (Genesis 15:1; Deuteronomy 33:29; 2 Samuel 22:3; Psalm 28:7; Psalm 119:114; Psalm 144:2; Psalm 33:20; Psalm 84:11; Proverbs 30:5.

My glory - My honor, or the source of my honor. That is, he bestows upon me all the honor that I have, and it is my glory that I may put my trust in him. I regard it as an honor to be permitted, in times of danger and trouble, to rely on him - a sentiment in which every true child of God will unite.

And the lifter up of my head - The head, in time of trouble and sorrow is naturally bowed down, as if overpowered with the weight of affliction. See Psalm 35:14: "I bowed down heavily as one that mourneth for his mother;" Psalm 38:6: "I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day." Compare Psalm 42:5; Psalm 44:25; Psalm 57:6; John 19:30. To lift up the head, therefore, or to raise one up, is to relieve his distresses, or to take away his troubles. Such a helper, David says, he had always found God to be, and he looks to him as one who is able to help him still. That is, he feels

that God can so entirely take away his present griefs as to reinstate him in his former happy and honorable condition.

Verse 4

I cried unto the Lord - That is, in these troubles, as he had always done in affliction. The form of the verb here is future - "I will cry" or call unto the Lord; probably, however, designed to state a general habit with him, that when troubles came he always called on the Lord. He speaks now of himself as if in the midst of the trouble; gives utterance to the feeling which he has always had in his sorrows; and says, "I will call upon the Lord," thus declaring his purpose to make his appeal confidently to him. Thus, the language is not so much retrospective as it is indicative of the uniform state of his mind in the midst of afflictions.

With my voice - Not merely mentally, but he gave utterance to the deep anguish of his soul in words. So the Saviour did in the garden of Gethsemane Matthew 26:39; and so, perhaps, most persons do in deep affliction. It is natural then to cry out for help; and besides the fact that we may hope that any prayer then, though mental only, would bring relief by being answered, there is a measure of relief found by the very act of giving utterance or vent to the deep and, as it were, pent-up feelings of the soul. In calmer times we are satisfied with unuttered aspirations, with gentle ejaculations, with sweet mental communion with God; in overwhelming trials we give utterance to our feelings in the earnest language of pleading.

And he heard me - Or, "then he hears me;" that is, when I call. The psalmist refers to what he had constantly found to be true, that God was a hearer of prayer.

Out of his holy hill - Zion. See the notes at Psalm 2:6. That was the place to which David had removed the ark, and which was regarded, therefore, as the special dwelling-place of the Most High. To him, as dwelling in Zion, prayer was accustomed to be offered, and there he was accustomed to answer prayer. To this fact David here refers as one that had been illustrated in his former days. To that God who had thus answered him he felt that he might confidently appeal now.

Selah - Indicating another strophe or musical pause. See the notes at Psalm 3:2.

Verse 5

I laid me down and slept - Notwithstanding these troubles and dangers I had such confidence that God hears prayer, and such calm trust in his

protection, that I laid me down gently and slept securely. The psalmist mentions this as a remarkable proof of the divine protection and favor. He was driven from his capital, his throne, and his home. He was compelled to wander as a poor fugitive, accompanied by only a few friends. He was pursued by enemies, who were numbered by thousands. He was made an exile, and persecuted by his own son; and with this son there were men of age and of experience in war. The forces of his enemies might come upon him at any moment. In these circumstances, persecuted as he was, and under all the anxiety and distress which he felt in view of the ungrateful conduct of his own son, he regarded it as a singular proof of the divine favor, and as an illustration of the peace which confidence in God gives to those who put their trust in him, that on such a dreadful night he was permitted to lie calmly down and sleep. As such a proof and illustration it may be regarded here: a proof of the unspeakable value of the divine favor, and an illustration of the effect of confidence in God in giving calmness and peace of mind in time of trouble. Psalm 127:2.

I awaked - Still safe and secure. He had not been suddenly attacked by his foes, and made to sleep the sleep of death; he had not been crushed by anguish of spirit. That we are "awaked" in the morning after a night's refreshing slumber; that we are raised up again to the enjoyments of life; that we are permitted again to greet our friends and to unite with them in the privileges of devotion, should always be regarded as a new proof of the goodness of God, and should lead to acts of praise. We have no power to awake ourselves; and when we remember how many are taken away from our world each night - how many there are who lie down to sleep to wake no more, we should never rise from a bed of repose without giving our first thoughts in gratitude to our Great Preserver.

For the Lord sustained me - He kept me from danger; he preserved me from death. And it is as true now as it was then, that God is the supporter of life when men sleep. He guards us; he causes the action of the heart to be continued as it propels the blood through our frame; he secures the gentle heaving of the lungs, both when we slumber and when we wake.

Verse 6

I will not be afraid - As the result of this new proof of the divine protection, and in view of all that God has done and has promised, the psalmist now says that he would not be afraid though any number of foes should rise up against him. Perhaps this confiding and exulting spirit may

be regarded in some measure as the "result" of the calm and refreshing slumber which he had enjoyed. The mind as well as the body had been refreshed and invigorated. With the bright light of a new morning he looked with more cheerful views and hopes on the things around him, and felt new strength to meet the dangers to which he was exposed. Who in trouble and sorrow has not felt this? Who has not experienced the influence of the slumbers of a night and of the light of the morning, in giving new vigour and inspiring new hopes, as if the returning day was an emblem of brighter scenes in life, and the passing away of the shades of night a token that all trouble and sorrow would flee away?

Of ten thousands of people - Myriads: Though myriads are arrayed against me. He does not, of course, pretend to any exactness here; but he felt that the number of his enemies was very great. This "was" the case in the rebellion of Absalom. Ahithophel proposed to Absalom to "choose out twelve thousand men" with whom he might pursue after David, implying that the number with him was actually much greater than that, 2 Samuel 17:1)

That have set themselves against me - That have arrayed themselves against me; or that have risen up in rebellion against me.

Round about - Intending to hem me in on every side. Of course this was to be apprehended in such a rebellion; yet David says that he could now look with calmness on all this, for he had confidence in God. Compare Psalm 56:3.

Verse 7

Arise, O Lord - This is a common mode of calling upon God in the Scriptures, as if he had been sitting still, or had been inactive. It is, of course, language taken from human conceptions, for in the intervals of active effort, in labor or in battle, we sit or lie down, and when we engage in toil we arise from our sitting or recumbent posture. So the mind accustoms itself to think of God. The idea is simply that David now calls upon God to interpose in his behalf and to deliver him.

Save me, O my God - He was still surrounded by numerous enemies, and he, therefore, calls earnestly upon God to help him. In accordance with a common usage in the Scriptures, and with what is right for all the people of God, he calls him "his" God: "O my God." That is, he was the God whom he recognized as his God in distinction from all idols, and who had

manifested himself as his God by the many mercies which he had conferred on him.

For thou hast smitten all mine enemies - That is, in former exigencies, or on former occasions. In his conflicts with Saul, with the Philistines, and with the surrounding nations, he had done this; and as the result of all he had established him on the throne, and placed him over the realm. In the remembrance of all this he appeals with the full confidence that what God had done for him before He would do now, and that, notwithstanding he was surrounded with numerous foes, He would again interpose. So we may derive comfort and assurance in present trouble or danger from the recollection of what God has done for us in former times. He who has saved us in former perils can still save us; we may believe that he who did not forsake us in those perils will not leave us now.

Upon the cheek-bone - This language seems to be taken from a comparison of his enemies with wild beasts; and the idea is, that God had disarmed them as one would a lion or tiger by breaking out his teeth. The cheek-bone denotes the bone in which the teeth are placed; and to smite that, is to disarm the animal. The idea here is not that of "insult," therefore; but the meaning is simply that he had deprived them of the power of doing him wrong.

Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly - The same idea is here expressed under another form, "as if" the teeth of wild animals were broken out, rendering them harmless. As God had thus disarmed his enemies in times past, the psalmist hoped that he would do the same thing now, and he confidently called on him to do it.

Verse 8

Salvation belongeth unto the Lord - That is, it pertains to God alone to save. The psalmist had no expectation of saving himself; he had no confidence in the unaided prowess of his own arm. If he was to be saved he felt that it was to be only by God, and the praise of this was to be given to Him. The particular reference here is to temporal deliverance, or deliverance from the dangers which surrounded him then; but the declaration is as true of spiritual deliverance - of the salvation of the soul - as it is of deliverance from temporal danger. In both cases it is true that God only saves, and that all the praise is due to him.

Thy blessing is upon thy people - Or perhaps, rather, "thy blessing be upon thy people," regarding this as a "prayer" rather than an "affirmation."

It is true, indeed, as an affirmation (compare Psalm 2:12); but it accords better with the connection here, and is a more appropriate conclusion of the psalm to regard it as a petition, expressing an earnest desire that the blessing of God might ever rest upon his own people. Then the thoughts of the psalmist are turned away from his own perils to the condition of others; from his individual case to that of the Church at large; and he prays that all others may find the same favors from God which he had so richly enjoyed, and which he hoped still to enjoy. It is one of the characteristics of true piety thus to turn from our own condition to that of others, and to desire that what we enjoy may be partaken of by the people of God everywhere.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 4

Introduction

1. "The title of the psalm." - The title of this psalm is "To the chief Musician on Neginoth. A psalm of David." This phrase in the title, "To the chief Musician," occurs at the beginning of 53 psalms, and at the close of the hymn in Habakkuk 3:19. It is uniformly rendered "to the chief Musician," and means that the psalm was intended for him, or was to be given to him, probably to regulate the manner of performing it. In no one instance does the title imply that he was the author. The word rendered "Chief Musician, מנצח *menâtsēcha* is derived from נצח *nâtsach* properly meaning "to shine," but not used in the Qal. In the Piel form it means to be conspicuous; to be over anything; to be chief; to be superintendent 2 Chronicles 2:2, 2 Chronicles 2:18; 2 Chronicles 34:12, and then it means to lead in music. The meaning of the form used here, and in the other places where it occurs as a title to a psalm, is "Chief Musician," or precentor; and the idea is, that the psalm is to be performed under his direction; or that the music is to be directed and adapted by him.

In the case before us there is a particular designation of the "instrument" that was to be employed in the music; which occurs also in Psalm 6:1-10; Psalm 54:1-7; Psalm 61:1-8; Psalm 67:1-7; Psalm 76:1-12; where the same instrument is mentioned as here. In Psalm 8:1-9; Psalm 84:1-12, another instrument is mentioned; and in Psalm 60:1-12; Psalm 4:1-8; Psalm 6:1-10; Psalm 54:1-7; Psalm 67:1-7; Psalm 76:1-12. It means in these cases that the psalm was designed to be sung with the accompaniment of some stringed instrument, or under the direction of the musician, who presided over the department of stringed instruments. It designates nothing as to the kind of stringed instruments which were to be employed.

2. "The author of the psalm." This psalm, like the preceding, purports to be a psalm of David, and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of this opinion. Indeed, there is some internal probability that, if the former psalm was composed by him, this was also, for as that appears to be a "morning" psalm Psalm 3:5, so this seems to be its counterpart, and to be designed to be an "evening" psalm, Psalm 4:4, Psalm 4:8. The general resemblance in the structure, and the reference in the one to the morning, and in the other to the evening, show that the two were designed, probably, to be a kind of

“double” psalm, to be used on the same day, the one in the morning, and the other in the evening. If this is so, and if David was the author of the third psalm, then there is the same reason to suppose that he was the author also of this. It may be added there has been a general concurrence of opinion in the belief that the psalm was written by David.

3. “The occasion on which the psalm was composed.” There is nothing in the psalm, or in the title, to determine this question, and it is now impossible to settle it with certainty. The Jewish interpreters generally, and most Christian expositors, suppose that it was composed on the same occasion as the preceding, in relation to the rebellion of Absalom. But there is nothing in the psalm itself which will certainly determine this, or which would make it improbable that it might have been composed at some other time in the life of David. It should be said, however, that there is nothing in the psalm which is inconsistent with that supposition, especially as the manifest purpose of the psalm is to make the occasion, whatever it was, one on which to utter great thoughts that would be valuable at all times. There is some internal evidence that this psalm was composed in reference to the same circumstances as the preceding, with this difference, that “that” was when the writer was in the midst of his troubles, and when he thought it a great mercy that he had been permitted to enjoy a night of quiet rest Psalm 3:5; “this,” when he had obtained deliverance from those troubles, and now felt that he “could” give himself to calm repose without anxiety and fear, Psalm 4:8.

4. “The contents of the psalm.” The psalm expresses general confidence in God, and a general sense of security. The writer is conscious, indeed, that he has enemies, and that they would “turn” his “glory into shame” if they could; that they are false men who seek his ruin by detractions Psalm 4:2, but still he has confidence in God that all will be well. Though he has enemies who are seeking to destroy him, yet his mind is so calm that he feels that he can commit himself confidently to God, and lie down and slumber. The general subject, therefore, of the psalm is the fact that confidence in God will make the mind calm in the midst of troubles, and that reliance on his protecting care will enable us to give ourselves at night to undisturbed repose. The following points occur in the psalm on this general subject.

(a) The writer calls on God to hear him, and makes it the ground of his petition that he had formerly heard him - that he had enlarged him when he was in distress, Psalm 4:1.

(b) He addresses directly his enemies, and gives them counsel as to what they ought to do, Psalm 4:2-5. He solemnly appeals to them, and asks them how long they would persevere in attempting to turn his glory into shame, Psalm 4:2; he conjures them to remember that all their efforts must be in vain, since the Lord had set apart him that was godly for himself, and would protect him, Psalm 4:3; he exhorts them to stand in awe, and to fear the consequences of the course which they were pursuing, and exhorts them to take proper time to reflect upon it - to think on it in the night, when alone with God, and when away from the excitements of the day, Psalm 4:4; and he entreats them to become themselves true worshippers of God, and to offer to him the sacrifices of righteousness, Psalm 4:5.

(c) He contrasts the sources of his own joy and theirs, Psalm 4:6-7. They were seeking worldly good, and endeavored to find their happiness in that alone; he desired more than that, and, as the chief source of his joy, asked that God would lift upon him the light of his countenance. He had experienced this, and he says that God "had put gladness into his heart more than in the time that their corn and wine increased." He had more real happiness in the conscious favor of God than the greatest worldly prosperity without that could afford. Religion will, in time of trouble, give more true happiness than all that the world can bestow.

(d) As the result of all, and in view of all these mercies and comforts, he says that he will lie calmly down and sleep. Though he had enemies, his mind is composed and calm; though there may be dangers, he can confide in God; and though he may be less prospered in worldly things than others, he has a joy in religion superior to all that the world can give; and that makes the mind calm as the body is committed to rest in the darkness of the night, Psalm 4:8.

Verse 1

Hear me when I call - When I pray. The word "hear" in such cases is always used in the sense of "listen to," "hear favorably," or "attend to;" hence, in the literal sense it is always true that God "hears" all that is said. The meaning is, "hear and answer me," or grant me what I ask.

O God of my righteousness - That is, O my righteous God. This is a common mode of expression in Hebrew. Thus, in Psalm 2:6, "hill of my holiness," meaning "my holy hill;" Psalm 3:4, "his hill of holiness," meaning "his holy hill." The psalmist here appeals to God as "his" God - the God in whom he trusted; and as a "righteous" God - a God who would do that which was right, and on whom, therefore, he might rely as one who would protect his own people. The appeal to God as a righteous God implies a conviction in the mind of the psalmist of the justice of his cause; and he asks God merely to do "right" in the case. It is not on the ground of his own claim as a righteous man, but it is that, in this particular case, he was wrongfully persecuted; and he asks God to interpose, and to cause justice to be done. This is always a proper ground of appeal to God. A man may be sensible that in a particular case he has justice on his side, though he has a general conviction that he himself is a sinner; and he may pray to God to cause his enemies to do right, or to lead those whose office it is to decide the case, to do what ought to be done to vindicate his name, or to save him from wrong.

Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress - That is, on some former occasion. When he was "pressed" or "confined," and knew not how to escape, God had interposed and had given him room, so that he felt free. He now implores the same mercy again. He feels that the God who had done it in former troubles could do it again; and he asks him to repeat his mercy. The prayer indicates confidence in the power and the unchangeableness of God, and proves that it is right in our prayers to recall the former instances of the divine interposition, as an argument, or as a ground of hope that God would again interpose.

Have mercy upon me - In my present troubles. That is, Pity me, and have compassion on me, as thou hast done in former times. Who that has felt the assurance that God has heard his prayer in former times, and has delivered him from trouble, will not go to him with the more confident assurance that he will hear him again?

Verse 2

O ye sons of men - Turning from God to men; from Him in whom he hoped for protection to those who were engaged in persecuting him. We are not, of course, to suppose that they were present with him, but this is an earnest, poetic remonstrance, "as if" they were with him. The reference is doubtless to Absalom and his followers; and he calls them "sons of men," as having human feelings, passions, and purposes, in strong distinction from that righteous God to whom he had just made his solemn appeal. God was holy, true, and just, and he might appeal to Him; they were ambitious and wicked, and from them he had nothing to hope. He looked upon God as righteous altogether; he looked upon them as altogether depraved and wicked. God he regarded as his just Protector; them he regarded as seeking only to wrong and crush him.

How long - The phrase used here might refer either to "time" or to "extent." How long in regard to "time," - or to what "degree" or "extent" will you thus persecute me? The former, however, seems to be the true signification.

Will ye turn my glory into shame - My honor, or what becomes my rank and station. If this refers to the rebellion in the time of Absalom, the allusion is to the fact that his enemies were endeavoring to rob him of his scepter and his crown, and to reduce him to the lowest condition of beggary and want; and he asks with earnestness how long they intended to do him so great injustice and wrong.

Will ye love vanity - Compare the notes at Psalm 2:1. That is, how long will you act as if you were in love with a vain and impracticable thing; a thing which "must" be hopeless in the end. The idea is, that God had chosen him, and anointed him, and had determined that he should be king Psalm 4:3, and therefore, that their efforts "must be" ultimately unsuccessful. The object at which they were aiming could not be accomplished, and he asks how long they would thus engage in what must, from the nature of the case, be fruitless.

And seek after leasing - The word "leasing" is the Old English word for "lie." The idea here is, that they were pursuing a course which would yet prove to be a delusion - the hope of overturning his throne. The same question, in other respects, may be asked now. Men are seeking that which cannot be accomplished, and are acting under the influence of a lie. What else are the promises of permanent happiness in the pursuits of pleasure and

ambition? What else are their attempts to overthrow religion and virtue in the world?

Selah - See the notes at Psalm 3:2.

Verse 3

But know - This is addressed to those whom, in the previous verse, he had called the "sons of men;" that is, his foes. This is designed to show them that their opposition to him must be vain, since God had determined to set him apart for his own service, and would, therefore, hear his prayer for relief and protection.

That the Lord hath set apart - That Yahweh had done this; that is, that he had designated him to accomplish a certain work, or that he regarded him as an instrument to perform it. He would, therefore, protect him whom he had thus appointed; and their efforts were really directed against Yahweh himself, and must be vain.

Him that is godly for himself - For his own purposes, or to accomplish his own designs. The reference is here undoubtedly to the psalmist himself; that is, to David. The word "godly," as applied to himself, is probably used in contrast with his enemies as being engaged in wicked designs, to wit, in rebellion, and in seeking to dispossess him of his lawful throne. The psalmist felt that his cause was a righteous cause, that he had done nothing to deserve this treatment at their hands; and that he had been originally exalted to the throne because God regarded him as a friend of himself and of his cause; and because he knew that he would promote the interests of that cause. The word here rendered "godly," חסיד *châsîyd* is derived from חסד *chesed* which means desire, ardor, zeal; and then kindness, benignity, love toward God or man. Here the word properly denotes one who has love to God, or one who is truly pious; and it is correctly rendered "godly." Compare Psalm 30:4-5; Psalm 31:23; Psalm 37:28. The idea is, that as God had appointed him for his own great purposes, the real aim of the rebels was to oppose Yahweh; and the purposes in which they were engaged could not, therefore, be successful.

The Lord will hear when I call unto him - As I am engaged in his service; as I am appointed to accomplish a certain purpose for him, I may confidently believe that he will hear me, and will deliver me out of their hands. Is not this always the true ground of encouragement to pray - that if God has a purpose to accomplish by us he will hear our prayer, and save us from danger, and deliver us out of the hand of our enemies? And should not

this be the main design in our prayers - that God "would" thus spare us that we may accomplish the work which he has given us to do?

Verse 4

Stand in awe - Still addressed to those who in Psalm 4:2 are called "sons of men;" that is, to his enemies. This is rendered by Prof. Alexander, "Rage and sin not." The Aramaic Paraphrase renders it, "Tremble before him, and sin not." The Latin Vulgate, *"Irascimini"* - "be angry." The Septuagint ὀργίζεσθε καὶ μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε *orgizesthe kai mē hamartanete* "Be ye angry, and sin not" - a rendering which Paul seems to have had in his eye in Ephesians 4:26, where the same language is found. It is not necessary, however, to suppose that, in this case, or by so quoting this language, Paul meant to give his sanction to the Septuagint translation of the passage. The truth doubtless is, that he found this language in that version, and that he quoted it, not as a correct translation, but as exactly expressing an idea which he wished to convey - in the same way as he would have quoted an expression from a Greek classic.

It was made to convey an inspired sentiment by his use of it; whether it was a fair translation of the original Hebrew was another question. For the meaning of the sentiment, see the notes at Ephesians 4:26. The original word here - רגז *râgaz* - means to be moved, disturbed, disquieted, thrown into commotion; and as this may be by anger, fear, or grief, so the word comes to be used with reference to any one of these things. - Gesenius, Lexicon. The connection here would seem to require that it should be understood with reference to "fear" - since we cannot suppose that the writer would counsel them to be moved or agitated by wrath or anger, and since there was no ground for exhorting them to be moved by grief. The true idea is, doubtless, that which is conveyed in our translation - that they were to fear; to stand in awe; to reflect on the course which they were pursuing, and on the consequences of that course, and by so doing to cease from their plans, and to sin no further. God had determined to protect him whom they were engaged in persecuting, and, in prosecuting their plans, they must come into conflict with His power, and be overcome. The counsel, therefore, is just such as may properly be given to all men who are engaged in executing plans of evil.

And sin not - That is, by continuing to prosecute these plans. Your course is one of rebellion against Yahweh, since he has determined to protect him whom you are endeavoring to drive from his throne, and any

further prosecution of your schemes must be regarded as additional guilt. They had indeed sinned by what they had already done; they would only sin the more unless they abandoned their undertaking.

Commune with your own heart - Hebrew: "Speak with your own heart;" that is, consult your own "heart" on the subject, and be guided by the result of such a deliberation. The language is similar to what we often use when we say, "Consult your better judgment," or "Consult your feelings," or "Take counsel of your own good sense;" as if a man were divided against himself, and his passions, his ambition, or his avarice, were contrary to his own better judgment. The word "heart" here is used in the sense in which we now use it as denoting the seat of the affections, and especially of right affections; and the meaning is, "Do not take counsel of, or be influenced by, your head, your will, your passions, your evil advisers and counselors; but consult your own better feelings, your generous emotions, your sense of right, and act accordingly." People would frequently be much more likely to do right if they would consult their "hearts" as to what should be done than they are in following the counsels which actually influence them. The secret, silent teachings of the "heart" - the heart when unbiased and uninfluenced by bad counselors - is often our best and safest guide.

Upon your bed - Admirable advice to those who are engaged in plans of wickedness. In the silence of night; in solitary musings on our bed; when withdrawn from the world, and from all the promptings of passion and ambition, and when, if at any time, we cannot but feel that the eye of God is upon us, the mind is most likely to be in a proper state to review its plans, and to inquire whether those plans can be expected to meet the divine approbation.

And be still - When you are thus quiet, reflect on your doings. For a most beautiful description of the effect of night and silence in recalling wicked men from their schemes, see Job 33:14-17. Compare the notes at that passage.

Selah - This, as explained in the notes at Psalm 3:2, marks a musical pause. The pause here would well accord with the sense, and would most happily occur after the allusion to the quiet communion on the bed, and the exhortation to be still.

Verse 5

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness - Offer righteous sacrifices; that is, sacrifices prompted by right motives, and in accordance with the prescriptions in the law of God. This appears to be addressed also to those who in Psalm 4:2 are called "sons of men;" that is, those who were arrayed against the psalmist. According to the common opinion this psalm was composed by David on occasion of his being driven from his throne and kingdom; and, of course, Zion, the ark, and the tabernacle, were in the hands of his enemies. The exhortation here may be, either that, as his enemies were now in possession of the usual seat of public worship, they would conduct the worship of God by keeping up the regular daily sacrifice; or, more probably, it means that in view of their sins, particularly in this rebellion, and as the result of the calm reflection to which he had exhorted them in Psalm 4:4, they should now manifest their repentance, and their purpose to turn to God, by presenting to him an appropriate sacrifice. They were sinners. They were engaged in an unholy cause. He exhorts them to pause, to reflect, to turn to God, and to bring a sacrifice for their sins, that their guilt might be blotted out.

And put your trust in the Lord - That is, turn from your evil ways, and confide in God in all his arrangements, and submit to him. Compare Psalm 2:12.

Verse 6

There be many that say - Some have supposed, as DeWette and others, that the allusion of the psalmist here is to his own followers, and that the reference is to their anxious fears in their misfortunes, as if they were poor and forsaken, and knew not from from where the supply of their wants would come. The more probable interpretation, however, is that the allusion is to the general anxiety of mankind, as contrasted with the feelings and desires of the psalmist himself in reference to the manner in which the desire was to be gratified. That is, the general inquiry among mankind is, who will show us good? Or, where shall we obtain that which seems to us to be good, or which will promote our happiness?

Who will show us any good? - The word "any" here is improperly supplied by the translators. The question is more emphatic as it is in the original - "Who will show us good?" That is, Where shall happiness be found? In what does it consist? How is it to be obtained? What will contribute to it? This is the "general" question asked by mankind. The "answer" to this question, of course, would be very various, and the

psalmist evidently intends to place the answer which "he" would give in strong contrast with that which would be given by the mass of men. Some would place it in wealth; some in honor; some in palaces and pleasure grounds; some in gross sensual pleasure; some in literature; and some in refined social enjoyments. In contrast with all such views of the sources of true happiness, the psalmist says that he regards it as consisting in the favor and friendship of God. To him that was enough; and in this respect his views stood in strong contrast with those of the world around him. The "connection" here seems to be this - the psalmist saw those persons who were arrayed against him intent on their own selfish aims, prosecuting their purposes, regardless of the honor of God and the rights of other men; and he is led to make the reflection that this is the "general" character of mankind. They are seeking for happiness; they are actively employed in prosecuting their own selfish ends and purposes. They live simply to know how they shall be "happy," and they prosecute any scheme which would seem to promise happiness, regardless of the rights of others and the claims of religion.

Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us - That is, in contrast with the feelings and plans of others. In the pursuit of what "they" regarded as good they were engaged in purposes of gain, of pleasure, or of ambition; he, on the contrary, asked only the favor of God - the light of the divine countenance. The phrase, "to lift up the light of the countenance" on one, is of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures, and is expressive of favor and friendship. When we are angry or displeased, the face seems covered with a dark cloud; when pleased, it brightens up and expresses benignity. There is undoubtedly allusion in this expression to the sun as it rises free from clouds and tempests, seeming to smile upon the world. The language here was not improbably derived from the benediction which the high priest was commanded to pronounce when he blessed the people of Israel Numbers 6:24-26, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." It may be added here, that what the psalmist regarded as the "supreme good" - the favor and friendship of God - is expressive of true piety in all ages and at all times. While the world is busy in seeking happiness in other things - in wealth, pleasure, gaiety, ambition, sensual delights - the child of God feels that true happiness is to be found only in religion, and in the service and friendship

of the Creator; and, after all the anxious inquiries which men make, and the various experiments tried in succeeding ages, to find the source of true happiness, all who ever find it will be led to seek it where the psalmist said his happiness was found - in the light of the countenance of God.

Verse 7

Thou hast put gladness in my heart - Thou hast made me happy, to wit, in the manner specified in Psalm 4:6. Many had sought happiness in other things; he had sought it in the favor of the Lord, and the Lord had given him a degree of happiness which they had never found in the most prosperous worldly condition. This happiness had its seat in the "heart," and not in any external circumstances. All true happiness must have its seat there, for if the heart is sad, of what avail are the most prosperous external circumstances?

More than in the time - More than they have had in the time referred to; or, more than I should have in such circumstances.

That their corn and their wine increased - When they were most successful and prosperous in worldly things. This shows that when, in Psalm 4:6, he says that many inquired who would show them any "good," what they aspired after was worldly prosperity, here expressed by an increase of grain and wine. The word rendered "corn" means grain in general; the word rendered "wine" - תירוֹשׁ *tîyrôsh* - means properly "must, new wine," Isaiah 65:8. The reference here is probably to the joy of harvest, when the fruits of the earth were gathered in, an occasion among the Hebrews, as it is among most people, of joy and rejoicing.

Verse 8

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep - The word "both" here means "at the same time;" that is, I will alike be in peace, and I will lie down and will sleep; I will have a mind at peace (or, in tranquility) when I lie down, and will sleep calmly. This is said in view of his confidence in God, and of his belief that God would preserve him. He had put his trust in him; he had sought his happiness in him, and now he felt assured that he had nothing to fear, and, at peace with God, he would lie down and compose himself to rest. This is the counterpart of what is said in Psalm 3:5. There he says in the morning, that, though surrounded by fear, he "had" been permitted to lie calmly down and sleep; here he says, that, though he is surrounded by fear, he has such confidence in God, that he "will" give himself to quiet slumber. His mind was free from anxiety as to the result of

the present troubles; he had calm confidence in God; he committed all to him; and thus gave himself to rest. No one can fail to admire the beauty of this; and no one can fail to perceive that entire confidence in God, and an assurance that all things are under his control, are best adapted of all things to give peaceful days and nights.

For thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety - There are two ideas here:

(a) One a confidence that he would abide in safety;

(b) the other, that he owed this entirely to the Lord.

He had no power to defend himself, and yet he felt assured that he would be safe - for he put his trust entirely in the Lord. The whole language implies unwavering trust or confidence in God, and is thus instructive and useful for all. It teaches us:

(1) that in the midst of troubles we may put our trust in God; and

(2) that religion is adapted to make the mind calm in such circumstances, and to enable its possessor to lie down without anxiety in the slumbers of the night, and to pursue without anxiety the duties of the day.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 5

Introduction

1. “Author of the psalm” - This psalm also purports to be a psalm of David, and there is nothing in it to lead us to doubt that this opinion is correct. It is ascribed to him in all the versions, and by all the ancient Hebrew writers, and the contents are such as we might expect from him.

2. “The occasion on which the psalm was composed.” This is not specified in the title to the psalm, and there is nothing in the psalm itself that can enable us to determine it with certainty. There can be no improbability in supposing that there were some events in the life of David, or that there were some particular circumstances, which suggested the thoughts in the psalm, but all those local and personal allusions are suppressed, as it does not appear to have been the writer‘s object to disclose private feelings, but to give utterance to sentiments, though perhaps suggested by private and personal considerations, which might be of permanent use to the church at all times.

There is evidence in the psalm itself that the author at the time of its composition was beset by enemies, and that he was in the midst of peril from the designs of violent men, Psalm 5:6, Psalm 5:8-10. Who those enemies were, however, he does not specify, for the object was to express sentiments that would be of use, to all who might be in similar circumstances, by showing what were the true feelings of piety, and what was the real ground of trust for the people of God at such times; and this object would not have been furthered by any specifications in regard to the foes which surrounded him at the time.

Flaminius (see Rosenmuller) supposes that the psalm was composed in the time of Saul, and in reference to the persecutions which David experienced then; but most interpreters have referred it to the time of Absalom‘s rebellion. Most of the Jewish writers, according to Kimchi (see DeWette), suppose that it had reference to Doeg and Ahithophel; but, as DeWette remarks, since they lived at different times, it cannot be supposed that the psalm had reference to them both. There is no improbability in supposing that the psalm was composed with reference to the same circumstances as the two preceding - that important event in the life of

David when his own son rose up in rebellion against him, and drove him from his throne. In those prolonged and fearful troubles it is by no means improbable that the royal poet would give utterance to his feelings in more than one poetic effusion, or that some new phase of the trouble would suggest some new reflections, and lead him anew to seek consolation in religion, and to express his confidence in God. The psalm has a sufficient resemblance to the two preceding to accord with this supposition, and it can be read with profit with those scenes in view.

3. "Contents of the psalm." The psalm, so far as the sentiment is concerned, may be properly regarded as divided into four parts:

I. An earnest prayer of the author to God to hear him; to attend to his cry, and to deliver him, Psalm 5:1-3. His prayer in the morning he would direct to him, and with the returning light of day he would look up to him. In his troubles his first act would be each day to call upon God.

II. An expression of unwavering confidence in God as the protector and the friend of the righteous, and the enemy of all wickedness, Psalm 5:4-7. God, he was assured, had no pleasure in wickedness; would not suffer evil to dwell in his presence; would abhor all that was false and deceitful, and he might, therefore, in all his troubles, put his trust in him. In view of this fact - this characteristic of the divine nature - he says that he would enter his holy temple, where prayer was accustomed to be made, with confidence, and worship with profound reverence, Psalm 5:7.

III. Prayer to God, in view of all this, for his guidance and protection in his perplexities, Psalm 5:8-10. He felt himself surrounded by dangers; he was in perplexity as to the true way of safety; his enemies were powerful, numerous, and treacherous, and he beseeches God, therefore, to interpose and to deliver him from them - even by cutting them off. He prays that they might fall by their own counsels, and that, as they had rebelled against God, they might be checked and punished as they deserved.

IV. An exhortation, founded on these views, for all to put their trust in God, Psalm 5:11-12. What he had found to be true, all others would find to be true; and as he in his troubles had seen reason to put his trust in God, and

had not been disappointed, so he exhorts all others, in similar circumstances, to do the same.

"To the chief muscian." See the note on the title to Psalm 4:1-8.

Verse 1

Give ear to my words, O Lord - We naturally incline the ear toward anyone when we wish to hear distinctly what he says, and we turn away the ear when we do not. The meaning here is, David prayed that God would be attentive to or would regard his prayer. This form of the petition is, that he would attend to his "words" - to what he was about to "express" as his desire. He intended to express only what he wished to be granted.

Consider my meditation - Understand; perceive, for so the word rendered "consider" properly means. He desired that he would regard the real import of what is here called his "meditation;" that is, he wished him not merely to attend to his "words," but to the secret and unexpressed desires of the soul. The idea seems to be that while his words would be sincere and truthful, yet they could not express "all" his meaning. There were desires of the soul which no language could convey - deep, unuttered "groanings" (compare Romans 8:26-27), which could not be uttered in language. There is a difference, however, in rendering the word translated "meditation." Most interpreters regard it as derived from הגה *hâgâh* to meditate (see the notes at Psalm 1:2) - and as thus denoting "thought," or "meditation." Gesenius and some others regard it as derived from הגג *hāgag* obsolete root - meaning to set on fire, to kindle; and hence, that it means here "heat," fervour of the mind; and then, fervent cry, or prayer. See "Rosenmuiller" also in "loc." DeWette concurs with Gesenius, and supposes that it should be rendered "sigh" or complaint. Prof. Alexander renders it "thought." Horsley renders it, "my sighing," but says he is in doubt whether it refers to an "internal desire of the mind," in opposition to "words" in the former part of the verse, or to a "prayer uttered *sotto voce*, like the private prayer usually said by every person before he takes his seat in the church" - the "internal motion of the mind toward God." It is not easy to determine the true meaning, but the probability is that it refers to an internal emotion - a fervent, ardent feeling - perhaps finding partial expression in sighs Romans 8:26, but which does not find expression in words, and which words could not convey. He prayed that God would

attend to the "whole" desires of the soul - whether expressed or unexpressed.

Verses 1-12

:Title

Upon Nehiloth - The title of Psalm 4:1-8 is, "upon Neginoth." As that refers to a musical instrument, so it is probable that this does, and that the idea here is that this psalm was intended particularly for the music-master that had special charge of this instrument, or who presided over those that played on it. Perhaps the idea is that this psalm was specially designed to be accompanied with this instrument. The word here, Nehiloth - נחילות *nechîylôth* plural. נחילה *nechîylâh* singular - is supposed by Gesenius, Lexicon, to denote a flute, or pipe, as being "perforated," from חלל *châlal* to bore." The word occurs only in this place. Very various opinions have been entertained of its meaning. See Hengstenberg, "Com." The Latin Vulgate and the Septuagint understand it as meaning "inheritance" - the same as נחלה *nachălâh* and as being somehow designed to refer to the people of God "as" a heritage. Latin Vulgate: *In finem pro ca, quae hereditatem consequitur, psalmus* David. So the Septuagint - ὑπὲρ τῆς κληρονομούσης *huper tēs klēronomousēs* So Luther, Fur das Erbe. What was the precise idea affixed to this it is not very easy to determine. Luther explains it, "according to the title, this is the general idea of the psalm, that the author prays for the inheritance or heritage of God, desiring that the people of God may be faithful to him, and may always adhere to him." The true interpretation, however, is evidently to regard this as an instrument of music, and to consider the psalm as adapted to be sung with the instrument of music specified. Why it was adapted particularly to "that" instrument of music cannot now be determined. Horsley renders it "upon the flutes." Compare Ugolin. Thesau. Ant. Sac.; tom. xxxii. pp. 158-170.

A Psalm of David - See introduction to Psalm 3:1-8.

Verse 2

Hearken unto the voice of my cry - My cry for assistance. The word "voice" refers to the utterance of his desires, or to his "expressed" wishes in a time of trouble.

My King, and my God - Though he was himself a king, yet he acknowledged his subjection to God as his supreme Ruler, and looked up to Him to protect him in his dangers, and to restore him to his rights. He was, at the same time, his God - his covenant God - to whom he felt that he was

permitted to come in the hour of trouble, and whose blessing he was permitted to invoke.

For unto thee will I pray - He had no one else to go to in his troubles, and he felt that he "might" approach the living God. It was his fixed purpose - his regular habit - to pray to him, and to seek his favor and friendship, and he felt that he was permitted to do so now.

Verse 3

My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord - The voice of prayer. Compare the notes at Psalm 3:5. Probably he refers here to a general habit of praying in the morning, though he makes a particular reference to his circumstances at that time. Compare Psalm 55:17. The psalmist felt, doubtless, that while it was a general duty and privilege to call upon God with the return of each morning, there was a special reason for it in the circumstances in which he then was. See the introduction to the psalm. He was then surrounded by enemies, and was in danger, and it was only in God that he could hope for protection even for a single day. The propriety of looking to God in the morning by prayer commends itself to any reflecting mind. Who knows what a day may bring forth? Who knows what temptations may await him? Who can protect himself from the dangers which may encompass him? Who can enable us to discharge the duties which are incumbent on us every day? Feeble, helpless, sinful, prone to err, in a world of temptation, and surrounded by dangers alike when we see them and when we do not, there is an obvious fitness in looking to God each morning for his guidance and protection; and the resolution of the psalmist here should be the firm purpose of every man.

In the morning - Regularly; each morning.

Will I direct my prayer unto thee - Margin, as in Hebrew, "set in order." The word used here - ערך *ʿârak* - means properly to place in a row, to put in order, to arrange, e. g., to place wood upon the altar Genesis 22:9; Leviticus 1:7; to arrange the showbread on the table Exodus 40:23; Leviticus 24:6, Leviticus 24:8. There is, not improbably, an allusion to these customs in the use of the word here; and the meaning may be, that his prayer would be a regularly arranged service before God. It would be a kind of morning sacrifice, and it would be arranged and performed with a suitable regard to the nature of the service - the fact that it was rendered to the great God. There would be a devout regard to propriety - a serious and solemn attention to the duties involved in the act as the worship of a holy

God. Prayer should not be rash; it should not be performend negligently or with a light spirit; it should engage the profound thought of the soul, and it should be performed with the same serious regard to time and to propriety which was demanded in the solemn and carefully prescribed rites of the ancient temple-service.

And will look up - The word used here - צפה *tsâphâh* - means, properly, to look about, to view from a distance. In Isaiah 21:5, it refers to a tower which has a wide prospect. Compare Song of Song of Solomon 7:4 . The idea here is properly that he would watch, narrowly and carefully (as one does who is stationed on a tower), for some token of divine favor - for some answer to his prayer - for some divine interposition - for some intimation of the divine will. This is, perhaps, equivalent to the Saviour‘s repeated command to “watch and pray.” The notion of looking “up” is not necessarily in the word used here, but it indicates the state of mind where there is deep and careful solicitude as to the answer to prayer.

Verse 4

For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness - The psalmist here refers to a well-known and well-understood characteristic of the Divine Being, that he was holy and pure, and that he could not have any pleasure in furthering the designs of wicked men. This is said with reference to his enemies, who were thus wicked; and the idea is that God would not, and could not, consistently with his nature, further their designs. This is the ground of encouragement which he had to pray - that he was conscious that his own aims were right, and that his cause was just, and that God could not favor the cause of the ungodly. This is still, and always will be, a ground of encouragement in prayer. If we know that our cause is right, we may look to God to favor it; if a cause is wrong, we cannot look to him to interpose to advance it. Good men, therefore, pray; wicked men do not.

Neither shall evil dwell with thee - The same idea is here expressed in another form. If God should show favor to the wicked, it would seem as if he admitted them to his habitation, as we do our friends and those in whom we delight. But as God would not do this, the psalmist feels that it was proper for him to call upon Him to deliver him from wicked people.

Verse 5

The foolish - Referring still to his enemies, as having this character, and urging the fact that they “had” such a character as a reason why God should hear him, and deliver him. The word “foolish” here, הוללים *hôleliym* is used

to denote the wicked, under the common idea in the Scriptures that sin is folly. Compare Psalm 14:1. It is rendered by Prof. Alexander, "the proud" or "insolent." The Aramaic renders it "deriders;" Latin Vulgate: "unjust;" Septuagint "transgressors;" Gesenius, Lexicon, "proud." So DeWette. The common idea, however, is the correct one, referring to the wicked under the idea that they were "fools," as all sin is supreme folly.

Shall not stand in thy sight - Shall not be allowed to be in thy presence; that is, thou wilt not approve their cause, or favor them. See the notes at Psalm 1:5.

Thou hatest all workers of iniquity - All that do wrong. He refers here, also, to a general characteristic of God, but still with an implied and immediate reference to his enemies as sustaining this character, and as a reason why he appealed to God to defend his cause. Nothing is more constantly affirmed in the Scriptures than that God hates all forms of evil.

Verse 6

Thou shalt destroy - Thou wilt bring to ruin; thou wilt cause to perish; that is, cause to perish as the wicked are caused to perish, by being punished. The idea is that God could not approve their cause; could not favor them; could not give them prosperity, and that they must be overthrown and punished. As in the previous verses, so here, David refers to this as a general characteristic of God, but with an implied reference to his enemies.

Them that speak leasing - Lies; the word "leasing" being the old Saxon word to denote falsehood. See Psalm 4:2. It is not found elsewhere in our common version. The allusion here is to his enemies, and the idea is that they were false and treacherous; a description which will well apply to them on the supposition that this refers to the rebellion of Absalom. See the introduction to the psalm.

The Lord will abhor - Will hate; will hold in abomination. That is, he will show his abhorrence by punishing such as are here referred to.

The bloody and deceitful man - The man of blood and fraud; the man who sheds blood, and is guilty of treachery and fraud. Margin, "man of bloods and deceit." The "man of bloods," - "the plural form being commonly used where there is reference to blood-guiltiness or murder." - "Prof. Alexander." See Genesis 4:10; Psalm 51:14. The idea seems to be that of shedding "much" blood. The reference here, as before, is to a general characteristic of the Divine Mind, with a special reference to the character

of David‘s enemies, as being distinguished for fraud and blood-guiltiness. On the supposition (see introduction) that this refers to the rebellion of Absalom, there can be no difficulty in seeing the propriety of the application. It was on these grounds that the psalmist directed his prayer to God. He was confident that his was a righteous cause; he was as sure that his enemies were engaged in a wicked cause; and he felt, therefore, that “he” might go before God and seek his interposition, with the assurance that all his attributes, as a righteous and holy God, would be enlisted in his favor. God has “no” attribute which can take part with a sinner, or on which a sinner can rely; the righteous can appeal to “every” attribute in the divine nature as a ground of confidence and hope.

Verse 7

But as for me - While it is their characteristic that they are wicked, and have no desire to serve God; and while with such characteristics they can have no hope of access to God, and no reason to suppose that he will hear their cry, I am inclined to enter his house, and I feel the assurance that he will listen to my prayer. In character and ill feelings he was wholly unlike them.

I will come into thy house - Indicating his expectation and his hope that he would yet be permitted to enter the courts of the Lord, from which he was now driven away (see the introduction to the psalm), and his purpose thus to acknowledge God. The word “house” here refers to the tabernacle, which was regarded as the house or dwelling place of God. The word was applied to the entire structure, embracing all the courts, as being sacred to God, as the word was subsequently to the whole of the temple. It was the holy of holies, however, which was regarded as the special dwelling-place of God, and that none were permitted to enter but the high priest, and he but once in the year. (See the notes at Hebrews 9:1-7.)

In the multitude of thy mercy - In thine abundant mercy. He expected to be delivered from his present troubles, and he felt assured that God would permit him again to enter his earthly courts, and to offer his vows and thanksgivings there.

And in thy fear - In profound reverence for thee. Fear, or reverence, is often employed to denote devotion or worship.

Will I worship toward thy holy temple - The worshippers were not permitted to enter the temple, but worshipped “toward” it; that is, looking toward it, or prostrating themselves toward it as the special dwelling-place

of God. If they were in the courts around the temple, they worshipped with their faces toward the place where God was supposed to reside; if they were far away, even in distant lands, they still directed their faces toward Jerusalem and the temple, as the Muslims now do toward Mecca. See the notes at Daniel 6:10. It has been objected, from the use of the word "temple" here, that this psalm could not have been written by David, as the temple was not built until the time of Solomon. But in reply to this it may be observed that the word here used - היכל *hêykâl* - is a word of large signification, and might be applied to any place of worship. It means, properly, a large and magnificent building, a palace, Proverbs 30:28; Isaiah 39:7; Daniel 1:4; and then, the place where Yahweh was supposed to reside, or the place of his worship; and might be applied to the tabernacle as well as to the temple. In fact, it is "often" applied to the tabernacle that was in use before the building of the temple, 1 Samuel 1:9; 1 Samuel 3:3; 2 Samuel 22:7. Compare Gesenius' Lexicon.

Verse 8

Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness - That is, conduct me safely in the manifestation of the principles of justice or righteousness which belong to thy nature. David felt assured that his was a righteous cause, and that he might make his appeal to God on the ground of the justness of that cause. Such a ground of appeal is always proper when we are in danger or in trouble from the injustice of others, for we may always ask of God to interpose, and to cause that which is right to be done.

Because of mine enemies - On account of my enemies, or in respect to them; that is, that they may not triumph, but that I may be vindicated and may be delivered from them.

Make thy way straight before my face - The way in which thou wouldst have me to walk. That is, mark out or make plain before me the path for me to tread - the path in which thou wilt deliver me. He was in perplexity, and knew not which way to go, and he looks up to God for guidance and direction.

Verse 9

For there is no faithfulness in their mouth - There is nothing in them which can be confided in; nothing in their promises and declarations. They are false and treacherous, and I can, therefore, only appeal to thee. It is easy to see the propriety of this statement, and of those which follow, on the supposition that this refers to the rebellion of Absalom. Absalom had gone

to Hebron on a false pretence 2 Samuel 15:7-10, and every act of his in this whole transaction had been treacherous and false.

Their inward part - Not only their external conduct, but their hearts, their principles, their motives. This was fairly to be inferred from their conduct. The object of the psalmist is to show that they were wholly depraved in all that properly constitutes character or that entered into moral conduct.

Their throat is an open sepulchre - That is, as the grave is open to receive its victim, so is their throat open to devour or swallow up the peace and happiness of others. The main idea is that they are false, treacherous, not to be confided in, slanderous. This passage, with the following, is employed by the apostle Paul to demonstrate the universal depravity of man. See the notes at Romans 3:13.

They flatter with their tongue - He had referred to the "inward part," or the "heart," and to the "throat" as being depraved and evil; he now refers to another member of the body as being equally depraved - the "tongue." Instead of being employed to utter truth, and to give expression to the real feelings of the heart, it was employed to flatter others, with a view to lead them astray, or to make use of them for base and selfish purposes. The propriety of this representation as applicable to Absalom and his coadjutors no one can fail to see (compare 2 Samuel 15:1-6). It is also to an eminent degree the characteristic of the wicked in general. On this, also, see the notes at Romans 3:13.

Verse 10

Destroy thou them, O God - The word here rendered "destroy" is translated by Prof. Alexander "condemn" - "condemn them; literally, make them guilty; that is, recognize and treat them as such." The Hebrew word אשם *'âsham* means to fail in duty, to transgress, to be guilty; in the Hiphil, the form used here, according to Gesenius, to "punish; and hence, to destroy," (Lexicon) The idea in the mind of the psalmist seems to have been that he desired, since they were undoubtedly guilty, that God would regard and treat them "as such." It is not that he wished that God would make them guilty; or that, in itself considered, he desired that they should be found to be so, or that, in itself considered, he wished them to be punished or cut off; but it is that, as they were guilty, and as they were pursuing a course which tended to overthrow the government of the land, and as they were at war with God and with the best interests of the people, God would interpose and

stay their progress - that he would show himself to be a righteous and just God. There is no evidence of any private malignity in this prayer, or of any spirit of private revenge. It is a prayer which corresponds with all the efforts, and consequently with all the wishes of every good person, that the violators of law may be arrested and punished. In this, assuredly, there is no wrong.

Let them fall by their own counsels - So as to show that they brought this judgment upon themselves. The wish is, that their plans, which were evil, might come to nought, and tend to their own overthrow. That is, the psalmist did not wish to imbrue his hands in their blood, or to be made the agent in their destruction; but he desired that God would himself interpose, so that their own plans might be made the means of quelling the rebellion. If men are so wicked that they must perish it is desirable that it should be "seen" that they perish by their own guilt and folly.

Cast them out - Expel them; drive them away; let them not be successful in taking possession of the throne, and in overturning the government.

In the multitude of their transgressions - In the abundance of their sins, or as a consequence of the number and the aggravation of their offences. The design of the psalmist is to fix the attention on the "great number" of their sins as a reason why they should not be successful. Such a prayer is not wrong, for it would not be right to pray that sinners "in" the abundance of their sins, or in consequence of the multitude of their sins, should be successful and prosperous. The fact that they are such sinners is, under a righteous administration, a reason why they should "not" be successful, not why they "should be."

For they have rebelled against thee - This is given as a reason why the psalmist prayed that they should be cut off. It was not that they had wronged him; it was because they had rebelled against God; and it was right, therefore, to hope and to pray that he would interpose and vindicate his government and law. There is no spirit of private revenge manifested here, and nothing said that would encourage or foster such a spirit. All that is said here is but carrying out what every magistrate must feel who executes the laws, and is what he endeavors himself to do; for it is desirable that the wicked - the violators of the law - the enemies of their country - should be arrested and prosecuted. See the general introduction, 6.

Verse 11

But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice - Compare the notes at Psalm 2:12. That is, they have occasion to rejoice in thee and in thy protection. The wicked have everything to dread, for they must be cut off; but the righteous have every reason to be happy, for they shall partake of the favor of God. This is, at the same time, the earnest expression of a desire that they might rejoice, and that the dealings of God with them might be such that they would ever "have occasion" for joy.

Let them even shout for joy - Internal joy or happiness is often expressed by shouting, or singing, as the word used here frequently signifies. The meaning is, that they should give every proper expression to their feeling of joy. This may be done by singing, or by grateful ascriptions of praise and gratitude.

Because thou defendest them - While the wicked are cut off Psalm 5:10. The psalmist, in this expression, doubtless had a primary reference to himself and to those who adhered to him in his righteous cause; but, as is common in the Psalms, he gives to the sentiment a general form, that it might be useful to all who fear and love God.

Let them also that love thy name - That love thee - the name being often put for the person. This is but another form of designating the righteous, for it is one of their characteristics that they love the name of God.

Be joyful in thee - Rejoice in thee - in thine existence, thy perfections, thy government, thy law, thy dealings, thy service; in all that thou hast revealed of thyself, and in all that thou doest. Compare Philemon 3:1, note; Philemon 4:4, note. It is one of the characteristics of the truly pious that they do find their happiness in God. They rejoice that there is a God, and that he is just such a being as he is; and they take delight in contemplating his perfections, in the evidences of his favor and friendship, in communion with him, in doing his will.

Verse 12

For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous - It is one of the characteristics of God that, while he will punish the wicked, he will show favor to the righteous; while he brings deserved punishment upon the one, he will show his favor to the other.

With favor wilt thou compass him as with a shield - That is, as a shield is thrown round or before one in the day of battle to protect him, so wilt thou throw thy protection around the righteous. For a description of a

“shield,” see the notes at Ephesians 6:16. Compare the notes at Psalm 3:3. On these accounts, David felt that he might trust in God in the day of trouble and danger; and, on the same account, all who are righteous may put their trust in him now.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 6

Introduction

1. "Title of the psalm." This psalm is inscribed "To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith." On the meaning of the phrase "Chief Musician on Neginoth," see the notes at the title to Psalm 4:1-8: The phrase "upon Sheminith" occurs here for the first time, and modifies the meaning of the title. The word Sheminith - שׁמינית *shemîynîyth* - means properly "the eighth," and corresponds exactly to our word "octave," the eighth. It means in modern music an interval of seven degrees, or twelve semitones. It contains five full tones, and two semitones. It is supposed by Gesenius (Lexicon) here to denote "the lowest and gravest notes of the scale, sung by men, the modern bass or basso." The word occurs, in the musical use, in 1 Chronicles 15:21, in enumerating various names of musicians, "Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, etc., with harps on the Sheminith to excel;" margin, "or eighth." It is also found in the title to Psalm 12:1-8: It does not elsewhere occur in reference to music in the Scriptures. It is probably not possible now to ascertain the precise meaning of the word as applicable to ancient music, and it is not important. The phrase "upon the octave" would properly be the true rendering of it; and this was doubtless quite intelligible at the time. It would be difficult to explain many of the musical terms now in use, after the lapse of two or three thousand years. If the term, however, was used, as is supposed by Gesenius, to denote the bass, its meaning is not difficult. It would then mean that the psalm was designed to be sung, accompanied with the instruments designated by "Neginoth," and with the voices appropriate to this "octave" - the bass voices. The usual bass voice might be supposed to be adapted to the sentiment in the psalm.

2. "The author of the psalm." The psalm purports to have been written by David, and there is nothing in the psalm to lead us to doubt the truth of this representation. It may be assumed, therefore, to be his.

3. "The occasion on which the psalm was written." In the, running title in the English version this psalm is called "David's complaint in his sickness." It is hardly necessary to say that these running titles were prefixed by the translators, and that there is nothing in the Hebrew that corresponds with this. Still, this has been a very prevailing tradition as to the occasion on which this psalm was composed. Dr. Horsley prefixes this

title to it: “A penitential prayer in the character of a sick person,” and in the exposition of this psalm supposes that the suppliant is a mystical personage, and that the object is to represent the feelings of a penitent under the image of such a personage, or that “the sick person is the believer‘s soul laboring under a sense of its infirmities and anxiously expecting the promised redemption; the sickness is the depravity and disorder occasioned by the fall of man.” Luther entities it “A penitential prayer (Bussgebet), for the health of the body and the soul.” DeWette regards it as the prayer of one oppressed or in trouble, under the image of a sick person; and in this opinion Rosemnuller concurs. Others regard it as a psalm composed in view of sickness, and suppose it was written in consequence of sickness brought upon David in consequence of the rebellion of Absalom. Indeed, there has been a pretty general concurrence among expositors in the sentiment that, as the two previous psalms were composed in view of that rebellion, so this was also. Calvin supposes that it was not composed specifically in view of “sickness,” but of some great calamity that brought David to feel that he was near the borders of the grave, and that was thus the means of bringing the sins of his past life impressively to his remembrance.

In this uncertainty, and this want of positive testimony as to the occasion when the psalm was composed, it is natural to look to the psalm itself, and to inquire whether there are any “internal” indications which will enable us to determine with any degree of probability the circumstances of the writer at the time of its composition. The psalm, then, has the following internal marks as to the occasion on which it was composed:

I. The writer was in the midst of enemies, and in great peril on account of them. “Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies,” Psalm 6:7. “Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity,” Psalm 6:8. “Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed,” Psalm 6:10. We cannot be mistaken, then, in supposing that this was at some period in the life of David, when his numerous enemies pressed hard upon him and endangered his life.

II. He was crushed and broken-hearted on account of these trials; he had not strength of body to bear up under the weight of accumulated woes; he sank under the burden of these troubles and calamities, and was brought

near to the grave. There were many and formidable external foes who threatened his life; and there was, on some account, connected with this, deep and crushing "mental" anguish, and the result was actual and dangerous sickness - so that he was led to contemplate the eternal world as near to him. It became a case, therefore, of real sickness caused by unique outward troubles. This is manifest from such expressions as the following: - "I am weak; heal me: my bones are vexed" Psalm 6:2. "In death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" Psalm 6:5. "I am weary with my groaning; I water my couch with my tears: mine eye is consumed with grief," Psalm 6:6-7. This is such language as would be used by one who was crushed and broken-hearted with grief, and who, unable to bear up under the weighty load was laid, as the result of it, on a bed of languishing. It is not uncommon that outward troubles become too great for the feeble human frame to bear, and that, crushed beneath them, the body is laid upon a bed of languishing, and brought to the borders of the grave, or to the grave itself.

III. The psalmist expresses a feeling which is common in such cases - a deep anxiety on the subject of his own sin, as if these calamities had come upon him on account of his transgressions, and as a punishment for his sins. This is implied in Psalm 6:1: "O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure." He looked upon this as a "rebuke" from God, and construed it as an expression of "hot displeasure." This is the prompting of natural feeling when one is afflicted, for this inquiry spontaneously arises in the mind, whether the affliction is not on account of some sin which we have committed, and is not to be regarded as proof that God is angry with us. It is an inquiry as proper as it is natural, and David, in the circumstances referred to, seems to have felt its full force.

Taking all these considerations into view, it seems probable that the psalm was composed during the troubles brought upon David in the rebellion of Absalom, and when, crushed by the weight of these sorrows, his strength gave way, and he was laid on a bed of languishing, and brought near to the grave.

4. "The contents of the psalm." The psalm contains the following points:

I. A plea of the author for mercy and compassion in trouble, under the apprehension that God was rebuking and punishing him for his sins, Psalm 6:1-2. His deep sufferings, described in the following verses, had, as remarked above, led him to inquire whether it was not on account of his sins that he was afflicted, and whether he ought not to regard his sorrow as proof that God was displeased with him for his sins.

II. A description of his sufferings, Psalm 6:2-7. He had been crushed with sorrow, and had become "weak;" his very "bones" were "vexed;" he was drawing near to the grave; he was weary with his groaning; he watered his couch with his tears; his eye was consumed with grief. These sufferings were partly bodily and partly mental; or rather, as suggested above, probably his mental sorrows had been so great as to prostrate his physical frame, and to lay him on a bed of languishing.

III. The assurance that God had heard his prayer, and that he would triumph over all his enemies, and that all his troubles would pass away, Psalm 6:8-10. Hope breaks in suddenly upon his afflicted soul, and, under this exulting feeling, he addresses his enemies, and tells them to depart from him. They could not be successful, for the Lord had heard his prayer. This sudden answer to prayer - this happy turn of thought - often occurs in the Psalms, as if, while the psalmist was pleading, an immediate answer to prayer was granted, and light broke in upon the darkened mind.

Verse 1

O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger - As if God was rebuking him by the affliction which he was bringing upon him. This is the point on which the attention of the psalmist is now fixed. He had been apparently contemplating his afflictions, and inquiring into their cause, and he was led to the conclusion that it might be for his sins, and that his trials were to be interpreted as proof that God was angry with him. He speaks, therefore, of God as visiting him in his "anger," and in his "hot displeasure," and pleads with him that he would "not" thus rebuke and chasten him. The word "rebuke" here, like the word rendered "chasten," properly refers to the reproof of an offender "by words," but may also be used to denote the reproof which God administers by his providential dealings when he brings judgment upon anyone for his sins. This is the meaning here. The psalmist

did not apprehend that God would openly "reprove" him for his sins; but he regarded his dealings with him as such a reproof, and he pleads that the tokens of the reproof might be taken away. The whole language is that which indicates a connection between suffering and sin; the feeling which we have when we are afflicted that it must be on account of our sins.

Neither chasten me - A word denoting substantially the same thing; used here in the sense of "punishing."

In thy hot displeasure - literally, "in thy heat." We speak of anger or wrath as "burning," or "consuming." Compare Genesis 39:19; Numbers 11:33; Deuteronomy 11:17; Psalm 106:40; Job 19:11; Job 32:2-3; Psalm 2:12.

Verse 2

Have mercy upon me, O Lord - That is, be gracious to me; or, show me compassion. This language may be used either in view of sin, of suffering, or of danger. It is a cry to God to interpose, and remove some present source of trouble, and may be employed by one who feels that he is a sinner, or by one on a bed of pain, or by one surrounded by enemies, or by one at the point of death, or by one who is looking out with apprehension upon the eternal world. It is commonly, indeed (compare Psalm 51:1), a cry to God in view of sin, pleading for pardon and salvation; but here it is a cry in view of trouble and danger, outward sorrow and mental anguish, that had overcome the strength of the sufferer and laid him on a bed of languishing. See introduction to the psalm, Section 3.

For I am weak - The original word here, אמלל *'ûmlal* means properly to languish or droop, as plants do that are blighted, Isaiah 24:7, or as fields do in a drought, Isaiah 16:8, and is here applied to a sick person whose strength is withered and gone. The condition of such an one is beautifully compared with a plant that withers for lack of moisture; and the word is used in this sense here, as referring to the psalmist himself when sick, as the result of his outward and mental sorrows. Such an effect has not been uncommon in the world. There have been numberless cases where sorrow has prostrated the strength - as a plant withers - and has brought on languishing sickness.

O Lord, heal me - This is language which would be properly applied to a case of sickness, and therefore, it is most natural to interpret it in this sense in this place. Compare Isaiah 19:22; Isaiah 30:26; Job 5:18; Genesis 20:17; Psalm 60:2; 2 Chronicles 16:12; Deuteronomy 28:27.

For my bones are vexed - The word "vexed" we now commonly apply to mental trouble, and especially the lighter sort of mental trouble - to irritate, to make angry by little provocations, to harass. It is used here, however, as is common in the Scriptures, in reference to torment or to anguish. The bones are the strength and framework of the body, and the psalmist means here to say that the very source of his strength was gone; that that which supported him was prostrated; that his disease and sorrow had penetrated the most firm parts of his body. Language is often used in the Scriptures, also, as if the "bones" actually suffered pain, though it is now known that the bones, as such, are incapable of pain. And in the same manner, also, language is often used, though that use of the word is not found in the Scriptures, as if the "marrow" of the bones were especially sensitive, like a nerve, in accordance with what is the common and popular belief, though it is now known that the marrow of the bones is entirely insensible to suffering. The design of the psalmist here is to say that he was crushed and afflicted in every part of his frame.

Verse 3

My soul is also sore vexed - The word "soul" here is used in the sense in which it is commonly with us, as denoting the mind. The idea is, that his sorrows were not merely those of the bodily frame. They had a deeper seat than even the bones. His mind, his soul, was full of anguish also, in view of the circumstances which surrounded him, and which had brought on these bodily afflictions.

But thou, O Lord - This is a broken sentence, as if he had commenced an address to God, but did not complete it. It is as if he had said, "Here I suffer and languish; my sorrows are deep and unmitigated; as for thee, O Lord" - as if he were about to say that he had hoped God would interpose; or, that his dealings were mysterious; or, that they seemed strange or severe; but he ends the sentence by no language of complaint or complaining, but by simply asking "how long" these sorrows were to continue.

How long? - That is, how long wilt thou leave me thus to suffer? How long shall my unmitigated anguish continue? How long will it be ere thou wilt interpose to relieve me? The language implies that in his apprehension it was already a long time - as time usually seems long to a sufferer (compare Job 7:2-4), and that he was constantly looking out for God to interpose and help him. This is language such as all persons may be inclined to use on beds of pain and languishing. It seems indeed long to them now; it

will, however, seem short when they look back upon it from the glories of the heavenly world. Compare 2 Corinthians 4:17-18.

Verse 4

Return, O Lord, deliver my soul - As if he had departed from him, and had left him to die. The word "soul" in this place is used, as it often is, in the sense of "life," for in the next verse he speaks of the grave to which he evidently felt he was rapidly descending.

O save me - Save my life; save me from going down to the grave. Deliver me from these troubles and dangers.

For thy mercies' sake -

(a) As an act of mere mercy, for he felt that he had no claim, and could not urge it as a matter of right and justice; and

(b) in order that God's mercy might be manifest, or because he was a merciful Being, and might, therefore, be appealed to on that ground.

These are proper grounds, now, on which to make an appeal to God for his interposition in our behalf; and, indeed, these are the only grounds on which we can plead with him to save us.

Verse 5

For in death - In the state of the dead; in the grave.

There is no remembrance of thee - They who are dead do not remember thee or think of thee. The "ground" of this appeal is, that it was regarded by the psalmist as a "desirable" thing to remember God and to praise him, and that this could not be done by one who was dead. He prayed, therefore, that God would spare his life, and restore him to health, that he might praise him in the land of the living. A sentiment similar to this occurs in Psalm 30:9, "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?" So also Psalm 88:11, "Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction?" So also in Isaiah 38:18, in the language of Hezekiah, "The grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth." See the notes at that passage. A similar sentiment also is found in Job 10:21-22. See the notes at that passage. In regard to the meaning of this it may be remarked

(a) that it is to be admitted that there was among the ancient saints much less light on the subject of the future state than there is with us, and that they often, in giving utterance to their feelings, seemed to speak as if all were dark beyond the grave.

(b) But, though they thus spoke in their sorrow and in their despondency, they also did, on other occasions, express their belief in a future state, and their expectation of happiness in a coming world (compare, for example, Psalm 16:10-11; Psalm 17:15).

(c) Does not their language in times of despondency and sickness express the feelings which "we" often have now, even with all the light which we possess, and all the hopes which we cherish? Are there not times in the lives of the pious, even though they have a strong prevailing hope of heaven, when the thoughts are fixed on the grave as a dark, gloomy, repulsive prison, and "so" fixed on it as to lose sight of the world beyond? And in such moments does not "life" seem as precious to us, and as desirable, as it did to David, to Hezekiah, or to Job?

In the grave - Hebrew, בשאול *bishe'ôl* "in Sheol." For the meaning of the word, see Isaiah 5:14, note; Isaiah 14:9, note; Job 7:9, note. Its meaning here does not differ materially from the word "grave."

Who shall give thee thanks? - Who shall "praise" thee? The idea is that "none" would then praise God. It was the land of "silence." See Isaiah 38:18-19. This language implies that David "desired" to praise God, but that he could not hope to do it in the grave.

Verse 6

I am weary with my groaning - I am exhausted or worn out with it. That is, his sorrows were so deep, and his groaning was so constant, that his strength failed. He became "faint" under the weight of his sorrows. All persons in trouble have experienced this effect - the sense of weariness or exhaustion from sorrow.

All the night make I my bed to swim - That is, he wept so much that his bed seemed to be immersed in tears. This is, of course, hyperbolical language, expressing in a strong and emphatic manner the depth of his sorrows.

I water my couch with my tears - The word here rendered "water" means to melt, to flow down; then, in the Hiphil, to cause to flow, to

dissolve. The sense here is, that he caused his couch to "flow" or "overflow" with his tears. We would say, he "flooded" his bed with tears. This verse discloses the true source of the trials referred to in the psalm. It was some deep mental anguish - some source of grief - that exhausted his strength, and that laid him on a bed of languishing. No circumstances in the life of David better accord with this than the troubles which existed on account of the ungrateful and rebellious conduct of Absalom, and it is most natural to refer it to this. Many a parent since the time of David has experienced "all," both mental and bodily, which is here described as a consequence of the ingratitude and evil conduct of his children. The tragedy of "Lear" turns entirely on this.

Verse 7

Mine eye is consumed - The word here rendered "consumed" - עשש *ʿâshêsh* - means properly to fall in, to fall away, and is applied here to the "eye" as pining or wasting away from care, anxiety, and sorrow. Tears were poured forth from the eye, and it seemed to be exhausting itself in this manner. The meaning is, that it had grown "dim," or that its sight began to fail, like that of an old man, on account of his troubles. Many have understood the word here rendered "eye" as referring to the "countenance;" but it is doubtful whether the word ever has this signification; and at any rate the common signification, referring it to the "eye," best suits this connection.

It waxeth old - It seems to grow old; it experiences the effects commonly produced by age in blunting the power of vision. This is not an uncommon effect of grief and sadness. Even while I am writing this I am called in my pastoral visitations to attend on a young lady lying on a bed of languishing, and probably of death, one of whose symptoms is a quite diminished, and indeed almost total loss of vision, as the effect of trouble and disease.

Because of all mine enemies - From the trouble which they have brought upon me. The reference here, according to the interpretation proposed of the psalm, is to Absalom and those who were associated with him. Their conduct had been such as to bring upon David this overwhelming tide of sorrows.

Verse 8

Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity - Referring, by the "workers of iniquity," to his enemies, as if they now surrounded him, and

calling on them "now" to leave him, since God had heard his prayer, and they could not be successful in their purposes. This is an indirect but most emphatic way of saying that God had heard his prayer; and the sentiment in this verse is strongly in contrast with the desponding state of feeling - the deep and dreadful sorrow - indicated in the previous verses. Light broke in suddenly upon him; his prayer had come up before God, and, in some way, he was assured that it would be answered. Already he sees his enemies scattered, and his own cause triumphant; and in this exulting feeling he addresses his foes, and commands them to leave him. This is, therefore, a remarkable and striking proof that prayer may be heard, even while we are speaking to God (compare Isaiah 65:24); that the assurance may be conveyed suddenly to the mind that God will hear and answer the prayer which is addressed to him; and also a beautiful illustration of the effect of this on a mind overwhelmed with trouble and sorrow, in giving it calmness and peace.

For the Lord hath heard - That is, my prayer has ascended before him, and I am certain that he regards it favorably, and will answer it. "In what way" he had this assurance he does not inform us. As he was an inspired man, we may suppose that the assurance was given to him directly by the Holy Spirit. "We" are not to expect the "same kind" of assurance that our prayers are heard; we are to look for no revelation to that effect; but there may be "as real" an intimation to the mind that our prayers are heard - as real "evidence" - as in this case. There may be a firm confidence of the mind that God is a hearer of prayer now coming to the soul with the freshness of a new conviction of that truth; and there may be, in trouble and sorrow, a sweet calmness and peace breathed through the soul - an assurance that all will be right and well, as if the prayer were heard, and such as there would be if we were assured by direct revelation that it is heard. The Spirit of God can produce this in our case as really as he did in the case of David.

The voice of my weeping - The voice of prayer that accompanied my weeping, or the voice of the weeping itself - the cry of anguish and distress which was in itself of the nature of prayer.

Verse 9

The Lord hath heard my supplication - Repeating the sentiment in the previous verse, to express his assurance and his joy. Nothing is more natural

in such circumstances than to dwell on the joyous thought, and to repeat it to ourselves, that it may make its full impression.

The Lord will receive my prayer - As he has done it, so he will still do it. This allays all fears of the future, and makes the mind calm. The state of mind here is this: "The Lord has heard my prayer; I am assured that he will do it hereafter; I have, therefore, nothing to fear."

Verse 10

Let all mine enemies be ashamed - Be so brought to see their folly that they shall be ashamed of their conduct. The wish is that they might be brought to see their own guilt - a wish certainly which it is right to cherish in regard to all evil-doers.

And sore vexed - Compare the notes at Psalm 5:10. The same Hebrew word is used here which occurs in Psalm 6:2-3, and rendered "vexed." It is a word which denotes trouble, trembling, consternation; and the meaning here is, that the psalmist prayed that they might be confounded or disconcerted in their plans - a prayer which is certainly proper in regard to all the purposes of the wicked. No one should desire that the purposes of the wicked should prosper; and not to desire this is to desire that they may be foiled and overcome in their schemes. This must be the wish of every good man.

Let them return - Turn back, or be turned back; that is, let them be repulsed, and compelled to turn back from their present object.

And be ashamed suddenly - Hebrew, "In a moment;" instantaneously. He desired that there might be no delay, but that their defeat might be accomplished at once. As it was right to pray that this might occur, so it was right to pray that it might occur without delay, or as speedily as possible. The sooner the plans of sinners are confounded, the better.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 7

Introduction

1. “Author of the psalm.” This psalm, according to the title, was composed by David; and there is nothing in it that is contrary to this supposition. Indeed, there were many circumstances in the life of David which would suggest the thoughts in this psalm; and the sentiments expressed are such as are frequently found in his other compositions.

2. “Occasion on which the psalm was composed.” The psalm is said in the title to have been composed as “a song to the Lord, concerning the words (Margin, ‹or business, ‹) of Cush the Benjamite.” There is no reason to call the correctness of this title in question, but there have been very various opinions as to who this Cush was. It is manifest from the psalm that it was composed in view of some “words” of reviling, or reproach, or slander; something that was done to wound the feelings, or to injure the reputation, or destroy the peace of David.

There have been three opinions in regard to the “Cush” here referred to:

(1) According to the first, “Saul” is the person intended; and it has been supposed that the name “Cush” is given to him as a reproach, and to denote the blackness of his character, as the word “Cush” would denote an Ethiopian, or black man. So it was understood by the author of the Targum or Aramaic Paraphrase, in which it is rendered “an ode which David sang before the Lord on the death of Saul, the son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin.” But this opinion has no probability. It is not certain that this term “Cush” would, in the time of David, denote one of black complexion; nor is there any probability that it would be used as a term of reproach at all; and as little probability is there that it would be applied by David to Saul if it had been. If the psalm referred to Saul, it is probable, from all that we know of the feelings of David toward the reigning prince, that he would not designate him, in the title of a psalm, in enigmatical and reproachful language. Besides, the injurious treatment of Saul toward Davd was rather manifested in deeds than in words.

(2) a second opinion is, that it refers to Shimei, who was of the house of Saul, and who reproached and cursed David as he was flying from

Jerusalem on occasion of the rebellion of Absalom, 2 Samuel 16:5 ff. It is supposed by those who maintain this opinion that the name was given to him because he was a calumniator and reviler - or, as we would say, a "blackhearted" man. But the same objection exists to this opinion as to that before-mentioned; and besides this, there are several things in the psalm which do not agree with such a supposition. In fact there is no reason for such a supposition, except that Shimei was a calumniator, and that the psalm refers to some such person.

(3) a third opinion is, that it refers to some one of the name Cush, of the tribe of Benjamin, who reproached David on some occasion that is now unknown. This opinion has every degree of probability, and is undoutbtedly the correct opinion. David was often reproached and calumniated in his life, and it would seem that, on some occasion now to us unknown, when he was violently reproached in this manner, he gave vent to his feelings in this impassioned ode. No other record was made of the transaction, and the occasion on which it occurred is not known. At the time when it occurred it would be easily understood who was referred to, and the design of the composition was accomplished by the record of the feelings of the author on all occasion that greatly tried his spirit. It is thus of permanent value to the church and the world, for there are few persons that are not on some occasions bitterly reproached, and few who are not disposed to vent their feelings in expressions similar to those in this psalm. One great design of the collection of poems in the Psalms was to show the workings of human nature in a great variety of situations; and hence, such a psalm as this has a permanent and general value; and so far as this general use is concerned, it matters little on what occasion, or in reference to what individual, the psalm was composed.

3. "Contents of the psalm." The psalm embraces the following points:

I. A prayer of the psalmist for deliverance from his enemies, and especially from this particular foe that threatened his destruction, Psalm 7:1-2. This is the general subject of the psalm.

II. He offers this prayer on the ground that he is innocent of the charges that are brought against him; relying thus on the fact that his was a

righteous cause, and appealing to God on this ground, and declaring his willingness to suffer all that his enemy attempted to bring upon him if he was guilty, Psalm 7:3-5.

III. He prays for the interposition of divine justice on his enemies, on the ground of the general justice of God, and as a part of his general administration over men, Psalm 7:6-9.

IV. In his own hopes, he trusts in the divine discrimination between innocence and guilt, assured that God would interpose on behalf of the righteous, and that the principles of the divine administration were opposed to the wicked, Psalm 7:10-11.

V. He speaks confidently of the ultimate destruction of the ungodly and of the manner in which it would be brought about, Psalm 7:12-16. If they did not turn, they must be certainly destroyed, for God was preparing the instruments of their destruction; and the means which he would use would be the very plans of the wicked themselves.

VI. The psalmist says that, as for himself, he would praise the Lord according to his righteousness; that is, would adore and praise him as a righteous God, Psalm 7:17.

The general subject of the psalm, therefore, pertains to the feelings which are to be entertained toward revilers and calumniators - toward those who reproach us when we are conscious of innocence of the charges that are alleged against us; and as all good men are liable to be placed in these circumstances, the psalm has a practical and general value.

4. "The title to the psalm." The psalm is entitled "Shiggaion of David." The word "Shiggaion" - שִׁגָּיוֹן *shiggâyôn* - occurs only in this place in the singular number, and in Habakkuk 3:1 in the plural. "A prayer of Habakkuk upon Shigionoth." It properly means a "song, psalm, hymn" (Gesenius). Prof. Alexander renders it "wandering, error," as if the word were derived from שָׁגָה *shâgâh* to walk, to go astray; and he supposes that it refers to the fact that David was "wandering" or unsettled at the time when the psalm was composed. This reason, however, will not apply to the use of the word

in Habakkuk. Solomon Van Til. (Ugolin, Thesau. Sac. Ant., vol. xxxii. pp. 294,295), supposes that it refers to "a certain inadvertence or oblivion of himself on the part of the author, or powerful seizure of the mind," *"animi abreptio."* He says that it is commonly supposed to indicate a poem, in which the poet is impelled by his feelings, and drawn along with little regard to the regularity of the numbers or the meter, but in which he pours out his emotions in an erratic or irregular manner from the overflowing of his soul.

This seems to me to have been the probable origin of this title, and to have denoted the kind of poetry to which it was applicable. Julius Bartoloccius (Ugolin, xxxii. 484) supposes that it refers to a certain "tone" (the "fifth tone") as especially "sweet" and "soft," and that this kind of poetry was thus applicable to hymns of joy; and that the term is used here because this psalm is especially sweet and pleasant. There is nothing in the psalm, however, which would indicate that this is the origin of the title; and the former supposition better meets the case than either this or the opinion of Prof. Alexander. I would regard it, therefore, as applicable to a psalm where there was an overflow of feeling or emotion that poured itself out without much regard to regular rhythm, or the laws of meter. It is a psalm of a "wandering" or "irregular meter." It may not be easy, however, to determine why it is particularly applied to this psalm; it is more easy to see why it should be applied to the hymn in Habakkuk. The Latin Vulgate and the Septuagint render it simply "A psalm."

Verse 1

O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust - The psalm opens with an expression of strong confidence in God. The psalmist addresses Yahweh as his God, and says that in him he trusts or confides. The word rendered trust - חסה *châsâh* - means "to flee;" to flee to a place; to take shelter; and is applied to taking shelter under the shadow or protection of one Judges 9:15; Isaiah 30:2; Psalm 57:1; Psalm 61:4. The idea here is, that in his troubles he fled to God as a refuge, and felt safe under his protection.

Save me from all them that persecute me - That is, protect my life; rescue me from their power. The word "persecute" here refers to those who sought his life, who endeavored to deprive him of his rights. The language would apply to many occasions in the life of David - to the persecutions

which he endured by Saul, by Absalom, etc. In this case the language was suggested by the opposition of Cush the Benjamite; and it was this that David had particularly in view. It is probable, however, that, whoever Cush was, he was not alone, but that others were associated with him in his opposition to David; and it was natural also that, in circumstances like these, David should remember his other persecutors, and pray that he might be delivered from them all. The prayer, therefore, has a general form, and the desire expressed is that which we all naturally have, that we may be delivered from all that troubles us.

And deliver me - Rescue me. It would seem from this expression, and from the following verse, that there was more to be apprehended in the case than mere reproachful words, and that his life was actually in danger.

Verse 2

Lest he - Lest "Cush" should do this. See the title, and the introduction to the psalm, Section 2.

Tear my soul like a lion - Tear or rend my "life" - that is, "me" - like a lion. The word rendered "soul" here - נפשׁ *nephesh* - refers, as it properly does elsewhere, to the "life," and not to the soul, as we use the term, denoting the thinking, immortal part. The simple idea is, that David was apprehensive of his "life," and, in order to indicate his great peril, he uses language derived from the fierceness of the lion. Such imagery would be well understood in a country where lions abounded, and nothing could more strikingly denote the danger in which David was, or the fierceness of the wrath of the enemy that he dreaded.

Rending it in pieces - Rending me in pieces. Or rather, perhaps, breaking or crushing the bones, for the word used - פרק *pâraq* (from our English word "break") - means "to break, to crush," and would apply to the act of the lion crushing or breaking the bones of his victim as he devoured it.

While there is none to deliver - Denoting the complete destruction which he feared would come upon him. The figure is that of a solitary man seized by a powerful lion, with no one at hand to rescue him. So David felt that if God did not interfere, he would fall into the hands of this fierce and wrathful enemy.

Verse 3

O Lord my God - A solemn appeal to God as to the sincerity and truth of what he was about to say.

If I have done this - This thing charged upon me, for it is evident that "Cush," whoever he was, had accused him of some wrong thing - some wicked action. What that was can only be learned from what follows, and even this is not very specific. So far as appears, however, it would seem to be that he accused David of bringing evil, in some way, upon one who was at peace with him; that is, of wantonly and without provocation doing him wrong, and of so doing wrong that he had the avails of it in his own possession - some spoil, or plunder, or property, that he had taken from him. The charge would seem to be, that he had made a wanton and unprovoked attack on one who had not injured him, and that he had taken, and had still in his possession, something of value that properly belonged to another. Whether the accuser (Cush) in this referred to himself or to some other person, does not appear clear from the psalm; but as he was filled with rage, and as the life of David was endangered by him, it would seem most probable that the reference was to himself, and that he felt he had been personally wronged. The design of David, in the passage now before us, is to deny this charge altogether. This he does in the most explicit manner, by saying that this was so far from being true, that he had, on the contrary, delivered the life of him that was his enemy, and by adding that, if this were so, he would be willing that the injured man should persecute and oppose him, and even trample his life down to the earth.

If there be iniquity in my hands - That is, if there is the iniquity referred to; or, in other words, if he had in his possession what had been wrongfully taken from another, to wit, as appears, from this "Cush" who now accused him. The word "iniquity" here denotes an "unjust possession" - a property that had been unjustly taken from another; and, as remarked above, the slanderous charge would seem to have been, that he had taken that property from some one who was at peace with him, and that he retained it contrary to justice. This charge David means peremptorily to deny.

Verse 4

If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me - If I have done evil; or if I have requited him that was friendly by some unjust and evil conduct. If I have come upon him wantonly and unprovoked, and have done him wrong. This seems to have been the substance of the accusation; and, as remarked above, it is most probable that the accuser (Cush) referred to himself.

Yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy - So far is this from being true, that the very reverse is true. So far from taking advantage of another that was at peace with me, and depriving him of his just rights by fraud or force, it is a fact that I have rescued from impending danger the man that was at war with me, and that was an avowed enemy. It would seem probable that in this he refers to this very Cush, and means to say that there had been some occasion in which he, who was long hostile to him, was wholly in his power, and when he had not only declined to take advantage of him, but had actually interposed to rescue him from danger. An instance of this kind actually occurred in the life of David, in his treatment of Saul 1 Samuel 24:10-11; and it is "possible" that David referred to that case, and meant to say that that was an indication of his character, and of his manner of treating others. Those who suppose that the whole psalm refers to Saul (see the introduction, Section 2), of course regard this as the specific case referred to. There may have been other instances of the same kind in the life of David, and there is no improbability in supposing that on some occasion he had treated this very man, "Cush," in this way, and that he refers here to that fact.

Verse 5

Let the enemy persecute my soul - Persecute my "life," for so the word rendered "soul," נפשׁ *nephesh* is evidently used here. He was willing, if he had been guilty of the thing charged upon him, that the enemy here referred to should "pursue" or persecute him until he should destroy his life. Compare with this the expression of Paul in Acts 25:11. The meaning here is simply that if he were a guilty man, in the manner charged on him, he would be willing to be treated accordingly. He did not wish to screen himself from any just treatment; and if he had been guilty he would not complain even if he were cut off from the land of the living.

And take it - Take my life; put me to death.

Yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth - The allusion here is to the manner in which the vanquished were often treated in battle, when they were rode over by horses, or trampled by men into the dust. The idea of David is, that if he was guilty he would be willing that his enemy should triumph over him, should subdue him, should treat him with the utmost indignity and scorn.

And lay mine honor in the dust - All the tokens or marks of my honor or distinction in life. That is, I am willing to be utterly degraded and

humbled, if I have been guilty of this conduct toward him who is my enemy. The idea in all this is, that David did not wish to screen himself from the treatment which he deserved if he had done wrong. His own principles were such that he would have felt that the treatment here referred to would have been right and proper as a recompense for such base conduct; and he would not have had a word to say against it. His desire for the interposition of God, therefore, arose solely from the fact of his feeling that, in these respects, he was entirely innocent, and that the conduct of his enemy was unjust and cruel.

Selah - A musical pause, not affecting the sense, but introduced here, perhaps, because the sense of the psalm now demanded a change in the style of the music. See the notes at Psalm 3:2.

Verse 6

Arise, O Lord, in thine anger - That is, to punish him who thus unjustly persecutes me. See the notes at Psalm 3:7.

Lift up thyself - As if he had been lying in repose and inaction. The idea is derived from a warrior who is called on to go forth and meet an enemy.

Because of the rage of mine enemies - Not only of this particular enemy, but of those who were associated with him, and perhaps of all his foes. David felt, on this occasion, that he was surrounded by enemies; and he calls on God to interfere and save him.

And awake for me - Or, in my behalf. The word "awake" is a still stronger expression than those which he had before used. It implies that one had been asleep, and insensible to what had occurred, and he addresses God "as if" He had thus been insensible to the dangers which surrounded him.

To the judgment that thou hast commanded - To execute the judgment which thou hast appointed or ordered. That is, God had, in his law, commanded that justice should be done, and had proclaimed himself a God of justice - requiring that right should be done on the earth, and declaring himself in all cases the friend of right. David now appeals to him, and calls on him to manifest himself in that character, as executing in this case the justice which he required under the great principles of his administration. He had commanded justice to be done in all cases. He had required that the wicked should be punished. He had ordered magistrates to execute justice. In accordance with these great principles, David now calls on God to manifest "himself" as the friend of justice, and to show, in this

case, the same principles, and the same regard to justice which he required in others. It is an earnest petition that he would vindicate his own principles of administration.

Verse 7

So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about - That is, as the result of thy gracious interposition in defending the righteous, and in bringing just judgment on the wicked. The meaning is, that such an act would inspire confidence in him as a just and holy God, and that, as the result, his people would gather round him to express their gratitude, and to render him praise. In other words, every act of justice on the part of God - all hls interpositions to defend his people, and to maintain the principles of righteousness and truth - tend to inspire confidence in him, and to increase the number of his friends. The phrase "the congregation of the people," here, does not necessarily refer to any "congregation," or assembly as such, then existing; but it means that a great congregation - a great multitude - would thus encompass him, or that great numbers would worship him the result of his interposition. This the psalmist urges as a motive, or as a reason why God should interpose, that in this way the number of his worshippers would be greatly increased.

For their sakes - On their account; or to secure this result in regard to them.

Return thou on high - The most probable meaning of this is "ascend thy throne of justice, or thy judgment-seat;" spoken here either as a king ascending his elevated throne (compare Isaiah 6:1), or as ascending to heaven, the place where he dispensed justice. The "language" is as if he had come down from his throne - as if he had not been engaged in dispensing justice; and David now calls on him to reascend the throne, and to execute righteous judgment among men. The effect of this, he says, would be to secure the confidence of his people, and to increase the number of those who would worship him. Of course, this is not to be understood literally, but in a manner appropriate to the divine majesty. It is language, in this respect, similar to that which is elsewhere used, when the psalmist calls on God "to awake, to arise, to lift up himself." See Psalm 7:6. Such language is easily understood; and language drawn from the common modes of speaking among men must be used when we speak of God. The whole idea in this passage is that God seemed to delay in the execution of his judgment, and the psalmist entreats him to hasten it.

Verse 8

The Lord shall judge the people - Expressing his confident belief that God would interpose, and that his judgment would not much longer be delayed. The proposition is a general one - that God would see that justice would be done to all people; and on this ground the psalmist pleads that He would now interpose and defend him from his enemies.

Judge me, O Lord - That is, in my present circumstances. Interpose to do justice to my cause, and to vindicate me from these false accusations.

According to my righteousness - In this particular case, for to that the proper laws of interpretation require us to confine this. He does not say that he wished his own righteousness to be made the basis of judgment in determining his eternal welfare, or that he depended on his own righteousness for salvation - for that is not the point in question; but he felt that his was, in this case, a righteous cause; that he was not guilty of the charge alleged against him; that he was an injured, wronged, and calumniated man; and he prayed that God would "vindicate" him from these charges, and defend him from those who were unjustly persecuting him. With all our sense of personal unworthiness in the matter of salvation, it is not improper, when we are wronged, to pray that God would interpose and vindicate us in that particular case, according to our innocence of the charges alleged against us.

And according to mine integrity that is in me - Hebrew, "my perfection." That is, his perfection in "this" case; his entire freedom from the charges brought against him; his absolute innocence in respect to the points under consideration. A man may be conscious of "perfect" innocence in respect to a particular matter, and yet have a deep sense of his "general" unworthiness, and of the fact that he is a sinner against God. That I am innocent of a particular act charged on me does not prove that I am guiltless altogether; that I should allege that, and insist on that, and pray to God to vindicate me in that, does not prove that I depend on that for the salvation of my soul, or that I claim absolute perfection before him.

Verse 9

Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to and end - Of all the wicked; wickedness not in this particular case only, but wickedness of all forms, and in all lands. The prayer here is a natural one; when a man becomes impressed with a sense of the evil of sin in one form, he wishes that the world may be delivered from it in all forms and altogether.

But establish the just - The righteous. This stands in contrast with his desire in regard to the wicked. He prays that the righteous may be confirmed in their integrity, and that their plans may succeed. This prayer is as universal as the former, and is, in fact, a prayer that the world may come under the dominion of the principles of truth and holiness.

For the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins - That is, the hearts and reins of all people. He understands the character of all people; he is intimately acquainted with all their thoughts, and purposes, and feelings. To search or try "the heart and the reins" is an expression frequently used in the Bible to denote that God is intimately acquainted with all the thoughts and feelings of people; that is, that he thoroughly understands the character of all people. The word "heart" in the Scriptures is often used to denote the seat of the "thoughts;" and the word "reins" seems to be used to denote the most secret feelings, purposes, and devices of the soul - as if lodged deep in our nature, or covered in the most hidden and concealed portions of the man. The word "reins," with us, denotes the kidneys. In the Scriptures the word seems to be used, in a general sense, to denote the inward parts, as the seat of the affections and passions.

The Hebrew word כליה *kilyâh* means the same as the word "reins" with us - the kidneys, Exodus 29:13, Exodus 29:22; Job 16:13; Isaiah 34:6; Deuteronomy 32:14. From some cause, the Hebrews seem to have regarded the "reins" as the seat of the affections and passions, though perhaps only in the sense that they thus spoke of the "inward" parts, and meant to denote the deepest purposes of the soul - as if utterly concealed from the eye. These deep thoughts and feelings, so unknown to other people, are all known intimately to God, and thus the character of every man is clearly understood by him, and he can judge every man aright. The phrase used here - of trying the hearts and reins - is one that is often employed to describe the Omniscience of God. Compare Jeremiah 11:20; Jeremiah 17:10; Jeremiah 20:12; Psalm 26:2; Psalm 139:13; Revelation 2:23. The particular idea here is, that as God searches the hearts of all people, and understands the secret purposes of the soul, he is able to judge aright, and to determine correctly in regard to their character, or to administer his government on the principles of exact justice. Such is the ground of the prayer in this case, that God, who knew the character of all people, would confirm those who are truly righteous, and would bring the wickedness of the ungodly to an end.

Verse 10

My defense is of God - The meaning here is, that God was his protector, and that in his troubles he confided in him. The original word here, as in Psalm 3:3, note; Psalm 5:12, note; is "shield." See the notes at thoses verses.

Which saveth the upright in heart - whom he that searches the heart Psalm 7:9 sees to be upright; or to be sincere, truthful, just. The writer says that it is a characteristic of God that he saves or protects all such; and, conscious of his innocence of the charges against himself, he here appeals to him on that ground, and confides in his protection because he sees that in this respect he was blameless.

Verse 11

God judgeth the righteous - That is, he pronounces a just judgment on their behalf; he vindicates their character. It is true, in a general sense, that God judges all according to their character; but the particular idea here is, that God will do justice to the righteous; he will interpose to vindicate them, and he will treat them as they ought to be treated when assailed by their enemies, and when reproached and calumniated. The original phrase here is susceptible of two translations; either, "God is a righteous judge" or, "God is judging," that is judges, "the righteous." The sense is not materially varied, whichever translation is adopted. Our common version has probably expressed the true idea; and there the design of the writer is to contrast the manner in which God regards and treats the righteous, with the manner in which he regards and treats the wicked. The one he judges, that is, he does him justice; with the other he is angry every day.

And God is angry with the wicked - The phrase "with the wicked" is supplied by our translators, but not improperly, since the writer evidently intends to speak of these in contrast with the righteous. The words "God is angry" must, of course, be understood in a manner in accordance with the divine nature; and we are not to suppose that precisely the same passions, or the same feelings, are referred to when this language is used of God which is implied when it is used of people. It means that his nature, his laws, his government, his feelings, are all arrayed against the wicked; that he cannot regard the conduct of the wicked with favor; that he will punish them. While his judgment in regard to the righteous must be in their favor, it must just as certainly be against the wicked; while he will vindicate the one, he

will cut off and punish the other. Of the truth of this in respect to the divine character there can be no doubt. Indeed, we could not honor a God - as we could honor no other being - who would deal with the righteous and the wicked alike, or who would have no respect to character in the treatment of others, and in his feelings toward them.

Every day - Continually; constantly; always. This is designed to quality the previous expression. It is not excitement. It is not temporary passion, such as we see in men. It is not sudden emotion, soon to be succeeded by a different feeling when the passion passes off. It is the steady and uniform attribute of his unchanging nature to be always opposed to the wicked - to all forms of sin; and in him, in this respect, there will be no change. The wicked will find him no more favorable to their character and course of life tomorrow than he is today; no more beyond the grave, than this side the tomb. What he is today he will be tomorrow and every day. Time will make no change in this respect, and the wicked can have no hope on the ground that the feeling of God toward sin and the sinner (as such) will ever be in any way different from what it is at the present moment. This is a fearful truth in regard to the sinner; and both aspects of the truth here stated should make the sinner tremble;

(a) that God is angry with him - that all His character, and all the principles of His govermnent and law, are and must be arrayed against him; and

(b) that in this respect there is to be no change; that if he continues to be wicked, as he is now, he will every day and always - this side the grave and beyond - find all the attributes of God engaged against him, and pledged to punish him.

God has no attribute that can take part with sin or the sinner.

Verse 12

If he turn not - If the wicked person does not repent. in the previous verse the psalmist had said that God is angry with the wicked every day; he here states what must be the consequence to the wicked if they persevere in the course which they are pursuing; that is, if they do not repent. God, he says, cannot be indifferent to the course which they pursue, but he is preparing for them the instruments of punishment, and he will certainly

bring destruction upon them. It is implied here that if they would repent and turn they would avoid this, and would be saved: a doctrine which is everywhere stated in the Scriptures.

He will whet his sword - He will sharpen his sword preparatory to inflicting punishment. That is, God will do this. Some, however, have supposed that this refers to the wicked person - the enemy of David - meaning that if he did not turn; if he was not arrested; if he was suffered to go on as he intended, he would whet his sword, and bend his bow, etc.; that is, that he would go on to execute his purposes against the righteous. See Rosenmuller *in loc*. But the most natural construction is to refer it to God, as meaning that if the sinner did not repent, He would inflict on him deserved punishment. The "sword" is an instrument of punishment (compare Romans 13:4); and to "whet" or sharpen it, is merely a phrase denoting that he would prepare to execute punishment. See Deuteronomy 32:41.

He hath bent his bow - The bow, like the sword, was used in battle as a means of destroying an enemy. It is used here of God, who is represented as going forth to destroy or punish his foes. The language is derived from the customs of war. Compare Exodus 15:3; Isaiah 63:1-4. The Hebrew here is," his bow he has trodden," alluding to the ancient mode of bending the large and heavy bows used in war, by treading on them in order to bend them.

And made it ready - Made it ready to shoot the arrow. That is, He is ready to execute punishment on the wicked; or, all the preparations are made for it.

Verse 13

He hath also prepared for him - The instruments of punishment are already prepared, and God can use them when he pleases. They are not to be made ready, and, therefore, there is no necessity for delay when he shall have occasion to use them. The idea is, that arrangements are made for the destruction of the wicked, and that the destruction must come upon them. The world is full of these arrangements, and it is impossible that the sinner should escape.

The instruments of death - The means of putting them to death; that is, of punishing them. The particular means referred to here are arrows, as being what God has prepared for the wicked. "Death" here is designed simply to denote punishment, as death would be inflicted by arrows.

He ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors - Or rather, as the Hebrew is, "He makes his arrows for burning," that is, "for burning arrows." Horsley renders it, "He putteth his arrows in action against those who are ready for burning." Prof. Alexander, "His arrows to (be) burning he will make." DeWette, "His arrows he makes burning." The Latin Vulgate and Septuagint, His arrows he has made for the burning: "that is, probably for those who are burning with rage, for persecutors. This seems to have been the idea of our translators. The Hebrew word - דלק *dâlaq* - means to burn, to flame; and hence, also, to burn with love, with anxiety, or with zeal or wrath - as persecutors do. But here the word seems properly to be connected with "arrows;" and the sense is, as rendered by Gesenius, "he maketh his arrows flaming;" that is, burning - alluding to the ancient custom of shooting ignited darts or arrows into besieged towns or camps, for the purpose of setting them on fire, as well as for the purpose of inflicting greater personal injury. The sense is, that God had prepared the means of certain destruction for the wicked. The reference here is not necessarily to persecutors, but what is said here pertains to all the wicked unless they repent.

Verse 14

Behold, he travaileth with iniquity - The wicked man does. The allusion here is to the pains and throes of child-birth; and the idea is, that the wicked man labors or struggles, even with great pain, to accomplish his purposes of iniquity. All his efforts, purposes, plans, are for the promotion of evil.

And hath conceived mischief - That is, he hath formed a scheme of mischief. The allusion here is common when speaking of forming a plan of evil.

And brought forth falsehood - The birth is falsehood; that is, self-deception, or disappointment. It does not mean that falsehood was his aim or purpose, or that he had merely accomplished a lie; but the idea is, that after all his efforts and pains, after having formed his scheme, and labored hard (as if in the pangs of child-birth) to bring it forth, it was abortive. He would be disappointed, and would fail at last. This idea is expressed more distinctly in the following verse, and the design of the whole is to say that any plan or purpose of wickedness must be in the end a failure, since God is a righteous Judge, and will vindicate His own cause.

Verse 15

He made a pit - The allusion here is undoubtedly to a method of hunting wild beasts which was common in ancient times. It consists in digging a pit-fall, and covering it over with brush and grass so as to deceive the animals, and then enclosing them and driving them into it. See the notes at Isaiah 24:17.

And digged it - And hollowed it out so as to be large enough to contain his prey, and so deep that he could not escape if he fell into it. The idea is, that the enemy here referred to had laid a secret and artful plan to destroy others. He meant that they should not be aware of his plan until the mischief came suddenly upon them. He was preparing to ruin them, and supposed that he was certain of his prey.

And is fallen into the ditch which he made - Into the pit-fall which he had constructed for others; as if a man who had made a pit-fall for wild beasts had himself fallen into it, and could not extricate himself. That is, he had been snared in his own devices; his cunning had recoiled on himself, and instead of bringing ruin on others he had only managed to bring it on himself. See this sentiment illustrated in the notes at Job 5:13. A remarkable instance of the kind may be found in Esther (Esther 57), in the case of Haman. Indeed, such things are not uncommon in the world, where the cunning and the crafty are involved in the consequences of their own plans, and are taken in meshes from which they cannot free themselves. A straightforward course is easy, and men are safe in it; but it requires more skill than most men are endowed with to manage a crooked and crafty policy safely, or so as to be safe themselves in pursuing such a course. A spider will weave a web for flies with no danger to himself, for he is made for that, and acts as if he understood all the intricacies of his own web, and may move safely over it in every direction; but man was made to accomplish his purposes in an open and upright way, not by fraud and deceit; hence, when he undertakes a tortuous and crooked course - a plan of secret and scheming policy - in order to ruin others, it often becomes unmanageable by his own skill, or is suddenly sprung upon himself. No one can overvalue a straightforward course in its influence on our ultimate happiness; no one can overestimate the guilt and danger of a crooked and secret policy in devising plans of evil.

Verse 16

His mischief - The mischief which he had designed for others.

Shall return upon his own head - Shall come upon himself. The blow which he aimed at others shall recoil on himself. This is but stating in another form the sentiment which had been expressed in the two previous verses. The language used here has something of a proverbial cast, and perhaps was common in the time of the writer to express this idea.

And his violent dealing - Which he shows to others. The word rendered violent dealing means violence, injustice, oppression, wrong.

Shall all come down upon his own pate - The word here rendered "pate" means properly vertex, top, or crown - as of the head. The idea is that it would come upon himself. He would be treated as he had designed to treat others. The sentiment here expressed is found also in Psalm 9:15; Psalm 35:8; Psalm 37:15. Compare Eurip. Med. 409, and Lucretius v. 1151.

Verse 17

I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness - That is, particularly as manifested in the treatment of the righteous and the wicked, protecting the one, and bringing deeserved punishment upon the other. The purpose of the psalm is to show this. In the course of the psalm the author had declared his full conviction that this was the character of God, and now, in view of this, he says that he will render to him the praise and glory which such a character deserves. He will acknowledge him by public acts of praise as such a God; and will at all times ascribe these attributes to him.

And will sing praise to the name of the Lord - To the name of Jehovah; that is, to Yahweh himself, the "name" being often used to designate a person, or that by which he is known; and also, in many cases, as in this, being significant, or designating the essential nature of him to whom it is applied.

Most high - Exalted above all other beings; exalted above all worlds. The purpose here declared of praising God may refer either to the act which he was then performing in the composition of the psalm, or it may be a purpose in respect to the future, declaring his intention to be to retain in future life the memory of those characteristics of the divine nature now disclosed to him, and to celebrate them in all time to come. The great truth taught is, that God is to be adored for what he is, and that his holy character, manifested alike in the treatment of the righteous and the wicked, lays the foundation for exalted praise.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 8

Introduction

Section 1. “The author of the psalm.” This is another psalm purporting to have been written by David, and there is nothing in it that lead‘s us to think otherwise.

Section 2. “The title to the psalm.” The psalm is addressed To the chief Musician upon Gittith. In regard to the meanin of the phrase “chief Musician,” see the notes at the introduction to Psalm 4:1-8. The word Gittith - גתית *gittîyth* - occurs but in two other places, also in the titles to the psalms, Psalm 81:1; Psalm 84:1. It is supposed to refer to a musical instrument so called, either as being common among the Gittites (from גתי *gittîy*), Gittites, or an inhabitant of Gath. See 2 Samuel 6:10-11; 2 Samuel 15:18), among whom David for some time resided; or as being derived from גת *gath* - a wine-press, as denoting an instrument that was used by those accustomed to tread the wine-vat, and intended to accompany the songs of the vintage. The former is the more probable derivation, as it is known that David dwelt for some time among that people, and it is not at all improbable that an instrument of music in use among them should have become common among the Hebrews. Nothing is known, however, as to whether it was a stringed instrument or a wind instrument. Compare, however, Ugolin, Thes. Sac. Ant. xxxii. 487. All that can be ascertained, with any degree of probability about this instrument, is, that as each of the psalms to which this title is prefixed is of a cheerful or joyous nature, would seem that this instrument was adapted to music of this kind, rather than to that which was pensive or serious. This idea also would agree well with the supposition that it denotes an instrument that was employed by those connected with the vintage. Compare Isaiah 16:10.

Section 3. “Occasion on which the psalm was composed.” Of this nothing is specified in the psalm itself, and it is impossible now to ascertain it. Aben Ezra, and some others, have supposed that it was written when David brought up the ark to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite, as mentioned in 1 Chronicles 13:12-14. But there is nothing in the psalm adapted to such an occasion. Rudinger supposes that it was composed in the joy of taking possession of Mount Zion. Others have supposed that it was

on occasion of the victory of David over Goliath of Gath; but there is nothing in it adapted to the celebration of such a victory.

If we may judge from the psalm itself, it would seem probable that it was composed by night in the contemplation of the starry heavens - naturally suggesting, in view of the vastness and beauty of the celestial luminaries, the littleness of man. This also filled the mind of the psalmist with wonder that the God who marshals all these hosts should condescend to regard the condition and wants of a being so feeble and frail as man, and should have exalted him as he has done over his works. That it was composed or suggested in the night seems probable, from Psalm 8:3, where the psalmist represents himself as surveying or "considering" the "heavens, the work" of the divine "fingers," and as making the "moon and the stars" the subject of his contemplation, but not mentioning the sun. In such contemplations, when looking on the vastness and grandeur, the beauty and order, of the heavenly hosts, it was not unnatural for the writer to think of his own comparative littleness, and then the comparative littleness of man everywhere. No time is more favorable for suggesting such thoughts than the still night, when the stars are shining clearly in the heavens, and when the moon is moving on in the silent majesty of its course. It would seem also, from Psalm 8:2, to be probable that the immediate occasion of this expression of admiration of the name and character of God was some act of condescension on his part in which he had bestowed signal favor on the writer - as if he had ordained strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings - from even the most feeble and helpless. Perhaps it was in view of some favor bestowed on David himself; and his soul is overwhelmed with a sense of the condescension of God in noticing one so weak and feeble and helpless as he was. From the contemplation of this, the thought is naturally turned to the honor which God had everywhere bestowed upon man.

The psalm, though one part of it is applied by the apostle Paul to Christ Hebrews 2:6-7, does not appear originally to have had any designed reference to the Messiah, though the apostle shows that its language had a complete fulfillment in him, and in him alone. See the notes at that passage. The psalm is complete in itself, as applicable to man as he was originally created, and according to the purposes of his creation; though it is true that

the original design will be carried out and completed only in the dominion which will be granted to the Messiah, who, as a man, has illustrated in the highest manner the original purpose of the creation of the race, and in whom alone the original design will be fully carried out.

Section 4. "Contents of the psalm." The psalm embraces the following points:

I. An admiring recognition of the excellence of the name of God (that is, of God himself); of that excellence as manifested in all the earth, Psalm 8:1. The excellency referred to, as the subsequent part of the psalm shows, is in his great condescension, and in his conferring such honor on man - a being so feeble as compared with himself, and so unworthy as compared with the glory of the heavens.

II. The immediate occasion of this reflection, or the cause which suggested it, Psalm 8:2. This seems to have been some remarkable manifestation to one who was feeble and helpless, as if God had ordained strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings. It is not improbable, as remarked above, that in this the psalmist refers to himself as having been, though conscious of weakness and helplessness, the means of overcoming the enemies of God, as if God had ordained strength through him, or had endowed him with strength not his own.

III. The psalmist is led into admiration of the condescension of God in bestowing such dignity and honor on man, Psalm 8:3-8. This admiration is founded on two things:

(1) That the God who had made the heavens, the moon and the stars, should condescend to notice man or creatures so insignificant and unworthy of notice, Psalm 8:3-4.

(2) The actual honor conferred on man, in the rank which God had given him in the dominion over his works here below; and in the wide extent of that dominion over the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the inhabitants of the seas, Psalm 8:5-8.

IV. The psalm concludes with a repetition of the sentiment in the first verse - the reflection on the excellency of the divine name and majesty, Psalm 8:9.

Verse 1

O Lord - Hebrew, יהוה *Yahweh* It is an address to God by his chosen and special title, Exodus 3:14. Compare the notes at Isaiah 1:2.

Our Lord - The word used here - אדני *'âdônay* - means properly master, lord, ruler, owner, and is such a title as is given to an owner of land or of slaves, to kings, or to rulers, and is applied to God as being the ruler or governor of the universe. The meaning here is, that the psalmist acknowledged Yahweh to be the rightful ruler, king, or master of himself and of all others. He comes before him with the feeling that Yahweh is the universal ruler - the king and proprietor of all things.

How excellent is thy name - How excellent or exalted art thou - the name being often used to denote the person. The idea is," How glorious art thou in thy manifested excellence or character."

In all the earth - In all parts of the world. That is, the manifestation of his perfect character was not confined to any one country, but was seen in all lands, and among all people. In every place his true character was made known through His works; in every land there were evidences of his wisdom, his greatness, his goodness, his condescension.

Who hast set thy glory above the heavens - The word used here, and rendered "hast set," is in the imperative mood - תנה *tenâh* - give; and it should probably have been so rendered here, "which thy glory give thou;" that is, "which glory of thine, or implied in thy name, give or place above the heavens." In other words, let it he exalted in the highest degree, and to the highest place, even above the heavens on which he was gazing, and which were in themselves so grand, Psalm 8:3. It expresses the wish or prayer of the writer that the name or praise of God, so manifest in the earth, might be exalted in the highest possible degree - be more elevated than the moon and the stars - exalted and adored in all worlds. In His name there was such intrinsic grandeur that he desired that it might be regarded as the highest object in the universe, and might blaze forth above all worlds. On the grammatical construction of this word - תנה *tenâh* - see an article by Prof. Stuart, in the Bibliotheca Sacra, vol. ix. pp. 73-77. Prof. Stuart supposes that the word is not formed from נתן *nâthan* - to give, as is the

common explanation, but from תנה *tânâh* - to give presents, to distribute gifts, Hosea 8:9-10, and that it should be rendered, Thou who diffusest abroad thy glory over the heavens.

Verse 2

Out of the mouth - This passage is quoted by the Saviour in Matthew 21:16, to vindicate the conduct of the children in the temple crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," against the objections of the Pharisees and Scribes, and is perhaps alluded to by him in Matthew 11:25. It is not affirmed, however, in either place, that it had an original reference to the times of the Messiah, or that it was meant, as used by the psalmist, to denote that children would be employed in the praise of God. The language sufficiently expressed the idea which the Saviour meant to convey; and the princip e or great truth involved in the psalm was applicable to the use which he made of it. The language would, perhaps, most naturally denote that infant children would give utterance to the praises of God, as the word "mouth" is used; but still it is not quite certain that the psalmist meant to convey that idea. It is probable, as we shall see, that he meant to say, God had conferred great honor on men - men so humble and weak that they might be compared to infants - by making them the means of overthrowing his enemies, thus showing the greatness of the divine condescension.

Babes - The word used here - עולל *ʿôlêl* - means properly a boy or child, and is usually connected with the word rendered sucklings, Jeremiah 44:7; Lamentations 2:11. It is applied to a boy playing in the streets, Jeremiah 6:11; Jeremiah 9:21; asking for bread, Lamentations 4:4,; carried away captive, Lamentations 1:5; borne in the arms, Lamentations 2:20; and once to an unborn infant, Job 3:16. It refers here to a child, or to one who is like a child; and the idea is that those to whom it is applied were naturally unable to accomplish what was done by them, and that God had honored them, and had shown his own condescension, by making them the instruments of doing what they had done.

And sucklings - The word used here - יונק *yôneq* - means a suckling, or a suckling child, a babe, Deuteronomy 32:25. It may be used literally, or employed to denote one who, in respect to strength, may be compared with a babe. The latter is probably the use made of it here.

Hast thou ordained strength - The word rendered ordained - יסד *yâsad* - means to found, to lay the foundation of, as of a building, Ezra 3:12; Isaiah 54:11. Then it means to establish, appoint, ordain, constitute, etc. The

meaning here is, that in what is referred to, there was, as it were, some basis or foundation for what is called "strength;" that is, that what is here meant by "strength" rested on that as a foundation - to wit, on what was done by babes and sucklings. The word "strength" is rendered by the Septuagint as "praise" - αἶνον *ainon* - and this is followed in the quotation in Matthew 21:16. The same rendering is adopted in the Latin Vulgate and in the Syriac. The Hebrew word - עֹז *ʿôz* - properly means strength, might; and the idea here would seem to be, that even from babes and sucklings - from those who were in themselves so feeble - God had taken occasion to accomplish a work requiring great power - to wit, in "stilling the enemy and the avenger;" that is, he had made those who were so feeble the instruments of accomplishing so great a work.

Because of thine enemies - In respect to thine enemies, or in order to accomplish something in regard to them, namely, in stilling them, as is immediately specified. The idea is, that there were those who rose up against God, and opposed his government and plans, and that God, in overcoming them, instead of putting forth his own power directly, had condescended to employ those who were weak and feeble like little children. Who these enemies were is not specified, but it is most natural to suppose that the reference is to some of the foes of the author of the psalm, who had been subdued by the prowess of his arm - by strength imparted to him, though in himself feeble as an infant.

That thou mightest still - Mightest cause to rest, or to cease. The original word - שׁבת *shâbath* - from which our word Sabbath is derived, means to rest; to lie by; to sit down; to sit still; and in the Hiphil, to cause to rest, or to cause to desist; to put an end to, Ezekiel 34:10; Joshua 22:25; Psalm 46:9; Proverbs 18:18. Here it means to bring to an end the purposes of the enemy and the avenger; or, to cause him to desist from his designs.

The enemy - The enemy of the writer, regarded also as the enemy of God.

And the avenger - One who was endeavoring to take revenge, or who was acting as if determined to avenge some imaginary or real wrong. This, too, may refer either to some one who was seeking to revenge himself on the author of the psalm, or who, with the spirit of revenge, stood up against God, and had set himself against him.

In regard to the meaning of this verse, which I apprehend is the key to the whole psalm, and which contains the original germ of the psalm, or the

thought which suggested the train of reflection in it, the following remarks may be made:

(a) There is no evidence that it was designed to refer originally to infants, or to children of any age, as stating anything which they would do in contributing to the praise of God, or as defeating sceptics and cavillers by "their instinctive recognition of God's being and glory," as is supposed by Calvin, DeWette, Prof. Alexander, and others. What is said here to be done by "babes and sucklings" has reference to some mighty enemy that had been overcome, not to anything which had been effected by the influence of the recognition of God by little children. It may be doubted, also, whether there is any such "instinctive admiration of his works, even by the youngest children," as would be "a strong defense against those who would question the being and glory" of God, as is supposed by Prof. Alexander and others; and, at all events, that is not the manifest thought in the passage.

(b) Nor does it refer merely to praise as proceeding from children, as being that by which the effect referred to is accomplished. It is true that this idea is in the translation by the Septuagint, and true that it is so quoted in Matthew 21:16, and true, also, that, as quoted by the Saviour, and as originally applied, it was adapted to the end which the Saviour had in view - to silence the chief priests and Scribes, who objected to the praises and hosannas of the children in the temple, for the psalm, on any interpretation, originally meant that God would accomplish good effects by those who were feeble and weak as children, and this principle was applicable to the praises of the children in the temple. But it does not appear that it originally referred to praise, either of children or others. It was to some manifested strength or prowess, by which some enemy, or some one who was seeking revenge, was overcome by the instrumentality of those who might be compared with children on account of their feebleness. From this the psalmist takes occasion to make his reflections on the exalted honor conferred in general on a creature so weak and feeble as man, especially in the wide dominion granted him over the inferior creation.

(c) This was, not improbably, some enemy of the author of the psalm; but who it was is not mentioned. David was often, however, in the course of his life, in such circumstances as are here supposed. Might it not refer to

Goliath of Gath - a mighty giant, and a formidable enemy of the people of God, overcome by David, quite a stripling - a child? Would not the language of the psalm agree with that? Was it not true that he was an "enemy" and an "avenger," or one socking revenge? and was it not true that God had, from one who was a mere child, "ordained strength" to subdue him?

(d) God had, then, condescended to honor one who was in himself weak and feeble as a child - who had no power of himself to accomplish what had been done.

(e) This was great condescension on the part of God; and especially was it to be so regarded when the eye looked out - as the author of the psalm appears to have done at the time of its composition - on the starry heavens, and contemplated their greatness and grandeur. What astonishing condescension was it that he who marshalled all those hosts should bestow such honor on man!

(f) It was not, therefore, unnatural to reflect on the greatness of the honor which God had actually bestowed on man, and the dignity to which God had exalted him; and the psalmist is thus, from a particular act of his condescension, led into the beautiful train of reflections on the exalted dominion of man with which the psalm concludes. Thus understood, the psalm has no orignal reference to the Messiah, but still it contains the principle on which the apostle reasons in Hebrews 2, for the dignity of man is most seen in the Redeemer, and the actual conferring of all the dignity and honor referred to in the psalm - the actual and entire subjugation of the earth to man - will be found only in the universal dominion conceded to Him. At the same time, however, there is a foundation for all that the psalmist says in respect to the honor originally conferred on man, and in his actual dominion over the inferior creation.

Verse 3

When I consider thy heavens - When I contemplate or look upon. They are called his heavens because he made them - because he is the proprietor of them - perhaps because they are his abode.

The work of thy fingers - Which thy fingers have made. The fingers are the instruments by which we construct a piece of work - perhaps indicating skill rather than strength; and hence so used in respect to God, as it is by his skill that the heavens have been made.

The moon and the stars - Showing, as remarked above, that probably this psalm, was composed at night, or that the train of thought was suggested by the contemplation of the starry worlds. It is not improbable that the thoughts occurred to the psalmist when meditating on the signal honor which God had conferred on him, a feeble man (see the notes at Psalm 8:2), and when his thoughts were at the same time directed to the goodness of God as the heavens were contemplated in their silent grandeur.

Which thou hast ordained - Prepared, fitted up, constituted, appointed. He had fixed them in their appropriate spheres, and they now silently showed forth his glory.

Verse 4

What is man - What claim has one so weak, and frail, and short-lived, to be remembered by time? What is there in man that entitles him to so much notice? Why has God conferred on him so signal honor? Why has he placed him over the works of his hands? Why has he made so many arrangements for his comfort? Why has he done so much to save him? He is so insignificant his life is so much like a vapor, he so soon disappears, he is so sinful and polluted, that the question may well be asked, why such honor has been conferred on him, and why such a dominion over the world has been given him. See these thoughts more fully expanded in the notes at Hebrews 2:6.

That thou art mindful of him - That thou dost remember him; that is, think of him, attend to him - that he does not pass away wholly from thy thoughts. Why should a God who is so vast and glorious, and who has all the starry worlds, so beautiful and grand, to claim his attention - why should he turn his thoughts on man? And especially why should he honor him as he has done by giving him dominion over the works of his hands?

And the son of man - Any descendant of man - any one of the race. What was man, as he was originally made, that such exalted honor should have been conferred on him; and what has any one of his descendants become, in virtue of his native faculties or acquired endowments, that he should be thus honored? The design is the same as in the former part of the verse, to express the idea that there was nothing in man, considered in any

respect, that entitled him to this exalted honor. Nothing that man has done since the time when the question was asked by the psalmist has contributed to diminish the force of the inquiry.

That thou visitest him - As thou dost; that is, with the attention and care which thou dost bestow upon him; not forgetting him; not leaving him; not passing him by. The word used here - פקד *pâqad* - would properly express a visitation for any purpose - for inspection, for mercy; for friendship, for judgment, etc. Here it refers to the attention bestowed by God on man in conferring on him such marks of favor and honor as he had done - such attention that he never seemed to forget him, but was constantly coming to him with some new proof of favor. What God has done for man since the psalmist wrote this, has done nothing to weaken the force of this inquiry.

Verse 5

For thou hast made him - Thou hast made man as such; that is, he was such in the original design of his creation, in the rank given him, and in the dominion conceded to him. The object here is to show the honor conferred on man, or to show how God has regarded and honored him; and the thought is, that in his original creation, though so insignificant as compared with the vast worlds over which God presides, he had given him a rank but little inferior to that of the angels. See the notes at Hebrews 2:7.

A little lower - The Hebrew word used here - חסר *châsêr* means to want, to lack - and then, to be in want, to be diminished. The meaming is, "Thou hast caused him to want but little;" that is, he was but little interior.

Than the angels - So this is rendered by the Aramaic Paraphrase: by the Septuagint; by the Latin Vulgate; by the Syriac and Arabic; and by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews Hebrews 2:7, who has literally quoted the fourth, fifth, and sixth verses from the Septuagint. The Hebrew, however, is - מאלהים *mi'ĕlôhîym* - than God. So Gesenius renders it, "Thou hast caused him to want but little of God; that is, thou hast made him but little lower than God." So DeWette, "nur wenig unter Gott." So Tholuck renders it, "nur um wenig unter Gott." This is the more natural construction, and this would convey an idea conformable to the course of thought in the psalm, though it has been usually supposed that the word used here - אלהים *'Elohiym* - may be applied to angels, or even men, as in Psalm 82:1; Psalm 97:7; Psalm 138:1; Exodus 21:6; Exodus 22:8-9. Gesenius (Thesau. Ling. Heb., p. 95) maintains that the word never has this signification. The

authority, however, of the Aramaic, the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, would seem sufficient to show that that meaning may be attached to the word here with propriety, and that somehow that idea was naturally suggested in the passage itself. Still, if it were not for these versions, the most natural interpretation would be that which takes the word in its usual sense, as referring to God, and as meaning that, in respect to his dominion over the earth, man had been placed in a condition comparatively but little inferior to God himself; he had made him almost equal to himself.

And hast crowned him with glory and honor - With exalted honor. See the notes at Hebrews 2:7.

Verse 6

Thou madest him to have dominion - Thou didst cause him to have, or didst give him this dominion. It does not mean that God made or created him for that end, but that he had conceded to him that dominion, thus conferring on him exalted honor. The allusion is to Genesis 1:26, Genesis 1:28.

Over the works of thy hands - His works upon the earth, for the dominion extends no further.

Thou hast put all things under his feet - Hast placed all things in subjection to him. Compare Psalm 47:3; Psalm 91:13; Lamentations 3:34; Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 15:25. The language is taken from the act of treading down enemies in battle; from putting the feet on the necks of captives, etc. The idea is that of complete and entire subjection. This dominion was originally given to man at his creation, and it still remains (though not so absolute and entire as this), for nothing is in itself more remarkable than the dominion which man, by nature so feeble, exercises over the inferior creation. it is impossible to account for this in any other way than as it is accounted for in the Bible, by the supposition that it was originally conceded to man by his Creator. On the question of the applicability of this to Christ, see the notes at Hebrews 2:6-9.

Verse 7

All sheep and oxen - Flocks and herds. Genesis 1:26, "over the cattle." Nothing is more manifest than the control which man exercises over flocks and herds - making them subservient to his use, and obedient to his will.

And the beasts of the field - Those not included in the general phrase "sheep and oxen." The word rendered "field," שׂדה *śâdeh* - or the poetic

form, as here - שׂדי *śâday* means properly a plain; a level tract of country; then, a field, or a tilled farm, Genesis 23:17; Genesis 47:20-21,; and then the fields, the open country, as opposed to a city, a village, a camp Genesis 25:27; and hence, in this place the expression means the beasts that roam at large - wild beasts, Genesis 2:20; Genesis 3:14. Here the allusion is to the power which man has of subduing the wild beasts; of capturing them, and making them subservient to his purposes; of preventing their increase and their depredations; and of taming them so that they shall obey his will, and become his servants. Nothing is more remarkable than this, and nothing furnishcs a better illustration of Scripture than the conformity of this with the declaration Genesis 9:2, "And the fear of you, and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air," etc. Compare the notes at James 3:7. It is to be remembered that no small number of what are now domestic animals were originally wild, and that they have been subdued and tamed by the power anti skill of man. No animal has shown himself superior to this power and skill.

Verse 8

The fowl of the air - Genesis 1:26, "Over the fowl of the air." Genesis 9:2, "upon every fowl of the air." This dominion is the more remarkable because the birds of the air seem to be beyond the reach of man; and yet, equally with the beasts of the field, they are subject to his control. Man captures and destroys them; he prevents their multiplication and their ravages. Numerous as they are, and rapid as is their flight, and strong as many of them are, they have never succeeded in making man subject to them, or in disturbing the purposes of man. See the notes at James 3:7.

And the fish of the sea - Genesis 1:26, "Over the fish of the sea." Genesis 9:2, "upon all the fishes of the sea." This must be understood in a general sense, and this is perhaps still more remarkable than the dominion over the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, for the fishes that swim in the ocean seem to be placed still farther from the control of man. Yet, so far as is necessary for his use and for safety, they are, in fact, put under the control of man, and he makes them minister to his profit. Not a little of that which contributes to the support the comfort, and the luxury of man, comes from the ocean. From the mighty whale to the shellfish that furnished the Tyrian dye, or to that which furnishes the beautiful pearl, man has shown his power to make the dwellers in the deep subservient to his will.

And whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas - Everything, in general, that passes through the paths of the sea, as if the ocean was formed with paths or highways for them to pass over. Some have referred this to man, as passing over the sea and subduing its inhabitants; some, to the fishes before spoken of; but the most natural construction is that which is adotpted in our received version, as referring to everything which moves in the waters. The idea is that man has a wide and universal dominion - a dominion so wide as to excite amazement, wonder, and gratitude, that it has been conceded to one so feeble as he is.

Verse 9

O Lord our Lord, how excellent … - Repeating the sentiment with which the psalm opens, as now fully illustrated, or as its propriety is now seen. The intermediate thoughts are simply an illustration of this; and now we see what occupied the attention of the psalmist when, in Psalm 8:1, he gave utterance to what seems there to be a somewhat abrupt sentiment. We now, at the close of the psalm, see clearly its beauty and truthfulness.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 9

Introduction

Section 1

"Author of the psalm." This psalm is ascribed to David, not only in the title, but in all the versions, and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of this. It would not be difficult to show from its contents that the sentiments and style of composition are such as accord with the other compositions of David.

Section 2

"Occasion on which the psalm was composed." On this point nothing is intimated expressly in the psalm, unless it be in the title, "To the chief Musician upon Muth-labben." The meaning of and that it was composed on his death. Others, as Rudinger, suppose that it is a psalm of thanksgiving on occasion of the victory over Absalom, and the suppression of his rebellion by his death: a harsh and unnatural supposition, as if any father, in any circumstances, could compose a psalm of praise on occasion of the death of it son. Moeller supposes that it was composed on occasion of a victory over the Philistines by David; Ferrand, who unites this psalm with the following, supposes that the whole refers to the times of the captivity in Babylon, and is a triumphal song of the people over their enemies; and Venema, who also thinks that these two psalms should be united, supposes that Psalm 9:3: "When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence." Compare Psalm 9:6, Psalm 9:13, Psalm 9:19-20.

(b) These were foreign enemies, or those who are called pagan, that is, belonging to idolatrous nations, Psalm 9:5: "Thou hast rebuked the heathen." Compare Psalm 9:15, Psalm 9:19.

(c) They were desolating foes - invading foes - those who laid a land waste in their marches, Psalm 9:6: "Thou hast destroyed cities: their memorial is perished with them."

(d) The writer had achieved a victory over them, and for this he celebrated the praises of God for his interposition, Psalm 9:1-2, Psalm 9:10-11, Psalm 9:15. This victory thus achieved was such as to make him certain of ultimate complete triumph.

(e) Yet he was still surrounded by enemies, and he still asks God‘s merciful interposition in his behalf, Psalm 9:13: “Have mercy upon me, O Lord; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death.” Compare Psalm 9:18-20.

David was not unfrequently in his life in circumstances such as arc here supposed, and it is not possible now to determine the exact occasion to which the psalm alludes.

Section 3

The contents of the psalm. The psalm erabraces two leading subjects - one pertaining to the past and the other to the future, both illustrating the character of God, and both giving occasion to the writer to express iris confidence in God. The one relates to deliverance already granted; the other to deliverance still hoped for in his troubles.

I. The first relates to deliverance from trouble, or conquest over foes, already granted, and to the occasion which that furnished for praising God, and for pious reflections on his character.

(1) The psalmist expresses his thanks to God, or pours out the language of praise for mercies that have been received. Psalm 9:1-2.

(2) The particular reason for this is stated; that God had enabled him to overcome many of his enemies - the pagan that had risen up against him, who had now been subdued, Psalm 9:3-6.

(3) this gives occasion for pious reflections on him character of God, as one who would endure forever; as one who had set up his throne to do judgment or right; as one who would be a refuge for the oppressed; as one who might; be confided in by all who knew him; as one who would remember the foes of the righteous, and who would not forget the cry of the humble, Psalm 9:7-12. The principal truth taught in this part of the psalm is, that God is a refuge and help for those who are in trouble and danger; that all such may put their trust in Him; and that He will interpose to save them.

II. The second part, constructed in a manner similar to the former, relates to the future, and to what the psalmist hoped still from God, in view

of the character which lie had evinced in his former troubles, Psalm 9:18-20.

(1) The psalmist still needs help, Psalm 9:13-14. He still has trouble from them that hate him, and he calls upon God still to interpose and lift him up from the gates of death, that he may praise him.

(2) He refers to the fact that; the pagan, who surrounded him as his foes, had sunk down into the pit which they hall made for others; and that their foot was taken in the net which they had hid: referring either to what had occurred in the past as the foundation of his present hope, or being so certain that this would be done that he could speak of it as if it were now actually accomplished, Psalm 9:15.

(3) This also, as in the former case, gives occasion for pious reflections on the character of God, and on the fact that he would interpose to destroy the wicked, and to protect the righteous, Psalm 9:16-18.

(4) In view of all this, the psalmist calls on God still to interpose - to manifest the same character which He had formerly done, by protecting him, and by overcoming his foes, Psalm 9:19-20. The principal truth taught in this part of the psalm is, that the wicked will be destroyed; that they as contradistinguished from the righteous, can hope for no protection from God, but will be cut down and punished.

The condition of the author of the psalm then was, that he had been surrounded by foes, and that God had interposcd in his behalf, giving him occasion for praise and thanksgiving; that he was still surrounded by formidable inemies, yet he felt assured that God would manifest the same character which he had done formerly, and that he might, therefore, call upon Him to interpose and give him occasion for future praise.

Section 4

"The title of the psalm." The psalm is directed to "the chief Musician upon Muth-labben." In regard to the phrase "chief Musician," see the notes at the title to Psalm 4:1-8. The phrase, "upon Muthlabben," occurs nowhere else, and very different explnations have been given of its meaning. The Targum, or Aramaic Paraphrase, renders it "To be sung over the man that

went out between the camps;" that is, Goliath of Gath; and the author of the Aramaic Paraphrase, evidently supposed it was written on the occasion of his death. The Latin Vulgate renders it, "*Pro occultis filii*;" and so the Septuagint, ὑπὲρ τῶν κρυφίων τοῦ ὑιοῦ *huper tōn kruphiōn tou huiou* - "for the secret things (mysteries) of the Son:" but what idea was attached to those words it is impossible now to determine. The Syriac has this title: "Concerning the Messiah taking his throne and kingdom, and prostrating his foe." Luther renders it, "A Psalm of David concerning a beautiful youth" - von der schonen Jugend. Substantially so also DeWette; Nach der Jungfernweise, den Beniten. Tholuck renders it, "To the chief Musician, after the melody ‹Death to the Son' (Tod dem Sohne), a Psalm of David."

After this variety in the explanation of the title, it is certainly not easy to determine the meaning. The most probable opinions may be regarded as two.

(1) That which supposes that it was a melody designed to be sung by females, or with female voices: literally according to this interpretation, "after the manner of virgins;" that is, with the female voice treble, soprano, in opposition to the deeper voice of men. Compare 1 Chronicles 15:20. Forkel, in his History of Musick (Gesch. der Musik, 1,142), understands it as meaning virgin measures, like the German Jungfrauweis. Gesenius, who supposes that it refers to the female voice or treble, regards the title - על־מות *ʿal -mûth* - "upon Muth," as being the same as עלמות על *ʿal ʿălâmôth* in Psalm 46:1-11, "Upon Alamoth," and supposes that it is derived from עלמה *ʿalmâh* - a virgin.

(2) The other opinion is that which supposes that the title is the beginning of some old and well-known melody in common use, and that the idea is, that this psalm was to be sung to that melody. That melody was, as expressed by Tholuck and others, a melody on the death of a son, and was set to some hymn that had been composed with reference to such an event. This is founded on the supposition that the national melodies had become in some degree fixed and unchangeable, or that certain melodies or tunes originally composed for a particular occasion had become popular and that the melody would be affixed to new pieces of music. This is common in the East; and, indeed, it is common in all countries. See this idea illustrated in Rosenmuller (Morgenland, No. 800). The meaning, as thus expressed, is,

"According to the manner (or, to the air) of the song (or poem called Death to the Son." Thus understood, it does not refer to the death of Absalom (as some have supposed), since there is nothing in the psalm that would correspond with such a supposition; nor to the death of Goliath, as the Targum supposes; but the composition was to be sung to the well-known air, or tune, entitled "Death to the Son." But when that air was composed, or on what occasion, there is of course no possibility now of ascertaining; and equally impossible is it to recover the air, or tune. The literal meaning of the title is על *ʿal* on, or according to - מות *mûth* death - לבן *labên* to the son.

Verse 1

I will praise thee, O Lord - That is, in view of the merciful interpositions referred to in the psalm Psalm 9:3-5, and in view of the attributes of God's character which had been displayed on that occasion Psalm 9:7-12.

With my whole heart - Not with divided affection, or with partial gratitude. He meant that all his powers should be employed in this service; that he would give utterance to his feelings of gratitude and adoration in the loftiest and purest manner possible.

I will show forth - I will recount or narrate - to wit, in this song of praise.

All thy marvelous works - All his works or doings fitted to excite admiration or wonder. The reference here is particularly to what God had done which had given occasion to this psalm, but still the psalmist designs undoubtedly to connect with this the purpose to give a general expression of praise in view of all that God had done that was fitted to excite such feelings.

Verse 2

I will be glad - I will rejoice, and will express my joy.

And rejoice in thee - I will exult; I will triumph. That is, he would express his joy in God - in knowing that there was such a Being; in all that he had done for him; in all the evidences of his favor and friendship.

Will sing praise to thy name - To thee; the name often being put for the person.

O thou Most High - Thou who art supreme - the God over all. See the notes at Psalm 7:17.

Verse 3

When mine enemies are turned back - Who these enemies were, the psalmist does not say. It is clear, however, as was remarked in the introduction, that the psalm was composed:

(a) in view of a victory which had been achieved over some formidable enemies; and

(b) in view of some dangers still impending from a similar source.

The literal meaning of the passage here is, "In the turning of my enemies back;" that is, in their retreat, defeat, overthrow. So far as the Hebrew form of expression is concerned, this may either refer to what had been done, or to what would be; and may imply either that they had been turned back, or that the psalmist hoped and believed that they would be; for in either case the fact would show the divine perfections, and give occasion for gratitude and praise. The verbs with which this is connected - "they shall fall and perish" - are indeed in the Hebrew, as in our version, in the future tense; but this does not necessarily determine the question whether the psalmist refers to what had occurred or what would occur. His attitude is this: he contemplates his enemies as mighty and formidable; he sees the danger which exists when such enemies surround one; he looks at the interposition of God, and he sees that whenever it occurs it would be followed by this consequence, that they would stumble and fall before him. But while this verse does not determine the question whether he refers to what has been, or to what would be, the subsequent verses Psalm 9:4-6 seem to settle it, where he speaks as if this were already done, and as if God had interposed in a remarkable manner in defeating his foes. I regard this, therefore, as a reflection on what had occurred, and as expressing what was then actually a ground of praise and thanksgiving.

They shall fall and perish - A general statement in view of what had occurred, meaning that this would always be the case.

At thy presence - Before thee; that is, when thou dost manifest thyself. This was the reason why they would stumble and fall, and is equivalent to saying, that "whenever mine enemies are turned back, the reason why they stumble and fall is "thy presence." It is the interposition of thy power. It is not to be traced to the prowess of man that they thus turn back, and that they fall and perish; it is to be traced to the fact that thou art present - that

thou dost interpose." It is thus an acknowledgment of God as the author of the victory in all cases.

Verse 4

For thou hast maintained my right and my cause - My righteous cause; that is, when he was unequally attacked. When his enemies came upon him in an unprovoked and cruel manner, God had interposed and had defended his cause. This shows that the psalmist refers to something that had occurred in the past; also that he regarded his cause as right - for the interposition of God in his behalf had confirmed him in this belief.

Thou satest in the throne judging right - As if he had been seated on a bench of justice, and bad decided on the merits of his cause before he interfered in his behalf. It was not the result of impulse, folly, partiality, or favoritism; it was because he had, as a judge, considered the matter, and had decided that the right was with the author of the psalm, and not with his enemies. As the result of that determination of the case, he had interposed to vindicate him, and to overthrow his adversaries. Compare Psalm 8:3-8.

Verse 5

Thou hast rebuked the heathen - Not the pagan in general, or the nations at large, but those who are particularly referred to in this psalm - those who are described as the enemies of the writer and of God. On the word rendered "heathen" here - גוים *gôyim* - see the notes at Psalm 2:1. The word rebuke here does not mean, as it does usually with us, to chide with words, but it means that he had done this by deeds; that is, by overcoming or vanquishing them. The reference is, undoubtedly, to some of those nations with whom the writer had been at war, and who were the enemies of himself and of God, and to some signal act of the divine interposition by which they had been overcome, or in which the author of the psalm had gained a victory. DeWette understands this as referring to "barbarians, foreigners, pagan?" David, in the course of his life, was often in such circumstances as are here supposed, though to what particular event he refers it would not be possible now to decide.

Thou hast destroyed the wicked - The Hebrew here is in the singular number - רשע *râshâʿ* - though it may be used collectively, and as synonymous with the word "heathen." Compare Isaiah 14:5; Psalm 84:10; Psalm 125:3. The Aramaic Paraphrase renders this, "Thou hast destroyed the impious Goliath." The reference is undoubtedly to the enemies meant by the word pagan, and the writer speaks of them not only as pagan or

foreigners, but as characterized by wickedness, which was doubtless a correct description of their general character.

Thou hast put out their name forever and ever - As when a nation is conquered, and subdued; when it is made a province of the conquering nation, and loses its own government, and its distinct existence as a people, and its name is no more recorded among the kingdoms of the earth. This is such language as would denote entire subjugation, and it is probably to some such event that the psalmist refers. Nations have often by conquest thus lost their independence and their distinct existence, by becoming incorporated into others. To some such entire subjugation by conquest the psalmist undoubtedly here refers.

Verse 6

O thou enemy! - This verse has been very variously rendered and explained. For an examination of the particular views entertained of it, see particularly Rosenmuller, *in loc*. The reference is doubtless to the enemies mentioned in the previous verses; and the idea is substantially the same - that they were completely overcome and subdued. The phrase, "O thou enemy," is probably to be regarded as the nominative absolute. "The enemy - his destructions or desolations are finished forever. He will now no more engage in that work." The attention of the writer is fixed on them, and on the fact that they will no more engage in the work of desolation. It is not, therefore, properly to be regarded, as it is rendered in the common translation, as an apostrophe to the enemy, but rather as indicating a state of mind in which the writer is meditating on his foes, and on the fact that they would no more engage in the work in which they had been occupied - of laying cities and towns in ruins.

Destructions are come to a perpetual end - That is, thy destructions are finished, completed, accomplished. There are to be no more of them. This may either refer to their acts causing destruction, or laying waste cities and towns, meaning that they would no more accomplish this work; or to the destruction or ruins which they had caused in laying waste cities - the ruins which marked their career - meaning that the number of such ruins was now complete, and that no more would be added, for they them. selves were overthrown. The word rendered "destructions" means properly desolations, waste places, ruins, and seem here to refer to the wastes or ruins which the enemy had made; and the true idea is, that such desolations were now complete, or that they would not be suffered to devastate

anymore cities and fields. Prof. Alexander renders this, "finished, completed are (his) ruins, desolations, forever; that is, he is ruined or made desolate forever."

And thou hast destroyed cities - That is, in thy desolating career. This, considered as an address to the enemy, would seem to refer to the career of some victor who had Carried fire and sword through the land, and whose course had been marked by smoking ruins. This was, however, now at an end, for God had interposed, and had given the author of the psalm a victory ever his foe. Prof. Alexander regards this, less properly, as an address to God, meaning that he had destroyed the cities of the enemy. The idea is, rather, that this enemy had been distinguised for spreading desolation and ruin, and that this career was now closed forever.

Their memorial is perished with them - The names of the cities, referring to their utter destruction, and to the character of the warfare which had been waged. It had been utterly barbarous and vicious; the enemy had left nothing to testify even what the city had been, and its name had ceased to be mentioned. See the notes at Psalm 9:5. This seems to be mentioned as a justification of the warfare which the author of the psalm had waged against this enemy, and as showing why God had interposed and had given him the victory.

Verse 7

But the Lord shall endure for ever - Yahweh is eternal - always the same. Though these cities have become desolate, and the enemy has been permitted to triumph, and nations and people have passed away, yet God is ever the same, unaffected by these changes and desolations, and in due time he will always interfere and vindicate his own character, and defend the oppressed and the wronged.

He hath prepared his throne for judgment - See Psalm 9:4. He sits as a just judge among the nations, and he will see that right is done. The wicked, though temporarily prosperous, cannot always triumph; and the righteous, though cast down and oppressed, cannot always remain thus, for God, the just Judge, will rise in their defense and for their deliverance. The unchangeableness of God, therefore, is at the same time the ground of confidence for the righteous, and the ground of dread for the wicked. The eternal principles of right will ultimately triumph.

Verse 8

And he shall judge the world in righteousness - The word here rendered world means properly the habitable earth; and then it denotes the inhabitants that dwell upon the earth. The statement here is general, and is suggested by what is referred to in the previous verses. In the particular case on which the psalm turns, God had manifested himself as a just Judge. He had overthrown the enemies of himself and of truth; he had interposed in behalf of the righteous: and from this fact the psalmist makes the natural and proper inference that this would be fouud to be his character in regard to all the world; this indicated what, in all Iris dealings with men he would always be found to be; this showed what he would be whenever he in any way pronounced a judgment on mankind. It may be added here that this will be found to be true in the great final judgment; that it will be in accordance with the principles of eternal justice.

He shall minister judgment - He will declare or pronounce judgment; he will execute the office of judge. "To the people." To all people; to the nations of the earth. This corresponds with what, in the former part of the verse, is called the world; and the declaration is, that in his dealings with the dwellers on the earth he will be guided by the strictest principles of justice.

In uprightness - In rectitude. He will not be influenced by partiality; he will show no favoritism; he will not be bribed. He will do exact justice to all.

Verse 9

The Lord also will be a refuge - Margin, an high place. The margin expresses the more exact sense of the, Hebrew word - משגב *miśgâb* It means properly height, altitude; then a height, rock, crag; and then, as such localities, being inaccessible to an enemy, were sought in times of danger as places of secure retreat, it comes to denote a place of security and refuge, Psalm 18:2; Psalm 46:7, Psalm 46:11; Psalm 48:3; Psalm 59:9, Psalm 59:17; Psalm 94:22. The declaration here is equivalent to what is so often said, that God is a refuge, a rock, a high tower, a defense; meaning, that those referred to might find safety in him. See the notes at Psalm 18:2.

For the oppressed - literally, for those who are crushed, broken; hence, the dejected, afflicted, unhappy - דך *dak* - from דכך mor *dākak* - to beat small; to break in pieces; to crush. The allusion here is to those who are wronged or down-trodden; to the victims of tyranny and injustice. Such may look to God to vindicate them and their cause, and they will not look in

vain. Sooner or later he will manifest himself as their protector and their helper. See Psalm 9:12.

A refuge in times of trouble - Not only for the oppressed, but for all those who are in trouble. Compare Psalm 46:1. That is, all such may come to him with the assurance that he will be ready to pity them in their sorrows, and to deliver them. The psalmist had found it so in his own case; and he infers that it would be so in all cases, and that this might be regarded as the general character of God.

Verse 10

And they that know thy name - All who are acquainted with thee; all those who have been made acquainted with the manifestations of thy goodness, and with the truth respecting thy character.

Will put their trust in thee - That is, all who have any just views of God, or who understand his real character, will confide in him. This is as much as to say, that he has a character which is worthy of confidence - since they who know him best most unreservedly rely on him. It is the same as saying that all the revelations of his character in his word and works are such as to make it proper to confide in him. The more intimate our knowledge of God, the more entirely shall we trust in him; the more we learn of his real character, the more shall we see that he is worthy of universal love. It is much to say of anyone that the more he is known the more he will be loved; and in saying this of God, it is but saying that one reason why men do not confide in him is that they do not understand his real character.

For thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee - Thou hast never left them when they have come to time with a confiding heart. David means, doubtless, to refer here particularly to his own case, to derive a conclusion from his particular case in regard to the general character of God. But what is here affirmed is still true, and always has been true, and always will be true, that God does not forsake those who put their trust in him. Men forsake him; he does not forsake them.

Verse 11

Sing praises to the Lord - As the result of these views of his character, and at the remembrance of his doings. The heart of the psalmist is full of exultation and joy at the remembrance of the divine interposition, and he naturally breaks out into these strong expressions, calling on others to rejoice also.

Which dwelleth in Zion - On the word Zion, see the notes at Psalm 2:6. Compare Psalm 3:4; Psalm 5:7. As Zion was the place where at this time the tabernacle was set up, and the worship of God was celebrated, it is spoken of as his dwelling-place.

Declare among the people his doings - Make general and wide proclamation of what he has done; that is, make him known abroad, in his true character, that others may be brought also to put their trust in him, and to Praise him.

Verse 12

When he maketh inquisition for blood - When he "inquires" after blood; that is, when he comes forth with this view, to wit, for purposes of punishment. There is allusion here to such passages as that in Genesis 9:5, "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man." The idea is, that when blood was shed in murder, God would seek out the murderer; he would require satisfaction of him who had shed the blood; he would punish the offender. The language, there, becomes equivalent to that of seeking punishment for murder, and then for sin in general; and the representation here is that of God as going forth in the capacity of an executioner of his own laws to inflict punishment on the guilty.

He remembereth them - "He remembereth," says Prof. Alexander, "the bloods or murders," since the word blood, as in Psalm 5:6, is in the plural - bloods. The better interpretation, however, is, that the word "them" here refers to the oppressed and the afflicted - for that is the main idea in the passage. See Psalm 9:8-9. When he goes forth in the earth to execute judgment on the wicked; when he cuts them down in his wrath; when he sweeps them away as with a flood - the punishment will not be indiscriminate. He will then mark the oppressed, the afflicted, the persecuted, the troubled, and the sad, and will interpose to save them - delivering them from the storms of wrath. The idea, then, is, that the righteous will not be forgotten; that even in the most fierce and awful of his dispensations he will still regard them, and interpose to save them.

He forgetteth not the cry of the humble - Margin, afflicted. The margin expresses the true idea. The reference is not to the humble in the common sense of that term, but to the afflicted; the oppressed; to those who are in trouble, Psalm 9:9. He will then remember the cry which in their afflictions they have been long sending up to him.

Verse 13

Have mercy upon me, O Lord - The cry for mercy implies that though God had interposed and granted them surprising deliverances, yet he was still surrounded by enemies, and was still in trouble. See introduction to the psalm, 2,3. He had been delivered from many troubles, but there were many still pressing upon him, and he now calls on God to interpose further in his behalf, and to grant him entire deliverance from all his sorrows and dangers. The trouble to which he here refers was of the same kind as that adverted to in the former part of the psalm - that arising from the efforts of formidable enemies.

Consider my trouble - Do not forget this trouble; bear it in remembrance; look upon its character and its depth, and mercifully interpose to deliver me.

Which I suffer of them that hate me - Or, "see my suffering arising from those that hate me; or, which is produced by those who hate me." The design is to fix the attention on the greatness of that suffering as caused by his "haters" or by his enemies - the foes that were still unsubdued.

Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death - Thou on whom I rely to do this; or, who hast done it in times past. The idea by bars and walls; as entered by gates - the grave leading to it. See Introduction to Job, Section 7, and the notes at Job 10:21-22. The psalmist felt that he had come near to that dark and gloomy abode, and that God only could rescue him from it; therefore, in the trouble which now threatened his life, he looks to him to interfere and save him.

Verse 14

That I may show forth all thy praise - That I may praise time in the land of the living; that I may finish the work of praise by rendering to thee all that is due. The idea is, that the dead could not praise God, or that his praise could be uttered only by the living; and he calls on God, therefore, to interpose and save him, that he might yet worship and praise him on the earth. In this sentiment the psalmist utters only what man naturally feels when he looks upon the grave; that it is an end of human plans and pursuits; that it is a land of silence; that the worship of God is not there celebrated. Such language must be retarded as uttered under the impulse of natural feeling, and not as uttered by the deliberate judgment of the mind when calmly contemplating the whole subject. All pious persons baize these feelings at times, and it was proper that these feelings should be expressed

in the sacred writings, as illustrating human nature even under the influence of religion. The same sentiment occurs in several places, as is, that he was apparently near to the gates of death, and that the only one who could raise him up was God, and he now invoked His interposition that it might be done. The phrase "gates of death" relates to the prevalent views about the unseen world - the world where the dead abide. That world was represented as beneath; as a dark and gloomy abode; as enclosed Psalm 115:17, "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." See the notes at Psalm 6:5. It is not necessary to say that the sacred writers had brighter views at times than these. But who can keep the mind always from desponding when it looks at the grave? Who can always help feeling that it is a place of darkness and gloom?

In the gates of the daughter of Zion - As contradistinguished from the "gates of death." Gates in ancient cities were places of concourse, where important transactions were performed; and the "gates" of Jerusalem were regarded as attractive and sacred, because it was through them that the people passed on their way to worship God at the tabernacle or in the temple. Hence, it is said, Psalm 87:2, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Psalm 100:4, "enter into his gates with thanksgiving." Compare Psalm 118:19. The phrase, "daughter of Zion," means Jerusalem. For the reason of this appellation see the notes at Isaiah 1:8. The language used here proves that the psalm was composed after Zion or Jerusalem was made the capital of the kingdom and the seat of public worship, and, therefore, that it cannot refer, as is supposed in the Aramaic Paraphrase, to the death of Goliath.

I will rejoice in thy salvation - In the salvation which thou wilt bestow on me; here particularly, in delivering him from his dangers. The language, however, is general, and may be employed with reference to salvation of any kind.

Verse 15

The heathen - Hebrew, "The nations;" that is, the idolatrous people that were arrayed against him. See the notes at Psalm 9:5.

Are sunk down - That is, referring to those who had been overcome, as mentioned in Psalm 9:5; or to those who still encompassed him, in respect to whom he was so certain that they would be overcome that he could speak of it as a thing already accomplished. According to the former view, it would be an encouragement derived from the past; according to the latter, it

would indicate unwavering confidence in God, and the certain assurance of ultimate victory. It is not easy to determine which is the true interpretation. The Hebrew is, "Sunk are the nations in the pit which they have made;" that is, he sees them sinking down to destruction.

In the pit that they made - In which they designed that others should fall. See the notes at Psalm 7:15.

In the net which they hid - Which they laid for others. The allusion here is to a spring-net made to capture birds or wild beasts.

Is their own foot taken - The net here referred to seems to have been particularly a net to take wild beasts by securing one of their feet, like a modern trap. The idea is, that they had been brought into the destruction which they had designed for others. See the notes at Psalm 7:15-16.

Verse 16

The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth - By what; he does in his dealings with men, in dispensing rewards and punishments, bestowing blessings upon the righteous, and sending punishments upon the ungodly. That is, his character can be learned from his dealings with mankind; or, by studying the dispensation of his Providence, we may learn what he is. This is always a fair and proper way of estimating character, alike in regard to God and man; and it is proper, at all times, to study what God does, to learn what he is.

The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands - The same sentiment which is expressed here occurs in Psalm 7:16. The idea is that the wicked are the cause of their own destruction; their own devices and designs are the means of their ruin, and they are made their own executioners. It is this to which the writer seems particularly to refer in the former part of the verse, when he says that "the Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth." This great principle is brought out in his dealings with human beings, that the course which wicked men pursue is the cause of their own ruin. The laws of God in a great measure execute themselves, and men bring upon themselves their own destruction. It is the highest perfection of government to make ttle laws execute themselves.

Higgaion - Margin, "Meditation." This word occurs elsewhere only in the following places, Psalm 19:14, rendered meditation; Psalm 92:3, rendered solemn sound; Lamentations 3:62. rendered device. Its proper meaning is, murmur; muttering; the utterance of a low sound, as the low sound of a harp; or the murmuring or muttering of one who talks to himself;

and then meditation. Compare the notes at Psalm 2:1, on the word "imagine," Margin, meditate, - the verb from which this is derived. Gesenius supposes that it is here a musical sound. So it is understood by the Septuagint - ᾠδὴ διαψάλματος *ōdē diapsalmatos* It is not known why it is introduced here. There seems to be nothing in the sense which demands it, as there is no particular reason why the reader should pause and meditate here rather than in any other place in the psalm. It is doubtless a mere musical pause, though perhaps indicating the kind of pause in the music, as some special sound or interlude on the musical instrument that was employed.

Selah - Another musical term, see the notes at Psalm 3:2. This indicates a general pause; the word Higgaion denotes the particular kind of pause.

Verse 17

The wicked - All the wicked; all who come properly under the denomination of wicked persons. Doubtless the writer had particularly in his eye the enemies with whom he was contending, and in reference to whom the psalm wits composed; and he meant to say that they would be certainly punished. But what was true in regard to them, was true of all others of similar character, and the statement is therefore made in a universal form - all the wicked.

Shall be turned - Shall turn back, or be turned from their present course. The idea is, that they were now pursuing a certain course, but that they would be turned back from that, or would fail and retreat; and instead of going on to victory, would be defeated, and would sink into hell. The idea is essentially the same as that which is expressed in Psalm 9:3 above: "When mine enemies are turned back."

Into hell - - לשׁאולה *lishe'ôlâh* - to Sheol, Hades, the grave, the world of departed spirits. This is the usual meaning of this word. See Luke 16:23, note; Isaiah 14:9, note; Job 10:21-22, note. Though the word, however, originally denoted the grave, the region of the dead, the world of departed spirits, yet it was also supposed that there was a distinction in the condition of the dead; and the word gradually came to denote the abode of the wicked portion of the dead, and hence, the place of future punishment. So it is undoubtedly used in Luke 16:23. It is clear

(a) that this cannot be understood here as referring to the grave in its ordinary sense, for the righteous will be as certainly consigned to the, grave, or will as certainly die, as the wicked;

(b) that it cannot refer to the invisible world, the abodes of the dead, in the ordinary sense of the term - for it is as true that the righteous will enter that world as that sinners will.

There must be some sense, in which the word is used here, different from that of the grave, or different merely from death as such. This sense can be only one of two - either:

(1) that the author means that they will be cut off by a sudden and violent death, considered as a calamity or as a punishment; or

(2) that he regarded the Sheol mentioned here as a place of punishment.

Calvin thinks it is not improbable that the former of these is intended; but it may be observed in regard to this,

(a) that this is not the language usually employed to denote that idea - the phrase, to be cut off, or cut down, being that which a writer intending to express that idea, would most naturally use - since the phrase, to be sent to Sheol, considered as the grave or the region of the dead, would express nothing special in regard to the wicked; and

(b) the spirit of the passage seems to demand the idea that the wicked referred to here would he consigned to a place of punishment, that they would be cut off as wicked persons, and treated accordingly.

This interpretation is strengthened by the other member of the parallelism, where it is said, “and all the nations that forget God;” since it is no more true that the nations “that forget God” will be “turned into the grave, or the world of departed spirits,” than it is that the nations that serve and obey him will. It seems to me, therefore, that this is one of the passages in which it is clear that the word Sheol had connected with it the idea of punishment beyond the grave - of a region where the wicked would be treated according to their deserts, and in a manner different from the treatment of the righteous; that although the general idea of that under-world was that it was a dark and gloomy place, yet that there was also the

idea that the abode of the wicked there was far more gloomy than that of the righteous; and that it was regarded as a punishment to be consigned to that region. It is not necessary to suppose that they had the full idea attached to the word hell which we have, anymore than that they had the same full and clear idea of heaven that we have. Light has come into our world on all these subjects gradually, and there is nothing which requires us to suppose that the earlier sacred writers lind the same clear views which the later writers had, or that either of them knew all that is to be known. Compare 1 Peter 1:10-11.

And all the nations that forget God - All who are strangers to him, or who are ignorant of the true God. See the notes at Romans 2:12. From the character and prospective doom of those to whom the psalmist particularly referred in this psalm, he is led to make this general remark about all who sustain the same character which they did. Under the administration of the same God those of the same character would share alike, for "there is no respect of persons with him;" and it is the perfection of an impartial government to treat all of the same character in the same manner. If we can, therefore, ascertain how, under his administration, one sinner will be treated in the future world, we can infer how all of the same character will be treated; if we can learn how God will deal with one people, we can infer how he will deal with all. The statement here is, that all the wicked, of whatever nation, will be consigned to punishment in the future world. The phrase used here, "that forqet God," denotes those who are not disposed or inclined to remember and honor him. The idea seems to be that though they might have known him, they did not choose to retain him in their knowledge, but gave themselves up to a life of idolatry and sin. Compare Romans 1:19-21, notes; Romans 1:28, note.

Verse 18

For the needy - The poor; those who are dependent and helpless.

Shall not always be forgotten - That is, by God. He will interfere and save them by destroying their enemies. He will not suffer the wicked always to persecute and oppress the righteous. In due time he will vindicate his own cause; will deliver the oppressed and down-trodden, and will consign their oppressors to deserved punishment. This is as true now, in regard to all the oppressed and their oppressors, as it was in the time of the psalmist.

The expectation of the poor - Of the afflicted and the oppressed. The word "expectation" refers to their hope; their desire; their earnest looking for deliverance. In that state men naturally look for the divine interposition, and the psalmist says that in that they will not always be disappointed.

Shall not perish for ever - The word "not" is supplied here by our translators, but not improperly. It is thus supplied in the Targum, and in the Syriac, the Vulgate and the Greek. Such forms of construction are not uncommon. Compare Psalm 1:5; Deuteronomy 33:6. "The negative is repeated from the preceding member." - Michaelis.

Verse 19

Arise, O Lord - See the notes at Psalm 3:7.

Let not man prevail - Against thee and thy cause. The war waged against the psalmist he regarded as waged against God, and he calls upon him, therefore, to interpose and vindicate his own cause. The word rendered "prevail" is be strong; that is, let not man seem to be stronger than thou art, or let, him not succeed in his efforts in opposing thy cause.

Let the heathen be judged in thy sight - The nations to whom the writer had referred in the psalm, that were arrayed against him and against God. He desired that a just judgment should be passed on them, and that God would vindicate the righteous, and save them from the power of those who oppressed and wronged them.

Verse 20

Put them in fear, O Lord - From this it is evident that the enemies of the psalmist were bold, daring, confident in their own strength, and in the belief that they would succeed. He prays, therefore, that these bold and daring invaders of the rights of others might be made to stand in awe, and to tremble before the great and terrible majesty of God; that they might thus have just views of themselves, and see how weak and feeble they were as compared with Him.

That the nations may know - The nations particularly referred to in this psalm as arrayed against the writer.

Themselves to be but men - That they may see themselves as they are - poor, feeble creatures; as nothing when compared with God; that instead of their pride and self-confidence, their belief that they can accomplish any purpose that they choose, they may see that they are not like God, but that they are frail and feeble mortals. The psalmist seems to have supposed that if they understood this, they would be humbled and would desist from their

purposes; and he therefore prays that God would interpose and show them precisely what they were. If men understood this, they would not dare to arrayy themselves against their Maker.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 10

Introduction

Section 1

"Author and occasion of the psalm." This psalm, like Psalm 1:1-6; Psalm 2:1-12, and many others, has no title to indicate its authorship; nor is there anything in the psalm itself which can enable us to determine this with any certainty. From the place which it occupies among the acknowledged Psalms of David, it is morally certain that it was regarded by those who arranged the Book of Psalms, as having been composed by him. There is nothing in the psalm to forbid this supposition.

Of course nothing is known as to the occasion on which it was composed. In the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, Psalm 113:1-9 (inclusive). In those versions, Psalm 114:1-8 and Psalm 10:1. The nature of that trouble is so far indicated as to show that it arose from the conduct of some formidable enemy, some one who was wicked, someone who was pursuing a secret and underhanded, a clandestine and treacherous course, to destroy the reputation or the life of the author of the psalm. In these circumstances the writer calls upon God to interpose for him. Nothing is indicated, however, by which we can ascertain who this enemy was, or on what occasion, in the life of David, the psalm was composed. It is only necessary to add, that there were several occasions in the life of David which corresponded with what is stated in the psalm, and that it is not necessary to understand the particular occasion more clearly in order to see the meaning of the psalm.

Section 2

"Contents of the psalm." The psalm is properly divided into two parts.

The first contains an account of the character of the enemy to whom the writer refers, Psalm 10:1-11; the second is an appeal to God to interpose and deliver him from the machinations of this foe, Psalm 10:12-18.

I. The characteristics of the enemy, Psalm 10:1-11. Those characteristics were the following:

(a) He was proud, and on that account persecuted the poor, Psalm 10:2.

(b) He was a boaster, and especially, it would seem, was one who was disposed to boast of his wealth, Psalm 10:3.

(c) He was a practical atheist; one too proud to seek after God, or to acknowledge his dependence on him, Psalm 10:4.

(d) His ways were always grievous, or adapted to produce evil, and the reason was that he had no just views on mortal subjects - that the great principles of truth and right were "far above out of his sight," Psalm 10:5.

(e) He was a man who had no apprehensions about the future; one who felt that his course would be one of continued prosperity, and that adversity would never come upon him, Psalm 10:6.

(f) He was profane and openly fraudulent, Psalm 10:7

(g) He was insidious, artful, and underhanded in his doings; a man who would stoop to any act of duplicity and treachery to accomplish his purposes, Psalm 10:8-10.

(h) And he acted as if God had "forgotten," that is, as if God would pass over offences; as though He did not see or regard them, Psalm 10:11.

II. An appeal to God to deliver him from the machinations of this foe, Psalm 10:12-18. This appeal consists of the following parts:

(a) A solemn address to God, beseeching him to remember the cry of the humble or the afflicted, Psalm 10:12.

(b) Arguments to enforce this appeal, or reasons why God should interpose, Psalm 10:13-15. These arguments are:

(1) That he had seen all this; that the effort of the wrong-doer to conceal what he had done was vain; and

(2) that the poor and afflicted had committed himself to God with a firm confidence that he would protect those who relied on him.

(c) The expression of a solemn and full conviction on the part of the writer of the psalm that God would thus interfere, and save those who put their trust in Him, Psalm 10:16-18.

Verse 1

Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? - That is, What is the reason why thou doest this? The thought upon which this is based is that God might be expected to interpose in a time of trouble, and that His aid might then be looked for. Yet, in this case, He seemed to be an indifferent spectator of the sorrows and afflictions of the wronged and oppressed. This filled the mind of the writer with surprise, and he could not account for it, especially in view of the character of the person or persons who had wronged the author of the psalm. "To stand afar off" in such circumstances, is an attitude of indifference and unconcern - as when others do not come near us if we are sick, or are bereaved, or are in circumstances of poverty and want. That man should do this would have produced no surprise in the mind of the writer; that God should do it was something that filled him with wonder.

Why hidest thou thyself? - As if God concealed himself or kept away. He did not manifest himself, but seemed to let the afflicted man suffer alone.

In times of trouble - Affliction, sorrow, persecution. The particular trouble referred to here was that which was produced by the machinations of the enemy or enemies whose character is described in the following verses. The question, however, is put in a general form, as if it; were strange and unaccountable that God should ever fail to interpose in time of trouble. How often has there been occasion to ask this question in our world!

Verse 2

The wicked in his pride - Margin: "In the pride of the wicked he doth." The margin is a literal translation of the Hebrew; but the sense is the same. The meaning is, that the fact that the wicked persecuted the poor, in the case referred to, was to be traced to his pride, haughtiness, ambition; that is, in pursuing his own selfish and ambitious purposes, he became utterly regardless of the rights and comforts of others. He esteemed their interest and happiness as unworthy of regard in comparison with his own aims and purposes, and trampled down all their rights in prosecuting his own ends. The term "wicked" here - in the original in the singular number, רשע *rāshâʿ*

though perhaps used collectively - means properly the wicked one, or the wicked man, and doubtless refers to some enemy that David had in his eye, and from whom he was at that time suffering wrong. It is not possible now to ascertain with certainty who this was; but as the whole description proceeds in the singular number Psalm 10:3-11, it is most natural to suppose that this refers to one individual.

Doth persecute the poor - עני ידלק *yidelaq ʿânîy* Prof. Alexander renders this, "burns the sufferer." Luther, muss der Elende leiden - "must the afflicted suffer." DeWette: angstigen sich die Elenden. The Latin Vulgate: "When the impious (man) is proud, the poor (man) is burned:" incenditur pauper. So the Septuagint. Gesenius (Lexicon) supposes it means, to burn with anguish. Horsley renders it, "In the exaltation of the impious one the helpless is consumed." But it seems to me that our common version has expressed the true sense. The word rendered persecuteth - דלק *dâlaq* - means properly to burn, to flame; then to burn with love, with anger; then to burn after anyone, to persecute. See it; explained in the notes at Psalm 7:13. According to the most natural application of the word here, it would seem to mean, "In the pride of the wicked, he persecutes the poor or the afflicted;" that is, he burns after him; he is inflamed against him; he hotly pursues him. The word poor in this place - עני *ʿânîy* - means the afflicted; the crushed; the downtrodden; those in circumstances of humiliation and poverty. The psalmist doubtless refers to himself as a poor and persecuted man; and the time in his life would seem to be when he was without a protector or friend, probably before he came to the throne.

Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined - The artifice, plan, or scheme, which they have formed. That is, they have formed a scheme to take advantage of, or to destroy others; and the psalmist prays that, as a just retribution, this very calamity may come upon them. No man could have a right to complain if the mischief and wrong which he had devised for others should be brought upon himself; and if it were certain that this in all eases would occur, there could be nothing that would so effectually deter men from wrongdoing. The psalmist, then, simply prays that justice might be done. Compare Psalm 5:10, note; Psalm 7:15-16, notes. The plural form of the verb is used here, but it is not certain that the psalmist had more than one enemy in view, for on expressing his feelings

toward that one enemy he may have designed to use language which would be applicable to all in similar circumstances.

Verse 3

For the wicked boasteth of his heart‘s desire - Margin, as in Hebrew, soul‘s. The main idea in this verse seems to be that he is a boaster - a man who makes some proclamation about himself as being superior to others, and who, in that proportion, looks with disdain or contempt on others. He vaunts himself, or makes an ostentatious display of something on which he prides himself, as wealth, strength, beauty, talent, prowess, etc. The particular thing here, it would seem, of which he boasted was his natural inclinations; the propensities and passions of his soul; that is, he took pride in himself, in his own passions, desires, lusts, tastes, and made a boastful display of them, as if he regarded them as something honorable, or as something fitted to excite admiration in others. This is not a very uncommon characteristic of wicked men; at least it is found in a certain class of wicked men. They pride themselves in whatever they have in their character that is special, or that is their own, for the very reason that it is theirs; and they become so shameless that they do not hesitate publicly to boast of that which should be regarded as a disgrace. A certain class of younq men are very apt to “boast” of passions and practices which should cover their faces with the burning blush of shame.

And blesseth the covetous - Margin, “the covetous blesseth himself, he abhorreth the Lord.” Prof. Alexander renders this, “And winning (that is, when he wins) blesses, despises Jehovah.” In other words, he hypocritically thanks God for his success, but despises him in his heart. This probably expresses the correct idea. The word rendered “the covetous” - בצע *botsēʿ* - is a participle, from the verb - בצע *bâtsaʿ* to cut in pieces; then, to plunder, to spoil; and then, to be greedy after gain. Here, the natural construction would seem to be to refer it not to another, as one who was covetous, but to himself, as greedy, or as succeeding in the object of his desire; as referring to the fact that he obtained his heart‘s desire, and as showing what his feelings were then. He was filled with evil desires, and was so shameless of them that he openly avowed them; and when he obtained the object of his wishes, he did what is here denoted by the word bless - as will be explained directly.

The idea in the mind of the writer seems to be that he cherished the desire, and made no secret of it, and obtained the object of his wishes. The

natural explanation of the manner in which he did this is, that it was by plunder, rapine, or spoil, for this would be most literally expressed by the word used. Compare Proverbs 1:19; Proverbs 15:27; Jeremiah 6:13; Jeremiah 8:10; Ezekiel 22:12. It might be, however, by unjust gains, or dishonest dealing, 1 Samuel 8:3; Isaiah 33:15; Isaiah 57:17. The word bless here may mean, as in the margin, blesses himself; or, as Prof. Alexander supposes, may mean that he blesses the Lord, that is, renders hypocritical thanks for his success, and professes to acknowledge that all is the gift of God, while at the same time he expresses contempt for him, and despises him in his heart. If the usual meaning of the word bless is to be retained, however, it would seem to be most in accordance with the spirit of the passage that he should bless himself, that is, his own talents, skill, power; in other words, that he should attribute all his success to himself.

The idea does not seem to be that he was even professedly a religious man, but that he was a proud and vain boaster who attributed all success to himself, and despised God and his claims. It has been supposed by some, however, and with plausibility (DeWette, and others), that the word rendered "bless" here - ברך *bērēk* - as in Job 1:5, Job 1:11; Job 2:9, means, not to bless, but to curse. See the notes at Job 1:5. DeWette renders it, Der Rauber lastert schmahend Jehovah. This seems to me to be the true idea - that this braggart or braggadocio did not make any pretensions to religion, but was a profane man, and one who despised God and abhorred His cause.

Whom the Load abhorreth - Or, more correctly, despises, or abhors the Lord. That is, he makes shameless boast of his own corrupt and base passions; when he is successful he makes no acknowledgment to God, but Curses him and despises or contemns him in his heart. A correct rendering then of the whole would be, "And having obtained, he curses - he despises Jehovah." Coverdale renders this, "The covetous blesseth himself, and blasphemeth the Lord." We have thus an example of lost finished and shameless depravity - but alas! One that was not found in the time of David only.

Verse 4

The wicked, through the pride of his countenance - In consequence of his pride; or, his pride is the reason of what is here stated. The "pride of his countenance" is a phrase that is used because pride shows itself mainly

in the countenance, or in a lofty air and manner. The design is to state the influence of pride in producing the effect here specified.

Will not seek after God - The phrase "after God," is supplied by our translators. Something clearly is to be supplied, and it is plainly something relating to God - either that the wicked man will not seek after God in prayer, or that he will not inquire after the proofs of his existence and attributes; or that he will not seek after his favor, or that he will not endeavor to know the divine will. All this would be implied in seeking after God, and this is undoubtedly the state of mind that is referred to here. The sinner is unwilling, in any appropriate way, to acknowledge God.

God is not in all his thoughts - Margin, "Or, all his thoughts are, There is no God," Psalm 14:1. The literal translation is: "No God (are) all his thoughts." The margin has undoubtedly expressed the meaning better than the translation in the text, since the spirit of the passage is not that the sinner had no thought of God, but that he thought wrong. The fact that he would not seek God, and that he had said that God had forgotten Psalm 10:11, shows that he had some thoughts of God. The language here is properly expressive of belief or desire; either that all his thoughts were that there is no God, i. e, that such was the result of all his meditations and reasonings on the subject; or that he wished that it might be found to be so. The language will admit of either construction, and in either sense it would express the thoughts of the wicked. Its both a matter of practical belief, and as a matter of desire, the language of the wicked is, "No God." The wicked wish that there were none; he practically believes that there is none. The entire verse, then, expresses the prevailing feelings of a sinner about God:

(a) That he wishes there were none, and practically believes that there is none; and

(b) that the reason or ground of these feelings is pride. Pride will prevent him from seeking God in the following ways:

(1) It makes him unwilling to recognize his dependence upon any being;

(2) it makes him unwilling to confess that he is a sinner;

(3) it makes him unwilling to pray;

(4) it makes him unwilling to seek aid of anyone, even God, in the business of life, in the prosecution of his plans, or in sickness and affliction;

(5) it makes him unwilling to accede to the terms of reconciliation and salvation proposed by God, unwilling to repent, to believe, to submit to His sovereignty, to acknowledge his indebtedness to mere grace for the hope of eternal life.

Pride is at the root of all the atheism, theoretical or practical, on the earth; at the root of all the reluctance which there is to seek the favor of God; at the root, therefore, of the misery and wretchedness of the world.

Verse 5

His ways are always grievous - His paths; his manner of life; his conduct toward God; his dealings with men. The word rendered "are grievious," יחילו *yāchiylû* - has been variously rendered. The Latin Vulgate renders it, "His ways are defiled." So the Septuagint. Coverdale renders it, "His ways are always filthy." Prof. Alexander, "His ways are firm." So DeWette, *"Es gelingen seine Wege."* Horsley, "His ways are confident." This variety in the interpretation arises from the ambiguity of the original word - חול *chûl* The meaning of this word, as given by Genesius, is to turn round, to twist, to whirl; and hence:

(1) to dance;

(2) to be whirled, or twisted upon anything;

(3) to twist oneself with pain, or to be in pain;

(4) to bear or bring forth;

(5) to tremble, to quake;

(6) to be strong or stable, as things twisted are.

Hence, he translates this passage, "his ways are firm, or stable, that is, all his affairs prosper." But it seems to me plain that this is not the idea in the mind of the psalmist. He is not dwelling on the prosperity of the wicked,

or on the result of his conduct, but on his character. In the previous verses he had stated some of the traits in his character, and the subsequent verses continue the description; hence, it is natural that we should expect to find some special feature of his character referred to here, and not that there should be an allusion to the stability of his affairs. It seems to me, therefore, that the exact idea here is, that his ways, or his modes of feelling and conduct were always perverse and forced, and hard; that there was always something tortuous and unnatural about him; that he was not straightforward and honest; that he did not see things as they are, and did not act in a plain and upright manner.

Thy judgments - Thy laws; or, the principles of thy govermnent.

Are far above out of his sight - They are out of the range of his vision. He does not see them. His thoughts grovel on the earth, and he is never elevated in his views so as to see the great principles of truth.

As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them - He treats them with contempt and scorn, as if he had no fear of them, or as if he were entirely confident of his own ability to overcome them. This is an illustration of his pride and self-confidence, for it is the characteristic of the proud and self-confident to boast in this manner. The word rendered "puffeth" means to breathe, to blow; and the idea here is, that he acted as though he could sweep them away with a breath.

Verse 6

He hath said in his heart - The phrase, "he hath said," means that this was his deliberate and settled character. What is here described was no sudden thing. It was not the freak of passion; it was a deliberately-formed purpose. The phrase, "in his heart," means that he had purposed this; he had said this to himself in a spirit of self-gratulation and confidence.

I shall not be moved - That is, he was confident in his present condition, and he apprehended no changes. He had formed his plans so wisely, that he believed he had nothing to apprehend; he feared neither sickness nor adversity; he dreaded not the power of his enemies; he feared nothing even from the providence of God; he supposed that he had laid the foundation for permanent prosperity. This feeling of self-confidence and of security is sometimes found, to an extent that cannot be justified, in the hearts of even good people (compare the note at Job 29:18); and it is common among the wicked. See Psalm 49:11; Job 21:9.

For I shall never be in adversity - Margin, "unto generation and generation." The margin expresses the correct sense. The idea of the wicked, as expressed here, is that they and their families would continue to be prosperous; that a permanent foundation was laid for honor and success, and for transmitting accumulated wealth and honors down to far distant times. It is a common feeling among wicked men that they can make permanent their titles, and possessions, and rank, and that nothing will occur to reduce them to the humble condition of others. Nothing more cleverly shows the pride and atheism of the heart than this; and in nothing are the anticipations and plans of human beings more signally disappointed. Compare the case of Shebna; see the note at Isaiah 22:15 ff.

Verse 7

His mouth is full of cursing - Profaneness; blasphemy against God. In the former verse the writer had described the feelings of the "heart;" he now proceeds to specify the open acts of the wicked. The meaning is, that the wicked man, as here described, was one who was full of imprecation, swearing, execration; a "profane" man; a man who, whatever was his belief about God, would constantly call upon his name, and imprecate his wrath on himself or others. An atheist, strange as it may seem, is as likely to make a frequent use of the name of God, and to call upon Him, as other people; just as profane people, who have no belief in the Saviour, swear by Jesus Christ. This passage seems to be referred to by the apostle Paul in Romans 3:14, not as a direct quotation, as if the psalmist referred to the point which he was arguing, but as language which expressed the idea that the apostle wished to convey. See the note at that passage.

And deceit - Margin, as in Hebrew, "deceits." The meaning is, that he was false and treacherous; and perhaps also that his treachery and fraud were accompanied with the solemn sanction of an oath, or an appeal to God, as is likely to be the case among fraudulent and dishonest people.

And fraud - The word used here - תך *tôk* - is now commonly supposed to mean rather "oppression or violence." See Gesenius' Lexicon. When this is attributed to his mouth, it means that what he says - what he requires - what he commands, is unjust, unreasonable, and oppressive.

Under his tongue - Perhaps alluding to the serpent, whose poison is concealed at the root of the fang or tooth, and therefore under the tongue. The meaning is, that beneath what the wicked say, though it seems to be

harmless, as the tongue of the serpent does, yet there lies mischief and iniquity, as the poison is hidden beneath the serpent‘s tongue.

Is mischief - The word used here means properly labor, toil; then trouble, vexation, sorrow. The meaning here seems to be that there lies under the tongue that which gives or causes distress; to wit, wrong-doing; injustice to others.

And vanity - Margin, iniquity. This expresses the idea in the original word. Whatever he says is evil, and is fitted to produce trouble and sorrow, as the concealed poison in the mouth of the serpent causes pain and death.

Verse 8

He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages - As robbers do, who hide themselves in the vicinity of villages, that they make a sudden descent upon them in the silence of the night, or that they may seize and rob the inhabitants as they go forth in the morning to attend their flocks to the pastures, or to labor in the fields. The word rendered “villages” means properly an enclosure, as a court before a building; and then a village or hamlet, farm-buildings, or farm hamlets, usually erected around an open space; and it is then used to denote the encampment of nomadic tribes, who usually pitch their tents in a circle so as to form an enclosure, Genesis 25:16; Isaiah 42:11. In the neighborhood of such places - in the thickets, bushes, or ravines, that might be near such encampments or enclosures - robbers would naturally secrete themselves, that they might fall upon them suddenly, or that they might seize anyone who left the village or encampment for ally purpose. So Frazer remarks in his Travels in Chorasan, i. 437: “When the Turkomans design to fall upon a village, they take a position near it in the rear, until in the morning the unsuspecting inhabitants drive out their herds, or leave the villages for some other purpose, and then they suddenly fall upon them.” DeWette, *in loc*.

In the secret places doth he murder the innocent - From these retreats he suddenly falls upon those who are unsuspicious, and who have done him no wrong. The word “innocent” here does not mean sinless in the absolute sense, but it means that they were innocent so far as the robber was concerned. They had done him no wrong; they had given him no occasion to make war upon them.

His eyes are privily set - Margin, “hide themselves.” The Hebrew word means to hide, to conceal; to lay up in private; to hoard; to keep back; to hold back, etc. Here it means to conceal, to lurk in ambush; and the idea is

that his eyes will secretly watch, or keep a lookout for them; that is, that his eyes, or that he himself will be concealed, that he may observe the goings of those whom he intends to make his prey.

Against the poor - Or, the wretched, the afflicted, the defenseless. The meaning is, that instead of being a helper of the poor and wretched, he is disposed to take every advantage of them, and deprive them of all their rights and comforts.

Verse 9

He lieth in wait secretly - Margin, in the secret places. See the note at Psalm 10:8. The object here is merely to illustrate the thought in the previous verse, by an allusion to a lion and a hunter.

As a lion in his den - As a lion crouches down in his den, ready to spring upon his prey. That is, the lion is concealed, but is on the look out, and when his prey passes near his den, he suddenly springs upon it and secures it. So it is with the wicked man. He carefully lays his plans. He conceals his purposes. He is himself hidden, or his plans are all hidden. Suddenly he springs upon his victim, who is taken by surprise and has no power of defense or escape. The purpose here is not so much to describe the wicked man as a literal robber, as to compare the conduct of the wicked with that of a robber - one who, like a lion or a hunter, lies concealed until his victim is seen. This will describe the conduct of a large class of people - men who secretly lay plans of seduction, villany, and fraud, and who spring suddenly upon their victims when there is no hope of escape.

He lieth in wait to catch the poor - The helpless and defenseless.

He doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net - As a hunter does the wild beast. Here the same thought is presented under a new image - that of a hunter. He lays his snare, gin, or pit-fall, and when the animal is allured into it, he springs the net suddenly on him, or the animal sinks into the pit, and is secured. See the note at Psalm 7:15; the note at Psalm 9:15.

Verse 10

He croucheth - Margin, "breaketh himself." Coverdale, "Then smiteth he, then oppresseth he." Prof. Alexander, "And bruised he will sink." Horsley, "And the overpowered man submits." Luther, "He slays, and thrusts down, and presses to the earth the poor with power." This variety of interpretation arises from some ambiguity in regard to the meaning of the original. The word rendered "croucheth" - ודכה, in the Kethib (the text) - is

in the Qeri‘ (margin), ידכה, “and crushed, he sinks down.” There is some uncertainty about the form in which the word is used, but it is certain that it does not mean, as in our translation, “he croucheth.” The word דכה *dâkâh* properly means to be broken in pieces, to be crushed; and this idea runs through all the forms in which the word occurs. The true idea, it seems to me, is that this does not refer to the wicked man, but to his victim or victims, represented here by a word in the collective singular; and the meaning is that such a victim, crushed and broken down, sinks under the power of the persecutor and oppressor. “And the crushed one sinks down.”

And humbleth himself - The word used here - יָשַׁח *yāśoch* - from שׂוּח *śûch* - means to sink down; to settle down. Here it means to sink down as one does who is overcome or oppressed, or who is smitten to the earth. The idea is, that he is crushed or smitten by the wicked, and sinks to the ground.

That the poor may fall - Rather, as in the original, “and the poor fall;” that is, they do fall. The idea is, that they do in fact fall by the arm of the persecutor and oppressor who treads them down.

By his strong ones - Margin, “Or, into his strong parts.” The text here best expresses the sense. The reference is to the strong ones - the followers and abettors of the “wicked” here referred to - his train of followers. The allusion seems to be to this wicked man represented as the head or leader of a band of robbers or outlaws - strong, athletic men engaged under him in committing robbery on the unprotected. See Psalm 10:8-9. Under these strong men the poor and the unprotected fall, and are crushed to the earth. The meaning of the whole verse, therefore, may be thus expressed: “And the crushed one sinks down, and the poor fall under his mighty ones.” The word rendered “poor” is in the plural, while the verb “fall” is in the singular; but this construction is not uncommon when the verb precedes. Nordheimer, Hebrew Grammar, Section 759, i., a. The word rendered “poor” means the wretched or the afflicted, and refers here to those who were unprotected - the victims of oppression and robbery.

The following account of the condition of Palestine at the present time will illustrate the passage here, and show how true the statements of the psalmist are to nature. It occurs in “The land and the Book,” by W. M. Thomson, D. D., Missionary in Syria. He is speaking of the sandy beach, or the sand hills, in the neighborhood of Mount Carmel, and says, respecting these “sandy downs, with feathery reeds, running far inland, the chosen retreat of wild boars and wild Arabs,” “The Arab robber larks like a wolf

among these sand heaps, and often springs out suddenly upon the solitary traveler, robs him in a trice, and then plunges again into the wilderness of sand hills and reedy downs, where pursuit is fruitless. Our friends are careful not to allow us to straggle about or lag behind, and yet it seems absurd to fear a surprise here - Khaifa before, and Acre in the rear, and travelers in sight on both sides. Robberies, however, do often occur, just where we now are. Strange country! and it has always been so." And then quoting the passage before us Psalm 10:8-10, he adds, "A thousand rascals, the living originals of this picture, are this day crouching and lying in wait all over the country to catch poor helpless travelers. You observe that all these people we meet or pass are armed; nor would they venture to go from Acre to Khaifa without their musket, although the cannon of the castles seem to command every foot of the way." Vol. i., pp. 487,488.

Verse 11

He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten - That is, this is his practical, habitual feeling. He acts as if God had forgotten, or as if God takes no knowledge of what is occurring in the earth. Compare Psalm 10:6.

He hideth his face - God has hidden his face; that is, he does not look on what is occurring.

He will never see it - That is, he will never see what is done. It cannot be supposed that any man would deliberately say either that the memory of God has failed, or that he will not see what is done upon the earth, but the meaning is, that this is the practical feeling of the wicked man; he acts as if this were so. He is no more restrained in his conduct than he would be if this were his deliberate conviction, or than if he had settled it in his mind that God is regardless of human actions. It is hardly necessary to say that this is a correct description of the conduct of wicked men. If they deliberately believed that God was regardless of human conduct, if they were certain that he would not behold what is done, their conduct would not be different from what it is now. They do not act as if his eye were upon them; they are not restrained by any sense of his presence.

Verse 12

Arise, O Lord - See the note at Psalm 3:7. This commences the second part of the psalm, in which the author calls on God to remember those who were oppressed and wronged by the wicked. By suffering the wicked thus to carry on their plans, God seemed to be indifferent to human affairs, and

the psalmist, therefore, invokes him to interpose, and to rescue the afflicted from their grasp.

O God, lift up thine hand - As one does when he is about to strike, or to exert his power. The prayer is, that God would interfere to put down the wicked.

Forget not the humble - Margin, "afflicted." The margin expresses the true sense. The idea is not that God would remember "humble" persons in the sense in which that word is now commonly used, but that he would remember those who were down-trodden, crushed, and afflicted. This is in accordance with the marginal reading in the Hebrew Bibles, which is now usually regarded as the more correct reading.

Verse 13

Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? - That is, despise him; or treat him with contempt and disregard. On what ground is this done? How is it to be accounted for? What is the proper explanation of so strange a fact? It is to be observed here:

(a) that the psalmist assumes this to be a fact, that the wicked do thus contemn or despise God. Of this he had no doubt; of this there can be no doubt now. They act as if this were so; they often speak of Him as if this were so. They pay no respect to his commands, to his presence, or to his character; they violate all His laws as if they were not worth regarding; they spurn all His counsels and entreaties; they go forward to meet Him as if His wrath were not to be apprehended or dreaded.

(b) So strange a fact, the psalmist says, ought to be accounted for. There must be some reason why it occurs; and what that reason is, is worth an earnest inquiry. It could not be possible to believe that man - the creature of God, and a creature so weak and feeble - could do it, unless the fact were so plain that it could not be denied. It is, then, worth inquiry to learn how so strange a fact can be accounted for; and the solution - the thing which will explain this, and which must be assumed to be true in order to explain it - is stated in the concluding part of the verse.

He hath said in his heart - This expression is here repeated for the third time in the psalm. See Psalm 10:6, Psalm 10:11. The idea is, that all this is the work "of the heart," and indicates the state of the heart. It cannot be regarded as the dictate of the reason or the judgment; but it is to be traced to the wishes, the feelings, the desires, and is to be regarded as

indicating the real condition of the human heart. A man habitually desires this; he practically persuades himself that this is so; he acts as if it were so.

Thou wilt not require it - Thou wilt not require an account of it; thou wilt not inquire into it. The Hebrew is simply: "Thou wilt not seek;" and the idea is, that God would not make an investigation of the matter. This fact, the psalmist says, would account for the conduct of the wicked. This is the actual feeling of wicked men, that they are not to give account of their conduct, or that God will not be strict to mark their deeds. People act as if they were not responsible to their Maker, and as if it were a settled point that he would never call them to account.

Verse 14

Thou hast seen it - Thou seest all. Though people act as if their conduct was not observed, yet thou art intimately acquainted with all that they do. The workers of iniquity cannot hide themselves. The idea here is, that although God seemed not to notice the conduct of the wicked, and though the wicked acted as if he did not, yet that all this was seen by God, and that he would deal with men according to justice and to truth.

For thou beholdest mischief - All that is done on the earth, though perhaps in this case referring particularly to that which gave the psalmist trouble.

And spite - The word spite with us, though it originally denoted rancour, malice, ill-will, now denotes usually a less deliberate and fixed malice than is indicated by those words, but is used to denote a sudden fit of ill-will excited by temporary vexation. It relates to small subjects, and is accompanied with a desire of petty revenge, and implies that one would be gratified with the disappointment or misfortune of another. The word here, however, in the original, means anger, wrath, malice; and the idea is, that God had seen all the anger of the enemies of the psalmist.

To requite it with thy hand - By thine own interposition or agency - the hand being the instrument by which we accomplish anything. The idea is, that the psalmist felt assured that God would not pass this over. Though the wicked acted as if he did not see or regard their conduct, yet the psalmist felt assured that God would not be unmindful of it, but would, in due time, visit them with deserved punishment.

The poor committeth himself unto thee - Margin, "leaveth." The word rendered poor is the same as that which occurs in Psalm 10:10. It means here those who are helpless and defenseless; the oppressed and the

downtrodden. The word committeth or leaveth means that he leaves his cause with God; he trusts in his protection and interposition; he gives himself no anxiety as to the result. He knows that God can deliver him if he sees that it is best; and he is assured that God will do that which it is best should be done.

Thou art the helper of the fatherless - That is, this is the general character of God - the character in which he has revealed himself to man. Compare Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 10:18; Isaiah 1:17; Psalm 68:5; Psalm 82:3; Jeremiah 49:11; Hosea 14:3; Malachi 3:5; James 1:27. The psalmist here refers to the "general character" of God as that in which all the oppressed, the crushed, the helpless may trust; and he mentions this particular case as one that best illustrated that character.

Verse 15

Break thou the arm of the wicked - The arm is the instrument by which we effect a purpose, and especially in wielding a sword or a spear, as in battle; and if the arm is broken, we are powerless. The psalmist, therefore, prays that God would render the wicked, in this respect, powerless.

And the evil man - Of all the evil, or the wicked. In regard to the prayer here, see the note at Psalm 5:10.

Seek out his wickedness until thou find none - Until it is all punished; until there has been a full recompense. This is a wish that no wicked act of his should be forgotten; that exact justice should be rendered. If it is right to punish the wicked at all, it is right to deal with them just as they deserve; if any wickedness may properly be punished, all may be; and, whatever may occur, the sinner may be assured that he will not be punished merely for a part of his sins. If God punishes the wicked at all, there will be nothing left unpunished.

Verse 16

The Lord is King forever and ever - That is, he reigns, and he will reign forever. This is one of the instances which frequently occur in the Psalms, where, though there is a desponding spirit, or an apprehension of danger expressed in the beginning of the poem, it ends with the language of exultation and triumph. The psalmist speaks here as if what he had desired was actually accomplished, and as if the enemies that had encompassed him, and all the enemies of the Lord, were actually overthrown, and God now reigned supreme. He was so confident that this would be so, that he

speaks of it as if it were already done. Compare Romans 4:17; see also Psalm 6:8-9; Psalm 7:17; Psalm 9:18.

The heathen are perished out of his land - That is, this would so certainly occur that he might speak of it as if it were actually done. The word "heathen" here refers to the enemies of God and of his cause, who are the principal subjects of the psalm. Compare Psalm 9:5. The "land," here, refers to the land of Palestine, or the holy land, regarded as a land sacred to God, or in the midst of which he himself dwelt.

Verse 17

Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble - Their desire or their prayer that thou wouldst interpose in their behalf in the time of danger, and rescue them. Compare Psalm 6:8-9. The word "humble" here refers to those who were poor, downtrodden, oppressed; and the original reference is, doubtless, to the psalmist himself, and to his friends. He was so certain that God would interpose, he had such assurance that his prayer would he answered, that his mind was perfectly calm.

Thou will prepare their heart - Margin, "or, establish." The margin seems most accurately to express the meaning of the original word - תכין *tākiyn* The idea is, that he would settle or confirm their heart; that is, that he would dispel their fears and allay their apprehensions by the assurances of his favor, and by his gracious interposition. They had been full of apprehension and alarm, but the assurances of the divine favor would establish their hearts and give them peace.

Thou wilt cause thine ear to hear - Another form of expressing assurance of the same thing. The idea is, that he would incline his ear, or make it attentive to the cry of his afflicted people.

Verse 18

To judge the fatherless - That is, to vindicate the orphan; to rescue him from the hand of those who would oppress and wrong him. In other words, the psalmist prays that God would manifest himself in his real and proper character as the vindicator of the fatherless (see the note at Psalm 10:14), or of those who are represented by the fatherless - the feeble and the helpless.

And the oppressed - Those who are downtrodden, crushed, and wronged. See the note at Psalm 9:9.

That the man of the earth - literally, "the man from the earth;" that is, that man springing from the earth, or created of the dust Genesis 2:7 - man frail, short-lived, feeble - should no more set up an unjust authority, trample

on the rights of his fellow-worms, or suppose that he is superior to his fellow-creatures.

May no more oppress - Margin, "terrify." The original word means properly to terrify, to make afraid; that is, in this place, to terrify by his harsh and oppressive conduct. It is to be observed here that the original word - ערץ *ʿârats* - has a very close resemblance in sound to the word rendered earth - ארץ *'erets* - and that this is commonly supposed to be an instance of the figure of speech called paronomasia, when the words have the same sound, but are of different significations. It is not certain, however, that there is in this case any designed resemblance, but it is rather to be supposed that it was accidental. In regard to the prayer in this verse, it may be proper to observe that there is always occasion to utter it, and will be until the Gospel shall pervade the hearts of all men. One of the most common forms of wickedness in our world is oppression - the oppression of the fatherless, of the poor, of the dependent - the oppression of the subjects of government, and the oppression of the slave. One of the most affecting things in regard to this is, that it is done by a man made "from the earth," - a child of dust - a creature composed of clay - of no better mould than others, and soon to return "to" the dust from which he was taken. Yet frail and weak man strives to feel that he is better than those clothed with a skin not colored like his own, or those born in a more bumble condition of life; and, in defiance of all the laws of God, and all the rights of his fellow-men, he crushes and grinds them to the earth. For such sins God will interpose, and he will yet show himself to be the helper of the fatherless and the oppressed. May He hasten the day when oppression and wrong shall cease in the world!

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 11

Introduction

Section 1. “Author of the psalm.” This psalm ascribed to David, both in the title and in the location which it has among the Psalms. There is nothing in the psalm to make this doubtful, and indeed its structure is so much in accordance with those usually ascribed to David, as to leave no doubt as to its authorship.

Section 2. “Occasion on which it was composed.” Of this there is no intimation in the title, or in the psalm itself. There is no special reference to any of the incidents of David‘s life, although some of the thoughts or images were suggested apparently by the recollection of what occurred in the persecutions of Saul or the rebellion of Absalom. Different occasions in the life of David have indeed been referred to as having led to the composition of the psalm. Venema supposes that it was composed when David was in the wilderness of Ziph, and when, betrayed by the inhabitants of the wilderness, and pursued by Saul, his friends began to advise him to seek a place of safety by flight, 1 Samuel 23:14-23. This gave occasion, Venema supposes, for his expressing the sentiment - which is the leading sentiment in the psalm - that when our affairs seem to be hopeless, we are not to be in despair, but are to put our trust still in God. Others have supposed that the psalm was composed when he was in the cave of Adullam Psalm 11:1. Instead of doing this, David determined to remain where he was, and to put his trust in God, with the belief that he would interpose and deliver him.

Section 3. “Contents of the psalm.” This psalm may be properly regarded as divided into two parts:

I. The counsel of some timid and fearful friends to the writer, in the circumstances of danger in which he was, to make his escape, and to seek safety by flight, Psalm 11:1-3. They advise him to flee as a bird to the mountain; that is, to flee to a place of security while he could, for he seems to have been surrounded by enemies. The arguments by which they enforced this counsel seem to be referred to in Psalm 11:2-3, and were these:

(a) that the wicked had made preparations to destroy him, for their bows and arrows were ready, Psalm 11:2; and

(b) that the condition of affairs was as if the very foundations were destroyed; that there was nothing to rest on; and that all his hopes, in his present condition, must be swept away, Psalm 11:3.

In these circumstances, all his hopes of safety, in their apprehension, was in flight.

II. The views which the author of the psalm entertained on the subject, in reply to this, Psalm 11:4-7. He had unwavering confidence in God; he did not despair; he believed that God would protect him; he believed that the object of God in permitting this was to try the righteous, and that in due time he would come forth and rain snares, fire, and brimstone, upon the ungodly. The state of mind thus evinced, is that of firmness in trying circumstances; steady confidence in God when things seem to be most adverse; and an assured belief that God will in due time rescue those who put their trust in him. It is the manifestation of firmness against the counsels of the timid; the language of unshaken trust in God when the fearful and unbelieving despair.

For the meaning of the title, see the note at Psalm 5:1-12.

Verse 1

In the Lord put I my trust - This, in general, expresses the state of mind of the author - a state of feeling which runs through the entire psalm. It is designed to be an answer to the counsel which others had been giving him to escape, and it implies that he was determined at that time, and always, to put his trust in God. They advised him to flee. In the existing circumstances he felt that that would have implied a want of confidence in God. He determined, therefore, to maintain his present position, and to rely upon the interposition of God in due time.

How say ye to my soul - How say ye to "me" - the soul being put for the person himself. "Why" do you say this to me? how can you give me such counsel, as if I were to run away from danger, and to put no trust in God? He seems to have supposed that such an act of flight would have been

construed by his enemies, and by the enemies of religion, as evidence that he had no faith or confidence in God. Such circumstances often occur in the world; and when that would be the "fair" and "natural" construction of one's conduct, the path of duty is plain. We are to remain where we are; we are boldly to face the danger, and commit the whole matter to God.

Flee as a bird to your mountain - This implies that it was supposed there was no longer any safety where he then was. The use of the plural number here - "Flee ye," by a change not uncommon in the Hebrew writings - seems designed to refer to the whole class of persons in those circumstances. The mind turns from his own particular case to that of others in the same circumstances; and the language may be designed to imply that this was the usual counsel given to such persons; that, on the same principle on which they now advised flight in this particular case, they would also advise flight in all similar cases. That is, they would counsel persons to flee to a place of safety when they were in danger of their life from persecution. This is the common counsel of the world; this would be the ordinary teaching of human prudence. The mountains in Palestine were regarded as places of safety, and were the common refuge of those who were in danger. In their caves and fastnesses, and on their heights, those who were in danger found security, for they could there hide themselves, or could more easily defend themselves, than they could in the plains and in the vallies. Hence, they became the place of retreat for robbers and banditti, as well as for the persecuted. The allusion to the bird here does not imply that birds sought a refuge in the mountains, and that he was to resemble them in this respect; but the point of the comparison turns on the rapidity with which this refuge should be sought:" Fly to the mountains as swiftly as a bird flies from danger." Compare Matthew 24:16; Judges 6:2; Hebrews 11:38.

Verse 2

For, lo, the wicked bend their bow - These are to he regarded as the words of the persons referred to in the previous verse, who had advised the persecuted psalmist to flee to the mountains. In this verse reasons are suggested for that advice. The reasons are, that the enemy was preparing for an attack, and that at an unexpected moment the attack would be made unless he should effect his escape. Apprised of the danger, he might now make good his escape, and avoid the peril which was impending. The common weapon in war, as in hunting, was the bow and arrow. The process of preparing for the use of the bow consisted in bending it, and properly

adjusting the arrow. The Hebrew word used here is "tread;" "the wicked tread upon the bow;" that is, with a view to bend it. The bow was made of steel, or strong wood, or pieces of ivory framed together, and it often required great strength - beyond the strength of the arm - to bend it so as to adjust the string. Hence, the "foot" was placed upon the center, and the two ends drawn near to each other.

They make ready their arrow upon the string - Hebrew, "they fit or fix the arrow upon the string." That is, they place the end of the arrow in the proper place upon the string of the bow.

That they may privily shoot at the upright in heart - Margin, as in the Hebrew, "in darkness." That is, that they may do it secretly or treacherously. They do not intend to do it in open day, or (as we should say) "in a fair fight;" but they mean to do it when their victim is not aware of their design. The phrase, "the upright in heart," may either denote their own conviction that those whom they designed so to attack were upright in heart - thus knowing that they were innocent; or it may be a statement of the advisers in the case, that those whom they counseled were thus upright - a statement on their part that the attack was made on the righteous. The latter is probably the true construction.

Verse 3

If the foundations be destroyed - These are still to be regarded as the words of the psalmist's advisers; or as an argument why he should make his escape. The word "foundations," here, refers to those things on which society rests, or by which social order is sustained - the great principles of truth and righteousness that uphold society, as the foundations on which an edifice rests uphold the building. The reference is to a destruction of those things in a community, when truth is no longer respected; when justice is no longer practiced; when fraud and violence have taken the place of honesty and honor; when error prevails; when a character for integrity and virtue affords no longer any security. This is supposed to be the case in the circumstances referred to in the psalm, when there was no respect paid to truth and justice, and when the righteous, therefore, could find no security. It is under these circumstances the advice is given Psalm 11:1, that the righteous should seek safety in flight.

What can the righteous do? - What source of safety or confidence has he? His trust for his own safety, and for the good of society, has always been in the prevalence of just principles, and he has no other resource.

Whatever others may do; whatever reliance they may place on such things, he can have no confidence in fraud, dishonesty, and error - in secret machinations and plans of treachery and deceit. His reliance is, and must be, in the prevalence of just principles; in the observance of law; in the diffusion of truth; in plans and deeds which are honorable and pure. When these no longer prevail, the argument is, there is nothing on which he can repose confidence in executing the plans on which his heart is fixed, and his proper course would be to flee Psalm 11:1. Part of this is true; part not. It is true that all the hope of the righteous is in the prevalence of principles of truth and justice, and that for the success of the objects nearest to his heart, whether of a private or public nature, he has no other resource or hope; but it is not always true, even when injustice, fraud, and error prevail, that he, should withdraw from society and seek his safety in flight, and leave the world to its own course. His presence may be the very thing to counteract this; his duty may be to remain and face the evil, and to endeavor to secure a better state of things. So the psalmist understood in his case.

Verse 4

The Lord is in his holy temple - Hebrew, "Jehovah is in the temple of his holiness." That is, he is in heaven, regarded as his temple or dwelling-place. This is the answer of the psalmist to the suggestions of his advisers that he should flee from danger. The answer is, in substance, that he had nothing to fear; that he had a protector in heaven; and that he might appeal to Him for defense. The idea is, that God, the protector of the righteous, is always in the heavens; that his throne is always accessible; and that to it the persecuted may come, and may always be safe.

The Lord's throne is in heaven - God is a king, ruling the universe. As such, the seat of his power or dominion is represented as in heaven, where he administers his government. That throne is fixed, and the affairs of his universe will be administered with justice. The righteous, therefore, may hope in his protection, and need not flee when the wicked assail them. The idea here is that of unwavering confidence in God as sitting upon the throne of the universe, and administering its affairs with justice and truth. Compare Isaiah 66:1, "heaven is my throne." See the notes on that verse.

His eyes behold - He sees everything in all parts of his vast empire, and therefore he knows all the purposes of the wicked, and all the wants of the righteous. The thought here, as one imparting a sense of safety, is, that God sees us. He is not ignorant of what our enemies are doing, and he is not

ignorant of what we need. If he were, the case would be different. We might their despair of safety, and feel that our enemies could overcome and destroy us. It is much, in the trials of life, to have this assurance - this constant feeling - that God sees us. He knows our condition, our wants, our dangers; he knows all that our enemies are doing - all their machinations against us. Knowing all this, we may be assured that he will interpose when it is best that he should interpose, and that he will suffer nothing to come upon us which it is not best that he should permit. When evil befalls us, therefore, it does not come because God does not know it, or because he could not prevent it, but because, seeing it all, he judges that it is best that it should thus occur. Compare Genesis 16:13.

His eyelids try - That is, they prove, penetrate into, as if by seeing through them. The "eyelids" here are synonymous with the eyes. The form of the language is varied in accordance with a custom common in Hebrew, and there is attributed here to the eyelids what properly belongs to the eyes - the power of seeing.

The children of men - All men, good and bad. He knows them all - all their purposes, their designs, their wishes, their dangers. He knows, therefore, what our enemies are doing; he knows what are our perils; and we may safely leave our cause with him. We should not, therefore, listen to the counsel which advises us to flee Psalm 11:1, but should rather put our trust in him who dwells in the heavens.

Verse 5

The Lord trieth the righteous - That is, he "proves" them, searches them, tests the reality of their piety. His dealings with them are such as to test the genuineness of their religion, and are designed to show their sincerity and the real power of their religious principles. It is not for the purpose of destroying them, or punishing them, that he deals with them as he does, but it is to show the reality of their attachment to him. This language seems here to be used to show the feeling of the persecuted and afflicted author of the psalm. He understood the reason why these calamities were suffered to come upon him - to wit, as a trial of his faith; and therefore it was his duty to remain and bear these troubles, and not to attempt to escape from them by flight. He says, therefore, that these troubles in the case of the righteous were in strong contrast with the purpose of the divine dealings toward the wicked, on whom God would "rain" snares, fire, and brimstone. In their case his judgments were for the purpose

of punishing and destroying; in the case of the righteous it was to "try" them, or to test the reality of their religion.

But the wicked - The wicked in general. All the wicked.

And him that loveth violence - Referring particularly here to those who were engaged in persecuting him who was the author of this psalm. They were contemplating acts of violence toward him Psalm 11:2; he says that all such persons were the objects of the divine displeasure, and would be appropriately punished.

His soul hateth - that is, "he" hates. God is often spoken of in language appropriate to man; and he is here referred to as having a soul - as he is elsewhere as having eyes, hands, or feet. The meaning is, that all such persons were the objects of the divine abhorrence, and that the divine dealings with them were not, as with the righteous, to "try" them, but to "punish" and "destroy" them. Knowing this, the persecuted author of the psalm, instead of fleeing, calmly committed himself and his cause to God.

Verse 6

Upon the wicked - Upon all the wicked.

He shall rain - He shall pour down as in a furious tempest.

Snares - It seems rather incongruous to speak of raining down "snares, " - understanding by the word snares, as it is used with us, that which entangles, as the snares by which we catch a bird, or by which a wild animal is taken. Compare the notes at Job 18:8-10. The word used here, however, seems to refer to anything by which one is taken in his career or course, or is involved in difficulties; and the meaning is, that God would arrest or seize upon the wicked, as a wild beast is secured by the snares or the toils of the hunter. By their being sent down as in a "rain," is denoted that such means of their arrest and punishment would exist in abundance, so that they could not escape.

Fire and brimstone - There is probably an allusion here to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Genesis 19:24. As those cities were eminent for their wickedness, and were destroyed on account of their guilt, they furnished an illustration of the manner in which God would treat the wicked in all future times. As they were destroyed on account of their wickedness, so will all the wicked be destroyed.

And an horrible tempest - As a furious blast of wind sweeps away houses and trees, spreading wide desolation, so will the wicked be swept away by the manifestation of the wrath of God.

This shall be the portion of their cup - That is, this shall be what they shall drink. See the note at Isaiah 51:17. The idea is, that the Lord holds out to them a cup for them to drink - a cup containing a deadly mixture. The allusion is to the mode of administering punishment by a poisonous draught - not an unfrequent mode of punishment in ancient times. The idea in the whole verse is, that the wicked would be destroyed, and that, therefore, there was nothing ultimately to be apprehended from them. God would protect his own friends, and would destroy all those that sought their hurt. In these circumstances the righteous should confide in him as their protector, and not "flee."

Verse 7

For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness - This would be more correctly rendered, "For Jehovah is righteous; he loves righteousness." The idea is, that God is himself righteous, and, consequently, he loves those who are righteous. He may be confided in, therefore, by the righteous as their friend, and being under his protection they have nothing to fear.

His countenance doth behold the upright - The word rendered "countenance" is, in the Hebrew, in the plural number; literally," his faces." It is not easy to account for this use of the plural, though it is common in the Scriptures. There may be an allusion to the fact that man seems to have two faces - one on the right side, and one on the left, two eyes, two cheeks, two nostrils, etc., as if made up of two persons. Applied to God, it has no other signification than it has when applied to man; nor should we seek to find anything mystical in the fact that the plural form is used. The term here, like the eyelids in Psalm 11:6, is equivalent to eyes, since the most remarkable feature of the countenance is the eyes; and the idea is, that God looks upon the upright; that is, he sees their dangers amid their wants; he looks upon them with favor and affection. Being thus constantly under his eye, and being objects of his favorable regard, they can have nothing to fear; or, in other words, they are safe. This, then, is the argument of the righteous man, in reply to the suggestion Psalm 11:1 that he should "flee" from danger. The argument is, that God would be his defender, and that he might safely rely on His protection. The wicked have everything to fear; the righteous, nothing. The one is never safe; the other, always. The one will be delivered out of all his troubles; the end of the other can be only ruin.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 12

Introduction

This psalm purports to be "A Psalm of David," and there is no reason to doubt that it was composed by him. On what occasion it was composed is now unknown, and there is nothing in the psalm itself to enable us to decide. Some have supposed that it was written in view of the persecution of David by Saul; and others, that it was in view of the rebellion of Absalom. There is nothing in the psalm, however, which shows that it has any spectral reference to those persecutions or troubles; nothing which might not have been uttered if those troubles had never occurred. All the expressions in the psalm are of a general character, and seem rather to refer to a prevailing state of iniquity than to any particular manifestation of wickedness as pertaining to the psalmist himself.

The psalm undoubtedly does refer to prevailing iniquity, and it is not difficult to determine to what form of iniquity it refers. It was a general failure of fidelity among good men; a general withdrawal from active duties of such men as had before been found faithful; a lack of that firmness and zeal which it was proper to expect from those who professed to be good men. Particularly, it refers to prevailing modes of speech among those from whom it was right to expect better things: a condition in which there was a lack of seriousness and sincerity in conversation; in which flattery abounded; in which double meanings in conversation were common; in which promises solemnly made could not be relied on; and in which there was, in consequence, great wrong done to the poor and the unsuspecting - those who, on account of their ignorance and their unsuspicious nature, were greatly injured by putting confidence in such promises and assurances. In this state of things the psalmist felt that it was proper to call on God to protect those who were exposed to such wrongs.

The psalm, therefore, is composed of these parts:

I. A statement of the prevailing condition of things, as a reason why it was proper for God to interpose, Psalm 12:1-2.

II. The fact that the Lord would interpose in such cases, and would cut off this class of persons, Psalm 12:3-5.

III. The strong contrast between the words of the Lord and the language which was then in prevalent use, Psalm 12:6. The words of the Lord were pure; pure as silver tried by the severest tests of fire.

IV. A deep conviction on the part of the psalmist that God would be the protector of those who were thus exposed to injury and wrong; particular y he would keep them from the purposes of such a generation forever, Psalm 12:7.

V. The closing verse, "The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted" Psalm 12:8, seems to be but the carrying out of the idea of the divine protection in the psalm: "Let the wicked walk about, therefore, on every side when vile men are exalted to power, for God is the protector of his people, and all such men are under his control." Or it may be the statement of a fact that wickedness did abound, or that people seemed to be unrestrained when wicked men were in power, though with the idea that God saw them, and would so check and restrain them that the injured and the wronged would be protected.

The title to the psalm - "To the chief Musician upon Sheminith" - is the same as that of the sixth Psalm, except that the words "On Neginoth," used there, are here omitted. See the note at that psalm.

Verse 1

Help, Lord - Hebrew, "Save, Yahweh." The idea is that there was no human help, and, therefore, the divine help is implored. The psalmist saw that those on whom reliance was usually placed for the promotion of the cause of truth and virtue now failed, and hence, he invites the divine interposition.

For the godly man - The word used here properly denotes the "merciful" man - חסיד *châsîyd* It is a term applied to the righteous, because it is a prominent trait in the character of a pious man that he is merciful, kind, benignant. Hence, the general character is often denoted by the special characteristic; in the same way as we speak of a pious man as a good man, a just man, a righteous man. The idea suggested by the use of the term here is, that it is always a characteristic of a pious man that he is merciful or

benignant. Compare Psalm 4:3; Psalm 32:6, where the same word is rendered "godly;" Psalm 30:4; Psalm 31:23; Psalm 37:28; Psalm 50:5; Psalm 52:9; Psalm 79:2; Psalm 85:8, where it is rendered saints; and Deuteronomy 33:8; Psalm 16:10; Psalm 86:2; Psalm 89:19, where it is rendered "holy." "Ceaseth." The word used here - גמר *gâmar* - means properly to bring to an end; to complete; to perfect. Hence, it means to come to an end, to cease, to fail.

Gesenius. - This might occur either by their being cut off by death; or by their ceasing to exert their influence in favor of religion; that is, by a general prevalence of wickedness among those who professed to be the friends of God. The latter seems to be the meaning here, since, in the following verses, the psalmist proceeds to specify the manner in which they "fail;" not by death, but by speaking vanity, falsehood, and flattery. That is, their conduct was such that their influence failed, or was lost to the community. No reliance could be placed on them, and, therefore, the psalmist so earnestly calls on God for his interposition. The idea is, that when men professing religion become conformed to the world - when they live like other men - when they cease to exert an influence in favor of piety - when they fall into habits of sin, it is a time to call on God with special earnestness for his aid. Often such conduct on the part of the professed friends of religion makes such an appeal to God more proper than even the death of good men does, for, in the latter case, their influence is simply withdrawn; in the former, not only is this influence which they might exert lost to the church, but there is a positive bad influence to be counteracted. The fall of a professor of religion into sin is a greater loss to the church than his death would be.

For the faithful - Those who profess faith; those who are bound by their vows to be faithful to God and to his cause. The word is equivalent to the believing, and is properly expressive of trust or faith in God.

Fail from among the children of men - Fail, as above noted, by their misconduct; by being false to the trust committed to them.

Verse 2

They speak vanity - This is a statement of the "manner" in which the "godly" and the "faithful" fail, as stated in Psalm 12:1. One of the ways was that there was a disregard of truth; that no confidence could be placed on the statements of those who professed to be pious; that they dealt falsely with their neighbors. The word "vanity" here is equivalent to "falsehood."

What they spoke was a vain and empty thing, instead of being the truth. It had no reality, and could not be depended on.

Every one with his neighbour - In his statements and promises. No reliance could be placed on his word.

With flattering lips - Hebrew, "Lips of smoothness." The verb from which the word used here is derived - חלק *chālaq* - means properly to divide, to distribute; then, to make things equal or smooth; then, to make smooth or to shape, as an artisan does, as with a plane; and then, "to make things smooth with the tongue," that is, "to flatter." See Psalm 5:9; Proverbs 5:3; Proverbs 26:28; Proverbs 28:23; Proverbs 29:5. The meaning is, that no confidence could be placed in the statements made. There was no certainty that they were founded on truth; none that they were not intended to deceive. Flattery is the ascribing of qualities to another which he is known not to possess - usually with some sinister or base design.

And with a double heart - Margin, as in Hebrew, "a heart and a heart;" that is, as it were, with two hearts, one that gives utterance to the words, and the other that retains a different sentiment. Thus, in Deuteronomy 25:13, the phrase in Hebrew, "a stone and a stone" means, as it is translated, "divers weights" - one stone or weight to buy with, and another to sell with. So the flatterer. He has one heart to give utterance to the words which he uses toward his neighbor, and another that conceals his real purpose or design. No confidence, therefore, could be placed in such persons. Compare the note at Job 32:22.

Verse 3

The Lord shall cut off - This might be rendered, "May the Lord cut off," implying a wish on the part of the psalmist that it might occur. But probably the common rendering is the correct one. It is the statement of a solemn truth, designed for warning, that all such persons would be punished.

All flattering lips - The meaning is, that he will cut off all "persons" who use flattery; that is, he will cut them off from the favors which he will show to his own people, or will punish them. The word used here is the common one to denote disowning or excommunicating, and derives its meaning from the act of separating offenders from a community. See Genesis 17:14; Leviticus 17:10; Leviticus 18:29; Leviticus 20:3, Leviticus 20:6; et soepe.

And the tongue that speaketh proud things - That boasts, or is self-confident. For an example of this, see Isaiah 28:15; and compare the notes at that passage. It was this disposition to falsehood, flattery, and boasting, which constituted the fact stated in Psalm 12:1, that "godly" and "faithful" men - men on whom reliance might be placed, whose word might be trusted, and whose promised aid in the cause of truth might be depended on - had seemed to "fail" among men. That is, no such men could be found.

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Verse 4

Who have said - Who habitually say. This does not mean that they had formally and openly said this - for none would be likely to do so - but that they had practically and really said this by their conduct. They acted as if it were the real principle on which they framed their lives, that they might use their tongues as they pleased.

With our tongue - literally, "as to," or "in respect to our tongue;" that is, by our tongue. It was by the tongue that they expected to accomplish their purposes. It was not by direct power, or by violence, but by the power of speech.

Will we prevail - literally, "We will do mightily;" that is, they would accomplish their purposes. They relied on the power of speech - on their ability in influencing others; in deceiving others; in persuading others to fall in with their plans.

Our lips are our own - That is, we may use them as we please; no one has a right to control us in the use of what properly belongs to ourselves. It cannot be meant that they intended to assert this openly as a right, for there are perhaps none who will not admit in words that they are responsible for what they "say," as well as for what they "do." But their conduct was such that this was the fair interpretation to be placed on what they said. They would speak this if they openly professed and avowed what was their real opinion.

Who is lord over us? - That is, who has a right to control us in the case? There are many who practically avow this as a principle of conduct, and who seem to feel that they are not responsible for their words, however much they may admit their responsibility for their actions. There is usually a greater degree of recklessness among men in regard to their speech than in regard to their conduct; and many a man who would shrink from doing

another wrong by an act of dishonesty in business, may be utterly reckless as to doing him wrong by an unkind remark.

Verse 5

For the oppression of the poor - That is, on account of the wrong done to the poor in the manner specified above - by the abuse of the power of speech. On account of the slanders uttered against them, or the frauds perpetrated on them by the abuse of this power. The reference is to the wrongs done when no confidence could be placed in men‘s words; when they uttered words of “vanity” and “flattery” Psalm 12:2; when promises were made only to be broken, and obligations assumed never to be fulfilled. In such a state of things the “poor” were the most likely to suffer. In performing service for others - in daily labor on a farm or in a mechanical employment - they would depend for support, on the promises made by their employers; and when their pay was withheld, they and their families must suffer. Compare James 5:4. Rich men, having other resources, would not thus suffer; but the poor must always suffer when there is in the community a disregard of the obligation of promises. In like manner, the poor would be most likely to “be taken in by the acts of unprincipled men, and to be deceived in their small dealings with them. Other classes of the community would be on their guard; but the poor, unacquainted with the arts of cunning men, are always liable - though on a small scale, yet of importance to them - to be wronged by the false statements and promises of those against whom they can have no redress.

For the sighing of the needy … - The word “needy” here is synonymous with “poor.” It refers to those in humble circumstances, who were especially liable to be wronged by deceitful statements and promises.

I will set him in safety - I will make him safe. I will save him from the evils which they thought to bring upon him. The general idea is, that God is the vindicator of the poor and the oppressed.

From him that puffeth at him - Prof. Alexander renders this, “I will place in safety him that shall pant for it.” Gesenius renders it, “whom they puffed at; that is, the oppressed.” The language in the original is difficult. It may mean either “he pants for it,” or “he puffs at him;” and the meaning can only be determined by the connection. That would rather seem to be what is indicated in our common version; to wit, that the persons referred to as oppressing the poor and needy, “puffed” at them; that is, they looked upon them with contempt, and felt that with a puff of their breath they could

blow them away. They regarded them as insignificant and worthless. By this construction, also, the connection with the main statement will be best preserved - that the injury referred to in the psalm was done by "words," by the breath of the mouth - thus indicating that by a "word" or a "breath" they could destroy them.

Verse 6

The words of the Lord - In contrast with the words of the persons referred to in Psalm 12:2-4. Their words were vanity, flattery, and falsehood; and no reliance could be placed on them. In contrast with these words, the words of the Lord were pure. They were to be relied on. All his sayings were true and faithful. The design is to bring his words into contrast with the sayings of such men, and to show how much more safety there is in relying on his promises than on the promises made by such men. Man failed, but God would not. Reliance could not be placed on the words of even the professedly "godly" and "faithful" Psalm 12:1, but entire confidence might be placed in the words of Yahweh. All his words were true, pure, faithful, so that even when his own professed friends failed, and confidence could be placed in them, yet there was still reason for unwavering confidence in God himself.

Are pure words - That is, they are without any mixture of falsehood - for this idea is implied in the comparison which the psalmist makes when he says that they are like silver purified in the furnace, that is, from which all the dross has been removed.

As silver tried in a furnace of earth - The word here rendered "furnace" properly means a workshop. Perhaps it corresponds nearly with our word "laboratory," as the term is now used by chemists. It evidently refers to some place where the metal was tried and purified. The words rendered "of earth" literally mean "on the earth," or "in the earth?" The language does not mean that the "furnace" was "made" of earth, as would seem to be implied in our version, but that the "furnace" or laboratory was erected on the earth, or in the earth. It may refer to something like a crucible placed on the ground, around which a fire of intense heat could be made. It is probable that some such structure would be made near the mines where ore was obtained, and that the ore would be thus purified from dross before it was removed.

Purified seven times - By passing it seven times - that is, very often - through the fire. The word "seven" in the Scriptures denotes a complete or

perfect number, and is often used to denote frequency. The idea here would seem to be that the process was repeated until the silver became entirely pure. The sense is, that the words of the Lord are "perfectly pure." There is no admixture of falsehood in his statements; there is no deception in his promises; there is no flattery in what he says. This was the ground of confidence on the part of the psalmist - that while men (even those who professed to be good men) so failed that no reliance could be placed on their statements, the most perfect trust could be reposed on all the statements of God.

Verse 7

"Thou shalt keep them That is, the persons referred to in Psalm 12:5 - the poor and the needy who were suffering from the wrongs inflicted on them. The idea is, that God would guard and defend them. They were safe in his hands. Compare Psalm 37:3-7.

From this generation - This generation, or this race of detractors, flatterers, and oppressors. The idea is, that that entire generation was eminently wicked, and that none but God could deliver the poor and the needy from their designs.

Forever - That is, "constantly," or as long as they would need the divine protection. God would not interpose and save them from the "present" trouble, and then leave them to the designs of their enemies, but he would "always" interpose as often as there was any need of his help. That is, they were now, and would be at all times, entirely safe. They had nothing to fear, for God was their refuge and their help.

Verse 8

The wicked walk on every side - Everywhere. They have full license, or seem to be wholly unrestrained.

When the vilest men are exalted - Margin, "The vilest of the sons of men are exalted." This expression has been very variously translated. Dr. Horsley renders it, "When the scorn of the sons of men is exalted." De Wette, "They exalt themselves; terror to the sons of men." Luther, "Where such wicked people rule among the sons of men." Hengstenberg, "Like exaltation is disgrace to the sons of men." Prof. Alexander seems inclined to favor this last view. According to this interpretation, the meaning is, that "although the wicked are now in the ascendant, and the righteous are treated with contempt, this disgrace is realy an exaltation, because only … in man‘s judgment, not in God‘s, who will abundantly indemnity his people for the

dishonor put upon them." The word rendered in our version "the vilest" - זלות *zûllûth* - means, according to Gesenius, "trembling, terror." It occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. The verb from which it is derived - זלל *zâlal* - means to shake, to tremble; then (as one shakes out, or casts away worthless things) to be vile, abject, despised, worthless.

Perhaps, however, the common version expresses the idea more accurately than any of these proposed amendments. I would offer the following as a fair translation of the passage: "The wicked walk on every side; (it is) as the lifting up, or the exaltation of vileness among the sons of men." That is, the state of things is as if the vilest were exalted, or were honored. It seems to be the very exaltation of wickedness or depravity in the world. A state of things exists in which, from the prevalence of iniquity, the wicked seem to go unrestrained; in which no regard is paid to truth; in which falsehood and flattery abound; and it is as if honor were done to the worst forms of sin, and the most abandoned seem to be the most exalted. This appears to be the reason in the mind of the psalmist why the divine interposition is necessary; with this idea the psalm commences, and with this it appropriately closes. There was a state of widespread depravity and successful iniquity, as if all honor were conferred on wicked and abandoned men, while the virtuous were oppressed and degraded. The psalm expresses "confidence" in God - confidence in his faithful word and promises; but the psalmist sees a state of things wherein it was eminently desirable that God should interpose, for the righteous seemed to have failed out of the earth, and the wicked seemed to be wholly in the ascendancy.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 13

Introduction

This psalm consists properly of three parts:

I. A complaint as of one who was forsaken by God; who was persecuted, and who saw no means of deliverance; who took counsel with his own heart how he might be delivered, but who found no way in which it could be done, Psalm 13:1-2.

II. An earnest prayer to God that He would interpose; that He would attend to the cry of the sufferer; that He would enlighten his mind; that his enemy might not be allowed to prevail against him, and rejoice over his fall, Psalm 13:2-3.

III. A cheerful confidence in God that he would grant this favor, and interpose in his behalf, Psalm 13:5-6.

This is entitled, "A Psalm of David," and there is no reason to suppose that he was not the author. Yet there are in it no indications of the time when it was written or of the circumstances under which it was posed. It would seem to have been time of persecution, and it would be most natural to refer its composition to the persecutions which David experienced from Saul. Most of the rabbinical writers understand it as referring to the whole Hebrew people, and as expressing their sentiments and feelings in times of persecution in general. Kimchi understands it as referring to the present exile and trials of the Jewish people. DeWette. The psalm, though undoubtedly composed with reference to the special circumstances and trials of the author, contains sentiments applicable at all times to believers, and may be regarded as exemplifying the way in which pious feeling expresses itself in times of persecution and trial. Individuals are not unfrequently in circumstances in which the language of this psalm exactly expresses the feelings of their hearts; and the psalm is of great and permanent value, therefore, in the church, as illustrating the fact that good people may sometimes feel desolate and forsaken, as if even God had left them; the fact that they will, in such circumstances, cry earnestly to God for his interposition; and the fact that they will have, and will manifest, as the

result of such an appeal to God, a cheerful confidence in His protecting care.

The title - "To the chief Musician" (margin, overseer) - is the same as that prefixed to the fourth Psalm, with the omission of the words "On Neginoth." See the notes at that title.

Verse 1

How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? - literally, "until when." The psalmist breaks out into this cry "in the midst" of his troubles. He had apparently borne them as long as he could. It seemed as if they would never come to an end. We may presume that he had been patient and uncomplaining; that he had borne his trials long with the hope and belief that they would soon terminate; that he had waited patiently for deliverance, uttering no words of complaint; but now he begins to despair. He feels that his troubles will never end. He sees no prospect of deliverance; no signs or tokens that God would interpose; and he breaks out, therefore, in this language of tender complaint, as if he was utterly forsaken, and would be forever. The mind, even of a good man, is not unfrequently in this condition. He is borne down with troubles. He has no disposition to murmur or complain. He bears all patiently and long. He hopes for relief. He looks for it. But relief does not come; and it seems now that his troubles never will terminate. The darkness deepens; his mind is overwhelmed; he goes to God, and asks - not with complaining or murmuring, but with feelings bordering on despair - whether these troubles never will cease; whether he may never hope for deliverance.

Forever? - He had been forgotten so long, and there appeared to be so little prospect of deliverance, that it seemed as if God never would return and visit him with mercy. The expression denotes a state of mind on the verge of despair.

How long - Referring to a second aspect or phase of his troubles. The first was, that he seemed to be "forgotten." The second referred to here is, that God seemed to hide his face from him, and he asked how long this was to continue.

Wilt thou hide thy face from me - Favour - friendship - is shown by turning the face benignantly toward one; by smiling upon him; in Scriptural language, by "lifting up the light of the countenance" upon one. See the

note at Psalm 4:6. Aversion, hatred, displeasure, are shown by turning away the countenance. God seemed to the psalmist thus to show marks of displeasure toward him, and he earnestly asks how long this was to continue.

Verse 2

How long - This refers to the third aspect of the case, or the third phase of the trouble, that is, that he was perplexed and embarrassed, having a deep and heavy sorrow in his heart, and he asks how long this was to continue. "Shall I take counsel in my soul." This refers to the methods which he endeavored to devise to escape from trouble. He was perplexed, persecuted, and apparently forsaken; and being thus apparently forsaken, he was constrained to attempt to devise some plan for his own deliverance, without interposition or help from on high. He was under a necessity of relying on himself; and he asks "how long" this was to continue, or when he might hope that God would interpose to aid him by his counsels, and thus to deliver him.

Having sorrow in my heart daily - Every day; constantly. That is, there was no intermission to his troubles. The sorrow in his heart seems to have been not merely that which was caused by troubles from without, but also that which sprang from the painful necessity of attempting to form plans for his own relief - plans which seemed to be in vain.

How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? - This is the fourth form or phase of his trouble, and he asks how long this was to continue. This clause suggests perhaps the exact form of the trial. It was that which arose from the designs of an enemy who persecuted and oppressed the psalmist, and who had done it so effectually that he seemed to have triumphed over him, or to have him completely in his power. All the other forms of the trial - the fact that he seemed to be forgotten; that God had apparently averted his face; that he was left to form plans of deliverance which seemed to be vain, were connected with the fact here adverted to, that an enemy had persecuted him, and had been suffered to gain a triumph over him. Who this enemy was we do not know.

Verse 3

Consider and hear me - literally, "Look, hear me." God had seemed to avert his face as if he would not even look upon him Psalm 13:1; and the psalmist now prays that he "would" look upon him - that he would regard his wants - that he would attend to his cry. So we pray to one who turns

away from us as if he were not disposed to hear, and as if he cared nothing about us.

Lighten mine eyes - The allusion here is, probably, to his exhaustion, arising from trouble and despair, as if he were about to die. The sight grows dim as death approaches; and he seemed to feel that death was near. He says that unless God should interpose, the darkness would deepen, and he must die. The prayer, therefore, that God would "enlighten his eyes," was a prayer that he would interpose and save him from that death which he felt was rapidly approaching.

Lest I sleep the sleep of death - literally, "Lest I sleep the death;" that is, "in" death, or, as in the common version, the sleep of death. The idea is, that death, whose approach was indicated by the dimness of vision, was fast stealing over him as a sleep, and that unless his clearness of vision were restored, it would soon end in the total darkness - the deep and profound sleep - of death. Death is often compared to sleep. See the note at 1 Corinthians 11:30; the note at John 11:11, John 11:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Daniel 12:2. The resemblance between the two is so obvious as to have been remarked in all ages, and the comparison is found in the writings of all nations. It is only, however, in connection with Christianity that the idea has been fully carried out by the doctrine of the resurrection, for as we lie down at night with the hope of awaking to the pursuits and enjoyments of a new day, so the Christian lies down in death with the hope of awaking in the morning of the resurrection to the pursuits and enjoyments of a new and eternal day. Everywhere else death is, to the mind, a long and unbroken sleep. Compare Jeremiah 51:39, Jeremiah 51:57.

Verse 4

Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him - I have overpowered him; I have conquered him. That is, to triumph over him as having obtained a complete victory.

And those that trouble me - Hebrew, "My adversaries." The reference here is the same as in the former member of the verse. It is to the enemies that seemed almost to have triumphed over him already, and under whose power he was ready to sink. "Rejoice." Exult; triumph.

When I am moved - Moved from my steadfastness or firmness; when I am overcome. Hitherto he had been able to hold out against them; now he began to despair, and to fear that they would accomplish their object by overcoming and subduing him. His ground of apprehension and of appeal

was, that by his being vanquished the cause in which he was engaged would suffer, and that the enemies of religion would triumph.

Verse 5

But I have trusted in thy mercy - In thy favor; thy friendship; thy promises. His original confidence had been in God only, and not in himself. That confidence he still maintained; and now, as the result of that, he begins to exult in the confidence that he would be safe. The idea is, "I have trusted in the mercy of God; I still trust, and I will trust forever."

My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation - The word "salvation" here does not refer to salvation in the future world, but to deliverance from his present troubles, or to God's interposition in putting him into a condition of safety. The idea is, that he had entire confidence that God would interpose, and that there would yet be cause to rejoice in that salvation as actually accomplished. He now calls on his heart to rejoice in the assurance that it would be his. So with us. There will not only be rejoicing in salvation when actually accomplished, but there may, and should be, in the firm conviction that it will be ours.

Verse 6

I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me - The word which is here rendered "dealt bountifully" - גמל *gâmal* - means properly "to deal" with anyone; to "treat" anyone well or ill; and then, to requite, or recompense. When used absolutely, as it is here, it is commonly employed in a good sense, meaning to deal favorably, or kindly, toward anyone; to treat anyone with favor. It means here that God had shown him kindness or favor, and had thus laid the foundation for gratitude and praise. The psalm closes, therefore, with expressions of joy, thankfulness, triumph. Though it begins with depression and sadness, it ends with joy. This is often observable in the Psalms. In the commencement it often occurs that the mind is overwhelmed with sorrow, and there is earnest pleading with God. Light, under the influence of prayer, breaks in gradually upon the soul. The clouds disperse; the darkness disappears. New views of the goodness and mercy of God are imparted; an assurance of his favor is brought to the soul; confidence in his mercy springs up in the heart; and the psalm that began with sorrowful complaining ends with the language of praise and of joy. So, too, it is in our own experience. Afflicted, depressed, and sad, we go to God. Everything seems dark. We have no peace - no clear and cheerful views - no joy. As we wait upon God, new views of his character, his mercy,

his love, break upon the mind. The clouds open. Light beams upon us. Our souls take hold of the promises of God, and we, who went to His throne sad and desponding, rise from our devotions filled with praise and joy, submissive to the trials which made us so sad, and rejoicing in the belief that all things will work together for our good.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 14

Introduction

This purports to be one of David‘s psalms, and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the superscription. Yet we are entirely ignorant of the time and the circumstances of its composition. There is nothing in the psalm that throws any light on this point, and conjecture would be vain. It would seem to have been composed under the influence of an affecting conviction of the depth and extent of human depravity, and in view of prevalent impiety and neglect of God; but such a state of things was not confined to any one period of the life of David, as it is not to any one country or period of the world. Unhappily there has been no country and no age in which, in view of existing facts, such a psalm as this might not have been composed; or in which the entire proof on which the psalmist relies to support his melancholy conclusions, might not have been found.

The psalm embraces the following points:

I. A statement of prevalent depravity, particularly in denying the existence of God, or in expressing the wish that there were no God, Psalm 14:1.

II. The evidence of this, Psalm 14:2-4. This is found in two things:

(a) first, in the representation that the Lord looked down from heaven for the very purpose of ascertaining whether there were any that “understood and sought after God,” and that the result of this investigation was that all had gone aside, and had become defiled with sin, Psalm 14:2-3.

(b) The second proof is a prevailing disposition on the part of the wicked to judge severely of the conduct of God‘s people; to magnify their errors and faults; to make use of their imperfections to sustain themselves in their own course of life - represented by their “eating up the sins of God‘s people as they eat bread,” Psalm 14:4.

There was all utter want of kindness and charity in regard to the imperfections of others; and a desire to find the people of God so offending that they could, by “their” imperfections and faults, sustain and vindicate

their own conduct in neglecting religion. The idea is that, in their apprehension, the religion of such persons was not desirable - that the God whom they professed to serve could not be God.

III. Yet, the psalmist says, they were not wholly calm and satisfied with the conclusion which they were endeavoring to reach, that there was no God. Notwithstanding their expressed wish or desire Psalm 14:1, that there was, or that there might be no God, their minds were not at ease in that conclusion or desire.

They were, says the psalmist, "in great fear," for there was evidence which they could not deny or resist that God was "in the generation of the righteous," or that there was a God such as the righteous served, Psalm 14:5. This evidence was found in the manifestation of his favor toward them; in his interposition in their behalf, in the proof which could not be resisted or denied that he was their friend. These facts produced "fear" or apprehension in the minds of the wicked, notwithstanding all their efforts to be calm.

IV. The psalmist says that their course was designed to bring shame upon the counsel or purposes of the "poor" (that is, the people of God, who were mainly among the poor, or the humble and oppressed classes of the community) - because they regarded God as their refuge, Psalm 14:6. As God was their only refuge, as they had no human hope or reliance, as all their hope would fail if their hope in God failed, so the attempt to show that there was no God was adapted and designed to overwhelm them with shame and confusion - still more to aggravate their sufferings by taking away their only hope, and leaving them to die. Their religion was their only consolation and the purpose of those who wished that there were no God was to take even this last comfort away.

V. The psalm closes, in view of these thoughts, with an earnest prayer that God would interpose to deliver his poor and oppressed people, and with the statement that when this should occur, his people would rejoice, Psalm 14:7. Instead of their low and oppressed condition - a condition wherein their enemies triumphed over them, and endeavored still further to aggravate their sorrows by taking away even their faith in God - they would

rejoice in him, and in the full proof of his existence and of his favor toward them.

The psalm, therefore, is designed to describe a condition of things in which wickedness abounds, and when it takes this form - an attempt to show that there is no God; that is, when there is a prevalence of atheism, and when the design of this is to aggravate the sufferings and the trials of the professed friends by unsettling their faith in the divine existence.

The title is the same as in Psalm 11:1-7; Psalm 12:1-8. Compare the note at the title to Psalm 4:1-8.

Verse 1

The fool - The word "fool" is often used in the Scriptures to denote a wicked man - as sin is the essence of folly. Compare Job 2:10; Psalm 74:18; Genesis 34:7; Deuteronomy 22:21. The Hebrew word is rendered "vile person" in Isaiah 32:5-6. Elsewhere it is rendered "fool, foolish," and "foolish man." It is designed to convey the idea that wickedness or impiety is essential folly, or to use a term in describing the wicked which will, perhaps, more than any other, make the mind averse to the sin - for there is many a man who would see more in the word "fool" to be hated than in the word "wicked;" who would rather be called a "sinner" than a "fool."

Hath said - That is, has "thought," for the reference is to what is passing in his mind.

In his heart - See the note at Psalm 10:11. He may not have said this to others; he may not have taken the position openly before the world that there is no God, but such a thought has passed through his mind, and he has cherished it; and such a thought, either as a matter of belief or of desire, is at the foundation of his conduct. He "acts" as if such were his belief or his wish.

There is no God - The words "there is" are not in the original. The literal rendering would be either "no God," "nothing of God," or "God is not." The idea is that, in his apprehension, there is no such thing as God, or no such being as God. The more correct idea in the passage is, that this was the belief of him who is here called a "fool;" and it is doubtful whether the language would convey the idea of desire - or of a wish that this might be so; but still there can be no doubt that such is the wish or desire of the

wicked, and that they listen eagerly to any suggestions or arguments which, in their apprehension, would go to demonstrate that there is no such being as God. The exact state of mind, however, indicated by the languaqe here, undoubtedly is that such was the opinion or the belief of him who is here called a fool. If this is the true interpretation, then the passage would prove that there have been people who were atheists. The passage would prove, also, in its connection, that such a belief was closely linked, either as a cause or a consequent, with a corrupt life, for this statement immediately follows in regard to the character of those who are represented as saying that there is no God. As a matter of fact, the belief that there is no God is commonly founded on the desire to lead a wicked life; or, the opinion that there is no God is embraced by those who in fact lead such a life, with a desire to sustain themselves in their depravity, and to avoid the fear of future retribution. A man who wishes to lead an upright life, desires to find evidence that there is a God, and to such a man nothing would be more dark and distressing than anything which would compel him to doubt the fact of God‘s existence. It is only a wicked man who finds pleasure in an argument to prove that there is no God, and the wish that there were no God springs up only in a bad heart.

They are corrupt - That is, they have done corruptly; or, their conduct is corrupt. “They have done abominable works.” They have done that which is to be abominated or abhorred; that which is to be detested, and which is fitted to fill the mind with horror.

There is none that doeth good - Depravity is universal. All have fallen into sin; all fail to do good. None are found who are disposed to worship their Maker, and to keep his laws. This was originally spoken, undoubtedly, with reference to the age in which the psalmist lived; but it is applied by the apostle Paul, Romans 3:10 (see the note at that passage), as an argument for the universal depravity of mankind.

Verse 2

The Lord looked down from heaven - The original word here - שׁקף *shâqaph* - conveys the idea of “bending forward,” and hence, of an intense and anxious looking, as we bend forward when we wish to examine anything with attention, or when we look out for one who is expected to come. The idea is that God looked intently, or so as to secure a close examination, upon the children of men, for the express purpose of ascertaining whether there were any that were good. He looked at all men;

he examined all their pretensions to goodness, and he saw none who could be regarded as exempt from the charge of depravity. Nothing could more clearly prove the doctrine of universal depravity than to say that an Omniscient God made "an express examination" on this very point, that he looked over all the world, and that in the multitudes which passed under the notice of his eye not "one" could be found who could be pronounced righteous. If God could not find such an one, assuredly man cannot.

Upon the children of men - Upon mankind; upon the human race. They are called "children," or "sons" (Hebrew), because they are all the descendants of the man that God created - of Adam. Indeed the original word here is "Adam" - אדם *'âdâm* And it may be questionable whether, since this became in fact a proper name, designating the first man, it would not have been proper to retain the idea in the translation - "the sons of Adam;" that is, all his descendants. The phrase occurs frequently to denote the human race, Deuteronomy 32:8; Psalm 11:4; Psalm 21:10; Psalm 31:19; Psalm 36:7; Psalm 57:4; et soepe.

To see if there were any that did understand - If there were one acting wisely - to wit, in seeking God. "Acting wisely" here stands in contrast with the folly referred to in the first verse. Religion is always represented in the Scriptures as true wisdom.

And seek God - The knowledge of him; his favor and friendship. Wisdom is shown by a "desire" to become acquainted with the being and perfections of God, as well as in the actual possession of that knowledge; and in no way can the true character of man be better determined than by the actual interest which is felt in becoming acquainted with the character of him who made and who governs the universe. It is one of the clearest proofs of human depravity that there is no prevailing desire among people thus to ascertain the character of God.

Verse 3

They are all gone aside - This verse states the result of the divine investigation referred to in the previous verse. The result, as seen by God himself, was, that "all" were seen to have gone aside, and to have become filthy. The word rendered "gone aside" means properly to go off, to turn aside or away, to depart; as, for example, to turn out of the right way or path, Exodus 32:8. Then it means to turn away from God; to fall away from his worship; to apostatize, 1 Samuel 12:20; 2 Kings 18:6; 2 Chronicles 25:27. This is the idea here - that they had all apostatized from the living

God. The word "all" in the circumstances makes the statement as universal as it can be made; and no term could be used more clearly affirming the doctrine of universal depravity.

They are all together become filthy - The word "all" here is supplied by the translators. It was not necessary, however, to introduce it in order that the idea of universal depravity might be expressed, for that is implied in the word rendered "together," יחדו *yachedâv* That word properly conveys the idea that the same character or conduct pervaded all, or that the same thing might be expressed of all those referred to. They were united in this thing - that they bad become defiled or filthy. The word is used with reference to "persons," as meaning that they are all "in one place," Genesis 13:6; Genesis 22:6; or to "events," as meaning that they occurred at one time, Psalm 4:8. They were all as one. Compare 1 Chronicles 10:6. The idea is that, in respect to the statement made, they were alike. What would describe one would describe all. The word rendered "become filthy" is, in the margin, rendered "stinking." In Arabic the word means to become "sharp," or "sour" as milk; and hence, the idea of becoming corrupt in a moral sense. Gesenius, Lexicon. The word is found only here, and in the parallel Psalm 53:3, and in Job 15:16, in each of which places it is rendered "filthy." It relates here to character, and means that their character was morally corrupt or defiled. The term is often used in that sense now.

There is none that doeth good, no, not one - Nothing could more clearly express the idea of universal depravity than this expression. It is not merely that no one could be found who did good, but the expression is repeated to give emphasis to the statement. This entire passage is quoted in Romans 3:10-12, in proof of the doctrine of universal depravity. See the note at that passage.

Verse 4

Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? - literally, "Do they not know, all the workers of iniquity, eating my people, they eat bread; Jehovah they call not." The several statements in this verse in confirmation of the fact of their depravity are:

(a) that they have no knowledge of God;

(b) that they find pleasure in the errors and imperfections of the people of God - sustaining themselves in their own wickedness by the fact that the professed friends of God are inconsistent in their lives; and

(c) that they do not call on the name of the Lord, or that they offer no worship to him.

The whole verse might have been, and should have been put in the form of a question. The first statement implied in the question is, that they have "no knowledge." This can be regarded as a proof of guilt only

(1) as they have opportunities of obtaining knowledge;

(2) as they neglect to improve those opportunities, and remain in voluntary ignorance; and

(3) as they do this from a design to practice wickedness.

See this argument stated at length by the apostle Paul in Romans 1:19-28. Compare the note at that passage. This proof of human depravity is everywhere manifested still in the world - in the fact that men have the opportunities of gaining the knowledge of God if they chose to do it; in the fact that they voluntarily neglect those opportunities; and in the fact that the reason of this is that they love iniquity.

Who eat up my people as they eat bread - They sustain themselves in their own course of life by the imperfections of the people of God. That is, they make use of their inconsistencies to confirm themselves in the belief that there is no God. They argue that a religion which produces no better fruits than what is seen in the lives of its professed friends can be of no value, or cannot be genuine; that if a professed belief in God produces no happier results than are found in their lives, it could be of no advantage to worship God; that they are themselves as good as those are who profess to be religious, and that, therefore, there can be no evidence from the lives of the professed friends of God that religion is either true or of any value. No inconsiderable part of the evidence in favor of religion, it is intended, shall be derived from the lives of its friends; and when that evidence is not furnished, of course no small part of the proof of its reality and value is lost. Hence, so much importance is attached everywhere in the Bible to the necessity of a consistent life on the part of the professed friends of religion. Compare Isaiah 43:10. The words "my people" here are properly to be

regarded as the words of the psalmist, identifying himself with the people of God, and speaking of them thus as "his own people." Thus one speaks of his own family or his own friends. Compare Rth 1:16 . Or this may be spoken by David, considered as the head or ruler of the nation, and he may thus speak of the people of God as his people. The connection does not allow of the construction which would refer the words to God.

And call not upon the Lord - They do not worship Yahweh. They give this evidence of wickedness that they do not pray; that they do not invoke the blessing of their Maker; that they do not publicly acknowledge him as God. It is remarkable that this is placed as the last or the crowning thing in the evidence of their depravity; and if rightly considered, it is so. To one who should look at things as they are; to one who sees all the claims and obligations which rest upon mankind; to one who appreciates his own guilt, his dependance, and his exposure to death and woe; to one who understands aright why man was made - there can be no more striking proof of human depravity than in the fact that a man in no way acknowledges his Maker - that he renders him no homage - that he never supplicates his favor - never deprecates his wrath - that, amidst the trials, the temptations, the perils of life, he endeavors to make his way through the world "as if there were no God." The highest crime that Gabriel could commit would be to renounce all allegiance to his Maker, and henceforward to live as if there were no God. All other iniquities that he might commit would spring out of that, and would be secondary to that. The great sin of man consists in renouncing God, and attempting to live as if there were no Supreme Being to whom he owes allegiance. All other sins spring out of that, and are subordinate to it.

Verse 5

There were they in great fear - Margin, as in Hebrew, "they feared a fear." The idea is, that they were in great terror or consternation. They were not calm in their belief that there was no God. They endeavored to be. They wished to satisfy themselves that there was no God, and that they had nothing to dread. But they could not do this. In spite of all their efforts, there was such proof of his existence, and of his being the friend of the righteous, and consequently the enemy of such as they themselves were, as to fill their minds with alarm. People cannot, by an effort of will, get rid of the evidence that there is a God. In the face of all their attempts to convince themselves of this, the demonstration of his existence will press upon them, and will often fill their minds with terror.

For God is in the generation of the righteous - The word "generation" here, as applied to the righteous, seems to refer to them as a "race," or as a "class" of people. Compare Psalm 24:6; Psalm 73:15; Psalm 112:2. It commonly in the Scriptures refers to a certain age or duration, as it is used by us, reckoning an age or generation as about thirty or forty years (compare Job 42:16); but in the use of the term before us the idea of an "age" is dropped, and the righteous are spoken of merely as a "class" or "race" of persons. The idea here is, that there were such manifest proofs that God was among the righteous, and that he was their friend, that the wicked could not resist the force of that evidence, however much they might desire it, and however much they might wish to arrive at the conclusion that there was no God. The evidence that he was among the righteous would, of course, alarm them, because the very fact that he was the friend of the righteous demonstrated that he must be the enemy of the wicked, and, of course, that they were exposed to his wrath.

Verse 6

Ye have shamed - The address here is made directly to the wicked themselves, to show them the baseness of their own conduct, and, perhaps, in connection with the previous verse, to show them what occasion they had for fear. The idea in the verse seems to be, that as God was the protector of the "poor" who had come to him for "refuge," and as they had "shamed the counsel of the poor" who had done this, they had real occasion for alarm. The phrase "ye have shamed" seems to mean that they had "despised" it, or had treated it with derision, that is, they had laughed at, or had mocked the purpose of the poor in putting their trust in Yahweh.

The counsel - The purpose, the plan, the act - of the poor; that is, in putting their trust in the Lord. They had derided this as vain and foolish, since they maintained that there was no God Psalm 14:1. They therefore regarded such an act as mere illusion.

The poor - The righteous, considered as poor, or as afflicted. The word here rendered "poor" - עני *ʿânîy* - means more properly, afflicted, distressed, needy. It is often rendered "afflicted," Job 34:28; Psalm 18:27; Psalm 22:24; Psalm 25:16; Psalm 82:3; et al. in Psalm 9:12; Psalm 10:12 it is rendered "humble." The common rendering, however, is "poor," but it refers properly to the righteous, with the idea that they are afflicted, needy, and in humble circumstances. This is the idea here. The wicked had derided those who, in circumstances of poverty, depression, want, trial, had no other

resource, and who had sought their comfort in God. These reproaches tended to take away their last consolation, and to cover them with confusion; it was proper, therefore, that they who had done this should be overwhelmed with fear. If there is anything which deserves punishment it is the act which would take away from the world the last hope of the wretched - "that there is a God."

Because the Lord is his refuge - He has made the Lord his refuge. In his poverty, affliction, and trouble, he has come to God, and put his trust in him. This source of comfort, the doctrine of the wicked - that there "was no God" - tended to destroy. Atheism cuts off every hope of man, and leaves the wretched to despair. It would put out the last light that gleams on the earth, and cover the world with total and eternal night.

Verse 7

Oh that the salvation of Israel - Margin, "Who will give," etc. The Hebrew literally is, "Who will give out of Zion salvation to Israel?" The word "Israel" refers primarily to the Hebrew people, and then it is used generally to denote the people of God. The wish here expressed is in view of the facts referred to in the previous verses - the general prevalence of iniquity and of practical atheism, and the sufferings of the people of God on that account. This state of things suggests the earnest desire that from all such evils the people of God might be delivered. The expression in the original, as in the margin, "Who will give," is a common expression in Hebrew, and means the same as in our translation, "Oh that." It is expressive of an earnest desire, as if the thing were in the hand of another, that he would impart that blessing or favor.

Out of Zion - On the word "Zion," see the note at Isaiah 1:8. It is referred to here, as it is often, as the seat or dwelling-place of God; the place from where he issued his commands, and from where he put forth his power. Thus in Psalm 3:4, "He heard me out of his holy hill." Psalm 20:2, "the Lord … strengthen thee out of Zion." Psalm 128:5, "the Lord shall bless thee out of Zion." Here the phrase expresses a wish that God, who had his dwelling in Zion, would put forth his power in granting complete deliverance to his people.

When the Lord bringeth back - literally, "In Yahweh's bringing back the captivity of his people." That is, the particular salvation which the psalmist prayed for was that Yahweh would return the captivity of his people, or restore them from captivity.

The captivity of his people - This is "language" taken from a captivity in a foreign land. It is not necessary, however, to suppose that any such literal captivity is here referred to, nor would it be necessary to infer from this that the psalm was written in the Babylonian captivity, or in any other particular exile of the Hebrew people. The truth was, that the Hebrews were often in this state (see the Book of Judges, "passim"), and this language came to be the common method of expressing any condition of oppression and trouble, or of a low state of religion in the land. Compare Job 42:10.

Jacob shall rejoice - Another name for the Hebrew people, as descended from Jacob, Isaiah 2:3; Isaiah 41:21; Isaiah 10:21; Isaiah 14:1; Amos 7:2; et soepe. Prof. Alexander renders this, "Let Jacob exult; let Israel joy." The idea seems to be, that such a restoration would give great joy to the people of God, and the language expresses a desire that this might soon occur - perhaps expressing the idea also that in the certainty of such an ultimate restoration, such a complete salvation, the people of God might now rejoice. Thus, too, it will not only be true that the redeemed will be happy in heaven, but they may exult even now in the prospect, the certainty, that they will obtain complete salvation.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 15

Introduction

This psalm refers to a single subject, but that the most important which can come before the human mind. It is the question. Who is truly religious? who will enter heaven? who will be saved? The psalm contains a statement of what real religion is; one of the most explicit and formal of the statements which we have in the Old Testament on that subject. The form in which the matter is presented is that of a question in the first verse, and of the answer to that question in the other verses of the psalm.

I. The question. Psalm 15:1. The question is, who shall be permitted to reside with God in his tabernacle? who shall be entitled to the privilege of dwelling on his holy hill (that is, Zion, regarded as the dwelling-place of God, and the emblem of heaven)? In other words, who has such a character as to be entitled to hope for the favor and friendship of God?

II. The answer, Psalm 15:2-5. The answer embraces the following particulars:

(1) The man who is upright, just, honest, truthful, Psalm 15:2.

(2) The man who treats his neighbor properly; who does not slander or reproach him; who does not readily listen to calumnious reports in regard to him, Psalm 15:3.

(3) The man who regards the righteous and the wicked as they should be regarded; who looks with proper disapprobation on all who are "vile" in their character, and with true respect on all who fear the Lord, Psalm 15:4.

(4) The man who is faithful to an engagement, though it proves to be against his own interest, Psalm 15:4.

(5) The man who does not take advantage of the necessities of others, who does not put out his money "to usury," and who, if a magistrate, does not take a bribe to induce him to condemn the innocent, Psalm 15:5.

These are characteristics of true religion everywhere, and it is as true now as it was when this psalm was composed that it is only those who possess this character who have a right to regard themselves as the friends of God, or who have a well-founded hope of dwelling with him in heaven.

The psalm purports, in the title, to be "A Psalm of David." It is not known on what occasion it was written, nor is it material to know this in order to understand the psalm. It has been supposed by some that it was composed on the occasion when the ark was carried up from the house of Obed-edom (2 Samuel 6:12 ff), but there is nothing in the psalm itself which should lead us to refer it to that occasion, or to any other special occasion. It seems rather - like Psalm 1:1-6 - to be adapted to all times and all places. It contains a general illustration of the nature of true religion, and there has been no state of things in the world in which such a psalm might not be appropriately composed; there is none in which it may not be appropriately read and pondered.

Verse 1

Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? - Margin, "sojourn." The Hebrew word means properly to "sojourn;" that is, to abide in a place as a sojourner or stranger; not permanently, but only for a while. The idea in this place is taken from the word "tabernacle" or "tent," with which one naturally associates the thought of sojourning, rather than that of a permanent abode. Compare Hebrews 11:9. It should not be inferred, however, that it is meant here that the residence with God would be "temporary." The idea of permanency is fully expressed in the other member of the sentence, and the language here is only such as was customary in speaking of the righteous - language derived from the fact that in early times men dwelt in tents rather than in permanent habitations.

Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? - Zion, regarded as the dwelling-place of God, and the type of heaven - the eternal abode of the Most High. See the note at Psalm 2:6. The question is equivalent to asking, who is qualified to dwell with God? who may properly be regarded as his friend? who has a title to his favor? who is truly pious? By us the same question would be put in another form, though implying the same thing: Who is qualified to become a member of the church; who has evidence of true conversion and real piety? who is he who is prepared for heaven?

Verse 2

He that walketh uprightly - Hebrew, "walking perfectly;" that is, one who walks or lives "perfectly." The word "walk" in the Scriptures is often used to denote the manner of life; life being represented as a journey. See the note at Psalm 1:1. The word here rendered "uprightly," or, in the Hebrew, "perfectly," means that which is complete in all its parts; where no part is missing or is defective. See the word explained in the notes at Job 1:1. The Word is not used in the sense in which it is often employed now, as denoting absolute freedom from sin, but as meaning that the character was complete in all its parts; or that the person referred to was upright alike in regard to God and to man. See the sentiment here expressed explained in the notes at Isaiah 33:15.

And worketh righteousness - Does right. That is, he does what is proper to be done in relation to God and to man. Compare Micah 6:8. The doctrine is everywhere laid down in the Scriptures that no man can be a friend of God who does not do habitually what is right. See 1 John 3:6-10.

And speaketh the truth in his heart - He uses language that is sincere, and that is in accordance with his real belief. This is opposed to all mere outward professions, and all hypocritical pretences. His religion has its seat in the heart, and is not the religion of forms; his acts are the expressions of upright intentions and purposes, and are not performed for selfish and hypocritical ends. This is everywhere the nature of true religion.

Verse 3

He that backbiteth not with his tongue - The word "backbite" means to censure; slander; reproach; speak evil of. The Hebrew word - רגל *râgal* - a verb formed from the word foot, means properly "to foot it," and then "to go about." Then it means to go about as a tale-bearer or slanderer; to circulate reports unfavorable to others. It is not improperly rendered here "backbite;" and the idea is, that it is essential to true piety that one should "not" be a slanderer, or should "not" circulate evil reports in regard to others. On the use of the "tongue," see the note at James 3:2-11.

Nor doeth evil to his neighbor - That does his neighbor no harm. This refers to injury in any way, whether by word or deed. The idea is, that the man who will be admitted to dwell on the holy hill of Zion, the man who is truly religious, is one who does no injury to anyone; who always does that which is right to others. The word "neighbor" usually refers to one who resides near us; and their it denotes all persons who are near to us in the

sense that we have business relations with them; all persons with whom we have anything to do. It is used in this sense here as referring to our dealings with other persons.

Nor taketh up a reproach - Margin, "or receiveth," or, "endureth." The idea is that of "taking up," or receiving as true, or readily giving credit to it. He is slow to believe evil of another. He does not grasp at it greedily as if he had pleasure in it. He does not himself originate such a reproach, nor does he readily and cheerfully credit it when it is stated by others. If he is constrained to believe it, it is only because the evidence becomes so strong that he cannot resist it, and his believing it is contrary to all the desires of is heart. This is true religion every where; but this is contrary to the conduct of no small part of the world. There are large classes of persons to whom nothing is more acceptable than reproachful accusations of others, and who embrace no reports more readily than they do those which impute bad conduct or bad motives to them. Often there is nothing more marked in true conversion than the change which is produced in this respect. He who delighted in gossip and in slanderous reports of others; who found pleasure in the alleged failings and errors of his neighbors; who gladly lent a listening ear to the first intimations of this kind, and who cheerfully contributed his influence in giving circulation to such things, augmenting such reports as they passed through his hands - now sincerely rejoices on hearing everybody well spoken of, and does all that can be done consistently with truth to check such reports, and to secure to every man a good name.

Verse 4

In whose eyes a vile person is contemned - That is, who does not show respect to a man of base or bad character on account of his wealth, his position, or his rank in life. He estimates character as it is in itself, and not as derived from rank, relationship, or station. While, as stated in the previous verse, he is not disposed to take up a false or evil report against another, he is at the same time disposed to do justice to all, and does not honor those who do not deserve to be honored, or apologise for base conduct because it is committed by one of exalted station or rank. Loving virtue and piety for their own sake, he hates all that is opposite; and where conduct deserves reprobation, no matter where found, he does not hesitate to avow his conviction in regard to it. The sentiment here is substantially the same as in Psalm 1:1. See the notes at that verse.

But he honoreth them that fear the Lord - No matter in what rank or condition of life they may be found. Where there is true piety he honors it. He is willing to be known as one that honors it, and is willing to bear all the reproach that may be connected with such a deeply cherished respect, and with such an avowal. Compare Psalm 1:1.

He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not - Who has made a promise, or entered into a contract, that is likely to turn out contrary to his expectations, to his own disadvantage; but who still adheres to his engagement. If the thing itself is wrong; if he has made a promise, or pledged himself to do a wicked thing, he cannot be under obligation to execute it; he should at once abandon it (compare the notes at Matthew 14:9); but he is not at liberty to violate an agreement simply because it will be a loss to him, or because he ascertains that it will not be, as he supposed, to his advantage. The principles here laid down will extend to all contracts or agreements, pecuniary or otherwise, and should be a general principle regulating all our transactions with our fellow-men. The only limitation in the rule is that above stated, when the promise or the contract would involve that which is morally wrong.

Verse 5

He that putteth not out his money to usury - The word "usury" formerly denoted legal interest, or a premium for the use of money. In this sense the word is no longer used in our language, but it always now denotes unlawful interest; "a premium or compensation paid, or stipulated to be paid, for the use of money borrowed or retained, beyond the rate of interest established by law." "Webster." The Hebrew word used here - נֶשֶׁךְ *neshek* - means "interest," that is, a premium or compensation for the use of money in any manner, or to any extent. The reference is to the law of the Hebrews, which forbade such a loaning of money to the poor, and especially to poor Israelites, Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35-37. Although this was forbidden in respect to the Israelites, yet the lending of money on interest, or "usury" in a lawful sense, was allowed toward "strangers," or toward the people of other nations.

See Deuteronomy 23:19-20. The ground of the distinction was, that the Hebrews were regarded as a nation of brethren; that, as such, they should be willing to accommodate and aid each other; that they should not do anything that could be regarded as unbrotherly. In respect to other people it was allowed, not because it was proper to take advantage of their wants,

and to oppress them, but because this special reason did not exist in regard to them. That might be improper "in a family," among brothers and sisters, which would be entirely proper toward those who did not sustain this special relation; and we may conceive of cases - such cases in fact often occur - when it would be unkind in the highest degree to exact interest of a brother, or an intimate friend, while it is perfectly proper to receive the ordinary allowance for the use of money in our business transactions (that is, the ordinary rate of interest) of those who do not sustain to us this special relation.

The fact that it was allowed to the Hebrews to take interest of the people of other nations, shows that there was nothing morally wrong in the thing itself; and, in fact, there can be no reason why a man, to whom it is an accommodation, should not pay for the use of money as well as for the use of any other property. The thing forbidden here, therefore, is not the taking of interest in any case, but the taking of interest in such a way as would be oppressive and hard - as of a Hebrew demanding it from his poor and needy brother; and, by consequence, it would forbid the exacting of unusual and unlawful rates of interest, or taking advantage of the necessities of others - by evading the provisions of law, and making their circumstances an occasion of extortion. In one word, the thing forbidden is a harsh, grasping, griping disposition; a disposition to take advantage of the embarrassments of others to increase our own gains. Kindness, and an accommodating spirit in business transactions, are as much demanded now by the principles of religion as they were when this psalm was written, or as they were under the law which forbade the taking of interest from a poor and needy brother.

Nor taketh reward against the innocent - Who does not take a bribe; that is, does not accept a pecuniary consideration, or any other consideration, to induce him to decide a cause against justice. He is not, in any way, to allow any such considerations to influence him, or to sway his judgment. The taking of bribes is often expressly forbidden in the Scriptures. See Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19; Deuteronomy 27:25; Proverbs 17:23.

He that doeth these things shall never be moved - That is, in answer to the question in Psalm 15:1, he shall be permitted to "abide in the tabernacle" of God, and to "dwell in his holy hill." He shall have a solid foundation of hope; he is a friend of God, and shall enjoy his favor forever.

In other words, these things constitute true religion; and he who has such a character will obtain eternal life. His foundation is sure; he will be safe in all the storms of life, and safe when the cold waves of death beat around him. Compare Matthew 7:24-25.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 16

Introduction

This psalm expresses a confident expectation of eternal life and happiness, founded on the evidence of true attachment to God. It expresses the deep conviction that one who loves God will not be left in the grave, and will not be suffered to see permanent "corruption," or to perish in the grave, forever.

The contents of the psalm are the following:

(1) An earnest prayer of the author for preservation on the ground that he had put his trust in God, Psalm 16:1.

(2) A statement of his attachment to God, Psalm 16:2-3, founded partly on his consciousness of such attachment Psalm 16:2, and partly on the fact that he truly loved the friends of God, Psalm 16:3.

(3) A statement of the fact that he had no sympathy with those who rejected the true God; that he did not, and would not, participate in their worship. The Lord was his portion, and his inheritance, Psalm 16:4-5.

(4) Thankfulness that the lines had fallen unto him in such pleasant places; that he had had his birth and lot where the true God was adored, and not in a land of idolaters, Psalm 16:6-7.

(5) A confident expectation, on the ground of his attachment to God, that he would be happy forever; that he would not be left to perish in the grave; that he would obtain eternal life at the right hand of God, Psalm 16:8-11. This expectation implies the following particulars:

(a) That he would never be moved; that is, that he would not be disappointed and cast off, Psalm 16:8.

(b) That, though he was to die, his flesh would rest in hope, Psalm 16:9.

(c) That he would not be left in the regions of the dead, nor suffered to lie forever in the grave, Psalm 16:10.

(d) That God would show him the path of life, and give him a place at his right hand, Psalm 16:11.

Nothing can be determined with certainty in regard to the occasion on which the psalm was composed. It is such a psalm as might be composed at any time in view of solemn reflections on life, death, the grave, and the world beyond; on the question whether the grave is the end of man, or whether there will be a future. It is made up of happy reflections on the lot and the hopes of the pious; expressing the belief that, although they were to die, there was a brighter world beyond - although they were to be laid in the grave, they would not always remain there; that they would be released from the tomb, and be raised up to the right hand of God. It expresses more clearly than can be found almost anywhere else in the Old Testament a belief in the doctrine of the resurrection - an assurance that those who love God, and keep his commandments, will not always remain in the grave.

The psalm is appealed to by Peter Acts 2:25-31, and by Paul Acts 13:35-37, as referring to the resurrection of Christ, and is adduced by them in such a manner as to show they regarded it as proving that He would be raised from the dead. It is not necessary to suppose, in order to a correct understanding of the psalm, that it had an exclusive reference to the Messiah, but only that it referred to him in the highest sense, or that it had its complete fulfillment in him. Compare Introduction to Isaiah, Section 7, iii: It undoubtedly expressed the feelings of David in reference to himself - his own hopes in view of death; while it is true that he was directed to use language in describing his own feelings and hopes which could have a complete fulfillment only in the Messiah. In a more full and complete sense, it was true that he would not be left in the grave, and that he would not be allowed "to see corruption."

It was actually true in the sense in which David used the term as applicable to himself that he would not be "left" permanently and ultimately in the grave, under the dominion of corruption; it was literally true of the Messiah, as Peter and Paul argued, that he did not "see corruption;" that he was raised from the grave without undergoing that change in the tomb through which all others must pass. As David used the language (as

applicable to himself), the hope suggested in the psalm will be fulfilled in the future resurrection of the righteous; as the words are to be literally understood, they could be fulfilled only in Christ, who rose from the dead without seeing corruption. The argument of Peter and Paul is, that this prophetic language was found in the Old Testament, and that it could have a complete fulfillment only in the resurrection of Christ. David, though he would rise as he anticipated, did, in fact, return to corruption. Of the Messiah it was literally true that his body did not undergo any change in the grave. The reference to the Messiah is, that it had its highest and most complete fulfillment in him. Compare the notes at Acts 2:25-31.

The title of the psalm is, "Michtam of David." The word "Michtam" occurs only in the following places, in all of which it is used as the title of a psalm: Psalm 16:1-11; Psalm 56:1-13; Psalm 57:1-11; Psalm 58:1-11; 59; Psalm 60:1-12. Gesenius supposes that it means a "writing," especially a poem, psalm, or song; and that its sense is the same as the title to the psalm of Hezekiah Isaiah 38:9, where the word used is rendered "writing." According to Gesenius the word used here - מכתם *miktâm* - is the same as the word employed in Isaiah - מכתב *miktâb* - the last letter ב (*b*), having been gradually changed to ם (*m*). Others, unaptly, Gesenius says, have derived the word from כתם *kethem* gold," meaning a "golden" psalm; that is, precious, or pre-eminent. DeWette renders it: "Schrift,"" writing. It is, perhaps, impossible now to determine why some of the psalms of David should have been merely termed "writings," while others are mentioned under more specific titles.

Verse 1

Preserve me, O God - Keep me; guard me; save me. This language implies that there was imminent danger of some kind - perhaps, as the subsequent part of the psalm would seem to indicate, danger of death. See Psalm 16:8-10. The idea here is, that God was able to preserve him from the impending danger, and that he might hope he would do it.

For in thee do I put my trust - That is, my hope is in thee. He had no other reliance than God; but he had confidence in him - he felt assured that there was safety there.

Verse 2

O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord - The words "O my soul" are not in the original. A literal rendering of the passage would be, "Thou hast said unto the Lord," etc., leaving something to be supplied. De Wette renders it: "To Yahweh I call; thou art my Lord." Luther: "I have said to the Lord." The Latin Vulgate: "Thou, my soul, hast said to the Lord." The Septuagint: "I have said unto the Lord." Dr. Horsley: "I have said unto Jehovah." The speaker evidently is the psalmist; he is describing his feelings toward the Lord, and the idea is equivalent to the expression "I have said unto the Lord." Some word must necessarily be understood, and our translators have probably expressed the true sense by inserting the words, "O my soul." the state of mind indicated is that in which one is carefully looking at himself, his own perils, his own ground of hope, and when he finds in himself a ground of just confidence that he has put his trust in God, and in God alone. We have such a form of appeal in Psalm 42:5, Psalm 42:11; Psalm 43:5, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?"

Thou art my Lord - Thou hast a right to rule over me; or, I acknowledge thee as my Lord, my sovereign. The word here is not Yahweh, but Adonai - a word of more general signification than Yahweh. The sense is, I have acknowledged Yahweh to be my Lord and my God. I receive him and rest upon him as such.

My goodness extendeth not to thee - This passage has been very variously rendered. Prof. Alexander translates it: "My good (is) not besides thee (or, beyond thee);" meaning, as he supposes: "My happiness is not beside thee, independent of, or separable from thee?" So DeWette: "There is no success (or good fortune) to me out of thee." Others render it: "My goodness is not such as to entitle me to thy regard." And others, "My happiness is not obligatory or incumbent on thee; thou art not bound to provide for it." The Latin Vulgate renders it: "My good is not given unless by thee." Dr. Horsley: "Thou art my good - not besides thee." I think the meaning is: "My good is nowhere except in thee; I have no source of good of any kind - happiness, hope, life, safety, salvation - but in thee. My good is not without thee." This accords with the idea in the other member of the sentence, where he acknowledges Yahweh as his Lord; in other words, he found in Yahweh all that is implied in the idea of an object of worship - all that is properly expressed by the notion of a God. He renounced all other gods, and found his happiness - his all - in Yahweh.

Verse 3

But to the saints that are in the earth - This verse also has been very variously rendered. Our translators seem to have understood it, in connection with the previous verse, as meaning that his "goodness," or piety, was not of so pure and elevated a character that it could in any way extend to God so as to benefit him, but that it "might" be of service to the saints on earth, and that so, by benefiting them, he might show his attachment to God himself. But if the interpretation of the previous verse above proposed be the correct one, then this interpretation cannot be admitted here. This verse is probably to be regarded as a further statement of the evidence of the attachment of the psalmist to God. In the previous verse, according to the interpretation proposed, he states that his happiness - his all was centered in God. He had no hope of anything except in him; none beyond him; none besides him.

In this verse he states, as a further proof of his attachment to him, that he regarded with deep affection the saints of God; that he found his happiness, not in the society of the wicked, but in the friendship of the excellent of the earth. The verse may be thus rendered: "As to the saints in the earth (or in respect to the saints in the earth), and to the excellent, all my delight is in them." In the former verse he had stated that, as to God, or in respect to God, he had no source of blessing, no hope, no joy, beyond him, or independent of him; in this verse he says that in respect to the saints - the excellent of the earth - all his delight was in them. Thus he was conscious of true attachment to God and to his people. Thus he had what must ever be essentially the evidence of true piety - a feeling that God is all in all, and real love for those who are his; a feeling that there is nothing beyond God, or without God, that can meet the wants of the soul, and a sincere affection for all who are his friends on earth. DeWette has well expressed the sense of the passage, "The holy, who are in the land, and the noble - I have all my pleasure in them."

In the earth - In the land; or, perhaps, more generally, "on earth." God was in heaven, and all his hopes there were in him. In respect to those who dwelt on the earth, his delight was with the saints alone.

And to the excellent - The word used here means properly "large, great," mighty; then it is applied to "nobles, princes, chiefs;" and then to those who excel in moral qualities, in piety, and virtue. This is the idea here, and thus it corresponds with the word "saints" in the former member of the verse. The idea is that he found his pleasure, not in the rich and the great,

not in princes and nobles, but in those who were distinguished for virtue and piety. In heaven he had none but God; on earth he found his happiness only in those who were the friends of God.

In whom is all my delight - I find all my happiness in their society and friendship. The true state of my heart is indicated by my love for them. Everywhere, and at all times, love for those who love God, and a disposition to find our happiness in their friendship, will be a characteristic of true piety.

Verse 4

Their sorrows shall be multiplied - The word here rendered "sorrows - עצבות *ʿatstsebôth* - may mean either idols or sorrows. Compare Isaiah 48:5; Psalm 139:24; Job 9:28; Psalm 147:3. Some propose to render it, "Their idols are multiplied;" that is, many are the gods which others worship, while I worship one God only. So Gesenius understands it. So also the Aramaic Paraphrase renders it. But the common construction is probably the correct one, meaning that sorrow, pain, anguish, must always attend the worship of any other gods than the true God; and that therefore the psalmist would not he found among their number, or be united with them in their devotions.

That hasten after another god - Prof. Alexander renders this, "Another they have purchased." Dr. Horsley, "Who betroth themselves to another." The Septuagint, "After these things they are in haste." The Latin Vulgate, "Afterward they make haste." The Hebrew word - מהר *mâhar* - properly means to hasten; to be quick, prompt, apt. It is twice used Exodus 22:16 in the sense of "buying or endowing;" that is, procuring a wife by a price paid to her parents; but the common meaning of the word is to hasten, and this is clearly the sense here. The idea is that the persons referred to show a readiness or willingness to forsake the true God, and to render service to other gods. Their conduct shows that they do not hesitate to do this when it is proposed to them; that they embrace the first opportunity to do it. Men hesitate and delay when it is proposed to them to serve the true God; they readily embrace an opposite course - following the world and sin.

Their drink-offerings of blood - It was usual to pour out a drink-offering of wine or water in the worship of idol gods, and even of the true God. Thus Jacob Genesis 35:14 is said to have set up a pillar in Padan-aram, and to have "poured a drink-offering thereon." Compare Exodus 29:40-41; Exodus 30:9; Lev, Leviticus 23:13; Numbers 15:5. The phrase

“drink-offerings of blood” would seem to imply that the blood of the animals slain in sacrifice was often mingled with the wine or water that was thus poured out in the services of the pagan gods. So Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and Michaelis suppose. It would seem, also, that the worshippers themselves drank this mingled cup. They did this when they bound themselves by a solemn oath to perform any dangerous service. DeWette. The eating, and consequently the drinking of blood, was solemnly forbidden to the Israelites (compare Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 3:17; Leviticus 7:26; Leviticus 17:10); and the idea here is, that the psalmist had solemnly resolved that he would not partake of the abominations of the pagan, or be united with them in any way in their worship.

Nor take up their names into my lips - As objects of worship. That is, I will not in any way acknowledge them as gods, or render to them the homage which is due to God. The very mention of the name of any other god than the true God was solemnly forbidden by the law of Moses Exodus 23:13, “And make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of your mouth.” So the apostle Paul says Ephesians 5:3, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not once be named among you, as becometh saints.” The idea in these places seems to be, that the mere mention of these things would tend to produce dangerous familiarity with them, and by such familiarity take off something of the repugnance and horror with which they should be regarded, They were, in other words, to be utterly avoided; they were never to be thought of or named; they were to be treated as though they were not. No one can safely so familiarize himself with vice as to render it a frequent subject of conversation. Pollution will flow into the heart from words which describe pollution, even when there is no intention that the use of such words should produce contamination. No one can be familiar with stories or songs of a polluted nature, and still retain a heart of purity. “The very passage of a polluted thought through the mind leaves pollution behind it.” How much more is the mind polluted when the thought is dwelt upon, and when utterance is given to it in language!

Verse 5

The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance - In contradistinction from idols. The margin here is, “of my part.” The word properly means “lot, portion, part;” and is applicable to the portion of booty or plunder that fell to anyone; or to the portion of land that belonged to anyone in the division

of an estate, 2 Kings 9:10, 2 Kings 9:36-37. The meaning here is, that Yahweh was the being whom the psalmist worshipped as God, and that he sought no possession or comfort which did not proceed from him.

And my cup - The allusion here is to what we drink; and hence, the term is used in the sense of "lot" or "portion." See the notes at Isaiah 51:17. Compare the notes at Psalm 11:6. The idea here is this: "The cup that I drink - that cheers, refreshes, and sustains me - is the Lord. I find comfort, refreshment, happiness, in him alone; not in the intoxicating bowl; not in sensual joys; but in God - in his being, perfections, friendship."

Thou maintainest my lot - Thou dost defend my portion, or that which is allotted to me. The reference is to what he specifies in the following verse as his inheritance, and he says that that which was so valuable to him was sustained or preserved by God. He was the portion of his soul; he was the source of all his joy; he maintained or preserved all that was dear to his heart.

Verse 6

The lines - The word used here refers to the "lines" employed in measuring and dividing land, Amos 7:17; 2 Samuel 8:2. Hence, the word comes to denote a portion of land that is "measured out" (or that is "surveyed off") to anyone - his possession or property; and hence, the word refers to the condition in life. The meaning here is, that in running out such a survey, "his" inheritance had been fixed in a pleasant and desirable part of the land.

Are fallen unto me - Referring to the appropriation of the different parts of the land by lot. The idea is, that the land was surveyed into distinct portions, and then that the part which fell to anyone was determined by lot. This was actually the case in distributing the land of Canaan, Numbers 26:55; Numbers 33:54; Numbers 36:2; Joshua 1519.

In pleasant places - In a pleasant or desirable part of the land.

Yea, I have a goodly heritage - A good, a desirable inheritance. The meaning is, that he regarded it as a desirable heritage that he lived where the true God was known; where he enjoyed his favor and friendship.

Verse 7

I will bless the Lord, who hath given the counsel - Probably the reference here is to the fact that the Lord had counseled him to choose him as his portion, or had inclined him to his service. There is nothing for which a heart rightly affected is more disposed to praise God than for the fact that

by his grace it has been inclined to serve him; and the time when the heart was given away to God is recalled ever onward as the happiest period of life.

My reins … - See the notes at Psalm 7:9. The "reins" are here put for the mind, the soul. They were regarded as the seat of the affections, Jeremiah 11:20; Job 19:27. The meaning here is, that in the wakeful hours of night, when meditating on the divine character and goodness, he found instruction in regard to God. Compare Psalm 17:3. Everything then is favorable for reflection. The natural calmness and composure of the mind; the stillness of night; the starry heavens; the consciousness that we are alone with God, and that no human eye is upon us - all these things are favorable to profound religious meditation. They who are kept wakeful by night "need" not find this an unprofitable portion of their lives. Some of the most instructive hours of life are those which are spent when the eyes refuse to close themselves in slumber, and when the universal stillness invites to contemplation on divine things.

Verse 8

I have set the Lord always before me - By night as well as by day; in my private meditations as well as in my public professions. I have regarded myself always as in the presence of God; I have endeavored always to feel that, his eye was upon me. This, too, is one of the certain characteristics of piety, that we always feel that we are in the presence of God, and that we always act as if his eye were upon us. Compare the notes at Acts 2:25.

Because he is at my right hand - The right hand was regarded as the post of honor and dignity, but it is also mentioned as a position of defense or protection. To have one at our right hand is to have one near us who can defend us. Thus, in Psalm 109:31, "He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him," etc. So Psalm 110:5, "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath." Psalm 121:5, "the Lord is thy Keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand." The idea is, that as we use the right hand in our "own" defense, we seem to have an additional and a needed helper when one is at our right hand. The sense here is, that the psalmist felt that God, as his Protector, was always near him; always ready to interpose for his defense. We have a somewhat similar expression when we say of anyone that he is "at hand;" that is, he is near us.

I shall not be moved - I shall be safe; I shall not be disturbed by fear; I shall be protected from my enemies. See Psalm 10:6; Psalm 15:5. Compare

Psalm 46:5. The language here is that of one who has confidence in God in time of great calamities, and who feels that he is safe under the divine favor and protection.

Verse 9

Therefore my heart is glad - In view of this fact, that my confidence is in God alone, and my belief that he is my Protector and Friend. See the notes at Acts 2:26.

And my glory rejoiceth - The Septuagint translate this, "my tongue," and this translation is followed by Peter in his quotation of the passage in Acts 2:26. See the notes at that passage. The meaning here is, that whatever there was in him that was honorable, dignified, or glorious - all the faculties of his soul, as well as his heart - had occasion to rejoice in God. His whole nature - his undying soul - his exalted powers as he was made by God - all - all, found cause of exultation in the favor and friendship of God. The heart - the uuderstanding - the imagination - the whole immortal soul, found occasion for joy in God.

My flesh also - My body. Or, it may mean, his whole person, he himself, though the direct allusion is to the body considered as lying in the grave, Psalm 16:10. The language is such as one would use of himself when he reflected on his own death, and it is equivalent to saying, "I myself, when I am dead, shall rest in hope; my soul will not be left to abide in the gloomy place of the dead; nor will my body remain permanently in the grave under the power of corruption. In reference to my soul and my body - my whole nature - I shall descend to the grave in the hope of a future life."

Shall rest - Margin, "dwell confidently." The Hebrew is literally "shall dwell in confidence" or hope. The word here rendered "shall rest" means properly to let oneself down; to lie down, Numbers 9:17; Exodus 24:16; then, to lay oneself down, to lie down, as, for example, a lion lying down, Deuteronomy 33:20; or a people in tents, Numbers 24:2; and hence, to rest, to take rest, Judges 5:17; and then to abide, to dwell. Gesenius, Lexicon. Perhaps the sense here is that of "lying down," considered as lying in the grave, and the expression is equivalent to saying, "When I die I shall lie down in the grave in hope or confidence, not in despair. I shall expect to rise and live again."

In hope - The word used here means "trust, confidence, security." It is the opposite of despair. As used here, it would refer to a state of mind in which there was an expectation of living again, as distinguished from that

state of mind in which it was felt that the grave was the end of man. What is particularly to be remarked here is, that this trust or confidence extended to the "flesh" as well as to the "soul;" and the language is such as would be naturally used by one who believed in the resurrection of the body. Language of this kind occurs elsewhere in the Old Testament, showing that the doctrine of the resurrection of the body was one to which the sacred writers were not strangers, and that although the doctrine was not as explicitly and formally stated in the Old Testament as in the New, yet that it was a doctrine which had been at some time communicated to man. See Isaiah 26:19, note; Daniel 12:2, note. As applicable to David, the language used here is expressive of his belief that "he" would rise again, or would not perish in the grave when his body died; as applicable to the Messiah, as applied by Peter Acts 2:26, it means that when "he" should die it would be with the hope and expectation of being raised again without seeing corruption. The language is such as to be applicable to both cases; and, in regard to the interpretation of the "language," it makes no difference whether it was supposed that the resurrection would occur before the body should moulder back to dust, or whether it would occur at a much more remote period, and long after it had gone to decay. In either case it would be true that it was laid in the grave "in hope."

Verse 10

For thou will not leave - The language used here implies, of course, that what is here called the soul would be in the abode to which the name hell is given, but "how long" it would be there is not intimated. The thought simply is, that it would not be "left" there; it would not be suffered to "remain" there. Whether it would be restored to life again in a few days, or after a longer period, is not implied in the term used. It would be fulfilled, though, as in the case of the Lord Jesus, the resurrection should occur in three days; or though, as in the case of David, it would occur only after many ages; or though, as Abraham believed of Isaac if he was offered as a sacrifice Hebrews 11:19, he should be restored to life at once. In other words, there is no allusion in this language to time. It is only to the "fact" that there would be a restoration to life.

My soul - DeWette renders this, "my life." The Hebrew word - נפשׁ *nephesh* - which occurs very frequently in the Scriptures, means properly "breath;" then, the vital spirit, life; then, the rational soul, the mind; then, an animal, or animated thing - that which "lives;" then, oneself. Which of these

senses is the true one here must be determined from the connection, and the meaning could probably be determined by a man‘s asking himself what he would think of if he used similar language of himself - “I am about to die; my flesh will go down to the grave, and will rest in hope - the hope of a resurrection; my breath - my soul - will depart, and I shall be dead; but that life, that soul, will not be extinct: it will not be “left” in the grave, the abode of the dead; it will live again, live on forever.” It seems to me, therefore, that the language here would embrace the immortal part - that which is distinct from the body; and that the word here employed may be properly understood of the soul as we understand that word. The psalmist probably understood by it that part of his nature which was not mortal or decaying; that which properly constituted his life.

In hell - - לשאול *lishe'ôl* “to Sheol.” See Psalm 6:5, note; Isaiah 5:14, note. This word does not necessarily mean hell in the sense in which that term is now commonly employed, as denoting the abode of the wicked in the future world, or the place of punishment; but it means the region or abode of the dead, to which the grave was regarded as the door or entrance - the under-world. The idea is, that the soul would not be suffered to remain in that under-world - that dull, gloomy abode (compare the notes at Job 10:21-22), but would rise again to light and life. This language, however, gives no sanction to the words used in the creed, “he descended into hell,” nor to the opinion that Christ went down personally to “preach to the spirits in prison “ - the souls that are lost (compare the notes at 1 Peter 3:19); but it is language derived from the prevailing opinion that the soul, through the grave, descended to the under-world - to the abodes where the dead were supposed still to reside. See the notes at Isaiah 14:9. As a matter of fact, the soul of the Saviour at his death entered into “paradise.” See the notes at Luke 23:43.

Neither wilt thou suffer - literally, “thou wilt not give;” that is, he would not give him over to corruption, or would not suffer him to return to corruption.

Thine Holy One - See the notes at Acts 2:27. The reading here in the text is in the plural form, “thy holy ones;” the marginal reading in the Hebrew, or the Qeri‘, is in the singular, “thine Holy One.” The singular form is followed by the Aramaic Paraphrase, the Latin Vulgate, the Septuagint, the Arabic, and in the New Testament, Acts 2:27. The Masoretes have also pointed the text as if it were in the singular. Many manuscripts

and earlier editions of the Bible, and all the ancient versions, read it in the same manner. It is probable, therefore, that this is the true reading. The Hebrew word rendered holy one - חסיד *châsîyd* - means properly kind, benevolent, liberal, good, merciful, gracious, pious. Gesenius, Lexicon. It would be applicable to any persons who are pious or religious, but it is here restricted to the one whom the psalmist had in his eye - if the psalm referred to himself, then to himself; if to the Messiah, then to him. The term is several times given to the Saviour as being especially adapted to him. See Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34; Acts 3:14; compare Luke 1:35. It is applied to him as being eminently holy, or as being one whom God regarded as especially his own. As the passage here is expressly applied to him in the Acts of the Apostles Acts 2:27, there can be no doubt that it was intended by the Spirit of inspiration to designate him in this place, whatever reference it may have had primarily to David himself.

To see - That is, to experience; to be acquainted with. The word is used often to denote perceiving, learning, or understanding anything by experience. Thus, "to see life," Ecclesiastes 9:9; "to see death," Psalm 89:48; "to see sleep," Ecclesiastes 8:16; "to see famine," Jeremiah 5:12; "to see good," Psalm 34:12; "to see affliction," Lamentations 3:1; "to see evil," Proverbs 27:12. Here it means that he would not "experience" corruption; or would not return to corruption.

Corruption - - שׁחת *shachath* This word is frequently used in the Scriptures. It is translated "ditch" in Job 9:31; Psalm 7:15; "corruption" (as here), in Job 17:14; Psalm 49:9; Jonah 2:6; "pit," in Job 33:18, Job 33:24, Job 33:28, Job 33:30; Psalm 9:15; Psalm 30:9; Psalm 35:7; Proverbs 26:27; Isaiah 38:17; Isaiah 51:14; Ezekiel 19:4; Ezekiel 28:8; "grave," in Job 33:22; and "destruction," in Psalm 55:23. The common idea, therefore, according to our translators, is the grave, or a pit. The "derivation" seems not to be certain. Gesenius supposes that it is derived from שׁוח *shûach* - "to sink or settle down;" hence, a pit or the grave. Others derive it from שׁחת *shāchath* not used in Qal, to destroy. The verb is used in various forms frequently; meaning to destroy, to ruin, to lay waste. It is translated here by the Latin Vulgate, *"corruptionem;"* by the Septuagint, διαφθοράν *diaphthoran* corruption; by the Arabic in the same way.

The same word which is employed by the Septuagint is employed also in quoting the passage in the New Testament, where the argument of Peter Acts 2:27, and of Paul Acts 13:35-37, is founded on the supposition that

such is the sense of the word here; that it does not mean merely “the pit, or the grave;” that the idea in the psalm is not that the person referred to would not go down to the grave, or would not “die,” but that he would not moulder back to dust in the grave, or that the “change” would not occur to him in the grave which does to those who lie long in the tomb. Peter and Paul both regard this as a distinct prophecy that the Messiah would be raised from the grave “without” returning to corruption, and they argue from the fact that David “did” return to corruption in the grave like other men, that the passage could not have referred mainly to himself, but that it had a proper fulfillment, and its highest fulfillment, in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This interpretation the believer in the inspiration of Peter and Paul is bound to defend, and in reference to this it may be remarked,

(1) that it cannot be demonstrated that this is not the meaning of the word. The word may be as “fairly” derived from the verb to corrupt, as from the verb to sink down, and, indeed, more naturally and more obviously. The grammatical form would rather suggest this derivation than the other.

(2) It “is” a fair construction of the original word. It is such a construction as may be put upon it without any “forced” application, or any design to defend a theory or an opinion. In other words, it is not a mere “catch,” or a grasp at a “possible” meaning of the word, but it is a rendering which, on every principle of grammatical construction, may be regarded as a “fair” interpretation. Whatever may have been the exact idea in the mind of David, whether he understood this as referring only to himself, and to the belief that he would not “always” remain in the grave, and under the power of corruption; or whether he understood it as referring primarily to himself, and ultimately and mainly to the Messiah; or whether he understood it; as referring solely to the Messiah; or whether he did not at all understand the language which the Holy Spirit led him to employ (compare the notes at 1 Peter 1:11-12), it is equally true that the sense which the apostles put on the words, in their application of the passage to the Messiah, is a suitable one.

(3) The ancient versions, as has been seen above, confirm this. Without an exception they give the sense of “corruption” - the very sense which has been given to the word by Peter and Paul. The authors of these versions had

no theory to defend, and it may be presumed that they had a just knowledge of the true meaning of the Hebrew word.

(4) It may be added that this interpretation accords with the connection in which the word occurs. Though it may be admitted that the connection would not "necessarily" lead to this view, yet this interpretation is in entire harmony with the statements in the previous verses, and in the following verse. Thus, in the previous verse, the psalmist had said that "his flesh would rest in hope," - a sentiment which accords with either the idea that he would at some future period be raised from the grave, and would not perish forever, though the period of the resurrection might be remote; or with the idea of being raised up so soon that the body would not return to corruption, that is, before the change consequent on death would take place. The sentiment in the following verse also agrees with this view. That sentiment is, that there is a path to life; that in the presence of God there is fulness of joy; that at his right hand there are pleasures forevermore - a sentiment, in this connection, founded on the belief of the resurrection from the dead, and equally true whether the dead should be raised immediately or at some remote period. I infer, therefore, that the apostles Peter and Paul made a legitimate use of this passage; that the argument which they urged was derived from a proper interpretation of the language; that the fair construction of the psalm, and the fact that David "had" returned to corruption, fully justified them in the application which they made of the passage; and that, therefore, it was the design of the Holy Spirit to convey the idea that "the Messiah" would be raised from the dead without undergoing the change which others undergo in the grave; and that it was thus "predicted" in the Old Testament, that be would be raised from the dead in the manner in which he was.

Verse 11

Thou wilt show me the path of life - In this connection this means that though he was to die - to descend to the regions of the dead, and to lie down in the dark grave - yet there WAS a path again to the living world, and that that path would be pointed out to him by God. In other words, he would not be suffered to remain among the dead, or to wander away forever with those who were in the under world, but he would be brought back: to the living world. This is language which, in this connection, could be founded only on

a belief of the resurrection of the dead. The word “life” here does not necessarily refer to heaven - to eternal life - though the connection shows that this is the ultimate idea. It is life in contradistinction from the condition of the dead. The highest form of life is that which is found in heaven, at the right hand of God; and the connection shows it was that on which the eye of the psalmist was fixed.

In thy presence - literally, “with thy face.” Before thy face; or, as the sense is correctly expressed in our version, “in thy presence.” The reference is to God‘s presence in heaven, or where he is supposed to dwell. This is shown by the additional statement that the joy mentioned was to be found at his “right hand” - an expression which properly refers to heaven. It is not merely a return to earth which is anticipated; it is an exaltation to heaven.

Is fulness of joy - Not partial joy; not imperfect joy; not joy intermingled with pain and sorrow; not joy which, though in itself real, does not satisfy the desires of the soul, as is the case with much of the happiness which we experience in this life - but joy, full, satisfying, unalloyed, unclouded, unmingled with anything that would diminish its fulness or its brightness; joy that will not be diminished, as all earthly joys must be, by the feeling that it must soon come to an end.

At thy right hand - The right hand is the place of honor (Notes, Psalm 16:8). Compare Mark 16:19; Hebrews 1:3; Acts 7:56; and it here refers to the place which the saints will occupy in heaven. This language could have been used only by one who believed in the doctrine of the resurrection and of the future state. As applicable to the author of the psalm, it implies that he had a firm belief in the resurrection of the dead, and a confident hope of happiness hereafter; as applicable to the Messiah, it denotes that he would be raised up to exalted honor in heaven; as applicable to believers now, it expresses their firm and assured faith that eternal happiness and exalted honor await them in the future world.

There are pleasures for evermore - Happiness that will be eternal. It is not enjoyment such as we have on earth, which we feel is soon to terminate; it is joy which can have no end. Here, in respect to any felicity which we enjoy, we cannot but feel that it is soon to cease. No matter how secure the sources of our joy may seem to be, we know that happiness here cannot last long, for life cannot long continue; and even though life should be lengthened out for many years, we have no certainty that our happiness will be commensurate even with our existence on earth. The dearest friend that

we have may soon leave us to return no more; health, the source of so many comforts, and essential to the enjoyment of any comfort here, may soon fail; property, however firmly it may be secured, may “take to itself wings and fly away.” Soon, at any rate, if these things do not leave us, we shall leave them; and in respect to happiness from them, we shall be as though they had not been. Not so will it be at the right hand of God. Happiness there, whatever may be its nature, will be eternal. Losses, disappointment, bereavement, sickness, can never occur there; nor can the anticipation of death, though at the most distant period, and after countless million of ages, ever mar our joys. How different in all these things will heaven be from earth! How desirable to leave the earth, and to enter on those eternal joys!

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 17

Introduction

This psalm is entitled "A Prayer of David." By whom the title was prefixed to it, is not known; but there can be no doubt of its appropriateness. It is, throughout, a prayer - fervent, earnest, believing. It was evidently uttered in the view of danger - danger arising from the number and the designs of his enemies; but on what particular occasion it was composed cannot now be determined. There were many occasions, however, in the life of David for the utterance of such a prayer, and there can be no doubt that in the dangers which so frequently beset him, he often poured out such warm and earnest appeals to God for help. "Who" the enemies referred to were cannot now be ascertained. All that is known of them is that they were "deadly" or bitter foes, that they were prosperous in the world, and that they were proud Psalm 17:9-10; that they were fierce and greedy, like a lion hunting its prey Psalm 17:12; that they were men whose families were in affluence and men who lived for this world alone, Psalm 17:14.

The points which constitute the prayer in the psalm are the following:

1. The prayer itself, as an earnest appeal or supplication to God to do what was equal and right, Psalm 17:1-2.

2. A reference of the author of the psalm to himself, and to his own life and character, as not deserving the treatment which he was receiving from others, Psalm 17:3-4.

3. An earnest petition on this ground for the divine interposition, Psalm 17:5-9.

4. A description of the character of his enemies, and a prayer on the ground of that character, that God would interpose for him, Psalm 17:10-14.

5. The expression of a confident hope of deliverance from all enemies; a looking forward to a world where he would be rescued from all troubles, and where, in the presence of God, and entering on a new life, he would awake in the likeness of God and be satisfied, Psalm 17:15. The psalm

terminates, as the anticipations of all good people do amid the troubles of this life, in the hope of that world where there will be no trouble, and where they will be permitted to dwell forever with God.

Verse 1

Hear the right - Margin, as in Hebrew, "justice." The prayer is, that God would regard that which was "right" in the case, or that he would vindicate the psalmist from that which was wrong. It is the expression of his confident assurance even in the presence of God that his cause was right, and that he was asking only that which it would be consistent for a "just" God to do. We can offer an acceptable prayer only when we are sure that it would be right for God to answer it, or that it would be consistent with perfect and eternal justice to grant our requests. It is to be observed here, however, that the ground of the petition of the psalmist is not that "he" was righteous, that is, he did not base his petition on the ground of his own merits, but that his "cause" was righteous; that he was unjustly oppressed and persecuted by his enemies. We cannot ask God to interpose in our behalf because we have a claim to his favor on the ground of our own merit; we may ask him to interpose because wrong is done, and his glory will be promoted in securing that which is just and right.

Attend unto my cry - The word used here - רנה *rinnâh* - means either a shout of joy, Psalm 30:5; Psalm 42:4; Psalm 47:1; or a mournful cry, outcry, wailing, Psalm 61:1; et soepe. It is expressive, in either case, of deep feeling which vents itself in an audible manner. Here it denotes the earnest "utterance" of prayer.

Give ear unto my prayer - See the notes at Psalm 5:1.

That goeth not out of feigned lips - Margin, as in Hebrew, "without lips of deceit." That is, that is sincere, or that proceeds from the heart. The utterance of the lips does not misrepresent the feelings of the heart. True prayer is that in which the lips "do" represent the real feelings of the soul. In hypocritical prayer the one is no proper representation of the other. It is evident that the prayer here was not mere mental prayer, or a mere desire of the heart. It was uttered prayer, or oral prayer; and, though private, it was in the form of uttered words. The feeling was so great that it was expressed in an audible cry to God. Deep emotion usually finds vent in such audible and fervent expressions. Compare the Saviour's earnest prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, Luke 22:41 ff.

Verse 2

Let my sentence - Hebrew, "my judgment." The allusion is to a judgment or sentence as coming from God in regard to the matter referred to in the psalm, to wit, the injuries which he had received from his enemies. He felt that they had done him injustice and wrong; he felt assured that a sentence or judgment from God in the case would be in his favor. So Job often felt that if he could bring his case directly before God, God would decide in his favor. Compare Job 23:1-6.

Come forth from thy presence - From before thee. That is, he asks God to pronounce a sentence in his case.

Let thine eyes behold - He asked God to examine the case with his own eyes, or attentively to consider it, and to see where justice was.

The things that are equal - The things that are just and right. He felt assured that his own cause was right, and he prays here that justice in the case may be done. He felt that, if that were done, he would be delivered from his enemies. As between ourselves and our fellow-men, it is right to pray to God that he would see that exact justice should be done, for we may be able to feel certain that justice is on our side, and that we are injured by them; but as between ourselves and God, we can never offer that prayer, for if justice were done to us we could not but be condemned. Before him our plea must be for mercy, not justice.

Verse 3

Thou hast proved mine heart - In this verse he refers to his own character and life in the matter under consideration, or the consciousness of his own innocence in respect to his fellow-men who are persecuting and opposing him. He appeals to the Great Searcher of hearts in proof that, in this respect, he was innocent; and he refers to different forms of trial on the part of God to show that after the most thorough search he would find, and did find, that in these respects he was an innocent man, and that his enemies had no occasion to treat him as they had done. It is still to be borne in mind here that the trial which the psalmist asks at the hand of God was not to prove that he was innocent toward him, or that he had a claim to His favor on account of his own personal holiness, but it was that he was innocent of any wrong toward those who were persecuting him, or, in other words, that after the most searching trial, even by his Maker, it would be found that he had given them no cause for treating him thus. The word here rendered "proved" means "to try, to prove, to examine," especially metals, to test

their genuineness. See Psalm 7:9-10, note; Job 12:11, note. The psalmist here says that God had tried or searched "his heart." He knew all his motives. He had examined all his desires and his thoughts. The psalmist felt assured that, after the most thorough trial, even God would not find anything in his heart that would justify the conduct of his enemies toward him.

Thou hast visited me - That is, for the purpose of inspecting my character, or of examining me. The English word "visit," like the Hebrew, is often used to denote a visitation for the purpose of inspection and examination. The idea is, that God had come to him for the very purpose of "examining" his character.

In the night - In solitude. In darkness. When I was alone. In the time when the thoughts are less under restraint than they are when surrounded by others. In a time when it can be seen what we really are; when we do not put on appearances to deceive others.

Thou hast tried me - The word used here - צרף *tsâraph* - means properly "to melt, to smelt," etc., metals, or separating the pure metal from the dross. The meaning is, that God, in examining into his character, had subjected him to a trial as searching as that employed in purifying metals by casting them into the fire.

And shalt find nothing - Thou wilt find nothing that could give occasion for the conduct of my enemies. The future tense is used here to denote that, even if the investigation were continued, God would find nothing in his heart or in his conduct that would warrant their treatment of him. He had the most full and settled determination not to do wrong to them in any respect whatever. Nothing had been found in him that would justify their treatment of him; he was determined so to live, and he felt assured that he would so live, that nothing of the kind would be found in him in time to come. "I am purposed." I am fully resolved.

My mouth shall not transgress - Transgress the law of God, or go beyond what is right. That is, I will utter nothing which is wrong, or which can give occasion for their harsh and unkind treatment. Much as he had been provoked and injured, he was determined not to retaliate, or to give occasion for their treating him in the manner in which they were now doing. Prof. Alexander renders this "My mouth shall not exceed my thought; "but the common version gives a better idea, and is sanctioned by the Hebrew. Compare Gesenius, Lexicon.

Verse 4

Concerning the works of men - In respect to the works or doings of men. The reference is here probably to the ordinary or common doings of mankind, or to what generally characterizes the conduct of men. As their conduct is so commonly, and so characteristically wicked, wickedness may be spoken of as their "work," and it is to this doubtless that the psalmist refers. In respect to the sinful courses or "paths" to which men are so prone, he says that he had kept himself from them. This is in accordance with what he says in the previous verse, that he had given no occasion by his conduct for the treatment which he had received at the hands of his enemies.

By the word of thy lips - Not by his own strength; not by any power which he himself had, but by the commands and promises of God - by what had proceeded from his mouth. The reference is doubtless to all that God had spoken: to the law which prescribed his duty, and to the promises which God had given to enable him to walk in the path of uprightness. He had relied on the word of God as inculcating duty; he had submitted to it as authority; he had found encouragement in it in endeavoring to do right.

I have kept me - I have preserved myself. I have so guarded my conduct that I have not fallen into the sins which are so common among men.

The paths of the destroyer - The paths which the "destroyer" treads; the course of life which such men lead. The idea is, not that he had been able to save himself from violence at their hands, but that he had been enabled to avoid their mode of life. The word rendered "destroyer" is from a verb which means "to break, to rend, to scatter," and would properly refer to acts of violence and lawlessness. He had kept himself from the modes of life of the violent and the lawless; that is, he had been enabled to lead a peaceful and quiet lift. He had given no occasion to his enemies to treat him as a violent, a lawless, a wicked man.

Verse 5

Hold up my goings in thy paths - He had been enabled before this to keep himself from the ways of the violent by the word of God Psalm 17:4; he felt his dependence on God still to enable him, in the circumstances in which he was placed, and under the provocations to which he was exposed, to live a life of peace, and to keep himself from doing wrong. He, therefore, calls on God, and asks him to sustain him, and to keep him still in the right path. The verb used here is in the infinitive form, but used instead of the

imperative. DeWette. - Prof. Alexander renders this less correctly, "My steps have laid hold of thy paths;" for he supposes that a prayer here "would be out of place." But prayer can never be more appropriate than when a man realises that he owes the fact of his having been hitherto enabled to lead an upright life only to the "word" of God, and when provoked and injured by others he feels that he might be in danger of doing wrong. In such circumstances nothing can he more proper than to call upon God to keep us from sin.

That my footsteps slip not - Margin, as in Hebrew: "be not moved." The idea is, "that I may be firm; that I may not yield to passion; that, provoked and wronged by others, I may not be allowed to depart from the course of life which I have been hitherto enabled to pursue." No prayer could be more appropriate. When we feel and know that we have been wronged by others; when our lives have given no cause for such treatment as we receive at their hands; when they are still pursuing us, and injuring us in our reputation, our property, or our peace; when all the bad passions of our nature are liable to be aroused, prompting us to seek revenge, and to return evil for evil, then nothing can be more proper than for us to lift our hearts to God, entreating that he will keep us, and save us from falling into sin; that he will enable us to restrain our passions, and to subdue our resentments.

Verse 6

I have called upon thee for thou wilt hear me, O God - The meaning of this is, "I have called on thee heretofore, and will do it still, because I am certain that thou wilt hear me." That is, he was encouraged to call upon God by the conviction that he would hear his prayer, and would grant his request. In other words, he came to God in faith; in the full belief of his readiness to answer prayer, and to bestow needed blessings. Compare John 11:42; Hebrews 11:6.

Incline thine ear unto me - See the notes at Psalm 17:1.

My speech - My prayer. The reference here, as in Psalm 17:1, is to prayer "uttered" before God; and not mere mental prayer.

Verse 7

Show thy marvelous loving-kindness - The literal translation of the original here would be, "distinguish thy favors." The Hebrew word used means properly "to separate; to distinguish;" then, "to make distinguished or great." The prayer is, that God would separate his mercies on this

occasion from his ordinary mercies by the manifestation of greater powers, or by showing him special favor. The ordinary or common mercies which he was receiving at the hand of God would not meet the present case. His dangers were much greater than ordinary, his wants were more pressing than usual; and he asked for an interposition of mercy corresponding with his circumstances and condition. Such a prayer it is obviously proper to present before God; that is, it is right to ask him to suit his mercies to our special necessities; and when special dangers surround us, when we are assailed with especially strong temptations, when we have unusually arduous duties to perform, when we are pressed down with especially severe trials, it is right and proper to ask God to bestow favors upon us which will correspond with our special circumstances. His ability and his willingness to aid us are not measured by our ordinary requirements, but are equal to any of the necessities which can ever occur in our lives.

O thou that savest by thy right hand - Margin, "that savest those that trust in thee from those that rise up against thy right hand." The Hebrew will admit of either construction, though that in the text is the more correct. It is, literally, "Saving those trusting, from those that rise up, with thy right hand. The idea is, that it was a characteristic of God, or that it was what he usually did, to save by his own power those that trusted him from those who rose up against them. That is, God might be appealed to to do this now, on the ground that he was accustomed to do it; and that, so to speak, he would be acting "in character" in doing it. In other words, we may ask God to do what he is accustomed to do; we may go to him in reference to his well-known attributes and character, and ask him to act in a manner which will be but the regular and proper manifestation of his nature. We could not ask him to do what was contrary to his nature; we cannot ask him to act in a way which would be out of character. What he has always done for people, we may ask him to do for us; what is entirely consistent with his perfections, we may ask him to do in our own case.

By thy right hand - By thy power. The right hand is that by which we execute our purposes, or put forth our power; and the psalmist asks God to put forth his power in defending him. See Isaiah 41:10; Job 40:14; Psalm 89:13.

From those that rise up against them - From their enemies.

Verse 8

Keep me as the apple of the eye - Preserve me; guard me; defend me, as one defends that which is to him most precious and valuable. In the original there is a remarkable strength of expression, and at the same time a remarkable confusion of gender in the language. The literal translation would be, "Keep me as the little man - the daughter of the eye." The word "apple" applied to the eye means the pupil, the little aperture in the middle of the eye, through which the rays of light pass to form an image on the retina ("Johnson, Webster"); though "why" it is called the "apple" of the eye the lexicographers fail to tell us. The Hebrew word - אישון *'îyshôn* - means properly, "a little man," and is given to the apple or pupil of the eye, "in which, as in a mirror, a person sees his own image reflected in miniature." This comparison is found in several languages. The word occurs in the Old Testament only in Deuteronomy 32:10; Psalm 17:8; Proverbs 7:2; where it is rendered "apple;" in Proverbs 7:9, where it is rendered "black;" and in Proverbs 20:20, where it is rendered "obscure." The other expression in the Hebrew - "the daughter of the eye" - is derived from a usage of the Hebrew word "daughter," as denoting that which is dependent on, or connected with (Gesenius, Lexicon), as the expression "daughters of a city" denotes the small towns or villages lying around a city, and dependent on its jurisdiction, Numbers 21:25, Numbers 21:32; Numbers 32:42; Joshua 17:11. So the expression "daughters of song," Ecclesiastes 12:4. The idea here is, that the little image is the "child" of the eye; that it has its birth or origin there. The prayer of the psalmist here is, that God would guard him, as one guards his sight - an object so dear and valuable to him.

Hide me under the shadow of thy wings - Another image denoting substantially the same thing. This is taken from the care evinced by fowls in protecting their young, by gathering them under their wings. Compare Matthew 23:37. Both of the comparisons used here are found in Deuteronomy 32:10-12; and it is probable that the psalmist had that passage in his eye - "He instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye; as an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him." Compare also Psalm 36:7; Psalm 57:1; Psalm 61:4; Psalm 63:7; Psalm 91:1, Psalm 91:4.

Verse 9

From the wicked that oppress me - Margin, "That waste me." The margin expresses the sense of the Hebrew. The idea is that of being wasted, desolated, destroyed, as a city or country is by the ravages of war. The psalmist compares himself in his troubles with such a city or country. The "effect" of the persecutions which he had endured had been like cities and lands thus laid waste by fire and sword.

From my deadly enemies - Margin, "My enemies against the soul." The literal idea is, "enemies against my life." The common translation expresses the idea accurately. The sense is, that his enemies sought his life.

Who compass me about - Who surround me on every side, as enemies do who besiege a city.

Verse 10

They are enclosed in their own fat - The meaning here is, that they were prosperous, and that they were consequently self-confident and proud, and were regardless of others. The phrase occurs several times as descriptive of the wicked in a state of prosperity, and as, therefore, insensible to the rights, the wants, and the sufferings of others. Compare Deuteronomy 32:15, "But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked: thou art waxed fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him," etc. Job 15:27, "because he covereth his face with his fatness, and maketh collops of fat on his flanks." Psalm 73:7, "their eyes stand out with fatness." Psalm 119:70, "their heart is as fat as grease."

With their mouth they speak proudly - Haughtily; in an arrogant tone; as a consequence of their prosperity.

Verse 11

They have now compassed us - Myself, and those who are associated with me. It would seem from this that the psalmist was not alone. It is to be observed, however, that there is a difference of reading in the Hebrew text. The Masoretic reading is: "us;" the Hebrew text is "me," though in the other expression the plural is used - "our steps." There is no impropriety in supposing that the psalmist refers to his followers, associates, or friends, meaning that the wrong was done not to him alone, but to others connected with him. The meaning of "compassed" is, that they "surrounded" him on every side. Wherever he went, they were there.

In our steps - Wherever we go.

They have set their eyes - As those do who are intent on any thing; as the lion does that is seeking its prey Psalm 17:12. They looked keenly and

directly at the object. They did not allow their eyes to wander. They were not indifferent to the object of their pursuit.

Bowing down to the earth - That is, as the translators evidently understood this, having their eyes bowed down to the ground, or looking steadily to the ground. The image, according to Dr. Horsley, is borrowed from a hunter taking aim at an animal upon the ground. A more literal translation, however, would be, "They have fixed their eyes to lay me prostrate upon the ground." The Hebrew word - נטה *nâṭâh* - means properly "to stretch out, to extend;" then, "to incline, to bow, to depress;" and hence, the idea of "prostrating;" thus, to make the shoulder bend downward, Genesis 49:15; to bring down the mind to an object, Psalm 119:112; to bow the heavens, Psalm 18:9. Hence, the idea of prostrating an enemy; and the sense here clearly is, that they had fixed their eyes intently on the psalmist, with a purpose to prostrate him to the ground, or completely to overwhelm him.

Verse 12

Like as a lion - Margin, "The likeness of him" (that is, "of every one of them") is "as a lion that desireth to ravin." The meaning is plain. They were like a lion intent on securing his prey. They watched the object narrowly; they were ready to spring upon it.

That is greedy of his prey - "He is craving to tear." Prof. Alexander. - The Hebrew word rendered "is greedy," means "to pine, to long after, to desire greatly." The Hebrew word rendered "of his prey," is a verb, meaning "to pluck, to tear, to rend in pieces." The reference is to the lion that desires to seize his victim, and to rend it in pieces to devour it.

And, as it were, a young lion - Hebrew, "And like a young lion."

Lurking in secret places - Margin, as in Hebrew, "sitting." The allusion is to the lion crouching, or lying in wait for a favorable opportunity to pounce upon his prey. See the notes at Psalm 10:8-10. There is no special emphasis to be affixed to the fact that the "lion" is alluded to in one member of this verse, and the "young lion" in the other. It is in accordance with the custom of parallelism in Hebrew poetry where the same idea, with some little variation, is expressed in both members of the sentence. See the introduction to Job, Section 5.

Verse 13

Arise, O Lord - See the notes at Psalm 3:7.

Disappoint him - Margin, "prevent his face." The marginal reading expresses the sense of the Hebrew. The word used in the original means "to anticipate, to go before, to prevent;" and the prayer here is that God would come "before" his enemies; that is, that he would cast himself in their way "before" they should reach him. The enemy is represented as marching upon him with his face intently fixed, seeking his destruction; and he prays that God would interpose, or that He would come to his aid "before" his enemy should come up to him.

Cast him down - That is, as it is in the Hebrew, make him bend or bow, as one who is conquered bows before a conqueror.

Deliver my soul from the wicked - Save my life; save me from the designs of the wicked.

Which is thy sword - The Aramaic Paraphrase renders this, "Deliver my soul from the wicked man, who deserves to be slain with thy sword." The Latin Vulgate: "Deliver my soul from the wicked man; thy spear from the enemies of thy hand." So the Septuagint: "Deliver my soul from the wicked; thy sword from the enemies of thy hand." The Syriac, "Deliver my soul from the wicked, and from the sword." DeWette renders it, "Deliver my soul from the wicked by thy sword." Prof. Alexander, "Save my soul from the wicked (with) thy sword." So Luther, "With thy sword." The Hebrew will undoubtedly admit of this latter construction, as in a similar passage in Psalm 17:10; and this construction is found in the margin: "By thy sword." The sentiment that the wicked ARE the "sword" of God, or the instruments, though unconsciously to themselves, of accomplishing his purposes, or that he makes them the executioners of his will, is undoubtedly favored by such passages as Isaiah 10:5-7 (see the notes at those verses), and should be properly recognized. But such a construction is not necessary in the place before us, and it does not well agree with the connection, for it is not easy to see why the psalmist should make the fact that the wicked were instruments in the hand of God in accomplishing his purposes a "reason" why He should interpose and deliver him from them. It seems to me, therefore, that the construction of DeWette and others, "Save me from the wicked "by" thy sword," is the true one. The psalmist asked that God would interfere by his own hand, and save him from danger. The same construction, if it be the correct one, is required in the following verse.

Verse 14

From men which are thy hand - Margin, "From men by thy hand." Here the rendering in the common version would be still more harsh than in the previous verse, since it is at least unusual to call men "the hand" of God, in the sense that they are his instruments in accomplishing his purposes. The more obvious construction is to regard it as a prayer that God would deliver him by his own hand from "men" - from men that rose up against him. Compare 2 Samuel 24:14.

From men of the world - A better construction of this would be "from men; from the world." The psalmist prays first that he may be delivered from men by the hand of God. He then "repeats" the prayer, "from men, I say," and then adds, "from the world." He desires to be rescued entirely from such worldly plans, devices, purposes; from people among whom nothing but worldly principles prevail.

Which have their portion in this life - Their portion - their lot - is among "the living;" that is, they have nothing to look forward to - to hope for in the world to come. They are, therefore, governed wholly by worldly principles. They have no fear of God; they have no regard to the rights of others further than will be in accordance with their own worldly interest. People whose portion is wholly in this life will make everything subordinate to their worldly interests.

And whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure - The meaning of this portion of the verse is that, in respect to the object for which they lived, they were successful. They lived only for the world, and they obtained what the world had to bestow. They had prosperity in their purposes in life. The word "hid" here - "hid treasure" - means that which is hoarded, secreted, carefully guarded; and the word commonly refers to the practice of secreting from public view valuable treasures, as silver and gold. It is possible, however, that the reference here is to the fact that God has hidden these objects in the depths of the earth, and that it is necessary to "search" for them carefully if men would obtain them. Compare Job 28:1-11. The phrase "whose belly thou hast filled" means that their appetite or cravings in this respect were satisfied. They had what they wanted.

They are full of children - Margin, "their children are full." The margin probably expresses the sense of the Hebrew better than the text. The literal rendering would be, "satisfied are their sons;" that is, they have enough to satisfy the wants of their children. The expression "they are full of children" is harsh and unnatural, and is not demanded by the original, or by the main

thought in the passage. The obvious signification is, that they have enough for themselves and for their children.

And leave the rest of their substance to their babes - That is, what remains after their own wants are supplied, they leave to their babes. They not only have enough for the supply of their own wants and the wants of their children during their own lives, but they also leave an inheritance to their children after they are dead. The word rendered "babes" properly means little children, though it seems here to be used as denoting children in general. The meaning is, that they are able to provide for their children after they themselves are dead. Compare the description of worldly prosperity in Job 21:7-11.

Verse 15

As for me - In strong contrast with the aims, the desires, and the condition of worldly individuals. "They" seek their portion in this life, and are satisfied; "I" cherish no such desires, and have no such prosperity. I look to another world as my home, and shall be satisfied only in the everlasting favor and friendship of God.

I will behold thy face - I shall see thee. Compare Matthew 5:8; 1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2. This refers naturally, as the closing part of the verse more fully shows, to the future world, and is such language as would be employed by those who believe in a future state, and by no others. This is the highest object before the mind of a truly religious man. The bliss of heaven consists mainly, in his apprehension, in the privilege of seeing God his Saviour; and the hope of being permitted to do this is of infinitely more value to him than would be all the wealth of this world.

In righteousness - Being myself righteous; being delivered from the power, the pollution, the dominion of sin. It is this which makes heavyen so desirable; without this, in the apprehension of a truly good man, no place would be heaven.

I shall be satisfied - While they are satisfied with this world, I shall be satisfied only when I awake in the likeness of my God. Nothing can meet the wants of my nature; nothing can satisfy the aspirings of my soul, until that occurs.

When I awake - This is language which would be employed only by one who believed in the resurrection of the dead, and who was accustomed to speak of death as a "sleep" - a calm repose in the hope of awaking to a new life. Compare the notes at Psalm 16:9-11. Some have understood this

as meaning "when I awake tomorrow;" and they thence infer that this was an evening song (compare Psalm 4:8); others have supposed that it had a more general sense - meaning "whenever I awake;" that is, while men of the world rejoice in their worldly possessions, and while this is the first thought which they have on awaking in the morning, my joy when I awake is in God; in the evidence of his favor and friendship; in the consciousness that I resemble him. I am surprised to find that Prof. Alexander favors this view. Even DeWette admits that it refers to the resurrection of the dead, and that the psalm can be interpreted only on the supposition that it has this reference, and hence, he argues that it could not have been composed by David, but that it must have been written in the time of the exile, when that doctrine had obtained currency among the Hebrews. The interpretation above suggested seems to me to be altogether too low a view to be taken of the sense of the passage.

It does not meet the state of mind described in the psalm. It does not correspond with the deep anxieties which the psalmist expressed as springing from the troubles which surrounded him. He sought repose from those troubles; he looked for consolation when surrounded by bitter and unrelenting enemies. He was oppressed and crushed with these many sorrows. Now it would do little to meet that state of mind, and to impart to him the consolation which he needed, to reflect that he could lie down in the night and awake in the morning with the consciousness that he enjoyed the friendship of God, for he had that already; and besides this, so far as this source of consolation was concerned, he would awake to a renewal of the same troubles tomorrow which he had met on the previous day. He needed some higher, some more enduring and efficient consolation; something which would meet "all" the circumstances of the case; some source of peace, composure, and rest, which was beyond all this; something which would have an existence where there was no trouble or anxiety; and this could be found only in a future world. The obvious interpretation of the passage, therefore, so far as its sense can be determined from the connection, is to refer it to the awaking in the morning of the resurrection; and there is nothing in the language itself, or in the known sentiments of the psalmist, to forbid this interpretation. The word rendered "awake" - קוץ *qûts* - used only in Hiphil, "means to awake;" to awake from sleep, Psalm 3:5; Psalm 139:18; or from death, 2 Kings 4:31; Jeremiah 51:39; Isaiah 26:19; Job 14:12; Daniel 12:2.

With thy likeness - Or, in thy likeness; that is, resembling thee. The resemblance doubtless is in the moral character, for the highest hope of a good man is that he may be, and will be, like God. Compare the notes at 1 John 3:2. I regard this passage, therefore, as one of the incidental proofs scattered through the Old Testament which show that the sacred writers under that dispensation believed in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; that their language was often based on the knowledge and the belief of that doctrine, even when they did not expressly affirm it; and that in times of trouble, and under the consciousness of sin, they sought their highest consolation, as the people of God do now, from the hope and the expectation that the righteous dead will rise again, and that in a world free from trouble, from sin, and from death, they would live forever in the presence of God, and find their supreme happiness in being made wholly like him.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 18

Introduction

This psalm is found, with some unimportant variations, in 1 Samuel 23:1) to record "the last words of David." And thus in the title it is said to have been composed when "the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies," an event which occurred only at a comparatively late period of his life.

The circumstance which is mentioned in the title - "and out of the hand of Saul" - does not necessarily conflict with this view, or make it necessary for us to suppose that it was composed immediately after his deliverance from the hand of Saul. To David, recording and recounting the great events of his life, that deliverance would occur as one of the most momentous and worthy of a grateful remembrance, for it was a deliverance which was the foundation of all his subsequent successes, and in which the divine interposition had been most remarkable. At any time of his life it would be proper to refer to this as demanding special acknowledgment. Saul had been among the most formidable of all his enemies. The most distressing and harassing events of his life had occurred in the time of his conflicts with him. God's interpositions in his behalf had occurred in the most remarkable manner, in delivering him from the dangers of that period of his history.

It was natural and proper, therefore, in a general song of praise, composed in view of all God's interpositions in his behalf, that he should refer particularly to those dangers and deliverances. This opinion, that the psalm was composed when David was aged, which seems so obvious, is the opinion of Jarchi and Kimchi, of Rosenmuller and DeWette. The strong imagery, therefore, in the psalm, describing mighty convulsions of nature Psalm 18:6-16, is to be understood, not as a literal description, but as narrating God's gracious interposition in the time of danger, "as if" the Lord had spoken to him out of the temple; "as if" the earth had trembled; "as if" its foundations had been shaken; "as if" a smoke had gone out of his nostrils; "as if" he had bowed the heavens and come down; "as if" he had thundered in the heavens, and had sent out hailstones and coals of fire, etc.

From the fact that there are variations, though not of an essential character, in the two copies of the psalm, it would seem not improbable that

it had been revised by David himself, or by some other person, after it was first composed, and that one copy was used by the author of the Book of Samuel, and the other by the collector and arranger of the Book of Psalms. These variations are not important, and by no means change the essential character of the psalm. It is not very easy to see why they were made, if they were made designedly, or to account for them if they were not so made. They are such as the following: The introduction, or the title of it, is adapted, in the psalm before us, to the purposes for which it was designed, when it was admitted into the collection. "To the chief Musician, a Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words," etc. The first verse of Psalm 18:4, the reading is, "The sorrows of death compassed me" etc.; in Samuel, "The waves of death compassed me." Similar variations, affecting the words, without materially affecting the sense, occur in Psalm 18:2-4, Psalm 18:6-8, Psalm 18:11-16, Psalm 18:19-21, Psalm 18:23-27, also in Psalm 18:28-30, Psalm 18:32-45, and Psalm 18:1-3.

II. A brief description of the troubles and dangers from which the psalmist had been rescued, Psalm 18:4-5.

III. A description, conceived in the highest forms of poetic language, of the divine interposition in times of danger, Psalm 18:6-19,

IV. A statement of the psalmist that this interposition was of such a nature as to vindicate his own character, or to show that his cause was a righteous cause; that he was right, and that his enemies had been in the wrong; that God approved his course, and disapproved the course of his enemies: or, in other words, that these interpositions were such as to prove that God was just, and would deal with men according to their character, Psalm 18:20-30.

V. A recapitulation of what God had done for him, in enabling him to subdue his enemies, and a statement of the effect which he supposed would be produced on others by the report of what God had done in his behalf, Psalm 18:31-45.

VI. A general expression of thanksgiving to God as the author of all these blessings, and as worthy of universal confidence and praise, Psalm 18:46-50 .

Psalm 4:1-8.

A Psalm of David - The words "A Psalm" are not here in the original, and may convey a slightly erroneous impression, as if the psalm had been composed for the express purpose of being used publicly in the worship of God. In the corresponding place in Psalm 36:1-12. The Aramaic Paraphrase translates this title: "To be sung over the wonderful things which abundantly happened to the servant of the Lord, to David, who sang," etc. The use of the phrase here - "the servant of the Lord" - by him who made the collection of the Psalms, would seem to imply that he regarded the psalm as having a sufficiently public character to make it proper to introduce it into a collection designed for general worship. In other words, David was not, in the view of the author of the collection, a private man, but was eminently a public servant of Yahweh; and a song of grateful remembrance of God's mercies to him was entitled to be regarded as expressing the appropriate feelings of God's people in similar circumstances in all times.

Who spake unto the Lord - Composed it as giving utterance to his feelings toward the Lord.

The words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him - When the Lord "had" delivered him; when he felt that he was completely rescued from "all" his foes. This does not mean that the psalm was composed on a particular day when God had by some one signal act rescued him from impending danger, but it refers to a calm period of his life. when he could review the past, and see that God had rescued him from "all" the enemies that had ever threatened his peace. This would probably, as has been suggested above, occur near the close of his life.

From the hand of all his enemies - Out of the hand, or the power. There is here a "general" view of the mercy of God in rescuing him from all his foes.

And from the hand of Saul - Saul had been one of his most formidable enemies, and the wars with him had been among the most eventful periods of the life of David. In a general review of his life, near its close, he would naturally recur to the dangers of that period, and to God's gracious interpositions in his behalf, and it would seem to him that what God had

done for him in those times deserved a special record. The original word here - כף *kaph* - is not the same as in the corresponding place in 2 Samuel 22:2. What follows is what he said.

Verse 1

I will love thee, O Lord - This verse is not found in the song in Psalm 27:1, "The Lord is the strength of my life." Psalm 28:8, "he is the saving strength of his anointed." Compare Psalm 29:11; Psalm 46:1; Psalm 73:26; Psalm 81:1; Psalm 140:7.

Verse 2

The Lord is my rock - The idea in this expression, and in the subsequent parts of the description, is that he owed his safety entirely to God. He had been unto him as a rock, a tower, a buckler, etc. - that is, he had derived from God the protection which a rock, a tower, a citadel, a buckler furnished to those who depended on them, or which they were designed to secure. The word "rock" here has reference to the fact that in times of danger a lofty rock would be sought as a place of safety, or that men would fly to it to escape from their enemies. Such rocks abound in Palestine; and by the fact that they are elevated and difficult of access, or by the fact that those who fled to them could find shelter behind their projecting crags, or by the fact that they could find security in their deep and dark caverns, they became places of refuge in times of danger; and protection was often found there when it could not be found in the plains below. Compare Judges 6:2; Psalm 27:5; Psalm 61:2. Also, Josephus, Ant., b. xiv., ch. xv.

And my fortress - He has been to me as a fortress. The word fortress means a place of defense, a place so strengthened that an enemy could not approach it, or where one would be safe. Such fortresses were often constructed on the rocks or on hills, where those who fled there would be doubly safe. Compare Job 39:28. See also the notes at Isaiah 33:16.

And my deliverer - Delivering or rescuing me from my enemies.

My God - Who hast been to me a God; that is, in whom I have found all that is implied in the idea of "God" - a Protector, Helper, Friend, Father, Saviour. The notion or idea of a "God" is different from all other ideas, and David had found, as the Christian now does, all that is implied in that idea, in Yahweh, the living God.

My strength - Margin, "My rock" So the Hebrew, although the Hebrew word is different from that which is used in the former part of the verse.

Both words denote that God was a refuge or protection, as a rock or crag is to one in danger (compare Deuteronomy 32:37), though the exact difference between the words may not be obvious.

In whom I will trust - That is, I have found him to be such a refuge that I could trust in him, and in view of the past I will confide in him always.

My buckler - The word used here is the same which occurs in Psalm 3:3, where it is translated "shield." See the notes at that verse.

And the horn of my salvation - The "horn" is to animals the means of their defense. Their strength lies in the horn. Hence, the word is used here, as elsewhere, to represent that to which we owe our protection and defense in danger; and the idea here is, that God was to the psalmist what the horn is to animals, the means of his defense. Compare Psalm 22:21; Psalm 75:4-5, Psalm 75:10; Psalm 92:10; Psalm 132:17; Psalm 148:14.

And my high tower - He is to me what a high tower is to one who is in danger. Compare Proverbs 18:10, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." The word used here occurs in Psalm 9:9, where it is rendered "refuge." (Margin, "A high place.") See the notes at that verse. Such towers were erected on mountains, on rocks, or on the walls of a city, and were regarded as safe places mainly because they were inaccessible. So the old castles in Europe - as that at Heidelberg, and generally those along the Rhine - were built on lofty places, and in such positions as not to be easily accessible.

Verse 3

I will call upon the Lord - The idea here is, that he would constantly call upon the Lord. In all times of trouble and danger he would go to him, and invoke his aid. The experience of the past had been such as to lead him to put confidence in him in all time to come. He had learned to flee to him in danger, and he had never put his trust in him in vain. The idea is, that a proper view of God's dealings with us in the past should lead us to feel that we may put confidence in him in the future.

Who is worthy to be praised - More literally, "Him who is to be praised I will call upon, Jehovah." The prominent - the leading thought is, that God is a being every way worthy of praise.

So shall I be saved from my enemies - Ever onward, and at all times. He had had such ample experience of his protection that he could confide in him as one who would deliver him from all his foes.

Verse 4

The sorrows of death compassed me - Surrounded me. That is, he was in imminent danger of death, or in the midst of such pangs and sorrows as are supposed commonly to attend on death. He refers probably to some period in his past life - perhaps in the persecutions of Saul - when he was so beset with troubles and difficulties that it seemed to him that he must die. The word rendered "sorrows" - חבל *chebel* - means, according to Gesenius, "a cord, a rope," and hence, "a snare, gin, noose;" and the idea here is, according to Gesenius, that he was taken as it were in the snares of death, or in the bands of death. So Psalm 116:3. Our translators, however, and it seems to me more correctly, regarded the word as derived from the same noun differently pointed - הבל *chēbel* - meaning "writhings, pangs, pains," as in Isaiah 66:7; Jeremiah 13:21; Jeremiah 22:23; Hosea 13:13; Job 39:3. So the Aramaic Paraphrase, "Pangs as of a woman in childbirth came around me." So the Vulgate, *"dolores."* So the Septuagint, ὠδῖνες *ōdines* The corresponding place in Psalm 42:7; Psalm 88:7; Jonah 2:3. Why the change was made in the psalm it is not possible to determine. Either word denotes a condition of great danger and alarm, as if death was inevitable.

And the floods of ungodly men - Margin, as in Hebrew, "Belial." The word "Belial" means properly "without use or profit;" and then worthless, abandoned, wicked. It is applied to wicked men as being "worthless" to society, and to all the proper ends of life. Though the term here undoubtedly refers to "wicked" men, yet it refers to them as being worthless or abandoned - low, common, useless to mankind. The word rendered floods - נחל *nachal* - means in the singular, properly, a stream, brook, rivulet; and then, a torrent, as formed by rain and snow-water in the mountains, Job 6:15. The word used here refers to such men as if they were poured forth in streams and torrents - in such multitudes that the psalmist was likely to be overwhelmed by them, as one would be by floods of water. "Made me afraid." Made me apprehensive of losing my life. To what particular period of his life he here refers it is impossible now to determine.

Verse 5

The sorrows of hell - Margin, "cords." The word used here is the same which occurs in the previous verse, and which is there rendered "sorrows." It is correctly translated here, as in that verse, "sorrows," though the parallelism would seem to favor the interpretation in the margin - cords. If it means "sorrows," the idea is, that such sufferings encompassed him, or seized upon him, as we associate in idea with the descent to the under-

world, or the going down to the dead. If it means "cords, or bands," then the idea is, that he was seized with pain as if with cords thrown around him, and that were dragging him down to the abodes of the dead. Luther, DeWette, Prof. Alexander, Hengstenberg, and others render the word, in each of these places, "bands." On the word here rendered "hell," שׁאול *she'ôl* see the notes at Isaiah 14:9. It means here the "under-world, the regions of the dead." It is a description of one who was overcome with the dread of death.

The snares of death - The word "snares" refers to the gins, toils, nets, which are used in taking wild beasts, by suddenly throwing cords around them, and binding them fast. The idea here is, that "Death" had thus thrown around him its toils or snares, and had bound him fast.

Prevented me - The word used here in Hebrew, as our word "prevent" did originally, means to "anticipate, to go before." The idea here is that those snares had, as it were, suddenly rushed upon him, or seized him. They came before him in his goings, and bound him fast.

Verse 6

In my distress - This refers, most probably, not to any particular case, but rather indicates his general habit of mind, that when he was in deep distress and danger he had uniformly called upon the Lord, and had found him ready to help.

I called upon the Lord - I prayed. That is, he invoked God to help him in his trouble. He relied not on his own strength; he looked not for human aid; he looked to God alone.

And cried unto my God - The word used here denotes an earnest cry for help. Compare Job 35:9; Job 36:13.

He heard my voice out of his temple - That is, he, being in his temple, heard my voice. The word rendered temple (compare the notes at Psalm 5:7) cannot refer here to the temple at Jerusalem, for that was built after the death of David, but it refers either to heaven, considered as the temple, or dwelling-place of God, or to the tabernacle, considered as his abode on earth. The sense is not materially varied, whichever interpretation is adopted. Compare Psalm 11:4.

And my cry came before him - He heard my cry. It was not intercepted on the way, but came up to him.

Even into his ears - Indicating that he certainly heard it. Compare Genesis 23:10; Genesis 44:18; Genesis 50:4; Exodus 10:2: Psalm 34:15.

Verse 7

Then the earth shook and trembled - The description which follows here is one of the most sublime that is to be found in any language. It is taken from the fury of the storm and tempest, when all the elements are in commotion; when God seems to go forth in the greatness of his majesty and the terror of his power, to prostrate everything before him. We are not to regard this as descriptive of anything which literally occurred, but rather as expressive of the fact of the divine interposition, as if he thus came forth in the greatness of his power. There is no improbability indeed in supposing that in some of the dangerous periods of David‘s life, when surrounded by enemies, or even when in the midst of a battle, a furious tempest may have occurred that seemed to be a special divine interposition in his behalf, but we have no distinct record of such an event, and it is not necessary to suppose that such an event occurred in order to a correct understanding of the passage. All that is needful is to regard this as a representation of the mighty interposition of God; to suppose that his intervention was as direct, as manifest, and as sublime, as if he had thus interposed. There are frequent references in the Scriptures to such storms and tempests as illustrative of the majesty, the power, and the glory of God, and of the manner in which he interposes on behalf of his people. See Psalm 144:5-7; Psalm 46:6-8; Psalm 29:1-11; Job 37:21-24; Job 38:1; Nahum 1:3; and particularly Habakkuk 3:3-16. The description in Habakkuk strongly resembles the passage before us, and both were drawn doubtless from an actual observation of the fury of a tempest.

The foundations also of the hills moved - The mountains seemed to rock on their foundations. In the corresponding place in 2 Samuel 22:8 the expression is, “The foundations of heaven moved and shook;” that is, that on which the heavens seem to rest was agitated. Many suppose that the expression refers to the mountains as if they bore up the heavens; but DeWette more properly supposes that the reference is to the heavens as a building or an edifice resting on foundations. Why the change was made in revising the psalm from the “foundations of the heavens” to the “foundations of the hills,” it is impossible now to determine.

Because he was wroth - literally,” Because it was inflamed (or enkindled) to him;” that is, because he was angry. Anger is often compared to a raging flame, because it seems to consume everything before it. Hence, we speak of it as “heated,” as “burning.” So we say of one that he is

"inflamed by passion." The expression here is sublime in the highest degree. God seemed to be angry, and hence, he came forth in this awful manner, and the very earth trembled before him.

Verse 8

There went up a smoke out of his nostrils - Margin, "by his;" that is, as it is understood in the margin, the smoke seemed to be produced "by" his nostrils, or to be caused by his breathing. The comparison, according to Rosenmuller and DeWette, is derived from wild beasts when excited with anger, and when their rage is indicated by their violent breathing. Compare Psalm 74:1; Deuteronomy 29:20; Isaiah 65:5.

And fire out of his mouth devoured - That is, the clouds seemed to be poured forth from his nostrils, and the lightning from his mouth. So in Habakkuk 3:5: "Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet."

Coals were kindled by it - Everything seemed to glow and burn. The lightning, that appeared to flash from his mouth, set everything on fire. The heavens and the earth were in a blaze.

Verse 9

He bowed the heavens also - He seemed to bend down the heavens - to bring them nearer to the earth. "He inclines the canopy of the heavens, as it were, toward the earth; wraps himself in the darkness of night, and shoots forth his arrows; hurls abroad his lightnings, and wings them with speed." Herder, Spirit of Hebrew Poetry (Marsh), ii. 157. The allusion is still to the tempest, when the clouds ran low; when they seem to sweep along the ground; when it appears as if the heavens were brought nearer to the earth - as if, to use a common expression, "the heavens and earth were coming together."

And came down - God himself seemed to descend in the fury of the storm.

And darkness was under his feet - A dark cloud; or, the darkness caused by thick clouds. Compare Nahum 1:3, "The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet." Deuteronomy 4:11, "the mountain burned … with thick darkness." Deuteronomy 5:22, "these words the Lord spake out of the thick darkness." Psalm 97:2, "clouds and darkness are round about him." The idea here is that of awful majesty and power, as we are nowhere more forcibly impressed with the idea of majesty and power than in the fury of a storm.

Verse 10

And he rode upon a cherub - Compare Isaiah 14:13, note; Isaiah 37:16, note. The cherub in the theology of the Hebrews was a figurative representation of power and majesty, under the image of a being of a high and celestial nature, "whose form is represented as composed from the figures of a man, ox, lion, and eagle," Genesis 3:24; then as bearing the throne of God upon their wings through the clouds, Exodus 25:18 ff; 1 Kings 6:23-28. Between the two cherubim in the temple, the Shechinah, or visible symbol of the presence of God, rested; and hence, God is represented as "dwelling between the cherubim," Exodus 25:22; Numbers 7:89; Psalm 80:1; Psalm 99:1. The cherubim are not to be regarded as real existences, or as an order of angels like the seraphim Isaiah 6:2-3, but as an imaginary representation of majesty, as emblematic of the power and glory of God. Here God is represented as "riding on a cherub;" that is, as coming forth on the clouds regarded as a cherub (compare Ezekiel 1), as if, seated on his throne, he was borne along in majesty and power amidst the storm and tempest.

And did fly - He seemed to move rapidly on the flying clouds.

Yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind - Rapidly as the clouds driven along by the wind. The "wings of the wind" are designed to represent the rapidity with which the wind sweeps along. Rapid motion is represented by the flight of birds; hence, the term wings is applied to winds to denote the rapidity of their movement. The whole figure here is designed to represent; the majesty with which God seemed to be borne along on the tempest. Herder renders it, "He flew on the wings of the storm."

Verse 11

He made darkness his secret place - Herder has beautifully rendered this verse,

"Now he wrapped himself in darkness;
Clouds on clouds enclosed him round."

The word rendered "secret place" - סתר *sêther* - means properly a hiding; then something hidden, private, secret. Hence, it means a covering, a veil. Compare Job 22:14; Job 24:15. In Psalm 81:7 it is applied to thunder: "I answered thee in the secret place of thunder;" that is, in the secret place or retreat - the deep, dark cloud, from where the thunder seems to come. Here the meaning seems to be, that God was encompassed with

darkness. He had, as it were, wrapped himself in night, and made his abode in the gloom of the storm.

His pavilion - His tent, for so the word means. Compare Psalm 27:5; Psalm 31:20. His abode was in the midst of clouds and waters, or watery clouds.

Round about him - Perhaps a more literal translation would be, "the things round about him - his tent (shelter, or cover) - were the darkness of waters, the clouds of the skies." The idea is that he seemed to be encompassed with watery clouds.

Dark waters - Hebrew, darkness of waters. The allusion is to clouds filled with water; charged with rain.

Thick clouds of the skies - The word rendered skies in this place - שׁחקים *shachaqiym* - means, in the singular, dust, as being fine; then a cloud, as a cloud of dust; then, in the plural, it is used to denote clouds, Job 38:37; and hence, it is used to denote the region of the clouds; the firmament; the sky; Job 37:18. Perhaps a not-inaccurate rendering here would be, "clouds of clouds;" that is, clouds rolled in with clouds; clouds of one kind rapidly succeeding those of another kind - inrolling and piled on each other. There are four different kinds of clouds; and though we cannot suppose that the distinction was accurately marked in the time of the psalmist, yet to the slightest observation there is a distinction in the clouds, and it is possible that by the use of two terms here, both denoting clouds - one thick and dense, and the other clouds as resembling dust - the psalmist meant to intimate that clouds of all kinds rolled over the firmament, and that these constituted the "pavilion" of God.

Verse 12

At the brightness that was before him - From the flash - the play of the lightnings that seemed to go before him.

His thick clouds passed - or, vanished. They seemed to pass away. The light, the flash, the blaze, penetrated those clouds, and seemed to dispel, or to scatter them. The whole heavens were in a blaze, as if there were no clouds, or as if the clouds were all driven away. The reference here is to the appearance when the vivid flashes of lightning seem to penetrate and dispel the clouds, and the heavens seem to be lighted up with a universal flame.

Hail-stones - That is, hailstones followed, or fell.

And coals of fire - There seemed to be coals of fire rolling along the ground, or falling from the sky. In the corresponding place in 2 Samuel

22:13 the expression is, "Through the brightness before him were coals of fire kindled." That is, fires were kindled by the lightning. The expression in the psalm is more terse and compact, but the reason of the change cannot be assigned.

Verse 13

The Lord also thundered in the heavens - Thunder is often in the Scriptures described as the voice of God. See the magnificent description in Psalm 29:1-11; compare Job 40:9, "Canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" So 1 Samuel 7:10; 1 Samuel 12:18; Psalm 77:18; Job 37:4.

And the Highest gave his voice - God, the most exalted Being in the universe, uttered his voice in the thunder; or, the thunder was his voice.

Hail-stones, and coals of fire - Accompanying the thunder. The repetition seems to be because these were such striking and constant accompaniments of the storm.

Verse 14

Yea, he sent out his arrows - The word arrows here probably refers to the lightnings mentioned in the other clause of the verse. Those lightnings scattered around, and accomplishing such destruction, seemed to be arrows sent forth from the hand of God.

And scattered them - Herder refers this to the lightnings; DeWette, to the enemies of the psalmist. The latter seems to be the more correct interpretation, though the enemies of the psalmist are not here particularly specified. They seem, however, to have been in his eye throughout the psalm, for it was the victory achieved over them by the divine interposition that he was celebrating throughout the poem.

And he shot out lightnings - As arrows; or, as from a bow.

And discomfited them - literally, to impel, to drive; then, to put in commotion or consternation. The allusion is to an army whose order is disturbed, or which is thrown into confusion, and which is, therefore, easily conquered. The idea is that David achieved a victory over all his enemies, as if God had scattered them by a storm and tempest.

Verse 15

Then the channels of waters were seen - In 2 Samuel 22:16 this is, "And the channels of the sea appeared." The idea is that, by the driving of the storm and tempest, the waters were driven on heaps, leaving the bottom bare. In the place before us the word used, "waters" - מים *mayim* - would denote waters of any kind - seas, lakes, rivers; in the corresponding place in

2Samuel, the word used - ים *yâm* - denotes, properly, the sea or the ocean. The word rendered channels means a pipe or tube; then a channel, or bed of a brook or stream, Isaiah 8:7; Ezekiel 32:6; and then the bottom of the sea or of a river. The allusion is to the effect of a violent wind, driving the waters on heaps, and seeming to leave the bed or channel bare.

The foundations of the world were discovered - Were laid open; were manifested or revealed. People seemed to be able to look down into the depths, and to see the very foundations on which the earth rests. The world is often represented as resting on a foundation, Psalm 102:25; Isaiah 48:13; Zechariah 12:1; Proverbs 8:29; see the note at Job 38:4.

At thy rebuke - At the expression of his anger or displeasure; as if God, in the fury of the tempest, was expressing his indignation and wrath.

At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils - At the breathing forth of anger, as it were, from his nostrils. See the note at Psalm 18:8.

Verse 16

He sent from above - He interposed to save me. All these manifestations of the divine interposition were from above, or from heaven; all came from God.

He took me - He took hold on me; he rescued me.

He drew me out of many waters - Margin, great waters. Waters are often expressive of calamity and trouble, Psalm 46:3; Psalm 69:1; Psalm 73:10; Psalm 124:4-5. The meaning here is, that God had rescued him out of the many troubles and dangers that encompassed him, as if he had fallen into the sea and was in danger of perishing.

Verse 17

He delivered me from my strong enemy - The enemy that had more power than I had, and that was likely to overcome me. It is probable that the allusion here in the mind of the psalmist would be particularly to Saul.

And from them which hated me - From all who hated and persecuted me, in the time of Saul, and ever onward during my life.

For they were too strong for me - I had no power to resist them, and when I was about to sink under their opposition and malice, God interposed and rescued me. David, valiant and bold as he was as a warrior, was not ashamed, in the review of his life, to admit that he owed his preservation not to his own courage and skill in war, but to God; that his enemies were superior to himself in power; and that if God had not interposed he would have been crushed and destroyed. No man dishonors himself by

acknowledging that he owes his success in the world to the divine interposition.

Verse 18

They prevented me - They anticipated me, or went before me. See the note at Psalm 18:5. The idea here is that his enemies came before him, or intercepted his way. They were in his path, ready to destroy him.

In the day of my calamity - In the day to which I now look back as the time of my special trial.

But the Lord was my stay - My support, or prop. That is, the Lord upheld me, and kept me from falling.

Verse 19

He brought me forth also into a large place - Instead of being hemmed in by enemies, and straitened in my troubles, so that I seemed to have no room to move, he brought me into a place where I had ample room, and where I could act freely. Compare the note at Psalm 4:1.

He delivered me - He rescued me from my enemies and my troubles.

Because he delighted in me - He saw that my cause was just, and he had favor toward me.

Verse 20

The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness - That is, he saw that I did not deserve the treatment which I received from my enemies, and therefore he interposed to save me. Compare the note at Psalm 17:3.

According to the cleanness of my hands - So far as my fellow-men are concerned. I have done them no wrong.

Hath he recompensed me - By rescuing me from the power of my enemies. It is not inconsistent with proper views of piety - with true humility before God - to feel and to say, that so far as our fellow-men are concerned, we have not deserved ill-treatment at their hands; and, when we are delivered from their power, it is not improper to say and to feel that the interposition in the case has been according to justice and to truth.

Verse 21

For I have kept the ways of the Lord - I have obeyed his laws. I have not so violated the laws which God has given to regulate my conduct with my fellow-men as to deserve to be treated by them as a guilty man.

And have not wickedly departed from my God - "I have not been a sinner from my God;" an apostate; an open violator of his law. The

treatment which I have received, though it would be justly rendered to an open violator of law, is not that which I have merited from the hand of man.

Verse 22

For all his judgments - All his statutes, ordinances, laws. The word judgment is commonly used in this sense in the Scriptures, as referring to that which God has judged or determined to be right.

Were before me - That is, I acted in view of them, or as having them to guide me. They were constantly before my eyes, and I regulated my conduct in accordance with their requirements.

And I did not put away his statutes from me - I did not reject them as the guide of my conduct.

Verse 23

I was also upright before him - Margin, with. The meaning is that he was upright in his sight. The word rendered upright is the same which in Job 1:1 is rendered perfect. See the note at that passage.

And I kept myself from mine iniquity - From the iniquity to which I was prone or inclined. This is an acknowledgment that he was prone to sin, or that if he had acted out his natural character he would have indulged in sin - perhaps such sins as had been charged upon him. But he here says that, with this natural proneness to sin, he had restrained himself, and had not been deserving of the treatment which he had received. This is one of those incidental remarks which often occur in the Scriptures which recognize the doctrine of depravity, or the fact that the heart, even when most restrained, is by nature inclined to sin. If this psalm was composed in the latter part of the life of David (see the introduction), then this must mean either

(a) that in the review of his life he felt it had been his general and habitual aim to check his natural inclination to sin; or

(b) that at the particular periods referred to in the psalm, when God had so wonderfully interposed in his behalf, he felt that this had been his aim, and that he might now regard that as a reason why God had interposed in his behalf.

It is, however, painfully certain that at some periods of his life - as in the matter of Uriah - he did give indulgence to some of the most corrupt inclinations of the human heart, and that, in acting out these corrupt propensities, he was guilty of crimes which have forever dimmed the luster

of his name and stained his memory. These painful facts, however, are not inconsistent with the statement that in his general character he did restrain these corrupt propensities, and did "keep himself from his iniquity" So, in the review of our own lives, if we are truly the friends of God, while we may be painfully conscious that we have often given indulgence to the corrupt propensities of our natures - over which, if we are truly the children of God, we shall have repented - we may still find evidence that, as the great and habitual rule of life, we have restrained those passions, and have "kept ourselves" from the particular forms of sin to which our hearts were prone.

Verse 24

Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me - By delivering me from my enemies. The divine interpositions in his behalf had been of the nature of a reward or recompense.

According to my righteousness - As if I were righteous; or, his acts of intervention have been such as are appropriate to a righteous life. The psalmist does not say that it was on account of his righteousness as if he had merited the favor of God, but that the interpositions in his behalf had been such as to show that God regarded him as righteous.

According to the cleanness of my hands - See the note at Psalm 18:20.

In his eyesight - Margin, as in Hebrew, before his eyes. The idea is that God saw that he was upright.

Verse 25

With the merciful - From the particular statement respecting the divine dealings with himself the psalmist now passes to a general statement (suggested by what God had done for him) in regard to the general principles of the divine administration. That general statement is, that God deals with men according to their character; or, that he will adapt his providential dealings to the conduct of men. They will find him to be such toward them as they have shown themselves to be toward him. The word merciful refers to one who is disposed to show kindness or compassion to those who are guilty, or to those who injure or wrong us.

Thou wilt show thyself merciful - Thou wilt evince toward him the same character which he shows to others. It is in accordance with this that the Saviour teaches us to pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," Matthew 6:12. And in accordance also with this he said, "For if ye

forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses," Matthew 6:14-15.

With an upright man - literally, a perfect man. See Job 1:1, where the same word is used in the original, and rendered perfect. The idea is that of a man who is consistent, or whose character is complete in all its parts. See the note at Job 1:1.

Thou wilt show thyself upright - Thou wilt deal with him according to his character. As he is faithful and just, so will he find that he has to do with a God who is faithful and just.

Verse 26

With the pure - Those who are pure in their thoughts, their motives, their conduct.

Thou wilt show thyself pure - They will find that they have to deal with a God who is himself pure; who loves purity, and who will accompany it with appropriate rewards wherever it is found.

And with the froward - The word used here - עקשׁ *ʿiqqêsh* - means properly perverse; a man of a perverse and wicked mind. It is derived from a verb - עקשׁ *ʿâqash* - which means, to turn the wrong way, to wrest, to pervert. It would be applicable to a man who perverts or wrests the words of others from their true meaning; who prevaricates or is deceitful in his own conduct; who is not straightforward in his dealings; who takes advantage of circumstances to impose on others, and to promote his own ends; who is sour, harsh, crabbed, unaccommodating, unyielding, unkind. It is rendered perverse in Deuteronomy 32:5; Proverbs 8:8; Proverbs 19:1; Proverbs 28:6; froward here, and in 2 Samuel 22:27; Psalm 101:4; Proverbs 11:20; Proverbs 17:20; Proverbs 22:5; and crooked in Proverbs 2:15. The word does not occur elsewhere in the Old Testament.

Thou wilt show thyself froward - Margin, wrestle. In the corresponding place in 2 Samuel 22:27 it is rendered, "Thou wilt show thyself unsavory;" though the same word is used in the original. In the margin in that place, as here, the word is wrestle. The original word in each place - פתל *pâthal* - means to twist, to twine, to spin; and then, to be twisted; to be crooked, crafty, deceitful. In the form of the word which occurs here (Hithpael), it means, to show oneself crooked, crafty, perverse. (Gesenius, Lexicon). It cannot mean here that God would assume such a character, or that he would be crooked, crafty, perverse in his dealings with men, for no

one can suppose that the psalmist meant to ascribe such a character to God; but the meaning plainly is, that God would deal with the man referred to according to his real character: instead of finding that God would deal with them as if they were pure, and righteous, and merciful, such men would find that he deals with them as they are - as perverse, crooked, wicked.

Verse 27

For thou wilt save the afflicted people - From the particular tokens of divine favor toward himself in affliction and trouble, the psalmist now draws the general inference that this was the character of God, and that others in affliction might hope for his interposition as he had done.

But wilt bring down high looks - Another general inference probably derived from the dealings of God with the proud and haughty foes of the psalmist. As God had humbled them, so he infers that he would deal with others in the same way. "High looks" are indicative of pride and haughtiness. Compare Psalm 101:5; Proverbs 6:17; Proverbs 21:4; Isaiah 2:11 (notes); Isaiah 10:12; Daniel 7:20.

Verse 28

For thou wilt light my candle - Margin, lamp. The word lamp best expresses the idea. In the Scriptures light is an image of prosperity, success, happiness, holiness, as darkness is the image of the opposite. See the notes at Job 29:2-3; compare also Job 18:6; Job 21:17; Proverbs 20:27; Proverbs 24:20; Psalm 119:105; Psalm 132:17; Isaiah 62:1. The meaning here is, that the psalmist felt assured that God would give him prosperity, as if his lamp were kept constantly burning in his dwelling.

The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness - Will shed light on my path, which would otherwise be dark: will impart light to my understanding; will put peace and joy in my heart; will crown me with his favor. Compare the note at Psalm 4:6.

Verse 29

For by thee I have run through a troop - Margin, broken. The word troop here refers to bands of soldiers, or hosts of enemies. The word rendered run through means properly to run; and then, as here, to run or rush upon in a hostile sense; to rush with violence upon one. The idea here is that he had been enabled to rush with violence upon his armed opposers; that is, to overcome them, and to secure a victory. The allusion is to the wars in which he had been engaged. Compare Psalm 115:1.

And by my God - By the help derived from God.

Have I leaped over a wall - Have I been delivered, as if I had leaped over a wall when I was besieged; or, I have been able to scale the walls of an enemy, and to secure a victory. The probability is that the latter is the true idea, and that he refers to his successful attacks on the fortified towns of his enemies. The general idea is, that all his victories were to be traced to God.

Verse 30

As for God - The declaration in this verse is suggested by the facts narrated in the previous verses. The contemplation of those facts leads the thoughts of the author of the psalm up to the Great Source of all these blessings, and to these general reflections on his character. "As for God," that is, in respect to that Great Being, who has delivered me, his ways are all perfect; his word is tried; he is a shield to all those who trust in him.

His way is perfect - That is, his doings are perfect; his methods of administration are perfect; his government is perfect. There is nothing wanting, nothing defective, nothing redundant, in what he does. On the word perfect, see the note at Job 1:1.

The word of the Lord is tried - Margin, refined. The idea is, that his word had been tested as silver or any other metal is in the fire. The psalmist had confided in him, and had found him faithful to all his promises. Compare the note at Psalm 12:6. In a larger sense, using the phrase the "word of the Lord" as denoting the revelation which God has made to mankind in the volume of revealed truth, it has been abundantly tested or tried, and it still stands. It has been tested by the friends of God, and has been found to be all that it promised to be for support and consolation in trial; it has been tested by the changes which have occurred in the progress of human affairs, and has been found fitted to meet all those changes; it has been tested by the advances which have been made in science, in literature, in civilization, and in the arts, and it has shown itself to be fitted to every stage of advance in society; it has been tested by the efforts which men have made to destroy it, and has survived all those efforts.

It is settled that it will survive all the revolutions of kingdoms and all the changes of dynasties; that it will be able to meet all the attacks which shall be made upon it by its enemies; and that it will be an unfailing source of light and comfort to all future ages. If persecution could crush it, it would have been crushed long ago; if ridicule could drive it from the world, it would have been driven away long ago; if argument, as urged by powerful

intellect, and by learning, combined with intense hatred, could destroy it, it would have been destroyed long ago; and if it is not fitted to impart consolation to the afflicted, to wipe away the tears of mourners, and to uphold the soul in death, that would have been demonstrated long ago. In all these methods it has been "tried," and as the result of all, it has been proved as the only certain fact, in regard to a book as connected with the future - that the Bible will go down accredited as a revelation from God to the end of the world.

He is a buckler - Or, a shield, for so the original word means. See the note at Psalm 3:3.

Verse 31

For who is God save the Lord? - Who is God except Yahweh? The idea is, that no other being has evinced the power, the wisdom, and the goodness which properly belong to the true God; or, that the things which are implied in the true nature of God are found in no other being.

Or who is a rock save our God? - See Psalm 18:2. There is no one who can furnish such safety or defense; no one under whose protection we can be secure in danger. Compare Deuteronomy 32:31.

Verse 32

It is God that girdeth me with strength - Who gives me strength. The word girdeth contains an allusion to the mode of dress among the orientals, the long flowing robe, which was girded up when they ran or labored, that it might not impede them; and, probably, with the additional idea that girding the loins contributed to strength. It is a common custom now for men who run a race, or leap, or engage in a strife of pugilism, to gird or bind up their loins. See Job 40:7, note; and Matthew 5:38-41, notes.

And maketh my way perfect - Gives me complete success in my undertakings; or, enables me so to carry them out that none of them fail.

Verse 33

He maketh my feet like hinds' feet - So Habakkuk 3:19, "He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places." The hind is the female deer, remarkable for fleetness or swiftness. The meaning here is, that God had made him alert or active, enabling him to pursue a flying enemy, or to escape from a swift-running foe.

And setteth me upon my high places - places of safety or refuge. The idea is, that God had given him security, or had rendered him safe from danger. Compare Deuteronomy 32:13. Swiftness of foot, or ability to escape

from, or to pursue an enemy, was regarded as of great value in ancient warfare. Achilles, according to the descriptions of Homer, was remarkable for it. Compare 2 Samuel 2:18; 1 Chronicles 12:8.

Verse 34

He teacheth my hands to war - Compare Psalm 144:1. The skill which David had in the use of the bow, the sword, or the spear - all of which depends on the hands - he ascribes entirely to God.

So that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms - This is mentioned as an instance of extraordinary strength, as if he were able to break a bow made of metal. The original word rendered steel means properly brass. Wood was doubtless first used in constructing the bow, but metals came afterward to be employed, and brass would naturally be used before the manufacture of steel was discovered. Rosenmuller *in loc*.

Verse 35

Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvations - Thou hast saved me as with a shield; thou hast thrown thy shield before me in times of danger. See the note at Psalm 5:12.

And thy right hand hath holden me up - Thou hast sustained me when in danger of failing, as if thou hadst upheld me with thine own hand.

And thy gentleness hath made me great - Margin, "or, with thy meekness thou hast multiplied me." The word here rendered gentleness, evidently means here favor, goodness, kindness. It commonly means humility, modesty, as applied to men; as applied to God, it means mildness, clemency, favor. The idea is, that God had dealt with him in gentleness, kindness, clemency, and that to this fact alone he owed all his prosperity and success in life. It was not by any claim which he had on God; it was by no worth of his own; it was by no native strength or valor that he had been thus exalted, but it was wholly because God had dealt kindly with him, or had showed him favor. So all our success in life is to be traced to the favor - the kindness - of God.

Verse 36

Thou hast enlarged my steps under me - The idea here is, "Thou hast made room for my feet, so that I have been enabled to walk without hindrance or obstruction. So in Psalm 31:8, "Thou hast set my feet in a large room." The idea is, that he was before straitened, compressed, hindered in his goings, but that now all obstacles had been taken out of the way, and he could walk freely.

That my feet did not slip - Margin, mine ancles. The Hebrew word here rendered in the text feet, and in the margin ancles, means properly a joint; small joint; especially the ancle. The reference here is to the ancle, the joint that is so useful in walking, and that is so liable to be sprained or dislocated. The meaning is that he had been enabled to walk firmly; that he did not limp. Before, he had been like one whose ancles are weak or sprained; now he was able to tread firmly. The divine favor given to him was as if God had given strength to a lame man to walk firmly.

Verse 37

I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them - He had not only routed them, but had had strength to pursue them; he had not only pursued them, but he had been enabled to come up to them. The idea is that of complete success and absolute triumph.

Neither did I turn again - I was not driven back, nor was I weary and exhausted, and compelled to give over the pursuit.

Till they were consumed - Until they were all either slain or made captive, so that the hostile forces vanished. None of my enemies were left.

Verse 38

I have wounded them … - I have so weakened them - so entirely prostrated them - that they were not able to rally again. This does not refer so much to wounds inflicted on individuals in the hostile ranks as to the entire host or army. It was so weakened that it could not again be put in battle array. The idea is that of successful pursuit and conquest.

They are fallen under my feet - I have completely trodden them down - a common mode of denoting entire victory, Psalm 119:118; Isaiah 25:10; Lamentations 1:15; Daniel 8:13; Luke 21:24.

Verse 39

For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle - See the note at Psalm 18:32. Compare Job 12:18; Proverbs 31:17.

Thou hast subdued under me - Margin, as in Hebrew, caused to bow. That is, God had caused them to submit to him; he had enabled him to overcome them; still acknowledging that all this was from God, and that the praise was due to Him, and not to the power of his own arm.

Verse 40

Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies - Their necks to tread upon, as the result of victory; or their necks to be subject to me, as the neck of the ox is to his owner. The phrase is sometimes used in this latter

sense to denote subjection (compare Jeremiah 27:12); but it is more commonly, when applied to war, used in the former sense, as denoting complete triumph or conquest. It was not uncommon to trample on the necks of those who were overcome in battle. See Joshua 10:24; Ezekiel 21:2; Genesis 49:8. The word used here - עֹרֶף *ʿôreph* - means properly neck, nape, the back of the neck; and hence, to give the neck means sometimes to turn the back, as in flight; and the phrase would admit of that meaning here. So Gesenius (Lexicon) understands it. So also DeWette: "Thou turnest my enemies to flight." It seems to me, however, that the more probable interpretation is that of complete subjection - as when the conqueror places his foot on the necks of his foes. This is confirmed by the next member of the sentence, where the psalmist speaks of the complete destruction of those who hated him.

That I might destroy them that hate me - That have pursued and persecuted me in this manner. The idea is that of utterly overcoming them; of putting an end to their power, and to their ability to injure him.

Verse 41

They cried - They cried out for help, for mercy, for life. In modern language, "they begged for quarter." They acknowledged that they were vanquished, and entreated that their lives might be spared.

But there was none to save them - To preserve their lives. No help appeared from their own countrymen; they found no mercy in me or my followers; and God did not interpose to deliver them.

Even unto the Lord - As a last resort. People appeal to everything else for help before they will appeal to God; often when they come to Him it is by constraint, and not willingly; if the danger should leave them, they would cease to call upon Him. Hence, since there is no real sincerity in their calling upon God - no real regard for his honor or his commands - their cries are not heard, and they perish. The course of things with a sinner, however, is often such that, despairing of salvation in any other way, and seeing that this is the only true way, he comes with a heart broken, contrite, penitent, and then God never turns away from the cry. No sinner, though as a last resort, who comes to God in real sincerity, will ever be rejected.

But he answered them not - He did not put forth his power to save them from my sword; to keep them alive when they were thus vanquished. Had they cried unto him to save their souls, he would undoubtedly have done it; but their cry was for life - for the divine help to save them from the

sword of the conqueror. There might have been many reasons why God should not interpose to save them from the regular consequences of valor when they had been in the wrong and had begun the war; but there would have been no reason why he should not interpose if they had called upon him to save them from their sins. There may be many reasons why God should not save sinners from the temporal judgments due to their sins - the intemperate from the diseases, the poverty, and the wretchedness consequent on that vice - or the licentious from the woes and sorrows caused by such a course of life; but there is no reason, in any case, why God should not save from the eternal consequences of sin, if the sinner cries sincerely and earnestly for mercy.

sa40

Verse 42

Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind - As the fine dust is driven by the wind, so they fled before me. There could be no more striking illustration of a defeated army flying before a conqueror. DeWette says correctly that the idea is, "I beat them small, and scattered them as dust before the wind."

I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets - In the corresponding place in 2 Samuel 22:43, this is, "I did stamp them as the mire of the street, and did spread them abroad." The idea in the place before us is, that he poured them out, for so the Hebrew word means, as the dirt or mire in the streets. As that is trodden on, or trampled down, so they, instead of being marshalled for battle, were wholly disorganized, scattered, and left to be trodden down, as the most worthless object is. A similar image occurs in Isaiah 10:6, where God is speaking of Sennacherib: "I will send him against an hypocritical nation … to tread them down like the mire of the streets."

Verse 43

Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people - From the contentions of the people; or, from the efforts which they have made to overcome and subdue me. The allusion is to the efforts made by the people, under the guidance of their leaders. It is not "strivings" among his own followers, but the efforts, the strivings, the contentions of his enemies, who endeavored to obtain the mastery over him, and to subdue him.

Thou hast made me the head of the heathen - The head of the nations; that is, the nations round about. In other words, he had, by the divine aid, brought them into subjection to him, or so subdued them that they became

tributary to him. The word “heathen” with us expresses an idea which is not necessarily connected with the original word. That word is simply nations - גוים *gôyim* It is true that those nations were pagans in the present sense of the term, but that idea is not necessarily connected with the word. The meaning is, that surrounding nations had been made subject to him; or that he had been made to rule over them. David, in fact, thus brought the surrounding people under subjection to him, and made them tributary. In 2 Samuel 8 he is said to have subdued Philistia, and Moab, and Syria, and Edom, in all of which countries he put “garrisons,” and all of which he made tributary to himself.

A people whom I have not known shall serve me - People that I had not before heard of. This is the language of confident faith that his kingdom would be still further extended, so as to embrace nations before unknown to him. His past victories, and the fact that his kingdom had been so established and was already so extended, justified the expectation that it would still be further enlarged; that the fame of his conquests would reach other nations, and that they would willingly yield themselves to him. After the victories which he had achieved, as celebrated in this psalm, that might be expected to follow as a matter of course. It is the triumphant exultation of a conqueror, and it seems to have been his expectation, not that his successors would extend the empire, but, that other nations would become voluntarily subject to him.

Verse 44

As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me - Margin, as in Hebrew, At the hearing of the ear. That is, their submission will be prompt and immediate. The fame of my victories will be such as to render resistance hopeless; my fame, as at the head of a mighty empire, will be such as to lead them to desire my friendship and protection.

The strangers - Margin, as in Hebrew, The sons of the stranger. The word refers to foreigners, to those of other nations. His name and deeds would inspire such respect, or create such a dread of his power, that they would be glad to seek his friendship, and would readily submit to his dominion.

Shall submit themselves unto me - Margin, yield feigned obedience. The Hebrew word used here - כחשׁ *kâchash* - means properly to lie, to speak lies; then, to deceive, or disappoint; then, to feign, to flatter, to play the hypocrite. It is manifestly used in this sense here, as referring to those who,

awed by the terror of his name and power, would come and profess subjection to him as a conqueror. Yet the use of the word here implies that he was aware that, in many cases, this would be only a feigned submission, or that the homage would be hypocritical; homage inspired by terror, not by love. Undoubtedly, much of the professed subjection of conquered nations is of this kind, and it would be well if all conquerors understood this as David did. He accepted, indeed, the acquiescence and the submission, but he understood the cause; and this knowledge would only tend to make his throne more secure, as it would save him from putting confidence or trust where there was no certainty that it would be well placed.

Toward David as a sovereign there was much real loyalty, but there was also much professed allegiance that was false and hollow; allegiance which would endure only while his power lasted, and which would only wait for an opportunity to throw off the yoke. In respect to God, also, there are not a few who "feignedly submit" to him, or who yield feigned obedience. They, too, are awed by his power. They know that he is able to destroy. They see the tokens of his greatness and majesty, and they come and profess submission to him - a submission founded on terror, not on love; a submission which would cease at once could they be assured of safety if they should renounce their allegiance to him. And as David was not ignorant of the fact that not a little of the professed submission to him was false and feigned - so, in a much higher sense - in a much more accurate manner - God is aware of the fact that many who profess to be subject to him are subject in profession only; that if they could do it with safety, they would throw off the very appearance of loyalty, and carry out in reality what exists in their hearts. It must have been sad for David to reflect how greatly the number of his professed subjects might have been diminished, if none had been retained but those who truly loved his reign, and respected him as a sovereign; it is sad to reflect how greatly the number of the professed friends of God would be diminished, if all those should withdraw who have yielded only reigned obedience to him! Yet the Church would be the better and the stronger for it.

Verse 45

The strangers shall fade away - Hebrew, "The sons of the stranger." That is, foreigners. The word rendered fade away - נבל *nâbêl* - means properly to wilt, wither, fall away, as applicable to flowers, leaves, or

plants, Psalm 1:3; Psalm 37:2; Isaiah 1:30; Isaiah 28:1. Here it means that those foreign nations would diminish in numbers and in power, until they should wholly disappear. The idea is, that all his foes would vanish, and that he and his kingdom would be left in peace.

And be afraid out of their close places - The word rendered be afraid means to tremble - as those do who are in fear. The word rendered close places means places that are shut up or enclosed, as fortified cities or fortresses. The reference is to their places of retreat, towns, castles, fortresses. The meaning is, that they would find such places to be no security, and would tremble out of them; that is, they would flee out of them in consternation and alarm. The general thought is that of ultimate complete security for himself and his kingdom, or entire deliverance from all his enemies.

Verse 46

The Lord liveth - Yahweh - the name used here - is often described as the living God in contradistinction to idols, who are represented as without life, Deuteronomy 5:26; Joshua 3:10; 2 Kings 19:4; Psalm 42:2; Matthew 16:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:9. Compare Psalm 115:5; Psalm 135:16. It is probably in allusion to this idea that the phrase "The Lord liveth" is used here. It is a joyful exclamation in view of all that God had done; of all the deliverances which he had performed for the author of the psalm. In the remembrance of all this the psalmist says that God had shown himself to be the living, that is, the true God. These interpositions furnished abundant demonstration that Yahweh existed, and that he was worthy of adoration and praise as the true God. So, in view of mercy and salvation, the heart of the redeemed exultingly exclaims, "The Lord lives - there is a living God."

And blessed be my Rock - God, who has shown himself to be a refuge and a protector. See the note at Psalm 18:2.

And let the God of my salvation be exalted - The God who has saved me from my enemies. Let him be exalted, be praised, be honored, be adored. Let his name be exalted above all idol gods; above all the creatures that he has made. The wish is, that His name might be made prominent; that all creatures might praise and honor Him.

Verse 47

It is God that avengeth me - Margin, giveth avengements for me. The marginal reading is a literal translation of the Hebrew. The meaning is, that

God had punished the enemies of the author of the psalm for all the wrongs which they had done to him. Compare Romans 12:19.

And subdueth the people under me - Margin, destroyeth. The idea is that he had subdued the nations so that they became obedient to him. The primary notion of the word used here - from דבר *dâbar* - is to set in a row; to range in order; to connect; to lead; to guide; - then, to reduce to order; to subdue. This God had done in respect to the nations. Instead of being rebellious and tumultuous, God had reduced them to obedience, and had thus set him over a kingdom where all were subject to order and to law.

Verse 48

He delivereth me from mine enemies - From all my foes.

Yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me - So that I triumph over them. Instead of being subdued by them, and trampled under their feet, I am exalted, and they are humbled.

Thou hast delivered me from the violent man - Margin, as in Hebrew, man of violence; the man characterized by injustice and wrong; the man who endeavored to overcome and subdue me by force and arms. There is probably a special allusion here by the psalmist to Saul as his great enemy, but perhaps he had also in his eye others of the same kind, and the meaning may be that he had been delivered from all of that class of people.

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Verse 49

Therefore will I give thanks unto thee - Margin, confess. The Hebrew word - ידה *yâdâh* - in the form used here, means properly to profess, to confess, to acknowledge; then especially to acknowledge or recognize blessings and favors; in other words, to give thanks, to praise. The idea here is that he would make a public acknowledgment of those blessings which he had received; or that he would cause the remembrance of them to be celebrated among the nations.

Among the heathen - Among the nations. See the note at Psalm 18:43. The meaning here is, that he would cause these blessings to be remembered by making a record of them in this song of praise; a song that would be used not only in his own age and in his own country, but also among other nations, and in other times. He would do all in his power to make the knowledge of these favors, and these proofs of the existence of the true God, known abroad and transmitted to other times. The apostle Paul uses this language Romans 15:9 as expressing properly the fact that the

knowledge of God was to be communicated to the "Gentiles:" "As it is written, For this cause will I confess to thee among the Gentiles." The word "heathen" or nations, in the passage before us, corresponds precisely with the meaning of the word Gentiles; and Paul has used the language of the psalm legitimately and properly as showing that it was a doctrine of the Old Testament that the truths of religion were not to be confined to the Jews, but were to be made known to other nations.

And sing praises unto thy name - Unto thee; the name often being used to denote the person. The meaning is, that he would cause the praises of God to be celebrated among foreign or pagan nations, as the result of what God had done for him. Far, probably, very far beyond what David anticipated when he penned this psalm, this has been done. The psalm itself has been chanted by million who were not in existence, and in lands of which the psalmist had no knowledge; and, connected as it has been with the other psalms in Christian worship, it has contributed in an eminent degree to extend the praises of God far in the earth, and to transmit the knowledge of him to generations as they succeeded one another. What David anticipated is, moreover, as yet only in the progress of fulfillment. Millions not yet born will make use of the psalm, as million have done before, as the medium of praise to God; and down to the most distant times this sacred song, in connection with the others in the Book of Psalms, will contribute to make God known in the earth, and to secure for him the praises of mankind.

Verse 50

Great deliverance giveth he to his king - To David, as king. The word in the original, which is rendered "deliverance," means properly salvations, and is here in the plural number. It refers not to one act of divine interposition, but to the many acts (referred to in the psalm) in which God had interposed to save him from danger and from death. The phrase "to his king" refers to the fact that God had appointed him to reign, and to administer the government for him. He did not reign on his own account, but he reigned for God, and with a view to do his will.

And showeth mercy to his anointed - To him who had been set apart to the kingly office by a solemn act of anointing. Compare 1 Samuel 16:13; 2 Samuel 2:4-7; 2 Samuel 5:3, 2 Samuel 5:17; 2 Samuel 12:7; compare 2 Kings 9:3, 2Kings 9:6,2 Kings 9:12. It is in allusion to this custom that the Messiah is called the Anointed, or the Christ. See the note at Matthew 1:1.

To David, and to his seed - To his descendants, or posterity. There is an undoubted reference here to the promises made to David in regard to his successors on the throne. See 2 Samuel 7:12-16, 2 Samuel 7:25-26, and 2 Samuel 7:12-13: "I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom; he shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." Also 2 Samuel 7:16: "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever." See also Psalm 89:36: "His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me." The perpetuity of this kingdom is found, in fact, in the reign of the Messiah, a descendant of David, in whose eternal reign these promises will receive an ample fulfillment. See Isaiah 9:7. Compare Luke 1:32-33. The temporal reign passed wholly away in the process of time from the descendants of David; the spiritual reign is perpetual in the Messiah. How far David understood this it is not important to inquire, and it would be impossible to determine. It is sufficient for the proper understanding of the place to remember

(a) that there will have been a strict fulfillment of the promise, according to the full import of the language, in the Messiah, the Son of David; and

(b) that, however this may have been understood by David who recorded the promise, the real author of the promise was the Holy Spirit, and that the real meaning of the promise, as thus recorded, was that it should be fulfilled as it has been.

In this, as in all other cases, the inquiry to be made in interpreting the language is not how the sacred penman understood it, but what was meant by the real author, the Spirit of God - and whether the prediction, according to that meaning, has been fulfilled. When a man employs an amanuensis, the inquiry in regard to what is written is not how the amanuensis understood it, but how he who dictated what was written intended it should be understood. Applying this principle, the prediction here and elsewhere, in regard to the perpetuity of the reign of David and his posterity, has been, and is, fulfilled in the most ample manner. "Great David's greater Son" shall reign forever and ever.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 19

Introduction

This very beautiful psalm is designed to illustrate the superiority of revealed truth above the light of nature in showing the character and perfections of God. In doing this, there is no attempt in the psalm, as there should be none on our part in explaining it, to undervalue or disparage the truths about God revealed by nature. All that could now be said in regard to the works of creation, as illustrating the divine perfections, is really admitted by the psalmist Psalm 19:1-6; and yet this is placed in strong contrast with the revelations disclosed in the "law of the Lord," that is, in his revealed word Psalm 19:7-11. The revelations of nature, and the higher revelation by inspiration, belong to the same system of religion, and are alike designed to illustrate the being, the perfections, and the government of God. The friend of religion should claim the one as well as the other; the defense of the Bible as a revelation from God should not lead us to disparage or undervalue the disclosures respecting God as made by nature. He who asserts that a revelation is necessary to mankind, and who maintains that the light of nature is not sufficient for the wants of man, should nevertheless concede all that can be known from the works of God about the Creator; should rejoice in all that truth; and should be willing that all should be learned that can be learned about God from his works. When all this is admitted, and all this learned, there will be still an ample field for the higher disclosures which revelation claims to make.

Nor did the psalmist apprehend that the revelations about God which are made in his works would be in conflict with those which are made in his word. He evidently felt, in looking at these works of creation, that he was learning truths which would in no manner contradict the higher truths communicated by revelation; that the investigation of the one might be pursued to any extent without showing that the other was needless, or bringing the truth of the other into peril.

This psalm consists properly of three parts:

I. The revelation of God in his works, Psalm 19:1-6.

II. The higher and more glorious revelation of himself in his law, Psalm 19:7-10.

III. The bearing of these truths on the present character and conduct of the author, and consequently their adaptedness to produce the same effect on others, Psalm 19:11-14.

(a) in warning men of the nature of sin, and thus keeping them from transgression, Psalm 19:11;

(b) in making them aware of the extent and depth of sin, and especially of secret faults, Psalm 19:12;

(c) in leading them to pray earnestly that they may be cleansed from secret faults, and be kept back or restrained from presumptuous sins, Psalm 19:12-13;

(d) in leading them to pray earnestly that their words and thoughts may be made acceptable to God, Psalm 19:14.

The psalm is said in the title to be "A Psalm of David;" and there is nothing in the psalm itself to create a doubt in regard to the correctness of this statement. It is impossible, however, to determine when, or in what circumstances, it was composed, for there are no internal marks which will fix it at any particular period of the life of the author. There is no allusion either to persecution or to triumph; to private, domestic, or public life - or to any of the known circumstances of the history of David. If a conjecture may be allowed, it would seem not improbable that it was composed in those calm periods of his history when he led a shepherd-life; when he had abundant time to contemplate the movements of the heavenly bodies by day and by night, and to meditate on them in contrast with the higher truths which God had made known in his law.

Rosenmuller conjectured at one time that the psalm was originally two, and that the two were afterward united into one. DeWette also looked favorably on this supposition. Rosenmuller, however, subsequently saw occasion to retract this, and to adopt the opinion that it was originally one

composition. This is undoubtedly the correct idea, as appears not only from the fact that there is no evidence that these were two psalms, and from the general character and construction of the psalm, but from the fact that the conclusion Psalm 19:12-14 seems to be based on the contemplation of all the truth which God in any way makes known to the soul. On the supposition that the psalm is one, this is a proper termination of the whole composition. On the other supposition, no small part of the beauty of the psalm would be lost.

In respect to the meaning of the title, "To the chief Musician," see the introduction to Psalm 4:1-8.

Verse 1

The heavens declare the glory of God - They announce, proclaim, make known his glory. The word heavens here refers to the material heavens as they appear to the eye - the region of the sun, moon, and stars. The Hebrew word is used in the Scriptures uniformly in the plural number, though in our common translation the singular number is often used. Genesis 1:1, Genesis 1:8-9, Genesis 1:14, Genesis 1:17, Genesis 1:20; Genesis 6:17; Genesis 7:11, Genesis 7:19, Genesis 7:23; et soepe. The plural, however, is often retained, but without any special reason why it should be retained in one place rather than in another. Genesis 2:1, Genesis 2:4; Deuteronomy 10:14; Ezra 9:6; Psalm 2:4; Psalm 8:1, Psalm 8:3; Psalm 18:13. The original idea may have been that there was one heaven above another - one in which the sun was placed, another in which the moon was placed, then the planets, the fixed stars, etc. Above all was supposed to be the place where God dwells. The word glory here means that which constitutes the glory or honor of God - his wisdom, power, skill, faithfulness, benevolence, as seen in the starry worlds above us, the silent, but solemn movements by day and by night. The idea is, that these convey to the mind a true impression of the greatness and majesty of God. The reference here is to these heavens as they appear to the naked eye, and as they are observed by all men. It may be added that the impression is far more solemn and grand when we take into the estimate the disclosures of the modern astronomy, and when we look at the heavens, not merely by the naked eye, but through the revelations of the telescope.

And the firmament - See the note at Daniel 12:3. The word rendered firmament - רקיע *râqîya*ʿ means properly "an expanse" - that which is spread out - and is applied to the heavens as they appear to be spread out or expanded above us. The word occurs elsewhere in the following places, and is always rendered "firmament" in our common version, Genesis 1:6, Genesis 1:7 (twice), Genesis 1:8, Genesis 1:14, Genesis 1:15, Genesis 1:17, Genesis 1:20; Psalm 150:1; Ezekiel 1:22-23, Ezekiel 1:25-26; Ezekiel 10:1; Daniel 12:3. The word "firmament" - that which is firm or fixed - is taken from the word used by the translators of the Septuagint, στερέωμα *stereōma* from the idea that the heavens above us are a solid concave. In the Scriptures the stars are represented as placed in that expanse, so that if it should be rolled together as a tent is rolled up, they would fall down to the earth. See the note at Isaiah 34:4. The reference in the passage before us is to the heavens as they appear to be spread out over our heads, and in which the stars are fixed.

Showeth his handywork - The heavens make known the work of his hands. The idea is that God had made those heavens by his own hands, and that the firmament, thus adorned with sun, and moon, and stars, showed the wisdom and skill with which it was done. Compare Psalm 8:3.

Verse 2

Day unto day - One day to another; or, each successive day. The day that is passing away proclaims the lesson which it had to convey from the movements of the heavens, about God; and thus the knowledge of God is accumulating as the time moves on. Each day has its own lesson in regard to the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of God, and that lesson is conveyed from one day to another. There is a perpetual testimony thus given to the wisdom and power of the Great Creator.

Uttereth speech - The word here rendered uttereth means properly to pour forth; to pour forth copiously as a fountain. Compare Proverbs 18:4; Proverbs 1:23; Proverbs 15:2, Proverbs 15:28. Hence, the word means to utter; to declare. The word "speech" means properly "a word;" and then, "a lesson;" or "that which speech conveys." The idea is, that the successive days thus impart instruction, or convey lessons about God. The day does this by the returning light, and by the steady and sublime movement of the sun in the heavens, and by all the disclosures which are made by the light of the sun in his journeyings.

And night unto night showeth knowledge - Knowledge respecting God. Each successive night does this. It is done by the stars in their courses; in their order; their numbers; their ranks; their changes of position; their rising and their setting. There are as many lessons conveyed to man about the greatness and majesty of God by the silent movements of each night as there are by the light of the successive days - just as there may be as many lessons conveyed to the soul about God in the dark night of affliction and adversity, as there are when the sun of prosperity shines upon us.

Verse 3

There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard - Margin, Without these their voice is heard. Hebrew, "without their voice heard." The idea in the margin, which is adopted by Prof. Alexander, is, that when the heavens give expression to the majesty and glory of God, it is not by words - by the use of language such as is employed among men. That is, there is a silent but real testimony to the power and glory of their great Author. The same idea is adopted substantially by DeWette. So Rosenmuller renders it, "There is no speech to them, and no words, neither is their voice heard." High as these authorities are, yet it seems to me that the idea conveyed by our common version is probably the correct one. This is the idea in the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate. According to this interpretation the meaning is, "There is no nation, there are no men, whatever may be their language, to whom the heavens do not speak, declaring the greatness and glory of God. The language which they speak is universal; and however various the languages spoken by men, however impossible it may be for them to understand each other, yet all can understand the language of the heavens, proclaiming the perfections of the Great Creator. That is a universal language which does not need to be expressed in the forms of human speech, but which conveys great truths alike to all mankind."

That the passage cannot mean that there is no speech, that there are no words, or that there is no language in the lessons conveyed by the heavens, seems to me to be clear from the fact that alike in the previous verse Psalm 19:2, and in the following verse Psalm 19:4, the psalmist says that they do use speech or language, "Day unto day uttereth speech;" "their words unto the end of the world." The phrase "their voice" refers to the heavens Psalm 19:1. They utter a clear and distinct voice to mankind; that is, they convey to people true and just notions of the greatness of the Creator. The meaning,

then, it seems to me, is that the same great lessons about God are conveyed by the heavens, in their glory and their revolutions, to all nations; that these lessons are conveyed to them day by day, and night by night; that however great may be the diversities of Speech among men, these convey lessons in a universal language understood by all mankind; and that thus God is making himself constantly known to all the dwellers on the earth. All people can understand the language of the heavens, though they may not be able to understand the language of each other. Of the truth of this no one can doubt; and its beauty is equal to its truth.

Verse 4

Their line - That is, of the heavens. The word used here - קוו *qav* - means properly a cord, or line:

(a) a measuring line, Ezekiel 47:3; Job 38:5; Isaiah 44:13; and then

(b) a cord or string as of a lyre or other instrument of music; and hence, a sound.

So it is rendered here by the Septuagint, φθόγγος *phthongos* By Symmachus, ἦχος *ēchos* By the Vulgate, *sonus*. DeWette renders it Klang, sound. Prof. Alexander dogmatically says that this is "entirely at variance with the Hebrew usage." That this sense, however, is demanded in the passage seems to be plain, not only from the sense given to it by the ancient versions, but by the parallelism, where the term "words" corresponds to it:

"Their line is gone out through all the earth;
Their words to the end of the world."

Besides, what could be the sense of saying that their line, in the sense of a measuring line, or cord, had gone through all the earth? The plain meaning is, that sounds conveying instruction, and here connected with the idea of sweet or musical sounds, had gone out from the heavens to all parts of the world, conveying the knowledge of God. There is no allusion to the notion of the "music of the spheres," for this conception was not known to the Hebrews; but the idea is that of sweet or musical sounds, not harsh or grating, as proceeding from the movements of the heavens, and conveying these lessons to man.

And their words - The lessons or truths which they convey.

To the end of the world - To the uttermost parts of the earth. The language here is derived from the idea that the earth was a plane, and had limits. But even with our correct knowledge of the figure of the earth, we use similar language when we speak of the "uttermost parts of the earth."

In them - That is, in the heavens, Psalm 19:1. The meaning is, that the sun has his abode or dwelling-place, as it were, in the heavens. The sun is particularly mentioned, doubtless, as being the most prominent object among the heavenly bodies, as illustrating in an eminent manner the glory of God. The sense of the whole passage is, that the heavens in general proclaim the glory of God, and that this is shown in a particular and special manner by the light, the splendor, and the journeyings of the sun.

Hath he set a tabernacle for the sun - A tent; that is, a dwelling-place. He has made a dwelling-place there for the sun. Compare Habakkuk 3:11, "The sun and moon stood still in their habitation."

Verse 5

Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber - That is, when he rises in the morning. He rises from the darkness of the night, and comes forth as the bridegroom comes out of the chamber where he has slept. The allusion is to the bright, and joyful, and cheerful aspect of the rising sun. The image of the bridegroom is employed because we associate with a bridegroom the idea of hilarity, cheerfulness, joy. The essential image is that the sun seems to rise from a night of repose, as man does in the morning, and that after such a night of repose he goes forth with cheerfulness and alacrity to the employments of the day. The figure is an obvious but a very beautiful one, though there is a transition from the image employed in the previous verse, where the sun is represented as dwelling in a tent or tabernacle fitted up for it in the heavens. In the next member of the sentence the figure is again changed, by his being represented as a man prepared to run a race.

And rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race - As a man who is vigorous and powerful, when he enters on a race. He is girded for it; he summons all his strength; he seems to exult in the idea of putting his strength to the test, and starting off on his career. Compare the note at 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. The same comparison which is employed here occurs in the Zendavesta, ii. 106. DeWette. The idea is that the sun seems to have a long journey before him, and puts forth all his vigour, exulting in the

opportunity of manifesting that vigour, and confident of triumphing in the race.

Verse 6

His going forth - The psalmist now describes that race which he has to run, as borne over the entire circuit of the heavens, from one end of it to another - sweeping the whole space across the firmament.

Is from the end of the heaven - From one end of the heaven; that is, from the East, where he starts.

And his circuit - The word used here - תקופה *teqûphâh* - means properly a coming about, or a return, as of the seasons, or of the year. It is found only in Exodus 34:22, "At the year's end;" 1 Samuel 1:20, "When the time was come about" (Margin, in revolution of days); 2 Chronicles 24:23, "At the end of the year" (Margin, in the revolution of the year). The word here does not refer to the fact that the sun comes round to the starting-point on the following day, but to the sweep or circuit which he makes in the heavens from one end of it to the other - traveling over the entire heavens.

Unto the ends of it - That is, to the other side of the heavens. The plural term is used here perhaps from the idea of completeness, or to denote that there was nothing beyond. The complete journey was made.

And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof - The rays of the sun penetrate everywhere. Nothing escapes it. It is not a mere march for show and splendor; it is not an idle and useless journey in the heavens; but all things - vegetables, birds, beasts, men - all that lives - feel the effect of his vital warmth, and are animated by his quickening influence. Thus the sun in his goings illustrates the glory of God. The psalmist was fully alive to the splendor, the glory, and the value of this daily march over the heavens, and shows that while, as in the remainder of the psalm, he dwells on the law of the Lord as having another sphere, and in its place more fully illustrating the divine glory, he is not by any means insensible to the grandeur and beauty of the works of God as showing forth the divine perfections.

Verse 7

The law of the Lord - Margin, doctrine. The word used here - תורה *tôrâh* - is that which is commonly employed in the Old Testament with reference to the law of God, and is usually rendered "law." The word properly means "instruction," "precept," from a verb signifying "to teach." It is then used with reference to instruction or teaching in regard to conduct, and is thus applied to all that God has communicated to guide mankind. It

does not here, nor does it commonly, refer exclusively to the commands of God, but it includes all that God has revealed to teach and guide us. It refers here to revealed truth as contradistinguished from the truth made known by the works of creation. Compare the note at Psalm 1:2. There are six epithets used in these verses Psalm 19:7-9 to describe the revealed truth of God, all referring to the same truths, but with reference to some distinct view of the truths themselves, or of their effect on the soul: to wit, law, testimony, statutes, commandment, fear, and judgments. Of the revealed truth of God, thus characterized by distinct epithets, a particular statement is first made in each case in regard to the truth itself as viewed in that special aspect, and then the effects of that revealed truth on the soul are described corresponding with that truth as so viewed. Thus, of the "law of the Lord" it is said:

(a) that it is perfect,

(b) that it converts the soul;

Of the "testimony of the Lord":

(a) that it is sure,

(b) that it makes the simple wise;

Of the "statutes of the Lord":

(a) that they are right,

(b) that they rejoice the heart;

Of the "commandment of the Lord":

(a) that it is pure,

(b) that it enlightens the eyes;

Of the "fear of the Lord":

(a) that it is clean,

(b) that it endures forever;

Of the "judgments of the Lord":

(a) that they are true and righteous,

(b) that they are more to be desired than gold, and that they are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb; that people are warned by them, and that in keeping them there is great reward.

Is perfect - On the meaning of the word used here, see the note at Job 1:1. The meaning is that it lacks nothing in order to its completeness; nothing in order that it might be what it should be. It is complete as a revelation of divine truth; it is complete as a rule of conduct. As explained above, this refers not only to the law of God as the word is commonly

employed now, but to the whole of divine truth as revealed. It is absolutely true; it is adapted with consummate wisdom to the wants of man; it is an unerring guide of conduct. There is nothing there which would lead men into error or sin; there is nothing essential for man to know which may not be found there.

Converting the soul - The particular illustration of the perfection of the law is seen in the fact that it "converts the soul;" that is, that it turns it from the ways of sin to holiness. The glory of the works of God - the heavens, the firmament, the sun, as described in the previous verses - is, that they convey the knowledge of God around the world, and that the world is filled with light and life under the genial warmth of the sun; the glory of the law, or the revealed truth of God, is, that it bears directly on the soul of man, turning him from the error of his ways. and leading him to pursue a life of holiness. It is not said of the "law" of God that it does this by its own power, nor can there be any design here to exclude the doctrine of the divine agency on the soul; but the statement is, that when the "law" of God is applied to the heart, or when the truth of God is made to bear on that heart, the legitimate effect is seen in turning the sinner from the error of his ways. This effect of truth is seen everywhere, where it is brought into contact with the heart of man. By placing this first, also, the psalmist may perhaps have intended to intimate that this is the primary design of the revelation which God has given to mankind; that while great and important effects are produced by the knowledge which goes forth from the works of God, converting power goes forth only from the "law" of God, or from revealed truth. It is observable that none of the effects here Psalm 19:7-12 ascribed to the revealed truth of God, under the various forms in which it is contemplated, are ascribed to the knowledge which goes forth from the contemplation of his works, Psalm 19:1-6. It is not scientific truth which converts men, but revealed truth.

The testimony of the Lord - The word used here - עדות *ʿêdûth* - means properly that which is borne witness to, and is applied to revealed truth as that which God bears witness to. In reference to the truth of what is stated he is the witness or the voucher; it is that which he declares to be true. Hence, the term is applicable to all that is revealed as being that which he affirms to be true, and the word may be applied to historical truths; or to precepts or laws; or to statements respecting himself, respecting man, respecting the way of salvation, respecting the fallen world. On all these

subjects he has borne witness in his word, pledging his veracity as to the correctness of the statements which are thus made. The word, therefore, refers to the whole of what is revealed in his word, considered as that to the truth of which he bears witness. The word is often used in this sense: Psalm 81:5; Psalm 119:14, Psalm 119:31, Psalm 119:36, Psalm 119:88, Psalm 119:99, Psalm 119:111, Psalm 119:129, Psalm 119:144, Psalm 119:157; Jeremiah 44:23. It is often also applied to the two tables of the law laid up in the ark, which is hence called "the ark of the testimony:" Exodus 16:34; Exodus 25:16, Exodus 25:21-22; Exodus 26:33; Exodus 30:26, et saepe.

Is sure - Established, firm. That "testimony," or that revealed truth, is not unsettled, vacillating, uncertain. It is so certain that it may be relied on; so well established, that it cannot be shaken.

Making wise the simple - The word rendered simple - פתי *pethîy* - means simplicity, folly, Proverbs 1:22; and then, simple in the sense of being open to persuasion, easily seduced: Proverbs 7:7; Proverbs 22:3; Proverbs 27:12; Psalm 116:6. Then it means credulous, Proverbs 14:15; and inexperienced, Psalm 19:7. Gesenius, Lexicon. The meaning here is evidently inexperienced in the sense of being ignorant or untaught. It refers to those who need spiritual guidance and direction, and is applicable to men as they are by nature, as untaught, or needing instruction, but with the idea that their minds are susceptible to impressions, or are open to conviction. Those who are naturally destitute of wisdom, it makes wise. The statement is, that that testimony, or revealed truth, makes them wise in the knowledge of God, or imparts to them real instruction.

Verse 8

The statutes of the Lord - The word here rendered statutes properly means mandates, precepts - rules given to anyone to guide him, Psalm 103:18; Psalm 111:7. It refers to the laws of God considered as appointed, or as the result of divine authority. The verb from which this word is derived (Hiphil) means to set over, to give the oversight, to appoint. Hence, the idea of laws, or statutes, as the result of such an appointment, or such an authority.

Are right - Are equal, just, proper. They are such as are founded in wisdom and equity; not such as are the mere result of arbitrary appointment. The idea is that they are not merely appointed, or made binding by authority, but that they are in themselves equitable and just.

Rejoicing the heart - Making the heart glad by the fact that they are equitable and just - and glad as the result of obedience. It is always a source of true happiness when we can feel that we are under just and equal laws; laws in themselves right, and laws administered in righteousness and truth.

The commandment of the Lord - An appellation of the law of God from the idea of setting up, appointing, constituting; hence, of charging, or commanding. The idea here is not so much that the thing is right in itself as that it is appointed or ordered by God; that it is what he requires. The term is one that is often applied to the laws of God, Deuteronomy 6:1; Deuteronomy 7:11; Leviticus 4:13; Genesis 26:5; Exodus 15:26; Exodus 16:28; Psalm 78:7; Psalm 89:31; Psalm 119:6, Psalm 119:10, Psalm 119:19, Psalm 119:21, Psalm 119:32, Psalm 119:35, Psalm 119:47-48, Psalm 119:60, Psalm 119:66, Psalm 119:73, Psalm 119:86, Psalm 119:96, Psalm 119:98, Psalm 119:115, Psalm 119:127, Psalm 119:131, Psalm 119:143 then I Chapter I then I me me then I out a then I out me day.

Is pure - Free from all stain; from all imperfection; from any corrupt tendency. “Enlightening the eyes.” That is, giving us light and knowledge. The eyes are mentioned, as it is by them that we see where to go. The reference here is undoubtedly to the mind or soul as being enlightened by the truth of God. We are made by these commandments to see what is right and proper; to understand what we should do.

Verse 9

The fear of the Lord - The word rendered fear in this place - יראה *yir'âh* - means properly fear, terror, Jonah 1:10; then, reverence, or holy fear, Psalm 2:11; Psalm 5:7; and hence, reverence toward God, piety, religion - in which sense it is often used. Compare Proverbs 1:7; Job 28:28; Isaiah 11:2. Hence, by metonymy, it means the precepts of piety or religion. It is used evidently in this sense here, as referring to revelation, or to revealed truth, in the sense that it promotes proper reverence for God, or secures a proper regard for his name and worship.

Is clean - The word used here - טהור *ṭâhôr* - means properly clear, pure, in a physical sense, as opposed to filthy, soiled; then, in a ceremonial sense, as opposed to that which is profane or common Leviticus 13:17, and then, in a moral sense, as a clean heart, etc., Psalm 12:6; Psalm 51:10. It is also applied to pure gold, Exodus 25:11. The sense here is, that there is nothing in it that tends to corrupt the morals, or defile the soul. Everything

connected with it is of a pure or holy tendency, adapted to cleanse the soul and to make it holy.

Enduring for ever - Standing to all eternity. Not temporary; not decaying; not destined to pass away. It stands firm now, and it will stand firm for ever. That is, the law of God, considered as adapted to make the heart holy and pure, is eternal. What it is now it will always be. What its teaching is now it will continue to be forever.

The judgments of the Lord - The word here rendered judgments refers also to the revealed truth of God, with the idea that that has been judged or determined by him to be right and to be best. It is the result of the divine adjudication as to what is true, and what is best for man. The word is often used in this sense. Compare Exodus 21:1; Leviticus 18:5; Leviticus 26:43; compare Psalm 9:7, Psalm 9:16; Psalm 10:5.

Are true - Margin, truth. So the Hebrew. That is, they accord entirely with the truth, or are a correct representation of the reality of things. They are not arbitrary, but are in accordance with what is right. This supposes that there is such a thing as truth in itself, and the divine law conforms to that; not that God determines a thing by mere will, and that it is, therefore, right. God is infinitely perfect, and what he does will be always right, for that is in, accordance with his nature; but still his judgments are right, not because he makes that to be right which is determined by his will, but because his will is always in accordance with what is right.

And righteous altogether - That is, they are, without exception, just; or, they are altogether or wholly righteous. There is no one of them which is not just and proper. All that God determines, whether in giving or in executing his laws - all in his requirements, and all in the administration of his government - is always and wholly righteous. It is precisely what it should be in the case, and is, therefore, worthy of universal confidence.

Verse 10

More to be desired are they than gold - That is, his law; or, as in the preceding verse, his judgments. They are more valuable than gold; they are of such a nature that the soul should more desire to be in possession of them than to be in possession of gold, and should value them more. The psalmist here and in the following verses describes his estimate of the worth of revealed truth as he perceived it. In the previous verses he had shown its value in the abstract; he here speaks of his own feelings in regard to it, and

shows that he esteems it more than he did the objects most prized and valued among men.

Yea, than much fine gold - The word used here - פז *pâz* - means properly that which is purified or pure, and thus becomes an epithet of gold, particularly of gold that is purified. It is rendered fine gold here, as in Psalm 119:127; Proverbs 8:19; Isaiah 13:12; Lamentations 4:2; and pure gold in Psalm 21:3. The word does not occur elsewhere. Gold is an article of principal value among men; and the object here is to show that to a pious mind the revealed truth of God is esteemed to be the most valuable of all things - a treasure above all which men can accumulate, and all which men can prize. Every truly pious heart will respond to the sentiment expressed here.

Sweeter also than honey - Honey, the sweetest of all substances, and regarded as an article of luxury, or as most grateful to the taste. It entered largely into the food of the inhabitants of Palestine, as it does now in Switzerland and in some parts of Africa. The idea is that the truth of God, as revealed, is more grateful to the heart, or affords more pleasure to the soul, than that which is esteemed as the highest luxury to the palate. The meaning is, that it is loved; it is pleasant; it is agreeable; it is not regarded merely as necessary, and admitted to the soul because it is needful, as medicine is, but it is received into the soul because it is delighted in, or is more agreeable and pleasant than the most luscious article of food is to the taste. To this, also, the heart of every one who "has tasted the good word of God" will respond.

And the honeycomb - Margin, dropping of honeycombs. So the Hebrew. The allusion is to honey that drops from the combs, and therefore the most pure honey. That which is pressed from the combs will have almost inevitably a mixture of bee-bread and of the combs themselves. That which naturally flows from the comb will be pure.

Verse 11

Moreover by them is thy servant warned - The word used here - זהר *zâhar* - means, properly, to be bright, to shine; then, to cause to shine, to make light; and then, to admonish, to instruct, to warn. The essential idea here is, to throw light on a subject, so as to show it clearly; that is, to make the duty plain, and the consequences plain. Compare Leviticus 15:31; Ezekiel 3:18; Ezekiel 33:7. The word is rendered admonished in Ecclesiastes 4:13; Ecclesiastes 12:12; warn, and warned, in Psalm 19:11; 2

Kings 6:10; 2 Chronicles 19:10; Ezekiel 3:17-21; Ezekiel 33:3-9; teach, in Exodus 18:20; and shine, in Daniel 12:3. It does not occur elsewhere.

And in keeping of them there is great reward - Either as the result of keeping them, or in the act of keeping them. In the former sense it would mean that a careful observance of the laws of God will be followed by rewards hereafter; in the other sense, that the act of keeping them will be attended with so much peace and happiness as to constitute of itself an ample reward. In both these senses is the assertion here made a correct one. Both will be found to be true. It is not easy to determine which is the true sense. Perhaps the language implies both. The phrase "thy servant" refers to the author of the psalm, and shows that in this part of the psalm, in speaking of the "sweetness" of the law of God, and of its value as perceived by the soul, and of the effect of keeping that law, he is referring to his own experience.

Verse 12

Who can understand his errors? - The word rendered errors is derived from a verb which means to wander, to go astray; then, to do wrong, to transgress. It refers here to wanderings, or departures from the law of God, and the question seems to have been asked in view of the purity, the strictness, and the extent of the law of God. In view of a law so pure, so holy, so strict in its demands, and so extended in its requirements - asserting jurisdiction over the thoughts, the words, and the whole life - who can recall the number of times that he has departed from such a law? A sentiment somewhat similar is found in Psalm 119:96, "I have seen an end of all perfection; thy commandment is exceeding broad." The language is such as every man who has any just sense of the nature and the requirements of the law, and a just view of his own life, must use in reference to himself. The reason why any man is elated with a conviction of his own goodness is that he has no just sense of the requirements of the law of God; and the more anyone studies that law, the more will he be convinced of the extent of his own depravity.

Hence, the importance of preaching the law, that sinners may be brought to conviction of sin; hence the importance of presenting it constantly before the mind of even the believer, that he may be kept from pride, and may walk humbly before God. And who is there that can understand his own errors? Who can number up the sins of a life? Who can make an estimate of the number of impure and unholy thoughts which, in the course of many

years, have flitted through, or found a lodgment in the mind? Who can number up the words which have been spoken and should not have been spoken? Who can recall the forgotten sins and follies of a life - the sins of childhood, of youth, of riper years? There is but one Being in the universe that can do this. To Him all this is known. Nothing has escaped His observation; nothing has faded from His memory. Nothing can prevent His making a full disclosure of this if He shall choose to do so. It is in His power at any moment to overwhelm the soul with the recollection of all this guilt; it is in His power to cover us with confusion and shame at the revelation of the judgment-day. Our only hope - our only security - that He will not do this, is in His mercy; and that He may not do it, we should without delay seek His mercy, and pray that our sins may be so blotted out that they shall not be disclosed to us and to assembled worlds when we appear before Him.

Cleanse thou me from secret faults - The word here rendered secret means that which is hidden, covered, concealed. The reference is to those errors and faults which had been hidden from the eye of him who had committed them, as well as from the eye of the world. The sense is, that the law of God is so spiritual, and so pure, and so extended in its claims, that the author of the psalm felt that it must embrace many things which had been hidden even from his own view - errors and faults lying deep in the soul, and which had never been developed or expressed. From these, as well as from those sins which had been manifest to himself and to the world, he prayed that he might be cleansed. These are the things that pollute the soul; from these the soul must be cleansed, or it can never find permanent peace. A man who does not desire to be cleansed from all these "secret faults" cannot be a child of God; he who is a child of God will pray without ceasing that from these pollutions of the soul he may be made pure.

Verse 13

Keep back thy servant also - Restrain thy servant; or, do not suffer him to commit those sins.

From presumptuous sins - The word used here is manifestly designed to stand in some respects in contrast with the secret faults mentioned in the previous verse. The word - זד *zêd* - means properly that which is boiling, swelling, inflated; then proud, arrogant; with the accessory notion of shameless wickedness or impiety. Gesenius, Lexicon. The word is rendered proud in Psalm 86:14; Psalm 119:21, Psalm 119:51, Psalm 119:69, Psalm

119:78, Psalm 119:85, Psalm 119:122; Proverbs 21:24; Isaiah 13:11; Jeremiah 43:2; Malachi 3:15; Malachi 4:1. It does not occur elsewhere. The prevailing thought is that of pride, and the reference is particularly to sins which proceed from self-confidence; from reliance on one's own strength. The word does not mean open sins, or flagrant sins, so much as those which spring from self-reliance or pride. The prayer is substantially that he might have a proper distrust of himself, and might not be left by an improper reliance on his own power to the commission of sin. This also is said in view of the extent and spirituality of the law of God - expressing the earnest desire of the author of the psalm that he might not be left to violate a law so pure and holy.

Let them not have dominion over me - Let them not reign over me; that is, let them not get the mastery or the ascendancy over me. Let me not become the slave of sin; so subject to it that it shall domineer over me. Sin often secures that kind of triumph or mastery over the mind, making a slave of him who yields to it. The pious man alone is a true freeman. He is emancipated from the dominion of sin, and walks in true liberty: see John 8:32, John 8:36; Galatians 5:1.

Then shall I be upright - Hebrew: I shall be perfect. On the meaning of the word used here, see the note at Psalm 19:7. It means here that he would be truly a servant of God; or, that he would have this evidence that he was a friend of God, that he was kept from the indulgence of secret faults, and from open transgressions - that is, his piety would have completeness of parts; or, it would be shown to be true and genuine. It cannot be demonstrated from the use of the word that he supposed that he would be absolutely perfect or free from all sin. See the note at Job 1:1.

And I shall be innocent - This does not mean that he would be absolutely innocent, or free from all sin; but it means here, as it is explained in the following phrase, that he would be innocent of the great transgression, or would be free from that.

From the great transgression - Margin, as in Hebrew, much. It does not, refer to any one specific offence, but it means that he would be free from the transgression which would exist if he were not cleansed from secret faults, and if he were not kept back from presumptuous sins. He would be saved from the great guilt which would ensue if he should give unchecked indulgence to secret faults, and if he should be allowed to

commit the open sins which were the result of pride and over-weening self-confidence.

Verse 14

Let the words of my mouth - The words that I speak; all the words that I speak.

And the meditation of my heart - The thoughts of my heart.

Be acceptable in thy sight - Be such as thou wilt approve; or, be such as will be pleasing to thee; such as will give thee delight or satisfaction; such as will be agreeable to thee. Compare Proverbs 14:35; Isaiah 56:7; Isaiah 60:7; Jeremiah 6:20; Exodus 28:38; Leviticus 22:20-21; Leviticus 19:5. This supposes:

(a) that God has such control over our thoughts and words, that he can cause us to order them aright;

(b) that it is proper to pray to him to exert such an influence on our minds that our words and thoughts may be right and pure;

(c) that it is one of the sincere desires and wishes of true piety that the thoughts and words may be acceptable or pleasing to God.

The great purpose of the truly pious is, not to please themselves, or to please their fellow-men, (compare Galatians 1:10), but to please God. The great object is to secure acceptance with him; to have such thoughts, and to utter such words, that He can look upon them with approbation.

O Lord my strength - Margin, as in Hebrew, rock. Compare the note at Psalm 18:2.

And my redeemer - On the word used here, see the note at Job 19:25; compare Isaiah 41:14; Isaiah 43:14; Isaiah 44:6, Isaiah 44:24; Isaiah 47:4; Isaiah 63:16. The two things which the psalmist here refers to in regard to God, as the appellations dear to his heart, are

(a) that God is his Rock, or strength; that is, that he was his defense and refuge; and

(b) that he had rescued or redeemed him from sin; or that he looked to him as alone able to redeem him from sin and death.

It is not necessary to inquire here how far the psalmist was acquainted with the plan of salvation as it would be ultimately disclosed through the great Redeemer of mankind; it is sufficient to know that he had an idea of redemption, and that he looked to God as his Redeemer, and believed that he could rescue him from sin. The psalm, therefore, which begins with a contemplation of God in his works, appropriately closes with a contemplation of God in redemption; or brings before us the great thought that it is not by the knowledge of God as we can gain it from his works of creation that we are to be saved, but that the most endearing character in which he can be manifested to us is in the work of redemption, and that wherever we begin in our contemplation of God, it becomes us to end in the contemplation of his character as our Redeemer.

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PSALM 20

Introduction

This psalm purports to be "A Psalm of David," nor is there any reason to doubt that he wrote it. Of the precise occasion on which it was composed nothing can be known with certainty, for there is no historical statement on the point, and there is nothing in the psalm to indicate it. It would seem, however, from the psalm, that it was composed on some occasion when the king was about going to war, and that it was designed to be used by the people of the nation, and by the king and his hosts mustered for war, as expressing mutually their wishes in regard to the result, and their confidence in each other and in God. Or if it was not designed to be used by the people actually, it was intended to be a poetic expression of the real feelings of the king and the people in regard to the enterprise in which he was embarked.

According to this idea, and as seems to me to be manifest on the face of the psalm, it is composed of alternate parts as if to be used by the people, and by the king and his followers, in alternate responses, closing with a chorus to be used by all. If it was intended to be employed in public service, it was doubtless to be sung by alternate choirs, representing the people and the king.

The whole may be divided into three strophes or parts:

I. The first strophe, Psalm 20:1-5.

(a) the people, Psalm 20:1-5. They pray that the Lord would defend the king in the day of trouble; that the name of the God of Jacob would defend him; that he would send him help from the sanctuary, and strengthen him out of Zion; that he would remember his offerings and accept his burnt sacrifice; that he would grant him according to his own heart, and fulfill all his counsel.

(b) the king, Psalm 20:5, first part. He says, as expressive of the feeling with which the expedition was undertaken, "We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners."

II. The second strophe, Psalm 20:5 (latter part), and Psalm 20:6.

(a) the people, Psalm 20:5, latter clause; expressing a desire for his success and triumph, "The Lord fulfil all thy petitions."

(b) the king, Psalm 20:6; expressing confidence of success from the observed zeal and cooperation of the people: "Now know I that the Lord sayeth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand."

III. general chorus of all, Psalm 20:7-9. This is the language of exultation and triumph in God; of joyful trust in him. "Some," is the language of this chorus, "trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God," Psalm 20:7. Then they see their enemies fallen and subdued, while their armies stand upright and firm, Psalm 20:8. Then they call, in joyful exultation and triumph, on God as the great King over all, and supplicate his mercy and favor, Psalm 20:9.

This is, therefore, a patriotic and loyal psalm, full of confidence in the king as he starts on his expedition, full of desire for his success, and full of confidence in God; expressing union of heart between the sovereign and the people, and the union of all their hearts in the great God.

On the meaning of the phrase in the title, "To the chief Musician," see the note at the title to Psalm 4:1-8.

Verse 1

The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble - According to the view expressed in the introduction to the psalm, this is the language of the people praying for their king, or expressing the hope that he would be delivered from trouble, and would be successful in what he had undertaken, in the prosecution of a war apparently of defense. The word" trouble" here used would seem to imply that he was beset with difficulties and dangers; perhaps, that he was surrounded by foes. It seems that he was going forth to war to deliver his country from trouble, having offered sacrifices and prayers Psalm 20:3 for the purpose of securing the divine favor on the expedition. The point or the moment of the psalm is when those sacrifices had been offered, and when he was about to embark on his enterprise. At that moment the people lift up the voice of sympathy and of encouragement, and pray that those sacrifices might be accepted, and that he might find the deliverance which he had desired.

The name of the God of Jacob - The word name is often put in the Scriptures for the person himself; and hence, this is equivalent to saying, "May the God of Jacob defend thee." See Psalm 5:11; Psalm 9:10; Psalm

44:5; Psalm 54:1; Exodus 23:21. Jacob was the one of the patriarchs from whom, after his other name, the Hebrew people derived their name Israel, and the word seems here to be used with reference to the people rather than to the ancestor. Compare Isaiah 44:2. The God of Jacob, or the God of Israel, would be synonymous terms, and either would denote that he was the Protector of the nation. As such he is invoked here; and the prayer is, that the Great Protector of the Hebrew people would now defend the king in the dangers which beset him, and in the enterprise which he had undertaken.

Defend thee - Margin, as in Hebrew, set thee on a high place. The word means the same as defend him, for the idea is that of being set on a high place, a tower, a mountain, a lofty rock, where his enemies could not reach or assail him.

Verse 2

Send thee help - Margin, thy help. So the Hebrew. The idea is, such help as he needed; such as would make him safe.

From the sanctuary - From the tabernacle, or the holy place where God was worshipped, and where he was supposed to reside, Exodus 28:43; Exodus 29:30; Exodus 35:19; Exodus 39:1. This was his seat; his throne; where he abode among the people. Here, too, it would seem that he had been worshipped, and his aid implored, in view of this expedition; here the royal psalmist had sought to secure the divine favor by the presentation of appropriate sacrifices and offerings Psalm 20:3. The prayer here is, that God would accept those offerings, and hear those supplications, and would now send the desired help from the sanctuary where he resided; that is, that he would grant his protection and aid.

And strengthen thee - Margin, as in Hebrew, support thee. The idea is, that he would grant his upholding hand in the day of peril.

Out of Zion - The place where God was worshipped; the place where the tabernacle was reared. See the note at Psalm 2:6.

Verse 3

Remember all thy offerings - On the meaning of the word here used, see the note at Isaiah 1:13, where it is rendered oblations. The word occurs often in the Scriptures, and is sometimes rendered offering, and sometimes oblation. The word means an offering of any kind or anything that is presented to God, except a bloody sacrifice - anything offered as an expression of thankfulness, or with a view to obtain his favor. It is

distinguished from bloody sacrifices, which are expressed by the word in the following clause. The word here employed occurs in the Psalms only in the following places: Psalm 20:3; Psalm 40:6; Psalm 96:8; where it is rendered offering and offerings; Psalm 45:12, rendered gift; Psalm 72:10, rendered presents; and Psalm 141:2, rendered sacrifice. The use of the word in this place proves that such offerings had been made to God by him who was about to go forth to the war; and the prayer of the people here is that God would remember all those offerings; that is, that he would grant the blessing which he who had offered them had sought to obtain.

And accept - Margin, turn to ashes, or make fat. The Hebrew word - דשן *dâshên* - means properly to make fat, or marrowy, Proverbs 15:30; to pronounce or regard as fat; to be fat or satiated, or abundantly satisfied, Proverbs 13:4. It conveys also the notion of reducing to ashes; perhaps from the fact that the victim which had been fattened for sacrifice was reduced to ashes; or, as Gesenius supposes (Lexicon, see דשן *deshen*), because "ashes were used by the ancients for fattening, that is, manuring the soil." The prayer here seems to be that God would "pronounce the burnt-offering fat;" that is, that he would regard it favorably, or would accept it. This proves, also, that a sacrifice had been made with a view to propitiate the divine favor in regard to the expedition which had been undertaken; that is, a solemn act of devotion, according to the manner of worship which then obtained, had been performed with a view to secure the divine favor and protection. The example is one which suggests the propriety of always entering upon any enterprise by solemn acts of worship, or by supplicating the divine blessing; that is, by acknowledging our dependence on God, and asking his guidance and his protecting care.

Thy burnt sacrifice - The word used here denotes bloody offerings; see the note at Isaiah 1:11. These offerings were designed especially for the expiation of sin, and for thus securing the divine favor. They were an acknowledgment of guilt, and they were offered with a view to secure the pardon of sin, and, in connection with that, the favor of God. In similar circumstances we approach God, not by an offering which we make, whether bloody or bloodless, but through the one great sacrifice made by the Redeemer on the cross for the sins of the world.

Verse 4

Grant thee according to thine own heart - According to thy wishes; according to the desires of thy heart.

And fulfil all thy counsel - All that thou hast designed or undertaken in the matter; that is, may he enable thee to execute thy purpose.

Verse 5

We will rejoice in thy salvation - According to the idea of the psalm suggested in the introduction, this is a response of the king and those associated with him in going forth to battle. It expresses the joy which they would have in the expected deliverance from danger, and their conviction that through his strength they would be able to obtain it. The word salvation here means deliverance; to wit, from the anticipated danger. The phrase implies that God would interpose to save them; it expresses alike their confidence in that, and the fact that such a deliverance would fill their hearts with joy and rejoicing.

And in the name of our God - This indicates a sense of dependence on God, and also that the enterprise undertaken was in order to promote his honor and glory. It was not in their own strength, nor was it to promote the purposes of conquest and the ends of ambition; it was that God might be honored, and it was with confidence of success derived from his anticipated aid.

We will set up our banners - We will erect our standards; or, as we should say, we will unfurl our flag. All people, when they go to war, have standards or banners, whether flags or some other ensigns, around which they rally; which they follow; under which they fight; and which they feel bound to defend. Each nation has its own standard; but it is difficult to determine what precisely was the form of the standards used among the ancient Hebrews. Military standards, however, were early used (compare Numbers 1:52; Numbers 2:2-3, Numbers 2:10, Numbers 2:18, Numbers 2:25; Numbers 10:14, Numbers 10:25), and indeed were necessary whenever armies were mustered for war, For the forms of ancient standards, see the article in Kitto‘s Cyclopaedia of the Bible, “Standards.”

The Lord fulfil all thy petitions - The prayers offered in connection with the sacrifice referred to in Psalm 20:3 (compare Psalm 20:4). This, according to the view suggested in the introduction, is the response of the people, expressing their desire that the king might be successful in what he had undertaken, and that the prayers which had been offered for success might be answered.

Verse 6

Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed - Saveth, or will save, the king, who had been anointed, or consecrated by anointing to that office. Compare the note at Psalm 2:2. This, according to the view given in the introduction, is the response of the king. It expresses his confident assurance of success from the interest which the people had expressed in the enterprise, as referred to in the previous verses, and from the earnestness of their prayers in his behalf and in behalf of the enterprise. They had manifested such zeal in the cause, and they had offered so earnest petitions, that he could not doubt that God would smile favorably on the undertaking, and would grant success.

He will hear him from his holy heaven - Margin, "from the heaven of his holiness." So the Hebrew. Compare 1 Chronicles 21:26; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Nehemiah 9:27-28; Psalm 14:2; Psalm 102:19. heaven is represented as the dwelling-place of God, and it is there that he hears and answers our prayers. The meaning of the word "hear" in this passage is, that he will "favorably hear," or regard; that is, that he will "answer" the petition, or grant the request.

With the saving strength - That is, he will interpose with that saving strength. Literally, "with the strengths of salvation." The answer to the prayer will be manifest in the strength or power put forth by him to save.

Of his right hand - The right hand is the instrument by which mainly we execute our purposes; and by constant use it becomes in fact more fully developed, and is stronger than the left band. Hence, it is used to denote "strength." See Exodus 15:6; Judges 5:26; see Psalm 17:7, note; Psalm 18:35, note.

Verse 7

Some trust in chariots - This (see the introduction to the psalm) seems to be a "general chorus" of the king and the people, expressing the fullest confidence in God, and showing the true ground of their reliance. The general meaning is, that their entire trust was in God. This is put in strong contrast with others, who relied, some on their chariots, and some on their horses, while "they" relied alone on God. They who trusted in horses and in chariots would be overcome; they who trusted in God alone would triumph. The word rendered chariots - רכב *rekeb* - means properly riding, and then a vehicle for "riding," a wagon, a chariot. Here it refers to the war-chariot, or the vehicle for carrying armed men into battle. These furnished great advantages in war, by the speed with which they could be driven against an

enemy, and by the facilities in fighting from them. They were usually very simple. They consisted of "a light pole suspended between and on the withers of a pair of horses, the after end resting on a light axle tree, with two low wheels. Upon the axle stood a light frame, open behind, and floored for the warrior and his charioteer, who both stood within. On the sides of the frame hung the war-bow, in its case; a large quiver with arrows and darts had commonly a particular sheath. In Persia, the chariots, elevated upon wheels of considerable diameter, had four horses abreast; and in early ages, there were occasionally hooks or scythes attached to the axles." - Kitto, "Cyclo." In early ages these constituted a main reliance in determining the result of a battle.

And some in horses - Some in cavalry, commonly a very material reliance in war. The use of horses in war was early known in the world, for we find mention of them in the earliest periods of history.

But we will remember the name of the Lord our God - That is, we will remember God - the name, as before remarked, often being used to denote the person. The meaning is, We will not forget that our reliance is not on armies, but on God, the living God. Whatever instrumentality we may employ, we will remember always that our hope is in God, and that he only can give success to our arms.

Verse 8

They are brought down and fallen - That is, those who trust in chariots and horses. The reference here is undoubtedly to the enemies against whom the king was about to wage war, and the language here is indicative of his certain conviction that they would be vanquished. So certain was he now of this that he could speak of it as if it were already done. "They "are" brought down." He sees them in anticipation prostrate and subdued; he goes forth to war with the certainty on his mind that this would occur. The word rendered "brought down" - כרע *kâraʿ* - means "to bend," "to bow" (as the knees); and then it refers to one who bows down before an enemy, that is, one who is subdued, Isaiah 10:4; Isaiah 65:12; Psalm 72:9; Psalm 78:31.

But we are risen, and stand upright - That is, he sees this in anticipation. He is certain of success and triumph. Depressed though we may now be, yet we are certain of victory.

Verse 9

Save, Lord - "Yahweh, save." This is still an earnest prayer. Confident as they are of success and triumph, yet they do not forget their dependence on God; they do not forget that victory must come from his hand. There was, indeed, exultation, but it was exultation in the belief that God would grant success - an exultation connected with, and springing from prayer. Prayer is not inconsistent with the most confident anticipation of success in any undertaking; and confidence of success can only spring from prayer.

Let the King - That is, let "God," spoken of here as the Great King. The connection and the parallelism demand this interpretation, for to God only is this prayer addressed. He is here invoked as the supreme monarch. A king going forth to war implores the protection of a greater king than himself - the King of all nations; and who, therefore, had the disposal of the whole result of the conflict in which he was about to engage.

Hear us when we call - As we now call on him; its we shall call on him in the day of battle. Thus the close of the psalm corresponds with the beginning. In the beginning Psalm 20:1-4 there is an earnest "desire" that God would hear the suppliant in the day of trouble; in the close there is an earnest "prayer" to him from all the people that he "would" thus bear. The desire of the blessing goes forth in the form of prayer, for God only can grant the objects of our desire. The whole psalm, therefore, is an expression of a strong confidence in God; of a sense of the most complete dependence on him; and of that assurance of success which often comes into the soul, in an important and difficult undertaking, when we have committed the whole cause to God. The psalm, too, is a model for us to imitate when we embark in any great and arduous enterprise. The desire for success should be accompanied with earnest prayer and supplication on our part; and when our friends express the desire that we may be successful, there should have been on our part such acts of devotion - such manifest reliance on God - such religious trust - that they can simply pray for our success to be in accordance with our own prayer. Never should we look for success unless our undertaking has been preceded by prayer; and when our best preparations have been made, our hope of success is not primarily and mainly in them, but only in God.

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PSALM 21

Introduction

This psalm likewise purports to be "A Psalm of David," and there is no cause to doubt the correctness of the superscription which ascribes it to him. There is, however, no certain intimation at what time of his life, or on what occasion, it was composed, and it is impossible to determine these points.

The most probable supposition in regard to its composition seems to me to be, that it is a song of thanksgiving for the victory secured in answer to the prayer of himself and the people in the previous psalm. Nothing can be argued, indeed, on this point, from the mere fact that it stands in close connection with the previous psalm; but there are, it seems to me, internal marks that this was its design, and that it is the expression of a heart overflowing with gratitude, and, therefore, recalling not merely the immediate blessings of a recent victory, but also the other blessings with which God had crowned his life, Psalm 21:3-4.

Thus understood in regard to its origin, the psalm may be regarded as divided into the following parts:

I. Thanksgiving for success, or for granting the object which had been so earnestly sought, Psalm 21:1-7. In this thanksgiving the psalmist says that God had not only granted what had been asked Psalm 21:1-3, but that he had greatly "exceeded" this: he had granted far more than had been the literal request. He had added blessings which had not been specifically sought; he had made those blessings permanent and eternal, Psalm 21:4-7.

II. The general truth that "all" the foes of God would thus be overcome, and that the cause of truth would be finally triumphant, Psalm 21:8-12. This was "suggested" by the victory which had been achieved. As God had granted that victory, as he had so easily subdued the enemies of himself and of his people - as he had gone so far beyond the expectations and the hopes of those who had gone forth to the conflict, the idea is naturally suggested that it would be thus with all his foes, and that there would be ultimately a complete victory over them.

III. The expression of an earnest "desire" that God might be thus exalted, and might thus achieve a complete and final victory, Psalm 21:13,

For the meaning of the phrase, "To the chief Musician," in the title to the psalm, see the notes at Psalm 4:1-8.

Verse 1

The king shall joy in thy strength - King David, who had achieved the victory which he had desired and prayed for, Psalm 20:1-9. This is in the third person, but the reference is doubtless to David himself, and is to be understood as his own language. If it be understood, however, as the language of "the people," it is still an ascription of praise to God for his favor to their king. It seems better, however, to regard it as the language of David himself. The word ""strength"" here implies that all the success referred to was to be traced to God. It was not by the prowess of a human arm; it was not by the valor or skill of the king himself; it was by the power of God alone.

And in thy salvation - In the salvation or deliverance from foes which thou hast granted, and in all that thou doest to save. The language would embrace all that God does to save his people.

How greatly shall he rejoice! - Not only does he rejoice now, but he ever will rejoice. It will be to him a constant joy. Salvation, now to us a source of comfort, will always be such; and when we once have evidence that God has interposed to save us, it is accompanied with the confident anticipation that this will continue to be the source of our highest joy forever.

Verse 2

Thou hast given him his heart's desire - See the notes at Psalm 20:4. This had been the prayer of the people that God would "grant him according to his own heart, and fulfil all his counsel," and this desire had now been granted. All that had been wished; all that had been prayed for by himself or by the people, had been granted.

And hast not withholden - Hast not denied or refused.

The request of his lips - The request, or the desire which his lips had uttered. The meaning is, that his petitions had been filly granted.

Selah - See the notes at Psalm 3:2.

Verse 3

For thou preventest him - Thou goest before him; thou dost anticipate him. See Psalm 17:13, margin. Our word "prevent" is now most commonly used in the sense of "hinder, stop, or intercept." This is not the original meaning of the English word; and the word is never used in this sense in the Bible. The English word, when our translation was made, meant to "go before," to "anticipate," and this is the uniform meaning of it in our English version, as it is the meaning of the original. See the notes at Job 3:12. Compare Psalm 59:10; Psalm 79:8; Psalm 88:13; Psalm 95:2; Psalm 119:147-148; Amos 9:10; see the notes at 1 Thessalonians 4:15. The meaning here is, that God had "anticipated" him, or his desires. He had gone before him. He had designed the blessing even before it was asked.

With the blessings of goodness - Blessings "indicating" goodness on his part; blessings adapted to promote the "good" or the welfare of him on whom they were bestowed. Perhaps the meaning here is, not only that they were "good," but they "seemed" to be good; they were not "blessings in disguise," or blessings as the result of previous calamity and trial, but blessings where there was no trial - no shadow - no appearance of disappointment.

Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head - This does not refer to the time of his coronation, or the period when he was crowned a king, but it refers to the victory which he had achieved, and by which he had been made truly a king. He was crowned with triumph; he was shown to be a king; the victory was like making him a king, or setting a crown of pure gold upon his head. He was now a conqueror, and was indeed a king.

Verse 4

He asked life of thee - An expression similar to this occurs in Psalm 61:5-6, "For thou, O God, hast heard my vows; … Thou wilt prolong the king's life, and his years to many generations." The expression in both cases implies that there had been a prayer for "life," as if life were in danger. The expression itself would be applicable to a time of sickness, or to danger of any kind, and here it is used doubtless in reference to the exposure of life in going into battle, or in going forth to war. In this apprehended peril he prayed that God would defend him. He earnestly sought protection as he went forth to the perils of war.

And thou gavest it him - Thou didst hear and answer his prayer. He was saved from danger.

Even length of days forever and ever - Thou didst grant him more than he asked. He sought life for himself; thou bast not only granted that, but hast granted to him the assurance that he should live in his posterity to all generations. The idea is, that there would be an indefinite contination of his race. His posterity would occupy his throne, and there would be no end to his reign thus prolonged. Beyond all his petitions and his hopes, God bad given the assurance that his reign would be permanent and enduring. We cannot suppose that he understood this as if it were a promise made to him personally, that "he" would live and would occupy the throne forever; but the natural interpretation is that which would refer it to his posterity, and to the perpetuity of the reign of his family or descendants. A similar promise occurs elsewhere: 2 Samuel 7:13, 2 Samuel 7:16; compare the notes at Psalm 18:50. It is by no means an uncommon thing that God gives us more than we asked in our prayers. The offering of prayer is not only the means of securing the blessing which we asked, but also often of securing much more important blessings which we did not ask. If the expression were allowable it might be said that the prayer "suggested" to the divine mind the conferring of all needed blessings, or it indicates such a state of mind on the part of him who prays that God "takes occasion" to confer blessings which were not asked; as a request made by a child to a parent for a specific favor is followed not only by granting "that" favor, but by bestowing others of which the child did not think. The state of mind on the part of the child was such as to "dispose" the parent to grant much larger blessings.

Verse 5

His glory is great in thy salvation - Not in himself; not in anything that he has done, but in what thou hast done. The fact that thou hast saved him, and the manner in which it has been done, has put upon him great honor. He felt indeed that his condition as king, and as to the prospects before him, was one of great "glory" or honor; but he felt at the same time that it was not in "himself," or for anything that he had done: it was only in the ""salvation"" which "God" had conferred upon him. Every child of God, in like manner, has great "glory" conferred upon him, and his "glory" will be great forever; but it is not in himself, or in virtue of anything that he has done. It is "great" in the "salvation" of God:

(a) in the "fact" that God has interposed to save him; and

(b) in the "manner" in which it has been done.

The highest honor that can be put upon man is in the fact that God will save him.

Honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him -

(a) In making him a king;

(b) in the victories and triumphs which thou hast now given him, placing on his head, as it were, a brighter crown;

(c) in the promised perpetuity of his reign.

So we may say of the ransomed sinner - the child of God - now. Honour and majesty have been laid on him:

(a) in the fact that God has redeemed him;

(b) in the manner in which this has been accomplished;

(c) in his adoption into the family of God;

(d) in the rank and dignity which he occupies as a child of God;

(e) in the hope of immortal blessedness beyond the grave.

Verse 6

For thou hast made him most blessed for ever - Margin, as in Hebrew, "set him" to be "blessings." The expression in our translation, as it is now commonly understood, would mean that God had made him "happy" or "prosperous." This does not seem to be the sense of the original. The idea is, that he had made him a blessing to mankind or to the world; or, that he had made him to be a source of blessing to others. Blessings would descend through him; and though in the consciousness of this fact he would be "happy," and in that sense be "blessed," yet the idea is rather that blessings would be imparted or scattered through him. Blessings would abound to others through his own reign; blessings through the reigns of those who should succeed him in the throne; blessings would be imparted to men as far as the import of the promise extended, that is, forever, Psalm 21:4. The

word “forever” here undoubtedly, as it was used by the Spirit of inspiration, was designed to refer to the eternal blessings which would descend on mankind through the Messiah, the illustrious descendant of David. How far David himself understood this, is not material inquiry. He was undoubtedly directed by the Spirit of inspiration to use such language as would fairly and properly express this. It is right, therefore, for us so to regard it, and so to interpret and apply it.

Thou hast made him exceeding glad - Margin, as in Hebrew, “gladded him with joy.” The Hebrew phrase means, as it is expressed in our translation, that he had been made very glad, or very happy. The favors of God to him, alike in his protection and in the promises which had been made in reference to the future, were such as to make him happy in the highest degree.

With thy countenance - With thy favor. By lifting the light of thy countenance upon him; or, as we should express it, by “smiling” upon him. See the notes at Psalm 4:6.

Verse 7

For the king - David, the author of the psalm.

Trusteth in the Lord - All these blessings have resulted from his confiding in God, and looking to him for his favor and protection.

And through the mercy of the Most High - The favor of Him who is exalted above all; the most exalted Being in the universe. The word “mercy” here is equivalent to “favor.” He had already experienced God‘s favor; he looked for a continuance of it; and through that favor he was confident that he would never be shaken in his purposes, and that he would never be disappointed.

He shall not be moved - He shall be firmly established. That is, his throne would be firm; he himself would live a life of integrity, purity, and prosperity; and the promises which had been so graciously made to him, and which extended so far into the future, would all be acomplished. The truth taught here is, that however firm or prosperous our way seems to be, the continuance of our prosperity, and the completion of our hopes and our designs, depend wholly on the “mercy” or the favor of the Most High. Confiding in that, we may feel assured that whatever changes and reverses we may experience in our temporal matters, our ultimate welfare will be secure. Nothing can shake a hope of heaven that is founded on his gracious promises as made through a Saviour.

Verse 8

Thine hand shall find out - That is, Thou wilt find out - the hand being that by which we execute our purposes. This verse commences a new division of the psalm (see the introduction) - in which the psalmist looks forward to the complete and final triumph of God over "all" his enemies. He looks to this in connection with what God had done for him. He infers that he who had enabled him to achieve such signal conquests over his own foes and the foes of God would not withdraw his interposition until he had secured a complete victory for the cause of truth and holiness. In connection with the promise made to him respecting his permanent reign and the reign of his successors on the throne Psalm 21:4, he infers that God would ultimately subdue the enemies of truth, and would set up his kingdom over all.

All thine enemies - However they may attempt to conceal themselves - however they may evade the efforts to subdue them - yet they shall "all" be found out and overcome. As this was intended by the Spirit of inspiration, it undoubtedly refers to the final triumph of truth on the earth, or to the fact that the kingdom of God will be set up over all the world. All that are properly ranked among the enemies of God - all that are in any way opposed to him and to his reign - will be found out and conquered. All the worshippers of idols - all the enemies of truth - all the rejecters of revelation - all the workers of iniquity, - all that are infidels or scoffers - shall be found out and subdued. Either by being made to yield to the claims of truth, and thus becoming the friends of God, or by being cut off and punished for their sins - they will be all so overcome that God shall reign over all the earth. An important truth is further taught here, to wit, that no enemy of God can escape him. There is no place to which he can flee where God will not find him. "There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves," Job 34:22.

Thy right hand - See the notes at Psalm 17:7.

Those that hate thee - All thine enemies.

Verse 9

Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger - Thou shalt consume or destroy them, "as if" they "were" burned in a heated oven. Or, they shall burn, as if they were a flaming oven; that is, they would be wholly consumed. The word rendered "oven" - תנור *tannûr* - means either an "oven" or a "furnace." It is rendered "furnace and furnaces" in

Genesis 15:17; Nehemiah 3:11; Nehemiah 12:38; Isaiah 31:9; and, as here, "oven" or "ovens," in Exodus 8:3; Leviticus 2:4; Leviticus 7:9; Leviticus 11:35; Leviticus 26:26; Lamentations 5:10; Hosea 7:4, Hosea 7:6-7; Malachi 4:1. It does not occur elsewhere. The oven among the Hebrews was in the form of a large "pot," and was heated from within by placing the wood inside of it. Of course, while being heated, it had the appearance of a furnace. The meaning here is that the wicked would be consumed or destroyed "as if" they were such a burning oven; as if they were set on fire, and burned up.

The Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath - The same idea of the utter destruction of the wicked is here presented under another form - that they would be destroyed as if the earth should open and swallow them up. Perhaps the allusion in the language is to the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Numbers 16:32; compare Psalm 106:17.

And the fire shall devour them - The same idea under another form. The wrath of God would utterly destroy them. That wrath is often represented under the image of "fire." See Deuteronomy 4:24; Deuteronomy 32:22; Psalm 18:8; Matthew 13:42; Matthew 18:8; Matthew 25:41; Mark 9:44; 2 Thessalonians 1:8. Fire is the emblem by which the future punishment of the wicked is most frequently denoted.

Verse 10

Their fruit - Their offspring; their children; their posterity, for so the parallelism demands. The "fruit" is that which the tree produces; and hence, the word comes to be applied to children as the production of the parent. See this use of the word in Genesis 30:2; Exodus 21:22; Deuteronomy 28:4, Deuteronomy 28:11, Deuteronomy 28:18; Psalm 127:3; Hosea 9:16; Micah 6:7.

Shalt thou destroy from the earth - Thou shalt utterly destroy them. This is in accordance with the statement so often made in the Scriptures, and with what so often occurs in fact, that the consequences of the sins of parents pass over to their posterity, and that they suffer in consequence of those sins. Compare Exodus 20:5; Exodus 34:7; Leviticus 20:5; Leviticus 26:39; compare the notes at Romans 5:12-21.

And their seed - Their posterity.

From among the children of men - From among men, or the human family. That is, they would be entirely cut off from the earth. The truth taught here is, that the wicked will ultimately be destroyed, and that God

will obtain a complete triumph over them, or that the kingdom of righteousness shall be at length completely established. A time will come when truth and justice shall be triumphant, when all the wicked shall be removed out of the way; when all that oppose God and his cause shall be destroyed, and when God shall show, by thus removing and punishing the wicked, that he is the Friend of all that is true, and good, and right. The "idea" of the psalmist probably was that this would yet occur on the earth; the "language" is such, also, as may be applied to that ultimate state, in the future world, when all the wicked shall be destroyed, and the righteous shall be no more troubled with them.

Verse 11

For they intended evil against thee - literally, "They stretched out evil." The idea seems to be derived from "stretching out" or laying snares, nets, or gins, for the purpose of taking wild beasts. That is, they formed a plan or purpose to bring evil upon God and his cause: as the hunter or fowler forms a purpose or plan to take wild beasts or fowls. It is not merely a purpose in the head, as our word "intended" would seem to imply; it supposes that arrangements had been entered into, or that a scheme had been formed to injure the cause of God - that is, through the person referred to in the psalm. The purposes of wicked men against religion are usually much more than a mere "intention." The intention is accompanied with a scheme or plan in their own mind by which the act may be accomplished. The evil here referred to was that of resisting or overpowering him who was engaged in the cause of God, or whom God had appointed to administer his laws.

They imagined a mischievous device - They thought, or they purposed. The word rendered "mischievous device" מזמה *mezimmâh* - means properly "counsel, purpose; then prudence, sagacity;" then, in a bad sense, "machination, device, trick." Gesenius, Lexicon. Proverbs 12:2; Proverbs 14:17; Proverbs 24:8.

Which they are not able to perform - literally, "they could not;" that is, they had not the power to accomplish it, or to carry out their purpose. Their purpose was plain; their guilt was therefore clear; but they were prevented from executing their design. Many such designs are kept from being carried into execution for the want of power. If all the devices and the desires of the wicked were accomplished, righteousness would soon cease

in the earth, religion and virtue would come to an end, and even God would cease to occupy the throne.

Verse 12

Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back - Margin, "Thou shalt set them as a butt." The word back also is rendered in the margin "shoulder." The word translated "therefore" means in this placer or, and the rendering "therefore" obscures the sense. The statement in this verse in connection with the previous verse, is, that they would not be able to "perform" or carry out their well-laid schemes, "for" or "because" God would make them turn the back; that is, he had vanquished them. They were going forward in the execution of their purposes, but God would interpose and turn them back, or compel them to "retreat." The word rendered "back" in this place - שׁכם *shekem* - means properly "shoulder," or, more strictly, the "shoulder-blades," that is, the part where these approach each other behind; and then the upper part of the back. It is not, therefore, incorrectly rendered by the phrase "thou shalt make them turn "the back."" The expression is equivalent to saying that they would be defeated or foiled in their plans and purposes.

When thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings - Compare the notes at Psalm 11:2. That is, when God should go forth against them, armed as a warrior.

Against the face of them - Against them; or, in their very front. He would meet them as they seemed to be marching on to certain conquest, and would defeat them. It would not be by a side-blow, or by skillful maneuver, or by turning their flank and attacking them in the rear. Truth meets error boldly, face to face, and is not afraid of a fair fight. In every such conflict error will ultimately yield; and whenever the wicked come openly into conflict with God, they must be compelled to turn and flee.

Verse 13

Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength - This is the concluding part of the psalm (see the introduction), expressing a desire that God "might" be exalted over all his foes; or that his own strength might he so manifestly put forth that he would be exalted as he ought to be. This is the ultimate and chief desire of all holy created beings, that God might be exalted in the estimation of the universe above all other beings - or that he might so triumph over all his enemies as to reign supreme.

So will we sing and praise thy power - That is, as the result of thy being thus exalted to proper honor, we will unite in celebrating thy glory and thy power. Compare Revelation 7:10-12; Revelation 12:10; Revelation 19:1-3. This will be the result of all the triumphs which God will achieve in the world, that the holy beings of all worlds will gather around his throne and "sing and praise his power." The "thought" in the psalm is that God will ultimately triumph over all his foes, and that this triumph will be followed by universal rejoicing and praise. Come that blessed day!

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 22

Introduction

I. "The author of the psalm." This psalm is said to have been composed by David: "A Psalm of David;" compare the notes at the title of Psalm 3:1-8. It cannot be absolutely demonstrated that these titles to the psalms are all of them correct, as it cannot be supposed that they were affixed to them by the authors of the psalms themselves; and it is not absolutely known by whom they were prefixed. Of course there is no certain evidence that they were attached to the psalms by an inspired writer. Still they are to be presumed to be correct unless there is some clear evidence to the contrary. In this case there seems to be none. There is nothing in the psalm itself that is inconsistent with the supposition, and there are no historical evidences in the case which would make it necessary for us to set the title aside. The affixing of this title to the psalm undoubtedly implies that it wits the prevailing opinion, at the time when the collection of Psalms was made, that this was a psalm of David. Rosenmuller indeed doubts this; but he assigns no historical reasons for the doubt. Hitzig supposes that the author was Jeremiah, on the ground, as he says, that it is "in the broad and flowing style" of Jeremiah, but this is mere conjecture.

It is not necessary, however, to suppose that David, though he was the author of the psalm, refers to himself. If it be admitted that he was inspired, or even if "this" should be doubted, it would still be an open question to whom the psalm refers - whether to himself as an individual; - whether to an "imaginary" sufferer, designing to illustrate the feelings of piety in a time of sorrow; whether to the people of God, considered collectively; or whether to the Messiah. The mere fact of the "authorship" of the psalm determines none of these questions.

It is not known, and it cannot now be determined, on what occasion the psalm was written. It is expressive of the feelings of a pious sufferer, - of one who appears to be forsaken by God and by man. Perhaps there may have been occasions in the life of David to which the expressions in the psalm may have been applicable; but if so, it is impossible now to determine on which "one" of these trials of his life the psalm was composed. There is no one period in which, from the historical records of his life, we could be able to make out all the circumstances which are

mentioned in the psalm. There are, however, expressions in it which in their intensity, as expressing wretchedness and woe, seem to go beyond anything that occurred in his experience, and which lead naturally to the question whether he did not refer to some other than himself.

II. "The contents of the psalm." Various divisions of the psalm have been proposed, but there are no "marked" and "prominent" divisions in the psalm itself. Hengstenberg, and after him Prof. Alexander, divide it into three parts, or strophes,

(1) Psalm 22:1-10;

(2) Psalm 22:12-21;

(3) Psalm 22:22-31.

According to this, each strophe, as Hengstenberg remarks, would consist of ten verses - with an intermediate verse between the 10th and the 12th Psalm 22:11 connecting the first and second parts. Prof. Alexander supposes that Psalm 22:21 is a connecting link also between the second and third parts.

This division, however, seems fanciful and arbitrary; and it will present a more simple and clear view of the psalm to regard it as embracing two main things: I. The condition of the sufferer; and II. His consolations or supports in his travels.

I. The condition of the sufferer. This consists of two parts:

(1) His sufferings as derived from God, or as they spring from God;

(2) as they are derived from men, or as they spring from the treatment which he receives from men.

(1) As they are derived from God, Psalm 22:1-2.

(a) He is forsaken of God, Psalm 22:1.

(b) He cries to him day and night (or continually), and receives no answer, Psalm 22:2.

His prayer seems not to be heard, and he is left to suffer apparently unpitied and alone.

(2) his sufferings as derived front men, as produced by the treatment which he received from men.

Here there are "five" specifications; "five" sources of his affliction and sorrow.

"First." He was despised, reproached, derided by them in the midst of his other sufferings, Psalm 22:6-8; especially his piety, or confidence in God was ridiculed, for it now seemed as if God had abandoned him.

"Second." His enemies were fierce and ravenous as strong bulls of Bashan, or as a ravening and roaring lion, Psalm 22:12-13.

"Third." His sufferings were intense, so that his whole frame was relaxed and prostrated and crushed; he seemed to be poured out like water, and all his bones were out of joint; his heart was melted like wax; his strength was dried up like a potsherd; his tongue clave to his jaws, and he was brought into the dust of death, Psalm 22:14-15.

"Fourth." His enemies pierced his hands and his feet, Psalm 22:16.

"Fifth." They stripped him of his raiment, and parted his garments among themselves, Psalm 22:18.

II. His consolations or supports in his trials. These are scattered through the psalm, and consist of the following things:

(l) His unshaken confidence in God as holy, Psalm 22:3.

(2) his faith in God as the hearer of prayer, and especially on the ground that he "had" heard prayer in times past, Psalm 22:4-5.

(3) The fact that he had been himself early devoted to God, and cast upon him as his Protector from very childhood, and trained up for him, Psalm 22:9-11.

(4) The anticipated cricket or result of what he was then suffering, or the things to be accomplished "by" his sufferings, Psalm 22:19-31. There are mainly "two" things implied here as to the anticipated result of his sufferings:

(a) The establishment of a great principle that would "encourage" the friends of God, or those whom the sufferer calls his "brethren," Psalm 22:22-26.

(b) The world would be converted as the result of his sufferings, and the kingdom of God would be set up everywhere among men, Psalm 22:27-31,

These views of the psalm are apparent on its time, or are such as are suggested by the analysis without reference to the inquiry who was the author, or to whom it refers. The analysis of the psalm, however, necessarily leads:

III. To the inquiry "to whom the psalm refers:"

(1) It refers to a sufferer, and it is designed to describe his condition and his feelings, when apparently forsaken by God and man. At the same time, he is a "pious" sufferer, or one who has real trust in God, though God "appears" to have forsaken him.

(2) There seems to be no reason to suppose that the psalm refers to David himself, or that he means to describe his own feelings and condition. He was indeed a sufferer; and he often refers to his own sufferings in the Psalms. It is true, also, that there are expressions in this psalm which would be applicable to him, or which might refer to his condition. But there are none which can be regarded as "exclusively" applicable to him, and there are some which could "not" be applied to him. Of the latter class are the expressions, "They pierced my hands and my feet," Psalm 22:16; "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture," Psalm 22:18. We know of no circumstances in the life of David to which these expressions would be applicable; we have no reason to suppose that there were any in which what is here said would have been literally true of him. On the other hand, this language cannot with propriety be regarded as "figurative," for we cannot conceive of any circumstances which would be described by such figures of speech. The whole east of the psalm, moreover, is different from those in which David refers to his own sufferings.

(3) The psalm refers to a case not then actually before the psalmist, but to some case that might or would occur, as an individual or as a representative case. So far as the mere "language" of the psalm is concerned, this might have been a case purely imaginary, and the design might have been to describe a pious sufferer who seemed to be forsaken both by God and man, or to illustrate the nature of true submission to God "in" such trials. In other words, it might have been a "supposed" case

intended to show the nature of real religion under the severest forms of suffering; and, as a poet, the author of the psalm may have pictured to himself such an instance in order to show what the feelings of true piety would suggest in such circumstances, or what would be the effect of true religion then. It is true that this interpretation would not be quite obvious and natural, for we usually find such descriptions connected with real cases; but I am merely saying that "so far as the language of the psalm is concerned," if we had no other way to ascertain its meaning, this interpretation would be allowable - and if we could not attach the psalm properly to any real person, this explanation would be admissible. But in this case such an interpretation is unnecessary, for there "is" a real person to whom the language is applicable, and one to whom we may properly suppose an inspired writer would refer in the language which is used here.

(4) The psalm refers, therefore, I apprehend, originally and exclusively, to the Messiah. The proof of this is to be found in such circumstances as the following:

(a) Portions of it are expressly applied to him in the New Testament. The cry in Psalm 22:1, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is the very one used by the Redeemer when on the cross, Matthew 27:46. The language Psalm 22:8, "He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him," is the taunt which his enemies used as they passed by the cross, Matthew 27:43. The language Psalm 22:18, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture," is more than once expressly applied to him; and, in one instance, with the unequivocal statement that it was done "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," John 19:24. Compare Luke 23:34.

(b) We have evidence derived from the early Jewish interpreters. The modern Jews, indeed, affirm that it has no reference to the Messiah, for they reject the idea of a suffering Messiah altogether. Some of them suppose that it refers to David, and endeavor to find a fulfillment of it in his persecutions and trials. Others, as Kimchi and Jarchi, suppose that the psalm is applicable to the suffering Jewish people, and apply it to them in their trials and dispersions, as if "they" were forsaken of God. Some have supposed that it refers to the condition of the Jews in Babylon. But this was not the

prevailing interpretation among the ancient Jewish interpreters. See Jo. H. Michaelis, Com. in Ps., p. 138; and Schottgen de Messia, pp. 232ff. It is true that the opinion of the ancient Jews does not "demonstrate" that the psalm refers to the Messiah; but the fact that they "held" that opinion is an important circumstance in showing what is its fair and obvious interpretation, for there was everything to induce "them" to reject this explanation. In general, the Jews who lived in the times referred to here were opposed to the idea of a suffering Messiah; and the fact that they admitted the applicability of the psalm to the Messiah must have embarrassed them not a little in their early controversies with Christians, for the carly Christians with one voice maintained that it referred to the Messiah, and that it was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. The correspondence between the psalm and his sufferings was one of the arguments on which they relied in proving that he was the Christ; and if the Jews admitted that the psalm had reference to the Messiah, they would find it hard to meet the force of this argument. Their admission, therefore, under these circumstances, that it referred to the Messiah, could have arisen only from the fair and obvious interpretation of the psalm which it was not easy to set aside.

(c) The internal character of the psalm shows that it refers to the Messiah. This will appear more conclusively in the course of the exposition, in the entire correspondence as will be seen there between the psalm and the sufferings of the Redeemer. It will be found that really of the expressions in the psalm are as applicable to him as they would be if they were "history" instead of "prophecy;" if they had been penned "after," instead of having been penned "before" his sufferings occurred. It is sufficient here to refer to the expressions in Psalm 22:1, note; Psalm 22:7-8, note; Psalm 22:16, note; and Psalm 22:18, note.

(d) There is no improbability in supposing that David here refers to the Messiah. It cannot be denied that there is, in the Old Testament, from some cause, a frequent reference to a personage who was expected to appear in future time, and who was called "the Messiah." And it cannot be denied that he is often represented as a sufferer, and that his humiliation and sufferings are often described. "Somehow," beyond all question, the Jewish writers had formed the conception of such a personage, and they exhaust the

powers of their native tongue in their description of his person and his work. He was, in fact, their "hero;" he to whom they always looked, and on whom their descriptions usually terminated, wherever they began. Compare Isaiah 53:1-12, notes; and Psalm 4:1-8. The expression "Aijeleth Shahar" is rendered in the margin, "the hind of the morning." The word "Aijeleth" - אילת *'ayĕlĕth* - means a "hind," and is used as a term of endearment toward a female, Proverbs 5:19. It is found in Genesis 49:21, "Naphtali is a "hind" let loose." Also in 2 Samuel 22:34; Job 39:1; Psalm 18:33; Habakkuk 3:19; in each of which places it is rendered in the singular "hind," and in the plural "hinds." The word "Shahar" - שׁחר *shachar* - means "the aurora, the dawn, the morning." "The phrase ‹hind of the dawn' probably stands for the morning sun scattering his first rays upon the earth, as the Arabian poets call the rising sun "the gazelle," comparing his rays with the horns of that animal."

Gesenius, Lexicon - The image is one of gladness, "as if" the rays of the sun leaped and bounded over the hills with joyousness as the hart or hind does. But why such a title is given to this psalm can be only a matter of conjecture. It would seem most probable that these words were the beginning of some other psalm or hymn that was sung to a set piece of music, and that the design was, as indicated by this title, that this psalm was to be sung to the same tune. A tune might not improbably be known then, as it is in fact sometimes now, by the first or opening words of the piece which was commonly sung in that measure. Thus we have hynms so constantly sung to certain tunes that the mention of the first line would be a sufficient suggestion of the strain of music in which it was to be sung. It would be, for example, sufficient to say that it was to be sung to the same tune as "From Greenland's icy mountains;" or, "All hail the power of Jesus' name;" or, "I would not live alway." Other views of the meaning of the phrase may be seen in Rosenmuller, "Com. *in loc*." Rosenmuller himself adopts the views here expressed, and sustains his opinion by the authority of Bochart.

Verse 1

My God, my God - These are the very words uttered by the Saviour when on the cross Matthew 27:46; and he evidently used them as best adapted of all the words that could have been chosen to express the extremity of his sorrow. The fact that he employed them may be referred to

as “some” evidence that the psalm was designed to refer to him; though it must be admitted that this circumstance is no conclusive proof of such a design, since he might have used words having originally another reference, as best fitted to express his own sufferings. The language is abrupt, and is uttered without any previous intimation of what would produce or cause it. It comes from the midst of suffering - from one enduring intense agony - as if a new form of sorrow suddenly came upon him which he was unable to endure. That new form of suffering was the feeling that now he was forsaken by the last friend of the wretched - God himself. We may suppose that he had patiently borne all the other forms of trial, but the moment the thought strikes him that he is forsaken of God, he cries out in the bitterness of his soul, under the pressure of anguish which is no longer to be borne. All other forms of suffering he could bear. All others he had borne. But this crushes him; overpowers him; is beyond all that the soul can sustain - for the soul may bear all else but this. It is to be observed, however, that the sufferer himself still has confidence in God. He addresses him as his God, though he seems to have forsaken him: “My God; My God.”

Why hast thou forsaken me? - Why hast thou abandoned me, or left me to myself, to suffer unaided and alone? As applicable to the Saviour, this refers to those dreadful moments on the cross when, forsaken by people, he seemed also to be forsaken by God Himself. God did not interpose to rescue him, but left him to bear those dreadful agonies alone. He bore the burden of the world‘s atonement by himself. He was overwhelmed with grief, and crushed with pain, for the sins of the world, as well as the agonies of the cross, had come upon him. But there was evidently more than this; “what” more we are unable fully to understand! There was a higher sense in which he was forsaken of God, for no mere physical sufferings, no pains of dying even on the cross, would have extorted this cry. If he had enjoyed the light of his Father‘s countenance; if these had been merely physical sufferings; if there was nothing else than what is apparent to our view in the record of those sufferings, we cannot suppose that this cry would have been heard even on the cross.

There is evidently some sense in which it was true that the dying Saviour was given up to darkness - to mental trouble, to despair, “as if” He who is the last hope of the suffering and the dying - the Father of mercies - had withdrawn from him; as if he were personally; a sinner; as if he were himself guilty or blameworthy on account of the sins for which he was

making an expiation. In some sense he experienced what the sinner will himself experience when, for his own sins, he will be at last forsaken of God, and abandoned to despair. Every word in this wonderful exclamation may be supposed to be emphatic. "Why." What is the cause? How is it to be accounted for? What end is to be answered by it? "Hast thou." Thou, my Father; thou, the comforter of those in trouble; thou, to whom the suffering and the dying may look when all else fails. "Forsaken." Left me to suffer alone; withdrawn the light of thy countenance - the comfort of thy presence - the joy of thy manifested favor. "Me." Thy well-beloved Son; me. whom thou hast sent into the world to accomplish thine own work in redeeming man; me, against whom no sin can be charged, whose life has been perfectly pure and holy; why, now, in the extremity of these sufferings, hast thou forsaken me, and added to the agony of the cross the deeper agony of being abandoned by the God whom I love, the Father who loved me before the foundation of the world, John 17:24. There is a reason why God should forsake the wicked; but why should he forsake his own pure and holy Son in the agonies of death?

Why art thou so far from helping me? - Margin, from my salvation. So the Hebrew. The idea is that of one who stood so far off that he could not hear the cry, or that he could not reach out the hand to deliver. Compare Psalm 10:1.

And from the words of my roaring - The word used here properly denotes the roaring of a lion, Job 4:10; Isaiah 5:29; Zechariah 11:3; and then the outcry or the groaning of a person in great pain, Job 3:24; Psalm 32:3. It refers here to a loud cry for help or deliverance, and is descriptive of the intense suffering of the Redeemer on the cross. Compare Matthew 27:50; Luke 23:46.

Verse 2

O my God, I cry in the daytime - This, in connection with what is said at the close of the verse, "and in the night-season," means that his cry was incessant or constant. See the notes at Psalm 1:2. The whole expression denotes that his prayer or cry was continuous, but that it was not heard. As applicable to the Redeemer it refers not merely to the moment when he uttered the cry as stated in Psalm 22:1, but to the continuous sufferings which he endured as if forsaken by God and men. His life in general was of that description. The whole series of sorrows and trials through which he

passed was as if he were forsaken by God; as if he uttered a long continuous cry, day and night, and was not heard.

But thou hearest not - Thou dost not "answer" me. It is as if my prayers were not heard. God "hears" every cry; but the answer to a prayer is sometimes withheld or delayed, as if he did not hear the voice of the suppliant. Compare the notes at Daniel 10:12-13. So it was with the Redeemer. He was permitted to suffer without being rescued by divine power, as if his prayers had not been heard. God seemed to disregard his supplications.

And in the night-season - As explained above, this means "constantly." It was literally true, however, that the Redeemer's most intense and earnest prayer was uttered in the night-season, in the garden of Gethsemane.

And am not silent - Margin, "there is no silence to me." Hebrew: "There is not silence to me." The idea is, that he prayed or cried incessantly. He was never silent. All this denotes intense and continuous supplication, supplication that came from the deepest anguish of the soul, but which was unheard and unanswered. If Christ experienced this, who may not?

Verse 3

But thou art holy - Thou art righteous and blameless. This indicates that the sufferer had still unwavering confidence in God. Though his prayer seemed not to be heard, and though he was not delivered, he was not disposed to blame God. He believed that God was righteous, though he received no answer; he doubted not that there was some sufficient reason why he was not answered. This is applicable, not only to the Redeemer, in whom it was most fully illustrated, but also to the people of God everywhere. It expresses a state of mind such as all true believers in God have - confidence in him, whatever may be their trials; confidence in him, though the answer to their prayers may be long delayed; confidence in him, though their prayers should seem to be unanswered. Compare the notes at Job 13:15.

O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel - That dwellest where praise is celebrated; that seemest to dwell in the midst of praises. The language here refers to the praises offered in the tabernacle or temple. God was supposed to dwell there, and he was surrounded by those who praised him. The sufferer looks upon him as worshipped by the multitude of his people; and the feeling of his heart is, that though he was himself a sufferer - a great and apparently unpitied sufferer - though he, by his afflictions, was

not permitted to unite in those lofty praises, yet he could own that God was worthy of all those songs, and that it was proper that they should be addressed to him.

Verse 4

Our fathers trusted in thee - This is a plea of the sufferer as drawn from the character which God had manifested in former times. The argument is, that he had interposed in those times when his people in trouble had called upon him; and he now pleads with God that he would manifest himself to him in the same way. The argument derives additional force also from the idea that he who now pleads was descended from them, or was of the same nation and people, and that he might call them his ancestors. As applicable to the Redeemer, the argument is that he was descended from those holy and suffering men who had trusted in God, and in whose behalf God had so often interposed. He identifies himself with that people; he regards himself as one of their number; and he makes mention of God‘s merciful interposition in their behalf, and of the fact that he had not forsaken them in their troubles, as a reason why he should now interpose in his behalf and save him. As applicable to others, it is an argument which the people of God may always use in their trials - that God has thus interposed in behalf of his people of former times who trusted in him, and who called upon him. God is always the same. We may strengthen our faith in our trials by the assurance that he never changes; and, in pleading with him, we may urge it as an argument that he has often interposed when the tried and the afflicted of his people have called upon him.

They trusted, and thou didst deliver them - They confided in thee; they called on thee; thou didst not spurn their prayer; thou didst not forsake them.

Verse 5

They cried unto thee - They offered earnest prayer and supplication.

And were delivered - From dangers and trials.

They trusted in thee, and were not confounded - They were not disappointed. Literally, “they were not ashamed.” That is, they had not the confusion which those have who are disappointed. The idea in the word is, that when men put their trust in anything and are disappointed, they are conscious of a species of “shame” as if they had been foolish in relying on that which proved to be insufficient to help them; as if they had manifested a want of wisdom in not being more cautious, or in supposing that they

could derive help from that which has proved to be fallacious. So in Jeremiah 14:3, "Their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters; they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; "they were ashamed and confounded," and covered their heads." That is, they felt as if they had acted "foolishly" or "unwisely" in expecting to find water there. Compare the notes at Job 6:20. In the expression here, "they trusted in thee, and were not confounded," it is meant that men who confide in God are never disappointed, or never have occasion for shame as if herein they had acted foolishly. They are never left to feel that they had put their trust where no help was to be found; that they had confided in one who had deceived them, or that they had reason to be ashamed of their act as an act of foolishness.

Verse 6

But I am a worm, and no man - In contrast with the fathers who trusted in thee. They prayed, and were heard; they confided in God, and were treated as men. I am left and forsaken, as if I were not worth regarding; as if I were a grovelling worm beneath the notice of the great God. In other words, I am treated as if I were the most insignificant, the most despicable, of all objects - alike unworthy the attention of God or man. By the one my prayers are unheard; by the other I am cast out and despised. Compare Job 25:6. As applicable to the Redeemer, this means that he was forsaken alike by God and men, as if he had no claims to the treatment due to a "man."

A reproach of men - Reproached by men. Compare Isaiah 53:3, and the notes at that verse.

Despised of the people - That is, of the people who witnessed his sufferings. It is not necessary to say how completely this had a fulfillment in the sufferings of the Saviour.

Verse 7

All they that see me laugh me to scorn - They deride or mock me. On the word used here - לעג *lâʿag* - see the notes at Psalm 2:4. The meaning here is to mock, to deride, to treat with scorn. The idea of laughing is not properly in the word, nor would that necessarily occur in the treatment here referred to. How completely this was fulfilled in the case of the Saviour, it is not necessary to say. Compare Matthew 27:39, "And they that passed by, reviled him." There is no evidence that this literally occurred in the life of David.

They shoot out the lip - Margin, "open." The Hebrew word - פטר *pâṭar* - means properly "to split, to burst open;" then, as in this place, it means to open wide the mouth; to stretch the mouth in derision and scorn. See Psalm 35:21, "They opened their mouth wide against me." Job 16:10, "they have gaped upon me with their mouth."

They shake the head - In contempt and derision. See Matthew 27:39, "Wagging their heads."

Verse 8

He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him - Margin, "He rolled himself on the Lord." The margin expresses the true sense of the Hebrew word. The idea is that of being under the pressure of a heavy burden, and of rolling it off, or casting it on another. Hence, the word is often used in the sense of committing to another; entrusting anything to another; confiding in another. Psalm 37:5, "commit thy way unto the Lord;" Margin, as in Hebrew: "Roll thy way upon the Lord." Proverbs 16:3, "commit thy works unto the Lord," Margin, as in Hebrew: "Roll." The language here is the taunting language of his enemies, and the meaning is that he had professed to commit himself to the Lord as if he were his friend; he had expressed confidence in God, and he believed that his cause was sate in His hand. This, too, was actually fulfilled in the ease of the Saviour. Matthew 27:43, "he trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him." It is one of the most remarkable instances of blindness and infatuation that has ever occurred in the world, that the Jews should have used this language in taunting the dying Redeemer, without even suspecting that they were fulfilling the prophecies, and demonstrating at the very time when they were reviling him that he was the true Messiah.

Let him deliver him - Let him come and save him. Since he professes to belong to God; since he claims that God loves him and regards him as his friend, let him come now and rescue one so dear to him. He is hopelessly abandoned by men. If God chooses to have one so abject, so despised, so forsaken, so helpless, let him come now and take him as his own. We will not rescue him; we will do nothing to save him, for we do not need him. If God wants him, let him come and save him. What blasphemy! What an exhibition of the dreadful depravity of the human heart was manifested in the crucifixion of the Redeemer!

Seeing he delighted in him - Margin, "if he delight in him." The correct rendering is," for he delighted in him." That is, it was claimed by the

sufferer that God delighted in him. If this is so, say they, let him come and rescue one so dear to himself. Let him show his friendship for this vagrant, this impostor, this despised and worthless man

Verse 9

But thou art he that took me out of the womb - I owe my life to thee. This is urged by the sufferer as a reason why God should now interpose and protect him. God had brought him into the world, guarding him in the perils of the earliest moments of his being, and he now pleads that in the day of trouble God will interpose and save him. There is nothing improper in applying this to the Messiah. He was a man, with all the innocent propensities and feelings of a man; and no one can say but that when on the cross - and perhaps with special fitness we may say when he saw his mother standing near him John 19:25 - these thoughts may have passed through his mind. In the remembrance of the care bestowed on his early years, he may now have looked with an eye of earnest pleading to God, that, if it were possible, he might deliver him.

Thou didst make me hope - Margin, "Keptest me in safety." The phrase in the Hebrew means, Thou didst cause me to trust or to hope. It may mean here either that he was made to cherish a hope of the divine favor "in very early life," as it were when an infant at the breast; or it may mean that he had cause then to hope, or to trust in God. The former, it seems to me, is probably the meaning; and the idea is, that frown his earliest years he had been lea to trust in God; and he now pleads this fact as a reason why he should interpose to save him. Applied to the Redeemer as a man, it means that in his earliest childhood he had trusted in God. His first breathings were those of piety. His first aspirations were for the divine favor. His first love was the love of God. This he now calls to remembrance; this he now urges as a reason why God should not with. draw the light of his countenance, and leave him to suffer alone. No one can prove that these thoughts did not pass through the mind of the Redeemer when he was enduring the agonies of desertion on the cross; no one can show that they would have been improper.

Upon my mother's breast - In my earliest infancy. This does not mean that he literally cherished hope then, but that he had done it in the earliest period of his life, as the first act of his conscious being.

Verse 10

I was cast upon thee from the womb - Upon thy protection and care. This, too, is an argument for the divine interposition. He had been, as it were, thrown early in life upon the protecting care of God. In some special sense he had been more unprotected and defenseless than is common at that period of life, and he owed his preservation then entirely to God. This, too, may have passed through the mind of the Redeemer on the cross. In those sad and desolate moments he may have recalled the scenes of his early life - the events which had occurred in regard to him in his early years; the poverty of his mother, the manger, the persecution by Herod, the flight into Egypt, the return, the safety which he then enjoyed from persecution in a distant part of the land of Palestine, in the obscure and unknown village of Nazareth. This too may have occurred to his mind as a reason why God should interpose and deliver him from the dreadful darkness which had come over him now.

Thou art my God from my mother‘s belly - Thou hast been my God from my very childhood. He had loved God as such; be had obeyed him as such; he had trusted him as such; and he now pleads this as a reason why God should interpose for him.

Verse 11

Be not far from me - Do not withdraw from me; do not leave or forsake me.

For trouble is near - Near, in the sense that deep sorrow has come upon me; near, in the sense that I am approaching a dreadful death.

For there is none to help - Margin, as in Hebrew, “not a helper.” There were those who would have helped, but they could not; there were those who could have helped, but they would not. His friends that stood around the cross were unable to aid him; his foes were unwilling to do it; and he was left to suffer unhelped.

Verse 12

Many bulls have compassed me - Men with the fierceness and fury of bulls. Compare Isaiah 51:20; Psalm 68:30.

Strong bulls of Bashan - The country of Bashan embraced the territory which was on the east of the Jordan, north of Gilead, which was given to the half tribe of Manasseh: compare Genesis 14:5 with Joshua 12:4-6. It was distinguished as pasture land for its richness. Its trees and its breed of cattle are frequently referred to in the Scriptures. Thus in Deuteronomy 32:14, “rams of the breed of Bashan” are mentioned; in Isaiah 2:13,

Zechariah 11:2, “oaks of Bashan” are mentioned in connection with the cedars of Lebanon; in Amos 4:1, “the kine of Bashan” are mentioned. The bulls of Bashan are here alluded to as remarkable for their size, their strength, and their fierceness; and are designed to represent men that were fierce, savage, and violent. As applied to the Redeemer, the allusion is to the fierce and cruel men that persecuted him and sought his life. No one can doubt that the allusion is applicable to his persecutors and murderers; and no one can show that the thought indicated by this phrase also may not have passed through the mind of the Redeemer when on the cross.

Verse 13

They gaped upon me with their mouths - Margin, as in Hebrew, “opened their mouths against me.” That is, they opened their mouths wide as if they would devour me, as a lion does when he seizes upon his prey. In Psalm 22:7 they are represented as “opening” the mouth for another purpose - that of derision or scorn; here they are described as if they were fierce and wild beasts ready to fall upon their prey.

As a ravening and roaring lion - The word “ravening” means “voraciously devouring,” and the allusion in the Hebrew word is to the lion as he tears his prey - טרף *ṭâraph* - rending it in pieces to devour it. All this is designed to denote the greediness with which the enemies of the Redeemer sought his life.

Verse 14

I am poured out like water - The sufferer now turns from his enemies, and describes the effect of all these outward persecutions and trials on himself. The meaning in this expression is, that all his strength was gone. It is remarkable that we have a similar expression, which is not easily accounted for, when we say of ourselves that “we are as weak as water.” An expression similar to this occurs in Joshua 7:5: “The hearts of the people melted, and became as water.” Compare Lamentations 2:19; Psalm 58:7. “My bones are out of joint.” Margin, “sundered.” The Hebrew word - פרד *pârad* - means “to break off, to break in pieces, to separate by breaking;” and then, to be separated, or divided. It is not necessary to suppose here that his bones were literally dislocated or “put out of joint,” anymore than it is necessary to suppose that he was literally “poured out like water,” or that his heart was literally “melted like wax” within him. The meaning is that he was utterly prostrated and powerless; he was as if his bones had been dislocated, and he was unable to use his limbs.

My heart is like wax - The idea here also is that of debility. His strength seemed all to be gone. His heart was no longer firm; his vigour was exhausted.

It is melted in the midst of my bowels - Or, within me. The word bowels in the Scriptures is not restricted in its signification as it is with us. It embraces the upper parts of the viscera as well as the lower, and consequently would include that part in which the heart is situated. See the notes at Isaiah 16:11. The meaning here is that his heart was no longer firm and strong. As applied to the Redeemer, this would refer to the prostration of his strength in his last struggle; and no one can prove that these thoughts did not pass through his mind when on the cross.

Verse 15

My strength is dried up like a potsherd, - A "potsherd" is a fragment of a broken pot, or a piece of earthenware. See Isaiah 45:9, note; and Job 2:8, note. The meaning here is, that his strength was not vigorous like a green tree that was growing, and that was full of sap, but it was like a brittle piece of earthenware, so dry and fragile that it could be easily crumbled to pieces.

And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws - See the notes at Job 29:10. The meaning here is, that his mouth was dry, and he could not speak. His tongue adhered to the roof of his mouth so that he could not use it - another description of the effects of intense thirst. Compare John 19:28.

And thou hast brought me into the dust of death - Or, as we should say, "to dust" - "to the grave" - to the dust where death reigns. See the notes at Daniel 12:2. The meaning is, that he was near death; or, was just ready to die. Who can show that the Redeemer when on the cross may not in his own meditations have gone over these very expressions in the psalm as applicable to himself?

Verse 16

For dogs have compassed me - Men who resemble dogs; harsh, snarling, fierce, ferocious. See Philemon 3:2, note; and Revelation 22:15, note. No one can doubt that this is applicable to the Redeemer.

The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me - That is, they have surrounded me; they have come around me on all sides so that I might not escape. So they surrounded the Redeemer in the garden of Gethsemane when they arrested him and bound him; so they surrounded him when on

his trial before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate; and so they surrounded him on the cross.

They pierced my hands and my feet - This passage is attended with more difficulty than perhaps any other part of the psalm. It is remarkable that it is nowhere quoted or referred to in the New Testament as applicable to the Saviour; and it is no less remarkable that there is no express statement in the actual history of the crucifixion that either the hands or the feet of the Saviour were pierced, or that he was nailed to the cross at all. This was not necessarily implied in the idea of crucifixion, for the hands and the feet were sometimes merely bound to the cross by cords, and the sufferer was allowed to linger on the cross thus suspended until he died from mere exhaustion. There can be no doubt, however, that the common mode of crucifixion was to nail the hands to the transverse beam of the cross, and the feet to the upright part of it. See the description of the crucifixion in the notes at Matthew 27:31-32. Thus, Tertullian, speaking of the sufferings of Christ, and applying this passage to his death, says that "this was the special or proper - *"propria"* - severity of the cross." Adv. Marcionem, iii. 19, ed. Wurtz, I. p. 403. See Hengstenberg's Christology, 1,139. The great difficulty in this passage is in the word rendered in our version, "they pierced" - כארי *kâ'ăriy* It occurs only in one other place, Isaiah 38:13, where it means as a lion. This would undoubtedly be the most natural interpretation of the word here, unless there were good reasons for setting it aside; and not a few have endeavored to show that this is the true rendering. According to this interpretation, the passage would mean, "As lions, they (that is, my enemies) surround (gape upon) my hands and my feet; that is, they threaten to tear my limbs to pieces." Gesenius, Lexicon. This interpretation is also that of Aben Ezra, Ewald, Paulus, and others. But, whatever may be the true explanation, there are very serious objections to this one.

(a) It is difficult to make sense of the passage if this is adopted. The preceding word, rendered in our version "enclosed," can mean only "surrounded" or "encompassed," and it is difficult to see how it could be said that a lion could "surround" or "encompass" "the hands and the feet." At all events, such an interpretation would be harsh and unusual.

(b) According to this interpretation the word "me" - "enclosed me" - would be superfluous; since the idea would be, "they enclose or surround

my hands and my feet."

(c) All the ancient interpreters have taken the word here to be a verb, and in all the ancient versions it is rendered as if it were a verb.

Even in the Masorah Parva it is said that the word here is to be taken in a different sense from what it has in Isaiah 38:13, where it plainly means a lion. Gesenius admits that all the ancient interpreters have taken this as a verb, and says that it is "certainly possible" that it may be so. He says that it may be regarded as a participle formed in the Aramaic manner (from כּוּר *kûr*), and in the plural number for כּארים *kâ'ăriym* and says that in this way it would be properly rendered, "piercing, my hands and my feet;" that is, as he says, "my enemies, who are understood in the dogs." From such high authority, and from the uniform mode of interpreting the word among the ancients, it may be regarded as morally certain that the word is a verb, and that it is not to be rendered, as in Isaiah 38:13, "as a lion." The material question is, What does the verb mean? The verb - כּוּר *kûr* - properly means "to dig, to bore through, to pierce."

Thus used, according to Gesenius, it would mean "piercing;" and if the word used here is a verb, he supposes that it would refer to the enemies of David as wounding him, or piercing him, "with darts and weapons." He maintains that it is applicable to David literally, and he sees no reason to refer it to the Messiah. But, if so, it is natural to ask why "the hands" and "the feet" are mentioned. Certainly it is not usual for darts and spears thrown by an enemy to injure the hands or the feet particularly; nor is it customary to refer to the hands or the feet when describing the effects produced by the use of those weapons. If the reference were to the enemies of David as wounding him with darts and spears, it would be much more natural to refer to the body in general, without specifying any of the particular members of the body. DeWette renders it "fesseln" - "they bind my hands and my feet."

He remarks, however, in a note, that according to the ancient versions, and the codices of Kennicott and DeRossi, it means *durchbohren* - bore through. Aquila, Symmachus, and Jerome in five codices, says he, render it bind. The Septuagint renders it ὤρυξαν *ōruxan* - "they pierced." The Latin

Vulgate the same, *"foderunt."* See the Syriac. For these reasons it seems to me that the common rendering is the true one, and that the meaning is, that, in some proper sense, the enemies here referred to "pierced or bored through" the hands and the feet of the sufferer. Evidently this could not be literally applied to David, for there is not the least authority for supposing that this ever happened to him; nor, as has been shown, was such a thing probable. A casual dart, or the stroke of a spear, might indeed strike the hand or the foot; but it would be unusual and remarkable if they should strike those members of the body and leave the other parts uninjured, so as to make this a matter for special notice; and even if they did strike those parts, it would be every way unlikely that they would "pierce them, or bore them through."

Such an event would be so improbable that we may assume that it did not occur, unless there was the most decisive evidence of the fact. Nor is there the least probability that the enemies of David would pierce his hands and feet deliberately and of design. I say nothing in regard to the fact that they never had him in their possession so that they could do it; it is sufficient to say that this was not a mode of punishing one who was taken captive in war. Conquerors killed their captives; they made them pass under yokes; they put them under saws and harrows of iron (compare 2 Samuel 12:31; 1 Chronicles 20:3); but there is not the slightest evidence that they ever tortured captives in war by piercing the hands and the feet. But, as has been remarked above, there is every reason to believe that this was the ordinary mode of crucifixion. I conclude, therefore, that this must have had original reference to the Messiah. It is no objection to the interpretation that this passage is not expressly referred to as having been fulfilled in the Redeemer, for there are undoubtedly many passages in the prophets which refer to the Messiah, which are not formally applied to him in the New Testament. To make it certain that the prophecy referred to him, and was fulfilled in him, it is not necessary that we should find on record an actual application of the passage to him. All that is necessary in the case is, that it should be a prophecy; that it should have been spoken before the event; and that to him it should be fairly applicable.

Verse 17

I may tell all my bones - That is, I may count them. They are so prominent, so bare, that I can see them and count their number. The idea here is that of emaciation from continued suffering or from some other cause. As applied to the Redeemer, it would denote the effect of long protracted suffering and anxiety on his frame, as rendering it crushed, weakened, emaciated. Compare the notes at Isaiah 52:14; Isaiah 53:2-3. No one can prove that an effect such as is here referred to may not have been produced by the sufferings of the Redeemer.

They look and stare upon me - That is, either my bones - or, my enemies that stand around me. The most obvious construction would refer it to the former - to his bones - as if they stood out prominently and stared him in the face. Rosenmuller understands it in the latter sense, as meaning that his enemies gazed with wonder on such an object. Perhaps this, on the whole, furnishes the best interpretation, as there is something unnatural in speaking of a man‘s own bones staring or gazing upon him, and as the image of his enemies standing and looking with wonder on one so wretched, so crushed, so broken, is a very striking one. This, too, will better agree with the statement in Isaiah 52:14, “Many were astonished at thee;” and Isaiah 53:2-3, “He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him;” “we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” It accords also better with the statement in the following verse; “they,” that is, the same persons referred to, “part my garments amoung them.”

Verse 18

They part my garments among them - They divide; they apportion. This refers merely to the fact that they made such a division or distribution of his garments; the manner in which it was done, is specified in the other part of the verse. The word “garments” is a general term, and would be applicable to any part of the raiment.

And cast lots upon my vesture - That is, upon the part here represented by the word “vesture,” “they cast lots.” There was a general division of his garments by agreement, or in some other mode not involving the use of the lot; on some particular portion, here indicated by the word vesture, the lot was cast to determine whose it should be. The word thus rendered vesture - לבוּשׁ *lebûsh* - does not necessarily denote any particular article of raiment, as distinguished from what is meant by the word rendered “garments.” Both are general terms denoting clothing, raiment, vestment; and either of the

terms might be applied to any article of apparel. The original words used here would not necessarily designate one article of raiment as disposed of without the lot and another specified portion by the lot. But although it could not be argued beforehand from the mere use of the language that such would be the case, yet if that should occur, it would be natural and not improper to apply the language in that sense, and as therein completely fulfilled.

As a matter of fact this was literally fulfilled in the crucifixion of the Saviour. By remarkable circumstances which no human sagacity could have foreseen or anticipated, there occurred a general division of a portion of his raiment, without an appeal to the lot, among the soldiers who were engaged in crucifying him, and a specific disposal of one article of his raiment by the lot, Matthew 27:35; Luke 23:34; John 19:23-24. It never occurred in the life of David, as far as we know, or have reason to believe, that his enemies stripped him, and divided his garments among themselves; and the description here, therefore, could be applicable only to some one else. It was completely fulfilled in the Saviour; and this verse, therefore, furnishes the fullest proof that the psalm refers to him. At the same time it should be observed that these circumstances are such that an impostor could not have secured the correspondence of the events with the prediction. The events referred to were not under the control of him whose garments were thus divided. They depended wholly on others; and by no art or plan could an impostor have so arranged matters that all these things should have appeared to be fulfilled in himself.

Verse 19

But be not thou far from me, O Lord - "O Yahweh." Others - all others - have forsaken me, and left me to perish. Now, in the day of my desertion and my peril, be thou near to me. See Psalm 22:11. This is the burden of the prayer in the whole psalm, that God would not leave him, but sustain and deliver him. Compare Psalm 22:1.

O my strength - Source of my strength; thou on whom I rely for support and deliverance.

Haste thee to help me - Help me speedily. Come to support me; come to deliver me from these dreadful sorrows. This is not necessarily a prayer to be rescued from death, but it would be applicable to deliverance from

those deep mental sorrows that had come upon him - from this abandonment to unutterable woes.

Verse 20

Deliver my soul from the sword - The word soul here means life, and denotes a living person. It is equivalent to "deliver me." "The sword" is used to denote an instrument of death, or anything that pierces like a sword. Compare 2 Samuel 11:24-25. As applied to the Saviour here, it may mean those extreme mental sufferings that were like the piercing of a sword.

My darling - Margin, "my only one." Prof. Alexander, "my lonely one." DeWette, my life. The Hebrew word - יחיד *yâchîyd* - means "one alone, only," as of an only child; then one alone, as forsaken, solitary, wretched, Psalm 25:16; Psalm 68:6; then it means one only, the only one, in the sense of "most dear, darling." Here, according to Gesenius (Lexicon), it is used poetically for life, as being something most dear, or as denoting all that we have, and, therefore, most precious. Compare Job 2:4. This is the most probable interpretation here, as it would thus correspond with the expression in the first part of the verse, "deliver my soul."

From the power of the dog - Margin, as in Hebrew, from the hand. The enemy is represented, as in Psalm 22:16, as a "dog" (see the notes on that verse); and then that enemy is spoken of as inflicting death by his hand. There is a little incongruity in speaking of a "dog" as having hands, but the image before the mind is that of the enemy with the character of a dog, and thus there is no impropriety in using in reference to him the language which is commonly applied to a man.

Verse 21

Save me from the lion's mouth - His enemies represented as fierce and ravening lions, compare Psalm 22:13,

For thou hast heard me - The word "heard" in this place is equivalent to "saved" - or saved in answer to prayer. The fact of "hearing" the prayer, and answering it, is regarded as so identical, or the one as so certainly following from the other, that they may be spoken of as the same thing.

From the horns of the unicorns - The idea here is, that he cried to God when exposed to what is here called "the horns of the unicorns." That is, when surrounded by enemies as fierce and violent as wild beasts - as if he were among "unicorns" seeking his life - he had called upon God, and God had heard him. This would refer to some former period of his life, when surrounded by dangers, or exposed to the attacks of wicked men, and when

he had called upon God, and had been heard. There were not a few occasions alike in the life of David and in the life of the Saviour, to which this would be applicable. The fact that he had thus been delivered from danger, is now urged as an argument why God was to be regarded as able to deliver him again, and why the prayer might be offered that he would do it; compare Psalm 22:9-11. To see the force of this it is not necessary to be able to determine with accuracy what is meant here by the word rendered unicorn, or whether the psalmist referred to the animal now denoted by that term. The existence of such an animal was long regarded as fabulous; but though it has been proved that there is such an animal, it is not necessary to suppose that the psalmist referred to it. Gesenius renders the word - ראם *re'êm* - "buffalo" (Lexicon) So also DeWette. See the notes at Job 39:9-10, where the meaning of the word is fully considered. The word occurs elsewhere only in Numbers 23:22; Numbers 24:8; Deuteronomy 33:17; Psalm 29:6; Psalm 92:10; Isaiah 34:7, in all which places it is rendered "unicorn," or "unicorns."

Verse 22

I will declare thy name - I will make thee known; that is, thine existence; thy perfections; thy law; thy method of salvation. As the result or effect of the interposition which he desired, and for which he prayed, he says that he would diffuse a knowledge of God. This is an expression of true piety, and is a statement of what in a pure mind will always be consequent on a gracious divine interposition - a purpose to make the character of the benefactor known. Compare Psalm 51:12-13; Psalm 18:48-49. As applicable to the Redeemer, it means that he would make the name of God known to people, or that "through him" that name would be made known.

Unto my brethren - Compare John 20:17; Romans 8:29. The word "brethren" would embrace literally brothers; kinsfolk; countrymen; then, those of the same opinion, profession, or religion; then, in a still larger sense, the human race as descended from a common parent. As having reference to the Redeemer, it would embrace here not only those who were his immediate followers and whom he called brethren - not only those of his own nation, - but the human family in general, toward whom he consented to sustain this relation. Compare the notes at Hebrews 2:10-12, where this passage is quoted and expressly applied to our Saviour.

In the midst of the congregation - Among the people assembled to worship there. See the notes at Hebrews 2:12. This is the place where praise is commonly celebrated, and he says that there he would make known the goodness of God. Compare Isaiah 38:19-20. It is not necessary to show that this was literally done by the Redeemer. It is enough to observe that this is the usual language of piety, and that the effect of his work has been to cause the praises of God to be celebrated in tens of thousands of the congregations of his saints.

Verse 23

Ye that fear the Lord - A phrase denoting those who are pious.

Praise him - This is language which may be supposed to be addressed by the speaker in the great congregation. In the previous verse he had said that he would praise God "in the midst of the congregation;" he here speaks as if he were in that congregation, and addressing them. He, therefore, calls on them to praise and honor God.

All ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him - The descendants of Jacob; that is, all who are true worshippers of God.

And fear him - Honour him, worship him. See the notes at Psalm 5:7.

All ye the seed of Israel - Another name for Jacob Genesis 32:28, and designed to denote also all who are true worshippers of Yahweh.

Verse 24

For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted - This expresses the belief that his prayer had been heard. The fact that he had been thus heard is here assigned to be the ground or reason for the exhortation in the previous verse, addressed to all the pious. The Lord had heard his prayer, and this was a reason why others should also confide in the Lord, and feel assured that he would likewise hear their prayers.

Neither hath he hid his face from him - That is, "permanently, constantly, finally, completely." He has not wholly abandoned me, but though he seemed to forsake me, it was for a time only; and his friendship has not been ultimately and forever withdrawn. It was indeed the foundation of all the petitions in this psalm that the Lord had hid his face from the sufferer Psalm 22:1; but, from this verse, it seems that it was only for a time. That which he passed through was a temporary darkness, succeeded by the clear manifestations of the divine favor. The Lord heard his prayer; the Lord showed that he had not utterly forsaken him.

But when he cried unto him, he heard - Showing that now he had the evidence and the assurance that his prayer had been heard. As applicable to the Redeemer on the cross, this means that though the darkness seemed to continue until death, yet it was not an utter forsaking. His prayer was heard; his work was accepted; the great object for which he came into the world would be accomplished; he himself would rise triumphantly from his sufferings; and the cause which he came to establish, and for which he died, would finally prevail in the world. Compare Hebrews 5:7-8; John 11:42; Isaiah 53:11-12.

Verse 25

My praise shall be of thee - That is, I will praise thee. I will call to remembrance thy goodness, and will unite with others in celebrating thy faithfulness and lovingkindness.

In the great congregation - See the notes at Psalm 22:27.

I will pay my vows before them that fear him - In the presence of his worshippers. That is, he would keep the vows which in his afflictions he had made, that he would praise and serve God. These vows or promises were of the nature of a "debt" which he says he would remember to pay. Of the Redeemer, this need not be understood personally, but it means that as the result of his prayer having been heard, the worship of God would be celebrated by those who feared him. The solemn worship of the people of God - the praises which they offer to the Most High - may be regarded as worship paid by the Redeemer himself, for he does it in the persons and services of those whom he redeemed. All the praises which proceed from their hearts and lips are the fruit of his "vows," of his fidelity, and his prayers.

Verse 26

The meek shall eat and be satisfied - The word "meek" - ענוים *ʿănâviym* - means here rather "afflicted, distressed, miserable." This is its usual meaning. It is employed sometimes in the sense of mild or meek (compare Numbers 12:3); but it here manifestly denotes the afflicted; the poor; the distressed. When it is said that they would "eat and be satisfied," the idea is that of prosperity or abundance; and the statement is, that, as the result of the Redeemer's work, blessings in abundance would be imparted to the poor and the distressed - those who had been destitute, forsaken, and friendless.

They shall praise the Lord that seek him - Those that worship God, or the pious, shall see abundant cause to praise God. They will not merely call upon him by earnest prayer, but they will render him thanks for his mercies.

Your heart shall live for ever - The hearts of those that worship God. Their hearts would not faint or be discouraged. They would exult and rejoice continually. In other words, their joy and their praise would never die away.

Verse 27

All the ends of the world - All parts of the earth; all nations. The earth is frequently represented in the Scriptures as having limits or boundaries; as spread out; as having corners, etc. Compare Isaiah 11:12; Jeremiah 9:26; Jeremiah 25:23; Jeremiah 49:32; Revelation 7:1. This language is in accordance with the prevailing modes of thinking, in the same way as we say, "the sun rises;" "the sun sets," etc.

Shall remember - The nations are often represented as "forgetting" God; that is, they act as if they had once known him, and had then forgotten him. See Job 8:13; Psalm 9:17; Psalm 50:22; Romans 1:21. Here it is said that they would again call God to remembrance; that is, they would worship him as the true God.

And turn unto the Lord - Turn away from their idols to worship the living God.

And all the kindreds of the nations - All the families. The numerous families upon the earth that constitute the one great family of mankind.

Shall worship before thee - Shall worship in thy presence; that is, shall worship thee. The language is derived from the act of worshipping God in the tabernacle or the temple, before the visible symbol of his presence there. As applicable to the Redeemer, this language is in accordance with what is uniformly said of him and his work, that the world would be converted to the living and true God. Compare the notes at Psalm 2:8.

Verse 28

For the kingdom is the Lord's - The dominion belongs of right to Yahweh, the true God. See Matthew 6:13; Psalm 47:7-8.

And he is the governor among the nations - He is the rightful governor or ruler among the nations. This is an assertion of the absolute right of Yahweh to reign over the nations of the earth, and the expression of an assurance on the part of the Messiah that, as the consequence of his work, this empire of Yahweh over the nations would be actually established.

Compare Daniel 7:13-14, note; Daniel 7:27, note; and 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, notes.

Verse 29

All they that be fat upon the earth - The general meaning of this verse is, that "all classes of persons" will come and worship the true God; not the poor and needy only, the afflicted, and the oppressed, but the rich and the prosperous. There are three classes mentioned as representing all:

(1) the rich and prosperous;

(2) they who bow down to the dust, or the crushed and the oppressed;

(3) those who are approaching the grave, and have no power to keep themselves alive.

The first class comprises those who are mentioned here as being fat. This image is often used to denote prosperity: Judges 3:29; Job 15:27; Psalm 17:10; Psalm 73:4 (Hebrew); Deuteronomy 31:20; Deuteronomy 32:15. The meaning is, that the rich, the great, the prosperous would be among the multitudes who would be converted to the living God.

Shall eat and worship - This expression is derived from the custom of offering sacrifices, and of feasting upon portions of the animal that was slain. In accordance with this, the blessings of salvation are often represented as a "feast" to which all are invited. See the notes at Isaiah 25:6. Compare Luke 14:16.

All they that go down to the dust - All those descending to the dust. Those who are bowed down to the dust; who are crushed, broken, and oppressed; the poor, the sad, the sorrowful. Salvation is for them, as well as for the rich and the great.

Shall bow before him - Shall worship before the true God.

And none can keep alive his own soul - Or rather, and he who cannot keep his soul (that is, himself) alive. So the Hebrew properly means, and this accords better with the connection. The class here represented is composed of those who are ready to perish, who are about to die - the aged - the infirm - the sick - the dying. These, thus helpless, feeble, and sad, shall also become interested in the great plan of salvation, and shall turn unto the Lord. These classes would represent all the dwellers on the earth; and the

affirmation is equivalent to a statement that men of all classes would be converted, and would partake of the blessings of salvation.

Verse 30

A seed shall serve him - A people; a race. The word used here, and rendered "seed" - זרע *zeraʿ* - means properly "a sowing;" then, a planting, a plantation; then. seed sown - of plants, trees, or grain; and then, a generation of men - children, offspring, posterity: Genesis 3:15; Genesis 13:16; Genesis 15:5, Genesis 15:13; et al. Hence, it means a race, stock, or family. It is used here as denoting those who belong to the family of God; his children. Compare Isaiah 6:13; Isaiah 65:9, Isaiah 65:23. The meaning here is, that, as the result of the work performed by the sufferer, many would be brought to serve God.

It - To wit, the seed mentioned; the people referred to.

Shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation - The word here rendered "Lord" is not יהוה *Yahweh* but אדני *'Âdônay* a word which is often used as a name of God - and should not be printed here in small capitals. Prof. Alexander renders this, it seems to me improperly, "It shall be related of the Lord to the next generation." So DeWette and Hengstenberg. But the common rendering appears to me to furnish a better signification, and to be more in accordance with the meaning of the original. According to this the idea is, that the seed - the people referred to - would be reckoned to the Lord as a generation of his own people, a race, a tribe, a family pertaining to him. They would be regarded as such by him; they would be so estimated by mankind. They would not be a generation of aliens and strangers, but a generation of his people and friends. Compare Psalm 87:6.

Verse 31

They shall come - That is, there were those who would thus come. Who these would be is not specified. The obvious sense is, that some would rise up to do this; that the succession of such men would be kept up from age to age, making known these great facts and truths to succeeding generations. The language would be applicable to a class of men called, from age to age, to proclaim these truths, and set apart to this work. It is a fair application of the verse to refer it to those who have been actually designated for such an office - the ministers of religion appointed to keep up the memory of the great work of redemption in the world. Thus understood, the passage is a proper carrying out of the great truths stated in the psalm - that, in virtue of the sufferings of the Redeemer, God would be made known to men; that his

worship would be kept up in the earth; that distant generations would serve him.

And shall declare his righteousness - No language could better describe the actual office of the ministers of the Gospel as appointed to set forth the "righteousness" of God, to vindicate his government and laws, and to state the way in which men may be made righteous, or may be justified. Compare Romans 1:17; Romans 3:26.

Unto a people that shall be born - To future generations.

That he hath done this - That God has done or accomplished what is stated in this psalm; that is, on the supposition that it refers to the Messiah, that he has caused an atonement to be made for mankind, or that redemption has been provided through the sufferings of the Messiah.

I have given what seems to me to be a fair exposition of this psalm, referring it wholly to the Messiah. No part of the interpretation, on this view of the psalm, seems to me to be forced or unnatural, and as thus interpreted it seems to me to have as fair and obvious an applicability to him as even Isaiah 53:1-12, or any other portion of the prophecies. The scene in the psalm is the cross, the Redeemer suffering for the sins of man. The main features of the psalm relate to the course of thoughts which then passed through the mind of the Redeemer; his sorrow at the idea of being abandoned by God; his confidence in God; the remembrance of his early hopes; his emotions at the taunts and revilings of his enemies; his consciousness of prostrated strength; his feelings as the soldiers pierced his hands and his feet, and as they proceeded to divide his raiment; his prayer that his enemies might not be suffered to accomplish their design, or to defeat the work of redemption; his purpose to make God known to men; his assurance that the effect of his sufferings would be to bring the dwellers on the earth to serve God, and to make his name and his righteousness known to far distant times. I regard the whole psalm, therefore, as applicable to the Messiah alone; and believing it to be inspired, I cannot but feel that we have here a most interesting and affecting account, given long before it occurred, of what actually passed through the mind of the Redeemer when on the cross - an account more full than we have anywhere else in the Bible. Other statements pertain more particularly to the external events of the crucifixion; here we have a record in anticipation of what actually passed through his own mind in those hours of unspeakable anguish when he made an atonement for the sins of the world.

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PSALM 23

Introduction

This psalm is asserted in the title to have been composed by David, and there is nothing in its contents contrary to this supposition, as there is nothing in it that would lead us necessarily to ascribe it to him. The contents of the psalm indeed correspond with the facts of his history, and with the recollections of his early life as a shepherd; but it is such as might have been composed by anyone who had been, and in fact by anyone though he had not been, a shepherd, as the images in it are such as are common in all poetry. Still, there is nothing to lead us to doubt that it was written by David.

It is wholly uncertain on what occasion the psalm was composed, since there are in the psalm no historical references, no indications of time, and no allusions to any circumstances in the life of the author. It is impossible even to determine whether it was composed in a time of prosperity or adversity; whether when the author was persecuted, or when he was prosperous and triumphant. The only apparent allusion to any circumstance of the poet‘s life is in Psalm 23:6, where he says, as the crowning joy which he anticipated, that he would “dwell in the house of the Lord forever,” from which it has been inferred by some that he was then in exile. But this allusion is of too general a character to justify this inference with certainty. Such a hope might be expressed by anyone in any circumstances, as the highest desire of a pious heart. Kimchi supposes that the psalm was composed by David in the wilderness of Hareth 1 Samuel 22:5; and that it pertained to the people of Israel, and to their return from exile. But this is mere conjecture. The Aramaic Paraphrase applies the psalm to the Hebrew people when delivered from captivity and exile, as a song of triumph on their return to their own land. Rudinger, and John D. Michaelis, suppose that it refers to the time when David had obtained a complete victory over all his enemies - when the rebellion of Absalom was quelled, when he was seated quietly on throne. Probably, if we are to to fix a time, it was at that period of life - an advanced period - when the recollection of the merciful interpositic of God in his behalf so often would suggest the brightest image of his earlier years, the watchful care which he as a shepherd had extended over his own flock - a care which God had now extended over him in the perils of his own life. Still, all this is no more than conjecture.

The psalm has always been regarded as one of exquisite beauty. The main subject is the watchful care which God had extended over the author, and the consequent assurance which he felt that God would still watch over him, and supply all his need. The leading thought - the essential idea - is, his full belief that God would provide for him, and that he would never be left to want. This is the thought with which the psalm commences: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want:" and this thought is carried through the psalm. It is illustrated by two facts or images:

(a) That God was his shepherd; that He had always manifested toward him (David) the care which a shepherd takes of his flock, Psalm 23:1-3; and

(b) That God had prepared a table before him (David) in the very presence of his enemies, or that he had abundantly led for him in their very sight, when they were endeavoring to destroy him - thus giving him the assurance that God never would leave him, Psalm 23:5.

The psalm, therefore, may be regarded as consisting of two main parts:

I. The general subject of the psalm - the confidence of the author in God - the assurance that he would always so provide for him that he would not want, Psalm 23:1.

II. The grounds or reasons for this confidence, Psalm 23:2-6. These are twofold:

(1) An argument derived from the care of God over him as a shepherd, Psalm 23:2-4.

(a) The statement of the fact, Psalm 23:2-3.

(b) The argument, Psalm 23:4. From his experience of the divine care in the past, he says that he would not be afraid even to descend into the valley of death.

(2) an argument derived from the fact that God had provided for him in the very presence of his enemies, Psalm 23:5-6.

(a) The statement of the fact; or a reference to his life, during which God had shown the same care and goodness as if He had spread a table for him even in the sight of his enemies, Psalm 23:5.

(b) The confident assurance, derived from that fact, that God would follow him with goodness and mercy all the days of his life; that his future course would be as if he were always to dwell in the house of the Lord, Psalm 23:6.

Verse 1

The Lord is my shepherd - Compare Genesis 49:24, "From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel;" Psalm 80:1, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel." See also the notes at John 10:1-14. The comparison of the care which God extends over his people to that of a shepherd for his flock is one that would naturally occur to those who were accustomed to pastoral life. It would be natural that it should suggest itself to Jacob Genesis 49:24, and to David, for both of them had been shepherds. David, in advanced years, would naturally remember the occupations of his early life; and the remembrance of the care of God over him would naturally recall the care which he had, in earlier years, extended over his flocks. The idea which the language suggests is that of tender care; protection; particular attention to the young and the feeble (compare Isaiah 40:11); and providing for their wants. All these things are found eminently in God in reference to his people.

I shall not want - This is the main idea in the psalm, and this idea is derived from the fact that God is a shepherd. The meaning is, that, as a shepherd, he would make all needful provision for his flock, and evince all proper care for it. The words shall not want, as applied to the psalmist, would embrace everything that could be a proper object of desire, whether temporal or spiritual; whether pertaining to the body or the soul; whether having reference to time or to eternity. There is no reason for supposing that David limited this to his temporal necessities, or to the present life, but the idea manifestly is that God would provide all that was needful for him always. Compare Psalm 34:9, "There is no want to them that fear him." This idea enters essentially into the conception of God as the shepherd of his people, that all their real wants shall be supplied.

Verse 2

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures - Margin, "Pastures of tender grass." The Hebrew word rendered "pastures" means usually "dwellings," or "habitations." It is applied here properly to "pastures," as places where flocks and herds lie down for repose. The word rendered in the margin "tender grass" - דֶּשֶׁא *deshe'* - refers to the first shoots of

vegetation from the earth - young herbage - tender grass - as clothing the meadows, and as delicate food for cattle, Job 6:5. It differs from ripe grass ready for mowing, which is expressed by a different word - חציר *châtsîyr* The idea is that of calmness and repose, as suggested by the image of flocks "lying down on the grass." But this is not the only idea. It is that of flocks that lie down on the grass "fully fed" or "satisfied," their wants being completely supplied. The exact point of contemplation in the mind of the poet, I apprehend, is that of a flock in young and luxuriant grass, surrounded by abundance, and, having satisfied their wants, lying down amidst this luxuriance with calm contentment. It is not merely a flock enjoying repose; it is a flock whose wants are supplied, lying down in the midst of abundance. Applied to the psalmist himself, or to the people of God generally, the idea is, that the wants of the soul are met and satisfied, and that, in the full enjoyment of this, there is the conviction of abundance - the repose of the soul at present satisfied, and feeling that in such abundance want will always be unknown.

Verse 3

He leadeth me beside the still waters - Margin, "waters of quietness." Not stagnant waters, but waters not tempestuous and stormy; waters so calm, gentle, and still, as to suggest the idea of repose, and such as prompt to repose. As applied to the people of God, this denotes the calmness - the peace - the repose of the soul, when salvation flows as in a gently running stream; when there is no apprehension of want; when the heart is at; peace with God.

He restoreth my soul - literally, "He causes my life to return." DeWette, "He quickens me," or causes me to live. The word soul" here means life, or spirit, and not the soul in the strict sense in which the term is now used. It refers to the spirit when exhausted, weary, or sad; and the meaning is, that God quickens or vivifies the spirit when thus exhausted. The reference is not to the soul as wandering or backsliding from God, but to the life or spirit as exhausted, wearied, troubled, anxious, worn down with care and toil. the heart, thus exhausted, He re-animates. He brings back its vigor. He encourages it; excites it to new effort; fills it with new joy.

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness - In right paths, or right ways. He conducts me in the straight path that leads to Himself; He does not permit me to wander in ways that would lead to ruin. In reference to His people it is true:

(a) that He leads them in the path by which they become righteous, or by which they are "justified" before him; and

(b) that He leads them in the way of "uprightness" and "truth." He guides them in the way to heaven; His constant care is evinced that they "may" walk in that path.

For his name's sake - For His own sake; or, that His name may be honored. It is not primarily on their account; it is not solely that they may be saved. It is that He may be honored:

(a) in their being saved at all;

(b) in the manner in which it is done;

(c) in the influence of their whole life, under His guidance, as making known His own character and perfections.

Compare Isaiah 43:25; Isaiah 48:9; Isaiah 66:5; Jeremiah 14:7. The feeling expressed in this verse is that of confidence in God; an assurance that he would always lead his people in the path in which they should go. Compare Psalm 25:9. This he will always do if people will follow the directions of His word, the teachings of His Spirit, and the guidance of His providence. No one who submits to Him in this way will ever go astray!

Verse 4

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death - The meaning of this in the connection in which it occurs is this: "God will lead and guide me in the path of righteousness, even though that path lies through the darkest and most gloomy vale - through deep and dismal shades - in regions where there is no light, as if death had cast his dark and baleful shadow there. It is still a right path; it is a path of safety; and it will conduct me to bright regions beyond. In that dark and gloomy valley, though I could not guide myself, I will not be alarmed; I will not be afraid of wandering or of being lost; I will not fear any enemies there - for my Shepherd is there to guide me still." On the word here rendered "shadow of death" - צלמות *tsalmâveth* - see Job 3:5, note; and Isaiah 9:2, note. The word occurs besides only in the following places, in all of which it is rendered "shadow of death:" Job 10:21-22; Job 12:22; Job 16:16; Job 24:17 (twice); Job 28:3;

Job 34:22; Job 38:17; Psalm 44:19; Psalm 107:10, Psalm 107:14; Jeremiah 2:6; Jeremiah 13:16; Amos 5:8. The idea is that of death casting his gloomy shadow over that valley - the valley of the dead. Hence, the word is applicable to any path of gloom or sadness; any scene of trouble or sorrow; any dark and dangerous way. Thus understood, it is applicable not merely to death itself - though it embraces that - but to any or all the dark, the dangerous, and the gloomy paths which we tread in life: to ways of sadness, solitude, and sorrow. All along those paths God will be a safe and certain guide.

I will fear no evil - Dark, cheerless, dismal as it seems, I will dread nothing. The true friend of God has nothing to fear in that dark valley. His great Shepherd will accompany him there, and can lead him safely through, however dark it may appear. The true believer has nothing to fear in the most gloomy scenes of life; he has nothing to fear in the valley of death; he has nothing to fear in the grave; he has nothing to fear in the world beyond.

For thou art with me - Thou wilt be with me. Though invisible, thou wilt attend me. I shall not go alone; I shall not be alone. The psalmist felt assured that if God was with him he had nothing to dread there. God would be his companion, his comforter, his protector, his guide. How applicable is this to death! The dying man seems to go into the dark valley alone. His friends accompany him as far as they can, and then they must give him the parting hand. They cheer him with their voice until he becomes deaf to all sounds; they cheer him with their looks until his eye becomes dim, and he can see no more; they cheer him with the fond embrace until he becomes insensible to every expression of earthly affection, and then he seems to be alone. But the dying believer is not alone. His Saviour God is with him in that valley, and will never leave him. Upon His arm he can lean, and by His presence he will be comforted, until he emerges from the gloom into the bright world beyond. All that is needful to dissipate the terrors of the valley of death is to be able to say, "Thou art with me."

Thy rod and thy staff - It may not be easy to mark the difference between these two words; but they would seem probably to refer, the latter to the "staff" which the shepherd used in walking, and the former to the "crook" which a shepherd used for guiding his flock. The image is that of a shepherd in attendance on his flock, with a staff on which he leans with one hand; in the other hand the "crook" or rod which was the symbol of his office. Either of these also might be used to guard the flock, or to drive off

the enemies of the flock. The "crook" is said (see Rosenmuller, *in loc*.) to have been used to seize the legs of the sheep or goats when they were disposed to run away, and thus to keep them with the flock. "The shepherd invariably carries a rod or staff with him when he goes forth to feed his flock. It is often bent or hooked at one end, which gave rise to the shepherd's crook in the hand of the Christian bishop. With this staff he rules and guides the flock to their green pastures, and defends them from their enemies. With it also he corrects them when disobedient, and brings them back when wandering." (The land and the book, vol. i., p. 305.)

They comfort me - The sight of them consoles me. They show that the Shepherd is there. As significant of his presence and his office, they impart confidence, showing that he will not leave me alone, and that he will defend me.

Verse 5

Thou preparest a table - The image is now changed, though expressing the general idea which is indicated in the first verse of the psalm, "I shall not want." The evidence or proof of this in the previous verses is, that God was a shepherd, and would provide for him as a shepherd does for his flock; the evidence here is that God had provided a table, or a feast, for him in the very presence of his enemies, and had filled his cup with joy. The word "table" here is synonymous with "feast;" and the meaning is, "thou providest for my wants." There "may" be an allusion here to some particular period of the life of the psalmist, when he was in want, and when he perhaps felt an apprehension that he would perish, and when God had unexpectedly provided for his wants; but it is impossible now to determine to what occasion he thus refers. There were numerous occasions in the life of David which would be well represented by this language, "as if" God had provided a meal for him in the very "presence" of his foes, and in spite of them.

Before me - For me. It is spread in my presence, and for me.

In the presence of mine enemies - That is, in spite of them, or so that they could not prevent it. They were compelled to look on and see how God provided for him. It was manifest that this was from God; it was a proof of the divine favor; it furnished an assurance that he who had done this would never leave him to want. The friends of God are made to triumph in the very presence of their foes. Their enemies are compelled to see how He interposes in their behalf, how He provides for them, and how He defends

them. Their final triumph in the day of judgment will be in the very presence of all their assembled enemies, for in their very presence He will pronounce the sentence which will make their eternal happiness sure, Matthew 25:31-36.

Thou anointest my head with oil - Margin, as in Hebrew, "makest fat." That is, thou dost pour oil on my head so abundantly that it seems to be made fat with it. The expression indicates abundance. The allusion is to the custom of anointing the head on festival occasions, as an indication of prosperity and rejoicing (see Matthew 6:17, note; Luke 7:46, note), and the whole is indicative of the divine favor, of prosperity, and of joy.

My cup runneth over - It is not merely "full;" it runs over. This, too, indicates abundance; and from the abundance of the favors thus bestowed, the psalmist infers that God would always provide for him, and that He would never leave him to want.

Verse 6

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me - God will bestow them upon me. This is the "result" of what is stated in the previous verses. The effect of God's merciful dealings with him had been to lead his mind to the assurance that God would always be his shepherd and friend; that He would never leave him to want.

All the days of my life - Through all its changes; in every variety of situation; until I reach its close. Life indeed would end, and he does not venture to conjecture when that would be; but as long as life should continue, he felt confidently assured that everything needful for him would be bestowed upon him. The language is the utterance of a heart overflowing with joy and gratitude in the recollection of the past, and full of glad anticipation (as derived from the experience of the past) in regard to the future.

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever - Margin, as in Hebrew: "to length of days." The expression, I think, does not refer to eternity or to heaven, but it is parallel with the former expression "All the days of my life;" that is, he would dwell in the house of the Lord as long as he lived - with the idea added here, which was not in the former member of the sentence, that his life would be long, or that he hoped and anticipated that he would live long on the earth. The phrase used here, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord," is one that is several times employed in the Psalms as indicative of the wish of the psalmist. Thus, in Psalm 27:4, "One thing

have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." Psalm 26:8, "lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth." Psalm 65:4, "blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts."

Psalm 84:4, "blessed are they that dwell in thy house." (Compare also Psalm 87:1, Psalm 87:3,10). The "language" here is obviously taken from the employment of those who had their habitation near the tabernacle, and afterward the temple, whose business it was to attend constantly on the service of God, and to minister in his courts. We are not to suppose of David that he anticipated such a residence in or near the tabernacle or the house of God; but the meaning is, that he anticipated and desired a life as if he dwelt there, and as if he was constantly engaged in holy occupations. His life would be spent as if in the constant service of God; his joy and peace in religion would be as if he were always within the immediate dwelling-place of the Most High. This expresses the desire of a true child of God. He wishes to live as if he were always engaged in solemn acts of worship, and occupied in holy things; he desires peace and joy in religion as if he were constantly in the place where God makes his abode, and allowed to partake of his smiles and friendship. In a very important sense it is his privilege so to live even on earth; it will certainly be his privilege so to live in heaven: and, full of grateful exultation and joy, every child of God may adopt this language as his own, and say confidently, "Goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life here, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever," for heaven, where God dwells, will be his eternal home.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 24

Introduction

There is no reason to doubt that the title of this psalm, which ascribes it to David, is correct. A portion of the psalm Psalm 24:3-6 has a strong resemblance to Psalm 15:1-5, and doubtless was composed by the same author.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed is not designated; but from its contents it was evidently on some public occasion of great solemnity; probably on the removal of the ark of the covenant into its appointed place in Jerusalem, where it was to abide permanently; a solemn entrance of Yahweh, as it were, into the place of his permanent abode, Psalm 24:7-10. This could not have been the temple, because:

(a) that was not erected in the time of David; and

(b) the description Psalm 24:7-10 is rather that of entering into a "city" than into a temple or a place of public worship, for the psalmist calls upon the "gates" to lift up their heads - an expression more suitable to a city than to the doors of a tabernacle or a temple.

According to this view, no occasion seems more appropriate than that of removing the ark from the house of Obed-edom to "the city of David," or to Jerusalem, as described in 2 Samuel 6:12-17. David indeed placed the ark "in the midst of the tabernacle which he had pitched for it" on Mount Zion 2 Samuel 6:17, but the particular reference of the psalm would rather seem to be to the entrance of the ark into the city than into the tabernacle. It was probably designed to be sung as the procession approached the city where the ark was destined to remain. The occasion of thus taking up the ark into the holy hill where it was to abide seems to have suggested the inquiry, who would be suited to ascend the holy hill where God abides, and to stand in his presence, Psalm 24:3-6.

The psalm properly consists of three parts:

I. An ascription of praise to God as the Maker and Upholder of all things, Psalm 24:1-2. He is represented as the Proprietor of the whole earth,

and as having a right to all that there is in the world, since He has made the earth and all which it contains. This universal claim, this recognition of Him as Lord of all, would be especially appropriate in bringing up the symbol of his existence and His power, and establishing his worship in the capital of the nation.

II. An inquiry, who would ascend into the hill of the Lord, and stand in His holy place; who could be regarded as worthy to engage in His worship, and to be considered as his friend? Psalm 24:3-6. This part of the psalm accords in the main with Psalm 15:1-5; and the inquiry and the answer would be especially appropriate on an occasion such as that upon which the psalm appears to have been composed. In asserting God‘s claim to universal dominion Psalm 24:1-2, and in introducing the symbols of His power into the place where he was to be recognized and adored Psalm 24:7-10, nothing could be more suitable than the question who would be regarded as qualified to worship before Him; that is, who would be regarded as His friends. The essential thing here asserted to be requisite, as in Psalm 15:1-5, is purity of heart and life - things essential to the evidence of piety under every dispensation, patriarchal, Mosaic, Christian.

III. A responsive song on the entrance of the procession with the ark into the city, Psalm 24:7-10. This consists of two strophes, to be sung, it would seem most probable, by responsive choirs:

First strophe, Psalm 24:7-8.

(a) The call upon the gates to lift up their heads, that the King of glory might come in.

(b) The response: Who is this King of glory?

(c) The answer: Yahweh, mighty in battle.

Second strophe, Psalm 24:9-10.

(a) The call upon the gates to lift up their heads, that the King of glory might come in.

(b) The response: Who is this King of glory?

(c) The answer: Yahweh of hosts.

Verse 1

The earth is the Lord‘s - The whole world belongs to God. He is the Creator of the earth, and therefore, its Proprietor; or, in other words, “the

property vests in him." It belongs to Him in a sense somewhat similar to our right of property in anything that is the production of our hands, or of our labor or skill. We claim that as our own. We feel that we have a right to use it, or to dispose of it, as we choose. No other person has a right to take it from us, or to dictate to us how we shall employ it. Thus, God, in the highest possible sense, has a right to the earth, and to all which it produces, as being all of it the creation of His hands, and the fruit of His culture and skill. He has a right to dispose of it as He pleases; by fire, or flood, or tempest; and He has an equal right to direct man in what way He shall employ that portion of the productions of the earth which may be entrusted to Him. All the right which any person has to any portion of the earth's surface, or to what is treasured up in the earth, or to what it is made to produce, is subordinate to the claims of God, and all should be yielded up at His bidding, whether He comes and claims it to be employed in His service, or whether He comes and sweeps it away by fire or flood; by the locust, or by the palmer-worm.

And the fulness thereof - All which it contains; everything which goes to "fill up" the world: animals, minerals, vegetables, people. All belong to God, and He has a right to claim them for His service, and to dispose of them as He pleases. This very language, so noble, so true, and so suitable to be made conspicuous in the eyes of human beings, I saw inscribed in a place where it seemed to be most appropriate, and most adapted to arrest and direct the thoughts of men - on the front of the Royal Exchange in London. It was well to remind the great merchants of the largest commercial city in the world of the truth which it contains; it does much to describe the character of the British nation that it should be inscribed in a place so conspicuous, and, as it were, on the wealth of that great capital.

The world - The word used here - תבל *têbêl* - is a poetic word, referring to the earth considered as fertile and inhabited - the "habitable" globe; the same as the Greek, οἰκουμένη *oikoumenē* And they that dwell therein - All the inhabitants of the earth, embracing men and animals of all kinds. Compare Psalm 50:10-11. God has a claim on people - upon their services, upon their talents, upon all that they can acquire by labor and skill; He has a right to all that fly in the air, or that walk the earth, or that swim in the sea. On the occasion on which it is supposed that this psalm was written, in bringing up the ark of God, and placing it in the tabernacle provided for it

in the capital of the nation, no sentiment could be more appropriate than that which would recognize the universal supremacy of God.

Verse 2

For he hath founded it upon the seas - That is, the earth, or the habitable world. The ground of the claim to the earth and all that it contains, which is here asserted, is the fact that God had created it, or "founded" it. The language used here - "he hath founded it," that is, he has laid the foundation of it, "upon the seas" and "the floods" - is in accordance with the usual mode of speaking of the earth in the Scriptures as laid upon a foundation - as a house is raised on a firm foundation. See the notes at Job 38:6. As the earth appeared to be surrounded by water, it was natural to speak of it as "founded" also upon the waters. There is probably an allusion here to the statement in Genesis 1:9-10, where the waters are said to have been so gathered together that the dry land appeared. Above all the waters the earth was established, so as to become the abode of plants, animals, and man.

And established it upon the floods - The streams; the torrents. The earth has been elevated above them, so as to be a residence for animals and for men. The essential thought is, that this earth has become what it is by the fact that God has founded it; and, therefore, what it produces belongs of right to Him.

Verse 3

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? - Mount Zion; called the hill of the Lord, because it was the place designated for His worship, or the place of His abode. See the notes at Psalm 15:1. The idea here is, "Who shall ascend there with a view of abiding there? Who is worthy to dwell there?" The question is equivalent to asking, What constitutes true religion? What is required for the acceptable worship of God? What will prepare a person for heaven?

Or who shall stand in his holy place? - In the tabernacle, or in the place where he is worshipped. Compare the notes at Psalm 1:5. Who is worthy to stand before God? Who has the qualifications requisite to constitute the evidence of his friendship?

Verse 4

He that hath clean hands - In the parallel passage in Psalm 15:2, the answer to the question is, "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness." The sentiment is substantially the same there as in the

passage before us. The meaning is, that he who would be recognized as a friend and worshipper of Yahweh must be an upright man; a person not living in the practice of iniquity, but striving always to do that which is right. The "hands" are the instruments by which we accomplish anything; and hence, to have clean hands is equivalent to being upright. See Job 17:9; Isaiah 1:15; Isaiah 59:3; Acts 2:23; Psalm 26:10. The margin here, as the Hebrew, is "the clean of hands."

And a pure heart - Not merely the one whose external conduct is upright, but whose heart is pure. The great principle is here stated which enters always into true religion, that it does not consist in outward conformity to law, or to the mere performance of rites and ceremonies, or to external morality, but that it controls the heart, and produces purity of motive and of thought.

Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity - Unto that which is "vain," or which is "false." This expression might refer to one who had not devoted himself to the worship of an idol - regarded as vain, or as nothing 1 Corinthians 8:6; Isaiah 41:24; Psalm 115:4-8; or to one who had not embraced that which is false and vain in opinion; or to one who had not sworn falsely, or taken the name of God in vain, Exodus 20:7. The probable meaning is, that he has not set his heart on vain things, or that which is false. He has sought after substantial truth, alike in the object of worship, in that which he professes to believe, and in the statements and promises which he makes to others. He aims to secure that which is true and real. He is in no sense "carried away" with that which is unreal and false.

Nor sworn deceitfully - This is one form of that which had been just specified - his love of truth. The idea here is, that he has not affirmed under the solemnities of an oath, that which was false; and that he has not, under similar solemnities, promised what he has not performed. He is a sincere man; a man seeking after the true and the real, and not running after shadows and falsehood; a man true to God and to his fellow-creatures; a man whose statements are in accordance with facts, and whose promises may be always relied on. In the parallel passage, in Psalm 15:2, the statement is, "he that speaketh the truth in his heart." See the notes at that passage.

Verse 5

He shall receive the blessing from the Lord - literally, "He shall bear away a blessing from Yahweh." The blessing here referred to means His

favor and friendship. He shall be recognized and treated as His. In other words, God bestows His favor on those who possess the character here referred to.

And righteousness from the God of his salvation - He shall be regarded and treated as righteous. Or, he shall obtain the divine approval as a righteous person. The idea of the psalmist would seem to be, not that he would obtain this as if it were a gift, but that he would obtain the divine "approval" of his character as righteous; he would be recognized and dealt with as a righteous man. He would come to God with "clean hands and a pure heart" Psalm 24:4, and would be welcomed and treated as a friend of God. The wicked and the impure could not hope to obtain this; but he who was thus righteous would be treated according to his real character, and would meet with the assurances of the divine favor. It is as true now as it was in the days of the psalmist, that it is only the man who is in fact upright and holy that can obtain the evidences of the divine approval. God will not regard one who is living in wickedness as a righteous man, nor will he admit such a man to His favor here, or to His dwelling-place hereafter.

Verse 6

This is the generation of them that seek him - This describes the race of those who seek Him; or, this is their character. The word "generation" here is used evidently in the sense of "race, people, or persons." This is the character or description of the "persons" who seek His favor; or, this is the character of His true friends. The phrase "to seek God" is often used as descriptive of true piety: Psalm 9:10; Psalm 14:2; Psalm 63:1; Proverbs 8:17; Matthew 6:33; Matthew 7:7. It indicates an earnest desire to know Him and to obtain His favor. It denotes also humility of mind, and a sense of dependence on God.

That seek thy face, O Jacob - Margin, O "God of" Jacob. DeWette understands this as meaning that they would seek the face of God among His people; or that they who belonged to the race of Jacob, and who were sincere, thus sought the face of God. There is supposed to be, according to this interpretation, a distinction between the true and the false Israel; between those who professed to be the people of God and those who really were His people (compare Romans 9:6-8). It seems to me that the word is not used here as it is in the margin to denote the "God of Jacob," which would be a harsh and an unusual construction, but that it is in apposition with the preceding words, as denoting what constituted the true Jacob, or

the true people of God. “This is the generation of them that seek him; this is the true Jacob, that seek thy face, O Lord.” That is, this is the characteristic of all who properly belong to the race of Jacob, or who properly belong to God as his true people. The sense, however, is not materially affected if we adopt the reading in the margin.

Verse 7

Lift up your heads, O ye gates - Either the gates of the city, or of the house erected for the worship of God; most probably, as has been remarked, the former. This may be supposed to have been uttered as the procession approached the city where the ark was to abide, as a summons to admit the King of glory to a permanent residence there. It would seem not improbable that the gates of the city were originally made in the form of a portcullis, as the gates of the old castles in the feudal ages were, not to “open,” but to be “lifted up” by weights and pullies. In some of the old ruins of castles in Palestine there are still to be seen deep grooves in the “posts” of the gateway, showing that the door did not open and shut, but that it was drawn up or let down. (The Land and the Book, vol. i. p. 376. One such I saw at Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight; and they were common in the castles erected in the Middle Ages.) There were some advantages in this, as they could be suddenly “let down” on an enemy about to enter, when it would be difficult to close them if they were made to open as doors and gates are commonly made. Thus understood, the “heads” of the gates would be the top, perhaps ornamented in some such way as to suggest the idea of a “head,” and the command was that these should be elevated to admit the ark of God to pass.

And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors - The doors of a city or sanctuary that was now to be the permanent place of the worship of God. The ark was to be fixed and settled there. It was no longer to be moved from place to place. It had found a final home. The idea in the word “everlasting” is that of permanence. The place where the ark was to abide was to be the enduring place of worship; or was to endure as long as the worship of God in that form should continue. There is no evidence that the author of the psalm supposed that those doors would be literally eternal, but the language is such as we use when we say of anything that it is permanent and abiding.

And the King of glory shall come in - The glorious King. The allusion is to God as a King. On the cover of the ark, or the mercy-seat, the symbol

of the divine presence - the Shekinah - rested; and hence, it was natural to say that God would enter through those gates. In other words, the cover of the ark was regarded as his abode - His seat - His throne; and, as thus occupying the mercy-seat, He was about to enter the place of His permanent abode. Compare Exodus 25:17, Exodus 25:20, Exodus 25:22.

Verse 8

Who is this King of glory? - This is probably the response of a portion of the choir of singers. The answer is found in the other part of the verse.

The Lord strong and mighty - Yahweh, strong and mighty - describing Him by His most exalted attributes as a God of power. This is in accordance with the idea in Psalm 24:1-2, where He is represented as the Creator and the Proprietor of all the earth. Perhaps, also, there is an allusion to the fact that He is mighty, as distinguished from idols which have no power.

The Lord mighty in battle - Who displays His power eminently in overthrowing hostile armies; perhaps in allusion to the victories which had been won when His people were animated in war by the presence of the ark in the midst of their armies, and when the victory could be properly traced to the fact that the ark, the symbol of the divine presence, was with them, and when, therefore, the victory would be properly ascribed to Yahweh himself.

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Verse 9

Lift up your heads … - The repetition here is designed to give force and emphasis to what is uttered. The response in Psalm 24:5 is slightly varied from the response in Psalm 24:8; but the same general sentiment is expressed. The design is to announce in a solemn manner that the symbol of the divine presence and majesty was about to be introduced into the place of its permanent abode, and that this was an event worthy to be celebrated; that even the gates of the city should voluntarily open themselves to admit the great and glorious King who was to reign there forever.

Verse 10

Who is this King of glory? - See the notes at Psalm 24:8.

The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory - On the meaning of the phrase, "the Lord of hosts," see the notes at Isaiah 1:9. The essential idea is, that God rules over the universe of worlds considered as marshalled in order, or arrayed as hosts or armies are for battle. All are under His command. The stars in the sky, that seem to be marshalled and led forth in

such perfect and beautiful order - the inhabitants of heaven in their different orders and ranks - all these acknowledge Him, and submit to Him as the supreme God. In the close of the psalm, therefore, there is an exact accordance with the thought in the beginning, that God is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, and that He should everywhere be recognized and regarded as such. The entrance of the ark of the covenant into the place provided for it as a permanent residence was a fit occasion to proclaim this thought; and this is proclaimed in the psalm in a manner befitting so solemn an occasion and so sublime a truth.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 25

Introduction

This purports to be a psalm of David, and there is no reason to doubt that he was its author. There are no indications, however, of the occasion on which it was composed, nor is it possible now to ascertain that occasion. It is probably one of those which were composed in his leisure moments, with no outward existing cause - designed to express the feelings of piety in the calm contemplation of God and his perfections.

The uniqueness of the psalm is, that it is the first of that class of psalms which are known as "alphabetical," in which the first word of each verse begins with one of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. One design of this mode of composition may have been to assist the memory; but it is probable that the prevailing reason was that it was regarded as a poetic beauty thus to arrange the letters of the alphabet. Such arts of poetry are common in all languages. Occasionally, in these psalms the order of the letters is slightly changed; in other instances, some of the letters are omitted, while the general structure is observed. Specimens of this mode of composition occur in Psalm 111:1-10; Psalm 112:1-10; Psalm 25:1-3.

(2) A desire to be led in the way of truth, Psalm 25:4-5.

(3) A desire that God, in his treatment of him, would remember His own merciful character, and not the sins of the psalmist, Psalm 25:6-7.

(4) A belief that God will guide those who trust Him, Psalm 25:8-9.

(5) Confidence in God in all His ways, Psalm 25:10.

(6) Prayer for the pardon of sin, Psalm 25:11,

(7) An expression of belief that God will teach and guide those who fear Him, Psalm 25:12-13.

(8) The assurance that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, Psalm 25:14,

(9) Prayer for deliverance from all trouble, Psalm 25:15-21.

(10) Prayer for the redemption of the people of God, for their complete deliverance from evil, for the salvation of the church, Psalm 25:22.

The psalm thus expresses the feelings of a pious mind when running over a great variety of subjects, apparently with little connection, or united only by a very slender thread of association; such thoughts as occur to one when the mind is allowed a free range, and follows out easy suggestions with no great effort to restrain the mind by the stricter rules of thinking, or when the mind allows itself to be easily drawn along from one subject to another, and finds, in each one that occurs, something to be thankful for; or to pray for; or to rejoice over; or to anticipate with pleasure; or to hope for; or to be penitent for; or to contemplate with gratitude and love. The thoughts of wicked people, when their minds are thus unbent and unstrung, recur to images of pollution and sin; they gloat over past indulgences; they recall the images of sensual pleasures; they bring before the fancy new and untried scenes of pollution; they revel in the anticipated pleasures of gaiety and sensuality. Perhaps there is nothing that more clearly indicates the real state of a man‘s heart than the kind of recollections, imaginings, and anticipations into which the mind falls in such a relaxed, or what some might call an “idle,” state of the mind; just as we judge of a stream when it flows gently as left to its own course, not when it is dammed up, or forced into new channels, or swelled by rains, or made into artificial rills and water-falls, or employed to turn mills, or diverted, contrary to its natural flow, even into beautiful gardens.

Verse 1

Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul - In meditation; in gratitude; in praise. The idea is, that the thoughts are lifted up from earth and earthly subjects to God. This is the beginning of the meditation; this gives character, perhaps, to the psalm. The state of mind is that of one who turns cheerfully away from earthly themes, and opens his mind to more lofty and hallowed influences. The mind begins with God; and, beginning with this, the current of thought is allowed to flow on, gathering up such ideas as would come in under this general purpose. Opening the mind to this influence, thoughts would flow in upon the soul embracing a wide range,

and perhaps not very closely connected among themselves, but all of which would be fitted to raise the heart to God in meditation, thankfulness, and praise.

Verse 2

O my God, I trust in thee - This is the first thought - a feeling that he had true confidence in God, and that in all the duties of life, in all his trials, and in all his hopes for the future, his reliance was on God alone.

Let me not be ashamed - That is, let me never be so forsaken by thee as to have occasion for shame that I have thus trusted in thee. The prayer is not that he might never be ashamed to avow and confess his trust in God, but that he might "find" God to be such a helper and friend that he might never be ashamed on account of the trust which he had put in Him, as if it had been a false reliance; that he might not be disappointed, and made to feel that he had done a foolish thing in confiding in One who was not able to help him. See the word explained in the notes at Job 6:20. Compare Isaiah 30:5; Jeremiah 8:9; Jeremiah 14:3-4.

Let not mine enemies triumph over me - This explains what the psalmist meant by his prayer that he might not be "ashamed," or put to shame. He prayed that he might not be vanquished by his foes, and that it might not appear that he had trusted in a Being who was unable to defend him. Applied now to us, the prayer would imply a desire that we may not be so overcome by our spiritual foes as to bring dishonor on ourselves and on the cause which we profess to love; that we may not be held up to the world as those who are unable to maintain the warfare of faith, and exposed to scorn as those who are unfaithful to their trust; that we may not be so forsaken, so left to trial without consolation, so given over to sadness, melancholy, or despair, as to leave the world to say that reliance on God is vain, and that there is no advantage in being his friends.

Verse 3

Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed - To "wait on the Lord" is an expression denoting true piety, as indicating our dependence on him, and as implying that we look to Him for the command that is to regulate our conduct and for the grace needful to protect and save us. Compare Isaiah 40:31. See also Isaiah 8:17; Isaiah 30:18; Psalm 40:1; Psalm 69:3. This petition is indicative of the wish of the pious heart that none who profess to serve God may ever be put to shame; that they may never be overcome by

sin; that they may never fall under the power of temptation; that they may not fail of eternal salvation.

Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause - This does not imply that any sinners transgress otherwise than without cause, or that they have any good reason for sinning; but it brings into view a prominent thought in regard to sin, that it is without cause. If the wicked had any good reason for their course of life - if they were compelled to do wrong - if the temptations under which they act were so powerful that they could not resist them - if they were not voluntary in their transgressions - then true benevolence would demand of us the prayer that they might not be confounded or put to shame. However, since none of these circumstances occur in the case of the sinner, there is no lack of benevolence in praying that all the workers of evil may be put to confusion; that is, that they may not triumph in an evil course, but that their plans may be defeated, and that they may be arrested in their career. There is no benevolence in desiring the triumph of wickedness; there is no lack of benevolence in praying that all the plans of wicked men may be confounded, and all the purposes of evil be frustrated. True benevolence requires us to pray that all their plans may be arrested, and that the sinner may not be successful in his career. A person may be certain that he is acting out the principles of benevolence when he endeavors to prevent the consummation of the plans and the desires of the wicked.

Verse 4

Show me thy ways, O Lord - The "ways" of God are His methods of administering the affairs of the world; His dispensations; the rules which He has prescribed for Himself in the execution of His plans; the great laws by which He governs the universe. Deuteronomy 32:4, "all his ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." The prayer of the psalmist is, that he may be able to understand the methods of the divine government; the principles upon which God bestows happiness and salvation; the rules which He has been pleased to prescribe for human conduct; the arrangements by which He confers favors upon mankind; the scheme by which He saves people. The idea evidently is that he might understand so much of this as to regulate his own conduct aright; that he might not lean upon his own understanding, or trust to His own guidance, but that He might always be under the guidance and direction of God.

Teach me thy paths - The paths which thou dost take; to wit, as before, in administering the affairs of the world. The prayer is expressive of a desire to be wholly under the direction of God.

Verse 5

Lead me in thy truth - In the way which thou regardest as truth, or which thou seest to be true. Truth is eternal and unchanging. What God sees and regards as truth is true, because he sees things as they are; and when we have the divine estimate of anything, we understand what the thing is. It is not that he makes it to be true, but that he sees it to be true. Such is the perfection of His nature that we have the utmost assurance that what God regards as truth is truth; what He proclaims to be right is right. It is then His truth, as He adopts it for the rule of His own conduct, and makes it known to His creatures to guide them.

And teach me - Since this would be understood by the psalmist, it would be a prayer that God would teach him by His law as then made known; by His Spirit in the heart; by the dispensations of His providence. As applicable to us, it is a prayer that He would instruct us by all the truths then made known, and all that have since been revealed; by His Spirit in its influences on our hearts; by the events which are occurring around us; by the "accumulated" truth of ages; the knowledge which by all the methods He employs He has imparted to people for their guidance and direction.

For thou art the God of my salvation - The word "salvation" is not to be understood here in the sense in which it is now commonly used, as denoting deliverance from sin and future ruin, but in the more general sense of "deliverance" - deliverance from danger and death. The phrase is synonymous with "preservation," and the idea is that the psalmist regarded God as his preserver; or that he owed his protection and safety in the time of danger to Him alone.

On thee do I wait - That is, I rely on Thee; or, I am dependent on Thee. He had no other source of reliance or dependence.

All the day - Continually, always. He was really dependent upon Him at all times, and he felt that dependence. It is always true that we are dependent upon God for everything; it is not true that we always feel this. It was a characteristic of the piety of the psalmist that he did feel this.

Verse 6

Remember, O Lord - That is, In thy future treatment of me, bring to remembrance what thou hast done, and treat me in the same manner still.

The language is that of one who felt that God had always been kind and gracious, and who asked for the future a continuance of the favors of the past. If we would recall, the goodness of God in the past, we should find enough to lay the foundation of prayer in reference to that which is to come. If we saw and fully understood all that has happened to us, we would need to offer no other prayer than that God might deal with us in the future as He has done in the past.

Thy tender mercies - Margin, as in Hebrew: "thy bowels." The Hebrew word means the "inner parts" regarded by the Hebrews as the seat of the affections. See the notes at Isaiah 16:11.

And thy loving-kindnesses - Thy tokens of favor; thy acts of mercy and compassion.

For they have been ever of old - "For from eternity are they." The language is that of a heart deeply impressed with a sense of the goodness God. In looking over his own life, the author of the psalm saw that the mercies of God had been unceasing and constant toward him from his earliest years. In words expressive of warm love and gratitude, therefore, he says that those acts of mercy had never failed - had been from eternity. His thoughts rise from the acts of God toward himself to the character of God, and to His attributes of mercy and love; and his heart is full of the idea that God is "always" good; that it belongs to His very nature to do good.

Verse 7

Remember not the sins of my youth - In strong contrast with God, the psalmist brings forward his own conduct and life. He could ask of God Psalm 25:6 to remember His own acts - what "He himself" had done; but could not ask him to remember His conduct - His past life. He could only pray that this might be forgotten. He did not wish it to come into remembrance before God; he could not ask that God would deal with him according to that. He prays, therefore, that he might not be visited as he advanced in life with the fruits of his conduct in early years, but that all the offences of that period of his life might be forgiven and forgotten. Who is there that cannot with deep feeling join in this prayer? Who is there that has reached the period of middle or advanced life, who would be willing to have the follies of his youth, the plans, and thoughts, and wishes of his early years brought again to remembrance? Who would be willing to have recalled to his own mind, or made known to his friends, to society around him, or to assembled worlds, the thoughts, the purposes, the wishes, the

“imaginings” of his youthful days? Who would dare to pray that he might be treated in advancing years as he treated God in his own early life? Nay, who would venture to pray that God would treat him in the day of judgment as he had treated the friends of his childhood, even the father who begat him, or the mother who bore him? Our hope in regard to the favor of God is that he will “not” summon up the thoughts and the purposes of our early years; that he will “not” treat us as if he remembered them; but that he will treat us as if they were forgotten.

Nor my transgressions - The sins of my early years.

According to thy mercy remember thou me - Deal with me, not according to strict justice, but according to mercy. Deal with me indeed according to thy nature and character; but let the attribute of mercy be that which will be the guide rather than the attribute of justice.

For thy goodness‘ sake - In order that thy goodness or benevolence may be displayed and honored - not primarily and mainly that I may be saved, but that thy character may be seen to be good and merciful.

Verse 8

Good and upright is the Lord - His character is benevolent, and he is worthy of confidence. He is not merely “good,” but he is equal and just in his dealings with people. This latter attribute is no less a reason for confidence in his character than the former. We need a God who is not merely benevolent and kind, but who is just and faithful; whose administration is based on principles of truth and justice, and in whose dealings, therefore, his creatures can repose unlimited confidence.

Therefore will he teach sinners - Because he is good and upright, we may approach him with the assurance that he will guide us aright. His “goodness” may be relied on as furnishing evidence that he will be “disposed” to do this; his “uprightness” as furnishing the assurance that the path in which he will lead us will be the best path. We could not rely on mere benevolence, for it might lack wisdom and firmness, or might lack power to execute its own purposes; we can rely upon it when it is connected with a character that is infinitely upright, and an arm that is infinitely mighty.

In the way - In the right way - the way in which they should go, the path of truth, of happiness, of salvation.

Verse 9

The meek will he guide - The humble, the teachable, the prayerful, the gentle of spirit - those who are willing to learn. A proud person who supposes that he already knows enough cannot be taught; a haughty person who has no respect for others, cannot learn of them; a person who is willing to believe nothing cannot be instructed. The first requisite, therefore, in the work of religion, as in respect to all kinds of knowledge, is a meek and docile spirit. See Matthew 18:3.

In judgment - In a right judgment or estimate of things. It is not merely in the administration of justice, or in doing "right," but it is in judging of truth; of duty; of the value of objects; of the right way to live; of all upon which the mind can be called to exercise judgment, or to come to a decision.

And the meek will he teach his way - The way in which he would have them to go. The "methods" by which God does this are:

(1) By His word or law,

(a) laying down there the principles which are to guide human conduct, and

(b) in numerous cases furnishing specific rules for directing our conduct in the relations of life;

(2) by His Spirit,

(a) disposing the mind to candor,

(b) enlightening it to see the truth, and

(c) making it honest and sincere in its inquiries;

(3) by His providence - often indicating, in an unexpected manner, to those who are sincere in their inquiries after truth and duty, what He would have them to do; and

(4) by the advice and counsel of those who have experience - the aged and the wise - those who have themselves been placed in similar circumstances, or who have passed through the same perplexities and embarrassments.

By all these methods a peson who goes to God in humble prayer, and with a proper sense of dependence, may trust that he will be guided aright; and it is not probable that a case could occur in which one who should honestly seek for guidance by these helps, might not feel assured that God

would lead him aright. Having used these means, a peson may feel assured that God will not leave him to error.

Verse 10

All the paths of the Lord - All the ways that the Lord takes; all that He commands; all that He does. The "paths of the Lord" denote the course in which He himself walks, or His dealings with His creatures. In the previous verse, the psalmist had said that the Lord would teach "His way" to the "meek;" he now says that all His ways are ways of mercy and of truth; or that all will be found to be in the direction of mercy and of truth.

Are mercy and truth - In all His dealings with those who "keep his covenant" He shows Himself to be at the same time merciful and true: compassionate toward their errors; faithful to His own promises.

To such as keep his covenant - To those who are His friends; to those who are faithful to Him. This expression is often used to denote those who are the true people of God, Genesis 17:9-10; Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 29:9; Psalm 132:12. The word "covenant" here is equivalent to "command or law;" and the idea is, that if they keep His laws they will find Him to be merciful and true. On the meaning of the word "covenant," see Acts 7:8, note; Hebrews 8:8, note; Hebrews 9:16-17, note.

And his testimonies - The word "testimony" in the Scripture, in this connection, refers to that to which God bears witness as "true;" or that which He has declared to be truth. In this sense, the phrase here means those who maintain His truth; or who abide by what He has pronounced to be true. The word is very often used in the Scriptures to denote the truth of God and the commandments of God. In all such cases, there is the underlying idea that the command or the statement referred to is that to which God bears witness as true or right.

Verse 11

For thy name's sake, O Lord - See the notes at Psalm 23:3. The idea here is that God would do this on His own account, or for the honor of His own name. This is A reason, and one of the main reasons, why God ever pardons iniquity. It is that the honor of His name may be promoted; that His glorious character may be displayed; that he may show himself to the universe to be merciful and gracious. There are, doubtless, other reasons why He pardons sin - reasons drawn from the bearing which the act of mercy will have on the welfare of the universe; but still the main reason is,

that His own honor will thus be promoted, and His true character thus made known. See the notes at Isaiah 43:25; notes at Isaiah 48:9. Compare Psalm 6:4; and Psalm 25:7.

Pardon mine iniquity - This prayer seems to have been offered in view of the remembered transgressions of his early years, Psalm 25:7. These recollected sins apparently pressed upon his mind all through the psalm, and were the main reason of the supplications which occur in it. Compare Psalm 25:16-18.

For it is great - As this translation stands, the fact that his sin was great was a reason why God should pardon it. This is a reason, because:

(a) it would be felt that the sin was so great that it could not be removed by anyone but God, and that unless "forgiven" it would sink the soul down to death; and

(b) because the mere fact of its magnitude would tend to illustrate the mercy of the Lord.

Undoubtedly, these are reasons why we may pray for the forgiveness of sin; but it may be doubted whether this is the exact idea of the psalmist, and whether the word "although" would not better express the true sense - "although it is great." It is true that the general sense of the particle here rendered "for" - כי *kîy* - is "because" or "since;" but it may also mean "although," as in Exodus 13:17, "God led them not the way through the land of the Philistines, although - (כי *kîy*) - that was near," that is, that was nearest, or was the most direct way. So in Deuteronomy 29:19, "I shall have peace, though - (כי *kîy*) - I walk in the imagination of mine heart." Also Joshua 17:18, "Thou shalt drive out the Canaanites, though - (כי *kîy*) - they have iron chariots, and though they be strong." Thus understood, the prayer of the psalmist here is, that God would pardon his offences "although" they were so great. His mind is fixed upon the "greatness" of the offences; upon the obstacles in the way of pardon; upon his own unworthiness; upon the fact that he had no claim to mercy; and he presents this strong and earnest plea that God would have mercy on him "although" his sins were so numerous and so aggravated. In this prayer all can join; this is a petition the force of which all true penitents deeply feel.

Verse 12

What man is he - Who is he. The statement in this verse is intended to include every man; or to be universal. Wherever one is found who has the character here referred to, or whoever he may be, of him what is here affirmed will be true, that God will lead him in the way that he shall choose.

That feareth the Lord - That is, a true worshipper of Yahweh, or that is truly a pious man: Psalm 5:7. "Him shall he teach." He will guide, or instruct him. See Psalm 25:9.

In the way that he shall choose - The way that the person ought to choose; or, in other words, in the right way. It is not the way that God shall choose, but the way that the pious person ought to choose: God will so instruct him that he shall find the true path.

Verse 13

His soul shall dwell at ease - Margin: "shall lodge in goodness." So the Hebrew. The idea is that of one "at home;" one who finds a comfortable and safe resting place; one who is not a wanderer or a vagrant. The word rendered in the text "at ease," and in the margin "goodness," means "good;" and the idea is that of a good or safe condition as compared with that of one who wanders abroad without a shelter, or of one who has lost his way, and has no one to guide him. As contrasted with such an one, he who fears God, and who seeks his guidance and direction, will be like a man in his own comfortable and quiet home. The one is a condition of safety and of ease; the other, a condition of anxiety, doubt, trouble. Nothing could better describe the calmness, peace, and conscious security of the man who has found the truth and who serves God - as compared with the state of that man who has no religion, no fear of God, no hope of heaven.

And his seed - His posterity; his family. "Shall inherit the earth." Originally this promise referred to the land of Canaan, as a promise connected with obeying the law of God: Exodus 20:12. It came then to be synonymous with outward worldly prosperity; with length of days, and happiness in the earth. See it explained in the notes at Matthew 5:5.

Verse 14

The secret of the Lord - On the word here rendered "secret," see the notes at Job 15:8. It properly means a couch or cushion; and then, a divan or circle of friends sitting together; then, deliberation or consultation; then, familiar contact, intimacy; and then, a "secret," - as if it were the result of a private consultation among friends, or something which pertained to them, and which they did not wish to have known. It is rendered "secret" in

Genesis 49:6; Job 15:8; Job 29:4; Psalm 25:14; Proverbs 3:32; Proverbs 11:13; Proverbs 20:19; Proverbs 25:9; Amos 3:7; "counsel" in Psalm 55:14; Psalm 64:2; Psalm 83:3; Jeremiah 23:18, Jeremiah 23:22; and "assembly" in Psalm 89:7; Psalm 111:1; Jeremiah 6:11; Jeremiah 15:17; Ezekiel 13:9. The word "friendship" would perhaps express the meaning here. The sense is, that those who fear the Lord are admitted to the intimacy of friendship with Him; are permitted to come into His presence, and to partake of His counsels; are allowed free access to Him; or, as it is more commonly expressed, have "fellowship" with Him. Compare 1 John 1:3. The language is such as would be applied to the intimacy of friends, or to those who take counsel together. The language belongs to a large class of expressions denoting the close connection between God and His people.

With them that fear him - With those who truly and properly reverence Him, or who are His true worshippers: Psalm 5:7; Job 1:1.

And he will show them his covenant - Margin, "And his covenant to make them know it." The meaning is, that God will impart to them the true knowledge of His covenant; or, in other words, He will enable them to understand what there is in that covenant, or in its gracious provisions, that is adapted to promote their happiness and salvation. The word "covenant" here is the same term which is commonly used to describe the arrangements which God has made for the salvation of people: see Psalm 25:10. Whatever there is in that arrangement to promote the happiness and salvation of His people, He will cause them to understand.

Verse 15

Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord - This is an indication of the habitual state of mind of the psalmist. He had said that God would lead and guide those who were meek, gentle, teachable, humble; and he now says that this was his habitual state of mind. He constantly looked to God. He sought His direction. In perplexity, in doubt, in difficulty, in danger, in view of death and the future world, he looked to God as his guide. In other words, in reference to himself, he carried out the principles which he had stated as constituting true religion. It was a religion of dependence on God, for man's only hope is in him.

For he shall pluck my feet out of the net - Margin, "bring forth." Compare Psalm 9:15-16, note; Psalm 10:9, note. The "net" here is that which had been laid for him by the wicked. He trusted in God alone to deliver him from it.

Verse 16

Turn thee unto me - Rather, the Hebrew means: "look upon me." The idea, however, is that the face of God was, as it were, turned in another direction, or that He was not attentive to him; and he prays that He would turn and behold him; that He would see him in his trouble.

And have mercy upon me - The psalmist seems to have felt that if God would look upon him he would pity him. He would see his case to be so sad that He would show him compassion - as, when we see an object of distress, "the eye affects the heart."

For I am desolate - The word here rendered "desolate" - יחיד *yâchîyd* - means properly "one alone, only;" and then, one who "is alone," or who is solitary, forsaken, wretched. There is no deeper sadness that ever comes over the mind than the idea that we are alone in the world; that we do not have a friend; that no one cares for us; that no one is concerned about anything that might happen to us; that no one would care if we were to die; that no one would shed a tear over our grave.

And afflicted - In what way we do not know. David, however, was very often in circumstances when he could use this language. The other parts of the psalm show that the "affliction" to which he here refers was that which arose from the recollection of the sins of his early life, and from the designs and purposes of his enemies.

Verse 17

The troubles of my heart - The sorrows which spring upon the heart - particularly from the recollections of sin.

Are enlarged - Have become great. They increased the more he reflected on the sins of his life.

O bring thou me out of my distresses - Alike from my sins, and from the dangers which surround me. These two things, external trouble and the inward consciousness of guilt, are not infrequently combined. Outward trouble has a tendency to bring up the remembrance of past transgressions, and to suggest the inquiry whether the affliction is not a divine visitation for sin. Any one source of sorrow may draw along numerous others in its train. The laws of association are such that when the mind rests on one source of joy, and is made cheerful by that, numerous other blessings will be suggested to increase the joy; and when one great sorrow has taken possession of the soul, all the lesser sorrows of the past life cluster around

it, so that we seem to ourselves to be wholly abandoned by God and by man.

Verse 18

Look upon mine affliction and my pain - See Psalm 25:16. This is a repetition of earnest pleading - as if God still turned away from him, and did not deign to regard him. In trouble and distress piety thus pleads with God, and repeats the earnest supplication for His help. Though God seems not to regard the prayer, faith does not fail, but renews the supplication, confident that He will still hear and save.

And forgive all my sins - The mind, as above remarked, connects trouble and sin together. When we are afflicted, we naturally inquire whether the affliction is not on account of some particular transgressions of which we have been guilty; and even when we cannot trace any direct connection with sin, affliction suggests the general fact that we are sinners, and that all our troubles are originated by that fact. One of the benefits of affliction, therefore, is to call to our remembrance our sins, and to keep before the mind the fact that we are violators of the law of God. This connection between suffering and sin, in the sense that the one naturally suggests the other, was more than once illustrated in the miracles performed by the Saviour. See Matthew 9:2.

Verse 19

Consider mine enemies - See Psalm 25:2. It is evident that one source of the trouble referred to in the psalm was the fact that he had cruel foes, and that he was apprehensive of their designs. The train of thought seems to be, in accordance with the remarks above, that enemies actually surrounded him, and threatened him, and that this fact suggested the inquiry whether this was not permitted on account of his sins. this had led him to think of the sins of his past life, going back as far as his youth Psalm 25:7, as if these calamities, even in advanced life, were on account of those early offences.

For they are many - Who and what they were, we have now no means of ascertaining. See the notes at Psalm 25:16.

And they hate me with cruel hatred - Margin, as in Hebrew: “hatred of violence.” It was such hatred as tended to violence; such that they could not restrain it. It sought his destruction, and was ready to break out at any moment.

Verse 20

O keep my soul - "My life;" or, keep "me." The allusion is to all the perils which encompassed him, whether arising from his foes or his sins; and the prayer is, that the divine protection might be commensurate with the danger; that is, that he might not be destroyed, either by his enemies or by the sins which he had committed.

And deliver me - Save me; rescue me.

Let me not be ashamed - See Psalm 25:2.

For I put my trust in thee - This is urged as a reason why he should be delivered and saved. The idea seems to be, that the honor of God would be concerned in protecting one who fled to Him; who confided in Him; who relied on Him. Thus, when the helpless and the oppressed have so much confidence in our character and our ability as to fly to us in the time of trouble, it is a proper reason for them to ask our protection that they do confide in us. Our character becomes involved in the matter, and they may safely trust that we shall feel ourselves under obligations to act in conformity with the confidence reposed in us. It is thus that the poor and the oppressed confide in the good; thus that a sinner confides in God.

Verse 21

Let integrity and uprightness preserve me - The word here rendered "integrity" means properly "perfection." See it explained in the notes at Job 1:1. The language here may refer either:

(a) to God - as denoting His perfection and uprightness, and then the psalmist's prayer would be that He, a righteous God, would keep him; or

(b) to his own integrity and uprightness of character, and then the prayer would be that that might be the means of keeping him, as the ground of his safety, under the government of a righteous God; or,

(c) which I think the more probable meaning, it may be the utterance of a prayer that God would show Himself upright and perfect in protecting one who put his trust in Him; one who was wronged and injured by his fellow-men; one who fled to God for refuge in time of persecution and trouble.

It was not exactly the divine perfections, as such, on which he relied; nor was it the integrity and purity of his own life; but it was the government of God, considered as just and equal, as bearing on himself and those who had wronged him.

For I wait on thee - That is, I depend on thee, or I rely on thee. This is a reason why he pleaded that God would preserve him. See the notes at Psalm 25:20.

Verse 22

Redeem Israel - Redeem or save thy people - the word "Israel" here being used, as elsewhere, to denote the people of God.

Out of all his troubles - Save thy people from persecution, and from trial of all kinds. The prayer of the psalmist had, before this, related mainly to himself. He had made mention of his own troubles and sorrows, and had earnestly sought relief. The psalm, however, closes appropriately with a reference to others; to all the people of God who might be in similar circumstances. Religion is not selfish. The mind under the influence of true piety, however intensely it may feel its own trouble, and however earnestly it may pray for deliverance, is not forgetful of the troubles of others; and prayers for their comfort and deliverance are freely mingled with those which the afflicted children of God offer for themselves. This verse may be, therefore, taken as an illustration of the nature of true piety: piety that seeks the welfare of all; piety that does not terminate in itself alone; piety that desires the happiness of all people, especially the deliverance of the suffering and the sad. It should, however, be added that this verse is no part of the alphabetical series in the psalm - that having been ended, in Psalm 25:21, with the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This verse commences with the Hebrew letter pe (p). Some have supposed that it was added to the psalm when it was prepared for public use, in order to make what was at first applicable to an individual appropriate as a part of public worship - or because the sentiments in the psalm, originally having reference to one individual, were as applicable to the people of God generally as to the author of the psalm. There is some plausibility in this conjecture.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 26

Introduction

The title affirms this to be a psalm of David, and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the superscription; but there are no indications by which we can determine on what occasion it was written.

It is not difficult, however, to ascertain from its contents the state of mind in which it was composed; and as that state of mind is not uncommon among those who are the professed people of God, the psalm will be useful in all ages of the world. The state of mind is that in which there is deep solicitude in regard to personal piety, or on the question whether the evidences of our piety, are genuine, and are such as we may rely on as warranting our hope of salvation. In this state of mind, and under this deep solicitude, the psalmist appeals to God to search him, or to judge in his case; he then recounts the evidences on which he relied as a ground for concluding that he was truly a friend of God; and then expresses the earliest desire of his heart to be found among the friends of God, and not to be united in character or in destiny with the wicked.

The psalm, therefore, properly consists of three parts:

I. A solemn appeal to God, or an earnest prayer that He would examine and judge of the evidences of piety on which the psalmist was accustomed to rely, Psalm 26:1-2. He was conscious of integrity or uprightness of intention, but he still felt that there was a possibility that he might deceive himself, and he, therefore, prays that God would search his heart and try his reins - that He would examine the evidences of his personal piety, and save him from delusion.

II. A statement of the evidences on which he relied, Psalm 26:3-8.

These evidences were the following:

(1) That God‘s loving-kindness was before his eyes, and that he had walked in his truth, Psalm 26:3.

(2) That he had not been the companion of the wicked, nor had he delighted to associate with them, Psalm 26:4-5).

(3) The desire of his heart to approach the altar of God with purity, and to celebrate the praises of God; or his delight in public worship, Psalm 26:6-7.

(4) That he had loved the place where God dwelt, or the habitation of his house, Psalm 26:8.

III. His earnest wish to be found among the friends of God, or to have his portion with them, Psalm 26:9-12.

(1) His "prayer" that this might be his lot, Psalm 26:9-10.

(2) His "purpose" to walk with the just and the holy, or to be found among the friends of God, Psalm 26:11-12.

In reference to all this, he asks the guidance and direction of God; he prays for the searching of His eye; he pleads that God would enable him sincerely to carry out these desires and purposes of his soul. The psalm is a beautiful illustration of the nature of true religion, and of the desire of a truly pious man that all the evidences of his piety - all which is his ground of reliance - may be submitted to the searching eye of God.

Verse 1

Judge me, O Lord - That is, determine in regard to my case whether I am truly thy friend, or whether the evidences of my piety are genuine. The psalmist asks an examination of his own case; he brings the matter before God for Him to decide; he submits the facts in regard to himself to God, so that He may pronounce upon them whether they constitute evidence of real piety.

For I have walked in mine integrity - On the word "walk," see the notes at Psalm 1:1. The word "integrity" here is the same which is elsewhere rendered "perfection." See the notes at Job 1:1. Compare Psalm 37:37. See also Psalm 7:8; Psalm 25:21; where the word is rendered, as here, "integrity." It means here "uprightness, sincerity." This is the first

thing which he brings before God for him to examine - the consciousness that he had endeavored to live an upright life; and yet it is referred to as if he was sensible that he "might" have deceived himself, and therefore, he prays that God would determine whether his life had been really upright.

I have trusted also in the Lord - Of this, likewise, he felt conscious; but this too he desired to submit to God. Trust in Yahweh, and an upright life, constituted the evidence of piety, or were the constituents of true religion according to the views of the Hebrews, as they are the constituents of true religion everywhere; and the purpose of the psalmist was to ascertain whether his piety was really of that character.

Therefore I shall not slide - If these are really traits of my character, if I really possess these, I shall not be moved. My feet will be firm, and I shall be secure. Or this may be regarded as a further declaration in regard to himself, as indicating firm confidence in God, and as meaning that he was conscious that he would not be moved, or would not swerve in this purpose of life. And yet the next verse shows that, with all this confidence as to his own character, he felt that there was a "possibility" of his having deceived himself; and, therefore, he pleaded that God would search and test him.

Verse 2

Examine me, O Lord - The meaning of this verse is, that he asked of God a strict and rigid examination of his case. To express this, the psalmist uses three words - "examine; prove; try." These words are designed to include the modes in which the reality of anything is tested, and they imply together that he wished the most "thorough" investigation to be made; he did not shrink from any test. He evidently felt that it was essential to his welfare that the most rigid examination should be made; that the exact truth should be known; that if he was deceived, it was best for himself that he should not be left under the delusion, but that, understanding his own case, he might be led to secure his salvation. The word rendered "examine" means, "to try, to prove," and is applicable especially to metals: Jeremiah 9:7; Zechariah 13:9. It means here, "Apply to me such tests as are applied to metals in order to determine their genuineness and their value."

And prove me - A word of similar import. In the original meaning of the word there is a reference to "smell;" to try by the smell; to ascertain the qualities of an object by the smell. Hence, it comes to be used in a more general sense to denote any way of ascertaining the quality of an object.

Try my reins - The word here rendered "try" (test) is one that is most commonly applied to metals; and the three words together express the earnest desire of the psalmist that God would examine into the evidences of his piety - those evidences to which he immediately refers - and apply the proper kind of tests to determine whether that piety was genuine. The word rendered "reins" means properly the "kidneys," and hence, it is used to denote the inward part, the mind, the soul - the seat of the desires and the affections. See Psalm 7:9, note; Psalm 16:7, note. We speak now of the "heart" as the seat of the affections or of love. The Hebrews more commonly spoke of the heart as the seat of intelligence or knowledge, and the reins or the "bowels" as the seat of the affections. In itself there was no more impropriety in their speaking of the reins or kidneys as the seat of the affections than there is of our speaking of the heart in that manner. Neither of them is strictly correct; and both modes of speech are founded on popular usage.

Verse 3

For thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes - Thy favor or friendship is constantly before me, in the sense that it is the object of my desire. I wish to secure it; I long to know whether I have sufficient evidence that it is mine. This is a reason why he desires that God would search him. The favor or the friendship of God was an object of intense desire with him. He had evidence upon which he relied, and which seemed to him to be satisfactory, that God was his friend. But the object was so great, the matter was so important, the danger of self-deception was so imminent, that he did not dare to trust his own judgment, and he prayed that God would search him. The thought here is, that it was a steady purpose of his life to secure the favor of God. His eye was never turned from this. It was always before Him.

And I have walked in thy truth - I have embraced the truth; I have regulated my life by the truth. This is the first thing to which he refers. He was certain that this had been his aim. Compare the notes at 3 John 1:4. See also 2 Kings 20:3. One of the first characteristics of piety is a desire to know what is true, and to live in accordance with the truth. The psalmist was conscious that he had "arrived" at this, and that he had endeavored to make it a ruling principle in his conduct. Whether he had done this, or whether he had deceived himself in the matter, was what he now wished to submit to the all-searching eye of God.

Verse 4

I have not sat with vain persons - That is, I have not been found among them; I have not made them my companions. See the notes at Psalm 1:1. The word "vain" here is in contrast with those who are sincere and true. The expression would be applied to people who are false and hollow; to those who have no sincerity or solidity of character; to those who are hypocrites and pretenders. The psalmist urges it as one evidence of his attachment to God that he had not been found among that class of persons, either as making them his companions, or as taking part with them in their counsels.

Neither will I go in with dissemblers - Neither will I walk with them; neither will I be found in their company. The word here rendered "dissemblers" means properly those who are "hidden" or "concealed;" then, those who hide their purposes or designs from others, or who conceal their real character and intentions. Thus used, the word denotes hypocrites, whose real character is "concealed" or "hidden" from the world. The psalmist says that he had not associated with such people, but that His companionship had been with the open, the frank, the sincere. On this he relied as one evidence of his piety; and this is always an evidence of true religion. See the notes at Psalm 1:1.

Verse 5

I have hated - We have here the same evidence of his piety repeated in another and a stronger form. In the previous verse he had merely stated that he had not been found among that class of persons, or that he had not made them his companions. He here says positively that he disapproved of their principles; that he hated the purpose for which they gathered themselves together; that he had no sympathy whatever with them.

The congregation of evil-doers - All such assemblages as were gathered together for wicked purposes, for sin and revelry; to plot wickedness; to injure men; to oppose God.

And will not sit with the wicked - That is, I will not be associated with them. This was the fixed purpose of his soul; and this was then, as it is now, an evidence of true piety. This, moreover, is an "indispensable" evidence of piety. He who does thus sit with the wicked; who makes them his companions and friends; who unites with them in their plans and purposes; who partakes with them in their special amusements and pursuits, cannot possibly be a pious man. If he mingles with such people at all, it must be

only as demanded by the necessities of social or civil life; or in the transactions of business; or for the purpose of doing them good. If it is for other purposes, if he makes them his chosen companions and friends, he gives the clearest evidence that his heart is with them, and that it is not with God.

Verse 6

I will wash mine hands in innocency - The psalmist here refers, as another evidence of his piety, to the fact that it was a ruling purpose of his life to be pure, to worship and serve his Maker in purity. He had stated that he had no sympathy with the wicked, and that he did not make them his companions; he now states what his preferences were, and where his heart was to be found. He had loved, and he still loved the worship of God; he delighted in the pure service of the Most High. Washing the hands is an emblem of purity. So Pilate Matthew 27:24 "took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person." Compare Deuteronomy 21:6-7. The word rendered "innocency" means properly "cleanness, purity;" and perhaps the allusion here is to water that is perfectly pure. The sense of the passage is, that he would endeavor to make himself pure, and would thus worship God. He would not come, practicing iniquity, or cherishing sin in his heart. He would banish all from his mind and heart and life that was wrong, and would come with true love to God, and with the spirit of a sincere worshipper.

So will I compass thine altar, O Lord - In this manner, and with this spirit, I will worship thee. The word "compass" may either mean that he would "embrace" it by throwing his arms around it, or that he would "go round" it with others in a solemn procession in worship. The idea is, that he would come to the altar of God with his offering in sincerity and truth. It was to himself one evidence of sincere piety that he so purposed in his heart, or that he was conscious of a desire to worship God in purity and truth. This desire is always an indication of true piety.

Verse 7

That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving - literally, "that I may cause to be heard;" that is, that I may make known to others. The idea is, that he would make known to others what he had learned from God; or that He would make known to them the delights of His service, and seek to win them to His worship. This he would do with a thankful remembrance of the favors which he had himself enjoyed, or as an expression of his

gratitude for the mercies which had been conferred on him. As expressive of his gratitude to God, he would endeavor to win others also to His service.

And tell of all thy wondrous works - The wonderful things which thou hast done - thy works of creation, providence, and salvation. His own mind was deeply impressed with the greatness of God‘s works, and he would desire to make the divine actions known as far as possible in the world. Compare Psalm 22:22; Psalm 66:16; Psalm 145:5-6. This is always one of the evidences of true piety. They who have been impressed properly with a sense of the greatness and goodness of God; they who have experienced His pardoning mercy and forgiving grace, desire always to make these things known to others, and to invite them also to partake of the mercies connected with the divine favor. Compare John 1:45,

Verse 8

Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house - I have loved to dwell in Thy house. See the notes at Psalm 23:6. The psalmist often refers to his delight in the house of God - the place of public worship; his love to be there united with the people of God in the solemn services of religion. Compare Psalm 84:1-2, Psalm 84:4, Psalm 84:10; Psalm 27:4.

And the place where thine honour dwelleth - Margin, “the tabernacle of thine honor.” This might indeed refer to the tabernacle; and the idea might be that he loved the place where that rested in its wanderings. But the more correct meaning is, that he loved the place where the “glory” of God - the Shekinah - the symbol of His presence - rested; that is, the place where God was pleased to manifest Himself, and where He dwelt. Wherever that was, he found pleasure in being there; and that he did thus love the place where God manifested Himself, was to his own mind an evidence of true piety. It is always an evidence of piety, for there can be no true religion where the soul does not find pleasure in the worship of God. A person who does not delight in such a service here, is not prepared for heaven, where God eternally dwells.

Verse 9

Gather not my soul with sinners - Margin, “take not away.” The word rendered “gather,” means properly to “collect;” to “gather,” as fruits, Exodus 23:10; ears of grain, Rth 2:7 ; money, 2 Kings 22:4. There is the idea of assembling together, or collecting; and the meaning here is, that he desired not to be united with wicked people, or to be regarded as one of their number. It does not refer particularly, as I apprehend, to death, as if he

prayed that he might not be cut down with wicked people; but it has a more general meaning - that he did not wish either in this life, in death, or in the future world, to be united with the wicked. He desired that his lot might be with those who revered God, and not with those who were His foes. He was united with those who feared God now; he desired that he might be united with them forever. This is expressive of true religion; and this prayer must go forth really from every pious heart. They who truly love God must desire that their lot should be with his friends, alike in this world and in the world to come, however poor, and humble, and despised they may be; not with sinners, however prosperous, or honored, or joyful, or rich, they may be. The word "my soul" here is synonymous with "me;" and the meaning is, he desired that "he himself" should not thus be gathered with sinners. It is the same word which is commonly rendered "life."

Nor my life - This word properly means "life;" and the prayer is, that his life might not be taken away or destroyed with that class of men. He did not wish to be associated with them when he died or was dead. He had preferred the society of the righteous; and he prayed that he might die as he had lived, united in feeling and in destiny with those who feared and loved God.

With bloody men - Margin, "men of blood." People who shed blood - robbers, murderers - a term used to denote the wicked. See the notes at Psalm 5:6.

Verse 10

In whose hands is mischief - The word here rendered "mischief," means properly "purpose, counsel, plan;" then, an evil purpose, "mischief, wickedness, crime." The idea is, either that they intended to do mischief, and that they employed their hands to accomplish it, or that the fruit or result of their wicked plans was in their hands; that is, they had in their possession what they had secured by robbery, or plunder, or dishonesty.

And their right hand is full of bribes - Margin: "filled with." The word here rendered "bribes" means properly "a gift," or "present;" and then, a gift offered to a judge to procure an unjust sentence, 2 Kings 16:8; Proverbs 6:35; Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 10:17. The general meaning is that he did not desire to be associated either with men who openly committed crime, or with those who could be corrupted in the administration of justice.

Verse 11

But as for me - The Hebrew is, "and I." But there is evidently a contrast between what he purposed to do, and the course of life pursued by those to whom he had just referred; and this is correctly expressed in our translation, "But as for me." It is a statement of his profession of piety, and of his purpose to lead a religious life. He "meant" - he solemnly "purposed" - to lead a holy life.

I will walk - I will live a life of integrity. See the notes at Psalm 1:1.

In mine integrity - Hebrew, in my "perfection." See Psalm 7:8, note; Job 1:1, note. The idea is that he intended to live a life of uprightness.

Redeem me - From sin; from trouble; from death. The word "redeem" here implies that he did not claim to be "perfect" in the most absolute sense, even when he expressed his purpose to lead a life of integrity. He felt still that he was a sinner, and that he was dependent on redeeming mercy for salvation. On the word "redeem," see Psalm 25:22, note; Isaiah 29:22, note. Compare the notes at Isaiah 43:3.

And be merciful to me - In connection with redemption. The prayer for mercy is always an acknowledgment of guilt, and the plea here shows that with all his purposes of holy living, and notwithstanding all that he had referred to in the psalm as evidence of uprightness of intention and integrity of life, he still felt that he was a sinner, and that his only hope was in the mercy of God.

Verse 12

My foot standeth in an even place - The word rendered "even place" - מישׁור *mîyshôr* - means properly "righteousness," or "justice;" then, "evenness, a level region, a plain:" Isaiah 40:4; Isaiah 42:16. DeWette renders it, "in a right path." The idea is, either that he was standing now on smooth and level ground; or that he was walking in a straight path, in contradistinction from the crooked and perverse ways of the wicked; that is, he had found now a level road where he might walk securely. The latter is probably the true meaning. He had been anxious about his condition. He had been examining the evidences of his piety. He had had doubts and fears. He had seen much to apprehend, and he had appealed to God to determine the question on which he was so anxious - whether his hope was built on a solid foundation. His path in these inquiries, and while his mind was thus troubled, was like a journey over a rough and dangerous road - a road of hills and valleys - of rocks and ravines. Now he had found a smooth and safe path. The way was level. He felt secure; and he walked calmly and

safely along, as a traveler does who has past over dangerous passes and who feels that he is on level ground. The idea is, that his doubts had been dissipated, and he now felt that his evidences of piety were well founded, and that he was truly a child of God.

In the congregations will I bless the Lord - In the assemblies of his people will I praise him. Compare Psalm 22:22. The meaning is, that in the great assembly he would offer special praise that God had resolved his doubts, and had given him so clear evidence that he was truly his friend. He would go to the house of God, and there render to Him public praise that he had been able to find the evidence which he desired. No act could be more appropriate than such an act of praise, for there is nothing for which we should render more hearty thanks than for any evidence that we are truly the friends of God, and have a well-founded hope of heaven. The whole psalm should lead us carefully to examine the evidences of our piety; to bring before God all that we rely on as proof that we are His friends; and to pray that He will enable us to examine it aright; and, when the result is, as it was in the case of the psalmist - when we can feel that we have reached a level place and found a smooth path, then we should go, as he did, and offer hearty thanks to God that we have reason to believe we are His children and are heirs of salvation.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 27

Introduction

This purports to be "A Psalm of David," and there is no reason to think that the inscription is not correct. But the occasion on which it was composed is wholly unknown. There is no intimation of this in the title, and there are no historical marks in the psalm which would enable us to determine this. There were not a few occasions in the life of David when all that is expressed in the psalm might have been said by him - as there are many occasions, in the lives of all, to which the sentiments of the psalm would be appropriate. The Septuagint version has the title, "A Psalm of David before his anointing," … πρὸ τοῦ χρισθῆναι *pro tou christhēnai* Grotius supposes the occasion to have been the anointing in Hebron, when he was first inaugurated as king, 2 Samuel 2:4. Rosenmuller refers it to the last anointing, 2 Samuel 5:3. Many of the Jewish expositors refer the psalm to the last days of David, when he was delivered from death by the intervention of Abishai, 2 Samuel 21:16-17. But there is no internal evidence that the psalm was composed on either of these occasions, and it is now impossible to ascertain the time or the circumstances of its composition.

The general object of the psalm is to excite in others confidence in God from the experience which the psalmist had of His merciful interposition in times of trouble and danger, Psalm 27:14. The author of the psalm had had some marked evidence of the divine favor and protection in seasons of peril and sorrow Psalm 27:1; and he makes use of this as an argument running through the psalm to lead others to repose on God in similar circumstances. It may have been that at the time of composing the psalm he was still surrounded by enemies, and exposed to danger; but if so, he expresses the utmost confidence in God, and gratefully refers to His past interposition in similar circumstances as full proof that all his interests would be secure.

The contents of the psalm are:

I. An expression of confidence in God as derived from his own experience of His merciful interposition in times of danger, Psalm 27:1-3. He had been in peril at some time which is not specified, and had been

rescued; and from this gracious interposition he argues that it would be safe always to trust in God.

II. The expression of a desire to dwell always where God is; to see his beauty there; to inquire further after him; to offer sacrifices; and to praise him, Psalm 27:4-6. The psalmist had seen so much of God that he desired to see yet more; he had had such experience of his favor that he wished always to be with Him; he had found so much happiness in God that he believed that all his happiness was to be found in His presence, and in His service.

III. An earnest prayer that God would hear him; that he would grant his requests; that he would save him from all his enemies; that he would lead him in a plain path, Psalm 27:7-12. This is founded partly on his own past experience, that when God had commanded him to seek His face he had obeyed Psalm 27:8, and it is connected with the fullest assurance that God would protect him, even if he would be forsaken by his father and mother Psalm 27:10.

IV. The conclusion - the exhortation to wait on the Lord, Psalm 27:13-14. This exhortation is derived from his own experience. He says that he himself would have fainted if he had not confided in God and hoped in His mercy, when there was no other hope Psalm 27:13; and, in view of that experience, he encourages all others to put their trust in Him Psalm 27:14.

Verse 1

The Lord is my light - He is to me the source of light. That is, He guides and leads me. Darkness is the emblem of distress, trouble, perplexity, and sorrow; light is the emblem of the opposite of these. God furnished him such light that these troubles disappeared, and his way was bright and happy.

And my salvation - That is, He saves or delivers me.

Whom shall I fear? - Compare Romans 8:31. If God is on our side, or is for us, we can have no apprehension of danger. He is abundantly able to protect us, and we may confidently trust in Him. No one needs any better security against the objects of fear or dread than the conviction that God is his friend.

The Lord is the strength of my life - The support of my life. Or, in other words, He keeps me alive. In itself life is feeble, and is easily crushed out by trouble and sorrow; but as long as God is its strength, there is nothing to fear.

Of whom shall I be afraid? - No one has power to take life away while He defends me. God is to those who put their trust in Him a stronghold or fortress, and they are safe.

Verse 2

When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me - This refers, doubtless, to some particular period of his past life when he was in very great danger, and when God interposed to save him. The margin here is, "approached against me." The literal rendering would be, "in the drawing near against me of the wicked to eat up my flesh." The reference is to some period when they purposed an attack upon him, and when he was in imminent danger from such a threatened attack.

To eat up my flesh - As if they would eat me up. That is, they came upon me like ravening wolves, or hungry lions. We are not to suppose that they literally purposed to eat up his flesh, or that they were cannibals; but the comparison is one that is drawn from the fierceness of wild beasts rushing on their prey. Compare Psalm 14:4.

They stumbled and fell - They were overthrown. They failed in their purpose. Either they were thrown into a panic by a false fear, or they were overthrown in battle. The language would be rather applicable to the former, as if by some alarm they were thrown into consternation. Either they differed among themselves and became confused, or God threw obstacles in their way and they were driven back. The general idea is, that God had interposed in some way to prevent the execution of their purposes.

Verse 3

Though an host - Though an "army;" that is, any army, or any number of men in battle array. The past interposition of God in similar times of trouble and danger was to him a sufficient security that he had nothing to fear.

Should encamp against me - In battle array, or prepared for battle.

My heart shall not fear - He would not tremble; he would not feel that there was anything of which to be afraid. God had shown Himself superior to the power of hostile armies, and the psalmist felt assured that he might confide in Him.

Though war should rise against me - Though it should be proclaimed, and though all preparation should be made for it, I will not be afraid.

In this will I be confident - In such a case, in such an extremity or emergency, I would calmly trust in God. He would apprehend no danger, for he had seen that the Lord could deliver him.

Verse 4

One thing have I desired of the Lord - One main object; one thing that I have especially desired; one thing which has been the object of my constant wish. This ruling desire of his heart the psalmist has more than once adverted to in the previous psalms (compare Psalm 23:6; Psalm 26:8); and he frequently refers to it in the subsequent psalms.

That will I seek after - As the leading object of my life; as the thing which I most earnestly desire.

That I may dwell in the house of the Lord - See the notes at Psalm 23:6.

All the days of my life - Constantly; to the end. Though engaged in other things, and though there were other objects of interest in the world, yet he felt that it would be supreme felicity on earth to dwell always in the temple of God, and to be employed in its sacred services, preparatory to an eternal residence in the temple above. To him the service of God upon earth was not burdensome, nor did he anticipate that he would ever become weary of praising his Maker. How can a man be prepared for an eternal heaven who finds the worship of God on earth irksome and tedious?

To behold the beauty of the Lord - Margin, "the delight." The word rendered "beauty" here - נעם *nôʿam* - means properly "pleasantness;" then, "beauty, splendor;" then, "grace, favor." The reference here is to the beauty or loveliness of the divine character as it was particularly manifested in the public worship of God, or by those symbols which in the ancient worship were designed to make that character known. In the tabernacle and in the temple there was a manifestation of the character of God not seen elsewhere. The whole worship was adapted to set forth his greatness, his glory, and his grace. Great truths were brought before the mind, fitted to elevate, to comfort, and to sanctify the soul; and it was in the contemplation of those truths that the psalmist sought to elevate and purify his own mind, and to sustain himself in the troubles and perplexities of life. Compare Psalm 73:15-17.

And to inquire in his temple - Or tabernacle. The word used here would be applicable to either, considered as the "palace" or the residence of Yahweh. As the temple was not, however, built at this time, the word must here be understood to refer to the tabernacle. See the notes at Psalm 5:7. The meaning of the passage is, that he would wish to seek instruction, or to obtain light on the great questions pertaining to God, and that he looked for this light in the place where God was worshipped, and by means of the views which that worship was adapted to convey to the mind. In a manner still more direct and full may we now hope to obtain just views of God by attendance on his worship. The Christian sanctuary - the place of public worship - is the place where, if anywhere on earth, we may hope to have our minds enlightened; our perplexities removed; our hearts comforted and sanctifed, by right views of God.

Verse 5

For in the time of trouble - When I am surrounded by dangers, or when affliction comes upon me.

He shall hide me - The word used here means to hide; to secrete; and then, to defend or protect. It would properly be applied to one who had fled from oppression, or from any impending evil, and who should be "secreted" in a house or cavern, and thus rendered safe from pursuers, or from the threatening evil.

In his pavilion - The word "pavilion" means "tent" or "tabernacle." The Hebrew word - סכה *sukâh* - means properly a booth, hut, or cot formed of green branches interwoven: Jonah 4:5; Job 27:18; see the notes at Isaiah 4:6. Then it is applied to tents made of skins: Leviticus 23:43; 2 Samuel 11:11. It thus is used to denote the tabernacle, considered as the dwelling-place of God on earth, and the meaning here is, that God would hide him as it were in His own dwelling; He would admit him near to Himself; He would take care that he should be protected as if he were one of His own family; as a man protects those whom he admits to his own abode.

In the secret of his tabernacle - In the most retired and private part of His dwelling. He would not merely admit him to His premises; not only to the vestibule of His house; not only to the open court, or to the parts of His house frequented by the rest of His family; but he would admit him to the private apartments - the place to which He Himself withdrew to be alone, and where no stranger, and not even one of the family, would venture to intrude. Nothing could more certainly denote friendship; nothing could

more certainly make protection sure, than thus to be taken into the private apartment where the master of a family was accustomed himself to withdraw, that he might be alone; and nothing, therefore, can more beautifully describe the protection which God will give to His friends than the idea of thus admitting them to the secret apartments of His own dwelling-place.

He shall set me up upon a rock - A place where I shall be secure; a place inaccessible to my enemies. Compare Psalm 18:1-2; Psalm 19:14 (margin); Psalm 61:2; Psalm 71:3. The meaning is, that he would be safe from all his enemies.

Verse 6

And now shall mine head - Now shall I be exalted. So we say that in affliction a person bows down his head; in prosperity he lifts it up. This verse expresses the confident expectation that he would be enabled to triumph over all his foes, and a firm purpose on his part, as the result of this, to offer sacrifices of praise to his great Deliverer.

Above mine enemies round about me - All my enemies, though they seem even to encompass me on every side.

Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle - In His tent, His dwelling-place: referring here, undoubtedly, to "the tabernacle" as a place where God was worshipped.

Sacrifices of joy - Margin, as in the Hebrew, of "shouting." That is, he would offer sacrifices accompanied with loud sounds of praise and thanksgiving. There is nothing wrong in shouting for joy when a person is delivered from imminent danger, nothing wrong in doing so when he feels that he is rescued from the peril of eternal ruin.

I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord - This language is that which comes from a full heart. He is not contented with saying merely that he would "sing." He repeats the idea; he dwells upon it. With a heart overflowing with gratitude he would go and give utterance to his joy. He would repeat, and dwell upon, the language of thanksgiving.

Verse 7

Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice - This earnest prayer seems to have been prompted by a returning sense of danger. He had had assurance of the divine favor. He had found God ready to help him. He did not doubt but that He would aid him; yet all this did not prevent his calling upon Him for the aid which he needed, but rather stimulated him to do it.

With all the deep-felt conviction of his heart that God was ready and willing to assist him, he still felt that he had no reason to hope for His aid unless he called upon Him. The phrase "when I cry with my voice" refers to the fact that he prayed audibly or aloud. It was not mental prayer, but that which found expression in the language of earnest entreaty.

Verse 8

When thou saidst, Seek ye my face … - Margin, "My heart said unto thee, Let my face seek thy face." The literal translation would be: "To Thee hath said my heart, Seek ye my face; thy face, O Lord, will I seek." DeWette thus expresses the idea, "Of thee my heart thinks (in regard to the command to seek thy face), thy face, Lord, I will seek." Our translators have given the correct meaning, though the original is quite obscure. The passage is designed to denote the state of the mind, or the disposition, in regard to the commands of God. The command or precept was to seek God. The prompt purpose of the mind or heart of the psalmist was, that he would do it. He "immediately" complied with that command, as it was a principle of his life - one of the steady promptings of his heart - that he would do this. The heart asked no excuse; pleaded for no delay; desired no reason for not complying with the command, but at once assented to the propriety of the law, and resolved to obey. This related undoubtedly at first to prayer, but the "principle" is applicable to all the commands of God. It is the prompting of a pious heart immediately and always to obey the voice of God, no matter what his command is, and no matter what sacrifice may be required in obeying it.

Verse 9

Hide not thy face far from me - Compare the notes at Psalm 4:6. To "hide the face" is to turn it away with displeasure, as if we would not look on one who has offended us. The favor of God is often expressed by "lifting the light of his countenance" upon anyone - looking complacently or "pleasedly" upon him. The reverse of this is expressed by hiding the face, or by turning it away. The word "far" introduced by the translators does not aid the sense of the passage.

Put not thy servant away in anger - Do not turn me off, or put me away in displeasure. We turn one away, or do not admit him into our presence, with whom we are displeased. The psalmist prayed that he might have free access to God as a Friend.

Thou hast been my help - In days that are past. This he urges as a reason why God should still befriend him. The fact that He had shown mercy to him, that He had treated him as a friend, is urged as a reason why He should now hear his prayers, and show him mercy.

Leave me not - Do not abandon me. This is still a proper ground of pleading with God. We may refer to all His former mercies toward us; we may make mention of those mercies as a reason why He should now interpose and save us. We may, so to speak, "remind" him of His former favors and friendship, and may plead with Him that He will complete what He has begun, and that, having once admitted us to His favor, He will never leave or forsake us.

Verse 10

When my father and my mother forsake me - If they should do it. The psalmist supposes it possible that this might occur. It does occur, though very rarely; but the psalmist means to say that the love of God is stronger and more certain than even that of a father or mother, since he will never forsake his people. Though every other tie that binds heart to heart should dissolve, this will remain; though a case might occur in which we could not be sure of the love that naturally springs out of the most tender earthly relationships, yet we can always confide in His love. See the notes at Isaiah 49:15.

Then the Lord will take me up - Margin, "will gather me." The margin expresses the usual meaning of the word. It is sometimes used as referring to the hospitable reception of strangers or wanderers into one's house: Judges 19:15, Judges 19:18; Joshua 20:4. The meaning here is, that if he should be forsaken by his nearest earthly friends, and be an outcast and a wanderer, so that no one on earth would take him in, the Lord would then receive him.

Verse 11

Teach me thy way, O Lord - See the notes at Psalm 25:4-5.

And lead me in a plain path - Margin, "a way of plainness." That is, a straight or smooth path. In other words, he prayed that he might be enabled to act wisely and right; he desired that God would teach him what he should do.

Because of mine enemies - Margin, "those which observe me." The translation in the text expresses the true sense. The word which is used is derived from a verb that signifies "to twist; to twist together;" and then, to

oppress; to treat as an enemy. Here it refers to those who would treat him harshly or cruelly; and he prays that God would show him how to act in view of the fact that he was surrounded by such foes. They were harsh and cruel; they sought to overcome him; they laid snares for him. He knew not how to act so as to escape from them, and he, therefore, pleads that God would instruct and guide him.

Verse 12

Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies - Let them not accomplish their desires in regard to me; let them not be able to carry out their purposes. The word here rendered "will" means properly "soul," but it is used here evidently to denote "wish" or "desire." Compare Psalm 35:25.

For false witnesses are risen up against me - People who would lay false charges against him, or who would wrongfully accuse him. They charged him with crimes which he never committed, and they persecuted him as if he were guilty of what they alleged against him.

And such as breathe out cruelty - That is, they meditate violence or cruel treatment. They are intent on this; they pant for it. Saul of Tarsus thus "breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." See the notes at Acts 9:1.

Verse 13

I had fainted, unless I had believed - The words "I had fainted" are supplied by the translators, but they undoubtedly express the true sense of the passage. The psalmist refers to the state of mind produced by the efforts of his enemies to destroy him, as mentioned in Psalm 27:12. So numerous, mighty, and formidable were they, that he says his only support was his faith in God; his belief that he would yet be permitted to see the goodness of God upon the earth. In this time of perplexity and trial he had confidence in God, and believed that He would uphold him, and would permit him to see the evidences of His goodness and mercy while yet on the earth. What was the ground of this confidence he does not say, but he had the fullest belief that this would be so. He may have had some special assurance of it, or he may have had a deep internal conviction of it, sufficient to calm his mind; but whatever was the source of this confidence it was that which sustained him. A similar state of feeling is indicated in the remarkable passage in Job, Job 19:25-27. See the notes at that passage.

To see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living - That is, that I should "live," and yet see and enjoy the tokens of the divine favor here

upon the earth.

Verse 14

Wait on the Lord - This is the sum of all the instruction in the psalm; the main lesson which the psalm is designed to convey. The object is to induce others, from the experience of the psalmist, to trust in the Lord; to rely upon Him; to come to Him in trouble and danger; to wait for His interposition when all other resources fail. Compare Psalm 25:3.

Be of good courage - The Hebrew word here means, "be strong." That is, do not faint. Do not be dismayed. Still hope and trust in the Lord.

He shall strengthen thine heart - He will strengthen "thee." He will enable you to perform your duties, and to triumph over your enemies. See the notes at Isaiah 40:31.

Wait, I say, on the Lord - Repeating an idea with which the heart was full; a lesson resulting from his own rich experience. He dwells upon it as a lesson which he would fix deeply in the mind, that in all times of danger and difficulty, instead of despondency, instead of sinking down in despair, instead of giving up all effort, we should go forward in the discharge of duty, putting our trust solely in the Lord.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 28

Introduction

This psalm is entitled "A Psalm of David;" and there is no reason for doubting the correctness of the inscription. But, as in some of the previous psalms, neither the title nor the contents contain any intimation as to the time or the circumstances of its composition.

It has, in some respects, a strong resemblance to Psalm 26:1-12. The leading idea in this, as in that, is the strong affection of the author for those who revered and loved God; his strong desire to be associated with them in character and destiny; his earnest wish that he might not be drawn away from them, and that his lot might not be with the wicked. It would seem from the psalm itself, especially from Psalm 28:3, that it was composed when its author was under some powerful temptation from the wicked, or when there were strong allurements offered by them which tended to lead him into the society of those who were strangers to God; and, under this temptation, he urges this earnest prayer, and seeks to bring before his own mind considerations why he should not yield to these influences.

The contents of the psalm, therefore, may be presented in the following analysis:

I. The consciousness of danger so pressing upon him as to lead him to break out in an earnest cry to God, Psalm 28:1-2.

II. The source of his anxiety or his danger; and his earnest prayer that he might not be left to the powerful temptation, and be drawn into the society of the wicked, Psalm 28:3.

III. Considerations which occurred to the mind of the psalmist himself why he should not yield to the temptation, or why he should not be associated with the wicked. These considerations are stated in Psalm 28:3-5. They are drawn from the character and the certain destiny of the wicked.

IV. A sense of relief, or a feeling that God had answered his prayer, and that he was safe from the danger, Psalm 28:6-7.

The psalm is especially appropriate to those who are in danger of being led away by the acts of the ungodly - or who are under strong temptations to be associated with the frivolous, the sensual, and the worldly - or to whom strong inducements are offered to mingle in their pleasures, their vices, and their follies. They who before their conversion were the companions of the ungodly; they who were devoted to guilty pleasures but have been rescued from them; they who have contracted habits of intemperance or sensuality in the society of the dissolute, and who feel the power of the habit returning upon them, and are invited by their former associates to join them again - are in the condition contemplated in the psalm, and will find its sentiments appropriate to their experience.

Verse 1

Unto thee will I cry - That is, under the consciousness of the danger to which I am exposed - the danger of being drawn away into the society of the wicked. In such circumstances his reliance was not on his own strength; or on his own resolutions; on his own heart; or on his fellowmen. He felt that he was safe only in God, and he appeals to Him, therefore, in this earnest manner, to save him.

O Lord my rock - See the notes at Psalm 18:2.

Be not silent to me - Margin, "from me." So the Hebrew. The idea is that of one who will not speak to us, or who will not attend to us. We pray, and we look for an "answer" to our prayers, or, as it were, we expect God to "speak" to us; to utter words of kindness; to assure us of His favor; to declare our sins forgiven.

Lest, if thou be silent to me - If thou dost not answer my supplications.

I become like unto them that go down into the pit - Like those who die; or, lest I be crushed by anxiety and distress, and die. The word "pit" here refers to the grave. So it is used in Psalm 30:3; Psalm 88:4; Isaiah 38:18; Isaiah 14:15, Isaiah 14:19. The meaning is, that if he did not obtain help from God he despaired of life. His troubles would overwhelm and crush him. He could not bear up under them.

Verse 2

Hear the voice of my supplications - It was not mental prayer which he offered; it was a petition uttered audibly.

When I lift up my hands - To lift up the hands denotes supplication, as this was a common attitude in prayer. See the notes at 1 Timothy 2:8.

Toward thy holy oracle - Margin, as in Hebrew, "toward the oracle of thy holiness." The word "oracle" as used here denotes the place where the answer to prayer is given. The Hebrew word - דביר *debîyr* - means properly the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle or the temple, the place where God was supposed to reside, and where He gave responses to the prayers of His people: the same place which is elsewhere called the holy of holies. See the notes at Hebrews 9:3-14. The Hebrew word is found only here and in 1 Kings 6:5, 1 Kings 6:16, 1 Kings 6:19-23, 1 Kings 6:31; 1 Kings 7:49; 1 Kings 8:6, 1 Kings 8:8; 2 Chronicles 3:16; 2 Chronicles 4:20; 2 Chronicles 5:7, 2 Chronicles 5:9. The idea here is that he who prayed stretched out his hands toward that sacred place where God was supposed to dwell. So we stretch out our hands toward heaven - the sacred dwelling-place of God. Compare the notes at Psalm 5:7. The Hebrew word is probably derived from the verb to "speak;" and, according to this derivation, the idea is that God spoke to His people; that he "communed" with them; that He answered their prayers from that sacred recess - His special dwelling-place. See Exodus 25:22; Numbers 7:89.

Verse 3

Draw me not away with the wicked - See the notes at Psalm 26:9. The prayer here, as well as the prayer in Psalm 26:9, expresses a strong desire not to be united with wicked people in feeling or in destiny - in life or in death - on earth or in the future world. The reason of the prayer seems to have been that the psalmist, being at this time under a strong temptation to associate with wicked persons, and feeling the force of the temptation, was apprehensive that he should be left to "yield" to it, and to become associated with them. Deeply conscious of this danger, he earnestly prays that he may not be left to yield to the power of the temptation, and fall into sin. So the Saviour Matthew 6:13 has taught us to pray, "And lead us not into temptation." None who desire to serve God can be insensible to the propriety of this prayer. The temptations of the world are so strong; the amusements in which the world indulges are so brilliant and fascinating; they who invite us to partake of their pleasures are often so elevated in their social position, so refined in their manners, and so cultivated by education; the propensities of our hearts for such indulgences are so strong by nature; habits formed before our conversion are still so powerful; and the prospect of worldly advantages from compliance with the customs of those around us are often so great - that we cannot but feel that it is proper for us to go to

the throne of grace, and to plead earnestly with God that he will keep us and not suffer us to fall into the snare.

Especially is this true of those who before they were converted had indulged in habits of intemperance, or in sensual pleasures of any kind, and who are invited by their old companions in sin again to unite with them in their pursuits. Here all the power of the former habit returns; here often there is a most fierce struggle between conscience and the old habit for victory; here especially those who are thus tempted need the grace of God to keep them; here there is special appropriateness in the prayer, "Draw me not away with the wicked."

And with the workers of iniquity - In any form. With those who do evil.

Which speak peace to their neighbours - Who speak words of friendliness. Who "seem" to be persuading you to do that which is for your good. Who put on plausible pretexts. They appear to be your friends; they profess to be so. They use flattering words while they tempt you to go astray.

But mischief is in their hearts - They are secretly plotting your ruin. They wish to lead you into such courses of life in order that you may fall into sin; that you may dishonor religion; that you may disgrace your profession; or that they may in some way profit by your compliance with their counsels. So the wicked, under plausible pretences, would allure the good; so the corrupt would seduce the innocent; so the enemies of God would entice his friends, that they may bring shame and reproach upon the cause of religion.

Verse 4

Give them according to their deeds - Deal righteously with them. Recompense them as they deserve.

And according to the wickedness of their endeavours - Their designs; their works; their plans.

Give them after the work of their hands - Reward them according to what they do.

Render to them their desert - A just recompense. This whole verse is a prayer that God would deal "justly" with them. There is no evidence that there is anything of vindictiveness or malice in the prayer. In itself considered, there is no impropriety in praying that "justice" may be done to the violators of law. See the general introduction, section 6.

Verse 5

Because they regard not the works of the Lord - What the Lord does in creation; in his providence; through His commands and laws; and by His Spirit. They do not find pleasure in His works; they do not give heed to the intimations of His will in His providential dealings; they do not listen to His commands; they do not yield to the influences of His Spirit. "Nor the operation of his hands." What He is now doing. The sense is essentially the same as in the former member of the sentence.

He shall destroy them - He will pull them down, instead of building them up. They expose themselves to His displeasure, and He will bring deserved punishment upon them.

And not build them up - He will not favor them; He will not give them prosperity. Health, happiness, salvation are to be found only in conformity with the laws which God has ordained. Neither can be found in violating those laws, or in any other method than that which He has ordained. Sooner or later the violation of law, in regard to these things, and in regard to everything, must lead to calamity and ruin.

Verse 6

Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications - This is one of those passages which frequently occur in the Psalms, when there has been an earnest and anxious prayer offered to God, and when the answer to the prayer seems to be immediate. The mind of the anxious and troubled pleader becomes calm; the promises of God are brought directly to the soul; the peace which was sought is obtained; and he who began the psalm with deep anxiety and trouble of mind, rejoices at the close of it in the evidences of the divine favor and love. What thus happened to the psalmist frequently occurs now. The answer to prayer, so far as giving calmness and assurance to the mind is concerned, is often immediate. The troubled spirit becomes calm; and whatever may be the result in other respects, the heart is made peaceful and confiding, and feels the assurance that all will be well. It is sufficient for us to feel that God hears us, for if this is so, we have the assurance that all is right. In this sense, certainly, it is right to look for an immediate answer to our prayers. See Isaiah 65:24, note; Daniel 9:21, note.

Verse 7

The Lord is my strength - See the notes at Psalm 18:1.

And my shield - See the notes at Psalm 3:3. Compare Psalm 33:20; Psalm 59:11; Psalm 84:9; Psalm 89:18; Genesis 15:1.

My heart trusted in him - I trusted or confided in him. See Psalm 13:5.

And I am helped - I have found the assistance which I desired.

Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth - I greatly rejoice. I am happy. He had found the assurance of the divine favor which he desired, and his heart was glad.

And with my song will I praise him - I will sing praises to Him. Compare Psalm 22:25.

Verse 8

The Lord is their strength - Margin, "his strength." The Hebrew is, "their strength," or "strength to them." The allusion is to the people of God. The course of thought seems to be, that the psalmist, having derived in his own case assistance from God, or having found God a strength to him, his mind turns from this fact to the general idea that God was the strength of "all" who were in similar circumstancaes; or that all His people might confide in Him as he had done.

And he is the saving strength - Margin, as in Hebrew, "strength of salvations." That is, In Him is found the strength which produces salvation. See the notes at Psalm 27:1.

Of his anointed - See Psalm 2:2, note; Psalm 20:6, note. The primary reference here is doubtless to the psalmist himself, as one who had been annointed or set apaart to the kingly office; but the connection shows that he intended to include all the people of God, as those whom He had consecrated or set apart to His service. See 1 Peter 2:5, 1 Peter 2:9.

Verse 9

Save thy people - All thy people. The psalm appropriately closes with a prayer for all the people of God. The prayer is offered in view of the deliverance which the psalmist had himself experienced, and he prays that all the people of God might experience similar deliverance and mercy.

And bless thine inheritance - Thy heritage; Thy people. The Hebrew word properly means "taking possession of anything; occupation." Then it comes to mean "possession; domain; estate:" Num, Psalm 18:21. Thus it is used as applied to the territory assigned to each tribe in the promised land: Joshua 13:23. Thus also it is applied to the people of Israel - the Jewish nation - as the "possession" or "property" of Yahweh; as a people whom he regarded as His own, and whom, as such, He protected: Deuteronomy 4:20;

Deuteronomy 9:26, Deuteronomy 9:29. In this place the people of God are thus spoken of as His special possession or property on earth; as that which He regards as of most value to Him; as that which belongs to Him, or to which He has a claim; as that which cannot without injustice to Him be alienated from Him.

Feed them also - Margin, "rule." The Hebrew word refers to the care which a shepherd extends over his flock. See Psalm 23:1, where the same word, under another form - "shepherd" - is used. The prayer is, that God would take the same care of His people that a shepherd takes of his flock.

And lift them up for ever - The word used here may mean "sustain" them, or "support" them; but it more properly means "bear," and would be best expressed by a reference to the fact that the shepherd carries the feeble, the young, and the sickly of his flock in his arms, or that he lifts them up when unable themselves to rise. See Isaiah 40:11, note; Isaiah 63:9, note. The word "forever" here means simply "always" - in all circumstances; at all times. In other words, the psalmist prays that God would "always" manifest Himself as the Friend and Helper of His people, as He had done to him. It may be added here, that what the psalmist thus prays for God's "will" to be done. God "will" save His people; He will bless His heritage; He will be to them a kind and faithful shepherd; He will sustain, comfort, uphold, and cherish them always - in affliction; in temptation; in death, forever. They have only to trust in Him, and they will find Him to be more kind and faithful than the most tender shepherd ever was to his flock.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 29

Introduction

This also purports to be a psalm of David, and it has every mark of being his production. It is designed to set forth the majesty and glory of God, especially as manifested in a thunderstorm, and was evidently composed in view of such an exhibition of His power and glory. It is one of the sublimest descriptions of a storm of thunder and lightning anywhere to be found. It is not possible to ascertain the particular occasion on which it was composed, nor is it necessary to do this in order to enter into the spirit and to appreciate the beauty of the psalm. Occasions occur in every country which furnish an illustration of the psalm; and its meaning can be appreciated by all.

The psalm has a universal applicability. It may be regarded as having been designed to show what feelings people should have in a violent storm, when the thunder rolls over sea and land, and when the lightnings flash along the sky; the effects which should be produced amidst such scenes; the influence of religion in keeping the mind from alarm - lifting up the soul in adoration of the great God - and inspiring confidence in One who has power to control elements so fearful. Amidst all the terrors of the tempest the mind of the psalmist was calm. The effect of it was to lead him to confide in the power of God, and to fill his soul with adoring views of him. We do not need to dread the fury of the elements when we know that they are under the absolute control of a Being of infinite goodness, truth, mercy, and love. If these fearful elements raged without control; if they were independent of God; if they were restrained by no laws; if the thunder rolled and the lightning played by mere caprice, or under the dominion of chance, well might we tremble.

The psalm properly consists of three parts:

I. The duty of ascribing praise and glory to God; of giving to him the glory due to his name; of worshipping him in the beauty of holiness, Psalm 29:1-2.

II. The description of the storm, Psalm 29:3-9. The thunder is seven times spoken of as “the voice of the Lord” (compare Revelation 10:3, “And

when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices"); and some special effect is referred to as resulting from the utterance of that voice. It is "upon the waters;" it is "powerful;" it is "full of majesty;" it "breaks the cedars;" it "divides the flames of fire;" it "shakes the wilderness;" it "makes the hinds to calve," and "discovereth the forests."

III. The impression that should be produced by the whole scene. The Lord presides over the floods; the Lord is King forever; the Lord is able to give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace, Psalm 29:10-11. In "such" a God His people may put confidence; under the protection of One who can arm himself with such power, and who can control such elements, His people have nothing to fear; in contending with such a God - one who can sweep the earth with desolation - who can direct the playing lightnings where He pleases - who can cause His voice to echo over hills, and vales, and floods, over the sea and the land, producing dismay and consternation - His enemies can have nothing to hope.

Verse 1

Give unto the Lord - Ascribe unto Yahweh; or, recognize Him as entitled to what is here ascribed to Him. The word cannot be understood, as it is commonly with us, to denote the imparting to another, or granting to another what he does not now possess - for God is always in possession of what is here ascribed to Him.

O ye mighty - Margin, as in Hebrew, "ye sons of the mighty." The Hebrew word used here - אלים *'Êliym* - is the plural form of one of the names of God - אל *'Êl* The word means properly "strong, mighty, a mighty one, a hero;" then, "strength, might, power;" and then it is applied to God as "the Mighty One," the Almighty. ("Gesenius.") In the plural form, the word means "mighty ones, heroes, gods:" Exodus 15:11; Exodus 18:11; Daniel 11:36. The phrase "sons of the mighty" is used only here and in Psalm 89:6. The allusion is undoubtedly to the angels as being in an eminent sense the sons of God, or of the mighty ones; and they are referred to here under that appellation as being themselves endowed with power or strength. Compare Psalm 103:20, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength;" margin: "mighty in strength." In view of the wonderful exhibitions of God's power in the storm - exhibitions far above the power of the most exalted of

His creatures, the psalmist calls upon the angels, the most exalted of them, to acknowledge the existence of a power so much beyond their own.

Glory and strength - Majesty and might. Acknowledge Him as the God of glory; as endowed with power. That is, learn from the manifestations of the power evinced in the storm how great is the power and the glory of God.

Verse 2

Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name - Margin: "the honor of his name." The honor of His name is that which is due to it, or which properly belongs to it. The "name" is put here, as it often is, for God Himself; and the meaning is, "Ascribe to God the honor that is properly his due." This is a claim addressed to the angels; it is a claim certainly not less binding on people. It is practically a call upon all creatures in the universe to ascribe due honor to God.

Worship the Lord - This exhortation is made particularly in view of the manifestations of His power in the storm. The idea is, that one who is capable of putting forth such power as is displayed in a tempest, has a claim to adoration and praise.

In the beauty of holiness - Margin, "in his glorious sanctuary." The Hebrew phrase would properly mean "holy beauty." Some have supposed that it means "in holy adorning," or in such consecrated vestments as were worn by priests in the sacred services of the sanctuary, or when they came into the presence of Yahweh. So DeWette understands it. But the more probable interpretation is that which refers it to the state of the heart - the "internal" ornament - with which we should approach God - to a holy and pure state of mind - that beauty or appropriateness of the soul which consists in holiness or purity. Of this the external clothing of the priesthood was itself but an emblem, and this is that which God desires in those who approach Him in an act of worship. It may be added that there is no "beauty" like this; that there is no external comeliness, no charm of person or complexion, no adorning of costly robes, that can be compared with this. It is this which God seeks, and with this He will be pleased, whether under a less or more attractive external form; whether under rich and costly raiment, or under the plain and decent clothing of poverty.

Verse 3

The voice of the Lord - The voice of Yahweh. There can be no doubt that the expression here, which is seven times repeated in the psalm, "the

voice of Jehovah," refers to thunder; and no one can fail to see the appropriateness of the expression. In heavy thunder it seems as if God spake. It comes from above. It fills us with awe. We know, indeed, that thunder as well as the other phenomena in the world, is produced by what are called "natural causes;" that there is no miracle in thunder; and that really God does not "speak" anymore in the thunder than he does in the sighing of the breeze or in the gurgling of the rivulet; but:

(a) He seems more impressively to speak to people in the thunder; and

(b) He may not improperly be regarded as speaking alike in the thunder, in the sighing of the breeze, and in the gurgling stream.

In each and all of these ways God is addressing men; in each and all there are lessons of great value conveyed, as if by His own voice, respecting His own existence and character. Those which are addressed to us particularly in thunder, pertain to His power, His majesty, His greatness; to our own weakness, feebleness, dependence; to the ease with which He could take us away, and to the importance of being prepared to stand before such a God. "Is upon the waters." The word "is" is supplied here by our translators in italics. The whole passage might be read as an exclamation: "The voice of Jehovah upon the waters!" It is the utterance of one who is overpowered by a sudden clap of thunder. The mind is awed. God seems to speak; His voice is heard rolling over the waters. The psalm was most likely composed in view of the sea or a lake - not improbably in view of the Mediterranean, when a storm was passing over it. A thunderstorm is sublime anywhere, in mountain scenery or upon the plains, upon the land or upon the ocean; but there are circumstances which give it special grandeur at sea, when the thunder seems to "roll" along with nothing to check or break it, and when the sublimity is increased by the solitude which reigns everywhere on the ocean.

The God of glory - The glorious God. See the notes at Psalm 24:7-10.

The Lord is upon many waters - Yahweh Himself seems to be on the ocean. His voice is heard there, and He Himself appears to be there. The margin here is, "great waters." This would seem to imply that the psalm was composed in view of waters more extended than a lake or a river, and sustains the idea above expressed, that it was in view of the great waters

which must have been so familiar to the mind of the sacred writer - the waters of the Mediterranean.

Verse 4

The voice of the Lord is powerful - Margin, as in Hebrew: "in power." That is, is mighty; or, has strength. Allusion may be made to what seems to be the effect of thunder in prostrating trees, or tearing off their limbs, or it may be merely to the loud sound of the thunder.

Is full of majesty - Margin, as in Hebrew, "in majesty." That is, it is grand, sublime, overpowering.

Verse 5

Breaketh the cedars - The thunder prostrates the lofty trees of the forest. The psalmist speaks as things appeared, attributing, as was natural, and as was commonly done, that to the thunder which was really produced by the lightning. It, is now fully known that the effect here referred to is not produced by thunder, but by the rapid passage of the electric fluid as it passes from the cloud to the earth. that power is so great as to rive the oak or the cedar; to twist off their limbs; to prostrate their lofty trunks to the ground. The psalmist speaks of thunder as accomplishing this, in the same way that the sacred writers and all men, even scientific men, commonly speak, as when we say, the sun rises and sets - the stars rise and set, etc. People who would undertake in all cases to speak with scientific accuracy, or in the strict language of science, would be unintelligible to the mass of mankind; perhaps on most subjects they would soon cease to speak at all - since they themselves would be in utter doubt as to what is scientific accuracy. People who require that a revelation from God should always use language of strict scientific precision, really require that a revelation should anticipate by hundreds or thousands of years the discoveries of science, and use language which, when the revelation was given, would be unintelligible to the mass of mankind; nay, which would be always unintelligible to a large portion of the race - since people ordinarily, however much the exact truths of science may be diffused, do not learn to use such exactness of speech. As long as men have occasion to speak on the subject at all they will probably continue to say that the sun rises and sets; that the grass grows; and that water runs.

Breaketh the cedars of Lebanon - "Cedars are mentioned as the loftiest forest trees, and those of Lebanon as the loftiest of their species." - "Prof. Alexander." The cedars of Lebanon are often referred to in the

Scriptures as remarkable for their size and grandeur: 1 Kings 4:33; 1 Kings 5:6; Psalm 92:12; Ezra 3:7.

Verse 6

He maketh them also to skip like a calf - That is, the cedars of Lebanon. Compare Psalm 114:4, "The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs." Psalm 68:16, "why leap ye, ye high hills?" The meaning is plain. The lightning tore off the large branches, and uprooted the loftiest trees, so that they seemed to play and dance like calves in their gambols. Nothing could be more strikingly descriptive of "power."

Lebanon and Sirion - Sirion was the name by which Mount Hermon was known among the Sidonians: Deuteronomy 3:9, "Which Hermon the Sidonians call Sirion." It is a part of the great range of Anti-libanus.

Like a young unicorn - On the meaning of the word used here, see the notes at Psalm 22:21. The illustration would be the same if any young wild animal were referred to.

Verse 7

Divideth the flames of fire - Margin, "cutteth out." The Hebrew word - חצב *châtsab* - means properly "to cut, to hew, to hew out;" as, for example, stones. The allusion here is undoubtedly to lightning; and the image is either that it seems to be cut out, or cut into tongues and streaks - or, more probably, that the "clouds" seem to be cut or hewed so as to make openings or paths for the lightning. The eye is evidently fixed on the clouds, and on the sudden flash of lightning, as if the clouds had been "cleaved" or "opened" for the passage of it. The idea of the psalmist is that the "voice of the Lord," or the thunder, seems to cleave or open the clouds for the flames of fire to play amidst the tempest. Of course this language, as well as that which has been already noticed Psalm 29:5, must be taken as denoting what "appears" to the eye, and not as a scientific statement of the reality in the case. The rolling thunder not only shakes the cedars, and makes the lofty trees on Lebanon and Sirion skip like a calf or a young unicorn, but it rends asunder or cleaves the clouds, and cuts out paths for the flames of fire.

Verse 8

Shaketh the wilderness - Causes it to shake or to tremble. The word used here means properly to dance; to be whirled or twisted upon anything; to twist - as with pain - or, to writhe; and then, to tremble, to quake. The forests are made to tremble or quake in the fierceness of the storm - referring still to what the thunder seems to do.

The wilderness of Kadesh - As in referring Psalm 29:5-6 to the effect of the storm on lofty trees, the psalmist had given poetic beauty to the description by "specifying" Lebanon and Sirion, so he here refers, for the same purpose, to a particular forest as illustrating the power of the tempest - to wit, the forest or wilderness of "Kadesh." This wilderness or forest was on the southeastern border of the promised land, toward Edom; and it is memorable as having been the place where the Israelites twice encamped with a view of entering Palestine from that point, but from where they were twice driven back again - the first time in pursuance of the sentence that they should wander forty years in the wilderness - and the second time, from the refusal of the king of Edom to allow them to pass through his territories. It was from Kadesh that the spies entered Palestine. See Numbers 13:17, Numbers 13:26; Numbers 14:40-45; Numbers 21:1-3; Deuteronomy 1:41-46; Judges 1:7. Kadesh was on the northern border of Edom, and not far from Mount Hor. See Robinson's Biblical Researches in Palestine, vol. ii. pp. 582,610,662; Kitto, Cyclo-Bib. in the article, "Kadesh;" and the Pictorial Bible on Numbers 20:1. There seems to have been nothing special in regard to this wilderness which led the author of the psalm to select it for his illustration, except that it was well known and commonly spoken of, and that it would thus suggest an image that would be familiar to the Israelites.

Verse 9

The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve - The deer. The object of the psalmist here is to show the effects of the storm in producing consternation, especially on the weak and timid animals of the forest. The effect here adverted to is that of fear or consternation in bringing on the throes of parturition. Compare Job 39:1, Job 39:3. No one can doubt that the effect here described may occur in the violence of a tempest; and perhaps no image could more vividly describe the terrors of the storm than the consternation thus produced. The margin here is, "to be in pain." The Hebrew means "to bring forth," referring to the pains of parturition.

And discovereth the forests - The word used here means "to strip off, to uncover;" and, as used here, it means to strip off the leaves of the forest; to make the trees bare - referring to an effect which is often produced by a violent storm.

And in his temple doth every one speak of his glory - Margin, "every whit of it uttereth," etc. The word here rendered "temple" does not refer in

this place to the tabernacle, or to the temple at Jerusalem, but rather "to the world itself," considered as the residence or dwelling-place of God. Perhaps the true translation would be, "And in his temple everything says, Glory!" That is, in the dwelling-place of God - the world of nature - the sky, the earth, the forests, the waters, everything in the storm, echoes "glory, glory!" All these things declare the glory of God; all these wonders - the voice of God upon the waters; the thunder; the crash of the trees upon the hills; the shaking of the wilderness; the universal consternation; the leaves stripped from the trees and flying in every direction - all proclaim the majesty and glory of Yahweh.

Verse 10

The Lord sitteth upon the flood - God is enthroned upon the flood, or presides over it. The obvious meaning is, that God is enthroned upon the storm, or presides over that which produces such consternation. It is not undirected; it is not the result of chance or fate; it is not produced by mere physical laws; it is not without restraint - without a ruler - for Yahweh presides over all, and all this may be regarded as his throne. Compare the notes at Psalm 18:7-11. See also Psalm 97:2. The word used here is commonly applied to the deluge in the time of Noah, but there would be an obvious unfitness in supposing here that the mind of the psalmist referred to that, or that the course of thought would be directed to that, and it is most natural, therefore, to suppose that the reference is to the floods above - the vast reservoirs of waters in the clouds, pouring down, amidst the fury of the tempest, floods of rain upon the earth.

The Lord sitteth King for ever - This is an appropriate close of the entire description; this is a thought which tends to make the mind calm and confiding when the winds howl and the thunder rolls; this accords with the leading purpose of the psalm - the call upon the sons of the mighty Psalm 29:1 to ascribe strength and glory to God. From all the terrors of the storm; from all that is fearful, on the waters, in the forests, on the hills, when it would seem as if everything would be swept away - the mind turns calmly to the thought that God is enthroned upon the clouds; that He presides over all that produces this widespread alarm and commotion, and that He will reign forever and ever.

Verse 11

The Lord will give strength unto his people - This is a practical application of the sentiments of the psalm, or a conclusion which is fairly to

be derived from the main thought in the psalm. The idea is, that the God who presides over the tempest and the storm, the God who has such power, and can produce such effects, is abundantly able to uphold His people, and to defend them. In other words, the application of such amazing power will be to protect His people, and to save them from danger. When we look on the rolling clouds in the tempest, when we hear the roaring of the thunder, and see the flashing of the lightning, when we hear the oak crash on the hills, and see the waves piled mountains high, if we feel that God presides over all, and that He controls all this with infinite ease, assuredly we have no occasion to doubt that He can protect us; no reason to fear that His strength cannot support us.

The Lord will bless his people with peace - They have nothing to fear in the tempest and storm; nothing to fear from anything. He will bless them with peace in the tempest; He will bless them with peace through that power by which He controls the tempest. Let them, therefore, not fear in the storm, however fiercely it may rage; let them not be afraid in any of the troubles and trials of life. in the storm, and in those troubles and trials, he can make the mind calm; beyond those storms and those troubles he can give them eternal peace in a world where no “angry tempest blows.”

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 30

Introduction

This is said to be "A Psalm or Song at the dedication of the house of David." There is no reason to call in question the correctness of this inscription, though it cannot be certain that it was prefixed by the author himself. The words of the title are found in the Hebrew, and it is to be presumed that they were affixed to the psalm by some one of the inspired writers.

It is clearly implied in the title, though not expressly affirmed, that David was the author of the psalm, for it is to be presumed that he would himself compose the hymn or song that was to be used at the dedication of his own dwelling. In fact, the title, as Rosenmuller has remarked, might not improperly be read, "A Psalm, a song of dedication of a house, of David," so that the words "A Psalm of David" might not improperly be regarded as united.

It is not absolutely certain what occasion is referred to in the psalm. Some have supposed that the tabernacle is meant; but the tabernacle was dedicated long before the time of David. Others, and among them several Jewish interpreters, have supposed that it was prepared in order to be sung either at the dedication of the temple which Solomon built, or the dedication of that which was erected after the return from the Babylonian captivity. Others have supposed that it was intended to be used at the dedication of the house or palace which David built for himself on Mount Zion, 2 Samuel 5:11. It was usual for the Hebrews to "dedicate" a house when it was finished; that is, to devote it in a solemn manner to God, probably with appropriate religious exercises. Deuteronomy 20:5, "what man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it."

Compare also Nehemiah 12:27. Others, as Rosenmuller and Prof. Alexander, suppose that the psalm was designed to be used at the dedication of the altar reared by David on the "threshing-floor" of Ornan, which David purchased at the time of the pestilence which came upon the people for his sin in numbering the people, 1 Chronicles 21:15-26. But there is no certain evidence of this. Apart from the incongruity of calling an altar a "house,"

the circumstances are not such as to lead us to believe that the psalm was composed for that occasion. The allusion in the psalm is rather to a previous state of depression, trouble, and sorrow, such as occurred in the life of David before he conquered his enemies, and before he was peaceably established on his throne - and to the joy which he felt when he had triumphed over his foes, and was peacefully established as king in Jerusalem. All the circumstances seem to me to accord best with the time when David erected a house for his own abode - a palace - upon Mount Zion, and to the act of dedicating such a house to God. See 2 Samuel 5:9-12; 2 Samuel 7:1-2. It may be added that that was properly called "the house of David" - a name which could be given neither to the altar erected on the threshing-floor of Ornan, nor to the tabernacle, nor to the temple.

But although the psalm was composed for the purpose of being used at the dedication of his "house," it was in view of some important circumstances of his past life, and particularly of his feelings in time of dangerous illness, and of his obligation on his recovery to devote himself to God. In the dedication of his house to God he recurs with deep interest to that period of his life, and dwells with grateful satisfaction on the goodness of God manifested in his restoration to health. On entering his new abode, he seems to have felt that there was a special propriety in his recognizing the fact that he owed his life to God; his life, not only in general, but in this special act of goodness, by which he had been raised up from the borders of the grave. "His former condition of calamity and sorrow as contrasted with his present happy and prosperous condition," therefore, suggested the train of thought in the psalm at the dedication of his house. In the course of the psalm, as illustrating his feelings, he adverts to the following points:

(1) His former state of self-confidence or security when he was in health, and when he thought his "mountain" stood "strong," Psalm 30:6-7.

(2) His sickness as a means of humbling him, and teaching him his dependence, Psalm 30:2-3.

(3) His prayer for deliverance when he was sick, Psalm 30:2, Psalm 30:8-10.

(4) His deliverance as an act of God Psalm 30:2-3, Psalm 30:11.

(5) His obligation to give thanks to God for his mercy, Psalm 30:1, Psalm 30:4, Psalm 30:12.

These would suggest most appropriate topics of meditation on entering a near abode, and looking forward to the vicissitudes which might and which would probably occur there.

That the allusion in the psalm is to "sickness," seems to me to be evident from Psalm 30:2-3, Psalm 30:9, though at what time of life this occurred, or what was the particular form of disease, we are not informed. From Psalm 30:3, Psalm 30:9, however, it is certain that it was a "dangerous" illness; that he anticipated death; and that he was saved from death only in answer to fervent prayer. The psalm, therefore, in this respect, has a resemblance to Psalm 6:1-10; Psalm 41:1-13; psalms composed also in view of sickness. In a book claiming to be from God, and designed for all mankind in a world where sickness so abounds, it was to be expected that there would be allusions to disease as well as to other forms of affliction, and that in the examples of ancient saints suffering on beds of pain, we should be able to find illustrations of proper pious feeling; that we should be directed by their example to the true sources of consolation, and should be made acquainted with the lessons which God designs to teach us in sickness.

The direct contents of the psalm are as follows:

I. The author recounts the signal mercy of God to him in the time of his danger. God had lifted him up, and had not allowed his enemies to exult over his death, Psalm 30:1-3.

II. He calls upon others to unite with him in praising God, and especially in view of the truth that affliction, as endured by the people of God, would not continue long, and that it would certainly be followed by peace and joy, as the light of the morning will certainly follow the darkest night, Psalm 30:4-5.

III. He adverts again, in illustration of this, to his former state, saying that there was a time when he thought he should never be moved; when he supposed that his "mountain" stood "strong," and that he was secure; but that God had hid His face, and troubled him, teaching him not to confide in his own strength, or in the mere fact that he was prosperous, Psalm 30:6-7.

IV. He adverts to his earnest prayer in the time of his affliction, and recounts the substance of that prayer, Psalm 30:8-10. The "argument" which he then urged was that there could be no "profit" or advantage to God "in his blood," or in his being cut off; that the "dust," that is, the dead, could not praise Him or declare His truth. He, therefore, prayed that God would keep him alive, that he might honor Him upon the earth.

V. In Psalm 30:11-12, he refers to the fact that the prayer was heard, and to the reason why it was heard. God had turned his mourning into dancing; he had put off his sackcloth, and girded him with gladness. The reason why God had done this was, that his "glory," that is, his tongue (margin), might give praise to God, and not be silent; and, in view of all the goodness of God to him, he expresses his purpose to praise God forever.

It will be seen, therefore, that the contents of the psalm are every way suitable to the occasion supposed to be referred to - the dedication of his house to God. On entering such a habitation for the first time it was proper to recall the past scenes of his life - his perils and troubles; it was proper to acknowledge the goodness of God in delivering him from those perils and troubles; it was proper to express his solemn purpose to serve God in that dwelling, and to consecrate himself and all that he had to Him and to His service evermore. What was proper for the royal author of this psalm is proper for all; and there can be nothing more appropriate when we have erected a house to dwell in than to dedicate it to God, with a suitable recollection of his dealings with us in our past life, and to pray that He may also condescend to dwell with us there.

Verse 1

I will extol thee - literally, "I will exalt thee;" that is, he would make God first and supreme in his thoughts and affections; he would do what he could to make Him known; he would elevate Him high in his praises.

For thou hast lifted me up - To wit, from the state of danger in which I was Psalm 30:2-3. The Hebrew word used here means properly to draw out, as from a well; and then, to deliver, to set free. As God had thus lifted him up, it was proper that he should show his gratitude by "lifting up" or extolling the name of God.

And hast not made my foes to rejoice over me - Hast not suffered them to triumph over me; that is, thou hast delivered me from them. He refers to the fact that he had been saved from a dangerous illness, and that his enemies had not been allowed to exult over his death. Compare the notes at Psalm 41:5.

Verse 2

O Lord my God, I cried unto thee - In the time of trouble and danger.

And thou hast healed me - Thou didst restore me to health. The language here evidently refers to the fact that he had been sick, and had then been restored to health.

Verse 3

O, Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave - My life; me. The meaning is, that he had been in imminent danger of death, and had been brought from the borders of the grave. The word here rendered "grave" is "Sheol" - a word which, properly used, commonly denotes the region of the dead; the underworld which is entered through the grave. Compare Isaiah 14:9, note; Psalm 6:5, note.

Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit - More literally, "thou hast caused me to live from them which go down to the pit;" that is, thou hast distinguished me from them by keeping me alive. The word "pit" here means the same as the grave. See the notes at Psalm 28:1.

Verse 4

Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his - This call upon others to give thanks to God is in view of the mercy which he had experienced. He invites them to unite with him in celebrating the praises of that God who had showed him so much mercy. It was not because they had been benefited by these tokens of the divine favor; but:

(a) because when we are partakers of the divine mercy, we desire that others may assist us in giving utterance to the praise due to God; and

(b) because others may learn from the mercies bestowed on us that God is worthy of praise, or may see in His dealings with us an argument for His

goodness; and may, therefore, appropriately unite in His praise.

Thus religion diffuses its influence on all around us, and tends to "unite" the hearts of many in every manifestation of the character of God. Infidelity is solitary and dissocial; religion is social; and, no matter on whom the favor is bestowed, its effect is to unite the hearts of many to each other and to God.

And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness - Margin, "to the memorial." The Hebrew is, "to the memory of his holiness." The sense is, in calling to recollection the acts of his holiness, or his holy perfections. Compare the notes at Psalm 22:3. The word "holiness" here is used in a large sense as denoting, not so much the hatred of sin, as benevolence, kindness, mercy - the divine compassion toward those who are in trouble or danger. It is true that it is a proper subject of rejoicing and praise that God is a holy God, a God of truth and justice, a God who cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence, a God in whose nature is combined every possible perfection; but that is not the exact idea here. The word refers to his compassion, goodness, kindness; and to the acts by which that had been manifested to the psalmist, as laying a proper foundation for gratitude and praise.

Verse 5

For his anger endureth but a moment - Margin: There is but "a moment in his anger." So the Hebrew. That is, his anger endures but a short time, or brief period. The reference here is to the troubles and sorrows through which the psalmist had passed, as compared with his subsequent happiness. Though at the time they might have seemed to be long, yet, as compared with the many mercies of life, with the joy which had succeeded them, and with the hopes now cherished, they seemed to be but for a moment. God, according to the view of the psalmist, is not a Being who cherishes anger; not one who lays it up in his mind; not one who is unwilling to show mercy and kindness: he is a Being who is disposed to be merciful, and though he may be displeased with the conduct of men, yet his displeasure is not cherished and nourished, but passes away with the occasion, and is remembered no more.

In his favor is life - It is his nature to impart life. He spares life; He will give eternal life. It is, in other words, not His nature to inflict death; death is to be traced to something else. Death is not pleasing or gratifying to Him; it

is pleasing and gratifying to Him to confer life. His favor secures life; death is an evidence of His displeasure - that is, death is caused by sin leading to His displeasure. If a man has the favor of God, he is sure of life; if not life in this world, yet life in the world to come.

Weeping may endure for a night - Margin: "in the evening." So the Hebrew. The word here rendered "endure" means properly "to lodge, to sojourn," as one does for a little time. The idea is, that weeping is like a stranger - a wayfaring person - who lodges for a night only. In other words, sorrow will soon pass away to be succeeded by joy.

But joy cometh in the morning - Margin: "singing." The margin expresses the force of the original word. There will be singing, shouting, exultation. That is, if we have the friendship of God, sorrow will always be temporary, and will always be followed by joy. The morning will come; a morning without clouds; a morning when the sources of sorrow will disappear. This often occurs in the present life; it will always occur to the righteous in the life to come. The sorrows of this life are but for a moment, and they will be succeeded by the light and the joy of heaven. Then, if not before, all the sorrows of the present life, however long they may appear to be, will seem to have been but for a moment; weeping, though it may have made life here but one unbroken night, will be followed by one eternal day without a sigh or a tear.

Verse 6

And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved - I shall never be visited with calamity or trial. This refers to a past period of his life, when everything seemed to be prosperous, and when he had drawn around him so many comforts, and had apparently made them so secure, that it seemed as if they could never be taken from him, or as if he had nothing to fear. To what precise period of his life the psalmist refers, it is now impossible to ascertain. It is sufficient to say, that men are often substantially in that state of mind. They have such vigorous constitutions and such continued health; their plans are so uniformly crowned with success; everything which they touch so certainly turns to gold, and every enterprise so certainly succeeds; they have so many and such warmly attached friends; they have accumulated so much property, and it is so safely invested - that it seems as if they were never to know reverses, and they unconsciously suffer the illusion to pass over the mind that they are never to see changes, and that they have nothing to dread. They become self-confident. They forget their

dependence on God. In their own minds they trace their success to their own efforts, tact and skill, rather than to God. They become worldly-minded, and it is necessary for God to teach them how easily he can sweep all this away - and thus to bring them back to a right view of the uncertainty of all earthly things. Health fails, or friends die, or property takes wings and flies away; and God accomplishes his purpose - a purpose invaluable to them - by showing them their dependence on Himself, and by teaching them that permanent and certain happiness and security are to be found in Him alone.

Verse 7

Lord, by thy favor thou hast made my mountain to stand strong - Margin: "settled strength for my mountain." This refers, I apprehend, to his former state of mind; to his confidence in that which constituted his prosperity as referred to in the previous verse; to his feeling, in that state, that everything pertaining to himself was safe; to his freedom from any apprehension that there would be any change. The word "mountain" seems to be used as denoting that on which he relied as his security or strength, as the mountain, or the inaccessible hills, constituted a refuge and security in times of danger. See Psalm 18:1-2, Psalm 18:33; Psalm 27:5. It does not refer to Mount Moriah, or Mount Zion, as some have supposed, for the passage relates to a former period of his life when these were not in his possession; but he speaks of himself as having, through the favor of God, put himself into a strong position - a position where he feared no enemy and no change; where he thought himself entirely secure - the state of "prosperity" to which he had referred in the previous verse. In that state, however, God showed him that there was no real security but in his favor: security not in what a man can draw around himself, but in the favor of God alone.

Thou didst hide thy face - That is, at the time when I was so confident, and when I thought my mountain stood so strong, and that I was so secure. Then I was shown how insecure and uncertain was all that I relied on, and how absolutely, after all that I had done, I was dependent for safety on God. To "hide the face" is synonymous in the sacred writings with the withdrawing of favor, or with displeasure. See the notes at Psalm 13:1. Compare Psalm 104:29.

And I was troubled - I was confounded, perplexed, agitated, terrified. I was thrown into sudden fear, for all that I had so confidently relied on, all

that I thought was so firm, was suddenly swept away. We do not know what this was in the case of the psalmist. It may have been the strength of his own fortifications; it may have been the number and discipline of his army; it may have been his own conscious power and skill as a warrior; it may have been his wealth; it may have been his bodily health - in reference to any of which he may have felt as if none of these things could fail. When that on which he so confidently relied was swept away, he was agitated, troubled, anxious. The same thing may occur now, and often does occur, whenpeople rely on their own strength; their health; their wealth. Suddenly any of these may be swept away; suddenly they are often swept away, to teach such men - even good men - their dependence on God, and to show them how vain is every other refuge.

Verse 8

I cried to thee, O Lord - That is, when those reverses came, and when that on which I had so confidently relied was taken away, I called upon the Lord; I uttered an earnest cry for aid. The prayer which he uttered on the occasion is specified in the following verses. The idea here is, that he was not driven from God by these reverses, but TO him. He felt that his reliance on those things in which he had put his trust was vain, and he now came to God, the true Source of strength, and sought His protection and favor. This was doubtless the design of the reverses which God had brought upon him; and this will always be the effect of the reverses that come upon good men. When they have placed undue reliance upon wealth, or health, or friends, and when these are taken away, the effect will be to lead them to God in earnest prayer. God designs to bring them back, and they do come back to him. Afflictions are always, sooner or later, effectual in bringing good men back to God. The sinner is often driven from God by trial; the good man is brought back to find his strength and comfort in God. The one complains, and murmurs, and is wretched; the other prays, and submits, and is made more happy than he was in the days of his prosperity.

Verse 9

What proof is there in my blood - That is, What profit or advantage would there be to thee if I should die? What would be “gained” by it? The argument which the psalmist urges is that he could better serve God by his life than by his death; that his death, by removing him from the earth, would prevent his rendering the service which he might by his life. The same argument is presented also in Psalm 6:5 (see the notes at that verse),

and is found again in Psalm 88:10-12, and in the hymn of Hezekiah, Isaiah 38:18-19. See the notes at that passage. The prayer used here is to be understood, not as a prayer at the time of the composition of the psalm, but as that which the psalmist employed at the time when he thought his mountain stood strong, and when God saw suitable to humble him by some calamity - perhaps by a dangerous illness, Psalm 30:6-7.

When I go down to the pit? - To the grave; or, If I should go down to the grave. See the notes at Psalm 30:3.

Shall the dust praise thee? - That which turns to dust; the lifeless remains. See the notes at Psalm 6:5.

Shall it declare thy truth? - Can a lifeless body stand up in defense of the truth, or make that truth known to the living? This shows on what his heart was really set, or what was the prevailing desire of his soul. It was to make known the truth of God; to celebrate his praise; to bring others to an acquaintance with him. It cannot be denied that the statement here made is founded on obscure views, or on a misconception of the condition of the soul after death - a misconception which we are enabled to correct by the clearer light of the Christian religion; but still there is a truth here of great importance. It is, that whatever we are to do for making known the character and perfections of God on earth - for bringing others to the knowledge of the truth, and saving their souls - is to be done before we go down to the grave. whatever we may do to honor God in the future world - in the vast eternity on which we enter at death - yet all that we are to do in this respect on earth is to be accomplished before the eyes are closed, and the lips are made mute in death. We shall not return to do what we have omitted to do on earth; we shall not come back to repair the evils of an inconsistent life; we shall not revisit the world to check the progress of error that we may have maintained; we shall not return to warn the sinners whom we neglected to warn. Our work on earth will be soon done - and done finally and forever. If we are to offer prayer for the salvation of our children, neighbors, or friends, it is to be done in this world; if we are to admonish and warn the wicked, it is to be done here; if we are to do anything by personal effort for the spread of the Gospel, it is to be done before we die. Whatever we may do in heaven, these things are not to be done there, for when we close our eyes in death, our personal efforts for the salvation of men will cease for ever.

Verse 10

Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me, - etc. This, too, is the prayer which he uttered in the calamities adverted to in Psalm 30:7. It is a cry for mercy founded on the idea referred to in Psalm 30:9.

Verse 11

Thou hast turned for me - In my behalf. That is, God had heard his prayer; he had brought his troubles to an end; he had caused his sorrows to be succeeded by correspondent joy.

My mourning into dancing - Joy, exultation, every expression of rejoicing, had been made to succeed his deep sorrows. Compare Psalm 30:5. It was this which he commemorated at the dedication of his house; this joy succeeding scenes of sorrow that he now called to remembrance as he entered the place which he had reared for a permanent abode. The contrast of his circumstances now - in a palace, with every comfort of plenty and peace around him - with his former circumstances which had been so sad, made it proper for him thus to celebrate the goodness of God.

Thou hast put off my sackcloth - That which I wore, or had girded around me, as an emblem of sorrow, or in the time of my mourning. See Isaiah 3:24, note; Job 16:15, note; and Matthew 11:21, note.

And girded me with gladness - Instead of a girdle of sackcloth he had been clothed in a festive dress, or with such a dress - girded with an elegant girdle - as was worn on joyous and festive occasions. See the notes at Matthew 5:38-41.

Verse 12

To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee - Margin, my "tongue," or my "soul." DeWette renders it, "my heart." The Aramaic Paraphrase: "that the honorable of the world may praise thee." The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate: "my glory." The reference is, undoubtedly, to what the psalmist regarded as most glorious, honorable, exalted, in himself. There is no evidence that he referred to his "tongue" or his "heart" particularly, but the expression seems to be equivalent to "my highest powers" - all the powers and faculties of my nature. The "tongue" would indeed be the instrument of uttering praise, but still the reference is rather to the exalted powers of the soul than to the instrument. Let all that is capable of praise within me, all my powers, be employed in celebrating the goodness of God.

And not be silent - Be employed in praise.

O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever - Compare the notes at Isaiah 38:20. This verse states the purpose which the psalmist now saw that God intended to accomplish by his dealings with him in the varied scenes of his past life; and his own purpose now as he entered his new abode. "The purpose of God," in all these various dealings - in the prosperity which had been bestowed on him Psalm 30:6-7; in the reverses and trials by sickness or otherwise which had come upon him Psalm 30:3, Psalm 30:7; and in the deliverance which God had granted him in answer to his prayers Psalm 30:2-3, Psalm 30:10-11 - was, that he should learn to praise the Lord. "His own purpose" now, as he entered his new habitation and dedicated it to God, was, to praise God with his highest powers forever: to consecrate all that he had to his gracious preserver; to make his house, not a habitation of gaiety and sin, but an abode of serious piety - a home where the happiness sought would be that which is found in the influence of religion. It is scarcely necessary to add that every new dwelling should be entered by a family with feelings similar to these; that the first act of the head of a family on entering a new habitation - whether it be a palace or a cottage - should be solemnly to consecrate it to God, and to resolve that it shall be a house where His praises shall be celebrated, and where the influence of religion shall be invoked to guide and sanctify all the members of the household.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 31

Introduction

This psalm is addressed to "the chief Musician," and purports to be a psalm of David. On the meaning of the phrase "To the chief Musician," see the notes at the title to Psalm 4:1-8. There can be no doubt that the inscription which ascribes it to David is correct, and that he was the author. The occasion, however, on which it was composed is unknown, and cannot now be ascertained. Most of the Jewish and many Christian interpreters have supposed that it was written when David was in the wilderness of Maon, and when, having been betrayed (as to the place of his retreat) by the Ziphites, he was hotly pursued by Saul and his host, 1 Samuel 23:19-26. There is, however, no particular reason for referring it to this period of his life, for there were many occasions to which it would be equally applicable.

Its general purpose is to inspire confidence in God in other hearts - from the experience of the psalmist - from that manifested favor by which he had been brought through his troubles. See Psalm 31:23-24. The psalm refers to the dangers which surrounded its author at the time referred to; his fears and apprehensions in those dangers; his calm confidence in God amid his dangers; the deliverance from trouble which was vouchsafed to him; his joy and gratitude for deliverance; and the lessons which others might learn in their trials from the divine dealings toward him in his. That the psalmist was in trouble or danger when he penned this psalm there can be no reason to doubt; that he prayed earnestly at that time for deliverance is clear; but it is also plain that in the psalm he refers to former troubles, and to the deliverance which God had granted to him in those troubles, and that he seeks and derives consolation and assurance from the dealings of God with him then. In some parts of the psalm he refers to his present afflictions; in other parts to the trials of other days, and to his deliverances in those trials; in the entire psalm he inculcates the duty of confiding in God, from his own experience of His mercy, and from his own reliance upon Him.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:

I. Prayer to God for deliverance from his sufferings and his enemies, on the ground of his confidence in Him, and his previous experience of His mercy, Psalm 31:1-8.

II. Description of his troubles and of the calamities under which he was oppressed; or an enumeration of his present distresses, Psalm 31:9-13. He says that he is in trouble, and that his eye is consumed with grief, Psalm 31:9; that his life is spent with grief, and his years with sighing, that his strength failed, and that his bones were consumed, Psalm 31:10; that he is a reproach among his neighbors and an object of dread to his acquaintances, or that they fled from him, he was so abject, forsaken, and afflicted, Psalm 31:11; that he was forsaken and forgotten like a dead man who had passed away from the recollection of mankind, Psalm 31:12; that he was slandered, and that people conspired together to take away his life, Psalm 31:13.

III. Calm confidence in God in these times of trouble; or a calm committing of all into His hands, under an assurance which he felt that all would be well, Psalm 31:14-20. He says that he trusted in God, Psalm 31:14; and that his times were in the hand of God, Psalm 31:15; he prays that God would deliver him, Psalm 31:15-18; he finds comfort and peace in the assurance of the divine goodness and mercy, Psalm 31:19; and in the assurance that God would hide them that trusted in Him from the pride of man, and would keep them safely in His pavilion, Psalm 31:20.

IV. Thanks for deliverance, Psalm 31:21-22. He seems to have found the deliverance, even while he prayed, or to have had such an assurance of it that he could speak of it as if it were already his. He felt that he had been hasty in supposing that he would be cut off; and seems to have reproached himself for even a momentary doubt in regard to the goodness of God, Psalm 31:22.

V. The lesson furnished to others by his experience, Psalm 31:23-24. It is a lesson of encouragement to all in similar circumstances, prompting them to be of good courage; to be cheered by his example and experience; never to despond; never to cease to trust God. Because He had found God to be a refuge and strength, he calls upon all others to believe that they would also find him such if they likewise trusted in Him.

Verse 1

In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust - This is the ground of the petitions which follow; or the reason why the psalmist thus appeals to God. It was his firm confidence in Him; in His character; in His promises; in His ability to deliver Him in the time of danger. Compare the notes at Psalm 7:1.

Let me never be ashamed - That is, let me never have occasion to be ashamed for having put this confidence in Thee. Let Thy dealings toward me be such as to show that my confidence was well founded. The word is not used here in the sense of being unwilling to confess his faith in God, or his love for Him, as it is often now (compare Romans 1:16; Romans 5:5; 2 Timothy 1:12), but in the sense of being so "disappointed" as to make one ashamed that he had thus relied on that which was unworthy of confidence. See the notes at Job 6:20; compare also Isaiah 30:5; Jeremiah 2:26; Jeremiah 14:3-4. The psalmist prays that God would interpose in his behalf in answer to his prayers, and that he would show that He was worthy of the confidence which he had reposed in him, or that He was a God who might be trusted in the time of trial; in other words, that he might not be subjected to the reproach of the wicked for having in his troubles relied upon such a God.

Deliver me in thy righteousness - In the manifestation of Thy righteous character; in the exhibition of that character as righteous; as doing justice between man and man; as pronouncing a just sentence between me and my enemies.

Verse 2

Bow down thine ear to me - As He does who inclines His ear toward one whom He is willing to hear, or whom He is desirous of hearing. See the notes at Psalm 17:6.

Deliver me speedily - Without delay. Or, hasten to deliver me. It is right to pray to be delivered from all evil; equally right to pray to be delivered immediately.

Be thou my strong rock - Margin: "to me for a rock of strength." See Psalm 18:1-2, note; Psalm 18:46, note.

For an house of defense to save me - A fortified house; a house made safe and strong. It is equivalent to praying that he might have a secure abode or dwelling-place.

Verse 3

For thou art my rock and my fortress - See the notes at Psalm 18:2.

Therefore for thy name‘s sake - For the sake of thine own honor, or for the glory of thy name. See the notes at Psalm 23:3. That is, since thou art my rock and my defense - since I put my trust in thee - show, by leading and guiding me, that my trust is well founded, or that this is Thy character, and that Thou wilt be true and faithful to those who commit their all to thee. See the notes at Psalm 31:1.

Verse 4

Pull me out of the net - See the notes at Psalm 9:15.

That they have laid privily for me - That my enemies have laid for me. The phrase “laid privily” refers to the custom of “hiding” or “concealing” a net or gin, so that the wild beast that was to be taken could not see it, or would fall into it unawares. Thus, his enemies designed to overcome him, by springing a net upon him at a moment when he was not aware of it, and at a place where he did not suspect it.

For thou art my strength - My stronghold. My hope of defense is in thee, and thee alone.

Verse 5

Into thine hand I commit my spirit - The Saviour used this expression when on the cross, and when about to die: Luke 23:46. But this does not prove that the psalm had originally a reference to him, or that he meant to intimate that the words originally were a prophecy. The language was appropriate for him, as it is for all others in the hour of death; and his use of the words furnished the highest illustration of their being appropriate in that hour. The act of the psalmist was an act of strong confidence in God in the midst of dangers and troubles; the act of the Saviour was of the same nature, commending his spirit to God in the solemn hour of death. The same act of faith is proper for all the people of God, alike in trouble and in death. Compare Acts 7:59. The word “spirit” may mean either “life,” considered as the animating principle, equivalent to the word “myself;” or it may mean more specifically the “soul,” as distinguished from the body. The sense is not materially varied by either interpretation.

Thou hast redeemed me - This was the ground or reason why the “psalmist” commended himself to God; this reason was not urged, and could not have been by the Saviour, in his dying moments. He committed his departing spirit to God as his Father, and in virtue of the work which he had been appointed to do, and which he was now about finishing, as a

Redeemer; we commit our souls to Him in virtue of having been redeemed. This is proper for us:

(a) because he has redeemed us;

(b) because we have been redeemed for him, and we may ask Him to take His own;

(c) because this is a ground of safety, for if we have been redeemed, we may be certain that God will keep us; and

(d) because this is the only ground of our security in reference to the future world.

What "David" may have understood by this word it may not be easy to determine with certainty; but there is no reason to doubt that he may have used it as expressive of the idea that he had been recovered from the ruin of the fall, and from the dominion of sin, and had been made a child of God. Nor do we need to doubt that he had such views of the way of salvation that he would feel that he was redeemed only by an atonement, or by the shedding of blood for his sins. To all who are Christians it is enough to authorize them to use this language in the midst of troubles and dangers, and in the hour of death, that they have been redeemed by the blood of the Saviour; to none of us is there any other safe ground of trust and confidence in the hour of death than the fact that Christ has died for sin, and that we have evidence that we are interested in his blood.

O Lord God of truth - True to thy promises and to thy covenant-engagements. As thou hast promised life and salvation to those who are redeemed, they may safely confide in thee. See the notes at 2 Corinthians 1:20.

Verse 6

I have hated them that regard lying vanities - This is evidently stated as a reason for the prayer offered in the previous verses. It is a reference by the psalmist to his own past life; to his general aim and conduct. The meaning is, that he had been a friend of God; that he had separated himself from wicked men; and he now prays in return for His protection and interposition. The sentiment is similar to that which occurs in Psalm 26:3-5. See the notes at that passage. The word rendered "regard" here means to

observe, to keep, to attend upon; and the reference is to those who show honor to what is here called "lying vanities;" that is, those who attend upon them, or who show them favor. The "lying vanities" are probably "idols," and the allusion is to those who attended on the worship of idols as distinguished from those who worshipped the true God. Idols are often represented as false - as vain, or vanity, - as a lie - in contradistinction from that which is true and real. See the notes at 1 Corinthians 8:4. There is special emphasis in the language used here as denoting the "utter" worthlessness and vanity of idols. The language means "vanities of emptiness;" denoting that they were "utterly" vain and worthless.

But I trust in the Lord - In Yahweh, the true God, as distinguished from idols.

Verse 7

I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy - I will triumph and joy in thy mercy; that is, in the mercy which he had already experienced, and in that which he still hoped to enjoy. He had had abundant proofs of that mercy; he hoped for still further proofs of it; and he says that he would find his joy in that, and not in what idols could give.

For thou hast considered my trouble - In times past and now. He felt assured that his prayer would be regarded, and that God would relieve and deliver him.

Thou hast known my soul in adversities - In the troubles that have come upon me. That is, God had seen and known all the feelings of his heart in the time of adversity; his sorrow and anxiety; his hope and trust; his uncomplaining spirit; his feeling of entire dependence on God, and his belief that He would interpose to save him. God had not turned away from him, but had shown that he regarded with interest all his feelings, his desires, his hopes. It is much, in the time of trouble, to know that all our feelings are understood by God, that He sees all our sorrows, and that He will not be regardless of them. There are no states of mind more interesting than those which occur in adversities; there is no one who can fully understand the soul in adversities but God; there is no one but God who can entirely meet the needs of the soul in such seasons.

Verse 8

And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy - Hast not delivered me into his hand, or into his power. See the margin 1 Samuel 17:46; 1 Samuel 24:18; 1 Samuel 26:8.

Thou hast set my feet in a large room - In a large place. Thou hast made me free, or set me at liberty. See Psalm 4:1, note; Psalm 18:19, note; Psalm 18:36, note.

Verse 9

Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble - The nature and sources of his trouble are specified in the verses following. He seems to have regarded all his trouble as the result of sin, either the sin of his heart, of which he alone was conscious, or of some open act of sin, that had been the means of bringing this affliction upon him, Psalm 31:10. As a consequence of this, he says that he was subjected to the reproach of his enemies, and shunned by his neighbors and his acquaintances; that he was forgotten by them like a dead man out of mind; that he was exposed to the slander of others, and that they conspired against his life, Psalm 31:11-13. In view of all this he calls earnestly upon God to save him in his troubles, and to be his helper and friend.

Mine eye is consumed with grief - That is, with weeping. See the notes at Psalm 6:7.

Yea, my soul - That is, my spirit, my life, my mind. My powers are weakened and exhausted by excessive grief.

And my belly - My bowels: regarded as the seat of the affections. See the notes at Isaiah 16:11; compare Psalm 22:14. The effect of his grief was to exhaust his strength, and to make his heart sink within him.

Verse 10

For my life is spent with grief - The word here rendered "spent" does not mean merely "passed," as it is commonly now used, as when we say we "spent" our time at such a place, or in such a manner, but in the more proper meaning of the word, as denoting "consumed, wasted away," or "destroyed." See the word כלה *kâlâh* as used in Jeremiah 16:4; Lamentations 2:11; Psalm 84:2 (Psalm 143:7; Psalm 69:3 Job 11:20.

And my years with sighing - That is, my years are wasted or consumed with sighing. Instead of being devoted to active toil and to useful effort, they are exhausted or wasted away with a grief which wholly occupies and preys upon me.

My strength faileth because of mine iniquity - Because of the trouble that has come upon me for my sin. He regarded all this trouble - from whatever quarter it came, whether directly from the hand of God, or from man - as the fruit of "sin." Whether he refers to any particular sin as the

cause of this trouble, or to the sin of his nature as the source of all evil, it is impossible now to determine. Since, however, no particular sin is specified, it seems most probable that the reference is to the sin of his heart - to his corrupt nature. It is common, and it is not improper, when we are afflicted, to regard all our trials as fruits of sin; as coming upon us as the result of the fall, and as an evidence that we are depraved. It is certain that there is no suffering in heaven, and that there never would be any in a perfectly holy world. It is equally certain that all the woes of earth are the consequence of man‘s apostasy; and it is proper, therefore, when we are afflicted, even though we cannot trace the affliction to any “particular” offence, to trace it all to the existence of evil, and to regard it as among the proofs of the divine displeasure against sin.

And my bones are consumed - That is, are decayed, worn out, or wasted away. Even the solid framework of my body gives way under excessive grief, and all my strength is gone. See Psalm 32:3; Psalm 102:3.

Verse 11

I was a reproach among all mine enemies - That is, he was subjected to their reproaches, or was calumniated and reviled by them. See the notes at Psalm 22:6.

But especially among my neighbors - I was reproached by none more than by my neighbors. They showed special distrust of me, and manifested special unkindness, even more than my enemies did. They turned away from me. They abandoned me. They would not associate with me. They regarded me as a disgrace to them, and forsook me. Compare Job 19:13-15, and the notes at that passage.

And a fear to mine acquaintance - An object of dread or terror, so that they fled from me.

They that did see me without - In the streets, or in public - out of my own house. Not only those in my own dwelling - the members of my family - regarded me in this manner, but passers in the streets - those whom I accidentally met - turned from me and fled in disgust and horror. It is not possible now to determine at what time in the life of the psalmist this occurred, or to ascertain the exact circumstances. There were, doubtless, times when with the saddest feelings he could say that all this was true of him. His troubles in the time of his persecutions by Saul, and still more probably his trials in the time when Absalom rebelled against him, and when he was driven away from his throne and his capital, would furnish an

occasion when this would be true. If the latter was the occasion, then we can see how naturally he would connect all this with his "iniquity," and regard it as the consequence of his sin in the matter of Uriah - a sin which would probably be always in his recollection, and which he would ever onward regard as lying at the foundation of all his afflictions.

Verse 12

I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind - Like the man who is dead, and who has passed away from the recollection of mankind. Compare Psalm 88:4-5. The Hebrew is, "as a dead man from the heart;" that is, from the memory or recollection of men, so as to be no more remembered; no more regarded. The expression is nearly the same in meaning as our common English proverb: "out of sight, out of mind." The allusion is to the fact that a man who is dead is soon forgotten. He is missed at first by a few friends, while the rest of the world knows little about him, or cares little for him. He is no longer seen where he has been accustomed to be seen, at the place of business, in the social circle, in the scenes of amusement, in the streets, or in public assemblies. For a short period a vacancy is created which attracts attention and causes regret. But the world moves on. Another comes to fill his place, and soon his absence ceases to be a subject of remark, or a cause of regret; the world says little about him, and soon he altogether ceases to be remembered. At no distant time the rude board with his name written on it, or the marble sculptured with all the skill of art, falls down. The passing traveler casts an eye upon the "name" of him who slept his last sleep there, and neither knows nor cares who he was.

"The gay will laugh
When thou art gone, the solemn brood of care
Plod on, and each one as before will chase

His favorite phantom"
- *Bryant*
"On my grassy grave
The men of future times will careless tread,

And read my name upon the sculptured stone;

Nor will the sound, familiar to their ears,

Recall my vanish'd memory."

- *Henry Kirke White*

It is sad to reflect that this is to be our lot; but so it is. It would cast a most gloomy shade over life if this was to be the end of man, and if he passed from existence as soon as he passes from the recollection of the living. The idea of the psalmist here is, that, in the circumstances to which he referred, he had been forgotten by mankind, and he uses the most striking image which could be employed to convey that idea.

I am like a broken vessel - Margin, as in Hebrew, "like a vessel that perisheth." That is, like a vessel made of clay - a piece of pottery - that is easily broken and rendered worthless. This is a favorite comparison with Jeremiah. See Jeremiah 22:28; Jeremiah 48:38; Lamentations 4:2. Compare also Psalm 2:9; Isaiah 30:14; Hosea 8:8.

Verse 13

For I have heard the slander of many - The reproach; the false accusations; the unjust aspersions. We are here more definitely informed as to another of the sources of the trouble that came upon him. It was "slander." He had already referred to "two" sources of trouble; one Psalm 31:11 that he was "reproached" by his friends and neighbors, and that his society was shunned by them; a second, that he was "forgotten" by those who ought to have remembered him, and that they treated him as though he were dead, Psalm 31:12. The third is referred to now; to wit, that he was the subject of "slander," or of false reports. What was the "nature" of those false charges we are not informed. But it is not needful that we should know precisely what they were. It is enough, in order to see the depth and aggravation of his trouble, to know that he "was" exposed to this; and that, to all that he had to endure from other sources, there was this added - that his name was reproached and cast out as evil - that he was subjected to "slander,"

"Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue
Outvenoms all the worms of Nile; whose breath
Rides on the posting winds; and doth belie

All corners of the world."

Cymbeline, Act iii., Sc. iv.

Fear was on every side - From the causes already specified. He knew not whom to trust. He seemed to have no friend. He was afraid, therefore,

of every one that he met.

While they took counsel together against me - See the notes at Psalm 2:2. They entered into a conspiracy or combination.

They devised to take away my life - They devised measures, or they laid a plot, thus to kill me. These are the grounds of the earnest prayer which he urges in Psalm 31:9: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble."

Verse 14

But I trust in thee, O Lord - In these times of trial - when Psalm 31:9 his eye was consumed with grief; when Psalm 31:10 his years were spent with sighing, his strength failed, and his bones were consumed; when Psalm 31:11 he was a reproach among his neighbors, and dreaded by his acquaintances; when Psalm 31:12 he was forgotten as a dead man; and when Psalm 31:13 he was surrounded with causes of alarm. Then he trusted in God. His confidence did not fail. He believed that God was his Father and Friend; that He was on the throne; that He could protect and defend him; and he left himself and his cause with Him. In such circumstances as these there is no other sure refuge but God; at such times the strength of faith is shown, and then is seen pre-eminently the power and value of religion.

I said, Thou art my God - Thou art all that is implied in the name "God;" and thou art mine. He felt assured that God would not forsake him, though men did; that he might confide in Him, though his earthly friends all turned away. There is always one (God) who will not leave or forsake us; and the friendship and favor of that One is of more value to us than that of all other beings in the universe combined.

Verse 15

My times are in thy hand - That is, I said this in my trouble; when my friends forsook me, and when my enemies came around me and threatened my life. The meaning is, that all that pertained to him was under the control and at the disposal of God. He would "live" as long as God should please. It was His to give life; His to preserve it; His to take it away. All in relation to life - its origin - its continuance - its changes - its seasons - childhood, youth, middle age, old age - all was in the hand of God. No one, therefore, could take his life before the time that had been appointed by God, and he might calmly commit the whole to him. This we may feel in all seasons of life and in all times of danger; of sickness; of feebleness. We shall live as

long as God has appointed; we shall pass through such changes as he directs; we shall die when and where and how he chooses. In the faithful discharge of our duty, therefore, we may commit all these things to him, and leave all at his disposal.

Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies - That is, since all these things are under thy control; since thou hast power over my life and over all that pertains to me, I pray that thy power may be exerted in my behalf, and that my life may be rescued from danger. This was his prayer in the midst of his troubles, and this prayer was heard.

Verse 16

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant - That is, show me thy favor, or be kind and merciful to me. See the notes at Psalm 4:6.

Save me for thy mercies‘ sake - On account of thy mercy; or that thy mercy may be manifested. This is always a just ground of appeal to God by a sinner or a sufferer, that God would make our sins and trials an "occasion" for displaying his own character. There are, indeed, other grounds of appeal; but there is no one that is more pure or exalted than this.

Verse 17

Let me not be ashamed, O Lord, for I have called upon thee - That is, I have reposed entire confidence in thee, and in thy promises, in the time of trial; let now the result be such as to show that I had reason thus to trust in thee; that thy character is such that the persecuted and the afflicted may always find thee to be a safe and secure refuge. In other words, Let me not be disappointed, and thus be made "ashamed" before men, as if I had put my trust where no relief was to be found, or where there was nothing to authorize an act of unreserved confidence. See the notes at Psalm 25:2-3.

Let the wicked be ashamed - Let them be disappointed in that on which they had put their trust; let it be seen that they, in their wicked plans, had no safe ground of confidence. They rely on their strength; their skill; their courage; their resources; and not on God. Let it now be seen that these things constitute no safe ground of trust, and let not others be encouraged to follow their example by any success that shall attend them in their designs.

And let them be silent in the grave - Margin, "let them be cut off for the grave." Hebrew: "for Sheol." The more correct translation is that which is in the text, "Let them be silent." That is, let them go down to the grave - to "Sheol" - to the "underworld" - to the "land of silence." On the meaning of the word used here - "Sheol," the grave - see the notes at Isaiah 14:9;

compare the notes at Job 10:21-22; and the notes at Psalm 16:10. This is represented as a land of "silence." This idea is derived from "the grave," where the dead repose in silence; and the meaning here is, let them be cut off and consigned to that land of silence. It is a prayer that the wicked may not triumph.

Verse 18

Let the lying lips be put to silence - See the notes at Psalm 12:2-3. The lips which speak lies. The reference here is especially to those who had spoken in this manner against the psalmist himself, though he makes the language general, or prays in general that God would silence all liars: a prayer certainly in which all persons may properly join.

Which speak grievous things - Margin, "a hard thing." The Hebrew word - עתק *ʿâthâq* - means "bold, impudent, wicked." Gesenius, Lexicon. The phrase here means, therefore, to speak wickedly, or to speak in a bold, reckless, impudent manner; that is, without regard to the truth of what is said.

Proudly and contemptuously - Hebrew, in pride and contempt: that is, in a manner which shows that they are proud of themselves and despise others. Slander always perhaps implies this. People are secretly proud of themselves; or they "desire" to cherish an exalted opinion of themselves, and to have others entertain the same opinion of them; and hence, if they cannot exalt themselves by their own merit, as they wish, they endeavor to humble others below their real merit, and to a level lower than themselves, by detraction.

Verse 19

Oh how great is thy goodness - That is, in view of the divine protection and favor in such cases, or when thus assailed. The psalmist seems to have felt that it was an inexpressible privilege thus to be permitted to appeal to God with the assurance of the divine protection. In few circumstances do people feel more grateful for the opportunity of appealing to God than when they are reviled and calumniated. As there is nothing which we feel more keenly than calumny and reproach, so there can be no circumstances when we more appreciate the privilege of having such a Refuge and Friend as God.

Which thou hast laid up - Which thou hast "treasured" up, for so the Hebrew word means. That is, goodness and mercy had been, as it were, "treasured up" for such an emergency - as a man treasures up food in

autumn for the wants of winter, or wealth for the wants of old age. The goodness of God is thus a treasure garnered up for the needs of His people - a treasure always accessible; a treasure that can never be exhausted.

For them that fear thee - Or "reverence" thee - fear or reverence being often used to denote friendship with God, or religion. See the notes at Psalm 5:7.

Which thou hast wrought for them - Which thou hast "made" for them (Hebrew); or, which thou hast secured as if by labor; that is, by plan and arrangement. It was not by chance that that goodness had been provided; God had done it in a manner resembling the act of a man who lays up treasure for his future use by plan and by toil. The idea is, that all this was the "work" of a benevolent God; a God who had carefully anticipated the wants of his people.

For them that trust in thee - who rely upon Thee in trouble, in danger, and in want; who feel that their only reliance is upon Thee, and who do actually trust in Thee.

Before the sons of men - That is, Thou hast performed this in the presence of the sons of men, or in the presence of mankind. God had not only laid it up in secret, making provision for the wants of His people, but he had worked out this deliverance before people, or had shown His goodness to them openly. The acts of benevolence or goodness in the case were - "first," that he had "treasured up" the resources of His goodness by previous arrangement, or by anticipation, for them; and "second," that he had "wrought out" deliverance, or had "manifested" his goodness by interposing to save, and by doing it openly that it might be seen by mankind.

Verse 20

Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence - See the notes at Psalm 27:5. The phrase "secret of thy presence" means thy "secret presence." The Hebrew is: "the secret of thy face;" and the idea is, that He would hide them, or withdraw them from public view, or from the view of their enemies, into the very place where He Himself dwelt, so that they would be before Him and near Him; so that His eye would be upon them, and that they would be certain of His protection. The language here is the same as in Psalm 27:5, except that the word "face" or "presence" is used here instead of the word "tabernacle." The idea is the same.

From the pride of man - The Hebrew word here rendered "pride" - רכס *rôkes* - means properly "league" or "conspiracy;" then, "snares" or "plots." It occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures, though the corresponding verb - רכס *râkas* - occurs twice, meaning to "bind on" or "to," Exodus 28:28; Exodus 39:21. The word here means "league" or "conspiracy," and the idea is, that when the wicked form a conspiracy, or enter into a league against the righteous, God will take them, as it were, into His own immediate presence, and will protect them.

Thou shalt keep them secretly - Thou wilt "hide" them as with Thyself.

In a pavilion - In Thy tent, or dwelling-place. See the notes at Psalm 27:5.

From the strife of tongues - Slander; reproach; calumny. This does not mean the strife of tongues among themselves, or their contentions with each other, but the united clamors of the whole against Himself. God would guard the righteous from their reproaches, or their efforts to ruin them by slander. Compare Psalm 37:5-6.

Verse 21

Blessed be the Lord - An expression of thanksgiving for the evidence that God had heard him in his troubles, and had answered him.

For he hath showed me his marvelous kindness - literally, "He has made his mercy wonderful;" that is, he has showed me such mercy as to be an object of admiration and astonishment. It was not ordinary kindness, such as is shown to people every day; it was so uncommon - so far beyond all expectation - so separate from second causes and the agency of man - so marked in its character - as to fill the mind with wonder.

In a strong city - Margin, "fenced city." This may mean either that he had thus placed him literally in a strongly fortified city where he was safe from the fear of his enemies; or, that he had interposed in his behalf, and had given him protection as if he had brought him into such a strongly fortified place. Jarchi supposes that the city of "Keilah" 1 Samuel 23:7 is here intended. But this is improbable. All that the passage necessarily implies is, that God had given him protection as if he had been placed in a strongly fortified town where he would be safe from danger.

Verse 22

For I said in my haste - In my fear; my apprehension. The word rendered "haste" means properly that terror or alarm which causes one to

flee, or to endeavor to escape. It is not "haste" in the sense of an opinion formed too quickly, or formed rashly; it is "haste" in the sense of terror leading to sudden flight, or an effort to escape. See an illustration of this idea in the case of David himself, in 1 Samuel 23:26.

I am cut off - That is, I shall certainly be cut off or destroyed.

From before thine eyes - Either, in thy very presence; or, so that I shall not be admitted into thy presence. I shall be cut down, and suffered no more to come before thee to worship thee. Compare the notes at Psalm 6:5.

Nevertheless thou heardest … - Contrary to my apprehensions, I was heard and delivered. God's mercy went beyond the psalmist's faith - as it often does to His people now, far beyond what they hope for; far beyond what they even pray for; far beyond what they believe to be possible; so far beyond all this, as to make the result, as in the case of David Psalm 31:21, a matter of wonder and astonishment.

Verse 23

O love the Lord, all ye his saints - This is the "application" of all the truths suggested in the psalm. The experience of the psalmist had shown the wisdom of trusting in God in times of danger and trouble, and had laid the foundation for a proper exhortation to others to imitate his example; an argument why all the people of God should love him, and should be of good courage. The reason here assigned for their loving the Lord is, that he preserves those who are faithful to him, and "rewards the proud doer." This is a reason for loving God, or for putting our trust in him, though the psalmist does not say that this is the only reason for doing it. The meaning here is, that the dealings of God toward the psalmist had established this truth in regard to the character of God, that he does preserve the faithful, and does punish the proud, and that this fact constitutes a reason why all his people should confide in him.

For the Lord preserveth the faithful - The faithful; those who put their trust in him; those who do not give up in despondency and despair in time of danger and trouble; those who do not forsake him even though for a time he seems to forsake them. What God looks for mainly in his people is confidence; faithfulness; trust; fidelity.

And plentifully rewardeth - "Abundantly" rewards. Literally, "in plenty." That is, his punishment does not fall short of the desert of the wicked man. It is ample or full. He does full justice.

The proud doer - "The man working pride." The reference is to the man who is confident in himself; who seeks to aggrandize himself, and who in doing this is regardless of the rights of others.

Verse 24

Be of good courage - See a similar exhortation at the close of a psalm, in Psalm 27:14. Compare the notes at that verse. As the result of all his own experience of the goodness of God, and of His gracious interposition in the time of danger, the psalmist exhorts others to be encouraged, and to feel assured that God would not leave or forsake them.

And he shall strengthen your heart - He will animate you; he will enable you to meet trial and opposition; he will keep you from becoming faint and disheartened.

All ye that hope in the Lord - All that put their trust in him, or all whose expectation is from him. It is a characteristic of true piety that all hope centers in God, or that the soul feels that there is no other ground of hope.

(a) The truly pious man despairs of success in anything else, or from any other quarter, for he feels that God alone can give success.

(b) He does hope in God - in reference to all that is needful for himself as an individual; all that will be for the good of his family; all that will tend to bless the world; all that he desires in heaven. Hope in God cheers him, sustains him, comforts him; makes life happy and prosperous; and makes death calm, serene, triumphant.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 32

Introduction

This psalm is ascribed to David, and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the superscription to that effect.

The "occasion" on which it was composed, however, is not intimated, nor is there any way now of ascertaining it. That David refers to his own experience is manifest from the psalm itself, Psalm 32:3-5; but whether to his experience at the time of his conversion, or to his experience in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah - his deep guilt - his anguish of spirit on that occasion - the remorse of conscience which he felt when the guilt of that sin was brought home to his conscience; or whether he refers to some other occasion of his life when he was troubled at the remembrance of sin, it is impossible now to determine.

The "design" of this psalm is manifest. It is to show the blessedness of the forgiveness of sin. This is done by showing, in the first place, the pain, distress, and anguish, resulting from the conviction of guilt. Then follows a statement of the effects consequent on a frank and full confession of guilt in giving peace to the mind, and relieving the distress caused by the remembrance of guilt. It is remarkable that this psalm refers so much to the "inward" feelings; and that it contains no reference to any external acts - to Jewish sacrifices and offerings. It pertains to the soul and to God; to the inward work of penitence and pardon; to the sorrow of conviction and to the peace of forgiveness; and it shows that there was among the Hebrews a just idea of the nature of religion as a spiritual transaction between the soul and God. Even DeWette recognizes this, and sees in the psalm an illustration of the nature of faith and its bearing on salvation, and an illustration of the nature of true reconciliation with God. "In this psalm," says he, "as well as in Psalm 32:1-2.

II. A description of the state of mind, when under conviction for sin, Psalm 32:3-4.

III. The effect of confession of sin, resulting in a sense of forgiveness and peace, Psalm 32:5.

IV. Encouragement to others in similar circumstances, derived from the example of the psalmist, or from the fact that He found peace and pardon when he called upon God, Psalm 32:6.

V. An expression of confidence in God as a refuge and hiding-place in time of trouble, Psalm 32:7.

VI. The proper spirit which they should have who are thus brought up from the depths of guilt; and the way in which they should receive the guidance and direction which will be afforded them, Psalm 32:8-9. The psalmist undertakes to instruct them; and says that they should cherish a spirit of humility and docility - not the fierce spirit of the untamed horse, or the spirit of the obstinate mule.

VII. The blessedness of trusting in the Lord, as the result of the experience of the psalmist in this time of sorrow for sin, Psalm 32:10-11.

The word "Maschil" in the title - משכיל *maśkîyl* is derived from the verb - שכל *śâkal* - meaning properly "to look at, to behold, to view;" and then, to be prudent, circumspect; to act prudently or circumspectly, as one does who looks attentively and carefully at objects; then it means to be intelligent, prudent, wise. The participle, which is the form used here (causitive of the Hiphil), means "making wise or prudent," or "conveying instruction;" and this title is given to this psalm, as well as to many others, as conveying the idea that the psalm was adapted "to make wise," or to impart instruction; and the sense would be well expressed by our phrase, "didactic song." The title is prefixed also to the following psalms: Psalm 42:1-11; Psalm 52:1-9; Psalm 53:1-6; Psalm 54:1-7; Psalm 142:1-7. It would be difficult now, however, to discover from the contents of the psalms themselves why the title was affixed to these particularly rather than to many others. Probably this was determined, by those who collected and arranged the psalms, according to some rules that are not now known to us.

Verse 1

Blessed is he … - On the meaning of the word "blessed," see the notes at Psalm 1:1. See the passage explained in the notes at Romans 4:7-8. The word "blessed" here is equivalent to "happy." "Happy is the man;" or

"happy is the condition - the state of mind - happy are the prospects, of one whose sins are forgiven." His condition is happy or blessed:

(a) as compared with his former state, when he was pressed or bowed down under a sense of guilt;

(b) in his real condition, as that of a pardoned man - a man who has nothing now to fear as the result of his guilt, or who feels that he is at peace with God;

(c) in his hopes and prospects, as now a child of God and an heir of heaven.

Whose transgression is forgiven - The word rendered "forgiven" means properly to lift up, to bear, to carry, to carry away; and sin which is forgiven is referred to here "as if" it were borne away - perhaps as the scapegoat bore off sin into the wilderness. Compare Psalm 85:2; Job 7:21; Genesis 50:17; Numbers 14:19; Isaiah 2:9.

Whose sin is covered - As it were "covered over;" that is, concealed or hidden; or, in other words, so covered that it will not appear. This is the idea in the Hebrew word which is commonly used to denote the atonement, - כפר *kâphar* - meaning "to cover over;" then, to overlook, to forgive; Genesis 6:14; Psalm 65:3; Psalm 78:38; Daniel 9:24. The original word here, however, is different - כסה *kâsâh* - though meaning the same - "to cover." The idea is, that the sin would be, as it were, covered over, hidden, concealed, so that it would no longer come into the view of either God or man; that is, the offender would be regarded and treated as if he had not sinned, or as if he had no sin.

Verse 2

Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity - Whose sin is not "reckoned" to him, or "charged" on him. The reference here is "to his own sin." The idea is not, that he is happy on whom God does not charge the guilt of other men, but that he is happy who is not charged "with his own guilt," or who is treated as if he had no guilt; that is, as if he were innocent. This is the true idea of justification. It is, that a man, although he is a sinner, and "is conscious" of having violated the law of God, is treated as if he had not committed sin, or as if he were innocent; that is, he is pardoned, and his sins are remembered against him no more; and it is the purpose of God to treat him henceforward as if he were

innocent. The act of pardon does not change the facts in the case, or "make him innocent," but it makes it proper for God to treat him as if he were innocent. The sin will not be re-charged upon him, or reckoned to his account; but he is admitted to the same kind of treatment to which he would be entitled if he had always been perfectly holy. See Romans 1:17, note; Romans 3:24, note; Romans 4:5, note; Romans 5:1, note.

And in whose spirit there is no guile - Who are sincere and true. That is, who are not hypocrites; who are conscious of no desire to cover up or to conceal their offences; who make a frank and full confession to God, imploring pardon. The "guile" here refers to the matter under consideration. The idea is not who are "innocent," or "without guilt," but who are sincere, frank, and honest in making "confession" of their sins; who keep nothing back when they go before God. We cannot go before him and plead our innocence, but we may go before him with the feeling of conscious sincerity and honesty in making confession of our guilt. Compare Psalm 66:18.

Verse 3

When I kept silence - The psalmist now proceeds to state his condition of mind before he himself found this peace, or before he had this evidence of pardon; the state in which he felt deeply that he was a sinner, yet was unwilling to confess his sin, and attempted to conceal it in his own heart. This he refers to by the expression, "When I kept silence;" that is, before I confessed my sin, or before I made mention of it to God. The condition of mind was evidently this: he had committed sin, but he endeavored to hide it in his own mind; he was unwilling to make confession of it, and to implore pardon. He hoped, probably, that the conviction of sin would die away; or that his trouble would cease of itself; or that time would relieve him; or that employment - occupying himself in the affairs of the world - would soothe the anguish of his spirit, and render it unnecessary for him to make a humiliating confession of his guilt. He thus describes a state of mind which is very common in the case of sinners. They know that they are sinners, but they are unwilling to make confession of their guilt. They attempt to conceal it. They put off, or try to remove far away, the whole subject. They endeavor to divert their minds, and to turn their thoughts from a subject so painful as the idea of guilt - by occupation, or by amusement, or even by plunging into scenes of dissipation. Sometimes, often in fact, they are successful in this; but, sometimes, as in the case of the psalmist, the trouble

at the remembrance of sins becomes deeper and deeper, destroying their rest, and wasting their strength, until they make humble confession, and "then" the mind finds rest.

My bones waxed old - My strength failed; my strength was exhausted; it seemed as if the decrepitude of age was coming upon me. The word here used, and rendered "waxed old," would properly denote "decay," or the wearing out of the strength by slow decay. All have witnessed the prostrating effect of excessive grief.

Through my roaring - My cries of anguish and distress. See the notes at Psalm 22:1. The meaning here is, that his sorrow was so great as to lead to loud and passionate cries; and this well describes the condition of a mind under deep trouble at the remembrance of sin and the apprehension of the wrath of God.

All the day long - Continually; without intermission.

Verse 4

For day and night - I found no relief even at night. The burden was constant, and was insupportable.

Thy hand was heavy upon me - Thy hand seemed to press me down. It weighed upon me. See Job 13:21; Psalm 39:10. It was the remembrance of guilt that troubled him, but that seemed to him to be the hand of God. It was God who brought that guilt to his recollection; and God "kept" the recollection of it before his mind, and on his heart and conscience, so that he could not throw it off.

My moisture - The word used here - לֹשֶׁד *leshad* - means properly "juice" or "sap," as in a tree; and then, "vital-moisture," or, as we should say, "life-blood." Then it comes to denote vigour or strength.

Is turned into the drought of summer - Is, as it were, all dried up. I am - that is, I was at the time referred to - like plants in the heat of summer, in a time of drought, when all moisture of rain or dew is withheld, and when they dry up and wither. Nothing could more strikingly represent the distress of mind under long-continued conviction of sin, when all strength and vigour seem to waste away.

Verse 5

I acknowledged my sin unto thee - That is, then I confessed my guilt. I had borne the dreadful pressure as long as I could. I had endeavored to conceal and suppress my conviction, but I found no relief. The anguish became deeper and deeper; my strength was failing; I was crushed under

the intolerable burden, and when I could no longer bear it I went and made humble confession, and found relief. The verb used here is in the future tense, "I will acknowledge my sin;" but in order to a correct understanding of it, it should be regarded as referring to the state of mind at the time referred to in the psalm, and the resolution which the psalmist then formed. The words "I said" should be understood here. This he expresses in a subsequent part of the verse, referring doubtless to the same time. "I said," or I formed a resolution to this effect. The idea is, that he could find no relief in any other way. He could not banish these serious and troublous thoughts from his mind; his days and nights were spent in anguish. He resolved to go to God and to confess his sin, and to see what relief could be found by such an acknowledgment of guilt.

And mine iniquity have I not hid - That is, I did not attempt then to hide it. I made a frank, a full confession. I stated it all, without any attempt to conceal it; to apologise for it; to defend it. before, he had endeavored to conceal it, and it was crushing him to the earth. He now resolved to confess it all, and he found relief.

I said - I formed the resolution.

I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord - I will no longer attempt to hide them, or to suppress the convictions of guilt. I will seek the only proper relief by making confession of my sin, and by obtaining forgiveness. This resolution was substantially the same as that of the prodigal son: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned," Luke 15:18.

And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin - He found that God was willing to pardon; he no sooner made confession than he obtained the evidence of pardon. "All the guilt," or the "iniquity" of his sin, was at once forgiven; and, as a consequence, he found peace. In what way he had evidence that his sin was forgiven he does not state. It may have been in his case by direct revelation, but it is more probable that he obtained this evidence in the same way that sinners do now, by the internal peace and joy which follows such an act of penitent confession. In regard to this, we may observe:

(a) The very act of making confession tends to give relief to the mind; and, in fact, relief never can be found when confession is not made.

(b) We have the assurance that when confession is made in a proper manner, God will pardon. See the notes at 1 John 1:9.

(c) When such confession is made, peace will flow into the soul; God will show himself merciful and gracious. The peace which follows from a true confession of guilt before God, proves that God "has" heard the prayer of the penitent, and has been merciful in forgiving his offences.

Thus, without any miracle, or any direct revelation, we may obtain evidence that our sins are washed away, which will give comfort to the soul.

Verse 6

For this - With reference to this state of mind, or to this happy result; or, encouraged by my example and my success. The idea seems to be that others would find, and might find, encouragement from what had occurred to him. In other words, his case had furnished an illustration of the way in which sinners are pardoned, and a proof of the mercy of God, which would be instructive and encouraging to others in similar circumstances. The conversion of one sinner, or the fact that one sinner obtains pardon, becomes thus an encouragement to all others, for

(a) pardon is always to be obtained in the same manner essentially - by humble and penitent confession of sin, and by casting ourselves entirely on the offered mercy of God; and

(b) the fact that one sinner has been pardoned, is full proof that others may obtain forgiveness also, for God is unchangeably the same. All those, therefore, who "have" been pardoned and saved in the world have become examples to the rest, and have furnished full proof that all others "may" be pardoned and saved if they will come in the same manner. See the notes at 1 Timothy 1:16.

Everyone that is godly - The original word used here would properly mean those who are pious, or who are already converted. It is the common word used in the Scriptures to denote "saints," and is usually so translated. But, as used here, it would seem rather to denote those who are "inclined" to be pious, or who are seeking how they may become pious; in other words, those who are "religiously disposed." The encouragement is to those who feel that they are sinners; who desire some way of relief from the

burden of sin; who are convinced that there is no other source of relief but God, and who are disposed to make the same trial which the psalmist did - to find peace by making confession of sin. All such persons, the psalmist says, might see in his case encouragement to come thus to God; all such would find Him willing to pardon.

In a time when thou mayest be found - Margin, as in Hebrew, "in a time of finding." That is, they would find that to be a propitious time, or a time of mercy. It does not mean that there were appointed or set times in which God would be gracious; or that there were seasons when he was disposed to "give audience" to people, and seasons when he could not be approached; but the meaning is, that whenever they came thus - with this penitent feeling, and this language of confession - they would find that the time of mercy. The idea is not that God is anymore disposed to show mercy at one time than another, but that they would find him "always" ready to show mercy when they came in that manner: that would be the time to obtain his favor; "that the time of finding." The real time of "mercy," therefore, for a sinner, is the time when he is willing to come as a penitent, and to make confession of sin.

Surely in the floods of great waters - In times of calamity - as when floods of water spread over a land; or in a time of judgment - when such floods sweep everything away. The reference here is, doubtless, to the floods that will come upon the ungodly - upon a wicked world. The illustration is drawn probably from the deluge in the time of Noah. So, when God shall sweep away the wicked in his wrath - when he shall consign them to destruction in the day of judgment - the pardoned sinner will be safe.

They shall not come nigh unto him - He will be secure. He shall not be swept off with others. Safe, as a forgiven man - safe as a child and a friend of God - he shall be protected as Noah was in the great deluge that swept off a guilty world. A pardoned man has nothing to fear, though flood or fire should sweep over the world.

Verse 7

Thou art my hiding-place - See Psalm 9:9, note; Psalm 27:5, note. The idea is that he would be safe under the protection of God. The general allusion is to concealment from an enemy, but the immediate reference is to sin, and the consequences of sin. By fleeing to God he would be secure against all the evils which sin brings upon human beings.

Thou shalt preserve me from trouble - Particularly the trouble which comes from guilt; sadness and sorrow in the remembrance of sin; apprehension of the wrath of God in the world to come; the consequences of guilt in that unseen and eternal world.

Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance - With songs expressive of deliverance or salvation. It is not merely one song or a single expression of gratitude; in his pathway to another world he will be attended with songs and rejoicings; he will seem to be surrounded with songs He himself will sing. Others, redeemed like him, will sing, and will seem to chant praises because He is redeemed and forgiven. All nature will seem to rejoice over his redemption. Nature is full of songs. The birds of the air; the wind; the running stream; the ocean; the seasons - spring, summer, autumn, winter; hills, valleys, groves - all, to one redeemed, seem to be full of songs. The feeling that we are pardoned fills the universe with melody, and makes the heaven and the earth seem to us to be glad. The Christian is a happy man; and he himself being happy, all around him sympathizes with him in his joy.

Verse 8

I will instruct thee - Many interpreters have understood this to refer to God - as if he were now introduced as speaking, and as saying that he would be the guide of those who thus submitted to him, and who sought him by penitence and confession. But it is more natural to regard the psalmist as still speaking, and referring to his own experience as qualifying him to give counsel to others, showing them how they might find peace, and with what views and feelings they should come before God if they wished to secure his favor. He had himself learned by painful experience, and after much delay, how the favor of God was to be obtained, and how deliverance from the distressing consciousness of guilt was to be secured; and he regards himself as now qualified to teach others who are borne down with the same consciousness of guilt, and who are seeking deliverance, how they may find peace. It is an instance of one who, by personal experience, is fitted to give instruction to others; and the psalmist, in what follows, does merely what every converted man is qualified to do, and should do, by imparting valuable knowledge to those who are inquiring how they must be saved. Compare Psalm 51:12-13.

And teach thee in the way which thou shalt go - The way which you are to take to find pardon and peace; or, the way to God.

I will guide thee with mine eye - Margin, I will counsel thee, mine eye shall be upon thee. The margin expresses the sense of the Hebrew. The literal meaning is, "I will counsel thee; mine eye shall be upon thee." DeWette, "my eye shall be directed toward thee." The idea is that of one who is telling another what way he is to take in order that he may reach a certain place; and he says he will watch him, or will keep an eye upon him; he will not let him go wrong.

Verse 9

Be ye not as the horse - The horse as it is by nature - wild, ungoverned, unwilling to be caught and made obedient. The counsel referred to in the previous verse is here given; and it is, that one who wishes to obtain the favor of God should not be as the wild and unbroken horse, an animal that can be subdued only by a curb, but should evince a calm, submissive spirit - a spirit "disposed" to obey and submit. If he becomes a subject of God's government, he is not to be subdued and held as the horse is - by mere force; there must be the cheerful submission of the will. People are not brought into the service of God by physical power; they are not kept there by an iron "curb." They come and yield themselves willingly to his law; they "must" come with that spirit if they would find the favor of God.

Or as the mule - The mule is distinguished for its obstinacy, and this is evidently the ground of comparison here. The meaning is, be tractable, gentle, yielding; submit to the guidance and direction of God and his truth.

Which have no understanding - That cannot be controlled by reason and conscience. They are governed only by power and by fear. People have reason and conscience, and they should allow themselves to be controlled by appeals TO their reason and to their moral sense. They are not made to be governed as brutes are. Since they have a higher nature, they should permit themselves to be governed by it.

Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle - More literally, "in bit and bridle is their ornament to restrain them;" that is, the trappings or the ornaments of the horse and the mule consist of the bridle and the bit, the purpose of which is to restrain or control them. The allusion, however, is not to the bit and bridle as an "ornament," but as the ordinary trappings of the mule and the horse.

Lest they come near unto thee - Or rather, "because of its not approaching thee;" that is, because the horse and the mule will not come to thee of their own accord, but must be restrained and controlled.

Verse 10

Many sorrows shall be to the wicked - The meaning here is, probably, that those who will not submit themselves to God in the manner which the psalmist recommends; who are like the horse and the mule, needing to be restrained, and who are to be restrained only by force, will experience bitter sorrows. The psalmist may refer here, in part, to sorrows such as he says he himself experienced when he attempted to suppress the convictions of guilt Psalm 32:3-4; and partly to the punishment that will come upon the impenitent sinner for his sins. The sorrows referred to are probably both internal and external; those arising from remorse, and those which will be brought upon the guilty as a direct punishment.

But he that trusteth in the Lord - He that has faith in God; he that so confides in him that he goes to him with the language of sincere confession.

Mercy shall compass him about - Shall surround him; shall attend him; shall be on every side of him. It shall not be only in one respect, but in all respects. He shall be "surrounded" with mercy - as one is surrounded by the air, or by the sunlight. He shall find mercy and favor everywhere, at home, abroad; by day, by night; in society, in solitude; in sickness, in health; in life, in death; in time, in eternity. He shall walk amidst mercies; he shall die amidst mercies; he shall live in a better world in the midst of eternal mercies.

Verse 11

Be glad in the Lord - Rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice that there is a God; rejoice that he is such as he is; rejoice in his favor; find your joy - your supreme joy - in him. Compare Philemon 3:1, note; Philemon 4:4, note.

Ye righteous - You who are willing to go to him and confess your sins; you who are willing to serve and obey him. See the notes at Psalm 32:6. The meaning is, that those who are disposed to confess their sins, and are willing to submit to him without being compelled by force, as the horse and the mule are, will find occasion for rejoicing. They will find a God who is worthy of their love, and they will find true happiness in him.

And shout for joy - Give expression to your joy. Let it not remain merely in the heart; but give it utterance in the language of song. If any of the dwellers on earth have occasion for the loud utterances of praise, they are those who are redeemed; whose sins are forgiven; who have the hope of heaven. If there is any occasion when the heart should be full of joy, and when the lips should give forth loud utterances of praise, it is when one

pressed down with the consciousness of guilt, and overwhelmed with the apprehensions of wrath, makes confession to God, and secures the hope of heaven.

All ye that are upright in heart - That is, who are sincere in your confession of sin, and in your desires to secure the favor of God. Such have occasion for joy, for to such God will show himself merciful, as He did to the psalmist when He made confession of sin; to such God will give the tokens of his favor, and the hope of heaven, as he did to him. The experience of the psalmist, therefore, as recorded in this psalm, should be full of encouragement to all who are burdened with a sense of sin. Warned by his experience, they should not attempt to conceal their transgressions in their own bosom, but they should go at once, as he was constrained at last to go, and make full and free confession to God. So doing, they will find that God is not slow to pardon them, and to fill their hearts with peace, and their lips with praise.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 33

Introduction

This psalm has no title prefixed to it, and it is not possible to determine with certainty who was the author, or on what occasion it was written. There is nothing in the psalm that has any special allusion to David, nor is there reference to any circumstances which would enable us to determine when it was composed. It has, indeed, no particular allusion to the Jewish religion, or to the prevailing mode of worship in that land, and is, in fact, so "general" in its sentiments and in its descriptions, that it might have been written at any period of the Jewish history, or even in any land. As it is found "among" the Psalms of David, and is between psalms which are both ascribed to David, we may presume that it was believed to have been composed by him; and there is nothing in it that is at variance with that belief. It is really but a carrying out of the sentiment with which the preceding psalm closes; and it has been conjectured that the intimate relation of the two psalms may have been the reason why the title to the latter of them was omitted.

The psalm properly consists of three parts:

I. an exhortation to praise God;

II. reasons why he should be praised; and

III. the expression of a purpose thus to praise Him.

I. An exhortation to praise God, Psalm 33:1-3. In this there is a call on the righteous to praise Him with songs and with musical instruments - the harp, the psaltery, the instrument of ten strings; a call to make use of the best powers of music in all its varied forms in His service.

II. Reasons for thus praising Him, Psalm 33:4-5.

(2) The fact that He made the universe; or, the wisdom and power displayed by Him in creation, Psalm 33:6-9.

(3) The stability of His counsel or purposes, Psalm 33:10-11.

(4) The blessings which He bestows upon those who acknowledge Him to be their God - blessings of care, protection, and deliverance in danger, Psalm 33:12-19.

III. The purpose of the writer, and of those who were associated with him, thus to praise God, Psalm 33:20-22.

The psalm is thus one that is appropriate to the people of all lands and times, and will be better appreciated in proportion as people become more and more acquainted with God in the wisdom, the power, and the skill which He has shown in the works of creation, and in His providential government of the world.

Verse 1

Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous - This is the sentiment with which the preceding psalm closes. See the notes at Psalm 32:11.

For praise is comely for the upright - Is befitting, suitable, proper. That is, the upright - the righteous - have abundant cause for praise, and it is for them a suitable employment, or one which becomes them. A man who is upright, or who is a righteous man, has in this very fact much which lays a foundation for praise, for the fact that he has such a character is to be traced to the grace of God, and this in itself is a more valuable possession than gold or kingly crowns would he. That he is not an open violator of the law of God; that he is not intemperate; that he is not the victim of raging lusts and passions; that he is not a dishonest man; that he is not profane; that he is not an infidel or a scoffer; that he is a pious man - a redeemed man - a man of good character - an heir of heaven - is the highest blessing that could be conferred on him; and he who has been saved from outbreaking transgression and crime in a world like this, and has been enabled to live an upright life, has eminently occasion to praise and bless God. Assuredly for such a man praise is an appropriate employment, for such a man it is "comely."

Verse 2

Praise the Lord with harp - For a description of the "harp," see the notes at Isaiah 5:12.

Sing unto him with the psaltery - For the meaning of this word, also, see the notes at Isaiah 5:12, where the word is rendered "viol."

And an instrument of ten strings - The word "and" is supplied here by the translators as if, in this place, a third instrument was referred to, distinct from the harp and the psaltery. The more correct rendering, however, would be, "a psaltery (or lyre) of ten strings." The same construction occurs in Psalm 144:9. In Psalm 92:3, however, the two words are separately used as denoting different instruments. The "lyre" or psaltery was probably not always made with the same number of strings, and it would seem that the one that was made of "ten" strings had something special about it as an instrument of uncommon sweetness or power. Hence, it is particularly designated here; and the idea is that the instruments of especial power and sweetness should be on this occasion employed in the service of God.

Verse 3

Sing unto him a new song - A song specially composed for this occasion; expressive of the special feelings suggested by this occasion, or appropriate to this new manifestation of the divine goodness and mercy. Such occasions, exhibiting some new phase of the divine goodness, demanded new language appropriate to them. So now, new hymns of praise, and new tunes in music, are demanded to meet the ever-varying manifestations of the mercy of God; and as the church is extended in the world, its modes of praise must be adapted to the new state of things which will arise. Nothing could be more absurd than to attempt to restrict the church in its praises to the exact words which were used in the time of David, or to the music which was employed then. Compare the notes at Revelation 5:9. The expression "new song" occurs several times in the Psalms, showing that new hymns of praise were composed as adapted to some new manifestation of the goodness of God: Psalm 40:3; Psalm 96:1; Psalm 98:1; Psalm 144:9; Psalm 149:1. Compare also Isaiah 42:10.

Play skillfully with a loud noise - literally, "Do well to play;" or, "do well in playing." That is, do the work well, or with all the skill of music. The word rendered "loud noise," means properly "a shout of joy" or "rejoicing:" Job 8:21; 1 Samuel 4:5. It is especially applied to the sound or clangor of trumpets: Leviticus 25:9; Leviticus 23:24; Numbers 29:1. There is rather the idea of "rejoicing" than of "noise" in the word. The meaning is that the music should be such as would be expressive of the highest joy.

Verse 4

For the word of the Lord is right - The command; the law; the promise of God. Whatever he "says" is right; or, is true. It is worthy of universal belief; and should, therefore, be a reason for praise. The fact that God says a thing is the highest proof that it is true.

And all his works are done in truth - Or rather, "in faithfulness." That is, All that he does is executed faithfully. He does all that he promises, and all that he does is such as to claim universal confidence. Whatever he does is, from the very fact that He does it, worthy of the confidence of all his creatures. None, however they may be affected by what he does, have any reason to doubt that it is perfectly right. God is the only Being of whom we have any knowledge, concerning whom we can feel this certain assurance.

Verse 5

He loveth righteousness - See Psalm 11:7.

And judgment - justice.

The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord - Margin, "mercy." So the Hebrew. That is, his mercy or goodness is manifest everywhere. Every part of the earth bears witness that he is good.

Verse 6

By the word of the Lord - By the command of God: Genesis 1:3, Genesis 1:6 etc. See the notes at Psalm 33:9.

Were the heavens made - That is, the starry heavens; the worlds above us: Genesis 1:1.

And all the host of them - All their "armies." The stars are represented as armies or marshalled hosts, led forth at his command, and under his direction - as armies are led forth in war. See Genesis 2:1; compare the notes at Isaiah 1:9.

By the breath of his mouth - By his word or command - as our words issue from our mouths with our breath. The idea here is, that God is the Creator of all things; and, as such, has a claim to praise; or, that as Creator he is entitled to adoration. To this he is entitled from the fact that he has made all things, and from the "manner" in which it has been done - the wisdom, power, goodness, skill, with which it has been accomplished.

Verse 7

He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap - The Hebrew word here rendered "gathereth" is a participle; "gathering." The design is to represent this as a continuous act; an act not merely of the original creation, but constantly occurring. The reference is to the power by which the waters

are gathered and kept together; the continual power which prevents their overspreading the earth. The word rendered "heap" - נד *nêd* - means properly a heap or "mound," and is applied to the waves of the sea heaped up together like mounds. Compare Joshua 3:13, Joshua 3:16; Exodus 15:8: Psalm 78:13. He collected those waters, and kept them in their places, as if they were solid matter. This denotes the absolute control which God has over the waters, and is thus a most striking illustration of his power.

He layeth up the depth in storehouses - The abysses; the deep waters; the masses of water. He places them where he pleases; he disposes of them as the farmer his grain, or the rich man his treasures. The caverns of the ocean - the ocean-beds - are thus vast reservoirs or treasure-houses for the reception of the waters which God has chosen to deposit there. All this is proof of his amazing power, and all this lays a proper foundation for praise. Occasions for gratitude to him may be found in every world that he has made; in every object that has come from his hand; and nothing more "obviously" suggests this than his wondrous power over the waters of the ocean - collecting them, restraining them, controlling them, as he pleases.

Verse 8

Let all the earth - All the inhabitants of the earth.

Fear the Lord - Worship and adore a Being of so great power. See the notes at Psalm 5:7.

Let all the inhabitants of the world - The power displayed in the works of creation appeals to all alike.

Stand in awe of him - Reverence or adore him. The expression is equivalent to "worship," fear or reverence entering essentially into the idea of worship.

Verse 9

For he spake, and it was done - The word "done," introduced here by our translators, enfeebles the sentence. It would be made more expressive and sublime as it is in the original: "He spake, and it was." That is, Its existence depended on his word; the universe sprang into being at his command; he had only to speak, and it arose in all its grandeur where before there was nothing. There is here an undoubted allusion to the account in Genesis of the work of creation - where the statement is that all depended on the command or the word of God: Genesis 1:3, Genesis 1:6, Genesis 1:9, Genesis 1:11, Genesis 1:14, Genesis 1:20, Genesis 1:24, Genesis 1:26. Nothing more sublime can be conceived than the language

thus employed in the Scriptures in describing that work. No more elevated conception can enter the human mind than that which is implied when it is said, God "spoke" and all this vast and wonderful universe rose into being.

He commanded - He gave order; he required the universe to appear.

And it stood fast - Or rather, "stood." That is, it stood forth; it appeared; it rose into being. The idea of its "standing fast" is not in the original, and greatly enfeebles the expression.

Verse 10

The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought - Margin: "maketh frustrate." The Hebrew word means to "break," or to "annul." The word here rendered "heathen" means "nations;" and the idea is that God, by his own overruling purpose and providence, frustrates the designs of the nations of the earth; that he carries forward his own designs and purposes in spite of theirs; that their plans avail nothing when they come in competition with his. their purposes must yield to His purpose. Compare Isaiah 8:9-10, note; Isaiah 19:3, note. All the plans and purposes of the nations of the earth that conflict with the purposes of God will be vain; all those plans, whatever they may be, will be made subservient under His providence to the promotion of His great designs.

He maketh the devices of the people of none effect - That is, He renders them vain, unsuccessful, ineffectual. The word "people" here is synonymous with "nations," and the idea is, that whatever may be the thoughts and purposes of human beings, if they are opposed to the plans of God, or if they do not tend to promote His glory, they will be rendered futile or vain. God is a great and glorious Sovereign over all, and He will make everything subordinate to the promotion of His own great designs.

Verse 11

The counsel of the Lord - The purpose of the Lord.

Standeth for ever - It will be carried out. It will never be changed. There can be no "superior" counsel or will to change it, as is the case with the plans of men; and no purposes of any beings "inferior" to himself - angels, men, or devils - can affect, defeat, or modify his eternal plans. No changes in human affairs can impede his plans; no opposition can defeat them; no progress can supersede them.

The thoughts of his heart - The things which he has "designed," or which he intends shall be accomplished.

To all generations - Margin, as in Hebrew, "to generation and generation." That is, from one generation of men to another; or, to all time. The plans of God are not changed by the passing off of one generation and the coming on of another; by new dynasties of kings, or by the revolutions that may occur in states and empires. Men can seldom cause their plans to be carried forward beyond the generation in which they live; and they can have no security that coming generations, with their own plans, will not abolish or change all that has been devised or purposed before. No man can make it certain that his own will, even in regard to "property," will be carried out in the generation that succeeds him. No monarch can make it certain that his plans will be perfected by his successors. Schemes devised with the profoundest care and the highest wisdom may be set aside by those who are next in power; and no individual can hope that coming ages will feel sufficient interest in him or his memory to carry on his plans. Who feels now any obligation to carry out the projects of Caesar or Alexander? How long since have all their plans passed away! So it will be with all who are now playing their parts on the earth! But none of these things affect the purposes of Him who will continue to live and to carry out His own designs when all the generations of human beings shall have passed away.

Verse 12

Blessed is the nation - For the meaning of the word "blessed," see the notes at Psalm 1:1. The idea here is, that the nation referred to is happy, or that its condition is desirable. What is true of a nation is also as true of an individual.

Whose God is the Lord - Whose God is Yahweh - for so this is in the original Hebrew. That is, the nation which worships Yahweh, and is under his protection. This is evidently said to distinguish such a nation from those which worshipped false gods or idols. Such a nation is blessed or happy, because:

(a) He is a real God, the true God, and not an imagination or fiction;

(b) because His laws are just and good, and their observance will always tend to promote the public welfare and prosperity;

(c) because His protection will be vouchsafed to such a nation; and

(d) because His worship, and the influence of His religion, will tend to diffuse virtue, intelligence, purity, and truth, over a land, and thus will promote its welfare.

And the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance - Chosen to be "His;" or, His portion. The primary reference here is undoubtedly to the Hebrew people, called his "inheritance:" Deuteronomy 4:20; Deuteronomy 9:26; Deuteronomy 32:9; Psalm 74:2; Psalm 78:62, Psalm 78:71; or "heritage," Psalm 94:5; Jeremiah 12:7, Jeremiah 12:9; but what is here affirmed of that people is true also of all other people who worship the true God.

Verse 13

The Lord looketh from heaven - heaven is represented as his abode or dwelling; and from that place he is represented as looking down upon all the nations of the earth. The meaning here is, that he sees all that dwell upon the earth, and that, therefore, all that worship him are under his eye. He knows their wants, and he will watch over them to protect them. It is not merely to the abstract truth that God sees all who dwell upon the earth that the psalmist means to refer; but that those who are his friends, or who worship him, are all under his eye, so as to enjoy his watchful care and attention.

He beholdeth all the sons of men - All the descendants of "Adam," for this is the original. There is no improbability in supposing that the word "Adam" here (usually meaning "man") is employed as a proper name to denote the great ancestor of the human race, and that the psalmist means to refer to the race as one great family descended from a common ancestor, though scattered abroad over the face of the world.

Verse 14

From the place of his habitation - From his dwelling - heaven.

He looketh down - He continually sees. The sentiment is repeated here to show that no one can escape his eye; that the condition, the characters, the wants of all are intimately known to him, and that thus he can watch over his people - all that love and serve him - and can guard them from danger. See Psalm 33:18-19.

Verse 15

He fashioneth their hearts alike - That is, one as well as another; or, one as really as another. No one is exempt from his control, or from all that is implied in the word "fashioneth." The meaning is not that their hearts are

made to “resemble” each other, or to be “like” each other, whether in goodness or in wickedness - but that all alike “are” made by him. The idea in the word “fashioneth” here is not that of “creating,” in the sense that He “makes” the heart by his own power what it is, whether good or bad; but that, as he has “formed” the hearts of all people, he must see what is in the heart, or must behold all the purposes and thoughts of people. The Maker of the human heart must understand what is in it; and, therefore, He must have a clear understanding of the purposes and designs of human beings. This idea is carried out in the latter member of the sentence, “he considereth all their works,” and is substantially the same as in the expression Psalm 94:9, “He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?”

He considereth all their works - He understands all that they do; he marks, or attends to, all that is done by them. The purpose here is to state the universal sovereignty of God. He made all things; He presides over all things; He sees all things; He is the source of safety and protection to all.

Verse 16

There is no king saved by the multitude of an host - By the number of his armies. His safety, however numerous and mighty may be his forces, is in God alone. He is the great Protector, whatever means men may use to defend themselves. The most numerous and the best organized armies cannot secure a victory. It is, after all, wholly in the hands of God. A wasting sickness in a camp may defeat all the plans of war; or success in battle may depend on contingencies which no commander could anticipate or provide against. A mutiny in a camp, or a panic on the battlefield, may disconcert the best-laid schemes; or forces may come against an army that were unexpected; or storm and tempest may disarrange and frustrate the entire plan of the campaign. See Ecclesiastes 9:11.

A mighty man - A strong man; a giant - as Goliath of Gath. “Strength” is not the only thing necessary to secure a victory.

Is not delivered by much strength - By the mere fact that he is strong. Other things are needed to ensure success; and God has power so to arrange events that mere strength shall be of no avail.

Verse 17

An horse - The reference here is undoubtedly to the war-horse. See the notes at Psalm 20:7.

Is a vain thing - literally, is a “lie.” That is, he cannot be confided in.

For safety - For securing safety in battle. He is liable to be stricken down, or to become wild and furious so as to be beyond the control of his rider; and however strong or fleet he may be, or however well he may be "broken," yet none of these things make it certain that the rider will be safe. God is the only being in whom perfect confidence can be reposed.

Neither shall he deliver any by his great strength - Safety cannot be found in his mere "strength," however great that may be. These illustrations are all designed to lead the mind to the great idea that safety is to be found in God alone, Psalm 33:18-19.

Verse 18

Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him - He watches over them, and "he" guards them from danger. His eye is, in fact, upon all men; but it is directed with special attention to those who fear him and trust in him. Their security is in the fact that the eye of God is upon them; that he knows their wants; that he sees their dangers; that he has ample ability to deliver and save them.

Upon them that hope in his mercy - Upon the pious; upon his friends. The expression is a very beautiful one. It describes the true state of a pious heart; it in fact characterizes the whole of religion, for we imply all that there is in religion on earth when we say of a man, that - conscious of his weakness and sinfulness - "he hopes in the mercy of God."

Verse 19

To deliver their soul from death - To preserve their "lives," - for so the word "soul" is to be understood here. The meaning is, to keep them alive. That is, God is their Protector; He guards and defends them when in danger.

And to keep them alive in famine - In times of want. Compare Job 5:20. He can provide for them when the harvests fail. Famine was one of the evils to which the inhabitants of Palestine, and of Oriental countries generally, were particularly exposed, and it is often referred to in the Scriptures.

Verse 20

Our soul waiteth for the Lord - This and the subsequent verses to the end of the psalm refer to the people of God, expressing their faith in him in view of the considerations suggested in the former part of the psalm. The language is expressive of the general character of piety. True piety leads people to wait on the Lord; to depend on Him; to look to His interposition in danger, sickness, poverty, want; to rely upon Him for all that is hoped for

in this life, and for salvation in the life to come. Compare Psalm 62:1; Psalm 25:3.

He is our help - Our aid; our helper. Compare Psalm 10:14; Psalm 22:11; Psalm 30:10.

And our shield - See the notes at Psalm 5:12. That is, He will defend us from our enemies, as if He threw His shield between us and them.

Verse 21

For our heart shall rejoice in him - See the notes at Psalm 13:5.

Because we have trusted in his holy name - In "him," the "name" often being put for the person himself. See the notes at Psalm 20:1. The idea is:

(a) that the fact of our having put our trust in God is in itself an occasion of joy or rejoicing;

(b) that the result will be joy, for we shall never be disappointed.

It will always, and in all circumstances, be a source of joy to anyone that he HAS put his trust in the name of God.

Verse 22

Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us - Let us find or obtain thy mercy or thy favor.

According as we hope in thee - It may be remarked in regard to this:

(a) it is but "reasonable" that we should look for the favor of God only as we trust in him, for we could not with propriety expect his favor beyond the measure of our confidence in him.

(b) This may be regarded as the most that we are entitled to hope from God. We have no reason to suppose that he will go beyond our wishes and prayers, or that he will confer favors on us which we neither expect nor desire.

(c) One of the reasons why the people of God are no more blessed, or why they receive no more favors from him, may be found in what is here suggested. As they expect little, they obtain little; as they have no intense, burning, lofty desire for the favor of God, either for themselves personally,

or for their families, or for the world, so they obtain but slight tokens of that favor.

(d) The true principle, therefore, upon which God is willing to bestow His favors, and which will be the rule that He will observe, is, that if people desire much, they will obtain much; that if they have big expectations, they will not be disappointed; and that God is willing to bestow His mercies upon His people and upon the world to the utmost of their desires and hopes. Compare Psalm 81:10, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Psalm 37:4, "delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart." How intense and fervent, then, should be the prayers and the petitions of the people of God! How earnest the supplications of sinners that God would have mercy on them!

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 34

Introduction

This psalm purports, by its title, to have been written by David, and there is no reason to call in question the correctness of the inscription. It is not probable that the title was given to the psalm by the author himself; but, like the other inscriptions which have occurred in many of the previous psalms, it is in the Hebrew, and was doubtless prefixed by him who made a collection of the Psalms, and expresses the current belief of the time in regard to its author. There is nothing in the psalm that is inconsistent with the supposition that David was the author, or that is incompatible with the circumstances of the occasion on which it is said to have been composed.

That occasion is said to have been when David, "changed his behavior before Abimelech." The circumstance here referred to is, undoubtedly, that which is described in 1 Samuel 21:10-15. David, for fear of Saul, fled to Gath, and put himself under the protection of Achish (or Abimelech), the king of Gath. It soon became known who the stranger was. The fame of David had reached Gath, and a public reference was made to him by the "servants of Achish," and to the manner in which his deeds had been celebrated among the Hebrews: "Did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?" 1 Samuel 21:11. David was apprehensive that he might be betrayed, and be delivered up by Achish to Saul, and he resorted to the device of feigning himself mad, supposing that this would be a protection; that either from pity Achish would shelter him; or, that as he would thus be considered harmless, Saul would regard it needless to secure him. He, therefore, acted like a madman, or like an idiot. He "scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard." The device, though it may have saved him from being delivered up to Saul, had no other effect. Achish was unwilling to harbor a madman; and David left him, and sought a refuge in the cave of Adullam. 1 Samuel 21:15; 1 Samuel 22:1. It is not necessary, in order to a proper understanding of the psalm, to attempt to vindicate the conduct of David in this. Perfect honesty would doubtless, in this case, as in all others, have been better in regard to the result as it is certainly better in respect to a good conscience. The question of adopting "disguises," however, when in danger, is not one which it is always easy to determine.

It is by no means necessary to suppose that the psalm was written "at that time," or "when" he thus "changed his behavior." All that the language of the inscription properly expresses is, that it was with reference to that occasion, or to the danger in which he then was, or in remembrance of his feelings at the time, as he recalled them afterward; and that it was in view of his own experience in going through that trial, and of his deliverance from that danger. In the psalm itself there is no allusion to his "change of behavior;" and the design of David was not to celebrate that, or to vindicate that, but to celebrate the goodness of God in his deliverance as it was effected at that time. In the psalm David expresses no opinion about the measure which he adopted to secure his safety; but his heart and his lips are full of praise in view of the fact that he "was" delivered. It is, moreover, fairly implied in the inscription itself, that the psalm was composed, not at that time, but subsequently: "A Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed." The obvious construction of this would be that the psalm was composed after Abimelech had driven him away.

The "name" of the king of Gath at the time is said, in the text of the inscription or title, to have been Abimelech; in the margin, it is Achish. In 1 Samuel 21:1-15 it is "Achish" in the text, and "Abimelech" in the margin. It is not at all improbable that he was known by both these names. His personal name was doubtless "Achish;" the hereditary name - the name by which the line of kings of Gath was known - was probably Abimelech. Thus the general, the hereditary, the family name of the kings of Egypt in early times was Pharaoh; in later times Ptolemy. In like manner the kings of Pontus had the general name of Mithridates; the Roman emperors, after the time of Julius Caesar, were "the Caesars;" and so, not improbably, the general name of the kings of Jerusalem may have been Adonizedek, or Melchizedek; and the name of the kings of the Amalekites, Agag. We have evidence that the general name Abimelech was given to the kings of the Philistines Psalm 34:1-6; concluding with the language, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." From this it has been supposed, as suggested above, that the psalm was composed after David had left the court of Abimelech, and not "at the time" when he was feigning madness.

II. A general statement about the privilege of confiding in God, as derived from his own experience; and an exhortation to others, founded on that experience, Psalm 34:7-10.

III. A special exhortation to the "young" to trust in the Lord, and to pursue a life of uprightness, Psalm 34:11-14. The psalmist professes himself able to instruct them, and he shows them that the way to attain to prosperity and to length of days is to lead a life of virtue and religion. What he had himself passed through - his deliverance in the time of trial - the recollections of his former life - all suggested this as an invaluable lesson to the young. From this it would seem not to be improbable that the psalm was written at a considerable period after what occurred to him at the court of the king of Gath, and perhaps when he was himself growing old - yet still in view of the events at that period of his life.

IV. A general statement that God will protect the righteous; that their interests are safe in His hands; that they may confidently rely upon Him; that though they may be afflicted, yet God will deliver them from their afflictions, and that He will ultimately redeem them from all their troubles, Psalm 34:15-22.

The general purport and bearing of the psalm, therefore, is to furnish an argument for trusting in God in the time of trouble, and for leading such a life that we may confidently trust him as our Protector and Friend.

1 Samuel 21:1-15. The Hebrew word - טעם *ṭaʿam* - means properly, "taste, flavor of food;" then intellectual taste, judgment, discernment, understanding; and in this place it would literally mean, "he changed his understanding;" that is, he feigned himself mad. This corresponds precisely with the statement of his conduct in 1 Samuel 21:13.

Before Abimelech - Margin, "Achish." As remarked above, this latter is the proper or personal name of the king.

Who drove him away - See 1 Samuel 21:15.

Verse 1

I will bless the Lord - I will praise him; I will be thankful for his mercies, and will always express my sense of his goodness.

At all times - In every situation of life; in every event that occurs. The idea is, that he would do it publicly and privately; in prosperity and in adversity; in safety and in danger; in joy and in sorrow. It would be a great principle of his life, expressive of the deep feeling of his soul, that God was always to be regarded as an object of adoration and praise.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth - I will be constantly uttering his praises; or, my thanks shall be unceasing. This expresses the "purpose" of the psalmist; and this is an indication of the nature of true piety. With a truly pious man the praise of God is constant; and it is an indication of true religion when a man is "disposed" always to bless God, whatever may occur. Irreligion, unbelief, scepticism, worldliness, false philosophy, murmur and complain under the trials and amidst the dark things of life; true religion, faith, love, spirituality of mind, Christian philosophy, see in God always an object of praise. People who have no real piety, but who make pretensions to it, are disposed to praise and bless God in times of sunshine and prosperity; true piety always regards him as worthy of praise - in the storm as well as in the sunshine; in the dark night of calamity, as well as in the bright days of prosperity. Compare Job 13:15.

Verse 2

My soul shall make her boast in the Lord - I myself will rejoice and exult in him. The word "boast" here refers to that on which a man would value himself; that which would be most prominent in his mind when he endeavored to call to remembrance what he could reflect on with most pleasure. The psalmist here says that when He did this, it would not be wealth or strength to which he would refer; it would not be his rank or position in society; it would not be what he had done, nor what he had gained, as pertaining to this life. His joy would spring from the fact that there was a God; that he was such a God, and that he could regard him as His God. This would be his chief distinction - that on which he would value himself most. Of all the things that we can possess in this world, the crowning distinction is, that we have a God, and that he is such a being as he is.

The humble shall hear thereof - The poor; the afflicted; those who are in the lower walks of life. They should hear that he put his trust in God, and they should find joy in being thus directed to God as their portion and their hope. The psalmist seems to have referred here to that class particularly, because:

(a) they would be more likely to appreciate this than those of more elevated rank, or than those who had never known affliction; and

(b) because this would be specially fitted to impart to them support and consolation, as derived from his own experience.

He had been in trouble. He had been encompassed with dangers. He had been mercifully protected and delivered. He was about to state how it had been done. He was sure that they who were in the circumstances in which he had been would welcome the truths which he was about to state, and would rejoice that there might be deliverance for them also, and that they too might find God a protector and a friend. Calamity, danger, poverty, trial, are often of eminent advantage in preparing the mind to appreciate the nature, and to prize the lessons of religion.

And be glad - Rejoice in the story of my deliverance, since it will lead them to see that they also may find deliverance in the day of trial.

Verse 3

O magnify the Lord with me - This seems to be addressed primarily to the "humble," those referred to in the previous verse. As they could appreciate what he would say, as they could understand the nature of his feelings in view of his deliverance, he calls upon them especially to exult with him in the goodness of God. As he and they had common calamities and trials, so might they have common joys; as they were united in danger and sorrow, so it was proper that they should be united in joy and in praise. The word "magnify' means literally "to make great," and then, to make great in the view of the mind, or to regard and treat as great. The idea is, that he wished all, in circumstances similar to those in which he had been placed, to have a just sense of the greatness of God, and of his claims to love and praise. Compare Psalm 35:27; Psalm 40:17; Psalm 69:30; Psalm 70:4; Luke 1:46.

And let us exalt his name together - Let us unite in "lifting up" his name; that is, in raising it above all other things in our own estimation, and in the view of our fellow-men; in so making it known that it shall rise above every other object, that all may see and adore.

Verse 4

I sought the Lord, and he heard me - That is, on the occasion referred to in the psalm, when he was exposed to the persecutions of Saul, and when

he sought refuge in the country of Abimelech or Achish: 1 Samuel 21:1-15. The idea is, that at that time he did not confide in his own wisdom, or trust to any devices of his own, but that he sought the protection and guidance of God, alike when he fled to Gath, and when he fled from Gath.

And delivered me from all my fears - From all that he apprehended from Saul, and again from all that he dreaded when he found that Abimelech would not harbor him, but drove him from him.

Verse 5

They looked unto him - That is, they who were with the psalmist. He was not alone when he fled to Abimelech; and the meaning here is, that each one of those who were with him looked to God, and found light and comfort in Him. The psalmist seems to have had his thoughts here suddenly turned from himself to those who were with him, and to have called to his remembrance how they "all" looked to God in their troubles, and how they all found relief.

And were lightened - Or, "enlightened." They found light. Their faces, as we should say, "brightened up," or they became cheerful. Their minds were made calm, for they felt assured that God would protect them. Nothing could better express what often occurs in the time of trouble, when the heart is sad, and when the countenance is sorrowful - a dark cloud apparently having come over all things - if one thus looks to God. The burden is removed from the heart, and the countenance becomes radiant with hope and joy. The margin here, however, is, "They flowed unto him." The Hebrew word, נהר *nâhar* means sometimes "to flow, to flow together," Isaiah 2:2; Jeremiah 31:12; Jeremiah 51:44; but it also means "to shine, to be bright;" and thence, "to be cheered, to rejoice," Isaiah 60:5. This is probably the idea here, for this interpretation is better suited to the connection in which the word occurs.

And their faces were not ashamed - That is, they were not ashamed of having put their trust in God, or they were not disappointed. They had not occasion to confess that it was a vain reliance, or that they had been foolish in thus trusting him. Compare Job 6:20, note; Psalm 22:5, note; Romans 9:33, note; 1 John 2:28, note. The idea here is, that they found God to be all that they expected or hoped that he would be. They had no cause to repent of what they had done. What was true of them will be true of all who put their trust in God.

Verse 6

This poor man cried - The psalmist here returns to his own particular experience. The emphasis here is on the word "this:" "This poor, afflicted, persecuted man cried." There is something much more touching in this than if he had merely said "I," or "I myself" cried. The language brings before us at once his afflicted and miserable condition. The word "poor" here - עני *ʿânîy* - does not mean "poor" in the sense of a want of wealth, but "poor" in the sense of being afflicted, crushed, forsaken, desolate. The word "miserable" would better express the idea than the word "poor."

And the Lord heard him - That is, heard in the sense of "answered." He regarded his cry, and saved him.

Verse 7

The angel of the Lord - The angel whom the Lord sends, or who comes, at his command, for the purpose of protecting the people of God. This does not refer to any particular angel as one who was specifically called "the angel of the Lord," but it, may refer to any one of the angels whom the Lord may commission for this purpose; and the phrase is equivalent to saying that "angels" encompass and protect the friends of God. The word "angel" properly means a "messenger," and then is applied to those holy beings around the throne of God who are sent forth as his "messengers" to mankind; who are appointed to communicate his will, to execute his commands; or to protect his people. Compare Matthew 24:31, note; Job 4:18, note; Hebrews 1:6, note; John 5:4, note. Since the word has a general signification, and would denote in itself merely a messenger, the qualification is added here that it is an "angel of the Lord" that is referred to, and that becomes a protector of the people of God.

Encampeth - literally, "pitches his tent." Genesis 26:17; Exodus 13:20; Exodus 17:1. Then the word comes to mean "to defend;" to "protect:" Zechariah 9:8. The idea here is, that the angel of the Lord protects the people of God as an army defends a country, or as such an army would be a protection. He "pitches his tent" near the people of God, and is there to guard them from danger.

About them that fear him - His true friends, friendship for God being often denoted by the word fear or reverence. See the notes at Job 1:1.

And delivereth them - Rescues them from danger. The psalmist evidently has his own case in view, and the general remark here is founded on his own experience. He attributes his safety from danger at the time to which he is referring, not to his own art or skill; not to the valor of his own

arm, or to the prowess of his followers, but, to the goodness of God in sending an angel, or a company of angels, to rescue him; and hence, he infers that what was true of himself would be true of others, and that the general statement might be made which is presented in this verse. The doctrine is one that is frequently affirmed in the Scriptures. Nothing is more clearly or constantly asserted than that the angels are employed in defending the people of God; in leading and guiding them; in comforting them under trial, and sustaining them in death; as it is also affirmed, on the other hand, that wicked angels are constantly employed in leading men to ruin. Compare Daniel 6:22, note; Hebrews 1:14, note. See also Genesis 32:1-2; 2 Kings 6:17; Psalm 91:11; Luke 16:22; Luke 22:43; John 20:12. It may be added that no one can prove that what is here stated by the psalmist may not be literally true at the present time; and to believe that we are under the protection of angels may be as philosophical as it is pious. The most lonely, the most humble, the most obscure, and the poorest child of God, may have near him and around him a retinue and a defense which kings never have when their armies pitch their tents around their palaces, and when a thousand swords would at once be drawn to defend them.

Verse 8

O taste and see - This is an address to others, founded on the experience of the psalmist. He had found protection from the Lord; he had had evidence of His goodness; and he asks now of others that they would make the same trial which he had made. It is the language of piety in view of personal experience; and it is such language as a young convert, whose heart is filled with joy as hope first dawns on his soul, would address to his companions and friends, and to all the world around; such language as one who has had any special comfort, or who has experienced any special deliverance from temptation or from trouble, would address to others. Lessons, derived from our own experience, we may properly recommend to others; the evidence which has been furnished us that God is good, we may properly employ in persuading others to come and taste his love. The word "taste" here - טעם *ṭâʿam* - means properly to try the flavor of anything, Job 12:11; to eat a little so as to ascertain what a thing is, 1 Samuel 14:24, 1 Samuel 14:29, 1 Samuel 14:43; Jonah 3:7; and then to perceive by the mind, to try, to experience, Proverbs 31:18.

It is used here in the sense of making a trial of, or testing by experience. The idea is, that by putting trust in God - by testing the comforts of religion

- one would so thoroughly see or perceive the blessings of it - would have so much happiness in it - that he would be led to seek his happiness there altogether. In other words, if we could but get men to make a trial of religion; to enter upon it so as really to understand and experience it, we may be certain that they would have the same appreciation of it which we have, and that they would engage truly in the service of God. If those who are in danger would look to him; if sinners would believe in him; if the afflicted would seek him; if the wretched would cast their cares on him; if they who have sought in vain for happiness in the world, would seek happiness in him - they would, one and all, so surely find what they need that they would renounce all else, and put their trust alone in God. Of this the psalmist was certain; of this all are sure who have sought for happiness in religion and in God.

"Oh make but trial of His love;
Experience will decide
How bless'd are they - and only they -
Who in His truth confide."

Blessed is the man that trusteth in him - Compare the notes at Psalm 2:12.

Verse 9

O fear the Lord - Reverence him; honor him; confide in him. Compare Psalm 31:23.

Ye his saints - His holy ones. All who profess to be his friends. This exhortation is addressed especially to the saints, or to the pious, because the speaker professed to be a friend of God, and had had personal experience of the truth of what he is here saying. It is the testimony of one child of God addressed to others, to encourage them by the result of his own experience.

For there is no want to them that fear him - All their needs will be abundantly supplied. Sooner or later all their real necessities will be met, and God will bestow upon them every needed blessing. The statement here cannot be regarded as absolutely and universally true - that is, it cannot mean that they who fear the Lord will never, in any instance, be hungry or thirsty, or destitute of raiment or of a comfortable home; but it is evidently intended to be a general affirmation, and is in accordance with the other statements which occur in the Bible about the advantages of true religion in securing temporal as well as spiritual blessings from God. Thus, in 1 Timothy 4:8, it is said, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having

promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Thus, in Isaiah 33:16, it is said of the righteous man, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure."

And so, in Psalm 37:25, David records the result of his own observation at the end of a long life, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." But while these statements should not be interpreted as affirming absolutely that no child of God will ever be in need of food, or drink, or raiment, or home, or friends, yet it is generally true that the needs of the righteous are supplied, often in an unexpected manner, and from an unexpected source. It is true that virtue and religion conduce to temporal prosperity; and it is almost universally true that the inmates of charity-houses and prisons are neither the pious, nor the children of the pious. These houses are the refuge, to a great extent, of the intemperate, the godless, and the profligate - or of the families of the intemperate, the godless, and the profligate; and if all such persons were to be discharged from those abodes, our almshouses and prisons would soon become tenantless. A community could most easily provide for all those who have been trained in the ways of religion, but who are reduced to poverty by fire, or by flood, or by ill health; and they would most cheerfully do it. Nothing can be more true than that if a man wished to do all that could be done in the general uncertainty of human affairs to secure prosperity, it would be an advantage to him to be a virtuous and religious man. God never blesses or prospers a sinner as such, though he often does it notwithstanding the fact that he is a sinner; but he does and will bless and prosper a righteous man as such, and because he is righteous. Compare the notes at 1 Timothy 4:8.

Verse 10

The young lions do lack and suffer hunger - That is, they often do it, as compared with the friends of God. The allusion is especially to the "young" lions who are not able to go forth themselves in search of food. Perhaps the idea is, that they are dependent on the older lions - their parents - for the supply of their needs, as the pious are dependent on God; but that the result shows their reliance to be often vain, while that of the pious never is. The old lions may be unable to procure food for their young; God is never unable to provide for the wants of his children. If their needs are in any case unsupplied, it is for some other reason than because God is unable

to meet their necessities. The word "lack" here - רוּשׁ *rûsh* - means to be poor; to suffer want; to be needy: Proverbs 14:20; Proverbs 18:23.

But they that seek the Lord - That seek Him as their Friend; that seek His favor; that seek what they need from Him. "To seek God" is a phrase which is often used to denote true piety. It means that we wish to know Him; that we desire His friendship; and that we seek all our blessings from Him.

Shall not want any good thing - Any real good. God is able to supply every need; and if anything is withheld, it is always certain that it is not because God could not confer it, but because He sees some good reasons why it should not be conferred. The real good; what we need most; what will most benefit us - will be bestowed on us; and universally it may be said of all the children of God that everything in this world and the next will be granted that is really for their good. They themselves are often not the best judges of what will be for their good; but God is an infallible Judge in this matter, and He will certainly bestow what is best for them.

Verse 11

Come, ye children - From persons in general Psalm 34:8 - from the saints and the pious Psalm 34:9 - the psalmist now turns to children - to the young - that he may state to them the result of his own experience, and teach them from that experience how they may find happiness and prosperity. The original word here rendered "children" properly means "sons;" but there can be no doubt that the psalmist meant to address the young in general. There is no evidence that he especially designed what is here said for his own sons. The counsel seems to have been designed for all the young. I see no reason for supposing, as Rosenmuller, DeWette, and Prof. Alexander do, that the word is here used in the sense of "disciples, scholars, learners." That the word may have such a meaning, there can be no doubt; but it is much more in accordance with the scope of the psalm to regard the word as employed in its usual sense as denoting the young. It is thus a most interesting address from an aged and experienced man of God to those who are in the morning of life - suggesting to them the way by which they may make life prosperous and happy.

Hearken unto me - Attend to what I have to say, as the fruit of my experience and observation.

I will teach you the fear of the Lord - I will show you what constitutes the true fear of the Lord, or what is the nature of true religion. I will teach

you how you may so fear and serve God as to enjoy his favor and obtain length of days upon the earth.

Verse 12

What man is he that desireth life? - That desires to live long. All people naturally love life; and all naturally desire to live long; and this desire, being founded in our nature, is not wrong. Life is, in itself, a good - a blessing to be desired; death is in itself an evil, and a thing to be dreaded, and there is nothing wrong, in itself, in such a dread. Equally proper is it to wish not to be cut down in early life; for where one has before him an eternity for which to prepare, he feels it undesirable that he should be cut off in the beginning of his way. The psalmist, therefore, does not put this question because he supposes that there were any who did not desire life, or did not wish to see many days, but in order to fix the attention on the inquiry, and to prepare the mind for the answer which was to follow. By thus putting the question, also, he has implicitly expressed the opinion that it is lawful to desire life, and to wish to see many days.

And loveth many days - literally, "loving days." That is, who so loves days, considered as a part of life, that he wishes they may be prolonged and multiplied.

That he may see good - That he may enjoy prosperity, or find happiness. In other words, who is he that would desire to understand the way by which life may be lengthened out to old age, and by which it may be made happy and prosperous? The psalmist proposes to answer this question - as he does in the following verses, by stating the results of what he had experienced and observed.

Verse 13

Keep thy tongue from evil - From speaking wrong things. Always give utterance to truth, and truth alone. The meaning is, that this is one of the methods of lengthening out life. To love the truth; to speak the truth; to avoid all falsehood, slander, and deceit, will contribute to this, or will be a means which will tend to prolong life, and to make it happy.

And thy lips from speaking guile - Deceit. Do not "deceive" others by your words. Do not make any statements which are not true, or any promises which you cannot and will not keep. Do not flatter others; and do not give utterance to slander. Be a man characterized by the love of truth: and let all your words convey truth, and truth only. It cannot be doubted that this, like all other virtues, would tend to lengthen life, and to make it

prosperous and peaceful. There is no vice which does not tend to abridge human life, as there is no virtue which does not tend to lengthen it. But probably the specific idea here is, that the way to avoid the hostility of other people, and to secure their favor and friendship, is to deal with them truly, and thus to live in peace with them. It is true, also, that God will bless a life of virtue and uprightness, and though there is no absolute certainty that anyone, however virtuous he may be, may not be cut off in early life, yet it is also true that, other things being equal, a man of truth and integrity will be more likely to live long - (as he will be more certain to make the most of life) - than one who is false and corrupt.

Verse 14

Depart from evil - From all evil; from vice and crime in every form.

And do good - Do good to all people, and in all the relations of life.

Seek peace - Strive to live in peace with all the world. Compare the notes at Romans 12:18.

And pursue it - Follow after it. Make it an object of desire, and put forth constant efforts to live in peace with all human beings. There can be no doubt that this is appropriate advice to one who wishes to lengthen out his days. We have only to remember how many are cut down by indulging in a quarrelsome, litigious, and contentious spirit - by seeking revenge - by quarrels, duels, wars, and strife - to see the wisdom of this counsel.

Verse 15

The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous - This is another of the ways in which the psalmist says that life will be lengthened out, or that those who desire life may find it. The Lord will be the protector of the righteous; he will watch over and defend them. See the notes at Job 36:7.

And his ears are open unto their cry - That is, when in trouble and in danger. He will hear them, and will deliver them. All this seems to be stated as the result of the experience of the psalmist himself; He had found that the eyes of God had been upon him in his dangers, and that His ears had been open when he called upon Him Psalm 34:6; and now, from his own experience, he assures others that the way to secure life and to find prosperity is to pursue such a course as will ensure the favor and protection of God. The general thought is, that virtue and religion - the love of truth, and the love of peace - the favor and friendship of God, will tend to lengthen out life, and to make it prosperous and happy. All the statements in the Bible concur in this, and all the experience of man goes to confirm it.

Verse 16

The face of the Lord - This phrase is synonymous with that in the previous verse: "The eyes of the Lord." The meaning is, that the righteous and the wicked are alike under the eye of God; the one for protection, the other for punishment. Neither of them can escape His notice; but at all times, and in all circumstances, they are equally seen by Him.

Is against them that do evil - The wicked; all that do wrong. In the former verse the statement is, that the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, that is, for their protection; in this case, by a change of the preposition in the original, the statement is, that His face is "against" them that do evil, that is, He observes them to bring judgment upon them.

To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth - To cut off themselves, - their families - and all memorials of them, so that they shall utterly be forgotten among people. Compare Psalm 109:13-15. So, in Proverbs 10:7, it is said, "The memory of the just is blessed; but the name of the wicked shall rot." Two things are implied here:

(1) That it is "desirable" to be remembered after we are dead. There is in us a deep-rooted principle, of great value to the cause of virtue, which prompts us to "desire" that we may be held in grateful recollection by mankind after we have passed away; that is, which prompts us to do something in our lives, the remembrance of which the world will not "willingly let die." - Milton.

(2) The other idea is, that there is a state of things on earth which has a tendency to cause the remembrance of the wicked to die out, or to make people forget them. There is nothing to make men desire to retain their recollection, or to rear monuments to them. People are indeed remembered who are of bad eminence in crime; but the world will forget a wicked man just as soon as it can. This is stated here as a reason particularly addressed to the young Psalm 34:11 why they should seek God, and pursue the ways of righteousness. The motive is, that men will "gladly" retain the remembrance of those who are good; of those who have done anything worthy to be remembered, but that a life of sin will make men desire to forget as soon as possible all those who practice it. This is not a low and base motive to be addressed to the young. That is a high and honorable principle which makes us wish that our names should be cherished by those who are to live after us, and is one of the original principles by which God

keeps up virtue in the world - one of those arrangements, those safeguards of virtue, by which we are prompted to do right, and to abstain from that which is wrong. It is greatly perverted, indeed, to purposes of ambition, but, in itself, the desire not to be forgotten when we are dead contributes much to the industry, the enterprise, and the benevolence of the world, and is one of the most efficacious means for preserving us from sin.

Verse 17

The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth - That is, one of the advantages or benefits of being righteous is the privilege of crying unto God, or of calling on his name, with the assurance that he will hear and deliver us. No one has ever yet fully appreciated the "privilege" of being permitted to call upon God; the privilege of prayer. There is no blessing conferred upon man in his present state superior to this; and no one can fully understand the force of the argument derived from this in favor of the service of God. What a world would this be - how sad, how helpless, how wretched - if there were no God to whom the guilty, the suffering, and the sorrowful might come; if God were a Being who never heard prayer at all; if he were a capricious Being who might or might not hear prayer; if He were a Being governed by fitful emotions, who would now hear the righteous, and then the wicked, and then neither, and who dispensed His favors in answer to prayer by no certain rule!

And delivereth them out of all their troubles -

(1) He often delivers them from trouble in this life in answer to prayer.

(2) he will deliver them literally from all trouble in the life to come.

The promise is not indeed, that they shall be delivered from all trouble on earth, but the idea is that God is able to rescue them from trouble here; that He often does it in answer to prayer; and that there will be, in the case of every righteous person, a sure and complete deliverance from all trouble hereafter. Compare the notes at Psalm 34:6: see Psalm 34:19.

Verse 18

The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart - Margin, as in Hebrew: "to the broken of heart." The phrase, "the Lord is nigh," means that he is ready to hear and to help. The language is, of course, figurative.

As an Omnipresent Being, God is equally near to all persons at all times; but the language is adapted to our conceptions, as we feel that one who is near us can help us, or that one who is distant from us cannot give us aid. Compare the notes at Psalm 22:11. The phrase, "them that are of a broken heart," occurs often in the Bible. It refers to a condition when a burden "seems" to be on the heart, and when the heart "seems" to be crushed by sin or sorrow; and it is designed to describe a consciousness of deep guilt, or the heaviest kind of affliction and trouble. Compare Psalm 51:17; Isaiah 57:15; Isaiah 61:1; Isaiah 66:2.

And sayeth such as be of a contrite spirit - Margin, as in Hebrew: "contrite of spirit." The phrase here means the spirit as "crushed" or "broken down;" that is, as in the other phrase, a spirit that is oppressed by sin or trouble. The world abounds with instances of those who can fully understand this language.

Verse 19

Many are the afflictions of the righteous - This is not intended to affirm that the afflictions of the righteous are more numerous or more severe than the afflictions of other men, but that they are subjected to much suffering, and to many trials. Religion does not exempt them from suffering, but it sustains them in it; it does not deliver them from all trials in this life, but it supports them in their trials, which it teaches them to consider as a preparation for the life to come. There are, indeed, sorrows which are special to the righteous, or which come upon them in virtue of their religion, as the trials of persecution; but there are sorrows, also, that are special to the wicked - such as are the effects of intemperance, dishonesty, crime. The latter are more numerous by far than the former; so that it is still true that the wicked suffer more than the righteous in this life.

But the Lord delivereth him out of them all - See the notes at Psalm 34:17.

Verse 20

He keepeth all his bones - That is, he preserves or guards the righteous.

Not one of them is broken - Perhaps there is a direct and immediate allusion here to what the psalmist had himself experienced. In His dangers God had preserved him, so that he had escaped without a broken bone. But the statement is more general, and is designed to convey a truth in respect to the usual and proper effect of religion, or to denote the advantage, in reference to personal safety in the dangers of this life, derived from

religion. The language is of a general character, such as often occurs in the Scriptures, and it should, in all fairness, be so construed. It cannot mean that the bones of a righteous man are never broken, or that the fact that a man has a broken bone proves that he is not righteous; but it means that, as a general principle, religion conduces to safety, or that the righteous are under the protection of God. Compare Matthew 10:30-31. Nothing more can be demanded in the fair interpretation of the language than this.

Verse 21

Evil shall slay the wicked - That is, his own wicked conduct will be the cause of his destruction. His ruin is not arbitrary, or the mere result of a divine appointment; it is caused by sin, and is the regular and natural consequence of guilt. In the destruction of the sinner, there will not be any one thing which cannot be explained by the supposition that it is the regular effect of sin, or what sin is, in its own nature, suited to produce. The one will measure the other; guilt will be the measure of all that there is in the punishment.

And they that hate the righteous - Another term for the wicked, or a term designating the character of the wicked in one aspect or view. It is true of all the wicked that they must hate the righteous in their hearts, or that they are so opposed to the character of the righteous that it is proper to designate this feeling as "hatred."

Shall be desolate - Margin, "shall be guilty." Prof. Alexander and Hengstenberg render this, as in the margin, "shall be guilty." DeWette, "shall repent." Rosenmuller, "shall be condemned." The original word - אשם *'âsham* - means properly to fail in duty, to transgress, to be guilty. The primary idea, says Gesenius (Lexicon), is that of "negligence," especially in going, or in gait, as of a camel that is slow or faltering. Then the word means to be held or treated as faulty or guilty; and then, to bear the consequences of guilt, or to be punished. This seems to be the idea here. The word is sometimes synonymous with another Hebrew word - ישם *yâsham* - meaning to be desolate; to be destroyed; to be laid waste: Ezekiel 6:6; Joel 1:18; Psalm 5:10. But the usual meaning of the word is undoubtedly retained here, as signifying that, in the dealings of Providence, or in the administering of divine government, such men will be held to be guilty, and will be treated accordingly; that is, that they will be punished.

Verse 22

The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants - The literal meaning of this is, that the Lord rescues the lives of his servants, or that he saves them from death. The word "redeem" in its primary sense means to let go or loose; to "buy" loose, or to ransom; and hence, to redeem with a price, or to rescue in any way. Here the idea is not that of delivering or rescuing by a "price," or by an offering, but of rescuing from danger and death by the interposition of the power and providence of God. The word "soul" here is used to denote the entire man, and the idea is, that God will "rescue" or "save" those who serve and obey him. They will be kept from destruction. They will not be held and regarded as guilty, and will not be treated as if they were wicked. As the word "redeem" is used by David here it means God will save His people; without specifying the "means" by which it will be done. As the word "redeem" is used by Christians now, employing the ideas of the New Testament on the subject, it means that God will redeem His people by that great sacrifice which was made for them on the cross.

And none of them that trust in him shall be desolate - Shall be held and treated as "guilty." See Psalm 34:21, where the same word occurs in the original. They shall not be held to be guilty; they shall not be punished. This is designed to be in contrast with the statement respecting the wicked in Psalm 34:21. The psalm, therefore, closes appropriately with the idea that they who trust the Lord will be ultimately safe; that God will make a distinction between them and the wicked; that they will be ultimately rescued from death, and be regarded and treated forever as the friends of God.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 35

Introduction

This psalm is ascribed to David. The title in the original, לדוד *ledâvid* - "by David" or, "of David" - is without anything to designate the occasion on which it was composed, or anything to mark the character of the psalm, as distinguished from others. Occasionally in the titles of the psalms there is a special reference to the circumstances in which the psalm was composed, as in Psalm 3:1-8; Psalm 30:1-12; Psalm 4:1-8; Psalm 5:1-12; Psalm 6:1-10; Psalm 16:1-11; 2 Samuel 16:3; by others it has been referred to the rebellion of Absalom; and others have referred it to the Messiah, as propheticly descriptive of what would occur to him. The psalm can be intelligently interpreted on either of the former suppositions, but there is no evidence that it had any direct reference to the Messiah. The only place in the New Testament in which it could be alleged that any part of it is applied to Christ, is John 15:25, where it is said, "But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, They hated me without a cause." By those who suppose that the psalm refers to the Messiah, it is said that this is a quotation from Psalm 35:19. But it may be remarked in regard to this:

(a) that the language of the psalm in that verse is different from that used in John, the language of the former being, "Neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause;" and

(b) that the language in John is a much more literal quotation from Psalm 69:4, "They that hate me without a cause," etc. a psalm which undoubtedly has reference to the Messiah. DeWette supposes that the psalm is not properly ascribed to David, and says that it is not "worthy" of him. He supposes that it was composed after the death of David, by an inferior poet. He furnishes, however, no reason for this opinion, except that which is derived from his own feelings - "nach meinem Gefuhle." The time and occasion on which the psalm was composed are not, however, of material consequence. As it would be appropriate to any of the occasions above referred to, so it is appropriate to numerous occasions which arise in the history of individuals; and it is, therefore, of so general a character that it may be useful in the church at all times.

What is apparent in the psalm - the central idea, and that which makes it so useful - is, that it was composed with reference to the treatment which the author received from those who had been his professed friends: from those to whom he had shown kindness in their troubles; to whom he had been a friend and a brother, but who had now turned against him. In the time of prosperity they had been his professed friends, and had partaken freely and largely of his hospitality; when they were afflicted he had shown them sympathy and kindness; but when reverses came upon him, they forsook him, and joined with his calumniators, persecutors, and accusers. The psalm, therefore, has a special applicability to trials of that nature. It expresses the feelings and views of the author in regard to his own sorrows, as springing from such ingratitude, and his earnest prayer to God to interpose in his behalf - the rolling of the sorrows of his pained and oppressed heart upon the arm of his unchanging Friend, the mighty and merciful God. As occasions similar to those referred to in the psalm not unfrequently occur in the world, it was important that in the vo ume of inspiration an "example" should be furnished of the manner in which piety is to meet such a form of trial.

The psalm consists of the following parts:

I. The prayer, Psalm 35:1-10. This is

(a) an earnest appeal to God for his interposition, Psalm 35:1-3;

(b) a solemn imprecation of divine vengeance on his enemies, or a prayer that they may receive from the hand of God just retribution for their crimes, Psalm 35:4-8;

(c) the expression of a determined purpose on his part to triumph in God, or to ascribe praise to God for his interposition, Psalm 35:9-10.

II. The description of the character and conduct of his enemies, Psalm 35:11-16. They were:

(a) false witnesses against him, or calumniators, Psalm 35:11;

(b) they had rendered to him evil for good, or had been guilty of base ingratitude, Psalm 35:12;

(c) in their troubles he had been to them as a brother, Psalm 35:13-14; but

(d) they had forgotten all this in his adversity, and had united with the vile and the abandoned - with revellers and drunkards, in pouring contempt on his name, and in reproaching his character, Psalm 35:15-16.

III. An earnest appeal to God, in view of these circumstances, to interpose and deliver him; to show that He was the Patron and Friend of those who were calumniated and injured, Psalm 35:17-28. This appeal is founded on such arguments as the following:

(a) That God seemed now to be looking on, and taking no interest in a righteous cause, or in the cause of one who was oppressed and wronged, Psalm 35:17;

(b) that His interposition would lead the psalmist to render Him praise, Psalm 35:18;

(c) that those who had so much injured and wronged him seemed to enjoy the divine favor, and were at ease, Psalm 35:19-20;

(d) that God had seen all this, and still saw it, and that it became Him to interpose on his behalf, Psalm 35:21-23;

(e) that it was inconsistent for God to suffer the wicked to triumph over the righteous, or that they should be allowed to exult as if they had swallowed them up, Psalm 35:24-26; and

(f) that it was desirable that, under the government of God, they who were truly righteous should receive such tokens of the divine favor and protection that they could rejoice in God, and render Him appropriate praise, Psalm 35:27-28.

Verse 1

Plead my cause, O Lord - The word "plead" means, properly, to argue in support of a claim, or against the claim of another; to urge reasons for or against; to attempt to persuade one by argument or supplication; as, to plead for the life of a criminal, that is, to urge reasons why he should be acquitted or pardoned; and then, to supplicate with earnestness in any way. The original word used here - רוב *rûb* - means to contend, strive, quarrel; and then, to contend before a judge, to manage or plead a cause. The idea here is, that the psalmist desires that God would undertake his cause against those who had risen up against him, as if it were managed before a tribunal, or before a judge, and God should be the advocate. The same word is used, in another form, in the other member of the sentence - "with them that strive - יריבי *yârîybāy* - against me." The idea is, that they were "pleading" against him, or were urging arguments, as it were, before a tribunal or a judge, why he should be condemned. They were his bitter opponents, engaged in bringing all manner of false accusations against him, and seeking his condemnation. The psalmist felt that he could not manage his own cause against them; and he, therefore, pleads with God that He would interpose, and stand up for him.

Fight against them that fight against me - The same idea substantially occurs here as in the former member of the verse. It is a prayer that God would undertake his cause; that He would exert His power against those who were opposed to him.

Verse 2

Take hold of shield and buckler - That is, Arm thyself as if for the contest. It is a prayer, in a new form, that God would interpose, and that he would go forth as a warrior against the enemies of the psalmist. On the word "shield," see the notes at Psalm 5:12. Compare the notes at Ephesians 6:16. On the word "buckler," see the notes at Psalm 18:2. These terms are derived from the armor of a warrior, and the prayer here is that God would appear in that character for his defense.

And stand up for my help - As a warrior stands up, or stands firm, to arrest the attack of an enemy.

Verse 3

Draw out also the spear - The word here rendered "draw out" means properly to pour out; to empty; and it is applied to the act of emptying sacks, Genesis 42:35; to emptying bottles, Jeremiah 48:12; to drawing a

sword from a sheath, Exodus 15:9; Leviticus 26:33; Ezekiel 5:12. It is applied to a "spear" either as drawing it out of the place where it was kept, or as stretching it out for the purposes of attack. The former probably is the meaning, and the idea is, that David prayed God to "arm himself" - as a warrior does - in order to defend him. The spear was a common weapon in ancient warfare. It was sometimes so short that it could be brandished as a sword in the hand, or hurled at an enemy, 1 Samuel 18:11; 1 Samuel 19:10; 1 Samuel 20:33; but it was usually made as long as it could be to be handled conveniently. The spear was a weapon of "attack." The parts of armor referred to in Psalm 35:2 were designed for defense. The idea of the psalmist is that of a warrior prepared alike for attack or defense.

And stop the way against them that persecute me - The words "the way" are not in the original. The word rendered "stop" - סגר *sâgar* - means properly to shut, to close, as a door or gate, Job 3:10; 1 Samuel 1:5; Genesis 19:6, Genesis 19:10. The idea here, according to the usage of the word, is, Shut or close up the way against those that persecute me. So Gesenius renders it. Grotius, Michaelis, DeWette, and others, however, regard the word as a noun, signifying the same as the Greek - σάγαρις *sagaris* - a two-edged sword, such as was used by the Scythians, Persians, and Amazons. Herod. vii. 64. See Rosenmuller *in loc*. It is not so rendered, however, in any of the ancient versions. The Septuagint render it: "And shut up against those that persecute me;" the Vulgate, "Pre-occupy against those that persecute me;" the Aramaic has: "Shut up against those that persecute me." The correct idea probably is that which is given in the common version. The psalmist prays that God would go forth to meet his enemies; that he would arrest and check them in their march; that he would hedge up their way, and that he would thus prevent them from attacking him.

Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation - Say to "me," I will save you. That is, Give me some assurance that thou wilt interpose, and that thou wilt guard me from my enemies. Man only wants this assurance to be calm in respect to any danger. When God says to us that he will be our salvation; that he will protect us; that he will deliver us from sin, from danger, from hell, the mind may and will be perfectly calm. To a believer he gives this assurance; to all he is willing to give it. The whole plan of salvation is arranged with a view to furnish such an assurance, and to give a pledge to the soul that God "will" save. Death loses its terrors then; the redeemed

man moves on calmly - for in all the future - in all worlds - he has nothing now to fear.

Verse 4

Let them be confounded - That is, Let them, through Thy gracious interposition in my behalf, be so entirely overcome and subdued that they shall be "ashamed" that they ever made the effort to destroy me; let them see so manifestly that God is on my side that they will be covered with confusion for having opposed one who was so entirely the object of the divine protection and care. See Psalm 6:10, note; Psalm 25:2-3, notes. Compare the notes at Job 6:20.

That seek after my soul - My life. That seek to destroy me.

Let them be turned back - In their attempts to pursue me. Do thou interpose and turn them back.

And brought to confusion - Put to shame; or made ashamed - as they are who are disappointed and thwarted in their schemes.

Verse 5

Let them be as chaff before the wind - As chaff is driven away in winnowing grain. See the notes at Psalm 1:4.

And let the angel of the Lord chase them - Drive them away, or scatter them. Angels are often represented in the Scriptures as agents employed by God in bringing punishment on wicked people. See 2 Kings 19:35; Isaiah 37:36; 1 Chronicles 21:12, 1 Chronicles 21:30; 2 Samuel 24:16.

Verse 6

Let their way be dark - Margin, as in Hebrew: "darkness." That is, let them not be able to see where they go; what danger they incur; what is before them. The idea is that of persons who wander in the night, not knowing what is before them, or what danger may be near. The succession of images and figures here is terrific. The representation is that of persons scattered as the chaff is before the wind; pursued by the angel seeking vengeance; and driven along a dark and slippery path, with no guide, and no knowledge as to the precipices which may be before them, or the enemies that may be pressing upon them.

And slippery - Margin, as in Hebrew: "slipperiness." This is a circumstance which adds increased terror to the image. It is not only a dark road, but a road made slippery by rains; a road where they are in danger every moment of sliding down a precipice where they will be destroyed.

And let the angel of the Lord persecute them - Pursue or follow them. The word "persecute" we use now in the sense of subjecting one to pain, torture, or privation, on account of his religious opinions. This is not the meaning of the word used here. It is simply to "follow" or "pursue." The image is that of the avenging angel following on, or pursuing them in this dark and slippery way; a flight in a dark and dangerous path, with a destroying angel close in the rear.

Verse 7

For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit - See Psalm 7:15, note; Psalm 9:15, note. This figure is derived from hunting. The idea is that of digging a pit or hole for a wild beast to fall into, with a net so concealed that the animal could not see it, and that might be suddenly drawn over him so as to secure him. The reference here is to plans that are laid to entrap and ruin others: plots that are concocted so as to secure destruction before one is aware. The psalmist says that, in his case, they had done this without "cause," or without any sufficient reason. He had done them no wrong; he had given them no show of excuse for their conduct.

Which without cause they have digged for my soul - For my life. That is, they have digged a pit into which I might fall, and into which they designed that I should fall, though I have never done anything to give them occasion thus to seek my destruction.

Verse 8

Let destruction come upon him at unawares - Margin, which "he knoweth not of." So the Hebrew. The meaning is, Let destruction come upon him when he is not looking for it, or expecting it.

And let his net that he hath hid catch himself - See the notes at Psalm 7:15-16. The psalmist prays here that the same thing may occur to his enemy which his enemy had designed for him. It is simply a prayer that they might be treated as they purposed to treat him.

Verse 9

And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord - That is, I shall be joyful, or will rejoice. This is said in anticipation of the interposition of God in destroying his enemies, and in delivering him from danger. It is not joy in the destruction of others; it is joy that he himself would be delivered. Our own deliverance from the hand of our enemies may involve the necessity of their being cut off. What we rejoice in, in such a case, is not their ruin, but our own deliverance; and for this it can never be improper to give thanks.

The psalmist says that he would rejoice "in the Lord." It would not be in his own skill or valor, but in what God had done to save him. See the notes at Psalm 34:2.

It shall rejoice in his salvation - For the salvation or deliverance that he brings to me.

Verse 10

All my bones shall say - A similar expression occurs in Psalm 51:8: "That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." The "bones" are here put for the frame; the whole man. See the notes at Psalm 32:3. The idea is, that he had been crushed and overborne with trouble and danger, so that his very frame - that which sustained him - had given way. He says now that if God would interpose in the manner which he prays for, he would be relieved of the insupportable burden, and his whole nature would rejoice.

Who is like unto thee - Who can bring deliverance like God. Compare the notes at Isaiah 40:18. "Which deliverest the poor," etc. Who rescues the poor from the hand of the mighty. That is,

(a) Who is there that would interpose as God does in behalf of the poor and the downtrodden?

(b) Who is there that could save them as He does? In His power, and in His willingness to aid, there is no one like God. The word rendered poor here rather means one who is afflicted, or crushed by trial.

Yea, the poor and the needy - The word here rendered poor is the same as that which occurs in the former member of the sentence. The word rendered "needy" is that which is commonly used to denote the poor in the usual sense of the term - one who is in need. The reference is to David, who was afflicted by persecution, and at the same thee was in want of the comforts of life.

From him that spoileth him - From him that would plunder and rob him.

Verse 11

False witnesses did rise up - Margin, "witnesses of wrong." The Hebrew is, "witnesses of "violence,"" חמס *châmâs* That is, they were persons who, in what they said of me, were guilty of injustice and wrong. Their conduct was injurious to me as an act of "violence" would be.

They laid to my charge - Margin, as in Hebrew: "they asked me." The word "asked" here seems to be used in the sense of "demand;" that is, they

demanded an "answer" to what was said. The usage appears to have been derived from courts, where the forms of trial may have been in the way of question and answer - the mode of accusation having been in the form of "asking" how a thing was, or whether it was so; and the defense being regarded as an "answer" to such an inquiry. Hence, it is synonymous with our expression of laying to the charge of anyone; or of accusing anyone.

Things that I knew not - Of which I had no knowledge; which never came into my mind. What those charges were the psalmist does not specify; but it is not uncommon for a good man to be falsely accused, and we are certain that such things occurred in the life of David.

Verse 12

They rewarded me evil for good - They recompensed, or returned evil instead of good. The manner in which they did it he states in the following verses.

To the spoiling of my soul - Margin, "depriving." The Hebrew word means "the being forsaken," or "abandoned." The idea is, that owing to this conduct he was forsaken or abandoned by all in whom he might have put confidence.

Verse 13

But as for me - The psalmist now contrasts their conduct with his own. He refers to the recollections of his past life, and to the acts of kindness which he had shown to them in thees of trouble, as more deeply marking the evils of their own conduct now.

When they were sick - Compare the notes at Job 30:25. It would seem from this that the persons referred to, who now treated him with so much ingratitude, were those with whom he had been formerly intimately associated, or whom he had regarded as his personal friends, since it cannot be supposed that this deep sympathy would have been shown for those who were altogether strangers to him.

My clothing was sackcloth - Compare the notes at Psalm 30:11. The meaning is, that he showed the deepest sympathy in their distress by putting on the emblems of humiliation or mourning. It was also with reference to prayer in their behalf; and to fasting, that he put on these marks of grief. The idea is, that he did all that was understood to be connected with the deepest humiliation before God, and that would fit the mind for earnest prayer in their behalf. He felt that their restoration to health - that the

preservation of their lives - depended on God, and he most earnestly and fervently pleaded in their behalf.

I humbled my soul with fasting - Margin, "afflicted;" so the Hebrew properly means. The word "soul" here is equivalent to "self;" I afflicted myself. He subjected himself to the pains of hunger, that he might be better prepared to offer fervent and acceptable prayer. Among the Hebrews fasting and prayer were much more closely connected than they are with Christians. See Daniel 9:3; Matthew 17:21; Luke 2:37.

And my prayer returned into mine own bosom - DeWette explains this as meaning, "I prayed with my head sunk on my bosom;" that is, with the head bowed down, so that the prayer which went out of Iris lips seemed to return again to his own bosom - that earnest prayer which one offers when the head is bowed with sorrow. A posture somewhat similar to this is referred to in the case of Elijah, 1 Kings 18:42: "And he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees." The posture of prayer with the head reclining toward the bosom is common among the Muslims, "Reland" de Religione Mohammetica, p. 87. Jarchi explains this as meaning that he sought the same for those who were now his enemies which he would for himself, or that he desired that that should come into his own bosom which he sought for them. Prof. Alexander supposes that this means, according to a traditional interpretation of the Jews, that he desired that the prayer which he offered might redound to his own advantage: "My prayer shall not be lost, it shall return in blessings to the heart which prompted it." There can be no reason to doubt that this is true "in fact;" and that prayer offered for others "does" bring back blessings to those who offer it. But to suppose that this was the "motive" in the case is to suppose that the psalmist was wholly selfish, and would take away the very point of his observation about his prayer - that it was dictated by the sincerest love for them and true sympathy for their sufferings. The most simple interpretation, therefore, is that which supposes that the prayer was offered under such a burden of grief on account of their sufferings, that his head sank on his bosom; or, in other words, that the prayer which was offered was such as is presented when the heart is most burdened and most sad.

Verse 14

I behaved myself - Margin, as in Hebrew: "I walked." The word "walk," in the Scriptures, is often used to denote a course of conduct; the way in which a man lives and acts: Philemon 3:18; Galatians 2:14; 1

Thessalonians 4:12; 2 Thessalonians 3:11. It is not improperly rendered here, "I behaved myself."

As though he had been my friend or brother - Margin, as in Hebrew: "as a friend, as a brother to me." This shows that these persons were not his near "relations," but that they were his intheate friends, or were supposed to be so. He felt and acted toward them as though they had been his nearest relations.

I bowed down heavily - Prof. Alexander renders this, "Squalid I bowed down." The word rendered "I bowed down" refers to the condition of one who is oppressed with grief, or who sinks under it. All have felt this effect of grief, when the head is bowed; when the frame is bent; when one under the pressure throws himself on a couch or on the ground. The word rendered heavily - קדר *qodēr* - is derived from a word - קדר *qâdar* - which means to be turbid or foul, as a torrent: Job 6:16; and then, to mourn, or to go about in filthy garments or sackcloth as mourners: Job 5:11; Jeremiah 14:2; Psalm 38:6; Psalm 42:9; and then, to be of a dirty, dusky color, as the skin is that is scorched by the sun: Job 30:28. It is rendered "black" in Jeremiah 4:28; Jeremiah 8:21; 1 Kings 18:45; Jeremiah 14:2; "blackish," Job 6:16; "dark," Joel 2:10; Micah 3:6; Ezekiel 32:7-8; "darkened," Joel 3:15; "mourn and mourning." Job 5:11; Job 30:28; Psalm 38:6; Psalm 42:9; Psalm 43:2; Ezekiel 31:15; and "heavily" only in this place. The "idea" here is that of one appearing in the usual aspect and habiliments of mourning. He had a sad countenance; he had put on the garments that were indicative of grief; and thus he "walked about."

As one that mourneth for his mother - The psalmist here evidently designs to illustrate the depth of his own sorrow by a reference to the deepest kind of grief which we ever experience. The sorrow for a mother is special, and there is no grief which a man feels more deeply or keenly than this. We have but one mother to lose, and thousands of most tender recollections come into the memory when she dies. While she lived we had always one friend to whom we could tell everything - to whom we could communicate all our joys, and of whose sympathy we were certain in all our sorrows, however trivial in their own nature they might be. Whoever might be indifferent to us, whoever might turn away from us in our troubles, whoever might feel that our affairs were not worth regarding, we were sure that she would not be the one; we were always certain that she would feel an interest in whatever concerned us. Even those things which

we felt could be scarcely worth a father's attention we could freely communicate to her, for we were sure there was nothing that pertained to us that was too insignificant for her to regard, and we went and freely told all to her. And then, how much has a mother done for us! All the ideas that we have of tenderness, affection, self-denial, patience, and gentleness, are closely connected with the recollection of a mother, for we have, in our early years, seen more of these tilings in her than in perhaps all other persons together. Though, therefore, we weep when a father dies, and though, in the formation of our character, we may have been more indebted to him than to her, yet our grief for him when he dies is different from that which we feel when a mother dies. We, indeed, reverence and honor and love him, but we are conscious of quite a different feeling from that which we have when a mother is removed by death.

Verse 15

But in mine adversity they rejoiced - Margin, as in Hebrew, "halting." That is, when reverses and troubles came upon me; when, in my journey of life, I seemed to stumble.

And gathered themselves together - Not to help me, but to oppose me, and to deride me.

Yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me - The word rendered "abjects" - נכים *nēkiym* - has been very variously rendered. The Septuagint renders it: μάστιγις *mastiges* "scourges;" so the Vulgate, *"flagella."* Our translators evidently regarded it as meaning the low, the vile, the outcasts of society; but this idea is not necessarily implied in the Hebrew word. The word used here is derived from a verb - נכה *nâkâh* - which means to smite, to strike, to beat; and it would be correctly rendered in this place, "those smiting," or "beating:" - "the smiters." But probably the allusion is to the "tongue" - to those who, as it were, smite or beat with the tongue; that is, who rail or revile: those who are slanderous. Compare Jeremiah 18:18; Gesenius (Lexicon). Others have supposed that it means "lame;" that is, those who limp or halt - meaning that all classes of persons gathered themselves together. But probably the true idea is that which is expressed above, that he was surrounded by slanderers and revilers.

And I knew it not - Hebrew, "I knew not;" that is, I knew nothing of what they accused me of; I was wholly ignorant of the charges brought against me. See the notes at Psalm 35:11.

They did tear me - See the notes at Job 16:9. The idea here is that they "tore" or "rent" with words; or, as we say in English, they "tore him in pieces;" that is, they railed at, or reviled him, tearing his character in pieces.

And ceased not - It was not one act only; it was continuous and unceasing. They did it when alone; and they gathered themselves together to do it; they countenanced and encouraged one another.

Verse 16

With hypocritical mockers in feasts - The word rendered hypocritical here - חנף *chânêph* - properly means people "profane, impious, abandoned." It refers to such persons as are commonly found in scenes of revelry. The words rendered "mockers at feasts," it is scarcely possible to render literally. The word translated, "mockers," - לעג *lâʿêg* - means properly one who stammers, or who speaks a foreign language; then, a jester, mocker, buffoon. The word rendered "feasts" - מעוג *mâʿôg* - means "a cake of bread;" and the whole phrase would denote "cake-jesters;" "table-buffoons" - those, perhaps, who act the part of jesters at the tables of the rich for the sake of good eating. "Gesenius." - The meaning is, that he was exposed to the ribaldry or jesting of that low class of people; that those with whom he had formerly been on friendly terms, and whom he had admitted to his own table, and for whom he had wept in their troubles, now drew around themselves that low and common class of parasites and buffoons for the purpose of ridiculing or deriding him.

They gnashed upon me with their teeth - The act of gnashing with the teeth is expressive of anger or wrath. See the notes at Job 16:9; compare Matthew 8:12; Matthew 13:42, Matthew 13:50; Matthew 22:13; Matthew 24:51; Matthew 25:30; Luke 13:28. The meaning here is that they connected the expressions of auger or wrath with those of derision and scorn. The one is commonly not far from the other.

Verse 17

Lord, how long wilt thou look on? - How long wilt thou witness this without interposing to deliver me, and to punish those who treat me thus? God saw it all. He was able to save him that was thus persecuted and opposed. And yet he did not interpose. He seemed to pay no attention to it. He appeared to be indifferent to it. The psalmist, therefore, asks "how long" this was to continue. did not doubt that God would, at some thee, interpose and save him; but what was so mysterious to him was the fact that he looked so calmly on - that he saw it all, and that he did not interpose when

he could so easily do it. The same question we may now ask, and may constantly ask, in regard to the wickedness in the world - "and no one can answer it." No one can tell why God, when he sees the state of things on earth, is so calm (compare the notes at Isaiah 18:4), and apparently so indifferent; why he does not hasten to deliver his people, and to punish the wicked. "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight," is all the answer that can be given to this inquiry. Yet it should have occurred to the psalmist, and it should be observed now, that the fact that God seems to be indifferent to the state of things, does riot proves that he is indifferent. There is an eternity to come, in which there will be ample thee to adjust human affairs, and to develop fully the divine character and counsels.

Rescue my soul from their destructions - My life from the destruction which they are aiming to accomplish.

My darling - Margin, "my only one." See the notes at Psalm 22:20. The reference here is to "his own soul" or life. It is the language of tenderness addressed to himself. He had but one soul or life, and that was dear to him, as an only child is dear to its parent.

From the lions - Enemies, described as lions; having the fierceness and savage fury of lions. In Psalm 22:20 it is, "from the power of the dog." The idea is the same in both places. Compare the notes at Psalm 22:20.

Verse 18

I will give thee thanks … - That is, When I am delivered I will publicly express my gratitude and joy. Compare Psalm 22:25; Psalm 18:49.

I will praise thee among much people - Margin, "strong." So the Hebrew. The idea here is, "strong in respect to numbers;" that is, when a large body of people should be assembled together.

Verse 19

Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me - Margin, "falsely." Literally, "My enemies of falsehood;" that is, who are "falsely" my foes; who have no just cause for being opposed to me. Compare Matthew 5:11. David was conscious that he had done them no wrong, or that he had given no occasion for their conduct toward him, and hence, his prayer is simply a request that justice might be done.

Neither let them wink with the eye - Compare the notes at Job 15:12. See also Proverbs 6:13; Proverbs 10:10. The word rendered "wink" means properly to tear or cut asunder; and then, to cut with the teeth, to bite; and hence, the phrase "to bite the lips," as an expression of malice, or mischief-

making: Proverbs 16:30; and to bite or pinch the eyes, that is, to press the eyelids together in the manner of biting the lips - also a gesture of malice or mischief. So Gesenius, Lexicon. But perhaps the more probable meaning is that of "winking" literally; or giving a significant wink of the eyes as an expression of triumph over anyone. In this sense the term is often used now.

That hate me without a cause - To whom I have given no occasion for opposition. In the case under consideration the psalmist regarded himself as entirely innocent in this respect.

Verse 20

For they speak not peace - They seek a quarrel. They are unwilling to be on good terms with others, or to live in peace with them. The idea is that they were "disposed" or "inclined" to quarrel. Thus we speak now of persons who are "quarrelsome.

They devise deceitful matters - literally, "they think of words of deceit." That is, they set their hearts on misrepresentation, and they study such misrepresentations as occasions for strife with others. They falsely represent my character; they attribute conduct to me of which I am not guilty; they pervert my words; they state that to be true which never occurred, and thus they attempt to justify their own conduct. Almost all the quarrels in the world, whether pertaining to nations, to neighborhoods, to families, or to individuals, are based on some "misrepresentation" of facts, designed or undesigned, and could have been avoided if men had been willing to look at facts as they are, or perfectly understood each other.

Against them that are quiet in the land - That are disposed to be quiet, or that are inclined to live in peace with those around them. The word rendered "quiet" means literally those who are "timid;" then, those who shrink back, and gather together from fear; then, those in general who are disposed to be peaceful and quiet, or who are indisposed to contention and strife. David implicitly asserts himself to be one of that class; a man who preferred peace to war, and who had no disposition to keep up a strife with his neighbors.

Verse 21

Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me - See the notes at Psalm 22:13.

And said, Aha, aha! - See Psalm 40:15; Psalm 70:3. The language is that which we use when we "detect" another in doing wrong - in doing what he meant to conceal.

Our eye hath seen it - We are not dependent on the reports of others. We have seen it with our own eyes. We have found you out. We cannot be mistaken in regard to it. The reference is to some supposed "detection" of misconduct on the part of David, and the joy and triumph of such a supposed detection.

Verse 22

This thou hast seen, O Lord - Thou hast seen what they have done, as they profess to have seen what I have done Psalm 35:21. Thine eye has been upon all their movements, as they say that theirs has been upon mine. Compare the notes at Psalm 35:17.

Keep not silence - That is, Speak; rebuke them; punish them. God seemed to look on with unconcern. As we express it, he "said nothing." He appeared to pay no attention to what was done, but suffered them to do as they pleased without interposing to rebuke or check them. Compare the notes at Psalm 28:1.

O Lord, be not far from me - Compare the notes at Psalm 10:1.

Verse 23

Stir up thyself - Arouse thyself as if from sleep. See Psalm 44:23.

And awake to my judgment - To execute judgment for me, or to render me justice. A similar petition (almost in the same words) occurs in Psalm 7:6. See the notes at that passage.

Even unto my cause - In my behalf; or, in the cause which so nearly pertains to me.

Verse 24

Judge me, O Lord my God - Pronounce judgment, or judge between me and my enemies. Compare the notes at Psalm 26:1.

According to thy righteousness - That is, "rightly." Let there be a righteous judgment. The character of God, or the righteousness of God, is the highest standard of equity and justice, and the psalmist asks that he would manifest his real character as judge in interposing in behalf of an injured and oppressed man, and doing justice to him. When we are right in our own cause we may ask a just God to interpose and determine between us and our enemies according to his own nature. As between ourselves and our fellow-men we may bring our cause with this plea before a righteous God; as between ourselves and God, we can make no appeal to his "justice," but our only hope is in his "mercy."

And let them not rejoice over me - Let them not carry out their purposes; let them not be successful, so that they can appeal to the result as if they were right, and thus obtain a triumph over me. Compare Psalm 35:19.

Verse 25

Let them not say in their hearts - Let them not congratulate themselves on the result; let them not feel that they have triumphed; let them not, under thy government, come off victorious in doing wrong.

Ah, so would we have it - Margin, as in Hebrew, "Ah, our soul." That is, It is just as we thought it was; just as we desired it should be; that is exactly our mind in the case. God has permitted us to triumph, and he has showed that we are right in the matter. He has decided the thing in our favor, and it is just as it should be.

Let them not say, We have swallowed him up - See the notes at Psalm 21:9. The meaning is, We have entirely destroyed him - as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were destroyed by being swallowed up in the earth, Numbers 16:31-35. Compare Lamentations 2:16.

Verse 26

Let them be ashamed … - See the notes at Psalm 35:4.

That magnify themselves against me - Who seek to exalt themselves over me; to make themselves great by humbling and destroying me. They hope to rise on my ruin.

Verse 27

Let them shout for joy - That is, Let me be delivered; let my friends see that God is on my side, and that they have occasion to rejoice in his merciful interposition in my behalf.

That favor my righteous cause - Margin, as in Hebrew, "my righteousness." The reference is to those who considered his cause a just one, and who were his friends.

Yea, let them say continually - Let this be a constant subject of grateful reflection - a perpetual source of joy to them - that God has interposed in my behalf, and has shown that my cause was a just one.

Let the Lord be magnified - Be regarded as great, exalted, glorious. Let the effect be to elevate their conceptions of the character of God by the fact that he has thus interposed in a righteous cause, and has shown that he is the friend of the wronged and the oppressed.

Which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant - Who delights to make his friends prosperous and happy, Let them see that this is the character of God, and let them thus be led to rejoice in him evermore.

Verse 28

And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness - That is, I will praise thee as a righteous God.

And of thy praise - Of that which is a ground or reason for praise. I will speak continually of that in God and in his doings which make it proper that he should be praised.

All the day long - Continually; constantly. Every new proof of the kindness of God to him would lead to new acts of praise; and his life, as ours should be, would be a continual expression of thanksgiving.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 36

Introduction

The "title" to this psalm is, "To the chief Musician, A "Psalm" of David the servant of the Lord." On the meaning of the phrase "To the chief Musician." see the notes at the title to Psalm 4:1-8. The words "A Psalm" are supplied by the translators. The original is simply "of," or "by David," as in Psalm 11:1-7; Psalm 14:1-7; Psalm 26:1-12; and others, without indicating whether it is a "psalm" or a "prayer." In many instances the "character" of the psalm is indicated try the title, as in Psalm 3:1-8; Psalm 4:1-8; Psalm 5:1-12; Psalm 6:1-10; and others, "A Psalm of David;" in Psalm 16:1-11, "Michtam of David;" Psalm 17:1-15, "A "Prayer" of David," etc. etc. The meaning of the title here is simply that this was "composed" by David, without indicating anything in regard to the "contents" or "character" of the psalm. The addition in the title, "The servant of the Lord," occurs also in the title to Psalm 36:1-4 would have been applicable to the character and designs of his enemies, as the description in the remainder of the psalm would have been applicable to his own.

The psalm consists of three parts:

I. A description of the character of the wicked, referring doubtless to some persons who were, or who had been, plotting the ruin of the author of the psalm; a general description of human depravity, drawn from the character of those whom the psalmist had particularly in his eye, Psalm 36:1-4.

II. A description of the mercy of God, and an expression of strong confidence in that mercy; particularly, a description of the character of a merciful God as a refuge in thees when depravity prevails, and in thees of darkness; an expression of strong confidence that light will ultimately come forth from him, and that they will find security who put their trust under the shadow of his wings, Psalm 36:5-9.

III. A prayer of the psalmist that he might experience the mercy of God in this case, and an expression of firm conviction that God would interpose

in his behalf, Psalm 36:10-12. He is so confident of this - so certain that it would occur - that he speaks of it as if it were already done.

Verse 1

The transgression of the wicked - There is considerable difficulty in respect to the grammatical construction of the Hebrew in this verse, though the general sense is plain. The main idea undoubtedly is, that the fair explanation of the conduct of the wicked, or the fair inference to be derived from that conduct was, that they had no fear of God before them; that they did in no proper way regard or fear God. The psalmist introduces himself as looking at the conduct or the acts of the wicked, and he says that their conduct can be explained, in his judgment, or "in his heart," in no other way than on this supposition. The word "transgression" here refers to some open and public act. What the particular act was the psalmist does not state, though probably it had reference to something which had been done to himself. What is here said, however, with particular reference to his enemies, may be regarded as a general truth in regard to the wicked, to wit, that their conduct is such that the fair interpretation of what they do is, that there is no "fear of God before their eyes," or that they have no regard for his will.

Saith - This word - נאם *ne'ûm* - is a participle from a verb, נאם *nâ'am* meaning to mutter; to murmur; to speak in a low voice; and is employed especially with reference to the divine voice in which the oracles of God were revealed to the prophets. Compare 1 Kings 19:12. It is found most commonly in connection with the word "Lord" or "Yahweh," expressed by the phrase "Saith the Lord," as if the oracle were the voice of Yahweh. Genesis 22:16; Numbers 14:28; Isaiah 1:24; Isaiah 3:15, "et saepe." It is correctly rendered here "saith;" or, the "saying" of the transgression of the wicked is, etc. That is, this is what their conduct "says;" or, this is the fair interpretation of their conduct.

Within my heart - Hebrew: "in the midst of my heart." Evidently this means in my judgment; in my apprehension; or, as we should say, "So it seems or appears to me." My heart, or my judgment, puts this construction on their conduct, and can put no other on it.

That there is "no fear of God - No reverence for God; no regard for his will. The sinner acts without any restraint derived from the law or the will of God.

Before his eyes - He does not see or apprehend God; he acts as if there were no God. This is the fair interpretation to be put upon the conduct of the wicked "everywhere" - that they have no regard for God or his law.

Verse 2

For he flattereth himself in his own eyes - He puts such an exalted estimate on himself; he so overrates himself and his own ability in judging of what is right and proper, that he is allowed to pursue a course which ultimately makes his conduct odious to all people: the result is so apparent, and so abominable, that no one can doubt what he himself is. The foundation or the basis of all this is an overweening confidence "in himself" - in his own importance; in his own judgment; in his own ability to direct his course regardless of God. The result is such a development of character, that it cannot but be regarded as hateful or odious. There is, indeed, considerable obscurity in the original. A literal translation would be, "For he has made smooth to him in his eyes to find his iniquity to hate." The ancient interpretations throw no light on the passage. The word rendered "flattereth" - חלק *châlaq* - means to be smooth; then, to be smooth in the sense of being bland or flattering: Hosea 10:2; Psalm 5:9; Proverbs 28:23; Proverbs 2:16; Proverbs 7:5. Here the meaning is, that he commends himself to himself; he overestimates himself; he ascribes to himself qualities which he does not possess - either:

(a) by supposing that what he does must be right and proper, or

(b) by overestimating his strength of virtue, and his power to resist temptation.

He does this until God suffers him so to act out his own nature, and to show what he is, that his course of life is seen by himself and by others to be odious.

In his own eyes - As if his eyes were looking upon himself, or his own conduct. We act so as to be seen by others; thus he is represented as acting as if he himself were looking on, and sought to commend himself to himself.

Until his iniquity be found to be hateful - Margin, as in Hebrew: "to find his iniquity to hate." Prof. Alexander renders this, "As to (God's) finding his iniquity (and) hating (it);" that is (as he supposes the meaning to be), that he flatters himself that God will not find out his iniquity and hate

it, or punish it. DeWette renders it, “that he does not find and hate his guilt;” that is, he so flatters himself in what he does, that he does not see the guilt of what he is doing, and hate it. He is blind to the real nature of what he is doing. But it seems to me that the true construction is that which is given by our translators. The real difficulty rests on the interpretation of the preposition in the word למצא *limetsâ'* - “until he find.” If the interpretation proposed by DeWette were the true one, the preposition should have been the Hebrew letter מ (*m*) instead of the Hebrew letter ל (*l*) - ממצא *mimetsâ'* instead of למצא *limetsâ'*). The preposition used here often has the sense of “even unto, until.” Compare Ezekiel 39:19; Isaiah 7:15; and this idea seems best to comport with the connection. The idea, according to this, is that he overestimates himself; he prides himself on his own strength and goodness, he confides in his own wisdom and power, he pursues his course of conduct trusting in himself, until he is suffered to act out what is really in his heart - and his conduct becomes hateful and abominable - until he can no longer conceal what he really is. God suffers him to act out what he had endeavored to cover over by his own flattery. Men who pride themselves on their own cunning and strength - men who attempt to conceal their plans from the world - are often thus suffered to develop their character so that the mask is taken off, and the world is allowed to see how vile they are at heart.

Verse 3

The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit - Are false and wicked. See the notes at Psalm 12:2. It is words do not fairly represent or express what is in his heart.

He hath left off to be wise - To act wisely; to do right.

And to do good - To act benevolently and kindly. This would seem to imply that there had been a change in his conduct, or that he was not what he once professed to be, and appeared to be. This language would be applicable to the change in the conduct of Saul toward David after he became envious and jealous of him 1 Samuel 18; and it is possible, as Amyraldus supposed, that this may have had particular reference to him. But such instances of a change, of feeling and conduct are not very uncommon in the world, and it may doubtless have happened that David experienced this more than once in his life.

Verse 4

He deviseth mischief upon his bed - Margin, as in Hebrew: "vanity." That is, when he lies down; when he is wakeful at night; he plots some scheme of iniquity - some vain, wicked enterprise. So in Proverbs 4:16, "For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall."

He setteth himself - That is, he takes his stand or his position; he assumes this attitude. See Psalm 2:2, "The kings of the earth "set themselves,"" where the same word occurs. The meaning is that what is done by him is the result of a calm and deliberate purpose. It is not the effect of passion or temporary excitement, but it is a deliberate act in which the mind is made up to do the thing. The conduct here referred to is thus distinguished from rash and hasty acts, showing that this is the settled character of the man.

In a way that is not good - In a bad or wicked way; in a way in which no good can be found; in conduct which allows of no redeeming or mitigating circumstances, and for which there can be no apology.

He abhorreth not evil - He has no aversion to evil. He is not in any manner deterred from doing anything because it is wrong. The fact that it is sinful is not allowed to be a consideration affecting his mind in determining what he shall do. In other words, the moral quality of an action does not influence him at all in making up his mind as to how he shall act. If it is right, it is by accident, and not because he prefers the right; if it is wrong, that fact does not in any way hinder him from carrying his purpose into execution. This is, of course, the very essence of depravity.

Verse 5

Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens - This commences the second part of the psalm - the description of the character of God in contrast with the character of the wicked man. The meaning here is, evidently, that the mercy of God is very exalted; to the very heavens, as high as the highest object of which man can conceive. Thus, we speak of virtue as "exalted," or virtue of the "highest kind." The idea is not that the mercy of God is "manifested" in heaven, for, mercy being favor shown to the guilty, there is no occasion for it in heaven; nor is the idea that mercy, as shown to man, has its "origin" in heaven, which is indeed true in itself; but it is, as above explained, that it is of the most exalted nature; that it is as high as man can conceive.

And thy faithfulness - Thy "truthfulness;" thy fidelity to thy promises and to thy friends.

Reacheth "unto the clouds." The clouds are among the highest objects. They rise above the loftiest trees, and ascend above the mountains, and seem to lie or roll along the sky. The idea here, therefore, as in the first part of the verse, is, that it is elevated or exalted.

Verse 6

Thy righteousness - Thy justice; that is, the justice of God considered as residing in his own nature; his justice in his laws; his justice in his providential dealings; his justice in his plan of delivering man from sin; his justice to the universe in administering the rewards and penalties of the law.

Is like the great mountains - Margin, as in Hebrew: "the mountains of God." The name "God" is thus, in the Scriptures, often given to that which is great or exalted, as God is the greatest Being that the mind can form any conception of. So in Psalm 80:10: "The boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars," in the Hebrew, "cedars of God." Connecting his name with "mountains" or "cedars," we have the idea of "strength" or "greatness," as being especially the work of the Almighty. The idea here is, that as the mountains are the most stable of all the objects with which we are acquainted, so it is with the justice of God. It is as fixed as the everlasting hills.

Thy judgments - The acts and records which are expressive of thy judgment in regard to what is right and best; that judgment as it is expressed in thy law, and in thy dealings with mankind. The "judgment" of God in any matter may be expressed either by a declaration or by his acts. The latter is the idea now most commonly attached to the word, and it has come to be used almost exclusively to denote "afflictive" dispensations of His Providence, or expressions of His displeasure against sin. The word is not used in that exclusive sense in the Scriptures. It refers to any divine adjudication as to what is right, whether expressed by declaration or by act, and would include his adjudications in favor of that which is right as well as those against that which is wrong.

Are a great deep - The word rendered "deep" here means properly wave, billow, surge; then, a mass of waters, a flood, a deep; and the phrase "great deep" would properly refer to the ocean, its "depth" being one of the most remarkable things in regard to it. The "idea" here is, that as we cannot

fathom the ocean or penetrate to its bottom, so it is with the judgments of God. They are beyond our comprehension, and after all our efforts to understand them, we are constrained, as in measuring the depths of the ocean, to confess that we cannot reach to the bottom of them. This is true in regard to his law, in regard to the principles of his government as he has declared them, and in regard to his actual dealings with mankind. It could not be otherwise than that in the administration of an infinite God there must be much that man, in his present state, could not comprehend. Compare Job 11:7-9; Isaiah 55:8-9.

O Lord, "thou preservest man and beast - literally, thou wilt "save;" that is, thou savest them from destruction. The idea is, that he keeps them alive; or that life, where it is continued, is always continued by his agency. The psalmist evidently sees in the fact here stated an illustration of what he had just said about the "greatness" of God in His providential agency and his general government. He was struck with His greatness, and with the incomprehensible nature of His power and agency, in the fact that he kept alive continually so many myriads of creatures upon the earth - so many hundred millions of human beings - so many thousand millions of wild beasts, reptiles, fish, birds, and insects - all dependent upon Him; that He provided for their needs, and that He protected them in the dangers to which they were exposed. And who can comprehend the extent of His law, and the wonderfulness of His Providence, in thus watching over and providing for the multitudes of animated beings that swarm in the waters, in the air, and on the earth?

Verse 7

How excellent - Margin, as in Hebrew: "precious." The word used here is one that would be applicable to precious stones 1 Kings 10:2, 1 Kings 10:10-11; or to the more costly kind of stones employed in building, as marble 2 Chronicles 3:6; and then, anything that is "costly" or "valuable." The meaning is, that the loving-kindness of God is to be estimated only by the value set on the most rare and costly objects.

Is "thy loving-kindness - Thy mercy. The same word is used here which occurs in Psalm 36:5, and which is there rendered "mercy." It is not a new attribute of God which is here celebrated or brought into view, but the same characteristic which is referred to in Psalm 36:5. The repetition of the word indicates the state of mind of the writer of the psalm, and shows that he delights to dwell on this; he naturally turns to this; his meditations begin

and end with this. While he is deeply impressed by the "faithfulness," the "righteousness," and the "judgment" of God, still it is His "mercy" or His "loving-kindness" that is the beginning and the ending of his thoughts; to this the soul turns with ever new delight and wonder when reflecting on the character and the doings of God. Here our hope begins; and to this attribute of the Almighty, when we have learned all else that we can learn about God, the soul turns with ever new delight.

Therefore - In view of that mercy; or because God is a merciful God. It is not in his "justice" that we can take refuge, for we are sinners, but the foundation of all our hope is his mercy. A holy creature could fly to a holy Creator for refuge and defense; he who has given himself to Him, and who has been pardoned, can appeal to his "faithfulness;" but the refuge of a sinner, as such, is only his "mercy;" and it is only to that mercy that he can flee.

The children of men - literally, "the sons of man;" that is, the human race, considered as descended from their great ancestor, or as one family. The meaning is not that all the children of men actually do thus put their trust in the mercy of God - for that is not true; but:

(a) all may do it as the children of men, or as men; and

(b) all who do "put their trust under the shadow of his wings" confide in His mercy alone, as the ground of their hope.

Under the shadow of thy wings - As little, helpless birds seek protection under the wings of the mother-bird. See the notes at Matthew 23:37; compare Deuteronomy 32:11-12.

Verse 8

They shall be abundantly satisfied - Margin, "watered." That is, all who thus put their trust in the mercy of God. The Hebrew word - רוה *râvâh* - means to drink to the full; to be satisfied, or sated with drink; or to be satisfied or filled with water, as the earth or fields after an abundant rain: Isaiah 34:7; Psalm 65:10. The state referred to by the word is that of one who was thirsty, but who has drunk to the full; who feels that his desire is satisfied:

(a) He has found that which is adapted to his wants, or which meets his needs, as water does the wants of one who is a thirst;

(b) He has found this "in abundance."

There is no lack, and he partakes of it in as large measure as he chooses. So the weary and thirsty traveler, when he finds in the desert a "new and untasted spring," finds that which he needs, and drinks freely; and so the sinner - the dying man - the man who feels that there is nothing in the world that can satisfy him:

(1) finds in the provisions of the gospel that which exactly meets the needs of his nature, and

(2) he finds it in abundance.

With the fatness - The word used here means properly "fatness" or "fat:" Judges 9:9. Then it means "fat food," or "sumptuous food," Job 36:16; Isaiah 55:2; Jeremiah 31:14. It is connected here with the word "drink," or "drink in," because this kind of food was "sucked" in at the mouth, and the mode of partaking of it resembled the act of drinking. Gesenius. The allusion is the same as that which so often occurs in the Scriptures, where the provisions of salvation are represented as a "feast," or where the illustration is drawn from the act of eating or drinking.

Of thy house - Furnished by thy house, or in the place of public worship. God is represented as the Head or Father of a family, and as providing for the wants of his children. Compare Psalm 23:6; Psalm 27:4.

And thou shalt make them drink - In allusion to the provisions of salvation considered as adapted to satisfy the needs of the thirsty soul.

Of the river - The abundance. Not a running fountain; not a gentle bubbling rivulet; not a stream that would soon dry up; but a "river," large; full; overflowing; inexhaustible.

Of thy pleasures - Furnishing happiness or pleasure such as "thine" is. The pious man has happiness of the same "kind" or "nature" as that of God. It is happiness in holiness or purity; happiness in doing good; happiness in the happiness of others. It is in this sense that the friend of God partakes of His pleasure or happiness. Compare 2 Peter 1:4. The following things, therefore, are taught by this verse:

(1) that God is happy;

(2) that religion makes man happy;

(3) that his happiness is of the same “kind” or “nature” as that of God;

(4) that this happiness is “satisfying” in its nature, or that it meets the real needs of the soul;

(5) that it is abundant, and leaves no want of the soul unsupplied; and

(6) that this happiness is to be found in an eminent degree in the “house of God,” or is closely connected with the public worship of God.

It is there that God has made provision for the wants of His people; and advancement in religion, and in the comforts of religion, will always be closely connected with the fidelity with which we attend on public worship.

Verse 9

For with thee is the fountain of life - The fountain or source from which all life flows. All living beings derive their origin from thee, as streams flow from fountains; all that is properly “called” life proceeds from thee; everything which makes life real life - which makes it desirable or happy - has its origin in thee. The psalmist evidently meant here to include more than mere “life” considered as animated existence. He recalls what he had referred to in the previous verses - the various blessings which proceeded from the mercy and loving-kindness of God, and which were attendant on his worship; and he here says that all this - all that makes man happy - all that can properly be regarded as “life” - proceeds from God. Life literally, in man and in all animated beings; life spiritually; life here, and life hereafter - all is to be traced to God.

In thy light shall we see light - As thou art the Source of light, and all light proceeds from thee, so we shall be enabled to see light, or to see what is true, only as we see it in thee. By looking to thee; by meditating on thy character; by a right understanding of thyself; by being encompassed with the light which encompasses thee, we shall see light on all those great questions which perplex us, and which it is so desirable that we should understand. It is not by looking at ourselves; it is not by any human teaching; it is not by searching for information “away from thee,” that we can hope to have the questions which perplex us solved; it is only by coming to thyself, and looking directly to thee. There is no other source of

real light and truth but God; and in the contemplation of himself, and of the light which encompasses him, and in that alone, can we hope to comprehend the great subjects on which we pant so much to be informed. All away from God is dark; all near him is light. If, therefore, we desire light on the subjects which pertain to our salvation, it must be sought by a direct and near approach to him; and the more we can lose ourselves in the splendors of his throne, the more we shall understand of truth. Compare 1 John 1:5; Revelation 21:23; Revelation 22:5; 1 Peter 2:9.

Verse 10

O continue - Margin, as in Hebrew: "draw out at length." The Hebrew word means "to draw;" hence, "to draw out," in the sense of "continuing" or "prolonging." Compare Psalm 85:5; Psalm 109:12; Jeremiah 31:3. The desire of the psalmist here is, that God would make the manifestation of his loving-kindness "continuous" or "perpetual" to His people; that it might not be fitful and interrupted, but always enduring, or constant. It is the utterance of a prayer that his favor might always be manifested to his friends.

Thy loving-kindness - Thy mercy, Psalm 36:5, Psalm 36:7. "Unto them that know thee." That are thy friends. The word "know" is often used to denote true religion: John 17:3; Philemon 3:10; Ephesians 3:19; 2 Timothy 1:12.

And thy righteousness - Thy favor; thy protection. That is, show to them the righteousness, or the glory of thy character. Deal with them according to those just principles which belong to thy character. Compare the notes at 1 John 1:9.

To the upright in heart - Those who are pure and holy in their intentions or their purposes. Compare Psalm 7:10. All true uprightness has its seat in the heart, and the psalmist prays that God would show his continued favor to those whom he sees to be true in heart to himself.

Verse 11

Let not the foot of pride come against me - The foot of the proud man. The word rendered "come against me" more properly means, "come not upon me;" and the meaning is, Let me not be "trampled down" as they who are vanquished in battle are "trodden down" by their conquerors. Compare the notes at Psalm 18:40.

And let not the hand of the wicked remove me - Let no efforts of the wicked do this. The "hand" is the instrument by which we accomplish anything, and the reference here is to the efforts which the wicked might

make to destroy him. The prayer is, that he might be “firm” and “unmoved” amid all the attempts which might be made to take his life.

Verse 12

There are the workers of iniquity fallen - The meaning of this seems to be, that the psalmist saw his prayer answered already. He speaks as if that which he desired and had prayed for was already done, and as if he himself saw it. He was so certain that it would be done, he had such an assurance that his prayer would be answered, that he seemed, by faith, to see the events already occurring before his own eyes, and felt that he might speak of what he prayed for as if it were already granted. Such is the nature of faith; and such strong confidence in God, and in his faithfulness to his promises, may all have who pray in faith. It is remarkable, as has been observed already in reference to the Psalms, how often a psalm begins in depression and ends in triumph; how often the author is desponding and sad as he surveys, at the beginning of the psalm, the troubles which surround him, and how in the progress of the psalm the clouds disperse; the mind becomes calm; and the soul becomes triumphant.

They are cast down, and shall not be able to rise - They are utterly overthrown. Their discomfiture is complete. They shall never be able to rally again. So faith looks on all enemies of truth and righteousness as hereafter to be utterly overthrown, and it regards this as so certain that it may speak already in the exulting language of victory. So certainly will all the spiritual foes of those who trust in God be vanquished - so certainly will the righteous triumph - that, on the wings of faith, they may look beyond all conflicts and struggles, and see the victory won, and break forth into songs of exulting praise. Faith often converts the promises into reality, and in the bright anticipations and the certain hopes of heaven sings and rejoices as if it were already in our possession - anticipating only by a few short days, weeks, or years, what will certainly be ours.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 37

Introduction

This psalm is entitled simply "of David," or "by David" - לדוד *ledâvid* In the original title there is no intheation, as in Psalm 3:1-8; Psalm 4:1-8; Psalm 16:1-11; Psalm 17:1-15, whether it is a "psalm" or some other species of composition, but the idea is merely that it is a "composition" of David, or that David was its "author."

This is one of the "alphabetical" psalms: see introduction to Psalm 37:7, Psalm 37:20, Psalm 37:29, Psalm 37:34. In Psalm 37:29 the Hebrew letter צ (*ts*) occurs instead of the Hebrew letter ע (ʿ); and in Psalm 37:7, Psalm 37:20, Psalm 37:34, the letter introduces only a single verse. It is not possible now to account for these irregularities in the structure of the psalm. John John Bellermann (in dem Versuch uber die Metrik der Hebraer, p. 117ff) endeavored from conjecture to restore the regular series of verses by changing a portion of them; but there is no authority for this from the manuscripts, and the probability is, that the author of the psalm did not observe entire accuracy in this respect, but that he made use of the successive Hebrew letters only as a general guide in controlling the mode of the composition. In this psalm the succession of "letters" does not in any way denote a succession or a variety of "subjects."

The occasion on which the psalm was composed is not mentioned in the title, nor is there anything in the psalm itself to fix it to any particular period of the life of David. Like Psalm 37:1. This may be regarded either as counsel addressed to some one - either a real or an imaginary person - whose mind was thus agitated, or who was disposed to fret and complain on account of this - and, on that supposition, the drift of the psalm is to calm down such a mind; or it may be regarded as the address or counsel of "God" directed to the psalmist himself in "his" state of perplexity and embarrassment on the subject. From some things in the psalm Psalm 37:25, Psalm 37:35-36 it seems most probable that the former is the true supposition.

The points in the psalm are the following:

I. The main subject of the psalm - the exhortation not to fret" or be troubled on account of evil-doers and the workers of iniquity; not to allow the mind to be anxious in regard to the fact that there are such persons, or in regard to their plans, or to their prosperity in the world - for they are soon to be cut down and pass away, Psalm 37:1-2.

II. The state of mind which should be cherished in such cases - "calm confidence in God in the faithful performance of duty," Psalm 37:3-8. We are to trust in the Lord, and do good, Psalm 37:3 to find our happiness in God, Psalm 37:4; to commit our way to Him in all our perplexities and troubles, Psalm 37:5-6; to rest secure in Him, waiting patiently for His interposition, Psalm 37:7; and to cease from all wrathful or revengeful feelings in reference to the wicked, Psalm 37:8.

III. The reasons for this state of mind, Psalm 37:9-15. The general idea here is that they will be cut off, and soon pass away; that they will not secure ultimate success and prosperity, but that their wicked conduct will recoil on themselves, and overwhelm them in destruction.

(2) The ultimate prosperity of the righteous, Psalm 37:16-24, he refers to his own observation, during a long life, respecting the comparative effects of a wicked and a righteous course. This is shown in two respects:

(a) The protection and care of Providence over the righteous, Psalm 37:25-26. He says that he had been young, and that he was then an aged man, but that in his long life he had never seen the righteous forsaken, nor his children begging bread.

(b) The providence of God as against the wicked, Psalm 37:35-36. He says that he had seen the wicked man in great power, and flourishing like a tree, but he soon passed away, and could no more be found upon the earth.

The general argument in the psalm, therefore, is that righteousness, the fear of God, "religion," has a tendency to promote ultimate happiness, and to secure length of days and real honor upon the earth; that the prosperity of the wicked is temporary, and that however prosperous and happy they may seem to be, they will be ultimately cut off and made miserable.

It remains only to add that this psalm was composed when David was an old man Psalm 37:25; and apart, therefore, from the fact that it is the work of an inspired writer, it has special value as expressing the result of the observations of a long life on a point which perplexes the good in every age.

Verse 1

Fret not thyself - The Hebrew word here means properly to burn, to be kindled, to be inflamed, and is often applied to anger, as if under its influence we become "heated:" Genesis 31:36; Genesis 34:7; 1 Samuel 15:11; 2 Samuel 19:43. Hence, it means to fret oneself, to be angry, or indignant. Compare Proverbs 24:19. We should perhaps express the same idea by the word "worrying" or "chafing." The state of mind is that where we are worried, or envious, because others are prosperous and successful, and we are not. The idea is, therefore, closely allied with that in the other part of the verse, "neither be thou "envious.""

Because of evil-doers - Wicked men:

(a) at the fact that there are wicked men, or that God suffers them to live;

(b) at their numbers;

(c) at their success and prosperity.

Neither be thou envious - Envy is pain, mortification, discontent, at the superior excellence or prosperity of others, accompanied often with some degree of malignant feeling, and with a disposition to detract from their merit. It is the result of a comparison of ourselves with others who are more highly gifted or favored, or who are more successful than we are ourselves. The feeling referred to here is that which springs up in the mind when we see persons of corrupt or wicked character prospered, while we, endeavoring to do right, are left to poverty, to disappointment, and to tears.

Verse 2

For they shall soon be cut down like the grass - As the grass in the field is cut down by the mower; that is, however prosperous they may seem to be now, they are like the grass in the meadow which is so green and luxuriant, but which is soon to fall under the scythe of the mower. Their

prosperity is only temporary, for they will soon pass away. The idea in the word rendered "soon" - מהרה *mehêrâh* - is that of "haste" or "speed:" Psalm 147:15; Numbers 16:46; Deuteronomy 11:17. The thought is not that it will be done immediately, but that "when" it occurs it will be a quick and rapid operation - as the grass falls rapidly before the mower.

And wither as the green herb - When it is cut down. That is, not as the dry and stinted shrub that grows in the desert of sand, but like the herb that grows in a garden, or in a marsh, or by the river, that is full of juices, and that needs abundant water to sustain it - like the flag or rush (compare Job 8:11) - and that withers almost instantly when it is cut down. The rapidity with which things "wilt" is in proportion to the rapidity of their growth, so the prosperity of a sinner is suddenly blasted, and he passes away. Compare Psalm 90:5-6.

Verse 3

Trust in the Lord - Confide in him; rest on him. Instead of allowing the mind to be disturbed and sad, because there are wicked men upon the earth; because they are prosperous and apparently happy; because they may injure you in your person or reputation Psalm 37:6, calmly confide in God. Leave all this in his hands. Feel that he rules, and that what he permits is wisely permitted; and that whatever may occur, it will all be overruled for his own glory and the good of the universe.

And do good - Be engaged always in some work of benevolence.

(a) If there are wicked men in the world, if wickedness abounds around us, there is the more reason for our endeavoring to do good. If others are doing evil, we should do good; if they are wicked, we cannot do a better work than to do good to them, for the best way of meeting the wickedness of the world is to do it good.

(b) The best way to keep the mind from complaining, chafing, and fretting, is to be always engaged in doing good; to have the mind always occupied in something valuable and useful. Each one should have so much of his own to do that he will have no thee to murmur and complain, to allow the mind to prey on itself, or to "corrode" for lack of employment.

So shalt thou dwell in the land - This would be more correctly translated as a command: "Dwell in the land." That is, abide safely or securely in the land - referring, perhaps, to "the land" as the land of promise - the country given to the people of God. The idea is, that they should abide

there calmly and securely; that they should not worry themselves because there were wicked men upon the earth, and because they were successful, but that they should be thankful for their inheritance, and partake gratefully of the bounties which they receive from the hand of God. Compare the notes at Matthew 5:5.

And verily thou shalt be fed - Margin, "in truth or stableness." The "literal" meaning would be, "Feed on truth." The word rendered "fed" is here in the imperative mood. It properly means to feed, as a flock; and then, to feed upon anything in the sense of delighting in, or taking pleasure in anything, as if we found our support or sustenance in it; and here it means, doubtless, "Feed on truth;" that is, seek after truth; find delight in it; let it be the food of your souls. The word here rendered "verily" means, as in the margin, "truth:" and the meaning is, that they should seek after truth, and find their support and comfort in that. There are, then, in this verse, four things prescribed as duty, in order to keep the mind calm in view of the fact that wickedness abounds in the world:

(1) to confide in God;

(2) to be actively employed in doing good;

(3) to abide calmly and gratefully in the land which God has given us;

(4) to seek after truth, or a true view of the character and government of God as the great Ruler.

If people would do these things, there would be little complaining and fretting in the world.

Verse 4

Delight thyself also in the - Lord. The word rendered "delight" means properly to live delicately and effeminately; then, to be tender or delicate; then, to live a life of ease or pleasure; then, to find delight or pleasure in anything. The meaning here is, that we should seek our happiness in God - in his being, his perfections, his friendship, his love.

And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart - literally, the "askings," or the "requests" of thy heart. What you really "desire" will be granted to you. That is,

(a) the fact that you seek your happiness in him will regulate your desires, so that you will be "disposed" to ask only those things which it will be proper for him to grant; and

(b) the fact that you do find your happiness in him will be a reason why he will grant your desires.

The fact that a child loves his father, and finds his happiness in doing his will, will do much to regulate his own "wishes" or "desires," and will at the same thee be a reason why the father will be disposed to comply with his requests.

Verse 5

Commit thy way unto the - Lord. Margin, as in Hebrew, "Roll thy way upon, the Lord." Compare the notes at Psalm 22:8, where the marg., as the Hebrew, is, "He rolled himself on the Lord." See also 1 Peter 5:7. The idea is that of rolling a heavy burden from ourselves on another, or laying it upon him, so that he may bear it. The burden which we have not got strength to bear we may lay on God. The term "way" means properly the act of treading or going; then, a way or path; then, a course of life, or the manner in which one lives; and the reference here is to the whole course of life, or all that can affect life; all our plans or conduct; all the issues or results of those plans. It is equivalent here to "lot" or "destiny." Everything, in regard to the manner in which we live, and all its results, are to be committed to the Lord.

Trust also in him - See Psalm 37:3.

And he shall bring it to pass - Hebrew, "He shall do it." That is, He will bring it to a proper issue; He will secure a happy result. He will take care of your interests, and will not permit you to suffer, or to be ultimately wronged. The thing particularly referred to here, as appears from the next verse, is reputation or character.

Verse 6

And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light - That is, if you are slandered; if your character is assailed, and seems for the thee to be under a cloud; if reproach comes upon you from the devices of wicked people in such a way that you cannot meet it - then, if you will commit the case to God, he will protect your character, and will cause the clouds to

disperse, and all to be as clear in reference to your character and the motives of your conduct as the sun without a cloud. There are numerous cases in which a man cannot meet the assaults made on his reputation, in which he cannot trace to its source a slanderous accusation, in which he cannot immediately explain the circumstances which may have served to give the slanderous report an appearance of probability, but in which he may be perfectly conscious of innocence; and, in such cases, the only resource is to commit the whole matter to God. And there is nothing that may be more safely left with him; nothing that God will more certainly protect than the injured reputation of a good man. Under his administration things will ultimately work themselves right, and a man will have all the reputation which he deserves to have. But he who spends his life in the mere work of defending himself, will soon have a reputation that is not much worth defending. The true way for a man is to do his duty - to do right always - and then commit the whole to God.

And thy judgment - Thy just sentence. That is, God will cause justice to be done to your character.

As the noon-day - The original word here is in the dual form, and means properly "double-light;" that is, the strongest, brightest light. It means "noon," because the light is then most clear and bright. The idea is, that he will make your character perfectly clear and bright. No cloud will remain on it.

Verse 7

Rest in the Lord - Margin, "Be silent to the Lord." The Hebrew word means to be mute, silent, still: Job 29:21; Leviticus 10:3; Lamentations 3:28. Hence, to be silent to anyone; that is, to listen to him in silence; and the idea in the phrase here, ""be silent to Jehovah,"" is that of waiting in silent patience or confidence for his interposition; or, in other words, of leaving the whole matter with him without being anxious as to the result.

And wait patiently for him - For his bringing the matter to a proper issue. He may seem to delay long; it may appear strange that he does not interpose; you may wonder that he should suffer an innocent man to be thus accused and calumniated; but you are not to be anxious and troubled. God does not always interpose in behalf of the innocent at once; and there may be valuable ends to accomplish in reference to yourself - in the discipline of your own spirit; in bringing out in your case the graces of gentleness, patience, and forgiveness; and in leading you to examine yourself and to

understand your own character - which may make it proper that he should not interpose immediately. It may be added that, however important thee seems to us, it is of no consequence to God; "nullum tempus occurrit" (as the lawyers say), to him; and more important results may be secured by delay than would be gained by an immediate interposition in correcting the evil and redressing the wrong. All that the promise implies is that justice will be done, but whether sooner or later must be left to Him; and that our character will be finally safe in His hands.

Fret not thyself - See the notes at Psalm 37:1.

Because of him who prospereth in his way - Because a wicked man has a prosperous life, or is not at once dealt with as he deserves.

Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass - Because the man is allowed to accomplish his purposes of wickedness, or is not arrested at once in his schemes of guilt.

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Verse 8

Cease from anger - That is, in reference to the fact that there are wicked people, and that they are permitted to carry out their plans. Do not allow your mind to be excited with envious, fretful, wrathful, or murmuring feelings against God because he bears patiently with them, and because they are allowed a temporary prosperity and triumph. Be calm, whatever may be the wickedness of the world. The supreme direction belongs to God, and he will dispose of it in the best way.

And forsake wrath - That is, as above, in regard to the existence of evil, and to the conduct of wicked men.

Fret not thyself in any wise - See Psalm 37:1. Let the mind be entirely calm and composed.

To do evil - So as to lead you to do evil. Do not allow your mind to become so excited that you will indulge in harsh or malignant remarks; or so as to lead you to do wrong to any man, however wicked he may be. See always that you are right, whatever others may be, and do not allow their conduct to be the means of leading you into sin in any form. Look to your own character and conduct first.

Verse 9

For evil-doers shall be cut off - See Psalm 37:2. This will be the termination of their course. They shall not ultimately prosper. God will order all things in equity, and though such men now seem to be prosperous,

and to be the objects of the divine favor, yet all this is temporary. The day of retribution will certainly come, and they will be dealt with as they deserve. The reference here probably is to judgment in this life, or to the fact that God will, as a general law, show his disapprobation of the course of the wicked by judgments inflicted on them in this world. See Psalm 55:23, "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." Proverbs 10:27, "the years of the wicked shall be shortened." Compare Job 15:32. The idea here is that wicked men will be cut down before they reach the ordinary term of human life, or before they would be cut off if they were not wicked. Compare Psalm 37:35-36. This is not indeed universally true, but there are instances enough of this kind to establish it as a general rule. Intemperance, voluptuousness, the indulgence of violent passions, and the crimes proceeding therefrom, shorten the lives of multitudes who, but for these, might have lived long on the earth. As it is a general rule that virtue, piety, the fear of God, temperance, honesty, and the calmness of spirit which results from these, tend to lengthen out life, so it is certain that the opposites of these tend to abridge it. Neither virtue nor piety indeed make it absolutely certain that a man will live to be old; but vice and crime make it morally certain that he will not. At all events, it is true that the wicked are to live but a little while upon the earth; that they soon will, like other men, be cut down and removed; and therefore we should not fret and complain in regard to those who are so soon to pass away. Compare Psalm 37:3. See also Psalm 37:11, Psalm 37:22, Psalm 37:25.

Verse 10

For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be - The thee will soon come when they shall pass away. The language "shall not be" cannot mean that they will cease to exist altogether, for the connection does not demand this interpretation. All that is intended is that they would be no longer on the earth; they would no longer live to give occasion for anxious thoughts and troubled feelings in the hearts of good people.

Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place - The place where he lived; the house in which he dwelt; the office which he filled; the grounds which he cultivated.

And it shall not be - Or rather, perhaps, as in the former member of the verse, "he is not." That is, you will not see him there. His seat at the table is vacant; he is seen no more riding over his grounds; he is no more in the social circle where he found his pleasure, or in the place of business or of

revelry: you are impressed with the feeling that "he is gone." You look where he was, but he is not there; you visit every place where you have been accustomed to see him, "but he is gone." Alas! where has he gone? Compare Job 14:10.

Verse 11

But the meek shall inherit the earth - See the notes at Psalm 37:3. On the meaning of the word here rendered "meek," see the notes at Psalm 9:12, where it is rendered "humble." The word properly denotes those who are afflicted, distressed, needy; then, those who are of humble rank in life; then, the mild, the gentle, the meek. The term here is a general one to denote those who are the friends of God, considered as meek, mild, gentle, humble, in contradistinction from the wicked who are proud and haughty; perhaps also, in this connection, in contrast with the wicked as prosperous in life. It was probably this passage that the Saviour quoted in Matthew 5:5.

And shall delight themselves -

(a) Shall "prefer" what is here referred to as the source of their happiness, or as in accordance with the desires of their hearts;

(b) shall "find" actual delight or happiness in this.

Though not rich and prospered in this world as the wicked often are, yet they will have their own sources of enjoyment, and will find happiness in what they prefer.

In the abundance of peace - In abundant peace. In the tranquility and quietness in which they spend their lives, in contrast with the jealousies, the contentions, and the strifes which exist among the wicked even when prosperous. They will have peace with God Psalm 29:11; Psalm 85:8; Psalm 119:165; Romans 5:1; they will have peace in their own consciences; they will have peace in the calmness of a quiet and contented spirit; they will have peace with those around them, as they have no passions to gratify, and no object to secure, which will excite the envy, or stir up the wrath, of others.

Verse 12

The wicked plotteth against the just - Margin, "practiceth." The Hebrew word means to plot; to lie in wait; to plan; to purpose; to devise. See Psalm 31:13. The meaning is, that wicked people lay their plans against

the righteous, but that they will not be able to carry them out, or accomplish them, for they will be cut off, and the Lord will protect His friends.

And gnasheth upon him with his teeth - An expression of rage or anger. See the notes at Psalm 35:16.

Verse 13

The Lord shall laugh at him - See the notes at Psalm 2:4. That is, he will regard all his attempts as vain - as not worthy of serious thought or care. The language is that which we use when there is no fear or apprehension felt. It is not that God is unfeeling, or that he is disposed to deride man, but that he regards all such efforts as vain, and as not demanding notice on the ground of anything to be apprehended from them.

For he seeth that his day is coming - The day of his destruction or overthrow. He sees that the wicked man cannot be ultimately successful, but that destruction is coming upon him. There is nothing ultimately to be apprehended from his designs, for his overthrow is certain.

Verse 14

The wicked have drawn out the sword - That is, they have prepared themselves with a full purpose to destroy the righteous.

And have bent their bow - literally, "have trodden the bow," in allusion to the method by which the bow was bent: to wit, by placing the foot on it, and drawing the string back.

To cast down the poor and needy - To cause them to fall.

And to slay such as be of upright conversation - Margin, as in Hebrew: "the upright of way." That is, those who are upright in their manner of life, or in their conduct.

Verse 15

Their sword shall enter into their own heart - Their purposes will recoil on themselves; or they will themselves suffer what they had devised for others. See the same sentiment expressed in Psalm 7:15-16; Psalm 9:15; compare Esther 7:10.

And their bows shall be broken - They will be defeated in their plans. God will cut them off, and not suffer them to execute their designs.

Verse 16

A little that a righteous man hath - literally, "Good is a little to the righteous, more than," etc. Our translation, however, has expressed the sense with sufficient accuracy. There are two things implied here:

(a) that it happens not unfrequently that the righteous have little of the wealth of this world; and

(b) that this little is to them of more real value, accompanied, as it is, with higher blessings, than the more abundant wealth which the wicked often possess.

It is better to have but little of this world‘s goods with righteousness, than it is to have the riches of many wicked men - or the wealth which is often found in the possession of wicked men - with their ungodliness. It is not always true, indeed, that the righteous are poor; but if they are poor, their lot is more to be desired than that of the wicked man, though he is rich. Compare Luke 16:19-31.

Is better than the riches of many wicked - Of many wicked people. The small property of one truly good man, with his character and hopes, is of more value than would be the aggregate wealth of many rich wicked men with their character and prospects. The word rendered “riches” here - המון *hâmôn* - means properly noise, sound, as of rain or of a multitude of people; then, a multitude, a crowd of people; and then, a “multitude” of possessions; that is, riches or wealth. The allusion here is not, as Prof. Alexander supposes, to the tumult or bustle which often attends the acquisition of property, or to the disorder and disquiet which attends its possession, but simply to the “amount” considered as large, or as accumulated or brought together. It is true that its acquisition is often attended with bustle and noise; it is true that its possessor has not often the peace and calmness of mind which the man has who has a mere competence; but the simple thought here is that, in reference to the amount, or the actual possession, it is better, on the whole, to have what the poor, pious man has, than to have what many wicked men have, if it were all gathered together. It does more to make a man happy on earth; it furnishes a better prospect for the life to come.

Verse 17

For the arms of the wicked shall be broken - See the notes at Psalm 10:15. The “arm” is the instrument by which we accomplish a purpose; and the meaning here is, that that will be broken on which the wicked rely, or, in other words, that their plans will fail, and that they will be disappointed - as

a man is rendered helpless whose arms are broken. Compare the notes at Job 38:15.

But the Lord upholdeth the righteous - The Lord will sustain and strengthen him. While the plans of the wicked will be defeated, while they themselves will be overthrown, and fail to accomplish their purposes of wickedness, the Lord will uphold the righteous, and enable them fully to carry out their plans. Their great scheme or purpose of life, the promotion of the glory of God, and the salvation of their own souls, will be fully accomplished - for in that purpose God will be their helper and friend.

Verse 18

The Lord knoweth the days of the upright - See the notes at Psalm 1:6. He knows how long they will live, and all that will happen to them. He sees their whole course of life; he sees the end. It is implied here that his eyes are on all the allotted days of their life; on all that has been ordained for them in the whole course of their life; and that nothing can shorten the days appointed to them. The wicked expect to live, hope to live, make their arrangements to live; but their eyes cannot rest on the future, and they cannot see the end - cannot tell precisely when they will be cut off. Some unexpected calamity - something which they cannot foresee - may come upon them, and cut short their days long before the expected thee; but this cannot happen in respect to Him whose eyes are on the righteous. Nothing can prevent their reaching the thee which he has fixed as the termination of their lives.

And their inheritance shall be forever - Shall be permanent, enduring. Perhaps all that was implied in tiffs language, as it was used by the psalmist, was that they would "continue," or would not be cut off as the wicked are; that is, that righteousness would contribute to length of days upon the earth (compare Psalm 37:9); yet the "language" suggests a higher idea, and is applicable to the righteous in respect to the promise that they will be put in "everlasting" possession of that which they "inherit" from God; that is, that they will be literally blessed forever. They will have a sure inheritance on earth, and it will endure to all eternity in another world.

Verse 19

They shall not be ashamed in the evil thee - In times of calamity and trouble. The word "ashamed" here refers to disappointment; as when one goes to a fountain or stream for water and finds it dried up. See Job 6:20, note; and Psalm 25:2-3. The idea here is, that when thees of trouble and

calamity come, in seasons of famine or want, they will find their expectations, arising from confidence in God, fully met. Their wants will be supplied, and they will find him to be their friend.

And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied - Their needs shall be supplied. God will provide for them. See Psalm 37:25. This is in accordance with the general promises which are made in the Scriptures, that God will provide for the needs of those who trust in Him. See the notes at Psalm 37:3.

Verse 20

But the wicked shall perish - The general sentiment here is the same as in Psalm 1:1-6, that the righteous shall be prospered and saved, and that the wicked shall perish. See the notes at Psalm 1:4-5. The word "perish" here would be applicable to any form of destruction - death here, or death hereafter - for it is equivalent to the idea that they shall be "destroyed." Whether the psalmist means here to refer to the fact that they will be cut off from the earth, or will be punished hereafter in the world of woe, cannot be determined from the word itself. It is most probable, as appears from other parts of the psalm, that he refers particularly to the fact that they will be cut down in their sins; that their lives will be shortened by their crimes; that they will by their conduct expose themselves to the displeasure of God, and thus be cut off. The "word" used, however, would also express the idea of destruction in the future world in any form, and may have a significance beyond anything that can befall men in this life. Compare 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Matthew 25:46.

And the enemies of the Lord - All the enemies of God; all who can properly be regarded as his foes.

Shall be as the fat of lambs - Margin, "the preciousness of lambs." Gesenius renders this, "like the beauty of the pastures." Prof. Alexander, "like the precious" (part) "of lambs;" that is, the sacrificial parts, or the parts that were consumed in sacrifice. De Wette, "as the splendor of the pasture." The Vulgate and the Septuagint render it: "the enemies of the Lord, as soon as they are honored and exalted, shall fail as if they were smoke." Rosenmuller renders it as it is in our common version. It is not easy to determine the meaning. The word rendered "fat" - יקר *yâqâr* - means properly that which is precious, costly, weighty, as precious gems; then, anything dear, beloved, or valuable; then, that which is honored, splendid, beautiful, rare. It is in no other instance rendered "fat;" and it cannot be so

rendered here, except as "fat" was considered valuable or precious. But this is a forced idea. The word כר *kar* properly and commonly means a "lamb;" but it also may the "pasture" or "meadow" where lambs feed. Psalm 65:13: "the "pastures" - כרים *kariym* - are clothed with flocks." Isaiah 30:23, "in that day shall thy cattle feed in large "pastures" - where the same word occurs. It seems to me, therefore, that the interpretation of Gesenius, DeWette, and others, is the correct interpretation, and that the idea is, that the wicked in their pride, beauty, and wealth, shall be like the meadow covered with grass and flowers, soon to be cut down by the scythe of the mower, or by the frosts of winter. This image often occurs: Matthew 6:30; Psalm 90:5-6; Isaiah 40:6-8; James 1:10; 1 Peter 1:24.

They shall consume - The word used here means to be completed or finished; to be consumed or spent, as by fire, or in any other manner; to pine away by weeping, Lamentations 2:11; to vanish as a cloud or smoke, Job 7:9.

Into smoke - The meaning here is not that they will vanish as the fat of lambs does in sacrifice, but simply that they will pass away as smoke entirely disappears. All that there was of them - their wealth, their splendor, their power - shall utterly vanish away. This is spoken in contrast with what would be the condition of the righteous.

Verse 21

The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again - This is probably intended here, not so much to describe the "character" as the "condition" of the wicked. The idea is, that he will be in such a condition of want that he will be under a necessity of borrowing, but will not have the means of repaying what he has borrowed, while the righteous will not only have enough for himself, but will have the means of showing mercy to others, and of "giving" to them what they need. The ability to lend to others is referred to as a part of the promise of God to his people, and as marking their condition as a prosperous one, in Deuteronomy 15:6: "And thou shalt lend unto many nations, and shalt not borrow." Compare Deuteronomy 28:12, Deuteronomy 28:44. It is true, however, as a characteristic of a wicked man, that he will often be "disposed" to borrow and not pay again; that he will be "reckless" about borrowing and careless about paying; and that it is a characteristic of a good or upright man that he will not borrow when he can avoid it, and that he will be punctual and conscientious in paying what he has borrowed.

But the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth - That is, in this connection, he is not under the necessity of borrowing of others for the supply of his wants. He has not only enough for himself, but he has the means of aiding others, and has the disposition to do it. It is his "character" to show favors, and he has the means of gratifying this desire.

And giveth - Imparts to others. He has enough for himself, and has also that which he can give to others. Of course all this is designed to be general. It does not mean that this will universaly be the case, but that the tendency of a life of piety is to make a man prosperous in his worldly affairs; to give him what he needs for himself, and to furnish him with the means, as he has the disposition, to do good to others. Other things being equal, the honest, temperate, pure, pious man will be the most prosperous in the world: for honesty, temperance, purity, and piety produce the industry, economy, and prudence on which prosperity depends.

Verse 22

For such as be blessed of him - They who are his true friends.

Shall inherit the earth - See Psalm 37:9.

And they that be cursed of him - His enemies.

Shall be cut off - Psalm 37:9. This verse suggests a thought of great importance, in advance of that which had been suggested before. It is that, after all, the difference in the ultimate condition of the two depends on the question whether they have, or have not, "the favor of the Lord." It is not on the mere fact of their own skill, but it is on the fact that the one has secured the divine favor, and that the other has not. It is not by mere human virtue, irrespective of God, that the result is determined; but it is that one is the friend of God, and the other not. This consideration will be found in the end to enter essentially into all the distinctions in the final condition of mankind.

Verse 23

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord - Margin, "established." The word rendered "ordered" means to stand erect; to set up; to found; to adjust, fit, direct. The idea here is, that all which pertains to the journey of a good man through life is directed, ordered, fitted, or arranged by the Lord. That is, his course of life is under the divine guidance and control. The word "good" has been supplied here by our translators, and there is nothing corresponding to it in the original. It is simply there, "the steps of man are ordered," etc. Yet there can be no doubt that a good or

pious man is particularly referred to, for the connection demands this interpretation. The word "steps" here means his course of life; the way in which he goes.

And he delighteth in his way - In his course of life; and, therefore, he blesses him. The general idea is that he is the object of the divine favor, and is under the care of God.

Verse 24

Though he fall - That is, though he is sometimes disappointed; though he is not always successful; though he may be unfortunate - yet this will not be final ruin. The word here does not refer to his falling into "sin," but into misfortune, disappointment, reverses, calamities. The image is that of a man who is walking along on a journey, but who stumbles, or fails to the earth - a representation of one who is not always successful, but who finds disappointment spring up in his path.

He shall not be utterly cast down - The word used here - טול *ṭûl* - means to "throw down at full length, to prostrate;" then, "to cast out, to throw away." Compare Isaiah 22:17; Jeremiah 16:13; Jeremiah 22:26; Jonah 1:5, Jonah 1:15. Here it means that he would not be "utterly" and "finally" prostrated; he would not fall so that he could not rise again. The calamity would be temporary, and there would be ultimate prosperity.

For the Lord upholdeth him with his hand - It is by no power of his own that he is recovered, but it is because, even when he falls, he is held up by an invisible hand. God will not suffer him to sink to utter ruin.

Verse 25

I have been young - The idea in this whole passage is, "I myself have passed through a long life. I have had an opportunity of observation, wide and extended. When I was a young man, I looked upon the world around me with the views and feelings which belong to that period of existence; when in middle life, I contemplated the state of things with the more calm and sober reflections pertaining to that period, and to the opportunities of wider observation; and now, in old age, I contemplate the condition of the world with all the advantages which a still wider observation and a longer experience give me, and with the impartial judgment which one has who is about to leave the world. And the result of all is a conviction that religion is an advantage to man; that God protects His people; that He provides for them; that they are more uniformly and constantly blessed, even in their worldly affairs, than other people, and that they do not often come to

poverty and want." There is a sad kind of feeling which a man has when he is constrained to say, "Ihave been young;" for it suggests the memory of joys, and hopes, and friends, that are now gone forever. But a man may have some claim to respect for his opinions when he is constrained to say it, for he can bring to the coming generation such results of his own experience and observation as may be of great value to those who are "young."

And now am old - This demonstrates that this psalm was one of the later productions of its author; and the psalm has an additional value from this circumstance, as stating the results of a long observation of the course of affairs on the earth. Yet there is much that is solemn when a man is constrained to say, "I am old." Life is nearly ended. The joys, the hopes, the vigor of youth, are all gone. The mature strength of manhood is now no more. The confines of life are nearly reached. The next remove is to another world, and that now must be near; and it is a solemn thing to stand on the shores of eternity; to look out on that boundless ocean, to feel that earth, and all that is dear on earth, is soon to be left "forever."

Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken - Forsaken by God; so forsaken that he has not a friend; so forsaken that he has nothing with which to supply his wants.

Nor his seed begging bread - Nor his children beggars. This was a remarkable testheony; and though it cannot be affirmed that the psalmist meant to say literally that he had never, in any instance, met with such a case - for the language may have been intended as a general statement, yet it may have been true to the letter. In the course of a long life it may have occurred that he had never met with such a case - and if so, it was a remarkable proof of the correctness of the general remarks which he was making about the advantage of piety. It is not now universally true that the "righteous" are not "forsaken," in the sense that they do not want, or in the sense that their children are not constrained to beg their bread, but the following things, are true:

(a) that religion tends to make men industrious, economical, and prudent, and hence, tends to promote prosperity, and to secure temporal comforts;

(b) that religion "of itself" impoverishes no one, or makes no one the poorer;

(c) that religion saves from many of the expenses in life which are produced by vicious indulgence; and

(d) that, as a general rule, it saves men and their children from the necessity of public begging, and from the charity-house.

Who are the inmates of the poor-houses in the land? Who are the beggars in our great cities? Here and there, it may be, is one who is the child of pious parents, reduced by sickness or misfortune, or a lack of practical good sense - for religion does not alter the constitution of the mind, and does not impart the "skill" or "talent" upon which so much of the success in life depends; but the great mass of persons in our charity-houses, and of beggars in the streets, are themselves intemperate, or are the wives and children of the intemperate. They consist of those whom religion, as it would have made them virtuous and industrious, would have saved from rags and beggary. It may not now be literally true that anyone who has been young, and who is become old, could say that he had not once seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread; but the writer of these lines, who has this day - the day on which he pens them (Dec. 1,1859) - reached the sixty-first year of his life, and who is constrained to say "I have been young," though he may feel a reluctance to add, "but now am old," can say, as the result of his own observation in the world, that, as a great law, the children of the pious are not vagrants and beggars. As a great law, they are sober, industrious, and prosperous. The vagrants and the beggars of the world are from other classes; and whatever may be the bearing of religion on the destinies of men in the future world, in this world the effect is to make them virtuous, industrious, prudent, and successful in their worldly affairs, so that their children are not left to beggary and want, but to respectability and to competence.

Verse 26

He is ever merciful - Margin, as in Hebrew, "all the day." That is, it is his character; he is constantly in the habit of showing kindness. He does not do it at intervals, or only occasionally, but it is this that marks the character of the man. He is known by this. The word "merciful" here means kind,

compassionate, benignant - and particularly in this respect, that he is willing to "lend" to others when he has the means.

And lendeth - The wicked man "borrows," but does not pay again Psalm 37:21; the righteous man "lends" to his neighbor.

And his seed is blessed - His children; his posterity, as the result of this conduct on his part. The effect of what he does passes over from him to them, conveying rich blessings to them.

Verse 27

Depart from evil, and do good - This is the sum of all that is said in the psalm; the great lesson inculcated and enforced by all these references to the effects of good and evil conduct. All these results - all that people experience themselves, and all the effects of their conduct on their posterity, enforce the great practical lesson that we should do good and avoid evil. These results of conduct are among the means which God employs to induce men to do right, and to abstain from what is wrong.

And dwell for evermore - That is, dwell in the land: meaning (in accordance with the general drift of the psalm) that righteousness will be connected with length of days and with prosperity; that its effects will be permanent on a family, descending from one generation to another. See the notes at Psalm 37:3.

Verse 28

For the Lord loveth judgment - That is, God loves that which is right; he loves to do right. The idea is, that such a recompense as is here adverted to - that on the one hand, in rewarding with prosperity a pure and upright life - and that, on the other, in cutting off the wicked - is right and proper in itself; and that as God loves to do right, these consequences respectively may be expected to follow in regard to the righteous and the wicked. Compare Psalm 11:7.

And forsaketh not his saints - He manifests his sense of that which is right, by not forsaking His saints.

They are preserved forever - They are ever under his paternal eye, and he will keep them. It will be literally true that they will be preserved "forever," that they will never be suffered to perish.

But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off - See the notes at Psalm 21:10. Compare Psalm 37:22.

Verse 29

The righteous shall inherit the land - See Psalm 37:3. The word "inherit" suggests the idea that they are heirs, and that God will treat them as His children.

And dwell therein forever - Psalm 37:3, Psalm 37:18, Psalm 37:27.

Verse 30

The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom - That is, It is a characteristic of the righteous to speak "wise things;" not to utter folly. His conversation is serious, earnest, true, pure; and his words are faithful, kind, and just. This, as a part of human conduct, is one of the reasons why God will bless him with prosperity and length of days.

And his tongue talketh of judgment - That is, of just or righteous things. See Matthew 12:35.

Verse 31

The law of his God is in his heart - That is, he loves it; he thinks of it; he makes it the inward rule of his conduct: Deuteronomy 6:6; Psalm 40:8 The word "law" here is a general term for the truth of God - for all that he has revealed to guide men. As long as that truth is in the heart; as long as it is the object of love; as long as it is suffered to guide and control us, so long will our words and conduct be right.

None of his steps shall slide - Margin, "goings." The idea is, that his course will be firm and steady. He will not fall into sin, and his life will be prosperous and happy. This is in accordance with the general sentiment in the psalm, that religion tends to promote prosperity, happiness, and length of days on the earth.

Verse 32

The wicked watcheth the righteous … - Observes closely; looks out for him; has his eye on him, seeking an opportunity to slay him. See the notes at Psalm 10:8-9. The sense is, that the wicked are the enemies of the righteous, and seek to do them wrong. It is a characteristic of the wicked that they seek to destroy the righteous. This was manifested in the case of the prophets; in the case of the apostles; in the case of the Saviour; and it has been so manifest in the deaths of the martyrs, and all the persecutions which the Church has suffered, as to justify the general declaration that it is one of the characteristics of a wicked world that it desires to do this.

Verse 33

The Lord will not leave him in his hand - Compare 2 Peter 2:9. That is, He will rescue him out of the hand of the wicked; he will not leave him,

so that the wicked shall accomplish his purpose. The psalmist here undoubtedly means to refer mainly to what will occur in the present life - to the fact that God will interpose to deliver the righteous from the evil designs of the wicked, as he interposes to save his people from famine and want. The meaning is not that this will universally occur, for that would not be true; but that this is the general course of things; this is the tendency and bearing of the divine interpositions and the divine arrangements. Those interpositions and arrangements are, on the whole, favorable to virtue, and favorable to those who love and serve God; so much so that it is an advantage even in the present life to serve God. But this will be absolutely and universally true in the future world. The righteous will be wholly and forever placed beyond the reach of the wicked.

Nor condemn him when he is judged - literally, He will not regard or hold him to be guilty when he is judged. He will regard and treat him as a righteous man. This may refer either

(a) to a case where a judgment is pronounced on a good man "by his fellow-men," by which he is condemned or adjudged to be guilty - meaning that God will not so regard and treat him; or

(b) to the final judgment, when the cause comes "before God" - meaning that then he will regard and treat him as righteous.

Both of these are true; but it seems probable that the former is particularly referred to here. DeWette understands it in the latter sense; Rosenmuller in the former. Rosenmuller remarks that the idea is, that the wicked, when he is not permitted to assail the righteous by violence, makes his appeal to the courts, and seeks to secure his condemnation there, but that God will not permit this. As he has saved him from violence, so he will interpose and save him from an unrighteous condemnation in the courts. This seems to me to be the true idea. Of course, this is to be understood only in a "general" sense, or as marking the "general" course of things under the divine administration. On this subject, compare Dr. Taylor's Lectures on Moral Government; vol. i., pp. 252-262. See also Butler's Analogy, passim.

Verse 34

Wait on the Lord - See the notes at Psalm 37:9. Let your hope be from the Lord; depend wholly upon Him; have such confidence in Him as to expect His gracious interposition in your behalf.

And keep his way - Or, walk in the path which He commands. Do not turn from that at any thee. Do not allow any temptation, or any opposition, to cause you to swerve from that path.

And he shall exalt thee to inherit the land - See Psalm 37:3, Psalm 37:9, Psalm 37:18.

When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it - This implies that they would certainly be cut off, and that the righteous would be permitted to see the result of a course of righteousness and one of wickedness. It is not necessarily implied that they would have any satisfaction in seeing the punishment of the wicked; but the meaning is, that they would be permitted to live so as to see that one course of life tended to secure the favor of God, and another to incur His displeasure; that there was an advantage in virtue and religion in this life; and the certainty that they would see this is adverted to as a "motive" for leading a life of piety. The result is so sure that a man may, if he live long, see it himself; and the fact that this is so should be an inducement for his leading a holy life. The psalmist proceeds, in Psalm 37:35-36, to illustrate this idea from his own observation.

Verse 35

I have seen - I have had an opportunity, in my long life Psalm 37:25, of witnessing the accuracy of the statement just made, that a righteous man may live to see a confirmation of the truth that wickedness, however prosperous the wicked man may be, will lead to ultimate ruin - as I have had an opportunity of seeing Psalm 37:25-26 the effect of a course of righteousness on the ultimate prosperity and happiness of its possessor. The same experience, with the same result, is referred to in Job 5:3.

In great power - The word used here - עריץ *ʿârîyts* - means properly "terrible; inspiring terror." It is applied to God in Jeremiah 20:11; and to powerful nations, Isaiah 25:3. It is also used in a bad sense, as denoting violent, fierce, lawless, or a tyrant, Isaiah 13:11; Isaiah 25:4-5; Job 15:20; Job 27:13. Here it may be used in the sense of one who was prosperous and mighty, and as referring to a man who wielded vast power; but there is connected with that also, undoubtedly, the idea that that power was wielded, not for purposes of benevolence, but for injustice, oppression, and wrong. It was a "wicked" man that was thus powerful.

And spreading himself - The word used here means properly to be naked; to make naked; to empty; then, to pour oneself out; and then, to spread oneself abroad. It is applied here to a tree that seems to pour itself out, or to spread itself out in every direction - sending its limbs aloft, and its branches far on every side.

Like a green bay tree - Margin: "a green tree that groweth in its own soil." The "bay tree" is a species of laurel, but there is no evidence that the original word here refers particularly to this, or specifically to any other tree. The original word אזרח *'ezrâch* - is derived from זרח *zârach* to rise; and then, to spring up as a plant does, and it properly means here, as expressed in the margin, "a native tree;" that is, a tree that grows in its own soil, or that has not been transplanted. Then, also, it comes to denote a native; one born in the country, not a foreigner: Leviticus 16:29; Leviticus 18:26, et al. The idea here is that a tree which thus remains in its own soil is more vigorous, and will attain to a larger growth, than one which is transplanted; and thus the figure becomes an emblem of a prosperous and mighty man. "Perhaps," also, there is included here, respecting the man, the idea that he has grown up where he is; that he has not been driven from place to place; that he has had uniform prosperity; that on the very soil which gave him birth he has risen to rank, to wealth, to power. His life has been spent in tranquil scenes, where everything seemed to be stable and secure; what his end will be, the psalmist states in the next verse.

Verse 36

Yet he passed away - Compare the notes at Job 20:5. The allusion here, of course, is to the man, and not to the tree, though the grammatical construction might refer to either. The idea is that he passed out of view - "he was gone;" he had no permanent abode on earth, but with all his pomp and splendor he had disappeared. Neither his prosperity, his greatness, nor his wealth, could secure him a permanent abode on earth. It might be said, also, in reply to this, that the good man passes away and is not. That is true. But the meaning here is, that this occurs "so much more frequently" in the case of a wicked man, or that wickedness is followed so often in this life by the judgment of God in cutting him off, as to show that there is a moral government, and that that government is administered in favor of the righteous, or that it is an advantage in this life to be righteous. It cannot be meant that this is "universally" so here, but that this is the "general" rule,

and that it is so constant as to show that God is on the side of virtue and religion.

And lo, he was not - He was no more; there was no longer any such person: The word "lo" implies that there was some degree of surprise, or that what had occurred was not looked for or expected. The observer had seen him in great power, flourishing, rich, honored; and, to his astonishment, he soon passed entirely away.

Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found - This is intended to "confirm" what had been just said, or to show how completely he had disappeared. It might be supposed, perhaps, that his removal was only temporary - that he was still somewhere upon the earth; but the psalmist says that after the most diligent search, he could not find him. He had disappeared entirely from among men.

Verse 37

Mark the perfect man - In contrast with what happens to the wicked. The word "perfect" here is used to designate a righteous man, or a man who serves and obeys God. See the notes at Job 1:1. The word "mark" here means "observe, take notice of." The argument is, "Look upon that man in the end, in contrast with the prosperous wicked man. See how the close of life, in his case, differs from that of a wicked man, though the one may have been poor and humble, and the other rich and honored." The point of the psalmist's remark turns on the end, or the "termination" of their course; and the idea is, that the end of the two is such as to show that there is an advantage in religion, and that God is the friend of the righteous. Of course this is to be understood in accordance with the main thought in the psalm, as affirming what is of general occurrence.

And behold the upright - Another term for a pious man. Religion makes a man upright; and if a man is not upright in his dealings with his fellow-man, or if what he professes does not make him do "right," it is the fullest proof that he has no true piety, 1 John 3:7-8.

For the end of that man is peace - DeWette renders this, Denn Nachkommen hat der Mann Friedens; "For a future has the man of peace." So it is rendered by the Latin Vulgate: *Sunt reliquiae homini pacifico*. So the Septuagint. So also Hengstenberg, Rosenmuller, and Prof. Alexander. Tholuck renders it, as in our version, "It shall go well at last to such man." It seems to me that the connection demands this construction, and the authority of Tholuck is sufficient to prove that the Hebrew will admit of it.

The word rendered "end" - אחרית *'achărîyth* - means properly the last or extreme part; then, the end or issue of anything - that which comes after it; then, the after time, the future, the hereafter: Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1; Genesis 49:1; Daniel 10:14. It may, therefore, refer to anything future; and would be well expressed by the word "hereafter;" the "hereafter" of such a man. So it is rendered "my last end" in Numbers 23:10; "latter end," Numbers 24:20; "their end," in Psalm 73:17. It "might," therefore, refer to all the future. The connection - the contrast with what happens to the wicked, Psalm 37:36, Psalm 37:38 - would seem to imply that it is used here particularly and especially with reference to the close of life. The contrast is between the course of the one and that of the other, and between the "termination" of the one course and of the other. In the one case, it is ultimate disaster and ruin; in the other, it is ultimate peace and prosperity. The one "issues in," or is "followed by" death and ruin; the other is succeeded by peace and salvation. Hence, the word may be extended without impropriety to all the future - the whole hereafter. The word "peace" is often employed in the Scriptures to denote the effect of true religion:

(a) as implying reconciliation with God, and

(b) as denoting the calmness, the tranquility, and the happiness which results from such reconciliation, from his friendship, and from the hope of heaven.

See John 14:27; John 16:33; Romans 5:1; Romans 8:6; Galatians 5:22; Philemon 4:7. The meaning here, according to the interpretation suggested above, is, that the future of the righteous man - the whole future - would be peace;

(a) as a general rule, peace or calmness in death as the result of religion; and

(b) in the coming world, where there will be perfect and eternal peace.

As a usual fact religious men die calmly and peacefully, sustained by hope and by the presence of God; as a univeral fact, they are made happy forever beyond the grave.

Verse 38

But the transgressors - Sinners; violators of the law of God.

Shall be destroyed together - The word "together" here - יחדו *yachedâh* - means properly "a union of them;" then, together - either:

(a) in one place, Genesis 13:6 - or

(b) at one time, Psalm 4:8; or

(c) all as one, Psalm 14:3 - or

(d) mutually with one another, as when men strive together, Deuteronomy 25:11.

The idea here is, that one would be destroyed as well as another; that there would be no exception; that they would go to the same ruin. They might be destroyed at different times, or in different modes, but it would be the same destruction in the end.

The end of the wicked - The future of the wicked. The same word is used here which occurs in Psalm 37:37, as applied to the righteous. The meaning is, that while the "future" of the one would be peace, the future of the other would be a "cutting off," or destruction.

Shall be cut off - That is, they shall be cut off; or, there will be a cutting off. This means here, evidently:

(a) that as an ordinary fact they would be cut down before they had reached the full limit of their course, Psalm 37:35-36;

(b) in the future world they would be cut off from hope and happiness forever.

Verse 39

But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord - Or, salvation comes to the righteous from the Lord. While the wicked are cut off, the righteous shall be safe. There are evidently two ideas here:

(1) that there will be salvation to the righteous, while the wicked are cut off;

(2) that this comes from the Lord, and not from themselves.

It is not owing to any power of their own that they are safe, but is solely because they are kept by the Lord.

He is their strength in the time of trouble - See Psalm 9:9, note; Psalm 18:2, note.

Verse 40

And the Lord shall help them - He will interpose to defend them when they are in danger and in trouble.

And deliver them - Rescue them from their dangers, and from the power of the wicked.

He shall deliver them from the wicked - From all the attempts of the wicked to destroy them.

And save them - Or, preserve them. He will keep them to everlasting life.

Because they trust in him - They rely on him, and not on themselves. This verse is a summing up of the sentiments of the psalm, and is designed to confirm the main thought which runs through it, to wit, that we should not fret, or complain, or repine at the prosperity of wicked men, Psalm 37:1. The reason ultimately assigned for this is, that whatever may be the danger of the righteous from the designs of wicked men, they will in the end be safe. It will go well with them, for the Lord will keep them. The general course of thought in the psalm is, that, whatever prosperity the wicked now have, it is temporary, for they will soon be cut off; and that whatever troubles now come upon the righteous, they too are temporary, and that their "hereafter" - "their futurity" - will be blessedness and peace. There is a moral government: God is the friend of the righteous; along the path of the present life there are proofs that he is so, and beyond the present life he will show himself to be so in their eternal peace.

He is the enemy of the wicked; there are evidences in the present life that he is so, and this will be fully and finally manifested in their destruction in the future world. The argument in the psalm, indeed, is mainly drawn from the "present life," from what there is to encourage virtue and goodness in the blessings which religion scatters on earth, and by the peaceful termination of the course - as well as from what there is to discourage wickedness and vice, in the fact that the wicked will be cut down and pass away. The argument is, that if this life were all, there are encouragements here to virtue and goodness. In Psalm 73, which in some respects resembles this psalm, the argument which satisfied the mind of the troubled psalmist - troubled at the prosperity of the wicked - is drawn mainly from the future world. Here it is drawn chiefly from the present life; and the main thought here - the practical lesson from the psalm - is, that even with reference to the life that now is - to its security, to its peace, to its blessedness, and to its happy close - it is an advantage to be righteous. It is better to have God for

our friend in life, and our support in death, than to have all the external prosperity of wicked men.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 38

Introduction

I. "Author of the psalm" - The psalm purports to have been written by David, and there is no reason to doubt that it was composed by him. There is no tradition to the contrary, and there is nothing in the psalm inconsistent with such a supposition.

II. "The title" - The psalm is said in the title to be designed "to bring to remembrance." The same title occurs in Psalm 70:1-5, though there is no resemblance between the two, except that they both have reference to the attempts and purposes of the enemies of David, and to trials in different forms which had come from them. The Latin Vulgate renders this: "A Psalm of David, for remembrance concerning the Sabbath." The Septuagint renders it in the same manner. The Arabic: In which there is a mention of the sabbath." Whence these allusions to the sabbath were derived is unknown, as there is nothing in the Hebrew corresponding with them. The Aramaic Paraphrase has prefixed, "For a good memorial concerning Israel." The Hebrew term used - להזכיר *lehazekiyr* - means simply "for bringing to remembrance," or for reminding. The meaning is, that it is a record for the purpose of "reminding;" that is, of keeping the "remembrance" of something which had occurred in his own experience, and which might be useful to himself or to others; the record of some valuable lessons which had been learned from what he had experienced in the trials referred to. Compare Genesis 40:14; 1 Kings 17:18; Ezekiel 21:24. Gesenius (Lexicon) renders it, "To bring to remembrance, sc., oneself with God." Grotius says of it, "This psalm is designed to inculcate the perpetual remembrance of David and his sin, and of the pardon that was granted." There can be no doubt that the psalm had this design of making a permanent record of an important event in the life of the author, or of his "experience" in a time of great calamity; but why this title was affixed only to this psalm and to Psalm 70:1-5 is wholly unknown. There are many other psalms to which, it would seem, the title might have been prefixed with equal propriety, as containing important reminiscences of trials, and of religious experience under those trials.

III. "Occasion of the psalm" - The particular time or occasion on which the psalm was composed is unknown. There are no recorded events in the

life of David to which this psalm would be "particularly" applicable, though, in a life of trial and suffering such as his was, there can be no doubt that there may have been many such occasions. It is impossible now, however, to fix the exact time or occasion with any degree of accuracy or probability. What is known is, that it was with reference to sickness Psalm 38:3-8, Psalm 38:10-11, and to the neglect which was evinced, and the cruel treatment which he received, in sickness Psalm 38:11-12, Psalm 38:19-20.

IV. The contents of the psalm.

(1) The psalm describes the condition of one who was suffering from "sickness," Psalm 38:2-3, Psalm 38:5, Psalm 38:7-8, Psalm 38:10-11. Some have supposed that this is merely "figurative" language, and that it is designed to represent calamity, trouble, sorrow, heavily pressing upon him as if he were sick; others have supposed that it is intended to refer, not to David, but to the people of Israel as afflicted and persecuted, represented under the image of one suffering from disease; but the most natural and obvious interpretation is to regard it as a literal description of one who was suffering under some form of disease. There were doubtless occasions in the long life of David when this actually occurred; and there are occasions in the lives of the people of God of a similar kind, sufficiently numerous to make it proper that an inspired record of the experience of a good man thus suffering should be preserved, as an example of the proper spirit to be manifested in sickness. What was the "character" or "nature" of that sickness may appear in the examination of the particular expressions in the record.

(2) The condition of the sufferer as aggravated by two things:

(a) By the neglect of his friends - by their turning away from him in his trials, Psalm 38:11;

(b) By the efforts of his enemies - taking advantage of his sickness, and bringing against him accusations which he was not then able to meet, Psalm 38:12.

(3) He himself traces all these trials, arising either from his disease or from the attacks of his enemies, to his own sins, and regards them all as the expression of the divine displeasure against his transgressions, Psalm 38:3-4, Psalm 38:6, Psalm 38:18. The effect of his suffering from sickness was to bring his sins to remembrance - an effect not uncommon, and, under the Providence of God, not undesigned - though he may have erred, as the afflicted often do, in supposing that his sickness was a "specific punishment" for sin, or was intended to correct him for some "particular" transgression.

(4) His own calmness and meekness in respect to the charges which, amid his other trials, his enemies brought against him, Psalm 38:13-14. He says that he was like a deaf man that did not hear, and like a mute man that did not open his mouth. He "seemed" not to hear anything that was said to his disadvantage, and he was as silent as though he had been mute.

(5) His earnest prayer for the interposition of God in these circumstances of sickness and trial, Psalm 38:15-22. He says that his only help is in God, Psalm 38:15; he prays that God will not allow his enemies to triumph over him, Psalm 38:16; he says that he is ready to halt, or that his strength is nearly exhausted, and he fears that his patience will utterly give way, Psalm 38:17; he says that he will confess all his sin, Psalm 38:18; he refers to the fact that his enemies are "lively," and are on the alert for his fall, Psalm 38:19-20; and in view of all this, he earnestly calls on God to save him, Psalm 38:21-22.

There is a striking resemblance between this psalm and Psalm 6:1-10, in the general structure, and in some of the particular expressions. Both appear to have been composed in a time of sickness, though not probably in the same sickness; and both express substantially the same feelings. The forty-first psalm, also, appears to have been composed on a similar occasion. In a revelation adapted to mankind, and designed to be applicable in its instructions and promises to the various conditions in which men are placed on the earth, it was to be presumed that there would be a not unfrequent reference to the sick bed - to the trials on a couch of languishing. And in an inspired book of "devotion," like the Book of Psalms, designed to illustrate the nature of piety in the various and diversified situations of life, the object

of a revelation could not be fully accomplished without an illustration of the feelings of piety in the time of sickness, and in the prospect of death - for such scenes must occur in the world, and it is eminently in such scenes that we desire to know what is the proper feeling to be cherished; what true religion is at such a time; what it will do to sustain and comfort the soul.

The Book of Psalms, therefore, would not have been complete without such an illustration of the nature of piety; and hence, it was every way probable that psalms like this would be composed, and every way improbable that no such psalms would be found in a book of inspired devotion. It seems to me, therefore, unnatural, and not demanded by any proper views of interpretation, to regard this psalm, and the other similar psalms, as DeWette, Hengstenberg, Rosenmuller and others do, and as the Aramaic Paraphrase and Jarchi do, as descriptive of "general calamity, Ungluck;" or of calamity coming upon "a people" - rather than a particular affliction in the form of sickness coming upon "an individual." The great value of the book of Psalms consists in the fact that it furnishes illustrations of the nature and power of true religion in all the varied circumstances of the lives of individual friends of God.

Verse 1

O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath - See the notes at Psalm 6:1, where the same language occurs, except in the change of a single Hebrew "word," that is, "wrath," though expressing the same idea.

Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure - See the notes at Psalm 6:1. The Hebrew in both is the same, except that in this place the negative particle is omitted, but without affecting the sense. It is not improbable that the one was copied from the other, or that this was composed with the language of the former in the memory. Thus we often use language with which we are familiar, as being well adapted to express our ideas.

Verse 2

For thine arrows slick fast in me - See the notes at Job 6:4. The word rendered "stick fast" - נחת *nâchath* - means properly to go or come down; to descend; and the literal idea here would be, "thine arrows come down upon me." It is not so much the idea of their "sticking fast" when in the wound or flesh; it is that they come down upon one, and pierce him. The meaning is, that he was afflicted "as if" God had wounded him with arrows - arrows

which pierced deep in his flesh. Compare the notes at Psalm 45:5. The allusion is to the disease with which he was afflicted.

And thy hand presseth me sore - The same word is used here which in the former part of the verse is rendered "stick fast." The idea is, that the hand of God had "descended" or "come down" upon him, prostrating his strength, and laying him on a bed of pain.

Verse 3

There is no soundness in my flesh - There is no sound place in my flesh; there is no part of my body that is free from disease. The word used here - מתם *methôm* - occurs only in Judges 20:48, where it is rendered "men;" in Isaiah 1:6, and in this place, where it is rendered "soundness." See the notes at Isaiah 1:6. It means that the body was wholly diseased; but what was the nature of the disease we are not informed. It would seem, however, that it was some cutaneous disease, or some disease that produced outward and loathsome eruptions that made his friends withdraw from him, Psalm 38:7, Psalm 38:11; compare Psalm 41:8.

Because of thine anger - That is, he regarded this as a punishment for sin; a specific manifestation of the divine displeasure on account of some particular offence or act of transgression. He does not refer, however, to the particular sin which he regarded as the cause of his sickness, and it is probable that this is just an instance of that state of mind, often morbid, in which we consider a particular calamity that comes upon us as a special proof of the divine displeasure. There are, undoubtedly, cases when sickness may be properly thus regarded; but it should be observed that, as this is not the universal rule in regard to sickness and other trials - as they come upon us under general laws, and because in sweeping over a community they often fall upon the righteous as well as the wicked, - we should not infer at once, when we are sick or otherwise afflicted, that it is for any "particular" sin, or that it is proof of any special displeasure of God against us. It is undoubtedly right to regard all affliction as having a close connection with sin, and to allow any calamity to suggest to us the idea of our depravity, for sin is the original cause of all the wretchedness and woe on earth; but under this general law we cannot always determine the "particular" reason why calamity comes on us. It may have other purposes and ends than that of being a specific punishment for our offences.

Neither is there any rest in my bones - Margin: "peace" or "health." The Hebrew word means "peace." The idea is, that there was no comfort;

no rest. His bones were filled with constant pain. The flesh "and the bones" constitute the entire man; and the idea here is, that he was universally diseased. The disease pervaded every part of the body.

Because of my sin - Regarding his sin as the immediate cause of his suffering. In a general sense, as has been remarked above, it is not wrong to regard sin as the cause of all our misery, and we may allow our suffering to be, in some degree, a measure or gauge of the evil of sin. The error consists in our regarding a particular form of trial as the punishment of a particular sin. The effect in the case of tile psalmist was undoubtedly to bring to remembrance his sins; to impress his mind deeply with a sense of the evil of sin; to humble him at the recollection of guilt. This effect is not improper or undesirable, provided it does not lead us to the conclusion, often erroneous, that our affliction has come upon us on account of a particular transgression. That may be so indeed; but the idea that that is the universal rule in regard to affliction is one which we are not required to entertain. See the notes at Luke 13:1-5.

Verse 4

For mine iniquities are gone over mine head - This is merely an enlargement of the idea suggested in the last verse - that his present sickness was to be traced to his sin, and that he was suffering the punishment for sin. The idea is here that his sins were very numerous and very aggravated. They had risen up around him, or had so accumulated that the mass rose, like waves of the sea, above his head. A somewhat similar idea - though the thought there refers rather to the number of sins than the degree of guilt - occurs in Psalm 40:12: "Mine iniquities … are more than the hairs of my head."

As an heavy burden … - That is, they are so heavy that I cannot bear them, and my frame has sunk under them. This might mean either that the sense of sin was so great that he could not bear up under it, but had been crushed by it (compare Psalm 32:3-4); or that on account of sin, "as if" it were a heavy weight, he had been crushed by disease. The general idea is, that the real cause of his sickness was the fact that he was a great sinner, and that God was punishing him for it.

Verse 5

My wounds stink - The word rendered "wounds" here means properly the swelling or wales produced by stripes. See the notes at Isaiah 1:6; notes at Isaiah 53:5. The meaning here is, that he was under chastisement for his

sin; that the stripes or blows on account of it had not only left a mark and produced a swelling, but that the skin itself had been broken, and that the flesh had become corrupt, and the sore offensive. Many expositors regard this as a mere figurative representation of the sorrow produced by the consciousness of sin; and of the loathsome nature of sin, but it seems to me that the whole connection rather requires us to understand it of bodily suffering, or of disease.

And are corrupt - The word used here - מקק *mâqaq* - means properly to melt; to pine away; and then, to flow, to run, as sores and ulcers do. The meaning here is, My sores run; to wit, with corrupt matter.

Because of my foolishness - Because of my sin, regarded as folly. Compare the notes at Psalm 14:1. The Scripture idea is that sin is the highest folly. Hence, the psalmist, at the same time that he confesses his sin, acknowledges also its foolishness. The idea of sin and that of folly become so blended together - or they are so entirely synonymous - that the one term may be used for the other.

Verse 6

I am troubled - Margin, "wearied." The Hebrew word means to bend, to curve; then, to be distorted, to writhe with pain, convulsions, and spasms. In Isaiah 21:3, the same word is rendered, "I was bowed down at the hearing of it;" that is, Sorrow so took hold of him, that at the intelligence he writhed with pain as a woman in travail. So here it means that he was bent, or bowed down, or that he writhed in pain as the result of his iniquities.

I am bowed down greatly - Compare Psalm 35:14. The word means properly to bow down; then, to be brought low; to be depressed with pain, grief, sorrow: Psalm 10:10; Isaiah 2:11.

I go mourning all the day long - Constantly; without any intermission. On the word rendered "go mourning" - קדר *qâdar* - see the notes at Psalm 35:14. The idea here is, that, on account of sin, he was crushed and bowed down as a mourner is with his sorrows, and that he appeared constantly as be walked about with these badges of grief and heavy sorrow. The disease which he had, and which was so offensive to himself Psalm 38:5, and to others Psalm 38:11, was like the filthy and foul garments which mourners put on as expressive of their sorrow. See Job 1:20, note; Job 2:8, note.

Verse 7

For my bones are filled with a loathsome disease - This would seem to indicate the seat of the disease, though not its nature. The word used

here, according to Gesenius (Lexicon), properly denotes the internal muscles of the loins near the kidneys, to which the fat adheres. The word rendered "loathsome" - the word "disease" being supplied by our translators - is derived from קלה *qâlâh* a word which means to roast, to parch, as fruit, grain, etc.; and then, in the form used here, it means scorched, burned; hence, a burning or inflammation; and the whole phrase would be synonymous with "an inflammation of the kidneys." The word used here does not imply that there was any eruption, or ulcer, though it would seem from Psalm 38:5 that this was the fact, and that the inflammation had produced this effect.

And there is no soundness in my flesh - See Psalm 38:3. His disease was so deep-seated and so pervading, that there did not seem to be "any" soundness in his flesh. His whole body seemed to be diseased.

Verse 8

I am feeble - The word used here means properly to be cold, or without warmth; and then, to be torpid or languid. Compare Genesis 45:26. Would not this be well represented by the idea of a "chill?"

And sore broken - This word means to break in pieces; to beat small; to crush; and then it may be used to denote being broken in spirit, or crushed by pain and sorrow: Isaiah 57:15; Isaiah 53:5; Isaiah 19:10.

I have roared - I have cried out on account of my suffering. See the notes at Psalm 22:1.

By reason of the disquietness of my heart - The word here rendered "disquietness" means properly "a roaring," as of the sea: Isaiah 5:30; and then, a groaning, or roaring, as of the afflicted. Here the "heart" is represented as "roaring" or "crying out." The lips only gave utterance to the deeper groanings of the heart.

Verse 9

Lord, all my desire is before thee - That is, Thou knowest all that I would ask or that I need. This is the expression of one who felt that his only hope was in God, and that He fully understood the case. There was no need of repeating the request. He was willing to leave the whole case with God.

And my groaning is not hid from thee - My sighing; the expression of my sorrow and anguish. As God certainly heard these sighs, and as He wholly understood the case, David hoped that He would mercifully interpose in his behalf.

Verse 10

My heart panteth - The word rendered "panteth," in its original form, means properly to go about; to travel around; and then, to travel around as a merchant or pedlar, or for purposes of traffic: Genesis 23:16; Genesis 37:28; Genesis 42:34. Applied to the heart, as it is here, it means to move about rapidly; to palpitate; to beat quick. It is an expression of pain and distress, indicated by a rapid beating of the heart.

My strength faileth me - It is rapidly failing. He regarded himself as rapidly approaching death.

As for the light of mine eyes - My vision; my sight.

It also is gone from me - Margin, as in Hebrew: "is not with me." This is usually an indication of approaching death; and it would seem from all these symptoms that he appeared to be drawing near to the end of life. Compare Psalm 13:3; Psalm 6:7; Psalm 31:9.

Verse 11

My lovers - See the notes at Psalm 31:11. The reference here is to those who professed to be his friends.

And my friends - The word used here means properly an acquaintance, a companion, a friend, Job 2:11; Job 19:21; then, a lover, a friend, a neighbor. The phrase here would be synonymous with our word "kinsmen."

Stand aloof - They are unwilling to come near me; they leave me to suffer alone.

From my sore - Margin: "stroke." The Hebrew word means properly a stroke, a blow, Deuteronomy 17:8; Deuteronomy 21:5; then a stroke in the sense of calamities or judgments, such as God brings upon men: Genesis 12:17; Exodus 11:1. The meaning here is, that they stand aloof from him, or refuse to come near him, as if he were afflicted with some contagious disease.

And my kinsmen - Margin: "neighbors." The Hebrew word used here - קרוב *qârôb* - means properly near, nigh; spoken of a place, Genesis 19:20; then of time, Isaiah 13:6; then of kindred or affinity, Numbers 27:11; and then of friendship, meaning our intimate acquaintance - as we should say, those who are "near" to us, Job 19:14. The word would be applicable to neighbors or to warm personal friends.

Verse 12

They also that seek after my life - This was a new aggravation of his affliction, that those who were his enemies now sought to accomplish their

purposes against him with better hopes of success, by taking advantage of his sickness.

Lay snares for me - On the meaning of this phrase, see the notes at Psalm 9:15. The idea here is that they sought this opportunity of ensnaring or entrapping him so as to ruin him. They took advantage of the fact that he was weak and helpless, and of the fact that he was forsaken or abandoned by his friends, to accomplish his ruin. how this was done is not stated. It might have been by their coming on him when he was thus helpless; or it might have been by endeavoring in his weak condition to extort confessions or promises from him that might be turned to his ruin. An enemy may hope to succeed much better when the one opposed is sick than when he is well, and may take advantage of his weak state of body and mind, and of the fact that he seems to be forsaken by all, to accomplish what could not be done if he were in the enjoyment of health, or sustained by powerful friends, or by a public opinion in his favor.

And they that seek my hurt - They who seek to injure me.

Speak mischievous things - Slanderous words. They charge on me things that are false, and that tend to injure me. The very fact that he was thus afflicted, they might urge (in accordance with a prevailing belief, and with the conviction of the psalmist also, Psalm 38:3-5) as a proof of guilt. This was done by the three friends of Job; and the enemies of the psalmist may thus have taken advantage of his sickness to circulate false reports about him which he could not then well meet.

And imagine deceits - Imagine or feign deceitful things; things which they know to be false or unfounded.

All the day long - Constantly. They seem to have no other employment. See Psalm 35:20.

Verse 13

But I, as a deaf man, heard not - I was as if I had been deaf, and did not hear them or know what they were about. I took no notice of what they did anymore than if I had not heard them. That is, he did not reply to them; he did not become angry; he was as calm and patient as if they had said nothing.

And I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth - As if I were a man that could not speak. I was perfectly silent under all this persecution. Compare 2 Samuel 16:10. How eminently true was this of the Saviour! Isaiah 53:7; 1 Peter 2:23; Matthew 26:63; Matthew 27:12, Matthew 27:14.

Verse 14

Thus I was as a man that heareth not - The sentiment in the former verse is repeated here to show the greatness of his patience and forbearance, or to fix the attention on the fact that one who was so calumniated and wronged could bear it patiently.

And in whose mouth are no reproofs - As a man who never reproved another; who, whatever might be the wrong which he endured, never replied to it; as he would be who was incapable of reproof, or who had no faculty for reproving. The whole of this is designed to show his entire patience under the wrongs which he suffered.

Verse 15

For in thee, O Lord, do I hope - This shows the reason or ground of his patience. He committed his whole cause to God. He believed that God would take care of his reputation, and that he would vindicate him. See Psalm 37:5-6. He had no doubt that He would protect his character, and that, notwithstanding the reproaches of his enemies, his true character would at last be made to shine forth, so that all men would see that he had been unjustly aspersed. The exact idea here is expressed, and the sentiment was beautifully and perfectly illustrated, in what is said of the Lord Jesus: "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously," 1 Peter 2:23.

Thou wilt hear, O Lord my God - Margin, as in Hebrew: "answer." The idea is, that God would answer his prayers, and that his character would, in answer to those prayers, be set right before the world.

Verse 16

For I said - This is the prayer to which he referred in the previous verse. He prayed that he might not be permitted to fall away under the influence of his sins and sufferings; that his faith might remain firm; that he might not be allowed to act so as to justify the accusations of his enemies, or to give them occasion to rejoice over his fall. The entire prayer Psalm 38:16-18 is one that is based on the consciousness of his own weakness, and his liability to sin, if left to himself; on the certainty that if God did not interpose, his sins would get the mastery over him, and he would become in his conduct all that his enemies desired, and be in fact all that they had falsely charged on him.

Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me - literally, "For I said, lest they should rejoice over me." It is the language of earnest desire that they might "not" thus be allowed to rejoice over his fall. The same sentiment occurs substantially in Psalm 13:3-4. The motive is a right one; alike

(a) in reference to ourselves personally - that our foes may not triumph over us by the ruin of our character; and

(b) in reference to its bearing on the cause of virtue and religion - that that cause may not suffer by our misconduct; compare Psalm 69:6.

When my foot slippeth -

(a) When my foot really has slipped, or when I have committed sin (as the psalmist did not deny that he had done, Psalm 38:3-5, Psalm 38:18); or

(b) when it "might" occur "again" (as he felt was possible); or

(c) if I deviate in the slightest degree from perfect virtue; if I inadvertently do anything wrong.

The slipping of the foot is an indication of the want of firmness, and hence, it comes to represent the falling into sin.

They magnify themselves against me - See Psalm 35:26. They exult over me; they triumph; they boast. They "make themselves great" on my fall, or by my being put down. This he says

(a) they were disposed to do, for they had shown a disposition to do it whenever he had fallen into sin;

(b) he apprehended that they would do it again, and they had already begun to magnify themselves against him, as if they were certain that it would occur.

He did not deny that there was ground to fear this, for he felt that his strength was almost gone Psalm 38:17, and that God only could uphold him, and save him from justifying all the expectations of his enemies.

Verse 17

For I am ready to halt - Margin, as in Hebrew, "for halting." The word from which the word used here is derived means properly to lean on one side, and then to halt or limp. The meaning here is, that he was like one who was limping along, and who was ready to fall; that is, in the case here referred to, he felt that his strength was almost gone, and that he was in continual danger of falling into sin, or sinking under his accumulated burdens, and of thus giving occasion for all that his enemies said of him, or occasion for their triumphing over him. Men often have this feeling - that their sorrows are so great that they cannot hope to hold out much longer, and that if God does not interpose they must fall.

And my sorrow is continually before me - That is, my grief or suffering is unintermitted. Probably the reference here is particularly to that which "caused" his grief, or which was the source of his trouble - his sin. The fact that he was a sinner was never absent from his mind; that was the source of all his trouble; that was what so pressed upon him that it was likely to crush him to the dust.

Verse 18

For I will declare mine iniquity - That is, he was not disposed to hide his sin. He would make no concealment of the fact that he regarded himself as a sinner. He admitted this to be true, and he admitted that his sin was the cause of all his troubles. It was the fact that he was a sinner that so painfully affected his mind; and he was not disposed to attempt to conceal it from anyone.

I will be sorry for my sin - I will not deny it; I will not apologize for it. I admit the truth of what my conscience charges on me; I admit the correctness and the propriety of the divine judgment by which I have been affiicted on account of my sin; I desire to repent of all my transgressions, and to turn from them. Compare Leviticus 26:41. The calamity brought upon the psalmist for his sin had produced the desired effect in this respect, that it had brought him to true repentance; and now, with the full confession of his sin, he was anxious only lest he should fall utterly, and should give his enemies, and the enemies of the truth, the occasion to triumph over him which they desired.

Verse 19

But mine enemies are lively … - DeWette renders this, "My enemies live and are strong." The word translated "lively" - חיים *chayiym* - means properly "living, being alive." The literal translation would be, "My

enemies, being alive, are strong." The idea is, that while he was weak and apparently near to death, they were in the full vigor of life and health. They were able to engage in active efforts to accomplish their purposes. They could take advantage of his weakness; and he could not contend with them, for he was no match for them. In every respect they had the advantage of him; and he prays, therefore, for the divine interposition in his behalf.

And they that hate me wrongfully - Hebrew, "falsely." See Psalm 35:19.

Are multiplied - They are numerous. They are constantly increasing.

Verse 20

They also that render evil for good - They whose characteristic it is to return evil for good, are opposed to me. This implies that those who were now seeking his ruin had been formerly benefitted by him. They were persons who cherished no grateful recollection of favors bestowed on them, but who found a pleasure in persecuting and wronging their benefactor. Compare Psalm 35:12-16. "Are my adversaries." Are now opposed to me; have become my enemies.

Because I follow the thing that good is - This properly means, Because I follow the good. The Hebrew word rendered "because" - תחת *tachath* - means properly the lower part; what is underneath; then, below; beneath. The idea here is, that the "underlying reason" of what they did was that he followed good, or that he was a righteous man; or, as we say, This was "at the bottom" of all their dealings with him. Sinner as he felt he was (and as he acknowledged he was) before God, and true as it was that his "sickness" was brought upon him by God for his sinfulness, yet the reason why "men" treated him as they did, was that he was a friend of God - a religious man; and their conduct, therefore, was sheer persecution. We may, with entire consistency, be very humble before God, and acknowledge that we deserve all that He brings upon us; and yet, at the same time, we may be sensible that we have not wronged men, and that their conduct toward us is wholly undeserved, is most ungrateful, is sheer malignity against us.

Verse 21

Forsake me not, O Lord - That is, Do not leave me in my troubles, my sickness, my sorrow. Leave me not to die; leave me not to complain and dishonor thee; leave me not to the reproaches of my enemies.

O my God, be not far from me - See Psalm 35:22. Compare Psalm 10:1; Psalm 13:1.

Verse 22

Make haste to help me - Margin, as in Hebrew: "for my help." This is an earnest prayer that God would come immediately to his rescue.

O Lord my salvation - See the notes at Psalm 27:1. The effect, therefore, of the trials that came upon the psalmist was to lead him to cry most earnestly to God. Those sorrows led him to God. This is one of the designed effects of affliction. Trouble never accomplishes its proper effect unless it leads us to God; and anything that "will" lead us to him is a gain in the end. The deeper our trouble, therefore, the greater may be the ultimate good to us; and at the end of life, when we come to look over all that has happened in our journey through this world, that on which we may look back with most satisfaction and gratitude may be the sorrows and afflictions that have befallen us - for these will be then seen to have been among the chief instrumentalities by which we were weaned from sin; by which we were led to the Saviour; by which we were induced to seek a preparation for heaven. No Christian, when he comes to die, ever feels that he has been too much afflicted, or that any trial has come upon him for which there was not occasion, and which was not designed and adapted to do him good.

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PSALM 39

Introduction

This psalm purports to be a Psalm of David, but the special occasion in his life when it was composed is not specified, and it cannot now be ascertained. It was evidently, like the previous psalm, in a time of affliction, but to what particular affliction it refers is unknown. It is, however, of so general a character, and expresses feelings which so often spring up in the mind of the afflicted, that it is adapted for general use in the world, and nothing would be gained, perhaps, if we could ascertain the particular trial in the life of the author of the psalm to which it had referred. On the meaning of the phrase in the title, "To the chief Musician," see the notes at the title to Psalm 4:1-8. The addition to that in this place, "to Jeduthun," implies, according to the rendering in our common version, that "Jeduthun," at the time when the psalm was composed, occupied that position; and this is probable. The word Jeduthun means properly "praising, celebrating;" but here it is used evidently as a proper name, and designates someone who was placed over the music, or who had charge of it. The reference is to one of the choristers appointed by David. Jeduthun is expressly mentioned, among others, as having been appointed for this service, 1 Chronicles 16:41: "And with them Heman and Jeduthun … to give thanks to the Lord." So, also, Psalm 39:1-13:42: "And with them Heman and Jeduthun, with trumpets and cymbals for those that should make a sound, and with musical instruments of God." See, also, 1 Chronicles 25:6; 2 Chronicles 35:15. It would seem, also, from Nehemiah 11:17, that his descendants held the same office in his time.

The psalm was composed by one who was in trouble, and who had such thoughts in his affliction that he did not dare to express them for fear that they would do injury to the cause of religion. He was sad and dispirited. He could not understand the reason of the divine dealings. He did not know why he was thus afflicted. He did not see the justice, the propriety, or the benevolence of the divine arrangements by which the life of man was made so short and so vain, and by which he was called to suffer so much. There was, in his case, a conscious spirit of complaining against the divine arrangements; or there was so much that, in his view, was mysterious and apparently inconsistent with benevolence in the divine dealings, that he did not dare to express what was going on in his own mind, or to give vent to

the secret thoughts of his soul; and he therefore resolved that he would keep silence, and would say nothing on the subject, especially when the wicked were before him. He bore this as long as he could, and then he gave vent to his suppressed emotions, and sought comfort in prayer.

The psalm, therefore, consists of two parts:

I. His purpose to keep silence; to say nothing; to suppress the emotions which were struggling in his bosom, or not to give utterance to what was passing in his mind, lest, by such an expression, he should strengthen and confirm the wicked in what they were thinking about, or in their views of God. So far did he carry this, that he says he resolved to hold his "peace even from good;" that is, he resolved that he would say nothing, lest he should be tempted to say something which would injure the cause of religion, and which he would have occasion to regret, Psalm 39:1-2.

II. The fact that he was constrained to speak; that he could not confine his thoughts to his own bosom; that he was in such anguish that he "must" find relief by giving utterance to what was passing in his soul. This occupies the remainder of the psalm, Psalm 39:3-13. This part of the psalm embraces the following points:

(1) The depth and anguish of his feeling; the fact that his feelings became so intense, like a pent-up fire in his bosom, that he could not but speak and make known his thoughts, Psalm 39:3.

(2) The utterance in words of the thoughts which he had been cherishing, which gave him so much trouble, and which he had been unwilling to express before the wicked, lest he should confirm them in their views about God and his dealings, Psalm 39:4-6. These thoughts pertained to his contemplation of human life - its brevity, its vanity, and its sorrows; to his doubts and perplexities about the purpose for which such a being as man was made; and to the darkness of his own mind concerning the reasons why God had made man thus, and why he dealt thus with him. Why was life so short? Why was it so vain? Why was it so full of sorrow?

(3) his calmest appeal to God in this state of mind, Psalm 39:7-13.

(a) He says that his only hope was in God, Psalm 39:7.

(b) He asks for deliverance from his transgressions - that is, here, from the calamities which had come upon him for his sins, Psalm 39:8.

(c) He says that he had been dumb before God, and had endeavored not to complain at his dealings, Psalm 39:9.

(d) He refers to the fact that when God undertakes to rebuke man for his iniquity, man cannot stand before him - that his beauty is made to consume away like a moth, Psalm 39:10-11.

(e) He earnestly cries, therefore, to God, and prays that he would deliver him, Psalm 39:12-13. He asks for strength in these struggles and trials, before he should go forth and be no more.

The psalm will be found to express feelings which often pass through the minds of even good men in regard to the mysteries of our condition here, and will be found to be adapted to calm down those feelings which often arise in the soul, and which could not be expressed without doing injury by paining the hearts of the good, and by confirming the wicked in their notions; to silence the complaints of the heart; and to bring the soul into a state of humble acquiescence before God under a recognition that all the events of life are controlled by his hand.

Verse 1

I said - This refers to a resolution which he had formed. He does not say, however, at what time of his life the resolution was adopted, or how long a period had elapsed from the time when he formed the resolution to the time when he thus made a record of it. He had formed the resolution on some occasion when he was greatly troubled with anxious thoughts; when, as the subsequent verses show, his mind was deeply perplexed about the divine administration, or the dealings of God with mankind. It would seem that this train of thought was suggested by his own particular trials Psalm 39:9-10, from which he was led to reflect on the mysteries of the divine administration in general, and on the fact that man had been subjected by

his Creator to so much trouble and sorrow - and that, under the divine decree, human life was so short and so vain.

I will take heed to my ways - To wit, in respect to this matter. I will be cautious, circumspect, prudent. I will not offend or pain the heart of others. The particular thing here referred to was, the resolution not to give utterance to the thoughts which were passing in his mind in regard to the divine administration. He felt that he was in danger, if he stated what he thought on the subject, of saying things which would do injury, or which he would have occasion to regret, and he therefore resolved to keep silent.

That I sin not with my tongue - That I do not utter sentiments which will be wrong, and which I shall have occasion to repent; sentiments which would do injury to those who are already disposed to find ground of complaint against God, and who would thus be furnished with arguments to confirm them in their views. Good men often have such thoughts passing through their minds; thoughts reflecting on the government of God as unequal and severe; thoughts which, if they were suggested, would tend to confirm the wicked and the skeptical in their views; thoughts which they hope, in respect to themselves, to be able to calm down by meditation and prayer, but which would do only unmitigated harm if they were communicated to other men, especially to wicked people.

I will keep my mouth with a bridle - The word used here means rather a "muzzle," or something placed "over" the mouth. The bridle is to restrain or check or guide the horse; the muzzle was something to bind or fasten the mouth so as to prevent biting or eating. Deuteronomy 25:4: "thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." See the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:9. The meaning here is, that he would restrain himself from uttering what was passing in his mind.

While the wicked is before me - In their presence. He resolved to do this, as suggested above, lest if he should utter what was passing in his own mind - if he should state the difficulties in regard to the divine administration which he saw and felt - if he should give expression to the skeptical or hard thoughts which occurred to him at such times, it would serve only to confirm them in their wickedness, and strengthen them in their alienation from God. A similar state of feeling, and on this very subject, is referred to by the psalmist Psalm 73:15, where he says that if he should utter what was really passing in his mind, it would greatly pain and offend those who were the true children of God; would fill their minds with doubts

and difficulties which might never occur to themselves: “If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I shall offend against the generation of thy children.” As illustrations of this state of feeling in the minds of good men, and as evidence of the fact that, as in the case of the psalmist, their existence in the mind, even in the severest and the most torturing form, is not proof that the man in whose bosom they arise is not a truly pious man, I make the following extracts as expressing the feelings of two of the most sincere and devoted Christian men that ever lived - both eminently useful, both in an eminent degree ornaments to the Church, Cecil and Payson: “I have read all the most acute, and learned, and serious infidel writers, and have been really surprised at their poverty. The process of my mind has been such on the subject of revelation, that I have often thought Satan has done more for me than the best of them, for I have had, and could have produced, arguments that appeared to me far more weighty than any I ever found in them against revelation.” - Cecil. Dr. Payson says in a letter to a friend: “There is one trial which you cannot know experimentally: it is that of being obliged to preach to others when one doubts of everything, and can scarcely believe that there is a God. All the atheistical, deistical, and heretical objections which I meet with in books are childish babblings compared with those which Satan suggests, and which he urges upon the mind with a force which seems irresistible. Yet I am often obliged to write sermons, and to preach when these objections beat upon me like a whirlwind, and almost distract me.”

Verse 2

I was dumb with silence - Compare Psalm 38:13. The addition of the words “with silence,” means that he was entirely or absolutely mute; he said nothing at all. The idea is, that he did not allow himself to give utterance to the thoughts which were passing in his mind in regard to the divine dealings. He kept his thoughts to himself, and endeavored to suppress them in his own bosom.

I held my peace, even from good - I said nothing. I did not even say what I might have said in vindication of the ways of God. I did not even endeavor to defend the divine character, or to explain the reasons of the divine dealings, or to suggest any considerations which would tend to calm down the feelings of complaint and dissatisfaction which might be rising in the minds of other men as well as my own.

And my sorrow was stirred - The anguish of my mind; my trouble. The word "stirred" here, rendered in the margin "troubled," means that the very fact of attempting to suppress his feelings - the purpose to say nothing in the case - was the means of increased anguish. His trouble on the subject found no vent for itself in words, and at length it became so insupportable that he sought relief by giving utterance to his thoughts, and by coming to God to obtain relief. The state of mind referred to here is that which often occurs when a man broods over his own troubled thoughts, and dwells upon things which are in themselves improper and rebellious. We are under no necessity of endeavoring to vindicate the psalmist in what he here did; nor should we take his conduct in this respect as our example. He evidently himself, on reflection, regarded this as wrong; and recorded it not as a pattern for others, but as a faithful transcript of what was passing at the time through his own mind. Yet, wrong as it was, it was what often occurs even in the minds of good men. Even they, as in the cases referred to above, often have thoughts about God and his dealings which they do not dare to express, and which it would do harm to express. They, therefore, hide them in their own bosom, and often experience just what the psalmist did - increased trouble and perplexity from the very purpose to suppress them. They should go at once to God. They may say to him what it would not be proper to say to men. They may pour out all their feelings before him in prayer, with the hope that in such acts of praying, and in the answers which they will receive to their prayers, they may find relief.

Verse 3

My heart was hot within me - My mind became more and more excited; my feelings more and more intense. The attempt to suppress my emotions only more and more enkindled them.

While I was musing the fire burned - literally, "in my meditation the fire burned." That is, while I was dwelling on the subject; while I was agitating it in my mind; while I thought about it - the flame was enkindled, and my thoughts found utterance. He was unable longer to suppress his feelings, and he gave vent to them in words. Compare Jeremiah 20:9; Job 32:18-19.

Then spake I with my tongue - That is, in the words which are recorded in this psalm. He gave vent to his pent-up feelings in the language which follows. Even though there was a feeling of murmuring and

complaining, he sought relief in stating his real difficulties before God, and in seeking from him direction and support.

Verse 4

Lord, make me to know mine end - This expresses evidently the substance of those anxious and troubled thoughts Psalm 39:1-2 to which he had been unwilling to give utterance. His thoughts turned on the shortness of life; on the mystery of the divine arrangement by which it had been made so short; and on the fact that so many troubles and sorrows had been crowded into a life so frail and so soon to terminate. With some impatience, and with a consciousness that he had been indulging feelings on this subject which were not proper, and which would do injury if they were expressed "before men," he now pours out these feelings before God, and asks what is to be the end of this; how long this is to continue; when his own sorrows will cease. It was an impatient desire to know when the end would be, with a spirit of insubmission to the arrangements of Providence by which his life had been made so brief, and by which so much suffering had been appointed.

And the measure of my days, what it is - How long I am to live; how long I am to bear these accumulated sorrows.

That I may know how frail I am - Margin: "What time I have here." Prof. Alexander renders this: "when I shall cease." So DeWette. The Hebrew word used here - חדל *châdêl* - means "ceasing to be;" hence, "frail;" then, destitute, left, forsaken. An exact translation would be, "that I may know at what (time) or (point) I am ceasing, or about to cease." It is equivalent to a prayer that he might know when these sufferings - when a life so full of sorrow - would come to an end. The language is an expression of impatience; the utterance of a feeling which the psalmist knew was not right in itself, and which would do injury if expressed before men, but which the intensity of his feelings would not permit him to restrain, and to which he, therefore, gives utterance before God. Similar expressions of impatience in view of the sufferings of a life so short as this, and with so little to alleviate its sorrows, may be seen much amplified in Job 6:4-12; Job 7:7; Job 14:1-13. Before we blame the sacred writers for the indulgence of these feelings, let us carefully examine our own hearts, and recall what has passed through our own minds in view of the mysteries of the divine administration; and let us remember that one great object of the Bible is to record the actual feelings of men - not to vindicate them, but to show what

human nature is even in the best circumstances, and what the human heart is when as yet but partially sanctified.

Verse 5

Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth - literally, "Lo, handbreadths hast thou given my days." The word rendered "handbreadth" means properly the spread hand; the palm; the hand when the four fingers are expanded. The word is then used to denote anything very short or brief. It is one of the smallest natural measures, as distinguished from the "foot" - that is, the length of the foot; and from the cubit - that is, the length of the arm to the elbow. It is the "shortness" of life, therefore, that is the subject of painful and complaining reflection here. Who has not been in a state of mind to sympathize with the feelings of the psalmist? Who is there that does not often wonder, when he thinks of what he could and would accomplish on earth if his life extended to one thousand years, and when he thinks of the great interests at stake in reference to another world which God has made dependent on so short a life? Who can at all times so calm down his feelings as to give utterance to no expressions of impatience that life is so soon to terminate? Who is there that reflects on the great interests at stake that has not asked the question why God has not given man more time to prepare for eternity?

And mine age - Or, my life. The word used here - חלד *cheled* - means properly "duration of life," lifetime; and then, life itself; Job 11:17.

Is as nothing - That is, it is so short that it seems to be nothing at all.

Before thee - As over against thee; that is, in comparison with thee. Compare Isaiah 40:17, "All nations "before him" are as nothing;" that is, over against him, or in comparison with him. When the two are placed together, the one seems to be as nothing in the presence of the other. So the life of man, when placed by the side of the life of God, seems to be absolutely nothing.

Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity - Margin, "settled." The idea is, that every man is "constituted" vanity. Literally, "All vanity every man is constituted." There seems to be nothing but vanity; and this is the result of a divine constitution or arrangement. The idea expressed in our common version, "at his best state," however true in itself, is not in the original. The thoughts in the original are:

(a) that all people are vanity; that is, life is so short, and man accomplishes so little, that it seems to be perfect vanity; and

(b) that this is the result of the divine constitution under which man was made.

It was the fact that man has been "so made" which gave so much trouble to the mind of the psalmist.

Verse 6

Surely every man walketh in a vain show - Margin, "an image." The word rendered "vain show" - צלם *tselem* - means properly a shade, a shadow; and then, an image or likeness, as shadowing forth any real object. Then it comes to denote an idol, 2 Kings 11:18; Amos 5:26. Here the idea seems to be that of an image, as contradistinguished from a reality; the shadow of a thing, as distinguished from the substance. Man seems to be like an image, a shadow, a phantom - and not a real object, walking about. He is a form, an appearance, that soon vanishes away like a shadow.

Surely they are disquieted in vain - That is, they are actively engaged; they bustle about; they are full of anxiety; they form plans which they execute with much toil, care, and trouble; yet for no purpose worthy of so much diligence and anxious thought. They are busy, bustling "shadows" - existing for no real or substantial purposes, and accomplishing nothing. "What shadows we are, and what shadows do we pursue," said the great orator and statesman, Edmund Burke; and what a striking and beautiful comment on the passage before us was that saying, coming from such a man, and from one occupying such a position.

He heapeth up riches - The word used here means to heap up, to store up, as grain, Genesis 41:35; or treasures, Job 27:16; or a mound, Habakkuk 1:10. Here it undoubtedly refers to the efforts of men in accumulating wealth, or storing up property. This was the thing which struck the psalmist as the leading employment of these moving shadows - a fact that would strike any one as he looks upon this busy world.

And knoweth not who shall gather them - Who shall gather them to himself; to whom they will go when he dies. Compare Job 27:16-19; Ecclesiastes 2:18, Ecclesiastes 2:21; Ecclesiastes 5:13-14; Luke 12:20. The idea is, that it is not only vanity in itself, considered as the great business of life, to attempt to accumulate property - seeing that this is not what the great object of life should be, and that a life thus spent really amounts to nothing

- but vanity in this respect also, that a man can have no absolute control over his property when he is dead, and he knows not, and cannot know, into whose hands his accumulated gains may fall. The facts on this subject; the actual distribution of property after a man is dead; the use often made of it, against which no man can guard - should, together with other and higher motives, be a powerful consideration with every one, not to make the amassing of wealth the great business of life.

Verse 7

And now, Lord, what wait I for? - From the consideration of a vain world - of the fruitless efforts of man - of what so perplexed, embarrassed, and troubled him - the psalmist now turns to God, and looks to him as the source of consolation. Turning to Him, he gains more cheerful views of life. The expression "What wait I for?" means, what do I now expect or hope for; on what is my hope based; where do I find any cheerful, comforting views in regard to life? He had found none in the contemplation of the world itself, in man and his pursuits; in the course of things so shadowy and so mysterious; and he says now, that he turns to God to find comfort in his perplexities.

My hope is in thee - In thee alone. My reliance is on thee; my expectation is from thee. It is not from what I see in the world; it is not in my power of solving the mysteries which surround me; it is not that I can see the reason why these shadows are pursuing shadows so eagerly around me; it is in the God that made all, the Ruler over all, that can control all, and that can accomplish His own great purposes in connection even with these moving shadows, and that can confer on man thus vain in himself and in his pursuits that which will be valuable and permanent. The idea is, that the contemplation of a world so vain, so shadowy, so mysterious, should lead us away from all expectation of finding in that world what we need, or finding a solution of the questions which so much perplex us, up to the great God who is infinitely wise, and who can meet all the necessities of our immortal nature; and who, in his own time, can solve all these mysteries.

Verse 8

Deliver me from all my transgressions - Recognising, as in Psalm 38:3-5, his sins as the source of all his troubles and sorrows. If his transgressions were forgiven, he felt assured that his trouble would be removed. His first petition, therefore, is, that his sins might be pardoned, with the implied conscious assurance that then it would be consistent and

proper for God to remove his calamity, and deliver him from the evils which had come upon him.

Make me not the reproach of the foolish - Of the wicked; of those who are foolish, because they are wicked. See the notes at Psalm 14:1. The prayer here is, that God would not suffer him to become an object of reproach to wicked and foolish men; that is, as the passage implies, that God would not so continue to treat him as if he were a sinner as to justify to themselves their reproaches of him as a wicked man. In other words, he prays that God would forgive his sin, and would withdraw his hand of affliction, so that even the wicked might see that he was not angry with him, but that he was an object of the divine favor.

Verse 9

I was dumb - See the notes at Psalm 39:2. Compare Isaiah 53:7. The meaning here is, that he did not open his mouth to complain; he did not speak of God as if he had dealt unkindly or unjustly with him.

I opened not my mouth - I kept entire silence. This would be better rendered, "I am dumb; I will not open my mouth." The meaning is, not that he had been formerly silent and uncomplaining, but that he was now silenced, or that his mind was now calm, and that he acquiesced in the dealings of Divine Providence. The state of mind here, if should be further observed, is not that which is described in Psalm 39:2. There he represents himself as mute, or as restraining himself from uttering what was in his mind, because he felt that it would do harm, by encouraging the wicked in their views of God and of his government; here he says that he was now silenced - he acquiesced - he had no disposition to say anything against the government of God. He was mute, not by putting a restraint on himself, but because he had nothing to say.

Because thou didst it - thou hast done that which was so mysterious to me; that about which I was so much disposed to complain; that which has overwhelmed me with affliction and sorrow. It is now, to my mind, a sufficient reason for silencing all my complains, and producing entire acquiescence, that it has been done by thee. That fact is to me sufficient proof that it is right, and wise, and good; that fact makes my mind calm. "The best proof that anything is right and best is that it is done by God." The most perfect calmness and peace in trouble is produced, not when we rely on our own reasonings, or when we attempt to comprehend and explain a mystery, but when we direct our thoughts simply to the fact that "God has

done it." This is the highest reason that can be presented to the human mind, that what is done is right; this raises the mind above the mysteriousness of what is done, and makes it plain that it should be done; this leaves the reasons why it is done, where they should be left, with God. This consideration will calm down the feelings when nothing else would do it, and dispose the mind, even under the deepest trials, to acquiescence and peace. I saw this verse engraved, with great appropriateness, on a beautiful marble monument that had been erected over a grave where lay three children that had been suddenly cut down by the scarlet fever. What could be more suitable in such a trial than such a text? What could more strikingly express the true feelings of Christian piety - the calm submission of redeemed souls - than the disposition of parents, thus bereaved, to record such a sentiment over the grave of their children?

Verse 10

Remove thy stroke away from me - And yet this calm submission, as expressed in Psalm 39:9, does not take away the desire that the hand of God may be removed, and that the suffering that is brought upon us may cease. Perfect submission is not inconsistent with the prayer that, if it be the will of God, the calamity may be removed: Luke 22:42. On the word here rendered "stroke" - נגע *nega*ʿ - see the notes at Psalm 38:11. It is equivalent here to chastisement, or judgment. It refers to the trial which he was then enduring, whatever it was, which had given occasion to the feelings that he says Psalm 39:1-2 he had felt bound to suppress when in the presence of the wicked, but in reference to which he had learned entirely to acquiesce Psalm 39:9. From that trial itself he now prays that he may be delivered.

I am consumed - I am wasting away. I cannot long bear up under it. I must sink down to the grave if it is not removed. See Psalm 39:13.

By the blow of thine hand - Margin, as in Hebrew: "conflict." That is, the blow which God brings on anyone when he has, as it were, a "strife" or a "conflict" with him. It is designed here to express his affliction, as if God had "struck" him.

Verse 11

When thou with rebukes - The word here rendered "rebukes" means properly:

(a) proof or demonstration;

(b) confutation or contradiction;

(c) reproof or admonition by words;

(d) reproof by correction or punishment.

This is the meaning here. The idea of the psalmist is, that God, by punishment or calamity, expresses his sense of the evil of human conduct; and that, under such an expression of it, man, being unable to sustain it, melts away or is destroyed.

Dost correct man for iniquity - Dost punish man for his sin; or dost express thy sense of the evil of sin by the calamities which are brought upon him.

Thou makest his beauty - Margin: "That which is to be desired in him." The Hebrew means "desired, delighted in;" then, something desirable, pleasant; a delight. Its meaning is not confined to "beauty." It refers to anything that is to man an object of desire or delight - strength, beauty, possessions, life itself. All are made to fade away before the expressions of the divine displeasure.

To consume away like a moth - Not as a moth is consumed, but as a moth consumes or destroys valuable objects, such as clothing. See the notes at Job 4:19. The beauty, the vigor, the strength of man is marred and destroyed, as the texture of cloth is by the moth.

Surely every man is vanity - That is, he is seen to be vanity - to have no strength, no permanency - by the ease with which God takes away all on which he had prided himself. See the notes at Psalm 39:5.

Verse 12

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry - That is, in view of my affliction and my sins; in view, also, of the perplexing questions which have agitated my bosom; the troublous thoughts which passed through my soul, which I did not dare to express before man Psalm 39:1-2, but which I have now expressed before thee.

Hold not thy peace - Be not silent. Do not refuse to answer me; to speak peace to me.

At my tears - Or rather, at my weeping; as if God heard the voice of his weeping. Weeping, if uncomplaining, is of the nature of prayer, for God regards the sorrows of the soul as he sees them. The weeping penitent, the weeping sufferer, is one on whom we may suppose God looks with

compassion, even though the sorrows of the soul do not find "words" to give utterance to them. Compare the notes at Job 16:20. See also Romans 8:26,

For I am a stranger - The word used - גר *gêr* - means properly a sojourner; a foreigner; a man living out of his own country: Genesis 15:13; Exodus 2:22. It refers to a man who has no permanent home in the place or country where he now is; and it is used here as implying that, in the estimation of the psalmist himself, he had no permanent abode on earth. He was in a strange or foreign land. He was passing to a permanent home; and he prays that God would be merciful to him as to a man who has no home - no permanent abiding place - on earth. Compare the notes at Hebrews 11:13; notes at 1 Peter 2:11.

And a sojourner - This word has substantially the same signification. It denotes one living in another country, without the rights of a citizen.

As all my fathers were - All my ancestors. The allusion is doubtless derived from the fact that the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob thus lived as men who had no permanent home here - who had no possession of soil in the countries where they sojourned - and whose whole life, therefore, was an illustration of the fact that they were "on a journey" - a journey to another world. 1 Chronicles 29:15 - "for we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." Compare the notes at Hebrews 11:13-15.

Verse 13

O spare me - The word used here - from שׁעה *shâʿâh* - means "to look;" and then, in connection with the preposition, "to look away from;" and it here means, "Look away from me;" that is, Do not come to inflict death on me. Preserve me. The idea is this: God seemed to have fixed his eyes on him, and to be pursuing him with the expressions of his displeasure (compare Job 16:9); and the psalmist now prays that he would "turn away his eyes," and leave him.

That I may recover strength - The word used here - בלג *bâlag* - means, in Arabic, to be bright; to shine forth; and then, to make cheerful, to enliven one's countenance, or to be joyful, glad. In Job 9:27, it is rendered "comfort;" in Job 10:20, that I "may take comfort;" in Amos 5:9, "strengtheneth." It is not used elsewhere. The idea is that of being "cheered up;" of being strengthened and invigorated before he should pass away. He wished to be permitted to recover the strength which he had lost, and

especially to receive consolation, before he should leave the earth. He desired that his closing days might not be under a cloud, but that he might obtain brighter and more cheerful views, and have more of the consolations of religion before he should be removed finally from this world. It is a wish not to leave the world in gloom, or with gloomy and desponding views, but with a cheerful view of the past; with joyful confidence in the government of God; and with bright anticipations of the coming world.

Before I go hence - Before I die.

And be no more - Be no more upon the earth. Compare Psalm 6:5, note; Psalm 30:9, note. See also the notes at Job 14:1-12. Whatever may have been his views of the future world, he desired to be cheered and comforted in the prospect of passing away finally from earth. He was unwilling to go down to the grave in gloom, or under the influence of the dark and distressing views which he had experienced, and to which he refers in this psalm. A religious man, about to leave the world, should desire to have bright hopes and anticipations. For his own comfort and peace, for the honor of religion, for the glory of God, he should not leave those around under the impression that religion does nothing to comfort a dying man, or to inspire with hope the mind of one about to leave the earth, or to give to the departing friend of God cheerful anticipations of the life to come. A joyful confidence in God and his government, when a man is about to leave the world, does much, very much, to impress the minds of others with a conviction of the truth and reality of religion, as dark and gloomy views can hardly fail to lead the world to ask what that religion is worth which will not inspire a dying man with hope, and make him calm in the closing scene.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 40

Introduction

This psalm, which purports to have been composed by David, is another of the psalms addressed or dedicated "to the chief Musician;" that is, which he is desired to adjust to the appropriate music; and it is, therefore, probably one that was particularly intended to be employed in the public worship of the Hebrews. On the meaning of this expression, see the notes to the inscription of Psalm 4:1-8.

There is no method of ascertaining with certainty on what occasion the psalm was composed. Doubtless it was in view of some of the trials which occurred in the life of David, since there were many of these to which the sentiments of the psalm may with propriety be applied. As it is impossible now, however, from anything in the psalm itself, to ascertain which of those afflictions were here referred to, or which suggested the psalm, conjecture would be useless; nor, if we could ascertain to what particular time of his life he made reference, would it furnish any material aid in interpreting the psalm. It is to be presumed, however, that there was a reference to some trouble or calamity in his own life; and even if it be supposed that the psalm was designed to refer wholly to the Messiah, and to be descriptive of his sufferings, still it is probable that the language employed was suggested by something in the life of the author of the psalm, and that he was led to contemplate the future sufferings of the Messiah in connection with his own trials.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:

(1) A reference to some time of calamity or deep sorrow, represented by being in a horrible pit, from which he had been delivered in answer prayer - a deliverance so remarkable that the effect would be to lead many, on account of it, to praise God, Psalm 40:1-3.

(2) Astatement of the blessedness of the man that made the Lord his trust, and put confidence in him rather than in the proud of the earth, or in those who were faithless or deceitful, Psalm 40:4.

(3) agrateful remembrance of the many works of the Lord; evidently as laying the foundation of obligation to serve him in every way possible, and as a "reason" of the purpose of obedience immediately referred to, Psalm 40:5.

(4) astatement of what He had done, or what he proposed to do, as expressive of his sense of obligation, or of the service which God required of him, Psalm 40:6-10. The speaker in the psalm says that God did not require of him sacrifice and offering - that is, the bloody sacrifices prescribed in the Hebrew ritual, Psalm 40:6; that God had disposed him to obey, or had prepared him to render such obedience as was required - ("Mine ears hast thou opened"), Psalm 40:6; that he came to obey, in accordance with some prediction or previous record in regard to him, Psalm 40:7; that he found his supreme pleasure in doing the will of God, Psalm 40:8; and that, in pursuance of this arrangement and of this purpose, he had made known the will of God - had preached righteousness in the great congregation, and had faithfully declared the salvation of God, Psalm 40:9-10.

(5) prayers and supplications founded on these facts - on his trials; on his dangers; on the attempts of his enemies to destroy him; on his desire for the welfare and safety of the people of God, Psalm 40:11-17. Particularly:

(a) prayer for his own deliverance from the troubles which encompassed him still, Psalm 40:11-13;

(b) prayer that those who were opposed to him might be abased and humbled, Psalm 40:14-15;

(c) prayer that those who sought the Lord might rejoice and be glad, Psalm 40:16; and

(d) a prayer for himself, as poor and needy, on the grounds that God was his help and his deliverer, Psalm 40:17.

A very important and difficult question occurs here. It is the question to whom the psalm originally referred.

On this question there have been the following opinions:

(1) that it refers originally and exclusively to David;

(2) that it had an original and exclusive reference to the Messiah;

(3) that it is susceptible of a double application, part of the psalm having reference to David, and the other portion to the Messiah, as having been suggested by his own circumstances; and

(4) that the portion of the psalm applied to the Messiah in Hebrews 10:5-9 is applied by way of accommodation, or as expressing the meaning of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, but without affirming on the part of the writer of that epistle that the psalm had originally any Messianic reference.

It would be too long to examine these opinions in detail; and all that is needful in this brief introduction to the psalm may be to state some reasons for what seems to me to be the true opinion, that the psalm had an original and exclusive reference to the Messiah, or that it is one of the compositions in the Old Testament, like Psalm 2:1-12; Isaiah 53:1-12, which were designed by the Spirit of inspiration to describe the Messiah, as to some of his characteristics, and as to what he would suffer.

(1) There are such psalms, such portions of the Old Testament. This is admitted by all who believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures. The Messiah was the hope of the Jewish people. He was the subject of their most sublime prophecies. The nation was accustomed to look forward to him as their great Deliverer. In all times of national calamity they looked forward to the period when He would appear for their rescue. He was, so to speak, the hero of their national literature; the bright object in the future to which all the sacred writers looked forward; the glorious Saviour and Deliverer whose coming, and the anticipated benefit of whose coming, animated their lays, and cheered them in the darkest days of trouble and sorrow. Compare the Introduction to Isaiah, Section 7.

(2) The author of the epistle to the Hebrews expressly applies a part of this psalm to the Messiah, Hebrews 10:5-9. There can be no reasonable doubt that he quoted this with the belief that the psalm had original reference to him, and that he did not use the language by way of accommodation, for he was endeavoring to demonstrate a point, or to prove that what he was stating was true. This he does by relenting to the passage in the psalm "as proof on the point then under consideration." But there would have been no proof, no argument - in the case, if he had merely quoted language by way of accommodation, which had originally a different design. The very point of his quotation is based on the fact that he was adducing a passage which had original reference to the Messiah, and which might be properly quoted as characterizing his work. The proof (as derived from this fact) that the psalm had reference to the Messiah, consists of two things:

(a) That it is so applied by an inspired apostle, which, with all who admit his inspiration would seem to be decisive of the question;

(b) that he so applied it, shows, in the circumstances, that this was an ancient and admitted interpretation.

He was writing to those who had been Jews; to those whom he was desirous of convincing as to the truth of what he was alleging in regard to the notion of Hebrew sacrifices. For this purpose it was necessary to appeal to the Old Testament; but it cannot be supposed that he would adduce, as proof, a passage whose relevancy to the point would not be at once admitted. It may be presumed, therefore, that the passage was commonly applied by the Hebrews themselves to the purpose for which the apostle used it, or that the application, when made, was so plain and obvious that they would not call it in question.

(3) The entire psalm may be applied to the Messiah without anything forced or unnatural in the interpretation. This will be shown, in detail, in the exposition of the psalm; but in the meantime it may not be improper to refer to the principal difficulties in such an application, and to the principal objections derived from this source against the idea that the psalm refers to the Messiah. The principal of these relate to the following points:

(a) In Psalm 40:2 the speaker in the psalm says: "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings;" and on the ground of this, he gives thanks to God. But there is no real difficulty in supposing that this refers to the Messiah, and that it was actually fulfilled in the case of the Lord Jesus. His enemies often plotted against his life; they laid snares for him; they endeavored to destroy him; his dangers may well be represented as "an horrible pit," and as "miry clay;" and his deliverance from those perils may well be compared with the case of one who is raised up from such a pit, and from the deep mire. Even supposing that this was designed to refer to the personal experience of the psalmist himself, still the language would be figurative, and must be designed to refer to some danger, peril, or trouble that would be well represented by being thrown into such a pit, or sinking in miry clay. It cannot be supposed that the psalmist meant to say this had really and literally occurred in his own life. Without any impropriety, therefore, the language may be applied to the trials and dangers of the Messiah, and to the merciful interposition of God in delivering him.

(b) The second objection or difficulty in referring it to the Messiah is derived from what is said in Psalm 40:12: "Mine iniquities have taken hold on me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me." But, in reference to the propriety of applying this to the Messiah, two remarks may be made: First. It may be true that the Messiah was so identified with men - became so truly a substitute for sinners - experienced in his own soul, in the deep sorrows of the atonement, so intensely the effects of their sin, and so bore the sufferings that were expressive of the divine sense of the evil of sin, that the language might be applied to him as if these sins were his own. He was treated as if they were his - as if he had been a sinner. He so made them his own, that it was proper he should be treated as if they were his, and that he might feel he was suffering as if they were his.

It is true that they could not be literally transferred to him; it is true that in no proper sense of the term was he a sinner; it is true that in the just signification of the word he was not "guilty," and that God always saw he was personally innocent; but still it is true that, in the work of the

atonement, he was treated as if he had been a sinner, and that, in this sense, he might speak of the sins for which he suffered as his own. He had voluntarily assumed them, and he was suffering for them as if they had been his. Thus we have in Isaiah 53:4-6 similar language applied to him: "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows;" "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him;" "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." If such language might properly be applied to him and his sufferings, then there could be no impropriety or incongruity in his regarding himself as so identified with sinful men, and as so truly bearing what was due to their sins, that he might speak of those sins "as if" they were his own, as one might speak of a debt incurred by a friend, and which he had brought himself under voluntary obligation to pay, as if it were his own, and might say, "it is no longer his, but mine."

The language of Scripture in regard to the relation of the Redeemer to sin is often so marked and striking as to suggest and to justify this language. See 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13. Second. It is possible, after all, that the word rendered "iniquities" in the psalm, means here merely "calamity, trouble, sorrow." (See the notes at Hebrews 10:5; and compare Prof. Stuart on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Excursus xx., p. 594.) So the same word which is used here means, in 2 Samuel 16:12, "It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction." The words "iniquity" and "calamity" - "sin" and "punishment" - are closely connected in the Scriptures; so closely that the one is often put for the other, and when a sacred writer speaks of his "sin," he often means the suffering or calamity that has come upon him in consequence of his sin. So the Messiah may be understood here to mean that the calamities or woes which had come upon him in consequence of his taking upon him the sins of the world made it proper to say that his "iniquities" - the iniquities which he had assumed or which, in the language of Isaiah, he "bore" - had "taken hold on him, so that he was not able to look up;" or, considering their great number, he might say, "they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me."

(c) A third objection to the application of the psalm to the Messiah is, that it cannot be supposed he would utter such imprecations on his enemies as are found in Psalm 40:14-15: "Let them be ashamed and confounded; let

them be driven backward; let them be desolate." To this it may be replied, that such imprecations are as proper in the mouth of the Messiah as in the mouth of David; and that they are improper in neither. Both David and the Messiah did utter denunciations against the enemies of piety and of God. There is no evidence that there was any malignant feeling in either case; nor is it inconsistent with the highest benevolence to utter denunciation of guilt. God constantly does it in his word; and he as often does it in the dealings of his Providence. The wicked cannot walk through this world without meeting denunciations of their guilt on every hand, and there was no impiety in the fact that he who will pronounce a sentence in the great day of judgment on all guilty men, should apprize them beforehand of what would be sure to come upon them. The objections, then, are not of such a nature that it is improper to regard the psalm as wholly applicable to the Messiah.

(4) The psalm cannot be applied with propriety to David, nor do we know of anyone to whom it can be applied but the Messiah. It was not true of David that he "had come to do the will" of God, in view of the fact that God did not require sacrifice and offerings, Psalm 40:6-7; it was not true that it was written of him "in the volume of the book," that he delighted to do the will of God, and that he had come into the world in view of the fact that it "had been" so written Psalm 40:7-8; it was not true that it had been his characteristic work to "preach righteousness in the great congregation" Psalm 40:9; but all this was true of the Messiah. These expressions are such as can be applied only to him; and, taking all these circumstances together, the conclusion seems to be a proper one that the whole psalm had original reference to the Redeemer, and is to be interpreted as applying to him alone.

There is a remarkable resemblance between the close of this psalm Psalm 40:13-17 and Psalm 70:1-5. Indeed, that entire psalm is the same as the closing part of this one. Why that portion of the psalm before us is thus repeated, and why it is separated from this and made a psalm by itself, is wholly unknown. It cannot be supposed to be an error in transcribing, for the error would be too material, and would most certainly be detected. Perhaps it can best be accounted for by supposing the author of Psalm 70:1-5 to have been in the state of mind, and in the circumstances there described, and by supposing that instead of writing a new psalm which would express his feelings, he found that this part of Psalm 40, already

composed, would describe so exactly what he wished to express, and that he regarded it as so adapted to be a prayer by itself, that he therefore copied it. The fact, that it was thus copied, and that the sentiments were repeated, does not in any manner detract from the supposition that it is inspired.

Verse 1

I waited patiently for the Lord - Margin, as in Hebrew, "In waiting I waited." That is, "I continued to wait." It was not a single, momentary act of expectation or hope; it was continuous; or, was persevered in. The idea is, that his prayer was not answered at once, but that it was answered after he had made repeated prayers, or when it seemed as if his prayers would not be answered. It is earnest, persevering prayer that is referred to; it is continued supplication and hope when there seemed to be no answer to prayer, and no prospect that it would be answered.

And he inclined unto me - That is, ultimately he heard and answered me; or he turned himself favorably toward me, as the result of "persevering" prayer. The word "inclined" here means properly "bowed;" that is, he "bent forward" to hearken, or to place his ear near my mouth and to hear me. At first, he seemed as one that would not hear; as one that throws his head backward or turns his head away. Ultimately, however, he bent forward to receive my prayer.

And heard my cry - The cry or supplication which I made for help; the cry which I directed to him in the depth of my sorrows and my danger, Psalm 40:2. As applied to the Redeemer, this would refer to the fact that in his sorrows, in the deep sorrows connected with the work of redemption, he persevered in calling on God, and that God heard him, and raised him up to glory and joy. See Matthew 26:36-46. Compare the notes at Hebrews 5:7. The time supposed to be referred to, is after his sufferings were closed; after his work was done; "after" he rose from the dead. It is the language of grateful remembrance which we may suppose he uttered in the review of the amazing sorrows through which he had passed in making the atonement, and in the recollection that God had kept him in those sorrows, and had brought him up from such a depth of woe to such a height of glory.

Verse 2

He brought me up also out of an horrible pit - Margin: "A pit of noise." The word used here means a pit; a cistern; a prison; a dungeon; a grave. This last signification of the word is found in Psalm 28:1; Psalm

30:4; Psalm 88:4; Isaiah 38:18; Isaiah 14:19. It may refer to any calamity - or to trouble, like being in a pit - or it may refer to the grave. The word rendered "horrible" - שׁאון *shâ'ôn* - means properly "noise, uproar, tumult," as of waters; of a crowd of men; of war. Then it seems to be used in the sense of "desolation" or "destruction," as applicable to the grave. DeWette understands it here of a pit, a cavern, or an abyss that roars or is tumultuous; that is, that is impassable. Perhaps this is the idea - a cavern, deep and dark, where the waters roar, and which seems to be filled with horrors. So Rosenmuller understands it. The Septuagint renders it: ἐκ λάκκου ταλαιπωρίας *ek lakkou talaipōrias* "a lake of misery." It is a deep and horrid cavern, where there is no hope of being rescued, or where it would seem that there would be certain destruction.

Out of the miry clay - At the bottom of the pit. Where there was no solid ground - no rock on which to stand. See Jeremiah 38:6; Psalm 69:2, Psalm 69:14.

And set my feet upon a rock - Where there was firm standing.

And established my goings - Or, fixed my steps. That is, he enabled me to walk as on solid ground; he conducted me along safely, where there was no danger of descending to the pit again or of sinking in the mire. If we understand this of the Redeemer, it refers to that time when, his sorrows ended, and his work of atonement done, it became certain that he would never be exposed again to such dangers, or sink into such a depth of woes, but that his course ever onward would be one of safety and of glory.

Verse 3

And he hath put a new song in my mouth - See the notes at Psalm 33:3. The idea is, that he had given a new or fresh "occasion" for praise. The deliverance was so marked, and was such an addition to former mercies, that a new expression of thanks was proper. It was an act of such surprising intervention on the part of God that the language used on former occasions, and which was adapted to express the mercies then received, would not be sufficient to convey the sense of gratitude felt for the present deliverance. As applied to the Messiah, and referring (as it was supposed in the notes at Psalm 40:2) to his being raised up to glory after the depth of his sorrows, it would mean that no language hitherto employed to express gratitude to God would be adequate to the occasion, but that the language of a new song of praise would be demanded to celebrate so great an event.

Even praise unto our God - "To our God;" identifying himself, as the Messiah does, with his people, and expressing the idea that the new song of praise was appropriate to them as well as to "himself," since they would be benefited by his work, and since God was their God as well as his. Compare John 20:17.

Many shall see it - Great numbers of the human race shall be made acquainted with the occasion which there was for such a song.

And fear - Learn to reverence, to worship, to honor God, as the result of what had been done.

And shall trust in the Lord - Shall confide in God; shall put their trust in him; shall become his true worshippers and friends:

(a) as the effect of this merciful interposition in behalf of him who had been thus in trouble or distress, and who was enabled to triumph;

(b) as the result of the work accomplished by him.

The effect of the Redeemer's sorrows, and of God's merciful help, would be that great numbers would learn to put their trust in God, or would become his true friends. No man, in fact, can compute the "numbers" of those who, in consequence of the work of the Messiah, will turn to God and become his true worshippers and friends.

Verse 4

Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust - See the notes at Psalm 34:8. Compare Psalm 27:1. Literally, here, "The blessings of the man who places Yahweh for his confidence;" that is, who makes Him his seeurity, or who feels that his security for happiness and salvation is in Him.

And respecteth not the proud - The haughty, or those who are confident in themselves. Literally, "who looks not to the proud;" that is, who does not depend on them for help and for salvation.

Nor such as turn aside to lies - Who depart from the straight path, and incline to that which is false and deceitful. The reference is to those who are easily made to swerve from that which is true and honest to that which is delusive and false. Their integrity cannot be confided in. There is no security that they will be disposed to do right. The idea is, that the man who trusts in God is blessed or happy, as compared with one who trusts in man; man confident in himself; man liable to fall into error; man who is easily

led astray; man who is deceitful, and who cannot, therefore, be relied on. God is mighty, but not haughty; God never is drawn aside from the truth; he never deceives.

Verse 5

Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done - literally, "Many (things), O Lord my God, hast thou done; thy wonderful things and thy thoughts toward us, it is not (possible) to state unto thee." The recollection of the particular kindness shown to the speaker, as referred to in the previous verses, suggests the recollection of the great number of wonders that God had done for his people - the acts of his kindness which it would be hopeless to attempt to recount before him. And who "could" enumerate and record all the acts of God's benevolence toward men in the works of creation, providence, and redemption; all that he has done in the history of the Church, and for the individual members of the Church in past times; all that he has done to save his people in the days of persecution; all that has been accomplished in our own individual lives? Obviously these things are beyond all power of enumeration by man. They can be admired now only in the gross; eternity alone will be sufficient for us to look at them and to recount them in detail. The phrase "wonderful works" means here remarkable interventions; things fitted to excite astonishment; things that surpass what man could have anticipated; things that could have been done only by God.

And thy thoughts which are to us-ward - Toward us; or which pertain to us. The word "thoughts" here refers to the plans, purposes, arrangements of God designed for our welfare; the things that are the result of his thinking of our wants - of what we need - of what would do us good. See Psalm 40:17.

They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee - Margin, "None can order them unto thee." Literally, "There is no putting them in order before thee;" that is, there is no such arranging of them, or disposing of them in order, that they can all be brought into their proper place, so as to be perceived or numbered. The Hebrew word - ערך *ʿârak* - means properly, to place in a row; to put in order; to arrange; as, to put an army in battle array, or to draw it up for battle, Judges 20:20, Judges 20:22; to put words in order for an argument, or to arrange thoughts so as to present an argument, Job 32:14; to set a cause in order before a judge, or to lay it before him, Job 13:18. The word also means to place together with anything, or by the side

of anything - that is, to make a comparison. Gesenius (Lexicon) supposes that this is the idea here, and that the proper interpretation is, "Nothing can be compared unto thee." But the other interpretation seems best to accord with the connection, as referring to the wonderful works of God, and to his thoughts of mercy and goodness as being beyond the power of computation, or as too numerous to be brought into order and arrangement before the mind.

If I would declare and speak of them - If I should attempt to speak of them; or to recount them.

They are more than can be numbered - More than man can enumerate. They go beyond the power of language to express them. This is literally true. No language of man can describe what God has done and has purposed in fitting up this world as an abode for people, and in his mercy toward them.

Verse 6

Sacrifice and offering - The first of the words used here - זבח *zebach* - means properly a bloody-offering; the other - מנחה *minchāh* - an offering without blood, as a thank-offering. See the notes at Isaiah 1:11. The four words employed in this verse - sacrifice, offering, burnt-offering, sin-offering - embrace all the species of sacrifice and offerings known among the Hebrews; and the idea here is, that such offering as they were accustomed to offer was required of him who is here referred to. A higher service was needed.

Thou didst not desire - The word here rendered desire means to incline to, to be favorably disposed, as in reference to doing anything; that is, to will, to desire, to please. The meaning here is, that he did not will this or wish it; he would not be pleased with it in comparison with obedience, or as a substitute for obedience. He preferred obedience to any external rites and forms; to all the rites and forms of religion prescribed by the law. They were of no value without obedience; they could not be substituted in the place of obedience. This sentiment often occurs in the Old Testament, showing that the design of all the rites then prescribed was to bring men to obedience, and that they were of no value without obedience. See the notes at Isaiah 1:10-20; compare 1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 51:16-17; Hosea 6:6; see also the notes at Hebrews 10:5.

Mine ears hast thou opened - Margin: "digged." The Hebrew word - כרה *kârâh* - means "to dig;" as, to dig a well, Genesis 26:25; to dig a

sepulchre, Genesis 50:5. As used here this would properly mean, "mine ears hast thou digged out;" that is, thou hast so opened them that there is a communication with the seat of hearing; or, in other words, thou hast caused me to hear this truth, or hast revealed it to me. Compare Isaiah 50:5, "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious." The meaning here would be, that the ear had been opened, so that it was quick to hear. An indisposition to obey the will of God is often expressed by the fact that the ears are "stopped:" Zechariah 7:11; Psalm 58:4-5; Proverbs 21:13. There is manifestly no allusion here, though that has been supposed by many to be the reference, to the custom of boring through the ear of a servant with an awl, as a sign that he was willing to remain with his master: Exodus 21:6; Deuteronomy 15:17. In that case the outer circle, or rim of the ear was "bored through" with an awl; here the idea is that of "hollowinq out," digging, excavating, that is, of making a passage "through," so that one could hear; not the mere piercing of the outer ear. The essential idea is, that this truth had been communicated to him - that God preferred obedience to sacrifice; and that he had been made attentive to that truth, "as if" he had been before deaf, and his ears had been opened. The principal difficulty in the passage relates to its application in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Hebrews 10:5. That difficulty arises from the fact that the Septuagint translates the phrase here by the words "a body hast thou prepared me;" and that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews founds an argument on that translation, with reference to the work of the Messiah. On this point, see the notes at Hebrews 10:5. It is perhaps not now possible to explain this difficulty in a way that will be entirely satisfactory.

burnt-offering - See the notes at Isaiah 1:11. The uniqueness of this offering was that it was consumed by fire.

And sin-offering - sin-offering was an offering or sacrifice made specifically for sin, with a view to expiate either sin in general, or some specific act of sin. In the Mosaic law there are two kinds of these offerings prescribed; "trespass-offerings," or offerings for guilt or fault, denoted by the word אשם *'âshâm* and sin-offering, denoted by the word used here. They are offerings which were consumed by fire, Leviticus 6:1-7; Leviticus 14:10. But the essential "idea" was that they were for "sin," or for some act of guilt. In a general sense, this was true of all bloody offerings or sacrifices; but in these cases the attention of the worshipper was turned particularly to the fact of sin or transgression.

Thou hast not required - That is, thou hast not required them as compared with obedience; in other words, thou hast preferred the latter. These offerings would not meet the case. More was necessary to be done than was implied in these sacrifices. They would not expiate sin; they would not remove guilt; they would not give the conscience peace. A higher work, a work implied in an act of "obedience" of the most exalted kind, was demanded in order to accomplish the work to be done. Compare Psalm 51:16.

Verse 7

Then said I - In Hebrews 10:7, the apostle applies this to the Messiah. See the notes at that verse. This is the most simple and satisfactory interpretation of the passage. The word "then" in this verse means, "since this is the case;" or, "things being thus." It does not refer to time, but to the condition of things. "Since it was certain that the work needful to be done could not be accomplished by bloody offerings - the sacrifice of animals - under these circumstances I said;" that is, I resolved or purposed to come.

Lo, I come - It is difficult to see how this could be applied to David; it is easy to see how it could be applied to the Messiah. When all bloody offerings under the law - all the sacrifices which men could make - did not avail to put away sin, it was true of the Messiah that he came into the world to perform a higher work that would meet the case - a lofty work of obedience, extending even unto death, Philemon 2:8. This is precisely the use which the apostle makes of the passage in Hebrews 10:7, and this is clearly the most obvious meaning. It is in no sense applicable to David; it is fully applicable to the Messiah.

In the volume of the book - literally, "in the roll of the book." See the notes at Luke 4:17. The phrase would most naturally denote the "scroll of the law;" but it might include any volume or roll where a record or prophecy was made. In a large sense it would embrace all that had been written at the command of God at the time when this was supposed to be spoken. That is, as spoken by the Messiah, it would include all the books of the Old Testament. See the notes at Hebrews 10:7.

It is written of me - It is recorded; or, there is a record made of me; to wit, in this respect, that his great delight would be to do the will of God. The proper interpretation of this expression must he, that there must be some record to be found in the "book" or" volume" referred to, which was designed to describe him in this respect, or which had an original reference

to him. The meaning is not that there was a general record on the point of obedience which might be applied to him as well as to others, but that the record was intended to be applied to him, and to describe his character. This is one of the passages in the Psalms which cannot with any propriety be applied to David himself. There was no such antecedent record in regard to him; no statement in any "book" or "volume" that this would be his character. There is no promise - no intimation - in any of the books of Scripture written before the time of David that he would come to do the will of God with a view to effect that which could not be done by the sacrifices and offerings under the law.

The reference of the language, therefore, must be to the Messiah - to some place where it is represented or affirmed that he would come to accomplish by his obedience what could not be done by the sacrifices and oblations made under the law. Thus understood, and regarded as the language of the Messiah himself, the reference might be to all the books of the Old Testament (for all were completed before he came), and not merely to those which had been written in the time of David. But still, it is true that no such declaration, in so many words, can now be found in any of those books; and the meaning must be that this was the language which was everywhere implied respecting the Messiah; that this was the substance of the description given of him; that this characterized his work as predicted there; to wit, that when all sacrifices and offerings under the law failed; when they had all shown that they were not efficacious to put away sin, One would come to perform some higher work that would be effectual in putting away transgression, and that this work might, in the highest sense, be described as "obedience," or as "doing the will of God." This was true. The language and the institutions of the Old Testament contemplated him as the One who only could put away sin. The entire spirit of the Mosaic economy supposed that a Saviour would come to do the will of God by making an atonement for the sin of the world. The meaning then is, "I come to do thy will in making an atonement, for no other offering would expiate sin; that I would do this, is the language of the Scriptures in predicting my coming, and of the whole spirit and design of the ancient dispensation."

Verse 8

I delight to do thy will, O my God - To wit, in obeying the law; in submitting to all the trials appointed to me; in making an atonement for the

sins of men. See the notes at Hebrews 10:7. Compare Philemon 2:8; Matthew 26:39.

Yea, thy law is within my heart - Margin, "In the midst of my bowels." So the Hebrew. The idea is, that the law of God was within him. His obedience was not external, but proceeded from the heart. How true this was of the Redeemer it is not necessary here to say.

Verse 9

I have preached righteousness in the great congregation - I have main tained and defended the principles of righteousness and truth among assembled multitudes. it would be difficult to see how this could be applied to David himself, or on what occasion of his life this could be said of him; but no one can doubt that this is applicable to the Messiah:

(a) He was a preacher.

(b) He addressed vast multitudes.

(c) Before them all, and at all times, he maintained and illustrated the great principles of "righteousness" as demanded by the law of God, and unfolded the way in which all those multitudes might become righteous before God.

Lo, I have not refrained my lips - I have not closed my lips. I have not kept back the truth.

O Lord, thou knowest - He could make this solemn appeal to God as the Searcher of hearts, in proof that he had faithfully uttered all that had been required of him in making known the will of God. Compare John 17:4, John 17:6, John 17:8, John 17:14, John 17:26.

Verse 10

I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart - The word "righteousness" here may denote the divine views on the subject of righteousness, or the divine method of making man righteous; that is, the method of justification, as the word is used in the New Testament. See the notes at Romans 1:17. The word, as it might have been employed by David, would have been used in the former sense, as meaning that, knowing what God requires of men, he had not concealed that in his heart, or had not kept it to himself; as used by the Messiah, as I suppose it to be here, it would be employed in the latter sense, or perhaps embrace both. The idea would be, that he had not concealed in his own mind, or had not kept to himself, the

knowledge which he had of the requirements of the law of God, or of the way in which man can be justified or regarded and treated as righteous in his sight. He had fully communicated this knowledge to others. It is not necessary to say that this was literally fulfilled in the work of the Redeemer. He spent his life in making known the great truths about the righteousness of God; he died that he might disclose to man a way by which God could consistently regard and treat men as righteous. See the notes at Romans 3:24-26.

I have declared thy faithfulness - Thy truthfulness; I have showed that God is worthy of confidence. And thy salvation. Thy method of salvation, or of saving men.

I have not concealed thy loving kindness - Thy mercy or thy merciful disposition toward men. He had shown to the human race that God was a merciful Being; a Being who would pardon sin.

And thy truth - The truth which thou hast revealed; the truth on all subjects which it was important for men to understand.

From the great congregation - That is, as in Psalm 40:9, the assembled multitudes - the throngs that gathered to hear the words of the Great Teacher. Compare Matthew 5:1; Matthew 13:2; Luke 8:4.

Verse 11

Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord - Do not restrain or hold back thy compassions. Let thy mercies - the expressions of thy love - flow out freely toward me in connection with what I have done. As applicable to the Redeemer, this is a prayer that God would bestow upon him in connection with his work, and as a reward of his work, appropriate proofs of his goodness. And especially is this to be understood here as a prayer for support and deliverance in the sorrows that came upon him in the accomplishment of his work. The prayer is intermediate between the expression of his purpose to do the will of God when all other means of salvation had failed Psalm 40:6-8, and the sorrows or sufferings that would come upon him in the accomplishment of his work Psalm 40:12-13. He saw himself at this point of his life, as represented in the psalm, as about to sink into the depth of woes. He had kept the law of God, and had by his obedience thus far done His will. He had made known the truth of God, and had declared His great message to the assembled multitude that had crowded his path, and thronged to hear him. He saw himself now about to enter the vale of sorrow; to plunge into that depth of the unutterable woes

connected with the making of an atonement. He prayed, therefore, that, in these approaching sorrows, God would not withhold the expression of his tender mercy. The point of time, therefore, in the Redeemer‘s life which the verse before us occupies, is that awful and sorrowful hour when, his public work of teaching and of miracles finished, he was about to endure the agonies of Gethsemane and of the cross.

Let thy loving-kindness - Thy mercy. “And thy truth.” Thy promises; thy plighted support and strength; thy fidelity. That is, he prayed that God would show himself true and faithful in bearing him through the great work of the atonement.

Continually - Through the whole of these sorrows. Do not for a moment leave or forsake me.

Preserve me - Keep me from sinking under these woes; from speaking any improper word; from shrinking back; from being overcome by the tempter; from failing in the great work now to be accomplished. As the Redeemer had a human as well as a divine nature; as he was man, with all human susceptibilities to suffering, it was not inappropriate that he should utter this prayer, and lift up his heart with the utmost earnestness to God, that he might not be forsaken in the consummation of the great work of his life, and that this work might not fail.

Verse 12

For innumerable evils have compassed me about - Have surrounded me, or have beset me on every side. The evils here referred to, understood as being those which came upon the Messiah, were sorrows that came upon him in consequence of his undertaking to do what could not be done by sacrifices and offerings Psalm 40:6; that is, his undertaking to save men by his own “obedience unto death.” The time referred to here, I apprehend, is that when the full effects of his having assumed the sins of the world to make expiation for them came upon him; when he was about to endure the agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary.

Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me - On this passage, as constituting one of the main objections, and the strongest objection, to the application of the psalm to the Messiah, and on the way in which such objection may be met, see introduction to this psalm (3b).

So that I am not able to look up - This is not the exact idea of the Hebrew word. That is simply, I am not able to see; and it refers to the dimness or failure of sight caused by distress, weakness, or old age. 1

Samuel 3:2; 1 Samuel 4:15; 1 Kings 14:4; compare Psalm 6:7. The idea here is, not that he was unable to look up, but that the calamities which came upon him were so heavy and severe as to make his sight dim, or to deprive him of vision. Either by weeping, or by the mere pressure of suffering, he was so affected as almost to be deprived of the power of seeing.

They are more than the hairs of mine head - That is, the sorrows that come upon me in connection with sin. The idea is that they were innumerable - the hairs of the head, or the sands on the seashore; being employed in the Scriptures to denote what cannot be numbered. See Psalm 69:4. Compare Genesis 22:17; Genesis 32:12; Joshua 11:4; 2 Samuel 17:11.

Therefore my heart faileth me - Margin, as in Hebrew: "forsaketh." The idea is that he sank under these sufferings; he could not sustain them.

Verse 13

Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me - That is, in these troubles and sorrows. See Matthew 26:39. The prayer is that, if possible, the cup of sorrow might be taken away.

O Lord, make haste to help me - This is the same form of prayer, and referring, I suppose, to the same occasion as that which occurs in Psalm 22:19. See the notes at that verse.

Verse 14

Let them be ashamed and confounded together - See at Psalm 35:4, note; Psalm 35:26, note. This may be understood here rather as a confident expectation than a wish or desire. It implies the certainty that they would thus be ashamed and confounded; that is, that they would not be successful, or would be foiled in their purposes. But understood as a wish or prayer, it could not be improper. There is no sin in the wish that the wicked may not be successful in their plans, and may not be suffered to injure us. As the language of the Messiah it was in every way an appropriate prayer that the purposes of those who would defeat his design in coming into the world might be foiled - for on the execution of that design depended the salvation of a lost race.

That seek after my soul to destroy it - That seek after my life; that would destroy me. That is, they seek to kill me; they would take my life before the full time is come. As understood of the Messiah, this would refer to the times when his life was in danger, as it often was, before the full period had arrived for him to die: John 7:6; Matthew 26:18. The purpose of

his enemies was to take his life; to prevent the spread of his doctrines; to cheek him in his work. The taking of his life at any time before the full period had arrived, or in any other way than that in which he had purposed to lay it down, would have been a defeat of his work, since in the plan of salvation it was contemplated that he should die at a certain time, and in a certain manner - that he should die at the time which had been predicted by the prophets, and in such a mode as to make an atonement for sin. All this would have been defeated if, before that time came, he had been put to death by stoning, or in any of the numerous ways in which his life was threatened.

Let them be driven backward, and put to shame, that wish me evil - Turned backward, as they are who are unsuccessful, or are defeated. Compare John 18:6.

Verse 15

Let them be desolate - The word here employed means to be astonished or amazed; then, to be laid waste, or made desolate. As used here, it refers to their purposes, and the wish or prayer is that they might be wholly unsuccessful, or that in respect to success they might be like a waste and desolate field where nothing grows.

For a reward - The word used here - עקב *ʿêqeb* - means the end, the last of anything; then, the recompence, reward, wages, as being the end, the result, or issue of a certain course of conduct. That is, in this case, the desolation prayed for would be a proper recompence for their purpose, or for what they said. "Of their shame." Of their shameful act or purpose; their act as deserving of ignominy.

That say unto me, Aha, aha - That use language of reproach and contempt. This is a term of exultation over another; a word of rejoicing at the calamities that come on another; an act of joy over a fallen enemy: Ezekiel 25:3; see Psalm 35:21, note; Psalm 35:25, note. As understood of the Messiah, this would refer to the taunts and reproaches of his enemies; the exultation which they manifested when they had him in their power - when they felt secure that their vexations in regard to him were at an end, or that they would be troubled with him no more. By putting him to death they supposed that they might feel safe from further molestation on his account. For this act, this note of exultation and joy, on the part of the Jewish rulers, and of the people as stimulated by those rulers, the desolation which came upon them (the utter ruin of their temple, their city, and their nation) was an

appropriate reward. That desolation did not go beyond their desert, for their treatment of the Messiah - as the ruin of the sinner in the future world will not go beyond his desert for having rejected the same Messiah as his Saviour.

Verse 16

Let all those that seek thee - All those who desire to know thee; to understand thy ways; to be thy friends. The phrase is used to denote the truly pious, because it is a characteristic of all such that they truly desire to be acquainted with God, and to find the way which leads to his favor.

Rejoice and be glad in thee -

(1) By finding thee, or securing the object which they sought;

(2) in thee, as the source of all true comfort and joy.

The prayer is that all such may be successful in their efforts, while those who have no such aim may be disappointed, Psalm 40:14.

Let such as love thy salvation -

(a) Thy method of salvation, or the appointed way by which men may be saved; and

(b) the salvation itself - deliverance from the guilt and dominion of sin, and complete and eternal restoration to the favor of God.

Say continually, The Lord be magnified - See the notes at Psalm 35:27, where the same expression occurs.

Verse 17

But I am poor and needy - More literally, "I am afflicted and poor." The language would describe the condition of one who was afflicted and was at the same time poor; of one who had no resource but in God, and who was passing through scenes of poverty and sorrow. There were undoubtedly times in the life of David to which this language would be applicable; but it would be far more applicable to the circumstances in which the Redeemer was placed; and, in accordance with the interpretation which has been given of the other parts of the psalm, I suppose that this is designed to represent his afflicted and humble condition as a man of poverty and sorrow.

Yet the Lord thinketh upon me - The Lord cares for me; he has not forgotten me. Man forsakes me, but he will not. Man leaves me to poverty and sorrow, but, he will not. How true this was of the Redeemer, that the

Lord, the Father of mercies; thought on him, it is not needful now to say; nor can it be doubted that in the heavy sorrows of his life this was a source of habitual consolation. To others also - to all his friends - this is a source of unspeakable comfort. To be an object of the thoughts of God; to be had in his mind; to be constantly in his remembrance; to be certain that he will not forsake us in our trouble; to be assured in our own minds that one so great as God is - the infinite and eternal One - will never cease to think on us, may well sustain us in all the trials of life. It matters little who does forsake us, if he does not; it would be of little advantage to us who should think on us, if he did not.

Thou art my help and my deliverer - Implying the highest confidence. See the notes at Psalm 18:2.

Make no tarrying, O my God - Do not linger or delay in coining to my assistance. The psalm closes with this prayer. Applied to the Redeemer, it indicates strong confidence in God in the midst of his afflictions and sorrows, with earnest pleading, coming from the depth of those sorrows, that God would interpose for him. The vision of the psalmist extended here no farther. His eye rested on a suffering Messiah - afflicted, crushed, broken, forsaken - with all the woes connected with the work of human redemption, and all the sorrows expressive of the evil of sin clustering upon him, yet confident in God, and finding his last consolation in the feeling that God "thought" on him, and in the assurance that He would not ultimately forsake him. There is something delightful, though pensive, in the close of the psalm. The last prayer of the sufferer - the confident, earnest pleading - lingers on the ear, and we almost seem to behold the Sufferer in the depth of his sorrows, and in the earnestness of his supplication, calmly looking up to God as One that "thought" on him when all others had forgotten him; as a last, safe refuge when every other refuge had failed. So, in our sorrows, we may lie before the throne, calmly looking up to God with a feeling that we are not forgotten; that there is One who "thinks" on us; and that it is our privilege to pray to him that he would hasten to deliver us. All sorrow can be borne when we feel that God has not forgotten us; we may be calm when all the world forsakes us, if we can feel assured that the great and blessed God thinks on us, and will never cease to remember us.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 41

Introduction

This psalm, ascribed to David, has, in its general design and spirit, a strong resemblance to Psalm 38:11-12; compare Psalm 41:5-9. It was this unkindness certainly which greatly increased his suffering, and which probably gave occasion to the psalm. Who the persons were that thus treated him with neglect and coldness cannot now be ascertained; nor is it necessary to know who they were in order to appreciate the meaning and the beauty of the psalm. Their conduct is so accurately and so feelingly described, that it would be no particular advantage to be made acquainted with their names.

The case, therefore, in the psalm is that of one who is sick; who is forsaken by his friends; who is subjected to unkind remarks alike when they are with him and when absent from him; of one, therefore, whose only refuge is God, and who looks to him for sympathy.

According to this view, the psalm may be conveniently divided into four parts:

I. The psalmist dwells on the blessed character of one who does show compassion or kindness to the poor and the suffering; the blessedness of the man who is merciful, Psalm 41:1-3. This is evidently a reflection forced upon him by the opposite conduct of those whom he supposed he might have regarded as his friends, and to whom he had a right to look for sympathy and kindness. In his own mind, therefore, he contrasts their actual conduct with the character of the truly kind and merciful man, and is led, in few words, to describe the happiness which would follow if proper kindness were shown to the poor and the afflicted. He says that the effect of such conduct would be:

(a) that the Lord would deliver such an one in the time of trouble, Psalm 41:1;

(b) that the Lord would preserve him alive, Psalm 41:2;

(c) that he would be blessed upon the earth, Psalm 41:2;

(d) that the Lord would not deliver him to the will of his enemies, Psalm 41:2;

(e) that he would strengthen him on the bed of languishing, and would make his bed in his sickness, Psalm 41:3.

II. An appeal to God for mercy, and for restoration to health, with an humble confession that it was for his own sin that he was suffering; and with a purpose not to attempt to justify himself, or to say that he had not deserved this at the hand of God, Psalm 41:4. He makes no complaint of God, much as he had occasion to complain of his friends.

III. A statement in regard to the manner in which he had been treated in his sickness, Psalm 41:5-9.

(a) His enemies took occasion to speak evil of him, and to utter the wish, in a manner which would be most painful to a sufferer, that he might die, and that his name might perish, Psalm 41:5.

(b) If they came to see him in his sickness, instead of speaking words of kindness and comfort, they spoke only "vain" and unmeaning words; they sought occasion to gratify their own malignity by finding something in his manner, or in his language, which they could repeat to his disadvantage, Psalm 41:6.

(c) All that hated him took occasion now to conspire against him, to lay together all that they individually knew or could say that would be injurious to him, and to urge their individual causes of complaint against him in a general statement in regard to his character, Psalm 41:7.

(d) They especially sought to injure him by reporting that a disease clave to him which was the result of sin, perhaps of an irregular life, and that there was no prospect that he would be again restored to health; that the hand of God was upon him, and that he must sink to the grave, Psalm 41:8.

(e) All this was aggravated by the fact that his own familiar friend, some one who had enjoyed his confidence, and had partaken of the hospitality of his table, had abused his friendship, and was found among his detractors and calumniators, Psalm 41:9.

IV. An earnest invocation of the mercy of God, and an expression of the confident assurance of his favor, closes the psalm, Psalm 41:10-13.

This psalm, like Psalm 4:1-8.

Verse 1

Blessed is he - See the notes at Psalm 1:1. Literally, "Oh the blessings of him that considers the poor." The object is to describe the advantages of doing what is here said; or the excellence of the spirit which would be manifested in such a case, and the effect which this would have on his own happiness. These happy effects are described in the remainder of this verse, and in the two following verses.

That considereth - The word used here - from שׂכל *śâkal* - means properly to look at, to behold; then, to be prudent or circumspect; then, to attend to; and then in general to act prudently, wisely, intelligently, in any case. Here it means to attend to; to show an interest in; to care for. The idea is that of not neglecting; not passing by; not being indifferent to; not being hard-hearted and uncharitable toward.

The poor - Margin, "the weak," or "the sick." The word used in the Hebrew - דל *dal* - means properly something hanging or swinging, as of pendulous boughs or branches; and then, that which is weak, feeble, powerless. Thus it comes to denote those who are feeble and helpless either by poverty or by disease, and is used with a general reference to those who are in slow or humble condition, and who need the aid of others. The statement here is of a general nature - that he is blessed who shows proper sympathy for all of that class: for those who need the sympathy of others from any cause - poverty, sickness, a low condition, or trouble. The particular thing here referred to was a case of sickness; where one was borne down by disease, perhaps brought on by mental sorrow, and when he particularly needed the sympathy of his friends. See Psalm 41:5-8.

The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble - Margin, as in Hebrew: "in the day of evil." This is the first happy effect or result of showing proper

sympathy with others in their troubles. It is a statement of the general principle that the Lord will deal with us as we do with others. See this principle stated and illustrated in Psalm 18:24-26.

Verse 2

The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive - This is a farther statement of the same principle, and it refers to a general, not a universal rule in the divine administration, that acts of piety will be partially rewarded on the earth; or that the divine favor will be shown to those who deal kindly with others. This principle is often referred to in the Scriptures. See Psalm 1:3, note; Psalm 37:3-4, note; Psalm 37:11, note; Psalm 37:23-26, note; Psalm 37:37, note; compare Matthew 5:5; 1 Timothy 4:8. The par ticular application here is, that if any one showed kindness to him that was sick or enfeebled by disease, he might expect that God would interpose in his case under similar circumstances, and would "preserve" him, or "keep him alive." Of course this is to be regarded as a statement made under the general principle. It is not to be interpreted as teaching that this would be universally true, or that he who did this would never die, but the meaning is, that he might look for special divine aid and favor, when he in turn should be sick.

And he shall be blessed upon the earth - This is in accordance with the doctrine noticed above, and so often referred to in the Psalms and elsewhere, that the effect of religion will be to promote happiness and prosperity in this life.

And thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies - Margin: "Do not thou deliver." The margin, perhaps, expresses most correctly the sense of the original, but still it is an expression of the confident belief of the psalmist that this will not occur; a belief expressed here rather in the form of a prayer than of a direct assertion. The idea is, that he would find God to be a defender and a helper when he was attacked by his foes.

Verse 3

The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing - The word rendered strengthen here means to support; to uphold; to sustain. The idea here is, that God would enable him to bear his sickness, or would impart strength - inward strength - when his body failed, or when but for this aid he must sink under his disease and die. The word rendered languishing means properly languor or sickness; and more generally something sickening; that is, something unclean, unwholesome, nauseating,

Job 6:6. The idea here, in accordance with what is stated above, is, that acts of religion will tend to promote our welfare and hap piness in this life; and more particularly that the man who shows favor Psalm 41:1 to those who are weak, sick, helpless, will find in turn that God will support him when he is sick. Thus, Psalm 18:25, "With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful."

Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness - Margin, as in Hebrew: "turn." So the Septuagint, ἔστρεψας *estrepsas* Luther renders it, "Thou dost help him." The idea is, that God will turn his bed or his couch; that is, that he will render favor like turning his couch, or making his bed when he is sick; or, in other words, he will relieve his suffering, and make him comfortable on his bed. It does not mean that he will turn his sickness to health, but that he will relieve and comfort him, as one is relieved and soothed on a sick bed by having his bed made up. This, too, is in accordance with the general sentiment that God will show himself merciful to those who are merciful; kind to those who are kind. On the bed of languishing it will be much to be able to remember that we, in our health, have contributed to the comfort of the sick and the dying.

(a) The recollection itself will do much to impart inward satisfaction then, for we shall then appreciate better than we did when we performed the act the value of this trait of character, and have a deeper sense of gratitude that we have been able to relieve the sufferings of others;

(b) we may believe and trust that God will remember what we have done, and that he will manifest himself to us then as our gracious supporter and our comforter.

It will not be because by our own acts we have merited his favor, but because this is his gracious purpose, and because it is in accordance with his nature thus to bestow kindness on those who have been kind to others.

Verse 4

I said, Lord - I said in my sickness, or in the trial referred to in the psalm. I called on God to be merciful to me when others had no mercy; to be near to me when others turned away; to save me when pressed down with disease on account of my sins. All that follows relates, like this passage, to what occurred when he was sick; to the thoughts that passed

through his mind, and to the treatment which he then experienced from others.

Be merciful unto me - In forgiving my sins, and restoring me to health.

Heal my soul - In restoring my soul to spiritual health by forgiving the sin which is the cause of my sickness; or it may mean, Restore my life - regardng his life as (as it were) diseased and in danger of extinction. The probability, however, is that he had particular reference to the soul as the word is commonly understood, or as designating himself; heal, or restore me.

For I have sinned against thee - Regarding his sin as the cause of his sickness. See the notes at Psalm 38:3-5.

Verse 5

Mine enemies speak evil of me - They take occasion to speak evil of me in my weak and feeble state, thus adding to my sorrows. The word "evil" here refers to their calumnies or reproaches. They spoke of him as a bad man; as if it were desirable that he should die; that his influence in the world should come to an end, and that his name should be forgotten.

When shall he die - "He is sick; sick on account of his sins; it seems certain that he will die; and it is desirable that such a man should die. But he seems to linger on, as if there were no hope of his dying." Nothing can be imagined more unkind, cutting, severe than this - the desire that a man who is sick shall die, and be out of the way. Nothing could add more to the sorrows of sickness itself than such a wish; than to have it talked about among men - whispered from one to another - that such a man was a nuisance; that he was a bad man; that he was suffering on account of his sins; that it was desirable that his death should occur as soon as possible, and that all remembrance of him on earth should cease.

And his name perish - That he should be forgotten altogether; that his name should be no more mentioned; that all the influence of his life should cease forever. Of a truly bad man - a corrupter of the faith and the virtue of others - this is desirable, for the sooner such men are forgotten the better. Forgotten they will be Proverbs 10:7, but there is no more malignant feeling in regard to a good man, and especially when such a man is suffering under a severe disease, than the wish that he should die, and that his name should wholly fade away from recollection.

Verse 6

And if he come to see me - If he condescends to visit me in my sickness. The word me is not in the original; and perhaps the idea is not that he came to see the sufferer, but that he came to see "for himself," though under pretence of paying a visit of kindness. His real motive was to make observation, that he might find something in the expressions or manner of the sufferer that would enable him to make a report unfavorable to him, and to confirm him in his impression that it was desirable such a man should die. He would come under the mask of sympathy and friendship, but really to find something that would confirm him in the opinion that he was a bad man, and that would enable him to state to others that it was desirable he should die.

He speaketh vanity - He utters no expressions of sincerity and truth; he suggests nothing that would console and comfort me; his words are all foreign to the purpose for which a man should visit another in such circumstances, and are, therefore, vain words. What he says is mere pretence and hypocrisy, and is designed to deceive me, as if he had sympathy with me, while his real purpose is to do me mischief.

His heart gathereth iniquity to itself - Or, in his heart he is gathering mischief. That is, in his heart, or in his secret purpose, under the pretence of sympathy and friendship, he is really aiming to gather the materials for doing me wrong. He is endeavoring to find something in my words or manner; in my expressions of impatience and complaining; in the utterances of my unguarded moments, when I am scarcely conscious - something that may be uttered in the honesty of feeling when a man thinks that he is about to die - some reflections of my own on my past life - some confession of sin, which he may turn to my disadvantage, or which may justify his slanderous report that I am a bad man, and that it is desirable that such a man should live no longer. Can anything be imagined more malicious than this?

When he goeth abroad, he telleth it - literally, he tells it to the street, or to those who are without. Perhaps his friends, as malicious as himself, are anxiously waiting without for his report, and, like him, are desirous of finding something that may confirm them in their opinion of him. Or perhaps he designs to tell this to the friends of the sufferer, to show them now that they were deceived in the man; that although in the days of his health, and in his prosperity, he seemed to be a good man, yet that now, when the trial has come, and a real test has been applied, all his religion has

been found false and hollow; his impatience, his complaining, his murmuring, and his unwillingness to die, all showing that he was a hypocrite, and was at heart a bad man. Compare the notes at Job 1:9-11.

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Verse 7

All that hate me whisper together against me - They talk the matter over where they suppose that no one can hear; they endeavonr to collect and arrange all that can be said against me; they place all that they can say or think as individuals, all that they have separately known or suspected, into "common stock," and make use of it against me. There is a conspiracy against me - a purpose to do me all the evil that they can. This shows that, in the apprehension of the sufferer, the one who came to see for himself Psalm 41:6 came as one of a company - as one deputed or delegated to find some new occasion for a charge against him, and that he had not to suffer under the single malignity of one, but under the combined malignity of many.

Against me do they devise my hurt - Margin, as in Hebrew: "evil to me." That is, they devise some report, the truth of which they endeavor to confirm by something that they may observe in my sickness which will be injurious to me, and which will prove to the world that I am a bad man - a man by whose death the world would be benefited. The slanderous report on which they seemed to agree is mentioned in the following verse - that he was suffering under a disease which was directly and manifestly the result of a sinful life, and that it must be fatal.

Verse 8

An evil disease - Margin, "a thing of Belial." The Hebrew is literally "a word of Belial." This has been very variously understood and interpreted. The Septuagint renders it: λόγον παράνομον *logon paranomon* - wicked word; "a wicked determination" (Thompson); that is, they formed a wicked purpose against him, to wit, by saying that he was now confined to his bed, and could not rise again. The Latin Vulgate renders it in a similar manner: *Verbum iniquitum constituerunt adversum me*. Luther: "They have formed a wicked device (Bubenstuck) against me;" they behave in a knavish or wicked manner. DeWette, "Destruction (Verderben) or punishnnent (Strafe) is poured upon him." The term rendered "disease" means properly "word" or "thing;" and Prof. Alexander renders it, "A word of Belial is poured upon him." The word rendered "evil, Belial," means literally "without use" -

בליעל *belîyaʿal* - from בלי *belîy* "not or without," and יעל *yaʿal* "use or profit."

Then it means worthlessness, wickedness, destruction; and hence, in connection with man, denotes one who is wicked, worthless, abandoned. It is difficult to determine its meaning here. The connection Psalm 41:3 would seem to suggest the idea adopted by our translators; the words themselves would seem rather to convey the idea of some reproach, or harsh saying - some vain, wicked, malicious words that were uttered against him. That there was disease in the case, and that the psalm was composed in view of it, and of the treatment which the author experienced from those who had been his professed friends when suffering under it, seems to me to be manifest from Psalm 41:1, Psalm 41:3-4, Psalm 41:8; but it is probable that the reference in this expression is not to the disease, but to the words or the conduct of his calumniators. It is evident from the pronoun him - the third person - that this refers, as our translators have indicated by the words they say to something that they said in regard to him; something which they affirmed as the result of their observations on his condition, Psalm 41:6-7. The true idea, therefore, I think is this: "They say - that is, those who came to see me said - A ‹word of evil‘ - "a sentence of evil or destruction" - is poured upon him. He is suffering under such a ‹word of destruction;‘ or, such a word (that is, sentence) as will involve his destruction, by way of punishment for his sins; therefore all is over with him, and he must die. He can hope to rise no more." This would express the idea that they regarded his death as certain, for he seemed to be under a sentence which made that sure.

Cleaveth fast unto him - Or rather, "is poured upon him." The word used here - צוק *tsûq* - means:

(1) to be narrow, straitened, compressed; and then

(2) to pour out - as metal is poured out Job 28:2, or as words are poured out in prayer Isaiah 26:16.

Here it would seem to mean that such a sentence was poured upon him, or that he had become submerged or swallowed up under it. It was like the pouring out of a torrent on him, overwhelming him with floods of water, so that he could not hope to escape, or to rise again.

And now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more - There is no hope for him; no prospect that he will ever get up again. They felt that they might indulge their remarks, therefore, freely, as he would not be able to take revenge on them, and their expectations and hopes were about to be accomplished by his death. Compare Psalm 41:5. As a part of his sufferings, all this was aggravated by the fact that they regarded those sufferings as full proof of his guilt; that he could not reply to their accusations; and that be was about to die under that imputation.

Verse 9

Yea, mine own familiar friend - Margin, as in Hebrew: "the man of my peace." The man with whom I was at peace; who had no cause of alienation from me; with whom I was associated in the most peaceful and friendly relations.

In whom I trusted - He whom I made my confidential friend, and on whom I supposed I could rely in the time of trouble.

Which did eat of my bread - This may either denote one who was supported by him as one of his family, or else one who partook of his hospitality. In the former case, if that is the meaning, he bad a right to expect that, as a matter of gratitude, such an one would stand by him, and not be found among his enemies. In the latter case, if that is the meaning, he had a right to expect that one who had shared his hospitality would not be found among his foes.

Hath lifted up his heel against me - Margin, as in Hebrew: "magnified." So the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate. Lather renders this, "hath trodden me under his feet." The figure here is taken from a horse that turns and kicks him that had fed him. This passage is applied John 13:18 to Judas, with the statement, in regard to him, that what he had done was done "that the Scripture might be fulfilled:" see the notes at that passage. It is not necessary to suppose that the Saviour meant to say that the passage in the psalm had original and exclusive reference to Judas; the phrase employed by the Saviour, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," may have been used by him in that large sense in which these words are often used as denoting, either:

(a) that the language found in the Scriptures, and applicable originally to another case, "would properly express the idea," or describe the fact; or

(b) that the case referred to was one of a class; or that, as it was accomplished in the case of David, so in a similar sense it was accomplished in the case of the Saviour.

In other words, Judas was regarded as belonging to the same class as the individual to whom the psalm refers. He was one to whom the language of the psalm was applicable; and the Saviour endured the same kind of suffering which the person did who is referred to in the psalm. Thus the language of the Scriptures, applicable to all such cases, received a complete fulfillment in Him. It is remarkable that, in the reference to Judas, the Saviour quotes only a part of the verse: "He that eateth bread with me." He omits, apparently from design, the former part of the verse in the psalm, "mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted," as if he would not even seem to convey the idea that he ever regarded Judas as his intimate friend, or as if he had ever really "trusted" him. He conveys the idea that Judas had partaken largely of his favors, but not that He himself was ever really a stranger to the baseness of his heart, John 6:64, John 6:70.

Verse 10

But thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me - That is, give me strength; restore me from my sickness and weakness.

And raise me up - From my bed of languishing.

That I may requite them - That I may repay them; or may recompense them. The word used here - שׁלם *shālam* - means properly, to be whole, sound, safe; then, in Piel, to make secure, or preserve in safety; and then, to complete, to make whole, to make good, to restore; and then, to make whole or to complete in the sense of recompensing or requiting: to make the matter equal. It would be well expressed here by the familiar language, "giving them what they deserve." But it is not necessary to understand this as indicating an unforgiving spirit. The writer may have meant to say that the persons who demeaned themselves in this manner ought to be punished; that the public good required it; and being a magistrate, he spoke as one appointed to administer the laws, and prayed for a restoration to strength, that he might administer justice in this and in all similar cases. It is possible also that he meant to say he would repay them by "heaping coals of fire on their heads" - by acts of kindness in place of the wrongs that they had done him (see Proverbs 25:21-22; compare Romans 12:20-21); though I admit,

that this is not the obvious interpretation. But in order to show that this was uttered with a bad spirit, and under the promptings of revenge, it would be necessary to show that neither of these supposable interpretations could be the true one. It may be added here that we may not be required to vindicate all the expressions of personal feeling found in the Psalms in order to any just view of inspiration. See General Introduction, 6 (6).

Verse 11

By this I know - Compare the notes at Psalm 20:6. This indicates a confident assurance that his prayer would be answered, and that he would be restored to health. How he had this assurance we are not informed, but it seems most probable that it was by an intimation conveyed to his mind by God himself. Compare, for a similar case, Philemon 1:25. See the notes at that passage.

That thou favorest me - That thou dost delight in me; that thou art my friend.

Because mine enemy doth not triumph over me - The word here rendered triumph properly means to shout, or to make a noise. As a sign of exultation, more especially in war: 1 Samuel 17:20. Here it means that his enemy would not secure a victory over him; or would not shout as if such a victory were obtained. That is, he felt assured now that all the machinations of his goes would be defeated; that all the hopes which they cherished that he was soon to die would be disappointed; that he himself would be recovered from Iris sickness, contrary to their malicious anticipations and desires. This he regarded as an evidence that God was his friend.

Verse 12

And as for me - literally, "and I;" as if there were some verb understood. The reference is turned on himself; on all that was suggested by this train of remark as bearing on himself. The result of the whole was a firm assurance that God would sustain him, and that he would be established before God forever. The train of thought is this: "And I … thou upholdest me." Perhaps the course of expression, if it had not been suddenly changed, would have been, "And I am sustained or held up." The thought, however, turns rather on God than on himself, and instead of carrying out the reference to himself so prominently, he turns to God as the source from where all this was derived.

Thou upholdest me - Not merely in strengthening me in my sickness, but, what is more important, in vindicating my character against the

aspersions which are cast upon it. Thou dost show that I am upright.

In mine integrity - literally, "in my perfection." See the notes at Job 1:1. The word here means uprightness, sincerity, probity. He had been calumniated by his foes. His sickness had been regarded by them as a proof that he was a hypocrite or a stranger to God. If he had died, they would have urged that fact as evidence that he was the object of the divine displeasure. His restored health was clear proof that their suggestions were false, and that he was not suffering for the cause which they alleged. God thus showed that he regarded him as upright and sincere. The claim is not that of "absolute perfections," but only of a character of piety or integrity in opposition to the slanderous charges of his enemies. Compare Psalm 7:8; Psalm 25:21; Psalm 26:1, Psalm 26:11.

And settest me before thy face for ever - That is, Thou wilt do it. God would always have him in his presence, permit him always to dwell with him - the highest proof of his friendship.

Verse 13

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel - That is, Let the Lord God of Israel be praised, honored, adored. The language is an expression of desire that all honor, all happiness, might be His. It is a recognition of God as the source of the mercies referred to, and an expression of the feeling that he is entitled to universal praise. The word Israel here refers to the people of God as descended from Jacob or Israel.

From everlasting, and to everlasting - Through eternity, or eternal ages, - from all past duration to all future duration. The expression "from everlasting to everlasting," would embrace eternity; and the idea is that God is deserving of eternal praise.

Amen, and amen - The word "amen" means properly surely, certainly, truly, and is a word expressive of solemn affirmation, or of the desire of the mind that this should be so. Its repetition is emphatic, expressing strong assent to what is said as certainly true, or as eminently the wish of the mind. This benediction marks the close of one of the five books into which the Psalms are commonly divided. See the General Introduction, Section 3.

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PSALM 42

Introduction

The title of this psalm is, "To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah." On the phrase "To the chief Musician," see the notes at the title to Psalm 4:1-8. On the term "Maschil," see the notes at the title to Psalm 32:1-11. This title is prefixed to eleven psalms. It properly means, as in the margin, giving instruction. But why such a title was prefixed to these psalms rather than to others is unknown. So far as appears, the title, in that sense, would be applicable to many other psalms as well as to these, whether understood in the signification of "giving instruction" in general, or of "giving instruction" on any particular subject. It is not easy to give an account of the origin of such titles long after the occasion for affixing them has passed away. The phrase "for the sons of Korah" is rendered in the margin "of the sons," etc. The Hebrew may mean for the sons of Korah; of the sons of Korah; or to the sons of Korah, as it is here rendered by Prof. Alexander. The Septuagint renders the title "For the end - εἰς τὸ τέλος *eis to telos* for understanding, εἰς σύνεσιν *eis sunesin* to the sons of Kore, τοῖς υἱοῦς Κορέ *tois huiois Kore* the Latin Vulgate. DeWette renders it, "A poem of the sons of Korah." The psalms to which this title is prefixed are the Psalm 42:1-11; 44; 45; Psalm 46:1-11; Psalm 47:1-9; Psalm 48:1-14; 49; Psalm 84:1-12; Psalm 85:1-13; Psalm 87:1-7; 88. So far as the title is concerned, it may mean either that the psalms were dedicated to them, or that they were submitted to them for arranging the music; or that they were designed to be employed by them as leaders of the music; or that they were the authors of these psalms, that is, that the psalms thus indicated emanated from their body, or were composed by one of their number. Which of these is the true idea must be determined, if determined at all, from some other source than the mere title. The sons of Korah were a family of Levitical singers. Korah was a great-grandson of Levi, Numbers 16:1. He was united with Dathan and Abiram in opposition to Moses, and was the leader of the conspiracy, Numbers 16:2; Jude 1:11.

Korah had three sons, Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph Exodus 6:24; and of their descendants David selected a number to preside over the music of the sanctuary, 1 Chronicles 6:22-23, 1 Chronicles 6:31; and they continued in this service until the time of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 20:19. One of the most eminent of the descendants of Korah, who was employed especially in

the musical service of the sanctuary, was Heman: 1 Chronicles 6:33, "Of the sons of the Kohathites; Heman, a singer." The sons of Heman were appointed by David, in connection with the sons of Asaph, and of Jeduthun, to preside over the music: 1 Chronicles 25:1, 1Chronicles 25:4,1 Chronicles 25:6; 2 Chronicles 5:12; 2 Chronicles 29:14; 2 Chronicles 35:1:5. See the notes at the title to Psalm 39:1-13. The general appellation, the "sons of Korah," seems to have been given to this company or class of singers. Their office was to preside over the music of the sanctuary; to arrange tunes for the music; to distribute the parts; and possibly to furnish compositions for that service. Whether, however, they actually composed any of the psalms is uncertain. It would seem that the usual custom was for the author of a psalm or hymn designed for public service to deliver it, when composed, into the hands of these leaders of the music, to be employed by them in the public devotions of the people. Thus, in 1 Chronicles 16:7, it is said, "Then on that day David delivered first this psalm, to thank the Lord, into the hand of Asaph and his brethren." Compare 2 Chronicles 29:30. See also the notes at the title of Psalm 1:1-6.

It is not absolutely certain, therefore, who composed this psalm. If it was written by David, as seems most probable, it was with some reference to the "sons of Korah;" that is, to those who presided over the music of the sanctuary. In other words, it was prepared especially to be used by them in the sanctuary, in contradistinction from psalms which had a more general reference, or which were composed for no such specific design. If it was written by the sons of Korah, that is, by any one of their number, it was intended by the author, undoubtedly, to illustrate the feelings of a man of God in deep trials; and the language and the allusions were probably drawn from the history of David, as furnishing the best historical instance for such an illustration of feeling. In this case, the language would be that of one placing himself in imagination in such circumstances, and giving in poetic form a description of the emotions which would pass through his mind, as if they were his own - unless it be supposed that one of the sons of Korah, the author of the psalm, had actually experienced such trials himself. I regard the former as the most probable supposition, and consider that the psalm was composed by David specifically for the use of the leaders of the music in the sanctuary. The name of the author may have been omitted because it

was so well understood who he was that there was no need to designate him.

There is a very marked resemblance between this psalm and Psalm 43:1-5. They were composed on a similar, if not on the same occasion; and the two might be united so as to constitute one connected psalm. In fact, they are thus united in thirty-seven codices of Kennicott, and in nine of De Rossi. The structure of both is the same, though they are separated in most of the Hebrew manuscripts, in the Septuagint and Latin Vulgate, in the Chaldee Paraphrase, and in the Syriac and Arabic versions.

Psalm 42:1-11 consists of two parts, marked by the "burden" or "refrain" in Psalm 42:5, Psalm 42:11; and if Psalm 43:1-5 were regarded as a part of the same composition, the two would be divided into three parts, marked by the same burden or refrain, in Psalm 42:5, Psalm 42:11; Psalm 43:5. Of these parts the general structure is similar, containing

(a) an expression of trouble, sorrow, despondency; and then

(b) a solemn appeal of the author to his own soul, asking why he should be cast down, and exhorting himself to put his trust in God.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed by David, if he wrote it - or the occasion which was supposed by the author, if that author was one of the sons of Korah - is not certainly known. The psalm agrees best with the supposition that it was in the time of the rebellion of Absalom, when David was driven from his throne, and from the place which he had appointed for the worship of God after he had removed the ark to Mount Zion, and when he was an exile and a wanderer beyond the Jordan, Psalm 42:1-5 there is

(1) An expression of his desire to hold communion with God - the panting of his soul after God, Psalm 42:1-2.

(2) his tears under the reproaches of his enemies, while they said, "Where is thy God?" Psalm 42:3.

(3) his remembrance of the former days when he had gone with the multitude to the house of God; and the expression of a firm belief, implied

in the language used, that he would go again to the house of God, and with them would keep "holyday," Psalm 42:4. See the notes at that verse.

(4) Self-remonstrance for his despondency, and an exhortation to himself to arouse and to trust in God, with the confident assurance that he would yet be permitted to praise Him, Psalm 42:5.

II. The second part contains a series of similar reflections, Psalm 42:6-11.

(1) a description of his desponding feelings under these circumstances; under the troubles which had rolled over him like waters, Psalm 42:6-7.

(2) an assurance that God would yet manifest His loving-kindness to him; and, on the ground of that, an earnest appeal to God as his God, Psalm 42:8-9.

(3) a further statement of his troubles, as derived from the reproaches of his enemies, as if a sword penetrated even to his bones, Psalm 42:10.

(4) Self-remonstrance again for his despondency, and an exhortation to himself to trust in God (in the same language with which the former part of the psalm closes), Psalm 42:11.

The idea of the whole is, that we should not be overwhelmed or cast down in trouble; that we should confide in God; that we should be cheerful, not desponding; that we should go to God, whatever may happen; and that we should feel that all will yet be well, that all will be overruled for good, and that brighter and happier days will come. How often have the people of God occasion to use the language of this psalm! In a world of trouble and sorrow such as ours is; in a world where the friends of God have often been, and may again be, persecuted; in the anguish which is felt from the ingratitude of children, kindred, and friends; in the distress which springs up in the heart when, from sickness or from any other cause, we are long deprived of the privileges of public worship - in exile as it were from the sanctuary - how imperfect would be a book professing to be a revelation from God, if it did not contain some such psalm as this, so accurately describing the feelings of those who are in such circumstances; so adapted to their needs; so well suited to direct to the true source of consolation! It is this adaptedness of the Bible to the actual requirements of mankind - this accurate description of the feelings which pass through our own mind and

heart - this constant direction to God as the true source of support and consolation - which so much endears the Bible to the hearts of the people of God, and which serves, more than any arguments from miracle and prophecy - valuable as those arguments are - to keep up in their minds the conviction that the Bible is a Divine revelation. Psalms like this make the Bible a complete book, and show that He who gave it "knew what is in man," and what man needs in this vale of tears.

Verse 1

As the hart panteth after the water-brooks - Margin, brayeth. The word rendered hart - איל *'ayâl* - means commonly a stag, hart, male deer: Deuteronomy 12:15; Deuteronomy 14:5; Isaiah 35:6. The word is masculine, but in this place is joined with a feminine verb, as words of the common gender may be, and thus denotes a hind, or female deer. The word rendered in the text "panteth," and in the margin "brayeth" - ערג *ʿârag* - occurs only in this place and in Joel 1:20, where it is applied to the beasts of the field as "crying" to God in a time of drought. The word properly means to rise; to ascend; and then, to look up toward anything; to long for. It refers here to the intense desire of the hind, in the heat of day, for water; or, in Joel, to the desire of the cattle for water in a time of drought. Luther renders it "cries;" the Septuagint and Vulgate render it simply "desires."

Neither the idea of panting nor braying seems to be in the original word. It is the idea of looking for, longing for, desiring, that is expressed there. By ‹water-brooks‘ are meant the streams that run in vallies. Dr. Thomson (Land and the Book, vol. i., p. 253) says, "I have seen large flocks of these panting harts gather round the water-brooks in the great deserts of Central Syria, so subdued by thirst that you could approach quite near them before they fled." There is an idea of tenderness in the reference to the word "hart" here - female deer, gazelle - which would not strike us if the reference had been to any other animal. These are so timid, so gentle, so delicate in their structure, so much the natural objects of love and compassion, that our feelings are drawn toward them as to all other animals in similar circumstances. We sympathize with them; we pity them; we love them; we feel deeply for them when they are pursued, when they fly away in fear, when they are in want. The following engraving will help us more to appreciate the comparison employed by the psalmist. Nothing could more beautifully or appropriately describe the earnest longing of a soul after God, in the circumstances of the psalmist, than this image.

So panteth my soul after thee, O God - So earnest a desire have I to come before thee, and to enjoy thy presence and thy favor. So sensible am I of want; so much does my soul need something that can satisfy its desires. This was at first applied to the case of one who was cut off from the privileges of public worship, and who was driven into exile far from the place where he had been accustomed to unite with others in that service Psalm 42:4; but it will also express the deep and earnest feelings of the heart of piety at all times, and in all circumstances, in regard to God. There is no desire of the soul more intense than that which the pious heart has for God; there is no want more deeply felt than that which is experienced when one who loves God is cut off by any cause from communion with him.

Verse 2

My soul thirsteth for God - That is, as the hind thirsts for the running stream.

For the living God - God, not merely as God, without anything more definitely specified, but God considered as living, as himself possessing life, and as having the power of imparting that life to the soul.

When shall I come and appear before God? - That is, as I have been accustomed to do in the sanctuary. When shall I be restored to the privilege of again uniting with his people in public prayer and praise? The psalmist evidently expected that this would be; but to one who loves public worship the time seems long when he is prevented from enjoying that privilege.

Verse 3

My tears have been my meat - The word rendered tears in this place is in the singular number, and means literally weeping. Compare Psalm 39:12. The word meat here means literally bread, and is used in the general signification of food, as the word meat is always used in the English version of the Bible. The English word meat, which originally signified food, has been changed gradually in its signification, until it now denotes in common usage animal food, or flesh. The idea here is, that instead of eating, he had wept. The state described is that which occurs so often when excessive sorrow takes away the appetite, or destroys the relish for food, and occasions fasting. This was the foundation of the whole idea of fasting - that sorrow, and especially sorrow for sin, takes away the desire for food for the time, and leads to involuntary abstinence. Hence arose the correlative idea of abstaining from food with a view to promote that deep sense of sin, or to

produce a condition of the body which would be favorable to a proper recollection of guilt.

Day and night - Constantly; without intermission. See the notes at Psalm 1:2. "While they continually say unto me." While it is constantly said to me; that is, by mine enemies. See Psalm 42:10.

Where is thy God? - See Psalm 3:2; Psalm 22:8. The meaning here is, "He seems to be utterly forsaken or abandoned by God. He trusted in God. He professed to be his friend. He looked to him as his protector. But he is now forsaken, as if he had no God; and God is treating him as if he were none of his; as if he had no love for him, and no concern about his welfare."

Verse 4

When I remember these things - These sorrows; this banishment from the house of God; these reproaches of my enemies. The verb used here is in the future tense, and would be appropriately rendered "I will remember these things, and I will pour out my soul within me." That is, it is not a mere recollection of the past, but it indicates a state or purpose of mind - a solemn resolution to bear these things ever in remembrance, and to allow them to produce a proper impression on his mind and heart that would not be effaced by time. Though the future tense is used as denoting what the state of his mind would be, the immediate reference is to the past. The sorrows and afflictions which had overwhelmed him were the things he would remember.

I pour out my soul in me - Hebrew, upon me. See the notes at Job 30:16. The idea is derived from the fact that the soul in grief seems to be dissolved, or to lose all firmness, consistency, or power, and to be like water. We speak now of the soul as being melted, tender, dissolved, with sympathy or grief, or as overflowing with joy.

For I had gone with the multitude - The word here rendered "multitude" - סך *sâk* - occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. It is supposed to denote properly a thicket of trees; a thick wood; and then, a crowd of men. The Septuagint renders it, "I will pass on to the place of the wonderful tabernacle," σκηνῆς θαυμαστῆς *skēnēs thaumastēs* So the Latin Vulgate. Luther translates it, "multitude," Haufen. The Hebrew verb is in the future - "I shall pass," or "when I pass," indicating a confident expectation of a favorable issue of his present trials, and referring not to the fact that he had gone with the multitude in time past, but to the fact that he would be permitted to go with them in solemn procession to the house of God, and

that then he would recall these things, and pour out his soul in the fullness of his emotions. The Septuagint renders this in the future; so also the Latin Vulgate, DeWette, and Prof. Alexander. Luther renders it, "For I would gladly go hence with the multitude." It seems clear, therefore, that this does not refer to what had been in the past, but to what he confidently hoped and expected would be in the future. He expected again to go with the multitude to the house of God. Even in his exile, and in his sorrows, he confidently anticipated this, and he says that he would then pour forth the full expression of gratitude - his whole soul - in view of all these things which had occurred. He was now in exile: his heart was overwhelmed with sorrow; he was away from the place of worship - the house of God; he no longer went with others with solemn steps to the sanctuary, but he hoped and expected again to be permitted to do so; and, in view of this, he calls on his soul Psalm 42:5 not to be cast down. This interpretation, referring it to the future, also brings this part of the psalm into harmony with the subsequent part Psalm 42:8, where the author of the psalm confidently expresses the same hope.

I went with them to the house of God - The tabernacle; the place of public worship. See the notes at Psalm 23:6. The Hebrew verb here is also in the future tense, and, in accordance with the interpretation above, the meaning is, "I will go," etc. The word occurs only here, and in Isaiah 38:15, "I shall go softly all my years." See the word explained in the notes at that passage. It seems here to be used with reference to a movement in a slow and solemn procession, as in the usual processions connected with public worship among the Hebrews. The meaning is, that he would go with the multitude with seriousness and solemnity, as they went up to the house of God to worship.

With the voice of joy and praise - Chanting hymns to God.

With a multitude that kept holyday - The word here rendered "multitude" - המון *hâmôn* - is different from that which is employed in the former part of the verse. This is the usual word to denote a multitude. It literally means a noise or sound, as of rain, 1 Kings 18:41; then, a multitude or crowd making a noise, as of nations, or of an army, Isaiah 13:4; Judges 4:7; Daniel 11:11-13. The word rendered "that kept holyday" - חוגג *chogēg* - from חגג *châgag* to dance - means literally dancing; dancing in a circle; and then, keeping a festival, celebrating a holyday, as this was done formerly by leaping and dancing, Exodus 5:1; Leviticus 23:41. The meaning is, that he

would join with the multitude in the joyful celebrations of public worship. This was the bright anticipation before him in exile; this cheered and sustained his heart when sinking in despair.

Verse 5

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? - Margin, bowed down. The Hebrew word means to bow down, to incline oneself; then, usually, to prostrate oneself as in public worship; and then, to sink down under the weight of sorrow; to be depressed and sad. The Septuagint renders it, "Why art thou grieved?" - περίλυπος *perilupos* So the Vulgate. This is an earnest remonstrance addressed by himself to his own soul, as if there were really no occasion for this excessive depression; as if he cherished his grief improperly. There was a brighter side, and he ought to turn to that, and take a more cheerful view of the matter. He had allowed his mind to rest on the dark side, to look at the discouraging things in his condition. He now felt that this was in some measure voluntary, or had been indulged too freely, and that it was wrong: that it was proper for a man like him to seek for comfort in brighter views; that it was a duty which he owed to himself and to the cause of religion to take brighter views. We may remark,

(1) That there are two sides to the events which occur, and which seem so discouraging to us - a dark side and a bright side.

(2) That in certain states of mind, connected often with a diseased nervous system, we are prone to look only on the dark side, to see only what is gloomy and discouraging.

(3) That this often becomes in a sense voluntary, and that we find a melancholy satisfaction in being miserable, and in making ourselves more unhappy, as if we had been wronged, and as if there were a kind of virtue in dejection and gloom - in "refusing," like Rachel, "to be comforted" Jeremiah 31:15; perhaps also feeling as if by this we were deserving of the divine approbation, and laying the foundation for some claim to favor on the score of merit.

(4) That in this we are often eminently guilty, as putting away those consolations which God has provided for us; as if a man, under the influence of some morbid feeling, should find a kind of melancholy

pleasure in starving himself to death in the midst of a garden full of fruit, or dying of thirst by, the side of a running fountain. And

(5) That it is the duty of the people of God to look at the bright side of things; to think of the past mercies of God; to survey the blessings which surround us still; to look to the future, in this world and the next, with hope; and to come to God, and cast the burden on him. It is a part of religious duty to be cheer ful; and a man may often do more real good by a cheerful and submissive mind in times of affliction, than he could by much active effort in the days of health, plenty, and prosperity. Every sad and desponding Christian ought to say to his soul, "Why art thou thus cast down?"

And why art thou disquieted in me? - Troubled, sad. The word means literally,

(1) to growl as a bear;

(2) to sound, or make a noise, as a harp, rain, waves;

(3) to be agitated, troubled, or anxious in mind: to moan internally. See the notes at Isaiah 16:11; compare Jeremiah 48:36.

Hope thou in God - That is, trust in him, with the hope that he will interpose and restore thee to the privileges and comforts heretofore enjoyed. The soul turns to God when all other hope fails, and finds comfort in the belief that he can and will aid us.

For I shall yet praise him - Margin, give thanks. The idea is, that he would yet have occasion to give him thanks for his merciful interposition. This implies a strong assurance that these troubles would not last always.

For the help of his countenance - literally, "the salvations of his face," or his presence. The original word rendered help is in the plural number, meaning salvations; and the idea in the use of the plural is, that his deliverance would be completed or entire - as if double or manifold. The meaning of the phrase "help of his countenance" or "face," is that God would look favorably or benignly upon him. Favor is expressed in the Scriptures by lifting up the light of the countenance on one. See the notes at Psalm 4:6; compare Psalm 11:7; Psalm 21:6; Psalm 44:3; Psalm 89:15. This closes the first part of the psalm, expressing the confident belief of the psalmist that God would yet interpose, and that his troubles would have an

end; reposing entire confidence in God as the only ground of hope; and expressing the feeling that when that confidence exists the soul should not be dejected or cast down.

Verse 6

O my God, my soul is cast down within me - This is the utterance of a soul in anguish, notwithstanding the purpose not to be cast down, and the conviction that hope ought to be cherished. The psalmist cannot but say that, despite all this, he is sad. His troubles come rushing over his soul; they all return at once; his heart is oppressed, and he is constrained to confess that, notwithstanding his solemn purpose not to be sad, and the conviction that he ought to be cheerful, and his wish to be and to appear so, yet his sorrows get the mastery over all this, and his heart is filled with grief. What sufferer has not felt thus? When he really wished to trust in God; when he hoped that things would be better; when he saw that he ought to be calm and cheerful, his sorrows have returned like a flood, sweeping all these feelings away for the time, filling his soul with anguish, compelling him to form these resolutions anew, and driving him afresh to the throne of grace, to beat back the returning tide of grief, and to bring the soul to calmness and peace.

Therefore will I remember thee - I will look to thee; I will come to thee; I will recall thy former merciful visitations. In this lone land; far away from the place of worship; in the midst of these privations, troubles, and sorrows; surrounded as I am by taunting foes, and having no source of consolation here, I will remember my God. Even here, amidst these sorrows, I will lift up my heart in grateful remembrance of him, and will think of him alone. The words which follow are designed merely to give an idea of the desolation and sadness of his condition, and of the fact of his exile.

From the land of Jordan - Referring probably to the fact he was then in that "land." The phrase would denote the region adjacent to the Jordan, and through which the Jordan flowed, as we speak of "the valley of the Mississippi," that is the region through which that river flows. The lands adjacent to the Jordan on either side were covered with underbrush and thickets, and were, in former times, the favorite resorts of wild animals: Jeremiah 49:19; Jeremiah 50:44. The psalmist was on the eastern side of the Jordan.

And of the Hermonites - The land of the Hermonites. The region in which Mount Hermon is situated. This was on the northeast of Palestine, beyond the Jordan. Mount Hermon was a ridge or spur of Antilibanus: Joshua 11:3, Joshua 11:17. This spur or ridge lies near the sources of the Jordan. It consists of several summits, and is therefore spoken of here in the plural number, Hermonim, the Hebrew plural of Hermon. These mountains were called by the Sidonians, Sirion. See the notes at Psalm 29:6. Different names were given to different parts of these sum mits of the mountain-ranges. The principal summit, or Mount Hermon properly so called, rises to the height of ten or twelve thousand feet, and is covered with perpetual snow; or rather, as Dr. Robinson says (Biblical Researches, iii. 344), the snow is perpetual in the ravines; so that the top presents the appearance of radiant stripes around and below the summit. The word is used here with reference to the mountain-region to which the general name of Hermon was given on the northeast of Palestine, and on the east of the sources of the Jordan. It would seem not improbable that after passing the Jordan the psalmist had gone in that direction in his exile.

From the hill Mizar - Margin, the little hill. So the Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, and Luther. DeWette renders it as a proper name. The word Mizar, or Mitsar (Hebrew), means properly smallness; and thus, anything small or little. The word seems here, however, to be used as a proper name, and was probably applied to some part of that mountain-range, though to what particular portion is now unknown. This would seem to have been the place where the psalmist took up his abode in his exile. As no such name is now known to be given to any part of that mountain-range, it is impossible to identify the spot. It would seem from the following verse, however, that it was not far from the Jordan.

Verse 7

Deep calleth unto deep - The language used here would seem to imply that the psalmist was near some floods of water, some rapid river or water-fall, which constituted an appropriate illustration of the waves of sorrow that were rolling over his soul. It is not possible to determine exactly where this was, though, as suggested in the verse above, it would seem most probable that it was in the vicinity of the upper portion of the Jordan; and doubtless the Jordan, if swollen, would suggest all that is conveyed by the language used here. The word rendered deep - תהום *tehôm* - means properly a wave, billow, surge, and then, a mass of waters; a flood - the deep; the

sea. In this latter sense it is used in Deuteronomy 8:7; Ezekiel 31:4; Genesis 7:11; Job 28:14; Job 38:16, Job 38:30; Psalm 36:6. Here it would seem to mean merely a wave or billow, perhaps the waves of a rapid stream dashing on one shore, and then driven to the opposite bank, or the torrents pouring over rocks in the bed of a stream. It is not necessary to suppose that this was the ocean, nor that there was a cataract or water-fall. All that is meant here would be met by the roaring waters of a swollen river. The word "calleth," here means that one wave seemed to speak to another, or one wave responded to another. See a similar expression in Psalm 19:2, "Day unto day uttereth speech." Compare the notes at that verse.

At the noise of thy water-spouts - literally, "at the voice." That is, "water-spouts" make a noise, or seem to give forth a voice; and this appears to be as if one part of the "deep" were speaking to another, or as if one wave were calling with a loud voice to another. The word "water-spouts" - צנור *tsinnor* - occurs only here and in 2 Samuel 5:8, where it is rendered gutter. It properly means a cataract, or a water-fall, or a water-course, as in 2Samuel. Any pouring of water - as from the clouds, or in a swollen river, or in a "water spout," properly so called - would correspond with the use of the word here. It may have been rain pouring down; or it may have been the Jordan pouring its floods over rocks, for it is well known that the descent of the Jordan in that part is rapid, and especially when swollen; or it may have been the phenomena of a "water-spout," for these are not uncommon in the East. There are two forms in which "waterspouts" occur, or to which the name is given in the east, and the language here would be applicable to either of them.

One of them is described in the following manner by Dr. Thomson, Land and the Book, vol. i., pp. 498,499: "A small black cloud traverses the sky in the latter part of summer or the beginning of autumn, and pours down a flood of rain that sweeps all before it. The Arabs call it sale; we, a waterspout, or the bursting of a cloud. In the neighborhood of Hermon I have witnessed it repeatedly, and was caught in one last year, which in five minutes flooded the whole mountain side, washed away the fallen olives - the food of the poor - overthrew stone walls, tore up by the roots large trees, and carried off whatever the tumultuous torrents encountered, as they leaped madly down from terrace to terrace in noisy cascades. Every summer threshing-floor along the line of its march was swept bare of all

precious food, cattle were drowned, flocks disappeared, and the mills along the streams were ruined in half an hour by this sudden deluge."

The other is described in the following language, and the above engraving will furnish an illustration of it. Land and the Book, vol, ii., pp. 256,257: "Look at those clouds which hang like a heavy pall of sackcloth over the sea along the western horizon. From them, on such windy days as these, are formed waterspouts, and I have already noticed several incipient "spouts" drawn down from the clouds toward the sea, and … seen to be in violent agitation, whirling round on themselves as they are driven along by the wind. Directly beneath them the surface of the sea is also in commotion by a whirlwind, which travels onward in concert with the spout above. I have often seen the two actually unite in mid air, and rush toward the mountains, writhing, and twisting, and bending like a huge serpent with its head in the clouds, and its tail on the deep." We cannot now determine to which of these the psalmist refers, but either of them would furnish a striking illustration of the passage before us.

All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me - The waves of sorrow; anguish of soul; of which rolling floods would be an emblem. The rushing, and heaving, and restless waters furnished the psalmist with an illustration of the deep sorrows of his soul. So we speak of "floods of grief … floods of tears," "oceans of sorrows," as if waves and billows swept over us. And so we speak of being "drowned in grief;" or "in tears." Compare Psalm 124:4-5.

Verse 8

Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the daytime - literally, "By day the Lord will command his mercy;" that is, he will so order or direct his mercy or his favor. The word "daytime" here refers evidently to prosperity; and the expectation of the psalmist was that a time of prosperity would return; that he might hope for better days; that the loving-kindness of God would again be manifested to him. He did not wholly despair. He expected to see better times (compare the notes at Psalm 42:5); and, in view of this, and in the confident assurance of it, he says in the subsequent part of the verse that even in the night - the season of calamity - his song should be unto God, and he would praise Him. Some, however, as DeWette, have understood the words "daytime" and "night" as synonymous with "day and night;" that is, at all times; implying an

assurance that God would always show his loving-kindness. But it seems to me that the above is the most correct interpretation.

And in the night his song shall be with me - I will praise him, even in the dark night of calamity and sorrow. God will even then give me such views of himself, and such manifest consolations, that my heart will be full of gratitude, and my lips will utter praise. See the notes at Job 35:10; compare Acts 16:25.

And my prayer unto the God of my life - To God, who has given me life, and who preserves my life. The meaning is, that in the dark night of sorrow and trouble he would not cease to call on God. Feeling that he had given life, and that he was able to sustain and to defend life, he would go to him and supplicate his mercy. He would not allow affliction to drive him from God, but it should lead him the more earnestly and fervently to implore his aid. Afflictions, God‘s apparently severe dealings, which it might be supposed would have a tendency to turn people from God, are the very means of leading them to him.

Verse 9

I will say unto God my rock - I will appeal to God as my defense, my helper, my Saviour. On the word rock, as applied to God, see the notes at Psalm 18:2.

Why hast thou forgotten me? - See the notes at Psalm 22:1. He had seemed to forget and forsake him, for He did not come to interpose and save him. This is a part of the prayer which he says Psalm 42:8 that he would use.

Why go I mourning? - On the meaning of the word used here - קדר *qodēr* - see Psalm 35:14, note; Psalm 38:6, note. The idea is that of being bowed down, made sad, deeply afflicted, as one forsaken.

Because of the oppression of the enemy - In the oppression of the enemy; that is, during its continuance, or on account of it. The word here rendered “oppression” means distress, affliction, straits, Job 36:15; 1 Kings 22:27; Isaiah 30:20. The “enemy” here referred to may have been Absalom, who had driven him from his throne and kingdom.

Verse 10

As with a sword in my bones - Margin, killing. The treatment which I receive in their reproaches is like death. The word rendered “sword” - רצח *retsach* - means properly killing, slaying, breaking in pieces, crushing. It occurs only here and in Ezekiel 21:22, where it is rendered slaughter. The

Septuagint renders it, "In the bruising of my bones they reproach me." The Vulgate, "While they break my bones they reproach me." Luther, "It is as death in my bones, that my enemies reproach me." The idea in the Hebrew is, that their reproaches were like breaking or crushing his very bones. The idea of the "sword" is not in the original.

Mine enemies reproach me - That is, as one forsaken of God, and as suffering justly under his displeasure. Their argument was, that if he was truly the friend of God, he would not leave him thus; that the fact of his being thus abandoned proved that he was not a friend of God.

While they say daily unto me - They say this constantly. I am compelled to hear it every day.

Where is thy God? - See the notes at Psalm 42:3.

Verse 11

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? - This closes the second strophe of the psalm, and, with one or two slight and immaterial variations, is the same as that which closes the first Psalm 42:5. In this latter, the word "why" is inserted, and the expression "the salvation of my countenance" occurs instead of "salvations of his countenance," with the addition of the words "and my God" at the close. The sense, however, is the same; and the verse contains, as before, self-reproof for being thus cast down, and self-exhortation to put trust in God. In the former part of the psalm Psalm 42:5 he had addressed this language to himself, as designed to impress his own mind with the guilt of thus yielding to discouragement and sorrow; but he had then almost immediately admitted that his mind was distressed, and that he was cast down; here he rallies again, and endeavors to arouse himself to the conviction that he ought not to be thus depressed and dejected. He exhorts himself, therefore; he charges his own soul to hope in God. He expresses again the assurance that he would yet be permitted to praise him. He regards God now as the "salvation of his countenance," or as his Deliverer and Friend, and expresses the conviction that he would yet make such manifestations of himself as to clear up and illuminate his countenance, at present made dark and saddened by affliction; and he appeals to him now as "his God." He has reached the true source of comfort to the afflicted and the sad - the living God as his God; and his mind is calm. Why should a man be sorrowful when he feels that he has a God? Why should his heart be sad when he can pour out his sorrows before Him?

Why should he be cast down and gloomy when he can hope: hope for the favor of God here; hope for immortal life in the world to come!

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PSALM 43

Introduction

This psalm is without a title. The name of the author is unknown, and, of course, it is not known on what occasion the psalm was composed. It bears, however, a very strong resemblance, in its general spirit and in its structure, to Psalm 42:1-11, and was, beyond doubt, composed by the same author, and in reference to the same occasion. The resemblance between the two psalms is so striking that many have supposed that they are parts of the same psalm, and as this one terminates with the same language Psalm 43:5 as that which occurs at the close of the two parts of Psalm 42:1-11 Psalm 42:5, Psalm 42:11, it has been conjectured by many that this is the third part or strophe of the psalm, and that they have been separated by mistake of the transcribers. See introduction to Psalm 42:1-11. It would be impossible to account for the fact that they had become separated in the majority Hebrew manuscripts if they had originally constituted one psalm; while the fact of their being found united in a small number of Hebrew manuscripts is easily accounted for, as the resemblance of the two may have led the transcribers to suppose that they were parts of one composition. The probability is, that this psalm was composed by the same author, as a kind of supplement to the former psalm, or as expressing, in a slightly different form, the emotions which passed through his mind on that same occasion.

The psalm contains

(1) an earnest appeal to God to assist the suffering author, and to protect him from the efforts of an ungodly nation, and from the designs of the deceitful and unjust man, Psalm 43:1;

(2) an appeal to God as his strength, with the language of anxious inquiry why he had cast him off, and had suffered him to go mourning because of the oppression of his enemy, Psalm 43:2;

(3) an earnest prayer that God would interpose, and would send out his light and his truth, and would permit him to go again to his holy hill, to the tabernacles, and to the altar, Psalm 43:3-4; and

(4), as in Psalm 42:5, Psalm 42:11, self-reproach that he is thus dejected and dispirited, and an appeal to his own soul to arouse itself, and to put its trust in God. It is a psalm, like the former, of great practical value to those who, in affliction, are sad and desponding.

Verse 1

Judge me, O God - This does not mean, Pronounce sentence upon me; but, Undertake my cause; interpose in my behalf; do justice in the case. He regarded his own cause as right; he felt that he was greatly wronged by the treatment which he received from people, and he asks to have it shown that he was not guilty of what his enemies charged on him; that he was an upright man, and a friend of God. See Psalm 7:8, note; Psalm 26:1, note.

And plead my cause - See the notes at Psalm 35:1. "Against an ungodly nation." Margin, unmerciful. Literally, "from a nation not merciful," or not; religious. The idea is, that the nation or people referred to manifested none of the spirit of religion in their conduct toward him; that he was treated with severity and injustice. This entire description would agree well with the state of things in the time of the rebellion of Absalom, when David was driven from his home and his throne: 2 Samuel 15:31; compare 2 Samuel 16:23; 2 Samuel 17:14, 2 Samuel 17:23.

Verse 2

For thou art the God of my strength - See Psalm 18:2, note; Psalm 28:7, note.

Why dost thou cast me off? - As if I were none of thine; as if I were wholly abandoned. Compare the notes at Psalm 22:1. The word rendered "cast off" - זנח *zânach* - is a word which implies strong disgust or loathing: "Why dost thou cast me off as a loathsome or disgusting object?" Compare Revelation 3:16. The Hebrew word means properly to be foul, to be rancid, to stink: then, to be loathsome or abominable; and then, to treat or regard anything as such. Compare Hosea 8:3, Hosea 8:5; Isaiah 19:6.

Why go I mourning … - See the notes at Psalm 42:9. This expression, with others of a similar character, renders it morally certain that this psalm was composed by the same person, and with reference to the same circumstances, as the former.

Verse 3

O send out thy light and thy truth - Send them forth as from thy presence; or, let them be made manifest. The word light here is equivalent

to favor or mercy, as when one prays for the "light of God's countenance" (see the notes at Psalm 4:6); and the idea is, that now, in the time of darkness and trouble, when the light of God's countenance seemed to be withdrawn or hidden, he prays that God would impart light; that he would restore his favor; that he would conduct him back again to his former privileges. The word truth here is equivalent to truthfulness or faithfulness; and the prayer is, that God would manifest his faithfulness to him as one of his own people, by restoring him to the privileges and blessings from which he had been unjustly driven. Compare the notesat Psalm 25:5.

Let them lead me - That is, Let them lead me back to my accustomed privileges; let me go under their guidance to the enjoyment of the blessings connected with the place of public worship.

Let them bring me unto thy holy hill - Mount Zion; the place where the worship of God was then celebrated, and hence called the "holy hill" of God.

And to thy tabernacles - The tabernacle was the sacred tent erected for the worship of God (see the notes at Psalm 15:1), and was regarded as the place where Yahweh had his abode. The tabernacle was divided, as the temple was afterward, into two parts or rooms, the holy and the most holy place (see the notes at Hebrews 9:1-5); and hence the plural term, tabernacles, might be employed in speaking of it. The language here implies, as in Psalm 42:1-11, that the author of the psalm was now exiled or banished from this, and hence, also it may be inferred that the two psalms were composed by the same author, and with reference to the same occasion. If the reference here, moreover, is to Mount Zion as the "holy hill," it may be observed that this would fix the composition of the psalm to the time of David, as before his time that was not the place of the worship of God, but was made "holy" by his removing the ark there. After his time the place of worship was removed to Mount Moriah, where the temple was built. It cannot be demonstrated, however, with absolute certainty that the reference here is to Mount Zion, though that seems in every way probable. Compare Psalm 2:6, note; Psalm 3:4, note; compare 2 Samuel 5:7-9; 2 Samuel 6:17.

Verse 4

Then will I go unto the altar of God - The altar on Mount Zion, where sacrifices were offered: 2 Samuel 6:17. The meaning is, that he would again

unite with others in the public and customary worship of God. Compare the notes at Psalm 42:4.

Unto God - Into the immediate presence of God; the place where he was worshipped.

My exceeding joy - Margin, the gladness of my joy. The Septuagint renders this, "who makes my youth joyous:" or, "the joy of my youth," (Thompson) The Hebrew is, the gladness of my joy; meaning, that God was the source of his joy, so that he found all his happiness in Him.

Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee - Compare the notes at Psalm 33:2-3. Instruments of music were commonly used in the worship of God, and David is represented as excelling in the music of the harp. Compare 1 Samuel 16:16-23.

O God, my God - It was not merely God as such that he desired to worship, or to whom he now appealed, but God as his God, the God to whom he had devoted himself, and whom he regarded as his God even in affliction and trouble. Compare the notes at Psalm 22:1.

Verse 5

Why art thou cast down? … - See Psalm 42:5, note; Psalm 42:11, note. The sameness of this verse with Psalm 42:5, Psalm 42:11 proves, as has been already remarked, that this psalm was composed by the same writer, and with reference to the same subject as the former. The doctrine which is taught is the same - that we should not be dejected or cast down in the troubles of life, but should hope in God, and look forward to better times, if not in this world, certainly in the world to come. If we are his children, we shall "yet praise him;" we shall acknowledge him as the "health" or the salvation (Hebrew) of our countenance; as one who by giving "salvation" diffuses joy over our countenance; as one who will manifest himself as our God. He who has an eternity of blessedness before him - he who is to dwell forever in a world of peace and joy - he who is soon to enter an abode where there will be no sin, no sadness, no tears, no death - he who is to commence a career of glory which is never to terminate and never to change - should not be cast down - should not be overwhelmed with sorrow.

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PSALM 44

Introduction

The title of this psalm, "To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil," is the same as the title prefixed to Psalm 42:1-11, except with a slight transposition. See the notes at the title to Psalm 42:1-11. This does not, however, prove that the psalm was by the same author; or that it was composed on the same occasion; or that the design and the contents of the two resemble each other; but merely that they were alike submitted, for the same purpose, to those descendants of the family of Korah who were employed in regulating the music of the sanctuary. It may be true, indeed, that the psalm was composed by one of the descendants of Korah, or one who had the charge of the music, but that is not made certain by the title.

There is no way in which the authorship can be determined. It does not belong to the general division of the book of Psalms which is ascribed to David 2 Kings 24:1, or in the reign of Jehoiachin, when the land was again invaded by him, 2 Kings 24:10. Tholuck supposes that it refers either to the time of Jehoiachin 2 Chronicles 36:9, or to the time of Zedekiah 2 Chronicles 36:11, when the land was invaded by the Babylonians, and when the captivity commenced. Prof. Alexander supposes that there is nothing in the psalm which makes it necessary to suppose that it refers to a later period than the time of David.

What is manifest in the psalm itself in regard to the occasion of its composition is,

(1) that it was a season of defeat and disaster, when the armies of Israel were discomfited, Psalm 44:9-10;

(2) that their armies and people were scattered among the pagan, and that the people were "sold" among them, Psalm 44:11-12;

(3) that they were made a reproach and a by-word among surrounding nations, Psalm 44:13-14;

(4) that this discomfiture and disgrace had befallen them in some place which might be called "the place of dragons," Psalm 44:19; and

(5) that this had occurred at some time when the author of the psalm, speaking in the name of the people, could say that it was not on account of prevailing idolatry, or because, as a people, they had "stretched out their hands to a strange god," Psalm 44:17-18, Psalm 44:20.

Perhaps it will be found, on an ex amination of the psalm, that all the circumstances accord better with the time of Josiah, and especially the close of his reign 2 Kings 23:26-30; 2 Chronicles 35:20-27, and the commencement of the reign following 2 Kings 23:31-37; 2 Kings 24:1, than with any other period of the history of the Hebrew people. This was the beginning of the calamities that came upon the nation in the period immediately preceding the Babylonian captivity; it was a time when the nation was free, as far as the efforts of a pious king could accomplish it, from prevailing idolatry; and yet it was a time when that series of disasters commenced which resulted in the entire removal of the nation to Babylon. There is not the slightest internal evidence that the psalm has reference to the times of the Maccabees; there were no historical facts in the time of David to which it can be easily applied; but all the circumstances in the psalm would find a fulfillment in the events which just preceded the Babylonian captivity, and in the series of national disasters which commenced with the defeat and death of Josiah.

The psalm is an earnest appeal to God to interpose amid the calamities of the nation, and to arise for their defense and deliverance. It consists of the following parts:

I. An allusion to former national blessings in the tradition which had come down from ancient times respecting the divine interposition in behalf of the nation when it was in danger, and when God delivered it from its foes, Psalm 44:1-8. This reference to the past is evidently designed to be an argument or a reason for expecting and imploring the divine interposition in the present period of national darkness and calamity. The fact that God had interposed in similar circumstances was an argument which might be urged why he should do so again.

II. The condition of the nation described, Psalm 44:9-16. It was a time of national calamity. God had cast the nation off, and went forth no more with their hosts. Their armies were turned back and plundered; the people were sold into slavery, they were made a reproach and a by-word among the nations of the earth.

III. The statement that whatever might be the reason why all this had come upon them, it was not on account of national defection, or the prevalence of idolatry, or because they had forgotten God, Psalm 44:17-22. The idea is that there was a prevailing desire in the nation to serve God, and that this was to be regarded as a calamity coming upon the people of God as such; their sufferings were endured in the cause of true religion, or because they were the people of God. This furnishes a ground of appeal that God would interpose in their behalf; or that he would vindicate them and his own cause.

IV. An earnest appeal to God to aid and save them, Psalm 44:23-26.

Verse 1

We have heard with our ears - That is, it has been handed down by tradition.

Our fathers have told us - Our ancestors. They have delivered it down from generation to generation. The word rendered "told" means properly to grave, or to insculp on a stone; and thence, to write. Then it comes to mean to number, to count, to recount, to tell, to declare. The word would be applicable to any method of making the thing known, either by hieroglyphic figures in sculpture, by writing, or by oral tradition, though it seems probable that the latter mode is particularly referred to here. Compare Exodus 10:2; Exodus 12:26-27.

What work thou didst in their days - The great work which thou didst accomplish for them; or, how thou didst interpose in their behalf. The reference is to what God accomplished for them in delivering them from Egyptian bondage, and bringing them into the land of Canaan.

In the times of old - In ancient times; in the beginning of our history. The idea here is, that we may properly appeal to the past - to what God has done in former ages - as an argument for his interposition in similar circumstances now, for,

(a) His former interposition showed his power to save;

(b) it was such an illustration of his character that we may appeal to that as a reason for asking him to interpose again.

Verse 2

How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand - The word rendered "heathen" means simply nations without necessarily conveying the idea of paganism, as that word is now understood. It means the nations, to wit, of the land of Canaan, or the Canaanites; and as these nations were in fact idolaters, or strangers to the true religion, the word came in time to have that idea attached to it. It is in that sense that we use the term now, though the word nations would accurately express the meaning of the original. The word rendered "drive out" - יָרַשׁ *yârash* - means properly to take, seize, or take possession of; and then, in the form here used (Hiphil), it means to cause to possess; to give possession of; and then, to take possession of, to drive out of a possession, to dispossess, to disinherit. The meaning here is, he dispossessed them of their country; he disinherited them. This, the psalmist says, God had done "by his hand;" that is, it was by his own power.

And plantedst them - That is, planted his people - the children of Israel. He put them in the place of those whom he had disinherited or dispossessed. The word is properly applicable to a tree, but it is also used with reference to a nation, and means that he assigned them a fixed and permanent residence. Thus we say in English, "to plant a colony." Compare Amos 9:15; Jeremiah 24:6; Jeremiah 32:41; Psalm 80:8; 2 Samuel 7:10.

How thou didst afflict the people - That is, the people of the land of Canaan; the nations that dwelt there. The word means to bring evil or calamity upon anyone.

And cast them out - The word used here may be taken in the sense of sending out or expelling, as in Genesis 3:23; 1 Kings 9:7 - and then it would be applicable to the Canaanites, as meaning that God had expelled or driven them out - as it is understood by our translators; or it may be used to denote the sending out of shoots or branches by a tree or vine, as in Psalm 80:11; Jeremiah 17:8; Ezekiel 17:6-7 - and then it would refer here to the Israelites, and would mean that God caused them to increase; multiplied them; spread them over the land, as a vine spreads, Psalm 80:8-11. The

parallelism here clearly demands the latter interpretation. So it is understood by Luther, DeWette, Tholuck, and Prof. Alexander.

Verse 3

For they got not the land in possession - The land of Canaan. The design of this verse is to illustrate the sentiment in the previous verse, that they owed their establishment in the promised land wholly to God. The fact that He had interposed in their behalf; that He had shown that he was able to discomfit their enemies, is appealed to as a reason why he should now interpose in a time of national danger and calamity. He who had driven out the nations in the days of their fathers; he who had established his people peaceably in the land from which the former inhabitants had been expelled, was able to interpose now and save them. The prominent thought in all this is, that it was God who had accomplished all that had been done. That same God was able to save them again.

By their own sword - That is, it was not owing to their valor, but to the divine power: Deuteronomy 8:10-18; Deuteronomy 9:3-6; Joshua 24:12.

Neither did their own arm save them - Not their own strength or prowess.

But thy right hand - The right hand is mentioned because it is that which is employed in wielding the sword or the spear in battle.

And the light of thy countenance - Thy favor. It was because thou didst lift upon them the light of thy countenance, or because thou didst favor them. See the notes at Psalm 4:6.

Because thou hadst a favor unto them - Thou didst desire to show them favor; thou hadst pleasure in them. The idea in the Hebrew word is that of delighting in anything, or having pleasure in it.

Verse 4

Thou art my King, O God - literally, "Thou art He, my King, O God;" that is, Thou art the same: the same King, and the same God, who didst interpose in the time of the fathers, and thou art he whom I recognize as King, as the Sovereign Ruler of thy people. The psalmist here uses the singular number, "my King," as expressive of his own feelings, though he doubtless means also to speak in the name of the people. It would seem not improbable from this, that the author of the psalm was the reigning monarch in the time of the troubles referred to. If not, it was evidently one who personated him, and who meant to represent his feelings. The language shows the strong confidence of the author of the psalm in God, and perhaps

also is designed to express his personal responsibility at the time, and his consciousness that his only refuge in conducting the troubled affairs of the nation was God.

Command deliverances for Jacob - As if all was under His command, and He had only to give direction, and salvation would come. The word "Jacob" here is used to denote the descendants of Jacob, or the people of God. See the notes at Psalm 24:6.

Verse 5

Through thee - By thy help. "Will we push down our enemies." The word here rendered "push down" means literally to strike or push with the horns, spoken of horned animals, Exodus 21:28, Exodus 21:31-32. Then it is applied to a conqueror prostrating nations before him: Deuteronomy 33:17; 1 Kings 22:11.

Through thy name - That is, acting under thine authority and by thy help. If he gave the commandment Psalm 44:4, it would be certain that they would be able to overcome their adversaries.

Will we tread them under - Will we conquer or subdue them. The language is taken from the custom of treading on a prostrate foe. See Psalm 7:5, note; Psalm 18:40, note; compare Job 40:12, note; Isaiah 10:6, note; Isaiah 63:3, note; Daniel 7:23, note.

That rise up against us - Our enemies that have mustered their strength for war. The language would properly denote those who had rebelled against a government; but it seems here to be used in a more general sense, as referring to those who had waged war against them. See Psalm 18:39,

Verse 6

For I will not trust in my bow - The author of the psalm himself again speaks as expressing his own feelings, and stating the grounds of his confidence and hope. Compare Psalm 44:4. At the same time he doubtless expresses the feelings of the people, and speaks in their name. He had said Psalm 44:3 that the ancestors of the Jewish people had not obtained possession of the promised land by any strength or skill of their own, and he now says that he, and those who were connected with him, did not depend on their own strength, or on the weapons of war which they might employ, but that their only ground of trust was God.

Verse 7

But thou hast saved us from our enemies - That is, Thou hast done it in times past. Thou hast interposed in behalf of our nation in periods of

danger and trial, and hast delivered us. This is stated as a reason for what is said by the psalmist in Psalm 44:6 - that he would not trust in his sword and in iris bow - and for the earnest appeal which he now makes to God. He and his people did not rely on their own strength and prowess, but on that God who had often interposed to save the nation.

And hast put them to shame that hated us - In former times. That is, he had caused them to be discomfited. He had turned them back. He had covered them with confusion. On the meaning of the words "shame" and "ashamed," see Job 6:20, note; Psalm 34:5, note.

Verse 8

In God we boast all the day long - That is, continually or constantly. It is not a momentary or temporary expression of our feelings, but it is our habitual and constant employment. We have no other ground of reliance, and we express that reliance constantly. The word rendered "boast" here rather more literally means praise: "In God we praise all the day long." The idea is, that he was their only ground of confidence. They ascribed all their former successes to him; they had no other reliance now.

And praise thy name for ever - We do it now; we shall never cease to do it.

Selah - On the meaning of this word, see the notes at Psalm 3:2.

Verse 9

But thou hast cast off - The author of the psalm now commences a description of the existing circumstances of the nation, so strongly in contrast with what had existed in former times when God interposed in their behalf, and when he gave them success. This is properly the commencement of the second part of the psalm, and the description is continued to Psalm 44:16. The Hebrew word here rendered "hast cast off" implies disgust and abhorrence, as the casting away of that which is loathsome. See the word explained in the notes at Psalm 43:2. The reference is to what had occurred at the time when the psalm was written. See introduction to this psalm. The allusion is to the invasion of the land by foreigners; their own discomfiture in their wars; and the calamities consequent on these invasions and defeats.

And put us to shame - By defeat and disgrace. See the word explained above, Psalm 44:7. For the defeat and discomfiture supposed to be referred to, see 2 Chronicles 35:20-27; 2 Chronicles 36:5-6.

And goest not forth with our armies - See the places referred to above. Thus Josiah was defeated and slain; and thus the land was conquered by the invaders.

Verse 10

Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy - Instead of giving us the victory. That is, we are defeated.

And they which hate us spoil for themselves - They plunder us; they take our property as spoil, and carry it away. That this was done at the time referred to in the introduction as the time of the composition of the psalm, is apparent from the narrative in the Book of Chronicles. 2 Chronicles 36:7, "Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the Lord to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon." Compare 2 Kings 23:33; 2 Kings 24:13-16; 2 Kings 25:13-17.

Verse 11

Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat - Margin, as in Hebrew, "as sheep of meat." That is, as sheep are killed for food, so thou hast allowed us to be put to death.

And hast scattered us among the heathen - Among the surrounding nations. See the notes at Psalm 44:2. That is, they had been discomfited in war; many had fled into surrounding countries; many had been carried away captive. All this undoubtedly occurred at the time at which I have supposed that the psalm was written - the time immediately preceding the Babylonian captivity.

Verse 12

Thou sellest thy people for nought - Margin, without riches. Without gain, or advantage; that is, for no price that would be an equivalent. The people were given up to their enemies, but there was nothing in return that would be of equal value. The loss was in no way made up. They were taken away from their country and their homes. They were withdrawn from useful labor in the land; there was a great diminution of the national strength and of the national wealth; but there was no return to the land, no advantage, no valuable result, that would be an equivalent for thus withdrawing them from their country and their homes. It was as though they had been given away. A case may be supposed where the exile of a part of a people might be an advantage to a land, or where there would be a full equivalent for the loss sustained, as when soldiers go forth to defend their country, and to repel a foe, rendering a higher service than they could by remaining at home; or as

when colonists go forth and settle in a new region, producing valuable returns in commerce; or as when missionaries go forth among the pagan, often producing, by a reflex influence, effects on the piety and prosperity of the churches at home, more important, and more widely diffused, than would have been produced by their remaining to labor in their own country.

But no such valuable results occurred here. The idea is that they were lost to their homes; to their country; to the cause of religion. It is not necessary to suppose that the psalmist here means to say that the people had been literally sold into slavery, although it is not in itself improbable that this had occurred. All that the words necessarily imply would be that the effect was as if they were sold into bondage. In Deuteronomy 32:30; Judges 2:14; Judges 3:8; Judges 4:2, Judges 4:9; Judges 10:7, the word used here is employed to express the fact that God delivered his people into the hand of their enemies. Any removal into the territories of the pagan would be a fact corresponding with all that is conveyed by the language used. There call be little doubt, however, that (at the time referred to) those who were made captives in war were literally sold as slaves. This was a common custom. Compare the notes at Isaiah 52:3.

And dost not increase thy wealth by their price - The words "thy wealth" are supplied by the translators; but the idea of the psalmist is undoubtedly expressed with accuracy. The meaning is, that no good result to the cause of religion, no corresponding returns had been the consequence of thus giving up the people into the hand of their enemies. This may however, be rendered, as DeWette translates it, "thou hast not enhanced their price;" that is, God had not set a high price on them, but had sold them for too little, or had given them away for nothing. But the former idea seems better to suit the connection and to convey more exactly the meaning of the original. So it is rendered in the Chaldee, and by Luther.

Verse 13

Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbors - Compare the notes at Psalm 39:8. The word neighbors here refers to surrounding people or nations. They were reproached, scorned, and derided as forsaken by God, and given up to their foes. They no longer commanded the admiration of mankind as a prosperous, favored, happy people. Surrounding nations treated them with contempt as inspiring no fear, and as having nothing to entitle them to respect.

Verse 14

Thou makest us a byword among heathen - The word rendered "byword" - מֹשָׁל *mâshâl* - means properly a similitude or parable; then, a sententious saying, and apophthegm; then, a proverb; then, a song or verse, particularly a satirical song, or a song of derision. The idea here is, that they were made a proverb, or were referred to as a striking instance of the divine abandonment, or as something marked to which the nations might and did refer as an example of calamity, judgment, misfortune, failure; a warning to all. See Deuteronomy 28:37.

A shaking of the head among the people - An occasion for the shaking of the head, in derision and scorn. Compare the notes at Psalm 22:7.

Verse 15

My confusion is continually before me - My shame; the conviction and the evidence of my disgrace is constantly present with me. Literally, "all the day my shame is before me." That is, the evidences of disgrace, defeat, and disaster; render everywhere around him, and he could not conceal them from himself. The psalmist here is represented as the head of the people, and expresses the sense of disgrace which the sovereign era people would feel in a time of national calamity; identifying himself with the people, he speaks of the national disgrace as his own.

And the shame of my face - The shame that is manifested on the countenance when we blush.

Hath covered me - That is, I am suffused with the evidence of my shame; or, as we sometimes say, "he blushed all over." The blush, however - that special rush of blood manifesting itself through the skin - which constitutes the evidence of shame, is confined to the face and the neck; an arrangement which none can explain, except on the supposition that there is a God; that he is a moral governor; and that, as it was designed that the body should be covered or clothed, he meant that the evidence of guilt should manifest itself on the parts of the person which are most exposed to view, or where others could see it. The idea here is, that he could not conceal the proofs of his shame and disgrace; he was compelled to exhibit them to all around.

Verse 16

For the voice of him … - That is, Because I hear the voice of him that reproaches and blasphemes. The word rendered blasphemeth, means properly to use cutting words; then, to reproach or revile. It may be applied either to people or to God. In the former case, it means reproach or reviling;

in the latter, blasphemy in the usual sense of that term, denoting reproachful words concerning God. The word may be used here in both these senses, as it is evident that not only were the people the subject of reproach, but that God was also.

By reason of the enemy - That is, the foreign enemies, or those who had invaded the land.

And avenger - Of him who had come to take vengeance. Here the word refers to the foreign enemies of the nation, and to the spirit by which they were actuated; their purposes to avenge themselves of what they regarded as wrongs, or take vengeance on a nation which they had long hated. Compare the notes at Psalm 8:2.

Verse 17

All this is come upon us - All these calamities. The connecting thought here is, that although all these things had come upon them, yet they could not be traced to their own infidelity or unfaithfulness to God. There was nothing in the national character, there were no circumstances at that time existing, there was no special unfaithfulness among the people, there was no such general forgetfulness of God, and no such general prevalence of idolatry as would account for what had occurred, or as would explain it. The nation was not then more deeply depraved than it had been at other times; but, on the contrary, there was among the people a prevalent regard for God and for his service. It was, therefore, a mystery to the author of the psalm, that these calamities had been suffered to come upon them at that time; it was an event the cause of which he desired to search out, Psalm 44:21.

Yet have we not forgotten thee - As a nation. That is, there was nothing special in the circumstances of the nation at that time which would call down the divine displeasure. We cannot suppose that the psalmist means to claim for the nation entire perfection, but only to affirm that the nation at that time was not characterized by any special forgetfulness of God, or prevalence of wickedness. All that is here said was true at the time when, as I have supposed, the psalm was written - the closing part of the reign of Josiah, or the period immeditely following.

Neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant - We have not been unfaithful to thy covenant; to the covenant which thou didst make with our fathers; to the commandments which thou hast given us. This can only mean that there was no such prevailing departure from the principles of that

covenant as could account for this. The psalmist could not connect the existing state of things - the awful and unique discomfitures and calamities which had come upon the nation - with anything special in the character of the people, or in the religious condition of the nation.

Verse 18

Our heart is not turned back - That is, We have not turned away from thy service; we have not apostatized from thee; we have not fallen into idolatry. This must mean that such was not at that time the characteristic of the nation; it was not a prominent thing among the people; there was no such general and pervading iniquity as to explain the fact that these calamities had come upon them, or to be properly the cause of these troubles.

Neither have our steps declined from thy way - Margin, goings. The idea as expressed by our translators is, that the people had not departed from the path prescribed by God; that is, from what he required in his law. The Septuagint and the Vulgate render it, "Thou hast turned our steps from thy way;" that is, though our heart is not turned back, and we have not revolted from thee, yet thou hast turned our steps from thy way, or hast turned us from the way of thy favor and from prosperity. The rendering in the common version, however, is more in conformity with the idea in the original.

Verse 19

Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons - Or rather, "That thou hast crushed us in the place of dragons." The connection is continued from the previous verse: "Our heart is not so turned back, nor have our steps so declined from thy path, that thou shouldst crush us in the place of dragons." That is, we have been guilty of no such apostasy and infidelity as to account for the fact that thou hast dealt with us in this manner, or make it necessary and proper that we should thus be crushed and overthrown The word rendered "dragons" - תנין *tannîyn* - means either a great fish; a sea monster; a serpent; a dragon; or a crocodile. See the notes at Isaiah 13:22. It may also mean a jackal, a fox, or a wolf. DeWette renders it here, jackals. The idea in the passage is essentially the same, whichever interpretation of the word is adopted. The "place of dragons" would denote the place where such monsters are found, or where they had their abode; that is to say, in desolate places; wastes; deserts; old ruins; depopulated towns. See the notes, as above, at Isaiah 13:19-22; compare Jeremiah 9:11.

The meaning here would be, therefore, that they had been vanquished; that their cities and towns had been reduced to ruins; that their land had been laid waste; that the place where they had been "sore broken" was in fact a fit abode for wild beasts and monsters.

And covered us with the shadow of death - Our land has been covered with a dark and dismal shade, as if Death had cast his image or shadow over it. See Job 3:5, note; and Psalm 23:4, note. There could be no more striking illustration of calamity and ruin.

Verse 20

If we have forgotten the name of our God - That is, if we have apostatized from him.

Or stretched out our hands to a strange god - Or have been guilty of idolatry. The act of stretching out the hands, or spreading forth the hands, was significant of worship or prayer: 1 Kings 8:22; 2 Chronicles 6:12-13; see the notes at Isaiah 1:15. The idea here is, that this was not the cause or reason of their calamities; that if this had occurred, it would have been a sufficient reason for what had taken place; but that no such cause actually existed, and therefore the reason must be found in something else. It was the fact of such calamities having come upon the nation when no such cause existed, that perplexed the author of the psalm, and led to the conclusion in his own mind Psalm 44:22 that these calamities were produced by the malignant designs of the enemies of the true religion, and that, instead of their suffering for their national sins, they were really martyrs in the cause of God, and were suffering for his sake.

Verse 21

Shall not God search this out? - That is, If this had been the case, it would be known to God. If, as a nation, we had been given to idolatry, or if our hearts had been secretly alienated from the true God, though there had been no open manifestation of apostasy, yet that could not have been concealed from him. The question here asked implies a solemn declaration on the part of the psalmist that this was not so; or that there was no such national apostasy from God, and no such prevalence of idolatry in the land as to account for what had occurred. The reason for the calamities which had come upon them, therefore, must be found in something else.

For he knoweth the secrets of the heart - What is in the heart: what is concealed from the world. If there were any such alienation from him in the hearts of the people, he would know it. The fact that God knows the heart,

or that he understands all the secret thoughts, purposes, and motives of people, is one that is everywhere affirmed in the Scriptures. See 1 Chronicles 28:9; Romans 8:27; compare the notes at Revelation 2:23.

Verse 22

Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long - That is, we are continually or constantly subjected to these calamities. It is not a single defeat, but it is a continued slaughter. This verse contains, in the apprehension of the psalmist, the true cause of the calamities which had come upon the nation. The emphasis in the passage lies in the phrase "for thy sake." The meaning is, It is on thy account; it is in thy cause; it is because we are thy friends, and because we worship thee. It is not on account of our national sins; it is not because there is any prevalent idolatry, but it is because we are the worshippers of the true God, and we are, therefore, martyrs. All these calamities have come upon us in consequence of our attachment to thee. There is no evidence that there was any self-glorying in this, or any intention to blame God as if he were unjust or severe, but it is the feeling of martyrs as suffering in the cause of religion. This passage is applied by the apostle Paul to Christians in his time, as fitly describing their sufferings, and the cause of the calamities which came upon them. See the notes at Romans 8:36.

We are counted as sheep for the slaughter - We are reckoned like sheep designed for the slaughter. That is, It is not because we are guilty, but we are regarded and treated as innocent sheep who are driven to be slaughtered. See the notes at Romans 8:36. Their attachment to the true religion - their devotion to Yahweh as the true God - was the secret cause of all the calamities which had come upon them. As a nation they were his friends, and as such they were opposed by the worshippers of other gods.

Verse 23

Awake, why sleepest thou? - This is a solemn and earnest appeal to God to interpose in their behalf, as if he were "asleep," or were regardless of their sufferings. Compare Psalm 3:7, note; Psalm 7:6, note; Psalm 35:23, note.

Arise, cast us not off for ever - Do not forsake us always. Compare Psalm 44:9. He had seemed to have cast them off; to have forgotten them; to have forsaken them utterly, and the psalmist, in the name of the people, calls on him not entirely to abandon them.

Verse 24

Wherefore hidest thou thy face? - See the notes at Psalm 13:1. Why dost thou turn away from us, and refuse to aid us, and leave us to these unpitied sufferings?

And forgettest our affliction and our oppression - Our trials, and the wrongs that are committed against us. These are earnest appeals. They are the pleadings of the oppressed and the wronged. The language is such as man would use in addressing his fellow-men; and, when applied to God, it must be understood as such language. As used in the Psalms, it denotes earnestness, but not irreverence; it is solemn petition, not dictation; it is affectionate pleading, not complaint. It indicates depth of suffering and distress, and is the strongest language which could be employed to denote entire helplessness and dependence. At the same time, it is language which implies that the cause for which they suffered was the cause of God, and that they might properly call on him to interfere in behalf of his own friends.

Verse 25

For our soul is bowed down to the dust - That is, We are overborne with calamity, so that we sink to the earth. The expression is one that denotes great affliction.

Our belly cleaveth unto the earth - We are like animals that are prone upon the earth, and that cannot rise. The allusion may be to reptiles that cannot stand erect. The figure is intended to denote great prostration and affliction.

Verse 26

Arise for our help - Margin, as in Hebrew, "a help for us." That is, Deliver us from our present calamities and troubles.

And redeem us - Save us; deliver us. See Psalm 25:22, note; Psalm 31:5, note; Isaiah 1:27, note; Isaiah 52:3, note.

For thy mercies' sake - On account of thy mercies. That is, in order that thy mercy may be manifested; or that thy character, as a God of mercy, may be made known. It was not primarily or mainly on their own account that the psalmist urges this prayer; it was that the character of God might be made known, or that it might be seen that he was a merciful Being. The proper manifestation of the divine character, as showing what God is, is in itself of more importance than our personal salvation - for the welfare of the universe depends on that; and the highest ground of appeal and of hope which we can have, as sinners, when we come before him, is that he would

glorify himself in his mercy. To that we may appeal, and on that we may rely. When that is urged as an argument for our salvation, and when that is the sole ground of our confidence, we may be assured that he is ready to hear and to save us. In the New Testament he has told us how that mercy has been manifested, and how it may be made available to us - to wit, through the Lord Jesus, the great Mediator; and hence, we are directed to come in his name, and to make mention of what he has done and suffered in order that the divine mercy may be consistently manifested to mankind. From the beginning of the world - from the time when man apostatized from God, - through all dispensations, and in all ages and lands, the only hope of men for salvation has been the fact that God is a merciful Being; the true ground of successful appeal to him has been, is, and ever will be, that his own name might be glorified and honored in the salvation of lost and ruined sinners - in the displays of his mercy.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 45

Introduction

This psalm is entitled "To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil. A song of love." On the phrase" To the chief Musician," see the notes at the title to Psalm 4:1-8. The words "Upon Shoshannim" occur also, as a title, or part of a title, in Psalm 60:1-12, "Shushan-eduth." The word Shoshan - שׁוֹשָׁן *shôshân* - occurs in 1 Kings 7:22, 1 Kings 7:26; 2 Chronicles 4:5; Hosea 14:5; in all which it is rendered lily, or lilies. The word, therefore, probably means a lily; and then it came to denote, probably, a musical instrument that had a resemblance to a lily, or that was shaped like a lily. It is not known to what kind of musical instrument there is a reference, but it would seem probable that something like the trumpet or the cymbal was intended.

The special reference here would seem to be to the chief musician who presided over this part of the musical instruments employed in public worship - as it would seem not improbable that each of the different parts, as trumpets, horns, viols, harps, etc., would have a special leader. On the portion of the title, "for the sons of Korah," and on the word "Maschil," see the notes at the title to Psalm 42:1-11. The portion of the title, "A Song of Loves," would properly denote a song devoted to love, or in celebration of love; that is, in which love would be the main idea. The phrase "a lovely song," or "a charming song," as Gesenius renders it here, would not, it seems to me, express the meaning of the original. An author would hardly prefix such a title to a psalm himself, as indicating that the psalm had special beauty, or was especially adapted to please; and if we suppose that the titles were prefixed by some other person than the author, or by common usage, it would be difficult to see why such a title should be prefixed to this psalm rather than to many others. It has, indeed, great beauty; but so have very many of the rest. If we suppose, however, that the title was prefixed as indicating the general subject of the psalm, or as indicating the feelings of the author toward the main persons referred to in it, the title is eminently appropriate. In this sense the title would be proper whether we regard the psalm as having reference to the Messiah, or as an epithalamium - a bridal or marriage hymn.

The author of the psalm is wholly unknown, and nothing can be determined on the subject, unless it be supposed that the portion of the title "for the sons of Korah," or "of the sons of Korah," conveys the idea that it was the composition of one of that family. On that point, see the notes at the title to Psalm 42:1-11. That it may have been written by David no one can disprove, but there is no certain evidence that he was the author, and as his name is not mentioned, the presumption is that it is not his.

Very various opinions have been entertained in regard to the reference of the psalm, and the occasion on which it was composed. A very material question is, To whom does the psalm refer? And especially, Has it reference to the Messiah, and is it to be classed with the Messianic Psalms?

Nearly all the older Christian interpreters, without hesitation, suppose that it refers to the Messiah. This opinion has been held, also, by a large part of the modern interpreters of the Bible, among others by Michaelis, Lowth, Dathe, Rosenmuller (in his second edition), Hengstenberg, Tholuck, Professor Alexander. Many, however, have defended the opposite opinion, though they have not been agreed on the question to whom the psalm refers. Grotius, Dereser, and Kaiser suppose it to have been sung at the marriage of Solomon with a foreign princess, probably the daughter of the king of Egypt. Doederlein supposes the king whose praises are sung to be an Israelite. Augusti thinks that it was sung at the nuptials of a Persian king. This last opinion DeWette adopts.

On this question it may be remarked,

(1) There is no evidence that the psalm refers to David; and, indeed, from the psalm itself it is evident that it could not have such a reference. The term "O God" Psalm 45:6 could not be applied to him, nor the expression "Thy throne is forever and ever," ibid. In the life of David, moreover, there was no marriage with a foreign princess that would correspond with the statement here; and no occasion on which the "daughter of "Tyre" was present with a gift, Psalm 45:12.

(2) it seems equally clear that the psalm does not refer to Solmon. In addition to the considerations already suggested as reasons why it does not

refer to David, and which are as applicable in the main to Solomon as to him, it may be added that Solomon was never a warlike prince, and was never distinguished for conquests. But the "hero" of the psalm is a warrior - a prince who goes forth to conquest, and who would be distinguished for his victories over the enemies of the king, Psalm 45:3-5.

(3) for stronger reasons still the Psalm cannot be supposed to refer to a Persian prince. Such a supposition is a mere conjecture, with not even the pretence that there are any historical facts that would justify such an application, and without even the suggestion as to a particular case to which it could be applicable. It is, moreover, wholly improbable that a nuptial ode designed to celebrate the marriage of a Persian king - a foreigner - would have been introduced into a book of sacred poetry among the Hebrews.

(4) The remaining opinion, therefore, is, that the psalm had original and exclusive reference to the Messiah. For this opinion the following reasons may be assigned:

(a) The authority of the New Testament. If the Bible is an inspired book, then one part of it may properly be regarded as an authoritative interpretation of another; or a statement in one part must be admitted to be proof of what is meant in another, since the entire book has one Author only - the Holy Spirit. But there can be no doubt that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews meant to quote this psalm as having reference to the Messiah, or as containing an intended statement in regard to him which might be appealed to as proof that he was divine. Thus, in Hebrews 1:8-9, he quotes Psalm 45:6-7, of the psalm, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever," etc., in proof that the Son of God is superior to the angels. See the notes at the Epistle to the Hebrews, on the passage referred to, where this point is considered at length. There can be no doubt that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews meant to quote the passage as having original reference to the Messiah; and his argument would have no force whatever on the supposition that the psalm had original reference to David, or to Solomon, or to a Persian prince.

(b) The testimony of tradition, or of early interpretation, is in favor of this supposition. Thus, the Chaldee Paraphrase Psalm 45:3 applies the

psalm expressly, to the Messiah: “Thy beauty, king Messiah - מלכא משיחא *malekâ' meshîyachâ'* - is more excellent than the sons of men.” This may not improperly be understood as representing the current opinion of the Hebrews at the time when the Chaldee interpretation was made, in regard to the design and reference of the psalm. The two eminent Jewish interpreters, Aben-Ezra and Kimchi, explain the psalm in the same manner, and may be supposed also to represent the prevailing mode of explaining it away among the Hebrews. On this point, also, the Epistle to the Hebrews may be referred to, as showing that such was the current explanation up to the time when that was written. I have referred to the fact that the author of that epistle quotes the psalm as an inspired man, and as thus furnishing the authority of inspiration in favor of this interpretation. I now refer to it as showing that this must have been the prevailing and well-understood opinion in regard to the design of the psalm. The author of the epistle was establishing by argument, not by authority, the claims of the Messiah to a rank above that of the angels. He made use of an argument which he evidently believed would have force among those who regarded the Old Testament as of divine origin. But the argument which he used, and on which he relied, would have no weight with those for whom he wrote unless they admitted that the psalm had reference to the Messiah, and that this point might be assumed without further proof. The fact, therefore, that he thus quotes and applies the psalm demonstrates that such was its current and admitted interpretation in his time.

(c) The internal evidence may be referred to. This will be further illustrated in the notes. At present it is necessary only to remark:

(1) That there are passages in this psalm which cannot be applied to any man - to any created being - and which can be applied only to one who may properly be called God, Psalm 45:6.

(2) The characteristics of the principal personage in the psalm are such as accurately describe the Messiah. These points will be illustrated in the notes.

(d) The psalm, on the supposition that it refers to the Messiah, is in accordance with a prevailing mode of writing in the Old Testament. See the

notes at Hebrews 1:8; compare Introduction to Isaiah, Section 7; and Introduction to Ephesians 5:23-32; notes at 2 Corinthians 11:2; notes at Revelation 21:2, notes at Revelation 21:9; notes at Revelation 22:17.

The proof, therefore, seems to me to be conclusive that the psalm had original and sole reference to the Messiah.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:

I. A statement of the purpose or design of the psalm. It is to speak of the things which the psalmist had meditated on respecting the "king;" some one in his view to whom that title was applicable, and whose praises he intended particularly to set forth Psalm 45:1.

II. A description of the king, Psalm 45:2-9.

(a) He is the fairest among people; distinguished for grace and beauty, Psalm 45:2.

(b) He is a warrior - a conqueror. He will go forth to conquest, and will be successful in overcoming his enemies, Psalm 45:3-5.

(c) His throne is the throne of God, and will endure forever, Psalm 45:6.

(d) His character is eminently righteous, Psalm 45:6-7.

(e) He is clad in robes of beauty; his garments are rich with perfumes; his attendants are the daughters of kings, Psalm 45:8-9.

III. A description of the queen, the bride, Psalm 45:9-17.

(a) She is clad in robes of gold - the gold of Ophir, Psalm 45:9.

(b) She is entreated to forget her own people, and her father's house - to become wholly devoted to him who had espoused her, assured that thus she would secure his heart, and be certain of his love, Psalm 45:10-11.

(c) She would be honored with the favor of the rich, and the attendance of foreign princesses, represented by the "daughter of Tyre;" Tyre, distinguished for wealth and splendor; Tyre, the representative of the commercial world, Psalm 45:12.

(d) The daughter of the king - the bride - is glorious and beautiful, as seen "within" her own palace or dwelling, Psalm 45:13.

(e) Her raiment is of wrought gold; of needlework of delicate finish and taste, Psalm 45:13-14.

(f) She is attended by virgins, her companions, who with her shall enter into the palace of the king, Psalm 45:14-15.

IV. An address to the king. He is to be honored by his children, who will be more to him than even his ancestors. His praise will spring from those children rather than from the luster and fame of his great progenitors. He will be remembered in all coming generations, and praised forever and ever, Psalm 45:16-17. See the notes at Psalm 45:16.

Such is the outline or substance of this exquisite specimen of sacred song - this very beautiful Hebrew ode. It must be apparent, I think, at once, that it cannot be applied with propriety to either David, or Solomon, or to a Persian prince. How far it is applicable to the Messiah and the church; to him as the bridegroom, and to the church as a bride - will be made apparent in the exposition of its particular words and phrases.

Verse 1

My heart is inditing - That is, I am engaged in inditing a good matter; though implying at the same time that it was a work of the heart - a work in which the heart was engaged. It was not a mere production of the intellect; not a mere work of skill; not a mere display of the beauty of song, but a work in which the affections particularly were engaged, and which would express the feelings of the heart: the result or effusion of sincere love. The word rendered is "inditing" - רחשׁ *râchash* - is rendered in the margin, boileth or bubbleth up. It means properly to boil up or over, as a fountain; and the idea here is that his heart boiled over with emotions of love; it was full and overflowing; it found expression in the words of this song. The Hebrew word does not occur elsewhere in the Bible.

A good matter - literally, a good word; that is, it was something which he was about to say which was good; something interesting, pure, important; not only a subject on which his heart was engaged, but also which was worthy of attention.

I speak of the things which I have made - literally, "I say my works to the king." That is, My work - that which I meditate and am about to compose - pertains to the king.

Touching the king - He is to be the main subject of my song. Compare the notes at Isaiah 5:1. If the remarks made in the introduction to the psalm are correct, then the "king" here referred to was the future Messiah - the great personage to whom all the writers of the Old Testament looked forward, and whose glory they were so anxious to see and to describe. Compare the notes at 1 Peter 1:10-12.

My tongue is the pen of a ready writer - Let my tongue in speaking of him be as the pen of a rapid writer. That is, let my tongue rapidly and freely express my thoughts and feelings. The word rendered "pen" - עט *ʿêṭ* - means a stylus, usually made of iron, used for the purpose of inscribing letters on lead or wax. See the notes at Job 19:24. The idea is that the psalmist's mind was full of his subject, and that he desired to express his thoughts in warm, free, gushing language - the language of overflowing emotion.

Verse 2

Thou art fairer than the children of men - That is, Thou art more fair and comely than men; thy comeliness is greater than that which is found among men. In other words, Thou art beautiful beyond any human standard or comparison. The language, indeed, would not necessarily imply that he was not a man, but it means that among all who dwell upon the earth there was none to be found that could be compared with him. The Hebrew word rendered "thou art fairer" - יפיפית *yāpeyāpiytha* - is a very unusual term. It is properly a reduplication of the word meaning "beautiful," and thus means to be very beautiful. It would be well expressed by the phrase "Beautiful - beautiful - art thou above the children of men." It is the language of surprise - of a sudden impression of beauty - beauty as it strikes at the first glance - such as the eye had never seen before. The impression here is that produced by the general appearance or aspect of him who is seen as king. Afterward the attention is more particularly directed to the "grace that is poured into his lips." The language here would well express the emotions often felt by a young convert when he is first made to see the beauty of the character of the Lord Jesus as a Saviour: "Beautiful; beautiful, above all men."

Grace is poured into thy lips - The word here rendered "is poured" means properly to pour, to pour out as liquids - water, or melted metal: Genesis 28:18; 2 Kings 4:4. The meaning here is, that grace seemed to be spread over his lips; or that this was strikingly manifest on his lips. The word grace means properly favor; and then it is used in the general sense of benignity, kindness, mildness, gentleness, benevolence. The reference here

is to his manner of speaking, as corresponding with the beauty of his person, and as that which particularly attracted the attention of the psalmist: the mildness; the gentleness; the kindness; the persuasive eloquence of his words. It is hardly necessary to remark that this, in an eminent degree, was applicable to the Lord Jesus. Thus if is said Luke 4:22, "And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." So John 7:46: "Never man spake like this man." See also Matthew 7:29; Matthew 13:54; Luke 2:47.

Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever - In connection with this moral beauty - this beauty of character - God will bless thee to all eternity. Since he has endowed thee with such gifts and graces, he will continue to bless thee, forever. In other words, it is impossible that one who is thus endowed should ever be an object of the divine displeasure.

Verse 3

Gird thy sword upon thy thigh - That is, Arm or prepare thyself for battle and conquest. The Messiah is introduced here as a conquering king; as about to go forward to subdue the nations to himself; as about to set up a permanent kingdom.

O most mighty - That is, Hero; Warrior; Conqueror.

With thy glory and thy majesty - With the glory and majesty appropriate to thee; or which properly belong to thee. This is at the same time the expression of a wish on the part of the author of the psalm, and a prophetic description. The psalmist desired that he would thus go forth to the conquest of the world; and saw that he would do it. Compare Psalm 45:5-6. It is needless to remark that this is easily and naturally applicable to the Messiah - the Lord Jesus - as going forth for the subjugation of the world to the authority of God. Compare 1 Corinthians 15:25, 1 Corinthians 15:28. See also, in reference to the figure used here, Isaiah 49:2; Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 1:16; Revelation 19:15.

Verse 4

And in thy majesty ride prosperously - Margin, "Prosper thou, ride thou." The majesty here referred to is the glory or magnificence which became a prince of such rank, and going forth to such deeds. The prayer is, that he would go forth with the pomp and glory becoming one in that station. The word used here, rendered in the margin, "prosper thou," means properly to go over or through, to pass over, and may be correctly rendered here, pass on; that is, move forward to conquest. The word "ride" refers to

the way in which warriors usually went forth to conquest in a chariot of war. The idea is that of one caparisoned for war, and with the glory appropriate to his rank as king, going forth to victory. This language is such as is often employed in the Scriptures to describe the Messiah as a conquering king.

Because of truth - On account of truth; or in the cause of truth. That is, the great purpose of his conquests would be to establish a kingdom based on truth, in contradistinction from the existing kingdom of darkness as based on error and falsehood. The "object" of his conquests was to secure the reign of truth over the minds of people. Compare John 18:37.

And meekness and righteousness - literally, "humility-righteousness;" or, humble right. It would be a kingdom or a conquest of righteousness," not" established, as most kingdoms are, by pride and arrogance and mere power, but a dominion where humility, meekness, gentleness would be at the foundation - that on which the whole superstructure would be reared. Its characteristic would be righteousness or justice - a righteousness and justice, however, not asserted and established by mere power, or by the pride of conquest, but which would be established and maintained by meekness or gentleness: a kingdom not of outward pomp and power, but the reign of the gentle virtues in the heart.

And thy right hand - The instrument of martial power and success; that which, in war, wields the sword and the spear. "Shall teach thee." Shall guide thee, or lead thee to the performance of terrible things.

Terrible things - Fearful deeds; things that are suited to excite astonishment or wonder. They were such things as would be regarded as distinguished achievements in war, indicating extraordinary valor; such conquests as would strike the world with amazement. We have here, therefore, a description of the Messiah as going forth to the great conquest of the world; and at the same time we have this intimation of the nature of his kingdom, that however great the "power" which would be exerted in securing its conquests, it would be founded on "truth:" it would be a kingdom where righteousness would prevail, and whose essential characteristic would be gentleness and peace.

Verse 5

Thine arrows are sharp in the heart … - literally, "Thine arrows are sharp - the people under thee shall fall - in the heart of the enemies of the king." The process of "thought" in the verse seems to be this: First. The

“arrows” are seen as sharp or penetrating. Second. The “people” are seen falling as those arrows are shot forth. Third. It is seen that those who fall are the “enemies of the king,” and that the arrows have pierced the “heart.” The word “sharp” is applied to the arrows as denoting that they were adapted to “pierce.” Sometimes arrows are blunted, or with a thick head, rather adapted to smite with force than to wound by penetrating. The bow and the arrow were common instruments in ancient wars, and were mainly used by those who went forth to battle in a chariot. Compare 1 Kings 22:34; 2 Kings 9:21-24. As pertaining to the Messiah, the reference here is, of course, to the “truth,” and to the power of that truth in penetrating the hearts of people. Compare the notes at Hebrews 4:12.

In the heart of the king‘s enemies - That is, the “truths” stated by the Messiah, the conquering king, would penetrate deep into the soul, and slay the sinner, the enemy of the king, that is, of the Messiah. The idea is, that truth would produce an effect in regard to the hopes of the sinner - his self-confidence - his life “as” a sinner - like that which the arrow does when it penetrates the heart. Compare Romans 7:9: “For I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.” See also the notes at Romans 7:10-11.

Whereby the people fall under thee - As the effect of the arrows; as the effect of truth. The representation is that of victory. As here represented, it is the victory of truth; a conquest by subjecting people to the authority and reign of God.

Verse 6

Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever - This passage is quoted by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews in proof that the Messiah is exalted above the angels, and it is, beyond all question, adduced by him as having original reference to the Messiah. See the passage explained at length in the notes at Hebrews 1:8. I do not perceive, after an interval of nearly twenty years since those notes were written, that it is necessary to alter or to add anything to what is there said in explanation of the passage. It is undoubtedly an address to the “king” here referred to as God - as one to whom the name “God” - אלהים *'Elohiym* - may be properly applied; and, as applied to the Messiah by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, it clearly proves that Christ is Divine.

Verse 7

Thou lovest righteousness … - See this verse explained in the notes at Hebrews 1:9, where it is applied to the Messiah. The word "God" is rendered in the margin "O God"; "O God, thy God, hath anointed thee," etc. According to this construction, the thought would be carried on which is suggested in Psalm 45:6, of a direct address to the Messiah as God. This construction is not necessary, but it is the most obvious one. The Messiah - the Lord Jesus - though he is described as God himself (John 1:1, et al.), yet addresses God as "his" God, John 20:17. As Mediator, as appearing in human form, as commissioned to perform the work of redemption, and to subdue the world to the divine authority, it was proper thus to address his Father as "his" God, and to, acknowledge Him as the source of all authority and law.

Verse 8

All thy garments smell of myrrh - The word "smell" is not in the original. The literal translation would be, "Myrrh, and aloes - cassia - all thy garments;" that is, they were so impregnated with perfumes that these seemed to constitute his very clothing. The mention of the "anointing" in the previous verse may have suggested the idea of these perfumes, as the anointing with a richly perfumed unguent seemed to have spread over, and to have pervaded all his raiment. Compare Psalm 133:2. It was common, however, for Orientals to use much perfumery, particularly on festive occasions. Myrrh - מר *môr* or מור *mur* - is an article which exudes from a tree found in Arabia, and still more extensively in Abyssinia. It is obtained by making an incision in the bark. It constituted one of the earliest articles of commerce Genesis 43:11, and was highly esteemed by the Egyptians and Jews, as well as by the Greeks and the Romans. It is mentioned in Esther 2:12 as an article used in the purification of women; and as a perfume, Exodus 30:23; Matthew 2:11; Mark 15:23; John 19:39. Of the tree which produces the myrrh, however, we have as yet no very accurate accounts. See Kitto's Encyc., art. "Mor."

And aloes - The word rendered "aloes" - אהלות *'ăhâlôth* - occurs four times in the Old Testament: Numbers 24:6, where it is rendered "lign-aloes;" and here, as in Proverbs 7:17; Exodus 30:24; Ezekiel 27:19. This, as well as "aloes," is a production of India and its islands. See Kitto's Encyc., art. "Ketzioth."

Out of the ivory palaces - That is, As thou comest out of the ivory palaces. The representation is that of the king as coming out of the palace

where he dwelt, and as clad in apparel appropriate to his station, and surrounded by his attendants, diffusing joy all around them. The imagery has "chanqed" from what it was in Psalm 45:3-5, where he goes forth as a conqueror, with his sword on his "thigh," and ascending his war-chariot. Here he appears clothed, indeed, in regal splendor, in the magnificence of state, but as the husband of the bride, and as encircled with the attendants of an Oriental court. Ivory palaces are palaces adorned with ivory, or where ivory constituted a prominent and striking part of the ornaments. It cannot be supposed that the palace was constructed entirely of ivory. Kitto supposes that this refers to the interior decorations, or that the walls were "inlaid" with ivory, gold, etc., as constituting a part of the decorations of the building. "Ivory," it would seem, was so abundant and conspicu ous that the name might be given to the whole structure. Such a palace was that built by Ahab: 1 Kings 22:39.

Whereby they have made thee glad - Hebrew, "from them (or thence) they have gladdened thee." That is, They, the attendants referred to more particularly in the following verses, have gladdened thee; have diffused around a general joy; have contributed to make thee happy. He was clad in robes that became his station, and was accompanied and surrounded by attendants who diffused around a general joy, and who made his own heart glad. The "idea" may be, that the Redeemer, the Messiah, is made happy by the affection and the companionship of the redeemed, his people.

Verse 9

Kings' daughters were among thy honorable women - Those who were in attendance on him and on the bride were from the most elevated ranks; among the most honorable of the earth. The word rendered "honorable women," means properly, precious, costly; and then, dear, beloved; and this might be rendered "kings' daughters are among thy beloved ones;" that is, in the number of thy maidens, or of those attending on thee. The allusion is to a marriage, and the description is drawn from the usual accompaniments of a marriage in the east. The design, as applicable to the Messiah and to his union with the Church, his bride, is to describe him as accompanied with every circumstance of distinction and honor, to throw around him all that constituted beauty and splendor in an Oriental marriage ceremony. Nothing of earth could be too rich or beautiful to illustrate the glory of the union of the Redeemer with his redeemed Church.

Upon thy right hand did stand the queen - The right hand is the place of honor, and that idea is intended here: 1 Kings 2:19; Mark 14:62; Mark 16:19; Hebrews 1:3; Acts 7:55. The idea here is, that the Church, the bride of the Lamb of God, as seen in the vision, is exalted to the highest post of honor. That Church has the place in his affections which the newly-married bride has in the affections of her husband.

In field of Ophir - In garments decked or ornamented with the finest gold. On the phrase "the gold of Ophir," see the notes at Isaiah 13:12.

Verse 10

Hearken, O daughter, and consider - This is probably to be understood as the language of the psalmist, in vision, as uttering counsel and advice which would be appropriate to the new condition of the bride. Some have understood it as the language of the father of the bride, uttering appropriate counsel to his daughter on entering upon her new relationship; exhorting her to affection and obedience in that relationship; charging her to feel that she is his, that she is to go with him, that she is to identify herself with his interests, and to "forget," - that is, not improperly to long for her own people and her father's house. All this would be good advice for a father to give to his daughter in such circumstances; but the most natural interpretation is to regard the language here as that of the psalmist, or as inspired wisdom, in regard to the proper feeling in entering on such a relation. If this be the meaning, the word "daughter" may be used as a term of affection or kindness, as the word "son" often is, to denote one who is a disciple or learner. The "thought" suggested here is, that counsel or advice in regard to the manner in which she should demean herself to secure the continual confidence of her husband, may be very properly given to a newly-married bride. The counsel here suggested, considered with reference only to that relation, would be eminently wise.

And incline thine ear - Attend to what is now said. The address is repeated - "Hearken;" "consider;" "incline thine ear;" as if the matter were of great importance. On the phrase "incline thine ear," see the notes at Psalm 31:2; compare Psalm 78:1.

Forget also thine own people - This is said on the supposition that the bride was a foreign princess. As such, it is to be supposed that she had been trained under other customs, under other forms of religion, and with reference to other interests than those which would now pertain to her. The counsel is, that she must now forget all these, and identify herself with her

husband, and with his interests. The word “forget” cannot denote absolute forgetfulness, or that she was to cast off all affection for those who had trained her up; but the meaning is, that she was not to pine after them; that she was not to be dissatisfied with her new home and her new relations; that she was not to carry the institutions of her native country with her; that she was not to make use of her new position to promote the ends of her native country if they were adverse to, or hostile to, the interests of her husband and his country.

As applied to a bride now, the advice would mean that she is not to pine for her old home; that she is not to make complaining and unfavorable comparison between that and her new home; that she is not to divert her husband from his plans, and the proper pursuits of his life, by endeavoring to induce him to forsake his friends, and to abandon his position, in order that she may be restored to the society of her earlier friends; that she is not to introduce habits, customs, amusements, modes of living into her husband‘s arrangements, derived from her former habits and modes of life, which would interfere with what is the proper economy of his house, and which would inconsistent with his principles, and with his means of living. When she marries, she should make up her mind, while she cherishes a proper regard for her old friends, and a proper memory of her past life, to identify her interests with his; to go where he goes; to live as he lives; and to die, if such be the will of God, where he dies, and to be buried by his side.

As applied to the Church - the bride of the Lamb - the idea here is that which we find so often enforced in the New Testament, that they who become the followers of the Saviour must be willing to forsake all for him, and to identify themselves with him and his cause. See the notes at Matthew 10:37; notes at Luke 14:26. We are to forsake the world, and devote ourselves to him; we are to break away from all worldly attachments, and to consecrate all to him; we are to bid adieu to worldly companions as our chosen friends, and make the friends of Christ our friends: we are not to pine after the world, to seek to return to it, to pant for its pleasures; we are not to take advantage of our position in the church to promote the objects which we had pursued before we entered it; we are not to introduce the customs, the habits, the plans which we before pursued, “into” the church. We are in all things to become identified with him to whom we have

become “espoused” 2 Corinthians 11:2; we are to live with him; to go with him; to die with him; to be his forever.

And thy father‘s house - The home of thy childhood; the house where thy father dwells. The strongest earthly ties are to be made subservient to a higher and stronger tie, if we would become true followers of the Saviour. See Luke 9:59-62.

Verse 11

So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty - That is, in consequence of your love to him, and your entire devotion of yourself to him. The word “desire” here is equivalent to having pleasure in; as meaning that his affliction would thus be fixed on her. In this way - by forgetting her own home, and devoting herself to him - she would secure his affection. In the married life, mere “beauty” will not secure permanently the love of a husband. The heart, as given to him, and as faithful to him, will alone secure his love. In like manner, it is nothing but sincere affection - true love on the part of the professed friends of the Saviour - the forgetting and forsaking of all else - that will secure his love, or make the church to him an object of desire.

For he is thy Lord - That is, as a husband he sustains this relation to thee; or, this appellation may be given to him. In what sense this is true in respect to a husband, see the notes at 1 Peter 3:6; notes at 1 Corinthians 11:3. In respect to the Saviour, the dominion implied in the word “Lord” is absolute and entire.

And worship thou him - That is, as applicable to a bride, Show him respect, honor, reverence. See the notes at Ephesians 5:33. The word means properly to bow down; then, to show respect, as to a superior; and then, to show proper respect to God, to wit, by worshipping or adoring him. See the notes at Matthew 2:11; see Matthew 8:2; Matthew 14:33; Matthew 15:25; Matthew 18:26; Matthew 28:9; Revelation 19:10; Revelation 22:9; compare the notes at Hebrews 1:6.

Verse 12

And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift - On the situation of Tyre, and its ancient splendor, see the notes at Matthew 11:21; the introduction to Isaiah 60:5-7, note; Isaiah 60:9, note; Isaiah 60:11, note; Isaiah 60:13 note.

Even the rich among the people - Rich men scattered among the people. Compare the notes at Psalm 22:29.

Shall entreat thy favor - Margin, as in Hebrew, "thy face." Shall desire thy smile; the light of thy countenance; thy friendship. The word rendered "entreat" - חלה *châlâh* - means properly to be rubbed; then, to be polished; and then, in the form used here (Piel) to rub, or stroke the face of anyone; to soothe or caress; to flatter, to court; and the idea is literally that of one who caresses or soothes, or seeks to conciliate. The sense here is, "the richest of the nations shall make court to thee with gifts." Gesenius, Lexicon. Ultimately, this will be true in regard to the Messiah. Compare as above, Isaiah 60. The wealth of the world will yet be laid at his feet, and, placed at his disposal. The effect of true conversion is always to make people willing to consecrate to the Saviour all that they possess.

Verse 13

The king's daughter - This evidently refers to the bride, the daughter of the foreign king. The verse contains a description of her beauty - her splendor of attire - before she is brought to the king, her future husband. She is represented here as in the palace or home of her father, before she is conducted forth to be given to her future husband in marriage. Is all "glorious." Is all splendor or beauty; is altogether splendor. There is nothing that is not splendid, rich, magnificent in her appearance, or in her apparel. As seen in Psalm 45:9, she is clad in gold; she is surrounded by honorable women - the daughters of kings Psalm 45:9, and encompassed with the rich, Psalm 45:12. As seen here, she is in her father's house, adorned for the marriage, and to be brought to the king, her future husband, attired in all that could give grace and beauty to her person. The allusion here, as referring to the church - the "bride of the Lamb" - "may be" to that church considered as redeemed, and about to be received to heaven, to dwell with its Husband and Saviour. Compare the notes at Revelation 19:7-8; notes at Revelation 21:2, notes at Revelation 21:9.

Within - This does not refer to herself, as if she was not merely splendid in her attire, but holy and pure - glorious and lovely - in "heart;" it refers to her as seen while yet "within" the palace or home of her father, in her own dwelling. The Hebrew word - פנימה *penîymâh* - means properly, "at or by the inner wall of a house, room, or court; that is, opposite to or in front of the door, and of those entering." Gesenius, "Lexicon" As seen in her dwelling - within the palace - in the most honored place - she is arrayed in gorgeous apparel, and adorned as becomes a king's daughter about to be married.

Her clothing is of wrought gold - Gold embroidery. See Psalm 45:9. That is, she is arrayed in the richest apparel.

Verse 14

She shall be brought unto the king - She shall be conducted to the king in the marriage procession, and be presented to him, clad in this magnificent raiment. The entire imagery is that of an Oriental marriage procession, where the bride is conducted forth to her future husband, attended by her virgin companions, or (as we should say) "bridesmaids."

In raiment of needlework - The word used here means properly "something variegated" or "versicolored," and would here denote a garment of divers colors, or "versicolored raiment." The word - רקמה *riqmâh* - occurs in the following places: Judges 5:30, twice, where (as here) it is rendered "needlework;" 1 Chronicles 29:2; Ezekiel 17:3, rendered "divers colors;" and Ezekiel 16:10, Ezekiel 16:13, Ezekiel 16:18; Ezekiel 26:16; Ezekiel 27:7, Ezekiel 27:16, Ezekiel 27:24, where it is rendered "broidered work." It has reference probably to embroidery or needlework, though the particular idea is rather that of the variegated "appearance" of the garment than to the manner in which it is made.

The virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee - literally, "virgins after her, her companions, brought unto thee." That is, they will be brought to the king. They will come in the same state as the queen herself; they, her companions, will be of so illustrious rank and birth, and apparelled with so much richness, that even "they" will be regarded as worthy to be treated as queens, or in the manner of queens. The design of the whole is to show the rank, the dignity, the splendor of the bride; herself gorgeously apparelled, and attended with companions so exalted as to he worthy of being treated as queens themselves. If this is to be regarded as applicable to the church, "the Lamb's wife" Revelation 21:9, it is designed to describe that church as beautiful and glorious, and as worthy of the affection of its Saviour. Compare Ephesians 5:27.

Verse 15

With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought - They shall come forth, attending the bride, with music and songs; the procession will be one of hilarity and joy.

They shall enter into the king's palace - That is, Moving from the palace of the royal father of the bride, or from her home, they will enter the palace of her husband, her future home. If this is designed to refer to the

church, it is a beautiful description of what will occur when the church redeemed shall enter heaven, the home - the palace - the glorious abode - of the great king its Saviour, and of the joy that will attend its triumphant admission into those everlasting abodes. Compare the notes at Revelation 21.

Verse 16

Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children - Instead of thy fame - thy celebrity - thy distinction - being derived from thine illustrious predecessors, it will be derived hereafter rather from thy sons; from the fact that they will be made princes and rulers in the earth. In our translation, this would seem to be an address to the bridal-queen, as if to console her for leaving the home of her illustrious ancestors, by the assurance that she would have children of her own, who would be still more illustrious. The connection, however, and the original; at least, in the Masoretic pointing, demands that this should be understood as an address to the king himself - the main subject in the poem, as in Psalm 45:2-9. The idea is, that he would derive his dignity and honor ultimately, not so much from his ancestors as his descendants; that those who would be born unto him would be more illustrious, and would have a wider dominion, than any who had gone before him in the line in which he was descended. It is not easy or practicable to apply this to Solomon, or to any other Hebrew prince; it is not difficult to apply it to the Messiah, and to the fact that those who would be descended spiritually from him, and who would ultimately be regarded as deriving true rank and honor from him, would far surpass in dignity all those who, in the line of kings, had been his predecessors.

Whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth - Not merely assigning to them provinces, to be governed as a part of the, empire, but in all lands, or where thy dominion shall be acknowledged all over the world. The image here is derived, undoubtedly, from the custom prevailing among kings of assigning portions of an empire as provinces to their sons. The meaning, however, considered as referring to the Messiah, is, that his luster and dignity on earth would not be derived from a distinguished earthly ancestry, or from an illustrious line of kings from whom he was descended, but from the fact that those who would derive their authority from him would yet possess the world, and that this their authority under him would extend to all lands. Compare the notes at Daniel 7:14, notes at Daniel 7:27.

Verse 17

I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations - The psalmist here evidently speaks as an inspired man, and the idea is that his thus singing the praises of the "king" - the Messiah - would be among the means of causing His name to be celebrated in all future ages. This song would go down to future times, and would serve to keep up the true knowledge of the Messiah in the far distant ages of the world. No one can doubt that this has been thus far accomplished; no one has any reason to doubt that this psalm "will be" among the means of keeping up the true knowledge of the Messiah, and of securing the remembrance of him upon the earth in all future periods of the world's history. This psalm has been on million of lips, in praise of the Messiah; it will be on hundreds of million more in future times, as expressive of tender love for the Redeemer.

Therefore shall the people praise thee forever and ever - Thy praise will never cease to be celebrated. The time will never come on earth when that praise will die away; and in all the eternity beyond the termination of this world's history there never will arrive a period when thy name will not be honored, and when thy praises shall cease to be sung. Compare the notes at Revelation 4:10; notes at Revelation 5:9-13. Happy are they who join in that song on earth; happy they who will unite in it in the heavenly world!

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 46

Introduction

This psalm has been called Luther‘s Psalm. It was that which he was accustomed to sing in trouble. When the times were dark; when the enemies of truth appeared to triumph; when disaster seemed to come over the cause in which he was engaged, and the friends of the Reformation were disspirited, disheartened, and sad, he was accustomed to say to his fellow-laborers, “Come, let us sing the 46th Psalm.”

The author of the psalm is unknown. It is not ascribed to David, but to “the Sons of Korah,” and there are no indications in the psalm that David was the author, or that it refers to his times. There is reason to believe that most of the psalms attributed to the “Sons of Korah” were composed subsequent to the time of David.

The title of the psalm is, “To the chief Musician, for the Sons of Korah, a song upon Alamoth.” On the phrase “To the chief Musician,” see the notes at the title to Psalm 4:1-8. On the phrase “For the Sons of Korah,” see the notes at the title to Psalm 42:1-11. The word “song” in the title occurs also in that to Psalm 30:1-12. (see the notes at that title), and also in the titles to Psalm 48:1-14; Psalm 65:1-13; Psalm 67:1-7; Psalm 75:1-10; Psalm 76:1-12; Psalm 87:1-7; Psalm 92:1-15; Psalm 108:1-13; and 1 Chronicles 15:20, where it is found in connection with the mention of certain singers or musicians, evidently referring to some kind of musical instruments which those who are mentioned used; “so the singers” Psalm 46:1-11:19, “Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, to sound with cymbals of brass; and Zechariah, and Aziel, and Shemiramoth, etc., with psalteries on Alamoth.” The word from which this is derived - עלמה *ʿalmâh* - means properly a “virgin,” or a youthful spouse (compare the notes at Isaiah 7:14); and the phrase here, and in 1 Chronicles 15:20, would seem properly to denote “after the manner of virgins;” that is, with the female voice, answering to our treble or soprano, as opposed to the deep bass or baritone voice of men. Then the reference might be to some musical instruments that were suited to accompany that voice, or whose tones resembled that voice, as distinguished from cymbals, trumpets, harps, etc. The form of the instrument is now unknown.

It is not possible now to ascertain the occasion on which the psalm was written. It was evidently in view of trouble, or of some impending calamity; apparently some national calamity, or some time when the nation was in danger, and when it was felt that their only refuge - their last hope - was in God. It would seem to be not improbable that the psalm was composed when wars were ragtag abroad in the earth; when the nations were convulsed; and when Jerusalem itself was besieged and threatened with ruin. The main thought Of the psalm - the central idea in it - is, that, amidst these general and far-spreading agitations and convulsions among the nations of the earth, the people of God were safe. They had nothing to fear, even though those convulsions and agitations should be multiplied and increased; even though they should be carried so far that the very foundations of the earth should be shaken, and the mountains removed and carried into the midst of the sea.

There was to them an Infinite Protector; there were unfailing sources of peace; they had nothing to dread. It was their duty, therefore, to be calm, still, confiding, for God would be exalted among the nations of the earth. It is possible that the psalm refers to the invasion of the land of Israel by Sennacherib, and to the miraculous destruction of his host, as recorded in Isaiah 36:2; the overthrow of numerous nations by their armies Isaiah 36:18-21; the siege of Jerusalem itself Isaiah 36:2; the confidence of Hezekiah and of his people in God when the city was besieged Isaiah 37:14-20; and the final overthrow of the Assyrian host by the angel of the Lord Isaiah 37:36, agree well with all the statements in the psalm, and seem well to "illustrate" the psalm, though it be impossible now to determine with precise accuracy to what particular historical occasion it has reference. The circumstances in that invasion, however, are so similar to those supposed in the psalm, that, perhaps, we shall not be likely to err in supposing that the psalm "had" reference to that occasion.

The psalm is divided into three parts or strophes, the close of each of which is indicated by the word "Selah," in Psalm 46:3, Psalm 46:7, Psalm 46:11.

I. The first strophe, Psalm 46:1-3. In this there is the general statement that God is a refuge and strength, and that the people of God would have

nothing to fear though the earth should be removed, and though the raging waters of the ocean should shake the very mountains.

II. The second, Psalm 46:4-7. In this there is the statement that the people of God had an unfailing source of consolation, like an ever-flowing river, making glad the city of God; that God himself was in that city as its Protector; that though the nations raged, and the kingdoms were moved, he had only to utter his voice and even the earth would be dissolved; that they had nothing to fear while the God of hosts - the God of mightier armies than those which had invaded the land - was with them.

III. The third strophe, Psalm 46:8-11. In this we have a reference to the mighty power of God as actually put forth in the desolations, which "he" had made in the earth. He had shown that power by making wars to cease; by breaking the bow, and cutting the spear in sunder; and by causing the warchariot to be burned in the fire. They had, therefore, nothing to fear while such a God was their Protector, and it was their duty calmly to confide in him, and leave the whole issue with him, for it was his purpose to exalt himself among the nations of the earth.

Verse 1

God is our refuge and strength - God is for us as a place to which we may flee for safety; a source of strength to us in danger. The first word, "refuge," from a verb meaning to "flee," and then "to flee to" - הסה *châsâh* - or to take shelter in - denotes a place to which one would flee in time of danger - as a lofty wall; a high tower; a fort; a fortress. See the notes at Psalm 18:2. The idea here is, that the people of God, in time of danger, may find him to be what such a place of refuge would be. Compare Proverbs 18:10. The word "strength" implies that God is the source of strength to those who are weak and defenseless; or that we may rely on his strength "as if" it were our own; or that we may feel as safe in his strength as though we had that strength ourselves. We may make it the basis of our confidence as really as though the strength resided in our own arm. See the notes at Psalm 18:2.

A very present help - The word "help" here means aid, assistance. The word "trouble" would cover all that can come upon us which would give us anxiety or sorrow. The word rendered "present" - נמצא *nimetsâ'* - means

rather, “is found,” or “has been found;” that is, he has “proved” himself to be a help in trouble. The word “present,” as if he were near to us, or close by us, does not accurately express the idea, which is rather, that “he has been found” to be such, or that he has always “proved” himself to be such a help, and that, therefore, we may now confide in him. The word “very,” or “exceedingly,” is added to qualify the whole proposition, as if this were “emphatically true.” It was true in the most eminent sense that God had always been found to be such a helper, and, “therefore,” there was nothing to fear in the present distress. Psalm 46:2.

Verse 2

Therefore will not we fear - Our confidence in God shall be unshaken and abiding. Having Him for our refuge and strength Psalm 46:1, we can have nothing to fear. Compare Psalm 56:3.

Though the earth be removed - literally, “in the changing of the earth;” that is, though the earth should be changed. This may either mean, Though the earth should change its place or its very structure in these convulsions; or, though it should perish altogether. Compare Psalm 102:26. The idea is, that they would not be afraid, though the convulsions then occurring in the world should be continued, and should be extended so far as to destroy the very earth itself. God would remain their friend and protector, and they would have nothing to fear.

And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea - Margin, as in Hebrew, “into the heart of the seas.” This may either be understood literally, as implying that they would “not” be afraid though the mountains, the most fixed and firm things of earth, should be uprooted and sunk in the ocean - implying that nothing earthly was stable; or, the mountains here may be referred to as emblems of that which seemed to be most settled and established on earth - the kingdoms of the world. The idea is, that in any convulsion - any change - any threatened danger - they would place confidence in God, who ruled over all, and who could not change. It will be seen at once that this entire description of trust and confidence in God is applicable to the time of Hezekiah, and to the feelings which he manifested when the land was invaded by the hosts of Sennacherib, and when wars and commotions were abroad among the kingdoms of the earth. See the introduction to the psalm. It was, also, eminently suited to console the mind in the circumstances to which Luther so often applied the psalm - the agitations, convulsions, wars, dangers in Europe, in the time of the

Reformation. It is suited to any time of trouble, when commotions and revolutions are occurring in the earth, and when everything sacred, true, and valuable seems to be in danger.

Verse 3

Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled - The waters of the sea. The idea is, that they would not be afraid though everything should be in commotion, and be as unsettled as the restless waves of the ocean. The earth might be changed, the mountains removed, the agitated sea roar and dash against the shore, but their minds would be calm. The word rendered "be troubled" means to boil; to ferment; to foam; and here it refers to the ocean as agitated and lashed into foam. Nothing is more sublime and fearful than the ocean in a storm; nothing furnishes a better illustration of the peace produced by confidence in God amid the agitations which occur in the world, than the mind of a seaman that is calm when the ocean is heaved in wild commotion.

Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof - The rolling ocean breaking against; the sides of the mountains on its shore, and seeming to shake them to their foundation. The word rendered "swelling" means properly majesty, glory; then pride, haughtiness, insolence. Literally, "though the mountains tremble through their pride." Compare Psalm 124:5. On the word "Selah," see the notes at Psalm 3:2.

Verse 4

There is a river - There is no allusion here to any particular stream or river, but the image is designed to represent a state of peace and calm security in contrast with the rough and troubled ocean. While the ocean rages, and foams, and dashes against the mountains as if it would overturn them, the state of Jerusalem, the city of God, was well represented by a calm and gently-flowing river; a river of full banks, diffusing joy and fertility and beauty wherever it flowed. This image, to represent happiness, abundance, peace, joy, is one that is often employed in the Scriptures. Compare Isaiah 32:2; Isaiah 33:21; Isaiah 41:18; Psalm 1:3; Revelation 22:1; Psalm 36:8. The "idea" here is simply that Jerusalem would be calm and serene amidst all the external agitations in the world - calm as a gently-flowing stream. The streams - the canals - the water-courses of such a river flowing around each dwelling and along each garden, would diffuse happiness and beauty everywhere.

The streams whereof - The allusion here is undoubtedly to the canals, watercourses, or rivulets that were led off from the main stream for the purpose of supplying fountains and watering gardens. Thus the city of Damascus is watered by streams or canals cut from the river Barrady, that flows down from the regions of Anti-Libanus. The greenness - the beauty - the fertility - of Damascus is owing wholly to the waters of the river thus conducted to every house and garden in the city. Compare introduction to Isaiah 17:1-14. So here, the flowing river of divine mercy and goodness is conveyed, as in smaller canals or streams, to each home and heart, producing peace, calmness, joy - while the world around is full of commotion and trouble.

Shall make glad the city of God - Jerusalem, considered as the place where God was worshipped, and where he was supposed especially to dwell: Psalm 48:1.

The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High - Of the "tent" where the Most High is supposed to abide. The word is applicable to any habitation or dwelling-place; but in the Scriptures it is applied especially to the sacred tent erected by Moses in the wilderness, and ultimately removed to Mount Zion by David, as the divine abode on earth. It is sometimes, also, applied to the temple; and if this psalm was written, as I have supposed, in the time of Hezekiah, it would be applicable to that. Compare Psalm 84:2; Psalm 132:5. The tabernacle and the temple were alike divided into two parts - the holy and the most holy place - and hence the "plural" term is sometimes applied to them. Compare the notes at Hebrews 9:2-3.

Verse 5

God is in the midst of her - God is in the midst of the "city" referred to above - the "city of God." That is,

(a) he dwelt there by the visible symbol of his presence, the Shekinah;

(b) he was there "actually" as a help and a protector.

It was his chosen abode, and as long as such a Being dwelt in the city, they had nothing to fear.

God shall help her - That is, in her danger, he will interpose to save her. This is language such as would be used in reference to a place that was besieged, and would well apply to the state of things when Jerusalem was

besieged by the armies of Assyria under Sennacherib. The language expresses the confidence of the people in the time of the impending danger.

And that right early - Margin, "when the morning appeareth." Literally, "in the faces of the morning," as the word is commonly used; or, more literally, in the "turning" of the morning - for the verb from which the word is derived means properly "to turn," and then "to turn to or from any one." The noun is applied to the face or countenance, because the person is "turned" to us when we see his countenance. The poetic idea here seems to refer to the day as having turned away "from" us at night, and then as turning about "toward" us in the morning, after having gone, as it were, to the greatest distance from us. "Possibly" there may be an allusion here to what occurred in the camp of the Assyrians, when the discovery that the angel of the Lord had smitten them was made early in the morning, or when men arose in the morning: "The angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose in the morning" (that is, when men arose in the morning), "behold, they were all dead corpses," Isaiah 37:36.

Verse 6

The heathen raged - The nations were in commotion, or were agitated like the waves of the sea. This language would well describe the consternation of the nations when the Assyrians went forth to conquest, and when, having subdued so many other kingdoms, they made war on Jerusalem. Compare Isaiah 36:18-20.

The kingdoms were moved - That is, those who were invaded, as well as those that made the invasion. There was a general convulsion or shaking among the nations of the earth.

He uttered his voice - God spoke; he gave command; he expressed his will. Compare Genesis 1:3; Habakkuk 3:6.

The earth melted - The very earth seemed to melt or dissolve before him. Everything became still. The danger passed away at his command, and the raging world became calm. The Bible abounds in language of this kind, showing the absolute power of God, or his power to control all the raging elements on land and ocean by a word. Compare the notes at Psalm 33:9. See also Psalm 107:25, Psalm 107:29; Matthew 8:26.

Verse 7

The Lord of hosts - The God commanding, ordering, marshalling the hosts of heaven - the angels, and the starry worlds. See the notes at Isaiah

1:9. Compare Psalm 24:10. The reference here is to God considered as having control over all "armies," or all that can be regarded and described as a marshalled host, in earth and in heaven. Having such a Being, therefore, for a protector, they had nothing to fear. See Psalm 46:11.

Is with us - Is on our side; is our defender. The Hebrew phrase used here is employed in Isaiah 7:14 (notes); Isaiah 8:8 (notes), to describe the Messiah. See the notes at those passages.

The God of Jacob - See the notes at Psalm 24:6. The meaning is, The God whom Jacob acknowedged, and whom he found to be his friend, is with us.

Is our refuge - literally, a high place, as a tower, far above the reach of enemies. See Psalm 9:9, note; Psalm 18:2, note. So the margin, "an high place for us."

Verse 8

Come, behold the works of the Lord - Go forth and see what the Lord has done. See, in what his hand has accomplished, how secure we are if we put our trust in him.

What desolations he hath made in the earth - Or, in the land. The word "desolations" might refer to any "ruin" or "overthrow," which he had brought upon the land of Israel, or on the nations abroad - the destruction of cities, towns, or armies, as proof of his power, and of his ability to save those who put their trust in him. But if this be supposed to refer to the invasion of the land of Israel by Sennacherib, it may point to what occurred to his armies when the angel of the Lord went forth and smote them in their camp Isaiah 37:36, and to the consequent deliverance of Jerusalem from danger. Without impropriety, perhaps, this may be regarded as all appeal to the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go forth and see for themselves how complete was the deliverance; how utter the ruin of their foes; how abundant the proof that God was able to protect his people in times of danger. It adds great beauty to this psalm to suppose that it "was" composed on that occasion, or in view of that invasion, for every part of the psalm may receive a beautiful, and an ample illustration from what occurred at that memorable period. Nothing "could" furnish a clearer proof of the power of God to save, and of the propriety of putting confidence in him in times of national danger, than a survey of the camp of the Assyrians, where an hundred and eighty-five thousand men had been smitten down in one

night by the angel of God. Compare 2 Kings 19:35; 2 Chronicles 32:21; Isaiah 37:36.

Verse 9

He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth - Either in all the land, or in all the world. The overthrow of the Assyrian army would probably put an end to all the wars then raging in the world. The Assyrian empire was then the most mighty on the globe; it was engaged in wide schemes of conquest; it had already overrun many of the smaller kingdoms of the world Isaiah 37:18-20; and it hoped to complete its conquests, and to secure the ascendancy over the entire earth, by the subjugation of India and Egypt. When the vast army of that empire, engaged in such a purpose, was overthrown, the consequence would be that the nations would be at rest, or that there would be universal peace. Compare the notes at Isaiah 14:6-7.

He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder - That is, he makes them useless, as a bow that is broken is of no value, or a spear that is cut into parts.

He burneth the chariot in the fire - The war-chariot, that which was employed in battle. See the notes at Isaiah 2:7; notes at Psalm 20:7. The expression here may refer to a custom of collecting the spoils of war into a heap, and setting them on fire. This was particularly done when the victors were unable to remove them, or so to secure them as to preclude all danger of their being taken again and used against themselves. Tiffs custom is alluded to by Virgil, AEn. viii. 561,562,

"*Qualis cram, cum primam aciem Prseneste sub ipsa*
Stravi, scutorumque iucendi victor acervos."

The idea here is, that God had wholly overthrown the foe, and had prevented all danger of his returning again for purposes of conquest.

Verse 10

Be still - The word used here - from רפה *râphâh* - means properly to cast down; to let fall; to let hang down; then, to be relaxed, slackened, especially the hands: It is also employed in the sense of not making an effort; not putting forth exertion; and then would express the idea of leaving matters with God, or of being without anxiety about the issue. Compare Exodus 14:13, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God." In this place the word seems to be used as meaning that there was to be no anxiety; that there was to be a calm, confiding, trustful state of mind in view of the displays of the divine presence and power. The mind was to be calm, in view of the fact

that God had interposed, and had shown that he was able to defend his people when surrounded by dangers. If this the divine interposition when Jerusalem was threatened by the armies of the Assyrians under Sennacherib, the force and beauty of the expression will be most clearly seen.

And know that I am God - See, in what I have done, the evidence that I am God. See a work accomplished which none "but" God could effect. Compare Isaiah 37:36.

I will be exalted among the heathen - That is, among the nations. The nations abroad that do not worship me, but worship idols, shall see in these deeds full proof that I am the true God, and that I am worthy of universal adoration. Compare the notes at Daniel 3:28-29; notes at Daniel 4:1-3, notes at Daniel 4:37. See also Exodus 9:16; Romans 9:17.

I will be exalted in the earth - In the lands abroad; all over the world. The defeat and destruction of the armies of Sennacherib were eminently suited to make a deep impression on the world that the God of the Hebrew people was the true God.

Verse 11

The Lord of hosts is with us … - See Psalm 46:7. This is the conclusion, or the result of the whole. As applied to the invasion of Sennacherib, this would be clearly seen, for all that occurred in that invasion was adapted to leave the impression that Jehovah, God of hosts, was with the Hebrew people. He had interposed in time of danger; he had saved his city and nation; he had overthrown one of the most mighty armies that had ever been assembled; he had caused the boasting conqueror himself to retrace his steps to his capita; he had wholly delivered the nation from all danger; and he had shown how easy it was, in ways which they could not have anticipated, to bring deliverance. The truth thus conveyed was adapted to the people of God in all lands and at all times, as showing that God has power to defend his people against the most formidable enemies, and that all their interests are safe in his hands.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 47

Introduction

This psalm is entitled, "To the chief Musician, a psalm for (margin, of) the sons of Korah." On the phrase "To the chief Musician," see the notes at the title to Psalm 4:1-8. On the phrase "For the sons of Korah," see the notes at the title to Psalm 42:1-11.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed, and the name of the author, are alike unknown. It is a triumphal psalm, and was composed apparently on some occasion of "victory" over enemies, with reference to a triumphal procession. Professor Alexander supposes that it was composed to commemorate the victory of Jehoshaphat over the Ammonites and Edomites, recorded in 2 Chronicles 20:19. This is not, however, decisive, as they might have been present on other similar occasions, and as it is probable, in fact, that they usually took part in celebrations of this kind. All that can be expressed with any certainty in regard to the occasion on which the psalm was composed is, that it was on an occasion of victory.

The psalm consists of two parts, quite similar in structure and in design. Each part consists of an exhortation to praise God, followed by a statement of reasons why, it should be done.

I. The first part comprises the first five verses:

(1) An exhortation to praise God - to celebrate the joy of the soul by a clapping of hands, and by a shout of triumph, Psalm 47:1.

(2)reasons for doing this, Psalm 47:2-5. These reasons are that he is terrible; that he is king over all the earth; that he will subdue the nations, and make them subject to his own people; and that, in anticipation of this, and in proof of this, he had now achieved a signal victory, and had gone up as from that victory to his own abode in heaven.

II. The second part embraces the Last four verses of the psalm:

(1) An exhortation, as before, to praise God, Psalm 47:6.

(2) reasons for this, Psalm 47:7-9. These reasons are, as before, that God is king over all the earth; that he now sits upon the throne of his holiness, and that Psalm 47:9 the princes of the nations - the subdued kings and rulers - are borne along in triumph to the people of the God of Abraham; and that in this victory it has been shown that the shields of the earth belong to God. See the notes at Psalm 47:9.

The psalm, therefore, is a triumphal ode, and was probably composed to be sung on occasion of some military triumph - some solemn procession on a return from battle, with captive princes marching in the procession, and with a display of the "shields" and other implements of war taken from the foe. All this is celebrated as indicative of the interposing power of God in victory, and as evidence of his purpose to protect his chosen people in time of peril. The psalm may yet be used in a higher sense by the church at large, when all the foes of God on earth shall be subdued, and when his kingdom shall be in fact set up over all the world.

Verse 1

O clap your hands, all ye people - A common way of expressing joy, or indicating applause. Compare the notes at Isaiah 55:12. The "people" here referred to are probably the Jewish people, and the call on them is to rejoice, with the customary marks of joy, in view of the great victory which God had gained over their enemies.

Shout unto God - Make a joyful noise in praise of God; that is, in acknowledgment that this victory has been gained by his interposition.

With a voice of triumph - With such a shout as is usually raised when a victory is obtained; such a shout as occurs in a triumphal procession. Compare 2 Samuel 6:15; 1 Chronicles 15:28; Job 39:25; Zechariah 4:7; Exodus 32:18; Isaiah 12:6; Isaiah 42:11; Isaiah 44:23; Jeremiah 50:15. There are doubtless times when loud shouts, as expressive of joy, are proper.

Verse 2

For the Lord most high - Yahweh, the Most High God; that is, who is exalted above all other beings. Compare Exodus 18:11; 1 Chronicles 16:25 Psalm 96:4; 2 Chronicles 2:5; Psalm 95:3.

Is terrible - literally, is to be feared; that is, reverenced and adored. There is an idea in the words "terrible" and "terror" which is not contained

in the original, as if there were something harsh, severe, stern, in his character. The word in the original does not go beyond the notion of inspiring reverence or awe, and is the common word by which the worship of God is designated in the Scriptures. The meaning is, that he is worthy of profound reverence or adoration.

He is a great king over all the earth - He rules the world. He is a universal Sovereign. The immediate "occasion" of saying this, when the psalm was composed, was evidently some victory (which had been achieved over the enemies of the people of God) so decided, and so immediately by the divine power, as to prove that he has absolute control over all nations.

Verse 3

He shall subdue the people under us - Compare Psalm 18:39, note; Psalm 18:47, note. The word rendered "subdue" is that which commonly means" to speak." The idea in the use of this word here is that he has only to speak and it is done (compare Psalm 33:9), or that he could do it by a word. Compare, however, on the use of the word here, Gesenius (Lexicon), on the word - דבר *dâbar* 2, Hiphil.

And the nations under our feet - That is, they shall be entirely or effectually subdued. See Psalm 7:5, note; Psalm 44:5, note. As God would enable them to do this, it was an occasion for thankfulness and triumph.

Verse 4

He shall choose our inheritance for us - He has chosen or selected the land which we inherit. Of all the countries which compose the world, he has chosen "this" to be the inheritance of his own people, or the place where they should dwell. The thought in this verse is based on the idea so common in the writings of the Hebrews, that their country was the glory of all lands - the place of all on earth most desirable to dwell in. It is in view of this fact that they are here called on to praise God, and to rejoice in him.

The excellency of Jacob - literally, "the pride - גאון *gâ'ôn* - of Jacob." Septuagint, "beauty" - καλλονὴν *kallonēn* So the Vulgate, *"speciem."* The meaning is, that it was a land of which Jacob, the ancestor of the people, might be proud, or which he did boast of. It was ever regarded as an honor among the Jews that they dwelt in a land which had been the abode of the prophets; and especially was anything regarded as of value that could be traced to Jacob; that bad been once in his possession; or that could be regarded as his gift. Compare John 4:12.

Whom he loved - As one of the patriarchs. Perhaps special allusion is here made to "Jacob" rather than to Abraham and Isaac, because the land came actually into the possession of the Hebrew people in the time of Jacob's sons. It was divided among the descendants of his sons, the twelve tribes, bearing their names; and thus Jacob was most naturally referred to as having been in possession of the land. Abraham and Isaac dwelt in the land as strangers and pilgrims Hebrews 11:9-10, Hebrews 11:13, having no possession there, not even of a burying-place except as they purchased it (compare Genesis 23:12-16); and the land actually came into the possession of the nation only in the family of Jacob.

Verse 5

God is gone up with a shout - That is, he has ascended to heaven, his home and throne, after having secured the victory. He is represented as having come down to aid his people in the war by the overthrow of their enemies, and (having accomplished this) as returning to heaven, accompanied by his hosts, and amidst the shouts of triumph. All this is, of course, poetical, and is not to be regarded as literal in any sense. Compare the notes at Psalm 7:7.

The Lord with the sound of a trumpet - Yahweh, accompanied with the notes of victory. All this is designed to denote triumph, and to show that the victory was to be traced solely to God.

Verse 6

Sing praises to God, sing praises - This commences the "second" part of the psalm. The "repetition" shows that the heart was full, or was overflowing with joy. It is a call on all to celebrate the praises of God, especially as he had enabled his people to triumph over their enemies.

Sing praises unto our King - Unto God, who has shown himself to be the King of his people - one who rules in their behalf, and who has interposed for their deliverance in danger.

Verse 7

For God is the King of all the earth - He has shown himself to be a universal sovereign. All nations are subject to him, and he has a claim to universal praise.

Sing ye praises with understanding - Margin, Every one "that hath understanding." Neither the text here, however, nor the margin, expresses the true idea of the original. The Hebrew is, "Sing a Maschil" - משׂכיל *maśkîyl* that is, Sing, or play, a didactic psalm or tune; that is, a song or ode

adapted to convey valuable lessons of instruction. See the word explained in the notes at the title to Psalm 32:1-11. The idea is, that the occasion was one on which "such" a psalm or song would be especially appropriate; an occasion on which great lessons or truths had been taught by the dealings of God, which it became his people now to set forth in a becoming manner. Those lessons or truths pertained to the fact that God is the great King over all the earth, or that he is a sovereign among the nations: a truth of immense importance to mankind, and a truth which the occasion on which the psalm was composed was especially adapted to bring to view.

Verse 8

God reigneth over the heathen - Over the "nations;" not over the "heathen" in the sense in which that term is understood now. It does not mean that God reigns, or that he has set up his throne over the people that have not the true religion, but that he is exalted over the "nations" of the earth as such; or, that he has universal dominion. See the notes at Psalm 46:10.

God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness - Upon his holy throne, The idea is, that his government is established in holiness or justice.

Verse 9

The princes of the people are gathered together - The marginal reading is, "The voluntary of the people are gathered unto the people of the God of Abraham." The word rendered "princes" - נדיב *nâdîyb* - means properly, voluntary, ready, prompt; then, generous, liberal; then, those of noble birth, princes, nobles. It is evidently used here in this latter sense. The word "people" here may mean either the people of Israel, or the people of other lands; but in this place it seems evidently to denote the latter. The words "are gathered together" may refer either to a voluntary or an involuntary assembling; meaning either that they came in chains as prisoners of war, subdued by the arms of the people of God, and thus rendering an involuntary tribute to their power and their religion; or that they came in a voluntary manner, and submitted themselves, acknowledging the God of Israel to be the true God. It seems to me that the connection requires that we should understand this in the former sense, as referring to the subjugation of the enemies of of the people of God, and to their being led along as captives, assembled thus from distant parts of the world as proof that the God of Israel reigned.

Even the people of the God of Abraham - The word "even" is not in the original. The meaning is, "to" the people of the God of Abraham; that is, they come and mingle with the people of the God of Abraham; or, they come as captives in war "to" that people, and confess in this manner that their God is the true God. The image is that of the assemblage of great numbers of foriegn princes and nobles as furnishing either a voluntary or involuntary acknowledgment of the fact that the God of Abraham was the true God, and that the people of Israel were his people.

For the shields of the earth belong unto God - Are of right his. This would seem to have been suggested by the marching in triumph of subdued and vanquished princes and warriors, their shields or weapons of war being borne along in the procession, demonstrating that Jehovah was King among the nations. It was seen in such a march that all those weapons of war "belonged" to him, or that he had a right to dispose of them, and to use them as he pleased.

He is greatly exalted - That is, one who can thus subdue nations, and lead along captive princes and warriors, "must" be a Being greatly exalted; a Being that has dominion over the nations of the earth. This completes the imagery in the psalm, and gives occasion for the shouts and the joys of triumph. God had shown that he was a great King over the earth. Princes and armies were subdued to his will. They were led along as captives, and were gathered together to the people of God, as if to acknowledge their own inferiority; and in this solemn manner the nations thus subdued owned Yahweh to be the true God. In a higher sense this will be true when all the earth shall be subdued by the power of truth, and when kings, and princes, and people everywhere shall come and acknowledge God, reigning through the Messiah, to be the King of all nations. Compare Isaiah 60.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 48

Introduction

The title of the psalm is, "A song and psalm for the sons of Korah." The "two" appellations, "song" and "psalm," would seem to imply that it was intended to "combine" what was implied in both these words; that is, that it embraced what was usually understood by the word "psalm," and that it was intended also specifically to be "sung." Compare the notes at the titles to Psalm 3:1-8 (notes); 18 (notes); 30 (notes): In Psalm 30:1-12 the two are combined as they are here. On the phrase "For the sons of Korah," see the notes at the title to Psalm 42:1-11.

The "occasion" on which the psalm was composed cannot be ascertained. Prof. Alexander and some others suppose that it was composed on the same occasion, or with reference to the same event, as the previous psalm - the overthrow of the enemies of Judah, under Jehoshaphat, 2 Kings 19:35. The circumstances of the case best agree with the former of these suppositions, though it is not possible to ascertain this with absolute precision.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:

I. An ascription of praise to God, especially as dwelling in a city which was for its beauty and strength an appropriate dwelling-place of such a God, Psalm 48:1-3. The psalmist "begins" with a statement that God is worthy to be praised, Psalm 48:1; he then, in the same verse, refers to the abode of God, the city where he dwelt, as a holy mountain; he describes the beauty of that city Psalm 48:2; and he then adverts to the fact that God is "known in her palaces," or that he dwells in that city as its protector. Its beauty, and its security in having God as a dweller there, are the first things to which the attention is directed.

II. A reference to the danger of the city on the occasion referred to, and the fact and the manner of its deliverance, Psalm 48:4-7. The psalmist represents the "kings" as assembling with a view to take it, but as being awe-struck with its appearance and as hastening away in consternation, - driven away as the ships of Tarshish are broken with an east wind.

III. The psalmist sees in these events a confirmation of what had been before affirmed of Jerusalem, that it would stand forever, or that God would be its protector, Psalm 48:8-10. There were on this subject ancient records, the truth of which the present event confirmed Psalm 48:8, and the psalmist says Psalm 48:9 that those records were now called to remembrance, and Psalm 48:10 that the effect would be that the name of God would be made known to the ends of the earth.

IV. A call on Jerusalem to rejoice, and a call on all persons to walk around and see the matchless beauty and strength of the city thus favored by God, Psalm 48:11-14. Its towers, its bulwarks, its palaces, were all such as to show its strength; the certainty of its permanence was such that one generation should proclaim it to another. God‘s interposition had been such as to furnish proof that he would be their God forever and ever, and that even unto death he would be the guide of those that trusted Him.

Verse 1

Great is the Lord - That is, he is high and exalted; he is a Being of great power and glory. He is not weak and feeble, like the idols worshipped by other nations. He is able to defend his people; he has shown his great power in overthrowing the mighty forces that were gathered together against the city where he dwells.

And greatly to be praised - Worthy to be praised. In his own nature, he is worthy of adoration; in interposing to save the city from its foes, he has shown that he is worthy of exalted praise.

In the city of our God - Jerusalem. In the city which he has chosen for his abode, and where his worship is celebrated. See the notes at Psalm 46:4. This praise was especially appropriate there:

(a) because it was a place set apart for his worship;

(b) because he had now interposed to save it from threatened ruin.

In the mountain of his holiness - His holy mountain; either Mount Zion, if the psalm was composed before the building of the temple - or more probably here Mount Moriah, on which the temple was reared. The names Zion, and Mount Zion, however, were sometimes given to the entire city. Compare the notes at Isaiah 2:2-3.

Verse 2

Beautiful for situation - The word rendered "situation" - נוף *nôph* - means properly "elevation, height," (Ges. Lexicon); and the idea here is, that the mountain referred to is "beautiful for elevation;" that is, it rises gracefully. The allusion here is to Jerusalem as it would appear to one approaching it, and especially as it appeared to the "kings" Psalm 48:4 who came to invest it, and who were so impressed with its marvelous beauty and strength, that they were afraid to attack it, and turned away Psalm 48:5.

The joy of the whole earth - Either the whole "land" of Palestine, or the whole world. Most probably the former is the meaning; and the idea is that, as a place of beauty and strength, and as a place where the worship of God was celebrated, and where the people of the land were accustomed to assemble, it was a source of national joy.

Is Mount Zion - The term used here would seem to denote the whole city, Jerusalem, as it often does. Mount Zion was the most conspicuous object in the city, the residence of the king, and for a long time, until the temple was built, the place where the ark reposed, and where the worship of God was celebrated, and hence, the term came to be used to denote the whole city.

On the sides of the north - That is, probably, the houses, the palaces, on the north sides of the Mount Zion. These were eminently beautiful; they struck one in approaching the city from that quarter, as impressive and grand. The natural and usual approach to the city was from the north, or the northwest. On the west was the valley of Gihon, on the south the valley of Hinnom; and on the east the valley of Jehoshaphat and of the brook Kidron; and it was only as the city was approached from the north that there would be a complete view of it; or, that was the only quarter from which it could be assailed. The "kings," therefore Psalm 48:8, may be supposed to have approached it from that quarter; and thus approaching it, they would have a clear and impressive view of its beauty, and of the sources of its strength - of the walls, towers, and bulwarks which defended it, and of the magnificence of the buildings on Mount Zion. Dr. Thomson (Land and the Book, vol. ii., p. 476), says of the situation of Mount Zion, "What is there or was there about Zion to justify the high eulogium of David: "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King?" The situation is indeed eminently adapted to be the platform of a magnificent citadel.

Rising high above the deep valley of Gihon and Hinnom on the west and south, and the scarcely less deep one of the Cheesemongers on the east, it could only be assailed from the northwest; and then "on the sides of the north" it was magnificently beautiful, and fortified by walls, towers, and bulwarks, the wonder and terror of the nations: "For the kings were assembled; they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marveled; they were troubled, and hasted away." At the thought of it the royal psalmist again bursts forth in triumph: "Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof; mark ye well her bulwarks; consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following." Alas! her towers have long since fallen to the ground, her bulwarks have been overthrown, her palaces have crumbled to dust, and we who now walk about Zion can tell no other story than this to the generation following." It was actually on the northern side of Mount Zion that most of the edifices of the city were erected. (Reland, Pales., p. 847.)

The city of the great King - That is, of God; the place where he has taken up his abode. Compare the notes at Psalm 46:4.

Verse 3

God is known in her palaces - The word rendered "palaces" here means properly a fortress, castle, or palace, so called from its height, from a verb, ארם *'âram* meaning to elevate, to lift up. It may be applied to any fortified place, and would be particularly applicable to a royal residence, as a castle or stronghold. The word "known" here means that it was well understood, or that the point had been fully tested and determined that God had chosen those abodes as his special residence - as the place where he might be found.

For a refuge - See the notes at Psalm 46:1. That is, there was safety or security in the God who had chosen Jerusalem as his special abode.

Verse 4

For, lo, the kings were assembled - There is evidently allusion here to some fact that had occurred; some gathering together of kings and their armies, with a view to besiege or attack Jerusalem. The kings referred to, if the allusion here is, as is supposed, to the time of Jehoshaphat, were the kings of Ammon and of Moab, and of Mount Seir, and perhaps others, not particularly mentioned, who came up against Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 20:1, 2 Chronicles 20:10.

They passed by together - That is, they were smitten with consternation; they were so impressed with the beauty, the majesty, the strength of the city, that they passed along without venturing to attack it. Or, perhaps, the meaning may be, that they were discomfited and overthrown as suddenly "as if" the mere sight of the city had filled their minds with dread, and had made them desist from their intended assault. Compare 2 Chronicles 20:22-25.

Verse 5

They saw it - That is, they looked on it; they contemplated it; they were struck with its beauty and strength, and fled.

And so they marveled - It surpassed their expectations of its strength, and they saw with wonder that any attempt to conquer it was hopeless.

They were troubled - They were filled with anxiety and confusion. They even began to have apprehensions about their own safety. They saw that their preparations had been made in vain, and that all hopes of success must be abandoned.

And hasted away - They fled in confusion. The idea in the whole verse is that of a "panic," leading to a disorderly flight. This "may" have occurred in the time of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 20:22-25. It may have been, however, that they approached the city, and were dismayed by its strength, so that they turned away before the internal conflict occurred which ended in their ruin. But it is not "necessary" to adjust these accounts one to another, or even to suppose that this was the event referred to in the psalm, though the general ideas in it accord well with all which occurred on that occasion.

Verse 6

Fear took hold upon them there - Trembling seized them; they were filled with sudden consternation. That is, as soon as they saw the city, or had a distinct view of it, they became alarmed.

And pain - Distress; anguish. The distress arising from disappointed hopes, and perhaps from the apprehension of their own safety. They were filled with dismay.

As of a woman in travail - This comparison is often used in the Scriptures to denote the severest kind of pain. Compare Jeremiah 4:31; Jeremiah 6:24; Jeremiah 13:21; Jeremiah 22:23; Jeremiah 30:6; Jeremiah 49:24; Micah 4:9-10; Isaiah 53:11.

Verse 7

Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish - On the ships of Tarshish, see the notes on Isaiah 2:16. The allusion to these ships here may have been to illustrate the power of God; the ease with which he destroys that which man has made. The ships so strong - the ships made to navigate distant seas, and to encounter waves and storms - are broken to pieces with infinite ease when God causes the wind to sweep over the ocean. With so much ease God overthrows the most mighty armies, and scatters them. His power in the one case is strikingly illustrated by the other. It is not necessary, therefore, to suppose that there was any actual occurrence of this kind particularly in the eye of the psalmist; but it is an interesting fact that such a disaster did befall the navy of Jehoshaphat himself, 1 Kings 22:48: "Jehoshaphat made "ships of Tarshish" to go to Ophir for gold; but they went not: "for the ships were broken" at Ezion-geber." Compare 2 Chronicles 20:36-37. This coincidence would seem to render it not improbable that the discomfiture of the enemies of Jehoshaphat was particularly referred to in this psalm, and that the overthrow of his enemies when Jerusalem was threatened called to remembrance an important event in his own history, when the power of God was illustrated in a manner not less unexpected and remarkable. If this was the allusion, may not the reference to the "breaking of the ships of Tarshish" have been designed to show to Jehoshaphat, and to the dwellers in Zion, that they should not be proud and self-confident, by reminding them of the ease with which God had scattered and broken their own mighty navy, and by showing them that what he had done to their enemies he could do to them also, notwithstanding the strength of their city, and that their "real" defense was not in walls and bulwarks reared by human hand, anymore than it could be in the natural strength of their position only, but in God.

Verse 8

As we have heard, so have we seen - That is, What has been told us, or handed down by tradition, in regard to the strength and safety of the city - what our fathers have told us respecting its sacredness and its being under the protection of God - we have found to be true. It has been shown that God is its protector; that he dwells in the midst of it; that it is safe from the assaults of man; that it is permanent and abiding. All that had ever been said of the city in this respect had been found, in this trial when the kings assembled against it, to be true.

In the city of the Lord of hosts - The city where the Lord of hosts has taken up his abode, or which he has chosen for his dwelling-place on earth. See the notes at Isaiah 1:24; notes at Psalm 24:10.

In the city of our God - Of Him who has shown himself to be our God; the God of our nation.

God will establish it for ever - That is, this had been told them; this is what they had heard from their fathers; this they now saw to be verified in the divine interposition in the time of danger. They had seen that these combined armies could not take the city; that God had mercifully interposed to scatter their forces; and they inferred that it could be taken by no human power, and that God intended that it should be permanent and abiding. What is here said of Jerusalem is true in a sense more strict and absolute of the Church - that nothing can prevail against it, but that it will endure to the end of the world. See the notes at Matthew 16:18.

Verse 9

We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God - We have reflected on, or meditated on. The word used here literally means "to compare, to liken;" and this idea is perhaps always implied when it is used in the sense of thinking on, or meditating on. Perhaps the meaning here is, that they had "compared" in their own minds what they had heard from their fathers with what they had now seen; they had called all these things up to their remembrance, and had compared the one with the other.

In the midst of thy temple - See the notes at Psalm 5:7. The allusion here most probably is to the "temple," properly so called, as these transactions are supposed to have occurred after the building of the temple by Solomon. The expression here also would make it probable that the psalm was composed after the defeat and overthrow of the armies referred to, in order that it might be used in the temple in celebrating the deliverance.

Verse 10

According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise - That is, as far as thy name is known, it will be praised; or, the effect of knowing it will be to inspire praise. A just view of thy character and doings will lead people to praise thee as far as thy name is known. This seems to have been said in view of what had occurred. Events so remarkable, and so suited to show that God was a just, a powerful, and a merciful Being, would claim universal praise and adoration.

Unto the ends of the earth - In every part of the world. The earth is frequently represented in the Scriptures as an extended plain, having ends, corners, or limits. See the notes at Isaiah 11:12; Revelation 7:1.

Thy right hand is full of righteousness - The right hand is the instrument by which we accomplish anything. The idea here is, that in what God had done it seemed as if his hand - the instrument by which this bad been accomplished - had been "filled" with justice. All that had been manifested had been righteousness, and that had been in abundance.

Verse 11

Let mount Zion rejoice - Let Jerusalem, the holy city, rejoice or be glad. Mount Zion is evidently used here to designate the city; and the idea is, that the city of God - the holy city - had occasion for joy and gladness in view of the manifestation of the divine favor.

Let the daughters of Judah be glad - The phrase "daughters of Judah" "may" denote the smaller cities in the tribe of Judah, that surrounded Jerusalem as the "mother" city - in accordance with an usage quite common in the Hebrew Scriptures. See the notes at Isaiah 1:8. Perhaps, however, the more obvious interpretation is the correct one, as meaning that the women of Judah had special occasion to rejoice on account of their deliverance from so great danger, and from the horrors which usually attended the siege or the conquest of the city - the atrocities which commonly befall the female sex when a city is captured in war. The "daughters of Judah" are those descended from Judah, or connected with the tribe of Judah. Jerusalem was in the bounds of that tribe, and the name Judah was given to all those that remained after the removal of the ten tribes.

Because of thy judgments - Thy righteous interposition in delivering the city and people.

Verse 12

Walk about Zion - This is a call on all persons to go round the city; to take a survey of it; to see how beautiful and how strong it was - how it had escaped all danger, and was uninjured by the attempt to destroy it - how capable it was of resisting an attack. The word "walk" here means simply to go around or surround. The other word used has a more direct reference to a solemn procession.

And go round about her - The word used here - from נקף *nâqaph* - to fasten together, to join together, means to move round in a circle, as if persons joined together (see the notes at Job 1:5), and would refer here

properly to a solemn procession moving round the city, and taking a deliberate survey of its entire circuit.

Tell the towers thereof - That is, Take the number of the towers. See how numerous they are; how firm they remain; what a defense and protection they constitute. Cities, surrounded by walls, had always "towers" or elevated portions as posts of observation, or as places from which missiles might be discharged with advantage on those who should attempt to scale the walls. Compare Genesis 11:4-5; 2 Chronicles 26:9-10; Isaiah 2:15.

Verse 13

Mark ye well her bulwarks - Margin, as in Hebrew, "Set your heart to her bulwarks." That is, Pay close attention to them; make the investigation with care, not as one does whose heart is not in the thing, and who does it negligently. The word rendered "bulwarks" - חיל *chêyl* - means, properly, a host or army, and then a fortification or entrenchment, especially the "ditch" or "trench," with the low wall or breastwork which surrounds it: 2 Samuel 20:15; Isaiah 26:1. (Gesenius, Lexicon) The Septuagint translates it here: δύναμις *dunamis* power; the Vulgate, "virtus," courage; Luther, "Mauern" - walls.

Consider her palaces - The word "palaces" here refers to the royal residences; and, as these were usually fortified and guarded, the expression here is equivalent to this: "Consider the "strength" of the city; its power to defend itself; its safety from the danger of being taken." The word rendered "consider" - פסגו *pasegû* - is rendered in the margin "raise up." The word occurs nowhere else in the Bible. According to Gesenius (Lexicon), it means to "divide up;" that is, to walk through and survey them; or, to consider them accurately, or in detail, one by one. The Vulgate renders it "distribute;" the Septuagint, "take a distinct view of (Thompson);" Luther, "lift up." The idea is, "examine attentively" or "carefully."

That ye may tell it to the generation following - That you may be able to give a correct account of it to the next age. The "object" of this is to inspire the next generation with a belief that God is the protector of the city; that it is so strong that it cannot be vanquished; that there is safety in such a city as that. As applied to the church now, or at any time, it means that we are to take such views of its being a true church of God; of its being fixed on firm foundations; of its being so able to resist all the assaults of Satan, and of its being so directly under the divine protection, that it has nothing to

fear. It will and must stand to all coming time, a place of absolute safety to all who seek protection and safety within it. The following remarks of Dr. Thomson (Land and the Book, vol. ii., 474,475), may furnish an illustration of what the ancient defenses in the city may have been, and especially of the word "towers" in this passage in the Psalms: "The only castle of any particular importance is that at the Jaffa Gate, commonly called the Tower of David. The lower part of it is built of huge stones, roughly cut, and with a deep "bevel" round the edges.

They are undoubtedly ancient, but the interspersed patch-work proves that they are not in their original positions. I have been within it, and carefully explored all parts of it that are now accessible, but found nothing which could cast any light upon its history. It is believed by many to be the Hippicus of Josephus, and to this idea it owes its chief importance, for the historian makes that the point of departure in laying down the line of the ancient walls of Jerusalem. Volumes have been written in our day for and against the correctness of this identification, and the contest is still undecided; but, interesting as may be the result, we may safely leave it with those who are now conducting the controversy, and turn to matters more in unison with our particular inquiries. Everything that can be said about this grand old tower will be found in the voluminous works of Williams, Robinson, Schultz, Wilson, Fergusson, and other able writers on the topography of the Holy City."

Verse 14

For this God is our God forever and ever - The God who has thus made his abode in the city, and who has manifested himself as its prorector. It is our comfort to reflect that such a God is "our" God; that he has manifested himself as our friend; that we may habitually feel that he is our own. And he is not only our God now, but he will be such for ever and ever. A feeling that the true God is "our" God - that he is ours and that we are his - always carries with it the idea that this is to be "forever;" that what is true now in this respect, will be true to all eternity. He is not a God for the present only, but for all time to come; not merely for this world, but for that unending duration which awaits us beyond the tomb.

He will be our guide even unto death - The Septuagint and the Vulgate render this "he will rule or govern ποιμανεῖ *poimanei* - reget) forever." The more correct rendering, however, is that in our version, which is a literal

translation of the Hebrew. Some have translated it upon death, על־מות *ʿal - mûth* others, beyond death; but the true idea is that he will be our guide, or will conduct us all along through life; that he will never forsake us until the close has come; that he will accompany us faithfully to the end. The thought does not, of course, "exclude" the idea that he will be our guide - our protector - our friend - beyond death; but it is simply that as long as we live on the earth, we may have the assurance that he will lead and guide us. This he will do in behalf of those who put their trust in him

(a) by the counsels of His word;

(b) by the influences of His Spirit;

(c) by His providential interpositions;

(d) by special help in special trials;

(e) by shedding light upon our path when in perplexity and doubt; and

(f) by support and direction when we tread that dark and to us unknown way which conducts to the grave.

Man needs nothing more for this life than the confident assurance that he has the Eternal God for his guide, and that he will never be left or forsaken by Him in any possible situation in which he may be placed. If God, by His own hand, will conduct me through this world, and lead me safely through the dark valley - that valley which lies at the end of every traveler's path - I have nothing to fear beyond.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 49

Introduction

The title to this psalm is the same essentially as the title to Psalm 42:1-11; 44; 45; Psalm 46:1-11; Psalm 47:1-9. On the meaning of the terms occurring in the title, see the notes at the title to Psalm 42:1-11.

The "author" of the psalm is unknown. There is no evidence that it was composed by David; and, in fact, the presumption is that he was not the author, as his name is not prefixed to it.

It is, of course, impossible to ascertain the "occasion" on which it was composed. It would seem from the psalm itself (see the notes at Psalm 49:5) that it was written in view of some evil or wrong which the author was suffering from rich oppressors, and that he sought consolation in his trials from the reflections which he makes in the psalm - to wit, from the fact that wealth constitutes no security - that it gives no permanence to the projects of its owners and that it really possesses no "power" in carrying out the plans of those who abuse it to purposes of oppression and wrong. The wealthy man, no matter how great his possessions may be, cannot redeem a brother from the grave; he cannot save himself from the tomb; he cannot make his possessions permanent in his family; he cannot take his riches with him when he dies. There is really, therefore, nothing to "fear" from the man of wealth, for whatever such a man can do must be temporary. The higher interests of the soul cannot be affected permanently by anything so uncertain and transitory as riches. It is not improbable that this train of thought was suggested by an actual occurrence in the life of the psalmist, whoever he was; but the reflections are of universal importance in regard to riches considered as a means of power, and to their real value as it respects the great interests of man.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:

I. An introduction, calling attention to the general subject as worthy of the consideration of all classes of persons, both low and high; as conveying lessons of wisdom; and as being the result of much reflection, Psalm 49:1-4.

II. The main subject in the psalm, or the point to be illustrated; to wit, "that the righteous have no reason to be afraid when rich oppressors compass them around; or when the rich oppress and wrong them," Psalm 49:5.

III. Reasons for this; or, reasons why those who are possessed of wealth, and who glory in the self-importance derived from wealth, should not be feared, Psalm 49:6-20.

(1) no one can by his riches save another - not even his own brother - from the grave, for all (whatever may be their condition) must die, and leave their wealth to others, Psalm 49:6-10.

(2) they cannot, by any wisdom or skill make their possessions "permanent," or secure, Psalm 49:11-12.

(3) they will not learn wisdom on this subject from the experience of the past, but the coming generation is as foolish as the one that went before, Psalm 49:13.

(4) all must go down to the grave, however rich they may be, Psalm 49:14.

(5) there is a better hope for the righteous, and though he goes down to the grave, he will live hereafter, Psalm 49:15.

(6) the rich can carry none of their wealth with them when they go to the grave. All must be left behind, and pass into the hands of others, Psalm 49:16-20. The conclusion from the whole, therefore, is, that we should not be "afraid" when one is made rich - when the glory of his house is increased, for the possession of wealth by another, though an enemy, gives him no such permanent power as to make him an object of dread. In our real, our highest interests, we must be safe, whatever the rich oppressor may do.

Verse 1

Hear this, all ye people - That is, What I am about; to utter is worthy of universal attention; it pertains equally to all mankind. The psalmist; therefore calls on all the nations to attend to what he is about to say. Compare the notes at Isaiah 1:2.

Give ear - Incline your ear; attend. Compare the notes at Psalm 17:6. See also Isaiah 37:17; Isaiah 55:3; Daniel 9:18; Proverbs 2:2.

All ye inhabitants of the world - The truth to be declared does not pertain exclusively to any one nation, or any one class of people. All are interested in it. The term here rendered "world" - חלד *cheled* - means properly "duration of life, lifetime;" then, "life, time, age;" and then it comes to denote the world, considered as made up of the living, or the passing generations.

Verse 2

Both low and high - Those alike of humble and those of exalted rank, for it pertains equally to all. On the meaning of the "terms" employed here, see the notes at Isaiah 2:9. These truths pertained to the "low;" that is, to those of humble rank, as teaching them not to envy the rich, and not to fear their power; and they pertained to those of exalted rank, as teaching them not to trust in their riches, and not to suppose that they could permanently possess and enjoy them.

Rich and poor together - As equally interested in these truths; that is, What the psalmist was about to say was adapted to impart useful lessons to both classes. Both needed instruction on the subject; and the same class of truths was adapted to furnish that instruction. The class of truths referred to was derived from the powerlessness of wealth in regard to the things of most importance to man, and from the fact that all which a man can gain must soon be left: teaching those of one class that they should not set their heart on wealth, and should not pride themselves on possessing it, and teaching the other class that they should not envy or fear the possessor of riches.

Verse 3

My mouth shall speak of wisdom - That is, I will utter sentiments that are wise, or that are of importance to all; sentiments that will enable all to take a just view of the subject on which I speak. This indicates "confidence" in what he was about to utter, as being eminently deserving of attention.

And the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding - What I reflect on, and what I give utterance to, in the matter under consideration.

The idea is, that he had meditated on the subject, as to what was real wisdom in the matter, and that he would now give utterance to the result of his meditations. It was not wisdom in general, or intelligence or understanding as such on which he designed to express the results of his thoughts, but it was only in respect to the proper value to be attached to wealth, and as to the fact of its causing fear Psalm 49:5 in those who were not possessed of it, and who might be subjected to the oppressive acts of those who were rich.

Verse 4

I will incline mine ear to a parable - The phrase "I will incline mine ear" means that he would listen or attend to - as we incline our ear toward those whom we are anxious to hear, or in the direction from which a sound seems to come. Compare Psalm 5:1; Psalm 17:1; Psalm 39:12; Isaiah 1:2. On the word rendered "parable" here מֹשׁל *mâshâl* - see the notes at Isaiah 14:4. Compare Job 13:12, note; Job 27:1, note. The word properly means similitude; then, a sentence, sententious saying, apophthegm; then, a proverb; then, a song or poem. There is usually found in the word some idea of "comparison," and hence, usually something that is to be illustrated "by" a comparison or a story. The reference here would seem to be to some dark or obscure subject which needed to be illustrated; which it was not easy to understand; which had given the writer, as well as others, perplexity and difficulty. He proposed now, with a view to understand and explain it, to place his ear, as it were, "close to the matter," that he might clearly comprehend it. The matter was difficult, but he felt assured he could explain it - as when one unfolds the meaning of an enigma. The "problem" - the "parable" - the difficult point - related to the right use, or the proper value, of wealth, or the estimate in which it should be held by those who possessed it, and by those who did not. It was very evident to the author of the psalm that the views of people were not right on the subject; he therefore proposed to examine the matter carefully, and to state the exact truth.

I will open - I will explain; I will communicate the result of my careful inquiries.

My dark saying - The word used here - חידה *chîydâh* - is rendered "dark speeches" in Numbers 12:8; "riddle," in Judges 14:12-19; Ezekiel 17:2; "hard questions" in 1 Kings 10:1; 2 Chronicles 9:1; "dark saying" (as here) in Psalm 78:2; Proverbs 1:6; "dark sentences," in Daniel 8:23; and "proverb" in Habakkuk 2:6. It does not elsewhere occur. It means properly

"something entangled, intricate;" then, a trick or stratagem; then art intricate speech, a riddle; then, a sententious saying, a maxim; then a parable, a poem, a song, a proverb. The idea here is, that the point was intricate or obscure; it was not well understood, and he purposed "to lay it open," and to make it plain.

Upon the harp - On the meaning of the word used here, see the notes at Isaiah 5:12. The idea here is, that he would accompany the explanation with music, or would so express it that it might be accompanied with music; that is, he would give it a poetic form - a form such that the sentiment might be used in public worship, and might be impressed upon the mind by all the force and power which music would impart. Sentiments of purity and truth, and sentiments of pollution and falsehood also, are always most deeply imbedded in the minds of people, and are made most enduring and effective, when they are connected with music. Thus the sentiments of patriotism are perpetuated and impressed in song; and thus sentiments of sensuality and pollution owe much of their permanence and power to the fact that they are expressed in corrupt verse, and that they are perpetuated in exquisite poetry, and are accompanied with song. Scenes of revelry, as well as acts of devotion, are kept up by song. Religion proposes to take advantage of this principle in our nature by connecting the sentiments of piety with the sweetness of verse, and by impressing and perpetuating those sentiments through associating them with all that is tender, pure, and inspiriting in music. Hence, music, both vocal and that which is produced by instruments, has always been found to be an invaluable auxiliary in securing the proper impression of truth on the minds of people, as well as in giving utterance to the sentiments of piety in devotion.

Verse 5

Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil - This verse is designed evidently to state the main subject of the psalm; the result of the reflections of the author on what had been to him a source of perplexity; on what had seemed to him to be a dark problem. He "had" evidently felt that there was occasion to dread the power of wicked rich men; but he now felt that he had no ground for that fear and alarm. He saw that their power was short-lived; that all the ability to injure, arising from their station and wealth, must soon cease; that his own highest interests could not be affected by anything which they could do. The "days of evil" here spoken of are the times which are referred to in the following phrase, "when the iniquity of my heels," etc.

When the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about - It would be difficult to make any sense out of this expression, though it is substantially the same rendering which is found in the Vulgate and the Septuagint. Luther renders it "when the iniquity of my oppressors encompasses me." The Chaldee Paraphrase renders it, "why should I fear in the days of evil, unless it be when the guilt of my sin compasses me about?" The Syriac renders it, "the iniquity of "my enemies." The Arabic, "when my enemies surround me." DeWette renders it as Luther does. Rosenmuller, "when the iniquity of those who lay snares against me shall compass me around." Prof. Alexander, "when the iniquity of my oppressors (or supplanters) shall surround me." The word rendered "heels" here - עקב *ʿâqêb* - means properly "heel," Genesis 3:15; Job 18:9; Judges 5:22; then, the rear of an army, Joshua 8:13; then, in the plural, "footsteps," prints of the heel or foot, Psalm 77:19; and then, according to Gesenius (Lexicon) "a lier in wait, insidiator."

Perhaps there is in the word the idea of craft; of lying in wait; of taking the advantages - from the verb עקב *ʿâqab* to be behind, to come from behind; and hence to supplant; to circumvent. So in Hosea 12:3, "in the womb he held his brother by the heel" (compare Genesis 25:26). Hence, the word is used as meaning to supplant; to circumvent, Genesis 27:36; Jeremiah 9:4 (Hebrew, Jeremiah 9:3) This is, undoubtedly, the meaning here. The true idea is, when I am exposed to the crafts, the cunning, the tricks, of those who lie in wait for me; I am liable to be attacked suddenly, or to be taken unawares; but what have I to fear? The psalmist refers to the evil conduct of his enemies, as having given him alarm. They were rich and powerful. They endeavored in some way to supplant him - perhaps, as we should say, to "trip him up" - to overcome him by art, by power, by trick, or by fraud. He "had" been afraid of these powerful foes; but on a calm review of the whole matter, he came to the conclusion that he had really no cause for fear. The reasons for this he proceeds to state in the following part of the psalm.

Verse 6

They that trust in their wealth - The first reason why there was no cause of alarm is drawn Psalm 49:6-10 from the "powerlessness" of wealth, as illustrated by the fact that it can do nothing to save life or to prevent death. He refers to those who possess it as "trusting" in their wealth, or "relying on" that as the source of their power.

And boast themselves - Pride themselves; or feel conscious of safety and strength because they are rich. It is the "power" which wealth is supposed to confer, that is alluded to here.

In the multitude of their riches - The abundance of their wealth.

Verse 7

None of them can bid any means redeem his brother - None of those who are rich. This verse might be literally rendered, "a brother cannot by redeeming redeem; a man cannot give to God his own ransom." The passage, therefore, may mean either, as in our version, that no one, however rich, can redeem a brother - his own brother - by his wealth; or, that a brother - one who sustains the relation of a brother - cannot rescue another from death. On the word "redeem," see Psalm 25:22, note; Isaiah 43:3, note. It means here that he could not rescue him, or save him from the grave; he could not by his wealth preserve him in life. The whole expression is emphatic: "redeeming he cannot redeem;" that is - according to Hebrew usage - he cannot "possibly" do it; it "cannot" be done. There is here no particular reference to the "means" to be employed, but only an emphatic statement of the fact that "it cannot by any possibility be done." The object is to show how powerless and valueless is wealth in regard to the things that most pertain to a man's welfare. It can do literally "nothing" in that which most deeply affects man, and in which he most needs help. There is no allusion here to the redemption of the soul, or to the great work of redemption, as that term is commonly understood; but it "is" true, in the highest sense, that if wealth cannot "redeem" life, or keep our best and nearest friend from the grave, much less can it avail in that which is so much more important, and so much more difficult, the redemption of the soul from eternal ruin. Here, also, as in the matter of saving from the grave, it is absolutely true that wealth can do "nothing" - literally, "nothing" - in saving the soul of its possessor, or in enabling its possessor to save his best friend. Nothing but the blood of the cross can avail then; and the wealth of the richest can do no more here than the poverty of the poorest.

Nor give to God a ransom for him - This would be more literally rendered, "a man cannot give to God his ransom;" that is, he cannot, though in the possession of the most ample wealth, give to God that which would purchase his own release from the grave. On the word "ransom," see as above, the notes at Isaiah 43:3. Compare Matthew 16:26.

Verse 8

For the redemption of their soul is precious - The word "soul" here means "life," and not the immortal part. The only question which the psalmist here considers is the value of wealth in preserving "life," or in saving man from the grave. The phrase, ""their" soul," refers doubtless to the man and his brother, as alluded to in the previous verse. The idea is that neither can the man of wealth ransom his own life from the grave, nor the life of his brother. Wealth can save neither of them. The word "precious" means "costly," "valuable." The word is applied 1 Kings 10:2, 1 Kings 10:10-11 to gems, and then to the costlier kinds of stones employed in building, as marble and hewn-stones, 2 Chronicles 3:6. Compare the notes at Psalm 36:7. The idea here is, that the rescue of the life, or the saving from the grave, would be too "costly;" it would be beyond the power of all wealth to purchase it; no amount of silver or gold, or raiment, or precious stones, could "constitute" a sufficient "price" to secure it.

And it ceaseth for ever - That is, Wealth forever comes short of the power necessary to accomplish this. It has always been insufficient; it always "will" be. There is no hope that it "ever" will be sufficient; that by any increase in the amount - or by any change in the conditions of the bargain - property or riches can avail for this. The whole matter is perfectly "hopeless" as to the power of wealth in saving one human being from the grave. It must always "fail" in saving a man from death. The word rendered "ceaseth" - חדל *châdal* - means "to leave off, to desist, to fail," Genesis 11:8; Exodus 9:34; Isaiah 2:22. As there is no allusion here to the redemption of the "soul" - the immortal part - this passage affirms nothing in regard to the fact that the work of redemption by the Saviour is completed or finished, and that an atonement cannot be made again, which is true; nor to the fact that when salvation through that atonement is rejected, all hope of redemption is at an end, which is also true. But though there is, originally, no such reference here, the "language" is such as is "adapted" to express that idea. In a much higher and more important sense than any which pertains to the power of wealth in saving from the grave, it is true tint the work of the atonement ceased for ever when the Redeemer expired on the cross, and that all hope of salvation ceases forever when the atonement is rejected, and when man refuses to be saved by his blood; nothing then can save the soul. No other sacrifice will be made, and when a man has finally rejected the Saviour, it may be said in the highest sense of

the term, that the redemption of the soul is too costly to be effected by any other means, and that all hope of its salvation "has ceased" forever.

Verse 9

That he should still live for ever - That his brother whom he could not redeem - or that he himself - should not die, Psalm 49:8. The idea is, that the price of life is so great that no wealth can rescue it so that a man shall not die.

And not see corruption - Should not return to dust, or moulder away in the grave. See the notes at Psalm 16:10.

Verse 10

For he seeth that wise men die - He must see this; he does see it. He perceives that no one can be saved from death. It comes on all alike - the wise and the unwise. Nothing saves from it. The allusion is here especially to the "rich," whether "they" are wise or whether they are fools and "brutish." The simple fact, as stated, is that no matter what may be the character of the man of wealth, whether wise or foolish, he must certainly die His wealth cannot save him from the grave. The possessor of wealth himself "sees" this. It cannot be concealed from him.

Likewise the fool - The rich man who is a fool, or who is destitute of wisdom. He who is rich and who is wise - wise in the things of this life and wise unto salvation - (or who is gifted with a high degree of intelligence and who evinces wisdom in respect to the higher matters of existence) - and the rich man who is a fool - (who is regardless of his highest interests, and who evinces no special intelligence, though possessed of wealth) - all, all die alike.

And the brutish person - The rich man who is stupid and dull; who lives like a brute; who lives to eat and drink; who lives for gross sensuality - "he" dies as well as he who is wise. Wealth cannot in either case save from death. Whether connected with wisdom or folly - whether carefully husbanded or lavishly spent - whether a man employs it in the highest and noblest manner in which it can be devoted, or in the indulgence of the most low and debasing enjoyments - it is alike powerless in saving people from the grave.

And leave their wealth to others - It all passes into other hands. It "must" be so left. It cannot be carried away by its possessor when he goes into the eternal world. It not only cannot save him from the grave, but he cannot even take it with him. All his houses, his lands, his title-deeds, his

silver, his gold, his parks, gardens, horses, hounds - all that he had accumulated with so much care, and worshipped with so idolatrous an affection, is not even his own in the sense that he can take it with him. The title passes absolutely into other hands, and even if he could come back to earth again, he could no longer claim it, for when he dies it ceases to be his forever. How powerless, then, is wealth in reference to the great purposes of human existence!

Verse 11

Their inward thought is - Their secret expectation and feeling is that they have secured permanency for their wealth in their own families, though they themselves may pass away. The essential thought in this verse is, that the rich people referred to in the foregoing verses imagine that their possessions will be perpetuated in their own families. The word rendered "inward thought" - קרב *qereb* - means properly "the midst, the middle, inner part;" and hence it comes to mean the heart, or the mind, as the seat of thought and affection: Psalm 5:9; Psalm 64:6. It means here, their hope, their calculation, their secret expectation; and the whole verse is designed to show the value or importance which they attach to wealth as being, in their apprehension, suited to build up their families forever.

That their houses shall continue "for ever - Either the dwellings which they rear, or - more probably - their families.

And their dwelling-places to all generations - Margin, as in Hebrew, "to generation and generation." That is, forever. They expect that their possessions will always remain in the family, and be transmitted from one generation to another.

They call their lands after their own names - They give their own names to the farms or grounds which they own, in the hope that, though they must themselves pass away, their "names" may be handed down to future times. This practice, which is not uncommon in the world, shows how intense is the desire of people not to be forgotten; and at the same time illustrates the main thought in the psalm - the importance attached to wealth by its possessor, as if it could carry his "name" down to future times, when he shall have passed away. In this respect, too, wealth is commonly as powerless as it is in saving its possessor from the grave. It is not very far into future times that mere wealth can carry the name of a man after he is dead. lands and tenements pass into other hands, and the future owner soon ceases to have any concern about the "name" of the former occupier, and

the world cares nothing about it. A man must have some other claim to be remembered than the mere fact of his having been rich, or he will be soon forgotten. Compare the notes at Isaiah 22:15-19.

Verse 12

Nevertheless, man being in honor abideth not - No matter to what rank he may rise, no matter how much wealth he may accumulate, no matter how fixed and secure he may seem to make his possessions, he cannot make them permanent and enduring. He must pass away and leave all this to others. The word rendered "abideth" - ילין *yālîyn* - means properly to pass the night; to remain over night; to lodge, as one does for a night; and the idea is, that he is not to lodge or remain permanently in that condition; or, more strictly, he will not lodge there even for a night; that is, he will soon pass away. It is possible that the Saviour had his eye on this passage in the parable of the rich fool, and especially in the declaration, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee," Luke 12:20.

He is like the beasts that perish - He is like the beasts; they perish. This does not mean that in all respects he is like them, but only in this respect, that he must die as they do; that he cannot by his wealth make himself immortal. He must pass away just as if he were an animal of the inferior creation, and had no power of accumulating wealth, or of laying plans that stretch into the future. The squirrel and the beaver - animals that "lay up" something, or that, like people, have the power of "accumulating," die just like other animals. So the rich "man." His intelligence, his high hopes, his far-reaching schemes, make no difference between him and his fellow-men and the brute in regard to death. They all die alike.

Verse 13

This their way is their folly - This might be rendered, "This is their way or course of life. It is their folly;" or, such is their folly. On the word "way," see the notes at Psalm 1:6. The idea is, that it is folly for a man to cherish these hopes; to feel that wealth is of so much importance; to imagine that it can deliver from the grave; to suppose that he can perpetuate his own name, and secure his possessions in his own family upon the earth. And yet the world is still full of people as foolish as were those in the time of the psalmist; people who will not be admonished by the suggestions of reason, or by the experience of 6,000 years in the past. This is one thing in which the world makes no progress - in which it learns nothing from the experience of the past; and as the beaver under the influence of instinct

builds his house and his home now in the same way that the first beaver did his, and as the brutes all act in the same manner from generation to generation, accumulating no knowledge, and making no advances from the experience of the past, so it is with people in their desire to grow rich. On other points the world accumulates knowledge, and profits from experience, garnering up the lessons taught by past experiment and observation, and thus becoming wiser in all other respects; but in regard to the desire of wealth, it makes no progress, gains no knowledge, derives no advantage, from the generations of fools that have lived and died in past ages. They now engage in the pursuit of gold with the same zeal, and the same expectation and hope which were evinced in the first ages of the world, and "as if" their own superior skill and wisdom could set at nought all the lessons taught by the past.

Yet their posterity - The coming generation is as confident and as foolish as the one that went before.

Approve their sayings - Margin, "delight in their mouth." That is, they delight or take pleasure in what proceeds from their mouth; in what they say; in their views of things. They adopt "their" principles, and act on "their" maxims; and, attaching the same importance to wealth which "they" did, seek as "they" sought to perpetuate their names upon the earth.

Verse 14

Like sheep they are laid in the grave - The allusion here is to a flock as "driven" forward by the shepherd; and the meaning is that they are driven forward to the grave, as it were, in flocks, or as a flock of sheep is driven by a shepherd. The word rendered "are laid" - שׂתוּ *śatû* - is probably not derived from the verb שׂוּת *śûth* or שׂית *śîyth* as our translators seem to have supposed, but from שׂתת *śâthath* to set, or place; and the meaning is, "Like sheep they put them in Sheol, or the grave;" that is, they thrust or drive them down there. In other words, this is "done," without intimating by whom it is done. They are urged forward; they are driven toward the tomb as a flock of sheep is driven forward to the slaughter. Some influence or power is pressing them in masses down to the grave. The word rendered "grave" is "Sheol." It is sometimes used in the sense of the grave, and sometimes as referring to the abode of departed spirits. See Job 10:21-22, note; Psalm 6:5, note. It seems here to be used in the former sense.

Death shall feed on them - The word rendered "feed" here - רעה *râʿâh* - means properly to feed a flock; to pasture; then, to perform the office of a

shepherd. The idea here is not, as in our translation, "death shall feed on them;" but, death shall rule over them as the shepherd rules his flock. The allusion to the "flock" suggested this. They are driven down to the grave, or to Sheol. The shepherd, the ruler, he who does this, is "death;" and the idea is not that death is a hungry monster, devouring them "in" the grave, but that the shepherd over that "flock," instead of being a kind and gentle friend and protector (as the word "shepherd" naturally suggests), is "death" - a fearful and grim Ruler of the departed. The idea, therefore, is not that of "feeding," specifically, but it is that of ruling, controlling, guiding. So the Septuagint, θάνατος ποιμανεῖ αὐτούς *thanatos poimanei autous* The Vulgate, however, renders it, *"mors depascet eos;"* and Luther, "der Tod naget sie;" death gnaws or feeds on them.

And the upright - The just; the righteous. The meaning of this part of the verse undoubtedly is, that the just or pious would have some kind of ascendancy or superiority over them at the period here referred to as the "morning."

Shall have dominion over them - Or rather, as DeWette renders it, shall "triumph" over them. That is, will be exalted over them; or shall have a more favored lot. Though depressed now, and though crushed by the rich, yet they will soon have a more exalted rank, and a higher honor than those who, though once rich, are laid in the grave tinder the dominion of death.

In the morning - That is, very soon; tomorrow; when the morning dawns after the darkness of the present. See the notes at Psalm 30:5. There is a time coming - a brighter time - when the relative condition of the two classes shall be changed, and when the upright - the pious - though poor and oppressed now, shall be exalted to higher honors than "they" will be. There is no certain evidence that this refers to the "morning" of the resurrection; but it is language which well expresses the idea when connected with that doctrine, and which can be best explained on the supposition that that doctrine was referred to, and that the hope of such a resurrection was cherished by the writer. Indeed, when we remember that the psalmist expressly refers to the "grave" in regard to the rich, it is difficult to explain the language on any other supposition than that he refers here to the resurrection - certainly not as well as on this supposition - and especially when it is remembered that death makes no distinction in cutting down people, whether they are righteous or wicked. Both are laid in the grave alike, and "any" prospect of distinction or triumph in the case must be

derived from scenes beyond the grave. This verse, therefore, may belong to that class of passages in the Old Testament which are founded on the belief of the resurrection of the dead without always expressly affirming it, and which are best explained on the supposition that the writers of the Old Testament were acquainted with that doctrine, and drew their hopes as well as their illustrations from it. Compare Daniel 12:2; Isaiah 26:19; Psalm 16:9-10.

And their beauty - Margin, "strength." The Hebrew word means "form, shape, image;" and the idea here is, that their form or figure will be changed, or disappear, to wit, by consuming away. The idea of "beauty," or "strength," is not necessarily in the passage, but the meaning is, that the form or figure which was so familiar among people will be dissolved, and disappear in the grave.

Shall consume in the grave - Hebrew, "in Sheol." The word probably means here "the grave." The original word rendered "consume," means literally to make old; to wear out; to waste away. The entire form of the man will disappear.

From their dwelling - Margin, "the grave being a habitation to every one of them." Septuagint, "and their help shall grow old in the grave from their glory." So the Latin Vulgate. The whole expression is obscure. The most probable meaning is, "they shall consume in the grave, "from its being a dwelling to him;"" that is, to each of them. Sheol, or the grave, becomes a dwelling to the rich man, and in that gloomy abode - that which is now his dwelling - he consumes away. It pertains to that dwelling, or it is one of the conditions of residing there, that all consume away and disappear. Others render it, "so that there is no dwelling or habitation for them." Others, and this is the more common interpretation, "their form passes away, the underworld is their habitation." See DeWette *in loc*. This last rendering requires a slight change in the punctuation of the original. DeWette, Note, p. 339. The "general" idea in the passage is plain, that the possessors of wealth are soon to find their home in the grave, and that their forms, with all on which they valued themselves, are soon to disappear.

Verse 15

But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave - literally, "from the hand of Sheol;" that is, from the dominion of death. The hand is an emblem of power, and it here means that death or Sheol holds the dominion over all those who are in the grave. The control is absolute and

unlimited. The grave or Sheol is here personified as if reigning there, or setting up an empire there. Compare the notes at Isaiah 14:9. On the word "redeem," see the references in the notes at Psalm 49:7.

For he shall receive me - literally, "he shall take me." That is, either, He will take me from the grave; or, He will take me "to" himself. The general idea is, that God would take hold of him, and save him from the dominion of the grave; from that power which death exercises over the dead. This would either mean that he would be preserved from going down to the grave and returning to corruption there; or, that he would hereafter be rescued from the power of the grave in a sense which would not apply in respect to the rich man. The former evidently cannot be the idea, since the psalmist could not hope to escape death; yet there might be a hope that the dominion of death would not be permanent and enduring, or that there would be a future life, a resurrection from the grave. It seems to me, therefore, that this passage, like the expression in Psalm 49:14, "in the morning," and the passages referred to in the notes at that verse, is founded on the belief that death is not the end of a good man, but that he will rise again, and live in a higher and better state. It was this consideration which gave such comfort to the psalmist in contemplating the whole subject; and the idea, thus illustrated, is substantially the same as that stated by the Saviour in Matthew 10:28, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul."

Verse 16

Be not thou afraid when one is made rich - Do not dread the power derived from wealth; do not fear anything which a man can do merely because he is rich. The original is, "when a "man" becomes rich." The allusion is not necessarily to a bad man, though that is implied in the whole passage, since there is no reason for fearing a "good" man, whether he is rich or poor. The only thing that seems to have been apprehended in the mind of the psalmist was that power of doing injury to others, or of employing means to injure others, which wealth confers on a bad man. The psalmist here changes the form of the expression, no longer referring to himself, and to his own feelings, as in the former part of the psalm, but making an application of the whole course of thought to others, showing them, as the result of his own reflection and observation, that no man had any real cause for dread and alarm when riches increased in the hands of the

wicked. The reasons why this power should not be feared are stated in the following verses.

When the glory of his house is increased - Rich people often lavish much of their wealth on their dwellings; on the dwelling itself; on the furniture; on the grounds and appendages of their habitation. This is evidently referred to here as "the "glory" of their house;" as that which would be adapted to make an impression of the power and rank of its possessor.

Verse 17

For when he dieth - He must die. His wealth cannot save him from the grave. It is always to be "assumed" of rich people, as of all other men, that they "will" have to die. The point is not one which is to be argued; not one about which there can be any doubt. Of all people, whatever else may be said of them, it may always be affirmed that they must die, and important inferences may be always drawn from that fact.

He shall carry nothing away - It is not improbable that the apostle Paul had this passage in his eye in what he says in 1 Timothy 6:7, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out." See the notes at that passage. Compare Job 27:16-19.

His glory shall not descend after him - His wealth, and those things which have been procured by wealth, as indicating station and rank, cannot accompany him to the other world. This is said to show that he is not to be "feared" on account of his wealth. The argument is, that whatever there is in wealth that seems to give power, and to afford the means of doing injury, must soon be separated from him. In respect to wealth, and to all the power derived from wealth, he will be like the most poor and penniless of mortals. All that he possesses will pass into other hands, and whether for good or for evil, it will no longer be in his power to use it. As this "must" occur soon - as it "may" occur in a moment - there is no reason to "fear" such a man, or to suppose that he can do permanent injury by any power derived from wealth. Compare the notes at Isaiah 14:6-7, notes at Isaiah 14:10-11.

Verse 18

Though while he lived - Margin, as in Hebrew, "in his life." More literally, "in his lives." The idea is, as long as he lived.

He blessed his soul - That is, he blessed himself; he congratulated himself; he regarded his condition as desirable and enviable. He "took airs" upon himself; he felt that his was a happy lot; he expected and demanded

respect and honor from others on account of his wealth. He commended himself as having evinced sagacity in the means by which he acquired wealth - thus imparting honor to himself; and he congratulated himself on the result, as placing him in a conditiOn above want, and in a condition that entitled him to honor. A striking illustration of this feeling is found in the parable of the rich fool, Luke 12:19, "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

And men will praise thee - Others will praise thee. He not only blessed or commended himself, but he might expect that others would praise and congratulate him also. They would regard him as a happy man; happy, because he had been thus successful; happy, because he had accumulated that which was the object of so universal desire among people. Success, though founded on that which is entitled to no praise, and which is even the result of unprincipled conduct, often secures the temporary praise of men, while a want of success, though connected with the strictest, sternest virtue, is often followed by neglect, or is even regarded as proof that he who fails has no claim to honor.

When thou doest well to thyself - Well, in reference to success in life, or in the sense that thou art prospered. Your industry, your sagacity, your prosperity will be the theme of commendation. To a certain extent, where this does not lead to self flattery and pride, it is proper and right. The virtues which ordinarily contribute to prosperity "are" worthy of commendation, and should be held up to the example of the young. But what is evil and wrong in the matter here referred to is that the man's commendation of himself, and the commendation by others, all tends to foster a spirit of pride and self-confidence; to make the soul easy and satisfied with the condition; to produce the feeling that all is gained which needs to be gained; to make the possessor of wealth arrogant and haughty; and to lead him to neglect the higher interests of the soul.

Verse 19

He shall go to the generation of his fathers - To be gathered to one's own people, or to his fathers, is a common expression in the Old Testament in speaking of death. See Genesis 25:8, Genesis 25:17; Genesis 35:29; Genesis 49:29, Genesis 49:33, Numbers 20:24, Numbers 20:26; Numbers 27:13; Numbers 31:2; Deuteronomy 32:50; Judges 2:10. It means that they were united again with those who had gone before them, in the regions of

the dead. Death had indeed separated them, but by death they were again united.

They shall never see light - He and the "generation" to which he has gone to be united, would no more see the light of this world; no more walk among the living: Job 33:30. Compare the notes at Isaiah 38:11; notes at Psalm 27:13. The meaning is, that the rich sinner will die as others have done before him, leaving all his earthly possessions, and will no more be permitted to revisit the world where his forsaken possessions are, and will not even be permitted to "look" on what before had been to him such a source of self-confidence, self-gratulation, and pride.

Verse 20

Man that is in honor - Man that is in possession of wealth, or that occupies an exalted rank. See the notes at Psalm 49:12.

And understandeth not - That is, who has no proper appreciation of what it is to be a man; of what is his true rank "as" a man; of his relations to God; of his condition as an immortal being - man that values himself only on the fact that he is rich; that lives for this world alone; that regards it as a sufficient distinction that he "is" rich; that degrades his nobler nature in the mere enjoyment of the pleasures of sense - is like the beasts - is in no way elevated above them.

Is like the beasts that perish - They live only for this life. They have no higher nature than that which pertains to the senses, and they live accordingly. The man who, though of exalted rank, lives for this life alone, herein resembles them. See the notes at Psalm 49:12. Alas! what multitudes there are who thus live - whose only aim is to secure the wealth and the honors of this life - who have no more thought of a future state, and who form no more plans in regard to a future world, than do the brutes! For many there are in exalted stations, who are surrounded by all that wealth can give, yet who no more admit the thought of a future world into their hopes and plans than if they had no other endowment than the camel or the ox, and whose conduct in this respect would not be changed if all the higher endowments which constitute the nature of man were withdrawn, and they were at once reduced to the condition of a brute. While, therefore, the main purpose of this psalm is to show that wealth confers no "power" which is to be dreaded - that its possessor, though wicked, cannot permanently injure us, since he must soon pass away by death - the course of thought at the same time teaches us that we should not "desire" wealth as our portion; that

we should not live for this, as the main object of life. The possessor of the most ample fortune must soon be laid in the grave. All that he has acquired will pass into other hands, and will be his no more. But he “has” a higher nature. He “may” live in a manner different from the brute that perishes. He “may” act with reference to a higher - an eternal - state of existence; and, when he dies, he “may” leave his earthly inheritance, whether great or small, only to enter on an inheritance that shall he permanent and eternal. “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” Mark 8:36.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 50

Introduction

This psalm purports to be a "psalm of Asaph." This is the first of the psalms ascribed to him. twelve in all are attributed to him, namely, 1 Chronicles 6:39; 1 Chronicles 15:17. He was eminent as a musician, Nehemiah 12:46; 1 Chronicles 16:7, and was appointed by "the chief of the Levites," at the command of David, with two others, Heman and Ethan, to preside over a part of the sacred choral services of public worship, 1 Chronicles 15:16-19. They had charge particularly of the worship as conducted with "cymbals of brass," 1 Chronicles 15:19. The "sons of Asaph" are afterward mentioned among the choristers of the temple 1 Chronicles 25:1-2; 2 Chronicles 20:14; 2 Chronicles 29:13; Ezra 2:41; Ezra 3:10; Nehemiah 7:44; Nehemiah 11:22; and this office appears to have been hereditary in his family, 1 Chronicles 25:1-2. Asaph was celebrated in after times as a prophet and a poet, 2 Chronicles 29:30; Nehemiah 12:46. The title, rendered in the margin, "for Asaph," "may" mean either that the psalm was composed "by" Asaph himself, or that it was composed especially "for" him, by David or by someone else, and that it was committed to him to be set to music, or to be sung by that band of musicians over which he was appointed to preside. Compare the notes at the title to Psalm 42:1-11. The presumption is, that it was composed "by" Asaph, as this is the most natural explanation of the title, and as there is nothing in the circumstances of the case to render this improbable.

Of the "occasion" on which the psalm was composed we have no information. There is nothing in the title to indicate this, nor is there anything in the psalm itself which would connect it with any known events in the Jewish history. There are no local allusions, there are no names mentioned, there are no circumstances referred to, which enable us to determine the time of its composition.

The "object" of the psalm seems to be to set forth "the value and importance of spiritual religion as compared with a mere religion of forms." It is one among numerous portions of the Old Testament which show that the Jewish religion "contemplated" and "required" spirituality in its worshippers, and that it was not designed to be merely formal. There was, indeed, great tendency among the Jewish people to rely on the forms of

religion, and it must be admitted that there was not a little in their modes of worship which went to foster this unless there was constant vigilance on the part of the worshipper, and on the part of the public teachers of religion. At the time when this psalm was composed, it would seem that there was a general reliance on the mere ceremonies of public worship; that much of the spirituality of religion had vanished; and that under the forms of religion, and connected with a decent and even scrupulous attention to them, there was a great, if not general, prevalence, of moral corruption among the people. See Psalm 50:16-21.

In the composition of the psalm, therefore, the author represents a scene of solemn judgment; describes God as coming with pomp, and amidst fire and tempests, to pronounce a sentence on man; and then, as in his presence, and as amidst these solemn scenes, shows what will be found to be true piety; what will meet with theapprobation, and what will incur the disapprobation, of God.

The psalm may be regarded as composed of the following parts.

I. A solemn representation of the scenes of judgment; of God as coming to judge his professed people, assembling together those who had avowed themselves to be his friends, and who had pledged themselves to be his amidst the solemn scenes of sacrifice, Psalm 50:1-6.

In this part of the psalm there are the following things:

(a) A general summons to the world, from the rising to the setting sun, Psalm 50:1.

(b) The statement that the great principles on which all would be determined would proceed out of Zion, or would be such as were inculcated there in the worship of God, Psalm 50:2.

(c) A description of God as coming to judgment amidst fire and tempest, Psalm 50:3.

(d) A general call to the heavens and the earth, that His people might be summoned from all quarters with reference to the final sentence, Psalm 50:4-5.

(e) A statement that perfect justice would be done, which the very heavens would reveal, for that God was himself the judge, Psalm 50:6.

II. A declaration of the great principles on which the judgment would proceed, and by which the issue would be determined. It would not be by an observance of the mere external forms of devotion, but by spiritual religion; by a sincere worship of God; by a holy life, Psalm 50:7-15; and the "second," that the wicked cannot hope to meet with the favor of God, though they do observe these forms, Psalm 50:16-23.

First. It is not by mere external forms that acceptance can be found with God, Psalm 50:7-15.

(a) A statement of the fact, and of the grounds of the fact, that God will testify against them, Psalm 50:7-8.

(b) The mere offering of sacrifices cannot be acceptable to Him. He does not "need" their sacrifices, as all the beasts of the world are His, Psalm 50:9-13.

(c) Only praise - spiritual worship - humble trust in him - can be admitted as true righteousness; as that which will be acceptable to him, Psalm 50:14-15.

Second. The wicked cannot be accepted and approved though they do observe the forms of religion, Psalm 50:16-23.

(a) Such men, though in the priestly office, cannot be regarded as appointed by God to declare his will, or to represent him on earth, Psalm 50:16-17,

(b) A description of the actual conduct of many of those who professed to be His friend; who were rigid in their observances of the external forms of religion, and who were even in the priestly office, Psalm 50:18-21.

(c) As before Psalm 50:14-15; only the righteous - the spiritually minded - the upright - can in such a solemn trial meet with the approbation of God, Psalm 50:22-23.

This psalm, therefore, is one of the most instructive portions of the Old Testament, as setting forth the necessity of spiritual religion, and the fact that a mere observance of forms can never constitute that righteousness which will make people acceptable to God.

Verse 1

The mighty God, even the Lord - Even "Yahweh," for this is the original word. The Septuagint and Vulgate render this "The God of gods, the Lord." DeWette renders it, "God, God Jehovah, speaks." Prof. Alexander, "The Almighty, God, Jehovah, speaks;" and remarks that the word "mighty" is not an adjective agreeing with the next word ("the mighty God"), but a substantive in apposition with it. The idea is, that he who speaks is the true God; the Supreme Ruler of the universe. It is "that" God who has a right to call the world to judgment, and who has power to execute his will.

Hath spoken - Or rather, "speaks." That is, the psalmist represents him as now speaking, and as calling the world to judgment.

And called the earth - Addressed all the inhabitants of the world; all dwellers on the earth.

From the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof - From the place where the sun seems to rise, to the place where it seems to set; that is, all the world. Compare the notes at Isaiah 59:19. See also Malachi 1:11; Psalm 113:3. The call is made to all the earth; to all the human race. The scene is imaginary as represented by the psalmist, but it is founded on a true representation of what will occur - of the universal judgment, when all nations shall be summoned to appear before the final Judge. See Matthew 25:32; Revelation 20:11-14.

Verse 2

Out of Zion - The place where God was worshipped, and where he dwelt. Compare the notes at Isaiah 2:3.

The perfection of beauty - See the notes at Psalm 48:2.

God hath shined - Has shined forth, or has caused light and splendor to appear. Compare Deuteronomy 33:2; Psalm 80:2; Psalm 94:1 (see the margin) The meaning here is, that the great principles which are to determine the destiny of mankind in the final judgment are those which proceed from Zion; or, those which are taught in the religion of Zion; they are those which are inculcated through the church of God. God has there made known his law; he has stated the principles on which he governs, and on which he will judge the world.

Verse 3

Our God shall come - That is, he will come to judgment. This language is derived from the supposition that God "will" judge the world, and it shows that this doctrine was understood and believed by the Hebrews. The

New Testament has stated the fact that this will be done by the coming of his Son Jesus Christ to gather the nations before him, and to pronounce tile final sentence on mankind: Matthew 25:31; Acts 17:31; Acts 10:42; John 5:22.

And shall not keep silence - That is, the will come forth and "express" his judgment on the conduct of mankind. See the notes at Psalm 28:1. He "seems" now to be silent. No voice is heard. No sentence is pronounced. But this will not always be the case. The time is coming when he will manifest himself, and will no longer be silent as to the conduct and character of people, but will pronounce a sentence, fixing their destiny according to their character.

A fire shall devour before him - Compare the notes at 2 Thessalonians 1:8; notes at Hebrews 10:27. The "language" here is undoubtedly taken from the representation of God as he manifested himself at Mount Sinai. Thus, in Exodus 19:16, Exodus 19:18, it is said, "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; and Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

And it shall be very tempestuous round about him - The word used here - שׂער *śaʿar* - means properly to shudder; to shiver; and then it is employed to denote the commotion and raging of a tempest. The allusion is doubtless to the descent on Mount Sinai Exodus 19:16, and to the storm accompanied by thunder and lightning which beat upon the mountain when God descended on it to give his law. The whole is designed to represent God as clothed with appropriate majesty when judgment is to be pronounced upon the world.

Verse 4

He shall call to the heavens from above - He will call on all the universe; he will summon all worlds. The meaning here is, not that he will gather those who are in heaven to be judged, but that he will call on the inhabitants of all worlds to be his witnesses; to bear their attestation to the justice of his sentence. See Psalm 50:6. The phrase "from above" does not, of course, refer to the heavens as being above God, but to the heavens as they appear to human beings to be above themselves.

And to the earth - To all the dwellers upon the earth; "to the whole universe." He makes this universal appeal with the confident assurance that his final sentence will be approved; that the universe will see and admit that it is just. See Revelation 15:3; Revelation 19:1-3. There can be no doubt that the universe, as such, will approve the ultimate sentence that will be pronounced on mankind.

That he may judge his people - That is, all these arrangements - this coming with fire and tempest, and this universal appeal - will be prepatory to the judging of his people, or in order that the judgment may be conducted with due solemnity and propriety. The idea is, that an event so momentous should be conducted in a way suited to produce an appropriate impression; so conducted, that there would be a universal conviction of the justice and impartiality of the sentence. The reference here is particularly to his professed "people," that is, to determine whether they were truly his, for that is the main subject of the psalm, though the "language" is derived from the solemnities appropriate to the universal judgment.

Verse 5

Gather my saints together unto me - This is an address to the messengers employed for assembling those who are to be judged. Similar language is used by the Saviour Matthew 24:31: "And he (the Son of Man) shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." The idea is, that God will bring them, or assemble them together. All this is language derived froth the notion of a universal judgment, "as if" the scattered people of God were thus gathered together by special messengers sent out for this purpose. The word "saints" here refers to those who are truly his people. The object - the purpose - of the judgment is to assemble in heaven those who are sincerely his friends; or, as the Saviour expresses it Matthew 24:31, his "elect." Yet in order to this, or in order to determine who "are" his true people, there will be a larger gathering - an assembling of all the dwellers on the earth.

Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice - Exodus 24:6-7. Compare the notes at Hebrews 9:19-22. The idea here is, that they are the professed people of God; that they have entered into a solemn covenant-relation to him, or have bound themselves in the most solemn manner to be his; that they have done this in connection with the sacrifices which accompany their worship; that they have brought their sacrifices or

bloody offerings as a pledge that they mean to be his, and will be his. Over these solemn sacrifices made to him, they have bound themselves to be the Lord‘s; and the purpose of the judgment now is, to determine whether this was sincere, and whether they have been faithful to their vows. As applied to professed believers under the Christian system, the “idea” here presented would be, that the vow to be the Lord‘s has been made over the body and blood of the Redeemer once offered as a sacrifice, and that by partaking of the memorials of that sacrifice they have entered into a solemn “covenant” to be his. Nothing more solemn can be conceived than a “covenant” or pledge entered into in such a manner; and yet nothing is more painfully certain than that the process of a judgment will be necessary to determine in what cases it is genuine, for the mere outward act, no matter how solemn, does not of necessity decide the question whether he who performs it will enter into heaven.

Verse 6

And the heavens shall declare his righteousness - Shall make it known, or announce it. That is, the heavens - the heavenly inhabitants - will bear witness to the justness of the sentence, or will approve the sentence. See the notes at Psalm 50:4. Compare Psalm 97:6.

For God is judge himself - The judgment is not committed to mortal men, or even to angels. Creatures, even the most exalted and pure, might err in such a work as that of judging the world. That judgment, to be correct, must be founded on a perfect knowledge of the heart, and on a clear and complete understanding of all the thoughts, the motives, the words, the deeds of all people. It cannot be supposed that any created being, however exalted, could possess all this knowledge, and it cannot be supposed that any created being, however pure, could be so endowed as to be secure against error in pronouncing a judgment on the countless millions of people. But God combines all these in himself; a perfect knowledge of all that has ever occurred on earth, and of the motives and feelings of every creature - and, at the same time, absolute purity and impartiality; therefore his judgment must be such that the universe will see that it is just. It may be added here that as the New Testament has stated (see the notes at Psalm 50:3) that the judgment of the world in the last day will be committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, the considerations just suggested prove that he is Divine. The immediate point in the passage before us is, that the fact that “God” will preside in the judgment, demonstrates that the acts of judgment will be

"right," and will be such as the "heavens" - the universe - will approve; such, that all worlds will proclaim them to be right. There is no higher evidence that a thing is right, and that it ought to be done, than the fact that God has done it. Compare Genesis 18:25; Psalm 39:9.

Verse 7

Hear, O my people, and I will speak - God himself is now introduced as speaking, and as stating the principles on which the judgment will proceed. The previous verses are introductory, or are designed to bring the scene of the judgment before the mind. The solemn scene now opens, and God himself speaks, especially as rebuking the disposition to rely on the mere forms of religion, while its spirituality and its power are denied. The purpose of the whole is, by asking how these things will appear in the judgment, to imply the vanity of "mere" forms of religion now. The particular address is made to the "people" of God, or to "Israel," because the purpose of the psalmist was to rebuke the prevailing tendency to rely on outward forms.

O Israel, and I will testify against thee - In the judgment. In view of those scenes, and as "at" that time, I will "now" bear this solemn testimony against the views which you entertain on the subject of religion, and the practices which prevail in your worship.

I am God, even thy God - I am the true God, and therefore I have a right to speak; I am "thy" God - the God who has been the Protector of thy people - acknowledged as the God of the nation - and therefore I claim the right to declare the great principles which pertain to true worship, and which constitute true religion.

Verse 8

I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings - On the words "sacrifices" and "burnt-offerings" here used, see the notes at Isaiah 1:11. The meaning is, "I do not reprove or rebuke you in respect to the withholding of sacrifices. I do not charge you with neglecting the offering of such sacrifices. I do not accuse the nation of indifference in regard to the external rites or duties of religion. It is not on this ground that you are to be blamed or condemned, for that duty is outwardly and publicly performed. I do not say that such offerings are wrong; I do not say that there has been any failure in the external duties of worship. The charge - the reproof - relates to other matters; to the want of a proper spirit, to the withholding of the heart, in connection with such offerings."

To have been continually before me - The words "to have been" are inserted by the translators, and weaken the sense. The simple idea is, that their offerings "were" continually before him; that is, they were constantly made. He had no charge of neglect in this respect to bring against them. The insertion of the words "to have been" would seem to imply that though they had neglected this external rite, it was a matter of no consequence; whereas the simple meaning is, that they were "not" chargeable with this neglect, or that there was "no" cause of complaint on this point. It was on other grounds altogether that a charge was brought against them. It was, as the following verses show, because they supposed there was special "merit" in such offerings; because they supposed that they laid God under obligation by so constant and so expensive offerings, as if they did not already belong to him, or as if he needed them; and because, while they did this, they withheld the very offering which he required, and without which all other sacrifices would be vain and worthless - a sincere, humble, thankful heart.

Verse 9

I will take no bullock out of thy house - Bullocks were offered regularly in the Hebrew service and sacrifice Exodus 29:11, Exodus 29:36; Leviticus 4:4; 1 Kings 18:23, 1 Kings 18:33; and it is with reference to this that the language is used here. In obedience to the law it was right and proper to offer such sacrifices; and the design here is not to express disapprobation of these offerings in themselves considered. On this subject - on the external compliance with the law in this respect - God says Psalm 50:8 that he had no cause to complain against them. It was only with respect to the design and the spirit with which they did this, that the language in this verse and the following verses is used. The idea which it is the purpose of these verses to suggest is, that God did not "need" such offerings; that they were not to be made "as if" he needed them; and that if he needed such he was not "dependent" on them, for all the beasts of the earth and all the fowls of the mountains were his, and could be taken for that purpose; and that if he took what was claimed to be theirs - the bullocks and the goats - he did not wrong them, for all were his, and he claimed only his own.

Nor he-goats out of thy folds - Goats were also offered in sacrifice. Leviticus 3:12; Leviticus 4:24; Leviticus 10:16: Numbers 15:27.

Verse 10

For every beast of the forest is mine - All the beasts that roam at large in the wilderness; all that are untamed and unclaimed by man. The idea is,

that even if God "needed" such offerings, he was not dependent on them - for the numberless beasts that roamed at large as his own would yield an ample supply.

And the cattle upon a thousand hills - This may mean either the cattle that roamed by thousands on the hills, or the cattle on numberless hills. The Hebrew will bear either construction. The former is most likely to be the meaning. The allusion is probably to the animals that were pastured in great numbers on the hills, and that were claimed by men. The idea is, that all - whether wild or tame - belonged to God, and he had a right to them, to dispose of them as he pleased. He was not, therefore, in any way dependent on sacrifices. It is a beautiful and impressive thought, that the "property" in all these animals - in all living things on the earth - is in God, and that he has a right to dispose of them as he pleases. What man owns, he owns under God, and has no right to complain when God comes and asserts his superior claim to dispose of it at his pleasure. God has never given to man the absolute proprietorship in "any" thing; nor does he invade our rights when he comes and claims what we possess, or when in any way he removes what is most valuable to us. Compare Job 1:21.

Verse 11

I know all the fowls of the mountains - That is, I am fully acquainted with their numbers; their nature; their habits; their residence. I have such a knowledge of them that I could appropriate them to my own use if I were in need of them. I am not, therefore, dependent on people to offer them, for I can use them as I please.

And the wild beasts of the field are mine - Margin, "with me." That is, they are before me. They are never out of my presence. At any time, therefore, I could use them as I might need them. The word rendered "wild beasts" - זיז *zîyz* - means any moving thing; and the idea here is, whatever moves in the field, or roams abroad. Everything is his - whether on the mountains, in the forest, or in the cultivated field.

Verse 12

If I were hungry, I would not tell thee - I should not have occasion to apply to you; I should not be dependent on you.

For the world is mine - The earth; all that has been created.

And the fulness thereof - All that fills the world; all that exists upon it. The whole is at his disposal; to all that the earth produces he has a right. This language is used to show the absurdity of the supposition that he was

in any way dependent on man, or that the offering of sacrifice could be supposed in any way to lay him under obligation.

Verse 13

Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? - This is said to show still further the absurdity of the views which seem to have prevailed among those who offered sacrifices. They offered them "as if" they were needed by God; "as if" they laid him under obligation; "as if" in some way they contributed to his happiness, or were essential to his welfare. The only supposition on which this could be true was, that he needed the flesh of the one for food, and the blood of the other for drink; or that he was sustained as creatures are. Yet this was a supposition, which, when it was stated in a formal manner, must be at once seen to be absurd; and hence the emphatic question in this verse. It may serve to illustrate this, also, to remark, that, among the pagan, the opinion did undoubtedly prevail that the gods ate and drank what was offered to them in sacrifice; whereas the truth was, that these things were consumed by the priests who attended on pagan altars, and conducted the devotions of pagan temples, and who found that it contributed much to their own support, and did much to secure the liberality of the people, to keep up the impression that what was thus offered was consumed by the gods. God appeals here to his own people in this earnest manner because it was to be presumed that "they" had higher conceptions of him than the pagan had; and that, enlightened as they were, they could not for a moment suppose these offerings necessary for him. This is one of the passages in the Old Testament which imply that God is a Spirit, and that, as such, he is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Compare John 4:24.

Verse 14

Offer unto God thanksgiving - The word rendered "offer" in this place - זבח *zâbach* - means properly "sacrifice." So it is rendered by the Septuagint, θῦσον *thuson* - and by the Vulgate, *"immola."* The word is used, doubtless, with design - to show what was the "kind" of sacrifice with which God would be pleased, and which he would approve. It was not the mere "sacrifice" of animals, as they commonly understood the term; it was not the mere presentation of the bodies and the blood of slain beasts; it was an offering which proceeded from the heart, and which was expressive of gratitude and praise. This is not to be understood as implying that God did not require or approve of the offering of bloody sacrifices, but as implying

that a higher sacrifice was necessary; that these would be vain and worthless unless they were accompanied with the offerings of the heart; and that his worship, even amidst outward forms, was to be a spiritual worship.

And pay thy vows unto the Most High - To the true God, the most exalted Being in the universe. The word "vows" here - נדר *neder* - means properly a vow or promise; and then, a thing vowed; a votive offering, a sacrifice. The idea seems to be, that the true notion to be attached to the sacrifices which were prescribed and required was, that they were to be regarded as expressions of internal feelings and purposes; of penitence; of a deep sense of sin; of gratitude and love; and that the design of such sacrifices was not fulfilled unless the "vows" or pious purposes implied in the very nature of sacrifices and offerings were carried out in the life and conduct. They were not, therefore, to come merely with these offerings, and then feel that all the purpose of worship was accomplished. They were to carry out the true design of them by lives corresponding with the idea intended by such sacrifices - lives full of penitence, gratitude, love, obedience, submission, devotion. This only could be acceptable worship. Compare the notes at Isaiah 1:11-17. See also Psalm 76:11; Ecclesiastes 5:5.

Verse 15

And call upon me in the day of trouble - This is a part of real religion as truly as praise is, Psalm 50:14. This is also the duty and the privilege of all the true worshippers of God. To do this shows where the heart is, as really as direct acts of praise and thanksgiving. The purpose of all that is said here is to show that true religion - the proper service of God - does not consist in the mere offering of sacrifice, but that it is of a spiritual nature, and that the offering of sacrifice is of no value unless it is accompanied by corresponding acts of spiritual religion, showing that the heart has a proper appreciation of the mercies of God, and that it truly confides in him. Such spirituality in religion is expressed by acts of praise Psalm 50:14; but it is also as clearly expressed Psalm 50:15 by going to God in times of trouble, and rolling the burdens of life on his arm, and seeking consolation in him.

I will deliver thee - I will deliver thee from trouble. This will occur

(a) either in this life, in accordance with the frequent promises of his word (compare the notes at Psalm 46:1); or

(b) wholly in the future world, where all who love God will be completely and forever delivered from all forms of sorrow.

And thou shalt glorify me - That is, Thou wilt honor me, or do me honor, by thus coming to me with confidence in the day of calamity. There is no way in which we can honor God more, or show more clearly that we truly confide in him, than by going to him when everything seems to be dark; when his own ways and dealings are wholly incomprehensible to us, and committing all into his hands.

Verse 16

But unto the wicked God saith - This commences a second part of the subject. See the introduction. Thus far the psalm had reference to those who were merely external worshippers, or mere formalists, as showing that such could not be approved and accepted in the day of judgment; that spiritual religion - the offering of the "heart" - was necessary in order to acceptance with God. In this part of the psalm the same principles are applied to those who actually "violate" the law which they profess to receive as prescribing the rules of true religion, and which they profess to teach to others. The design of the psalm is not merely to reprove the mass of the people as mere formalists in religion, but especially to reprove the leaders and teachers of the people, who, under the form of religion, gave themselves up to a course of life wholly inconsistent with the true service of God. The address here, therefore, is to those who, while they professed to be teachers of religion, and to lead the devotions of others, gave themselves up to abandoned lives.

What hast thou to do - What right hast thou to do this? How can people, who lead such lives, consistently and properly do this? The idea is, that they who profess to declare the law of a holy God should be themselves holy; that they who profess to teach the principles and doctrines of true religion should themselves be examples of purity and holiness.

To declare my statutes - My laws. This evidently refers rather to the teaching of others than to the profession of their own faith. The language would be applicable to the priests under the Jewish system, who were expected not only to conduct the outward services of religion, but also to instruct the people; to explain the principles of religion; to be the guides and teachers of others. Compare Malachi 2:7. There is a striking resemblance between the language used in this part of the psalm Psalm 50:16-20 and the language of the apostle Paul in Romans 2:17-23; and it would seem

probable that the apostle in that passage had this portion of the psalm in his eye. See the notes at that passage.

Or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth - Either as professing faith in it, and a purpose to be governed by it - or, more probably, as explaining it to others. The ""covenant"" here is equivalent to the "law" of God, or the principles of his religion; and the idea is, that he who undertakes to explain that to others, should himself be a holy man. He can have no "right" to attempt to explain it, if he is otherwise; he cannot hope to be "able" to explain it, unless he himself sees and appreciates its truth and beauty. This is as true now of the Gospel as it was of the law. A wicked man can have no right to undertake the work of the Christian ministry, nor can he be able to explain to others what he himself does not understand.

Verse 17

Seeing thou hatest instruction - That is, He is unwilling himself to be taught. He will not learn the true nature of religion, and yet he presumes to instruct others. Compare the notes at Romans 2:21.

And castest my words behind thee - He treated them with contempt, or as unworthy of attention. He did not regard them as worthy of being "retained," but threw them contemptuously away.

Verse 18

When thou sawest a thief - When you have seen or found one who was intending to commit theft, then (instead of rebuking or exposing him) you have been willing to act with him, and to divide the profits. The words "when thou sawest" would seem to imply readiness and willingness to engage with them, as "at first sight." Whenever there was an opportunity to share in the results of theft, they were ready to engage in it. The main "point" in this is, that they were willing to do so even when observing the outward duties of religion, and when professing to be the true worshippers of God. A similar sentiment occurs in Romans 2:21. See the notes at that passage.

Then thou consentedst with him - literally, Thou didst delight in him, or hadst pleasure in him. He was a man after thine own heart. Thou wast at once on good terms with him.

And hast been partaker with adulterers - Margin, as in Hebrew, "thy portion was with adulterers." This was a common vice among the Jewish people. See the notes at Romans 2:22. The idea here is, that they were

associated in practice with adulterers; they were guilty of that crime as others were. The point of the remark here is, that they did this under the cloak of piety, and when they were scrupulous and faithful in offering sacrifices, and in performing all the external rites of religion.

Verse 19

Thou givest thy mouth to evil - Margin, as in Hebrew, "thou sendest." That is, they gave it up to evil; they employed it in evil: in falsehood, malice, deceit, slander, deception, detraction.

And thy tongue frameth deceit - The word rendered "frameth" means properly to bind, to fasten; and then, to contrive, to frame. The meaning is, that it was employed in the work of deceit; that is, it was employed in devising and executing purposes of fraud and falsehood.

Verse 20

Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother - To the general character of falsehood and slander there is now added the fact that they were guilty of this in the most aggravated manner conceivable - against their nearest relations, the members of their own families. They were not only guilty of the crime against neighbors - against strangers - against persons to whom they sustained no near relationship; but against those of their own households - those whose characters, on that account, ought to have been especially dear to them. The words ""thou sittest"" probably refer to the fact that they would do this when enjoying social contact with them; in confidential conversation; when words of peace, and not of slander, might be properly expected. The word "brother" "might" be used as denoting any other man, or any one of the same nation; but the phrase which is added, "thine own mother's son," shows that it is here to be taken in the strictest sense.

Thou slanderest - literally, "Thou givest to ruin." Prof. Alexander renders it, "Thou wilt aim a blow." The Septuagint, the Vulgate, Luther, and DeWette understand it of slander.

Thine own mother's son - It is to be remembered that where polygamy prevailed there would be many children in the same family who had the same father, but not the same mother. The nearest relationship, therefore, was where there was the same mother as well as the same father. To speak of a brother, in the strictest sense, and as implying the nearest relationship, it would be natural to speak of one as having the same mother. The idea here is, that while professing religion, and performing its external rites with

the most scrupulous care, they were guilty of the basest crimes, and showed an entire want of moral principle and of natural affection. External worship, however zealously performed, could not be acceptable in such circumstances to a holy God.

Verse 21

These things hast thou done, and I kept silence - Compare the notes at Isaiah 18:4. The meaning is, that while they did these things - while they committed these abominations - he did not interfere. He did not come forth in his anger to destroy them. He had borne all this with patience. He had borne this until it was now time that he should interpose Isaiah 18:3, and state the true principles of his government, and warn then of the consequences of such a course of sin and hypocrisy. Compare the notes at Acts 17:30.

Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself - The idea here is, that they thought or imagined that God was just like themselves in the matter under consideration, and they acted under this impression; or, in other words, the fair interpretation of their conduct was that they thus regarded God. That is, they supposed that "God" would be satisfied with the "forms" of religion, as "they" were; that all he required was the proper offering of sacrifice, according to "their" views of the nature of religion; that he did not regard principle, justice, pure morality, sincerity, even as they themselves did not; and that he would not be strict to punish sin, or to reprove them for it, if these forms were kept up, even as "they" were not disposed to be rigid on the subject of sin.

But I will reprove thee - I will rebuke thee alike for thy sins, and for this view of the nature of religion.

And set them in order - literally, I will "array" them; that is, I will draw them out to view in their appropriate ranks and orders, as soldiers are drawn up in martial array. They shall be so arranged and classified that they may be seen distinctly.

Before thine eyes - So that they may be plainly seen. The meaning is, that they would have a clear and impressive view of them: they would be made to see them as they were. This might be done then, as it is done now, either

(a) by their being set before their minds and hearts, so that they would see and feel the enormity of sin, to wit, by conviction for it; or

(b) by sending such punishment on them for their sins that they might "measure" the guilt and the number of their transgressions by the penalties which would be inflicted.

In some way all sinners will yet be made to see the nature and the extent of their guilt before God.

Verse 22

Now consider this - Understand this; give attention to this. The word "now" does not well express the force of the original. The Hebrew word is not an adverb of "time," but a particle denoting "entreaty," and would be better rendered by, "Oh, consider this;" or, "Consider this, I beseech you." The matter is presented to them as that which deserved their most solemn attention.

Ye that forget God - Who really forget him though you are professedly engaged in his worship; who, amidst the forms of religion, are actually living in entire forgetfulness of the just claims and of the true character of God.

Lest I tear you in pieces - Language derived from the fury of a ravenous beast tearing his victim from limb to limb.

And there be none to deliver - As none can do when God rises up in his wrath to inflict vengeance. None would "venture" to Interpose; none "could" rescue from his hand. There "is" a point of time in relation to all sinners when no one, not even the Redeemer - the great and merciful Mediator - will interpose to save; when the sinner will be left to be dealt with by simple, pure, unmixed and unmitigated "justice;" when mercy and kindness will have done their work in regard to them in vain; and when they will be left to the "mere desert" of their sins. At that point there is no power that can deliver them.

Verse 23

Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me - That is, he truly honors me; he is a true worshipper; he meets with my approbation. The word here rendered ""offereth"" is the same which is used in Psalm 50:14, and means "he that sacrifices:" here meaning, he that presents the sacrifice of praise. So the Septuagint: "the sacrifice of praise glorifies me." So the Vulgate. The idea is, that the worship which God requires is "praise;" it is not the mere external act of homage; it is not the presentation of a bloody sacrifice; it is

not the mere bending of the knee; it is not a mere outward form: it is that which proceeds from the heart, and which shows that there is there a spirit of true thankfulness, adoration, and love.

And to him that ordereth his conversation aright - Margin, as in Hebrew, "that disposeth his way." Or, more literally, "To him that "prepares" or "plans" his way;" that is, to him who is attentive to his going; who seeks to walk in the right path; who is anxious to go in the road that leads to a happier world; who is careful that all his conduct shall be in accordance with the rules which God has prescribed.

Will I show the salvation of God - This may mean either, "I, the author of the psalm as a teacher" (compare Psalm 32:8); or, "I" as referring to God - as a promise that "He" would instruct such an one. The latter is the probable meaning, as it is God that has been speaking in the previous verse. The "salvation of God" is the salvation of which God is the author; or, which he alone can give. The "idea" here is, that where there is a true desire to find the way of truth and salvation, God will impart needful instruction. He will not suffer such an one to wander away and be lost. See the notes at Psalm 25:9.

The general ideas in the psalm, therefore, are

(1) that there is to be a solemn judgment of mankind;

(2) that the issues of that judgment will not be determined by the observance of the external forms of religion;

(3) that God will judge people impartially for their sins, though they observe those forms of religion; and

(4) that no worship of God can be acceptable which does not spring from the heart.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 51

Introduction

This psalm purports to be a psalm of David, and the contents of it accord with this supposition, and with the statement in the title in regard to the occasion on which it was composed. There would be no difficulty on the subject, and no ground for hesitation, in regard to the author and the occasion on which it was composed, if it were not for the prayer in Psalm 51:18, "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion; build thou the walls of Jerusalem," which, it has been maintained by DeWette, Rosenmuller, Venema, and others, must have been written in the time of the Babylonian cxile. Except this, it is admitted on all hands that the psalm in its composition accords entirely with the statement in the title, that it was composed by David. It has, in fact, been generally admitted that the psalm "was" composed by David, though it is the opinion of Rosenmuller, Venema, and Doederlein, that the last two verses were added by a later hand.

According to the title, the psalm was composed on occasion of the great fault and crime in the life of David, and as an expression of his penitence in view of his sin. On the phrase "To the chief Musician," see the notes at the title to Psalm 4:1-8. We are not to suppose that this title was prefixed to the psalm by David himself, but the use to be made of it by committing it to the "chief Musician," or to the overseer of the music in the public worship of God shows that the psalm was considered as designed to be used in public, and was not a mere expression of the private feelings of the author. It was, doubtless, commonly understood (and was probably so intended by David himself) that it was to be used as a "public" expression of his penitence in view of his crane; and both the fact of its composition, and the manner in which it was to be used, were to be interpreted as indicating his willingness that the widest publicity should be given to his confession, and that the memory of the crime and of his penitence should be perpetuated in all ages of the world. The phrase in the title, "A "Psalm" of David," denotes that it was to be used for public worship, or as connected with praise. It was designed not merely to express his private feelings, but was intended to be employed in the solemn services of public devotion. See introduction to Psalm 3:1-8.

The phrase "when Nathan the prophet came unto him," refers to the fact recorded in 2 Samuel 12:1-13. It means that the psalm was the "result" of the visit of Nathan to him; or that it records the feelings of the author, when the sense of his sin had been brought to his mind by the faithful message of the prophet. We may suppose that the record of his feelings was made without delay, for the psalm bears all the marks of having been composed under the deepest feeling, and not of being the result of calm reflection. On the phrase "after he had gone in to Bath-sheba," see the sad record in 2 Samuel 11:1-5.

DeWette, however, maintains that psalm could not have been composed David, but that it must have been in the time of the Babylonian exile. The only argument which he adduces in favor of this opinion is the prayer in Psalm 51:18, "Build thou the walls of Jerusalem," which, he says, could not have been a prayer offered by David, as there was in his time nothing which would make this prayer proper. Jerusalem was not then in ruins. It had been strongly fortified by David himself, and required no particular interposition of God as if to "restore" walls that had been thrown down; whereas, in the time of the exile, such a prayer would have been eminently proper, and would be a natural petition for one who loved his country, and who, as an expression of his own penitence, was desirous of doing all he could for the cause of religion. The difficulty will be more appropriately met in the notes at those verses.

It may be observed here, however, that possibly the expression "Build thou the walls of Jerusalem," "may" be used in a figurative or spiritual sense, expressive of a desire that God would bless his people; that he would interpose in their behalf; that he would be their protector and friend; that he would do for them what would be well expressed by building strong and secure wails around a city. But it may be asked, also, Is it absolutely certain that when the psalm was composed the work of enclosing the city of Jerusalem with walls had been completed? May it not have been, in fact, that at that very time David was engaged in "carrying out" his design of rendering the city impregnable by walls and towers, and that in the midst of his intense sorrow for his own sin, though so heinous and aggravated, his heart may have trurned to that which was so dear to him as an object to be

accomplished, and that even then, in connection with his bitter repentance for his sin, he may have prayed that God would favor that great design?

It is no evidence that our sorrow for sin is not deep and genuine, that, even in our expressions of penitence, our heart turns to Zion - to the Church - to the great work which the Church is accomplishing - and that, though our prayers "began" with a reference to our own sin, they should "close" with a petition that God would bless his people, and fulfill the great purposes so near to the heart of piety in reference to the progress of true religion in the world. Indeed, from the very narrative in Psalm 51:1-12, the psalmist confesses his guilt, and prays for pardon. He begins with an earnest plea for mercy Psalm 51:1-2; he humbly acknowledges his offence, without any attempt to vindicate himself, or to apologise for it Psalm 51:3-6; he pleads with God to cleanse him, to pardon him, to create in him a new heart, and not to cast him off or to take his Holy Spirit from him Psalm 51:7-12.

II. In the second part Psalm 51:13-19 he shows how he would manifest his sense of the divine mercy if he was forgiven: expressing the purpose to lead a new life; to devote himself to the duties of religion; to do all in his power to repair the evils of his conduct, and especially to induce others to avoid the way of sin, warning them by his example. He says that he would teach transgressors the true ways of God, and that sinners would be converted to Him, Psalm 51:13; that he would sing aloud the praise of God, Psalm 51:14-15; that he would offer to God the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, Psalm 51:16-17; and he then pleads Psalm 51:18-19, that God would interpose and bless Zion, that the great work might be completed in which he had been engaged in defending the city, and in preparing a place which would be secure, where God might be worshipped, and where sacrifices and offerings might perpetually ascend on his altar.

Verse 1

Have mercy opon me, O God - This is the utterance of a full heart; a heart crushed and broken by the consciousness of sin. The psalmist had been made to see his great guilt; and his first act is to cry out for mercy. There is no attempt to excuse his sin, or to apologise for it; there is no effort to vindicate his conduct; there is no complaint of the righteousness of that

holy law which condemned him. It was "guilt" that was before his mind; guilt only; deep and dreadful guilt. The appeal properly expresses the state of a mind that is overwhelmed at the remembrance of crime, and that comes with earnestness to God to plead for pardon. The only hope of a sinner when crushed with the consciousness of sin is the mercy of God; and the plea for that mercy will be urged in the most earnest and impassioned language that the mind can employ. "Accordingly to thy Iovingkindness." On the meaning of the word used here, see the notes at Psalm 36:7.

(a) The "ground" of his hope was the compassion of God:

(b) the "measure" of that hope was His boundless beneficence; or, in other words, he felt that there was need of "all" the compassion of a God.

His sin was so great, his offence was so aggravated, that he could have no hope but in a Being of infinite compassion, and he felt that the need of mercy in his case could be measured and covered "only" by that infinite compassion.

According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies - The same idea occurs here also. The psalmist fixed his eye on the "vastness" of the divine mercy; on the numberless "acts" of that mercy toward the guilty; here he found his hope, and here alone. Every instance of extraordinary mercy which had occurred in the world furnished him now with an argument in his appeal to God; was an encouragement to him "in" that appeal; was a ground of hope that his appeal would not be rejected. So to us: every instance in which a great sinner has been forgiven is evidence that we may be forgiven also, and is an encouragement to us to come to God for pardon. See the notes at 1 Timothy 1:16.

Blot out my transgressions - In allusion to an account that is kept, or a charge made, when such an account is wiped away, erased, or blotted out. Compare Exodus 32:32-33; see the notes at Isaiah 43:25; notes at Isaiah 44:22; notes at Colossians 2:14. Never was a more earnest appeal made by a sinner than that which is made in this verse; never was there a more sincere cry for mercy. It shows us where we should "begin" in our prayers when we are pressed down with the consciousness of sin - with a cry for "mercy," and not an appeal to "justice;" it shows us what is to be the "ground" and the "measure" of our hope - the mere compassion of an infinitely benevolent God; it shows us the place which we must take, and

the argument on which we must rely - a place among sinners, and an argument that God has been merciful to great sinners, and that therefore he may be merciful to us.

Verse 2

Wash me throughly from mine iniquity - literally, "Multiply to wash me." The word rendered "throughly" is a verb, either in the infinitive or imperative mood, and suggests the idea of "multiplying" or "increasing." The reference is to that which might need constant or repeated washings in order to remove a stain adverbially to denote intensity, or thoroughness. On the word wash as applicable to sin, see the notes at Isaiah 1:16.

And cleanse me from my sin - Remove it entirely. Make me wholly pure. See the notes at Isaiah 1:16. In what manner he hoped that this would be done is shown in the following portions of the psalm. It was -

(a) by forgiveness of the past, Psalm 51:9; and

(b) by making the heart pure and holy through the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, Psalm 51:10-11.

Verse 3

For I acknowledge my transgressions - literally, I know, or make known. That is, he knew that he was a sinner, and he did not seek to cloak or conceal that fact. He came with the knowledge of it himself; he was willing to make acknowledgment of it before God. There was no attempt to conceal it; to excuse it. Compare the notes at Psalm 32:5. The word ""for"" does not imply that he referred to his willingness to confess his sins as an act of merit, but it indicates a state of mind which was necessary to forgiveness, and without which he could not hope for pardon.

And my sin is ever before me - That is, It is now constantly before my mind. It had not been so until Nathan brought it vividly to his recollection (2 Samuel 12:1 ff); but after that it was continually in his view. He could not turn his mind from it. The memory of his guilt followed him; it pressed upon him; it haunted him. It was no wonder that this was so. The only ground of wonder in the case is that it did not occur "before" Nathan made that solemn appeal to him, or that he could have been for a moment insensible to the greatness of his crime. The whole transaction, however, shows that people "may" be guilty of enormous sins, and have for a long time no sense of their criminality; but that "when" the consciousness of

guilt is made to come home to the soul, nothing will calm it down. Everything reminds the soul of it; and nothing will drive away its recollection. In such a state the sinner has no refuge - no hope of permanent peace - but in the mercy of God.

Verse 4

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned - That is, the sin, considered as an offence against God, now appeared to him so enormous and so aggravated, that, for the moment, he lost sight of it considered in any other of its bearings. It "was" a sin, as all other sins are, primarily and mainly against God; it derived its chief enormity from that fact. We are not to suppose that David did not believe and notice that he had done wrong to people, or that he had offended against human laws, and against the well-being of society. His crime against Uriah and his family was of the deepest and most aggravated character, but still the offence derived its chief heinousness from the fact that it was a violation of the law of God. The state of mind here illustrated is that which occurs in every case of true penitence. It is not merely because that which has been done is a violation of human law; it is not that it brings us to poverty or disgrace; it is not that it exposes us to punishment on earth from a parent, a teacher, or civil ruler; it is not that it exposes us to punishment in the world to come: it is that it is of itself, and apart from all other relations and consequences, "an offence against God;" a violation of his pure and holy law; a wrong done against him, and in his sight. Unless there is this feeling there can be no true penitence; and unless there is this feeling there can be no hope of pardon, for God forgives offences only as committed against himself; not as involving us in dangerous consequences, or as committed against our fellow-men.

And done this evil in thy sight - Or, When thine eye was fixed on me. Compare the notes at Isaiah 65:3. God saw what he had done; and David knew, or might have known, that the eye of God was upon him in his wickedness. It was to him then a great aggravation of his sin that he had "dared" to commit it when he "knew" that God saw everything. The presence of a child - or even of an idiot - would restrain people from many acts of sin which they would venture to commit if alone; how much more should the fact that God is always present, and always sees all that is done, restrain us from open and from secret transgression.

That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest - That thy character might be vindicated in all that thou hast said; in the law which

thou hast revealed; in the condemnation of the sin in that law; and in the punishment which thou mayest appoint. That is, he acknowledged his guilt. He did not seek to apologise for it, or to vindicate it. God was right, and he was wrong. The sin deserved all that God in his law "had" declared it to deserve; it deserved all that God by any sentence which he might pass upon him "would" declare it to deserve. The sin was so aggravated that "any" sentence which God might pronounce would not be beyond the measure of its ill-desert.

And be clear when thou judgest - Be regarded as right, holy, pure, in the judgment which thou mayest appoint. See this more fully explained in the notes at Romans 3:4.

Verse 5

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity - The object of this important verse is to express the deep sense which David had of his depravity. That sense was derived from the fact that this was not a sudden thought, or a mere outward act, or an offence committed under the influence of strong temptation, but that it was the result of an entire corruption of his nature - of a deep depravity of heart, running back to the very commencement of his being. The idea is, that he could not have committed this offence unless he had been thoroughly corrupt, and always corrupt. The sin was as heinous and aggravated "as if" in his very conception and birth there had been nothing but depravity. He looked at his, sin, and he looked back to his own origin, and he inferred that the one demonstrated that in the other there was no good thing, no tendency to goodness, no germ of goodness, but that there was evil, and only evil; as when one looks at a tree, and sees that it bears sour or poisonous fruit, he infers that it is in the very nature of the tree, and that there is nothing else in the tree, from its origin, but a tendency to produce just such fruit.

Of course, the idea here is not to cast reflections on the character of his mother, or to refer to her feelings in regard to his conception and birth, but the design is to express his deep sense of his own depravity; a depravity so deep as to demonstrate that it must have had its origin in the very beginning of his existence. The word rendered "I was shapen" - חוללתי *chôlaletiy* - is from a word - חול *chûl* - which means properly, "to turn around, to twist, to whirl;" and then it comes to mean "to twist oneself with pain, to writhe;" and then it is used especially with reference to the pains of childbirth. Isaiah 13:8; Isaiah 23:4; Isaiah 26:18; Isaiah 66:7-8; Micah 4:10. That is the

meaning here. The idea is simply that he was “born” in iniquity; or that he was a sinner when he was born; or that his sin could be traced back to his very birth - as one might say that he was born with a love of music, or with a love of nature, or with a sanguine, a phlegmatic, or a melancholy temperament.

There is not in the Hebrew word any idea corresponding to the word ““shapen,”” as if he had been “formed” or “moulded” in that manner by divine power; but the entire meaning of the word is exhausted by saying that his sin could be traced back to his “very birth;” that it was so deep and aggravated, that it could be accounted for - or that he could express his sense of it - in no other way, than by saying that he was “born a sinner.” How that occurred, or how it was connected with the first apostasy in Adam, or how the fact that he was thus born could be vindicated, is not intimated, nor is it alluded to. There is no statement that the sin of another was “imputed” to him; or that he was “responsible” for the sin of Adam; or that he was guilty “on account of” Adam‘s sin, for on these points the psalmist makes no assertion. It is worthy of remark, further, that the psalmist did not endeavor to “excuse” his guilt on the ground that he was ““born”” in iniquity; nor did he allude to that fact with any purpose of “exculpating” himself. The fact that he was thus born only deepened his sense of his own guilt, or showed the enormity of the offence which was the regular result or outbreak of that carly depravity. The points, therefore, which are established by this expression of the psalmist, so far as the language is designed to illustrate how human nature is conceived, are

(1) that people are born with a propensity to sin; and

(2) that this fact does not excuse us in sin, but rather tends to aggravate and deepen our guilt.

The language goes no further than this in regard to the question of original sin or native depravity. The Septuagint agrees with this interpretation - ἰδού γὰρ ἐν ανομίαις συνελήφθην *idou gar en anomias sunelēfthēn* So the Vulgate: *in iniquitatibus conceptus sum*.

And in sin did my mother conceive me - Margin, as in Hebrew, “warm me.” This language simply traces his sin back to the time when he began to

exist. The previous expression traced it to "his birth;" this expression goes back to the very beginning of "life;" when there were the first indications of life. The idea is, "as soon as I began to exist I was a sinner; or, I had then a propensity to sin - a propensity, the sad proof and result of which is that enormous act of guilt which I have committed."

Verse 6

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts - The word rendered "desirest," means to have pleasure in; to delight in; and the idea is that this only is agreeable to God, or this only accords with his own nature. The word rendered "inward parts," means properly the reins, and is usually employed to denote the seat of the mind, the feelings, the intellect. Compare the notes at Job 38:36. The allusion is to the "soul;" and the idea is, that God could be satisfied with nothing "but" purity in the soul. The "connection" is this: David was deeply conscious of his own pollution; his deep, early, native depravity. This, in his own mind, he contrasted strongly with the nature of God, and with what God must require, and be pleased with. He "felt" that God could not approve of or love such a heart as his, so vile, so polluted, so corrupt; and he felt that it was necessary that he should have a pure heart in order to meet with the favor of a God so holy. But how was that to be obtained? His mind at once adverted to the fact that it could come only from God; and hence, the psalm now turns from confession to prayer. The psalmist pleads earnestly Psalm 51:7-10 that God "would" thus cleanse and purify his soul.

And in the hidden part - In the secret part; the heart; the depths of the soul. The cleansing was to begin in that which was hidden from the eye of man; in the soul itself. Wisdom, heavenly, saving wisdom, was to have its seat there; the cleansing needed was not any mere outward purification, it was the purification of the soul itself.

Thou shalt make me to know wisdom - Thou only canst enable me to understand what is truly wise. This wisdom, this cleansing, this knowledge of the way in which a guilty man can be restored to favor, can be imparted only by thee; and "thou wilt do it." There is here, therefore, at the same time a recognition of the truth that this "must" come from God, and an act of faith, or a strong assurance that he "would" impart this.

Verse 7

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean - On the word hyssop, see the notes at John 19:29; notes at Hebrews 9:19. The plant or herb was much

used by the Hebrews in their sacred purifications and sprinklings: Exodus 12:22; Leviticus 14:4, Leviticus 14:6, Leviticus 14:49, Leviticus 14:51; 1 Kings 4:33. Under this name the Hebrews seem to have comprised not only the common "hyssop" of the shops, but also other aromatic plants, as mint, wild marjoram, etc. - Gesenius, "Lexicon" The idea of the psalmist here evidently is not that the mere sprinkling with hyssop would make him clean; but he prays for that cleansing of which the sprinkling with hyssop was an emblem, or which was designed to be represented by that. The whole structure of the psalm implies that he was seeking an "internal" change, and that he did not depend on any mere outward ordinance or rite. The word rendered "purge" is from the word חטא *châṭâ'* - which means "to sin." In the Piel form it means to bear the blame (or "loss") for anything; and then to "atone for, to make atonement, to expiate:" Genesis 31:39; Leviticus 6:26; Numbers 19:19. Here it conveys the notion of cleansing from sin "by" a sacred rite, or by that which was signified by a sacred rite. The idea was that the sin was to be removed or taken away, so that he might be free from it, or that "that" might be accomplished which was represented by the sprinkling with hyssop, and that the soul might be made pure. Luther has rendered it with great force - Entsundige mich mit Ysop- "Unsin me with hyssop."

Wash me - That is, cleanse me. Sin is represented as "defiling," and the idea of "washing" it away is often employed in the Scriptures. See the notes at Isaiah 1:16.

And I shall be whiter than snow - See the notes at Isaiah 1:18. The prayer is, that he might be made "entirely" clean; that there might be no remaining pollution in his soul.

Verse 8

Make me to hear joy and gladness - That is, the voice of forgiveness, causing joy and rejoicing. What he wished to hear was the kind voice of God in pronouncing his pardon; not the voice of anger and condemnation. God now condemned him. The law condemned him. His own conscience condemned him. The result was anguish and sorrow. The burden was great and overpowering - such as to crush him; to break all his "bones." He longed to hear the sweet voice of forgiveness, by which he might have peace, and by which his soul might be made to rejoice. Compare the notes at Psalm 32:1-2.

That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice - That is, which have been crushed or broken by the weight of sin. Compare the notes at Psalm 32:3. See also Psalm 6:2; Psalm 22:14; Psalm 31:10; Psalm 38:3. The word "rejoice" means here, be free from suffering; the prayer is that the burden which had crushed him might be removed.

Verse 9

Hide thy face from my sins - That is, Do not look on them; avert thy face from them; do not regard them. Compare the notes at Psalm 13:1.

And blot out all mine iniquities - Take them entirely away. Let the account be erased, cancelled, destroyed. See the notes at Psalm 51:1.

Verse 10

Create in me a clean heart, O God - The word rendered "create," ברא *berâ'* - is a word which is properly employed to denote an act of "creation;" that is, of causing something to exist where there was nothing before. It is the word which is used in Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God "created" the heaven and the earth," and which is commonly used to express the act of creation. It is used "here" evidently in the sense of causing that to exist which did not exist before; and there is clearly a recognition of the divine "power," or a feeling on the part of David that this could be done by God alone. The idea is, however, not that a new "substance" might be brought into being to which the name "a clean heart" might be given, but that he might "have" a clean heart; that his heart might be made pure; that his affections and feelings might be made right; that he might have what he was conscious that he did "not" now possess - a clean or a pure heart. This, he felt, could be produced only by the power of God; and the passage, therefore, proves that it is a doctrine of the Old Testament, as it is of the New, that the human heart is changed only by a divine agency.

And renew a right spirit within me - Margin, "a constant spirit." The Hebrew word - נכון *nākûn* - means properly, that which is "erect," or that which is made to stand up, or which is firm or established. It is used to denote

(a) that which is upright, right, proper: Exodus 8:26; Job 42:8; Psalm 5:9;

(b) that which is right, true, sincere, Psalm 78:37;

(c) that which is firm, constant, fixed.

This would seem to be the meaning here. He prays for a heart that would be firm in the purposes of virtue; that would not yield to temptation; that would carry out holy resolutions; that would be stedfast in the service of God. The word "renew" here means to be or to make new; to produce something new. It is also used in the sense of making anew, as applied to buildings or cities in the sense of "rebuilding" or "repairing" them: Isaiah 61:4; 2 Chronicles 15:8; 2 Chronicles 24:4. The word here would naturally convey the idea that there had been formerly a right and proper spirit in him, which he prayed might now be restored. The language is that of one who had done right formerly, but who had fallen into sin, and who desired that he might be brought back into his former condition.

Verse 11

Cast me not away from thy presence - That is, Do not reject me, or cast me off entirely; do not abandon me; do not leave me in my sin and sorrow. The language is derived from the idea that true happiness is to be found in the "presence" of God, and that to be exiled from him is misery. Compare Psalm 16:11, note; Psalm 31:20, note. See also Psalm 140:13.

And take not thy holy Spirit from me - It is not certain that David understood by the phrase "thy Holy Spirit" precisely what is now denoted by it as referring to the third person of the Trinity. The language, as used by him, would denote some influence coming from God producing holiness, "as if" God breathed his own spirit, or his own self, into the soul. The language, however, is appropriate to be used in the higher and more definite sense in which it is now employed, as denoting that sacred Spirit - the Holy Spirit - by whom the heart is renewed, and by whom comfort is imparted to the soul. It is not necessary to suppose that the inspired writers of the Old Testament had a full and complete comprehension of the meaning of the words which they employed, or that they appreciated all that their words might properly convey, or the fullness of signification in which they might be properly used in the times of the Gospel. Compare the notes at 1 Peter 1:10-12. The language used here by David - "take not" - implies that he had been formerly in possession of that which he now sought. There was still in his heart that which might be regarded as the work of the Spirit of God; and he earnestly prayed that that might not be wholly taken away on account of his sin, or that he might not be entirely abandoned to despair.

Verse 12

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation - literally, "Cause the joy of thy salvation to return." This implies that he had formerly known what was the happiness of being a friend of God, and of having a hope of salvation. That joy had been taken from him by his sin. He had lost his peace of mind. His soul was sad and cheerless. Sin always produces this effect. The only way to enjoy religion is to do that which is right; the only way to secure the favor of God is to obey his commands; the only way in which we can have comforting evidence that we are his children is by doing that which shall be pleasing to him: 1 John 2:29; 1 John 3:7, 1 John 3:10. The path of sin is a dark path, and in that path neither hope nor comfort can be found.

And uphold me with thy free spirit - That is, Sustain me; keep me from falling. The words ""with thy"" are not in the original, and there is nothing there to indicate that by the word "spirit" the psalmist refers to the Spirit of God, though it should be observed that there is nothing "against" such a supposition. The word rendered "free" - נדיב *nâdîyb* - means properly "willing, voluntary, ready, prompt;" 1 Chronicles 28:21; Exodus 35:5. Then the word means liberal, generous, noble-minded; Isaiah 32:5, Isaiah 32:8; Proverbs 17:7, Proverbs 17:26. It would seem here to mean "a "willing" spirit," referring to David's own mind or spirit; and the prayer is, that God would uphold or sustain him "in" a "willing" spirit or state of mind; that is, a state of mind in which he would he "willing" and "ready" to obey all the commands of God, and to serve him faithfully. What he prayed for was grace and strength that he might be "kept" in a state of mind which would be constant and firm Psalm 51:10, and a state in which he would always be found "willing" and ready to keep the commandments of God. It is a proper object of prayer by all that they may be always kept in a state of mind in which they will be willing to do all that God requires of them, and to bear all that may be laid on them.

Verse 13

Then will I teach transgressors thy ways - As an expression of gratitude, and as the result of his own painful experience. He would show them, from that experience, the evil and the bitterness of sin in itself; he would show them with what dreadful consequences sin must always be followed; he would show them the nature of true repentance; he would show them what was required in order that sin might be forgiven; he would encourage them to come to that God who had forgiven him. So the Saviour

charged Peter, from his own bitter experience in having fallen under the power of temptation, to strengthen and encourage those who were struggling with the depravity of their own hearts, and who were in danger of falling: "And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," Luke 22:32.

And sinners shall be converted unto thee - They would see from his case the evil of transgression; they would learn from his example that mercy might be found; they would be persuaded to flee from the wrath to come. The best preparation for success in winning souls to God, and turning them from the error of their ways, is a deep personal experience of the guilt and the danger of sin, and of the great mercy of God in its forgiveness. No man can hope to be successful who has not experienced this in his own soul; no one who has, will labor wholly in vain in such a work.

Verse 14

Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God - Margin, as in Hebrew, "bloods." So it is rendered by the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate. Luther renders it "blood-guilt." DeWette, "from blood." Compare Isaiah 4:4. The "plural" form - "bloods" - is used probably to mark "intensity," or to denote "great" guilt. The allusion is to the guilt of shedding blood, or taking life (compare Genesis 9:5-6), and the reference is undoubtedly to his guilt in causing Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, to be slain. 2 Samuel 11:14-17. It was this which weighed upon his conscience, and filled him with alarm. The guilt of this he prayed might be taken away, that he might have peace. The "fact" of the shedding of that blood could never be changed; the real "criminality" of that fact would always remain the same; the "crime" itself could never be declared to be innocence; his own personal "ill desert" for having caused the shedding of that blood would always remain; but the sin might be pardoned, and his soul could thus find peace.

The penalty might be remitted, and, though guilty, he might be assured of the divine favor. He could not, indeed, repair the evil to Uriah - for "he" had gone beyond the power of David for good or for evil - but he could do much to express his sense of the wrong; he could do much to save others from a similar course; he could do much to benefit society by keeping others from the like guilt. He could not, indeed, recall Uriah from the grave, and repair the evil which he had done to "him," but he might save others from such a crime, and thus preserve many a useful life from the effects of unrestrained guilty passions. We cannot, indeed, by penitence recall those

whom we have murdered; we cannot restore purity to those whom we have seduced; we cannot restore faith to the young man whom we may have made a sceptic; but we may do much to restrain others from sin, and much to benefit the world even when we have been guilty of wrongs that cannot be repaired.

Thou God of my salvation - On whom I am dependent for salvation; who art alone the source of salvation to me.

And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness - Compare the notes at Psalm 35:28.

Verse 15

O Lord, open thou my lips - That is, by taking away my guilt; by giving me evidence that my sins are forgiven; by taking this burden from me, and filling my heart with the joy of pardon. The original word is in the future tense, but the meaning is well expressed in our common translation. There was, in fact, at the same time a confident expectation that God "would" thus open his lips, and a desire that he should do it.

And my mouth shall show forth thy praise - Or, I will praise thee. Praise is the natural expression of the feelings when the sense of sin is removed.

Verse 16

For thou desirest not sacrifice … - On the words rendered in this verse "sacrifice" and "burnt-offering," see the notes at Isaiah 1:11. On the main sentiment here expressed - that God did not "desire" such sacrifices - see the notes at Psalm 40:6-8. The idea here is, that any mere external offering, however precious or costly it might be, was not what God required in such cases. He demanded the expression of deep and sincere repentance; the sacrifices of a contrite heart and of a broken spirit: Psalm 51:17. No offering without this could be acceptable; nothing without this could secure pardon. In mere outward sacrifices - in bloody offerings themselves, unaccompanied with the expression of genuine penitence, God could have no pleasure. This is one of the numerous passages in the Old Testament which show that the external offerings of the law were valueless unless accompanied by the religion of the heart; or that the Jewish religion, much as it abounded in forms, yet required the offerings of pure hearts in order that man might be acceptable to God. Under all dispensations the real nature of religion is the same. Compare the notes at Hebrews 9:9-10. The phrase "else would I give it," in the margin, "that I should give it,"

expresses a willingness to make such an offering, if it was required, while, at the same time, there is the implied statement that it would be valueless without the heart.

Verse 17

The sacrifices of God - The sacrifices which God desires and approves; the sacrifices without which no other offering would be acceptable. David felt that that which he here specified was what was demanded in his case. He had grievously sinned; and the blood of animals offered in sacrifice could not put away his sin, nor could anything remove it unless the heart were itself penitent and contrite. The same thing is true now. Though a most perfect sacrifice, every way acceptable to God, has been made for human guilt by the Redeemer, yet it is as true as it was under the old dispensation in regard to the sacrifices there required, that even that will not avail for us unless we are truly penitent; unless we come before God with a contrite and humble heart.

Are a broken spirit - A mind broken or crushed under the weight of conscious guilt. The idea is that of a burden laid on the Soul until it is crushed and subdued.

A broken and a contrite heart - The word rendered contrite means to be broken or crushed, as when the bones are broken, Psalm 44:19; Psalm 51:8; and then it is applied to the mind or heart as that which is crushed or broken by the weight of guilt. The word does not differ materially from the term "broken." The two together constitute intensity of expression.

Thou wilt not despise - Thou wilt not treat with contempt or disregard. That is, God would look upon them with favor, and to such a heart he would grant his blessing. See the notes at Isaiah 57:15; notes at Isaiah 66:2.

Verse 18

Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion - From himself - his deep sorrow, his conscious guilt, his earnest prayer for pardon and salvation - the psalmist turns to Zion, to the city of God, to the people of the Lord. These, after all, lay nearer to his heart than his own personal salvation; and to these his thoughts naturally turned even in connection with his own deep distress. Such a prayer as is here offered he would also be more naturally led to offer from the remembrance of the dishonor which he had brought on the cause of religion, and it was natural for him to pray that his own misconduct might not have the effect of hindering the cause of God in the world. The psalms often take this turn. Where they commence with a personal

reference to the author himself, the thoughts often terminate in a reference to Zion, and to the promotion of the cause of religion in the world.

Build thou the walls of Jerusalem - It is this expression on which De Wette, Doederlein, and Rosenmuller rely in proof that this psalm, or this portion of it, was composed at a later period than the time of David, and that it must have been written in the time of the captivity, when Jerusalem was in ruins. See the introduction to the psalm. But, as was remarked there, it is not necessary to adopt this supposition. There are two other solutions of the difficulty, either of which would meet all that is implied in the language.

(a) One is, that the walls of Jerusalem, which David had undertaken to build, were not as yet complete, or that the public works commenced by him for the protection of the city had not been finished at the time of the fatal affair of Uriah. There is nothing in the history which forbids this supposition, and the language is such as would be used by David on the occasion, if he had been actually engaged in completing the walls of the city, and rendering it impregnable, and if his heart was intensely fixed on the completion of the work.

(b) The other supposition is, that this is figurative language - a prayer that God would favor and bless his people as if the city was to be protected by walls, and thus rendered safe from an attack by the enemy. Such language is, in fact, often used in cases where it could not be pretended that it was designed to be literal. See Jude 1:20; Romans 15:20; 1 Corinthians 3:12; Galatians 2:18; Ephesians 2:22; Colossians 2:7.

Verse 19

Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness - "Then," that is, when God should have thus showed favor to Zion; when he should have poured out his blessing on Jerusalem; when religion should prosper and prevail; when there should be an increase of the pure worship of God. In such offerings as would "then" be made - in sacrifices presented not in mere form, but with sincerity, humility, and penitence - in the outward offering of blood presented with a corresponding sincerity of feeling, and with true contrition, and a proper acknowledgment of the guilt designed to be represented by the shedding of blood in sacrifice - God would be pleased, and would approve the worship thus rendered to him. Sacrifice would then be acceptable, for it would not be presented as a mere

form, but would be so offered, that it might be called a "sacrifice of righteousness" - a sacrifice offered with a right spirit; in a manner which God would deem right.

With burnt-offering - See the notes at Isaiah 1:11.

And whole burnt-offering - The word here means that which is wholly consumed, no part of which was reserved to be eaten by the priests, as was the case in many of the sacrifices. See Deuteronomy 33:10. Compare Leviticus 6:9; Leviticus 1:3-17.

Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar - That is, then shall bullocks be offered. The meaning is, that all the offerings prescribed in the law would then be brought, and that those sacrifices would be made with a right spirit - a spirit of true devotion - the offering of the heart accompanying the outward form. In other words, there would be manifested the spirit of humble worship; of pure religion.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 52

Introduction

This psalm purports to be "a psalm of David," and there is no reason to doubt that he was the author. The occasion on which it was composed is stated in the title. The correctness of this title has been called in question by DeWette and Rudinger, on the ground that the contents of the psalm do not seem to them to be so well suited to that occasion as to the times of Absalom or Ahithophel. There does not, however, appear to be any just reason for doubting the correctness of the title, as all the circumstances referred to in the psalm are susceptible of application to the act of Doeg the Edomite, on the occasion referred to, namely, that mentioned in 1 Samuel 22:9 ff. David had fled to Ahimelech the priest at Nob, 1 Samuel 21:1. By Ahimelech he had been supplied with bread, and furnished with the sword with which he himself had slain Goliath. On this occasion, an Edomite was present, named Doeg, whose character was, from some cause well known; and David felt that he would not hesitate to betray anyone, or do any act of wickedness or meanness, if it would subserve his own purposes 1 Samuel 22:22. Apprehensive of danger, therefore, even in the presence and under the protection of Ahimelech, and supposing that his place of retreat could not be concealed from Saul, he fled to Achish, king of Gath 1 Samuel 21:10, until in the fear of danger there, he feigned madness, and was driven away as a madman 1 Samuel 21:14-15. he found refuge for a time in the cave of Adullam, where he supposed he would be safe, 1 Samuel 22:1-2. From that cave he went to Mizpeh, in Moab 1 Samuel 22:3-4, and thence, at the suggestion of the prophet Gad, he went into the forest of Hareth, 1 Samuel 22:5.

At this time, Doeg the Edomite, in order to secure the favor of Saul, and to show that there was one at least who was friendly to him, and was willing to deliver up to punishment those who had encouraged David in his rebellion, informed Saul of the fact that David had been seen with Ahimelech at Nob, and that Ahimelech had given him food and the sword of Goliath the Philistine. The result was, that Ahimelech and the priests who were with him were summoned before Saul; that they were accused by him of the crime; that Saul commanded those who were around him to fall on Ahimelech and the priests and to put them to death; and when they all hesitated, Doeg himself fell upon them and executed the barbarous order.

Eighty-five priests thus perished by the sword, and the city of Nob was destroyed, 1 Samuel 22:9-19. It was the conduct of Doeg in this matter that is the subject of this psalm. Doeg is called "the Edomite." He was probably a native of Idumea, who had connected himself with Saul, and who hoped to secure his special favor by thus informing him of those who were in league with his enemy David. Some have supposed that he was a native-born Jew, and that he is called an Edomite because he may have had his residence in Idumea; but the more obvious supposition is that he was a native of that land. On Idumea, see the notes at Isaiah 11:14; notes at Isaiah 34:5-6; notes at Isaiah 63:1.

On the phrase in the title, "To the chief Musician," see the notes at the introduction to Psalm 4:1-8. The fact that it is thus addressed to the overseer of the public music shows that, though it originally had a private reference, and was designed to record an event which occurred in the life of David, it yet had so much of public interest, and contained truth of so general a nature, that it might properly be employed in the public devotions of the sanctuary.

On the word "Maschil," see introduction to Psalm 32:1-11. The psalm is divided, in the original, apparently for musical purposes, or to adapt it in some way to the music of the sanctuary, into three parts, which are indicated by the word "Selah," at the close of Psalm 52:3, Psalm 52:5. These, however, have no reference to the sense, or to the natural divisions of the psalm.

As respects the sense or the contents of the psalm, it is divided into three parts, which are not indicated by this musical mark.

I. The first refers to the character of the calumniator and informer, Psalm 52:1-4. He was a man who was confident in himself, and who did not regard the goodness of God, Psalm 52:1; a man whose tongue devised mischiefs like a sharp razor, Psalm 52:2; a man who loved evil more than good, and a lie more than the truth, Psalm 52:3; and a man who loved to utter words that would destroy the character and the happiness of others, Psalm 52:4.

II. The judgment, or punishment that would come upon such a man, Psalm 52:5-7.

(a) God would destroy and root him out of the land, Psalm 52:5;

(b) the righteous would see this, and would triumph over him as one who was brought to a proper end - the proper end of one who did not make God his strength; who trusted in his riches; who strengthened himself in the purposes of wickedness, Psalm 52:6-7.

III. The security - the preservation - the joy, of the author of the psalm, Psalm 52:8-9. The aim - the purpose - of the informer referred to in the psalm, namely Doeg, had been really to disclose the place of David‘s retreat, and to have him delivered into the hands of Saul. This he hoped to accomplish through Ahimelech the priest. He supposed, evidently, that when Saul was informed that David had been with “him,” Ahimelech would be brought before Saul and required to give information as to the place where David might be found, and that thus David would be delivered into the hands of Saul. But in this he had been disappointed. David had fled, and was secure.

Ahimelech was summoned to meet Saul 1 Samuel 22:11, and with him were summoned also all “his father‘s house, the priests that were in Nob.” In reply to the charge that he had conspired against Saul; that he had befriended David; that he had “given him,” in modern language, “aid and comfort;” that he had assisted him so that he could “rise against Saul,” and that he had so befriended him that he could “lie in wait for him” at that time - he boldly declared his conviction that Saul had not a more faithful subject in his realm than David was; “And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king‘s son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honorable in thine house?” There Ahimelech stood - an example of a bold, firm, independent, honorable, honest man. He maintained the innocence of David, as well as his own. He sought no favor by joining in the clamor against David. He did not seek to avert the blow which he could not but see was impending over himself, by any mean compliance with the prejudices of the king.

He did nothing to flatter the offended monarch, or to gratify him in his purpose to arrest David, the fugitive. He made no offer to disclose to him the place of his concealment. Any one of these things - any act in the line of that which Doeg had performed - might have saved his life. That he knew the place of David‘s retreat, is apparent from a circumstance incidentally referred to in the ultimate account of the affair, for, after Ahimelech had been put to death, it is said that one of his sons - Abiathar - fled at once to David 1 Samuel 22:20-21, and disclosed to him the dreadful manner of his father‘s death; thus showing that the knowledge of the place of his retreat was in the possession of the family, and could easily have been disclosed to Saul, and yet it was not done. Neither Ahimelech, nor anyone of his family, even intimated to Saul that they knew where David then was, and that they could put him in possession of the means of securing him. That the fact that they did not and would not betray the place of his retreat was one cause of the wrath of Saul, is apparent from the reason assigned why the “footmen” were commanded to put them to death; “And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the Lord, because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not show it to me,” 1 Samuel 22:17.

It cannot be doubted, therefore, that if there had been an offer of furnishing the information; if there had been a tender of their services in the case; if there had been evinced a spirit of ready compliance with the prejudices and passions of Saul; if there had been among them the same spirit of mean sycophancy which characterized Doeg - Ahimelech and the whole family would have been safe. But no such thing was done; no such offer was made; no such spirit was evinced. There they stood - noble-minded people - father, son, all the family, true to honor, to virtue, to religion; true to God, to Saul, to David, and to themselves. They hid the secret in their own bosoms; they neither proffered nor submitted to any mean or dishonorable compliances that they might save their lives. There was, on the one hand, Doeg, “the “mighty” man,” but “the mean informer;” on the other, a noble-minded man standing up in the conscious integrity of what he had done, and maintaining it even at the hazard of life.

The result is well known, and was that which, so far as the fate of Ahimelech was concerned, could easily have been anticipated. Saul,

maddened against David, was now equally infuriated against the honest man who had befriended him. He commanded him to be put to death at once. And here, in this remarkable transaction, where so much of meaness and honor, of fidelity and falsehood, of integrity and corruption, of soberness and passion, come so near together, we have another strikng instance of firmness and virtue. Saul commanded the "footman," (margin, the "runners,") who were about him, to "turn and slay" Ahimelech and his sons. Yet the "footmen" declined to do the bloody work. Noble men, themselves, they saw here an instance of true nobleness of character and of deed in the priests of the Lord; and they refused, even at the peril of the wrath of Saul, to execute an unrighteous sentence on men so noble, so honorable, so true. There was one, however, that would do it. There stood the mean, the sycophantic, the base man, Doeg, who had ‹informed‘ against the priests, and he was ready to do the work. The command was given, and he consummated the work of betrayal and of meanness, by putting at once to the sword, fourscore and five priests of the Lord, and by carrying desolation and death through the city of their habitation, smiting "with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep;" 1 Samuel 22:18-19.

In the meantime David was safe, and it is this fact which he celebrates when he says in this psalm, "I am like a green olive tree in the house of God," Psalm 52:8; and it is for this that he gives praise, Psalm 52:9.

The psalm refers, therefore, to the character and the conduct of an "informer," one of the most odious characters among men. In a book claiming to be a revelation from God, as the Bible does - a book designed for all mankind, and intended to be adapted to all ages, and in a world where such people would be found in all lands and times, it was proper that the character of such should be at least once held up in its true light, that men may see what it really is. Any bad man may make himself more odious by becoming an "informer;" any good man may suffer, as David did, from the acts of such a one; and hence, the case in the psalm may suggest useful lessons in every age of the world.

Verse 1

Why boastest thou thyself in Mischief? - Why dost thou "exult" in that which is wrong? Why dost thou find pleasure in evil rather than in good? Why dost thou seek to triumph in the injury done to others? The reference is to one who prided himself on schemes and projects which tended to injure others; or who congratulated himself on the success which attended his efforts to wrong other people.

O mighty man - DeWette and Luther render this, "tyrant." The original word would be properly applied to one of rank or distinction; a man of "power" - power derived either from office, from talent, or from wealth. It is a word which is often applied to a hero or warrior: Isaiah 3:2; Ezekiel 39:20; 2 Samuel 17:10; Psalm 33:16; Psalm 120:4; Psalm 127:4; Daniel 11:3; Genesis 6:4; Jeremiah 51:30. So far as the "word" is concerned, it might be applied either to Saul or to any other warrior or man of rank; and Professor Alexander supposes that it refers to Saul himself. The connection, however, seems to require us to understand it of Doeg, and not of Saul, This appears to be clear

(a) from the general character here given to the person referred to, a character not particularly applicable to Saul, but applicable to an informer like Doeg Psalm 52:2-4; and

(b) from the fact that he derived his power, not from his rank and office, as Saul did, but mainly from his wealth Psalm 52:7. This would seem to imply that some other was referred to than Saul.

The goodness of God endureth continually - literally, "all the day." That is, the wicked man could not hope to prevent the exercise of the divine goodness toward him whom he persecuted, and whom he sought to injure. David means to say that the goodness of God was so great and so constant, that he would protect his true friends from such machinations; or that it, was so unceasing and watchful, that the informer and accuser could not hope to find an interval of time when God would intermit his care, and when, therefore, he might hope for success. Against the goodness of God, the devices of a wicked man to injure the righteous could not ultimately prevail.

Verse 2

Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs - The word rendered "mischiefs" means

(a) desire, cupidity: Proverbs 10:3; then

(b) fall, ruin, destruction, wickedness: Psalm 5:9; Psalm 38:12.

The meaning here is, that he made use of his tongue to ruin others. Compare Psalm 50:19. The particular thing referred to here is the fact that Doeg sought the ruin of others by giving "information" in regard to them. He "informed" Saul of what Ahimelech had done; he informed him where David had been, thus giving him, also, information in what way he might be found and apprehended. All this was "designed" to bring ruin upon David and his followers. It "actually" brought ruin on Ahimelech and those associated with him, 1 Samuel 22:17-19.

Like a sharp razor - See the notes at Isaiah 7:20. His slanders were like a sharp knife with which one stabs another. So we stay of a slanderer that he "stabs" another in the dark.

Working deceitfully - literally, making deceit. That is, it was by deceit that he accomplished his purpose. There was no open and fair dealing in what he did.

Verse 3

Thou lovest evil more than good - Thou dost prefer to do injury to others, rather than to do them good. In the case referred to, instead of aiding the innocent, the persecuted, and the wronged, he had attempted to reveal the place where he might be found, and where an enraged enemy might have an opportunity of wreaking his vengeance upon him.

And lying rather than to speak righteousness - He preferred a lie to the truth; and, when he supposed that his own interest would be subserved by it, he preferred a falsehood that would promote that interest, rather than a simple statement of the truth. The "lying" in this case was that which was "implied" in his being desirous of giving up David, or betraying him to Saul - as if David was a bad man, and as if the suspicions of Saul were wellfounded. He preferred to give his countenance to a falsehood in regard to him, rather than to state the exact truth in reference to his character. His conduct in this was strongly in contrast with that of Ahimelech, who, when arraigned before Saul, declared his belief that David was innocent; his firm conviction that David was true and loyal. "For" that fidelity he lost his life, 1 Samuel 22:14. Doeg was willing to lend countenance to the suspicions of Saul, and practically to represent David as a traitor to the king. The word "Selah" here is doubtless a mere musical pause. See the notes at Psalm 3:2. It determines nothing in regard to the sense of the passage.

Verse 4

Thou lovest all devouring words - All words that tend to devour or "swallow up" reputation and happiness. Luther, "Thou speakest gladly all things (anything) that will serve to destruction." Anything, everything, that will serve to ruin people. The word rendered "devouring" - בלע *belaʿ* - occurs only here and in Jeremiah 51:44, though the verb from which it is derived occurs frequently: Isaiah 28:4; Exodus 7:12; Jonah 2:1 Jonah 1:17; Genesis 41:7, Genesis 41:24, et al. The verb means to swallow; and then, to consume or destroy.

O thou deceitful tongue - Margin, "and the deceitful tongue." The sense is best expressed in the text. It is an address to the tongue as loving deceit or fraud.

Verse 5

God shall likewise destroy thee for ever - Margin, "beat thee down." The Hebrew word means to "tear, to break down, to destroy:" Leviticus 14:45; Judges 6:30. The reference here is not to the "tongue" alluded to in the previous verses, but to Doeg himself. The language in the verse is intensive and emphatic. The main idea is presented in a variety of forms, all designed to denote utter and absolute destruction - a complete and entire sweeping away, so that nothing should be left. The word "here" used would suggest the idea of "pulling down" - as a house, a fence, a wall; that is, the idea of completely "demolishing" it; and the meaning is, that destruction would come upon the informer and slanderer "like" the destruction which comes upon a house, or wall, or fence, when it is entirely pulled down.

He shall take thee away - An expression indicating in another form that he would be certainly destroyed. The verb used here - חתה *châthâh* - is elsewhere used only in the sense of taking up and carrying fire or coals: Isaiah 30:14; Proverbs 6:27; Proverbs 25:22. The idea here "may" be that he would be seized and carried away with haste, as when one takes up fire or coals, he does it as rapidly as possible, lest he should be burned.

And shall pluck thee out of thy dwelling-place - literally, "out of the tent." The reference is to his abode. The allusion here in the verb that is used - נסח *nâsach* - is to the act of pulling up plants; and the idea is, that he would be plucked up as a plant is torn from its roots.

And root thee out of the land of the living - As a tree is torn up from the roots and thus destroyed. He would be no more among the living.

Compare Psalm 27:13. All these phrases are intended to denote that such a man would be utterly destroyed.

Verse 6

The righteous also shall see - See the notes at Psalm 37:34.

And fear - The effect of such a judgment will be to produce reverence in the minds of good people - a solemn sense of the justice of God; to make them tremble at such fearful judgments; and to fear lest they should violate the law, and bring judgment on themselves.

And shall laugh at him - Compare the notes at Psalm 2:4. See also Psalm 58:10; Psalm 64:9-10; Proverbs 1:26. The idea here is not exultation in the "sufferings" of others, or joy that "calamity" has come upon them, or the gratification of selfish and revengeful feeling that an enemy is deservedly punished; it is that of approbation that punishment has come upon those who deserve it, and joy that wickedness is not allowed to triumph. It is not wrong for us to feel a sense of approbation and joy that the laws are maintained, and that justice is done, even though this does involve suffering, for we know that the guilty deserve it, and it is better that they should suffer than that the righteous should sutter through them. All this may be entirely free from any malignant, or any revengeful feeling. It may even be connected with the deepest pity, and with the purest benevolence toward the sufferers themselves.

Verse 7

Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength - That is, the righteous Psalm 52:6 would say this. They would designate him as a man who had not made God his refuge, but who had trusted in his own resources. The result would be that he would he abandoned by God, and that those things on which he had relied would fail him in the day of calamity. He would be pointed out as an instance of what must occur when a man does not act with a wise reference to the will of God, but, confiding in his own strength and resources, pursues his own plans of iniquity.

But trusted in the abundance of his riches - See the notes at Psalm 49:6. From this it would seem that Doeg was a rich man, and that, as a general thing, in his life, and in his plans of evil, he felt confident in his wealth. He had that spirit of arrogance and self-confidence which springs from the conscious possession of property where there is no fear of God; and into all that he did he carried the sense of his own importance as derived from his riches. In the particular matter referred to in the psalm the

meaning is, that he would perform the iniquitous work of giving "information" with the proud and haughty feeling springing from wealth and from self-importance - the feeling that he was a man of consequence, and that whatever such a man might do would be entitled to special attention.

And strengthened himself in his wickedness - Margin, "substance." This is the same word which in Psalm 52:1 is rendered "mischief." The idea is, that he had a malicious pleasure in doing wrong, or in injuring others, and that by every art, and against all the convictions and remonstrances of his own conscience, he endeavored to confirm himself "in" this unholy purpose and employment.

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Verse 8

But I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God - I am safe and happy, notwithstanding the effort made by my enemy, the informer, to secure my destruction. I have been kept unharmed, like a green and flourishing tree - a tree protected in the very courts of the sanctuary - safe under the care and the eye of God. A green tree is the emblem of prosperity. See Psalm 1:3, note; Psalm 37:35, note; compare Psalm 92:12. The "house of God" here referred to is the tabernacle, considered as the place where God was supposed to reside. See Psalm 15:1, note; Psalm 23:6, note; Psalm 27:4-5, notes. The particular allusion here is to the "courts" of the tabernacle. An olive tree would not be cultivated in the tabernacle, but it might in the "courts" or "area" which surrounded it. The name "house of God" would be given to the whole area, as it was afterward to the entire area in which the temple was. A tree thus planted in the very courts of the sanctuary would be regarded as sacred, and would be safe as long as the tabernacle itself was safe, for it would be, as it were, directly under the divine protection. So David had been, notwithstanding all the efforts of his enemies to destroy him.

I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever -

(a) I "have" always done it. It has been my constant practice in trouble or danger.

(b) I "will" always do it.

As the result of all my experience, I will still do it; and thus trusting in God, I shall have the consciousness of safety.

Verse 9

I will praise thee forever, beause thou hast done it - Because thou art the source of my safety. The fact that I have been delivered from the designs of Saul, and saved from the efforts of Doeg to betray me, is to be traced wholly to thee. It has been ordered by thy providence that the purposes alike of Doeg and of Saul have been defeated, and I am still safe.

And I will wait on thy name - That is, I will wait on "thee;" the name being often put for the person himself: Psalm 20:1; Psalm 69:30; Proverbs 18:10; Isaiah 59:19. The language used here means that he would trust in God, or confide in him. All his expectation and hope would be in him. There are two ideas essentially in the language:

(1) the expression of a sense of "dependence" on God, as if the only ground of trust was in him;

(2) a willingness to "await" his interposition at all times; a belief that, however long such an interposition might be delayed, God "would" interfere at the proper time to bring deliverance; and a purpose calmly and patiently to look to him until the time of deliverance should come. Compare Psalm 25:3, Psalm 25:5, Psalm 25:21; Psalm 27:14; Psalm 37:7, Psalm 37:9, Psalm 37:34; Psalm 69:3; Isaiah 8:17; Isaiah 40:31.

For it is good before thy saints - God is good; and I will confess it before his "saints." His mercy has been so marked, that a public acknowledgment of it is proper; and before his assembled people I will declare what he has done for me. So signal an act of mercy, an interposition so suited to illustrate the character of God, demands more than a private acknowledgment, and I will render him public praise. The same idea occurs in Psalm 22:25; Psalm 35:18; Psalm 111:1; Isaiah 38:20. The general thought is, that for great and special mercies it is proper to render special praise to God before his assembled people. It is not that we are to obtrude our private affairs upon the public eye or the public ear; it is not that mercies shown to us have any particular claim to the attention of our fellow-men, but it is that such interpositions illustrate the character of God, and that they may constitute an argument before the world in favor of his benevolent and merciful character. Among the "saints" there is a common

bond of union - a common interest in all that pertains to each other; and when special mercy is shown to anyone of the great brotherhood, it is proper that all should join in the thanksgiving, and render praise to God.

The importance of the subject considered in this psalm - the fact that it is not often referred to in books on moral science, or even in sermons, - and the fact that it involves many points of practical difficulty in the conversation between man and man in the various relations of life - may justify at the close of an exposition of this psalm a consideration of the general question about the morality of giving "information," or, in general, the character of the "informer." Such a departure from the usual method adopted in works designed to be expository would not be ordinarily proper, since it would swell such works beyond reasonable dimensions; but perhaps it may be admitted in a single instance.

In what cases is it our duty to give information which may be in our possession about the conduct of others; and in what cases does it become a moral wrong or a crime to do it?

This is a question of much importance in respect to our own conduct, and often of much difficulty in its solution. It may not be possible to answer all the inquiries which might be made on this subject, or to lay down principles of undoubted plainness which would be applicable to every case which might occur, but a few general principles may be suggested.

The question is one which may occur at any time, and in any situation of life - Is it never right to give such information? Are we never bound to do it? Are there no circumstances in which it is proper that it should be voluntary? Are there any situations in which we are exempt by established customs or laws from giving such information? Are there any in which we are bound, by the obligations of conscience, not to give such information, whatever may be the penalty? Where and when does guilt begin or end in our volunteering to give information of the conduct or the concealments of others?

These questions often come with much perplexity before the mind of an ingenuous schoolboy, who would desire to do right, and who yet has so much honor that he desires to escape the guilt and the reproach of being a

“tell-tale.” They are questions which occur to a lawyer (or, rather, which “did” occur before the general principle, which I will soon advert to, had been settled by the courts), in regard to the knowledge of which he has been put in possession under the confidential relation of advocate and client. They are questions which may occur to a clergyman, either in respect to the confidential disclosures made at the confessional of the Catholic priest, or in respect to the confidential statements of the true penitent made to a Protestant pastor, in order that spiritual counsel may be obtained to give relief to a burdened conscience. They are questions which it was necessary should be settled in regard to a fugitive from justice, who seeks protection under the roof of a friend or a stranger.

They are questions respecting refugees from oppression in foreign lands - suggesting the inquiry whether they shall be welcomed, or whether there shall be any law by which they shall, on demand, be restored to the dominion of a tyrant. They are questions which the conscience will ask, and does ask, about those who make their escape from slavery, who apply to us for aid in securing their liberty, and who seek an asylum beneath our roof; questions whether the law of God requires or permits us to render any active assistance in making known the place of their refuge, and returning them to bondage. When, and in what cases, if any, is a man bound to give information in such circumstances as these? It is to be admitted that cases may occur, in regard to these questions, in which there would be great difficulty in determining what are the exact limits of duty, and writers on the subject of morals have not laid down such clear rules as would leave the mind perfectly free from doubt, or be sufficient to guide us on all these points. It will be admitted, also, that some of them are questions of much difficulty, and where instruction would be desirable.

Much may be learned, in regard to the proper estimate of human conduct among people, from the “language” which they employ - language which, in its very structure, often conveys their sentiments from age to age. The ideas of people on many of the subjects of morals, in respect to that which is honorable or dishonorable, right or wrong, manly or mean, became thus “imbedded” - I might almost say “fossilized” - in their modes of speech. Language, in its very structure, thus carries down to future times the sentiments cherished in regard to the morality of actions - as the fossil

remains that are beneath the surface of the earth, in the strata of the rocks, bring to us the forms of ancient types of animals, and ferns, and palms, of which there are now no living specimens on the globe. They who have studied Dean Trench‘s Treatise on “Words” will recollect how this idea is illustrated in that remarkable work; how, without any other information about the views of people in other times, the very “words” which they employed, and which have been transmitted to us, convey to us the estimate which was formed in past ages in regard to the moral quality of an action, as proper or improper - as honorable or dishonorable - as conformed to the noble principles of our nature, or the reverse.

As illustrating the general sentiments of mankind in this respect, I will select “two” words as specimens of many which might be selected, and as words which people have been agreed in applying to some of the acts referred to in the questions of difficulty that I have just mentioned, and which may enable us to do something in determining the morality of an action, so far as those words, in their just application to the subject, indicate the judgment of mankind.

One of these is the word “meanness” - a word which a schoolboy would be most “likely” to apply to the act of a tell-tale or an informer, and which we instinctively apply to numerous actions in more advanced periods of life, and which serves to mark the judgment of mankind in regard to certain kinds of conduct. The “idea” in such a case is not so much the “guilt” or the “criminality” of the act considered as a violation of law, as it is that of being opposed to just notions of “honor,” or indicating a base, low, sordid, grovelling spirits - “lowness of mind, want of dignity and elevation; want of honor.” (Webster)

The other word is “sycophant.” The Athenians had a law prohibiting the exportation of figs. This law, of course, had a penalty, and it was a matter of importance to the magistrate to ascertain who had been guilty of violating it. It suggested, also, a method of securing the favor of such a magistrate, and perhaps of obtaining a reward, by giving “information” of those who had been guilty of violating the law. From these two words - the Greek word “fig,” and the Greek word to “show,” or to “discover,” we have derived the word “sycophant;” and this word has come down from the

Greeks, and through the long tract of ages intervening between its first use in Athens to the present time, always bearing in every age the original idea imbedded in the word, as the old fossil that is now dug up bears the form of the fern, the leaf, the worm, or the shell that was imbedded there perhaps million of ages ago. As such a man would be "likely" to be mean, and fawning, and flattering, so the word has come to describe always a parasite; a mean flatterer; a flatterer of princes and great men; and hence it is, and would be applied as one of the words indicating the sense of mankind in regard to a "tale-bearer," or an "informer."

Words like these indicate the general judgment of mankind on such conduct as that referred to in the psalm before us. Of course, to what particular "actions" of the kind they are properly applicable, would be another point; they are referred to here only as indicating the general judgment of mankind in regard to certain kinds of conduct, and to show how careful people are, in their very language, to express their permanent approbation of that which is "honorable" and "right," and their detestation of that which is "dishonorable" and "wrong."

Let us now consider more particularly the subject with respect to "duty," and to "criminality." The question is, whether we can find any eases where it is "right" - where it is our duty to give such information; or, in what eases, if any, it is right; and in what cases it is malignant, guilty, wrong. The points to be considered are:

(1) When it is right, or when it may be demanded that we should give information of another; and

(2) When it becomes guilt.

(1) when it is right, or when it may be demanded of us.

(a) It is to be admitted that there are cases in which the interests of justice demand that people should be "required" to give information of others; or, there are cases where the courts have a right to summon us, to put us upon our oath, and to demand the information which may be in our possession. The courts constantly act on this; and the interests of justice

could not be promoted, nor could a cause ever be determined, without exercising this right. If all people were bound in conscience to witchold information simply because they have it in their possession, or because of the mode in which they came in possession of it - or if they witcheld it from mere stubbornness and obstinacy - all the departments of justice must stand still, and the officers of justice might be discharged, since it can neither be presumed that "they" would possess all the knowledge necessary to the administration of justice themselves, nor would the law allow them to act on it if they did.

The law never presumes that a judge is to decide a case from a knowledge of the facts in his own possession, or simply because "he knows what was done in the case." The ultimate decision must be made in view of testimony given, not of knowledge "possessed." In most cases, however, there is no difficulty on this point. There is no necessary violation of confidence in giving this information. There have been no improper means used to obtain it. There has been only an observation of that which any other man might have seen. There has been no baseness in "spying" out what was done. There has been no "sycophantic" purpose; there is no voluntariness in betraying what we know; there is no dishonorableness in divulging what "happened" to be known to us. A man may "regret" that he witnessed the act of crime, but he does not blame himself for it; he may feel "pained" that his testimony may consign another man to the gallows, but he does not deem it dishonorable, for he has no mean purpose in it, and the interests of justice demand it.

(b) It is an admitted principle that one employed as counsel in a case - a lawyer - shall "not" be required to give up information which may be in his possession as counsel; information which has been entrusted to him by his client. It is held essential to the interests of justice, that whatever is thus communicated to a professional adviser shall be regarded by the court as strictly confidential, and that the counsel incurs no blame if he does "not" give information on the subject; or, in other words, the true interests of justice do not demand, and the principles of honor will not admit, that he should betray the man who has entrusted his cause to him. How far a man, governed by a good conscience, and by the principles of honor, may undertake a cause which, from the statements of his client in the beginning,

he may regard as doubtful, or where in the progress of the case he may become sure that his client is guilty, is a point which does not come under the present inquiry, and which may, in fact, be in some respects a question of difficult solution. It must still, however, even in such a case, be held that he cannot be required to give the information in his possession, and every principle of honor or of right would be understood to be violated, if, abandoning the case, he should become a voluntary "informer."

(c) In like manner, it is understood that the law does not require a juryman to give voluntary "information" of what may be within his own knowledge in the case that may be submitted for trial. The extent of his oath and his obligation is that he shall give a verdict according to the testimony submitted under the proper forms of law. He may not "go back" of that, and found his opinion in the verdict on any private knowledge which he may have in his own possession, and which has not, under the proper forms of law, been laid before the court; nor may what he himself may have seen and heard enter at all into his verdict, or influence it in any manner, unless it has been submitted with the other testimony in the case to the court. The verdict is to be based on evidence "given;" not on what he "has seen." An accused man has a right to demand that "all" that shall bear on the sentence in the case - "all" that shall enter into the verdict - shall be submitted as testimony, under the solemnities of an oath, and with all proper opportunities of crossexamination, and of rebutting it by counter testimony. A juryman may, indeed, be called as a witness in a case. But then he is to be sworn and examined as any other witness, and when he comes to unite with others in making up the verdict, he is to allow to enter into that verdict "only" that which is in possession of all the members of the jury, and he is not to permit "any" knowledge which he may have, which was "not" obtained from him in giving testimony, to influence his own judgment in the case.

(d) There are cases, however, in which things entrusted to one as a secret, or in confidence, may be required to be given up. Such cases may occur in a matter of private friendship, or in a case of professional confidence.

In the case of a Presbyterian clergyman, it has been held that he was bound to submit a letter to the court which had been addressed to him by

the accused as her pastor, and which was supposed to contain important disclosures in regard to her criminality. In this case, however, the disclosure was not originally made by the pastor; nor was the fact of the existence of such a letter made known by him. The fact that such a letter had been sent to him, was stated by the party herself; and the court, having this knowledge of it, "demanded" its production in court. It was submitted after taking legal advice, and the community justified the conduct of the pastor. So the principle is regarded as well settled that a minister of religion may be required to disclose what has been communicated to him, whether at the "confessional," or as a pastor, which may be necessary to establish the guilt of a party; and that the fact that it had been communicated in confidence, and for spiritual advice, does not constitute a reason for refusing to disclose it.

(2) but the point before us relates rather to the inquiry when the act of giving such information becomes "guilt," or in what circumstances it is forbidden and wrong.

Perhaps all that need to be said on this point can be reduced to three heads: when it is for base purposes; when the innocent are betrayed; and when professional confidence is violated. The illustration of these points, after what has been said, need not detain us long.

First. When it is for base purposes. This would include all those cases where it is for gain; where it is to secure favor; and where it is from envy, malice, spite, or revenge. The case of Doeg was, manifestly, an instance of this kind, where the motive was not that of promoting public justice, or preserving the peace of the realm, but where it was to ingratiate himself into the favor of Saul, and secure his own influence at court. The parallel case of the Ziphims Psalm 54:1-7 was another instance of this kind, where, so far as the narrative goes, it is supposable that the only motive was to obtain the favor of Saul, or to secure a reward, by betraying an innocent and a persecuted man who had fled to them for a secure retreat. The case of Judas Iscariot was another instance of this kind. He betrayed his Saviour; he agreed, for a paltry reward, to disclose his place of usual retreat - a place to which he had resorted so often for prayer, that Judas knew that he could be found there.

It was for no wrong done to him. It was from no regard to public peace or justice. It was not because he even supposed the Saviour to be guilty. He knew that he was innocent. He even himself confessed this in the most solemn manner, and in the very presence of those with whom he had made the infamous bargain - and with just such a result as the mean and the wicked must always expect, when those for whom they have performed a mean and wicked act have no further use for them. such, also, is the case of the "sycophant." That a man might, in some circumstances, give information about the exportation of "figs" contrary to law, or might even be required to do it, may be true; but it was equally true that it was not commonly done for any patriotic or honorable ends, but from the most base and ignoble motives; and hence, the sense of mankind in regard to the nature of the transaction has been perpetuated in the world itself. So, in a school, there is often no better motive than envy, or rivalship, or malice, or a desire to obtain favor or reward, when information is given by one school-boy of another; and hence, the contempt and scorn with which a boy who acts under the influence of these motives is always regarded - emblem of what he is likely to meet in all his subsequent life.

Second. The innocent are never robe betrayed. The divine law pertaining to this seems to be perfectly plain, and the principles of that law are such as to commend themselves to the consciences of all mankind. Thus, Isaiah 16:3-4, "Take counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday; hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wandereth. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler." Also in Deuteronomy 23:15-16, "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee: he shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him."

On these passages I remark:

1. That they are settled principles of the law of God. There is no ambiguity in them. They have not been repealed. They are, therefore, still binding, and extend to all cases pertaining to the innocent and the oppressed.

2. They accord with the convictions of the human mind - the deep-seated principles which God has laid in our very being, as designed to guide us in our treatment of others.

3. They accord with some of the highest principles of self-sacrifice as illustrated in history - the noblest exhibitions of human nature in giving an asylum to the oppressed and the wronged; instances where life has been perilled, or even given up, rather than that the persecuted, the innocent, and the wronged, should be surrendered or betrayed. How often, in the history of the church has life been thus endangered, because a refuge and a shelter was furnished to the persecuted Christian - the poor outcast, driven from his home under oppressive laws! How honorable have people esteemed such acts to be! How illustrious is the example of those who have at all hazards opened their arms to receive the oppressed, and to welcome the persecuted and the wronged! In the year 1685, by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantz, eight hundred thousand professed followers of the Saviour - Huguenots - were driven from their homes and their country, and compelled to seek safety by flight to other lands.

In their own country, fire and the sword spread desolation everywhere, and the voice of wailing filled the land. Those who could flee, did flee. The best people of France - those of noblest blood - fled in every direction, and sought a refuge in other countries. They fled - carrying with them not only the purest form and the best spirit of religion, but the best knowledge of the arts, to all the surrounding nations. Belgium, Holland, England, Scotland, Switzerland, opened their arms to welcome the fugitives. Our own country welcomed them - then, as now, an asylum for the oppressed. In every part of our land they found a home. Thousands of the noblest spirits - the best people of the South and the North, were composed of these exiles and wanderers. But suppose the world had been barred against them. Suppose they had been driven back again to their native land, poor persecuted men and women returned to suffering and to death. How justly mankind would have execrated such an act!

The same principles are applicable to the fugitive from slavery. Indeed, one of the texts quoted relates to this very point, and is designed to guide

people on this subject in all ages and in all lands. “Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee.” No law could possibly be more explicit; none could be more humane, just, or proper; and consequently all those provisions in human laws which require people to aid in delivering up such fugitives are violations of the law of God - have no binding obligation on the conscience - and are, at all hazards, to be disobeyed. Acts 5:29; Acts 4:19.

Third. Professional confidence is not to be betrayed. We have seen, in the remarks before made, that those who are employed as counselors in the courts, cannot be required to communicate facts which are stated to them by their clients, but that confidential communications made to others may be demanded in promoting the interests of justice. The point now, however, relates only to the cases where professional confidence is voluntarily violated, or where knowledge thus obtained is made use of in a manner which cannot be sanctioned either by the principles of honor or religion. Two such instances may be referred to as illustrations:

(a) One occurs when a clergyman, to whom such knowledge is imparted as a clergyman for spiritual advice, instruction, or comfort, abuses the trust reposed in him, by making use of that information for any other purpose whatever. It is entrusted to him for that purpose alone. It is committed to him as a man of honor. The secret is lodged with him, with the implied understanding that it is there to remain, and to be employed only for that purpose. Whether at the “confessional” of the Roman Catholic, or whether made in the confidence reposed in a Protestant pastor, the principle is the same. Whatever advantage may be taken of that secret for the promotion of any other ends; whatever object the minister of religion may propose to secure, based on the fact that he is in possession of it; whatever influence he may choose to exert, founded on the assumption that he could divulge it; whatever statement he may make in regard to such a person - based on the fact that he is in possession of knowledge which he has, but which he is not at liberty to communicate - and designed to injure the person; whatever use he may make of it as enabling him to form an estimate for his own purposes of what occurs in a family; or, in general, whatever communication he may make of it, of any kind (except under process of law, and because the law demands it), is to be regarded as a betrayal of professional confidence. The

interests of religion require that a pastor should be regarded as among the most faithful of confidential friends; and no people, or class of people, should be placed in such circumstances that they may, at the "confessional," or in any other way, have the means of arriving at secrets which may be employed for any purposes of their own whatever.

(b) It is a breach of professional confidence when a lawyer is entrusted with knowledge in one case by a client, which, by being employed in another case, and on another occasion, he uses against him. The secret, whatever it may be, which is entrusted to him by a client, is for that case alone; and is, to all intents, to die when that case is determined. It is dishonorable in any way for him to engage as counsel for another party against his former client when, by even the remotest possibility, the knowledge obtained in the former occurrence could come as an element in the determination of the case, or could be made use of to the advantage of his new client. Every sentiment of honesty and honor demands that if there is a possibility of this, or if there would be the remotest temptation of the kind, he should at once promptly and firmly decline to engage against his former client.

In human nature there are two classes of propensities or principles: those which are generous, magnanimous, gentle, kind, benevolent, large-hearted, humane, noble; and those which are low, grovelling, sordid, sycophantic, mean, ignoble.

Though man is destitute of holiness, and though, as I believe, not one or all of these things which I have referred to as generous and noble can by cultivation become true religion, or constitute, by mere development, what is needful to secure the salvation of the soul, yet they are to be cultivated, for they are invaluable in society, and necessary to the happiness and the progress of mankind. On these, more than on most other things, the happiness of families, and the welfare of the world depend; and whatever may be our views of the necessity and value of religion, we are not required to undervalue "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," or those virtues which we connect, in our apprehensions, with that which is manly and honorable, and which tend to elevate and ennoble the race.

Christianity has, if I may so express it, a “natural affinity” for one class of these propensities; it has none for the other. It, too, is generous, humane, gentle, kind, benevolent, noble; it blends easily with these tilings when it finds them in human nature; and it produces them in the soul which is fully under its influence, where they did not exist before. It has no more affinity for that which is mean, ignoble, morose, sycophantic, than it has for profanity or falsehood, for dishonesty or fraud, for licentiousness or ambition.

That true religion may be found in hearts where these virtues, so generous and noble, are not developed, or where there is not a little that dishonors religion as not large, and liberal, and courteous, and gentlemanly, it is, perhaps, impossible to deny mean, so sycophantic, so narrow, so sour, and so morose, that a large part of the work of sanctification seems to be reserved for the close of life - for that mysterious and unexplained process by which all who are redeemed are made perfect when they pass “through the valley of the shadow of death.” But though there may be religion in such a case, it is among the lowest forms of piety. What is mean, ignoble, and narrow, is no part of the Christian religion, and can never be transmuted into it.

There has come down to us as the result of the progress of civilization in this world, and with the highest approbation of mankind, a class of virtues connected with the ideas of honor and honorableness. That the sentiment of honor has been abused among people; that an attempt has been made to set it up as the governing principle in cases where conscience should rule; that in doing this a code has been established which, in many respects, is a departure from the rules of morality, there can be no doubt; - but still there are just principles of honor which Christianity does not disdain; which are to be incorporated into our principles of religion, and which we are to endeavor to instil into the hearts of our children. Whatever there is in the world that is “true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report;” whatever belongs to the name of “virtue,” and whatever deserves “praise,” is to be blended with our religion, constituting our idea of a Christian man.

It is the blending of these things - the union of Christian principle with what is noble, and manly, and generous, and humane - which, in any case, entitles to the highest appellation that can be given to any of our race - that of the christian gentleman.

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PSALM 53

Introduction

There is a remarkable resemblance between this psalm and Psalm 14:1-7. Both are ascribed to the same author, David; and each pursues the same line of thought - the folly and wickedness of Atheism. They both show that the belief that there is no God is not a harmless idea, or a mere speculation, but that it has important consequences on the life, and is naturally connected with a wicked life, Psalm 53:3-4.

The difference in the two compositions is (a) in the title; and (b) in the psalm itself.

(a) In the title. Both psalms are ascribed to David, and both are dedicated to the "Chief Musician." But in the title to the psalm before us, there is this addition: "Upon Mahalath, Maschil." On the meaning of the term Maschil, see Introduction to Psalm 32:1-11. The term here would seem to imply that the psalm was designed to give instruction on an important subject, but why it is prefixed to this psalm, and not to the others, we have no means of determining. The word, rendered "Mahalath" - מחלת *machălath* - occurs only here and in the title to Exodus 15:26; Proverbs 18:14; 2 Chronicles 21:15 meaning "disease," and he supposes reference is to "the spiritual malady with which all mankind are infected, and which is really the theme or subject of the composition." It is true that there is a word - מחלה *machăleh* - similar to this, meaning "disease," but it is also true that the word used here is never employed in that sense, and equally true that such a construction here is forced and unnatural. The obvious supposition is that it refers to an instrument of music.

(b) The difference in the psalms themselves is mainly that in Psalm 53:1-6 Psalm 14:6 is omitted, and that in the other parts of the psalm there are enlargements designed to illustrate or to explain more fully the course of thought in the psalm. It is not known by whom these changes were made. They are, as DeWette remarks, such as could not have occurred by an error in transcribing, and they must have been made by design. Whether the changes were made by the author, or by someone who collected and arranged the psalms, and who, adopting the main thoughts of Psalm 14:1-7, inserted additions conveying new phases of thought, though without

intending to supersede the use of the original composition, it is not possible now to determine. It is by no means an improbable supposition that the author of the psalm - David - may have revised it himself, and made these changes as expressing more fully his idea, while, as embodying valuable thoughts, it was deemed not undesirable to retain the original psalm in the collection as proper to be used in the service of God. Similar changes occur in Psalm 14:1-7.

Verse 1

The fool hath said in his heart … - For the meaning of this verse, see the notes at Psalm 14:1. The only change in this verse - a change which does not affect the sense - is the substitution of the word "iniquity," in Psalm 53:1-6, for "works," in Psalm 14:1-7.

Verse 2

God looked down from heaven … - See the notes at Psalm 14:2. The only change which occurs in this verse is the substitution of the word אלהים *'Elohiym* rendered "God," for "Yahweh," rendered Lord, in Psalm 14:2. The same change occurs also in Psalm 14:4, Psalm 14:6. It is to be observed, also, that the word "Yahweh" does not occur in this psalm, but that the term used is uniformly. אלהים *'Elohiym* God. In Psalm 14:1-7 both terms are found - the word אלהים *'Elohiym* three times Psalm 14:1-2, Psalm 14:5, and the word יהוה *Yahweh* four times, Psalm 14:2, Psalm 14:4, Psalm 14:6-7. It is impossible to account for this change. There is nothing in it, however, to indicate anything in regard to the authorship of the psalm or to the time when it was written, for both these words are frequently used by David elsewhere.

Verse 3

Every one of them is gone back - See the notes at Psalm 14:3. The only variation here in the two psalms is in the substitution of the word - סג *sâg* for סור *sûr* - words almost identical in form and in sense. The only difference in meaning is, that the former word - the word used here - means "to draw back," or "to go back;" the other, the word used in Psalm 14:1-7, means "to go off, to turn aside." Each of them indicates a departure from God; a departure equally fatal and equally guilty, whether people turn "back" from following him, or turn "aside" to something else. Both of these forms of apostasy occur with lamentable frequency.

Verse 4

Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? - See the notes at Psalm 14:4. The only change in this verse is in the omission of the word "all." This word, as it occurs in Psalm 14:1-7 ("all the workers of iniquity"), makes the sentence stronger and more emphatic. It is designed to affirm in the most absolute and unqualified manner that none of these workers of iniquity had any true knowledge of God. This has been noticed by critics as the only instance in which the expression in Psalm 14:1-7 is stronger than in the revised form of the psalm before us.

Verse 5

There were they in great fear … - Margin, as in Hebrew, "they feared a fear." For the general meaning of the verse, see the notes at Psalm 14:5. There is, however, an important change introduced here - the most important in the psalm. The general sentiment of two verses Psalm 14:5-6 in Psalm 14:1-7 is here compressed into one, and yet with such an important change as to show that it was by design, and apparently to adapt it to some new circumstance. The solution of this would seem to be that the original form Psalm 14:1-7 was suited to some occasion then present to the mind of the writer, and that some new event occurred to which the general sentiment in the psalm might be easily applied (or which would express that as well as could be done by an entirely new composition), but that, in order to adapt it to this new purpose, it would be proper to insert some expression more particularly referring to the event.

The principal of these additions is found in the verse before us. In Psalm 14:5-6, the language is, "There were they in great fear, for God is in the generation of the righteous; ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge." In the psalm before us, the language is, "There were they in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them." "Where no fear was." The reference here, as in Psalm 14:5, is to the fear or consternation of the people of God on account of the designs and efforts of the wicked. They were apprehensive of being overthrown by the wicked. The design of the psalmist in both cases is to show that there was no occasion for that fear. In Psalm 14:5, he shows it by saying that "God is in the congregation of the righteous." In the psalm before us fie says expressly that there was no ground for that fear - "where no fear was," - and he adds, as a reason, that God had "scattered the bones" of them "that encamped against" them. That

is, though there seemed to be occasion for fear - though those enemies were formidable in numbers and in power - yet God was their friend, and he had now showed them that they had no real occasion for alarm by dispersing those foes.

For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee - Of the besieger. This, as already intimated, would seem to have been introduced in order to adapt the psalm to the particular circumstances of the occasion when it was revised. From this clause, as well as others, it appears probable that the particular occasion contemplated in the revision of the psalm was an attack on Jerusalem, or a siege of the city - an attack which had been repelled, or a siege which the enemy had been compelled to raise. That is, they had been overthrown, and their bones had been scattered, unburied, on the ground. The whole language of Psalm 14:1-7, thus modified, would be well suited to such an occurrence. The general description of atheism and wickedness in Psalm 14:1-7 would be appropriate in reference to such an attempt on the city - for those who made the attack might well be represented as practically saying that there was no God; as being corrupt and abominable; as bent on iniquity; as polluted and defiled; and as attempting to eat up the people of God as they eat bread; and as those who did not call upon God. The verse before us would describe them as discomfited, and as being scattered in slaughtered heaps upon the earth.

Thou hast put them to shame - That is, they had been put to shame by being overthrown; by being unsuccessful in their attempt. The word "thou" here must be understood as referring to God.

Because God hath despised them - He has wholly disapproved their character, and he has "despised "their attempts; that is, he has shown that they were not formidable or to be feared. They were efforts which might be looked on with contempt, and he had evinced this by showing how easily they could be overthrown.

Verse 6

Oh that the salvation of Israel … - The only change here from Psalm 14:7 is that the word אלהים *'Elohiym* God, is substituted for "Jehovah," Lord, and that the word rendered "salvation" is here in the plural. On the supposition that the psalm was adapted to a state of things when the city had been besieged, and the enemy discomfited, this language would express the deep and earnest desire of the people that the Lord would grant

deliverance. Perhaps it may be supposed, also, that at the time of such a siege, and while the Lord interposed to save them from the siege, it was also true that there was some general danger hanging over the people; that even the nation might be described as in some sense “captive;” or that some portions of the land were subject to a foreign power. The desire expressed is, that the deliverance might be complete, and that the whole land might be brought to the possession of liberty, and be rescued from all foreign domination. That time, when it should arrive, would be the occasion of universal rejoicing.

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PSALM 54

Introduction

This psalm purports to be a psalm of David, and it bears all the internal marks of being his composition. The title suggests, doubtless with accuracy, the occasion on which it was composed, as well as the design for which it was intended. It is addressed or dedicated to the "chief Musician," to be set by him to music, and to be employed in the public service of God. See Introduction to Psalm 4:1-8 - where, also, see the phrase "on Neginoth." The word "Maschil" denotes that it was a didactic poem, or a poem designed to set forth important truth. See Introduction to Psalm 32:1-11. The occasion on which the psalm was composed is indicated by the statement that it was "when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?" Such an occurrence is twice recorded; 1 Samuel 23:19; 1 Samuel 26:1. It would seem not improbable that they in fact made two communications to Saul on the subject at different times, or that David was twice in their country, and that they twice endeavored to betray him to Saul. On the first occasion (1 Samuel 23:19 ff) Saul, after commending them for their zeal, expressly desired them 1 Samuel 23:22 to return, and look carefully that they might be sure that he was there, or that he had not escaped into some other place, "for," he adds, "it is told me that he dealeth very subtilly." Before making the attempt himself to seize him, he wished to be certified that he was really there. On their return, the Ziphims found that David had escaped to "Maon" 1 Samuel 23:24, and they came again and informed Saul of that fact, After a vain effort on the part of Saul to find him, and after some other occurrences recorded in 1 Samuel 26:1. Of course, it is not known precisely on which of these occasions the psalm was composed.

This psalm is similar in design to Psalm 52:1-9; and is intended, like that, to characterize the base conduct of informers. The psalm consists of three parts:

(1) An earnest prayer for deliverance, Psalm 54:1-3;

(2) an expression of confident belief that God would interpose and deliver him, Psalm 54:4-5;

(3) a resolution to render sacrifice to God, or to offer the tribute of praise, if he should be thus delivered, Psalm 54:6-7.

Verse 1

Save me, O God, by thy name - The word "name" here may include the perfections or attributes properly implied in the name. It is a calling on God as God, or in view of all that is implied in his name, or that constitutes the idea of "God." That name would imply all of power and benevolence that was necessary to secure his salvation or safety. The particular object of the prayer here is that God would save him from the design of the Ziphims to betray him to Saul. In some way David seems to have been apprised of the information which they had given to Saul, or at least to have suspected it so strongly that he felt it was necessary for him to move from place to place in order to find safety.

And judqe me by thy strength - The word "judge" here is used in the sense of declaring a judgment in his favor, or of vindicating him. See the notes at Psalm 7:8. Compare Psalm 18:20; Psalm 26:1; Psalm 43:1. The idea is, Vindicate or save me by thy power.

Verse 2

Hear my prayer, O God - My earnest cry for deliverance from the designs of those who would betray me.

Give ear to the words of my mouth - Incline thine ear to me, as one does who wishes to hear. See the notes at Psalm 17:6.

Verse 3

For strangers are risen up against me - That is, foreigners; those of another nation or land. Saul and his friends who sought the life of David were his own countrymen; these persons who sought go betray him were another people. They attempted to gain the favor of Saul, or to secure a reward from him, by betraying to him an innocent man whom he was persecuting.

And oppressors seek after my soul - Seek after my life. The word here rendered "oppressors" means people of violence; the proud; the haughty; persecutors; tyrants. The word properly denotes those who exert their power in an arbitrary manner, or not under the sanction of law.

They have not set God before them - They do not act as in the presence of God. They do not regard his authority. See the notes at Psalm

36:1. The word "Selah" here merely marks a musical pause. It indicates nothing in regard to the sense.

Verse 4

Behold, God is mine helper - That is, God alone can aid me in these circumstances, and to him I confidently look.

The Lord is with them that uphold my soul - My friends; those who have rallied around me to defend me; those who comfort me by their presence; those who sustain me in my cause, and who keep me from sinking under the burden of my accumulated troubles.

Verse 5

He shall reward evil unto mine enemies - Margin, "those that observe me." The original word here means literally "to twist, to twist together;" then, to press together; then, to "oppress," or to treat as an enemy. The reference here is to those who pressed upon him as enemies, or who endeavored to crush him. The idea is that God would recompense them for this conduct, or that he would deal with them as they deserved.

Cut them off in thy truth - In thy faithfulness; in thy regard for what is right. This is simply a prayer, or an expression of strong confidence, that God would deal with them as they deserved, or that he would not suffer such conduct to pass without a proper expression of his sense of the wrong. There is no evidence that David in this prayer was prompted by private or vindictive feeling.

Verse 6

I will freely sacrifice unto thee - The Hebrew words rendered "freely," mean with "willingness, voluntariness, spontaneousness." The idea is, that he would do it of a free or willing mind; without constraint or compulsion; voluntarily. The reference is to a free-will or voluntary offering, as distinguished from one, that was prescribed by law. See Exodus 35:29; Exodus 36:3; Leviticus 7:16; Leviticus 22:18; Numbers 15:3; Numbers 29:39. The idea is, that as the result of the divine interposition which he prayed for, he would bring voluntary offerings to God in acknowledgment of his goodness and mercy.

I will praise thy name, O Lord - I will praise thee. See Psalm 52:9.

For it is good - That is, God himself is benevolent; and David says that he would express his sense of God's goodness by offering him praise.

Verse 7

For he hath delivered me out of all trouble - This is spoken either in confident expectation of what would be, or as the statement of a general truth that God did deliver him from all trouble. It was what he had experienced in his past life; it was what he confidently expected in all time to come.

And mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies - The words "his desire" are not in the original. A literal translation would be, "And on my enemies hath my eye looked." The meaning is, that they had been overthrown; they had been unsuccessful in their malignant attempts against him; and he had had the satisfaction of "seeing" them thus discomfited. Their overthrow had not merely been reported to him, but he had had ocular demonstration of its reality. This is not the expression of malice, but of certainty. The fact on which the eye of the psalmist rested was his own safety. Of that he was assured by what he had witnessed with his own eyes; and in that fact he rejoiced. There is no more reason to charge malignity in this case on David, or to suppose that he rejoiced in the destruction of his enemies as such, than there is in our own case when we are rescued from impending danger. It is proper for Americans to rejoice in their freedom, and to give thanks to God for it; nor, in doing this, is it to be supposed that there is a malicious pleasure in the fact that in the accomplishment of this thousands of British soldiers were slain, or that thousands of women and children as the result of their discomfiture were made widows and orphans. We can be thankful for the mercies which we enjoy without having any malignant delight in those woes of others through which our blessings may have come upon us.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 55

Introduction

This psalm is entitled "A Psalm of David," and there is every reason to believe that it is properly ascribed to him. It is addressed to "the chief Musician" - to be by him set to appropriate music, that it might be employed in the public worship of God. See the notes at the title to Psalm 4:1-8. On the word "Neginoth" in the title, see also the note in the Introduction of Psalm 4:1-8.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed is not indicated in the title, nor can it be with certainty ascertained. The author of the Chaldee Paraphrase refers the psalm to the time of Absalom and to his rebellion, and this is also the opinion of the Jewish expositors in general. They suppose that the psalm was composed on occasion of the departure of David from Jerusalem, when he had heard of the rebellion, and that the psalm has special reference to the time when, having fled from the city, and having come to the ascent of the Mount of Olives, while all was consternation around him, he learned that Ahithophel also was among the conspirators, which was the consummation of his calamity, 2 Samuel 15:31. Others suppose that the psalm was composed when David was in Keilah, and when, surrounded by foes, he was apprehensive that the inhabitants of that place would deliver him into the hand of Saul, 1 Samuel 23:1-12. Of all the known events in the life of David, the supposition which regards the psalm as composed during the rebellion of Absalom, and at the special time when he learned that the man whom he had trusted - Ahithophel - was among the traitors, is the most probable. All the circumstances in the psalm agree with his condition at that time, and the occasion was one in which the persecuted and much-afflicted king would be likely to pour out the desires of his heart before God. Paulus and DeWette have remarked that it is evident from the psalm that the enemies to whom the author refers were inhabitants of the same city with himself, and that the danger was from treason within the walls of the city, Psalm 55:1 O. This seems not improbable, and this agrees well with the supposition that the scene of the psalm is laid in the time of the rebellion of Absalom.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:

(1) The prayer of the psalmist that God would hear his cry, Psalm 55:1-3.

(2) ageneral description of his trouble and sorrows, as being so great that he was overwhelmed, and such as to make him wish for the wings of a dove that he might fly away, and be at rest, Psalm 55:4-8.

(3) the causes, or sources of his trouble, Psalm 55:9-14;
(a) The general fact that he was surrounded by enemies; that there were violence, strife, and mischief in the city, Psalm 55:9-11.
(b) The particular fact that someone in whom he had put confidence, and who had been his special friend, was, to his surprise, found among his enemies, and had proved himself faithless to him, Psalm 55:12-14.
(4) his earnest prayer for the destruction of his enemies, Psalm 55:15.
(5) his own confidence in God; his reliance on the divine mercy and protection in the time of trouble and danger; and his assurance that God would interpose in his behalf, Psalm 55:16-21.

(6) a general exhortation, as a practical lesson from all that had occurred, to trust in God - to cast every burden on him - with the assurance that the righteous would never be moved, but that the wicked must be subdued, Psalm 55:22-23.

Verse 1

Give ear to my prayer - See the notes at Psalm 5:1; Psalm 17:6. This is the language of earnestness. The psalmist was in deep affliction, and he pleaded, therefore, that God would not turn away from him in his troubles.

And hide not thyself from my supplication - That is, Do not withdraw thyself, or render thyself inaccessible to my prayer. Do not so conceal thyself that I may not have the privilege of approaching thee. Compare the notes at Isaiah 1:15. See also Ezekiel 22:26; Proverbs 28:27; Leviticus 20:4; 1 Samuel 12:3. The same word is used in all these places, and the general meaning is that of "shutting the eyes upon," as implying neglect. So also in Lamentations 3:56, the phrase "to hide the ear" means to turn away so as not to hear. The earnest prayer of the psalmist here is, that God would not, as it were, withdraw or conceal himself, but would give free access to himself in prayer. The language is, of course, figurative, but it illustrates

what often occurs when God seems to withdraw himself; when our prayers do not appear to be heard; when God is apparently unwilling to attend to us.

Verse 2

Attend unto me, and hear me - This also is the language of earnest supplication, as if he was afraid that God would not regard his cry. These varied forms of speech show the intense earnestness of the psalmist, and his deep conviction that he must have help from God.

I mourn - The word used here - רוד *rûd* - means properly to wander about; to ramble - especially applied to animals that have broken loose; and then, to inquire after, to seek, as one does "by running up and down;" hence, to desire, to wish. Thus in Hosea 11:12 - "Judah runs wild toward God," - in our translation, "Judah yet ruleth with God." The word occurs also in Jeremiah 2:31, "We are lords" (margin, have dominion); and in Genesis 27:40, "When thou shalt have the dominion." It is not elsewhere found in the Scriptures. The idea here seems not to be to mourn, but to inquire earnestly; to seek; to look for, as one does who wanders about, or who looks every way for help. David was in deep distress. He looked in every direction. He earnestly desired to find God as a Helper. He was in the condition of one who had lost his way, or who had lost what was most valuable to him; and he directed his eyes most earnestly toward God for help.

In my complaint - The word here employed commonly means speech, discourse, meditation. It here occurs in the sense of complaint, as in Job 7:13; Job 9:27; Job 21:4; Job 23:2; Psalm 142:2; 1 Samuel 1:16. It is not used, however, to denote complaint in the sense of fault-finding, but in the sense of deep distress. As the word is now commonly used, we connect with it the idea of fault-finding, complaining, accusing, or the idea that we have been dealt with unjustly. This is not the meaning in tills place, or in the Scriptures generally. It is the language of a troubled, not of an injured spirit.

And make a noise - To wit, by prayer; or, by groaning. The psalmist did not hesitate to give vent to his feelings by groans, or sobs, or prayers. Such expressions are not merely indications of deep feeling, but they are among the appointed means of relief. They are the effort which nature makes to throw off the burden, and if they are without complaining or impatience they are not wrong. See Isaiah 38:14; Isaiah 59:11; Hebrews 5:7; Matthew 27:46.

Verse 3

Because of the voice of the enemy - He now states the cause of his troubles. He had been, and was, unjustly treated by others. The particular idea in the word "voice" here is, that he was suffering from slanderous reproaches; from assaults which had been made on his character. He was charged with evil conduct, and the charge was made in such a manner that he could not meet it. The result was, that a series of calamities had come upon him which was quite overwhelming.

Because of the oppression of the wicked - The word here rendered "oppression" occurs nowhere else. The verb from which it is derived occurs twice, Amos 2:13: "Behold, I am "pressed" under you as a cart is "pressed" that is full of sheaves." The idea is that of crushing by a heavy weight; and hence, of crushing by affliction. The "wicked" alluded to here, if the supposition referred to in the Introduction about the occasion of the psalm is correct, were Absalom and those who were associated with him in the rebellion, particularly Ahithophel, who had showed himself false to David, and had united with his enemies in their purpose to drive him from his throne.

For they east iniquity upon me - That is, they charge me with sin; they attempt to justify themselves in their treatment of me by accusing me of wrong-doing, or by endeavoring to satisfy themselves that I deserve to be treated in this manner. If this refers to the time of the rebellion of Absalom, the allusion would be to the charges, brought by him against his father, of severity and injustice in his administration, 2 Samuel 15:2-6.

And in wrath they hate me - In their indignation, in their excitement, they are full of hatred against me. This was manifested by driving him froth his throne and his home.

Verse 4

My heart is sore pained within me - Heavy and sad; that is, I am deeply afflicted. The word rendered is "sore pained," means properly to turn round; to twist; to dance in a circle; to be whirled round; and then to twist or writhe with pain, especially applied to a woman in travail, Isaiah 13:8; Isaiah 23:4; Isaiah 26:18. Here the idea is, that he was in deep distress and anguish. It is easy to see that this would be so, if the psalm refers to the revolt of Absalom. The ingratitude and rebellion of a son - the fact of being driven away from his throne - the number of his enemies - the unexpected news that Ahithophel was among them - and the entire uncertainty as to the result, justified the use of this strong language.

And the terrors of death are fallen upon me - The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and Luther, render this "the fear of death," as if he were afraid for his life, or afraid that the result of all this would be his death. A more natural construction, however, is to suppose that the reference is to the ordinary pains of death, and that he means to say that the pangs which he endured were like the pangs of death. The words "are fallen" suggest the idea that this had come suddenly upon him, like a "horror of great darkness" (compare Genesis 15:12), or as if the gloomy shadow of death had suddenly crossed his path. Compare the notes at Psalm 23:4. The calamities had come suddenly upon him; the conspiracy had been suddenly developed; and he had been suddenly driven away.

Verse 5

Fearfulness and trembling - Fear so great as to produce trembling. Compare the notes at Job 4:14. He knew not when these things would end. How far the spirit of rebellion had spread he knew not, and he had no means of ascertaining. It seemed as if he would be wholly overthrown; as if his power was wholly at an end; as if even his life was in the greatest peril.

And horror hath overwhelmed me - Margin, as in Hebrew, "covered me." That is; it had come upon him so as to cover or envelop him entirely. The shades of horror and despair spread all around and above him, and all things were filled with gloom. The word rendered "horror" occurs only in three other places; - Ezekiel 7:18, rendered (as here) "horror;" Job 21:6, rendered "trembling;" and Isaiah 21:4, rendered "fearfulness." It refers to that state when we are deeply agitated with fear.

Verse 6

And I said - That is, when I saw these calamities coming upon me, and knew not what the result was to be.

Oh, that I had wings like a dove! - literally, "Who will give me wings like a dove?" or, Who will give me the pinion of a dove? The original word - אבר *'êber* - means properly, "a wing-feather;" a pinion; the penna major or flagfeather of a bird‘s wing by which he steers his course, - as of an eagle, Isaiah 40:31, or of a dove, as here. It is distinguished from the wing itself, Ezekiel 17:3: "A great eagle, with great wings, "long-winged," full of feathers." The reference here is supposed to be to the turtle-dove - a species of dove common in Palestine. Compare the notes at Psalm 11:1. These doves, it is said, are never tamed. "Confined in a cage, they droop, and, like Cowper, sigh for ‹A lodge in some vast wilderness - some boundless

contiguity of shade;‘ and no sooner are they set at liberty, than they flee to their mountains.” Land and the Book (Dr. Thomson), vol. i., p. 416.

For then would I fly away, and be at rest - I would escape from these dangers, and be in a place of safety. How often do we feel this in times of trouble! How often do we wish that we could get beyond the reach of enemies; of sorrows; of afflictions! How often do we sigh to be in a place where we might be assured that we should be safe from all annoyances; from all trouble! There is such a place, but not on earth. David might have borne his severest troubles with him if he could have fled - for those troubles are in the heart, and a mere change of place does not affect them; or he might have found new troubles in the place that seemed to him to be a place of peace and of rest. But there is a world which trouble never enters. That world is heaven; to that world we shall soon go, if we are God‘s children; and there we shall find absolute and eternal rest. Without “the wings of a dove,” we shall soon fly away and be at rest. None of the troubles of earth will accompany us there; no new troubles will spring up there to disturb our peace.

Verse 7

Lo, then would I wander far off - literally, “Lo, I would make the distance far by wandering;” I would separate myself far from these troubles.

And remain in the wilderness - literally, I would sojourn; or, I would pass the night; or, I would put up for the night. The idea is taken from a traveler who puts up for the night, or who rests for a night in his weary travels, and seeks repose. Compare Genesis 19:2; Genesis 32:21; 2 Samuel 12:16; Judges 19:13. The word “wilderness” means, in the Scripture, a place not inhabited by man; a place where wild beasts resort; a place uncultivated. It does not denote, as with us, an extensive forest. It might be a place of rocks and sands, but the essential idea is, that it was not inhabited. See the notes at Matthew 4:1. In such a place, remote from the habitations of people, he felt that he might be at rest.

Verse 8

I would hasten my escape - I would make haste to secure an escape. I would not delay, but I would flee at once.

From the windy storm and tempest - From the calamities which have come upon me, and which beat upon me like a violent tempest. If this psalm was composed on occasion of the rebellion of Absalom, it is easy to see with what propriety tiffs language is used. The troubles connected with that

unnatural rebellion had burst upon him with the fury of a sudden storm, and threatened to sweep everything away.

Verse 9

Destroy, O Lord - The word rendered "destroy," properly means to "swallow up;" to "devour" with the idea of greediness. Isaiah 28:4; Exodus 7:12; Jonah 1:17; Jeremiah 51:34. Then it is used in the sense of "destroy," Job 20:18; Proverbs 1:12. The reference here is to the persons who had conspired against David. It is a prayer that they, and their counsels, might be destroyed: such a prayer as people always offer who pray for victory in battle. It is a prayer that the may be successful in what they regard as a righteous cause; but this implies a prayer that their enemies may be defeated and overcome. That is, they pray for success in what they have undertaken; and if it is right for them to attempt to do the thing, it is not wrong to pray that they may be succesful.

And divide their tongues - There is evident allusion here to the confusion of tongues at Babel Genesis 11:1-9; and as the language of those who undertook to build that tower was confounded so that they could not understand each other, so the psalmist prays that the counsels of those engaged against him might be confounded, or that they might be divided and distracted in their plans, so that they could not act in harmony. It is very probable that there is an allusion here to the prayer which David offered when he learned that Ahithophel was among the conspirators 2 Samuel 15:31; "And David said, O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." This would tend to divide and distract; the purposes of Absalom, and secure his defeat.

For I have seen violence and strife in the city - In Jerusalem. Perhaps he had learned that among the conspirators there was not entire harmony, but that there were elements of "strife" and discord which led him to hope that their counsels would be confounded. There was little homogeneoushess of aim and purpose among the followers of Absalom; and perhaps David knew enough of Ahithophel to see that his views, though he might be enlisted in the cause of the rebellion, would not be likely to harmonize with the views of the masses of those who were engaged in the revolt.

Verse 10

Day and night they go about it, upon the walls thereof - That is, continually. The word "they" in this place probably refers to the violence and strife mentioned in the preceding verse. They are here personified, and

they seem to surround the city; to be everywhere moving, even on the very walls. They are like a besieging army. Inside and outside; in the midst of the city and on the walls, there was nothing but violence and strife - conspiracy, rebellion, and crime.

Mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it - Crime abounded, and the result was anguish or sorrow. This language would well describe the scenes when Absalom rebelled; when the city was filled with conspirators and rebels; and when crime and anguish seemed to prevail in every part of it.

Verse 11

Wickedness is in the midst thereof - That is, the wickedness connected with rebellion and revolt.

Deceit and guile depart not from her streets - They are everywhere. They are found in every street and alley. They pervade all classes of the people. The word rendered "deceit" means rather "oppression." This was connected with "guile," or with "deceit." That is, wrong would be everywhere committed, and the perpetration of those wrongs would be connected with false representations, and false pretences - a state of things that might be expected in the unnatural rebellion under Absalom.

Verse 12

For it was not an enemy that reproached me - The word "reproached" here refers to slander; calumny; abuse. It is not necessarily implied that it was in his presence, but he was apprized of it. When he says that it is not an enemy that did this, the meaning is that it was not one who had been an avowed and open foe. The severest part of the trial did not arise from the fact that it was done by such an one, for that he could have borne. That which overwhelmed him was the fact that the reproach came from one who had been his friend; or, the reproach which he felt most keenly came from one whom he had regarded as a personal confidant. It is not to be supposed that the psalmist means to say that he was not reproached by his enemies, for the whole structure of the psalm implies that this was so; but his anguish was made complete and unbearable by the discovery that one especially who had been his friend was found among those who reproached and calumniated him. The connection leads us to suppose, if the right view (Introduction) has been taken of the occasion on which the psalm was composed, that the allusion here is to Ahithophel 2 Samuel 15:31; and the particular distress here referred to was that which David experienced on

learning that he was among the conspirators. A case of trouble remarkably resembling this is referred to in Psalm 41:9. See the notes at that place.

Then I could have borne it - The affliction would have been such as I could bear. Reproaches from an enemy, being known to be an enemy, we expect; and and we feel them comparatively little. We attribute them to the very fact that such an one is an enemy, and that he feels it necessary to sustain himself by reproaching and calumniating us. We trust also that the world will understand them in that way; and will set them down to the mere fact that he is our enemy. In such a case there is only the testimony against us of one who is avowedly our foe, and who has every inducement to utter malicious words against us in order to sustain his own cause. But the case is different when the accuser and slanderer is one who has been our intimate friend. He is supposed to know all about us. He has been admitted to our counsels. He has known our purposes and plans. He can speak not "slanderously" but "knowingly." It is supposed that he could have no motive to speak ill of us except his own conviction of truth, and that it could be only the strongest conviction of truth - the existence of facts to which not even a friend could close his eyes - that could induce him to abandon us, and hold us up to repreach and scorn. So Ahithophel - the confidential counselor and friend of David - would be supposed to be acquainted with his secret plans and his true character; and hence, reproaches from such a one became unendurable. "Neither was it he that hated me." That avowedly and openly hated me. If that had been the case, I should have expected such usage, and it would not injure me.

That did magnify himself a against me - That is, by asserting that I was a bad man, thus exalting himself in character above me, or claiming that he was more pure than I am. Or, it may mean, that exalted himself above me, or sought to reach the eminence of power in my downfall and ruin.

Then I would have hid myself from him - I should have been like one pursued by an enemy who could hide himself in a cave, or in a fastness, or in the mountains, so as to be safe from his attacks. The arrows of malice would fly harmlessly by me, and I should be safe. Not so, when one reproached me who had been an intimate friend; who had known all about me; and whose statements would be believed.

Verse 13

But it was thou, a man mine equal - Margin, "a man according to my rank." Septuagint, ἰσόψυχε *isopsuche* equal-souled, like-souled, "second self" (Thompson); Vulgate, *"unanimus,"* of the same mind; Luther, "Geselle," companion. The Hebrew word used here - ערך *ʿêrek* - means properly a row or pile, as of the showbread piled one loaf on another, Exodus 40:23; then it would naturally mean one of the same row or pile; of the same rank or condition. The word also means price, estimation, or value, Job 28:13; Leviticus 5:15, Leviticus 5:18; Leviticus 6:6. Here the expression may mean a man "according to my estimation, value, or price;" that is, of the same value as myself (Gesenius, Lexicon); or more probably it means a man of my own rank; according to my condition; that is, a man whom I esteemed as my equal, or whom I regarded and treated as a friend.

My guide - The word used here properly denotes one who is familiar - a friend - from the verb אלף *'âlaph* - to be associated with; to be familiar; to be accustomed to. The noun is frequently used to denote a military leader - the head of a tribe - a chieftain; and is, in this sense, several times employed in Genesis 36 to denote the leaders or princes of the Edomites, where it is rendered duke. But here it seems to be used, not in the sense of a leader or a guide, but of a familiar friend.

And mine acquaintance - The word used here is derived from the verb to know - ידע *yâdaʿ* - and the proper idea is that of "one well known" by us; that is, one who keeps no secrets from us, but who permits us to understand him thoroughly. The phrase "mine acquaintance" is a feeble expression, and does not convey the full force of the original, which denotes a more intimate friend than would be suggested by the word "acquaintance." It is language applied to one whom we thoroughly "know," and who "knows us;" and this exists only in the case of very intimate friends. All the expressions used in this verse would probably be applicable to Ahithophel, and to the intimacy between him and David.

Verse 14

We took sweet counsel together - Margin, "who sweetened counsel." Literally, "We sweetened counsel together;" that is, We consulted together; we opened our minds and plans to each other; in other words, We found that happiness in each other which those do who freely and confidentially communicate their plans and wishes - who have that mutual satisfaction which results from the approval of each other's plans.

And walked unto the house of God in company - We went up to worship God together. The word rendered "company" means properly a noisy crowd, a multitude. The idea here is not that which would seem to be conveyed by our translation - that they went up to the house of God in company "with each other," but that both went with the great company - the crowd - the multitude - that assembled to worship God. They were engaged in the same service, they united in the worship of the same God; associated with those that loved their Maker; belonged to the companionship of those who sought his favor. There is nothing that constitutes a stronger bond of friendship and affection than being united in the worship of God, or belonging to his people. Connexion with a church in acts of worship, ought always to constitute a strong bond of love, confidence, esteem, and affection; the consciousness of having been redeemed by the same blood of the atonement should be a stronger tie than any tie of natural friendship; and the expectation and hope of spending an eternity together in heaven should unite heart to heart in a bond which nothing - not even death - can sever.

Verse 15

Let death seize upon them - This would be more correctly rendered, "Desolations (are) upon them!" That is, Desolation, or destruction will certainly come upon them. There is in the original no necessary expression of a wish or prayer that this might be, but it is rather the language of certain assurance - the expression of a fact - that such base conduct - such wickedness - would make their destruction certain; that as God is just, they must be overwhelmed with ruin. Injury is sometimes done in the translation of the Scriptures by the insertion of a wish or prayer, where all that is necessarily implied in the original is the statement of a fact. This has been caused here by the somewhat uncertain meaning of the word which is used in the original. That phrase is ישׁימות *yaśimâveth* It occurs nowhere else. Our translators understood it (as the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and Luther do) as made up of two words. More correctly, however, it is to be regarded as one word, meaning "desolations," or "destructions." So Gesenius (Lexicon), Rosenmuller, and Prof. Alexander understand it.

And let them go down quick into hell - "Alive," or "living," for that is the meaning of the word "quick" here - חיים *chayiym* - as it commonly is in the Scriptures. Compare Leviticus 13:10; Numbers 16:30; Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 4:5. The word "hell" is rendered in the margin "the grave." The original word is "sheol," and means here either the

grave, or the abode of departed spirits. See the notes at Isaiah 14:9; notes at Job 10:21-22. There is a harshness in the translation of the term here which is unnecessary, as the word "hell" with us now uniformly refers to the place of punishment for the wicked beyond death. The meaning here, however, is not that they would be consigned to wrath, but that they would be cut off from the land of the living. The idea is that their destruction might be as sudden as if the earth were to open, and they were to descend alive into the chasm. Probably there is an implied allusion here to the manner in which the company of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram was destroyed, Numbers 16:31-33. Compare Psalm 106:17.

For wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them - Wickedness abounds in all their transactions. It is in their houses, and in their hearts. This is mentioned as a reason why they should be cut off and consigned to the grave. It is the reason why people are cut down at all; it is often a fact that wicked people are most manifestly cut down for their sins. And because it will be better for the community that the wicked should be punished than that they should escape, so there is no evidence that David cherished malice or ill-will in his heart. See General Introduction, Section 6 (5).

Verse 16

As for me, I will call upon God - That is, I have no other refuge in my troubles, yet I can go to him, and pour out all the desires of my heart before him.

And the Lord shall save me - This expresses strong confidence. On the supposition that the psalm refers to the rebellion of Absalom, David was driven from his home, and his throne, and from the house of God - a poor exile, forsaken by nearly all. But his faith did not fail. He confided in God, and believed that He was able to effect his deliverance, and that He would do it. Rarely can we be placed in circumstances so trying and discouraging as were those of David; never should we, in any circumstances, fall to believe, as he did, that God can deliver us, and that, if we are his friends, we shall be ultimately safe.

Verse 17

Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray - In another place Psalm 119:164 the psalmist says that he engaged in acts of devotion seven times in a day. Daniel prayed three times a day, Daniel 6:10. David went, in his troubles, before God evening, morning, and mid-day, in solemn, earnest prayer. So Paul, in a time of great distress, gave himself on three set

occasions to earnest prayer for deliverance. See the notes at 2 Corinthians 12:8. This verse, therefore, does not prove that it was a regular habit of David to pray three times a day; but in view of the passage, it may be remarked

(a) that it is proper to have regular seasons for devotion, of frequent occurrence; and

(b) that there are favorable and suitable times for devotion.

The morning and the evening are obviously appropriate; and it is well to divide the day also by prayer - to seek, at mid-day, the rest titan bodily and mental toil which is secured by communion with God - and to implore that strength which we need for the remaining duties of the day. True religion is cultivated by frequent and regular seasons of devotion.

And cry aloud - The word here employed properly means to murmur; to make a humming sound; to sigh; to growl; to groan. See the notes at Psalm 42:5. Here the language means that he would give utterance to his deep feelings in appropriate tones - whether words, sighs, or groans. To the deep thoughts and sorrows of his soul he would often give suitable expression before God.

And he shall hear my voice - The confident language of faith, as in Psalm 55:16.

Verse 18

He hath delivered my soul in peaee - The Hebrew is, "He has redeemed;" so also the Septuagint and Vulgate. The meaning is, He has "rescued" me, or has saved me from my enemies. Either the psalmist composed the psalm "after" the struggle was over, and in view of it, here speaks of what had actually occurred; or he is so confident of being redeemed and saved that he speaks of it as if it were already done. See Psalm 55:19. There are many instances in the Psalms in which the writer is so certain that what he prays for will be accomplished that he speaks of it as if it had already actually occurred. The words "in peace" mean that God ad given him peace; or that the result of the divine interposition was that he had calmness of mind.

From the battle that was against me - The hostile array; the armies prepared for conflict.

For there were many with me - This language conveys to us the idea that there were many on his side, or many that were associated with him, and that this was the reason why he was delivered. It is doubtful, however, whether this is the meaning of the original. The idea may be that there were many contending with him; that is, that there were many who were arrayed against him. The Hebrew will admit of this construction.

Verse 19

God shall hear and afflict them - That is, God will hear my prayer, and will afflict them, or bring upon them deserved judgments. As this looks to the future, it would seem to show that when in the previous verse he uses the past tense, and says that God "had" redeemed him, the language there, as suggested above, is that of strong confidence, implying that he had such certain assurance that the thing would be, that he speaks of it as if it were already done. Here he expresses the same confidence in another form - his firm belief that God "would" hear his prayer, and would bring upon his enemies deserved punishment.

Even he that abideth of old - The eternal God; he who is from everlasting. Literally, "He inhabits antiquity;" that is, he sits enthroned in the most distant past; he is eternal and unchanging. The same God who has heard prayer, will hear it now; he who has always shown himself a just God and an avenger, will show himself the same now. The fact that God is from everlasting, and is unchanging, is the only foundation for our security at any time, and the only ground of success in our plans. To a Being who is always the same we may confidently appeal, for we know what he will do. But who could have confidence in a changeable God? Who would know what to expect? Who can make any "calculation" on mere chance?

Because they have no changes … - Margin, "With whom there be no changes, yet they fear not God." Literally, "To whom there are no changes, and they fear not God." Prof. Alexander supposes this to mean that God will "hear" the reproaches and blasphemies of those who have no changes, and who, therefore, have no fear of God. The meaning of the original is not exactly expressed in our common version. According to that version, the idea would seem to be that the fact that they meet with no changes or reverses in life, or that they are favored with uniform prosperity, is a "reason" why they do not fear or worship God. This may be true in fact (compare the notes at Job 21:9-14), but it is not the idea here. The meaning is, that the God who is unchanging - who is always true and just - will

“afflict,” that is, will bring punishisment on those who heretofore have had no changes; who have experienced no adversities; who are confident of success because they have always been prosperous, and who have no fear of God. Their continual success and prosperity “may” be a reason - as it often is - why they do “not” feel their need of religion, and do “not” seek and serve God; but the precise truth taught here is, that the fact of continued prosperity is no argument for impunity and safety in a course of wrong doing. God is unchangeable in fact, as they seem to be; and an unchangeable God will not suffer the wicked always to prosper. To constitute safety there must be a better ground of assurance than the mere fact that we have been uniformly prospered, and have experienced no reverses hitherto.

They fear not God - They do not regard him. They do not dread his interposition as a just God. How many such there are upon the earth, who argue secretly that because they have always been favored with success, therefore they are safe; who, in the midst of abundant prosperity - of unchanging “good fortune,” as they would term it - worship no God, feel no need of religion, and are regardless of the changes of life which may soon occur, and even of that one great change which death must soon produce!

Verse 20

He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him - Against those who were his friends, or who had given him no occasion for war. The Septuagint and Vulgate render this, “He hath put forth his hands in recompensing;” that is, in taking vengeance. The Hebrew would bear this construction, but the more correct rendering is that in our common version. The “connection” here would seem to indicate that this is to be referred to God, as God is mentioned in the previous verse. But evidently the design is to refer to the enemies, or the principal enemy of the psalmist - the man whom he had particularly in his eye in the composition of the psalm; and the language is that of one who was “full” of the subject - who was thinking of one thing - and who did not deem it necessary to specify by name the man who had injured him, and whose conduct had so deeply pained him. He, therefore, begins the verse, “He hath put forth his hands,” etc.; showing that his mind was fixed on the base conduct of his enemy. The language is such as leads us to suppose that the psalmist had Ahithophel in view, as being eminently the man that had in this cruel and unexpected manner put

forth his hands against one who was his friend, and who had always treated him with confidence.

He hath broken his covenant - He, Ahithophel. The margin, as the Hebrew, is, "He hath profaned." The idea is, that he had defiled, or polluted it; or he had treated it as a vile thing - a thing to be regarded with contempt and aversion, as a polluted object is. The "covenant" here referred to, according to the views expressed above, may be supposed to refer to the compact or agreement of Ahithophel with David as an officer of his realm - as an adviser and counselor - that he would be faithful to the interests of the king and to his cause. All this he had disregarded, and had treated as if it were a worthless thing, by identifying himself with Absalom in his rebellion. See 2 Samuel 15:12, 2 Samuel 15:31.

Verse 21

The words of his mouth were smoother than butter - Prof. Alexander renders this, "Smooth are the butterings of his mouth." This is in accordance with the Hebrew, but the general meaning is well expressed in our common version. The idea is, that he was a hypocrite; that his professions of friendship were false; that he only used pleasant words - words expressive of friendship and love - to deceive and betray. We have a similar expression when we speak of "honeyed words," or "honeyed accents." This would apply to Ahithophel, and it will apply to thousands of similar cases in the world.

But war was in his heart - He was base, treacherous, false. He was really my enemy, and was ready, when any suitable occasion occurred, to show himself to be such.

His words were softer than oil - Smooth, pleasant, gentle. He was full of professions of love and kindness.

Yet were they drawn swords - As swords drawn from the scabbard, and ready to be used. Compare Psalm 28:3; Psalm 57:4.

Verse 22

Cast thy burden upon the Lord - This may be regarded as an address of the psalmist to himself, or to his own soul - an exhortation to himself to roll all his care upon the Lord, and to be calm. It is expressed, however, in so general language, that it may be applicable to all persons in similar circumstances. Compare Matthew 11:28-29; Philemon 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:7. The Margin here is, "gift." The "literal" rendering would be, "Cast upon Jehovah what he hath given (or laid upon) thee; that is, thy lot." (Gesenius,

Lexicon) The phrase, "he gives thee," here means what he appoints for thee; what he allots to thee as thy portion; what, in the great distribution of things in his world, he has assigned to "thee" to be done or to be borne; cast it all on him. Receive the allotment as coming from him; as what "he" has, in his infinite wisdom, assigned to thee as thy portion in this life; as what "he" has judged it to be best that then shouldest do or bear; as "thy" part of toil, or trouble, or sacrifice, in carrying out his great arrangements in the world. All that is to be "borne" or to be "done" in this world he has "divided up" among people, giving or assigning to each one what He thought best suited to his ability, his circumstances, his position in life - what "he" could do or bear best - and what, therefore, would most conduce to the great end in view. That portion thus assigned to "us," we are directed to "cast upon the Lord;" that is, we are to look to him to enable us to do or to bear it. As it is "his" appointment, we should receive it, and submit to it, without complaining; as it is "his" appointment, we may feel assured that no more has been laid upon us than is commensurate with our ability, our condition, our usefulness, our salvation. We have not to rearrange what has been thus appointed, or to adjust it anew, but to do all, and endure all that he has ordained, leaning on his arm.

And he shall sustain thee - He will make you sufficient for it. The word literally means "to measure;" then to hold or contain, as a vessel or measure; and then, to hold up or sustain "by" a sufficiency of strength or nourishment, as life is sustained. Genesis 45:11; Genesis 47:12; Genesis 50:21; 1 Kings 4:7; 1 Kings 17:4. Here it means that God would give such a "measure" of strength and grace as would be adapted to the duty or the trial; or such as would be sufficient to bear us up under it. Compare the notes at 2 Corinthians 12:9.

He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved - literally, "He will not give moving forever to the righteous." That is, he will not so appoint, arrange, or permit things to occur, that the righteous shall be "ultimately" and "permanently" removed from their steadfastness and their hope; he will not suffer them to fall away and perish. In all their trials and temptations he will sustain them, and will ultimately bring them off in triumph. The meaning here cannot be that the righteous shall never be "moved" in the sense that their circumstances will not be changed; or that none of their plans will fail; or that they will never be disappointed; or that their minds

will never in any sense be discomposed; but that whatever trials may come upon them, they will be "ultimately" safe. Compare Psalm 37:24.

Verse 23

But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction - The word "them," here evidently refers to the enemies of the psalmist; the wicked people who were arrayed against him, and who sought his life. The "pit of destruction" refers here to the grave, or to death, considered with reference to the fact that they would be "destroyed" or "cut off," or would not die in the usual course of nature. The meaning is, that God would come forth in his displeasure, and cut them down for their crimes. The word "pit" usually denotes "a well," or "cavern" Genesis 14:10; Genesis 37:20; Exodus 21:34, but is often used to denote the grave (Job 17:16; Job 33:18, Job 33:24; Psalm 9:15; Psalm 28:1; Psalm 30:3, Psalm 30:9, et al.); and the idea here is that they would be cut off for their sins. The word "destruction" is added to denote that this would be by some direct act, or by punishment inflicted by the hand of God.

Bloody and deceitful men - Margin, as in Hebrew, "Men of bloods and deceit." The allusion is to people of violence; people who live by plunder and rapine; and especially to such people considered as false, unfaithful, and treacherous - as they commonly are. The special allusion here is to the enemies of David, and particularly to such as Ahithophel - men who not only sought his life, but who had proved themselves to be treacherous and false to him.

Shall not live out half their days - Margin, as in Hebrew, "shall not halve their days." So the Septuagint, and the Latin Vulgate. The statement is general, not universal. The meaning is, that they do not live half as long as they might do, and would do, if they were "not" bloody and deceitful. Beyond all question this is true. Such people are either cut off in strife and conflict, in personal affrays in duels, or in battle; or they are arrested for their crimes, and punished by an ignominious death. Thousands and tens of thousands thus die every year, who, "but" for their evil deeds, might have doubled the actual length of their lives; who might have passed onward to old age respected, beloved, happy, useful. There is to all, indeed, an outer limit of life. There is a bound which we cannot pass. That natural limit, however, is one that in numerous cases is much "beyond" what people actually reach, though one to which they "might" have come by a course of temperance, prudence, virtue, and piety.

God has fixed a limit beyond which we cannot pass; but, wherever that may be, as arranged in his providence, it is our duty not to cut off our lives "before" that natural limit is reached; or, in other words, it is our duty to live on the earth just as long as we can. Whatever makes us come short of this is self-murder, for there is no difference in principle between a man's cutting off his life by the pistol, by poison, or by the halter, and cutting it off by vice, by crime, by dissipation, by the neglect of health, or by those habits of indolence and self-indulgence which undermine the constitution, and bring the body down to the grave. Thousands die each year whose proper record on their graves would be "self-murderers." Thousands of young people are indulging in habits which, unless arrested, "must" have such a result, and who are destined to an early grave - who will not live out half their days - unless their mode of life is changed, and they become temperate, chaste, and virtuous. One of the ablest lawyers that I have ever known - an example of what often occurs - was cut down in middle life by the use of tobacco. How many thousands perish each year, in a similar manner, by indulgence in intoxicating drinks!

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 56

Introduction

This purports to be a psalm of David, and there is no sufficient reason for doubting the correctness of its being thus attributed to him. DeWette indeed thinks that the contents of the psalm do not well agree with the circumstances of David‘s life, and especially with that period of his life referred to in the title, and supposes that it was composed by some Hebrew in exile in the time of the captivity. But this is evidently mere conjecture. There “were” times in the life of David to which all that is said in this psalm would be applicable; and it is not difficult to explain all the allusions in it with reference to the circumstances specified in the title.

On the words “To the chief Musician,” see Introduction to Psalm 4:1-8. In the expression in the title “upon Jonath-elem-rechokim,” the first word - “Jonath” - means a “dove,” a favorite emblem of suffering innocence; and the second - אלם *'êlem* - means “silence,” dumbness, sometimes put for uncomplaining submission; and the third - רחוקים *râchôqiym* - means “distant” or “remote,” agreeing here with places or persons, probably the latter, in which sense it is applicable to the Philistines, as aliens in blood and religion from the Hebrews. Thus understood, the whole title is an enigmatical description of David as an innocent and uncomplaining sufferer among strangers. See Prof. Alexander. DeWette, however, renders it, “The dove of the far-off terebinth trees.” The Septuagint and the Vulgate render it, “for the people who are made remote from their sanctuary.” The common rendering of the phrase is, “Upon, or respecting the dove of silence, in remote plaaes,” or “far-off from its nest,” or “in distant groves.”

Gesenius (Lexicon) renders it, “the silent dove among strangers,” and applies it to the people of Israel in the time of the exile, as an uncomplaining, unmurmuring people. This explanation of the “words,” “the silent dove among strangers,” is probably the true one; but it is applicable here, not to the people of Israel, as Gesenius, the Septuagint, and the Vulgate, render it, but to David, as an exile and a wanderer - one who was driven away from country and home, as a dove wandering from its nest. Whether it was the title of a “tune” or a piece of music already known, or whether it was music that was composed for this occasion, and with reference to this very psalm, it is not practicable now to determine. It is

very “possible” that there was already a piece of music in existence, and in common use, to which this beautiful title of “A silent dove among strangers,” or “A patient dove driven from her nest into remote p aces,” was given - plaintive, tender, pensive music, and therefore especially appropriate for a psalm composed to describe the feelings of David when driven from home, and compelled to seek a place of safety in a remote region, like a dove driven from its nest.

On the meaning of the word “Michtam,” see the notes at the introduction to Psalm 16:1-11. The portion of the title “When the Philistines took him in Gath,” evidently refers to the event recorded in 1 Samuel 21:10 ff when David, fleeing from Saul, took refuge in the country of Achish, king of Gath, and when the “servants” of the king of Gath made him known to Achish, whose fears they so aroused as to lead him to drive the stranger away. The words “took him in Gath,” refer not to their “apprehending” him, or “seizing” him, but to their following him, or overtaking him, to wit, by their calumnies and reproaches, so that he found no safety there. He was persecuted by Saul; he was also persecuted by the Philistines, among whom he sought refuge and safety.

The psalm embraces the following points:

I. An earnest prayer for the divine interposition in behalf of the author of the psalm, Psalm 56:1-2.

II. An expression of his trust in God in times of danger, Psalm 56:3-4.

III. A description of his enemies: of their wresting his words; of their evil thoughts against him; of their gathering together; of their watching his steps; of their lying in wait for his life, Psalm 56:5-6.

IV. His confident belief that they would not escape by their iniquity; that God knew all his wanderings; that God remembered his tears, as if He put them in His bottle; and that his enemies would know that God was with him, Psalm 56:7-9.

V. His entire trust in God, and his firm assurance that he would yet be kept from falling, and would walk before God in the light of the living. Psalm 56:10-13.

The general "subject" of the psalm, therefore, is "confidence or trust in God in the time of danger."

Verse 1

Be merciful unto me, O God - See the notes at Psalm 51:1.

For man would swallow me up - The word used here means properly to breathe hard; to pant; to blow hard; and then, to pant after, to yawn after with open mouth. The idea is, that people came upon him everywhere with open mouth, as if they would swallow him down whole. He found no friend in man - in any man. Everywhere his life was sought. There was no "man," wherever he might go, on whom he could rely, or whom he could trust; and his only refuge, therefore, was in God.

He fighting daily - Constantly; without intermission. That is, all people seemed to be at war with him, and to pursue him always.

Oppresseth me - Presses hard upon me; so presses on me as always to endanger my life, and so that I feel no security anywhere.

Verse 2

Mine enemies - Margin, "mine observers." The Hebrew word here used means properly to twist, to twist totogether; then, to be firm, hard, tough; then, "to press together," as a rope that is twisted - and hence, the idea of oppressing, or pressing hard on one, as an enemy. See Psalm 27:11; Psalm 54:5. In the former verse the psalmist spoke of an enemy, or of "one" that would swallow him up (in the singular number), or of "man" as an enemy to him anywhere. Here he uses the plural number, implying that there were "many" who were enlisted against him. He was surrounded by enemies. He met them wherever he went. He had an enemy in Saul; he had enemies in the followers of Saul; he had enemies among the Philistines, and now when he had fled to Achish, king of Gath, and had hoped to find a refuge and a friend there, he found only bitter foes.

Would daily swallow me up - Constantly; their efforts to do it are unceasing. A new day brings no relief to me, but every day I am called to meet some new form of opposition.

For they be many that fight against me - His own followers and friends were few; his foes were many. Saul had numerous followers, and David encountered foes wherever he went. "O thou Most High." The word used here - מרום *mârôm* - means properly height, altitude, elevation; then, a

high place, especially heaven, Psalm 18:16; Isaiah 24:18, Isaiah 24:21; then it is applied to anything high or inaccessible, as a fortress, Isaiah 26:5. It is supposed by Gesenius (Lexicon), and some others, to mean here "elation of mind, pride," - implying that his enemies fought against him with elated minds, or proudly. So the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and Luther render it; and so DeWette understands it. Yet it seems most probable that our translators have given the correct rendering, and that the passage is a solemn appeal to God as more exalted than his foes, and as one, therefore, in whom he could put entire confidence. Compare Psalm 92:8; Psalm 93:4,; Micah 6:6.

Verse 3

What time I am afraid - literally, "the day I am afraid." David did not hesitate to admit that there were times when he was afraid. He saw himself to be in danger, and he had apprehensions as to the result. There is a natural fear of danger and of death; a fear implanted in us:

(a) to make us cautious, and

(b) to induce us to put our trust in God as a Preserver and Friend.

Our very nature - our physical constitution - is full of arrangements most skillfully adjusted, and most wisely planted there, to lead us to God as our Protector. Fear is one of these things, designed to make us feel that we "need" a God, and to lead us to him when we realize that we have no power to save ourselves from impending dangers.

I will trust in thee - As one that is able to save, and one that will order all things as they should be ordered. It is only this that can make the mind calm in the midst of danger:

(a) the feeling that God can protect us and save us from danger, and that he "will" protect us if he sees fit;

(b) the feeling that whatever may be the result, whether life or death, it will be such as God sees to be best - if "life," that we may be useful, and glorify his name yet upon the earth; if "death," that it will occur not because he had not "power" to interpose and save, but because there were good and sufficient reasons why he should "not" put forth his power on that occasion and rescue us.

Of this we may be, however, assured, that God has "power" to deliver us always, and that if not delivered from calamity it is not because he is inattentive, or has not power. And of this higher truth also we may be assured always, that he has power to save us from that which we have most occasion to fear - a dreadful hell. It is a good maxim with which to go into a world of danger; a good maxim to go to sea with; a good maxim in a storm; a good maxim when in danger on the land; a good maxim when we are sick; a good maxim when we think of death and the judgment - "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee."

Verse 4

In God I will praise his word - The meaning of this seems to be, "In reference to God - or, in my trust on God - I will especially have respect to his "word" - his gracious promise; I will make that the special object of my praise. In dwelling in my own mind on the divine perfections; in finding there materials for praise, I will have special respect to his revealed truth - to what he has "spoken" as an encouragement to me. I will be thankful that he "has" spoken, and that he has given me assurances on which I may rely in the times of danger." The idea is, that he would "always" find in God that which was the ground or foundation for praise; and that that which called for special praise in meditating on the divine character, was the word or promise which God had made to his people.

I will not fear what flesh can do unto me - What man can do to me. Compare the notes at Matthew 10:28 (notes); Romans 8:31-34 (notes); Hebrews 13:6 (notes).

Verse 5

Every day they wrest my words - The word here rendered "wrest," means literally to give pain, to grieve, to afflict; and it is used here in the sense of "wresting," as if force were applied to words; that is, they are "tortured," twisted, perverted. We have the same use of the word "torture" in our language. This they did by affixing a meaning to his words which he never intended, so as to injure him.

All their thoughts are against me for evil - All their plans, devices, purposes. They never seek my good, but always seek to do me harm.

Verse 6

They gather themselves together - That is, they do not attack me singly, but they unite their forces; they combine against me.

They hide themselves - They lurk in ambush. They do not come upon me openly, but they conceal themselves in places where they cannot be seen, that they may spring upon me suddenly.

They mark my steps - They watch me whatever I do. They keep a spy upon me, so that I can never be sure that I am not observed.

When they wait for my soul - As they watch for my life; or, as they watch for opportunities to take away my life. I am never secure; I know not at what time, or in what manner, they may spring upon me. This would apply to David when he fled to Achish, king of Gath; when he was driven away by him; and when he was watched and pursued by Saul and his followers as he fled into the wilderness. 1 Samuel 21:1-15; 22.

Verse 7

Shall they escape by iniquity? - This expression in the original is very obscure. There is in the Hebrew no mark of interrogation; and a literal rendering would be, "By iniquity (there is) escape to them;" and, according to this, the sense would be, that they contrived to escape from just punishment by their sins; by the boldness of their crimes; by their wicked arts. The Septuagint renders it, "As I have suffered this for my life, thou wilt on no account save them." Luther, "What they have done evil, that is already forgiven." DeWette reads it, as in our translation, as a question: "Shall their deliverance be in wickedness?" Probably this is the true idea. The psalmist asks with earnestness and amazement whether, under the divine administration, people "can" find safety in mere wickedness; whether great crimes constitute an evidence of security; whether his enemies owed their apparent safety to the fact that they were so eminently wicked. He prays, therefore, that God would interfere, and show that this was not, and could not be so.

In thine anger cast down the people, O God - That is, show by thine own interposition - by the infliction of justice - by preventing the success of their plans - by discomfiting them - that under the divine administration wickedness does not constitute security; in other words, that thou art a just God, and that wickedness is not a passport to thy favor.

Verse 8

Thou tellest my wanderings - Thou dost "number" or "recount" them; that is, in thy own mind. Thou dost keep an account of them; thou dost notice me as I am driven from one place to another to find safety. "My wanderings," to Gath, 1 Samuel 21:10; to the cave of Adullam, 1 Samuel

22:1; to Mizpeh, in Moab, 1 Samuel 22:3; to the forest of Hareth, 1 Samuel 22:5; to Keilah, 1 Samuel 23:5; to the wilderness of Ziph, 1 Samuel 23:14; to the wilderness of Maon, 1 Samuel 23:25; to En-gedi, 1 Samuel 24:1-2.

Put thou my tears into thy bottle - The tears which I shed in my wanderings. Let them not fall to the ground and be forgotten. Let them be remembered by thee as if they were gathered up and placed in a bottle - "a lachrymatory" - that they may be brought to remembrance hereafter. The word here rendered "bottle" means properly a bottle made of skin, such as was used in the East; but it may be employed to denote a bottle of any kind. It is possible, and, indeed, it seems probable, that there is an allusion here to the custom of collecting tears shed in a time of calamity and sorrow, and preserving them in a small bottle or "lachrymatory," as a memorial of the grief. The Romans had a custom, that in a time of mourning - on a funeral occasion - a friend went to one in sorrow, and wiped away the tears from the eyes with a piece of cloth, and squeezed the tears into a small bottle of glass or earth, which was carefully preserved as a memorial of friendship and sorrow.

Many of these lachrymatories have been found in the ancient Roman tombs. I myself saw a large quantity of them in the "Columbaria" at Rome, and in the Capitol, among the relics and curiosities of the place. The above engraving will illustrate the form of these lachrymatories. The annexed remarks of Dr. Thomson ("land and the Book," vol. i. p. 147), will show that the same custom prevailed in the East, and will describe the forms of the "tear-bottles" that were used there. "These lachrymatories are still found in great numbers on opening ancient tombs. A sepulchre lately discovered in one of the gardens of our city had scores of them in it. They are made of thin glass, or more generally of simple pottery, often not even baked or glazed, with a slender body, a broad bottom, and a funnel-shaped top. They have nothing in them but "dust" at present. If the friends were expected to contribute their share of tears for these bottles, they would very much need cunning women to cause their eyelids to gush out with water. These forms of ostentatious sorrow have ever been offensive to sensible people. Thus Tacitus says, ‹At my funeral let no tokens of sorrow be seen, no pompous mockery of woe. Crown me with chaplets, strew flowers on my grave, and let my friends erect no vain memorial to tell where my remains are lodged. ‹"

Are they not in thy book? - In thy book of remembrance; are they not numbered and recorded so that they will not be forgotten? This expresses strong confidence that his tears "would" be remembered; that they would not be forgotten. All the tears that we shed "are" remembered by God. If "properly" shed - shed in sorrow, without murmuring or complaining, they will be remembered for our good; if "improperly shed" - if with the spirit of complaining, and with a want of submission to the divine will, they will be remembered against us. But it is not wrong to weep. David wept; the Saviour wept; nature prompts us to weep; and it cannot be wrong to weep if "our" eye "poureth out" its tears "unto God" Job 16:20; that is, if in our sorrow we look to God with submission and with earnest supplication.

Verse 9

When I cry unto thee - This expresses strong confidence in prayer. The psalmist felt that he had only to cry unto God, to secure the overthrow of his enemies. God had all power, and his power would be put forth in answer to prayer.

Then shall mine enemies turn back - Then shall they cease to pursue and persecute me. He did not doubt that this would be the ultimate result - that this blessing would be conferred, though it might be delayed, and though his faith and patience might be greatly tried.

For God is for me - He is on my side; and he is with me in my wanderings. Compare the notes at Romans 8:31.

Verse 10

In God will I praise his word - Luther renders this, "I will praise the word of God." The phrase "in God" means probably "in respect to God;" or, "in what pertains to God." That which he would "particularly" praise or celebrate in respect to God - that which called for the most decided expressions of praise and gratitude, was his "word," his promise, his revealed truth. So in Psalm 138:2, "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name;" that is, above all the other manifestations of thyself. The allusion in the passage here is to what God had "spoken" to David, or the "promise" which he had made - the declaration of his gracious purposes in regard to him. Amidst all the perfections of Deity, and all which God had done for him, this now seemed to him to have special pre-eminence in his praises. The "word" of God was to him that which impressed his mind most deeply - that which most tenderly affected his heart. There are times when we feel this, and properly feel it; times when, in the contemplation of the

divine perfections and dealings, our minds so rest on his word, on his truth, on what he has revealed, on his gracious promises, on the disclosures of a plan of redemption, on the assurance of a heaven hereafter, on the instructions which he has given us about himself and his plans - about ourselves, our duty, and our prospects, that this absorbs all our thoughts, and we feel that this is "the" great blessing for which we are to be thankful; this, "the" great mercy for which we are to praise him. What would the life of man be without the Bible! What a dark, gloomy, sad course would ours be on earth if we had nothing to guide us to a better world!

In the Lord will I praise his word - In "Yahweh." That is, whether I contemplate God in the usual name by which he is known - אלהים *'Elohiym* - or by that more sacred name which he has assumed - יהוה *Yahweh* - that which seems now to me to lay the foundation of loftiest praise and most hearty thanksgiving, is that he has spoken to people, and made known his will in his revealed truth.

Verse 11

In God have I put my trust - The sentiment in this verse is the same as in Psalm 56:6, except that the word "man" is used here instead of "flesh." The meaning, however, is the same. The idea is, that he would not be afraid of what "any man" - any human being - could do to him, if God was his friend.

Verse 12

Thy vows are upon me, O God - The word "vow" means something promised; some obligation under which we have voluntarily brought ourselves. It differs from duty, or obligation in general, since that is the result of the divine command, while this is an obligation arising from the fact that we have "voluntarily" taken it upon ourselves. The extent of this obligation, therefore, is measured by the nature of the promise or vow which we have made; and God will hold us responsible for carrying out our vows. Such voluntary obligations or vows were allowable, as an expression of thanksgiving, or as a means of exciting to a more strict religious service, under the Mosaic dispensation Genesis 28:20; Numbers 6:2; Numbers 30:2-3; Deuteronomy 23:21; 1 Samuel 1:11; and they cannot be wrong under any dispensation. They are not of the nature of "merit," or works of supererogation, but they are

(a) a "means" of bringing the obligations of religion to bear upon us more decidedly, and

(b) a proper expression of gratitude.

Such vows are those which all persons take upon themselves when they make a profession of religion; and when such a profession of religion is made, it should be a constant reflection on our part, that "the vows of God are upon us," or that we have voluntarily consecrated all that we have to God. David had made such a vow

(a) in his general purpose to lead a religious life;

(b) very probably in some specific act or promise that he would devote himself to God if he would deliver him, or as an expression of his gratitude for deliverance. Compare the notes at Acts 18:18; notes at Acts 21:23-24.

I will render praises unto thee - literally, "I will recompense praises unto thee;" that is, I will "pay" what I have vowed, or I will faithfully perform my vows.

Verse 13

For thou hast delivered my soul from death - That is, my "life." Thou hast kept "me" from death. He was surrounded by enemies. He was pursued by them from place to place. He had been, however, graciously delivered from these dangers, and had been kept alive. Now he gratefully remembers this mercy, and confidently appeals to God to interpose still further, and keep him from stumbling.

Wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling - This might be rendered, "Hast thou not delivered;" thus carrying forward the thought just before expressed. So the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and Luther and DeWette render it. The Hebrew, however, will admit of the translation in our common version, and such a petition would be an appropriate close of the psalm. Thus understood, it would be the recognition of dependence on God; the expression of gratitude for his former mercies; the utterance of a desire to honor him always; the acknowledgment of the fact that God only could keep him; and the manifestation of a wish that he might be enabled to live and act as in His presence. The word here rendered "falling" means usually a "thrusting" or "casting down," as by violence. The prayer is, that he might be kept amid the dangers of his way; or that God would uphold him so that he might still honor Him.

That I may walk before God - As in his presence; enjoying his friendship and favor.

In the light of the living - See the notes at Job 33:30. The grave is represented everywhere in the Scriptures as a region of darkness (see the notes at Job 10:21-22; compare Psalm 6:5; Psalm 30:9; Isaiah 38:11, Isaiah 38:18-19), and this world as light. The prayer, therefore, is, that he might continue to live, and that he might enjoy the favor of God: a prayer always proper for man, whatever his rank or condition.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 57

Introduction

This is another psalm which purports to be a psalm of David. The propriety of ascribing it to him cannot be called in question. It is addressed to "the chief Musician" (see the notes to Introduction of Psalm 4:1-8). Though relating to an individual case, and to the particular trials of an individual, yet it had much in it that would be appropriate to the condition of others in similar circumstances, and it contained, moreover, such general sentiments on the subject of religion, that it would be useful to the people of God in all ages. The expression in the title, "Al-taschith," rendered in the margin, "Destroy not," and by the Septuagint, μή διαφθείρης *mē diaphtheirēs* (destroy not), and in the same manner in the Latin Vulgate, occurs also in the titles of the two following psalms, and of the seventy-fifth. It is regarded by some as a musical expression - and by others as the first words of some well-known poem or hymn, in order to show that this psalm was to be set to the music which was employed in using that poem; or, as we should say, that the "tune" appropriate to that was also appropriate to this, so that the words would at once suggest the tune, in the same manner as the Latin designations *De Profundis, Miserere, Non Nobis Domine, Te Deum,* etc., indicate well-known tunes as pieces of music - the tunes to which the hymns beginning with those words are always sung.

The author of the Chaldee Paraphrase regards this psalm as belonging to that period of David's history when he was under a constant necessity of using language of this nature, or of saying "Destroy not," and as therefore suited to all similar emergencies. The language seems to be derived from the prayer of Moses, Deuteronomy 9:26; "I prayed therefore unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, destroy not thy people," etc. This very expression is found in 1 Samuel 26:9, in a command which David addressed to his followers, and it "may" have been a common expression with him. On the meaning of the word "Michtam" in the title, see the notes at the Introduction to Psalm 16:1-11. It is found in the three following psalms - in the two former of them, in connection with the phrase "Al-taschith, showing that probably those psalms had reference to the same period of David's life.

When he fled from Saul in the cave - Possibly the cave of Adullam 1 Samuel 22:1, or that of En-gedi 1 Samuel 24:1-3. Or, the word may be used in a "general" sense as referring not to any "particular" cave, but to that period of his life when he was compelled to flee from one place to another for safety, and when his home was "often" in caves.

The psalm consists of the following parts:

I. An earnest prayer of the suffering and persecuted man, with a full expression of confidence that God would hear him, Psalm 57:1-3.

II. A description of his enemies, as people that resembled lions; people, whose souls were inflamed and infuriated; people, whose teeth were like spears and arrows, Psalm 57:4.

III. The expression of a desire that God might be exalted and honored, or that all these events might result in his honor and glory, Psalm 57:5.

IV. A further description of the purposes of his enemies, as people who had prepared a net to take him, or had digged a pit into which he might fall, but which he felt assured was a pit into which they themselves would fall, Psalm 57:6.

V. A joyful and exulting expression of confidence in God; an assurance that he would interpose for him; a determination to praise and honor him; a desire that God might be exalted above the heaven, and that his glory might fill all the earth - forgetting his own particular troubles, and pouring out the desire of his heart that "God" might be honored whatever might occur to "him."

Verse 1

Be merciful unto me, O God - The same beginning as the former psalm - a cry for mercy; an overwhelming sense of trouble and danger leading him to come at once to the throne of God for help. See the notes at Psalm 56:1.

For my soul trusteth in thee - See the notes at Psalm 56:3. He had nowhere else to go; there was no one on whom he could rely but God.

Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge - Under the protection or covering of his wings - as young birds seek protection under the wings of the parent bird. See the notes at Psalm 17:8. Compare Psalm 36:7.

Until these calamities be overpast - Compare Job 14:13, note; Psalm 27:13, note; also at Isaiah 26:20, note. He believed that these calamities "would" pass away, or would cease; that a time would come when he would not thus be driven from place to place. At present he knew that he was in danger, and he desired the divine protection, for under "that" protection he would be safe.

Verse 2

I will cry unto God most high - The idea is - God is exalted above all creatures; all events are "under" him, and he can control them. The appeal was not to man, however exalted; not to an angel, however far he may be above man; it was an appeal made at once to the Supreme Being, the God to whom all worlds and all creatures are subject, and under whose protection, therefore, he must be safe.

Unto God that performeth all things for me - The word used here, and rendered "performeth" - גמר *gâmar* - means properly to bring to an end; to complete; to perfect. The idea here is, that it is the character of God, that he "completes" or "perfects," or brings to a happy issue all his plans. The psalmist had had experience of that in the past. God had done this in former trials; he felt assured that God would do it in this; and he, therefore, came to God with a confident belief that all would be safe in his hands.

Verse 3

He shall send from heaven - That is, from himself; or, he will interpose to save me. The psalmist does not say "how" he expected this interposition - whether by an angel, by a miracle, by tempest or storm, but he felt that help was to come from God alone, and he was sure that it would come.

And save me from the reproach … - This would be more correctly rendered, "He shall save me; he shall reproach him that would swallow me up." So it is rendered in the margin. On the word rendered "would swallow me up," see the notes at Psalm 56:1. The idea here is, that God would "rebuke" or "reproach," to wit, by overthrowing him that sought to devour or destroy him. God had interposed formerly in his behalf Psalm 57:2, and he felt assured that he would do it again.

Selah - This seems here to be a mere musical pause. It has no connection with the sense. See the notes at Psalm 3:2.

God shall send forth his mercy - In saving me. He will "manifest" his mercy.

And his truth - His fidelity to his promise; his faithfulness to those who put their trust in him. He will show himself "true" to all the promises which he has made. Compare Psalm 40:11.

Verse 4

My soul is among lions - That is, among people who resemble lions; men, fierce, savage, ferocious.

And I lie even among them that are set on fire - We have a term of similar import in common use now, when we say that one is "inflamed" with passion, referring to one who is infuriated and enraged. So we speak of "burning" with rage or wrath - an expression derived, perhaps, from the inflamed "appearance" of a man in anger. The idea here is not that he "would" lie down calmly among those persons, as Prof. Alexander suggests, but that he actually "did" thus lie down. When he laid himself down at night, when he sought repose in sleep, he was surrounded by such persons, and seemed to be sleeping in the midst of them.

Even the sons of men - Yet they are not wild beasts, but "men" who seem to have the ferocious nature of wild beasts. The phrase, "sons of men," is often used to denote men themselves.

Whose teeth are spears and arrows - Spears and arrows in their hands are what the teeth of wild beasts are.

And their tongue a sharp sword - The mention of the tongue here has reference, probably, to the abuse and slander to which he was exposed, and which was like a sharp sword that pierced even to the seat of life. See the notes at Psalm 55:21.

Verse 5

Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens - Compare Psalm 8:1. The language here is that of a man who in trouble lifts his thoughts to God; who feels that God reigns; who is assured in his own soul that all things are under his hand; and who is desirous that God should be magnified whatever may become of himself. His prime and leading wish is not for himself, for his own safety, for his own deliverance from danger; it is that "God" may be honored - that the name of God may be glorified - that God may be regarded as supreme over all things - that God may be exalted in the highest

possible degree - an idea expressed in the prayer that he may be exalted "above the heavens."

Let thy glory be above all the earth - The honor of thy name; thy praise. Let it be regarded, and be in fact, "above" all that pertains to this lower world; let everything on earth, or that pertains to earth, be subordinate to thee, or be surrendered for thee. This was the comfort which David found in trouble. And this "is" the only true source of consolation. The welfare of the universe depends on God; and that God should be true, and just, and good, and worthy of confidence and love - that he should reign, - that his law should be obeyed - that his plans should be accomplished, - is of more importance to the universe than anything that merely pertains to us; than the success of any of our own plans; than our health, our prosperity, or our life.

Verse 6

They have prepared a net for my steps - A net for my goings; or, into which I may fall. See the notes at Psalm 9:15.

My soul is bowed down - The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and Luther render this in the plural, and in the active form: "They have bowed down my soul;" that is, they have caused my soul to be bowed down. The Hebrew may be correctly rendered, "he pressed down my soul," - referring to his enemies, and speaking of them in the singular number.

They have digged a pit before me … - See Psalm 7:15-16, notes; Psalm 9:15, note; Job 5:13, note.

Verse 7

My heart is fixed, O God - Margin, as in Hebrew, "prepared." Compare the notes at Psalm 51:10. The word "suited" or "prepared" accurately expresses the sense of the Hebrew, and it is so rendered in the Septuagint, (ἑτοίμη *hetoimē*); in the Vulgate, *"paratum;"* and by Luther, "bereit." The word is used, however, in the sense of "standing erect," Psalm 9:7; to "establish" or "strengthen," Psalm 89:4; Psalm 10:17; and hence, to be erect; to be firm, steady, constant, fixed. This seems to be the meaning here, as it is expressed in our common version. His heart was firm and decided. He did not waver in his purpose, or lean now to one side and then to the other; he was not "swayed" or "moved" by the events that had occurred. He felt conscious of standing firm in the midst of all his troubles. He confided in God. He did not doubt his justice, his goodness, his mercy; and, even in his trials, he was ready to praise him, and was "resolved" to praise him. The

repetition of the word "fixed" gives emphasis and intensity to the expression, and is designed to show in the strongest manner that his heart, his purpose, his confidence in God, did not waver in the slightest degree.

I will sing and give praise - My heart shall confide in thee; my lips shall utter the language of praise. In all his troubles God was his refuge; in all, he found occasion for praise. So it should be the fixed and settled purpose of our hearts that we will at all times confide in God, and that in every situation in life we will render him praise.

Verse 8

Awake up, my glory - By the word "glory" here some understand the tongue; others understand the soul itself, as the glory of man. The "word" properly refers to that which is weighty, or important; then, anything valuable, splendid, magnificent. Here it seems to refer to all that David regarded as glorious and honorable in himself - his noblest powers of soul - all in him that "could" be employed in the praise of God. The occasion was one on which it was proper to call all his powers into exercise; all that was noble in him as a man. The words "awake up" are equivalent to "arouse;" a solemn appeal to put forth all the powers of the soul.

Awake, psaltery and harp - In regard to these instruments, see the notes at Isaiah 5:12. The instrument denoted by the word "psaltery" - נבל *nebel* - was a stringed instrument, usually with twelve strings, and played with the fingers. See the notes at Psalm 33:2. The "harp" or "lyre" - כנור *kinnôr* - was also a stringed instrument, usually consisting of ten strings. Josephus says that it was struck or played with a key. From 1 Samuel 16:23; 1 Samuel 18:10; 1 Samuel 19:9, it appears, however, that it was sometimes played with the fingers.

I myself will awake early - That is, I will awake early in the morning to praise God; I will arouse myself from slumber to do this; I will devote the first moments - the early morning - to his worship. These words do not imply that this was an evening psalm, and that he would awake on the morrow - the next day - to praise God; but they refer to what he intended should be his general habit - that he would devote the early morning (arousing himself for that purpose) to the praise of God. No time in the day is more appropriate for worship than the early morning; no object is more worthy to rouse us from our slumbers than a desire to praise God; in no way can the day be more appropriately begun than by prayer and praise; and nothing will conduce more to keep up the flame of piety - the life of

religion in the soul - than the habit of devoting the early morning to the worship of God; to prayer; to meditation; to praise.

Verse 9

I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people - So great a deliverance as he here hoped for, would make it proper that he should celebrate the praise of God in the most public manner; that he should make his goodness known as far as possible among the nations. See the notes at Psalm 18:49.

Verse 10

For thy mercy is great unto the heavens … - See this explained in the notes at Psalm 36:5.

Verse 11

Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens - See the notes at Psalm 57:5. The sentiment here is repeated as being that on which the mind of the psalmist was intensely fixed; that which he most earnestly desired; that which was the crowning aim and desire of his life.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 58

Introduction

This psalm is also inscribed as a psalm of David. Both the title and the contents agree in fixing the time of its composition, and the occasion, as being the same as in the two previous psalms. Knapp indeed refers it to the time of Absalom, and DeWette supposes that it was composed in the time of the Babylonian captivity. But there is no reason for departing from the supposition that the title is correct. There is nothing in the psalm inconsistent with the supposition that it was composed by David, and in the time of the persecutions under Saul. On the meaning of the expression in the title, "To the chief Musician," see the notes at the Introduction to Psalm 4:1-8. On the phrase "Al-taschith," see Introduction to Psalm 57:1-11. On the word "Michtam," see Introduction to Psalm 16:1-11.

The psalm consists of three parts:

I. A description of the enemies of the psalmist, suggesting a "general" description of the character of the wicked, Psalm 58:1-5. The psalmist, by an emphatic "question" impliedly affirms that those whom he referred to were wicked and false Psalm 58:1-2; and this leads him to a general reflection on the character of wicked people;

(a) as estranged from the womb;

(b) as going astray as soon as they are born;

(c) as resembling the serpent injecting deadly poison; and

(d) as deaf to all appeals of conscience, virtue, and religion - like an adder that will not listen to the voice of the charmer, Psalm 58:3-5.

II. A prayer that God would interpose and deal with them as they deserved, Psalm 58:6-9. This prayer is expressed in different illustrations: -

(a) by comparing them with lions, and praying that their teeth might be broken out, Psalm 58:6;

(b) by comparing them with water, and praying that they might disappear as waters flow off, Psalm 58:7;

(c) by comparing them with a snail, and praying that they might be dissolved, and pass away as a snail appears to do, Psalm 58:8;

(d) by comparing them with the untimely birth of a woman, that is cast away, Psalm 58:8;

(e) by comparing them with a pot which is made to feel the heat of thorns on fire, and made to boil quickly - praying that God would take them away before even that could be done, Psalm 58:9.

III. The exultation of the righteous at such a result, Psalm 58:10-11.

(a) They would rejoice at the deliverance, Psalm 58:10;

(b) they would see that God is a righteous God; that he is not a friend of wickedness, but that he regards the cause of truth; that there is in fact a just moral government in the world; that there is a God who is a judge in the earth, Psalm 58:11.

Verse 1

Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? - Luther renders this, "Are you then dumb, that you will not speak what is right, and judge what is proper, ye children of men?" The meaning of the verse is exceedingly obscure; but probably the whole sense of the psalm turns on it. The word rendered "congregation," אלם *'êlem* - occurs only in this place and in the title to Psalm 56:1-13, "Jonath-elem-rechokim." See the notes at that title. The word properly means "dumbness, silence." Gesenius (Lexicon) renders it here, "Do ye indeed decree dumb justice?" that is, "Do ye really at length decree justice, which so long has seemed dumb?" Professor Alexander renders it, "Are ye indeed dumb when ye should speak righteousness?" The allusion is clearly to some public act of judging; to a judicial sentence; to magistrates and rulers; to people who "should" give a righteous sentence; to those in authority who "ought" to pronounce a just opinion on the conduct of others.

The “fact” in the case on which the appeal is made seems to have been that they did “not” do this; that their conduct was wicked and perverse; that no reliance could be placed on their judicial decisions. Rosenmuller renders it, “There is, in fact, silence of justice;” that is, justice is not declared or spoken. Perhaps the meaning of the phrase may be thus expressed: “Is there truly a dumbness or silence of justice when ye speak? do you judge righteously, O ye sons of men?” That is, “You indeed speak; you do declare an opinion; you pronounce a sentence; but justice is, in fact, dumb or silent when you do it. There is no correct or just judgment in the matter. The opinion which is declared is based on error, and has its origin in a wicked heart.” There is no expression in the original to correspond to the words “O congregation” in our translation, unless it is the word אלם *'êlem* which never has this signification.

It is not so rendered in any of the versions. It is not easy to determine “who” is referred to by this question. It cannot be, as is implied in our common version, that it is to any “congregation,” any people gathered together for the purpose of pronouncing judgment. Yet it is evidently a reference to some persons, or classes of persons, who were expected to “judge,” or to whom it pertained to pass judgment; and the most natural supposition is that the reference is to the rulers of the nation - to Saul, and the heads of the government. If the supposition is correct that the psalm was composed, like Psalm 56:1-13; Psalm 57:1-11; 59, in the time of the Sauline persecutions, and that it belongs to the same “group” of psalms, then it would have reference to Saul and to those who were associated with him in persecuting David. The subject of the psalm would then be the unjust judgments which they passed on him in treating him as an enemy of the commonwealth; in regarding him as an outlaw, and in driving him from his places of refuge as if hunting him down like a wild beast. The contents of the psalm well accord with this explanation.

Do ye judge uprightly? - Do you judge right things? are your judgments in accordance with truth and justice?

O ye sons of men - Perhaps referring to the fact that in their judgments they showed that they were people - influenced by the common passions of people; in other words, they showed that they could not, in forming their judgments, rise above the corrupt passions and prejudices which usually influence and sway mankind.

Verse 2

Yea, in heart ye work wickedness - Whatever might be the outward appearances, whatever pretences they might make to just judgment, yet in fact their hearts were set on wickedness, and they were conscious of doing wrong.

Ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth - It is difficult to attach any meaning to this language; the translators evidently felt that they could not express the meaning of the original; and they, therefore, gave what seems to be a literal translation of the Hebrew. The Septuagint renders it, "In heart you work iniquity in the land; your hands weave together iniquity." The Latin Vulgate: "In heart you work iniquity; in the land your hands prepare injustice." Luther: "Yea, willingly do you work iniquity in the land, and go straight through to work evil with your hands." Professor Alexander: "In the land, the violence of your hands ye weigh." Perhaps the true translation of the whole verse would be, "Yea, in heart ye work iniquity in the land; ye weigh (weigh out) the violence of your hands;" that is, the deeds of violence or wickedness which your hands commit. The idea of "weighing" them, or "weighing them out," is derived from the administration of justice. In all lands people are accustomed to speak of "weighing out" justice; to symbolize its administration by scales and balances; and to express the doing of it as holding an even balance. Compare Job 31:6, note; Daniel 5:27, note; Revelation 6:5, note. Thus interpreted, this verse refers, as Psalm 58:1, to the act of pronouncing judgment; and the idea is that instead of pronouncing a just judgment - of holding an equal balance - they determined in favor of violence - of acts of oppression and wrong to be committed by their own hands. That which they weighed out, or dispensed, was not a just sentence, but violence, wrong, injustice, crime.

Verse 3

The wicked are estranged from the womb - The allusion here undoubtedly is to the persons principally referred to in the psalm - the enemies of David. But their conduct toward him suggests a more general reflection in regard to "all" the wicked as having the same characteristics. The psalmist, therefore, instead of confining his remarks to them, makes his observations general, on the principle that all wicked men have essentially the same character, and especially in respect to the thing here affirmed, that they go astray early; that they are apostate and alienated from God from

their very birth. The words, “the wicked,” here do not necessarily refer to the whole human family (though what is thus affirmed is true of all the human race), but to people who in their lives develop a wicked character; and the affirmation in regard to them is that they go astray early in life - from their very infancy.

Strictly speaking, therefore, it cannot be shown that the psalmist in this declaration had reference to the whole human race, or that he meant to make a universal declaration in regard to man as being early estranged or alienated from God; and the passage, therefore, cannot directly, and with exact propriety, be adduced to prove the doctrine that “original sin” pertains to all the race - whatever may be true on that point. If, however, it is demonstrated from “other” passages, and from facts, that all men “are” “wicked” or depraved, then the assertion here becomes a proof that this is from the womb - from their very birth - that they begin life with a propensity to evil - and that all their subsequent acts are but developments of the depravity or corruption with which they are born. It is only, therefore, after it is proved that people “are” depraved or “wicked,” that this passage can be cited in favor of the doctrine of original sin.

The word rendered are “estranged” - זרו *zorû* - means properly, “to go off, to turn aside,” or “away, to depart;” and then it comes to mean “to be strange,” or “a stranger.” The proper idea in the word is that one is a stranger, or a foreigner, and the word would be properly applied to one of another tribe or nation, like the Latin *“hostis,”* and the Greek ξείνος *xeinos* Exodus 30:33; Isaiah 1:7; Isaiah 25:2; Isaiah 29:5; Psalm 44:20. The meaning of the term as thus explained is, that, from earliest childhood, they are “as if” they belonged to another people than the people of God; they manifest another spirit; they are governed by other principles than those which pertain to the righteous. Compare Ephesians 2:19. Their first indications of character are not those of the children of God, but are “alien, strange, hostile” to him. The phrase “from the womb,” refers, undoubtedly, to their birth; and the idea is, that as soon as they begin to act they act wrong; they show that they are strangers to God. Strictly speaking, this passage does not affirm anything directly of what exists in the heart “before” people begin to act, for it is by their “speaking lies” that they show their estrangement; yet it is proper to “infer” that where this is universal, there “is” something lying back of this which makes it certain that they

"will" act thus - just as when a tree always bears the same kind of fruit, we infer that there is something "in" the tree, back of the actual "bearing" of the fruit, which makes it certain that it "will" bear such fruit and no other. This "something" in the heart of a child is what is commonly meant by "original sin."

They go astray - The Hebrew word used here means to go astray, to wander, to err. It is used in reference to drunken persons who reel, Isaiah 28:7; and to the soul, as erring or wandering from the paths of truth and piety, Ezekiel 48:11; Psalm 95:10; Psalm 119:110; Proverbs 21:16. The "manner" in which the persons here referred to did this, is indicated here by their "speaking lies."

As soon as they be born - Margin, as in Hebrew, "from the belly." The meaning is, not that they speak lies "as soon as" they are born, which could not be literally true, but that this is the "first act." The first thing "done" is not an act of holiness, but an act of sin - showing what is in the heart.

Speaking lies - They are false in their statements; false in their promises; false in their general character. This is one of the forms of sin, indicating original depravity; and it is undoubtedly selected here because this was particularly manifested by the enemies of David. They were false, perfidious, and could not be trusted. If it be proved, therefore, that all people are wicked, then "this" passage becomes a proper and an important text to demonstrate that this wickedness is not the result of temptation or example, but that it is the expression of the depravity of the heart by nature; that the tendency of man by nature is not to goodness, but to sin; that the first developments of character are sinful; that there is something lying of sinful acts in people which makes it certain that they will act as they do; and that this always manifests itself in the first acts which they perform.

Verse 4

Their poison - Their malignity; their bad spirit; that which they utter or throw out of their mouth. The reference here is to what they speak or utter Psalm 58:3, and the idea is, that it is penetrating and deadly.

Like the poison of a serpent - Margin, as in Hebrew, "according to the likeness." In this expression no particular class of serpents is referred to except those which are "poisonous."

Like the deaf adder - Margin, "asp." The word may refer either to the viper, the asp, or the adder. See the notes at Isaiah 11:8. The "particular" idea here is, that the serpent referred to was as it were "deaf;" it could not

be tamed or charmed; it seemed to stop its own ears, so that there was no means of rendering it a safe thing to approach it. The supposition is that there "were" serpents which, though deadly in their poison, "might" be charmed or tamed, but that "this" species of serpent could "not." The sense, as applied to the wicked, is, that there was no way of overcoming their evil propensities - of preventing them from giving utterance to words that were like poison, or from doing mischief to all with whom they came in contact. They were malignant, and there was no power of checking their malignity. Their poison was deadly, and there was no possibility of restraining them from doing evil.

That stoppeth her ear - Which "seems" to stop her ear; which refuses to hear the words and incantations by which other serpents are subdued and tamed. Others, however, refer this to the man himself, meaning, "like the deaf adder he stops his ear;" that is, he voluntarily makes himself like the adder that does not hear, and that will not be tamed. The former interpretation, however, is to be preferred.

Verse 5

Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers - The word rendered "charmers" - לחשׁ *lachash* - means properly "whisperers, mutterers," and it refers here to those who made use of spells or incantations - sorcerers or magicians. See the notes at Isaiah 8:19. These incantations were accompanied usually with a low, muttering sound, or with a gentle whisper, as if for the purpose of calming and controlling the object of the incantation. Such charmers of serpents (or pretended charmers) abounded among the ancients, and still abound in India. The art is carried in India to great perfection; and there are multitudes of persons who obtain a livelihood by this pretended or real power over venomous serpents. Their living is obtained either by "exhibiting" their power over serpents which they carry with them in their peregrinations, or by "drawing" them by their incantations from the walls of gardens, houses, and hedges, where they had taken up their abode. Multitudes of facts, referred to by those who have resided in India, seem to confirm the opinion that this power is real.

Charming never so wisely - Margin, "Be the charmer never so cunning." The word rendered here "charming" - חובר *chober* - means properly to bind; to bind together. The "literal" meaning of the original Hebrew is, "binding spells that are wise," or, that are "cunning;" in other words, making use of the most cunning or skillful of their incantations and

charms. The meaning is, that the utmost skill of enchantment will be unsuccessful. They are beyond the reach of any such arts. So with the people referred to by David. They were malignant and venomous; and nothing would disarm them of their malignity, and destroy their venom. What is here affirmed of these men is true in a certain sense of all people. The depravity of the human heart is such that nothing that man can employ will subdue it. No eloquence, no persuasion, no commands, no remonstrances, no influence that man can exert, will subdue it.

It cannot be charmed down; it cannot be removed by any skill or power of man, however great. The following remarks from Dr. Thomson, who has spent twenty years in Palestine (land and the Book, vol. i. pp. 221-223), will illustrate this passage: "I have seen many serpent-charmers who do really exercise some extraordinary power over these reptiles. They carry enormous snakes, generally black, about them, allow them to crawl all over their persons and into their bosoms; always, however, with certain precautions, either necessary, or pretended to be so. They repeatedly breathe strongly into the face of the serpent, and occasionally blow spittle, or some medicated composition upon them. It is needless to describe the mountebank tricks which they perform. That which I am least able to account for is the power of detecting the presence of serpents in a house, and of enticing or ‹charming‘ them out of it. The thing is far too common to be made a matter of scepticism. The following account, by Mr. Lane, is a fair statement of this matter: ‹The charmer professes to discover, without ocular perception (but perhaps he does so by a unique smell), whether there be any serpents in the house, and if there be, to attract them to him, as the fowler, by the fascination of his voice, allures the bird into his net.

As the serpent seeks the darkest place in which to hide himself, the charmer has, in most eases, to exercise his skill in an obscure chamber, where he might easily take a serpent from his bosom, bring it to the people without the door, and affirm that he had found it in the apartment, for no one would venture to enter with him, after having been assured of the presence of one of these reptiles within. But he is often required to perform in the full light of day, surrounded by spectators; and incredulous persons have searched him beforehand, and even stripped him naked, yet his success has been complete. He assumes an air of mystery, strikes the walls with a short palm-stick, whistles, makes a clucking noise with his tongue,

and spits upon the ground, and generally says - I adjure you, by God, if ye be above or if ye be below, that ye come forth; I adjure you by the most great name, if ye be obedient, come forth, and if ye be disobedient, die! die! die!‘ The serpent is generally dislodged by his stick from a fissure in the wall or from the ceiling of the room.

I have heard it asserted that a serpent-charmer, before he enters a house in which he is to try his skill, always employs a servant of that house to introduce one or more serpents; but I have known instances in which this could not be the case, and am inclined to believe that the dervishes above mentioned are generally acquainted with some physical means of discovering the presence of serpents without seeing them, and of attracting them from their lurking-places. What these ‹physical means‘ may be is yet a secret, as also the ‹means‘ by which persons can handle live scorpions, and can put them into their bosom without fear or injury. I have seen this done again and again, even by small boys. This has always excited my curiosity and astonishment, for scorpions are the most malignant and irascible of all insects. The Hindoos, and after them the Egyptians, are the most famous snake-charmers, scorpion-eaters, etc., etc., although gipsies, Arabs, and others are occasionally found, who gain a vagabond livelihood by strolling round the country, and confounding the ignorant with these feats."

Verse 6

Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth - The word here rendered "break" means properly "to tear out." The allusion is to his enemies, represented as wild beasts; and the prayer is, that God would deprive them of the means of doing harm - as wild animals are rendered harmless when their teeth are broken out.

Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord - The word used here means properly "biters" or "grinders:" Job 29:17; Proverbs 30:14; Joel 1:6. Compare the notes at Psalm 3:7. The word rendered "young lions" here does not refer to mere whelps, but to full-grown though young lions in their vigor and strength, as contrasted with old lions, or those which are enfeebled by age. The meaning is, that his enemies were of the most fierce and violent kind.

Verse 7

Let them melt away as waters which run continually - Let them vanish or disappear as waters that flow off, or floods that run by, and are no more seen. "Perhaps" the allusion here may be to the waters of a torrent that is swollen, which flow off and are lost in the sand, so that they wholly disappear. See the notes at Job 6:15-19. The prayer is, that his enemies might perish or be cut off, and that he might thus be saved from them.

When he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows - literally, "he treads on his arrows." See the notes at Psalm 11:2. The meaning here is, When he prepares for an attack - or, prepares to make war, as one does who bends his bow, and places his arrow on the string. The allusion here is to the enemies of David, as seeking his life.

Let them be as cut in pieces - That is, Let his arrows be as if they were cut off or "blunted," so that they will produce no effect. Let them be such, that they will not penetrate and wound.

Verse 8

As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away - Or rather, As the snail which melteth as it goes; that is, which leaves a slimy trail as it moves along, and thus melts away the more as it advances, until at length it dies. Gesenius, Lexicon. The allusion is to what seems to occur to the snail; it seems to melt or to be dissolved as it moves along; or seems to leave a part of itself in the slime which flows from it.

Like the untimely birth of a woman - The Hebrew word means literally "that which falls from a woman;" and hence, the word is used to denote an abortion. The prayer is, that they might utterly pass away; that they might become like those who never had real life; that their power might wholly disappear.

That they may not see the sun - May not be among the living. Compare the notes at Job 3:16.

Verse 9

Before your pots can feel the thorns - The word "thorns" here - אטד *'âṭâd* - refers to what is called "Christ's thorn," the southern buckthorn. "Gesenius." The fire made of such thorns when dry would be quick and rapid, and water would be soon heated by it. The idea is, that what is here referred to would occur "quickly" - sooner than the most rapid and intense fire could make an impression on a kettle and its contents. The destruction of the wicked would be, as it were, instantaneous. The following quotation from Prof. Hackitt (Illustrations of Scripture, p. 135) will explain this

passage: "A species of thorn, now very common near Jerusalem, bears the name of *Spina Christi*, or Christ's thorn. The people of the country gather these bushes and plants, and use them as fuel. As it is now, so it was of old. ‹As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool,' Ecclesiastes 7:6 ‹Before your pots can feel the thorns,' namely, the fire of them, ‹he shall sweep them away,' Psalm 58:9 The figure in this case is taken from travelers in the desert, or from shepherds tenting abroad, who build a fire in the open air, where it is exposed to the wind; a sudden gust arises and sweeps away the fuel almost before it has begun to burn. ‹As thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire' Isaiah 33:12. The meaning is that the wicked are worthless - their destruction shall be sudden and complete."

He shall take them away - The word rendered "shall take them away" means properly "to shiver, to shudder;" and it is then applied to the commotion and raging of a tempest. They shal be taken away as in a storm that makes everything shiver or tremble; Job 27:21. It would be done "suddenly" and "entirely." A sudden storm sent by God would beat upon them, and they would be swept away in an instant.

Both living and in his wrath - Margin, "as living as wrath." This expression is exceedingly obscure. The Septuagint renders it, "he shall devour them as it were living - as it were in wrath." The Latin Vulgate: "He shall devour them as living, so in wrath." Prof. Alexander: "Whether raw or done." He supposes that the idea is, that God would come upon them while forming their plans; and that the illustration is derived from the act of "cooking," and that the meaning is, that God would come upon them whether those plans were matured or not - "cooked" or "raw." This seems to me to be a very forced construction, and one which it is doubtful whether the Hebrew will bear. The word rendered "living" - חי *chay* - means properly "alive, living;" and then, "lively, fresh, vigorous;" and is applicable then to a plant that is living or green. It "may" be here applied to the "thorns" that had been gathered for the fire, still green or alive; and the idea "here" would be, that even while those thorns were alive and green - before they had been kindled by the fire (or while they were trying to kindle them), a sudden tempest would come and sweep them all away.

It is not, indeed, an uncommon occurrence in the deserts of the East, that while, in their journeyings, travelers pause to cook their food, and have gathered the fuel - thorns, or whatever may be at hand - and have placed

their pot over the fire, a sudden tempest comes from the desert, and sweeps everything away. Rosenmuller *in loc*. Such an occurrence "may" be referred to here. The word rendered "wrath" - חרון *châron* - means properly "burning;" and then it is used to denote anything burning. It is applied to wrath or anger, because it seems to "burn." Numbers 25:4; Numbers 32:14; 1 Samuel 28:18. Here, however, it "may" be taken literally as applicable to thorns when they begin to be kindled, though still green. They are seen first as gathered and placed under the pots; then they are seen as still green - not dried up by the kindling flame; then they are seen as on fire; and, in a moment - before the pots could be affected by them - all is swept away by a sudden gust of wind. The "idea" is that of the sudden and unexpected descent of God on the wicked, frustrating their schemes even when they seemed to be well formed, and to promise complete success. This does not mean, therefore, that God would cut off and punish the wicked while "living," but it refers to the fact that their schemes would be suddenly defeated even while they supposed that all things were going on well; defeated before there was, in fact, any progress made toward the accomplishment, as the arrangements for the evening-meal would all be swept away before even the pot had begun to be warm.

Verse 10

The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance - When he sees the just punishment inflicted on the wicked. He will approve of it; he will see that it is right; he will be glad that law is maintained, and that wickedness does not triumph; he will rejoice in the safety of those who do right, and in their deliverance from the assaults and the designs of the wicked. People everywhere approve of the just administration of law, even though it consigns the transgressors to prison or to death; and it is a matter of gratification to all who love law and order when a righteous government is maintained; when wickedness is checked; when justice is administered in a community. This is the end of government and of law; this is what all magistrates are appointed to secure; this is what all good citizens are aiming to accomplish. There is no evidence that the psalmist had any vindictive or revengeful feeling when he uttered the sentiment in this verse. See the notes at Psalm 52:6. Compare Psalm 37:34; Psalm 40:3.

He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked - Compare Psalm 68:23. The image here is taken from a battlefield, where the victor treads in

the blood of the slain. It is strong language denoting the entire overthrow of the wicked. There can be no doubt, however, that the allusion is to the "feelings" of satisfaction and triumph with which a victor walks over such a field; the exultation which he has that his foes are subdued, and that he has triumphed. The "idea" is that the righteous will have emotions, when the wicked are subdued and punished, which in some respects "resemble" the feelings of the victor who walks over a field covered with the blood of the slain. Still it is not "necessary" to suppose that these are, in either case, vindictive feelings; or that either the victor or the righteous have pleasure in the shedding of blood, or in the sufferings of others; or that they would not have preferred that the discomfited and slain should "not" have been wicked, and should "not" have been made to suffer in this manner. All that is "essentially" implied in this is, that there is a feeling of satisfaction and approval when law is vindicated, and when the triumph of wickedness is prevented. It would be difficult to show that the feelings expressed by the psalmist are "less" proper than those which an officer of justice "may" have, and "ought" to have, and "does" have, when he has faithfully discharged his duty, and has secured the arrest and punishment of the violators of law; or that the psalmist has expressed anything more than every man must feel who sees "just" punishment inflicted on the guilty. Assuredly it is a matter of rejoicing that wickedness does "not" triumph; it is a thing to exult in when it "is" arrested.

Verse 11

So that a man shall say - That is, every man shall say, or people everywhere shall see this. This expresses the result of a close observation of the divine dealings among people. The conclusion from those dealings is,

(a) that there is, on the whole, a reward for the righteous on earth, or that righteousness tends to secure the favor of God and to promote human happiness; and

(b) that there is a God - a just Being presiding over human affairs.

A reward for the righteous - Margin, as in Hebrew, "fruit for the righteous." That is, righteousness will produce its appropriate "fruits," as trees that are cultivated will reward the cultivator. The idea is, that there is a course of things on earth, even with all there is that is mixed and mysterious, which is favorable to virtue; which shows that there is an "advantage" in being righteous; which demonstrates that there is a moral

government; which makes it certain that God is the friend of virtue and the enemy of vice; that he is the friend of holiness and an enemy of sin. Compare the notes at 1 Timothy 4:8.

Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth - Or, Truly there is a God that judges in the earth. In other words, the course of things demonstrates that the affairs of the world are not left to chance, to fate, or to mere physical laws. There are results of human conduct which show that there is a "Mind" that presides over all; that there is One who has a purpose and plan of his own; that there is One who "administers" government, rewarding the good, and punishing the wicked. The argument is, that there is a course of things which cannot be explained on the supposition that the affairs of earth are left to chance; that they are controlled by fate; that they are regulated by mere physical laws; that they take care of themselves. There is a clear proof of divine interposition in those affairs, and a clear proof that, on the whole, and in the final result, that interposition is favorable to righteousness and opposed to sin. No man, in other words, can take the "facts" which occur on the earth, and explain them satisfactorily, except on the supposition that there is a God. All other explanations fail; and numerous as it must be admitted are the difficulties that meet us even on this supposition, yet all other suppositions utterly fail in giving any intelligible account of what occurs in our world. See this argument stated in a manner which cannot be confuted, in Bishop Butler's Analogy, part i. chap. iii.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 559

Introduction

The general title to this psalm is the same as in the two preceding psalms. That it was written by David, as is affirmed in the title, there is every reason to believe. The "occasion" on which it is said to have been composed was "when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him." This incident is related in 1 Samuel 19:11: "Saul also sent messengers unto David's house to watch him, and to slay him in the morning." There is nothing in the psalm inconsistent with this statement in regard to the time and the occasion of its composition, unless it is in the word "heathen" - גוים *gôyim* - twice used Psalm 59:5, Psalm 59:8 - a term, which (DeWette maintains) belongs properly to people of a foreign nation, and a foreign religion. It is true, however, that while the word originally had this meaning, it came to be used to denote any people or persons who had the general character and spirit which was supposed to distinguish nations without the knowledge of the true God; those who were cruel, harsh, unfeeling, oppressive, savage. Psalm 2:1, Psalm 2:8; Psalm 9:5, Psalm 9:15, Psalm 9:19-20; Psalm 10:16; Psalm 79:6, Psalm 79:10; Psalm 106:47, et al. In this sense it might be used here, without impropriety, as applicable to the enemies of David.

At what precise "time" the psalm was composed, it is, of course, impossible now to ascertain. All that is determined by the title is that it was on that occasion, or with reference to that event; but whether it was at the very time when those enemies were known to be watching the house, or whether it was in view of that scene as recollected afterward, recalling the feelings which then passed through his mind, cannot now be determined with certainty. That David was aware that his enemies were thus watching him is apparent from 1 Samuel 19:11; that such thoughts as are recorded in the psalm passed through his mind in that time of danger is not improbable, but it can hardly be supposed that such an occasion would allow of the leisure necessary to express them in the form in which we now have them in the psalm. The probability, therefore, seems to be, that the psalm is a subsequent composition, recording the thoughts which then actually passed through his mind.

The psalm has no very regular order. The mind passes from one thing to another - now uttering fervent prayer; now describing the enemy - his character and plans; and now expressing the confident hope of deliverance, and the purpose to praise God. Indeed the very structure of the psalm seems to me to furnish evidence that it describes feelings which "would" pass through the mind on such an occasion. Thus we have in Psalm 59:1-2, Psalm 59:5, Psalm 59:11-15, "prayer" for deliverance; in Psalm 59:3-4, Psalm 59:6, Psalm 59:12, intermingled with these prayers, a description of the character and designs of these enemies; and in Psalm 59:8-9, Psalm 59:16-17, an expression of confident hope - a purpose to praise God, for deliverance and mercy. All this is indicative of such feelings as "might," and probably "would," pass through the mind in such a time of peril as that referred to in the title.

On the different phrases in the title, see Introductions to Psalm 4; 47; 16.

Verse 1

Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God - See the notes at Psalm 18:48. This prayer was offered when the spies sent by Saul surrounded the house of David. They had come to apprehend him, and it is to be presumed that they had come in sufficient numbers, and with sufficient power, to effect their object. Their purpose was not to break in upon him in the night, but to watch their opportunity, when he went forth in the morning, to slay him 1 Samuel 19:11, and there seemed no way for him to escape. Of their coming, and of their design, Michal, the daughter of Saul, and the wife of David, seems to have been apprised - perhaps by someone of her father's family. She informed David of the arrangement, and assured him that unless he should escape in the night, he would be put to death in the morning. She, therefore, let him down through a window, and he escaped, 1 Samuel 19:12. It was in this way that he was in fact delivered; in this way that his prayer was answered. A faithful wife saved him.

Defend me from them that rise up against me - Margin, as in Hebrew, "Set me on high." The idea is that of placing him, as it were, on a tower, or on an eminence which would be inaccessible. These were common places of refuge or defense. See the notes at Psalm 18:2.

Verse 2

Deliver me from the workers of iniquity - The workers of iniquity here referred to were Saul and those whom he employed to carry out his murderous purpose - the people that had been sent to slay him.

And save me from bloody men - Hebrew, "Men of bloods;" that is, men whose trade is blood; who seek to shed my blood, or who seek my life. See Psalm 5:6, note; Psalm 26:9, note; Psalm 55:23, note.

Verse 3

For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul - They lie in wait as wild beasts do for their prey, ready to spring upon it. The word used here is often employed to denote the act of lying in ambush; of watching in secret places to spring upon a victim: Judges 9:32; Judges 21:20; Psalm 10:9. The word "soul" here means "life." They lie in ambush that they may kill me.

The mighty are gathered against me - Strong men; hostile men; cruel men. Saul would employ on this occasion not the weak, the cowardly, the faint-hearted, but men of courage and strength; men who were unscrupulous in their character; men who would not be likely to be moved by entreaty, or turned from their purpose by compassion. It is not mere "strength" that is here referred to, but that kind of strength or courage which can be employed in a desperate enterprise, and which is suited to accomplish any scheme of wickedness, however daring or difficult.

Not for my transgression, nor for my sin - This is done not on account of my violating the laws of the land, nor because it is alleged that I am a sinner against God. David was conscious that he did not deserve this treatment from the hand of man. He bad been guilty of no wrong against Saul that exposed him to just punishment. He carried with him the consciousness of innocence as to any crime that could have made this treatment proper; and he felt that it was all the result of unjust suspicions. It was not improper for him to refer to this in his prayer; for, however he might feel that he was a sinner in the sight of God, yet he felt that a great and grievous wrong was done him by man; and he prayed, therefore, that a righteous God would interpose. See Psalm 7:8, note; Psalm 17:2, note; Psalm 35:24, note; Psalm 43:1, note.

Verse 4

They run and prepare themselves - That is, they "hasten" to accomplish this; they are quick to obey the command of Saul requiring them to slay me. The word "prepare" refers to whatever was deemed

necessary to enable them to accomplish what they had been commanded to do - arming themselves, making provision for their journey, etc.

Without my fault - That is, without anything on my part to deserve this, or to justify Saul and those employed by him in what they attempt to do. David, in all this, was conscious of innocence. In his own feelings toward Saul, and in all his public acts, he knew that he had sought only the king‘s welfare, and that he had been obedient to the laws.

Awake to help me - That is, “arouse,” as one does from sleep. See the notes at Psalm 7:6. Compare Psalm 35:23. The word rendered “to help me,” is rendered in the margin, “to meet me.” This is the meaning of the Hebrew. It is a prayer that God would meet him, or come to him, and aid him.

Verse 5

Thou therefore, O Lord God of hosts - God of armies: commanding all the armies of heaven - the angels, and the stars and constellations drawn out in the form of armies; thou, thus endowed with all power, and able to subdue all people though arrayed and combined for purposes of evil - awake to my help. On the meaning of the phrase “God of hosts,” see the notes at Isaiah 1:9.

The God of Israel - The God of the Hebrew people - the descendants of Jacob or Israel - the Protector of thy people - awake to help me, one of those who, being of that covenant people, come under the promise of protection.

Awake to visit all the heathen - On the word here rendered “heathen” - גוים *gôyim* - see the notes at Psalm 2:1. It is from the use of this word in this verse and in Psalm 59:8, as remarked in the Introduction to the psalm, that DeWette infers that the psalm could not have been composed on the occasion referred to in the title, and argues, that this term could not be applied by David to Saul and his followers. This objection, however, will lose its force if the word is understood as denoting people who had the usual character of pagans, who were fierce, bloody, savage, cruel. In this sense the word might be employed with reference to those who were engaged in seeking the life of David. David, using the common word “heathen” or “nations,” as denoting those who are wicked, cruel, harsh, prays that God would awake to visit them; that is, to visit them for purposes of punishment, or so to visit them as to prevent their carrying out their designs.

Be not merciful to any tricked transgressors - That is, Arrest and punish them "as" transgressors, or "being" transgressors. This prayer is not inconsistent with a desire that such people might be converted, and "thus" obtain mercy; but it is a prayer that God would not suffer them, being wicked people, to go at large and accomplish the work of wickedness which they designed. See General Introduction Section 6. (5) (e).

Selah - A musical pause. See the notes at Psalm 3:2.

Verse 6

They return at evening - Many have rendered this in the imperative, as in Psalm 59:14, "Let them return at evening," etc. So Luther renders it, and so also DeWette. But the more natural and obvious interpretation is to render it in the indicative, as describing the manner in which his enemies came upon him - like dogs seeking their prey; fierce mastiffs, howling and ready to spring upon him. From the phrase "they return at evening," thus explained, it would seem probable that they watched their opportunity, or lay in wait, to secure their object; that having failed at first, they drew off again until evening, perhaps continuing thus for several days unable to accomplish their object.

They make a noise like a dog - So savages, after lurking stealthily all day, raise the war-whoop at night, and come upon their victims. It is possible that an assault of this kind "had" been attempted; or, more probably, it is a description of the manner in which they "would" make their assault, and of the spirit with which it would be done.

And go round about the city - The word "city" is used in a large sense in the Scriptures, and is often applied to places that we should now describe as "villages." Any town within the limits of which David was lodged, would answer to this term.

Verse 7

Behold, they belch out with their mouth - The word rendered "belch out" means properly to boil forth; to gush out, to flow; and then, to pour forth copiously, or in a running stream, as a fountain does. Hence, the word means also to pour out "words" - words that flow freely - words of folly, abuse, or reproach. Proverbs 15:2, "the mouth of fools poureth out (Margin, belcheth or babbleth) foolishness." Proverbs 15:28, "the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things;" that is, "gushes over" with wicked things - as a fountain overflows. In this place, the word means that the enemies of

David who were in pursuit of his life, poured out reproaches and threatenings like a gushing fountain.

Swords are in their lips - Their words are as sharp swords. See the notes at Psalm 57:4.

For who, say they, doth hear? - That is, no one hears who will be able to punish us. They dread no man; and they have no fear of God. Compare the notes at Psalm 10:11. The words "say they" are, however, supplied here by the translators, and are not in the original; and the language "may" be understood as that of David himself, "as if" no one heard; that is, It is no wonder that they thus pour out words of reproach, for who "is" there to hear and to punish them? The former interpretation, however, is to be preferred. The language expresses the feelings of the enemies of David, who indulged freely in language of abuse and reproach "as if" there were none to hear.

Verse 8

But thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them - That is, God will hear them, and will have all their efforts in derision, or will treat them with contempt. See Psalm 2:4, note; Psalm 37:13, note.

Thou shalt have all the heathen in derision - All those referred to in this psalm - the enemies of David - who have the character, and who manifest the spirit of the pagan; that is, of those who are not actuated by true religion. See the notes at Psalm 59:5. This verse expresses the strong conviction of David, that all the efforts of his enemies would be vain; that God "would be" his Protector; and that he would save him from their evil designs.

Verse 9

Because of his strength will I wait upon thee - literally, "His strength - I will wait upon thee." The reference here is not to the strength or power of God, as if the fact that "He" was powerful was a reason why the psalmist should look to him - but it is to the strength or power of the enemy - of Saul and his followers. There is much abruptness in the expression. The psalmist looks at the power of his enemy. "‹His strength,' he cries. It is great. It is beyond my power to resist it. It is so great that I have no other refuge but God; and because it is so great, I will fix my eyes on him alone." The word rendered "wait upon" means rather to look to; to observe; to fix the eyes upon.

For God is my defense - Margin, "My high place." That is, God was to him "as" a high place, or a place of refuge; a place where he would be safe.

See the notes at Psalm 18:2.

Verse 10

The God of my mercy shall prevent me - Or rather, "My God - his mercy shall prevent me." This is in accordance with the present reading of the Hebrew text, and is probably correct. The psalmist looks to God as his God, and then the feeling at once springs up that his mercy - favor - his loving-kindness - "would" "prevent" him. On the word "prevent" see the notes at Psalm 21:3; compare Psalm 17:13; Psalm 18:5. The meaning here is, that God would "go before him," or would "anticipate" his necessities.

God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies - That is, He will let me see them discomfited, and disappointed in their plans. This is equivalent to saying that God would give him the victory, or would not suffer them to triumph over him. See the notes at Psalm 54:7.

Verse 11

Slay them not, lest my people forget - The meaning of this seems to be, Do not destroy them at once, lest, being removed out of the way, the people should forget what was done, or should lose the impression which it is desirable should be produced by their punishment. Let them live, and let them wander about, as exiles under the divine displeasure, that they may be permanent and enduring proofs of the justice of God; of the evil of sin; of the danger of violating the divine law. So Cain wandered on the earth Genesis 4:12-14, a living proof of that justice which avenges murder; and so the Jews still wander, a lasting illustration of the justice which followed their rejection of the Messiah. The prayer of the psalmist, therefore, is that the fullest expression might be given to the divine sense of the wrong which his enemies had done, that the salutary lesson might not be soon forgotten, but might be permanent and enduring.

Scatter them by thy, power - Break up their combinations, and let them go abroad as separate wanderers, proclaiming everywhere, by being thus vagabonds on the earth, the justice of God.

And bring them down - Humble them. Show them their weakness. Show them that they have not power to contend against God.

O Lord our shield - See Psalm 5:12, note; Psalm 33:20, note. The words "our" here, and "my" in the former part of the verse, are designed to show that the author of the psalm regarded God as "his" God, and the people of the land as "his," in the sense that he was identified with them, and felt that his cause was really that of the people.

Verse 12

For the sin of their mouth … - That is, in belching out words of reproach and malice, Psalm 59:7.

Let them even be taken in their pride - In the very midst of their schemes, or while confidently relying on the success of their plans. Even while their hearts are elated, and they are sure of success, let them be arrested, and let their plans be foiled.

And for cursing and lying which they speak - That is, on account of the false charges which they have brought against me, and of their bitter imprecations on me. The allusion is to the accusations brought against David, and which were believed by Saul, and which were the foundation of the efforts made by Saul to take his life.

Verse 13

Consume them in wrath - Or, in thy justice. The idea in the word "consume" here is to finish; to complete; to bring to an end. It does not mean to "burn" them as our word might seem to imply, nor is there any reference to the "mode" or "manner" in which their power was to be brought to an end. It is merely a prayer that all their plans might be frustrated; that there might be an entire completion of their attempts; or that they might be in no sense successful.

Consume them - The expression is repeated for the sake of emphasis, implying a desire that the work might be "complete."

That they may not be - That things might be as if they were not in the land of the living.

And let them know - Those who are now plotting my death.

That God ruleth in Jacob - That God rules among his people, protecting them and guarding them from the attacks of their enemies; that he is their friend, and that he is the enemy of all those who seek to injure and destroy them.

Unto the ends of the earth - Everywhere. All over the world. Let it be shown that the same principles of government prevail wherever man abides or wanders - that God manifests himself everywhere as the friend of right, and the enemy of wrong. The phrase "the ends of the earth," is in accordance with the prevailing conception that the earth was an extended plane, and that it had limits or boundaries. Compare the notes at Isaiah 40:22, notes at Isaiah 40:28.

Verse 14

And at evening let them return - See the notes at Psalm 59:6. The original here is the same as in Psalm 59:6, with the exception of the word "and" at the beginning. This qualifies the sentence, and makes the construction in our version proper. The language is that of confident triumph. They came around the city to take David; they shouted and shrieked as dogs bark and howl when they come upon their prey. David asked God to interpose and save him; and then, says he, let them come if they will, and howl around the city; they will find no prey; they will be like hungry dogs from whom their anticipated victim has escaped. Let them come, and howl and rage. They can do no harm. They will meet with disappointment; and such disappointment will be a proper punishment for their sins.

Verse 15

Let them wander up and down for meat - Let them be like dogs that wander about for food, and find none. The idea is, that they would not find him, and would be then as dogs that had sought in vain for food.

And grudge if they be not satisfied - Margin, If they be not satisfied, then they will stay all night. The marginal reading is most in accordance with the Hebrew. The sentence is obscure, but the idea seems to be that they would not be satisfied - that is, they would not obtain that which they had sought; and, like hungry and disappointed dogs, they would be compelled to pass the night in this miserable and wretched condition. The word which our translators have rendered "grudge" - from לוּן *lûn* - means properly to pass the night; then, to abide, to remain, to dwell; and then, in Hiphil, to show oneself obstinate and stubborn - from the idea of remaining or persisting in a bad cause; and hence, the word sometimes means to complain: Numbers 14:29; Exodus 17:3. It has not, however, the signification of grudging, though it might mean here to murmur or complain because they were disappointed. But the most natural meaning is that which the word properly bears - that of passing the night, as referring to their wandering about, disappointed in their object, and yet still hoping that they might possibly obtain it. The anticipated feeling in the mind of the psalmist is that which he would have in the consciousness of his own safety, and in the pleasure of knowing that they must sooner or later find out that their victim had escaped.

Verse 16

But I will sing of thy power - That is, I will praise thee for the manifestation of thy power in rescuing me from danger.

Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning - When the light dawns; when these troubles are over; when the night of calamity shall have passed by. There is an allusion here, probably, to the fact that they encompassed the place of his abode at night Psalm 59:6, Psalm 59:14; but there is also the implied idea that that night was emblematic of sorrow and distress. The morning would come; morning after such a night of sorrow and trouble; a morning of joy and gladness, when he would feel that he had complete deliverance. Then would he praise God aloud. Compare the notes at Isaiah 21:12.

For thou hast been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble - That is, he looked to the time when he would feel this; when looking back he could say this; when in view of it he would praise God.

Verse 17

Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing - The source of strength to me; the real strength by which I have obtained deliverance is in thee. See the notes at Psalm 18:1.

For God is my defense - See the notes at Psalm 59:9.

And the God of my mercy - The God who has showed mercy to me; he from whom all these favors have sprung. Whatever means might be used to secure his own safety (compare 1 Samuel 19:12 ff) still he felt that his deliverance was to be traced wholly to God. He had interposed and had saved him; and it was proper, therefore, that praise should be ascribed to him. The experience of David in the case referred to in this psalm should be an inducement to all who are in danger to put their trust in God; his anticipated feelings of gratitude, and his purpose to praise God when he should be delivered, should awaken in us the resolution to ascribe to God all the praise when we are delivered from impending troubles, and when our lives are lengthened out where we have been in imminent danger. Whatever may have been the means of our rescue, it is to be traced to the interposition of God.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 60

Introduction

In the title, this psalm is ascribed to David. The occasion on which it is said to have been composed was after he had been engaged in wars in the East - in Aramea - and when he was meditating the completion of his conquests in the subjugation of Idumea. The time of its composition, according to the title, was that referred to in Psalm 4:1-8.

The phrase "upon Shushan-eduth" means properly "Lily of Testimony." The word שׁוּשׁן *shôshân* means properly lily. See the notes at the title to Psalm 19:7; 2 Kings 11:12; and especially to the ark, called "the ark of the testimony," as containing the law or the divine testimony to the truth. Exodus 25:21-22 (compare Exodus 16:34); Exodus 26:33-34; Exodus 30:6, Exodus 30:26; Exodus 31:7. The word occurs frequently, and is uniformly translated testimony. Exodus 27:21; Exodus 30:36; Exodus 31:18, et saepe. See the notes at Psalm 19:7. The lily of the law would properly express the meaning of the phrase here, and it may have been the name of a musical instrument having a resemblance to a lily - open-mouthed like the lily; perhaps some form of the trumpet.

Why the term earth - testimony or law - was connected with this, it is not easy to determine. Gesenius (Lexicon) supposes that the word means revelation, and that the term was used in these inscriptions because the authors of the psalms wrote by revelation. But if this was the reason, it would not explain why the title was prefixed to these psalms rather than others, since all were composed by revelation. Prof. Alexander, somewhat fancifully, supposes that the name lily is used in this title to denote beauty; that the reference is to the beauty of the law, and that the psalm is designed to celebrate that beauty. But it is sufficient to say in reply to this that there is no particular mention of the law in this psalm, and no special commemoration of its beauty. If the title had been prefixed to Psalm 19:1-14, or to Psalm 16:1-11. It indicates nothing here in regard to the character of the psalm to which it is prefixed. It may be merely one form of denoting that it was a composition of David.

The word rendered "to teach," means here that the psalm was adapted to impart instruction, and in this sense it is not unlike the word Maschil (Title

to Psalm 32:1-11), as being a psalm suited to impart valuable information on the subject referred to, or perhaps to be learned and treasured up in the memory. It is not possible for us, however, to understand why the language was applied to this psalm rather than to others.

The psalm is said to have been composed when David "strove with Aramnaharaim and with Aram-zobah, when Joab returned and smote in the valley of salt twelve thousand." The allusion is to the transactions referred to in Psalm 60:7-8. The words rendered Aram-nahaim mean properly Aram (or Aramea) of the two rivers, and the reference is to Syria or Mesopotamia. The compound word occurs elsewhere in the following places, in all of which it is rendered Mesopotamia, Genesis 24:10; Deuteronomy 23:4; Judges 3:8; 1 Chronicles 19:6. The word Aram is of frequent occurrence, and properly refers to Syria. The name comprehended more than Syria proper, and the term Aram-naharaim, or Aram of the two rivers, was used to designate that part of the general country of Aramea which was between the Tigris and the Euphrates. The compound term Aram-zobah refers also to a part of Aramea or Syria. This kingdom was in the neighborhood of Damascus, and perhaps comprehended Hamath, and probably extended as far as the Euphrates. The king of this country is represented as making war with Saul 1 Samuel 14:47, and with David 2 Samuel 8:3; 2 Samuel 10:6. In 2 Samuel 8:3, David is represented as having smitten "Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates." It is to these wars, and to this conquest, that the title of the psalm alludes.

The language in the title "when Joab returned," would seem to imply that these conquests were achieved not by David in person, but by Joab - a circumstance not at all improbable, as he was the leader of the armies of David; 2 Samuel 20:23, "Now Joab was over all the host of Israel." David had thus subdued Syria, and Moab, and the children of Ammon, and the Philistines, and the Amalekites, and Hadadezer, king of Zobah, and had dedicated to the Lord the silver and the gold which he had taken in these conquests 2 Samuel 8:11-12; but it would seem probable that Edom or Idumea stilt held out, or that at the time of composing the psalm that country had not been subdued. But the subjugation of that land was necessary to complete the conquests of David, and to make his kingdom

safe. It was at this time probably, in the interval between 2 Samuel 8:12 and 2 Samuel 8:14, that the psalm was composed, or in view of the strong desire of David to subdue Edom; see Psalm 60:8-9, "Over Edom will I cast out my shoe," … "Who will lead me into Edom?" It would seem that there were some special difficulties in the conquest of that country; or that there had been some partial discomfiture in attempting it Psalm 60:1-3, and David was now fearful that he had in some way incurred the divine displeasure after all his conquests, and that Edom - a place so strong and so important - was likely to remain unsubdued. And yet the conquest was made, for it is said in the title "that Joab smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand." Compare 2 Samuel 8:13.

The phrase "the Valley of Salt" is explained by the fact that not a few valleys are found in Arabia and Syria, which are at certain periods - in the wet seasons - stagnant pools; but which, when they are dried up, leave an incrustation of salt, or a saline deposit on the sand. Travelers make mention of such pools, from which they obtain their supplies of salt. Van Hamelsveld, Bib. Geog., i. p. 402. What valley is here referred to is not certain. It would seem most probable that it was the valley in which the Dead Sea is situated, as being eminently the valley of salt, or the valley in which such deposits abounded. Dr. Robinson (Researches in Palestine, vol. ii. p. 483), supposes that this "valley of salt" is situated at the southern end of the Dead Sea - the Ghor south of the Dead Sea; and adjacent to the Mountain of Salt - "the whole body of the mountain being a solid mass of rock-salt" p. 482. This valley separates the ancient territories of Judah and Edom, and would, therefore, be the place where the battle would naturally be fought.

This victory is said in the title of the psalm to have been achieved by Joab; in 2 Samuel 8:13, it is attributed to David; in the parallel place in 1 Chronicles 18:12, it is said to have been achieved by Abishai - in the margin, Abshai. There is no discrepancy between the account in 2Samuel, where the victory is ascribed to David, and that in the title to the psalm where it is ascribed to Joab, for though the battle may have been fought by Joab, yet it was really one of the victories of David, as Joab acted under him and by his orders - as we speak of the conquests of Napoleon, attributing to him the conquests which were secured by the armies under his command.

There is greater difficulty in reconciling the account in 1Chronicles with the title to the psalm, where one ascribes the victory to Joab, and the other to Aibishai. Some have supposed that either in the title to the psalm or in 1Chronicles there has been an error in transcribing. But such an error could hardly have occurred. The most probable opinion seems to be that the victory was achieved by the joint action of the forces under Joab and his brother Abishai, and that with propriety it may be spoken of as the victory of either of them. We know that on one occasion Joab thus divided his forces, retaining the command of a portion of the army to himself, and assigning the other portion to his brother Abishai 2 Samuel 10:9-10, and it is possible that there may have been such a division of the army here, and that the victory may have been so connected with the skill and valor of Abishai that it might without impropriety be spoken of as his victory, while there was no impropriety also in ascribing it to Joab, as entrusted with the general command, or to David who had planned and directed the expedition.

There is, also, a discrepancy in the numbers mentioned as slain, in the title to the psalm, and in the account in Samuel and Chronicles. In 2 Samuel 8:13, and in 1 Chronicles 18:12, the number is "eighteen thousand;" in the title to the psalm, it is "twelve thousand." Why the statement varies, it is impossible to determine with certainty. We cannot suppose that the author of the psalm was ignorant of the usual estimate of the number, and we have no evidence that there is an error in the transcription. The probability is, that there may have been, as is often the case, in the account of battles, two estimates. The common and more moderate estimate may have been that the number was twelve thousand - and this was adopted by the author of the psalm. The more accurate and well-ascertained estimate may have been that which was placed in the regular history, in the Books of Samuel and the Chronicles. If the actual number was in fact as great as eighteen thousand, then there is no contradiction - for the greater number includes the less. If eighteen thousand were actually slain, there was no falsehood in the assertion, according to the first estimate, that twelve thousand had fallen in the battle, for that statement was in fact true, though a subsequent and more accurate "return" from the army made the number larger. Both statements were true. In saying that three men were drowned in a flood, or lost at sea in

a storm, I do not falsify a declaration which may be made subsequently that not only three perished but six or more.

There is no reference, in the accounts in Samuel and the Chronicles, to the partial discomfiture referred to in the psalm Psalm 60:1-3; and the impression from those historical narratives would probably be that the armies of David had been uniformly successful. Yet it is possible that some things may have been omitted in the rapid survey of the conquests of David in Samuel and the Chronicles. The design of the authors of those books may have been to give a general summary of the wars or series of wars by which David obtained a final victory over his enemies, and brought into subjection all that he regarded as properly his territory, or all that had been included in the general promise to Abraham and his posterity, without noticing the reverses or disasters that may have occurred in securing those triumphs. Perhaps the most probable supposition in the case is, that during the absence of the armies in the east the Edomites had taken occasion to invade the land of Palestine from the south, and that in endeavoring to repel them, there had been some defeats and losses in the comparatively small forces which David was then able to employ. He now summoned his armies on their return, and made a vigorous and decided effort to expel the Edomites from the land, to carry the warfare into their own country, and to add their territory to that which he had already brought under subjection. In this he was entirely successful. 2 Samuel 8:14; 1 Chronicles 18:13.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:

I. A statement of the disaster which had occurred, as if God had cast his people off, and as if, after all, they might be given up into the hands of their enemies, Psalm 60:1-3.

II. A statement of the object for which God now summoned his people to war - that of carrying forth the banner of truth, or of bringing nations into subjection to the true religion, Psalm 60:4-5.

III. A reference to the conquests already made, or to the dominion which David had set up over Shechem, Succoth, Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim, Judah, Moab, and Philistia, Psalm 60:6-8.

IV. The expression of a strong desire to complete the series of conquests by subduing Edom or Idumea, Psalm 60:8-9. That alone remained. That offered formidable resistance to the armies of David. The conquest of that seemed difficult, if not hopeless, and the psalmist, therefore, asks with deep solicitude who would aid him in this war; who would bring him successfully into the strong city - the strong fortifications of Edom, Psalm 60:9.

V. An appeal to God to do it; to that God who had cast them off; to him who had left their armies to go forth alone. David now calls on him to return to those forces, and to render aid - expressing the confident assurance that he would thus return, and that the victory would be secured, Psalm 60:10-12.

Verse 1

O God, thou hast cast us off - The word used here means properly to be foul, rancid, offensive; and then, to treat anything as if it were foul or rancid; to repel, to spurn, to cast away. See the notes at Psalm 43:2. It is strong language, meaning that God had seemed to treat them as if they were loathsome or offensive to him. The allusion, according to the view taken in the introduction to the psalm, is to some defeat or disaster which had occurred after the conquests in the East, or during the absence of the armies of David in the East 2 Samuel 5:20.

Thou hast been displeased - The word used here means "to breathe"; to breathe hard; and then, to be angry. See the notes at Psalm 2:12. God had treated them as if he was displeased or angry. He had suffered them to be defeated.

O turn thyself to us again - Return to our armies, and give us success. This might be rendered, "Thou wilt turn to us;" that is, thou wilt favor us - expressing a confident belief that God would do this, as in Psalm 60:12. It is more in accordance, however, with the usual structure of the Psalms to regard this as a prayer. Many of the psalms begin with a prayer, and end with the expression of a confident assurance that the prayer has been, or would certainly be heard.

Verse 2

Thou hast made the earth to tremble - This refers, doubtless, to some calamity that might be compared with an earthquake - some disaster, discomfiture, or defeat that had shaken their hopes, as a city is shaken by an earthquake. Such comparisons are common in the Scriptures.

Thou hast broken it - As if it were broken up, or convulsed.

Heal the breaches thereof - That is, Appear for thy people, and repair their disasters, as if after an earthquake thou shouldst appear and fill up the rents which it had made. The prayer is that he would place things in their former condition of prosperity and success.

For it shaketh - It is convulsed or agitated. That is, there is still commotion. Things are unsettled and disturbed. The prayer is, that there might be stability or continued success.

Verse 3

Thou hast showed thy people hard things - Thou hast caused them to see reverses, disappointments, and trials. This refers, according to the supposition in the Introduction to the psalm, to some calamitous events which had occurred. The probability seems to be that the Edomites may have spread desolation over the land.

Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment - The word rendered "astonishment" - תרעלה *tarʿêlâh* - occurs only here and in Isaiah 51:17, Isaiah 51:22 - in both of which verses in Isaiah it is rendered trembling. It means properly reeling, drunkenness; and the idea here is, that it was as if he had given them a cup - that is, an intoxicating drink - which had caused them to reel as a drunken man; or, in other words, their efforts had been unsuccessful. Compare Psalm 11:6, note; Isaiah 51:17, note.

Verse 4

Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee - The word rendered "banner" - נס *nês* - means properly anything elevated or lifted up, and hence, a standard, a flag, a sign, or a signal. It may refer to a standard reared on lofty mountains or high places during an invasion of a country, to point out to the people a place of rendezvous or a rallying place Isaiah 5:26; Isaiah 11:12; Isaiah 18:3; or it may refer to a standard or ensign borne by an army; or it may refer to the flag of a ship, Ezekiel 27:7; Isaiah 33:23. Here it doubtless refers to the flag, the banner, the standard of an army; and the idea is that God had committed such a standard to his people that they might go forth as soldiers in his cause. They were enlisted in his service, and were fighting his battles.

That it may be displayed because of the truth - In the cause of truth; or, in the defense of justice and right. It was not to be displayed for vain parade or ostentation; it was not to be unfolded in an unrighteous or unjust cause; it was not to be waved for the mere purpose of carrying desolation, or of securing victory; it was that a righteous cause might be vindicated, and that the honor of God might be promoted. This was the reason which the psalmist now urges why (God should interpose and repair their disasters - that it was his cause, and that they were appointed to maintain and defend it. What was true then of the people of God, is true of the church now. God has given to his church a banner or a standard that it may wage a war of justice, righteousness, and truth; that it may be employed in resisting and overcoming his enemies; that it may carry the weapons of truth and right against all injustice, falsehood, error, oppression, and wrong; that it may ever be found on the side of humanity and benevolence - of virtue, temperance, liberty, and equality; and that it may bear the great principles of the true religion to every territory of the enemy, until the whole world shall be subdued to God.

Verse 5

That thy beloved may be delivered - The word beloved is in the plural number, and might be rendered beloved ones. It refers not merely to David as his servant and friend, but to those associated with him. The reference is to the calamities and dangers then existing, to which allusion has been made above. The prayer is, that the enemy might be driven back, and the land delivered from their invasion.

Save with thy right hand - The right hand is that by which the sword is handled, the spear hurled, the arrow drawn on the bow. The prayer is, that God would put forth his power and deliver his people.

And hear me - literally, Answer me. The answer which he desired was that God would lead his armies successfully into Edom, Psalm 60:8-9.

Verse 6

God hath spoken in his holiness - That is, as a holy God; a God who is true; a God whose promises are always fulfilled. The idea is, that the holiness of God was the public pledge or assurance that what he had promised he would certainly perform. God had made promises in regard to the land of Canaan or Palestine, as a country to be put into the possession of Abraham and his posterity. Genesis 12:7; Genesis 13:15; Genesis 17:8; Psalm 105:8-11. The original promise of the gift of that land, made to

Abraham under the general name of Canaan Genesis 12:7, embraced the whole territory from the river (that divided the land from Egypt) to the Euphrates: "Unto thy seed, addressed to Abraham, have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates," Genesis 15:18. This would embrace the country of Edom, as well as the other countries which are specified in the psalm. The natural and proper boundary of the land on the east, therefore, according to the promise, was the river Euphrates; on the west, Egypt and the Mediterranean sea; on the south, the outer limit of Edom. It was the object of David to carry out what was implied in this promise, and to secure the possession of all that had been thus granted to the Hebrews as the descendants of Abraham. Hence, he had been engaged in carrying his conquests to the east, with a view to make the Euphrates the eastern border or boundary of the land: "David smote also Hadarezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates," 2 Samuel 8:3. Compare 1 Chronicles 18:3. In the prosecution of the same purpose he was anxious also to subdue Edom, that the entire territory thus promised to Abraham might be put in possession of the Hebrews, and that he might transmit the kingdom in the fullness of the original grant to his posterity. It is to this promise made to Abraham that he doubtless refers in the passage before us.

I will rejoice - I, David, will exult or rejoice in the prospect of success. I will find my happiness, or my confidence in what I now undertake, in the promise which God has made. The meaning is, that since God had made this promise, he would certainly triumph.

I will divide Shechem - That is, I will divide up the whole land according to the promise. The language here is taken from that which was employed when the country of Canaan was conquered by Joshua, and when it was divided among the tribes: "Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land which I sware unto their fathers to give them," Joshua 1:6. Compare Joshua 13:6-7; Joshua 14:5; Joshua 18:10; Joshua 19:51; Joshua 23:4; Psalm 78:55; Acts 13:19. David here applies the same language to Shechem, "and the valley of Succoth," as portions of the land, meaning that he would accomplish the original purpose in regard to the land by placing it in possession of the people of God. Shechem or Sichem was a city within the limits of the tribe of Ephraim, between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, called by the Romans Neapolis, and now Nablus. It is about two hours, or eight miles,

south of Samaria. It seems to be mentioned here as being the spot where the law of Moses was read to the people of Israel, and especially the blessings and curses recorded in Deuteronomy 27:11-13. This was actually done, Joshua 8:33. Shechem, therefore, as lying between these mountains, and as being the place where the great mass of the people were assembled to hear what was read, became a central place, a representative spot of the whole land, and to say that that was conquered or subdued, was to speak of that which implied a victory over the land. David speaks of having secured this, as significant of the fact that the central point of influence and power had been brought under subjection, and as in fact implying that the land was subdued. The importance of that place, and the allusion to it here, will justify a more extended reference to it, which I copy from "The Land and the Book," by Dr. Thomson, vol. ii. p. 203,204.

"Nablus is a queer old place. The streets are narrow, and vaulted over; and in the winter time it is difficult to pass along many of them on account of brooks which rush over the pavement with deafening roar. In this respect, I know no city with which to compare it except Brusa; and, like that city, it has mulberry, orange, pomegranate, and other trees, mingled in with the houses, whose odoriferous flowers lead the air with delicious perfume during the months of April and May. Here the billbul delights to sit and sing, and thousands of other birds unite to swell the chorus. The inhabitants maintain that theirs is the most musical vale in Palestine, and my experience does not enable me to contradict them.

"Imagine that the lofty range of mountains running north and south was cleft open to its base by some tremendous convulsion of nature, at right angles to its own line of extension, and the broad fissure thus made is the vale of Nablus, as it appears to one coming up the plain of Mukhna from Jerusalem. Mount Ebal is on the north, Gerizim on the south, and the city between. Near the eastern end, the vale is not more than sixty rods wide; and just there, I suppose, the tribes assembled to hear the ‹blessings and the curses‘ read by the Levites. We have them in extenso in Joshua 13:27. It was on the east side of the river Jordan, and is now called Sakut. It is first mentioned in Genesis 33:17, in the account of the journey which Jacob took on returning from the East to the land of Canaan. At this place he paused in his journey, and made booths for his cattle; and hence, the name Succoth, or booths. Why this place is referred to here by David, as representing his

conquests, cannot now be ascertained. It seems most probable that it was because it was a place east of the Jordan, as Shechem was west of the Jordan, and that the two might, therefore, represent the conquest of the whole country. Succoth, too, though not more prominent than many other places, and though in itself of no special importance, was well known as among the places mentioned in history. It is possible, also, though no such fact is mentioned, that there may have been some transaction of special importance there in connection with David‘s conquests in the East, which was well understood at the time, and which justified this special reference to it.

Verse 7

Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine - That is, My dominion or authority is extended over these regions - Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Judah. The idea here is substantially the same as in the former verse, that his dominion extended over the country on both sides of the Jordan; or that in the direction of east and west it embraced all that had been promised - “from the great sea to the river Euphrates.” In verse 6, this idea is expressed by selecting two spots or towns as representatives of the whole country - Shechem on the west, and Succoth on the east; in this verse, the same idea is expressed by a reference to the two regions so situated - Gilead and Manasseh on the east, and Ephraim and Judah on the west. Gilead was on the east of the river Jordan, properly embracing the mountainous region south of the river Jabbok, Numbers 32:26, Numbers 32:29, Numbers 32:39. Hence, in this place, it is put for the region occupied by the tribes of Reuben and Gad. “Manasseh” refers to the district or region occupied by the half tribe of Manasseh, on the east of the Jordan. These two portions - Gilead and Manasseh - or, Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh - would, therefore, embrace the whole of the land of promise, north and south, on the east of the Jordan. The limits of these regions to the east were properly the banks of the Euphrates; that is, the original promise would embrace this. David had gone to carry the boundaries of his country to those assigned limits 2 Samuel 8:3, and he now says that he had completed that undertaking.

Ephraim also - Ephraim and Judah were the principal tribes on the west of the Jordan, and they would well represent that part of Canaan. The idea is, that the whole of the promised land, east and west, was now under his control. There needed only the territory of Edom, on the south, to complete

the conquest, and place the whole of the promised land under his dominion, Psalm 60:8-9.

Is the strength of my head - This means that Ephraim constituted his chief strength, or was that on which he mainly relied. It was that which protected him, as the helmet does the head; that on which his very life in battle depended. This honor is given to the tribe of Ephraim because it was one of the largest tribes, and because it was situated in the very center of the land.

Judah is my lawgiver - This means that the tribe of Judah, by its position, its numbers, and the prominence given to it in the prophecies Genesis 49:8-12, actually gave law to the nation. Its influence was felt in all the institutions of the land. The controlling influence went out from that tribe in the time of David; and its authority in this respect was recognized, perhaps partly in anticipation of what it had been said would be its importance in future times: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come." Genesis 49:10.

Verse 8

Moab is my washpot - Moab was a region of country on the east of the Dead Sea, extending as far north as the river Arnon. See the notes at Isaiah 15:1-9. The words rendered wash-pot mean properly a pot or basin for washing, a wash-basin; and the expression is used here as one of contempt, as if he would use it as the meanest vessel is used. It implies that Moab was already subdued, and that the author of the psalm could make any use of it he pleased. It also implies that Moab was not regarded as adding much to his strength, or to the value of his dominions; but that, compared with other portions of his kingdom, it was of as little value as a wash-basin compared with the more valuable vessels in a house.

Over Edom will I cast out my shoe - Edom or Idumea was the country which still remained unsubdued. This David was anxious to possess, though the conquest had been delayed and prevented by the adverse circumstances to which allusion has already been made in the notes at the psalm. On the situation of Idumea, see the notes at Isaiah 11:14. In the margin this is, "triumph thou over me, by an irony." It may be regarded as irony, or as a taunt, meaning that Philistia was no longer now in a situation to triumph over him; or it may be understood as referring to the exultation and shouting which would ensue on the reception of its sovereign. The former seems to be the most probable interpretation, as the language is

undoubtedly intended to denote absolute subjection, and not the voluntary reception of a king. The language in the entire passage is that of triumph over foes.

Verse 9

Who will bring me into the strong city? - The strong city - the fenced, the fortified city - referred to here is doubtless the capital of Idumea. This was the celebrated city Petra, situated in the rocks, and so difficult to be taken by an enemy. For a description of it, see the notes at Isaiah 16:1. It was this city, as the capital of the land of Edom, which David was now so anxious to secure; and he asks, therefore, with interest, who among his captains, his mighty men, would undertake the task of conducting his armies there.

Who will lead me into Edom? - Into the capital, and thence into the whole land to subdue it. This was done under the combined command of Joab and Abishai his brother. See the notes at the title to the psalm.

Verse 10

Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst east us off? - See the notes at Psalm 60:1. The meaning is, that although God had seemed to reject and forsake them, they had no other resource, and the appeal might be still made to him. The psalmist hoped that he would again be favorable to his people, and would not forsake them altogether. It is still true that although God may seem to forsake us, that although he may leave us for a time to discouragement and darkness, yet we have no other resource but himself; it is still true that we may hope in his mercy, and plead for his return.

And thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies? - Who didst suffer us to be defeated. See the notes at Psalm 60:2-3.

Verse 11

Give us help from trouble - From the troubles which have now come upon us and overwhelmed us.

For vain is the help of man - Margin, salvation. The idea is, that they would look in vain to man to assist them in their present difficulties. They must depend on God alone. What is here said of temporal troubles is true as absolutely in the matter of salvation. When we are burdened with the consciousness of guilt, and trembling under the apprehension of the wrath to come, it is not man that can aid us. Our help is in God alone. Man can neither guide, comfort, pardon, nor save; and in vain should we look to any man, or to all people, for aid. We must look to God alone: to God as the

only one who can remove guilt from the soul; who can give peace to the troubled heart; who can deliver us - from condemnation and ruin.

Verse 12

Through God - By the help of God.

We shall do valiantly - literally, we shall make strength. That is, we shall gain or gather strength; we shall go forth with spirit and with courage to the war. This expresses the confident assurance that they would secure the aid of God, and that under him they would achieve the victory.

For he it is that shall tread down our enemies - He will himself tread or trample them down; that is, he will enable us to do it. The psalm, therefore, though begun in despondency and sadness, closes, as the Psalms often do, with confident hope; with the assurance of the favor of God; and with the firm belief that the object sought in the psalm would be obtained. The history shows that the prayer was answered; that the armies of David were successful; that Edom was subdued; and that thus the territories of the Hebrew people had, in fact, in the time of David, the boundaries promised to Abraham.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 61

Introduction

This psalm (title) is inscribed "To the chief Musician upon Neginah." On the meaning of the expression, "To the chief Musician," see the notes at the title to Psalm 4:1-8, where also we have the following word in another form, - "on Neginoth" - the plural, instead of the singular. The word means a stringed instrument; and the idea is, that the psalm was committed to the leader of those who played on stringed instruments in the sanctuary.

The psalm is ascribed to David, but the occasion on which it was composed is not specified. From the psalm itself it is evident that it was composed by one who was in exile Psalm 61:2, and by one who was a king Psalm 61:6. The supposition which best agrees with all the circumstances alluded to in the psalm is, that it was composed by David when he was driven into exile on the rebellion of Absalom, and that it was composed when he was still beyond the Jordan 2 Samuel 17:22, and when his life was yet in danger. Psalm 42:1-11 and Psalm 43:1-5 refer to the same period, and have the same general characteristics.

The psalm consists of the following parts:

I. A prayer for the divine interposition, Psalm 61:1-2. The psalmist was far away from his home - in exile - and his heart was overwhelmed.

II. A reference to former mercies, and to the divine interposition in other days, as a ground of hope and of pleading now, Psalm 61:3-5.

III. An expression of confident assurance that his prayer would be heard; that his life would be preserved; that his days would be lengthened out, and that he would be delivered from danger, Psalm 61:6-7.

IV. The result of this deliverance; or, as an expression of gratitude for it, a purpose to devote himself to God, in a life spent in the daily performance of his vows, Psalm 61:8.

Verse 1

Hear my cry, O God - See the notes at Psalm 5:2. The word rendered cry in this place sometimes denotes a joyful shout - a shout of triumph; but the connection makes it certain that it here refers to the voice of prayer. It is implied that it was audible prayer, or that the psalmist gave utterance to his desires in words. It is language such as would be produced by deep distress; when a sad and burdened heart gives vent to its feelings in a loud cry for mercy.

Attend unto my prayer - Give ear; incline the ear to me, Psalm 5:1; Psalm 17:1, Psalm 17:6; Psalm 39:12; Psalm 71:2.

Verse 2

From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee - This language is derived from the idea that the earth is one extended plain, and that it has limits or boundaries. Such language is common in the Scriptures, and indeed is in constant use now, even although we know that the earth is globular, and that there are no parts which can properly be called "the ends of the earth." The meaning is plain. The psalmist was far from the place where he was accustomed to live; or, in other words, he was in exile or in banishment. The language agrees well with the supposition that the psalm was composed when David was driven from his home and his throne by Absalom, and was in exile beyond the Jordan, 2 Samuel 17:22. Compare Psalm 42:1-11.

When my heart is overwhelmed - The word used here - עטף *ʿâṭaph* - means properly to cover, as with a garment, Psalm 73:6; then, with grain - as a field, Isaiah 57:16. The meaning here is, that darkness or calamity seemed to have covered or enveloped his soul. He saw no light, he had no comfort. Compare Psalm 42:3, Psalm 42:6-7.

Lead me to the rock that is higher than I - To a rock; to some place of refuge; to some stronghold where I may be safe. The allusion is to God as such a rock or place of refuge. See the notes at Psalm 18:2. The idea is, that he had no strength in himself; that if he depended on himself, he could not be safe. He was, as it were, in a low vale, exposed to every enemy. He wished to be put in a place of safety. To such a place of safety - to Himself - he prayed that God would lead him. We need one much higher than we are to save us. A Saviour - a Redeemer - on the same level with ourselves could not help us. We must have one that is supreme over all things; one that is divine.

Verse 3

For thou hast been a shelter for me - A place of refuge; a place where I have found safety. He refers here to what had occurred in former times. God had protected him when in danger, and he pleads that fact as a reason why God should now interpose and deliver him. That reason seems to be founded on two considerations:

(a) God had thus shown that he had power to deliver him; and

(b) it might be expected that God who is unchangeable, and who had interposed, would manifest the same traits of character still, and would not leave him now.

Both of these are proper grounds for prayer.

And strong tower from the enemy - See the notes at Psalm 18:2.

Verse 4

I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever - This expresses the confident assurance that he would be restored to his home, and to the privileges of public worship. The word forever here means perpetually; that is, his permanent home would be there, or he would dwell with God who dwelt in the tabernacle. The word "tabernacle" refers to the sacred tent which was erected for the worship of God, within which were the ark, the tables of the law, the table of showbread, etc. In the innermost part of that tent - the holy of holies - the symbol of the divine presence rested on the mercy-seat or cover of the ark of the covenant. David regarded it as a great privilege to abide near that sacred tent; near to the place of; public worship; near to the place where God was supposed to dwell. See Psalm 23:6, note; Psalm 26:8, note; Psalm 27:4, note. It is possible that his mind looked beyond the tabernacle on earth to an eternal residence in the very presence of God; to his being admitted into his own sacred abode in heaven.

I will trust in the covert of thy wings - Margin, Make my refuge. See the notes at Psalm 17:8. Compare Psalm 36:7; Psalm 57:1. The idea is, that he would seek and find protection in God - as young birds do under the outstretched wings of the parent bird.

Verse 5

For thou, O God, hast heard my vows - That is, my prayers accompanied with solemn pledges or promises that I will devote myself to thy service. In some way David had the assurance that those vows and prayers had been heard; that God would answer his supplications - that he

would restore him to his home, and to the privilege of uniting with others in the sacred services of the sanctuary. In what way he had this assurance we are not informed, but the statement here accords with what we often find in the Psalms. His troubled mind became calm, for he looked upon the blessing as already granted. He entertained no doubt that what he had asked would be bestowed. The mind of a true believer often feels this assurance now. Somehow he feels an undoubting persuasion that the prayer which he has offered has been heard; that God will be merciful; that the blessing which has been sought will assuredly be conferred. That there may be danger of illusion here, no one can doubt - for we are not, as David was, inspired; but no one can prove that God may not impart such a gracious assurance to the soul; no one can show that it is wrong for a believer to allow peace to flow into his soul, in the confident hope that the blessing which he had sought will be his.

Thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name - The heirship which pertains to such; the privileges of those who are the true children of God. One of these privileges is that of prayer; another is the peace which results from adoption into the family of God; of feeling that we are his heirs. Compare the notes at Romans 8:16-17.

Verse 6

Thou wilt prolong the king‘s life - literally, “Days upon the days of the king thou wilt add;” that is, Thou wilt add days to those which thou hast already permitted him to live. The language does not necessarily mean that he would have a long life, but that he would still be permitted to live. He had apprehended death. He knew that his life was sought by those who were engaged with Absalom in the rebellion. At first it was uncertain what the issue would be. He had fled for his life. But now, in answer to prayer, he felt assured that his life would be preserved; that he would be permitted to return to his home and his throne; and that as king - as the sovereign of his people - he would be permitted to honor God.

And his years as many generations - Margin, as in Hebrew, generation and generation. This probably means that he would be permitted to live longer than the ordinary time of a generation; that he would live as if one generation - or as if one ordinary lifetime - were added to another, so that he would live through successive generations of men. The average life of a generation is about thirty years. David is supposed to have lived from 1085 before the Christian era to 1016 b.c., or 69 years, which would reach a third

generation. This is a more natural interpretation of the passage than to suppose that he refers to an "ideal" king, or that his dynasty would continue for many generations.

Verse 7

He shall abide before God for ever - That is, perpetually; without danger of change, or of being driven into exile. This may allude, however, to the hope which David had that he would always live with God in a higher world - a world where there would be no danger of change or banishment. His restoration to his home, to his throne, and to the privileges of the sanctuary, he may have regarded as an emblem of his ultimate reception into a peaceful heaven, and his mind may have glanced rapidly from the one to the other. On earth, after his restoration, he would have no fear that he would be banished again; in heaven, of which such a restoration might be regarded as an emblem, there could be no change, no exile.

O prepare mercy and truth - literally, divide, or divide out; then, allot or appoint; and then, make ready or prepare. The prayer is, that God would measure out to him, or impart to him, such favor that this desire of his heart would be realized. On the phrase mercy and truth, see Psalm 25:10, note; Psalm 57:3, note; Psalm 57:10, note.

Which may preserve him - They will preserve him. That is, the manifestation of such mercy and truth would make his permanent occupancy of his throne on earth, and his ultimate reception into heaven, secure.

Verse 8

So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever - As the result of this gracious interposition. Compare the notes at Isaiah 38:20. The meaning is, that he would do this constantly. It would be the regular business of his life.

That I may daily perform my vows - The solemn promises which I have made in my exile; the purposes which I have expressed to devote myself to thee. Or, the language may have been used in a more general sense, denoting that, as a religious man, the vows of God were constantly on him, or that he had pledged himself to serve God faithfully and always, and that he could better perform this duty at the tabernacle - in the place consecrated to public worship - than he could in exile. He desired, therefore, to be restored to the sanctuary, that he might keep up the performance of the daily duties of religion without interruption or hindrance. The whole psalm indicates a fervent desire to be engaged in the

worship and service of God; a desire to be with Him and to enjoy His favor on earth; a confident hope that he would be permitted to enjoy His presence forever.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 62

Introduction

On the phrase in the title to this psalm, "To the chief Musician," see the notes at the title to Psalm 4:1-8. On the expression "To Jeduthun," see the notes at the title to Psalm 39:1-13. Jeduthun was one of those who were appointed by David to preside over the music of the tabernacle 1 Chronicles 25:1-3, but it is impossible now to determine why this psalm, and the others where his name is found in the title Psalm 39:1-13; Psalm 62:4, Psalm 62:8. Another division is indicated in the original by the recurrence of the word אך *'ak* - "truly" - at the beginning of Psalm 62:1, Psalm 62:4-6, Psalm 62:9, as if the mind of the author had been greatly impressed with the importance of the particular sentiment introduced by that word.

The general purpose of the psalm is to lead people to trust in God. The contents are as follows:

I. A statement of the humble trust of the author in God - trust in him as his only hope - as his rock and his refuge, Psalm 62:1-2.

II. A description of his enemies and of their designs. They devised mischief; they sought to cast down others from their high places; they delighted in falsehood; they made great pretensions of friendship, but they were false in heart, Psalm 62:3-4.

III. A renewed expression of the confidence of the psalmist in God - repeating what he had said in Psalm 62:1-2 - and reaffirming his entire trust in the divine protection, Psalm 62:5-7.

IV. An exhortation to others to trust in God, and not in people; whether people of high or low condition; to trust in nothing else than God: not in power - the power of oppression; not in the robbery of others, or that which was obtained from others by violence; not in riches, in whatever way they might have been acquired, Psalm 62:8-10.

V. Reasons for trusting in God, Psalm 62:11-12.
(a) All power belongs to him, Psalm 62:11,
(b) He is merciful or kind, Psalm 62:12,

(c) He is just or equitable, Psalm 62:12.

Verse 1

Truly - Indeed; really. The state of mind indicated by this particle is that of one who had been seriously contemplating a subject; who had looked round on his own actual condition; who had taken an estimate of all his resources, and of all his means of reliance, and who had carefully examined his own state of mind to see what was his real trust, and what were his real feelings toward God. Having done all this, he, at last, breaks out with the expression - "My soul does sincerely confide in God; I have no other resource; I have no power to meet my foes, and I am sure - my inmost soul testifies - that my real trust is, where it ought to be, in God; I see nothing in myself on which to rely; I see so much crime, falsehood, treachery in people, that I cannot confide in them; I have had so much painful experience of their insincerity and baseness that I cannot rely on them; but I do see that in God which leads me to trust in him, and I am sure that my heart truly does rely on him."

My soul waiteth upon God - Margin, is silent. Septuagint, "Is not my soul subject to God?" So the Latin Vulgate. Luther, "My soul is still (calm) in God." The Hebrew word - דומיה *dûmîyâh* - means "silence, quiet, rest"; and then, a silent expectation or hope. The idea here is, "Truly toward God is the silent waiting of my soul"; that is, "In him alone do I trust; there is calmness of mind; I have no apprehension as to what can happen. My mind is at peace, for I feel that all is in the hands of God, and that lie is worthy of entire trust and confidence." The feeling is that which exists when we have entrusted all to God; when, having entire confidence in his power, his goodness, his wisdom, his mercy, we commit the whole case to him as if it were no longer our own. Such is the calmness - the peace - the quiet - the silence of the soul - when all is left with God. See the notes at Isaiah 26:3, and Philemon 4:6-7.

From him cometh my salvation - That is, My safety is from him; my security is with him. It is true, also, that all that is ever implied in this word salvation, whether pertaining to this life or the life to come, is derived from God.

Verse 2

He only is my rock … - See the notes at Psalm 18:2.

I shall not be greatly moved - The word greatly here, or much - "I shall not be much moved," implies that he did not anticipate perfect security from danger or calamity; he did not suppose that he would escape all disaster or trouble, but he felt that no great evil would befall him, that his most important interests were safe, and that he would be ultimately secure. He would be restored to his home and his throne, and would be favored with future peace and tranquility. None of us can hope wholly to escape calamity in this life. It is enough if we can be assured that our great interests will be ultimately secured; that we shall be safe at last in the heavenly world. Having that confidence the soul may be, and should be, calm; and we need little apprehend what will occur in this world.

Verse 3

How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? - The original word here rendered "imagine mischief," from התת *hâthath* occurs only in this place. It means, according to Gesenius (Lexicon), to break in upon; to set upon; to assail: "How long will ye break in upon a man?" that is, set upon him. So the Septuagint, and the Latin Vulgate. It does not refer to their merely forming purposes of mischief against a man, but to their making assaults upon him; to their endeavoring to take his life or to destroy him. The address here is to the enemies of David, and the language would apply well to the attempts made upon his life by Absalom and his followers. The question here is, "how long" they would continue to do this; how long they would show this determined purpose to take his life; whether they would never cease thus to persecute him. They had already done it long; they had showed great perseverance in this course of wickedness; and he asks whether it would never come to an end? Who these persons were he does not intimate; but there can be no great danger of mistake in referring the description to Absalom and his adherents.

Ye shall be slain all of you - Prof. Alexander renders this entire passage," Will ye murder (that is, seek to murder him) all of you (combined against a single person, who is consequently) like wall inclined (or bent by violence), fence (or hedge) crushed (broken down)." So, substantially, DeWette renders it. Those who thus interpret the passage give it an active signification, meaning that his enemies pressed upon him, like a wall that was bent by violence, or a fence that was likely to fall on one. The original word rendered "ye shall be slain,"

d **t^{a}raats^{a}chuw -** תרצחו *terâtsechû* is in the active form (Piel), and cannot without violence be rendered in the passive, as it is in our translation. But the active form may still be retained, and a consistent meaning be given to the whole passage without the forced meaning put on it in the rendering by Prof. Alexander. It is not natural to speak of enemies as so coming on a man as to make him like a falling wall, or a tottering fence. The evident idea is, that they themselves would be as a falling wall; that is, that they would be defeated or disappointed in their purpose, as a wall that has no solid foundation tumbles to the ground. The meaning of the original may be thus expressed: "How long will ye assail a man, that ye may put him to death? All of you shall be as a bowing wall," etc. That is, You will not accomplish your design; you will fail in your enterprise, as a wall without strength falls to the ground.

As a bowing wall - A wall that bows out, or swells out; a wall that may fall at any moment. See the notes at Isaiah 30:13.

And as a tottering fence - A fence that is ready to fall; that has no firmness. So it would be with them. Their purposes would suddenly give way, as a fence does when the posts are rotted off, and when there is nothing to support it.

Verse 4

They only consult to cast him down from his excellency - This is the object of all their counsels and plans. They aim at one high in rank - and their purpose, their sole purpose, is to bring him down. This would apply well to the case of David in the time of the rebellion of Absalom.

They delight in lies - In false pretences; in secret plans of evil; in hypocritical assurances. This was eminently true of Absalom, who made use of these arts to seduce the people from allegiance to his father. 2 Samuel 15:1-6.

They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly - They profess true attachment and zeal, but they are traitors at heart. See the notes at Psalm 28:3. This, too, would apply well to the conduct of Absalom and those associated with him.

Verse 5

My soul, wait thou only upon God - See the notes at Psalm 62:1. There is, in the word used here, and rendered wait, the same idea of rest or repose which occurs in Psalm 62:1. The meaning is, that he would commit the

whole cause to God, and that his soul would thus be calm and without apprehension.

For my expectation is from him - In Psalm 62:1, this is salvation. The idea here is, that all that he expected or hoped for must come from God. He did not rely on his fellow men; he did not rely on himself. God alone could deliver him, and he confidently believed that God would do it. Often are we in such circumstances that we feel that our only "expectation" - our only hope - is in God. All our strength fails; all our resources are exhausted; our fellow-men cannot or will not aid us; our own efforts seem to be vain; our plans are frustrated, and we are shut up to the conclusion that God alone can help us. How often is this felt by a Christian parent in regard to the conversion of his children. All his own efforts seem to be vain; all that he says is powerless; his hopes, long-cherished, are disappointed; his very prayers seem not to be heard; and he is made to feel that his only hope is in God - a sovereign God - and that the whole case must be left in His hands. This state of mind, when it is fully reached, is often all that is needful in order that our desires may be granted. It is desirable that this state of mind should be produced; and when it is produced, the prayer is answered.

Verse 6

He only is my rock … - See the notes at Psalm 62:2. The only difference between this verse and Psalm 62:2 is, that in this verse the word "greatly" is omitted. The psalmist declares here in the most absolute manner, that he shall not be "moved" at all. In Psalm 62:2, he said that he would not be "greatly moved;" his mind would not be much or materially disturbed. The language here indicates more entire confidence - more certain conviction - showing that the slight apprehension or fear which existed in the beginning of the psalm, had been wholly dissipated, and that his mind had become perfectly calm.

Verse 7

In God is my salvation - See Psalm 62:1. That is, his salvation, his safety, his anticipated deliverance, was to come only from God.

And my glory - That in which I glory or boast; the source of all in me that is glorious or honorable. he gloried that there was such a God; he gloried that He was his God.

The rock of my strength - The strong rock; the refuge that cannot be successfully assailed; where I shall feel strong and secure. See the notes at Psalm 18:2.

My refuge - That to which I may flee for safety. See the notes at Psalm 46:1.

Verse 8

Trust in him at all times - This exhortation, addressed to all persons, in all circumstances, and at all times, is founded on the personal experience of the psalmist, and on the views which he had of the character of God, as worthy of universal confidence. David had found him worthy of such confidence; he now exhorts all others to make the same trial, and to put their trust in God in like manner. What he had found God to be, all others would find him to be. His own experience of God‘s goodness and mercy - of his gracious interposition in the time of trouble - had been such that he could confidently exhort all others, in similar circumstances, to make the same trial of his love.

Ye people, pour out your heart before him - All people. On the meaning of the phrase “pour out your heart,” see the notes at Psalm 42:4. The idea is, that the heart becomes tender and soft, so that its feelings and desires flow out as water, and all its emotions, all its wishes, its sorrows, its troubles, are poured out before God. All that is in our hearts may be made known to God. There is not a desire which he cannot gratify; not a trouble in which he cannot relieve us; not a danger in which he cannot defend us. And, in like manner there is not a spiritual want in which he will not feel a deep interest, nor a danger to our souls from which he will not be ready to deliver us. Much more freely than to any earthly parent - to a father, or even to a mother - may we make mention of all our troubles, little or great, before God.

God is a refuge for us - For all. For one as well as another. He is the only refuge; he is all the refuge that we need.

Verse 9

Surely men of low degree are vanity - literally, “vanity are the sons of Adam,” but the word Adam here is used evidently to represent men, or the race. The same word is also employed particularly to represent common men, or men of the humbler rank, in contradistinction to the word אישׁ *'îysh* - which is the other word used here, and rendered “men of high degree.” Compare, for this use of the word, Hosea 6:7. The same antithesis between the two words is found in Isaiah 2:9; Isaiah 5:15. The idea here is, that in the great matters which pertain to us, we cannot depend on men, and that our hope - our trust - must be in God. Of men of the humbler or lower

classes, it is said that they are "vanity;" that is, they are like a vain, empty, unsubstantial thing. They cannot help us. It is useless to rely on them when we most need aid.

Men of high degree are a lie - Men of exalted rank, kings, princes, nobles. This does not refer to their personal character, as if they were always false, deceitful, treacherous; but the idea is, that any prospect of protection or aid from men of rank and station - front any power which they wield - is unworthy to be relied on. It is not that which we need; it is not that on which we can depend.

To be laid in the balance - literally, "In the scales to go up;" that is, they are seen to go up, or to show how light they are. They have no real weight; no real value. On the scales or balance, see the notes at Daniel 5:27.

They are altogether lighter than vanity - They are all vain; single or combined, they have no power to save us. The meaning is not that if these two ranks of persons were weighed against each other they would both be found to be vanity; but that it is true of each and every rank of men - high and low - whether single or combined - that, as weighed against our interests and needs, they are nothing. All the kings of the earth with all their hosts of war, all princes and nobles with all that they can summon from the lower ranks of their people, cannot save one soul from death - cannot deliver us from the consequences of our transgressions. God, and God alone, can do this.

Verse 10

Trust not in oppression - The general meaning here is, that we are not to trust in anything but God. In the previous verse the psalmist had stated reasons why we should not trust in men of any rank. In this verse he enumerates several things on which people are accustomed to rely, or in which they place confidence, and he says that we should put no confidence in them in respect to the help which we need, or the great objects which are to be accomplished by us. The first thing mentioned is oppression; and the idea is, that we must not hope to accomplish our object by oppressing others; extorting their property or their service; making them by force subject to us, and subservient to our wishes. Many do this. Conquerors do it. Tyrants do it. The owners of slaves do it.

And become not vain in robbery - That is, Do not resort to theft or robbery, and depend on that for what is needed in life. Many do. The great robbers of the world - conquerors - have done it. Thieves and burglars do it.

People who seek to defraud others of their earnings do it. They who withhold wages from laborers, and they who cheat in trade, do it.

If riches increase, set not your heart upon them - If you become rich without oppression, or without robbery. If your riches seem to grow of themselves - for that is the meaning of the original word (compare Mark 4:2) - do not rely on them as being all that you require. People are prone to do this. The rich man confides in his wealth, and supposes that he has all he needs. The psalmist says that none of these things constitute the true reliance of man. None of them can supply his real needs; none can defend him in the great perils of his existence; hone can save his soul. He needs, over and above all these, a God and Saviour; and it is such a God and Saviour only that can meet the real needs of his nature.

Verse 11

God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this - This repetition, or this declaration that he had heard the thing repeated, is designed to give emphasis to what was said, or to call attention to it as particularly worthy of notice. See the notes at Job 33:14. Compare Job 40:5. The sentiment here is particularly important, or is deserving of special attention, because, as the psalmist had shown, all other resources fail, and confidence is to be placed in nothing else for that which man so much needs; neither in people, whether of low degree or high Psalm 62:9; not in oppressive acts - acts of mere power; not in plunder; not in wealth, however acquired, Psalm 62:10.

That power belongeth unto God - Margin, strength. The idea is, that the strength which man needs - the ability to defend and to save him - is to be found in God. All else may fail, but the power of God will not fail. The result of all, therefore, should be to lead us to put our trust in God alone.

Verse 12

Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy - Power, indeed, belongs to God Psalm 62:11; but this is an attribute to be feared, and while, in one respect, it will inspire confidence, or while it gives us the assurance that God is able to defend us when all else shall fail, yet, unattended by any other attribute, it might produce only apprehension and alarm. What man, weak and sinful man, needs to know is not merely that God has almighty power, but how that power will be wielded, or with what other attributes it is combined; whether it will be put forth to destroy or to save; to kill or to keep alive; to crush or to uphold. Man, therefore, needs the assurance that God is a benevolent Being, as really as that he is a powerful Being; that he

is disposed to show mercy; that his power will be put forth in behalf of those who confide in him, and not employed against them. Hence, the attribute of mercy is so essential to a proper conception of God; and hence, the psalm so appropriately closes by a reference to his mercy and compassion.

For thou renderest to every man according to his work - As this stands in our version, it would seem that the psalmist regarded what is here referred to as a manifestation of mercy. Yet the "rendering to every man according to his work" is an act of justice rather than of mercy. It is probable, therefore, that the word rendered "for" - כי *kîy* - does not refer here to either of the attributes mentioned exclusively - either power or mercy - but is to be understood with reference to the general course of argument in the psalm, as adapted to lead to confidence in God. The fact that he is a God who will deal impartially with mankind, or who will regard what is right and proper to be done in view of the characters of mankind, is a reason why they should confide in God - since there could be no just ground of confidence in a Being who is not thus impartial and just. All these combined - power, mercy, equity - constitute a reason why people should confide in God. If either of these were missing in the divine character, man could have no confidence in God. If these things do exist in God, unlimited confidence may be placed in him as having all needful power to save; as being so merciful that sinful people may trust in him; and as being so just and equal in his dealings that all may feel that it is right to repose confidence in a Being by whom all the interests of the universe will be secured. Compare 1 John 1:9.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 63

Introduction

This psalm purports to be a "psalm of David," and there can be no just ground of doubt in regard to the correctness of the title in this respect. DeWette indeed supposes that the way in which mention is made of the "king" in Psalm 63:11, seems to indicate that the psalm was not composed by David himself, but that it was written by some friend of his, who was his companion in the troubles which he experienced; but it is not necessary to resort to this supposition, for it is not very uncommon for an author to refer to himself in the third person, as Caesar does everywhere. The psalm further purports to have been composed by David "when he was in the wilderness of Judah." The "wilderness of Judah" was that wild and uncultivated tract of country lying on the east side of the territory of the tribe of Judah, commonly called "the wilderness of Judea" (Matthew 3:1; compare the notes at Matthew 4:1), lying along the Jordan. David was repeatedly driven into that wilderness in the time of Saul; and the general structure of the psalm would accord well with any one of those occasions; but the mention of the "king" in Psalm 63:11, as undoubtedly meaning David, makes it necessary to refer the composition of the psalm to a later period in his life, since the title "king" was not given to him in the time of Saul. The psalm, therefore, was doubtless composed in the time of Absalom - the period when David was driven away by the rebellion, and compelled to seek a refuge in that wilderness. It belongs, if this view is correct, to the same period in the life of David as Psalm 42:1-11; Psalm 43:1-5; Psalm 61:1-8; and probably some others.

The psalm consists of the following parts:

I. An expression of earnest desire to see the power and glory of God again, as he had formerly done in the sanctuary, Psalm 63:1-2.

II. His sense of the goodness of God, and of the value of the divine favor, as being greater than that of life; and his purpose to find his happiness in God, and to praise and bless him in all situations, especially in those moments of solemn meditation when he was alone upon his bed, Psalm 63:3-6.

III. His remembrance of former mercies, and his conviction that God still upheld him by his right hand, Psalm 63:7-8.

IV. His firm belief that all his enemies would be destroyed, Psalm 63:9-11.

Verse 1

O God, thou art my God - The words here rendered God are not the same in the original. The first one - אלהים *'Elohiym* - is in the plural number, and is the word which is usually employed to designate God Genesis 1:1; the second - אל *'Êl* - is a word which is very often applied to God with the idea of strength - a strong, a mighty One; and there is probably this underlying idea here, that God was the source of his strength, or that in speaking of God as his God, he was conscious of referring to him as Almighty. It was the divine attribute of power on which his mind mainly rested when he spoke of him as his God. He did not appeal to him merely as God, with no reference to a particular attribute; but he had particularly in his eye his power or his ability to deliver and save him. In Psalm 22:1, where, in our version, we have the same expression, "My God, my God," the two words in the original are identical, and are the same which is used here - אל *'Êl* - as expressive of strength or power. The idea suggested here is, that in appealing to God, while we address him as our God, and refer to his general character as God, it is not improper to have in our minds some particular attribute of his character - power, mercy, love, truth, faithfulness, etc. - as the special ground of our appeal.

Early will I seek thee - The word used here has reference to the early dawn, or the morning; and the noun which is derived from the verb, means the aurora, the dawn, the morning. The proper idea, therefore, would be that of seeking God in the morning, or the early dawn; that is, as the first thing in the day. Compare the notes at Isaiah 26:9. The meaning here is, that he would seek God as the first thing in the day; first in his plans and purposes; first in all things. He would seek God before other things came in to distract and divert his attention; he would seek God when he formed his plans for the day, and before other influences came in, to control and direct him. The favor of God was the supreme desire of his heart, and that desire would be indicated by his making him the earliest - the first - object of his search. His first thoughts - his best thoughts - therefore, he resolved should be given to

God. A desire to seek God as the first object in life - in youth - in each returning day - at the beginning of each year, season, month, week - in all our plans and enterprises - is one of the most certain evidences of true piety; and religion flourishes most in the soul, and flourishes only in the soul, when we make God the first object of our affections and desires.

My soul thirsteth for thee - See the notes at Psalm 42:2.

My flesh longeth for thee - All my passions and desires - my whole nature. The two words - "soul" and "flesh," are designed to embrace the entire man, and to express the idea that he longed supremely for God; that all his desires, whether springing directly from the soul, or the needs of the body, rose to God as the only source from which they could be gratified.

In a dry and thirsty land - That is, As one longs for water in a parched desert, so my soul longs for God. The word thirsty is in the margin, as in Hebrew, weary. The idea is that of a land where, from its parched nature - its barrenness - its rocks - its heat - its desolation - one would be faint and weary on a journey.

Where no water is - No running streams; no gushing fountains; nothing to allay the thirst.

Verse 2

To see thy power and thy glory - The reference here is to what was manifested of the presence and the power of God in the services of public worship; the praises, the prayers, the rejoicings, the evidences of the divine presence.

So as I have seen thee in the sanctuary - At the tabernacle, amidst the solenm services of divine worship. There seems to be no reason for supposing that he here refers to the mere external pomp and splendor of public worship, but he doubtless includes the power of the divine presence which he had felt in such services on his own soul. As applied now to a place of Christian worship, it may be observed that there are nowhere more striking exhibitions of the Tower of God on earth than those which occur in such a place, especially in a revival of religion. The scene on the day of Pentecost was as striking an exhibition of the power of God as that which goes forth in the fury of the storm, in the raging of the ocean, or in the guidance of the heavenly bodies. Nothing can so well express what occurs in such a scene as the words "power" and "glory;" nothing shows more certainly the power of God than that influence which bows down haughty sinners, and makes them humble; which produces a deep stillness and awe

in the assembled multitudes; which extorts the cry, "Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?" which makes hardened men weep, and men long addicted to habits of sin willing to abandon their iniquities, and turn to God: and nothing shows more clearly the "glory" of God than that power, that grace, that mercy, which thus turns multitudes from the ways of sin and death, and directs their feet into the path of peace and salvation. They who have ever witnessed the power of God in a revival of religion, will ever afterward long to see again "the power and glory" of God, as they "have seen" it "in the sanctuary."

Verse 3

Because thy loving-kindness is better than life - Thy favor; thy mercy. This is of more value than life; more to be desired than life. Life is the most valued and valuable thing pertaining to this world which we can possess. See the notes at Job 2:4. But, above this, David valued the favor and friendship of God. If one or the other was to be sacrificed, he preferred that it should be his life; he would be willing to exchange that for the favor of God. Life was not desirable, life furnished no comforts - no joys - without the divine favor.

"My life itself, without Thy love,
No taste of pleasure could afford;
‹Twould but a tiresome burden prove,
If I were banished from the Lord."

My lips shall praise thee - That is either

(a) because of this loving-kindness; because I have this trust in thy character; or

(b) because thou wilt restore me to the place of public worship, and I shall be permitted again to praise thee.

Probably the latter is the true idea.

Verse 4

Thus will I bless thee while I live - In my life; or, as long as life lasts, will I praise thee. The word "thus" refers to the sentiment in the previous verse, meaning that as the result of his deep sense of the value of the loving kindness of God, he would praise him through all the remainder of his life, or would never cease to praise him. A true purpose of serving God

embraces the whole of this life, and the whole of eternity. He who loves God, and who has any proper sense of his mercy, does not anticipate a time when he will cease to praise and bless him, or when he will have any desire or wish not to be engaged in his service.

I will lift up my hands in thy name - In solemn prayer and praise. See the notes at Psalm 28:2.

Verse 5

My soul shall be satisfied - See the notes at Psalm 36:8. The idea is, that his soul now longed for the service of God as one who is hungry longs for food, or as one who is thirsty longs for drink; and that the time would come when this longing desire would be satisfied. He would engage in the service of God as he desired to do; he would be permitted to enjoy that service without interruption.

As with marrow and fatness - See the notes at Psalm 36:8. The words here employed denote rich food; and the comparison is between the pleasure of serving God, and the satisfaction derived from food when one is hungry. It is not uncommon to compare the pleasures of religion with a feast or banquet. Compare Isaiah 25:6.

And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips - Lips full of joy; or, which give utterance to the joy of the heart.

Verse 6

When I remember thee upon my bed - See the notes at Psalm 42:8. That is, when I lie down at night; when I compose myself to sleep. Nothing can be more proper than that our last thoughts, as we sink into quiet slumber, should be of God; of his being, his character, his mercy, his loving-kindness; of the dealings of his providence, and the manifestations of his grace toward us, during the day; and nothing is better suited to compose the mind to rest, and to induce quiet and gentle slumber, than the calmness of soul which arises from the idea of an Infinite God, and from confidence in him. Often when restless on our beds - when nothing else will lull the body to rest, the thought of God - the contemplation of his greatness, his mercy, and his love - the sweet sense of an assurance of his favor will soothe us, and cause us to sink into gentle repose. So it may be - so it will be - when we are about to sleep the long sleep of death, for then the most appropriate thoughts - the thoughts that will best prepare us for that long sleep - will be thoughts of God.

And meditate on thee in the night-watches - See the notes at Psalm 1:2. The word watches here refers to the ancient divisions of the night for municipal or military purposes - periods of the night assigned to different persons to keep watch around a camp or city. The most common division of the night was into three parts, though the arrangement varied at different times. See Matthew 14:25; Luke 12:38.

Verse 7

Because thou hast been my help - Because thou hast interposed to defend me in danger. The idea is, that he had experienced the divine interposition in times of danger, and that this was a reason why he should still confide in God. The argument is, that God‘s mercy and favor in the past is a reason why we should confide in him in time to come.

Therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice - Under the shadow or protection of thy wings will I feel safe. See the notes at Psalm 17:8. Compare Psalm 36:7; Psalm 57:1; Psalm 61:4.

Verse 8

My soul followeth hard after thee - The word used here - דבק *dâbaq* - means properly to cleave to; to adhere; to be glued to; to stick fast. Then it means to attach oneself to anything; and then, to pursue or follow after. The idea here is that of adhering to, or cleaving to; and the meaning is, that the psalmist adhered firmly to God, as pieces of wood glued together adhere to each other; that he, as it were, stuck fast to him; that he would not leave him or be separated from him. The language represents the feelings of true piety in adhering firmly and constantly to God, whatever there may be that tends to separate us from him. The adhesion of bodies by glue is a striking but not an adequate representation of the firmness with which the soul adheres to God. Portions of matter held together by glue may be separated; the soul of the true believer never can be separated from God.

Thy right hand upholdeth me - The right hand is that by which we accomplish anything; and, by constant use, is stronger than the left hand. Hence, the expression is equivalent to saying that God upheld him with all his strength. The meaning is, that God sustained him in life; defended him in danger; kept him from the power of his enemies.

Verse 9

But those that seek my soul to destroy it - Who seek my life; who endeavor to kill me. This language would well describe the purposes of Absalom and his followers.

Shall go into the lower parts of the earth - Shall descend into the earth; into the deepest graves. He would live; but they would perish.

Verse 10

They shall fall by the sword - Margin, They shall make him run out like water by the hands of the sword. The word rendered in the text "they shall fall," and in the margin "they shall make him run out" - נגר *nâgar* - means properly, to flow, to pour out, as water; and then, to pour out; then, to give up or deliver. The idea here is that of delivering over, as one pours out water from a basin or pitcher: they shall be delivered over to the sword. The original rendered "sword" is, as in the margin, "by the hands of the sword;" that is, the sword is represented as accomplishing its purpose as if it had hands. The sword shall slay them.

They shall be a portion for foxes - The original word - שׁוּעָל *shûʿâl* - means properly and commonly a fox. But under this general name fox, the Orientals seem to have comprehended other animals also, having some resemblance to a fox, and particularly jackals. Thus jackals seem to be meant in Judges 15:4; since foxes are with great difficulty taken alive; and in this place also it has the same meaning, inasmuch as foxes do not feast on dead bodies, though a favorite repast of the jackal. Gesenius, Lexicon. Compare Bochart Hieroz. T. ii. p. 190, ed. Lips. Jackals are wild, fierce, savage; they howl around dwellings at night - producing most hideous music, beginning "in a sort of solo, a low, long-drawn wail, rising and swelling higher and higher until it quite overtops the wind," (Thomson's "Land and the Book," i. 133) - and ready to gather at any moment when there is prey to be devoured. "These sinister, guilty, wo-begone brutes, when pressed with hunger, gather in gangs among the graves, and yell in rage, and fight like fiends over their midnight orgies; but on the battlefield is their great carnival. Oh! let me never even dream that anyone dear to me has fallen by the sword, and lies there to be torn, and gnawed at, and dragged about by these hideous howlers."

Verse 11

But the king shall rejoice in God - This passage, as was remarked in the Introduction to the psalm, shows that this psalm could not have been composed in the time of Saul, since the title king was not then given to David. The use of the term here in the third person does not prove that the psalm could not have been written by David himself, for he may have spoken of himself simply as "the king," and all the more forcibly and

properly as he was driven unjustly from his throne, and was now an exile, yet was still a king - the king. The title was his; the throne belonged to him, and not to Absalom who had driven him from it. It was not improper to allude to this fact in the manner in which it is referred to here, and to say that "the king" - the true, the real king - himself - should and would rejoice in God. He would find God to be his helper; and by God he would yet be restored to his throne.

Every one that sweareth by him shall glory - Everyone that sweareth to him, or maintains his oath of allegiance to him, shall be honored.

But the mouth of them that speak lies - All who have sworn falsely; all who have professed allegiance and have proved unfaithful; all those who, contrary to their oaths and their obligations, have been found in the rebellion. They shall not be permitted to exult or rejoice, but they shall be confounded and silenced. This expresses, therefore, the fullest confidence in God; the absolute belief of David that he would be again placed on his throne, and again permitted "to see the power and glory of God as" he had "seen it in the sanctuary" Psalm 63:2; the belief that he would be restored to prosperity, and that his enemies would be humbled and destroyed - So it will be with all who put their trust in God. There is certain joy and triumph for them, if not in this world, at least in the world to come.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 64

Introduction

This psalm is described as a "psalm of David," and it bears internal evidence that it was composed by him, as it contains first, a prayer for deliverance from enemies Psalm 64:1-6; and second, a confident expectation of deliverance, Psalm 64:7-10; a form of structure found in many of the psalms written by David. It is addressed, or dedicated, as many others are, "To the chief Musician." This fact shows that it was not designed as an expression of mere private feeling, but was intended to be employed in the worship of God. See the notes at the Introduction to Psalm 4:1-8.

The occasion on which this psalm was composed is unknown. In its general structure and character, it bears a strong resemblance to Psalm 58:1-11. Indeed, many of the expressions in the two psalms are the same, and it would seem probable that it was composed with reference to the same occasion, or that the circumstances in the two cases were so similar as to make the same expressions in the main appropriate. The occasion may have been, either the times of persecution under Saul, or the rebellion of Absalom. Perhaps we may suppose, without impropriety, that the former psalm Psalm 58:1-11 was composed in the time of Saul, and this in the time of Absalom, and that the circumstances in the two eases were so similar, that the author found the same phraseology which he had used on the former occasion to be appropriate to his present position, or that his feelings were so identical now with what they were then, that he naturally expressed himself in substantially the same language.

The psalm, as observed above, is composed of two parts:

I. A prayer for deliverance from his enemies, with a description of their character, Psalm 64:1-6.

II. An expression of confident expectation that his prayer would be answered, and that God would interpose in his behalf, Psalm 64:7-10.

Verse 1

Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer - The use of the word voice here would seem to imply that this was audible prayer, or that, though alone, he

gave utterance to his petitions aloud. We have this same use of the word often in the Psalms, making it probable that even private prayers were uttered in an audible manner. In most cases, when there is no danger of being overheard, or of its being construed as ostentation or Pharisaism, this is favorable to the spirit of secret devotion. Compare the notes at Daniel 6:10. The word here rendered prayer means properly speech, discourse; then, complaint; then, meditation. It is most commonly rendered complaint. See Job 7:13; Job 9:27; Job 10:1; Job 21:4; Psalm 55:2 (notes); Psalm 142:2. It refers here to a state of mind caused by trouble and danger, when the deep meditation on his troubles and dangers found expression in audible words - whether those words were complaint or petition. As there are no indications in the psalm that David was disposed to complain in the sense of blaming God, the proper interpretation here is that his deep meditations took the form of prayer.

Preserve my life from fear of the enemy - Either Saul or Absalom. He prayed that his life might be made so secure that he would not have occasion to be afraid of his enemy.

Verse 2

Hide me - Or, more literally, thou wilt hide me. There is both an implied prayer that this might be done, and a confident belief that it would be done. The idea is, Protect me; guard me; make me safe - as one is who is hidden or concealed so that his enemies cannot find him.

From the secret counsel - The word used here - סוד *sôd* - means properly couch, cushion; and then, a divan, a circle of friends sitting together on couches for familiar conversation, or for counsel. See Psalm 25:14, note; Psalm 55:14, note; compare Job 15:8; Job 29:4. Here the reference is to the consultations of his enemies for the purpose of doing him wrong. Of course, as they took this counsel together, he could not know it, and the word secret is not improperly applied to it. The idea here is, that although he did not know what that counsel or purpose was, or what was the result of their consultations, yet God knew, and he could guard him against it.

Of the wicked - Not the wicked in general, but his particular foes who were endeavoring to destroy him. Luther renders this, “from the assembling of the wicked.”

From the insurrection - The word used here - רגשה *rigshâh* - means properly a “noisy crowd, a multitude.” The allusion is to such a crowd, such

a disorderly and violent rabble, as constituted a mob. He was in danger not only from the secret purposes of the more calm and thoughtful of his enemies who were plotting against him, but from the excited passions of the multitude, and thus his life was in double danger. If he escaped the one, he had no security that he would escape the other. So the Redeemer was exposed to a double danger. There was the danger arising from the secret plottings of the Scribes and Pharisees assembled in council, and there was also the danger arising from the infuriated passions of the multitude. The former calmly laid the plan for putting him to death by a judicial trial; the others took up stones to stone him, or cried, "Crucify him, crucify him!" The word insurrection here does not well express the idea. The word tumult would better represent the meaning of the original.

Of the workers of iniquity - That is, of those who were arrayed against him.

Verse 3

Who whet their tongue like a sword - Who sharpen their tongue; that is, they utter words that will cut deep, or penetrate the soul. The idea is that of slander or reproach - the same idea which we have in Shakespeare (Cymbeline):

"‹Tis slander;
Whose edge is sharper than the sword."

This comparison is a favorite one with David. Compare Psalm 52:2; Psalm 57:4; Psalm 59:7.

And bend their bows … - That is, they prepare for this - as they make ready to shoot who bend their bows, and fix their arrows on the string. The idea here is, that this was deliberate, or was the result of counsel and purpose. It was not an outbreak of mere passion and excitement; it was by fixed design and careful preparation. See Psalm 11:2, note; Psalm 58:7, note.

Even bitter words - We apply the same term bitter now to words of malice and reproach.

Verse 4

That they may shoot in secret - From an unobserved quarter; from a place where they are so concealed that it cannot be known where the arrows come from. There was a purpose to ruin him, and at the same time to conceal themselves, or not to let him know from what source the ruin came.

It was not an open and manly fight, where he could see his enemy, but it was a warfare with a concealed foe.

At the perfect - At the upright; at one who is perfect so far as his treatment of them is concerned. Compare Psalm 18:20, note; Psalm 18:23, note.

Suddenly do they shoot at him - At an unexpected time, and from an unlooked-for quarter. They accomplish what they intended; they carry out their design.

And fear not - They feel confident that they are not known, and that they will not be detected. They have no fear of God or man. Compare Psalm 55:19.

Verse 5

They encourage themselves - literally, they strengthen themselves, or make themselves strong. That is, they take counsel; they encourage each other; they urge one another forward; they suggest to each other methods by which what they purpose may be done, and by which difficulties may be overcome. This was a part of their "secret counsel" or their consultation, Psalm 64:2.

In an evil matter - Margin, as in Hebrew, speech. The reference is to their purpose or plan. They strengthen themselves for doing what they know to be a wrong or wicked thing.

They commune - literally, they tell or speak. That is, they tell each other how it may be done, or suggest different methods by which it may be successfully accomplishled. They compare views, that they may select that which will be most likely to be successful. All this indicates plan, consultation, design.

Of laying snares privily - Margin, as in Hebrew, to hide snares. This is a figure derived from the method of taking wild beasts. See Psalm 7:15, note; Psalm 38:12, note. The reference here is to some secret plan by which they intended that the author of the psalm should be entrapped and ruined. It was not a plan of open and manly warfare, but a purpose to destroy him when he would have no opportunity of defense.

They say, Who shall see them? - That is, who will see the snares or pitfalls? Who will be aware of their existence? They sought to make the plan so secret that no one could discover it, or even suspect it; to keep it so concealed that he for whom it was intended could not be put on his guard. Compare Psalm 10:8-9.

Verse 6

They search out iniquities - They search deep; they examine plans; they rack their invention to accomplish it. The original word - חפשׂ *châphaś* - is a word which is used to denote the act of exploring - as when one searches for treasure, or for anything that is hidden or lost - implying a deep and close attention of the mind to the subject. So here they examined every plan, or every way which was suggested to them, by which they could hope to accomplish their purpose.

They accomplish - This would be better translated by rendering it, "We have perfected it!" That is, We have found it out; it is complete; meaning that they had found a plan to their liking. It is the language of self-congratulatlon.

A diligent search - Or rather, "The search is a deep search." In other words, "The plan is a consummate plan; it is just to our mind; it is exactly what we have sought to find." This, too, is language of self-congratulation and satisfaction at the plan which they had thought of, and which was so exactly to their mind.

Both the inward thought - literally, the inside; that is, the hidden design.

And the heart - The plan formed in the heart; the secret purpose.

Is deep - A deep-laid scheme; a plan that indicates profound thought; a purpose that is the result of consummate sagacity. This is the language of the author of the psalm. He admitted that there had been great talent and skill in the formation of the plan. Hence, it was that he cried so earnestly to God.

Verse 7

But God shall shoot at them with an arrow - That is, Instead of their being able to carry out their purposes of shooting the arrows which they had prepared against others, God will shoot his arrows against them. The tables will be turned. They themselves will experience what they had intended to inflict on others. God will deal with them as they intended to deal with others. The sentiment here is substantially the same as in Psalm 7:15; see the notes at that passage. It is also in accordance with what we often find in the writings of David, when in the close of a psalm he expresses a confident expectation that the prayer which he had offered in the beginning would be heard, or rejoices in the assurance that he had been heard. The idea, also, is involved in this part of the psalm that God will deal with men as they

purpose to deal with others; that is, according to their true character. Compare the notes at Psalm 18:25-26.

Suddenly shall they be wounded - Margin, their wound shall be. The Hebrew is, "Suddenly shall be their wounds." The idea is, that the wounds in the case would be theirs; and would be inflicted suddenly. The blows which they thought to give to others would come on themselves, and this would occur at an unexpected moment.

Verse 8

So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves - In Psalm 64:3, their tongue is represented as a sword; and here, keeping up the figure, the tongue, as a sword, is represented as falling on them, or as inflicting the wound on themselves which they had intended to inflict on others. This might be rendered, "And they have cast him down; upon them is their own tongue;" or, "Upon them their own tongue has come." That is, someone would cast them down, and they would fall as if smitten by their own tongue like a sword. It is not said who would do this, but the most natural interpretation is that it would be done by God. The idea is, that the instrument which they had employed to injure others would be the means of their own ruin.

All that see them shall flee away - Compare Psalm 31:11. That is, they shall flee in consternation from those who are so fearfully overthrown. They shall see that God is just, and that He will punish the wicked; and they will desire to escape from a ruin so dreadful as that which comes upon the ungodly. The idea is, that when God punishes sinners, the effect on others is, and should be, to lead them to wish not to be associated with such people, but to escape from a doom so fearful.

Verse 9

And all men shall fear - That is, a deep impression would be made, not only on the associates and companions of the wicked, but on all that should hear of what was done. People, in view of the just punishment of the wicked, would learn to reverence God, and to stand in awe of One so powerful and so just. Judgments, punishment, wrath, are adapted and designed to make a deep impression on mankind. On this principle, the final punishment of the wicked will make a deep and salutary impression on the universe forever.

And shall declare the work of God - Shall make it known to others. It will become a subject of conversation, or they will talk about it, as

illustrating the divine perfections and character. Such should always be the effect of the judgments of God, for they illustrate his true character; they make known his attributes; they convey to the world lessons of the utmost importance. Nothing is more proper than to talk about the judgments of God, and to endeavor to derive from them the instructions which they are adapted to convey about the divine nature, and the principles of the administration under which the universe is placed. Wars, pestilences, famines, earthquakes, conflagrations, inundations, diseases, all teach important lessons about God; and each one bears its own special message to mankind.

For they shall wisely consider of his doing - They shall attentively and carefully consider it; they shall endeavor to derive such lessons from his dealings as they are suited to convey. In other words, an attentive consideration of his doings will contribute to maintain a just knowledge of world in subjection to him. God is thus always speaking to human beings; and nothing is more proper for human beings than to give their minds to a careful consideration of what is really intended to be taught us by the events which are occurring in his providential dealings.

Verse 10

The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him - That is, As the result of his gracious intervention, or as the effect of his judgments on the wicked, the righteous will rejoice on account of their own security, and put their trust in One who has thus shown himself to be the friend of holiness, and the enemy of sin. Whatever tends to reveal the divine character, or to make a proper exhibition of that character, will also lead good people to confide in God, and to feel that they are safe.

And all the upright in heart shall glory - Shall rejoice; shall feel that they have cause for trust and triumph. The good - the pure - the righteous - the godly - will always rejoice in everything which tends to show that God is just, and true, and holy; - for all their own hope of security and salvation rests upon the fact that the God in whom they trust is a righteous God.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 65

Introduction

This also purports to be a psalm of David. It is dedicated to "the chief Musician," or committed to him to be set to appropriate music for the public worship of God. See the notes at the Introduction to Psalm 4:1-8. It is described as both "a psalm," and "a song." It is not easy to account for this double appellation, or to distinguish between the meaning of these words, though probably the real distinction is that the former word - psalm - refers to that to which it is applied, considered merely as a poem or composition; the latter - song - is applied with reference to its being sung in public worship. See Introduction to Psalm 48:1-14.

Though the psalm is ascribed to David, and though there is nothing in its general character which is inconsistent with this supposition, yet it has been maintained by DeWette and some others that the expressions in Psalm 65:4 demonstrate that the psalm was composed after the temple was erected. The ground of this supposition is, that the words "courts," "house," and "holy temple," occurring in that verse, are applicable only to the temple. This, however, is not decisive, for all these words may have been used in reference to the tabernacle, or to the tent which David erected on Mount Zion 2 Chronicles 1:4, and where he was accustomed to worship. Compare the notes at Psalm 65:4. If this is so, then there is nothing to forbid the supposition that the psalm was composed by David. Compare also the notes at Psalm 65:1.

The occasion on which it was written is not indicated in the title, and it is impossible now to determine it. It would seem from the psalm itself to have been composed after a copious and much-needed rain, perhaps after a long drought, when the earth was again refreshed by showers from heaven. The language, however, is of so general character that it may have had no particular reference to any recent event in the time of the psalmist, but may have been suggested, like Psalm 65:1, Psalm 65:4, and would be eminently appropriate when his people approached him in an annual thanksgiving.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:

I. The blessedness of praising God, or of coming before him, in his house, with the language of prayer and praise, Psalm 65:1-4.

(a) Praise "waits" for God;

(b) he is the hearer of prayer;

(c) he alone can cleanse the soul from sin;

(d) it is a blessed privilege to be permitted to come before him, and to dwell in his courts.

II. The things for which he is to be praised, Psalm 65:5-13.

(1) he is to be praised for the exhibitions of his power, or as the Almighty God; as one who answers the prayers of his people by heavy judgments; as one who shows that all may have confidence in him, on the earth and on the sea; as one who makes the mountains firm, who stills the noise of the waves, who calms the tumults of the people, who displays the tokens of his power everywhere, and makes the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice, Psalm 65:5-8.

(2) for his beneficence, especially in sending down refreshing rains upon the earth, and causing the grain to spring up, the grass to grow, and the hills to rejoice on every side, Psalm 65:9-13.

Verse 1

Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion - That is, all the arrangements are made; the people are assembled; their hearts are prepared to praise thee. The fact that Zion is mentioned here as the seat of praise would seem to imply that this psalm was composed before the building of the temple, contrary to the opinion of DeWette and others, as noticed in the Introduction to the psalm, for after the building of the temple the seat of worship was transferred from Mount Zion, where David had placed the ark and prepared a tent for it 1 Chronicles 15:1; 1 Chronicles 16:1; 2 Chronicles 1:4, to Mount Moriah. It is true that the general name Zion was given familiarly to Jerusalem as a city, but it is also true that the particular place for the worship of God in the time of David was Mount Zion strictly so called. See the notes at Psalm 2:6. The margin in this place is, "Praise is silent." The Hebrew is, "To thee is silence-praise," - a kind of compound phrase, not meaning "silent praise," but referring to a condition where

everything is ready; where the preparations have been entirely made; where the noise usually attendant on preparation has ceased, and all is in readiness as if waiting for that for which the arrangements had been carried forward. The noise of building - of preparation - was now hushed, and all was calm. The language here would also denote the state of feeling in an individual or an assembly, when the heart was prepared for praise; when it was filled with a deep sense of the majesty and goodness of God; when all feelings of anxiety were calmed down, or were in a state of rest; when the soul was ready to burst forth in expressions of thanksgiving, and nothing would meet its needs but praise.

And unto thee shall the vow be performed - See Psalm 22:25, note; Psalm 50:14, note; Psalm 56:12, note. The reference here is to the vows or promises which the people had made in view of the manifested judgments of God and the proofs of his goodness. Those vows they were now ready to carry out in expressions of praise.

Verse 2

O thou that hearest prayer - Who hast revealed thyself as a God hearing prayer - one of the leading characteristics of whose nature it is that thou dost hear prayer. Literally, "Hearer of prayer, to thee shall all flesh come." Nothing as applied even to God is more sublime and beautiful than the appellative "Hearer of prayer." Nothing in his attributes is of more interest and importance to man. Nothing more indicates his condescension and goodness; nothing so much encourages us in the endeavor to overcome our sins, to do good, to save our souls, and to save the souls of others. Dark and dismal would this world be, if God did not hear prayer; gloomy, inexpressibly gloomy, would be the prospects of man, if he had not the assurance that God is a prayer-hearing God - if he might not come to God at all times with the assurance that it is his very nature to hear prayer, and that his ear is ever open to the cries of the guilty, the suffering, the sad, the troubled, the dying.

Unto thee shall all flesh come - That is, all people - for the word is here used evidently to denote mankind. The idea is, that there is no other resource for man, no other help, no other refuge, but the God that hears prayer. No other being can meet his actual needs; and those needs are to be met only in connection with prayer. All people are permitted to come thus to God; all have need of his favor; all must perish unless, in answer to prayer, he interposes and saves the soul. It is also true that the period will

arrive on earth when all flesh - all people - will come to God and worship him; when, instead of the scattered few who now approach him, all nations, all the dwellers on continents and islands, will worship him; will look to him in trouble; will acknowledge him as God; will supplicate his favor.

Verse 3

Iniquities prevail against me - Margin, as in Hebrew, Words, or matters of iniquities. The literal meaning is words; and the idea may be that words spoken in iniquity, or slanderous words spoken by others, prevailed against him. The phrase, however, is susceptible of the interpretation which refers it to iniquity itself; meaning the matter of iniquity - the thing - iniquity itself - as if that overcame him, or got the mastery of him. The psalmist here, in his own name, seems to represent the people who thus approached God, for the psalm refers to the worship of an assembly or a congregation. The idea is, that when they thus came before God; when they had prepared all things for his praise Psalm 65:1; when they approached him in an attitude of prayer, they were so bowed down under a load of transgression - a weight of sin - as to hinder their easy access to his throne. They were so conscious of unworthiness; their sin had such an effect on their minds; it rendered them so dull, cold, and stupid, that they could not find access to the throne of God. How often do the people of God find this to be the case!

As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away - That is, In reference to these very transgressions or iniquities that now press us down, thou wilt remove them. The language expresses the rising confidence and hope of the worshippers that God would not allow those transgressions so to prevail as to prevent their worshipping God acceptably. Heavy as was the burden of sin, and much as the consciousness of guilt tended to impede their worship, yet they felt assured that God would so remove their transgressions that they might have access to his mercy-seat. The word rendered "purge away" - כפר *kâphar* - is the word which is commonly rendered "to atone for," or which is used to represent the idea of atonement. See the notes at Isaiah 43:3. The word has here the sense of cleansing or purifying, but it always carries with it, in the Scriptures, a reference to that through which the heart is cleansed - the atonement, or the expiatory offering made for sin. The language here expresses the feeling which all may have, and should have, and which very many do have, when they approach God, that, although they are deeply conscious of sin, God will so

graciously remove the guilt of sin, and lift off the burden, cleansing the soul by his grace, as to make it not improper that we should approach him, and that he will enable us to do it with peace, and joy, and hope. Compare the notes at Psalm 51:2.

Verse 4

Blessed is the man whom thou choosest - That is, Happy is the man; or, "Oh, the happiness of the man whom thou dost thus permit to approach thee." The construction here in the Hebrew is the same as in Psalm 1:1. See the notes at that passage. The word choosest refers to the fact that true piety regards all such blessings as the result of the divine favor; the fruit of his electing grace and love. Compare the notes at Ephesians 1:3-4; notes at 1 Peter 1:2-3. We approach God with confidence, with the spirit of true worshippers, with the spirit of his children, only as he inclines us to him, and calls us to partake of his favor. Compare John 6:44.

And causest to approach unto thee - That is, that he may worship thee. The idea is here recognized in the word "causest," that it is only by a divine influence that people are led to worship God. The cause - the efficient reason - why any man worships his Maker at all, is to be found in God himself. This idea is fairly implied in the form of the word as it is used in the Hebrew.

That he may dwell in thy courts - That is, either temporarily for the purpose of worship; or permanently, that he may serve thee in the sanctuary. See Psalm 23:6, note; Psalm 27:4, note. Compare Psalm 15:1. The word "courts" refers properly to the area around the tabernacle or the temple, and not to the tabernacle or temple itself. The worship of the people was offered in those courts, and not in the tabernacle or temple. See the notes at Matthew 21:12.

We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house - Our souls will find thus what they need; what they long for. See the notes at Psalm 36:8. It is the nature of religion to satisfy the mind; that is, the soul finds in religion what meets its needs, for religion leaves no necessity of its nature unsupplied. It may be added that nothing else will do this but religion. The word "house" here denotes a place where God dwells, and it might be applied to the temple, as it often is in the Scriptures (compare Isaiah 2:3; Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17; John 2:16; et al.); or to the tabernacle, before the temple was reared. Psalm 42:4; Matthew 12:4; Judges 18:31; Judges 20:18, Judges 20:26, Judges 20:31. The reference here is to

the tabernacle or tent which David reared on Mount Zion, and where the worship of God was celebrated before the temple was built. “Even of thy holy temple.” The word “temple” is most commonly applied in the Scriptures to the structure which Solomon built for the worship of God; and it is on the ground that the Word is usually so applied, that DeWette and others have argued that this psalm could not have been written by David, but that it was composed after the temple was reared. But the word rendered “temple” - היכל *hêykâl* - is a word of so general a character that it may be applied to any house erected for the worship of God. It is not unfrequently applied to the tabernacle. See the notes at Psalm 5:7. This psalm, therefore, may have been composed while the tabernacle was standing, and before the temple was built, and hence, may have been composed by David, as the title intimates.

Verse 5

By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us - That is, By things suited to inspire us and all people with awe, or with a deep sense of thy majesty, thy power, and thy glory. The answer to their prayers would be in such a manner as deeply to impress their minds and hearts. God‘s judgments on his foes, and the manner of his manifesting his favor to his people, would be such as to impress the mind with a deep sense of his own greatness. Yet all this would be in righteousness; in the infliction of a just sentence on the wicked; in direct interposition in favor of the righteous. The judgments of God on guilty people have been always such as to keep the world in awe; such as were adapted deeply to impress mankind with a sense of his own majesty and glory.

O God of our salvation - The God on whom our salvation, or our safety depends.

Who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth - Of all parts of the earth, the word “ends” being used on the supposition that the earth is a plain having appropriate limits. This allusion is often found in the Scriptures, the sacred writers speaking, as all men do, as things appear to be. Thus all philosophers, as well as other people, speak of the sun as rising and setting, which is, in itself, no more strictly accurate than it is to speak of the earth as if it had limits or boundaries. The word confidence as used here means that God is the source of trust, or, that all proper reliance, by all people, in all parts of the earth and on the sea, must be in him; that is, that there is no other on whom people can properly rely. It does not mean that

all people actually repose such confidence in him, which would not be true - but that he is the only true source of confidence.

And of them that are afar off upon the sea - That is, of all men on sea and land. The seaman has no other source of security amidst the dangers of the deep than God. Compare Psalm 107:23-30. The language does not mean that all mariners actually do put their trust in God, but that they cannot confide in the winds and the waves - in the strength of their vessel - or their own power or skill in managing it - but that the true and only ground of trust is God.

Verse 6

Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains - Fixing them firm on their foundations. This is an exhibition of vast strength or power on the part of God, as if he fixed them so firm that they could not be moved - as if he handled with ease those vast masses of matter, with all their rocks and forests - and caused them to repose steadily and calmly on their foundations. We have few more exalted conceptions of the power of God than to suppose him lifting with ease a vast mountain; letting it down where he pleases, and settling it so firmly that it cannot be moved.

Being girded with power - That is, they seemed to be surrounded or encompassed with power, as a man girds himself up when he wishes to put forth a great effort of strength.

Verse 7

Which stilleth the noise of the seas - He calms the seas when they have been agitated by the storm. He causes the mighty waves to settle down, and the whole surface of the ocean becomes calm and smooth. The storm subsides at his command, and the sea is still. It was the manifestation of this power which demonstrated so clearly the divinity of the Lord Jesus, when he said to the troubled waves, "Peace, be still, and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Mark 4:39. Compare Psalm 107:29.

The noise of their waves - The loud roar of the waters, so that they are still.

And the tumult of the people - The raging; the fury; the excitement of assembled multitudes, resembling the raging waves of the ocean. This comparison is very common. See Isaiah 17:12-13. Compare the notes at Revelation 19:6. This is perhaps a more striking and wonderful exhibition of the power of God than that of calming down the waves of the ocean. In the one case, it is the exertion of mere power on nature, acting through its

established laws, and where there is no resistance of will; in the other, it is power exerted over the will; power over agents conscious that they are free, and where the worst passions meet and mingle and rage.

Verse 8

They also that dwell in the utter-most parts - That is, Those who dwell in the remotest regions; far from civilized lands; far from those places where people are instructed as to the causes of the events which occur, and as to the being and character of the great God who performs these wonders. The idea is, that even they see enough of the evidences of the divine presence and power to fill their minds with awe. In other words, there are in all lands evidences of the Divine existence and might. There is enough to fill the minds of people with awe, and to make them solemn.

Are afraid - Thus the thunder, the storm, the tempest, the earthquake, the eclipse of the sun or the moon, fill the minds of barbarous nations with terror.

At thy tokens - Or signs. That is, the signs which really indicate the existence, the presence, and the power of God.

Thou makest the outgoings - The word rendered outgoings means properly a going forth, as of the rising of the sun Psalm 19:7; and then, a place of going forth, or from which anything goes forth, as a gate or door Ezekiel 42:11, or fountains from which water issues Isaiah 41:18; and hence, the east, where the sun seems to come forth from his hiding-place. The representation here is that the morning seems to come forth, or that the rays of light stream out from the east; and, in like manner, that the fading light of the evening - the twilight - seems to come from the west.

Of the morning and evening to rejoice - The allusion is to the east and the west. The sun in his rising and his setting seems to rejoice; that is, he appears happy, bright, cheerful. The margin is to sing - a poetic expression indicating exultation and joy.

Verse 9

Thou visitest the earth - God seems to come down that he may attend to the needs of the earth; survey the condition of things; arrange for the welfare of the world which he has made; and supply the needs of those whom he has created to dwell upon it. See the notes at Psalm 8:4.

And waterest it - Margin, After thou hadst made it to desire rain. This difference between the translations in the text and in the margin can be

accounted for by the various meanings of the original word. The Hebrew term - שׁוּק *shûq* - means properly:

(a) to run;

(b) to run after anything, to desire, to look for;

(c) to run over, to overflow; and then,

(d) to cause to overflow.

The meaning here evidently is, he drenched the earth, or caused the water to run abundantly. The reference is to a copious rain after a drought.

Thou greatly enrichest it - That is, Thou givest to it abundance; thou pourest water upon it in such quantities, and in such a manner, as to make it rich in its productions.

With the river of God - A river so abundant and full that it seems to come from God; it is such as we should expect to flow from a Being infinite in resources and in benevolence. Anything great is in the Scriptures often described as belonging to God, or his name is added to it to denote its greatness. Thus, hills of God mean lofty hills; cedars of God, lofty cedars, etc.

Which is full of water - The waters are so abundant that it seems as if they must come from God.

Thou preparest them corn - Grain. Thou givest to those who cultivate the earth an abundant harvest.

When thou hast so provided for it - Or rather, When thou hast thus prepared the earth, to wit, by sending down abundant rains upon it. God prepares the earth to bear an abundant harvest, and then he gives that harvest. The preparation of the earth for the harvest, and then the givinq of the harvest, are alike from him. The harvest could not be without the previous rain, and neither the rain nor the harvest could be without God. He does not create a harvest by miracle, but follows the order which he has himself ordained, and has respect to his own laws.

Verse 10

Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly - Or rather, its furrows, for so the Hebrew word properly means. Job 31:38; Job 39:10. The allusion is to the furrows made by the plow, which are filled with water by the rains.

Thou settlest the furrows thereof - Or rather, thou beatest down the ridges thereof. Literally, thou makest them to descend. That is, The rain - falling on them - beats them down, so that the ground becomes level.

Thou makest it soft with showers - Margin, thou dissolvest it. The idea is, to soften, to loosen, to make the soil light and open. All farmers know that this is necessary, and that it cannot be done without water.

Thou blessest the springing thereof - Or, what springs from it; the vegetation. Thou dost bless it by causing it to grow luxuriantly, thus producing an abundant harvest.

Verse 11

Thou crownest the year with thy goodness - Margin, the year of thy goodness. The Hebrew is literally the year of thy goodness - meaning a year remarkable for the manifestation of kindness; or a year of abundant productions. But the Hebrew will admit of the other construction, meaning that God crowns or adorns the year, as it revolves, with his goodness; or that the harvests, the fruits, the flowers of the year are, as it were, a crown set on the head of the year. The Septuagint renders it, "Thou wilt bless the crown of the year of thy goodness." DeWette renders it, "Thou crownest the year with thy blessing." Luther, "Thou crownest the year with good." On the whole, the most probable meaning is that expressed in our common version, referring to the beauty and the abundant productions of the year as if they were a crown on its head. The seasons are often personified, and the year is here represented as a beautiful female, perhaps, walking forward with a diadem on her brow.

And thy paths drop fatness - That is, fertility; or, Fertility attends thy goings. The word rendered "drop," means properly to distil; to let fall gently, as the rain or the dew falls to the earth; and the idea is, that whereever God goes, marching through the earth, fertility, beauty, abundance seems to distil or to fall gently along his path. God, in the advancing seasons, passes along through the earth, and rich abundance springs up wherever he goes.

Verse 12

They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness - The waste places, or the waste parts of the land; the uncultivated places, the places of rocks and sands. The word wilderness in the Scriptures does not mean, as with us, a tract of country covered with trees, but a place of barren rocks or sands - an uncultivated or thinly inhabited region. See the notes at Matthew 3:1; notes

at Isaiah 35:1. In those wastes, however, there would be valleys, or places watered by springs and streams that would afford pastures for flocks and herds. Such are the "pastures of the wilderness" referred to here. God's passing along those valleys would seem to "drop," or distil, fertility and beauty, causing grass and flowers to spring up in abundance, and clothing them with luxuriance.

And the little hills rejoice on every side - Margin, as in Hebrew, are girded with joy. That is, Joyful, happy scenes surround them; or, they seem to be full of joy and happiness. The valleys and the hills alike seem to be made glad. The following remarks of Professor Hackett ("Illustrations of Scripture," p. 30), will explain this passage. "Another peculiarity of the desert is that, though the soil is sandy, it rarely consists, for successive days together, of mere sand; it is interspersed, at frequent intervals, with clumps of coarse grass and low shrubs, affording very good pasturage, not only for camels, the proper tenants of the desert, but for sheep and goats. The people of the villages on the borders of the desert are accustomed to lead forth their flocks to the pastures found there. We frequently passed on our way shepherds so employed; and it was interesting to observe as a verification of what is implied in the Saviour's statement Matthew 25:33, that the sheep and goats were not kept distinct, but intermixed with one another. The shepherds not only frequent the parts of the desert near their places of abode, but go often to a considerable distance from them; they remain absent for weeks and months, only changing their station from time to time, as their needs in respect to water and herbage may require. The incident related of Moses shows that the pastoral habits of the people were the same in his day: ‹Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the further part of the desert, even to Horeb,' Exodus 3:1. It is of the desert in this sense, as supplying to some extent the means of pasturage, that the prophet Joel speaks in Joel 1:19; Joel 2:22. The psalmist also says Psalm 65:12-13, with the same reference:

Thou crownest the year with thy goodness,
And thy paths drop fatness;
They drop fatness on the pastures of the wilderness.

Verse 13

The pastures are clothed with flocks - The flocks stand so thick together, and are spread so far, that they seem to be a clothing for the

pasture; or, the fields are entirely covered with them.

The valleys also are covered over with corn - With grain. That is, the parts of the land - the fertile valleys - which are devoted to tillage. They are covered over, or clothed with waving grain, as the pasture-fields are with flocks.

They shout for joy, they also sing - They seem to be full of joy and happiness. What a beautiful image is this! How well does it express the loveliness of nature; how appropriately does it describe the goodness of God! Everything seems to be happy; to be full of song; and all this is to be traced to the goodness of God, as it all serves to express that goodness. Strange that there should be an atheist in such a world as this; - strange that there should be an unhappy man; - strange that amidst such beauties, while all nature joins in rejoicing and praise - pastures, cultivated fields, valleys, hills - there can be found a human being who, instead of uniting in the language of joy, makes himself miserable by attempting to cherish the feeling that God is not good!

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 66

Introduction

The name of the author of this psalm is unknown. There is no certain evidence that it was composed by David, yet there is nothing in the psalm itself which is inconsistent with the supposition that he was the author. Perhaps the most natural and obvious interpretation of Psalm 66:13-15, would be that there is reference there to the temple; and if so, of course, the psalm must have been written by someone else. But it is not absolutely necessary to suppose that the temple is there referred to, for the language might be applied to the tabernacle as the "house" or the place of the worship of God. There is, however, no positive evidence that it was composed by David, and it is impossible now to determine its authorship.

As little can the occasion on which the psalm was composed be determined. It is evident only that it was after there had been some calamity of a private nature, or after the nation had been subjected to oppression by some powerful enemies, and when there had been deliverance from that calamity, Psalm 66:11-12. The calamity was similar to those which had been endured by the nation in the time of the Egyptian oppressions, and naturally brought to mind the sufferings endured by the people of God at that time, while their own deliverance suggested a recollection of the deliverance of their fathers from that bondage, Psalm 66:6. On the whole, the supposition of Rosenmuller that it was composed after the Babylonian captivity, and in view of the return of the people to their native land - perhaps to be sung on their journey from the land of exile, seems to me to be the most probable of any. Venema supposes that it refers to the time of Hezekiah, and the overthrow of Sennacherib; others regard it as referring to the persecutions of David by Saul; others, to the rebellion of Absalom; others, to the famine which is mentioned in Psalm 66:13-15. Such a psalm of praise would be a proper fulfillment of "vows" which it might be supposed the Hebrews would make in the time of their exile; to wit, that if they were ever permitted to return to their native land, they would go to the house of God, and sacrifice again on his altars.

On the phrase in the title, "To the chief Musician," see Introduction to Psalm 4:1-8. On the words, "A Song or Psalm," see the notes at the titles to Psalm 30:1-12 (notes) and Psalm 65:1-13 (notes).

The psalm contains:

I. An exhortation, addressed to all the earth, to praise God, as a matter pertaining to all lands, Psalm 66:1-2.

II. A reference to the mighty acts of God, as a reason for worshipping him, Psalm 66:3-7.

III. A reference to his gracious interposition in time of national danger and trouble, and to the fact that he had rescued the nation in a marvelous manner, Psalm 66:8-12.

IV. A reference to the vows which had been made in that time of trouble, and the purpose now to execute those vows, by going to the house of God, and sacrificing on his altars, Psalm 66:13-15.

V. A call on all people to hear what God had done for the worshippers: namely, That he had heard prayer; that he had interposed for their deliverance; that he had attended to the voice of supplication; that he had not turned away his mercy, Psalm 66:16-20.

Verse 1

Make a joyful noise unto God - literally, "Shout." It is a call for exultation and praise.

All ye lands - Margin, as in Hebrew, all the earth. The occasion was one that made universal exultation and praise proper. They who had been so deeply affected by the gracious interposition of God, could not but call on all the nations of the earth to unite with them in the expression of joy. The deliverance was so great that they wished all to rejoice with them (compare Luke 15:6, Luke 15:9); and the intervention of God in the case of his people, furnished lessons about his character which gave occasion to all men to rejoice.

Verse 2

Sing forth the honor of his name - That is, Celebrate in appropriate praise the honor due to his name. Make that honor known in connection with songs.

Make his praise glorious - literally, "place honor, his praise;" that is, Give him honor; give him praise. The meaning is, Set forth his praise with songs - with music - with shouts; - that will be the appropriate expression of the praise which is due to him.

Verse 3

Say unto God - In your songs of praise. Let your songs be directly addressed to him, setting forth the grounds of that praise, or the reasons why it is due to him.

How terrible art thou in thy works! - How fearful! how much to be reverenced! The meaning is, that the manifestations of his power and greatness, in the events which occur under his government, are suited to impress the mind with awe and reverence.

Through the greatness of thy power - By the putting forth of thy power. Or, Thou hast such power over thine enemies as to be able to compel them to submit to thee.

Shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee - Margin, Lie, or yield reigned obedience. The Hebrew word means to lie, to speak lies; then, to feign, to flatter, to play the hypocrite. It is thus applied to the vanquished, who make a hollow profession of submission and love to their victors. See the word explained in the notes at Psalm 18:44; compare Psalm 81:15; Deuteronomy 33:29; Job 31:28. The meaning here is, that he had power to subdue them, and to compel them to acknowledge his right to reign. It is the putting forth of mere power which is here referred to; and all that such power can do, is to secure outward and reigned submission. It cannot of itself secure the submission of the heart, the will, and the affections. That is to be secured by love, not by power; and the difference between the submission of the true people of God and that of all others is that the former are subdued by love, the latter by power; the submission of the former is genuine, that of the latter is forced. The inhabitants of heaven will be submissive to God because they love him; the dwellers in hell will be restrained by power, because they cannot deliver themselves. So now, the submission of a true child of God is that of love, or is a willing submission; the submission of a hypocrite is that of fear, when he feigns obedience because he cannot help it, or because he simply dreads the wrath of God. The object here is to celebrate the power of God, and it was sufficient, in order to set that forth, to say that it awed, and outwardly subdued the enemies of God.

Verse 4

All the earth shall worship thee - That is, all the inhabitants of the world will bow down before thee, or render thee homage. The time will come when thy right to reign will be universally acknowledged, or when thou wilt everywhere be adored as the true God. This is in accordance with all the statements in the Bible. See the notes at Psalm 22:27; Compare the notes at Isaiah 45:23; notes at Romans 14:11.

And shall sing unto thee - Shall celebrate thy praises. "To thy name." To thee.

Verse 5

Come and see the works of God - See the notes at Psalm 46:8, where substantially the same expression occurs. The idea is, "Come and see what God has done and is doing; come and learn from this what he is; and let your hearts in view of all this, be excited to gratitude and praise." The particular reference here is to what God had done in delivering his people from their former bondage in Egypt Psalm 66:6; but there is, connected with this, the idea that he actually rules among the nations, and that in his providence he has shown his power to govern and sbdue them.

He is terrible in his doing - That is, His acts are suited to inspire awe and veneration. See the notes at Psalm 66:3.

Verse 6

He turned the sea into dry land - The Red Sea, when he brought his people out of Egypt, Exodus 14:21. This was an illustration of his power, and of his ability to defend and deliver his people. The terror in that case, or that which was "terrible," was the overthrow of their enemies the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea - thus showing that he had power to destroy all the enemies of his people.

They went through the flood on foot - literally, "through the river." It is probable that the reference here is to the passage of the river Jordan, when the Israelites were about to pass into the promised land Joshua 3:14-17; thus combining the two great acts of divine interposition in favor of his people, and showing his power over streams and floods.

There did we rejoice in him - We, as a nation - our fathers - thus rejoiced in God. See Exodus 15.

Verse 7

He ruleth by his power for ever - literally, "Ruling by his power forever." The idea is, that he does this constantly; in each age and

generation. He never has ceased to rule; he never will. His dominion extends from age to age, and will stretch forward forever. The power which he evinced in delivering his people he retains now, and will retain forever. In that unchanging power, his people may confide; that unchanging power, the wicked should fear.

His eyes behold the nations - All nations; all people. He sees all their conduct. They can conceal nothing from him. They should, therefore, stand in awe. The wicked have much to fear from One who sees all that they do, and who has power to crush and destroy them. Compare the notes at Psalm 11:4.

Let not the rebellious exalt themselves - Be lifted up with pride, or feel secure. They cannot overcome an Almighty God; they cannot escape from his power. The word rebellious here has reference to those who are impatient under the restraints of the law of God, and who are disposed to east off his authority. The admonition is one that may be addressed to all who thus rebel against God, whether they are nations or individuals. Alike they must feel the vengeance of his arm, and fall beneath his power.

Verse 8

O bless our God, ye people - That is, particularly the people of the nation; the Hebrew people. The call here to praise or bless God is on account of some special benefit which had been conferred on them, and which is referred to more particularly in the following verses. It was his gracious interposition in the time of danger, by which they were delivered from their foes, Psalm 66:11-12.

And make the voice of his praise to be heard - Let it be sounded out afar, that it may be heard abroad.

Verse 9

Which holdeth our soul in life - Margin, as in Hebrew, putteth. That is, He has put (or placed) us in a state of safety. The word rendered "in life" means literally "among the living." The word soul here is equivalent to us - ourselves; and the idea is, that he keeps us among the living. What is here said of this special deliverance is true of all people at all times, that they owe the fact that they are among the living to the care of God; or, it is because he puts them among the living, or keeps them alive.

And suffereth not our feet to be moved - That is, from their firm position of safety. The idea is taken from one who is walking, and who is kept from slipping or falling.

Verse 10

For thou, O God, hast proved us - That is, Thou hast tried us; thou hast tested the reality of our attachment to thee, as silver is tried by the application of fire. God had proved or tried them by bringing calamity upon them to test the reality of their allegiance to him. The nature of the proof or trial is referred to in the following verses.

Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried - That is, by being subjected to appropriate tests to ascertain its real nature, and to remove from it imperfections. Compare the notes at 1 Peter 1:7; notes at Isaiah 1:25; notes at Isaiah 48:10; see also Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:3.

Verse 11

Thou broughtest us into the net - That is, Thou hast suffered or permitted us to be brought into the net; thou hast suffered us to be taken captive, as beasts are caught in a snare. See the notes at Psalm 9:15. The allusion here is to the efforts made by their enemies to take them, as hunters lay gins, or spread nets, to capture wild beasts. The idea here is, that those enemies had been successful; God had suffered them to fall into their hands. If we suppose this psalm to have been composed on the return from the Babylonian captivity, the propriety of this language will be apparent, for it well describes the fact that the nation had been subdued by the Babylonians, and had been led captive into a distant land. Compare Lamentations 1:13.

Thou laidst affliction upon our loins - The loins are mentioned as the seat of strength (compare Deuteronomy 33:11; 1 Kings 12:10; Job 40:16).; and the idea here is, that he had put their strength to the test; he had tried them to see how much they could bear; he had made the test effectual by applying it to the part which was able to bear most. The idea is, that he had called them to endure as much as they were able to endure. He had tried them to the utmost.

Verse 12

Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads - This refers evidently to some national subjection or conquest - most probably to their having been subdued by the Babylonians. Professor Alexander renders this, “Thou hast caused men to ride at our head,” as if leading them forth as captives in war. The most probable meaning, however, is that they had been subdued, as if on a field of battle, and as if their conquerors had ridden over them when prostrate on the ground. Compare the notes at Psalm 44:5, and the notes at Isaiah 51:23.

We went through fire and through water - This is designed to represent the nature of their trials. It was as if they had been made to pass through burning flames and raging floods. Compare the notes at Isaiah 43:2. Instead of passing through the seas and rivers when the waters had been turned back, and when a dry and safe path was made for them, as was the ease with their fathers Psalm 66:6, they had been compelled to breast the flood itself; and yet, notwithstanding this, God had brought them into a place of safety. In either way, by parting the floods, or by conducting his people through them, as shall seem best pleasing to him, God can conduct his people safely, and deliver them from danger. The power, the protecting care, the love, and the faithfulness of God are shown with equal clearness whether he divides the flood and causes his people to march through as on dry land, or whether he suffers the flood to rage and heave around them while he conducts his chosen people safely through.

But there broughtest us out into a wealthy place - Margin, moist. Professor Alexander, overflow, abundance. Vulgate, info a place of refreshment - refrigerium. The Septuagint, εἰς ἀναψυχήν *eis anapsuchēn* Luther, Thou hast led us forth and quickened us. DeWette, zum Ueberflusse- "to overflowing, or abundance." The Hebrew word - רויה *revâyâh* - means properly "abundant drink," "abundance." It occurs only here and in Psalm 23:5, where it is rendered "runneth over." See the notes at that place. The proper idea here is, that he had brought them into a land where there was plenty of water - as emblematic of abundance in general. He had led them to a place where there were ample rivers, springs, and streams, producing fertility and abundance. This would be the language of the people after their return from exile, and when they were permitted again to re-visit their native land - a land always characterized as a land of plenty. See Deuteronomy 8:7; compare Exodus 3:8; Leviticus 20:24; Numbers 13:27.

Verse 13

I will go into thy house with burnt-offeriings - To thy temple - the place of worship. This is language designed to represent the feelings and the purpose of the people. If the psalm was composed on occasion of the return from the Babylonian captivity, it means that, as their first act, the people would go to the house of God, and acknowledge his goodness to them, and render him praise. On the word burnt-offerings, see the notes at Isaiah 1:11.

I will pay thee my vows - I will keep the solemn promises which I had made; that is, the promises which the people had made in the long period of their captivity. On the word vows, see the notes at Psalm 22:25.

Verse 14

Which my lips have uttered … - Margin, "opened." The Hebrew word, however - פצה *pâtsâh* - means properly to tear apart; to rend; and then, to open wide, as the mouth, for example - or the throat, - as wild beasts do, Psalm 22:13. Then it means to open the mouth in scorn Lamentations 2:16; Lamentations 3:46; and then, to utter hasty words, Job 35:16. The idea would be expressed by us by the phrases to bolt or blurt out; to utter hastily; or, to utter from a heart full and overflowing to utter with very little care as to the language employed. It is the fullness of the heart which would be suggested by the word, and not a nice choice of expressions. The idea is, that the heart was full; and that the vows were made under the influence of deep emotion, when the heart was so full that it could not but speak, and when there was very little attention to the language. It was not a calm and studied selection of words. Such vows are not less acceptable to God than those which are made in the best-selected language. Not a little of the most popular sacred poetry in all tongues is of this nature; and when refined down to the nicest rules of art it ceases to be popular, or to meet the needs of the soul, and is laid aside. The psalmist here means to say, that though these vows were the result of deep feeling - of warm, gushing emotion - rather than of calm and thoughtful reflection, yet there was no disposition to disown or repudiate them now. They were made in the depth of feeling - in real sincerity - and there was a purpose fairly to carry them out.

When I was in trouble - When the people were in captivity, languishing in a foreign land. Vows made in trouble - in sickness, in bereavement, in times of public calamity - should be faithfully performed when health and prosperity visit us again; but, alas, how often are they forgotten!

Verse 15

I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings - Margin, marrow. On the word rendered "burnt-offerings" see the notes at Isaiah 1:11. The word rendered "fatlings" is rendered in Isaiah 5:17, lambs. It may be applied to any animal considered as fat - a qualification required in sacrifices to be made on the altar, Isaiah 1:11.

With the incense of rams - The word here rendered incense is commonly applied to aromatics which were burned in the tabernacle or temple, producing a grateful odor (see the notes at Isaiah 1:13); but it seems here to be used with reference to the smoke ascending from burning rams offered in sacrifice - ascending as the smoke of incense did. The smoke thus ascending would be as grateful and acceptable as incense.

I will offer bullocks with goats - Bullocks and goats. That is, I will present sacrifices in all the forms required in worship; in all the forms that will express gratitude to God, or that will be an acknowledgment of dependence and guilt; in all that would properly express homage to the Deity. Bullocks and goats were both required in the ancient worship.

Verse 16

Come and hear, all ye that fear God - All who are true worshippers of God - the idea of fear or reverence being put for worship in general. The call is on all who truly loved God to hear what he had done, in order that he might be suitably honored, and that due praise might be given him.

And I will declare what he hath done for my soul - This is probably the personification of an individual to represent the people, considered as delivered from oppression and bondage. The words "for my soul" are equivalent to "for me." Literally, "for my life." The phrase would embrace all that God had done by his gracious intervention in delivering the people from bondage. The language here is such as may be used by any one who is converted to God, in reference

(a) to all that God has done to redeem the soul;

(b) to all that he has done to pardon its guilt;

(c) to all that he has done to give it peace and joy;

(d) to all that he has done to enable it to overcome sin;

(e) to all that he has done to give it comfort in the prospect of death;

(f) to all that he has done to impart thee hope of heaven.

The principle here is one which it is right to apply to all such cases. It is right and proper for a converted sinner to call on others to hear what God

has done for him;

(a) because it is due to God thus to honor him;

(b) because the converted heart naturally gives utterance to expressions of gratitude and praise, or wishes to make known the joy derived from pardoned sin;

(c) because there is in such a soul a strong desire that others may partake of the same blessedness, and find the same satisfaction and peace in the service of God.

It is the duty of those who are pardoned and converted thus to call on others to hear what God has done for them;

(a) because others have the same need of religion which they have;

(b) because the same salvation is provided for them which has been provided for those who have found peace;

(c) because all are under obligation to make known as far as possible the fact that God has provided salvation for sinners, and that all may be saved.

He who has no such sense of the mercy of God, manifested toward himself, as to desire that others may be saved - who sees no such value in the religion which he professes as to have an earnest wish that others may partake of it also - can have no real evidence that his own heart has ever been converted to God. Compare the notes at Romans 9:1-3; notes at Romans 10:1.

Verse 17

I cried unto him with my mouth - That is, in my trouble; when distress came upon me. This, according to the explanation of the design of the psalm given above, is one individual speaking on behalf of the nation, or uttering the sentiment of the people. At the same time, however, all this is language appropriate to an individual when recording his own experience.

And he was extolled with my tongue - I praised him; I acknowledged his supremacy. I recognized my dependence on him, and looked to him as that God who had all things under his control, and who could grant me the deliverance which I desired.

Verse 18

If I regard iniquity in my heart - literally, "If I have seen iniquity in my heart." That is, If I have indulged in a purpose of iniquity; if I have had a wicked end in view; if I have not been willing to forsake all sin; if I have cherished a purpose of pollution or wrong. The meaning is not literally, If I have "seen" any iniquity in my heart - for no one can look into his own heart, and not see that it is defiled by sin; but, If I have cherished it in my soul; if I have gloated over past sins; if I am purposing to commit sin again; if I am not willing to abandon all sin, and to be holy.

The Lord will not hear me - That is, He will not regard and answer my prayer. The idea is, that in order that prayer may be heard, there must be a purpose to forsake all forms of sin. This is a great and most important principle in regard to prayer. The same principle is affirmed or implied in Psalm 18:41; Psalm 34:15; Proverbs 1:28; Proverbs 15:29; Proverbs 28:9; Isaiah 15:1-9; Jeremiah 11:11; Jeremiah 14:12; Zechariah 7:13; John 9:31. It is also especially stated in Isaiah 58:3-7. The principle is applicable

(a) to secret purposes of sin; to sinful desires, corrupt passions. and evil propensities;

(b) to acts of sin in individuals, as when a man is pursuing a business founded on fraud, dishonesty, oppression, and wrong;

(c) to public acts of sin, as when a people fast and pray Isaiah 58:1-14, and yet hold their fellow-men in bondage; or enact and maintain unjust and unrighteous laws; or uphold the acts of wicked rulers; or countenance and support by law that which is contrary to the law of God; and

(d) to the feelings of an awakened and trembling sinner when he is professedly seeking salvation.

If there is still the love of evil in his heart; if he has some cherished purpose of iniquity which he is not willing to abandon; if there is any one sin, however small or unimportant it may seem to be, which he is not

willing to forsake, he cannot hope that God will hear his prayer; he may be assured that he will not. All prayer, to be acceptable to God, must be connected with a purpose to forsake all sin.

Verse 19

But verily God hath heard me … - That is, He has given me evidence that he has heard my prayer; and, in doing this, he has thus given me the assurance also that I do not regard iniquity in my heart. The evidence that he has heard me is at the same time proof to my mind that I do not love sin. As it is a settled and universal principle that God does not hear prayer when there is in the heart a cherished love and purpose of iniquity, so it follows that, if there is evidence that he has heard our prayers, it is proof that he has seen that our hearts are sincere, and that we truly desire to forsake all forms of sin.

Verse 20

Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer - That is, It is fit that I should praise and adore God for the fact that he has graciously condescended to listen to the voice of my supplications.

Nor his mercy from me - There is no more proper ground of praise than the fact that God hears prayer - the prayer of poor, ignorant, sinful, dying men. When we consider how great is his condescension in doing this; when we think of his greatness and immensity; when we reflect that the whole universe is dependent on him, and that the farthest worlds need his care and attention; when we bear in mind that we are creatures of a day and "know nothing;" and especially when we remember how we have violated his laws, how sensual, corrupt, and vile our lives have been, how low and grovelling have been our aims and purposes, how we have provoked him by our unbelief, our ingratitude, and our hardness of heart - we can never express, in appropriate words, the extent of his goodness in hearing our prayers, nor can we find language which will properly give utterance to the praises due to his name for having condescended to listen to our cries for mercy.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 67

Introduction

On the phrases in the title, "To the chief Musician" and "on Neginoth," see the notes at the Introduction to Psalm 4:1-8. On the words "psalm" and "song," see the notes at the title to Psalm 48:1-14.

Four of the psalms Psalm 4:1-8; Psalm 6:1-10; Psalm 54:1-7; 55, where the phrase "on Neginoth" occurs, are ascribed to David; one Isaiah 37:30, "Ye shall eat this year such as groweth of itself; and the second year such as groweth of the same: and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit there-of." This was to be a "sign" to the people of Israel that the land would not be subjugated to the foreigners (see my noteat that passage); and the psalm, according to this supposition, was written in view of the fact that God had, at the time of its composition, mercifully interposed in the destruction of the Assyrian army. The psalm contains, according to this idea, an expression of praise for the merciful interposition which God had thus vouchsafed, and a prayer that the promise might be fully accomplished; that the land might be free from any future invasion; and that, according to the prediction, it might produce abundantly, or that it might be cultivated in peace, and with no fear of foreign conquest. Thus, Psalm 67:6: "Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us." There is much plausibility in this supposition, though it is not possible with certainty to determine its correctness.

Thus understood, the psalm is designed to express the feelings - the desires - the hopes of the Hebrew people in those circumstances. It contains,

I. A prayer that God would still be merciful to them and bless them, as if there were still some danger to be apprehended, Psalm 67:1.

II. A desire that his ways - the principles of his administration - might be made known to all people, Psalm 67:2.

III. A call on the people to praise God for what he had done, with the expression of a wish that all nations might be glad and rejoice; that they

might put their trust in God as a righteous God; that they might understand the great principles on which he governs the world, Psalm 67:3-5.

IV. A statement of the fact that then - in connection with this universal recognition of God - the prophecy would be fulfilled in its most complete sense; that the earth would yield her increase as it was made to do; that there would be universal prosperity: in other words, that the proper acknowledgment of God, and the prevalence of true religion, would be an incalculable benefit to man‘s temporal interests; or, that under such a state of things, the true fertility and productiveness of the earth would be developed, Psalm 67:6-7. The psalm thus illustrates the influence of true religion in securing the proper cultivation of the earth (accomplishing so far the purpose for which man was made, Genesis 1:28; Genesis 2:15), and consequently in promoting the happiness of mankind.

Verse 1

God be merciful unto us, and bless us - There is, perhaps (as Prof. Alexander suggests), an allusion, in the language used here, to the sacerdotal benediction in Numbers 6:24-26: “The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” The prayer is that God would bestow upon his people the blessing implied in the form of benediction which he had directed the ministers of his religion to use. The first cry is, of course, for mercy or favor. The beginning of all blessings to mankind is the favor or mercy of God. There is no higher blessing than his favor; there is none that comes from him which should not be regarded as mercy.

And cause his face to shine upon us - Margin, With us. That is, among us. It is an invocation of his presence and favor. On the phrase “cause his face to shine,” see the notes at Psalm 4:6.

Verse 2

That thy way may be known upon earth - The law of God; the principles and methods of the divine administration; the way in which God rules mankind and in which he bestows his blessings on people. The prayer is, that all the earth might be made acquainted with the methods in which God deals with his people, or confers favors on people. The happiness of man depends on a knowledge of the principles on which God bestows his

favors; for all people are, in all things, dependent on him. The success of a farmer depends on his understanding, and complying with, the laws and principles on which God bestows a harvest; the preservation of health, the restoration of health when we are sick, depends on a knowledge of the great laws which God has ordained for the continuance of the healthy functions of our bodies, and on the use of the means which he has provided for restoring health when those functions are disordered; and, in like manner, the salvation of the soul depends on the right understanding of the method which God has appointed to secure his favor. In neither of these cases - in no case - is it the business of people to originate laws of their own; laws for the cultivation of the earth, or for the preservation of health, or for the saving of the soul. The business of man is to find out the rules in accordance with which God bestows his favors, and then to act in obedience to them. The psalmist here supposes that there are certain rules or principles, in accordance with which God bestows blessings on mankind; and he prays that those rules and principles may be everywhere made known upon the earth.

Thy saving health among all nations - The original word here rendered "saving health," is "salvation." It is with great uniformity so rendered. It is indeed translated "welfare," in Job 30:15; help, in Psalm 3:2; Psalm 42:5; deliverance, in Psalm 18:50; Psalm 44:4; Isaiah 26:18; helping, Psalm 22:1; and health, in Psalm 42:11; but elsewhere it is in all cases rendered "salvation." The words "saving health" were adopted from an older version, but no argument should be founded on, them. The word "salvation" expresses all that there is in the original; and the prayer is, that the method by which God confers salvation on people may be made known throughout all lands. Assuredly no more appropriate prayer could be offered than that all the race may be made acquainted with the way in which God saves sinners.

Verse 3

Let the people praise thee, O God - Do thou incline them to praise thee: a prayer that all people might so understand the character and ways of God, and might have such a sense of his claims upon them, as to lead them to praise him.

Let all the people praise thee - The people of all lands. See the notes at Psalm 22:27. Compare Psalm 66:4.

Verse 4

O let the nations be qlad, and sing for joy - All the nations of the earth. Let them all be made acquainted with thee; with thy character; with the principles of thy govermnent; with the methods by which thou dost bestow thy favors, that they all may be made glad. These things pertain to them all. The knowledge of these things would convey inestimable blessings to them all, and fill all their hearts with joy. Nothing would, in fact, diffuse so much happiness over a miserable and guilty world - nothing would furnish such an occasion for universal joy, gratitude, and praise - as the possession of the knowledge of the great principles on which God rules the world, and on which he blesses people.

For thou shalt judge the people righteously - That is, The great principles of thy administration are right, or righteous. and the nations will have occasion to rejoice in them.

And, govern the nations upon earth - Margin, lead. So the Hebrew. That is, God would instruct them what to do; he would guide them in paths of prosperity, happiness, salvation. Individuals and nations, as they follow the counsels of God, are safe and happy; and in no other way.

Verse 5

Let the people praise thee … - See Psalm 67:5. The repetition shows that this was the principal thought in the mind of the author of the psalm. It expresses an earnest - an intense - desire, that all nations should acknowledge God as the true God, and praise him for his mercies.

Verse 6

Then shall the earth yield her increase - The word rendered "increase" - יבול *yebûl* - means properly produce, or that which the earth produces when properly cultivated. It is rendered "increase," as here, in Leviticus 26:4, Leviticus 26:20; Deuteronomy 32:22; Judges 6:4; Job 20:28; Psalm 78:46; Psalm 85:12; Ezekiel 34:27; Zechariah 8:12; and fruit, in Deuteronomy 11:17; Habakkuk 3:17; Haggai 1:10. It does not elsewhere cccur. The Hebrew verb here is in the past tense - "has yielded her increase," but the connection seems to demand that it shall be rendered in the future, as the entire psalm pertains to the future - to the diffusion of the knowledge of the way of God, Psalm 67:2; to the desire that the nations might praise him, Psalm 67:3-5; and to the fact that God would bless the people, Psalm 67:6-7. Thus understood, the idea is, that the prevalence of true religion in the world would be connected with prosperity, or that it

would tend greatly to increase the productions of the earth. This, it would do,

(a) as such an acknowledgment of God would tend to secure the divine favor and blessing on those who cultivate the earth, preventing the necessity, by way of judgment, of cutting off its harvests by blight, and drought, and mildew, by frost, and storm, and destructive insects, caterpillars, and locusts;

(b) as it would lead to a much more extensive and general cultivation of the soil, bringing into the field multitudes, as laborers, to occupy its waste places, who are now idle, or intemperate, or who are cut down by vice and consigned to an early grave.

If all who are now idle were made industrious - as they would be by the influence of true religion; if all who by intemperance are rendered worthless, improvident, and wasteful, were made sober and working people; if all who are withdrawn from cultivating the earth by wars - who are kept in standing armies, consumers and not producers - or who are cut down in battle, should be occupied in tilling the soil, or should become producers in any way; and if all who are now slaves, and whose labor is not worth half as much as that of freemen, should be restored to their equal rights, - the productions of the earth would at once be increased many times beyond the present amount. The prevalence of true religion in the world, arresting the cause of idleness and improvidence, and keeping alive those who are now cut off by vice, by crime, and by the ravages of war, would soon make the whole world assume a different aspect, and would accomplish the prediction of the prophet Isaiah 35:1 that the "wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and that the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." The earth has never yet been half cultivated. Vast tracts of land are still wholly unsubdued and uninhabited. No part of the earth has yet been made to produce all that it could be made to yield; and no one can estimate what the teeming earth might be made to produce if it were brought under the influence of proper cultivation. As far as the true religion spreads, it will be cultivated; and in the days of the millenium, when the true religion shall be diffused over all continents and islands, the earth will be a vast fruitful field, and much of the beauty and the fertility of Eden be reproduced in every land.

And God, even our own God, shall bless us - The true God; the God whom we adore. That is, He will bless us with this abundant fertility; he will bless us with every needed favor.

Verse 7

God shall bless us - That is, with prosperity, peace, salvation. The making of his name known abroad will be the means of blessing the world; will be the highest favor that can be conferred on mankind.

And all the ends of the earth shall fear him - All parts of the earth. See the notes at Psalm 22:27. The time, therefore, looked for is that when the knowledge of the Lord shall pervade all lands; the time to which the ancient prophets were constantly looking forward as the sum of all their wishes, and the burden of all their communications; that time, for the coming of which all who love their fellow-men, and who earnestly desire the welfare of the world, should most earnestly pray. The hope that this may occur, is the only bright thing in the future respecting this world; and he lives most in accordance with the high ends for which man was made who most earnestly desires this, and who, by his prayers and efforts, contributes most to this glorious consummation.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 68

Introduction

This psalm purports to be a psalm of David. It is dedicated to "the chief Musician." See the notes at the Introduction to Psalm 4:1-8. There is no reason to doubt the correctness of the title, as there is nothing in the psalm which conflicts with the supposition that David was the author, and as it accords so much, in its scope and language, with his undoubted compositions. On the phrase in the title "A Psalm or Song," see the notes at the title to Psalm 65:1-13.

It is not certainly known on what occasion the song was composed. It is evidently, like the eighteenth psalm, a triumphal song designed to celebrate victories which had been achieved; but whether composed to celebrate some particular victory, or in view of all that had been done in subduing the enemies of the people of God, it is impossible now to determine. Prof. Alexander supposes that it was in reference to the victory recorded in 2 Samuel 12:26-31, the last important victory of David's reign. Venema supposes that it was composed on the occasion of removing the ark to Mount Zion, to the place which David had prepared for it. This also is the opinion of Rosenmuller. DeWette inclines to the opinion that it was written in view of the victory over the Ammonites and others, as recorded in Psalm 68:29.

(2) it was composed when the Hebrew nation was one, or before the separation of the ten tribes and the formation of the kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam, for Benjamin, Judah, Zebulon and Naphtall are especially mentioned as taking part in the solemnities referred to in the psalm, Psalm 68:27.

(3) it was consequently before the Babylonian captivity.

(4)it was composed on some occasion of bringing up the ark, and putting it in the place which had been prepared for it, Psalm 68:16, Psalm 68:24-25. These verses can be best explained on the supposition that the psalm was written on that occasion. Indeed they cannot well be explained on any other supposition.

(5) it was in view of past triumphs; of victories secured in former times; of what God had then done for his people, and especially of what he had done when the ark of the covenant had been placed at the head of the armies of Israel, Psalm 68:14. Compare Psalm 68:7-8, Psalm 68:12, Psalm 68:17-18.

(6) it was in anticipation of future triumphs - the triumphs of the true religion; under the feeling and belief that Jerusalem would be the center from which wholesome influences would go out over the world; and that through the influences which would go out from Jerusalem the world would be subdued to God, Psalm 68:20-23; 29-31. Compare Isaiah 2:3.

The psalm was composed, therefore, I apprehend, when the ark was brought up from the house of Obed-edom, and placed in the city of David, in the tent or tabernacle which he had erected for it there: 2 Samuel 6:12; Psalm 68:1-2.

II. A call on the people to praise God, with reference to his greatness, and to his paternal character, Psalm 68:3-6.

III. A reference to what he had done in former times for his people in conducting them from bondage to the promised land, Psalm 68:7-14.

IV. A particular reference to the ark, Psalm 68:15-18. After it had been lying neglected, God had gone forth with it, and Zion had become distinguished above the hills; the chariots of God had been poured forth; victory had attended its movements; and God had gone up leading captivity captive.

V. The anticipation of future triumphs - the confident expectation of future interposition - as derived from the history of the past, Psalm 68:19-23.

VI. A description of the procession on the removing of the ark, Psalm 68:24-27.

VII. The anticipation of future triumphs expressed in another form, not that of subjugation by mere power, but of a voluntary submission of kings and nations to God, Psalm 68:28-31. Kings would come with presents

Psalm 68:29; nations - Egypt and Ethiopia - would stretch out their hands to God, Psalm 68:31.

VIII. A call on all the nations, in view of these things, to ascribe praise to God, Psalm 68:32-35.

Verse 1

Let God arise - See the notes at Psalm 3:7. There is an obvious reterence here to the words used by Moses on the removal of the ark in Numbers 10:35. The same language was also employed by Solomon when the ark was removed to the temple, and deposited in the most holy place 2 Chronicles 6:41:" Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength." It would seem probable, therefore, that this psalm was composed on some such occasion.

Let his enemies be scattered - So in Numbers 10:35: "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." The ark was the symbol of the divine presence, and the idea is, that whereever that was, the enemies of God would be subdued, or that it was only by the power of Him who was supposed to reside there that his enemies could be overcome.

Let them also that hate him flee before him - Almost the exact language used by Moses in Numbers 10:35. It is possible that this may have been used on some occasion when the Hebrews were going out to war; but the more probable supposition is that it is general language designed to illustrate the power of God, or to state that his rising up, at any time, would be followed by the discomfiture of his enemies. The placing of the ark where it was designed to remain permanently would be a proper occasion for suggesting this general truth, that all the enemies of God must be scattered when he rose up in his majesty and power.

Verse 2

As smoke is driven away - To wit, by the wind. Smoke - vapor - easily disturbed and moved by the slightest breath of air - represents an object of no stability, or having no power of resistance, and would thus represent the real weakness of the most mighty armies of men as opposed to God.

So drive them away - With the same ease with which smoke is driven by the slightest breeze, so do the enemies of God disappear before his power. Compare the notes at Psalm 1:4.

As wax melteth before the fire - Compare Psalm 22:14. The meaning here is plain. As wax is melted down by fire - losing all its hardness, its

firmness, its power of resistance, so must the most mighty armies melt away before God.

So let the wicked perish at the presence of God - That is, those who rise up against him; his enemies. It will be as easy for God to destroy wicked men as it is for fire to melt down wax.

Verse 3

But let the righteous be glad - That is, Let them be prosperous and happy; let them be under thy protecting care, and partake of thy favor. While the wicked are driven away like smoke, let the righteous live, and flourish, and be safe. Compare Psalm 32:11.

Let them rejoice beore God - In the presence of God; or as admitted to his presence. The wicked will be driven far off; the righteous will be admitted to his presence, and will rejoice before him.

Yea, let them exceedingly rejoice - Margin, as in Hebrew, rejoice with gladness. The expression is designed to express great joy; joy that is multiplied and prolonged. It is joy of heart accompanied with all the outward expressions of joy.

Verse 4

Sing unto God, sing praises to his name - That is, to him; the name being often put for the person himself. The repetition denotes intensity of desire; a wish that God might be praised with the highest praises.

Extol him - The word here rendered "extol" - סלל *sâlal* - means to lift up, to raise, to raise up, as into a heap or mound; and especially to cast up and prepare a way, or to make a way level before an army by casting up earth; that is, to prepare a way for an army. See the notes at Isaiah 40:3. Compare also Isaiah 57:14; Isaiah 62:10; Job 19:12; Job 30:12, Proverbs 15:19 (margin); Jeremiah 18:15. This is evidently the idea here. It is not to "extol" God in the sense of praising him; it is to prepare the way before him, as of one marching at the head of his armies, or as a leader of his hosts. The allusion is to God as passing before his people in the march to the promised land; and the call is to make ready the way before him - that is, to remove all obstructions out of his path and to make the road smooth and level.

That rideth - Rather," that marcheth." There is, indeed, the idea of riding, yet it is not that of "riding upon the heavens," which is the meaning, but of riding at the head of his hosts on their march.

Upon the heavens - The word used here - ערבה *ʿărābâh* - never means either heaven, or the clouds. It properly denotes an arid tract, a sterile region, a desert; and then, a plain. It is rendered desert in Isaiah 35:1, Isaiah 35:6; Isaiah 40:3; Isaiah 41:19; Isaiah 51:3; Jeremiah 2:6; Jeremiah 17:6; Jeremiah 50:12; Ezekiel 47:8; and should have been so rendered here. So it is translated by DeWette, Prof. Alexander, and others. The Septuagint renders it, "Make way for him who is riding westward." So the Latin Vulgate. The Chaldee renders it, "Extol him who is seated upon the throne of his glory in the north heaven." The reference, doubtless, is to the passage through the desert over which the Hebrews wandered for forty years. The Hebrew word which is employed here is still applied by the Arabs to that region. The idea is that of Yahweh marching over those deserts at the head of his armies, and the call is to prepare a way for him on his march, compare Psalm 68:7-8.

By his name JAH - This refers to his riding or marching at the head of his forces through the desert, in the character described by that name - or, as יה *Yâhh* that is, יהוה *Yahweh* Yah (Jah) is an abbreviation of the word Yahweh (Jehovah), which was assumed by God as His special name, Exodus 6:3. The word Yahweh is usually rendered, in our version, Lord, printed in small capitals to denote that the original is יהוה *Yahweh* the word itself is retained, however, in Exodus 6:3; Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 12:2 (see the notes); and Isaiah 26:4. The word "Jah" occurs in this place only, in our English translation. It is found in combination, or in certain formulas - as in the phrase Hallelujah, Psalm 104:35; Psalm 105:45; Psalm 106:1. The meaning here is, that God went thus before His people in the character of the true God, or as Yahweh.

And rejoice before him - Or, in His presence. Let there be joy when He thus manifests Himself as the true God. The presence of God is suited to give joy to all the worlds that He has made, or wherever He manifests Himself to His creatures.

Verse 5

A father of the fatherless - Or, of orphans. Compare Psalm 10:14, Psalm 10:18. That is, God takes the place of the parent. See Jeremiah 49:11: "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." This is one of the most tender appellations that could be given to God, and conveys one of the most striking descriptions that can be given of his character. We see his greatness, his majesty, his power, in

the worlds that he has made - in the storm, the tempest, the rolling ocean; but it is in such expressions as this that we learn, what we most desire to know, and what we cannot elsewhere learn, that he is a Father; that he is to be loved as well as feared. Nothing suggests more strikingly a state of helplessness and dependence than the condition of orphan children and widows; nothing, therefore, conveys a more affecting description of the character of God - of his condescension and kindness - than to say that he will take the place of the parent in the one case, and be a protector in the other.

And a judge of the widows - That is, He will see justice done them; he will save them from oppression and wrong. No persons are more liable to be oppressed and wronged than widows. They are regarded as incapable of defending or vindicating their own rights, and are likely to be deceived and betrayed by those to whom their property and rights may be entrusted. Hence, the care which God manifests for them; hence, his solemn charges, so often made to those who are in authority, and who are entrusted with power, to respect their rights; hence, his frequent and solemn rebukes to those who violate their rights. See the notes at Isaiah 1:17. Compare Deuteronomy 10:18; Deuteronomy 14:29; Deuteronomy 24:17; Exodus 22:22; Job 24:3, Job 24:21; Jeremiah 7:6; Malachi 3:5; James 1:27.

Is God in his holy habitation - Where he dwells; to wit, in heaven. The design of the psalmist seems to be to take us at once up to God; to let us see what he is in his holy home; to conduct us into his very presence, that we may see him as he is. What a man is we see in his own home - when we get near to him; when we look upon him, not on great or state occasions, when he is abroad, and assumes appearances befitting his rank and office, but in his own house; as he is constantly. This is the idea here, that if we approach God most nearly, if we look upon him, not merely in the splendor and magnificence in which he appears in governing the worlds, in his judgments, in storm and tempest, riding on the clouds and controlling the ocean, but, as it were, in his own dwelling, his quiet heavens - if we look most closely at his character, we shall find that character best represented by the kind and benignant traits of a father - in his care for widows and orphans. In other words, the more we see of God - the more we become intimately acquainted with his real nature - the more evidence we shall find that he is benevolent and kind.

Verse 6

God setteth the solitary in families - Margin, as in Hebrew, in a house. The word rendered solitary means properly one alone, as an only child; Genesis 22:2, Genesis 22:12, Genesis 22:16; and then it means alone, solitary, wretched, forsaken. See the notes at Psalm 22:20. The word rendered "families" would be more literally and better translated as in the margin, houses. The idea then is, not that he constitutes families of those who were solitary and alone, but that to those who are alone in the world - who seem to have no friends - who are destitute, wretched, forsaken, he gives comfortable dwellings. Thus the idea is carried out which is expressed in the previous verse. God is the friend of the orphan and the widow; and, in like manner, he is the friend of the cast out - the wandering - the homeless; - he provides for them a home. The meaning is, that he is benevolent and kind, and that they who have no other friend may find a friend in God. At the same time it is true, however, that the family organization is to be traced to God. It is his original appointment; and all that there is in the family that contributes to the happiness of mankind - all that there is of comfort in the world that depends on the family organization - is to be traced to the goodness of God. Nothing more clearly marks the benignity and the wisdom of God than the arrangement by which people, instead of being solitary wanderers on the face of the earth, with nothing to bind them in sympathy, in love, and in interest to each other, are grouped together in families.

He bringeth out those which are bound with chains - He releases the prisoners. That is, He delivers those who are unjustly confined in prison, and held in bondage. The principles of his administration are opposed to oppression and wrong, and in favor of the rights of man. The meaning is not that he always does this by his direct power, but that his law, his government, his requirements are all against oppression and wrong, and in favor of liberty. So Psalm 146:7, "The Lord looseth the prisoners." Compare the notes at Isaiah 61:1.

But the rebellious dwell in a dry land - The rebels; all who rebel against him. The word rendered dry land means a dry or arid place; a desert. The idea is, that the condition of the rebellious as contrasted with that of those whom God has under his protection would be as a fertile and well-watered field compared with a desert. For the one class he would provide a comfortable home; the other, the wicked, would be left as if to dwell in deserts and solitudes: In other words, the difference in condition between

those who are the objects of his favor, and those who are found in proud rebellion against him, would be as great as that between such as have comfortable abodes in a land producing abundance, and such as are wretched and homeless wanderers in regions of arid sand. While God befriends the poor and the needy, while he cares for the widow and the orphan, he leaves the rebel to misery and want. The allusion here probably is to his conducting his people through the desert to the land of promise and of plenty; but still the passage contains a general truth in regard to the principles of his administration.

Verse 7

O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people … - That is, in conducting them through the desert to the promised land. The statement in regard to the paternal character of God in the previous verses is here illustrated by his guiding his own people, when fleeing from a land of oppression, through the barren desert - and his interpositions there in their behalf. All that had been said of him in the previous verses is here confirmed by the provision which he made for their needs in their perilous journey through the wilderness.

Verse 8

The earth shook - See Exodus 19:16-18.

The heavens also dropped at the presence of God - That is, dropped down rain and food. The idea is that the very heavens seemed to be shaken or convulsed, so that rain and food were shaken down - as ripe fruit falls from a tree that is shaken. Compare the notes at Isaiah 34:4. So also, Isaiah 64:1-3. The meaning is not that the heavens themselves dropped down, but that they dropped or distilled rain and food.

Even Sinai itself was moved - This was true; but this does not seem to be the idea intended here, for the words "even" and "was moved" are not in the original. The Hebrew is, literally, "This Sinai;" meaning probably" this was at Sinai," or, "this took place at Sinai." The correct translation perhaps would be, "The heavens distilled rain at the presence of God, this at Sinai, at the presence of God."

At the presence of God, the God of Israel - The whole region seemed to be moved and awed at the presence of God, or when he came down to visit his people. The earth and the heavens, all seemed to be in commotion.

Verse 9

Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain - Margin, shake out. Prof. Alexander, "a rain of free gifts." The Septuagint and the Vulgate render it, "a voluntary or willing rain." The Syriac, "the rain of a vow." The Hebrew word translated "plentiful" means free, voluntary, of its own accord - נדבה *nedâbâh* - (See the notes at Psalm 51:12, where it is rendered free); then it means that which is given freely; and hence, abundantly. It means, therefore, in this place, plentiful, abundant. The reference, however, is to the manna, with which the people were supplied from day to day, and which seemed to be showered upon them in abundance. The word rendered "didst send" means properly to shake out, as if God shook the clouds or the heavens, and the abundant supplies for their needs were thus shaken out.

Whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary - Thou didst strengthen thy people when they were exhausted, or were in danger of fainting. In other words, God sent a supply of food - manna, quails, etc. - when they were in the pathless wilderness, and when they were ready to perish.

Verse 10

Thy congregation hath dwelt therein - In the land of promise; for the connection requires us to understand it in this manner. The idea of the writer all along pertains to that land, and to the mercy which God had shown to it. After showing by an historical reference what God had done for the people in the wilderness, he returns here, though without expressly mentioning it, to the land of promise, and to what God had done there for his people. The word tendered "congregation" - חיה *châyâh* - means properly a beast, an animal, Genesis 1:30; Genesis 2:19; Genesis 8:19; Genesis 37:20. Then it comes to be used as a collective noun, meaning a herd or flock; thus, a troop of people, an array or host, 2 Samuel 23:11, 2 Samuel 23:13; and it is applied here to the people, under the idea so common in the Scriptures that God is a Shepherd.

Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor - For thy flock considered as poor or wretched. That is, Thou hast provided for them when they had no resources of their own - when they were a poor, oppressed, and afflicted people - wanderers wholly dependent on thee.

Verse 11

The Lord gave the word - The command, or the order. It is not certain to what the psalmist here refers; whether to some particular occasion then fresh in the recollection of the people, when a great victory had been

gained, which it was the design of the psalm to celebrate; or whether it is a general statement in regard to the doings of God, having reference to all his victories and triumphs, and meaning that in all cases the command came from him. The subsequent verses make it evident that there is an allusion here to the ark of the covenant, and to the victories which had been achieved under that as a guide or protector. The entire psalm refers to the ark, and its triumphs; and the idea here seems to be, that in all the victories which had been achieved the "word" or the command came from God, and that its promulgation was immediately made by a "great company" who stood ready to communicate it or to "publish" it.

Great was the company of those that published it - Margin, army. More literally, "The women publishing it were a great host." The word used is in the feminine gender, and refers to the Oriental custom whereby females celebrated victories in songs and dances. See Exodus 15:20-21; Judges 11:34; Judges 21:21; 1 Samuel 18:6-7. The idea here is, that when there was a proclamation of war - when God commanded his people to go out to battle, and to take with them the ark, the females of the land - the singers - were ready to make known the proclamation; to celebrate the will of the Lord by songs and dances; to cheer and encourage their husbands, brothers, and fathers, as they went out to the conflict. The result is stated in the following verse.

Verse 12

Kings of armies did flee apace - Margin, as in Hebrew, did flee, did flee. This is the Hebrew mode of expressing that which is emphatic or superlative. It is by simply repeating the word. The idea is, that they fled speedily; they fled at once, and in alarm. Psalm 68:12-13 are marked by DeWette as a quotation, and the language is supposed by him to be the substance of the song that was sung by the women as referred to in Psalm 68:11. This supposition is not improbable. The reference is, undoubtedly, to the former victories achieved by the people of God when they went out to war; and the idea is, that when the command came, when God gave the word Psalm 68:11, their foes fled in consternation.

And she that tarried at home divided the spoil - The women remaining in their homes, while the men went out to war. On them devolved the office of dividing the plunder, and of giving the proper portions to each of the victors. They would take an interest in the battle, and receive the booty, and assign the portion due to each of the brave soldiers - the more

acceptable as given to them by female hands. Possibly, however, the meaning may be, that the victors would bring the plunder home, and lay it at the feet of their wives and daughters to be divided among the women themselves. The dividing of the spoils of battle after a victory was always an important act. Compare Judges 5:30; Joshua 7:21; 1 Chronicles 26:27; Hebrews 7:4.

Verse 13

Though ye have lien among the pots - There are few passages in the Bible more difficult of interpretation than this verse and the following. Our translators seem to have supposed that the whole refers to the ark, considered as having been neglected, or as having been suffered to remain among the common vessels of the tabernacle, until it became like those vessels in appearance - that is, until its brilliancy had become tarnished by neglect, or by want of being cleaned and furbished - yet that it would be again like the wings of a dove covered with silver, as it had been formerly, and pure like the whitest snow. But it is not certain, if it is probable, that this is the meaning. Prof. Alexander renders it, "When ye lie down between the borders (ye shall be like) the wings of a dove covered with silver;" that is, "when the land had rest," or was restored to a state of tranquility.

DeWette renders it, "When ye rest between the cattle-stalls:" expressing the same idea, that of quiet repose as among the herds of cattle lying calmly down to rest. The Septuagint renders it, "Though you may have slept in kitchens." The words rendered" Though ye have lien" mean literally, "If you have lain," alluding to some act or state of lying down quietly or calmly. The verb is in the plural number, but it is not quite clear what it refers to. There is apparently much confusion of number in the passage. The word rendered "pots" - שׁפתים *shephathayim* - in the dual form, occurs only in this place and in Ezekiel 40:43, where it is translated hooks (margin, end-irons, or the two hearth-stones). Gesenius renders it here "stalls," that is, folds for cattle, and supposes that in Ezekiel it denotes places in the temple-court, where the victims for sacrifice were fastened. Tholuck renders it, "When you shall again rest within your stone-borders (that is, within the limits of your own country, or within your own borders), ye shall be like the wings of a dove." For other interpretations of the passage, see Rosenmuller *in loc*. I confess that none of these explanations of the passage seem to me to be satisfactory, and that I cannot understand it. The wonder is not, however, that, in a book so large as the Bible, and written in a remote age,

and in a language which has long ceased to be a spoken language, there should be here and there a passage which cannot now be made clear, but that there should be so few of that description. There is no ancient book that has not more difficulties of this kind than the Hebrew Scriptures:

Yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver … - The phrase "yet shall ye be" is not in the original. The image here is simply one of beauty. The allusion is to the changeable colors of the plumage of a dove, now seeming to be bright silver, and then, as the rays of light fall on it in another direction, to be yellow as gold. If the allusion is to the ark, considered as having been laid aside among the ordinary vessels of the tabernacle, and having become dark and dingy by neglect, then the meaning would be, that, when restored to its proper place, and with the proper degree of attention and care bestowed upon it, it would become a most beautiful object. If the allusion is to the people of the land considered either as lying down in dishonor, as if among filth, or as lying down calmly and quietly as the beasts do in their stalls, or as peacefully reposing within their natural limits or borders, then the meaning would be, that the spectacle would be most beautiful. The varied tints of loveliness in the land - the gardens, the farms, the flowers, the fruits, the vineyards, the orchards, the villages, the towns, the cheerful homes - would be like the dove - the emblem of calmness - so beautiful in the variety and the changeableness of its plumage. The comparison of a beautiful and variegated country with a dove is not a very obvious one, and yet, in this view, it would not be wholly unnatural. It is not easy always to vindicate philosophically the images used in poetry; nor is it always easy for a Western mind to see the reasons of the images employed by an Oriental poet. It seems probable that the comparison of the land (considered as thus variegated in its beauty) with the changing beauties of the plumage of the dove is the idea intended to be conveyed by this verse; but it is not easy to make it out on strictly exegetical or philological principles.

Verse 14

When the Almighty scattered kings in it - The Hebrew here is, "In the scattering of (that is, by) the Almighty of kings." The reference is to the act of God in causing kings to abandon their purposes of invasion, or to flee when their own countries were invaded. Compare Psalm 48:5-6. The language here is so general that it might be applied to any such acts in the history of the Hebrew people; to any wars of defense or offence which they

waged. It may have reference to the scattering of kings and people when Joshua invaded the land of Canaan, and when he discomfited the numerous forces, led by different kings, as the Israelites took possession of the country. The close connection of the passage with the reference to the journey through the wilderness Psalm 68:7-9 would make it probable that this is the allusion. The phrase "in it," (margin, for her), refers doubtless to the land of Canaan, and to the victories achieved there.

It was white as snow in Salmon - Margin, She was. The allusion is to the land of Canaan. But about the meaning of the phrase "white as snow in Salmon," there has been great diversity of opinion. The word rendered "was white as snow" is correctly rendered. It means to be snowy; then, to be white like snow. The verb occurs nowhere else. The noun is of frequent occurrence, and is always rendered snow. Exodus 4:6; Numbers 12:10; 2 Samuel 23:20; 2 Kings 5:27; et al. The word Salmon properly means shady, and was applied to the mountain here referred to, probably on account of the dark forests which covered it. That mountain was in Samaria, near Shechem. Judges 9:48. It is not known why the snow of that mountain is particularly alluded to here, as if there was any special whiteness or purity in it. It is probably specified by name only to give more vivacity to the description. There is much difference of opinion as to what is the meaning of the expression, or in what respects the land was thus white.

The most common opinion has been that it was from the bones of the slain which were left to bleach unburied, and which covered the land so that it seemed to be white. Compare Virg. AEn. v. 865; xii. 36. Ovid uses similar language, Fast. i: *"Humanis ossibus albet humus."* So also Horace, Serra. 1,8: *"Albis informem spectabant ossibus agrum."* This interpretation of the passage is adopted by Rosenmuller, Gesenius, and DeWette. Others suppose it to mean that the land was like the dazzling whiteness of snow in the midst of blackness or darkness. This was the opinion of Kimchi, and this interpretation is adopted by Prof. Alexander. Tholuck supposes it to mean that, when war was waged on the kings and people, they fell as fast as snow-flakes on Mount Salmon; and that the idea is not so much the whiteness of the land, as the fact that they fell in great numbers, covering the land as the snow-flakes do. It is perhaps not possible to determine which of these explanations is correct. Either of them would accord with the meaning of the words and the general sense of the psalm. That of Tholuck is the most poetical, but it is less obvious from the Hebrew words used.

Verse 15

The hill of God - The phrase "the hill of God," or the mountain of God, is elsewhere applied in the Scriptures only to Mount Horeb or Sinai Exodus 3:1; Exodus 18:5; Exodus 24:13; 1 Kings 19:8, and to Mount Zion, Psalm 24:3; Isaiah 30:29. There is no reason for supposing that there is a reference here to Mount Horeb or Sinai, as the psalm does not particularly relate to that mountain, and as there is nothing in the psalm to bring that mountain into comparison with other mountains. The allusion is, I think, clearly to Mount Zion; and the idea is, that that mountain, though it was not distinguished for its elevation or grandeur - though it had nothing in itself to claim attention, or to excite wonder - yet, from the fact that it had been selected as the place where God was to be worshipped, had an honor not less than that of the loftiest mountain, or than those which showed forth the divine perfections by their loftiness and sublimity. There is connected with this, also, the idea that, although it might be less defensible by its natural position, yet, because God resided there, it was defended by his presence more certainly than loftier mountains were by their natural strength. It should be remarked, however, that many other interpretations have been given of the passage, but this seems to me to be its natural meaning.

Is as the hill of Bashan - Luther renders this, "The mount of God is a fruit-bearing hill; a great and fruitbearing mountain." On the word Bashan, see the notes at Isaiah 2:13; notes at Isaiah 33:9; notes at Psalm 22:12. Bashan was properly the region beyond Jordan, bounded on the north by Mount Hermon or the Anti-Libanus, and extending south as far as the stream Jabbok, and the mountains of Gilead. The "hill" of Bashan, or the "mountain of Bashan," was properly Mount Hermon - the principal mountain pertaining to Bashan. The name Bashan was properly given to the country, and not to the mountain. The mountain referred to - Hermon - is that lofty range which lies on the east of the Jordan, and in the northern part of the country - a range some twelve thousand feet in height. See the notes at Psalm 42:6. It is the most lofty and distinguished mountain in Palestine, and the idea here, as above expressed, is, that Mount Zion, though not so lofty, or not having so much in itself to attract attention, was not less honored, and not less safe, as being the special dwelling-place of God.

An high hill … - Or rather; a mount of peaks or ridges as Bashan. Mount Hermon was not a single hill, or a detached mountain, but a chain of

mountains - a range of lofty peaks or summits. So of Zion. It was by the presence and protection of God what Bashan was by its natural strength and grandeur. Comparatively low and unimportant as Zion was, it had in fact more in it to show what God is, and to constitute safety, than there was in the loftiness and grandeur of Bashan. The latter, though thus lofty and grand, had no "advantage" over Zion, but Zion might in every way be compared with that lofty range of hills which, by their natural position, their strength, and their grandeur, showed forth so much the greatness and glory of God. The teaching would be, as applied to Zion, or the Church, that there is "as much" there to show the divine perfections, to illustrate the greatness and the power of God, as there is in the most sublime works of nature; or that they who look upon the works of God in nature to learn his perfections, have no advantage over those who seek to learn what he is in his church.

Verse 16

Why leap ye, ye high hills? - That is, with exultation; with pride; with conscious superiority. Why do you seem to regard yourselves as so superior to Mount Zion, in strength, in beauty, in grandeur? The Hebrew, however - רצד *râtsad* - rather means, "Why do ye watch insidiously? why do ye look askance at?" The word occurs only in this place. In Arabic it means to watch closely; to lie in wait for. This is the idea here. The mountains around Palestine - the mountains of the pagan world - the lofty hills - as if conscious of their grandeur, are represented as looking "askance," in their pride, at Mount Zion; as eyeing it with silent contempt, as if it were not worthy of notice; as if it were so insignificant that it had no claim to attention. The idea is not that of "leaping," as in our English Bible, or of "hopping," as in the version of the Episcopal Prayer Book, but that of a look of silent disdain, as if, by their side, Zion, so insignificant, was not worthy of regard. "Perhaps," by the high hills here, however, are disguisedly also represented the mighty powers of the pagan world, as if looking with contempt on the people of the land where Zion was the place of worship.

This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in - The hill which "he" has selected as his abode, and which "he" has honored above all the mountains of the earth, by his permanent residence there. As such, Zion has an honor above the loftiest hills and ranges of mountains in the earth.

Yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever - Permanently; he will make it his fixed habitation on earth. Not-withstanding the envy or the contempt of

surrounding hills, he will make this his settled abode. He has chosen it; he delights in it; he will not forsake it for the mountains and hills that are in themselves more grand and lofty.

Verse 17

The chariots of God - The meaning of this verse is, that God is abundantly able to maintain his position on Mount Zion; to defend the place which he had selected as his abode. Though it has less natural strength than many other places have - though other hills and mountains, on account of their natural grandeur, may be represented as looking on this with contempt, as incapable of defense, yet he who has selected it is fully able to defend it. He is himself encompassed with armies and chariots of war; thousands of angels guard the place which he has chosen as the place of his abode. "Chariots," usually two-wheeled vehicles, often armed with scythes attached to their axles, were among the most powerful means of attack or defense in ancient warfare. See Psalm 20:7, note; Psalm 46:9, note; Isaiah 31:1, note; Isaiah 37:24, note; Compare Exodus 14:7; Joshua 17:16; Judges 4:15.

Are twenty thousand - A closer version is "two myriads," or twice ten thousand. The original word is in the dual form. The language is designed to denote a very great number. A myriad was a great number; the idea here is that even "that" great number was doubled.

Even thousands of angels - Margin, "many thousands." The Hebrew is, "thousands repeated," or "multiplied." There is in the Hebrew no mention of angels. The Septuagint and the Vulgate render it, "thousands of the rejoicing;" that is, thousands of happy attendants. The original, however, would most naturally refer to the chariots, as being multiplied by thousands.

The Lord is among them - The real strength, after all, is not in Zion itself, or in the chariots of the Lord surrounding it, but in the Lord himself. "He" is there as the Head of the host; He, as the Protector of his chosen dwelling-place.

As in Sinai, in the holy place - literally, "The Lord is among them; Sinai, in the sanctuary." The idea seems to be, that even Sinai with all its splendor and glory - the Lord himself with all the attending hosts that came down on Sinai - seemed to be in the sanctuary, the holy place on Mount Zion. All that there was of pomp and grandeur on Mount Sinai when God came down with the attending thousands of angels, was really around Mount Zion for its protection and defense.

Verse 18

Thou hast ascended on high - That is, Thou hast gone up to the high place; to thy throne; to thine abode. The idea is, that God had descended or come down from his dwelling-place in the case referred to in the psalm, and that having now secured a victory by vanquishing his foes, and having given deliverance to his people, he had now returned, or reascended to his seat. This may either mean his throne on earth, or his abode in heaven. It would seem most probable that the latter is the idea.

Thou hast led captivity captive - "Thou hast made captivity captive," or "Thou hast captured a captivity." The main idea is, that he had achieved a complete victory; he had led all his foes captive. The language "would" also express the idea that he had made captives for himself of those who were captives to others, or who were in subjection to another. As applied in the Christian sense, this would refer to those who were captives to Satan, and who were held in bondage by him, but who had been rescued by the Redeemer, and brought under another captivity - the yielding of voluntary service to himself. Those once captives to sin were now led by him, captives in a higher sense. See the notes at Ephesians 4:8.

Thou hast received gifts for men - Margin, "in the man." That is, "Among men," or while among them as a conqueror. The idea here most naturally conveyed would be, that he had obtained "gifts," privileges, advantages, "in" man; that is, that men, considered as captives, constituted the victory which he had achieved - the advantage which he had acquired. It was not so much "for" them as "in" them, and "by" them, to wit, by possessing them as captives or subjects to him. With this victory achieved, he had now ascended on high.

Yea, for the rebellious also - Or, more properly, "even the rebellious." That is, Those who had been in a state of rebellion he had subdued to himself, and had thus led captivity captive. It was a triumph by which they had become subdued to him.

That the Lord God might dwell among them - literally, "For the dwelling of Jah, God." The idea is, that he had achieved such a triumph; he had so brought the rebellious under subjection to himself, that he could take up his abode with them, or dwell with them as his people. His rule could be extended over them, and they would acknowledge him as their sovereign. This would be applicable to a people in ancient times that had been subdued by the people of God. It might now be properly applied, also, to sinners

who by the power of truth have been so subdued as to submit to God. It is applicable to all who have been conquered by the Gospel - whose enmity has been slain - who have been changed from enemies to friends - so that the Lord may dwell in their hearts, or rule over them. This passage is applied by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:8 to the Messiah, not as having original reference to him, but as suggesting language which would appropriately express the nature of his work, and the glory of his triumph. See the notes at that place.

Verse 19

Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits … - literally, "day, day;" that is, day by day; or, constantly. The words "with benefits" are not in the original, and they do not convey the true idea of the passage. The word rendered "loadeth" means to take up; to lift, as a stone, Zechariah 12:3; to bear, to carry, Isaiah 46:3. Then it means "to take up and place upon a beast of burden;" to load, Isaiah 46:1; Genesis 44:13. Hence, it means to impose or lay a burden or a load on one; and the idea here is, "Blessed be the Lord God even if he lays a burden on us, and if he does this daily, for he is the God of our salvation." He enables us to bear it; he gives us strength; and finally he delivers us from it. "Though," therefore, he constantly lays on us a burden, he as constantly aids us to bear it. He does not leave us. He enables us to triumph in him, and through him; and we have occasion constantly to honor and to praise his name. This accords with the experience of all his people, that however heavy may be the burden laid on them, and however constant their trials, they find him as constant a helper, and they daily have occasion to praise and bless him.

Verse 20

He that is our God is the God of salvation - literally, "God is for us a God of salvation." That is, The God whom we worship is the God from whom salvation comes, and who brings salvation to us. It is not a vain thing that we serve him, for he is the only being who can save us, and he will save us.

And unto God the Lord belong the issues from death - The "outgoings" or "escapes" from death. That is, He only can save from death. The Hebrew word means, properly, a going forth, a deliverance; then, a place of going forth as a gate, Ezekiel 48:30; a fountain, Proverbs 4:23. Probably the only idea intended here by the psalmist was, that safety or deliverance from death proceeds solely from God. The sentiment, however,

is true in a larger sense. All that pertains to deliverance from death, all that prepares for it, all that makes it easy to be borne, all that constitutes a rescue from its pains and horrors, all that follows death in a higher and more blessed world, all that makes death "final," and places us in a condition where death is no more to be dreaded - all this belongs to God. All this is under his control. He only can enable us to bear death; he only can conduct us from a bed of death to a world where we shall never die.

Verse 21

But God shall wound the head of his enemies - More properly, "God shall crush the head," etc. The idea is that of complete destruction, - as, if the head is crushed, life becomes ex tinct. See Genesis 3:15; compare Psalm 110:6.

And the hairy scalp - More literally, "the top of the hair." The Hebrew word used here for "scalp" means the vertex, the top, the crown, as of the head, where the hair "divides itself;" and the idea is properly, "the dividing of the hair." Gesenius, Lexicon. The allusion is to the top of the head; that is, the blow would descend on the top of the head, producing death.

Of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses - Of the man who perseveres in a course of wickedness. If he repents, God will be merciful to him; if he persists in sin, he will be punished. The literal rendering would be, "the hairy scalp going on, or going, sc. "about", in his trespasses." The reference is to a wicked man "continuing" in his transgressions.

Verse 22

The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan - On the situation of Bashan, see the notes at Psalm 68:15. There may be an allusion here to the victory achieved over Og, king of Bashan, in the time of Moses, Numbers 21:33-35. The idea may be that as, at that time, a victory was achieved over a formidable enemy, so in times of similar peril, God would deliver his people, and save them from danger. Or, as Bashan was the remote frontier of the holy land, the meaning may be, that God would bring his people from the remotest borders where they should be scattered. Another meaning is suggested by Professor Alexander, namely, that as the subject referred to in the subsequent verses is the "enemy" of God, the meaning may be that God would bring back his enemies for punishment, even from the remotest borders, when they were endeavoring to escape, and even when they supposed they were safe. The first of these opinions is probably the true one. God would rescue his people, as he had done from the attacks of the

mighty king of Bashan; he would deliver them, as he had brought their fathers from the depths of the sea.

I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea - The words "my people" are not in the Hebrew, but they seem to be not improperly supplied by the translators. If so, the allusion is to the interposition of God in conducting his people through the Red Sea Exodus 14:22; and the idea is, that God would at all times interpose in their behalf, and deliver them from similar dangers.

Verse 23

That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies … - Margin, "red." A more literal rendering would be, "That thou mayest crush - thy foot in blood - the tongue of thy dogs from the enemies, from him." The idea of "dipping" the foot in blood is not in the passage directly; but the leading thought is that of "crushing" the enemy. It is then "added" that the foot would be in blood. So of the tongue of the dogs. The "meaning" is, that the tongues of dogs would be employed in licking up the blood of the enemies, though that is not "expressed" in so many words. The sense of the whole is, that the foes of the people would be slain.

Verse 24

They have seen thy goings, O God - That is, the lookers on in the solemn procession referred to in Psalm 68:25; or, in other words, Thy goings have been attended by pomp and magnificence, and have been witnessed by multitudes. The word "goings" here refers to the solemn triumphal processions which celebrated the victories achieved by God.

Even the goings of my God, my King - The psalmist here speaks of God as "his" God and "his" King. The idea seems to have suddenly crossed his mind that this great God, so glorious, is "his" God. He exults and rejoices that He whom he adores is such a God; that a God so great and glorious is "his." So the believer now, when he looks upon the works of God, when he contemplates their vastness, their beauty, and their grandeur, is permitted to feel that the God who made them is "his" God; to find consolation in the thought that his "Father made them all."

"He looks abroad into the varied field
Of Nature, and, though poor, perhaps, compared
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,

Calls the delightful scenery all his own.

His are the mountains, and the valleys his,

And the resplendent rivers; - his to enjoy

With a propriety that none can feel

But who, with filial confidence inspired,

Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,

And smiling say, ‹My Father made them all!‘

Are they not his by a peculiar right,

And by an emphasis of interest his,

Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,

Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind

With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love

That plann‘d, and built, and still upholds a world

So clothed with beauty for rebellious man?”

task, Book v.

In the sanctuary - Or, “to” the sanctuary; in other words, as the ark was borne to the sanctuary, the place appointed for its rest, for, as above remarked, the psalm seems to have been composed on such an occasion.

Verse 25

The singers went before - That is, in the removal of the ark; in the solemn procession referred to in the previous verse. “In” that procession those who sang preceded those who performed on instruments of music. Compare 1 Chronicles 13:8; 1 Chronicles 15:16. “The players on instruments followed after.” The different classes of performers would naturally be ranged together. In 1 Chronicles 13:8, the following

instruments of music are mentioned as having been employed on a similar occasion, if not on this very occasion - harps, psalteries, timbrels, cymbals, and trumpets.

Among them were the damsels playing with timbrels - The true construction of the passage is, "Behind were the players in the midst of damsels playing." The singers and the players were surrounded by these women playing on timbrels. The word rendered "playing with timbrels" - תפף *tâphaph* - means to strike, to beat; and hence, to strike or beat upon a timbrel. A timbrel is a kind of drum, a tabret, or tambourine, usually beaten with the fingers. See a description of it in the notes at Isaiah 5:12, under the word "tabret." It is an instrument which has been in use from the remotest antiquity.

Verse 26

Bless ye God in the congregations - In the assemblages of the people; not only as individuals, but in solemn precessions; in triumphal marches; when the people are assembled together. In this public manner acknowledge God as the true God, and render him praise.

Even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel - Margin, "Ye that are of;" that is, "of the fountain of Israel." The margin has undoubtedly expressed the correct idea. The appeal is to the Hebrew people represented as descending from a common stock or ancestor - Jacob or Israel - as a stream or river flows from a fountain. Compare the notes at Isaiah 48:1; see also Isaiah 51:1; Deuteronomy 33:28. All the descendants of Jacob or Israel are thus called on to unite in solemnly praising the Lord their God.

Verse 27

There is little Benjamin - In that solemn procession. That is, the tribe of Benjamin is "represented" there; or, there are in the procession those who are connected with that tribe. The name "little" is given to the tribe either because Benjamin was the youngest of the sons of Jacob, or, more probably, because that tribe was among the smallest of the tribes of Israel. In fact, the tribe was so small, as compared with that of Judah, for instance, that, after the revolt of the ten tribes, the name of Benjamin was lost, and the whole nation was called, after the tribe of Judah, "Jews."

With their ruler - The word "with" is not in the original. The Hebrew is literally "ruling them." This would seem to mean that, on the occasion referred to, Benjamin, or those who were connected with that tribe, had the oversight, or the direction of those who were engaged in this solemn

procession. Though small, it had the preeminence on this occasion. To it was committed the important duty of presiding over these solemnities; that is, those who were prominent in the arrangements for the occasion were of the tribe of Benjamin. This seems to me to be a better explanation than to suppose, as Professor Alexander does, that it has reference to the enemies of the people of God, and that Benjamin had "conquered" or "subdued" them.

The princes of Judah - The principal men of the tribe of Judah.

And "their council - Margin, "with their company." The Hebrew word here, - רגמה *rigmâh* - means crowd, throng, band. It never means "council." The idea is, evidently, that large numbers of the tribe of Judah attended - that the "princes" or leaders were accompanied by throngs of their own people; in allusion to the fact that Judah was one of the largest of the tribes of Israel - and in contrast with Benjamin, which was few in number, and yet thus occupied the most honorable place as having "charge" of the arrangements.

The princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali - These were remote or border tribes, and they seem to be mentioned here to show that all the tribes were represented; that is, that this was a national celebration. The fact that these tribes are mentioned as being represented on the occasion, proves that this psalm was composed before the revolt of the ten tribes, and the formation of the kingdom of Israel; that is, as "early" as the time of Solomon. This increases the probability that the psalm was written by David.

Verse 28

Thy God hath commanded thy strength - Has ordered thy strength to appear, or to be manifested. This is addressed, evidently, to the people of the land; and the idea is, that, on this occasion, God had called forth a full representation of the strength of the nation; or, as we should say, there had been a full "turn out." It was an impressive sight, showing the real strength of the people.

Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us - Increase the strength thus manifested. Let it be still greater. The scene is now impressive and grand; make it still more so, by adding to the number and the prosperity of thy people. This is an illustration of the desire in the heart of every pious man that, whatever prosperity God may have given to his people, he would give a still larger measure - that however greatly he may have increased their numbers, he would add to them manymore. This desire

of the heart of piety will not be satisfied until the whole world shall be converted to God.

Verse 29

Because of thy temple at Jerusalem - The word rendered "temple" here properly means a palace; then, the abode of God considered as a king, or his residence as a king. It might, therefore, be applied either to the tabernacle or to the temple, erected as the special dwelling-place of God. As the word has so general a meaning, the passage here does not prove that the psalm was composed after Solomon's temple was reared, for it may refer to the tabernacle that David set up for the ark on Mount Zion. See Psalm 5:7, note; Psalm 65:4, note.

At Jerusalem - literally, "upon," or "above" Jerusalem. Perhaps the idea is, that as the place of worship was built on Mount Zion, it was "above," or seemed to "overhang" the city. The city was built mostly in the valleys that lay between the different hills or eminences - Mount Zion, Mount Moriah, Mount Ophel.

Shall kings bring presents unto thee - In honor of God and his religion. Compare Psalm 72:10. See also the notes at Isaiah 49:7, notes at Isaiah 49:23; notes at Isaiah 60:5, notes at Isaiah 60:16.

Verse 30

Rebuke the company of spearmen - Margin, "the beasts of the reeds." This is in the form of a prayer - "Rebuke;" but the idea is, that this "would" occur; and the meaning of the whole verse, though there is much difficulty in interpreting the particular expressions, is, that the most formidable enemies of the people of God, represented here by wild beasts, would be subdued, and would be made to show their submission by bringing presents - by "pieces of silver," or, with tribute. Thus the idea corresponds with that in the previous verse, that "kings would bring presents." The rendering in the margin here expresses the meaning of the Hebrew. It "might" perhaps be possible to make out from the Hebrew the sense in our common translation, but it is not the "obvious" meaning, and would not accord so well with the scope of the passage. On the word rendered "company," which primarily means an animal, see the notes at Psalm 68:10.

It is applied to an army as being formidable, or terrible, "like" a wild beast. The word rendered "spearmen" - קנה *qâneh* - means "a reed" or "cane;" "calamus." Compare the notes at Isaiah 42:3; notes at Isaiah 36:6. This phrase, "the beast of the reeds," would properly denote a wild beast, as

living among the reeds or canes that sprang up on the banks of a river, and having his home there. It would thus, perhaps, most naturally suggest the crocodile, but it might also be applicable to a lion or other wild beast that had its dwelling in the jungles or bushes on the banks of a river. Compare Jeremiah 49:19; Jeremiah 50:44. The comparison here would, therefore, denote any powerful and fierce monarch or people that might be compared with such a fierce beast. There is no particular allusion to Egypt, as being the abode of the crocodile, but the reference is more general, and the language would imply that fierce and savage people - kings who might be compared with wild beasts that had their homes in the deep and inaccessible thickets - would come bending with the tribute money, with pieces of silver, in token of their subjection to God.

The multitude of the bulls - Fierce and warlike kings, who might be compared with bulls. See the notes at Psalm 22:12.

With the calves of the people - That is, the nations that might be compared with the calves of such wild herds - fierce, savage, powerful. Their leaders might be compared with the bulls; the people - the multitudes - were like the wild and lawless herd of young ones that accompanied them. The general idea is, that the most wild and savage nations would come and acknowledge their subjection to God, and would express that subjection by an appropriate offering.

Till every one submit himself with pieces of silver - The word here rendered "submit" means properly to tread with the feet, to trample upon; and then, in the form used here, to let oneself be trampled under feet, to prostrate oneself; to humble oneself. Here it means that they would come and submissively offer silver as a tribute. That is, they would acknowledge the authority of God, and become subject to him.

Scatter thou the people that delight in war - Margin, "He scattereth." The margin expresses the sense most accurately. The reference is to God. The psalmist sees the work already accomplished. In anticipation of the victory of God over his foes, he sees them already discomfited and put to flight. The mighty hosts which had been arrayed against the people of God are dissipated and driven asunder; or, in other words, a complete victory is obtained. The people that "delighted in war" were those that had a pleasure in arraying themselves against the people of God - the enemies that had sought their overthrow.

Verse 31

Princes shall come out of Egypt - That is, Shall come and acknowledge the true God. Egypt is referred to here as one of the most prominent of the foreign nations then known; and the idea is, that the distinguished men of foreign nations - the rulers and princes of the world - would come and submit themselves to God, and be united to his people. The word rendered "princes" here - חשמנים *chashmaniym* - occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. It means, according to Gesenius (Lexicon), the fat; then, the rich; the opulent; nobles. It is the word from which the name "Hasmonean" (or Asmonean), which was given by the Jews to the Maccabees, or Jewish princes in the time of the Jewish history between the Old and New Testaments, is supposed to have been derived. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Syriac, render it "legates" or "ambassadors." Luther renders it "princes." The reference is undoubtedly to men of station or rank.

Ethiopia - Hebrew, "Cush." On the meaning of this word in the Scriptures, see the notes at Isaiah 11:11.

Shall soon stretch out her hands - literally, "Shall make its hands to run." The expression denotes the eagerness or haste with which it would be done. The act is an act of supplication, and the reference is to prayer.

Unto God - To the true God. The nation will supplicate the mercy of God, or will worship him. The idea, in accordance with that in the previous verses, is, that the country here referred to would become subject to the true God. It is a view of the future; of the time when the nations would be converted to the true faith, or would acknowledge the true God. Whether this refers to the Cush in Arabia, or to the Cush in Africa (Ethiopia as commonly understood), it is a description of what will yet occur, for all these lands, and all other lands, will be converted to the true religion, and will stretch out their hands in supplication and prayer, and will find acceptance with God. Even Africa - wronged, degraded, oppressed, injured Africa - will do it; and the worship of her children will be as acceptable to the Universal Father as that of any other of the races of mankind that dwell on the earth.

Verse 32

Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth - That is - that acknowledge the true God - celebrate his praise. The psalmist sees the conversion of the world to God to be so certain an event that he calls on all nations to join in the song.

Verse 33

To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens - The highest heavens. The heaven of heaven would properly mean the heaven above that which is heaven to us; that is, the heaven above the sky. This is represented as the special dwelling-place of God. The Jews were accustomed to speak of three heavens:

(a) The aerial heaven, or the region above us, where the birds fly, and the winds blow;

(b) the starry heavens, or the firmament in which the stars are fixed; and

(c) the heaven above all, the abode of God and of angels.

The word "rideth" here means that he appears there as a conqueror, or that he moves in majesty and glory. See the notes at Psalm 18:10.

Which were of old - The words "of old" refer here to the heavens, and denote their antiquity. He rides upon those ancient heavens. He occupies a position above those ancient works of his power.

Lo, he doth send out his voice - Margin, as in Hebrew, "give." The reference is to thunder. The design of this is to increase the impression of his majesty and power.

And that a mighty voice - See the notes at Psalm 29:3.

Verse 34

Ascribe ye strength unto God - literally, "give." That is, Acknowledge him as a God of power. Recognise his omnipotence in your worship. See the notes at Psalm 29:1.

His excellency is over Israel - His majesty; his glory; his protecting care. The idea is, that his glorious character - his majesty - was manifested particularly in his protection of his people.

And his strength is in the clouds - Margin, "heavens." The Hebrew word rather means "clouds." The idea is, that while his character as Protector was evinced particularly in his care of his people, his "power" was particularly seen in the clouds - the storm - the thunder - the lightning. Thus, all the manifestations of his character, alike in nature, and toward his people, are adapted to produce a deep and solemn impression in regard to his majesty and glory, or to lay the just foundation of praise.

Verse 35

O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places - The places where thou dwellest, and from which thou dost manifest thyself. That is, The manifestations which thou dost make of thyself when thou seemest to come forth from thine abode are "terrible," or are suited to fill the mind with awe. Compare Psalm 45:4, note; Psalm 65:5, note; Psalm 66:5, note.

The God of Israel - The God who is adored by Israel, or by his true people; our God.

Is he that giveth strength and power unto his people - He is not weak and feeble. He is able to protect them. He shows that he can gird them with strength; that he can defend them; that he can sustain them in the trials of life. The God whom they acknowledge as their God is not one whose strength fails, or who is seen to be feeble and powerless when his aid is needed. He is fully equal to all their needs, and they never trust him in vain. "Blessed be God." For all that he is, for all that he has done. This is the language of joy and praise in view of the contemplation of his character as depicted in the psalm. At the close of every right contemplation of his character, his government, his plans, his claims, his law, his gospel, the heart that is right will say, "Blessed be such a God." To one endowed with "such" attributes, praise - everlasting praise - is due.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 69

Introduction

This psalm is said in the title to be a psalm of David, but on what occasion it was composed is not there intimated, nor can it be determined from the psalm itself. There is nothing "in" the psalm which is inconsistent with the supposition that it was composed by David; and, in fact, it has, in many respects, a strong resemblance to not a few of his undoubted compositions, as Psalm 6:1-10; Psalm 42:1-11. On the expression in the title "To the chief Musician," see Notes in the Introduction to Psalm 4:1-8. On the words "upon Shoshannim," see the notes on the Title to Psalm 69:34-36 demonstrate that it must have been written in the time of the exile. Rosenmuller coincides with that opinion in regard to those verses, but supposes that they were added to the psalm (as originally composed) by some later author. It will be found, however, on examination of these verses, that there is nothing in them inconsistent with the supposition that the entire psalm was composed by David. The psalm evidently pertains to an individual sufferer; a man who regarded himself as suffering in the cause of religion, or on account of his zeal for the service of God. It is this fact which is laid at the foundation of the psalmist's prayer for the divine intervention. The author is a sufferer in the cause of God and of truth, and he beseeches God, in whose cause he suffers, on that account to interpose in his behalf.

There are several passages in the psalm which are applied in the New Testament to the Messiah and his times; Psalm 69:9, compare John 2:17, and Romans 15:3; Psalm 69:4, compare John 15:25; Psalm 69:21, compare Matthew 27:34, Matthew 27:48 (Mark 15:23, and John 19:29); Psalm 69:25, compare Matthew 23:38, and Acts 1:20. These passages, however, are of so "general" a character that they do not seem to have been designed to refer exclusively to the Messiah, or even to have had "any" original reference to him. The language is such that it "would accurately describe" the events to which it is applied; and the fact that the language is quoted in this manner in the New Testament history does not prove that the psalm had any original reference to the Messiah.

In the psalm, the sufferer first Psalm 69:1-6 describes his condition; he then Psalm 69:7-13 represents himself as suffering in the cause of God or of

religion; then Psalm 69:14-18, prays to be delivered from these troubles. In Psalm 69:19-21 he again adverts to his sufferings with a more explicit reference to their cause, the malice of his enemies; and then Psalm 69:22-28 prays that his enemies may be destroyed. He anticipates that his prayer will be heard, and that this will have a favorable effect on others, leading them to praise God Psalm 69:29-33; and this leads him to look forward to the general prosperity of Zion - to the fact that Zion will be delivered out of all its troubles - as laying the foundation for universal praise Psalm 69:34-36.

Verse 1

Save me, O God - That is, Interpose and deliver me from the dangers which have come upon me.

For the waters are come in unto my soul - So as to endanger my life. Waters, deep, raging, overwhelming, are images of calamity or danger. See the notes at Psalm 32:6. Compare Psalm 42:7.

Verse 2

I sink in deep mire - Margin, as in Hebrew, "the mire of the depth." This would denote either mire which was itself so deep that one could not extricate himself from it; or, mire found in a deep place, as at the bottom of a pit. Compare the notes at Psalm 40:2. An illustration of this might be drawn from the case of Joseph, cast by his brethren into a deep pit Genesis 37:24; or from the case of Jeremiah, thrown into a deep dungeon: "And they let down Jeremiah with cords; and in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire," Jeremiah 38:6.

Where there is no standing - No solid ground; nothing for the foot to rest on. "I am come into deep waters." Margin, as in Hebrew, "depth of waters." That is, waters where he could not touch the bottom - an image of some peril that threatened his life.

Where the floods overflow me - The waters. They break over my head. My life is "in danger."

Verse 3

I am weary of my crying - The word "crying" here does not mean weeping, or shedding tears, but calling upon God for help. He had grown weary; his strength had been exhausted in the act of calling upon God to assist him. See the notes at Psalm 6:6. This was an instance where one had called so long on God, and prayed so much and so earnestly, that his strength was gone. Compare Matthew 26:41.

My throat is dried - Or, "is parched up." The Hebrew word denotes to burn; to be enkindled; and then, to be inflamed. Here it means that by the excessive exertion of his voice, his throat had become parched, so that he could not speak.

Mine eyes fail - That is, become dim from exhaustion. I have looked so long in that one direction that the power of vision begins to fail, and I see nothing clearly. See the notes at Psalm 6:7. Compare Job 17:7; Psalm 31:9; Psalm 38:10.

While I wait for my God - That is, by continued "looking" to God. The word "wait" is not used here, nor is it generally in the Bible, as it is now with us, in the sense of looking for "future" interposition, or of doing nothing ourselves in expectation of what "may" occur; but it is used in the sense of looking to God alone; of exercising dependence on him; of seeking his aid. This is indeed connnected with the ordinary idea of abiding his will, but it is also an "active" state of mind - a state expressive of intense interest and desire. See the notes at Psalm 62:5.

Verse 4

They that hate me without a cause - Without any just reason; without any provocation on my part. There were many such in the case of David, for to those who rose up against him in the time of Saul, and to Absalom also, he had given no real occasion of offence. An expression similar to the one used here occurs in Psalm 35:19. See the notes at that passage. The "language" is applied to the Saviour John 15:25, not as having had original reference to him, but as language which received its most perfect fulfillment in the treatment which he received from his enemies. See the notes at John 15:25.

Are more than the hairs of mine head - The number is so great that it cannot be estimated.

They that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty - literally, "More than the hairs of my head are my haters falsely (those who hate me falsely); strong are those destroying me; my enemies." The idea is, that those who were numbered among his foes without any just provocation on his part were so numerous and strong that he could not contend with them.

Then I restored that which I took not away - Prof. Alexander renders this, "What I did not rob, then must I restore." This seems to have a proverbial cast, and the idea is, that under this pressure of circumstances -

borne down by numbers - he was compelled to give up what he had not taken away from others. They regarded and treated him as a bad man - as if he had been a robber; and they compelled him to give up what he possessed, "as if" he had no right to it, or "as if" he had obtained it by robbery. This does not seem to refer to anything that was "voluntary" on his part - as if, for the sake of peace, he had proposed to give up that to which they had no claim, or to surrender his just rights, but to the act of compulsion by which he was "forced" to surrender what he had, "as if" he had been a public offender. How far it is proper to yield to an unjust claim for the sake of peace, or to act "as if" we had done wrong, rather than to have controversy or strife, is a point which, if this interpretation is correct, is not settled by this passage. It seems here to have been merely a question of "power."

Verse 5

O God, thou knowest my foolishness - The errors and follies of my life. Though conscious of innocence in this case - though he felt that his enemies hated him "without cause," and that they took what belonged to him and not to them, yet he was not insensible to the fact that he was a sinner, and he was not unwilling to confess before God, that, however conscious of uprightness he might be in his dealings toward people, yet toward God, he was a sinful man. From him he deserved all that had come upon him. Indeed the very calamities which had been permitted to come upon him were proof to his own mind that he was a sinner, and served, as they were doubtless designed, to turn his mind to that fact, and to humble him. The effect of calamities coming upon us, as reminding us of the fact that we are sinners, is often referred to in the Psalms. See Psalm 38:2-4; Psalm 40:12.

And my sins are not hid from thee - Margin, "guiltiness." The word used here has always attached to it the idea of "guilt." The meaning is, that God knew all his life; and that however unjust the conduct of "men" toward him might be when they treated him as if he had wronged them, yet considered as a part of the dealings of God, or as having been suffered to come upon him from God, all that had occurred was right, for it was a proper expression of the divine displeasure against his sins. We may feel that we have not wronged our fellow-men; yet even the treatment which we receive from them, however unjust so far as they are concerned, may be regarded as deserved by us at the hand of God, and as proper on his part as

an expression of his displeasure for our transgressions against him, and as a proof that we are sinners. Trial never comes to us from any quarter except as founded on the fact that we are sinners; and even where there is entire innocence toward our fellow-men, God may make use of their passions to rebuke and discipline us for our sins toward himself.

Verse 6

Let not them that wait on thee - Those who worship thee; those who are thy true friends. True piety is often, in the Scriptures, represented as waiting on the Lord. See Psalm 25:3, Psalm 25:5; Psalm 37:9; Isaiah 40:31.

Be ashamed for my sake - On account of me; or, in consequence of what I do. Let me not be suffered to do anything that would make them ashamed of me, or ashamed to have it known that I belong to their number. I know that I am a sinner; I know that judgments come justly on me; I know that if left to myself I shall fall into sin, and shall dishonor religion; and I pray, therefore, that I may be kept from acting out the depravity of my heart, and bringing dishonor on the cause that I profess to love. No one who knows the evil of his own heart can fail to see the propriety of this prayer; no one who remembers how often people high in the church, and zealous in their professed piety, fall into sin, and disgrace their profession, can help feeling that what has happened to others "may" happen to him also, and that he has need of special prayer, and special grace, that he may go down into the grave at last without having brought dishonor upon religion.

Let not those that seek thee - Another phrase to denote people of true piety - as those who are "seeking" after God; that is, who are desirous of understanding his character, and obtaining his favor.

Be confounded for my sake - Let them not feel "disgraced" in me; let them not feel it a dishonor to have it said that I am one of their number, or that I profess to be united to them.

Verse 7

Because for thy sake I have borne reproach - In thy cause; in defense of thy truth; because I have professed to be a friend of God. The true reason why these calamities have come upon me is that I have been thy professed friend, and have endeavored to do my duty to thee. The reproach connected with religion in a world of sin, or where true religion is hated, has fallen on me.

Shame hath covered my face - The idea here is not that he had himself been ashamed of religion or of the service of God, but that he had suffered

shame, derision, reproach among people for his professed attachment to the truth. Compare Psalm 44:15-16.

Verse 8

I am become a stranger unto my brethren - That is, They treat me as they would a stranger; as one in whom they have no interest, and whom they regard with no friendship. Compare the notes at Psalm 31:11.

And an alien unto my mother‘s children - A foreigner; one of another tribe or nation; one to whom they were bound by no tie of relationship. The allusion in the language “unto my mother‘s children” is intended to denote the most intimate relationship. In families where a man had many wives, as was common among the Hebrews, the nearest relationship would be denoted by being of the same “mother” rather than of the same “father.” See the notes at Psalm 50:20. The same thing occurs also where polygamy is not practiced, in cases where a man has married more wives than one. The idea of the psalmist here, therefore, is, that his nearest relatives treated him as if he were a stranger and a foreigner. Compare Job 19:13-19.

Verse 9

For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up - My zeal - my ardor - in the cause of religion (that is, of thy pure worship) has been so great as to consume me. It has been like a devouring fire within me. Zeal is represented under the idea of heat - as it is in the Greek language; and the characteristics of heat or fire are here applied to it. This passage is quoted in John 2:17, and applied to the Saviour, not as having had originally a reference to him, but as language which would accurately describe his character. See the notes at that passage.

And the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me - This, too, is applied, in the same way, to the Saviour, by the Apostle Paul, in Romans 15:3. See the notes at that passage.

Verse 10

When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting - The words “and chastened” are not in the original. The literal translation would be, “And I wept (away) my soul with fasting;” that is, I gave myself so much to fasting accompanied with weeping, that my strength was exhausted. This refers to his acts of devotion; to his endeavors to discipline his soul so as to lead a strictly religious life.

That was to my reproach - This may either mean that they accused him of hypocrisy and insincerity; or, that they charged him with folly for being

so religious, so strict, so self-sacrificing, so serious - perhaps they would say, so superstitious, so gloomy, so fanatical. The latter best accords with the connection, since it was for his "religion" mainly that they reproached him, Psalm 69:7-9.

Verse 11

I made sackcloth also my garment - I put on sackcloth. This was often done as expressive of grief and sorrow. See Psalm 30:11, note; Psalm 35:13, note. Compare Isaiah 22:12; Daniel 9:3. In the case here referred to, this was an act of religion; an expression of penitence and humiliation.

And I became a proverb to them - A jest; a subject of derision; a by-word. They ridiculed me for it. Compare 1 Kings 9:7.

Verse 12

They that sit in the gate speak against me - The gates of cities were places of concourse; places where business was transacted; places where courts were frequently held. See the notes at Job 29:7. Compare Isaiah 14:31; Isaiah 28:6; Psalm 9:14. Calvin supposes that as the gates were the places where the judges sat to administer justice, the meaning here is that magistrates, or those who were high in rank and power, joined in the cry of reproach against him. The more probable interpretation, however, is, that he was subject to the reproach of those who were gathered around these places - the people of business, and the idlers who were assembled there; or, as we should say, that he was the subject of "towntalk."

And I was the song of the drunkards - Margin, as in the Hebrew, "drinkers of strong drink." They made ballads or low songs about me. They selected me for an example in their drunken songs. David was not alone in this. It has not been uncommon that the songs of revellers and drunkards have been designed to turn piety and the pious into derision. Compare, alas! some of the songs of Burns. See Job 30:9, note; Psalm 35:15-16, notes.

Verse 13

But as for me - In respect to my conduct and my feelings in these circumstances, and under this treatment.

My prayer is unto thee - I indulge in no reproaches of others, and no recriminations. I do not permit myself to indulge in any revengeful feelings. I give myself to prayer. I look to God alone. I keep up my devotions, I maintain my habits of religion, notwithstanding their reproaches, and revilings. I do not allow these things to alter my course of life. Compare the notes at Daniel 6:10.

In an acceptable time - A time that is well-pleasing to thee; a time when thou wilt hear me. See Isaiah 61:2; 2 Corinthians 6:2. This implies

(a) that he had come to God when he was "disposed" to hear; and

(b) that he had heard him, and had answered his requests.

While others mocked, he continued to pray, and the Lord heard him. No time for prayer can be more "acceptable" to God than when others are reproaching us because we are his friends.

In the multitude of thy mercy hear me - In the abundance of thy mercy; or, in thy abounding compassion. This was the substance of his prayer.

In the truth of thy salvation - In the exercise of that faithfulness on which salvation depends; or which is manifested in the salvation of people. He prayed that God would show himself faithful to the promises which he had made to those who were seeking salvation.

Verse 14

Deliver me out of the mire - Out of my troubles and calamities. See Psalm 69:1-2.

And let me not sink - As in, mire. Let me not be overwhelmed by my sorrows.

Let me be delivered from them that hate me - All my enemies. Let me be saved from their machinations and devices.

And out of the deep waters - See Psalm 69:1-2. From my troubles.

Verse 15

Let not the waterflood overflow me - The stream; the volume of waters. The idea is that of a flood or stream rolling along, that threatened to drown him.

Neither let the deep swallow me up - The abyss; the deep waters.

And let not the pit shut her mouth upon me - In his anguish and distress he passes here from the idea of running streams, and deep waters, to that of a well, pit, or cavern - representing himself as "in" that pit, and praying that it might not be closed upon him, leaving him in darkness and in mire, from which he could not then escape. The general idea in all these expressions is the same - that of overwhelming calamities from which he prayed to be delivered.

Verse 16

Hear me, O L RD, for thy lovingkindness is good - Thy mercy - thy favor - is good; that is, it is ample, abundant, great: it delights in deeds of

mercy; in acts of benevolence. This was the only ground of his plea; and this was enough. Compare Psalm 63:3.

Turn unto me - Incline thine ear unto me; turn not away, but be favorable to me.

According to the multitude of thy tender mercies - See the notes at Psalm 51:1. He felt that he had occasion for the exercise of "all" the mercy of God; that the case was one which could be reached only by the exercise of the highest kindness and compassion.

Verse 17

And hide not thy face from thy servant - See the notes at Psalm 27:9.

For I am in trouble - In the midst of dangers and sorrows. Literally, "there is trouble upon me."

Hear me speedily - Margin, as in Hebrew, "Make haste to hear me." That is, Grant me without delay what I ask. The case is one of urgent necessity. I "must" have relief or I shall perish. It is not wrong to ask God to interpose at once in our behalf when we are in trouble, though it is our duty to be patient and resigned if his interposition is delayed, for he may have important ends to accomplish by our continuing to suffer. In our distress on account of sin also, it is right to plead with him to interpose "at once," and to relieve us by forgiveness. In this respect we are not to be contented with delay; we are to cast ourselves upon his mercy, and to plead for immediate pardon, for as it is our only safety, so it is for the honor of God that we should be forgiven, and that we should not continue in a state of guilt. An afflicted child of God will be safe in the final issue, whether he is relieved at once, or whether he is suddenly cut off by death, or whether he continues to suffer for even many years; but an unpardoned sinner is "not" safe for a moment, and if he should be cut off, unforgiven, even when under the deepest conviction for sin, he would perish. Every consideration, therefore, makes it proper that he should plead for forgiveness at once, and ask that God would not "delay" to show him mercy.

Verse 18

Draw nigh unto my soul - To me - for my life is in danger.

And redeem it - Ransom it; save it from ruin. See the notes at Isaiah 43:3; notes at Isaiah 44:22.

Deliver me, because of mine enemies - Because they are so numerous, so powerful, and so determined on my destruction. Compare Psalm 13:4.

Verse 19

Thou hast known my reproach - The reproach that has come upon me; the shame and contempt which I am called to endure. God had seen all this; and the psalmist appeals to him as having seen it, as a reason why he should now interpose and save him.

And my shame, and my dishonor - These are different words to express the same idea. They are accumulated here to denote the "greatness" of his distress. In other words, shame and reproach bad come upon him in every possible form.

Mine adversaries are all before thee - All who persecute and oppose me are constantly in thine eye. Thou knowest who they are; thou seest all that they do. Nothing in their conduct is concealed from thee. God, therefore, could take an accurate view of his troubles, and could see all the reasons which existed for interfering in his behalf.

Verse 20

Reproach hath broken my heart - The reproaches, the calumnies, the aspersions, the slanders of others, have crushed me. I am not able to bear up under them; I fail under the burden. Distress may become so great that life may sink under it, for many die of what is called "a broken heart." Undeserved reproaches will be as likely to produce this result on a sensitive heart as any form of suffering; and there are thousands who are crushed to the earth by such reproaches.

And I am full of heaviness - Or, I am sick; I am weak; I am ill at ease. My strength is gone.

And I looked for some to take pity - Margin, "to lament with me." The meaning of the Hebrew word is to pity; to commiserate; to show compassion. Job 2:11; Job 42:11; Isaiah 51:19; Jeremiah 16:5.

But there was none - There was no one whose heart seemed to be touched with compassion in the case; none who sympathized with me.

And for comforters - For those who would show sympathy for me; who would evince a friendly feeling in my distress.

But I found none - He felt that he was utterly forsaken by mankind. There is no feeling of desolation like that.

Verse 21

They gave me also - My enemies; all persons around me. No one would show me even so much kindness as to give me food when I was hungry, or drink when I was thirsty. They utterly forsook me; they left me to die unpitied. Nay, they did more than this. When I was perishing with hunger,

they not only refused to give me wholesome food, but they mocked my sufferings by giving me a bitter and poisonous herb for food, and vinegar for my drink.

Gall for my meat - For my food. Or, they gave me this "instead" of wholesome food. The word here rendered "gall" - ראֹשׁ *rô'sh* - is the same "in form" which is commonly rendered "head," and occurs in this sense very often in the Scriptures. It is also used to denote a "poisonous plant," perhaps from the idea that the plant referred to was distinguished for, or remarkable for its "head" - as the poppy; and "then" the name may have been given also to some other similar plants. The word then comes to denote poison; venom; anything poisonous; and then, anything very bad-tasted; "bitter." It is rendered "gall," as here, in Deuteronomy 29:18; Jeremiah 8:14; Jeremiah 9:15; Jeremiah 23:15; Lamentations 3:5, Lamentations 3:19; Amos 6:12; "venom" in Deuteronomy 32:33; "poison," in Job 20:16; and "hemlock," in Hosea 10:4. In Deuteronomy 29:18, it is rendered, in the margin, "rosh," or "a poisonful herb." It does not occur elsewhere with any such signification. It may not be possible to determine precisely what is denoted here by the word, but it undoubtedly refers to some poisonous, bitter, deadly, stupefying substance given to a sufferer, "instead" of that which would be wholesome food, or suited to sustain life.

And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink - Instead of giving me pure water, they gave me sour wine - vinegar - that which would not slake my thirst, or which would not answer the purpose of drink. The form of trial here referred to is that where one is dying of thirst, and where, instead of giving water to assuage the thirst, one should give, in mockery, that which could not be drunk, or which would answer none of the purposes required. The word translated "vinegar" - חמץ *chômets* - is rendered in the ancient versions "sour grapes," but the proper signification here seems to be vinegar - the usual meaning of the word. What is here stated to have been done to David was also done to the dying Saviour, though without any intimation that the passage here had an original reference to him - or that what was done to him was intended to be a fulfillment of what is here said. See Matthew 27:34, Matthew 27:48; Mark 15:23; John 19:29. In the case of the Saviour, they first gave him vinegar mingled with myrrh - a usual custom in reference to those who were crucified - for the purpose of deadening the pain, or stupefying the sufferer. Matthew 27:34. At a subsequent part of the crucifixion they gave him vinegar, extended to him in

a sponge affixed to a reed. Matthew 27:48; John 19:29. This was for a different purpose. It was to allay his thirst, and it seems (as the former may have been) to have been an act of kindness or compassion on the part of those who were appointed to crucify him. The former he refused to take, because he came to suffer; the latter he just tasted as he died. John 19:30. The "coincidence" in the cases of David and the Saviour was remarkable; but in the case of the Saviour no further use is made of what occurred to David than to employ the "language" which he employed to describe his own sufferings. The one was not, in any proper sense, a "type" of the other; nor does the language in the psalm refer to the Saviour.

Verse 22-23

Let their table become a snare before them - These verses are quoted by Paul Romans 11:9-10 as descriptive of the character of persons in his time, or as "language" which would express what he desired to say. See the passage explained at length in the notes at Romans 11:9-10. The whole passage is a prayer that they might receive a proper recompense for what they had done. The word "table" here means the table at which they were accustomed to eat. As they refused food to a hungry man, the prayer is, that they might find the recompense for their conduct "in that very line;" or that, as they refused food to the hungry, they might find "their" food a "snare" to them. That is, Let it be the means of punishing them for their not giving wholesome food to the hungry, or for their offering poisonous herbs to a starving man. The word "snare" here means unexpected danger; danger sprung suddenly upon them - as a snare is upon a wild beast.

And that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap - Much of this is supplied by the translators. The literal rendering would be, "And to those at peace (or secure) a trap." The word here rendered "welfare" is the plural form of the word meaning "peace," and may denote those who feel that they are at peace; that they are secure; that they are in no danger. The ancient versions give it the sense of "requitals," that is, a recompence for their transgressions; but the other signification best accords with the connection. The word "trap" is usually applied to the devices for capturing wild beasts, and the meaning is, "Let the recompence come suddenly upon them, while they think themselves at peace, or when they are surrounded by all the comforts and luxuries of life." This prayer is such as occurs frequently in the Psalms. It cannot be "proved" that it was uttered in a malignant spirit, or that anything more is intended by it than

that the psalmist desired that justice might be done to all people - an object which all magistrates, and all good citizens, should pray for.

Psalm 69:23

Let their eyes be darkened … - See the notes at Romans 11:10.

And make their loins continually to shake - As under a heavy burden. The apostle Romans 11:10 varies the language, but retains the idea: "and bow down their back alway."

Verse 24

Pour out thine indignation upon them - That is, Punish them for their sins; or, do justice to them.

And let thy wrathful anger - literally, "the burning of thy wrath;" glow of anger; burning wrath. See Numbers 25:4; Numbers 32:14, 1 Samuel 28:18. This is undoubtedly a petition that God would visit them with the severity of his indignation; or, it expresses the belief of the psalmist that they "deserved" such tokens of his displeasure.

Take hold of them - Seize upon them; overtake them when they expect to escape.

Verse 25

Let their habitation be desolate - Margin, "their palace." The Hebrew word means properly a wall; then, a fortress or castle; and then it means also a nomadic encampment, a rustic village, a farm-hamlet. The word conveys the idea of an "enclosure," with special reference to an encampment, or a collection of tents. The Septuagint renders it here ἔπαυλις *epaulis* meaning a place to pass the night in, especially for flocks and herds. The Hebrew word - טירה *ṭîyrâh* - is rendered "castles" in Genesis 25:16; Numbers 31:10; 1 Chronicles 6:54; "palaces" in Ezekiel 25:4; "rows" in Ezekiel 46:23; and "habitation" in this place. It does not occur elsewhere. Here it means their "home," - their place of abode, - but with no particular reference to the "kind" of home, whether a palace, a castle, or an encampment. The idea is, that the place which they had occupied, or where they had dwelt, would be made vacant. They would be removed, and the place would be solitary and forsaken. It is equivalent to a prayer that they might be destroyed.

And let none dwell in their tents - Margin, as in Hebrew, "let there not be a dweller." That is, Let their tents where they had dwelt be wholly forsaken. This passage is quoted in Acts 1:20, as applicable to Judas. See the notes at that passage.

Verse 26

For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten - That is, instead of pitying one who is afflicted of God, or showing compassion for him, they "add" to his sorrows by their own persecutions. The psalmist was suffering as under the hand of God. He needed sympathy from others in his trials. Instead of that, however, he found only reproaches, opposition, persecution, calumny. There was an entire want of sympathy and kindness. There was a disposition to take advantage of the fact that he was suffering at the hand of God, to increase his sorrows in all ways in which they could do it.

And they talk to the grief of those - What they say adds to their sorrow. They speak of the character of those who are afflicted; they allege that the affliction is the punishment of some crime which they have committed; they take advantage of any expressions of impatience which they may let fall in their affliction to charge them with being of a rebellious spirit, or regard it as proof that they are destitute of all true piety. See the notes at Psalm 41:5-8. It was this which added so much to the affliction of Job. His professed friends, instead of sympathizing with him, endeavored to prove that the fact that he suffered so much at the hand of God demonstrated that he was a hypocrite; and the expressions of impatience which he uttered in his trial, instead of leading them to sympathize with him, only tended to confirm them in this belief.

Whom thou hast wounded - literally, as in the margin, "thy wounded." That is, of those whom "thou" hast afflicted. The reference is to the psalmist himself as afflicted by God, while, at the same time, he makes the remark general by saying that this was their character; this was what they were accustomed to do.

Verse 27

Add iniquity unto their iniquity - Margin, "punishment of iniquity." The literal rendering is, "Give iniquity upon their iniquity." Luther understands this as a prayer that "sin may be made a punishment for sin;" that is, that they may, as a punishment for their former sins, be left to commit still more aggravated crimes, and thus draw on themselves severer punishment. So Rosenmuller renders it, "Suffer them to accumulate sins by rushing from one sin to another, until their crimes are matured, and their destined punishment comes upon them." An idea similar to this occurs in Romans 1:28, where God is represented as having "given the pagan over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient"

d **fit, or proper - "**because they did not like to retain him in their knowledge." Perhaps this is the most natural interpretation here, though another has been suggested which the original will bear. According to that, there is an allusion here to the double sense of the equivocal term rendered "iniquity" - עון *ʿâvôn* - which properly denotes sin as such, or in itself considered, but which sometimes seems to denote sin in its consequences or effects. This latter is the interpretation adopted by Prof. Alexander. Thus understood, it is a prayer that God would add, or give, to their sin that which sin deserved; or, in other words, that he would punish it "as" it deserved.

And let them not come into thy righteousness - Let them not be treated "as" righteous; as those who are regarded by "thee" as righteous. Let them be treated as they deserve. This is the same as praying that a murderer may not be treated as an innocent man; a burglar, as if he were a man of peace; or a dishonest man, as if he were honest. Let people be regarded and treated as they "are in fact;" or, as they deserve to be treated. It seems difficult to see why this prayer may not be offered with propriety, and with a benevolent heart - for to bring this about is what all officers of justice are endeavoring to accomplish.

Verse 28

Let them be blotted out of the book of the living - That is, Let them cease to live; let them not be numbered among living people; let them be cut off. This language is taken from the custom of registering the names of persons in a list, roll, or catalogue, Exodus 32:32. See the notes at Philemon 4:3. Compare Revelation 3:5. The language has no reference to the future world; it is "not" a prayer that they should not be saved.

And not be written with the righteous - Let them not be registered or numbered with the righteous. As they "are" wicked, so let them be numbered; so regarded. Let them be reckoned and treated as they are. They deserve to be punished; so let them be. All that this "necessarily" means is, that they should not be treated as righteous, when they were in fact "not" righteous. It cannot be shown that the author of the psalm would not have desired that they should "become" righteous, and that they should "then" be regarded and treated as such. All that the language here implies is, a desire that they should be regarded and treated as they were; that is, as they deserved. The language is evidently derived from the idea so common in the Old Testament that length of days would be the reward of a righteous

life (see Job 5:26; Proverbs 3:2; Proverbs 9:11; Proverbs 10:27), and that the wicked would be cut off in the midst of their days. See the notes at Psalm 55:23.

Verse 29

But I am poor and sorrowful - I am afflicted and suffering. The word here rendered "poor" often means "afflicted."

Let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high - Let thy help raise me up from my low condition, and exalt me to a place of safety.

Verse 30

I will praise the name of God with a song - As the result of my deliverance, I will "compose" a song or a psalm especially adapted to the occasion, and suited to express and perpetuate my feelings. It was in such circumstances that a large part of the psalms were composed; and since others besides the psalmist are often in such circumstances, the Book of Psalms becomes permanently useful in the church. It is not always necessary now to "compose" a song or hymn to express our feelings in the circumstances in which we are placed in life - for we may commonly find such sacred songs ready at our hand; yet no one can doubt the propriety of adding to the number of such by those who can do it, or of increasing the compositions for praise in the church in view of the ever-varied experience of the children of God.

And will magnify him - Will exalt his name; will endeavor to make it "seem" greater; or, will spread it further abroad.

With thanksgiving - I will use expressions of thanks to make his name more widely known.

Verse 31

This also shall please the Lord - This will be more acceptable to the Lord.

Better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs - Better than a burnt sacrifice - horns, and hoofs, and all. The original here is, "horning and hoofing;" that is, an ox whose horns were fully grown, and whose hoofs were compact and solid; a perfect animal in its kind, offered whole on the altar. The psalmist does not say that such an offering would "not" be acceptable to the Lord, but that the offering of the heart - the sacrifice of praise - would be "more" acceptable than any such offering in itself considered. This sentiment accords with the common language of the Old

Testament. See the notes at Psalm 40:6-8. Compare Psalm 51:16-17; 1 Samuel 15:22.

Verse 32

The humble shall see this, and be glad - Margin, "The meek." That is, Others who are thus afflicted - the poor, the needy, the oppressed, the sad - shall be made acquainted with what has been done in my behalf, and shall take courage, or be strengthened. They will learn to trust that God will also interpose in "their" troubles, and bring them out of "their" distresses.

And your heart shall live that seek God - Shall be revived; shall be encouraged, strengthened, animated.

Verse 33

For the Lord heareth the poor - The needy; the humble; the unprotected. The reference is to those who are in circumstances of want and distress. The truth stated here is in accordance with all that is said in the Scriptures. Compare the notes at Psalm 34:6. See also Job 5:15; Psalm 10:14; Psalm 12:5; Psalm 35:10; Psalm 68:10.

And despiseth not his prisoners - He does not overlook them; he does not treat them as if they were worthy of no attention or regard. The word "prisoners" here may refer to those who are, as it were, bound by affliction under his own providential dealings; or to those who are oppressed, or are held as captives, or are thrown into prison, on his account. The particular reference here seems to be to David, and to those associated with him, who were straitened or deprived of their freedom in the cause of God.

Verse 34

Let the heaven and earth praise him - All things; all above and all below.

The seas - The waters - the oceans. This is in accordance with what often occurs in the Scriptures, when all things, animate and inanimate, are called on to praise God. Compare Psalm 148:1-14.

And everything that moveth therein - Margin, as in Hebrew, "creepeth." Compare the notes at Psalm 8:8. See also the notes at Isaiah 55:12.

Verse 35

For God will save Zion - See the notes at Psalm 51:18. That is, he will save his people; he will protect and defend them. This expresses the confident assurance of the psalmist that, whatever might be the existing

troubles, God would not forsake his people, but would interpose in their behalf.

And will build the cities of Judah - Though they may now lie waste, or be desolate. See the notes at Psalm 51:18. The general idea here is, that God would be favorable to his land; that he would give success and prosperity to his people; that he would manifest his mercy to them. There is no necessity from the language used here to suppose, as DeWette and Rosenmuller do, that there is an allusion to the time of the exile, and to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon, and that consequently either the whole psalm must have been composed at that time - or (as Rosenmuller supposes) that the last verses of the psalm were added by a later hand, and that thus the whole psalm was adapted to the time of the exile. From Psalm 69:9 it would seem that, when the psalm was composed, the place of public worship was still standing, and the language here, as in Psalm 51:18, is so general that it might have been employed at any time.

That they may dwell there … - That his people may dwell there according to the ancient promise. The idea is, that he would be the protector of his people, and that all his promises to them would be fulfilled.

Verse 36

The seed also of his servants - The children or the descendants of his people.

Shall inherit it - Shall continue to dwell in it.

And they that love his name - They that love him; they that are his true friends.

Shall dwell therein - They shall be safe there; they shall find there a home. This indicates the confident belief of the author of the psalm that the favor of God would be shown to the land. Whatever might be the present troubles, his faith was unwavering - his confidence unshaken - in regard to the faithfulness of God. Palestine - the promised land - would still be the inheritance of those who loved God, and the interests of those who dwelt there would be secure. As applied to the church of God now, the idea is, that it is safe; that it will always be under the divine protection; and that it will be the loved and the secure abode of all that "love the name" of their God and Saviour.

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PSALM 70

Introduction

This psalm bears to the closing part of Psalm 40:13-17, see the notes in the Introduction to that psalm) a resemblance similar to that between Psalm 14:1-7 and Psalm 53:1-6. The one is not indeed a mere copy of the other, but the one is substantially the same as the other, with some slight variations, apparently introduced to fit it for some new occasion on which it was to be used. We do not know what the occasion in either case was; but it would seem that in this instance, the psalmist found, in the closing verses of the fortieth psalm, language which "very nearly" expressed what he felt on some particular occasion, and which might, by a slight change, be applied to the use for which it was then desired.

We have no further knowledge of the "occasion" on which this was done, than what is implied in the title: "to bring to remembrance." For the meaning of this, see thenotes at the title to Psalm 38. It determines nothing, however, as to the reason why the closing part of Psalm 40 was selected as the subject of a separate psalm, or why the changes were made which here occur. It merely denotes that there were things which it was proper to preserve in the recollection; or principles which it was of importance for the people of God to remember.

It will be necessary, in considering the psalm, only to note, in each verse successively, the alterations which are made from Psalm 40.

Verse 1

Make haste - These words are supplied by our translators. The first word in Psalm 40:13, rendered "be pleased," is here omitted in the original. The psalm in the Hebrew begins abruptly - "O God, to deliver me," - leaving the impression that this is a fragment - a fragment commencing without even the care necessary to make the grammatical construction complete.

O God - Hebrew, אלהים *'Elohiym* In the corresponding place in Psalm 40:13 the word is "Yahweh." Why the change was made is unknown. The remainder of the verse is the same as in Psalm 40.

sa40

Verse 2

Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul - The only change here from Psalm 40:14, is the omission of the word "together" which occurs there, and the omission of the words "to destroy it."

Let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt - This corresponds in the Hebrew entirely with Psalm 40:14.

Verse 3

Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame - The only change which occurs in this verse is the substitution of the milder phrase "Let them be turned back," for "Let them be desolate." See the notes at Psalm 40:15.

Verse 4

Let all those that seek thee … - The only change in this verse from Psalm 40:16, is in the insertion of the word "and" in the beginning of the second clause - "and let such as love," etc.

Verse 5

But I am poor and needy - This is the same as in Psalm 40:17.

Make haste unto me, O God - Hebrew, אלהים *'Elohiym* In the parallel place in Psalm 40:17, this is, "The Lord thinketh upon me," - where the Hebrew word is not אלהים *'Elohiym* but אדני tub ,my *'Adonāy* (Lord). The word "make haste" seems to have been introduced here by design - thus carrying out the main idea in Psalm 40, but turning here to "petition" what is there stated as a "fact."

Thou art my help and my deliverer … - The close of the psalm is the same as the close of Psalm 40, except that the word Lord (Yahweh) is used here instead of "God" (אלהים *'Elohiym*). It is not possible to ascertain whether these changes were mere matters of taste, or whether they were designed to adapt the psalm to some new circumstance, or to the special feelings of the psalmist at the time. There is no evidence that they are mere errors of transcribers, and indeed the changes are so made that this cannot be supposed. The change of the names אלהים *'Elohiym* יהוה *Yahweh* and אדני *'Adonāy* for example, is such as must have been by design, and could not have been made by copyists. But what that design was must remain unknown. The alterations do not in any way, as far as we can understand, affect the sense.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 71

Introduction

This psalm is without a title, as is the case with the first, second, tenth, and some others. Of course it is impossible to determine on what occasion it was composed. There is some plausibility in the supposition that Psalm 70:1-5 might have been placed before it, or in connection with it, as a kind of introduction, or as indicating the character of the psalms among which it is found; but nothing of certainty can be ascertained on that point. It evidently belongs to the "class" of psalms which refer to the trials of the righteous; but it was rather in view of past troubles than of those which were then existing.

There is no certain evidence that the psalm was composed by David. If so, it was when he was advanced in life. There is, indeed, much in the psalm which would be appropriate to David - much which he might have written; but there is no way now of ascertaining with certainty who was the author. In the Syriac version, the psalm is, indeed, ascribed to David, and this may perhaps express the prevailing idea in regard to the authorship as it had been handed down by tradition. The title in Syriac is, "Composed by David. When Saul warred against the house of David. And a prophecy respecting the passion and resurrection of the Messiah." The Latin Vulgate and the Septuagint also ascribe it to David. The title in both is the same - "By David. Of the sons of Jonadab, and the first captives." But these titles are of no authority, as they are not in the Hebrew, and they are of little historic value.

All that is known respecting the occasion on which the psalm was composed, whoever was the author, is, that it was composed when old age was drawing near, and in view of the trials and the blessings of life as considered from the contemplation of its approaching close, Psalm 71:5, Psalm 71:9, Psalm 71:17-18. The life of the author had been one of trials Psalm 71:20, but also of great mercies Psalm 71:6-7, Psalm 71:17. He was then surrounded with difficulties; the infirmities of age were coming upon him, and he was encompassed with enemies Psalm 71:10-11, Psalm 71:20; therefore, he sought the continued favor and blessing of God in the little that remained to him of life.

It is a psalm of great value as describing the feelings of a good man when he is growing old, and is an illustration of what there has been occasion so often to remark in this exposition of the Book of Psalms, that the Bible is adapted to all the conditions of human life. In a book professing to be a revelation from God, and in a world where "old age," with its trials, its infirmities, its recollections, and its hopes, must be so prominent in the actual state of things existing, it would have been unaccountable if there had been nothing to illustrate the feelings of those in advancing or advanced years - nothing to suggest the kind of reflections appropriate to that period of life - nothing to cheer the heart of the aged man, and to inspire him with hope - nothing to prompt him to recall the lessons of the past, and to make use of those lessons to prepare him for the future; even as, in a world so full of trial, it would have been strange if there had been nothing to comfort the mind in affliction, and to enable people to derive proper lessons from the experiences of life. This psalm, therefore, is one of the most valuable portions of the Bible to a certain class of mankind, and may be to any of the living, as suggesting the proper reflections of a good man as the infirmities of age draw on, and as he reviews the mercies and the trials of the past.

It is not necessary to make a more particular analysis of its contents. The psalm, in general, embraces these points:

(1) A prayer for deliverance from troubles, and from wicked people, Psalm 71:1-4.

(2) an acknowledgment of God‘s goodness in early life; a grateful review of divine mercies manifested from the earliest years of life, Psalm 71:5-8.

(3) aprayer that God would still preserve him as old age came on; a prayer that God would interpose in his behalf, and enable him still to be useful to the world - to that generation, and to the generations to come, Psalm 71:9-18.

(4) the expression of a confident expectation that his prayer would be answered, and that God would be merciful to him, Psalm 71:19-21.

(5) the expression of a purpose to offer praise to God as a suitable return for the mercies of the past, and for all that he hoped to receive in time to come, Psalm 71:22-24.

Verse 1

In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust - See the notes at Psalm 25:2. Compare Psalm 22:4-5; Psalm 31:1.

Let me never be put to confusion - Let me never be ashamed; that is, Let me not be so disappointed in the trust that I repose in thee as to have occasion to feel ashamed that I have done it.

Verse 2

Deliver me in thy righteousness - See the notes at Psalm 31:1. The first three verses of this psalm seem in fact to have been taken, with slight variations, from the first three verses of Psalm 31:2, this is, "Bow down thine ear to me." The idea is the same. See the notes at that place. Compare the notes at Psalm 17:6.

And save me - In Psalm 31:2, this is, "Deliver me speedily."

Verse 3

Be thou my strong habitation - Margin, as in Hebrew, "Be thou to me for a rock of habitation." That is, a rock where I may safely make my abode, or to which I may resort and feel safe. In Psalm 31:2, this is, "Be thou my strong rock, for an house of defense to save me." The idea is the same. See the notes at that passage, and compare the notes at Psalm 18:2.

Whereunto I may continually resort - Where I may take refuge at all times, in all circumstances of danger.

Thou hast given commandment to save me - There was some command, or some promise, on which the psalmist relied, or which he felt he might plead as the ground of his appeal. This may refer to some "special" promise or command made to the author of the psalm - and, if the psalm was composed by David, there were many such; or the reference may have been to the general commands or promises made to the people of God as such, which he felt he was at liberty to plead, and which all may plead who are the friends of God. "We" cannot refer, as David could, to any special promise made to "us" as "individuals;" but, in proportion as we have evidence of piety, we can refer to the promises made to alI the people of God, or to all who devote themselves to him, as a reason why he should interpose in our behalf. In this respect the promises made in the Scriptures

to the children of God, may be pleaded by us "as if" they were made personally to ourselves, for, if we are his, they are made to us - they are intended for us.

For thou art my rock and my fortress - See the notes at Psalm 18:2.

Verse 4

Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked - It is, of course, not possible now to ascertain who are particularly referred to here. If David was the author of the psalm, they may have been any of the numerous enemies that he had in his life.

Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man - Hebrew, "out of the palm." This means here the same as hand, and refers to the "grasp" which anyone makes in taking hold of a thing by the hand.

Verse 5

For thou art my hope, O Lord God - The ground of my hope and my expectation is in thee.

(1) I have no other help; no other defense; but

(2) I "have" confidence; on thee I "do" rely.

Thou art my trust from my youth - From my earliest years. The meaning is, that he had always trusted in God, and had always found him a helper. All that he was, and all that he possessed, he owed to God; and he felt now that God had been his protector from his earliest years. Perhaps it could not be shown certainly from this expression that he meant to say he had "actually trusted" in God from his youth, for the "language" means no more than that God had actually protected him, and holden him up, and had continually interposed to save and keep him. As God had always been his Protector, so he felt that he might come to Him now, and put his trust in Him.

Verse 6

By thee have I been holden up from the womb - From the beginning of my existence. The "idea" in all this is, that, since God had sustained him from his earliest years - since he had shown his power in keeping him, and manifested his care for him, there was ground to pray that God would keep him still, and that he would guard him as old age came on. The sentiment in this verse is substantially the same as in Psalm 22:9-10. See the notes at that passage.

My praise shall be continually of thee - My praise shall ascend to thee constantly. I will not cease to praise thee. Compare the notes at Psalm 22:25.

Verse 7

I am as a wonder unto many - The word here rendered "wonder" - מופת *môphêth* - means properly a miracle, a prodigy; then things that are suited to excite wonder or admiration; then, a sign, a token. See the notes at Isaiah 8:18. The meaning here is, that the course of things in regard to him - the divine dealings toward him - had been such as to excite attention; to strike the mind as something unusual, and out of the common course, in the same way that miracles do. This might be either from the number and the character of the calamities which had come upon him; or from the narrow escapes which he had had from death; or from the frequency of the divine intervention in his behalf; or from the abundant mercies which had been manifested toward him. The connection makes it probable that he refers to the unusual number of afflictions which had come upon him, and the frequency of the divine interpositions in his behalf when there was no other refuge, and no other hope.

But thou art my strong refuge - See the notes at Psalm 18:2. That is, God had been his Protector, his hiding-place.

Verse 8

Let my mouth be filled - This is an appeal to himself, in view of the goodness of God, to praise him always. See the notes at Psalm 35:28.

With thy praise - With the expressions of praise.

And with thy honor all the day - With such expressions as shall promote thy glory, and make thy honor known.

Verse 9

Cast me not off in the time of old age - When old age comes with its infirmities; its weaknesses; its trials. When my strength fails me; when my eyes grow dim; when my knees totter; when my friends have died; when I am no longer able to labor for my support; when the buoyant feelings of earlier years are no more; when my old companions and associates are gone, and I am left alone. Thou who didst watch over me in infancy; who didst guard me in childhood and youth; who hast defended me in manhood; who hast upheld me in the days of sickness, danger, bereavement, trouble - do thou not leave me when, in advanced years, I have special need of thy care; when I have reason to apprehend that there may come upon me, in that

season of my life, troubles that I have never known before; when I shall not have the strength, the buoyancy, the elasticity, the ardor, the animal spirits of other years, to enable me to meet those troubles; and when I shall have none of the friends to cheer me whom I had in the earlier periods of my course. It is not unnatural or improper for a man who sees old age coming upon him to pray for special grace, and special strength, to enable him to meet what he cannot ward off, and what he cannot but dread; for who can look upon the infirmities of old age as coming upon himself but with sad and pensive feelings? Who would wish "to be" an old man? Who can look upon a man tottering with years, and broken down with infirmities - a man whose sight and hearing are gone - a man who is alone amidst the graves of all the friends that he had in early life - a man who is a burden to himself and to the world, a man who has reached the "last scene of all, that ends the strange eventful history," that scene of

"Second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything," -
That scene when one can say,
"I have lived long enough; my way of life
Is fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,

As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have,"

Who can think of all this, and not pray for special grace for himself should he live to see those days of infirmity and weakness? And who, in view of such infirmities, can fail to see the propriety of seeking the favor of God in early years? Compare Ecclesiastes 12:1-6.

Forsake me not when my strength faileth - As I may expect it to do, when I grow old. A man can lay up nothing better for the infirmities of old age than the favor of God sought, by earnest prayer, in the days of his youth and his maturer years.

Verse 10

For mine enemies speak against me - That is, they said substantially, as it is stated in Psalm 71:11, that God had forsaken him, and that therefore, they would arise and punish him, or treat him as an outcast from God.

And they that lay wait for my soul - For my life; or, to take my life. The margin here - as the Hebrew - is, "watch," or "observe." The "watchers

for my life;" that is, they who watch for an opportunity to take my life, or to destroy me.

Take counsel together - About the best means of accomplishing their object.

Verse 11

Saying, God hath forsaken him - That is, God has given him over; he no longer protects him; he regards him as a wicked man, and we shall therefore, not only be "safe" in our attempts upon his life, but we shall be "justified" in those attempts.

Persecute and take him - It can be done safely now; it can be done with propriety.

For there is none to deliver him - He has no one now to whom to look; no one on whom he can rely. Abandoned by God and by man, he will be an easy prey. Compare the notes at Psalm 41:7-8.

Verse 12

O God, be not far from me - See the notes at Psalm 22:11.

O my God, make haste for my help - See the notes at Psalm 40:13.

Verse 13

Let them be confounded and consumed - See the notes at the similar passage in Psalm 35:4. The sentiment in this verse is the same; the language is slightly varied. See also Psalm 40:14, where the same sentiment occurs.

Verse 14

But I will hope continually - I will always cherish hope; I will not give up to despair. I will trust in God whatever may be the number, the power, and the confidence of my enemies. None of these things shall make me despair, for as long as I have a God, I have every ground for hope. No man should despair who has God for his Friend. Compare Psalm 42:5, Psalm 42:11; Psalm 43:5.

And will yet praise thee more and more - literally, "I will add upon all thy praise." That is, I will accumulate it; I will increase it. He saw abundant cause in the past for praising God; he had such confidence in him, and he felt such an assurance that he would interpose in his behalf, that he did not doubt that in the future dealings of God with him, he would have every reason to "add" to that praise.

Verse 15

My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness … - See the notes at Psalm 71:8. The word "righteousness" here refers to the righteous character

of God, particularly as manifested in his behalf; the word "salvation" refers to what God had done to deliver him from his dangers.

For I know not the numbers thereof - That is, I cannot estimate the amount of thy favors; they are innumerable. See the notes at Psalm 40:5.

Verse 16

I will go in the strength of the Lord God - In my future journey through life; in my trials; in my duties; in my conflicts; in my temptations. Admonished in the past of my own weakness, and remembering how often God has interposed, I will hereafter lean only on his arm, and not trust to my own strength. But thus leaning on his arm, I "will" go confidently to meet the duties and the trials of life. If one has the strength of God to lean on, or can use that strength "as if" it were his own, there is no duty which he may not discharge; no trial which he may not bear. The Hebrew here is, "I will come with the mighty deeds (more literally, "strengths") of the Lord God." The word is used to denote the "mighty acts" of Yahweh, in Deuteronomy 3:24; Psalm 106:2; Job 26:14. DeWette proposes to render this, "I will go in the mighty deeds of Yahweh;" that is, I will sing of his mighty deeds. Rosenmuller explains it, "I will go into the temple to celebrate his praise there;" that is, I will bring the remembrance of his mighty acts there as the foundation of praise. So Professor Alexander explains it. It seems to me, however, that our translation has expressed the true idea, that he would go in the strength of God; that he would rely on no other; that he would make mention of no other. Old age, trials, difficulties, arduous duties, were before him; and in all these he would rely on no other strength but that of the Almighty.

I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only - Of thy just and holy character. I will allude to nothing else; I will rely on nothing else as the foundation of my hope, and as my encouragement in the duties and trials of life.

Verse 17

O God, thou hast taught me from my youth - See Psalm 71:5-6. That is, God had guided and instructed him from his earliest years. He had made known to him his own being and perfections; he had made his duty plain; he had led him along the dangerous path of life.

And hitherto have I declared - I have made known. That is, he had done this by public praise; he had done it by his writings; he had done it by

maintaining and defending the truth. In all situations of life, up to that time, he had been willing to stand up for God and his cause.

Thy wondrous works - See Psalm 9:1, note; Psalm 26:7, note. Doings or acts which were suited to attract attention; to awe the mind by their greatness; to inspire confidence by their wisdom.

Verse 18

Now also when I am old and grey-headed - Margin, "unto old age and grey hairs." This does not necessarily mean that he was then actually old and grey-headed, but it would imply that he was approaching that period, or that he had it in prospect. The time of youth was past, and he was approaching old age. The literal rendering would be, "And also unto old age and grey hairs, do not forsake me." This is the prayer of one who had been favored in youth, and in all his former course of life, and who now asked that God would continue his mercy, and not forsake him when the infirmities of age drew on.

Forsake me not - Still keep me alive. Give me health, and strength, and ability to set forth thy praise, and to make known thy truth. See the notes at Psalm 71:9.

Until I have showed thy strength - Margin, as in Hebrew, "thine arm." The arm is the instrument by which we execute a purpose, and it thus becomes a symbol of strength.

Unto this generation - literally, "to a generation." The reference is to the generation then living; that is, the generation which had come on the stage since he had reached manhood - the generation - the new generation - which one who is approaching old age sees engaged in the active scenes of life, cultivating the fields, filling the offices, constructing the bridges and roads, manning the ships, occupying the dwellings, instead of those with whom he was formerly associated, and who are now in their graves. His own generation - the companions of his own early years - had passed away. He had lived to speak to a new generation, and he was desirous that they should start on the journey of life with the advantage of his experience, as of one that had gone before. Each generation "may" thus enter on life with all the accumulated wisdom of the past; that is, as wise as those had become who had themselves had the experience, and treasured up results from the observations, of a long life.

Society thus makes progress. One generation becomes wiser and better than the one which went before it, and the experience of all ages thus

accumulates as the world advances, enabling a future age to act on the results of all the wisdom of the past. Man thus differs from the inferior creation. The animals, governed by instinct alone, make no progress. Compare the notes at Psalm 49:13. They profit neither by the wisdom, nor the follies of the past. The first robin built its nest of the same materials, and with as much art, as the robin does now; the first stock of bees constructed their cells with as nice and accurate adaptations, with mathematical precision as complete, as a swarm of bees will do now. Neither the bird nor the bee has learned anything by experience, by study, or by observation - nor lays up, to transmit to future generations of birds or bees, the results of its own sagacity or observation.

Not so with man. The result of the experiences of one generation goes into the general experience of the world, and becomes its capital; a new thought, or a new invention struck out by some splendid genius, becomes the common property of the race; and society, as it rolls on, gathers up all these results, as the Ganges or the Mississippi, rolling on to the ocean, gathers into one mighty volume all the waters that flow in a thousand streams, and all that come from rivulets and fountains, however remote. It is this which makes the life of "a man" so valuable in this world; this which makes it so desirable for a man, even when approaching old age, yet to live a little longer, for, as the fruit of his experience, his observation, his ripe wisdom, his acquired knowledge, he may yet suggest something, by writing or otherwise, which may add to the intelligence of the world; some principle which may be elaborated and perfected by the coming age.

And thy power - Thy greatness; majesty; glory.

To every one that is to come - To all future generations. That I may state truths which may benefit future ages. He who suggests one truth which the world was not in possession of before, is a benefactor to mankind, and will not have lived in vain, for that truth will do something to set the race forward, and to make the world better and happier. It is not a vain thing, then, for a man to live; and every one should endeavor "so" to live that the world may not be the worse - or may not go backward - by his living in it, but that it may be the wiser and the better: not merely so that it may keep on the same level, but that it may rise to a higher level, and start off on a new career.

Verse 19

Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high - See the notes at Psalm 36:5. The purpose of the psalmist is to exalt that righteousness as much as possible, and he, therefore, compares it with that which is high - the heavens - the highest thing of all. The literal rendering would be, "even to the high," or the height; that is, to the highest place. The passage is designed to express his confidence in God, in the infirmities and troubles which he must expect to come upon him with advancing years.

Who hast done great things - In his work of creation; in his providence; in his manifested mercy toward his people. He had done things so great as to show that he could protect those who put their trust in him.

O God, who is like unto thee! - Who can be compared to thee! See the notes at Psalm 35:10. Compare the notes at Isaiah 40:18. See also Psalm 89:8; Exodus 15:11; 2 Samuel 7:22.

Verse 20

Thou, which hast showed me great and sore troubles - Or rather, who hast caused us to see or experience great trials. The psalmist here, by a change from the singular to the plural, connects himself with his friends and followers, meaning that he had suffered with them and through them. It was not merely a personal affliction, but others connected with him had been identified with him, and his personal sorrows had been increased by the trials which had come upon them also. Our severest trials often are those which affect our friends.

Shalt quicken me again - literally, "Shalt return and make us live." The word "quicken" in the Scriptures has always this sense of "making to live again." See the notes at John 5:21; compare Romans 4:17; 1 Corinthians 15:36; Ephesians 2:1. The plural form should have been retained here as in the former member of the sentence. The authors of the Masoretic punctuation have pointed this as if it were to be read in the singular, but the plural is undoubtedly the true reading. Alike in his affliction, and in his hope of the returning mercy of God, he connects himself here with those who had suffered with him. The language expresses firm confidence in the goodness of God - an assurance that these troubles would pass away, and that he would see a brighter day.

And shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth - As if he had been sunk in the waters, or in the mire. See Psalm 130:1. The word here used means commonly "wave, billow, surge;" then, a mass of waters, "a flood," the deep; then, a gulf, an abyss. The idea here is, that, instead of

being on the mountain top, in a place of security, he had sunk down to the lowest point; he had, as it were, sunk "into" the very earth. Yet from that low estate he felt assured that God would raise him up, and place him in a condition of happiness and safety. This is one of the many instances which we have in the Psalms, where the psalmist in great trouble expresses the most entire confidence that God would interpose in his behalf.

Verse 21

Thou shalt increase my greatness - Thou wilt not merely restore me to my former condition, but wilt enlarge my happiness, and wilt do still greater things for me.

And comfort me on every side - literally, "Thou wilt turn thyself; thou wilt comfort me." The word also means to surround; to encompass Genesis 2:11, Genesis 2:13; 1 Kings 7:24; Psalm 18:5; and the idea here may be that God would "go around him," or encircle him, and would thus comfort him. This idea is expressed in our common version. It was the confident assurance of entire, or complete consolation.

Verse 22

I will also praise thee with the psaltery - Margin, as in Hebrew, "with the instrument of psaltery." The Hebrew word is נבל *nebel* In Isaiah 5:12 it is rendered "viol." See the notes at that passage. It is rendered "psaltery" in 1 Samuel 10:5; 2 Samuel 6:5; 1 Kings 10:12; and elsewhere. Compare the notes at Psalm 33:2.

Even thy truth - I will make mention of thy truth and faithfulness in my songs of praise; or, I will celebrate these in connection with appropriate music.

Unto thee will I sing with the harp - Hebrew, כנור *kinnôr* See the notes at Isaiah 5:12. Compare the notes at Psalm 33:2.

O thou Holy One of Israel - The God of Israel or the Hebrew people; the God regarded by them as most holy, and worshipped by them as their God. This is the first time that this title occurs in the Psalms, but it is common in the prophets, particularly in Isaiah. See Isaiah 1:4; Isaiah 5:19, Isaiah 5:24; Isaiah 10:20; Isaiah 12:6. It occurs also in Psalm 78:41; Psalm 89:18.

Verse 23

My lips shall greatly rejoice … - My lips will seem to be happy in the privilege of celebrating the praises of God.

And my soul, which thou hast redeemed - Compare Psalm 34:22. The word soul here seems to be employed to denote "the soul" properly, as we understand the word - the immortal part. The usual meaning of the word, in the Psalms, however, is "life," and it is possible that the psalmist meant merely to say here that the "life" which had been spared should find pleasure in celebrating the praises of God; but there is no impropriety in supposing that he has reference to his higher - his immortal - nature.

Verse 24

My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness - Thy righteous character; the truthfulness, the goodness, the fidelity which thou hast manifested in delivering me. The word rendered "talk" means properly to meditate; then, to think aloud, to talk to oneself; and the idea may be, that his mind would be so full of the subject that he would give utterance to his thoughts in audible expressions when alone. It denotes fullness of heart, and language naturally flowing out from a full soul.

All the day long - Continually. This shall occupy my mind at all times. See the notes at Psalm 1:2.

For they are confounded … - That is, they are put to confusion; they are disappointed in their hopes; they are defeated in their plans. The psalmist sees this to be so certain that he speaks of it as if it were already done. The Psalms often conclude in this way. They begin in trouble, they end in joy; they begin in darkness, they end in light; they begin with a desponding mind, they end with a triumphant spirit; they begin with prayer, they end in praise. On the "language" used here, see the notes at Psalm 71:13. On such a "close" of the Psalms, see Psalm 3:7-8; Psalm 6:9-10; Psalm 7:17; Psalm 17:15; Psalm 22:30-31; Psalm 26:12; Psalm 42:11; Psalm 43:5; Psalm 52:8-9.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 72

Introduction

The title of this psalm, in the original, is simply "For Solomon." The words "a psalm" are supplied by the translators. In the margin this is "of" to wit, of Solomon - as if Solomon were the writer. Prof. Alexander renders it, "By Solomon," and supposes, of course, that he was the author. The Septuagint renders it, "For" - εἰς *eis* - "Solomon." So the Latin Vulgate: "In Salomonem." The Syriac: "Of David; when he constituted Solomon king." Luther: "Of Solomon." It is true that the Hebrew in the title is the same which is used in other psalms where the author is designated, as in Psalm 70:1-5, and elsewhere, "of David;" in Psalm 72:2, Psalm 72:4, with Isaiah 11:4; Psalm 72:3, with Isaiah 9:6; Psalm 72:5, with Isaiah 9:7. See also Psalm 72:8, Psalm 72:11, Psalm 72:17. It will be shown in the exposition of these verses that they accurately describe the state of things under the Messiah, and that they cannot be literally applied to the reign of Solomon.

(4) it may be added that this interpretation is in accordance with the prevalent style of the Old Testament. No one can doubt, however the fact may be explained, that the writers of the Old Testament "did" look forward to a remarkable personage who was to appear in the future. Whether the reality of the inspiration of the prophets is admitted or denied, they somehow had conceived "that notion," and this idea is constantly manifesting itself in their writings. They delight to dwell upon the prospect of his appearing; they dwell with pleasure on his characteristics; they turn to him in times of national trouble; they anticipate final deliverance under him alone. They describe him as clothed with regal magnificence; they exalt him to the highest rank; they represent him as most beautiful in character, and most mighty in power; they apply to him the most exalted names; priest; prophet; prince; king; warrior; angel; "God." We are not surprised to find the sacred writers recurring to this idea at any time, whatever may be the subject on which they are writing; and to think of the Old Testament "without a Messiah," would be much the same as to think of the Iliad without Achilles; or the AEneid without AEneas; or "Hamlet" without Hamlet. It is for those who deny the inspiration of the prophets to explain how this idea sprang up in their minds; they cannot deny the fact that it was there. There is, perhaps, no part of the Old Testament where this is more

manifest than in the psalm before us. It bears all the marks of having been composed under the influence of such an idea.

The psalm consists of two parts:

I. A description of the reign of the "king" - the Messiah, Psalm 72:18-19.

I. A description of the reign of the "king" - the Messiah. That reign would be

(1) A reign of righteousness. justice would be done to all; the poor and down-trodden would be protected; prosperity would attend the righteous; the whole course of the administration would be in favor of virtue and religion, Psalm 72:1-7.

(2) The reign would be universal, Psalm 72:8-11. The king would have dominion from sea to sea, foreign princes would send him presents; all kings would bow down before him; and all nations would serve him.

(3) it would be a reign of benevolence; a reign that would have special regard for the poor; the needy, and the oppressed, Psalm 72:12-14.

(4) it would be perpetual; it would spread afar, and endure forever, Psalm 72:15-17.

II. The doxology, Psalm 72:18-19; a doxology eminently appropriate in view of the prospective glories of the reign of the Messiah. For such a kingdom, for such a reign of glory and beneficence, for such mercy shown to mankind in the prospect of setting up such a dominion, it was meet that the heart should be filled with adoration, and that the lips should pour forth blessings on the name of God.

To the psalm a postscript is added, Psalm 72:20, intimating that this was the close of the collection of psalms ascribed to David. On the meaning of this, see the notes at the verse.

Verse 1

Give the king - Supposing the psalm to have been composed by David in view of the inauguration of his son and successor, this is a prayer that God would bestow on him the qualifications which would tend to secure a

just, a protracted, and a peaceful reign. Though it is to be admitted that the psalm was designed to refer ultimately to the Messiah, and to be descriptive of "his" reign, yet there is no impropriety in supposing that the psalmist believed the reign of Solomon would be, in some proper sense emblematic of that reign, and that it was his desire the reign of the one "might," as far as possible, resemble that of the other. There is no improbability, therefore, in supposing that the mind of the psalmist might have been directed to both in the composition of the psalm, and that while he used the language of prayer for the one, his eye was mainly directed to the characteristics of the other.

Thy judgments - Knowledge; authority; ability to execute thy judgments, or thy laws. That is, he speaks of the king as appointed to administer justice; to maintain the laws of God, and to exercise judicial power. It is one of the primary ideas in the character of a king that he is the fountain of justice; the maker of the laws; the dispenser of right to all his subjects. The officers of the law administer justice "under" him; the last appeal is to him.

And thy righteousness - That is, Clothe him, in the administration of justice, with a righteousness like thine own. Let it be seen that he represents "thee;" that his government may be regarded as thine own administration through him.

Unto the king's son - Not only to him, but to his successor; that is, let the administration of justice in the government be perpetuated. There is no improbability in supposing that in this the psalmist may have designed also to refer to the last and the greatest of his successors in the line - the Messiah.

Verse 2

He shall judge thy people with righteousness - On this verse see the notes at Isaiah 11:3-4. The fact that this so entirely accords with the description in Isaiah 11, which undoubtedly refers to the Messiah, has been alluded to above as confirming the opinion that the psalm has a similar reference.

Verse 3

The mountains shall bring peace to the people - The idea in this verse is that the land would be full of peace and the fruits of peace. All parts of it would be covered with the evidences that it was a land of quietness and security, where people could pursue their callings in safety, and enjoy the fruit of their labors. On the mountains and on all the little hills in the land

there would be abundant harvests, the result of peace (so strongly in contrast with the desolations of war) - all showing the advantages of a peaceful reign. It is to be remembered that Judea is a country abounding in hills and mountains, and that a great part of its former fertility resulted from terracing the hills, and cultivating them as far as possible toward the summit. The idea here is, that one who should look upon the land - who could take in at a glance the whole country - would see those mountains and hills cultivated in the most careful manner, and everywhere bringing forth the productions of peace. Compare Psalm 65:11-13. See also the notes at Psalm 85:11-12.

And the little hills, by righteousness - That is, By the prevalence of righteousness, or under a reign of righteousness, the little hills would furnish illustrations of the influence of a reign of peace. Everywhere there would be the effects of a reign of peace. The whole land would be cultivated, and there would be abundance. Peace always produces these blessings; war always spreads desolation.

Verse 4

He shall judge the poor of the people - The afflicted; the down-trodden; the needy. He would vindicate their cause against their oppressors; his reign would be one of impartial justice, under which the rights of the poor as well as of the rich would be respected. See the notes at Isaiah 11:4.

He shall save the children of the needy - Those in humble life; those most likely to be oppressed by others; those who have no natural protectors.

And shall break in pieces the oppressor - Shall subdue, or destroy, those who live to oppress others. See the notes at Psalm 12:5.

Verse 5

They shall fear thee - That is, "men" shall fear thee, or thou shalt be feared, or reverenced. The idea is, that his reign would continue, or that he would be obeyed during all the time mentioned here.

As long as the sun and moon endure - literally, "With the sun, and before the moon;" that is, as long as they have the sun with them, or have it to shine upon them, and as long as they are in the presence of the moon, or have its light. In other words, they would continue to the end of time; or to the end of the world. It does not denote "eternity," for it is not assumed in the Bible that the sun and moon will continue forever; but the idea is, that as long as the sun shall continue to shine upon the earth - as long as people shall dwell upon the earth - the kingdom would be perpetual. There would

be no change of dynasty; no new empire would arise to displace and to supersede this. This would be the dynasty under which the affairs of the world would be wound up; this the kingdom which would be found at the consummation of all things. The reign of the Messiah will be the "final" reign in the earth; that under which the affairs of earth will close.

Throughout all generations - While the generations of people dwell on the earth.

Verse 6

He shall come down - That is, The influence of his reign will be like fertilising showers. The word" he" in this place might have been "it," referring to his reign, or to the influence of his government.

Like rain upon the mown grass - The word rendered "mown grass" - גז *gêz* - means properly "a shearing," and is applied in Deuteronomy 18:4, and Job 31:20, to a fleece of wool. So it is understood here by the Septuagint, by the Latin Vulgate, by the Syriac, and by Luther; and, in accordance with this, it has been supposed by some that there is an allusion to the dew that descended on the fleece spread out by Gideon, Judges 6:37. The Chaldee Paraphrase renders it, "As the grass that has been eaten off by locusts;" where the idea would be that after locusts have passed over a field, devouring everything, when the rain descends the fields revive, and nature again puts on the appearance of life. This idea is adopted by Rosenmuller. The common interpretation, however, which refers the word to a "mowing," that is, a "mown meadow," is probably the correct one; and thus understood, the image is very beautiful. The reign of the Messiah would resemble the gently descending shower, under which the grass which has been mown springs up again with freshness and beauty.

As showers that water the earth - literally, "like showers, the watering of the earth." The original word rendered "that water" suggests the idea of distilling, or "gently" flowing.

Verse 7

In his days shall the righteous flourish - It will be a period when just and upright people will be protected, or when they shall receive the countenance of him who reigns. The administration of the kingdom that is to be set up will be in favor of righteousness or justice. The word "flourish" here is derived from the growth of plants - as plants sprout, or spring up - an emblem of prosperity.

And abundance of peace - literally, "multitude of peace;" that is, The things which produce peace, or which indicate peace, will not be few, but numerous; they will abound everywhere. They will be found in towns and villages, and private dwellings; in the calm and just administration of the affairs of the State; in abundant harvests; in intelligence, in education, and in undisturbed industry; in the protection extended to the rights of all.

So long as the moon endureth - Margin, as in Hebrew, "until there be no moon." That is, until the moon shall cease to shine upon the earth. See Psalm 72:5.

Verse 8

He shall have dominion also from sea to sea - There is probably an allusion here to the promise in Exodus 23:31: "And I will set thy bounds from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river." This was the original promise in regard to the bounds of the promised land. A promise similar to this occurs also in Genesis 15:18: "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." The meaning here is, that what was implied in these ancient promises would be carried out under the reign of the king referred to in the psalm. The "immediate" allusion, therefore, in the phrase "from sea to sea," may have been from the Red Sea on the East to the Mediterranean on the West; but still the language is susceptible of a more enlarged application, and may mean from one sea to another; that is, embracing all the lands or countries lying between seas and oceans; or, in other words, that the dominion would be universal. Compare the notes at Psalm 2:8.

And from the river … - The Euphrates. This was emphatically "the river" to the Hebrews - the great river - the greatest river known to them; and this river would be naturally understood as intended by the expression, unless there was something to limit it. Besides, this was expressly designated in the original covenant as the boundary of the promised land. See, as above, Genesis 15:18. The meaning here is, that, taking that river as one of the boundaries, or as a starting point, the dominion would extend from that to the utmost limits of the earth. It would have no other boundary but the limits of the world. The promise, therefore, is, that the dominion would be universal, or would pervade the earth; at once a kingdom of peace, and yet spreading itself all over the world. It is hardly necessary to say that this did not occur under Solomon, and that it could not have been

expected that it would occur under him, and especially as it was expected that his reign would be one of peace and not of conquest. It would find its complete fulfillment only under the Messiah.

Verse 9

They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him - The word rendered "they that dwell in the wilderness" - ציים *tsîyîym* means properly those who abide in deserts, dry places, solitudes; and it might be applied either to animals or to people. It is applied to the former in Isaiah 13:21 (see the notes at that place); Isaiah 23:13; Isaiah 34:14; Jeremiah 50:39. In all these, except Isaiah 23:13, it is rendered "wild beasts of the desert," denoting jackals, ostriches, etc.; but here, and in Psalm 74:14, it is evidently applied to people, as denoting shepherds - nomadic tribes - people who have no permanent home, but who wander from place to place. The idea is, that these wild, wandering, unsettled hordes would become subject to him, or would bow down and acknowledge his authority. This can be fulfilled only under the Messiah.

And his enemies shall lick the dust - This is expressive of the most thorough submission and abject humiliation. It is language derived from what seems actually to occur in Oriental countries, where people prostrate themselves on their faces, and place their mouths on the ground, in token of reverence or submission. Rosenmuller (Morgenland, vol. ii., pp. 82,83) quotes a passage from Hugh Boyd's Account of his embassage to Candy in Ceylon, where he says that when he himself came to show respect to the king, it was by kneeling before him. But this, says he, was not the case with other ambassadors. "They almost literally licked the dust. They cast themselves on their faces on the stony ground, and stretched out their arms and legs; then they raised themselves upon their knees, and uttered certain forms of good wishes in the loudest tones - May the head of the king of kings reach above the sun; may he reign a thousand years." Compare the notes at Isaiah 49:23.

Verse 10

The kings of Tarshish - On the situation of Tarshish, see the notes at Isaiah 2:16. Compare Psalm 48:7. The word seems to be used here to denote any distant region abounding with riches.

And of the isles … - Representing also distant lands; or lands beyond the seas. The word "islands" among the Hebrews commonly denoted distant

seacoasts, particularly those of the Mediterranean. See the notes at Isaiah 41:1.

The kings of Sheba and Seba - places in Arabia. On the word "Sheba," see the notes at Isaiah 60:6. On the word "Seba," see the notes at Isaiah 43:3.

Shall offer gifts - See the notes at Psalm 45:12. Compare Isaiah 60:5-7, Isaiah 60:13-17.

Verse 11

Yea, all kings shall fall down … - That is, his reign will be universal. The kings and people mentioned in the previous verses are only specimens of what will occur. "All" kings - "all" nations - will do what these are represented as doing. They will submit to the Messiah; they will own him as their Lord. See the notes at Psalm 2:8. Compare Isaiah 49:23.

Verse 12

For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth - The sufferer; the down-trodden; the oppressed. See the notes at Psalm 72:4. Compare the notes at Isaiah 61:1.

The poor also … - All who have no protector; all who are exposed to injustice and wrong from others. This is everywhere declared to be the characteristic of the reign of the Messiah. See the notes at Isaiah 11:4.

Verse 13

He shall spare the poor and needy - He will have pity on; he will show mercy or favor to them.

And shall save the souls of the needy - Will guard and defend them; will be their protector and friend. His administration will have special respect to those who are commonly overlooked, and who are exposed to oppression and wrong.

Verse 14

He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence - He will rescue their lives; that is, he will deliver them from the hands of men who practice deceit, or who are dishonest and unjust - and from the hands of those who oppress. This is stating in another form the idea that his reign would be one of equity, protecting the rights of the poor, and delivering the oppressed.

And precious shall their blood be in his sight - That is, so precious that he will not permit it to be shed unjustly, but will come to their rescue when their life is in danger; or, that - being shed - he will regard it as so

valuable that he will not permit it to go unavenged. He will never be indifferent to their safety, or their reputation.

Verse 15

And he shall live - So far as the lanquage here is concerned, this may either refer to the king - the Messiah - or to the poor and the oppressed man. If the former, then it means that the life of the Messiah would be perpetual; that he would not be cut off as other sovereigns are; that there would be no change of dynasty; that he would be, as a king, the same - unchanging and unchanged - in all the generations of people, and in all the revolutions which occur on the earth. This would accord with the truth, and with what is elsewhere said of the Messiah; but, perhaps, the more correct interpretation is the latter - that it refers to the poor and the oppressed man - meaning that he would live to bring an offering to the Messiah, and to pray for the extension of his kingdom upon the earth.

And to him shall be given - Margin, "one shall give." Literally, "he shall give to him;" that is, the man who has enjoyed his protection, and who has been saved by him, will do this. As a token of his gratitude, and as an expression of his submission, he will bring to him a costly offering, the gold of Sheba.

Of the gold of Sheba - One of the gifts referred to in Psalm 72:10, as coming from Sheba. Compare Isaiah 43:3; Isaiah 45:14. The meaning is, that those who are redeemed by him - who owe so much to him for protecting and saving them - will bring the most valued things of the earth, or will consecrate to him all that they are, and all that they possess. Compare Isaiah 60:5-7, Isaiah 60:13-17.

Prayer also shall be made for him continually - Not for him personally, but for the success of his reign, for the extension of his kingdom. Prayer made for "that" is made for "him," for he is identified with that.

And daily shall he be praised - Every day; constantly. It will not be only at stated and distant intervals - at set seasons, and on special occasions - but those who love him will do it every day. It is not necessary to say that this accords with the truth in reference to those who are the friends and followers of the Messiah - the Lord Jesus. Their lives are lives of praise and gratitude. From their dwellings daily praise ascends to him; from their hearts praise is constant; praise uttered in the closet and in the family; praise breathed forth from the heart, whether on the farm, in the workshop, on a

journey, or in the busy marts of commerce. The time will come when this shall be universal; when he who can take in at a glance the condition of the world, will see it to be a world of praise; when he who looks on all hearts at the same moment will see a world full of thankfulness.

Verse 16

There shall be an handful of corn - "Of grain," for so the word means in the Scriptures. The "general" idea in this verse is plain. It is, that, in the time of the Messiah, there would be an ample supply of the fruits of the earth; or that his reign would tend to the promotion of prosperity, industry, abundance. It would be as if fields of grain waved everywhere, even on the tops of mountains, or as if the hills were cultivated to the very summit, so that the whole land would be covered over with waving, smiling harvests. There is a difference of opinion, however, and consequently of interpretation, as to the meaning of the word rendered "handful." This word - פסה *pissâh* - occurs nowhere else, and it is impossible, therefore, to determine its exact meaning. By some it is rendered "handful;" by others, "abundance." The former interpretation is adopted by Prof. Alexander, and is found in the older interpreters generally; the latter is the opinion of Gesenius, DeWette, and most modern expositors.

It is also the interpretation in the Syriac. The Vulgate and the Septuagint render it "strength" - meaning something "firm" or "secure," *"firmamentum,"* στήριγμα *stērigma* According to the explanation which regards the word as meaning "handful," the idea is, that there would be a great contrast between the small beginnings of the Messiah's reign and its ultimate triumph - as if a mere handful of grain were sown on the top of a mountain - on a place little likely to produce anything - a place usually barren and unproductive - which would grow into an abundant harvest, so that it would wave everywhere like the cedar trees of Lebanon. According to the other interpretation, the idea is simply that there would be an "abundance" in the land. The whole land would be cultivated, even to the tops of the hills, and the evidences of plenty would be seen everywhere. It is impossible to determine which of these is the correct idea; but both agree in that which is essential - that the reign of the Messiah would be one of peace and plenty. The former interpretation is the most poetic, and the most beautiful. It accords, also, with other representations - as in the parable of the grain of mustard-seed, and the parable of the leaven; and it accords, also, with the fact that the beginning of the Gospel was small in comparison

with what would be the ultimate result. This would seem to render that interpretation the most probable.

In the earth - In the land; the land of Canaan; the place where the kingdom of the Messiah would be set up.

Upon the top of the mountains - In places "like" the tops of mountains. The mountains and hills were seldom cultivated to the tops. Yet here the idea is, that the state of things under the Messiah would be as if a handful of grain were sown in the place most unlikely to produce a harvest, or which no one thought of cultivating. No one needs to be told how well this would represent the cold and barren human heart in general; or the state of the Jewish world in respect to true religion, at the time when the Saviour appeared.

The fruit thereof - That which would spring up from the mere handful of grain thus sown.

Shall shake like Lebanon - Like the cedar trees of Lebanon. The harvest will wave as those tall and stately trees do. This is an image designed to show that the growth would be strong and abundant, far beyond what could have been anticipated from the small quantity of the seed sown, and the barrenness of the soil. The word rendered "shake" means more than is implied in our word "shake" or "wave." It conveys also the idea of a rushing sound, such as that which whistles among cedar or pine trees. "The origin of the Hebrew verb," says Gesenius, "and its primary idea lies in the "noise" and "crashing" which is made by concussion." Hence, it is used to denote the "rustling" motion of grain waving in the wind, and the sound of the wind whistling through trees when they are agitated by it.

And they of the city - Most interpreters suppose that this refers to Jerusalem, as the center of the Messiah's kingdom. It seems more probable, however, that it is not designed to refer to Jerusalem, or to any particular city, but to stand in contrast with the top of the mountain. Cities and hills would alike flourish; there would be prosperity everywhere - in barren and unpopulated wastes, and in places where people had been congregated together. The "figure" is changed, as is not uncommon, but the "idea" is retained. The indications of prosperity would be apparent everywhere.

Shall flourish like grass of the earth - As grass springs out of the ground, producing the idea of beauty and plenty. See the notes at Isaiah 44:3-4.

Verse 17

His name shall endure for ever - Margin, as in Hebrew, "Shall be forever;" that is, "He" shall endure forever.

His name shall be continued as long as the sun - As long as that continues to shine - an expression designed to express perpetuity. See the notes at Psalm 72:5. The margin here is, "shall be as a son to continue his father's name forever." The Hebrew word - נון *nûn* - means "to sprout, to put forth;" and hence, to "flourish." The idea is that of a tree which continues always to sprout, or put forth leaves, branches, blossoms; or, which never dies.

And men shall be blessed in him - See Genesis 12:3; Genesis 22:18. He will be a source of blessing to them, in the pardon of sin; in happiness; in peace; in salvation.

All nations shall call him blessed - Shall praise him; shall speak of him as the source of their highest comforts, joys, and hopes. See Luke 19:38; Matthew 21:9; Matthew 23:39. The time will come when all the nations of the earth will honor and praise him.

Verse 18

Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel - The God who rules over Israel; the God who is worshipped by the Hebrew people, and who is recognized as their God. They adore him as the true God; and he "is" their God, their Protector, their Friend.

Who only doeth wondrous things - Things that can properly be regarded as "wonders;" things suited to excite admiration by their vastness and power. Compare Exodus 15:11.

Verse 19

And blessed be his glorious name for ever - The name by which he is known - referring perhaps particularly to his name "Yahweh." Still the prayer would be, that all the names by which he is known, all by which he has revealed himself, might be regarded with veneration always and everywhere.

And let the whole earth be filled with his glory - With the knowledge of himself; with the manifestations of his presence; with the influences of his religion. Compare Numbers 14:21. This prayer was especially appropriate at the close of a psalm designed to celebrate the glorious reign of the Messiah. Under that reign the earth will be, in fact, filled with the glory of God; the world will be a world of glory. Assuredly all who love God, and who love mankind, all who desire that God may be honored, and

that the world may be blessed and happy, will unite in this fervent prayer, and reecho the hearty "Amen and amen" of the psalmist.

Amen, and amen - So be it. Let this occur. Let this time come. The expression is doubled to denote intensity of feeling. It is the going out of a heart full of desire that this might be so.

Verse 20

The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended - This is not found in the Syriac. The following is added in that version at the close of the psalm: "The end of the Second Book." In regard to this twentieth verse, it is quite clear that it is no part of the psalm; and it is every way probable that it was not placed here by the author of the psalm, and also that it has no special and exclusive reference to this psalm, for the psalm could in no special sense be called "a prayer of David." The words bear all the marks of having been placed at the close of a collection of psalms, or a division of the Book of Psalms, to which might be given as an appropriate designation, the title "The Prayers of David, the son of Jesse;" meaning that that book, or that division of the book, was made up of the compositions of David, and might be thus distinguished from other portions of the general collection. This would not imply that in this part of the collection there were literally no other psalms than those which had been composed by David, or that none of the psalms of David might be found in other parts of the general collection, but that this division was more entirely made up of his psalms, and that the name might therefore be given to this as his collection. It may be fairly inferred from this, that there was such a collection, or that there were, in the Book of Psalms, divisions which were early recognized. See the General Introduction. Dr. Horsley supposes, however, that this declaration, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended," pertains to this psalm alone, as if David had nothing more to pray for or to wish than what was expressed in these glowing representations of the kingdom of the Messiah, and of the happy times which would be enjoyed under his rule.

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PSALM 73

Introduction

This psalm (with the ten succeeding psalms, together with Psalm 79:1-13; 80; could not be his, for it is alleged that they refer to events long subsequent to his age. There seems to be no objection, however, to the supposition that this psalm was composed by him, as it has no particular reference to any particular age or country, but is made up of general reflections, which might have arisen in any age, or in any land.

Respecting the particular occasion on which the psalm was composed we have no information. It was in view of the prosperity of the wicked, and suggests the reflections which troubled the writer in regard to the divine administration in view of that prosperity. The thoughts which are recorded are such as might occur to any mind, and do often occur, arising from the fact that wicked people are so successful and so happy in the world, living in prosperity, and dying apparently without pain or alarm, while So many of the good are poor and sorrowful in their lives, and their whole course on earth is one of so much grief and sorrow. Such thoughts as are expressed in this psalm will often cross the mind, and the question will arise why God permits this; whether there is any advantage in being good; and whether that God who sees this, and permits this, can be just and benevolent - the friend of the righteous, and the enemy of the wicked - or whether there is any God. The psalm describes these feelings, and shows how the difficulties were solved in the case of its author, suggesting as the solution, that this is not the world of retribution; that there is a future state where exact justice will be done, and where all the inequalities of the present system will be adjusted. In that future world - "in eternity" - there will be ample time and room to make such an adjustment; to do exact justice to all. The "idea" in the psalm is, that these things cannot be explained except on the supposition that there is a future state; and the psalm, therefore, is an argument for a future state of existence. The affairs of earth cannot be explained, and the character of God cannot be vindicated, except on that supposition.

The psalm in its general structure and design bears a strong resemblance to Psalm 73:17; in the former case - Psalm 37:10-11, Psalm 37:20, Psalm 37:23-25, Psalm 37:35-37. The idea in both is, that the ultimate effect of goodness or piety must be happiness; the ultimate effect of sin must be

misery. The author of one of these psalms finds this solution in the present life; the author of the other, in the life to come. In either case, the character of God is vindicated, and the troubled feelings of the soul calmed down.

The general "idea" in the psalm is stated in the first verse, that "God is good to Israel, to such as are of a clean heart;" that is, that he is the true friend of the righteous, or that his administration is in favor of virtue, or in favor of those who are righteous. The psalm states the process by which the writer came to this conclusion; the mental conflicts through which he passed before this result was reached; his own agitation of mind, and the difficulties he saw in the subject, in view of the facts which exist in this world. His mind had been greatly perplexed when he had meditated on the subject, and the mental conflict had gone so far with him as almost to lead him to abandon the idea that there was a God, or that there was anything in religion, and to conclude that it was all a delusion.

The psalm, therefore, consists of the following parts:

I. The statement of the general proposition that the divine administration is favorable to virtue, or that there is a God who presides in the affairs of people, Psalm 73:1.

II. The facts which the psalmist had observed, out of which his doubts had sprung, or which had given him so much perplexity and trouble, Psalm 73:2-14. Those facts were, that the wicked seemed to be prosperous and happy; that they lived without trouble, and died without any tokens of the divine disapproval; that their eyes stood out with fatness, and that they had more than heart could desire; that they set their mouths against the heavens, and were proud blasphemers, while God took no notice of them, or manifested no disapprobation; that they contemned God, and yet were prospered in the world, while, on the other hand, he himself - the psalmist - was chastened, and afflicted, and plagued - suggesting the idea that there could be no advantage in piety, and that all his anxiety to have pure hands and a pure heart was in vain.

III. The statement of his purpose to conceal his feelings on the subject, lest he should do injury to those who had not these troublesome thoughts,

but who endeavored in humility to serve God, Psalm 73:15. He had thoughts which he did not consider it proper to make known to others - thoughts which would only pain them, or unsettle their faith in God, without doing any good.

IV. The means by which his mind had been made calm on the subject, and his difficulties solved, Psalm 73:17-20. He had gone to the sanctuary; he had looked at the end of these things; he had seen what was to be the result; he had been instructed to look forward to a time when all these inequalities would be adjusted, and when, in the punishment of the wicked, it would be seen that there is a God, and that he is just.

V. He now condemns his own former folly, and sees that his conduct had been wholly irrational; that his views had been short-sighted; that he had been stupid, like a beast, in the low conceptions which he had taken of God, Psalm 73:21-22.

VI. In view of all, the psalmist now commits himself to God. He sees that there is reason to trust in him. He resolves to murmur or complain no more. He finds his portion in God. He believes that God will guide him by his counsel, and ultimately receive him to glory. He says that there is none in heaven or on earth that he desires beside him. He is cheered with the thought that when his strength and heart should fail, God would be the strength of his heart, and his portion forever. He would, therefore, henceforth, confide in the Lord God, Psalm 73:23-28.

Verse 1

Truly God is good to Israel - That is, to his people; to the righteous; to those who serve him. That is, God is the "real" friend of the righteous. He has not forgotten them. He does not abandon them. He is not indifferent to them. He is not the friend of wicked people; and the administration of his government is not in favor of wickedness. After all that seems to indicate this, after all that troubles the mind in regard to his dealings, it is a truth that God is the friend of righteousness, and not of wickedness, and that there is advantage in his service. To see the force of what is said here by the psalmist we must realize that the train of thought in the psalm had passed through his mind, and that his perplexities had been relieved in the manner

specified in the psalm. The margin here is "yet;" "yet God is good to Israel." This word "yet" would, in this place, be a happy translation. The psalmist then would be represented as having been engaged in meditating on the subject and in looking at all its perplexities, and then he says, "Yet God is good; notwithstanding all the difficulties in the case, it is nevertheless true that he is the friend of his people - the friend of righteousness."

Even to such as are of a clean heart - Margin, as in Hebrew, "clean of heart." See Psalm 73:13. The reference is to those who are truly righteous, for all true righteousness has its seat in the heart. See Psalm 51:10.

Verse 2

But as for me - literally, "And I." The meaning is, "And I, who so confidently now trust in God, and believe that he is good, was formerly in a far different state of mind; I was so hesitating, so troubled, and so doubtful, that I had almost entirely lost confidence in him as a wise and just moral governor."

My feet were almost gone - I was just ready to fall. Of course, this refers to his state of mind. In regard to his faith or confidence in God, he was like a man standing in a slippery place, and scarcely able to remain upright.

My steps had well nigh slipped - The expression rendered "well nigh" means "like nothing," or "as nothing;" that is, in reference to firmness it was as if there was "nothing" left. There was nothing which would keep him from slipping. The word rendered "slipped" means "poured out." That is, in his going he was like water poured out, instead of being like something solid and firm. The idea is, that his faith seemed to be all gone. He was like a falling man; a man who had no strength to walk.

Verse 3

For I was envious at the foolish - The word "foolish" here refers to sinners. It may either refer to them as foolish, or as proud, insolent, vain - for so the word is elsewhere used. See Psalm 14:1.

When I saw the prosperity of the wicked - More literally, "the peace of the wicked." The reference is not so much to their prosperity in general as to their peace; their conscious safety; their freedom from trouble; and especially their calmness, and their freedom from suffering, in death. From all this he was led for the moment to doubt whether there was any

advantage in religion; whether God was just; and whether he befriended the righteous anymore than he did the wicked.

Verse 4

For there are no bands in their death - The word rendered "bands" here means properly "cords tightly drawn," Isaiah 58:6; then, pains, pangs, torments - "as if" one were twisted or tortured with pain, as a cord is closely twisted. The word occurs only in Isaiah 58:6, and in this place. The fact which is here referred to by the psalmist, and which gave him so much uneasiness, was that which so often occurs, that when the wicked die, they do not seem to suffer in proportion to their wickedness; or there seem to be no special marks of the divine displeasure as they are about to leave the world. They have lived in prosperity, and they die in peace. There is no uncommon agony in death; there is no special alarm about the future world. They have enjoyed this world, and a sinful life seems now to be followed by a peaceful death. They do not even suffer as much in death as good people often do; - what then is the advantage of piety? And how can we believe that God is just; or that he is the friend of the righteous; or even that there is a God? Of the fact here adverted to by the psalmist, that the wicked do thus live and die, there can be no doubt, and that fact has given perplexity to good people in all ages of the world.

But their strength is firm - Margin, as in Hebrew, "fat." That is, They are not emaciated and weakened by disease, but they go down to death apparently from good health, and without wasting disease. See the notes at Job 21:23-26.

Verse 5

They are not in trouble as other men - Margin, "In the trouble of other men." Literally, "In the labor of man they are not;" that is, they are exempt from the common burdens and troubles of humanity, or those which pertain to man as man. There seems to be some special interposition in their favor to save them from the common calamities which come upon the race.

Neither are they plagued like other men - Margin, "with." Literally, "And with mankind they are not afflicted," or smitten. The calamities which come so thickly and heavily on the race do not seem to come upon them. They are favored, prospered, happy, while others are afflicted.

Verse 6

Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain - Therefore they are proud, haughty, imperious. They put on the ornaments and trappings of

pride; their clothing and their adorning all are indicative of a proud heart. They seem to imagine that they are better than others, and that they are treated in this manner "because" they are better than others. In the original it is a single word which is rendered "compasseth about as a chain." The word means "to adorn with a necklace or collar;" and the idea is, that pride surrounds them as with a neck-chain, or a collar for the neck. They wear it as an ornament. They make it conspicuous. It is apparent on a haughty neck - in an erect and stiff demeanour. Compare the notes at Isaiah 3:16: "The daughters of Zion walk with stretched forth necks."

Violence covereth them as a garment - Injustice or cruelty seems to be their very clothing. It is manifest in their whole gait and demeanor that they are men of haughtiness and pride; that they are destitute of tenderness, sympathy, sensibility.

Verse 7

Their eyes stand out with fatness - As the fruit of their high living. They are not weakened and emaciated by toil and want, as other men often are. Compare the notes at Psalm 17:10.

They have more than heart could wish - Margin, "they pass the thoughts of the heart." Literally, "the imaginations or thoughts of the heart pass;" pass along; pass forth. The meaning seems to be, not that they have more than heart could desire, as in our translation - for that would not probably be true; nor, that the thoughts of the heart are "disclosed," as Prof. Alexander supposes - for that idea does not seem to be in the language; but that their thoughts, their plans, their purposes, pass freely along without any obstruction; their wishes are all gratified; their purposes are accomplished; they have all that they wish. Whatever comes into the mind as an object of desire is obtained without hindrance or trouble. They seem only to wish for a thing, or to think of a thing, and they have it.

Verse 8

They are corrupt - literally, "they mock." The word rendered "they are corrupt" never has this signification. It is the very word - מוק *mûq* - from which our word mock is derived, and means the same thing. The idea is that they deride religion, or mock at all that pertains to God, and to the retributions of the future world.

And speak wickedly concerning oppression … - literally, "they speak in wickedness; oppression they speak from on high." That is, they use arrogant language; they speak in a proud manner, as if they were above

others; they use harsh and violent language, not regarding the feelings or the rights of others.

Verse 9

They set their mouth against the heavens - Compare Revelation 13:6. Literally, "They set their mouth in heaven," or in the heavens. The idea is, they speak as if they were "in" the heavens; as if they were clothed with all authority; as if they were superior beings, and had a right to command the universe.

And their tongue walketh through the earth - It has no limit; it is as if it roamed over all the earth. They speak without any restraint of law, or propriety; without any regard to the command of God, or to what is due to people, In other words, they seem to set themselves above all law, and to act as if there were no one in heaven or in earth to control them.

Verse 10

Therefore his people - Those that truly love God; the pious in the earth.

Return hither - Return to this subject. In their musings - their meditations on divine things - they come back to this inquiry. The subject occupies their minds, and they recur to it as a subject which perplexes them; as a thing that is incomprehensible. They think it over again and again, and are more and more perplexed and embarrassed. The difficulties which these facts suggest about God and his government are such that they cannot solve them.

And waters of a full cup are wrung out to them - literally, "waters of fullness;" or, full waters. The Chaldee renders this, "Many tears flow from them." The Septuagint, and the Latin Vulgate, "And full days shall be found by them." The word rendered "are wrung out" - from מצה *mâtsâh* - means properly to "suck;" then, to suck out; to drink greedily. See Isaiah 51:17. It is applied to one who drinks greedily of an intoxicating cup; and then, to one who drinks a cup of poison to the dregs. Psalm 75:8. The meaning here is, that the facts in the case, and the questions which arose in regard to those facts, and which so perplexed them, were like a bitter cup; a cup of poison, or an intoxicating cup which overpowered their faculties - and that they, in their perplexities, "exhausted" the cup. They drank it all, even to the dregs. They did not merely taste it; but they drank it. It was a subject full of perplexity; a subject that wholly overpowered all their faculties, and "exhausted" all their powers.

Verse 11

And they say - His people say. The connection demands this interpretation. The meaning is, that his people, as they return again and again to this subject Psalm 73:10, are constrained to put this question. They are compelled by these facts to start such painful inquiries about God; and distressing as the inquiries are, and as are the doubts which they involve, these thoughts will pass through their mind, even though to avoid giving needless pain to those who have no such perplexities and difficulties they keep these thoughts to themselves, Psalm 73:15.

How doth God know? - That is, How can these facts be reconciled with God‘s omniscience? How can it be that he sees all this, and yet suffers it to occur, or that he does not interpose to prevent it? Is it not a fair inference from these facts that God does “not” see them, and that he is “not” an Omniscient Being? Can it be explained, can it be believed, that God sees all this, and that he calmly looks on, and does nothing to prevent it? If he sees it, why does he not interpose and put an end to it? These perplexities were not confined to the psalmist. They are such as have been felt by good people in all ages; and no one yet has been able to furnish a solution of them that is wholly free from difficulty.

And is there knowledge in the Most High? - Can there be in God a knowledge of these facts? Are we not driven to the conclusion that he must be ignorant of them? for, if he knew them, would he not interpose to prevent them? How “can” it be consistent with the idea that he “knows” them, and “sees” them, that he does “not” interpose, and that he suffers these things to take place without any attempt to check such evils? Who, even now, can answer these questions?

Verse 12

Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world - This is also to be understood as the language of the good man perplexed and embarrassed by the fact that the wicked are prosperous and happy. The meaning is, “Lo, these are wicked people - people of undoubted depravity; they are people who live regardless of God; and yet they are peaceful, tranquil, happy, prospered.” This was one of the facts which so much embarrassed the psalmist. If there had been any doubt about the character of those people, the case would have been different. But there was none. They were people whose character for wickedness was well known, and yet they were permitted to live in peace and prosperity, as if they were the favorites of heaven. The literal meaning of the words rendered “who prosper in the

world" is, "tranquil (or secure) for the age;" that is, forever, or constantly. They know no changes; they see no reverses; they are the same through life. They are always tranquil, calm, happy, successful.

They increase in riches - literally, "They become great in substance." They make constant accumulations in wealth, until they become great.

Verse 13

Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain - That is, There is no advantage in all my efforts to become pure and holy. It does not assist me in obtaining the favor of God; and it would be just as well to live a sinful life - to indulge in the pleasures of sense - to make the world my portion. Nothing is to be gained by all my painful efforts at self-discipline; by all my endeavors to become righteous. It would have been as well for me - or better - if I had lived a life of sin like other people. The righteous obtain from God fewer blessings than the wicked; they have less happiness and less prosperity in this world; they are subjected to more trouble and sorrow; and to all else there must be added the struggles, the conflict, the warfare, the painful effort "to be" pure, and to lead a holy life, all of which is now seen to be of no advantage whatever. Such thoughts as these were not confined to the psalmist. They are thoughts which will start up in the mind, and which it is not easy to calm down.

And washed my hands in innocency - That is, It has been of no use that I have washed my hands in innocency. The word "innocency" here means "purity." He had washed his hands in that which was pure; as, pure water. To wash the hands is emblematic of innocence or purity. See the notes at Psalm 26:6.

Verse 14

For all the day long - Continually. All my life.

Have I been plagued - Smitten; afflicted; troubled. My life has been a life of trial. I have not known prosperity.

And chastened every morning - Margin, as in Hebrew, "My chastisement was." That is, my sufferings - my trials - have been repeated with every returning morning. Each new day has brought some new form of affliction, designed to rebuke and punish me. I never have found exemption from trial even for a single day. So different is my lot from the lot of wicked people, who know nothing of this, and who are always prospered and happy. See the notes at Job 7:18.

Verse 15

If I say, I will speak thus - If I should resolve to give expression to my feelings. If I should utter all that is passing in my mind and my heart. It is implied here that he had "not" given utterance to these thoughts, but had confined them to his own bosom. He knew how they might be regarded by others; how others might be led to feel as if no confidence was to be placed in God; how this might suggest thoughts to them which would not otherwise occur to them, and which would only tend to fill their minds with distress; how such thoughts might unsettle the foundations of their faith, their peace, their hope, and their joy.

I should offend against the generation of thy children - The word rendered "I should offend," means to treat perfidiously, or in a faithless or treacherous manner. Then it means, "to deal falsely with." And this is the meaning here; "I should not be "true" to them; I should not be "faithful" to their real interests; I should do that which would be equivalent to dealing with them in a false and perfidious manner." The idea is, that he "ought" not to say or do anything which would tend to lessen their confidence in God, or which would suggest to their minds grounds of distrust in God, or which would disturb their peace and hope. This was alike an act of justice and benevolence on his part. Whatever might be his own troubles and doubts, he had no "right" to fill their minds with doubts and distrust of God; and he felt that, as it was desirable that the minds of others should not be harassed as his own had been, it could not be kind to suggest such thoughts.

This, however, should not forbid anyone from mentioning such difficulties to another for the purpose of having them removed. If they occur to the mind, as they may to the minds of any, however sincere and pious they may be, nothing can make it improper that they should be laid before one of greater age, or longer experience, or wider opportunities of knowledge, in order that the difficulties may be solved. Nothing can make it improper for a child to have recourse thus to a parent - or a member of a church, to a pastor. If, however, these doubts can be calmed down otherwise, it is better that they should be mentioned to no one. Some little additional strength may be given them even by dwelling on them long enough to mention them to another, and by putting them in such a form that they would be understood by another; and the true way is to go to God with them by prayer, and to spread them out before the mercy-seat. Prayer, and a careful study of the word of God may calm them down without their being suggested to any human being. At any rate, they should not be suggested at

all to the young, or to those with fewer advantages of education, or of less experience than we have had, on whom the only effect would be to fill their minds with doubts which they could not solve - and with thoughts tending only to perplexity and unbelief - such as would never have occurred to themselves.

Verse 16

When I thought to know this - When I endeavored to comprehend this, or to explain it to myself. The idea is that he "thought" on the subject, or "meditated" on it with a view to be able to understand it. He did not express his opinions and feelings to others, but he dwelt on them in his own mind; not to find additional difficulties, not to confirm himself in opposition to God, and not to find new occasions for distrusting the divine government, but to understand exactly how this was. It was his object to seek and understand "the truth."

It was too painful for me - Margin, "It was labor in mine eyes." The Hebrew word rendered "painful," means properly labor, toil, a burden; and the idea is, that the question was a burden - was too weighty for his weak powers.

Verse 17

Until I went into the sanctuary of God - The word "sanctuary" we now apply to a place of public worship; and, thus understood, the passage here would mean that he learned the truth on the subject only by the statements and disclosures made there in regard to the divine plans and dealings, and the results of human conduct. This interpretation makes good sense, and is in itself true, but it is not the idea in the original. The word "sanctuary" in the Old Testament, in the singular number, is applied to the tabernacle, or the temple, or, more especially to the most holy place in the tabernacle or the temple; the place of the unique dwelling of God. Thus understood the idea would be that he learned the solution of the mystery "there." But these were not places of instruction, and it cannot be supposed that the reference is to either of them. The word in the original is in the plural number - sanctuaries - things that God regarded as holy; and the meaning seems to be, that the only solution of the case was to be learned from those things which pertained to God‘s most holy and secret places; or in those places which were nearest to him, and where he most clearly manifested himself. The difficulty was not to be solved by any mere human

reasoning - by the powers of man, away from God; it was to be learned in the presence of God himself, and in the disclosures which He made about his divine plans and purposes. The psalmist had tried his own powers of reason, and the subject was above his reach. The only solution of the difficulty was to be obtained by a near approach to God himself. There the mystery could be solved, and there it was solved. The "end" of all this, as disclosed by God, would determine why, it was permitted, and would remove the perplexity of the mind.

Then understood I their end - literally, their after things; that is, the things which will occur to them hereafter. That solves all the difficulty. There will be a judgment hereafter, and dark as things may now appear, it will be seen in the end, or in the result, that exact and equal justice will be done to all.

Verse 18

Surely thou didst set them in slippery places - Not in a solid and permanent position; not where their foothold would be secure, but as on smooth and slippery rocks, where they would be liable any moment to fall into the foaming billows. However prosperous their condition may seem to be now, yet it is a condition of uncertainty and danger, from which they must soon fall into ruin. In their prosperity there is nothing of permanence or Stability; and this fact will explain the difficulty.

Thou castedst them down into destruction - They are placed, not in a permanent condition, but in a condition from which they will be cast down to destruction. Ruin is before them; and the end will demonstrate the justice of God. Nothing can be determined from their present condition as to the question which caused so much perplexity, but in order to a proper solution we must wait to see the end. As an illustration of this, see the interesting account of the interview between Solon of Athens, and Croesus, the rich king of Lydia, as given in Herodotus, book i., 30-33.

Verse 19

How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! - How suddenly and unexpectedly does destruction come upon them! Nothing can be argued from their apparent prosperity, for there is no ground of security in "that," no basis for an argument that it will continue. The end must be seen in order to form a correct estimate on the subject, and that end may soon come. Compare the notes at Job 15:20-21.

They are utterly consumed with terrors - literally, "they perish; they are destroyed by terrors;" that is, by terrible things, or by things suited to produce terror in the mind. The idea is not that they are destroyed by their own fears, but that things come upon them which are suited to overwhelm the soul, and that by those things they are utterly destroyed. It is by this result that we are to determine in regard to the equity of the divine administration, and not by their prosperity and their apparent safety.

Verse 20

As a dream when one awaketh - Their prosperity is like the visions of a dream; the reality is seen when one awakes. A man in a dream may imagine that he is a king; that he dwells in a palace; that he is surrounded by flatterers and courtiers; that he walks in pleasant groves, listens to the sounds of sweet music, sits down at a table loaded with the luxuries of all climes, and lies upon a bed of down. He may awake only to find that he is encompassed with poverty, or that he is on a bed of languishing, or that he is the miserable tenant of a hovel or a dungeon. The reality is when he awakes. So it is in regard to our present condition on earth. The reality is seen when the dream - the gorgeous dream - of life is over.

So, O Lord, when thou awakest - The Hebrew expression here - בעיר *bāʿîyr* - occurs in more than fifty other places in the Scriptures, and is in all these places translated "in the city." This interpretation, however, would be quite unmeaning here, and the probability is that the expression is a form of the verb עור *ʿûr* "to awake, to arouse;" and the idea is not, as in our version, that of "God's" awaking as if he had been asleep, but it refers to the dreamer when he shall awake. It is, literally, in the awaking; that is, when the dream is over.

Thou shalt despise their image - The image that floated before their imaginations in the dream of life. Thou wilt pay no attention to it; there is no reality in it; it will at once vanish. In the future world, God will pay no regard to the dreams of human life, to the outward show, to the appearance; but the affairs of eternity will be regulated by what is real - by that which constitutes the character of the man. By that, and not by the vain dreams of the world, will the destiny of people be determined. We are to look at "that" in determining the question about the government of God, and not at what "appears" in the brief dream of life.

Verse 21

Thus my heart was grieved - literally, and more expressively, "was soured." The meaning is, that his heart was grieved, pained, dissatisfied. His mind was embittered, and he was rendered unhappy, by the views which he cherished about God, as doubting the wisdom and justice of his dealings with people - and about people, as being envious at their prosperity.

And I was pricked in my reins - The reins are often in the Scriptures represented as the seat of the thoughts or affections. See the notes at Psalm 7:9. The word rendered "pricked" means to sharpen, as a sword; and then, to pierce and penetrate as a sword does. The idea is, that these thoughts, so distressing and painful, seemed to be like a sharp sword penetrating to the seat of life.

Verse 22

So foolish was I, and ignorant - Such low and imperfect views did I take of the subject. The margin is, "I knew not." So the Hebrew: "And I am brutish, and know not;" that is, I did not understand the case; I had no correct views in regard to it.

I was as a beast before thee - Margin, as in Hebrew, "with thee." That is, in thy very presence; or, I was guilty of such foolishness in the very presence of my Maker. If it had been when I was alone, or when no one saw me, the folly would not have been so aggravated, and so much to be regretted, but it was when the very eye of God was upon me. Compare Isaiah 1:7; Jeremiah 7:30; Jeremiah 18:10; Psalm 51:4. When he says that he was as a beast, he means that he was stupid and senseless; he had no proper understanding of the case; he did not take any just views of it.

Verse 23

Nevertheless, I am continually with thee - I am kept by thee in the land of the living; I am permitted to abide in thy presence; I am allowed to hope in thy mercy. Notwithstanding my low and unworthy views, notwithstanding my doubts about the justice of the divine administration, notwithstanding my envy at the prosperity of the wicked, and my spirit of complaining against God, I am not driven away from God; I am not banished from his presence, or cut off from his favor. Well may we marvel when we reflect on our thoughts about God, that He has not risen in his anger, and banished us from his presence forever and ever.

Thou hast holden me by my right hand - Thou hast not left me. Thou hast stretched out thy hand to keep me. Thou hast been to me as, a Protector

and Friend. Thou hast not been angry at my unkind and ungrateful thoughts; thou hast not banished me eternally from thy presence.

Verse 24

Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel - With thy advice; with thy teaching. This implies two things:

(a) his belief that God "would" do this, notwithstanding his folly; and

(b) his purpose that God "should" be his guide now.

He would no longer murmur or complain, but would entrust all to God, and allow himself to be led as God should be pleased to direct him.

And afterward receive me to glory - After thou hast led me along the path of the present life in the way in which thou wouldst have me to go, thou wilt then receive me to thyself in heaven - to a world where all shall be clear; where I shall never have any doubts in regard to thy being, to the justice of thy dispensations, or to the principles of thy government.

Verse 25

whom have I in heaven but thee? - literally, "Who is to me in the heavens?" That is, There is no one there that in my love for him can be compared with thee; no one who can do for me what thou canst do; no one who can meet and satisfy the needs of my soul as thou canst; no one who can be to me what God "is" - what a God "must" be. After all my complaining and my doubts there is no one, not even in the heavens, who cant supply the place of "God," or be to me what God is; and the warm affections of my soul, therefore, are "really" toward him. I feel my need of him; and I must and do find my supreme happiness in him. What would even heaven be to me without God? who there, even of the angels of light, could supply the place of God?

And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee - That is, Thou art all-sufficient; thou dost meet and satisfy the needs of my nature. All my happiness is in thee; no one on earth could be substituted in thy place, or be to me what thou art as God.

Verse 26

My flesh and my heart faileth - Flesh and heart here seem to refer to the whole man, body and soul; and the idea is, that his powers of body and mind failed; were spent; were exhausted. This seems to have been said in an "ideal" sense, or by anticipation. He does not mean to say that his strength

then had actually failed, but he seems to have placed himself by imagination in the situation where his strength "would" be all gone - in sickness, in weakness, in sorrow, on the bed of death. He asks himself now what would be his strength then - what would be the object of chief interest and love - on what he would rely; and he answers without hesitation, and with entire confidence, that he could rely on God, and that He would be his portion forever. Even then, when heart and flesh should fail, when all the powers of mind and body should be exhausted, the love of God would survive, and he would find strength and joy in Him.

But God is the strength of my heart - Margin, as in Hebrew, "rock;" the rock on which my heart relies; that is, my refuge, my defense. See the notes at Psalm 18:2. Compare Psalm 61:2.

And my portion for ever - The source of my happiness. Not wealth, then; not honor; not earthly friends; not fame - will be my reliance and the ground of my hope; but that which I shall regard as most valuable - my supreme joy and rejoicing - will be the fact that God is my friend and portion. With all the doubts which I have had in regard to the rectitude of his government, I am sure that when I come to die, I shall cling to him as my hope, my joy, my all. My last refuge - my sufficient refuge - is God. When people come to die, they have "no other refuge" but God. Nothing that they can accumulate of this world's goods will meet their needs then, for God only can give strength and comfort on the bed of death. Of each and all, however vigorous they may now be, it will be true that "flesh and heart" will "fail;" of each and all it is true that when this shall occur, none but God can be the portion and the strength of the soul.

Verse 27

For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish - All that are estranged from thee; all who are not thy friends. They will certainly be destroyed. For them there can be no hope. This is the fact which solved the difficulty of the psalmist in regard to the divine dealings with people, Psalm 73:3-7. The fact that there will be a righteous judgment, in which God will deal with people according to their deserts, made all plain. Compare Psalm 73:16-20.

Thou hast destroyed - That is, Thou wilt certainly destroy. The psalmist places himself in the future, and speaks of this as if it were already done. It will be so certainly done that he could speak of it as if it were already accomplished.

All them that go a whoring from thee - The relation of God to his people is often compared in the Scriptures with the marriage relation (compare Matthew 12:39; Matthew 16:4; Jeremiah 3:8-9; Jeremiah 5:7; Jeremiah 13:27; Ezekiel 23:37; Revelation 2:22:

Verse 28

But it is good for me to draw near to God - That is, It is pleasant; it is profitable; it is the chief good. For myself, happiness is to be found in that alone; there I find what my nature pants for and desires. Others find, or attempt to find, happiness in other things; my happiness is found in God alone. This is the result to which the psalmist came after all his perplexity. With all his doubts and difficulties, his real desire was to be near to God; his supreme happiness was found there.

I have put my trust in the Lord God - I have truly confided in him; he is my portion and the sole ground of my reliance. The doubts which he had had were not, after all, real doubts about the claim of God to confidence. There was an underlying trust in God in the midst of all this. He had not desired to cherish such doubts; he did, on the most calm reflection, still trust in God.

That I may declare all thy works - That I might make known thy doings toward the children of men. I have desired rightly to understand thee and thy government, that I might vindicate thy name, and assert thy claim to the love and confidenee of mankind. His doubts and perplexities had not really been because he was an enemy of God, or because he desired to cherish doubts in regard to him, but because, when appearances were against the equity of the divine government, he wished to see how the things which occurred could be explained consistently with a proper belief in the goodness and justice of God, in order that he might go and explain the matter to his fellow-men. Such perplexities and doubts, therefore, are not really inconsistent with true love for God and genuine confidence in him; and it is well when such doubts are made the means of enabling us more clearly to explain the divine dealings - it is well when, under all such doubts and difficulties, we can still find evidence that we truly love God.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 74

Introduction

This psalm is entitled "Maschil of Asaph." On the word Maschil - meaning "didactic," or adapted "to give instruction" - see the notes at the title to Psalm 32:1-11. On the phrase "of Asaph," see the notes at the title to Psalm 74:4, Psalm 74:9, particularly Psalm 74:9, where it is asserted that "there is no more any prophet;" that is, no one to instruct the people, or to declare what the result or the issue will be.

It is alleged by them that at the time of the invasion by the Chaldeans there were prophets in the land, and particularly that Jeremiah was then living, who distinctly predicted what the result of it would be. But this is not a conclusive objection to the idea that the reference is to the destruction of the city and the temple by the Chaldees. The meaning of Psalm 74:9 may be that there was no divine teacher who could "save" the people, or who could "prevent" those desolations; the matter had gone so far that all divine interference and protection appeared to be withdrawn, and the nation seemed to be abandoned to its fate. Still there can now be no certainty as to the time or the occasion when the psalm was composed; though the most probable reference of the psalm is to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

The psalm consists essentially of two parts: a prayer; and the reasons why the prayer is urged, and should be answered.

I. The prayer, Psalm 74:1-3. It is a prayer that God would remember Mount Zion, now made desolate, or in ruins.

II. The reasons why the prayer is urged, Psalm 74:4-8.

(2) the fact that there was among the people, in those times of calamity, no prophet - no messenger of God - no one to show them how long this would continue, or to give them assurance that these desolations would cease, Psalm 74:9-11.

(3) areference to what God had done for his people in former times when he interposed to save them from their enemies, Psalm 74:12-15.

(4) the fact that God rules over the earth, and has control of all things; that day and night, light and darkness, summer and winter, are all under him, and are directed and controlled by him, Psalm 74:16-17.

(5) aprayer that God would not forget his own cause; that he would remember that these reproaches were reproaches of his own name; that he would call to mind his own solemn covenant; and that he would pity and relieve the people that loved him, now poor and oppressed - the people that desired to serve and praise him, Psalm 74:18-23.

Verse 1

O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? - Thou seemest to have cast us off forever, or finally. Compare Psalm 44:9, note; Psalm 13:1, note. "Why doth thine anger smoke." See Deuteronomy 29:20. The presence of smoke indicates fire, and the language here is such as often occurs in the Scriptures, when anger or wrath is compared with fire. See Deuteronomy 32:22; Jeremiah 15:14.

Against the sheep of thy pasture - Thy people, represented as a flock. See Psalm 79:13; Psalm 95:7. This increases the tenderness of the appeal. The wrath of God seemed to be enkindled against his own people, helpless and defenseless, who needed his care, and who might naturally look for it - as a flock needs the care of a shepherd, and as the care of the shepherd might be expected. He seemed to be angry with his people, and to have cast them off, when they had every reason to anticipate his protection.

Verse 2

Remember thy congregation - The word rendered "congregation" means properly an "assembly," a "community," and it is frequently applied to the Israelites, or the Jewish people, considered as a body or a community associated for the service of God. Exodus 12:3; Exodus 16:1-2, Exodus 16:9; Leviticus 4:15; Numbers 27:17. The word used by the Septuagint is συναγωγή *sunagōgē* - synagogue - but refers here to the whole Jewish people, not to a particular synagogue or congregation.

Which thou hast purchased of old - In ancient times; in a former age. That is, Thou hast "purchased" them to thyself, or as thine own, by redeeming them from bondage, thus securing to thyself the right to them, as one does who redeems or purchases a thing. See the notes at Isaiah 43:3.

The rod of thine inheritance - Margin, as in Hebrew, "tribe." The Hebrew word - שבט *shêbet* - means properly "a staff," stick, rod; then, a shepherd's staff, a crook; then, a scepter; and then it is used to denote a "tribe," so called from the staff or scepter which the chief of the tribe carried as the symbol of authority. Exodus 28:21; Judges 20:2. The word "inheritance" is frequently applied to the children of Israel considered as belonging to God, as property inherited belongs to him who owns it - perhaps suggesting the idea that the right to them had come down, as inherited property does, from age to age. It was a right over them acquired long before, in the days of the patriarchs.

Which thou hast redeemed - By delivering them out of Egyptian bondage. So the church is now redeemed, and, as such, it belongs to God.

This mount Zion - Jerusalem - the seat of government, and of public worship - the capital of the nation.

Wherein thou last dwelt - By the visible symbol of thy presence and power. - On all these considerations the psalmist prays that God would not forget Jerusalem in the present time of desolation and trouble.

Verse 3

Lift up thy feet - That is, Advance, or draw near. Come and look directly and personally on the desolations which now exist in the holy city.

Unto the perpetual desolations - Hebrew, "the ruins of perpetuity," or eternity; that is, such as have been long continued, and threaten to continue forever. The ruin had not suddenly come, and it did not seem likely soon to pass away, but appeared to be entire and permanent. The destruction of the city seemed to be complete and final.

Even all that the enemy hath done wickedly - That is, with wicked intent and purpose. The reference seems to be to the Chaldeans, and to the ruin which they had brought upon the temple and city.

In the sanctuary - That is, either Jerusalem, considered as a holy place; or the temple, the place of the public worship of God.

Verse 4

Thine enemies roar - This refers to the shout and tumult of war. They raised up the war-cry even in the very place where the congregations had been assembled; where God had been worshipped. The word rendered "roar" properly has reference to wild beasts; and the meaning is, that their war-cry resembled the howling of beasts of prey.

In the midst of thy congregations - literally, "in the midst of thine assembly." This is a different word from that which is rendered "congregation" in Psalm 74:2. This word - מועד *môʿêd* - means a meeting together by mutual appointment, and is often applied to the meeting of God with his people at the tabernacle, which was therefore called "the tent of the congregation," or, more properly, "the tent of meeting," as the place where God met with his people, Exodus 29:10, Exodus 29:44; Exodus 33:7; Leviticus 3:8, Leviticus 3:13; Leviticus 10:7, Leviticus 10:9; "et saepe." The meaning here is, that they roared like wild beasts in the very place which God had appointed as the place where he would meet with his people.

They set up their ensigns for signs - That is, they set up "their" banners or standards, as "the" standards of the place; as that which indicated sovereignty over the place. They proclaimed thus that it was a conquered place, and they set up their own standards as denoting their title to it, or as declaring that they ruled there. It was no longer a place sacred to God; it was publicly seen to belong to a foreign power.

Verse 5

A man was famous - literally, "He is known;" or, shall be known. That is, he was or shall be celebrated.

According as he had lifted up axes - literally, "As one raising on high axes;" that is, as one lifts up his axe high in the air in order to strike an effectual stroke.

Upon the thick trees - The clumps of trees; the trees standing thick together. That is, As he showed skill and ability in cutting these down, and laying them low. His celebrity was founded on the rapidity with which the strokes of the axe fell on the trees, and his success in laying low the pride of the forest. According to our common translation the meaning is, that "formerly" a man derived his fame from his skill and success in wielding his axe so as to lay the forest low, but that "now" his fame was to be derived from another source, namely, the skill and power with which he cut down the elaborately-carved work of the sanctuary, despoiled the columns of their ornaments, and demolished the columns themselves. But another interpretation may be given to this, as has been suggested by Prof. Alexander. It is, that "the ruthless enemy is known or recognized as dealing with the sanctuary no more tenderly than a woodman with the forest which he fells." The former, however, is the more natural, as well as the more

common interpretation. Luther renders it, "One sees the axe glitter on high, as one cuts wood in the forest." The Vulgate, and the Septuagint, "The signs pointing to the entrance above that they did not know." What idea was attached to this rendering, it is impossible to determine.

Verse 6

But now they break down the carved work thereof … - literally, "But now the carvings of it together, at once, with sledge and hammers they beat down." The carved work refers evidently to the ornaments of the temple. The word used here - פתוח *pittûach* - is rendered engraving, carved work, or carving; Exodus 28:11, Exodus 28:21, Exodus 28:36; Exodus 39:6, Exodus 39:14, Exodus 39:30; Zechariah 3:9; 2 Chronicles 2:14. It is the very word which in 1 Kings 6:29 is applied to the ornaments around the walls of the temple - the "carved figures of cherubim, and palm trees, and open flowers," and there can be no doubt that the allusion here is to those ornaments. These were rudely cut down, or knocked off, with axes and hammers, as a man lays low the trees of the wood. The phrase "at once" means that they drove forward the work with all despatch. They spared none of them. They treated them all alike as an axeman does the trees of a forest when his object is to clear the land.

Verse 7

They have cast fire into thy sanctuary - Into the temple to destroy it. Literally, "They have cast thy sanctuary into the fire." The meaning is, that they had burned it down. This was actually done by the Chaldeans, 2 Kings 25:9; 2 Chronicles 36:19.

They have defiled by casting down the dwelling-place of thy name to the ground - The place where thy name dwelt or was recorded Exodus 20:24; that is, the place where God's name was known, or where he was worshipped. The literal meaning is, "To the earth they have defiled the dwelling of thy name?" The idea is, that they had defiled or polluted the temple by throwing it to the ground; by making it a heap of ruins; by making it undistinguishable from common earth.

Verse 8

They said in their hearts - They purposed; they designed it.

Let us destroy them together - Let us destroy all these buildings, temples, towers, and walls at the same time; let us make an entire destruction of them all.

They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land - The phrase "they have burned up" must refer to the places or edifices where assemblies for public worship were held, since it cannot be supposed that the idea is that they had burned up the assemblies of worshippers themselves. The word rendered "synagogues" is the same in the Hebrew that is used in Psalm 74:4, and is there rendered "congregations." It means "assemblies," persons collected together for public worship. See the notes at that verse. It is not used in the Bible to denote "places" for the meetings of such assemblies, nor is it elsewhere rendered "synagogues." It is translated by the word "seasons," Genesis 1:14; Exodus 13:10, "et al.; set time," Genesis 17:21; Exodus 9:5, "et al.; time appointed," Exodus 23:15; 2 Samuel 24:15, "et al.; congregation," Leviticus 1:1, Leviticus 1:3, Leviticus 1:5; Leviticus 3:2, Leviticus 3:8, Leviticus 3:13, "and very often; feasts," Leviticus 23:2, Leviticus 23:4, Leviticus 23:37, "et al.; - solemnity," Deuteronomy 31:10; Isaiah 33:20; - and so also, set feasts, solemn feasts, appointed feasts, etc.

But in no instance does it necessarily refer to an edifice, unless it is in the place before us. There is no reason, however, for doubting that, from the necessity of the case, in the course of events, there would be other places for assembling for the worship of God than the temple, and that in different cities, villages, towns, and neighborhoods, persons would be collected together for some form of social religious service. Buildings or tents would be necessary for the accommodation of such assemblages; and this, in time, might be developed into a system, until in this way the whole arrangement for "synagogues" might have grown up in the land. The exact origin of synagogues is not indeed known. Jahn (‹Biblical Archaeology,‘ Section 344) supposes that they sprang up during the Babylonian captivity, and that they had their origin in the fact that the people, when deprived of their customary religious privileges, would collect around some prophet, or other pious man, who would teach them and their children the duties of religion, exhort them to good conduct, and read to them out of the sacred books.

Compare Ezekiel 14:1; Ezekiel 20:1; Daniel 6:11; Nehemiah 8:18. There seems, however, no good reason for doubting that synagogues may have existed before the time of the captivity, and may have sprung up in the manner suggested above from the necessities of the people, probably at first without any fixed rule or law on the subject, but as convenience suggested,

and that they may at last, by custom and law, have grown into the regular form which they assumed as a part of the national worship. Compare Kitto‘s Encyc. Art. ‹synagogue.‘ I see no improbability, therefore, in supposing that the word here may refer to such edifices at the time when this psalm was composed. These, if they existed, would naturally be destroyed by the Chaldeans, as well as the temple itself.

Verse 9

We see not our signs - The emblems of worship, or the national emblems or banners, which we have been accustomed to see. There are no signals or tokens of our nationality in the land. All have been removed by the invaders, and we see everywhere evidences of the presence of a foreign power. The marks of our own independency are gone. The nation is subdued and conquered.

There is no more any prophet - No one is raised up as the special messenger of God to assure us of his favor, or to take the lead in the national troubles. In times of danger God had been accustomed to send to them some special teacher who would declare his will, direct the nation what to do, and give encouraging assurances that the national troubles would cease, and that deliverance would come. They saw no such messengers of God now. This is not inconsistent with the supposition that this psalm was written before the captivity, and in the time of the Chaldean invasion, or with the supposition that Jeremiah was then alive, for the meaning may be, not that literally there was no prophet in the land, but that there was no one who had come from God as a special messenger of comfort and deliverance. Ruin had come upon them, and there were no indications of divine interposition in their behalf.

Neither is there among us any that knoweth how long - How long these calamities are to continue. No one can tell when they are to end. The prophetic office seemed to have ceased among them. It was renewed, however, after the captivity, in the case of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Malachi.

Verse 10

O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? … - How long shall this state of things be allowed to continue? Is there to be no end to it? Are these desolations never to be repaired - these ruins never to be rebuilt? It “seemed” so; and hence, this earnest appeal. So to us it often appears as if

our trials were never to come to an end. One calamity succeeds another; and there comes no relief. Yet there is relief. Deliverance may come, and soon come, in the present life; or if not in the present life, yet to all those who are the children of God it will soon come by their removal to a world where trial will be forever unknown.

Verse 11

Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? - Why dost thou not stretch forth thy hand for our deliverance? The hand, especially the right hand, is the instrument by which we wield a sword, or strike a blow; and the expression here is equivalent to asking why God did not interfere and save them.

Pluck it out of thy bosom - As if God had hidden his hand beneath the folds of his garment, or had wrapped his robe tightly around him. It "seemed" as if he had done this, as if he looked calmly on, and saw the temple fired, the synagogues burned up, the land laid waste, and the people slaughtered, without an attempt to interpose. How often are we constrained to use similar language - to ask a similar question - when iniquity abounds, when crime prevails, when sinners are perishing, when the church mourns - for God seems to have withdrawn his hand, and to be looking on with unconcern! No one can tell why this is so; and, without irreverence, or a spirit of complaining, but deeply affected with the mystery of the fact, we may ask "Why" this is so.

Verse 12

For God is my King of old - That is, the king, or ruler of his people. The people had acknowledged him as their king and ruler, and he had showed himself to be such. This is given as a reason why he should now interpose in their behalf. It is an argument, proper always to be urged, drawn from the faithfulness and unchangeableness of God.

Working salvation in the midst of the earth - Salvation for his people. The reference here particularly is to what he had done for his people in delivering them from bondage in Egypt, and conducting them to the promised land, as is stated in the following verses.

Verse 13

Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength - Margin, as in Hebrew, "break." That is, he had by his power "broken up" the strength of the sea so that it offered no resistance to their passing through it. The allusion is evidently to the passage through the Red Sea, Exodus 14:21.

Thou brakest the heads of the dragons - Margin, "whales." On the meaning of the word used here - תנין *tannîyn* - see the notes at Isaiah 13:22; notes at Job 30:29. It refers here, undoubtedly, to crocodiles or sea monsters. The language here is used to denote the absolute power of God as manifested over the sea when the people of Israel passed through it. It was as if by slaying all the mighty monsters of the deep that would have resisted their passage, he had made their transit entirely safe.

In the waters - That reside in the waters of the sea.

Verse 14

Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces - On the meaning of the word "leviathan," see the notes at Job 41:1. The word is used here as descriptive of sea monsters.

And gavest him to be meat - Gavest him for "food."

To the people inhabiting the wilderness - That is, the sea monsters were killed, and, being thrown on shore, were gathered for food. The "inhabitants of the wilderness" or the desert, may refer either to the wild and savage tribes of men that lived on the shores of the sea, and that subsisted mainly on fish, or it may refer to the wild animals of the desert that consumed such sea monsters as they were cast up on the shore. There is no allusion to the Israelites considered as passing through the desert, as if they had fed on these sea monsters. The essential idea is, that these monsters were put to death, or were so removed but of the way as to offer no obstruction to the passage of the Israelites through the sea. It was as if they had been killed. The image is entirely poetic, and there is no necessity for supposing that such a thing literally occurred.

Verse 15

Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood - That is, the source of the streams and the streams themselves. The main allusion is probably to the Jordan, and the idea is, that God had, as it were, divided all the waters, or prevented any obstruction to his people from the river in any respect; as if the waters in the very springs and fountains, and the waters in the channel of the river flowing from those springs and fountains, had been so restrained and divided that there was a safe passage through them. Joshua 3:14-17.

Thou driedst up mighty rivers - Margin, "rivers of strength." The Hebrew - איתן *'êythân* - (compare Deuteronomy 21:4; Amos 5:24; 1 Kings 8:2) - means rather perennial, constant, ever-flowing. The allusion is to

rivers or streams that flow constantly, or that do not dry up. It was this which made the miracle so apparent. It could not be pretended that they had gone over the bed of a stream which was accustomed to be dry at certain seasons of the year. They passed over rivers that never dried up; and, therefore, it could have been only by miracle. The main allusion is undoubtedly to the passage of the Jordan.

Verse 16

The day is thine, the night also is thine - Thou hast universal dominion. All things are under thy control. Thou hast power, therefore, to grant what we desire of thee.

Thou hast prepared the light and the sun - He who has made the sun - that greatest and noblest object of creation to the view of man - must have almighty power, and must be able to give what we need.

Verse 17

Thou hast set all the borders of the earth - Thou hast established all the boundaries of the world; that is, the boundaries of the earth itself; or the natural bonndaries of nations and people, made by seas, mountains, rivers, and deserts. The language in regard to the first of these - the earth itself - would be derived from the prevalent mode of speaking, as if the earth were a plane, and had limits - a common mode of expression in the Scriptures, as it is in all ancient writings, and in the common language of men, even of philosophers. In regard to the latter idea, the language would imply that God had fixed, by his own power and will, all the natural boundaries of nations, or that his dominion is over all the earth. There are natural boundaries, or arrangements in nature, which tend to break up the one great family of man into separate nations, and which seem to have been designed for that. Compare Acts 17:26. Over all these God presides, and he has his own great plans to accomplish by the arrangement.

Thou hast made summer and winter - literally, as in the margin, "Summer and winter, thou hast made them." That is, he has so made the earth that these various seasons will occur. The fact that there are different seasons of the year, or that the year is divided into seasons, is to be traced to the agency of God. He has so made the world that these changes will take place. Nothing is the result of chance; all things in the arrangements of nature are by his design.

Verse 18

Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached - Has used opprobrious and abusive words in regard to thee, and to thy people. The idea is, that religion - the true religion - had been reproached by the foe. They had treated that religion as if it were false; they had reproached God as if he were a false God, and as if he were unable to defend his people. Compare Isaiah 36:4-10, Isaiah 36:13-20; Isaiah 37:10-13, Isaiah 37:23. The prayer here is, that God would remember that these words of reproach were against himself, and that he would regard them as such.

And that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name - Have blasphemed thee - the name often being put for the person himself. The word "foolish" here may refer to them as "wicked" as well as foolish. Wickedness and folly are so connected - they are so commonly combined, that the word may be used to describe the enemies of God in either sense - characterising their conduct as either the one or the other. Compare the notes at Psalm 14:1.

Verse 19

O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove - The "life" of thy turtle-dove; or, thy turtle-dove itself. The turtle-dove is a name of endearment for one beloved, in Psalm 68:10) - is the same which in the other member of the sentence is rendered "congregation." It may be applied to a herd of cattle, tame or wild; and then to a "people" - a band, a troop, a host - whether of orderly and civilized, or of wild and savage people. It seems to be used in this double sense in the verse before us; in the first member of the verse, "deliver not thy turtle-dove "to the multitude" - to the wild beast, or to the savage hosts; in the latter, "forget not the congregation of thy poor" - thy flock - thy people - considered as timid or alarmed. Save the timid and trembling flock from beasts of prey.

Verse 20

Have respect unto the covenant - The covenant which thou hast made with thy people, promising, on thy part, to protect them, and to be their God. Compare Deuteronomy 4:13; Deuteronomy 5:2; Deuteronomy 26:18-19. The prayer here is, that God would remember, in the day of national calamity, the solemn promise implied in that covenant, and that he would interpose to save his people. Compare Genesis 9:15; Leviticus 26:42; Ezekiel 16:60; Luke 1:72. This may be regarded as the language which the people did use when these calamities were about to come upon them.

For the dark places of the earth - The allusion here is to the lands from whence came the armies that had invaded Judea, and that threatened desolation. They were dark regions of paganism and idolatry.

Are full of the habitations of cruelty - The abodes of violence, or of violent and cruel men. They had sent forth their armies from such places for purposes of conquest and rapine, and no compassion could be expected from them. Their numbers were so great, and their character was so fierce and warlike, that the people of Israel could find defense and security only in God; and they, therefore, plead with him that he would interpose in their behalf. The prayer in this passage may with propriety be used by the people of God now. It is still true that "the dark parts of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty;" and in view of this fact, and of the utter hopelessness of the renovation of the world by any human means, or by any progress which society can make of itself, it is proper to seek God's interposition. And it is proper in such prayers to him now, as in ancient times, to make the ground of our appeal to him his own gracious covenant; his promises made to his church; his solemn assurances that this state of things shall not always continue, but that the time will arrive when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord.

Verse 21

O let not the oppressed return ashamed - Ashamed by being disappointed, as if they had trusted in that which had no claims to confidence. Compare the notes at Job 6:20. The word rendered "oppressed," means "trodden down, crushed, broken, afflicted." It refers to the people as attacked by foreign armies, or as crushed by those who had gained power over them. The word "return" refers to their coining back from God - from the throne of mercy. Let them not come back from thee with no assurance of thy favor; with no evidence that their prayers have been heard; let them not come back, subject to the reproach that they had made their appeal to thee in vain.

Let the poor and needy praise thy name - The people who are oppressed and helpless. Let them have occasion to praise thee because their prayer has been heard, and because thou dost save them.

Verse 22

Arise, O God - As if God were now insensible to the wrongs and sufferings of his people; as if he were inattentive and indisposed to come to their help. See the notes at Psalm 3:7.

Plead thine own cause - literally, "Contend thine own contention." That is, Maintain a cause which is really thine own. Thine own honor is concerned; thine own law and authority are assailed; the war is really made on "thee." This is always the true idea in the prayers which are offered for the conversion of sinners, for the establishment of truth, and for the spread of the Gospel in the world. It is not originally the cause of the church; it is the cause of God. Everything in regard to truth, to justice, to humanity, to temperance, to liberty, to religion, is the cause of God. All the assaults made on these, are assaults made on God.

Remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily - Constantly. He does not cease. The word "foolish" refers to the wicked. The idea is, that the wicked constantly reproach God - either by their language or their conduct; and this is a reason for calling on him to interpose. No better reason for asking his interposition can be given, than that such conduct is a real reproach to God, and reflects on his honor in the world.

Verse 23

Forget not the voice of thine enemies - The voice of thine enemies clamoring for the destruction of thy people. Compare Psalm 137:7. The prayer is, that God would bring deserved chastisement upon them for their purposes and their aims against his people. It is not necessarily a prayer for vengeance; it is a prayer for just retribution.

The tumult of those that rise up against thee - Of those that make war on thee, and on thy people. The word ""tumult" here means clamor or shout - as the shout of battle. The reference is to the movement of a host pressing on to conquest, encouraging and exciting each other, and endeavoring to intimidate their enemies by the loud clamor of the war-cry. It is a description of what had occurred among the main events referred to in the psalm, when the enemy came in to lay waste the capital, and to spread desolation throughout the land.

Increaseth continually - Margin, as in Hebrew, "Ascendeth." That is, it seems to go up; it is the swelling clamor of a great multitude of warriors intent on conquest. A cry or clamor thus seems to swell or rise on the air, and (as it were) to ascend to God. The prayer here is, that God would regard that cry, not in the sense that he would grant them the fulfillment of their wishes, but in the sense that he would recompense them as they deserved. It is in this sense that the clamors of the wicked ascend to heaven - in this sense that God will regard them, as if they were a prayer for just retribution.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 75

Introduction

This psalm, like the two previous psalms, is ascribed to Asaph (see Introduction to Psalm 4:1-8. On the phrase "Al-taschith," see the notes on the title to Psalm 57:1-11. The phrase "A Psalm or Song" (in Hebrew, "a psalm - a song"), occurs also in the title, to other psalms, as Psalm 30:1-12; Psalm 65:1-13, etc.

It is not possible now to determine the occasion on which this psalm was composed, as it is not indicated in the title, and there are no historical references in the psalm itself which would enable us to ascertain it. The general purpose is indicated in Psalm 75:1, which is to ascribe praise to God for some particular manifestation of his favor. So far as can be conjectured from the psalm, there are two things which may have been referred to.

(I) The first is, that it was composed by someone - or for some one, in his name, as expressing his feelings - who was about to enter on the administration of the affairs of the nation, apparently a young prince soon to ascend the throne. See Psalm 75:2, "When I shall receive the congregation," etc.

(II) The second is, that it would seem to have been a time of national danger; a time when there may have been other aspirants for the throne; a time when wicked and powerful men had combined for the purpose of usurping the authority, and setting aside the legitimate claimant to power, or when there seemed to have been a universal dissolution of authority, or general anarchy. See Psalm 75:3, "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved." Compare Psalm 75:4-5.

In these circumstances, in this general rebellion, in this time of resistance to lawful authority, and of combination and conspiracy against right, the speaker in the psalm expresses confidence in God as the source of all authority Psalm 75:6; as the "Judge" Psalm 75:7; as a God in whose hand is a cup of punishment which he will administer to all wicked people, Psalm 75:8. "The psalm, therefore, expresses confidence in God in the endeavor to assert the claims of legitimate authority."

Another, and a more common view, however, has been taken of the psalm, which is, that it refers to God as the Ruler among the nations, and as asserting that he will in due time take vengeance on those who are in rebellion against him. This is the view of DeWette, Prof. Alexander, Luther, and others. It was also the view taken by the translators of the Septuagint, and the Latin Vulgate. Compare, however, the notes at Psalm 75:2.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:

(1) A purpose of the author of the psalm to praise God for the manifestation of his wondrous works, Psalm 75:1.

(2) his purpose when he should "receive the congregation," or should be invested with authority, to judge uprightly, or to discharge his duties with fidelity, Psalm 75:2.

(3) astatement of the existing disorder and confusion, as if the very structure of society was broken up, Psalm 75:3.

(4) advice addressed to the authors of the prevailing disorder not to pursue their plans of evil Psalm 75:4-8, for two reasons:

(a) Promotion or success must come from God, or from his counsels, and not by chance, or by any laws of nature Psalm 75:6-7; and

(b) because God is a righteous Judge, and the wicked can expect nothing but punishment at his hand, Psalm 75:8.

(5) apurpose to praise God, in view of the fact that all the power of the wicked would be broken, but the power of the righteous would be maintained and exalted, Psalm 75:9-10.

Verse 1

Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks - We, the people; language which would be appropriate to public thanksgiving - showing that the psalm was designed for public use. The reasons for this public thanksgiving are stated in the subsequent part of the psalm.

Do we give thanks - The repetition is emphatic. The idea is, that the occasion was one for special thanksgiving.

For that thy name is near - literally, "and near is thy name." The word name is often used to designate the person himself; and the idea here is, that God was near; that he had manifested himself to them in some special manner, and that for this there was occasion of praise. Compare Jeremiah 23:23.

Thy wondrous works declare - Or, "They declare thy wondrous works." The Septuagint renders it, "I will declare all thy wondrous works." The Latin Vulgate, "We will declare thy wonders." Luther, "We will declare thy wonders, that thy name is so near." Prof. Alexander, "They recount thy wonders." The meaning seems to be, "They," that is, the people, "declare thy wondrous works." Thy marvelous doings constitute the foundation for praise - for the praise now offered.

Verse 2

When I shall receive the congregation - The marginal rendering is, "Take a set time." The phrase is thus rendered in most of the versions. So the Septuagint, "When I take the time" - ὅταν λάβω καιρὸν *hotan labō kairon* So the Vulgate, "When I accept the time." So Luther, "When in its own time." So De Wette, "When I take the time." According to this interpretation, this is the language of God, as if implying that, although "the earth" was then "dissolved," or although disorders were allowed to exist, yet he would take a set time, or take the appointed time for judgment, and would pronounce a sentence on the conduct of people, and deal with them in a righteous manner, punishing the rebellious, and vindicating his own cause. The proper interpretation of the passage turns on the meaning of the Hebrew word rendered in the text "congregation" - מועד *môʿêd* See the word explained in the notes at Psalm 74:8. It may mean a set time, an appointed season, 1 Samuel 13:8, 1 Samuel 13:11; or a coming together, an assembly, Job 30:23; or a place of assemblage, as the tabernacle, etc.; Exodus 27:21; Exodus 40:22; Psalm 74:8. It may, therefore, be applied to the congregation of the Jewish people - the nation considered as an assemblage for the worship of God; and the idea of taking this, or receiving this, may be applied to the act of assuming authority or sovereignty over the people, and hence, the language may be used to denote the entrance on the discharge of the duties of such sovereignty. The language would be ap plicable to one who had the right of such an elevation to power - a prince - an heir apparent - in a time when his right was disputed; when there was an organized opposition to him; or when the nation was in a state of anarchy and

confusion. It seems to me that this supposition best accords with the proper meaning of the language, and with the scope of the psalm.

I will judge uprightly - I will put down all this opposition to law. I will deal with exact justice between man and man. I will restore order, and the supremacy of law, to the state. The language, therefore, according to this interpretation, is not the language of God, but that of a prince having a right to the throne, and about to ascend it in a time of great misrule and disorder.

Verse 3

The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved - The word rendered "dissolved" means properly to melt, to flow down; then, to melt away, to pine away, to perish. Isaiah 64:7; Job 30:22; Nahum 1:5; Psalm 107:26. Here it means that there was, as it were, a general breaking up of things; or that none of the institutions of the land seemed to have any stability. There seemed to be no government, but universal anarchy and confusion.

I bear up the pillars of it - Of the earth; of society. The earth here is compared with an edifice supported by pillars. Compare Judges 16:26; 1 Samuel 2:8; 1 Timothy 3:15. As applied to a prince or ruler, this means that the permanent structure of the state, the welfare of society, depended on his administration. If, according to the view of others, it is applied to God, the meaning is, that as he upholds the world, there cannot be permanent misrule; that amidst all the commotions of earth, and all that seemed to threaten ruin, his hand sustained all, and he would not allow things to proceed to permanent disorder. In the former case, the assertion would be true if a prince felt that he had power to support the government, and to restore order; in the latter case, it must be true, for God sustains the earth, and as he can check disorder when he shall judge it best to interpose, so he will not permit it ultimately to prevail.

Selah - A musical pause. See the notes at Psalm 3:2.

Verse 4

I said unto the fools - To the wicked people in rebellion. Folly and wickedness in the Bible are synonymous terms, as they are identical in fact. See the notes at Psalm 14:1.

Deal not foolishly - Act not foolishly; carry not out your wicked plans. Do not pursue your schemes of wickedness and folly, for they cannot be successful, and they will only tend to involve you in ruin.

And to the wicked - The wicked people engaged in rebellion - either against a lawful human government, or against God.

Lift not up the horn - The horn is a symbol of strength. Compare Job 16:15; Daniel 7:7-8, Daniel 7:11, Daniel 7:21; Daniel 8:5, Daniel 8:8-9, Daniel 8:21. This is to be understood as the language of the person represented as speaking in the psalm - whether a prince, or whether God himself. It is counsel addressed to the wicked, that they should not attempt to put forth their strength in the accomplishment of their evil purposes. The reason given for this is stated in Psalm 75:6, namely, that success does not depend on chance, or on human power, but must come from God.

Verse 5

Lift not up your horn on high - In a proud, self-confident, arrogant manner.

Speak not with a stiff neck - With arrogance and pride; in a haughty, imperious manner. The word rendered "stiff" (literally "a neck of stiffness") - עתק *ʿâthâq* - means properly bold, impudent, wicked; and the idea is that of speaking as those do who are impudent, shameless, bold, licentious - indicating confidence in themselves, and a reckless disregard of truth and of the rights of others. The Septuagint and the Vulgate render it, "And speak not unrighteousness against God."

Verse 6

For promotion - The word used here in the original, and rendered "promotion" - הרים *hariym* - is susceptible of two quite different significations. According to one - that which is adopted by our translators - it is the infinitive (Hiphil) of רום *rûm* "to raise" - the word used in Psalm 75:5-6, and there rendered "lift up." Thus it would mean, that to "lift up" is not the work of people, or is not originated by the earth - does not originate from any part of it, east, west, or south, but must come from God alone. According to the other view, this word is the plural of הר *har* "mountain," and would mean that something - (something understood - as "judgment") - comes not "from the east, nor the west, nor from the desert of mountains," the mountainous regions of the south, but must come from God. The Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, and the ancient versions generally, adopt the latter interpretation. De Wette renders it as our translators have done. This interpretation - rendering it promotions - seems to be the true one, for in the two previous verses this was the prominent idea - a caution against attempting to "lift themselves up," or to exalt themselves, and in this and

the following verse a reason is given for this caution, to wit, that the whole question about success or prosperity depends not on anything here below; not on any natural advantages of situation, or on any human skill or power; but on God alone. It was in vain, in regard to such an object, to form human alliances, or to depend on natural advantages; and therefore people should not depend on these things, but only on God.

Neither from the east - literally, from the outgoing; that is, of the sun. The meaning may either be that success would not depend on any natural advantages of country furnished in the East; or that the persons referred to were seeking to form alliances with an Eastern people, and then the statement would be that no such alliances would of themselves secure success.

Nor from the west - The setting; that is, the place where the sun goes down. This also may refer either to the natural advantages of a Western country, or to some alliance which it was intended to form with the people there.

Nor from the south - Margin, as in Hebrew, "desert." The reference is to the rocky and barren regions south of Palestine, and the allusion here also may be either to some natural advantages of those regions, or to some alliance which it was proposed to form.

Verse 7

But God is the judge - All depends on him, not on the natural advantages of a country; not on human strength, human skill, or human prowess. Whatever may be the natural resources of a country; whatever may be the enterprise, the numbers, or the valor of its inhabitants; whatever alliances of peace or war they may form with other nations, yet success depends on God. He presides over all; he can give success when it is least expected; and he also can humble people when they have made the most ample preparations for success, and anticipate it in the most confident manner.

He putteth down one, and setteth up another - Literal y, "This one he humbles, and this he exalts." This is true alike of an individual or a nation. The word rendered "setteth up" is the same which is used in Psalm 75:4-6, rendered "Lift up," and "promotion." The idea is, that in the matter of" lifting up," or "promotion," all depends on God. He is a sovereign, and he confers exaltation, whether of an individual or a nation, as he pleases.

Verse 8

For in the hand of the Lord … - The general idea in this verse is, that God holds in his hand a cup for people to drink; a cup whose contents will tend to prolong life, or to cause death. See the idea in this passage fully explained in Job 21:20, note; Psalm 60:3, note; Isaiah 51:17, note; Revelation 14:10, note.

And the wine is red - The word used here - חמר *châmar* - may mean either to boil up, or to be red - from the idea of boiling, or becoming heated. The Septuagint and the Vulgate render it, "And he pours it out from this into that;" that is, he draws it off, as is done with wine. The true idea in the expression is probably that it ferments; and the meaning may be that the wrath of God seems to boil like fermenting liquor.

It is full of mixture - Mixed with spices, in order to increase its strength; or, as we should say, drugged. This was frequently done in order to increase the intoxicating quality of wine. The idea is, that the wrath of God was like wine whose native strength, or power of producing intoxication, was thus increased by drugs. And he poureth out of the same. He pours it out in order that his enemies may drink it; in other words, they reel and stagger under the expressions of his wrath, as men reel and stagger under the influence of spiced or drugged wine.

But the dregs thereof - The "lees" - the settlings - what remains after the wine is racked off. See the notes at Isaiah 25:6. This would contain the strongest part of the mixture; and the idea is, that they would drink the wrath of God to the utmost.

All the wicked of the earth - Wicked people everywhere. The expression of the wrath of God would not be confined to one nation, or one people; but wherever wicked people are found, he will punish them. He will be just in his dealings with all people.

Shall wring them out - Wine was kept in skins; and the idea here is, that they would wring out these skins so as to get out "all" that there was in them, and leave nothing remaining. The wrath of God would be exhausted in the punishment of wicked people, as if it were all wrung out.

And drink them - Not merely the wine; but the dregs; all that there was. Wicked people will suffer all that there is in the justice of God.

Verse 9

But I will declare for ever - I - the author of the psalm. I will make known at all times the character of God, and will declare the truth

respecting his works and ways. The particular mode as referred to here, was praise.

I will sing praises to the God of Jacob - The God whom Jacob worshipped; the God who proved himself to be his Friend, thus showing that he is the Friend of all that trust in him. See the notes at Psalm 24:6.

Verse 10

All the horns of the wicked … - See the notes at Psalm 75:4. The meaning is, I will destroy all their power. This, too, may refer to the author of the psalm, supposed to be a prince or ruler about to ascend the throne, and to assert his rightful authority. This indicates his purpose in regard to his administration (compare Psalm 75:2); the principles on which he would administer his government. It would be an administration under which the wicked would be punished, and where the righteous would be protected. In this manner it would be an emblem of the administration of God. All just human governments are founded on the same principles as the government of God. People have only to apply to the affairs of civil society the principles on which God governs the universe, to constitute the most perfect human administration. Those which come nearest to that, most nearly approximate perfection; and civil governments will reach their end, and accomplish their design, only when those principles shall be universally applied among people.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 76

Introduction

This psalm is one of those which in the title are ascribed to Asaph (see Introduction to Psalm 4:1-8.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed is not stated, and cannot now be ascertained. The Septuagint regards it as having had reference to the Assyrians - ᾠδὴ προς τὸν Ἀσσύριον *hōdē pros ton Assurion* - "An ode to the Assyrian." So the Latin Vulgate; *Canticum ad Assyrios*. This is the opinion adopted also by Jarchi. The title in the Syriac version is, "When Rabbah of the Ammonites was laid waste; and further it describes the judment of the Messiah against the wicked. Grotius supposes that it was intended to describe the victory over the Ammonites. Rudinger ascribes its composition to the time of the Maccabees. DeWette supposes that it refers to some late period of the Jewish history, but that the particular time is unknown. It would be vain to attempt to ascertain with any certainty the particular occasion on which the psalm was composed. It was evidently on some occasion when an attack had been made on "Salem," that is, on Jerusalem Psalm 76:2-3, and when that attack had been repelled, and the enemy had been driven back. Many of the circumstances in the psalm. would agree well with the account of the invasion of the Assyrians under Sennacherib, but there were many other occasions in the Jewish history to which it would, in like manner, be applicable.

The psalm is a song of praise for deliverance from an enemy. The contents are as follows:

I. The fact that God had made himself known "in Judah," or to the Jewish people - or, that he had manifested himself to them in a remarkable manner, Psalm 76:1.

II. The fact that he had showed this in a special manner in "Salem," the capital of the nation - referring to some particular time in which this was done, Psalm 76:2.

III. The manner in which he had done this - by breaking the arrows of the bow, and the shield; by showing that his power was superior to all the defenses which men had set up; and by overcoming entirely the invading foe, Psalm 76:3-6.

IV. The fact that, on this account, God was to be feared and reverenced, Psalm 76:7-9.

V. The statement of a great truth, and a most important principle, which had been particularly illustrated by the occurrence; to wit, that the wrath of man would be made to praise God, and that the remainder of wrath he would restrain, Psalm 76:10.

VI. A call on all people to acknowledge God in a suitable manner, by bringing presents, and by standing in awe of him, Psalm 76:11-12.

Verse 1

In Judah is God known - That is, he has made himself known there in a special manner; he has evinced his watchful care over the city so as to demand a proper acknowledgment; he has manifested himself there as he has not elsewhere. It is true that God is known, or makes himself known everywhere; but it is also true that he does this in some places, and at some times, in a more marked and striking manner than he does in other places and at other times. The most clear and impressive displays of his character are among his own people - in the church. "His name is great in Israel." Among the people of Israel; or, among his own people. The meaning here is, that, by some act referred to in the psalm, he had so displayed his power and his mercy in favor of that people, as to make it proper that his name should be exalted or praised.

Verse 2

In Salem also - This was the ancient name for Jerusalem, and is evidently so used here. It continued to be given to the town until the time of David, when it was called "Jerusalem." See the notes at Isaiah 1:1. The word properly means "peace," and is so rendered here by the Septuagint, ἐν εἰρήνῃ ὁ τόπος αὐτοῦ *en eirēnē ho topos autou* - "his place is in peace." There may have been an allusion here to that ancient signification of the name, as being more poetical, and as suggesting the fact that God had restored peace to the city and nation when invaded.

Is his tabernacle - The tent, or sacred place where he is worshipped. Salem or Jerusalem was made the place of public worship, and the ark removed there by David, 2 Samuel 6:17.

And his dwelling-place in Zion - That is, on Mount Zion - the portion of Jerusalem in which David built his own palace, and which he made the place of public worship. This remained so until the temple was built on

Mount Moriah; see the notes at Psalm 2:6; compare Psalm 9:11; Psalm 48:12; Psalm 65:1.

Verse 3

There brake he the arrows of the bow - That is, in Salem, or near Salem. The language is such as would be used in reference to invaders, or to armies that came up to storm the city. The occasion is unknown; but the meaning is, that God drove the invading army back, and showed his power in defending the city. The phrase "the arrows of the bow," is literally, "the lightnings of the bow," the word rendered "arrows" meaning properly "flame;" and then, "lightning." The idea is, that the arrows sped from the bow with the rapidity of lightning.

The shield - Used for defense in war. See Psalm 5:12; Psalm 33:20; compare the notes at Ephesians 6:16.

And the sword - That is, he disarmed his enemies, or made them as powerless as if their swords were broken.

And the battle - He broke the force of the battle; the strength of the armies drawn up for conflict.

Verse 4

Thou art more glorious and excellent - The word rendered glorious - נאור *na'ôr* - is from the verb which means "to shine," to give light, and the word would properly refer to a luminous or "shining" object - as the sun, the source of light. Hence, it means "shining," splendid, glorious; and it is thus applied to the Divine Being with reference to his perfections, being like light. Compare 1 John 1:5. The word rendered "excellent," means exalted, noble, great. These words are applied here to God from the manifestation of his perfections in the case referred to.

Than the mountains of prey - The word "prey" as employed here - טרף *ṭereph* - means that which is obtained by hunting; and then, plunder. It is usually applied to the food of wild beasts, beasts of prey. Here it refers to the "mountains" considered as the abode or stronghold of robbers and banditti, from where they sally forth in search of plunder. These mountains, in their heights, their rocks, their fastnesses, furnished safe places of retreat for robbers, and hence, they became emblems of power. It is not improbable that the hordes referred to in the psalm had their abodes in such mountains, and hence, the psalmist says that God who made those mountains and hills was superior to them in strength and power.

Verse 5

The stout-hearted are spoiled - The valiant men, the men who came so confidently to the invasion. The word "spoiled" here, as elsewhere in the Scriptures, means "plundered," not (as the word is now used) "corrupted." See the notes at Colossians 2:8.

They have slept their sleep - They are dead; they have slept their last sleep. Death, in the Scriptures, as in all other writings, is often compared with sleep.

And none of the men of might - The men who came forth for purposes of war and conquest.

Have found their hands - The Septuagint renders this, "Have found nothing in their hands;" that is, they have obtained no plunder. Luther renders it, "And all warriors must suffer their hands to fall." De Wette, "Have lost their hands?" The idea seems to be, that they had lost the use of their hands; that is, that they had no use for them, or did not find them of any use. They could not employ them for the purpose for which they were intended, but were suddenly stricken down.

Verse 6

At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob - At thy word; thy bidding; or, when God rebuked them for their attempt to attack the city. The idea is, that they were discomfited by a word spoken by God.

Both the chariot and horse … - The Septuagint renders this, "They who are mounted on horses." The word rendered "chariot" here - רכב *rekeb* - may mean "riders, cavalry," as well as chariot. See the notes at Isaiah 21:7. Hence, there would be less incongruity in the Hebrew than in our translation, where it is said that the "chariots" have fallen into a deep sleep. The idea may be either that horsemen and horses had fallen into a deep slumber, or that the rumbling of the chariot-wheels had ceased, and that there was a profound silence, like a deep sleep.

Verse 7

Thou, even thou, art to be feared - To be had in reverence or veneration. The repetition of the word "thou" is emphatic, as if the mind paused at the mention of God, and remained in a state of reverence, repeating the thought. The particular "reason" suggested here why God should be had in reverence, was the display of his power in overthrowing by a word the mighty hosts that had come against the holy city.

And who may stand in thy sight - Who can stand before thee? implying that no one had the power to do it. "When once thou art angry." If

such armies have been overcome suddenly by thy might, then what power is there which could successfully resist thee?

Verse 8

Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heavens - It seemed to come from heaven; it was manifestly from thee. The overthrow of these enemies of thy people was a manifest judgment from thee, and should be so regarded.

The earth feared - The world itself seemed to hear the voice of God, and to stand in awe.

And was still - It seemed to be profoundly attentive to what God said, and as if it reverently listened to his voice. It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to represent the earth - the hills, the mountains, the streams, the rivers, the plains - as conscious of the presence of God; as either rejoicing or trembling at his voice. Compare Psalm 65:12-13; Psalm 114:3-7; Habakkuk 3:8-11.

Verse 9

When God arose to judgment - That is, when he came to overthrow and destroy the enemies of his people, as referred to in the former part of the psalm.

To save all the meek of the earth - Of the land - to wit, the land of Judea; or, to save his people when in affliction. The word "meek," which with us usually means those who are forbearing under injuries, means here the humble, the afflicted, the crushed, the oppressed.

Verse 10

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee - It shall be the occasion of praise; or, honor shall accrue to thee from it, "as if" it were employed in thy praise, and "as if" it were voluntarily engaged in promoting thy glory. The deliverance of the people by the direct interposition of God in the case referred to in the psalm, the sudden and entire overthrow of the invading forces by his power, led to this reflection. The overruling power of God was displayed. The "wrath" of the invading host had given occasion for this manifestation of the divine perfections; or, in other words, his character would not have been displayed in this manner if it had not been for these wicked purposes of people. It is not that there was anything in the wrath itself, or in their plans or intentions, that was in itself "adapted" to honor God; but that it was overruled by him, so that he took "occasion" from it to display his own character.

The wicked conduct of a child is an "occasion" for the display of the just character and the wise administration of a parent; the act of a pirate, a rebel, a murderer, furnishes an "occasion" for the display of the just principles of law, and the stability and power of a government. In like manner, the sins of the wicked are made an occasion for the display of the divine perfections in maintaining law; in the administering of justice; in preserving order. But there is another sense, also, in which the wrath of man is made the occasion for glorifying God. It is, that since there is such wrath, or since there are such wicked purposes, God makes use of that wrath, or of those wicked purposes, as he does of the powers of nature - of pestilence, disease, and storms, as instruments to accomplish his own designs, or to bring about great results. Thus he made use of the treasonable purpose of Judas, and the mad passions and the angry feelings of the Jews, in bringing about the work of redemption by the death of his Son; thus be made use of the purposes of Sennacherib in order to punish his own people (see the notes at Isaiah 10:5-7); thus he employed Cyrus to "execute his counsel" Isaiah 46:10; and thus he made use of the wrath evinced in persecuting the church to secure its permanent establishment in the world. Whether these things could be accomplished "without" that wrath, is a question which is too high for man to determine. It is certain, also, that the fact that God overrules the wrath of people does not justify that wrath. The purposes of people are, like the pestilence and the storm, what they are in themselves; and the nature of their conduct is not affected by any use that God may make of it. People must be judged according to their own deeds, not for what God does through their wickedness.

The remainder of wrath - The word "remainder" here - שׁארית *she'êrîyth* - means properly "part;" what remains, especially after a defeat or slaughter - the "survivors" of a battle, Jeremiah 11:23; Jeremiah 44:14; Micah 7:18; Zephaniah 2:7. Gesenius renders it here (Lexicon) "extreme wrath," retained even in extremity. The Septuagint, ἐγκατάλειμμα *engkataleimma* - "the things which are left." So the Vulgate, *"reliquice."* Luther, "When men rage against thee, thou turnest it to honor; and when they rage yet more, thou art yet prepared." Venema supposes that the meaning is the whole wrath. As in Arabic the word used here means "wholeness," or the whole of anything; and according to this, the idea would be that it was not merely wrath in general, or in a general sense, that would be made use of, but all that there was in wrath; it would all be made

use of in advancing the divine purposes. The allusion seems to be to something that had been laid up in a magazine - as provision or arms, when the soldier went forth to war - which he would make use of if necessary, so that "all" might be ultimately consumed or employed. The control of God was over "this" as well as over that which was actually employed; he could overrule that which was employed. He could restrain people from at all using this that was kept in reserve. The idea seems to be that all the "wrath" which is "manifested" among people would be made to praise God, or would be overruled for his glory - and "all" which would "not" contribute to this end he would keep back, he would check; he would prevent its being put forth - so that "all" should be under his control, and "all" disposed of as he should will. There was nothing in the heart or the purposes of man that was beyond his jurisdiction or control; man could do nothing in his wrathful plans that God could not dispose of in his own way, and for his own honor.

Shalt thou restrain - The word used here - חגר *châgar* - means literally to bind around; to gird; to gird up, as of a garment or sword that is girded on, 1 Samuel 17:39; 1 Samuel 25:13; Psalm 45:3; or sackcloth, Isaiah 15:3; Jeremiah 49:3. The Septuagint renders this, "and the remainder of wrath shall make a feast to thee," ἑορτάσει σοί *heortasei soi* - that is, it shall praise or honor thee as in a festival. So the Vulgate. Prof. Alexander renders it, "Shalt thou gird about thee;" that is, God would gird it on as a sword, and would make use of it as a weapon for executing his own purposes. So DeWette, "And with the last wrath thou shalt gird thyself." Others render it, "Thou restrainest the remainder of thy wrath" - that is, punishment - "when the wrath of man will not promote the knowledge of thyself" It seems to me, however, that our translators have expressed the exact idea in the psalm; and the meaning is, that the whole of the wrath of man is under the control of God, and that whatever there is, or would be, in the manifestation of that wrath, or in carrying out the purposes of the heart, which could not, in the circumstances, be made to promote his glory, or which would do injury, he would check and restrain. He would suffer it to proceed no further than he chose, and would make it certain that there should be no exhibition of wrathful feelings on the part of man which would not, in some way, be made to promote his honor, and to advance his own great purposes. He has absolute control over the passions of people, as he has over the pestilence, over earthquakes, and over storms, and can make all tributary to his glory, and executioners of his will.

Verse 11

vow, and pay unto the Lord your God - That is, Pay your vows, or sacredly observe them. On the word "vow," see the notes at Psalm 22:25. Compare Psalm 50:14; Psalm 56:12; Psalm 66:13. The word refers to a voluntary promise made to God.

Let all that be round about him - All that worship him, or that profess to honor him.

Bring presents - Bring gifts or offerings; things expressive of gratitude and homage. See the notes at Psalm 45:12. Compare Isaiah 16:1, note; Isaiah 18:7, note; Isaiah 60:5, note.

Unto him that ought to be feared - Margin, "to fear." The meaning would be well expressed by the word dread; "to the Dread One." It was not to inspire fear that the presents were to be brought; but they were to be brought to One who had shown that he was the proper object of dread or reverence.

Verse 12

He shall cut off the spirit of princes - That is, He will cut down their pride; he will break them down. Luther renders it, "He shall take away the wrath of princes." The allusion is to what he had done as celebrated in this psalm. He had shown that he could rebuke the pride and self-confidence of kings, and could bring them low at his feet.

He is terrible to the kings of the earth - When they are arrayed against him.

(1) they are wholly under his control.

(2) he can defeat their plans.

(3) he can check them when he pleases.

(4) he can, and will, make their plans - even their wrath - the means of promoting or carrying out his own purposes.

(5) he will allow them to proceed no further in their plans of evil than he can make subservient to the furtherance of his own.

(6) he can cut down the most mighty of them at his pleasure, and destroy them forever.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 77

Introduction

For the meaning of the title to this psalm, see the notes at the title to Psalm 39:1-13. It purports, like the preceding ones, to be a psalm of Asaph. See the notes in the title to Psalm 77:1. This, although it is in the beginning of the psalm, is clearly designed to be a general expression of his experience in the case "as recorded in the psalm," or as the result of the conflict through which he had passed.

II. A statement of his affliction, and of the exercises of his mind in his affliction, Psalm 77:2-9.

(1) the statement of the affliction, Psalm 77:2.

(2) in that affliction he was troubled in mind, or he had painful ideas in regard to God. He could not reconcile his sufferings with such views as he desired to cherish of God, Psalm 77:3.

(3) his meditations, and perhaps the pain of disease, kept him awake, and he was unable to rest. The ordinary time of repose furnished no relief, Psalm 77:4.

(4) he recalled the past; he looked over the dealings of God with people in former times; he summoned up his own reflections in times past, and especially the time when he could praise God in trouble, recalling his "song in the night" - but in vain, Psalm 77:5-6.

(5) the result was that he had most painful thoughts in regard to God, as if he had forgotten to be gracious, and had cast him off forever, and would be favorable no more, Psalm 77:7-9.

III. His self-reproach; his recalling himself to a proper state of feeling; his purpose to think of the dealings of God with his people, and to examine them more closely, Psalm 77:10-12. He saw that the course of thought which he had indulged in was wrong, and was satisfied that it was an "infirmity," that it was to be traced to his own weakness - and that he ought to take different views of God.

IV. The result of all; the things which comforted him in his troubles, and which enabled him at last to put his calm trust in God, Psalm 77:13-20.

He refers

(1) To the fact that God is great, and that he could not hope to be able to comprehend him, Psalm 77:13-14.

(2) to the fact that God had redeemed his people by surprising manifestations of power, showing that he was faithful, and that he was able to deliver front the deepest distresses, Psalm 77:15-18.

(3) to the fact that the way of God was in the sea, or in great waters, and that we cannot expect to be able to comprehend him, Psalm 77:19.

(4) to the fact that God had led his flock in ancient times amid scenes of danger and of trial, Psalm 77:20.

By all this his mind was comforted, and his soul was made calm. God heard his prayer, and gave him peace.

Verse 1

I cried unto God with my voice - That is, he cried or prayed audibly. It was not mere mental prayer. See the notes at Psalm 3:4.

Even unto God with my voice - The repetition here is emphatic. The idea is that it was an earnest or fervent cry. Compare the notes at 2 Corinthians 12:8.

And he gave ear unto me - See Psalm 5:1, note; Psalm 17:6, note.

Verse 2

In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord - Compare the notes at Psalm 50:15. This trouble may have been either mental or bodily; that is, it may have arisen from some form of disease, or it may have been that which sprang from difficulties in regard to the divine character, government, and dealings. That it "assumed" the latter form, even if it had its beginning in the former, is apparent from the following verses. Whether it was connected with any form of bodily disease must be determined by the proper interpretation of the next clause in this verse.

My sore ran in the night - Margin, "My hand." It is evident that our translators sup. posed that there was some bodily disease - some running sore - which was the cause of his trouble. Hence, they so rendered the Hebrew word. But it is now generally agreed that this is without authority. The Hebrew word is "hand" - יד *yâd* - a word which is never used in the sense of sore or wound. The Septuagint renders it, "my hands are before him." The Vulgate renders it in the same manner. Luther, "My hand is

stretched out at night." DeWette, "My hand is stretched out at night unwearied." The word which is rendered in our version "ran" - נגר *nâgar* - means to "flow;" and, in Niphil, to be poured out, and then, "to be stretched out;" which is evidently its meaning here. The idea is, that his hand was stretched out in earnest supplication, and that this continued in the night when these troubles came most upon him. See Psalm 77:4, Psalm 77:6. In his painful meditations in the night. watches - in thinking on God and his ways, as he lay upon his bed, he stretched out his hand in fervent prayer to God.

And ceased not - The word used here - פוג *pûg* - means properly to be cold; then, to be torpid, sluggish, slack. Here it means that the hand did not become weary; it did not fall from exhaustion; or, in other words, that he did not give over praying through weariness or exhaustion.

My soul refused to be comforted - I resisted all the suggestions that came to my own mind, that might have comforted me. My heart was so melancholy and downcast; my spirits were so crushed; my mind was so dark; I had become so morbid, that I loved to cherish these thoughts. I chose to dwell on them. They had obtained possession of me, and I could not let them go. There was nothing that my own mind could suggest, there was nothing that occurred to me, that would relieve the difficulty or restore peace to my soul. These sad and gloomy thoughts filled all my soul, and left no room for thoughts of consolation and peace. A truly pious man may, therefore, get into a state of mind - a sad, dispirited, melancholy, morbid state - in which nothing that can be said to him, nothing that will occur to himself, will give him comfort and peace. Compare Jeremiah 31:15.

Verse 3

I remembered God - That is, I thought on God; I thought on his character, his government, and his dealings; I thought on the mysteries - the incomprehensible things - the apparently unequal, unjust, and partial doings - of his administration. It is evident from the whole tenor of the psalm that these were the things which occupied his attention. He dwelt on them until his whole soul became sad; until his spirit became so overwhelmed that he could not find words in which to utter his thoughts.

And was troubled - The Septuagint renders this, εὐφράνθην *euphranthēn* - I was rejoiced or delighted. So the Vulgate. Luther renders it, "When I am troubled, then I think on God." Our translation, however, has probably given the true idea; and in that has expressed

(a) what often occurs in the case of even a good man - that by dwelling on the dark and incomprehensible things of the divine administration, the soul becomes sad and troubled to an extent bordering on murmuring, complaint, and rebellion; and may also serve to illustrate

(b) what often happens in the mind of a sinner - that he delights to dwell on these things in the divine administration:

(1) as most in accordance with what he desires to think about God, or with the views which he wishes to cherish of him; and

(2) as justifying himself in his rebellion against God, and his refusal to submit to him - for if God is unjust, partial, and severe, the sinner is right; such a Being would be unworthy of trust and confidence; he ought to be opposed, and his claims ought to be resisted.

I complained - Or rather, I "mused" or "meditated." The word used here does not necessarily mean to complain. It is sometimes used in that sense, but its proper and common signification is to meditate. See Psalm 119:15, Psalm 119:23, Psalm 119:27, Psalm 119:48, Psalm 119:78, Psalm 119:148.

And my spirit was overwhelmed - With the result of my own reflections. That is, I was amazed or confounded by the thoughts that came in upon me.

Verse 4

Thou holdest mine eyes waking - literally, "Thou holdest the watchings of my eyes." Gesenius (Lexicon) translates the Hebrew word rendered "waking," "eyelids." Probably that is the true idea. The eyelids are the watchers or guardians of the eyes. In danger, and in sleep, they close. Here the idea is, that God held them so that they did not close. He overcame the natural tendency of the eye to shut. In other words, the psalmist was kept awake; he could not sleep. This he traces to God. The idea is, that God so kept himself before his mind - that such ideas occurred to him in regard to God - that he could not sleep.

I am so troubled - With sad and dark views of God; so troubled in endeavoring to understand his character and doings; in explaining his acts; in painful ideas that suggest themselves in regard to his justice, his goodness, his mercy.

That I cannot speak - I am struck dumb. I know not what to say. I cannot find "anything" to say. He must have a heart singularly and happily free by nature from scepticism, or must have reflected little on the divine administration, who has not had thoughts pass through his mind like these. As the psalmist was a good man, a pious man, it is of importance to remark, in view of his experience, that such reflections occur not only to the minds of bad people - of the profane - of sceptics - of infidel philosophers, but they come unbidden into the minds of good people, and often in a form which they cannot calm down. He who has never had such thoughts, happy as he may and should deem himself that he has not had them, has never known some of the deepest stirrings and workings of the human soul on the subject of religion, and is little qualified to sympathize with a spirit torn, crushed, agitated, as was that of the psalmist on these questions, or as Augustine and thousands of others have been in after-times. But let not a man conclude, because he has these thoughts, that therefore he cannot be a friend of God - a converted man. The wicked man invites them, cherishes them, and rejoices that he can find what seem to him to be reasons for indulging in such thoughts against God; the good man is pained; struggles against them: endearours to banish them from his soul.

Verse 5

I have considered the days of old - Rather, "I do consider;" that is, "I think upon." This refers to his resolution in his perplexity and trouble; the method to which he resorted in examining the subject, and in endeavoring to allay his troubles. He resolved to look at the past. He asked what was the evidence which was furnished on the subject by the former dealings of God with himself and with mankind; what could be learned from those dealings in regard to the great and difficult questions which now so perplexed his mind.

The years of ancient times - The records and remembrances of past ages. What is the testimony which the history of the world bears on this subject? Does it prove that God is worthy of confidence or not? Does it or does it not authorize and justify these painful thoughts which pass through the mind?

Verse 6

I call to remembrance my song in the night - Compare Job 35:10, note; Psalm 42:8, note. The word here rendered "song" - נגינה *negîynâh* - means properly the music of stringed instruments, Lamentations 5:14;

Isaiah 38:20; then, a stringed instrument. It is the word which we have so often in the titles to the psalms (Psalm 4:1-8; Psalm 6:1-10; Psalm 54:1-7; Psalm 67:1-7; Psalm 76:1-12); and it is used here in the sense of song or psalm. The idea is, that there had been times in his life when, even in darkness and sorrow, he could sing; when he could find things for which to praise God; when he could find something that would cheer him; when he could take some bright views of God adapted to calm down his feelings, and to give peace to his soul. He recalls those times and scenes to his remembrance, with a desire to have those cheerful impressions renewed; and he asks himself what it was which then comforted and sustained him. He endeavors to bring those things back again, for if he found comfort then, he thinks that he might find comfort from the same considerations now.

I commune with mine own heart - I think over the matter. See the notes at Psalm 4:4.

And my spirit made diligent search - In reference

(a) to the grounds of my former support and comfort; and

(b) in reference to the whole matter as it lies before me now.

Verse 7

Will the Lord cast off for ever? - This was the subject, and the substance, of his inquiry: whether it was a fair and just conclusion that God would show no mercy; would never be gracious again. Evidently the thought passed through his mind that this seemed to be the character of God; that things looked as if this were so; that it was difficult, if not impossible, to understand the divine dealings otherwise; and he asks whether this was a fair conclusion; whether he must be constrained to believe that this was so.

And will he be favorable no more? - Will he no more show favor to people? Will he pardon and save no more of the race of mankind?

Verse 8

Is his mercy clean gone for ever? - The word rendered "clean gone" means to fail; to fail utterly. The idea is, Can it be that the compassion of God has become exhausted - that no more mercy is to be shown to mankind - that henceforth all is to be left to stern and severe justice? What would the world be if this were so! What must be the condition of mankind if mercy were no more to be shown to the race!

Doth his promise fail for evermore? - Margin, as in Hebrew, "to generation and generation." The original Hebrew rendered "promise" means "word;" and the question is, whether it can be that what God has spoken is to be found false. Can we no longer rely on what he has said? All the hopes of mankind depend on that, and if that should fail, all prospect of salvation in regard to our race must be at an end.

Verse 9

Hath God forgotten to be gracious? - Has he passed over mercy in administering his government? Has he ceased to remember that man needs mercy? Has he forgotten that this is an attribute of his own nature?

Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? - The original word here rendered "tender mercies" refers to the "bowels," as the seat of compassion or mercy, in accordance with a usage common in Hebrew. See Psalm 25:6, note; Isaiah 16:11, note; Isaiah 63:15, note. Compare Luke 1:78 (in Greek); Philemon 1:8; Philemon 2:1; 1 John 3:17. We speak of the "heart" as the seat of affection and kindness. The Hebrews included the heart, but they used a more general word. The word rendered "shut up" means "closed;" and the question is whether his mercy was closed, or had ceased forever. The psalmist concludes that if this were done, it must be as the result of anger - anger in view of the sins of people.

Verse 10

And I said, This is my infirmity - The meaning of this phrase is not, as would appear from our translation, that his reflections on the subject were to be traced to his weakness, or were a proof of weakness of mind, but that the subject overpowered him. This verse has been very variously rendered. The Septuagint and the Vulgate translate it, "And I said, now I begin; this is a change of the right hand of the Most High," with what meaning it is difficult to see. Luther renders it, "But yet I said, I must suffer this; the right hand of the Most High can change all;" a beautiful sentiment, but probably not the idea in the original. The Hebrew means, "This makes me sick;" that is, "This distresses me; it afflicts me; it overwhelms me. Such reflections prostrate me, and I cannot bear up under them. I "must" seek relief. I "must" find it somewhere. I "must" take some view of this matter which will save me from these dreadful thoughts that overpower and crush the soul." Any deep mental emotion may have this effect, and it is not strange that such a result should be produced by the momentous thoughts suggested by religion, as it sometimes attends even the manifestation of the divine

mercy to the soul. Compare the notes at Daniel 10:8-9. The course of thought which the psalmist pursued, and in which he found relief, is stated in the following verses. It consisted of an attempt to obtain, from the remembrance of the divine administration in past times, views of God which would lead to confidence in him. The views thus obtained, as will be seen, were two-fold:

(a) That, as far as his dealings could be understood, God was worthy of confidence; and

(b) That in the ways of God there are, and must be, many things which man cannot comprehend.

But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High - That is, the years when God displayed his power; when he reached out his right hand; when he manifested his true character; when there was a proper exhibition to the world of what he is, and of the true principles of his administration. The words "But I will remember" are not in the original, though, as they occur in the following verse, they are not improperly supplied by the translators. The original, however, is more striking and emphatic: "This makes me sick! The years of the right hand of the Most High!" The history of those years occurred to his mind. They rose to his view suddenly in his sorrow. They came before him in such a form and manner that he felt they should be inquired into. Their history should be examined. In that history - in those remembered years - "relief" might be found. It was natural to look there for relief. He instinctively turned, therefore, to examine the records of those years, and to inquire what testimony they bore in regard to God; what there might be in them that would give relief to a troubled heart.

Verse 11

I will remember the works of the Lord - That is, I will call them to remembrance, or I will reflect on them. I will look to what God has "done," that I may learn his true character, or that I may see what is the proper interpretation to be put on his doings in respect to the question whether he is righteous or not; whether it is proper to put confidence in him or not. Or, in other words, I will examine those doings to see if I cannot find in them something to calm down my feelings; to remove my despondency; and to give me cheerful views of God.

Surely I will remember thy wonders of old - Thy wonderful dealings with mankind; those acts which thou hast performed which are suited to excite amazement and wonder.

Verse 12

I will meditate also of all thy work - That is, with a view to learn thy real character; to see whether I am to be constrained by painful facts to cherish the thoughts which have given me such trouble, or whether I may not find reasons for cherishing more cheerful views of God.

And talk of thy doings - Or rather, "I will muse on thy doings" - for so the Hebrew word signifies. It is not conversation with others to which he refers; it is meditation - musing - calm contemplation - thoughtful meditation. He designed to reflect on the doings of God, and to ask what was the proper interpretation to be put on them in regard to his character. Thus we must, and may, judge of God, as we judge of our fellow-men. We may, we must, inquire what is the proper interpretation to be put on the events which occur under his administration, and form our opinions accordingly. The result of the psalmist's reflections is stated in the following verses.

Verse 13

Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary - Luther renders this, "O God, thy way is holy." Prof. Alexander, "O God, in holiness is thy way." DeWette, "O God, holy is thy way." The word rendered "sanctuary" - קדֹשׁ *qôdesh* - means properly "holiness." It is not the same word which in Psalm 73:17 is rendered "sanctuary" - מקדֹשׁ *miqdâsh* The word here employed, however, may mean a holy place, a sanctuary, as the tabernacle Exodus 28:43; Exodus 29:30, or the temple 1 Kings 8:8; 2 Chronicles 29:7. In this passage the word is ambiguous. It means either that the way of God is holy, or in holiness; or, that it is in the sanctuary, or holy place. If the former, it is a statement of the result to which the psalmist came in regard to the divine character, from a contemplation of his doings. If the latter, it means that the way of God - the true principles of the divine administration - are to be learned in the place where he is worshipped, and from the principles which are there set forth. Compare the notes at Psalm 73:17. It seems to me that the former is the correct interpretation, as it accords better with the scope of the passage.

Who is so great a God as our God - In greatness no one can be compared with him. He is supreme over all. This is the first reflection of the

psalmist in regard to God - that he is great; that he is superior to all other beings; that no one can be compared with him. The evident inference from this in the mind of the psalmist, as bearing on the subject of his inquiry, is, that it is to be expected that there will be things in his administration which man cannot hope to understand; that a rash and sudden judgment should not be formed in regard to him from his doings; that people should wait for the developments of his plans; that he should not be condemned because there are things which we cannot comprehend, or which seem to be inconsistent with goodness. This is a consideration which ought always to influence us in our views of God and his government.

Verse 14

Thou art the God that doest wonders - It is, it must be, the characteristic of God, the true God, to do wonderful things; things which are suited to produce amazement, and which we can little hope to be able to understand. Our judgment of God, therefore, should not be hasty and rash, but calm and deliberate.

Thou hast declared thy strength among the people - Thou hast manifested thy greatness in thy dealings with the people. The word "people" here refers not especially to the Hebrew people, but to the nations - the people of the world at large. On a wide scale, and among all nations, God had done that which was suited to excite wonder, and which people were little qualified as yet to comprehend. No one can judge aright of what another has done unless he can take in the whole subject, and see it as he does who performs the act - unless he understands all the causes, the motives, the results near and remote - unless he sees the necessity of the act - unless he sees what would have been the consequences if it had not been done, for in that which is unknown to us, and which lies beyond the range of our vision, there may be full and sufficient reasons for what has been done, and an explanation may be found there which would remove all the difficulty.

Verse 15

Thou hast with thine arm - That is, with strength or power, the arm being a symbol of strength. Exodus 6:6; Exodus 15:16; Psalm 10:15.

Redeemed thy people - Thou didst rescue or deliver them from Egyptian bondage. See the notes at Isaiah 43:3.

The sons of Jacob and Joseph - The descendants of Jacob and Joseph. Jacob is mentioned because he was the ancestor of the twelve tribes;

Joseph, because he was conspicuous or eminent among the sons of Jacob, and particularly because he acted so important a part in the affairs of Egypt, from whose dominion they were redeemed.

Verse 16

The waters saw thee … - The waters of the Red Sea and the Jordan. There is great sublimity in this expression; in representing the waters as conscious of the presence of God, and as fleeing in consternation at his presence. Compare Revelation 20:11; Habakkuk 3:10-11.

They were afraid - On the word used here - חול *chûl* - see Psalm 10:5, note; Psalm 55:4, note. It may mean here to tremble or quake, as in pain Deuteronomy 2:25; Joel 2:6. - Alarm, distress, anguish, came over the waters at the presence of God; and they trembled, and fled.

The depths also were troubled - The deep waters, or the waters "in" the depths. It was not a ripple on the surface; but the very depths - the usually calm and undisturbed waters that lie below the surface - were heaved into commotion at the divine presence.

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Verse 17

The clouds poured out water - Margin, "The clouds were poured forth with water." The translation in the text is the more correct. This is a description of a storm; but to what particular storm in history does not appear. It was evidently some exhibition of the divine greatness and power in delivering the children of Israel, and may have referred to the extraordinary manifestation of God at Mount Sinai, amidst lightnings, and thunders, and tempests. Exodus 19:16. For a general description of a storm, as illustrating this passage, see Job 36:26-33, notes; Job 37:1-5, notes; and Psalm 29:1-11.

The skies sent out a sound - The voice of thunder, which seems to come from the sky.

Thine arrows also - The lightnings - compared with burning or ignited arrows. Such arrows were anciently used in war. They were bound round with rags, and dipped in some combustible substance - as turpentine - and shot into houses, grain-fields, haystacks, or towns, for the purpose of setting them on fire. It was not unnatural to compare the rapid lightnings with such blazing arrows.

Went abroad - They moved rapidly in all directions.

Verse 18

The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven - Compare the notes at Psalm 29:1-11. The word rendered "heaven" here - גלגל *galgal* - means properly "a wheel," as of a chariot, Isaiah 5:28; Ezekiel 10:2, Ezekiel 10:6; Ezekiel 23:24; Ezekiel 26:10. Then it means a "whirlwind," as that which rolls along, Ezekiel 10:13. Then it is used to denote chaff or stubble, as driven along before a whirlwind, Psalm 83:13; Isaiah 17:13. It is never used to denote heaven. It means here, undoubtedly, the whirlwind; and the idea is, that in the ragings of the storm, or of the whirlwind, the voice of God was heard - the deep bellowing thunder - as if God spoke to people.

The lightnings lightened the world - The whole earth seemed to be in a blaze.

The earth trembled and shook - See the notes at Psalm 29:1-11.

Verse 19

Thy way is in the sea - Probably the literal meaning here is, that God had shown his power and faithfulness in the sea (that is, the Red Sea), in delivering his people; it was there that his true character was seen, as possessing almighty power, and as being able to deliver his people. But this seems to have suggested, also, another idea - that the ways of God, in his providential dealings, were like walking through the sea, where no permanent track would be made, where the waves would close on the path, and where it would be impossible by any footprints to ascertain the way which he had taken. So in regard to his doings and his plans. There is nothing by which man can determine in regard to them. There are no traces by which he can follow out the divine designs - as none can follow one whose path is through the trackless waters. The subject is beyond man's reach, and there should be no rash or harsh judgment of the Almighty.

And thy path in the great waters - The additional idea here may be, that the ways or plans of God are vast - like the ocean. Even in shallow waters, when one wades through them, the path closes at once, and the way cannot be traced; but God's goings are like those of one who should move through the great ocean - over a boundless sea - where none could hope to follow him.

And thy footsteps are not known - The word rendered "footsteps" means properly the print made by the "heel," and the print made by the foot. The idea here is, that there are no traces in regard to many of the dealings of God, which appear most incomprehensible to us, and which trouble us most, as there can be no footprints left in the waters. We should

not venture, therefore, to sit in judgment on the doings of God, or presume that we can understand them.

Verse 20

Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron - This satisfied and comforted the mind of the psalmist. God had never forsaken his people. He had shown himself faithful in his dealings with them. He had acted the part of a good shepherd. In all the dangers of their way; in their perilous journey through the wilderness; amidst foes, privations, and troubles - rocks, sands, storms, tempests - when surrounded by enemies, and when their camp was infested with poisonous serpents - God had shown himself able to protect his people, and had been faithful to all his promises and covenant-engagements. Looking back to this period of their history, the psalmist saw that there was abundant reason for confiding in God, and that the mind should repose on him calmly amid all that was dark and mysterious in his dealings. In view of the past, the mind ought to be calm; encouraged by the past, however incomprehensible may be God‘s doings, people may come to him, and entrust all their interests to him with the confident assurance that their salvation will be secure, and that all which seems dark and mysterious in the dealings of God will yet be made clear.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 78

Introduction

This is one of the psalms ascribed to Asaph. See Introduction to Psalm 32:1-11.

The time when the psalm was composed cannot now be ascertained with any certainty. It was evidently written, however, after the revolt of the ten tribes, and the establishment of the sovereignty in the tribe of Judah; that is, after the time of David and Solomon. This is apparent from Psalm 78:9, Psalm 78:67, where "Ephraim," the chief of the ten tribes, is referred to in distinction from "Judah."

The design of the psalm is, evidently, to vindicate the fact that Ephraim had been rejected, and that Judah had been chosen to be the head of the nation. The reason of this was found in the conduct of Ephraim, or the ten tribes, in revolting from God, and in forgetting the divine mercy and compassion shown to the Hebrew people in former days. See Psalm 78:9-11, Psalm 78:67-68.

The argument in the psalm is the following:

I. A call on all the people, addressed to them by the king or the ruler, to attend to the instructions of former times - the lessons which it was of importance to transmit to future generations, Psalm 78:1-4.

II. God had established a general law which he had designed for all the people, or which he intended should be the law of the nation as such - that all the people might set their hope in God, or be worshippers of Him as the only true God, and that they might all be one people, Psalm 78:5-8.

III. Ephraim - the most powerful of the ten tribes, and their head and representative - had been guilty of disregarding that law, and had refused to come to the common defense of the nation, Psalm 78:9-11.

IV. The wickedness of this rebellion is shown by the great favors which, in its former history, God had shown to the nation as such, including these very tribes, Psalm 78:67-68.

VI. The fact is declared that David had been chosen to rule over the people; that he had been taken from humble life, and made the ruler of the

nation, and that the line of the sovereignty had been settled in him, Psalm 78:69-72.

Verse 1

Give ear, O my people - This is not an address of God, but an address of the king or ruler of the people, calling their attention to an important subject; to wit, his right to rule over them, or showing why the power had been vested in him.

To my law - The word law here seems to mean what he would say, as if what he should choose to say would have the force and authority of law. What follows is not exactly law in the sense that it was a rule to be obeyed; but it is something that is authoritatively said, and should have the force of law.

Incline your ears … - Be attentive. What is to be said is worthy of your particular regard. Compare the notes at Psalm 5:1.

Verse 2

I will open my mouth in a parable - See the notes at Psalm 49:4. The word "parable" here means a statement by analogy or comparison; that is, he would bring out what he had to say by a course of reasoning founded on an analogy drawn from the ancient history of the people.

I will utter dark sayings of old - Of ancient times; that is, maxims, or sententious thoughts, which had come down from past times, and which embodied the results of ancient observation and reflection. Compare Psalm 49:4, where the word rendered "dark sayings" is explained. He would bring out, and apply, to the present case, the maxims of ancient wisdom.

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Verse 3

Which we have heard and known - Which have been communicated to us as certain truth.

And our fathers have told us - That is, we have heard and known them by their telling us; or, this is the means by which we have known them. They have come down to us by tradition from ancient times.

Verse 4

We will not hide them from their children - From their descendants, however remote. We of this generation will be faithful in handing down these truths to future times. We stand between past generations and the generations to come. We are entrusted by those who have gone before us with great and important truths; truths to be preserved and transmitted in

their purity to future ages. That trust committed to us we will faithfully discharge. These truths shall not suffer in passing from us to them. They shall not be stayed in their progress; they shall not be corrupted or impaired. This is the duty of each successive generation in the world, receiving, as a trust, from past generations, the result of their thoughts, their experience, their wisdom, their inventions, their arts, their sciences, and the records of their doings, to hand these down unimpaired to future ages, combined with all that they may themselves invent or discover which may be of use or advantage to the generations following.

Shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord - The "reasons" why he should be praised, as resulting from his past doings - and the wags in which it should be done. We will keep up, and transmit to future times, the pure institutions of religion.

And his strength - The records of his power.

And his wonderful works that he hath done - In the history of his people, and in his many and varied interpositions in their behalf.

Verse 5

For he established a testimony in Jacob - He ordained or appointed that which would be for a "witness" for him; that which would bear testimony to his character and perfections; that which would serve to remind them of what he was, and of his authority over them. Any law or ordinance of God is thus a standing and permanent witness in regard to his character as showing what he is.

And appointed a law in Israel - That is, He gave law to Israel, or to the Hebrew people. Their laws were not human enactments, but were the appointments of God.

Which he commanded our fathers … - He made it a law of the land that these testimonies should be preserved and faithfully transmitted to future times. See Deuteronomy 4:9; Deuteronomy 6:7; Deuteronomy 11:19. They were not given for themselves only, but for the benefit of distant generations also.

Verse 6

That the generation to come might know them … - That people in future times might enjoy the benefit of them as their fathers had done, and that they should then send them forward to those who were to succeed them.

Who should arise and declare them to their children - Who, as they appeared on the stage of life, should receive the trust, and send it onward to future ages. Thus the world makes progress; thus one age starts where the previous one left off; thus it enters on its own career with the advantage of all the toils, the sacrifices, the happy thoughts, the inventions of all past times. It is designed that the world shall thus grow wiser and better as it advances; and that future generations shall be enriched with all that was worth preserving in the experience of the past. See the notes at Psalm 71:18.

Verse 7

That they might set their hope in God - That they might place confidence in God; that they might maintain their allegiance to him. The object was to give such exhibitions of his character and government as to inspire just confidence in him, or to lead people to trust in him; and not to trust in idols and false gods. All the laws which God has ordained are such as are suited to inspire confidence in him as a just and righteous ruler; and all his dealings with mankind, when they are properly - that is, "really" - understood, will be found to be adapted to the same end.

And not forget the works of God - His doings. The word here does not refer to his "works" considered as the works of creation, or the material universe, but to his acts - to what he has done in administering his government over mankind.

But keep his commandments - That by contemplating his doings, by understanding the design of his administration, they might be led to keep his commandments. The purpose was that they might see such wisdom, justice, equity, and goodness in his administration, that they would be led to keep laws so suited to promote the welfare of mankind. If people saw all the reasons of the divine dealings, or fully understood them, nothing more would be necessary to secure universal confidence in God and in his government.

Verse 8

And might not be as their fathers - Their ancestors, particularly in the wilderness, as they passed through it to the promised land. See Exodus 32:7-9; Exodus 33:3; Exodus 34:9; Acts 7:51-53.

A stubborn and rebellious generation - Stiff-necked, ungovernable; inclined to revolt. Nothing was more remarkable in their early history than this.

A generation that set not their heart aright - Margin, as in Hebrew, "prepared not their heart." That is, they took no pains to keep their heart aright, or to cherish right feelings toward God. They yielded to any sudden impulse of passion, even when it led them to revolt against God. This is as true of sinners now as it was of them, that they "take no pains" to have their hearts right with God. If they did, there would be no difficulty in doing it. It is not with them "an object of desire" to have their hearts right with God, and hence, nothing is more easy or natural than that they should rebel and go astray.

And whose spirit was not stedfast with God - That is, they themselves did not maintain a firm trust in God. They yielded readily to every impulse, and every passion, even when it tended to draw them away wholly from him. There was no such "strength" of attachment to him as would lead them to resist temptation, and they easily fell into the sin of idolatry.

Verse 9

The children of Ephraim - The sons of Ephraim; that is, the descendants of Ephraim; the tribe of Ephraim. Ephraim was one of the "largest" of the tribes of Israel, and was the "chief" tribe in the rebellion, and hence, the term is often used to denote the "ten" tribes, or the kingdom of Israel, in contradistinction from that of Judah. See Isaiah 7:2, Isaiah 7:5, Isaiah 7:8-9, Isaiah 7:17; Isaiah 11:13; Isaiah 28:1. The word is evidently used in this sense here, not as denoting that one tribe only, but that tribe as the head of the revolted kingdom; or, in other words, the name is used as representing the kingdom of that name after the revolt. See Psalm 78:67-68.

Being armed - The idea in this phrase is, that they had abundant means for maintaining their independence in connection with the other tribes, or as a part of the nation, but that they refused to cooperate with their brethren.

And carrying bows - Margin, "throwing forth." Literally, "lifting up." The idea is, that they were armed with bows; or, that they were fully armed.

Turned back in the day of battle - That is, they did not stand by their brethren, or assist them in defending their country. There is probably no reference here to any particular battle, but the idea is, that in the wars of the nation - in those wars which were waged for national purposes - they refused to join with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin in defense of the lawful government.

Verse 10

They kept not the covenant of God - The covenant which God had made with the entire Hebrew people. They did not maintain their allegiance to Yahweh. Compare Deuteronomy 4:13, Deuteronomy 4:23; Deuteronomy 17:2.

And refused to walk in his law - Refused to obey his law. They rebelled against him.

Verse 11

And forgat his works - The works which he had performed in behalf of the nation. These works are referred to in the verses following.

And his wonders that he had shewed them - The wonderful works in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness; the miracles which he had performed on behalf of the nation.

Verse 12

Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers - Things suited to excite wonder and astonishment. Such were all the miracles that he performed, in effecting the deliverance of his people.

In the land of Egypt - In delivering them from Pharaoh.

In the field of Zoan - The Septuagint renders this ἐν πεδίῳ Τάνεως **en pediō Taneōs" in the plain of Tanis." So the Latin Vulgate. Zoan or Tanis was an ancient city of Lower Egypt, situated on the eastern side of the Tanitie arm of the Nile. The name given to it in the Egyptian language signified "low region." See the notes at Isaiah 19:11. The Hebrews seem to have been located in this region, and it was in this part of Egypt - that is, in the country lying round about Zoan - that the wonders of God were principally manifested in behalf of his people.**

Verse 13

He divided the sea … - The Red Sea. Exodus 14:21-22.

And he made the waters to stand as an heap - The word rendered "heap" means anything piled up, or a mound; and the idea is, that the waters were piled up on each side of them as a "mound." See the notes at Psalm 33:7. Compare Joshua 3:13, Joshua 3:16; Exodus 15:8.

Verse 14

In the day-time also he led them with a cloud - That is, the cloud was the visible symbol of his presence, and its movements determined the way in which they were to go. It was "God" who led them, and who adopted this manner of doing it, so that they had "always" with them, by day and by night, a "visible" proof of his presence. There was that with them which

could not be ascribed to any natural causes, and which, therefore, "demonstrated" that God was with them, and that as long as they followed the cloud and the pillar of fire they could not err. See Exodus 13:21; Exodus 14:24. They had the less excuse, therefore, for rebelling against him.

And all the night with a light of fire - A column - a pillar - which stood over the camp, and which was a symbol of the divine presence and guidance. The cloud would not be visible by night, nor would the fire be a good guide by day; and hence, the form of the symbol was changed. The same thing, however, was intended by both, and together they were standing proofs of the presence of God.

Verse 15

He clave the rocks in the wilderness - There were two occasions on which the rock was smitten for water; one Exodus 17:6 at Mount Horeb, shortly after they came out of Egypt; and the other Numbers 20:11, when they had nearly ceased their wanderings in the wilderness. Hence, the plural term (rocks) is used here.

And gave them drink as out of the great depths - As if he had formed a lake or an ocean, furnishing an inexhaustible supply.

Verse 16

He brought streams also out of the rock … - literally, "flowings." The waters were poured out in an over-flowing stream. Those streams continued to flow, thus constituting a continued proof of the presence of God. See this fully explained in the notes at 1 Corinthians 10:4.

Verse 17

And they sinned yet more against him - literally, "They added to sin against him." The idea is, that his mercies, and the proofs of his presence were only made the occasion of greater sin on their part. This may have been in two ways;

(1) their sin was thus more aggravated, as being committed against greater light; and

(2) they evinced more and more their depravity, in proportion as he bestowed mercies on them - not an uncommon thing with people.

By provoking the Most High - literally, "embittering." They rebelled against him. They refused to submit to him. They forgot his mercies. Compare Deuteronomy 9:22.

In the wilderness - literally, "in the dry place;" in the desert. In the very place where they were most manifestly dependent on him - where there were no natural streams of water - where their needs were met by a miraculous supply - even there did they provoke him, and rebel against him. If he had simply stopped that miraculous supply of water they must have perished. But sinners forget how dependent they are on God, when they sin against him. On what can they rely, if he withdraws from them, and leaves them to themselves?

Verse 18

And they tempted God in their heart - Exodus 16:2. The heart was the source of the evil. They were not satisfied with what he gave them. They asked for that which would be more agreeable to them, and they did it with a complaining and a murmuring spirit. It is not wrong in itself to ask of God that which will be better than what we now possess, for that is the object of all our prayers; but this may be done from a wrong motive - for mere self-gratification, as was the case here; or it may be with a complaining and dissatisfied spirit, such as was evinced on this occasion. In such a case we cannot expect the prayer to be answered "except as a punishment."

By asking meat for their lust - Food. The word "meat" here does not necessarily denote animal food, as it does with us. They asked another kind of food than manna; and they did it, not because this was "necessary" to sustain life, but in order to gratify their appetites. The original word here, however, is not "lusts," but "souls;" that is, "they asked food for themselves."

Verse 19

Yea, they spake against God - That is, in the manner which is immediately specified - by calling in question his power, or his ability to provide for them in the wilderness. See Numbers 11:4.

They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? - In the desert. The word rendered "furnish" is in the margin "order." It means to arrange; to set in order; and here to arrange and provide for, as at a feast. The precise words used by the complaining Hebrews are not quoted here, but the substance of what they said is retained. The idea is, that what they spake was "equivalent" to saying that God could not prepare a table for them; that is, provide for them, in the desert.

Verse 20

Behold, he smote the rock … - See the notes at Psalm 78:15. The smiting of the rock the first time occurred "before" the complaining about the food. The fact that the rock had been smitten could not be doubted. They had thus had abundant evidence that God was able to do that, and to furnish "water" for them in the desert. It was unreasonable, therefore, to doubt whether he could provide "food" for them - for this in itself was no more difficult than to furnish water. Yet they are represented as affirming that this was far more difficult, and that, although it was admitted that God had provided "water," yet that to provide "food" was wholly beyond his power. Their special sin, therefore, was, that they doubted the power of God in one case, when, in another, equally difficult, they had had abundant proof of it. The spirit of complaining had not been put down by one surprising and undoubted miracle performed in their behalf - a miracle which proved that God had all the power necessary to meet their needs.

Can he give bread also? - Does the ability to cause water to flow from a rock prove that there is also ability to produce bread when necessary? They doubted it, and thus complained against God.

Can he provide flesh for his people? - They supposed that this required greater power than the providing of water, or even of bread, and that if it were admitted that God could furnish the two former, it would by no means follow that he could provide the latter. It was this, as the next verse shows, which was the immediate occasion of the special anger of the Lord.

Verse 21

Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth - See Numbers 11:1, Numbers 11:10.

So a fire was kindled against Jacob … - Fire may be used here, as in Numbers 11:1, as an emblem of wrath; a fire may have been literally sent down to consume them.

Verse 22

Because they believed not in God - They did not believe in his power, or in his promises.

And trusted not in his salvation - In his power and his willingness to save. They had had abundant evidence of that power, but they still doubted his ability to save them, notwithstanding all that he had done for them.

Verse 23

Though he had commanded the clouds from above - Though he had showed that he had absolute control over the clouds, and had only to command them and they would furnish rain in abundance. Compare the notes at Isaiah 5:6.

And opened the doors of heaven - As he had done at the deluge, Genesis 7:11. The idea is, that he had rained down manna upon them in such abundance that it might be compared with the waters that had been sent down at the deluge.

Verse 24

And had rained down manna upon them to eat - Exodus 16:4-5, Exodus 16:14; Numbers 11:7-9. Compare the notes at John 6:31.

And had given them of the corn of heaven - Food that seemed to come down from heaven. The reference here is to the manna, and it is called corn in the sense that it was food, or that it supplied the place of grain. It may also have been called corn from its resemblance to grain. See Exodus 16:31.

Verse 25

Man did eat angels‘ food - Food that came from heaven; food so directly and manifestly from heaven that it might be supposed to be the same kind that was eaten there, and that had now been sent down by a special miracle for man; food so delicate and so free from the ordinary coarse properties of food, that it might be supposed to be such as angels feed on. The word rendered “angels” - אביר *'abbîyr* - means properly “strong, mighty,” and may be applied to people in general, Judges 5:22; Lamentations 1:15; Jeremiah 46:15; to animals, Psalm 22:13 (“bulls of Bashan”); to princes, Psalm 68:31; or to nobles, Job 24:22. It might be rendered here food of nobles, or princes; that is, food of richer quality, or of a more delicate nature, than common food; such as nobles or princes have on their tables. The immediate connection, however, would rather seem to demand the rendering in our version, as the food is said to have come down from heaven. It is rendered food of angels in the Septuagint, in the Latin Vulgate, in the ancient versions generally, and also by Luther. DeWette renders it, “Each one ate the food of princes;” that is, they all lived like princes.

He sent them meat to the full - Food to satisfy; or, as much as they wanted.

Verse 26

He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven - See Numbers 11:31. In the history, the quarter from which the wind came is not mentioned, except as it might be indicated by the statement that the "quails were brought from the sea;" - that is, evidently, the Red Sea. This wind would have come from the southeast. The phrase "in the heaven" means in the air, or from above.

And by his power … - By his direct agency. It was a wind which he caused to blow for the purpose; a miracle.

Verse 27

He rained flesh also upon them as dust - The flesh of quails, Numbers 11:31. The word "rained" means that they seemed to come upon them like a copious shower. The word dust denotes their great abundance.

And feathered fowls - Margin, as in Hebrew, "fowl of wing." This is a poetic expression, designed to give beauty to the description by the image of their fluttering wings.

Like as the sand of the sea - An expression also designed to denote their great numbers, Genesis 22:17; Genesis 32:12; Genesis 41:49; Joshua 11:4; 1 Samuel 13:5; Revelation 20:8.

Verse 28

And he let it fall in the midst of their camp … - It was brought to their very doors; they had not to go and seek it abroad.

Verse 29

So they did eat, and were well filled - The word rendered "well" here is intensive. It means that they were abundantly satisfied; that there was no lack; that they had the most ample supply.

For he gave them their own desire - He gave them exactly what they asked. He gave them flesh to eat as they had demanded; and he gave it to them in such quantities that no one could say that he had not enough.

Verse 30

They were not estranged from their lust - literally, "They were not made strangers to;" that is, in regard to their lusts or desires they were not in the condition of "foreigners" or aliens; they were not separated from them. The word "lusts" here means "desires, wishes." It is not used here in the restricted sense in which it is now with us. The reference is to their desire for food different from manna - for flesh; and the idea is, that they did not restrain their intense desire even when it should have been fully

satisfied. They indulged to excess, and the consequence was that many of them perished.

But while their meat was yet in their mouths - Even while they were eating, and were indulging in this unrestrained manner.

Verse 31

The wrath of God came upon them - See Numbers 11:33.

And slew the fattest of them - literally, "slew among their fat ones." That is, The most vigorous among them were cut down; the people most eminent for rank, for influence, for strength, for valor. How far this was the natural effect of indulgence in eating, and how far it was a direct miracle, cannot now be ascertained. In either case it would equally show the divine displeasure.

And smote down - Margin, as in Hebrew, "made to bow." That is, they were made to bow in death.

The chosen men of Israel - Margin, "Young men." The idea is that of select men; men that would be chosen from among the others; men distinguished for vigor or influence. Not the aged or the feeble particularly, not those who might be naturally expected to fall, but men of strength who might be supposed to be capable of resisting the ordinary attacks of disease. God showed in this way that the judgment came directly from his hand.

Verse 32

For all this they sinned still - Even this did not reclaim them, and prevent their sinning. Heavy judgments do not always restrain men from sin. Not unfrequently they take occasion from such judgments to sin the more.

And believed not for his wondrous works - They did not trust in His wondrous works; or, those works did not have the effect of producing faith. See Psalm 78:22-23. The same thing occurred in the life of the Saviour. John 12:37.

Verse 33

Therefore their days did he consume in vanity - He suffered them to spend their days - the days of that entire generation - in vain and fruitless wanderings in the desert. Instead of leading them at once to the promised land, they were kept there to wear out their life in tedious monotony, accomplishing nothing - wandering from place to place - until all the generation that had come out of Egypt had died.

And their years in trouble - literally, "in terror." Amidst the troubles, the alarms, the terrors of a vast and frightful desert. Sin - rebellion against God - leads to a course of life, and a death, of which these gloomy, sad, and cheerless wanderings in the desert were a striking emblem.

Verse 34

When he slew them - When he came forth in his wrath and cut them down by the plague, by fiery serpents, or by their enemies.

Then they sought him - Their calamities had the effect of producing temporary reformation. They became professedly penitent; they manifested a wish to know God, and expressed a purpose to serve him. It was, however, a temporary and hollow, not a deep and real reformation. This often occurs. In times of affliction, in sickness, in bereavement, in the loss of property, people become serious, and express a purpose to repent and turn to God. A deep impression seems to be produced on their minds, to last, alas! only as long as the hand of God rests upon them. Resolutions of repentance are formed only to be forgotten when the affliction is removed, and when the days of prosperity again return.

And they returned and inquired early after God - The word rendered "inquired early" has reference to the first rays of the morning - the aurora - the dawn. Then it comes to denote the beginning of anything; or, the first thing. Thus employed, it may refer to the act of seeking God as the first thing; in youth; in the morning; at the commencement of any enterprise or undertaking. See Proverbs 8:17; Proverbs 1:28. Here it means that, in their affliction, they did not delay to seek God, but expressed an early intention of serving him. They evinced a prompt purpose to break off their sins, and to return to him.

Verse 35

And they remembered that God was their Rock - See Deuteronomy 32:4, Deuteronomy 32:15, Deuteronomy 32:31. Compare the notes at Psalm 18:2. That is, they were brought to reflect that their only security and defense was God. They were made to feel that they could not rely on themselves, or on any human power, and that their only trust was in God.

And the high God their Redeemer - The God who is exalted over all; the true and living God. The truth was brought to their recollection that it was He who had delivered them from bondage in Egypt, and who had brought them out into freedom. On the word "Redeemer," see the notes at

Isaiah 41:14. Compare Isaiah 43:14; Isaiah 44:6, Isaiah 44:24; Isaiah 47:4; Isaiah 59:20; Psalm 25:22; Job 5:20.

Verse 36

Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth - The word rendered "flatter" means properly "to open;" and hence, "to be open; to be ingenious or frank;" and then, to be easily persuaded, to be deluded, to be beguiled; and hence, also, in an active form, to persuade, to entice, to seduce, to beguile, to delude. The meaning here is, that they attempted to deceive by their professions, or that their professions were false and hollow. Those professions were the mere result of affliction. They were based on no principle; there was no true love or confidence at the foundation. Such professions or promises are often made in affliction. Under the pressure of heavy judgments, the loss of property, the loss of friends, or the failure of health, people become serious, and resolve to give attention to religion. It is rarely that such purposes are founded in sincerity, and that the conversions apparently resulting from them are true conversions. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render the phrase here, "They loved with their mouth."

And they lied unto him with their tongues - They made promises which they did not keep.

Verse 37

For their heart was not right with him - Luther renders this, "Not fast with him." The Hebrew word means "to fit, to prepare;" and the idea is, that the heart was not "adjusted" to such a profession, or did not "accord" with such a promise or pledge. It was a mere profession made by the lips, while the heart remained unaffected. See the notes at Psalm 78:8.

Neither were they stedfast in his covenant - In maintaining his covenant, or in adhering to it. Compare Psalm 25:14; Psalm 44:17. See also Psalm 78:8.

Verse 38

But he, being full of compassion - literally, "But he, merciful," That is, he was ready to forgive them.

Forgave their iniquity - literally, Atoned for, expiated, covered over their iniquity. There is connected with the word the idea of expiation or atonement, as the ground of pardon.

And destroyed them not - Did not cut them off in their repeated acts of rebellion. He bore with them, and spared them.

Yea, many a time turned he his anger away - literally, He multiplied to turn his anger away. That is, he did it repeatedly. There were frequent occasions on their journey for doing this, and he did it.

And did not stir up all his wrath - literally, Did not excite, or arouse all his anger. His anger was stayed or mitigated, and they were suffered still to live.

Verse 39

For he remembered that they were but flesh - That they were human; that they were weak; that they were prone to err; that they were liable to fall into temptation. In his dealings with them he took into view their fallen nature; their training; their temptations; their trials; their weaknesses; and he judged them accordingly. Compare Psalm 103:14. So it was with the Saviour in his treatment of his disciples, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," Matthew 26:41. God will judge people as they are; he will not in his judgments forget that they are people, and that they are weak and feeble. People often judge their fellow-men with much more harshness, with much less allowance for their infirmities and weaknesses, than God shows in his dealings with mankind. And yet such are the very people who are most ready to blame God for his judgments. If God acted on the principle and in the manner according to which they act, they could hope for no mercy at his hand. It is well for them that there is not one like themselves on the throne of the universe.

A wind that passeth away, and cometh not again - Which blows by us, and is gone forever. What a striking description is this of man! How true of an individual! How true of a generation! How true of the race at large! God remembers this when he thinks of people, and he deals with them accordingly. He is not harsh and severe, but kind and compassionate. To man, a being so feeble - to the human race, so frail - to the generations of that race, so transitory, so soon passing off the stage of life - he is ever willing to show compassion. He does not make use of his great power to crush them; he prefers to manifest his mercy in saving them.

Verse 40

How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness - Margin, Or, rebel against him. The Hebrew word may have the signification in the margin. The idea is, that they were perverse and rebellious; that they excited his displeasure, and gave occasion for his anger. See Psalm 78:17.

And grieve him in the desert - The word here rendered grieve means

(1) to work, to fashion;

(2) to suffer pain, to travail, to be afflicted; and then,

(3) to cause one to suffer pain, or to afflict.

The meaning here is that the conduct of the Hebrews was such as was suited to cause pain - as the conduct of a disobedient and rebellious child is.

Verse 41

Yea, they turned back, and tempted God - They turned away from his service; they were disposed to return to Egypt, and to place themselves in the condition in which they were before they were delivered from bondage.

And limited the Holy One of Israel - The idea is, that they set a limit to the power of God; they fancied or alleged - (and this is a thing often done practically even by the professed people of God) - that there was a boundary in respect to power which he could not pass, or that there were things to be done which he had not the ability to perform. The original word - תוה *tâvâh* - occurs but three times in the Scriptures; in 1 Samuel 21:13, where it is rendered scrabbled (in the margin, made marks); in Ezekiel 9:4, where it is rendered set, that is, set a mark (margin, mark); and in the place before us. It is rendered here by the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, to provoke to anger. DeWette translates it troubled. Professor Alexander, "On the Holy One of Israel (they) set a mark." The idea in the word would seem to be that of making a mark for any purpose; and then it means to delineate; to scrawl; or to set a mark for a limit or boundary. Thus it might be applied to God - as if, in estimating his character or his power, they set limits or bounds to it, as one does in marking out a farm or a house-lot in a city or town. There was a limit, in their estimation, to the power of God, beyond which he could not act; or, in other words, his power was defined and bounded, so that beyond a certain point he could not aid them.

Verse 42

They remembered not his hand - His gracious interpositions; the manifestations of his power. They forgot that power had been exercised which showed that he was omnipotent - that there was no limit to his ability to aid them.

Nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy - The time when he rescued them. The power then manifested was sufficient to defend and deliver them in any new dangers that could befall them. The margin is, from affliction. The Hebrew will admit of either interpretation. The sense is not materially changed.

Verse 43

How he had wrought his signs in Egypt - Margin, set. The Hebrew word means to set or place. The word signs here refers to miracles as signs or indications of God‘s power and favor. The things which he did were of such a nature as to show that he was almighty, and at the same time to assure them of his disposition to protect them.

And his wonders in the field of Zoan - The wonderful things which he did; the things suited to excite amazement, or astonishment. On the word Zoan, see the notes at Psalm 78:12.

Verse 44

And had turned their rivers into blood - Exodus 7:20. There was properly but one river in Egypt - the Nile. But there were several branches of that river at the mouth; and there were numerous artificial streams or canals cut from the river, to anyone of which the word river might be also given. Compare the notes at Isaiah 11:15.

And their floods … - Their streams; the canals and branches of the Nile, where they usually obtained a supply of water.

Verse 45

He sent divers sorts of flies … - The account of this plague is found in Exodus 8:24. The word there used is simply “swarm,” without indicating what the swarm was composed of. The rabbis explain the word as denoting a mixture, or a conflux of noxious insects, as if the word were derived from ערב *ʿârab* - “to mix.” The Septuagint renders it κυνόμνια *kunomnia* - “dog-fly” - which Philo describes as so named from its impudence. The common explanation of the word now is that it denotes a species of fly - the gad-fly - exceedingly troublesome to man and beast, and that it derives its name - ערב *ʿârôb* - from the verb ערב *ʿârab* in one of its significations to suck, and hence, the allusion to sucking the blood of animals. The word occurs only in the following places, Exodus 8:21-22, Exodus 8:24, Exodus 8:29, Exodus 8:31, where it is rendered swarm, or swarms, and Psalm 105:31, where (as here) it is rendered divers sorts of flies.

And frogs which destroyed them - Exodus 8:6. The order in which the plagues occurred is not preserved in the account in the psalm.

Verse 46

He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar - The increase or the produce of their fields. Exodus 10:12-14. The word חסיל *châsîyl* - is supposed to denote a species of locust rather than the caterpillar. It literally means the devourer. In our version, however, it is uniformly rendered caterpillar as here; 1 Kings 8:37; 2 Chronicles 6:28; Isaiah 33:4; Joel 1:4; Joel 2:25. It occurs nowhere else.

And their labor unto the locust - The fruit of their labor; the harvests in their fields.

Verse 47

He destroyed their vines with hail - Margin, killed. See Exodus 9:22-26. In the account in Exodus the hail is said to have smitten man and beast, the herb, and the tree of the field. In the psalm only one thing is mentioned, perhaps denoting the ruin by what would be particularly felt in Palestine, where the culture of the grape was so common and so important.

And their sycamore trees with frost - The sycamore is mentioned particularly as giving poetic beauty to the passage. Of the sycamore tree, Dr. Thomson remarks ("land and the Book," vol. i. p. 25), "It is a tender tree, flourishes immensely in sandy plains and warm vales, but cannot bear the hard, cold mountain. A sharp frost will kill them; and this agrees with the fact that they were killed by it in Egypt. Among the wonders performed in the field of Zoan, David says, ‹He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamores with frost.' Certainly, a frost keen enough to kill the sycamore would be one of the greatest ‹wonders' that could happen at the present day in this same field of Zoan." The word rendered "frost" - חנמל *chănâmâl* - occurs nowhere else. It is parallel with the word hail in the other member of the sentence, and denotes something that would be destructive to trees. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Arabic render it frost. Gesenius renders it ants.

Verse 48

He gave up their cattle also to the hail - Margin, he shut up. Exodus 9:22-25.

And their flocks to hot thunderbolts - Margin, lightnings. The original word means flame; then, lightning. There is no allusion in the word to the idea of a bolt, or shaft, accompanying the lightning or the thunder, by which

destruction is produced. The destruction is caused by the lightning, and not by the thunder, and it is hardly necessary to say that there is no shaft or bolt that accompanies it. Probably this notion was formerly entertained, and found its way into the common language used. The same idea is retained by us in the word thunderbolt. But this idea is not in the original; nor is there any foundation for it in fact.

Verse 49

He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger … - This verse is designed to describe the last, and the most dreadful of the plagues that came upon the Egyptians, the slaying of their first-born; and hence, there is such an accumulation of expressions: anger - fierce anger - wrath - indignation - trouble. All these expressions are designed to be emphatic; all these things were combined when the first-born were slain. There was no form of affliction that could surpass this; and in this trial all the expressions of the divine displeasure seemed to be exhausted. It was meant that this should be the last of the plagues; it was meant that the nation should be humbled, and should be made willing that the people of Israel should go.

By sending evil angels among them - There is reference here undoubtedly to the slaying of the first-born in Egypt. Exodus 11:4-5; Exodus 12:29-30. This work is ascribed to the agency of a destroyer (Exodus 12:23; compare Hebrews 11:28), and the allusion seems to be to a destroying angel, or to an angel employed and commissioned to accomplish such a work. Compare 2 Samuel 24:16; 2 Kings 19:35. The idea here is not that the angel himself was evil or wicked, but that he was the messenger of evil or calamity; he was the instrument by which these afflictions were brought upon them.

Verse 50

He made a way to his anger - Margin, he weighed a path. He leveled a path for it; he took away all hindrance to it; he allowed it to have free scope. The idea of weighing is not in the original. The allusion is to a preparation made by which one can march along freely, and without any obstruction. See the notes at Isaiah 40:3-4.

He spared not their soul from death - He spared not their lives. That is, he gave them over to death.

But gave their life over to the pestilence - Margin, their beasts to the murrain. The original will admit of either interpretation, but the connection

seems rather to demand the interpretation which is in the text. Both these things, however, occurred.

Verse 51

And smote all the firstborn in Egypt - See Exodus 11:4-5; Exodus 12:29-30.

The chief of their strength - Those on whom they relied; their firstborn; their pride; their glory; their heirs. Compare Genesis 49:3.

In the tabernacles of Ham - The tents; the dwelling-places of Ham; that is, of Egypt. Compare Genesis 10:6; Psalm 105:23, Psalm 105:27; Psalm 106:22,

Verse 52

But made his own people to go forth like sheep … - That is, he was a shepherd to them. He defended them; provided for them; led them - as a shepherd does his flock. See the notes at Psalm 23:1-2.

Verse 53

And he led them on safely, so that they feared not - In hope; in confidence; so that they had no occasion for alarm. He showed himself able and willing to defend them.

But the sea overwhelmed their enemies - Margin, as in Hebrew, covered. See Exodus 14:27-28; Exodus 15:10.

Verse 54

And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary - The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "to the mountain of his holiness"; that is, his holy mountain. But the reference is rather to the whole land of Canaan. He brought them to the borders of that land - the land of promise - the holy land. They who came out from Egypt did not indeed enter that land, except Caleb and Joshua, but they were conveyed to its borders before all of them fell. It was true also that the people - the Hebrew people - came to the promised land, and secured its possession.

Even to this mountain - Mount Zion, for the object of the psalm was to show that the worship of God was properly celebrated there. See Psalm 78:68. The meaning is not that the people who came out of Egypt actually inherited that mountain, but that their descendants - the people of God - had been put in possession of it.

Which his right hand had purchased - Had procured, or obtained possession of. That is, he had secured it by his power.

Verse 55

He cast out the heathen also before them - literally, the nations. The idea of their being pagan, in the sense which is now attached to that word, is not in the original. The word is one which would be applied to any nation, without reference to its religion. These nations were, indeed, pagans according to the present use of that term, but that idea is not necessarily in the Hebrew word.

And divided them an inheritance by line - Divided to his people an inheritance by a measurement of the land. That is, the land was partitioned out among the tribes, by a survey, fixing their limits and boundaries. See Joshua 13:7; 18; 19.

And made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents - To dwell securely and quietly, no longer roaming from place to place, but having a fixed habitation and a home.

Verse 56

Yet they tempted and provoked … - They tried the patience of God, and provoked him to anger after they were peaceably settled in the promised land. See Judges 2:10-13. The object is to show that it was the character of the people that they were prone to depart from God. Compare Psalm 78:10-11, note; Psalm 78:17, note; Psalm 78:40, note.

Verse 57

But turned back … - See the notes at Psalm 78:41.

They were turned aside like a deceitful bow - literally, a bow of deceit. That is, a bow that could not be depended on; a bow, one of whose arms was longer or more elastic than the other, so that the arrow would turn aside from the mark. The marksman would attempt to hit an object, and would fail. So it was with the people of Israel. They could not be depended on. No reliance could be put on their promises, their covenant-engagements, their attachment, their fidelity, for in these things they failed, as the arrow from a deceitful bow would fail to strike the mark. Their whole history shows how just was this charge; alas! the history of many of the professed people of God has shown how applicable the description has been to them also.

Verse 58

For they provoked him to anger with their high places - places where idols were worshipped; usually on mountains or elevated places. Leviticus 26:30; compare 1 Kings 3:2; 1 Kings 12:31-32; 2 Kings 17:32; 2 Chronicles 33:17.

And moved him to jealousy - As one is when affections due to himself are bestowed upon another - as in the married life. "With their graven images." Their idols. Graven images are here put for idols in general.

Verse 59

When God heard this - literally, "God heard;" that is, he understood this; he was acquainted with it. He heard their prayers addressed to false gods; he heard their praises sung in honor of idols.

He was wroth - This is language taken from the common manner of speaking among people, for language derived from human conceptions and usages must be employed when we speak of God, though it may be difficult to say what is its exact meaning. The general sense is that his conduct toward them was as if he was angry; or was that which is used by a man who is displeased.

And greatly abhorred Israel - The idea in the word rendered abhorred is that of rejecting them with abhorrence; that is, the reference is not merely to the internal feeling or emotion, but to the act which is the proper accompaniment of such an internal feeling. He cast them off; he treated them as not his own. The addition of the word "greatly" shows how intense this feeling was; how decided was his aversion to their conduct.

Verse 60

So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh - The tabernacle or tent which had been erected at Shiloh. He forsook that as a place where he was to be worshipped; that is, he caused his tabernacle, or his place of worship, to be erected in another place, to wit, on Mount Zion. See Psalm 78:68. The name Shiloh means properly a place of rest, and seems to have been given to this place as such a place, or as a place where the ark might abide after its migrations. Shiloh was a city within the limits of the tribe of Ephraim, on a mountain north of Bethel. Here the ark of God remained for many years after it came into the promised land. Joshua 18:1; Judges 18:31; Judges 21:12, Judges 21:19; 1 Samuel 1:3, 1 Samuel 1:24; 1 Samuel 2:14; 1 Samuel 4:3-4. The ark, after it was taken by the Philistines, was never returned to Shiloh, but was deposited successively at Nob 1 Samuel 21:1-6, and at Gibeon 1 Kings 3:4, until David pitched a tabernacle for it on Mount Zion 1 Chronicles 15:1. The meaning here is, that in consequence of the sins of the people, the place of worship was finally and forever removed from the tribe of Ephraim, within whose limits Shiloh was, to the tribe of Judah, and to Mount Zion.

The tent which he placed among men - It was the place which he selected as his abode on earth.

Verse 61

And delivered his strength into captivity - That is, the ark, considered as the symbol of his power. This constituted the defense of the people; this was the emblem of the presence of God, which, when with them, was their real protection. The allusion here is to the time when the ark was taken by the Philistines in the days of Eli. See 1 Samuel 4:3-11.

And his glory - That which was emblematic of his glory, to wit, the ark.

Into the enemy‘s hand - The hand or power of the Philistines.

Verse 62

He gave his people over also unto the sword - When the ark was taken, 1 Samuel 4:10. Thirty thousand of the children of Israel fell on that occasion.

And was wroth with his inheritance - Was angry with his people, considered as his inheritance; that is, considered as his own special people, or his possession.

Verse 63

The fire consumed their young men - Fire here may be regarded as an image of destructive war, as in Numbers 21:28: “For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon: it hath consumed Ar of Moab,” etc. The idea here is, that the young people had been cut off in war.

And their maidens were not given to marriage - As the young people who would have entered into this relation were cut off in war. The margin here is praised; “The maidens were not praised.” This is in accordance with the Hebrew. The idea is, “Their virgins were not praised in nuptial songs;” that is, there were no marriage celebrations; no songs such as were usually composed on such occasions in praise of those who were brides. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this much less accurately, and much less beautifully, were not lamented.

Verse 64

Their priests fell by the sword - Compare 1 Samuel 4:11. It was considered a special calamity that the ministers of religion were cut down in war.

And their widows made no lamentation - That is, the public troubles were so great, the danger was still so imminent, the calamities thickened so fast, that there was no opportunity for public mourning by formal

processions of women, and loud lamentations, such as were usual on these occasions. See the notes at Job 27:15. The meaning is not that there was a want of affection or attachment on the part of the friends of the slain, or that there was no real grief, but that there was no opportunity for displaying it in the customary manner.

Verse 65

Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep - literally, as one sleeping; that is, as one who is asleep suddenly arouses himself. The Lord seemed to have slept, or to have been inattentive to what was occurring. Suddenly he aroused himself to inflict vengeance on the enemies of his people. Compare Psalm 7:6, note; Psalm 44:23, note.

And like a mighty man - The allusion is probably to a warrior.

That shouteth by reason of wine - The proper idea here is that of singing, or lifting up the voice in exultation and rejoicing; the idea of a man who sings and shouts as he is excited by wine, and as he presses onward to conflict and to victory. It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to compare God, as he goes forth to accomplish his purposes on his enemies, with a warrior. See Exodus 15:3; Psalm 24:8.

Verse 66

And he smote his enemies in the hinder part - From behind; that is, as they fled. There are two ideas here: one, that they fled at his approach, or turned their backs; the other, that as they fled, he smote and destroyed them.

He put them to a perpetual reproach - As discomfited; as defeated and scattered; as unable to contend with him. The allusion is, probably, to the victories of David, occurring after the events related in the preceding verses.

Verse 67

Moreover, he refused the tabernacle of Joseph - As a place where his worship should be celebrated. This is the completion of the statement in Psalm 78:60. The design is to show that there had been a transfer of the preeminence from the tribe of Ephraim to the tribe of Judah, and from Shiloh to Zion. Joseph is mentioned here as the father of Ephraim, from whom one of the tribes - (one of the most influential and numerous) - was named. Jacob had twelve sons, from whom the twelve tribes in general took their name. As the tribe of Levi, however, being devoted to the sacerdotal work, was not reckoned as one of the, twelve, the number was made up by giving to the descendants of the two sons of Joseph - Ephraim and

Manasseh Genesis 48:5 - a place among the tribes; and, on this account, the name Joseph does not appear as one of the twelve tribes. Yet Joseph is mentioned here, as the ancestor of one of them - that of Ephraim, from whom the priority and supremacy were withdrawn in favor of the tribe of Judah.

And chose not the tribe of Ephraim - To be the tribe within whose limits the tabernacle should be permanently set up; or within whose limits the place of public worship was finally to be established.

Verse 68

But chose the tribe of Judah - He chose David of the tribe of Judah as ruler and king; he chose a place within the limits of Judah, to wit, Mount Zion, or Jerusalem, as the place where his worship was to be celebrated. Thus, the ancient prediction in regard to the supremacy of Judah was accomplished. Genesis 49:8-10.

The Mount Zion, which he loved - Which he chose, for which he had an affection. Compare Psalm 87:2.

Verse 69

And he built his sanctuary - His holy place; that is, his tabernacle. The temple was not then built; and, when reared, it was not on Mount Zion, but on Mount Moriah. The name Zion, however, was often given to the whole city.

Like high palaces - The word palaces is not in the original. The Hebrew means simply high places, like hills or mountains. The meaning is, that his sanctuary was exalted, as if it were placed on a high hill. It was a conspicuous object; it could be seen from afar; it was the most prominent thing in the land. See the notes at Isaiah 2:2.

Like the earth - Permanent and established.

Which he hath established for ever - Margin, as in Hebrew, founded. The earth is often represented as founded or established on a solid basis, and thus becomes an emblem of stability and perpetuity.

Verse 70

He chose David also his servant - He chose him that he might set him over his people as their king. The idea is, that David was selected when he had no natural pretensions to the office, as he did not pertain to a royal family, and could have no claim to such a distinction. The account of this choice is contained in 1 Samuel 16:11; 2 Samuel 7:8.

Verse 71

From following the ewes great with younq - Margin, as in Hebrew, From after. The meaning is, that he followed after them; that is, he attended them, or watched over them as a shepherd. The single word rendered "the ewes great with young" - עול *ʿûl* - is a participle from עלוה *ʿâlâhô* to ascend, to go up; and then, to bring up, to nourish. The exact idea here is doubtless that of bringing up, or of sucking them, and the word should have been so translated here. It is so rendered by Luther. The idea in our translation has been derived from the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate. The meaning is, that he brought him from being a shepherd to be the ruler of his people - expressed still in the language of a shepherd life.

To feed Jacob his people - Rather, to be a shepherd to them; to perform toward them the office of a shepherd, including the ideas of governing them, providing for them, and defending them. See the notes at Psalm 23:1-2.

Verse 72

So he fed them - He performed toward them the office of a shepherd.

According to the integrity of his heart - literally, "According to the perfection of his heart." That is, he was upright and pure in the administration of his government.

And guided them by the skillfulness of his hands - literally, "by the understanding of his hands" - as if the hand had been endued with intelligence. Compare Psalm 144:1: "Which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." See also Psalm 137:5. The idea is, that he administered the government with integrity and uprightness. This is a beautiful tribute to the integrity and purity of the administration of David. It is not the language of flattery; it is a simple statement, flowing from the heart, in favor of a just and upright administration; and it is a true statement of what the administration of David was. Save in the matter of Uriah - over which he afterward wept so bitterly - his administration was eminently just, pure, impartial, wise, and benignant; probably none among people have been more so. The whole psalm is thus a beautiful argument showing why the government had been transferred from Ephraim to Judah, and why it had been placed in the hands of David.

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PSALM 79

Introduction

This psalm, also, purports to be a psalm of Asaph; that is, it was either composed by him or for him; or it was the composition of one of his descendants who presided over the music in the sanctuary, and to whom was given the general family name, Asaph. The psalm pertains to the same general subject as Psalm 79:1-4.

II. A prayer for the divine interposition, Psalm 79:5-6.

III. Reasons for that prayer, or reasons why God should interpose in the case, Psalm 79:7-13. These reasons are,

(a) that they had devoured Jacob, Psalm 79:7;

(b) that the people, on account of their sins, had been brought very low, Psalm 79:8;

(c) that the divine glory was at stake, Psalm 79:9-10;

(d) that they were in a suffering and pitiable condition, many being held as captives, and many ready to die, Psalm 79:11:

(e) that justice demanded this, Psalm 79:12; and

(f) that this interposition would lay the foundation for praise to God, Psalm 79:13.

Verse 1

O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance - The nations; a foreign people. See Psalm 2:1, note; Psalm 2:8; note; Psalm 78:55, note. The term is one that would be applicable to the Chaldeans, or Babylonians, and the probable allusion here is to their invasion of the holy land under Nebuchadnezzar. 2 Chronicles 36:17-21.

Thy holy temple have they defiled - They have polluted it. By entering it; by removing the sacred furniture; by cutting down the carved work; by making it desolate. See 2 Chronicles 36:17-18. Compare the notes at Psalm 74:5-7.

They have laid Jerusalem on heaps - See 2 Chronicles 36:19: "And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof."

Verse 2

The dead bodies of thy servants … - They have slain them, and left them unburied. See 2 Chronicles 36:17. This is a description of widespread carnage and slaughter, such as we know occurred at the time when Jerusalem was taken by the Chaldeans. At such a time, it is not probable that the Chaldeans would pause to bury the slain, nor is it probable that they would give opportunity to the captive Hebrews to remain to bury them. That would occur, therefore, which often occurs in war, that the slain would be left on the field to be devoured by wild animals and by the fowls of heaven.

Verse 3

Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem - They have poured it out in such quantities that it seems to flow like water - not an uncommon occurrence in war. There was no event in the history of the Hebrews to which this description would be more applicable than to the Babylonian invasion. The language might indeed be applicable to the desolation of the city by Antiochus Epiphanes, and also to its destruction by the Romans; but, of course, it cannot refer to the latter, and there is no necessity for supposing that it refers to the former. All the conditions of a proper interpretation are fulfilled by supposing that it refers to the time of the Chaldean invasion.

And there was none to bury them - The Chaldeans would not do it, and they would not suffer the Hebrew people to do it.

Verse 4

We are become a reproach to our neighbours - See the language in this verse explained in the notes at Psalm 44:13. The words in the Hebrew are the same, and the one seems to have been copied from the other.

Verse 5

How long, Lord? - See Psalm 74:1, note; Psalm 74:10, note; and Psalm 77:7-9, notes. This is the language, not of impatience, but of anxiety; not of complaining, but of wonder. It is language such as the people of God are often constrained to employ under heavy trials - trials which continue so long that it seems as if they would never end.

Shall thy jealousy, burn like fire? - That is, Shall it continue to burn like fire? Shall it utterly consume us? On the word jealousy, see the notes at Psalm 78:58.

Verse 6

Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen - Punish, as they deserve, the nations that have risen up against thy people, and that have brought; desolation upon the land. The word rendered here pour out is used with reference to a cup or vial, as containing a mixture for the people to drink - of intoxication, or of poison. See the notes at Revelation 16:1; notes at Psalm 11:6; notes at Isaiah 51:17; compare Jeremiah 25:15, Jeremiah 25:17; Matthew 20:22; Matthew 26:39, Matthew 26:42.

That have not known thee - Who are strangers to thee; who are thy enemies. The prayer that the wrath of God might be poured upon them was not because they were ignorant of him, but on account of their wicked conduct toward the people of God. The phrase "that have not known thee" is used merely to designate them, or to describe their character. The prayer is not necessarily a prayer for vengeance, or in the spirit of revenge; it is simply a prayer that justice might be done to them, and is such a prayer as any man may offer who is anxious that justice may be done in the world. See remarks on the imprecations in the Psalms. General Introduction Section 6. It is not proper, however, to use this as a proof-text that God will punish the "pagan," or will consign them to destruction. The passage obviously has no reference to such a doctrine, whether that doctrine be true or false.

And upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name - The people that do not worship thee; referring here particularly to those who had invaded the land, and made it desolate.

Verse 7

For they have devoured Jacob - literally, "They have eaten." That is, they have eaten up what the land produced.

And laid waste his dwelling-place - His home; his habitation; the residence of Jacob, or of the people of Israel.

Verse 8

O remember not against us forrmer iniquities - Margin, The iniquities of them that were before us. The Hebrew may mean either former times, or former generations. The allusion, however, is substantially the same. It is not their own iniquities which are particularly referred to, but the

iniquity of the nation as committed in former times; and the prayer is, that God would not visit them with the results of the sins of former generations, though their own ancestors. The language is derived from the idea so constantly affirmed in the Scripture, and so often illustrated in fact, that the effects of sin pass over from one generation to the next, and involve it in calamity. See Exodus 20:5; Exodus 34:7; Leviticus 20:5; Leviticus 26:39-40; Numbers 14:18, Numbers 14:33; compare the notes at Romans 5:12, et seg.

Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us - literally, "Hasten; let thy tender mercies anticipate us." The word prevent here, as elsewhere in the Scriptures, does not mean to hinder, as with us, but to go before; to anticipate. See Job 3:12, note; Psalm 17:13, note; Psalm 21:3, note; Isaiah 21:14, note; Matthew 17:25, note; 1 Thessalonians 4:15, note. The prayer here is, that God, in his tender mercy or compassion, would anticipate their ruin; would interpose before matters had gone so far as to make their destruction inevitable.

For we are brought very low - The idea in the original word is that of being pendulous, or hanging down - as vines do, or as anything does that is wilted, or withered, or as the hands do when one is weak, faint, or sick. Then it refers to a failure or exhaustion of strength; and the idea here is that their strength as a nation was exhausted.

Verse 9

Help us, O God of our salvation - On whom our salvation depends; who alone can save us.

For the glory of thy name - That thy name may be honored. We are thy professed people; we have been redeemed by thee; and thine honor will be affected by the question whether we are saved or destroyed, It is the highest and purest ground for prayer, that the glory or honor of God may be promoted. See the notes at Matthew 6:9, notes at Matthew 6:13; notes at John 12:28; notes at Daniel 9:19.

And deliver us - From our enemies.

And purge away our sins - Forgive our sins, or cleanse us from them. The original word is that which is commonly used to denote an atonement. Compare in the Hebrew, Daniel 9:24,; Ezekiel 45:20; Exodus 30:15; Exodus 32:30; Leviticus 4:20; 5:26; Leviticus 16:6, Leviticus 16:11, Leviticus 16:24.

For thy name's sake - See the notes at Daniel 9:19.

Verse 10

Wherefore should the heathen say Where is their God? - The nations. Why should such a course of forbearance toward them be pursued as to lead them to ask the question whether God is able to punish them, or to come to the conclusion that he is not the God of those who profess to worship him. See Psalm 42:3, note; Psalm 42:10, note.

Let him be known among the heathen - Let him so manifest himself among them that they cannot but see that he is God; that he is a just God; that he is the Friend and Protector of his people.

In our sight - So that we may see it; or, so that it may be seen that he is our Friend and Protector.

By the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed - Margin, vengeance. The true idea is, "Let the avenging of the blood of thy servants - the blood poured out, or shed, be known among the nations in our sight." The prayer is that God would so interpose that there could be no doubt that it was on account of the blood of his people which had been shed by their enemies. It is a prayer that just punishment might be executed - a prayer which may be offered at anytime.

Verse 11

Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee - The sighing of him who is bound. The allusion here is, doubtless, to those among the Hebrews who had been taken captives, and who "sighed" not only on account of the sufferings which they endured in their bondage, but because they had been taken from their country and home. The meaning is, "Hear those sighs, and come for the deliverance of those who are thus held in captivity."

According to the greatness of thy power - Margin, as in Hebrew, thine arm. The arm is the symbol of power. It is implied here that great power was needful to deliver those who were held in captivity, power such as God only could exert - power which could be wielded only by an Omnipotent Being. It was the power of God only which could rescue them, as it is only by the power of God that sinners can be saved.

Preserve thou those that are appointed to die - Margin, Reserve the children of death. The literal meaning is, "Let remain the sons of death;" that is, Preserve those who are in such circumstances that death is impending, and who may be called the sons of death. This might apply to those who were condemned to death; or, to those who were sick and in danger of death; or to those who were prisoners and captives, and who

were, by their sufferings, exposed to death. The prayer is that such might be suffered to remain on the earth; that is, that they might be kept alive.

Verse 12

And render unto our neighbors - That is, the neighbors who had reproached them; the surrounding people who had seen these calamities come upon them, and who had regarded these calamities as proof that their God was unable to protect them, or that they were suffering under his displeasure. See the notes at Psalm 79:4. "Sevenfold." Seven times the amount of reproach which they have heaped upon us. The word seven is often used to denote many, as seven was one of the perfect numbers. The idea is that of complete or full vengeance. Compare Genesis 4:15, Genesis 4:24; Proverbs 6:31; Isaiah 30:26; Matthew 18:21-22; Luke 17:4.

Into their bosom … - Perhaps the allusion here is to the custom of carrying things in the bosom of the flowing dress as it was girded around the loins. "Let them be made to carry with them seven times the amount of reproach which they have endeavored to heap on us."

Verse 13

So we thy people, and sheep of thy pasture - See the notes at Psalm 74:1.

Will give thee thanks for ever - Will praise thee always; will acknowledge thee as our God, and will evermore render thee thanksgiving.

We will shew forth thy praise to all generations - Margin, as in Hebrew, to generation and generation. That is, We will make arrangements that the memory of these gracious acts shall be transmitted to future times; to distant generations. This was done by the permanent record, made in the Scriptures, of these gracious interpositions of God, and by their being carefully preserved by each generation to whom they came. No work has been more faithfully done than that by which the records of God's ancient dealings with his people have been preserved from age to age - that by which the sacred Scriptures have been guarded against error, and handed down from one generation to another.

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PSALM 80

Introduction

This very touching and beautiful psalm purports also to be a psalm of Asaph. Compare the notes at the title to Psalm 60:1-12. The word rendered eduth, which means testimony, may have been used here with reference to the contents of the psalm as a public testimony in regard to the dealings of God with his people. But it is not possible now to determine with certainty the meaning of these titles.

The psalm, in its design, has a strong resemblance to Psalm 79:1-13, and was probably composed on the same occasion. It has been generally supposed to have reference to the time of the Babylonian captivity. Some have referred it, however, to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes; and others regard it as a prayer of the ten tribes which had been carried away to Assyria. Doederlein supposes that it refers to the wars of Jehoshaphat with the Ammonites Psalm 80:3, Psalm 80:7, Psalm 80:19.

I. The first part is a prayer, addressed to God as a shepherd - as one who had led his people like a flock - that he would again shine forth on them now that they were in trouble, and that he would stir up his strength, and come and save them, Psalm 80:1-3.

II. The second is a prayer, also - founded on the troubles of his people; a people fed with their tears; a strife to their neighbors; and an occasion of laughter or mirth to their foes, Psalm 80:4-7.

III. The third is also a prayer - founded on the former dealings of God with his people, on his care for them in ancient times, and on the fact that they were now desolate; their state being represented under the image of a vine brought from abroad; planted with care; attentively nurtured until it sent out its branches in every direction, so that it filled the land; and then broken down - torn - rent - trampled on - by a wild boar out of the wood, Psalm 80:8-19. In view of this desolation the psalmist prays that God would interpose, and he pledges the assurance that if this were done for them, the people would no more go back from God.

Verse 1

Give ear - Incline the ear; as if the ear of God was then turned away, or as if he was inattentive to what was occurring. See the notes at Psalm 5:1. O

Shepherd of Israel. See the notes at Psalm 23:1.

Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock - Joseph, the father of Ephraim and Manasseh. See the notes at Psalm 78:67. The name Joseph seems here to be used poetically to represent the whole people of Israel, as he was a man so prominent in their history, and especially as Egypt is mentioned as the country from which the vine had been transplanted - a country where Joseph had acted so important a part, and in connection with which his name would be so naturally associated. The meaning is, that God had led the tribes of the Hebrew people as a shepherd leads or conducts his flock.

Thou that dwellest between the cherubims - See the notes at Psalm 18:10. The allusion here is to God as dwelling, by a visible symbol - the Shechinah - on the mercy-seat, between the cherubims. Exodus 25:18, Exodus 25:22; Exodus 37:7; 1 Samuel 4:4; 1 Kings 6:25. See the notes at Isaiah 37:16; and notes at Hebrews 9:5. "Shine, forth." Manifest thyself. Let light come from thy presence in the midst of our darkness and calamity.

Verse 2

Before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh - Ephraim and Manasseh were the two sons of Joseph, and their names were given to two of the tribes of Israel. See the notes at Psalm 78:67. They seem to have been particularly mentioned here, because Joseph, their father, had been referred to in the previous verse; and it was natural, in speaking of the people, to mention his sons. Benjamin is mentioned because, in the encampment and march through the wilderness, these three tribes always went together, as the descendants of the same mother. Genesis 46:19-20; Numbers 2:18-24; Numbers 10:22-24. It is probable that they were always especially united in the great operations of the Hebrew people, and that when one was mentioned it was customary to mention the others, as being of the same family, or descended from the same mother. There does not appear, from the psalm itself, any particular reason why the prayer is offered that God would manifest himself especially to these three tribes; and nothing in regard to the occasion on which the psalm was composed, can be argued from the fact that they are thus mentioned.

Hengstenberg indeed supposes that the common idea that the tribe of Benjamin adhered to Judah in the revolt of the ten tribes is erroneous, and that Benjamin was one of the ten tribes which revolted; and that Simeon was not included in the number because he had no separate territory, but only certain towns and places within the limits of the tribe of Judah. Prof.

Alexander, embracing this opinion, supposes that the psalm refers to the calamities which came upon the ten tribes at the time of their captivity. But this supposition seems to me to be improbable. The obvious and fair interpretation of the narrative on the subject is, that the tribe of Benjamin adhered to that of Judah at the time of the revolt, for it is said 1 Kings 12:21 that "when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to right against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon." Besides, even on the supposition that Benjamin was one of the ten revolted tribes, the fact that these three tribes are particularly mentioned together would not prove that the psalm referred to the carrying away of the ten tribes into Assyria, for still the question would arise why these are particularly mentioned rather than any other of the ten. It seems to me, therefore, that the fact that these are specified can be explained on the suppositions above suggested:

(a) That the main reference in the psalm was to the coming out of Egypt - the bringing the "vine" - that is, the people - from that land Psalm 80:8;

(b) That in alluding to that, it was natural to make mention of Joseph, who was so distinguished there, and who, after so many trials, was exalted to so great honor that his name might be given to the whole people;

(c) That when Joseph had been spoken of, it was natural, in the progress of the psalm, to mention particularly the names of his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh; and

(d) that having mentioned them, it was natural also to refer to one whose name was always associated with that of Joseph as his younger brother by the same mother, and to the tribe of that name which was always associated with Ephraim and Manasseh in the march.

I regard the psalm, therefore, as referring to the entire Hebrew people, and the names of these three tribes as representatives of the whole nation. The prayer is, that God would manifest; himself in the presence of his people.

Stir up thy strength - As if he were indifferent to their condition; as if he put forth no effort to save them. See the notes at Psalm 35:23.

And come and save us - Margin, as in Hebrew, come for salvation to us. That is, Come and deliver us from our enemies and our dangers.

Verse 3

Turn us again - This phrase in our translation would seem to mean, "Turn us again from our sins," or, "Bring us back to our duty, and to thy love;" and this idea is commonly attached to the phrase probably by the readers of the Bible. But this, though in itself an appropriate prayer, is not the idea here. It is simply, Bring us back; cause us to return; restore us. The idea thus suggested would be either

(a) restore us to our former state of prosperity; that is, Cause these desolations to cease; or

(b) bring us back, as from captivity, to our own land; restore us to our country and our homes, from which we have been driven out.

Thus understood, it would be properly the language of those who were in captivity or exile, praying that they might be restored again to their own land.

And cause thy face to shine - Be favorable or propitious to us. Let the frown on thy countenance disappear. See the notes at Psalm 4:6.

And we shall be saved - Saved from our dangers; saved from our troubles. It is also true that when God causes his face to shine upon us, we shall be saved from our sins; saved from ruin. It is only by his smile and favor that we can be saved in any sense, or from any danger.

Verse 4

O Lord God of hosts - Yahweh, God of armies. That is either

(a) the God who rules among the hosts of heaven - the inhabitants of that holy world; or

(b) God of the hosts of the sky - the worlds above - the stars, that seem marshalled as hosts or armies, and that are led forth each night with such order and grandeur; or

(c) God of the hosts on earth - the armies that are mustered for war. The phrase is one which is often applied to God. See the notes at Psalm 24:10;

and at Isaiah 1:24.

How long wilt thou be angry - Margin, as in Hebrew, wilt thou smoke. The allusion is derived from the comparison of anger with fire. See the notes at Psalm 74:1.

Against the prayer of thy people - That is, Thou dost not answer their prayer; thou seemest to be angry against them even when they pray; or in the act of calling upon thee. The earnest inquiry here is, how long this was to continue. It seemed as if it would never end. Compare the notes at Psalm 77:7-9.

Verse 5

Thou feedest them with the bread of tears - literally, "Thou causest them to eat the bread of tears," or of weeping. That is, their food was accompanied with tears; even when they ate, they wept. Their tears seemed to moisten their bread, they flowed so copiously. See the notes at Psalm 42:3.

And givest them tears to drink - So abundant were their tears that they might constitute their very drink.

In great measure - Or rather by measure; that is, abundantly. The word here rendered "great measure" - שׁלִישׁ *shâlîysh* - means properly a third, and is usually applied to a measure for grain - a third part of another measure - as, the third part of an ephah. See the notes at Isaiah 40:12. Then the word is used for any measure, perhaps because this was the most common measure in use. The idea seems to be, not so much that God gave tears to them in great measure, but that he measured them out to them, as one measures drink to others; that is, the cup, or cask, or bottle in which their drink was served to them was as if filled with tears only.

Verse 6

Thou makest us a strife - An occasion of strife or wrangling; that is, of strife among themselves, to see who will get the most of our spoils; or of contention, to see which could do most to aggravate their sufferings, and to bring disgrace and contempt upon them. They were emulous with each other in the work of desolation and ruin.

Unto our neighbors - The surrounding nations. See Psalm 79:4.

And our enemies laugh among themselves - Over our calamities. They exult; they glory; they triumph in our ruin.

Verse 7

Turn us again, O God of hosts … - This verse is the same as Psalm 80:3, except that here the appeal is to the "God of hosts;" there, it is simply to "God." This indicates greater earnestness; a deeper sense of the need of the interposition of God, indicated by the reference to his attribute as the leader of hosts or armies, and therefore able to save them.

Verse 8

Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt - Referring to his people, under the image (which often occurs in the Scriptures) of a vine or vineyard. See the notes at Isaiah 5:1-7. Compare Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 15:6; Matthew 20:1; Matthew 21:28, Matthew 21:33; Luke 13:6.

Thou hast cast out the heathen - The nations; to wit, the nations that occupied the land of Canaan before the children of Israel dwelt there. See Psalm 2:1, note; Psalm 2:8, note; Psalm 77:15, note.

And planted it - Thou hast established thy people there as one plants a vine in a field. See Psalm 44:2.

Verse 9

Thou preparedst room before it - The Hebrew word used here means properly to turn; to turn the back; then, to turn in order to look at anything; to look upon; to see; then, in Piel, to cause to turn away; to remove. Then it comes to mean to remove, or to clear from impediments so as to prepare a way Isaiah 40:3; Isaiah 57:14; Isaiah 62:10; Malachi 3:1, and hence, to remove the impediments to planting a vine, etc.; to wit, by clearing away the trees, brush, stones, etc. Compare Isaiah 5:2. Here it means that the hindrances in planting the vine were taken out of the way; that is, God removed the pagan so that there was room then to establish his own people.

And didst cause it to take deep root - Hebrew, "And didst cause it to root roots;" that is, Its roots struck deep into the soil, and the plant became firm.

And it filled the land - Its branches ran everywhere, so as to fill the whole land. See the notes at Isaiah 16:8.

Verse 10

The hills were covered with the shadow of it - That is, It made a shade, by its luxuriant foliage, on the hills in every part of the land; it seemed to cover all the hills.

And the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars - Margin, as in Hebrew, cedars of God; that is, lofty, majestic cedars. See the notes at

Psalm 65:9. The reference here is to the cedars of Lebanon, among the most majestic objects known to the Hebrews.

Verse 11

She sent out her boughs unto the sea - To the Mediterranean Sea on the one side.

And her branches - Her sucklings. The word is usually applied to little children, and means here the little branches that are nourished by the parent vine.

Unto the river - The Euphrates, for so the river usually means in the Scriptures. The Euphrates on the one side, and the Mediterranean Sea on the other, were the natural and proper boundaries of the country as promised to Abraham. See Psalm 72:8; 1 Kings 4:21. Compare the notes at Psalm 60:1-12.

Verse 12

Why hast thou then broken down her hedges? - Why hast thou dealt with thy people as one would with a vineyard who should break down all its enclosures, and leave it open to wild beasts? The word rendered hedges means wall or enclosure. Compare the notes at Isaiah 5:2.

So that all they which pass by the way - All travelers; or, wild beasts. So that there is nothing to prevent their coming up to the vine and plucking the grapes.

Do pluck her - Pluck, or pick off the grapes; or, if the phrase "all which pass by the way" denotes wild beasts, then the meaning is, that they eat off the leaves and branches of the vine.

Verse 13

The boar out of the wood - Men come in and ravage the land, whose character may be compared with the wild boar. The word rendered boar means simply swine. The addition of the phrase "out of the wood" determines its meaning here, and shows that the reference is to wild or untamed swine; swine that roam the woods - an animal always extremely fierce and savage.

Doth waste it - The word used here occurs nowhere else. It means to cut down or cut off; to devour; to lay waste.

And the wild beast of the field - Of the unenclosed field; or, that roams at large - such as lions, panthers, tigers, wolves. The word here used - זיז *zîyz* - occurs besides only in Psalm 50:11; and Isaiah 66:11. In Isaiah 66:11, it is rendered abundance.

Doth devour it - So the people from abroad consumed all that the land produced, or thus they laid it waste.

Verse 14

Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts - Again come and visit thy people; come back again to thy forsaken land. This is language founded on the idea that God had withdrawn from the land, or had forsaken it; that he had left his people without a protector, and had left them exposed to the ravages of fierce foreign enemies. It is language which will describe what seems often to occur when the church is apparently forsaken; when there are no cheering tokens of the divine presence; and when the people of God, discouraged, seem themselves to be forsaken by him. Compare Jeremiah 14:8.

Look down from heaven - The habitation of God. As if he did not now see his desolate vineyard, or regard it. The idea is, that if he would look upon it, he would pity it, and would come to its relief.

And behold, and visit this vine - It is a visitation of mercy and not of wrath that is asked; the coming of one who is able to save, and without whose coming there could be no deliverance.

Verse 15

And the vineyard … - Gesenius renders this as a verb: "Protect;" that is, "Protect or defend what thy right hand hath planted." So the Septuagint renders it κατάρτισαι *katartisai* - and the Vulgate, *perfice*, fit, prepare, order. Prof. Alexander renders it sustain. DeWette, "Guard what thy right hand hath planted." This is doubtless the true idea. It is a prayer that God would guard, sustain, defend what he had planted; to wit, the vine which he had brought out of Egypt, Psalm 80:8.

And the branch - literally, the son; that is, the offspring or shoots of the vine. Not merely the original plant - the parent stock - but all the branches which had sprung from it and which had spread themselves over the land.

That thou madest strong for thyself - Thou didst cause it to grow so vigorously for thine own use or honor. On that account, we now call on thee to defend what is thine own.

Verse 16

It is burned with fire - That is, the vineyard. This is a description of the desolations that had come upon the nation, such as would come upon a vineyard if it were consumed by fire.

It is cut down - It has been made desolate by fire and by the axe.

They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance - At the frown on thy face, as if God has only to look upon people in anger, and they perish. The word they refers to those who were represented by the vine which had been brought out of Egypt - the people of the land.

Verse 17

Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand - Luther renders this, "Let thy hand guard the folks of thy right hand, and the people whom thou hast powerfully chosen." The right hand is the place of honor; and the phrase "the man of thy right hand" means one who occupies such a position of honor. The phrase "Let thy hand be upon" is ambiguous. It may denote either favor or wrath; let it be upon him either to protect him, or to punish him. The connection, however, evidently demands the former interpretation, for it is in reference to the "man whom God had made strong for himself." The allusion is either

(a) to some individual man whom God had raised up to honor, as a prince or ruler of the people; or

(b) to the people as such - as Luther understands it.

Most probably the former is the correct interpretation; and the prayer is, that God would interpose in behalf of the ruler of the people - the king of the nation - whom he had exalted to so high honor, and whom he had placed in such a position of responsibility; that he would now endow him properly for his work; that he would give him wisdom in counsel, and valor in battle, in order that the nation might be delivered from its foes. It is, therefore, a prayer for the civil and military ruler of the land, that God would give him grace, firmness, and wisdom, in a time of great emergency. Prof. Alexander strangely supposes that this refers to the Messiah.

Upon the son of man - This means simply man, the language being varied for the sake of poetry. Compare the notes at Psalm 8:4. It is true that the appellation "the Son of man" was a favorite designation which the Lord Jesus applied to himself to denote that he was truly a man, and to indicate his connection with human nature; but the phrase is often used merely to denote a man. Here it refers to the king or civil ruler.

Whom thou madest strong for thyself - The man whom thou hast raised up to that exalted station, and whom thou hast endowed to do a work

for thee in that station. A magistrate is a servant and a representative of God, appointed to do a work for him - not for himself. See Romans 13:1-6.

Verse 18

So will not we go back from thee - That is, if thou wilt thus interpose; if thou wilt deliver the nation; if thou wilt help him whom thou hast placed over it, giving him wisdom and valor, we will hereafter be obedient to thy law; we will not apostatize from thee. It is a solemn promise or pledge of future obedience made by the psalmist as expressing the purpose of the people if God would be merciful and would withdraw his judgments; a pledge proper in itself, and often made by the Hebrew people only to be disregarded; a pledge proper for all who are in affliction, and often made in such circumstances, but, as in the case of the Hebrews, often made only to be forgotten.

Quicken us - literally, Give us life. See the notes at Ephesians 2:1. Restore life to us as a people; save us from ruin, and reanimate us with thy presence.

And we will call upon thy name - We will worship thee; we will be faithful in serving thee.

Verse 19

Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts … - See Psalm 80:3, note; Psalm 80:7, note; Psalm 80:14, note. This is the sum and the burden of the psalm. The repetition of the prayer shows the earnestness of the people, and their conviction that their only hope in their troubles was that God would interpose and bring them back again; that he would be favorable to them, and lift upon them the light of his countenance. So with all. In our backslidings, our afflictions, and our troubles, our only hope is that God will bring us back to himself; our proper place is at the throne of mercy; our pleadings should be urgent, earnest, and constant, that he will interpose and have mercy on us; our solemn purpose - our expressed and recorded pledge - should be that if we are restored to God, we will wander no more. But, alas! how much easier it is to say this than to do it; how much easier to promise than to perform; how much easier to pledge ourselves when we are in affliction that if the troubles are removed we will be faithful, than it is to carry out such a purpose when the days of prosperity return, and we are again surrounded by the blessings of health and of peace. If all people - even good people - kept the vows which they make, the world would be comparatively a pure and happy world; if the church itself would only carry

out its own solemn pledges, it would indeed arise and shine, and the world would soon be filled with light and salvation.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 81

Introduction

This psalm purports also to be a psalm of Asaph. See Introduction to Psalm 8:1-9.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed seems to have been a festal occasion, and the circumstances in the psalm will probably best accord with the supposition that it was the Feast of the Passover. Rosenmuller has indeed endeavored to show (see his notes at Psalm 81:4) that it was composed on occasion of the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24, following); but there is nothing in the psalm which would necessarily restrict it to that, and, as we shall see, all the circumstances in the psalm harmonize with the supposition that it was at the Feast of the Passover, the principal and the most important festival of the Hebrews. It is well remarked by DeWette (Introduction to the psalm), that as the Hebrews were required to make known to their children the design of the ordinance of the Passover (see Exodus 12:26-27), nothing would be more natural than that the sacred poets should take occasion from the return of that festival to enforce the truths pertaining to it in songs composed for the celebration. Such seems to have been the design of this psalm - reminding the people of the goodness of God in the past, and recalling them from their sins by a remembrance of his mercies, and by a view of what would be the consequences of fully obeying his law.

It would seem from the psalm not improbable that it was composed in a time of national declension in religion, and when there was a tendency to idolatry, and that the object of the author was to rouse the nation from that state, and to endeavor by a reference to the past to bring them back to a more entire devotedness to God.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:

I. The duty of praise, particularly on such occasions as that on which the psalm was composed; a duty enjoined even in Egypt, in the time of Joseph, when God delivered his people out of that strange land, Psalm 81:1-7.

II. The main command which was then ordained to be the guide of the people - the fixed law of the nation - the fundamental idea in their polity -

that there was to be no strange god among them, but that they were to worship the true God, and him alone, Psalm 81:8-10.

III. The fact that the nation had refused to hear; that there had been such a proneness to worship other gods, and to fall into the habits of idolaters, that God had given them up to their own desires, and suffered them to walk in their own ways, Psalm 81:11-12.

IV. A statement of what God would have done for them if they had been obedient; of what would have been the effect on their national prosperity if they had hearkened to the commands of God; and consequently of what would still be the result if the people should be obedient, and submit themselves wholly to the law of God, Psalm 81:13-16. Particularly:

(1) Their enemies would have been subdued, Psalm 81:14.

(2) those who hated the Lord would have yielded themselves to him, Psalm 81:15.

(3) God would have given them abundant prosperity; he would have fed them with the finest of the wheat, and would have satisfied them with honey out of the rock, Psalm 81:16.

The psalm is of special importance to the church now, as reminding it of its obligation from the past mercies of God, and as showing what would be the consequences if it should be wholly devoted to the service of God.

Verse 1

Sing aloud unto God our strength - The strength and support of the nation; he from whom the nation has derived all its power. The word rendered sing aloud means to rejoice; and then, to make or cause to rejoice. It would be appropriate to a high festal occasion, where music constituted an important part of the public service. And it would be a proper word to employ in reference to any of the great feasts of the Hebrews.

Make a joyful noise - A noise indicating joy, as distinguished from a noise of mourning or lamentation.

Unto the God of Jacob - Not here particularly the God of the patriarch himself, but of the people who bore his name - his descendants.

Verse 2

Take a psalm - literally, "Lift up a psalm; perhaps, as we should say, "Raise the tune." Or, it may mean, Take an ode, a hymn, a psalm, composed

for the occasion, and accompany it with the instruments of music which are specified.

And bring hither the timbrel - For the purpose of praise. On the meaning of this word rendered "timbrel" - תף *tôph* - see the notes at Isaiah 5:12.

The pleasant harp - On the word here rendered "harp" - כנור *kinnôr* - see also the notes at Isaiah 5:12. The word translated "pleasant" - נעים *nâʿîym* - means properly pleasant, agreeable, sweet, Psalm 133:1; Psalm 147:1. It is connected here with the word harp, as meaning that that instrument was distinguished particularly for a sweet or pleasant sound.

With the psaltery - On the meaning of the word used here - נבל *nebel* - see the notes at Isaiah 5:12. These were the common instruments of music among the Hebrews. They were employed alike on sacred occasions, and in scenes of revelry. See Isaiah 5:12.

Verse 3

Blow up the trumpet - The word rendered blow means to make a clangor or noise as on a trumpet. The trumpet was, like the timbrel, the harp, and the psaltery, a common instrument of music, and was employed on all their festive occasions. It was at first made of horn, and then was made similar in shape to a horn. Compare Joshua 6:5; Leviticus 25:9; Job 39:25.

In the new moon - On the festival held at the time of the new moon. There was a high festival on the appearance of the new moon in the month of Tisri, or October, which was the beginning of their civil year, and it is not improbable that the return of each new moon was celebrated with special services. See the notes at Isaiah 1:13; compare 2 Kings 4:23; Amos 8:5; 1 Chronicles 23:31; 2 Chronicles 2:4. It is not certain, however, that the word used here means new moon. Prof. Alexander renders it in the month; that is, in the month, by way of eminence, in which the passover was celebrated. The word used - חדשׁ *chôdesh* - means, indeed, commonly the new moon; the day of the new moon; the first day of the lunar month Numbers 29:6; 1 Samuel 20:5, 1 Samuel 20:18, 1 Samuel 20:24; but it also means a month; that is, a lunar month, beginning at the new moon, Genesis 8:5; Exodus 13:4; et al. The corresponding or parallel word, as we shall see, which is rendered in our version, in the time appointed, means full moon; and the probability is, as Professor Alexander suggests, that in the beginning of the verse the month is mentioned in general, and the particular time of the

month - the full moon - in the other part of the verse. Thus the language is applicable to the passover. On the other supposition - the supposition that the new moon and the full moon are both mentioned - there would be manifest confusion as to the time.

In the time appointed - The word used here - כסה *keseh* - means properly the full moon; the time of the full moon. In Syriac the word means either "the first day of the full moon," or "the whole time of the full moon." (*Isa Bar Ali* as quoted by Gesenius, Lexicon) Thus, the word means, not as in our translation, in the time appointed, but at the full moon, and would refer to the time of the Passover, which was celebrated on the fourteenth day of the lunar month; that is, when the moon was at the full. Exodus 12:6.

On our solemn feast day - Hebrew, In the day of our feast. The word solemn is not necessarily in the original, though the day was one of great solemnity. The Passover is doubtless referred to.

Verse 4

For this was a statute for Israel … - See Exodus 12:3. That is, it was a law for the whole Jewish people, for all who had the name Israel, for all the descendants of Jacob. The word was is not in the original, as if this had been an old commandment which might now be obsolete, but the idea is one of perpetuity: it is a perpetual law for the Hebrew people.

A law of the God of Jacob - Hebrew, a judgment; or, right. The idea is, that it was what was due to God; what was his right. It was a solemn claim that he should be thus acknowledged. It was not a matter of conventional arrangement, or a matter of convenience to them; nor was it to be observed merely because it was found to be expedient and conducive to the welfare of the nation. It was a matter of right and of claim on the part of God, and was so to be regarded by the nation. The same is true now of the Sabbath, and of all the appointments which God has made for keeping up religion in the world. All these arrangements are indeed expedient and proper; they conduce to the public welfare and to the happiness of man; but there is a higher reason for their observance than this. It is that God demands their observance; that he claims as his own the time so appropriated. Thus he claims the Sabbath, the entire Sabbath, as his own; he requires that it shall be employed in his service, that it shall be regarded as his day; that it shall be made instrumental in keeping up the knowledge of himself in the world, and in promoting his glory. Exodus 20:10. People, therefore, "rob God" (compare Malachi 3:8) when they take this time for needless secular

purposes, or devote it to other ends and uses. Nor can this be sinless. The highest guilt which man can commit is to "rob" his Maker of what belongs to Him, and of what He claims.

Verse 5

This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony - literally, he placed this; that is, he appointed it. The word Joseph here stands for the whole Hebrew people, as in Psalm 80:1. See the notes at that verse. The meaning is, that the ordinance for observing this festival - the Passover - was to be traced back to the time when they were in Egypt. The obligation to observe it was thus enhanced by the very antiquity of the observance, and by the fact that it was one of the direct appointments of God in that strange and foreign land.

When he went out through the land of Egypt - Margin, against. Or rather, In his going out of the land of Egypt. Literally, In going upon the land of Egypt. The allusion is, undoubtedly, to the time when the Hebrews went out of the land of Egypt - to the Exodus; and the exact idea is, that, in doing this, they passed over a considerable portion of the land of Egypt; or, that they passed over the land. The idea in the margin, of its being against the land of Egypt, is not necessarily in the original.

Where I heard a language that I understood not - literally, "The lip, that is, the language, of one that I did not know, I heard." This refers, undoubtedly, not to God, but to the people. The author of this psalm identifies himself here with the people - the whole nation - and speaks as if he were one of them, and as if he now recollected the circumstances at the time - the strange language - the foreign customs - the oppressions and burdens borne by the people. Throwing himself back, as it were, to that time (compare the notes at 1 Thessalonians 4:17) - he seems to himself to be in the midst of a people speaking a strange tongue - a language unintelligible to him - the language of a foreign nation. The Jews, in all their long captivity in Egypt - a period of four hundred years (see the notes at Acts 7:6) - preserved their own language apparently incorrupt. So far as appears, they spoke the same language, without change, when they came out of Egypt, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had used. The Egyptian was entirely a foreign language to them, and had no affinity with the Hebrew.

Verse 6

I removed his shoulder from the burden - The burden which the people of Israel were called to hear in Egypt. The reference is undoubtedly to their burdens in making bricks, and conveying them to the place where

they were to be used; and perhaps also to the fact that they were required to carry stone in building houses and towns for the Egyptians. Compare Exodus 1:11-14; Exodus 5:4-17. The meaning is, that he had saved them from these burdens, to wit, by delivering them from their hard bondage. The speaker here evidently is God. In the previous verse it is the people. Such a change of person is not uncommon in the Scriptures.

His hands were delivered from the pots - Margin, as in Hebrew, passed away. That is, they were separated from them, or made free. The word rendered pots usually has that signification. Job 41:20; 1 Samuel 2:14; 2 Chronicles 35:13; but it may also mean a basket. Jeremiah 24:2; 2 Kings 10:7. The latter is probably the meaning here. The allusion is to baskets which might have been used in carrying clay, or conveying the bricks after they were made: perhaps a kind of hamper that was swung over the shoulders, with clay or bricks in each - somewhat like the instrument used now by the Chinese in carrying tea - or like the neck-yoke which is employed in carrying sap where maple sugar is manufactured, or milk on dairy farms. There are many representations on Egyptian sculptures which would illustrate this. The idea is that of a burden, or task, and the allusion is to the deliverance that was accomplished by removing them to another land.

Verse 7

Thou calledst in trouble - The people of Israel. Exodus 2:23; Exodus 3:9; Exodus 14:10.

And I delivered thee - I brought the people out of Egypt.

I answered thee in the secret place of thunder - That is, in the lonely, retired, solemn place where the thunder rolled; the solitudes where there was no voice but the voice of thunder, and where that seemed to come from the deep recesses of the mountain gorges. The allusion is doubtless to Sinai. Compare Exodus 19:17-19. The meaning is, that he gave a response - a real reply - to their prayer - amid the solemn scenes of Sinai, when he gave them his law; when he recognized them as his people; when he entered into covenant with them.

I proved thee - I tried you; I tested your fidelity.

At the waters of Meribah - Margin, as in Hebrew, strife. This was at Mount Horeb. Exodus 17:5-7. The trial - the proof - consisted in his bringing water from the rock, showing that he was God - that he was their God.

Verse 8

Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee … - See the notes at the similar passage in Psalm 50:7. God calls their attention to what he required of them; to what his law demanded; to what was the condition of their being his people and of securing his favor. What the demanded was, that they should acknowledge him; obey him; serve him; that there should be no strange god among them, and that they should worship no false god, Psalm 81:9.

Verse 9

There shall no strange god be in thee - Worshipped by thee; or recognized and regarded as a god. This was a condition of his favor and friendship. Compare Deuteronomy 32:12; Isaiah 43:12. The word here rendered "strange" - זר *zār* - has reference to one of a foreign nation; and the meaning is, that they were not to worship or adore the gods that were worshipped by foreigners. This was a fundamental law of the Hebrew commonwealth.

Neither shalt thou worship any strange god - The Hebrew word here is different - נכר *nêkâr* - but means substantially the same thing. The allusion is to gods worshipped by foreign nations.

Verse 10

I am the Lord thy God … - See Exodus 20:2. The meaning is, "I am Yahweh, that God; the God to be worshipped and honored by thee; I only am thy God, and no other god is to be recognized or acknowledged by thee." The foundation of the claim to exclusive service and devotion is here laid in the fact that he had brought them out of the land of Egypt. Literally, had caused them to ascend, or go up from that land. The claim thus asserted seems to be twofold:

(a) that in doing this, he had shown that he was God, or that he had performed a work which none but God could perform, and had thus shown his existence and power; and

(b) that by this he had brought them under special obligations to himself, inasmuch as they owed all that they had - their national existence and liberty - entirely to him.

Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it - Possibly an allusion to young birds, when fed by the parent-bird. The meaning here is, "I can amply supply all your needs. You need not go to other gods - the gods of other lands - as if there were any deficiency in my power or resources; as if I

were not able to meet your necessities. All your needs I can meet. Ask what you need - what you will; come to me and make any request with reference to yourselves as individuals or as a nation - to this life or the life to come - and you will find in me all abundant supply for all your needs, and a willingness to bless you commensurate with my resources." What is here said of the Hebrews may be said of the people of God at all times. There is not a want of our nature - of our bodies or our souls; a want pertaining to this life or the life to come - to ourselves, to our families, to our friends, to the church, or to our country - which God is not able to meet; and there is not a real necessity in any of these respects which he is not willing to meet. Why, then, should his people ever turn for happiness to the "weak and beggarly elements of the world" (compare the notes at Galatians 4:9), as if God could not satisfy them? Why should they seek for happiness in vain amusements, or in sensual pleasures, as if God could not, or would not, supply the real needs of their souls?

Verse 11

But my people … - See Psalm 78:10-11, Psalm 78:17-19. "And Israel would none of me." Literally, "Did not will me;" that is, "did not incline to me; were not attached to me; were not disposed to worship me, and to find happiness in me." Compare Isaiah 1:19; Job 39:9; Proverbs 1:25. They refused or rejected him. See Exodus 32:1; Deuteronomy 32:15, Deuteronomy 32:18.

Verse 12

So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust - Margin, as in Hebrew, to the hardness of their own hearts. Literally, "I sent them, or I dismissed them, to the hardness of their hearts." I suffered them to have what, in the hardness of their hearts they desired, or what their hard and rebellious hearts prompted them to desire: I indulged them in their wishes. I gave them what they asked, and left them to themselves to work out the problem about success and happiness in their own way - to let them see what must be the result of forsaking the true God. The world - and the church too - has been often suffered to make this experiment.

And they walked in their own counsels - As they thought wise and best. Compare Acts 7:42; Acts 14:16; Romans 1:24; Psalm 78:26-37.

Verse 13

Oh that my people had hearkened unto me - This passage is designed mainly to show what would have been the consequences if the Hebrew

people had been obedient to the commands of God, Psalm 81:14-16. At the same time, however, it expresses what was the earnest desire - the wish - the preference of God, namely, that they had been obedient, and had enjoyed his favor. This is in accordance with all the statements, all the commands, all the invitations, all the warnings, in the Bible. In the entire volume of inspiration there is not one command addressed to people to walk in the ways of sin; there is not one statement that God desires they should do it; there is not one intimation that he wishes the death of the sinner. The contrary is implied in all the declarations which God has made - in all his commands, warnings, and invitations - in all his arrangements for the salvation of people. See Deuteronomy 5:29; Deuteronomy 32:29-30; Isaiah 48:18; Ezekiel 18:23, Ezekiel 18:32; Ezekiel 33:11; 2 Peter 3:9; Luke 19:42.

And Israel had walked in my ways! - Had kept my commandments; had been obedient to my laws. When people, therefore, do not walk in the ways of God it is impossible that they should take refuge, as an excuse for it, in the plea that God desires this, or that he commands it, or that he is pleased with it, or that he approves it. There is no possible sense in which this can be true; in every sense, and on every account, he prefers that people should be obedient, and not disobedient; good, and not bad; happy, and not miserable; saved, and not lost. Every doctrine of theology should be held and interpreted in consistency with this as a fundamental truth. That there are things which are difficult to be explained on the supposition that this is true, must be admitted; but what truth is there in reference to which there are not difficulties to be explained? And is there anything in this, or in any of the truths of the Bible, which more demands explanation than the facts which are actually occurring under the government of God: the fact that sin and misery have been allowed to come into the universe; the fact that multitudes constantly suffer whom God could at once relieve?

Verse 14

I should soon have subdued their enemies - This is one of the consequences which, it is said, would have followed if they had been obedient to the laws of God. The phrase rendered soon means literally like a little; that is, as we might say, in a little, to wit, in a little time. The word rendered subdued means to bow down; to be curved or bent; and the idea is, that he would have caused them to bow down, to wit, by submission before them. Compare Deuteronomy 32:29-30.

And turned my hand against their adversaries - Against those who oppressed and wronged them. The act of turning the hand against one is significant of putting him away - repelling him - disowning him - as when we would thrust one away from us with aversion.

Verse 15

The haters of the Lord - The enemies of the Lord, often represented as those who hate him - hatred being always in fact or in form connected with an unwillingness to submit to God. It is hatred of his law; hatred of his government; hatred of his plans; hatred of his character. See Romans 1:30; John 7:7, John 15:18, John 15:23-25. Compare Exodus 20:5.

Should have submitted themselves unto him - Margin, yielded retained obedience. Hebrew, lied. See the phrase explained in the notes at Psalm 18:44. The meaning is, that they would have been so subdued as to acknowledge his authority or supremacy, while it is, at the same time, implied that this would have been forced and not cordial. No external power, though it may so conquer as to make people outwardly obedient, can affect the will, or subdue that. The grace of God alone can do that, and it is the special triumph of grace that it can do it.

But their time - The time of his people. They would have continued to be a happy and a flourishing nation.

Should have endured for ever - Perpetually - as long as they continued to be obedient. If a nation were obedient to the will of God; if it wholly obeyed his laws; if it countenanced by statute no form of sin; if it protected no iniquity; if it were temperate, just, virtuous, honest, there is no reason why its institutions should not be perpetual, or why it should ever be overthrown. Sin is, in all cases, the cause of the ruin of nations, as it is of individuals.

Verse 16

He should have fed them also - He would have given them prosperity, and their land would have produced abundantly of the necessities - even of the luxuries - of life. This is in accordance with the usual promises of the Scriptures, that obedience to God will be followed by national temporal prosperity. See Deuteronomy 32:13-14; 1 Timothy 4:8; Psalm 37:11. Compare the notes at Matthew 5:5.

With the finest of the wheat - Margin, as in Hebrew, with the fat of wheat. The meaning is, the best of the wheat - as the words fat and fatness

are often used to denote excellence and abundance. Genesis 27:28, Genesis 27:39; Job 36:16; Psalm 36:8; Psalm 63:5; Psalm 65:11.

And with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee - Palestine abounded with bees, and honey was a favorite article of food. Genesis 43:11; Deuteronomy 8:8; Deuteronomy 32:13; 1 Samuel 14:25-26; Isaiah 7:15; Ezekiel 16:13; Matthew 3:4. Much of that which was obtained was wild honey, deposited by the bees in the hollows of trees, and as it would seem in the caverns of the rocks. Much of it was gathered also from rocky regions, and this was regarded as the most delicate and valuable. I do not know the cause of this, nor why honey in high and rocky countries should be more pure and white than that obtained from other places; but the whitest and the most pure and delicate honey that I have ever seen I found at Chamouni in Switzerland. Dr. Thomson (land and the Book, vol. ii. p. 362) says of the rocky region in the vicinity of Timnath, that "bees were so abundant in a wood at no great distance from this spot that the honey dropped down from the trees on the ground;" and that "he explored densely-wooded gorges in Hermon and in Southern Lebanon where wild bees are still found, both in trees and in the clefts of the rocks."

The meaning here is plain, that, if Israel had been obedient to God, he would have blessed them with abundance - with the richest and most coveted productions of the field. Pure religion - obedience to God - morality - temperance, purity, honesty, and industry, such as religion requires - are always eminently favorable to individual and national prosperity; and if a man or a nation desired to be most prospered, most successful in the lawful and proper objects of individual or national existence, and most happy, nothing would tend more to conduce to it than those virtues which piety enjoins and cultivates. Individuals and nations, even in respect to temporal prosperity, are most unwise, as well as most wicked, when they disregard the laws of God, and turn away from the precepts and the spirit of religion. It is true of nations, as it is of individuals, that "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is," 1 Timothy 4:8.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 82

Introduction

This, too, is a "Psalm of Asaph." See Introduction to Isaiah 1:17, Isaiah 1:23, Isaiah 1:26.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:

I. A reference to God as the Supreme Ruler; the Ruler of those that rule; the God to whom all magistrates, however exalted in rank, are responsible, Psalm 82:1.

II. A reference to the character of the magistrates at the time when the psalm was written, as those who judged unjustly; who were partial in the administration of justice; and who favored people of rank and position, Psalm 82:2.

III. A statement of the duties of magistrates, in reference particularly to the poor, the fatherless, the needy, and the afflicted, Psalm 82:3-4.

IV. A further statement in regard to the character of the magistrates at the time when the psalm was written, particularly as ignorant, and as walking in darkness, Psalm 82:5.

V. A solemn appeal to them as mortal people - as subject to death like others - though they had a rank which entitled them to the appellation of "gods," and were the representatives of the Most High on earth, Psalm 82:6-7.

VI. A call on God to arise and to execute judgment in the earth, for he was the Supreme Ruler, and the nations, with all their interests, pertained to him, Psalm 82:8.

Verse 1

God standeth in the congregation of the mighty - In the assembly of the rulers and judges; among those of most exalted rank and station. He is there to observe them; to give them law; to direct their decisions; to judge them. He is supreme over them; and he holds them responsible to himself The word rendered congregation is that which is commonly applied to the assembly of the people of Israel, considered as an organized body, or as a

body politic. It here, however, refers to magistrates considered as a body or class of people; as those who have assemblages or meetings, with special reference to their duties as magistrates. The word rendered "mighty" - אל *'Êl* - is in the singular number, and is one of the names which are given to God; hence, the literal rendering is, "God standeth in the assembly of God." The Septuagint renders it, In the synagogue of the gods. So also the Latin Vulgate. The reference, however, is undoubtedly to magistrates, and the idea is, that they were to be regarded as representatives of God; as acting in his name; and as those, therefore, to whom, in a subordinate sense, the name gods might be given. Compare Psalm 82:6. In Exodus 21:6; Exodus 22:8-9, Exodus 22:28, also, the same word in the plural is applied to magistrates, and is properly translated judges in our common version. Compare the notes at John 10:34-35. The idea is, that they were the representatives of the divine sovereignty in the administration of justice. Compare Romans 13:1-2, Romans 13:6. They were, in a sense, gods to other people; but they were not to forget that God stood among them as their God; that if they were exalted to a high rank in respect to their fellowmen, they were, nevertheless, subject to One to whom the name of God belonged in the highest sense.

He judgeth among the gods - As they to whom the name gods is thus given as the representatives of the divine sovereignty judged among people, so God would judge among them. If they were, in some sense (in consequence of their representing the divine majesty, and deriving their power and appointment from God), independent of people, they were in no sense independent of God himself.

Verse 2

How long will ye judge unjustly - literally, Judge evil. This is designed, evidently, to denote the prevailing character of the magistrates at the time when the psalm was written. Unhappily such occasions occur very often in the course of human affairs.

And accept the persons of the wicked? - literally, Lift up, or bear, the faces of the wicked. The meaning is, that they showed favor or partiality to wicked people; they did not decide cases according to truth, but were influenced by a regard for particular persons on account of their rank, their position, their wealth, or their relation to themselves. This is a common phrase in the Scriptures to denote favoritism or partiality. Job 34:19; Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; 1 Peter 1:17; Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:17.

Verse 3

Defend the poor and fatherless - literally, judge; that is, Pronounce just judgment; see that right is done to them. This is required everywhere in the Scriptures. The meaning is not that judgment is to be pronounced in their favor because they are poor, or because they are orphans, for this would be to do what they had just been charged with as in itself wrong, accepting of persons; that is, showing favor on account of condition or rank, rather than on account of a just claim. The idea is, that the poor and the fatherless, having no natural protectors, were likely to be wronged or oppressed; that they had none to defend their claims; and that magistrates, therefore, as if they were their natural protectors, should see that their rights were maintained. See the notes at Isaiah 1:17.

Do justice to the afflicted and needy - See that justice is done them; that they are not wronged by persons of wealth, of power, and of rank. Such care does religion take of those who have no natural guardians. The poor and the needy - the widow and the fatherless - owe to the religion of the Bible a debt which no language can express.

Verse 4

Deliver the poor and needy - That is, Deliver them from the power and the arts of those who would oppress and wrong them. This would not be showing them partiality; it would be simply doing them justice.

Rid them out of the hand of the wicked - Deliver, or Rescue them from their hands; that is, from their attempts to oppress and wrong them.

Verse 5

They know not, neither will they understand - This is designed still further to characterize the magistrates at the time referred to in the psalm. They not merely judged unjustly, and were not merely partial in the administration of justice Psalm 82:2, but they did not desire to understand their duty, and the true principles on which justice should be administered. They were at no pains to inform themselves, either in regard to those principles, or in regard to the facts in particular cases. All just judgment must be based

(a) on a true knowledge of what the law is, or what is right; and

(b) on a knowledge of the facts in a particular case. Where there is no such knowledge, of course there must be a mal-administration of justice.

One of the first requisites, therefore, in a magistrate is, that he shall have a proper knowledge of the law; his duty is to ascertain the exact facts in each individual case that comes before him, and then impartially to apply the law to that case.

They walk on in darkness - In ignorance of the law and of the facts in the case.

All the foundations of the earth - See Psalm 11:3, note; Psalm 75:3, note. All settled principles; all the things on which the welfare of society rests; all on which the prosperity of the world depends. The manner in which justice is administered is as if the very foundations of the earth should be disturbed, and the world should move without order.

Are out of course - Margin, as in Hebrew, moved. That is, they are moved from their proper place; the earth no longer rests firmly and safely on its foundation. This language is taken from the idea so often occurring in the Scriptures, and in the language of people generally, that the earth rests on solid foundations - as a building does. The idea is derived from the stability and fixedness of the earth, and from the fact that when a building is fixed and stable we infer that it has a solid foundation. The thought here is, that a proper administration of justice is essential to the stability and prosperity of a state - as essential as a solid foundation is to the stability of the edifice which is reared on it. The effect of a real-administration of justice in any community may be well compared with what the result would be if the foundations of the earth should be removed, or if the laws which now keep it in its place should cease to operate.

Verse 6

I have said, Ye are gods - See the notes at Psalm 82:1. I have given you this title; I have conferred on you an appellation which indicates a greater nearness to God than any other which is bestowed on men - an appellation which implies that you are God‘s representatives on earth, and that your decision is, in an important sense, to be regarded as his.

And all of you are children of the Most High - Sons of God. That is, You occupy a rank which makes it proper that you should be regarded as his sons.

Verse 7

But ye shall die like men - You are mortal, like other people. This fact you have forgotten. You have been lifted up with pride, as if you were in fact more exalted than other people; as if you were not subject to the law

which consigns all people to the grave. An ancient monarch directed his servant to address him each morning in this language: “Remember, sire, that thou art mortal.” No more salutary truth can be impressed on the minds of the rich and the great than that they are, in this respect, like other people - like the poorest, the meanest of the race: that they will die under similar forms of disease; that they will experience the same pain; that all which is fearful in death will be their portion as well as that of the most obscure; and that in the grave, with whatever pomp and splendor they descend to it, or however magnificent the monument which may be reared over the spot where they lie, there will be the same offensive and repulsive process of decay which occurs in the most humble grave in the country churchyard. Why, then - oh, why - should man be proud?

And fall like one of the princes - And die as one of the princes. The idea in the word fall may be, perhaps, that they would die by the hand of violence - or be cut down, as princes often are, e. g. in battle. The use of the word princes here denotes that they would die as other persons of exalted rank do; that is, that they were mortal as all people, high and low, are - as common people are, and as princes are. Though they had names - אל *'Êl* and אלהים *'Elohiym* - that suggested the idea of divinity, yet such appellations did not make any real change in their condition as people, and as subject to the ordinary laws under which people live. Whatever name they bore. it did not afford any security against death.

Verse 8

Arise, O God, judge the earth - That is, Since there is such a failure in the administration of justice by those to whom it pertains, and who are appointed to do it in thy stead, do thou, O God, come forth thyself, and see that justice is executed among people. Do thou take the matter into thine own hands, and see that impartial justice is done everywhere among people. It pertains to thee as the great Proprietor of the earth to exercise justice; and we have nowhere else to look when men fail to do their duty.

For thou shalt inherit all nations - Or rather, All nations belong to thee as thine inheritance; that is, as thine own. The word “inherit” is used here, as it often is, merely to denote possession or proprietorship, without reference to the question how the possession is obtained. The word strictly refers to what has been received from parents, or what people are heirs to; and, in this sense, it is commonly applied to the land of Palestine, either as what was derived by the Jewish people from their ancestors the patriarchs,

or as what they had received from God as a Father. Exodus 32:13; Deuteronomy 1:38; Deuteronomy 12:10. It is here used simply in the sense of possessing it. That is, the whole earth belonged to God, and the administration of its affairs pertained to him. As those had failed who had been appointed under him to the office of judges - as they had not been faithful to their trust - as no confidence could be reposed in them, - the psalmist calls upon God to interfere, either by appointing other magistrates; or by leading those who were in office to just views of their duty; or by his own direct judgments, punishing the wicked, and rewarding the righteous, by the interpositions of his providence. We may hence learn

(1) That there are times on earth when wickedness is so prevalent, and when there is such a want of faithfulness in civil rulers, that we have no other resource but to call upon God to interpose.

(2) that it is right to call upon Him to see that justice should be done in the earth even in the punishment of the guilty, since all the interests of society depend on the proper administration of justice.

(3) for the same reason it is right to pray that God would judge the world, and that justice may be done on the human race.

It is desirable and proper that justice should be done; hence, there is no malignity in desiring that there may be a universal judgment, and that the affairs of the universe should be placed on an equal and righteous foundation. It is possible that there may be a just and holy joy at the idea that justice is done, and that God shows himself the friend of truth, of order, and of law. Compare Psalm 58:10, note; Revelation 19:1-3, notes.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 83

Introduction

This is another of the psalms of Asaph, the last of the group or collection that is found under his name. Compare the Introduction to Psalm 47:1-9; Psalm 48:1-14; the first, composed and sung on the field of battle; the second, on the triumphant return to Jerusalem; the third - the one before us - in confident anticipation of victory. This is, perhaps, rather fanciful, and it certainly cannot be demonstrated that this is the correct opinion. It would seem, at least, to be hardly probable that a psalm would be composed and sung in a battlefield.

All that is certain in regard to the psalm is, that it was written in view of a threatened invasion by combined armies, and the prayer is, that God would give help, as he had done when the nation had been threatened on other occasions. The nations which were combined, or which had formed an alliance for this purpose, are specified in Psalm 83:6-8; Edom; Ishmael; Moab; the Hagarenes; Gebal; Ammon; Amalek; the Philistines; the Tyrians, Assur, and the children of Lot.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:

I. A prayer that God would no longer keep still, or be silent, Psalm 83:1.

II. A statement of the occasion for the prayer, to wit, the conspiracy or combination formed against his people, Psalm 83:2-5.

III. An enumeration of the nations thus combined, Psalm 83:6-8.

IV. A prayer that God would interpose as he had done in former times, in critical periods of the Jewish history - as in the case of the Midianites; as in the time of Sisera, and Jabin; and as in the wars waged with Oreb and Zeeb, Zebah and Zalmunna, Psalm 83:9-12.

V. A prayer that these enemies might be utterly overthrown and confounded; that God would promote his own glory; and that his people might be secure and happy, Psalm 83:13-18.

Verse 1

Keep not thou silence, O God - See the notes at Psalm 28:1. The prayer here is that in the existing emergency God would not seem to be indifferent to the needs and dangers of his people, and to the purposes of their enemies, but that he would speak with a voice of command, and break up their designs.

Hold not thy peace - That is, Speak. Give commaud. Disperse them by thine own authority.

And be not still, O God - Awake; arouse; be not indifferent to the needs and dangers of thy people. All this is the language of petition; not of command. Its rapidity, its repetition, its tone, all denote that the danger was imminent, and that the necessity for the divine interposition was urgent.

Verse 2

For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult - Are excited; are aroused; are moving in a wild, furious, tumultuous manner, rushing on to the accomplishment of their designs. They come like rolling waves of the sea. See the word used here explained in the notes at Psalm 2:1, where it is rendered, in the text, "rage;" in the margin, "tumultuously assemble."

And they that hate thee - Thine enemies; the enemies of thy cause, and of thy people. Who they were is specified in Psalm 83:6-8.

Have lifted up the head - Have become proud; bold; confident of success, all of which is indicated by the phrase "lifted up the head." The head is bowed down in penitence and trouble; pride lifts it up; boldness, confidence, and wickedness, are indicated by its being thus lifted up.

Verse 3

They have taken crafty counsel - The one word translated "have taken crafty" - ערם *ʿâram* - means properly to make naked; and then, to be crafty, cunning, malignant, 1 Samuel 23:22. It is well rendered here, they have taken crafty counsel. The meaning is, they have made their counsel or their consultations crafty, cunning, artful, malignant. Instead of pursuing a course in their deliberations that would be just, true, honorable, they have followed the reverse. On the word rendered "counsel" - סוד *sôd* - which means a couch or cushion, and hence, a divan - see Job 15:8, note; Psalm 25:14, note; Psalm 64:2, note. The idea here is, that the persons referred to in the subsequent part of the psalm (Psalm 83:6-8) had been assembled in a divan, or for consultation, and that they had there formed a malignant plan - against God and his people - which they were now proceeding to execute.

Against thy people - For the purpose of destroying them.

And consulted against thy hidden ones - The word rendered "hidden ones" - from the verb צפן *tsâphan* to hide, to conceal - properly denotes that which is secret, private, inaccessible Ezekiel 7:22; and then, anything protected or hidden so as to be secure. Compare the notes at Psalm 27:5. It would seem here to refer to those who were so protected by Yahweh - so inaccessible to others by reason of his guardian care - that they would be safe.

Verse 4

They have said, Come, and let us cut them off … - Let us utterly destroy them, and root them out from among the nations. Let us combine against them, and overpower them; let us divide their land among ourselves, attaching it to our own. The nations referred to Psalm 83:6-8 were those which surrounded the land of Israel; and the proposal seems to have been to partition the land of the Hebrews among themselves, as has been done in modern times in regard to Poland. On what principles, and in what proportions, they proposed thus to divide the land is not intimated, nor is it said that the project had gone so far that they had agreed on the terms of such a division. The formation of such a purpose, however, was in itself by no means improbable. The Hebrew people were offensive to all the surrounding nations by their religion, their prosperity, and the constant rebuke of tyranny and idolatry by their religious and their social institutions. There had been enough, also, in their past history - in the remembrance of the successful wars of the Hebrews with those very nations - to keep up a constant irritation on their part. We are not to be surprised, therefore, that there was a deeply-cherished desire to blot out the name and the nation altogether.

That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance - That the nation as such may be utterly extinct and forgotten; that the former triumphs of that nation over us may be avenged; that we may no longer have in our very midst this painful memorial of the existence of one God, and of the demands of his law; that we may pursue our own plans without the silent or the open admonition derived from a religion so pure and holy. For the same reason the world has often endeavored to destroy the church; to cause it to be extinct; to blot out its name; to make the very names Christ and Christian forgotten among mankind. Hence, the fiery persecutions under the Roman government in the time of the Emperors; and hence, in every age, and in every land, the church has been exposed to persecution - originated with a

purpose to destroy it as long as there was any hope of accomplishing that end. That purpose has been abandoned by Satan and his friends only because the result has shown that the persecution of the church served but to spread its principles and doctrines, and to fix it more firmly in the affections and confidence of mankind, so that the tendency of persecution is rather to overthrow the persecutor than the persecuted. Whether it can be destroyed by prosperity and corruption - by science - by error - seems now to be the great problem before the mind of Satan.

Verse 5

For they have consulted together with one consent - Margin, as in Hebrew, heart. There is no division in their counsels on this subject. They have one desire - one purpose - in regard to the matter. Pilate and Herod were made friends together against Christ Luke 23:12; and the world, divided and hostile on other matters, has been habitually united in its opposition to Christ and to a pure and spiritual religion.

They are confederate against thee - literally, "They cut a covenant against thee;" that is, they ratify such a covenant, compact, league - referring to the manner in which bargains and agreements were ratified by cutting in pieces a victim sacrificed on such occasions; that is, by giving to such a transaction the solemnity of a religious sanction. Genesis 15:10; Jeremiah 34:18-19. See Bochart, Hieroz. i. 35. The meaning here is, that they had entered into this agreement in the most solemn manner, under the sanctions of religion.

Verse 6

The tabernacles of Edom - The tents of Edom; meaning here, the dwellers in those tents, that is, the Edomites. The word tabernacles or tents does not necessarily imply that the nation then led a wandering life, for the word came to signify in process of time a dwelling-place, or a habitation. The Edomites were not, in fact, a roving and wandering people, but a people of fixed boundaries. In early periods, however, like most ancient people, they doubtless dwelt in tents. Edom, or Idumea, was south of Palestine. See the notes at Isaiah 11:14.

And the Ishmaelites - The descendants of Ishmael. They dwelt in Arabia Deserta.

Of Moab - On the situation of Moab, see the notes at Isaiah 15:1-9. It was on the southeast of Palestine.

And the Hagarenes - The Hagarenes were properly Arabs, so called from Hagar, the handmaid of Abraham, the mother of Ishmael. Genesis 16:1; Genesis 25:12. As connected with the Ishmaelites they would naturally join in this alliance.

Verse 7

Gebal - The Gebal here referred to was probably the same as Gebalene, the mountainous tract inhabited by the Edomites, extending from the Dead Sea southward toward Petra, and still called by the Arabs *Djebal* (Gesenius, Lexicon) The word means mountain. Those who are here referred to were a part of the people of Edom.

And Ammon - The word Ammon means son of my people. Ammon was the son of Lot by his youngest daughter, Genesis 19:38. The Ammonites, descended from him, dwelt beyond the Jordan in the tract of country between the streams of Jabbok and Arnon. These also would be naturally associated in such a confederacy. 1 Samuel 11:1-11.

And Amalek - The Amalekites were a very ancient people: In the traditions of the Arabians they are reckoned among the aboriginal inhabitants of that country. They inhabited the regions on the south of Palestine, between Idumea and Egypt. Compare Exodus 17:8-16; Numbers 13:29; 1 Samuel 15:7. They also extended eastward of the Dead Sea and Mount Seir Numbers 24:20; Judges 3:13; Judges 6:3, Judges 6:33; and they appear also to have settled down in Palestine itself, whence the name the Mount of the Amalekites, in the territory of Ephraim, Judges 12:15.

The Philistines - Often mentioned in the Scriptures. They were the ancient inhabitants of Palestine, whence the name Philistia or Palestine. The word is supposed to mean the land of sojourners or strangers; hence, in the Septuagint they are uniformly called ἀλλοφύλοι *allophuloi* those of another tribe, strangers, and their country is called γῆ ἀλλοφύλων *gē allophulōn* They were constant enemies of the Hebrews, and it was natural that they should be engaged in such an alliance as this.

With the inhabitants of Tyre - On the situation of Tyre, see the Introduction to Isaiah 23. Why Tyre should unite in this confederacy is not known. The purpose seems to have been to combine as many nations as possible against the Hebrew people, and - as far as it could be done - all those that were adjacent to it, so that it might be surrounded by enemies, and so that its destruction might be certain. It would not probably be difficult to find some pretext for inducing any of the kings of the

surrounding nations to unite in such an unholy alliance. Kings, in general, have not been unwilling to form alliances against liberty.

Verse 8

Assur also is joined with them - Assyria. Assyria was on the northeast of Palestine. The conspirators had secured, it seems, the aid of this powerful kingdom, and they felt confident of success.

They have holpen the children of Lot - The sons, or the descendants of Lot. The margin is, as the Hebrew, "been an arm to." That is, they were an aid, or help; in other words, the sons of Lot were permitted, as it were, to make use of the arm of these powerful nations in accomplishing their purposes. The sons of Lot were Moab and Ammon, the ancestors of the Moabites and the Ammonites, Genesis 19:37-38. It would appear from this, that the purpose of destroying the Hebrew people had been originated by the Moabites and Ammonites, and that they had called in the aid of the surrounding nations to enable them to carry out their plan. The enumeration of those who had joined in the alliance shows that all the nations adjacent to Palestine, on every side, had entered into the agreement, so that the land was completely encompassed, or hemmed in, by enemies. In these circumstances, the conspirators felt secure; in these circumstances, the Hebrew people had no resource but to call upon God. Thus it often occurs that the people of God are so surrounded by enemies, or are so hemmed in by troubles and trials, that they have no other resource than this: they are shut up to the necessity of prayer. Often God so orders, or permits things to occur, as to cut off his people from every other dependence, and to make them feel that there is no help for them but in Him.

Verse 9

Do unto them as unto the Midianites - That is, Let them be overthrown and destroyed as the Midianites were. The reference here is to the complete overthrow of the Midianites, as related in Judges 4:4, Judges 4:6, Judges 4:14-15, and was slain by Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, Judges 4:17-21.

As to Jabin - The king of Canaan, in whose service Sisera was.

At the brook of Kison - Judges 4:13. This is a stream which rises near Mount Tabor, and empties itself into the Bay of Ptolemais. In Judges 5:21, in the song of Deborah on occasion of this victory, it is mentioned as "that ancient river, the river Kishon;" that is, it was a stream which was well

known; which had been referred to in ancient tales and poetry; not a newly discovered river, but a river whose name and locality were familiar to all.

Verse 10

Which perished at En-dor - Endor is not particularly mentioned in the history of the transaction in the book of Judges, but it is known that Endor was in the vicinity of Mount Tabor, and there is no improbability in the tradition which has fixed the site of the battle at or near Endor. The word or name "En-dor" means properly fount of the dwelling (or, habitation), and was probably given at first to a spring or fountain near to which some distinguished or well-known person dwelt. It is mentioned in Joshua 17:11; 1 Samuel 28:7.

They became as dung for the earth - The land was enriched or made fertile by their flesh, their blood, and their bones, as the field of Waterloo was by that of the slain, or as fields of battle commonly are.

Verse 11

Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb - These were princes or rulers of the Midianites, slain by Gideon, the one on the rock Oreb, and the other at the wine-press of Zeeb. Judges 7:25. The prayer here is, that the enemies who had conspired against the land of Israel might be utterly destroyed.

Yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna - The word here rendered princes means properly anointed, and was given to princes, kings, prophets, and priests, as anointed, or as set apart by anointing to their office. Zebah and Zalmunna were kings of Midian, slain also by Gideon. See Judges 8:5, Judges 8:21.

Verse 12

Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession - The houses of God here mean the habitations of God, or the places where he dwelt among the people. As there was but one ark, one tabernacle, and one temple, or one place of constituted public worship, this must refer to other places where God was worshipped, or where he might be supposed to reside; either to synagogues (see the notes at Psalm 74:8), or to the private dwellings of the people regarded as a holy people, or as a people among whom God dwelt. This may, therefore, imply that their dwellings - their private abodes - were also dwelling-places of God, as now the house of a religious family - a place where God is regularly worshipped - may be regarded as an abode of God on the earth. The language here is not to be

understood as that of Oreb and Zeeb, of Zebah and Zalmunna, but of the enemies referred to in the psalm, who had entered into the conspiracy to destroy the Hebrew nation. They had said, "Let us inherit the houses of God;" that is, Let us take to ourselves, and for our possession, the dwellings of the land where God is supposed to reside.

Verse 13

O my God, make them like a wheel … - Or rather, like a rolling thing - something that the wind rolls along. The word גלגל *galgal* - means properly a wheel, as of a chariot, Ezekiel 10:2, Ezekiel 10:6; or a wheel for drawing water from a well, Ecclesiastes 12:6; then, a whirlwind, Psalm 77:19; and then, anything driven before a whirlwind, as chaff, or stubble, Isaiah 17:13. Compare the notes at Isaiah 22:18. The prayer here is, that they might be utterly destroyed, or driven away.

Verse 14

As the fire burneth a wood … - The same idea is here presented under another form. No image of desolation is more fearful than that of fire raging in a forest; or of fire on the mountains. As trees and shrubs and grass fall before such a flame, so the prayer is, that they who had combined against the people of God might be swept away by his just displeasure.

Verse 15

So persecute them - So pursue them; so follow them up. The word "persecute" is now used in a somewhat different sense, as denoting pain or suffering inflicted on account of religious opinion. It means here simply to pursue.

With thy tempest - With the expressions of thy displeasure; with punishment which may be compared with the fury of a storm.

And make them afraid with thy storm - Or, Make them afraid, terrify them, so that they will flee away. As all that is here sought by prayer is what people endeavor to do when an enemy invades their country - as they make arrangements for repelling those enemies, and overthrowing them, and as they feel that it is right to do so - there is no impropriety in making this the subject of prayer to God. What it is right for men to attempt, it is right to pray for; what it would be right for them to do if they had the power, it is right to ask God to accomplish; what is free from malignity in the act, and in the design, may be free from malignity in the desire and the prayer; and if men can carry with them the idea that what they are endeavoring to do is right, whether as magistrates, judges, rulers, defenders of their country, or

as private men, they will have very little difficulty in regard to the so-called "imprecatory psalms." See this subject treated in the General Introduction

Verse 16

Fill their faces with shame - As those who are disappointed and foiled in their plans - such disappointment and confusion commonly manifesting itself in the face. The prayer here is, that their enemies might be so baffled in their designs - that they might be made so to feel how vain and hopeless were all their plans - that there might be such a manifest interposition of God in the case, as that they should be led to see that Yahweh reigned; that it was in vain to contend with him, and that his people were under his protection.

That they may seek thy name, O Lord - That they may be led to seek thee. This explains the drift and design of the whole prayer in the psalm. It is not a malignant prayer for the destruction of their enemies; it is not a wish that they might be made to suffer; but it is a prayer that the divine dealing might be such as to lead them to the acknowledgment of the true God. It is a benevolent thing to desire that men may be brought to the knowledge of the true God, though it be through the discomfiture of their own plans, by defeat, or by suffering. Anything that leads people to an acquaintance with God, and results in securing his friendship and favor, is a gain, and will be cause of thankfulness in the end.

Verse 17

Let them be confounded - Let them be ashamed. That is, Let them have that kind of shame and confusion which results from the fact that their plans have not been successful, or that they have been foiled and baffled in their schemes.

And troubled - Disturbed; put to confusion. Let them be troubled as men are who are unsuccessful in their projects.

Forever - As a people; as confederated nations; as united in such an unholy alliance. Let them never again be able thus to combine, or to form a compact for the destruction of thy people. This does not refer to them as individuals, but as nations. It is a prayer that they may be so discomfited now that they may see the wickedness and folly of all such efforts, and that they may never again form such a combination.

Yea, let them be put to shame - By utter failure in their schemes.

And perish - Not individually, but as combined - as an alliance. Let there be a complete end to such a confederacy, so that it shall never be seen

again.

Verse 18

That men may know - That all people may be impressed with the belief that thou art the true and only God. This was the design and aim of the prayer in the psalm. It was that there might be such a manifestation of the power of God; that it might be so evident that the events which had occurred could be traced to no other source than God himself, that all people might be led to honor him.

That thou whose name alone is Jehovah - To whom alone this name belongs; to whom alone it can be properly ascribed. This was the special name by which God chose to be known. Exodus 6:3. Compare the notes at Isaiah 42:8. On the word Jehovah - יהוה *Yahweh* - see the notes at Psalm 68:4. It is found in combination, in Genesis 22:14; Exodus 17:15; Judges 6:24; Ezekiel 48:35; Jeremiah 23:6; Jeremiah 33:16.

Art the Most High over all the earth - Thou art the Supreme God, ruling over all people. Thy dominion is so absolute over nations, even when combined together, and thy power is so complete in foiling their plans, and disconcerting their purposes, that it is clear that thou dost reign over them. He that could break up such a combination - he that could rescue his people from such an allied force - must have all power over the nations - must be the true God.

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PSALM 84

Introduction

On the meaning of the phrase in the title, "upon Gittith," see the notes at the title to Psalm 8:1-9. On the meaning of the phrase "for (margin, to) the sons of Korah," see the notes at the title to Psalm 42:1-11. The author of the psalm is unknown, though it bears a strong resemblance to the forty-second, and may have been composed by David himself. If so, it was dedicated, or devoted, as that was, to "the sons of Korah," to be adapted by them to music, and to be employed in public worship, and it may also have been composed on the same occasion. It is to be observed, however, that there were not only numerous occasions in the life of David, but also in the lives of other pious Hebrews, to which the sentiments in this psalm would be appropriate; and we cannot, therefore, affirm with certainty that it was composed by David. If it had been, moreover, it is difficult to account for the fact that his name is not prefixed to it. See, however, the notes at Psalm 84:9.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed is apparent from the psalm itself. It was evidently when the writer was deprived, for some cause now unknown, of the privileges of the sanctuary. That cause may have been exile, or sickness, or distance, or imprisonment; but whatever it was, the psalmist expresses his own deep feelings on the subject; the sense which he has of the blessedness of an attendance on the sanctuary, and of the happiness of those who were permitted to attend - regarding it as such a privilege that even the sparrow and the swallow might be supposed to be happy in being permitted to dwell near the altar of God. He describes, also, the joy and rejoicing of those who went up in companies, or in solemn procession, to the place of public worship - a happy, triumphant group on their way to the house of God.

It is not possible, however, to ascertain the exact time, or the particular occasion, when the psalm was written. The language is such as might have been used when the public worship was conducted either in the tabernacle, or in the temple - for the words employed are such as were adapted to either. It must have been, however, before the temple was destroyed, for it is clear that the usual place of public worship was still standing, and

consequently it was before the captivity. The psalm is not one indicating public calamity; it is one of private love and sorrow.

The contents of the psalm are as follows:

I. The psalmist expresses his own sense of the loveliness of the place where God is worshipped, and his earnest longing for the courts of the Lord, Psalm 84:1-2.

II. He illustrates this feeling by a beautiful image drawn from the sparrow and the swallow - building their nests unobstructed and unalarmed near the very altar of God - as if they must be happy to be so near to God, and to dwell peaceably there, Psalm 84:3-4.

III. He describes the happiness of those who are on the way to the place of public worship: their joy; their progress in strength of purpose as they approached the place; their happiness in appearing before God, Psalm 84:5-7.

IV. He pours forth his earnest prayer that he might be permitted thus to approach God; that he might be allowed to abide in the courts of God; that he might find a home there; that he might even spend a day there - for a day there was better than a thousand elsewhere, Psalm 84:8-12.

The whole psalm is a beautiful expression of love to the sanctuary, as felt by all who truly worship God.

Verse 1

How amiable - How much to he loved; how lovely. The word amiable is now used to denote a quality of mind or disposition - as gentle, affectionate, kind. The word used here, however in the original, means rather dear, beloved - as a token of endearment. Compare the notes at the title to Matthew 21:12, following.

O Lord of hosts! - Yahweh of hosts; Yahweh, controlling - ruling - guiding - marshalling - all the armies of heaven and earth: compare the notes at Isaiah 1:9; notes at Psalm 24:10.

Verse 2

My soul longeth - The word used here means properly to be pale; then, to be faint or weak; and then, to pine after, to long for, to desire earnestly. It would properly denote such a longing or desire as to make one faint or exhausted; that is, it indicates intense desire. In Psalm 17:12, it is applied to

a hungry lion; "Like a lion that is greedy of its prey." In Genesis 31:30, it conveys the idea of intense desire: "Because thou sore longedst after thy father's house." For an illustration of the sentiment here expressed, see the notes at Psalm 42:1-2.

Yea, even fainteth - Is exhausted; fails of its strength. The word means properly to be completed, finished; then to be consumed, to be spent, to waste or pine away. Genesis 21:15; Jeremiah 16:4; Lamentations 2:11; Job 19:27.

For the courts of the Lord - The word used here refers to the different areas around the tabernacle or temple, within which many of the services of public worship were conducted, and which were frequented by different classes of persons. See the notes at Matthew 21:12.

My heart and my flesh - My whole nature; my body and my soul; all my desires and aspirations - all the longings of my heart are there. The body - the flesh - cries out for rest; the heart - the soul - for communion with God. Our whole nature demands the benefits which spring from the worship of God. Body and soul were made for his service, and the necessities of neither can be satisfied without religion.

Crieth out - The word used here - רנן *rânan* - means properly to give forth a tremulous sound; then, to give forth the voice in vibrations, or in a tremulous manner; and thence it may mean either to utter cries of joy, Leviticus 9:24; Job 38:7; Isaiah 12:6, or to utter a loud wail Lamentations 2:19. Its common application is to joy Psalm 98:4; Psalm 132:16; Psalm 65:8; and it might be rendered here, "Sing unto the Lord," or "Rejoice unto the Lord." The connection, however, seems to demand that it be understood as the cry of earnest longing or desire.

For the living God - God, the true God, considered as living, in contradistinction from idols, always spoken of as dead. Compare Psalm 63:1.

Verse 3

Yea, the sparrow hath found an house - A home; a place where she may abide, and build her nest, and rear her young. The word here used - צפור *tsippôr* - is a name given to a bird from its chirping or twittering. It is rendered sparrow in Leviticus 14:4 (margin); Psalm 102:7; and is often rendered bird (Genesis 7:14; Genesis 15:10, et al.), and fowl, Deuteronomy 4:17; Nehemiah 5:18; et al. It may denote a bird of any kind, but is properly applied here to a sparrow, a species of bird very common and abundant in

Palestine; a bird that finds its home especially about houses, barns, etc. That sparrows would be likely to gather around the tabernacle and even the altar, will appear not improbable from their well-known habits. "The sparrows which flutter and twitter about dilapidated buildings at Jerusalem, and crevices of the city walls, are very numerous. In some of the more lonely streets they are so noisy as almost to overpower every other sound. Their chirping is almost an articulate utterance of the Hebrew term (צפור *tsippôr*), which was employed to designate that class of birds. It may be taken for granted that the sparrows are not less numerous in other places where they have similar means for obtaining shelter and building their nests. The sparrows, in their resort to houses and other such places, appear to be a privileged bird. Encouraged by such indulgence, they are not timid - they frequent boldly the haunts of people. The sight of this familiarity reminded me again and again of the passage in the Psalms Psalm 84:3, where the pious Israelite, debarred from the privileges of the sanctuary, felt as if he could envy the lot of the birds, so much more favored than himself." - Professor Hackett, "Illustrations of Scripture," pp. 94,95.

And the swallow a nest for herself - A place where it may make its nest. The word used here - דרור *derôr* - denotes properly, swift flight, a wheeling or gyration; and it is applied to birds which fly in circles or gyrations, and the name is thus appropriately given to the swallow. It occurs in this sense only here and in Proverbs 26:2.

Where she may lay her young - Where she may place her young. The wordplay here is not used in the sense in which we now apply it when we speak of "laying" eggs. It means to place them; to make a home for them; to dispose and arrange them.

Even thine altars … - The altars where thou art worshipped. The idea here is, that the sparrows and the swallows seemed to have a happy lot; to be in a condition to be envied. Even they might come freely to the place where God was worshipped - to the very altars - and make their home there undisturbed. How strongly in contrast with this was the condition of the wandering - the exiled - author of the psalm!

Verse 4

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house - Who are constantly there; whose permanent abode is there. The reference is to the priests and Levites - the ministers of religion - who had their permanent abode near the tabernacle and the temple, and who were wholly devoted to the sacred

duties of religion. Their lot is here spoken of as a blessed, or as a happy lot, in contradistinction from those who had only the opportunity of occasionally going up to worship. Compare the notes at Psalm 65:4.

They will be still praising thee - They will do it constantly, as their daily employment. It will not be worship begun and ended, but worship continued - the regular business from day to day. Such will heaven be; and this will constitute its glory. There will be

(a) a permanent residence there: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out," Revelation 3:12; and

(b) there will be the constant service of God; such a service that it may be described as perpetual praise.

The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "They will praise thee for ages of ages;" that is, forever.

Verse 5

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee - Not merely are they blessed who dwell there permanently, but the man also whose heart is there; who feels that his strength is in God alone who loves to go there when opportunity is afforded him, treading his way to Zion. The idea is, that all strength must come from God; that this Strength is to be obtained by waiting on him (compare the notes at Isaiah 40:31), and that, therefore, it is a privilege thus to wait on God. Compare Psalm 84:7.

In whose heart are the ways of them - literally, "The ways in their heart." DeWette renders this, "Who thinketh on the ways, or paths, to Jerusalem." The word "ways" may refer either to the ways or paths that lead to the place of worship, or the ways to God and to heaven. As the allusion, however, is evidently to those who were accustomed to go up to the place of public worship, the meaning is, that the man is blessed or happy whose heart is on those ways; who thinks on them; who makes preparation for going up; who purposes thus to go up to worship. The sense is enfeebled in our translation by the insertion of the words "of them." The literal translation is better: "The ways, that is, the paths, the going up, the journey, to the place of public worship, are in their heart." Their affections; their thoughts are there. The word rendered ways, means commonly a raised

way, a highway, but it may refer to any public path. It would be applicable to what we call a turnpike (road), as a way thrown up for public use. The allusion is to the ways or paths by which the people commonly went up to the place of public worship; and the idea may be well expressed in the language of Watts:

"I love her gates, I love the road."

The sentiment thus expressed finds a response in thousands of hearts: in the happiness - the peace - the joy - with which true worshippers go to the house of God. In the mind of the writer of the psalm this would have an additional beauty and attractiveness as being associated with the thought of the multitudes thronging that path - the groups - the companies - the families - that crowded the way to the place of public worship on their great festal occasions.

Verse 6

Who passing through the valley of Baca - This is one of the most difficult verses in the Book of Psalms, and has been, of course, very variously interpreted. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, Luther, and Professor Alexander, render it a valley of tears. The word "Baca" (בכא *bâkâ'*) means properly weeping, lamentation; and then it is given to a certain tree - not probably a mulberry tree, but some species of balsam - from its weeping; that is, because it seemed to distil tears, or drops of balsam resembling tears in size and appearance. It is translated mulberry trees in 2 Samuel 5:23-24; 1 Chronicles 14:14-15; and so in the margin here, "mulberry trees make him a well." There is no reason, however, to think that it has that meaning here. The true rendering is, "valley of lamentation," or weeping; and it may have reference to some lonely valley in Palestine - where there was no water - a gloomy way - through which those commonly passed who went up to the place of worship. It would be vain, however, to attempt now to determine the locality of the valley referred to, as the name, if ever given to it, seems long since to have passed away. It may, however, be used as emblematic of human life - "a vale of tears;" and the passage may be employed as an illustration of the effect of religion in diffusing happiness and comfort where there was trouble and sorrow - as if fountains should be made to flow in a sterile and desolate valley.

Make it a well - Or, a fountain. That is, It becomes to the pilgrims as a sacred fountain. They "make" such a gloomy valley like a fountain, or like a road where fountains - full, free, refreshing - break forth everywhere to

invigorate the traveler. Religious worship - the going up to the house of God - turns that in the journey of life which would otherwise be gloomy and sad into joy; makes a world of tears a world of comfort; has an effect like that of changing a gloomy path into one of pleasantness and beauty. The idea here is the same which occurs in Isaiah 35:7, "And the parched ground shall become a pool" (see the notes at that passage); and in Job 35:10, "Who giveth songs in the night" (see the notes at that passage); an idea which was so beautifully illustrated in the case of Paul and Silas in the jail at Philippi, when, at midnight they "sang praises to God" Acts 16:25, and which is so often illustrated in the midst of affliction and trouble. By the power of religion, by the presence of the Saviour, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, such times become seasons of purest joy - times remembered ever afterward with most fervent gratitude, as among the happiest periods of life. For religion can diffuse smiles over faces darkened by care; can light up the eye sunk in despondency; can change tears of sorrow into tears of joy; can impart peace in scenes of deepest sorrow; and make the most gloomy vales of life like green pastures illuminated by the brightness of noonday.

The rain also filleth the pools - Margin, "covereth." This is a still more difficult expression than the former. The Septuagint and the Vulgate render it, "The teacher - the lawgiver - ὁ νομοθετῶν *ho nomothetōn* - "legislator" - gives blessings." Luther, "The teachers shall be adorned with many blessings." Gesenius, "Yea, with blessings the autumnal rain doth cover it." DeWette, "And with blessing the harvest-rain covers it," which he explains as meaning," Where they come, though it would be sorrow and tears, yet they are attended with prosperity and blessing." Professor Alexander, "Also with blessings is the teacher clothed." The word rendered "rain" - מורה *môreh* - is from ירה *yârâh* to throw, to cast, to place, to sprinkle, and may denote

(1) an archer;

(2) the early rain

(3) teaching, Isaiah 9:15; 2 Kings 17:28; or a teacher, Isaiah 30:20; Job 36:22.

It is rendered rain, in the place before us; and former rain twice in Joel 2:23 (margin, a teacher). The word rendered "filleth" means properly to cover, and would be fitly so translated here. Compare Leviticus 13:45;

Ezekiel 24:17, Ezekiel 24:22. The word has not naturally the idea of filling. The word rendered "pools" - ברכות *berâkôth* - if pointed in one manner - ברכה *berêkâh* (in the singular) - denotes a pond, pool, or basin of water; if pointed in another manner - ברכה *berâkâh* - it means blessing, benediction, and is often so used in the Scriptures, Genesis 27:12; Genesis 28:4; Genesis 33:11; Proverbs 11:11, … The rendering of Gesenius, as above, "Yea, with blessings the autumnal rain doth cover it," (that is, the valley so desolate in the heat of summer - the valley of weeping), would perhaps be the most natural, though it is not easy to see the connection according to this interpretation, or according to any other proposed.

Least of all is it easy to see the connection according to the translation of the Septuagint, the Vulgate, Luther, and Prof. Alexander. Perhaps the connection in the mind of the author of the psalm may have been this. He sees the sterile and desolate valley through which the pilgrims are passing made joyous by the cheerfulness - the happiness - the songs - of those who are on their way to the house of God. This fact - this image - suggests to him the idea that this is similar to the effect which is produced in that valley when copious rains descend upon it, and when, though commonly desolate, it is covered with grass and flowers, or is "blessed" by the rain. This latter image is to his mind an illustration of the happy scene now before him in the cheerful and exulting movements of the pilgrims on their way to the house of God. The one suggests the other; and the psalmist has a combined image before his mind, the one illustrating the other, and both showing how a vale naturally desolate and sterile may be made cheerful and joyous.

Verse 7

They go from strength to strength … - Margin," company to company." The Septuagint and Vulgate, "They go from strength to strength; the God of gods is seen in Zion." Luther, "They obtain one victory after another, that one must see that there is a righteous God in Zion." DeWette, "Going they increase in strength, until they appear before God in Zion." This last is doubtless the true idea. As they pass along, as they come nearer and nearer to the end of their journey, their strength, their ardor, their firmness of purpose increases. By their conversation; by their songs; by encouraging one another; by seeing one difficulty overcome after another; by the fact kept before their minds, and increasingly apparent, that they are constantly approaching the end of their journey - that the distance to be

traveled is constantly diminishing - that the difficulties become less and less, and that they will soon see the towers and walls of the desired city - they are invigorated, cheered, comforted. What a beautiful illustration of the life of Christian pilgrims - of the bands of the redeemed - as they journey on toward the end of their course - the Mount Zion above! By prayer and praise and mutual counsel, by their songs, by the fact that difficulties are surmounted, leaving fewer to be overcome, and that the journey to be traveled is diminishing constantly - by the feeling that they are ever drawing nearer to the Zion of their home, until the light is seen to glitter and play on its towers and walls - they increase in strength, they become more confirmed in their purposes, they bear trials better, they overcome difficulties more easily, they walk more firmly, they tread their way more cheerfully and triumphantly.

Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God - literally, "He shall appear to God in Zion." The meaning evidently is, that they who are referred to in the previous verses as going up to Zion will be seen there, or will come before God, in the place of worship. There is a change of number here, from the plural to the singular - as, in Psalm 84:5, there is a change from the singular to the plural. Such changes are frequent in the Scriptures as in other writings, and the one here can be accounted for on the supposition that the author of the psalm, in looking upon the moving procession, at one moment may be supposed to have looked upon them as a procession - a moving mass - and then that he looked upon them as individuals, and spake of them as such. The idea here is, that they would not falter and fall by the way; that the cheerful, joyous procession would come to the desired place; that their wishes would be gratified, and that their joy would be full when they came to the end of their journey - to Zion. So it is of all Christian pilgrims. Every true believer - everyone that truly loves God - will appear before him in the upper Zion - in heaven. There their joy will be complete; there the long-cherished desires of their hearts will be fully gratified; there all that they ever hoped for, and more, will be realized.

Verse 8

O Lord God of hosts - See the notes at Psalm 84:1. God is appealed to here as a God of power; as a God who is able to accomplish all his purposes, and to impart every needed blessing.

Hear my prayer - A prayer of the psalmist that he might also have a place among the servants of God in their worship, Psalm 84:2. To this

earnestness of prayer he is excited by the view which he had of the blessedness of those who went with songs up to Zion. His soul longs to be among them; from the sight of them his prayer is the more fervent that he may partake of their blessedness and joy.

Give ear, O God of Jacob - With whom Jacob wrestled in prayer, and prevailed. Genesis 32:24-30. On the phrase, "give ear," see the notes at Psalm 5:1.

Verse 9

Behold, O God our shield - Our defense, as a shield is a defense in the day of battle. Compare Psalm 5:12, note; Psalm 18:2, note; Psalm 33:20, note. It is an appeal to God as a protector. The psalmist was an exile - a wanderer - and he looked to God as his defense.

And look upon the face of thine anointed - Look favorably upon; look with benignity and kindness. The word anointed here is the word "Messiah" - משיח *mâshîyach* (Greek, Χριστός *Christos* "Christ"; see the notes at Matthew 1:1). Compare the notes at Psalm 2:2. It here refers, however, evidently to the author of the psalm; and the word used is evidence that the author was David, as the anointed of the Lord, or someone set apart to the kingly office. It is true that this word was applicable to other kings, and also to priests and prophets, but the circumstances in the case concur best on the supposition that David is referred to. The allusion here is not to Christ; and the language does not suggest or justify the use which is often made of it when prayer is offered, that "God would look upon us in the face of his anointed" - whatever may, or may not be, the propriety of that prayer on other, grounds.

Verse 10

For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand - Better - happier - more profitable - more to be desired - than a thousand days spent elsewhere. That is, I should find more happiness - more true joy - in one day spent in the house of God, in his worship, in the exercises of true religion - more that will be satisfactory to the soul, and that will be dwelt on with pleasure in the memory when life is coming to a close - than I could in a thousand days spent in any other manner. This was much for a man like David - or a man who had been encompassed with all the splendor of royalty - to say; it is much for any man to say. And yet it could be said with truth by him; it can be said with equal truth by others; and when we come to the end of life - to the time when we shall review the past, and ask where we have found

most true happiness, most that was satisfactory to the soul, most that we shall delight then to dwell on and to remember, most that we should be glad to have repeated and perpetuated, most that would be free from the remembrance of disappointment, chagrin, and care - it will not be the banqueting hall - the scenes of gaiety - the honors, the praises, the flatteries of people - or even the delights of literature and of the social circle - but it will be the happy times which we shall have spent in communion with God - the times when in the closet we poured out our hearts to Him - when we bowed before him at the family altar, when we approached him in the sanctuary. The sweetest remembrances of life will be the sabbath and the exercises of religion.

I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God - Margin," I would choose rather to sit at the threshold." The verb used here is derived from a noun signifying sill or threshold, and it would seem to mean here to stand on the threshold; to be at the door or the entrance, even without the privilege of entering the house: I would prefer that humble place to a residence within the abodes of the wicked. The verb here used occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. The exact idea is not, as would seem from our translation, to keep the door, as in the capacity of a sexton or servant, but that of occupying the sill - the threshold - the privilege of standing there, and looking in, even if he was not permitted to enter. It would be an honor and a privilege to be anywhere about the place of public worship, rather than to be the occupant of a dwelling-place of sin.

Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness - The word "tents" here is equivalent to dwellings. It is used because it was so common in early periods to dwell in tents; and hence, the word was employed to denote a dwelling in general. The emphasis here is very much on the word "in:" - he would prefer standing at the door of the house of worship to dwelling within the abodes of the wicked - that is, to being admitted to intimacy with those who occupy such dwellings - however splendid, rich, and gorgeous, those abodes might be.

Verse 11

For the Lord God is a sun - The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "For the Lord loveth mercy and truth." Our translation, however, is the correct one. The sun gives light, warmth, beauty, to the creation; so God is the source of light, joy, happiness, to the soul. Compare Isaiah 60:19; Revelation 21:23; Revelation 22:5.

And shield - See Psalm 84:9.

The Lord will give grace and glory - Grace, or favor, here; glory, or honor, in the world to come. He will bestow all needful favor on his people in this life; he will admit them to glory in the world to come. Grace and glory are connected. The bestowment of the one will be followed by the other. Romans 8:29-30. He that partakes of the grace of God on earth will partake of glory in heaven. Grace comes before glory; glory always follows where grace is given.

No good thing will he withhold … - Nothing really good; nothing that man really needs; nothing pertaining to this life, nothing necessary to prepare for the life to come. Compare 1 Timothy 4:8; Philemon 4:19.

Verse 12

O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee - Blessed in every respect. His lot is a happy one; happy in thy friendship; happy in being permitted to worship thee; happy in the blessings which religion scatters along his path here; happy in thy sustaining grace in times of trial; happy in the support given in the hour of death; happy in the eternity to which he is going. Oh that all men would try it, and experience in their own souls the happiness - the real, genuine, deep, permanent joy - of trusting in God; of believing that there is a God; of confiding in his character; of leaning on him in every situation in life; of relying on his mercy, his grace, and his faithfulness, in the hour of death!

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 85

Introduction

On the phrase in the title, "To the chief Musician," see the notes on the title to Psalm 4:1-8. On the expression, "for the sons of Korah," see the notes at the title to Psalm 42:1-11. Neither of these expressions determines anything in regard to the authorship of the psalm, or the occasion on which it was composed, and conjecture on these points would be useless. There were in the Jewish history, as there have been in the Christian church, numerous occasions to which the sentiments of the psalm would be appropriate. It was evidently composed in view of the fact that God had, on some former occasion, interposed when his people were in trouble, but that now for similar causes he was again angry with them, and they were suffering similar calamities. The psalm contains a fervent prayer that God would again appear for them, and it implies a confident expectation that he would do this, so that the calamities which had come upon them would be removed - even as by a miraculous interposition. There is nothing to make it absolutely certain that it pertains to the Babylonian captivity, as DeWette supposes, but the language is so general that it might refer to any captivity.

The psalm consists essentially of three parts:

I. An allusion to God's gracious interposition in former times, as the ground of the present appeal to him, Psalm 85:1-3. In those times, when his people had been conquered, he had restored to them the possession of their own land; he had forgiven their iniquity; he had turned himself from the fierceness of his anger. These acts of mercy were now remembered; and this was the ground of confident hope in the present trouble.

II. A description of the state of the people at the time when the psalm was composed, as demanding help from God, Psalm 85:4-7. It is clear that the nation was suffering from some calamity; that the anger of God seemed to be upon them; that it appeared as if his wrath would never be turned away; and that unless he should interpose the nation must perish.

III. The expression of a confident hope that God would deliver his people, Psalm 85:8-13.

(a) The psalmist represents himself as willing to hear what God would say, with the hope that he would speak peace to his people; Psalm 85:8.

(b) He declares his belief that God is near to them who fear him Psalm 85:9, and that in the present case - in the manner in which he would meet the present emergency - there would be a mingling of mercy and truth - of righteousness and peace: that each of these, in proper proportions, and without collision, would meet and mingle in the divine dealings; that is, it would be seen, in his dealings with his people, that God was merciful and just - righteous and disposed to peace Psalm 85:10.

(c) He expresses his assurance that, dark as things now appeared, there would be a divine interposition as if truth (or, a just solution of these difficulties) should spring out of the very earth - as if it would come from some unknown quarter and in some unexpected manner, as mysterious, and as incomprehensible, and as far removed from human agency as if it came up suddenly from the ground - or as if the heavens opened themselves, and it looked down from the sky Psalm 85:11; and

(d) he, in conclusion, expresses his confident belief that the Lord would give that which was truly good; that the land would again yield its increase; that righteousness would attend his march through the land, going as it were before him, and causing all the people to walk in his steps, Psalm 85:12-13.

There does not appear to have been in this psalm any original reference to the Messiah, or to his work: that is, all that there is in the psalm can be explained on the supposition that it has no such reference. But it must be obvious to every one that the language is such as is suited most beautifully and appropriately to describe many things in the plan of redemption, and especially to express the fact that in that work the attributes of God, some of which seem not easy to be reconciled, have been most perfectly and beautifully manifested and blended.

Verse 1

Lord, thou hast been favorable unto thy land - Margin, "well pleased with." The idea is that he had been kind or propitious to the nation; to wit, on some former occasion. So Luther, (vormals) "formerly." The reference is to some previous period in their history, when he had exercised his power in their behalf.

Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob - That is, at the time referred to. It is not necessary to suppose that the allusion is to the period immediately preceding the time when the psalm was composed, but it may

have been any period in their history. Nor is it necessary to suppose that the people had been removed from their land at the time, for all that would be necessary to suppose in interpreting the language would be that the land had been invaded, even though the inhabitants still remained in it.

Verse 2

Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people - That is, These calamities came upon them in consequence of their sins, and thou hast dealt with them as if those sins were forgiven. The fact that the tokens of his anger bad passed away, and that his judgments were withdrawn, seemed to prove that their sins had been forgiven. The same form of expression used here - with the same words in Hebrew - occurs in Psalm 32:5. See the notes at that passage. The language suggests the idea of an atonement. Literally, "Thou hast lifted up - or borne - the iniquity of thy people."

Thou hast covered all their sin - So that it is hidden; and therefore thou dost treat them as if they were righteous, or as if there were no sin. The idea of covering is that expressed in the Hebrew word, which is commonly rendered "atonement" - כפר *kâphar* - to cover; to cover over; then, to cover over sin; to forgive. The idea suggested in this verse is, that when God withdraws the tokens of his displeasure, we may hope that he has pardoned the sin which was the cause of his anger.

Verse 3

Thou hast taken away all thy wrath - That is, formerly; on the occasion referred to. Thou didst so deal with thy people as to make it evident that thou didst cherish no anger or displeasure against them.

Thou hast turned thyself … - Margin, "thine anger from waxing hot." Literally, Thou didst turn from the heat of thine anger. His indignation was withdrawn, and he was again at peace with them. It is this fact, drawn from the former history of the people, which constitutes the basis of the appeal which follows.

Verse 4

Turn us, O God of our salvation - The God from whom salvation must come, and on whom we are dependent for it. The prayer here is, "turn us;" turn us from our sins; bring us to repentance; make us willing to forsake every evil way; and enable us to do it. This is the proper spirit always in prayer. The first thing is not that he would take away his wrath, but that he would dispose us to forsake our sins, and to turn to himself; that we may be led to abandon that which has brought his displeasure upon us, and then that

he will cause his anger toward us to cease. We have no authority for asking God to turn away his judgments unless we are willing to forsake our sins; and in all cases we can hope for the divine interposition and mercy, when the judgments of God are upon us, only as we are willing to turn from our iniquities.

And cause thine anger toward us to cease - The word used here, and rendered "cause to cease" - פרר *pârar* - means properly to break; then, to violate; and then, to annul, or to bring to an end. The idea here is, that if they were turned from sin, the cause of his anger would be removed, and would cease of course. Compare Psalm 80:3.

Verse 5

Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? - Thine anger is so long continued that it seems as if it would never cease.

Wilt thou draw out thine anger - Wilt thou protract or prolong it? The idea is that of a determined purpose, in retaining his anger, as if his wrath would cease of necessity unless there were such a direct exercise of will.

To all generations - literally, "from generation to generation." That is, - so that not merely the generation which has sinned, and which has brought down these tokens of displeasure, shall suffer, but the next, and the next, and the next, forever. The plea is that the judgment might terminate, and not reach coming generations.

Verse 6

Wilt thou not revive us again - literally, "Wilt thou not turn, or return, cause us to live;" that is, and cause us to live. The expression is equivalent to "again" as in our translation. The Septuagint and Vulgate render it, "Returning, wilt thou not give us life?" The word rendered revive means to live; to cause to live; and the idea is that of recovering them from their condition as a state of death; that is, restoring them as if they were dead. The image is that of returning spring after the death of winter, or the young grass when the rain descends after a long drought, and when everything seemed to be dead. So of the people referred to in the psalm; everything among them was like such a winter, when there is neither leaf, nor flower, nor grass, nor fruit; or like such a drought, when desolation is seen everywhere; or like the grave, where the dead repose. The image of spring, after a long and dreary winter, is one also which will properly describe the condition of the church when the influences of the Spirit have been long

withheld, and when, under the visitations of grace, religion seems to live again among the people of God.

That thy people may rejoice in thee - In thy favor; in thy presence; in thee as their God.

(a) There is always joy in a revival of religion. Nothing is so much suited to make a people happy; nothing diffuses so much joy. Compare Acts 8:8.

(b) This is particularly joy in God. It is because he comes near; because he manifests his mercy; because he shows his power and his grace.

Verse 7

Shew us thy mercy, O Lord - That is, Manifest thy mercy in returning to us; in forgiving our sins; in taking from us the tokens of thy displeasure.

And grant us thy salvation - Salvation or deliverance from our present trouble and calamities.

Verse 8

I will hear what God the Lord will speak - I, the psalmist; I, representing the people as looking to God. The state of mind here is that of patient listening; of a willingness to hear God, whatever God should say; of confidence in him that what he would say would be favorable to his people - would be words of mercy and of peace. Whatever God should command, the speaker was willing to yield to it; whatever God should say, he would believe; whatever God should enjoin, he would do; whatever God should ask him to surrender, he would resign. There was no other resource but God, and there was entire confidence in him that whatever he should say, require, or do, would be right.

For he will speak peace unto his people - Whatever he shall say will tend to their peace, their blessedness, their prosperity. He loves his people, and there may be a confident assurance that all he will say will tend to promote their welfare.

And to his saints - His holy ones; his people.

But let them not turn again to folly - The Septuagint and the Vulgate render this, “To his saints and to those who turn the heart unto him.” Our common version, however, has expressed the sense of the Hebrew; and it contains very important truths and admonitions.

(a) The way which they had formerly pursued was folly. It was not mere sin, but there was in it the element of foolishness as well as wickedness. All sin may be contemplated in this twofold aspect: as wickedness, and as foolishness. Compare Psalm 14:1; Psalm 73:3.

(b) There was great danger that they would turn again to their former course; that they would forget alike the punishment which had come upon them; their own resolutions; and their promises made to God. Compare Psalm 78:10-11, Psalm 78:17-18, Psalm 78:31-32. Nothing is more common than for a people who have been afflicted with heavy judgments to forget all that they promised to do if those judgments should be withdrawn; or for an individual who has been raised up from a bed of sickness - from the borders of the grave - to forget the solemn resolutions which he formed on what seemed to be a dying bed - perhaps becoming more thoughtless and wicked than he was before, as if to make reprisals for the wrong done him by his Maker, or as if to recover the time that was lost by sickness.

(c) This passage, therefore, is a solemn admonition to all who have been afflicted, and who have been restored, that they return not to their former course of life. To this they should feel themselves exhorted

(1) by their obligations to their benefactor;

(2) by the remembrance of their own solemn vows made in a time of sincerity and honesty, and when they saw things as they really are; and

(3) by the assurance that if they do return to their sin and folly, heavier judgments will come upon them; that the patience of God will be exhausted; and that he will bear with them no longer.

Compare John 5:14, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

Verse 9

Surely his salvation - His help; his aid. The word here does not mean salvation in the restricted use of the term as applied to the future life, but it means deliverance of all kinds - rescue from trouble, danger, calamity.

Is nigh them that fear him - All who truly reverence him, and look to him in a proper manner. They may expect his aid; they may be sure that he will soon come to help them. This expresses the confident assurance of the author of the psalm that God would interpose in the troubles of the nation, and would deliver them.

That glory may dwell in our land -
(a) The glory or honor of having such a God to dwell among them; and

(b) the peace, the prosperity, the happiness, which will be the consequence - of his interposition.

The idea is, that this would be a permanent thing; that this honor or glory would then make the land its dwelling-place.

Verse 10

Mercy and truth are met together - That is, in the divine dealings referred to in the psalm. There has been a blending of mercy and truth in those dealings; or, both have been manifested; truth, in the divine statements, threatenings, and promises; and mercy, in forgiving sin, and in sparing the people. There is no necessary contradiction between truth and mercy; that is, the one does not necessarily conflict with the other, though the one seems to conflict with the other when punishment is threatened for crime, and yet mercy is shown to the offender - that is, where the punishment is not inflicted, and the offender is treated as if he had not sinned. In this respect, the great difficulty in all human governments has been to maintain both; to be true to the threatening of the law, and at the same time to pardon the guilty. Human governments have never been able to reconcile the two.

If punishment is inflicted up to the full measure of the threatening, there is no manifestation of mercy; if mercy is shown, there is a departure from justice, or a declaration that the threatenings of the law are not, in all cases, to be inflicted: that is, there is, to that extent, an abandonment of justice. Human governments have always felt the need, in their practical operations, of some device like an atonement, by which the two might be blended, and both secured. Such a method of reconciliation or of securing both objects - truth, in the fulfillment of the threat, and mercy toward the offender - has never been (and could not be) acted on in a human administration. It is only in the divine government that this has been accomplished, where a true and perfect regard has been paid to truth in the threatening, and to mercy toward the guilty by an atonement. It is true, indeed, that this passage does not refer to the atonement made by the Redeemer, but there can scarcely be found a better illustration of that work than occurs in the language used here.

Compare the notes at Romans 3:26. See also my work on the "atonement," chapters ii., iii.

Righteousness - In the maintenance of law, or the manifestation of justice. That is, in this case, God had shown his justice in bringing these calamities on the people for their sins. In the work of the Redeemer this was done by his being "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities;" by the fact that "the chastisement of our peace was upon him," and that "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:5-6. "And peace." Pardon; mercy; restoration to favor. In the case of the Hebrew people this was done by his removing the calamities which their sins had brought upon them, and by his returning favor. In the work of redemption, it was done by the pardon of sin, and by reconciliation to God.

Have kissed each other - As friends and lovers do; as they do who have been long separated; as they do who, after having been alienated and estranged, are made friends again. In like manner, there seemed to be an alienation - an estrangement - a state of hostility - between righteousness and mercy, between justice and pardon, but they have been now united as separated and alienated friends are, and have embraced each other as such friends do; that is, they blend together in beautiful harmony.

Verse 11

Truth shall spring out of the earth - As plants do - for this is the meaning of the word. The blessings of truth and righteousness would be like the grass, the shrubs, the flowers, which spring up from the ground - and like the, rain and the sunbeams which come from heaven. Truth would spring up everywhere, and abound in all lands, as plants, and shrubs, and grass spring up all over the earth. There is not an intended contrast between the two clauses of this verse, as if truth came from the earth, and righteousness from heaven; but the idea is that they would come in a manner that might be compared with the way in which God‘s other abundant blessings are bestowed, as springing, on the one hand, from the fertility of the earth, and on the other, from the rain, the dew, and the sunbeam.

And righteousness shall look down from heaven - Shall descend from heaven; or shall come from above - as if the rain, and the sun looked down from heaven, and saw the needs of man. The original word here rendered "look down" - שׁקף *shâqaph* - means to lay upon, or over; then, to project, lie over, look forward; then, to overhang; and the idea here is that it bent

over, or leaned forward to look at the necessities of than - as one does who is desirous of gazing at an object. There was an anxiety, so to speak, to come to the earth - to meet the human need. As the rain and the sunbeams seem anxious to bestow their blessings on man, so God seems anxious to bestow on man the blessings of salvation.

Verse 12

Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good - All that is truly good: all needful temporal blessings; all blessings connected with salvation.

And our land shall yield her increase - There shall be fruitful seasons, and the earth shall produce abundance. Compare the notes at Psalm 67:6.

Verse 13

Righteousness shall go before him - Shall anticipate his coming, and prepare his way. The idea seems to be, that in order to his appearing, there would be a proclamation of righteousness, and a preparation for his advent by the diffusion of righteousness among the people; in other words, the nation, in the prospect of his coming, would turn from sin, and would seek to be prepared for his appearing. Thus John proclaimed the coining of the Redeemer, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 3:2. So also "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Matthew 3:3.

And shall set us in the way of his steps - This might be rendered, "and set its steps for a way;" that is, the steps which would be taken by him would indicate the way in which his people should walk. Perhaps, however, the common interpretation best expresses the sense of the passage. According to that, the idea is, that the effect of his coming would be to dispose people to walk in the way of the steps which he took; to be his imitators and followers. The general thought is, that his coming would have the effect of turning the people to the paths of righteousness and truth. This is the designed effect of all the visitations of God to our world.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 86

Introduction

This psalm purports to be a psalm of David; and there is nothing in the psalm that is contrary to this supposition. Why it has its place among the psalms which are designated as the compositions of "the sons of Korah," and had not its place among those which are ascribed to David Psalm 170 we have no means of ascertaining. It is not said, however, that those were the only psalms of David, and there is no improbability in supposing that he may have composed others. It is not improperly named "a prayer," since it is made up mostly of petitions, though this is true of others which are called "psalms," and though it is true that this one has so much of praise in it that it might also (as it is in the margin) be designated a psalm. The occasion on which it was composed is unknown, but it has been commonly supposed that it was written in the time of the persecutions under Saul. DeWette regards it as a national song composed in a time of national trouble.

This psalm does not admit of any minute subdivision. It is made up of earnest prayers, with reasons why those prayers should be answered; and perhaps the leading practical suggestion which would properly follow from the psalm is, that it is proper for us, in our prayers, to urge reasons why they should be answered: the reasons why we pray at all. We cannot, indeed, suppose that we can suggest anything which would not occur to the divine mind, but in all our prayers there is some reason why we pray; there are reasons why we ask the particular things which are the burden of our supplications, and it cannot be improper, in order that our own minds at least may be suitably impressed, to mention those reasons when we come before God.

Verse 1

Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me - See the notes at Psalm 5:1.

For I am poor and needy - This is the reason here assigned why God should hear him. It is not a plea of merit. It is not that there was any claim on God in the fact that he was a poor and needy man - a sinner helpless and dependent, or that it would be any injustice if God should not hear, for a sinner has no claim to favor; but it is that this was a condition in which the aid of God was needed, and in which it was proper or appropriate for God to hear prayer, and to render help. We may always make our helplessness,

our weakness, our poverty, our need, a ground of appeal to God; not as a claim of justice, but as a case in which he will glorify himself by a gracious interposition. It is also to be remarked that it is a matter of unspeakable thankfulness that the "poor and needy" may call upon God; that they will be as welcome as any class of people; that there is no condition of poverty and want so low that we are debarred from the privilege of approaching One who has infinite resources, and who is as willing to help as he is able.

Verse 2

Preserve my soul - Preserve, or keep, my life; for so the word rendered soul means in this place, as it does commonly in the Scriptures.

For I am holy - Margin, "One whom thou favorest." The Hebrew word - חסיד *châsîyd* - means properly, benevolent, kind; then, good, merciful, gracious; and then pious, godly. Psalm 30:4; Psalm 31:23; Psalm 37:28. The ground of the plea here is, that he was a friend of God; and that it was proper on that account to look to him for protection. He does not say that he was holy in such a sense that he had a claim on that account to the favor of God, or that his personal holiness was a ground of salvation; but the idea is, that he had devoted himself to God, and that it was, therefore, proper to look to him for his protection in the time of danger. A child looks to a parent for protection, because he is a child; a citizen looks to the protection of the laws, because he is a citizen; and so the people of God may look to him for protection, because they are his people. In all this there is no plea of merit, but there is the recognition of what is proper in the case, and what may he expected and hoped for.

Save thy servant - Save him from threatening danger and from death.

That trusteth in thee - Because I trust or confide in thee. I go nowhere else for protection; I rely on no one else. I look to thee alone, and I do this with entire confidence. A man who does this has a right to look to God for protection, and to expect that God will interpose in his behalf.

Verse 3

Be merciful unto me, O Lord - It was mercy after all that he relied on, and not justice. It was not because he had any claim on the ground that he was "holy," but all that he had and hoped for was to be traced to the mercy of God.

For I cry unto thee daily - Margin, as in Hebrew, "All the day." The meaning is, that he did this constantly, or without intermission.

Verse 4

Rejoice the soul of thy servant - Cause me to rejoice; to wit, by thy gracious interposition, and by delivering me from danger and death.

For unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul - Compare the notes at Psalm 24:4. The idea is that of arousing himself, or exerting himself, as one does who makes strenuous efforts to obtain an object. He was not languid, or indifferent; he did not put forth merely weak and fitful efforts to find God, but he bent his whole powers to that end; he arouses himself thoroughly to seek the divine help. Languid and feeble efforts in seeking after God will be attended with no success. In so great a matter - when so much depends on the divine favor - when such great interests are at stake - the whole soul should be roused to one great and strenuous effort; not that we can obtain his favor by force or power, and not that any strength of ours will prevail of itself, but

(a) because nothing less will indicate the proper intensity of desire; and

(b) because such is his appointment in regard to the manner in which we are to seek his favor.

Compare Matthew 7:7-8; Luke 13:24; Luke 16:16.

Verse 5

For thou, Lord, art good … - This is another reason why God should hear his prayer; and it is a reason which may be properly urged at all times, and by all classes of persons. It is founded on the benevolence of God; on the fullness of his mercy to all that invoke his name. We should call in vain on a God who was not merciful and ready to forgive; but in the divine character there is the most ample foundation for such an appeal. In his benevolence; in his readiness to forgive; in the plenitude of his mercy, God is all that a penitent sinner could wish him to be. For if such a sinner should endeavor to describe what he would desire to find in God as a ground of appeal in his prayers, he could not express his feelings in language more full and free than God has himself employed about his own readiness to pardon and save. The language of the Bible on this subject would express, better than any language which he could himself employ, what in those circumstances he would wish to find God to be.

Verse 6

Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer … - See the notes at Psalm 5:1.

Verse 7

In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee - That is, I do it now; I have done it; I will do it. The language implies a habit, or a steady purpose of mind, that in all times of trouble he would make God his refuge. It was this fixed purpose - this regular habit - which was now the ground of his confidence. A man who always makes God his refuge, who has no other ground of reliance, may feel assured that God will interpose and save him.

For thou wilt answer me - This also implies a fixed and steady assurance of mind, applicable not only to this case, but to all similar cases. He had firm confidence in God at all times; an unwavering belief that God is a hearer of prayer. This is a just foundation of hope when we approach God. Compare James 1:6-7.

Verse 8

Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord - Among all those which are worshipped as gods there is no one that can hear and save. The psalmist, in respect to prayer, and to help to be obtained by prayer, compares his own condition with that of those who worshipped false gods. He had a God who could hear; they had none. A true child of God now in trouble may properly compare his condition in this respect with that of those who make no profession of religion; who do not profess to worship God, or to have a God. To him there is a throne of grace which is always accessible; to them there is none. There is One to whom he may always pray; they profess to have no one on whom they can call.

Neither are there any works like unto thy works - That is, as done by those "gods." There is nothing they have done which can be a ground of confidence that can be compared with what thou hast done. The allusion is to the power, the wisdom, and the skill evinced in the works of creation, and in the merciful interpositions of Providence. From these the psalmist derives a proof that God is able to save. There is no such argument to which the worshippers of false gods can appeal in the time of trouble.

Verse 9

All nations whom thou hast made shall come … - In this verse the psalmist expresses his belief that the conviction which he entertained about the ability of God to save - about his being the only true God - would yet pervade all the nations of the earth; that they all would yet be convinced that he was the true God, and would come and worship him alone. So clear to him seemed to be the evidence of the existence and perfections of God

that he did not doubt that all people would come yet to see it also, and to acknowledge him. Compare Isaiah 2:2-3; Isaiah 60:3-14; Psalm 2:8; Psalm 72:17.

And shall glorify thy name - Shall honor thee as the true God. They will renounce their idols; they will come and worship thee. This belief - this hope - is held out through the entire volume of revealed truth. It cheered and encouraged the hearts of the saints of the Old Testament and the New; and it may and should cheer and encourage our hearts. It is not less certain because it seems to be long delayed. To the view of man this is all that is certain in the future. No man can predict what will occur in regard to any of the existing political institutions on the earth - either the monarchies of the old world, or the republics of the new. No man can tell in reference to the arts; to the sciences; to social life; to manners; to the cities and towns which now exist on the earth, what they will be in the far distant future. Only one thing is certain in that future - that the kingdom of God will be set up, and that the Redeemer‘s throne will be established over all the earth; that the time is to come when “all nations shall come and worship before God, and shall glorify his name.”

Verse 10

For thou art great, and doest wondrous things - Things suited to excite wonder or admiration; things which lie beyond the power of any creature, and which could be performed by no one but a being of almighty power. A God who could do these things could also do that which the psalmist asked of him, for what God actually does proves that there is nothing within the limits of possibility which he cannot perform. The greatness and the power of God are reasons why we should appeal to him in our weakness, and in our times of trouble.

Thou art God alone - Thou only canst do what a God can do, or what belongs to God. In those things, therefore, which require the interposition of divine power our appeal must be to thee alone. So in the matter of salvation.

Verse 11

Teach me thy way, O Lord - That is, in the present emergency. Show me what thou wouldst have me to do that I may obtain thy favor, and thy gracious help.

I will walk in thy truth - I will live and act in accordance with what thou dost declare to be true. Whatever that may be, I will pursue it, having no will of my own.

Unite my heart to fear thy name - That is, to worship, obey, and honor thee.

(a) The end which he desired to secure was that he might truly fear God, or properly reverence and honor him;

(b) the means which he saw to be necessary for this was that his "heart" might be "united" in this one great object; that is, that his heart might be single in its views and purposes; that there might be no distracting purposes; that one great aim might be always before him.

The word rendered "unite" - יחד *yāchad* - occurs as a verb only in three places. In Genesis 49:6, it is rendered united: "Unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united." In Isaiah 14:20, it is translated joined: "Thou shalt not be joined with them." The adverb - יחד *yachad* occurs often, and is rendered together, Genesis 13:6; Genesis 22:6, Genesis 22:8, Genesis 22:19; Genesis 36:7; *et saepe*. The idea is that of union, or conjunction; of being together; of constituting one; and this is accomplished in the heart when there is one great ruling object before the mind which nothing is allowed to interfere with. It may be added, that there is no more appropriate prayer which a man can offer than that his heart may have such a unity of purpose, and that nothing may be allowed to interfere with that one supreme purpose.

Verse 12

I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart - This is but carrying out the idea in the previous verse. He would give his whole heart to God. He would allow nothing to divide or distract his affections. He would withhold nothing from God.

And I will glorify thy name for evermore - Not merely in the present emergency; but I will do it ever onward - even to eternity. The meaning is, that he would in all cases, and at all times - in this world and in the world to come - honor God. He would acknowledge no God but him, and he would honor him as God.

Verse 13

For great is thy mercy toward me - In respect to me; or, Thou hast manifested great mercy to me; to wit, in past times. He makes use of this now as an argument or reason why God should interpose again.

(a) He had shown on former occasions that he had power to save;

(b) the fact that he had thus treated him as his friend was a reason why he should now befriend him.

And thou hast delivered my soul - My life. The meaning is, that he had kept him alive in times of imminent danger. At the same time David could say, as every child of God can say, that God had delivered his soul in the strict and proper sense of the term - from sin, and death, and hell itself.

From the lowest hell - Margin, grave; Hebrew, שׁאול *she'ôl* Greek, ᾅδης *Hadēs* See the word explained in the notes at Isaiah 14:9. Compare the notes at Job 10:21-22. The word rendered "lowest" means simply under, or beneath: the grave or hades beneath. The idea of lowest, or the superlative degree, is not necessarily implied in the word. The idea of the grave as deep, or as under us, however, is implied, and the psalmist means to say that he had been saved from that deep dwelling-place - from the abode of departed spirits, to which the dead descend under ground. The meaning is, that he had been kept alive; but the greatness of the mercy is designed to be set forth by having before the mind a vivid idea of the darkness, the horror, and the gloom of the world to which the dead descend, and where they dwell.

Verse 14

O God, the proud are risen against me - People who are self-confident, ambitious, haughty; who do not regard the welfare or the rights of others; who are disposed to trample down all others in order that they may accomplish their own purposes; these are the people who have opposed me and sought my life. This would apply either to the time of Saul or of Absalom. In both these cases there were men who would correspond to this description.

And the assemblies of violent men - Margin," terrible." The Septuagint and the Vulgate render this, "the synagogue of the wicked." The word rendered violent means properly terrible, inspiring terror; then, violent, fierce, lawless, tyrants. The idea here is that they pursued their object by violence and not by right; they did it in a fierce and savage manner, or in such a way as to inspire terror. The word assembly here means merely that they were banded together; what was done was the result of a conspiracy or combination.

Have sought after my soul - After my life.

And have not set thee before them - They do not fear thee; they do not act as if in thy presence; they have no regard for thee, for thy law, for thy favor, for thy threatenings.

Verse 15

But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion … - See the notes at Psalm 86:5. The words rendered "long-suffering" mean that there was and would be delay in his anger; that it was not soon excited; that he did not act from passion or sudden resentment; that he endured the conduct of sinners long without rising up to punish them; that he was not quick to take vengeance, but bore with them patiently. On this account the psalmist, though conscious that he was a sinner, hoped and pleaded that God would save him.

Plenteous in … truth - That is, in faithfulness. When thou hast made a promise, thou wilt faithfully keep it.

Verse 16

O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me - Look upon me; as if God were now turned away, and were unmindful of his danger, his needs, and his pleading. The expression is equivalent to those in which he prays that God would incline his ear to him. See Psalm 86:1, Psalm 86:6, and the notes at Psalm 5:1.

Give thy strength unto thy servant - Give such strength as proceeds from thee, and such as will accomplish what thou alone canst effect. Enable me to act as if clothed with divine power. The ground of the plea here is, that he was the "servant" of God, and he might, therefore, hope for God's interposition.

And save the son of thine handmaid - This is, as far as I know, the only separate allusion which David ever makes to his mother individually, unless the passage in Psalm 35:14 - "I bowed down heavily as one that mourneth for his mother" - be supposed to refer to his own mother. But we have elsewhere no such mention of his mother as can give us any idea of her character, and indeed it is not easy to determine who she was. The language here, however, would seem to imply that she was a pious woman, for the words "thy handmaid," as employed in the Scriptures, would most naturally suggest that idea. If so, then the ground of the plea here is that his mother was a child of God; that she had lived for his service; and that she had trained up her children for him. David now prays that, as he had been devoted to God by her, and had thus been trained up, God would remember

all this, and would interfere in his behalf. Can it be wrong to urge before God, as a reason for his interposition, that we have been devoted to him by parental faithfulness and prayer; that we have been consecrated to him by baptism; that we have been trained up for his service; that in reference to us high hopes were cherished that we might carry out the purposes of pious parents, and live to accomplish what was so dear to their hearts? He who has had a pious mother has entered on life under great advantages; he has been placed under solemn responsibilites; he is permitted to hope that a mother‘s prayers will not be forgotten, but that her example, her teachings, and her piety will shed a hallowed influence on all the paths of life until he joins her in heaven.

Verse 17

Shew me a token for good … - Hebrew, “Make me a sign for good;” that is, Do that for me in my trouble which will be an evidence that thou dost favor me, and wilt save me. Let there be such a manifest interposition in my behalf that others may see it, and may be convinced that thou art God, and that thou art the Protector and Friend of those who put their trust in thee. We need not suppose that the psalmist refers here to a miracle in his behalf. Any interposition which would save him from the hands of his enemies - which would defeat their purposes - which would rescue him when there seemed to be no help, would be such an evidence that they could not doubt that he was the friend of God. Thus they would be made “ashamed” of their purposes; that is, they would be disappointed and confounded; and there would be furnished a new proof that God was the protector of all who put their trust in him.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 87

Introduction

This psalm, like some others, is entitled "a psalm or song;" that is, it so far combined the properties of both a "psalm" and a "song" that it might be called by either name. See the notes at the title to Psalm 65:1-13. The phrase "for the sons of Korah" may mean, as in the margin, "of the sons of Korah." See the notes at the title to Psalm 42:1-11.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed is unknown. The design of the psalm is obvious. It is to exalt Zion as a place to dwell in, and to state the privileges or advantages of having been born there; the honor of such a birth, and the benefit which would he connected with it, from having been brought early under the influence of the true religion, and from having been trained up amidst its institutions. The practical truth which is suggested by the psalm is the honor and benefit of having been born in a land where the true religion prevails; of having been born in connection with the church; of having been early devoted to God; and of having had the benefits of a religious training. The foundation of what is said in the psalm is the honor which we naturally associate with the idea of birth; birth as connected with a family of distinguished worth, wealth, or rank; birth as connected with a particular country, city, or town.

Verse 1

His foundation - This is an abrupt commencement of the psalm. The adjective "his" has been supposed by some to refer to the psalm itself, and this expression has been considered to be a part of the title to the psalm, meaning that the foundation of the psalm is the holy mountain where the praises of God were celebrated; that is Zion. This, however, is a forced and unnatural interpretation. The most obvious explanation is to refer it to God, and the meaning is, that his "foundation," or that which he had founded and established, to wit, the place for his worship, or for the institutions of religion, was in the holy mountains of Jerusalem. It would seem that the psalmist was contemplating the city - looking on its walls, and its palaces, and especially on the place which had been reared for the worship of God, and that he breaks out in this abrupt manner, by saying that this was what God had founded; that here he had established his home; that here was the place where he was worshipped, and where he dwelt; that this was the place

which he loved more than all the other places where the descendants of Jacob dwelt.

Is in the holy mountains - The mountains of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is surrounded by hills, and within the city itself there were the hills of Zion, Moriah, Acra, and Bezethah; See the notes at Matthew 2:1. These sacred hills God had selected as the place of his solemn worship - of his own abode. Compare the notes at Psalm 48:1-2.

Verse 2

The Lord loveth the gates of Zion - Compare Psalm 78:68. The gates of a city were the places of concourse; where business was transacted; where courts were held. The particular allusion here seems to be to the thronging multitudes pressing into the city for public worship - the numbers that gathered together at the great feasts and festivals of the nation; and the meaning is, that he looked with more pleasure on such multitudes as they thronged the gates, pressing in that they might worship him, than on any other scene in the land.

More than all the dwellings of Jacob - Than any of the places where the descendants of Jacob, or where his people dwell. Much as he might be pleased with their quiet abodes, with their peace, prosperity, and order, and with the fact that his worship was daily celebrated in those happy families, yet he had superior pleasure in the multitudes that crowded the ways to the place where they would publicly acknowledge him as their God.

Verse 3

Glorious things are spoketh of thee, O city of God - Jerusalem, called the "city of God" as being the place of his unique home on earth. The word rendered "are spoken" may mean either "have been spoken," or "are to be spoken;" that is, either, such things have been said, or they may be said. They have been placed on record; or, they may now be put on record concerning thee. Probably the former is the true meaning; and the language would embrace such points as these:

(1) Those things which had been spoken as to its beauty of situation; its magnificence and splendor. Compare Psalm 48:2-3, notes; Psalm 48:12-13, notes.

(2) such things as had been spoken or recorded in regard to its future prosperity, its triumphs, and its influence in the world; the promises which

had been made in reference to the prosperity of Zion, and the spread of the true religion from that point as a center.

Compare the notes at Isaiah 2:3. The Old Testament abounds with promises concerning the future glory of Zion - the "glorious things" that are spoken respecting the final triumph of religion in the world. Of this the statement here is to be mainly understood, where Zion is referred to as the seat of the true religion, and as therefore the representative of the true church on earth. It is that of which the real record has been made, and not merely of Jerusalem or Zion as a city. That might pass away; the church, of which that was the representative, will endure forever. Compare Isaiah 54:1-3; 60; Revelation 21:2-4.

Verse 4

I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon … - The word Rahab here refers to Egypt. See Isaiah 51:9. It is also applied to Egypt in Psalm 89:10. The reason why the name was given to Egypt is not certainly known. The Hebrew word properly means fierceness, insolence, pride; and it may have been given to Egypt by the Hebrews on account of its haughtiness, pride, and insolence. It has been supposed by some (Jablonski, Opusc. i. 228) that the name is of Egyptian origin, but this has not been clearly made out. (Gesenius, Lexicon) Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia, are mentioned here as among the best known nations and cities of the world; as places where it would commonly be regarded as an honor to have been born. The meaning is, "I will refer to these as places well-known and distinguished; I will refer to the honor of having been born there; but great as is such an honor, the honor of having been born in Zion is far above that; it conveys the idea of a much higher distinction; it should be more sacredly cherished as among those things on which men value themselves." The word "I" here seems to have reference to the psalmist, and not to God. The psalmist is mentioning what to him would seem to have a claim to the highest honor.

Philistia - The western portion of Palestine, from which the whole country was afterward named. See the notes at Psalm 60:8; compare Psalm 108:9; Isaiah 14:29, Isaiah 14:31. "And Tyre." See Psalm 45:12, note; Isaiah 23:1, note.

With Ethiopia - Hebrew, Cush. The reference here is probably to the southern portion of Arabia. See Psalm 68:31, note; Isaiah 18:1, note.

This man was born there - That is, It would be said of individuals that they were born in one of those places, and it would be regarded as an honor thus to have been born. People would pride themselves on the fact that they were born there, and the world would hold them in esteem on that account. This refers to a very natural, and a very common feeling among people. We can, of course, claim no credit, and deserve no real honor, on account of the place where we happen to have been born; but the fact that one has been born in a place distinguished for its advantages and its fame, - in a place where liberty, religion, and the arts have flourishcd - in a place renowned for its public spirit, and for producing illustrious people, - may be properly accounted as an occasion for gratitude, and as a stimulus to high and honorable efforts, and may thus be made an important auxiliary to virtue, patriotism, and piety.

Verse 5

And of Zion it shall be said - In respect to Zion; or, in honor of Zion. People shall regard it as a privilege to have been born in Zion. They shall speak of such a birth as a marked and honored distinction. "This and that man," etc. Designating them, or pointing them out, as having been born there. Those in a crowd, those passing along, those brought in any way to notice, will be spoken of in reference to their birth in Zion, and will be treated with a degree of favor and esteem, arising from their birth there corresponding to what those receive who are born in Egypt, Babylon, or Tyre. They will not be shunned and avoided on account of their birth as if it were ignoble, but they will be honored for it.

And the Highest himself shall establish her - Will establish Zion, or will give it prosperity and perpetuity. This, too, is what would be "said" respecting Zion by such as should speak of those born there; and it indicates

(a) their conviction that it would be permanent; and

(b) their desire that it might be: that a place so honored and distinguished might be perpetuated.

The practical truths suggested by this verse, as applied to the church, are

(1) that it is a privilege to have been born in connection with the Christian church; to have had a Christian parentage, and to have been early dedicated to God;

(2) that the time will come when this will be a ground of commendation, or when it will be spoken of as an honor, or when it will be regarded as presumptive evidence of a claim to esteem in the eyes of the world, that one was born in the church, was early devoted to God, and was trained up under the influences of religion;

(3) that the character of those who are thus born, and who are thus trained up, will constitute, in the view of the world, evidence of the stability of the church, and proof that God regards it with favor. It has not always been deemed an honor, or a passport to favor, to have been born in the church, but the time will come when this will be universally so; and, even now, no child can fully appreciate the honor and the real advantage of having been born in a family where God is served, and of having been early consecrated to God by parental purpose, by prayer, and by Christian baptism.

Verse 6

The Lord shall count - That is, God himself will honor those who are so born. In the previous verse, the effect of such a birth was described as securing honor from human beings. Here a higher honor is adverted to - that which will be derived from God himself.

When he writeth up the people … - The word rendered "people" here is in the plural number. At the time of making an enrollment of the people, or taking an account or a census of the nations, he would mark, or cause to be marked, with special honor the man that had his birth in Zion. Out of such would his own people be taken, and those thus born would have an honor which no one else would receive from him. He would not mark with any special approbation those who had been born in Egypt, in Babylon, or in Tyre, but he would mark with special interest those who had been born in Zion. The practical truth suggested here is, that God will in the main take his people from among those who have been born in the church. As a matter of fact, while it is true that others are converted and added to the church, the great mass of church-members consist of those who have been born of

Christian parents; who have been early dedicated to God; and who have been trained up for his service. See the notes at Isaiah 44:3-5.

Verse 7

As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there - literally, "The singers as the players on instruments." The image is that of a musical procession, where the singers go before, followed by those who play on various instruments of music. The idea seems to be that when the number of the true friends of God shall be made up, or shall all be enrolled, there will be a triumphal procession; or, they are seen by the psalmist, moving before God as in a triumphal procession. Compare the notes at Isaiah 35:10. Perhaps the reference is to heaven - the true Zion; to the assembling of all who shall have been born in Zion, and who shall have become citizens of the true Zion, the Jerusalem above.

All my springs are in thee - The word rendered springs means properly a place of fountains (see the notes at Psalm 84:6), and also a fountain, Genesis 7:11; Genesis 8:2. It thus becomes an emblem of happiness; of delight; of pleasure; and the ideal here is that the highest happiness of the psalmist was found in what is here referred to by the word "thee." That word may refer either to God or to Zion; but as the subject of the psalm is Zion, it is most natural to suppose that the reference is to that. Thus it accords with the sentiment so often found in the Psalms, where the writer expresses his love for Zion; his pleasure in its solemnities; his desire to abide there as his permanent home. Compare Psalm 23:6; Psalm 84:2-4, Psalm 84:10. The idea has been beautifully expressed by Dr. Dwight, in his version of Psalm 137:6:

"I love thy church, O God;
Her walls before thee stand,
Dear as the apple of thine eye,

And graven on thy hand.

"If e'er my heart forget

Her welfare or her woe,

Let every joy this heart forsake,

And every grief o‘erflow.

“Beyond my highest joy

I prize her heavenly ways.

Her sweet communion, solemn vows,

Her hymns of love and praise.”

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PSALM 88

Introduction

This psalm is altogether of a mournful and desponding character. The author is a sufferer; he is expecting to die; he fears to die; he longs to live; his mind is overwhelmed with gloom which does not seem to be irradiated by one ray of hope or consolation. It is, in this respect, unlike most of the psalms which relate to sickness, to sorrow, to suffering, for in those psalms generally there springs up, in answer to prayer, a gleam of hope - some cheerful view - some sustaining prospect; so that, though a psalm begins in despondency and gloom, it ends with joy and triumph. Compare, among others, Psalm 6:9-10; Psalm 7:17; Psalm 13:6; Psalm 42:8, Psalm 42:11; Psalm 56:11-13; Psalm 59:16; Psalm 69:34, Psalm 69:36. But in this psalm there is no relief; there is no comfort. As the Book of Psalms was designed to be useful in all ages, and to all classes of people, and as such a state of mind as that described in this psalm might occur again and often - it was proper that such a condition of utter despondency, even in a good man, should be described, in order that others might see that such feelings are not necessarily inconsistent with true religion, and do not prove that even such a sufferer is not a child of God. It is probable that this psalm was designed to illustrate what may occur when disease is such as to produce deep mental darkness and sorrow. And the Book of Psalms would have been incomplete for the use of the church, if there had not been at least one such psalm in the collection.

The psalm is said, in the title, to be "A Psalm or Song for (margin, of) the sons of Korah" - combining, in some way unknown to us, as several of the other psalms do, the properties of both a psalm and a song. The phrase, "for the sons of Korah," means here, probably, that it was composed for their use, and not by them, unless "Heman the Ezrahite" was one of their number. On the phrase, "To the chief Musician," see the notes at the title to Psalm 4:1-8. The words, "upon Mahalath Leannoth," are of very uncertain signification. They are rendered by the Septuagint and the Vulgate "for Maeleth, to answer;" by Luther, "to sing, of the weakness of the miserable;" by Prof. Alexander, "concerning afflictive sickness." The word "Mahalath" seems here to be a form of מחלה *machăleh* which means properly, "sickness, disease." It is rendered, with a slight variation in the pointing, "disease" in 2 Chronicles 21:15; Exodus 15:26; "infirmity," in Proverbs 18:14; and

"sickness" in Exodus 23:25; 1 Kings 8:37; 2 Chronicles 6:28. It does not occur elsewhere, and would be properly rendered here, therefore, "disease, sickness, or infirmity." The Hebrew which is rendered "Leannoth," לענית *leʿanoyth* is made up of a preposition (ל *l*) and a verb. The verb - ענה *ʿânâh* - means:

(1) to chant or sing;

(2) to lift up the voice in any way - to begin to speak;

(3) to answer;

(4) to mean to say, to imply.

The verb also has another class of significations;

(a) to bestow labor upon,

(b) to suffer, to be afflicted, and might here refer to such affliction or trouble.

According to the former signification, which is probably the true one here, the allusion would be to something which was said or sung in respect to the sickness referred to; as, for example, a mournful melody composed for the occasion; and the purpose would be to express the feelings experienced in sickness. According to the other signification it would refer to affliction, and would be little more than a repetition of the idea implied in the word Mahalath. It seems to me, therefore, that there is a reference in the word "Leannoth" to something which was said or sung on that occasion; or to something which might be properly said or sung in reference to sickness. It is difficult to translate the phrase, but it might be somewhat literally rendered, "concerning sickness - to be said or sung;" that is, in reference to it. The word Maschil (see the notes at the title to Psalm 32:1-11) conveys the idea that it is a didactic or instructive psalm - suggesting appropriate thoughts for such a season. The psalm is ascribed to "Heman the Ezrahite." The name Heman occurs in 1 Kings 4:31; 1 Chronicles 2:6; 1 Chronicles 6:33; 1 Chronicles 15:17, 1 Chronicles 15:19; 1 Chronicles 16:42; 1 Chronicles 25:1, 1 Chronicles 25:4-6; 2 Chronicles 5:12; 2 Chronicles 29:14; 2 Chronicles 35:15 - usually in connection with Ethan, as among those whom David placed over the music in the services of the sanctuary.

Nothing is known of the occasion on which the psalm was composed, except, as is probably indicated in the title, that it was in a time of sickness; and from the psalm itself we find that it was when the mind was enveloped in impenetrable darkness, with no comfort.

The psalm consists of two parts:

I. A description of the sick man‘s suffering, Psalm 88:1-9. His soul was full of troubles, and he drew near to the grave, Psalm 88:3; he was, as it were, already dead, and like those laid in the deep grave, whom God had forgotten, Psalm 88:4-6; the wrath of God lay heavily on him, and all his waves went over him, Psalm 88:7; God had put away all his friends from him, and had left him to suffer alone, Psalm 88:8; his eye mourned by reason of his affliction, and he cried daily to God, Psalm 88:9.

II. His prayer for mercy and deliverance, Psalm 88:10-18. The reasons for the earnestness of the prayer, or the grounds of petition are,

(a) that the dead could not praise God, or see the wonders of his hand, Psalm 88:10-12;

(b) that the faithfulness and loving-kindness of God could not be shown in the grave, Psalm 88:11;

(c) that his troubles were deep and overwhelming, for God had cast off his soul, and had hid his face from him; he had been long afflicted; he was distracted with the terrors of God; the fierce wrath of God went over him; lover and friend and acquaintance had been put far from him, Psalm 88:13-18.

Verse 1

O Lord God of my salvation - On whom I depend for salvation; who alone canst save me. Luther renders this, “O God, my Saviour.”

I have cried day and night before thee - literally, “By day I cried; by night before thee;” that is, my prayer is constantly before thee. The meaning is, that there was no intermission to his prayers; he prayed all the while. This does not refer to the general habit of his life, but to the time of his sickness. He had prayed most earnestly and constantly that he might be delivered from sickness and from the dangers of death. He had, as yet, obtained no answer, and he now pours out, and records, a more earnest petition to God.

Verse 2

Let my prayer come before thee - As if there were something which hindered it, or which had obstructed the way to the throne of grace; as if God repelled it from him, and turned away his ear, and would not hear.

Incline thine ear unto my cry - See the notes at Psalm 5:1.

Verse 3

For my soul is full of troubles - I am full of trouble. The word rendered as "full" means properly to satiate as with food; that is, when as much had been taken as could be. So he says here, that this trouble was as great as he could bear; he could sustain no more. He had reached the utmost point of endurance; he had no power to bear anymore.

And my life draweth nigh unto the grave - Hebrew, to Sheol. Compare the notes at Isaiah 14:9; notes at Job 10:21-22. It may mean here either the grave, or the abode of the dead. He was about to die. Unless he found relief he must go down to the abodes of the dead. The Hebrew word rendered life is in the plural number, as in Genesis 2:7; Genesis 3:14, Genesis 3:17; Genesis 6:17; Genesis 7:15; et al. Why the plural was used as applicable to life cannot now be known with certainty. It may have been to accord with the fact that man has two kinds of life; the animal life - or life in common with the inferior creation; and intellectual, or higher life - the life of the soul. Compare the notes at 1 Thessalonians 5:23. The meaning here is, that he was about to die; or that his life or lives approached that state when the grave closes over us; the extinction of the mere animal life; and the separation of the soul - the immortal part - from the body.

Verse 4

I am counted with them that go down into the pit - I am so near to death that I may be reckoned already as among the dead. It is so manifest to others that I must die - that my disease is mortal - that they already speak of me as dead. The word "pit" here means the grave - the same as Sheol in the previous verse. It means properly

(1) a pit,

(2) a cistern, Genesis 37:20,

(3) a prison or dungeon, Isaiah 24:22,

(4) the grave, Psalm 28:1; Psalm 30:4; Isaiah 38:18.

I am as a man that hath no strength - Who has no power to resist disease, no vigor of constitution remaining; who must die.

Verse 5

Free among the dead - Luther renders this, "I lie forgotten among the dead." DeWette renders it, "Pertaining to the dead - (den Todten angehorend) - stricken down, like the slain, I lie in the grave," and explains it as meaning, "I am as good as dead." The word rendered "free" - חפשי *chophshîy* - means properly, according to Gesenius (Lexicon),

(1) prostrate, weak, feeble;

(2) free, as opposed to a slave or a captive;

(3) free from public taxes or burdens.

The word is translated "free" in Exodus 21:2, Exodus 21:5, Exodus 21:26-27; Deuteronomy 15:12-13, Deuteronomy 15:18; 1 Samuel 17:25; Job 3:19; Job 39:5; Isaiah 58:6; Jeremiah 34:9-11, Jeremiah 34:14; and at liberty in Jeremiah 34:16. It occurs nowhere else except in this verse. In all these places (except in 1 Samuel 17:25, where it refers to a house or family made free, and Job 39:5, where it refers to the freedom of the wild ass), it denotes the freedom of one who had been a servant or slave. In Job 3:19, it has reference to the grave, and to the fact that the grave delivers a slave or servant from obligation to his master: "And the servant is free from his master." This is the idea, I apprehend, here. It is not, as DeWette supposes, that he was weak and feeble, as the spirits of the departed are represented to be (compare the notes at Isaiah 14:9-11), but that the dead are made free from the burdens, the toils, the calamities, the servitudes of life; that they are like those who are emancipated from bondage (compare Job 7:1-2; Job 14:6); that death comes to discharge them, or to set them at liberty. So the psalmist applies the expression here to himself, as if he had already reached that point; as if it were so certain that he must die that he could speak of it as if it had occurred; as if he were actually in the condition of the dead. The idea is that he was to all appearance near the grave, and that there was no hope of his recovery. It is not here, however, the idea of release or emancipation which was mainly before his mind, or any idea of consolation as from that, but it is the idea of death - of hopeless disease that must end in death. This he expresses in the usual language; but it is evident that he did not admit any comfort into his mind from the idea of freedom in the grave.

Like the slain that lie in the grave - When slain in battle. They are free from the perils and the toils of life; they are emancipated from its cares and

dangers. Death is freedom; and it is possible to derive solace from that idea of death, as Job did Job 3:19; but the psalmist here, as remarked above, did not so admit that idea into his mind as to be comforted by it.

Whom thou rememberest no more - As if they were forgotten by thee; as if they were no longer the object of thy care. They are suffered to lie and waste away, with no care on thy part to restore them to life, or to preserve them from offensiveness and decay. So the great, the beautiful, and the good lie neglected in the grave.

And they are cut off from thy hand - Margin, "by." The Hebrew is literally "from thy hand," but still the idea is that it was by the agency of God. They had been cut down, and were forgotten - as if God regarded them no more. So we shall all moulder in the grave - in that deep, dark, cold, silent, repulsive abode, as if even God had forgotten us.

Verse 6

Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit - That is, I am as if I were thus laid; the deep grave seems now to lie so certainly before me, that it may be spoken of as if it were already my abode. The words rendered "lowest pit" mean literally the pit under, or beneath. The reference is to the sepulchre, as in Psalm 88:4.

In darkness - The dark grave; the realms of the dead. See the notes at Job 10:21-22.

In the deeps - The caverns; the deep places of the earth or the sea. All these expressions are designed to convey the idea that he was near the grave; that there was no hope for him; that he must die. Perhaps also there is connected with this the idea of trouble, of anguish, of sorrow; of that mental darkness of which the grave was an image, and into which he was plunged by the prospect of death. The whole scene was a sad one, and he was overwhelmed with grief, and saw only the prospect of continued sorrow and gloom. Even a good man may be made afraid - may have his mind made sad and sorrowful - by the prospect of dying. See Isaiah 38. Death is naturally gloomy; and when the light of religion does not shine upon the soul, and its comforts do not fill the heart, it is but natural that the mind should be full of gloom.

Verse 7

Thy wrath lieth hard upon me - Presses me down; burdens me. The meaning is, that that which was the proper and usual expression of wrath or displeasure - to wit, bodily and mental suffering - pressed hard on him. and

crushed him to the earth. These bodily sufferings he interpreted, in the sad and gloomy state of mind in which he was, as evidences of the divine displeasure against himself.

And thou hast afflicted me - Thou hast oppressed me, or broken me down.

With all thy waves - literally, "thy breakers;" that is, with expressions of wrath like the waves of the sea, which foam and break on the shore. Nothing could be a more striking image of wrath. Those "breakers" seem to be so furious and angry, they rush along with so much impetuosity, they are so mighty, they dash with such fury on the shore, that it seems as if nothing could stand before them. Yet they find a barrier such as we should little expect. The low and humble beach made of shifting sand, where there seems to be no stability, is an effectual barrier against all their rage; as the humble piety of the child of God, apparently without strength to resist calamity, bears all the beatings of affliction, and maintains its place as the heavy waves of sorrow roll upon it. On the meaning of the word used here, and on the idea expressed, see the notes at Psalm 42:7.

Verse 8

Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me - The same ground of complaint, or expression of the depth of affliction, occurs elsewhere, Psalm 31:11; Psalm 38:11; Psalm 69:8. See also Job 19:13-17.

Thou hast made me an abomination unto them - As something which they would avoid, or from which they would revolt and turn away - as we turn away from the body of a dead man, or from an offensive object. The word means properly an object to be detested or abominated, as things unclean, Genesis 43:32; or as idolatry, 1 Kings 14:24; 2 Kings 16:3; 2 Kings 23:13.

I am shut up - As in prison; to wit, by disease, as when one is confined to his house.

And I cannot come forth - I cannot leave my couch, my room, my house. Compare Job 12:14.

Verse 9

Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction - I weep; my eye pours out tears. Literally, My eye pines away, or decays. Compare Job 16:20, note; Isaiah 38:3, note; Psalm 6:6, note.

Lord, I have called daily upon thee - That is, I have prayed earnestly and long, but I have received no answer.

I have stretched out my hands unto thee - I have spread out my hands in the attitude of prayer. The idea is that of earnest supplication.

Verse 10

Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? - The wonders - or the things suited to excite admiration - which the living behold. Shall the dead see those things which here tend to excite reverence for thee, and which lead people to worship thee? The idea is that the dead will be cut off from all the privileges which attend the living on earth; or, that those in the grave cannot contemplate the character and the greatness of God. He urges this as a reason why he should be rescued. The sentiment here is substantially the same as in Psalm 6:5. See the notes at that passage. Compare Isaiah 38:18.

Shall the dead arise and praise thee? - The original word, here rendered "the dead," is Rephaim - רפאים *rephâ'iym* On its meaning, see the notes at Isaiah 14:9. It means, properly, relaxed, languid, feeble, weak; and is then applied to the dead - the shades - the Manes - dwelling in the under-world in Sheol, or Hades, and supposed to be as shades or shadows, weak and feeble. The question here is not whether they would rise to live again, or appear in this world, but whether in Sheol they would rise up from their resting places, and praise God as men in vigor and in health can on the earth. The question has no reference to the future resurrection. It relates to the supposed dark, dismal, gloomy, inactive state of the dead.

Verse 11

Shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave? - Thy goodness; thy mercy. Shall anyone make it known there? shall it there be celebrated?

Or thy faithfulness in destruction? - In the place where destruction seems to reign; where human hopes perish; where the body moulders back to dust. Shall anyone there dwell on the fidelity - the truthfulness - of God, in such a way as to honor him? It is implied here that, according to the views then entertained of the state of the dead, those things would not occur. According to what is now made known to us of the unseen world it is true that the mercy of God will not be made known to the dead; that the Gospel will not be preached to them; that no messenger from God will convey to them the offers of salvation. Compare Luke 16:28-31.

Verse 12

Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? - In the dark world; in "the land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself, and where the light is as darkness." Job 10:21-22. "And thy

righteousness." The justice of thy character; or, the ways in which thou dost maintain and manifest thy righteous character.

In the land of forgetfulness - Of oblivion; where the memory has decayed, and where the remembrance of former things is blotted out. This is a part of the general description, illustrating the ideas then entertained of the state of the dead; that they would be weak and feeble; that they could see nothing; that even the memory would fail, and the recollection of former things pass from the mind. All these are images of the grave as it appears to man when he has not the clear and full light of revelation; and the grave is all this - a dark and cheerless abode - all abode of fearfulness and gloom - when the light of the great truths of the Gospel is not suffered to fall upon it. That the psalmist dreaded this is clear, for he had not yet the full light of revealed truth in regard to the grave, and it seemed to him to be a gloomy abode. That people without the Gospel ought to dread it, is clear, for when the grave is not illuminated with Christian truth and hope, it is a place from which man by nature shrinks back, and it is not wonderful that a wicked man dreads to die.

Verse 13

But unto thee have I cried, O Lord - I have earnestly prayed; I have sought thy gracious interposition.

And in the morning - That is, each morning; every day. My first business in the morning shall be prayer.

Shall my prayer prevent thee - Anticipate thee; go before thee: that is, it shall be early; so to speak even before thou dost awake to the employments of the day. The language is that which would be applicable to a case where one made an appeal to another for aid before he had arisen from his bed, or who came to him even while he was asleep - and who thus, with an earnest petition, anticipated his rising. Compare the notes at Job 3:12; compare Psalm 21:3; Psalm 59:10; Psalm 79:8; Psalm 119:148; Matthew 17:25; 1 Thessalonians 4:15.

Verse 14

Lord, why castest thou off my soul? - Why dost thou forsake or abandon me? Why is it that thou dost not interpose, since thou hast all power, and since thou art a God of mercy? Why dost thou not deliver me from my troubles? How often are good people constrained to ask this question! How often does this language express exactly what is passing in their minds! How difficult, too, it is to answer the question, and to see why

that God who has all power, and who is infinitely benevolent, does not interpose to deliver his people in affliction! The answer to this question cannot be fully given in this world; there will be an answer furnished doubtless in the future life.

Why hidest thou thy face from me? - Why dost thou not lift up the light of thy countenance upon me, and show me thy favor? God seemed to turn away from him. He seemed unwilling even to look upon the sufferer. He permitted him to bear his sorrows, unpitied and alone.

Verse 15

I am afflicted and ready to die - I am so afflicted - so crushed with sorrow and trouble - that my strength is nearly gone, and I can endure it but a little longer.

From my youth up - That is, for a long time; so long, that the remembrance of it seems to go back to my very childhood. My whole life has been a life of trouble and sorrow, and I have not strength to bear it longer. It may have been literally true that the author of the psalm had been a man always afflicted; or, this may be the language of strong emotion, meaning that his sufferings had been of so long continuance that they seemed to him to have begun in his very boyhood.

While I suffer thy terrors - I bear those things which produce terror; or, which fill my mind with alarm; to wit, the fear of death, and the dread of the future world.

I am distracted - I cannot compose and control my mind; I cannot pursue any settled course of thought; I cannot confine my attention to anyone subject; I cannot reason calmly on the subject of affliction, on the divine government, on the ways of God. I am distracted with contending feelings, with my pain, and my doubts, and my fears - and I cannot think clearly of anything. Such is often the case in sickness; and consequently what we need, to prepare us for sickness, is a strong faith, built on a solid foundation while we are in health; such an intelligent and firm faith that when the hour of sickness shall come we shall have nothing else to do but to believe, and to take the comfort of believing. The bed of sickness is not the proper place to examine the evidences of religion; it is not the place to make preparation for death; not the proper place to become religious. Religion demands the best vigor of the intellect and the calmest state of the heart; and this great subject should be settled in our minds before we are sick - before we are laid on the bed of death.

Verse 16

Thy fierce wrath goeth over me - Like waters. See Psalm 88:7.

Thy terrors have cut me off - That is, I am as one already dead; I am so near to death that I may be spoken of as dead.

Verse 17

They came round about me daily like water - Margin, "as in" Hebrew, all the day. That is, his troubles seemed to be like the waves of the sea cohnstantly breaking on the shore. See Psalm 42:7.

They compassed me about together - My troubles did not come singly, so that I could meet them one at a time, but they seemed to have banded themselves together; they all came upon me at once.

Verse 18

Lover and friend hast thou put far from me - That is, Thou hast so afflicted me that they have forsaken me. Those who professed to love me, and whom I loved - those whom I regarded as my friends, and who seemed to be my friends - are now wholly turned away from me, and I am left to suffer alone. See the notes at Psalm 88:8.

And mine acquaintance into darkness - The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "my acquaintance from my misery." Luther, "Thou hast caused my friends and neighbors, and my kindred, to separate themselves far from me, on account of such misery." The literal rendering would be, my acquaintances are darkness. This may mean either that they had so turned away that he could not see them, as if they were in the dark; or, that his familiars now - his companions - were dark and dismal objects - gloomy thoughts - sad forebodings. Perhaps the whole might be translated, "Far away from me hast thou put lover and friend - my acquaintances! All is darkness!" That is, When I think of any of them, all is darkness, sadness. My friends are not to be seen. They have vanished. I see no friends; I see only darkness and gloom. All have gone, leaving me alone in this condition of unpitied sorrow! This completes the picture of the suffering man; a man to whom all was dark, and who could find no consolation anywhere - in God; in his friends; in the grave; in the prospect of the future. There are such cases; and it was well that there was one such description in the sacred Scriptures of a good man thus suffering - to show us that when we thus feel, it should not be regarded as proof that we have no piety. Beneath all this, there may be true love to God; beyond all this, there may be a bright world to which the sufferer will come, and where he will forever dwell.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 89

Introduction

This psalm is entitled "Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite." In the margin this is rendered, "A Psalm for Ethan the Ezrahite to give instruction." On the word Maschil, see the notes at the title to Psalm 42:1-11. As both Heman (1 Chronicles 2:6. If these were the persons referred to, and if they were the authors of these two psalms, then the period of the composition of these psalms was laid far back in the history of the Hebrew people, far anterior to the time of David. Compare 1 Chronicles 2:6-12. It is hardly probable, however, that they were composed at so early a period in the Jewish history; and there are some things in this psalm, which cannot be reconciled with such a supposition (compare Psalm 89:3, Psalm 89:20, Psalm 89:35, Psalm 89:39, Psalm 89:49), and which make it certain that it was either composed by David, or after the time of David. The probability, therefore, seems to be that these names, "Heman" and "Ethan," were either the names of some persons subsequent to the time referred to in 1 Chronicles 2:6, (see General Introduction, Section 2 (5)); or that these their names were given to classes of "the sons of Korah" who had charge of the music, and that the psalms were composed by some persons of those classes. As thus composed, they might be spoken of as the psalms of Heman and Ethan.

There are no certain methods of ascertaining when the psalm before us was composed, or what was the occasion of its composition. DeWette supposes that it must have been written about the time of the exile, as the family of David is represented in the psalm as dishonored and dethroned - and yet before the exile, as there is no mention of the destruction of the city and temple. He accords, therefore, with the opinion of Venema that it was not far from the time of the death of Josiah, 2 Chronicles 35:20-24. The author he supposes to be either a successor of David - an humbled monarch - or, someone who personates the king, and who represents the calamity of the king as his own. Hengstenberg also supposes that it was composed between the time of the death of Josiah and the Babylonian exile. There is a strong probability in the psalm itself that it was composed at such a period, but it is impossible to determine the exact time, or the precise occasion. The burden of the psalm is, that most precious promises had been made to David of the perpetuity of his throne, but that now these promises scorned

to fail; that reverses and calamities had come which threatened to overturn his throne, and to bring his kingdom to an end. His "crown" had been "profaned" and "cast to the ground." See Psalm 89:38-44.

The psalm consists properly of three parts:

I. The promise made to David in respect to the perpetuity of his throne, Psalm 89:38-45.

III. An earnest plea for the divine interposition in the fulfillment of the promise, and the restoration of the divine favor and mercy, Psalm 89:46-52.

Verse 1

I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever - Particularly how the "mercy" was manifested in the promise made to David; the solemn covenant made with him in respect to the perpetuity of his throne. The appointment of David to the throne was an act of mere mercy or favor, since he was not in the royal line, and had no claim to the crown. It will be seen, also, that if it be supposed that the covenant with David, and the promise therein made to him, was intended to include the Messiah as descending from him, there was a still higher reason for celebrating the "mercies" of God, inasmuch as all mercy to our world comes through him.

With my mouth - Not merely in my heart, but with words. The meaning here is that he would make a record which might be used evermore as the language of praise.

Will I make known thy faithfulness - In the fulfillment of these promises. He felt assured that they would be fulfilled. Whatever appearances there might be to the contrary, the psalmist had no doubt that God would prove himself to be faithful and true. See the notes at Isaiah 55:3, on the expression, "the sure mercies of David."

To all generations - Margin, as in Hebrew, generation and generation. He would make a record which would carry down the remembrance of this faithfulness to all future ages.

Verse 2

For I have said - The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "Thou hast said," which is more in accordance with what the connection seems to demand; but the Hebrew will not admit of this construction. The true meaning seems to be, that the psalmist had said; that is, he had said in his mind; he had firmly believed; he had so received it as a truth that it

might be spoken of as firmly settled, or as an indisputable reality. It was in his mind one of the things whose truthfulness did not admit of a doubt.

Mercy shall be built up for ever - The mercy referred to; the mercy manifested in the promise made to David. The idea is, that the promise would be fully carried out or verified. It would not be like the foundation of a building, which, after being laid, was abandoned; it would be as if the building, for which the foundation was designed, were carried up and completed. It would not be a forsaken, half-finished edifice, but an edifice fully erected.

Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish - In the matter referred to - the promise made to David.

In the very heavens - literally, "The heavens - thou wilt establish thy faithfulness in them." That is the heavens - the heavenly bodies - so regular, so fixed, so enduring, are looked upon as the emblem of stability. The psalmist brings them thus before his mind, and he says that God had, as it were, made his promise a part of the very heavens; he had given to his faithfulness a place among the most secure, and fixed, and settled objects in nature. The sun in its regular rising; the stars in their certain course; the constellations, the same from age to age, were an emblem of the stability and security of the promises of God. Compare Jeremiah 33:20-21.

Verse 3

I have made a covenant with my chosen - With my chosen one; that is, with David. The original is in the singular number, though by the Septuagint, and the Vulgate, and by Luther, it is rendered in the plural - chosen ones - elect. This is undoubtedly the language of God himself, though it is not expressly ascribed to him. The design is to describe the solemn promise which God had made to David and to his posterity. Compare Psalm 78:70-71. See also, on the use of the phrase "made a covenant," see Psalm 50:5, note; Psalm 83:5, note.

I have sworn unto David my servant - I have taken a solemn oath in regard to him. The substance of the oath is stated in the next verse. The promise referred to is found in 2 Samuel 7:11-16.

Verse 4

Thy seed will I establish for ever - Thy children; thy posterity. The reference is to his successors on the throne. The promise was that there should not fail to be one on his throne; that is, that his dynasty should never become extinct. See 2 Samuel 7:16: "And thy house and thy kingdom shall

be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever." Compare also 1 Kings 2:4. The word rendered "establish" means properly to fit; then, to make firm; to put on a solid basis.

And build up thy throne - It shall be kept up; it shall be like a building that is constantly progressing toward completion. The meaning is, that it would not fail. He would not begin the work, and then abandon it. The dynasty, the kingdom, the throne, would be complete and perpetual.

To all generations - As long as the world should stand. This can have been accomplished only by the Messiah occupying in a spiritual sense the throne of "his father David." Compare Luke 1:32-33.

Verse 5

And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord - That is, the inhabitants of heaven shall find new occasion for praise in the faithfulness evinced in carrying out the promise to David, and in the marvelous things which will occur under that promise, and in its accomplishment. If we suppose that this promise embraced the Messiah and his reign, then we shall see what new occasions the angels would find for praise - in the incarnation of the Redeemer, and in all that would be accomplished by him.

Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints - In the assembly of the holy ones; that is, the angels. In their songs of praise, this will be among the things which will fill them with joy. The idea is, that the inhabitants of the heavens - the holy angels - would take a deep interest in the fulfillment of this promise, as it would furnish new manifestations of the character of God. Compare Revelation 5:11-14; 1 Peter 1:12.

Verse 6

For who in the heaven … - literally, In the cloud; that is, in the sky. The idea is that none in the regions above - the upper world - can be compared with God. There is no other god - there is no one among the angels, great and glorious as they are, that can be likened to him.

Who among the sons of the mighty … - The angels - regarded as mighty. The "sons of the mighty" on earth are spoken of as mighty men - as men of power - as men of exalted rank. So here, the idea is, that none of the angels, though of exalted rank ("principalities," or "powers," compare Romans 8:38; Ephesians 1:21), could be put in comparison with God. See the notes at Isaiah 40:25.

Verse 7

God is greatly to be feared - There is that in him which is suited to fill the mind with solemn feelings, and this is a proper state of mind with which to come before him. Nature teaches us that God should be approached with awe; and all the teachings of revelation confirm this. His power is to be feared; his justice is to be feared; his holiness is to be feared; and there is much also in his goodness, his benevolence, his mercy, to fill the mind with solemn emotions.

In the assembly of the saints - The assembly of the holy; the assembly that is convened for his worship. The reference here may be either to worshippers on earth or in heaven. Wherever, and whenever, in this world or in other worlds, creatures are engaged in the worship of God, there should be deep solemnity and reverence. On the word rendered "assembly" here - סוד *sôd* - a council, or assemblage for counsel, see Psalm 25:14, note; Psalm 64:2, note; compare Job 15:8. The idea here is founded on what is said in the previous verse, that none can be compared with God.

And to be had in reverence - In fear; in awe.

Of all them that are about him - That approach him; that are in his presence. The conscious presence of God should fill the mind with awe. When we feel that his eye is upon us, when we know that he sees us, how can we trifle and be thoughtless? How can we then be sinful?

Verse 8

O Lord God of hosts - See the notes at Isaiah 1:9; Psalm 24:10. God, commanding the armies of heaven; leading forth the stars; controlling all forces - all powers.

Who is a strong Lord like unto thee? - The original word here rendered "Lord" is יה *Yâhh* or *Jah*. This is one of the few places where that word occurs, except in the compounding of words. It is an abbreviation of the name Yahweh, and has the same signification. See the notes at Psalm 68:4. The meaning is, that there was no one who in respect to power could be compared with Yahweh.

Or to thy faithfulness round about thee? - Rather, "thy faithfulness is round about thee." That is, It attends thee at all times; it is always with thee; it is a part of thy very nature. To all round about thee, thou art faithful; wherever God is - and he is everywhere - there is faithfulness. He never changes; and people and angels may always trust in him. The psalmist then proceeds to illustrate the greatness of his power, and of his faithfulness, in the works of creation. The design of these illustrations, doubtless, is to keep

before the mind the idea of the divine faithfulness as shown in the works of nature, and then to apply this to the covenant which had been made with David. The idea is, that he who is so faithful in nature will be the same in grace; that he who had shown such unchangeableness in the works of creation might be expected to show the like in respect to the promises which he had made.

Verse 9

Thou rulest the raging of the sea - The pride; the anger; the lifting up of the sea. That is, when the sea is raging and boisterous; when it seems as if everything would be swept away before it, thou hast absolute control over it. There is, perhaps, no more impressive exhibition of divine power than the control which God has over the raging waves of the ocean: and yet this was the power which Jesus exercised over the raging sea of Galilee - showing that he had the power of God. Mark 4:39-41.

When the waves thereof arise - In the lifting up of the waves; when they seem to raise themselves up in defiance.

Thou stillest them - At thy pleasure. They rise no higher than thou dost permit; at thy command they settle down into a calm. So in the troubles of life - the storms - the waves of affliction; they rise as high as God permits, and no higher; when he commands they subside, and leave the mind as calm as the smooth sea when not a breath of wind moves over its surface, or makes a ripple on its placid bosom.

Verse 10

Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces - Margin, "Egypt." See the notes at Psalm 87:4. The reference is to the exodus of the Hebrew people, when he destroyed the power of Egypt.

As one that is slain - Slain on the field of battle; as a man pierced through with a sword or spear.

Thou hast scattered thine enemies - At the time referred to, in Egypt; and at other times, when the enemies of God and of his people had been discomfited.

With thy strong arm - Margin, as in Hebrew, the arm of thy strength. That is, by his power - the arm being the symbol of power. See the notes at Psalm 77:15. Compare Deuteronomy 5:15; Deuteronomy 7:8, Deuteronomy 7:19, et al.

Verse 11

The heavens are thine - Are thy work; and, therefore, thy property - the highest conception of property being that which is derived from creation. It is also implied here that as all things belong to God, he has a right to dispose of them as he pleases.

The earth also is thine - The earth itself, as made by thee; all that the earth produces, as having sprung out of that which thou hast made. The entire proprietorship is in thee.

As for the world - In the use of this word, the earth is spoken of as inhabitable, meaning that the earth and all that dwell upon it belong to God.

And the fulness thereof - All that it produces; what constitutes its enireness. That is, the earth itself considered as earth, or as a mass of matter; and all that springs from it; all that constitutes the earth, with all its mountains, seas, rivers, people, animals, minerals, harvests, cities, towns, monuments - the productions of nature, the works of power, and the achievements of art. Compare the notes at Psalm 24:1.

Thou hast founded them - They all have their foundation in thee; that is, thou hast caused them all to exist. They have no independent and separate basis on which to rest.

Verse 12

The north and the south, thou hast created them - All that there is in the north and in the south - in the northern and the southern sky - the constellations and the stars; and all that there is in the earth - in the regions of cold and of heat - far as they extend in either direction. The word rendered "north" here - צפון *tsâphôn* - means properly that which is hidden or dark, and was applied to the north, because the ancients regarded it as the seat of gloom and darkness. Hom. Od., ix. 25. The south, on the other hand, was regarded by them as illuminated and made bright by the beams of the sun. The word rendered "south" - ימין *yâmîyn* - means literally the right hand, and was applied to the south because the ancient geographers were supposed to face the east, as now they are supposed to face the north. Compare the notes at Job 23:9.

Tabor and Hermon - That is, the west and the east - the former of these mountains being on the western side of Palestine, the other on the eastern, and both of them being objects of beauty and grandeur. The idea is, that God had control of all parts of the universe; that the world in every direction, and in every part, declared his power, and made known his greatness.

Shall rejoice in thy name - Or, do rejoice in thee. That is, They, as it were, exult in thee as their God. They are clothed with beauty, as if full of joy; and they acknowledge that all this comes from thee as the great Creator. Compare Psalm 65:8, Psalm 65:12; Psalm 96:11-12.

Verse 13

Thou hast a mighty arm - Margin, as in Hebrew," an arm with might." That is, Thou hast great power - the arm being the instrument by which we accomplish our purposes.

Strong is thy hand - The hand, too, is an instrument by which we execute our plans. Hence, God is so often represented a having delivered his people with a strong hand.

And high is thy right hand - It is by the right hand particularly that we carry out our purposes. We lift it high when we are about to strike with force. All this is expressive of the divine omnipotence.

Verse 14

justice and judgment are the habitation of the throne - Margin, "establishment." The Hebrew word - מכון *mâkôn* - means properly a place where one stands; then, a foundation or basis. The idea here is, that the throne of God is founded on justice and right judgment; it is this which supports it; his administration is maintained because it is right. This supposes that there is such a thing as right or justice in itself considered, or in the nature of things, and independently of the will of God; that the divine administration will be conformed to that, and will be firm because it is thus conformed to it. Even omnipotent power could not maintain permanently a throne founded on injustice and wrong. Such an administration would sooner or later make its own destruction sure.

Mercy, and truth shall go before thy face - literally, anticipate thy face; that is, thy goings. Wherever thou dost go, wherever thou dost manifest thyself, there will be mercy and faithfulness. Thy march through the world will be attended with kindness and fidelity. So certain is this, that his coming will, as it were, be anticipated by truth and goodness.

Verse 15

Blessed is the people - Happy is their condition. See the notes at Psalm 1:1.

That know the joyful sound - That hear that sound. DeWette explains this of the call to the festivals and offerings, Leviticus 23:24; Numbers 10:10; Psalm 27:6. That is, says he, those who honor and worship God. The

Hebrew word - תרועה *terûʿâh* - means a loud noise; a tumult; especially, shouts of joy, or rejoicing, Job 8:21; 1 Samuel 4:5; the "shout of a king," that is, the joyful acclamations with which a king is welcomed, Numbers 23:21; the shout of battle, Jeremiah 4:19; Jeremiah 49:2. Then it means the sound or clangor of trumpets, Leviticus 25:9; Numbers 29:1-6. The word is, therefore, especially applicable to the sounding of the trumpets which attended the celebration of the great; festivals among the Hebrews, and there can be little doubt that this is the reference here. The idea is, that they are blessed or happy who are the worshippers of Yahweh, the true God; who are summoned to his service; who are convened to the place of his worship.

They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance - They shall live in thy favor, and enjoy thy smiles.

Verse 16

In thy name shall they rejoice - In thee shall they rejoice, or find their happiness. In thy being; thy perfections; thy protection; thy government; thy favor.

All the day - That is, continually. It is their privilege, and it is their duty to rejoice always. Thou art always the same, and the happiness which is found in thy being and attributes at one time may be found at all times; thy promises are ever the same, and thy people may find happiness in them always. There is no reason why the people of God should not be constantly happy; they who have such a God, and such hopes as they are permitted to cherish, should be so. Compare the notes at Philemon 3:1; notes at Philemon 4:4.

And in thy righteousness - Under thy righteous government; or, in the knowledge of thy righteous character.

Shall they be exalted - See Proverbs 14:34. The effect of that knowledge shall be to exalt or to elevate them in moral character, in happiness, in the esteem of others, and in true prosperity. Compare 1 Timothy 4:8.

Verse 17

For thou art the glory of their strength - The ornament; the beauty; the honor; that is, Their strength derives its beauty and honor, not from anything in themselves, but from the fact that it is derived from thee. The strength thus imparted is an honor or ornament in itself; it is an honor and glory to them that it is imparted to them.

And in thy favor - Or, by thy favor, or good pleasure.

Our horn shall be exalted - The horn is a symbol of power. Compare Psalm 22:21, note; Psalm 75:4; Daniel 7:8, note; Job 16:15, note. The meaning here is, that their power had been derived from God; or that all which contributed to their exaltation and honor in the world, had been derived from him.

Verse 18

For the Lord is our defense - Margin, "Our shield is of the Lord." The original word rendered "defense," is shield. Compare Psalm 5:12, note; Psalm 33:20, note; Psalm 59:11, note. The meaning is, that protection was to be found in God alone. The true construction of this verse is, "For to Yahweh (belongs) our shield, and to the Holy One of Israel our king." That is, All that they had, and all that they relied on as a defense, belonged to God, or was of God; in other words, their very protectors were themselves protected by Yahweh. They had no other defense; nothing else on which they could depend.

Verse 19

Then thou spakest in vision - Or, by a vision. See this word explained in the notes at Isaiah 1:1. The meaning is, that God had spoken this by means of visions, or by communications made to his people by the prophets. This "vision" was especially made known to Nathan, and through him to David. See 2 Samuel 7:4-17. The substance of what is here said is found in that passage in Samuel. In 2 Samuel 7:17, it is expressly called a "vision."

To thy holy one - The vision was addressed particularly to David, but was made through him to the people of Israel. The ancient versions render this in the plural, as referring to the people of Israel. The Hebrew is in the singular number.

I have laid help upon one that is mighty - I have so endowed him that he shall be the protector and defender of my people. He is qualified for the office entrusted to him, and in his hands the interests of the nation will be safe. This was not expressly said in the vision; but this was the substance of what was said. See 2 Samuel 7:9.

I have exalted one chosen out of the people - One not of exalted rank; one not descended from kings and conquerors; but one that had grown up among the people; one called from the ranks of common life; one chosen from among those engaged in humble occupations. In this way it was the

more apparent that the power really came from God. Compare 2 Samuel 7:8; see also the notes at Psalm 78:70-72.

Verse 20

I have found David my servant - That is, I found him among the sheepfolds; in humble life. I saw there one who was qualified for the high office of being the ruler of the nation, and I designated, or set him apart, for that office. The idea is, that there was in him a precious qualification for this work, and that God had seen this, and, in accordance with this, had summoned him to his service.

With my holy oil have I anointed him - By the hand of Samuel. 1 Samuel 16:13. Oil was used in setting apart prophets, priests, and kings. It was poured upon the person - emblematic of the pouring out upon him of wisdom and grace from on high to qualify him for his office.

Verse 21

With whom my hand shall be established - Septuagint: "My hand shall aid him." Luther; "My hand shall hold him." DeWette; "With him my hand shall be continually." Professor Alexander; "Shall ever be present." The idea is, that God would always defend or protect him. He would not merely interpose at times, or at intervals, but he would be his constant protector. His hand would be permanently, or constantly, extended for his aid - as if it were a part of David's own person, or were his own hand, to be used as he pleased. So God is the constant helper of his people. They may rely on his power; they may avail themselves of it, as if it were their own.

Mine arm also shall strengthen him - In using his own arm, he will in fact make use of the strength of mine. The people of God are as really defended as if the strength of God were theirs; or as if they were themselves almighty. The omnipotence of God is employed in their defense, and it will be as certainly exerted in their favor, and as constantly, as if it were their own. It will be no less surely employed in their defense in the hand of God than if it were in their own hand. It will be more wisely employed by him in their behalf than it would be by themselves.

Verse 22

The enemy shall not exact upon him - The literal meaning here is derived from the force sometimes used in extorting or demanding a debt, where no indulgence is shown, but where it is exacted to the last mite, whether the man is able to pay it or not. Compare Matthew 18:25, Matthew 18:28. Then it is used to denote oppression, or subjugation, which is the

idea here. The enemy shall not be suffered to act the part of one who rigidly exacts the payment of a debt; that is, he shall not be allowed to oppress him.

Nor the son of wickedness afflict him - This is copied almost literally from 2 Samuel 7:10. The phrase "the son of wickedness" means simply the wicked. He shall not fall into the hands, or under the power of wicked men.

Verse 23

And I will beat down his foes before his face - I will crush them, or destroy them: showing that the power of doing this was not his own, but was the power of God exerted in his behalf.

And plague them that hate him - His enemies. I will bring "plagues" upon them: calamities, judgments, afflictions. The word is commonly used to denote those judgments which come directly from the hand of God - as famine, pestilence, wasting sickness, the plague, or the "plagues" of Egypt. Exodus 12:13; Exodus 30:12; Numbers 8:19; Numbers 17:11-12. These are all in the hand of God, and can be employed at his pleasure, as storms and tempests may be, in executing his purposes.

Verse 24

But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him - I will at the same time be faithful to him, and merciful. These attributes of my nature shall be always attendant on him, as if they were his own.

And in my name - By me; or - He, acting in my name, and in my cause, shall be exalted.

Shall his horn be exalted - See the notes at Psalm 89:17.

Verse 25

I will set his hand also in the sea … - His dominion shall extend from the sea on the one hand to the rivers on the other. The sea here evidently refers to the Mediterranean; and the rivers to the great rivers on the east - the Tigris and Euphrates. These were the promised boundaries of the land. Genesis 15:18. David secured a conquest over all these territories, and united all under his scepter, thus securing the accomplishment of the promise made to Abraham. See the notes at Psalm 60:1-12.

Verse 26

He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father - He shall appeal to me, or come to me as a Father, and as his only hope and defense.

My God - He shall come to me as God, and shall recognize me as his God, his only trust and hope.

And the rock of my salvation - See the notes at Psalm 18:2. The meaning of all this is, that he would at all times recognize him as his only trust and hope, and that he would be faithful on his part to God.

Verse 27

Also I will make him my first-born - He shall be regarded and treated by me as the first-born son is in a family; that is, with distinguished favor and honor. Compare Genesis 27:19; Genesis 29:26; Exodus 4:22; Exodus 13:12; Jeremiah 31:9. See also the notes at Colossians 1:15, notes at Colossians 1:18.

Higher than the kings of the earth - Than other kings; the most exalted among kings and rulers. This was entirely fulfilled in David, who occupied a pre-eminence among princes and rulers which no other king did: a prominence alike in his own personal character and his reign; in his relation to God; and in the fact that he was the ancestor of the Messiah, the "King of kings, and Lord of lords" Revelation 19:16; "the prince of the kings of the earth," Revelation 1:5.

Verse 28

My mercy will I keep for him for evermore - I will not withdraw my favor from him, nor from his posterity, Psalm 89:33-36. In him, and in his Great Descendant, the throne shall be established forever. This dominion will not be like the changing dynasties of this world, but will be perpetual and eternal.

And my covenant shall stand fast with him - See 2 Samuel 7:14-16; 2 Samuel 23:5. It shall be firm, or established with him and his family.

Verse 29

His seed also will I make to endure for ever - That is, His posterity shall occupy the throne:

(a) this would have been true of his descendants, if they had been faithful to God, and had not revolted from him;

(b) it is true of him who is the successor of David in his spiritual kingdom, the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. Compare the notes at Isaiah 9:6-7.

And his throne as the days of heaven - As long as the heavens endure; that is, to the end of the world. Compare Psalm 72:5, note; Psalm 72:7, note; Psalm 72:17, note.

Verse 30

If his children - His posterity; his successors on the throne.

Forsake my law - If they are not regulated by it in the administration of their government, and in their private lives. It is here supposed that they might forsake his law, or fail to observe it; but still there is the assurance that the power would not depart permanently from the successors of David, but that it would be restored ultimately to that line, and be permanent and eternal.

And walk not in my judgements - And do not obey my commandments.

Verse 31

If they break my statutes - Margin, "profane." The Hebrew word means to pollute or defile; and the idea is, If they practically contemn them; if they regard them as things of nought, or treat them with disdain as a polluted or defiled thing. It is in this way that the mass of mankind do regard the commands of God. They treat them with no respect; they practically class them among objects that are polluted, and that are to be avoided as defiled and defiling.

And keep not my commandments - If they do not regulate their conduct by my laws.

Verse 32

Then will I visit their transgression with the rod - They shall be punished, though my mercy shall not be wholly taken from them. God has two objects in his dealings with his backsliding and offending people;

(a) one is to show his displeasure at their conduct, or to punish them;

(b) the other is to reclaim them.

All who have been truly converted, or who are truly his people, will be recovered though they fall into sin; but it may be done, and will be likely to be done, in such a way as to show his own displeasure at their offences.

And their iniquity with stripes - The word rendercd stripes means properly a stroke, a blow; then, judgments or calamities such as God sends on mankind as a punishment for their sins. Genesis 12:17; Exodus 11:1; Psalm 38:11.

Verse 33

Nevertheless my loving-kindness - My mercy; my favor. I will not utterly cast him off. He shall not be in the condition of those who are my enemies, or who are entirely forsaken.

Will I not utterly take from him - Margin, "I will not make void from." The Hebrew word - פרר *pârar* - means to break, to break in pieces; then, to violate, as a covenant; then, to make vain, to bring to nought, to frustrate; then, to annul, to abolish. The idea here is that of making entirely vain; wholly removing from; or taking completely away. The meaning is, that he would not wholly take away his favor; he would not entirely abandon him; he would not suffer him to become wholly apostate; he would not leave him to ruin. The covenant once made would be accomplished; the promise given would be carried out.

Nor suffer my faithfulness - My faithfulness as pledged in the covenant or promise. "To fail." Margin," lie." I will not prove false, or deal falsely in the pledge which I have made. It shall not appear at last that I have made a promise which has not been kept. This passage contains a very important principle in regard to the dealings of God with his people. The principle is, that if people are converted, if they in fact become his people - he will never suffer them wholly to fall away and perish. They may be suffered to backslide; they may fall into sin, but they will not be allowed to go so far as to apostatize wholly. They will be brought back again. Whatever method may be necessary for this, will be adopted. Commands; warnings; entreaties; remonstrances; - their own experience; the admonitions of others; the influences of the Holy Spirit: judgments and calamities; sickness; loss of property; bereavement; disappointment; disgrace; any of these, or all of these, may be resorted to, in order to bring them back; but they will be brought back. God, in mercy and in love, will so visit them with sorrow and trouble that they shall be recovered, and that their "spirit shall be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

Verse 34

My covenant will I not break - literally, I will not pollute, defile, profane. See the notes at Psalm 89:31, where the same word is used. God says that he will not do in regard to the covenant as they had done.

Nor alter the thing … - The promise which I have made. I will not make it a different thing. I will not modify its conditions, or withdraw it. It shall stand precisely as it was when I uttered it. What God promises will be exactly performed.

Verse 35

Once have I sworn by my holiness - That is, once for all; - a single oath - an oath once taken by me - makes it certain. To swear by his

"holiness" is to pledge his own holy nature; to make it as certain as that he is holy; to stake the whole question of his holiness on that. That is, If this should not be accomplished - if he should fail in this - it would prove that he was not a holy God.

That I will not lie unto David - Margin, as in Hebrew, "if I lie." The meaning is, He would be found faithful to the promise. See Psalm 89:3-4; compare 2 Samuel 7:8-16.

Verse 36

His seed shall endure forever … - His posterity. See the notes at Psalm 89:29. There, the expression is, "his throne as the days of heaven." Here it is, "his throne as the sun before me." The meaning is the same. It would stand through all time. Compare the notes at Psalm 72:5.

Verse 37

It shall be established forever as the moon - As long as the moon shall endure. The heavenly bodies are the most permanent objects that we know of; and they, therefore, became the emblems of stability and perpetuity. Compare the notes at Psalm 72:7.

And as a faithful witness in heaven - As the witness in heaven, or in the sky, is sure. The reference is to the moon, regarded as a witness for God. What is said here of the moon as an index of his faithfulness, might be said also of the sun and the stars; but the beauty of the image is increased by the attention being fixed to a single object. As the moon is fixed, regular, enduring - so are the promises and purposes of God. Such were the promises made to David; such was the oath which had been taken by God; such the covenant which he had made. The psalmist now proceeds Psalm 89:38-45 to show that this oath and these promises seemed to be disregarded; that there were things occurring which appeared as if God had forgotten them; that there was not that manifest prosperity and favor which was implied in the promise; but that a series of calamities had occurred which it was difficult to reconcile with these solemn pledges. On the ground of this he prays Psalm 89:46-52 that God would return, and would remember his covenant, and would bless David and his people.

Verse 38

But thou hast cast off - literally, Thou hast treated as a foul, offensive thing; thou hast treated him to whom these promises were made, as if he were a vile and detestable object - as that which one throws away because it is worthless or offensive.

And abhorred - Hast despised; that is, as if it were an object of aversion or contempt. Compare Psalm 60:1, Psalm 60:10.

Thou hast been wroth - literally, "Thou hast suffered (thine anger) to overflow," or to pour itself forth. See Psalm 78:21, Psalm 78:59.

With thine anointed - With him who had been anointed as king - anointed as thine own - to administer justice, and to rule for thee. 1 Samuel 16:1, 1 Samuel 16:13. This might seem to refer to the time of Absalom, when David was driven from his throne and his kingdom; see, however, the Introduction to the Psalm.

Verse 39

Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant - Thou hast dealt with him as if there were no such covenant; as if no such promise had been made to him. The word rendered "made void," means to abhor, or reject.

Thou hast profaned his crown, by casting it to the ground - literally, "Thou hast profaned to the earth his crown;" that is, Thou hast treated it as a polluted thing; a thing to be rejected and abhorred; a thing which one casts indignantly upon the ground.

Verse 40

Thou hast broken down all his hedges - His walls or defenses; all that he relied on for safety.

Thou hast brought his strongholds to ruin - His towers, fortifications; defenses. The enemy has been suffered to destroy them. They are now heaps of ruins.

Verse 41

All that pass by the way spoil him - The sentiment here is substantially the same as in Psalm 80:12. See the notes at that place. The idea is that of fields or vineyards, where all the fences, the walls, and the hedges are thrown down so that they become like an open common.

He is a reproach to his neighbors - An object of ridicule, as if he were forsaken by God; as if east out and despised.

Verse 42

Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries - Hast given them the victory. Thou hast suffered them to accomplish their purposes.

Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice - They joy or rejoice in the success of their plans; in their triumphs over thy servant and over his people.

Verse 43

Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword - That is, Thou hast turned it away, so that when it is raised to strike, it does not descend on the object aimed at by the blow. The meaning is, that he had not been successful in battle, or had been defeated.

And hast not made him to stand in the battle - To stand firm; to hold his ground. He has been driven back; his forces have fled.

Verse 44

Thou hast made his glory to cease - Margin," brightness." Luther, "Thou destroyest his purity." The original word means brightness, sp endour. The literal translation here would be, "Thou causest to cease from being brightness;" that is, Thou hast taken away from his brightness, so that it is gone. The allusion is to the splendor, the glory, the magnificence connected with his rank as king. This had been destroyed, or had come to nought.

And cast his throne down to the ground - See Psalm 89:39.

Verse 45

The days of his youth hast thou shortened - This does not mean that he had shortened his life, but that he had abbreviated the period of his vigor, his hope, and his prosperity; instead of lengthening out these, and prolonging them into advancing years, he had by calamities, disappointments, reverses, and troubles, as it were, abridged them. No such youthful vigor, no such youthful hope now remained. The feelings of age - the cutting off from the world - had come suddenly upon him, even before he had reached the season when this might be expected to occur. Though at a time of life and in circumstances when he might have hoped for a longer continuance of that youthful vigor, he had suddenly been brought into the sad condition of an old man.

Thou hast covered him with shame - Hast clothed him with shame or disgrace. Everything in his circumstances and in his appearance indicates shame and disgrace, and the divine displeasure.

Verse 46

How long, Lord? - How long is this to continue? Can it be that this is to continue always? Is there to be no change for the better? Are the promises which have been made, never to be fulfilled? Compare Psalm 13:1, note; Psalm 77:7-9, notes.

Wilt thou hide thyself for ever? - Thy favor. Wilt thou never come forth and manifest thyself as the Helper of those who trust in thee?

Shall thy wrath burn like fire? - Fire which entirely consumes; fire which never ceases as long as there is anything to burn; fire which never puts itself out, but which wholly destroys that on which it preys.

Verse 47

Remember how short my time is - The word rendered "time" - חלד *cheled* - means duration; lifetime. Psalm 39:5. Then it means life; time; age; the world. Literally, here, "Remember; I; what duration." The meaning is plain. Bear in remembrance that my time must soon come to an end. Life is brief. In a short period the time will come for me to die; and if these promises are fulfilled to me, it must be done soon. Remember that these troubles and sorrows cannot continue for a much longer period without exhausting all my appointed time upon the earth. If God was ever to interpose and bless him, it must be done speedily, for he would soon pass away. The promised bestowment of favor must be conferred soon, or it could not be conferred at all. The psalmist prays that God would remember this. So it is proper for us to pray that God would bless us soon; that he would not withhold his grace now; that there may be no delay; that he would (we may say it with reverence) bear in remembrance that our life is very brief, and that if grace is to be bestowed in order to save us, or in order to make us useful, it must be bestowed soon. A young man may properly employ this prayer; how much more appropriately one who is rapidly approaching old age, and the end of life!

Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? - As thou dost seem to have done, since they accomplish so little in the world, and since so many appear wholly to miss the great purpose of life! Nothing, in certain moods of mind, will strike one more forcibly or more painfully than the thought that the mass of people seem to have been made in vain. Nothing is accomplished by them worthy of the powers with which they are endowed; nothing worthy of so long living for; nothing worthy of the efforts which they actually put forth. In a large portion of mankind there is an utter failure in securing even the objects which they seek to secure; in numerous cases, when they have secured the object, it is not worth the effort which it has cost; in all cases, the same effort, or an effort made less strenuous, laborious, costly, and continuous, would have secured an object of real value - worth all their effort - the immortal crown!

Verse 48

What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? - Shall not die - to see death being an expression often used to denote death itself. Death is represented as a real object, now invisible, but which will make itself visible to us when we die. The meaning here is, "All men are mortal; this universal law must apply to kings as well as to other men; in a short time he to whom these promises pertain will pass away from the earth; and the promises made to him cannot then be fulfilled."

Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? - His life. Will he be able to deliver that from the power of the grave; in Hebrew, שׁאול *she'ôl* Death - the grave - Sheol - asserts a universal dominion over mankind, and no one can be rescued from that stern power.

Verse 49

Lord, where are thy former loving-kindnesses - Thy mercies; thy pledges; thy promises. Where are those promises which thou didst make formerly to David? Are they accomplished? Or are they forgotten and disregarded? They seem to be treated as a thing of nought; as if they had not been made. He relied on them; but they are not now fulfilled.

Which thou swarest unto David - Which thou didst solemnly promise, even with the implied solemnity of an oath.

In thy truth - Pledging thy veracity.

Verse 50

Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants - Remember this, so as to cause it to pass away; he not forgetful or unmindful of this. Compare Psalm 89:47. The psalmist desired that all this might be before the mind of God as a reason why he should help him. These promises had been made to David and his people. They had relied on them, and they were now reproached as having trusted to promises which had never been made. This reproach was consequent on what seemed to be the failure to fulfill those promises; and as this reproach came upon God, and was a reflection on his fidelity, the psalmist prays that he would allow it to come before him.

How I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people - literally, "I bear in my bosom all the many people." That is, everything that pertained to them came upon him. All their troubles; all their reverses; all their complaints; all their murmurings, seemed to come upon him. He was held responsible for everything pertaining to them; all this pressed upon his heart. Compare the bitter complaint of Moses in Numbers 11:11-15. The phrase "to bear in the bosom" here, is equivalent to bearing it on the heart.

Trouble, anxiety, care, sorrow, seem to press on the heart, or fill the bosom with distressing emotions, and lay on it a heavy burden. The allusion here is not merely to reproach, but the meaning is that everything pertaining to the people came on him, and it crushed him down. The burdens of his own people, as well as the reproaches of all around him, came upon him; and he felt that he was not able to bear it.

Verse 51

Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O Lord - Have reproached thee and me. Wherewith they reproach thy character and cause, and reproach me for having trusted to promises which seem not to be fulfilled. As the representative of thy cause, I am compelled to bear all this, and it breaks my heart.

Wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed - Of myself, as the anointed king. They have reproached my footsteps; that is, they have followed me with reproaches - treading along behind me. Wherever I go, wherever I put my foot down in my wanderings, I meet this reproach.

Verse 52

Blessed be the Lord for evermore - Praise to God always. So Chrysostom was accustomed to say, even when driven out as an exile and a wanderer, "Blessed be God for everything." The passage here denotes entire acquiescence in God; perfect confidence in him; a belief that he was right, and faithful, and true. It is an instance of the faith which those who are truly pious have in God, in all circumstances, and at all times; of their belief that he is worthy of entire confidence, and ought always to be praised. Compare Job 1:21. At the close of all kinds of trouble - and in the midst of all kinds of trouble - true piety will enable us to say, "Blessed be God."

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 90

Introduction

This psalm is one of the most remarkable in the whole collection. It is said, in the title, to be "A Prayer of Moses, the man of God;" or, as it is in the margin, "being a Psalm of Moses." The original word - תפלה *tephillâh* - means properly

(1) intercession, supplication for anyone;

(2) prayer or supplication in general;

(3) a hymn or inspired song.

Gesenius, Lexicon. In Psalm 72:20, the word is applied to the whole preceding part of the Book of Psalms - "The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." The word "prayer" would better represent the nature of the contents of this psalm than the word "psalm," or "hymn."

If the author was Moses, then this is the only one of his compositions which we have in the Book of Psalms. We know, from not a few places in the Pentateuch, that Moses was a poet as well as a lawgiver and statesman; and it would not be improbable that there might have been some compositions of his of this nature which were not incorporated in the five books that he wrote, and which would be likely to be preserved by tradition. This psalm bears internal evidence that it may have been such a composition. There is no local allusion which would make it necessary to suppose that it was written at a later period; there is nothing inconsistent with the sentiments and style of Moses in the Pentateuch; there is much that is in accordance with his style and manner; and there were numerous occasions when the sentiments of the psalm would be exceedingly suitable to the circumstances in which he was, and to the train of thoughts which we may suppose to have passed through his mind. The following remarks of Prof. Alexander seem to me to be eminently just and appropriate: "The correctness of the title which ascribes the psalm to Moses is confirmed by its unique simplicity and grandeur; its appropriateness to his times and circumstances; its resemblance to the law in urging the connection between sin and death; its similarity of diction to the poetical portions of the Pentateuch, without the slightest trace of imitation or quotation; its marked unlikeness to the Psalms of David, and still more to those of later date; and finally the proved impossibility of plausibly assigning it to any other age or author." As a relic thus of most ancient times - as coming down from the

most remarkable man in the Jewish history, if not in the world - as well as for its own instructive beauty and appropriateness to all times and lands - it is a composition of great interest and value.

This psalm is placed at the beginning of the fourth book of the Psalter, according to the ancient traditional division of the Psalms. Or, perhaps, the author of the arrangement - probably Ezra - designed to place this "by itself" between the two great divisions of the book, containing respectively the earlier and the later psalms. It may be regarded, therefore, as "the heart or center of the whole collection," suggesting thoughts appropriate to the entire current of thought in the book.

The phrase, "the man of God," in the title, is given to Moses in Deuteronomy 33:1; Joshua 14:6; Ezra 3:2; as a title especially appropriate to him, denoting that he was faithful to God; that he was a man approved by God. The title is indeed given to others, Judges 13:6, Judges 13:8; 1 Samuel 2:27; 1 Samuel 9:6-8; 1 Kings 12:22, et al.; but there was a special appropriateness in the title as given to Moses on account of his character, his eminent rank, and his influence in founding the Hebrew commonwealth.

It is impossible, of course, now to determine the time when the psalm was composed, but it may not improbably be supposed to have been near the close of the wanderings in the wilderness. The Hebrew people were about to enter the promised land; the generation that came out of Egypt was passing away; Moses himself felt that he was near the end of his course, for he had been apprized that he could not enter the land of promise to the borders of which he had conducted the people. These things were eminently suited to suggest such views of the shortness of human life, and of its frailty, as are here presented. At the same time, all these circumstances were suited to suggest the reference to the future, and the prayer in respect to that future, with which the psalm so beautifully closes. It seems, then, not improper to regard this psalm as one of the last utterances of Moses, when the wanderings of the Hebrew people were about to cease; when an entire generation had been swept off; and when his own labors were soon to close.

The main subject of the psalm is the brevity - the transitory nature - of human life; the reflections on which seem designed to lead the soul up to

God, who does not die. The races of people are cut down like grass, but God remains the same from age to age. One generation finds him the same as the previous generation had found him - unchanged, and as worthy of confidence as ever. None of these changes can affect him, and there is in each age the comforting assurance that he will be found to be the refuge, the support, the "dwelling-place" of his people.

The psalm consists of the following parts:

I. The fact that God is unchanging; that he is the refuge of his people, and always has been; that from the eternity past to the eternity to come, he is the same - he alone is God, Psalm 90:1-2.

II. The frailty of man - the brevity of human life - as contrasted with this unchanging nature - this eternity - of God, Psalm 90:3-11. Man is turned to destruction; he is carried away as with a flood; his life is like a night's sleep; the human race is like grass which is green in the morning and is cut down at evening; - human existence is like a tale that is told - brief as a meditation - and narrowed down to threescore years and ten.

III. A prayer that the living might be able so to number their days - to take such an account of life as to apply the heart to wisdom; - to make the most of life, or to be truly wise, Psalm 90:12.

IV. A prayer for those who were to follow - for the coming generation - that God would continue his favors; that though the present generation must die, yet that God, who is unchanging and eternal, would meet the next generation, and all the generations to come, with the same mercies and blessings, enjoyed by those who went before them - prolonging these to all future time, Psalm 90:13-17.

The psalm, therefore, has a universal applicability. Its sentiments and its petitions are as appropriate now as they were in the time of Moses. The generations of people pass away as certainly and as rapidly now as they did then; but it is as true now as it was then, that God is unchanging, and that he is the "dwelling-place" - the home - of his people.

Verse 1

Lord - Not יהוה *Yahweh* here, but אדני *'Adonāy* The word is properly rendered "Lord," but it is a term which is often applied to God. It indicates,

however, nothing in regard to his character or attributes except that he is a "Ruler or Governor."

Thou hast been our dwelling-place - The Septuagint renders this, "refuge" - καταφυγή *kataphugē* So the Latin Vulgate, *"refugium;"* and Luther, "Zuflucht." The Hebrew word - מעון *mâʿôn* - means properly a habitation, a dwelling, as of God in his temple, Psalm 26:8; heaven, Psalm 68:5; Deuteronomy 26:15. It also means a den or lair for wild beasts, Nahum 2:12; Jeremiah 9:11. But here the idea seems to be, as in the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Luther, "a refuge"; a place to which one may come as to his home, as one does from a journey; from wandering; from toil; from danger: a place to which such a one naturally resorts, which he loves, and where he feels that he may rest secure. The idea is, that a friend of God has that feeling in respect to Him, which one has toward his own home - his abode - the place which he loves and calls his own.

In all generations - Margin, "generation and generation." That is, A succeeding generation has found him to be the same as the previous generation had. He was unchanged, though the successive generations of men passed away.

Verse 2

Before the mountains were brought forth - Before the earth brought forth or produced the mountains. In the description of the creation it would be natural to represent the mountains as the first objects that appeared, as emerging from the waters; and, therefore, as the "first" or "most ancient" of created objects. The phrase, therefore, is equivalent to saying, Before the earth was created. The literal meaning of the expression, "were brought forth," is, in the Hebrew, "were born." The mountains are mentioned as the most ancient things in creation, in Deuteronomy 33:15. Compare Genesis 49:26; Habakkuk 3:6.

Or ever thou hadst formed - literally, "hadst brought forth." Compare Job 39:1.

The earth and the world - The word "earth" here is used to denote the world as distinguished either from heaven Genesis 1:1, or from the sea Genesis 1:10. The term "world" in the original is commonly employed to denote the earth considered as "inhabited," or as capable of being inhabited - a dwelling place for living beings.

Even from everlasting to everlasting - From duration stretching backward without limit to duration stretching forward without limit; that is,

from eternal ages to eternal ages; or, forever.

Thou art God - Or, "Thou, O God." The idea is, that he was always, and ever will be, God: the God; the true God; the only God; the unchangeable God. At any period in the past, during the existence of the earth, or the heavens, or before either was formed, he existed, with all the attributes essential to Deity; at any period in the future - during the existence of the earth and the heavens, or beyond - far as the mind can reach into the future, and even beyond that - he will still exist unchanged, with all the attributes of Deity. The creation of the universe made no change in him; its destruction would not vary the mode of his existence, or make him in any respect a different being. There could not be a more absolute and unambiguous declaration, as there could not be one more sublime, of the eternity of God. The mind cannot take in a grander thought than that there is one eternal and immutable Being.

Verse 3

Thou turnest man to destruction - In contradistinction from his own unchangeableness and eternity. Man passes away; God continues ever the same. The word rendered "destruction" - דכא *dakkâ'* - means properly anything beaten or broken small or very fine, and hence, "dust." The idea here is, that God causes man to return to dust; that is, the elements which compose the body return to their original condition, or seem to mingle with the earth. Genesis 3:19: "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The word "man" here, of course, refers to man in general - all people. It is the great law of our being. Individual man, classes of people, generations of people, races of people, pass away; but God remains the same. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "Thou turnest man to "humiliation;" which, though not the sense of the original, is a true idea, for there is nothing more humiliating than that a human body, once so beautiful, should turn back to dust; nothing more humbling than the grave.

And sayest, Return, ye children of men - Return to your dust; go back to the earth from which you came. Return, all of you without exception; - kings, princes, nobles, warriors, conquerors; mighty people, captains, and counselors; ye learned and great, ye honored and flattered, ye beautiful and happy, ye youthful and vigorous, and ye aged and venerable; whatever is your rank, whatever are your possessions, whatever are your honors, whatever you have to make you lovely, to charm, to please, to be admired; or whatever there is to make you loathsome and detestable; ye vicious, ye

profane, low, grovelling, sensual, debased; go all of you alike to "dust!' Oh, how affecting the thought that this is the lot of man; how much should it do to abase the pride of the race; how much should it do to make any man sober and humble, that he himself is soon to turn back to dust - unhonored, undistinguished, and undistinguishable dust!

Verse 4

For a thousand years in thy sight - Hebrew, "In thy eyes;" that is, It so appears to thee - or, a thousand years so seem to thee, however long they may appear to man. The utmost length to which the life of man has reached - in the case of Methuselah - was nearly a thousand years Genesis 5:27; and the idea here is, that the longest human life, even if it should be lengthened out to a thousand years, would be in the sight of God, or in comparison with his years, but as a single day.

Are but as yesterday when it is past - Margin, "he hath passed them." The translation in the text, however, best expresses the sense. The reference is to a single day, when we call it to remembrance. However long it may have appeared to us when it was passing, yet when it is gone, and we look back to it, it seems short. So the longest period of human existence appears to God.

And as a watch in the night - This refers to a portion of the night - the original idea having been derived from the practice of dividing the night into portions, during which a watch was placed in a camp. These watches were, of course, relieved at intervals, and the night came to be divided, in accordance with this arrangement, into parts corresponding with these changes. Among the ancient Hebrews there were only three night-watches; the first, mentioned in Lamentations 2:19; the middle, mentioned in Judges 7:19; and the third, mentioned in Exodus 14:24; 1 Samuel 11:11. In later times - the times referred to in the New Testament - there were four such watches, after the manner of the Romans, Mark 13:35. The idea here is not that such a watch in the night would seem to pass quickly, or that it would seem short when it was gone, but that a thousand years seemed to God not only short as a day when it was past, but even as the parts of a day, or the divisions of a night when it was gone.

Verse 5

Thou carriest them away as with a flood - The original here is a single verb with the suffix - זרמתם *zerametâm* The verb - זרם *zâram* - means, to flow, to pour; then, to pour upon, to overwhelm, to wash away. The idea is,

that they were swept off as if a torrent bore them from the earth, carrying them away without regard to order, rank, age, or condition. So death makes no discrimination. Every day that passes, multitudes of every age, sex, condition, rank, are swept away and consigned to the grave - as they would be if a raging flood should sweep over a land.

They are as a sleep - The original here is, "a sleep they are." The whole sentence is exceedingly graphic and abrupt: "Thou sweepest them away; a sleep they are - in the morning - like grass - it passes away." The idea is that human life resembles a sleep, because it seems to pass so swiftly; to accomplish so little; to be so filled with dreams and visions, none of which remain or become permanent.

In the morning they are like grass which groweth up - A better translation of this would be to attach the words "in the morning to the previous member of the sentence, "They are like sleep in the morning;" that is, They are as sleep appears to us in the morning, when we wake from it - rapid, unreal, full of empty dreams. The other part of the sentence then would be, "Like grass, it passeth away." The word rendered "groweth up," is in the margin translated "is changed." The Hebrew word - חלף *châlaph* - means to pass, to pass along, to pass by; to pass on, to come on; also, to revive or flourish as a plant; and then, to change. It may be rendered here, "pass away;" and the idea then would be that they are like grass in the fields, or like flowers, which soon "change" by passing away. There is nothing more permanent in man than there is in the grass or in the flowers of the field.

Verse 6

In the morning it flourisheth - This does not mean that it grows with any special vigor or rapidity in the morning, as if that were illustrative of the rapid growth of the young; but merely that, in fact, in the morning it is green and vigorous, and is cut down in the short course of a day, or before evening. The reference here is to grass as an emblem of man.

And groweth up - The same word in the Hebrew which is used in the close of the previous verse.

In the evening it is cut down, and withereth - In the short period of a day. What was so green and flourishing in the morning, is, at the close of the day, dried up. Life has been arrested, and death, with its consequences, has ensued. So with man. How often is this literally true, that those who are strong, healthy, vigorous, hopeful, in the morning, are at night pale, cold,

and speechless in death! How striking is this as an emblem of man in general: so soon cut down; so soon numbered with the dead. Compare the notes at Isaiah 40:6-8; notes at 1 Peter 1:24-25.

Verse 7

For we are consumed by thine anger - That is, Death - the cutting off of the race of man - may be regarded as an expression of thy displeasure against mankind as a race of sinners. The death of man would not have occurred but for sin Genesis 3:3, Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12; and all the circumstances connected with it - the fact of death, the dread of death, the pain that precedes death, the paleness and coldness and rigidity of the dead, and the slow and offensive returning to dust in the grave - all are adapted to be, and seem designed to be, illustrations of the anger of God against sin. We cannot, indeed, always say that death in a specific case is proof of the direct and special anger of God "in that case;" but we can say that death always, and death in its general features, may and should be regarded as an evidence of the divine displeasure against the sins of people.

And by thy wrath - As expressed in death.

Are we troubled - Are our plans confounded and broken up; our minds made sad and sorrowful; our habitations made abodes of grief.

Verse 8

Thou hast set our iniquities before thee - Thou hast arrayed them, or brought them forth to view, as a "reason" in thy mind for cutting us down. Death may be regarded as proof that God has brought before his mind the evidence of man's guilt, and has passed sentence accordingly. The fact of death at all; the fact that anyone of the race dies; the fact that human life has been made so brief, is to be explained on the supposition that God has arrayed before his own mind the reality of human depravity, and has adopted this as an illustration of his sense of the evil of guilt.

Our secret sins - literally, "our secret;" or, that which was concealed or unknown. This may refer to the secret or hidden things of our lives, or to what has been concealed in our own bosoms; and the meaning may be, that God has judged in the case not by external appearances, or by what is seen by the world, but by what "he" has seen in the heart, and that he deals with us according to our real character. The reference is, indeed, to sin, but sin as concealed, hidden, forgotten; the sin of the heart; the sin which we have endeavored to hide from the world; the sin which has passed away from our own recollection.

In the light of thy countenance - Directly before thee; in full view; so that thou canst see them all. In accordance with these, thou judgest man, and hence, his death.

Verse 9

For all our days are passed away in thy wrath - Margin, "turned." The Hebrew word - פנה *pânâh* - means to "turn;" then, to turn to or "from" anyone; and hence, to turn away as if to flee or depart. Here it means that our days seem to turn from us; to give the back to us; to be unwilling to remain with us; to leave us. This seems to be the fruit or result of the anger of God, as if he were unwilling that our days should attend us any longer. Or, it is as if he took away our days, or caused them to turn away, because he was angry and was unwilling that we should any longer enjoy them. The cutting off of life in any manner is a proof of the divine displeasure; and in every instance death should be regarded as a new illustration of the fact that the race is guilty.

We spend our years as a tale that is told - Margin, "meditation." The Hebrew word - הגה *hegeh* - means properly

(a) a muttering, or growling, as of thunder;

(b) a sighing or moaning;

(c) a meditation, thought.

It means here, evidently, thought; that is, life passes away as rapidly as thought. It has no permanency. It makes no impression. Thought is no sooner come than it is gone. So rapid, so fleeting, so unsubstantial is life. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate in some unaccountable way render this "as a spider." The translation in our common version, "as a tale that is told," is equally unauthorized, as there is nothing corresponding to this in the Hebrew. The image in the original is very striking and beautiful. Life passes with the rapidity of thought!

Verse 10

The days of our years - Margin, "As for the days of our years, in them are seventy years." Perhaps the language would better be translated: "The days of our years! In them are seventy years;" or, they amount to seventy years. Thus the psalmist is represented as reflecting on human life - on the

days that make up the years of life; - as fixing his thought on those days and years, and taking the sum of them. The days of our years - what are they?

Are threescore years and ten - Not as life originally was, but as it has been narrowed down to about that period; or, this is the ordinary limit of life. This passage proves that the psalm was written when the life of man had been shortened, and had been reduced to about what it is at present; for this description will apply to man now. It is probable that human life was gradually diminished until it became fixed at the limit which now bounds it, and which is to remain as the great law in regard to its duration upon the earth. All animals, as the horse, the mule, the elephant, the eagle, the raven, the bee, the butterfly, have each a fixed limit of life, wisely adapted undoubtedly to the design for which they were made, and to the highest happiness of the whole. So of man. There can be no doubt that there are good reasons - some of which could be easily suggested - why his term of life is no longer. But, at any rate, it is no longer; and in that brief period he must accomplish all that he is to do in reference to this world, and all that is to be done to prepare him for the world to come. It is obvious to remark that man has enough to do to fill up the time of his life; that life to man is too precious to be wasted.

And if by reason of strength … - If there be unusual strength or vigor of natural constitution; or if the constitution has not been impaired or broken by toil, affliction, or vicious indulgence; or if the great laws of health have been understood and observed. Any of these causes may contribute to lengthen out life - or they may all be combined; and under these, separately or combined, life is sometimes extended beyond its ordinary limits. Yet the period of seventy is the ordinary limit beyond which few can go; the great mass fall long before they reach that.

Yet is their strength - Hebrew, “Their pride.” That of which a man who has reached that period might be disposed to boast - as if it were owing to himself. There is, at that time of life, as well as at other times, great danger lest that which we have received from God, and which is in no manner to be traced to ourselves, may be an occasion of pride, as if it were our own, or as if it were secured by our own prudence, wisdom, or merit. May it not, also, be implied here that a man who has reached that period of life - who has survived so many others - who has seen so many fall by imprudence, or vice, or intemperance - will be in special danger of being proud, as if it were by some special virtue of his own that his life had been thus

lengthened out? Perhaps in no circumstances will the danger of pride be more imminent than when one has thus passed safely through dangers where others have fallen, and practiced temperance while others have yielded to habits of intemperance, and taken care of his own health while others have neglected theirs. The tendency to pride in man does not die out because a man grows old.

Labour and sorrow - The word rendered "labour" - עמל *ʿâmâl* - means properly "toil;" that is, wearisome labor. The idea here is, that toil then becomes burdensome; that the body is oppressed with it, and soon grows weary and exhausted; that life itself is like labor or wearisome toil. The old man is constantly in the condition of one who is weary; whose powers are exhausted; and who feels the need of repose. The word rendered "sorrow" - און *'âven* - means properly "nothingness, vanity;" Isaiah 41:29; Zechariah 10:2; then, nothingness as to worth, unworthiness, iniquity - which is its usual meaning; Numbers 23:21; Job 36:21; Isaiah 1:13; and then, evil, adversity, calamity; Proverbs 22:8; Genesis 35:18. This latter seems to be the meaning here. It is, that happiness cannot ordinarily be found at that period of life; that to lengthen out life does not add materially to its enjoyment; that to do it, is but adding trouble and sorrow.

The ordinary hopes and plans of life ended; the companions of other years departed; the offices and honors of the world in other hands; a new generation on the stage that cares little for the old one now departing; a family scattered or in the grave; the infirmities of advanced years on him; his faculties decayed; the buoyancy of life gone; and now in his second childhood dependent on others as he was in his first; how little of happiness is there in such a condition! How appropriate is it to speak of it as a time of "sorrow!" How little desirable is it for a man to reach extreme old age! And how kind and merciful the arrangement by which man is ordinarily removed from the world before the time of "trouble and sorrow" thus comes! There are commonly just enough people of extreme old age upon the earth to show us impressively that it is not "desirable" to live to be very old; just enough to keep this lesson with salutary force before the minds of those in earlier life; just enough, if we saw it aright, to make us willing to die before that period comes!

For it is soon cut off … - Prof. Alexander renders this, "For he drives us fast;" that is, God drives us - or, one seems to drive, or to urge us on. The word used here - גז *gāz* - is commonly supposed to be derived from גזז

gâzaz to cut, as to cut grass, or to mow; and then, to shear, sc. a flock - which is its usual meaning. Thus it would signify, as in our translation, to be cut off. This is the Jewish interpretation. The word, however, may be more properly regarded as derived from גוז *gûz* which occurs in but one other place, Numbers 11:31, where it is rendered "brought," as applied to the quails which were brought or driven forward by the east wind. This word means, to pass through, to pass over, to pass away; and then, to cause to pass over, as the quails were Numbers 11:31 by the east wind. So it means here, that life is soon passed over, and that we flee away, as if driven by the wind; as if impelled or urged forward as chaff or any light substance is by a gale.

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Verse 11

Who knoweth the power of thine anger? - Who can measure it, or take a correct estimate of it, as it is manifest in cutting down the race of people? If the removal of people by death is to be traced to thine anger - or is, in any proper sense, an expression of thy wrath - who can measure it, or understand it? The cutting down of whole generations of people - of nations - of hundreds of million of human beings - of the great, the powerful, the mighty, as well as the weak and the feeble, is an amazing exhibition of the "power" - of the might - of God; and who is there that can fully understand this? Who can estimate fully the wrath of God, if this is to be regarded as an expression of it? Who can comprehend what this is? Who can tell, after such an exhibition, what may be in reserve, or what further and more fearful displays of wrath there may yet be?

Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath - literally, "And according to thy fear, thy wrath." The word rendered "fear" would here seem to refer to the "reverence" due to God, or to what there is in his character to inspire awe: to wit, his power, his majesty, his greatness; and the sense seems to be that his wrath or anger as manifested in cutting down the race seems to be commensurate with all in God that is vast, wonderful, incomprehensible. As no one can understand or take in the one, so no one can understand or take in the other. God is great in all things; great in himself; great in his power in cutting down the race; great in the expressions of his displeasure.

Verse 12

So teach us to number our days - literally, "To number our days make us know, and we will bring a heart of wisdom." The prayer is, that God

would instruct us to estimate our days aright: their number; the rapidity with which they pass away; the liability to be cut down; the certainty that they must soon come to an end; their bearing on the future state of being.

That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom - Margin, "Cause to come." We will bring, or cause to come, a heart of wisdom. By taking a just account of life, that we may bring to it a heart truly wise, or act wisely in view of these facts. The prayer is, that God would enable us to form such an estimate of life, that we shall be truly wise; that we may be able to act "as if" we saw the whole of life, or as we should do if we saw its end. God sees the end - the time, the manner, the circumstances in which life will close; and although he has wisely hidden that from us, yet he can enable us to act as if we saw it for ourselves; to have the same objects before us, and to make as much of life, "as if" we saw when and how it would close. If anyone knew when, and where, and how he was to die, it might be presumed that this would exert an important influence on him in forming his plans, and on his general manner of life. The prayer is, that God would enable us to act "as if" we had such a view.

Verse 13

Return, O Lord - Come back to thy people; show mercy by sparing them. It would seem probable from this that the psalm was composed in a time of pestilence, or raging sickness, which threatened to sweep all the people away - a supposition by no means improbable, as such times occurred in the days of Moses, and in the rebellions of the people when he was leading them to the promised land.

How long? - How long shall this continue? How long shall thy wrath rage? How long shall the people still fall under thy hand? This question is often asked in the Psalms. Psalm 4:2; Psalm 6:3; Psalm 13:1-2; Psalm 35:17; Psalm 79:5, et al.

And let it repent thee - That is, Withdraw thy judgments, and be merciful, as if thou didst repent. God cannot literally "repent," in the sense that he is sorry for what he has done, but he may act "as if" he repented; that is, he may withdraw his judgments; he may arrest what has been begun; he may show mercy where it seemed that he would only show wrath.

Concerning thy servants - In respect to thy people. Deal with them in mercy and not in wrath.

Verse 14

O satisfy us early with thy mercy - literally, "In the morning;" as soon as the day dawns. Perhaps there is an allusion here to their affliction, represented as night; and the prayer is, that the morning - the morning of mercy and joy - might again dawn upon them.

That we may rejoice and be glad all our days - All the remainder of our lives. That the memory of thy gracious interposition may go with us to the grave.

Verse 15

Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us - Let the one correspond with the other. Let our occasions of joy be measured by the sorrows which have come upon us. As our sufferings have been great, so let our joys and triumphs be.

And the years wherein we have seen evil - Affliction and sorrow. They have been continued through many wearisome years; so let the years of peace and joy be many also.

Verse 16

Let thy work appear unto thy servants - That is, thy gracious work of interposition. Let us see thy power displayed in removing these calamities, and in restoring to us the days of health and prosperity.

And thy glory unto their children - The manifestation of thy character; the display of thy goodness, of thy power, and thy grace. Let this spreading and wasting evil be checked and removed, so that our children may live, and may have occasion to celebrate thy goodness, and to record the wonders of thy love.

Verse 17

And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us - The word translated "beauty" - נעם *nôʿam* - means properly "pleasantness;" then, beauty, splendor; then grace or layout. The Septuagint renders it here, λαμπρότης *lamprotēs* "splendor;" and so the Latin Vulgate. The wish is clearly that all that there is, in the divine character, which is "beautiful," which is suited to win the hearts of people to admiration, gratitude, and love - might be so manifested to them, or that they might so see the excellency of his character, and that his dealings with them might be such, as to keep the beauty, the loveliness, of that character constantly before them.

And establish thou the work of our hands upon us - What we are endeavoring to do. Enable us to carry out our plans, and to accomplish our purposes.

Yea, the work of our hands establish thou it - The repetition of the prayer here is emphatic. It indicates an intense desire that God would enable them to carry out their plans. If this was written by Moses, we may suppose that it is expressive of an earnest desire that they might reach the promised land; that they might not all be cut down and perish by the way; that the great object of their march through the wilderness might be accomplished; and that they might be permanently established in the land to which they were going. At the same time it is a prayer which it is proper to offer at any time, that God would enable us to carry out our purposes, and that we may be permanently established in his favor.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 91

Introduction

The author of this psalm, and the occasion on which it was composed, are alike unknown. The psalm has no title; and there are no internal marks by which we can ascertain when, or by whom, it was written. It is very general in its application, and may have been composed with no particular reference to any event occurring at the time, as it is evident that it had no special reference to the circumstances of the writer. Though it follows a psalm composed by Moses, yet there is no reason to suppose that it was written by him, nor is there any particular resemblance to that psalm.

From some things in the psalm, as Psalm 91:3-5, Psalm 91:9, Psalm 91:11; it would appear to be not improbable that the psalm was composed with reference to some individual who was exposed to temptation, or to danger, either from secret enemies or from pestilence, and that it was intended to assure such an one that there was nothing to be feared if he put his trust in God. There is no evidence that it was designed to refer particularly to the Saviour. It is, indeed, applied to him by Satan in the temptation in the wilderness Matthew 4:6; but there is, in that case, no such recognition of its applicability to himself on the part of the Saviour as to justify us in the conclusion that it originally referred to him. Its quotation by the tempter is no proof that this was the original reference of the psalm, and the quotation made is one which could be applied to him in the same way as amy general premise in the Old Testament made to those who trusted in God might have been.

The most remarkable thing in the structure of the psalm is the frequent change of persons, leading some to suppose that it may have been composed with a view to its being sung by choirs in alternate responses, and Michaelis has suggested that there were probably two such choirs; the one - as in Psalm 91:1-2 - celebrating the praises of those who trusted in God; the other - as in Psalm 91:3-8 - exciting and encouraging the people to put their trust in God, and suggesting reasons why they should do it. Such a thing is, undoubtedly, possible; but the evidence that this was the intention of the author of the psalm is not clear.

Tholuck has divided the psalm, on the supposition that it was thus intended to be sung by alternate choirs, into portions arranged with that view: Psalm 91:1, the choir; Psalm 91:2, the response; Psalm 91:3-8, the choir; Psalm 91:9, the response; Psalm 91:10-13, the choir; Psalm 91:14-16, the response. This, however, is quite arbitrary, as it cannot be demonstrated to have been the original design.

This arrangement, however, suggests a good division of the psalm:

I. The general statement of the safety of those who put their trust in God, Psalm 91:1.

II. A responsive declaration of the author of the psalm, that he would make the Lord his refuge, and the Most High his habitation, Psalm 91:2.

III. A statement of the security or benefit of doing this, Psalm 91:3-8.

IV. A responsive declaration - repeated - by the author of the psalm that he would do this; that God "was" his refuge, Psalm 91:9 (part first).

V. A further statement of the benefit of this, Psalm 91:10-13.

VI. A general declaration embracing the sum of all that is said in the psalm, as coming from God himself, containing assurances of his protection to those who thus put their trust in him, and confide in him, Psalm 91:14-16.

This mode of division meets substantially all the changes of "persons" in the psalm, or arranges the different portions of it into parts belonging to the different speakers in the psalm. There is reason to believe that this was the line of thought in the mind of the psalmist, though it is not clear that this was designed to be so used in public responses in singing.

Verse 1

He that dwelleth - Everyone that so dwells. The proposition is universal, and is designed to embrace all who are in this condition. It is true of one; it is true of all. The word rendered "dwelleth" here is a participle from the verb to "sit," and here means "sitting:" literally, "sitting in the secret place," etc. The idea is that of calm repose; of resting; of sitting down - as one does in his dwelling.

In the secret place - On the meaning of this see the notes at Psalm 27:5. Compare Psalm 31:20; Psalm 32:7. Abiding where God abides. The idea is that of having one's home or residence in the most holy place in the tabernacle or the temple, and of sitting with him in that sacred place.

Of the Most High - Of God, represented as exalted above all; over all the universe.

Shall abide - Margin, as in Hebrew, "lodge." That is his home - his resting place - where he lodges, or passes the night. He takes up his lodging there; he makes it his home.

Under the shadow of the Almighty - Under his protection, as if under his wings. Compare the notes at Psalm 17:8. This is a general statement, and is designed as an introduction to the whole psalm, or as expressing what the psalm is intended to illustrate, "the blessedness" of the man who thus dwells with God; who makes him his friend; who makes the home of God his home.

Verse 2

I will say of the Lord - I, the psalmist; I will take this to myself; I will endeavor to secure this blessedness; I will thus abide with God. In view of the blessedness of this condition, and with the hope of securing it to myself; I will adopt this resolution as the purpose of my life. It is what I need; it is what my soul desires.

My refuge and my fortress - "I will say of Jehovah, My refuge and my fortress!" I will address him as such; I will regard him as such. On the meaning of these terms, see the notes at Psalm 18:2.

My God - I will address him as my God; as the God whom alone I worship; as the only being to whom the name "God" can properly be applied; as being to me all that is implied in the word God.

In him will I trust - I will repose that confidence in him which is evinced by making my home with him, and seeking permanently to dwell with him.

Verse 3

Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler - The snare or gin set for catching birds; meaning, here, that God would save him from the purposes of wicked people; such purposes as might be compared with the devices employed to catch birds. On the meaning of the figure used here, see the notes at Psalm 18:5.

And from the noisome pestilence - The "fatal" pestilence; the pestilence that spreads death in its march. That is, he can prevent its coming upon you; or, he can save you from its ravages, while others are dying around you. This promise is not to be understood as absolute, or as meaning that no one who fears God will ever fall by the pestilence - for good people "do" die at such times as well as bad people; but the idea is, that God "can" preserve us at such a time and that, as a great law, he will be thus the protector of those who trust him. It is to be remembered that in times of pestilence (as was the case during the prevalence of the Asiatic cholera in 1832 and 1848), very many of the victims are the intemperate, the sensual, the debased, and that a life of this kind is a predisposing cause of death in such visitations of judgment. A large part of those who die are of that number. From the danger arising from this cause, of course the virtuous, the temperate, the pious are exempt; and this is one of the methods by which God saves those who trust in him from the "noisome pestilence." Religion, therefore, to a considerable extent, constitutes a ground of security at such times; nor is there any reason to doubt that, in many cases also, there may be a special interposition protecting the friends of God from danger, and sparing them for future usefulness. The promise here is substantially that general promise which we have in the Scriptures everywhere, that God is the Protector of his people, and that they may put their trust in him.

Verse 4

He shall cover thee with his feathers … - As the parent bird protects its young. See the notes at Psalm 17:8. Compare Deuteronomy 32:11. "His truth." His unfailing promise; the certainty that what he has promised to do he will perform.

Shall be thy shield and buckler - literally, "Shield and buckler is his truth." The meaning is, that his pledge or promise would be unto them as the shield of the soldier is to him in battle. Compare Psalm 35:2. The word rendered "buckler" is derived from the verb "to surround," and is given to the defensive armor here referred to, because it "surrounds," and thus "protects" a person. It may apply to a coat of mail.

Verse 5

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night - That which usually causes alarm at night - a sudden attack; an unexpected incursion of enemies; sudden disease coming on by night; or the pestilence which seems to love night, and to "walk in darkness." Any one of these things seems to

be aggravated by night and darkness; and hence, we most dread them then. We cannot see their approach; we cannot measure their outlines; we know not the extent of the danger, or what may be the calamity.

Nor for the arrow that flieth by day - Whether shot from the bow of God - as pestilence and disease; or from the hand of man in battle. The idea is, that he that trusts in God will be calm. Compare the notes at Psalm 56:3.

Verse 6

Nor for the pestilence - The plague or pestilence was common in Oriental countries.

That walketh in darkness - Not that it particularly comes in the night, but that it seems to creep along as if in the night; that is, where one cannot mark its progress, or anticipate when or whom it will strike. The laws of its movements are unknown, and it comes upon people as an enemy that suddenly attacks us in the night.

Nor for the destruction - The word used here - קטב *qeṭeb* - means properly a cutting off, a destruction, as a destroying storm, Isaiah 28:2; and then, contagious pestilence, Deuteronomy 32:24. It may be applied here to anything that sweeps away people - whether storm, war, pestilence, or famine.

That wasteth at noonday - It lays waste, or produces desolation, at noon; that is, visibly, openly. The meaning is, that whenever, or in whatever form, calamity comes which sweeps away the race - whether at midnight or at noon - whether in the form of pestilence, war, or famine - he who trusts in God need not - will not - be afraid. He will feel either that he will be preserved from its ravages, or that if he is cut off he has nothing to fear. He is a friend of God, and he has a hope of a better life. In death, and in the future world, there is nothing of which he should be afraid. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, strangely enough, "Nor of mischance and the demon of noonday."

Verse 7

A thousand shall fall at thy side - Though a thousand should fall at thy side, or close to thee. This alludes to the manner in which the pestilence often moves among people.

And ten thousand at thy right hand - Compare Psalm 3:6. The word "myriad" would better represent the exact idea in the original, as the Hebrew word is different from that which is translated "a thousand." It is

put here for any large number. No matter how many fall around thee, on the right hand and the left, you will have nothing to fear.

But it shall not come nigh thee - You will be safe. You may feel assured of the divine protection. Your mind may be calm through a sense of such guardianship, and your very calmness will conduce to your safety. This refers, as remarked above, to a "general" law in regard to the judgments of God. It is true that others, beside the dissipated, vicious, and debased, may be the victims; but the great law is that temperance, soberness, virtue, cleanliness, and that regard to comfort and health to which religion and virtue prompt, constitute a marked security - so marked as to illustrate the "general" law referred to in the psalm before us.

Verse 8

Only - That is, This is "all" that will occur to you. The only thing which you have to anticipate is, that you will see how God punishes sinners.

With thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked - Your own eyes shall see it. See the notes at Psalm 37:34. You will see the just punishment of the ungodly, the vicious, the profane, the sensual. You will see what is the proper fruit of their conduct; what is the just expression of the views which God takes of their character. This undoubtedly refers to the general principle that there is a moral government on earth; that vice is often punished as such; that the general course of the divine dealings is such as to show that God is favorable to virtue, and is opposed to vice. The system is not complete here, and there are many things which could not be reconciled with this, if the present world were all, and if there were no future state: but the course of events indicates the general character of the divine administration, and what is the tendency of things. The completion - the actual and perfect adjustment - is reserved for a future state. The facts as they occur on earth prove that there is an attribute of justice in God; the fact that his dealings here are not wholly and fully in accordance with what justice demands, proves that there will be a state where full justice will be done, and where the whole system will be adjusted.

Verse 9

Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge - literally, "For thou, O Jehovah, (art) my refuge." The Chaldee Paraphrase regards this as the language of Solomon, who, according to that version, is one of the speakers in the psalm: "Solomon answered and said, ‹Since thou, O Lord, art my refuge,‘" etc. Tholuck regards this as the response of the choir. But

this is unnecessary. The idea is, that the psalmist "himself" had made Yahweh his refuge, or his defense. The language is an expression of his own feeling - of his own experience - in having made God his refuge, and is designed here to be a ground of exhortation to others to do the same thing. He could say that he had made God his refuge; he could say that God was now his refuge; and he could appeal to this - to his own experience - when he exhorted others to do the same, and gave them assurance of safety in doing it.

Even the Most High thy habitation - literally, "The Most High hast thou made thy habitation;" or, thy home. On the word habitation, see the notes at Psalm 90:1. The idea is, that he had, as it were, chosen to abide with God, or to dwell with him - to find his home with him as in a father's house. The consequence of this, or the security which would follow, he states in the following verses.

Verse 10

There shall no evil befall thee - The Chaldee Paraphrase has, "The Lord of the world answered and said, ‹There shall no evil befall thee,'" etc. The sentiment, however, is that the psalmist could assure such an one, from his own personal experience, that he would be safe. He had himself made Yahweh his refuge, and he could speak with confidence of the safety of doing so. This, of course, is to be understood as a general truth, in accordance with what has been said above.

Neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling - On the word rendered "plague" here נגע *nega*ʿ - see Psalm 38:12, note; Psalm 39:11, note. It is not the same word which is used in Psalm 91:6, and translated "pestilence;" and it does not refer to what is technically called the "plague." It may denote anything that would be expressive of the divine displeasure, or that would be sent as a punishment. The word rendered "dwelling" here means a tent; and the idea is, that no such mark of displeasure would abide with him, or enter his tent as its home. Of course, this also must be understood as a general promise, or as meaning that religion would constitute a general ground of security.

Verse 11

For he shall give his angels charge over thee - literally, "He will give ‹command' to his angels." That is, he would instruct them, or appoint them for this purpose. This passage Psalm 91:11-12 was applied to the Saviour by the tempter. Matthew 4:6. See the notes at that passage. This, however, does

not prove that it had an original reference to the Messiah, for even if we should suppose that Satan was a correct and reliable expounder of the Scriptures, all that the passage would prove as used by him would be, that the righteous, or those who were the friends of God, might rely confidently on his protection, and that Jesus, if he was of God, might do this as others might. On the sentiment in the passage, to wit, that God employs his angels to protect his people, see the notes at Psalm 34:7; compare the notes at Hebrews 1:14.

To keep thee in all thy ways - To preserve thee wheresoever thou goest.

Verse 12

They shall bear thee up … - As if they took hold of thee, and held thee up, when about to fall.

Lest thou dash thy foot … - Lest you should stumble and fall. They will protect you so that you may walk safely.

Verse 13

Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder - Thou shalt be safe among dangers, as if the rage of the lion were restrained, and he became like a lamb, and as if the poisonous tooth of the serpent were extracted. Compare Mark 16:18. The word used here to denote the "lion" is a poetic term, not employed in prose. The word rendered "adder" is, in the margin, asp. The Hebrew word - פתן *pethen* - commonly means viper, asp, or adder. See Job 20:14, note; Job 20:16, note; compare Psalm 58:4; Isaiah 11:8. It may be applied to any venomous serpent.

The young lion - The "young" lion is mentioned as particularly fierce and violent. See Psalm 17:12.

And the dragon … - Hebrew, תנין *tannîyn* See Psalm 74:13, note; Job 7:12, note; Isaiah 27:1, note. In Exodus 7:9-10, Exodus 7:12, the word is rendered serpent (and serpents); in Genesis 1:21; and Job 7:12; whale (and whales); in Deuteronomy 32:33; Nehemiah 2:13; Psalm 74:13; Psalm 148:7; Isaiah 27:1; Isaiah 51:9; Jeremiah 51:34, as here, dragon (and dragons); in Lamentations 4:3, sea monsters. The word does not occur elsewhere. It would perhaps properly denote a sea monster; yet it may be applied to a serpent. Thus applied, it would denote a serpent of the largest and most dangerous kind; and the idea is, that he who trusted in God would be safe amidst the most fearful dangers, as if he should walk safely amidst venomous serpents.

Verse 14

Because he hath set his love upon me - Has become attached to me; has united himself with me; is my friend. The Hebrew word expresses the strongest attachment, and is equivalent to our expression - "to fall in love." It refers here to the fact that God is the object of supreme affection on the part of his people; and it also here implies, that this springs from their hearts; that they have seen such beauty in his character, and have such strong desire for him, that their hearts go out in warm affection toward him.

Therefore will I deliver him - I will save him from trouble and from danger.

I will set him on high - By acknowledging him as my own, and treating him accordingly.

Because he hath known my name - He has known me; that is, he understands my true character, and has learned to love me.

Verse 15

He shall call upon me - He shall have the privilege of calling on me in prayer; and he will do it.

And I will answer him - I will regard his supplications, and will grant his requests. There could be no greater privilege - no more precious promise - than this.

I will be with him in trouble - I will stand by him; I will not forsake him.

I will deliver him, and honor him - I will not only rescue him from danger, but I will exalt him to honor. I will recognize him as my friend, and will regard and treat him as such. On earth he shall be treated as my friend; in another world he shall be exalted to honor among the redeemed, and become the associate of holy beings forever.

Verse 16

With long life will I satisfy him - The margin here, is "length of days;" that is, days lengthened out or multiplied. The meaning is, I will give him length of days as he desires, or until he is satisfied with life; implying

(1) that it is natural to desire long life;

(2) that long life is to be regarded as a blessing (compare Proverbs 3:2, Proverbs 3:16; Exodus 20:12);

(3) that the tendency of religion is to lengthen out life; since virtue, temperance, regular industry, calmness of mind, moderation in all things,

freedom from excesses in eating and in drinking - to all of which religion prompts - contribute to health, and to length of days (see Psalm 34:12-14, notes; Psalm 37:9, note; Psalm 55:23, note); and

(4) that a time will come, even under this promised blessing of length of days, when a man will be "satisfied" with living; when he will have no strong desire to live longer; when, under the infirmities of advanced years, and under his lonely feelings from the fact that his early friends have fallen, and under the influence of a bright hope of heaven, he will feel that he has had enough of life here, and that it is better to depart to another world.

And shew him my salvation - In another life, after he shall be "satisfied" with this life. The promise extends beyond the grave: "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." See the notes at 1 Timothy 4:8. Thus, religion blesses man in this life, and blesses him forever. In possession of this, it is a great thing to him to live long; and then it is a great thing to die - to go to be forever with God.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 92

Introduction

The author of this psalm is not indicated in the title, and it is impossible now to ascertain who he was. Nor can the occasion be determined "when" it was composed. It is of so general a character that it might have been written at any period of the Jewish history; and, so far as the style and the contents are concerned, it may have been written by either of those whose names are attached to the other psalms. That it may have been composed by David, is certainly possible, but of that there is no evidence.

In the title it is called "A Psalm or Song for the sabbath-day;" that is, to be used on the sabbath. The Chaldee Paraphrase has in the title, "Praise and a song which the first man spoke for the sabbath-day." This may indicate that there was an carly tradition on this subject; but we have no proof of what would be so interesting a fact, that we have a genuine poetic composition of Adam. The contents are all such as might be properly used on the sabbath, though there is nothing in the psalm that has any "special" reference to the sabbath, or that is derived from the appointment of such a day. It is not improbable, however, that special psalms and hymns were composed with a view to be used on festal occasions; and this, as a psalm of praise, is well adapted still to the services of the sabbath.

The psalmist refers:

I. To the blessedness of praise, or to the propriety of celebrating the praise of God, Psalm 92:1-4.

II. He refers to the works of God as laying the foundation of praise, Psalm 92:5-6.

III. He refers to the justice of God, or the fact that the wicked, however they may seem to be prospered, will be cut off, Psalm 92:7-9.

IV. He refers to the prosperity and the security of the righteous; to the influence of religion and the favor of God on life, as making it prosperous and happy, and as preparing people to be useful and cheerful in old age, Psalm 92:10-15.

Verse 1

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord - literally, "Good is it to give thanks unto Jehovah." That is, the act is appropriate; the effect is good.

(1) The thing itself is appropriate, for there is much, under all circumstances, to be thankful for: life, health, food, raiment, air, water, friends, recollections, hopes - and, above all, the blessings of redemption, and the assurance that we may be happy forever. Many of these things may be found in the condition of all; but if all else fail, the hope of heaven - the assurance that the Redeemer died - the offer of salvation - cannot fail. That is ours, and cannot be taken away.

(2) The effect is good. It is a desirable state of mind. It tends to happiness, contentment, peace. A gloomy mind makes all things around more gloomy; an unthankful mind is an unhappy mind; a murmuring, complaining, dissatisfied mind makes its possessor wretched, and all around him miserable.

(3) it is good as it is due to God. For all his favor we should be thankful - and all that we enjoy is his gift.

(4) it tends much to lessen the real troubles and afflictions of life to dwell on those things for which we should be thankful.

And to sing praises unto thy name - Unto thee. As this psalm was designed for the "Sabbath day," this proves that one of the appropriate services of the Sabbath is "praise." It is a day when it is fit to recall the mercies of God to our recollection; and the remembrance of those mercies, and their celebration by appropriate songs, tend to diffuse joy over all the coming days of the week.

O Most High - God exalted over all. The fact that "he" is exalted over all - over us - over our friends - over all worlds - is an appropriate thought when we come before him to praise him; appropriate at all times, and in all circumstances of life.

Verse 2

To show forth thy loving-kindness - To celebrate thy mercy; thy goodness; thy love.

In the morning - That is, there is a fitness in doing this in the morning; or, there are special reasons why we should do this at that time.

(a) We have been preserved through the dangers of the night; dangers when we were asleep, unconscious, and defenseless.

(b) Life is then, as it were, a new gift - for we are raised from “the image of death” - sleep - and we should regard life then “as if” we had been raised from the dead.

(c) To praise God in the morning will have a good influence on us, in promoting cheerfulness; in making us benignant and kind; in preparing us for the toils and trials of the day.

There is no better preparation for a day, in view of its burdens, cares, toils, and trials, than a thankful, cheerful mind in the morning. He who begins a day with a sour, a morose, a complaining, an irritable spirit - who has been preserved through the night, and sees nothing to be thankful for in the morning - will be a miserable man through the day, and will make all miserable around him. He who sees nothing to be thankful for in the morning will see nothing to hope for in the day; he who has no gratitude for the past, will have no bright anticipations of the future.

And thy faithfulness - Faithfulness in the laws of nature; in thy promises; in thy character: in thy providential dealings with people.

Every night - Margin, in the nights.” The reference is to the return of evening; and the meaning is, that it is a good thing, or that it is appropriate to contemplate the faithfulness of God at the close of every day.

(a) The mind is then calm, after the toils of the day are over.

(b) The time - evening - its stillness - its twilight - its approaching darkness - all is favorable for reflection.

(c) There is much in every day to be thankful for, and it is well to recall it at night.

(d) It has a happy effect on the mind when we are about to lie down to rest, to recall the mercies of God; to reflect on what he has done for us; to gather, from his kindness in the past, lessons of confidence and hope for the times to come.

We lie down at night more calmly in proportion as we are disposed at the close of a day to think of the mercies which we have received at the hand of God; and the recalling of those mercies to remembrance with the voice, and with instruments of praise, is always an appropriate mode of closing a day.

Verse 3

Upon an instrument of ten strings - The general idea in this verse is, that instruments "of all kinds" are to be employed in celebrating the praises of God. On the instrument here referred to, see the notes at Psalm 33:2.

And upon the psaltery - Or "lyre." See the notes at Isaiah 5:12. The word is there translated viol.

Upon the harp with a solemn sound - Margin, upon the solemn sound with the harp." Prof. Alexander renders this, "On meditation with a harp." On the word rendered "harp," see the notes at Isaiah 5:12. The Hebrew word rendered "solemn sound" is הגיון *higgâyôn* which means properly "murmur;" then, the sound of a harp; and then, meditation. See the notes at Psalm 9:16. Here the meaning seems to be, "with murmurs upon the harp;" that is, with the sound of the harp - its murmuring tones. It does not denote here a distinct instrument of music, but it refers to the tones of the harp: not to the meditations of the mind - of the worshipper - but to the low and gentle sounds of the instrument itself.

Verse 4

For thou, Lord, hast made me glad - Thou hast made me happy; thou hast given me such a state of feeling as finds an appropriate expression in "praise."

Through thy work - Either the work of creation, the finishing of which the Sabbath was designed particularly to commemorate; or the works of God in general - the universe; or the general dealings of his providence; or some particular interpositions of Providence in his behalf that called for special praise. All these are appropriately combined in the celebrations - the praises - of the Sabbath; to these should be added, as among the most marvelous of his works, and that which furnishes special occasion for praise on the Christian Sabbath, the wonderful work of redemption - that which of all the "works" of God makes a heart rightly affected most "glad."

I will triumph - I will exult or rejoice.

In the works of thy hands - In all thy works; in all that thou hast done.

Verse 5

O Lord, how great are thy works! - Compare Psalm 8:3; Psalm 40:5. See also the notes at Job 11:7. The meaning here is this: The psalmist, on the Sabbath, in giving himself to meditation on the works of God, is overwhelmed with a sense of their vastness, their incomprehensible nature, and the depth of wisdom evinced, far beyond the grasp of man, in what God had done. How soon is man lost; how soon does he get beyond his depth; how soon does he feel that here is greatness which he cannot comprehend, and wisdom which he cannot fathom, and goodness which he cannot appreciate, when he sits down to meditate on the works of God!

And thy thoughts are very deep - Compare Isaiah 28:29; Romans 11:33-34. The meaning is, that the plans or the purposes of God, as evinced in the works of creation and providence, are too profound for man to understand them. Who but God himself can comprehend them?

Verse 6

A brutish man knoweth not - A man who is stupid, and who is like the beasts or brutes; that is, a man whose tastes and propensities are like the brutes, or who does not seem to act as if endowed with a rational nature. The idea evidently is, that there are many such people, and that it is not to be wondered at that they have no exalted idea of the greatness of God. As a matter of fact there are many in human form - many made in the image of God - who seem to have no more notion of God, and who see no more wisdom and goodness in his works, than the horse or the ox. Compare Isaiah 1:3.

Neither doth a fool understand this - A fool, in the sense that he has been made foolish and stupid by sin; that he does not worship and honor God. He has no right understanding in regard to the Maker and the Governor of the universe.

Verse 7

When the wicked spring as the grass - When they grow up as plants do; when they seem to flourish and prosper. Compare Psalm 90:5-6; Psalm 37:2, Psalm 37:35, Psalm 37:38. The word "grass" here refers to the vegetable creation generally, embracing plants and flowers of all kinds.

And when all the workers of iniquity do flourish - As plants and flowers do. They are like vigorous plants; not like the stunted and dry shrubs of the desert.

It is that they shall be destroyed for ever - The meaning here is, not that the design of their being thus made to flourish is that they should be destroyed, or that they are made to flourish for that purpose, but that such "will be" the result. They will not be made happy in another world by their prosperous and prospered wickedness here, as if God approved of their course; but the end will be that they will be destroyed forever. The design of the psalmist seems to be to turn the mind from the idea that mere external prosperity is necessarily connected with happiness; or that one who is prospered in this life is on that account safe. There is another world, and "there" ample justice will be done to all. See Psalm 73:16-20.

Verse 8

But thou, Lord, art most high for evermore - In the treatment of the righteous and the wicked, thou wilt maintain thine own exalted place as a sovereign. Whatever may occur to people, God will maintain this exalted position as supreme over all.

Verse 9

For, lo, thine enemies, O Lord, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish - The repetition of the word "lo" here - "behold!" - is emphatic. The attention of the psalmist was fixed on this as an event which would be sure to occur. It was certain that God would be exalted; it followed from this, that all his enemies would be subdued in order that he might be thus exalted.

All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered - More literally, "shall scatter or disperse themselves;" implying eagerness and activity, as if they were in haste to flee away. The allusion is to an army that is discomfited, disorganized, "demoralized," and scattered; or to chaff that is dispersed by the wind. See Job 21:18; Isaiah 17:13; Isaiah 29:5; Hosea 13:3.

Verse 10

But my horn shalt thou exalt - The horn is a symbol of strength or power (see the notes at Psalm 18:2); and the meaning here is, that, while the wicked would be cut off, he would be prospered; that is, he had such confidence that he was the friend of God, that he believed God would honor him and exalt him. The psalmist here speaks of himself not so much with reference to his own particular case, but as the representative of the righteous. The idea is, that God will thus exalt "a righteous man."

Like the horn of an unicorn - Supposed to be remarkable for the strength of its horn. On the animal here referred to, see the notes at Job 39:9; compare Psalm 22:21.

I shall be anointed with fresh oil - Oil pure and sweet; not old and rancid. That is, he would be made happy, cheerful, bright, and prosperous. Anointing with oil in the East was the symbol of all this, or was equivalent to what we mean by putting on festive apparel - holiday apparel. Compare the notes at Psalm 23:5.

Verse 11

Mine eye also shall see my desire - That is, I shall be permitted to see the destruction of my foes; I shall be gratified with seeing them overthrown. On the sentiment here expressed, see Psalm 54:7, note; Psalm 59:10, note.

On mine enemies - The word used here - שׁוּר *shûr* - occurs nowhere else. It means, properly, a lier-in-wait; one who "watches;" one who is in ambush; and refers to persons who "watched" his conduct; who "watched" for his ruin.

And mine ears … - literally, "Of those rising up against me, evil-doers, my ear shall hear." He would hear of their ruin; he would hear what he desired to hear.

Verse 12

The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree - That is, the beauty, the erectness, the stateliness, the growth of the palm-tree - all this is an emblem of the condition, the prosperity, the happiness of a righteous man. The wicked shall be cut down; but the righteous shall flourish. This image - the comparison of a righteous man to a flourishing, majestic, green, and beautiful tree - is not uncommon in the Scriptures. See the notes at Psalm 1:3; compare Jeremiah 17:8. On the "palm-tree," see the notes at Matthew 21:8. "The stem," says Dr. Thomson ("land and the Book," vol. i. p. 65)" tall, slender, and erect as Rectitude herself, suggests to the Arab poets many a symbol for their lady-love; and Solomon, long before them, has sung, ‹How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love! for delights; this thy stature is like the palm-tree." Isaiah 2:13. The following remarks by Dr. Thomson ("land and the Book," vol. i. pp. 292,295), with the accompanying cut, will show the propriety of the image here. "The platform where the cedars stand is more than six thousand feet above the Mediterranean, and around it are gathered the very tallest and grayest heads of Lebanon. The forest is not large - not more than five hundred trees, great and small, grouped irregularly on the sides of shallow ravines, which mark the birthplace of the Khadisha, or Holy River.

“But, though the space covered by them does not exceed half a dozen acres, yet, when fairly within the grove, and beneath the giant arms of those old patriarchs of a hundred generations, there comes a solemn hush upon the soul as if by enchantment. Precisely the same sort of magic spell settles on the spirits, no matter how often you repeat your visits. But it is most impressive in the night. Let us by all means arrange to sleep there. The universal silence is almost painful. The gray old towers of Lebanon, still as a stone, stand all around, holding up the stars of heaven to look at you, and the trees gather like phantoms about you, and wink knowingly, or seem to, and whisper among themselves you know not what. You become suspicious, nervous, until, broad awake, you find that it is nothing but the flickering of your drowsy fire, and the feeble flutter of bats among the boughs of the trees. A night among the cedars is never forgotten; the impressions, electrotyped, are hid away in the inner chamber of the soul, among her choicest treasures, to be visited a thousand times with never-failing delight.

“There is a singular discrepancy in the statements of travelers with regard to the number of trees. Some mention seven, others thirteen - intending, doubtless, only those whose age and size rendered them Biblical, or at least historical. It is not easy, however, to draw any such line of demarcation. There is a complete gradation from small and comparatively young to the very oldest patriarchs of the forest. I counted four hundred and forty-three, great and small, and this cannot be far from the true number. This, however, is not uniform. Some are struck down by lightning, broken by enormous loads of snow, or torn to fragments by tempests. Even the sacrilegious axe is sometimes lifted against them. But, on the other hand, young trees are constantly springing up from the roots of old ones, and from seeds of ripe cones. I have seen these infant cedars in thousands just springing from the soil; but as the grove is wholly unprotected, and greatly frequented both by human beings and animals, they are quickly destroyed. The fact, however, proves that the number might be increased “ad libitum.” Beyond a doubt, the whole of these upper terraces of Lebanon might again be covered with groves of this noble tree, and furnish timber enough not only for Solomon‘s Temple and the house of the forest of Lebanon, but for all the houses along this coast. But, unless a wiser and more provident government controls the country, such a result can never be realized, and,

indeed, the whole forest will slowly die out under the dominion of the Arab and Turk. Even in that case the tree will not be lost. It has been propagated by the nut or seed in many parks in Europe, and there are more of them within fifty miles of London than on all Lebanon.

"We have seen larger trees every way, and much taller, on the banks of the Ohio, and the loftiest cedar might take shelter under the lowest branches of California's vegetable glories. Still, they are respectable trees. The girth of the largest is more than forty-one feet; the height of the highest may be one hundred. These largest, however, part into two or three only a few feet from the ground. Their age is very uncertain, nor are they more ready to reveal it than others who have an uneasy consciousness of length of days. Very different estimates have been made. Some of our missionary band, who have experience in such matters, and confidence in the results, have counted the "growths" (as we Western people call the annual concentric circles) for a few inches into the trunk of the oldest cedar, and from such data carry back its birth three thousand five hundred years. It may be so. They are carved full of names and dates, going back several generations, and the growth "since the earliest date" has been almost nothing. At this rate of increase they must have been growing ever since the Flood. But young trees enlarge far faster, so that my confidence in estimates made from such specimens is but small." The idea in the passage before us is, that the righteous will flourish like the most luxuriant and majestic trees of the forest; they may be compared with the most grand and beautiful objects in nature.

Verse 13

Those that be planted in the house of the Lord - As if plants were reared up in the house of God. The same image, under the idea of the olive tree, occurs in Psalm 52:8. See the notes at that verse. The passage here may refer particularly to those who have been trained up in connection with the church; young plants set out in the sanctuary, and cultivated until they have reached their growth.

Shall flourish in the courts of our God - That is, Having been planted there, they will grow there; they will send out their boughs there; they will produce fruit there. The "courts" of the house of God were properly the areas or open spaces around the tabernacle or the temple (see the notes at

Matthew 21:12); but the word came also to denote the tabernacle or the temple itself, or to designate a place where God was worshipped. It has this meaning here. The passage affords an encouragement to parents to train up their children in attendance on the ordinances of public worship; and it shows the advantage of having been born in the church, and of having been trained up in it - an advantage which no one can fully appreciate. The passage may also be regarded as furnishing a proof of what will be the result of being thus "planted" and nurtured in connection with the church, inasmuch as trees carefully planted and cultivated are expected to produce more and better fruit than those which grow wild.

Verse 14

They shall still bring forth fruit in old age - As a tree that is carefully planted and cultivated may be expected to live long, and to bear fruit even when it is old. It is true that such a tree may be cut down; or that it may be blown down by winds and tempests; or that it may be unproductive, but as a general rule, and as laying the foundation of a reasonable hope, such a tree may be expected to live long, and to produce fruit even when it is old. So of one devoted early to God, and trained up under the influences of religion. The care, the culture, the habits of temperance, of industry, of moderation, and of sobriety so formed, are favorable to length of days, and lay the foundation for usefulness when old age comes. An aged man should be useful. He should feel that whatever wisdom he may possess as the result of long study and experience, belongs to God and to truth; that one great reason for sparing him is that he may be useful; that the world needs the benefit of his counsel and his prayers; that his life is lengthened out not for his own ease or enjoyment, but that virtue and piety may be extended in the world by all the influence which he can bring to bear upon it in advanced years. It may be added that, as a matter of fact, those who are thus trained and are thus preserved, are useful in old age. No one thus spared need be useless; perhaps almost none are. There is something appropriate for old men to do, as there is for the young and the middle-aged; and it should be the object of an aged Christian to find out what that is, and to do it. The word rendered "old age means literally grey or hoary hair."

They shall be fat - The meaning is, that they shall be vigorous, or have the appearance of vigor and health.

And flourishing - Margin, as in Hebrew, "green." This image is taken from a tree, as if it were still green in old age, or gave no indications of

decay.

Verse 15

To shew that the Lord is upright - That is, This will be a proof that God is faithful to his promises; that he is the true friend of his people. The fact that they live long - that they are happy and useful even in old age, will be a demonstration that God is the friend of virtue, and that he deals with people according to their character.

He is my rock - He is my defense; that which constitutes my security. See the notes at Psalm 18:2. This is language of strong confidence in view of all that is said in the psalm.

And there is no unrighteousness in him - This is said in the most absolute form - implying the most entire confidence. God is altogether to be trusted. There is no evil or wrong in his character or in his dealings. In all respects he is worthy of confidence: "worthy" to be loved, trusted, adored, obeyed, by the inhabitants of all worlds. What a sublime thought is this! What a consolatory truth! What would the universe be if God, a Being of infinite POWER, were not a Being of perfect RIGHTEOUSNESS, and could not be trusted by the creatures which he has made!

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 93

Introduction

The author of this psalm is unknown, and there is nothing by which we can determine this, or its date, or the occasion on which it was written. It seems, from Psalm 93:5, to have been composed with some reference to the sanctuary, and to the service there: "Holiness becometh thine "house," O Lord," and it may have been designed, with the last psalm, to have been used in the place of public worship on the sabbath-day. It would appear, also, from the structure of the psalm, that it was composed in view of some danger which may have threatened the nation from some hostile power Psalm 93:1-4, and that the design was to impart confidence in God, or to keep up the assurance in the mind of the people that God presided over all, and that his kingdom was safe. With this view, it is adapted to inspire confidence in God in all ages, and in all times of danger. In the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, the title is, "The praise of an ode by David, for the day preceding the sabbath, when the earth was founded." The origin of this title is unknown, and it has no authority. There is no evidence that it was composed by David, and the presumption from Psalm 93:5 is that it was composed after the temple was built, and consequently after the death of David.

Verse 1

The Lord reigneth - The same commencement of a psalm occurs in Psalm 97:1-12; Psalm 99:1-9. The same idea is often found in the Scriptures. 1 Chronicles 16:31; Psalm 47:8; Isaiah 52:7; Revelation 19:6. The thought seems abrupt here. It would appear as if the psalmist had been meditating on the dark things which occur in the world; the mysteries which abound; the things which seem irreconcilable with the idea that there is a just government over the world, and that suddenly the idea occurs, as a flash of lightning in a storm, that Yahweh reigns over all, and that all must be right. Amidst all these things God sits upon the throne; he orders all events; he sways his scepter over all; he orders all things according to his own will; he secures the accomplishment of his own purposes.

He is clothed with majesty - That is, he puts on, or wears this; he appears in this as a garb, or robe. The word rendered "majesty" means properly "loftiness," and is applied to the swelling of the sea Psalm 89:9, or to a column of smoke, Isaiah 9:18. The idea here is, that God is exalted; and

that he appears in such a manner as to indicate his proper dignity. See the notes at Isaiah 6:1.

The Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself - There is an allusion here to the mode of dress among the Orientals - the custom of girding the loins when one labored, or walked, or ran. See the notes at Matthew 5:38-41.

The world also is stablished - Is firm; is on a solid foundation. It cannot be shaken or destroyed by natural convulsions, or by the power of man.

That it cannot be moved - Moved out of its place; overthrown; destroyed. This seems to have been spoken in view of some impending calamity, as if everything were to be swept away. The psalmist consoles himself with the thought that the world was firmly established; that no storm or tempest could be so violent as to remove it out of its place. The ground of consolation is the essential stability of what God has ordained.

Verse 2

Thy throne is established of old - Whatever might occur, the throne of God was firm. That could not be moved. It had been set up from all eternity. It had stood through all the convulsions and changes which had occurred in the universe; and it would stand firm forever. Whatever might change, that was immovable; and as long as that is unchanged we have a ground of security and hope. Should "that" be moved, all would be gone. The margin here is, as in Hebrew, "from then:" but it means "of old;" from the most ancient times; that is, from the period indicated by the next clause, "from everlasting."

Thou art from everlasting - From all eternity; thou hast always existed; thou art ever the same Psalm 90:1.

Verse 3

The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice - The word here rendered "floods," means properly rivers, and then it may be applied to any waters. The word voice here refers to the noise of raging waters when they are agitated by the winds, or when they dash on the shore. See the notes at Psalm 42:7.

The floods lift up their waves - As if they would sweep everything away. The allusion here is to some calamity or danger which might, in its strength and violence, be compared with the wild and raging waves of the ocean. Or if it refers literally to the ocean in a storm, then the psalm may

have been the reflections of the author as he stood on the shore of the sea, and saw the waves beat and dash against the shore. To one thus looking upon the billows as they roll in toward the shore, it seems as if they were angry; as if they intended to sweep everything away; as if the rocks of the shore could not resist them. Yet they have their bounds. They spend their strength; they break, and retire as if to recover their force, and then they renew their attack with the same result. But their power is limited. The rocky shore is unmoved. The earth abides. God is over all. His throne is unshaken. No violence of the elements can affect that; and, under his dominion, all is secure.

Verse 4

The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters - That is, he is more powerful than those waters; he is able to control them. See Psalm 65:7, note; Job 38:11, note. The original here is more rapid in the course of the thought; more emphatic and forcible: "More than the voice of waters - many - mighty - the breakers of the sea - in the high place is Jehovah." He is over all those billows and breakers; more mighty than they all. They can proceed no further than he permits; they will be stayed when and where he commands. We can conceive of few things which more illustrate the power and the majesty of God than the fact that he thus presides over, and controls, the waves of the ocean.

Yea, than the mighty waves of the sea - The original word here corresponds precisely with our word "breakers" - the mighty waves that "break" on the beach.

Verse 5

Thy testimonies are very sure - All that thou hast borne witness to; all that thou hast affirmed or declared to be true. This would embrace "all that" God has spoken, whether his law, his promises, his commands, his prophecies, or his statements of what has occurred and of what will occur. See the notes at Psalm 19:7.

Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord - The psalm seems to have been intended to be used in the sanctuary, as a part of public worship, and the word "holiness" here would seem to mean a proper respect for God; confidence in him; a state of mind free from all doubt, and from all that is impure. Perhaps there may be here, also, the idea that in all the convulsions of the world; in all that threatens to overthrow truth and righteousness; in all the attacks which are made on the divine government; in all the efforts of

the defenders of error, and in the midst of abounding iniquity, the church should maintain a firm adherence to the principles of "holiness," to that which is right and true. There should be one place - the church - where there would be no wavering in regard to truth and holiness; one place, where the truth would be defended whatever commotions might be abroad. The main idea, therefore, in the psalm is, that, in view of the fact that God reigns, and that nothing can frustrate his plans, or disturb his throne, we should approach him with reverence, with humble trust, with sincere and pure hearts.

In a larger sense, also, in the largest sense conceivable - it is true that "holiness," purity, freedom from evil thoughts, from a wanton eye and a wanton imagination, from unholy plans and purposes, should prevail in the house of God, and should be regarded as indispensable to proper worship. As heaven is pure, and as there shall enter there nothing "that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie" Revelation 21:27, so in the place where we seek to prepare for that holy world - the sanctuary of God - nothing should be allowed to enter that is impure and polluting; nothing that tends to corrupt or defile the soul. It may be added, that attendance in a place of public worship is calculated to make the heart pure, and to banish unholy thoughts and purposes from the soul. A man who feels that he is in the presence of a holy God, will not be likely to welcome into his soul polluted images and unholy desires.

Forever - Margin, as in Hebrew, "to length of days." The idea is, that it is always appropriate. See the notes at Psalm 23:6.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 94

Introduction

This psalm, in the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, is entitled "A Psalm of David, for the fourth day of the week." What is the origin of this title is unknown, as there is nothing corresponding to it in the Hebrew. In the original the psalm is without a title, nor is there anything in the contents of it which will enable us to determine who was the author, or to fix the date or the occasion of its composition. There is in it nothing necessarily inconsistent with the supposition that David was the author; and there were undoubtedly occasions in his life, when it would have been appropriate. There have been many conjectures as to the author, and as to the occasion on which it was composed. Rudinger refers it to the times of David and the rebellion of Absalom; Venema supposes that it refers to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the persecution under him; DeWette refers it to the time of the Babylonian exile; others suppose that it was written on the eve of the Babylonian captivity. Whatever may have been the occasion, the style and form of the psalm are so general that it may be made a vehicle of pious thought, and of the feelings of the people of God, in all ages.

From the psalm itself it is plain that it was composed during some Impending or actual national calamity. This is evident from Psalm 94:3-5, Psalm 94:14, Psalm 94:20. It would seem, also, from Psalm 94:7-10, that it was probably some calamity which was brought upon the people by a foreign nation - a nation that defied Yahweh, and proclaimed that he was unable to defend his friends, or that he would not interpose in their behalf: "They say, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." The object of the psalm is to show that God "is" the protector of his people; that he "does" regard them; that he "will" interpose in their behalf.

The psalm embraces the following subjects:

(1) An appeal or prayer to God as the God of vengeance, or as a just God, Psalm 94:1-2.

(2) a statement of the character and purposes of the wicked who were bringing these calamities upon the nation, Psalm 94:3-7.

(3) a direct appeal to these invaders themselves - an appeal based on the ground that God could "not" be indifferent to the conduct of people; that he

must hear their words, understand their thoughts, see their acts, and know all that they did, Psalm 94:8-11.

(4) Consolation in the trouble derived from the fact that this was a deserved chastening of the Lord, and was not designed for their destruction, but for their good, Psalm 94:12-15.

(5) The fact that God is a source of confidence, comfort, and support to his people, in all Such times of trial, Psalm 94:16-23.

Verse 1

O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth … - Margin, God of revenges The idea is, that it pertains to God to take vengeance, or to punish for crimes. See the notes at Romans 12:19. The appeal here is made to God in view of the crimes committed by others, and which are referred to in the subsequent part of the psalm. God is addressed as having the right to restrain and punish wicked people, and he is asked to interpose and assert that right in a case which clearly demanded it. The appeal is repeated to make it emphatic, or to denote "earnestness" in the petition.

Show thyself - Margin, as in Hebrew, "shine forth." The meaning is, Manifest thyself; come forth as such a God; prove thy right; display thy power, and show that thou art a God opposed to crime and wrong. The same Hebrew word is used here which is found in Psalm 80:1, and which is there rendered "shine forth." See the notes at that passage.

Verse 2

Lift up thyself - Be exalted or lifted up so as to be manifest in thy true character. The idea is that God was, as it were, sitting at his ease, or as if he were indifferent to what was occurring in the world. See the notes at Psalm 3:7.

Thou Judge of the earth - Ruler of the world; to whom it pertains to exercise judgment over all classes of people, and in all circumstances. The meaning here is, that as he was the Ruler of the whole earth, this matter came without doubt under his jurisdiction. It was a case for his interposition.

Render a reward to the proud - A just recompence to the people who are confident in their own strength, and who are manifesting their pride in depriving others of their rights.

Verse 3

Lord, how long shall the wicked … - As if there were to be no end to their exaltation; their joy; their success. How long would God allow this? How long would he sit by and see it done? Was he disposed to let them go on forever? Would he never interpose, and arrest them in their career? How often do we wonder that God does not interpose! How often does it seem inexplicable that a Being of almighty power and infinite goodness does not interfere with respect to the wickedness, the oppression, the slavery, the wrong, the cruelty, the fraud, the violence of the world - and put an end to it! Nay, how entirely are we overwhelmed at the thought that he does not put an end to iniquity in the universe altogether; that he never "will" thus interpose, and put an end to sin and sorrow! Such things are too high for us now; perhaps will be always so. Things on earth are not as we should suppose they would be; and we can only pause and adore where we cannot comprehend!

Verse 4

How long shall they utter and speak hard things? - The word rendered utter means to pour forth - as water from a fountain; to pour forth copiously. The meaning is, that they seemed to be full, and that they poured forth evil words as a fountain pours forth water. The phrase "hard things" means proud, unfeeling, insolent things; things which are unjust, unkind, severe, harsh.

And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? - Boast of their power and their success. How long shall they be permitted to have such success as may seem to justify them in their exultation?

Verse 5

They break in pieces thy people - They tread down; they grind; they crush. The Hebrew word is often used as meaning to crush under foot; to trample on; and hence, it means to oppress. Lamentations 3:34; Isaiah 3:15.

And afflict - To wit, by oppression and wrong. If this refers to foreigners, it means that they did this by invasion and by the ravages of war.

Thine heritage - Thy people, regarded as an inheritance or possession. See Psalm 28:9, note; Psalm 33:12, note; Psalm 68:9, note; Psalm 74:2, note; Isaiah 19:25, note; Isaiah 47:6, note; 1 Peter 5:3, note.

Verse 6

They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless - To do this is everywhere represented as a special crime, and as especially

offensive to God from the fact that these classes are naturally feeble and unprotected. See the notes at Isaiah 1:17; Psalm 68:5; Psalm 82:3.

Verse 7

Yet they say - By their conduct; or, they seem to say.

The Lord shall not see - In the original, יה *Yâhh* This is an abbreviation of the word יהוה *Yahweh* See Psalm 68:4, note; Psalm 83:18, note. On the impious sentiment here expressed, see the notes at Psalm 10:11.

Neither shall the God of Jacob regard it - Implying that God was indifferent to the conduct of people; that he would not punish the wicked; that sinners have nothing to fear at his hand. This sentiment is very common still, either as an article in their creed, or as implied in their conduct. The doctrine of universal salvation is really founded on this opinion; and most people ACT as if it were their belief that the wicked are in no danger of being punished, and that there is no such attribute in God as justice.

Verse 8

Understand, ye brutish among the people - See Psalm 73:22. The meaning here is, "You who are like the brutes; you who see and understand no more of the character and plans of God than the wild beasts of the desert." The meaning is, that they did not employ their reason in the case; they acted like beasts, regardless of the consequences of their conduct - as if God would treat people as he does the beasts; as if there were no retribution in the future world.

And ye fools, when will ye be wise? - How long is this stupidity to continue? When will you attend to the truth; when will you act as immortal beings; when will you suffer your rational nature to lead you up to just views of God? It is implied that this folly had been manifested for a long period, and that it was time they should arouse from this condition, and act like people. With what propriety may this language be addressed still to the great mass of mankind! What numbers of the human race are there now, who in respect to God, and to the purpose for which they were made, evince no more wisdom than the brutes that perish! Oh, if people were truly wise, what a beautiful world would this be; how noble and elevated would be our now degraded race!

Verse 9

He that planted the ear - He that made the ear. The word here used in the original is a participle. "Shall not he planting the ear;" that is, the "planter" of the ear. The idea seems to have been taken from the act of

making a “hole” in the ground when we set out a plant - as if, in like manner, a “hole” had been made in the side of the head to insert the ear.

Shall he not hear? - He could not have created the faculty of hearing, without possessing it himself. Or, it is reasonable to suppose that he who has made man capable of hearing, must be able to hear himself. We have nothing in our nature which is not possessed in an infinitely higher measure by God.

He that formed the eye - This, too, is a participle: “He forming the eye;” that is, the Former of the eye. The word used here is frequently employed in reference to a “potter;” and the idea is that God has moulded or formed the eye as the potter fashions the clay. The more the eye is studied in its structure, the more deeply shall we be impressed with the wonderful skill and wisdom of God. See this beautifully illustrated in Paley‘s Natural Theology.

Shall he not see? - He that made the eye to see must himself be able to see. He must see all that the eye itself can see; he must see all that all eyes see; he must have the power of sight far beyond what there is in the mere organ which he has made.

Verse 10

He that chastiseth the heathen - More literally, “Shall not the Reprover of nations - shall he not chastise - he that teaches man knowledge?” The idea is, that God exercises a government over the nations of the earth; that he has them under his control; that he brings heavy judgments on them; that he thus conveys great lessons to man. And shall not such a Being, in individual cases, reprove and correct for sin? It is assumed here that God, in fact, brings judgments on nations; that he does this by fire, flood, famine, pestilence; that these things are proofs that he presides over the nations of the earth; and the question here is, whether he that does this on the large scale must not be expected to do it in individual cases, so that the offender will not escape.

Shall not he correct? - Shall he not chastise, or bring judgments on offenders?

He that teacheth man knowledge … - The idea in our translation, that he who imparts knowledge to mankind must himself possess intelligence, is a true one, but it is probably not that which is in the original. The sense is probably merely that God is the great Teacher, and this is the impression which it is intended should be impressed on the mind, leaving the

consequences of this to be supplied by the reader: "He that teaches man all the knowledge that he has!" - reflect on the consequences of this, or what must follow from this! Such a Being cannot be ignorant; he must understand all things; he must, therefore, see human conduct everywhere as it is. The consequence - the result - of this is staffed in the next verse, that he must see the thoughts of man, and understand his real character.

Verse 11

The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man - That is, He who teaches people all that they know Psalm 94:10, must understand all that there is in the mind. See the notes at 1 Corinthians 3:20.

That they are vanity - That is, that they are foolish, vain, unwise, wicked. The knowledge of the thoughts themselves carries with it also the knowledge that they are vain and foolish - for that is their character, and to know them truly is to know this of them. They do not appear to him as they do to people themselves. They are to his view stripped of all that is flattering and illusive, and are seen to be vain and foolish.

Verse 12

Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord - "Happy the man;" or "Oh the blessedness of the man." See the notes at Psalm 1:1. The word here rendered "chastenest" does not mean to chasten in the sense of afflicting or punishing. It means here to instruct; to warn; to admonish; to exhort. So the word is employed in Proverbs 9:7; Job 4:3; Psalm 16:7. The meaning here is, that the man is blessed or happy whom God so "instructs, warns, or teaches," that he understands the principles of the divine administration. Such a man will see reasons for confidence in him in trouble, and for calmness of mind until punishment is brought upon his enemies.

And teachest him out of thy law - Causest him, from thy word, to understand the great principles of thy government.

Verse 13

That thou mayest give him rest - Mayest make his mind quiet and calm; mayest save him from murmuring, from despondency, from impatience, by just confidence in thee, and in thy government.

From the days of adversity - Or, in the days of evil; the time of calamity and trouble. That his mind may then be composed and calm.

Until the pit be digged for the wicked - Until the wicked be punished; that is, while the preparations are going on, or while God seems to delay

punishment, and the wicked are suffered to live as if God did not notice them, or would not punish them. The idea is, that the mind should not be impatient as if their punishment would not come, or as if God were unconcerned; and that just views of the divine administration would tend to make the mind calm even when the wicked "seemed" to prosper and triumph. See the notes at Psalm 73:16-22. The phrase "until the pit be digged" is derived from the method of hunting wild beasts by digging a pit into which they might fall and be taken. See the notes at Psalm 7:15.

Verse 14

For the Lord will not cast off his people … - He will interpose in their behalf though the wicked seem now to triumph. The certainty of this would give consolation; this would make the mind calm in the days of trouble. Compare 1 Samuel 12:22; 1 Kings 6:13; Deuteronomy 31:6. See the notes at Romans 11:1-2.

Verse 15

But judgment shall return unto righteousness - That is, The exercise of judgment shall be so manifest to the world - as if it "returned" to it - as to show that there is a righteous God. The truth here taught is, that the "results" of God's interposition in human affairs will be such as to show that he is on the side of righteousness, or such as to vindicate and maintain the cause of righteousness in the earth.

And all the upright in heart shall follow it - Margin, shall be after it. The meaning is, that all who are upright in heart - all who are truly righteous - will follow on in the path of justice; that they will regard what God does as right, and will walk in that path. The fact that what occurs is done by God, will be to them a sufficient revelation of what ought to be done; and they will follow out the teachings properly suggested by the divine dealings as their rules of life. In other words, the manifested laws of the divine administration will be to them an indication of what is right; and they will embrace and follow the lessons thus made known to them by the dealings of Divine Providence as the rules of their own conduct.

Verse 16

Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers? … - This is the language of the psalmist. It is what he had said in the circumstances referred to in the first part of the psalm, when the wicked seemed to triumph; when they had come in upon the land, and laid waste the heritage of God, Psalm 94:3-6. At that time, full of anxiety and trouble, and deeply

impressed with a sense of danger, he had anxiously looked around for help, and had asked with deep concern who would stand up for him and defend him. The following verses Psalm 94:17-18 show what was then his reliance, and in what way confidence in God had kept him from falling into despair.

Verse 17

Unless the Lord had been my help - At the time referred to. If I had not had a God to whom I could have gone - if my mind had not been directed to him - if I had not actually found him a refuge and strength, I should have despaired altogether. There was no other one to whom I could go; there was nothing else but the help of God on which I could rely.

My soul had almost dwelt in silence - Margin, quickly. The original is, "It was as it were but little;" that is, there was little lacking to bring this about; a little heavier pressure - a little added to what I was then suffering - a little longer time before relief was obtained - would have brought me down to the land of silence - to the grave. The Latin Vulgate renders this, "My soul had dwelt in *inpherno*." The Septuagint, "in Hades" - τῷ ἅδῃ *tō Hadē* See Psalm 31:17. The grave is represented as a place of silence, or as the land of silence: Psalm 115:17: "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." Compare Amos 8:3.

Verse 18

When I said, My foot slippeth - I can no longer stand. My strength is gone; and I must sink into the grave. The original here is, "If I say, My foot slippeth," etc. The statement is general; that if at any time he had been, or should be, in such circumstances, then God would interpose. The general remark, however, is founded on his interposition on this particular occasion. His aid was then so marked and timely, that he felt that he could make the declaration general in regard to his whole life - to all circumstances in which he would ever be placed.

Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up - By thy merciful interposition thou didst keep me from falling. It was strength put forth as the expression of "mercy;" not strength to which he had any claim. How often in life may we say this of ourselves, that when just ready to sink; when our strength was almost gone; when a little severer pressure would have brought us to the grave, God by his mercy and his power interposed and saved us! Every such act of mercy - every new interposition in this manner - is a new gift of life, and lays us under obligation as if we had been just created, for it is just so much more of life given us by God.

Verse 19

In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul - The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "In the multitude of my griefs within me," etc. DeWette renders it, "Bei meinen vielen Sorgen," "in my many cares." The Hebrew word, however, properly means "thoughts;" and the idea seems to be that in the great number of thoughts which passed through his mind, so many of them perplexing, anxious, burdensome - so many of them vain and profitless - so many of them that seemed to come and go without any aim or object, there was one class that gave him comfort. They were those which pertained to God. In those thoughts he found calmness and peace. However much he might be disturbed by other thoughts, yet here he found rest and peace. In God - in his character, in his law, in his government - he had an unfailing source of consolation; and whatever trouble he might have from the cares of life, and from the evil imaginings in his own mind, yet here his soul found repose.

God was an unfailing refuge; and meditation on him and his perfections made the mind calm. How many thoughts pass through our minds in a single day or a single hour! Who can tell from where they come, or by what laws they are linked together! How many of them seem to have no connection with any that went before! How many of them seem to be thrown into our minds when we would avoid them! How many are vain and frivolous; how many are skeptical; how many are polluted and polluting! How many come into the mind which we would not for worlds disclose to our best friends! How few of us would walk abroad if we were conscious that all whom we meet could look into our bosoms, and see all that is passing there! What a consolation it is to us that they cannot see it! What a world of confusion and blushes would this be if, in the streets of a crowded city, or when man meets his fellow man anywhere, all that is in his bosom were known! And yet, in this multitude of thoughts - so empty, so foolish, so sinful, so vexing, so skeptical, so polluting - there are others - there are thoughts of God, of Christ, of heaven, of hope, of faith, of love, of benevolence; thoughts within us, when the divine promises come to the heart, and the prospect of heaven warms the soul. These give "comfort;" these fill the soul with "delight." Happy he who can find in his bosom, amidst the multitude of thoughts within him, those which pertain to God; to a higher life; to heaven!

Verse 20

Shall the throne of iniquity - The throne established in iniquity; or, sustaining iniquity. The allusion is probably to what was referred to in the former part of the psalm - the powers that were spreading desolation through the land - wicked princes or rulers, Psalm 94:3-7. Their thrones were established on evil; they defended wickedness and wrong by their authority; they abused their power, and employed it to overthrow the rights of others. The "phrase" would be applicable to any unjust government, or to any laws that are designed to uphold that which is wrong. Such are all the laws which authorize or uphold slavery, gaming, lotteries, the traffic in intoxicating drinks, etc.

Have fellowship with thee - With God. Shall they be united with thee; be sustained by thee; be regarded as a part of thine administration? Wilt thou sanction them? Wilt thou give to them thy patronage, as if they met with thine approbation? The Hebrew word means to be associated with, or allied to, and would be properly applied to a partnership, or anything where there is fellowship or alliance. The interrogative form here strongly implies that this "cannot be." Such laws - such purposes - "cannot" be in accordance with the laws and authority of God; or, in other words, God does not sit on the same throne with those who authorize and by law sustain slavery, intemperance, and gambling. There can be no partnership here.

Which frameth mischief by a law - The word rendered "mischief" usually means labor, toil; and then, trouble, vexation, sorrow. It may, however, be used to denote evil of any kind - crime, or wrong. The word rendered frameth means to form, to fashion, to make, as a potter does clay; Genesis 2:7-8, Genesis 2:19; or as a workman does statues, Isaiah 44:9-10, Isaiah 44:12; or as one makes weapons, Isaiah 54:17. It is often applied to God as the Creator. See the notes at Psalm 94:9: "he that formed the eye." The word law here means a rule or statute; and the idea is, that the iniquity referred to was not the result of an irregular and fitful impulse; or of passion; of sudden excitement; or of mere "will" in a particular case; but was reduced to statute, and sustained by law. The expression would apply to all those cases where evil is upheld by the government or by civil authority, or where those who are engaged in it can plead in their defense the sanction of law. The statement here is, that such acts "cannot" have fellowship with God, or receive his approval. It is an insult to God to suppose that he has ever appointed legislators or magistrates for the purpose of making or

upholding such enactments. Yet there are many such laws in the world; and a main reason why it is so difficult to remove such evils as have been above referred to is the fact that they are sustained by law, and that they who hold slaves, or open gambling-houses, or sell intoxicating drinks, can plead the authority of the law; or, in other words, that the laws have done all they can to place such things on a level with those which "ought" to be protected by statute. Many a man in his business looks no further than to the laws of the land, and if he has their sanction, in vain is the attempt to induce him to abandon a business that leads to oppression, or that scatters woe and sorrow through a community.

Verse 21

They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous - Against the life of the righteous; that is, to take their lives. The Hebrew word rendered "gather together," means to press or crowd upon anyone; to rush in crowds or troops. It would refer particularly to a tumultuous gathering - "a mob" - intent on accomplishing its purpose.

And condemn the innocent blood - literally, make guilty; that is, they hold that blood to be guilty; or, they treat the innocent as if they were guilty.

Verse 22

But the Lord is my defense … - In all these purposes of the wicked; in all that they do - whether under the form and sanction of law Psalm 94:20, or by the excitement of passion - my trust is still in God. He is able to interpose in either case, and I may confidently commit my cause to him. On the language used here, as well as the sentiment, see the notes at Psalm 18:2.

Verse 23

And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity - The consequences of their sin. He shall punish them as they deserve. See the notes at Psalm 7:16.

And shall cut them off in their own wickedness - As the result of their wickedness, and while they are engaged in perpetrating acts of sin.

Yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off - Expressing, by the repetition of the sentiment, the utmost confidence that this would be so. This is in accordance with the prayer with which the psalm opens, and is expressive of entire faith that God will deal justly with the children of men. However the wicked may seem to prosper and to triumph, yet the day of

vengeance is approaching, and all which they have deserved will come upon them.

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PSALM 95

Introduction

Of the author of this psalm nothing is certainly known. It is, however, ascribed to David in the Latin Vulgate and in the Septuagint; and in Hebrews 4:7, it is referred to as a psalm of David: "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, ‹Today, if ye will hear his voice,'" etc. This language may refer in general to the Book of Psalms, called from their chief author, the Psalms of David; or it may mean that David was the author of this particular psalm. Either supposition would meet all that is demanded by the quotation in the Epistle to the Hebrews. There is, however, no improbability in the supposition that the psalm was written by David, as he doubtless composed many songs to which his name was not attached.

Nothing is known of the "occasion" on which the psalm was composed. It is a general song of praise, and contains only such language as might be proper in any period of the Jewish history after the people were established in the promised land. It is, indeed, a "Hebrew" song; it has reference to the Hebrew people; and it contains such arguments and appeals as would be particularly adapted to influence them.

The psalm consists of three parts:

I. An exhortation to praise and worship God, Psalm 95:1-2.

II. Reasons for offering such praise, Psalm 95:3-7:

(a) He is a great God, Psalm 95:3;

(b) He has made all things, and all things are under his control, Psalm 95:4-5;

(c) He is our Maker, Psalm 95:6;

(d) He is our God, and we are his people, Psalm 95:7.

III. An exhortation not to harden the heart; not to be perverse and rebellious, Psalm 95:7-11. This is enforced by the example of the Israelites in the wilderness, and by the results which followed from their tempting God, and provoking his wrath. The appeal is founded on the fact that, in consequence of their rebellion, they were shut out of the promised land. On the same principle, if we are rebellious, we shall be excluded from heaven.

Verse 1

O come, let us sing unto the Lord - The word here rendered come, means properly "go;" but it is used here, as it often is, as a formula of invitation, in calling on others to share in what is done by the speaker. It is here to be understood as used by one portion of an assembly convened for worship addressing the other portion, and calling on them to unite in the praise of God.

Let us make a joyful noise - The word used here means commonly to make a loud noise, to shout, Job 30:5. It is especially used

(a) of warlike shouts, Joshua 6:16; 1 Samuel 17:20;

(b) of the shout of triumph, Judges 15:14;

(c) of the sound or clangor of a trumpet, Numbers 10:9; Joel 2:1.

It may thus be used to denote any shout of joy or praise. In public worship it would denote praise of the most animated kind.

To the Rock of our salvation - The strong ground of our confidence; the basis of our hope; our security. See the notes at Psalm 18:2.

Verse 2

Let us come before his presence - Margin, as in Hebrew, "prevent his face." The word in Hebrew means literally to come before; to anticipate. It is the word which is commonly rendered "prevent." See Job 3:12, note; Psalm 17:13, note; Psalm 59:10, note; 1 Thessalonians 4:15, note. Here it means to come before, in the sense of "in front of." Let us stand before his face; that is, in his very presence.

With thanksgiving - Expressing our thanks.

And make a joyful noise unto him - The same word which occurs in Psalm 95:1.

With psalms - Songs of praise.

Verse 3

For the Lord is a great God - For Yahweh is a great God. The object is to exalt Jehovah, the true God, as distinguished from all who were worshipped as gods. The first idea is that he is "great;" that he is exalted over all the universe; that he rules over all, and that he is to be worshipped as such.

And a great King above all gods - This does not mean that he is a great ruler of all other gods, as if they had a real existence, but that he is king or

ruler far above all that were worshipped as gods, or to whom homage was paid. Whoever, or whatever was worshipped as God, Yahweh was supreme over all things. He occupied the throne; and all others must be beneath him, and under his dominion. If the sun, the moon, or the stars were worshipped - if the mountains or the rivers - if angels good or bad - yet Yahweh was above all these. If imaginary beings were worshipped, yet Yahweh in his perfections was exalted far above all that was ascribed to them, for He was the true God, and the Ruler of the universe, while they were beings of the imagination only.

Verse 4

In his hand - In his power, or under his control as his own. That is, he so possesses all things that they can be claimed by no other. His right over them is absolute and entire.

Are the deep places of the earth - The word used here - מחקר *mechqâr* - means the interior, the inmost depth; that which is "searched out," from - חקר *châqar* - to search, search out, explore. The primary idea is that of searching by boring or digging; and the allusion here is to the parts of the earth which could be explored only by digging - as in mining, or sinking shafts in the earth. The meaning is, that all those places which lie beyond the ordinary power of observation in man are in the hand of God. He knows them as clearly as those which are most plain to human view; he possesses or owns them as his own as really as he does those which are on the surface of the ground.

The strength of the hills is his also - Margin, "The heights of the hills are his." The word rendered "strength" - תועפות *tôʿâphôth* - means properly swiftness or speed in running; then, weariness, wearisome labor; and hence, wealth obtained by labor; "treasures." Here the expression means "treasures of the mountains;" that is, treasures obtained out of the mountains, the precious metals, etc. Compare the notes at Job 22:25, where the same word occurs. All this belongs to God. As he is the Maker of these hills, and of all that they contain, the absolute proprietorship is in him.

Verse 5

The sea is his - Margin, as in Hebrew, "Whose the sea is." That is, The sea belongs to him, with all which it contains.

And he made it - It is his, "because" he made it. The creation of anything gives the highest possible right over it.

And his hands formed the dry land - He has a claim, therefore, that it should be recognized as his, and that all who dwell upon it, and derive their support from it, should acknowledge him as its great Owner and Lord.

Verse 6

O come, let us worship and bow down - Let us worship him by bowing down; by prostrating ourselves before him. The word here rendered "come" is not the same which is used in Psalm 95:1. Its literal meaning is "come," and it is an earnest exhortation to come and worship. It is not a particle merely calling attention to a subject, but it is an exhortation to approach - to enter - to engage in a thing. The word rendered "worship," means properly to bow down; to incline oneself; and then, to bow or prostrate oneself before anyone in order to do him homage, or reverence. Then it means to bow down before God in the attitude of worship. It would most naturally refer to an entire "prostration" on the ground, which was a common mode of worship; but it would also express adoration in any form. The word rendered "bow down," means properly to bend, to bow, spoken usually of the knees. Isaiah 45:23: "every knee shall bow." Compare Judges 7:5-6; 1 Kings 8:54; 2 Kings 1:13. The word might be applied, like the former word, to those who bow down with the whole person, or prostrate themselves on the ground. 2 Chronicles 7:3.

Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker - The usual attitude of prayer in the Scriptures. See the notes at Daniel 6:10; compare 2 Chronicles 6:13; Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60; Acts 9:40; Acts 20:36; Acts 21:5. All the expressions here employed denote a posture of profound reverence in worship, and the passage is a standing rebuke of all irreverent postures in prayer; of such habits as often prevail in public worship where no change of posture is made in prayer, and where a congregation irreverently sit in the act of professedly worshipping God. People show to their fellowmen the respect indicated by rising up before them: much more should they show respect to God - respect in a posture which will indicate profound reverence, and a deep sense of his presence and majesty. Reverently kneeling or standing "will" indicate this; sitting does not indicate it.

Verse 7

For he is our God - Not only the God whom we worship as the true God, but One who has revealed himself to us as our God. We worship him as God - as entitled to praise and adoration because he is the true God; we

worship him also as sustaining the relation of God to us, or because we recognize him as our God, and because he has manifested himself as ours.

And we are the people of his pasture - whom he has recognized as his flock; to whom he sustains the relation of shepherd; who feeds and protects us as the shepherd does his flock. See the notes at Psalm 79:13; compare Psalm 23:1-3.

And the sheep of his hand - The flock that is guided and fed by his hand.

To day if ye will hear his voice - His voice calling you; commanding you; inviting you; encouraging you. See this passage explained in the notes at Hebrews 3:7-11. The word "today" here means "the present time;" now. The idea is, that the purpose to obey should not be deferred until tomorrow; should not be put off to the future. The commands of God should be obeyed at once; the purpose should be executed immediately. All God's commands relate to the present. He gives us none for the future; and a true purpose to obey God exists only where there is a willingness to obey "now," "today;" and can exist only then. A purpose to repent at some future time, to give up the world at some future time, to embrace the Gospel at some future time, is "no obedience," for there is no such command addressed to us. A resolution to put off repentance and faith, to defer attention to religion until some future time, is real disobedience - and often the worst form of disobedience - for it is directly in the face of the command of God. "If ye will hear." That is, If there is a disposition or willingness to obey his voice at all; or, to listen to his commands. See the notes at Hebrews 3:7.

Verse 8

Harden not your heart - See this verse explained in the notes at Hebrews 3:8.

As in the provocation … - Margin, "contention." The original is "Meribah." See Exodus 17:7, where the original words Meribah, rendered here "provocation," and "Massah," rendered here "temptation," are retained in the translation.

Verse 9

When your fathers - Your ancestors. See this verse explained in the notes on Hebrews 3:9.

Tempted me - Tried me; tried my patience, to see how much I would bear. This does not mean, as it commonly does now with us, to place inducements before one to lead him into sin, but to try one - to put his

patience to the test. This they did, in the case referred to, by their obduracy and evil conduct.

Proved me - See the notes at Hebrews 3:9. "And saw my work." Though they constantly saw my work; saw my gracious interpositions; saw what I was doing for their own good.

Verse 10

Forty years long - All the time that they were in the wilderness. During this long period their conduct was such as to try my patience and forbearance.

Was I grieved - The word used here - קוּט *qûṭ* - means properly to loathe, to nauseate, to be disgusted with. It is translated "loathe" in Ezekiel 6:9; Ezekiel 20:43; Ezekiel 36:31; and grieved in Psalm 119:158; Psalm 139:21. It is here expressive of the strong abhorrence which God had of their conduct. Compare Revelation 3:16.

With this generation - With the entire generation that came out of Egypt. They were all cut off in the wilderness, except Caleb and Joshua.

And said, It is a people - It is a characteristic of the entire people, that they are disposed to wander from God.

That do err in their heart - In the Epistle to the Hebrews Hebrews 3:10 where this is quoted, it is, "They do always err in their heart." The sense is substantially the same. See the notes at that place.

And they have not known my ways - See the notes at Hebrews 3:10.

Verse 11

Unto whom I sware in my wrath - See the notes at Hebrews 3:11.

That they should not enter into my rest - Margin, as in Hebrew, "If they enter into my rest." The "rest" here referred to was the land of Canaan. They were not permitted to enter there as a place of "rest" after their long and weary wanderings, but died in the wilderness. The meaning is not that none of them were saved (for we must hope that very many of them were brought to the heavenly Canaan), but that they did not come to the promised land. Unbelief shut them out; and this fact is properly made use of here, and in Hebrews 3, as furnishing a solemn warning to all not to be unbelieving and rebellious, since the consequence of unbelief and rebellion must be to exclude us from the kingdom of heaven, the true place of "rest."

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 96

Introduction

This psalm is similar in structure and design to Psalm 95:1-11. It is an exhortation to universal praise, and was doubtless designed to be used in public worship - in the service of the sanctuary.

The psalm has no title in the Hebrew, and its authorship cannot with any certainty be determined. There is, however, a very marked similarity between this psalm and a portion of that which was composed and sung at the removal of the ark by David, as recorded in 1 Chronicles 16:7, "Then on that day David delivered first this psalm to thank the Lord, into the hand of Asaph and his brethren." Of the original psalm, therefore, David was undoubtedly the author. Psalm 96:1-13 is merely an abridgment of that one, or more properly an extract from it, since it is essentially similar to one portion of it, and is taken from it with very slight variations, 1 Chronicles 16:23-33. But by whom the extract and the slight alterations were made, and on what occasion this was done, we have no certain means of ascertaining. The title in the Septuagint is, "When the house was built after the captivity. An ode by David." The same is the title in the Latin Vulgate. According to this, it is supposed that on the dedication of the temple, when it was rebuilt after the Babylonian captivity, a portion of a psalm composed by David was selected and arranged for that purpose.

Hence, it might be properly called "A Psalm of David;" though not, of course, composed by him for that particular occasion. This seems to me to be a very probable account of the origin of the psalm, and of the reason why it has its present form. In the original psalm 1 Chronicles 16 there were things which would not be particularly appropriate to the dedication of the temple, while the portion which is extracted is eminently suited for such a service. DeWette doubts the genuineness of the psalm in 1 Chronicles 16; and Hengstenberg supposes that that psalm was made up of parts taken from psalms which were then in common use. But it seems to me that the suggestion above is the most natural, and sufficiently explains the origin of this psalm. It would be very appropriate to the re-dedication of the temple; and it is appropriate to be used in similar services at all times.

The structure of the psalm is very simple, and it does not admit of any particular analysis.

Verse 1

O sing unto the Lord a new song - See the notes at Psalm 33:3. This is the only addition made to the original form of the psalm. The word new here implies that there was some fresh occasion for celebrating the praises of God; that some event had occurred, or that some truth relating to the divine character had now been made known, which could not well be expressed in any psalm or hymn then in use. It is a call on all to celebrate the praises of the Lord in a "new" song - new, particularly, as it calls on "all the earth" to join in it; and possibly this was designed to suggest the idea that while that temple stood, a dispensation would commence, under which the distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles would be broken down, and all mankind would unite in the praise of God.

Sing unto the Lord, all the earth - All nations. All people had occasion to bless his name; to praise him. What he had done, what he was still doing, was of interest to all lands, and made an appeal to all people to praise him. The psalm is constructed on this supposition, that the occasion for praise referred to was one in which all people were interested; or, in other words, that Yahweh was the true God over all the nations, and that all people should acknowledge him.

Verse 2

Sing unto the Lord, bless his name - This verse is substantially the same as 1 Chronicles 16:23; "Sing unto the Lord, all the earth; show forth from day to day his salvation."

Show forth his salvation - His interposition; the fact that he has saved or delivered us. This may have referred originally in particular to what he had done to save the people in time of danger, but the language is such also as to express salvation in a higher sense - salvation from sin and death. As such it may be employed to express what God has done for mankind - for all people, Jews and Gentiles - in providing a way of salvation, and making it possible that they should reach heaven. For this all people have occasion for praise.

From day to day - Continually; always. It is a fit subject for unceasing praise. Every man should praise God every day - on each returning morning, and on every evening - for the assurance that there is a way of

salvation provided for him, and "that he may be happy forever." If we had right feelings, this would be the first thought which would burst upon the mind each morning, irradiating, as with sunbeams, all around us; and it would be the last thought which would linger in the soul as we lie down at night, and close our eyes in slumber - making us grateful, calm, happy, as we sink to rest, for whether we wake or not in this world we may be forever happy.

Verse 3

Declare his glory among the heathen - Among the nations; the people who are not Hebrews. The meaning is, Let it be proclaimed in all lands, among all people. Let it not be confined to those who are professedly his people, but let it be announced everywhere. This is copied literally from 1 Chronicles 16:24.

His wonders among all people - His "marvelous works;" those things which are suited to produce astonishment in the mind. The reference is to those works and doings of God which lie so far beyond the power of any created being, and which by their vastness, their wisdom, and their benevolence, are suited to produce a deep impression on the human mind.

Verse 4

For the Lord is great - Yahweh is great. See the notes at Psalm 77:13. This verse is taken literally from 1 Chronicles 16:25.

And greatly to be praised - Worthy of exalted praise and adoration.

He is to be feared above all gods - He is to be reverenced and adored above all that are called gods. Higher honor is to be given him; more lofty praise is to be ascribed to him. He is Ruler over all the earth, and has a claim to universal praise. Even if it were admitted that they were real gods, yet it would still be true that they were local and inferior divinities; that they ruled only over the particular countries where they were worshipped and acknowledged as gods, and that they had no claim to "universal" adoration as Yahweh has.

Verse 5

For all the gods of the nations are idols - All the gods worshipped by the people of other lands are mere "idols." None of them can claim to have a real existence as gods. The word here rendered "idols" is translated by the Septuagint, δαιμόνια *daimonia* "demons." So the Latin Vulgate *"daemonia."* The Hebrew word - אליל *'ĕlîyl* - means properly "of nothing, nought, empty, vain." See Job 13:4. The meaning here is, that they were

mere nothings; they had no real existence; they were the creations of the imagination; they could not in any sense be regarded as what it was pretended they were; they had no claim to reverence and worship as gods. Of most of them it was a fact that they had no existence at all, but were mere creatures of fancy. Of those that did really exist, as the sun, moon, stars, animals, or the spirits of departed people, though it was true that they had an actual existence, yet it was also true that they had no existence "as gods," or as entitled to worship; and hence, it was also true that the worship offered to them was as vain as that which was offered to mere beings of the imagination. This verse is extracted literally from 1 Chronicles 16:26. The Hebrew is the same.

But the Lord made the heavens - Yahweh created the heavenly hosts, and therefore he is the true God, and is entitled to worship. The power of "creation" - of causing anything to exist where there was nothing before - must pertain to God alone, and is the highest act of Divinity. No pretended pagan god has that power; no man has that power. The true God has reserved the exercise of that power to himself, and has never, in any instance, imparted it to a created being.

Verse 6

Honour and majesty are before him - This part of the verse is taken literally from 1 Chronicles 16:27. The meaning is, that that which constitutes honor, glory, majesty, is in his presence, or wherever he is. Whereever he manifests himself, there are the exhibitions of honor and majesty. They are always the accompaniments of his presence.

Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary - This is slightly varied from the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 16:27. The word rendered "strength" is in both places the same. The word rendered "beauty" here - תפארת *tiph'ereth* - is in 1 Chronicles 16:27 חדוה *chedvâh* - "joy or gladness." The word here rendered "sanctuary" - מקדשׁ *miqdâsh* - is in 1 Chronicles 16:27 - מקום *mâqôm* - "place." These variations are such as to show that the psalm is not a mere extract, but that it was altered of design, and adapted to the occasion on which it was to be employed - confirming the supposition that it may have been used in the re-dedication of the temple after the return from the captivity. The word "sanctuary" refers to the holy place where God dwells; his sacred abode, whether his residence in heaven, or the temple on earth as the place of his earthly habitation. When it is said that "strength" is there, it means that the dwelling-place of God is the source of "power," or that

power emanates from thence; that is, from God himself. When it is said that "beauty" is there, the meaning is, that whatever is suited to charm by loveliness; whatever is a real ornament; whatever makes the world attractive; whatever beautifies and adorns creation, has its home in God; it proceeds from him. It may be added that whatever there is of "power" to reform the world, and convert sinners; whatever there is to turn people from their vicious and abandoned course of life; whatever there is to make the world better and happier, proceeds from the "sanctuary" - the church of God. Whatever there is that truly adorns society, and makes it more lovely and attractive; whatever there is that diffuses a charm over domestic and social life; whatever there is that makes the world more lovely or more desirable to live in - more courteous, more gentle, more humane, more kind, more forgiving - has its home in the "sanctuary," or emanates from the church of God.

Verse 7

Give unto the Lord - Ascribe unto the Lord - to Yahweh. This is extracted literally from 1 Chronicles 16:28.

O ye kindreds of the people - Hebrew, "Families" of the people: people, as united by family ties. The idea is that of worship not merely as individuals, nor as a mere "aggregate" of individuals united by no common bonds, but as those united by strong ties; bound by blood and affection; constituted into communities. It is a call on such to worship God in their capacity as thus bound together; to come as families and to worship God. In other words, it is a call on families "as such" to acknowledge God. A family is a proper place where to honor God. When the same joy pervades all hearts in prosperity, and when all are alike made sorrowful in adversity, there is an evident fitness that all should unite in the same worship of God; and that, as in all other things they have common interests, sympathies, and affections, so they should have in religion - in the service of their Creator.

Give unto the Lord glory and strength - That is, Proclaim that these belong to God; or, worship him as a God of glory and power.

Verse 8

Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name - This also is literally taken from Psalm 96:1-13:28. The margin here is, as in Hebrew, of "his name:" the honor of his name. The idea is that which is expressed in our translation. Bring to God what is due to him; or, render such an acknowledgment as he deserves and claims. Acknowledge him as God, and

acknowledge him to be such a God as he is. Let the honor due to God as such be given him; and let the honor due to him, for the character which he actually has, be ascribed to him.

Bring an offering - This is language taken from the temple-worship, and means that God is to be worshipped, in the manner which he has prescribed, as a suitable expression of his majesty. The word here rendered "offering" - מנחה *minchāh* - is that which is commonly used to denote a "bloodless" offering - a thank-offering. See the notes at Isaiah 1:13.

And come into his courts - The courts or areas around the tabernacle and the temple, where sacrifices were made, and where the people worshipped. See the notes at Matthew 21:12.

Verse 9

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness - This verse is literally taken from 1 Chronicles 16:29-30. The margin here is, "in the glorious sanctuary." The Septuagint, ἐν αὐλῇ ἁγίᾳ *en aulē hagia* - "in his holy court." So the Latin Vulgate. On the meanings of the expression, see the notes at Psalm 29:2.

Fear before him, all the earth - All lands; all people. The word rendered "fear" means properly to writhe, to twist, to be in pain; and then, to tremble, to quake, to be afraid. The word "tremble" would perhaps best express the idea here. It is that solemn awe produced by the sense of the divine presence and majesty which causes trembling. It denotes profound reverence for God.

Verse 10

Say among the heathen - Among the nations; all nations. Make this proclamation everywhere. This is changed from the parallel passage in Psalm 93:1.

The world also shall be established … - Under the reign of God. The meaning is, that the world is fixed or immovable. It has its place, and it cannot be moved out of it. The government of God is fixed and stable. It is not temporary, changing, vacillating, like the dynasties of the earth, but is stedfast and abiding, and is well represented by the earth - so fixed and firm that nothing can move it from its place.

He shall judge the people righteously - The people of all lands; the nations of the earth. See the notes at Psalm 67:4.

Verse 11

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad - Let all worlds be full of joy, as they are all interested in the fact here stated. The universe is one. It has been made by the same hand; it is under the control of the same mind; it is governed by the same laws. The God who reigns on earth reigns in heaven; and what affects one part of the universe affects all. Hence, in all the manifestation of the character of God, whether made in heaven or in the earth, it is proper to call on all the universe to partake in the general joy.

Let the sea roar - In praise to God. It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to call on inanimate things to praise God. Compare Psalm 148:7-9. The same thing is common in all poetry.

And the fulness thereof - Its abundance. That which fills it. All that it contains. That is, Let all that dwell in the seas praise God. His reign is an occasion for universal gladness. All in the inanimate world; all among the irrational tribes of being; all in the air, in the waters, or on the earth, have occasion for praise, and would render praise if they could appreciate the wisdom and goodness evinced in their creation. Though unconscious, the lower creatures seem to celebrate his praise; but man only can give an intelligent utterance to thanksgiving.

Verse 12

Let the field be joyful … - This is taken - with the change of a single letter, not affecting the sense - from 1 Chronicles 16:32-33. It is a call on the fields - the cultivated portions of the earth - to rejoice in the reign of God. As if conscious of the beauty with which he clothes them, and of the happiness which they confer on man in their beauty and in the abundance of their productions, they are called on to praise God.

Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice - The forests - the oaks, the cedars, the pines, that wave with so much majesty. If they were conscious of their own magnificence and beauty - if they could see how much wisdom and goodness God has lavished on them, in their forms, their branches, their leaves, their flowers, their fruit - if they could know how much they are made to accomplish in rendering the world beautiful, and in contributing to the happiness of man - if they understood what a bare, bleak, cold, desert world this would be but for them, they, too, would have abundant occasion for praise and joy.

Verse 13

Before the Lord - This is altered from Psalm 72:2-4; and the notes at Isaiah 11:2-5. What is here stated occurs now, wherever the gospel reigns in

the hearts of people; it will be fully accomplished when the Lord Jesus shall come again and judge the world.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 97

Introduction

The author of this psalm is unknown, and the occasion on which it was composed cannot be ascertained. Its structure is similar to that of the two preceding psalms, and it may have been written by the same author, and at the same time; but it is of so general a nature that it may be employed at all times, and in all lands. From the contents, it would seem not improbable that it may have been composed in view of some victory over the enemies of the Hebrew people, and especially over idolaters; but when this occurred, if the psalm had such an origin, it is impossile now to determine. Venema supposes that it had reference to the times of the Maccabees, but of that there is no proof. Many of the expressions in the psalm are taken from the older portions of the Scriptures; and it has been remarked (Hengstenberg) that none are taken from the writings after the return from the Babylonian captivity. From this it has been inferred that it must have been composed before the exile. Still, this inference is not certain, for a writer after the return from Babylon may have made his references solely to the more ancient writings of his country.

The author of the Septuagint version regarded this as a psalm of David, when the land was restored to peace. The title in that version is, Τῷ Δαυὶδ, ὅτ᾽ ἡ γῆ αὐτοῦ καθίσταται *Tō Dauid hot' hē gē autou kathistatai* "by David, when his land was restored," (or, was at peace). The same title occurs in the Latin Vulgate. Luther entities it, "Of Christ and his kingdom." The general subject of the psalm is the sovereignty or the supremacy of God, and the manifestation of that sovereignty or supremacy in vindicating his people, and in bringing to pass events which gave them ground of confidence and rejoicing in him.

Perhaps the most that can be said now on the origin and design of the psalm is, that these "six" psalms Psalm 95:1-11 asserts Yahweh's Godhead power over all nature, and exhorts people to serve him. In Psalm 96:1-13, all nations are exhorted to join in his service, because he cometh to judge all mankind, Jew and Gentile. In Psalm 97:1-12, Yahweh reigns over all the world, the idols are deserted, and the Just One is glorified. In Psalm 98:1-9, Yahweh hath done wonders, and performed deliverance for himself; he hath remembered his mercy toward the house of Israel; he comes to judge the

whole world … In Psalm 99:1-9, Yahweh, seated between the cherubim in Zion (the visible church), reigns over all the world, to be praised for the justice of his government. … In Psalm 100:1-5, all the world is called upon to praise Yahweh the Creator, whose mercy and truth are everlasting." There may be something fanciful in this position, but the views thus expressed the general course of thought in this group of psalms.

In this psalm Psalm 97:1-12 the particular point, then, is, that Yahweh is supreme over all the world; that the idols are proved to be nought; and that the righteous are vindicated.

The psalm embraces the following points:

I. A description of the majesty and glory of God as a sovereign, Psalm 97:1-6. Clouds and darkness are around him; fire goes before him; the lightnings play, and the earth trembles; the hills melt, and are dissolved; the heavens in their splendor declare his righteousness.

II. In view of this, all idol images and gods are confounded, and are shown to be nothing; and the friends of the true God have occasion for joy, Psalm 97:7-9.

III. The prosperity and happiness of the righteous under the reign of God, Psalm 97:10-12. God will deliver them; light is sown for them in darkness; gladness is their portion, and they are called on to rejoice and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

Verse 1

The Lord reigneth - See the notes at Psalm 93:1. This is the general fact to be dwelt upon; this is the foundation of joy and praise. The universe is not without a sovereign. It is not the abode of anarchy. It is not the production of chance. It is not subject to mere physical laws. It is not under the control of evil. It is under the government of a God: a wise, holy, intelligent, just, benevolent Being, who rules it well, and who presides over all its affairs. If there is anything for which we should rejoice, it is that there is One Mind, everlasting and most glorious, who presides over the universe, and conducts all things according to his own wise and eternal plan.

Let the earth rejoice - The earth itself; all parts of it; all that dwell upon it. As the earth everywhere derives whatever it has of fertility, beauty, grandeur, or stability, from God - as order, beauty, productiveness are diffused everywhere over it - as it has received so many proofs of the divine beneficence toward it, it has occasion for universal joy.

Let the multitude of isles be glad thereof - Margin, "Many, or great isles." The Hebrew is many. So the Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, the Chaldee, and the Syriac. The eye of the psalmist is evidently on the many islands which are scattered over the sea. Not merely the continents - the extended countries where nations dwell - have occasion for joy, but the beautiful islands - the spots of earth which have risen from the deep, and which are covered with fruits and flowers - these, too, have occasion to rejoice: to rejoice that God has raised them from the waters; that he keeps them from being overflowed or washed away; that he clothes them with beauty; that he makes them the abode of happy life; that he places them in the wastes of the ocean as he does the stars in the wastes of the sky, to beautify the universe. The idea in the verse is, that all the earth has cause to rejoice that Yahweh reigns.

Verse 2

Clouds and darkness are round about him - This is a description of the majesty of God, derived probably from the manner in which he manifested himself at Mount Sinai. Exodus 19:16-19. God is often thus represented as encompassed with clouds. Psalm 104:3; Daniel 7:13; Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7. See the notes at Psalm 18:7-15. The word rendered "clouds" is the common word to denote a cloud; the word translated "darkness" means properly "thick clouds, cloudy darkness, gloom." It would refer to a cloud considered as dark, and as casting a gloom over the world. There is no reference here to the fact that the dealings of God are dark, mysterious, and incomprehensible, as if he were surrounded by clouds and darkness. This is indeed often true; but that is not the truth taught here. The meaning here is, that the character of God is suited to fill the mind with solemn awe, or with emotions of sublimity.

Righteousness and judgment - He is a righteous God; he is a God who will execute just judgment. Though he is encompassed with clouds, yet he is a just God; and this is suited to impress the mind with profound reverence. That he will do right we may be assured, even when he covers himself with clouds; the fact that he will thus do right is suited to calm the

minds of those who love and obey him, and at the same time to fill the minds of the wicked with alarm.

Are the habitation of his throne - Margin, "establishment." The Hebrew word means "place;" the place where one stands, or where one abides; a habitation, or a dwelling. It then means a foundation or basis, Psalm 89:14; Psalm 104:5. This would seem to be the idea here. His throne rests upon, or is sustained by, justice and righteousness. Nothing else would uphold the government of the universe; nothing else will sustain any government.

Verse 3

A fire goeth before him - See Psalm 18:13, note; Psalm 50:3, note.

And burneth up his enemies round about - Is especially directed against his foes. That is, he manifests himself as a just God, inflicting vengeance on his enemies. He comes to reign, and in his reign all his foes will be destroyed.

Verse 4

His lightnings enlightened the world … - See the notes at Psalm 77:18. Compare Psalm 104:32; Habakkuk 3:6-10.

Verse 5

The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord - They seemed to flow down as if they were like melted wax: that is, they could not stand before him. The most firm, solid, lofty things were as nothing in his presence. Compare Revelation 20:11; Judges 5:5; Micah 1:4; Nahum 1:5. The object here is to describe the sublimity, the greatness, the majesty of God, as if nothing could stand before him; as if everything fled away when he approached. There is perhaps a general allusion to his glory and power as manifested at Sinai.

At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth - The Creator and Ruler of the entire world. The God who thus manifested himself is not a local Deity, or the God of a particular nation or country, but the God of the whole world, before whom all created things are as nothing.

Verse 6

The heavens declare his righteousness - See the notes at Psalm 50:6. Compare the notes at Psalm 19:1.

And all the people see his glory - As manifested in the heavens, and in the power which he puts forth on the earth. That is, (they have the opportunity of seeing it; it is made manifest in all his works. They see what

in fact is a manifestation of his glory, to wit, his great and wondrous works. It is not affirmed that they "appreciate" all this, or that they see this to be a manifestation of his glory - which would not be true - but that they see what is in fact a revelation of his greatness, his wisdom, and his power.

Verse 7

Confounded be all they that serve graven images - Hebrew, "Let them be ashamed." The idea is, that they would be disappointed. They would find that these were not real gods; that their trust in them was vain; and that they had evinced great folly in relying on that which could not aid them in the day of necessity. See Job 6:20, note; Psalm 22:5, note; Psalm 25:2, note. Compare Isaiah 20:5. What is here affirmed of the worshippers of idols will be found to be true at last of all who put their trust in anything but the true God.

That boast themselves of idols - That worship idols, and glory in them as if they could save; or, that glory in their own idol-gods as if they were more powerful than those of other people. It would not be unnatural that nations which worshipped idols should glory in them, or that one people should boast of their gods as more powerful - more worthy to be trusted - than those which were worshipped in other lands.

Worship him, all ye gods - Hebrew, אלהים *'Elohiym* The Septuagint and the Vulgate render this, "all his angels." The original word אלהים *'Elohiym* is that which is commonly applied to the true God (Genesis 1:1, et saepe), though it may be applied to angels, or to magistrates. See Psalm 82:1, note; Psalm 82:6, note. On the general meaning of this passage, and the question respecting its reference to the Messiah, see the notes at Hebrews 1:6. The reference here, according to the quotation in Hebrews 1:6, is to the angels. The original word will admit of this interpretation, and the entire structure of the psalm will justify its application to the Messiah.

Verse 8

Zion heard, and was glad - The good news came to Zion that all the idols of the pagan were confounded or were overcome: that is, that the Lord reigned. There was joy in Zion that the evils and abominations of idolatry were at an end, and that the worship of Yahweh had taken the place of idol-worship. The idea is, that the displacement of idols, or the fact that they had ceased to be worshipped, was a cause of joy to the worshippers of the true God. Whatever tends to remove the worship of idols from the world, and to

extend and establish the worship of the living God, is an occasion of gladness.

And the daughters of Judah rejoiced … - See the notes at Psalm 48:11. Woman has special occasion to rejoice in the spread of the true religion. It is that only which has lifted her from a state of deep degradation; which has elevated her to be a companion instead of a slave; which has made her the intelligent wife and mother, rather than the mere inmate of a harem.

Verse 9

For thou, Lord, art high above all the earth - See the notes at Psalm 83:18.

Thou art exalted far above all gods - See the notes at Psalm 95:3.

Verse 10

Ye that love the Lord, hate evil - Show your love for the Lord "by" hating all that is evil; that is, all that he hates, or that is evil in his sight. There can be no true love for God where evil is not hated in all its forms, since it is the object of the divine abhorrence. We cannot be like God unless we love what he loves, and hate what he hates. There is nothing more clearly affirmed in the Scriptures than that in order to the love of God there must be the hatred of all that is wrong, and that where there is the love of sin in the heart, there can be no true religion. Compare the notes at Isaiah 1:16-20.

He preserveth the souls of his saints - The lives of his saints, or his holy ones. That is, he guards them from danger, and watches over them with a careful eye. See Psalm 3:8; Psalm 37:39.

He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked - That is, he often does this; they may expect that he will do it. He does not, indeed, always deliver them from the temporal calamities which wicked people bring upon them - for they are not unfrequently persecuted and wronged; but ultimately he will deliver them altogether from the power of the wicked. In heaven none of the machinations of wicked people can reach them. At the same time it is also true that God often interposes in behalf of his people, and delivers them as such from the designs of the wicked: that is, he delivers them because they are righteous, or because they are his friends. Compare the notes at Daniel 3:16-17, notes at Daniel 3:24-25; notes at Daniel 6:18-23.

Verse 11

Light is sown for the righteous - That is, There is light for the righteous; or, they shall be brought into light, though they may be for a time in darkness. The word rendered "sown" - זרע *zâraʿ* - is from a verb which properly denotes to scatter, to disperse - as seed is scattered or dispersed when sown in a field. It is hence used with reference to moral subjects, as to sow righteousness, Proverbs 11:18; to sow iniquity, Proverbs 22:8; to sow mischief, Job 4:8; that is, these things are scattered or sown, as seed is in a field, and produce a corresponding harvest. Thus light is scattered abroad, and will produce an appropriate harvest - a harvest of joy. It will spring up around the righteous, and he shall reap that which light tends to produce - happiness, intelligence, and peace. The figure of sowing light is an unusual one, but the meaning is plain. It is, that the righteous will not always be in darkness; that there is in preparation for him a harvest of joy; that it will as certainly be produced as a harvest will from grain that is sown; that though there may be present calamities, there will be ultimate peace and triumph.

And gladness for the upright in heart - The word gladness here - joy, or rejoicing - is parallel to the word light. Joy or gladness is sown for the righteous; that is, arrangements are made for producing joy, as preparations are made by sowing seed for a harvest. The world is full of arrangements for conferring happiness on the righteous.

Verse 12

Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous - See the notes at Psalm 33:1.

And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness - Margin, "to the memorial" (compare Psalm 30:4). The idea is, "to the memory of his holiness;" that is, when his holiness comes before the mind; when it is remembered; when it is thought of. Give thanks or rejoice,

(a) that God is holy; that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; that there is One eternally pure who presides over the universe; that there is One who will always do what is right;

(b) that such a Being is our God - our covenant-keeping God; that we may look to him, trust in him, enjoy him.

Wicked people do not rejoice that there is a God at all, and especially that God is a "holy God;" but it is one of the characteristics of true piety to rejoice in the thought that there is a God, and that he is perfectly holy, and hence, to feel conscious happiness whenever his name is mentioned, and

whenever his attributes are referred to. The highest source of joy for man is that there is a God, and that God is exactly what he is, pure and holy. It would be a source of deepest sorrow if there were no God, or if God were in any respect, even the slightest, a different being from what he is.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 98

Introduction

This is entitled simply "A Psalm." But who is its author is unknown. It is similar in its design and structure to the group of Psalms Psalm 97:1-12), supposes that this psalm refers to the restoration of the Jewish people. It is a psalm which would have been appropriate at the dedication of the temple after the Babylonian captivity, and may have been composed for that occasion. It is of so general a character, however, that it is appropriate to all times in the church. The psalm does not admit of a particular analysis.

Verse 1

O sing unto the Lord a new song - Compare Psalm 33:3; Psalm 96:1. "For he hath done marvelous things." Things suited to excite wonder, or to fill the mind with astonishment. See Psalm 77:14; Psalm 86:10.

His right hand - The instrument by which we execute any purpose. Compare Isaiah 59:16; Isaiah 63:5.

And his holy arm - The arm of his holiness; that is, his arm put forth in a righteous cause, or vindicating that which is right.

Hath gotten him the victory - literally, "has worked salvation for him:" for himself, or in his own cause. The victory - the salvation - was really in defense of his own government; in maintaining his own authority against those who set themselves in opposition to it. What is here said may be applied to all that God does. It is really in his own cause, in order to maintain the principles of his own administration.

Verse 2

The Lord hath made known his salvation - See the notes at Isaiah 52:10. This does not mean that he had merely "proclaimed" his salvation, or his willingness to save, but that he had shown his salvation - his power to save - by some public act. What the particular act referred to here was, it is impossible now to ascertain. Such acts, however, have been often performed, as when he delivered his people out of Egypt; when he restored the Hebrews from the Babylonian captivity; and whenever he interposed in their behalf in times of danger. He has done it also in the gift of a Saviour; he does it in every revival of true religion; he does it in the salvation of a single sinner.

His righteousness - His righteous character; his faithfulness to his people. Whenever he interposes, it is in behalf of that which is right; and

such interposition, therefore, is an illustration of his character as just. It is in this way we learn that his character is that of a just God.

Hath he openly showed - Margin, as in Hebrew, "revealed." He has disclosed it, or made it manifest.

In the sight of the heathen - The nations; or, so that the nations could see it: that is, the nations outside of Pa estine. His acts were so public - so remarkable - that surrounding nations could learn what was his true character. Thus it was when he delivered his people from Egyptian bondage; and thus also frequently in the history of his people.

Verse 3

He hath remembered his mercy - Compare the notes at Luke 1:54-55 (note), Luke 1:72 (note), where this passage in the Psalms was not improbably referred to by Mary and Zacharias. The idea is, that God had called to mind his promise of mercy to his people; that he had not suffered it to pass out of his recollection; that he had kept his word.

And his truth - He has kept his promise; he has shown that he is a God of truth.

Toward the house of Israel - Toward his people.

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God - This appears to have been quoted from Isaiah 52:10. See the notes at that passage. The resemblance in the language is so strong as to make it probable that the psalm was composed after the times of Isaiah, and not improbably to be used (as remarked above) in the dedication of the temple after the captivity. The whole psalm would be appropriate to celebrate that deliverance; while, at the same time, like the language in Isaiah, it would be adapted to celebrate a higher deliverance - under the Messiah - of which that was an emblem.

Verse 4

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord - By singing; by instruments of music. See the notes at Psalm 95:1.

All the earth - All lands. The event is of sufficient importance to be celebrated by all nations. It is a matter of universal exultation and joy.

Make a loud noise - The word used here - פצח *pâtsach* - means properly to break in pieces; then, to break forth, as a shout of triumph or joy, as if the joy could be no longer confined or repressed. See the notes at Isaiah 14:7. The word occurs only in the following places (besides that which is before us), in all of which it is rendered "break forth." Isaiah 14:7; Isaiah 44:23;

Isaiah 49:13; Isaiah 52:9; Isaiah 54:1; Isaiah 55:12 - (except in Micah 3:3, where it it is rendered "break"). It is expressive of irrepressible joy.

Rejoice and sing praise - This very combination of the words, "Break forth into joy, sing together" - the same words in Hebrew as here - occurs in Isaiah 52:9, showing, as above remarked, that the psalm was composed after the times of Isaiah, and probably had reference to the same event.

Verse 5

Sing unto the Lord with the harp - A song or psalm accompanied by the harp. On the harp. See the notes at Isaiah 5:12.

And the voice of a psalm - The voice in singing; a musical voice. Let it not be mere instrumental music, but let that be accompanied with the voice uttering intelligible sounds or words. The only proper use of instrumental music in the worship of God is to deepen the impression which the words are adapted to make; to secure a better influence of truth on the heart.

Verse 6

With trumpets - The word used here is uniformly rendered "trumpets" in the Scriptures. Numbers 10:2, Numbers 10:8-10; Numbers 31:6; et al. The trumpet was mainly employed for convening a public assembly for worship, or for assembling the hosts for battle. The original word - חצצרה *chătsôtserâh* - is supposed to have been designed to imitate "the broken pulse-like sound of the trumpet, like the Latin *"taratantara."* So the German "trarara," and the Arabic *hadadera* The word used here was given to the long, straight trumpet.

And sound of cornet … - The word here translated "cornet" is also usually rendered "trumpet," Exodus 19:16, Exodus 19:19; Exodus 20:18; Leviticus 25:9; Joshua 6:4-6, Joshua 6:8-9, Joshua 6:13, Joshua 6:16, Joshua 6:20; et saepe. It is rendered "cornet" in 1 Chronicles 15:28; 2 Chronicles 15:14; Hosea 5:8. In the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate it is here rendered "horn" - the meaning of "cornet." The name - שׁפר *shôphār* - is supposed to have been given to this instrument from its clear and shrill sound, like the English name "clarion." It was either made of horn, or similar to a horn - an instrument curved like a horn. The instrument was in frequent use among the Hebrews.

Verse 7

Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof - See the notes at Psalm 96:11.

The world, and they that dwell therein - The habitable world - the land - in contradistinction from the sea. Let there be universal praise on the water and the land.

Verse 8

Let the floods clap their hands - The rivers. Let them join in the universal praise. As if conscious of their beauty, their grandeur, their usefulness; as if sensible that all this was conferred by God; as if rejoicing in the goodness of God manifested to them, and through them, let them unite in the universal praise. Compare the notes at Isaiah 55:12.

Let the hills be joyful together - The mountains - in view of the goodness of God toward them - crowning them with beauty - clothing them with sublimity and grandeur - let them also rejoice in God as "their" God. Let all nature thus join in praise.

Verse 9

Before the Lord, for he cometh to judge the earth … - This verse is essentially the same as Psalm 96:13. See the notes at that verse. The psalm calls for universal praise. The very "reading" of the psalm - so joyous - so jubilant - so animated - so exulting - is suited to awaken the mind to praise; to rouse it to thankfulness; to fill it with joy. One cannot read the psalm without being a happier man; without being lifted above the world; without lofty views of God; without a feeling that he is worthy of this universal praise; without recognizing that we are in a world where the mind should be joyful; that we are under the dominion of a God whose reign should fill the mind with gladness.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 99

Introduction

This psalm is closely linked in its general character and design with those which have gone before Psalm 100:1-5 - forming a connected group or series. The general subject is the kingship of Yahweh, or the foundations of praise derived from the fact that he reigns, or is king. As the foundation of praise on this account, reference is made in this group of psalms to his attributes; to what he has done in the works of creation; to what he has done for his people; and to the certainty that he will come ultimately to rule over all the earth, and to exercise just judgment among people.

This psalm consists of the following parts:

I. A statement of the fact that Yahweh reigns, and that this should make a deep impression on the world; that the people should tremble; that the earth should be moved, Psalm 99:1.

II. Reasons for this, or reasons why he should be reverenced and adored by mankind, Psalm 99:2-9. These reasons are two:

(1) The first is derived from the fact that he is a holy and a righteous God, and is therefore worthy of universal adoration, Psalm 99:2-5.

(2) The second is derived from what he has done for his people: for his merciful interposition in times of trouble, when Moses, and Aaron, and Samuel called upon his name; and from the fact that he answered his people when they cried unto him; and from the manner in which it was done, Psalm 99:6-9. He had shown himself ready to hear their protection in the cloudy pillar, he had answered their supplications, and had forgiven them. He had not swept them wholly away, or cut them off, but had spared them, and had shown mercy to them.

Verse 1

The Lord reigneth - The Lord, Yahweh, is king. See Psalm 93:1.

Let the people tremble - The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "Let the people rage" - or, be angry: as if the idea were that God reigned, although the people were enraged, and were opposed to him. The true meaning of the word used here, however, is "tremble," properly signifying to be moved, disturbed, disquieted, thrown into commotion; and then it may mean to be moved with anger, Proverbs 29:9; Isaiah 28:21; or with grief, 2 Samuel 18:33: or with fear, Psalm 4:4; or with joy, Jeremiah

33:9. Hence, it means to be agitated or moved with fear or reverence; and it refers here to the reverence or awe which one has in the conscious presence of God.

He sitteth between the cherubims - See the notes at Psalm 80:1.

Let the earth be moved - Margin, "stagger." The word means to move or quake. It occurs nowhere else. Compare the notes at Psalm 18:7. See also Habakkuk 3:6, Habakkuk 3:10.

Verse 2

The Lord is great in Zion - Compare Psalm 95:3. The meaning here is, not that God is "absolutely" great - which is indeed true - but that there is a sense in which he has shown himself great "in Zion;" that is, in his manifestations toward his own people. He has evinced power in their behalf; he has interposed for them in times of danger; he has so discomfited their enemies as to show that he is a great God - a God worthy to be adored.

And he is high above all the people - Above all the nations. He has them under his control. He rules over all. The God who rules in Zion also rules all the nations of the earth; and his people, therefore, have special occasion to praise him.

Verse 3

Let them praise thy great and terrible name - The word rendered "terrible" means "to be feared or reverenced;" that is, his name - his being - he himself - is suited to inspire awe and reverence. The word "them" here refers to the nations over whom God reigns. It is a call on them to praise their king and their God.

For it is holy - See the notes at Isaiah 6:3; notes at Revelation 4:8. The fact that God "is" holy - that he is pure and righteous - that he cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence - is a just foundation for universal praise. Who could worship or honor a God who was not pure and holy?

Verse 4

The king's strength - The word king here undoubtedly refers to God as a king, Psalm 99:1. The word rendered "strength," means power, force; and the reference here is to what constitutes the main strength or power of his character and government. It is rendered in the Septuagint, τιμή *timē* - "honor." So in the Latin Vulgate - *"honor."* DeWette renders it, "The praise of the king who loves judgment." So Rosenmuller, "Let them praise the strength - the power - of the king who loves judgment." But perhaps our common version best expresses the sense, that whatever there is in the

character of the "king," that is God, which constitutes strength, or gives power to his administration, is favorable to justice, or will be exerted in the cause of right. God's essential character; all the acts of his power; all the demonstrations of his authority, will be in favor of justice, and may be relied on as sustaining the righteous cause. It is not the "mere" exertion of power - it is power that is always exercised in favor of right; and this lays the foundation of praise. We could not praise a being of "mere" power, or one who was merely "almighty," without respect to his moral character. It is only when the character is such that power will be exerted in favor of that which is right and just that it becomes the proper subject of praise.

Loveth judgment - Is always on the side of justice and right. He so loves justice that his power will be put forth only in behalf of that which is right. God shows this by his law, and by all the acts of his administration.

Thou dost establish equity - That which is equal and just; alike by thy law, and by thine interpositions. All that thou doest, and all that thou dost appoint, is in favor of that which is equal and just.

Thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob - That which is just; that which ought to be done. Thou doest this among thy people; thou doest it in their relation to the surrounding nations. All the acts of thy administration tend to the establishment of that which is right.

Verse 5

Exalt ye the Lord our God - See the notes at Psalm 30:1. The meaning is, Let his name be, as it were, lifted up on high, so as to be conspicuous or seen from afar. Let it be done with a lofty voice; let it be with ascriptions of praise.

And worship at his footstool - By humble prostration at his feet. The footstool is that on which the feet rest when one is sitting, and the reference here is to the footstool on which the feet of a king rested when he sat on his throne or chair of state. To worship at his footstool - compare 1 Chronicles 28:2; Psalm 132:7 - denotes the deepest humility and the profoundest prostration and reverence. It is as if we could not look on his face, or on his throne, or on his gorgeous and magnificent robes, but bowed our heads in lowly reverence, and deemed it sufficient honor to lie low before that on which his feet rested. To show the dignity and majesty of God, the earth itself is represented as being merely his footstool; as being, in comparison with the heaven - the place of his seat - his "throne," only as the footstool is as compared with the splendid chair of state. Isaiah 66:1; Matthew 5:34-35.

For he is holy - See Psalm 99:3. Margin, "it is holy." The translation in the text best expresses the sense. The fact that God is "holy" is a reason for lowly and profound prostration before him.

Verse 6

Moses and Aaron among his priests - Among the ministers of religion; or, as officiating in the service of God. Let them come as representatives of their order - as representing those who conduct the public worship of God, and join in his praise. The idea is, that all mankind should join in his praise, and those mentioned here as among the most eminent of those who were engaged in directing the public worship of God. Moses could be called a "priest" only in the most general sense of the term, as having been employed in directing and arranging for public worship, and as being of the original tribe of Levi, from whom the whole sacerdotal order sprang.

And Samuel among them that call upon his name - Among those who are true worshippers, in distinction from the priests who were specially appointed to the public service of God. The idea is, that praise should be offered by "all" classes: by priests and by people. As Moses and Aaron were among the most eminent of the former class, so Samuel was among the most distinguished of those who were not of the priestly order. These were "representative men;" and the meaning is, that all who were of their order or rank - priests and people - should unite in the worship of God.

They called upon the Lord - They did call upon the Lord; they worshipped Yahweh. They gave the influence of their names and of their position to his public service. They thus showed their sense of the propriety of praising God; they gave the countenance of their example to public worship and praise; and the benefits which they received in answer to prayer showed the propriety and advantage of thus publicly acknowledging God.

And he answered them - They did not call upon him in vain. He heard their prayers. He bestowed blessings on them in connection with their worship. It was not a useless thing to praise and worship him. The worship of God is thus commended to us not merely from the propriety of the act itself, but from its advantages. It is unnecessary to refer to particular instances in the history of these people when their prayers were answered. Their lives were full of such instances - as the lives of all who truly call upon God are now. If a man who prays could "see" all that comes to him every day in answer to prayer - all the things bestowed which he had

"desired" in prayer, and which would not have been conferred on him if he had not prayed, there would no longer be any doubt on the question whether God answers prayer.

Verse 7

He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar - He spake to the men of other times; to those who called upon his name. It cannot be meant literally that he spake to "Samuel" from the "cloudy pillar" - the pillar which guided the Israelites in the wilderness, unless that term be understood in the general sense as denoting the "Shechinah" - the visible symbol of the divine presence - the cloud that rested on the ark. The idea is, that God his people in ancient times from the cloud - the symbol of his presence; that he communed with them; that he heard their prayers; that he gave them his commandments; that he interposed in their behalf, and that it was not a vain thing that they worshipped him. All this was as true of Samuel - it is as true now of those who call upon God - as it was of Moses and Aaron.

They kept his testimonies … - They obeyed his laws, and he thus heard and answered them.

Verse 8

Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God - The reference here is to God as "our" God; that is, the language used by those who now worship him is designed to give encouragement in approaching his throne. The God that "we" worship is the same that "they" worshipped; and as he answered them, we may feel assured that he will answer us.

Thou wast a God that forgavest them - They were not perfect; they were sinners; they often offended thee, and yet thou didst answer them, and show them mercy.

Though thou tookest vengeance - Though thou didst manifest thy displeasure at their misconduct; though thou in thy judgments didst show that thou wast displeased with them; nevertheless thou didst answer them. Sinners as they were, and often as thou didst show thy displeasure at their conduct, yet thou didst hear their prayers and bless them.

Of their inventions - The Hebrew word denotes work, deed, doing, conduct. It means here what they did - their sins. There is no allusion to any special art or "cunning" in what they did - as if they had "invented" or found out some new form of sin.

Verse 9

Exalt the Lord our God - See the notes at Psalm 99:5.

And worship at his holy hill - In Psalm 99:5, this is, "at his footstool." The "holy hill" refers to Zion, as the seat of the national worship.

For the Lord our God is holy - See Psalm 99:5. This appropriately closes the psalm, by a distinct and solemn statement that the fact that Yahweh is a holy God is a reason for worshipping him. This is at all times the highest reason for adoration and praise.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 100

Introduction

This psalm - so beautiful - so grand - so often sung in all lands and languages - completes this "group" of psalms respecting the reign of God, or the reasons for praise as derived from the fact that he reigns. In the previous psalms in this group Psalm 9599 the call to praise had been in some respects local and particular; in this, it is universal. All lands are called on to praise him; all people to worship him as God. The "ground" of this, as stated in the psalm, is that he is their "Maker;" that he is the Creator of all. As all have derived their being from him, they are called on to praise him as their common Creator and Father. So far as the reason here referred to is a ground for praise and worship, it applies to all people now. The nations - the people of the earth - are one. However much they may differ in complexion, in language, in customs, in religion, they have all been formed by the same God; they are all of one family; they are all entitled to the same privileges; they may all have the same access to his throne. The races of people are one; and all should gather around the throne of their common Creator, and render him united praise. This psalm has been sung by million and hundreds of million; it will continue to be sung to the end of time.

The psalm is entitled "A Psalm of praise In the margin, "thanksgiving." The Septuagint is, "A Psalm of Confession" - εἰς ἐξομολόγησιν *eis homologēsin* So the Latin Vulgate, and the Chaldee. The Syriac version is, "anonymous," or, without a name; "concerning Joshua the son of Nun, when he subdued the Ammonites." Luther: "A Psalm of Thanksgiving."

Verse 1

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord - See the notes at Psalm 95:1.

All ye lands - Margin, as in Hebrew, "all the earth." The margin expresses the sense. The idea in the psalm is, that praise did not pertain to one nation only; that it was not appropriate for one people merely; that it should not be confined to the Hebrew people, but that there was a proper ground of praise for "all;" there was that in which all nations, of all languages and conditions, could unite. The ground of that was the fact that they had one Creator, Psalm 100:3. The psalm is based on the unity of the human race; on the fact that there is one God and Father of all, and one great family on earth.

Verse 2

Serve the Lord with gladness - That is, In your worship, and in all your acts of obedience. Let there be joy in this service. Let it not be with the fear of slaves; not as a matter of compulsion and force; not with reluctance, moroseness, or gloom. Let it be a cheerful, happy service; let it be freely rendered, let it be an occasion of joy to the soul. The service of God is a source of the highest joy that man knows.

Come before his presence with singing - As expressive of joy. So the birds sing; so nature rejoices; so should man - intelligent, redeemed, immortal man, be joyful.

Verse 3

Know ye that the Lord, he is God - That is, Let all the nations know that Yahweh is the true God. The idols are vanity. They have no claim to worship; but God is the Creator of all, and is entitled to universal adoration.

It is he that hath made us - The Hebrew is, "He made us," and this expresses the exact idea. The fact that he is the Creator proves that he is God, since no one but God can perform the work of creation. The highest idea that we can form of power is that which is evinced in an act of creation; that is, in causing anything to exist where there was nothing before. Every created thing, therefore, is a proof of the existence of God; the immensity of the universe is an illustration of the greatness of his power.

And not we ourselves - Margin, "And his we are." The difference between the text and the margin is owing to a different reading in the Hebrew, varying only in a single letter. The reading in the text is, "And not (לא *lo'*) we;" in the margin, "And to him (לו *lô*) we." These words would be pronounced in the same manner, and either of them would convey good sense. The weight of authority is in favor of the common reading, "And not we;" that is, We are not self-created; we derive our being from him. All that we have and are, we owe to him.

We are his people - By virtue of creation. The highest "property" which can exist is that derived from an act of creation. He that has brought anything into existence has a right to it, and may dispose of it as he pleases. It is on this idea essentially that all idea of "property" is founded.

And the sheep of his pasture - As the shepherd owns the flock, so God is our owner; as the shepherd guards his flock and provides for it, so God guards us and provides for us. See the notes at Psalm 95:7.

Verse 4

Enter into his gates … - The gates which lead to his temple, or to the place of public worship.

Into his courts … - The "courts" were literally the open spaces which surrounded the tabernacle or temple. It was in these that worship was celebrated, and not in the tabernacle or temple. See Psalm 65:4, note; Psalm 84:2, note; Psalm 92:13, note.

Be thankful unto him - That is, Offer thanksgiving and praise. Come before him with a grateful heart. See the notes at Psalm 50:14.

Bless his name - Bless him; praise him; ascribe honor to him; acknowledge him as God.

Verse 5

For the Lord is good - For good is Yahweh. That is, He is not a being of mere "power;" he is not merely the Creator; but he is benevolent, and is, therefore, worthy of universal praise. In the former verses, his claim to adoration is founded on the fact that he is the "Creator," and has, as such, a right to our service; in this verse, the claim is asserted on account of his moral character:

(1) his benevolence;

(2) his mercy;

(3) his truth;

(a) the fact that he is a God of truth; and

(b) the fact that his truth endures, or that in all generations he shows himself to be faithful to his promises.

The first of these is his "benevolence:" "The Lord is good." As such, assuredly, God is worthy of praise and honor. A being of "mere" power we could not love or praise; a being whose power was united with malignity or malevolence, could only be the object of hatred and terror; but a being whose power is united with goodness or benevolence ought to he loved.

His mercy is everlasting - This is the "second" reason, drawn from his moral character, why he should be praised and adored. A being of mere "justice" may be feared and respected; but a character of "mere" justice would be to man an object of dread - and may be so anywhere. There are other attributes than the one of "justice," high and valuable as that may be, which are necessary to constitute a perfect character; and man, in order to

find happiness and security, must find some other attribute in God than mere "justice," for man is a sinner, and needs pardon; he is a sufferer, and needs compassion; he is to die, and needs support and consolation. Besides, mere "justice" may drive its decisions over some of the kindest and tenderest feelings of human nature, for there are cases, under all administrations, where pardon is desirable and mercy is proper. It is, therefore, a ground of unspeakable joy for man that God is not a Being of "mere justice," but that there is mingled in his character the attribute of mercy and kindness. But for this, man could have no hope; for, as a sinner, he has no claim on God, and all his hope must be derived from God's infinite compassion. To all this as a ground of praise is to be added the fact that this mercy of God is "everlasting." Its fruits - its results - will extend to the vast eternity before us; and in all that eternity we shall never cease to enjoy the benefits of that mercy; never be suffered to fall back on the mere "justice" of God.

And his truth endureth to all generations - Margin, as in Hebrew, "to generation and generation." That is, forever. It is the same in every generation of the world. This is the third reason derived from the moral character of God for praising him; and this is a just ground of praise. We could not love and honor a God who was not true to his promises, and who did not himself love the truth; we could not honor one who was changeable and flexible - who loved one thing in one generation and a different thing in the next; who in one age was the friend of truth, and in the next the patron of falsehood. It is the just foundation for praise to God - our God - that he is essentially and always - in all worlds, and in all the generations of people - toward all in the universe - a Being of unchangeable benevolence, mercy, and truth. Such a God is worthy to be had in universal reverence; such a God is worthy of universal praise.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 101

Introduction

This psalm purports to be a Psalm of David, and there is no reason to doubt that it was composed by him, though it is not possible to ascertain why it did not have a place in the collection of his psalms in the early part of the book Psalm 101:1.

II. His purpose to lead an upright life - a life characterized by wisdom - especially in his own family, Psalm 101:2-3. It is a purpose to "begin" life in this relation aright; "to be" an upright man in his family.

III. The principles on which he purposed to do this, especially in reference to those who should be in his employ as domestics, servants, or laborers, Psalm 101:4-7:

(1) He would employ no "froward" person, Psalm 101:4.

(2) He would employ no one who was a "slanderer," Psalm 101:5.

(3) He would employ no one who had "a high look or a proud heart," Psalm 101:5.

(4) He would seek out the faithful and the pious in the land to be in his service, Psalm 101:6.

(5) He would employ no one who was deceitful; no one who could not be trusted; no one who was a liar, Psalm 101:7.

IV. These same principles, he says, should govern him in a higher relation - as a sovereign and monarch, for they were principles which were as needful in administering the government of a nation, as in a family; they were principles which a good man should take with him to all the public duties of life, whatever might be his rank, Psalm 101:8. Thus understood, the psalm contains important principles applicable

(a) to man or woman entering on the married life;

(b) to those who are at the head of manufacturing establishments;

(c) to farmers and mechanics;

(d) to those who occupy official positions, and who administer the government of a land - judges, rulers, princes, monarchs.

No better rules could be given to guide those who have others under them or in their employ, in respect to their own conduct, or in respect to those who shall be employed, than such as the psalmist here says should guide him.

Verse 1

I will sing of mercy and judgment - That is, In the psalm which he was about to compose, he would make these the burden of his song; he would, in fact, by stating his views as to the regulation of his own conduct, commend these virtues - mercy and justice - to mankind, and celebrate their value. He who himself "adopts" the principles of mercy, kindness, truth, and justice, as his own guide, commends these virtues to mankind in the best way possible. No language can do it effectually, unless a man practices these virtues himself.

Unto thee, O Lord, will I sing - As commending and approving these things; as having put it into my heart to practice them; as displaying them in thine own higher administration: for a father of a family, or a magistrate, is but the representative of God.

Verse 2

I will behave myself wisely - In the choice of principles to guide me; in my conduct in my family; in my official relations. This expresses a "desire" to act wisely, and a "purpose" to do it.

In a perfect way - In accordance with the perfect rules of right. I will make these my guide. I will "aim" to be perfect; I will have before me a perfect standard.

O when wilt thou come unto me? - Perhaps this would be better rendered, "When thou dost come unto me;" that is, When then dost visit me and my dwelling, thou shalt find that these are the principles which regulate and govern me in my house. The idea is that God would come to visit his habitation, and inspect his conduct; and that whenever this should occur, however often it might be, or however unexpectedly he might come, he should "always" find these principles governing him in his family. A man should so live that "whenever" God comes into his dwelling, or when anyone comes, or however narrow and searching may be the inspection, these principles shal be found to regulate his conduct.

I will walk within my house - Before my family; in the principles which shall govern me there.

With a perfect heart - Always aiming to do exactly that which is right: in my general conduct; in the rules by which I live; in my treatment of all under my charge and in my employ. The great principles of "right," in everything - in the smallest matters - shall guide and govern me.

Verse 3

I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes - That is, I will propose no wicked thing to be done; I will have no such object in view; I will employ no one to do that which is wrong. The margin, as the Hebrew, is, "thing of Belial." See the notes at Psalm 41:8. It here means that which is worthless, bad, wicked. He would have no wicked aim; he would not look upon a wicked thing for a moment, or with the least favor.

I hate the work of them that turn aside - All their doings, motives, plans. The word rendered "turn aside" means to turn out of the way; out of the right path: Wanderers - transgressors - those who leave the path of truth and honesty.

It shall not cleave to me - I will have nothing to do with it. It shall not he allowed to attach itself to me. A wicked plan or purpose is thus represented as having a tendency to fasten itself on a man, or to "stick to him" - as pitch, or wax, as a "burn" does.

Verse 4

A froward heart shall depart from me - The word here rendered froward means perverse, false, deceitful, depraved. See the notes at Psalm 18:26. The "idea" here is that of one who is inclined to evil; who has some wrong passion or inclination to indulge; who has an obstinate and perverse will; who does not listen to reason or the voice of wise persuasion; who will do wrong, despite all the means which may be employed to induce him to do right. The language may either refer to the author of the psalm himself, as regulating his own conduct; or it may refer to those in his employ. In the former sense, it would mean that he would not himself be perverse and froward; in the latter sense, that he would not have such persons in his employ. The connection seems to require that we should understand it in the latter sense, as referring to the class of persons that the psalmist would have about him.

I will not know a wicked person - I will not countenance such a one; I will not recognize such a one among those who are admitted into my house,

or own him as my friend; or, I will not have such in my employ. Probably the language embraces both these ideas - as it should in the case of all who are at the head of a family:

(a) I will not countenance or recognize as among my friends, who are to be admitted to my fireside and family, and who are to be familiar with me and my children, those who are profligate, wicked, and unprincipled, whatever may be their rank, their wealth, their accomplishments, their fascination of manner, or their power of conversation;

(b) I will have in my employ no one who is not honest, temperate, virtuous, pure. The welfare of a family depends more on the former of these things than the latter; no family can be well ordered where both are not found.

Verse 5

Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour - literally, "One who speaks concerning his neighbor in secret." If a man has any good to say of another, he will be likely to say it openly; if he has any evil to say, it will be likely to be said in secret. Hence, to speak in secret of anyone comes to mean the same thing as to slander him.

Him will I cut off - That is, I will cut him off from me; I will not employ him. He would not have one in his house, or in his service, who did injustice to the character of others; who stabbed their reputation in the dark. This was alike indicative of the personal character of the author of the psalm, and of his purpose as the head of a family. It is hardly necessary to say that no one should employ another who is in the habit of slandering his neighbor.

Him that hath an high look - That is proud - as a proud man commonly carries his head high.

And a proud heart - The Hebrew word here rendered "proud" commonly means wide, broad, large, as of the sea, or of an extended country, Job 11:9; Exodus 3:8. It is applied also to the law of God as comprehensive, and without limit, Psalm 119:96. Then it comes to mean swelled up - made large - inflated Proverbs 28:25; and hence, proud and arrogant.

Will not I suffer - I will not tolerate such a person near me. No one can have peace in his house who has such a class of servants or domestics; no

one should countenance such persons. Humility is the very foundation of all virtue.

Verse 6

Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land … - I will look to them to be employed in my house, and in my service. The word rendered "faithful" means those who are worthy of belief or confidence. It does not "necessarily" mean those who are pious or religious - though it is often used to denote such persons, in reference to the principal trait in the character of the pious, that is, confidence or faith in God. The essential meaning here is, that he would seek those who were trustworthy; on whom he could place reliance; whose truth, fidelity, and honesty he could confide in. This would be most certainly found in those who are "faithful" to God, and who would then be "faithful" to lower obligations. Undoubtedly, also, it is desirable, on some accounts, to have only such in our employ, if such can be found. But we are not to regard this passage as teaching the doctrine, even by the example of the psalmist, that we are to employ no persons but such as are truly religious. There are others who will be found faithful, honest, and reliable; and they have such a claim to our confidence as to impose on us a moral obligation to show them that confidence - so far, at least, that we shall not, by any act of ours, declare them not worthy of trust because they are not religious. Besides, it may be desirable, on many accounts, that persons who are not religious should be brought under the influence of religion in pious families, and enjoy the advantages which may be connected with a religious household. In seeking our own interest, and what will be for our own welfare and happiness, we should not be unmindful of what may be for the good of others. Religion may extend itself much in the world by thus bringing into the service of religious households those who may, by example, instruction, and prayer, be led to the possession and practice of true religion.

He that walketh in a perfect way … - Margin, "perfect in the way." The translation in the text is the more correct. The phrase means an upright man; a man of integrity. It does not necessarily imply that he is absolutely holy, or free from all sin, but that he is upright, consistent, honest: a man whose moral character is developed in proper proportions, or is such that it may be relied on. See the notes at Job 1:1.

Verse 7

He that worketh deceit - The man who is dishonest - who is full of tricks, false pretences, and devices - who cannot be confided in as straight-forward and sincere - one whose word cannot be relied on - one whose course is subterranean or serpentine.

Shall not dwell within my house - Shall neither be employed in my service, nor be admitted as a guest and companion. I will not, in any way, patronise or countenance such a person.

He that telleth lies - In any way: by stating what is false; by promising what is not performed; by deceiving me in his professions. I will seek only those who love and speak the truth.

Shall not tarry in my sight - Margin, "shall not be established." The idea is that of being confirmed or established. The sense here seems to be, that though such a person should gain admittance to his house on any pretence or profession, he should not obtain a permanent residence there. As soon as his real character was known, he would be dismissed or discharged. The psalmist says that he would do nothing to show him countenance; he would not give occasion to have it represented that he favored liars or dishonest persons, or that such persons might find employment with him. As a universal rule, no man should have such plans to accomplish in his family, or in his business-transactions, that he cannot employ, in accomplishing those things, persons who are perfectly honest; or, in other words, no man should engage in any undertaking, or pursue any kind of business, that would require people of loose principles - the cunning, the crafty, the deceitful, the dishonest - to carry it out. Yet there are many such employments in the world; and there are men suited for such employments, and who are willing to engage in such work. It may be a good test for a man in regard to the business in which he is engaged, to ask himself what kind of agents, clerks, or servants, it will be necessary for him to employ in carrying it out. If the business is such as to make it necessary to employ unprincipled people - people who have easy consciences - people who will violate the sabbath - men who have more skill than honesty - more cunning than principle - that very fact should determine him at once in regard to the propriety of the business.

Verse 8

I will early destroy … - Hebrew, "In the mornings I will destroy." That is, It shall be my first business as I enter upon the day. Possibly, also, by the use of the plural here - "in the mornings" - there may be the idea that this

would be his constant rule of conduct: he would do it every day; he would do it morning by morning. He would on no day - at no time - allow the wicked to be in his service. This rule would be unvarying. It would extend through his life. The word "destroy" here may refer not only to his conduct as a man, and as the head of a family, but to the act of a magistrate; and the idea may be, that the rule which he prescribed for himself in his own house was a rule which he would carry with him into public: that is, as the psalm was composed by David, that, as a king and sovereign, it should be his aim to carry those principles to the throne; that, in respect to the state, he would do what he purposed to do in his home-relations. The strict and stern regard for truth, sincerity, honesty, fidelity, which he would evince in the one case he would evince in the other; carrying to the high employments of public life, where there were so many temptations to a contrary course, the inflexible virtues which were needful for peace, for happiness, and for success in domestic life.

That I may cut off - By discountenancing them; by punishing them if they are guilty.

All wicked doers - All violators of law.

From the city of the Lord - From Jerusalem, the place where God dwelt, and which was sacred to his service. See Psalm 46:4, note; Psalm 48:2, note; Psalm 48:8, note. Happy is the man at the head of a family - happy is the magistrate - who adopts for himself, and who faithfully carries out the principles laid down by the author of this psalm - divinely inspired to adopt such rules for himself, and to suggest them for others in all ages.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 102

Introduction

This psalm purports, in the title, to be a "Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord." It is a prayer, made up of earnest supplications, as of one who was in great affliction, whether he refers to his own individual sorrows, or whether he speaks as one of the people. The word "afflicted," means here a suffering one; one who is in trouble. The word is in the singular number, and is one which is often applied to a person who is in trouble - whatever may be the nature of that trouble. The word rendered "overwhelmed" means properly to cover as with a garment; to clothe; and then, to be covered with darkness, affliction, grief, Psalm 61:2. This is the meaning here. It denotes a state where the soul was enshrouded in gloom and sorrow. The word rendered "complaint," means properly meditation; then, moaning; then, the expression of sorrow. It does not necessarily mean, as the word does with us, "finding fault," or expressing dissatisfaction, but it rather denotes that deep sorrow which finds utterance in low and plaintive sounds; not in boisterous and loud outcry, but in subdued notes - in sounds uttered not because one wishes to complain, but because the sorrow is such that it will find vent. Compare 1 Samuel 1:16; 1 Kings 18:27; Job 7:13; Job 9:27; Job 10:1; Job 21:4; Psalm 55:2; Psalm 64:1 (Hebrew).

On what occasion, or by whom, this psalm was composed, it is not possible now to ascertain. Hengstenberg and Prof. Alexander suppose that it was by David. It seems more probable, however, from Psalm 102:13-21, that it was in the time of the captivity, and was in view of the troubles of that long and weary exile, and that the psalmist speaks not of individual and personal troubles, but speaks as one of the people - as one in exile with others who had been long held in captivity, and who sighed for deliverance, and for a restoration to their native land. In the midst of these troubles, which are so tenderly described in the first eleven verses, he saw encouraging evidences that the Lord was about to manifest his mercy, and to restore the people to their native land; and he pleads most earnestly with God, on the ground that he was faithful and unchanging, that he would thus interpose and accomplish the earnest desire of his afflicted people. The "language," indeed, in the psalm, is that of an individual, and the author of the psalm speaks of his own personal sorrows, but it may be as one among

many who were equally crushed and overwhelmed, so that the language used to represent his sorrow may describe the sorrows experienced by others in the same circumstances. Beyond all question, the language used in the psalm would express the feelings of many a pious Hebrew in the time of the exile, the sorrow - the sadness - the cherished hopes - the prayers - of many a one in that prolonged and painful captivity.

The psalm may be divided into three parts:

I. A description of the sorrows of the author of the psalm, as representative of the condition and feelings of the exiles, Psalm 102:1-11. In this, the language of lamentation and complaint predominates.

II. The grounds of hope - the indications of deliverance - the evidences that God was about to show favor to his people, and to restore them to their own country - that the time, the set time, to favor Zion was about to come, Psalm 102:12-22.

III. The confidence of the psalmist in God, on the ground of his unchangeableness: on the fact that God is always the same; that his promises must be sure; that his purposes must be accomplished; that the very heavens and the earth would change - that the skies would grow old like a garment and pass away - but that God did not, would not change. All that he had spoken must be true; all that he had purposed must be accomplished; all that he had promised must come to pass, Psalm 102:23-28.

Verse 1

Hear my prayer, O Lord - The prayer which I offer in view of my personal trials; the prayer which I offer as one of an afflicted people. Compare Psalm 4:1; Psalm 17:1; Psalm 18:6.

And let my cry come unto thee - My prayer, accompanied with an outward expression of my earnestness. It was not a silent, or a mental prayer; it was a loud and earnest cry. Psalm 5:2; Psalm 18:6, Psalm 18:41; Psalm 30:2; Psalm 72:12; Job 35:9; Job 36:13.

Verse 2

Hide not thy face from me - The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, “Do not turn away thy face from me.” The sense is essentially the same. The prayer is, that God would not refuse to look graciously upon

him; that he would turn his attention to him; that he would regard his supplications. See the notes at Psalm 10:1; compare Psalm 13:1; Psalm 27:9; Job 13:24; Job 34:29; Deuteronomy 31:17.

In the day when I am in trouble - When sorrows come upon me; when I need thy gracious help. Literally, "When there is distress to me."

Incline thine ear unto me - See Psalm 5:1, note; Psalm 17:6, note; compare Psalm 17:1; Psalm 55:1; Psalm 86:6; Psalm 39:12.

In the day when I call, answer me speedily - Grant at once my requests; give me immediate evidence that my prayer is heard. The psalmist believed in an immediate answer to prayer. He often had evidence that his prayer was answered at once; his mind became calm; he had comfort and peace; he obtained the blessing which he earnestly sought. No one can doubt that prayer may be answered at once; no one who prays can fail to find such answers in his own case, in his peace, his calmness, his joy. In multitudes of cases blessings are granted in such a way that there can be no doubt that they have come in answer to prayer. Compare the notes at Daniel 9:20-23.

Verse 3

For my days are consumed like smoke - Margin, "into smoke." Literally, "in smoke." That is, They vanish as smoke; they pass away and become nothing; they are spent in affliction, and seem to accomplish nothing. The idea is, that in his affliction he seemed to accomplish none of the ends of life. His life seemed to be wasted. This is often the feeling in trial: and yet in trial a man may be more useful, he may do more to accomplish the real ends of life, he may do more to illustrate the power and excellence of religion, than he ever did in the days of prosperity.

And my bones are burned as an hearth - Or rather, as faggots or fuel. Literally, "They are burned as a burning." The idea is, that in his troubles, his very bones, the most solid and substantial part of himself, seemed to be consumed and to waste away. See the notes at Psalm 31:10.

Verse 4

My heart is smitten - Broken; crushed with grief. We now speak of "a broken heart." Even death is often caused by such excessive sorrow as to crush and break the heart.

And withered like grass - It is dried up as grass is by drought, or as when it is cut down. It loses its support; and having no strength of its own, it dies.

So that I forget to eat my bread - I am so absorbed in my trials; they so entirely engross my attention, that I think of nothing else, not even of those things which are necessary to the support of life. Grief has the effect of taking away the appetite, but this does not seem to be the idea here. It is that of such a complete absorption in trouble that everything else is forgotten.

Verse 5

By reason of the voice of my groaning - By suffering and trouble, so great as to produce groaning, my flesh is wasted away.

My bones cleave to my skin - Margin, "flesh." The Hebrew word means "flesh." The effect described is that of a wasting away or an emaciation of flesh from deep distress, so that the bones became prominent, and had nothing to hide them from view; so that they seemed to adhere fast to the flesh itself. See the notes at Job 19:20.

Verse 6

I am like a pelican of the wilderness - A bird in the midst of desolation becomes a striking image of loneliness and distress. The word rendered "pelican" - קאת *qâ'ath* - is supposed to have been a name given to the pelican from the idea of vomiting, as it "vomits the shells and other substances which it has too voraciously swallowed." The word occurs in the following places, where it is rendered as here "pelican:" Leviticus 11:18; Deuteronomy 14:17; and in Isaiah 34:11; Zephaniah 2:14, where it is rendered "cormorant." The following description, taken from the "Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 403, by Dr. Thomson, will illustrate this passage. Speaking of the outlet of the Huleh, and the region of the exit of the Jordan from that lake in its course toward the sea of Tiberias, he says, "Here only have I seen the pelican of the wilderness, as David calls it. I once had one of them shot just below this place, and, as it was merely wounded in the wing, I had a good opportunity to study its character. It was certainly the most sombre, austere bird I ever saw. It gave one the blues merely to look at it. David could find no more expressive type of solitude and melancholy by which to illustrate his own sad state. It seemed as large as a half-grown donkey, and when fairly settled on its stout legs, it looked like one. The pelican is never seen but in these unfrequented solitudes, and to this agree all the references to it in the Bible."

I am like an owl of the desert - The owl is a well-known bird which dwells in solitudes and old ruins, and which becomes, alike by its seeking

such places of abode, by its appearance, and by its doleful cry, the very emblem of desolation.

Verse 7

I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top - That is, I am "sleepless;" trouble drives sleep from my eyes, and I am kept awake at night - a common effect of grief. The following remarks, copied from the "Land and the Book" (i. 54,55), will furnish all the illustration needful of this verse. "They are a tame, troublesome, and impertinent generation, and nestle just where you don't want them. They stop up your stove and waterpipes with their rubbish, build in the windows and under the beams of the roof, and would stuff your hat full of stubble in half a day if they found it hanging in a place to suit them … . When one of them has lost its mate - a matter of everyday occurrence - he will sit on the house-top alone, and lament by the hour his sad bereavement."

Verse 8

Mine enemies reproach me all the day - Continually. They reproach me as one of thy people; or, I bear reproaches in common with others, and it becomes to me a personal matter, so entirely are my feelings and interests identified with those of thy people. Perhaps there were also, mingled with this, personal reproaches and calumnies.

And they that are mad against me - Angry; excited even to madness.

Are sworn against me - literally, "swear by me," or against me. The meaning is, that they have conspired together under the solemnity of an oath to do me harm. It is not the wrath of an individual that I am to meet, but the combined wrath of those who act under the solemnities of an oath. Compare Acts 23:12.

Verse 9

For I have eaten ashes like bread - I have seated myself in ashes in my grief (compare Job 2:8; Job 42:6; Isaiah 58:5; Isaiah 61:3; Jonah 3:6; Daniel 9:3; Matthew 11:21); and ashes have become, as it were, my food. The ashes in which he sat had been mingled with his food.

And mingled my drink with weeping - Tears have fallen into the cup from which I drank, and have become a part of my drink. The idea is, that he had shed copious tears; and that even when he took his food, there was no respite to his grief.

Verse 10

Because of thine indignation and thy wrath - Hebrew, "From the face of thine indignation," etc. That is - he regarded all his sufferings as proof of the indignation and wrath of God against him. See Psalm 90:7-9.

For thou hast lifted me up - In former times. Thou hadst given me prosperity; thou hadst given me an elevated and honorable place among men.

And cast me down - Thou hast brought me into a low condition, and I feel it all the more from the fact that I had enjoyed prosperity. Compare the notes at Psalm 30:7. The passage, however, is susceptible of another interpretation: "Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me away." That is, Thou hast lifted me from the ground as a storm or tempest takes up a light thing, and hast whirled me away. This idea occurs in Isaiah 22:18. See the notes at that passage. The former, however, seems to me to be the more correct interpretation.

Verse 11

My days are like a shadow that declineth - The shadow made by the gnomon on a sun-dial, which marks the hours as they pass. See 2 Kings 20:10. The idea is that the shadow made by the descending sun was about to disappear altogether. It had become less distinct and clear, and it would soon vanish. It would seem from this, that the dial was so made that the shadow indicating the hour ascended when the sun ascended, and declined when the sun went down. See the notes at Isaiah 38:8.

And I am withered like grass - See the notes at Psalm 102:4.

Verse 12

But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever - Though my condition has been changed, though I have been cast down from an exalted position, though kingdoms rise and fall, yet thou art unchanged. Thy purposes will abide. Thy promises will be fulfilled. Thy character is the same. As thou hast been the hearer of prayer in past times, so thou art now. As thou hast interposed in behalf of thy people in other ages, so thou wilt now. As thy people in affliction have been permitted to come to thee, so they may come to thee now. The psalmist here brings to his own mind, as an encouragement in trouble, as we may at all times, the fact that God is an unchanging God; that he always lives; that he is ever the same. We could have no ground of hope if God changed; if he formed purposes only to abandon them; if he made promises only to disregard them; if today he were

a Being of mercy and goodness, and tomorrow would be merely a Being of justice and wrath. This argument is enlarged upon in Psalm 102:25-28.

And thy remembrance unto all generations - Thy memory; or, the remembrance of thee. My days are like a shadow. I shall pass away, and be forgotten. No one will recollect me; no one will feel any interest in remembering that I have ever lived (see the notes at Psalm 31:12). But while one knows that this must be so in regard to himself and to all other people - that he and they are alike to be forgotten - he may also feel that there is One who will never be forgotten. God will never pass away. He will be always the same. All the hopes of the church - of the world - are based on this. It is not on man - on any one individual - on any number of people - for they will all alike pass away and be forgotten; but one generation of people after another, to the end of time, may call on God, and find him an ever-living, an unchanged and unchangeable protector and friend.

Verse 13

Thou shalt arise - Thou wilt come forth - as if God had been inattentive or inactive.

And have mercy upon Zion - That is, Upon Jerusalem - represented as in a state of desolation. God would at length pity her, and interpose in her behalf.

For the time to favor her - Implying that there was an appointed time to favor her, or to bring her troubles to an end.

Yea, the set time is come - The word used here - מועד *môʿêd* - means properly an appointed season - a designated moment. It refers to some purpose or appointment in regard to anything that is to be done, as in 1 Samuel 13:8, 1 Samuel 13:11; 2 Samuel 20:5; Genesis 17:21; or to a fixed period, as when certain things are to be done, certain festivals to be held regularly at a certain season of the year, Lamentations 1:4; Lamentations 2:6; Hosea 9:5; Hosea 12:9; Leviticus 23:2, Leviticus 23:4, Leviticus 23:37, Leviticus 23:44. Here it means that there was some period fixed in the Divine Mind when this was to occur, or a definite time when it had been predicted or promised that it would occur. The language is such as would be applicable to the captivity in Babylon, concerning which there was a promise that it should continue but seventy years. If the psalm refers to that, then the meaning is that there were indications in the course of events that that period was about to arrive. Compare the notes at Daniel 9:2. What those indications were in this case, the psalmist immediately states, Psalm

102:14. It may be remarked here, that there are usually some previous intimations or indications of what God is about to do. "Coming events cast their shadows before." Even the divine purposes are accomplished usually in connection with human agency, and in the regular course of events; and it is frequently possible to anticipate that God is about to appear for the fulfillment of his promises. So it was in the coming of the Saviour. So it was in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. So it is when God is about to revive religion in a church. So it is, and will be, in regard to the conversion of the world.

Verse 14

For thy servants take pleasure in her stones - Those who profess to be thy servants; thy friends. This was the "evidence" to the mind of the psalmist that God was about to visit his people, and to rebuild Jerusalem. It was an "awakened interest" among the professed people of God, leading them to manifest their love for Zion, and for all that pertained to her - a love for the very stones that lay in undistinguished heaps where the city once stood - the piles of rubbish where the walls and dwellings had once been. The people of God in their captivity began to look with strong interest on these very ruins, and with an earnest wish that from these ruins the city may again arise, and the walls be rebuilt.

And favor the dust thereof - literally, pity - or, show compassion for. They no longer look with indifference on these ruins of Zion. They look with a tender heart on the very dust of those ruins. They feel that a wrong has been done to Zion; they ardently desire its restoration to its former splendor and glory. They long for a return to it as to their home. They are weary with their captivity, and they are anxiously waiting for the time when they may revisit their native land. This would seem to refer to an awakened interest on the subject, caused perhaps in part by the fact that it could be ascertained (see Daniel 9:2) that the period of the captivity was about to end, and partly by an influence on their hearts from on high, awakening in them a deeper love for Zion - a revival of pure religion. The practical truth taught here is, that an indication of a coming revival of religion is often manifested by the increased attention to the subject among its professed friends; by the desire in their hearts that it may be so; by tenderness, pity, compassion among them in view of abounding desolations, the coldness of the church, and the prevalence of iniquity; by their looking with interest on that which had before been neglected, like shapeless ruins - the prayer-

meeting, the communion, the sanctuary; by a conscious returning love in their hearts for all that pertains to religion, however unimportant it may be in the eyes of the world, or however it may be despised. A surrounding world would look with unconcern on the ruins of Jerusalem; a friend of God, in whose heart religion was revived, would look with the most tender concern even on that rubbish, and those ruins. So it is in a revival of religion, when God is about to visit his church in mercy. Everything in regard to the church becomes an object of deep interest.

Verse 15

So the heathen - The nations. That is, The surrounding people, who hear what thou hast done for thy people, will see the evidence that thou art God, and learn to love and worship thee.

Shall fear the name of the Lord - Shall reverence and honor thee.

And all the kings of the earth thy glory - The sovereigns of the earth will be especially affected and impressed with thy majesty. If this refers to the return from the captivity at Babylon, then it means that that event would be particularly suited to impress the minds of the rulers of the world, as showing that God had all nations under his control; that he could deliver a captive people from the grasp of the mighty; that he was the friend of those who worshipped him, and that he would frown on oppression and wrong.

Verse 16

When the Lord shall build up Zion - The Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, and Luther, vender this, "Because the Lord hath built up Zion." This also is the most natural and correct translation of the Hebrew. The reference, however, may be to the future. The psalmist may throw himself into the future, and - standing there - he may describe things as they will appear then - as already done.

He shall appear in his glory - The idea is that the building up of Zion would be an occasion in which God would manifest his glory. In reference to the restoration of his people from bondage; in rebuilding Zion, then in ruins; in restoring the splendor of the place where he had been so long worshipped, he would display his true character as a God of glory, truth, power, and goodness. As applied to the church in general, this would mean that when God comes to revive religion, to visit his people, to recover them from their backslidings, to convert and save sinners, he appears in his appropriate character as the God of his people - as a glorious God. Then the perfections of his nature are most illustriously displayed; then he appears in

his true character, as a God of mercy, grace, and salvation. There is no scene on earth where the character of God is more gloriously exhibited than in a revival of true religion.

Verse 17

He will regard the prayer - literally, "He looks upon," or "he ‹turns himself' to their prayer." He does not any longer seem to turn away from them and disregard them. He shows by thus building up Zion that he does regard prayer; that he hears the supplications of his people. There is no higher proof that prayer is heard than that which is often furnished in a revival of pure religion. All such revivals, like that on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1 ff), are usually preceded, as that was Acts 1:13-14, by special prayer; in those revivals there are often most manifest and clear answers to prayer for the conversion of individuals; to prayer for a blessing on a preached gospel; to prayer for particular relatives and friends.

Of the destitute - literally, "of the poor." The word - ערער *ʿarʿâr* - occurs only here and in Jeremiah 17:6, where it is rendered "heath:" "He shall be like the ‹heath' in the desert." The word, according to its etymology, means "naked;" then, poor, stripped of everything, impoverished, wholly destitute. It would thus be eminently applicable to the poor exiles in Babylon; it is as applicable to sinners pleading with God, and to the people of God themselves, destitute of everything like self-righteousness, and feeling that they have nothing in themselves, but that they are wholly dependent on the mercy of God. Compare Revelation 3:17.

And not despise their prayer - Not treat it with contempt; not pass it by unheard. This is stated as one of the reasons why the nations would be struck with awe - that God, the infinite God, would hear the prayers of those who were so poor, so powerless, so friendless. There is, in fact, nothing more suited to excite wonder than that God does hear the prayer of poor, lost, sinful man.

Verse 18

This shall be written for the generation to come - It shall be recorded for the instruction and encouragement of future ages. The fact that God has heard the prayer of his people in a time of trial shall be so recorded and remembered that it may be referred to in similar circumstances in all time to come, for he is an unchanging God. What he has done now, he will always be willing to do hereafter.

And the people which shall be created - Future generations. Each successive generation is in fact a new "creation;" each individual is also; for the essential idea in creation is that of bringing something into existence where there was nothing before. There is a "beginning" of existence in every human being. Man is not in any proper sense a "development" from former being, nor is his life merely a "continuance" of something which existed before.

Shall praise the Lord - Shall praise the Lord for what he has now done; shall learn, from the great principles now illustrated in regard to his administration, to praise him.

Verse 19

For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary - From his high and holy dwelling-place, in heaven. The word here rendered "looked down," means, in Kal, to lay upon or over; then, in Niphil, to lie out over anything, to project; and then, to bend forward. It then means to bend or incline forward with an intention to look at anything, as from a window, Genesis 26:8. Compare Psalm 14:2. See also Psalm 85:12, note; 1 Peter 1:12, note.

From heaven did the Lord behold the earth - Did he look abroad over all the world.

Verse 20

To hear the groaning of the prisoner - Meaning here, probably, the captives in Babylon; those who were held as prisoners there, and who were subjected to such hardships in their long captivity. See the notes at Psalm 79:11.

To loose those that are appointed to death - Margin, as in Hebrew, "the children of death." Compare the notes at Matthew 1:1. This may mean either those who were sentenced to death; those who were sick and ready to die; or those who, in their captivity, were in such a state of privation and suffering that death appeared inevitable. The word rendered "loose" means, properly, to "open," applied to the mouth, for eating, Ezekiel 3:2; or in song, Psalm 78:2; or for speaking, Job 3:1; - or the ear, Isaiah 50:5; or the hand, Deuteronomy 15:8; or the gates of a city, a door, etc., Deuteronomy 20:11. Them it means to set free, as by opening the doors of a prison, Isaiah 14:17; Job 12:14. Here it means to "set free," to deliver. Compare Isaiah 61:1.

Verse 21

To declare the name of the Lord in Zion … - That his name might be declared in Zion, or that his praise might be set up in Jerusalem again. That is, that his people might be returned there, and his praise be celebrated again in the holy city.

Verse 22

When the people are gathered together - When they shall be brought from their dispersion in distant lands; when they shall assemble again in the city of their fathers, and when public worship shall be celebrated there as in former ages.

And the kingdoms, to serve the Lord - The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "kings." The reference must be to the time when those of other lands - kings and their people - would be converted to the true religion; when the Gentiles as well as the Jews, then one undistinguished people, would be brought to the knowledge of the true God, and would unite in his worship. See the notes at Isaiah 60. All of all lands, will yet praise the Lord "as if" they were one great congregation, assembled in one place. Thus, though separate, they will with united feeling recount the mercy and goodness of God to his people in past times.

Verse 23

He weakened my strength in the way - Margin, as in Hebrew, "afflicted." The idea is, that God had taken his strength away; he had weakened him - humbled him - brought him low by sorrow. The word "way" refers to the course which he was pursuing. In his journey of life God had thus afflicted - humbled - prostrated him. The psalmist here turns from the exulting view which he had of the future Psalm 102:21-22, and resumes his complaint - the remembrance of his troubles and sorrows Psalm 102:3-11. He speaks, doubtless, in the name of his people, and describes troubles which were common to them all. Perhaps the allusion to his troubles here may be designed, as such a recollection should do, to heighten his sense of the goodness and mercy of God in the anticipated blessings of the future.

He shortened my days - Compare Job 21:21; Psalm 89:45. That is, He seemed to be about to cut me off from life, and to bring me to the grave. The psalmist felt so confident that he would die - that he could not endure these troubles, but must sink under them, that he spoke as if it were already done. Compare Psalm 6:4-5.

Verse 24

I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days - This was the burden of my prayer, for this I earnestly pleaded. See Psalm 30:9; Isaiah 38:1-3, Isaiah 38:9-18. The word used here means "to cause to ascend or go up" and the expression might have been translated, "Cause me not to ascend." The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render it, "Call me not away." Dr. Horsley," Carry me not off." In the word there may be an allusion - an obscure one, it is to be admitted - to the idea that the soul ascends to God when the body dies. The common idea in the Old Testament is that it would descend to the regions of the departed spirits - to Sheol. It is plain, however, that there was another idea - that the soul would ascend at once to God when death occurred. Compare Ecclesiastes 3:21; Ecclesiastes 12:7. The word rendered "in the midst" means properly in the half; as if life were divided into two portions. Compare Psalm 55:23.

Thy years are throughout all generations - Thou dost not die; thou art ever the same, though the generations of people are cut off. This seems to have been said here for two reasons:

(1) As a ground of consolation, that God was ever the same; that whatever might happen to people, to the psalmist himself, or to any other man, God was unchanged, and that his great plans would be carried forward and accomplished;

(2) As a reason for the prayer. God was eternal. He had an immortal existence. He could not die. He knew, in its perfection, the blessedness of "life" - life as such; life continued; life unending. The psalmist appeals to what God himself enjoyed - as a reason why life - so great a blessing - should be granted to him a little longer. By all that there was of blessedness in the life of God, the psalmist prays that that which was in itself - even in the case of God - so valuable, might yet a little longer be continued to "him."

Verses 25-27

Of old - See this passage fully explained in the notes at Hebrews 1:10-12. In the beginning; at the first. The phrase used here means literally "to the face;" then, "before" in the order of time. It means here, long ago; of olden time; at the beginning. The meaning is, that the years of God had stretched through all the generations of people, and all the changes which

had occurred upon the earth; that at the very beginning he existed, and that he would continue to exist to the very close, unchangeably the same.

Verse 28

The children of thy servants shall continue - The descendants of those that serve and obey thee. This represents the confident expectation of the psalmist that, as God was unchangeable, all his promises toward his people would be fulfilled, even though the heavens and the earth should pass away. God was the same. His word would not fail. His promises were sure. Compare Matthew 5:18; Matthew 24:35. The word rendered "continue," means to dwell, as in a habitation; then, to abide. It stands opposed to a wandering, nomadic life, and indicates permanency.

And their seed shall be established before thee - The word used here means properly to stand erect; then to set up, to erect, to place, to found, to make firm, as a city, Psalm 107:36; the earth, Psalm 24:2; the heavens, Proverbs 3:19. It means here that they would be firmly and permanently established: that is, the church of God would be permanent in the earth. It would not be like the generations of people that pass away. It would not be like the nomadic tribes of the desert that have no fixed habitation, and that wander from place to place. It would not be even like the heavens that might put on new forms, or wholly pass away: it would be as enduring and changeless as God himself; it would, in its proper form, endure forever. As God is eternal and unchangeable, so would the safety and welfare of his people be.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 103

Introduction

This very beautiful psalm is entitled "A Psalm of David." Nothing in the psalm forbids the supposition that he was its author, although nothing in the psalm or elsewhere enables us to ascertain the precise occasion on which it was written.

It seems to have been composed after some signal manifestation of the mercy of God, or some striking proof of his compassion and loving-kindness; after some danger which threatened life, and was regarded as evidence of the divine displeasure, but had now passed by; after God had interposed, and checked and arrested judgments which threatened ruin, and had manifested himself again as a loving Father. This merciful interposition filled the heart of the psalmist with emotions of gratitude and praise, and led him to call on his own soul Psalm 103:1-2, and all the angels Psalm 103:20, and the hosts of heaven Psalm 103:21, and all the works of God everywhere Psalm 103:22 to unite in celebrating his praise. The psalm is exceedingly regular in its structure and composition; beautiful in its language and conceptions; adapted to all times and ages; suited to express the feelings of gratitude to God for deliverance from trouble, and for the manifestation of his mercy; suited to elevate the soul, and to fill it with cheerful views. These circumstances have made it a favorite psalm as a vehicle of praise in all ages. It is, moreover, eminently suited to express the feelings of the soul in view of the redeeming love and mercy of God; the goodness of God in the forgiveness of sin through a Saviour; and his tender compassion for his people as a Father; and it is, therefore, one to which the Christian oftener turns than to almost any other of the psalms as expressive of the deep and grateful feelings of his heart.

Verse 1

Bless the Lord, O my soul - The word "bless," as applied to God, means to praise, implying always a strong affection for him as well as a sense of gratitude. As used with reference to people, the word implies a "wish" that they may be blessed or happy, accompanied often with a prayer that they may be so. Such is the purport of the "blessing" addressed to a congregation of worshippers. Compare Numbers 6:23-27. The word "soul" here is equivalent to mind or heart: my mental and moral powers, as

capable of understanding and appreciating his favors. The soul of man was "made" to praise and bless God; to enjoy his friendship; to delight in his favor; to contemplate his perfections. It can never be employed in a more appropriate or a more elevated act than when engaged in his praise.

And all that is within me … - All my powers and faculties; all that can be employed in his praise: the heart, the will, the affections, the emotions. The idea is, that God is worthy of all the praise and adoration which the entire man can render. No one of his faculties or powers should be exempt from the duty and the privilege of praise.

Verse 2

Bless the Lord, O my soul - The repetition here denotes the intensity or earnestness of the wish or desire of the psalmist. It is an emphatic calling upon his soul, that is, himself, never to forget the many favors which God was continually conferring upon him.

And forget not all his benefits - Any of his favors. This refers not to those favors in the aggregate, but it is a call to remember them in particular. The word rendered "benefits" - גמול *gemûl* - means properly an act, work, doing, whether good or evil, Psalm 137:8; and then, "desert," or what a man deserves "for" his act; "recompence." It is rendered "deserving" in Judges 9:16; benefit, as here, in 2 Chronicles 32:25; "desert," Psalm 28:4; "reward," Psalm 94:2; Isaiah 3:11; Obadiah 1:15; "recompence," Proverbs 12:14; Isaiah 35:4; Isaiah 59:18; Isaiah 66:6; Jeremiah 51:6; Lamentations 3:64; Joel 3:4, Joel 3:7. The proper reference here is to the divine "dealings," - to what God had done - as a reason for blessing his name. His "dealings" with the psalmist had been such as to call for praise and gratitude. What those "dealings" particularly were he specifies in the following verses. The call here on his soul is not to forget these divine dealings, as laying the foundation for praise. We shall find, when we reach the end of life, that all which God has done, however dark and mysterious it may have appeared at the time, was so connected with our good as to make it a proper subject of praise and thanksgiving.

Verse 3

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities - Pardoning all thy sins. That is, It is a characteristic of God to pardon sin, and I have evidence that he has done it in my own case, and this is a ground for praise. It is observable that this is the first thing in view of the psalmist - the first of the "benefits" which he had received from God, or the first thing in importance among his acts or

his dealings, which called for praise. Properly considered, this is the first thing which calls for praise. That God is a merciful God - that he has declared his willingness to pardon sin - that he has devised and revealed a way by which this can be done, and that he has actually done it in our own case, is the most important matter for which we should praise him. When we understand all the things which most affect our welfare, and which enter most deeply into our happiness here and hereafter, we shall find that this is a blessing compared with which all other favors are comparative trifles.

Who healeth all thy diseases - Perhaps, in the case of the psalmist, referring to some particular instance in which he had been recovered from dangerous sickness. The word rendered "diseases" - תחלואים *tachălû'iym* - occurs only in the plural form. It is translated "sicknesses," in Deuteronomy 29:22; "diseases," as here, in 2 Chronicles 21:19; "them that are sick," in Jeremiah 14:18; and "grievous (deaths)" in Jeremiah 16:4. It does not elsewhere occur. It is applicable to all forms of sickness; or in this place it may refer to some particular diseases with which David had been afflicted. We have several allusions in the Psalms to times when the authors of the psalms were afflicted with sickness. So in the Psalms of David. Compare Psalm 6:2; Psalm 38:7; Psalm 41:8. The thought here is, that it is a proper ground of praise to God that he has the power of healing disease. All instances of restoration to health are illustrations of this, for whatever may be the skill of physicians, or the wise adaptation of means, healing virtue comes from God alone.

Verse 4

Who redeemeth thy life from destruction - That is, who saves it from death when exposed to danger, or when attacked by disease. The word "destruction" or "corruption" here is equivalent to the grave, since it is there that the body returns to corruption. Compare the notes at Psalm 16:10.

Who crowneth thee - The idea here is not merely that God is the source of these blessings, but that there is something of beauty, of dignity, of honor, as in the conferring of a crown or garland on anyone. Compare the notes at Psalm 65:11.

With loving-kindness and tender mercies - mercy and compassions. God showed mercy to him - evinced compassion - and these were so abundant that they might be said to be the crown or ornament of his life.

Verse 5

Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things - The word translated "thy mouth" here is rendered in the Chaldee "thy age;" in the Arabic, the Septuagint, and the Latin Vulgate, "thy desire;" in the Syriac, "thy body;" DeWette renders it, "thy age." So also Tholuck. The Hebrew word - עדי *ʿădîy* - is rendered "ornaments" in Exodus 33:4-6; 2 Samuel 1:24; Isaiah 49:18; Jeremiah 2:32; Jeremiah 4:30; Ezekiel 7:20; Ezekiel 16:11, Ezekiel 16:17 (margin,); Ezekiel 23:40; and "mouth" in Psalm 32:9, as here. These are the only places in which it occurs. Gesenius renders it here "age," and supposes that it stands in contrast with the word "youth" in the other part of the verse. The connection would seem to demand this, though it is difficult to make it out from any usage of the Hebrew word. Professor Alexander renders it "thy soul" - from the supposition that the Hebrew word "ornament" is used as if in reference to the idea that the "soul" is the chief glory or ornament of man. This seems, however, to be a very forced explanation. I confess myself unable to determine the meaning.

So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's - Compare Isaiah 40:31. The allusion, to which there is supposed to be a reference here, is explained in the notes at that passage. Whatever may be true in regard to the supposed fact pertaining to the eagle, about its renewing its strength and vigor in old age, the meaning here is simply that the strength of the psalmist in old age became like the strength of the eagle. Sustained by the bounty of God in his old age he became, as it were, young again.

Verse 6

The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment - That is, "justice." He sees that justice is done to the oppressed. He is on their side. His law, his commands, his judicial decisions, his providential interpositions, are in their favor. This does not mean that it will he done at once; or that there will never be any delay; or that they may not suffer even for a long time - for this occurs in fact; but the meaning is, that God has their true interest at heart; that at proper times, and whenever and whereever there are any dealings of his in the case, his acts are in favor of those that are oppressed; and that there will be sooner or later such interpositions in their behalf as shall entirely vindicate their cause.

For all that are oppressed - By harsh laws; by unjust governments; by slavery; by unrighteous decisions in courts; by the pride and power of wicked people. Compare the notes at Isaiah 1:17, notes at Isaiah 1:23-27.

Verse 7

He made known his ways unto Moses - This is another ground of praise - that God had "revealed his will;" that this had been done in an indubitable manner to Moses; and that these revelations had been recorded by him for the instruction and guidance of his people. The word "ways" here means his laws; his methods of administration; the principles on which he governs mankind, and the conditions on which he will save people. There is no higher ground of gratitude to God than the fact that he has given a revelation to mankind.

His acts unto the children of Israel - His methods of doing things have been made known to them; and his acts - his interpositions - have been in their favor.

Verse 8

The Lord is merciful and gracious - See the notes at Psalm 78:38. The idea here is derived evidently from Exodus 34:6-7 - that great and glorious statement of God himself in regard to his own character. Our world is a different world under that statement from what it would be if that and kindred declarations had not been made. There is here a "progression" of thought; an "advance" on the previous statements. At first the psalmist referred to his own individual experience Psalm 103:3-5; then he referred to the dealings of God toward the Hebrew people Psalm 103:6-7; and now he rises to the general contemplation of his character as it relates to all mankind. It was a characteristic of God in respect to all, that he was kind, compassionate, and forbearing.

Slow to anger - That is, patient; not soon excited; bearing much, and bearing it long. See James 5:11; compare Exodus 34:6-7.

And plenteous in mercy - Margin, "great of mercy." The Hebrew word means "much," or great;" and the idea is, that mercy is not manifested by him in small or stinted measure. It is rich; full; abundant; overflowing; free.

Verse 9

He will not always chide - Rebuke; contend; strive; for so the Hebrew word means. He will not always contend with people, or manifest his displeasure. See the notes at Isaiah 57:16; notes at Psalm 78:38-39. This implies that he may chide or rebuke his people, but that this will not be forever. He will punish them; he will manifest his displeasure at their sins; he will show that he does not approve of their course, but he will show that he "loves them," and does not seek their ruin.

Neither will he keep his anger for ever - The words "his anger" are supplied by the translators, but not improperly. The meaning is the same as in the former member of the sentence. He will not cherish hatred when the object of the chastisement is accomplished. It is not his character to retain anger for its own sake, or for any personal gratification.

Verse 10

He hath not dealt with us after our sins - All may say this, and this "is" a ground of thanksgiving and praise. It is a matter for which we should render unceasing praise that God has not done to us as our sins deserved. Who of us can fail to stand in awe and to tremble when we think what God "might" have justly done to us; what sufferings he "might" have brought upon us, which would have been no more than we have deserved; what pain of body, what distress of mind, what anguish of bereavement - what sorrow, danger, sickness, losses - we "might" have suffered before the point would be reached at which it could be said that we were suffering more than a holy and just God might properly inflict on us.

Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities - That is, he has not inflicted suffering on us that could be regarded in any proper sense as a just retribution for what we have done; or, so that it could properly be said that the one fairly "measured" the other.

Verse 11

For as the heaven is high above the earth - See the notes at Psalm 57:10. Compare the notes at Isaiah 55:9. The literal translation of the phrase here would be, "For like the height of the heavens above the earth." The heavens - the starry heavens - are the highest objects of which we have any knowledge; and hence, the comparison is used to denote the great mercy of God - meaning that it is as great as can be conceived; that there is nothing beyond it; that we cannot imagine that it could be greater - as we can imagine nothing higher than the heavens.

So great is his mercy toward them that fear him - To those who reverence and serve him. That is, His mercy is thus great in forgiving their offences; in imparting grace; in giving them support and consolation.

Verse 12

As far as the east is from the west - As far as possible; as far as we can imagine. These are the points in our apprehension most distant from each other, and as we can conceive nothing beyond them, so the meaning is, that we cannot imagine our sins could be more effectually removed than they

are. The literal meaning of the Hebrew is, "like the distance of the east from the west" or, "like its being far."

So far hath he removed our transgressions from us - That is, he has put them entirely away. They are so removed that they cannot affect us any more. We are safe from all condemnation for our sins, as if they had not been committed at all. Compare the notes at Isaiah 43:25; notes at Isaiah 44:22.

Verse 13

Like as a father pitieth his children - Hebrew, "Like the compassion of a father for his children." See the notes at Matthew 7:7-11. God often compares himself with a father, and it is by carrying out our ideas of what enters into the parental character that we get our best conceptions of the character of God. See the notes at Matthew 6:9. That which is referred to here, is the natural affection of the parent for the child; the tender love which is borne by the parent for his offspring; the disposition to care for its needs; the readiness to forgive when an offence has been committed. Compare Luke 15:22-24. Such, in an infinitely higher degree, is the compassion - the kindness - which God has for those that love him.

So the Lord pitieth them that fear him - He has compassion on them. He exercises toward them the paternal feeling.

Verse 14

For he knoweth our frame - Our formation; of what we are made; how we are made. That is, he knows that we are made of dust; that we are frail; that we are subject to decay; that we soon sink under a heavy load. This is given as a reason why he pities us - that we are so frail and feeble, and that we are so easily broken down by a pressure of trial.

He remembereth that we are dust - Made of the earth. Genesis 2:7; Genesis 3:19. In his dealings with us he does not forget of what frail materials he made us, and how little our frames can bear. He tempers his dealings to the weakness and frailty of our nature, and his compassion interposes when the weight of sorrows would crush us. Remembering, too, our weakness, he interposes by his power to sustain us, and to enable us to bear what our frame could not otherwise endure. Compare the notes at Isaiah 57:16.

Verse 15

As for man - literally, "Man; like the grass are his days!" The thought is fixed on man: man so frail and weak; man, not only made originally of

earth, but man delicate, feeble, soon to pass away like the springing grass, or like the fading flower.

His days are as grass - See the notes at Psalm 90:5-6; compare Isaiah 40:6-8, notes; 1 Peter 1:24, note.

As a flower of the field - As a blossom. It opens with beauty and fragrance, but soon fades and perishes.

So he flourisheth - Rather, "So he blossoms." That is, he is like a flower that is fresh and beautiful, and that soon withers away.

Verse 16

For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone - Margin, as in Hebrew, "it is not." The reference is either to a hot and burning wind, that dries up the flower; or to a furious wind that tears it from its stem; or to a gentle breeze that takes off its petals as they loosen their hold, and are ready to fall. So man falls - as if a breath - a breeze - came over him, and he is gone. How easily is man swept off! How little force, apparently, does it require to remove the most beautiful and blooming youth of either sex from the earth! How speedily does beauty vanish; how soon, like a fading flower, does such a one pass away!

And the place thereof shall know it no more - That is, It shall no more appear in the place where it was seen and known. The "place" is here personified as if capable of recognizing the objects which are present, and as if it missed the things which were once there. They are gone. So it will soon be in all the places where we have been; where we have been seen; where we have been known. In our dwellings; at our tables; in our places of business; in our offices, counting-rooms, studies, laboratories; in the streets where we have walked from day to day; in the pulpit, the court-room, the legislation-hall; in the place of revelry or festivity; in the prayer-room, the Sabbath-school, the sanctuary - we shall be seen no longer. We shall be gone: and the impression on those who are there, and with whom we have been associated, will be best expressed by the language, "he is gone!" Gone; - where? No one that survives can tell. All that they whom we leave will know will be that we are absent - that we are "gone." But to us now, how momentous the inquiry, "Where shall we be, when we are gone from among the living?" Other places will "know" us; will it be in heaven, or hell?

Verse 17

But the mercy of the Lord - The favor of the Lord; or, his loving-kindness.

Is from everlasting to everlasting - Is from the eternity past to the eternity to come. It had its foundation in the eternal decrees of God; it has its security in his purpose that where it is conferred, it shall not be withdrawn. It had no beginning; it will have no end. There never was a period in the past when it was not the purpose of God to save his people; there never will be a period in the future when it will be said that his saving mercy has ceased. It would be difficult to think of a statement which would at the same time, in so few words, confirm at once the doctrine of the divine decrees, and the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. If either of these doctrines is denied, then what is here stated by the psalmist is not true: if the doctrine of the divine decrees is denied, then his purpose of mercy had a beginning, and is not "from everlasting;" if the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is denied, then his mercy has an end, and is not "to everlasting."

Upon them that fear him - In respect to those who are his true worshippers, or his true people.

And his righteousness - His righteous purpose; or, his purpose in regard to their "becoming" righteous.

Unto children's children - literally, "sons of sons." That is, his purposes embrace the children and children's children of the righteous; or, they are included in the covenant of mercy. See the notes at Acts 2:39. Compare Exodus 20:6.

Verse 18

To such as keep his covenant - To such as adhere to the arrangements of his covenant, or who are faithful on their part. God will be faithful to his part of the covenant; and where there is fidelity on the part of his people, the blessings implied in the covenant will be conferred on them and on their children. The promise is ample, and the fidelity of God is certain, but still it is true that in those promises, and in that fidelity, it is implied that his people on their part must be faithful also, or the blessings will not be bestowed. There are no promises of blessings to the unfaithful, nor have those who are unfaithful any reason to hope that they or theirs will be partakers of the blessings of the covenant of mercy. Our only hope that we or our children will be partakers of the blessings of the covenant is to be found in the fact that we ourselves are faithful to God.

And to those that remember his commandments to do them - Who do not "forget" his law. If they do forget it, they have no right to expect the blessing. Obedience and fidelity are our only reasonable grounds of expectation of the blessing of God.

Verse 19

The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens - He has "fixed" his throne there. This is the ground of the security that his blessing will be imparted to those who fear him, and to their children's children, or that it will be transmitted to coming generations. God is a Sovereign. His throne is fixed and firm. His dominion is not vacillating and changing. His reign is not, like the reign of earthly monarchs, dependent on the capriciousness of a changeable will, or on passion; nor is it liable to be altered by death, by revolution, or a new dynasty. The throne of God is ever the same, and nothing can shake or overthrow it. Compare the notes at Psalm 11:4.

And his kingdom ruleth over all - He reigns over all the universe - the heavens and the earth; and he can, therefore, execute all his purposes. Compare Psalm 47:2.

Verse 20

Bless the Lord - The psalm began Psalm 103:1-2 with an exhortation to "bless the Lord." That exhortation was, however, then addressed by the psalmist to his own soul, and was especially founded on the benefits which he had himself received. The psalm closes also with an exhortation to "bless the Lord," yet on a much wider scale. The psalmist feels that there is not only occasion for him to do it, but that the reason for it extends to the whole universe. The meaning is, that God is worthy of universal praise; and all ranks of beings - all worlds - should join in that praise. Man, feeble, frail, dying, could not come up to the fullness of the praise required. Praise such as was appropriate to God - such as his perfections and works deserved - demanded loftier powers than those of man; the loftiest powers in the universe.

Ye his angels - All beings higher than man; beings around and before his throne.

That excel in strength - Margin, as in Hebrew, "mighty in strength," and therefore more "able" to offer adequate praise.

That do his commandments - Who perfectly obey his law, and who, therefore, can render more acceptable praise than can ever come from human lips.

Hearkening unto the voice of his word - Who always listen to his voice; who never are disobedient; and who can, therefore, approach him as holy beings, and more appropriately worship him.

Verse 21

Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts - His armies; the vast multitudes of holy beings, arranged and marshalled as hosts for battle, in all parts of the universe. Compare the notes at Isaiah 1:9; notes at Ephesians 1:21.

Ye ministers of his - The same beings referred to by the word "hosts," and all others who may be employed in executing his will. The "hosts" or armies of the Lord are thus marshalled that they may "do his pleasure," or that they may execute his purposes.

That do his pleasure - What is agreeable to him; that is, who perform his will. Employed in his service, and appointed to execute his will, they are called on to bless his name. The fact of being employed in his service is a sufficient reason for praise. It is implied here that those "ministers of his" actually do his will. They are obedient to his commands; they regard themselves as employed for him.

Verse 22

Bless the Lord, all his works - All that he has made, animate and inanimate, intelligent and brute. It is not uncommon to call on the inanimate creation to join with intelligent beings in praising God. Compare Psalm 148:1-14. The same thing is often found in the "Paradise Lost," and in fact occurs in all poetry.

In all places of his dominion - Wherever he reigns, on earth, or in heaven; here or in distant worlds.

Bless the Lord, O my soul - Ending the psalm as it began, and with the additional reason derived from the fact that the "universe" is called on to do it. As one of the creatures of God; as a part of that vast universe, the psalmist now calls on his own soul to unite with all others - to be one of them - in praising and blessing the Creator. He "desired" thus to unite with all others. His heart was full; and in a universe thus joyous - thus vocal with praise - he wished to be one among the immense multitudes that lifted their voices in adoration of the great Yahweh.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 104

Introduction

This psalm in the Syriac, the Arabic, the Greek, and the Latin versions, is ascribed to David, but on what authority is now unknown. That it "may" have been composed by him cannot be doubted, but there is no certain evidence that he was the author. In the Hebrew, it has no title, and there is nothing in the psalm itself which would furnish any indication as to its authorship.

The occasion on which the psalm was composed is unknown, and cannot now be ascertained. Rosenmuller and Hengstenberg suppose that it was at the time of the return from the Babylonian exile, and that it was intended to be used at the re-dedication of the temple. But it has no special applicability to such a service; it has no such local references as would fix it to that time; it has nothing which would make it inappropriate at "any" time, or in "any public service. It is such a psalm as might be composed at any period of the world, or in any country, where there was an intelligent view and a careful observation of the works of God. It implies, indeed, such a knowledge of the fact that God made the world as could be obtained only by revelation; but it evinces also a power of close observation; a large acquaintance with the creation around us; a relish for the scenes of nature; as well as a rich poetic faculty, and a power of description, adapted to place such scenes before the mind as realities, and to make us feel, in reading it, that we are in the very midst of the things which are described - so that they seem to live and move before our eyes.

The psalm was probably founded on the record of the creation in Psalm 104:2-5 (compare Genesis 1:1-5): to the stretching out of the heavens as a curtain; to the source of light - "who coverest thyself with light as with a garment;" - to the laying of the foundations of the earth to abide forever; to God as Creator of all things, with the additional ideas of his being clothed with honor and majesty; making the clouds his chariot; walking upon the wings of the wind; making the winds his messengers, and flames of fire his ministers.

II. An allusion to the work of the "second" day, Psalm 104:6-9 (compare Genesis 1:6-8). Here it is the separation of the waters - the power exerted on

the waters of the earth; in Genesis, the dividing of the waters above from those on the earth; in the psalm, the poetic images of the deep covering the earth as with a garment; the waters climbing up the mountains, and rolling down into the valleys, until they found the place appointed for them, a boundary which they could not pass so as to return again and cover the earth.

III. An allusion to the work of the "third" day, Psalm 104:10-18 (compare Genesis 1:9-13). In Genesis, the waters gathering together; the dry land appearing, and the earth yielding grass, and herbs, and fruit trees - the creation of vegetables; in the psalm, the springs running into the valleys, and winding among the hills - giving drink to the beasts, and quenching the thirst of wild asses - furnishing a lace for the fowls to build their nests, causing the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man - supplying him wine to make him glad, and oil to make his face shine, and bread to strengthen his heart - bringing forth the trees of the Lord, the cedars of Lebanon for the birds to make their nests, and the fir trees for the stork - making the hills a refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the conies: that is, the work of creation on the third day is seen by the eye of the psalmist not "as" mere "creation," but in the "result," as enlivened and animated by all these varied forms of life, activity, and beauty which had been spread over the earth as the "consequence" of this part of the work of creation.

IV. An allusion to the work of the "fourth" day, Psalm 104:19-23 (compare Genesis 1:14-19). Here, as in the previous divisions of the psalm, it is not a reference to the mere "creation" - to the power evinced - but to the creation of the sun and moon "as seen in the effects" produced by them - the living world as it is influenced by the sun and moon: the seasons - the alternations of day and night. Thus Psalm 104:20, at night, when the sun has gone down, all the beasts of the forest are seen creeping forth; the lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God; and again when the sun arises Psalm 104:22-23, they are seen gathering themselves together, and retiring to their dens, and man is seen going forth to his work and to his labor until the evening. It is thus not the original act of creation which is before the mind of the psalmist, but that act in its development, or when it is

seen what God contemplated by it, or what he intended that in this respect the world should be when he made the sun, the moon, and the stars.

V. An allusion to the work of the "fifth" day, Psalm 104:24-30 (compare Genesis 1:20-23); the creation of "life" in the waters, and in the air; as the fowls of heaven - the whales, etc. Here, too, the psalmist sees all this as it is - or developed on the sea, and in the air. In the sea there are things creeping innumerable, small and great; there are the ships; there is leviathan; there is everywhere animated life; there are beings innumerable all dependent on God; there are the processes of renewing, creating, destroying, continually going on - a moving scene, showing the "effect of life" as it is produced by God.

VI. It is remarkable, however, that the allusion to the successive days of the work of creation, so obvious in the other parts of the psalm, seems to close here, and there is no distinct reference to the sixth day, or the seventh - to the creation of "man" as the crowning work, and to the "rest" provided for man in the appointment of the Sabbath. The purpose of the psalmist seems to have been to celebrate the praises of God in the varied scene - the panorama passing before the eye in the works of "nature." The purpose did not seem to be to contemplate "man" - his creation - his history - but "nature," as seen around us. The remainder of the psalm, therefore, is occupied with a description of the glory of the Lord "as thus manifested;" the works of God as suited to fill the mind with exalted views of his greatness, and with a desire that his reign may be universal and perpetual, Psalm 104:31-35.

Verse 1

Bless the Lord, O my soul - See Psalm 103:1.

O Lord my God, thou art very great - This is a reason why the psalmist calls on his soul to bless God; namely, for the fact that he is so exalted; so vast in his perfections; so powerful, so wise, so great.

Thou art clothed with honor and majesty - That is, with the emblems of honor and majesty, as a king is arrayed in royal robes. Creation is the garment with which God has invested himself. Compare the notes at Psalm 93:1.

Verse 2

Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment - Referring to the first work of creation Genesis 1:3, "And God said, Let there be light, and

there was light." He seemed to put on light as a garment; he himself appeared as if invested with light. It was the first "manifestation" of God. He seemed at once to have put on light as his robe.

Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain - As an expanse spread over us. The word used here means a curtain or hanging, so called from its tremulous motion, from a word meaning to tremble. Thus it is applied to a curtain before a door; to a tent, etc. It is applied here to the heavens, as they seem to be "spread out" like the curtains of a tent, as if God had spread them out for a tent for himself to dwell in. See the notes at Isaiah 40:22.

Verse 3

Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters - The word here rendered "layeth" - from קרה *qârâh* - means properly to meet; then, in Hiphil, to cause to meet, or to fit into each other, as beams or joists do in a dwelling. It is a word which would be properly applied to the construction of a house, and to the right adjustment of the different materials employed in building it. The word rendered "beams" - עליה *ʿălîyâh* - means "an upper chamber, a loft," such as rises, in Oriental houses, above the flat roof; in the New Testament, the ὑπερῷον *huperōon* rendered "upper room," Acts 1:13; Acts 9:37, Acts 9:39; Acts 20:8. It refers here to the chamber - the exalted abode of God - as if raised above all other edifices, or above the world. The word "waters" here refers to the description of the creation in Genesis 1:6-7 - the waters "above the firmament," and the waters "below the firmament." The allusion here is to the waters above the firmament; and the meaning is, that God had constructed the place of his own abode - the room where he dwelt - in those waters; that is, in the most exalted place in the universe. It does not mean that he made it of the waters, but that his home - his dwelling-place - was in or above those waters, as if he had built his dwelling not on solid earth or rock, but in the waters, giving stability to that which seems to have no stability, and making the very waters a foundation for the structure of his abode.

Who maketh the clouds his chariot - Who rides on the clouds as in a chariot. See the notes at Isaiah 19:1. Compare the notes at Psalm 18:11.

Who walketh upon the wings of the wind - See the notes at Psalm 18:10.

Verse 4

Who maketh his angels spirits - The meaning here literally would be, "Who makes the winds his messengers," or "his angels;" that is, who

employs them to execute his purpose; who sends them out as messengers or angels to do his will.

His ministers a flaming fire - That is, Fire is employed by him - in lightnings - to accomplish his purpose as his ministers or his servants. They are entirely under his command. They are sent by him to do his will; to carry out his designs. This is intended to describe the majesty and the power of God - that he can employ wind and lightning - tempest and storm - to go on errands such as he commands; to fulfill his plans; to do his bidding. For the application of this to the angels, and as employed by the apostle Paul to prove the inferiority of the angels to the Messiah, see the notes at Hebrews 1:7.

Verse 5

Who laid the foundations of the earth - Referring still to the creation of the earth. The margin is, "He hath founded the earth upon her bases." The Hebrew word rendered in the margin "her bases" means properly a place; then a basis or foundation. The idea is, that there wes something, as it were, placed under the earth to support it. The idea is not uncommon in the Scriptures. Compare the notes at Job 38:4.

That it should not be removed for ever - So that it cannot be shaken out of its place. That is, It is fixed, permanent, solid. Its foundations do not give way, as edifices reared by man. but it abides the same from age to age - the most fixed and stable object of which we have any knowledge. Compare the notes at Psalm 78:69.

Verse 6

Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment - Compare the notes at Job 38:9. The meaning is, that God covered the earth with the sea - the waters - the abyss - as if a garment had been spread over it. The reference is to Genesis 1:2; where, in the account of the work of creation, what is there called "the deep" - the abyss - (the same Hebrew word as here - תהום *tehôm* - covered the earth, or was what "appeared," or was manifest, before the waters were collected into seas, and the dry land was seen.

The waters stood above the mountains - Above what are now the mountains. As yet no dry land appeared. It seemed to be one wide waste of waters. This does not refer to the Deluge, but to the appearance of the earth at the time of the creation, before the gathering of the waters into seas and oceans, Genesis 1:9. At that stage in the work, all that appeared was a wide waste of waters.

Verse 7

At thy rebuke they fled - At thy command; or when thou didst speak to them. The Hebrew word also implies the notion of "rebuke," or "reproof," as if there were some displeasure or dissatisfaction. Proverbs 13:1; Proverbs 17:10; Ecclesiastes 7:5; Isaiah 30:17; Psalm 76:6. It is "as if" God had been displeased that the waters prevented the appearing or the rising of the dry land, and had commanded them to "hasten" to their beds and channels, and no longer to cover the earth. The allusion is to Genesis 1:9, and there is nowhere to be found a more sublime expression than this. Even the command, "And God said, Let there be light; and there was light," so much commended by Longinus as an instance of sublimity, does not surpass this in grandeur.

At the voice of thy thunder they hasted away - They fled in dismay. The Hebrew word - חפז *châphaz* - contains the idea of haste, trepidation, consternation, alarm, "as if" they were frightened; Psalm 31:22. God spake in tones of thunder, and they fled. It is impossible to conceive anything more sublime than this.

Verse 8

They go up by the mountains … - That is, when they were gathered together into seas. They seemed to roll and tumble over hills and mountains, and to run down in valleys, until they found the deep hollows which had been formed for seas, and where they were permanently collected together. The margin here is, "The mountains ascend, the valleys descend." So it is translated in the Septuagint, in the Latin Vulgate, by Luther, and by DeWette. The more natural idea, however, is that in our translation: "They (the waters) go up mountains; they descend valleys."

Unto the place - The deep hollows of the earth, which seem to have been scooped out to make a place for them.

Which thou hast founded for them - Where thou hast laid a permanent foundation for them on which to rest; that is, which thou hast prepared for them.

Verse 9

Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over - See Job 26:10, note; Job 38:10-11, note.

That they turn not again to cover the earth - As it was before the dry land appeared; or as the earth was when "darkness was upon the face of the deep" Genesis 1:2, and when all was mingled earth and water. It is

"possible" that in connection with this, the psalmist may also have had his eye on the facts connected with the deluge in the time of Noah, and the promise then made that the world should no more be destroyed by a flood, Genesis 9:11, Genesis 9:15.

Verse 10

He sendeth the springs into the valleys - Though the waters are gathered together into seas, yet God has taken care that the earth shall not be dry, parched, and barren. He has made provision for watering it, and by a most wise, wonderful, and benevolent arrangement, he has formed springs among the valleys and the hills. It is now animated nature which comes before the eye of the psalmist; and all this he traces to the fact that the earth is "watered," and that it is not a waste of rocks and sands. The allusion in this part of the psalm (see the Introduction) is to the earth as covered with vegetation - or, to the third day of the week of creation Genesis 1:9-13, which, in Genesis, is connected with the gathering of the waters into seas. This description continues in Psalm 104:18. The literal rendering here would be, "sending springs into the valleys." He conducts the waters from the great reservoirs - lakes and seas - in such a way that they form springs in the valleys. The way in which this is done is among the most wonderful and the most benevolent in nature - by that power, derived from heat, by which the waters of the ocean, contrary to the natural law of gravitation, are lifted up in small particles - in vapor - and carried by the clouds where they are needed, and let fall upon the earth, to water the plants, and to form fountains, rivulets, and streams - and borne thus to the highest mountains, to be filtered through the ground to form springs and streams below.

Which run among the hills - Margin, "walk." That is, they go between the hills. The streams of water flow along in the natural valleys which have been made for them.

Verse 11

They give drink to every beast of the field - All are thus kept alive. The wild beasts that roam at large, find water thus provided for them.

The wild donkeys quench their thirst - Margin, as in Hebrew, "break." The meaning is, that the most wild and ungovernable of beasts - those which are farthest from the habits of domesticated animals, and the most independent of any aid derived from man, find abundance everywhere. On the word rendered "wild asses," and on the habits of the animals here referred to, see the notes at Job 11:12.

Verse 12

By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation - Among them the fowls of the air dwell. That is, among the trees which spring up by the fountains and water-courses. The whole picture is full of animation and beauty.

Which sing among the branches - Margin, as in Hebrew, "give a voice." Their voice is heard - their sweet music - in the foliage of the trees which grow on the margin of the streams and by the fountains. There is scarcely to be found a more beautiful poetic image than this.

Verse 13

He watereth the hills from his chambers - The waters, as stated before, run in the valleys - in the natural channels made for them among the hills, Psalm 104:10. But still, it was a fact that the hills themselves were watered; that there were springs far up their heights; and that vegetation was sustained above the reach of the fountains and streams below; and it was a proof of the divine skill and beneficence that, in some way, water was furnished on the summits and sides of the hills themselves. This was caused, the psalmist says, by God‘s pouring water on them, as it were, from his own "chambers" - his abode on high. The allusion is, doubtless, to rain, which seems to be poured down from the very abode of God. The word rendered "chambers" means "upper rooms," (see the notes at Psalm 104:3); and the reference is to the dwelling-place of God, as far above the earth.

The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works - Thy doings; with what thou hast done. All the needs of the earth seem to be met and "satisfied;" all that it could desire to make it fertile and beautiful; and the proper abode of man, of beast, and of fowl, has been granted. It has no cause of complaint; nothing has been left undone, in the valleys or on the hills, on the dry land or in the waters, that was needful to be done to carry out the purpose for which it has been called into being.

Verse 14

He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle - Out of the earth there is caused to grow every variety of food necessary for the various orders of beings that are placed upon it. The idea here is not merely that of "abundance;" it is also that of "variety:" the needs and tastes of all have been consulted in the productions of the earth. The one earth - the same earth - has been made to produce the endless varieties of food required for

the creatures that have been placed on it. The word "grass" here refers to all the vegetable productions needful for cattle.

And herb for the service of man - Genesis 1:29. The word "herb" here would include every green plant or vegetable; or all that the earth produces for the food of man. This, of course, refers to the earth as it came from the hand of God, and to the original arrangement, before permission was given to man to eat the flesh of animals, Genesis 9:3. The word translated "service" might be rendered "culture," as if man was to cultivate it for his use, not that it was to be produced, as the food for cattle, spontaneously.

That he may bring forth food out of the earth - Hebrew, "bread." That is, that by culture he may bring forth that which would make bread.

Verse 15

And wine that maketh glad the heart of man … - literally, "And wine (it) gladdens the heart of man to make his face to shine more than oil." Margin, "to make his face shine with oil, or more than oil." The latter expresses the idea most accurately. So DeWette renders it. The meaning is, that the earth is made to produce wine (or grapes which produce wine), and this exhilarates the heart, so that the effect is seen on the countenance, making it more bright and cheerful than it is when anointed with oil. On the use of oil, see the notes at Psalm 23:5. The reference here, in the original, is not to wine and oil as produced by the earth, as would seem to be implied in our translation, but to wine that makes the heart glad, and the face brighter than if anointed with oil. The psalmist here states a fact about the use of wine - a wellknown fact that it exhilarates the heart, and brightens the countenance; and he states it merely as a fact. He says nothing on the question whether the use of wine as a beverage is, or is not, proper and safe. Compare the notes at John 2:10.

And bread which strengtheneth man's heart - That is, Which sustains the heart - that being regarded as the seat of life. Compare Genesis 18:5.

Verse 16

The trees of the Lord - From the grass, from the herb, from the vine, and from bread, as adapted to sustain the living beings upon the earth, the psalmist passes to the more lofty and grand productions of the vegetable world - to those which display more manifestly the power of God, and which furnish abodes and retreats for the various orders of living beings. The phrase "the trees of the Lord" means great and magnificent trees - as the expression "mountains of God" means great and lofty mountains - as if

they seemed to "approach" God, or as if no appellation would so well describe their nature as that which was derived from the Infinite One. See Psalm 36:6, note; Psalm 65:9, note; Psalm 80:10, note.

Are full of sap - The word so rendered means merely to be full, to be saturated - the words "of sap" being supplied by the translators. The idea is, that, lofty as they are, they are abundantly supplied with that which is necessary to their growth. There is no want - no lack - of that which is needful to supply them. They flourish, sustained abundantly by that which is derived from the earth and the waters.

The cedars of Lebanon - As among the loftiest and most magnificent productions of the earth. See Psalm 29:5, note; Psalm 92:12, note; Isaiah 2:13, note.

Which he hath planted - So lofty and large, that it would seem as if none could plant them but the Almighty.

Verse 17

Where the birds make their nests - Furnishing a home for the birds where they may breed their young. In Psalm 104:12, the birds are introduced as singing among the foliage of trees and shrubs by the water-courses; here they are introduced as having their home in the lofty cedars in places which God had made for them. The word rendered "birds" here is the word which in Psalm 84:3 is translated "sparrow," and which is commonly used to denote "small birds." Compare Leviticus 14:4 (margin), and Leviticus 14:5-7, Leviticus 14:49-53. It is used, however, to denote birds of any kind. See Genesis 7:14; Psalm 8:8; Psalm 11:1; Psalm 148:10.

As for the stork - See the notes at Job 39:13.

The fir trees are her house - Her retreat; her abode. The stork here is used to represent the larger class of birds. The meaning is, that they build their nests among the fir-trees or cypresses. See the notes at Isaiah 14:8; notes at Isaiah 41:19. So Milton says:

"The eagle and the stork
On cliffs and cedar-tops their eyries build."

They build their nests, however, not only on fir and pine trees, but on houses and castles. Dr. Thomson ("Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 504), says of them, "These singular birds do not breed in Syria, but pass over it to Asia Minor, and into Northwestern Europe, where they not only build in fir and pine trees upon the mountains, but also enter cities and villages, and make their nests on houses, castles, and minarets."

Verse 18

The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats - Still keeping up the description of animated nature - the carrying out of the work of creation. The idea is, that nature is full of life. Even the most inaccessible places - the rocks - the high hills - have their inhabitants. Where man cannot climb or dwell, there are abodes of animals which God has made to dwell there, and which find there a refuge - a shelter - a home. On the word used here, and rendered "wild goats," see the notes at Job 39:1. The word occurs elsewhere only in 1 Samuel 24:2.

And the rocks for the conies - The word here "employed" - שׁפן *shâphân* - denotes a quadruped that chews the cud, in the manner of a hare Leviticus 11:5; Deuteronomy 14:7, and living in flocks. The rabbis render it the "coney," or rabbit, as our translators have done. The habits of the rabbit accord with this description. The word occurs nowhere else, except in Proverbs 30:26, where it is rendered, as here, "conies."

Verse 19

He appointed the moon for seasons - Genesis 1:14-18. That is, The moon, as well as the sun, is appointed to divide time; to determine its progress; to indicate the return of festival occasions, or appointed times to be observed in any manner. It is, in fact, the foundation of the division of the year into "months," and consequently the indication of all that is to be observed in the "months" of the year. But for this, there would be no natural divisions of time except those of day and night, and of the year. How great an advantage it is for the purpose of life, to have time broken up into brief intervals or periods which can be marked and remembered, both in our private life and in history, it is not necessary to say. God has been pleased to add to the natural divisions of time into days, and years, and months, an "artificial" division - the "fourth" part of the moon‘s course - "a week," indicated by the Sabbath, thus greatly facilitating the plans of life in regard to stated times or "seasons," and especially in regard to religious observances. The idea in the passage before us is, that the whole arrangement is one of benevolence, promoting the comfort of man, and bringing the ideas of succession, variety, and beauty into the system.

The sun knoweth his going down - As if conscious of what he is doing, he knows the exact time of setting, and never varies, but always obeys the divine command; never sets "before" his time - unexpectedly shortening the day, and leaving man in sudden darkness in the midst of his toil; and never

lingers above the horizon "after" the moment has come for his setting, but withdraws at the exact time, enabling man to close his toil, and seek repose, and giving an opportunity for another class of creatures to come forth on the animated scene. Their good is regarded as well as that of man; and the operations of nature are so arranged as to promote the welfare of all.

Verse 20

Thou makest darkness, and it is night - Thou hast made arrangements for the return of night - for the alternations of day and night. The Hebrew word rendered "makest," means "to place;" and the idea is, that God constitutes the darkness, or so disposes things that it occurs.

Wherein all the beasts of the forest - The margin is, "the beasts thereof do trample on the forest." The reference is to the beasts which seek their prey at night.

Do creep forth - The Hebrew word used here means properly "to creep," as the smaller animals do, which have feet, as mice, lizards, crabs, or as those do which glide or drag themselves upon the ground, having no feet, as worms and serpents. Genesis 1:21, Genesis 1:26, Genesis 1:28, Genesis 1:30; Genesis 9:2. The allusion here is to the quiet and noiseless manner in which the animals come forth at night in search of their prey, or seem to crawl out of their hiding-places - the places where they conceal themselves in the day-time. The idea is, that the arrangements which God has made in regard to day and night are wisely adapted to the animals which he has placed on the earth. The earth is full of animated beings, accomplishing by day and night the purposes of their existence.

Verse 21

The young lions roar after their prey - This is a continuation of the description in the previous verse. At night the beasts which had been hidden in the daytime crawl forth and seek their food. The lion is particularly specified as one of the beasts that in a general survey would attract attention. The psalmist hears his "roar" as he goes forth in the forest in pursuit of his prey.

And seek their meat from God - Their food. That is, God bestows it on them, and they act as if they sought it at his hand. They seek it where he has placed it; they are dependent on him for it. It is a beautiful idea that even the brute creation act as if they called on God, and sought the supply of their needs at his hands.

Verse 22

The sun ariseth - A new scene in this endless variety of incidents in a world full of life and beauty. The psalmist sees the light break in the east, and the sun appear above the horizon - and the whole scene is changed. The animals that had gone forth at night are seen to return again to their hiding-places, and man in his turn Psalm 104:23 is seen to go forth to his daily toil.

They gather themselves together - Though scattered in the night, when light returns, they all bend their steps to the places where they are accustomed to repose in the daytime. The scene is most beautiful. At night they sally forth for their prey; when the morning light returns, they all retrace their steps to the places in dens and caverns where they pass the day, and there they repose in silence until night returns again.

Verse 23

Man goeth forth … - Man is now seen to go forth from his dwelling, and he appears on the stage to perform his daily toil, until evening comes, and then again he gives way for the beasts of night. Thus the scene is ever varying - showing how full of animated existence the earth is; how varied are the occupations of its different inhabitants; and how the varieties of being are adapted to its own varied condition in the alternations of day and night.

Verse 24

O Lord, how manifold are thy works! - literally, "how many." The reference is to the "number" and the "variety" of the works of God, and to the wisdom displayed in them all. The earth is not suited up merely for one class of inhabitants, but for an almost endless variety; and the wisdom of God is manifested alike in the number and in the variety. No one can estimate the "number" of beings God has made on the earth; no one can comprehend the richness of the variety. By day the air, the earth, the waters swarm with life - life struggling everywhere as if no placc was to be left unoccupied; even for the dark scenes of night countless numbers of beings have been created; and, in all this immensity of numbers, there is an endless variety. No two are alike. Individuality is everywhere preserved, and the mind is astonished and confounded alike at the numbers and the variety.

In wisdom hast thou made them all - That is, Thou hast adapted each and all to the different ends contemplated in their creation. Anyone of these beings shows the wisdom of God in its formation, and in its adaptations to the ends of its existence; how much more is that wisdom displayed in these countless numbers, and in this endless variety!

The earth is full of thy riches - Hebrew, "possessions." So the Septuagint and the Vulgate. That is, these various objects thus created are regarded as the "possession" of God; or, they belong to him, as the property of a man belongs to himself. The psalmist says that this wealth or property abounds everywhere; the earth is full of it.

Verse 25

So is this great and wide sea … - Our translation here does not quite express the beauty and the force of the original; "This sea! Great and broad of hands! There is the creeping thing - and there is no number; animals - the little with the great." The reference here is, undoubtedly to the Mediterranean Sea, which not improbably was in sight when the psalm was composed - as it is in sight not only along the coast, but from many of the elevations in Palestine. The phrase "wide of hands" applied to the sea, means that it seems to stretch out in all directions. Compare the notes at Isaiah 33:21. The "creeping things" refer to the variety of inhabitants of the deep that glide along as if they crept. See the notes at Psalm 104:20. The word "beasts" refers to any of the inhabitants of the deep, and the idea is that there is an endless variety "there." This reflection cannot but impress itself on the mind of anyone when looking on the ocean: What a countless number, and what a vast variety of inhabitants are there in these waters - all created by God; all provided for by his bounty!

Verse 26

There go the ships - There the vessels move along - objects that would, of course, attract the attention of one looking at the sea, and admiring its wonders. The psalmist is describing the active scenes on the surface of the globe, and, of course, on looking at the ocean, these would be among the objects that would particularly attract his attention.

There is that leviathan - The Septuagint and the Vulgate render this, dragon. On the meaning of the word "leviathan," see the notes at Job 41:1.

Whom thou hast made - Margin, as in Hebrew, "formed." The idea of creation is implied in the word.

To play therein - As his native element. To move about therein; to make quick and rapid motions, as if in sport.

Verse 27

These wait all upon thee - That is, These are all dependent on thee. It does not, of course, mean that they "wait" in the sense that they are conscious of their dependence on God, but that they are "actually"

dependent. The original word implies the idea of "expecting" or "hoping," and is so rendered in the Septuagint and Vulgate. They have no other ground of expectation or hope but in thee.

That thou mayest give them their meat in due season - Their food at the proper time. That is, They are constantly dependent on thee, that thou mayest give them food from day to day. Perhaps there is also the idea that they do not lay up or hoard anything; or that they cannot anticipate their own needs, but must receive from one day to another all that they want directly from God.

Verse 28

That thou givest them they gather - What thou dost place before them they collect. They have no resources of their own. They can invent nothing; they cannot vary their food by art, as man does; they cannot make use of reason, as man does, or of skill, in preparing it, to suit and pamper the appetite. It comes prepared for them direct from the hand of God.

Thou openest thine hand - As one does who bestows a gift on another. The point in the passage is, that they receive it immediately from God, and that they are wholly dependent on him for it. They have not to labor to prepare it, but it is made ready for them, and they have only to gather it up. The allusion in the "language" may be to the gathering of manna in the wilderness, when it was provided by God, and people had only to collect it for their use. So it is with the brute creation on land and in the waters.

They are filled with good - They are "satiated" with good; that is, They are satisfied with what to them is good, or with what supplies their needs.

Verse 29

Thou hidest thy face - As if God turned away from them; as if he was displeased with them; as if he withdrew from them the tokens of his friendship and favor.

They are troubled - They are confounded; they are overwhelmed with terror and amazement. The word "troubled" by no means conveys the sense of the original word - בהל *bâhal* - which means properly to tremble; to be in trepidation; to be filled with terror; to be amazed; to be confounded. It is that kind of consternation which one has when all support and protection are withdrawn, and when inevitable ruin stares one in the face. So when God turns away, all their support is gone; all their resources "fail, and they must die." They are represented as conscious of this; or, this is what would occur if they were conscious.

Thou takest away their breath - Withdrawing that which thou gavest to them.

They die, and return to their dust - Life ends when thou dost leave them, and they return again to earth. So it is also with man. When God withdraws from him, nothing remains for him "but to die."

Verse 30

Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created - That is, New races are created in their place, or start up as if they were created directly by God. They derive their being from him as really as those did which were first formed by his hand, and the work of creation is constantly going on.

And thou renewest the face of the earth - The earth is not suffered to become desolate. Though one generation passes off, yet a new one is made in its place, and the face of the earth constantly puts on the aspect of freshness and newness.

Verse 31

The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever - Margin, as in Hebrew, "shall be." It might be rendered, "Let the glory of the Lord be for ever," implying a strong desire that it should be so. But the language may denote a strong conviction that it would be so. The mind of the writer was filled with wonder at the beauty and variety of the works of God on the land, in the air, and in the waters; and he exclaims, with a heart full of admiration, that the glory of a Being who had made all these things could never cease, but must endure forever. All the glory of man would pass away; all the monuments that he would rear would be destroyed; all the works of art executed by him must perish; but the glory of One who had made the earth, and filled it with such wonders, could not but endure forever and ever.

The Lord shall rejoice in his works - See Genesis 1:31. The idea here is, that God finds pleasure in the contemplation of his own works; in the beauty and order of creation; and in the happiness which he sees as the result of his work of creation. There is no impropriety in supposing that God finds pleasure in the manifestation of the wisdom, the power, the goodness, the mercy, and the love of his own glorious nature.

Verse 32

He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth - There is great sublimity in this expression, as indicating the power and the majesty of God. He has only to "look" upon his works, and they stand in awe and tremble. The most mighty and fearful convulsions of nature occur as if they were the mere

effect of God‘s “looking” on the earth. Compare Habakkuk 3:10 - “The mountains saw thee, and they trembled.”

He toucheth the hills, and they smoke - That is, as Mount Sinai did when God came down upon it. Exodus 19:18. It is as if the hills were conscious of his presence, and were awed.

Verse 33

I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live - That is, I will continue to praise him; I will never cease to adore him. The result of the psalmist‘s meditations on the wonderful works of God is to awaken in his mind a desire to praise God forever. He is so filled with a sense of his greatness and glory that he sees that there would be occasion for eternal praise; or that the reason for praise could never be exhausted. He who has any proper sense of the greatness, the majesty, and the glory of God “intends” to praise him forever. He sees that there is enough in the character of God to demand eternal praise, and he does not anticipate that a period can ever occur in all the future when he will feel that the causes for praise have come to an end, or when his heart will be indisposed to celebrate that praise.

Verse 34

My meditation of him shall be sweet - That is, I will find pleasure in meditating on his character and works. See the notes at Psalm 1:2. It is one of the characteristics of true piety that there is a “disposition” to think about God; that the mind is “naturally” drawn to that subject; that it does not turn away from it, when it is suggested; that this fills up the intervals of business in the day-time, and that it occupies the mind when wakeful at night. Psalm 63:6. It is also a characteristic of true piety that there is “pleasure” in such meditations; happiness in thinking of God. The sinner has no such pleasure. The thought of God is painful to him; he does not desire to have it suggested to him; he turns away from it, and avoids it. Compare the notes at Isaiah 30:11. It is one of the evidences of true piety when a man “begins” to find pleasure in thinking about God; when the subject, instead of being unpleasant to him, becomes pleasant; when he no longer turns away from it, but is sensible of a desire to cherish the thought of God, and to know more of him.

I will be glad in the Lord - That is, I will rejoice that there is such a Being; I will seek my happiness in him as my God.

Verse 35

Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth - Compare Psalm 37:38. This might with propriety be rendered, "Consumed are the sinners out of the earth," expressing a fact and not a desire; and it may have been prompted by the feeling of the psalmist that such an event would occur; that is, that the time would come when sin would no more abound, but when the world would be filled with righteousness, and all the dwellers on the earth would praise God. The word translated "consumed" - from תמם *tâmam* - means properly to complete, to perfect, to finish, to cease. It does not mean "consume" in the sense of being burned up - as our word means - or destroyed, but merely to come to an end, to cease, to pass away: that is; Let the time soon come - or, the time will soon come - when there will be no sinners on the earth, but when all the inhabitants of the earth will worship and honor God. The "connection" here seems to be this: The psalmist was himself so filled with the love of God, and with admiration of his works, that he desired that all might partake of the same feeling; and he looked forward, therefore, as those who love God must do, to the time when all the dwellers on earth would see his glory, and when there should be none who did not adore and love him. All that is "fairly" implied in the wish of the psalmist here would be accomplished if all sinners were converted, and if, in that sense, there were to be no more transgressors in the world.

And let the wicked be no more - Let there not be anymore wicked persons; let the time come when there shall be no bad people on the earth, but when all shall be righteous. In this prayer all persons could properly unite.

Bless thou the Lord, O my soul - The psalm closes (as Psalm 103 does) as it began. The psalmist commenced with the expression of a purpose to bless God; it closes with the same purpose, confirmed by a survey of the wonderful works of God.

Praise ye the Lord - Hebrew, Hallelu-jah. The psalmist expresses the earnest desire of a truly pious heart (in looking upon a world so beautiful, so varied in its works, so full of the expressions of the wisdom and goodness of God - a world where all the inferior creation so completely carries out the purpose of the Creator), that man, the noblest of all the works of God, might unite with the world around and beneath him in carrying out the great purpose of the creation - so that he might, in his own proper place, and according to the powers with which he is endowed, acknowledge God. How beautiful - how sublime - would be the spectacle

on earth, if man accomplished the purpose of his creation, and filled his place, as well as the springs, the hills, the trees, the fowls, the wild goats, the moon, the sun, the young lions, and the inhabitants of the “great and wide sea” do in their spheres! Oh, come the time when on earth there shall be harmony in all the works of God, and when all creatures here shall carry out the purpose which was contemplated when God called the earth into existence.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 105

Introduction

The author of this psalm is unknown, as is the occasion on which it was composed. It resembles the seventy-eighth psalm in the fact that both are of an historical nature, recounting the dealings of God with his people in their deliverance from the bondage in Egypt. The object of the former psalm however, seems to have been "to recall the nation from their sins," and to vindicate the dealings of God with the Hebrews in his arrangements for their government, or in the change of the administration, by giving the government to the tribe of Judah under David, rather than to Ephraim; the object of this psalm is "to excite the people to gratitude" by the remembrance of the goodness of God to the people in former times. Accordingly this psalm is occupied with recounting the mercies of God - his various acts of intervention in their history - all apppealing to the nation to cherish a grateul remembrance of those acts, and to love and praise him.

The first sixteen verses of the psalm are substantially the same as the first part of the psalm composed by David when he brought up the ark, as recorded in 1 Chronicles 16:8-22. But at that point the resemblance ceases. Probably the author of this psalm found in the one composed by David what was suitable to the occasion on which this was composed, and adopted it without any material change. In the remainder of the psalm, he has simply carried out in the history of the Jews what was suggested by David in the psalm in 1 Chronicles 16, and has applied the idea to the other events of the Jewish history, as furnishing a ground of praise. The psalm is a mere summary of the principal events of that history to the time when the people entered the promised land - as laying the foundation of praise to God.

Verse 1

O give thanks unto the Lord - The design here is to show that thanks should be given to the Lord in view of his dealings with his people, as stated in the subsequent portions of the psalm.

Call upon his name - More literally, "Call him by his name;" that is, Address him by his proper title; ascribe to him the attributes which properly belong to him; or, address him in a proper manner.

Make known his deeds among the people - What he has done in former times. The allusion is to his acts in behalf of his people in delivering

them from Egyptian bondage, and bringing them to the promised land. The word "people" here refers to the Hebrew people; and the exhortation is, that the knowledge of these deeds should be diffused and kept up among them. One of the ways of doing this was that proposed by the psalmist, to wit, by a psalm of praise - by recording and celebrating these acts in their devotions. One of the most effective modes of keeping up the knowledge of what God has done in our world is by songs of praise in worshipping assemblies.

Verse 2

Sing unto him - Sing before him; offer him praise.

Sing psalms unto him - The word here rendered "sing psalms" means properly "to prune," and then, to" cut off," as a discourse at regular periods; or, to utter in rhythmical numbers; and then it means to accompany such words with an instrument of music. The idea here is, that he is to be approached, not merely with "singing," but with sentiments expressed in the form of regular composition - in musical numbers.

Talk ye - The word used here very commonly means to meditate, to muse (compare the notes at Psalm 1:2), but would here seem to be employed in the sense of "talking over," to wit, in singing. That is, In the psalms used let there be a "narrative" of what God has done. Let his works be the subject of the words used in the psalm.

Of all his wondrous works - Of what he has done that is suited to excite wonder and admiration. Compare Psalm 77:12.

Verse 3

Glory ye in his holy name - The original word rendered "glory" is the same word which is commonly used to denote "praise," and it has that meaning here. The idea is, In your praises let the main subject be the name of God - that holy name by which he chooses to be known. The Hebrew is, "the name of his holiness." It implies

(a) that we should rejoice in God - in his very name - in that by which he chooses to make himself known;

(b) that it is a special subject of praise and rejoicing that his name is "holy;" that is, that he is a holy Being.

This can be a subject of real rejoicing only to those who are themselves holy; but properly considered, one of the highest reasons for rejoicing in

God is the fact that he is holy; that he cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence. There would be no ground of confidence in God if this were not so.

Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord - That desire to know him; that come to praise him. Let their hearts rejoice - or, let them be happy:

(a) because they are "permitted" to seek him;

(b) because they are inclined to seek him;

(c) because they have such a God to come to - One so mighty, so holy, so good, so gracious.

Verse 4

Seek the Lord and his strength - Seek strength from him; seek that his strength may be imparted to you; seek him as a Being of almighty power; as One by whom you may be strengthened. The Septuagint and Vulgate render this, "Seek the Lord, and ‹be strengthened.'" Strength comes from God, and it is only by his strength that we can be strong; only by our making use of his omnipotence in our own behaIf that we can discharge the duties, and bear the trials of this life. Compare the notes at Isaiah 40:29-31.

Seek his face evermore - His favor. His smiling upon us, his lifting up the light of his countenance, is synonymous with his favor. See Psalm 24:6; Psalm 27:8. Compare the notes at Psalm 4:6.

Verse 5

Remember his marvelous works … - The works suited to excite wonder. Call them to remembrance in your psalm; seek the aid of music and song to impress the memory of them deeply on your hearts.

His wonders - His miracles. See Psalm 78:43, note; Isaiah 8:18, note.

And the judgments of his mouth - That is, properly, the judgments which he pronounced on his enemies, and which were followed by their overthrow. The word does not refer here, as it often does, to his statutes or commands.

Verse 6

O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen - All you who are descendants of Abraham and Jacob; the former being particularly mentioned here because he was the great ancestor of the Hebrew people; the latter, because the events referred to were closely

connected with the history of Jacob - with his going down into Egypt, and with the division of the tribes named after his sons. The word rendered "his chosen" would seem in our version to refer to Jacob. In the original, however, it is in the plural number, and must agree with the word rendered "children," "Ye chosen sons of Jacob" (compare Psalm 105:43). So it has been translated in 1 Chronicles 16:13, "Ye children of Jacob, his chosen ones."

Verse 7

He is the Lord our God - His name is Yahweh - the true God; and this God is ours. See the notes at Psalm 95:7.

His judgments are in all the earth - More properly "in all the land;" that is, in every part of the land he is honored as our God. His institutions are established here; his laws are obeyed here; his worship is celebrated here. No other God is worshipped here; everywhere he is acknowledged as the nation's God.

Verse 8

He hath remembered his covenant forever - That is, God has had it constantly in remembrance, or always. Compare the notes at Luke 1:72. Though the covenant was made long since; though many generations of people have passed by; though great changes have occurred; though many calamities have come upon the nations, yet his ancient covenant and promise have never been forgotten. All his promises have been fulfilled; all ever will be. The "covenant" here referred to is that which was made with Abraham, and through him with the Hebrew people.

The word which he commanded - The thing which he commanded; that is, all which he ordained and appointed.

To a thousand generations - Very many generations; or, any number of generations: that is, always. Compare Exodus 20:6. The experience of the people through all the generations of their history has shown that in what he has promised and directed he is unchanging.

Verse 9

Which covenant he made with Abraham - Which he "ratified" with Abraham. Literally, "which he cut with Abraham." Genesis 17:2-14. Compare the notes at Psalm 50:5.

And his oath unto Isaac - Confirming the promise made to Abraham. See Genesis 26:2-5.

Verse 10

And confirmed the same unto Jacob - literally, "caused it to stand;" that is, he made it fast or secure. He renewed it, commanding the same things; making the same promises; and pledging himself for its fulfillment in the same manner. Genesis 28:10-15.

For a law - For an established or settled ordinance, for a rule by which future things were to be regulated: that is, they would occur according to that promise, and be conformed to it. It was, as it were, a rule which God prescribed for himself in regard to his own future conduct.

And to Israel … - Another name for Jacob, Genesis 32:28.

Verse 11

Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan - Genesis 13:14-15.

The lot of your inheritance - Or, that shall be the lot of your inheritance; or, what you shall inherit. The margin is, "the cord." The Hebrew word - חבל *chebel* - means properly a cord, a rope; and then, a measuring-line. Hence, it means a portion "measured out" and assigned to anyone as land, Joshua 17:14; Joshua 19:9. Compare Psalm 16:6. The meaning is, that the land of Canaan was given by promise to the patriarchs as their lot or portion of the earth; as that which they and their descendants were to possess as their own.

Verse 12

When they were but a few men in number - literally, "In their being people of number, very little." That is, They could then be easily numbered, and they were so few that they could not take possession of it themselves. This is in contrast with the promise then made to them that they should be in number as the stars, and as the sand on the sea shore.

And strangers in it - Foreigners. They were mere sojourners. They did not become incorporated with the people of the land. They did not acquire property there. They were regarded and treated as belonging to a foreign people. See the notes at Hebrews 11:9.

Verse 13

When they went from one nation to another … - Wandered about, as if they had no home and no fixed habitation. See Genesis 12:6, Genesis 12:9-10; Genesis 13:1; Genesis 20:1; Genesis 26:1, Genesis 26:17, Genesis 26:22-23.

Verse 14

He suffered no man to do them wrong - He protected them as they wandered from place to place, and as they were exposed to dangers. See the

history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in their wanderings, as it is recorded in the book of Genesis.

Yea, he reproved kings for their sakes - That he might protect them; that he might keep them from danger and from sin. See the case of Pharaoh in the time of Abraham, Genesis 12:17-20, and the case of Abimelech, Genesis 20:3, Genesis 20:6.

Verse 15

Saying, Touch not mine anointed - That is, This was the language of his "providence." It was as though God had said this. It is not meant that this was said in so many words, but this is the "poetic" form of representing the dealings of Providence. Compare Genesis 26:11. The word "anointed" here means that God had, as it were, set them apart to his service, or that they were to him as kings, and priests, and prophets, sacred people, belonging to God. The "language" is not found in the Old Testament as applied to the patriarchs, but the "idea" is fairly implied there, that they belonged to God as sacred and holy men.

And do my prophets no harm - As if God had thus spoken to them, and called them prophets. That is, they belonged to God as a sacred order: they were separate from other men, and God regarded them as his own.

Verse 16

Moreover, he called for a famine upon the land - It was not by chance; not by the mere operation of physical laws, but it was because God "ordered" it. The famine here referred to, as the connection shows, was that which occurred in the time of Jacob, and which was the occasion of the migration into Egypt. There was also a famine in the time of Abraham Genesis 12:10; but the design of the psalmist here is to refer to that period of the Jewish history which pertained to their residence in Egypt, and to the dealings of God with the nation when there, as furnishing an occasion for gratitude. Isaiah 3:1.

Verse 17

He sent a man before them - That is, He so ordered it by his providence that a man - Joseph - was sent before the family of Jacob into Egypt, that he might make arrangements for their reception and preservation. The whole matter was as God had sent him, or had commanded him to go. And yet it was brought about as the result of a series of acts of the most wicked character; by the envy and the hatred of his brethren; by their guilt and hardness of heart in proposing at first to put him

to death, and then in their arrangements for selling him to hopeless slavery; by their plan so to dispose of him that their father might never hear of him again, and that they might be troubled with him no more. God did not cause these acts. He did not command them; he did not approve of them. And yet, since they did occur, and since Joseph's brethren were so wicked, God made use of these things to accomplish his own benevolent purposes, and to carry out his great designs. So he makes use of the passions of wicked people at all times to execute his plans (compare the notes at Isaiah 10:5-7; see also Psalm 76:10; and Genesis 50:20); and so he will do to the end of time. People are free in their wickedness; but God is equally free in frustrating their schemes, and overruling their designs for the accomplishment of his own purposes.

Who was sold for a servant - For a slave; Genesis 37:28, Genesis 37:36; Genesis 39:1.

Verse 18

Whose feet they hurt with fetters - In Genesis 40:3; it is said of Joseph that he was "bound" in prison. It is not improbable that his "feet" were bound, as this is the usual way of confining prisoners.

He was laid in iron - In the prison. The margin is, "his soul came into iron." The version in the Prayer-Book of the Episcopal Church is, the iron entered into his soul. This is a more striking and beautiful rendering, though it may be doubted whether the Hebrew will permit it. DeWette renders it, "In iron lay his body."

Verse 19

Until the time that his word came - The word, or the communication from God.

The word of the Lord tried him - That is, tested his skill in interpreting dreams, and his power to disclose the future. Psalm 12:6.

Verse 20

The king sent and loosed him - Released him from prison. Genesis 41:14. The object was that he might interpret the dreams of Pharaoh.

The ruler of the people, and let him go free - Hebrew, "peoples," in the plural - referring either to the fact that there were "many" people in the land, or that Pharaoh ruled over tributary nations as well as over the Egyptians.

Verse 21

He made him lord of his house - Genesis 41:40. This implied that the administration of the affairs of the nation was virtually committed to him.

And ruler of all his substance - Margin, as in Hebrew, "possession." Of all he had. He placed all at his disposal in the affairs of his kingdom.

Verse 22

To bind his princes at pleasure - Giving him absolute power. The power here referred to was that which was always claimed in despotic governments, and was, and is still, actually practiced in Oriental nations. Literally, "to bind his princes ‹by his soul;'" that is, at his will; or, as he chose.

And teach his senators wisdom - This is now an unhappy translation. The word "senator" in fact originally had reference to "age" (see Webster's Dictionary), but it is now commonly applied to a body of men entrusted with a share in the administration of government - usually a higher body in a government - as the Senate of the United States. As these were usually "aged men," the word has acquired its present meaning, and is now ordinarily used without reference to age. But there was no such constituted body in the government of Egypt - for despotism does not admit of such an arrangement. The Hebrew word here means "aged men," and is employed with reference to those who were connected with the administration, or whom the monarch would consult - his counselors. The meaning of the phrase "to teach them wisdom" is, that he would instruct them "what to do;" literally, he would "make them wise," that is, in reference to the administration. He had the right of commanding them, and directing them in the administration. At the same time, it is doubtless true that Joseph was endowed with practical wisdom in the affairs of government far beyond them, and that in instructing them what to do, he actually imparted "wisdom" to them.

Verse 23

Israel also came into Egypt - Another name for Jacob; see Psalm 105:10.

And Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham - Not as a permanent abode, but as a temporary arrangement, until the time should come for the people to be removed to the land of promise. See Genesis 46:6. The more literal rendering would be, "Jacob was a stranger - a foreigner - in the land of Ham." On the meaning of the word "Ham," see the notes at Psalm 78:51.

Verse 24

And he increased his people greatly … - God caused them to multiply. Exodus 1:7, Exodus 1:9.

Verse 25

He turned their heart to hate his people - God turned their heart. That is, He so ordered things that they became the enemies of his people, and made it necessary that they should be removed into another land. It is not said that God did this by his direct "power;" or that he "compelled" them to hate his people; or that he in any way interfered with their "will;" or that he regarded this "as a good" in itself; or that he "approved" of it: but this is said in accordance with the usual representations in the Bible, where God is spoken of as having all things under his control, and where it is constantly affirmed that nothing takes place without his own proper agency and government in the matter. Nothing - not even the human will - free as it is - is independent of God; and not even the worst passions of men are "outside of his plan," or independent in such a sense that he does not afford the opportunity for their development and display. Compare the notes at Isaiah 6:10; Isaiah 10:5-7, Isaiah 10:15.

To deal subtilly - In a fraudulent, or deceitful manner. See Exodus 1:10.

Verse 26

He sent Moses his servant - He sent Moses to be his servant in delivering his people; that is, to accomplish the work which he had designed should be done.

And Aaron whom he had chosen - whom he had selected to perform an important work in delivering his people from bondage.

Verse 27

They shewed his signs among them - literally, "They placed among them the words of his signs." So the margin. The reference is to the miracles performed in Egypt in bringing calamities upon the Egyptians to induce them to permit the children of Israel to go out from their bondage. They were the agents in setting these wonders before the Egyptians. The term words is employed here - "the words of his signs" - to keep up the idea that it was by the command of God that this was done, or by his word. It was by no power of their own, but only by the authority of God.

And wonders in the land of Ham - Miracles. Things suited to produce astonishment. See Psalm 105:5.

Verse 28

He sent darkness, and made it dark - Exodus 10:21-23.

And they rebelled not against his word - More literally, "his words." The reference is to Moses and Aaron; and the idea, as expressed here, is that they were obedient to the command of God; that they went and did what he ordered them; that, although he required them to go before a mighty and proud monarch, to denounce against him the vengeance of heaven, and to be the instruments of bringing upon the land unspeakably severe judgments, yet they did not shrink from what God commanded them to do. They were true to his appointment, and showed themselves to be faithful messengers of God. Others, however, suppose that this refers to the Egyptians, and that it is to be taken as a question: "And did they not rebel against his word?" The language might bear this, and the translators of the Septuagint seem to have so understood it, for they render it, "And they rebelled against his words." But the most natural construction is that in our common version, and the design is evidently to commend the boldness and the fidelity of Moses and Aaron.

Verses 29-36

See an account of these plagues in Psalm 78:43-51. This is mostly a mere enumeration of the plagues in the order in which they occurred, but without, of course, the details of the circumstances attending them. There are no circumstances mentioned here which require particular explanation.

Verse 37

He brought them forth also with silver and gold - Which they had begged of the Egyptians. In Exodus 12:35, it is said, in our translation, that they had "borrowed" this gold and silver, together with raiment, of the Egyptians. This is an unhappy translation, as our word "borrow" means to ask anything of another for the purpose of using it for a time, with an implied understanding that it shall be returned, if an article to be used - or that as much money shall be repaid, if it is money that is borrowed - and according to this there would have been dishonesty and fraud on the part of the Israelites in "borrowing" these things of the Egyptians, when not intending (as they evidently did not) to return them. The Hebrew word, however, in Exodus 12:35 - שׁאל *shâ'al* - means merely to ask, "to demand, to require, to request, to perition, to beg." The idea of an obligation to "return" the things, as in our word "borrow," is not attached to the Hebrew word.

And there was not one feeble person … - literally, Not one who was lame; or, who halted, or staggered. This, of course, is not necessarily to be

understood literally. It is a general description of the capability of the people for traveling, or for war.

Verse 38

Egypt was glad when they departed - They had suffered so many plagues; the land was so utterly desolate, there was so much sorrow in their dwellings, from the calamities which had come upon them for refusing to let the Israelites go, that at last they were glad to have them depart, and they were willing to aid them that they might get rid of them. This will, in part, account for the fact that they were willing to give them what they asked - even silver and gold - if they might thus facilitate their departure.

For the fear of them fell upon them - The fear of them, as being under the protection of God; and the fear of the judgments, which must follow if they continued to oppress them.

Verse 39

He spread a cloud for a covering - See the notes at Psalm 78:14. In Numbers 10:34; it is said that "the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day," and from this seems to have been derived the idea of its "covering" them, as if it were a protection from the heat in the desert.

Verse 40

The people asked, and he brought quails - See the notes at Psalm 78:26-29.

And satisfied them with the bread of heaven - manna, sent down, as it were, from heaven. In Psalm 78:25, it is called "angels' food." See the notes at that verse.

Verse 41

He opened the rock … - See the notes at Psalm 78:15. "They ran in the dry places like a river." Or, "a river." They flowed along in the desert - a river of waters. See the notes at 1 Corinthians 10:4.

Verse 42

For he remembered … - He was faithful to his promise made to Abraham, and did not forget his descendants in the hour of need. This is the statement made in Psalm 105:8-9; and to illustrate and confirm the faithfulness of God, this reference is made to the history of the Hebrew people. See the notes at those verses.

Verse 43

And he brought forth his people with joy - With joy at their deliverance from bondage, and for his merciful interposition.

And his chosen with gladness - Margin, as in Hebrew, "singing." See Exodus 15.

Verse 44

And gave them the lands of the heathen - Of the "nations" of the land of Palestine, according to his promise. See the notes at Psalm 78:55.

And they inherited the labor of the people - The fruit of their labors. See Deuteronomy 6:10-11; Joshua 13:7.

Verse 45

That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws - The end - the design - of all this was that they might be an obedient people. This was the purpose of all his interventions in their behalf; and their obligation to obedience was enforced and measured by what he had done. The same is true in regard to his people now.

Praise ye the Lord - Hebrew, Hallelu-jah. See Psalm 104:35.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 106

Introduction

The author of this psalm is unknown, and the occasion on which it was composed cannot now be ascertained. It belongs to the same "class" as Psalm 106:47), and this is the opinion of Hengstenberg; but it is impossible to demonstrate this with any certainty. It was evidently composed in some period of public calamity, and there is no impropriety in supposing that it may have been then.

The psalm consists essentially of three parts:

I. A brief introduction, setting forth the duty of praising God, and referring to his mercy, and expressing the desire of the author of the psalm that he himself might participate in his mercy, and share the happy lot of the "chosen" of God, Psalm 106:1-5.

II. A reference to the history of the nation, and a confession of their sins in all the periods of their history, and their proneness as a people to disobey God, referring particularly to their history in Egypt, Psalm 106:6-12; in the desert, Psalm 106:34-43.

III. A prayer - founded on the fact that God had often interposed in their behalf - that he would now again interpose, and gather them from among the pagan, that they might again sing his praises, Psalm 106:44-48.

Verse 1

Praise ye the Lord - Margin, "Hallelu-jah." The two Hebrew words mean, "praise ye the Lord." They are the same words with which the previous psalm closes, and are here designed to indicate the general duty illustrated in the psalm.

O give thanks unto the Lord - See the notes at Psalm 105:1.

For he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever - See Psalm 100:5, note; Psalm 107:1, note; where the language in the Hebrew is the same.

Verse 2

Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? - Who can speak the great things of God? Who can find language which will suitably express what he has done, or which will "come up" in sublimity to his acts? In other words, human language must fall immeasurably short of adequately expressing the praises of Yahweh, or conveying the fullness of what he has done. Who has

not felt this when he has endeavored to praise God in a proper manner? Compare the notes at Psalm 40:5.

Who can shew forth all his praise - Hebrew, "Cause to be heard." That is, Language cannot be found which would cause "it to be heard" in a suitable manner.

Verse 3

Blessed are they that keep judgment - They are blessed, for their conduet is right, and it leads to happiness. The Hebrew is, "the keepers of judgment;" that is, they who observe the rules of justice in their conduct, or who are governed by the principles of integrity.

And he that doeth righteousness at all times - All who yield obedience to just law - whether a nation or an individual. The psalm is designed to illustrate this "by contrast;" that is, by showing, in the conduct of the Hebrew people, the consequences of "disobedience," and thus impliedly what would have been, and what always must be, the consequences of the opposite course. Compare Psalm 15:1-5.

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Verse 4

Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that thou bearest unto thy people - literally, "Remember me with the favor of thy people." This is the language of the author of the psalm: a pious ejaculation such as will occur to the mind in recounting what God has done for his church; what are the advantages of being his friends; what blessings of peace, happiness, and joy are connected with true religion. Even the wicked sometimes have this feeling when they look on the happy life, and the peaceful death of the godly. So Balaam said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Numbers 23:10.

O visit me with thy salvation - Come to me with salvation; confer it upon me.

Verse 5

That I may see the good of thy chosen - Thy chosen people; or, thine elect. That I may possess and enjoy the same favor and happiness which they do. It is implied here that there are special favors conferred on them; or, that happiness is found in the friendship of God which is not to be found elsewhere. It is a characteristic of true piety to desire to make that our own. A truly religious man more desires the happiness which results from being among the "chosen" of God than all that the world can confer.

That I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation - The happiness found in the nation that serves thee. True religion - the favor of God - not only confers happiness on the "individual" who possesses it, but on the nation or people where it prevails. It is just as much suited to produce happiness there, and is just as necessary for happiness there, as in the case of an individual.

That I may glory with thine inheritance - That I may share the honor of thy people. The word "inheritance" here is used to denote that which is one's own, and is thus applied to the people of God considered as "his." The meaning is, that the psalmist desired no other glory, honor, or distinction, than that which pertained to God's people as such. He sought not the "glory" connected with the distinctions of the world; the display of wealth; the triumph of genius, of conquest, of arms - but the "glory" of being a friend of God, and of partaking of that which God confers on his people.

Verse 6

We have sinned with our fathers - We have sinned as "they" did; we have followed their example. The illustration of the manner in which the nation had sinned occupies a considerable part of the remainder of the psalm; and the idea here is, that, in the generation in which the psalmist lived, there had been the manifestation of the same rebellious spirit which had so remarkably characterized the entire nation. The "connection" of this with the foregoing verses is not very apparent. It would seem to be that the psalmist was deeply impressed with a sense of the great blessings which follow from the friendship of God, and from keeping his commandments - as stated, Psalm 106:3-5; but he remembered that those blessings had not come upon the people as might have been expected, and his mind suddenly adverts to the cause of this, in the fact that the nation had "sinned." It was not that God was not disposed to bestow that happiness; it was not that true religion "failed" to confer happiness; but it was that the nation had provoked God to displeasure, and that in fact the sins of the people had averted the blessings which would otherwise have come upon them. The psalmist, therefore, in emphatic language - repeating the confession in three forms, "we have sinned - we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly," acknowledges that the failure was in them, not in God. The language here is substantially the same as in Daniel 9:5-6, and it would seem not improbable that the one was suggested by the other. Which was

prior in the order of time, it is now impossible to determine. Compare the notes at Daniel 9:5-6.

Verse 7

Our fathers understood not - They did not fully comprehend the design of the divine dealings. They did not perceive the greatness of the favor shown to them, or the obligation to obey and serve God under which they were placed by these remarkable manifestations.

Thy wonders in Egypt - The miracles performed there in behalf of the Hebrew people.

They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies - The great number of the divine interpositions in their behalf. They did not allow them to influence their conduct as they should have done. The aggravation of their offence in the case here referred to was particularly in the "multitude" of the mercies. It would have been sinful to have forgotten even one act of the divine favor; it was a great aggravation of their guilt that "so many" acts were forgotten, or that they failed to make an impression on them. So now. It is a great sin to be unmindful of a "single" favor conferred by God; it is a great aggravation of guilt that men live continually amidst so many proofs of the divine goodness; that they are fed, and clothed, and protected; that they breathe the pure air, and look upon the light of the sun; that they enjoy the comforts of domestic life, the blessings of liberty, and the offers of salvation; that they lie down and rise up; that their toils are crowned with success, and that the blessings of every land are made to come around them - and yet they forget or disregard all these proofs of the divine mercy.

But provoked him at the sea, even at the Red Sea - Exodus 14:10-12. They "rebelled" against him. Even amidst the wonders there occurring, and after all the blessings which they had received at his hands, when they were in danger they doubted his power, and called in question his faithfulness.

Verse 8

Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake - For the promotion of his own honor and glory; that it might be seen that he is powerful and merciful. This is constantly given as the reason why God saves people; why he forgives sin; why he redeems the soul; why he delivers from danger and from death. Compare Ezekiel 36:22, Ezekiel 36:32; Isaiah 37:35; Isaiah 43:25; Isaiah 48:9; Jeremiah 14:7; Psalm 6:4; Psalm 23:3; Psalm 25:11; Psalm 31:16; Psalm 44:26. This is the highest reason which can be assigned for pardoning and saving sinners.

That he might make his mighty power to be known - Exodus 9:16. Compare the notes at Romans 9:17.

Verse 9

He rebuked the Red Sea also - The word rendered "rebuke" commonly means to chide - as when one is angry with another for having done wrong. Here it is evidently a poetic term, meaning that he spake "as if" he were angry; or "as if" the Red Sea did wrong in presenting an obstacle or obstruction to the passage of his people. Compare Exodus 14:21-22,

So he led them through the depths - Through what had been the abyss; what had seemed to be depths, being covered with water.

As through the wilderness - As through a desert or dry place; as he afterward led them through the wilderness. The waters parted asunder, and made a way for them.

Verse 10

And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them - From Pharaoh. By making a path through the waters, they were enabled to escape; by the overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, they were completely and forever delivered from their oppressors. Exodus 14:30.

Verse 11

And the waters covered their enemies … - Exodus 14:27-28; Exodus 15:5.

Verse 12

Then believed they his words - In immediate view of his interpositions in their behalf in conducting them through the Red Sea, and in the destruction of their enemies.

They sang his praise - In the song composed by Moses on the occasion of their deliverance. Exodus 15.

Verse 13

They soon forgat his works - On Psalm 106:13-15, see the notes at Psalm 78:17-22. Literally, here, as in the margin, "They made haste, they forgat." They did it soon; did it without any delay. It was as if they were impatient to have it done.

They waited not for his counsel - For the fulfillment of his promise; or for his command in regard to their future conduct. They did not look to him, but they depended on themselves, and followed their own desires and wishes.

Verse 14

But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness - Margin, as in Hebrew, "lusted a lust." The reference is to their desire of better food than the manna.

And tempted God in the desert - Tried God, whether he "could" provide for them food and drink. Psalm 78:19-20.

Verse 15

And he gave them their request - By sending great quantities of quails. Numbers 11:31-32.

But sent leanness into their soul - The word translated "leanness" is from a verb - רזה *râzeh* - to make thin; to cause to waste away; to destroy. The radical idea is that of abrading or "scraping;" and hence, it means to become lean, to waste away. It occurs only here and in Isaiah 10:16, rendered "leanness," and in Micah 6:10, rendered "scant;" margin, "leanness." It means here that the effect of all this on their souls was similar to the effect on the body when it wastes away by disease or want of food. This effect often occurs. In the gratification of their desires, in great temporal success and prosperity, individuals, churches, nations, often forget their dependence on God; lose their sense of the value of spiritual privileges and blessings: are satisfied with their condition; become selfconfident and proud, and forfeit the favor of God. If we pray for temporal prosperity, we should also pray that we may at the same time have grace commensurate with it, that it may be a blessing and not a curse; if we are visited with prosperity when it has not been a direct object of our prayer - if we inherit riches, or if our plans are successful beyond our expectations - or, in the language of the world, if "fortune smiles upon us," there should be special prayer on our part that it may not be a curse rather than a blessing; that it may be so received and used as not to alienate our minds from God. Few are the Christian people who can bear continued success in life; few are those who are not injured by it; rare is it that growth in grace keeps pace with uninterrupted worldly prosperity; rare is it that the blessings of earth are so received and employed that they are seen to be a means of grace, and not a hindrance to growth in piety. A man does not know what is best for him when his heart is set on worldly prosperity; and God is more benevolent to people than they are to themselves, in withholding what is so often the object of their intense desire. "What is asked in passion, is often given in wrath" - Henry.

Verse 16

They envied Moses also in the camp - They were envious of him, or rebelled against him, as assuming too much authority. See Numbers 16:1-2. The reference here is rather to the "result" of that envy in producing rebellion than to the envy itself. It is true, however, that the foundation of their opposition to him "was" envy.

And Aaron the saint of the Lord - That is, as set apart to the service of the Lord; or, as employed in holy things. The reference is to his "office," not to his personal character.

Verse 17-18

On these verses see Numbers 16:31-35. This refers to the time when they rebelled against Moses.

Verse 19

They made a calf in Horeb - Exodus 32:4. Probably in resemblance of the Egyptian god "Apis." The image was made by Aaron out of materials furnished by the people, and at their request Exodus 32:1-3, so that it might be said to be the act of the people.

And worshipped the molten image - The word rendered "molten" is from a verb נסך *nâsak* - to pour, to pour out; hence, to cast, to found; and it means anything that is made by fusion or casting. This image was cast Exodus 32:4, and hence, this name is given to it.

Verse 20

Thus they changed their glory - Their true glory - the proper object of worship - God. Compare the notes at Romans 1:23. They "exchanged" that as an object of worship for the image of an ox.

Into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass - Into the likeness of an ox. That is, They worshipped God under that image. The circumstance of its "eating grass" is added to show the absurdity of the act. Instead of worshipping God - an independent Being, who does not need to be supported, but who himself sustains all things, and provides for all - they worshipped an animal that had need of constant sustenance, and would itself soon die if deprived of its proper nourishment. Compare the notes at Isaiah 40:18-20; notes at Isaiah 41:6-7.

Verse 21-22

They forgat God their Saviour … - The God who had saved, or delivered them, out of Egypt. The sentiment here is the same as in Psalm 78:11-12. See the notes at that place.

Verse 23

Therefore he said that he would destroy them - See Exodus 32:10-14. He threatened to destroy them, and he would have done it, if Moses had not interposed and pleaded for them. There was nothing strange or very unusual in this. Many a descending curse upon guilty people is turned away by prayer, and by human intervention. We are constantly endeavoring to turn aside evils which would come upon others - by our intervention - by labor or by prayer. Thus, when we toil to provide food for our children, or give it in charity to the poor, we are endeavoring to avert the evil of starvation which would otherwise come upon them; when we provide for them clothing, we turn away the evils of nakedness and cold; when we give them medicine we turn away the evil of long-continued disease or of death; when we rush through the flames if a house is on fire, or venture out in a rough sea in a boat, to save others from devouring flame or from a watery grave, we seek to turn aside evils which would otherwise come upon them. So when we pray for others we may turn away evils which would otherwise descend on the guilty. No one can estimate the number or the amount of evils which are thus turned away from the guilty and the suffering by intervention and intercession; no one can tell how many of the blessings of his own life he owes to the intercessions and the toils of others. "All the blessings that come upon sinners - "all" that is done to turn away deserved wrath from people - is owing to the fact that the one great Intercessor - greater than Moses - cast himself into the "breach," and himself met and rolled back the woes which were coming upon a guilty world. "Had not Moses his chosen." Chosen to lead and guide his people to the promised land.

Stood before him - Presented himself before him.

In the breach - literally, "in the breaking." The allusion is to a breach made in a wall 1 Kings 11:27; Isaiah 30:13; Amos 4:3; Job 30:14, and to the force with which an army rushes through a breach that is thus made. So God seemed to be about to come forth to destroy the nation.

Verse 24

Yea, they despised the pleasant land - Margin, as in Hebrew, "land of desire." That is, a country "to be desired," - a country whose situation, climate, productions, made it desirable as a place of abode. Such Palestine was always represented to be to the children of Israel (Leviticus 20:24; Numbers 13:27; Numbers 14:8; Numbers 16:14; Deuteronomy 6:3; Deuteronomy 11:9; et al.;) but this land had to them, at the time here

referred to, no attractions, and they rather desired to return again to Egypt; Numbers 11:5.

They believed not his word - His assurance in regard to the land to which they were going.

Verse 25

But murmured in their tents … - Numbers 14:2, Numbers 14:27. They complained of Moses; they complained of their food; they complained of the hardships of their journey; they complained of God. They did this when "in their tents;" when they had a comfortable home; when safe; when provided for; when under the direct divine protection and care. So people often complain: perhaps oftener when they have "many" comforts than when they have "few."

Verse 26

Therefore he lifted up his hand against them - Numbers 14:27-33. He resolved to cut them off, so that none of them should reach the promised land.

To overthrow them in the wilderness - literally, to cause them to "fall."

Verse 27

To overthrow their seed also among the nations - Margin, as in Hebrew, "to make them fall;" to wit, among the surrounding people. The reference here is to the posterity of those who complained and fell in the wilderness. The result of their rebellion and complaining would not terminate with them. It would extend to their posterity, and the rebellion of the fathers would be remembered in distant generations. The overthrow of the nation, and its captivity in Babylon was thus one of the remote consequences of their rebellion in the wilderness.

And to scatter them in the lands - In foreign lands - as at Babylon. If this psalm was written at the time of the Babylonian captivity, this allusion would be most appropriate. It would remind the nation that its captivity there had its origin in the ancient and long-continued disposition of the people to revolt from God.

Verse 28

They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor - They joined in their devotions, or, they shared in the rites of idolatrous worship. This occurred when they were in the regions of Moab, and on the very borders of the

promised land. Numbers 25:1-3. Baal was the name of the idol; Peor was the name of a mountain in Moab, where the idol was worshipped.

And ate the sacrifices of the dead - Of false gods, represented as "dead" or having no life, in contradistinction from the true and "living God." They ate the sacrifices offered to those idols; that is, they participated in their worship. Numbers 25:2.

Verse 29

Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions - The word rendered "inventions" means properly "works; deeds;" then it is used in the sense of "evil" deeds, crimes.

And the plague brake in upon them - See Numbers 25:8-9. No less than twenty-four thousand fell in the plague. Numbers 25:9.

Verse 30

Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment … - Inflicted summary punishment upon a principal offender. Numbers 25:7-8.

Verse 31

And that was counted unto him for righteousness - See Numbers 25:11-13. Compare the notes at Romans 4:3. The meaning here is, that this was regarded as a "proof" or "demonstration" that he was a righteous man - a man fearing God.

Unto all generations for evermore - Hebrew, "To generation and generation forever." The record would be transmitted from one generation to another, without any intermission, and would be permanent. This is one of the illustrations of the statement so frequently made in the Scriptures (compare Exodus 20:6; Deuteronomy 7:9; Romans 11:28) that the blessings of religion will descend to a distant posterity. Such instances are constantly occurring, and there is no legacy which a man can leave his family so valuable as the fact that he himself fears God and keeps his laws.

Verse 32

They angered him also at the waters of strife - Numbers 20:3-13. They complained of the lack of water. They wished that they had died as others had done. They murmured against God as if he could not supply their needs. They showed an unbelieving and rebellious spirit - provoking God, and tempting Moses to in act of great impatience by their conduct. In Numbers 20:13, this is, "the waters of Meribah;" - margin, "strife." This is the meaning of the Hebrew word. The place took its name from the fact that the people there strove against the Lord and against Moses.

So that it went ill with Moses for their sakes - Evil came upon him. He was betrayed into impatience, and was tempted to use words which offended God, and prevented his being permitted to lead the people into the promised land. Numbers 20:12.

Verse 33

Because they provoked his spirit - literally, "They made his spirit bitter," or they embittered his soul. They threw him off his guard, so that instead of manifesting the meekness and gentleness which so eminently characterized him in general (see Numbers 12:3), he gave way to expressions of anger. See Numbers 20:10.

So that he spake unadvisedly with his lips - Passionately; in a severe, harsh, and threatening manner. He did not bear with them as he should have done; he did not refer to God, to his power, and to his goodness as he should have done; he spake as if the whole thing depended on him and Aaron: "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" The word rendered "spake unadvisedly" - בטא *bâṭâ'* - means properly to "babble;" and then, to talk idly, or unadvisedly; to utter that which has no meaning, or an improper meaning. Let us not harshly blame Moses, until we are placed in circumstances similar to his, and see how we would ourselves act. Who is there that would not have been provoked as he was, or even to a greater degree? If there are any such, let them "cast the first stone."

Verse 34

They did not destroy the nations - The Canaanites, Hivites, Jebusites, etc.; the nations that inhabited the land of Canaan.

Concerning whom the Lord commanded them - The command on this subject was positive; and it was to destroy them, to spare none of them. Numbers 33:52; Deuteronomy 7:5, Deuteronomy 7:16.

Verse 35

But were mingled among the heathen - Among the nations; by intermarriage, and by commerce. They suffered them to remain in the land, contrary to the command of God, and thus greatly exposed and endangered the purity of their religion and their own morals. See Judges 2:2; Judges 3:5-6.

And learned their works - Their practices; their customs and habits: learned to live as they did. This was an illustration of the danger of contact with the wicked and the worldly. What occurred in their case has often

occurred since in the history of the people of God, that by "mingling" with the world they have learned to practice their "works;" have become conformed to their manner of living, and have thus lost their spirituality, and brought dishonor on the cause of religion. There is some proper sense in which the people of God are not to be conformed to the world; in which, though living among them, they are to be separate from them; in which, though they are parts of the same nation, and live under the same government and laws, they are to be a distinct and special people, ruled supremely by higher laws, and having higher and nobler ends of life. Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17.

Verse 36

And they served their idols - Judges 2:12-13, Judges 2:17, Judges 2:19; Judges 3:6-7.

Which were a snare unto them - Like the snares or toils by which birds and wild beasts are caught. That is, they were taken unawares; they were in danger when they did not perceive it; they fell when they thought themselves safe. The bird and the wild beast approach the snare, unconscious of danger; so the friend of God approaches the temptations which are spread out before him by the enemy of souls - and, ere he is aware, he is a captive, and has fallen. Nothing could better describe the way in which the people of God are led into sin than the arts by which birds are caught by the fowler, and wild beasts by the hunter.

Verse 37

Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters - See 2 Kings 16:3; Ezekiel 16:20; Ezekiel 20:31; Isaiah 57:5.

Unto devils - Hebrew, שׁדים *shêdiym* The Septuagint, δαιμονίοις *daimoniois* "demons." So the Vulgate, *"daemoniis."* The word is used only in the plural number, and is applied to idols. It occurs only in this place, and in Deuteronomy 32:17. On the meaning of this, see the notes at 1 Corinthians 10:20.

Verse 38

And shed innocent blood … - The blood of those who had committed no crime; who did not "deserve" the treatment which they received. That is, they were sacrificed "as" innocent persons, and "because" it was believed that they "were" innocent: the pure for the impure; the holy for the unholy. It was on the general principle that a sacrifice for sin must be itself pure, or it could not be offered in the place of the guilty; that an offering made for

one who had violated law must be by one who had "not" violated it. This was the principle on which "lambs" were offered in sacrifice. It is on this principle that the atonement for sin by the Lord Jesus was made; on this depend its efficacy and its value.

And the land was polluted with blood - That is, Either so much blood was thus poured out, that it might be said that the very land was polluted with it; or, the sin itself was so great, that it seemed to defile and pollute the whole land.

Verse 39

Thus were they defiled with their own works - By their very attempts to deliver themselves from sin. They were corrupt, and the consciousness that they were sinners led them to the commission of even greater enormities in attempting to expiate their guilt, even by the sacrifice of their own sons and daughters. Thus all the religions of the pagan begin in sin, and end in sin. The consciousness of sin only leads to the commission of greater sin; to all the abominations of idol-worship; to the sacrifice - the murder - of the innocent, with the vain hope of thus making expiation for their crimes. Sinners have never yet been able to devise a way by which they may make themselves pure. It is only the great Sacrifice made on the cross which meets the case; which provides expiation; and which saves from future sin.

And went a whoring - Apostacy from God and backsliding are ofen illustrated in the Scriptures by the violation of the marriage compact, as the relation between God and his people is often compared with the relation between a husband and wife. Compare Isaiah 62:5; Jeremiah 3:14; Jeremiah 7:9; Jeremiah 13:27; Ezekiel 16:20, Ezekiel 16:22, Ezekiel 16:25, Ezekiel 16:33-34; Ezekiel 23:17.

With their own inventions - More literally, With their own works. See the notes at Psalm 106:29.

Verse 40

Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against his people - Anger is often compared with a fire; as we say now, a man is "inflamed" with passion. See Esther 1:12; Lamentations 2:3; Psalm 79:5; Psalm 89:46; Jeremiah 4:4; Judges 2:14. Of course, this must be taken in a manner appropriate to God. It means that his treatment of his offending people was as if he were burning with wrath against them.

Insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance - He was offended with his people; he treated them "as if" they were an abomination to him. He punished them; he cast them off; he left them to the just results of their own conduct. Were ever any writers more candid and honest than the sacred penmen? There is no effort to vindicate the nation; there is no apology offered for them; there is no concealment of their guilt; there is no attempt to soften the statement in regard to the feelings of God toward them. Their conduct was abominable; they deserved the divine displeasure; they were ungrateful, evil, and rebellious; and the sacred writers do not hesitate to admit the truth of this to the fullest extent.

Verse 41

And he gave them into the hand of the heathen - That is, of foreign nations. They were indeed "pagans," in the sense in which that term is used now - that is, they were ignorant of the true God, and worshipped idols; but that idea is not necessarily in the original word. The word "Gentiles" expresses all that the word implies.

And they that hated them ruled over them - Had them in subjection.

Verse 42

Their enemies also oppressed them - Septuagint, "Afflicted them," They invaded their country; they destroyed their vintages; they laid desolate their land; they made them captives.

And they were brought into subjection - Hebrew, made to bow.

Verse 43

Many times did he deliver them - From danger of invasion; from foreign arms; from entire overthrow. Numerous instances of this are recorded in the history of the Hebrew people.

But they provoked him with their counsel - This does not mean that they gave counsel or advice to God; but it refers to the counsel which they took among themselves; the plans which they formed. These were such as to offend God.

And were brought low for their iniquity - Margin, "impoverished or weakened." The Hebrew word means to melt away, to pine; and hence, to decay, to be brought low. See Job 24:24, where it is rendered "brought low," and Ecclesiastes 10:18, where it is rendered "decayeth." The word does not occur elsewhere. The meaning is, that they were weakened; their national strength was exhausted as a punishment for their sins.

Verse 44

Nevertheless, he regarded their affliction - literally, "And he looked upon the trouble that was upon them;" or, "and he saw in the distress to them." The meaning is, that he did not turn away from it; he saw the need of interposition, and he came to them.

When he heard their cry - literally, "In his hearing their cry." Their cry for help came before him, and he did not refuse to look upon their affliction. The idea is, that he was attracted to their case by their loud cry for help; and that when he heard the cry, he did not refuse to look upon their low and sad condition. God assists us when we cry to him. We ask his attention to our troubles; we pray for his help; and when he hears the cry, he comes and saves us. He does not turn away, or treat our case as unworthy of his notice.

Verse 45

And he remembered for them his covenant - His solemn promises made to their fathers. He remembered that covenant in their behalf; or, on account of that, he came and blessed them. He had made gracious promises to the patriarchs; he had promised to be the God of their posterity; he had his own great purposes to accomplish through their nation in the distant future; and on these accounts, he came and blessed them.

And repented - He averted impending judgments. He checked and arrested the calamities which he was bringing upon them for their sins. He acted toward them as though his mind had been changed; as though he was sorry for what he was doing. The word "repent" can be applied to God in no other sense than this. It cannot be applied to him in the sense that he felt or admitted that he had done wrong; or that he had made a mistake; or that he had changed his mind or purposes; or that he intended to enter on a new course of conduct; but it may be applied to him in the sense that his treatment of people is "as if" he had changed his mind, or "as if" he were sorry for what he had done: that is, a certain course of things which had been commenced, would be arrested and changed to meet existing circumstances, because "they" had changed - though all must have been foreseen and purposed in his eternal counsels.

According to the multitude of his mercies - The greatness of his mercy; the disposition of his nature to show mercy; the repeated instances in which he had shown mercy in similar circumstances.

Verse 46

He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives - That is, he exercised such control over the minds of the pagan

that they were willing to show them mercy and to release them. It was not by any native tenderness on the part of the pagan; it was not because they were disposed of themselves to show them any favor; it was not because they had any "natural" relentings on the subject; but it was because God had access to their hearts, and "inclined" them to show compassion for their suffering prisoners. This is a remarkable instance of the power of God over even the hardened minds and hearts of pagan men; and it shows that he holds this power, and can exercise it when he pleases. If he could excite in their hard hearts feelings of compassion toward his own people in bondage, what should prevent his having such access to the hearts of the pagan now as to lead them to repentance toward himself? On the exercise of this power the salvation of the pagan world - as of all sinners - must depend; and for the putting forth of this power we should most fervently pray. The "literal" rendering of this verse would be, "And he gave them to compassions before all those that made them captive." That is, he inclined them to show favor or compassion. Compare Daniel 1:9; 1 Kings 8:50.

Verse 47

Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen - From among the nations. From this it would seem that the psalm was composed when the nation was in captivity, or was dispersed among the nations that were hostile to them. The prayer is, that as God had, in former periods, recovered his people when they were in exile, or were scattered abroad, he would again graciously interpose and bring them to the land of their fathers, where they had been accustomed to worship God.

To give thanks unto thy holy name - Unto thee; a holy God. That we may praise thee in the place where thou art accustomed to be worshipped - in the sanctuary.

And to triumph in thy praise - To exult; to rejoice; to be glad in praising thee - in thy worship.

Verse 48

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting - Forever. As he has been adored in the past - even from the beginning of the creation - so let him be adored and praised in all periods to come - forever and forever. See the notes at Psalm 41:13.

And let all the people say, Amen - In Psalm 41:13, this is, "Amen and amen." The idea is, Let all the people join in this; let them all express and

declare their assent to this: let them all say, “Be it so.” The word “Amen” is a word expressing assent - meaning verily, truly, certainly.

Praise ye the Lord - Hebrew, “Hallelu-jah.” See Psalm 104:35.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 107

Introduction

This psalm is without a title, and its author is unknown. The occasion on which it was composed is not particularly designated, though from Psalm 107:2-3, it is probable that it was on a return from exile or captivity. There is nothing in the psalm to forbid the supposition that this was the return from the captivity at Babylon, and that the psalm was designed to be used at the re-dedication of the temple after the restoration. Every part of it would be appropriate to such an occasion, and it is every way probable that so important an event would be celebrated with appropriate songs of praise.

The "design" of the psalm, so far as it has a practical bearing, is indicated in Psalm 107:8, Psalm 107:15, Psalm 107:21, Psalm 107:31, in the language repeated in those verses: "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" The purpose of the psalm is so to set forth these "works," or these "doings" of God, as to lead men to praise and adoration.

The psalm is very regular in its structure. The first three verses are introductory, intended to designate the people who were specially called on to praise God - as those who had been redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands - east, west, north, and south.

The remainder of the psalm is divided into portions marked by the above words, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness," etc., Psalm 107:8, Psalm 107:15, Psalm 107:21, Psalm 107:31. These portions are of unequal length, and this language (with a few appropriate words added) is placed "at the close of each part," as being that which was suggested by the previous thoughts. In the closing portion, however, Psalm 107:32-43, this language is not employed, but the expression of "desire" in the other cases is changed into an "affirmation" that all who were wise would "observe these things," and would "understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

The particular parts of the psalm are the following:

I. A reference to the redeemed of the Lord as having wandered in the wilderness; as having been hungry and thirsty; as having no city to dwell in; and then, as calling upon the Lord in such a manner that he heard them, and led them in a right and safe way. For "this" the psalmist expresses the wish that "men would praise the Lord for his goodness," Psalm 107:4-9.

II. A reference to God as displaying goodness toward those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and who are bound in affliction and iron: illustrated by a reference to the people of God in the times of bondage, as being cast down and punished for their sins, and as then calling upon the Lord in their trouble, so that he brought them out of that darkness and shadow of death, and brake their bands asunder. For "this" the psalmist expresses the wish that "men would praise the Lord for his goodness," Psalm 107:10-16.

III. A reference to the deliverance performed for the people of God. They had sinned; they had shown their folly; they had drawn near to the gates of death, and then they cried unto the Lord, and he sent his word and healed them. For "this" the psalmist expresses the desire that "men would praise the Lord for his goodness," Psalm 107:17-22.

IV. A reference to the goodness of the Lord as manifested toward those who go down to the sea in ships, and do business in the great waters. They see the wonders of the Lord in the deep. They encounter storms and tempests. They are raised up to the heavens on the waves, and then sink to a corresponding depth. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunkard; and then they cry to the Lord, and he hears them, and makes the sea calm, and brings them to the desired haven. For "this" the psalmist expresses the wish that "men would praise the Lord for his goodness," Psalm 107:23-32.

V. A reference to the goodness of the Lord in preparing a place for men to dwell in: turning rivers into a wilderness, the water-springs into dry ground, the wilderness into standing water, and the dry ground into water-springs: making arrangements for people to dwell upon the earth, so that they may sow the fields and plant vineyards - setting the poor on high from affliction, and making them families like a flock. In reference to "this," and to "all" that God does, the psalmist says, in the conclusion of the psalm, that

all who are "wise, and will observe these things, shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord," Psalm 107:33-43.

Verse 1

O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good - See the notes at Psalm 106:1.

For his mercy endureth for ever - He is unchanging in his mercy. It is an attribute of his very nature. He is constantly manifesting it. The word rendered "mercy" here, however - חסד *chesed* - is more general in its signification than our word "mercy." Our word means "favor shown to the guilty;" the Hebrew word means kindness, goodness, benignity in general. It is this which is celebrated in the psalm before us.

Verse 2

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so - They are especially qualified to say so; they have special occasion to say so; they can and will appreciate this trait in his character. The word rendered "redeemed" here - from גאל *gā'al* - means "delivered, rescued," without reference to any price paid for the deliverance. It refers here not to a ransom from "sin," but to deliverance from "danger." The probable allusion is to the deliverance from the captivity in Babylon. Compare the notes at Isaiah 43:3.

Whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy - the power of the enemy. That is, He has saved them from their enemies, and has not suffered them to be destroyed by them. What is here said is true in the most eminent sense of those who are redeemed by the blood of the Son of God, and who are made heirs of salvation. Every consideration makes it proper that they should praise the Lord. Of all on earth, they have most occasion for such praise; of all among people, it may be presumed that they will be best qualified to appreciate the goodness of the Lord.

Verse 3

And gathered them out of the lands - The countries where they were scattered. In the times of the captivity the people were not all taken to one place, or did not all abide in one place. In the long exile - of seventy years - in Babylon, they would naturally be much scattered in the different provinces; and the attempt to collect them together, to restore them again to their native land, might be attended with much difficulty.

From the east … - From all quarters; from the places where they were scattered abroad. That is, one taking his position in Babylon would see them

dispersed from that place as a center into all the surrounding country.

And from the south - Margin, as in Hebrew, "from the sea." In general, in the Old Testament, the word "sea" is used for the west, because the western boundary of the land of Palestine was the Mediterranean Sea. Compare Psalm 139:9. But the supposed position of the speaker here is "Babylon," and on that account the south might be fitly designated by the word "sea;" as, on the south of Babylon, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean would be soon reached.

Verse 4

They wandered in the wilderness - On their return from Babylon; or, when God was conducting them again to their own land. The word "wilderness" in the Scriptures means a desolate, barren, uninhabited region, usually destitute of trees, of springs, and of water-courses. It does not denote, as it does with us, a region of extensive "forests." Compare the notes at Matthew 4:1.

In a solitary way - Rather, in a "waste" way; a land that was desolate and uncultivated.

They found no city to dwell in - In their journeyings. This was true of the region between Babylon and Palestine; a wide, barren, desolate waste.

Verse 5

Hungry and thirsty - As they would be, when wandering in such a desert. A more literal and expressive rendering would be, "Hungry - also thirsty."

Their soul fainted in them - The word used here - עטף *ʿâṭaph* - means properly to cover, to clothe, as with a garment, Psalm 73:6; or a field with grain, Psalm 65:13; then, to hide oneself, Job 23:9; then, to cover with darkness, Psalm 77:3; 102, title; thus it denotes the state of mind when darkness seems to be in the way - a way of calamity, trouble, sorrow; of weakness, faintness, feebleness. Here it would seem from the connection to refer to the exhaustion produced by the want of food and drink.

Verse 6

Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble - The language in this verse is repeated in this psalm in Psalm 107:13, Psalm 107:19, Psalm 107:28 - as if this were the main subject of the psalm, that when the people of God in different circumstances, or under various forms of trouble, call upon God, he hears them and delivers them.

And he delivered them out of their distresses - The verb from which the noun used here is derived has the idea of being "narrow, straitened, compressed." Hence, the word comes to be used in the sense of distress of any kind - as if one were pressed down, or compressed painfully in a narrow space.

Verse 7

And he led them forth by the right way - A literal version, if the term necessary to express it might be allowable, would be," He wayed them in a straight way;" he made a way for them, and that was a straight way. He conducted them in the most direct path to the land to which they were going.

That they might go to a city of habitation - A city where they might permanently dwell. The word "city" here seems to be used in the sense of "abode;" and the idea is, that he led them to a land where they might cease to be wanderers, and might find a settled home.

Verse 8

Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness - More literally, "Let such - or, let these - praise the Lord for his goodness," the word "men" having been supplied by our translators. Yet it is not improper to suppose that a wider range is intended than would be denoted if it were confined to those who had then been delivered. It was evidently designed to impress the minds of those who might use this psalm in their devotions; and the idea is, that the deliverance then vouchsafed to the people of God in their troubles should lead all to praise and adore him. Such a surprising interposition suggested an important lesson in regard to God, applicable to all people; and should lead all to praise him in view of the trait of character thus manifested, as that of a God who hears prayer when his people are in trouble, and who can make a straight path before them when they are in danger of being lost, and who can conduct them through the wilderness - the waste places - of this world, as he did his people across the pathless sands of the desert. The true use of all history is to teach us lessons about God.

And for his wonderful works to the children of men - His doings as suited to excite wonder and admiration. His dealings with his people in the desert furnished one illustration of this; the world is full of such illustrations. The desire expressed in this verse suggests the great lesson of the psalm.

Verse 9

For he satisfieth the longing soul - This does not mean - what is indeed true in itself - that God has made provision for the "soul" of man, and satisfies it when it longs or pants for its needed supply, but the reference is to the creatures of God - the living things that he has made; and the idea is, that he has made provision for their needs. He gives them food and drink, so that their needs are met. The "particular" reference here, however, in the word rendered "longing" is to "thirst," as contradistinguished from the other member of the verse, where the reference is to "hunger." So the word is used in Isaiah 29:8.

And filleth the hungry soul with goodness - Supplies the needs of the hungry with "good;" that is, with that which is "good" for it; which meets its needs, and imparts strength and happiness.

Verse 10

Such as sit in darkness - The reference in these verses Psalm 107:10-14 is evidently to the children of Israel, when in Babylon; and the design is, to show the goodness of God to them in their trouble, and the occasion which they had for praising him on that account. To "sit in darkness" is significant of great ignorance (compare the notes at Luke 1:79; notes at Isaiah 9:2); or of affliction and trouble, as darkness is an emblem of calamity.

And in the shadow of death - A dark, gloomy, chilly shade such as "Death" would cast if he stood between us and the light. See the notes at Job 3:5; compare Job 10:21; Psalm 23:4; Psalm 44:19; Isaiah 9:2. The reference is to the sad and gloomy residence of the Hebrews in the land of captivity.

Being bound in affliction and iron - Captives and slaves. Compare Psalm 105:18.

Verse 11

Because they rebelled against the words of God - The commands of God. They did not keep his commandments. Their captivity was produced by national disobedience. See the notes at Daniel 9:5-8.

And contemned the counsel - They despised the instructions of God. The law of God, at the same time that it "is" law, is of the nature of "counsel," since it is indicative of what God regards as wise and good, and since it is the best "advice" that God can give to people. A just and righteous law, while it involves "obligation" to obey it, is also the best

counsel that can be given, and implies that the highest "wisdom" would be shown in being obedient to it. God will "command" nothing which he would not "advise," and which it would not be "wisdom" to obey.

Of the Most High - Of God, who, being supreme, has a right to rule over all, and to require that his laws shall be obeyed.

Verse 12

Therefore he brought down their heart - Their pride; their self-sufficiency; their self-complacency. They thought that they could do without God; they relied on their own resources, and were self-satisfied; but God showed them that all this was vain, and humbled them, as he often does the proud, in the dust.

With labour - With trouble; with affliction; with disappointment; with reverses; with sorrow. The Hebrew word - עמל *ʿâmâl* - would include all this. Compare Genesis 41:51; Deuteronomy 26:7; Job 3:10; Job 16:2.

They fell down - They, as it were, "stumbled" - for so the Hebrew word means. They were walking along with a haughty air, and a high look, and suddenly they stumbled and fell.

And there was none to help - No God to interpose; no nation to befriend them; no human arm to be stretched out for their deliverance. God gave them up, helpless, to the just consequences of their folly and wickedness.

Verse 13

Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble - Compare Psalm 107:6, Psalm 107:13, Psalm 107:19, Psalm 107:28 - in all the divisions of the psalm except the last. See the notes at Psalm 107:6.

Verse 14

He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death - From their captivity; from calamity which seemed to be as gloomy as the shadow of death.

And brake their bands in sunder - Delivered them from their bondage, as if the bands of a prisoner or captive were suddenly broken.

Verse 15

Oh that men would praise … - See the notes at Psalm 107:8. The idea here is that the things just referred to "should" call forth expressions of gratitude to God. The immediate reference is to those who had partaken of these proofs of the divine goodness, but still the language is so general as to be applicable to all classes of people.

Verse 16

For he hath broken the gates of brass - The immediate "reason" here given for praising the Lord is that he had "broken the gates of brass," continuing the thought from Psalm 107:10-14. In the previous part of the psalm, in giving a reason for praising the Lord, the fact that he feeds the hungry was selected Psalm 107:9 because in the preceding part the allusion was to the sufferings of hunger and thirst Psalm 107:4-5; here the fact that he had broken the gates of brass is selected, because the allusion in the immediately preceding verses Psalm 107:12-14 was to their imprisonment. In the construction of the psalm there is great regularity. The "gates of brass" refer probably to Babylon; and the idea is, that their deliverance had been as if the brass gates of that great city had been broken down to give them free egress from their captivity. Thus the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus is announced in similar language: "I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron," Isaiah 45:2. See the notes at that passage.

Verse 17

Fools, because of their transgression - Wicked people, considered as fools, because they "are" transgressors. Compare Psalm 14:1, note; Psalm 73:3, note; Psalm 75:4, note. The immediate allusion here, probably, is to the Jews, who had been so wicked and so supremely foolish in violating the commands of God, and making it necessary to bring upon them as a punishment the captivity at Babylon; but the language is made general because it will with equal propriety describe the conduct of all wicked people. There is nothing more foolish than an act of wickedness; there is no wisdom equal to that of obeying God.

And because of their iniquities, are afflicted - A more literal rendering of this verse would be, "Fools from the way of their transgressions (that is, by their course of transgression), and by their iniquities, afflict themselves." The idea is, that it is "in the very line" of their trangressions; or, that they "bring it upon themselves." All punishment is in fact in the line of the offence; that is, sin leads directly to it; or, in other words, if a man treads along in the path of sin, he will come to this result - to punishment. Punishment is not arbitrary on the part of God, and it is not of the nature of a mere direct infliction from his "hand." It is what people mete out to themselves, and what they might have avoided if they had chosen to do so.

Verse 18

Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat - All food; all that is to be eaten. The word rendered "abhorreth" is a word which is used with reference to anything that is abominable or loathsome; that from which we turn away with disgust. The language is expressive of sickness, when we loathe all food.

And they draw near unto the gates of death - They are sick, and are ready to die. The reference is to the under world - the world where the dead are supposed to dwell. This is represented here as a city which is entered through gates. See the notes at Psalm 9:13.

Verse 19

Then they cry unto the Lord … - See Psalm 107:6, note; Psalm 107:13, note. The meaning here is, that if the "sick" cry to the Lord, he hears them, and delivers them. This cannot mean that it "always" occurs, but it occurs "so often" as to show that God can and does interpose to save; "so often" as to encourage us thus to call upon him when we are sick; "so often" as to lay a proper foundation for praise. Many persons - very many - can recall such instances in their own lives, when they seemed to all human appearance to be drawing near to the gates of death, and when, in connection with prayer, their disease took a favorable turn, and they were restored again to health. Compare the notes at James 5:14-15.

Verse 20

He sent his word, and healed them - He did it by a word; it was necessary for him merely to give a command, and the disease left them. So it was in the life of the Saviour, who often healed the sick by a "word" Matthew 8:8; Luke 7:7; and so now restoration from disease often seems to be accomplished as if some word had been spoken by one who had power, commanding the disease to depart. In all cases, also, whatever means may be used, healing power comes from God, and is under his control. Compare Psalm 30:2.

And delivered them from their destructions - From what would have destroyed them, if it had not been checked and removed.

Verse 21

Oh that men … - See the notes at Psalm 107:8. Who can help joining in this wish, that those who have been restored from sickness, who have been raised up from the borders of the grave, "would" praise God for it! Who can help wishing that they had the feelings of Hezekiah when he was saved from the sickness which threatened his life - saved by the direct and

manifest interposition of God - when he said Isaiah 38:20, "The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments, all the days of our life in the house of the Lord!" Who can help wishing that people everywhere would see in such interpositions the proof of the benevolence of God, and would thank him that he has not forgotten guilty and suffering people!

Verse 22

And let them sacrifice - As in the cases before Psalm 107:9, Psalm 107:16, this is connected with the preceding part of the psalm, or is a "continuation" of the thought which had been interrupted by the prayer, "Oh that men would praise the Lord." The particular idea here is, that they who have been sick, and who have been restored to health, should offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving; or, that they are the proper persons to praise the Lord. The word "sacrifice" here is used in a large sense to denote worship or adoration. Let them worship God with thanks or praises.

The sacrifices of thanksgiving - Hebrew, "praise." Let them offer praise.

And declare his works with rejoicing - Margin, as in Hebrew, "singing." Let them set forth his "doings" in songs. Compare Psalm 9:11.

Verse 23

They that go down to the sea in ships - The scene here changes again. From those that wander in the desert - from those who are in prison - from those who are sick - the eye of the psalmist turns to those who encounter the perils of the ocean, and he finds there occasion for praise to God. The phrase "go down" or "descend" is employed here because the sea is lower than the land, and because we "descend" when we embark on board of a vessel.

That do business … - Whose business or employment is on the ocean.

Verse 24

These see the works of the Lord - They - sailors - have a special opportunity to see the works of God. They see manifestations of his power which are not seen on the land. They see things which seem to come "directly" from God; which are "immediately" produced by him - not as the things which occur on the land, which are the result of "growth," and which are slowly developed. They seem in the solitariness and grandeur of the ocean to stand more directly in the presence of the great God.

And his wonders in the deep - In the abyss; in that which is distinguished for its "depth," as the mountains are for their height. Compare Psalm 148:7.

Verse 25

For he commandeth - Hebrew, "he says;" that is, He speaks the word, and it is done. The mere expression of his will raises up the storm, and throws the sea into commotion.

And raiseth the stormy wind - Margin, as in Hebrew, "Maketh to stand." The "stormy wind" is literally, the wind of the tempest.

Which lifteth up the waves thereof - The waves of the ocean. The wind seems to take them up, and lift them on high.

Verse 26

They mount up to the heaven - The mariners. That it refers to the seamen, and not to the waves, is apparent from the close of the verse: "their soul is melted."

They go down again to the depths - The word here is different from that used in Psalm 107:24, and rendered "deep," but the idea is essentially the same. It is the sea or ocean considered as "deep;" as bottomless. The idea here is, that they seem to descend into the very depths of the ocean.

Their soul is melted because of trouble - It seems to dissolve; it loses all its vigor; it faints. The word used - מוג *mûg* - means to melt; to flow down; to soften; and is then applied to the heart or mind that loses its courage or vigor by fear or terror. Exodus 15:15; Joshua 2:9, Joshua 2:24; Nahum 1:5. The "trouble" here referred to is that which arises from fear and danger.

Verse 27

They reel to and fro - The word used here - חגג *châgag* - means to dance as in a circle; then, to reel, or be giddy as drunkards are.

And stagger … - This word means to move to and fro; to waver; to vacillate; and it is then applied to a man who cannot walk steadily - a drunkard. So the vessel, with the mariners on board, seems to stagger and reel in the storm.

And are at their wit's end - Margin, as in Hebrew, "All their wisdom is swallowed up." That is, They have no skill to guide the vessel. All that has been done by the wisdom of naval architecture in constructing it, and all that has been derived from experience in navigating the ocean, seems now to be useless. They are at the mercy of the winds and waves; they are

dependent wholly on God; they can now only cry to him to save them. Often this occurs in a storm at sea, when the most skillful and experienced seaman feels that he can do no more.

Verse 28

Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble … - See Psalm 107:6, Psalm 107:13, Psalm 107:19. Sailors pray. If they do not pray elsewhere, they often do in a storm, when in danger of being wrecked and lost. A storm at sea brings hundreds on their knees who never prayed before - for they feel that their only help is in God, and that it is a fearful thing to die. Then they do "right." They do what "ought" to be done. But they do then only what people ought always to do, for it is as plain a duty to pray when we are in safety as when we are in danger; when sailing on a smooth sea as in a storm; when on the land as on the ocean. People anywhere, and at any time may die; and people everywhere and at all times "should," therefore, call upon God. Storms, tempests, fire, disease, and danger, only impel people to do what they should do always from higher motives, and when their motives will be likely to be more disinterested and pure.

Verse 29

He maketh the storm a calm - God does this, and God only can do it. The fact, therefore, that Jesus did it Matthew 8:26, proves that he was divine. There can be no more striking proof of divine power than the ability to calm the raging waves of the ocean by a word. This is literally, "He places the tempest to silence."

So that the waves thereof are still - Are lulled. The ocean ceases to be agitated, and the surface becomes smooth. Nothing is more still than the ocean in a calm. Not a breath of air seems to stir; not a ripple agitates the surface of the sea; the sails of the vessel hang loose, and even the vessel seems to be perfectly at rest: "As idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean." So God can calm down the tempest of the soul. He can make the mind which was heaving and tossed, like the ocean, with anguish on account of guilt, and which trembled in view of the coming judgment, as calm as the ocean is when in its state of perfect repose. God can do "this," and none "but" God can do it; and as Jesus thus stills the agitation of the guilty soul, as he did the waves of the sea, "this" proves also that he is divine.

Verse 30

Then are they glad because they be quiet - Because the storm subsides, and they have the feeling of safety from danger.

So he bringeth them - Rather, "And he guides them."

Unto their desired haven - The word translated "haven" occurs nowhere else. By some it is rendered "shore," but the word "haven" or "port" seems best to express the sense of the passage: "the haven of their desire." No one can appreciate this fully who has not been long at sea, and who has not experienced the intense desire once more to see "land." Even then no one experiences it fully who has not some object there which he desires to see, or to accomplish. If his business is there, if it is his native land, if his father, mother, wife, or children are there, if it is the place of his father's sepulchre, and the place where he was born and reared, how intense becomes the desire to see that land once more. So God brings his people to rest in heaven - their haven, their home. After being tossed by the tempests of life, after encountering its storms and dangers, after the fear and agitation experienced, he stills the storms; the way becomes smooth and calm; the end of the voyage is serene; and death is like the ship smoothly gliding into port with its sails all set. The soul enters heaven - the desired haven - the port that was longed for; a safe haven, beyond all storms or tempests; an eternal home!

Verse 31

Oh that men … - See Psalm 107:8, note; Psalm 107:15, note; Psalm 107:21, note. Assuredly they who are thus delivered from the dangers of the sea should praise the Lord; they who have seen the wonders of God on the great ocean should "never" forget God.

Verse 32

Let them exalt him also - Let them lift up his name on high; let them make it conspicuous. The word means "to lift up," and is applied to praise because we thus, as it were, "lift up" God, or make him conspicuous.

In the congregation of the people - Not merely in private, but in public. As his doings are public and conspicuous - as they pertain to all - people should acknowledge him in their public capacity, or when assembled together.

And praise him in the assembly of the elders - The old men; the men eminent for experience and wisdom. Perhaps this refers to those who occupied some official position in public worship, as appointed to preside over that worship, and to conduct it. We know that the arrangement was

early made to appoint a body of aged men to preside over the assemblies for worship, and to direct the devotions of the people. In the presence of such venerable and venerated men, they are here exhorted to give due praise to God. The "reason" for this seems to be partly drawn from what had been referred to in the previous verses - the power of God as seen in stilling the tempests of the ocean; and partly from what is immediately referred to - the blessing of God on the labors of man in cultivating the earth.

Verse 33

He turneth rivers into a wilderness - He makes great changes in the earth; he shows that he has absolute dominion over it. See the notes at Isaiah 44:26-27. On the word "wilderness," see the notes at Psalm 107:4. The point here is, that God had such control over nature that he could make the bed of a river dry and barren as the rocky or sandy desert. He could effectually dry up the stream, and make it so dry and parched that nothing would grow but the most stunted shrubs, such as were found in the waste and sandy desert.

And the water-springs into dry ground - The very fountains of the rivers: not only drying up the river itself by leading it off into burning wastes where it would be evaporated by the heat, or lost in the sand - but so directly affecting the "sources" of the streams as to make them dry.

Verse 34

A fruitful land - Hebrew, A land of fruit. That is, a land that would produce abundance. The word "fruit" here is not used in the limited sense in which we now employ it, but means any productions of the earth.

Into barrenness - Margin, as in Hebrew, "saltness." The word is used to denote a barren soil, because where salt "abounds" the soil "is" barren. Thus it is around the Dead Sea. Compare Job 39:6; Jeremiah 17:6. See also Virg. Geor. II. 238, "Salsa … tellus - frugibus infelix;" Pliny, Hist. Nat. 31. 7; Bochart, Hieroz. t. i., p. 872.

For the wickedness of them that dwell therein - As he overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah; probably alluding to that.

Verse 35

He turneth the wilderness into a standing water - A pool; a lake. See the notes at Isaiah 35:6-7.

And dry ground into water-springs - Not merely watering it with rain from heaven, but causing gushing fountains to break forth, and to flow continually, diffusing fertility and beauty everywhere.

Verse 36

And there he maketh the hungry to dwell - Those who were in want; those who would have perished. It is not necessary to refer this to any particular case. It is a general statement, pertaining to changes which God makes upon the earth, as great as if he "should" thus convert a desert into a fruitful field - a barren waste into a land abounding in springs of water; as if he should conduct there a company of famished men, and provide for them food in abundance.

That they may prepare a city for habitation - A permanent dwelling-place for man.

Verse 37

And sow the fields, and plant vineyards - Cultivate the earth. The culture of the vine was an important feature in agriculture in Palestine, and hence, it is made so prominent here.

Which may yield fruits of increase - The fruits which the earth produces.

Verse 38

He blesseth them also - In the manner immediately specified.

So that they are multiplied greatly - This was regarded as one of the highest blessings which God could confer, and hence, it was so often promised by him to the patriarchs, as a proof of his favor, that their seed should be as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the sea-shore. Genesis 13:16; Genesis 22:17; Genesis 26:4; Genesis 32:12.

And suffereth not their cattle to decrease - The keeping of herds of cattle was also an important point in husbandry, and hence, it was a blessing that they were made to increase, and that they were kept from the diseases to which cattle are subject.

Verse 39

Again, they are minished … - literally, "And they are made to decrease." That is - all is in the hand of God. He rules and directs all things. If there is prosperity, it comes from him; if there are reverses, they occur under his hand. People are not always prosperous. There are changes, misfortunes, disappointments, sorrows. God so deals with the race as in the bests manner to secure the recognition of himself: not always sending prosperity, lest people should regard it as a thing of course, and forget that it comes from him; and not making the course of life uniformly that of disappointment and sorrow, lest they should feel that there is no God

presiding over human affairs. He visits now with prosperity, and now with adversity; now with success, and now with reverses, showing that his agency is constant, and that people are wholly dependent on him. In existing circumstances - since man is what he is - it is better that there should be alternations, reverses, and changes, than that there should be a uniform course.

Through oppression - Anything that "presses" or "straitens."

Affliction - Evil; here, in the sense of calamity.

And sorrow - Anguish, pain: of body or mind.

Verse 40

He poureth contempt upon princes - He treats them as if they were common people; he pays no regard in his providence to their station and rank. They are subjected to the same needs as others; they meet with reverses like others; they become captives like others; they sicken and die like others; they are laid in the grave like others; and, with the same offensiveness, they turn back to dust. Between monarchs and their subjects, masters and their slaves, mistresses and their handmaidens, rich men and poor men, beauty and deformity, there is no distinction in the pains of sickness, in the pangs of dying, in the loathsomeness of the grave. The process of corruption goes on in the most splendid coffin, and beneath the most costly monument which art and wealth can rear, as well as in the plainest coffin, and in the grave marked by no stone or memorial. What can more strikingly show "contempt" for the trappings of royalty, for the adornings of wealth, for the stars and garters of nobility, for coronets and crowns, for the diamonds, the pearls, and the gold that decorate beauty, than that which occurs "in a grave!" The very language used here, alike in the Hebrew and in our translation, is found in Job 12:21. The word rendered "princes" properly means "willing, voluntary, prompt;" and is then applied to the generous, to the noble-minded, to those who give liberally. It then denotes one of noble rank, as the idea of rank in the mind of the Orientals was closely connected with the notion of liberality in giving. Thus it comes to demote one of noble birth, and might be applied to any of exalted rank.

And causeth them to wander in the wilderness - Margin, "void place." The Hebrew word - תהו *tôhû* - means properly wasteness, desolateness; emptiness, vanity. See Genesis 1:2; Job 26:7; Isaiah 41:29; Isaiah 44:9; Isaiah 49:4. Here it means an empty, uninhabited place; a place where there is no path to guide; a land of desolation. The reference seems to

be to the world beyond the grave; the land of shadows and night. Compare the notes at Job 10:21-22.

Where there is no way - literally, "no way." That is, no well-trodden path. All must soon go to that pathless world.

Verse 41

Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction - Margin, "after." The sense is not materially different. The idea is, that while he thus humbles princes, bringing them down from their lofty position, he has respect to the poor in their condition of suffering and trial, and raises them from that depressed state, and gives them prosperity. Thus he orders the circumstances of people, and shows his sovereignty.

And maketh him families like flock - Numerous as a flock. Large families were accounted a blessing among the Hebrews. See the notes at Psalm 107:38.

Verse 42

The righteous shall see it, and rejoice - Shall see all these changes; shall see in their own case the proofs of the divine favor. They shall thus have occasion for praise.

And all iniquity shall stop her mouth - The wicked shall be silenced; they shall be dumb. The righteous shall find, in these varied scenes, occasion for praise and joy; the wicked shall be able to find no occasion for complaining or murmuring. The divine dealings shall be manifestly so just, and so worthy of universal approval, that, even though the wicked are disposed to complain against God, they will be able to find nothing which will justify them in such complaints.

Verse 43

Whoso is wise - All who are truly wise. That is, all who have a proper understanding of things, or who are disposed to look at them aright.

And will observe these things - Will attentively consider them; will reason upon them correctly; will draw just conclusions from them; will allow them to produce their "proper" impression on the mind. The meaning is, that these things would not be understood at a glance, or by a hasty and cursory observation, but that all who would take time to study them would see in them such proofs of wisdom and goodness that they could not fail to come to the conclusion that God is worthy of confidence and love.

Even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord - They will perceive that God is a merciful Being; that he seeks the welfare of the

universe; that he desires the good of all; that the whole system is so arranged as to be adapted to secure the greatest good in the universe. No one can study the works of God, or mark the events of his providence, without perceiving that there are “innumerable” arrangements which have no other end than to produce happiness; which can be explained only on the supposition that God is a benevolent Being; which would not exist under the government of a malevolent being. And, although there are things which seem to be arrangements to cause suffering, and although sin and misery have been allowed to come into the world, yet we are not in circumstances to enable us to show that, in some way, these may not be consistent with a desire to promote the happiness of the universe, or that there may not be some explanation, at prosent too high for us, which will show that the principle of benevolence is applicable to all the works of God. Meantime, where we can - as we can in numberless cases - see the proofs of benevolence, let us praise God; where we cannot, let us silently trust him, and believe that there will yet be some way in which we may see this as the angels now see it, and, like them, praise him for what now seems to us to be dark and incomprehensible. There is an “eternity” before us in which to study the works of God, and it would not be strange if in that eternity we may learn things about God which we cannot understand now, or if in that eternity things now to us as dark as midnight may be made clear as noonday. How many things incomprehensible to us in childhood, become clear in riper years!

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 108

Introduction

This psalm is ascribed to David, and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the title in this respect. The psalm is not an original composition, but is made up, with slight alterations, of parts of two other psalms, Psalm 57:7-11; Psalm 60:5-12.

When the psalm was so arranged, or why the parts of two former psalms were thus brought together to form a new composition, it is impossible now to determine. It "may" have been for a mere purpose of art; or it may, more probably, have occurred when the two parts of psalms already in use might be so combined as to be adapted to some new event. It may have been, also, that what had been expressed "on two different occasions" might now be fulfilled or accomplished "on some one occasion," and that thoughts which had been expressed separately before might now be unitedly uttered in praise. Rosenmuller supposes that the psalm in its present form was arranged on the return from the captivity at Babylon, and that the parts of the two separate psalms were found to be suitable for a national song at that time, and were therefore thus brought together. This supposition would have much probability if the psalm were not ascribed to David; and perhaps this fact need not be an insuperable objection - since, if the two psalms from which this is compiled were the work of David, the author of the arrangement might without impropriety attribute the composition itself to David.

There are some slight variations in the psalm, as here arranged, from the original psalms; but why these were made cannot now be determined. Substantially all that will be necessary in the exposition of the psalm will be to notice these variations.

Verse 1

O God, my heart is fixed - Prepared, suited, ready. See the notes at Psalm 57:7. In Psalm 57:7, this is repeated: "My heart is fixed; O God, my heart is fixed:" indicating that there "might" have been some doubt or vacillation caused by the circumstances then existing, and the repetition would have respect to that, as if the psalmist had been unsettled and wavering for a time, but was at last firm. In such circumstances it would not

be unnatural to "repeat" the assertion, as if there were no longer any doubt. In the beginning of a psalm, however, where there had been no previous expression or feeling of doubt so far as appears, there would be no propriety in repeating the assertion.

I will sing and give praise - See the notes at Psalm 57:7.

Even with my glory - This is not in Psalm 57:1-11. It is literally here, "truly my glory." In Psalm 57:8, however, the expression, "Awake up, my glory," occurs, and this seems to correspond with that language. It means here that it was his glory - his honor - thus to be employed in giving praise to God. It was worthy of all that there was elevated in his nature; of all that constituted his glory; of his highest powers. At no time is man employed in a more noble and lofty work than praise.

Verse 2

Awake, psaltery and harp … - This is copied without change from Psalm 57:8.

Verse 3

I will praise thee, O Lord … - This is taken from Psalm 57:9. The only change is the substitution here of the name יהוה *Yahweh* for אדני *'Adonāy* Why that change was made is unknown.

Verse 4

For thy mercy … - This is taken from Psalm 57:10. The only change is in the expression "above the heavens," instead of "unto the heavens." The sense is essentially the same. The particular idea here, if it differs at all from the expression in Psalm 57:1-11, is, that the mercy of God seems to "descend" from heaven upon man, or "comes down" from on high.

Verse 5

Be thou exalted … - This is taken from Psalm 57:11. The only change in the Hebrew is in the insertion of the word "and," "and thy glory above all the earth."

Verse 6

That thy beloved may be delivered - The word rendered "beloved," and the verb rendered "may be delivered," are both in the plural number, showing that it is not an individual that is referred to, but that the people of God are intended. This is taken without any alteration from Psalm 60:5. In that psalm the prayer for deliverance is grounded on the afflictions of the people, and the fact that God had given them "a banner that it might be displayed because of the truth," - or, in the cause of truth. See the notes at

that psalm. In the psalm before us, while the prayer for deliverance is the same, the reason for that prayer is different. It is that God is exalted; that his mercy is above the heavens; that his glory is above all the earth, and that he is thus exalted that he may interpose and save his people.

Save with thy right hand, and answer me - The Hebrew here is the same as in Psalm 60:5, where it is rendered "and hear me."

Verse 7

God hath spoken … - This is taken, without change, from Psalm 60:6. See the notes at that place.

Verse 8

Gilead is mine … - This is taken from Psalm 60:7. The only change is the omission of the word and before "Manasseh."

Verse 9

Moab … - This is fallen from Psalm 60:8. The only change is in the close of the verse. Instead of "Plilistia, triumph thou because of me" Psalm 60:8, it is here, "Over Philistia will I triumph." Why the change was made is unknown.

Verse 10

Who will bring me … - This is taken, without alteration, from Psalm 60:9.

Verse 11

Wilt not thou, O God … - This is taken from Psalm 60:10, with no change in the Hebrew, except that the word "thou" (in the first member of the verse) is omitted.

Verse 12

Give us help from trouble … - This is copied from Psalm 60:11.

Verse 13

Through God we shall do … - This also is taken from Psalm 60:12, without change.

Thus the psalm, though made up of parts of two separate psalms, is complete and continuous in itself. There is no break or discrepancy in the current of thought, but the unity is as perfect as though it had been an original composition. It is to be remarked, also, that though in the original psalms the parts which are used here have a different connection, and are separately complete there, yet as employed here, they seem to be exactly suited to the new use which is made of the language; and though the original "reasons" for the use of the language do not appear here, yet there

is a sufficient reason for that language apparent in the psalm as rearranged. To an Israelite, also, there might be a new interest in the use of the language in the fact that words with which he was familiar, as employed for other purposes, “could” be thus combined, and made applicable to a new occasion in the national history.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 109

Introduction

This psalm is ascribed to David, and there is nothing in the psalm to make us doubt the correctness of the title. Kimchi supposes that it refers to the enemies of David in the time of Saul. Grotius and Knapp suppose that it refers to Ahithophel; Dathe, to Shimei; DeWette, that it refers to national foes at a later period than the time of David. It is impossible now to ascertain the occasion on which it was composed. It would seem to have been one of the most trying in the life of David, when his enemies were most bitter against him. It is one of the "imprecatory" psalms, and one which is as difficult to reconcile with a kind and forgiving spirit as any other in the book.

In the New Testament Acts 1:20 a part of the psalm is applied to Judas the traitor, but without its being necessary to conclude that it had any original reference to him. The conduct of Judas was like the conduct of the enemy of David; the language used in the one case might be properly used in the other.

The psalm consists of three parts:

I. A description of the enemies of the psalmist Psalm 109:1-5, as

(a) deceitful and lying;

(b) as using words of hatred;

(c) as fighting against him without cause;

(d) as returning evil for good, and hatred for love.

From this it would seem that the persons referred to were some who had been closely connected with the author; who had received important benefits from him; who had been the subjects of his prayer; and who pursued him from mere malice.

II. A prayer for the punishment of those who had thus wronged him - referring particularly to some one person who had been prominent, or who had instigated others, imploring the infliction of just punishment on him as if he were alone responsible, Psalm 109:6-20. It is in this part of the psalm that the principal difficulty in the interpretation consists, as this is made up

of severe and apparently harsh and revengeful imprecations. All is in fact invoked on him that any man could ever desire to see inflicted on an enemy.

III. A prayer for the sufferer‘s own deliverance, with a promise of thanksgiving, Psalm 109:21-31. The psalmist here describes his miserable and suffering condition, and prays that God would interpose - expressing a willingness to suffer anything at the hand of man if God would be his friend - a willingness that they should continue to “curse,” if God would “bless.” As the result of all, he says that he would find delight in praise - in the public acknowledgment of the goodness of God.

On the phrase in the title, “To the chief Musician,” see the notes at the title to Psalm 4:1-8,

Verse 1

Hold not thy peace - That is, Speak for my defense - as if God had looked with unconcern on the wrongs which were done to him. See the notes at Psalm 83:1.

O God of my praise - The God whom I praise; whom I worship and adore. It implies that he was accustomed to praise him, and desired still to praise him. He sought that God would interpose now that he might have new occasion for praise.

Verse 2

For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful - literally, “The mouth of wickedness, and the mouth of deceit.” This acquaints us with the nature of the wrong which had been done him. It was slander; undeserved reproach.

Are opened against me - Margin, “have opened;” that is, have opened themselves.

They have spoken against me with a lying tongue - They have accused me of things which are not true; they have made false charges against me. David, as has not been uncommon with good people, was called repeatedly to this trial.

Verse 3

They compassed me about also with words of hatred - They attacked me on every side; they assailed me, not merely in one form and direction, but in every form, and in every direction. I could turn no way - I could go nowhere - where I did not encounter these slanderous reports.

And fought against me without a cause - Contended against me, or fought against me, with “words.” They sought to do me all the harm they

could. The phrase "without a cause "means that he had given them no occasion for this conduct; he had not wronged them; it was mere malignity. See Psalm 35:7; Psalm 69:4. Compare John 15:25.

Verse 4

For my love … - As a recompence for my love; or, this is the return which I get for all the expressions of my love to them. The enemies referred to were those whom he had treated kindly; to whom he had done good. This is not uncommon in the world. It was illustrated in an eminent degree in the life of the Saviour.

But I give myself unto prayer - literally, "I - prayer;" that is, I am all prayer; I continually pray. This may mean, either, that he bore these trials with a meek spirit, and did not allow these things to disturb his devotions; or, more probably, that he prayed constantly "for them;" he desired their good, and sought it from above.

Verse 5

And they have rewarded me evil for good - literally, "They have placed against me." They have put it in my way; it is what they had to set before me. See the notes at Psalm 35:12, where the same expression occurs.

And hatred for my love - Instead of loving me in return for my love, they have met me with the expressions of hatred. This often occurred in the life of David; it was constant in the life of the Saviour; it is habitually manifested by people toward God; it is often experienced by good men now; it "may" occur in the life of any man - and if it "does" occur to us, we should not think that any strange thing has happened to us.

Verse 6

Set thou a wicked man over him - This commences the imprecatory part of the psalm, extending to Psalm 109:20. The first thing that the psalmist asks is, that his foe might be subjected to the evil of having a man placed over him like himself: a man regardless of justice, truth, and right; a man who would respect character and propriety no more than he had himself done. It is, in fact, a prayer that he might be punished "in the line of his offences." It cannot be wrong that a man should be treated as he treats others; and it cannot be in itself wrong to desire that a man should be treated according to his character and deserts, for this is the object of all law, and this is what all magistrates and legislators are endeavoring to secure.

And let Satan stand at his right hand - As his counselor and adviser. The language would be properly applicable to one who had been a counselor or adviser to a king in the administration of the government; and the prayer is, that he might know what it was to have such a one as his counselor and adviser. The language used would seem to make it not improbable that David here refers particularly to someone who had occupied this position in reference to himself, and who had betrayed his trust; who had given him crafty and malignant counsel; who had led him into bad measures; who had used his position to promote his own interests at the expense of his master‘s. David had such counselors, as anyone in authority may have. The prayer, then, would be, that such a man might be punished in his own line; that he might know what it was to have a bad and wicked adviser. The word rendered "Satan" - שׂטן *śâṭân* - is in the margin rendered "adversary." In the Septuagint it is διάβολος *diabolos* in the Vulgate, *"diabolus."* See the notes at Job 1:6, for its meaning. The prayer here seems not to be that the devil or Satan might stand near him as his counselor; but that a man - a real adversary - an accuser - one with a malignant heart - one who would make use of his position to accomplish his own purposes, and to betray the interests of his master, might give him counsel, as seems to have been done in the case of David.

Verse 7

When he shall be judged … - When for his offences he shall be arraigned. The psalmist supposes that he "might" be put on trial; he seems to suppose that this "would be." Such wickedness could not always escape detection, and sooner or later he would be arrested and brought to trial. "When" this should occur, the psalmist prays that justice might be done; that he might be condemned, as he "ought" to be. Such a prayer could not in itself be wrong, for assuredly it cannot be proper for magistrates to pray that the wicked man may escape, or that they may themselves fail in the very object for which they are appointed. See the General Introduction, 6 (5) e. f.

And let his prayer become sin - Evidently his prayer in reference to his "trial" for crime; his prayer that he might be acquitted and discharged. Let it be seen in the result that such a prayer was wrong; that it was, in fact, a prayer for the discharge of a bad man - a man who ought to be punished. Let it be seen to be what a prayer would be if offered for a murderer, or violator of the law - a prayer that he might escape or not be punished. All must see that such a prayer would be wrong, or would be a "sin;" and so, in

his own case, it would be equally true that a prayer "for his own escape" would be "sin." The psalmist asks that, by the result of the trial, such a prayer might be "seen" to be in fact a prayer "for the" protection and escape of a "bad man." A just sentence in the case would demonstrate this; and this is what the psalmist prays for.

Verse 8

Let his days be few - Let him be soon cut off; let his life be shortened. It cannot be wrong for an officer of justice to aim at this; to desire it; to pray for it. How strange it would be for a magistrate to pray "that a murderer or a traitor should be long lived!"

And let another take his office - So every man acts, and practically prays, who seeks to remove a bad and corrupt man from office. As such an office must be filled by someone, all the efforts which he puts forth to remove a wicked man tend to bring it about that "another should take his office;" and for this it is "right" to labor and pray. The act does not of itself imply malignity or bad feeling, but is consistent with the purest benevolence, the kindest feelings, the strictest integrity, the sternest patriotism, and the highest form of piety. The word rendered office here is in the margin "charge." It properly denotes a "mustering, an enumeration;" then, care, watch, oversight, charge, as in an army, or in a civil office. In Acts 1:20, this passage is applied to Judas, and the word - the same word as in the Septuagint here - is rendered in the text "bishopric," in the margin, "office." See the notes at that passage. It had no original reference to Judas, but the language was exactly adapted to him, and to the circumstances of the case, as it is used by the apostle in that passage.

Verse 9

Let his children be fatherless - Hebrew, "his sons." This is what "always" occurs when a criminal who is a father is executed. It is one of the consequences of crime; and if the officer of justice does his duty, of course, the sons of such a man "must" be made fatherless. The prayer is, simply, that justice may be done, and all this is but an enumeration of what must follow from the proper execution of the laws.

And his wife a widow - This implies no malice against the wife, but may be consistent with the most tender compassion for her sufferings. It is simply one of the consequences which must follow from the punishment of a bad man. The enumeration of these things shows the enormity of the

crime - just as the consequences which follow from the execution of a murderer are an illustration of the divine sense of the evil of the offence.

Verse 10

Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg - Let them continually wander about with no home - no fixed habitation. Let them be compelled to ask their daily food at the hand of charity. Here we enter on a part of the psalm which is more difficult to be reconciled with a proper feeling than the portions which have been considered. It is, indeed, a frequent consequence of crime that the children of those who are punished "are" vagabonds and beggars, but this is not a necessary consequence; and there "seems" here, therefore, to be a mixture of personal feeling, or a feeling of revenge. This runs through the remaining portion of the imprecatory part of the psalm. I confess that it is difficult to explain this without admitting that the expressions are a record only of what actually occurred in the mind of a man, truly pious, but not perfect - a man who thus, to illustrate the workings of the mind even when the general character was holy, was allowed to record his own feelings, though wrong, just as he would record the conduct of another, or his own conduct, though wrong, as a simple matter of fact - a record of what actually was felt. The "record" may be exactly correct; the sentiment recorded may have been wholly incapable of vindication. See the General Introduction, Section 6 (6).

Let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places - In places uninhabited by man; in barren regions; in deserts: let them be compelled to live on the scanty food which they may pick up there - the roots, or the wild fruits, which will simply keep them alive. See the notes at Job 30:4.

Verse 11

Let the extortioner catch all that he hath - literally, "Let the extortioner cast a snare over all that he hath;" that is, let him seize all his property. The word rendered "catch" - נקֹשׁ *nâqash* - is a word which means to lay a snare, as for birds and wild animals, and hence, it means to ensnare, to entrap, to catch. The word rendered "extortioner" means literally one who lends or borrows money; a money-loaner; in our times, a "broker." Here it refers to one who loaned money on interest; or who took advantage of the necessities of others to lend money at high rates - thus sooner or later seizing upon and securing the property of another. The prayer here is, that he might be in such circumstances as to make it necessary to fall into the hands of those who would thus come into possession of all his property.

And let the strangers spoil his labor - Let strangers "plunder" his labor; that is, the fruit of his labor. Let them seize and possess what he has earned and gained to enjoy it themselves. The remarks made on Psalm 109:10, will apply to this verse and the following.

Verse 12

Let there be none to extend mercy unto him - Let him find compassion and sympathy in no one. When he suffers, let him be left to bear it alone. Let there be none found to shed a tear of compassion over him, or to relieve him. Literally, "Let there be no one to draw out kindness to him."

Neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children - To show them mercy or kindness. See the notes at Psalm 109:10.

Verse 13

Let his posterity be cut off - To have a numerous posterity, to have the name and family perpetuated, was regarded among the Hebrews as one of the greatest and most desirable blessings. Hence, to pray that all one's family might be cut off was one of the severest forms of malediction which could be employed.

And in the generation following - The very next generation. Let not his family be perpetuated at all.

Let their name be blotted out - As a name is erased from a catalogue or muster-roll when one dies.

Verse 14

Let the iniquity of his fathers - Of his ancestors.

Be remembered with the Lord - Or, by the Lord. The doctrine of the Bible is, that God "visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate" him Exodus 20:5; the matter of fact is that children and children's children often suffer from the errors, the crimes, and the follies of their parents, as in the case of intemperance, murder, and treason (compare the notes at Romans 5:12 ff); and the prayer here is, that this regular effect of sin might follow in this instance; that these consequences might not be arrested by divine interposition.

And let not the sin of his mother be blotted out - This is probably added to complete the parallelism; the sin of his father and his mother. There may, however, if this is a composition of David, be a similar allusion to that which occurs in Psalm 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and

in sin did my mother conceive me." The prayer is, that whatever effects might properly follow from the fact that his mother was a sinner - either in some special sense, or in the general sense that all are sinhers - might come upon him.

Verse 15

Let them be before the Lord continually - Let their sins never pass from the mind of God. Let him never so forget them as not to inflict punishment for them.

That he may cut off the memory of them from the earth - That they may be wholly forgotten among people. Let their very name perish; and let the offender in this case be in the condition of those who have no ancestors to whom they can refer with pride and pleasure. The idea here is drawn from the honor which is felt in being able to refer to ancestors worthy of being remembered for their virtues.

Verse 16

Because that he remembered not to show mercy - He had no compassion; he was severe, harsh, unjust, unfeeling.

But persecuted the poor and needy man - The man that was destitute of friends; that was a wanderer and a beggar. There were times in the life of David when this would be strictly and literally applicable to him.

That he might even slay the broken in heart - The man whose heart was crushed by sorrow - that he might put "the finishing stroke" to all, and send him to the grave. Whatever might have been the "feeling" which prompted to this prayer, or however difficult it may be to vindicate the psalmist's expression of feeling, there can be no doubt as to the propriety of inflicting punishment on such a man. The sufferings invoked are none too severe to be inflicted on a man who persecutes the poor and needy, and seeks so to multiply sorrows that the man already crushed and broken in heart shall sink to the grave.

Verse 17

As he loved cursing … - As he loved to curse others; as he seemed to have a pleasure alike in the act of cursing and in the feeling which prompts to cursing, let him see what it is; let it come upon him in its fullness. He has chosen this as his portion; let it be his. This, in the original, is in the indicative mood, and not, as in our version, in the optative form: "He loved cursing, and it has come upon him; he did not delight in blessing, and it is far from him." Still, the connection would rather seem to require that we

should understand this as a prayer, and not as an affirmation, for the object of the whole seems not to be to state what had come upon him, but what the psalmist wished might come upon him.

As he delighted not in blessing … - As he had no pleasure in wishing that others might be happy, or in any measures which would tend to promote their happiness, so let everything that could be regarded as a blessing be put far from him; let him know nothing of it.

Verse 18

As he clothed himself with cursing like as with a garment - Moral qualities are often compared with raiment - as that in which we "appear" to our fellow-men. See 1 Peter 5:5; Job 29:14.

So let it come into his bowels like water - Margin, "within him." Hebrew, "In his midst." Let it penetrate him through and through. Let no part of him be unaffected by it.

And like oil into his bones - As if oil flowed through all his bones, so let the effects of cursing pervade his whole frame. The prayer is, that his entire nature might feel the effects of cursing; that he might know to the full what he was endeavoring to bring on others.

Verse 19

Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him - He has chosen to put it on, to wear it, to appear in it; so let him constantly feel its consequences. As he is always obliged to wear clothing, so let this be as constantly with him and upon him as his mantle and his sash.

And for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually - The belt or girdle which he constantly wears. See the notes at Matthew 5:38.

Verse 20

Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord, … - The word rendered "reward" means usually work, labor, occupation, business; then, what one earns by his work - reward, recompence, Leviticus 19:13. The meaning here is, Let them constantly receive these things which I have prayed for Psalm 109:6-19; let them be constantly treated in this manner. This is a summing up of his entire wish - his whole desire. It cannot be proved that they did "not deserve" all this; it cannot be shown that if all this came upon them at the hand of God, it would be unjust; it cannot be denied that such things as these, either singly, in groups, or in succession, do actually come upon wicked people; and the prayer in the case "may" have been merely that justice might be done. Still, as before remarked, it is not

easy wholly to vindicate the expressed feelings of the psalmist. See the notes at Psalm 109:10.

Verse 21

But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name‘s sake - That is, Interpose for me; exert thy power in my behalf. The phrase “for thy name‘s sake” implies that the motive which prompted him was a desire that God might be honored. It was not primarily or mainly for his own happiness; it was that God might be glorified, that his character might be illustrated, that his plans might be accomplished. Compare the notes at Daniel 9:18-19.

Because thy mercy is good - That is, It is the characteristic of mercy to do good; to show kindness.

Deliver thou me - He prays that God would “manifest” himself as he really was, as a God of mercy.

Verse 22

For I am poor and needy - I am helpless and dependent. I am in a condition where I need thy gracious interposition.

And my heart is wounded within me - I am as one that is prostrated by a weapon - as if my heart had been pierced. I have no courage, no strength. I am like one who lies wounded on a battlefield.

Verse 23

I am gone like the shadow when it declineth - See the notes at Psalm 102:11.

I am tossed up and down as the locust - Agitated, moved, driven about, as a cloud of locusts is by the wind. The meaning of the whole is, that he was frail and weak, and needed strength from on high.

Verse 24

My knees are weak through fasting - Hunger; want of food. Strength to stand is connected with firmness in the knee-joints, and hence, weakness and feebleness are denoted by the giving way of the knees. Compare Hebrews 12:12.

And my flesh faileth of fatness - I am lean and weak. There is not the proper supply for my strength. The idea seems to have been that fatness (Hebrew, oil) was necessary to strength.

Verse 25

I became also a reproach unto them - They reproached or reviled me as a bad man. Compare the notes at Psalm 22:6. The plural here - “unto them” - shows that there were more than one to whom the psalm had

reference, though one of them was so prominent that a considerable part of the psalm might properly be spoken of him alone.

When they looked upon me, they shaked their heads - In contempt. See Psalm 22:7. Compare Matthew 27:39.

Verse 26

Help me, O Lord my God … - Stand by me; interpose.

Verse 27

That they may know that this is thy hand - That this has been done by thee; that it has all occurred under thy direction, or has been ordered by thee. The reference seems to be particularly to God‘s interposition: “Let it be manifest to all that thou hast interposed in my behalf; that thou hast undertaken for me; that thou art my Friend.” He desired an interposition from God that he might be vindicated before all his enemies.

That thou, Lord, hast done it - Let it be such an interposition that it will be manifest to all that no other one but God could have done this.

Verse 28

Let them curse, but bless thou - See Psalm 109:17. Let them continue to curse me, provided thou wilt bless me. I am willing to bear all these reproaches, if I may have thy favor. That favor I value infinitely more than I do theirs; and it is a small matter that I am reviled and cursed by people, if I may secure the favor and friendship of God.

When they arise - When they rise up against me; when they attempt to persecute me.

Let them be ashamed … - Let them be disappointed; let them not be successful in their designs against me. On the word “ashamed,” see Job 6:20, note; Psalm 25:2-3, note.

Verse 29

Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame - Let confusion and disappointment seem to cover them, so as to constitute a garment. See the notes at Psalm 109:18-19. They had “clothed themselves with cursing” Psalm 109:18, and the prayer now is, that the covering of shame might be as complete and entire.

And let them cover themselves with their own confusion as with a mantle - As with an outer garment - the mantle or robe - which they might wrap all round them. Let it be so abundant that they may entirely wrap their person in it. Let their confusion correspond with their sin in the fullest manner.

Verse 30

I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth - I will sing abundant praises to him. Compare the notes at Isaiah 38:20.

Yea, I will praise him among the multitude - In the great congregation. I will publicly acknowledge his goodness and mercy. See the notes at Psalm 22:25.

Verse 31

For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor - He will thus show that he befriends the poor and the helpless.

To save him from those that condemn his soul - - Margin, "from the judges of his soul." The Hebrew is, "from those that judge his soul." The meaning is, from those that pronounce a harsh or unjust judgment; from those that condemn the innocent.

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PSALM 110

Introduction

This psalm is entitled "A Psalm of David." It is also ascribed to David by the Saviour Matthew 22:43; and by Peter Acts 2:34; and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the title. There is nothing, however, in the title, or in the psalm, to determine at what period of David's life, or on what occasion it was written. Aben Ezra supposed that it was at the time referred to in 2 Samuel 21:15-17; and others have selected other occasions in the life of David. But all this is conjecture. The psalm has no particular reference to anything in his history, and as it is wholly prophetic of the Messiah, it might have been composed at any period of his life.

The psalm is repeatedly quoted in the New Testament as referring to the Messiah, and in such a manner as to show that this was the customary interpretation among the Jews, or that it might be referred to by way of "proof" in regard to the Messiah, so that the relevancy and pertinence of the argument would be at once admitted. Matthew 22:44 (compare Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42); Acts 2:34; Hebrews 5:6; Hebrews 7:17, Hebrews 7:21. The way in which it is quoted shows that this was the prevailing and received mode of interpreting the psalm.

Yet this belief has not been uniform. DeWette supposes that it refers to David himself. Jarchi supposed that it referred to Abraham; Borhek, to Solomon; Justin Martyr and Tertullian, to Hezekiah. See Rosenmuller.

The application of the psalm in the New Testament to the Messiah is so clear and unequivocal, that we are bound to defend the opinion that it was "designed" to refer to him; and the manner in which it is quoted shows that it was in no secondary sense, and in no way of "accommodation," but that it had an original and exclusive applicability to him. Every principle of honesty in interpretation demands this. There may be difficulties in the interpretation itself, but the fact that it refers to the Messiah involves no difficulty, if it be once admitted that there is such a thing as prophecy at all, and that "any" portion of the Old Testament has reference to a Messiah. There is no part of the Old Testament that is more clearly applied to him in the New Testament than this psalm; there is no part that more naturally suggests the Messiah; there is none that is more difficult of explanation if it

be maintained that it does not refer to him; there is none that is made more plain by referring it to him. It will be assumed, therefore, in this exposition, that the psalm had an original and exclusive reference to the Messiah, and that the friends of revelation are bound to show that in him who claimed to be the Messiah, and to whom it is applied in the New Testament - the Lord Jesus - there is a "fair" fulfillment of the predictions which are contained in it.

The idea in the psalm is that of the exaltation, the conquest, the priesthood, and the dominion of the Messiah. Two things - the kingship and the priesthood of the Messiah - are combined. The leading idea is that of the "priest-king" or the "king-priest," as in the case of Melchizedek, in whom the two offices of priest and king were in a very unusual manner and form united in one person. Usually they were separate, even in the earliest ages of the world. In the case of Melehizedek they were "combined," and hence, he was selected as a proper representative of the Messiah - of one who should combine these offices, apparently incongruous, in one.

The psalm embraces the following points:

I. The appointment of the Messiah - acknowledged by the author of the psalm as his "Lord" - to that high office, to be held until he should subdue all his enemies, Psalm 110:1.

II. His being endowed with "power" needful for the accomplishment of the design for which he was appointed, Psalm 110:2.

III. The assurance that his people would be made "willing" in the day when he should put forth his power, Psalm 110:3.

IV. The special characteristic of his reign, as that of a "priest-king," after the order of Melehizedek; combining the two functions of king and priest in his own person and office, Psalm 110:4.

V. His conquest and triumph, Psalm 110:5-7.

Verse 1

The Lord said unto my Lord - In the Hebrew, "Spake Jehovah to my Lord." The word יהוה *Yahweh* is the incommunicable name of God. It is

never given to a created being. The other word translated "Lord - אדני *'Adonāy* - means one who has rule or authority; one of high rank; one who has dominion; one who is the owner or possessor, etc. This word is applied frequently to a creature. It is applied to kings, princes, rulers, masters. The phrase "my Lord" refers to someone who was superior in rank to the author of the psalm; one whom he could address as his superior. The psalm, therefore, cannot refer to David himself, as if Yahweh had said to him, "Sit thou at my right hand." Nor was there anyone on earth in the time of David to whom it could be applicable; anyone whom he would call his "Lord" or superior. If, therefore, the psalm was written by David, it must have reference to the Messiah - to one whom he owned as his superior - his Lord - his Sovereign. It cannot refer to God as if he were to have this rule over David, since God himself is referred to as "speaking" to him whom David called his Lord: "Jehovah said unto my Lord." The reasoning of the Saviour, therefore, in Matthew 22:43-45, was founded on a fair and just interpretation of the psalm, and was so plain and conclusive that the Pharisees did not attempt to reply to it. Matthew 22:46. See the notes at that passage. No other interpretation "can" be given to it, consistently with the proper rules of expounding language, unless it be shown that the psalm was not composed by David, and might, therefore, be applied to someone whom the author would acknowledge as his "Lord." But there is no evidence of this, and there is no one in the Old Testament history to whom the psalm would be applicable.

Sit thou at my right hand - The position of honor and of rank. Compare the notes at Psalm 16:8. See also Psalm 45:9; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69; Acts 7:55; Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 8:1. The phrase is properly applicable to the Messiah as exalted to the highest place in the universe - the right hand of God.

Until I make thine enemies thy footstool - Until they are entirely subdued under time. See the notes at Matthew 22:44. The enemies here referred to are the enemies of the Messiah considered as King (see Psalm 2:1-12); and the promise here is, that "he must reign until he shall have put all enemies under his feet." See the notes at 1 Corinthians 15:25.

Verse 2

The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion - The scepter of thy power; that with which thou shalt rule. It will be given to thee by Yahweh; and it will be given to thee, as it were, "out of Zion;" that is, as

proceeding from the church, and as derived from that. It will be an appointment connected with the church, and will be "as if" the church had conferred it on thee. The idea is, that the Messiah would receive, as it were, his designation, authority, commission, power from the church. He would spring from it Isaiah 11:1; would act for it; would do what was needful for its good; would wield the power which properly belongs to the church on the earth. Compare the notes at Psalm 2:9.

Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies - Set up thy power over them, and reign in them. This is a commission to set up a kingdom "in the very midst" of those who were his enemies; in the hearts of those who had been and were rebellious. His kingdom is set up not by destroying them, but by "subduing" them so that they become his willing servants. They yield to him, and he rules over them. It is not here a commission to cut them off, but one much more difficult of execution - to make them his friends, and to dispose them to submit to his authority. Mere "power" may crush people; it requires more than that to make rebels willingly submissive, and to dispose them voluntarily to obey.

Verse 3

Thy people - All who are given to thee; all over whom thou art to rule. This verse has been variously translated. The Septuagint renders it, "With thee is the beginning in the day of thy power, in the splendor of thy saints, from the womb, before the light of the morning have I begotten thee." So the Latin Vulgate. Luther renders it, "After thy victory shall thy people willingly bring an offering to thee, in holy adorning: thy children shall be born to thee as the dew of the morning." DeWette, "Willingly shall thy people show themselves to thee on the day of the assembling of thy host in holy adorning, as from the womb of the morning, thy youth (vigor) shall be as the dew." Prof. Alexander, "Thy people (are) free-will offerings in the day of thy power, in holy decorations, from the womb of the dawn, to thee (is) the dew of thy youth." Every clause of the verse is obscure, though the "general" idea is not difficult to perceive; that, in the day of Messiah's power, his people would willingly offer themselves to him, in holy robes or adorning, like the glittering dew of the morning; or, in numbers that might be compared with the drops of the morning dew. The essential ideas are:

(1) that he would have a "people;"

(2) that their subjection to him would be a "willing" subjection;

(3) that this would be accomplished by his "power;"

(4) that they would appear before him in great beauty - in robes of holy adorning;

(5) that they would in some way resemble the dew of the morning; and

(6) that to him in thus subduing them there would be the vigor of youth, the ardor of youthful hope.

Shall be willing - literally, "Thy people (are, or shall be) willing-offerings." The word rendered "willing" - נדבות *nedâbôth* - is in the plural number; "thy people, ‹willingnesses.‘" The singular - נדבה *nedâbâh* - means voluntariness, spontaneousness: and hence, it comes to mean spontaneously, voluntarily, of a willing mind. It is rendered a "willing offering," in Exodus 35:29; "free offering," in Exodus 36:3; "voluntary offering," in Leviticus 7:16; "free-will offering," in Leviticus 22:18, Leviticus 22:21, Leviticus 22:23; Leviticus 23:38; Numbers 15:3; Numbers 29:39; Deuteronomy 12:6, Deuteronomy 12:17; Deuteronomy 16:10; Deuteronomy 23:23; 2 Chronicles 31:14; Ezra 1:4; Ezra 3:5; Ezra 8:28; Psalm 119:108; "willingly," in 2 Chronicles 35:8; "plentiful," in Psalm 68:9; "voluntary, and voluntarily," in Ezekiel 46:12; "freely," in Hosea 14:4; and "free-offering," in Amos 4:5. It does not occur elsewhere. The idea is that of "freeness;" of voluntariness; of doing it from choice, doing it of their own will. They did it in the exercise of freedom. There was no compulsion; no constraint. Whatever "power" there was in the case, was to make them "willing," not to compel them to do a thing "against" their will. That which was done, or that which is here intended to be described as having been done, is evidently the act of devoting themselves to him who is here designated as their Ruler - the Messiah. The allusion may be either

(a) to their devoting themselves to "him" in conversion, or becoming his;

(b) to their devoting themselves to his "service" - as soldiers do in war; or

(c) to their devoting their time, wealth, talents, to him in lives consecrated to him.

"Whatever" there is as the result of his dominion over them is "voluntary" on their part. There is no compulsion in his religion. People are not constrained to do what they are unwilling to do. All the power that is exerted is on the will, disposing people to do what is right, and what is for their own interest. No man is forced to go to heaven against his will; no man is saved from hell against his will; no man makes a sacrifice in religion against his will; no man is compelled to serve the Redeemer in any way against his will. The acts of religion are among the most free that people ever perform; and of all the hosts of the redeemed no one will ever say that the act of his becoming a follower of the Redeemer was not perfectly voluntary. He chose - he "professed" - to be a friend of God, and he never saw the time when he regretted the choice.

In the day of thy power - The power given to the Messiah to accomplish the work of his mission; the power to convert people, and to save the world. Matthew 28:18; Matthew 11:27; John 17:2. This implies

(a) that "power" would be employed in bringing people to submit to him; and

(b) that there would be a fixed time when that power would be put forth.

Still, it is power which is not inconsistent with freedom. It is power exerted in making people "willing," not in "compelling or forcing" them to submit to him. There "is" a power which may be exerted over the will consistent with liberty, and that is the power which the Messiah employs in bringing people to himself.

In the beauties of holiness - This power will be connected with the beauty of holiness; or, holiness will be manifested when that power is put forth. The object is to "secure" holiness; and there will be beauty in that holiness. The only power put forth in the case is to make people holy; and they will, in their lives and conduct, manifest all the beauty or attractiveness which there is in a holy and pure character. The word rendered "beauty" is in the plural number, and the allusion may be to the raiment of those who are referred to. They would appear in pure garments - in sacerdotal vestments - as priests of God. Compare Leviticus 16:4. The idea may be that they would be a "kingdom of priests," clad in priestly vestments (Exodus 19:6; compare the notes at 1 Peter 2:5, notes at 1 Peter 2:9), and that they would be adorned with "robes" appropriate to that office. This may refer, however, to their actual, internal holiness, and may mean that

they would, when they were subjugated to him, appear as a holy or a righteous people.

From the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth - Margin, more than the womb of the morning, thou shalt have, etc." The expression here is evidently designed to refer to the source of the dew - the dew of the early dawn - as having its "birth" then, or as seeming to be "born" then. The morn is represented as the "mother" of the dew. The figure is highly poetic and beautiful. The ground of the comparison may be either

(a) that the "beauty of holiness" - the beautiful array of the saints - "is more than" that produced in the womb of the morning; or

(b) that the dew of youth is more beautiful than the dew produced in the morning. As the word "dew," that on which the comparison must turn, occurs in the last member of the sentence, it is probable that the second of these interpretations is the true one, as indicated in the margin: "More than the womb of the morning (more than the morning produces) thou hast the dew of thy youth." That is, "as the young morning - the youth of the day - has its beauties in the abundance and luster of the dew-drops, so shall the dew of thy youth be - the beginning of thy glorious day." May there not be here also an allusion to the multitudes that would be among his "people" - numerous as the dewdrops of the morning, and as beautiful as they - on his going forth to the world with all the beauty of a bright dawn?

The meaning of the whole, I apprehend, is, "Thy reign shall be like the day - a long bright day. Thy coming - the morning of that day - shall be like the early dawn - so fresh, so beautiful, made so lovely by the drops of dew sparkling on every blade of grass. More beautiful by far - more lovely - shall be the beginning of the day of thy reign; - more lovely to the world thy youth - thy appearing - the beginning of thy day." Thus understood, the verse is a most beautiful poetic description of the bright morning when the Messiah should come; the dawn of that glorious day when he should reign. Compare Isaiah 9:1-3.

Verse 4

The Lord hath sworn - He has confirmed the appointment of the Messiah by a solemn oath, or as by an oath. That is, It is as sure and fixed as if he had taken an oath. Compare Hebrews 6:13. The "time," so to speak,

if the word time can be applied to transactions in a past eternity, was that when he was designated in the divine purpose as Messiah; in the eternal counsels of God. Compare Psalm 2:7.

And will not repent - Will not change his purpose.

Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek - The word rendered "order" here means properly a word, a thing, a matter; hence, a way or manner. The meaning here is, that he would be a priest "after the manner" of Melchizedek; or, such a priest as he was. He would not be of the tribe of Levi; he would not be in the regular line of the priesthood, but he would resemble, in the characteristics of his office, this ancient priest-king, combining in himself the two functions of priest and king; as a priest, standing alone; not deriving his authority from any line of predecessors; and having no successors. See this verse explained at length, in its application to the Messiah, in the notes at Hebrews 5:6 (note), Hebrews 5:10 (note); Hebrews 7:1-3 (note). The passage as it stands here, and as looked at without any reference to the use made of it in the New Testament, would imply these things:

(1) That he who was spoken of would be, in a proper sense, a priest.

(2) that he would have a perpetual or permanent priesthood - "forever."

(3) that he would not be of the established line of priests in the tribe of Levi, but that his appointment would be unusual and extraordinary.

(4) that the appointment would come directly from God, and would not be "derived" from those who went before him.

(5) that as a priest he would "resemble" Melchizedek, according to the record which was found of Melchizedek in Genesis.

(6) that as Melchizedek was a priest of the Most High God, so he would be.

(7) that as Melchizedek combined in himself the functions of both priest and king, so these would be found in him.

(8) that as Melchizedek had no successors in office, so he would have none.

How far these things were applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ, and with what propriety the passage might be applied to him, may be seen by examining the Epistle to the Hebrews, Hebrews 57.

Verse 5

The Lord at thy right hand - See the notes at Psalm 16:8.

Shall strike through kings - The Hebrew word here rendered "shall strike," - from מחץ *mâchats* - means "to shake, to agitate"; and then, "to shake in pieces, to dash in pieces, to crush"; and here it has the sense of dashing in pieces, smiting, wounding, crushing. The "kings" referred to are the enemies of God and the Messiah, and the idea is that all would be subdued before him; that he would set up a universal dominion; that none would be able to stand before him; or, that he would reign over all the earth. The "language" is that which is derived from conquests in war; from the subjugation of enemies by force of arms. Compare the notes at Psalm 2:9-12; and the notes at Isaiah 11:4.

In the day of his wrath - Psalm 2:12.

Verse 6

He shall judge among the heathen - Among the "nations." That is, he shall set up a kingdom, or shall rule over the nations of the earth. He shall come to execute judgment and justice, and shall apportion to people what is due to them. See the notes at Isaiah 11:3-5.

He shall fill the places with the dead bodies - He shall make a great slaughter - indicative of conquest, and of the subjugation of the world to himself. It would be "as if" the bodies of the slain in battle strewed the ground, or filled the valleys of the earth.

He shall wound the heads - The same word is used here that occurs in the previous verse, and that is there rendered "shall strike." It is the language of "conquest," as if the world was to be subdued to himself by war.

Over many countries - Margin, "great." Over vast and extensive regions, carrying his conquests into distant lands. This will be fulfilled only when all the earth shall be subject to the reign of the Messiah. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28.

Verse 7

He shall drink of the brook in the way - The design here seems to be to represent the Messiah as a victorious king and conqueror pursuing his enemies. In the previous verse the psalmist had represented him under the image of one engaged in battle, and slaying his enemies with a great slaughter. He here represents him as pursuing those who should escape from the battle, and as pursuing them without fainting or exhaustion. He is like one who finds abundant springs and streams of water in his journeyings; who refreshes himself at those fountains and streams; who, therefore, is not faint and weary. He pursues his foes vigorously and with success.

Therefore shall he lift up the head - Therefore shall he triumph, or be successful. The head falls when we are faint and exhausted, when we are disappointed and are ashamed, when we are conscious of guilt. It is lifted up in conscious rectitude, in success and triumph, in the exuberance of hope. The idea here is, that the Messiah would be triumphant. He would achieve the victory over all his foes; he would pursue, without exhaustion, his flying enemies, and he would return from the conquest joyous, exulting, triumphant. All this is under the image of a victorious hero; all this will be accomplished in the conquest of the world by the Gospel; in the subduing of the foes of God; in the final scene when the Redeemer shall deliver up the kingdom to God. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28.

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PSALM 111

Introduction

The author of this psalm is unknown, as is the occasion on which it was composed. It is one of the psalms, of which there are in all ten in number, that commence with the phrase "Hallelu-jah" in the Hebrew; in our version rendered, "Praise ye the Lord." Those psalms are Psalm 111:1-10; Psalm 112:1-10; Psalm 113:1-9; Psalm 146:1-10; Psalm 148:1-14; Psalm 149:1-9; and Psalm 150:1-6: The use of this phrase shows that the psalms where it is found were designed for public worship. It is probable that this was one of the later psalms - a fact that might be indicated by the very use of this phrase "Hallelujah." Venema supposes that it was composed in the time of the Maccabees, but of this there is no evidence.

This is one of the alphabetical psalms. In that class of psalms there is considerable variety. In some a letter of the Hebrew alphabet commences each verse in the psalm; in others, the successive letters of the alphabet begin each two or three verses in succession, or, as in Psalm 119; eight verses in succession; in others, the successive letters of the alphabet are used in the beginning of separate clauses of the "verses" of a psalm.

The peculiarity of this psalm is that the first eight verses of the psalm contain "two" clauses, beginning with the letters of the alphabet taken in their order; the last two verses, "three". Why this arrangement was adopted, it is impossible now to determine - as it is in regard to "many" things which are thought to be beauties in poetry. There is very much in the measure, the rhythm, the rhyme, of modern poetry, that is quite as artificial, and quite as inexplicable, as this.

The psalm is call to the praise of God on account of his "works," and is designed to suggest grounds of confidence in him as drawn "from" those works. It is, therefore, of universal applicability; and may be used in any nation, at any time, and among any people. It is a psalm which may be translated into all the languages of the world, and whatever language people may speak, it would exppress in their own tongue what they have occasion to give thanks for in the various lands where they dwell.

Verse 1

Praise ye the Lord - Margin, "Hallelujah." See Psalm 106:1.

I will praise the Lord with my whole heart - With undivided affections; holding back nothing. I will allow nothing to be in my heart that would interfere with the fullness of praise; no coldness or dividedness of affection; no love for other things that would deaden my love for God; no suspicion respecting him that would chill my ardor; no unbelief that would drag me down to earth, while the language of my lips ascended to God. See the notes at Psalm 86:12.

In the assembly of the upright - With the righteous when they are gathered together for public worship.

And in the congregation - See Psalm 22:22, Psalm 22:25; Psalm 66:13; Psalm 89:5.

Verse 2

The works of the Lord are great - They are great in number; great in magnitude; great in wisdom; great in goodness. This language was appropriate in the time of the psalmist, when people looked upon the heavens with the naked eye alone, and when they had very imperfect views of the real magnitude of the universe as it is now disclosed by the telescope. It is entirely appropriate now, and conveys a more solemn and sublime impression than it would in the time of the psalmist. It will still be appropriate under the larger views which may yet be obtained of the universe by more perfect instruments, by more accurate observation, and by more profound study. And it will be appropriate when people shall survey the greatness of the universe from the heights of heaven.

Sought out of all them - Studied by all such.

That have pleasure therein - More literally, "Sought to all their wishes." Perhaps the meaning is, that they would find all their desires gratified in those works; they would find in them all that they would wish to find respecting the power, wisdom, goodness, and majesty of God. Still it implies that they have a desire thus to study his works, or that they do find a pleasure in examining the proofs of the being and attributes of God in his works. A man who loves God will have real pleasure in studying his works as well as his word; and it is as proper to find pleasure in the one as in the other - as proper to wish to find the knowledge which the one imparts as that which the other bestows. One great error among the friends of God is the neglect to study his works. In doing this, people need not neglect or

undervalue the Bible and the knowledge which it gives, for such studies would be among the best means of illustrating the Bible.

Verse 3

His work is honorable and glorious - literally, "Honour and glory is his work;" that is, All that he does is honorable and glorious. The language would cover all that God does in the works of creation, providence, and redemption. There is honor - there is majesty - in "everything" that he does.

And his righteousness endureth for ever - That is, It will be found in all the investigations of his works, that he is unchangeably righteous or just. All that he has done, or that he now does, goes to demonstrate this. There are doings of people - even of good people - which will not bear investigation; but there are no such acts of God. There are things that people do which excite admiration only when there is no investigation in regard to them; but the works of God are admired the more, the more they are studied. There are things which appear beautiful, or appear sweet only when they are not shaken; a collection of perfumes will give out sweets the more it is stirred.

Verse 4

He hath made his wonderful works - In heaven and in earth.

To be remembered - literally, "Memory hath he made for his wonderful works." "They" are so made, that man may remember them; the memory of man, also, is so made, that it may retain them. The highest and most appropriate exercise of memory is to retain the lessons which the works of God inculcate; to treasure up for gratitude and for use what he teaches his intelligent creation through those works. Memory can never be better employed than in treasuring up the truths which the Creator teaches in his providential dealings with us, and in his word. How much better would it be for man if he labored more to "remember" these things; if he sought to forget many of those things which he is so careful now to retain in his recollection.

The Lord is gracious … - See the notes at Psalm 86:5. This is stated here as the result of the careful study of the doings of God; as the conclusion to which all will come who carefully study his works. "Illustrations" of what God has done that deserves to be remembered occupy the remainder of the psalm, except the last verse.

Verse 5

He hath given meat unto them that fear him - Margin, "prey." The idea is, that he has supplied their needs. The Hebrew word is, "prey," and the allusion is to the mode in which the needs of the beasts of the field are supplied. The meaning may be that they had obtained this from their enemies, as beasts of prey take their food by making war; or the word may be used in a general sense, as meaning that God had supplied their needs.

He will ever be mindful of his covenant - He will never leave or forsake his people; he will be faithful to all the promises that he has made to them.

Verse 6

He hath showed his people - The Jewish people. He has made this known to them. The reference here is not to his "announcing" it, or stating it, but to his acts of interposition in their behalf in which he had manifested the greatness of his power.

The power of his works - The power of his acts; the power involved in what he does. The power referred to here was that which was evinced in destroying the Egyptians, and in subduing the nations of Canaan.

That he may give them the heritage of the heathen - The nations; to wit, the nations of Palestine. The word "heritage" is often used in the large sense of possessions; and the meaning here is, that God had shown the greatness of his power by giving all that they possessed into the hands of his people.

Verse 7

The works of his hands - All that he does in the works of creation and providence; all in his acts toward the children of men.

Are verity - Truth. That is, They tend to establish and confirm the truth; they are done in the cause or the defense of truth. Truth in any case may be ascertained by what God "does," for all that he defends and protects is "truth," and his acts, therefore, may be regarded as an expression of what is true and right.

And judgment - In the cause of justice; or, in maintaining the principles of right. God never does anything to vindicate wrong. None of his acts can be fairly interpreted as having been done to sustain injustice, fraud, deceit, ambition, oppression, murder, or licentiousness. That he suffers free agents to do these things without interference is no evidence that he approves of them. That he "disapproves" of them is shown

(a) by his declarations;

(b) by his threatenings;

(c) by all that he does to punish the wicked here.

All his commandments are sure - His statutes; his ordinances. They are sure; that is, they are to be relied on; or, are worthy of confidence.

Verse 8

They stand fast forever and ever - Margin, "established." The Hebrew word means "sustained, supported." They will not fail or fall. Whatever else may be shaken, his law, his word, and the principles of his administration, will not fail. See the notes at Matthew 5:18. Compare Luke 16:17; Matthew 24:35. The great principles of truth and righteousness will stand, and whatever is founded on those principles will endure forever.

And are done in truth and uprightness - Are based on truth, or on a just view of things; they are done in such a way that truth will be maintained and promoted. The word "uprightness" here means that all this is done on the principles of equity - of what "ought" to be done, or what is "best" to be done. Compare Psalm 19:9.

Verse 9

He sent redemption unto his people - In their deliverance from Egypt. He has now sent it in a higher sense under the great Deliverer, the Saviour.

He hath commanded his covenant for ever - He has ordained or appointed it. The covenant is here represented as if it were obedient to the will of God, or under his control. The covenant refers to his arrangements with his people; his assurances of favor, with the terms on which that favor will be shown.

Holy and reverend is his name - Holy and to be venerated; literally, "to be feared." That is, he has shown in all this that he is holy, and that he is a Being who is to be had in reverence.

Verse 10

The fear of the Lord - Reverence for God; respect for his law, his will, his government, himself; the fear of offending him, which will lead us to do right. This fear is not that of a slave; it is not mere dread; it is not terror. It is consistent with love, and springs from it. It is consistent with calmness of mind, and promotes it. It does not produce terror, but rather delivers from it, and preserves the mind from alarms. The word here rendered "fear" is a noun of the same origin as the word rendered "reverend" in the previous

verse. The suggestion to the mind of the psalmist that the "name of the Lord" was "reverend," or was to be venerated, introduced this thought that such reverence is the very foundation of wisdom.

Is the beginning of wisdom - The foundation, the origin, the commencement of being truly wise. It is so. There is no true wisdom which does not recognize the being, the perfections, and the claims of God. The highest wisdom - the most lofty endowment of man - is that he "may" know and honor God. This, in capability, makes him wise above the brute creation; this, in exercise, makes one man more wise than another; this, when it springs up in the soul, makes a man more wise than he was before - or, is the "beginning" of true wisdom in the soul. Compare Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 9:10; Deuteronomy 4:6; Job 28:28; Ecclesiastes 12:13.

A good understanding … - Margin, "good success." The original word - שׂכל *śêkel* - is rendered "understanding" (as here) in 1 Samuel 25:3; Ezra 8:18; Job 17:4; Proverbs 3:4; Proverbs 13:15; Proverbs 16:22; "wisdom" in 1 Chronicles 22:12; Proverbs 12:8; Proverbs 23:9; "prudence," 2 Chronicles 2:12; Proverbs 19:11 (margin); "sense," in Nehemiah 8:8; "knowledge," 2 Chronicles 30:22; and "policy" in Daniel 8:25. It "may" denote, therefore, understanding, wisdom, knowledge, success, prudence; and it is true in regard to "all" of these - for the fear of the Lord, or true religion, produces them "all." It is not necessary, therefore, to endeavor to ascertain precisely which of these is the meaning here.

That do his commandments - Margin, as in the Hebrew, "do them." That do the things connected with the fear of the Lord; that is, who obey God.

His praise endureth for ever - That is, the foundation for his praise endures to all eternity; or, is unchangeable. As God is always the same, so there is, as derived from his being and perfections, always the same foundation for praise. As there will always be created beings who can and will appreciate this, so it will be literally true, as it should be, that his praise "will" be celebrated forever.

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PSALM 112

Introduction

The author of this psalm, as of the preceding, is unknown, and equally with that it is impossible now to ascertain the time or the occasion of its composition. It is a psalm of the same structure as that, with the same number of verses; like that, it is alphabetical in its form, and composed in the same manner - the first eight verses with two clauses each, beginning with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet - and the last two verses with "three" clauses, beginning, in like manner, with three letters of the alphabet in succession. This peculiarity of structure makes it highly probable that it was composed by the same author.

It is further to be noticed that this psalm "begins" where the other "ends," with the happiness or blessedness of "fearing God," and is designed to set forth that blessedness, or to show what are the advantages of true religion. This fact makes it further probable that the two psalms were composed by the same author.

This psalm is very simple in its structure. It sets forth the advantages or benefits of the fear of the Lord, or of religion in respect

(a) to the posterity of the man, Psalm 112:2;

(b) in securing wealth, Psalm 112:3;

(c) in the light which springs up in darkness, Psalm 112:4;

(d) in the discretion with which such a man is enabled to manage his affairs, Psalm 112:5;

(e) in the firmness and composure of his mind in times of danger and trouble, Psalm 112:6-8;

(f) in his being so prosperous, and so exalted, that he will become an object of envy to the wicked, Psalm 112:9-10.

Verse 1

Praise ye the Lord - Margin, as in Hebrew, "Hallelujah." See the notes at Psalm 106:1.

Blessed is the man - Hebrew, "The blessings of the man." See the notes at Psalm 1:1. That is, Blessed, or happy, is such a one.

That feareth the Lord - In Psalm 111:10, the psalmist had referred to "the fear of the Lord" as "the beginning of wisdom," and had "alluded" to the success, prosperity, or happiness which attends the fear of the Lord, or true religion. This psalm is designed more fully "to illustrate" that thought.

That delighteth greatly in his commandments - See the notes at Psalm 1:2. It is a characteristic of true piety to find pleasure in the commands of God; in the commandments themselves, and in obedience to them.

Verse 2

His seed shall be mighty upon earth - His children; his posterity. That is, they shall be prospered; honored; distinguished among people: distinguished for their virtues, for their influence, for their success in life. This refers to what was regarded among the Hebrews as an object of great desire, and is in accordance with the promises everywhere found in their Scriptures. See Psalm 25:13, note; Psalm 37:25-26, notes. Compare Genesis 12:2; Genesis 17:6; Exodus 20:6. It is in accordance, also, with a general fact in the course of events. The best security for the virtue and success of children is the virtue and the piety of parents; the surest inheritance as pertaining to happiness, respectability, and usefulness in life, is that which is derived from the example, the prayers, the counsel of a pious father and mother.

The generation of the upright shall be blessed - The family; the children. Such promises are to be expected to be fulfilled in general; it is not required by any proper rules of interpreting language that this should be universally and always true.

Verse 3

Wealth and riches shall be in his house - The Septuagint and the Vulgate render this, "glory and riches shall be in his house." The word, however, properly means riches or wealth, and the two terms are used apparently to convey the idea that wealth or property in "varied forms" would be in his house; that is, not merely gold and silver, but all that was understood to constitute wealth - variety of garments, articles of furniture, etc. This promise is of the same nature as that of the previous verse. It pertains to a general truth in regard to the influence of religion in promoting prosperity. Compare the notes at 1 Timothy 4:8.

And his righteousness endureth for ever - That is, The effects of it shall be transmitted from age to age in the prosperity, the respectability, the wealth, the happiness of his descendants. It travels on from age to age, and blesses distant generations.

Verse 4

Unto the upright - The just; the pious; the man who fears God.

There ariseth light in the darkness - This is a new form of the blessing which follows the fear of the Lord, or another of the benefits which spring from true religion, and by which the pious man is distinguished from other people. The distinction is not that days of darkness will not come upon him as well as upon others, for he may be sick as others are, he may be bereaved as others are, he may lose his property as others do - since there are general laws that affect mankind in these respects. God has not promised that he will interpose to save his people from these things, but that he will save them in them. The peculiarity in regard to those who fear God is, that these things will not always continue; that they shall not be overwhelmed by them; that it will not be uninterrupted and unmitigated gloom; that the sky shall not be always overcast. Compare Psalm 97:11, note; Job 11:17, note.

He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous - These words are designed to be applied to the "upright" man, and are intended more fully to designate his character, and to show "why" light shall spring up to him when he is in darkness. It is because his character is "really" pure and holy, so that whatever cloud may come over it for a time, however it may be temporarily obscured, however he may be calumniated by men, or however God may for a time seem to forsake him and to treat him as if he were a bad man, yet ultimately his character will appear as it really is. Light will come in upon the darkness. The clouds will break away. The prejudices against him will be dispersed. Full justice will be done to his character both by man and by God, and the world will see that he is a just and pious man. See the notes at Psalm 37:5-6. Every man will ultimately be seen as he is; every man will attain the position, and have the reputation which he "ought" to have.

Verse 5

A good man showeth favor - He has the means to show favor to others, or to promote their welfare, and he is disposed to do this. It is the characteristic of a good man - of a heart that is truly pious - to do good to

others; to promote their welfare here, and to assist them in their endeavor to secure happiness in the world to come.

And lendeth - The original word here - לוה *lâvâh* - means to join oneself to anyone; to cleave to him; then, to form the union which is constituted between debtor and creditor, borrower and lender. Here it is used in the latter sense, and it means that a good man will accommodate another - a neighbor - with money, or with articles to be used temporarily and returned again. A man who always "borrows" is not a desirable neighbor; but a man who never lends - who is never willing to accommodate - is a neighbor that no one would wish to live near - a crooked, perverse, bad man. True religion will always dispose a man to do acts of kindness in any and every way possible.

He will guide his affairs - The word used here means literally to hold, contain; to hold up, or sustain; to nourish, to furnish the means of living. Genesis 45:11; Genesis 47:12; Genesis 50:21. Here it means that he would uphold or manage his business.

With discretion - Margin, "judgment;" so the Hebrew. He would do it prudently, sensibly, economically, wisely. This is, or should be, one of the characteristics of a good man. Religion prompts to this; religion will aid a man in doing this; religion will tend to check everything of a contrary nature. A man who neglects his "affairs," who pays no attention to his business, who is indifferent whether he is successful or fails, is a man who gives "just so evidence" that he is a stranger to true religion.

Verse 6

Surely he shall not be moved for ever - Luther, "For he shall remain always." He shall be fixed, stable, firm, prosperous. He shall not be driven from place to place. He shall have a permanent home. He shall have a steady reputation. He shall have a constant influence. He shall be a firm, establislied, prosperous man. Of course this is to be taken in the general, and should not be pressed to mean that it will be, in the most literal sense, and always, true, for a good man "may" be "unfortunate in business," and suffer with others; he may be sick; he may see reason to change his residence; he will certainly die. But still it is true that religion "tends" to produce this permanency, and that in this respect there is a marked difference between people who are truly pious, and those who are not.

The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance - In Proverbs 10:7, it is said that "the name of the wicked shall rot;" and the meaning here

is, that the way to secure a grateful remembrance among people after we are dead is to be righteous - to do something that shall deserve to be remembered. It cannot mean that a man who is righteous will "never" be forgotten, or that his name and deeds will never pass from the recollection of mankind - for that would not be true; but that people will delight to cherish the memory of the righteous; that they will be disposed to do justice to their character after they are dead; that the benevolent and the upright will be remembered when the names of the wicked shall be forgotten. The world has no interest in keeping up the memory of bad people, and as soon as it can be done hastens to forget them. Wicked people are remembered only when their deeds are enormous, and then their memory is cherished only to admonish and to warn. The world has no interest in keeping up the memory of Benedict Arnold, or Alexander VI, or Caesar Borgia except to warn future generations of the guilt and baseness of treason and profligacy; it "has" an interest in never suffering the names of Howard, of Wilberforce, of Henry Martyn, to die, for those names excite to noble feelings and to noble efforts wherever they are known. Such names are to be had "in everlasting remembrance."

Verse 7

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings - Of bad news; of reverses and losses; of the destruction of his ship at sea, or his property by land; of disaster by flood, by famine, by war. His heart will so fully confide in God that he can commit all calmly into his hands. He will feel assured that all will be well; that nothing occurs but that which the wisest and the best Being in the universe sees it best should occur; and that in all which "does" take place he is able to sustain the sufferer. There is nothing so well suited to make the mind calm as trust in God. What has a man to be afraid of who does trust in him? Compare Psalm 27:3; Psalm 46:2; Psalm 56:3-4; Hebrews 13:6; Proverbs 1:33.

His heart is fixed - Is firm; is established. See the notes at Psalm 57:7.

Trusting in the Lord - This is the reason "why" his heart is "fixed" or firm. It is not any native courage or resolution; it is not any firmness of his own; it is simply because he has confidence in God, and feels assured that all things will be well.

Verse 8

His heart is established - Sustained; upheld. This is the same idea, though somewhat varied in form. The word means to sustain; to support;

and the idea is, that there is some basis of support - some strength - which is not his own.

He shall not be afraid - When he is assailed by enemies.

Until he see his desire upon his enemies - This implies that he had nothing really to fear. He would certainly overcome his foes; and in the meantime he might look calmly on all their efforts to destroy him, for those efforts would be vain. So the believer now looks calmly on all his spiritual foes. He has nothing to fear, for he will overcome them all; he will certainly triumph; he will trample them all under his feet. He may well, therefore, endure these conflicts for a brief period, for the issue is certain, and the conflict will soon come to an end.

Verse 9

He hath dispersed … - This is another characteristic of a righteous man, and another reason of the permanent honor which will be rendered to him. The meaning is, that he is liberal; he freely scatters what he has; he divides it with those who are needy and unfortunate. One part of mankind have an overplus - have more than they need for themselves and their families - and that overplus is what is designed to meet the needs of the unfortunate, the weak, the aged, the imbecile, the infirm, who have "not" enough. It is the "treasury" of God - the "reservoir" where that is gathered which is to be distributed for the needs of the helpless and the dependent. The righteous man is one who enters fully into this arrangement, and who feels that all this overplus belongs to God, and is to be appropriated as he shall direct.

His righteousness endureth for ever - His acts of charity are constant. His piety is not fitful, spasmodic, uncertain; it is steady principle; it is firm and solid; it may always be relied on. See Psalm 112:3.

His horn shall be exalted with honor - See the notes at Psalm 75:10.

Verse 10

The wicked shall see it, and be grieved - They shall see his prosperity; shall see the evidence that God approves his character and his conduct. The word rendered "grieved" means rather to be angry or enraged. Perhaps the word "fret" would best express the sense.

He shall gnash with his teeth - As indicative of hatred and wrath. See the notes at Psalm 37:12.

And melt away - Disappear - as snow does that melts; or as a snail (see the notes at Psalm 58:8); or as waters that run away (see the notes at Psalm

58:7); or as wax (see the notes at Psalm 68:2). Their wrath shall be of no avail, for they themselves shall soon disappear.

The desire of the wicked shall perish - He shall not be able to accomplish his desire, or to carry out his purposes. He shall be disappointed, and all his cherished plans will come to nought. This is in strong contrast with what is said in the psalm would occur to the righteous. They would be prospered and happy; they would be able to carry out their plans; they would be respected while living, and remembered when dead; they would find God interposing in their behalf in the darkest hours; they would be firm and calm in the day of danger and of trouble; they would put their trust in the Lord, and all would be well. Surely there is an advantage in our world in being a friend of God.

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PSALM 113

Introduction

The author of this psalm, as of those which immediately precede it, is unknown. It is very general in its character, and has no allusion to any circumstances by which one could determine the name of the author, or the occasion on which it was written. In connection with the five following psalms, it constitutes what was known among the Hebrews as the "Hallel'; that is, the song of praise, sung on great occasions, at the annual festivals, and especially at the Passover and the Feast of tabernacles. Buxtorf, Lexicon. Tal., p. 613, et al.

This psalm, which is expressive of the majesty of God, as having a claim to universal praise, consists essentially of two parts:

I. The general statement that God is to be praised, and a call on all to engage in that service, Psalm 113:1-3.II. Reasons why he should be praised, Psalm 113:4-9.

(1) he is exalted above all nations, Psalm 113:4;

(2) None can be compared with him, Psalm 113:5;

(3) he is condescending, and looks with interest on the things in heaven and on earth, Psalm 113:6;

(4) He exalts the poor to positions of honor and influence, Psalm 113:7-8;

(5) He constitutes and appoints families, with all that is tender and joyous in the domestic relation, Psalm 113:9.

Verse 1

Praise ye the Lord - Margin, as in Hebrew, "Hallelujah." See the notes at Psalm 106:1.

Praise, O ye servants of the Lord - You who profess to serve and obey him; who acknowledge him as your God. In the original this is also the word "Hallelu," הללו *halelû* Praise the name of the Lord - Still the same word "Hallelu." The name of the Lord is put here, as it is often, for the Lord himself.

Verse 2

Blessed be the name of the Lord - Blessed be the Lord; or; Let the name of the Lord be blessed.

From this time forth and for evermore - Now and forever. He is worthy of praise now, and he ever will be. What he is now, he will always continue to be; and as praise is proper now, it will be forever and ever. An eternal God has claims to eternal praise.

Verse 3

From the rising of the sun … - From the farthest east to the farthest west - the sun in its rising and setting being the remotest object that we see in the horizon.

The Lord‘s name is to be praised - This does not mean that it “will” be - though that is true; but that it “ought” to be - that it is worthy of universal praise. All people in the east and in the west - everywhere - “should” praise and adore that name.

Verse 4

The Lord is high above all nations - Hebrew, Exalted above all nations is Yahweh. That is, he rules over all nations; he directs their affairs; he is their sovereign king. As a matter of fact, and from the necessity of the case, he is on a throne which is elevated above all the kings and kingdoms of the world. He is the Sovereign not only of one nation, but of all; and it is meet that this should be acknowledged by them all.

And his glory above the heavens - That which renders him glorious. The manifestations of his glorious character are not confined to the earth; they extend to the heavens; they are not confined to the visible heavens; they extend far beyond, in the regions of illimitable space. The universe - the earth and the starry worlds - all are full of the manifestations of his glory; and far beyond the bounds of created things (if they have a boundary), God is there - without limit - the same God - worthy there of universal praise! Who can comprehend such a God? Compare the notes at Psalm 8:1.

Verse 5

Who is like unto the Lord our God? - Who can be compared with Yahweh our God? See the notes at Isaiah 40:17-25. The meaning is, that no creature - no idol - can be compared with Yahweh. The remark here has special reference to his attributes as immediately specified - his humbling himself to behold the things in heaven and in earth; his raising up the poor, etc. It is true “in general,” in regard to God, that no creature can be

compared with him; it is true, in regard to each one of his attributes, that they are far above all created excellence.

Who dwelleth on high - Margin, "exalteth himself to dwell." Literally, "The one making high to sit." The language is applicable to one who is seated on a lofty throne. Compare Psalm 8:1. He has his dwelling - his throne - his permanent seat - in the heavens: so high and exalted that it requires infinite condescension to look upon the earth, or even upon the heavens.

Verse 6

Who humbleth himself … - So high that it is necessary he should stoop even to behold the things which seem most lofty to us; and who actually does stoop thus to regard the things which he has made in heaven and on earth.

To behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! - More literally, "to look in heaven and in earth." Even to look on heaven, high as it is to us - still more to look on earth, so insignificant as compared with the vast bodies in the heavens - is condescension on the part of God. It requires him to stoop - even to look on the sun - the stars - the distant worlds! Yet he does this. There is not a world which he does not survey constantly; not a creature whose interests he does not regard; not an insect - a flower - an atom - that he does not regard with as much minute attention as though there were nothing else to demand his care.

Verse 7

He raiseth up the poor out of the dust - From the most humble condition in life. He exalts them to conditions of wealth, rank, honor. He has power to do this; he actually does it. This is not intended to be affirmed as a universal truth, or to assert that it is always done, but that it is among the things which show his majesty, his power, and his goodness, and which lay the foundation for praise.

And lifteth the needy out of the dunghill - From the condition of lowest poverty. Instances are sufficiently abundant in which this is done, to justify such an assertion, and to show that it is a proper foundation of praise to God.

Verse 8

That he may set him with princes - May give him a rank - a position - with nobles and great people upon the earth. Many instances of this nature have occurred in the history of the world. Not a few of the nobles of

England, including several of its lord chancellors, have been raised thus from very humble life; and in every nation God shows that he has power to give to those of humblest rank a name and place which no hereditary titles and honors can bestow: thus Shakespeare was the son of a glover and woolstapler. God has power to come into the humblest cottage of poverty, and to bring forth those who shall stand foremost in their generation as people of genius and power. Nothing is more absolute than the power which God thus holds over the nations of the earth, and it is meet that a Being who has this power, and who exercises it, should be praised and honored.

Even with the princes of his people - Among those who are selected to preside over the people whom he has chosen for himself. It is implied here that this would be a higher honor than to be exalted to power among a pagan people - a people ignorant of the true God. It is a higher honor to be counted worthy to rule a Christian nation than a pagan people; it is a higher honor to be a ruler in the church - over those whom God has redeemed for himself - than it is to administer a secular government.

Verse 9

He maketh the barren woman to keep house … - Margin, as in Hebrew, "to dwell in a house." That is, to be at the head of a family. See the notes at Psalm 68:6. Compare 1 Samuel 2:5. This, too, is suggested as a reason why God should be praised and adored. In instances where all hope of posterity is cut off, he interposes, and diffuses joy through a dwelling. We may look abroad, and see abundant occasion for praising God, in his condescension to human affairs - in his lifting up the poor from the humblest condition - in his exalting those of lowly rank to places of honor, trust, wealth, and power; but, after all, if we wish to Find occasions of praise that will most tenderly affect the heart, and be connected with the warmest affections of the soul, they will be most likely to be found in the domestic circle - in the mutual love - the common joy - the tender feelings - which bind together the members of a family. In such a family, the words with which this psalm begins and ends, "Hallelujah," "Hallelujah," are especially appropriate; and if any community on earth should apply these words to itself it should be such a family, called upon by everything tender, holy, and lovely, to "praise the" Lord.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 114

Introduction

This psalm, a part of the Hallel (see the notes at the Introduction to Psalm 113:1-9), is occupied in celebrating the praises of God for what he had done in the delivering of his people from Egyptian bondage, and in conducting them to the promised land. It is the language of exultation, joy, and triumph, in view of the gracious interpositions of God in their deliverance. The psalmist sees the mountains and hills seized as it were with consternation, leaping and skipping like sheep; Jordan, as it were, frightened and fleeing back; the very earth trembling - at the presence of God. Everything is personified. Everything is full of life; everything recognizes the presence and the power of the Most High. It would be appropriate to use such a psalm on the great festivals of the Jewish nation, for nothing could be more proper than to keep these events in their history before the minds of the people. The author of the psalm is unknown; and the occasion on which it was composed cannot now be determined. It is a most animated, elevated, cheering psalm, and is proper to be used at all times to make the mind rejoice in God, and to impress us with the feeling that it is easy for God to accomplish his purposes.

Verse 1

When Israel went out of Egypt - literally, "In the going out of Israel from Egypt." This is not to be confined to the exact act of the exodus, but embraces all that properly entered into that migration - the whole train of events which resuited in their being brought into the promised land.

The house of Jacob - The family of Jacob - a name appropriately used here, since it was the family of Jacob that had gone down into Egypt, and that had increased to these great numbers.

From a people of strange language - Speaking a foreign or a barbarian tongue. See the notes at Psalm 81:5.

Verse 2

Judah was his sanctuary - His home; his abode; his sacred dwelling-place. Judah was the principal or leading tribe, recognized as the tribe where power was to be concentrated, and from which the Messiah was to proceed Genesis 49:8-12; and hence, the name was early used to denote the entire people, and ultimately, as modified in the word Jews, became the common name of the nation.

And Israel his dominion - The nation that he ruled; the nation that had his law; the nation that he governed by his presence - or, of which he was the recognized king. There can be no doubt that the reference here is to God, but it is remarkable that the name "God" is not used. Perhaps the reason may be that this psalm was designed to be employed in connection with the preceding one, and as that consists entirely of the praises of God, it was not necessary to repeat the name when his praise was to be continued under another form, and in connection with another line of thought.

Verse 3

The sea saw it - The word it is supplied, not very properly, by our translators. It would be more expressive to say, "The sea saw:" that is, The sea - (the Red Sea) - saw the mighty movement - the marshalled hosts - the moving masses - the cattle - the pursuing enemies - the commotion - the agitation - on its usually quiet shores. We are to conceive of the usual calmness of the desert - the waste and lonely solitudes on the banks of the Red Sea - and then all this suddenly broken in upon by vast hosts of men, women, children, and cattle, fleeing in consternation, followed by the embattled strength of Egypt - all rolling on tumultuously to the shore. No wonder that the sea is represented as astonished at this unusual spectacle, and as fleeing in dismay.

And fled - As if affrighted at the approach of such an host, coming so suddenly upon its shores.

Jordan was driven back - Referring to the dividing of the waters of the Jordan when the children of Israel passed over to the promised land. Joshua 3:13-17. They also seemed astonished at the approach of the Hebrews, and retired to make a way for them to pass over.

Verse 4

The mountains skipped like rams - As flocks in their gambols. They seemed to move from place to place; everything seemed to be unsettled, and acknowledged the presence of the Omnipotent One. The word rendered "skipped" means to leap for joy; to dance. See the notes at Psalm 29:6. The reference here is to the agitations and commotions of the peaks of Sinai, when God came down to deliver the law. Exodus 19:16-18.

And the little hills like lambs - Hebrew, Like the sons of the flock. The reference here is to the less prominent eminences of Sinai. The lofty hills, and the smaller hills surrounding, seemed to be all in a state of commotion.

Verse 5-6

What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? … - literally, "What to thee, O sea," etc. That is, What influenced thee - what alarmed thee - what put thee into such fear, and caused such consternation? Instead of stating the cause or reason why they were thus thrown into dismay, the psalmist uses the language of surprise, as if these inanimate objects had been smitten with sudden terror, and as if it were proper to ask an explanation from themselves in regard to conduct that seemed so strange.

Verse 7

Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord … - This is at the same time an explanation of the facts referred to in the previous verses, and the statement of an important truth in regard to the power of God. The true explanation - as here implied - of what occurred to the sea, to the Jordan, to the mountains, and to the hills, was the fact that God was there; the inference from that, or the truth which followed from that, was, that before that God in whose presence the very mountains shook, and from whom the waters of the sea fled in alarm the whole earth should tremble.

Verse 8

Which turned the rock into a standing water - That is, Before him who could do this, the earth should tremble; the inhabited world should stand in awe of such amazing power. The words rendered "a standing water," mean properly a pool of water. They indicate nothing in regard to the permanency of that pool; they do not imply that it remained as a standing pool during the sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness - whatever may have been the fact in regard to that. The simple idea is, that, at the time referred to, the rock was converted into a pool; that is, the waters flowed from the rock, constituting such a pool.

The flint - Another name for the rock - used here to describe the greatness of the miracle.

Into a fountain of waters - That is, The waters flowed from the rock as from a fountain. The Bible is a book of miracles, and there is nothing more improbable in this miracle than in any other.

In the Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, the Syriac, the Arabic, and in many manuscripts, there is no division of the psalm here, but the following psalm is united with this, as if they were a single poem. Why, in those versions, the division of the Heb. was not followed, cannot now be ascertained. The division in the Hebrew is a natural division, and was evidently made in the original composition.

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PSALM 115

Introduction

It is not possible now to ascertain on what occasion this psalm was composed, or who was its author. It has been generally believed that it was written in the later periods of the Jewish history, and after the captivity in Babylon. There is no improbability in the supposition, though there is nothing so marked in the psalm as to make this supposition necessary. It is evident from Psalm 115:2-3, that it was composed in a time of national calamity, and especially of such national disaster as might lead the surrounding nations to say of them that they were forsaken by the God whom they worshipped. This charge is replied to by saying that what had occurred had taken place under the divine permission, and was no proof that Yahweh was not the true God. This thought leads the author of the psalm to prove the utter powerlessness of idols as compared with Yahweh, and, in view of this, to exhort the people of Israel still to trust in their own God as the Being in whom alone they could hope for protection and safety.

The psalm, therefore, comprises the following parts:

I. A statement that all which they had was to be traced to God, Psalm 115:1.

II. The existing troubles of the nation as being so great that the pagan were led to infer that Yahweh could not help them, and to ask, with some show of plausibility, where now was the God in whom they trusted? Psalm 115:2.

III. The general statement of the psalmist that what had occurred was to be traced to God; that it was not evidence that he had forsaken them, but was proof that he was a sovereign, Psalm 115:3.

IV. A statement of the utter weakness, helplessness, and inefficiency of idols; of their entire powerlessness as being without life; and of the stupidity and folly of worshipping such lifeless objects, Psalm 115:4-8.

V. An exhortation to trust in the Lord, on the ground of what he had done, and of the blessings which were to be expected of him, Psalm 115:9-16.

VI. An exhortation to do this at once, since death would soon occur, and praise could not be rendered to him in the grave, Psalm 115:17-18,

Verse 1

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory - This apparently abrupt commencement of the psalm was undoubtedly in reference to some circumstances which would be well understood at the time when the psalm was composed, but which cannot be definitely ascertained now. It seems to have been in view of some existing troubles, and the language at the same time expresses a hope of the divine interposition, and a feeling that the praise of such interposition would belong wholly to God. The phrase "give glory" means, give all the honor and praise. See the notes at Psalm 29:1-2.

For thy mercy - The mercy or the favor which we seek and look for - thy gracious help in the time of trouble.

And for thy truth's sake - Thy faithfulness to thy promises; thy faithfulness to thy people. The psalmist anticipated this manifestation of faithfulness with confidence; he felt that all the praise for such an anticipated interposition would belong to God.

Verse 2

Wherefore should the heathen say - The nations; they who worshipped idols, and who claimed that those idols were true gods. Why should we, thy people, be so left, so forsaken, so afflicted, as to lead these idolaters to suppose that we worship a false God, or that the God whom we adore is destitute of power or faithfulness; either that he does not exist, or that he cannot be relied on. It is evident that they were now in circumstances which would give some plausibility to the question here asked.

Where is now their God? - They seem to be forsaken. God, the God whom they worship, does not come forth for their defense. If he exists at all, he is destitute of power, or he is not true to the people who worship him, and he cannot be trusted. Compare Psalm 42:3, note; Psalm 42:10, note; Psalm 79:10, note.

Verse 3

But our God is in the heavens - The Septuagint adds, "and in the earth." This is not, however, in the Hebrew. The idea is, Our God really exists. He is the true God. He reigns in heaven. His plans are such as are

and should be formed in heaven: lofty, vast, incomprehensible. But he is still our God; our Ruler; our Protector. He is not a god of earth - whose origin is earth - who dwells on earth alone - like the idols of the pagan; but the whole vast universe is under his control.

He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased - And, therefore, what has been done is right, and we should be submissive to it. He is a sovereign God; and mysterious as are his doings, and much as there seems to be occasion to ask the question "Where is now your God?" yet we are to feel that what has occurred has been in accordance with his eternal plans, and is to be submitted to as a part of his arrangements. It is, in fact, always a sufficient answer to the objections which are made to the government of God, as if he had forsaken his people in bringing affliction on them, and leaving them, apparently without interposition, to poverty, to persecution, and to tears, that he is "in the heavens;" that he rules there and everywhere; that he has his own eternal purposes; and that all things are ordered in accordance with his will. There must, therefore, be some good reason why events occur as they actually do.

Verse 4

Their idols - Their gods - the gods which they worship, as contrasted with the God whom we adore. The design of this description Psalm 115:4-8 is to show the utter vanity of trusting in such gods, and to lead the people of Israel to put their trust in the true God - in Yahweh.

Are silver and gold - Made of silver and gold, and they must have, therefore, the properties of silver and gold. They can be of value only as silver and gold. They cannot do the work of mind; they cannot do the work of God. The psalmist was not disposed to depreciate the real value of these idols, or to throw contempt on them which they did not deserve. He was disposed to treat them fairly. They were silver and gold; they had an intrinsic value as such; they showed in the value of the material how much the pagan were disposed to honor their objects of worship; and they were not held up to contempt as shapeless blocks of wood or stone. The psalmist might have said that most of them were made of wood or stone, and were mere shapeless blocks; but it is always best to do justice to an adversary, and not to attempt to underrate what he values. The argument of an infidel on the subject of religion may be utterly worthless as an argument for infidelity, but it may evince ability, learning, subtilty, clearness of reasoning, and even candor; and it is best to admit this, if it is so, and to

give to it all the credit which it deserves as a specimen of reasoning, or as stating a real difficulty which ought to be solved by somebody - to call it "silver and gold" if it is so, and not to characterize it as worthless, weak, stupid - the result of ignorance and folly. He has great advantage in an argument who owns the real force of what an opponent says; he gains nothing who charges it as the offspring of stupidity, ignorance, and folly - unless he can show that it is so.

The work of men's hands - Shaped and fashioned by people's hands. They cannot, therefore, be superior to those who made them; they cannot answer the purpose of a God.

Verses 5-7

They have mouths … - They are shaped like people, but have none of the attributes of intelligent beings.

Verse 8

They that make them are like unto them - Stupid; senseless; irrational. See the notes at Isaiah 44:9-20.

So is everyone that trusteth in them - People who do this show that they are destitute of all the proper attributes of reason, since such gods cannot help them. It is most strange, as it appears to us, that the worshippers of idols did not themselves see this; but this is in reality no more strange than that sinners do not see the folly of their course of sin; that people do not see the folly of worshipping no God. In fact, there is less of folly among the pagan than there is in this class of men. The worship of an idol shows at least that there is some religious tendency in the mind; some conviction that God ought to he worshipped; some aspiration after a proper object of worship; some appreciation of the true dignity and rank of man as made for worship; but what shall be said of the man who evinces no such tendency - who has no such aspiration or desire - who endeavors to extinguish in his nature all that was designed to express the idea of worship, or to lead him to God - who never starts the inquiry whether there is a God - who never prays for light, for guidance, for pardon, for a preparation for death and eternity - who never even testifies so much interest in religion as to set up an image of gold, or wood, or stone, as indicative of the fact that he is made above the brutes? There are multitudes of the pagan less stupid and foolish than people in Christian lands.

Verse 9

O Israel, trust thou in the Lord - This exhortation is founded in a great measure on what had been just said in regard to idols. They had no power. There was no reason why they should be confided in. They could not help in the day of trouble; and as people need a god, and as the idols cannot be to them as gods, the exhortation is addressed to his people to trust him. He would be to them all that was implied in the name God; all that was wanted in a God.

He is their help - The help of those who trust in him. He is able to help them in the time of trouble; he is willing to help them; he will help them. They who put their trust in him will find him a sure and certain help. This is the experience of all who confide in him.

And their shield - Their protector. See Psalm 5:12, note; Psalm 18:2, note; Psalm 33:20, note. Compare Genesis 15:1; Deuteronomy 33:29; Proverbs 30:5.

Verse 10

O house of Aaron … - Ministers of religion; descendants of Aaron. His family was consecrated to the various services of the sanctuary.

Verse 11

Ye that fear the Lord … - All the people that reverence God; all his true worshippers.

Verse 12

The Lord hath been mindful of us - This would be especially appropriate if the psalm was written, as is commonly supposed, after the return from the captivity of Babylon. In such circumstances it would be every way proper to bring before the mind of the people the fact that God had remembered them and had delivered them.

He will bless us - Our past experience furnishes the fullest evidence that he will continue to bless us. He who has delivered us from so great calamities, and who has restored us to our native land after so long and so painful a captivity, will not forsake us now. There can be now no circumstances in which he cannot bestow on us all the blessings which we need; there will be none when we may not hope that he will bless us. If he could save us from such troubles, be can save us from all; if he did thus interpose, we may argue that he will always grant us his help when we need it.

He will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron - Compare Psalm 115:9-10.

Verse 13

He will bless them that fear the Lord - Compare Psalm 115:11.

Both small and great - Margin, as in Hebrew, with. The little with the great; children and grown persons; the poor and the rich; the ignorant and the learned; those of humble rank, and those of most exalted birth and condition.

Verse 14

The Lord shall increase you more and more - He will increase your numbers and your power. We may suppose that the people were greatly diminished by the captivity, and that on their return to their country their number was comparatively small. This promise of a great increase was in accordance with the cherished wishes of the Hebrew people, and with the repeated promises which God had made to their fathers. Compare Genesis 15:5; Genesis 22:17; Genesis 32:12.

You and your children - The blessing shall be not only on you, but it shall go down to future generations,

Verse 15

Ye are blessed of the Lord - Blessed in your present comforts and mercies; blessed in his promises in regard to the time to come; blessed in the prospects which are before you.

Which made heaven and earth - The true God; the great Creator of all things. It was not the blessing of a creature - man or angel - it was the blessing of the living God.

Verse 16

The heaven - Hebrew, "The heavens."

Even the heavens are the Lord's - A more literal and correct rendering of this would be, "The heavens are heavens for Jehovah." That is, he has reserved the heavens as a home for himself, or as his special possession and home. Compare Isaiah 66:1; Matthew 5:34; Acts 7:49.

But the earth … - He propared earth for the abode of man; he has placed man upon it to cultivate it; he has given its fruits and productions to man, to be held and enjoyed by man; he has made all on earth subject to man - the dwellers in the air, the land, and the waters. All this he has given to man; not to the angels. Earth is the home of man, the birth-place of man; the place where he lives, where he shows the result of his toil, his skill, and his ingenuity; the place where he builds houses, bridges, monuments, works of art; the place where he prepares for another state of existence; the place

where he dies, and is buried. It is, as formed by the Creator, a beautiful home outfitted for mankind; how much more beautiful would it be, if man never defiled or desolated it by sin! how happy an abode would it have been if sin had never entered it!

Verse 17

The dead praise not the Lord - The meaning of this is, that as those who are dead cannot praise God, or cannot worship him, this should be done while we are in the land of the living. This opportunity, like all other opportunities, will be cut off in the grave, and hence, we should be faithful in this duty, and should avail ourselves of this privilege, while life lasts. In regard to the sentiment here expressed, and the grounds on which that sentiment was entertained, see the notes at Isaiah 38:18-19; notes at Psalm 6:5.

Neither any that go down into silence - Into the grave - the land of silence. Psalm 94:17. Nothing is more impressive in regard to the grave than its utter silence. Not a voice, not a sound, is heard there - of birds or human beings - of song or conversation - of the roaring of the sea, the sighing of the breeze, the fury of the storm, the tumult of battle. Perfect stillness reigns there; and the first sound that shall be heard there will be the archangel‘s trump.

Verse 18

But we will bless the Lord … - While life lasts; now and ever onward. Our lives are spared; and while those lives shall be continued they shall be spent in praise. We will transmit the praise to future times; and when we are dead, the voice of praise shall be prolonged by those who come after us. It may be added here that we have now higher and clearer views of the grave and of the future world than the psalmist had, and that though it is certain that our voices of praise must be stilled by death, yet in another world we shall continue the work of praise in strains more lofty than here, and in a continuance of service that shall never end. The grave is, indeed, before us all; but so is also heaven, if we belong to those who truly fear the Lord, and who sincerely worship him through Christ Jesus.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 116

Introduction

The author and date of this psalm are unknown. It seems to be rather of a private than a public character, and there are expressions in it which must have been drawn from the personal experience of its writer. It is adapted to public use only because in all public assemblages there are those who would find their own experience represented by the language of the psalm. It may have been composed after the return from Babylon, but there is nothing in the psalm to limit it to that time, and the language is such that it may have been composed at any period after Jerusalem became the place of public worship, Psalm 116:19.

The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, which combined the two previous psalms into one, divide this into two, at the end of Psalm 116:9. The reason why this was done is unknown.

The psalm appears to have been composed in reference to a dangerous sickness, or some deep affliction which threatened life, Psalm 116:3, Psalm 116:8-9, Psalm 116:15; and it expresses a purpose to praise and serve God in view of the fact that the author had been delivered from impending death, and that his days had been lengthened out upon the earth.

The psalm embraces the following points:

I. An expression of love and gratitude in view of the mercies of God, and of a purpose to serve him as long as life should last, Psalm 116:1-2.

II. A description of his sufferings, as if the pains of hell had seized him, Psalm 116:3-4.

III. A description of the mercy and goodness of God as interposing in answer to his prayer, and delivering him, Psalm 116:5-11.

IV. A solemn declaration of his purpose to praise God for all his mercies; to take the cup of salvation and call on his name; to pay his vows in the presence of the people of God; to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving; to worship in the courts of the Lord‘s house, in the midst of Jerusalem, Psalm 116:12-19.

Verse 1

I love the Lord - The Hebrew rather means, "I love, because the Lord hath heard," etc. That is, the psalmist was conscious of love; he felt it glowing in his soul; his heart was full of that special joy, tenderness, kindness, peace, which love produces; and the source or reason of this, he says, was that the Lord had heard him in his prayers.

Because he hath heard … - That is, This fact was a reason for loving him. The psalmist does not say that this was the only reason, or the main reason for loving him, but that it was the reason for that special joy of love which he then felt in his soul. The main reason for loving God is his own excellency of nature; but still there are other reasons for doing it, and among them are the benefits which he has conferred on us, and which awaken the love of gratitude. Compare the notes at 1 John 4:19.

Verse 2

Because he hath inclined his ear unto me - See the notes at Psalm 5:1. Because he has been gracious to me, and has heard my prayers. This is a pood reason for serving God, or for devoting ourselves to him, but it is not the only reason. We ought to worship and serve God whether he hears our prayers or not; whether he sends joy or sorrow; whether we are favored with prosperity, or are sunk in deep affliction. People have worshipped God even when they have had no evidence that he heard their prayers; and some of the most pure acts of devotion on earth are those which come from the very depths of darkness and sorrow.

Therefore will I call upon him as long as I live - Margin, as in Hebrew, "in my days." Encouraged by the past, I will continue to call upon him in the future. I will retain a firm faith in the doctrine that he hears prayer, and I will express my practical belief in the truth of that doctrine by regular and constant habits of worship. When a man once has evidence that God has heard his prayer, it is a reason why he should always call on him in similar circumstances, for God does not change.

Verse 3

The sorrows of death - What an expression! We know of no intenser sorrows pertaining to this world than those which we associate with the dying struggle - whether our views in regard to the reality of such sorrows be correct or not. We may be - we probably are - mistaken in regard to the intensity of suffering as ordinarily experienced in death; but still we dread those sorrows more than we do anything else, and all that we dread may be

experienced then. Those sorrows, therefore, become the representation of the intensest forms of suffering; and such, the psalmist says, he experienced on the occasion to which he refers. There would seem in his case to have been two things combined, as they often are:

(1) actual suffering from some bodily malady which threatened his life, Psalm 116:3, Psalm 116:6, Psalm 116:8-10;

(2) mental sorrow as produced by the remembrance of his sins, and the apprehension of the future, Psalm 116:4. See the notes at Psalm 18:5.

And the pains of hell - The pains of Sheol - Hades; the grave. See Psalm 16:10, note; Job 10:21-22, notes; Isaiah 14:9, note. The pain or suffering connected with going down to the grave, or the descent to the nether world; the pains of death. There is no evidence that the psalmist here refers to the pains of hell, as we understand the word, as a place of punishment, or that he mean, to say that he experienced the sorrows of the damned. The sufferings which he referred to were these of death - the descent to the tomb.

Gat hold upon me - Margin, as in Hebrew, "found me." They discovered me - as if they had been searching for me, and had at last found my hiding place. Those sorrows and pangs, ever in pursuit of us, will soon find us all. We cannot long escape the pursuit Death tracks us, and is upon our heels.

I found trouble and sorrow - Death found me, and I found trouble and sorrow. I did not seek it, but in what I was seeking I found this. Whatever we fail to "find" in the pursuits of life, we shall not fail to find the troubles and sorrows connected with death. They are in our path wherever we turn, and we cannot avoid them.

Verse 4

Then called I upon the name of the Lord - Upon the Lord. I had no other refuge. I felt that I must perish unless he should interpose, and I pleaded with him for deliverance and life. Compare the notes at Psalm 18:6.

O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul - My life. Save me from death. This was not a cry for salvation, but for life. It is an example for us, however, to call on God when we feel that the soul is in danger of perishing, for then, as in the case of the psalmist, we have no other refuge but God.

Verse 5

Gracious is the Lord - This fact was his encouragement when he called on God. He believed that God was a gracious Being, and he found him to be so. Compare the notes at Hebrews 11:6.

And righteous … - Just; true; faithful. This, too, is a proper foundation of appeal to God: not that we are righteous, and have a claim to his favor, but that he is a Being who will do what is right; that is, what is best to be done in the case. If he were an unjust Being; if he were one on whose stability of character, and whose regard for right, no reliance could be placed, we could never approach him with confidence or hope. In this sense we may rely on his justice - his justness of character - as a ground of hope. Compare the notes at 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us Our sins."

Verse 6

The Lord preserveth the simple - The Septuagint renders this "babes" - νήπια *nēpia* The Hebrew word has reference to simplicity or folly, as in Proverbs 1:22. It then refers to those who are the opposite of cautious or cunning; to those who are open to persuasion; to those who are easily enticed or seduced. The verb from which the word is derived - פתה *pâthâh* - means to open, to expand; then, to be open, frank, ingenuous, easily persuaded or enticed. Thus it may express either the idea of being simple in the sense of being foolish, easily seduced and led astray; or, simple in the sense of being open, frank, ingenuous, trustful, sincere. The latter is evidently its meaning here. It refers to one of the characteristics of true piety - that of unsuspecting trust in God. It would describe one who yields readily to truth and duty; one who has singleness of aim in the desire to honor God; one who is without guile, trick, or cunning. Such a man was Nathanael John 1:47: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." The Hebrew word used here is rendered simple, Psalm 19:7; Psalm 119:130; Proverbs 1:4, Proverbs 1:22, Proverbs 1:32; Proverbs 7:7; Proverbs 8:5; Proverbs 9:4; Proverbs 14:15, Proverbs 14:18; Proverbs 19:25; Proverbs 21:11; Proverbs 22:3; Proverbs 27:12; Ezekiel 45:20; and foolish, Proverbs 9:6. It does not elsewhere occur. The meaning here is, that the Lord preserves or keeps those who have simple and unwavering trust in him; those who are sincere in their professions; those who rely on his word.

I was brought low - By affliction and trial. The Hebrew literally means to hang down, to be pendulous, to swing, to wave - as a bucket in a well, or as the slender branches of the palm, the willow, etc. Then it means to be

slack, feeble, weak, as in sickness, etc. See the notes at Psalm 79:8. Here it probably refers to the prostration of strength by disease.

And he helped me - He gave me strength; he restored me.

Verse 7

Return unto thy rest, O my soul - Luther, "Be thou again joyful, O my soul." The meaning seems to be, "Return to thy former tranquility and calmness; thy former freedom from fear and anxiety." He had passed through a season of great danger. His soul had been agitated and terrified. That danger was now over, and he calls upon his soul to resume its former tranquility, calmness, peace, and freedom from alarm. The word does not refer to God considered as the "rest" of the soul, but to what the mind of the psalmist had been, and might now be again.

For the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee - See the notes at Psalm 13:6.

Verse 8

For thou hast delivered my soul from death - My life. Thou hast saved me from death. This is such language as would be used by one who had been dangerously ill, and who had been restored again to health.

Mine eyes from tears - Tears which he had shed in his sickness, and in the apprehension of dying. It may refer to tears shed on other occasions, but it is most natural to refer it to this. Compare the notes at Psalm 6:6.

And my feet from falling - From stumbling. That is, he had not, as it were, fallen by the way, and been rendered unable to pursue the journey of life. All this seems to refer to one occasion - to a time of dangerous illness.

Verse 9

I will walk before the Lord … - Compare Psalm 27:13, note; Isaiah 38:20, note. This expresses a full belief that he would live, and a purpose to live "before the Lord;" that is, as in his presence, in his service, and enjoying communion with him.

Verse 10

I believed, therefore have I spoken - This, in the Septuagint and Latin Vulgate, begins a new psalm, but without any good reason. This language is borrowed by the Apostle Paul to express his confidence in the truth of the gospel, and the effect which that confidence had on him in causing him to declare the truth. 2 Corinthians 4:13. The meaning here is, that in the time of his affliction the psalmist had true faith in God; and, as a result of that, he was able now to speak as he did. At that time he trusted in God; he called

on him; he sought his mercy, and God heard his prayer; and now, as the consequence of that, he was enabled to give utterance to these thoughts. Faith was at the foundation of his recovery, and he was now reaping the fruits of faith.

I was greatly afflicted - In danger of death. The psalmist reviewed this now, and he saw that all that he had felt and dreaded was real. He was in imminent; danger. There was occasion for the tears which he shed. There was reason for the earnestness of his cry to God.

Verse 11

I said in my haste - The Hebrew word used here means to flee in haste; to be in alarm and trepidation; and the idea seems to be, that the assertion referred to was made under the influence of excitement - or that it was not the result of sober reflection, but of an agitated state of mind. It does not necessarily imply that that which was said was false, for many true statements may be made when the mind is agitated and excited; but the meaning is, that he was then in such a state of mind as to suggest the belief, and to cause the assertion that all people are liars. Whether calm reflection would, or would not, confirm this impression of the moment would be a fair question after the excitement was over.

All men are liars - Are false; no one is to be relied on. This was said in the time of his affliction, and this added much to his affliction. The meaning is that, in those circumstances of distress, no one came to his aid; no one sympathized with him; there was no one to whom he could unbosom himself; no one seemed to feel any interest in him. There were relatives on whom he might have supposed that he could rely; there may have been those to whom he had shown kindness in similar circumstances; there may have been old friends whose sympathy he might have had reason to expect; but all failed. No one came to help him. No one shed a tear over his sorrows. No one showed himself true to friendship, to sympathy, to gratitude. All people seemed to be false; and he was shut up to God alone. A similar thing is referred to in Psalm 41:5-9; Psalm 88:18; compare also Job 19:13-17. This is not an unnatural feeling in affliction. The mind is then sensitive. We need friends then. We expect our friends to show their friendship then. If they do not do this, it seems to us that the entire world is false. It is evident from the whole course of remark here that the psalmist on reflection felt that he had said this without due thought, under the influence of excitement - and that he was disposed, when his mind was restored to

calmness, to think better of mankind than he did in the day of affliction and trouble. This also is not uncommon. The world is much better than we think it is when our own minds are morbid and our nerves are unstrung; and bad as the world is, our opinion of it is not unfrequently the result rather of our own wrong feeling than of just reflection on the real character of mankind.

Verse 12

What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? - All his "recompences," - the same word which in Psalm 116:7 is rendered "hath dealt bountifully." The question here has reference to that. What return can be equal to his bounties; what will be a proper acknowledgment of them; with what can I repay him for them all? The question is a natural and a proper question. It is one which we naturally ask when we have received a favor from our fellowmortals; how much more proper is it in view of the favors which we receive from God - especially in view of the mercy of God in the gift of a Saviour; the love manifested in the redemption of the soul! What can be an adequate return for love like that - for mercies so great, so undeserved?

Verse 13

I will take the cup of salvation - Compare the notes at Psalm 11:6. The "cup of salvation" means the cup by which his sense of the greatness of the salvation might be expressed - the cup of thanksgiving. Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 10:16. The reference seems to be to a custom in festivals of drinking a cup of wine as a special expression of thanks or of obligation. The act would be more solemn, and the truth more deeply impressed on the mind, when accompanied by some religious rite - some ceremonial, as in the Lord's Supper, expressly designed to call the mercy of God to remembrance.

And call upon the name of the Lord - Engage in a solemn act of devotion; make it a matter of special ceremony or observance to call the mercy of God to remembrance. This was one way of rendering to the Lord a return for the benefits received at his hands; as it is now. Christians do this at the table of the Lord - in the observance of the Lord's Supper.

Verse 14

I will pay my vows … - I will perform or execute. The word vows here refers probably to the solemn promise which he had made in his sickness - the promise to devote himself to God, should he be restored to health. Compare the notes at Isaiah 38:15, notes at Isaiah 38:20. Such promises are

commonly made in sickness, and, alas! almost as commonly disregarded and forgotten on a restoration to health. Yet such vows should be sacredly observed, for

(a) They are right and proper;

(b) they are made in most solemn circumstances;

(c) they are usually sincere;

(d) they are of the nature of a covenant with God;

(e) they are made when we are in the best position to take just views of life - of this life, and of the life to come;

(f) the subsequent life would be happier and better if they were faithfully carried out.

Compare Psalm 22:25, note; Psalm 66:13-14, notes.

In the presence of all his people - Publicly. The vows were made in private; on the sick bed; when alone; in the silence of the night-watches; when no eye was upon him who made them but the eye of God. There is a propriety, however, that the expression of thanksgiving should be public. Compare Isaiah 38:20. Indeed, nothing is more proper than public thanks for a restoration from sickness; and as in our public assemblies prayer is often specially offered for the sick at their own request, so it would be equally proper that, at their request, public thanks should be rendered for their recovery.

Verse 15

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints - Of his people; his friends. Luther renders this, "The death of his saints is held to be of value" - (ist werth gehalten) - "before the Lord." The word rendered "precious" - יקר *yâqâr* - means costly, as precious stones, 1 Kings 10:2, 1 Kings 10:10-11; dear, beloved, as relatives and friends, Psalm 45:9; honored, respected, Ecclesiastes 10:1; splendid, beautiful, Job 31:26; rare, 1 Samuel 3:1. The idea here is, that the death of saints is an object of value; that God regards it as of importance; that it is connected with his great plans, and that there are great purposes to be accomplished by it. The idea

here seems to be that the death of a good man is in itself of so much importance, and so connected with the glory of God and the accomplishment of his purposes, that he will not cause it to take place except in circumstances, at times, and in a manner, which will best secure those ends. The particular thought in the mind of the psalmist seems to have been that as he had been preserved when he was apparently so near to death, it must have been because God saw that the death of one of his friends was a matter of so much importance that it should occur only when the most good could be effected by it, and when the ends of life had been accomplished; that God would not decide on this hastily, or without the best reasons; and that, therefore, he had interposed to lengthen out his life still longer. Still, there is a general truth implied here, to wit, that the act of removing a good man from the world is, so to speak, an act of deep deliberation on the part of God; that good, and sometimes great, ends are to be accomplished by it; and that, therefore, God regards it with special interest. It is of value or importance in such respects as the following:

(1) as it is the removal of another of the redeemed to glory - the addition of one more to the happy hosts above;

(2) as it is a new triumph of the work of redemption - showing the power and the value of that work;

(3) as it often furnishes a more direct proof of the reality of religion than any abstract argument could do.

How much has the cause of religion been promoted by the patient deaths of Ignatius, and Polycarp, and Latimer, and Ridley, and Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and the hosts of the martyrs! What does not the world owe, and the cause of religion owe, to such scenes as occurred on the death-beds of Baxter, and Thomas Scott, and Halyburton, and Payson! What an argument for the truth of religion - what an illustration of its sustaining power - what a source of comfort to us who are soon to die - to reflect that religion does not leave the believer when he most needs its support and consolations; that it can sustain us in the severest trial of our condition here; that it can illuminate what seems to us of all places most dark, cheerless, dismal, repulsive - “the valley of the shadow of death!”

Verse 16

O Lord, truly I am thy servant - In view of thy mercy in delivering me from death, I feel the obligation to give myself to thee. I see in the fact that thou hast thus delivered me, evidence that I am thy servant - that I am so regarded by thee; and I recognize the obligation to live as becomes one who has had this proof of favor and mercy.

The son of thine handmaid - Of a pious mother. I see now the result of my training. I call to my recollection the piety of a mother. I rememberer how she served thee; how she trained me up for thee; I see now the evidence that her prayers were heard, and that her efforts were blessed in endeavoring to train me up for thee. The psalmist saw now that, under God, he owed all this to the pious efforts of a mother, and that God had been pleased to bless those efforts in making him his child, and in so guiding him that it was not improper for him to speak. of himself as possessing and carrying out the principles of a sainted mother. It is not uncommon - and in such cases it is proper - that all the evidence which we may have that we are pious - that we are living as we ought to live, that we are receiving special favors from God - recalls to our minds the instructions of early years, the counsels and prayers of a holy father or mother.

Thou hast loosed my bonds - The bonds of disease; the fetters which seemed to have made me a prisoner to Death. I am now free again. I walk at large. I am no longer the captive - the prisoner - of disease and pain.

Verse 17

I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving - I will publicly thank and praise thee. See the notes at Psalm 107:22.

And will call upon the name of the Lord - Will worship and praise the Lord.

Verse 18

I will pay my vows … - See Psalm 116:14.

Verse 19

In the courts of the Lord‘s house - See the notes at Psalm 65:4. Compare Psalm 84:2; Psalm 92:13; Psalm 96:8; Psalm 100:4; Psalm 135:2.

In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem - Where the tabernacle, and afterward the temple, was reared.

Praise ye the Lord - Hallelujah. A call on others to join in the praise of God. The psalmist felt his own heart drawn to the service of praise by all the mercies of God; he desired, as an expression of his own feelings, that

others should unite with him in that sacred exercise. When our own hearts are filled with gratitude, we wish that all others may partake of the same feeling.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 117

Introduction

The occasion and the author of this psalm are alike unknown. DeWette regards it as a temple-psalm, and agrees with Rosenmuller in the supposition that it was sung either at the beginning or the end of the service in the temple. Knapp supposes that it was used as an intermediate service, sung during the progress of the general service to vary the devotion, and to awaken a new interest in the service, either sung by a choir or by the whole people.

In many manuscripts of Kennicott and De Rossi, and in several editions of the Scriptures, this psalm is united with the following. The psalm has no independent character or meaning of its own, and seems to have been designed, like the "Doxologies" in our Books of Psalms and Hymns, to be attached to other psalms as occasion might require. There is no psalm designed for public worship to which it might not thus properly be attached.

Verse 1

O praise the Lord, all ye nations - The idea is that God has a claim to universal worship, and that all the nations of the earth are under obligations to adore him as the true God. He is not the God of the Hebrew people only, but of all people; his praise should be celebrated not merely by one nation, but by all. This is one of the passages in the Old Testament, anticipating what is more fully disclosed in the New Testament, in which the sacred writer extends his vision beyond the narrow boundaries of Judea, and looks to the world, the whole world, as the theater on which the true religion was to be displayed, and for which it was designed. It is language such as would be indited by the Spirit of inspiration on the supposition that the time would come when the barrier between Jews and Gentiles would be broken down, and when all the nations of the earth would be in the possession of the true religion, and would unite in the worship of the same God. This doctrine, however, was not fully made known until the coming of the Redeemer. The announcement of this was made by the Redeemer himself (compare Matthew 8:11; Matthew 12:21; Matthew 28:19); it was the occasion of no small part of the trouble which the Apostle Paul had with his countrymen (compare Acts 13:46; Acts 18:6; Acts 21:21; Acts 22:21; Acts 26:20, Acts 26:23); it was one of the doctrines which Paul especially endeavored to

establish, as a great truth of Christianity, that all the barriers between the nations were to be broken down, and the Gospel proclaimed to all people alike, Romans 3:29; Romans 9:24, Romans 9:30; Romans 11:11; Romans 15:9-11, Romans 15:16, Romans 15:18; Galatians 2:2; Ephesians 2:11-18; Ephesians 3:1-9. It is under the gospel that this language becomes especially appropriate.

Praise him, all ye people - People of all lands. The word here rendered "praise" - שׁבח *shâbach* - means properly to soothe, to still, to restrain - as, for example, billows Psalm 89:9; and then, to praise, as if to soothe with praises - mulcere laudibus, Pacuv. The idea of soothing or mitigating, however, is not necessarily in the word, but it may be understood in the general sense of praise. We may in fact often soothe or appease people - angry, jealous, suspicious people - by skillful flattery or praise - for there are few, even when under the influence of anger or hatred, who may not thus be approached, or who do not value praise and commendation more than they do the indulgence of passion; but we cannot hope thus to appease the anger of God. We approach him to utter our deep sense of his goodness, and our veneration for his character; we do not expect to turn him from anger to love - to make him forget his justice or our sins - by soothing flattery.

Verse 2

For his merciful kindness is great toward us - His kindness; his compassion; his love. All nations - all people - may say this, and therefore the psalm is adapted to universal praise. Especially may this be said in view of the love of God to mankind in the gift of a Saviour - a Saviour not for any one people especially or exclusively, but for the world, John 3:16.

And the truth of the Lord endureth for ever - All that God has said: his declarations; his promises; his assurances of mercy. They are the same in all lands where they are made known, and they are the same in all ages of the world. Truth is a representation of things as they are; and truth, therefore, must be ever the same. What was true in the first ages of the world in regard to the relation of the sum of the squares on the two sides of a right-angled triangle to the square of the hypothenuse is true now, and will always be true; and so, what God has affirmed at any one time will always remain the same in all ages and in all lands. What was truth to Abraham is truth to us; what was truth to Paul is truth to us; what was truth to the martyrs is truth to us; what is truth to us will be truth to all generations of

the world in all lands, and will be truth forever. This fact, too, is a just foundation for universal praise, and therefore the psalm is so adapted to be used in all lands and among all people. How often in our own language has this psalm been the medium of the utterances of praise in Christian sanctuaries:

"From all that dwell below the skies,
Let the Creator's praise arise;
Let the Redeemer's name be sung,

Through every land, by every tongue.

Eternal are thy mercies, Lord;

Eternal truth attends thy word;

Thy praise shall sound from shore to shore,

Till suns shall rise and set no more.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 118

Introduction

Of the authorship of this psalm, and the occasion on which it was composed, nothing can now be ascertained with certainty. The common opinion has been that it is a psalm of David, and that it was composed when his troubles with Saul ceased, and when he was recognized as king. Some, however, have referred it to Hezekiah on the occasion of his restoration from sickness; others to the time of the return from the Babylonian exile; and others to the time of the Maccabees. It would be useless to examine these opinions, as they are all of them mere conjecture, and as no certainty can now be arrived at.

What is apparent on the face of the psalm is, that it was a psalm of thanksgiving, to be employed in the temple when an offering or sacrifice was led up to the altar Psalm 118:27 to be presented as an acknowledgment of mercy from God, on some occasion of deliverance from danger, by someone whose claim to rule had been rejected, but who was now victorious over his enemies, and recognized as the rightful leader and ruler of the people. The psalm is in a measure dramatic. The author is the speaker in the first twenty-one verses; in the remainder of the psalm the priests and the people speak, and at the close, the psalmist again utters praise.

The psalm consists of the following parts:

I. The author of the psalm speaks, Psalm 118:14.

(2) a description of his peril and deliverance, Psalm 118:5-18. He had been in distress; he had called on the Lord; he had seen the benefit of trusting in the Lord rather than in man. All nations had compassed him about as bees; they had thrust sore at him; they had sought his life; but he had not been dismayed; he had felt, even in the midst of his dangers, that he would live to declare the works of the Lord, Psalm 118:17-18

(3) The speaker approaches the temple. He asks that the doors may be opened that he may enter and praise the Lord. He addresses those who have charge of the temple - the ministers of religion - and desires leave to come and present his offering, Psalm 118:19-21.

II. The priests and people speak, Psalm 118:22-27.

(1) they recognize him now as the Ruler - the cornerstone - the foundation of the nation‘s prosperity, and its hope. He had been rejected by those who were professedly laying the foundation of empire, but he had now established his claims to being regarded as the very cornerstone on which the whole edifice must rest, Psalm 118:22.

(2) they recognize this as a marvelous work of God, and as suited to excite the deepest admiration, Psalm 118:23.

(3) they recognize this as a joyful day, as if God had created a day for the very purpose of celebrating an event so joyous, Psalm 118:24.

(4) they pronounce him blessed who thus came in the name of the Lord; they bless him out of the house of the Lord, Psalm 118:25-26.

(5) they direct him to bring his offering, and to bind it to the horns of the altar preparatory to sacrifice. He is permitted freely to come. His offering is recognized as proper, so that he can approach with an assurance of acceptance, Psalm 118:27.

III. The author of the psalm again speaks, Psalm 118:28-29. He acknowledges God as his God, and calls on all to praise him.

Portions of the psalm are, in the New Testament, applied to Christ; and it has been made a question whether it had, or had not, an original reference to him. Thus in Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:11; Luke 20:17, it is quoted by the Saviour as illustrating a truth in regard to himself In Acts 4:11, the twenty-second verse of the psalm is applied by Peter to the Saviour, as having been fulfilled in him - or, as meaning that the language of the psalm would properly describe the fact which had occurred in the treatment of Jesus of Nazareth. Many of the Jewish rabbins regarded the psalm as referring to the Messiah, and not a few Christian interpreters have supposed that it had such an original reference.

It seems clear, however, from the psalm itself that it could not have been composed primarily with reference to him. There are portions of it which cannot, without a very forced use of language, be applied to him, as for example, the allusion to the attack made by “all nations” on the person referred to in the psalm Psalm 118:10, and in the allusion to the danger of death Psalm 118:17-18. The person referred to in the psalm was in danger of death, but he was not given over to death. He had the assurance in the

very midst of the danger that he would not die, but would continue to live Psalm 118:17. The Redeemer, however, did die. His enemies accomplished their purpose in this respect. They put him to death, though he rose again from the dead.

It is clear, therefore, I think, that the psalm had not an original reference to the Messiah. Still, there is much in it which is applicable to him, and which might be used as expressive of what occurred to him. It contains principles also which may be as applicable to him as they were to the psalmist; and, therefore, it is used by the Saviour to enforce the moral of his own parable in reference to himself, as having had a counterpart in their own history, in a case which must have been familiar to them all. As such, it is right to use it now, as illustrating what occurred in the treatment of the Redeemer.

Verse 1

O give thanks unto the Lord … - Let others unite with me in giving thanks to the Lord; let them see, from what has occurred in my case, what occasion there is for praise. Every instance of a particular favor shown to anyone is to others an occasion for praise, inasmuch as it is an illustration of the general character of God. On this verse compare the notes at Psalm 106:1. The language is nearly the same.

Verse 2

Let Israel now say … - The Hebrew people; the people of God. They have now, in my case, a new illustration of the mercy of God which ought to animate them, and to encourage their hearts. Compare Psalm 115:9.

Verse 3

Let the house of Aaron now say … - Compare Psalm 115:10. The ministers of religion. They are appointed to serve God; to lead in his worship; to defend his truth; to keep up faith in the truth of religion. They are, therefore, interested in my case, and may derive from it a new proof of the merciful character of God which they may employ, not only for their own encouragement in personal piety, but in the duties of their office. My case furnishes a new argument, of which they can make use in defending the truth, and in illustrating the power of religion.

Verse 4

Let them now that fear the Lord say … - Compare Psalm 115:11. All that worship God are interested in what God has done for me. It is a manifestation of the divine character which should cheer them. They are called, therefore, to unite with the author of the psalm in praise and thanksgiving, not merely from sympathy with him, but because great truths of religion had been illustrated, in his case, which were of as much importance to them as to him.

Verse 5

I called upon the Lord in distress - Margin, as in Hebrew, "out of distress." In the very midst of trouble he called upon the Lord; his voice was heard, as it were, coming from the depth of his sorrows. See the notes at Psalm 18:6.

The Lord answered me - That is, he heard my prayers, and delivered me. See the notes at Psalm 18:6.

And set me in a large place - I was before pressed on every side; sorrows compassed me around; I could not move; I had no liberty. Now he gave me space and freedom on every side, so that I could move without obstruction or pain. This is literally, "The Lord" - (not יהוה *Yahweh* here, but יה *Yâhh*) "answered me in a large place." See Psalm 4:1, note; Psalm 18:19, note.

Verse 6

The Lord is on my side - Margin, as in Hebrew," for me." The Lord is with me. He is my helper. He defends my cause.

I will not fear - I have nothing to be afraid of. God is more mighty than any or all of my foes, and he can deliver me from them all. Compare Psalm 56:4, Psalm 56:9, Psalm 56:11.

What can man do unto me? - Any person; all people. They can do no more than God permits. They cannot destroy me when he means to save me; they cannot defeat his gracious designs toward me. I am safe if God is my Friend. Compare the notes at Romans 8:31.

Verse 7

The Lord taketh my part with them that help me - The psalmist had friends. There were those who stood by him. He relied, indeed, on their aid, but not on their aid without God. He felt that even their help was valuable to him only as God was with them. There was direct dependence on God in reference to himself; and there was the same sense of dependence in respect to all who were engaged in his defense. This might be rendered, however,

simply "for my help," and is so rendered by DeWette. The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate render it, "The Lord is my helper."

Therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me - literally, "I shall see upon those that hate me;" that is, I shall look upon them according to my wish; I shall see them overthrown and subdued. See the notes at Psalm 54:7. Compare Psalm 92:11; Psalm 112:8.

Verse 8

It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man - This is stated apparently as the result of his own experience. He had found people weak and faithless; he had not so found God. Compare Psalm 40:4; Psalm 62:8-9. Literally, "Good is it to trust in Yahweh more than to confide in man." This is the Hebrew form of comparison, and is equivalent to what is stated in our version, "It is better," etc. It is better,

(1) because man is weak - but God is Almighty;

(2) because man is selfish - but God is benevolent;

(3) because man is often faithless and deceitful - God never;

(4) because there are emergencies, as death, in which man cannot aid us, however faithful, kind, and friendly he may be - but there are no circumstances in this life, and none in death, where God cannot assist us; and

(5) because the ability of man to help us pertains at best only to this present life - the power of God will be commensurate with eternity.

Verse 9

It is better … than to put confidence in princes - Even in the most mighty of the human race; in those who of all people may be supposed to have the most ability to aid us; in those whose favor is often sought more than the favor of God. Princes are only men; often as faithless and deceitful as other men; often less reliable in their character than those in more humble life. and in the great matters where we most need aid - in sickness, in danger, in death, in the eternal world - as absolutely powerless as men in the lowest condition of poverty, or in the most humble rank.

Verse 10

All nations compassed me about - They surrounded me; they hemmed me in on every side, so that I seemed to have no chance to escape. It would seem from this that the psalm was composed by someone who was at the head of the government, and whose government had been attacked by surrounding nations. This would accord well with many things that occurred in the life of David; but there were also other times in the Jewish history to which it would be applicable, and there is nothing that necessarily confines it to the time of David.

But in the name of the Lord will I destroy them - Margin, as in Hebrew," cut them off." This is the language which he used at that time; the purpose which he then formed; an expression of the confidence which he then cherished. He meant to subdue them; he had no doubt that he would be able to do it.

Verse 11

They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about … - The sentiment and the language of the previous verse are here repeated, as if to give force to what he had said, or to deepen the impression. His own mind dwelt upon it, and the events to which he referred came so vividly to his recollection, and were so important, that he dwells upon them. The subject was worth more than a passing remark. The mind was full, and the language comes from an overflowing heart.

Verse 12

They compassed me about like bees -

(a) As thick or numerous as bees;

(b) armed as bees - or, their weapons might be compared to the stings of bees.

They are quenched as the fire of thorns - The Septuagint and the Vulgate render this, "They burn as the fire of thorns." The connection would seem to demand this, but the Hebrew will not bear it. The figure is changed in the Hebrew, as is not uncommon. The mind of the psalmist at first recalls the number and the malignity of his foes; it then instantly adverts to the rapid manner in which they were destroyed. The illustration from the "fire of thorns" is derived from the fact that they quickly kindle into a blaze, and then the flame soon dies away. In Eastern countries it was common to burn over their fields in the dry time of the year, and thus to clear them of thorns and briars and weeds. Of course, at such a time they

would kindle quickly, and burn rapidly, and would soon be consumed. So the psalmist says it was with his enemies. He came upon them, numerous as they were, as the fire runs over a field in a dry time, burning everything before it. Compare the notes at Isaiah 33:12.

For in the name of the Lord I will destroy them - That is, such was his purpose then; such was the reason why they so soon and suddenly disappeared.

Verse 13

Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall - literally, "Thrusting thou hast thrust at me." This is the Hebrew mode of expressing intensity, repetition, or emphasis. The meaning is, that they had made a deadly thrust at him; that they had repeated the blows; that they had come with a fierce determination to crush and destroy him. The psalmist, as it were, sees the enemy again before him, and addresses him as if he were present. Everything is vivid to the mind; the whole scene appears again to pass before him.

Verse 14

The Lord is my strength and song - He is the source of strength to me; and he is the subject of my praise. There is no ground of praise in myself for anything that I have done, but all is due to him.

And is become my salvation - He has saved me. I live because he preserved me. So we shall be saved in heaven solely because he saves us, and there, more than can be possible here, we shall say, "God is our strength and our song, and is become our salvation."

Verse 15-16

The voice of rejoicing and salvation - Rejoicing for salvation; song, praise, thanksgiving. Luther renders this beautifully; "They sing with joy for victory in the houses of the righteous."

Is in the tabernacles of the righteous - The tents of the righteous; their dwellings. That is,

(a) it is a fact that the voice of joy and rejoicing is there;

(b) it is appropriate that it should be so, or that a righteous family should be happy - the dwelling-place of praise;

(c) God will add to the happiness of the righteous, or will make their habitation happy, peaceful, blessed.

There is nothing that diffuses so much happiness through a family as religion; there is no joy like that when a member of a family is converted; there is no place on earth more happy than that where a family bows before God with the feeling that all are children of God and heirs of salvation.

The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly - Hebrew "Doeth strength." That is, God does great things, laying the foundation for joy and praise.

Verse 17

I shall not die, but live - Evidently the psalmist had apprehended that he would die; or, he had felt that he was in imminent danger of dying. In this language he seems, as in Psalm 118:13, to go back again to the scenes referred to in the psalm. He lives them over again. He describes the feelings which he had then. He saw that he was in danger. His enemies were thick round about him, and sought his life. But he had then the assurance that they would not be victorious; that they would not accomplish their object; that he would be protected; that he would live to declare what God had done for him. He does not say how he had this assurance, but there is no impropriety in supposing that he had it, as Hezekiah had in similar circumstances (see Isaiah 38:5-8, Isaiah 38:21), by a direct divine intimation. Things like this are not uncommon now, when, in danger or in sickness, the mind is strongly impressed with the belief that there will be a restoration to health and safety, and when the mind is made calm and peaceful by that belief - the very calmness of the mind under such a belief contributing not a little to that result. Why should we hesitate to believe that such a faith and hope may come from the Lord? Compare Acts 27:22-25.

And declare the works of the Lord - Declare what he has done.

Verse 18

The Lord hath chastened me sore - Hebrew, "The Lord has chastened - has chastened me." See the notes at Psalm 118:13. The psalmist had been greatly afflicted, and he now looked upon his affliction in the light of a fatherly chastisement or correction. It had been a severe trial, and he was not insensible to its severity, though he regarded it as designed for his own good.

But he hath not given we over unto death - He interposed when I was in danger; he rescued me when I was on the verge of the grave. This is the close of the psalmist's statement in regard to the divine dealings with him.

He had passed through great danger; he had been sorely afflicted; but he had been rescued and spared, and he came now to express his thanks to God for his recovery. In the following verse he addresses those who had the care of the sanctuary, and asks that he might be permitted to enter and offer his thanks to God.

Verse 19

Open to me the gates of righteousness … - The gates of the house devoted to a righteous God; the gates of a house where the principles of righteousness are strengthened, and where the just emotions of the heart may be expressed in the language of praise. Compare the notes at Isaiah 26:2. The language here may be regarded as addressed to those who had charge of the house of the Lord - the priests - requesting that they would open the doors and permit him to enter to praise God for his mercy. Compare Isaiah 38:20.

Verse 20

This gate of the Lord - This gate dedicated to the service of the Lord; that belongs to the house of the Lord.

Into which the righteous shall enter - Through which the righteous pass. That is, It is for such persons, and all who come with a purpose to serve and worship God should be permitted to pass through them; I claim the privilege, therefore, of so passing through these gates into the house of God, for I come to praise him. All who are truly righteous, all who desire to worship God, all who wish and purpose to be holy, have a right thus to enter the house of God - to be recognized as his friends - to be permitted to join in all the devotions of his people; all such will have a right to enter the temple above. None have a right to exclude them here; none in heaven will be disposed to exclude them there.

Verse 21

I will praise thee - Within thy courts.

For thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation - See Psalm 118:14.

Verse 22

The stone which the builders refused - See the notes at Matthew 21:42-43. Compare Mark 12:10-11; Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:7. This is an allusion to a building, as if a stone should be cast away by workmen as unfit to be worked into the edifice. The figure would then be applicable to anyone who, for any purpose, was rejected. Thus it might have been applied

many a time to David; so, doubtless, to others who urged claims to authority and power; and so, eminently, to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not to suppose that this had original reference to the Messiah, but the language was applicable to him; and it is used in the passages above referred to, in addresses to the Jews, merely to show them how the principle was found in their own writings, that one who was rejected, like a stone regarded as unfit to be worked into any part of a building, might be in reality so important that it would be laid yet at the very corner, and become the most valuable stone in the edifice - that on which the whole superstructure would rest.

Is become the head stone of the corner - The principal stone placed at the corner of the edifice. This is usually one of the largest, the most solid, and the most carefully constructed of any in the edifice. Of course one would be needed at each corner of the building to constitute a firm support, but usually there is one placed at one corner of an edifice larger and more carefully made than the others, often laid with imposing ceremonies, and prepared to contain whatever it may be thought necessary to deposit in the foundation of the building to be transmitted to future times as preserving the names of the builders, or expressing the design of the edifice. Such a position he who had been rejected was to occupy in the civil polity of his country; such a position eminently the Lord Jesus occupies in relation to the church. Ephesians 2:20.

Verse 23

This is the Lord‘s doing - Margin, as in Hebrew, “This is from the Lord.” That is, It is to be traced to the Lord alone. It is not the result of human wisdom or power. The deliverance from danger - the raising up from the low condition - the change by which he who was rejected was restored to his rightful place - all this was to be traced to God alone. So it was in the case of the psalmist; so it was in the case of the Redeemer. None but God could have made him who was rejected, despised, crucified, and laid in the grave, the Saviour of a world. The place which the once rejected Redeemer now bears in the church - the honors bestowed on him as the head of the church - the triumph of his gospel in the world - all prove that it is the work of God.

It is marvelous in our eyes - It is suited to excite wonder. It is not one of those things which are to be ranked with the common and well-known events that are easily explained, and that excite no wonder; it is one of those things which cannot be explained by any known law; which belong to the

“supernatural;” which bear the marks of a direct divine interposition; which are suited to excite the admiration of mankind. Thus it was in the case of the psalmist; thus, pre-eminently, it was in the case of the Redeemer. No operation of natural laws will constitute a sufficient explanation of the latter. It is a matter for wonder, for rejoicing, and for praise, that one, despised, rejected, crucified, has been raised from the grave; that his religion has spread so far over the world; that it influences mankind as it does; and that he himself is exalted to a rank “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” Ephesians 1:21.

Verse 24

This is the day which the Lord hath made - As if it were a new day, made for this very occasion; a day which the writer of the psalm did not expect to see, and which seemed therefore to have been created out of the ordinary course, and added to the other days. He was in danger of death; his days were likely to be cut off and ended, so that he should see no more. But God had spared him, and added this joyous day to his life; and it was meet that for this he should be praised. It was so full of joy, so unexpected, so bright, so cheerful, that it appeared to be a new day coming fresh from the hand of the Almighty, unlike the other days of the year. So the Sabbath - the day that commemorates the resurrection of the Redeemer - is God‘s day. He claims it. He seems to have made it anew for man. Amidst the other days of the week - in a world where the ordinary days are filled up with so much of earth, so much toil, trouble, care, vexation, vanity, wickedness - it seems like one of the days that God made when he first made the world; before sin and sorrow entered; when all was calm, serene, happy. The Sabbath is so calm, so bright, so cheerful, so benign in its influence; it is so full of pleasant and holy associations and reminiscences, that it seems to be a day fresh from the hand of God, unlike the other days of the week, and made especially, as if by a new act of creation, for the good of mankind. So when a man is raised up from sickness - from the borders of the grave - it seems to be a new life given to him. Each day, week, month, year that he may live, is so much added to his life, as if it were created anew for this very purpose. He should, therefore, regard it not as his own, but as so much given to him by the special mercy and providence of God - as if added on to his life. Compare Isaiah 38:5.

We will rejoice and be glad in it - The psalmist, and all who united with him in his thanksgivings. So the Christian Sabbath. It is a day of joy - all joy, and no sorrow. It is a day to be happy in; a day of rest; a day, when the cares and toils of life are suspended; a day, when we are no longer harassed with those things which vex us in the worldliness of the week; a day, when we think of God, of redemption, of hope, of heaven. The Sabbath should be a day of joy, and not of gloom; it would be the happiest of all days to weary and jaded people everywhere, if they observed it aright. In a world of toil and sorrow, it is among the richest of God‘s blessings to people; it strengthens, refreshes, and cheers the heart of burdened and sorrowful man here; it lifts the soul to joyous contemplation of that eternal Sabbath where wearisome toll and sorrow shall be no more.

Verse 25

Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord … - The word save here seems to be used in the general sense of imploring the divine interposition and mercy. It is a part of the word which in the New Testament is rendered “Hosanna” - save now Matthew 21:9 - and is the language which the multitudes employed when they followed the Saviour as he went from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem. The language which they used on that occasion was borrowed from this psalm, and was eminently appropriate to the occasion - “Hosanna - blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord;” but the fact that it was thus employed does not prove that the psalm had original reference to the Messiah. The language was not improbably used on high festivals, and would be naturally employed when the Messiah came.

Send now prosperity - Give success; be favorable. God had interposed, and now the prayer is, that there might be continued and uninterrupted prosperity; that as the tide had begun to turn in the psalmist‘s favor, it might recede no more; that the calamities and woes which he had experienced might not be repeated. This was omitted in the acclamations of the multitude that attended the Saviour Matthew 21:9; but it is eminently an appropriate prayer to be used in connection with his coming - since his coming, whether to the world, to an individual, to a church, or to a community, brings the highest kind of “prosperity” in its train.

Verse 26

Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord - See the notes at Matthew 21:9. This is the language of those who had charge of the sanctuary, addressing him who came in the name of the Lord to present his

thank-offering. It is the language of welcome; the assurance that his offering would be acceptable to God. It was applicable to the Messiah, as coming in the name of the Lord, and was so used by the multitudes Matthew 21:9, and by the Saviour himself Matthew 23:39; but this use of the language does not prove that it had original reference to him. The Old Testament abounds in language which may thus be employed to express ideas under the Christian dispensation; but this does not prove that all such language was originally designed to refer to that dispensation.

We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord - We, the priests, the ministers of religion, have pronounced and do pronounce you blessed. We welcome your approach. You may come freely with your thank-offering. It will be accepted of the Lord. You come under our benediction, and the benediction of God.

Verse 27

God is the Lord - Still the language of the priests in their official capacity. The meaning here seems to be "God is Yahweh;" or, Jehovah is the true God. It is an utterance of the priesthood in regard to the great truth which they were appointed specifically to maintain - that Yahweh is the true God, and that he only is to be worshipped. This truth it was appropriate to enunciate on all occasions; and it was especially appropriate to be enunciated when a prince, who had been rescued from danger and death, came, as the restored leader of the people of God, to acknowledge his gracious intervention. On such an occasion - in view of the rank and character of him who came - and in view of what God had done for him - it was proper for the ministers of religion to announce in the most solemn manner, that Yahweh was the only true and living God.

Which hath showed us light - Who has given us light in the days of our darkness and adversity; who has restored us to prosperity, and bestowed on us the blessings of safety and of peace.

Bind the sacrifice with cords - Come freely with the sacrificial victim; with the offering which is to be presented to God in sacrifice. The word - חג *châg* - commonly means a festival or feast, Exodus 10:9; Exodus 12:14; and then it means a festival-sacrifice, a victim, Exodus 23:18; Malachi 2:3. The Septuagint and Vulgate render it, "Prepare a solemn feast." Our translation probably expresses the true sense. The word rendered cords, means properly anything interwoven or interlaced. Then it means a cord, a braid, a wreath; and then a branch with thick foliage. Different interpretations have been

given of the passage here, but probably the word is correctly rendered cords.

Unto the horns of the altar - altars were often made with projections or "horns" on the four corners. Exodus 27:2; Exodus 30:2; Exodus 37:25; 1 Kings 2:28. Whether the animal was actually bound to the altar when it was slain, is not certain; but there would seem to be an allusion to such a custom here. Lead up the victim; make it ready; bind it even to the altar, preparatory to the sacrifice. The language is that of welcome addressed to him who led up the victim - meaning that his sacrifice would be acceptable.

Verse 28

Thou art my God, and I will praise thee - This is the language of the author of the psalm - his solemn profession before the sanctuary and the altar; his response to the priesthood. In Psalm 118:27, they had declared that "Jehovah alone was God;" to this he now replies, that he acknowledges, it; he recognizes him as the true God, and as his God; he comes to praise him; and he professes his purpose always to exalt him as his God.

Thou art my God, I will exalt thee - Repeating the solemn declaration that Yahweh alone was the God whom he worshipped, and that it was his purpose always to magnify his name.

Verse 29

O give thanks unto the Lord … - The psalm closes, as it began, with an exhortation to praise God. In the beginning of the psalm, it was a general exhortation; here it is an exhortation founded on the course of thought in the psalm, or as a proper conclusion from what had been referred to in the psalm. Evidence had been given that the Lord was good; on the ground of that, all people are exhorted to give him thanks.

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PSALM 119

Introduction

This is an Alphabetical Psalm - the longest, and most perfect in its kind, in the collection of Psalms. The peculiarity of the composition consists in this - that the first eight verses of the psalm begin with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet - Aleph (א ′); the next eight verses with the second letter - Beth (ב *b*); and so on, through the twenty-two letters of the alphabet. These parts are designated in our common version by the names of the Hebrew letters respectively indicating the parts - Aleph, Beth, Gimel, Daleth, etc.

The general subject of the psalm is the law of God considered as a rule of life; as sanctifying the soul; as a support in trial; as imparting happiness to the mind - in its contemplation, and in obedience to it. The psalm appears to have been intended to set forth the excellency of that law, and the happy effects of obeying it, in every variety of form, and with every variety of expression. In its great length, extending to one hundred and seventy-six verses, there was ample opportunity to illustrate this; and the purpose of the author of the psalm seems to have been to see how much could be said on this, and to say all that could be said on it. It is remarkable that a single subject could be pursued so far with so much variety, and with so little that can be regarded as repetition, for there are perhaps no two verses in the psalm so exactly similar that there cannot be seen, either in themselves, or in their connection, some new phase given to the subject, or some new shade of thought not expressed elsewhere. So marked is this design of the psalm, so constant is the reference to the law of God - the testimonies of God - the statutes of God - that, according to the Masora, there is "only one verse in the psalm which does not contain some title or description of the word of God."

The psalm seems to be a record of the personal experience of the author, or the result of his meditations on the subject. It is not the Jewish people speaking, or the church, as many have supposed, but it is evidently an individual - not improbably a man of years - giving the result of his experience in regard to the influence of the law or the word of God in the various circumstances of life: in regard to what he had found that to be to himself personally. At the same time, the language is such as will express

the experience of others, and is such as might be employed in public worship.

It is not probable, however, that a psalm so long was commonly used in public worship, as many of the shorter psalms were. It is a great storehouse of truths, most precious and valuable, on one of the most important subjects of religion - the word of God; and it may have been intended, as would seem not improbable from the alphabetical arrangement, to be committed to memory by the young, that their minds might be early stored with valuable precepts to be their guide in the journey of life. A young man could not have a better treasure laid up in his mind than he would possess by committing this psalm to memory.

Whether the psalm was the work of David or of some later writer cannot be ascertained. Many have ascribed it to David; and it has been supposed that he wrote it either when he was an exile among the Philistines 1 Samuel 27:1-12, or when he was young, and had not yet obtained the authority of the government. This last opinion is derived - Rosenmuller thinks correctly - from Psalm 119:9, Psalm 119:23, Psalm 119:46, Psalm 119:141, Psalm 119:161. Gurlitt supposed that its author was some youth who was made captive by the Assyrians, and who composed the psalm in his captivity, as expressive of his attachment to his religion: a youth who could not, though away from his country and home, and surrounded by temptations, be turned away from the religion of his fathers by threats or bribes; who rejected all the allurements and blandishments which could be presented to him to induce him to abandon that religion, and to conform to the customs of idolatry - or who resisted all temptations to sensual gratifications.

This idea is derived from Psalm 119:22-23, Psalm 119:25, Psalm 119:28-29, Psalm 119:36, Psalm 119:39, Psalm 119:42-43, Psalm 119:46, Psalm 119:50-51, Psalm 119:53, Psalm 119:56, Psalm 119:67, Psalm 119:72, Psalm 119:74, Psalm 119:78, Psalm 119:83 father on come then man Chapter then I thou man day. Thus understood, it would be appicable to the condition of such a young Hebrew as Joseph or Daniel, and would express the feelings which such young men would have in the temptations by which they were surrounded, and the firmness of their attachment to the principles of the religion in which they had been trained. The idea is a

beautiful one, and may properly be used for an illustration, but there is no certain evidence that the psalm was composed under those circumstances. Others have supposed that the psalm was written by Jaddo Nehemiah 12:22, the high priest in the time of Alexander the Great - amidst the troubles which then existed in Judea, and amidst the opposition of the Samaritans - and that the design was to show his own firmness in the Jewish religion, and to excite the Hebrews to the same firmness by setting forth the authority and excellence of the word of God, and the authority of the law.

Rudinger supposes that it was composed in the time of the persecutions under Antiochus - the times of the Maccabees - with the same design. All these are mere conjectures, and it is now impossible to ascertain the occasion on which the psalm was composed, or to determine who was its author. Nor is it necessary. The psalm is so applicable to the people of God at all times, so suited to strengthen the mind in trial, so adapted to guide, comfort, and support the soul, and so true in regard to the influence and value of the law of God, that it is not needful to know when it was composed, or who its author was. It is sufficient to know that it was composed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and is a repository of truths which will be of inestimable value in all ages of the world.

There is no grouping or arrangement of the subjects in the psalm, and little or no connection between the sentiments in the verses of it. Much in it has a proverbial cast, or is presented in the form of aphorisms; and the order of thought seems to have been suggested by the necessity of choosing a particular letter with which to commence each verse, and the succession of eight verses under each letter. It might be possible to make an arrangement of the psalm under particular heads - such as the following, under the general title of the word of God, or the law of God:

I. In youth
II. In trial
III. In duty

IV. In meditation

V. At night

VI. In public

VII. In private

VIII. In prosperity
IX. In adversity, etc., etc.

But, in an exposition of the psalm, such an arrangement or classification, changing the structure of the psalm, might be of doubtful propriety, and it will be right to adhere to the order which the Spirit of Inspiration has seen fit to observe.

Verse 1

Blessed are the undefiled in the way - In the way or journey of life; in the path of religion; in the road which leads to heaven. As life - the religious life - is represented under the image of a journey, the expression here is equivalent to saying, "Blessed are those who in the journey of life - in their religious course - are pure, Sincere, uncontaminated." On the word way, see the notes at Psalm 1:6. The margin here on the word undefiled, is perfect, or sincere. So the Hebrew. The word is the same as in Job 1:1, where it is rendered "perfect." See the notes at that passage. The Greek translation is undefiled - ἄμωμοι *amōmoi* So the Latin, *"immaculati."* Luther renders it, "Who live without blemish" or stain. The idea is, "Blessed are they who are upright, sincere, perfect, in their course." The whole psalm is designed to illustrate this thought, by showing what the influence of a sincere and conscientious attachment to the principles of the law or word of God in the various circumstances of life must be.

Who walk in the law of the Lord - Who habitually obey his law. This constitutes sincerity, uprightness, perfection in a man's life, for the law of the Lord is the only just rule of human conduct.

Verse 2

Blessed are they that keep his testimonies - His commandments or laws, considered as what he bears witness to concerning that which is just, wise, good. Every law of a parent is to his children a testimony on his part of what is wise and right and good; and so every law of God is his solemn testimony as to what is right and good for man. See Psalm 19:7, note; Psalm 25:10, note.

And that seek him with the whole heart - With a sincere desire to know his will and to do it; without hypocrisy or guile; with no selfish or

sinister aims. As God knows the heart, all other modes of "seeking" him must be in vain. It is impossible for man to impose on him by appearances.

Verse 3

They also do no iniquity - See the notes at 1 John 3:9. The meaning is, that they are righteous; their character is that they do that which is right. It cannot mean that all persons who are religious are actually and absolutely perfect - for no man would hold this opinion; no one does hold it. It is general language such as is commonly used to describe an upright or righteous man. The declaration is true of all who are the friends of God - or, who are truly; religious - in the following senses:

(1) That they are habitually and characteristically righteous;

(2) That they intend to do right - for a man who deliberately purposes to do wrong - to lead a life of sin and disobedience, cannot be a pious man.

(3) That when they do err, it is not the result of intention, or the design of their life, but because they are tempted; are overcome with passion; are led by the power of their native corruption of heart to act contrary to their better judgment and their true character.

See Romans 7:14-17. On the other hand, it is true that a man who is not characteristically righteous; who is not an upright man in his dealings; who is not true, and honest, and temperate, and just, and benevolent, cannot be a child of God and heir of heaven. No exactness of orthodoxy, and no fervour of emotion, and no zeal in the cause of religion, can constitute true piety without this.

They walk in his ways - Habitually; constantly; characteristically. They are not merely honest, upright, and just in their dealings with men, but they walk in the ways of God; they are religious.

Verse 4

Thou hast commanded - All this is here traced to the command of God; to the fact that he has required it. It is not mere human prudence; it is not mere morality; it is not because it will be for our interest; it is because God requires it. This is the foundation of all true virtue; and until a man acts from this motive it cannot be said that he is in the proper sense a righteous man.

To keep thy precepts diligently - Hebrew, "very much;" that is, to do it constantly; faithfully. Each one of his laws is to be observed, and to be observed always, and in all circumstances.

Verse 5

O that my ways were directed … - Indicating the desire of the pious heart. That desire - a prevailing, constant, uniform desire - is to keep the law of God. It is the aim of the life; it is the supreme purpose of the soul; it is the ruling wish of the man, thus to keep the law of God. He in whose bosom this is not the constant wish cannot be a pious man. The Hebrew particle used here, and rendered "O that," is a particle denoting a wish, or an earnest desire. The word "ways" denotes the course of life. The whole is expressive of an earnest desire to live in accordance with the law of God. It implies also a sense of dependence on God.

Verse 6

Then shall I not be ashamed - On the word ashamed, see Job 6:20, note; Psalm 25:2-3, note. The meaning here is, that he would not have occasion to be ashamed; he would not be disappointed; all his hopes would be realized. He would have full evidence of piety; he would enjoy the comforts which he sought in religion; he would feel assured of ultimately obtaining eternal life.

When I have respect unto all thy commandments - literally, "In my looking at all thy commandments." That is, in his regarding them; in his feeling that all were equally binding on him; and in his having the consciousness that he had not intentionally neglected, violated, or disregarded any of them. There can be no true piety except where a man intends to keep all the commands of God. If he makes a selection among them, keeping this one or that one, as may be most convenient for him, or as may be most for his interest, or as may be most popular, it is full proof that he knows nothing of the nature of true religion. A child has no proper respect for a parent if he obeys him only as shall suit his whim or his convenience; and no man can be a pious man who does not purpose, in all honesty, to keep All the commandments of God; to submit to his will in everything.

Verse 7

I will praise thee with uprightness of heart - With an upright and sincere heart.

When I shall have learned - Hebrew, "In my learning." In the practice or act of learning them. His own experience of their nature, influence, and value would lead him to sincere praise. He had no doubt of finding that they were worthy of his praises, and of seeing in them more and more occasion to glorify and honor God. The more we know of God, the more shall we see in him to praise. The larger our acquaintance and experience, the more our hearts will be disposed to magnify his name. This remark must extend to all that there is in God to be learned; and as that is infinite, so there will be occasion for renewed and more elevated praise to all eternity.

Thy righteous judgments - Margin, as in Hebrew, "Judgments of thy righteousness." The laws or statutes which God, as a righteous or just God, appoints to be the rule of conduct to his creatures.

Verse 8

I will keep thy statutes - Thy commands; thy laws. This expresses the firm purpose of the psalmist, He meant to keep the law of God; he could confidently say that he would do it - yet coupled with the prayer which follows, that God would not forsake him.

O forsake me not utterly - Hebrew, "To very much;" so as to leave me to myself. His confidence that he would keep the commandments of God was based on the prayer that God would not leave him. There is no other ground of persuasion that we shall be able to keep the commandments of God than that which rests on the belief and the hope that He will not leave us.

Verse 9

Wherewithal - This begins the second portion of the psalm, extending to Psalm 119:16, in which all the verses begin with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet (ב *b*), indicated in our translation by the word *Beth*. These names of the letters, inserted for convenience, are no part of the psalm, as it is not so marked in the original. This mode of indicating the divisions of the psalm is special to our version. It is not in the Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, or the German versions. The word wherewithal means "by what" (Hebrew); that is, What means shall a young man adopt by which he may "cleanse his way?" it indicates a state of inquiry. The case supposed is that of a young man pondering the question how he may be saved from the corruptions of his own heart, and escape the temptations to which he is exposed in early years, and lead a pure and upright life. There can be no more important inquiry for one just entering on the journey of life; there can be found

nowhere a more just and comprehensive answer than is contained in this single verse. All the precepts of ancient and modern wisdom, all the teachings of pagan morality and religion, and all the results of the experience of mankind, could furnish nothing in addition to what is here suggested. The world has no higher wisdom than this by which to guide a young man, so that he may lead a holy life.

Shall a young man - The remark here might be applied also to those who are in middle life, or even to those who are in more advanced years, but it is applied here especially to the young, because it may be supposed that in the other cases the matter may be regarded as settled by experience; because to the young, as they commence life, the inquiry is so momentous; and because it is a question which it may be supposed will come up before the mind of every young man who has any right aspirations, and any proper conception of the dangers which encompass his path.

Cleanse his way? - Make his course of life pure and upright. The language does not necessarily imply that there had been any previous impurity or vice, but it has particular reference to the future: not how he might cleanse himself from past offences, but how he might make the future pure. The inquiry is, how he might conduct himself - what principles he could adopt - under what influence he could bring himself - so that his future course would be honest, honorable, upright.

By taking heed thereto … - The word "thereto" is not in the original. The Hebrew is, "To keep according to thy word;" or, "in keeping according to thy word." Prof. Alexander supposes that this means "to keep it (his way) according to thy word;" and that the whole is a question - "How may a young man so cleanse his way as to keep it according to thy word?" - and that the answer to the question is to be found in the general strain of the psalm, or in the general principles laid down in the psalm. But it is clear that the answer to the question must be found in the verse, or not found at all; and the most natural construction is that in our translation. So DeWette renders it: "How can a young man walk guiltless? If (or, when) he holds (or, keeps) himself according to thy word." The meaning clearly is If he governs himself according to the law of God - if he makes that law the rule of his life and conduct, he would be enabled to do it. All other things might fail; this rule would never fail, in making and keeping a man pure. The more principles of common honesty, the principles of honor, the considerations of self-interest, the desire of reputation - valuable as they may be - would not

constitute a security in regard to his conduct; the law of God would, for that is wholly pure.

Verse 10

With my whole heart have I sought thee - See the notes at Psalm 119:2. The psalmist in Psalm 119:2 speaks of the "blessedness of those who seek the Lord with the whole heart;" in this verse he says that this blessedness was his. He could affirm that he had thus sought God. He had such a consciousness that this was the aim and purpose of his life that he could say so without hesitation. Every man who claims to be a religious man ought to be able to say this. Alas, how few can do it!

O let me not wander … - Keep me in this steady purpose; this fixed design. This is the language of a heart where there is a consciousness of its weakness, and its liability to err, strong as may be its purpose to do right. Such an apprehension is one of the best means of security, for such an apprehension will lead a man to "pray," and while a man prays he is safe.

Verse 11

Thy word have I hid in mine heart - Compare the notes at Psalm 37:31. The word rendered "hid" means properly to conceal, so that a thing may be secret, private, inaccessible; then, to lay up in private, to treasure up. to hoard - as money or jewels - commonly "hidden" from public view. Job 20:26; Psalm 17:14. Then it means to lay up in one's heart, as a secret, inaccessible place; to hide one's thoughts; purposes, designs; or to lay up knowledge or wisdom in the heart as a treasure, Job 10:13; Proverbs 2:1; Proverbs 7:1. The meaning here is, that he had "treasured" up the word of God, as the most valuable thing, in his heart; it was "there," though unseen; it constituted the secret power by which he was governed; it was permanently deposited there, as the most valuable of his treasures.

That I might not sin against thee - That it might protect me from sinning against thee. That I might be continually guided by its precepts; that I might be admonished of duty; that I might be deterred from going astray.

Verse 12

Blessed art thou, O Lord - Blessed art thou as the author of such a law. This language of benediction or doxology is an outbreak of feeling or adoration in view of such a law - so good, so holy, so suited to direct and guide man. The mind is full of the subject; and the lips give vent to the feeling of gratitude and joy that such a law had been revealed to people.

Teach me thy statutes - Make me more and more acquainted with a law so pure, so rich, so valuable.

Verse 13

With my lips have I declared - That is, I have openly and publicly made thy words known to others; I have defended and vindicated them.

All the judgments - The word judgments here means the same as statutes or laws: and the idea is, that he had been on the side of those laws, and had endeavored by argument and persuasion to bring others under their influence. How he had done it we are not informed; but we have no reason to suppose that the author of the psalm was a minister of religion, and if not, then we have here an example of what a man who does not claim to be a public teacher may do, and should do, in making known and defending divine truth. Every man is as much bound to do this in his sphere as the minister of religion is in his; and private member‘s of the church have often an opportunity of doing this to more advantage than the ministers of the gospel possess.

Of thy mouth - With my mouth I speak those things which have proceeded from thine. I speak in thy name; I declare thy truth. It is not my own; it is thine.

Verse 14

I have rejoiced … - I do rejoice; I exult in this; I find my happiness there. The word expresses a high degree of joy.

As much as in all riches - Hebrew, “as upon all wealth.” As people rejoice who have great wealth. I find my happiness in religion, as if in the possession of real wealth. Proverbs 10:22.

Verse 15

I will meditate in thy precepts - I will think of them; I will find my happiness in them. See the notes at Psalm 1:2.

And have respect unto thy ways - And look to thy ways - thy commands. I continually regard them, or refer to them in my mind as the guide of my life. See the notes at Psalm 119:6.

Verse 16

I will delight myself in thy statutes - I will find my happiness in thy laws. See Psalm 1:2, note; Psalm 112:1, note.

I will not forget thy word - I will not allow the world to crowd it out of my mind.

Verse 17

Deal bountifully … - This commences the next portion of the psalm, indicated by the letter *Gimel* (ג *g*), the third letter of the Hebrew alphabet, answering to our letter "g." Each verse of this portion Psalm 119:17-24 begins with this letter. There is a resemblance between the first word of this verse - גמל *gemol* - and the letter - "Gimel" - which commences the eight verses of this portion of the psalm. The noun (derived from the verb) - גמל *gâmâl* - means a camel, and the letter *gimel* has been supposed to have derived its name from its having originally a resemblance to the camel's neck. In some of the Phenician inscriptions, and in the Ethiopic alphabet, it has this form (Gesenius, "Lex"). The verb used here means to do, or show, or cause good or evil to anyone; and then to reward, or to recompense, either good or evil. Here it seems to be used in a general sense of doing good, or showing favor, as in Psalm 13:6; Psalm 116:7; Psalm 142:7. Compare Proverbs 11:17. It does not necessarily imply that the author of the psalm had any claim, or demanded this on the ground of merit. He begged the favor, the friendship, the interposition of God in his behalf.

That I may live - The continuance of life was dependent on the favor of God.

And keep thy word - For grace to do this he was equally dependent on God; and he asked that life might be continued, in order that he might honor the word of God by obeying it.

Verse 18

Open thou mine eyes - Margin, "Reveal." So the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate. The Hebrew word means to be naked; then to make naked, to uncover, to disclose, to reveal. Here it is the same as "uncover;" that is, take away from the eyes what is before them to prevent clear vision. Compare Numbers 22:31; Numbers 24:4, Numbers 24:16.

That I may behold wondrous things - Things which are suited to excite wonder and amazement: that is, things which are secret or hidden from the common view; the deep, spiritual meaning of the word of God. By natural vision he might see the surface - the letter; to see the deep, hidden, real, meaning, he needed the special influence of God. Compare 1 Corinthians 2:12, 1 Corinthians 2:14-15. He believed that there were such things in the law of God; he desired to see them.

Out of thy law - Out of the written word; out of the Scriptures. The word "law" here is used to denote "all" that God had revealed to mankind; all that is contained in the volume of inspiration. The truths taught here are

(1) That there are deep, hidden, secret things in the word of God, which are not perceived by the natural man;

(2) That those things, when understood, are suited to excite wonder, or to fill the mind with admiring views of God;

(3) That a special illumination of God is necessary that man may perceive these things; and

(4) That the proper understanding of these things is connected with prayer, and can be hoped for only in answer to prayer.

No one has a proper appreciation of divine truth - of the beauty, the spiritual meaning, the grandeur, the sublimity of the Bible - until he is a renewed - a praying - man. Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 2:6-15.

Verse 19

I am a stranger in the earth - A wayfaring man; a pilgrim; a sojourner; a man whose permanent home is not in this world. The word is applicable to one who belongs to another country, and who is now merely passing through a foreign land, or sojourning there for a time. Compare the notes at Hebrews 11:13. The home of the child of God is heaven. Here he is in a strange - a foreign - land. He is to abide here but for a little time, and then to pass on to his eternal habitation.

Hide not thy commandments from me - Make me to know them; keep them continually before me. In this strange land, away from my home, let me have the comfort of feeling that thy commands are ever with me to guide me; thy promises to comfort me. The feeling is that of one in a strange land who would desire, if possible, to keep up constant communications with his home - his family, his friends, his kindred there. On earth, the place of our sojourning - of our pilgrimage - the friend of God desires to have constant contact with heaven, his final home; not to be left to the desolate feeling that he is cut off from all contact with that world where he is forever to dwell.

Verse 20

My soul breaketh - This word means to break; to crush; to break in pieces by scraping, rubbing, or grating. The idea would seem to be, not that

he was crushed as by a single blow, but that his soul - his strength - was worn away by little and little. The desire to know more of the commands of God acted continually on him, exhausting his strength, and overcoming him. He so longed for God that, in our language, "it wore upon him" - as any ungratified desire does. It was not the possession of the knowledge of God that exhausted him; it was the intenseness of his desire that he might know more of God.

For the longing - For the earnest desire.

That it hath unto thy judgments at all times - Thy law; thy commands. This was a constant feeling. It was not fitful or spasmodic. It was the steady, habitual state of the soul on the subject. He had never seen enough of the beauty and glory of the law of God to feel that all the needs of his nature were satisfied, or that he could see and know no more; he had seen and felt enough to excite in him an ardent desire to be made fully acquainted with all that there is in the law of God. Compare the notes at Psalm 17:15.

Verse 21

Thou hast rebuked the proud - Compare Psalm 9:5. The meaning is, that God had done this not by word but by deed. The proud were everywhere rebuked by God, alike in his law, and in his providence. The connection seems to be this: the psalmist is meditating on the benefit or advantage of keeping the law of God; of a humble, pious life. His mind naturally adverts to what would be the opposite of this - or to this in contrast with an opposite course of life; and he says, therefore, that God had in every way, and at all times, manifested his displeasure against that class of people. Such a course, therefore, must be attended with misery; but the course which he proposed to pursue must be attended with happiness.

That are cursed - The accursed; those who are regarded and treated by God as accursed, or as objects of his disapprobation.

Which do err from thy commandments - Who depart from thy law. The sense is, "I propose and intend to keep thy law. As a motive to this, I look at the consequences which must follow from disobeying it. I see it everywhere in the divine treatment of those who do disregard that law. They are subject to the displeasure - the solemn rebuke - of God. So all must be who disregard his law; and it is my purpose not to be found among their number."

Verse 22

Remove from me reproach and contempt - Show me thy favor, and let me not suffer in the estimation of mankind on account of my religion. Let me not be exposed to malicious charges; to accusations of hypocrisy, insincerity, and unfaithfulness on account of my religion. This "reproach and contempt" might arise from two sources;

(1) on account of religion itself, or because he was a true friend of God; or

(2) he may have been charged with hypocrisy and insincerity; with doing things inconsistent with the profession of religion. These accusations he prays may be removed from him:

(a) in order that the true religion might not be in itself a matter of reproach, but that God might honor his own religion, and make it esteemed among people;

(b) because he was conscious that so far as he was concerned, the charges were unfounded. He did not deserve the "reproach and contempt" that properly belong to a life of hypocrisy and insincerity.

For I have kept thy testimonies - My conscience assures me of this. I can appeal to thee, my God, in proof that I do not deserve the charge of insincerity and hypocrisy. Every professedly pious man ought to be able thus to appeal to conscience and to God, and to say, in the most solemn manner, that he does not deserve the reproach of hypocrisy and insincerity.

Verse 23

Princes also did sit and speak against me - This would have been applicable to David many times in his life, but it was also applicable to many others, and there is nothing in the language which would limit it to David. It is evident that the author of the psalm had been subject to reproach from those who were of exalted rank; it is clear also that he felt this keenly. It is natural, whether proper or not, that we should feel the reproach and contempt of those in elevated life - the rich, the honored, the learned - more than of those in humbler life. Their good opinion can be of value only as they may be better qualified than others to judge of what constitutes true excellence, or as they may have it in their power to do us more harm, or to do more to aid us in doing good, than others have; but truth and principle are never to be sacrificed that we may secure their favor; and if, in the faithful discharge of our duty, and the zealous adherence to the

principles of our religion, we incur their frowns, we are to bear it - as the great Lord and Saviour of his people did. Hebrews 13:13.

But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes - I was engaged in this; I continued to do it; I was not deterred from it by their opposition; I found comfort in it, when they sat and talked against me. This would seem to have reference to some occasion when they were together - in public business, or in the social circle. They, the princes and nobles engaged in the ordinary topics of conversation, or in conversation connected with revelry, frivolity, or sin. Unwilling to participate in this - having different tastes - feeling that it was improper to be one of their companions in such a mode of spending time, or in such subjects of conversation, "he" withdrew, he turned his thoughts on the law of God, he sought comfort in meditation on that law and on God. He became, therefore, the subject of remark - perhaps of their jests - "because" he thus refused to mingle with them, or because he put on what seemed to be hypocritical seriousness, and was (what they deemed) stern, sour, unsocial, as if he thus publicly, though tacitly, meant to rebuke them. Nothing will be more "likely" to subject one to taunting remarks, to rebuke, to contempt, than to manifest a religious spirit, and to introduce religion in any way in the circles of the worldly and the frivolous.

Verse 24

Thy testimonies also are my delight - See the notes at Psalm 119:16. He found his main happiness in the word of God.

And my counselors - Margin, as in Hebrew, "men of my counsel." He sought direction and advice from them as from a friend who would give him counsel. He looked to the revealed law of God to ascertain what was right; to know how he should act in the emergencies of life.

Verse 25

My soul cleaveth unto the dust - This commences a new division of the psalm, in which each verse begins with the "fourth" letter of the Hebrew alphabet - *Daleth* (ד *d*), equivalent to the English "d." There is nothing in the sense to separate it from the other parts of the psalm. The word rendered "cleaveth" means to be glued to; to stick fast. It has the sense of adhering firmly to anything, so that it cannot easily be separated from it. Compare the notes at Psalm 63:8. The word "dust" here may mean either the earth, and earthly things, considered as low, base, unworthy, worldly; or it may mean the grave, as if he were near to that, and in danger of dying. DeWette understands it in the latter sense. Compare Psalm 44:25; Psalm 22:29. Yet

the word cleave would hardly suggest this idea; and the force of that word would be better represented by the idea that his soul, as it were, adhered to the things of earth; that it seemed to be so fastened to them - so glued to them - that it could not be detached from them; that his affections were low, earthly, grovelling, so as to give him deep distress, and to lead him to cry to God for life and strength that he might break away from them. This expresses what is often felt by good people, and thus presents one of the forms of religious experience. Compare Romans 7:14-15.

Quicken thou me - Cause me to live; give me vigor and strength to break away from this which binds me fast, and to rise above these low propensities.

According to thy word - That is, either according to thy promises made to thy people to aid them when they are in distress; or, according to the principles of thy word, that I may live as thy word requires. Who has not found his soul so cleaving to dust - to earth - to worldly things - as to feel himself degraded by it, and to lead him to cry out with earnestness that God would give him strength, life, vigor, that his soul might rise to better things?

Verse 26

I have declared my ways - That is, I have declared or recounted them to thee. I have made mention of my cares, troubles, anxieties, purposes. I have laid them all before thee, reserving or keeping back nothing.

And thou heardest me - Thou didst answer me. It is only when we declare all our ways before God, that we can hope he "will" hear us. It is right and proper that we should go before God with all our cares and troubles. There is nothing that gives us anxiety, of which we may not speak to him, however trivial it may seem to be - even as a child speaks to a mother of the smallest matter that troubles him. When this is done, we may be assured that God will not turn away from us, or disregard our cry.

"I told him all my secret grief;
My secret groaning reached his cars;
He gave my inward pains relief,
And calmed the tumult of my fears."

Teach me thy statutes - Make known to me thy will. Acquaint me with what thou wouldst have me to do. See Psalm 119:12.

Verse 27

Make me to understand … - See the notes at Psalm 119:18.

So shall I talk of thy wondrous works - The things in thy works - thy providential dealings - that are wondrous. That is, with a heart full of the subject, he could not but speak of those things - for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." See the notes at Psalm 39:2-4.

Verse 28

My soul melteth - Margin, "droppeth." The Hebrew word here employed - דלף *dâlaph* - means to drop, to drip, to distil, spoken of a house, as when the rain drops through the roof, Ecclesiastes 10:18; then, to shed tears, to weep, Job 16:20 - and this seems to be the meaning here. The idea of melting is not properly in the word, and the term weep would better express the meaning. His soul seemed to drop tears. It overflowed with tears. Yet there is an idea of abundant or constant weeping. It is not a gush of emotion, as when we say of one that he is "bathed in tears;" it is the idea of a steady flow or dropping of tears - slow, silent, but constant - as if the soul were dripping away or dissolving. Thus the idea is more striking and beautiful than that of melting. It is quiet but continuous grief that slowly wears away the soul. There are two kinds of sorrow:

(a) the one represented by floods of tears, like fierce torrents that sweep all away, and are soon passed;

(b) the other is the gentle dropping - the constant wearing - the slow attrition caused by inward grief, that secretly but certainly wears away the soul.

The latter is more common, and more difficult to be borne than the other. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "My soul slumbereth."

For heaviness - This word means grief, sorrow, vexation. Proverbs 14:13; Proverbs 17:21. It is here silent grief; hidden sorrow. How many thus pine in secret, until life slowly wears away, and they sink to the grave.

Strengthen thou me - Give me strength to meet this constant wearing away - this slow work of sorrow. We need strength to bear great and sudden sorrow; we need it not less to bear that which constantly wears upon us; which makes our sleep uneasy; which preys upon our nerves, and slowly eats away our life.

According unto thy word - See Psalm 119:9, Psalm 119:25.

Verse 29

Remove from me - Take it from me; cause it to depart; let me not be under its influence or power.

The way of lying - Every false, deceitful, hypocritical way. We are not to suppose that the psalmist was addicted to lying, but that he felt he was, like all people, in danger of acting from false views, from wrong motives, or under the influence of delusion and deceit. It is a prayer that he might always be sincere and truthful. No man who knows his own heart can doubt the propriety of this prayer. On nothing does a man need more to examine himself; in nothing does he more need the grace of God, than that he may be sincere.

And grant me thy law graciously - The knowledge of thy law; grace to obey thy law. The single word rendered "grant graciously" is a word which implies the idea of mercy or favor. It was not a thing which he claimed as a right; it was that for which he was dependent on the mercy of God.

Verse 30

I have chosen the way of truth - Among all the paths of life I have selected this. I prefer this. I desire to walk in this. Religion is, wherever it exists, a matter of preference or choice; and the friend of God prefers his service to the service of the world.

Thy judgments - Thy statutes; thy laws.

Have I laid before me - I have set them before my mind as the guide of my conduct; I have made their observance the end and aim of my life.

Verse 31

I have stuck unto thy testimonies - The word here rendered "stuck" is the same which in Psalm 119:25 is rendered "cleave:" - "My soul cleaveth unto the dust." It means here that he had adhered to the testimonies of God as if he had been glued to them, or as if he and they were firmly united together. He had so adhered to them that he could not be detached from them.

O Lord, put me not to shame - Let me not be disappointed or confounded; let all my anticipations of the good effects of obeying thy law be realized; let me find all that I have hoped for; let me partake of thy friendship and favor as I desire. See the notes at Psalm 119:6.

Verse 32

I will run the way of thy commandments - That is, I will not merely keep them - which might be expressed by "I will walk in them," but I will

hasten to keep them; I will do it with alacrity, as when one runs to accomplish an object. I will devote to them all the energies of my life.

When thou shalt enlarge my heart - Or, more literally, "For thou wilt enlarge my heart;" expressing confidence that God would do this, so that he would be thus inclined and enabled to keep his commandments. it is an acknowledgment of dependence, and at the same time the expression of a confident belief that God would grant him the grace needful for him. The phrase "to enlarge the heart" means to make it free; to deliver it from all hindrances to what is right; to fill it with noble and holy purposes; to stimulate and animate it. The heart is contracted or made narrow by selfishness, pride, vanity, ambition, covetousness; it is made large by charity, love, hope, benevolence. Sin narrows the soul; religion enlarges it.

Verse 33

Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes - This begins a new division of the psalm, indicated by the letter *He* (ה *h* "h"). The word rendered "teach" means properly to throw, to cast, to hurl; and then, to teach - as if truth were thrown and scattered abroad. The sentiment is the same as in Psalm 119:12.

And I shall keep it unto the end - Always. To the end of life. His keeping it depended on grace given to him continually to dispose and enable him to do it.

Verse 34

Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law - Give me right views of it, of its nature and obligation. It is not a prayer that God would give him the faculty of understanding or intelligence; but that he would enable him to take just views of the law. The word is the same as in Psalm 119:27, rendered there, "Make me to understand."

Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart - See Psalm 119:2. I will keep it with undivided affections; I will make it the sole guide of my life.

Verse 35

Make me to go in the path … - That is, Incline me to it; so direct me that I shall thus walk. It is an acknowledgment of his dependence on God, that he might be able to carry out the cherished purposes of his soul.

For therein do I delight - See Psalm 119:16. I am conscious of having pleasure in thy commandments; of having a strong desire to keep them, and I pray for grace that I may be able to do it. Real delight in the law of God is

one of the best means of securing its observance; one of the best evidences that it will be kept.

Verse 36

Incline my heart unto thy testimonies - Cause my heart to be inclined to them, or to be disposed to keep them. This, too, is a recognition of dependence, and a prayer for guidance.

And not to covetousness - To gain; to the love of money. This seems to be referred to here as the principal thing which would turn away the heart from religion, or as that from which the most danger was to be feared. There are undoubtedly many other things which will do this - for all sin will do it; but this was the chief danger which the psalmist apprehended in his own case, and perhaps he meant to refer to this as the principal danger on this subject which besets the path of man. There are manymore persons turned away from the service of God, and kept away from it, by covetousness than there are by any other one sin. When the psalmist prays that God would not "incline" his heart to covetousness, the language is similar to that in the Lord's prayer - "And lead us not into temptation." That is, Restrain us from it; let us not be put in circumstances where we shall be in danger of it. We are not to suppose that God exerts any positive influence either to make a man covetous, or to tempt him. See James 1:13-14.

Verse 37

Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity - Vain things; wicked things; things which would be likely to lead me astray from what is real and true. Compare Isaiah 33:15; Job 31:1. Margin, here, as in Hebrew, "make to pass." Make my eyes to pass rapidly from such objects, that I may not look at them, may not contemplate them, may not dwell upon them. There is danger in looking on sin steadily; in surveying its features; in returning to contemplate it. An ugly object loses much of its deformity when we look often upon it; and this is a benevolent law, lest we should be miserable when we are under a necessity of looking on it. Sin follows this general law, and is to be avoided altogether, even in its contemplation, if we would be safe. A man should be thankful in this world that he has eyelids; and as he can close his eyes, so he should often do it.

And quicken thou me in thy way - Endow me with life, energy, vigor, that I may walk in thy way.

Verse 38

Stablish thy word unto thy servant - Confirm it; make it seem firm and true; let not my mind be vacillating or skeptical in regard to thy truth. This seems to be a prayer against the influence of doubt and scepticism; a prayer that doubts might not be suffered to spring up in his mind, and that the objections and difficulties of scepticism might have no place there. There is a class of people whose minds are naturally skeptical and unbelieving, and for such people such a prayer is especially appropriate. For none can it be improper to pray that the word of God may always seem to them to be true; that their minds may never be left to the influence of doubt and unbelief.

Who is devoted to thy fear - literally, "Who," or which, "to thy fear." This may refer either to the author of the psalm, or to the word of God. It may mean that he was among those who feared - that is, worshipped God; or, that the word of God had reference to the "fear," that is, to the worship of God, or was designed to secure that. The construction seems to demand the latter interpretation; and then the prayer is, that God would confirm his faith in that "word" - in that revealed truth - which was designed to secure the worship of God.

Verse 39

Turn away my reproach - The reproach which is likely to come upon me from being a professed worshipper of God. In all ages good men have been exposed to this reproach.

Which I fear - Which I have reason to apprehend will come upon me. This may not mean that he was personally afraid of it, but merely that he had reason to apprehend that he was exposed to it. The prayer is proper, for there is nothing which our nature makes us shrink back from more than reproach. Compare Psalm 119:22; Psalm 69:9, Psalm 69:20; Romans 15:3; 2 Corinthians 12:10. The word repreach in the original is the same which denotes shame or dishonor.

For thy judgments are good - Thy statutes; thy laws. I know they are good. I feel that I desire to obey them. I pray, therefore, that obedience on my part to that which is good may not subject me to shame; that people may see that thy laws are good, and that it is not a matter of reproach to obey them.

Verse 40

Behold, I have longed after thy precepts - I have earnestly desired them. See the notes at Psalm 119:20.

Quicken me in thy righteousness - Make me to live; to live in obedience to thy righteous laws. See Psalm 119:25, note; Psalm 119:37, note.

Verse 41

Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord - This commences a new portion of the psalm, in which each verse begins with the letter *Vau* (ו *v* "v"). There are almost no words in Hebrew that begin with this letter, which is properly a conjunction, and hence, in each of the verses in this section of the psalm Psalm 119:41-48 the beginning of the verse is in the original a conjunction -.ו This does not here indicate a connection, as with us the conjunction "and" would naturally do; but is a mere artificial arrangement in order that the verse may begin with that letter, and it in no manner affects the sense. The phrase "Let thy mercies come" is literally, "and thy mercies shall come," or "and let thy mercies come." That is, Let thy mercy be manifested to me; let me experience thy mercy and thy favor.

Even thy salvation - mercy connected with salvation, or that leads to salvation.

According to thy word - According to the promises of thy word; according to the arrangements which thou hast made, and hast revealed. The only hope of mercy is that which is held out in the word of God.

Verse 42

So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me - I shall have something by which I may reply to those who calumniate me. So the Saviour replied to the suggestions of the tempter almost wholly by passages of Scripture Matthew 4:4, Matthew 4:7, Matthew 4:10; and so, in many cases, the best answer that can be given to reproaches on the subject of religion will be found in the very words of Scripture. A man of little learning, except that which he has derived from the Bible, may often thus silence the cavils and reproaches of the learned sceptic; a man of simplehearted, pure piety, with no weapon but the word of God, may often thus be better armed than if he had all the arguments of the schools at his command. Compare Ephesians 6:17.

For I trust in thy word - I believe it; I rely on it; I confide in that, as my only comfort and protection.

Verse 43

And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth - Do not take it entirely or altogether from me. Let me not be utterly hopeless; let me be

at no time without some evidence that thy word dwells in me with sustaining and sanctifying power. The prayer seems to have been offered when the mind was troubled and in doubt, and when it seemed as if all hope and all trust in the truth of God would vanish. The words rendered "utterly" mean "to very much;" that is, altogether or entirely. Let it not be done until the extreme shall be reached.

For I have hoped in thy judgments - I do trust in thy word, and it is my only trust. If that is gone, all is gone. As long as I can hold on to that, even in the slightest degree, I am safe. When all else fails, if that has not utterly failed me, I shall be secure.

Verse 44

So shall I keep thy law continually forever and ever - At all times and in all places; in this world and the world to come. This indicates a purpose to do it, and an assurance that he would do it, if God should enable him to retain even the slightest hold on the truth.

Verse 45

And I will walk at liberty - Margin, "at large." Luther renders it, "freely." The Septuagint, "in a broad place." The Hebrew word means "wide, broad, large, spacious." The reference is to that which is free and open; that in which there are no limits, checks, restraints; where a man does what he pleases. The meaning here is, that he would feel he was free. He would not be restrained by evil passions and corrupt desires. He would be delivered from those things which seemed to fetter his goings. This does not here refer so much to external troubles or hindrances, to being oppressed and straitened by external foes, as to internal enemies - to the servitude of sin - to the slavery of appetite and passion. Compare the notes at Romans 7:9-14. See also Job 36:16; Psalm 118:5. The margin well expresses the sense of the passage.

For I seek thy precepts - I seek or endeavor to obey them. I seek them as the guide of my life. I ask nothing else to direct me.

Verse 46

I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings … - In the presence of men of most elevated rank. I will not be ashamed to avow my belief in thy word before those in power - whether friendly or unfriendly to thee and to thy cause. I will not disguise my belief in thy truth with any desire to secure their favor; I will not be intimidated from expressing my faith by any

dread of their frowns. Compare Matthew 10:18-19; Acts 4:19; Acts 5:29; Acts 26:2.

Verse 47

And I will delight myself … - See the notes at Psalm 119:16.

Verse 48

My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments … - As an expression of delight or rejoicing, as people lift up their hands with their voice when they give expression to joy. It denotes a high statue of joy, such as leads to an outward expression; not merely that which exists in calm contemplation, but where the heart is full, and when it finds outward expression.

And I will meditate in thy statutes - See the notes at Psalm 1:2. I will indicate my joy - my happiness - in thy commandments in every way possible; by outward expressions, and by deep and calm contemplation when I am alone; in my daily employments, in solitude, in the night-watches. This is indicative always of true religion.

Verse 49

Remember the word unto thy servant - This commences a new division of the psalm, in which each verse begins with the Hebrew letter *Zayin* (ז *z*) - answering to our "z." There is nothing special in this portion of the psalm as indicated by the letter. The language here is a prayer that God would not forget what he had promised; that all that he had said might be fulfilled; that the expectations and hopes which he had raised in the mind might be realised. It is language which may be used with reverence, and without any implication that God would forget - as a child might with propriety and love ask a parent to remember a promise which he had made.

Upon which thou hast caused me to hope - That is, All the hope which I have has been excited by thy word; thy promises. I have no other source of hope; I cherish no other hope. I pray now, since that hope has been thus excited in me, that I may realise all I have been led to desire and to expect. The word of God is the only foundation of hope for people; and when our hopes are fairly built on that, we have a right to appeal to God that he will make it good.

Verse 50

This is my comfort in my affliction - Compare Romans 15:4. The word here rendered "comfort" occurs only here and in Job 6:10. The obvious meaning is, that his only consolation in his affliction was derived

from the word of God; the word which had caused him to hope, and the word by which he had been quickened or made alive. The particular design of this is to show the value of the word of God as a source of comfort in trouble.

For thy word hath quickened me - Has made me alive; or, caused me to live. That is, the word, the truth of God, had been the instrument of calling him from the death of sin, and of imparting to him new life, or had been the means of his regeneration. Compare James 1:18; 1 Corinthians 4:15; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 1:23. As it was by this "word" that he had been made alive, so his only comfort was in that word, and it was to him a just ground of consolation that God had brought him from the death of sin, and had imparted to him spiritual life.

Verse 51

The proud have had me greatly in derision - Those of rank; those in high life: perhaps, as we should say, the frivolous and fashionable world. They have ridiculed me; they have held me up to contempt for my scruples, my seriousness, my conscientiousness, my unwillingness to mingle with them in the pursuits, the pastimes, the frivolities of life. It is now no new thing to be held in contempt by the "proud" and the frivolous, on account of serious piety; to be thus held in contempt has been rather the rule than the exception in the treatment which the friends of religion have received from the world.

Yet have I not declined from thy law - I have not been deterred from the avowal of my religious belief; I have not turned away from the duties of piety on account of the ridicule and scorn to which I have been exposed. Compare Psalm 44:17-19.

Verse 52

I remembered - In my troubles.

Thy judgments of old - The word "judgments" here seems to refer to the divine dealings, whether expressed in the law of God, or in the actual administration of his government over the world. The words "of old" do not seem here to refer to the "eternity past," as the phrase sometimes does now, but to the constancy and uniformity of the principles of the divine administration. The psalmist remembered that the principles of that administration had been always the same; that the law of God was always the same; and that, therefore, he might confide in God. What God had done formerly he would do now; the favor which he had shown in times past he

would continue to show now. In the trials of life, in the changes which occur, in the apparent wreck of things, in the fearful prospect of disaster and ruin at any time, it is well for us to think of the unchanging principles which mark the divine dealings. Under such an administration, all who put their trust in God must be safe.

And have comforted myself - I have found consolation in this. When all else seemed to fail, it was a comfort to reflect that an unchangeable God presided over the affairs of people. We could not put confidence in a God given to change.

Verse 53

Horror hath taken hold upon me - Has seized me; has overpowered and overwhelmed me. I shudder; I tremble; I am afraid; I am filled with distress. Luther, "I am burnt up." The Hebrew word - זלעפה *zalʿâphâh* - is from a verb meaning "to be hot; to glow"; and the idea in the word is that of violent heat; then, a glow or burning, as of a wind - the "simoom" of the desert. See Psalm 11:6, where the word is translated "horrible tempest," in the margin, "burning." The word occurs only in that passage, in the one before us, and in Lamentations 5:10, where it is rendered "terrible (famine)," in the margin, "terrors," or "storms." The state referred to here is that of one who sees the storm of burning wind and sand approaching; who expects every moment to be overcome and buried; whose soul trembles with consternation.

Because of the wicked … - Their conduct alarms me. Their danger appals me. Their condition overwhelms me. I see them rebelling against God. I see them exposed to his wrath. I see the grave just before them, and the awful scenes of judgment near. I see them about to be cast off, and to sink to endless woe, and my soul is transfixed with horror. The contemplation overwhelms me with uncontrollable anguish. Can such things be? Can people be thus in danger? And can they be calm and composed, when so near such awful horrors? No man can look on the world of despair without horror; no one can truly realize that his fellow-men are exposed to the horrors of that abode without having his soul filled with anguish. Strange that all people do not feel thus - that impenitent people can walk along on the verge of the grave and of hell "without" horror - that pious people, good people, praying people, can look upon their friends in that condition without having their souls filled with unutterable anguish. Compare Psalm 119:136; Romans 9:1-4; Luke 19:41.

Verse 54

Thy statutes - Thy law; thy commandments.

Have been my songs - Have been to me a source of joy; have been my happiness, my consolation, my delight. I have found pleasure in meditating on them; I have had peace and joy in them in the day of loneliness and trouble. The psalmist rejoiced, doubtless, as the good now do,

(a) in law itself; law, as a rule of order; law, as a guide of conduct; law, as a security for safety;

(b) in such a law as that of God - so pure, so holy, so suited to promote "the happiness of man;

(c) in the stability of that law, as constituting his own personal security, the ground of his hope;

(d) in law in its influence on the universe, preserving order, and securing harmony.

In the house of my pilgrimage - In my life considered as a journey to another world; in my pilgrimage through the desert of this world; amidst rocks, and sands, and desolation; among tribes of savage men, wanderers, robbers, freebooters; with no home, no place of shelter; exposed to cold, and rain, and sleet, and ice, and snow, as pilgrims are - for to all these is the "pilgrim" - the way-farer - exposed, and all these represent the condition of one passing through this world to a better (compare Hebrews 11:13). Here, says the psalmist, I sang. I found joy in these scenes by thinking on the pure law - the pure and holy truth of God. I comforted myself with the feeling that there "is" law; that there is just government; that there is a God; that I am under the protection of law; that I am not alone, but that there is one who guides me by his truth. Compare the notes at Job 35:10. See Acts 16:25; Psalm 34:1.

Verse 55

I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night … - I have thought on thee in the night, when on my bed; I have done it in the night of calamity and sorrow. See the notes at Psalm 63:6.

Verse 56

This I had, because I kept thy precepts - literally, "This was to me;" that is, This has happened to me; this has occurred. This joyful

remembrance of thy law in the night of affliction Psalm 119:50; this stability and firmness on my part in keeping thy law when proud men have derided me Psalm 119:51; this comfort which I have derived from meditating on thy statutes Psalm 119:52; this solicitude for the welfare of others Psalm 119:53; this peace which I have enjoyed in thy law in the house of my pilgrimage Psalm 119:54; and this consolation which I have had in thee in the night-season Psalm 119:55; - all this has been granted to me because I have kept thy statutes; because I have sought to be obedient - to serve time - to find my happiness in thee. These are the proper fruits and effects of keeping the law of God. Such peace does it impart; so much does it do to sustain and comfort the soul.

Verse 57

Thou art my portion, O Lord - This begins a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter Cheth (ח *ch*), which may be represented in English by "ch." On the meaning of the language here, see the notes at Psalm 16:5. God was to him what other people seek in wealth, honor, pleasure, fame. To him, God was all and in all. He asked nothing else.

I have said - I have formed the purpose, and have expressed it. It is the deliberate and settled design of my life.

That I would keep thy words - That I would obey thee at all times; that I would keep all thy commandments.

Verse 58

I entreated thy favor - Margin, as in Hebrew, "face." That is, he prayed that God would lift upon him the light of his countenance; that he would not avert his face from him in anger.

With my whole heart - With sincere, undivided affections. See Psalm 119:2, Psalm 119:10, Psalm 119:34; Psalm 9:1.

Be merciful unto me according to thy word - See the notes at Psalm 119:41.

Verse 59

I thought on my ways - This language most naturally refers to the time of conversion, and may be employed without impropriety to describe the process of a sinner's turning to God. It would seem to be descriptive of the experience of the author of the psalm when he became personally interested in the subject of religion. The first step in such a work is reflection on the course of life which has been led; on the guilt of such a course; and on the

consequences. It is a pause in the career of sin and folly - a pause for reflection and thought. Compare Luke 15:17-18. No one is converted without such reflection; and as soon as a sinner can be made to pause and reflect on his course, there is hope that he will be converted. Assuredly it is proper for all, whatever may be their circumstances in life, to pause from time to time; to reflect; to ask what will be the consequences of the course of life which is pursued.

And turned my feet - Changed my course of life. He himself did this in fact; and he does not hesitate to say that it was he who thus turned. His own agency was employed. He does not say that he "waited" for God to turn him; or that he found he could not turn of himself, but that he turned; he paused; he reflected; he changed his course of life. This is true in conversion always. There is an actual turning from sin; an actual turning to God. The sinner turns. He leaves an old path, and treads a new one. He does this as the conscious result of reflection on the course which he was pursuing; and there is nothing in his actual turning, or in his whole future course, which is not the proper result of reflection, or which a proper reflection on the course of life would not lead to and justify. Man himself is always active in conversion. That is, he does something; he changes; he repents; he believes; he turns to God; it is not God that changes, that repents, that believes, that turns; it is the man himself. It is, indeed, by the grace and help of God; but the effect of that grace is not to make him idly wait; it is to rouse him to effort; to lead him to act.

Unto thy testimonies - Thy law, considered as the divine testimony in regard to what is right.

Verse 60

I made haste - This language further describes the process of conversion. There was no delay; there was no excuse offered. He acted at once under his conviction of what was right. He did not ask permission to defer it to a future time; he did not attempt to avoid the duty; not plead inability; he did not give himself merely to the "use of means;" he did not rely on prayer, and reading, and reflection; but "he did the thing, and he did it at once." This is conversion; and if all convicted sinners would follow this example, and do at once that which they are commanded to do, and which they know they ought to do, there would be in no case any difficulty about conversion, for the main difficulty in conversion lies in the fact that the sinner is not willing to obey God at once; that he will not break away from

his sins; that he endeavors to excuse himself; that he pleads for delay; that he waits for God to do what he himself ought to do.

And delayed not to keep thy commandments - I did not continue to go on in a course of sin, but I forsook my sin and obeyed.

Verse 61

The bands of the wicked - Margin, "companies." The Hebrew word properly means a cord, a rope; then a snare, gin, net; then, a band or a company of men. The reference is to some time in the life of the psalmist when he was surrounded by wicked men.

Have robbed me - Rather, have surrounded me; have environed me - for so the Hebrew word means.

But I have not forgotten thy law - I have not been deterred from keeping it by the dangers to which I have been exposed.

Verse 62

At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee - In the usual times of repose; when men are commonly lying in unconscious slumber. My heart is so interested in thy law - my soul is so full - that I am kept wakeful by meditating upon it, and I arise from my bed and offer thee praise. The Hebrew here means, literally, "the half," or "halving of the night," the night considered as divided into two equal portions. The idea is, that his mind was so full of the subject that he would take this unusual time to give vent to his feelings. The mind may be so full of love to the law - the word - of God, that nothing will satisfy it but such unusual acts of devotion. The Saviour rose up a great while before day, and went out into a solitary place and there prayed Mark 1:35; and on one occasion at least he continued all night in prayer to God Luke 6:12.

Because of thy righteous judgments - I do this on account of the interest which I have in those judgments or laws of righteousness. I love them as laws; I love them as righteous laws.

Verse 63

I am a companion of all them that fear thee - I find my associates and friends among those who worship thee; not with the profane and the wicked. "A man is known by the company that he keeps;" and it is an evidence of piety when we seek our companions and friends among the pious. It shows where the heart is; what the preferences are; what are the tastes; what is the real condition of the soul. We seek our friends in

accordance with our tastes and preferences; our love to God is indicated by our love to his friends. Compare Psalm 139:21-22.

And of them that keep thy precepts - That obey thy law. On the sentiment here, compare the notes at Psalm 1:1. A man may determine much in regard to his own character by asking himself what is the character of his chosen friends and companions. A member of a church should regard it as a dark sign against himself in regard to his piety, if his chosen friends are taken from the world, and not from the professed friends of God; if he finds more pleasure in their society, and in the scenes where they meet, than he does in the society of Christians however humble, or in places where they assemble for prayer and praise.

Verse 64

The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy - Full of the proofs of thy goodness and compassion. See the notes at Psalm 33:5. This is the expression of a heart full of love to God and to his word. In such a state of mind as the psalmist was in, the goodness of God is seen everywhere. The best preparation for seeing evidence that God is good is a heart full of love. Then the proofs of that love spring up on every side - as when we truly love a friend we find constant proofs of his excellency of character.

Teach me thy statutes - I desire to see more and more of thy law. Thou art so gracious and merciful, the evidence of thy goodness is so widespread round about me, that it leads me to desire to see more and more of thyself and thy law.

Verse 65

Thou hast dealt well with thy servant - This begins a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Teth* (ת *t*), corresponding to our "t." The use of this letter, however, does nothing to mark the sense. The literal meaning of the phrase here is, "Good hast thou done with thy servant;" and the idea is, that God had been good, and had done good to him. In the review of his own life he sees good, and good alone. Even in afflictions and trials this is all that he sees.

According unto thy word - According to thy promises; or, according to the principles of thy word. That is, the whole effect of the revealed truth of God upon him had been good. It was designed for his good; it had produced good only. Truth and law do nothing but good, and the welfare of individuals, and of a community, is promoted just in proportion as truth and law prevail.

Verse 66

Teach me good judgment - The word here rendered "judgment" means, properly, "taste," that power by which we determine the quality of things as sweet, bitter, sour, etc. Then it is applied to the mind or understanding, as that by which we determine the moral quality of things, or decide what is right or wrong; wise or foolish; good or evil. Here it means that he desired to have in full exercise the faculty of appreciating what is right, and of distinguishing it from what is wrong.

And knowledge - Knowledge of the truth; knowledge of thy will; knowledge of duty.

For I have believed thy commandments - I have confided in thy commandments. He believed that such a keeping of the law of God would be connected with a correct view of things. The keeping of the commands of God is one of the best means of growing in true knowledge, and of cultivating the understanding; of promoting a just taste or perception of what is true, and of developing the powers of the soul in the best proportions. Compare John 7:17.

Verse 67

Before I was afflicted - The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, "Before I was humbled." The Hebrew word has the general sense of being afflicted, and may refer to any kind of trial.

I went astray - The Hebrew word means to wander; to err; to do wrong; to transgress. Numbers 15:28; Job 12:16. It here means that he forgot his duty; that he fell into sin; that he departed from what was right; that he embraced erroneous views; that he lived in the neglect of his soul, the neglect of duty, and the neglect of God. Prosperity had not led him to fulfill duty; to seek salvation; to trust in God. This was, in his case, as it is in thousands of others, the experience of his life. Hence, affliction often becomes so necessary to check us when we are going astray, and so useful in recalling us to the ways of duty and of truth.

But now have I kept thy word - Since I was afflicted. The effect has been to recall me from my wanderings, and to turn me to paths of duty and holiness. This is an effect often - very often - experienced; this is language which can be used by many a child of God. Of those who are the children of God it may be said that they are "always" benefited "sooner" or "later" by afflictions. It may not be at the time of the affliction (compare Hebrews 12:11), but the "ultimate" effect is in all cases to benefit them. Some error is

corrected; some evil habit changed; some mode of life not consistent with religion is forsaken; pride is humbled; the heart is quickened in duty; habits of prayer are resumed or formed; the affections are fixed on a better world; the soul is made more gentle, calm, humble, spiritual, pure. Afflictions are among the most precious means of grace. They are entirely under the direction of God. They may be endlessly varied, and adapted to the case of every individual.

God knows every heart, and the best way to reach any heart. By sickness; by disappointment; by loss of property; by bereavement; by blighted hopes; by the ingratitude of others; by the unkindness of professed friends, and the malice of enemies; by domestic troubles; by the misconduct of children - perhaps the most severe of all human ills, and the hardest to bear; in ten thousand ways God can reach the heart, and break and crush it, and make it ready for the entrance of truth - as the farmer breaks and pulverizes the soil by the plow and the harrow, so that it shall be prepared to receive the seed. Compare the notes at Isaiah 28:24-29. Among those things for which good men have most occasion for thankfulness are afflictions; and when we lie down on the bed of death, and look over life and the divine dealings with us through life, as the glories of heaven are about to open upon us, we shall feel that among the chiefest mercies of God are those dealings of his holy hand, trying at the time, which kept us from going astray, or which recalled us when we had wandered from him - and "that in our life, now closing, there has not been one trial too much."

Verse 68

Thou art good - See the Psalm 100:5, note; Psalm 107:1, note.

And doest good - As the expression or manifestation of goodness. The goodness of God is not a mere sentiment; not mere feeling; not an inactive principle; not a mere wish: it finds expression in acts which tend to promote the happiness of his creatures everywhere.

Teach me thy statutes - See Psalm 119:12, note; Psalm 119:26, note. As one of the acts of the divine goodness, the psalmist prays that God will make him more and more acquainted with his law.

Verse 69

The proud - The psalmist had before referred to the "proud" as those from whom he had suffered injury, or as having been exposed to their

derision. See the notes at Psalm 119:51. He here reverts to another form in which he had suffered from them.

Have forged a lie against me - Compare Job 13:4. The word rendered "forged," means to patch together; and then it is applied to charges or accusations against anyone, perhaps from their being made up (as they often are) of shreds and patches - hints, small matters, things having no necessary connection in themselves, but brought together as if they pertained to the same transaction - words dropped here and there in conversation, which, being artfully woven together, seem to make out a plausible case against a man. Most slanders are formed and sustained in this way, for it is rare that an absolutely forged slander is uttered against a man, or that a charge is brought which cannot be made to have plausibility from such circumstances as those referred to above. Even the most pure and circumspect cannot always avoid this, for there is something in every man's life of which a malignant and cunning enemy may take advantage, and which he may weave into a story which some will believe, and which it may not be easy to confute. A malicious man may thus start a slander which may require years to correct, and which may even operate injuriously against a man all his life.

But I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart - Notwithstanding their accusations, and their attempts to turn me away from thee, or to represent me as false and hypocritical. Whatever they may do; whatever reports they may start to my disadvantage, it is my fixed purpose to obey entirely and always thy law. See the notes at Psalm 119:51.

Verse 70

Their heart is as fat as grease - They are prospered. They have health, property, influence, comforts of all kinds. heaven appears to smile upon them, and it seems as if it were one effect of a wicked course of life to make people prosperous. See Psalm 17:10, note; Psalm 73:7, note.

But I delight in thy law - Though its observance should not be attended by any such results as seem to follow wickedness, though I am poor, emaciated, pale - disappointed, slandered, persecuted - though my lot in life is among the lowly and the despised - yet I will adhere to my purpose to keep thy law. It is, and it shall be, my delight, whatever may be the effects of so observing it. See Psalm 119:35.

Verse 71

It is good for me that I have been afflicted - See the notes at Psalm 119:67. Whatever may have been the form of the affliction, it was good for me. The design was benevolent; the result has been my own benefit. This will be the experience sooner or later resulting from all the afflictions of the righteous.

That I might learn thy statutes - That I might be brought more fully to understand what they require; and that I might be led to conform to them. It is implied here

(a) that this is the tendency of affliction; and

(b) that this is an advantage - a good.

Anything that will lead a man to obey God is a blessing and a favor. Whatever leads a sinner to secure the salvation of his soul is a gain to him. No matter what it may cost; no matter what he may be required to give up; no matter to what persecutions and troubles it may expose him; no matter what he may suffer, or how long he may suffer; no matter though poverty, contempt, toil - even the rack or the stake - may be the consequence of his religion - yet it is again to him; and he will be thankful for it in the end - for nothing that can be endured in this life can be compared with the sufferings of the world of despair; nothing on earth can be "compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us in heaven." See the notes at Romans 8:18.

Verse 72

The law of thy mouth - The law which proceeds out of thy mouth, or which thou hast spoken.

Is better unto me - The Hebrew is, "Good to me is the law of thy mouth above thousands of gold and silver."

Than thousands of gold and silver - Than any amount of wealth. It is to me the most valuable possession; that which I prize above all other things. Compare the notes at Psalm 19:10.

Verse 73

Thy hands have made me - This commences a new division of the psalm, in which each verse begins with the Hebrew letter *Jod* (י *y*) - or "i" - the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, called in Matthew 5:18, "jot;" "one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law." The words "thy hands have made me" are expressive of the idea that he had been formed or

moulded by God - as the "hands" are the instruments by which we do anything. See the notes at Job 10:8; compare Psalm 100:3.

And fashioned me - Fitted me; shaped me, formed me as I am. He had received alike his existence and the particular form of his existence from God - as a man makes a statue or image. Compare Psalm 139:13-16.

Give me understanding … - As I have derived my being from thee, so I am wholly dependent on thee to carry out the purpose for which I have been made. My Maker alone can give me understanding. I have no resources in myself. See Psalm 119:34.

Verse 74

They that fear thee - Those who worship thee; thy friends; the pious and the good.

Will be glad when they see me - They will welcome me to their society; they will regard and treat me as a friend and brother. It is implied here that he considered this to be an honor - a thing to be desired. He valued the friendship and affection of those who feared and served God, and he made it an object so to live as to be worthy of their affection. Wicked men - men of the world - do not value that. They are satisfied with the friendship of those who, like themselves, have no fear of God. To a truly pious mind, the friendship of those who love God is of more value than that of any others; though in the one case they are poor and despised, and though in the other they are rich and of exalted rank. See the notes at Psalm 119:63. "Because I have hoped in thy word." See the notes at Psalm 119:49.

Verse 75

I know, O Lord - I feel assured; I entertain no doubt on the subject. This was the conviction of the mind of the psalmist in affliction. Mysterious as the trial may have been, hard as it may have been to bear, long as it may have been continued, and varied as may have been the forms of the trial, yet he had no doubt that it was all right; that it was for the best purposes; and that it was in strict accordance with what was best.

That thy judgments - This does not here refer to the laws of God, but to the divine dealings; to those afflictions which came in the way of judgments, or which might be regarded as expressive of the divine view of his conduct and life.

Are right - Margin, as in Hebrew, "righteousness." They were in accordance with what was right; they were so strictly just, that they might

be called righteousness itself. This implied the utmost confidence in God, the most absolute submission to his will.

And that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me - In faithfulness to my soul; in faithfulness to my own best interest. It was not arbitrary; it was not from malice; it was not that the affliction had come by chance; it was because God loved his soul, and sought his welfare. It was because God saw that there was some good reason why it should be done; that there was some evil to be checked; some improper conduct to be corrected; some lesson which he would be the better for learning; some happy influence on his life here, and on his happiness in heaven, which would be more than a compensation for all that he would suffer.

Verse 76

Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort - Margin, as in Hebrew, "to comfort me." The word rendered merciful-kindness means mercy, favor, grace, kindness; and the idea is, that all his consolation - all that he expected or desired - must be derived from mere favor; from the goodness of God. He had no source of comfort in himself, and he had no claim on God for comfort. It was through mercy alone that he could have happiness of any kind.

According to thy word … - See the notes at Psalm 119:25.

Verse 77

Let thy tender mercies come unto me - See the notes at Psalm 119:41.

That I may live - It is evident that this was uttered in view of some great calamity by which his life was threatened. He was dependent for life - for recovery from sickness, or for deliverance from danger - wholly on the compassion of God.

For thy law is my delight - See the notes at Psalm 119:16; compare Psalm 119:24, Psalm 119:47. This is urged here as a reason for the divine interposition. The meaning is, that he was a friend of God; that he had pleasure in his service and in his commandments; and that he might, therefore, with propriety, appeal to God to interpose in his behalf. This is a proper ground of appeal to God in our prayers, not on the ground of merit or claim, but because we may reasonably suppose that God will be disposed to protect his friends, and to deliver them in the day of trouble.

Verse 78

Let the proud be ashamed - Referring here to his enemies, who appear to have been in the higher ranks of life, or to have been those who prided

themselves on their wealth, their station, or their influence. See the notes at Psalm 119:51. The psalmist asks here that they might be confounded or put to shame; that is, that they might fail of accomplishing their purposes in regard to him. See Psalm 25:2-3, notes; Job 6:20, note.

For they dealt perversely with me - They were not honest; they deceived me; they took advantage of me; they were not true to their professions of friendship. Compare the notes at Isaiah 59:3; notes at Job 8:3; notes at Job 34:12.

Without a cause - Hebrew, "by a lie." That is, They have been guilty of falsehood in their charges or accusations against me. I have given them no occasion for such treatment, and their conduct is based on an entire misrepresentation. See the notes at John 15:25.

But I will meditate in thy precepts - See the notes at Psalm 1:2. I will not be diverted from thee, from thy law, from thy service, by all that man can do to me; by all the false charges which the enemies of religion may bring against me; by all the contempt or persecution that I may suffer for my attachment to thee. See Psalm 119:23, note; Psalm 119:69, note.

Verse 79

Let those that fear thee turn unto me - Let thy friends be my friends. Let them show me favor, and count me among their companions. If the great and the powerful turn away from me; if they persecute me, and do me wrong; if they cast out my name as evil, and are unwilling to associate with me, yet let thy friends, however poor and humble, regard me with kindness, and reckon me among their number, and I shall be satisfied.

And those that have known thy testimonies - Thy law. Those who can see and appreciate the beauty of thy commandments. This is the ground of true friendship in religion - the common love of God, of his law, and of his service. This is a permanent ground of affection. All friendship founded on earthly distinctions; all derived from titled birth - from rank - from affluence - from civil, military, or naval renown - from beauty, strength, or nobleness of form - must be temporary; but that which is founded on attachment to God, to his law, and to the Saviour, will abide forever.

Verse 80

Let my heart be sound … - Hebrew, "Be perfect." See the notes at Job 1:1. The Septuagint here is "immaculate," ἄμωμος *amōmos* So the Latin Vulgate. It is the expression of a desire that the heart might be pure; that there might be no improper attachment for other objects; that there might be no defect of love to God.

That I be not ashamed - See the notes at Psalm 119:6. A man has no occasion to be ashamed of a pure heart; and that which can alone keep us from being ultimately ashamed is sincerity, uprightness, and purity in the service of God.

Verse 81

My soul fainteth for thy salvation - The new division of the psalm, which begins here, is indicated by the Hebrew letter *Kaph* (כ *k*), equivalent

to “k” or “c” (hard). The word here rendered “fainteth” is the same that in Psalm 73:26 is translated “faileth”: “My flesh and my heart faileth.” The idea is, that his strength gave way; he had such an intense desire for salvation that he became weak and powerless. Any strong emotion may thus prostrate us; and the love of God - the desire of his favor - the longing for heaven - may be so intense as to produce this result.

I hope in thy word - I trust in thy promises, and am sustained. My powers, which would otherwise wholly fail, are upheld by thy word, and on that I rely. See Psalm 119:74.

Verse 82

Mine eyes fail for thy word - The same word in Hebrew as in the previous verse and in Psalm 73:26. The idea here is that of looking out for a thing - of “straining the eyes” - so that their power becomes exhausted. The language expresses a longing desire - a waiting - an intense wish - for a thing, as when we look for a ship long expected, or for a friend long absent, or for help when in danger. Such a desire the psalmist had for the word of God, for divine truth.

Saying, When wilt thou comfort me? - How long shall I be compelled to wait for comfort? How often in the Psalms do the expressions occur, “When,” and “How long!” How often in the life of the believer now are similar expressions appropriate! God often seems greatly to try the faith and patience of his people by mere delay; and the strength of faith and the power of religion are shown in such circumstances by persevering faith in the divine promises, even when there seems to be no evidence that he will interpose.

Verse 83

For I am become like a bottle in the smoke - Bottles in the East were commonly made of skins. See the notes at Matthew 9:17. Such “bottles,” hanging in tents where the smoke had little opportunity to escape, would, of course, become dark and dingy, and would thus be emblems of distress, discomfort, and sorrow. The meaning here is, that, by affliction and sorrow, the psalmist had been reduced to a state which would be well represented by such a bottle. A somewhat similar idea occurs in Psalm 22:15: “My strength is dried up like a potsherd.” See the notes at that place.

Yet do I not forget thy statutes - Compare the notes at Psalm 119:51. Though thus deeply afflicted, though without comfort or peace, yet I do, I will, maintain allegiance to thee and thy law. The doctrine is that distress,

poverty, sorrow, penury, and rags - the most abject circumstances of life - will not turn away a true child of God from obeying and serving him. True religion will abide all these tests. Lazarus from the deepest poverty - from beggary - from undressed sores - went up to Abraham‘s bosom.

Verse 84

How many are the days of thy servant? - I cannot hope to live long. I am sinking under my burdens. If I am, therefore, to see the accomplishment of my desires - my deliverance from my enemies and my troubles - it must be soon. This is not a desire to be told how long he was to live, as if it were an object of desire to know this, but it is a method of saying that he could not live long under these circumstances, and therefore he offered this earnest prayer that God would interpose and save him soon.

When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me? - How long shall this be delayed? I look for this; I expect it; I rely on thy promise that it shall be done; but if done so that I shall see it, it must soon be done, for I shall soon sink into the grave. It is a prayer that God would come and do quickly what he felt assured he would do, in delivering him from his foes.

Verse 85

The proud - Those in high life, or of exalted rank. See the notes at Psalm 119:51.

Have digged pits for me - See the notes at Psalm 7:15. Compare Psalm 35:7; Psalm 57:6; Psalm 94:13.

Which are not after thy law - The word which here refers not to the pits, but to the proud. They who have done this are people who do not regard thy commands; people who are open and public offenders. It is that class of people with whom I have to contend - inert who set at defiance all the laws of God; men high in rank, who wield great power, and who have no regard to the law of God in their conduct. Even they have sought my destruction in the meanest way possible - by covert arts, by underhanded means, by digging pits, as they would for wild beasts.

Verse 86

All thy commandments are faithful - Margin, “faithfulness.” The idea in the Hebrew is that they are worthy to be relied on. They are founded in truth, and they should secure our confidence.

They persecute me wrongfully … - Hebrew, a “lie, “or “falsehood.” That is, There is a “lie” or “falsehood” at the foundation of their

persecutions. Those persecutions are not based on any just views of what I am, or of the treatment which I ought to receive at the hand of my fellow-men. They charge on me tilings which are not true, and they act accordingly. See the notes at Psalm 119:78.

Verse 87

They had almost consumed me upon earth - The word which is here translated "consumed" is the same which is used in Psalm 119:81, and there rendered "fainteth." See the notes at that verse. The idea is, that their persecutions had been so severe, and so long continued, that his strength was almost exhausted; he was ready to faint and to die.

But I forsook not thy precepts - I still adhered to thee, even in the extremity of my suffering. The effect of persecution was not to drive me from thee, or to lead me to abandon thee. See Psalm 119:61, note; Psalm 119:69, note.

Verse 88

Quicken me - Cause me to live; revive me. See Psalm 71:20, note; Ephesians 2:1, note. Compare Psalm 80:18; Romans 8:11; 1 Peter 3:18; John 6:63.

After thy loving-kindness - Thy mercy; thy grace; thy compassion. That is, Let the measure of the grace given to me be thine own benevolent nature, and not my deserts. That is all I ask; that is all I could desire.

So shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth - Which proceeds out of thy mouth. His hope of being able to keep it was founded on the grace and mercy which he besought God to bestow upon him.

Verse 89

Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven - This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Lamed* (ל *l*), or "l." On the meaning of the passage, see the notes at Psalm 89:2. The word rendered "settled" means properly "to set, to put, to place;" and then, to stand, to cause to stand, to set up, as a column, Genesis 35:20; an altar, Genesis 33:20; a monument, 1 Samuel 15:12. The meaning here is, that the word - the law - the promise - of God was made firm, established, stable, in heaven; and would be so forever and ever. What God had ordained as law would always remain law; what he had affirmed would always remain true; what he had promised would be sure forever.

Verse 90

Thy faithfulness - The accomplishment of thy promises.

Is unto all generations - Margin, "to generation and generation." From one generation to another. The generations of people change and pass away, but thy promises do not change. They are as applicable to one generation as to another; they meet every generation alike. The people of no one age can lay any exclusive claim to them, or feel that they were made only for them. They are as universal - as much adapted to the new generations that come upon the earth - as the light of the sun, ever-enduring, is; or as the fountains and streams, which flow from age to age.

Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth - Margin, "Standeth." It is firm. The earth thus established or made firm, is an illustration of thy faithfulness, and of the stability and permanence of thy promises. It is the same from generation to generation, with its rivers, streams, and fountains; with its fruits and flowers; with its balmy air and its sweet prospects; with its riches of gold and silver; with its pearls and diamonds; with its treasures of land and ocean. So is the word of God - so are the gracious promises which he has addressed to people - the same in every age.

Verse 91

They continue this day according to thine ordinances - According to thy judgments (Hebrew); that is, thy commands. They "stand" (Hebrew) as thou hast appointed; they are what thou didst design them to be. The original purpose in their creation is carried out, and they thus furnish an illustration of the stability of thy government and the permanency of thy law.

For all are thy servants - All worlds obey thy commands; all are under thy control. They show that they are thy servants by the conformity of their movements to the laws which thou hast impressed on them.

Verse 92

Unless thy law had been my delights - See Psalm 119:16, note; Psalm 119:24, note. Unless I had had pleasure in thy law, thy word, thy truth; unless I had derived support and consolation in that.

I should then have perished in mine affliction - I should have sunk under my burden. I should not have been able to hold up under the weight of sorrow and trial. How often the people of God can say. this! How often may each one in the course of his life say this! "I should have sunk a thousand times," said a most excellent, but much afflicted, man to me, "if it had not been for one declaration in the word of God - ‹The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.'"

Verse 93

I will never forget thy precepts - Thy laws; thy truth. I will bear them in mind forever. To all eternity they shall be the object of my meditation.

For with them thou hast quickened me - By them thou hast given me life, spiritual life. Compare the notes at James 1:18. This is stated as a reason why he would never suffer the truth of God to pass out of his mind. By that truth he had been made really to live. He had been brought from spiritual death to spiritual life. He saw before him now, as the result of that, an endless career of blessedness. How could he ever forget what had worked such a change in his character and condition; which had inspired such hopes; which had opened before him such an immortal career of glory!

Verse 94

I am thine - All that he had, and was, belonged to God. This is an expression of a fact, and of a purpose: a fact about which he had no doubt; a purpose ever to be the Lord‘s. This is indicative of the real state of feeling in the heart of a pious man. He feels that he is the Lord‘s; he has no other desire than to be his forever.

Save me - Deliver me from my enemies; from sin; from hell. As he belonged to God, he prayed that God would save and preserve his own.

For I have sought thy precepts - I feel assured or confident that this has been the aim and purpose of my life. On this ground I plead that thou wilt keep and preserve me. A man who feels assured that he is a friend of God has a right to appeal to him for protection, and he will not appeal to him in vain.

Verse 95

The wicked have waited for me to destroy me - That is, they have lain in wait; or, they have laid a plan. They are watching the opportunity to do it.

But I will consider thy testimonies - I will think of them; I will adhere to them; I will find my support in them; I will not be driven from my adhesion to them by an apprehension of what man can do to me.

Verse 96

I have seen an end of all perfection - The word which is here rendered “perfection” - תכלה *tiklâh* - occurs only in this place; but a similar word from the same root - תכלית *taklîyth* - occurs in the following places: in Nehemiah 3:21, and Job 26:10, rendered “end;” in Job 11:7; Job 28:3, rendered “perfection;” and in Psalm 139:22, rendered “perfect.” It means properly “completion, perfection;” or, as others suppose, “hope,

confidence." It is rendered, in the Septuagint and Latin Vulgate, "consummation." Luther renders it, "of all things." It is proper here to apply it to character; to perfect virtue, or to claims to perfect virtue - either in one's-self or in others. The word rendered "end" here refers not to the fact of its existence, or to its duration, but to a limit or boundary as to its extent. To all claims to perfection made by man, he had seen an end or limit. He had examined all which claimed to be perfect; he had found it defective; he had so surveyed and examined the matter, as to be able to say that there could be no claim to perfection which would prove good. All claim to perfection on the part of man must be abandoned forever.

But thy commandment is exceeding broad - The word but is not in the original, and enfeebles the sense. The idea is, that the law of God, as he now saw it, was of such a nature - was so "broad" - as to demonstrate that there could be no just claim to perfection among people. All claims to perfection had arisen from the fact that the law was not properly understood, that its true nature was not seen. People thought that they were perfect, but it was because they had no just view of the extent and the spirituality of the law of God. They set up an imperfect standard; and when they became conformed to that standard, as they might do, they imagined themselves to be perfect; but when their conduct was compared with a higher and more just standard - the law of God - it could not but be seen that they were imperfect people. That law had claims which they had not met, and never would meet, in this life. It is very easy to flatter ourselves that we are perfect, if we make our own standard of character; it is not possible for man to set up a claim to perfection, if he measures himself by the standard of God's word; and all the claims of people to perfection are made simply because they do not properly understand what the law of God requires. Compare the notes at Job 9:20.

Verse 97

O how love I thy law! - This commences a new division of the Psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter Mem (מ *m* The expression here, "O how love I thy law," implies intense love - as if a man were astonished at the fervour of his own emotion. His love was so ardent that it was amazing and wonderful to himself - perhaps wonderful that he, a sinner, should love the law of God at all; wonderful that he should ever have been brought so to love a law which condemned himself. Any man who reflects on what his feelings are by nature in regard to religion, will be filled with wonder that

he loves it at all; all who are truly religious ought to be so filled with love to it, that it will be difficult for them to find words to express the intensity of their affection.

It is my meditation all the day - See the notes at Psalm 1:2.

Verse 98

Thou, through thy commandments - By the teaching and power of thy law.

Hast made me wiser than mine enemies - I have a better understanding of thee, of thy law, of the duties of this life, and in regard to the life to come, than my enemies have - not because I am naturally better, or because I have higher endowments by nature, but because thou hast made me wiser than they are. The rendering of this first clause of the verse now most approved by interpreters is, "Thy commandments make me more wise than my enemies are," though this requires a singular verb to be construed with a plural noun (Professor Alexander). So DeWette renders it.

For they are ever with me - Margin, as in Hebrew, "it is ever with me." The reference is to the law or commandments of God. The meaning is, that that law was never out of his mind; that he was constantly thinking about it; and that it unfolded such wisdom to him as to make him superior to all his foes; to give him a better understanding of life, its design, its duties, and its obligations, than his enemies had. The best instructor in true wisdom is the revealed word of God - the Bible.

Verse 99

I have more understanding than all my teachers - Referring perhaps to those who had given him instruction in early life. By constant meditation on the law of God, he had, in the progress of years, advanced to a point beyond that to which they had arrived. He had improved upon their suggestions and instructions, until he had surpassed them in knowledge. His "design" in saying this was to set forth the excellency and the fullness of the law of God, and to show how the study of it was suited to enlarge the understanding. In early life the wisdom of teachers seems to be far beyond anything that we can hope to reach; yet a few years of study and meditation may place us far beyond them. What those teachers seemed to be to us, however, when we were young, may serve ever onward as a means of comparison when we wish to speak of the greatness of human attainments. So the psalmist says that he had now reached a point which seemed to him

in early life to be wonderful, and to be beyond what he had then hoped ever to attain. He had now reached that point; he had gone beyond it.

For thy testimonies are my meditation - Compare Psalm 1:2; 2 Timothy 3:15. All this knowledge he had obtained by meditation on the law of God; by the study of divine truth. The effect of that constant study was seen in the knowledge which he now possessed, and which seemed to surprise even himself as compared with the brightest anticipations of his early years.

Verse 100

I understand more than the ancients - Hebrew, The old men. It does not refer, as the word "ancients" does with us, to the people of former times, but to aged men. They have treasured up wisdom. They have had the advantage of experience, of study, and of observation. They, therefore, like teachers, become a standard by which we measure our own attainments, as the boy hardly hopes to gain that amount of knowledge which he observes in people who are venerable in years, and who are remarkable for their acquirements. Compare Job 12:12: "With the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days understanding." Job 32:7: "I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom." Compare 1 Kings 4:30-31. Yet the psalmist says that he "had" reached this point, and had even gone beyond what he had once thought he could never attain.

Because I keep thy precepts - It is all the result of an honest endeavor to do right; to observe law; to keep the commands of God. Obedience to the law of God will do more than any mere human teaching to make a man truly wise.

Verse 101

I have refrained my feet from every evil way - I have walked in the path which thy law marks out. I have avoided the way of wickedness, and have not yielded to the seductions of a sinful life.

That I might keep thy word - I have avoided all those allurements which would turn me from obedience, and which would prevent a right observance of thy commands. This indicates a purpose and a desire to keep the law of God, and shows the method which he adopted in order to do this. That method was to guard against everything which would turn him from obedience; it was, to make obedience to the law of God the great aim of the life.

Verse 102

I have not departed from thy judgments - Thy law; thy commands. This cannot mean that he had never done this, but that as a great rule of life he had not done it. The character and aim of his life had been obedience, not disobedience. A man may honestly say this, though he may be conscious of much imperfection, and may feel that he has not perfectly carried out such an aim and purpose. No one can be a truly pious man, or have evidence of personal religion, who cannot say in sincerity that he has "not departed in this sense, "from the judgments" (the commands) of God; who cannot look back on his life and say that his course - his aim - his character - since he became a professor of religion - has been, one of obedience to God. Compare 1 John 3:7-9.

For thou hast taught me - Not to himself was this to be traced, but to God; not to any wisdom of his own, but to that which was given him from on high.

Verse 103

How sweet are thy words unto my taste … - Margin, as in Hebrew, "palate." The reference is to the taste, perhaps because the sense of taste was supposed to reside in the palate. The Hebrew word "may" include also the whole of the inside of the mouth. The word rendered "sweet" does not occur elsewhere. It properly means "to be smooth," and hence, is applied to kind or agreeable words. On the sentiment here, see the notes at Psalm 19:10.

Verse 104

Through thy precepts I get understanding - A true understanding; a correct view of things; a knowledge of thee, of myself, of the human character, of the destiny of man, of the way of salvation - the best, and the only essential knowledge for man. This knowledge the psalmist obtained from the "precepts" of God; that is, all that God had communicated by revelation. This passage expresses in few words what had been said more at length in Psalm 119:98-100.

Therefore I hate every false way - I see that which is right and true, and I pursue it. In proportion as I have a just knowledge of truth and duty, I hate that which is false and evil.

Verse 105

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet - This begins a new portion of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter Nun (נ *n*), equivalent to our "n." The margin here is "candle." The Hebrew word means a light, lamp, candle. The

idea is, that the word of God is like a torch or lamp ton man in a dark night. It shows him the way; it prevents his stumbling over obstacles, or failing down precipices, or wandering off into paths which would lead into danger, or would turn him away altogether from the path to life. Compare the notes at 2 Peter 1:19.

And a light unto my path - The same idea substantially is presented here. It is a light which shines on the road that a man treads, so that he may see the path, and that he may see any danger which may be in his path. The expression is very beautiful, and is full of instruction. He who makes the word of God his guide, and marks its teachings, is in the right way. He will clearly see the path. He will be able to mark the road in which he ought to go, and to avoid all those by-paths which would lead him astray. He will see where those by-roads turn off from the main path - often at a very small angle, and so that there seems to be no divergence. He will see any obstruction which may lie in his path; any declivity or precipice which may be near, and down which, in a dark night, one might fall. Man needs such a guide, and the Bible is such a guide. Compare the notes at Psalm 119:9.

Verse 106

I have sworn - I have solemnly purposed; I have given to this purpose the solemnity and sanction of an oath. That is, I have called God to witness; I have formed the purpose in his presence, and with the consciousness that his eye is upon me. So all who make a profession of religion solemnly vow or swear. They do it in the house of God; they do it in the presence of the Discerner of hearts; they do it at the communion table; they do it at the family altar; they do it in the closet, when alone with God.

And I will perform it - Hebrew, I will establish it, or make it to stand. It shall not be a mere purpose. It shall be accomplished. This also is the resolution of all who make a true profession of religion. It is their intention - their solemn determination - to carry out that vow to its full accomplishment, always, and in every place, while life lasts, and forever. A man who makes a profession of religion, intending “not” to carry out what is fairly implied in such a profession, is a hypocrite. Unless there is a solemn purpose to keep the law of God, and always to keep it - to do what is fairly implied in a profession of religion, and always to do it - to defend the truth according to his best means of knowing it, and always to defend it - he cannot possibly be a sincere friend of God; he cannot be truly a religious man. He cannot be loyal to his country who designs to violate any

one of its just laws; he cannot be an obedient child who intends to disobey the laws of a parent.

That I will keep thy righteous judgments - Not implying that there are any of the judgments of God which are not righteous, but meaning to characterize all his judgments or laws as righteous.

Verse 107

I am afflicted very much - The form of the affliction is not mentioned. There are frequent allusions in the psalm to the fact that the author was and had been afflicted - as, in fact, must be the case in the life of every good man. Compare Psalm 119:71, Psalm 119:75. If David was the author of the psalm, we know that there were numerous occasions in his life when this language would be appropriate. As designed for the people of God at all times, it was important that there should be these allusions to affliction.

Quicken me … - Make me live; give me life and vigor, that I may bear up under my trials. See the notes at Psalm 119:25.

Verse 108

Accept, I beseech thee, the free-will offerings of my mouth - Or, the meaning of the word here rendered "free-will," see the notes at Psalm 110:3. It conveys the idea that there is no constraint or compulsion; that the offering is a prompting of the heart. The offering might be that of flour, or grain, or fruits, or property of any kind, as devoted to God; or it might be, as here, an offering of the lips, expressed in prayer and praise. Either of them might be acceptable to God; their being accepted in either case would depend on the good pleasure of God, and hence, the psalmist prays that his offering might be thus acceptable. Compare Hebrews 13:15.

And teach me thy judgments - Thy commands; thy laws. See the notes at Psalm 119:12.

Verse 109

My soul is continually in my hand - The Septuagint renders this, "My soul is always in thy hands," but the Hebrew will not admit of this construction. The idea in the original is that his soul - his life - was always in jeopardy. The expression seems to be proverbial. Anything taken in the hand is liable to be rudely snatched away. Thus a casket of jewels, or a purse of gold in the hand, may at any moment be seized by robbers. See the notes at Job 13:14. Compare 1 Samuel 19:5; Judges 12:3. The meaning here is, that his life was constantly in danger.

Yet do I not forget thy law - Notwithstanding the danger to which I am exposed, and the care necessary to defend my life, I do not allow my mind to be turned from meditating on thy law, nor do I suffer any danger to deter me from obeying it. Compare the notes at Psalm 119:61.

Verse 110

The wicked have laid a snare for me - As men do to take wild beasts or birds. See the notes at Psalm 119:85. Compare Job 18:8, note; Job 18:10, note; Psalm 9:15, note; Psalm 69:22, note. See also Psalm 119:61, Psalm 119:69.

Yet I erred not from thy precepts - Notwithstanding the danger to which I was exposed, I maintained a steadfast adherence to thy commandments. I was not deterred from obeying them by any peril which beset me.

Verse 111

Thy testimonies - Thy law; thy revealed will; the revelation which thou hast given considered as thy solemn "testimony" as to what is true and right.

Have I taken as an heritage for ever - As my inheritance; as my property; as that which I consider to be of real and permanent value. The Hebrew word used here - נחל *nachal* - means to receive as a possession; to acquire; to possess as wealth; and then, to inherit. It is usually applied to the possession of the promised land as an inheritance. Here it means that the law of God was to him as such a possession. He regarded it as one does a rich inheritance. He chose it as his portion above all things else.

For they are the rejoicing of my heart - My happiness is in them. I find constant comfort in them. See Psalm 119:77, Psalm 119:92. Compare the notes at Psalm 1:2.

Verse 112

I have inclined mine heart - The Hebrew word means properly "to stretch out"; "to extend" - as the hand. Exodus 8:6, Exodus 8:17. Then it means to incline, to bow, to depress. Here the idea is, that he had "given" that "direction" to the inclinations of his heart; he had resolved or purposed. He refers to an act of choice on his part, meaning that he had preferred this course, or that he had made this a solemn intention. Though every right inclination of the human heart is to be traced to the divine agency, yet it is also true that man is active in religion - or that his own mind resolves,

chooses, and prefers - and that true religion is the actual choice or preference of all who serve God aright. See the notes at Psalm 119:59.

To perform thy statutes alway - Margin, as in Hebrew, "to do." He meant to do the will of God. He intended to do this constantly; even forever. No man can be a truly pious man who has any disposition, or any purpose, "ever" to turn away from the service of God.

Even unto the end - See Psalm 119:33. To the end of life; to the end of all things.

Verse 113

I hate vain thoughts - This commences a new portion of the psalm, distinguished by the Hebrew letter *Samech* (ס *s*), answering to our "s." The word rendered "vain thoughts" occurs only in this place. It is rendered by the Septuagint, παρανόμους *paranomous* - transgressors. So the Latin Vulgate. Luther renders it "die Flattergeister," the frivolous-minded. The word means divided; a man of a divided mind; a man who has no sure faith in regard to divine things, but is driven here and there; a sceptic; a doubter. Compare James 1:8. Thus it refers not to his own thoughts primarily, as being "vain" or worthless, but to a state of mind or heart in general, where there is no firmness, no stability, no settled view: a state of mind wavering, doubtful, skeptical, in regard to religion. What is implied here in reference to what he loved - by stating (in the way of contrast) what he "hated," - would be a mind which was settled in its convictions of truth, and firm in its adherence to truth; a mind which was steadfast in religion, and not vacillating, skeptical, or uncertain on the subject. This denotes that the psalmist sought such a state of mind for himself, and that he valued it in others.

But thy law do I love - I have no "divided" or unsettled feelings in regard to that. I am conscious of a firm attachment to it. This thought he has repeatedly expressed in the psalm.

Verse 114

Thou art my hiding place - See the notes at Psalm 32:7, where the same expression occurs.

And my shield - See Psalm 5:12, note; Psalm 84:11, note.

I hope in thy word - See Psalm 119:74, Psalm 119:81.

Verse 115

Depart from me, ye evil-doers - Workers of iniquity; bad men. See the notes at Psalm 6:8. This indicates a determined purpose that nothing should

deter or allure him from the service of God. A man who wishes to serve God, and lead a religious life, must separate himself from the society, as such, of unprincipled people.

For I will keep the commandments of my God - This is my fixed resolution. It may be remarked here

(1) that bad people will turn away from the society of one who has formed such a resolution, and who carries it out;

(2) the resolution is a necessary one to be formed and executed, if a man will serve God;

(3) the formation and execution of such a purpose, is the best way to get rid of the society of bad people.

Verse 116

Uphold me - Sustain me in the trials and the temptations of life. Help me to bear afflictions without sinking under them; to meet temptations without yielding to them; to encounter opposition from the enemies of religion without being overcome.

According unto thy word -

(1) According to the requirements of thy word - that I may be conformed to them;

(2) according to the promises of thy word - that they may be verified in me.

That I may live - That my life may not be cut off by my foes, and that I may not sink under my burdens.

And let me not be ashamed of my hope - The meaning of this is, Let not my hope prove to be delusive and vain; let it not be seen at last that it is worthless, or that religion has no power to accomplish what it promises. See Psalm 6:10, note; Psalm 25:2-3, note; Psalm 31:1, note. The phrase does not mean, as it would seem to signify, Let me not blush, or be unwilling to acknowledge my hope, or to profess that I am a friend of God. That "would be," indeed, a proper prayer, but it is not the prayer here.

Verse 117

Hold thou me up - Keep me from falling in the trials and temptations of life. The Hebrew word means to prop, uphold, support. The Septuagint is,

"Aid me."

And I shall be safe - And I shall be saved; or, that I may be saved. It is an acknowledgment of entire dependence on God for salvation - temporal and eternal.

And I will have respect … - I will look to thy statutes; I will have them always in my eye. Compare the notes at Psalm 119:6.

Verse 118

Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes - Compare the notes at Psalm 119:21. Rather, "Thou hast made light of," or "thou despisest." The Hebrew word means properly to suspend in a balance; to weigh. Then it means to lift up lightly or easily; and then, to make light of; to contemn; to regard anything as "light." The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate render it, "Thou dost despise." That is, God regards them as of no account; as a light substance of no value; as chaff which the wind carries away. Compare Job 21:18; Psalm 1:4; Psalm 35:5; Isaiah 17:13.

For their deceit is falsehood - This seems to be a truism - for deceit must imply falsehood. In the original this is an emphatic way of declaring the whole thing to be false, as the Hebrew language often expresses emphasis by mere repetition - thus "pits, pits," meaning many pits. The psalmist first characterizes their conduct as deceitful - as that which cannot be relied on - as that which must fail in the end; he then speaks of this system on which they acted as altogether a "lie" - as that which is utterly "false;" thus giving, as it were, a double emphasis to the statement, and showing how utterly delusive and vain it must be.

Verse 119

Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth - Margin, "causest to cease." Literally: "Dross … thou makest all the wicked of the earth to cease." They are seen by the psalmist as dross, and then he says that God had treated them as such.

Like dross - The "scoriae" of metals, or of a furnace. This dross is cast out as of no value. So the wicked are regarded by God.

Therefore I love thy testimonies - I love a law which condemns sin. I love a government which ferrets out and punishes the guilty. This is a leading object with all just governments; and this we approve in all governments. As the divine government makes this an object, and as it will accomplish this more perfectly than any other administration so it is more

worthy of confidence than any other. As it is the only government that does this perfectly, so it is the only one that is worthy of unlimited confidence.

Verse 120

My flesh trembleth for fear of thee - I stand in awe of thee. I shudder at the consciousness of thy presence. See Habakkuk 3:16; Hebrews 12:21; Joel 2:10; Nahum 1:5. There is nothing unaccountable in this. Any man would tremble, should God manifest himself to him as he might do; and it is possible that the mind may have such an overpowering sense of the presence and majesty of God, that the body shall be agitated, lose its strength, and with the deepest alarm fall to the earth. Compare Daniel 10:8; Revelation 1:17. No man could meet one of the departed dead, or a good angel, without this fear; how much less could he meet God!

And I am afraid of thy judgments - Of thy laws or commands. My mind is filled with awe at the strictness, the spirituality, the severity of thy law. Reverence - awe - is one of the essential elements of all true religion.

Verse 121

I have done judgment and justice - This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Ayin* (ע ʿ) - a letter which cannot well be represented in the English alphabet, as there is, in fact, no letter in our language exactly corresponding with it. It would be best represented probably by what are called "breathings" in Greek. The meaning of the first part of this verse is, "I have led a righteous and upright life." It is equivalent to saying that he had kept the law of God, or had made that the rule of his conduct.

Leave me not to mine oppressors - To the people who would do me wrong; who seek my hurt. He urged this on the ground that he had been obedient to the divine law, and might, therefore, with propriety, make this request, or might claim the divine protection. Man has no merit of his own, and no claim on God; but when he is his true friend, it is not improper to expect that he will interpose in his behalf; nor is it improper to present this in the form of a prayer. Our loving God, and serving him, though it is done imperfectly, is, in fact, a reason why he should and will interpose in our behalf.

Verse 122

Be surety for thy servant for good - On the meaning of the word here rendered "be surety," see the notes at Job 17:3, and the notes at Isaiah 38:14, in both which places the same Hebrew word occurs: In Isaiah it is

rendered "undertake for me." The word means, properly, "to mix, to mingle;" hence, to braid, to interweave; then, to exchange, to barter. Then it means to mix or intermingle interests; to unite ourselves with others so that their interests come to be our own; and hence, to take one under our protection, to become answerable for, to be a surety for: as, when one endorses a note for another, he mingles his own interest, reputation, and means with his. So Christ becomes the security or surety - ἔγγυος *enguos* - of his people, Hebrews 7:22. The prayer here is, that God would, so to speak, mix or mingle his cause and that of the psalmist together, and that he would then protect the common cause as his own; or, that he would become a "pledge" or "surety" for the safety of the psalmist. This now, through the Mediator, we have a right to ask at the hand of God; and when God makes our cause his own, we must be safe.

Let not the proud oppress me - See the notes at Psalm 119:51. Let them not triumph over me, and crush me.

Verse 123

Mine eyes fail for thy salvation - See the notes at Psalm 119:81-82.

And for the word of thy righteousness - Thy righteous word - that it may be made known to me, and that I may see its beauty and enjoy it.

Verse 124

Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy - Not according to justice - for, sinners as we are, we can never urge that as a plea before God. No man who knows himself could ask of God to deal with him according to the strict and stern principles of justice. But we may ask him to deal with us according to mercy - for mercy is our only plea, and the mercy of God - vast and boundless - constitutes such a ground of appeal as we need. No man can have any other; no man need desire any other.

And teach me thy statutes - See the notes at Psalm 119:12. Show thy mercy to me in teaching me thy law.

Verse 125

I am thy servant - See the notes at Psalm 116:16.

Give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies - Since I am thy servant, instruct me in the knowledge of thy will. As I desire to obey thee, show me what will be acceptable obedience, or what thou dost require in order to acceptable service. This is a prayer of piety. A man who sincerely desires to obey God will make it a first point to ascertain what is his will, or what will constitute true obedience.

Verse 126

It is time for thee, Lord, to work - literally, "Time to do for Yahweh;" and the construction might be either that it is time to do (something) for Yahweh; or, that it is time for Yahweh himself to do (something). The direct address to the Lord in the latter part of the sentence would seem, however, to show that the latter is the true interpretation: to wit, that since people make void the law of God, it is time for him to work, that is, to interpose by his power and restrain them; to bring them to repentance; to assert his own authority; to vindicate his cause. Thus understood, it is an appropriate prayer to be used when iniquity abounds, and when some special form of sin has an ascendancy among a people. The other interpretation, however, "It is time (for us) to do (something), since people make void thy law," suggests a truth of great importance. Then is the time when the people of God should arouse themselves to efforts to stay the tide of wickedness, and to secure the ascendancy of religion, of virtue, and of law.

For they have made void thy law - They have broken it. They have set it at defiance. They regard and treat it as if it had no claim to obedience; as if it were a thing of nought. This the psalmist urges as a reason for the putting forth of power to arrest the evil; to bring people to repentance; to secure the salvation of souls. By all the evil done when the law of God is set at nought, by all the desirableness that the law should be obeyed, by all the danger to the souls of people from its violation, this prayer may now and at all times be offered, and that with earnestness. Compare Psalm 119:136.

Verse 127

Therefore I love thy commandments … - The more people break them Psalm 119:126, the more I see their value; the more precious they are to me. The fact that they make thy law void, and that evil consequences result from their conduct, only impresses my mind the more with a sense of the value of the law, and makes my heart cling to it the more. There is almost nothing that will so impress upon our minds the importance of law as the sight of the effects which follow when it is disregarded.

Above gold … - See the notes at Psalm 119:72. Compare Psalm 19:10.

Verse 128

Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right - literally, "Therefore all the commandments of all I regard as right." The idea seems to be, that he regarded as right and just all the commandments of God pertaining to "every" thing and "every" person; all, considered in

every way; all, wherever the law extended, and whomsoever it embraced; all the law pertaining to duty toward God and toward man. He saw in the "violation" of the laws of God Psalm 119:126 a reason for approving "all" law; all that would restrain people from sin, and that would bind them to duty and to virtue. The effect had been to lead him to reflect on the worth of law as law, and he had come to the conclusion that all the laws of God were to be approved and loved, inasmuch as they would, in their observance, prevent the wrongs and sorrows which he saw to be consequent on their violation.

And I hate every false way - Every course of life not based on truth, or on a right view of things. All just law is based on a perception of what is true; on the reality of things; on what is required in the nature of the case; on what will tend to promote the best interests of society. Compare the notes at Psalm 119:104.

Verse 129

Thy testimonies are wonderful - This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Pe* (פ *p*), corresponding to our "p." The meaning of the expression here is, that the laws of God - the revelations of his will - are adapted to fill the mind with wonder. The mind is awed by their wisdom; their comprehensiveness; their extent; their spirituality; their benevolence: by the fact that laws are framed, so perfectly adapted to the end; so well suited to secure order, and to promote happiness.

Therefore doth my soul keep them - Because they are so surpassingly wise and benevolent; because they are so manifestly the work of wisdom and goodness.

Verse 130

The entrance of thy words giveth light - The Septuagint translates this, "the manifestation (or declaration) - ἡ δήλωσις *hē dēlōsis* - of thy words enlightens." So the Vulgate. Luther renders it, "When thy word is revealed, so it delivers us, and makes the simple wise." DeWette, "The opening (revelation) of thy word," etc. The Hebrew word - פתח *pethach* - means an "opening" or "entrance" - as of a gate, Joshua 20:4; Judges 9:35; and then "a door," as of a tent or the temple, Genesis 18:1; 1 Kings 6:8; or the gate of a city, Isaiah 3:26; and then it means opening, insight, instruction. The word as used here seems to denote the opening or unfolding of the word of God; the revelation of that word to the mind. A door is open so that we enter into a house; a gate, so that we enter into a

city; and thus the meaning of the word of God is "opened" to us, so that we may, as it were, enter in and see its beauty. The language does not, therefore, denote the entrance of that word into the mind, but, its being made open to us so that we may perceive its beauty, or may ourselves "enter" into its meaning, its mysteries, and its beauties.

It giveth understanding unto the simple - The word rendered "simple" literally means "those who are open to persuasion," or who are easily enticed or seduced. Then it refers to the credulous, Proverbs 14:15, and then to the "inexperienced." See Psalm 19:7, note; Psalm 116:6, note.

Verse 131

I opened my mouth and panted - All this is the language of deep emotion. We breathe hard under the influence of such emotion; we open the mouth wide, and pant, as the ordinary passage for the air through the nostrils is not sufficient to meet the needs of the lungs in their increased action. The idea is, that his heart was full; that he had such an intense desire as to produce deep and rapid breathing; that he was like one who was exhausted, and who "panted" for breath. Compare the notes at Psalm 42:1.

For I longed for thy commandments - The word here rendered "longed" occurs nowhere else. It means to desire earnestly. See the notes at Psalm 119:20.

Verse 132

Look thou upon me - Turn not away from me. Regard me with thy favor.

And be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name - Margin, "According to the custom toward those," etc. The Hebrew word is "judgment:" "according to the judgment to the lovers of thy name." The word seems here to be used in the sense of "right;" of what is due; or, of what is usually determined: that is, as God usually determines, judges, acts toward those who love him. The idea is, Treat me according to the rules which regulate the treatment of thy people. Let me be regarded as one of them, and be dealt with accordingly. On the sentiment in this passage, see the notes at Psalm 106:4.

Verse 133

Order my steps in thy word - My goings, or, my conduct and life - by thy word; according to thy requirements. Let me be wholly obedient to thy will.

And let not any iniquity have dominion over me - See the notes at Psalm 19:13. The prayer is, that no form of sin, that no wicked passion or propensity, might be allowed to rule over him. He who is willing that any one sin should rule in his heart, though he should be free from all other forms of sin, cannot be a pious man. See the notes at James 2:10.

Verse 134

Deliver me from the oppression of man - From constraint on the part of man, so that I may be free to act as I please. Give me true religious liberty, and let me not be under any compulsion or constraint. The word rendered "deliver" is that which is usually rendered "redeem." It is used here in the large sense of deliverance; and the prayer is an expression of what the true friends of religion have always sought, desired, and demanded - "freedom" of opinion - the richest blessing which man can enjoy.

So will I keep thy precepts - My heart inclines to that; I desire it; and, if suffered to act without constraint, I will do it. As it is the purpose and the wish of my soul, I pray that all hindrances to the free exercise of my religion may be removed. How often has this prayer been offered in times of persecution! By how many million of the dwellers on the earth might it even now be offered! What a blessing it is to those who are free from oppressive laws, that they are permitted to carry out the wishes of their hearts, and to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience, with none to molest them or make them afraid.

Verse 135

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant - Hebrew, "Let thy face give light to thy servant." See the notes at Psalm 4:6.

And teach me thy statutes - See the notes at Psalm 119:12.

Verse 136

Rivers of waters run down mine eyes - My heart is sad, and my eyes pour forth floods of tears. It is not a gentle weeping, but my eyes are like a fountain which pours out full-flowing streams. See Jeremiah 9:1. "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears," etc. Compare Jeremiah 14:17; Lamentations 1:16; Lamentations 2:18.

Because they keep not thy law - On account of the sins, the follies, the stupidity, and the transgressions of people. So the Saviour wept over Jerusalem Luke 19:41; and so the apostle said that he had "great heaviness and continual sorrow" in his heart, on account of his "brethren," his "kinsmen according to the flesh." Romans 9:2-3. Such a feeling is right.

There is nothing for which we should be excited to deeper emotion in respect to our fellow-men than for the fact that they are violators of the law of God, and exposed to its fearful penalty. There is nothing which more certainly indicates true piety in the soul than such deep compassion for people as sinners, or because they are sinners. There is nothing which is more certainly connected with a work of grace in a community, or revival of true religion, than when such a feeling pervades a church. Then Christians will pray; then they will labor to save sinners; then they will feel their dependence on God; and then the Spirit of God will descend and bless the efforts put forth for the salvation of people. It may be added, nothing is more remarkable than that pious people ordinarily feel so little on account of the danger of their friends and fellow-sinners - that the occasions are so rare on which they imitate the example of the psalmist and of the Saviour in weeping over the condition of a perishing world!

Verse 137

Righteous art thou, O Lord … - This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Tsaddiy* (צ *ts*) - corresponding with "ts." The thought in this verse is, that God is right, or righteous, in his judgments, that is, in his law; or, in other words, that his law is founded on principles of equity.

Verse 138

Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded - Thy law, considered as a testimony as to what is right and best.

Are righteous and very faithful - Margin, as in Hebrew, "righteousness and faithfulness." They are "so" righteous, and so deserving of confidence - so certain to be accomplished, and so worthy to be trusted in - that they may be spoken of as "righteousness" and "fidelity" of the most perfect kind; the very essence of that which is right.

Verse 139

My zeal hath consumed me - Margin, "cut me off." The word which is here translated "consumed" is rendered "cut off" in Lamentations 3:53; Job 23:17; Psalm 54:5; Psalm 88:16; Psalm 94:23; Psalm 101:5; Psalm 143:12; "vanish," Job 6:17; "destroyed," Psalm 73:27; 2 Samuel 22:41; Psalm 18:40; Psalm 101:8; Psalm 69:4. It means here, that he pined away; that his strength was exhausted; that he was sinking under the efforts which he had put forth as expressive of his deep interest in the cause of God and of truth. On the sentiment here expressed, see the notes at Psalm 69:9.

Because mine enemies have forgotten thy words - Thy law; thy commands. It was not because they were his foes - not because he was endeavoring to destroy them, or to take vengeance on them - but because they were unmindful of God, and of the claims of his law. It is a great triumph which religion gains over a man‘s soul, when, in looking on the conduct of persecutors, calumniators, and slanderers - of those who are constantly doing us wrong - we are more grieved because they violate the law of God than because they injure us; when our solicitude is turned from ourselves, and terminates on our regard for the honor of God and his law. Yet that is the nature of true religion; and that we should be able to find in ourselves in such circumstances. A man should doubt the evidence of his personal religion, if all his feelings terminate on the wrong done to himself by the wicked conduct of others; if he has no feeling of solicitude because the law of God has been violated, and God has been dishonored. Compare the notes at Psalm 119:136.

Verse 140

Thy word is very pure - Margin, “tried or refined.” See the word explained in the notes at Psalm 18:30.

Therefore thy servant loveth it - Therefore I love it. I love it because it is pure, holy, true; not merely because it will save me. Apart from all reference to myself. I love thy truth as truth; I love purity as purity; I love law as law; I love holiness as holiness. This is true religion.

Verse 141

I am small and despised - The word here rendered “small” may mean “small” in respect to number - that is, “few,” Micah 5:2; Isaiah 60:22; or in respect to age - “young,” Genesis 19:31; or in respect to dignity - “low;” least in rank or esteem. The language here may be applied to the church as comparatively few; to one who is young; or to one in humble life. Either of these may be a reason why one is regarded as of little consequence, or may be subject to reproach and ridicule. It is not possible to determine in which of these senses the word is used here, or in which sense it was applicable to the psalmist. The word “despised” means treated as unworthy of notice; passed by; looked upon with contempt. This might be on account of age, or poverty, or ignorance, or humble rank: or it might be simply on account of his religion, for the friends of God have been, and often are, despised simply because they are religious. The Saviour was despised by people; the

apostles were; the most excellent of the earth in all ages have been. Compare Hebrews 11:36-38; 1 Corinthians 4:13.

Yet do not I forget thy precepts - I am not ashamed of them. I am not deterred from keeping them, and from avowing my purpose to obey them, because I am despised for it. This is often one of the severest tests of religion, and to be faithful in such circumstances is one of the clearest proofs of true attachment to God. There are few things which we are less able to bear than contempt, and one of the best evidences of attachment to principle is when we adhere to what we regard as right and true, though we are despised for it by the frivolous, the worldly, the rich - by those who claim to be "wise." He who can bear contempt on account of his opinions, can usually bear anything.

Verse 142

Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness - It never changes. The principles of thy law, of thy government, and of thy method of saving people, are the same under all dispensations, in every land, in all worlds; and they will remain the same forever. Human governments change. Old dynasties pass away. New laws are enacted under new administrations. Customs change. Opinions change. People change. The world changes. But as God himself never changes, so it is with his law. That law is founded on eternal truth, and can never change.

And thy law is the truth - It is founded on "truth;" on the reality of things. It is so essentially founded on truth, it springs so certainly out of truth, or out of the reality of things, that it may be said to be the truth itself. He who understands the law of God understands what truth is, for it is the expression and the exponent of that which is true.

Verse 143

Trouble and anguish - The word rendered "trouble" means affliction of any kind; the word rendered "anguish" would probably express that which results from being pressed, compressed, straitened. It properly refers to a situation where there is no room to move, and where we are pent up in a narrow place. The two words denote deep affliction.

Have taken hold on me - Margin, as in Hebrew, "found me." That is, they were in pursuit of me, and have at last apprehended me. Trouble, anguish, death, are in pursuit of us all our lives, and are never very far in the rear of us. Often, when we least expect them, they come suddenly up to us, and make us their victims.

Yet thy commandments are my delights - Notwithstanding this trouble, and in this trouble - no matter what comes - I have the same unfailing source of comfort, the truth of God; and notwithstanding what may occur, I still make God and his law the source of my happiness. See the notes at Psalm 119:24.

Verse 144

The righteousness of thy testimonies - The principles of righteousness on which they are founded. Those testimonies - those laws - are not arbitrary, or the mere expressions of will. They are founded on right and justice as seen by God, and his laws are his testimony as to what truth and justice are.

Is everlasting - See the notes at Psalm 119:142.

Give me understanding, and I shall live - Give me a right view of thy law, and thy truth, and I shall have real life. See the notes at Psalm 119:34.

Verse 145

I cried with my whole heart … - This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Koph* (ק *q*), answering to our letter "k." The expression "I cried with my whole heart" means that he did it earnestly, fervently. He had no divided wishes when he prayed. Not always is this so, even with good people. They sometimes offer a form of prayer, that they may be spiritually-minded, when their hearts are intensely worldly, and they would be unwilling to be otherwise; or that religion may be revived, when their hearts have no lively interest in it, and no wish for it; or that they may live wholly to God, when they are making all their arrangements to live for the world, and when they would be greatly disappointed if God should take means to make them live entirely to him; or that they may be humble, childlike, sincere, when they have no wish to be any otherwise than they are now, and when they would regard it as an affront if it should be assumed by any that they are not so now, and if they were exhorted to change their course of life. Often it would be a great surprise - perhaps grief - even to professedly religious persons, if God should answer their prayers, and should make them what they professedly desire to be, and what they pray that they may be. See the notes at Psalm 9:1; compare Psalm 111:1; Psalm 138:1; Psalm 119:2, Psalm 119:10, Psalm 119:34, Psalm 119:58, Psalm 119:69; Jeremiah 24:7.

I will keep thy statutes - It is my purpose and desire to keep thy law perfectly.

Verse 146

I cried unto thee - I called upon thee in trouble.

Save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies - Margin, "That I may keep." The correct rendering is, "I will keep." The idea is, that if God would interpose and save him, he "would" henceforward faithfully keep the law of God: It is one of the designs of affliction to lead people to make such vows as this. They are commonly made on beds of sickness, alike by the religious and the irreligious; the saint and the sinner. How often, alas, are they forgotten even by the friends of God! How seldom are they remembered at all by the sinner when he is raised up from the verge of the grave, and restored again to health!

Verse 147

I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried - I anticipated it; I rose up to pray before the morning dawned. On the word "prevent," see the notes at 1 Thessalonians 4:15; notes at Psalm 21:3; notes at Psalm 59:10; notes at Psalm 79:8. The meaning here is, that he rose up before the dawn, to pray. Thus the Saviour did, Mark 1:35.

(a) It is proper thus to pray, for our earliest thoughts should be those of devotion; our earliest acts should be in acknowledgment of God.

(b) Such a time is eminently favorable to devotion. Calm, still, quiet; before the thoughts are engaged in the world, and before the cares of life press upon us when the thoughts are clear, and the mind tranquil, the soul is in the best state for devotion.

(c) All people, if they will, can secure this time, before the "dawning of the morning," to pray. Compare Psalm 5:3, note; Psalm 88:13, note; see also Psalm 130:6. The word rendered "dawning of the morning," is from a verb which means to blow; to blow gently; and is usually applied to the evening, when the breezes blow gently. It may be applied, however, as it clearly is here, also to the morning.

I hoped in thy word - I prayed because I had hope in thy word; I exercised hope in thy word then. Alone with thee in the morning, I found consolation by trusting in thy gracious promises.

Verse 148

Mine eyes prevent the night watches - Luther renders this, "I wake up early." The Hebrew word means a "watch" - a part of the night, so called

from military watches, or a dividing of the night to "keep guard." See the notes at Psalm 90:4. The idea of the psalmist here is, that he anticipated these regular divisions of the night in order that he might engage in devotion. Instead of waiting for their return, he arose for prayer before they recurred - so much did his heart delight in the service of God. The language would seem to be that of one who was accustomed to pray in these successive "watches" of the night - the early, the middle, and the dawn. This may illustrate what occurs in the life of all who love God. They will have regular seasons of devotion, but they will often anticipate those seasons. They will be in a state of mind which prompts them to pray; when nothing will meet their state of mind but prayer; and when they cannot wait for the regular and ordinary season of devotion - like a hungry man who cannot wait for the usual and regular hour of his meals. The meaning of the phrase, "mine eyes prevent," is that he awoke before the usual time for devotion.

That I might meditate in thy word - See the notes at Psalm 1:2.

Verse 149

Hear my voice, according unto thy loving-kindness - According to thy mercy; thy goodness. Let that be the rule in answering me; not my deserts, or even the fervour of my prayers. We can desire no better rule in answer to our prayers.

O Lord, quicken me - Give me life; cause me truly to live. See the notes at Psalm 119:40.

According to thy judgment - Thy law as a rule of judgment; thy revealed truth, with all its gracious promises.

Verse 150

They draw nigh - They follow me; they press hard upon me.

That follow after mischief - That seek to do me wrong.

They are far from thy law - They yield no obedience to it; they are not influenced by it in their conduct toward me.

Verse 151

Thou art near, O Lord - God was present with him; he was ready to hear his cry; he was at hand to save him. Compare Psalm 145:18. The psalmist had the assurance, springing from deep feeling, and the conscious presence of God, which the people of God often have, that God is very near to them; that he is ready to hear them; that their prayers are answered; that they are in the presence of a heavenly Friend. Such are among the precious experiences of the life of a religious man.

And all thy commandments are truth - All that thou hast ordained; all that thou hast promised. The psalmist felt this. He was experiencing the truth of what God had assured him of. Not a doubt came into his mind - for God was near him. This conviction that God is "near" us - this manifestation of God to the soul as a present God - is one of the most certain assurances to our own minds of the truth of religion, and of our acceptance with him.

Verse 152

Concerning thy testimonies - In regard to all that thou hast testified to as true and best. Every command of God is in fact a testimony of his as to what is right; every promise is a testimony of his own purpose in regard to mankind.

I have known of old - The word used here is a noun, and means properly, "the front," what is "before;" then, the East; then, what pertains to olden time or ancient days - "before" the present. The meaning here is, that he had known this "before" what had now occurred; it was not a new thing - a new experience. It was deeply impressed on his mind as the result of all his reflection and observation.

That thou hast founded them for ever - "From" eternity, and "for" eternity. They were laid in the eternity past; they will continue in the eternity to come. They are based on eternal principles of right; they will never be changed. Such a conviction will do much to keep the soul steady and firm in the trials and uncertainties of life. Whatever may change, God's law does not change; whatever is new, that is not new; whatever will vanish away, that will remain.

Verse 153

Consider mine affliction … - This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Resh* (ר *r*), corresponding to our "r." The prayer here is, that God would look upon his trial; that he would regard it as it really was; that he would not turn away from it, or pass it by, as if it were a trifle - a thing not worthy to claim his attention. See the notes at Psalm 9:13.

For I do not forget thy law - I endeavor to be obedient, submissive, patient. As a suffering child of thine, I come to thee, and beseech thee to interpose and save me.

Verse 154

Plead my cause … - Undertake my cause, as an advocate does. See the notes at Psalm 35:1.

Quicken me … - Give me life. See the notes at Psalm 119:25.

Verse 155

Salvation is far from the wicked - That is,

(a) in their present course: they are very far from being safe, or from having a prospect of salvation;

(b) they are constantly going farther and farther off - making their salvation less probable - not going toward heaven, but from it.

(c) Destruction is very near to them, and they are constantly making it nearer and nearer.

(d) In their present course it may be said that salvation is far - is infinitely remote - from them, so that they can never come to it.

(e) If they would be saved, they must change their course altogether, and go "toward" salvation and not from it.

For they seek not thy statutes - They do not regard thy law; they do not make it a principle to obey thy commandments.

Verse 156

Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord - They are many, or multiplied. The word rendered "tender mercies" is the same which occurs in Psalm 40:11; Psalm 51:1; Psalm 69:16; Psalm 79:8; Psalm 103:4. See the notes at Psalm 25:6.

Quicken me … - See Psalm 119:149.

Verse 157

Many are my persecutors and mine enemies - The thought here turns on the number of his enemies, and on the effect which numbers might have in turning one from the way of truth. We might meet one such enemy, and overcome him; we might resist the influence of one in endeavoring to turn us away from the truth, but the danger of falling is much increased when numbers are combined in persecuting us, or in seeking to turn us away from our religion - when it becomes unpopular to be a professed friend of God.

Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies - I still adhere to thee; I still maintain my integrity, notwithstanding all this. See the notes at Psalm

119:51.

Verse 158

I beheld the transgressors - Those who wronged me; those who violated the law of God.

And was grieved - Or, "sickened." The word used here means commonly to loathe, to nauseate, to sicken. Ezekiel 16:47; Psalm 95:10. I was made sad, sorry, sick at heart. I did not look on them with anger; I did not desire to take revenge upon them; I did not return evil for evil. My heart was sad that people would do wrong; that they would expose themselves to such danger. See the notes at Psalm 119:136.

Because they kept not thy word - Because they violated thy law; because they were sinners.

Verse 159

Consider how I love thy precepts - Search me. Behold the evidence of my attachment to thy law. This is the confident appeal of one who was conscious that he was truly attached to God; that he really loved his law. It is similar to the appeal of Peter to the Saviour John 21:17, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." A man who truly loves God may make this appeal without impropriety. He may be so confident - so certain - that he has true love for the character of God, that he may make a solemn appeal to him on the subject - as he might appeal to a friend, to his wife, to his son, to his daughter, with the utmost confidence that he loved them. A man "ought" to have such love for "them," that he could affirm this without hesitation or doubt; a man "ought" to have such love for God, that he could affirm this with equal confidence and propriety.

Quicken me … - See the notes at Psalm 119:25.

Verse 160

Thy word is true from the beginning - literally, "The head of thy word is truth." Probably the meaning is, that the "principles" of God's word were truth, or were based on truth. The main thing - that on which all relied - was truth, absolute truth. It was not "made" truth by the mere will of God, but it was "founded on" essential truth. Compare Psalm 119:142, note; Psalm 119:144, note. Margin, "The beginning of thy word is true." Its origin is truth; its foundation is truth; its essential nature is truth. See Psalm 19:9.

And every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever - Since any one of thy laws is as certainly founded in truth as any other, it must be that all alike are eternal and unchanging. It must be so with all the essential

principles of morality. Mere regulations in regard to rites and ceremonies may be altered, as local and municipal laws among men may be; but essential principles of justice cannot be. A civil corporation - the government of a city or borough - may change its regulations about streets, and culverts, and taxes; but they can never enact laws authorizing murder or theft; nor can they alter the essential nature of honesty and dishonesty; of truth and falsehood.

Verse 161

Princes have persecuted me without a cause - This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the Hebrew letter *Schin* (שׂ *ś* and שׁ *sh*) - corresponding to our "s," or "sh." On the meaning of the expression here, see Psalm 119:23, note; Psalm 119:76, note.

But my heart standeth in awe of thy word - I still reverence thy word. I am not deterred from keeping thy law by any threats or intimidations. This is in accordance with the uniform statements in the psalm, that nothing deterred him from manifesting his adherence to the law of God.

Verse 162

I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil - Plunder in a camp; prey; booty: as the hunter or the warrior, when he lights on great and unexpected success.

Verse 163

I hate and abhor lying - The mention of lying here particularly seems to have been suggested by the necessity, from the structure of the psalm, of finding some word at the beginning of the verse which commenced with the letter Schin. At the same time, it is an illustration of the nature of piety, and doubtless there had been numerous occasions in the life of the psalmist when he had seen and experienced the effects of falsehood. This sin, therefore, might occur to him as readily as any other. It is unnecessary to say that religion "forbids" this sin in all its forms.

But thy law do I love - Particularly here the law which forbids lying. The psalmist was conscious, as every good man must be, that he truly loved that pure law which forbids falsehood in all its forms.

Verse 164

Seven times a day - The word seven may be used here, as it is often in the Scriptures, indefinitely to denote many, or often. There is, however, nothing which makes it necessary to understand it in this sense. The number of times in which it is proper and profitable to engage in secret or public

devotion is nowhere specified in the Scriptures, but it is left, under a general direction, to be determined by each one as he shall find it desirable and convenient; as his feelings or his circumstances shall suggest. On another occasion Psalm 55:17 David mentions that he prayed "evening, and morning, and at noon;" at other times, perhaps, he might have found it in accordance with his feelings, or with his circumstances, to engage in devotion seven times in a day. There are circumstances in the lives of all good men when they are prompted to do this: times of trouble, of sickness, of bereavement, of danger, or of religious interest. There are states of mind which prompt to this, and when secret devotion becomes frequent, and almost constant; when nothing will satisfy the mind but prayer. No one would be injured by making it a rule, unless unavoidably prevented, to engage seven times each day in secret prayer, though, at the same time, no one could maintain that this is required as a rule by the Scriptures. The times, the circumstances, the manner, the place of secret devotion are wisely and properly left to each individual to be determined by himself. Religion is essentially voluntary, and the times of secret devotion must be voluntary, and therefore a man can easily determine, by his own secret devotions, whether he has any special interest at any particular time in religion, or whether he has any religion at all.

Do I praise thee - Do I engage in devotion.

Because of thy righteous judgments - Thy law, considered as righteous. I love that law, as such, and I praise thee for it.

Verse 165

Great peace have they - See the notes at Isaiah 26:3; compare the notes at Philemon 4:6-7. They have great calmness of mind. They are not troubled and anxious. They believe and feel that all things are well-ordered by thee, and will be conducted to the best result. They, therefore, calmly leave all with thee. As a matter of fact, the friends of God have peace and calmness in their minds, even amidst the troubles, the disappointments, and the reverses of life. The love of God is the best - the only - way to secure permanent peace in the soul.

Which love thy law - It is the love of law, and the belief that the law of God is in accordance with justice, that gives peace to their minds. God's government is a government of law, and therefore it is loved.

And nothing shall offend them - Margin, "They shall have no stumbling-block." "Hebrew, "And to them no stumbling," or stumbling-

block. See the notes at Matthew 5:29-30; notes at Matthew 18:6; notes at Matthew 16:23; notes at 1 Peter 2:8; notes at James 2:10. The meaning here is, that they would not fall into sin; they would be kept safe; they would be preserved from the power of temptation. The meaning is not, as it would seem to be in our version, that nothing would pain, grieve, or irritate them; but, as above, that as long as they were obedient to the law, and disposed to obey it, they would be safe from the power of temptation.

Verse 166

Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation - As a prevailing habit or principle in my life. I have looked to thee for deliverance in the time of danger; I have looked to thee for salvation in the world to come.

And done thy commandments - That is, habitually. This is not, necessarily, a claim to absolute perfection.

Verse 167

My soul hath kept thy testimonies, and I love them exeeedingly - I am conscious of loving them; I feel an inward assurance that I do love them.

Verse 168

I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies - This is an appeal which is several times made in the psalm; not with boasting, but as indicating the tenor and purpose of his life. Every man ought to be able to make such an appeal.

For all my ways are before thee - Thou hast seen my manner of life, and I may appeal to thee in proof that I have thus kept thy law. No one can lay claim to entire perfection, but there is many a man who, while conscious of much imperfection, and many shortcomings, can appeal to God for the truth of the statement that his great aim of life has been to keep his commandments.

Verse 169

Let my cry come near before thee, O Lord - This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the letter *Tau* (ט ṭ), corresponding to our "t," or "th." The petition here is, that his prayer might be heard; that it might come into the very presence of God; that there might be no obstructions to its reaching where God was. Let nothing from my unworthiness, from my past sins, from my ignorance, prevent its coming before thee. Something often apparently hinders our

prayers so that they do not reach the ear of God. The psalmist prays here that there may be no such hindrance in the prayer which he now offers.

Give me understanding according to thy word - According to the promises of thy word; or, give me the same views of truth which are set forth in thy word. This prayer had been several times offered before, and it shows how earnest was his desire to know the truth. See Psalm 119:34, Psalm 119:73, Psalm 119:144.

Verse 170

Let my supplication come before thee - The word here rendered "supplication" properly means "favor, mercy, pity," Joshua 11:20; Ezra 9:8; then, that by which favor or mercy is sought - prayer or petition, Psalm 6:9; Psalm 55:1.

Deliver me according to thy word - From my enemies, my sins, my dangers. According to thy promises; according to the arrangements in thy word.

Verse 171

My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes - The sentiment here is the same as in Psalm 119:7. The language is varied, but the meaning here, as in that verse, is, I will praise thee in proportion as I learn thy precepts or thy law. The more I learn of thy will, the more I will praise thee. I shall see more for which to offer praise and adoration, and I shall be more and more inclined to praise and adore time. Each new degree of knowledge will excite a corresponding desire to praise thee. This will be true of all who love God, while this life lasts, and forever. The ever-increasing knowledge of God will excite ever-increasing praise; and as God is infinite and eternal, it follows that the increase of knowledge and of happiness, in those who are saved, will be eternal. These things will go hand in hand forever and ever.

Verse 172

My tongue shall speak of thy word - It shall speak of it in the language of praise; it shall speak of it in making it known to others.

For all thy commandments are righteousness - I see this; I feel it; and, therefore, I will speak of it. My impression that thy commandments are all righteous is so deep, that I cannot but speak of them. I must vindicate them; I must praise thee for them.

Verse 173

Let thine hand help me - Do thou help me - the hand being that by which we accomplish anything.

For I have chosen that precepts - I have chosen them as my comforters and my guide. I have resolved to obey them, and I pray that thou wilt help me to accomplish the purpose of my heart.

Verse 174

I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord - See the notes at Psalm 119:166. The word rendered "I have longed" denotes an earnest desire or wish. Compare the notes at Psalm 42:1, and the notes at Psalm 119:20.

And thy law is my delight - It is so much the object of my delight that I earnestly long or desire to see more and more of its richness and fullness.

Verse 175

Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee - I desire life that I may praise thee; if I do live, I will praise thee. My life is consecrated to thy service; if lengthened out, and as far as it shall be lengthened out, it shall be devoted to thee.

And let thy judgments help me - The dealings of thy hand; the interpositions of thy providence. Let them all be such as will be favorable to the great purpose of my soul - the service of my God.

Verse 176

I have gone astray like a lost sheep - A sheep that has wandered away from its fold, and is without a protector. Compare Isaiah 53:6; Matthew 10:6; Matthew 15:24; Matthew 18:12; Luke 15:6; 1 Peter 2:25. I am a wanderer. I have lost the path to true happiness. I have strayed away from my God. I see this; I confess it; I desire to return. It is remarkable that this is almost the only confession of sin in the psalm. This psalm, more than any other, abounds in confident statements respecting the life of the author, his attachment to the law of God, the obedience which he rendered to that law, and his love for it - as well as with appeals to God, founded on the fact that he did love that law, and that his life was one of obedience. This is not, indeed, spoken in a spirit of self-righteousness, or as constituting a claim on the ground of merit; but it is remarkable that there is so frequent reference to it, and so little intermingling of a confession of sin, of error, of imperfection. The psalm would not have been complete as a record of religious experience, or as illustrating the real state of the human heart, without a distinct acknowledgment of sin, and hence, in its close, and in view of his whole life, upright as in the main it had been, the psalmist

confesses that he had wandered; that he was a sinner; that his life had been far from perfection, and that he needed the gracious interposition of God to seek him out, and to bring him back.

Seek thy servant - As the shepherd does the sheep that is lost, Luke 15:4-6. So the Saviour came to seek and to save that which was lost, Luke 19:10. So God seeks the wanderer by his word, by his providence, by his Spirit, to induce him to return and be saved.

For I do not forget thy commandments - In all my wandering; with my consciousness of error; with my sense of guilt, I still do feel that I love thy law - thy service - thy commandments. They are the joy of my heart, and I desire to be recalled from all my wanderings, that I may find perfect happiness in thee and in thy service evermore. Such is the earnest wish of every regenerated heart. Far as such an one may have wandered from God, yet he is conscious of true attachment to him and his service; he desires and earnestly prays that he may be "sought out," brought back, and kept from wandering anymore.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 120

Introduction

This is the first of fifteen psalms Ezekiel 40:22, Ezekiel 40:37. Others have supposed that the title refers to some uniqueness of structure in the psalms - a gradation or elevation of thought - approaching to a climax. Michaelis (Notes on Lowth's Lectures on Hebrew Poetry, xxv., p. 512) supposes that the title is a musical term, and that the reference is to something special in the rhythm, or what is called by us, "feet" of the psalm, but which in the East would be called "steps" or "ascents." See DeWette, Einleitung, p. 35.

In this variety of conjecture - for it can be regarded as little more than conjecture - it is impossible now to determine with any degree of certainty what is the true meaning of the title, or why it was given to these psalms. It is evident that, from some cause, there was such a unity in them, either from the nature of the composition, or from the occasion on which they were used, that they could properly have a general title given to them, as indicating what would be well understood among the Hebrews in regard to their design. But I apprehend that the reason for that title cannot now be positively ascertained. Something negative, however, may be determined in regard to this.

(1) It is quite clear that the opinion of the rabbis that they were 15 in number, and named Songs of Degrees, because they were sung on ascending the steps to the temple, is purely fanciful. In the real temple there was no such ascent; and it is only in the visions of Ezekiel that there is any such allusion.

(2) It seems equally clear that they were not so called because they were composed and used for the "going up" from the captivity in Babylon, or to be sung during the march through the desert. Several of them - those of David and Solomon - were composed long before that event, and could have had no allusion to it. Besides, there are but two of them Psalm 122:1-9; Psalm 126:1-6 that have any reference to the return from Babylon, or that would have any applicability to that journey. Moreover, it is extremely improbable that any such selection of psalms should have been used on

such a journey, or that any arrangement should have been made for such a purpose.

(3) It seems to me equally improbable that they were called "Songs of Degrees or Ascents," because they were used by the people when "going up" to Jerusalem to attend on the great festivals. As in the previous specification, it may be remarked that the psalms here referred to had no special applicability to such a use; that there is no evidence that any such practice prevailed; that it is wholly improbable that there would be any such set and fixed arrangement, or that the people in going up to Jerusalem on those occasions would move along to measured music.

The word rendered "degrees" in the title - מעלה *mă'âlâh* in the singular - and מעלות *ma'ălôth* in the plural, the form used here - means properly an "ascent, a going up," as from a lower to a higher region, Ezra 7:9 (margin); or of the thoughts that ascend in the mind, Ezekiel 11:5. Then it means a "step," by which one ascends, 1 Kings 10:19; Ezekiel 40:26, Ezekiel 40:31, Ezekiel 40:34. Then it means a degree of a dial, or a dial as divided into degrees, where there is an "ascent" on the dial, 2 Kings 20:9-11. See the notes at Isaiah 38:8. After what has been said above, there seem to be but two suppositions which have probability in regard to its meaning here:

(a) The one is the opinion of Gesenius, that these psalms are called Songs of Degrees, or Ascents, because of a certain "ascent" in the mode of composition, as when the first or last words of a preceding line are repeated at the beginning of a succeeding line, and then some new increase in the sense or idea - or some "ascent" in the meaning - follows by such an addition. The following instances may be referred to as illustrating this view. Psalm 121:1-2: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help: My help cometh from the Lord," etc, Psalm 121:3-4: He that keepeth thee will not slumber: Behold, he that "keepeth" Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." Psalm 121:7-8: "the Lord shall "preserve" thee from all evil; he shall "preserve" thy soul: The Lord shall "preserve" thy going out, and thy coming in," etc. So also Psalm 124:1-2: "If it had not been the Lord who was "on our side," now may Israel say: If it had not been the Lord who was "on our side;" when people rose up against us - "then" Psalm 124:3 they had swallowed us up quick; "then" Psalm 124:4 the

waters had overwhelmed us; "then" Psalm 124:5 the proud waters had gone over our soul." See also Psalm 122:2-4; Psalm 123:3-4; Psalm 126:2-3; and Psalm 129:1-2. There is doubtless some foundation for this supposition, but, after all, it seems far-fetched, and though the remark may be true of some of these fifteen psalms, yet it can by no means be made applicable to all of them, nor could it be shown to be so special to them that no others could have been for the same reason included in the number.

(b) The remaining supposition seems to have much more plausibility than anyone here suggested. It is that the term is a musical expression; that there was something special in the "scale" of the music to which these psalms were sung, though that is now lost to us. This is akin to the opinion of John D. Michaelis, as alluded to above. This is, also, referred to by Asseman (Biblioth. Orient., t. i., p. 62), and by Castell (Lex. Syr.) It is impossible, however, now to ascertain "what" there is that would make this appellation especially appropriate to these psalms. All that can be known is, that there was some reason why these psalms were, so to speak, bound up together, and designated by a common title. This does not prevent a special title being prefixed to some of them in regard to their author and design.

The psalm now before us has no other title, and nothing to designate its author. it pertains to a sufferer who calls earnestly upon the Lord for deliverance. The particular form of trial is that caused by the tongue - slander. The author was suffering from some unjust aspersions cast upon him; from some effort to destroy his reputation; from some charge in regard to his character, which made him miserable, as if he sojourned in Mesech and dwelt in the tents of Kedar, Psalm 120:5. He says that it was in vain for him to attempt to live in peace with the men who calumniated him. He was himself disposed to peace. He earnestly desired it. But they were for war, and they kept up the war, Psalm 120:6-7. Among the forms of suffering to which the people of God are exposed, this is not uncommon; and it was proper that it should be referred to in a book designed, as the Book of Psalms was, to be useful in all ages, and in all lands, as a record of religious experience.

Verse 1

In my distress - In my suffering, as arising from slander, Psalm 120:2-3. There are few forms of suffering more keen than those caused by slander:

"Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue
Outvenoms all the worms of Nile; whose breath
Rides on the posting winds, and doth belie

All corners of the world: kings, queens, and states,

Maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave

This viperous slander enters."

Cymbeline, iii. 4.

It is one of those things which a man cannot guard against; which he cannot repel by force; whose origin he cannot always trace; which will go where a vindication will not follow; whose effects will live long after the slander is refuted; which will adhere to a man, or leave a trait of suspicion, even after the most successful vindication, for the effect will be to make a second slander more easily credited than the first was.

I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me - I had no other resource. I could not meet the slander. I could not refute it. I could not prevent its effects on my reputation, and all that I could do was to commit the case to the Lord. See the notes at Psalm 37:5-6.

Verse 2

Deliver my soul, O Lord - My soul is harassed and distressed. Perhaps the meaning also may be, My life is in danger. Or, if it refers to the soul as such, then it means that everything pertaining to his soul was deeply affected by the course which was pursued. He was maligned, slandered, misrepresented, deceived, and he had no comfort or peace.

From lying lips - False, deceitful, slanderous. Compare the notes at Psalm 31:18.

And from a deceitful tongue - From a tongue whose statements cannot be relied on; whose words are deceptive; whose promises are false. David was often called to experience troubles of this sort; and this is a kind of trial which may come upon anyone in a form which he can no more anticipate or prevent than he can the coming of a "mist from the ocean." No man can certainly guard against the influence of falsehood; no man can be sure that all that will be said to him is true; no man can be certain that all the

promises made to him - save those made to him by God - will be performed.

Verse 3

What shall be given unto thee? - Margin, "What shall the deceitful tongue give unto thee;" or, "what shall it profit thee?" Luther, "What can the false tongue do?" Others render this, "How will God punish thee?" Others, "What will he (God) give to thee?" That is, What recompence can you expect from God for these malignant calumnies? A literal translation of this verse would be, "What shall the tongue of deceit give to thee, and what shall it add to thee?" - referring to the offender himself. The essential idea is, What will be the result of such conduct? What must be expected to follow from it? That is, either

(a) from the unprofitableness of such a course; or

(b) from the natural consequences to one's reputation and happiness; or

(c) from the judgment of God.

The answer to these questions is found in Psalm 120:4.

Or what shall be done unto thee? - Margin, as in Hebrew, "added." What must be the consequence of this? what will follow?

Thou false tongue - This may be either an address to the tongue itself, or, as above, the word "tongue" may be used as the nominative to the verbs in the sentence. The sense is not materially affected either way.

Verse 4

Sharp arrows of the mighty - This is an answer to the question in Psalm 120:3. The consequence - the effect - of such a use of the tongue must be like sharp and piercing arrows, or like intensely burning coals. The "sharp arrows of the mighty" are the arrows of the warrior - as war was conducted mainly by bows and arrows. Those arrows were, of course, sharpened to make them piercing, penetrating, more deadly.

With coals of juniper - On the word here rendered "juniper," see the notes at Job 30:4. The idea here is, that coals made from that would be intensely hot, and would cause severer pain than if made from other wood. The word refers to a species of broom or shrub growing in the deserts of Arabia, with yellowish flowers and a bitter root. See "Robinson's Biblical Researches," vol. i., p. 299. Burchardt says that he found the Bedouin of

Sinai burning the roots into coal, and says that they make the best charcoal, and throw out the most intense heat. The shrub sometimes grows so large as to furnish a shade to those exposed to the heat of the sun in the desert, 1 Kings 19:4; "Land and the Book" (Thomson), vol. ii., pp. 438,439. The cut given below will give an idea of this plant.

Verse 5

Woe is me - My lot is a sad and pitiable one, that I am compelled to live in this manner, and to be exposed thus to malignant reproaches. It is like living in Mesech or in Kedar.

That I sojourn - The word used here does not denote a permanent abode, but it usually refers to a temporary lodging, as when one is a traveler, a pilgrim, a stranger, and is under a necessity of passing a night in a strange land on his way to the place of his destination. The trouble or discomfort here referred to is not that which would result from having his home there, or abiding there permanently, but of feeling that he was a stranger, and would be exposed to all the evils and inconveniences of a stranger among such a people. A man who resided in a place permanently might be subject to fewer inconveniences than if he were merely a temporary lodger among strangers.

In Mesech - The Septuagint and Vulgate render this, "that my sojourning is protracted." The Hebrew word - מֹשֶׁך *meshek* - means, properly "drawing," as of seed "scattered regularly along the furrows" Psalm 126:6; and then possession, Job 28:18. The people of Meshech or the Moschi, were a barbarous race inhabiting the Moschian regions between Iberia, Armenia, and Colchis. Meshech was a son of Japheth, Genesis 10:2; 1 Chronicles 1:5. The name is connected commonly with "Tubal," Ezekiel 27:13: "Tubal and Meshech they were thy merchants." Ezekiel 39:1: "I am against … the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal," Herodotus (iii. 94; vii. 78) connects them with the Tibarenes. The idea here is, that they were a barbarous, savage, uncivilized people. They dwelt outside of Palestine, beyond what were regarded as the borders of civilization; and the word seems to have had a signification similar to the names Goths, Vandals, Turks, Tartars, Cossacks, in later times. It is not known that they were particularly remarkable for slander or calumny; but the meaning is that they were barbarous and savage - and to dwell among slanderers and revilers seemed to the psalmist to be like dwelling among a people who were strangers to all the rules and principles of civilized society.

That I dwell in the tents of Kedar - The word Kedar means properly dark skin, a darkskinned man. Kedar was a son of Ishmael Genesis 25:13, and hence, the name was given to an Arabian tribe descended from him, Isaiah 42:11; Isaiah 60:7; Jeremiah 49:28. The idea here also is, that to dwell among slanderers was like dwelling among barbarians and savages.

Verse 6

My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace - This trouble is no new thing. It has been long continued, and has become intolerable. Who this was that thus gave him trouble is, of course, now unknown. It is only necessary to remark that there can scarcely be any source of trouble more bitter than that of sustaining such relations to others either in business, or in office, or by family-ties - whether by marriage or by blood - in school, in college, or in corporate bodies - as to expose us always to a quarrel: to be compelled to have constant contact with people of sour, perverse, crooked tempers, who are satisfied with nothing; who are suspicious or envious; who pervert our motives and our conduct; who misrepresent our words; who demand more than is due to them; who refuse to perform what may reasonably be expected of them; and who make use of every opportunity to involve us in difficulties with others. There are many trials in human life, but there are few which are more galling, or more hard to bear than this. The literal rendering of the passage would be, "Long for her has my soul dwelt," etc. That is, long (or too long) for her good - for the welfare of my soul. It has been an injury to me; to my piety, to my comfort, to my salvation. it has vexed me, tried me, hindered me in my progress in the divine life. Nothing would have a greater tendency of this kind than to be compelled to live in the manner indicated above.

Verse 7

I am for peace - Margin, "A man of peace." Literally, "I (am) peace." It is my nature. I desire to live in peace. I strive to do so. I do nothing to provoke a quarrel. I would do anything which would be right to pacify others. I would make any sacrifices, yield to any, demands, consent to any arrangements which would promise peace.

But when I speak - When I say anything on the subject, when I propose any new arrangements, when I suggest any changes, when I give utterance to my painful feelings, and express a desire to live differently - they will listen to nothing; they will be satisfied with nothing.

They are for war - For discord, variance, strife. All my efforts to live in peace are vain. They are determined to quarrel, and I cannot prevent it.

(a) A man in such a case should separate from such a person, if possible, as the only way of peace.

(b) If his position and relations are such that that cannot be done, then he should be careful that he does nothing himself to irritate and to keep up the strife.

(c) If all that he does or can do for peace is vain, and if his relations and position are such that he cannot separate, then he should bear it patiently - as coming from God, and as the discipline of his life. God has many ways of testing the patience and faith of his people, and there are few things which will do so more effectually than this; few situations where piety will shine more beautifully than in such a trial;

(d) He who is thus tried should look with the more earnestness of desire to another world. There is a world of peace; and the peace of heaven will be all the more grateful and blessed when we go up to it from such a scene of conflict and war.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 121

Introduction

This psalm is entitled simply, "A Song of Degrees." See the notes on the title to Psalm 120:1-7. Nothing is known, or can be known, of the author or of the occasion on which it was composed. DeWette and Rosenmuller suppose that it was composed in the exile; Rosenmuller regarding it as a psalm to be sung on the return to Palestine after the captivity - DeWette, as the psalm of a pensive exile looking toward the hills of Palestine, his native land, as the source from where all his help must come - and expressing confidence in God that he would bring him out of his exile and his trouble. There is no proof, however, that either of these suppositions is correct. The language is such, indeed, as might then be employed, but it is also such as might be used on many other occasions. It might be the language of the leader of an army, endangered, and looking to the "hills" where he expected reinforcements; it might be that of a pious man encompassed with dangers, anal using this expression as illustrative of his looking up to God; or it might be the language of one looking directly to heaven, represented as the heights, or the exalted place where God dwells; or it might be the language of one looking to the hills of Jerusalem - the seat of the worship of God - the place of His abode - as his refuge, and as the place from where only help could come. This last seems to me to be the most probable supposition; and thus the psalm represents the confidence and hope of a pious man (in respect to duty, danger, or trial) as derived from the God whom he worships - and the place where God has fixed his abode - the church where he manifests himself to people.

Verse 1

I will lift up mine eyes - Margin, "Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills? Whence should my help come?" The expression would properly denote a condition where there was danger; when no help or aid was visible; and when the eyes were turned to the quarter from which help might be expected to come. What the danger was cannot now be ascertained.

Unto the hills - Hebrew, the mountains. To the quarter from where I look for assistance. This (as has been shown in the Introduction) may refer

(1) to the mountains from where one in danger expected help; or

(2) to heaven, considered as high, and as the abode of God; or

(3) to the hills on which Jerusalem was built, as the place where God dwelt, and from where aid was expected.

The third of these is the most probable. The first would be applicable to a state of war only, and the second is forced and unnatural. Adopting the third interpretation, the language is natural, and makes it proper to be used at all times, since it indicates a proper looking to God as he manifests himself to people, particularly in the church.

From whence cometh my help - A more literal rendering would be, "Whence cometh my help?" This accords best with the usage of the Hebrew word, and agrees well with the connection. It indicates a troubled and anxious state of mind - a mind that asks, Where shall I look for help? The answer is found in the following verse.

Verse 2

My help cometh from the Lord - From Yahweh. This is the answer to the anxious inquiry in Psalm 121:1. It indicates

(a) a consciousness that help could come only from God;

(b) a belief that it would come from him; and a confident yet humble reliance on him.

Which made heaven and earth - The great Creator of the universe. He must, therefore, be able to protect me. The Creator of all can defend all.

Verse 3

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved - He will enable you to stand firm. You are safe in his protection. Compare the notes at Psalm 38:16. This, with the remainder of the psalm, seems to be of the nature of an answer to the anxious question in Psalm 121:1 - an answer which the author of the psalm, in danger and trouble, makes to his own soul, imparting confidence to himself.

He that keepeth thee will not slumber - He will be ever watchful and wakeful. Compare Isaiah 27:3. All creatures, as far as we know, sleep; God never sleeps. Compare Psalm 139:11-12. His eyes are upon us by day, and in the darkness of the night - the night literally; and also the night of calamity, woe, and sorrow.

Verse 4

Behold, he that keepeth Israel - The Keeper - the Guardian - of his people. The psalmist here passes from his own particular case to a general truth - a truth to him full of consolation. It is, that the people of God must always be safe; that their great Guardian never slumbers; and that he, as one of his people, might, therefore, confidently look for his protecting care.

Shall neither slumber nor sleep - Never slumbers, never ceases to be watchful. Man sleeps; a sentinel may slumber on his post, by inattention, by long-continued wakefulness, or by weariness; a pilot may slumber at the helm; even a mother may fall asleep by the side of the sick child; but God is never exhausted, is never weary, is never inattentive. He never closes his eyes on the condition of his people, on the needs of the world.

Verse 5

The Lord is thy keeper - Thy Preserver; thy Defender. He will keep time from danger; he will keep thee from sin; he will keep thee unto salvation.

The Lord is thy shade - The Lord is as a shadow: as the shadow of a rock, a house, or a tree, in the intense rays of the burning sun. See the notes at Isaiah 25:4.

Upon thy right hand - See Psalm 16:8; Psalm 109:31. Perhaps the particular allusion to the right hand here may be that that was the place of a protector. He would thus be at hand, or would be ready to interpose in defense of him whom he was to guard. It is possible, however, that the idea here may be derived from the fact that in Scripture the geographer is represented as looking to the east, and not toward the north, as with us. Hence, the south is always spoken of as the right, or at the right hand (compare the notes at Psalm 89:12); and as the intense rays of the sun are from the south, the idea may be, that God would be as a shade in the direction from which those burning rays came.

Verse 6

The sun shall not smite thee by day - The Septuagint renders this, "shall not burn thee" - συγκαύσει *sungkausei* So the Latin Vulgate. The Hebrew word means to smite, to strike, as with a rod or staff, or with the plague or pestilence; and then, to kill, to slay. The allusion here is to what is now called a "sun-stroke" - the effect of the burning sun on the brain. Such effects of the sun are often fatal now, as doubtless they were in the time of the psalmist.

Nor the moon by night - The psalmist here refers to some prevalent opinion about the influence of the moon, as endangering life or health. Some have supposed that he refers to the sudden cold which follows the intense heat of the day in Oriental countries, and which, because the moon rules the night, as the sun does the day, is either poetically or literally attributed to the moon. Lackmann and Michaelis suppose that there is some allusion to the influence of the moon in producing various kinds of disease, and especially lunacy - an idea which gave origin to that name. Compare the notes at Matthew 4:24. See Matthew 17:15; Mark 9:17; Luke 9:39. Knapp supposes the idea is, that from the moon‘s not giving a clear and full light like the sun, travelers trusting to its guidance may be led into rivers or quagmires. Macrobius refers to a custom among the Orientals of covering the faces of children when asleep, from some imagined effect of the moon on the health of the child. Andersen (Orient. Reise-Beschreib. i. 8) refers to an effect, which he says is common, and which he had often seen, of sleeping in the moon-beams, of making the neck stiff, so that it could not be turned from side to side as before. See Rosenmuller, Morgenland, *in loc*. Others have supposed that the allusion is to the effect of the moon, and of sleeping under the open air, in producing ophthalmia - a disease very common in the East - an effect guarded against by covering the face. The influence of the moon, in producing madness or disease - the general influence of it on health - is often referred to. Thus Shakespeare says:

“The moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound.”
Midsummer Night‘s Dream, ii. 2.
“It is the very error of the moon;
She comes more near the earth than she was wont,

And makes men mad.”
Othello, v. 2.

Some of these things are evidently purely imaginary. The true idea seems to be that there were effects to be dreaded from the sudden changes from the heat of day to the cold of night, and that these effects were attributed to the moon. See Genesis 31:40. The meaning is, that God would be a Protector alike in the dangers of the day and of the night.

Verse 7

The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil - This is an advance of the thought. The psalmist had in the previous verses specified some particular evils from which he says God would keep those who put their trust in him. He now makes the remark general, and says that God would not only preserve from these particular evils, but would keep those who trusted in him from all evil: he would be their Protector in all the perils of life.

He shall preserve thy soul - Thy life. See Psalm 41:2; Psalm 97:10.

Verse 8

The Lord shall preserve thou going out and thy coming in - Preserve thee in going out and coming in; in going from thy dwelling, and returning to it; in going from home and coming back; that is, everywhere, and at all times. Compare Deuteronomy 28:6. See the notes also at Job 5:24. "From this time forth, and even forevermore." Through this life and for ever. This is the gracious assurance which is made to all who put their trust in God. At home and abroad; in the house, in the field, and by the way; on the land and on the ocean; in their native country and in climes remote; on earth, in the grave, and in the eternal world, they are always safe. No evil that will endanger their salvation can befal them; nothing can happen to them here but what God shall see to be conducive to their ultimate good; and in the heavenly world they shall be safe forever from every kind of evil, for in that world there will be no sin, and consequently no need of discipline to prepare them for the future.

"In foreign realms, and lands remote,
Supported by thy care,
Through burning climes they pass unhurt,
And breathe in tainted air.
When by the dreadful tempest borne,
High on the broken wave,
They know thou art not slow to hear,
Nor impotent to save.
The storm is laid - the winds retire,
Obedient to thy will;
The sea that roars at thy command,
At thy command is still.
In midst of dangers, fears, and death,
Thy goodness we'll adore;
We'll praise thee for thy mercies past,

And humbly hope for more.
Our life, while thou preserv‘st that life,
Thy sacrifice shall be;
And death, when death shall be our lot,
Shall join our souls to thee.”
Addison‘s Spec.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 122

Introduction

This psalm is expressly ascribed to David, though it is not known why it should be classed among the "Songs of Degrees." On the supposition that these were used by the pilgrims in "going up" to Jerusalem to worship, and that they were sung by the way, this psalm would be particularly appropriate, and is one of the very few, in the entire collection of fifteen, that would be appropriate. This psalm evidently was used on some such occasion, and is beautifully suited to such a design. There is no reason to doubt that it is a composition of David, but it is not now possible to ascertain at what period of his life, or on what particular occasion, it was composed. DeWette has endeavored to show that the psalm must have been composed at a later period in the Jewish history than the time of David. His arguments are:

(1) that these "Psalms of Degrees" mostly pertain to a later period, and yet that they are closely connected together in sense;

(2) that the language indicates a later period than the time of David;

(3) that the pilgrimage to Jerusalem was not instituted until a later age than that of David;

(4) that the mention of the "thrones of the house of David" Psalm 122:5 indicates a later age; and

(5) that Jerusalem is represented Psalm 122:3 as a city already built - probably, as DeWette thinks, referring to Jerusalem as rebuilt after the captivity.

It will be found, however, in the exposition of the psalm, that there is no part of it which is not applicable to David and his times.

Verse 1

I was glad - It was a subject; of joy to me. The return of the happy season when we were to go up to worship filled me with joy. The language is expressive of the, happiness which is felt by those who love God and his sanctuary, when the stated season of worship returns. The heart is drawn to the house of prayer; the soul is filled with peace at the prospect of being again permitted to worship God. Who the speaker here is, is not known. It

may have been David himself; more probably, however, it was designed by him to be used by those who should go up to worship, as expressive of their individual joy.

When they said unto me - When it was said unto me. When the time arrived. When I was invited by others to go. The announcement was joyful; the invitation was welcome. It met the desires of my heart, and I embraced the invitation cheerfully and joyfully.

Let us go into the house of the Lord - Up to the place where God dwells; the house which he has made his abode. If the psalm was composed in the time of David, this would refer to the tabernacle as fixed by him on Mount Zion; if at a later period, to the temple. The language will admit of either interpretation. Compare the notes at Isaiah 2:3.

Verse 2

Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem - We shall enter the sacred city. It appears now in full view before us - its walls, its palaces, its sacred places. We shall not stand and gaze upon it at a distance; we shall not merely be charmed with its beauty as we approach it; we shall accomplish the object of our desire, and enter within its walls and gates. So the believer approaches heaven - the New Jerusalem above. he will not merely admire its exterior, and look upon it at a distance; but he will enter in. He draws nearer and nearer to it, and as he approaches it when he is dying, its beauty becomes the more charming to his view, and the joy of his heart increases as he now feels the assurance that he will "stand within its gates:" that he will enter there, and dwell there forever. So said Dr. Payson, when approaching the end of life: "The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me, its breezes fan me, its odors are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears but as an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has been gradually drawing nearer and nearer, appearing larger and brighter as he approached, and now he fills the whole hemisphere - pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun; exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering with unutterable wonder why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm." Works, i. 407. See also the exquisite description of the glories of

heaven, familiar to all, as described by Bunyan, as the Christian pilgrims were about to cross the river of death.

Verse 3

Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together - literally, "joined to itself together;" that is, when one part is, as it were, bound closely to another part; not scattered or separate. The walls are all joined together; and the houses are all united to one another so as to make a compact place. The ground occupied by Jerusalem never could be large, as it was surrounded with valleys, except on the north, and hemmed in with hills, so that, from the necessity of the case, when it became the capital of the nation, it was densely crowded. This, moreover, was usual in ancient cities, when they were made compact for the sake of defense and protection.

Verse 4

Whither the tribes - The twelve tribes of the children of Israel.

Go up - To the great feasts and festivals of the nation. See Exodus 23:17. This language of going up is such as would be used anywhere respecting the capital of a nation - as it is now of London; but it was literally true of Jerusalem, since it was elevated far above most parts of the land.

The tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel - The "ark of testimony;" the ark within which were the tables of stone, containing the law considered as God's testimony or witnessing as to justice, right, equity, duty, truth. See Exodus 16:34; Exodus 25:16, Exodus 25:21; Exodus 40:3, Exodus 40:20; Exodus 30:6, Exodus 30:36; Exodus 31:18.

To give thanks unto the name of the Lord - To worship Yahweh - the name often being put for the Being himself. A main part of Hebrew worship was praise, and hence, this is often put for the whole of worship.

Verse 5

For there are set - Margin, Do sit. The Hebrew is, "For there sit thrones for judgment." They are established there; or, That is the appointed place for administering justice.

Thrones of judgment - Seats for dispensing justice. The word throne is now commonly appropriated to the seat or chair of a king, but this is not necessarily the meaning here. The word may denote a seat or bench occupied by a judge. The meaning here is, that Jerusalem was the supreme

seat of justice; the place where justice was dispensed for the nation. It was at once the religious and the civil capital of the nation.

The thrones of the house of David - Of the family of David, who performed the office of magistrates, or who administered justice. The family of David would naturally be employed in such a service as this. This office, Absalom - who had not been appointed to it - earnestly desired, in order that he might secure popularity in his contemplated rebellion. "Oh that I were made a judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!" 2 Samuel 15:4.

Verse 6

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem - The prosperity, the welfare of Jerusalem - for peace is everywhere the image of prosperity and happiness. Compare Psalm 51:18. This is the language which those who were going up to the city - to the house of the Lord - addressed to each other, expressing the joyful feelings of their hearts at their own near approach to the city. It breathes the desire that all would pray for the peace and prosperity of a city so dear to their own souls; where the worship of God was celebrated; where God himself dwelt; where justice was administered: a city of so much importance and so much influence in the land. To us now it inculcates the duty of praying for the church: its peace; its unity; its prosperity; its increase; its influence on our country and on the world at large. It is a prayer that the church may not be divided by schism or heresy; that its members may cherish for each other right feelings; that there may be no jealousies, no envyings, and no jars; that the different branches of the church may regard and treat each other with kindness, with respect, and with mutual recognition; that prosperity may attend them all.

The shall prosper that love thee - Or rather, They shall have peace that love thee; or, May they have peace that love thee. The word prosper conveys an idea which is not in the original. The Hebrew word means to be "secure," "tranquil," "at rest," spoken especially of one who enjoys quiet prosperity, Job 3:26; Job 12:6. The essential idea is that of quietness or rest; and the meaning here is, that those who love Zion will have peace; or, that the tendency of that love is to produce peace. See Romans 5:1. The prayer was for "peace;" the thought in connection with that was naturally that those who loved Zion would have peace. It is indeed true, in general, that they who love Zion, or who serve God, will "prosper" (compare the notes at 1 Timothy 4:8), but that is not the truth taught here. The idea is that they

will have peace: peace with God; peace in their own consciences; peace in the prospect of death and of the future world; peace amidst the storms and tempests of life; peace in death, in the grave, and forever.

Verse 7

Peace be within thy walls - The word here rendered walls, means properly an host, an army; then a fortification, an entrenchment, especially the ditch or trench with the low wall or breastwork which surrounds it. Gesenius, Lexicon. It refers here to the fortifications or defenses around Jerusalem.

And prosperity - Peace; the same word which is used in the previous verse, and expressing the same idea - that of tranquility.

Within thy palaces - This word properly means a "fortress," "castle;" then, a palace, a residence of a king or a prince, 1 Kings 16:18; 2 Kings 15:25; Isaiah 25:2. The idea is, that such places abounded in Jerusalem; and the prayer is, that in those abodes of power, where the rulers of the land resided, there might be peace. The particular reason for this prayer is suggested in the following verse.

Verse 8

For my brethren and companions' sakes - Because they dwell there; or, because they go up there to worship; or, because they love thee, and find their happiness in thee; or, because they are unconverted, and all my hope of their salvation is to be derived from thee - from the church, from the influence of religion.

I will now say, Peace be within thee - I will pray for thy peace, for thy prosperity, for the blessing of God upon thee - because their good, their comfort, their hope of salvation, depends on thee - on the influence which shall go out from thee. So the Christian prays that the church may prosper - that the divine blessing may rest upon it - that there may be in it harmony, peace, love, and zeal - that a blessing may attend the preaching of the gospel - not only because he loves it, and seeks his own comfort and edification in it, but that his friends and kindred - his wife, his parents, his children, his neighbors - those whom he loves, and whose salvation he desires, may be saved. This expresses the true feelings of piety all over the world; this is one of the grounds of the strong love which the friends of God have for the church - because they hope and desire that through the church those most dear to their hearts will find salvation.

Verse 9

Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good - Because of the sanctuary within thee; because that is the place where God is worshipped. The principal attraction in thee is the fact that in thee is the place where the worship of God is celebrated. It is this which gives its main importance in my view to the place; it is for this, and because I desire its influence to be perpetuated and extended, that I seek thy prosperity. This expresses a deep feeling in the mind of a pious man. To him the church of God is the most important of all objects, gives the principal interest to a place, and is everywhere to him the chief attraction. The church does more to adorn a place than anything else; it is that which exerts the best influence on a place, and sends the best influence abroad; it is that which to him is the source of chief comfort and delight. His heart is there; his main delight is there; his arrangements will be made so as best to enjoy the privileges of the sanctuary; and his plans of life will all contemplate the welfare, the extension, and the influence of the church of God. It is religion which in his view is the chief ornament of a place; religion which in any community is the principal fountain of its happiness and prosperity; religion which is the central and controlling influence on the private dwellings, and the public institutions, of a nation.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 123

Introduction

This psalm is entitled simply "Song of Degrees." See the notes at the title of Psalm 120:1-7. Nothing is intimated in regard to the authorship of the psalm, or to the occasion on which it was composed. The only circumstance which throws any light on its origin is the statement in Psalm 123:4, that the author and his friends - the people of God referred to in the psalm - were exposed to derision and contempt for their attachment to religion, especially the contempt and reproach of those who were in circumstances of ease and affluence, or who were in the more elevated ranks of life. This might accord well with the condition of the exiles returning from Babylon, or with the condition of the returned captives when rebuilding the walls of the city, and when they met with scorn and contempt from the Samaritans and the Ammonites; from Sanballat and Tobiah; from the Arabians and the Ashdodites Nehemiah 4:1-8; but there is no certain evidence that the psalm was composed on that occasion. The pious Hebrews of antiquity - David and others - and the people of God at all times have been too much exposed to this kind of treatment to make the mere applicability of the psalm to that particular time a reason for concluding that it must have been composed then; and it is now impossible to determine by whom, or on what occasion it was composed. It refers to what may occur in any age of the world; and it expresses the proper feelings of piety at all times when we are, on account of our religion, exposed to "the scorning of those that are at ease, and to the contempt of the proud."

Verse 1

Unto thee - To God.

Lift I up mine eyes - In supplication and prayer. Nature prompts us to look up when we address God, as if he dwelt above us. It is the natural prompting of the heart that he must be the most exalted of all beings, dwelling above all. See Psalm 121:1.

O thou that dwellest in the heavens - Whose home - whose special home - is in heaven - above the sky. This is in accordance with the common feelings of people, and the common description of God in the Bible, though it is true also that God is everywhere. Compare Psalm 2:4; Psalm 11:4.

Verse 2

Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters … - Or, are to the hands of their masters; or, regard the hands of their masters. That is, we look to God with the same spirit of deference, dependence, and readiness to mark the will of God, which is evinced by servants in regard to their masters, and by maidens in regard to the will of a mistress. There has been some difference of view in regard to the meaning of this comparison. Some have supposed that the allusion is to the fact that servants, when in danger, look to their masters for protection; others, that they look to them for the supply of their needs; others, that when they have been guilty of an offence they look to them alone for pardon. See Rosenmuller, *in loc*. The true idea, however, seems to be, that they look to them with deference and respect; that they attentively mark every expression of their will; that they are ready to obey their commands on the slightest intimation of their wishes - standing in a waiting posture, with no will of their own - their own wills absorbed in the will of the master or the mistress.

The following extracts from Oriental travelers may illustrate the idea here: Maundrell (Reise von Aleppo nach Jerusalem, s. 13), speaking of an interview with the Pasha at Tripoli, says, "The servants all stood in great numbers with the utmost respect, and in profoundest silence, and served the guests with the utmost attention and respect." Pococke remarks that in Egypt the slaves stand in the profoundest silence at the end of the table, their hands laid cross-wise over one another, and that they mark with the deepest attention the slightest movement of their master, who conveys his wishes to them through signs and winks. Savary, in his Letters from Egypt (p. 135), says, "The slaves stand with their hands laid cross-wise over their breasts, silent, at the end of the hall. "Their eyes are directed to the master," and they are attentive to the slightest indication of his will." See other illustrations in Rosenmuller, Morgenland, ii. 109,110. It is to such a custom as this that the psalmist refers; and the idea is, that his eyes were directed to God, in his troubles, in profound silence, and with deep attention, resembling that of servants waiting in stillness on their master, and catching the slightest intimation of his will - a movement of the head or hand - or anything which would indicate his pleasure.

Until that he have mercy upon us - We have nothing to do but wait. We have no other resource. We can do nothing if we turn away from him. Our only hope and expectation is there, and if we ever find relief, it must be

there. The surest - the only - hope of relief is to wait on God; and it is the purpose of our souls to do this until we find help and deliverance. This is the attitude in which the earnest prayer in the next verse is offered.

Verse 3

Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us - The language of earnest pleading, repeating with emphasis the object of the prayer. The supplicants are represented as standing and urging this petition, feeling that help could come only from God; looking only to him; and watching his countenance, as servants do their master‘s.

For we are exceedingly filled - The Hebrew word used here means to be saturated; to have the appetite fully satisfied - as applied to one who is hungry or thirsty. Then it comes to mean to be entirely full, and the idea here is, that as much contempt had been thrown upon them as could be; they could experience no more.

With contempt - Contempt has been shown us in every possible way. We are thoroughly despised.

Verse 4

Our soul is exceedingly filled - Thoroughly sated. This verse states the nature and the source of the contempt which they were called to bear.

With the scorning of those that are at ease - According to one view of these “Psalms of Degrees” (see the Introduction to Psalm 120:1-7) this would be an instance of an “ascent” in the sense, or of the going up of the thought, where in Psalm 123:3 there was mention made in general of “contempt,” and in this verse the thought is carried onward and upward, or there is an additional idea which gives intensity to it. It is the scorn proceeding from those who are at ease; that is, the frivolous, the affluent, the proud. The word scorning means derision, mockery. The idea in the Hebrew is derived from stammering, which the word properly means; and then, mockery, as repeating over the words of another, or imitating the voice of one in derision. Compare Psalm 2:4; Job 22:19. The phrase “those that are at ease” properly refers to those who are tranquil or quiet, Job 12:5; Isaiah 32:18; Isaiah 33:20; and then it is used of those who are living at ease; those who are living in self-indulgence and luxury, Amos 6:1; Isaiah 32:9, Isaiah 32:11. Here it would seem to refer to those who, in our language, are “in easy circumstances;” the affluent; those who are not compelled to toil: then, the frivolous, the fashionable, those in the upper walks of life. The contempt was aggravated by the fact that it came from

that quarter; not from the low, the ignorant, the common, but from those who claimed to be refined, and who were distinguished in the world of gaiety, of rank, and of fashion. This, even for good people (such is human nature), is much more hard to bear than contempt is when it comes from those who are in the lower walks of life. In the latter case, perhaps, we feel that we can meet contempt with contempt; in the former we cannot. We disregard the opinions of those who are beneath us; there are few who are not affected by the opinions entertained of them by those who are above them.

And with the contempt of the proud - Those who are lifted up; either in rank, in condition, or in feeling. The essential idea is, that it was the contempt of those to whom mankind look up. Religious people have always had much of this to encounter, and often it is in fact a more severe test of the reality and power of religion than the loss of goods, or than bodily pains and penalties. We can bear much if we have the respect - the praise - of those above us; it is a very certain test of the reality and the power of our religion when we can bear the scorn of the great, the noble, the scientific, the frivolous, and the fashionable. Piety is more frequently checked and obscured by this than it is by persecution. It is more rare that piety shines brightly when the frivolous and the fashionable flown upon it than when princes attempt to crush it by power. The church has performed its duty better in the furnace of persecution than it has in the “happy” scenes of the world.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 124

Introduction

This psalm, one of the "Songs of Degrees," is, like Psalm 122:1-9, ascribed to David. See the Introductory Notes to that psalm. There is nothing in the one before us to render it improbable that it was composed by him, but it is now impossible to ascertain on what occasion it was written. It would be appropriate to be sung on the return from Babylon, and there is no improbability in the supposition that it may have been used on that occasion. But there is nothing in it to prove that it was composed then, or to make it applicable to that occasion alone. Very many were the occasions in the Jewish history when such a psalm was applicable; very many have been the occasions in the history of the Christian church; very many, also, in the lives of individual believers.

The idea in the psalm is, that deliverance from trouble and danger is to be ascribed wholly to God; that the people of God are often in such circumstances that there is no human help for them, and that the praise of theft deliverance is due to God alone.

Verse 1

If it had not been the Lord who was on our side - Unless it was Yahweh who was with us. The idea is, that someone had been with them, and had delivered them, and that such was the nature of the interposition that it could be ascribed to no one but Yahweh. It bore unmistakeable evidence that it was his work. The deliverance was of such a kind that it could have been accomplished by him only. Such things often occur in life, when the intervention in our behalf is so remarkable that we can ascribe it to no one else but God.

Now may Israel say - May well and truly say. The danger was so great, their helplessness was so manifest, and the deliverance was so clearly the work of God, that it was proper to say that if this had not occurred, ruin would have been inevitable and entire.

Verse 2

If it had not been the Lord who was on our side - Repeating the idea, since the mind was full of it, and carrying the thought forward. This is one of the instances of an ascent of thought in these psalms, from which it has

been supposed that the title “Songs of Degrees” was given to this collection. See, however, Introduction to Psalm 120:1-7.

When men rose up against us - When we were assailed by our enemies. On what occasion this occurred, it is now impossible to determine.

Verse 3

Then they had swallowed us up quick - There was no other help, and ruin - utter ruin - would have soon come upon us. The word quick here means alive; and the idea is derived from persons swallowed up in an earthquake, or by the opening of the earth, as in the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Numbers 16:32-33. Compare Psalm 106:17. The meaning here is, that they would have been destroyed as if they were swallowed up by the opening of the earth; that is, there would have been complete destruction.

When their wrath was kindled against us - Hebrew, In the kindling of their wrath against us. Wrath is often represented in the Scriptures as burning or heated - as that which consumes all before it.

Verse 4

Then the waters had overwhelmed us - Our destruction would have been as if the waves of the ocean had overwhelmed us.

The stream had gone over our soul - The torrent would have swept us away. Compare Psalm 18:4, Psalm 18:16.

Verse 5

Then the proud waters had gone over our soul - Over us. The word proud here is applied to the waters as if raging, swelling, rolling, tumultuous; as if they were self-confident, arrogant, haughty. Such raging billows, as they break and dash upon the shore, are a striking embIem of human passions, whether in an individual, or in a gathering of men - as an army, or a mob. Compare Psalm 65:7. This is again an amplification, or an ascent of thought. See the notes at Psalm 124:2. It is, however, nothing more than a poetical embellisment, adding intensity to the expression.

Verse 6

Blessed be the Lord - The Lord be praised; or, We have reason to praise the Lord because we have been delivered from these calamities.

Who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth - The figure is here changed, though the same idea is retained. The imago is now that of destruction by wild beasts - a form of destruction not less fearful than that which comes from overflowing waters. Such changes of imagery constantly occur in the Book of Psalms, and in impassioned poetry everywhere. The

mind is full of a subject; numerous illustrations occur in the rapidity of thought; and the mind seizes upon one and then upon another as best suited to express the emotions of the soul. The next verse furnishes another instance of this sudden transition.

Verse 7

Our soul is escaped - We have escaped; our life has been preserved.

As a bird out of the snare of the fowlers - By the breaking of the snare, or the gin. The bird is entangled, but the net breaks, and the bird escapes. See the notes at Psalm 91:3.

The snare is broken … - It was not strong enough to retain the struggling bird, and the captive broke away. So we seemed to be caught. The enemy appeared to have us entirely in his power, but escape came to us as it does to the bird when it finds the net suddenly break, and itself again at large.

Verse 8

Our help is in the name of the Lord - In the Lord; in the great Yahweh. See Psalm 121:2.

Who made heaven and earth - The great Creator; the true God. Our deliverances have led us up to him. They are such as can be ascribed to him alone. They could not have come from ourselves; from our fellow-men; from angels; from any or all created beings. Often in life, when delivered from danger, we may feel this; we always may feel this, and should feel this, when we think of the redemption of our souls. That is a work which we of ourselves could never have performed; which could not have been done for us by our fellow-men; which no angel could have accomplished; which all creation combined could not have worked out; which could have been effected by no one but by him who "made heaven and earth;" by him who created all things. See Colossians 1:13-17.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 125

Introduction

This psalm is entitled merely "A Song of Degrees." Its author, and the occasion on which it was composed, are unknown. The contents of the psalm accord well with the supposition that it may have been written after the return from the Babylonian captivity, and may have been designed to strengthen and comfort those who were engaged in rebuilding the city, and restoring the ancient worship, either against the Samaritans and those who opposed them Nehemiah 6:12-13, or against the lukewarmness of a part of the people themselves. There is nothing, however, so exclusively applicable to that time as to make it necessary to suppose that it was composed on that occasion. There is, indeed, evidence in the psalm Psalm 125:5, that there were some among the people who were disposed to turn away from the service of Yahweh, or who were perverse and rebellious; but such a state of things was not special to the time of the return from the captivity, nor was it special to the Jews, for it has occurred often; it exists still. The psalm is designed to encourage those who were disposed to trust in the Lord, by the assurance that they would be safe; that the blessing of God would be upon them; and that the church was firm and secure.

Verse 1

They that trust in the Lord - His people; his friends. It is, and has been always, a characteristic of the people of God that they trust or confide in him.

Shall be as mount Zion - The mountain which David fortified, and on which the city was at first built, 2 Samuel 5:6-9. The name Zion became also the name by which the entire city was known.

Which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever - A mountain is an emblem of firmness and stability; and it is natural to speak of it as that which could not be removed. There is something more than this, however, intended here, as there is some ground of comparison especially in regard to Mount Zion. This must have been either the idea that Zion was particularly strong by position, or that it was under the divine protection, and was therefore safe. Most probably it refers to Zion as a place secure by nature, and rendered more so by art.

Verse 2

As the mountains are round about Jerusalem - Hebrew, "Jerusalem - the mountains are round about her." Jerusalem, except on the north, is encompassed with hills or mountains, so that although the city was built on hills - Zion, Moriah, Bezethah, Acra - it was itself surrounded by hills higher than any of these, and was, in a certain sense, in a valley. See the notes at Matthew 2:1. Compare the notes at Psalm 48:1-14.

So the Lord is round about his people … - As Jerusalem is thus protected by the hills around, so the people of God are protected by Yahweh. He surrounds the church; he is exalted far above the church; he guards the approaches to the church; he can defend it from all its foes. Under his protection it is safe. Jerusalem, as surrounded by hills and mountains, has thus become an emblem of the church at all times; its security was an emblem of the security of all who trust in the Lord.

Verse 3

For the rod of the wicked - Margin, as in Hebrew, "wickedness." The word "rod" - the staff, the scepter, the instrument of inflicting punishment - here means dominion, power, that condition in which the wicked are commonly found, as one of prosperity or power. God will not deal with the righteous as the wicked are often dealt with: that is, God will not give his people prosperity as he does them. The righteous will be afflicted, and will be placed in circumstances to keep them from putting forth their hands to iniquity; that is, from indulging in iniquity. They will be afflicted; they will be kept in the ways of virtue and religion by trial; they will not be left to act out the depravity of the heart as the wicked are.

Shall not rest upon - Permanently abide; or, be the constant condition of the righteous. They may be prospered, but they must expect that there will be changes, and that God will so deal with them as to keep them from putting forth their hands to iniquity.

The lot of the righteous - The righteous, considered as the "lot" or portion of the Lord. The language is derived from dividing a land by lot (compare Psalm 105:11; Psalm 74:2); and the idea is, that the "lot" pertaining to the Lord, or his "portion" among people, is the righteous.

Lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity - Lest the effect of prosperity should be to lead them away from God - like the wicked. Hence, they are dealt with in a different manner. They are afflicted; they are thus kept under proper discipline, and their hearts and lives are made what they should be. The statement in this verse, therefore, accords

with the uniform statements in the Scriptures, that prosperity is dangerous to the spiritual interests of people, and that, therefore, people are often afflicted in order that they may be led to seek higher interests than those which pertain to this life. The connection here seems to be, that God will defend his people, even as Jerusalem was defended by hills and mountains; but that the real welfare and prosperity of his people was not what the wicked seek - wealth and honor - but the favor of the Lord. Another meaning may, however, be suggested in regard to this verse, which to some may appear more probable than the one above. It is this: that the "rod" - the dominion of the wicked - of bad rulers - of a harsh and oppressive government - will not always be upon the people of God, lest, being crushed, they should be led to acts of iniquity; or lest, being kept from the free service of God, they should abandon themselves to sin.

Verse 4

Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good … - To the good; to the pious. Let them be under the divine protection. Possibly this is not merely a prayer, but is expressive of the belief of the psalmist as to what would occur under the divine administration - that the favor of God would rest upon his people.

Verse 5

As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways - The wicked. Those who leave the right or straight path, and wander in forbidden ways. The word here rendered "crooked ways" occurs nowhere else except in Judges 5:6, where it is rendered "by-ways," meaning unfrequented paths or roads; narrow and crooked paths, remote from the highways, or the ways commonly traversed. Hence, the word means also paths of sin - as deviations from the straight road which man should travel.

The Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity - They shall be dealt with as sinners. They shall be punished. The allusion is to backsliders; to those who forsake the worship of God; who cease to do "good;" who, though among the professed people of God, wander from him in by-paths and forbidden ways. The idea is, that their profession of religion will not save them; that they will not obtain the divine blessing merely because they are avowedly the people of God, or are numbered among them, but that they will be treated as all other sinners are: they will be led forth with all the wicked, and will be treated like them. Compare Ezekiel 33:12-13; Matthew 7:22-23; Matthew 25:11-12.

But peace shall be upon Israel - Upon the real Israel; upon the true people of God. Galatians 6:16; Isaiah 54:13; Isaiah 55:12; Isaiah 57:2; Isaiah 66:12; John 14:27; John 16:33; Ephesians 2:17; Philemon 4:7.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 126

Introduction

This psalm is entitled simply "A Song of Degrees." See the Introduction to Psalm 120:1-7. There can be no reasonable doubt as to the occasion on which it was composed, for it bears internal evidence of having been composed with reference to the return from Babylon. It may have been designed to be sung as the returning captives went up to Jerusalem, but was more probably composed subsequently to that event, as designed to keep it in remembrance. It was evidently, however, written not long after the return, and by someone who had been personally interested in it, for the author manifestly, in describing the feelings of the people Psalm 126:1-2, speaks of himself as one of them, or as participating in those feelings which they had when the exile was closed, and when they returned to their own land. Who the author was, it is in vain now to conjecture.

It is evident from the psalm Psalm 126:5, that, when it was composed, there was still some trouble - something that might be called a "captivity," from which the psalmist prays that they might be delivered; and the object of the psalm would seem to be in part, in that trial to find encouragement from the former interposition of God in their case. As he had "turned the captivity of Zion," as he had filled their "mouth with laughter," so the psalmist prays that he would again interpose in similar circumstances, and renew his goodness. It is, of course, now impossible to determine precisely to what this refers. It may be, as Rosenmuller supposes, to a portion of the people who remained in exile; or it may be to some other captivity or danger to which they were exposed after their return. The psalmist, however, expresses entire confidence that there would be such interposition, and that, though then in trouble, they would have joy, such as the farmer has who goes forth sowing his seed with weeping, and who comes with joy in the harvest, bearing his sheaves with him, Psalm 126:5-6.

Verse 1

When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion - Margin, as in Hebrew, "returned the returning of Zion." The Hebrew word which is rendered in the text captivity means properly return; and then, those returning. The ancient versions render it captivity. The reference clearly is to those who were returning to Zion, and the psalmist fixes his eye on them

as returning, and immediately says that it was the Lord who had thus restored them. The whole was to be traced to God.

We were like them that dream - The Latin Vulgate and the Septuagint render this, "we were comforted." The meaning is, "It seemed like a dream; we could hardly realize that it was so; it was so marvelous, so good, so full of joy, that we could scarcely believe it was real." This state of mind is not uncommon, when, in sudden and overpowering joy, we ask whether it can be real; whether it is not all a dream. We fear that it is; we apprehend that it will all vanish away like a dream.

Verse 2

Then was our mouth filled with laughter - Then were we happy; completely happy. See Job 8:21.

And our tongue with singing - We expressed our joy in songs - the natural expression of joy. Young converts - those "turned" from sin to God - sing. Their feelings find expression in the songs of Zion. This is natural; this is proper; this will occur when sinners are converted. An assemblage of young converts is always a happy assemblage; a place where there is a "revival" of religion is always a happy place - full of songs and singing.

Then said they among the heathen - The nations; the people among whom they dwelt.

The Lord hath done great things for them - In causing their return to their own land; in ordering the arrangements for it; in bringing their captivity to an end; in securing such interposition from the civil rulers as to facilitate their return. This would indicate that the surrounding people had not an unfriendly feeling toward them, but that they pitied them in exile, and were disposed to acknowledge the hand of God in what was done. Their deliverance, in the circumstances, was such as evidently to have been the work of God. This will agree well with the account of the return of the exiles from Babylon, and with all that had been done for them by Cyrus. Compare Ezra 1:1-4.

Verse 3

The Lord hath done great things for us - All that the people around us say is true. We see it; we feel it; we acknowledge it. Those to whom this pertained would see it more clearly than those who had merely observed it. A surrounding world may see in the conversion of a man, in his being turned from sin, in the influence of religion upon him, in his comfort, calmness, and peace, that "the Lord has done great things" for him; but he

himself, while he responds most fully to what they say, will see this more clearly than they do. There is more in his redemption, his conversion, his peace and joy, than they do or can perceive, and with emphasis he himself will say, "The Lord has done great things for me."

Whereof we are glad - It fills our souls with joy. If this is understood of the returning Hebrews - coming back from the captivity in Babylon - all must see how appropriate is the language; if it be applied to a sinner returning to God, it is no less suitable, for there is nothing that so fills the mind with joy as a true conversion to God.

Verse 4

Turn again our captivity, O Lord - literally, "Turn our captivity." The word "again" is inserted by the translators, and conveys an idea which is not necessarily in the original. It is simply a prayer that God would "turn" their captivity; that is, looking upon the captivity as not wholly ended, or as, in some sense, still continuing, that it might please him wholly to turn it, or to end it. The language would be applicable, if there was a new "captivity" similar to the one from which they had been delivered, or if the one mainly referred to was not complete; that is, if a part of the people still remained in bondage. The latter is probably the idea, that while a considerable part of the nation had been restored, and while an order had been issued for the restoration of all the captives to their native land, it was still true that a portion of them remained in exile; and the prayer is, that God would interfere in their behalf, and complete the work. A portion of the exiles, in fact, returned under Cyrus; a part under Darius; a part under Xerxes and his successors. The return was by no means accomplished at once, but occupied a succession of years.

As the streams in the south - In the southern parts of Palestine, or in the regions bordering it on the south - Idumea and Arabia. That is, As those streams when dried up by the summer heat are swelled by autumnal and winter rains, so let the streams of the returning people, which seem now to be diminished, be swelled by augmenting numbers coming again to their own land. Let the companies of returning emigrants be kept full, like swollen streams, until all shall have been brought back.

Verse 5

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy - Though the sowing of seed is a work of labor and sorrow - often a work so burdening the farmer that he weeps - yet the return - the harvest - is accompanied with rejoicing. The

truth is expressed in a general form, as illustrating the idea that enterprises which are begun under many difficulties, and which require much labor, will be crowned with success, and that the joy is more than an equivalent for all the weariness and sorrow. Thus it is in respect to the toil of the farmer; the cares and anxieties of the student; the work of conversion and repentance; the labors of the Christian pastor; the efforts of the Sabbath-school teacher; the faithfulness of the Christian parent; the endeavors of a church for a revival of religion; the zeal and sacrifice of the Christian missionary. The particular, allusion here is to the exiles, in their long and weary march to their native land. It was a work of toil and tears, but there would be joy, like that of the harvest, when, their long journey over they should again come to their native land. Compare Isaiah 9:3.

Verse 6

He that goeth forth and weepeth - He that goes forth weeping - still an allusion to the farmer. He is seen moving slowly and sadly over the plowed ground, burdened with his task, an in tears.

Bearing precious seed - Margin, "seed-basket." Literally, "bearing the drawing out of seed;" perhaps the seed as drawn out of his bag; or, as scattered or sown regularly in furrows, so that it seems to be drawn out in regular lines over the fields.

Shall doubtless come again - Shall come to this sown field again in the time of harvest. He will visit it with other feelings than those which he now has.

With rejoicing … - Then his tears will be turned to joy. Then the rich harvest will wave before him. Then he will thrust in his sickle and reap. Then he will gather the golden grain, and the wain will groan under the burden, and the sheaves will be carried forth with songs of joy. He will be abundantly rewarded for all his toil; he will see the fruit of his labors; he will be filled with joy. The design of this illustration was, undoubtedly, to cheer the hearts of the exiles in their long and dangerous journey to their native land; it has, however, a wider and more universal application, as being suited to encourage all in their endeavors to secure their own salvation, and to do good in the world - for the effort is often attended with sacrifice, toil, and tears. The joy of heaven will be more than a compensation for all this. The following remarks by Dr. Thomson (Land and the Book, vol. i., pp. 118,119) will furnish an illustration of the meaning of this passage: "I never saw people sowing in tears exactly, but

have often known them to do it in fear and distress sufficient to draw them from any eye. In seasons of great scarcity, the poor peasants part in sorrow with every measure of precious seed cast into the ground. It is like taking bread out of the mouths of their children; and in such times many bitter tears are actually shed over it. The distress is frequently so great that government is obliged to furnish seed, or none would be sown. Ibrahim Pasha did this more than once within my remembrance, copying the example, perhaps, of his great predecessor in Egypt when the seven years‘ famine was ended. The thoughts of this psalm may likewise have been suggested by the extreme danger which frequently attends the farmer in his plowing and sowing.

The calamity which fell upon the farmers of Job when the oxen were plowing, and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away, and slew the servants with the edge of the sword Job 1:14-15, is often repeated in our day. To understand this, you must remember what I just told you about the situation of the arable lands in the open country; and here again we meet that verbal accuracy: the sower goes forth - that is, from the village. The people of Ibel and Khiem, in *Merj ʿAiyun* for example, have their best grain-growing fields down in the *ʿArd Huleh* six or eight miles from their homes, and just that much nearer the lawless border of the desert. When the country is disturbed, or the government weak, they cannot sow these lands except at the risk of their lives. Indeed, they always go forth in large companies, and completely armed, ready to drop the plow and seize the musket at a moment‘s warning; and yet, with all this care, many sad and fatal calamities overtake the people who must thus sow in tears.

And still another origin may be found for the thoughts of the psalm in the extreme difficulty of the work itself in many places. The soil is rocky, impracticable, overgrown with sharp thorns; and it costs much painful toil to break up and gather out the rocks, cut and burn the briers, and to subdue the stubborn soil, especially with their feeble oxen and insignificant plows. Join all these together, and the sentiment is very forcibly brought out, that he who labors hard, in cold and in rain, in fear and danger, in poverty and in want, casting his precious seed in the ground, will surely come again, at harvest-time, with rejoicing, and bearing his sheaves with him.”

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PSALM 127

Introduction

This psalm is entitled "A Song of Degrees for Solomon;" in the margin, "Of Solomon." In the Syriac Version the title is, "From the Psalms of the Ascent; spoken by David concerning Solomon; it was spoken also of Haggai and Zechariah, who urged the rebuilding of the Temple." The meaning of the title may be either "for Solomon," or of Solomon; that is, it may have been either composed by him, or with reference to him. Many have supposed that it was written by David near the close of his life, and was designed to be a guide to Solomon, his successor, in regard to the principles which should govern him in his reign. There is nothing, however, in the title in the Hebrew which would indicate that it was composed by David; and there is nothing in the psalm which would seem to be especially appropriate to address to a young monarch just entering on his reign, unless it was the mere filet of dependence on God. The allusion to children Psalm 127:3-5, beautiful and proper as it is, would seem to have no particular pertinency to an entrance on the administration of a government, and would not be the topic which Would most naturally be suggested in such circumstances. The probability, therefore, is, that the psalm was composed by Solomon. On what occasion, however, it was written, it is now impossible to determine. The sentiments and style are such as agree well with the idea that Solomon was the author, and the whole psalm might have been introduced into the Book of Proverbs without any manifest discrepancy with the general character and style of that book. From the psalm itself it would seem that it was composed mainly with reference to one who was entering on domestic life, and that it was intended to set before such a one the views which ought to guide him, or the thoughts which ought to occur to him. Nothing could be more appropriate in such circumstances than the sentiments of the psalm:

I. The entire dependence on God for success, Psalm 127:1.

II. The vanity of all efforts - rising early, and sitting up late - without the divine blessing, Psalm 127:2.

III. The fact that children belong to God, and are to be regarded as his, Psalm 127:3.

IV. The aid which children might be expected to render to a father in supporting or defending him, Psalm 127:4.

V. The comfort which he might expect to derive from them, and the honor which, being properly trained, they would reflect on him and on the family, Psalm 127:5.

Verse 1

Except the Lord build the house - Or rather, "a house." The word "house" may refer either to an ordinary dwelling; to the temple, as a place of worship; or to a family, with reference to its success and prosperity, as the word house is often used now. The statement is universal, and is designed to indicate a universal dependence on God in human undertakings, though it is not improbable that there may have been an allusion, when the psalm was composed, to some building which was contemplated or commenced. If the psalm was a composition of David or Solomon, the allusion way have been to the temple about to be erected. The language, however, is so general as to be applicable to any enterprise of that kind.

They labor in vain that build it - literally, "In vain toil its builders in it." The idea is, that they are entirely dependent on God. No matter what their skill, their strength, their industry may be - all will be in vain unless God shall assist them. They are dependent on Him for life, for health, for strength, for practical wisdom, for a disposition to continue their work, and for success in it. Their work might be destroyed by fire, by a tempest, by an earthquake, or by an irruption of enemies; and for the result, therefore, they are entirely dependent on God.

Except the Lord keep the city - The same idea of dependence is here repeated in another form. The preservation of a city depends wholly on God, whatever care or precaution may be used.

The watchman waketh but in vain - literally, "In vain waketh the keeper." The word rendered waketh means to be sleepless; and then, to watch. The allusion is to the watch or guard appointed to keep a city, and the idea is, that, whatever may be the diligence, the care, the fidelity of one thus appointed to guard a city, its safe-keeping must depend on God alone. Fires may break out in spite of the watchmen; a tempest may sweep over it; bands of armed people may assail it; or the pestilence may suddenly come into it, and spread desolation through its dwellings. There may have been an

allusion in this to some immediate arrangement for guarding Jerusalem when the psalm was composed; but the remark is so general that it is not necessary to confine it to that. It is universally true that, after all the care for their own preservation which people can employ, their safety depends wholly on God.

Verse 2

It is vain for you to rise up early - The psalmist does not here say that it is improper to rise early; or that there could be no advantage in it; or that people would be more likely to be successful in their undertakings if they did not rise early; but that, although this was done, they would be still altogether dependent on God. Mere early rising, without his blessing, would not secure what they hoped to accomplish, for everything is still in the hand of God. Health, strength, clearness of mind, and success, are all under his control; and though early rising may tend to produce all these - as it does in fact - yet still people are not the less dependent on God for success.

To sit up late - That you may labor or study. As in the former case the psalmist does not express any opinion about the propriety or impropriety of early rising, so it is in respect to this. He merely says that if it is done, this, of itself, will not accomplish the object; people are still dependent on God for success though they do it. As a matter of fact, however, sitting up late has less tendency to promote success in life than early rising; but in either ease there is the same dependence on God.

To eat the bread of sorrows - Bread of care, anxiety, or trouble; that is, bread earned or procured by the severity of toil. There may be an allusion here to the original sentence pronounced on man, Genesis 3:17. The meaning is, that it is in vain that you labor hard, that you exhaust your strength, in order to get bread to eat, unless God shall bless you. After all your toil the result is with him.

For so he giveth his beloved sleep - The word "for" is not in the original, The sentence is very obscure in the connection in which it stands. The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate render it, "Ye who eat the bread of care - rise when you have rested - when he hath given his beloved sleep." Some have supposed it to mean that God gives his people rest without toil, or that, while others labor, his "beloved" - his friends - sleep; but this interpretation is not necessarily demanded by the Hebrew, and is inconsistent with the general doctrine of the Bible. Others have supposed the idea to be, that God gives his beloved rest after labor; but though this is true, it is not true of

them especially or exclusively. Some suppose, with as little probability, that the meaning is, that what others hope (but hope in vain) to get by labor, the Lord bestows upon his people in sleep, they know not how.

The meaning evidently is, that God bestows "sleep" upon his people in some sense in which it is not bestowed on others, or that there is, in regard to their case, something in which they differ from those who are so anxious and troubled - who rise so early for the sake of gain - who toil so late - who eat the bread of care. The idea seems to be that there would be calmness, repose, freedom from anxiety or solicitude. God makes the mind of his people - his beloved - calm and tranquil, while the world around is filled with anxiety and restlessness - busy, bustling, worried. As a consequence of this calmness of mind, and of their confidence in him, they enjoy undisturbed repose at night. They are not kept wakeful and anxious about their worldly affairs as other men are, for they leave all with God, and thus he "giveth his beloved sleep." The particle "so" - כֵּן *kên* - or "thus," I apprehend, refers to the general sense of what had been said, rather than to what immediately precedes it; to the fact that all success depends on God Psalm 127:1, and that it is always by his interposition, and not as the result of human skill, toil, or fatigue, that people find calmness, success, repose. It is only by the favor of God, and by their recognizing their dependence on him, that they find repose, success, and freedom from care.

Verse 3

Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord - They are an inheritance derived from the Lord. They are bestowed by him as really as success is in building a house, or in guarding a city. The idea is, that everything which we value, or which we desire, is a gift from God, and is to be received as from him, and to be acknowledged as his gift. The general idea here, as in the previous verses, is that of entire dependence on God.

And the fruit of the womb is his reward - Or rather, "a reward;" that is, they are of the nature of a reward for a life of devotion to God; they are among the blessings which God promises, and are evidences of his favor. Our translation by inserting the words "is his" obscures the sense, as if the meaning were that they belong to God as his "reward" for what he does for us. The reverse of this is the true idea - that they are a blessing with which he rewards or favors his people. Of course, this is not universally true, but the promise is a general one, in accordance with the usual promises in the

Bible in regard to the result of piety. Children are to be reckoned among the divine favors bestowed on us, and for their lives, their health, their virtues, and the happiness derived from them, we are, as in other things, dependent on him - as in building a house, in guarding a city, or in the rest and comfort derived from toil.

Verse 4

As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man - They are what a parent may rely on for defense in danger, or for help in securing provision for himself and family - as the warrior or the hunter relies on his arrows.

So are children of the youth - Sons in their youth; in their prime and vigor. The comparison of sons with arrows or spears is common in Arabic poetry. See Rosenmuller, Com. *in loc*. Also Morgenland, *in loc*.

Verse 5

Happy is the man - Hebrew, The happiness of the man. See the notes at Psalm 1:1.

That hath his quiver full of them - The quiver is a case in which arrows are carried; and as a man - a hunter or warrior - feels secure when he has his quiver full of arrows, so a man is blessed in proportion to the number of his sons. This is in accordance with the idea often presented in the Bible, and the promise often made there of a numerous posterity as a proof of the divine favor.

They shall not be ashamed - They shall not turn back discomfited, hanging their heads with shame and confusion. See the notes at Job 6:20.

But they shall speak with the enemies in the gate - Margin, "shall subdue, or destroy." The Hebrew word, however, means "to speak;" and the meaning is, that they would "speak" to their foes in the place of conflict - for a battle occurred often in the gate of a city, as the possession of a gate, or an entrance to a city was of so much importance to those who attacked, and those who defended it. The idea is, that they would speak with effect; they would distinguish themselves; they would let their presence be known. The connection does not allow us to understand this of forensic controversy, or of transactions in business, though these were usually performed at the gates of cities. The meaning is, that they would do honor to the family, and gratify the heart of the parent, by their valor in defending their city and home, or in attacking the cities of the enemies of their country. The psalm is designed to inculcate the lesson of dependence on God for success in everything.

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PSALM 128

Introduction

The author of this psalm is unknown, as is also the occasion on which it was composed. It is not known, either, why this psalm was placed among those which are called "Songs of Degrees." The scope and design of it, however, cannot be misunderstood. It is intended to show the advantage of religion on the affairs of this life, and especially on the domestic relations; in a numerous family, in the character of children, and in being permitted to see numerous descendants. In connection with this, the possessor of true religion would be permitted to see the prosperity of Zion - the good of Jerusalem, and peace upon Israel. Of course this is to be regarded as a general statement, or as indicating what will commonly be true as the restilt of religion. See Psalm 37:9, note; Psalm 37:33, note; Psalm 112:2-3, note. Thus industry, temperance, prudence, tend to promote health and long life, so that health and a long life are the general result; but it would be unfair to regard one who should assert this as meaning to say that it is universally true, or that people who are industrious, temperate, and prudent, are never sick, and never die.

The psalm states, in general Psalm 128:1, the blessedness of those who fear the Lord. This blessedness is seen

(1) in their success in life, Psalm 128:2;

(2) in a numerous and happy family, Psalm 128:3;

(3) in being permitted to see children‘s children, Psalm 128:6;

(4) in being permitted to see the prosperity of religion - the "good of Jerusalem," and "peace upon Israel," Psalm 128:5-6.

Verse 1

Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord - That honors God; that is truly pious. See the notes at Psalm 1:1; Psalm 112:1. What that blessedness is, is indicated in the following verses.

That walketh in his ways - The ways which God commands or directs. On the word "walketh," see the notes at Psalm 1:1.

Verse 2

For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands - Thou shalt enjoy the avails of thy labor; thou shalt be secure in thy rights. See the notes at Isaiah 3:10. This is a general promise respecting the prosperity which religion affords. If all people were truly religious, this would be universal, so far as man is concerned. Property would be secure; and, except so far as abundant harvests might be prevented by the direct providence of God - by blight, and mildew, and storms, and drought - all people would enjoy undisturbed the avails of their labor. Slavery, whereby one man is compelled to labor for another, would come to an end; every one who is now a slave would "eat the labor of his own hands;" and property would no more be swept away by war, or become the prey of robbers and freebooters. Religion, if it prevailed universally, would produce universal security in our rights.

Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee - literally, "Happy thou, and well with thee." That is, happiness and security would be the consequence of true religion.

Verse 3

Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house - It is not uncommon in the East, as elsewhere, to train a vine along the sides of a house - partly to save ground; partly because it is a good exposure for fruit; partly as an ornament; and partly to protect it from thieves. Such a vine, in its beauty, and in the abundant clusters upon it, becomes a beautiful emblem of the mother of a numerous household. One of the blessings most desired and most valued in the East was a numerous posterity, and this, in the case of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was among the chief blessings which God promised to them - a posterity that should resemble in number the sands of the sea or the stars of heaven. Compare Genesis 15:5; Genesis 22:17; Genesis 32:12. These two things - the right to the avails of one's labor Psalm 128:2, and a numerous family - are the blessings which are first specified as constituting the happiness of a pious household.

Thy children like olive plants round about thy table - Compare the notes at Psalm 52:8. Beautiful; producing abundance; sending up young plants to take the place of the old when they decay and die. The following extract and preceding cut from "The land and Book," vol. i., pp. 76,77, will furnish a good illustration of this passage: "To what particular circumstance does David refer in the 128th Psalm, where he says, Thy children shall be like oliveplants round about thy table? Follow me into the grove, and I will show you what may have suggested the comparison. Here we have lilt upon

a beautiful illustration. This aged and decayed tree is surrounded, as you see, by several young and thrifty shoots, which spring from the root of the venerable parent. They seem to uphold, protect, and embrace it. We may even fancy that they now bear that lead of fruit which would otherwise be demanded of the feeble parent. Thus do good and affectionate children gather round the table of the righteous. Each contributes something to the common wealth and welfare of the whole - a beautiful sight, with which may God refresh the eyes of every friend of mine."

Verse 4

Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed … - As if he had said, "Look upon this picture. See the farmer cultivating his fields; see him gathering in the grain; see him at his own table calmly, quietly, and gratefully enjoying the fruit of his toil. Look upon that picture of a happy family - numerous, cheerful, beloved - giving promise of upholding the name of the family in future years - and see all this as coming from the Lord - and you have an illustration of the blessedness which follows a religious life."

Verse 5

The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion - Will not merely bless thee in the field and in the house, but will add blessings that seem to come more directly out of Zion, or that seem to be more directly connected with religion: shall bless thee with religious influences in thine own family; shall bless thee by permitting thee to see the growth of the church and the conversion of souls.

And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem - The prosperity, the happiness of Jerusalem: that is, the good of the church; the advancement of pure religion. The Hebrew might be rendered, "And look thou upon the good of Jerusalem" - in the imperative; and, thus rendered, it would be a command to regard, in these circumstances, the welfare of Jerusalem, or the prosperity of the church; but the language will also admit of the other construction, and the connection seems to require it. Thus understood, it is a promise that he who is referred to would be permitted to enjoy a view of the continual prosperity of religion in the world.

All the days of thy life - To the very close of life. No higher blessing could be promised to a pious man than that he should see religion always prospering; that the last view which he would have of the world should be the rapid advances of religion; that he should die in a revival of religion.

Verse 6

Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children - This is a continuation of the idea of blessedness as connected with a numerous posterity - an object of so much interest to the Hebrews (see the notes at Psalm 128:3), and having its foundation in our nature.

And peace upon Israel - See Psalm 125:5. As the crowning blessing; a blessing above that of success in worldly affairs; above that of seeing a numerous and happy posterity. The love of God is the supreme affection in the mind of a pious man; the desire that his cause may prosper and triumph is to him a supreme desire. Man is truly and completely blessed only in religion.

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PSALM 129

Introduction

This psalm is entitled merely "A Song of Degrees." Its author is unknown; and the occasion on which it was written cannot now be ascertained. It is a psalm which would be applicable to many periods of the Jewish history, and it is not of such a nature that it can with certainty be referred to any one of them. There is nothing in it which would forbid us to suppose that it was composed on the return from the Babylonian exile, but there is nothing to fix it definitely to that event. Why it was made one of the "Songs of Degrees" is equally unknown. It merely refers to the fact that Israel had often been roughly and severely treated; and it contains a prayer that those who were the enemies of Zion might be punished in a proper manner. It would seem probable that it was composed during a time of trouble, of war, or of persecution, and that the main purpose of the writer was to refer to the fact that the same thing had often occurred before, and to find consolation and support in that fact. The principle on which it is founded is, that there is nothing to be dreaded as the result of trial, if we have passed through the same form of trial before, and if we have not sunk but have been sustained under it. This furnishes an assurance that the same thing may occur again.

Verse 1

Many a time - Margin, as in Hebrew, "much." Probably, however, the idea is, as expressed in our translation, "many a time;" "often." So it is in the Latin Vulgate and the Septuagint; and this accords better with the connection.

Have they afflicted me from my youth - Have I been afflicted; have others dealt unjustly by me. The youth here is the beginning. of the history of that people: since we began to be a people; since the nation was founded.

May Israel now say - May the nation now say. It is clear from this that the psalm was not written at an early period of their history.

Verse 2

Many a time … - This repetition is designed to fix the thoughts on the fact, and to impress it on the mind. The mind dwells on the fact as important in its bearing on the present occasion or emergency. The idea is, that it is no new thing to be thus afflicted. It has often occurred. It is a matter of long and almost constant experience. Our enemies have often

attempted to destroy us, but in vain. What we experience now we have often experienced, and when thus tried we have been as often delivered, and have nothing now therefore to fear. We are not to regard it as a strange thing that we are now afflicted; and we are not to be discouraged or disheartened as if our enemies could overcome us, for they have often tried it in vain. He who has protected us heretofore can protect us still. He who defended us before can defend us now, and the past furnishes an assurance that be will defend us if it is best that we should be protected. It does much to support us in affliction if we can recall to mind the consolations which we had in former trials, and can avail ourselves of the result of past experience in supporting us now.

Yet they have not prevailed against me - They have never been able to overcome us. We were safe then in the divine hands; we shall be safe in the same hands now.

Verse 3

The plowers plowed upon my back - The comparison here is undoubtedly taken from the "plowing" of land, and the idea is that the sufferings which they had endured were such as would be well represented by a plow passing over a field, tearing up the sod; piercing deep; and producing long rows or furrows. The direct allusion would seem to be to stripes inflicted on the back, as if a plow had been made to pass over it; and the meaning is, that they had been subjected to sufferings as slaves or criminals were when the lash cut deep into the flesh. Probably the immediate thing in the mind of the psalmist was the hard bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt, when they were subjected to all the evils of servitude.

They made long their furrows - On my back. The word used here, and rendered "made long" - ארך *'ârak* means to make long, to prolong, to extend in a right line, and it may be used either in the sense of making long as to extent or space, or making long in regard to time, prolonging. The latter would seem to be the meaning here, as it is difficult to see in what sense it could be said that stripes inflicted on the back could be made long. They might, however, be continued and repeated; the sufferings might be prolonged sufferings as well as deep. It was a work of long-continued oppression and wrong.

Verse 4

The Lord is righteous - Righteous in permitting this; righteous in what he has done, and will do, in the treatment of those who inflict such wrongs. We may now safely commit our cause to him in view of what he has done in the past. He was not indifferent then to our sufferings, or deaf to the eries of his people; he interposed and punished the oppressors of his people, and we may trust him still.

He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked - By which they bound us. He did this in our "youth;" when we were oppressed and beaten in Egypt. Then he interposed, and set us free.

Verse 5

Let them all be confounded and turned back … - This might be rendered in the indicative, "they are ashamed," but the connection seems to require the rendering in our version. It is a prayer that God would now interpose as he had done in former times, and that he would cause all the haters of Zion to be put to shame as formerly.

Verse 6

Let them be as the grass upon the housetops - The housetops, or roofs of houses, covered with sand or earth, in which seeds of grass may germinate and begin to grow, but where, as there is no depth of earth, and as the heat of the sun there would be intense, it would soon wither away. See the notes at Isaiah 37:27.

Which withereth afore it groweth up - This, even if it has any meaning, is not the meaning of the original. The idea in the Hebrew is - and it is so rendered in the Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, and by Luther - "which before (one) pulls it, withers." Grass would wither or dry up, of course, if it were pulled up or cut down, but the grass here spoken of withers even before this is done. It has no depth of earth to sustain it; having sprouted, and begun to grow, it soon dies - a perfect image of feebleness and desolation; of hopes begun only to be disappointed. "This morning" (says Dr. Thomson, "Land and the Book," vol. ii., p. 574) "I saw a striking illustration of this most expressive figure. To obtain a good view of the Tyropean, my guide took me to the top of a house on the brow of Zion, and the grass which had grown over the roof during the rainy season was now entirely withered and perfectly dry."

Verse 7

Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand - It cannot be gathered and laid up for the use of cattle, as grass can that grows in the field. It is

valueless for any such purpose; or, is utterly worthless. The phrase "filleth not his hand" seems to be derived from the idea of reaping, where the reaper with one hand takes hold of the grain which he reaps, and cuts it off with the sickle in the other.

Nor he that bindeth sheaves - The man who gathers in the harvest. This was commonly performed by a different person from the reaper.

His bosom - This word would commonly refer to the bosom of the garment, in which tilings were carried; or that part above the girdle. It may be used here, however, in a larger sense - since it is incongruous to suppose that sheaves of grain would be carried thus - as meaning simply that one who gathered the sheaves would usually convey them in his arms, folding them to his bosom.

Verse 8

Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the Lord, … - As in a harvest-field, where persons passing by express their joy and gratitude that their neighbors are reaping an abundant harvest. The phrase "The blessing of the Lord be upon you," was expressive of good wishes; of pious congratulation; of a hope of success and prosperity; as when we say, "God be with you;" or, "God bless you." The meaning here is, that such language would never be used in reference to the grass or grain growing on the house-top, since it would never justify a wish of that kind: it would be ridiculous and absurd to apply such language to anyone who should be found gathering up that dry; and withered, and worthless grass. So the psalmist prays that it may be in regard to all who hate Zion Psalm 129:5, that they may have no such prosperity as would be represented by a growth of luxuriant and abundant grain; no such prosperity as would be denoted by the reaper and the binder of sheaves gathering in such a harvest; no such prosperity as would be indicated by the cheerful greeting and congratulation of neighors who express their gratification and their joy at the rich and abundant harvest which has crowned the labors of their friend, by the prayer that God would bless him.

We bless you in the name of the Lord - Still the language of pious joy and gratification addressed by his neighbors to him who was reaping his harvest. All this is simply language drawn from common life, uttering a prayer that the enemies of Zion might be "confounded and turned back" Psalm 129:5; a prayer that they might not be successful in their endeavors

to destroy the Church. Such a prayer cannot but be regarded as proper and right.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 130

Introduction

This psalm also is entitled "A Song of Degrees." See the notes at Introduction to Psalm 120:1-7. The author and the occasion on which it was composed are unknown, as is also the reason why it was included in this group of psalms.

The language of the psalm seems to be that of an individual; but most interpreters suppose that it is an individual speaking in the name of the nation, and representing its calamities and its penitence. Some have imagined that the person represented as speaking in Psalm 130:7-8, is a different individual from the one speaking in the other part of the psalm, but there seems to be no ground for this opinion. It is commonly supposed that the psalm had reference to the state of the Jews in the Babylonian captivity, but there is no necessity for limiting it to that period, if indeed it has any reference to the people of Israel. There were many occasions in their history when the language of the psalm would not be less appropriate than at that time. But there is no necessity at all for supposing that it refers to the nation as such. It may be the language of an individual, mourning over his sins, and pleading for mercy, expressing deep conviction of sin, and humble trust in God as the only hope for a convinced, condemned, and penitent sinner. As such, it would represent what has occurred in thousands of cases when sinners have been brought to conviction of sin, and have cried for mercy. Understood in this manner, it is one of the most instructive and touching of the psalms. I know of no reason why it may not be so regarded.

Verse 1

Out of the depths - The word rendered "depths" is from a verb - עמק *ʿâmaq* - which means to be deep; then, to be unsearchable; then, to make deep; and it would apply to anything low, deep, or profound, as the ocean, a pit, or a valley. The word used here occurs elsewhere only in the following places: Psalm 69:2, Psalm 69:14, where it is rendered "deep," applied to waters; and Isaiah 51:10; Ezekiel 27:34, where it is rendered "depths." The word, as used here, would be applicable to deep affliction, dejection, or distress. It would be applicable

(a) to affliction - the depths of sorrow from loss of friends, property, or bodily suffering;

(b) sin - the depths into which the soul is plunged under the consciousness of guilt;

(c) mental trouble - low spirits - melancholy - darkness of mind - loss of comfort in religion - powerful temptation - disappointment - the anguish caused by ingratitude - or sadness of heart in view of the crimes and the sorrows of people - or grief at the coldness, the hardness, the insensibility of our friends to their spiritual condition.

From all these depths of sorrow it is our privilege to call upon the Lord; in those depths of sorrow it is proper thus to implore his help. Often he brings us into these "depths" that we may be led to call upon him; always when we are brought there, we should call upon him.

Have I cried unto thee, O Lord - Or rather, "do I now invoke thee," or call earnestly upon thee. The language does not refer so much to the past as the present. I now cry for mercy; I now implore thy blessing. The condition is that of one who in deep sorrow, or under deep conviction for sin, pleads earnestly that God would have compassion on him.

Verse 2

Lord, hear my voice - This is the prayer; this is what he cried. It is the language of earnest pleading.

Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications - Do not turn away from me; do not disregard my cry. See the notes at Psalm 5:1.

Verse 3

If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities - If thou shouldst observe, note, attend to, regard all the evil that I have done. The Hebrew word means properly to keep, to watch, to guard. The word, as used here, refers to that kind of vigilance or watchfulness which one is expected to manifest who is on guard; who keeps watch in a city or camp by night. The idea is, If God should thus look with a scrutinizing eye; if he should try to see all that he could see; if he should suffer nothing to escape his observation; if he should deal with us exactly as we are; if he should overlook nothing, forgive nothing, we could have no hope.

Who shall stand? - Who shall stand upright? Who could stand before thee? Who could hope to be acquitted? This implies

(1) that the petitioner was conscious of guilt, or knew that he was a sinner;

(2) that he felt there was a depth of depravity in his heart which God could see, but which he did not - as every man must be certain that there is in his own soul;

(3) that God had the power of bringing that to light if he chose to do it, so that the guilty man would be entirely overwhelmed;

(4) that he who urged the prayer rested his only hope on the fact that God would not mark iniquity; would not develop what was in him; would not judge him by what he saw in his heart; but would deal with him otherwise, and show him mercy and compassion.

Every man must feel that if God should "mark iniquity" as it is - if he should judge us as we are - we could have no hope. It is only on the ground that we may be forgiven, that we eau hope to come before him.

Verse 4

But there is forgiveness with thee - The Septuagint renders this ἱλασμός *hilasmos* propitiation, reconciliation; the Latin Vulgate "propitiatio," propitiation. The Hebrew word means "pardon." The idea is, that sin may be forgiven; or, that God is a Being who does pardon sin, and that this is the only ground of hope. When we come before God, the ground of our hope is not that we can justify ourselves; not that we can prove we have not sinned; not that we can explain our sins away; not that we can offer an apology for them; it is only in a frank and full confession, and in a hope that God will forgive them. He who does not come in this manner can have no hope of acceptance with God.

That thou mayest be feared - That thou mayest be reverenced; or, that men may be brought to serve and worship thee - may be brought to a proper reverence for thy name. The idea is, not that pardon produces fear or terror - for the very reverse is true - but that God, by forgiving the sinner, brings him to reverence him, to worship him, to serve him: that is, the sinner is truly reconciled to God, and becomes a sincere worshipper. The offendcr is so pardoned that he is disposed to worship and honor God, for God has revealed himself as one who forgives sin, in order that the sinner may be encouraged to come to him, and be his true worshipper.

Verse 5

I wait for the Lord - That is, in this state of distress and trouble - from these "depths" of woe, and sorrow, and conviction of sin. This implies two things:

(1) that he had no other dependence;

(2) that his soul was actually in a waiting posture, or that he actually looked to the Lord for his interposition.

My soul doth wait - I wait, with all my soul and heart.

And in his word do I hope - In his promise. I believe that he will fulfill that promise, and that I shall find a gracious answer to my prayers. Under conviction for sin, under deep sorrow and distress of any kind, this is the only hope of man. If God does not interpose, there is no deliverer; that he will interpose we may feel assured, if we come to him with a humble, a believing, and a penitent heart.

Verse 6

My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning - More intently; more anxiously. The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate render this, "My soul hopeth in the Lord from the morning watch until night." The idea is that of watchers - night guards - who look anxiously for the break of day that they may be relieved. It is not that of persons who simply look for the return of day, but of those who are on guard - or it may be who watch beside the sick or the dying - and who look out on the east to mark the first indications of returning light. To them the night seems long; they are weary, and want repose; all around is cheerless, gloomy, and still; and they long for the first signs that light will again visit the world. Thus in affliction - the long, dark, dreary, gloomy night of sorrow - the sufferer looks for the first indication, the first faint ray of comfort to the soul. Thus under deep conviction for sin, and deep apprehension of the wrath of God - that night, dark, dreary, gloomy, often long - the soul looks for some ray of comfort, some intimation that God will be merciful, and will speak peace and pardon.

I say, more than they that watch for the morning - Margin, which watch unto the morning. The translation in the text best expresses the sense. There is something exceedingly beautiful and touching in this language of repetition, though it is much enfeebled by the words which our translators have inserted, "I say, more than." The Hebrew is, "more than they that watch for the morning - watch for the morning," as if the mind dwelt upon

the words as better expressing its own anxious state than any other words could do. Everyone who has been afflicted will feel the force of this; every one who has been under conviction of sin, and who has felt himself in danger of suffering the wrath of God, will remember how anxiously he longed for mercy, for light, for peace, for some indication, even the most faint, like the first ray which breaks in the east, that his soul would find mercy and peace.

Verse 7

Let Israel hope in the Lord - In such circumstances of affliction and distress, let not the people of God despair. In the darkest night, in calamities deep and prolonged, let not those who love God despair. The morning will dawn; the light will break in the east; deliverance and joy will come. The Hebrew here is, "Trust, O Israel, in the Lord." The design of the Psalmist seems to be, from his own experience, to persuade others - the afflicted people of God - to put their trust in Him in whom he had himself hoped. From the very depths of affliction, guilt, and almost despair, he had looked to the Lord: encouraged and persuaded by his example, he would now entreat the people of God everywhere and always, in like manner, to trust him.

For with the Lord there is mercy - He is merciful, and in his mercy we may trust.

And with him is plenteous redemption - It is ample; it is full; it abounds. It is not limited; it is not exhausted; it cannot be exhausted. So we may always feel when we come before God, that his mercy is ample for all the needs of all the sinful and the suffering; that the provisions of his grace are unexhausted and inexhaustible. Applying this, as we may, to the work of the Saviour, we may feel that the redemption which is in him is adequate to the needs of a world, and that although numberless million have been saved by it, yet that it is still as rich, as full, and as free as it was in the beginning; as the ocean, though from the beginning of the world it has supplied the materials for rain and dew to water the hills, the vales, the continents, and the islands, is still full; as the light of the sun, though for thousands of ages it has poured its light on the planets, and on all the vast space between itself and those orbs, and has sent out its light into the vast regions beyond, still shines with undiminished splendor, and pours its floods of day and of glory on all those worlds.

Verse 8

And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities - His people. He will completely deliver them from the power and the pollution of sin. This will ultimately be accomplished in reference to his whole church, and to every true member of that church. This was the highest object before the mind of the psalmist - that with which the psalm appropriately closes. And this is the highest object before the mind of every true child of God - that he may be completely and forever delivered from the power and the dominion of sin. This will be perfectly accomplished in heaven only; but there and then the bliss will be complete. The psalm begins with an earnest cry from the "depths;" it closes with the triumphant hope of complete and eternal deliverance. There is one world where there is no occasion to cry to God from the "depths" of sorrow and of sin.

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PSALM 131

Introduction

This brief psalm is entitled "A Song of Degrees of David." There is nothing in it to forbid the idea that it was composed by him, for it is wholly in his spirit and manner. It is not known, however, on what occasion it was written, nor why it has a place among the "Songs of Degrees." It would seem to have been prepared on some occasion when the author had been charged with being of a lofty and proud spirit; with meddling in matters that were above him, or above his condition in life; or with making such suggestions about public affairs as were considered to indicate a self-confident, or an aspiring mind. Without being able to determine this by any certain facts, the supposition which would seem most to accord with the contents of the psalm would be that it was written when he was a young man; when he had expressed, in the presence of others, some sentiments on public affairs which were interpreted by them as denoting a forward and self confident spirit.

If so, then this psalm was probably a private meditation on what he had done, and was of the nature of a personal examination of his spirit and motives. Knowing, as we do, what David was afterward - his great talents as a warrior and a king, and his ability to manage public affairs - it would not, in itself, be strange or improbable that, in early life, and even when a shepherdboy, he might have advanced opinions which would be regarded as beyond his age, as unbecoming his condition, and as manifesting a disposition to meddle with matters above him; and that he might have been rebuked for this. If it were so, we may suppose that a pious and a modest youth would give himself to self-examination, to determine whether that was the spirit which actuated him, and this psalm may have been the result of such an examination: a deep self-consciousness that such was not the spirit which influenced him; that these were not the motives which prompted him to do what he had done.

The psalm, therefore, may, perhaps, without impropriety, be regarded as furnishing evidence of the early manifestation of a disposition on the part of David to study public affairs, and of an early manifestation of a knowledge on that subject which was regarded as above his years and his station; and, at the same time, of his readiness to profit by rebuke, and to examine his

real motives; and of his consciousness that he was not actuated by self-confident and aspiring views. The psalm manifests a humble spirit, and a spirit of confident trust in God. If the interpretation thus suggested could be confirmed - or if it may be allowed - the psalm would be one of the most valuable records of the early life and character of David. It would add to the interest of this conjecture, if we might suppose that this psalm was left among the effusions of his early years - among, as we should say, his "private papers," and was discovered after he was dead, and was then arranged and published among these "Songs of Degrees."

Verse 1

Lord, my heart is not haughty - Though this is charged upon me; though I may have said things which seem to imply it; though this might appear a just inference from my conduct - yet I am conscious that this is not my real character. What I have said was not the result of ambition.

Nor mine eyes lofty - I am conscious that I am not ambitious and aspiring - as I am accused of being. What I have said is not the result of such a feeling, nor should such a charge be brought against me.

Neither do I exercise myself - Margin, as in Hebrew, walk. I do not walk about among such things; I do not pry into them; I do not meddle with them. What I have said or done is not, as has been said concerning me, the result of a meddlesome and interfering spirit. It may seem to be so; my own consciousness tells me it is not so. The interpretation put upon my conduct may be natural; but I am conscious to myself that it is not the right interpretation.

In great matters, or in things too high for me - Margin, as in Hebrew, wonderful. The word wonderful would apply to matters suited to excite astonishment by their vastness, or their unusual nature - as prodigies or miracles; and then, great and lofty truths. It would apply also to things which might be regarded as far above the capacity of a child, or of one in obscure life, and with slight advantages of education; and, as above suggested, it may have been the accusation brought against him, that, in respect to public matters, matters of state - or to the more elevated doctrines of religion - he had manifested a spirit unbecoming one in early years, and of humble rank, and that this indicated a desire to meddle with matters which he could not understand, and which could not pertain to him. He was conscious, he says, that he was not actuated by that spirit.

Verse 2

Surely I have behaved and quieted myself - Margin, as in Hebrew, my soul. The Hebrew is, "If I have not soothed and quieted my soul." This is a strong mode of affirming that he had done it. The negative form is often thus used to denote a strong affirmation. The full form would be, "God knows if I have not done this;" or, "If I have not done this, then let me bear the consequences; let me be punished." The idea is that he was conscious he had done this. Instead of being arrogant, proud, and ambitious - instead of meddling with matters above him, and which did not belong to him, he had known his proper place. He had been gentle, calm, retiring. The word rendered behaved means properly to be even or level; then, in the form used here, to make even, smooth, or level; and it is used here in the sense of calming the mind; smoothing down its roughnesses; keeping it tranquil. Compare the notes at Isaiah 38:13, in our version, "I reckoned" (the same word as here) "till morning," but where the correct translation would be, "I composed or calmed myself until morning." So the meaning here is, that he had kept his mind calm, and even, and gentle.

As a child that is weaned of his mother - See Isaiah 28:9. There have been very various interpretations of this passage. See Rosenmuller *in loc*. Perhaps the true idea is that of a child, when weaned, as leaning upon its mother, or as reclining upon her breast. As a weaned child leans upon its mother. That is, as a child, accustomed to the breast, and now deprived of it, lays its head gently where it had been accustomed to derive its nutriment, feeling its dependence, hoping to obtain nourishment again: not angry, but gently grieved and sad. A little child thus clinging to its mother - laying its head gently down on the bosom - languishing - looking for nourishment - would be a most tender image of meekness and gentleness.

My soul is even as a weaned child - literally, "As a weaned child upon me my soul;" that is probably, My soul leans upon me as a weaned child. My powers, my nature, my desires, my passions, thus lean upon me, are gentle, unambitious, confiding. The Septuagint renders this in a different manner, and giving a different idea, "Had I not been humble, but exalted myself as a weaned child doth against its mother, how wouldst thou have retributed against my soul!" The Hebrew, however, requires that it should be otherwise interpreted. The idea is, that he had been gentle; that he had calmed down his feelings; that whatever aspirations he might have had, he had kept them under; that though he might have made inquiries, or offered

suggestions that seemed to savor of pride or ambition, he had been conscious that this was not so, but that he had known his proper place, and had kept it. The sentiment here is, that religion produces a child-like spirit; that it disposes all to know and keep their right place; that to whatever inquiries or suggestions it may lead among the young, it will tend to keep them modest and humble; and that whatever suggestions one in early life may be disposed to make, they will be connected with a spirit that is humble, gentle, and retiring. Religion produces self-control, and is inconsistent with a proud, an arrogant, and an ambitious spirit.

Verse 3

Let Israel hope in the Lord … - The connection would seem to require us to understand this as the assertion of him who had been accused of thoughts which seemed to be too lofty. As the result of all his reflections (of those reflections for which he was rebuked and charged with pride, but which were really conceived in a modest spirit) - as expressing what he saw that seemed to be in advance of what others saw, or to indicate a habit of thought beyond his years - he says that there were reasons why Israel should hope in the Lord; that there was a foundation for confident trust; that there was that in the divine character which was a just ground of reliance; that there was that in the course of events - in the tendencies of things - which made it proper for the people of God, for the church, to hope, to confide, to feel assured of its ultimate and permanent safety. This would indicate the nature of the suggestions which he had expressed, and which had exposed him to the charge of arrogance; and it would also indicate a ripe and mature habit of thinking, beyond what might be expected from one in very early life. All this was, probably, applicable to David in his early years, as to the reflections which might have foreshadowed what he would be in future; this was eminently applicable to David‘s Descendant - greater than he - who, at twelve years of age, astonished the Hebrew doctors in the temple with “his understanding and answers” Luke 2:47; this gives a beautiful view of modesty joined with uncommon gifts in early life; this shows what is always the nature of true religion - as producing modesty, and as prompting to hope.

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PSALM 132

Introduction

This psalm is simply entitled "A Song of Degrees." The author of it is not known, nor can the occasion on which it was written be certainly ascertained. It would seem to have been composed in a time of public distress and disaster; when the affairs of the nation were in jeopardy, and especially when the line of the monarchy seemed about to fail, and the promises made to David seemed about to come to nought. It would have been a suitable occasion for such a psalm at the time immediately preceding the captivity in Babylon, or on the return from Babylon, when the throne was tottering or had fallen, and when God seemed to be about to forsake his house, the temple - or had forsaken it, and suffered it to fall to ruin. At such a time of national disaster, when it appeared as if the house of God was to be permanently destroyed, and the government to be overturned forever, it was natural and proper thus to make mention of the zeal, the toil, and the sacrifice of him who had sought a "habitation" for God; who had planned and labored that there might be a permanent dwelling-place for the Most High, and who had received gracious promises from God himself in regard to the permanent establishment of his family on the throne. It would be appropriate, also, to recall this as a foundation for the prayer that God would again visit Zion, and would fulfill the promises which he had given to David.

The psalm therefore consists properly of two parts:

I. A statement of the zeal of David for the ark, in securing a permanent abode for it, Psalm 132:1-8; and

II. A reference to the promises made to David and his posterity, and a prayer that these promises might be carried out and accomplished, Psalm 132:9-18.

Verse 1

Lord, remember David - Call to remembrance his zeal, his labor, his trials in order that there might be a permanent place for thy worship. Call this to remembrance in order that his purpose in thy cause may not be frustrated; in order that the promises made to him may be accomplished.

And all his afflictions - The particular trial here referred to was his care and toil, that there might be a settled home for the ark. The word used

would not refer merely to what is specified in the following verses (his bringing up the ark to Mount Zion), but to his purpose to build a house for God, and - since he was not permitted himself to build it because he was a man of war, and had been engaged in scenes of blood, 1 Kings 5:3; 1 Chronicles 22:8 - to his care and toil in collecting materials for the temple to be erected by his son and successor. It is not, therefore, his general afflictions which are here meant, but his anxiety, and his efforts to secure a lasting place for the worship of God.

Verse 2

How he sware unto the Lord - The solemn oath which he took that he would make this the first object; that he would give himself no rest until this was done; that he would sacrifice his personal ease and comfort in order that he might thus honor God. This oath or purpose is not recorded in the history. The fair interpretation of this would be either

(1) that these words properly expressed what was in the mind of David at the time - that is, his acts implied that this purpose was in his heart; or

(2) that this vow was actually made by David, though not elsewhere recorded. Such a vow might have been made, and the remembrance of it kept up by tradition, or it might have been suggested to the author of the psalm by direct inspiration.

And vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob - See Genesis 49:24. The God whom Jacob worshipped, and who had manifested himself so signally to him as a God of might or power.

Verse 3

Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house - The tent of my dwelling; the place where I abide. Nor go up into my bed The couch of my bed, or where I sleep. I will make it my first business to find a dwelling-place for the Lord; a place where the ark may repose.

Verse 4

I will not give sleep to mine eyes … - There is no difference here between the words sleep and slumber. The meaning is, that the house of the Lord should be his first care.

Verse 5

Until I find out a place for the Lord - A place for the ark of God; a place where it may constantly and safely remain. The symbol of the divine

presence rested on the mercy-seat, the cover of the ark, and hence, this was represented as the seat or the house of God.

An habitation for the mighty God of Jacob - Hebrew, "For the mighty One of Jacob." The reference is to a permanent dwelling-place for the ark. It had been moved from place to place. There was no house appropriated to it, or reared expressly for it, and David resolved to provide such a house - at first, a tent or tabernacle on Mount Zion - and then, a more spacious and magnificent structure, the temple. The latter he was not permitted to build, though the purpose was in his heart.

Verse 6

Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah - Most probably this is the language of the contemporaries of David; or this is what they might be supposed to say; or this is what tradition reports that they did say. David's purpose, as referred to in the previous verses, is not recorded in the history, and the memory of the whole transaction may have been handed down by tradition. Or, this may be merely poetic language, expressing the feelings of those who, when sent out by David, or accompanying him, found the ark. Much difficulty has been felt in regard to this verse. There is no mention in the history of the fact that the ark was "heard of" at Ephrata, or that it was ever there. The name Ephrata - אפרתה *'ephrâthâh* - is applied

(1) to a region of country to which was subsequently given the name Bethlehem, Genesis 35:16-19; Rth 4:11 .

(2) Properly to Bethlehem, a city of Judah, the full name of which was Bethlehem-Ephratah, Genesis 48:7; Micah 5:2.

(3) It is a proper name, 1 Chronicles 2:19, 1 Chronicles 2:50; 1 Chronicles 4:4.

(4) It may perhaps be the same as Ephraim.

Compare Judges 12:5; 1 Samuel 1:1; 1 Kings 11:26. Some have supposed the meaning to be, that they found it within the limits of the tribe of Ephraim, and that the word Ephratah is used here with reference to that; but this is a forced construction. It may have been indeed true that the ark was found within the limits of that tribe, but the word Ephratah would not naturally denote this; and, besides, the tribe of Ephraim was so large, and

covered such an extent of territory, that this would convey no distinct information; and it cannot be supposed that the writer meant to say merely that they found it within the limits of a tribe. Nor can it mean that they actually found the ark at Ephrata, or Bethlehem, for this would not be true. A simple and natural interpretation of the passage has been suggested, which seems to make it plain: that, in their search for the ark, it was at Ephratah or Bethlehem that they first heard of it, but that they actually found it in the fields of the wood. It may seem strange that there should have been so much uncertainty about the ark as is here implied; that David did not know where it was; and that none of the priests knew. But, while it must be admitted that it seems to be strange, and that the fact is not of easy explanation, it is to he remembered that the ark was at one time in the possession of the Philistines; that when it was retaken it seems to have had no very permanent resting place; that it may have been removed from one spot to another as circumstances required; that it may have been committed now to one, and now to another, for safe keeping; and thus it might have occurred, in the unsettled and agitated state of affairs, that its exact situation might be unknown, and that a somewhat diligent search was necessary in order to find it We know too little of the times to enable us to pronounce upon the subject with much confidence.

We found it in the fields of the wood - Continuing our search, we found it there. Perhaps Kirjath-jearim, 1 Samuel 7:1; 1 Chronicles 13:5. It was to Kirjath-jearim that the ark was carried after it had been taken by the Philistines 1 Samuel 6:21. The literal meaning of the passage here is, "The fields of the wood" - or of Jear, where the word in Hebrew is the same as in Kirjath-jearim. The name Kirjath-jearim means Forest Town, or, city of the woods; and the allusion here is the same as in 1 Samuel 7:1. The interpretation, then, seems to be that they heard of the ark, or learned where it was, when they were at Ephrata or Bethlehem; but that they actually found it in the vicinity of Kirjath-jearim. The ignorance in the case may have been merely in regard to the exact place or house where it was at that time kept. Bethlehem was the home or city of David, and the idea is, that, when there, and when it was contemplated to remove the ark to Mount Zion, information or intelligence was brought there of its exact locality, and they went forth to bring it to its new abode or its permanent resting place.

Verse 7

We will go into his tabernacles - His tents, or the fixed resting place prepared for the ark. This is evidently language supposed to have been used on bringing up the ark into its place in Jerusalem: language such as they may be supposed to have sung or recited on that occasion.

We will worship at his footstool - See the notes at Psalm 99:5. The meaning is, the footstool of God: let us bow humbly at his feet. The language denotes profound adoration. It expresses the feelings of those who bare the ark to its assigned place.

Verse 8

Arise, O Lord, into thy rest - Into that which is appointed for its permanent place of repose, that it may no longer be removed from spot to spot. This is spoken of the ark, considered as the place where God, by an appropriate symbol, abode. That symbol - the Shechinah - rested on the cover of the ark. The same language was used by Solomon at the dedication of the temple: "Now, therefore, arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou and the ark of thy strength," 2 Chronicles 6:41.

Thou, and the ark of thy strength - The ark, the symbol of the divine power, as if the power of God resided there, or as if the Almighty had his abode there. Perhaps the language was derived from the fact that the ark, in the wars of the Hebrews against their foes, was a symbol of the divine presence and protection - that by which the divine power was put forth.

Verse 9

Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness - This is also substantially the same language that was used by Solomon at the dedication of the temple. See again 2 Chronicles 6:41. The idea is, that in the service of such a God, the priests, the ministers of religion, should be holy. The honor of religion demanded it. It was the first qualification of those who "served the altar;" a qualification without which all other endowments would be valueless. On the word clothed, see the notes at Psalm 35:26; compare Psalm 65:13; Psalm 93:1; Psalm 104:1; Isaiah 61:10; 1 Peter 5:5.

And let thy saints shout for joy - Thy holy ones; all who truly worship and honor thee. Let them be happy in such a God; in thy presence; in thy service. The fact that there is a God, and such a God, and that this God is ours - that we may serve him, glorify him, enjoy him - is suited to fill the mind with joy.

Verse 10

For thy servant David's sake - Because of the promise made to him; because of the zeal which he has shown in securing a place for the ark. Let it not be in vain that he has shown such a regard to the honor of God; let not the promises made to him fail. Such a prayer is proper now. There is nothing wrong in our beseeching God to carry out and accomplish the purposes cherished by his church for promoting the honor of his name; or for a child to pray that the purposes of a pious parent in regard to himself may not fail. It is an expression of nature - a desire that the labor and sacrifices of those who have gone before us should not be lost. This is the language of the author of the psalm, and of those for whom the psalm was composed. See Psalm 132:1. In view of all that David has done, do thou now show favor and mercy.

Turn not away the face of thine anointed - As if in displeasure, or in forgetfulness. The word anointed would refer to one who was set apart as a king, a priest, or a prophet. See the notes at Matthew 1:1. The word would be applicable to David himself, as the anointed king; in a higher sense it is applicable to the Messiah, the Christ. The reference here is probably to David himself, as if a failure to carry out his purposes in regard to the sanctuary, or to fulfill the promises made to him, would be a turning away the face from him; would be a mark of the divine displeasure against him. The prayer is, that God would carry out those purposes as if his face was continually turned with benignity and favor toward David.

Verse 11

The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David - He has made a gracious promise, confirmed by an oath, which we may plead in our present necessities. That promise was made "in truth," that is, sincerely - so that it will certainly be carried out - so that we may appeal to God, on the ground of his faithfulness, to keep his word.

He will not turn from it - We may be certain that he will carry it out. We may appeal to him on the basis of that promise with the utmost confidence.

Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne - Margin, as in Hebrew, "of thy belly." The throne would descend to his posterity, 2 Samuel 7:12; see the notes at Psalm 89:3-4.

Verse 12

If thy children will keep my covenant … - This was the condition implied in the promise - that they were to keep the law of God, and to serve

and obey him. If they did not, they could not, of course, plead the promise. This principle is universal. We cannot plead any promise of God in our behalf, or in behalf of our children, unless we obey his commands, and are ourselves faithful to him. See the sentiment in this verse illustrated in the notes at Psalm 89:30-37.

Verse 13

For the Lord hath chosen Zion - He has selected it as the place where he will abide; the seat of his religion. This is a new plea or argument, and shows that the psalm had reference to Zion or Jerusalem, as then in danger, or as having been in danger. See the notes at Psalm 48:1-2.

He hath desired it for his habitation - A place where to abide. Its had selected this as the permanent place of his worship.

Verse 14

This is my rest for ever - My home; my permanent abode. I will no more remove from place to place - as when the ark was carried in the wilderness, and as it has been since; but Zion shall now be the fixed seat of religion. See the notes at Psalm 68:16.

Here will I dwell … - Permanently; constantly.

Verse 15

I will abundantly bless her provision - Margin, surely. Hebrew, "Blessing I will bless," a strong affirmation, meaning that he would certainly do it; that he would do it in every way; that every needed blessing would be imparted. The word rendered provision is a cognate form of the word in Psalm 78:25, translated meat: "He sent them meat to the full." It properly refers to food for a journey, but it is applicable to any kind of food. The original idea is that of food obtained by hunting - as game, venison: Genesis 25:28; Job 38:41. The meaning here is, that God would provide abundantly for their support.

I will satisfy her poor with bread - I will give them what they need. See the notes at Psalm 37:25.

Verse 16

I will also clothe her priests with salvation - See the notes at Psalm 132:9, where - instead of the word which in 2 Chronicles 6:41, as here, is "salvation," we find the word "righteousness." The promise here corresponds to the prayer in Psalm 132:9. It is a reason why God should interpose. What they prayed for Psalm 132:9, had been expressly promised, and that promise is now urged as a plea why the prayer should be granted.

And her saints shall shout aloud for joy - See Psalm 132:9. In 2 Chronicles 6:41 the prayer is, "And let thy saints rejoice in goodness." The sense is not materially varied. The Hebrew is, "And let thy saints rejoicing rejoice;" that is, let them shout, shout; let them be full of joy.

Verse 17

There will I make thy horn of David to bud - The horn was an emblem of power; and then, of success or prosperity. See the notes at Luke 1:69. The word rendered "to bud" means to grow, or to shoot forth as a plant, or as grass grows; and then it may be applied to anything which shoots forth or grows. The allusion here would seem to be to a horn as it shoots forth on the head of an animal. So David would be endowed with growing strength; would have the means of defending himself against his enemies, and of securing victory. The language had no original reference to the Messiah, but it is not improperly applied to him (as springing from David) in Luke 1:69. On the word horn, see the notes at Psalm 75:4. Compare Psalm 89:17, Psalm 89:24; Psalm 92:10; Psalm 112:9; Daniel 7:8; Daniel 8:5.

I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed - Margin, a candle. I have appointed; that is, I have given him that which will always be as a lamp or guide to him; that by which he will see to walk. I have given him true and precious promises, which will be to him as a lamp, a candle, a lantern is to one walking in the night. See Psalm 18:28, note; Psalm 119:105, note.

Verse 18

His enemies will I clothe with shame - They shall be so confounded that shame shall seem to cover them as a garment. See the notes at Psalm 109:29. That is, David would be triumphant.

But upon himself shall his crown flourish - His crown shall be as a fresh, blooming garland. The Hebrew word used here may mean either to glitter, or to flower, to fiourish or bloom. As applied to a crown, it may mean either that it would sparkle or glitter, as set with precious stones - or (under the idea of a garland) it may mean that it would appear to bloom or blossom. In either case it denotes success, joy, triumph - and is a promise of prosperity to David as a king. This was a part of the promise referred to by the psalmist, and a ground of the plea in the psalm. God had made these precious promises to David and his posterity; and now, in a time of sorrow and disaster, when the glory of the crown seemed about to pass away, the psalmist, in the name of the people, and in language to be used by the

people, prays that those ancient promises might be remembered and fulfilled. So, in a time of general religious declension, we may plead the promises, so rich and so abundant, which God has made to his church, as a reason for his gracious interposition, for his coming to revive his work.

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PSALM 133

Introduction

This psalm is entitled "A Song of Degrees of David." It is one of the four in this collection ascribed to him, and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of the inscription. As to the occasion on which the psalm was composed, however, we have no information. Perhaps there was nothing special in the occasion which called it forth, since it may have been written at any time to set forth the beauty and the power of brotherly love. It may have been composed either for the service of the people when gathered in their annual festivals, or in view of the harmony - the beauty and order - evinced when they were thus gathered together.

The psalm is an illustration, in most beautiful language, of brotherly love, particularly in regard to its calm, and gentle, and sweet influence - like the ointment which flowed down from the head of the anointed priest, or like the gentle dew on Hermon or Zion. It is a psalm applicable alike to a church; to family; to a gathering of friends.

Verse 1

Behold - As if he looked upon such a gathering, and saw there the expressions of mutual love. This may have been uttered in the actual contemplation of such an assemblage; or it may have been a picture of the imagination.

How good - How good in itself; how proper; how suited to promote happiness, and to diffuse good influences abroad.

And how pleasant - The word used here means lovely, charming, attractive; that which fills the mind with delight, spoken of one beloved, 2 Samuel 1:26; of a place, Genesis 49:15; of words, Proverbs 15:26; of beauty or glory, as of Yahweh, Psalm 27:4. It is descriptive of the pleasure which we derive from a picture, from a landscape, from sweet sounds and gentle voices, or from love.

For brethren to dwell together in unity - Margin, even together. Hebrew, "The dwelling of brethren also together." Perhaps the idea in the word "also" may be, that while the unity of brethren when separate, or as they were seen when scattered in their habitations, was beautiful, it was also pleasant to see them when actually assembled, or when they actually came together to worship God. As applicable to the church, it may be remarked

(1) that all the people of God - all the followers of the Redeemer - are brethren, members of the same family, fellow-heirs of the same inheritance, Matthew 23:8.

(2) There is a special fitness that they should be united, or dwell in unity.

(3) There is much that is beautiful and lovely in their unity and harmony. They are redeemed by the same Saviour; they serve the same Master; they cherish the same hope; they are looking forward to the same heaven; they are subject to the same trials, temptations, and sorrows; they have the same precious consolations. There is, therefore, the beauty, the "goodness," the "pleasantness" of obvious fitness and propriety in their dwelling together in unity.

(4) Their unity is adapted to produce an important influence on the world, John 17:21. No small part of the obstructions to the progress of religion in the world has been caused by the strifes and contentions of the professed friends of God. A new impulse would be given at once to the cause of religion if all the followers of the Lord Jesus acted in harmony: if every Christian would properly recognize every other Christian as his brother; if every true church would recognize every other church as a church; if all ministers of the Gospel would recognize all other ministers as such; and if all who are Christians, and who walk worthy of the Christian name, were admitted freely to partake with all others in the solemn ordinance which commemorates the Saviour's dying love. Until this is done, all that is said about Christian union in the church is a subject of just derision to the world - for how can there be union when one class of ministers refuse to recognize the Christian standing, and the validity of the acts, of other ministers of the Lord Jesus - when one part of the Christian church solemnly refuses to admit another portion to the privileges of the Lord's table - when by their actions large portions of the professed followers of the Redeemer regard and treat others as having no claims to a recognition as belonging to the church of God, and as left for salvation to his "uncovenanted mercies."

Verse 2

It is like the precious ointment upon the head - That is, which was poured upon the head of the high priest, when consecrated to the holy office. The Hebrew is, "the good ointment." For a description of the ointment which was used in the consecration of the high priest, and the holy things of the sanctuary, see Exodus 30:22-30. Compare the notes at Isaiah 61:3, on the phrase "oil of joy." Anointing with oil was common on festivals and joyous occasions (see the notes at Psalm 23:5), and hence, it became an emblem of anything joyous, happy, beautiful; and the idea seemed to be carried to the highest degree when it was connected with the anointing of a high priest to the sacred duties of his office. There is no other resemblance between the idea of anointing with oil and that of harmony among brethren than this which is derived from the gladness - the joyousness - connected with such an anointing. The psalmist wished to give the highest idea of the pleasantness of such harmony; and he, therefore, compared it with that which was most beautiful to a pious mind - the idea of a solemn consecration to the highest office of religion. The comparison is one which would not unnaturally occur to a Jew.

That ran down upon the beard - Descending from the head upon the long, flowing beard. The idea here is that of copiousness, or abundance - as if so much ointment was poured forth as to descend on the whole person, consecrating the entire man.

Even Aaron's beard - The word "even" here, introduced by our translators, weakens the force and beauty of the comparison. The psalmist had the simple image of Aaron before his mind, without intending to compare him with any other.

That went down to the skirts of his garments - literally, "to the mouth of his garment." The idea is that the anointing oil was abundant enough to flow down so as to fall on his entire robe, diffusing a sweet fragrance all around. It is possible, though it may seem like a conceit, that the psalmist may have had an idea of unity in this, as if in the anointing of the high priest the whole man was consecrated, or was "united" in the consecration. It was not merely the head, but the beard, the raiment, the entire person, that partook of the fragrance of the anointing oil. Thus love in a Christian community is so abundant - so overflowing - that it spreads over all the spiritual body, the church; the same sweet and holy influence, represented by the oil of anointing, pervades all, and combines all in one.

Verse 3

As the dew of Hermon … - On the situation of Mount Hermon, see the notes at Psalm 89:12. The literal rendering of this passage would be, "Like the dew of Hermon which descends on the mountains of Zion." According to our version two things are referred to: the dew of Hermon, and the dew on the mountains of Zion, But this is not in the original. There no dew is referred to but that which belongs to Hermon. It has, of course, been made a question how the dew of Hermon, a remote mountain, could be said to descend on the mountains of Zion, and our translators have sought to solve the difficulty by inserting the words "and as the dew." Some have supposed that the proper interpretation is to refer the comparison in the passage to the dew of Hermon, and that all which follows is an application of the thought: "Like the dew of Hermon is the influence which comes down upon the mountains of Zion," etc.

The most probable and plausible interpretation, however, it seems to me, is, that the mind of the poet was turned to the dew of Hermon - to the gentleness, and the copiousness, and the vivifying nature of that dew - diffusing beauty and abundance all around - and that he thought of that dew, or dew like that, as descending on the mountains of Zion. Not that the dew of Hermon actually descended there; but when changing the comparison, in illustration of brotherly love, from oil to dew, he most naturally thought (perhaps from some former observation) of the dew of Hermon, and immediately thought of Zion as if that dew descended there: that is, love, unity, and concord there would be as if the dew of Hermon should descend on the barren hills of Zion or Jerusalem, there diffusing beauty, abundance, fertility. The comparison of the influence of brotherly love, or unity, with dew is not a forced or unnatural one. So calm, so gentle, so refreshing on the tender grain, on the young plants, on the flowers, is dew, that it is a striking image of the influences which produce brotherly love and harmony.

For there the Lord commanded the blessing - He appointed that as the place of worship; as the seat of his residence; the source of all holy influences. See Psalm 78:67-69, note; Psalm 87:2, note.

Even life for evermore - literally, "Life to eternity." That is, such influences go from that place as to lead to eternal life, or as to secure eternal life. It is in Zion, in his church, that he has made known the way to eternal life, and the means by which it may be obtained. To the end of the world this beautiful psalm will be sung in the church alike as expressing the charm which there is in unity among brethren and in the church; and as tending to

promote that unity whose beauty it is designed to commend. Happy will be that day when the church shall be so united that it may be sung everywhere, as expressing what is, and not merely what should be.

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PSALM 134

Introduction

This is the last psalm of the collection or group called "Songs of Degrees," and it is of the nature of a doxology as now sung in our places of worship. Its author is unknown. From anything that appears in the psalm itself, it may have been composed originally to occupy the very place which it does occupy here. The psalm is a summons to praise, and it would seem not improbable that it was designed to be sung by alternate choirs - the first Psalm 134:1-2 representing the people approaching the sanctuary, calling on those who habitually serve God there - the ministers of religion - to lift up their hands in the sanctuary and to praise the Lord; the second Psalm 134:3, the response of the priests or the ministers of religion, pronouncing a blessing on the people - a blessing as proceeding out of Zion.

Verse 1

Behold - As if calling attention to the fact that they were there, or had come.

Bless ye the Lord - Praise Yahweh. Making known their desire that God should be praised, and calling on those who presided over the public worship of the sanctuary to engage now in that service as expressive of their feelings.

All ye servants of the Lord - The priests or ministers of religion, appointed especially to this service.

Which by night stand in the house of the Lord - There was a class of singers in the temple who devoted the night, or a part of the night, to praise; and it is possible that this service may have been, as it was subsequently in some of the monasteries, continued by succeeding choirs, during the entire night. Thus in 1 Chronicles 9:33, it is said, "And these are the singers, chief of the fathers of the Levites, who remaining in the chambers were free, for they were employed in that work day and night." This class is particularly addressed in this psalm, as if they were especially favored, or as if they especially possessed the ear of God in the silence of the night, and when the world slumbered around them. There is something favorable to devotion in the silence of the night; when the world sleeps; when we are alone with God; when it seems as if God would more particularly attend to our cry since the rest of the world is still, and does not (as it were) need his care. All

this may be fancy; but the effect may be to make the mind more solemn, and better suited for devotion.

Verse 2

Lift up your hands in the sanctuary - Margin, In holiness. The Hebrew word properly means holiness, but it may be applied to a holy place. See Psalm 20:2. The lifting up of the hands is properly expressive of prayer, but the phrase may be used to denote praise or worship in general.

And bless the Lord - In the night-watches - while all around is still, - let there be one place where the voice of praise shall ascend on high.

Verse 3

The Lord that made heaven and earth - The great Creator of all things. This is probably the language of those who were thus employed in the service of the Lord at night; their response to the address in the first two verses.

Bless thee out of Zion - That is, bless those who thus approached the sanctuary, and called on those within to praise the Lord. This is the answer. Let the blessing of God rest on you. It is language showing that they appreciated the kind and encouraging salutation, and that they reciprocated the feelings and the good wishes of those who came to worship. In the name of the Lord whom they served, therefore, and appealing to him, they pronounced a blessing on those who thus approached the sanctuary. People do not come near the house of God - the place of public worship - with kind and sympathizing feelings without a blessing from the sanctuary, without a response that welcomes them, and that meets all their aspirations. There is always in Zion - in the church - a voice, by day and night, which pronounces a blessing on those who wish it well, who seek its good, and who desire to partake of the favor of God.

Out of Zion - That is, may God speak to you out of Zion; may he confer on you such blessings as properly go out of Zion; or such as Zion (or his church) can furnish. Go not away unblessed; go not without a token of divine favor - for God will bless you.

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PSALM 135

Introduction

This psalm has no title in Hebrew; and the author, and the occasion on which it was written, are alike unknown. It is general in its character, though its imagery is taken mostly from Hebrew history.

The sole design of the psalm is to excite to the praise of God; or to show reasons for that praise. As grounds or reasons for this, the psalmist refers to the fact that God is good, Psalm 135:3; to the fact that he had chosen Jacob for himself, Psalm 135:4; to the greatness of God as seen in the works of nature, Psalm 135:5-7; to the history of the Hebrew people, Psalm 135:8-12; to the inability of idols to aid, Psalm 135:13-18; and, in view of all this, he calls on all classes of the people to praise the Lord, Psalm 135:19-21.

Verse 1

Praise ye the Lord - Hebrew, Hallelu-jah. Literally, "Praise Jah," an abridged name for Yahweh. See the notes at Psalm 68:4.

Praise ye the name of the Lord - The same as praising God himself.

Praise him, O ye servants of the Lord - You who are especially designated or appointed to this service, Psalm 134:1.

Verse 2

Ye that stand in the house of the Lord - See the notes at Psalm 134:1. That is, those who were appointed to conduct the services of religion, the priests and Levites.

In the courts of the house of our God - The areas, or parts assigned for different classes of worshippers around the tabernacle and the temple. See the notes at Matthew 21:12; notes at Psalm 92:13.

Verse 3

Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good - See Psalm 107:1.

Sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant - See Psalm 33:1; Psalm 92:1. The idea here is, that it is a source of happiness, and that it is proper in itself.

Verse 4

For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself - The descendants of Jacob. He has selected them from among all the inhabitants of the earth to be his special people.

And Israel for his peculiar treasure - The word here rendered treasure, means that which is acquired; property; wealth. They were what God possessed, owned, or claimed among all the people of the earth as especially his own. He had chosen them; he had redeemed them; he had made them his own, and he regarded them with the interest with which anyone looks on his own property, the fruit of his own toil. See Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6; Deuteronomy 32:9; 1 Kings 8:53.

Verse 5

For I know - I, as the representative of Israel, and speaking in the, name of the people. This is said as the foundation or the reason for praise. It was the thorough conviction of the psalmist that God was great above all who were claimed to be gods, and that he only was worthy of worship.

That the Lord is great - See the notes at Psalm 95:3.

And that our Lord is above all gods - All that are worshipped as gods.

Verse 6

Whatsoever the Lord pleased - God is an absolute sovereign. He has formed a plan, and has carried it out. He has made the world as he chose, and he has ordered all its arrangements according to his own pleasure. As a universal sovereign, he has a right to universal adoration. See the notes at Psalm 115:3.

In heaven, and in earth … - These are put for the universe; these are the universe. In these places - in all worlds - on the land and in the ocean - even in the profound depths of the sea, there is nothing which has not been placed there by his will, and which he has not arranged according to his eternal plan.

Verse 7

He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth - The word rendered vapors means literally risings; things raised up; and it may be applied, therefore, to vapors or clouds. The Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, and Luther render it clouds. It is among the proofs of the divine wisdom and power that he causes them to ascend contrary to the common law which drags all things down toward the earth. The arrangement by which this is done is among the most wise and wonderful of all the works of God. See Job 26:8, note; Job 38:25-28, notes.

He maketh lightnings for the rain - To accompany the rain. See the notes at Job 28:26.

He bringeth the wind out of his treasuries - Where he has, as it were, treasured it up, to be used when there should be occasion for it. See the notes at Job 38:22.

Verse 8

Who smote the firstborn of Egypt - As the last and the greatest of the plagues brought upon the Egyptians; the chief and crowning judgment under which they were made willing that the children of Israel should go, and which was in fact the judgment which secured their freedom. This is selected here evidently for this reason, instead of recounting all the plagues which were brought upon the Egyptians.

Both of man and beast - Exodus 11:5. Margin, as in Hebrew, From man unto beast. That is, including both; smiting both.

Verse 9

Who sent tokens and wonders - Tokens: that is, signs or evidences of the divine power. Wonders: things suited to impress the mind with awe; things outside of the ordinary course of events; things not produced by natural laws, but by the direct power of God. The allusion here is, of course, to the plagues of Egypt, as recorded in Exodus. See the notes at Psalm 105:27-36.

Verse 10

Who smote great nations … - To wit, those specified in the following verse.

Verse 11

Sihon king of the Amorites … - These are specimens of what was done, or instances of the mighty kings who were subdued. It is not pretended that all were enumerated. The subjugation of these nations and kings showed the power of God, and laid the foundation for praise.

Verse 12

And gave their land for an heritage … - See the notes at Psalm 111:6.

Verse 13

Thy name, O Lord, endureth for ever - Thou art the ever-living, the unchanging God. The generations of people pass away; the kingdoms of the earth change; the idols perish, but thou art the same. The object here seems to be to bring the image or the idea of God before the mind as he was when he performed these great works, as a God interposing in behalf of his people, and as worthy of praise. The idea is that he is the same now that he was then; and as he then impressed the world with a sense of his majesty

and power, and as he then interposed in behalf of his people by mighty signs and wonders, we should feel that, being an unchangeable God, he can do it now, and is now equally worthy. of confidence, adoration, and praise.

And thy memorial - Thy remembrance; the memory of thyself. That is, What thou hast done to secure a remembrance among people is of such a nature as to make the same impression to all coming time. The events were such that the memory of them should never pass away from mankind.

Throughout all generations - Margin, as in Hebrew, To generation and generation. There never will be a generation on the earth, in the latest periods, to which the memory of these things should not be transmitted.

Verse 14

For the Lord will judge his people - He will interpose in their behalf by his judgments, or by directing the course of events in their favor. This language is copied literally from Deuteronomy 32:36: "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants." It is there a part of the song of Moses after the journey through the wilderness, after smiting the kings of the Amorites and of Bashan; and when, delivered from their enemies, the Israelites had come to the borders of the promised land, Deuteronomy 31. The language was, therefore, especially appropriate to the design of this psalm.

And he will repent himself concerning his servants - In behalf of his people. That is, he will do as if he repented, or had changed his mind. He will stay his judgments. He will not suffer his people to be destroyed. He will not permit the judgments which seemed to threaten their entire ruin to be carried out to the full. They shall be arrested midway as if God had then changed his mind. Of course, all this is language accommodated to human weakness, and to the manner of speaking among people.

Verses 15-18

The idols of the heathen are silver and gold … - To show more fully the propriety of praising God, and him alone as God, the psalmist instituted a comparison between him and idols, showing that the gods worshipped by the pagan lacked every ground of claim to divine worship and homage. They were, after all that could be done to fashion, to decorate, and to adorn them, nothing but silver and gold, and could have no better claim to worship than silver and gold as such. They had, indeed, mouths, eyes, ears, but they could neither speak, see, hear, nor breathe. The passage here is substantially the same as in Psalm 115:4-8; and the one was evidently

copied from the other, though in the latter the description is in some respects amplified; but which was the original it is impossible to determine. See the notes at that passage.

Verses 19-21

Bless the Lord, O house of Israel … - This passage, also, is evidently an imitation of the passage in Psalm 115:9-13. The form in Psalm 115:9-13. It is an earnest call on all classes of the people to bless and praise the Lord. It is language expressive of overflowing joy; the utterance of a heart full of exalted conceptions of the majesty, the glory, and the mercy of God; of a heart which feels to the utmost the fitness of praise, and desires that all classes of people - priests and people - that all created things should unite in the praise of Yahweh. Who, in reading the psalm, can fail to catch the feelings of the psalmist, and to say Amen and amen!

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PSALM 136

Introduction

This psalm also has no title to indicate the author, or to explain the occasion on which it was composed. It is a psalm of very special construction, and stands alone in the form of its poetry. The peculiarity consists in repeating at the close of each verse the language "for his mercy endureth forever." This is a kind of refrains, and may have been designed, in public worship, to be a response by a choir, or by the people. That it may have been intended to be so used cannot be disproved, nor can anyone show that such a response in public worship is, itself, improper or wrong. It is not certain, however, that it was meant to be so used; and it should not, therefore, be appealed to as proving that such responses are proper in public worship, whatever may be true on that point. It may have been merely a specimen of the poetic art among the Hebrews - one of the forms in which Hebrew poetry expressed itself. The subjects referred to as laying the foundation for the response in each verse - "for his mercy endureth forever," are such as have been often introduced in the previous psalms, and will require but little additional illustration. The general idea is, that all these acts of the divine interposition - all that God has done, even though it seemed to be a display of power or of justice, of severity or of wrath - was, in fact, an illustration of the "mercy" of God, and laid a foundation for praise. That is, All this was connected with the good of his people, with favors to mankind, with the accomplishment of great and benevolent purposes, and, therefore, was expressive of mercy - a proof that the "mercy of God endures forever."

Verse 1

O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good - This whole verse is the same as Psalm 106:1, except that that is introduced by a Hallelujah. See the notes at that verse.

For his mercy endureth for ever - See also Psalm 106:1, note; Psalm 107:1, note. Literally, "For unto eternity his mercy." That is, It is ever the same; it never changes; it is never exhausted; it is found in all his dealings - in all his acts toward his creatures, and ever will be.

Verse 2

O give thanks unto the God of gods - See Deuteronomy 10:17. The supreme God; the God superior to all that is called God, or that is adored by

the nations of the earth; above all to whom the name God is ever applied.

For his mercy … - The ground of praise here is, that it is a characteristic of the supreme God that he is a merciful Being; that there is blended in his character eternal mercy with infinite power. Mere power might fill us with dread; power mingled with mercy, and able to carry out the purposes of mercy, must lay the foundation for praise.

Verse 3

O give thanks to the Lord of lords - The Lord or Ruler of all in authority - all kings, princes, rulers. He is supreme over all. This is an attribute of Divinity; yet this is ascribed to the Lord Jesus, thus proving that he is divine. See the notes at Revelation 19:16.

For his mercy … - The ground of praise here, as in the previous verse, is, that this God - the Supreme Ruler over all the potentates and magistrates of earth - is a merciful Being. He is kind and benignant toward those rulers, and through them to mankind.

Verse 4

To him who alone doeth great wonders - Miracles; marvelous things; things which spring from his direct and absolute power; things lying beyond the range of natural laws. See the notes at Psalm 72:18.

For his mercy … - For all these mighty wonders are performed in carrying out purposes of mercy. So the wonders which were done in Egypt were for the deliverance of an oppressed people; so the miracles performed by the Saviour and his apostles were to remove disease and pain, and to establish a religion of mercy; so the divine interpositions among the nations are to assert the principles of righteousness, to secure the reign of order and love, and to promote the welfare of mankind.

Verse 5

To him that by wisdom made the heavens - Made them in so wise a manner; where so much wisdom was manifested. See Proverbs 3:19; Proverbs 8:24-31.

For his mercy … - The making of the heavens was a manifestation of mercy and goodness as furnishing an abode for unfallen and holy beings; as a dwelling-place for redeemed sinners when they shall be removed there from the earth; and as, by their order, their beauty, their harmony, and their happy influences, tending to promote the happiness of man on earth.

Verse 6

To him that stretched out the earth above the waters - Genesis 1:1, Genesis 1:9; see the notes at Psalm 24:2.

For his mercy … - As an illustration of his benignity and kindness in preparing an abode for man, and for other creatures in the world. Whatever there is of life or happiness, on the continents and islands, has resulted from that act of God when "he made the dry land appear."

Verse 7

To him that made great lights - Genesis 1:14. The sun and the moon are here particularly referred to.

For his mercy … - As manifested in all that has followed from the creation and diffusion of light - (all the beauty in the universe as seen; all the life, beauty, and vigor in the vegetable and animal world; all that there is of life and happiness in the universe - for there could be neither if darkness reigned everywhere); light, the emblem of happiness; the source of joy; the producer, in a great measure, of the beauties of the universe, and the revealer of those beauties everywhere. How can a man think of light and not praise its Author?

Verse 8

The sun to rule by day - Genesis 1:16. Margin, as in Hebrew, for the ruling of the day. That is, to control, as it were, the day; to determine its length - its beginning - its ending - to make it what it is.

For his mercy … - By all the blessings of day as distinguished from night and darkness - by all that the sun in his daily course does to diffuse life, joy, peace, comfort, happiness on the earth - by all that are warmed by its beams, cheered by its light, guided in labor, guarded from dangers - do we derive an argument for the mercy of God; by all this there is laid a foundation for his praise.

Verse 9

The moon and stars to rule by night - Genesis 1:16.

For his mercy … - As a proof also of his benignity and mercy. By all the beauty of the moon and stars in their course through the heavens - by all that there is in the harmony and order of their movements - by all that there is to make night less hideous and fearful - by all that there is to reveal a countless number of worlds whose existence could not have been discovered but for the night - by all that there is to guide the mariner on the ocean, enabling him to determine his position and to mark his course when on the deep - and therefore by all the blessings of navigation and

commerce, binding the different parts of the world together, by all that there is in the "North-star," fixed and true in guiding those who flee from bondage - by all these and kindred things without number, do we see the benignity, the goodness, the mercy of God, in forming the moon and stars "to rule by night."

Verse 10

To him that smote Egypt in their first-born - Exodus 12:29. That is, he struck them down, or destroyed them, by his own direct power.

For his mercy … - It was in mercy to his people. It was the means of their deliverance from bondage, for the Egyptians would not otherwise have suffered them to depart. By all the results of their deliverance both to themselves and to mankind, the act was seen to be an act of mercy to the world. It was better for mankind that the Hebrews should be delivered even at this sacrifice than it would have been that they should not be brought into the promised land.

Verse 11

And brought Israel out from among them - From the land of Egypt. By all the wonders manifested in their deliverance, and in conducting them out of the land so that they should escape from their pursuers.

For his mercy … - His mercy in this respect was to be measured by all that there was of power in conducting them forth in safety, and by the results of it.

Verse 12

With a strong hand - A powerful hand; as by a hand that could grasp and subdue all that opposed.

And with a stretched-out arm - As if the arm were stretched out to strike with the utmost force, or to exert its utmost power. See Exodus 6:6; Deuteronomy 4:34; Deuteronomy 5:15; Deuteronomy 7:19; Deuteronomy 26:8; Jeremiah 32:21.

For his mercy … - The exertion of his power in delivering his people was the expression of a mercy, the consequences of which are to endure forever, for the results of that deliverance will never cease in the history of the world; will never cease in heaven.

Verse 13

To him which divided the Red sea into parts - More literally, "Parted it into parts;" made parts of that which before was unbroken and a whole. It

was actually divided into two parts, so that the Hebrews passed between them: Exodus 14:21-22.

For his mercy … - This, too, was an exercise of mercy, or a manifestation of benevolence toward them and toward the world, to be measured by all the good which would result from it in itself, and by all the power which was put forth to effect it.

Verse 14

And made Israel to pass through the midst of it - Exodus 14:29.

For his mercy … - The mercy manifested in keeping the waves from returning on them and overwhelming them.

Verse 15

But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea - Margin, as in Hebrew, shaked off. The word is applicable to a tree shaking off its foliage. Isaiah 33:9. The same word is used in Exodus 14:27: "And the Lord overthrew (Margin, shook off) the Egyptians in the midst of the sea," He shook them off as if he would no longer protect them. He left them to perish.

For his mercy … - Their destruction was done in mercy to his people and to the world, for it was the means of deliverance to Israel. The death of a wicked man is a benefit to the world, and the act of removing him may be really an act of the highest benevolence to mankind. No wrong is done to such people, for they deserve to die; and the only service which can be rendered to the world through them is by their removal from the earth.

Verse 16

To him which led his people through the wilderness - For all the manifestations of his care during a period of forty years.

For his mercy … - That is, his mercy was to be measured by all the protection extended over them; by all the provision made for their needs; by all that God did to defend them; by all his interposition when attacked by their enemies; by safely bringing them to the land to which he had promised to conduct them.

Verses 17-22

To him which smote great kings - On this passage see the notes at Psalm 135:10-12. There is little difference in the two places, except that here the statement is divided by the refrain, "For his mercy endureth forever." The idea in the whole passage, in view of the divine interposition in slaying the mighty kings, and in giving their land for a possession to the

Hebrew people, is, that it was a proof of mercy and benevolence. It is benevolence to mankind and to the church of God - it is in the interests of humanity, of domestic peace, and of the charities of life, to remove wicked people from the world. This mercy may be manifested further, not merely in removing the wicked, but in transferring their possessions to those who will make a better use of them. Thus the possessions of these mighty kings, Sihon and Og, were transferred to the people of God, and lands which had been devoted to the service of blood, ambition, crime, pollution, and idolatry, became devoted to the service of religion and righteousness. In like manner, through the removal of a wicked man from the world by death, God may cause his wealth, accumulated by avarice and dishonesty, to be transferred to the hands of children who will make a good use of it - children converted as if in anticipation of this, and with a view to this. Among the highest expressions of mercy to the world may be, therefore, the removal of wicked princes in war - or the removal of wicked people, in other ranks of life, by death in any form.

Verse 23

Who remembered us in our low estate - When we were few in number; when we were a feeble people; when we were a people unable to contend with such mighty foes.

For his mercy … - By all that he did for us when thus feeble; by all his power put forth to defend us from our enemies, he has showed his mercy and kindness to us and to the world.

Verse 24

And hath redeemed us from our enemies - Has rescued or delivered us from all our foes; has given to us freedom and peace.

For his mercy … - By all that he has done in order to redeem us; and by all the prosperity, happiness, and peace which have followed as the result of that, he has showed his mercy. So it is in the greater work of the redemption of the soul. By all the love manifested in the gift of a Saviour - by all the sufferings and toils of his life - by his "agony and bloody sweat" in the garden of Gethsemane - by his "cross and passion," by all the blessings of salvation here, all our peace, all our purity, all our consolations, all our hopes, and by all the glories of heaven hereafter - the mercy of God in our redemption is to be estimated and measured. Who can take the full account of it?

Verse 25

Who giveth food to all flesh - To all living things: all in the air, on the earth, in the waters. See the notes at Psalm 104:27-28; compare Psalm 115:16.

For his mercy … - All this is a proof of his benignity and kindness. To see this, it would be necessary to have a view of what is done every day in the providence of God to meet the needs of the countless multitudes thus dependent on him. Let it be remembered, also, that the needs of each insect, fowl, animal; fish, is to be provided for as an individual - and who can take in a full view of the care, the wisdom, the benevolence of what is done every day by the Father of all in providing for their needs? Let it be remembered, also, that this has been continned without ceasing from the foundation of the world, and will be demanded until its close, and then let us try to imagine what is necessary to be done to provide for the needs of all the dwellers in distant worlds - and who, in this view, can form any proper estimate of the wisdom and the goodness of God?

Verse 26

O give thanks unto the God of heaven - The God who reigns in heaven; whose home is heaven.

For his mercy … - In view of all this - of all that he does in heaven and on earth - let praise be ascribed to him. To know the measure of the praise due to him; to see how great is his "mercy," it would be necessary to know all that he does in heaven and on earth. That will not be known here. It will constitute the theme of contemplation and praise forever and ever. Enough, however, is known here to show the propriety of repeating again, again, and again, as in this psalm, the language, "For his mercy endureth forever;" "For his mercy endureth forever;" "For his mercy endureth forever."

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PSALM 137

Introduction

Though there is no title prefixed to this beautiful psalm, and no direct intimation as to the occasion on which it was composed, yet there can be no doubt as to the circumstances in which it was written. There is, indeed, no mention of the name of the author, and no possibility of recovering that name now, but there can be no doubt that it was composed by one of the exiles in Babylon - one who had witnessed and shared the sufferings of the exiles there, and who had also a lively recollection of the wrongs done to Jerusalem when it was attacked and destroyed by its foes. The writer was a Jew to the heart‘s core; an “Hebrew of the Hebrews;” embodying and expressing in this short psalm all that there was which was special in Hebrew feeling, patriotism, devotion. Nowhere else in a short compass is so much Judaism - so much Jewish piety - to be found concentrated as in this psalm. There is grief at their lonely and desolate condition in Babylon; profound and submissive silence in the midst of their troubles; indignation that they should be taunted and derided by their captors; a strong - earnest - supreme love for their native land; deep resentment at the remembrance of the many wrongs done to Jerusalem when it was destroyed; and an earliest invocation to God that he would remember those wrongs alike in relation to Edom and Babylon, and treat those wrong-doers as they deserved. It would seem most probable that the psalm was composed soon after the return from Babylon, and before the temple was finished - while the ruins of the city caused by the Edomites and Babylonians were visible everywhere. The combined remembrance of the insults in Babylon, and of the wrong done to the city at its capture, animates the poet, and fills his mind with this deep and burning indignation.

Verse 1

By the rivers of Babylon - The streams, the water-courses, the rivulets. There was properly only one river flowing through Babylon - the Euphrates; but the city was watered, as Damascus now is, by means of canals or water-courses cut from the main river, and conveying the water to different parts of the city. For a description of Babylon, see the introductory notes to Isaiah 13. If the reference here is to Babylon proper, or the city, the allusion would be to the Euphrates flowing through it; if to Babylonia, the allusion would be to the Euphrates, and the other rivers which watered the

country, as the Tigris, the Chaboras, and the Ulai. As it is most probable that the captive Hebrews were not scattered through the empire, but were concentrated in one or a few places, it is, perhaps, not improper to understand this of Babylon itself.

There we sat down - There we were sitting. Perhaps a little company of friends; perhaps those assembled for worship; perhaps those who happened to come together on some special occasion; or, perhaps, a poetic representation of the general condition of the Hebrew captives, as sitting and meditating on the desolations of their native land.

Yea, we wept - We sat there; we meditated; we wept. Our emotions overpowered us, and we poured forth tears. So now, there is a place in Jerusalem, at the southwest corner of the area on which the temple was built, where the Jews resort on set occasions to weep over the ruins of their city and nation.

When we remembered Zion - When we thought on our native land; its former glory; the wrongs done to it; the desolations there; when we thought of the temple in ruins, and our homes as devastated; when we thought of the happy days which we had spent there, and when we contrasted them with our condition now.

Verse 2

We hanged our harps upon the willows - The harps once used to accompany the songs of praise and the service of God in the temple; the harps with which they had sought to beguile their weary hours, and to console their sad spirits in their captivity. The word rendered "willows" - ערבים *ʿărâbiym* - used only in the plural, denotes the willow or osier, so called from its white, silvery leaves. Gesenius, Lexicon. Compare Isaiah 15:7. It is probable that the weeping willow - the willow with long pendulous branches - is here referred to. Trees in desert lands spring up along the courses of the streams, and appear, in the wide desolation, as long and waving lines of green wherever the rivers wind along. The course of a stream can thus be marked by the prolonged line of meandering green in the desert as far as the eye can reach. It has been objected to the statement here that the willow is not now found in the neighborhood of ancient Babylon, but that the palm is the only tree which grows there. I saw, however, in 1852, in James' Park in London, a willow-tree with a label on it, stating that it was taken from the site of ancient Babylon; and there seems no reason to doubt the correctness of the account. The willow may be less abundant

there now than it was in former times, as is true of the palm. tree in Palestine, but there is no reason to doubt that it grew there. All that the psalm, however, would necessarily demand in a fair interpretation would be that there should have been even a single clump of these trees planted there, under which a little band of exiles may have seated themselves when they gave utterance to the plaintive language of this psalm.

In the midst thereof - In the midst of Babylon; showing that this referred to the city proper. They could not sing, such was their grief, though they had their harps with them; and they hung them up, therefore, on the branches of the trees around them; or, poetically, they were as dumb as if they had hung up their harps there.

Verse 3

For there they that carried us away captive - The Babylonians.

Required of us a song - Asked of us a song. The word does not express the idea of compulsion or force. Margin, as in Hebrew, words of a song. Perhaps the idea is that they did not merely ask music, but they wished to hear the words - the songs themselves - in which they were accustomed to praise God. This may have been a taunt, and the request may have been in derision; or it may have been seriously, and with no desire to reproach them, or to add to their sorrows. We are not to impute bad motives to others where there is no evidence that there are any, and where the supposition of good motives will answer just as well; and the expression here may have been a kind and natural wish to hear the songs of these foreigners - songs of which they might have heard much by report; perhaps songs which they had overheard them singing when they were in a less desponding state of mind, and when they sought to comfort themselves by these ancient national melodies. As the only reason assigned for not complying with this request was that they could not "sing the Lord's song in a strange land" Psalm 137:3, we are rather led to infer that there was no bad motive - no disposition to taunt and ridicule them by the request that was made.

And they that wasted us - Margin, laid us on heaps. The Hebrew word means a tormentor; properly, one who extorts lamentation from others, or who causes them to howl - to wit, under oppression or wrong. The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate render it, "They who led us away." The general idea is, those under whom they were then suffering; or, who had caused these trials to come upon them.

Required of us mirth - literally, "Our tormentors, joy." The Hebrew word means joy; and the sense is, that they asked them to give the usual indications of joy and happiness - to wit, a song. The language means, "Cheer up; be happy; give us one of the beautiful songs which you were accustomed to sing in your own land." It may, indeed, have been in derision; but there is no proof that it was.

Saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion - The songs - the sacred hymns - which you were accustomed to sing in worship in your own land.

Verse 4

How shall we sing the Lord's song - The song designed to celebrate his praise; that is, appropriate to the worship of Yahweh.

In a strange land - Far from our home; far from the temple; exiles; captives: how can we find spirit in such circumstances to sing? How can we do that which would be indicative of what we do not feel, and cannot feel - joy and happiness! The idea is not that those psalms or songs would be profaned by being sung there, or that there would be anything improper in itself in singing them, but that it would be misplaced and incongruous to sing them in their circumstances. It would be doing violence to their own feelings; their feelings would not allow them to do it. There are states of mind when the language of joy is appropriate and natural; there are states where the heart is so sad that it cannot sing.

Verse 5

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem - The meaning here is, that to sing in such circumstances would seem to imply that they had forgotten Jerusalem; that they were unmindful of its sorrows, and cared not that it was desolate. The remembrance of its calamities pressed hard upon them, and they could not do anything which would seem to imply that they had become unmindful of the sufferings that had come upon their nation. One will not make merry when a wife or child lies dying - or on the day of the funeral - or over the grave of a mother. A joyous and brilliant party, accompanied with music, feasting, dancing, when a friend has been just laid in the grave, when the calamities of war are abroad, when the pestilence is raging in a city, we feel to be untimely, unseemly, and incongruous. So these captives said it would be if they should make merry while their temple was in ruins; while their city was desolate; while their people were captives in a foreign land.

Let my right hand forget her cunning - Let my right hand forget its skill in music - all its skill. If I should now play on the harp - as indicative

of joy - let the hand which would be employed in sweeping over its strings become paralyzed and powerless. Let the punishment come where it would seem to be deserved - on the hand which could play at such a time. So Cranmer held the hand which had been employed in signing a recantation of his faith in the fire, until it was burned off, and dropped in the flames.

Verse 6

If I do not remember thee - Equivalent to, "If I forget thee." If I ever fail to remember thee; if I shall ever act as if I had forgotten thee. Singing in a strange land, among those who had perpetrated such wrongs in thee - appearing to be happy, cheerful, joyous, happy, merry there - would be understood to imply that I had ceased to remember thee, and cared nothing for thee.

Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth - Compare Ezekiel 3:26. Let me be unable to speak; let my tongue be as it were attached to the upper part of the mouth, so that it could not be used. If I employ it in an unworthy purpose - in any way whereby it can be inferred that I have ceased to remember my native land, and the city of our solemnities, let my tongue be ever after useless. This language is often employed by Virgil: Vox faucibus haesit.

If I prefer not Jerusalem - literally, "If I do not cause to ascend." That is, If I do not exalt Jerusalem in my estimation above everything that gives me pleasure; if I do not find my supreme happiness in that.

Above my chief joy - Margin, as in Hebrew, the head of my joy. The chief thing which gives me joy; as the head is the chief, or is supreme over the body. This is expressive of a great truth in regard to religion. Anything else - everything else - is to be sooner sacrificed than that. The happiness which is found in religion is superior to that found in every other source of enjoyment, and is preferred to every other. If either is to be sacrificed - the joy of religion, or the pleasure derived from society, from the frivolous world, from literature, from music, from dancing, from works of art - it will be the latter and not the former. There are other sources of joy which are not in any way inconsistent with religion: the joy of friendship; of domestic life; of honorable pursuits of the esteem of people. So of music, the arts, gardens, literature, science. But when one interferes with the other, or is inconsistent with the other, the joy of the world is to be sacrificed to the joy of religion. When the joy of religion is sacrificed for the joy of the world, it

proves that there is no true piety in the soul. Religion, if it exists at all, will always be supreme.

Verse 7

Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom - The Edomites; the people of Idumea. On the situation of Edom or Idumea, see introductory notes to Isaiah 34.

In the day of Jerusalem - In the day when Jerusalem shall be restored; in the day when punishment shall be inflicted on the nations that destroyed it; then, do not forget the Edomites, who took so large and so active a part in its overthrow. This is to be understood as a continued "remembrance" of Zion; as a purpose not to "forget" Jerusalem. The psalmist, representing the feelings of the captives in Babylon, says, that so far from doing anything which would imply a forgetfulness of their native land - as singing cheerful songs there might be understood to be, they would do everything to call Jerusalem to remembrance. They would remember her former splendor; they would remember her desolations; they would go further - they would not forget those who had brought these calamities upon her; those who had done most for her overthrow. As among the most prominent, they would remember particularly the ancient; enemies of their nation - the Edomites - who had been among the most active in its destruction, and who had united with the Babylonians in the work of ruin. They would remember all this; and they prayed God that he also would remember the desolation itself, and all the actors in that work of desolation.

Who said - Implying that they had been associated with the Babylonians in the destruction of the city. On the hostility of that people to the Hebrews, and the grounds of their hostility - and on their agency as united with the Babylonians in destroying Jerusalem, and the divine vengeance threatened them on that account - see, as above, the introduction to Isaiah 34.

Rase it, rase it - Margin, as in Hebrew, make bare. That is, Strip it of everything - temple, houses, ornaments, fountains - and leave it a bare and naked rock. Let nothing remain but the rocks - the foundations - on which it is built. In the history of the Edomites, as stated in the introduction to Isaiah 34, there were abundant facts to show that they were particularly zealous and active in seeking the destruction of the hated city. This verse and the one following constitute a portion of the "imprecatory" Psalms; of those which seem to cry for vengeance, and to manifest a revengeful and

unforgiving spirit; the portion of the Psalms which has been regarded as so difficult to be reconciled with the forgiving spirit enjoined in the gospel. On this subject, see the General Introduction, Section 6.

Verse 8

O daughter of Babylon - That is, Babylon itself; the city of Babylon. On the word "daughter" as thus used, see the notes at Isaiah 1:8.

Who art to be destroyed - Certainly to be destroyed; of whose destruction there are fixed and absolute prophecies. See the notes at Isaiah 13:19-22.

Happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us - Margin, that recompenseth unto thee thy deed which thou didst to us. Literally, "Happy shall he be who shall repay to thee the recompence which thou hast recompensed unto us." The idea is, who shall repay thee for thy treatment of us; or, as we should say in common language, "Who shall pay thee back?" That is, he will be esteemed a fortunate man who is made the instrument of inflicting deserved punishment on a city so guilty and so cruel. He will acquire fame and honor by doing it; his name will be made known abroad and perpetuated among people. In fact, the name of Cyrus, who conquered Babylon, is among the names of the most celebrated of conquerors; and the manner in which he took Babylon and overthrew the government and kingdom, has given him a most eminent place among successful princes and conquerors.

Verse 9

Happy shall he be that taketh … - Margin, as in Hebrew, rock. This refers to what was not uncommon in ancient warfare, as it is now among savage tribes - the indiscriminate slaughter of those of all ages, and of both sexes, in war. It was expressly foretold of Babylon that this would occur (see Isaiah 13:16, and the notes at that place), and there may be a reference here to that prediction, and the psalmist may mean to say that the man would be accounted happy, or would be happy, who wreaked vengeance on Babylon in carrying out that prophecy. The idea is, "This will certainly occur, for it is foretold, and happy or fortunate will he be who is the instrument in fulfilling it." Compare 2 Kings 8:12; Nahum 3:10; Hosea 13:16. See also Homer, II xxii. 63,373, following It is impossible to reconcile such barbarous customs with the idex of "honorable war," or with the principles of war as carried on among "civilized" nations now.

It should be added, however, that there is much - very much - that is practiced in war by “civilized” nations still, which it is equally impossible to reconcile with any just notions of morality or humanity, and which in coming ages, and when people shall come to view things aright, will seem to the people of those times to be not less monstrous, strange, and barbarous. In regard to this passage, we are not necessarily to suppose that the author of the psalm approved of this, or desired it, or prayed for it. He looked forward to the fulfillment of a prediction; he saw that a just and terrible judgment would certainly come upon Babylon; he expressed that in the common language of the times, and states the manner in which it would occur; he described the feelings - the gratification - of those who would execute the divine purpose in the overthrow of Babylon; he referred to the estimate in which the conqueror would be held by people, and the glory of the achievement as giving him fame among people.

It must be admitted that the feelings of the author of the psalm appear to accord with this; that he considers it proper that the city should be destroyed; and that he regards its overthrow as a righteous judgment, and as a thing to be desired in the divine administration. It is true that he might approve of such an overthrow, and see it to be right - he might describe the feelings of those by whom it would be done, their joy, their exultation, and even their barbarity, without himself approving of their barbarity, or sympathizing with their feelings, or partaking of their spirit; but still it cannot in fairness be denied that there is an apparent approval of the act here referred to, which savors more of imprecation than forgiveness, and which is apparently prompted more by the spirit of revenge than by a desire of just punishment. On this subject, however, see the General Introduction, Section 6 (4); and the notes at Psalm 109:10. A correct record may be made, whether of facts or of feelings, without any design of expressing either approbation or disapprobation on the part of the historian, the prophet, or the poet.

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PSALM 138

Introduction

This is the first of a series of eight psalms Psalm 138:3, Psalm 138:7, and it expresses confidence that God would interpose in the future in behalf of the author, as he had done in the past; and it is, therefore, adapted to inspire confidence and hope in all who are called to pass through scenes of trial. The psalm does not admit of any particular analysis.

Verse 1

I will praise thee with my whole heart - Reserving nothing m my heart to give to idols or to other gods. All that constitutes praise to God as God, he would address to him alone. He would use no language, and cherish no feeling, which implied a belief that there was any other God; he would indulge in no attachment which would be inconsistent with supreme attachment to God, or which would tend to draw away his affections from him. See the notes at Psalm 9:1.

Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee - The idols; all idols; in preference to them all. This does not mean that he would do this in the presence of other gods; but that Yahweh should be acknowledged to be God in preference to any or all of them.

Verse 2

I will worship - I will bow down and adore.

Toward thy holy temple - See the notes at Psalm 5:7. The word temple here undoubtedly refers to the tabernacle.

And praise thy name for thy loving-kindness - Praise thee for thy benignity; thy mercy; thy benevolence.

And for thy truth - Thy truthfulness; thy faithfulness to thy promises.

For thou hast magnified thy word - Thou hast made it great. Compare Isaiah 42:21. The reference here is to the promises of God, and especially to the promise which God had made to David that the Messiah would descend from him. Compare Psalm 19:1-14. There are very many points in relation to God, of the highest interest to mankind, on which the disclosures of science shed no light; there are many things which it is desirable for man to know, which calmer be learned in the schools of philosophy; there are consolations which man needs in a world of trouble which cannot be found in nature; there is especially a knowledge of the method by which sin may be pardoned, and the soul saved, which can never be disclosed by the blow-

pipe, the telescope, or the microscope. These things, if learned at all must be learned from revelation, and these are of more importance to man as a traveler to another world than all the learning which can be acquired in the schools of philosophy - valuable as that learning is.

Verse 3

In the day when I cried - Referring to some former period of his life when he was in trouble.

Thou answeredst me - In the very day when I called, thou gavest me the answer: that is, immediately.

And strengthenedst me with strength in my soul - literally, "Thou didst embolden - or, didst make me courageous with strength." Thou didst enable me to meet danger, and to overcome fear. It would seem probable that this was on some occasion when he was in danger from his enemies.

Verse 4

All the kings of the earth shall praise thee … - That is, kings, princes, and rulers shall learn the words of promise; shall be made acquainted with the words which thou hast graciously spoken, and with their fulfillment, and shall be led to praise thee. This refers to a time, of which frequent prophetic mention is made in the Scriptures, when kings and rulers shall be converted to the true religion, and when they shall act an important part, by their example and influence, in maintaining and diffusing it. Compare Psalm 68:31-32; Isaiah 49:23.

Verse 5

Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord - In the ways which God has appointed. They shall join with all that love him - with the humblest of the people - in acknowledging God. Kings and people shall thus bow before God in common acts of praise, and as being on the same level before him. As people, as sinners, as redeemed, as traveling to the grave, they are all alike before God.

For great is the glory of the Lord - Great is his character; great his dignity; great his honor; and all this will be seen to be so when those of most exalted rank thus worship and adore him. The most lofty on earth shall acknowledge that there is one who is more exalted than they are, and their own dignity and splendor shall thus contribute to deepen the impression of the honor and glory of God.

Verse 6

Though the Lord be high - This might be rendered "For lofty is Yahweh - and the humble he sees - and the proud he knows from afar." The idea is, that God - so high and exalted - sees and knows all of every rank among people. The mind of the psalmist had been impressed with a sense of the greatness and majesty of God, but (as if it might be said that one so great could not regard man, so humble and insignificant) he adds, that the fact of God's exaltation does not prevent his noticing the affairs of people: that the lowly in life need not fear lest they should be overlooked; the proud need not hope that they will escape the notice of his eye.

Yet hath he respect unto the lowly - Those in humble life; the obscure; the unknown. It does not mean here that he has any special favor toward them, but merely that he sees them. Their low and obscure condition does not prevent his observing them, and they need have no fear that he will overlook them, or that they will be forgotten. Compare the notes at James 4:6; notes at 1 Peter 5:5.

But the proud - Those of lofty rank, and of lofty feelings; the haughty.

He knoweth afar off - From afar. Though he is exalted - though he is in heaven - yet he is not so far removed but that he sees them, and knows them altogether. Distance from him is no protection for them; nor can the wicked hope to escape notice from the fact that God reigns over distant worlds.

Verse 7

Though I walk in the midst of trouble - Though I am in the low vale of sorrow, I shall not be overlooked or forgotten. This implies that the writer was then in trouble, and it expresses the conviction that whenever he should be in trouble God would remember him, and give him life and strength.

Thou wilt revive me - Thou wilt cause me to live; thou wilt give me life. Psalm 30:3. Compare the notes at Psalm 71:20. The meaning is, Thou wilt give me life - vigor - strength - to bear the trouble.

Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand - As one does when he is about to inflict a blow.

Against the wrath of mine enemies … - In reference to all their attempts to destroy me. Thou wilt meet their wrath by thy power, and I shall be safe.

Verse 8

The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me - He will complete what he has begun. He will not begin to interpose in my behalf, and then abandon me. He will not promise to save me, and then fail to fulfill his

promise. He will not encourage me, and then cast me off. So of us. He will complete what he begins. He will not convert a soul, and then leave it to perish. “Grace will complete what grace begins.” See the notes at Philemon 1:6.

Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever - See the notes at Psalm 136:1.

Forsake not the works of thine own hands - What thou hast made; what thou hast begun to do. Do not leave me to perish. Prayer is one of the means - and an essential means - by which the saints are to be kept unto salvation. The doctrine of the “perseverance of the saints.” is not inconsistent with prayer, but rather prompts to it; and he who professes to rely on that doctrine, and feels so safe that he does not need to pray, and does not pray, gives certain evidence that he has never been converted, and has no true religion.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 139

Introduction

This psalm purports to be a psalm of David, and there is no reason to doubt that it is properly attributed to him. See introduction to Psalm 138:1-8. At what time it was composed is, however, unknown. It contains reflections which might have occurred at any period of his life; yet it would seem most probable that it was not written in his early years, but that it is a record of his most mature thoughts on a great and very important subject.

The psalm relates to the omnipresence of God, and contains such reflections as would occur to one meditating on that attribute of the Deity. It is the most distinct and full statement of that doctrine which is to be found in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the doctrine is presented in language which has never been surpassed for sublimity and beauty. The leading idea in the psalm seems to be that of comfort from the fact that God is everywhere; that he knows all that pertains to us; that we can never be hidden from his view; that he has known us from the beginning; that as he fashioned and formed us - making us what we are - he knows all our necessities, and can supply them. The psalm consists of three parts:

I. A celebration of the Omniscience and Omnipresence of God, as a ground of confidence and hope, Psalm 139:1-6.

(b) The fact that he is everywhere present, Psalm 139:7-12.

(c) The fact that all in our past life has been known to God; that he has created us, and that his eye has been upon us from the beginning of our existence, Psalm 139:13-16.

(d) The fact that his thoughts toward us are precious, and numberless as the sand, Psalm 139:17-18.

II. The feelings of the psalmist in relation to the acts of the wicked as a proof that he loved God, Psalm 139:19-22. These reflections seem to have sprung from his contemplation of the divine character and perfections, as leading him to hate all that was opposed to a Being so pure, so benevolent, so holy. On looking into his own heart, in view of what God was, he was conscious that he had no sympathy with the enemies of God as such; that

such was his love for the character of God, and such his confidence in him, that he could have nothing in common with them in their feelings toward God, but wished to be dissociated from them forever.

III. The expression of a desire that, as God saw all the recesses of the human soul, he would search his heart, and would detect any evil he might see there, and deliver him from the evil, and lead him in the way which conducted to life eternal, Psalm 139:23-24. Anyone may feel, and must feel, that after all which he knows of himself - after all the effort which he makes to ascertain what is within his heart - there are depths there which his eye cannot penetrate, and that there may be sins of thought and feeling there which he has not detected; but it is only from the consciousness of sincerity, and a true desire to honor God, that one can pray that God would search him, and that he would detect and bring out every form of sin which he may see concealed and lurking in the soul He who can sincerely offer this prayer is a pious man.

Verse 1

O Lord, thou hast searched me - The word rendered searched, has a primary reference to searching the earth by boring or digging, as for water or metals. See Job 28:3. Then it means to search accurately or closely.

And known me - As the result of that search, or that close investigation. Thou seest all that is in my heart. Nothing is, or can be, concealed from thee. It is with this deep consciousness that the psalm begins; and all that follows is but an expansion and application of this idea. It is of much advantage in suggesting right reflections on our own character, to have this full consciousness that God knows us altogether; that he sees all that there is in our heart; that he has been fully acquainted with our past life.

Verse 2

Thou knowest my downsitting … - In the various circumstances of life, thou knowest me. Thou knowest me in one place as well as in another. I cannot so change my position that thou will not see me, and that thou wilt not be perfectly acquainted with all that I say, and all that I do. In every posture, in every movement, in every occupation, thou hast a full knowledge of me. I cannot go out of thy sight; I cannot put myself into such a position that thou wilt not see me.

Thou understandest my thought - Hebrew, "As to my thought." That is, Thou seest what my plans are; what I design to do; "what I am thinking

about." A most solemn reflection! How unwilling would bad people be - would even good people be - to have those round about them know always "what they are thinking about."

Afar off - Not when the "thought" is far off; but "thou," being far off, seest us as clearly as if thou wert near. I cannot go to such a distance from thee that thou wilt not see perfectly all that I am thinking about.

Verse 3

Thou compassest my path ... - Margin, "winnowest." The Hebrew word - זרה *zârâh* - means properly "to scatter," to cast loosely about - as the wind does dust; and then, to winnow - to wit, by throwing grain, when it is thrashed, up to the wind: Isaiah 30:24; Jeremiah 4:11; Rth 3:2 . Then it means "to winnow out;" that is, to winnow out all the chaff, and to leave all the grain - to save all that is valuable. So here it means that God, as it were, "sifted" him. Compare Isaiah 30:28; Amos 9:9; Luke 22:31. He scattered all that was chaff, or all that was valueless, and saw what there was that was real and substantial. When it is said that he did this in his "path and his lying down," it is meant that he did it in every way; altogether; entirely.

And art acquainted with all my ways - All the paths that I tread; the whole course of my life. All that I do, in all places and at all times, is fully known to thee.

Verse 4

For there is not a word in my tongue - All that I say; all that I have power to say; all that I am disposed at any time to say.

But lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether - All that pertains to it. What is "said," and what is "meant." Merely to "hear" what is spoken does not imply necessarily a full knowledge of what is said - for it may be false, insincere, hypocritical. God knows exactly what is said and what is "meant."

Verse 5

Thou hast beset me behind and before - The word rendered "beset" - צור *tsûr* - means properly to press; to press upon; to compress. It has reference commonly to the siege of a city, or to the pressing on of troops in war; and then it comes to mean to besiege, hem in, closely surround, so that there is no way of escape. This is the idea here - that God was on every side of him; that he could not escape in any direction. He was like a garrison besieged in a city so that there was no means of escape. There is a transition here (not an unnatural one), from the idea of the Omniscience of God to that

of His Omnipresence, and the remarks which follow have a main reference to the latter.

And laid thine hand upon me - That is, If I try to escape in any direction I find thine band laid upon me there. Escape is impossible.

Verse 6

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me - literally, "Wonderful knowledge away from me," or, more than I can comprehend. It is beyond my reach; it surpasses all my powers to comprehend it.

It is high, I cannot attain unto it - It is so exalted that I cannot grasp it; I cannot understand how it can be.

Verse 7

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? - Where shall I go where thy spirit is not; that is, where thou art not; where there is no God. The word "spirit" here does not refer particularly to the Holy Spirit, but to God "as" a spirit. "Whither shall I go from the all-pervading Spirit - from God, considered as a spirit?" This is a clear statement that God is a "Spirit" (compare John 4:24); and that, as a spirit, he is Omnipresent.

Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? - Hebrew, From his face; that is, where he will not be, and will not see me. I cannot find a place - a spot in the universe, where there is not a God, and the same God. Fearful thought to those that hate him - that, much as they may wish or desire it, they can never find a place where there is not a holy God! Comforting to those that love him - that they will never be where they may not find a God - their God; that nowhere, at home or abroad, on land or on the ocean, on earth or above the stars, they will ever reach a world where they will not be in the presence of that God - that gracious Father - who can defend, comfort, guide, and sustain them.

Verse 8

If I ascend up into heaven - The word "heaven" here, in the original is in the plural number - "heavens," - and includes all that there is above the earth - the highest worlds.

If I make my bed - Properly, "If I strew or spread my couch." If I should seek that as the place where to lie down.

In hell - Hebrew, "Sheol." See the notes at Isaiah 14:9, where the word is fully explained. The word here refers to the under-world - the abodes of the dead; and, in the apprehension of the psalmist, corresponds in depth with the word "heaven" in height. The two represent all worlds, above and

below; and the idea is, that in neither direction, above or below, could he go where God would not be.

Thou art there - Or, more emphatically and impressively in the original, "Thou!" That is, the psalmist imagines himself in the highest heaven, or in the deepest abodes of the dead - and lo! God is there also! he has not gone from "him"! he is still in the presence of the same God!

Verse 9

If I take the wings of the morning - literally, "I will take the wings of the morning." That is, I will take this as a supposable case; I will imagine what would occur, should I be able to take to myself the wings of the morning, and endeavor to escape "by flight" from the presence of God, or go where he could not pursue me, or where he would not be. The "wings of the morning" evidently mean that by which the light of the morning "seems to fly" - the most rapid object known to us. It is not to be supposed that the psalmist had an idea of the exact velocity of light, but to him that was the most rapid object known; and his language is not the "less" striking because the laws of its flight have become accurately known. The word rendered "morning" refers to the dawn - the daybreak - the Aurora - the "first" beams of the morning light. The beams of light are in fact no swifter then than at any other time of the day, but they seem to be swifter, as they so quickly penetrate the darkness.

And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea - The end of the sea; that is, the "west," as the sea referred to undoubtedly is the Mediterranean, which was west of Palestine, and which became another name for the west. The idea is, that if he could fly with the rapidity of light, and could be in an instant over the sea, even beyond its remotest border, still God would be there before him. He could not escape from the divine presence.

Verse 10

Even there shall thy hand lead me - I shall find thee there; thy hand would be upon me; I should not have gone from thy presence.

And thy right hand shall hold me - Still hold me; still be laid upon me. I should find myself there, as certainly as here, in thy hand; and in the same sense - either to seize upon me if I went astray, or to protect me, if obedient, supported by thee in all the perils of the flight. God, still the same - the same in all respects - would be with me there as he is here.

Verse 11

If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me - If I seek to find refuge in the darkness of the night so that God would not see me. The word rendered "cover" - שׁוּף *shûph* - means properly to snap, to gape after; then, to lie in wait for; and then, to attack, or fall upon anyone, unexpectedly. It is rendered "bruise" (twice) in Genesis 3:15, "He shall "bruise" thy head, and thou shalt "bruise" his heel;" "breaketh" in Job 9:17, "He "breaketh" me with a tempest;" and in this place "cover." It does not occur elsewhere. Here it means to fall upon; to overpower; to cover. The idea is, If it should come suddenly upon me; if I should be involved in sudden darkness - "as if" the darkness should come and attempt to "snatch" me away from God. All this would be in vain, for it would be, so far as God is concerned, bright day around me.

Even the night shall be light about me - In respect to me. It shall be as if I stood in the full blaze of light. God can see me still; he can mark my goings; he can perceive all that I do as plainly then as at mid-day. This "is" so: and what a thought this is for a wicked man who seeks to escape detection in his crimes by perpetrating them in the night! What a thought for a good man, that in the darkest night of sorrow, when there seems to be nothing but deep midnight, when there appears to be not a ray of light in his dwelling, or on his path that all to the eye of God is as clear as noon-day! For in that night of sorrow God sees him as plainly as in the brightest days of prosperity and joy.

Verse 12

Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee - Margin, as in Hebrew, "darkeneth not." Darkness does not make darkness to thee. It makes things dark to us; not to him. So it is in natural darkness; so in moral darkness ness. It seems dark to us; it is not so to him. Things appear dark to us - disappointment, bereavement, trouble, care, losses; but all is light to God. The existence of sin and suffering on the earth seems dark to us; not to him, for he sees the reasons and the end of all.

But the night shineth as the day - One is as bright and clear to him as the other.

The darkness and the light are both alike to thee - Margin, as in Hebrew, "As is the darkness so is the light." To thee there is no difference. All is light.

Verse 13

For thou hast possessed my reins - The word here rendered "possessed" means properly to "set upright," to "erect," and hence, the derivative of the verb is applied to a cane or reed, as being erect. Then the word means to found, to create, Genesis 14:19, Genesis 14:22 - as the heavens and the earth; and then, to get, to gain, to purchase, etc. Here the word seems to be used in its original sense, to make, create, etc. The idea is, not as in our translation, that God "possessed" or "owned" them but that he had "made" them, and that, "therefore," he knew all about them. The word "reins" means literally the "kidneys;" and then, it comes to denote the inward part, the mind, the soul, the seat of the desires, affections, and passions. Jeremiah 11:20. See Psalm 7:9, note; Job 19:27, note. The meaning here is, that God had made him; that the innermost recesses of his being had been constituted as they are by God; and that, "therefore," he must be able to see all that there is in the very depths of the soul, however it may be hidden from the eye of man.

Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb - The word here rendered "cover" means properly to interweave; to weave; to knit together, and the literal translation would be, "Thou hast "woven" me in my mother's womb, meaning that God had put his parts together, as one who weaves cloth, or who makes a basket. So it is rendered by DeWette and by Gesenius (Lexicon). The original word has, however, also the idea of protecting, as in a booth or hut, woven or knit together - to wit, of boughs and branches. The former signification best suits the connection; and then the sense would be, that as God had made him - as he had formed his members, and united them in a bodily frame and form before he was born - he must be able to understand all his thoughts and feelings. As he was not concealed from God before he saw the light, so he could not be anywhere.

Verse 14

I will praise thee - I will not merely admire what is so great and marvelous, but I will acknowledge thee in a public manner as wise, and holy, and good: as entitled to honor, love, and gratitude.

For I am fearfully and wonderfully made - The word rendered "fearfully" means properly "fearful things;" things suited to produce fear or reverence. The word rendered "wonderfully made" means properly to distinguish; to separate. The literal translation of this - as near as can be given - would be, "I am distinguished by fearful things;" that is, by things in my creation which are suited to inspire awe. I am distinguished among

thy works by things which tend to exalt my ideas of God, and to fill my soul with reverent and devout feelings. The idea is, that he was "distinguished" among the works of creation, or so "separated" from other things in his endowments as to work in the mind a sense of awe. He was made different from inanimate objects, and from the brute creation; he was "so" made, in the entire structure of his frame, as to fill the mind with wonder. The more anyone contemplates his own bodily formation, and becomes acquainted with the anatomy of the human frame, and the more he understands of his mental organization, the more he will see the force and propriety of the language used by the psalmist.

Marvellous are thy works - Fitted are they to excite wonder and admiration. The particular reference here is to his own formation; but the same remark may be made of the works of God in general.

And that my soul knoweth right well - Margin, as in Hebrew, "greatly." I am fully convinced of it. I am deeply impressed by it. We can see clearly that the works of God are "wonderful," even if we can understand nothing else about them.

Verse 15

My substance was not hid from thee - Thou didst see it; thou didst understand it altogether, when it was hidden from the eyes of man. The word "substance" is rendered in the margin, "strength" or "body." The Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, the Syriac, the Arabic, and Luther render it, "my bone," or "my bones." The word properly means strength, and then anything strong. Another form of the word, with different pointing in the Hebrew, means a bone, so called from its strength. The allusion here is to the bodily frame, considered as strong, or as that which has strength. Whatever there was that entered into and constituted the vigor of his frame, the psalmist says, was seen and known by God, even in its commencement, and when most feeble. Its capability to become strong - feeble as it then was - could not even at that time be concealed or hidden from the view of God.

When I was made in secret - In the womb; or, hidden from the eye of man. Even then thine eye saw me, and saw the wondrous process by which my members were formed.

And curiously wrought. - Literally, "embroidered." The Hebrew word - רקם *râqam* - means to deck with color, to variegate. Hence, it means to variegate a garment; to weave with threads of various colors. With us the idea of embroidering is that of working various colors on a cloth by a

needle. The Hebrew word, however, properly refers to the act of "weaving in" various threads - as now in weaving carpets. The reference here is to the various and complicated tissues of the human frame - the tendons, nerves, veins, arteries, muscles, "as if" they had been woven, or as they appear to be curiously interweaved. No work of tapestry can be compared with this; no art of man could "weave" together such a variety of most tender and delicate fibres and tissues as those which go to make up the human frame, even if they were made ready to his hand: and who but God could "make" them? The comparison is a most beautiful one; and it will be admired the more, the more man understands the structure of his own frame.

In the lowest parts of the earth - Wrought in a place as dark, as obscure, and as much beyond the power of human observation as though it had been done low down beneath the ground where no eye of man can penetrate. Compare the notes at Job 28:7-8.

Verse 16

Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect - This whole verse is very obscure, but the "idea" in this expression clearly is, "Before I had shape or form thou didst see what I was to be." The single word in the original translated "my substance, yet being unperfect," is גלם *gôlem* It occurs only in this place, though the verb - גלם *gâlam* - is found in 2 Kings 2:8, where it is used in reference to the mantle of Elijah: And Elijah took his mantle, and "wrapped it together," etc. That is, he rolled it up, or he folded it. The noun, then, means that which "is" rolled or wrapped together; that which is folded up, and hence, is applicable to anything folded up or undeveloped; and would thus most aptly denote the embryo, or the foetus, where all the members of the body are as yet folded up, or undeveloped; that is, before they have assumed their distinct form and proportions. This is undoubtedly the idea here. Before the embryo had any such form that its future size, shape, or proportions could be marked by the eye of man, it was clearly and distinctly known by God.

And in thy book - Where thou recordest all things. Perhaps the allusion here would be to the book of an architect or draftsman, who, before his work is begun, draws his plan, or sketches it for the direction of the workmen.

All my members were written - The words "my members" are not in the original. The Hebrew is, as in the margin, "all of them." The reference may be, not to the members of his body, but to his "days" (see the margin

on the succeeding phrase) - and then the sense would be, all my "days," or all the periods of my life, were delineated in thy book. That is, When my substance - my form - was not yet developed, when yet an embryo, and when nothing could be determined from that by the eye of man as to what I was to be, all the future was known to God, and was written down - just what should be my form and vigor; how long I should live; what I should be; what would be the events of my life.

Which in continuance were fashioned - Margin, "What days they should be fashioned." Literally, "Days should be formed." DeWette renders this, "The days were determined before any one of them was." There is nothing in the Hebrew to correspond with the phrase "in continuance." The simple idea is, The days of my life were determined on, the whole matter was fixed and settled, not by anything seen in the embryo, but "before" there was any form - before there were any means of judging from what I then was to what I would be - all was seen and arranged in the divine mind.

When as yet there was none of them - literally, "And not one among them." Before there was one of them in actual existence. Not one development had yet occurred from which it could be inferred what the rest would be. The entire knowledge on the subject must have been based on Omniscience.

Verse 17

How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! - On the word "thoughts," see the notes at Psalm 139:2. Compare Psalm 139:23. The remark is made here doubtless in view of the numberless "thoughts" involved in planning and forming a frame so wondrous, and in the care necessary to bring it to perfection; to develop it; to provide for it; to guard and defend it. How many "thoughts" of a parent are employed in behalf of his children, in providing for them; teaching them; counseling them; anticipating their needs. How manymore thoughts are needful on the part of God in reference to each one of us: for there are numberless things necessary for us which cannot occupy the mind of a parent, since he cannot accomplish these things for us; they do not lie within his province, or in his power.

How great is the sum of them - literally, "How strong are the heads of them." That is, The heading of them, or the summing of them up, would be a task beyond the power of man. And who "could" estimate the number of the "thoughts" necessarily bestowed on himself by his Maker in all the care

exercised over him; all the arrangements for his development and growth; all that is done to defend him from danger; all that is indispensable in providing for his needs; all that was necessary to secure the salvation of his soul! See the notes at Psalm 40:5.

Verse 18

If I should count them - If I could count them.

They are more in number than the sand - Numberless as the sand on the sea-shore.

When I awake, I am still with thee - When I am lost in deep and profound meditation on this subject, and am aroused again to consciousness, I find the same thing still true. The fact of "my" being forgetful, or lost in profound meditation, has made no difference with thee. Thou art still the same; and the same unceasing care, the same thoughtfulness, still exists in regard to me. Or, the meaning may be, sleeping or waking with me, it is still the same in regard to thee. Thine eyes never close. When mine are closed in sleep, thou art round about me; when I awake from that unconscious state, I find the same thing existing still. I have been lost in forgetfulness of thee in my slumbers; but thou hast not forgotten me. There has been no change - no slumbering - with thee.

Verse 19

Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God - Compare the notes at Isaiah 11:4. The literal translation of this would be, "If thou wilt slay the wicked." It is not easy to account for the sudden and remarkable transition or diversion of the train of thought from the main subject of the psalm, in these verses Psalm 139:19-22, in which the psalmist gives vent to his feelings toward the wicked, and prays that they may depart from him. Perhaps the explanation of it may be, that as the psalmist was reflecting on the fact that God is everywhere present, that he searches the hearts of people, that he must know all their conduct, he was suddenly struck with the idea of the condition of wicked people in the presence, and under the eye, of such a Being. As God knows all things, he must know them; and this instantaneously suggested the idea of their guilt and danger. People of such characters could not deceive such a God. They could not but be known to him, and could not but be objects of his aversion. They could not, therefore, but be in danger.

Depart from me, therefore, ye bloody men - See Psalm 119:115. The Hebrew is, "Men of bloods;" that is, men who shed blood. The language is

used to denote wicked men in general. The idea here is not that the psalmist was in danger from them at that time, but that he desired to be separate from that class of people; he did not wish to be ranked with them, to partake of their conduct, or to share in their fate. He had no sympathy with them, and he desired to be separate from them altogether.

Verse 20

For they speak against thee wickedly - This is one form or manifestation of their character as wicked people, that they speak maliciously against God. The psalmist, therefore, desired to have nothing to do with them. It is always a sufficient reason for avoiding the society, the friendship, and the fellowship of others, when they profane, blaspheme, or calumniate the name of God. From such men we should at once withdraw. Piety shrinks from the society of such men, whatever may be their rank, or their social qualities, and turns away in pain, in sorrow, in abhorrence. See the notes at Psalm 26:9.

And thine enemies take thy name in vain - It is proof that they are thine enemies that they take thy name in vain, or that they are profane men; it is a sufficient reason for desiring to be separated from them.

Verse 21

Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? - This is in the consciousness of the psalmist a proof of his own real piety, as derived from his feelings toward those who were the enemies of God. The word hate here, as applied to them, must be understood in the sense that he disapproved of their conduct; that he did not desire to be associated with them; that he wished to avoid their society, and to find his friends among men of a different character. See the notes at Psalm 1:1. Compare Isaiah 5:5.

And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? - The expression here - "grieved" - explains the meaning of the word "hate" in the former member of the verse. It is not that hatred which is followed by malignity or ill-will; it is that which is accompanied with grief - pain of heart - pity - sorrow. So the Saviour looked on people: Mark 3:5: "And when he had looked round about on them with "anger," being "grieved" for the hardness of their hearts." The Hebrew word used here, however, contains "also" the idea of being disgusted with; of loathing; of nauseating. See the notes at Psalm 119:158. The feeling referred to is anger - conscious

disgust - at such conduct; and grief, pain, sorrow, that people should evince such feelings toward their Maker.

Verse 22

I hate them with perfect hatred - With no approval whatever of their conduct; with no sympathy for the evil they do; with no words of apology for their sinful acts; with entire disapprobation.

I count them mine enemies - As they are the enemies of God, so I regard them as my enemies. I do not wish to be associated with them, or to be regarded as one of them.

Verse 23

Search me, O God - The word "search" here is the same as in Psalm 139:1. See the notes at that verse. The psalmist had stated the fact that it is a characteristic of God that he "does" search the heart; and he here prays that God "would" exercise that power in relation to himself; that as God could know all that there is within the heart, he would examine him with the closest scrutiny, so that he might be under no delusion or self-deception; that he might not indulge in any false hopes; that he might not cherish any improper feelings or desires. The prayer denotes great "sincerity" on the part of the psalmist. It indicates also self-distrust. It is an expression of what all must feel who have any just views of themselves - that the heart is very corrupt; that we are liable to deceive ourselves; and that the most thorough search "should" be made that we be "not" deceived and lost.

And know my heart - Know or see all that is within it.

Try me - As metal is tried or proved that is put to a "test" to learn what it is. The trial here is that which would result from the divine inspection of his heart.

And know my thoughts - See what they are. The word rendered "thoughts" occurs only in one other place, Psalm 94:19. The idea is, Search me thoroughly; examine not merely my outward conduct, but what I think about; what are my purposes; what passes through my mind; what occupies my imagination and my memory; what secures my affections and controls my will. He must be a very sincere man who prays that God will search his thoughts, for there are few who would be willing that their fellow-men, even their best friends, should know all that they are thinking about.

Verse 24

And see if there be any wicked way in me - Margin, "way of pain," or "grief." The Hebrew word properly means an image, an idol Isaiah 48:5,

but it also means pain, 1 Chronicles 4:9; Isaiah 14:3. The word in the form used here does not occur elsewhere. Gesenius (Lexicon) renders it here idol-worship. DeWette, “way of idols.” Prof. Alexander, “way of pain.” The Septuagint and Vulgate, “way of iniquity.” So Luther. The Syriac, “way of falsehood.” Rosenmuller, “way of an idol.” According to this, the prayer is that God would search him and see if there was anything in him that partook of the nature of idolatry, or of defection from the true religion; any tendency to go back from God, to worship other gods, to leave the worship of the true God. As idolatry comprehends the sum of all that is evil, as being alienation from the true God, the prayer is that there might be nothing found in his heart which tended to alienate him from God - would indicate unfaithfulness or want of attachment to him.

And lead me in the way everlasting - The way which leads to eternal life; the path which I may tread forever. In any other way than in the service of God his steps must be arrested. He must encounter his Maker in judgment, and be cut off, and consigned to woe. The path to heaven is one which man may steadily pursue; one, in reference to which death itself is really no interruption - for the journey commenced here will be continued through the dark valley, and continued forevermore. Death does not interrupt the journey of the righteous for a moment. It is the same journey continued - as when we cross a narrow stream, and are on the same path still.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 140

Introduction

This, also, is a psalm of David. The occasion on which it was composed is not indicated in the title, but the contents of the psalm leave no room to doubt that it was written at an early period of his life, in the time when he was subjected to persecution - most probably in the time of Saul. The psalm bears every mark of David's style and spirit; and there can be no doubt that he was the author of it. For the reasons why it may have had a place "here" in the Book of Psalms, see the Introduction to Psalm 138:1-8. On the phrase, "To the chief Musician," see the Introduction to Psalm 4:1-8.

Verse 1

Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man - That is, evidently from some particular man who was endeavoring to injure him; some personal enemy. All the circumstances mentioned agree well with the supposition that Saul is intended.

Preserve me from the violent man - Margin, as in Hebrew, "man of violences." That is, one who has committed violence so often, who has so frequently done wrong, that this may be considered a characteristic of the man. This would apply well to the repeated acts of Saul in persecuting David, and endeavoring to do him injury.

Verse 2

Which imagine mischiefs in their heart - Here the language is changed to the plural number in the Hebrew, implying that while there was one man who was eminent in his wickedness and his wrong-doing, there were many others associated with him, acting under his direction. The word "mischiefs" in the Hebrew means "evils; wickednesses." It was not a single purpose; the plan embraced many forms of evil - doing him wrong in every way possible.

Continually are they gathered together for war - They are organized for this purpose; they are constantly prepared for it. The word rendered "gathered together" properly means to sojourn, to dwell for a time; and it has been proposed by some to render this, "All the day they dwell with wars;" that is, they are constantly involved in them. But the word may mean also "to gather together," as in Psalm 56:6.

Verse 3

They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent - Compare the notes at Psalm 64:3. The idea here is, that since the tongue of the serpent "seems" to be sharp, pointed, adapted to penetrate (and probably the original reference in the image was derived from that idea), the wound inflicted is by the serpent's tongue - "as if" with a hard, penetrating point. It is now known, however, that it is by a tooth - a single tooth, made flexible for the purpose - at the root of which a small bag containing the poison is located, which is injected through an orifice in the tooth into the wound. The meaning here is, that the words spoken by such persons - by their tongues - were like the poison produced by the bite of a serpent.

Adders' poison is under their lips - The asp or adder is among the most poisonous of serpents. Thus, Cleopatra of Egypt is said to have destroyed her own life by an asp, which she had concealed for that purpose. This passage is quoted in Romans 3:13, as a proof of human depravity. See the notes at that verse.

Verse 4

Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked … - See the notes at Psalm 71:4. This is a repetition of the prayer in Psalm 140:1.

Who have purposed to overthrow my goings - To thrust me down as I go; to defeat my plans; to destroy me. They endeavor to prevent my accomplishing what I had designed to do.

Verse 5

The proud have hid a snare for me - Haughty; arrogant; oppressive men. See Psalm 35:7, note; Psalm 57:6, note.

And cords - Strings; twine; as those do who lay a net to catch birds, and who design to spring it upon them unawares.

They have spread a net by the wayside - Where I may be expected to walk, and where it may be suddenly sprung upon me.

They have set gins for me - Snares, toils - such as are set for wild beasts. The meaning is, that they had not only made open war upon him, but they had sought to bring him into an ambush - to rush upon him suddenly when he was not on his guard, and did not know that, danger was near.

Verse 6

I said unto the Lord, Thou art my God … - In all these dangers from open war, in all these perils from a crafty enemy lying in ambush, my only refuge was God; my hope was in him alone. From all these dangers, seen

and unseen, I knew that he could defend me, and I confidently believed that he would.

Verse 7

O God the Lord … - literally, "Yahweh, Lord, the strength of my salvation" The word rendered "God," in the original, is יהוה *Yahweh* The address is to Yahweh as the Lord; that is, as the supreme Ruler - who presides over all things. Him the psalmist acknowledged as "his" Lord and Ruler. The phrase "the strength of my salvation" means the strength or power on which my safety depends. I have no other hope of deliverance but in thee.

Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle - Thou hast been a shield unto me. Literally, "In the day of arms," or of armor, 1 Kings 10:25; Ezekiel 39:9-10.

Verse 8

Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked - That is, in the matter under consideration. Let them not accomplish their desire in my destruction. Let them not succeed in their designs against me. The prayer, however, "may" be used more generally. It is proper to pray that the desires of the wicked, as wicked people, may not be granted to them; that they may "not" be successful in their purposes. Success in such desires would be only an injury to themselves and to the world. It is proper to pray that the purposes of the wicked may be defeated, and that they may be led to abandon their designs and to seek better ends. For this, in fact, we always pray when we pray for their conversion.

Further not his wicked device - His purpose against me.

Lest they exalt themselves - Lest they attribute it to their own skill, wisdom, or valor, and lest they pride themselves on their success. To succeed in a righteous cause makes a man humble and grateful; in a bad cause, proud, and forgetful of God. The margin here is, "Let them not be exalted." The meaning is, that success would at the same time elate them in their own estimation, and increase their bad influence in the world. It is, on every account, a benevolent prayer that wicked people may "not" be successful in their plans of iniquity.

Verse 9

As for the head of those that compass me about - Luther renders this, "The calamity which my enemies design against me must fall upon their own heads." The passage stands in contrast with Psalm 140:7: "Thou hast

covered my head," etc. As for his own head, it had been protected in the day of battle. In reference now to the heads of his enemies - of those that compassed him about - he prays that what they had designed for "his" head might come by a just retribution on their own. The phrase "compass me about" refers to his enemies as being numerous, and as surrounding him on every side. See Psalm 40:12; Psalm 88:17; Psalm 109:3; Psalm 118:10-12.

Let the mischief of their own lips cover them - Come upon them. The mischief which they have designed against me; that which they have conspired to bring on me. The reference is to a combination against him, or to some agreement which they had made to destroy him.

Verse 10

Let burning coals fall upon them - Let them be punished, "as if" burning coals were poured upon them. See Psalm 11:6, note; Psalm 18:12-13, notes; Psalm 120:4, note.

Let them be cast into the fire - Punished as if they were cast into the fire and consumed.

Into deep pits, that they rise not up again - That they may utterly perish. This was one mode of punishing, by casting a man into a deep pit from which he could not escape, and leaving him to die, Genesis 37:20, Genesis 37:24; Psalm 9:15; Psalm 35:7; Jeremiah 41:7.

Verse 11

Let not an evil speaker - literally, "A man of tongue." That is, a man whom the tongue rules; a man of an unbridled tongue; a man who does not control his tongue. See the notes at James 3:2-12.

Be established in the earth - Be successful or prosperous; let him not carry out his designs. It is not desirable that a man should prosper in such purposes; and therefore, this is not a prayer of malignity, but of benevolence.

Evil shall hunt the violent man … - More literally, "A man of violence - a bad man - they shall hunt him down speedily;" or, "let him be hunted down speedily. Let him who forms a project of violence and wrong - a bad man - be hunted as the beasts of prey are, and let his destruction come quickly." Margin, "Let him be hunted to his overthrow." But the explanation now given suits the connection, and is a literal expression of the sense of the original.

Verse 12

I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted - See the notes at Psalm 9:4. The psalmist here doubtless refers primarily to himself, as having a confident belief that the Lord would maintain "his" cause, or would defend "him." At the same time he makes the statement general, implying that what would be done to him would be done to all in similar circumstances. The idea is that God, in all his attributes, in all his providential arrangements, in all his interpositions on earth, would be found to be on the side of the oppressed, the afflicted, and the wronged. He has no attribute that can take part with an oppressor or a wrong doer. The wicked cannot come to him with the belief that he will be on their side: the righteous - the oppressed - the afflicted - can.

And the right of the poor - He will defend the right of the poor. Literally, "The judgment of the poor." That which will be just and right in their case.

Verse 13

Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name - Unto thee.

(1) they will have occasion to do it;

(2) they will be disposed to do it.

They will not be unmindful of the favors conferred upon them; it will be a characteristic of them that they "will" be thankful.

The upright shall dwell in thy presence - They shall be under thy protection; they shall be admitted to thy favor; they shall dwell in thy dwelling-place.

(1) On earth they shall enjoy his favor - "as if" they abode with God.

(2) in heaven they will be permitted to dwell with him forever.

The general idea of the psalm is, that the poor, the persecuted, the afflicted, if righteous, shall enjoy the favor and protection of God. God is on their side, and not on the side of the wicked who oppress them. But then, people "should be righteous" in order that they may find the favor of God and dwell with him. There is no reason why a "poor" wicked man should enjoy the favor of God anymore than why a "rich" wicked man should. It is not poverty or riches that commend us to God; it is faith, and holiness, and

love, and obedience, in the condition of life in which we are placed, be it in a cottage or a palace.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 141

Introduction

This, also, is a psalm of David, and apparently composed under circumstances similar to the former. It is impossible, however, to determine the precise time at which it was written, or the exact circumstances of the psalmist at the time.

The circumstances, as far as they can be gathered from the psalm, are these:

(1) He was in a situation of peril; so much so as to have almost no hope for himself or his followers. Snares and gins were laid for him Psalm 141:9, and his followers and friends were scattered and dispirited, as if their bones were scattered at the grave‘s mouth, Psalm 141:7. Everything looked dark and discouraging.

(2) in these circumstances it occurred to his mind, or was suggested to him, to say or do something which, not honorable or right in itself, might have brought relief, or which might have rescued him from his peril, and secured the favor of his enemies; some trick - some artful scheme - some concession of principle - which would have delivered him from his danger, and which would have secured for him a position of safety, plenty, and honor, Psalm 141:3-4. Many considerations, derived from his danger, might have been suggested for this, even by those who were not bad people, but who might have been timid men, and who might have felt that their cause was hopeless, and that it would be proper to avail themselves of this opportunity to escape from their peril in any way.

(3) David knew that to resist this - to abstain from following this apparently wise and prudent counsel - to refuse to do what the circumstances might seem to others to justify - would expose him to the rebukes of sincere and honest people who thought that this would be right. Yet knowing all this, he resolved to hear their reproach rather than to follow such advice by doing a wrong thing. He says Psalm 141:5, that though they should smite him, it would (he knew) be in kindness, with the best intention; though they should reprove him, it would be like a “gentle oil” - it would not break his head or crush him. He would cherish no resentment;

he would still pray for them as usual in the time of their calamities, Psalm 141:5. Even when the "judges," the rulers - his enemies - should be overthrown, as they might be, he would take no advantage of that circumstance; he would not seek for revenge; his words should be "sweet" kind words still, Psalm 141:6.

(4) David prays, therefore, in view of this temptation, and of the counsel suggested to him, that he might be able to set a watchful guard over his own lips, and to keep his heart, that he might not be betrayed into anything which would be dishonorable or wicked; that he might not be allured to that which was wrong by any prospect of temporal advantage which might follow. Psalm 141:1-4.

(5) as the result of all, he put his trust in God, that he might be enabled to pursue an upright course; and that, in such a course, he might be preserved from the snares which had been laid for him, Psalm 141:8-10.

Perhaps what is here said in illustration of the design of the psalm will best agree with the supposition that it refers to the time mentioned in 1 Samuel 24:1-7. Saul was then in his power. He could easily have put him to death. His friends advised it. The "suggestion" was a natural one; it would seem to many to be a justifiable measure. But he resisted the temptation, trusting in the Lord to deliver him, without his resorting to a measure which could not but have been regretted ever afterward.

The practical truth which would be illustrated by this view of the psalm would be, "that we are not to say or do anything that is wrong, though good people, our friends, advise it; though it should subject us to their reproaches if we do it not; though to do it would be followed by great personal advantages; and though not to do it would leave us still in danger - a danger from which the course advised would have delivered us. It is better to act nobly, honorably, and in a high-minded manner, and to leave the result with God, still trusting in him."

Verse 1

Lord, I cry unto thee - In view of my perils; in view of the suggestions of my friends; in view of my temptation to do a wrong thing at their advice,

and with the prospect of the advantage which it might seem to be to me.

Make haste unto me - To save me from all this danger: the danger from my enemies; the danger from the counsels of my friends. See the notes at Psalm 22:19; compare Psalm 40:13; Psalm 70:1, Psalm 70:5; Psalm 71:12. The meaning is, that there is need of immediate interposition. There is danger that I shall be overcome; that I may be tempted to do a wrong thing; that I may be ruined if there is any delay.

Give ear unto my voice … - See the notes at Psalm 5:1.

Verse 2

Let my prayer be set forth before thee - Margin, "directed." The Hebrew word means to fit; to establish; to make firm. The psalmist desires that his prayer should not be like that which is feeble, languishing, easily dissipated, but that it should be like that which is firm and secure.

As incense - See the notes and illustrations at Luke 1:9-10. Let my prayer come before thee in such a manner as incense does when it is offered in worship; in a manner of which the ascending of incense is a suitable emblem. See the notes at Revelation 5:8; notes at Revelation 8:3.

And the lifting up of my hands - In prayer; a natural posture in that act of worship.

As the evening sacrifice - The sacrifice offered on the altar at evening. Let my prayer be as acceptable as that is when it is offered in a proper manner.

Verse 3

Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth - That I may not say anything rashly, unadvisedly, improperly. Compare Psalm 39:1. The prayer here is, that God would guard him from the temptation to say something wrong. To this he seems to have been prompted by the circumstances of the case, and by the advice of those who were with him. See introduction to the psalm. Compare the notes at Psalm 11:1.

Keep the door of my lips - That my lips or mouth may not open except when it is proper and right; when something good and true is to be said. Nothing can be more proper than "this" prayer; nothing more desirable than that God should keep us from saying what we ought not to say.

Verse 4

Incline not my heart to any evil thing - Hebrew, to a word that is evil; that is, wrong. The connection seems to demand that the term should be thus explained. The expression "Incline not" is not designed to mean that

God exerts any "positive" influence in leading the heart to that which is wrong; but it may mean "Do not place me in circumstances where I may be tempted; do not leave me to myself; do not allow any improper influence to come over me by which I shall be led astray." The expression is similar to that in the Lord's Prayer: "Lead us not into temptation." The psalmist's allusion here has been explained in the introduction to the psalm.

To practice wicked works with people that work iniquity - To be united or associated with people who do wrong; to do the things which wicked and unprincipled people do. Let me not be permitted to do anything that will be regarded as identifying me with them. Let me not, in the circumstances in which I am placed, be left to act so that the fair interpretation of my conduct shall be that I am one of their number, or act on the same principles on which they act. Literally, "To practice practices in wickedness with people."

And let me not eat of their dainties - Let me not be tempted by any prospect of participating in their mode of living - in the luxuries and comforts which they enjoy - to do a wicked or wrong thing. Let not a prospect or desire of this overcome my better judgment, or the dictates of my conscience, or my settled principles of what is right. People often do this. Good people are often tempted to do it. The prospect or the hope of being enabled to enjoy what the rich enjoy, to live in luxury and ease, to be "clothed in short linen and fare sumptuously every day," to move in circles of splendor and fashion, often leads them to a course of action which their consciences condemn; to practices inconsistent with a life of godliness; to sinful indulgences which utterly ruin their character. Satan has few temptations for man more attractive and powerful than the "dainties" which wealth can give; and there are few of his devices more effectual in ruining people than those which are derived from these allurements. The word here rendered dainties properly refers to things which are pleasant, lovely, attractive; which give delight or pleasure. It may embrace "all" that the world has to offer as suited to give pleasure or enjoyment. It refers here to what those in more elevated life have to offer; what they themselves live for.

Verse 5

Let the righteous smite me - This verse is exceedingly difficult and obscure (compare the margin); and there have been almost as many different opinions in regard to its meaning as there have been commentators

on the psalm. A large number of these opinions may be seen in Rosenmuller *in loc*. DeWette explains it, "I gladly suffer anything that is unpleasant from my friends, that may be for my good; but the wickedness of my enemies I cannot endure." The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate render it, "Let a righteous man correct me with mercy, and he will work convictions in me; but let not the oil of a sinner (for this shall still be my prayer) anoint my head at their pleasure." "Thompson's translation." According to this, the sense would be, "If the righteous smite me with severity of words I shall take it as an act of kindness and benevolence; on the other hand, the bland words of a sinner, smooth as oil, which wound more than sharp arrows, may God avert from me."

Or, in other words, "I had rather be slain by the severe words of the righteous than anointed by the oily and impious words of the wicked." The sense proposed by Hengstenberg (Com. *in loc*.) is, "Even as I through the cloud of wrath can see the sunshine of divine goodness, I will not give myself over to doubt and despair, according to the course of the world, when the hand of the Almighty rests upon me; but I will, and can, and should, in the midst of trouble, be joyful, and that is the high privilege of which I will never be deprived." According to this, the idea is, that the sufferings endured by good people, even at the hand of the wicked, are chastisements inflicted by a gracious God in justice and mercy, and as such may be likened to a festive ointment, which the head of the sufferer should not refuse, as he will still have occasion for consolation to invoke God in the midst of trials yet to be experienced.

The word "righteous" is evidently employed in the usual sense of the term. It refers to those who love and serve God. The word translated "smite" - חלם *châlam* - is rendered broken in Judges 5:22; Isaiah 16:8; Isaiah 28:1 ("margin," but rendered by our translators "overcome," sc. with wine); "smote," Judges 5:26; Isaiah 41:7; "beaten," Proverbs 23:35; "beating down," 1 Samuel 14:16; "break down," Psalm 74:6. It does not elsewhere occur, except in the verse before us. It would apply to any beating or smiting, with the fist, with a hammer, with a weapon of war, and then with "words" - words of reproof, or expressions of disapprobation. According to the view above taken (Introduction), it is used here with reference to an apprehended rebuke on the part of good people, for not following their advice.

It shall be a kindness - literally, "A kindness;" that is, an act of kindness. The idea is, that it would be so intended on their part; it should be so received by him. Whatever might be the wisdom of the advice, or the propriety of yielding to it, or whatever they might say if it were not followed, yet he could regard it as on their part only well-intended. If a certain course which they had advised should be rejected, and if by refusing or declining to follow it one should incur their displeasure, yet that ought to be interpreted only as an act well-intended and meant in kindness.

And let him reprove me - As I may anticipate that he will, if his advice is not taken. I must expect to meet this consequence.

It shall be an excellent oil - literally, "Oil of the head." That is - like oil which is poured on the head on festive occasions, or when one is crowned, as a priest, or a prophet, or a king. See the notes at Mark 6:13; notes at Luke 4:18-19. Oil thus used for the head, the face, etc., was an indispensable article for the toilet among Orientals. The idea is here that the reproof of the righteous should be received as readily as that which contributed most to comely adorning and comfort; or that which diffused brightness, cheerfulness, joy.

Which shall not break my head - Or rather, Which my head shall not (or, should not) refuse; which it should welcome. The word rendered break should not have been so translated. The Hebrew word - הניא *hāniy'* is from נוא *nû'* - in Hiphil, to negative; to make naught; then to refuse, to decline, to deny. It is rendered "discourage" in Numbers 32:7, Numbers 32:9 (Margin, "break"); "disallow," Numbers 30:5 ("twice"), Numbers 30:8, Numbers 30:11; "make of none effect," Psalm 33:10; "break," in the passage before us. It does not elsewhere occur. The idea is, "If such reproof comes on me for the faithful doing of what I regard as wise and best, I ought no more to reject it than the head would refuse the oil poured on it, to make the person healthful and comely."

For yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities - I will not be sullen, displeased, angry, revengeful. I will not refuse to pray for them when trials come upon them, because they have not approved of my course, because they have reproved me for not following their counsel, because they have used words that were like heavy blows. I will cherish no malice; I will not be angry; I will not seek to be revenged. I will not turn away from them when trouble comes on them. I will love them, cherish with gratitude the memory of the kindness they meant, and pray for them in the time when

they especially need prayer. Should they now rebuke me rather than pray for me, yet I will not in turn "rebuke" them in similar trials, but "will pray for them," as though nothing of this had happened. Noble spirit - indicative of what should always be the spirit of a good man. Our friends - even our pious friends - may not be always "wise" in their advice, and they may be severe in their reproofs if we do not follow their counsel; yet let us receive all as well-intended, and let us not in anger, in sullenness, or in revenge, refuse to aid them, and to pray for them in trouble, though they were "not" wise, and though they used words of severity toward us.

Verse 6

When … - This passage is no less difficult than the preceding, and it seems almost impossible to determine its exact meaning. What is meant by "judges"? What judges are referred to by the word "their"? What is meant by their being "overthrown"? What is the sense of the words "in stony places"? Does the passage refer to some certain prospect that they "would be" overthrown, or is it a mere supposition which relates to something that "might" occur? Who are meant by "they," in the phrase "they shall hear my words?" It seems to me that the most plausible interpretation of the passage is founded on that which has been assumed thus far in the explanation of the psalm, as referring to the state of things recorded in 1 Samuel 24:1-7. David was in the wilderness of En-gedi, in the midst of a rocky region. Saul, apprised of his being there, came with three thousand chosen men to apprehend him, and went into a cave to lie down to rest. Unknown, probably, to him, David and his men were in the "sides of the cave." They now saw that Saul was completely in their power, and that it would be an easy thing to enter the cave, and kill him when off his guard. The men urgently advised David to do this. David entered the cave, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, showing how completely Saul was in his power, but he proceeded no further; he did not follow the suggestions of his friends; he did not take the life of Saul, as he might have done; and he even regretted what he had done, as implying a want of due respect for the anointed of the Lord, 1 Samuel 24:11. Yet he had the fullest confidence that the king and his forces would be overthrown, and that it would be done in a way consistent with open and manly war, and not in an underhanded and stealthful way, as it would have been if he had cut him off in the cave. With this in view, it seems to me that the difficult passage before us may be explained with, at least, some degree of plausibility.

Their judges - By the judges, are to be understood the rulers of the people; the magistrates; those in office and power - referring to Saul and the officers of his government. "Their judges;" to wit, the judges or rulers of the hosts in opposition to me - of those against whom I war; Saul and the leaders of his forces.

Are overthrown - Are discomfited, vanquished, subdued; as I am confident they will be, in the regular prosecution of the war, and not by treachery and stealth.

In stony places - literally, "in the hands of the rock;" or, as the word "hands" may sometimes be used, "in the sides of the rock." It might mean "by the power of the rock," as thrown upon them; or, "against its sides." The essential idea is, that the "rocks," the rocky places, would be among the means by which they would be overthrown; and the sense is, that now that Saul was in the cave - or was in that rocky region, better known to David than to him - Saul was so completely in his power, that David felt that the victory, in a regular course of warfare, would be his.

They shall hear my words - The followers of Saul; the people of the land; the nation. Saul being removed - subdued - slain - the people will become obedient to me who have been anointed by a prophet as their king, and designated as the successor of Saul. David did not doubt that he would himself reign when Saul was overcome, or that the people would hear his words, and submit to him as king.

For they are sweet - They shall be pleasant; mild; gentle; equitable; just. After the harsh and severe enactments of Saul, after enduring his acts of tyranny, the people will be glad to welcome me, and to live under the laws of a just and equal administration. The passage, therefore, expresses confidence that Saul and his hosts would be overthrown, and that the people of the land would gladly hail the accession to the throne of one who had been anointed to reign over them.

Verse 7

Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth - We are, indeed, now like bones scattered in the places of graves; we seem to be weak, feeble, disorganized. We are in a condition which of itself seems to be hopeless: as hopeless as it would be for dry bones scattered when they were buried to rise up and attack an enemy. The reference is to the condition of David and his followers as pursued by a mighty foe. His hope was not in his own forces, but in the power and interposition of God Psalm 141:8.

As when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth - Like chips, blocks, splinters, that have no strength; as when these lie scattered around - a fit emblem of our feeble and scattered forces.

Verse 8

But mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord - My hope is in thee. I do not rely on my own power. I do not trust in my armed forces. I know that they are weak, dispirited, scattered - like strewed bones - like the chips and splinters lying around the place where wood is chopped. I look, therefore, solely to God. I believe that he "will" interpose; and now that my enemy has placed himself in this position, I do not need to resort to stealthful arts - to dishonorable acts - to assassination - as my friends advise, but the object will be accomplished, and I shall be placed on the throne by the act of God, and in a manner that will not subject my name and memory to reproach by a base and treacherous deed.

In thee is my trust - I rely on thee alone.

Leave not my soul destitute - My life; my all. Do not now leave me without thy gracious interposition; do not suffer this juncture to pass by without such an interposition as will end the war, and restore peace to me and to a distracted land.

Verse 9

Keep me from the snares … - See the notes at Psalm 11:6. Compare Psalm 38:12; Psalm 69:22; Psalm 91:3. The secret plans which they have laid against me.

And the gins of the workers of iniquity - Wicked men; men who seek my destruction. On the word gins, see the notes at Isaiah 8:14. The gin is a trap or snare to catch birds or wild animals. The word used here is the same which occurs in Psalm 18:5, and which is there rendered "snare." See the notes at that passage. Compare also Psalm 64:5; Psalm 69:22; Psalm 106:36; Psalm 140:5, where the same word occurs.

Verse 10

Let the wicked fall into their own nets - See the notes at Psalm 35:8. Compare Psalm 7:15-16.

While that I withal escape - Margin, as in Hebrew, "pass over." While I safely pass over the net or snare which has been secretly laid for me. The word "withal" means, in the Hebrew, "together, at the same time;" that is, At the same time that they fall into the net, let me pass over it in safety. See the notes at Job 5:13.

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PSALM 142

Introduction

This also is a psalm of David. It is entitled, like not a few others of the Psalms, "Maschil;" margin, "giving instruction:" a didactic hymn. See the word explained in the Introduction to Psalm 32:1-11. It is said, in the title, to be "A prayer when he was in the cave;" that is, either a prayer which he composed while there, or which he composed afterward, putting into a poetic form the substance of the prayer which he breathed forth there, or expressive of the feelings which he had when there. The reference may be either to the cave of Adullam 1 Samuel 22:1, or to that in Engedi 1 Samuel 24:3. In both cases the circumstances were substantially the same, for David had fled to the cave to escape from Saul. The prayer is such as would be appropriate to a condition of danger such as was that in which David then was. It is a cry of distress when there was no refuge - no hope - but in God; when there seemed to be no way of escape from his enemies; and when, forsaken by his friends, and pursued by an enemy who sought his life, he seemed now to be in the power of his foe. It may also be "used" to express the feelings of one now in danger - as of a sinner under condemnation, seeing no way of escape, exposed to ruin, and shut up entirely to the mercy of God. Such a one feels, as David did on this occasion, that there can be no escape but through the interposition of God.

Verse 1

I cried unto the Lord with my voice - See the notes at Psalm 3:4, where the language is the same. He uttered a loud and audible prayer, though he was alone. It was not a mental ejaculation, but he gave expression to his desires.

With my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication - See Psalm 30:8. The Hebrew word rendered "did make my supplication," means to implore favor or mercy. It denotes the language of petition and entreaty, not the language of claim.

Verse 2

I poured out my complaint before him - literally, my meditation; that is, What so much occupied my thoughts at the time I expressed aloud. The word "complaint" does not express the idea. The meaning is, not that he "complained" of God or of man; but that his mind "meditated" on his condition. He was full of care and of anxiety; and he went and poured this

out freely before God. The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, "my prayer." See Psalm 55:2, where the same Hebrew word is used.

I showed before him my trouble - I made mention of it. I spoke of it.

Verse 3

When my spirit was overwhelmed within me - Luther renders this, "When my spirit was in distress." The Hebrew word rendered "overwhelmed" means, in Kal, to cover as with a garment; then, to be covered as with darkness, trouble, sorrow; and then, to languish, to faint, to be feeble: Psalm 77:3; Psalm 107:5. The idea here is, that, in his troubles, he had no vigor, no life, no spirit. He did not see how he could escape from his troubles, and he had no heart to make an effort.

Then thou knewest my path - Thou didst see all. Thou didst see the way that I was treading, and all its darkness and dangers, implying here that God had made it an object to mark his course; to see what egress there might be - what way to escape from the danger. It was in no sense concealed from God, and no danger of the way was hidden from him. It is much for us to feel when we are in danger or difficulty that God knows it all, and that nothing can be hidden from him.

In the way wherein I walked - In my path; the path that I was treading.

Have they privily laid a snare for me - They treated me as a man would treat his neighbor, who should spread a snare, or set a trap, for him in the path which he knew he must take. The word rendered "have privily laid" means to hide, to conceal. It was so concealed that I could not perceive it. They did it unknown to me. I neither knew that it was laid, nor where it was laid. They meant to spring it upon me at a moment when I was not aware, and when I should be taken by surprise. It was not open and manly warfare; it was stealth, cunning, trick, art.

Verse 4

I looked on my right hand, and beheld - Margin, "Look on the right hand and see The words translated "looked" and "beheld" are in the imperative mood in the Hebrew. They are not, however, improperly rendered as to the sense. They refer to David's state of mind at the time, and give vividness to the description. The psalmist seems to be in the presence of others. He calls upon them to look around; to see how he was encompassed with danger. Look, says he, in every direction; see who there is on whom I may rely; what there is to which I may trust as a refuge. I can find none; I see none; there is none. The "right hand" is referred to here as

the direction where he might look for a protector: Psalm 109:6, Psalm 109:31.

But there was no man that would know me - No man to be seen who would recognize me as his friend; who would stand up for me; on whom I could rely.

Refuge failed me - Margin, as in Hebrew, "perished from me." If there had been any hope of refuge, it has failed altogether. There is none now.

No man cared for my soul - Margin, "No man sought after my soul." Hebrew, after my "life." That is, No one sought to save my life; no one regarded it as of sufficient importance to attempt to preserve me.

Verse 5

I cried unto thee, O Lord - When there was no help; when I saw myself encompassed with dangers; when I looked on every hand and there was no "man" that would undertake for me.

I said, Thou art my refuge -

(a) My "only" refuge. I can go nowhere else.

(b) Thou art "in fact" my refuge. I can and do put my trust in thee. See the notes at Psalm 46:1.

And my portion - See the notes at Psalm 16:5.

In the land of the living - Among all those that live - all living beings. There is no one else among the living to whom I can come but to thee, the living God. My hope is not in human beings, for they are against me; not in angels, for they have not the power to rescue me. It is God only, the living God, whom I make my confidence and the ground of my hope.

Verse 6

Attend unto my cry - Give ear to me when I cry to thee. Do not turn away and refuse to hear me.

For I am brought very low - I am reduced greatly; I am made very poor. The language would be applicable to one who had been in better circumstances, and who had been brought down to a condition of danger, of poverty, of want. It is language which is commonly applied to poverty.

Deliver me from my persecutors - Saul and his followers.

For they are stronger than I - More in number; better armed; better suited for battle.

Verse 7

Bring my soul out of prison - Bring me out of my present condition which is like a prison. I am as it were shut up; I am encompassed with foes; I do not know how to escape. Compare Psalm 25:17.

That I may praise thy name - Not merely for my own sake, but that I may have occasion more abundantly to praise thee; that thus "thou" mayest be honored; an object at all times much more important than our own welfare - even than our salvation.

The righteous shall compass me about - They shall come to me with congratulations and with expressions of rejoicing. They will desire my society, my friendship, my influence, and will regard it as a privilege and an honor to be associated with me. David looked to this as an object to be desired. He wished to be associated with the righteous; to enjoy their friendship; to have their good opinion; to be reckoned as one of them here and forever. Compare the notes at Psalm 26:9. It "is" an honor - a felicity to be desired - to be associated with good people, to possess their esteem; to have their sympathy, their prayers, and their affections; to share their joys here, and their triumphs in the world to come.

For thou shalt deal bountifully with me - Or, when thou shalt deal bountifully with me. When thou dost show me this favor, then the righteous will come around me in this manner. They will see that I am a friend of God, and they will desire to be associated with me as his friend.

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PSALM 143

Introduction

This psalm also is entitled "A Psalm of David." There is, however, no intimation in the title as to the time or the occasion on which it was composed. In the Septuagint version, and the Latin Vulgate, it is said to have been written "when Absalom his son persecuted him." There is nothing in the psalm inconsistent with this supposition, nor is there anything which necessarily restricts the application to that period of life. It would seem most natural that it should refer to the same trials as the previous psalm; and the sentiments in it are as applicable to the persecutions under Saul as to the rebellion of Absalom. There can be no doubt that it was composed when he was in danger and in trouble on account of malignant and powerful enemies; and it is of the same general character as many in the collection that were composed on those occasions. It is a psalm written in trouble; and, in a world like this, there will be always many hearts that can fully sympathize with the sentiments which are expressed in it.

Verse 1

Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear … - See Psalm 4:1, note; Psalm 5:1, note.

In thy faithfulness answer me - That is, Show thy faithfulness to thy promises. God had made gracious promises to David (compare Psalm 31:1. In thy disposition to do right; to vindicate a righteous cause; to interpose when wrong is done. We, though sinners before God, may feel that our cause is a just one as toward our fellowmen, and, when wronged, we may ask God to interpose, as a righteous God, in our behalf. We cannot, however, ask him to save us on the ground of our righteousness toward him, for we have no such righteousness. See Psalm 143:2.

Verse 2

And enter not into judgment with thy servant - Do not deal with me on the ground of justice as toward "thee;" do not mark my own offences against thee, when I plead that justice may be done as between me and my fellow-men. While I plead that thou wouldst judge righteously between me and them, I am conscious that I could not claim thy needed interposition on the ground of any righteousness toward thee. There I must confess that I am

a sinner; there I can rely only on mercy; there I could not hope to be justified.

For in thy sight - As before thee; in thy presence; by thee.

Shall no man living - No one of the race, no matter what his rank, his outward conduct, his gentleness, his amiableness, his kindness; no matter how just and upright he may be toward his fellow-men.

Be justified - Be regarded as righteous; be acquitted from blame; be held to be innocent. The meaning is, "I do not come before thee and plead for thy favor on the ground of any claim on thee, for I am conscious that I am a sinner, and that my only hope is in thy mercy." See the notes at Romans 3:20. Compare Job 4:17; Job 9:2, Job 9:20; Job 15:14-16; Job 25:4-6. This is a great and momentous truth in regard to man; it is the foundation of the necessity for a plan of salvation through an atonement - for some way in which man "may" properly be regarded and treated as righteous. Assuredly every man, conscious of what he is in himself, may and should fervently pray that God "would" not enter into judgment with him; that he would not mark his offences; that he would not judge him as strict justice would demand. Our hope is in the "mercy," not in the "justice" of God.

Verse 3

For the enemy hath persecuted my soul - Has persecuted me; has sought my life.

He hath smitten my life down to the ground - He has, as it were, trampled me down to the earth. The word rendered "smitten" means to break in pieces, to beat small, to crush. See Psalm 72:4; Psalm 89:10; Job 6:9. His very life seemed to be crushed out as one that is trodden down to the ground.

He hath made me to dwell in darkness - He has made my life like that of one who dwells in darkness; he has made it a life of sorrow, so that I have no comfort - no light.

As those that have been long dead - A similar expression occurs in Lamentations 3:6: "He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old." The same Hebrew words are used. The word rendered "long" means, age, duration, eternity: Psalm 139:24. The idea here is, that his condition was like that of those who had been long in their graves; who had long since ceased to see any light; whose abode was utter and absolute gloom.

Verse 4

Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me - See the notes at Psalm 77:3. Compare Psalm 42:5-7. His spirit was broken and crushed. He was in a state of despair as to any human help.

My heart within me is desolate - I have no comfort; no cheerfulness; no hope. My soul is like the waste desert where there is no water; where nothing grows; where there are only rocks and sands.

Verse 5

I remember the days of old - Former times.

(1) as contrasted with my present condition.

(2) as times when I called upon thee, and thou didst interpose.

(3) as encouraging me now to come to thee, and spread out my case before thee. See Psalm 77:5-11, note; Psalm 42:4, note.

I meditate on all thy works … - On what thou hast done; on thy gracious interpositions in the time of trial; on the manifestations of thy power in my behalf, and in behalf of thy people. I call all this to mind, remembering that thou art an unchangeable God; that thou hast the same power still; that thou canst interpose now as thou didst then; and that, as an unchangeable God, thou wilt do it in the same circumstances. I, therefore, come to thee, and pray that thou wilt interpose in my behalf.

Verse 6

I stretch forth my hands unto thee - In prayer. I have nowhere else to go. See Psalm 88:9.

My soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land - As land in a time of drought "seems" to thirst for rain. See the notes at Psalm 63:1. Compare Psalm 42:1. The word rendered "thirsty" here means properly "weary." The idea is that of a land which seems to be weary; which has no vigor of growth; and where everything seems to be exhausted. The same word occurs in Isaiah 32:2: "As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

Verse 7

"Hear me speedily, O Lord." Hasten to hear me; do not delay. Literally, "Hasten; answer me." I am in imminent danger. Do not delay to come to my relief.

My spirit faileth - My strength is declining. I can hold out no longer. I am ready to give up and die.

Hide not thy face from me - Do not refuse or delay to look favorably upon me; to lift up the light of thy countenance upon me.

Lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit - Margin, "For I am become like." The idea is, Unless thou shalt lift up the light of thy countenance - unless thou shalt interpose and help me, I shall die. The "pit" here refers to the grave. See the notes at Psalm 28:1.

Verse 8

Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness - The voice of thy lovingkindness, or thy mercy and favor. Permit me to hear thee addressing me in the language of kindness, and with the assurances of mercy.

In the morning - Early; speedily; with the first rays of the morning. Let it be, as it were, the first thing in the day; the first thing that is done. The idea is not that he would wait for another day, but that he would interpose as the very first act - as when one enters on a day. See the notes at Psalm 46:5, where the margin is, when the morning appeareth; Hebrew, In the faces of the morning.

For in thee do I trust - I have no other confidence or ground of reliance; but I have confidence in thee.

Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk … - The safe way; the way in which I may find safety. See the notes at Psalm 5:8.

Verse 9

Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies - See the notes at Psalm 69:14.

I flee unto thee to hide me - Margin, "Hide me with thee." The Hebrew is, I hide myself with thee; that is, I take refuge with thee; I put myself under thy protection; I make myself thus secure, as thou art secure. See the notes at Psalm 17:8. Compare Psalm 27:5; Psalm 31:20.

Verse 10

Teach me to do thy will … - To do that which will be agreeable or pleasing to thee; which will meet with thy approbation. That is, Teach me in the present emergency to do that which thou wilt approve; which will be wise; which will be best adapted to secure my deliverance and my safety.

Thy spirit is good - The spirit which guides those who trust in thee; the spirit with which "thou" dost guide people. That spirit is wise, prudent, judicious, reliable. It will not lead astray. Grant me "that" spirit, and I shall be certain that I am going in the right path. There is no certain evidence that the psalmist here refers distinctively to the Holy Spirit, considered as the

Third Person of the Trinity; but the prayer is one for guidance from on high in the day of darkness and trouble. It is an acknowledgment of dependence on God for direction, and the expression of confidence that under the divine guidance he would not go astray.

Lead me into the land of uprightness - Or rather here, "land of evenness;" level ground; ground where I may walk without the dangers to which I am exposed where I am now, in a place of ambuscades, caverns, rocks, where I may be assailed at any moment without the power of seeing my enemy, or of defending myself. See this use of the word in the following places where it is rendered "plain," meaning a level country, Deuteronomy 3:10; Deuteronomy 4:43; Joshua 13:9, Joshua 13:16-17, Joshua 13:21; 1 Kings 20:23, 1 Kings 20:25; Psalm 27:11; Jeremiah 21:13; Jeremiah 48:8, Jeremiah 48:21; Zechariah 4:7. He desired to be led, as it were, into a "level" country where he might be safe. It is not a prayer, as would seem from our translation, to be so guided that he might lead an upright life. Such a prayer is proper, but it is not the prayer offered here.

Verse 11

Quicken me, O Lord - Give me life. Compare the notes at Ephesians 2:1. Make me equal to my circumstances, for I am ready to sink and to yield.

For thy name's sake - For thine honor. Compare the notes at Daniel 9:17-18. It is in thy cause. Thou wilt thus show thy power, thy faithfulness, thy goodness. Thou wilt thus get honor to thyself. This is the highest motive which can influence us - that God may be glorified.

For thy righteousness' sake - Thy justice; thy truth; thy faithfulness in performing thy promises and pledges.

Bring my soul out of trouble - Out of this trouble and distress. See the notes at Psalm 25:17.

Verse 12

And of thy mercy … - Thy mercy to me; thy mercy to the world. The destruction of the wicked is a favor to the universe; just as the arrest and punishment of a robber or a pirate is a mercy to society, to mankind; just as every prison is a display of "mercy" as well as of "justice" - mercy to society at large; justice to the offenders.

And destroy all them that afflict my soul - Cut them off; render them powerless to do mischief.

For I am thy servant - Not as a matter of private feeling - not for personal revenge - but because I am in thy service, and it is only by being delivered from these dangers that I can honor thee as I would. It is thine own cause, and I ask that they may be cut off "in order" that the service which I might render thee may be unembarrassed.

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PSALM 144

Introduction

This psalm is also ascribed to David. It is almost entirely a compilation of passages from other psalms - particularly Psalm 18:34, with Psalm 144:1; Psalm 18:2, Psalm 18:46, with Psalm 144:2; Psalm 18:9, with Psalm 144:5; Psalm 18:14, with Psalm 144:6; Psalm 18:16, with Psalm 144:7. Compare also Psalm 8:4, with Psalm 144:3; Psalm 104:32, with Psalm 144:5; Psalm 33:2-3, with Psalm 144:9; Psalm 33:12, with Psalm 144:15; Psalm 128:3, with Psalm 144:12. In itself considered there is nothing improbable in the supposition that David himself should have made such a selection, or should have employed language which he had used before, adapting it now to a new purpose, and making such additions as would fit it for the new occasion for which it was intended. It would not be possible now, however, to ascertain the occasion on which this arrangement was made, or its specific design. There is, evidently, a remembrance of former mercies; there was impending danger; there is an earnest prayer that God would interpose as he had done in former times; there is a promise of new songs of praise if God would interpose; there is a looking forward to the prosperity - the joy - which would result if God did thus interpose and save the nation.

In regard to the occasion on which the psalm was written, perhaps the conjecture of Kimchi is the most probable, that it is a prayer against the attempts of foreign nations to overthrow the Hebrew people, in some of the numerous wars in which David was engaged after he had come to the possession of the crown. The different parts of the psalm can be better explained on this supposition than perhaps on any other. This would make proper all the expressions in regard to the past Psalm 144:1-2; the uncertainty and instability of earthly things and the weakness of man Psalm 144:3-4; the necessity of the divine interposition as in former times Psalm 144:5-8; the reference to foreigners Psalm 144:7-8, Psalm 144:11; the purpose to praise God Psalm 144:9-10; the allusion to the happiness of a people whose God is the Lord, and to the prosperity which would follow his interposition Psalm 144:12-15.

Verse 1

Blessed be the Lord my strength - Margin, as in Hebrew, "my rock." See the notes at Psalm 18:46, where the same expression occurs in the Hebrew.

Which teacheth my hands to war - Hebrew, "To the war." See the notes at Psalm 18:34. The Hebrew is not precisely alike, but the sense is the same.

And my fingers to fight - Hebrew, my fingers to the fight. That is, he teaches my fingers so that I can skillfully use them in battle. Probably the immediate reference here is to the use of the bow - placing the arrow, and drawing the string.

Verse 2

My goodness - Margin, "my mercy." That is, He shows me mercy or favor. All the favors that I receive come from him.

And my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer - See the notes at Psalm 18:2, where the same words occur.

My shield - The same word which in Psalm 18:2 is rendered "buckler." See the notes at that passage.

And he in whom I trust - The same idea as in Psalm 18:2. The tense of the verb only is varied.

Who subdueth my people under me - See the notes at Psalm 18:47. The language is slightly different, but the idea is the same. It is to be remarked that David "here" refers to his people - "who subdueth my people," meaning that those over whom God had placed him had been made submissive by the divine power.

Verse 3

Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? - The sentiment here is the same as in Psalm 8:4, though the language is not precisely the same. See the notes at that passage. The word rendered "that thou takest knowledge of him," means here to take notice of; to regard. The idea is, It is amazing that a being so insignificant as man should be an object of interest to God, or that One so great should pay any attention to him and to his affairs. In Psalm 8:4, the language is "that thou art mindful of him," that is, that thou dost remember him - that thou dost not altogether pass him over. In Psalm 8:1-9 the remark is made in view of the heavens as being so exalted in comparison with man, and the wonder is, that in view of worlds so vast occupying the divine attention, and needing the divine care, "man," so insignificant, does not pass out of his view altogether. Here the

remark seems to be made in illustration of the idea that there is no strength in man; that he has no power to accomplish anything of himself; that he is entirely dependent on God.

Or the son of man - Man - any of the race. See the notes at Psalm 8:4.

That thou makest account of him! - Psalm 8:4, "that thou visitest him." See the notes at that passage. The word here means "that thou shouldest "think" of him," that he should ever come into thy thought at all.

Verse 4

Man is like to vanity - See the notes at Psalm 39:5-6; Psalm 62:9. The idea here is, that man can be compared only with that which is utterly vain - which is emptiness - which is nothing.

His days are as a shadow that passeth away - See the notes at Psalm 102:11: "My days are like a shadow that declineth." The idea is essentially the same. It is, that as a shadow has no substance, and that as it moves along constantly as the sun declines, until it vanishes altogether, so man has nothing substantial or permanent, and so he is constantly moving off and will soon wholly disappear.

Verse 5

Bow thy heavens, O Lord … - Come to my aid "as if" the heavens were bent down; come down with all thy majesty and glory. See the notes at Psalm 18:9: "He bowed down the heavens also, and came down." What it is there declared that the Lord "had" done, he is here implored to do again.

Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke - See the notes at Psalm 104:32: "He toucheth the hills, and they smoke." It is there affirmed as a characteristic of God that he "does" this; here the psalmist prays that, as this belonged to God, or was in his power, he "would" do it in his behalf. The prayer is, that God would come to his relief "as if" in smoke and tempest - in the fury of the storm.

Verse 6

Cast forth lightnings, and scatter them - See the notes at Psalm 18:14: "He sent out his arrows, and scattered them." The allusion there is to lightning. The psalmist prays that; God would do now again what he had then done. The Hebrew here is, "Lighten lightning;" that is, Send forth lightning. The word is used as a verb nowhere else.

Shoot out thine arrows … - So in Psalm 18:14: "He shot out lightnings." The words are the same here as in that psalm, only that they are arranged differently. See the notes at that place.

Verse 7

Send thine hand from above - Margin, as in Hebrew, "hands." See the notes at Psalm 18:16: "He sent from above."

Rid me, and deliver me out of great waters - Thus Psalm 18:16: "He took me, he drew me out of many waters." As God had done it once, there was ground for the prayer that he would do it yet again.

From the hand of strange children - Strangers: strangers to thee; strangers to thy people, foreigners. See Psalm 54:3: "For strangers are risen up against me." The language would properly imply that at the time referred to in the psalm he was engaged in a warfare with foreign enemies. Who they were, we have no means now of ascertaining.

Verse 8

Those mouth speaketh vanity - Vain things; things not real and true; falsehood; lies. See the notes at Psalm 24:4. The idea is, that what they said had no foundation in truth - no reality. Truth is solid and reliable; falsehood is unreliable and vain.

And their right hand is a right hand of falsehood - The meaning here seems to be that even under the solemnities of an oath, when they lifted up their hands to swear, when they solemnly appealed to God, there was no reliance to be placed on what they affirmed or promised. Oaths were taken by lifting up the right hand as toward God. See Genesis 14:22; Exodus 6:8 (Margin, and Hebrew); Deuteronomy 32:40.

Verse 9

I will sing a new song unto thee, O God - There will be occasion in such a deliverance, or manifestation of mercy, for a new expression of praise. On the phrase, "a new song," see the notes at Psalm 33:3.

Upon a psaltery, and an instrument of ten strings - The word "and" should not have been inserted here. The idea is, "Upon a lyre or harp (Nebel) of ten strings, will I sing praise." See the notes at Isaiah 5:12; and notes at Psalm 33:2.

Verse 10

It is he that giveth salvation unto kings - Margin, "Victory." The Hebrew word means "salvation," but it is used here in the sense of deliverance or rescue. Even "kings," with all their armies, have no hope but in God. They seem to be the most powerful of men, but they are, like all other people, wholly dependent on him for deliverance from danger. David thus recognizes his own entire dependence. Though a king in the divine

purpose and in fact, yet he had no power but as derived from God; he had no hope of deliverance but in him. It is implied further that God might as readily be supposed to be willing to interpose in behalf of kings as of other people when their cause was right, and when they looked to him for aid. See the notes at Psalm 33:16: "there is no king saved by the multitude of an host." Compare Psalm 44:5-6.

Who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword - Who has done it; who can do it again; on whom alone David is dependent as all other men are. David speaks of himself by name elsewhere. See Psalm 18:50; 2 Samuel 7:26. He refers to himself also under the name of "the king," Psalm 61:6; Psalm 63:11. Caesar, in his writings, often speaks of himself in the same way.

Verse 11

Rid me, and deliver me … - See the notes at Psalm 144:7-8. The language is here repeated. The prayer had been interrupted by the thought that the answer to it would lay the foundation for praise, and by an acknowledgment of entire dependence on God. The psalmist now, after repeating the prayer, suggests what would result from the answer to it, and dwells on the happy consequences which must follow; the bright scenes in his own reign, in the prosperity of the people, in the happiness of the nation, in domestic comforts, and in the abundance which the land would produce when these dangers should pass away, when people now engaged in the conflict of arms might return to the peaceful pursuits of life, when families would be safe in their dwellings, and when the earth cultivated in time of peace would again produce abundance, Psalm 144:12-14.

Verse 12

That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth - That our sons - not called forth to the hardships of the tent and the field, the perils and the exposures of war - may grow up under the culture of home, of the family, in quiet scenes, as plants carefully cultivated and flourishing. Compare Psalm 128:3. The Hebrew here is, "grown large in their youth;" not "grown up," which has a paradoxical appearance. The meaning is, that they may be stout, strong, vigorous, well-formed, even in early life; that they may not be stunted in their growth, but be of full and manly proportions.

That our daughters may be as cornerstones - The word used here - זויות *zâvîyôth* - occurs only in the plural form, and means properly "corners"

- from a verb meaning to hide away, to conceal. The word is used respecting the corners of an altar, Zechariah 9:15; and seems here to refer to the corner columns of a palace or temple: perhaps, as Gesenius (Lexicon) supposes, in allusion to the columns representing female figures so common in Egyptian architecture.

Polished - Margin, "cut." The idea is not that of "polishing" or "smoothing," but of cutting or sculpturing. It is the stone carefully cut as an ornament.

After the similitude of a palace - A more literal translation would be, "The likeness or model of a temple;" or, for the building of a temple. That is, that they may be such as may be properly compared with the ornamental columns of a temple or palace. The comparison is a very beautiful one, having the idea of grace, symmetry, fair proportions: that on which the skill of the sculptor is most abundantly lavished.

Verse 13

That our garners may be full - That our fields may yield abundance, so that our granaries may be always filled.

Affording all manner of store - Margin, "From kind to kind." Hebrew, "From sort to sort;" that is, every sort or kind of produce or grain; all, in variety, that is needful for the supply of man and beast.

That our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets - A great part of the wealth of Palestine always consisted in flocks of sheep; and, from the earliest periods, not a few of the inhabitants were shepherds. This language, therefore, is used to denote national prosperity.

In our streets - The Hebrew word used here means properly whatever is outside; what is out of doors or abroad, as opposed to what is within, as the inside of a house; and then, what is outside of a town, as opposed to what is within. It may, therefore, mean a street Jeremiah 37:21; Job 18:17; Isaiah 5:25; and then the country, the fields, pastures, etc.: Job 5:10; Proverbs 8:26. Here it refers to the pastures; the fields; the commons.

Verse 14

That our oxen may be strong to labour - Margin, "able to bear burdens;" or, "laden with flesh." The Hebrew is simply loaded or laden: that is, with a burden; or, with flesh; or, as Gesenius renders it, with young. The latter idea would best suit the connection - that of cattle producing abundantly or multiplying.

That there be no breaking in, nor going out - No breaking in of other cattle into enclosed grounds, and no escape of those which are shut up for pasture. That property may be safe everywhere. The image is that of security, peace, order, prosperity.

That there be no complaining in our streets - literally, "outcry; clamor." That the land may be at peace; that order and law may be observed; that the rights of all may be respected; that among neighbors there may be no strifes and contentions.

Verse 15

Happy is that people that is in such a case - In such a condition; or, where these things prevail.

Yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord - Whose God is Yahweh; who worship and serve Him as their God. The worship of Yahweh - the religion of Yahweh - is "adapted" to make a people happy; peaceful; quiet; blessed. Prosperity and peace, such as are referred to in the previous verses, are, and must be, the result of pure religion. Peace, order, abundance, attend it everywhere, and the best security for a nation's prosperity is the worship of God; that which is most certain to make a nation happy and blessed, is to acknowledge God and to keep his laws.

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PSALM 145

Introduction

This is also a Psalm of David, and the last of the series in this part of the collection. It is entitled simply, "Of Praise," or, in the Hebrew, "Praise by David," or "Praise of David;" that is, one of David's songs of praise. It is an "alphabetical" psalm; that is, each verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The arrangement in this respect is complete, except that the Hebrew letter *nun* (נ *n* is omitted, for which no reason can be assigned, unless it was from a desire that the psalm might consist of three equal parts of seven verses each. In the Septuagint, Syriac, Arabic, Latin Vulgate, and Aethiopic versions, this omission is attempted to be supplied by inserting between Psalm 145:13-14 a verse which in Hebrew would begin with the Hebrew letter *nun* (נ *n* - נאמן, etc.: - "Faithful is the Lord in all his words, and holy in all his works." This is taken from Psalm 145:17 of the psalm by the change of a word in the beginning - "faithful" for "righteous," נאמן for צדיק. There is no authority for this, however, in the MSS., and it is evidently an attempt to supply what seemed to be an omission or defect in the composition of the psalm. The verse is not in the Chaldee Paraphrase, or in the version of Aquila and Theodotion; and it is certain that as early as the time of Origen and Jerome it was not in the Hebrew text. The Masorites and the Jewish commentators reject it. The sense is in no way affected by the insertion or omission of this, since the verses of the psalm have no necessary connection in meaning - the composition, as in most of the alphabetical psalms, being made up of independent sentiments suggested in part at least by the necessity of commencing each verse with a particular letter.

The psalm does not admit of any particular analysis, and it is impossible now to ascertain the occasion on which it was written.

Verse 1

I will extol thee … - I will lift thee up; I will lift up thy name and praise, so that it may be heard afar.

And I will bless thy name forever and ever - I will bless or praise thee. I will do it now; I will do it in all the future. I will do it in time; I will do it in eternity. See the notes at Psalm 30:1.

Verse 2

Every day will I bless thee … - Compare Psalm 92:2; Psalm 55:17. As we receive blessings from God every day (compare Lamentations 3:23), it is proper that we should render to him daily thanks; as God is the same always - "yesterday, today, and forever" - it is proper that he should receive from day to day the tribute of praise; as we are daily dependent on him - one day as much as another - our recognition of that dependence should be daily; and as he will always be unchangeably the same, it will be proper that he should be praised forever and ever. Two things are apparent from this verse:

(1) that a truly religious man "will" worship God every day;

(2) that it is the fixed purpose of a truly religious man to continue this forever.

Verse 3

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised - See Psalm 96:4, note; Psalm 18:3, note.

And his greatness is unsearchable - See Job 5:9, note; Job 9:10, note; Job 11:7-8, notes.

Verse 4

One generation shall praise thy works … - Shall praise thee on account of thy works or thy doings. That is, Thy praise shall be always kept up on the earth. See the notes at Isaiah 38:19; notes at Psalm 19:2. One generation shall transmit the knowledge of thy works to another by praise - by hymns and psalms recording and celebrating thy praise. Successive generations of people shall take up the language of praise, and it shall thus be transmitted to the end of time.

And shall declare thy mighty acts - Thy works of strength or power. God's greatness - his infinity - is in itself a just ground of praise, for we should rejoice that there is One Infinite Eternal Being; and as all that greatness is employed in the cause of truth, of law, of good order, of justice, of kindness, of mercy, it should call forth continued praise in all parts of his dominions.

Verse 5

I will speak - That is, in my acts of praise. I will not be ashamed to be known as his worshipper; I will publicly declare my belief in his existence, his greatness, his goodness.

Of the glorious honor of thy majesty - The glory of the honor of thy majesty. This accumulation of epithets shows that the heart of the psalmist was full of the subject, and that he labored to find language to express his emotions. It is beauty; it is glory; it is majesty: it is all that is great, sublime, wonderful - all combined - all concentrated - in one Being.

And of thy wondrous works - Margin, "things," or "words." The reference is to wondrous deeds or acts considered as the subject of discourse or praise.

Verse 6

And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts - The force, the power of those things done by thee which are suited to inspire fear or reverence. The great power displayed in those acts shall be a ground or reason for celebrating thy praise. The manifestations of that power will so deeply impress the minds of people, that they will be led to speak of them.

And I will declare thy greatness - Hebrew, "And thy greatness, I will declare it." In respect to that, I will recount it, or I will make it known to others.

Verse 7

They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness - Hebrew, The memory of the greatness of thy goodness they will pour forth. The word rendered "abundantly utter" means to bud forth, to gush out, to flow, as a fountain. Proverbs 18:4; Proverbs 1:23; Proverbs 15:2, Proverbs 15:28. It is applied to words as poured forth in praise. The meaning is, that the heart is full, as a fountain is full of water, and that it naturally overflows, or seeks to discharge itself. The thought of the goodness of God fills the heart, and makes it overflow with gratitude.

And shall sing of thy righteousness - They shall shout for joy at the displays of thy justice; at the manifestations of thy righteous character.

Verse 8

The Lord is gracious - See Psalm 86:5, note; Psalm 86:15, note.

And full of compassion - Kind; compassionate; ready to do good. See the notes at Psalm 103:8.

Slow to anger - See Psalm 103:8, where the same expression occurs.

And of great mercy - Margin, great in mercy. His greatness is shown in his mercy; and the manifestation of that mercy is great: great, as on a large scale; great, as manifested toward great sinners; great, in the sacrifice made

that it may be displayed; great, in the completeness with which sin is pardoned - pardoned so as to be remembered no more.

Verse 9

The Lord is good to all - To all his creatures. That is, he is kind and compassionate toward them; he is disposed and ready to do them good. There is not one of them whom he is not ready and willing to bless; not one whose happiness would not be agreeable to him, or whose welfare he is not ready to promote. Compare Psalm 100:5.

And his tender mercies are over all his works - In all that he has made there is evidence that he is a kind and benevolent God. He has a heart to love, to bless, what he has made; everywhere arrangements are made for happiness; he is not disposed to cast off the feeble, the erring, and the suffering; he is willing to receive back again those who have wandered from him, to pardon the offending, to wipe away the tears of the sorrowful.

Verse 10

All thy works shall praise thee - Or, do praise thee; that is, all thy works show what thou art, and combine in setting forth thy perfections. See the notes at Psalm 19:1.

And thy saints shall bless thee - Or, do bless thee. All those who are holy in heaven and on earth, the angels around thy throne, and thy people below, all combine to proclaim thy praise.

Verse 11

They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom - Of thy reign; of the great principles of thy government and laws. They see in that reign evidence that thou art worthy of universal praise. Seeing this, it becomes to them a subject on which they talk or converse (compare Malachi 3:16) - a subject of interest to their hearts, and "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." People talk about that which interests them; those things in which they have pleasure; those which they desire to understand; those in which they see difficulties that they would wish to have solved. It is one of the characteristics of the "saints" - of the people of God - that they do talk about God and his kingdom; that the subject is to them a pleasant theme of meditation and conversation; that they have the kind of pleasure in talking about God which other people have in conversing about their farms or their merchandise, their children and friends, the news of the day, politics, literature, or science.

And talk of thy power - As put forth in the works of creation; as manifested in the dispensations of thy providence; as evinced in the conversion of sinners; as displayed in carrying thy truth around the world; as exhibited in sustaining fine sufferer, and in giving peace and support to the dying.

Verse 12

To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts - To bring other people to understand and to appreciate the evidences of the power of God. A man who sees this himself will wish that others may see it also. This is the foundation of the desire which warms and animates the heart of the Christian missionary - the desire to make the great truths of redemption known as far as possible, even to the ends of the earth.

And the glorious majesty of his kingdom - And the glory of the majesty of his reign. They wish to communicate the knowledge of this to those ignorant of it. They themselves see this to be glorious, and they wish that all others may see it also.

Verse 13

Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom … - See Psalm 10:16, note; Daniel 4:34, note. The meaning is, that the reign of God will continue forever and ever. It will never pass away as other dominions do; it will not change as dynasties do among people; it will not be overthrown as they are; its great principles will stand firm forever and ever. Compare the notes at Psalm 72:17.

Verse 14

The Lord upholdeth all that fall - The word used here is a participle, literally, "The Lord sustaining;" that is, the Lord is a Sustainer or Upholder of all that fall. The allusion is to those who have no power to go of themselves; who would sink under the burdens of life if they were not supported. The idea is, that it is a characteristic of the Lord, that he does sustain such; that all such may confidently look to him to uphold them.

And raiseth up all those that be bowed down - The word here also is a participle: "he is lifting up;" that is, he is a lifter up. The reference is to those who are bent and bowed under the duties, the cares, the trials of life; who go bowed down under those burdens. God is able to strengthen them so that they can bear those burdens without being crushed under them.

Verse 15

The eyes of all wait upon thee - Margin, Look unto thee. All creatures, on the land, in the air, in the waters; all in heaven; all throughout the universe. That is, It is as if all directed their eyes to thee imploringly for the supply of their needs. To no one else can they look for those things which are needful for them. A universe thus looks every day, every hour, every moment, to its God! How sublime the scene!

And thou givest them their meat in due season - See the notes at Psalm 104:27, where the same words occur.

Verse 16

Thou openest thine hand - By the mere opening of the hand all needful gifts are bestowed on the creatures dependent on thee. The same words are found in Psalm 104:28; see the notes at that passage.

And satisfiest the desire of every living thing - All kinds of creatures - people, fowls, beasts, fishes, insects - the innumerable multitudes that swarm on the earth, in the air, in the waters. In Psalm 104:28, it is, "They are filled with good." The meaning is essentially the same. Of course this is to be taken in a general sense. It cannot mean that absolutely no one ever needs, or ever perishes from want, but the idea is that of the amazing beneficence and fullness of God in being able and willing to satisfy such multitudes; to keep them from perishing by cold, or hunger, or nakedness. And, in fact, how few birds perish by hunger; how few of the infinite number of the inhabitants of the sea; how few animals that roam over deserts, or in vast plains; how few people; how few even of the insect tribes - how few in the world revealed by the microscope - the world beneath us - the innumerable multitudes of living things too small even to be seen by the naked eye of man!

Verse 17

The Lord is righteous in all his ways - In his own character; in his laws; in his providential dealings; in his arrangements for the redemption and salvation of man. In his own character he is what it is desirable that a God should be; in all his laws he ordains that only which it is desirable should be enacted; in all his dealings with people he does that which it is desirable should be done. He violates no right; he wrongs no one; he demands of no one a service which would be unjust; he makes no arrangements for pardon and salvation which it is not best should be made. It is much for a man to be able to say in all that occurs to him under the divine administration, "It is right;" it is much for a man to have such

confidence in God as to be able to feel that all he does in respect to nations is the best thing that could be done. Compare Psalm 89:14, note; Psalm 97:2, note.

And holy in all his works - Margin, merciful, or bountiful. The Hebrew word is merciful. The idea seems to be that righteousness and mercy are equally consulted in his arrangements; that they meet together, and act harmomoniously in the divine plans. Compare the notes at Psalm 85:10.

Verse 18

The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him - There is a sense in which he is "nigh" to all, for he is everywhere present; but there is a special sense in which he seems to be near to us; in which he manifests himself to us; in which he gives us evidence of his presence. It is in prayer, in praise, in his ordinances - in his gracious interpositions in our behalf - in the peace and joy which we have in communion with him. Compare the notes at Psalm 34:18: "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart."

To all that call upon him in truth - In sincerity; not hypocritically; worshipping him as the true God, and with a sincere desire to obtain his favor. Compare the notes at John 4:24. We can have no hope that God will hear us unless we are sincere in our worship. He sees the heart, and he will act toward us as we are, and not as we profess to be.

Verse 19

He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him - Of those who worship him with reverence - those who are his true friends. See the notes at Matthew 7:7-8; notes at John 14:13; notes at 1 John 5:14; notes at Psalm 34:15.

He also will hear their cry, and will save them - He will regard their expressed desire - their earnest prayer.

Verse 20

The Lord preserveth all them that love him - He keeps them; watches over them; defends them; makes them the object of his care. See Psalm 31:20, note, Psalm 31:23, note; Psalm 97:10, note.

But all the wicked will he destroy - All that are found ultimately to be wicked; all that on the final trial deserve to be classed with the wicked. See Psalm 9:17, note; Psalm 11:6, note; Matthew 25:46, note.

Verse 21

My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord - That is, I will utter his praise. In view of all these things, in view of his character and doings, I will praise him. I will be found among those who honor him; who acknowledge him as the true God; who render homage for what he is, and thanks for what he has done.

And let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever - All people; all that dwell upon the earth. Let his praise be universal and eternal. This is the language of true piety; all in whose bosom there is any true religion will heartily say Amen. No desire of a pious heart is more constant and strong than that God should be praised, adored, honored by all intelligent creatures; that he should be known and acknowledged in all the earth as the true God; that his praise should ascend from all parts of the universe forever. See the notes at Psalm 100:1-5.

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PSALM 146

Introduction

This psalm is without a title, and it is impossible to ascertain by whom, or on what occasion, it was composed. In the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, the title is, "Hallelujah. Of Haggai and Zechariah." But this is without authority, and it is not known how it came to be prefixed. The same title occurs in the Arabic Version. The Syriac Version has the title still more in full: "Spoken by Haggai and Zechariah the prophets, who ascended from the captivity at Babylon, concerning the morning ministration of the priests;" that is, to be used in their morning services. The tradition, therefore, would seem to be that this is a composition of those prophets. That it may have belonged to the times of Haggai and Zechariah is certainly possible, nor is there anything in the psalm inconsistent with that supposition, though there is no positive evidence that it is so. In this portion of the Psalms Psalm 146:1-2.

II. Reliance is not to be put in man, even in princes, since all are mortal, Psalm 146:3-4.

III. God is the only Being on whom we can rely, Psalm 146:5-9.

(1) the happiness of that reliance, Psalm 146:5.

(2) reasons for such reliance, Psalm 146:6-9. He is the Creator of all things; he keeps truth; he executes judgment for the oppressed; he shows his kindness toward the hungry, the prisoner, the blind, the bowed down, the righteous, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

IV. God will reign for ever, and he is the God of Zion. His people, therefore, should praise him, Psalm 146:10.

Verse 1

Praise ye the Lord - "Ye" - all people. Margin, Hallelujah. See Psalm 104:35; Psalm 106:1.

Praise the Lord, O my soul - See Psalm 103:1, note; Psalm 104:1, note.

Verse 2

While I live will I praise the Lord … - See the notes at Psalm 104:33, where the same language occurs substantially as in this verse: "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being." The idea is, not merely that he would praise him during this life -

short and fleeting as it is - but that as long as he had an existence - in the future world - forever he would praise him.

Through every period of my life
Thy goodness I'll pursue;
And after death, in distant worlds,

The glorious theme renew.

Through all eternity to Thee

A joyful song I'll raise;

But, oh! eternity's too short

To utter all thy praise."
- Addison

Verse 3

Put not your trust in princes - Rely on God rather than on man, however exalted he may be. There is a work of protection and salvation which no man, however exalted he may be, can perform for you; a work which God alone, who is the Maker of all things, and who never dies, can accomplish. See the notes at Psalm 118:8-9. Compare also the notes at Isaiah 2:22: "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

Nor in the son of man - Any son of man; any human being, no matter what his rank or power. The phrase is often used to denote man. See the notes at Psalm 8:4. The appellation "Son of man" was often applied by the Saviour to himself to express emphatically the idea that he was a man - that he had a human nature; that he was identified with the race; that he was a brother, a fellow-sufferer, a friend of man: that he was not a cold and abstract being so exalted that he could not feel or weep over the sins and woes of a fallen and suffering world. The language here, however, it is scarcely necessary to say, does not refer to him. It is right to put our trust in him; we have no other trust.

In whom there is no help - Margin, salvation. So the Hebrew. The idea is, that man cannot save us. He cannot save himself; he cannot save others.

Verse 4

His breath goeth forth - He dies like other people, no matter how exalted he is. See the notes at Isaiah 2:22.

He returneth to his earth - See the notes at Psalm 90:3. The earth - the dust - is "his" -

(a) It is his, as that from which he was made: he turns back to what he was. Genesis 3:19: "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

(b) The earth - the dust - the grave is his, as it is his home - the place where he will abide.

(c) It is his, as it is the only property which he has in reversion. All that a man - a prince, a nobleman, a monarch, a millionaire - will soon have will be his grave - his few feet of earth. That will be his by right of possession; by the fact that, for the time being, he will occupy it, and not another man. But that, too, may soon become another man's grave, so that even there he is a tenant only for a time; he has no permanent possession even of a grave. How poor is the richest man!

In that very day - The very day - the moment - that he dies.

His thoughts perish - His purposes; his schemes; his plans; his purposes of conquest and ambition; his schemes for becoming rich or great; his plans of building a house, and laying out his grounds, and enjoying life; his design of making a book, or taking a journey, or giving himself to ease and pleasure. Luke 12:19-20: "and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry; but God said unto him, Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of time." Such are all the purposes of men!

Verse 5

Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help - Who may rely for protection on the God who defended Jacob in his travels and dangers. Or, perhaps the word Jacob is used here collectively to denote Israel - the Jewish people: the God whom they adore and worship, rather than the gods of the pagan. Compare Psalm 144:15, note; Psalm 54:4, note.

Whose hope is in the Lord his God - In Yahweh, worshipped as his God. That is, who truly worships Yahweh, or makes Yahweh his God.

Verse 6

Which made heaven and earth … - Who is the true God, the Creator of all things. Happy is he who can address the God who called all this

wondrous universe into being, and who sustains all by his power, as his God.

Which keepeth truth for ever - Who is always true to his promises. In this verse there are two reasons given why the lot of the people of God would be a happy one:

(1) That Yahweh is the true God, the Creator of all things, and, therefore, able to protect and provide for them.

(2) That he is faithful, and may always be relied on.

Idol-gods have no power, and every reliance placed on them is a vain reliance; people are often false and cannot be trusted, but Yahweh has infinite power, and every promise that he makes will be fulfilled; all that he says is eternally and unchangeably true. The reasons for trusting in him, or the reasons why they who trust in him are "happy," are further stated in the following verses.

Verse 7

Which executeth judgment for the oppressed - This is the third reason why the lot of those is a happy one who trust in God. It is because he has power to pronounce and execute a right judgment or sentence in regard to the oppressed and the wronged, and because it is characteristic of his nature that he does thus execute judgment. See the notes at Psalm 103:6: "The Lord executeth right. eousness and judgment for all that are oppressed."

Which giveth food to the hungry - See the notes at Psalm 107:9: "For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." This is the fourth reason why they who confide in God are happy. Compare Luke 1:53: "He hath filled the hungry with good things."

The Lord looseth the prisoners - This is the fifth reason why they who trust in the Lord are "happy." Compare the notes at Psalm 68:6: "He bringeth out those which are bound with chains." See also the notes at Psalm 107:10: "Being bound in affliction and iron." Compare Job 36:8-9.

Verse 8

The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind - This is the sixth reason for what is stated as to the blessedness of those who put their trust in the Lord. The language here would be applicable to bodily or to mental blindness. Compare the notes at Psalm 119:18: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may

behold wondrous things out of thy law." See also the notes at Isaiah 35:5: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened."

The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down - This is the seventh reason why they are happy who trust in the Lord. It is that those who are crushed and bowed down under the weight of care, trouble, and calamity, are raised up by him, or are sustained and comforted. See the notes at Psalm 145:14: "The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down."

The Lord loveth the righteous - This is the eighth reason why those who trust in the Lord are happy. It is a characteristic of God, and a foundation for praise, that he loves those who obey law; who do that which is right.

Verse 9

The Lord preserveth the strangers - He regards them with interest; he defends and guides them. This is the ninth reason why those who trust in the Lord are happy. The stranger - away from home and friends; with no one to feel an interest in him or sympathy for him; with the feeling that he is forsaken; with no one on whom he can call for sympathy in distress - may find in God one who will regard his condition; who will sympathize with him; who is able to protect and befriend him. Compare Exodus 12:49; Exodus 22:21; Exodus 23:9; Leviticus 19:33; Deuteronomy 1:16; Deuteronomy 10:18-19; Isaiah 56:3, Isaiah 56:6.

He relieveth the fatherless and widow - He is their friend. This is the tenth reason why those who put their trust in the Lord are happy. It is that God is the Friend of those who have no earthly protector. See the notes at Psalm 68:5: "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation."

But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down - He overturns their plans; defeats their schemes; makes their purposes accomplish what they did not intend they should accomplish. The Hebrew word here means to bend, to curve, to make crooked, to distort; then, to overturn, to turn upside down. The same word is applied to the conduct of the wicked, in Psalm 119:78: "They dealt perversely with me." The idea here is, that their path is not a straight path; that God makes it a crooked way; that they are diverted from their design; that through them he accomplishes purposes which they did not intend; that he prevents their accomplishing their own designs; and that he will make their plans subservient to a higher and better

purpose than their own. This is the eleventh reason why those who put their trust in God are happy. It is that God is worthy of confidence and love, because he has all the plans of wicked men entirely under his control.

Verse 10

The Lord shall reign for ever - See the notes at Psalm 10:16: "The Lord is King forever and ever" Compare Exodus 15:18.

Even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations - As long as the world shall endure. There shall be no change of dynasty as there is in human governments; but the same King shall reign from age to age.

Praise ye the Lord - Hallelu-jah. The psalm closes as it commences. It is a call on all persons to unite in the praise of Yahweh.

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PSALM 147

Introduction

The author of this psalm is unknown; nor can the occasion on which it was composed be ascertained with any degree of certainty. In the Septuagint, the Arabic, and the Syriac versions, it is ascribed, like the previous psalm, to the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The Syriac has this title: "A Psalm of Haggai and Zechariah, when they urged the completion of the temple of Jerusalem." It is quite manifest, from Psalm 147:2, Psalm 147:13-14, that the psalm was written after the return from the Babylonian captivity, and that probably on the completion of the temple after that return, with a view to be employed at its dedication. See Introduction to Psalm 146:1-10.

This psalm comprises two themes: praise to God for his goodness to his creatures generally; and special praise for his goodness to his people. These topics are intermingled in the psalm, but the former is more prominent in the first part of the psalm; the latter in the close. Both were proper themes at the rebuilding of the temple and the walls of the city, after the return from the exile. Both are proper now, and will be so always.

Verse 1

Praise ye the Lord - Hallelu-jah. See Psalm 146:1.

For it is good to sing praises unto our God - See the notes at Psalm 92:1: "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord."

For it is pleasant - See the notes at Psalm 135:3: "Sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant." The Hebrew word is the same.

And praise is comely - Becoming; proper. See the notes at Psalm 33:1: "praise is comely for the upright." The Hebrew word is the same. If these psalms were composed for the rededication of the temple, it would not be unnatural that much of the language employed should be borrowed from earlier psalms with which the people were familiar.

Verse 2

The Lord doth build up Jerusalem - He builds up the walls; he restores the city; he has caused the temple to be reconstructed. This language would be applicable to a return from the captivity. There may be an allusion here to the language in Psalm 102:16: "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory." See the notes at that passage.

What is there spoken of as what would be in the future is here spoken of as accomplished, and as a ground of praise.

He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel - Those who have been exiled from their native land, and who have been scattered as outcasts in a foreign country. This is appropriate language to use on the supposition that the psalm was composed after the return from the exile, for it is in such language that that return was predicted by the prophets. Isaiah 11:12: "and he shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah," etc. Isaiah 56:8: "the Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel," etc.

Verse 3

He healeth the broken in heart - Referrring primarily to the fact that he had healed those who were crushed and broken in their long captivity, and that he had given them comfort by returning them to their native land. At the same time, however, the language is made general, as describing a characteristic of God that he does this; that it is his character to do this. See the notes at Psalm 34:18. See also Psalm 51:17. Compare Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18.

And bindeth up their wounds - See the notes at Isaiah 1:6. Margin, griefs. The word refers to those who are afflicted with griefs and troubles. The reference is to mental sorrows; to a troubled spirit; to a heart made sad in any way. God has provided healing for such; on such he bestows peace.

Verse 4

He telleth the number of the stars - He counts them all. God only can do this. The stars are so numerous that no astronomer can count them; they lie so far in the depths of space, and are so remote from each other, that no man can be so presumptuous as to suppose that he has even seen any considerable part of them, even by the aid of the most powerful telescopes.

He calleth them all by their names - As if each one had a name, and God could call them forth one by one by their names, like the muster-roll of an army. This language seems to be taken from Isaiah 40:26: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by numbers; he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth." See the notes at that passage.

Verse 5

Great is our Lord - See the notes at Psalm 48:1.

And of great power - This seems to be added, as in Isaiah 40:28, in view of the power required in making the heavens, and in guiding and numbering the stars: "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?"

His understanding is infinite - Margin, Of his understanding there is no number. That is, This corresponds with his power to number the stars. There is no limit to it. It is not bounded; there is no point reached where it can be said that there is no more; that it is exhausted. See the notes at Isaiah 40:28: "There is no searching of his understanding."

Verse 6

The Lord lifteth up the meek - The humble; the poor; the bowed down; the oppressed. See the notes at Psalm 146:8: "The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down."

He casteth the wicked down to the ground - See the notes at Psalm 146:9: "The way of the wicked he turneth upside down."

Verse 7

Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving - Accompany the praise of God - the expression of worship - with a grateful remembrance of the past. The one will aid the other, and the two will constitute acceptable and proper worship. The first word here means properly to answer, or respond; and the idea would seem to be, that we are to make a suitable response or answer to the manifold layouts which we have received at the hand of God.

Sing praise upon the harp unto our God - On the word harp, see the notes at Isaiah 5:12. The harp was an instrument commonly employed in divine worship. See the notes at Psalm 33:2: "Praise the Lord with harp." Compare Psalm 43:4; Psalm 49:4; Psalm 57:8; Psalm 71:22.

Verse 8

Who covereth the heaven with clouds - Clouds that are designed to convey refreshing rain to the earth. The reasons for praise here stated Psalm 147:8-9 are derived from the goodness of God as exhibited in his providential arrangements for the good of man.

Who prepareth rain for the earth - By causing it to be taken from the sea, carried by the clouds, and conveyed through the air to the places where it is needed, and then gently sprinkled on the earth. Compare the notes at Psalm 104:13: "He watereth the hills from his chambers." See also Job

5:10, note; Job 28:26, note; Job 36:27-28, notes; Job 38:28, note; Job 38:37, note.

Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains - Which would be barren but for the rain. Who conveys the water thus to the very tops of the mountains, and causes it to descend on their sides, so that even the mountains are clothed with verdure and beauty. Compare the notes at Psalm 104:14: "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle."

Verse 9

He giveth to the beast his food - To the wild beast; to the animals that cannot toil for it themselves, as man does. Compare Psalm 104:21, note; Psalm 104:27-28, notes.

To the young ravens which cry - Compare the notes at Job 38:41. See also Psalm 145:15.

Verse 10

He delighteth not in the strength of the horse - The horse is among the noblest works of God - perhaps the noblest of all the animals that he has made. See the notes at Job 39:19-25. Yet God regards with more interest and pleasure humble piety than he does any mere power, however great and wonderful it may be.

He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man - Not the same pleasure as in piety; he prefers the humble heart to this. The reference is to man as capable of rapid marches, of quick movements in assaulting an enemy; the allusion being, perhaps, to an army prepared for war - cavalry and infantry - the horse moving on with resistless force - the foot-soldiers with rapid motion.

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Verse 11

The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him - In those who truly worship him, however humble, poor, and unknown to people they may be; however unostentatious, retired, unnoticed may be their worship. Not in the "pride, pomp, and circumstance of war" is his pleasure; not in the march of armies; not in the valor of the battlefield; not in scenes where "the garments of the warrior are rolled in blood," but in the closet, when the devout child of God prays; in the family, when the group bend before Him in solemn devotion; in the assembly - quiet, serious, calm - when his friends are gathered together for prayer and praise; in the heart that truly loves, reverences, adores Him.

In those that hope in his mercy - It is a pleasure to him to have the guilty, the feeble, the undeserving hope in Him - trust in Him - seek Him.

Verse 12

Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem … - In addition to this general praise in which all may unite, there are special reasons why Jerusalem and its inhabitants should praise God: just as now, in addition to the general reasons pertaining to all people why they should praise God, there are special reasons why Christians - why his redeemed people - should do it. What those reasons, as pertaining to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, were, is specified in the following verses.

Verse 13

For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates - He has made thee safe and secure - as if he had given additional strength to the fastenings of the gates of the city. Cities were surrounded by walls. They were entered through gates. Those gates were fastened by bars passed across them, to which the gates were secured. The language here might be applicable to any period, but it is probable that there is particular reference to Jerusalem as made strong in rebuilding it after the return from Babylon.

He hath blessed thy children within thee - The inhabitants, by giving them safety and peace.

Verse 14

He maketh peace in thy borders - Margin, he maketh thy border peace. The word border here refers to a boundary, and stands for all the domain or territory included within the boundaries of a country. The idea is that peace prevailed throughout the land.

And filleth thee with the finest of the wheat - Margin, as in Hebrew, fat of wheat. Literally, "He satisfies thee with the fat of wheat." There is no want of wheat, and that of the best kind. Compare the notes at Psalm 132:15: "I will satisfy her poor with bread."

Verse 15

He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth - That is, with reference to the productions of the earth; to the changes which occur; to the seasons; to snow, frost, ice, cold, heat, wind; and he is universally and immediately obeyed. Nature everywhere yields a ready acquiescence to his will.

His word runneth very swiftly - As if it hastened to obey him. There is no delay. Compare the notes at Psalm 33:9: "He spake, and it was done; he

commanded, and it stood fast." Snow, and frost, and ice, and cold, and heat, and wind, are entirely obedient to him. There is no reluctance in obeying him; there is no delay.

Verse 16

He giveth snow like wool - He covers the earth with snow, so that it seems to have a clothing of wool. Compare the notes at Job 37:6: "For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth."

He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes - As if ashes were strewed over the earth; or, as easily as one strews ashes.

Verse 17

He casteth forth his ice like morsels - The word rendered morsels means properly a bit, a crumb, as of bread, Genesis 18:5; Judges 19:5. The allusion here would seem to be to hail, which God sends upon the earth as easily as one scatters crumbs of bread from the hand.

Who can stand before his cold? - Or, hail. The word is the same, except in pointing, as the preceding word rendered ice. The idea is that no one can stand before the peltings of the hail, when God sends it forth, or scatters it upon the earth.

Verse 18

He sendeth out his word - He commands: or, he speaks.

And melteth them - Melts the snow and the ice. Compare the notes at Job 37:10-12: "By the breath of God frost is given," etc. The idea is, that they are entirely under his control. They obey him when he speaks.

He causeth his wind to blow - The warm south wind: "his" wind, because he directs it, and causes it to perform his will.

And the waters flow - The snow and the ice melt.

Verse 19

He showeth his word unto Jacob - Margin, words. His commands; his promises; his laws. The things which were before adverted to, pertain to the world in general. All people see his works; all enjoy the benefits of his arrangements in the seasons - in the changes which occur upon the earth; but he has especially favored his own people by giving them his laws - his revealed will. This distinguishes them above all other nations of the earth, and gives them special occasion for gratitude.

His statutes and his judgments unto Israel - His laws; his written word. The word judgments here refers to the law of God as being that which he judges or determines to be right.

Verse 20

He hath not dealt so with any nation - He has favored Israel more than any other people by giving them his revealed truth. This was so. There was no nation in the ancient world so favored as the Hebrew people in this respect. There is no nation now so favored as the nation that has the revealed will of God - the Bible. The possession of that book gives a nation a vast superiority in all respects over all others. In laws, customs, morals, intelligence, social life, purity, charity, prosperity, that book elevates a nation at once, and scatters blessings which can be derived from nothing else. The highest benevolence that could be shown to any nation would be to put it in possession of the word of God in the language of the people.

And as for his judgments, they have not known them - Other nations are ignorant of his laws, his statutes, his revealed will. They are consequently subjected to all the evils which arise from ignorance of those laws. The fact that the ancient people of God possessed them was a sufficient reason for the Hallelujah with which the psalm closes. The fact that we possess them is a sufficient reason why we should re-echo the shout of praise, and cry Hallelujah.

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PSALM 148

Introduction

The author of this psalm is unknown. The occasion on which it was composed was probably the same as that on which the two previous psalms and the two following were written - each commencing and closing with a Hallelujah. That occasion was, most probably, as before remarked, the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the captivity, and the dedication of the temple.

The psalm is, in general, a call on all parts of the universe to praise the Lord. It is properly divided into two portions. In the first Psalm 148:1-6, the call is addressed to the heavens - to all that is above the earth - to praise Yahweh; in the second Psalm 148:7-14, the call is addressed to all the dwellers on the earth to unite in that praise. The psalm is most animated and triumphant. The language accords with the sentiment. It is adapted to the most animating and spirit-stirring music; and these psalms - this and the two preceding and the two following - in style, in sentiment, in poetic beauty, in sublimity, in their adaptedness to fill the soul with lofty emotions - are eminently suited to close the whole collection - the entire Book of Psalms. Little can be needed, or can be added, in illustration of the sentiments of the psalm.

Verse 1

Praise ye the Lord - See the notes at Psalm 146:1.

Praise ye the Lord from the heavens - On the part of the heavens. Let those who dwell in heaven begin the song.

Praise him in the heights - All that are in the heights; to wit, in the highest parts of the universe, or the heavens.

Verse 2

Praise ye him, all his angels - Dwelling in the heavens. Compare the notes at Psalm 103:20.

Praise ye him, all his hosts - See the notes at Psalm 103:21 and the notes at Isaiah 1:9. All his armies - referring to the angels considered as marshalled into hosts, of which God is the Head and Leader.

Verse 3

Praise ye him, sun and moon - The most conspicuous and glorious objects in the heavens, as apparent to the eyes of people.

Praise him, all ye stars of light - A poetical expression to denote bright or shining stars. The phrase embraces all the stars as they strike the eyes of people. Each one has something special to it for which to praise God: and the entire groups - the immense multitudes, as such - should join in one chorus of praise.

Verse 4

Praise him, ye heavens of heavens - Referring to the idea that there is one heaven rising above another. See the notes at Psalm 68:33. See 1 Kings 8:27: "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee." Compare 2 Chronicles 2:6.

And ye waters that be above the heavens - Genesis 1:7: "And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament." The allusion here is to the waters which seem to be above the lower heaven, that is, the air, and which seem to come from some higher region - some higher heaven. See the notes at Psalm 104:3: "Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters."

Verse 5

Let them praise the name of the Lord - That is, Let them praise Yahweh himself - the name being often put for the person or thing referred to.

For he commanded, and they were created - He showed his great power by merely speaking, and they came at once into being. Compare Psalm 33:6, note; Psalm 33:9, note.

Verse 6

He hath also stablished them forever and ever - He has made them firm, stable, enduring. That they may be eternal is possible; that they will not be, no one can prove. Matter, when created, has no necessary tendency to decay or annihilation; and the universe - the stars, and suns, and systems - which have endured so many million of ages may continue to exist any number of million of ages to come. Of course, however, all this is dependent on the will of God. On the meaning of this passage, compare Psalm 119:90, note; Psalm 72:5, note; Psalm 89:2, note; Psalm 89:36-37, note. See also 2 Peter 3:7, note; 2 Peter 3:10, note; 2 Peter 3:13, note.

He hath made a decree which shall not pass - He has given a law or statute which they cannot pass. The word rendered decree here seems to be used in the sense of limit or bound; and the idea is, that he has bound them

by a fixed law; he has established laws which they are compelled to observe. The fact is, in regard to them, that he has established great laws - as the law of gravitation - by which they are held from flying off; he has marked out orbits in which they move; he has so bound them that they perform their revolutions with unerring accuracy in the very path which he has prescribed. So accurate are their movements that they can be predicted with exact precision; and so uniform, that any succession of ages does not vary or affect them.

Verse 7

Praise the Lord from the earth - From among those who dwell on the earth. In respect to terrestrial objects, let these also unite in the praise of God.

Ye dragons - On the meaning of this word, see Psalm 91:13, note; Isaiah 13:22, note. The word may mean a great fish, a whale, a sea monster, or a serpent. It would seem to refer here to whales and sea monsters. See the notes at Revelation 12:3.

And all deeps - All that are in the depths of the sea. Not merely the "dragons" or sea monsters, but all that inhabit the oceans.

Verse 8

Fire, and hail - Fire, when accompanied by hail; that is, the lightning. See Psalm 18:12.

Snow, and vapors - Snow and clouds. It was not unnatural that these should be combined, or suggested together to the mind.

Stormy wind - The storm; the tempest.

Fulfilling his word - Obeying his command; accomplishing his purpose. Let the storm-wind, which seems to be so little under any control, speak his praise by showing how obedient it is to his will, and how exactly it carries out his designs. Its perfect submission to his laws - the exactness with which, though apparently so fierce, raging, and lawless, it carries out his plans, and pauses when he commands it - is in fact an act of praise or homage, as it proclaims his majesty, his supremacy, and his power. On the sentiment here expressed, compare Psalm 107:29, note; Psalm 89:9, note.

Verse 9

Mountains, and all hills - As being among the loftiest objects of earth, raising their heads highest toward the heavens.

Fruitful trees, and all cedars - Fruitful trees, not as distinguished from those which are barren, but as distinguished from forest-trees, those whose

nature is that they do not bear fruit. Of the latter, the cedar was the most prominent, and, therefore, is made the representative of the whole.

Verse 10

Beasts, and all cattle - Wild beasts and tame; those which roam the forest, and those which have been domesticated for the service of man. As fruitful trees and cedars might include all the trees, so the "beasts and cattle" here might include the whole of those that were wild and tamed.

Creeping things, and flying fowl - Margin, as in Hebrew, Birds of wing. These are grouped together for a reason similar to that for which fruitful trees and cedars, and beasts and cattle, are grouped together, to embrace the whole. The expression embraces the loftiest and lowest; those which ascend farthest above the earth, and those which creep upon its surface. The word rendered creeping things would properly embrace the smaller animals which creep along upon the ground; both those which have four feet or more, as mice, lizards, crabs, etc., and those without feet, which glide or drag themselves upon the ground, as worms and serpents. (Gesenius, Lexicon) These, in their lowly condition, and in their humble way, are called on to unite in the general chorus of praise. Accomplishing the purpose for which they are made, they will, with the most lofty of created beings, contribute to proclaim the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of God.

Verse 11

Kings of the earth, and all people - This would embrace all, as all are included in the idea of the rulers and the ruled.

Princes, and all judges of the earth - Those of exalted rank; those high in authority. This is proper in itself considered, as they are people like other people; and proper as an example to the rest. None of any rank are exempt from the obligation to praise God; none are cut off from the privilege.

Verse 12

Both young men, and maidens - Those in the morning of life, just entering on their career; just forming their character: with ardor, elasticity, cheerfulness, hope; let them consecrate all this to God: let all that there is in the buoyancy of their feelings, in the melody of their voices, in their ardor and vigor, be employed in the praise and the service of God.

Old men, and children - Old men, with what remains of life, and children, with all that there is of joyousness - let all unite in praising God. Life, as it closes - life, as it begins - let it all be devoted to God.

Verse 13

Let them praise the name of the Lord - Let them praise Yahweh - the name being often put for the person.

For his name alone is excellent - Margin, as in Hebrew, exalted. He only is exalted as God. See the notes at Psalm 8:1: "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

His glory is above the earth and heaven - Compare the notes at Psalm 113:4: "The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens." See also the notes at Psalm 8:1: "Who hast set thy glory above the heavens."

Verse 14

He also exalteth the horn of his people - He gives them power and prosperity. See the notes at Psalm 89:17: "And in thy favor our horn shall be exalted." Compare Psalm 92:10; Psalm 112:9.

The praise of all his saints - That is, "he has raised up praise for all his saints;" or, has given them occasion for praise. He has so blessed them with special mercies as to make praise especially appropriate for them.

Even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him - whom he admits to his presence as his friends; whom he regards as his own. See the notes at Ephesians 2:13; compare the notes at Acts 2:39.

Praise ye the Lord - Hallelu-jah. Let all unite in his praise.

PSALMS CONTENTS

PSALM 149

Introduction

This belongs to the group of psalms already referred to Psalm 149:1-5.

II. The exhortation to carry out the purposes of God in regard to the people who had them, and who wronged were still hostile to them: to inflict on them the punishment which was due to them, and which God designed to bring upon them - regarding themselves as called of God to be his instruments in executing that punishment, in token of the divine displeasure at the conduct of those who had oppressed and wronged them, Psalm 149:6-9.

Verse 1

Praise ye the Lord - Margin, Hallelujah. See the notes at Psalm 146:1.

Sing unto the Lord a new song - As if there was a new and a special occasion for praise. This would be so if the psalm was composed on the return from the exile; on the rebuilding of the city; and on the re-dedication of the temple. On the meaning of the language, see Psalm 33:3, note; Revelation 5:9, note; Revelation 14:3, note; see also Psalm 96:1; Isaiah 42:10.

And his praise in the congregation of saints - In the assembly of the people of God. See Psalm 148:14, note; Psalm 111:1, note.

Verse 2

Let Israel - The people of Israel; the Hebrew people; the people of God.

Rejoice in him that made him - Him, who has made the people what they are. All that they have and are is to be traced to him, as really as the universe of matter is to be traced to his power. Their condition is not one of development, or one which is the result of their own wisdom, grace, or power. See the notes at Psalm 100:3: "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves." Compare Isaiah 54:5.

Let the children of Zion - Those who dwell in Zion or Jerusalem.

Be joyful in their King - In God as their king.

(a) That they have a king, or that there is one to rule over them;

(b) That they have such a king; one so wise, so powerful, so good;

(c) That he administers his government with so much efficiency, impartiality, equity, wisdom, goodness. Compare Psalm 100:3-5.

Verse 3

Let them praise his name in the dance - Margin, with the pipe. The Hebrew word here - מחול *mâchôl* - is rendered dancing in Psalm 30:11; dance, as here, Psalm 150:4 (where also the margin has pipe); Jeremiah 31:13; Lamentations 5:15; dances, Jeremiah 31:4. It does not elsewhere occur. On the verb חול *chûl* see Psalm 10:5, note; Psalm 51:5, note. Here it cannot be improper to regard it as referring to that measured tread, or solemn movement which sometimes constituted a part of worship: 2 Samuel 6:14. Such a movement cannot be proved to be wrong in worship; whether it is wise or expedient is a different matter. Customs in worship change as the customs of a people change; and that might be very proper in one stage of society, or in one period of the world, which, though not in itself wrong, might be very unadvisable in another. There was much in the Hebrew mode of worship which cannot be transferred to the forms of Christian worship without an obvious incongruity and disadvantage; and because a thing has been done, and is not in itself wrong, we should not infer that it should always be done, or that it would be always best. If people like the Shakers dance in worship, they have an undoubted right to do so, and it may be the most edifying mode of worship for them with their low notions of religion; let not others ridicule them; nor let others go to see them as they would any other "outr'e" performance from idle curiosity. Such absurdities might soon die away if they were not kept alive by the notice which they attract, and by the foolish curiosity of wiser people. There are some things which are more certain to come to an end by neglect than they could by sober argument; some things which live merely because they are ridiculed, and because they who practice them are exalted into conspicuity by their own folly, and by the idea that they are martyrs.

Let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp - On these instruments, see the notes at Isaiah 5:12; notes at Job 21:12; notes at Psalm 68:25; notes at Psalm 81:2.

Verse 4

For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people - Let them rejoice on this account. He loves them; he approves their conduct; he bestows his favors upon them. All this should add to their joy, and fill their hearts with

gladness. Compare the notes at Psalm 35:27. The Hebrew word here rendered "taketh pleasure" conveys the idea of complacency, satisfaction, delight. It is the opposite of being pained or offended. God has complacency in his people. He delights in their welfare; he delights in doing them good.

He will beautify the meek with salvation - The word here rendered beautify means to adorn, to honor, as the sanctuary, Isaiah 60:7 (rendered glorify); and it here means that the salvation which God would bestow upon them would be of the nature of an ornament, as if they were clothed with costly or splendid raiment. Compare Psalm 132:16. The word meek here means humble or lowly, and may refer to those who are humble in rank or condition, or those who are humble in heart. Perhaps the two ideas are here combined. They have not external adorning, but God will give them an honor and beauty in salvation which no outward adorning could impart.

Verse 5

Let the saints be joyful in glory - In the glory of their condition; in the favor of God; in the honor which he bestows upon them. Let them rejoice in this; let them shout and triumph over this. Other men rejoice in honor; in wealth; in houses, lands, parks, libraries, works of art: let the saints rejoice in the glory of being the friends of God; in the hope of heaven. Compare Psalm 84:11.

Let them sing aloud upon their beds - Compare Job 35:10, note; Acts 16:25, note; Psalm 34:1, note. The idea is, that in the meditations of the night, when darkness is around them, when alone with God, they may find occasion for exultation and praise. Their hearts may be full of joy, and alone they may give expression to their joy in songs of praise.

Verse 6

Let the high praises of God be in their mouth - Margin, as in Hebrew, in their throat. Literally, "Praises of God in their throat; and a sword of two edges in their hand." That is, In the very work of executing the purposes of God on his enemies, there should be the feeling and the language of praise. Their hearts should be full of confidence in God; they should feel that they are engaged in his service; and while they defend themselves, or inflict punishment on the enemies of God, they should chant His praise. The idea is, that even in the work of war they might feel that they were engaged in the service of God, and that the passions usual in war should be subdued and kept under by the consciousness that they are mere instruments in the

hand of God to accomplish His purposes. Perhaps the Hebrew word rendered "high praises" - רוממה *rômemâh* - may imply more than mere praise. It may embrace anything that is lofty and exalted, and may mean here that they would have the consciousness that they were engaged in high and lofty aims; that they were carrying out the great designs of God; that they were executing purposes more momentous than their own could be - even the eternal purposes of the Most High. This would give an importance, a dignity, an elevation to their conduct which could spring from no other source.

And a two-edged sword in their hand - literally, a sword of edges; that is, a sword with an edge on both sides of the blade. Roman swords were often made in this manner. They were made for piercing as well as for striking. See the notes at Hebrews 4:12.

Verse 7

To execute vengeance upon the heathen - To inflict punishment upon them as a recompence for their sins. The word pagan here means nations. The allusion is, doubtless, to those who had oppressed and injured the Hebrew people - perhaps referring to those who had destroyed the city and the temple at the time of the Babylonian captivity. They were now to receive the punishment due for the wrongs which they had done to the nation; a just recompence at the hand of God, and by the instrumentality of those whom they had wronged. Compare the notes at Psalm 137:7-9.

And punishments upon the people - The people of those lands. Those who had waged war with the Hebrew nation.

Verse 8

To bind their kings with chains - To make them prisoners and captives. This is but carrying out the idea in the previous verses, of inflicting punishment upon them for the wrongs which they had done to the people of God. There is no evidence that this refers to a spiritual conquest, or to a spiritual subjection of those nations to the true religion. The whole idea is in accordance with what is so often expressed in the Psalms - that of inflicting just punishment on the wicked. See the General Introduction, Section 6.

And their nobles with fetters of iron - To make them prisoners. That is, to subdue them. Captives in war, even those of elevated rank, were often led in chains to grace the triumph of conquerors.

Verse 9

To execute upon them the judgment written - Either, that which is written in the law in general as what is threatened to wicked men; or, that which was written for their particular case, or which they were specifically commanded to do. Compare Deuteronomy 7:1-2; Deuteronomy 32:41-43. Most probably the reference is to some particular command in this case.

This honor have all his saints -

(a) It is an honor to engage in executing or carrying out the purposes of God. As it is an honor to be a magistrate, a judge, a sheriff, a constable, a commander of an army, an admiral in a navy, to execute the purposes of a government - an honor sought with great avidity among people as among the most valued distinctions of life - why should it be less honorable to execute the purposes of God? Are the objects which he seeks in his administration less important than those which are sought among people? Are his laws of less importance? Are his aims less pure? Is there less of justice, and equity, and benevolence in his plans?

(b) It is an honor which pertains to "all the saints" - to all who love and fear God - to be engaged in carrying out or executing his plans. In their own way, and in their own sphere - it may, indeed, be a very humble sphere - but each and all in their own sphere, are engaged in executing the purposes of God. In the duties of a family; in kindness to the poor; in the office of a teacher or a magistrate; in clearing a farm; in cultivating the land; in building a schoolhouse; in founding a church, a college, an asylum for the blind, the dumb, the lame, the insane; in contributing to send the gospel abroad over our own land, or among the pagan, or in going to carry that gospel to a benighted world - in some of these ways all who are truly the friends of God, or who are entitled to be enrolled among the "saints of the Lord" are, in fact, carrying out the purposes of the Lord - the "judgments written" to guide mankind; and man's highest honor here, as it will be in heaven, is to carry out the purposes of the Lord.

Praise ye the Lord - Hallelu-jah. It is a subject of praise and thanksgiving, it should lead us to shout Hallelujah, that we are permitted to be employed in any way, however humble, in carrying out the divine plans, or in accomplishing those great designs which he contemplates toward our race.

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PSALM 150

Introduction

This beautiful and animated psalm closes the series of the Hallelujah Psalms Psalm 146150, and appropriately also closes the entire volume. Its author is unknown, but in respect to the object for which it was composed there can be no uncertainty. It was manifestly designed, whoever wrote it, to occupy the very place which it does occupy - to complete the volume devoted to praise. Praise is the suitable ending of the book; praise is what the Spirit of inspiration meant to secure in the heart and on the lips. In the review of the whole there is occasion for praise. In view of all that has been disclosed about God, about his religion, about the manifestations of his mercy and grace to his people, there is occasion for praise. After all that has been experienced, observed, and recorded in this book - all of trial, sorrow, temptation, conflict, disappointment, sickness, bereavement, persecution, war, captivity, bondage, exile, tears, pain, darkness, trouble - there is, as the result of the whole, as there will be at the end of our own troubled and chequered lives, occasion for exultation, praise, triumph - songs, rejoicings, raptures, hallelujahs. This psalm, then, made up wholly of expressions of gratitude and praise, is an appropriate close to the entire Book of Psalms. So may our lives close, when its varied scenes are over, with thanksgivings and praises, as a proper expression in view of the past, and as emblematic of the uninterrupted employment that awaits us in the heavens.

Verse 1

Praise ye the Lord - See the notes at Psalm 146:1.

Praise God in his sanctuary - His holy place; the place where he dwells. The allusion here is, probably, to the temple, the place of his abode on earth.

Praise him in the firmament of his power - The whole expression is equivalent to earth and heaven; Praise him on earth; praise him in heaven. The word rendered firmament is the same which is used in Genesis 1:6. It properly means an expanse - a thing spread out. The verb from which the word is derived means to beat; then, to beat out - that is, to spread out by beating, as gold is; and then, simply to spread out, to expand. Compare Psalm 136:6; Isaiah 42:5; Isaiah 44:24. In Syriac the word means to make firm; but this idea is not necessarily in the Hebrew word. The idea of a firmament as something firm is derived from the Septuagint - in Genesis

1:6, στερέωμα *stereōma* - in this place, ἐν στερεώματι *en stereōmati* The Hebrew, however, merely means "an expanse" - something spread out, as the heavens seem to us to be "stretched out;" and the call here is on all that dwell above that expanse - in heaven - to unite with those on earth in his praise. It is called "the expanse of his power" because it is in the heavens - in the sun, the moon, the stars - that the power of God seems to be principally displayed.

Verse 2

Praise him for his mighty acts - See the notes at Psalm 145:4: "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts." The Hebrew word is the same. The reference is to that which displays the power of God; the things which manifest his omnipotence.

Praise him according to his excellent greatness - Hebrew, the multitude of his greatness. Let the praise in elevation correspond with this; let it be such as shall properly express this; let all be employed that will contribute to make this known, or that will be appropriate to this. Hence, the psalmist proceeds to call on all to make use of everything, by instrument and voice, that would in any manner set forth the praise of God.

Verse 3

Praise him with the sound of the trumpet - Margin, cornet. In this verse and the verses following there is an allusion to the instruments of music which were commonly employed in Hebrew worship. The idea is, that all these - all that could properly express praise - should be used to celebrate the praises of God. Each one, with its own distinct note, and all combined in harmony, should be employed for this purpose. Most of these instruments, and many more, are now combined in the organ, where the instruments, instead of being played on by separate performers, are so united that they can be supplied with wind from one source - the bellows - and all played by one performer. Thus one mind directs the performance, securing, if skillfully done, perfect unity and harmony. This instrument was unknown to the Hebrews. Among them, each instrument had its own performer. The trumpet was principally used to call the people together, but it was also an important instrument among those used by the bands of musicians that performed in the temple, as its tones are now important ones in the organ.

Praise him with the psaltery and harp - Hebrew, the נבל *nebel* and כנור *kinnôr* See these instruments described in the notes at Isaiah 5:12. The word

here rendered psaltery is there rendered viol - "And the harp and the viol," etc.

Verse 4

Praise him with the timbrel - Hebrew, תף *tôph* See this described in the notes at Isaiah 5:12. It is rendered tabret and tabrets in Genesis 31:27; 1 Samuel 10:5; 1 Samuel 18:6; Isaiah 5:12; Isaiah 24:8; Isaiah 30:32; Jeremiah 31:4; Ezekiel 28:13; timbrel and timbrels in Exodus 15:20; Judges 11:34; 2 Samuel 6:5; 1 Chronicles 13:8; Job 21:12; Psalm 81:2; Psalm 149:3; and in the margin in Jeremiah 31:4. The word does not occur elsewhere. It was an instrument that was struck with the hands.

And dance - See this word explained in the notes at Psalm 149:3. Dancing among the Hebrews seems to have accompanied the timbrel or tabret. See Exodus 15:20,

Praise him with stringed instruments - מנים *minniym* This word means strings, from a verb which means to divide; and the proper reference would be to slender threads, as if they were divided, or made small. It is nowhere else applied to instruments of music, but might be properly applied to a harp, a violin, a bass-viol, etc. The word strings is indeed applied elsewhere to instruments of music Psalm 33:2; Psalm 144:9; 1 Samuel 18:16; Isaiah 38:20; Habakkuk 3:19, but the Hebrew word is different. Such instruments were commonly used in the praise of God. See the notes at Psalm 33:2.

And organs - Hebrew, עוגב *ʿûgâb* See this word explained in the notes at Job 21:12. It occurs elsewhere only in Genesis 4:21; Job 21:12; Job 30:31; in all of which places it is rendered organ. The word is derived from a verb meaning to breathe, to blow; and would be applicable to any wind-instrument. It here represents the whole class of wind-instruments. The word organ is a Greek word, and is found in the Septuagint in this place; and hence, our word organ has been introduced into the translation. The Greek word properly denotes

(a) something by which work is accomplished, as a machine;

(b) a musical instrument;

(c) the material from which anything is made;

(d) the work itself. (Passow, Lexicon).

Our word organ, as used in music, suggests the idea of a combination of instruments or sounds. That idea is not found in the Hebrew word. It denotes merely a wind-instrument. Neither the Hebrews nor any of the ancient nations had an instrument that corresponded with the organ as we now use the term.

Verse 5

Praise him upon the loud cymbals - literally, "the cymbals of sound" or hearing. That is, Let there be audibly expressed joy. The allusion here is to an instrument of music that was most distinctly heard in union with other instruments. The sound of the cymbal would be most clearly audible in its accompaniment of the other instruments referred to, as the sound of cymbals, or as the "triangle" would be now. The Hebrew word rendered cymbal means a tinkling, clanging, ringing, as of metal, or of arms; then, a whirring, as of wings (compare the notes at Isaiah 18:1); then, any tinkling or clanging instrument, as a fish-spear or harpoon; then, cymbals, instruments of music. The cymbal, as now used, is an instrument of brass, in a circular form, like a dish, producing, when two are struck gether, a sharp, ringing sound - Webster. An instrument of this kind is evidently referred to here. The word occurs in the Bible in the following places only: Deuteronomy 28:42, rendered locust; 2 Samuel 6:5, rendered, as here, cymbal; Job 41:7, rendered fish-spears; and Isaiah 18:1, rendered shadowing with.

Praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals - The cymbals of joyful voice. On the word teruah, rendered high, see the notes at Psalm 89:16. A loud, lofty sound or shout, as on the reception of a conqueror, is the idea here; and the sense is, that the praise of God was to be celebrated with that which would in the highest sense express joy and triumph.

Verse 6

Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord - All living things in the air, the earth, the waters. Let there be one universal burst of praise. Let his praises be celebrated not only with instruments of music, but let all living beings unite in that praise; let a breathing universe combine in one solemn service of praise.

Praise ye the Lord - Hallelu-jah. Thus, at the end of all the trials, the conflicts, the persecutions, the sorrows, the joys recorded in this book, the psalmist gives utterance to feelings of joy, triumph, transport, rejoicing; and

thus at the end of all - when the affairs of this world shall be closed - when the church shall have passed through all its trials, shall have borne all its persecutions, shall have suffered all that it is appointed to suffer - when the work of redemption shall be complete, and all the ransomed of the Lord shall have been recovered from sin, and shall be saved - that church, all heaven, the whole universe, shall break forth in one loud, long, triumphant Hallelujah. “The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away,” Isaiah 35:10.

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Proverbs

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PROVERBS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Proverbs

1. The opening words of the book Proverbs 1:1 give us its current Hebrew title, of which the first word has been adopted by translators, and "Proverbs" has become the common heading of the book in the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the King James Version. At one time a title of honor, the Book of Wisdom, or the "all-excellent wisdom," was applied by both Jews and Christians to this book, indicating that the book took its place, as the representative of the Wisdom of which the Hebrews thought so much, at the head of the whole class of books, canonical or apocryphal, which were known as Sapiential.

The Hebrew word for "proverb" (מִשְׁל *mâshâl*) has a much more definite significance than the Greek παροιμία *paroimia* and the Latin *"proverbium."* Its root-meaning is that of comparison, the putting of this and that together, noting likeness in things unlike; it corresponds to the Greek παραβολή *parabolē* rather than παροιμία *paroimia* That it was applied also to moral apophthegms of varying length, pointed and pithy in their form, even though there might be no similitude, is evident enough throughout the book.

Proverbs are characteristic of a comparatively early stage in the mental growth of most nations. A single startling or humorous fact serving as the type of all similar facts (e. g., 1 Samuel 10:12); the mere result of an induction to which other instances may be referred (e. g., 1 Samuel 24:13); a law, with or without a similitude, or explaining in this manner the course of events in the lives of men or in the history of their nation Jeremiah 31:29; Ezekiel 18:2: these things furnish proverbs found in the history of all nations, generally in its earlier stages. There is little or no record of their birth. No one knows their author. They find acceptance with people from their inherent truth or semblance of truth. Afterward, commonly at a much later period, people make collections of them.

2. The Book of Proverbs, however, is not such a collection. So far as it includes what had previously been current in familiar sayings, there was a process of selection, guided by a distinct didactic aim - excluding all that were local, personal, or simply humorous, and receiving those which fell in with the ethical purpose of the teacher. As in the history of other nations, so

among the Hebrews (compare 1 Kings 4:31), there rose up, at a certain stage of culture, those to whom the proverb was the most natural mode of utterance, who embodied in it all that they had observed or thought out as to the phenomena of nature or of human life. So pre-eminently was the sage to whose authorship the Book of Proverbs is assigned - Solomon, the son of David.

The definite precision of 1 Kings 4:32 leads to the inference that there was at the time when that book was written a known collection of sayings ascribed to Solomon far longer than the present book, and of songs which are almost, or altogether, lost to us. The scope of that collection may probably have included a far wider range of subjects (such as trees, creatures, etc.), than the present book, which is from first to last ethical in its scope, deals but sparingly, through the larger portion of its contents, with the world of animals and plants, and has nothing that takes the form of fable.

3. The structure of the book shows, however, that it is a compilation from different sources as well as a selection from the sayings of one man only; and a compilation which, in its present form, was made some three centuries after the time of Solomon. One considerable section of the book consists of proverbs that were first arranged and written out under Hezekiah Proverbs 25:1. Agur Proverbs 30:1 and Lemuel Proverbs 31:1 are named as the authors of the last two chapters. The book is, therefore, analogous in its composition to the Psalms; it is an anthology from the sayings of the sages of Israel, taking its name from him who was the chiefest of them, just as the Book of Psalms is an anthology from the hymns not only of David, but also of the sons of Korah and others.

The question as to how far the book gives us the teaching of Solomon himself, what portions of it may be assigned to him, and what may be attributed to some later writers, has been answered very differently. However, certain landmarks present themselves, dividing the book into sections, each of which is a complete whole.

(a) Proverbs 1:1-6 is the title and introduction to the book, describing its contents and aim. There seems good reason for believing that, though

Proverbs 1:1 gave the original title of the book, the other verses were added by the last compiler, in whose hands it took its present shape.

(b) Proverbs 1:7 is something of a motto, laying down the principle which is the basis of the whole book. This may be assigned to the same compiler.

(c) Proverbs 8:4. This personification of Wisdom as a living power, and the stress laid upon her greatness and beauty, contrasted with the "strange woman," the "foreigner," i. e., the harlot or adulteress, whose fascination is most perilous to the soul entering on its time of trial, are the characteristic features of this portion.

The whole of this section has been ascribed by some commentators to a later author than Solomon, on the grounds which are, to say the least, very uncertain.

Arguments, in favor of the identity of authorship, are not lacking.

(d) 1 Kings 4:32, made possibly under the direction of the king himself, and prefaced by the more homiletic teachings of Proverbs 16:10-15; Proverbs 19:6, Proverbs 19:12; Proverbs 20:8, Proverbs 20:26, Proverbs 20:28; Proverbs 21:1.

(e) Proverbs 23:15, Proverbs 23:19, Proverbs 23:26; Proverbs 24:13, Proverbs 24:21, the same warnings against sins of impurity Proverbs 23:27-28, the same declaration of the end which the teacher has in view Proverbs 22:17-21, as are met with in Proverbs 24:23-34: a section with a new title. "These things also belong to the wise," i. e., are spoken by them, fulfill the promise of the title Proverbs 1:6 that it would include the "words of the wise," wherever the compiler found them. Short as the section is, it presents in the parable of the field of the slothful Proverbs 24:30-34 some characteristic features not to be found in the other portions of the book. What had been spoken before barely and briefly Proverbs 6:9 is now reproduced with pictorial vividness. What was before a general maxim, becomes sharper and more pointed as a lesson of experience.

(g) Proverbs 25:2-7 with Proverbs 16:10-15), the same half-grouping under special words and thoughts., of the "righteous" in Proverbs 29:2, Proverbs 29:7, Proverbs 29:16. The average length of the proverbs is about the same, in most there is the same general parallelism of the clauses. There is a freer use of direct similitudes. In one passage Proverbs 27:23-27 there is, as an exceptional case, instruction which seems to be economic rather than ethical in its character, designed, it may be, to upheld the older agricultural life of the Israelites as contrasted with the growing tendency to seek wealth by commerce, and so fall into the luxury and profligacy of the Phoenicians.

(h) Proverbs 30:1; Proverbs 31:1; משׂא *maśśâ'*) is elsewhere, with scarcely an exception, rendered "burden," either in its literal sense, or, as denoting a solemn speech or oracle, uttered by a prophet (compare the titles of Nehemiah 11:7) and Ucal. Some take these names to be two ideal names, the first meaning "God is with me," and the second "I am strong," both names of the same ideal person, the representative of a divine wisdom, meeting Proverbs 30:4-5 the confession of ignorance and blindness. By others the words are treated as not being names at all, but part of the opening words of Agur himself, the introduction to the strange complaint, or confession, which opens so abruptly Proverbs 30:2.

The leading features of the section are less didactic, more enigmatic in character, as though it corresponded specifically to the "dark sayings" of Proverbs 1:6. The phenomena are grouped into quaternions, and show a strange intermingling of facts belonging to the brute and to the human world; in this, whensoever and by whomsoever written, showing the influence of the Book of Job as clearly as the earlier sections did. Probably, the section is a fragment of a work written by one belonging originally to the country to which many critics have been led to refer the Book of Job itself, a proselyte to the faith which the occurrence of the name Yahweh Proverbs 30:9 proves that the writer had received. The reign of Hezekiah was conspicuous for the re-opening of contact with these neighboring nations 2 Chronicles 32:23, for the admission of converts from them among the citizens of Zion Psalm 87:1-7, and for the zeal shown in collecting and adding to the canon whatever bore upon it the stamp of a lofty and heavenly wisdom.

(i) Proverbs 31:1-9. Most Jewish and some Patristic commentators have conjectured that Lemuel is a name for Solomon, and that the words of his mother‘s reproof were spoken when the first promise of his reign was beginning to pass into sensuality and excess. Others have suggested that Lemuel is simply an ideal name, he who is “for God,” the true king who leads a life consecrated to the service of Yahweh. We must be content to confess our ignorance as to who Lemuel was, and what was the occasion of the “prophecy.” It probably belongs to the same period as 1 Samuel 15:22, of Asaph Psalm 50:13-14, of David Psalm 51:16-17, had impressed itself on the minds of the people at large, and on one who, like the writer of the Book of Proverbs, had grown up under the immediate influence of the teacher (Nathan) who, after the death of Samuel, stood at the head of the prophetic order. The tendency to discriminate between moral and positive obligations thus originated, would be fostered by contact with other Semitic nations, such as Edom and Sheba, standing on the same footing as regards the fundamental principles of ethics, but not led, as Israel had been, through the discipline of typical or symbolic ordinances. If the Book of Job was already known to the Israelite seekers after wisdom, the grandeur of its thoughts and the absence in it of any reference to the Law as such, would strengthen the conviction that instruction might be given, leading to a life of true wisdom and holiness and yet not including any direct reference to ceremonial or ritual precepts. These would be preserved in the traditions of household life, the example of parents, the teaching of priests and Levites; while a teacher such as the writer of the Book of Proverbs could aim at laying the foundation of a godly life independently of them, and exhibit that life in its completeness.

This accounts for the absence from the Proverbs of all mention of obligations on which devout Israelites at all times must have laid stress, and to which Pharisaism in its later developments gave an exaggerated prominence.

It was this negative characteristic which fitted the book to do a work which could not otherwise have been done so well, both for the education of Israel, and for that of mankind at large. The Jew was to be taught to recognize a common ground upon which he and they alike stood Mark

12:33. The Greek, when the sacred books of Israel were brought before him in his own language, could find in such a book as Proverbs, that which he could understand and sympathize with - teaching as to life and its duties, vices and their penalties, not unlike that which he found in his own literature. It was significant of the attractive power which this book exercised on the minds of men during the period between the Old and New Testaments, when there was no "open vision," and the gift of prophecy was for a time withdrawn, that the two most prominent books in the collection which we know as the Apocrypha, the only two, indeed, that have a marked didactic character, the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus, were based upon its model, and to a large extent reproduced its precepts.

The teaching of the Book of Proverbs was, however, in its essence, identical with that which formed the basis of the faith of Israel. Its morality was not merely the result of a wide observation of the consequences of good and evil conduct, but was essentially religious. The constant occurrence of the divine name in the form (יהוה *Yahweh*), which was the characteristic inheritance of Israel, and which is more frequently used than that of God (אלהים *'Elohiym*), is in itself a sufficient proof that there was no surrender of the truth of which that name was the symbol. The reverence of Yahweh Proverbs 1:7 stood in the very front of its teaching as the beginning of wisdom. The temper thus indicated, that of awe and reverence, rooted in the consciousness of man's littleness and weakness in the presence of the Eternal and the Infinite, was at once the motive and the crown Proverbs 2:5 of the life of obedience to the laws of duty which the teaching of the book enjoins.

If outward prosperity, "length of days," and "riches and honor" Proverbs 3:16; Proverbs 10:27, attach to those who keep His commandments, men are taught also that He educates and trains them by "chastening" and "correction" Proverbs 3:11-12. All powers of intellect and speech, all efforts after holiness, are thought of as His gifts Proverbs 16:1, Proverbs 16:9, even as people are taught to recognize His bounty in all the outward blessings of their lives, and in the family relationships which make up the happiness of home Proverbs 19:14. When people are told to seek wisdom, they are led on to think of it as clothed with a personal life, in closest fellowship with the Eternal, inseparably one with Him Proverbs 8:22, Proverbs 8:30. And, since

the wisdom which the book inculcates is thus raised far above the level of earthly prudence, so also the reward is more than outward prosperity. "Righteousness delivereth from death" Proverbs 11:4, turns, i. e., the inevitable end of life into a euthanasia. In contrast with the wicked, of whom it is true that "when he dieth his expectation shall perish" Proverbs 11:7, it is written of the righteous that he "hath hope in his death" Proverbs 14:32.

5. The application of these principles to practical and social life presupposes a state of society in which the simplicity of village life is giving way to the sudden development of the wealth and luxury which belong to cities. The dangers against which the young are warned with oft-repeated earnestness are those of extravagance, indebtedness, drunkenness, impurity leading to open lawlessness, and the life of the freebooter. Other faults incident to different temperaments are each, in their turn, held up to reprobation.

With the practical wisdom which is characteristic of the book, appealing, as it does, to those that are halting between two opinions, and inclining to the worse, stress is laid not chiefly on the sin but on the folly of the vice, not on its eternal, but its temporal consequences. People are urged to act first from secondary, prudential motives, to shun the poverty, wretchedness, ignominy, which are the consequences of self-indulgence, that so they may learn the habits of self-restraint which will make them capable of higher thoughts, and obedient to the divine law, as finding in that obedience itself their exceeding great reward. The remedies for these evils the writer or writers of the Book of Proverbs saw were to be found in education. Individuals and nations alike needed discipline and restraint. Individuals would find this in the training of home, in the counsels, warnings, and, if necessary, the chastisements also, by which the unruly will is checked and guided; nations, in the stern, inflexible, incorruptible administration of justice controlled by a wise and righteous king Proverbs 16:10, Proverbs 16:12-14; Proverbs 20:8, Proverbs 20:26, Proverbs 20:28. Hence, kings are counseled no less than subjects Proverbs 28:16; Proverbs 29:12; Proverbs 31:4: the king is advised not to rely too much on his own unaided judgment, but to surround himself with wise and prudent

counselors Proverbs 24:6, and to refer all to that wisdom, which is the gift of God Proverbs 8:15.

No ethical manual would be complete, unless it assigned to woman, as well as man, her right position in the social order. From her folly Proverbs 11:22 and degradation Proverbs 2:16-19; Proverbs 5:3-14; 7:6-27 spring the worst evils; in her excellence is the crown and glory of a man‘s life Proverbs 11:16; Proverbs 12:4. No picture of ideal happiness is brighter than that of a home which is thus made perfect with the clear brightness of true union Proverbs 5:15-20. The “prudent wife” is thought of as one of God‘s best gifts Proverbs 19:14, “building her house” Proverbs 14:1 on the only true foundation. Her influence on her children is as great as that of their father, if not greater Proverbs 1:8; Proverbs 6:20. They owe what they have of goodness to her loving persuasion. Their sins and follies are a heaviness and reproach to her Proverbs 10:1; Proverbs 17:25. They are bound to render to her a true and loving obedience Proverbs 1:8; Proverbs 6:20. The teaching on this subject culminates in Luke 11:49. If our Lord was speaking of Himself as ἡ σοφία τοῦ θεοῦ *hē sophia tou Theou* that sent its prophets and Apostles into the world and sent them in vain, then we have a direct indication that He sought to lead His disciples to identify Him with the personal Wisdom of whom such great things are said in Proverbs 1:20-33. If, however, the Wisdom of God be taken as the title of some lost book, the inference is that the teaching of the Book of Proverbs had impressed itself so deeply on the minds of the Jews of Palestine no less than on those of Alexandria as to give rise there also to a “Sapiential” literature in which Wisdom appeared as the sender of those Apostles and prophets, on whom, as its foundation, the Church was to be built. If, further, we take in the thought that our Lord‘s representations of His work, as they were determined, on one side, by the Messianic language of Isaiah, were influenced, on another, by the teaching of Proverbs 9:5 may be the source from whence flowed the deeper parable of Proverbs 9:1, the starting-point of the thought that the Church is the “house of God” 1 Timothy 3:15, “built” upon the rock Matthew 16:18 of the Apostles as the στύλοι *stuloi* of that house Galatians 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:15; and the feast which she prepared Proverbs 9:2-3 the origin of the parable of the Wedding Feast.

Thus, also, may be explained the stress which Paul lays on the fact that Christ Jesus ἐγενήθη ἡμῖν σοφία ἀπὸ θεοῦ *egenēthē hēmin sophia apo Theou* 1 Corinthians 1:30, that He is θεοῦ σοφία *Theou sophia* 1 Corinthians 1:24, that in Him are hid "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" Colossians 2:3. Its influence on Patristic theology is shown by the prominence given to Proverbs 8:22 (see the note) throughout the Arian controversy; and more remote after-growths of the Greek version of this book, may be noted in the Achamoth, or Σοφία *Sophia* of the Gnostic systems of Basilides and Valentinus, in the church dedicated by Constantine to the Divine Wisdom, in the retention of that name by Justinian when he built the temple which, as the Mosque of Santa Sophia, still attracts the admiration of Christendom, and lastly, in the commonness of the personal name Sophia, the only one of its class that has become popular, while others, such as Irene, Agape, Pistis, Dikaiosyne, have fallen almost or altogether into oblivion.

The direct use of the Book of Proverbs in the New Testament presents some special features. Quotations from it are not very numerous, and are brought in, not with such words as γέγραπται, ἡ γραφὴ λέγει *gegraptai hē graphē legei* or as coupled with the name of Solomon, but as current and familiar sayings, as if the book had been used generally in education and its maxims impressed upon the memory. In almost all cases the quotations are from the Septuagint Version, in some instances even where it differs widely from the Hebrew. It will be worth while, as the circumstances just mentioned often hinder the quotations or allusive references from attracting the attention of the English reader, to refer to some, at least, of the more striking examples in parallel columns.

The familiarity of the New Testament writers with the Greek version of the book is, however, shown in other ways. Over and above their use of the same ethical terminology (σοφία *sophia* σύνεσις *sunesis* φρόνησις *phronēsis* ἐπίγνωσις θεοῦ *epignōsis Theou* αἴσθησις *aisthēsis*), its influence is to be traced in their choice of a word which occupies a prominent position in the vocabulary of Christendom. In Proverbs, prophetic stress is laid upon the φόβος θεοῦ *phobos Theou* as the ἀρχή σοφίας *archē sophias* the groundwork of all virtues: the word occurs thirteen times, to say nothing of the parallel passages in Psalm 19:9; Psalm 34:11; Psalm 111:10. It might

have been expected that it would be found not less prominent in the teaching of the New Testament. There, however, it is found but seldom Acts 9:31; 2 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:21. It is not difficult to see why the old phrase was felt to be no longer adequate.

In proportion as Κύριος *Kurios* came to be identified in men‘s minds with the Lord Jesus, and love in return for His love the one constraining motive, would there seem something harsh and jarring in a phrase which would come to them as equivalent to “the fear of Christ.” Happily, the Septuagint version of the Book of Proverbs supplied also the synonym that was needed. In Proverbs 1:7 there is an alternative rendering, standing in juxtaposition to the other, namely, εὐσέβεια *eusebeia* εὐσέβεια εἰς θεὸν ἀρχὴ αἰσθήσεως *eusebeia eis Theon archē aisthēseōs* The word occurs also in Proverbs 13:11, and in Isaiah 11:2, where also it stands together with an alternative rendering πνεῦμα φόβου θεοῦ *pneuma phobou Theou* The substantive, and yet more the adjective εὐσεβής *eusebēs* occurs with greater frequency in the Apocryphal books, especially in Ecclesiasticus. The way was thus prepared for the prominence which the word gains, just as the necessity was beginning to be felt, in the latest Epistles of the New Testament. It occurs ten times in the Pastoral Epistles of Paul, and four times in Second Peter; Acts 3:12 (where the King James Version gives “holiness”), being the only other passage. The temper of devoutness, reverence, godliness, had thus taken the place in Christian terminology of the older “fear of the Lord.”

For the most part, the choice of the Greek equivalents for the more prominent ethical or philosophical terms of the Proverbs is singularly felicitous. The history of the dominant word of the book (חכמה *chokmâh*), or more commonly in the plural, חכמות *chokmôth* wisdom) is indeed almost an exact parallel to that of the σοφία *sophia* by which it was rendered. As used in the earlier books of the Old Testament Exodus 28:3; Exodus 35:10, Exodus 35:31, Exodus 35:35; Exodus 36:1 it, or its cognate adjective, is applied to the wisdom of those who had the skill or art which was required for the ornamentation of the tabernacle. We have traces of a higher application in Deuteronomy 4:6; Deuteronomy 34:9. As used of the wisdom of Solomon in 1Kings, and throughout Job and the Psalms, as in the Proverbs, the higher prevails exclusively. So, in like manner, Aristotle

describes the gradual elevation of the Greek σοφός *sophos* how it was first applied to sculptors like Pheidias and Polycleitos, how σοφία *sophia* thus came to be known as ἀρετὴ τέχνης *aretē technēs* then became equivalent to the highest accuracy in all things, and finally was thought of as οὐδεμίας γενέσεως *oudemias geneseōs* separated altogether from the idea of art-production. So too, the use of φρόνησις *phronēsis* for a Hebrew word indicating the power which divides, discerns, distinguishes, is appropriate if the chief office of φρόνησις *phronēsis* be τὰ καθ᾽ ἕκαστα γνωρίζειν *ta kath' hekasta gnōrizein* The general choice of αἴσθησις *aisthēsis* rather than ἐπιστήμη *epistēmē* for the rendering of the equivalent Hebrew word showed that they recognized the essentially practical character of the knowledge of which the Proverbs spoke, as perceiving the right thing to be done, and the right word to be said, in each detail of life.

Lastly, may be noted here some salient features of this Greek Version.

(a) In not a few places it adds to the existing Hebrew; the addition sometimes having the character of an alternative rendering, sometimes consisting of entirely new matter.

(b) Sometimes the insertions or variations have the character of an exegetical gloss, toning down or making more explicit what might seem doubtful or misleading in the original.

The arrangement of the closing chapters in the Greek Version also presents striking peculiarities, the whole of Proverbs 31:1-9 being inserted after Proverbs 24:22, as part of the same chapter, and the acrostic description of the true wife ending the book as Proverbs 29. The most probable explanation of the transposition is that it originated in some accidental dislocation in the manuscript from which the translation was made.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The long exhortation Proverbs 10:1. On Proverbs 1:1-7, see the introduction to Proverbs.

Verse 2

The writer‘s purpose is to educate. He is writing what might be called an ethical handbook for the young, though not for the young only. Of all books in the Old Testament, this is the one which we may think of as most distinctively educational. A comparison of it with a similar manual, the "sayings of the fathers," in the Mishna, would help the student to measure the difference between Scriptural and rabbinical teaching.

Wisdom - The power by which human personality reaches its highest spiritual perfection, by which all lower elements are brought into harmony with the highest, is presently personified as life-giving and creative. Compare the notes of Job 28:23, etc.

Instruction - i. e., discipline or training, the practical complement of the more speculative wisdom.

Understanding - The power of distinguishing right from wrong, truth from its counterfeit. The three words σοφία *sophia* παιδεία *paideia* φρόνησις *phronēsis* (Septuagint), express very happily the relation of the words in the Hebrew.

Verse 3

Wisdom - Not the same word as in Proverbs 1:2; better, perhaps, thoughtfulness.

Justice - Rather, righteousness. The word in the Hebrew includes the ideas of truth and beneficence as well as "justice."

Judgment - The teaching of the Proverbs is to lead us to pass a right sentence upon human actions, whether our own or another‘s.

Equity - In the Hebrew (see the margin) the plural is used, and expresses the many varying forms and phases of the one pervading principle.

Verse 4

This verse points out the two classes for which the book will be useful:

(1) the "simple," literally the "open," the open-hearted, the minds ready to receive impressions for good or evil Proverbs 1:22; and

(2) the "young," who need both knowledge and discipline.

To these the teacher offers the "subtilty," which may turn to evil Exodus 21:14 and become as the wisdom of the serpent Genesis 3:1, but which also takes its place, as that wisdom does, among the highest moral gifts Matthew 10:16; the "knowledge" of good and evil; and the "discretion," or discernment, which sets a man on his guard, and keeps him from being duped by false advisers. The Septuagint renderings, πανουργία *panourgia* for "subtilty," αἴσθησις *aisthēsis* for "knowledge," ἔννοια *ennoia* for "discretion," are interesting as showing the endeavor to find exact parallels for the Hebrew in the terminology of Greek ethics.

Verse 5

But it is not for the young only that he writes. The "man of understanding" may gain "wise counsels," literally, the power to "steer" his course rightly on the dangerous seas of life. This "steersmanship," it may be noted, is a word almost unique to Proverbs (compare "counsel" in Proverbs 11:14; Proverbs 12:5; Proverbs 24:6).

Verse 6

The book has yet a further scope; these proverbs are to form a habit of mind. To gain through them the power of entering into the deeper meaning of other proverbs, is the end kept in view. Compare Habakkuk 2:6, it is rendered "taunting proverb." Here "riddle" or "enigma" would better express the meaning.

Verse 7

The beginning of wisdom is found in the temper of reverence and awe. The fear of the finite in the presence of the Infinite, of the sinful in the presence of the Holy (compare Job 42:5-6), this for the Israelite was the starting-point of all true wisdom. In the Book of Job 28:28 it appears as an oracle accompanied by the noblest poetry. In Psalm 111:10 it comes as the choral close of a temple hymn. Here it is the watchword of a true ethical education. This fear has no torment, and is compatible with child-like love. But this and not love is the "beginning of wisdom." Through successive stages and by the discipline of life, love blends with it and makes it perfect.

Verse 9

To the Israelite's mind no signs or badges of joy or glory were higher in worth than the garland around the head, the gold chain around the neck,

worn by kings and the favorites of kings Genesis 41:42; Daniel 5:29.

Verse 10

The first great danger which besets the simple and the young is that of evil companionship. The only safety is to be found in the power of saying "No," to all such invitations.

Verse 11

The temptation against which the teacher seeks to guard his disciple is that of joining a band of highway robbers. The "vain men" who gathered around Jephthah Judges 11:3, the lawless or discontented who came to David in Adullam 1 Samuel 22:2, the bands of robbers who infested every part of the country in the period of the New Testament, and against whom every Roman governor had to wage incessant war, show how deeply rooted the evil was in Palestine. Compare the Psalm 10:7, note; Psalm 10:10 note.

Without cause - Better, in vain; most modern commentators join the words with "innocent," and interpret them after Job 1:9. The evil-doers deride their victims as being righteous "in vain." They get nothing by it. It does them no good.

Verse 12

i. e., "We will be as all-devouring as Sheol. The destruction of those we attack shall be as sudden as that of those who go down quickly into the pit." Some render the latter clause, and upright men as those that go down to the pit. "Pit" here is a synonym for Sheol, the great cavernous depth, the shadow-world of the dead.

Verse 13-14

The second form of temptation (see Proverbs 1:10 note) appeals to the main attraction of the robber-life, its wild communism, the sense of equal hazards and equal hopes.

Verse 17

Strictly speaking, this is the first proverb (i. e., similitude) in the book; a proverb which has received a variety of interpretations. The true meaning seems to be as follows: "For in vain, to no purpose, is the net spread out openly. Clear as the warning is, it is in vain. The birds still fly in. The great net of God's judgments is spread out, open to the eyes of all, and yet the doers of evil, willfully blind, still rush into it." Others take the words as pointing to the failure of the plans of the evil-doers against the innocent (the "bird"): others, again, interpret the proverb of the young man who thinks

that he at least shall not fall into the snares laid for him, and so goes blindly into them.

Verse 19

Not robbery only, but all forms of covetousness are destructive of true life.

Verse 20

Wisdom is personified. In the Hebrew the noun is a feminine plural, as though this Wisdom were the queen of all wisdoms, uniting in herself all their excellences. She lifts up her voice, not in solitude, but in the haunts of men "without," i. e., outside the walls, in the streets, at the highest point of all places of concourse, in the open space of the gates where the elders meet and the king sits in judgment, in the heart of the city itself Proverbs 1:21; through sages, lawgivers, teachers, and yet more through life and its experiences, she preaches to mankind. Socrates said that the fields and the trees taught him nothing, but that he found the wisdom he was seeking in his converse with the men whom he met as he walked in the streets and *agora* of Athens.

Verse 22

Compare the Psalm 1:1 note.

(1) The "simple," literally, "open," i. e. fatally open to evil;

(2) the "scorners," mocking at all good;

(3) lastly, the "fools" in the sense of being hardened, obstinate, perverse, hating the knowledge they have rejected.

Verse 23

The teaching of Divine Wisdom is essentially the same as that of the Divine Word John 7:38-39. "Turning," repentance and conversion, this is what she calls the simple to. The promise of the Spirit is also like His John 14:26. And with the spirit there are to be also the "words" of Wisdom. Not the "spirit" alone, nor "words" alone, but both together, each doing its appointed work - this is the divine instrumentality for the education of such as will receive it.

Verse 24

The threats and warnings of Wisdom are also foreshadowings of the teaching of Jesus. There will come a time when "too late" shall be written

on all efforts, on all remorse. Compare Matthew 25:10, Matthew 25:30.

Verse 26

Compare the marginal reference. The scorn and derision with which men look on pride and malice, baffled and put to shame, has something that answers to it in the Divine Judgment. It is, however, significant that in the fuller revelation of the mind and will of the Father in the person of the Son no such language meets us. Sadness, sternness, severity, there may be, but, from first to last, no word of mere derision.

Verse 27

Desolation - Better, tempest. The rapid gathering of the clouds, the rushing of the mighty winds, are the fittest types of the suddenness with which in the end the judgment of God shall fall on those who look not for it. Compare Matthew 24:29 etc.; Luke 17:24.

Verses 29-31

This is no arbitrary sentence. The fault was all along their own. The fruit of their own ways is death.

Verse 32

Turning - Wisdom had called the simple to "turn," and they had turned, but it was "away" from her. For "prosperity" read carelessness. Not outward prosperity, but the temper which it too often produces, the easy-going indifference to higher truths, is that which destroys.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

Now in the divine order comes the promise Proverbs 2:5. The conditions of its fulfillment are stated in Proverbs 2:1-4 in four sets of parallel clauses, each with some shade of distinct meaning. Thus, not "receiving" only, but "hiding" or treasuring up - not the "ear" only, but the "heart" - not the mere "cry," but the eager "lifting up the voice."

Verse 4

Note the illustrations.

(1) Contact with Phoenician commerce, and joint expeditions in ships of Tarshish (see Psalm 72:10 note), had made the Israelites familiar with the risks and the enterprise of the miller's life. Compare Matthew 13:44.

Verse 5

The promise. The highest blessedness is to know God John 17:3. If any distinction between "the Lord" יהוה *yehovâh* and "God" אלהים *'elohîym* can be pressed here, it is that in the former the personality, in the latter the glory, of the divine nature is prominent.

Verse 6

People do not gain wisdom by any efforts of their own, but God gives it according to the laws of His own goodness.

Verse 7

Sound wisdom - "Soundness," an idea which passes on into that of health and safety. Compare "sound doctrine" in 1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:3.

Verse 8

saints - The devout and God-fearing. Compare Psalm 85:8 etc. The occurrence of the word here, in a book that became more and more prominent as prophetic utterances ceased, probably helped to determine its application in the period of the Maccabean struggles to those who especially claimed for themselves the title of "devout" (Chasidim, the Ἀσιδαῖοι **Asidaioiof 1 Maccabees 7:13).**

Verse 10

Another picture of the results of living in the fear of the Lord. Not that to which it leads a man, but that from which it saves him, is brought into

view. Notice also that it is one thing for wisdom to find entrance into the soul, another to be welcomed as a "pleasant" guest.

Verses 12-15

The evil-doers here include not robbers and murderers only Proverbs 1:10-16, but all who leave the straight path and the open day for crooked ways, perverse counsels, deeds of darkness. "To delight etc." Proverbs 2:14 is the lowest depth of all.

Verse 16

The second great evil, the warnings against which are frequent (see the marginal reference). Two words are used to describe the class.

(1) "The strange woman" is one who does not belong to the family, one who by birth is outside the covenant of Israel.

(2) "The stranger" is none other than a foreigner.

It is the word used of the "strange" wives of Solomon 1 Kings 11:1, 1 Kings 11:8, and of those of the Jews who returned from Babylon (Proverbs 2:17; but the old pagan leaven (influence) presently broke out; the sensual worship of other gods led the way to a life of harlotry. The stringent laws of the Mosaic code Leviticus 19:29; Leviticus 21:9; Deuteronomy 23:18 probably deterred the women of Israel from that sin, and led to a higher standard of purity among them than prevailed among other nations.

Most interpreters have, however, generalized the words as speaking of any adulteress. The Septuagint as if reluctant to speak of facts so shameful, has allegorized them, and seen in the temptress the personification of "evil counsel."

Verse 17

The guide of her youth - Better, the familiar friend (compare Proverbs 16:28; Proverbs 17:9). The "friend" is, of course, the husband, or the man to whom the strange woman first belonged as a recognized concubine. Compare Jeremiah 3:4

The covenant of her God - The sin of the adulteress is not against man only but against the Law of God, against His covenant. The words point to some religious formula of espousals. Compare Malachi 2:14.

Verse 18

The house of the adulteress is as Hades, the realm of death, haunted by the spectral shadows of the dead (Rephaim, see the Psalm 88:10 note), who have perished there.

Verse 19

The words describe more than the fatal persistency of the sinful habit when once formed. A resurrection from that world of the dead to "the paths of life" is all but impossible.

Verse 20

The previous picture of shame and sin is brought before the disciple as an incentive to a better course.

Verse 21-22

Noticeable here is the Hebrew love of home and love of country. To "dwell in the land" is (compare Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 25:18, etc.) the highest blessing for the whole people and for individual men. contrast with it is the life of the sinner cut off from the land (not "earth") of his fathers.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 2

Three words carry on the chain of blessings:

(1) "Length of days" (see the Psalm 91:16 note);

(2) "Years of life," i. e., of a life worth living (compare Psalm 30:5; Psalm 42:8);

(3) "Peace," tranquility inward and outward, the serenity of life continuing through old age until death. Compare 1 Timothy 4:8.

Verse 3

The two elements of a morally perfect character:

(1) "Mercy," shutting out all forms of selfishness and hate.

(2) "Truth," shutting out all deliberate falsehood, all hypocrisy, conscious or unconscious.

The words that follow possibly refer to the Eastern custom of writing sacred names on pieces of papyrus or parchment, and wearing them around the neck, as charms and talismans against evil. Compare, however, 1 Peter 3:3-4.

Verse 4

Compare Luke 2:52. These are the two conditions of true human growth.

Verse 5

In preaching "trust in God" the moralist anticipates the teaching that man is justified by faith. To confide in God's will, the secret of all true greatness, is to rise out of all our anxieties and plans and fears when we think of ourselves as the arbiters of our own fortunes, and so "lean to our own understanding."

Verse 6

Not in acts of solemn worship or great crises only, but "in all thy ways;" and then God will make the "path" straight and even.

Verse 7

The great hindrance to all true wisdom is the thought that we have already attained it.

Verse 8

Navel - The central region of the body is taken as the representative of all the vital organs. For "health" we should read healing, or, as in the marg. There is probably a reference to the local applications used by the surgery of the period as means of healing.

Verse 9

"Substance" points to capital, "increase" to revenue. The Septuagint as if to guard against ill-gotten gains being offered as an atonement for the ill-getting, inserts the quaifying words, "honor the Lord from thy righteous labors."

Verse 10

Compare the marginal reference. This fullness of outward blessings does not exclude the thought of the "chastening" Proverbs 3:11, without which the discipline of life would be incomplete. "Presses" are the vats of a Roman vineyard, into which the wine flowed through pipe from the wine-press.

Verse 11

Despise … be weary - The temper is not that of contempt. To struggle impatiently, to fret and chafe, when suffering comes on us, is the danger to which we are exposed when we do not accept it as from the hands of God. Compare Jonah 4:9; Job 5:17.

Verse 12

The first distinct utterance of a truth which has been so full of comfort to many thousands; it is the summing up of all controversies (compare John 9:2) as to the mystery of suffering. The apostle writing to the Hebrews can find no stronger comfort Hebrews 12:6 than this; the Church, in her visitation service, has no truer message for the sufferer.

Verse 13

The first beatitude of the Proverbs introduces a new lesson. "Getteth understanding," literally as in the margin, probably in the sense of "drawing forth from God's store, from the experience of life" (as in Proverbs 8:35; Proverbs 18:22). The preciousness of wisdom is dwelt on here, not the use to be made of it.

Verse 14

Compare Proverbs 2:4. "Fine gold" is apparently a technical word of that commerce, the native gold in the nugget or the dust.

Verse 15

Rubies - The פנינים *pânîynîym* were among the costly articles of traffic, and red or rose-colored Lamentations 4:7. The last fact has led some to identify them with coral, or (as in the King James Version) with "rubies." Most commentators, however, have identified them with pearls, which may connect this passage with Matthew 7:6; Matthew 13:45. The words of the promise here are almost the echo of 1 Kings 3:11-13.

Verse 17

"Ways" and "paths" describe the two kinds of roads, the "highway" and the "byway." In both these he who was guided by Wisdom would walk securely.

Verse 18

This and the other references in Proverbs Proverbs 11:30; Proverbs 13:12; Proverbs 15:4 are the only allusions in any book of the Old Testament, after Genesis, to the "tree" itself, or to its spiritual significance. Further, there is the tendency to a half-allegorizing application of that history. "The tree of life" which Adam was not to taste lies open to his children. Wisdom is the "tree of life," giving a true immortality. The symbol entered largely into the religious imagery. of Assyria, Egypt, and Persia. Philo, going a step further, found in the two trees the ideal representatives of speculative knowledge and moral wisdom; and the same image subserves a higher purpose in the promises and the visions of Revelation 2:7; Revelation 22:2.

Verse 19

Hereto Wisdom has been thought of in relation to men. Now the question comes, What is she in relation to God? and the answer is, that the creative act implies a Divine Wisdom, through which the Divine will acts. This thought, developed in Psalm 33:6; John 1:3. The words of the writer of the Proverbs take their place among the proofs of the dogmatic statements of the Nicene Creed.

Verse 20

Compare Genesis 1:7; Genesis 7:11; Job 38. Looking upon the face of Nature, men see two storehouses of the living water, without which it would be waste and barren. From the "depths" rush forth the surging waves, from

the "clouds" falls the gentle rain or "dew;" but both alike are ordered by the Divine Wisdom.

Verse 21

Let not them depart - i. e., The wisdom and discretion of the following clause. Keep thine eye on them, as one who watches over priceless treasures.

Verse 25

Under the form of this strong prohibition there is an equally strong promise. So safe will all thy ways be that to fear will be a sin.

Verses 27-35

A marked change in style. The continuous exhortation is replaced by a series of maxims.

From them to whom it is due - literally, as in the margin. The precept expresses the great Scriptural thought that the so-called possession of wealth is but a stewardship; that the true owners of what we call our own are those to whom, with it, we may do good. Not to relieve them is a breach of trust.

Proverbs 3:28

Procrastination is especially fatal to the giving impulse. The Septuagint adds the caution: "for thou knowest not what the morrow will bring forth."

Proverbs 3:29

Securely - i. e., "With full trust," without care or suspicion. Compare Judges 18:7, Judges 18:27.

Proverbs 3:31

A protest against the tendency to worship success, to think the lot of the "man of violence" enviable, and therefore to be chosen.

Proverbs 3:32

The true nature of such success. That which people admire is an abomination to Yahweh. His "secret," i. e., His close, intimate communion as of "friend with friend," is with the righteous.

Proverbs 3:33

The thought, like that which appears in Zechariah 5:3-4, and pervades the tragedies of Greek drama, is of a curse, an Ate, dwelling in a house from generation to generation, the source of ever-recurring woes. There is, possibly, a contrast between the "house" or "palace" of the rich oppressor and the lowly shepherd's hut, the "sheep-cote" 2 Samuel 7:8 ennobled only by its upright inhabitants.

Proverbs 3:34

Surely - Better, If he scorneth the scorners, i. e., Divine scorn of evil is the complement, and, as it were, the condition, of divine bounty to the lowly (compare the marginal reference and the Proverbs 1:26 note).

Proverbs 3:35

The margin conveys the thought that "fools" glory in that which is indeed their shame. Others take the clause as meaning "every fool takes up shame," i. e., gains nothing but that.

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CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

The words "ye children" indicate as usual a new section returning, after the break of Proverbs 3:27-35, to the old strain of fatherly counsel.

Verse 2

Doctrine - Knowledge orally given and received.

Verse 3

Probably the words of Solomon himself, who looks back from his glorious throne and his matured wisdom to the training which was the starting point. The part taken by Bathsheba in Genesis 22:2, Genesis 22:12) in its derived sense, "beloved like an only son." The Vulgate gives "unigenitus." Compare the words applied to our Lord, as the "only begotten" John 1:14, the "beloved" Ephesians 1:6.

Verses 4-20

The counsel which has come to him, in substance, from his father. Compare it with 2 Samuel 23:2 etc.; 1 Chronicles 28:9; 1 Chronicles 29:17; Psalm 15:1-5; Psalm 24:1-10; Proverbs 4:7

Or, "The beginning of wisdom is - get wisdom." To seek is to find, to desire is to obtain.

Proverbs 4:12

The ever-recurring parable of the journey of life. In the way of wisdom the path is clear and open, obstacles disappear; in the quickest activity ("when thou runnest") there is no risk of falling.

Proverbs 4:13

She is thy life - Another parallel between personified Wisdom in this book and the Incarnate Wisdom in John 1:4.

Proverbs 4:16

A fearful stage of debasement. Sin is the condition without which there can be no repose.

Proverbs 4:17

i. e., Bread and wine gained by unjust deeds. Compare Amos 2:8. A less probable interpretation is, "They eat wickedness as bread, and drink violence as wine." Compare Job 15:16; Job 34:7.

Proverbs 4:18

Shining … shineth - The two Hebrew words are different; the first having the sense of bright or clear. The beauty of a cloudless sunshine

growing on, shining as it goes, to the full and perfect day, is chosen as the fittest figure of the ever increasing brightness of the good man‘s life. Compare the marginal reference.

Proverbs 4:19

Compare our Lord‘s teaching John 11:10; John 12:35.

Proverbs 4:20

The teacher speaks again in his own person.

Verse 22

Health - See the Proverbs 3:8 note.

Verse 23

Better, as in the margin, i. e., with more vigilance than men use over anything else. The words that follow carry on the same similitude. The fountains and wells of the East were watched over with special care. The heart is such a fountain, out of it flow the “issues” of life. Shall men let those streams be tainted at the fountain-head?

Verses 24-26

Speech turned from its true purpose, the wandering eye that leads on to evil, action hasty and inconsiderate, are the natural results where we do not “above all keeping keep our heart” Proverbs 4:23.

Verse 27

The ever-recurring image of the straight road on which no one ever loses his way represents here as elsewhere the onward course through life of the man who seeks and finds wisdom.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

The formula of a new counsel, introducing another warning against the besetting sin of youth Proverbs 2:16.

Verse 2

And that thy lips may keep - literally, "and thy lips shall keep."

Verse 3

Smoother than oil - The same comparison is used in marginal reference to describe the treachery of a false friend.

Verse 4

Wormwood - In Eastern medicine this herb, the absinthium of Greek and Latin botanists, was looked upon as poisonous rather than medicinal. Compare Revelation 8:11.

Verse 6

Or (with the Septuagint and Vulgate), Lest she should ponder (or "She ponders not") the way of life, her paths move to and fro (unsteady as an earthquake); she knows not. The words describe with a terrible vividness the state of heart and soul which prostitution brings upon its victims; the reckless blindness that will not think, tottering on the abyss, yet loud in its defiant mirth, ignoring the dreadful future.

Verse 9

Thine honor - i. e., "The grace and freshness of thy youth" (compare Hosea 14:6; Daniel 10:8). The thought of this is to guard the young man against the sins that stain and mar it. The slave of lust sacrifices "years" that might have been peaceful and happy to one who is merciless.

Verse 10

Strangers - The whole gang of those into whose hands the slave of lust yields himself. The words are significant as showing that the older punishment of death Deuteronomy 22:21; Ezekiel 16:38; John 8:5 was not always inflicted, and that the detected adulterer was exposed rather to indefinite extortion. Besides loss of purity and peace, the sin, in all its forms, brings poverty.

Verse 11

Yet one more curse is attendant on impurity. Then, as now, disease was the penalty of this sin.

Verse 12

More bitter than slavery, poverty, disease, will be the bitterness of self-reproach, the hopeless remorse that worketh death.

Verse 14

The conscience-stricken sinner had been "almost" given up to every form of evil in the sight of the whole assembly of fellow-townsmen; "almost," therefore, condemned to the death which that assembly might inflict Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22. The public scandal of the sin is brought in as its last aggravating feature.

Verse 15

The teacher seeks to counteract the evils of mere sensual passion chiefly by setting forth the true blessedness of which it is the counterfeit. The true wife is as a fountain of refreshment, where the weary soul may quench its thirst. Even the joy which is of the senses appears, as in the Song of Solomon, purified and stainless (see Proverbs 5:19 marginal reference).

Verse 16

Wedded love streams forth in blessing on all around, on children and on neighbors and ill the streets, precisely because the wife's true love is given to the husband only.

Verse 19

Better, "A loving hind (is she) and pleasant roe." As in the whole circle of Arab and Persian poetry the antelope and the gazelle are the chosen images of beauty, so they served with equal fitness for the masculine and feminine types of it. (Compare the names Tabitha and Dorcas Acts 9:36.

Verse 20

Emphasis is laid (see the Proverbs 2:16 note) upon the origin of the beguiler.

Verse 21

One more warning. The sin is not against man, nor dependent on man's detection only. The secret sin is open before the eyes of Yahweh. In the balance of His righteous judgment are weighed all human acts.

Pondereth - Note the recurrence of the word used of the harlot herself (see Proverbs 1:6 note): she ponders not, God does.

Verse 23

The end of the sensual life: to "die without instruction," life ended, but the discipline of life fruitless; to "go astray," as if drunk with the greatness of his folly (the same word is used as for "ravished" in Proverbs 5:19, see

marg.), even to the end. This is the close of what might have gone on brightening to the perfect day Proverbs 4:18.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

Surety - The "pledge," or security for payment, which, for example, David was to bring back from his brothers 1 Samuel 17:18. So the word was used in the primitive trade transactions of the early Israelites.

In the warnings against this suretyship, in the Book of Proverbs, we may trace the influence of contact with the Phoenicians. The merchants of Tyre and Zidon seem to have discovered the value of credit as an element of wealth. A man might obtain goods, or escape the pressure of a creditor at an inconvenient season, or obtain a loan on more favorable terms, by finding security. To give such security might be one of the kindest offices which one friend could render to another. Side by side, however, with a legitimate system of credit there sprang up, as in later times, a fraudulent counterfeit. Phoenician or Jewish money-lenders (the "stranger") were ready to make their loans to the spendthrift. He was equally ready to find a companion (the "friend") who would become his surety. It was merely a form, just writing a few words, just "a clasping of the hands" (see the marginal reference) in token that the obligation was accepted, and that was all. It would be unfriendly to refuse. And yet, as the teacher warns his hearers, there might be, in that moment of careless weakness, the first link of a long chain of ignominy, galling, fretting, wearing, depriving life of all its peace. The Jewish law of debt, hard and stern like that of most ancient nations, aright be enforced against him in all its rigour. Money and land might go, the very bed under him might be seized, and his garment torn from his back Proverbs 20:16; Proverbs 22:27, the older and more lenient law Exodus 22:25-27 having apparently fallen into disuse. he might be brought into a life-long bondage, subject only to the possible relief of the year of jubilee, when the people were religious enough to remember and observe it. His wives, his sons, his daughters might be sharers in that slavery Nehemiah 5:3-5. It was doubtful whether he could claim the privilege which under Exodus 21:2 belonged to an Israelite slave that had been bought. Against such an evil, no warnings could be too frequent or to urgent.

Stricken thy hand - The natural symbol of the promise to keep a contract; in this case, to pay another man's debts. Compare Proverbs 17:18; Proverbs 22:26; Job 17:3; Ezekiel 17:18.

Verse 2

Or, “If thou art snared … if thou art taken,” etc.

Verse 3

Better, “Do this now, O my son, and free thyself when thou hast come into thy friend‘s house; go, how thyself down (perhaps “stamp with thy foot,” or “hasten”), press hotly upon thy friend. By persuasion, and if need be, by threats, get back the bond which thou hast been entrapped into signing:” The “friend” is, as before, the companion, not the creditor.

Verse 6

The warning against the wastefulness of the prodigal is followed by a warning as emphatic against the wastefulness of sloth. The point of comparison with the ant is not so much the foresight of the insect as its unwearied activity during the appointed season, rebuking man‘s inaction at a special crisis Proverbs 6:4. In Proverbs 30:25, the storing, provident habit of the ant is noticed.

Verse 7

The words express the wonder with which the Hebrew observer looked on the phenomena of insect life. “Guide,” better captain, as in Joshua 10:24. The Septuagint introduces here a corresponding reference to the industry of the bee.

Verse 11

The similitude is drawn from the two sources of Eastern terror: the “traveler,” i. e., “the thief in the night,” coming suddenly to plunder; the “armed man,” literally “the man of the shield,” the armed robber. The habit of indolence is more fatally destructive than these marauders.

Verse 12

A naughty person - literally, “a man of Belial,” i. e., a worthless man (see the Deuteronomy 13:13 note). This is the portrait of the man who is not to be trusted, whose look and gestures warn against him all who can observe. His speech is tortuous and crafty; his wink tells the accomplice that the victim is already snared; his gestures with foot and hand are half in deceit, and half in mockery.

Verse 15

The duper and the dupe shall share the same calamity.

Verses 16-19

A new section, but not a new subject. The closing words, “he that soweth discord” (Proverbs 6:19, compare Proverbs 6:14), lead us to identify the sketch as taken from the same character. With the recognized Hebrew

form of climax (see Proverbs 30:15, Proverbs 30:18, Proverbs 30:24; Amos 1:1-15; 2; Job 5:19), the teacher here enumerates six qualities as detestable, and the seventh as worse than all (seven represents completeness), but all the seven in this instance belong to one man, the man of Belial Proverbs 6:12.

Verse 21-22

The thought of Proverbs 3:3 is carried step further. No outward charm, but the law of obedience, shall give safety to the traveler, when he sleeps or when he wakes.

Verse 23

Compare Psalm 119:105.

Verse 24

Evil woman - literally, "woman of evil." In reading what follows, it must be remembered that the warning is against the danger of the sin of the adulterous wife.

Verse 25

Eyelids - Possibly pointing to the Eastern custom of painting the eyes on the outside with *kohl* so as to give brightness and languishing expression.

Verse 26

The two forms of evil bring, each of them, their own penalty. By the one a man is brought to such poverty as to beg for "a piece of bread" (compare 1 Samuel 2:36): by the other and more deadly sin he incurs a peril which may affect his life. The second clause is very abrupt and emphatic in the original; "but as for a man's wife; she hunts for the precious life."

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

The harlot adulteress of an Eastern city is contrasted with the true feminine ideal of the Wisdom who is to be the "sister" and "kinswoman" Proverbs 7:4 of the young man as he goes on his way through life. See Proverbs 8 in the introduction.

Verse 6

Casement - The latticed opening of an Eastern house, overlooking the street (compare Judges 5:28).

Verse 7

Simple - In the bad sense of the word (Proverbs 1:22 note); "open" to all impressions of evil, empty-headed and empty-hearted; lounging near the house of ill-repute, not as yet deliberately purposing to sin, but placing himself in the way of it at a time when the pure in heart would seek their home. There is a certain symbolic meaning in the picture of the gathering gloom Proverbs 7:9. Night is falling over the young man's life as the shadows deepen.

Verse 11

Loud and stubborn - Both words describe the half-animal signs of a vicious nature. Compare Hosea 4:16.

Verse 14

This pretence of a religious feast gives us an insight into some strange features of popular religion under the monarchy of Judah. The harlot uses the technical word Leviticus 3:1 for the "peace-offerings," and makes them the starting-point for her sin. They have to be eaten on the same day that they are offered Leviticus 7:15-16, and she invites her victim to the feast. She who speaks is a "foreigner" who, under a show of conformity to the religion of Israel, still retains her old notions (see Proverbs 2:16 note), and a feast-day to her is nothing but a time of self-indulgence, which she may invite another to share with her. If we assume, as probable, that these harlots of Jerusalem were mainly of Phoenician origin, the connection of their worship with their sin would be but the continuation of their original "cultus."

Verse 16

The words point to the art and commerce which flourished under Solomon.

Carved works - Most commentators take the original as meaning "striped coverlets of linen of Egypt."

Verse 17

The love of perfumes is here, as in Isaiah 3:24, a sign of luxurious vice.

Cinnamon - The Hebrew word is identical with the English. The spice imported by the Phoenician traders from the further East, probably from Ceylon, has kept its name through all changes of language.

Verse 19

The reference to the husband is probably a blind. The use of the word "goodman" is due to the wish of the English translators to give a colloquial character to this part of their Version. The Hebrew is merely "the man." A touch of scorn may be noticed in the form of speech: not "my husband," but simply "the man."

Verse 21

Fair speech - The Hebrew word is usually translated "doctrine," or "learning" Proverbs 1:5; Proverbs 4:2; Proverbs 9:9; possibly it is used here in keen irony.

Verse 22

As a fool … - literally, "As a fetter to the correction of a fool," the order of which is inverted in the King James Version The Septuagint, followed by the Syriac Version, has another reading, and interprets the clause: "As a dog, enticed by food, goes to the chain that is to bind him, so does the youth go to the temptress." None of the attempts of commentators to get a meaning out of the present text are in any degree satisfactory.

Verse 23

The first clause does not connect itself very clearly with the foregoing, and is probably affected by the corrupt text which makes it perplexing.

Verse 26

The house of the harlot is now likened to a field of battle strewn with the corpses of the many slain.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

A companion picture to that in Proverbs 8:5 to the "simple" and the "fools," and they have to choose between her voice and that of the temptress.

Verse 2-3

The full enumeration of localities points to the publicity and openness of Wisdom's teaching (see Proverbs 1:20 note), as contrasted with the stealth and secrecy and darkness which shroud the harlot's enticements Proverbs 7:9.

Verse 4

Men … sons of man - The two words are used, which, like *viri* and *homines* describe the higher and the lower, the stronger and the weaker. Compare the Psalm 49:2 note.

Verse 6

Excellent - literally, "princely things." The word is not the same as in marginal reference, and is elsewhere always used of persons (compare "captain" in 1 Samuel 9:16; 2 Samuel 5:2). The poetic style of this part of the book applies it here to the things taught, or to the character of the teaching.

Verse 8-9

Words of the ideal Wisdom, which find their highest fulfillment in that of the Incarnate Word. Compare Luke 4:22; Matthew 11:19.

Verse 12

Wisdom first speaks warnings (Proverbs 1:24 note), next promises (Proverbs 2:1 note); but here she neither promises nor threatens, but speaks of her own excellence. "Prudence" is the "subtilty" (see the margin), the wiliness of the serpent Genesis 3:1, in itself neutral, but capable of being turned to good as well as evil. Wisdom, occupied with things heavenly and eternal, also "dwells with" the practical tact and insight needed for the life of common men. "Witty inventions" are rather counsels. The truth intended is, that all special rules for the details of life spring out of the highest Wisdom as their source.

Verse 15

Not only the common life of common men, but the exercise of the highest sovereignty, must have this Wisdom as its ground. Compare with

this passage Proverbs 8:15-21 the teaching of 1 Kings 3:5-14. The word rendered "princes" Proverbs 8:15 is different from that in Proverbs 8:16; the first might, perhaps, be rendered "rulers."

Verse 18

Durable riches - i. e., Treasure piled up for many years; ancient wealth.

Verse 19

Gold - The "choice, fine gold" of margin reference. The "fine gold" in the second clause is a different word, and perhaps represents gold extracted from the ore.

Verse 22

A verse which has played an important part in the history of Christian dogma. Wisdom reveals herself as preceding all creation, stamped upon it all, one with God, yet in some way distinguishable from Him as the object of His love Proverbs 8:30. John declares that all which Wisdom here speaks of herself was true in its highest sense of the Word that became flesh John 1:1-14: just as Apostles afterward applied Wisd. 7:22-30 to Christ (compare Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3).

Possessed - The word has acquired a special prominence in connection with the Arian controversy. The meaning which it usually bears is that of "getting" Genesis 4:1, "buying" Genesis 47:22, "possessing" Jeremiah 32:15. In this sense one of the oldest divine names was that of "Possessor of heaven and earth" Genesis 14:19, Genesis 14:22. But the idea of thus "getting" or "possessing" involved, as a divine act in relation to the universe, the idea of creation, and thus in one or two passages the word might be rendered, though not accurately, by "created" (e. g., Psalm 139:13). It would seem accordingly as if the Greek translators of the Old Testament oscillated between the two meanings; and in this passage we find the various renderings ἔκτισε *ektise* "created" (Septuagint), and ἐκτήσατο *ektēsato* "possessed" (Aquila). The text with the former word naturally became one of the stock arguments of the Arians against the eternal co-existence of the Son, and the other translation was as vehemently defended by the orthodox fathers. Athanasius receiving ἔκτισεν *ektisen* took it in the sense of appointing, and saw in the Septuagint a declaration that the Father had made the Son the "chief," the "head," the "sovereign," over all creation. There does not seem indeed any ground for the thought of creation either in the meaning of the root, or in the general usage of the word. What is meant in this passage is that we cannot think of God as ever having been without

Wisdom. She is "as the beginning of His ways." So far as the words bear upon Christian dogma, they accord with the words of John 1:1, "the Word was with God." The next words indeed assert priority to all the works of God, from the first starting point of time.

Verse 23

I was set up - Rather, "I was anointed" (compare Psalm 2:6 margin: 2 Chronicles 28:15). The image is that of Wisdom anointed, as at her birth, with "the oil of gladness."

Or ever the earth was - literally, "from the times before the earth."

Verse 24

Compare Job 26:1-14; 38: A world of waters, "great deeps" lying in darkness, this was the picture of the remotest time of which man could form any conception, and yet the co-existence of the uncreated Wisdom with the eternal Yahweh was before that.

Verse 25

Compare Psalm 90:2. What the Psalmist said of Yahweh, the teacher here asserts of Wisdom; she was before the everlasting hills.

Verse 26

The highest part of the dust of the world - literally, "the head of the dusts of the world;" an image of either:

(1) the dry land, habitable, fit for cultivation, as contrasted with the waters of the chaotic deep; or

(2) man himself. Compare Ecclesiastes 3:20.

Verse 27

A compass - Better as in the margin and Job 22:14 (see the note), i. e., the great vault of heaven stretched over the deep seas.

Verse 30

As one brought up with him - i. e., As his foster child. Others take the word in the original in another sense, "I was as his artificer," a rendering which falls in best with the special point of the whole passage, the creative energy of Wisdom. Compare Wisdom Proverbs 7:21, Proverbs 7:22.

Daily - Heb. "day by day." As the Creator rejoiced in His workmanship Genesis 1:4, Genesis 1:10, Genesis 1:12-13, so Wisdom rejoiced in the exuberance of her might and strength.

Verse 31

Wisdom rejoices yet more in the world as inhabited by God‘s rational creatures. (compare Isaiah 45:18). Giving joy and delight to God, she finds her delight among the sons of men. These words, like the rest, are as an unconscious prophecy fulfilled in the Divine Word, in whom were “hid all the treasures of Wisdom.” Compare the marginal reference: in Him the Father was well pleased; and yet His “joy also is fulfilled,” not in the glory of the material universe, but in His work among the sons of men.

Verse 32

The old exhortation with a new force. The counsels are no longer those of prudence and human experience, but of a Wisdom eternal as Yahweh, ordering all things.

Verse 34

The image is suggested probably by the Levites who guarded the doors of the sanctuary Psalm 134:1; Psalm 135:2. Not less blessed than theirs is the lot of those who wait upon Wisdom in the temple not made with hands.

Verse 35

Wisdom then is the only true life. The Word, the Light, is also the Life of man John 1:4. The eternal life is to know God and Christ John 17:3.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

A parable full of beauty, and interesting in its parallelism to the parables of our Lord Matthew 22:3-4; Luke 14:16.

Seven pillars - The number is chosen as indicating completeness and perfection. God revealing Himself in nature, resting in His work, entering into covenant with human beings - these were the ideas conveyed by it.

Verse 2

Mingled her wine - i. e., with myrrh and other spices, to give flavor and strength.

Verse 3

Wisdom and the "foolish woman" Proverbs 9:13 speak from the same places and to the same class - the simple, undecided, wavering, standing at the diverging point of the two paths that lead to life or death.

Verse 5

A parallel to the higher teaching of the Gospels (compare John 6:27; Matthew 26:26).

Verses 7-9

These verses seem somewhat to interrupt the continuity of the invitation which Wisdom utters. The order of thought is, however, this: "I speak to you, the simple, the open ones, for you have yet ears to hear: but from the scorner or evil doer, as such, I turn away." The words are illustrated by Matthew 13:11 ff.

Verse 10

The holy - The word in the Hebrew is plural, agreeing, probably, with אלהים *'elohîym* understood (so in Proverbs 30:3). The knowledge of the Most Holy One stands as the counterpart to the fear of Yahweh.

Verse 12

The great law of personal retribution (compare Matthew 7:2). The Septuagint makes a curious addition to this verse, "My son, if thou wilt be wise for thyself, thou shalt be wise also for thy neighbors; but if thou turn out evil, thou alone shalt bear evil. He who resteth on lies shall guide the winds, and the same shall hunt after winged birds, for he hath left the ways of his own vineyard, and has gone astray with the wheels of his own husbandry. He goeth through a wilderness without water, and over a land set in thirsty places, and with his hands he gathereth barrenness."

Verse 13

The picture of the harlot as the representative of the sensual life, the Folly between which and Wisdom the young man has to make his choice (Proverbs 9:3 note). "Simple," in the worst sense, as open to all forms of evil. "Knoweth nothing," ignorant with the ignorance which is willful and reckless.

Verse 14

Contrast with Proverbs 9:1, etc. The foolish woman has her house, but it is no stately palace with seven pillars, like the home of Wisdom. No train of maidens wait on her, and invite her guests, but she herself sits at the door, her position as prominent as that of Wisdom, counterfeiting her voice, making the same offer to the same class (compare Proverbs 9:16 with Proverbs 9:4).

Verse 17

The besetting sin of all times and countries, the one great proof of the inherent corruption of man's nature. Pleasures are attractive because they are forbidden (compare Romans 7:7).

Verse 18

Compare the marginal reference. With this warning the long introduction closes, and the collection of separate proverbs begins. Wisdom and Folly have each spoken; the issues of each have been painted in life-like hues. The learner is left to choose.

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CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

See the Introduction.

Verse 2

Righteousness - Including, perhaps, the idea of benevolence. Compare the use of δικαιοσύνη *dikaiosunē* in Matthew 6:1 (the older reading), and 2 Corinthians 9:9-10.

Verse 3

Casteth away … - Better, "overturns, disappoints the strong desire of the wicked." Tantalus-like, they never get the enjoyment they thirst after.

Verse 4

Slack - The word is elsewhere translated as "deceitful" Job 13:7; Psalm 120:2-3; Hosea 7:16; Jeremiah 48:10. The two thoughts run easily into each other.

Verse 5

The son is called upon to enter upon the labors of others, and reap where they have sown. To sleep when the plenteous harvest lies ready for the sickle is the most extreme laziness.

Verse 6

Covereth … - The meaning is perhaps, the violence which the wicked has done is as a bandage over his mouth, reducing him to a silence and shame, like that of the leper Leviticus 13:45; Micah 3:7 or the condemned criminal Esther 7:8, whose "face is covered."

Verse 8

A prating … fall - Better, as in the margin. Inward self-contained wisdom is contrasted with self-exposed folly.

Verse 9

Shall be known - literally, "shall be made to know" (see Jeremiah 31:19; Judges 8:16 margin) in the sense of exposed.

Verse 10

In Proverbs 10:8 the relation between the two clauses was one of contrast, here of resemblance. Cunning, reticence, and deceit (Proverbs 6:12 note) bring sorrow no less than garrulity.

Verse 11

Compare Proverbs 10:6. Streams of living water (like the "fountain of living waters" of Jeremiah 2:13; Jeremiah 17:13, and the "living water" of

John 4:10), flow from the mouth of the righteous, but that of the wicked is "covered," i. e., stopped and put to silence by their own violence.

Verse 12

Love covereth all sins - i. e., First hides, does not expose, and then forgives and forgets all sins.

Verse 13

i. e., The wisdom of the wise is seen in the words that issue from his lips; the folly of the fool is not only seen in his speech, but brings upon him the chastisement which he well deserves.

Verse 14

Lay up - The point of the maxim is that the wise man reserves what he has to say for the right time, place, and persons (compare Matthew 7:6), as contrasted with the foolish, ever giving immediate utterance to what destroys himself and others.

Verse 15

Destruction - That which crushes, throws into ruins. Wealth secures its possessors against many dangers; poverty exposes men to worse evils than itself, meanness, servility, and cowardice. Below the surface there lies, it may be, a grave irony against the rich; see Proverbs 18:11.

Verse 16

A warning against the conclusion to seek wealth first of all, which men of lower natures might draw from Proverbs 10:15.

"*Quaerenda pecunia primum est;*

Virtus post nummos?"

Horace, Ep. 1. i. 53.

Such an inference is met by the experience, that while wealth gotten by honest industry is not only, like inherited riches a defense, but also a blessing, the seeming profit (rather than "fruit") of the wicked tends to further sin 1 Timothy 6:10, and so to punishment. Compare Romans 6:21.

Verse 17

literally, A way of life is he that keepeth instruction. The verb "erreth" is better rendered in the margin. The influence for good or evil spreads beyond the man himself.

Verse 18

Better, He who hideth hatred is of lying lips. He who cherishes hatred, is either a knave, or a fool - a knave if he hides, a fool if he utters it.

Verse 19

There wanteth not sin - Some render this, "Sin shall not cease," etc., i. e., many words do not mend a fault. Silence on the part both of the reprover and the offender is often better. The King James Version is, however, preferable.

Verse 20

The tongue, the instrument of the mind is contrasted with the heart or mind itself, the just with the wicked, the choice silver with the worthless "little," the Hebrew word being possibly taken in its primary sense as a "filing" or "scraping" of dross or worthless metal. If the tongue is precious, how much more the mind! If the heart is worthless, how much more the speech!

Verse 21

Feed - The Hebrew word, like ποιμαίνειν *poimainein* includes the idea of guiding as well as nourishing; doing a shepherd's work in both.

For want of wisdom - Some prefer, through him who wanteth understanding, referring to a person. The wise guides others to safety; the fool, empty-headed, and empty-hearted, involves others like himself in destruction.

Verse 23

As the fool finds his sport in doing mischief, so the man of understanding finds in wisdom his truest refreshment and delight.

Verse 24

The fear - i. e., The thing feared (compare the marginal reference).

Shall be granted - Or, He (Yahweh) giveth the desire of the righteous.

Verse 25

Or, when the whirlwind is passing, then the wicked is no more. Compare Matthew 7:24-27.

The righteous … - In the later rabbinic interpretation this was applied to the Messiah as being the Just One, the Everlasting Foundation, on whom the world was established.

Verse 26

The teeth set on edge by the sour wine used by peasants Rth 2:14 ; Psalm 69:21, the eye irritated by wood-smoke, these shadow the annoyance of having a messenger who will loiter on the way.

Verse 28

Transpose "hope" and "expectation." The expectant waiting of the righteous is joyful at the time, and ends in joy: the eager hope of the wicked

comes to nought.

Verse 29

Omit "shall be." The meaning is: "The Way of Yahweh," i. e., the Divine Order of the world, has its two sides. It is "strength to the upright, destruction to the workers of iniquity."

Verse 30

The wicked shall rot inhabit - The other and higher side of the same law of the divine government appears in Matthew 5:5.

Verse 31

Bringeth forth … - As a tree full of life and sap brings forth its fruit. So the "froward tongue" is like a tree that brings forth evil and not good fruit; it "shall be cut down." The abuse of God's gift of speech will lead ultimately to its forfeiture. There shall, at last, be the silence of shame and confusion.

Verse 32

Know - i. e., "Know, and therefore utter." So, in like manner, the "mouth of the wicked" knows, and therefore speaks frowardness, and that only.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

This emphatic reproduction of the old rule of Deuteronomy 25:13-14 is perhaps a trace of the danger of dishonesty incidental to the growing commerce of the Israelites. The stress laid upon the same sin in Proverbs 16:11; Proverbs 20:10; bears witness to the desire of the teacher to educate the youth of Israel to a high standard of integrity, just as the protest of Hosea against it Hosea 12:7 shows the zeal of the prophet in rebuking what was becoming more and more a besetting sin.

A just weight - literally, as in the margin, indicating a time when stones rather than metal were used as a standard of weight. Compare Deuteronomy 25:13.

Verse 2

A rabbinic paraphrase of the second clause is: "Lowly souls become full of wisdom as the low place becomes full of water."

Verse 4

The day of wrath - Words true in their highest sense of the great "diesirae" of the future, but spoken in the first instance (compare Zephaniah 1:15-18) of any "day of the Lord," any time of judgment, when men or nations receive the chastisement of their sins. At such a time "riches profit not."

Verse 7

Significant words, as showing the belief that when the righteous died, his "expectation" (i. e., his hope for the future) did not perish. The second clause is rendered by some, "the expectation that brings sorrow."

Verse 9

Through knowledge - Better, By the knowledge of the just, shall they (i. e., the neighbors) be delivered.

Verse 11

The blessing of the upright - Probably the prayers which he offers for the good of the city in which he dwells, and which avail to preserve it from destruction (compare Genesis 18:23-33); or "the blessing which God gives the upright."

Verse 12

None but the man "void of wisdom" will show contempt for those about him. The wise man, if he cannot admire or praise, will at least know how to

be silent.

Verse 13

The man who comes to us with tales about others will reveal our secrets also. Faithfulness is shown, not only in doing what a man has been commissioned to do, but in doing it quietly and without garrulity.

Verse 14

Counsel - See Proverbs 1:5 note. This precept may well be thought of as coming with special force at the time of the organization of the monarchy of Israel. Compare 1 Kings 12:6.

Verse 15

See the marginal reference. The play upon "sure" and "suretiship" in the the King James Version (though each word is rightly rendered) has nothing corresponding to it in the Hebrew, and seems to have originated in a desire to give point to the proverb.

Verse 16

Or, "The gracious woman wins and keeps honor, as (the conjunction may be so rendered) strong men win riches."

Verse 18

Deceitful work - Work which deceives and disappoints the worker; in contrast with the "sure reward" of the second clause.

Omit "shall be" and render, "but he that soweth righteousness worketh a sure reward."

Verse 21

literally, "hand to hand." The meaning of which is, "Hand may plight faith to hand, men may confederate for evil, yet punishment shall come at last;" or "From hand to hand, from one generation to another, punishment shall descend on the evil doers."

Verse 22

The most direct proverb, in the sense of "similitude," which has as yet met us.

Jewel of gold - Better, ring; i. e., the nose-ring Genesis 24:22, Genesis 24:47; Isaiah 3:21.

Without discretion - literally, "without taste," void of the subtle tact and grace, without which mere outward beauty is as ill-bestowed as the nose-ring in the snout of the unclean beast. If we may assume that in

ancient Syria, as in modern Europe, swine commonly wore such a ring to hinder them doing mischief, the similitude receives a fresh vividness.

Verse 24

Withholdeth more than is meet - i. e., Is sparing and niggardly where he ought to give. The contrast is stated in the form of a paradox, to which the two following verses supply the answer. Some render, "There is that withholdeth from what is due," i. e., from a just debt, or from the generosity of a just man.

Verse 25

Liberal soul - literally, "the soul that blesses," i. e., gives freely and fully. The similitudes are both of them essentially Eastern. Fatness, the sleek, well filled look of health, becomes the figure of prosperity, as leanness of misfortune Proverbs 13:4; Proverbs 28:25; Psalm 22:29; Isaiah 10:16. Kindly acts come as the refreshing dew and soft rain from heaven upon a thirsty land.

Verse 26

In the early stages of commerce there seems no way of making money rapidly so sure as that of buying up grain in time of famine, waiting until the dearth presses heavily, and then selling at famine prices. Men hate this selfishness, and pour blessings upon him who sells at a moderate profit.

Verse 27

Procureth - Better, striveth after. He who desires good, absolutely, for its own sake, is also unconsciously striving after the favor which attends goodness.

Verse 28

Branch - Better, leaf, as in Psalm 1:3; Isaiah 34:4.

Verse 29

He that troubleth … - The temper, nigardly and worrying, which leads a man to make those about him miserable, and proves but bad economy in the end.

Verse 30

Winneth souls - Better, a wise man winneth souls. He that is wise draws the souls of people to himself, just as the fruit of the righteous is to all around him a tree of life, bearing new fruits of healing evermore. The phrase is elsewhere translated by "taketh the life" 1 Kings 19:4; Psalm 31:13. The wise man is the true conqueror. For the Christian meaning given to these words, see the New Testament reference in the margin.

Verse 31

The sense would appear to be, “The righteous is requited, i. e., is punished for his lesser sins, or as a discipline; much more the wicked, etc.” Compare 1 Peter 4:18.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

Brutish - Dumb as a brute beast. The difference between man and brute lies chiefly in the capacity of the former for progress and improvement, and that capacity depends upon his willingness to submit to discipline and education. Compare Psalm 49:12.

Verse 4

Virtuous - The word implies the virtue of earnestness, or strength of character, rather than of simple chastity.

A crown - With the Jews the sign, not of kingly power only, but also of joy and gladness. Compare Song of Song of Solomon 3:11 .

Verse 6

Shall deliver them - i. e., The righteous themselves.

Verse 9

Two interpretations are equally tenable;

(1) as in the King James Version, He whom men despise, or who is "lowly" in his own eyes (compare 1 Samuel 18:23), if he has a slave, i. e., if he is one step above absolute poverty, and has some one to supply his wants, is better off than the man who boasts of rank or descent and has nothing to eat. Respectable mediocrity is better than boastful poverty.

(2) he who, though despised, is a servant to himself, i. e., supplies his own wants, is better than the arrogant and helpless.

Verse 10

Regardeth - literally, "knoweth." All true sympathy and care must grow out of knowledge. The duty of a person to animals:

(1) rests upon direct commandments in the Law Exodus 20:10; Exodus 23:4-5;

(2) connects itself with the thought that the mercies of God are over all His works, and that man's mercy, in proportion to its excellence, must be like His Jonah 4:11; and

(3) has perpetuated its influence in the popular morality of the East.

Tender mercies - Better, "the feelings, the emotions," all that should have led to mercy and pity toward man.

Verse 11

The contrast is carried on between the life of industry and that of the idle, "vain person" of the "baser sort" (the "Raca" of Matthew 5:22). We might have expected that the second clause would have ended with such words as "shall lack bread," but the contrast goes deeper. Idleness leads to a worse evil than that of hunger.

Verse 12

The meaning seems to be: The "net of evil men" (compare Proverbs 1:17) is that in which they are taken, the judgment of God in which they are ensnared. This they run into with such a blind infatuation, that it seems as if they were in love with their own destruction. The marginal rendering gives the thought that the wicked seek the protection of others like themselves, but seek in vain; the "root of the just" (i. e., that in them which is fixed and stable) alone yields that protection.

Verse 14

See Proverbs 13:2 note.

Verse 16

The "fool" cannot restrain his wrath; it rushes on "presently" (as in the margin, on the same day, however, uselessly. The prudent man knows that to utter his indignation at reproach and shame will but lead to a fresh attack, and takes refuge in reticence.

Verse 17

The thought which lies below the surface is that of the inseparable union between truth and justice. The end does not justify the means, and only he who breathes and utters truth makes the righteous cause clear.

Verse 20

The "deceit" of "those who imagine evil" can work nothing but evil to those whom they advise. The "counselors of peace" have joy in themselves, and impart it to others also.

Verse 23

Another aspect of the truth of Proverbs 10:14.

Verse 24

Under tribute - The comparison is probably suggested by the contrast between the condition of a conquered race (compare Joshua 16:10; Judges 1:30-33), and that of the freedom of their conquerors from such burdens.

The proverb indicates that beyond all political divisions of this nature there lies an ethical law. The "slothful" descend inevitably to pauperism and servitude. The prominence of compulsory labor under Solomon 1 Kings 9:21 gives a special significance to the illustration.

Verse 26

Is more excellent than - Rather, the just man guides his neighbor.

Verse 27

The word rendered "roasteth" occurs nowhere else; but the interpretation of the King James Version is widely adopted. Others render the first clause thus: "The slothful man will not secure (keep in his net) what he takes in hunting," i. e., will let whatever he gains slip from his hands through want of effort and attention.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

Heareth - The verb of the second clause is inserted in the first, just as in the next verse that of the first is inserted in the second. Stress is laid upon the obstinacy of the scorner who refuses to hear, not only "instruction," but also the much stronger "rebuke."

Verse 2

The fruit of his mouth - Speech rightly used is itself good, and must therefore bring good fruit.

Eat violence - i. e., Bring upon itself repayment in kind for its deeds of evil.

Verse 7

Compare Proverbs 11:24. There is a seeming wealth behind which there lies a deep spiritual poverty and wretchedness. There is a poverty which makes a person rich for the kingdom of God.

Verse 8

On the one side is the seeming advantage of wealth. The rich man who gets out of many troubles often escapes from a just retribution by his money. But then the poor man in his turn is free from the risk of the threats and litigation that beset the rich. He "hears no rebuke" (the words are not used as in Proverbs 13:1) just as the dead "hear not the voice of the oppressor" Job 3:18 or the abuse of the envious.

Verse 9

Very beautiful in its poetry is the idea of the light "rejoicing" in its brightness (compare Psalm 19:5; Job 38:7). Note also the distinction between the "light" and the "lamp." The righteous ones have the true light in them. That which belongs to the wicked is only derived and temporary, and even that shall be extinguished before long. Compare a like distinction in John 1:8; John 5:35.

Verse 10

Either:

(1) "By pride alone comes contention" - that is the one unfailing spring of quarrels; or

(2) "By pride comes contention only" - it, and it alone, is the fruit of pride.

Verse 11

By vanity - literally, "by a breath," i. e., by a windfall, or sudden stroke of fortune, not by honest labor. The general meaning seems to be that the mere possession of riches is as nothing; they come and go, but the power to gain by skill of hand ("labor") is everything.

Verse 12

When the desire cometh - The desire comes, it is a tree of life: i. e., the object of our desires is attained. Compare Proverbs 3:18.

Verse 15

Hard - The primary meaning of the original word is permanence (compare Deuteronomy 21:4; Micah 6:2). This may be applied as here to the hard dry rock, to running streams, or to stagnant pools. In either case, the idea is that of the barren dry soil, or the impassable marsh, in contrast with the fountain of life, carrying joy and refreshment with it.

Verse 19

The connection is somewhat obscure. Either, "Satisfied desire is pleasant, therefore it is an abomination to fools to depart from the evil on which their minds are set;" or, "Sweet is the satisfaction of desire, yet the wicked will not depart from the evil which makes that satisfaction impossible."

Verse 22

An expression of trust, that in the long run the anomalies of the world are rendered even (compare the marginal references). The heaped up treasures of the wicked find their way at last into the hands of better men.

Verse 23

The contrast is the ever recurring one between honest poverty and dishonest wealth. "The new-plowed field of the poor is much food, but there are those, who, though rich, perish through their disregard of right."

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verse 1

Every wise woman - literally, Wise women. The fullest recognition that has as yet met us of the importance of woman, for good or evil, in all human society.

Verse 3

A rod of pride - i. e., The pride shown in his speech is as a rod with which he strikes down others and himself.

Verse 4

i. e., Labor has its rough, unpleasant side, yet it ends in profit. So also, the life of contemplation may seem purer, "cleaner "than that of action. The outer business of the world brings its cares and disturbances, but also "much increase." There will be a sure reward of that activity in good works for him who goes, as with "the strength of the ox," to the task to which God calls him.

Verse 6

Findeth it not - literally, there is none. The successful pursuit of wisdom presupposes at least earnestness and reverence. The scoffer shuts himself out from the capacity of recognizing truth.

Verse 8

The Hebrew counterpart to the Greek "Know thyself." "The highest wisdom is for a person to understand his own way. The most extreme folly is self-deceit." The word "deceit" may, however, involve fraud practiced upon others. The folly of fools shows itself then in their ceaseless effort to deceive.

Verse 9

Fools make a mock - The verb in the Heb. is singular, the noun plural. The King James Version assumes that the number is altered to individualize the application of the maxim. Others translate it: "Sin mocks the fools who are its victims," i. e., disappoints and ruins them; or, "A sin-offering does but mock the worshippers when they are willfully wicked:" they expect to gain God‘s favor, and do not gain it. So taken it becomes parallel to Proverbs 15:8; Proverbs 21:7.

Verse 10

A striking expression of the ultimate solitude of each man‘s soul at all times, and not merely at the hour of death. Something there is in every

sorrow, and in every joy, which no one else can share. Beyond that range it is well to remember that there is a Divine Sympathy, uniting perfect knowledge and perfect love.

Verse 12

A way … - The way of the fool, the way of self-indulgence and self-will.

Verse 13

Sorrow of some kind either mingles itself with outward joy, or follows hard upon it.

Verse 14

Shall be satisfied - These words are not in the original. Repeat the verb from the first clause, "He who falls away from God in his heart, shall be filled with his own ways; and the good man (shall be filled) with that which belongs to him."

Verse 15

Simple - In the bad sense (compare Proverbs 1:22).

Verse 17

The contrast lies between two forms of evil. Hasty anger acts foolishly, but the "man of wicked devices," vindictive and insidious, incurs all men's hatred.

Verse 18

Crowned - The teacher anticipates the truth, and the paradox, of the Stoic saying, "The wise is the only king."

Verse 20

The maxim, jarring as it is, represents the generalization of a wide experience; but the words which follow Proverbs 14:21 show that it is not to be taken by itself. In spite of all the selfish morality of mere prudence, the hearer is warned that to despise his "neighbor" (Christians must take the word in all the width given to it by the parable of the Good Samaritan) is to sin. The fullness of blessing comes on him who sees in the poor the objects of his mercy.

Verse 22

Err - In the sense of wandering from the right way, the way of life.

Verse 23

The contrast between a single, thorough deed, and the mere emptiness of speech.

Verse 24

"The crown," i. e., the glory of the wise man constitutes his wealth. He alone is truly rich even as he alone (compare Proverbs 14:18 note) is truly king.

The seeming tautology of the second clause is really its point. Turn "the foolishness of fools" as you will, it comes back to "foolishness" at last.

Verse 25

In the second clause, "destroyeth life" might have been expected as the antithesis to "delivereth souls." But what worse could be said? "A deceitful witness speaketh lies." All destruction is implied in falsehood.

Verse 26

His children - Probably, the children whom the Lord adopts, and who are true to their adoption.

Verse 27

See the marginal reference and Proverbs 10:11 note.

Verse 28

A protest against the false ideal of national greatness to which Eastern kings, for the most part, have bowed down. Not conquest, or pomp, or gorgeous array, but a happy and numerous people form the true glory of a king. The word translated "prince" is of doubtful meaning; but the translation is supported by the Septuagint, Vulg, and most commentators.

Verse 29

Exalteth folly - Lifts it up, as it were, on high, and exposes it to the gaze of all men.

Verse 30

Sound heart - literally, "heart of health," that in which all emotions and appetites are in a healthy equilibrium. The contrast with this is the envy which eats, like a consuming disease, into the very bones and marrow of a man's moral life.

Verse 31

Honoureth him - i. e., God, who is the Maker of poor and rich alike.

Verse 32

Consult marginal reference. The hope which abides even "in death" must look beyond it.

Verse 33

Omit "that which is." "Wisdom" is the subject of both clauses. She is "made nown," i. e., by the very force of contrast, in the midst of fools; or

she is reserved and reticent in the one, noisy and boastful in the other. The Septuagint and some other versions get over the difficulty, by reading "Wisdom is not made known."

Verse 34

Reproach - The word so rendered has this sense in the Targum of Leviticus 20:17. Its more usual meaning is "mercy," "piety;" hence, some have attached to the word rendered "sin" the sense of "sin-offering," and so get the maxim "piety is an atonement for the people."

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verse 2

Useth knowledge aright - Rather, makes knowledge goodly. The power of well-considered speech to commend true wisdom, is contrasted with the pouring (literally as in the margin) forth of folly.

Verse 3

The teaching which began with the fear of the Lord Proverbs 1:7 would not be complete without this assertion of His omni-present knowledge.

Verse 4

A wholesome tongue - literally, as in the margin, the same word as "sound" in Proverbs 14:30 (see the note). A more literal rendering would be soundness of speech.

Tree of life - Compare Proverbs 3:18 note.

Breach in the spirit - With the sense of vexation (compare Isaiah 65:14).

sa40

Verse 7

Not so - The word translated "so" is taken by some in its etymological force as "strong," "firm," and the passage is rendered "the heart of the fool disperseth (supplied from the first clause) what is weak and unsteady," i. e., "falsehood and unwisdom." The Septuagint takes it as an adjective, "the heart of the fool is unstedfast." The phrase as it stands in the King James Version is, however, of frequent occurrence Genesis 48:18; Exodus 10:11; Numbers 12:7.

Verse 10

Better, There is a grievous correction, i. e., nothing less than death, to him that forsaketh the way.

Verse 13

Some prefer to render the last clause, "In sorrow of heart the breath is oppressed."

Verse 15

Afflicted - The affliction meant here is less that of outward circumstances than of a troubled and downcast spirit. Life to the cheerful is as one perpetual banquet, whether he be poor or rich. That which disturbs the feast is anxiety, the taking (anxious) thought" of Matthew 6:34.

Verse 16

This proverb has its completion in the teaching of Matthew 6:33.

Verse 17

A dinner of herbs - The meals of the poor and the abstemious. The "stalled ox," like the "fatted calf" of Luke 15:23, would indicate a stately magnificence.

Verse 19

The slothful goes on his journey, and for him the path is thick set with thorns, briars, fences, through which he cannot force his way. For the "righteous" (better, upright), the same path is as the broad raised causeway of the king's highway. Compare Isaiah 40:3.

Verse 20

To "despise" a mother is to cause her the deepest grief, and is therefore not unfitly contrasted with "making a glad father."

Verse 21

i. e., The empty-hearted, rejoicing in folly, goes the wrong way; the man of understanding, rejoicing in wisdom, goes the right way.

Verse 22

Counsellors - The Hebrew word, used almost as an official title 1 Chronicles 27:32; Isaiah 1:26; Isaiah 19:11, brings before us the picture of the council-chamber of Eastern countries, arranged for a solemn conference of the wise.

Verse 23

Probably, a special reference to debates in council Proverbs 15:22. They bring before us the special characteristic of the East, the delight in ready, improvised answers, solving difficulties, turning aside anger. Compare the effect on the scribe Mark 12:28.

Verse 24

Above … beneath - The one path is all along upward, leading to the highest life. It rescues the "wise" from the other, which is all along downward, ending in the gloom of Sheol.

Verse 25

The widow - Here, as elsewhere Deuteronomy 10:18; Psalm 68:5, the widow, as the most extreme type of desolation, stands as the representative of a class safer in their poverty under the protection of the Lord, than the proud in the haughtiness of their strength.

Verse 26

Some prefer the margin, and render, words of pleasantness are pure. Gracious words are to God as a pure acceptable offering, the similitude being taken from the Levitical ritual, and the word "pure" in half ceremonial sense (compare Malachi 1:11).

Verse 27

Gifts - There is a special application to the office of the judge. The Aramaic Targum paraphrases the first words of this passage as: "he who gathers the mammon of unrighteousness," using the words with special reference to wealth obtained by unjust judgments. May we infer that Christ's adoption of that phrase Luke 16:9 had a point of contact with this proverb, through the version then popularly used in the synagogues of Palestine?

Verse 28

Contrast the "studying" of the wise before he answers and the hasty babbling of the foolish. The teaching of our Lord Matthew 10:19 presents us with a different and higher precept, resting upon different conditions.

Verse 29

Compare John 9:31.

Verse 30

The light of the eyes - The brightness which shines in the eyes of one whose heart and face are alike full of joy. Such a look acts with a healing and quickening power. Compare Proverbs 16:15.

A good report - i. e., Good news.

Verse 31

The reproof of life - i. e., The reproof that leads to, or gives life, rather than that which comes from life and its experience.

Verse 33

The instruction of wisdom - i. e., The discipline that leads to wisdom.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verse 1

The proverbs in Proverbs 16:1-7 have, more than any other group, an especially religious character impressed upon them. The name of Yahweh as Giver, Guide, Ruler, or Judge, meets us in each of them.

Proverbs 16:1

Better, The plans of the heart belong to man, but the utterance of the tongue is from Yahweh. Thoughts come and go, as it were, spontaneously; but true, well ordered speech is the gift of God. Compare Proverbs 16:9.

Verse 2

We are blind to our own faults, do not see ourselves as others see us. There is One who tries not the "ways" only, but the "spirits" Hebrews 4:12: this is the true remedy against self-deceit.

Verse 3

Commit - literally, as in the margin, as a man transfers a burden from his own back to one stronger and better able to bear it. Compare the margin reference.

Thy thoughts - i. e., The plans or counsels out of which the works spring.

Verse 4

For himself - Better, The Lord has done everything for its own end; and this includes the appointment of an "evil day" for "the wicked" who deserve it.

Verse 5

See the marginal reference note.

Verse 6

Compare Proverbs 15:8. "By mercy and truth," not by sacrifices and burnt-offerings, "iniquity is purged, atoned for, expiated." The teaching is the same as that of the prophets.

Verse 7

Goodness has power to charm and win even enemies to itself.

Verse 9

Deviseth his way - i. e., Thinks it out with anxious care; yet it is the Lord and He only who directs the steps. Compare Proverbs 16:1.

Verse 10

A divine sentence - See the margin, i. e., "soothsaying" in its darker aspect as contrasted with prophecy. The true oracle is to be sought, not from soothsayers and diviners, but "at the lips of the king," who is ideally the representative, the προφήτης *prophētēs* of Yahweh, in His government of mankind.

Verse 11

See Proverbs 11:1 note. People are not to think that trade lies outside the divine law. God has commanded there also all that belongs to truth and right.

Verse 14

While Proverbs 16:13 depicts the king as he ought to be, this verse reminds us of the terrible rapidity with which, in the despotic monarchies of the East, punishment, even death, follows royal displeasure.

Verse 15

The "latter rain" is that which falls in March or April just before the harvest. The "cloud" which brings it, immediately screening people from the scorching sun, and bringing plenty and blessing, is a fit type of the highest favor.

Verse 20

Good as it is to "handle a matter wisely," it is far better to "trust in the Lord." The former is really impossible except through the latter.

Verse 21

The words point to the conditions of all true growth in wisdom; and he who has the gift of uttering it in winning speech increases it in himself and others.

Verse 22

Wellspring of life - Compare Proverbs 10:11 note. "the instruction of fools" Not that which they give, but that which they receive. Compare Proverbs 14:24. "Folly" is its own all-sufficient punishment.

Verse 24

Honey took its place not only among the luxuries, but among the medicines of the Israelites. This two-fold use made it all the more suitable to be an emblem both of the true Wisdom which is also true obedience, and of the "pleasant words" in which that Wisdom speaks.

Verse 26

He that laboreth - literally, as in the margin, i. e., "The desire of the laborer labors for him" (or, helps him in his work), "for his mouth urges

him on." Hunger of some kind is the spring of all hearty labor. Without that the man would sit down and take his ease. So also, unless there is a hunger in the soul, craving to be fed, there can be no true labor after righteousness and wisdom (compare Matthew 5:6).

Verses 27-30

The four verses speak of the same thing, and the well-known opprobrious name, the "man of Belial," stands at the head as stigmatizing the man who delights in causing the mischief of which they treat.

Diggeth up evil - i. e., Digs an evil pit for others to fall into. Compare Psalm 7:15.

Proverbs 16:30

The physiognomy of the man of Belial, the half-closed eyes that never look you straight in the face, the restlessness or cunning of which biting the lips is the surest indication. Compare Proverbs 6:13.

Verse 31

Omit "if." Literally, "it (i. e., the hoary head) is found in the way of righteousness," comes as the reward of righteousness.

Verse 33

Disposing - Better, the judgment or sentence which depends upon the lot. The lots were thrown into the gathered folds of a robe, and then drawn out. Where everything seemed the merest chance, there the faithful Israelite teacher recognized the guidance of a higher will. Compare the case of Achan Joshua 7:18, and of Jonathan 1 Samuel 14:37-42. The process here described would seem to have been employed ordinarily in trials where the judges could not decide on the facts before them (compare Proverbs 18:18).

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

Sacrifices - The feast accompanied the offerings Proverbs 7:14. Part of the victims were burned upon the altar, the rest was consumed by the worshipper and his friends. The "house full of sacrifices" was therefore one abounding in sumptuous feasts.

Verse 2

The "servant," it must be remembered, was a slave, but (as in such cases as Genesis 15:2; 2 Samuel 16:4) might succeed to the inheritance.

Verse 3

Wonderful as is the separation of the pure metal from the dross with which it has mingled, there is something yet more wonderful in the divine discipline which purifies the good that lies hid, like a grain of gold, even in rough and common natures, and frees it from all admixture of evil. Compare Malachi 3:2; 1 Peter 1:7.

Verse 4

The two clauses describe two phases of the mutual affinities of evil. The evil-doer delights in lies, the liar in bad words.

Verse 5

He that is glad at calamities - A temper common at all times as the most hateful form of evil; the Greek ἐπιχαιρεκακία **epichairekakiaThe sins spoken of in both clauses occur also in Job's vindication of his integrity Proverbs 31:13, Proverbs 31:29.**

Verse 6

The reciprocity of good in sustained family relationships. A long line of children's children is the glory of old age, a long line of ancestors the glory of their descendants.

Verse 7

The margin renderings are more literal and give greater emphasis. What is pointed out is not the unfitness of lying lips for the princely-hearted, but the necessity of harmony, in each case, between character and speech.

Verse 8

A half-satirical description of the power of bribery in palaces and among judges. The precious stone (literally as in the margin) is probably a gem, thought of as a talisman, which, "wherever it turns," will ensure "prosperity" to him who, being the possessor, has the power to give it.

Verse 9

Seeketh love - i. e., Takes the course which leads to his gaining it.

He that repeateth a matter - The warning is directed against that which leads a man to dwell with irritating iteration on a past offence instead of burying it in oblivion.

Separateth very friends - Better, alienateth his chief friend. The tale-bearer works injury to himself.

Verse 11

The proverb expresses the reverence of the East for the supreme authority of the king. The "cruel messenger" is probably the king's officer despatched to subdue and punish. The Septuagint renders it: "The Lord will send a pitiless Angel."

Verse 12

The large brown bear of Syria, in her rage at the loss of her whelps, was to the Israelites the strongest type of brute ferocity. Compare 2 Samuel 17:8; 2 Kings 2:24.

Verse 14

The figure is taken from the great tank or reservoir upon which Eastern cities often depended for their supply of water. The beginning of strife is compared to the first crack in the mound of such a reservoir. At first a few drops ooze out, but after a time the whole mass of waters pour themselves forth with fury, and it is hard to set limits to the destruction which they cause.

Before it be meddled with - literally, "before it rolls, or rushes forward."

Verse 15

People need to be warned against an unjust acquittal, no less than against unjust condemnation. The word "justifieth" has its forensic sense, "to declare righteous," to acquit.

Verse 16

More literally: Why is there a price in the hand of a fool? Is it to get wisdom when he has no heart for it? No money will avail without the understanding heart.

Verse 17

Some take the proverb to describe (as in Proverbs 18:24) the "friend that sticketh closer than a brother:" and render: At all times, a friend loveth, but in adversity he is born (i. e., becomes) a brother.

Verse 18

Compare the marginal reference. Since nothing is nobler than the self-sacrifice of the true friend Proverbs 17:17, so nothing is more contemptible than the weakness which allows itself to be sacrificed for the sake of worthless associates.

In the presence of his friend - i. e., "On behalf of" or "to his friend for some third person."

Verse 19

He that exalteth his gate - i. e., Builds a stately house, indulges in arrogant ostentation.

Verse 22

Doeth good like a medicine - Better, worketh a good healing. Omit "like."

Verse 23

The words "out of the bosom," from the fold of the garment, rather than from the bag or girdle in which money was usually carried, possibly point to the stealthiness with which the "gift" (or, bribe) is offered to the judge.

Verse 24

Before him - Set straight before his eyes as the mark to which they look. Others, following the Septuagint and Vulgate, interpret the verse, Wisdom is seen in the clear, stedfast look of the wise man as contrasted with the wandering gaze of the fool.

Verse 25

Compare Proverbs 17:21. Here is added a reference to the sorrow which the folly of a child brings especially to the mother.

Verse 26

Nor to strike … - Better, and to strike the noble (in character rather than in rank) is against right. Compare John 18:28.

Verse 27

Better, A man of calm (or noble) spirit is a man of understanding.

Verse 28

Is esteemed - Or, "is" (simply). The maxim would imply that silence is in any case good.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Verse 1

The text and the marginal readings indicate the two chief constructions of this somewhat difficult verse. Other renderings are

(1) He who separateth himself from others seeks his own desire, and rushes forward against all wise counsel: a warning against self-will and the self-assertion which exults in differing from the received customs and opinions of mankind.

(2) he who separates himself (from the foolish, unlearned multitude) seeks his own desire (that which is worthy to be desired), and mingleth himself with all wisdom. So the Jewish commentators generally.

Between (1) blaming and (2) commending the life of isolation, the decision must be that (1) is most in harmony with the temper of the Book of Proverbs; but it is not strange that Pharisaism, in its very name, separating and self-exalting, should have adopted (2).

Verse 2

Another form of egotism. In "understanding," i. e., self-knowledge, the "fool" finds no pleasure; but self-assertion, talking about himself and his own opinions, is his highest joy.

Verse 3

With ignominy - Better, "together with baseness comes reproach." The outer shame follows close upon the inner.

Verse 4

The parallelism of the two clauses is probably one of contrast. If so, the proverb is a comparison between all teaching from without and that of the light within. "The words of a man's mouth" are dark as the "deep waters" of a pool, or tank ("deep waters" being associated in the Old Testament with the thought of darkness and mystery; compare Proverbs 20:5; Psalm 69:2; Ecclesiastes 7:24); but "the wellspring of wisdom is as a flowing brook," bright and clear. The verse presents a contrast like that of Jeremiah 2:13.

Verses 6-8

The first verse speaks of the immediate, the others of the remote, results of the "fool's" temper. First, "contention," then "strokes" or blows, then

“destruction,” and last, “wounds.”

Proverbs 18:8

Wounds - The word so rendered occurs here and in Proverbs 26:22 only. Others render it “dainties,” and take the verse to describe the avidity with which people swallow in tales of scandal. They find their way to the innermost recesses of man‘s nature.

Verse 10

Safe - literally, as in the margin i. e., is exalted. Compare Psalm 18:2, Psalm 18:33.

Verse 11

What the name of the Lord is to the righteous Proverbs 18:10, that wealth is to the rich. He flees to it for refuge as to a strong city; but it is so only “in his own conceit” or imagination.

High - In the Hebrew the same word as “safe” Proverbs 18:10, and manifestly used in reference to it.

Verse 12

Before - In the sense of priority of time.

Verse 14

Infirmity - Bodily pain or trouble. “Spirit” in the Hebrew text is masculine in the first clause, feminine in the second, as though used in the latter as having lost its strength.

Verse 15

With the wise and prudent there is no loss of time. “Heart” and “ear” - the mind working within, or gathering from without materials for its thought - are, through this channel or that, ever gaining knowledge.

Verse 16

The “gift” (or, bribe), by a bold personification, appears as the powerful “friend at court,” who introduces another, and makes him welcome in high places.

Verse 17

A protest against another fault in judging. Haste is hardly less evil than corruption. “Audi alteram partern “should be the rule of every judge.

His neighbor - The other party to the suit “searcheth,” i. e., scrutinizes and detects him.

Verse 18

Compare Proverbs 16:33 note. A tacit appeal to the Divine Judge gave a fairer prospect of a just decision than corruption Proverbs 18:16 or hasty

onesidedness Proverbs 18:17.

Verse 19

The meaning of the first clause is obtained in the King James Version by the insertion of the words in italics, and it seems on the whole to be the best. The Septuagint and Vulgate give an entirely different rendering, based, apparently, upon a different text.

Verse 20

The general sense is plain. A man must for good or evil take the consequence of his words, as well as his deeds. Compare the marginal reference.

Verse 22

The sense seems to require, "Whoso findeth a good wife," as in some Chaldee manuscripts; but the proverb writer may be looking at marriage in its ideal aspect, and sees in every such union the hands of God joining together man and woman for their mutual good. The Septuagint adds "He who casts out a good wife, casts away that which is good: but he that keepeth an adulteress is foolish and ungodly."

Verse 23

Note the paradox. The poor man, of whom one might expect roughness, supplicates; the rich, well nurtured, from whom one might look for courtesy, answers harshly and brusquely.

Verse 24

Better, "A man of many companions is so to his own destruction, but there is a friend (the true, loving friend) etc." It is not the multitude of so called friends that helps us. They may only embarrass and perplex. What we prize is the one whose love is stronger and purer even than all ties of kindred.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Verse 1

The "perverse" man is the rich fool, as contrasted with the poor man who is upright.

Proverbs 19:1-2 are missing in the Septuagint.

Verse 3

The non-wisdom which, having brought about disasters by its own perverseness, then turns round and "fretteth," i. e., angrily complains against the Providence of God.

Perverteth - Rather, "overturneth," "maketh to fail."

Verse 6

Intreat the favor … - literally, "stroke the face" of the man of princely nature, who gives munificently.

Verse 7

It seems best to follow the Vulgate in taking the last clause as a separate maxim, He who pursues words, nought are they; i. e., the fair speeches and promises of help come to nothing. A various reading in the Hebrew gives, "he pursues after words, and these he shall have" - i. e., these, and nothing else.

This and other like maxims do not in reality cast scorn and shame on a state which Christ has pronounced "blessed." Side by side with them is Proverbs 19:1, setting forth the honor of an upright poverty. But as there is an honorable poverty, so there is one which is altogether inglorious, caused by sloth and folly, leading to shame and ignominy, and it is well that the man who wishes to live rightly should avoid this. The teaching of Christ is, of course, higher than that of the Book of Proverbs, being based upon a fuller revelation of the divine will, pointing to a higher end and a nobler standard of duty, and transcending the common motives and common facts of life.

Verse 8

Wisdom - literally, as in the margin, to gain a "heart," i. e., the higher faculties both of reason and feeling, is identical with gaining wisdom, i. e., the faculty which seeks and finds.

Verse 10

“Delight,” high unrestrained enjoyment, is to the “fool” who lacks wisdom but a temptation and a snare. The second clause carries the thought on to what the despotism of Eastern monarchies often presented, the objectionable rule of some favored slave, it might be, of alien birth, over the princes and nobles of the land.

Verse 13

Calamity - The Hebrew word is plural (as in Psalm 57:1; Psalm 91:3), and seems to express the multiplied and manifold sorrow caused by the foolish son.

Continual dropping - The irritating, unceasing, sound of the fall, drop after drop, of water through the chinks in the roof.

Verse 15

Casteth into a deep sleep - Better, causeth deep sleep to fall.

Verse 16

Keepeth his own soul - i. e., His life in the truest and highest sense.

Verse 17

Note the original greatness of the thought. We give to the poor. Have we lost our gift? No, what we gave, we have lent to One who will repay with usury. Compare the yet nobler truth of our Lord‘s teaching Matthew 25:40.

Verse 18

While there is hope - While he is still young, and capable of being reformed.

Crying - Better, as in the margin, Do not set thy soul on his destruction; words which either counsel forbearance in the act of chastisement (compare Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21); or urge that a false clemency is a real cruelty. The latter sense is preferable. The father is warned that to forbear from chastising is virtually to expose the son who needs it to a far worse penalty.

Verse 19

The sense of the last words seems to be that the connection between wrath and punishment is so invariable, that all efforts to save the passionate man from the disastrous consequences which he brings on his own head are made in vain.

Verse 21

Contrast the many purposes of man, shifting, changing, from good to better, from bad to worse, and the one unchanging righteous “counsel” of Yahweh.

Verse 22

The "liar" is probably the man, who makes false excuses for not giving, and so is inferior to the poor man, whose "desire," the wish to do good, is taken, in the absence of means to carry it into effect, for the act of kindness itself.

Verse 23

Shall abide satisfied - Better, one that is satisfied hath a sure abiding-place. The word "abide" has, most probably, here as elsewhere, its original sense of "passing the night." Even in the hour of darkness he shall be free from fear.

Verse 24

Hideth his hand in his bosom - Better, dippeth his hand in the dish (compare 2 Kings 21:13). The scene brought before us is that of an Eastern feast. There are no knives, or forks, or spoons. Every guest has to help himself, or be helped by the host. Compare John 13:26.

Verse 25

Words which embrace nearly the whole theory of punishment. If the man who offends is a "scorner," hardened beyond all hope of reformation, then punish him by way of retribution and example, and let the penalty be sharp, that even the unwary and careless may beware. If the man be "understanding," then let the punishment take the form of discipline. Admonish, reprove, educate.

Verse 26

Or, A son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach, is one that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother.

Verse 27

literally, Cease, my son, to hear instruction, that thou mayest err from the words of knowledge; advice given ironically to do that to which his weakness leads him, with a clear knowledge of the evil to which he is drifting.

Verse 28

Ungodly witness - literally, "Witness of Belial," "worthless," "untruthful."

Devoureth iniquity - Seizes on it eagerly, as a dainty, lives on it.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Verse 1

"Wine" and "strong drink" are personified as themselves doing what they make men do. The latter (see Leviticus 10:9 note) is here, probably, the "palm-wine" of Syria.

Verse 2

Sinneth against his own soul - i. e., Against his own life (compare Habakkuk 2:10).

Verse 3

Meddling - See Proverbs 17:14 note.

Verse 4

Plowing time in Palestine is in November and December, when the wind blows commonly from the North.

Verse 5

The contest between reticence on the one side and pertinacity in search on the other is represented as by a parable. The well may be very deep (compare the marginal reference), but the man of understanding" has enough skill to draw up the water even to the last drop. Every question is, as it were, a turning of the windlass.

Verse 6

Goodness - With the special sense of bounty, beneficence. Contrast promise and performance. People boast of their liberality, yet we look in vain for the fulfillment of actual obligations.

Verse 9

A warning voice against the spirit, which, ignorant of its own guilt, is forward to condemn others.

Verse 10

See Proverbs 11:1: Here perhaps, as a companion to Proverbs 20:9, with a wider application to all judging one man by rules which we do not apply to ourselves or to another.

Verse 11

The graces or the faults of children are not trifles. "The child is father of the man;" and the earliest actions are prophecies of the future, whether it will be pure and right, or unclean and evil.

Verse 12

Not only do we owe the gifts of sight and hearing to Yahweh, but He, being the giver, will also call us to account for them (compare Psalm 94:9).

Verse 13

Open thine eyes - Be vigilant and active. That is the secret of prosperity.

Verse 14

Naught - Bad, worthless 2 Kings 2:19.

Verse 15

A precious jewel - literally, "A vessel of preciousness," i. e., most precious of all are "the lips of knowledge."

Verse 16

The warning against suretiship and lust are here repeated and combined (compare Proverbs 27:13). The judge tells the creditor to seize the goods of the surety who has been weak enough to pledge himself for those who are alien to him, instead of those of the actual debtor. The reading of the the King James Version recalls in the second clause the history of Tamar Genesis 38:17-18. The Hebrew text, however, gives "strangers" in the masculine plural, and is probably right, the feminine being the reading of the margin, probably adopted from Proverbs 27:13.

Verse 17

"To eat gravel" was a Hebrew Lamentations 3:16, and is an Arabic, phrase for getting into trouble. So "bread," got by deceit, tastes sweet at first, but ends by leaving the hunger of the soul unsatisfied. There is a pleasure in the sense of cleverness felt after a hard bargain or a successful fraud, which must be met by bidding men look on the after consequences.

Verse 19

Flattereth - literally, "The man who opens his lips," who has no reticence; such a man, with or without intending it, does the work of a talebearer.

Verse 20

A connecting link between Leviticus 20:9 and Matthew 15:4. The words, "his lamp shall be put out," describe the failure of outward happiness.

Verse 21

Or, An inheritance gotten hastily (greedily sought after by unjust means) at the beginning, the end thereof shall not be blessed. Another reading

gives, “an inheritance loathed, (compare Zechariah 11:8), or with a curse upon it.” The King James Version agrees with the versions.

Verse 22

God‘s awarding to everyone according to his works, is the true check to the spirit of vindictiveness (compare Romans 12:17, Romans 12:19). Note that man is not told to wait on the Lord in expectation of seeing vengeance on his enemies, but “He shall save thee.” The difference of the two hopes, in their effect upon the man‘s character, is incalculable.

Verse 24

The order of a man‘s life is a mystery even to himself. He knows not where he is going, or for what God is educating him.

Verse 25

Better, It is a snare to a man to utter a vow (of consecration) rashly, and after vows to inquire whether he can fulfill them. Both clauses are a protest against the besetting sin of rash and hasty vows. Compare the marginal reference.

Verse 26

The wheel - The threshing wheel Isaiah 28:27-28, which passes over the grain and separates the grain from the chaff. The proverb involves therefore the idea of the division of the good from the evil, no less than that of the punishment of the latter.

Verse 27

The spirit of man - The “breath” of Genesis 2:7, the higher life, above that which he has in common with lower animals, coming to him direct from God. Such a life, with all its powers of insight, consciousness, reflection, is as a lamp which God has lighted, throwing its rays into the darkest recesses of the heart. A still higher truth is proclaimed in the Prologue of John‘s Gospel. The candle, or lamp of Yahweh, derives its light from “the Light that lighteth every man,” even the Eternal Word.

Verse 30

Better, The blueness of a wound is a cleansing of evil, so are the stripes that go down to the inward parts of the belly.

The open sores of wounds left by the scourge, unclean and foul as they seem, are yet a cleansing, purifying process for evil; so also are the stripes that reach the inward parts of the belly, i. e., the sharp reproofs, the stings of conscience, which penetrate where no scourge can reach, into the inner life

of man. Chastisement, whatever be its nature, must be real; the scourge must leave its mark, the reproof must go deep.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Verse 1

Rivers of water - See the Psalm 1:3 note. As the cultivator directs the stream into the channels where it is most wanted, so Yahweh directs the thoughts of the true king, that his favors may fall, not at random, but in harmony with a divine order.

Verse 3

Compare the marginal reference. The words have a special significance as coming from the king who had built the temple, and had offered sacrifices that could not be numbered for multitude" 1 Kings 8:5.

Verse 4

The plowing - The Hebrew word, with a change in its vowel points, may signify either:

(1) the "fallow field," the "tillage" of Proverbs 13:23, or

(2) the lamp.

According to: (1) the verse would mean, "The outward signs of pride, the proud heart, the broad lands of the wicked, all are evil." (2) however, belongs, as it were, to the language of the time and of the book Proverbs 13:9; Proverbs 24:20. The "lamp of the wicked" is their outwardly bright prosperity.

Verse 5

Here diligence is opposed, not to sloth but to haste. Undue hurry is as fatal to success as undue procrastination.

Verse 6

Vanity - Or, "a breath driven to and fro of those that are seeking death." Another reading of the last words is: "of the snares of death" (compare 1 Timothy 6:9). Some commentators have suggested that the "vapor" or "mist" is the mirage of the desert, misleading those who follow it, and becoming a "net of death."

Verse 7

Robbery - Probably the "violence" which the wicked practice.

Shall destroy them - More literally, carries them away.

Verse 8

Or, “Perverse is the way of a sin burdened man.”

Verse 9

A wide house - literally, “a house of companionship,” i. e., a house shared with her. The flat roof of an Eastern house was often used for retirement by day, or in summer for sleep by night. The corner of such a roof was exposed to all changes of weather, and the point of the proverb lies in the thought that all winds and storms which a man might meet with there are more endurable than the tempest within.

Verse 12

Or, The Righteous One (Yahweh) regardeth well the house of the wicked, and maketh the wicked fall into mischief.

Verse 16

congregation of the dead - The Rephaim (compare the Proverbs 2:18 note).

Remain - i. e., “He shall find a resting place, but it shall be in Hades.”

Verse 17

Wine and oil - i. e., The costly adjuncts of a princely banquet. The price of oil or precious unguent was about equal to the 300 days‘ wages of a field laborer Matthew 20:2. Indulgence in such a luxury would thus become the type of all extravagance and excess.

Verse 18

Compare the marginal reference. Evil doers seem to draw down the wrath of God upon their heads, and so become, as it were, the scapegoats of the comparatively righteous.

Verse 20

Spendeth it up - literally, swalloweth it. The wise man keeps a store in reserve. He gains uprightly, spends moderately, never exhausts himself. But the proverb may have also a higher application. The wise man stores up all “treasure to be desired” of wisdom, all “oil” of divine influence, which strengthens and refreshes, and so is ready at all times for the work to which the Master calls him. Compare Matthew 25:1-13.

Verse 21

The man who keeps “righteousness” will assuredly find it, but he will find besides it the “life” and the “honor” which he was not seeking. Compare 1 Kings 3:13; Matthew 6:33.

Verse 22

Even in war, counsel does more than brute strength. So of the warfare which is carried on in the inner battlefield of the soul. There also wisdom is mighty to the "pulling down of strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4, where Paul uses the very words of the Septuagint Version of this passage), and the wise man scales and keeps the city which the strong man armed has seized and made his own.

Verse 25

Killeth him - He wastes his strength and life in unsatisfied longings for something which he has not energy to gain. The wish to do great or good things may sometimes be taken for the deed, but if the hindrance is from a man's own sloth, it does but add to his condemnation.

Verse 26

All the day long - Better, every day. The wish of the slothful man passes into restless, covetous, dissatisfied desire; the righteous, free from that desire, gives without grudging.

Verse 27

A lower depth even than Proverbs 15:8. The wicked man may connect his devotion with his guilt, offer his sacrifice and vow his vow (as men have done under paganism or corrupted Christianity) for success in the perpetration of a crime.

Verse 28

Speaketh constantly - His testimony abides evermore who repeats simply what he has heard, whether from the lips of men or from the voice within, in contrast with "the false witness."

Verse 29

Directeth - i. e., Makes straight and firm. On one side it is the callousness of guilt; on the other side it is the confidence of integrity.

Verse 30-31

Two companion proverbs. Nothing avails against, nothing without, God. The horse is the type of warlike strength, used chiefly or exclusively in battle. 1 Kings 4:26; 1 Kings 10:26-28, may be thought of as having given occasion to the latter of the two proverbs.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 22

Verse 1

Omit "good." The word is an insertion. To the Hebrew, "name" by itself conveyed the idea of good repute, just as "men without a name" (compare Job 30:8 margin) are those sunk in ignominy. The margin gives a preferable rendering of the second clause of this verse.

Verse 2

Compare the margin reference. Another recognition of the oneness of a common humanity, overriding all distinctions of rank.

Verse 4

Better, (compare the margin) The reward of humility (is) the fear of the Lord, "riches, and honor, and life.

Verse 6

Train - Initiate, and so, educate.

The way he should go - Or, according to the tenor of his way, i. e., the path especially belonging to, especially fitted for, the individual's character. The proverb enjoins the closest possible study of each child's temperament and the adaptation of "his way of life" to that.

Verse 8

The rod of his anger - That with which he smites others (compare Isaiah 14:6). The King James Version describes the final impotence of the wrath of the wicked.

Verse 9

He that hath a bountiful eye - literally, as in the margin, contrasted with the "evil eye" of Proverbs 28:22.

Verse 11

More literally, "He that loveth pureness of heart, his lips are gracious, the king is his friend."

Verse 13

The point of the satire is the ingenuity with which the slothful man devises the most improbable alarms. He hears that "there is a lion without," i. e., in the broad open country; he is afraid of being slain in the very streets of the city.

Verse 14

The fall of the man into the snare of the harlot seems to be the consequence of the abhorrence or wrath of Yahweh. That abhorrence is,

however, the result of previous evil. The man is left to himself, and sin becomes the penalty of sin.

Verse 16

Better, He who oppresses the poor for his own profit gives. (i. e., will, in the common course of things, be compelled to give) to a rich man, and that only to his own loss. Ill-gotten gains do not prosper, and only expose the oppressor to extortion and violence in his turn.

Verse 17

This is the commencement of a new and entirely distinct section, opening, after the fashion of Proverbs 3:1, Proverbs 3:21; Proverbs 4:1; Proverbs 7:1; with a general exhortation Proverbs 22:17-21 and passing on to special precepts. The "words of the wise" may be a title to the section: compare Proverbs 24:23. The general characteristics of this section appear to be

(1) a less close attention to the laws of parallelism, and

(2) a tendency to longer and more complicated sentences. Compare the Introduction to Proverbs.

Verse 18

What is "pleasant" in the sight of God and man is the union of two things, belief passing into profession, profession resting on belief.

Verse 19

Even to thee - The wide general character of the teaching does not hinder its being a personal message to every one who reads it.

Verse 20

Excellent things - A meaning of the word derived from "the third," i. e., "the chief of three warriors in a chariot" (compare Exodus 14:7 note). Another reading of the Hebrew text gives "Have I not written to thee long ago?" and this would form a natural antithesis to "this day" of Proverbs 22:19. The rendering of the Septuagint is: "write them for thyself three times;" that of the Vulgate, "I have written it (i. e., my counsel) In threefold form;" the "three times" or "threefold form" being referred either to the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, or to the division of the Old Testament into the Law, the prophets, and the Hagiographa.

Verse 21

To them that send unto thee - Better as in the margin; compare Proverbs 10:26. The man who has learned the certainty of the words of truth will learn to observe it in all that men commit to him.

Verse 22

i. e., "Do not be tempted by the helplessness of the poor man to do him wrong:" some prefer, "Refrain from doing him wrong through pity for his helplessness."

The gate - The place where the rulers of the city sit in judgment. The words point to the special form of oppression of which unjust judges are the instruments.

Verse 26

Strike hands - i. e., Bind themselves as surety for what another owes (compare the margin reference).

Verse 27

He - i. e., The man to whom the surety has been given. The practice of distraining for payment of a debt, seems, though prohibited Exodus 22:27, to have become common.

Verse 28

A protest against the grasping covetousness Isaiah 5:8 which is regardless of the rights of the poor upon whose inheritance men encroach (compare the margin reference). The not uncommon reference of the words to the "landmarks" of thought or custom, however, natural and legitimate, is foreign to the mind of the writer.

Verse 29

The gift of a quick and ready intellect is to lead to high office, it is not to be wasted on a work to which the obscure are adequate.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 23

Verse 1

What is before thee - Beware lest dainties tempt thee to excess. Or, "consider diligently who is before thee," the character and temper of the ruler who invites thee.

Verse 2

i. e., "Restrain thy appetite, eat as if the knife were at thy throat." Others render the words "thou wilt put a knife to thy throat" etc., i. e., "indulgence at such a time may endanger thy very life."

Verse 3

Dainties … deceitful meat - Such as "savory meat," venison Genesis 27:4, offered not from genuine hospitality, but with some by-ends.

Verse 4

Cease from thine own wisdom - i. e., "Cease from the use of what is in itself most excellent, if it only serves to seek after wealth, and so ministers to evil." There is no special contrast between "thine own wisdom" and that given from above, though it is of course implied that in ceasing from his own prudence the man is on the way to attain a higher wisdom.

Verse 5

Set thine eyes - literally, as in the margin, i. e., "gaze eagerly upon;" and then we get an emphatic parallelism with the words that follow, "they fly away as an eagle toward heaven;" "certainly make themselves wings."

Verse 6

A different danger from that of Proverbs 23:1. The hazard here is the hospitality of the purse-proud rich, avaricious or grudging even in his banquets.

Evil eye - Not with the later associations of a mysterious power for mischief, but simply, as in the margin ref. and in Matthew 20:15.

Verse 7

Thinketh - The Hebrew verb is found here only, and probably means, "as he is all along in his heart, so is he (at last) in act."

Verse 9

The "fool" here is one willfully and persistently deaf to it, almost identical with the scorner.

Verse 11

The reason is given for the precept Proverbs 23:10.

Their redeemer - See Job 19:25 note. It was the duty of the גאל *gā'al* the next of kin, to take on himself, in case of murder, the office of avenger of blood Numbers 35:19. By a slight extension the word was applied to one who took on himself a like office in cases short of this. Here, therefore, the thought is that, destitute as the fatherless may seem, there is One who claims them as His next of kin, and will avenge them. Yahweh Himself is in this sense their גאל *gā'al* their Redeemer.

Verse 13-14

i. e., "You will not kill your son by scourging him, you may kill him by with holding the scourge."

Proverbs 23:14

Hell - Sheol, the world of the dead.

Verses 15-35

Another continuous exhortation rather than a collection of maxims.

Proverbs 23:16

The teacher rejoices when the disciple's heart Proverbs 23:15 receives wisdom, and yet more when his lips can utter it.

Reins - See Job 19:27 note.

Proverbs 23:17

Envy sinners - Compare in Psalm 37:1; Psalm 73:3; the feeling which looks half-longingly at the prosperity of evil doers. Some connect the verb "envy" with the second clause, "envy not sinners, but envy, emulate, the fear of the Lord."

Proverbs 23:18

Or, For if there is an end (hereafter), thine expectations shall not be cut off. There is an implied confidence in immortality.

Proverbs 23:20

Riotous eaters of flesh - The word is the same as "glutton" in Proverbs 23:21 and Deuteronomy 21:20.

Proverbs 23:21

The three forms of evil that destroy reputation and tempt to waste are brought together.

Drowsiness - Specially the drunken sleep, heavy and confused.

Proverbs 23:26

Observe - Another reading gives, "let thine eyes delight in my ways."

Proverbs 23:28

As for a prey - Better as in the margin.

The transgressors - Better, the treacherous," those that attack men treacherously.

Proverbs 23:29

Woe … sorrow - The words in the original are interjections, probably expressing distress. The sharp touch of the satirist reproduces the actual inarticulate utterances of drunkenness.

Proverbs 23:30

Mixed wine - Wine flavored with aromatic spices, that increase its stimulating properties Isaiah 5:22. There is a touch of sarcasm in "go to seek." The word, elsewhere used of diligent search after knowledge Proverbs 25:2; Job 11:7; Psalm 139:1, is used here of the investigations of connoisseurs in wine meeting to test its qualities.

Proverbs 23:31

His color - literally, "its eye," the clear brightness, or the beaded bubbles on which the wine drinker looks with complacency.

It moveth itself aright - The Hebrew word describes the pellucid stream flowing pleasantly from the wineskin or jug into the goblet or the throat (compare Proverbs 23:32

Adder - Said to be the Cerastes, or horned snake.

Proverbs 23:34

The passage is interesting, as showing the increased familiarity of Israelites with the experiences of sea life (compare Psalm 104:25-26; Psalm 107:23-30).

In the midst of the sea - i. e., When the ship is in the trough of the sea and the man is on the deck. The second clause varies the form of danger, the man is in the "cradle" at the top of the mast, and sleeps there, regardless of the danger.

Proverbs 23:35

The picture ends with the words of the drunkard on waking from his sleep. Unconscious of the excesses of the night, his first thought is to return to his old habit.

When shall I awake … - Better, when I shall awake I will seek it yet again.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Verse 1

A lesson given before, now combined with another. True followers after wisdom will admit neither envy of evil on the one hand, nor admiration or fellowship with it on the other.

Verse 3-4

The "house" is figurative of the whole life, the "chambers" of all regions, inward and outward, of it.

Verse 5

Is strong - literally, as in the margin; i. e., rooted and established in strength.

Verse 7

In the gate - Compare the Proverbs 22:22 note.

Verse 11

Literally:

"Deliver those that are drawn unto death,

And those who totter to the slaughter - if

Thou withdraw … "

i. e., "O withdraw them," save them from their doom; in contrast to Proverbs 24:10. The structure and meaning are both somewhat obscure; but the sentence is complete in itself, and is not a mere hypothesis concluded in the following verses.

Verse 12

As Proverbs 24:11 warned men against acquiescing in an unrighteous tyranny, so this denounces the tendency to hush up a wrong with the false plea of ignorance. Compare Ecclesiastes 5:8. Proverbs 24:10-12 thus forms a complete and connected whole.

Verse 13

Honey entered largely into the diet of Hebrew children Isaiah 7:15, so that it was as natural an emblem for the purest and simplest wisdom, as the "sincere milk of the word" was to the New Testament writers. The learner hears what seems to be a rule of diet - then Proverbs 24:14 the parable is explained.

Verse 14

The knowledge of wisdom - Better, Know that thus (like the honey) is wisdom to thy soul.

Verse 15-16

The teaching of the proverb warns men not to attack or plot against the righteous. They will lose their labor, "Though the just man fall (not into sin, but into calamities), yet he riseth up." The point of the teaching is not the liability of good men to err, but God's providential care over them (compare the margin reference). "Seven times" is a certain for an uncertain number (compare Job 5:19). In contrast with this is the fate of the evildoers, who fall utterly even in a single distress.

Verse 18

See the margin. The meaning is "Thy joy will be suicidal, the wrath of the righteous Judge will be turned upon thee, as the greater offender, and thou wilt have to bear a worse evil than that which thou exultest in."

Verse 20

No reward - literally, "no future," no life worthy to be called life, no blessing.

Verse 21

Them that are given to change - Those that seek to set aside the worship of the true God, or the authority of the true king, who represents Him.

Verse 22

Both - Those who fear not God, and those who fear not the king.

Verse 23

Belong to the wise - Either "are fitting for the wise, addressed to them," or (as in the superscriptions of many of the Psalms) "are written by the wise." Most recent commentators take it in the latter sense, and look on it as indicating the beginning of a fresh section, containing proverbs not ascribed to Solomon's authorship. Compare the introduction to Proverbs.

Verse 25

There is no surer path to popularity than a righteous severity in punishing guilt.

Verse 26

Better, He shall kiss lips that giveth a right answer, i. e., he shall gain the hearts of men as much as by all outward signs of sympathy and favor. Compare 2 Samuel 15:1-6.

Verse 27

i. e., Get an estate into good order before erecting a house on it. To "build a house" may, however, be equivalent (compare Exodus 1:21;

Deuteronomy 25:9; Rth 4:11) to "founding a family;" and the words a warning against a hasty and imprudent marriage. The young man is taught to cultivate his land before he has to bear the burdens of a family. Further, in a spiritual sense, the "field" may be the man's outer common work, the "house" the dwelling-place of his higher life. He must do the former faithfully in order to attain the latter. Neglect in one is fatal to the other. Compare Luke 16:10-11.

Verse 28

Deceive not with thy lips - Better, wilt thou deceive with thy lips?

Verse 29

A protest against vindictiveness in every form. Compare marginal reference.

Verse 30

The chapter ends with an apologue, which may be taken as a parable of something yet deeper. The field and the vineyard are more than the man's earthly possessions. His neglect brings barrenness or desolation to the garden of the soul. The "thorns" are evil habits that choke the good seed, and the "nettles" are those that are actually hurtful and offensive to others. The "wall" is the defense which laws and rules give to the inward life, and which the sluggard learns to disregard, and the "poverty" is the loss of the true riches of the soul, tranquility, and peace, and righteousness.

Verse 33-34

See the Proverbs 6:11 note.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 25

Verse 1

A new section.

Copied out - In the sense of a transfer from oral tradition to writing.

Verse 2

The earthly monarch might be, in some respects, the type of the heavenly, but here there is a marked contrast. The king presses further and further into all knowledge; God surrounds Himself as in "thick darkness," and there are secrets unrevealed even after the fullest revelation.

Verse 3

The other side of the thought of Proverbs 25:2. What the mind of God is to the searchers after knowledge, that the heart of the true and wise king is to those who try to guess its counsels.

Verse 5

The interpretation of the proverb of Proverbs 25:4. The king himself, like the Lord whom he represents, is to sit as "a refiner of silver" Malachi 3:3.

Verse 6-7

The pushing, boastful temper is, in the long run, suicidal. It is wiser as well as nobler to take the lower place at first in humility, than to take it afterward with shame. Compare Luke 14:8-10, which is one of the few instances in which our Lord's teaching was fashioned, as to its outward form, upon that of this book.

Verse 8

The general meaning is: It is dangerous to plunge into litigation. At all times, there is the risk of failure, and, if we fail, of being at the mercy of an irritated adversary. Without the italics, the clause may be rendered, "lest thou do something (i. e., something humiliating and vexatious) at the end thereof."

Verse 9

An anticipation of the highest standard of ethical refinement Matthew 18:15, but with a difference. Here the motive is prudential, the risk of shame, the fear of the irretrievable infamy of the betrayer of secrets. In the teaching of Christ the precept rests upon the divine authority and the perfect example.

Verse 11

Apples of gold - Probably the golden colored fruit set in baskets (i. e., chased vessels of open worked silver); so is a word spoken upon its wheels (i. e., moving quickly and quietly on its way). The proverb may have had its origin in some kingly gift to the son of David, the work of Tyrian artists, like Hiram and his fellows. Others gazed on the cunning work and admired, but the wise king saw in the costly rarity a parable of something higher. "A word well set upon the wheels of speech" excelled it. Ornamentation of this kind in the precious metals was known, even as late as in the middle ages, as oeuvre de Salomon.

Verse 12

The theme of this proverb being the same as that of Proverbs 25:11, its occurrence suggests the thought that rings used as ornaments for ears, or nose, or forehead, and other trinkets formed part of the works of art spoken of in the foregoing note, and that the king had something at once pointed and wise to say of each of them.

Verse 13

A picture of the growing luxury of the Solomonic period. The "snow in harvest" is not a shower of snow or hail, which would be terrifying and harmful rather than refreshing (compare 1 Samuel 12:17-18); but, rather, the snow of Lebanon or Hermon put into wine or other drink to make it more refreshing in the scorching heat of May or June at the king's summer palace on Lebanon (1 Kings 9:19, note; Proverbs 10:26.

Verse 14

The disappointment caused by him who promises much and performs little or nothing, is likened to the phenomena of an eastern climate; the drought of summer, the eager expectation of men who watch the rising clouds and the freshening breeze, the bitter disappointment when the breeze dies off, and the clouds pass away, and the wished for rain does not come.

Verse 15

A soft tongue - Winning and gentle speech does what it seems at first least capable of doing; it overcomes obstacles which are as bones that the strongest jaws would fail to crush.

Verse 16

Hast thou found honey? - Compare Judges 14:8; 1 Samuel 14:27. The precept extends to the pleasure of which honey is the symbol.

Verse 17

Let thy foot be seldom in the house of thy friend, etc. Though thy visits were sweet as honey, he may soon learn to loathe them.

Verse 18

Maul - A heavy sledge hammer. The word is connected with "malleus:" its diminutive "mallet" is still in use.

Verse 19

Stress is to be laid on the uselessness of the "broken tooth" and the "foot out of joint," or tottering, rather than on the pain connected with them. The King James Version loses the emphasis and point of the Hebrew by inverting the original order, which is "a broken … joint is confidence" etc.

Verse 20

Examples of unwisdom and incongruity sharpen the point of the proverb. Pouring vinegar upon nitre or potash utterly spoils it. The effervescence caused by the mixture is perhaps taken as a type of the irritation produced by the "songs" sung out of season to a heavy heart.

The verb rendered "taketh away" may have the sense (as in Ezekiel 16:11) of "adorning oneself," and the illustration would then be, "as to put on a fine garment in time of cold is unseasonable, so is singing to a heavy heart."

Verse 21-22

A precept reproduced by Paul Romans 12:20; the second clause of which seems at first sight to suggest a motive incompatible with a true charity. Leviticus 16:12 suggests an explanation. The high priest on the Day of Atonement was to take his censer, to fill it with "coals of fire," and then to put the incense thereon for a sweet-smelling savor. So it is here. The first emotion in another caused by the good done to him may be one of burning shame, but the shame will do its work and the heart also will burn, and prayer and confession and thanksgiving will rise as incense to the throne of God. Thus, "we shall overcome evil with good."

Verse 23

The marginal reading is far more accurate and gives a better sense. The northwest wind in Palestine commonly brings rain, and this was probably in the thought of the writer.

Verse 24

Compare the Proverbs 21:9 note.

Verse 25

The craving of wanderers for news from the home that they have left is as a consuming thirst, the news that quenches it as a refreshing fountain.

Verse 26

Falling down before - i. e., Yielding and cringing. To see this instead of stedfastness, is as grievous as for the traveler to find the spring at which he hoped to quench his thirst turbid and defiled.

Verse 27

So for men … - A difficult sentence, the text of which is probably defective. The words are not in the original. Many commentators render: so to search into weighty matters is itself a weight, i. e., people soon become satiated with it as with honey. Possibly a warning against an over-curious searching into the mysteries of God‘s word or works.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 26

Verse 1

In Palestine there is commonly hardly any rain from the early showers of spring to October. Hence, "rain in harvest" became sometimes (see the marginal reference) a supernatural sign, sometimes, as here, a proverb for whatever was strange and incongruous.

Verse 2

i. e., "Vague as the flight of the sparrow, aimless as the wheelings of the swallow, is the causeless curse. It will never reach its goal." The marginal reading in the Hebrew, however, gives" to him" instead of "not" or "never;" i. e., "The causeless curse, though it may pass out of our ken, like a bird's track in the air, will come on the man who utters it." Compare the English proverb, "Curses, like young chickens, always come home to roost."

Verse 4-5

Two sides of a truth. To "answer a fool according to his folly" is in Proverbs 26:4 to bandy words with him, to descend to his level of coarse anger and vile abuse; in Proverbs 26:5 it is to say the right word at the right time, to expose his unwisdom and untruth to others and to himself, not by a teaching beyond his reach, but by words that he is just able to apprehend. The apparent contradiction between the two verses led some of the rabbis to question the canonical authority of this book. The Pythagoreans had maxims expressing a truth in precepts seemingly contradictory.

Verse 6

Cutteth off the feet - Mutilates him, spoils the work which the messenger ought to fulfill.

Drinketh damage - i. e., "has to drink full draughts of shame and loss" (compare Job 15:16).

Verse 7

Or, Take away the legs of the lame man, and the parable that is in the mouth of fools: both are alike useless to their possessors. Other meanings are:

(1) "The legs of the lame man are feeble, so is parable in the mouth of fools."

(2) "the lifting up of the legs of a lame man, i. e., his attempts at dancing, are as the parable in the mouth of fools."

Verse 8

i. e., "To give honor to the fool is like binding a stone in a sling; you cannot throw it." In each case you misapply and so waste. Others render in the sense of the margin: To use a precious stone where a pebble would be sufficient, is not less foolish than to give honor to a fool.

Verse 9

Better: "As a thorn which is lifted up in the hand of the drunkard" etc. As such a weapon so used may do mischief to the man himself or to others, so may the sharp, keen-edged proverb when used by one who does not understand it.

Verse 10

The word "God" is not in the original, and the adjective translated "great" is never used elsewhere absolutely in that sense. The simplest and best interpretation is: As the archer that woundeth everyone, so is he who hireth the fool, and he who hireth every passerby. Acting at random, entrusting matters of grave moment to men of bad repute, is as likely to do mischief as to shoot arrows at everyone.

Verse 13

Compare the marginal reference note. Here there is greater dramatic vividness in the two words used:

(1) A roaring one,

(2) a lion, more specifically.

Verse 15

Grieveth him - Better, wearieth him.

Verse 16

Seven - The definite number used for the indefinite (compare Proverbs 24:16).

Reason - Better, a right judgment.

Verse 18-19

The teacher cuts off the plea which people make when they have hurt their neighbor by lies, that they "did not mean mischief," that they were "only in fun." Such jesting is like that of the madman flinging firebrands or arrows.

Verse 21

Coals - Charcoal.

Verse 22

Compare the marginal reference note.

Verse 23

Burning lips - i. e., "Lips glowing with, affection, uttering warm words of love," joined with a malignant heart, are like a piece of broken earthenware from the furnace, which glitters with the silver drops at stick to it, but is itself worthless.

Verse 25

Seven abominations - Compare Proverbs 26:16 note. Here "seven" retains, perhaps, its significance as the symbol of completeness. Evil has, as it were, gone through all its work, and holds its accursed Sabbath in the heart in which all things are "very evil."

Verse 26

Better, "Hatred is covered by deceit, but in the midst of the congregation his wickedness will be made manifest," i. e., then, in the time of need, the feigned friendship will pass into open enmity.

Verse 27

Rolleth a stone - The illustration refers, probably, to the use made of stones in the rough warfare of an earlier age. Compare Judges 9:53; 2 Samuel 11:21. The man is supposed to be rolling the stone up to the heights.

Verse 28

The lying tongue hates its victims.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Verse 2

Another - An "alienus" rather than "alius." Praise to be worth anything must be altogether independent.

Verse 3

Compare Sirach 22:15; a like comparison between the heaviest material burdens and the more intolerable load of unreasoning passion.

Verse 4

Envy - Better, as in the margin, the violence of passion in the husband who thinks himself wronged (compare Proverbs 6:34).

Verse 5

Secret love - Better, love that is hidden; i. e., love which never shows itself in this one way of rebuking faults. Rebuke, whether from friend or foe, is better than such love.

Verse 6

Deceitful - Better, abundant. Very lavish is the enemy of the kisses that cover perfidy, but lavish of them only. His courtesy goes no deeper.

Verse 7

The special instance covers the general law, that indulgence in pleasure of any kind brings on satiety and weariness, but self-restraint multiplies the sources of enjoyment.

Verse 8

Change of place is thought of as in itself an evil. It is not easy for the man to find another home or the bird another nest. The maxim is characteristic of the earlier stages of Hebrew history, before exile and travel had made change of country a more familiar thing. Compare the feeling which made the thought of being "a fugitive and a vagabond" Genesis 4:12-13 the most terrible of all punishments.

Verse 10

"Better is a neighbor" who is really "near" in heart and spirit, than a brother who though closer by blood, is "far off" in feeling.

Verse 11

The voice of the teacher to his true disciple. He pleads with him that the uprightness of the scholar will be the truest answer to all attacks on the character or teaching of the master.

Verse 12-13

Compare the marginal reference.

Verse 14

The picture of the ostentatious flatterer going at daybreak to pour out blessings on his patron. For any good that he does, for any thanks he gets, he might as well utter curses.

Verse 15

Continual dropping - Here, as in the marginal reference, the flat, earthen roof of Eastern houses, always liable to cracks and leakage, supplies the groundwork of the similitude.

Verse 16

The point is the impossibility of concealment or restraint. A person cannot hide the wind, or clasp it in his hands. If he takes an unguent in his right hand, the odor betrays him, or it slips out. So, in like manner, the "contentious woman" is one whose faults it is impossible either to hide or check. The difficulty of the proverb led to a different reading, adopted by the versions, "The north wind is rough, and yet it is called propitious"; it clears off the clouds and brings fine weather.

Verse 17

The proverb expresses the gain of mutual counsel as found in clear, well-defined thoughts. Two minds, thus acting on each other, become more acute. This is better than to see in "sharpening" the idea of provoking, and the point of the maxim in the fact that the quarrels of those who have been friends are bitter in proportion to their previous intimacy.

Verse 18

Waiteth - literally, "keepeth," "observeth." As the fig tree requires constant care but yields abundant crops, so the ministrations of a faithful servant will not be without their due reward. Compare 2 Timothy 2:6.

Verse 19

As we see our own face when we look on the mirror-like surface of the water, so in every heart of man we may see our own likeness. In spite of all diversities we come upon the common human nature in which we all alike share. Others see in the reference to the reflection in the water the thought that we judge of others by ourselves, find them faithful or the reverse, as we ourselves are.

Verse 20

Hades, the world of the dead, and Destruction (Death, the destroying power, personified) have been at all times and in all countries thought of as

all-devouring, insatiable (compare the marginal reference). Yet one thing is equally so, the lust of the eye, the restless craving which grows with what it feeds on Ecclesiastes 1:8.

Verse 21

So is … - Better, So let a man be to his praise, let him purify it from all the alloy of flattery and baseness with which it is too probably mixed up.

Verse 22

Bray - To pound wheat in a mortar with a pestle, in order to free the wheat from its husks and impurities, is to go through a far more elaborate process than threshing. But the folly of the fool is not thus to be got rid of. It sticks to him to the last; all discipline, teaching, experience seem to be wasted on him.

Verses 23-27

The verses sing the praises of the earlier patriarchal life, with its flocks and herds, and tillage of the ground, as compared with the commerce of a later time, with money as its chief or only wealth.

Proverbs 27:23

The state - literally, face. The verse is an illustration of John 10:3, John 10:14.

Proverbs 27:24

Riches - The money which men may steal, or waste, is contrasted with the land of which the owner is not so easily deprived. Nor will the crown (both the "crown of pure gold" worn on the mitre of the high priest, Exodus 29:6; Exodus 39:30; and the kingly diadem, the symbol of power generally) be transmitted (as flocks and herds had been) "from one generation to another."

Proverbs 27:25

Appeareth - Better, When the grass disappeareth, the "tender grass showeth itself." Stress is laid on the regular succession of the products of the earth. The "grass" ("hay") of the first clause is (compare Psalm 37:2; Psalm 90:5; Psalm 103:15; 2 Kings 19:26) the proverbial type of what is perishable and fleeting. The verse gives a picture of the pleasantness of the farmer's calling; compared with this what can wealth or rank offer? With this there mingles (compare Proverbs 27:23) the thought that each stage of that life in its season requires care and watchfulness.

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 28

Verse 2

Transgression - Better, rebellion. A revolt against a ruler leads to rapid changes of dynasty (the whole history of the kingdom of Israel was a proof of this), but "with men of understanding and knowledge thus shall he (the prince) continue." True wisdom will lead people to maintain an existing order. The King James Version implies that political disorders may come as the punishment of any national sin.

The state - Better, it (the land) shall surely prolong its days in stability.

Verse 3

People raise a man of the people, poor like themselves, to power. They find him the worst oppressor of all, plundering them to their last morsels, like the storm-rain which sweeps off the seed-corn instead of bringing fertility.

Verse 5

The deep interdependence of morality and intellect. We have a right judgment in all things in proportion as our hearts seek to know God. Compare James 1:23-24.

Verse 6

Perverse in his ways - literally, "Perverse in his double ways." Compare James 1:8.

Verse 8

Unjust gain - Omit "unjust:" "usury and gain" make up the notion of "gain derived from usury." Ill-gotten gains do not prosper, after a time they pass into hands that know how to use them better.

Verse 10

When the wicked succeed in tempting the righteous, Vice seems to win a triumph. But the triumph is suicidal. The tempter will suffer the punishment he deserves, and the blameless, if true to themselves, will be strengthened and ennobled by the temptation.

Verse 11

Wealth blunts, poverty sharpens, the critical power of intellect.

Verse 12

There is great glory - Men array themselves in festive apparel, and show their joy conspicuously.

A man is hidden - Better, men hide themselves, they shrink and cower for fear, and yet are hunted out.

Verse 13

The conditions of freedom are confession and amendment, confession to God of sins against Him, to men of sins against them. The teaching of ethical wisdom on this point is identical with that of psalmist, prophet, apostles, and our Lord Himself.

Verse 14

The "fear" here is not so much reverential awe, as anxious, or "nervous" sensitiveness of conscience. To most men this temperament seems that of the self-tormentor. To him who looks deeper it is a condition of blessedness, and the callousness which is opposed to it ends in misery.

Verse 15

The form of political wretchedness, when the poverty of the oppressed subjects not only embitters their sufferings, but exasperates the brutal ferocity of the ruler.

Verse 17

The case of willful murder, not the lesser crime of manslaughter for which the cities of refuge were appointed. One, with that guilt on his soul, is simply hasting on to his own destruction. Those who see him must simply stand aloof, and let God‘s judgments fulfill themselves.

Verse 18

In his ways - Rather "in his double ways" (as in Proverbs 28:6). The evil of vacillation rather than that of craft, the want of the one guiding principle of right, is contrasted with the straightforwardness of the man that "walketh uprightly."

Shall fall at once - Better, shall fall in one of them (his ways). The attempt to combine incompatibilities is sure to fail. Men cannot serve God and Mammon.

Verse 20

Not the possession of wealth, nor even the acquisition of it, is evil, but the eager haste of covetousness.

Shall not be innocent - Better, as in the margin, in contrast with the many "blessings" of the "faithful."

Verse 21

Dishonest partiality leads men who have enslaved themselves to it to transgress, even when the inducement is altogether disproportionate. A

“piece of bread” was proverbial at all times as the most extreme point of poverty (compare the marginal reference).

Verse 22

The covetous temper leads not only to dishonesty, but to the “evil eye” of envy; and the temper of grudging, carking care, leads him to poverty.

Verse 24

Is the companion of a destroyer - i. e., he stands on the same footing as the open, lawless robber. Compare this with our Lord‘s teaching as to Corban Mark 7:10-13.

Verse 25

Shall be made fat - He shall enjoy the two-fold blessing of abundance and tranquility (compare Proverbs 11:25).

Verse 26

The contrast between the wisdom of him who trusts in the Lord, and the folly of self-trust.

Verse 27

Hideth his eyes - i. e., Turns away from, disregards, the poor. Compare Isaiah 1:15.

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CHAPTER 29

Verse 1

Shall be destroyed - literally, "shall be broken" Proverbs 6:15. Stress is laid on the suddenness in such a case of the long-delayed retribution.

Verse 3

Spendeth … - The laws of parallelism would lead us to expect "troubleth his father," but that is passed over as a thing about which the profligate would not care, and he is reminded of what comes home to him, that he is on the road to ruin.

The king - The ruler, as the supreme fountain of all justice, and as the ideal judge, is contrasted with the taker of bribers.

Verse 6

While the offence of the wicked, rising out of a confirmed habit of evil, becomes snare for his destruction; the righteous, even if he offend, is forgiven and can still rejoice in his freedom from condemnation. The second clause is taken by some as entirely contrasted with the first; it expresses the joy of one whose conscience is void of offence, and who is in no danger of falling into the snare.

Verse 8

Scornful men - The men who head political or religious revolutions, who inflame (literally as in the margin) the minds of the people against the powers that be.

Verse 9

All modes of teaching - the stern rebuke or the smiling speech - are alike useless with the "foolish" man; there is "no rest." The ceaseless cavilling goes on still.

Verse 10

Seek his soul - i. e., "Care for, watch over, his life" (compare Psalm 142:4).

Verse 11

Mind - The Hebrew word is used sometimes for "mind" or "reason," sometimes for "passion," or "wrath." The reticence commended would include both; but the verb "keepeth it in" (rendered "stilleth," in Psalm 65:7) is slightly in favor of the second of the two senses.

Verse 12

All his servants are wicked - They know what will please, and they become informers and backbiters.

Verse 13

Better, The poor and the oppressor. "Usurer," as in the margin expresses the special form of oppression from which the poor suffer most at the hands of the rich. God has made them both and bestows His light equally on both.

Verse 15

Left to himself - The condition of one who has been pampered and indulged. The mother who yields weakly is as guilty of abandoning the child she spoils, as if she cast him forth; and for her evil neglect, there shall fall upon her the righteous punishment of shame and ignominy.

Verse 18

Vision - The word commonly used of the revelation of God's will made to prophets. Compare Isaiah 1:1; Nahum 1:1.

When prophetic vision fails, obedience to the Law is the best or only substitute for it, both being forms through which divine wisdom is revealed. Very striking in the midst of ethical precepts is this recognition of the need of a yet higher teaching, without which morality passes into worldly prudence or degenerates into casuistry. The "wise man," the son of David, has seen in the prophets and in their work the condition of true national blessedness. The darkest time in the history of Israel had been when there "was no open vision 1 Samuel 3:1; at such a time the people "perish," are let loose, "are left to run wild."

Verse 19

Servant - i. e., A slave, whose obedience is reluctant. He may "understand" the words, but they produce no good effect. There is still lacking the true "answer" of obedience.

Verse 21

Son - The Hebrew word occurs here only and is therefore of doubtful meaning. The favored slave, petted and pampered from boyhood, will claim at last the privilege, perhaps the inheritance, of sonship.

Verse 23

Honour shall uphold the humble in spirit - Better: The lowly in spirit shall lay hold on honor.

Verse 24

On the first discovery of the theft, the person wronged Judges 17:2, or the judge of the city (marginal reference), pronounced a solemn curse on the thief and on all who, knowing the offender, were unwilling to give evidence against him. The accomplice of the thief hears that curse, and yet is silent, and so falls under it, and "destroys his own soul."

Verse 25

The confusion and wretchedness in which the fear of what men can do entangles us, is contrasted with the security of one, who not only "fears" the Lord, so as to avoid offending Him, but trusts in Him as his protector and guide.

Verse 26

To trust in the favor of princes is to build upon the sands. The judgment which will set right all wrong will come from the Lord. It is better to wait for that than to run here and there, canvassing, bribing, flattering.

Verse 27

The words point out not only the antagonism between the doers of good and evil, but the instinctive antipathy which the one feels toward the other.

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CHAPTER 30

Verse 1

See the introduction to Proverbs. According to the different reading, there noted, the inscription ends with: "the man spake," and the words that follow, are the beginning of the confession, "I have wearied myself after God and have fainted."

Spake - The Hebrew word is that commonly used of the utterance of a divine oracle.

Verse 2

A confession of ignorance, with which compare the saying of Socrates that he was wise only so far as he knew that he knew nothing, or that of Asaph Psalm 73:22.

Verse 3

He found, when he looked within, that all his learning was as nothing. He had heard of God only "by the hearing of the ear" Job 42:5, and now he discovered how little that availed.

The holy - The Holy One. Compare Proverbs 9:10.

Verse 4

Man is to be humbled to the dust by the thought of the glory of God as seen in the visible creation.

Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? - The thought is obviously that of the all-embracing Providence of God, taking in at once the greatest and the least, the highest and the lowest. The mysteries of the winds and of the waters baffle men's researches.

What is his son's name - The primary thought is that man knows so little of the divine nature that he cannot tell whether he may transfer to it the human relationships with which he is familiar, or must rest in the thought of a unity indivisible and incommunicable. If there is such an Only-begotten of the Father (compare Proverbs 8:30), then His nature, until revealed, must be as incomprehensible by us as that of the Father Himself.

Verse 5

Out of this consciousness of the impotence of all man's efforts after the knowledge of God rises the sense of the preciousness of every living word that God has Himself revealed, whether through "the Law and the prophets" or through "wise men and scribes."

Verse 6

Men are not to mingle revealed truth with their own imaginations and traditions. In speculating on the unseen, the risk of error is indefinitely great, and that error God reproves by manifesting its falsehoods.

Verse 7

Two things - The limitation of man‘s desires follows naturally upon his consciousness of the limits of his knowledge.

Verse 8

The order of the two requests is significant. The wise man‘s prayer is first and chiefly, “truth in the inward parts,” the removal of all forms of falsehood, hollowness, hypocrisy.

Neither poverty … - The evil of the opposite extremes of social life is that in different ways they lead men to a false standard of duty, and so to that forgetfulness of God which passes into an absolute denial.

Food convenient for me - literally, “give me for food the bread of my appointed portion.” The prayer foreshadows that which we have been taught by the Divine Wisdom: “Give us, day by day, our daily bread.”

Verse 9

The special dangers of the two extremes. Wealth tempts to pride, unbelief, and a scorn like that of Pharaoh Exodus 5:2; poverty to, dishonesty, and then to perjury, or to the hypocritical profession of religion which is practically identical with it.

Verse 10

Accuse not a servant - The prayer in Proverbs 30:8 does not shut out, sympathy with those who are less favored. Even the slave has a right to protection against frivolous or needless accusation. Others, however, render the words Make not a slave to accuse his master, i. e., Do not make him discontented with his lot, lest he afterward curse thee for having made it worse than it was.

Verse 11

As the teacher had uttered what he most desired, so now he tells what he most abhorred; and in true-harmony with the teaching of the Ten Commandments places in the foremost rank those who rise against the Fifth.

Verse 12

The Pharisee temper (compare the marginal reference).

Verse 15-16

Note the numeration mounting to a climax, the two, the three, the four (Amos 1:3 etc.). The word rendered "horseleach" is found nowhere else, and its etymology is doubtful; but there are good grounds for taking the word in its literal sense, as giving an example, in the natural world, of the insatiable greed of which the next verse gives other instances. Its voracious appetite is here represented, to express its intensity, as two daughters, uttering the same ceaseless cry for more.

Proverbs 30:16

The grave - Hebrew שׁאול *she'ôl* The "Hell" or Hades of Proverbs 27:20, all-consuming yet never full.

Verses 18-20

Another enigma. The four things of Proverbs 30:16 agreed in the common point of insatiableness; the four now mentioned agree in this, that they leave no trace behind them.

Proverbs 30:19

The way of a man with a maid - The act of sin leaves no outward mark upon the sinners.

Verse 21

For four which it cannot bear - Better: four it cannot bear. Here the common element is that of being intolerable, and the four examples are divided equally between the two sexes. Each has its examples of power and prosperity misused because they fall to the lot of those who have no training for them, and are therefore in the wrong place.

Verse 23

Odious woman - One in whom there is nothing loveable. Marriage, which to most women is the state in which they find scope for their highest qualities, becomes to her only a sphere in which to make herself and others miserable.

Verse 24

Exceeding wise - Some prefer the reading of the Septuagint and Vulgate: "wiser than the wise." The thought, in either case, turns upon the marvels of instinct, which, in their own province, transcend the more elaborate results of human wisdom.

Verse 25

See the marginal reference note. Note the word "people" applied here to ants, as to locusts in Joel 1:6. The marvel lies in their collective, and, as it were, organized action.

Verse 26

Conies - See the marginal reference note.

Verse 27

Compare Joel 2:7-8; the most striking fact in the flight of the locust-swarms was their apparent order and discipline, sweeping over the land like the invasion of a great army.

Verse 28

Spider - Rather, the Gecko (or Stellio), a genus of the lizard tribe, many species of which haunt houses, make their way through crevices in the walls, and with feet that secrete a venomous exudation catch the spiders or the flies they find there.

Verse 31

A greyhound - The Hebrew word occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament. The literal meaning is: "one with loins girded;" and some have referred this to the stripes of the zebra, others to the "war-horse" (compare Job 39:19, Job 39:25), as he is represented in the sculptures of Persepolis, with rich and stately trappings.

A king, against whom there is no rising up - i. e., A king irresistible. Others prefer, "a king in the midst of his people," and the sense, as giving a more vivid picture, is certainly more satisfactory.

Verse 32

Lay thine hand upon thy mouth - The act expresses the silence of humiliation and repentance after the sin has been committed, and that of self-restraint, which checks the haughty or malignant thought before it has passed even into words.

Verse 33

Churning … wringing … forcing - In the Hebrew text it is one and the same word. "The pressure of milk produces curds, the pressure of the nose produces blood, the pressure of wrath (i. e., brooding over and, as it were, condensing it) produces strife."

PROVERBS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 31

Introduction

See the introduction to Proverbs.

Verse 1

That his mother taught him - Compare Proverbs 1:8; Proverbs 6:20. If we refer the chapter to Israelite authorship, we may remember the honor paid to the wisdom of Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah; if it was the honor paid to an Edomite or an Arabian, we may think of the Queen of Sheba, whose love of Wisdom led her to sit at the feet of the son of David.

Verse 2

The repetitions are emphatic; expressive of anxious love.

Son of my vows - Like Samuel, and Samson, the child often asked for in prayer, the prayer ratified by a vow of dedication. The name Lemuel (literally "for God," consecrated to Him) may be the expression of that dedication; and the warning against indulging in wine Proverbs 31:4 shows that it had something of the Nazarite or Rechabite idea in it.

Verse 3

To that which destroyeth - The temptations of the harem were then, as now, the curse of all Eastern kingdoms.

Verse 4

Some read: "nor for princes to say, Where is strong drink?" The "strong drink" Proverbs 20:1 was distilled from barley, or honey, or dates.

Verse 6

The true purpose of the power of wine over man's mind and body, as a restorative and remedial agent. Compare the margin reference. The same thought showed itself in the Jewish practice of giving a cup of wine to mourners, and (as in the history of the crucifixion) to criminals at their execution.

Verse 8

In contrast with the two besetting sins of Eastern monarchs stands their one great duty, to give help to those who had no other helper.

Such as are appointed to destruction - literally, "children of bereavement," with the sense, either, as in the text, of those "destined to be bereaved of life or goods," or of "bereaved or fatherless children."

Verse 10

See the introduction to Proverbs.

Rubies - Better, pearls. See the Proverbs 3:15 note.

Verse 11

No need of spoil - Better, no lack of gain, lack of honest gain.

Verse 13

Worketh willingly with her hands - Or, worketh with willing hands. The stress laid upon the industrial habits of Israelite matrons may perhaps belong to a time when, as under the monarchy of Judah, those habits were passing away.

Verse 14

The comparison points to the enlarged commerce of the Israelites consequent on their contact with the Phoenicians under David and Solomon; compare Proverbs 31:24.

Verse 15

A portion to her maidens - The daily task assigned to each at the same time as the daily food. Compare Proverbs 30:8; Exodus 5:14.

Verse 16

The verse points to a large sphere of feminine activity, strikingly in contrast with the degradation to which woman in the East has now fallen.

Verse 20

The industry is not selfish, but bears the fruit of an open-handed charity.

Verse 21

Scarlet - Probably some well-known articles of dress, at once conspicuous for their color, or, as some think, for their double texture and warmth.

Verse 22

Silk - Better, fine linen, the byssus of Egypt.

Verse 23

The industry of the wife leaves the husband free to take his place among the elders that sit in councils.

Verse 24

Fine linen - Not the same word as in Proverbs 31:22 note; it describes a made-up garment Isaiah 3:23.

Merchant - literally, "Canaanite," i. e., the Phoenician merchant.

Verse 25

Shall rejoice in time to come - Better, rejoiceth over the time to come; i. e., looks forward to the future, not with anxious care, but with confident gladness.

Verse 26

Law of kindness - The words which come from the lips of the true wife are as a law giving guidance and instruction to those that hear them; but the law is not proclaimed in its sterner aspects, but as one in which "mercy tempers justice," and love, the fulfilling of the law, is seen to be the source from which it springs.

Verse 29

The words of praise which the husband Proverbs 31:28 is supposed to have addressed to the ideal wife.

Virtuously - The Hebrew word has primarily (like "virtus") the idea of "strength," but is used with various shades of meaning. Here (as in Proverbs 12:4; Rth 3:11) the strength is that of character stedfast in goodness. In other passages (e. g., Genesis 34:29; Psalm 49:10) it has the sense of "riches," and is so taken here by the Septuagint and Vulgate, see also the marginal rendering.

Verse 30

The last lesson of the book is the same as the first. The fear of the Lord is the condition of all womanly, as well as of all manly, excellence.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE
Ecclesiastes

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ECCLESIASTES INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Ecclesiastes

I. This book is placed, in the most ancient Jewish and Christian lists, between the other two books (Proverbs and the Song of Songs) attributed to Solomon, and the constant tradition of the Jewish and Christian congregations has handed down Solomon as the author without question.

Some modern critics have indeed alleged that Solomon could not have written it: (a) because the language is such as no Jew in his age could have used; (b) because the language differs from that of Proverbs and the Song of Songs; and (c) because the historical allusions in the book do not agree with the period and the circumstances of Solomon.

(a) In answer to this, it would appear that every word quoted from Ecclesiastes as impossible to be used before the captivity has been shown either:

(1) to be used in books written, as is generally believed, before the captivity; or

(2) to be formed from words, and by a grammatical process, in use before the captivity; or

(3) to be represented in such books by a derivative; or

(4) to be undoubtedly common to other Semitic dialects besides Chaldee, and therefore, presumably, to Hebrew before the captivity, although not found in extant writings of earlier date than Ecclesiastes.

The allegation, therefore, that the language of this book shows distinct traces of the Chaldean invasion, of the Babylonian captivity, or of any later event which affected the Hebrew tongue, may be considered sufficiently answered.

(b) The dissimilarity in style and diction between this book and Proverbs or the Song of Songs is admitted; but it has been accounted for to some extent, first, by the difference of subject. Abstract ideas may be expressed up to a certain point by words which originally denoted something else: but philosophic thought such as distinguishes this book from the other two, gradually forms its own terminology. Next, it is argued, that there was an interval of many years between the composition of the two former books

and of this; and that in that time there was a natural change in the temperament, views, and style of the writer; a change which may be traced partly to Solomon‘s familiarity with foreign women sprung from various Semitic races, partly also to his extensive negotiations and personal contact with the representatives of other nations, some of whom were not of Semitic origin 1 Kings 10:22.

Lastly, to balance the differences, it is to be noted that there are some characteristic resemblances between these books. It is reasonable to regard these as an indication of a common origin.

(c) It is alleged that the particular mention of Jerusalem Ecclesiastes 1:1, Ecclesiastes 1:12 as the seat of Solomon‘s reign, implies that the book was written at a time when there was more than one seat of kingly authority in Israel, i. e. after the separation of the ten tribes and the erection of another capital, Samaria. The answer is that there is an obvious fitness in the specific mention of Jerusalem previous to the account of Solomon‘s labors in Ecclesiastes 1:12, implies that, at the time when these words were written, Solomon was no longer king, and that, consequently, the passage must have been written by someone who was impersonating him after his death. But, in Hebrew, the preterite is used with strict grammatical propriety in describing a past. It does not prevent critics, after taking all the facts into account, from considering the whole of these books as the work of the same author. which extends into the present. Solomon is as a speaker who views the action or state expressed by the verb as then first about coming to pass, in progress, or perhaps occurring at the instant. The phrase therefore, would be both grammatically correct, if used by Solomon before the close of his reign, and a natural expression of his feelings in his old age.

It is argued that such a state of violence, popular oppression, and despotic rule, as that which is instanced in Ecclesiastes 4:1 did not exist in Palestine in the peaceful reign of Solomon. This allegation has no foundation in fact. The significant statements of historians (e. g. 1 Kings 12:4 and 2 Chronicles 2:17-18; 2 Chronicles 8:7-9) and the numerous unmistakeable allusions in the Book of Proverbs (e. g. Proverbs 1:10-13; Proverbs 6:16-19; Proverbs 11:26; Proverbs 14:20; Proverbs 22:22-23; Proverbs 24:21; Proverbs 25:5; Proverbs 28:2, Proverbs 28:16) agree with

the descriptions in Ecclesiastes in showing that the kingdom of Israel, even in its most prosperous days, afforded grievous instances of the common evils of Asiatic despotism.

It is stated that such passages as Ecclesiastes 12:7, Ecclesiastes 12:14 show a knowledge of revealed truth beyond what was given prior to the captivity. But if the exact words of Ecclesiastes are compared with the obscure intimations given by Moses on the one hand, and with the later utterances of Daniel on the other, this book appears to hold a middle place. It tallies very closely with some of the Psalms which were probably written about the age of Solomon. After all, does not the argument (mentioned above) proceed on an assumption that we are more competent than we really are to find out the ways of the Author of Revelation? Are we qualified to decide positively that so much, as is recorded on those subjects in Ecclesiastes came out of its proper season if it was given to Solomon?

On the whole, therefore, it seems the most reasonable course to accept as a simple statement of fact the words with which Ecclesiastes begins; and, in accordance with the voice of the church from the beginning, to regard solomon as the author of this book.

II. What was the object of the writer in composing this book?

The method of Greek philosophy and its principles - Epicurean, Stoic, and Cynic - have been attributed to the author of Ecclesiastes; but on no better ground than might be found in the writings of any thoughtful and sensitive man who has felt, contemplated, and described the perplexities of human life.

The author was evidently a man of profound faith in God, of large and varied personal experience, of acute observation of people and things, and of deep sensibility. He was probably first moved to write by a mind that was painfully full of the disappointing nature of all things viewed apart from God. Next, he was moved by a deep sympathy with fellow human beings who were touched by the same natural feelings as himself, and suffering like him, though each in their various ways; and thirdly, he was moved by the evident desire to lead other men, and especially young men, out of the

temptations which he had felt, and out of the perplexities which once entangled and staggered him. Whether his heart was chilled by old age or by the cold shadow of some former eclipse of faith can only be conjectured; but there is in Ecclesiastes an absence of that fervor of zeal for the glory of God which glows in other books, and which we are justified in regarding as a feature of Solomon‘s character in his early days. His immediate object would seem then to be to relieve his mind by pouring out the results of his own life, to comfort those who bore the same burden of humanity, and to lift up those who were naturally feeble or depressed by circumstances and to lead them in the way of God‘s commandments.

As regards a plan, the writer of the book evidently regarded it as complete in itself; the first part of the book being contemplative or doctrinal, and the latter part being practical.

First, there is the writer‘s statement of his subject, and his detailed account of his personal experience of the influence of vanity pervading human proceedings Ecclesiastes 5:1, in active service Ecclesiastes 11:6, in humble acknowledgment of His power Ecclesiastes 3:10-17, in reliance on His final justice Ecclesiastes 5:8; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, as the means by which that cry has been, and may again be, hushed.

ECCLESIASTES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The introductory verses Ecclesiastes 1:1-3 serve to describe the writer, and to state the subject of his book.

Verse 1

Preacher - literally, Convener. No one English word represents the Hebrew קהלת *qôheleth* adequately. Though capable, according to Hebrew usage, of being applied to men in office, it is strictly a feminine participle, and describes a person in the act of calling together an assembly of people as if with the intention of addressing them. The word thus understood refers us to the action of Wisdom personified Proverbs 1:20; Proverbs 8:8. In Proverbs and here, Solomon seems to support two characters, speaking sometimes in the third person as Wisdom instructing the assembled people, at other times in the first person. So our Lord speaks of Himself (compare Luke 11:49 with Matthew 23:34) as Wisdom, and as desiring Luke 13:34 to gather the people together for instruction; It is unfortunate that the word "Preacher" does not bring this personification before English minds, but a different idea.

Verse 2

Vanity - This word הבל *hebel* or, when used as a proper name, in Genesis 4:2, "Abel", occurs no less than 37 times in Ecclesiastes, and has been called the key of the book. Primarily it means "breath," "light wind;" and denotes what:

(1) passes away more or less quickly and completely;

(2) leaves either no result or no adequate result behind, and therefore

(3) fails to satisfy the mind of man, which naturally craves for something permanent and progressive: it is also applied to:

(4) idols, as contrasted with the Living, Eternal, and Almighty God, and, thus, in the Hebrew mind, it is connected with sin.

In this book it is applied to all works on earth, to pleasure, grandeur, wisdom, the life of man, childhood, youth, and length of days, the oblivion of the grave, wandering and unsatisfied desires, unenjoyed possessions, and anomalies in the moral government of the world.

Solomon speaks of the world-wide existence of "vanity," not with bitterness or scorn, but as a fact, which forced itself on him as he advanced in knowledge of men and things, and which he regards with sorrow and perplexity. From such feelings he finds refuge by contrasting this with another fact, which he holds with equal firmness, namely, that the whole universe is made and is governed by a God of justice, goodness, and power. The place of vanity in the order of Divine Providence - unknown to Solomon, unless the answer be indicated in Ecclesiastes 7:29 - is explained to us by Paul, Ecclesiastes 1:4-11. Compare Romans 8:22.

Verse 3

What profit … - The question often repeated is the great practical inquiry of the book; it receives its final answer in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. When this question was asked, the Lord had not yet spoken Matthew 11:28. The word "profit" (or pre-eminence) is opposed to "vanity."

Hath a man - Rather, hath man.

Verse 4

Vanity is shown in mankind, the elements, and all that moves on earth; the same course is repeated again and again without any permanent result or real progress; and events and people alike are forgotten.

Abideth - The apparent permanence of the earth increases by contrast the transitory condition of its inhabitants.

Ever - The word does not here absolutely signify "eternity" (compare Ecclesiastes 3:11 note), but a certainly short period (compare Exodus 21:6): here it might be paraphrased "as long as this world, this present order of things, lasts."

Verse 5

Hasteth … - literally, at his place panting (in his eagerness) riseth he there.

Verse 6

More literally, Going toward the south and veering toward the north, veering, veering goes the wind; and to its veerings the wind returns.

Verse 7

The place - i. e., The spring or river-head. It would seem that the ancient Hebrews regarded the clouds as the immediate feeders of the springs (Proverbs 8:28, and Psalm 104:10, Psalm 104:13). Genesis 2:6 indicates some acquaintance with the process and result of evaporation.

Verse 8

All things … utter it - This clause, as here translated, refers to the immensity of labor. Others translate it, "all words are full of labor; they make weary the hearers," or "are feeble or insufficient" to tell the whole; and are referred to the impossibility of adequately describing labor.

Verse 9

Hath been … is done - i. e., Hath happened in the course of nature … is done by man.

Verse 11

Things - Rather, men.

Verse 12

Solomon relates his personal experience Ecclesiastes 1:12-18.

Was - This tense does not imply that Solomon had ceased to be king when the word was written. See the introduction to Ecclesiastes. He begins with the time of his accession to the throne, when the gifts of wisdom and riches were especially promised to him 1 Kings 3:12-13.

Verse 13

Wisdom - As including both the powers of observation and judgment, and the knowledge acquired thereby (1 Kings 3:28; 1 Kings 4:29; 1 Kings 10:8, …). It increases by exercise. Here is noted its application to people and their actions.

Travail - In the sense of toil; the word is here applied to all human occupations.

God - God is named as אלהים *'elohîym* thirty-nine times in this book; a name common to the true God and to false gods, and used by believers and by idolators: but the name Yahweh, by which He is known especially to the people who are in covenant with Him, is never once used.

Perhaps the chief reason for this is that the evil which is the object of inquiry in this book is not at all unique to the chosen people. All creation Ecclesiastes 5:1 note.

Verse 14

Vexation of spirit - A phrase which occurs 7 times, and may be otherwise translated, "feeding on wind." Modern Hebrew grammarians assert that the word rendered "vexation" must be derived from a root signifying "to feed," "follow," "strive after." This being admitted, it remains to choose between two translations:

(1) “striving after wind,” or “windy effort;” adopted by the Septuagint and the majority of modern interpreters; or

(2) feeding on wind. Compare Hosea 12:1: and similar phrases in Proverbs 15:14; Isaiah 44:20; Psalm 37:3.

Verse 15

He saw clearly both the disorder and incompleteness of human actions (compare the marginal reference), and also man‘s impotence to rectify them.

Verse 16

I am come … - Rather, I have accumulated (literally “enlarged and added”) wisdom more than etc.

They that have been … - The reference is probably to the line of Canaanite kings who lived in Jerusalem before David took it, such as Melchizedek Genesis 14:18, Adonizedek Joshua 10:1, and Araunah 2 Samuel 24:23; or, it may be, to Solomon‘s contemporaries of his own country 1 Kings 4:31 and of other countries who visited him 1 Kings 4:34; 1 Kings 10:24. for “in” Jerusalem render over.

Verse 17

To know madness and folly - A knowledge of folly would help him to discern wisdom, and to exercise that chief function of practical wisdom - to avoid folly.

Verse 18

We become more sensible of our ignorance and impotence, and therefore sorrowful, in proportion as we discover more of the constitution of nature and the scheme of Providence in the government of the world; every discovery serving to convince us that more remains concealed of which we had no suspicion before.

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CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

Solomon‘s trial of God‘s second gift, namely, riches, and the enjoyment which riches supply; this brought him to the sane result (compare Ecclesiastes 1:12).

Comparing Solomon‘s action with Luke 12:16-21, it must be remembered that Solomon‘s object was the acquisition of wisdom, not self-indulgence, and that he did not fail to look forward to the certainty of death overtaking him.

Verse 3

I sought … - Rather, I resolved (literally “I turned in my heart”) to draw my flesh with wine (see the margin), my heart guiding me with wisdom. In the course of his attempt to answer the question of Ecclesiastes 1:3, while his heart was directing him (as a charioteer directs his horses or a shepherd his sheep) with wisdom, and while he was following that guidance, he determined to draw with him his flesh by wine, thus making his flesh, which he speaks of as distinct from himself (compare Romans 7:25), a confederate and subsidiary in his attempt.

Verse 4

Compare 1 Kings 7:1-12; 1 Kings 9:15-19; 1 Kings 10:14-27; and 2 Chronicles 8:4.

Verse 5

Orchards - literally, “paradises,” i. e., parks or pleasure-grounds (compare Nehemiah 2:8 note). Indications of at least three of these have been pointed out; one at Jerusalem near the pool of Siloam, called “the king‘s garden” Nehemiah 3:15; Jeremiah 52:7; a second near Bethlehem (compare Ecclesiastes 2:6); and a third in the remote north, on the heights of Hermon Song of Song of Solomon 4:8 ; Song of Song of Solomon 8:11 .

Verse 6

Pools - A short distance south of Bethlehem, in a valley in the defile of Urtas, three “Pools of Solomon” are still shown and an adjoining hill still bears the name of the “Little Paradise.”

Verse 7

I got - Rather, I bought, in distinction from those born in the house. The “children of Solomon‘s servants” (compare Ezra 2:55, Ezra 2:58) were

more probably of Canaanite origin 1 Kings 9:20-21; 1 Kings 5:15 than Hebrews 1 Kings 9:22.

Possessions of great and small cattle - Rather, herds of oxen and sheep.

All … before me - King David‘s herds and flocks are mentioned in 1 Chronicles 27:29, 1 Chronicles 27:31: but we have no specific account of the wealth of other Canaanite or Hebrew inhabitants of Jerusalem before Solomon.

Verse 8

Kings - Both tributary 1 Kings 10:15 and independent 1 Kings 5:1; 1 Kings 9:14; 1 Kings 10:2; the “provinces” probably correspond to the kingdoms mentioned in 1 Kings 4:21.

As musical … sorts - Rather, Many women (compare 1 Kings 11:1-3).

Verse 10

Portion - A word of frequent occurrence. By it Solomon describes the pleasure found in the act of working and also perhaps the pleasure felt in the process of acquiring wisdom; this pleasure is admitted to be good, if received from God (Ecclesiastes 2:26; Ecclesiastes 5:18; compare 1 Timothy 4:4); but being transitory it is subject to vanity, and therefore does not afford a sufficient answer to the repeated question, “What profit etc.?” Ecclesiastes 1:3.

Verses 12-26

Solomon having found that wisdom and folly agree in being subject to vanity, now contrasts one with the other Ecclesiastes 2:13. Both are brought under vanity by events Ecclesiastes 2:14 which come on the wise man and the feel alike from without - death and oblivion Ecclesiastes 2:16, uncertainty Ecclesiastes 2:19, disappointment Ecclesiastes 2:21 - all happening by an external law beyond human control. Amidst this vanity, the good (see Ecclesiastes 2:10 note) that accrues to man, is the pleasure felt Ecclesiastes 2:24-26 in receiving God‘s gifts, and in working with and for them.

Ecclesiastes 2:12

What can the man do … - i. e., “What is any man - in this study of wisdom and folly - after one like me, who, from my position, have had such special advantages (see Ecclesiastes 1:16, and compare Ecclesiastes 2:25) for carrying it on? That which man did of old he can but do again: he is not likely to add to the result of my researches, nor even to equal them.” Some

hold that the "man" is a reference to Solomon's successor - not in his inquiries, but in his kingdom, i. e., Jeroboam.

Ecclesiastes 2:14

Event - Or, "hap" Rth 2:3 . The verb from which it is derived seems in this book to refer especially to death. The word does not mean chance (compare Ecclesiastes 9:1-2), independent of the ordering of Divine Providence: the Gentile notion of "mere chance," or "blind fate," is never once contemplated by the writer of this book, and it would be inconsistent with his tenets of the unlimited power and activity of God.

Ecclesiastes 2:16

Seeing that … - Compare Ecclesiastes 1:11. Some render, "as in time past, so in days to come, all will be forgotten;" others, "because in the days to come all will have been long before forgotten."

Ecclesiastes 2:17

I hated life - Compare this expression, extorted from Solomon by the perception of the vanity of his wisdom and greatness, with Romans 8:22-23. The words of Moses Numbers 11:15, and of Job Job 3:21; Job 6:9, are scarcely less forcible. With some people, this feeling is a powerful motive to conversion Luke 14:26.

Ecclesiastes 2:19

Labour - Compare Ecclesiastes 2:4-8.

Ecclesiastes 2:20

I went about - i. e., I turned from one course of action to another.

Ecclesiastes 2:23

Are sorrows … grief - Rather, sorrows and grief are his toil. See Ecclesiastes 1:13.

Ecclesiastes 2:24

Nothing better for a man, than that … - literally, no good in man that etc. The one joy of working or receiving, which, though it be transitory, a man recognizes as a real good, even that is not in the power of man to secure for himself: that good is the gift of God.

Ecclesiastes 2:26

The doctrine of retribution, or, the revealed fact that God is the moral Governor of the world, is here stated for the first time (compare Ecclesiastes 3:15, Ecclesiastes 3:17 ff) in this book.

This also is vanity - Not only the travail of the sinner. Even the best gifts of God, wisdom, knowledge, and joy, so far as they are given in this

life, are not permanent, and are not always (see Ecclesiastes 9:11) efficacious for the purpose for which they appear to be given.

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CHAPTER 3

Introduction

It follows from Ecclesiastes 2:26 that the works of people are subject in their results to another will (God‘s) besides that of the doer. Here is the germ of the great question of later times - how to reconcile man‘s free will with God‘s decrees. Solomon‘s way of stating it is that to every separate work, which goes to make up the great aggregate of human activity (the “travail,” Ecclesiastes 3:10), there is a season, an appropriate time which God appoints for its being done Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. To the question Ecclesiastes 3:9 What profit? he answers that the works of people, if done according to God‘s appointment, are a part of that beautifully arranged scheme of Divine Providence which, as a whole, is, by reason of its extent and duration, incomprehensible to us Ecclesiastes 3:11. Man‘s good is to rejoice and do good in his lifetime, which he can do only as God appoints Ecclesiastes 3:12-13. God‘s work, of which this would be a part, is forever, is perfect (and so not subject to vanity), and is calculated to teach people to revere Him Ecclesiastes 3:14. His work, which was begun long ago, is now going on to completion; His work hereafter will be a complement of something which was done previously; and He recalls the past in order to add to it what shall make it complete and perfect Ecclesiastes 3:15. The principle of divine government - that every work in order to be permanent and successful must be God‘s work as well as man‘s work - is also declared in Psalm 127:1-2 (attributed to Solomon).

Verse 1

Everything - More particularly, the actions of people (e. g. his own, Ecclesiastes 2:1-8) and events which happen to people, the world of Providence rather than the world of creation. It would seem that most of his own works described in Ecclesiastes 2:1-8 were present to his mind. The rare word translated “season” means emphatically “fitting time” (compare Nehemiah 2:6; Esther 9:27, Esther 9:31).

Verse 5

Stones may be regarded either as materials for building, or as impediments to the fertility of land (see 2 Kings 3:19, 2 Kings 3:25; Isaiah 5:2).

Verse 6

Get … lose - Rather, seek, and a time to give up for lost.

Verse 7

Rend - i. e., Tear garments in sign of mourning or anger. See 2 Samuel 1:2, 2 Samuel 1:11 ff.

Verse 11

Rather, He hath made all (the travail, Ecclesiastes 3:10) beautiful (fit, in harmony with the whole work of God) in its time; also He hath set eternity in their heart (i. e., the heart of the sons of men, Ecclesiastes 3:10).

The word, translated "world" in the text, and "eternity" in this note, is used seven times in Ecclesiastes.

The interpretation "eternity," is conceived in the sense of a long indefinite period of time, in accordance with the use of the word throughout this book, and the rest of the Old Testament. God has placed in the inborn constitution of man the capability of conceiving of eternity, the struggle to apprehend the everlasting, the longing after an eternal life.

With the other meaning "the world," i. e., the material world, or universe, in which we dwell, the context is explained as referring either to the knowledge of the objects with which this world is filled, or to the love of the pleasures of the world. This meaning seems to be less in harmony with the context than the other: but the principal objection to it is that it assigns to the word in the original a sense which, although found in rabbinical Hebrew, it never bears in the language of the Old Testament.

So … find - i. e., Without enabling man to find. Compare Ecclesiastes 7:13; Ecclesiastes 8:17.

Verse 12

In them - i. e., in the sons of men.

To do good - In a moral sense. Physical enjoyment is referred to in Ecclesiastes 3:13.

Verse 14

The last clause of this verse goes beyond a declaration of the fact of God's government of the world Ecclesiastes 2:26 by adding the moral effect which that fact is calculated to produce on those who see it. It is the first indication of the practical conclusion Ecclesiastes 12:13 of the book.

Verse 15

Rather, What has been - what was before, and what shall be has been before. The word "is" in our the King James Version is erroneously printed

in Roman letters: it does not exist in the Hebrew (it should have been italicized); and the word there translated "now" is the same which is translated as "already."

Requireth - i. e., requireth for judgment, as the word specially means in 2 Samuel 4:11; Ezekiel 3:18 … It is obvious from the context of the last clause of Ecclesiastes 3:14, and Ecclesiastes 3:16-17, that this is the meaning here.

Past - literally, "put to flight."

The meaning of the verse is that there is a connection between events - past, present and future - and that this connection exists in the justice of God who controls all.

Verses 16-22

That great anomaly in the moral government of this world, the seemingly unequal distribution of rewards and punishments, will be rectified by God, who has future times and events under His control Ecclesiastes 3:16-17. As for people, they are placed by God, who is their teacher, in a humble condition, even on a level with inferior animals, by death, that great instance of their subjection to vanity Ecclesiastes 3:18-19, which reduces to its original form all that was made of the dust of the ground Ecclesiastes 3:20. And though the destinies of man and beast are different, yet in our present lack of knowledge as to God's future dealing with our spirits Ecclesiastes 3:21, man finds his portion (see the Ecclesiastes 2:10 note) in such labor and such joy as God assigns to him in his lifetime Ecclesiastes 3:22.

Ecclesiastes 3:16

I saw … - Rather, I have seen (as in Ecclesiastes 3:10) under the sun the place etc. The place of judgment means the seat of the authorized judge. Compare "the place of the holy" Ecclesiastes 8:10.

Ecclesiastes 3:17

A time there - i. e., a time with God.

Ecclesiastes 3:18

literally, I said in my heart with regard to the sons of men, it is that God may prove them and show them that they are beasts, they themselves. "Showing" is the reading of the Septuagint and Syriac: the present Hebrew text reads "seeing." The meaning is that the long delay of God's judgment Ecclesiastes 3:16-17 is calculated to show people that the brevity of their

life renders them incapable of following out and understanding His distributive justice.

Ecclesiastes 3:19

That which befalleth the sons of men - literally, the event (happenstance) of the sons of men, i. e., what comes upon them from outside, by virtue of the ordinance of God. See the Ecclesiastes 2:14 note. Death in particular Ecclesiastes 3:2, Ecclesiastes 3:11 is a part of the "work that God doeth."

Ecclesiastes 3:21

The King James Version of this verse is the only rendering which the Hebrew text, as now pointed, allows. It is in accordance with the best Jewish and many modern interpreters. A slightly different pointing would be requisite to authorize the translation, "Who knows the spirit of the sons of man whether it goes above, and, the spirit of the beast whether it goes down below?" etc., which, though it seems neither necessary nor suitable, is sanctioned by the Septuagint and other versions and by some modern interpreters.

Who knoweth - This expression (used also in Ecclesiastes 2:19; Ecclesiastes 6:12) does not necessarily imply complete and absolute ignorance. In Psalm 90:11, it is applied to what is partially understood: compare similar forms of expression in Proverbs 31:10; Psalm 94:16; Isaiah 53:1. Moreover, it is evident from marginal references that Solomon did not doubt the future existence and destination of the soul. This verse can only be construed as a confession of much ignorance on the subject.

Ecclesiastes 3:22

What shall be after him - i. e., What shall become of the results of his work after he is dead. Compare Ecclesiastes 2:19; Ecclesiastes 6:12.

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CHAPTER 4

Introduction

Having arrived Ecclesiastes 3:22 at a partial answer to his question Ecclesiastes 1:3; namely, that there is positive good (a portion) in that satisfaction which is found in working, Solomon now turns to the case of such happiness being interrupted and reduced to vanity by various contingencies - by oppression Ecclesiastes 4:1-3; by envy Ecclesiastes 4:4-6; by loneliness Ecclesiastes 4:7-12; and by decay of working power Ecclesiastes 4:13-16. The first two instances seem taken from the lower ranks of life, and the last two derived from the higher ranks of life.

Verse 1

So I returned, and considered - Rather, And I returned and saw. He turns to look upon other phenomena, and to test his previous conclusion by them.

Oppressed - See the introduction to Ecclesiastes.

Verse 4

Every right work - Rather, every success in work.

For this … - i. e., "This successful work makes the worker an object of envy." Some understand the meaning to be, "this work is the effect of the rivalry of man with his neighbor."

Verse 5

Foldeth his hands - The envious man is here exhibited in the attitude of the sluggard (marginal references).

Eateth his own flesh - i. e., "Destroys himself:" compare a similar expression in Isaiah 49:26; Psalm 27:2; Micah 3:3.

Verse 6

Either the fool‘s sarcasm on his successful but restless neighbor; or the comment of Solomon recommending contentment with a moderate competence. The former meaning seems preferable.

Verses 7-12

The spectacle of a prosperous man whose condition is rendered vain by his brotherless, childless isolation.

Ecclesiastes 4:8

A second - Any one associated or connected with him.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Compare a saying from the Talmud: "A man without companions is like the left hand without the right."

Verses 13-16

These verses set forth the vanity of earthly prosperity even on a throne. Opinion as to their application is chiefly divided between considering them a parable or fiction like that of the childless man in Ecclesiastes 4:8: or as setting forth first the vicissitudes of royal life in two proverbial sayings Ecclesiastes 4:13-14, and then Ecclesiastes 4:15-16, the vicissitudes or procession of the whole human race, one generation giving place to another, Which in its turn will be forgotten by its successor. On the whole, the first appears to have the better claim.

Ecclesiastes 4:13

Child - Rather, young man.

Ecclesiastes 4:14

Rather: For out of the house of bondage he goes forth to be a king; although he was born poor in his kingdom, i. e., in the country over which he became king.

Ecclesiastes 4:15

I considered … - literally, I saw "all the population of the young man's kingdom."

The second child - This second youth is generally understood to be identical with the one mentioned in Ecclesiastes 4:13.

Ecclesiastes 4:16

There is - Rather: There was.

That have been before them - Rather, before whom he was, i. e., at the head of whom the young king was. Compare Micah 2:13.

They also that … him - i. e., The next generation shall forget this chosen king.

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CHAPTER 5

Introduction

The Preacher now begins to address his hearer in the second person. The soliloquy, hitherto unbroken, is henceforth interrupted by personal addresses, which are repeated with increasing frequency from this place to the end of the book. They who divide the whole book into two parts (the first theoretical, the second practical) begin the second division here.

There is a striking resemblance between the line of thought pursued in this book and that of Asaph in Ecclesiastes 5:1 has also the spiritual sense of entering into communion with God, Solomon here admonishes generally that reverence is due to God, and particularly that the "vanity" which is mingled with the "portion" that God assigns to every man, ought to be treated as a divine mystery, not to be made an occasion of idle thought, hasty words, and rash resolutions, but to be considered in the fear of God Ecclesiastes 5:1-7; that the spectacle of unjust oppression is to be patiently referred to God's supreme judgment Ecclesiastes 5:8-9; that mere riches are unsatisfying, bring care with them, and if hoarded are transitory Ecclesiastes 5:10-17; and that a man's enjoyment of his portion in life, including both labor and riches, is the gift of God Ecclesiastes 5:18-20.

Verse 1

Keep thy foot - i. e., Give thy mind to what thou art going to do.

The house of God - It has been said that here an ordinary devout Hebrew writer might have been expected to call it "the house of Yahweh;" but to those who accept this book as the work of Solomon after his fall into idolatry, it will appear a natural sign of the writer's self-humiliation, an acknowledgment of his unworthiness of the privileges of a son of the covenant, that he avoids the name of the Lord of the covenant (see Ecclesiastes 1:13 note).

Be more ready to hear - Perhaps in the sense that, "to draw near for the purpose of hearing (and obeying) is better than etc."

Verse 6

Suffer not thy mouth … - i. e., Do not make rash vows which may hereafter be the cause of evasion and prevarication, and remain unfulfilled.

Before the angel - The Septuagint and some other versions render "before the face of God," meaning a spiritual being representing the

presence of God, a minister of divine justice Exodus 23:21, such a one as inflicted judgment upon David 2 Samuel 24:17. Others, with less probability, understand the angel to be a priest, and refer to Malachi 2:7.

Verse 7

For … vanities - Or, For so it happens through many dreams and vanities and many words.

Verse 8

Matter - Rather, purpose (as in the margin, and Ecclesiastes 3:1), referring either to the will of God or to the edict of an oppressive ruler.

For he … they - literally, for high watches over high and the highest over them, i. e., the king in the capital watches over the judge or governor in the province, and God over both. This seems more in harmony with the preceding verses, and more agreeable to the scope of this passage than to understand the passage only of earthly rulers.

Verse 9

The king himself is served by the field - Rather, the king is subject to the field, i. e., is dependent on its cultivation. The higher ranks, if they oppress the lower, lose thereby their own means of subsistence.

Verse 11

They … that eat them - i. e., The laborers employed, and the household servants.

Verse 12

Labouring man - Not a slave (Septuagint), but everyone who, according to the divine direction, earns his bread in the sweat of his brow.

Verse 14

Evil travail - Adverse accident, or unsuccessful employment (compare Ecclesiastes 1:13; Ecclesiastes 4:8).

Verse 17

Hath much sorrow … - Rather, is very sad and hath pain and vexation.

Verse 18

Rather, Behold what I have seen to be good, it is pleasant for a man to eat. Such thankful enjoyment is inculcated by the Law Deuteronomy 12:7, Deuteronomy 12:18.

Verse 20

The days will pass smoothly and pleasantly, while he lives in the consciousness of God‘s favor.

Answereth him - i. e., grants his prayers.

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CHAPTER 6

Introduction

The Preacher in this chapter contemplates the case of people to whom God gives wealth, honor, success, children, and long life, yet withholds from them the capacity of enjoyment, rest, permanence or contentment Ecclesiastes 6:1-9. What then is good for man to do, whose lot in life is so thoroughly subject to vanity? Ecclesiastes 6:10-12.

Verse 1

Common among - Rather, great (heavy) upon people.

Verse 3

No burial - For a corpse to lie unburied was a circumstance in itself of special ignominy and dishonor (compare the marginal references).

Verse 4

He … his - Rather, it … its. The untimely birth is spoken of.

Verse 5

Rather, it hath not seen nor known the sun: this (the untimely birth) hath rest rather than the other.

Verse 6

He live - Rather, he hath lived. "He" refers to the man Ecclesiastes 6:3. His want of satisfaction in life, and the dishonor done to his corpse, are regarded as such great evils that they counterbalance his numerous children, and length of days, and render his lot viewed as a whole no better than the common lot of all.

Verses 7-9

Connect these verses with Ecclesiastes 6:2-3: "All labor is undertaken with a view to some profit, but as a rule the people who labor are never satisfied. What advantage then has he who labors if (being rich) he is wise, or if being poor he knows how to conduct himself properly; what advantage have such laborers above a fool? (None, so far as they are without contentment, for) a thing present before the eyes is preferable to a future which exists only in the desire."

Ecclesiastes 6:8

What - literally, what profit (as in Ecclesiastes 1:3).

Knoweth … living - i. e., "Knows how to conduct himself rightly among his contemporaries."

Verse 10

Or, "That which has been named - i. e., events past or current, either Ecclesiastes 1:9 as they present themselves to man, or Ecclesiastes 3:15 as they are ordered by God - was long ago (i. e., was decreed, its nature and place were defined by the Almighty), and was known that it is man;" i. e., the course of events shapes the conduct and character of man, so that what he does and suffers is said to be or constitute the man. God from the beginning definitely ordained the course of events external to man, and constituted man in such a way that events materially affect his conduct and his destiny. Hence, God, by withholding from certain people the gift of contentment, and thus subjecting them to vanity, is acting according to the predetermined course of His Providence which man cannot alter (compare Romans 8:20). Others translate, "What there is, its name is named long ago and known, that it is man;" i. e., "What hath been and is, not only came into existence long ago Ecclesiastes 1:9; Ecclesiastes 3:15, but also has been known and named, and is acknowledged that it, besides other things, is specially man; that man always remains the same, and cannot go beyond his appointed bounds."

Him that is mightier - i. e., God; compare Ecclesiastes 9:1; 1 Corinthians 10:22, and marginal references.

Verse 11

Things - Namely, the various circumstances detailed in the foregoing chapters, from the Preacher's personal experience, and his observation of other people, ending with the comprehensive declaration in Ecclesiastes 6:10 to the effect that vanity is an essential part of the constitution of creation as it now exists, and was foreknown.

What is man the better? - Rather, what is profitable to man?

Verse 12

After him - i. e., On earth, in his own present sphere of action, after his departure hence (compare Ecclesiastes 2:19; Ecclesiastes 3:22).

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CHAPTER 7

Introduction

Ecclesiastes 7 and Ecclesiastes 10 show a striking resemblance to the style of the writer of the Book of Proverbs. Hereto the principal object has been to state the vanity of the conditions of human life: henceforth, the principal object will be to direct man how to conduct himself under those conditions.

The general drift of the writer‘s counsels throughout the last six chapters, and particularly in Ecclesiastes 7:1-22, points to wisdom united with the fear of God as the “good for man in this life.” It is illustrated by frequent reference to, and contrast with, that evil which consists of folly allied with wickedness.

Verse 1

Name … ointment - The likeness between reputation and odor supplies a common metaphor: the contrast is between reputation, as an honorable attainment which only wise people win, and fragrant odor, as a gratification of the senses which all people enjoy.

The connection of this verse with the preceding verses is this: the man, who wants to know what is profitable for man and good in this life, is here told to act in such a way as ordinarily secures a good reputation (i. e., to act like a wise man), and to teach himself this hard lesson - to regard the day of death as preferable to the day of birth. Though Solomon seems in some places to feel strongly (Ecclesiastes 2:16; Ecclesiastes 3:19-20 ff) that natural fear of death which is, in a great measure, mistrust founded on the ignorance which Christ dispelled; yet he states the advantage of death over life in respect of its freedom from toil, oppression, restlessness Ecclesiastes 2:17; Ecclesiastes 4:2; Ecclesiastes 6:5, and in respect of its implying an immediate and a nearer approach to God Ecclesiastes 3:21; Ecclesiastes 12:7. While Solomon preferred the day of death, he might still (with Luther here) have regarded birth as a good thing, and as having its place in the creation of God.

Verse 2

That - Namely, what is seen in the house of mourning.

Lay it to his heart - Consider it attentively.

Verse 3

Sorrow - Rather, Seriousness.

The heart is made better - i. e., is made bright and joyful (compare 2 Corinthians 6:10). The mind which bears itself equally in human concerns, whether they be pleasant or sorrowful, must always be glad, free, and at peace.

Verse 4

House of mourning … house of mirth - These phrases acquire a forcible significance from the Eastern custom of prolonging both festive and mournful celebrations through several days. See Genesis 50:10; Judges 14:17. This verse indicates that a life of enjoyment, does not mean the abandonment of ourselves to pleasures, but the thankful and sober use of the beautiful things which God gives us.

Verse 6

As the crackling of thorns - Noisy while it lasts, and quickly extinguished. See Psalm 58:9 note.

Verse 7

Rather, oppression (or extortions) maketh a wise man foolish; and a bribe etc. If a wise man, being in a high position, exercises oppression (see Psalm 62:10), or practices extortion, he becomes a fool in so doing. This verse is a warning against impatience in the exercise of power or the acquisition of riches.

Verse 8

Better - Inasmuch as something certain is attained, man contemplates the end throughout an entire course of action, and does not rest upon the beginning.

Patient … proud - literally, "Long," long-suffering … "high," in the sense of impatient.

Verse 11

And by it there is profit … - literally, And is profitable to the living. The same word as in Ecclesiastes 6:11, to the question in which it looks like an answer.

Verse 12

Wisdom is a defense … - See the margin and Psalm 121:5, i. e., He who is defended from adversity by his wisdom is in as good a position as he who is defended by his riches.

Excellency - literally, Profit.

Giveth life to - literally, "Causes to live," "makes alive" Proverbs 3:18; the deeper meaning of which is elicited by comparing these words with John 6:63; Matthew 4:4.

Verse 13

The work of God - The scheme of Divine Providence, the course of events which God orders and controls (compare Ecclesiastes 3:11). It comprises both events which are "straight," i. e., in accordance with our expectation, and events which are "crooked," i. e., which by their seeming inequality baffle our comprehension.

Verse 14

Good and prosperous days are in God's design special times of comfort and rejoicing: the days of affliction and trouble, are in God's design the proper seasons of recollection and serious consideration. The Providence of God hath so contrived it, that our good and evil days should be intermingled each with the other. This mixture of good and evil days is by the Divine Providence so proportioned, that it sufficiently justifies the dealings of God toward the sons of men, and obviates all their discontent and complaints against Him.

Set the one over against the other - Rather, made this as well as that, i. e., the day of adversity, as well as the day of prosperity. The seeming imitation of this passage in Ecclesiasticus (Ecclesiastes 6:12 note.

Verses 15-17

The days of my vanity - This does not imply that those days of vanity were ended (see Ecclesiastes 1:12 note).

The meaning may be best explained by a paraphrase. Solomon states how the wise man should regard the "crooked Ecclesiastes 7:13 work of God" when it bears upon him. He says in effect, "Do not think that thou couldest alter the two instances (described in Ecclesiastes 7:15) of such crooked work so as to make it straight, that thou art more righteous or more wise than He is Who ordained these events. To set up thy judgment in opposition to His would imply an excess of wickedness and folly, deserving the punishment of premature death. But rather it is good for thee to grasp these seeming anomalies; if thou ponder them they will tend to impress on thee that fear of God which is a part of wisdom, and will guide thee safely through all the perplexities of this life" (compare Ecclesiastes 8:12-13). The suggestion that these verses are intended to advocate a middle course between sin and virtue is at variance with the whole tenor of the book.

Ecclesiastes 7:16

Destroy thyself - The Septuagint and Vulgate render it: "be amazed." Compare "marvel not" Ecclesiastes 5:8.

Verse 20

The connection of this verse with Ecclesiastes 7:18-19 becomes clearer if it is borne in mind that the fear of God, wisdom, and justice, are merely different sides of one and the same character, the formation of which is the aim of all the precepts in this chapter. The words "just" Ecclesiastes 7:15, Ecclesiastes 7:20 and "righteous" Ecclesiastes 7:16 are exactly the same in Hebrew.

Verse 21-22

Curse … cursed - Rather, speak evil of … spoken evil of.

Verse 23

I will be - Or, I am. There was a time when Solomon thought himself wise enough to comprehend the work of God, and therefore needed for himself the self-humbling conviction declared in this verse.

It - i. e. Wisdom. Compare Ecclesiastes 8:17.

Verse 24

literally, Far off is that which hath been i. e., events as they have occurred in the order of Divine Providence), and deep, deep, who can find it out?

Verse 25

Reason - The same word is translated "account" Ecclesiastes 7:27, "invention" Ecclesiastes 7:29, and "device" Ecclesiastes 9:10: it is derived from a root signifying "to count."

Verse 26

Compare the account of Solomon's wives 1 Kings 11:1-8: see also Proverbs 2:16-19; Proverbs 5:3 …

Verse 28

One man - One whose good qualities quite satisfy our expectation. Compare the expression "one among a thousand" (marginal reference).

A woman - The number of Solomon's wives and concubines 1 Kings 11:3 was a thousand.

Verse 29

God hath made - Rather, God made. A definite allusion to the original state of man: in which he was exempt from vanity.

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CHAPTER 8

Introduction

Although in some degree baffled in his own pursuit of wisdom, Solomon yet regards wisdom as the nearest approach to "that good for man" which he is seeking; and presses here, as a part of that wisdom, a spirit of obedience Ecclesiastes 8:1-5. In the face of the incomprehensible course of external events, he determined to abide in the fear and trust of God Ecclesiastes 8:6-14, and to acknowledge the natural incompetence of every man to find out the unsearchable ways of God Ecclesiastes 8:15-17.

Verse 1

And who - Rather, and as he who knoweth. The possessor of wisdom excels other people: it imparts serenity to his countenance, and removes the expression of gloom or fierceness (see the marginal reference).

Verse 2

Oath - A reference to the oath of allegiance taken to Solomon at his accession to the throne (the margin of 1 Chronicles 29:24).

Verse 3

Stand not … - i. e., "Do not persist in rebellion."

Verse 5

Feel - literally, know. The meaning is, "He who obeys the commandment (i. e., the word of the king, Ecclesiastes 8:4), will not be an accomplice in any act of rebellion; and if he be a wise man he discerns (literally knows) that the king's commandment or action is liable to correction, if it be wrong, in God's time and by God's judgment." Compare Ecclesiastes 3:11, Ecclesiastes 3:17.

Verse 6

Because, therefore - , Or, as in Ecclesiastes 8:7, "for."

The possibility of God's time and judgment being in opposition to a king's purpose or commandment Ecclesiastes 8:5, suggests the thought that such discord is a misery (evil, Ecclesiastes 6:1) common to man (or, mankind).

Verse 7

When - Or, as in the margin. For the meaning of this verse, compare marginal references.

Verse 8

Neither hath he power - Rather: "and there is no power." Compare Ecclesiastes 3:19.

No discharge … - i. e., "No exemption from the final hour of struggle between life and death."

Wickedness - Though the life of the wicked may be prolonged Ecclesiastes 7:15, yet wickedness itself has no inherent power to prolong that life.

Verse 9

To his own hurt - Or, "to the hurt of the subject." The case is still that of an unwise king whose command is obeyed Ecclesiastes 8:2 even to the hurt of the wise man who obeys him.

Verse 10

i. e., "I saw wicked (rulers) buried, who came into the world and went from the Holy place (the seat of authority and justice, Deuteronomy 19:17; 2 Chronicles 19:6), and they were forgotten in the city where they had so ruled to the hurt of their subjects: this - their death and oblivion - shews their lot also to be vanity." Others interpret the verse: "I have seen wicked men buried; and (others) came into the world, and from the Holy place they went out of the world, and were forgotten in the city where they had done rightly" (compare 2 Kings 7:9).

Verse 12

His days be prolonged - i. e., in his wickedness Ecclesiastes 8:8.

"I" is emphatic, as if to mark the opposition to the "sons of men" Ecclesiastes 8:11.

Verse 14

Which is done upon the earth - The instance of vanity, to which these words are applied, is the seeming inequality of God's justice; but if they are considered in connection with the profession of personal faith in God's absolute justice Ecclesiastes 8:12, the conclusion is irresistible, that, whatever reason the Preacher had for reserve in declaring his belief, he certainly looked forward to final judgment in a future state of existence (compare Ecclesiastes 3:17; Ecclesiastes 12:14).

Verse 15

Mirth - Better, Gladness, or "joy" (as in Ecclesiastes 2:10). The Hebrew word is applied not only to the pleasures arising from the physical senses, but also frequently to religious joy. The sentiment of this verse is a frequent

conclusion of the writer‘s personal experience (compare marginal references), and is unfairly charged with Epicureanism. The Preacher is careful to set forth pleasure as a gift from God, to be earned by labor, and received with thankfulness to the Giver, and to be accounted for to Him. His estimate of the pleasures of the senses is recorded in Ecclesiastes 7:2-6.

Verse 16-17

These verses supplement Ecclesiastes 8:15 with the reflection that the man who goes beyond that limited sphere within which he can labor and be contented, and investigates the whole work of God, will find that his finite intelligence cannot grasp it.

Ecclesiastes 8:16

Business - Or, “travail” Ecclesiastes 1:13; Ecclesiastes 3:10. The sleeplessness noted probably refers to the writer himself.

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CHAPTER 9

Introduction

In Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 reasons are adduced for the universal conclusion Ecclesiastes 8:17 that no person can understand the works of God. This does not, however, prevent the assertion of the practical advantage in this life of that wisdom which includes the fear of God (Ecclesiastes 9:13 ff). Compare Ecclesiastes 9:1-10 with Wisd. 2:1-9.

Verse 1

A good man‘s trust in God is set forth as a counterpoise to our Ignorance of the ways of Providence.

In the hand of God - Under His special protection (Deuteronomy 33:3 ff) as righteous, and under His direction Proverbs 21:1 as people.

No man … - literally, both love and also hatred man knoweth not: all are before them. Love and hatred here mean the ordinary outward tokens of God‘s favor or displeasure, i. e., prosperity and adversity. “Man knoweth not” probably means: “man knows not whether to expect prosperity or adversity from God; all his earthly future is in obscurity.”

Verse 2

Event - See Ecclesiastes 2:14 note.

Sweareth - i. e., Swears lightly or profanely.

Verse 3

Compare Ecclesiastes 8:11. The seeming indiscriminateness of the course of events tends to encourage evil-disposed men in their folly.

Verse 4

For to him - Rather: “Yet to him.” Notwithstanding evils, life has its advantage, and especially when compared with death.

Dog - To the Hebrews a type of all that was contemptible 1 Samuel 17:43.

Verse 5-6

See Ecclesiastes 8:12, note; Ecclesiastes 8:14, note. The living are conscious that there is a future before them: but the dead are unconscious; they earn nothing, receive nothing, even the memory of them soon disappears; they are no longer excited by the passions which belong to people in this life; their share in its activity has ceased. Solomon here describes what he sees, not what he believes; there is no reference here to

the fact or the mode of the existence of the soul in another world, which are matters of faith.

The last clause of Ecclesiastes 9:6 indicates that the writer confines his observations on the dead to their portion in, or relation to, this world.

Ecclesiastes 9:6

Now - Rather: "long ago."

Verses 7-12

Read these six verses connectedly, in order to arrive at the meaning of the writer; and compare Ecclesiastes 2:1-12.

After the description Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 of the portionless condition of the dead, the next thought which occurs is that the man who is prosperous and active should simply enjoy his portion all through this life Ecclesiastes 9:7-10; and then Ecclesiastes 9:11-12 follows the correcting thought (see Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 note), introduced as usual Ecclesiastes 2:12; Ecclesiastes 4:1, Ecclesiastes 4:7 by "I returned," namely, that the course of events is disposed and regulated by another will than that of man.

The person addressed is one whose life of labor is already pleasing to God, and who bears visible tokens of God's favor.

Ecclesiastes 9:7

Now accepteth - Rather: "already has pleasure in." Joy (the marginal reference note) is regarded as a sign of the approbation and favor of God.

Ecclesiastes 9:8

White garments and perfume are simply an expressive sign of joy.

Ecclesiastes 9:10

The works which we carry on here with the combined energies of body and soul come to an end in the hour of death, when the soul enters a new sphere of existence, and body and soul cease to act together. Compare John 9:4.

Device - See Ecclesiastes 7:25 note.

Ecclesiastes 9:11

Chance - Or, "incident," that which comes to us from without, one of the external events described in Ecclesiastes 2:14 note.

Ecclesiastes 9:12

Time - See Ecclesiastes 3:1 ff.

Verse 13

Or, Also this have I seen - wisdom under the sun, and great it seemed to me.

From this verse to the end of Ecclesiastes 10, the writer inculcates, in a series of proverbs, wisdom in contrast to folly, as the best remedy in the present life to the evil of vanity.

Verse 14-15

A parable probably without foundation in fact. Critics who ascribe this book to a late age offer no better suggestion than that the "little city" may be Athens delivered 480 b.c. from the host of Xerxes through the wisdom of Themistocles, or Dora besieged 218 b.c. by Antiochus the Great.

Ecclesiastes 9:16-17 are comments on the two facts - the deliverance of the city and its forgetfulness of him who delivered it - stated in Ecclesiastes 9:15.

Verse 18

Sinner - The word in the original indicates intellectual as well as moral error.

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CHAPTER 10

Introduction

This chapter resembles a portion of the Book of Proverbs, consisting entirely of rhythmical sentences giving advice, more or less direct, as to conduct. It is part of the writer‘s answer to the question Ecclesiastes 2:3; Ecclesiastes 6:12 “What is good for men to do?” The thought which underlies the whole chapter is the advantage of that wisdom which includes piety and patience, as practical guidance through all the perplexities of life: various traits of wisdom are set forth in a favorable light, heightened by contrast with folly. A great part of the advice seems, in addition to its general application, to have a special reference to servants of a king.

Verse 1

This verse is by its meaning so closely connected with Ecclesiastes 9:18 that the selection of it for the beginning of a new chapter seems unfortunate.

Apothecary - Rather: a dealer in spices and perfumes (compare Exodus 30:25). The swarms of flies in the East very soon corrupt and destroy any moist unguent or mixture left uncovered, and pollute a dish of food in a few minutes.

So doth … - literally, more weighty than wisdom, than honor, is a little folly.

Verse 2

The metaphor perhaps means “A wise man‘s sense is in its place, ready to help and protect him; but a fool‘s sense is missing when it is wanted, and so is useless.”

Verse 3

“Way” may be understood either literally (compare Ecclesiastes 10:15), or figuratively, of the course of action which he follows.

He saith … - He exposes his folly to every one he meets.

Verse 4

If the spirit … - i. e., If he is angry.

Leave not thy place - i. e., Do not lose thy self-control and quit his presence. Gentleness on thy part will calm both thyself and him, and prevent great wrongs being committed by either.

Verse 6-7

The “evil” of Ecclesiastes 10:5 is here specified as that caprice of a king by which an unworthy favorite of low origin is promoted to successive

dignities, while a noble person is degraded or neglected.

Verses 8-10

The figures seem to be taken from the work of building up and pulling down houses. In their general application, they recommend the man who would act wisely to be cautious when taking any step in life which involves risk.

Ecclesiastes 10:8

Breaketh an hedge - Rather: "breaks through a wall."

Serpent - The habit of snakes is to nestle in a chink of a wall, or among stones (compare Amos 5:19).

Ecclesiastes 10:9

Be endangered - Rather: "cut himself."

Verse 11

Rather: "If a serpent without enchantment (i. e., not being enchanted) bites, then there is no advantage to the charmer": i. e., if the charmer is unwisely slack in exercising his craft, he will be bitten like other people. See Psalm 58:4 note.

Verse 14

Full of words - Confident talking of the future is indicated rather than mere loquacity. Compare James 4:13.

Verse 15

The sense is: "The fool wearies himself with ineffectual attempts, he has not sufficient knowledge for the transaction of ordinary business."

Verses 16-20

Foolish rulers, by their weakness, self-indulgence and sloth, bring decay upon the state: nobleness and temperance insure prosperity: yet the subject must not rebel in word or thought against his king.

Ecclesiastes 10:16

A child - Rather, young. The word is applied to Rehoboam 2 Chronicles 13:7 at the time of his accession to the throne, when he was 41 years old.

Eat in the morning - A sign of intemperance (compare Isaiah 5:11).

Ecclesiastes 10:17

Son of nobles - i. e., of a noble disposition.

Ecclesiastes 10:18

The "building" or "house" represents the state. Compare Isaiah 3:6; Amos 9:10.

Droppeth through - i. e., Lets the rain through the roof.

Ecclesiastes 10:19

literally, For merriment they make a feast (bread), and wine gladdens the living, and money supplies all things.

Ecclesiastes 10:20

Curse - Compare Ecclesiastes 7:21-22.

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CHAPTER 11

Introduction

There ought to be no division between Ecclesiastes 10:20 and Ecclesiastes 11:1.

As if in contrast to the self-indulgence described in Ecclesiastes 10:16-19, the opposite virtue, readiness to give to others, is inculcated. The use of the word "bread" in both Ecclesiastes 10:19 (see the note) and Ecclesiastes 11:1 points the contrast.

Verse 1

The verse means: "Show hospitality, even though the corresponding return of hospitality to you may seem improbable; nevertheless, be hospitable in faith." Compare Luke 14:13-14; Hebrews 13:2. Some interpreters (not unreasonably) understand by "bread" the seed from the produce of which bread is made. Seed cast upon the fertile soil flooded by the early rains would be returned to the sower in autumn with large increase.

Verse 2

The verse means: "Let your hospitality and your alms be extensive: for you know not what reverses may befall either that person who by your liberality will be strengthened to meet them, or yourself who may come to need grateful friends." Compare Luke 16:9.

Seven, and also to eight - A definite number for an indefinite (compare marginal reference).

Verses 3-6

"Unforeseen events come from God; and the man who is always gazing on the uncertain future will neither begin nor complete any useful work: but do thou bear in mind that times and circumstances, the powers of nature and the results to which they minister, are in the hand of God; and be both diligent and trustful." The images are connected chiefly with the occupation of an agricultural laborer: the discharge of rain from the cloud, and the inclination of the falling tree, and the direction of the wind, are beyond his control, though the result of his work is affected by them. The common application of the image of the fallen tree to the state of departed souls was probably not in the mind of the inspired writer.

Ecclesiastes 11:5

Spirit - The same Hebrew word (like πνεῦμα *pneuma* in Greek and "Spirit" in English) signifies both the wind Ecclesiastes 11:4 and the Spirit (compare marginal reference). The Old Testament in many places recognizes the special operation of God Job 10:8-12; Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:5, and distinctly of the Spirit of God Job 31:15 in the origination of every child. Compare Genesis 2:7.

Verses 7-10

The preceding exhortation to a life of labor in the sight of God is now addressed especially to the active and the young; and is enforced by another consideration, namely, the transitory character of all that sustains youth.

Ecclesiastes 11:7

The light … the sun - Gifts of God which cheer man's toil, but which he almost ceases to appreciate in his old age.

Ecclesiastes 11:8

Days of darkness - The time of old age, and perhaps any time of sorrow or misfortune. Compare Ecclesiastes 12:2.

All that cometh - i. e., "The future," which must not be reckoned on by the active man, as if his present state of healthy energy were to continue.

Ecclesiastes 11:9

Rejoice … cheer … walk - The imperative mood is used to encourage one who possesses certain gifts from God to remember that they come from God and are to be used in accordance with His will.

In the ways … - The words are probably used in an innocent sense Ecclesiastes 2:10; Proverbs 16:9.

Judgment - This includes a judgment beyond the grave; though the writer's view of it was dim and indefinite if compared with Christian's.

Ecclesiastes 11:10

The sense appears to be, "Let the timely recollection of God's judgment, and of the fleeting character of youth, so influence your conduct that you will refrain from acts which entail future remorse and pain."

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CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

Remember now - Rather, And remember. The connection between this verse and the preceding one is unfortunately interrupted by our division of chapters.

Creator - Gratitude to God as Creator is here inculcated, as just previously Ecclesiastes 11:9 fear of God as Judge. Godliness, acquired as a habit in youth, is recommended as the proper compensation for that natural cessation of youthful happiness which makes the days of old age more or less evil; more evil in proportion since there is less of godliness in the heart, and less evil where there is more godliness.

While the evil days come not - Rather, before the evil days come.

Verse 2

While … not - Or, Before. The darkening of the lights of heaven denotes a time of affliction and sadness. Compare Ezekiel 32:7-8; Job 3:9; Isaiah 5:30. Contrast this representation of old age with 2 Samuel 23:4-5.

Verse 3

The body in old age and death is here described under the figure of a decaying house with its inmates and furniture.

This verse is best understood as referring to the change which old age brings to four parts of the body, the arms ("the keepers"), the legs ("the strong men"), the teeth ("the grinders"), and the eyes.

Verse 4

And the doors … is low - The house is viewed from without. The way of entry and exit is stopped: little or no sound issues forth to tell of life stirring within. The old man, as he grows older, has less in common with the rising generation; mutual interest and social contact decline. Some take the doors and the sound of the mill as figures of the lips and ears and of the speech.

He shall rise … - Here the metaphor of the house passes out of sight. The verb may either be taken impersonally ("they shall rise," compare the next verse): or as definitely referring to an old man, who as the master of the house rises out of sleep at the first sound in the morning.

All the daughters of musick - i. e., Singing women Ecclesiastes 2:8.

Be brought low - i. e., Sound faintly in the ears of old age.

Verse 5

High - The powerful and the proud, such persons as an old man in his timidity might shrink from opposing or meeting: or, high ground which old men would avoid ascending.

Fears … in the way - Compare Proverbs 26:13.

The almond tree - The type of old age. Many modern critics translate "The almond shall be despised," i. e., pleasant food shall no longer be relished.

The grasshopper - Rather: "the locust." The clause means, heaviness and stiffness shall take the place of that active motion for which the locust is conspicuous.

Desire - literally, the caper-berry; which, eaten as a provocative to appetite, shall fail to take effect on a man whose powers are exhausted.

Long home - literally, "eternal (see Ecclesiastes 1:4 note) house;" man's place in the next world. Without attributing to the author of Ecclesiastes that deep insight into the future life which is shown by the writer of the Epistles to the Corinthians, we may observe that He by whom both writers were inspired sanctions in both books (see 2 Corinthians 5:1-6) the use of the same expression "eternal house." In 2Corinthians it means that spiritual body which shall be hereafter; and it is placed, as it is here (see Ecclesiastes 12:3), in contrast with that earthly dissolving house which clothes the spirit of man in this world.

Mourners - The singing women who attend funerals for hire (see Matthew 9:23).

Verse 6

Be loosed - The termination of life is signified generally by the snapping of the silver cord by which the lamp hangs from the ceiling; by the dashing in pieces of the cup or reservoir of oil; by the shattering of the pitcher used to bring water from the spring; and by the breaking of the wheel by which a bucket is let down into the well. Others discern in the silver cord, the soul which holds the body in life; in the bowl, the body; and in the golden oil (compare Zechariah 4:12) within it, the spirit.

Verse 7

The spirit - i. e., The spirit separated unto God from the body at death. No more is said here of its future destiny. To return to God, who is the fountain Psalm 36:9 of Life, certainly means to continue to live. The doctrine of life after death is implied here as in Exodus 3:6 (compare Mark

12:26), Psalm 17:15 (see the note), and in many other passages of Scripture earlier than the age of Solomon. The inference that the soul loses its personality and is absorbed into something else has no warrant in this or any other statement in this book, and would be inconsistent with the announcement of a judgment after death Ecclesiastes 12:14.

Verses 8-14

This passage is properly regarded as the Epilogue of the whole book; a kind of apology for the obscurity of many of its sayings. The passage serves therefore to make the book more intelligible and more acceptable.

Here, as in the beginning of the book Ecclesiastes 1:1-2, the Preacher speaks of himself Ecclesiastes 12:8-10 in the third person. He first repeats Ecclesiastes 12:8 the mournful, perplexing theme with which his musings began Ecclesiastes 1:2; and then states the encouraging practical conclusion Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 to which they have led him. It has been pointed out that the Epilogue assumes the identity of the Preacher with the writer of the Book of Proverbs.

Ecclesiastes 12:11

literally, Words of wise men are as goads, and as nails driven in (by) masters of assemblies; they are given from one shepherd: "goads," because they rouse the hearer and impel him to right actions; "nails" (perhaps tent-spikes), because they remain fixed in the memory: "masters of assemblies" are simply "teachers" or "preachers" (see Ecclesiastes 1:1 note), instructors of such assemblies as Wisdom addresses Proverbs 1:20.

One shepherd - i. e., God, who is the supreme Giver of wisdom Proverbs 2:6, and the chief Shepherd Jeremiah 23:1-4. Compare 1 Corinthians 2:12-13.

Ecclesiastes 12:12

By these - i. e., "By the words of wise men."

Books - Rather, "Writings." Probably the proverbs current in the Preacher‘s age, including, though not especially indicating, his own.

The Preacher protests against the folly of protracted, unprofitable, meditation.

Ecclesiastes 12:13

literally, "The conclusion of the discourse" (or "word," = words, Ecclesiastes 1:1), "the whole, let us hear."

The whole duty of man - Rather, the whole man. To revere God and to obey Him is the whole man, constitutes man‘s whole being; that only is

conceded to Man; all other things, as this book teaches again and again, are dependent on a Higher Incomprehensible Being.

Ecclesiastes 12:14

Judgment with - Rather, judgment (which shall be held) upon etc.: i. e., an appointed judgment which shall take place in another world, as distinct from that retribution which frequently follows man‘s actions in the course of this world, and which is too imperfect (compare Ecclesiastes 2:15; Ecclesiastes 4:1; Ecclesiastes 7:15; Ecclesiastes 9:2, …) to be described by these expressions. He that is fully convinced that there is no solid happiness to be found in this world, and that there is a world to come wherein God will adjudge people to happiness or misery respectively, as they have made their choice and acted here, must necessarily subscribe to the truth of Solomon‘s conclusion, that true religion is the only way to true happiness.

ECCLESIASTES CONTENTS

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO
Song of Songs

SONG OF SONGS CONTENTS

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SONG OF SONGS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Song of Solomon

1. "The Song of Songs which is Solomon's," so designated by its most ancient (Hebrew) title, holds a unique position in sacred literature. It may be said to be the enigma of the Old Testament, just as the Apocalypse (Revelation) is of the New Testament.

The Song was regarded as an integral and venerated portion of the Hebrew canon before the commencement of the Christian era, and passed as such into the canon of the primitive church. It has been always held both by the church and by the synagogue in the highest and most reverent estimation.

One or two allusions have been found in the Song to at least one older canonical book (Genesis); and a few references to it occur in books of later composition (Proverbs, Isaiah, Hosea); while two or three doubtful allusions have been thought to be made to it by writers of the New Testament. These references are sufficient to establish the recognition of the Song as a part of Holy Scripture by some among the canonical writers.

2. The difficulties of the interpreter of the Song are unusually great. One lies in the special form of composition. The Song of Songs might be called a lyrico-dramatic poem, but it is not a drama in the sense that it was either intended or adapted for representation.

Though the Song is a well-organized poetical whole, its unity is made up of various parts and sections, of which several have so much independence and individuality as to have been not inaptly called Idylls, i. e. short poetic pieces of various forms containing each a distinct subject of representation. These shorter pieces are all, however, so closely linked by a common purpose, as to form, when viewed in their right connection, constituent parts of a larger and complete poem.

The earliest Jewish expositor of the Song as a whole, the author of the so-called Chaldee Targum, divides it in his historico-prophetic interpretation into two nearly equal halves at Psalm 136:23, and then raising

along with itself a sanctified humanity to the heavenly places Ephesians 2:6, is finally awaiting there an invitation from

SONG OF SONGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The "Song of songs," i. e., the best or most excellent of songs.

Which is Solomon's - literally, "to" or "for Solomon," i. e., belonging to Solomon as its author or concerning him as its subject. In a title or inscription, the former interpretation is to be preferred.

Verses 2-4

the prologue. - The Song commences with two stanzas in praise of the king (now absent) by a chorus of virgins belonging to the royal household. Expositors, Jewish and Christian, interpret the whole as spoken by the Church of the heavenly Bridegroom.

Psalm 23:5; Luke 7:46; John 12:3).

Thy name … poured forth - As unguents are the sweeter for diffusion, so the king's name the wider it is known.

Psalm 58:1; Proverbs 23:31.

Verses 5-8

This section is made by the Targumist and other Jewish interpreters to adumbrate the condition of Israel in the wilderness; by some Christian expositors, that of the Gentile Church on her first conversion.

Genesis 25:13; Psalm 120:5. The word itself signifies "dark" or "black." Possibly "tents of Kedar" stand here poetically for shepherds' tents in general Isaiah 60:7.

Job 20:9; Job 28:7, and indicates in the latter place the piercing glance of a bird of prey.

My mother's children, - Or, sons; a more affectionate designation than "brothers," and implying the most intimate relationship.

Angry - This anger was perhaps but a form of jealous care for their sister's safety (compare Psalm 23:1.

Rest - Or, lie down; a term properly used of the couching of four-footed animals: "thy flock" is here therefore easily understood. Compare Ezekiel 34:14-15; Psalm 23:2; Jeremiah 50:6.

As one that turneth aside - Or, goeth astray like an outcast.

Song of Song of Solomon 1:8

The chorus, and not the king, are the speakers here. Their meaning seems to be: If thy beloved be indeed a shepherd, then seek him yonder

among other shepherds, but if a king, thou wilt find him here in his royal dwelling.

Verses 9-14

This and the next Jeremiah 2:2 between the Holy One and His Church, first in the wilderness of the Exodus, and then in the wilderness of the world Ezekiel 20:35-36.

1 Kings 10:28-29. As applied to the bride it expresses the stately and imposing character of her beauty.

Proverbs 25:12), or substitute for the strung beads of the bride‘s necklace.

John 12:3, with her most precious unguents.

Spikenard - An unguent of great esteem in the ancient world, retaining its Indian name in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. It is obtained from an Indian plant now called “jatamansi.”

Song of Song of Solomon 1:13

Render: A bag of myrrh is my beloved to me, which lodgeth in my bosom.

Song of Song of Solomon 1:14

Camphire - Rather, כפר *kôpher* from which “cyprus” is probably derived (in the margin misspelled “cypress “),the name by which the plant called by the Arabs “henna” was known to the Greeks and Romans. It is still much esteemed throughout the East for the fragrance of its flowers and the dye extracted from its leaves. Engedi was famous for its vines, and the henna may have been cultivated with the vines in the same enclosures.

SONG OF SONGS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

The division of the chapters is unfortunate; Isaiah 35:1) "rose." The etymology is in favor of its being a bulbous plant (the white narcissus, Conder). "Sharon" is usually the proper name of the celebrated plain from Joppa to Caesarea, between the hill-country and the sea, and travelers have remarked the abundance of flowers with which this plain is still carpeted in spring. But in the time of Eusebius and Jerome there was a smaller plain of Sharon (Saron) situated between Mount Tabor and the sea of Tiberias, which would be very near the bride‘s native home if that were Shunem.

Verse 2

The king resumes, taking up the bride‘s comparison: "As the lily excels in beauty the thorny shrubs among which it grows, so my friend excels her companions."

Verses 3-7

The bride‘s answer: "As the ‹tappuach‘ with its fragrant fruit excels the barren trees of the wild wood, so my beloved his associates and friends etc." תפוח *tappûach* may in early Hebrew have been a generic name for apple, quince, citron, orange etc.

Exodus 17:15 note).

2 Samuel 6:19 note; 1 Chronicles 16:3; Hosea 3:1). For an instance of the reviving power of dried fruit, see 1 Samuel 30:12.

Deuteronomy 33:27; Proverbs 4:8.

Song of Song of Solomon 2:7

Render: "I adjure you … by the gazelles, or by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up nor awaken love until it please." The King James Version, "my love," is misleading. The affection or passion in itself, not its object, is here meant. This adjuration, three times significantly introduced as a concluding formula (marginal references), expresses one of the main thoughts of the poem; namely, that genuine love is a shy and gentle affection which dreads intrusion and scrutiny; hence the allusion to the gazelles and hinds, shy and timid creatures.

The complementary thought is that of Song of Song of Solomon 8:6-7 , where love is again described, and by the bride, as a fiery principle.

Verses 8-17

The bride relates to the chorus a visit which the beloved had paid her some time previously in her native home. He on a fair spring morning solicits her company. The bride, immersed in rustic toils, refuses for the present, but confessing her love, bids him return at the cool of day. It is a spring-time of affection which is here described, still earlier than that of the former chapter, a day of pure first-love, in which, on either side, all royal state and circumstance is forgotten or concealed. Hence, perhaps, the annual recitation of the Song of Songs by the synagogue with each return of spring, at the Feast of Passover, and special interpretations of this passage by Hebrew doctors, as referring to the paschal call of Israel out of Egypt, and by Christian fathers, as foreshadowing the evangelic mysteries of Easter - Resurrection and Regeneration. The whole scene has also been thought to represent the communion of a newly-awakened soul with Christ, lie gradually revealing Himself to her, and bidding her come forth into fuller communion.

Isaiah 13:4).

Proverbs 5:19 note). The points of comparison here are beauty of form, grace, and speed of movement. In 2 Samuel 2:18; 1 Chronicles 12:8, princes are compared to "gazelles."

Wall - The clay-built wall of the house or vineyard of the bride's family, different from the strong wall of a city or fortress Joel 2:23, i. e., Nisan or Abib, corresponding to the latter part of March and early part of April. Cyril interpreted Ezekiel 13:4).

Genesis 3:8 "the cool" or breathing time of the day.

And the shadows flee - i. e., Lengthen out, and finally lose their outlines with the sinking and departure of the sun (compare Jeremiah 6:4). As the visit of the beloved is most naturally conceived of as taking place in the early morning, and the bride is evidently dismissing him until a later time of day, it seems almost certain that this interpretation is the correct one which makes that time to be evening after sunset. The phrase recurs in 2 Samuel 2:29, not far from Mahanaim (Song of Song of Solomon 6:13 margin). If used in a symbolic sense, mountains of "separation," dividing for a time the beloved from the bride. This interpretation seems to be the better, though the local reference need not be abandoned.

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CHAPTER 3

Introduction

The bride relates to the chorus what appears to be an imaginary occurrence transacted in a dream (like that of Song of Song of Solomon 5:2-8). The Targum takes this section to be typical of the wanderings of Israel after the Holy One in the wilderness, as the next Song of Song of Solomon 3:6-11 is made to represent their entrance into the land.

Verse 1

By night - i. e., In the night-hours.

Verse 3

The city - One near the bride‘s native home, possibly Shunem.

Verse 4

I held him - This begins the fourth stanza. The bride‘s mother is mentioned again in Song of Song of Solomon 6:9 ; Song of Song of Solomon 8:2 .

Verse 5

See Song of Song of Solomon 2:7 note.

Verses 6-11

The principal and central action of the Song; the bride‘s entry into the city of David, and her marriage there with the king. Jewish interpreters regard this part of the poem as symbolizing the “first” entrance of the Church of the Old Testament into the land of promise, and her spiritual espousals, and communion with the King of kings, through the erection of Solomon‘s Temple and the institution of its acceptable worship. Christian fathers, in a like spirit, make most things here refer to the espousals of the Church with Christ in the Passion and Resurrection, or the communion of Christian souls with Him in meditation thereon.

Jeremiah 23:10; Joel 2:22; Isaiah 42:11; Psalm 65:12.

Pillars of smoke - Here an image of delight and pleasure. Frankincense and other perfumes are burned in such abundance round the bridal equipage that the whole procession appears from the distance to be one of moving wreaths and columns of smoke.

All powders of the merchant - Every kind of spice forming an article of commerce.

Psalm 91:5.

1 Kings 1:11. This is the last mention of her in sacred history.

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CHAPTER 4

Introduction

The king in a lyric song of five stanzas commends the beauty of the bride:

Verse 1

Thou hast doves‘ eyes … - Thine eyes are doves behind thy veil. So also in Isaiah 47:2, “veil” is better than “locks.”

That appear from … - Or, “that couch upon Mount Gilead.” The point of comparison seems to be the multitudinousness of the flocks seen browsing on the verdant slopes of the rich pasture-lands Numbers 32:1; Micah 7:14.

Verse 2

Whereof … - Or, “all of them are equal pairs, and none is bereft among them,” i. e., none has lost her mate. The points of comparison in this simile are of course brilliant whiteness, regularity, and completeness of number.

Verse 3

Thy speech is comely - Perhaps, “thy mouth,” i. e., the organ of speech.

Verse 4

The “tower of David” may be that mentioned in Nehemiah 3:25-27; Micah 4:8. For the custom of hanging shields and other weapons in and upon buildings suited for the purpose, see Ezekiel 27:10-11.

Verse 7

Section 4:75:1: The king meeting the bride in the evening of the same day, expresses once more his love and admiration in the sweetest and tenderest terms and figures. He calls her now “bride” (spouse, Song of Song of Solomon 4:8) for the first time, to mark it as the hour of their espousals, and “sister-bride” (spouse, Song of Song of Solomon 4:9-10 , Song of Song of Solomon 4:12 ; Song of Song of Solomon 5:1), to express the likeness of thought and disposition which henceforth unites them. At the same time he invites her to leave for his sake her birthplace and its mountain neighborhood, and live henceforth for him alone.

Verse 8

The order and collocation of words in the Hebrew is grand and significant. With me from Lebanon, O bride, with me from Lebanon thou shalt come, shalt look around (or wander forth) from the height (literally “head”) of Amana, from the height of Shenir and Hermon, from dens of

lions, from mountain-haunts of leopards. It is evidently a solemn invitation from the king in the sense of Psalm 45:10-11. Four peaks in the same mountain-system are here named as a poetical periphrasis for northern Palestine, the region in which is situated the native home of the bride.

(1) Amana (or Abana, 2 Kings 5:12), that part of the Anti-libanus which overlooks Damascus.

(2) Shenir or Senir, another peak of the same range (according to Deuteronomy 3:9, the Amorite name for Hermon, but spoken of here and in 1 Chronicles 5:23 as distinct from it).

(3) Hermon, the celebrated mountain which forms the culminating point of the Anti-libanus, on the northeastern border of the holy land.

(4) Lebanon, properly the western range overlooking the Mediterranean, but here used as a common designation for the whole mountain system.

Leopards are still not unfrequently seen there, but the lion has long since disappeared.

Verses 9-11

The similes employed refer to the graces of adornment, speech, and gesture, as expressions of inward character and sentiment.

Song of Song of Solomon 4:9

With one of thine eyes - Rather, with one look of thine.

Song of Song of Solomon 4:11

Honeycomb - literally, Thy lips distill a dropping (of pure honey). Compare the marginal references.

Verses 12-15

The loveliness and purity of the bride are now set forth under the image of a paradise or garden fast barred against intruders, filled with rarest plants of excellent fragrance, and watered by abundant streams. Compare Proverbs 5:15-20.

Genesis 29:3, and sealed with "the king's own signet" (Daniel 6:17; compare Matthew 27:66).

Ecclesiastes 2:5 of "pardes" (see Nehemiah 2:8 note). The pomegranate was for the Jews a sacred fruit, and a characteristic product of the land of promise (compare Exodus 28:33-34; Numbers 20:5; Deuteronomy 8:8; 1 Kings 7:18, 1 Kings 7:20). It is frequently

mentioned in the Song, and always in connection with the bride. It abounds to this day in the ravines of the Lebanon.

Camphire - Cyprus. See Song of Song of Solomon 1:14 note.

Song of Song of Solomon 4:13-15

Seven kinds of spices (some of them with Indian names, e. g. aloes, spikenard, saffron) are enumerated as found in this symbolic garden. They are for the most part pure exotics which have formed for countless ages articles of commerce in the East, and were brought at that time in Solomon‘s ships from southern Arabia, the great Indian Peninsula, and perhaps the islands of the Indian Archipelago. The picture here is best regarded as a purely ideal one, having no corresponding reality but in the bride herself. The beauties and attractions of both north and south - of Lebanon with its streams of sparkling water and fresh mountain air, of Engedi with its tropical climate and henna plantations, of the spice-groves of Arabia Felix, and of the rarest products of the distant mysterious Ophir - all combine to furnish one glorious representation, “Thou art all fair!”

Verse 16

The bride‘s brief reply, declaring her affection for the king and willingness to belong to him.

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CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

My honeycomb - literally, “my reed” or “my wood,” i. e., the substance itself, or portions of it in which the comb is formed. The bees in Palestine form their combs not only in the hollows of trees and rocks, but also in reeds by the river-banks. The king‘s meaning appears to be: “All pleases me in thee, there is nothing to despise or cast away.”

Eat, O friends - A salutation from the king to his assembled guests, or to the chorus of young men his companions, bidding them in the gladness of his heart Song of Song of Solomon 3:11 partake of the banquet. So ends this day of outward festivity and supreme heart-joy. The first half of the Song of Songs is fitly closed. The second half of the poem commences Song of Song of Solomon 5:2 with a change of tone and reaction of feeling similar to that of Song of Song of Solomon 3:1 . It terminates with the sealing Song of Song of Solomon 8:6-7 of yet deeper love.

Verse 2

Some time may be supposed to have elapsed since the bride‘s solemn espousals with the king Song of Solomon 4:75:1. A transient cloud of doubt or estrangement is now passing over her soul, as by the relation of this dream she intimates to her friends. Ancient allegorical interpreters find here a symbol of the condition and feelings of Israel during the Babylonian captivity, when the glories and privileges of Solomon‘s Temple were no more, and the manifested presence of the Holy One had been withdrawn. Israel in exile seeks the Lord Song of Song of Solomon 5:8 , and will find Him again in the second temple Song of Song of Solomon 6:3-9 .

I sleep, but my heart waketh - A poetical periphrasis for “I dream.” Compare the ancient saying: “Dreams are the vigils of those who slumber, hopes are waking dreams.”

The voice - Or, “sound.” Compare Song of Song of Solomon 2:8 , note. She hears him knocking before he speaks.

My undefiled - literally, “my perfect one.” Vulgate “immaculata mea.” Compare Song of Song of Solomon 4:7 .

Verse 3

She makes trivial excuses, as one in a dream.

Verse 4

Put in his hand - Through (literally "from") the hole (of the lock), in order to raise the pins by which the bolt was fastened. The Oriental lock is a hollow piece of wood attached to the doorpost, into which a sliding-bolt is made to run. As soon as the bolt has been driven home a number of pins drop into holes prepared in it for their reception. To raise these pins, and so enable the bolt to be withdrawn, is to unfasten the lock. This is commonly done by means of the key (literally "opener"), but may often be accomplished by the fingers if dipped in paste or some other adhesive substance. For such a purpose the beloved inserts his fingers here anointed with the costly unguent, which will presently distil on those of the bride when she rises to open to him.

Verse 5

Sweet smelling myrrh - Or (as in the margin) "running myrrh," that which first and spontaneously exudes, i. e., the freshest, finest myrrh. Even in withdrawing he has left this token of his unchanged love.

Verse 8

The bride, now awake, is seeking her beloved. The dream of his departure and her feelings under it have symbolized a real emotion of her waking heart.

Verse 9

Section 5:96:3: The bride's commendation of the beloved. In the allegorical interpretations of Jewish expositors all is here spoken by exiled Israel of the Holy One whose praise she sings "by the waters of Babylon" Psalm 137:1. Christian interpreters apply the description directly to the Incarnate Son, partly in His Eternal Godhead, but chiefly in His risen and glorified Humanity.

Verse 10

My beloved is white and ruddy - Compare 1 Samuel 16:12; Daniel 7:9. The complexion most admired in youth. Jewish interpreters remark that he who is elsewhere called "the Ancient of Days" is here described as the Ever-Young. "White in His virgin-purity," says Jerome, "and ruddy in His Passion."

The chiefest among ten thousand - literally, "a bannered one among a myriad;" hence one signalized, a leader of ten thousand warriors.

Verse 11

His head is as the most fine gold - Perhaps in the sense of noble and precious as the finest gold. Lamentations 4:2.

Bushy - Waving like branches of the palm.

Verse 12

Or, His eyes are doves. The comparison is to doves seen by streams of water washing in milk (i. e., milk-white), and sitting on fulness (i. e., on the full or abundant water-flood).

Fitly set - This rendering supposes that the eyes within their sockets are compared to precious stones set in the foil of a ring (see the margin); but the other rendering is preferable. The milk-white doves themselves, sitting by full streams of water, or reflected in their flittings athwart the glassy surface, present images of the calm repose and vivid glances of the full pure lustrous eyes of the beloved.

Verse 13

Sweet flowers - Better as in the margin, i. e., plants with fragrant leaves and flowers trained on trellis-work.

Like lilies - Are lilies dropping liquid myrrh (see the Song of Song of Solomon 5:5 note). Perhaps the fragrance of the flowers, or the delicate curl of the lip-like petals, is here the point of comparison, rather than the color.

Verse 14

His hands … - Are golden rings or cylinders. The fingers of the bent or closed hand are compared to a massive ring or set of rings; or, if outstretched or straightened, to a row of golden rods or cylinders.

The beryl - The "tarshish" (compare Exodus 28:20), probably the chrysolite of the ancients (so called from its gold color), the modern topaz.

His belly … - His body (the Hebrew term applies to the whole body, from the shoulders to the thighs) is a piece of ivory workmanship overlaid with sapphires. The sapphire of the ancients seems to have been the lapis lazuli.

Verse 15

His countenance - Or, his appearance (his whole port and mien, but especially head and countenance) "is as the Lebanon."

Verse 16

He is altogether lovely - literally, the whole of him desires or delights; the plural substantive expressing the notion of the superlative. Theodoret, applying to our Lord the whole description, interprets well its last term: "Why should I endeavor to express His beauty piecemeal when He is in Himself and altogether the One longed-for, drawing all to love, compelling

all to love, and inspiring with a longing (for His company) not only those who see, but also those who hear?”

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CHAPTER 6

Verse 1-2

The question put by the chorus, and the answer it receives from the bride, show that the loss and seeking are not to be taken too seriously.

Verses 4-9

The section might be entitled, "Renewed declaration of love after brief estrangement."

Psalm 48:2. "Tirzah" (i. e., "Grace" or "Beauty ")was an old Canaanite royal city Joshua 12:24. It became again a royal residence during the reigns of Baasha and his three successors in the kingdom of the ten tribes, and may well therefore have been famed for its beauty in the time of Solomon.

Terrible as … - Awe-inspiring as the bannered (hosts). The warlike image, like others in the Song, serves to enhance the charm of its assured peace.

Song of Song of Solomon 6:5

Even for the king the gentle eyes of the bride have an awe-striking majesty. Such is the condescension of love. Now follows Song of Song of Solomon 6:5-7 the longest of the repetitions which abound in the Song, marking the continuance of the king's affection as when first solemnly proclaimed Song of Song of Solomon 4:1-6 . The two descriptions belong, according to some (Christian) expositors, to the Church of different periods, e. g. to the primitive Church in the splendor of her first vocation, and to the Church under Constantine; other (Jewish) expositors apply them to "the congregation of Israel" under the first and second temples respectively.

Song of Song of Solomon 6:9

The king contrasts the bride with the other claimants for her royal estate or favor Song of Song of Solomon 6:8 . She not only outshines them all for him, but herself has received from them disinterested blessing and praise.

This passage is invaluable as a divine witness to the principle of monogamy under the Old Testament and in the luxurious age of Solomon.

Verse 10

The chorus address the bride here only as the Shulamite, and beg her to perform for their entertainment a sacred dance (see Isaiah 24:23; Isaiah 30:26.

Verse 11-12

The bride‘s words may be paraphrased: “You speak of me as a glorious beauty; I was lately but a simple maiden engaged in rustic toils. I went down one day into the walnut-garden” (the walnut abounded on the shores of Lake Gennesaret, and is still common in Northern Palestine) “to inspect the young plants of the vale” (i. e., the wady, or watercourse, with now verdant banks in the early spring after the rainy season), “and to watch the budding and blossoming of vine and pomegranate.” Compare 2 Kings 2:12; 2 Kings 13:14, where Elijah and Elisha, as the spiritual leaders of the nation, are “the chariot and horsemen of Israel,” compare also Isaiah 22:18). This last clause is another instance of the love for military similitudes in the writer of the Song.

Ammi-nadib - literally, my people a noble one. The reference is either to Israel at large as a wealthy and dominant nation, under Solomon, or to the bride‘s people (the Shulamites) in particular, to the chief place among whom, by her union with the king, she is now exalted.

Verse 13

Return, return - About to withdraw, the bride is recalled by the chorus, desiring yet a little longer to contemplate a grace and beauty which has won all hearts.

Shulamite - Probably the same as “Shunamite,” i. e., a native of the town or district of Shunem, situated in the territory of Issachar Joshua 19:18, on the slopes of the Little Hermon, overlooking the plain of Jezreel. It is now called Salem.

See - Look or gaze at. The bride‘s modest reply, taking up their words, and wondering at their request. The chorus answer with a further petition.

As it were the company of two armies - Or, rather, the dance of Mahanaim (see the margin), a well-known sacred dance, taking its name from the locality in which it originated Genesis 32:2; Joshua 21:38. Some, taking “Mahanaim” to be an ordinary designation for “the Angels” or “Angelic Hosts,” render here “a dance as it were of

angel-choirs," i. e., one of special grace and beauty. The former of these interpretations is to be preferred.

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CHAPTER 7

Introduction

The Shulamite complies with the request of her attendants, and as she glides before them in the dance, they sing in further commendation of her beauty of form and grace of movement. The description in the original consists, like Song of Song of Solomon 4:1-5 , of five stanzas nearly coinciding with the verses in the text.

Verse 1

Thy feet with shoes - Or, thy steps in the sandals: the bride‘s feet are seen in motion in the dance. “Joints” might be rendered circling movements.

Prince‘s daughter - Or, daughter of a noble; the bride is of honorable though not of kingly birth.

Like jewels - The image suggested is that of large well-formed pearls or other jewels skillfully strung or linked together.

Verse 2

Or, Thy lap is like a moon-shaped bowl where mixed wine faileth not.” The wine in the bowl rising to the brim adds to the beauty of the vessel, and gives a more pleasing image to the eye. Some interpret, “thy girdle is like a moon-shaped bowl,” or “bears a moon-shaped ornament” (compare Isaiah 3:18).

Set about with lilies - The contrast is one of colors, the flowers, it may be, representing the purple of the robe. “The heap of wheat is not seen because covered by the lilies.”

Verse 4

A tower of ivory - The tower of ivory, the allusion being to some particular tower, built probably by Solomon 1 Kings 10:21.

Fishpools in Heshbon - Or, simply pools. Among the ruins to the south of Heshbon still remain a number of deep wells cut in the rock, and a large reservoir of water. The simile well sets forth the appearance of a large clear liquid eye (compare Lamentations 1:1; or, an expression indicating the gate itself as the scene of numerous gatherings.

Nose - Better perhaps “face “or “brow.”

The tower of Lebanon - Possibly “the house of the forest of Lebanon” or part of it 1 Kings 7:2; 1 Kings 9:19, built by Solomon in the early part of

his reign; or possibly a watchtower erected by David to overawe Damascus after his war with Hadadezer 2 Samuel 8:6.

Verse 5

Compare and contrast with 2 Chronicles 2:7, 2 Chronicles 2:14; 2 Chronicles 3:14). This interpretation is favored by the parallelism with "purple," but removes a beautiful image.

Purple - A deep violet black.

The king … - Rather, "A king is bound in the tresses or windings of thy hair." These last words indicate the king's approach.

Verses 6-10

A brief dialogue; Proverbs 23:31.

Song of Song of Solomon 7:10

His desire is toward me - All his affection has me for its object. The bride proceeds to exercise her power over his loving will.

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CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

Royal rank and splendor are grown wearisome. The king once called her "sister" and "sister-bride." Would he were indeed as a "brother," her mother's own child whom she might meet, embrace, and welcome everywhere without restraint or shame. Her love for him is simple, sacred, pure, free from the unrest and the stains of mere earthly passion.

Verse 2

Who would instruct me - Or, thou shouldest teach me Isaiah 54:13. Some allegorists make the whole passage Song of Solomon 7:118:2 a prayer of the synagogue for the Incarnation of the Word, like Song of Song of Solomon 1:2 (see note). Others, a prayer of the Church under both covenants for that complete union with the Incarnate Godhead which is still future.

Verse 3

The bride now turns to and addresses the chorus as before (marginal reference).

Verse 4

That ye stir not up - literally, as in the margin. For "my love" read as before love. The omission of "the roes and hinds" here is noticeable. Hebrew scholars regard this charge here and elsewhere Ezekiel 20:35, in the latter day, and the former words Song of Song of Solomon 3:5 by Moses in the wilderness of Sinai.

Verse 5

The scene changes from Jerusalem to the birthplace of the bride, where she is seen coming up toward her mother's house, leaning on the arm of the great king her beloved.

Who is this - Compare and contrast with Song of Song of Solomon 3:6 . In the former scene all was splendor and exaltation, but here condescension, humility, and loving charm.

I raised thee up … - Beneath this apple-tree I wakened thee. The king calls the bride's attention to a fruit-tree, which they pass, the trysting-spot of earliest vows in this her home and birthplace. The Masoretic pointing of the Hebrew text (the most ancient traditional interpretation) assigns these words to the bride, but the majority of Christian fathers to the king. The

whole passage gains in clearness and dramatic expression by the latter arrangement.

Verse 6-7

The bride says this as she clings to his arm and rests her head upon his bosom. Compare John 13:23; John 21:20. This brief dialogue corresponds to the longer one Isaiah 65:24; Isaiah 62:3-4.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 under the New.

(a) Love is here regarded as an universal power, an elemental principle of all true being, alone able to cope with the two eternal foes of God and man, Death and his kingdom.

"For strong as death is love,
Tenacious as Sheol is jealousy."

"Jealousy" is here another term for "love," expressing the inexorable force and ardor of this affection, which can neither yield nor share possession of its object, and is identified in the mind of the sacred writer with divine or true life.

(b) He goes on to describe it as an all-pervading Fire, kindled by the Eternal One, and partaking of His essence:

"Its brands are brands of fire,
A lightning-flash from Jah."

Compare Deuteronomy 4:24.

(c) This divine principle is next represented as overcoming in its might all opposing agencies whatsoever, symbolized by water.

(d) From all which it follows that love, even as a human affection, must be reverenced, and dealt with so as not to be bought by aught of different nature; the attempt to do this awakening only scorn.

Verses 8-12

A brief dialogue commencing with a question and answer probably made by brothers of the bride concerning a younger sister who will soon be old enough to be asked in marriage. The answer is given in the form of a parable: "If she be a wall," i. e., stedfast in chastity and virtue, one on whom no light advances can be made, then let us honor and reward her. This fortress-wall shall be crowned as it were with a tower or battlement of silver. But "if she be a door," light-minded and

accessible to seduction Proverbs 7:11-12, then let us provide against assailants the protection of a cedar bar or panel.

Song of Song of Solomon 8:10

The bride herself replies with the pride of innocence and virtue already crowned. She has shown herself to be such a fortress-wall as her brothers have alluded to, and her reward has been the royal favor.

Song of Song of Solomon 8:11 , Song of Song of Solomon 8:12

She next turns to the king, and commends her brothers to his favorable regard by means of another parable. Solomon owns a vineyard in Baal-hamon (possibly Baalbak, or identical with Amana (Conder)), situated in the warm and fertile plains of Coele-Syria, overshadowed by the heights of Lebanon Song of Song of Solomon 4:8 . This vineyard he has let out to tenants etc.

The bride also has a vineyard of her own Song of Song of Solomon 1:6 , her beauty and virtue faithfully guarded by these same brothers in time past. This vineyard now belongs to Solomon. Let him have "the thousand" which is his due - she is indeed herself henceforth entirely his - but let the faithful keepers have their meed as well. At least two hundred silverlings should be theirs - a double tithe of royal praise and honor.

Verse 13-14

The poem having opened with the song of a chorus in praise of the king Song of Song of Solomon 1:2-4 , concludes with a versicle recited by the bride, repeating the last words of her former strain Song of Song of Solomon 2:17 , with one significant change. She no longer thinks of the possibility of separation. The "Mountains of Bether" (division) of Song of Song of Solomon 2:17 , are now "Mountains of Besamim" (spices). His haunts and hers are henceforth the same (compare Song of Song of Solomon 4:6).

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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE
Isaiah

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Introduction to Isaiah

Section 1. Division of the Books of the Old Testament

Early on the Jews divided the books of the Old Testament into three parts - the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa (the holy writings). The Law was comprised of the five books of Moses. Priority was given to this division because it was the first composed, as well as on account of its containing their civil and ecclesiastical constitution and their oldest historical records.

The Prophets comprised the second and the largest division of the sacred writings of the Jews. This portion included the books of Joshua, Judges, 1Samuel, 2Samuel, 1Kings, and 2Kings, which were called the "former prophets;" and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the books from Hosea to Malachi, which were called the "latter prophets." Daniel has been excluded from this portion by later Jews and assigned to the third division, because they did not regard him as a prophet, but as an historical writer. Formerly, his work was doubtless included in the second division.

The third portion, "the Hagiographa," includes the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and the two books of Chronicles.

This three-fold division of the Old Testament is as old as the time of our Saviour, because he refers to it in Luke 24:44. The Jews attribute the arrangement and division of the canonical books to Ezra. They say that he was assisted in this by 120 men who constituted ‹a great synagogue;‘ that Daniel, and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were of this number; and that Haggai and Zechariah, together with Simon the Just, were also connected with it. But this statement is known to be erroneous. From the time of Daniel to the time of Simon the Just, not less than 250 years intervened (Alexander on the Canon, pp. 26,27); and of course all these persons could not have been present. It is not, however, improbable that Ezra may have been assisted by learned and pious men who aided him in the work. What Ezra did is indeed unknown. It is the general opinion that he collected and arranged the books which now compose the Old Testament; that perhaps he wrote some of the historical books, or compiled

them from fragments of history and documents that might have been in the public archives (compare the Analysis of Isaiah 1:1, we are told that he was the son of Amoz, and that he discharged the prophetic office under the reign of the kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. In regard to those times, and the character of the period in which they reigned, see section 3 of this introduction (below). It is evident also from the prophecies themselves that he delivered them during the reign of these kings. In Isaiah 6:1, it is expressly said that he had a vision of Yahweh in the year in which Uzziah died. Of course, he must have commenced his prophetic labors at least as early as during the last year of that king. If that chapter or vision was not designed as an inauguration of the prophet, or an induction into the prophetic office (see the notes on Isaiah 6:1-13), and if his prophecies were collected and arranged as they were delivered, then it will follow that the previous chapters Isaiah 39:1-8 Uzziah died, according to Calmet, 754 years before Christ. Isaiah must therefore have occupied the prophetic office at least from 754 to 707 b.c., or 47 years; that is, under Uzziah one year, under Jotham for 16 years, under Ahaz for 16 years, and under Hezekiah for 14 years.

It is not known at what age Isaiah entered into the prophetic function. It is probable that he lived much longer than to the 15th year of Hezekiah. In 2 Chronicles 32:32, it is said that ‹the rest of the acts of Hezekiah‘ were ‹written in the vision of Isaiah;‘ and this statement obviously implies that he survived him, and recorded the deeds of his reign up to his death. Since Hezekiah lived 14 or 15 years after this (Isaiah 38:5, compare 2 Kings 18:2), this would make the period of his public ministry to extend to at least 61 or 62 years. If Isaiah survived Hezekiah, he probably lived some time until during the reign of Manasseh. This supposition is confirmed not indeed by any direct historical record in the Old Testament, but by all the traditional accounts which have been handed down to us. The testimony of the Jews and of the early fathers is uniform that Isaiah was put death by Manasseh by being sawn asunder. The main alleged offence was that Isaiah had said that he had seen Yahweh, and that for this he ought to die, in accordance with the law of Moses Exodus 33:20, “No man shall see me and live.” If Isaiah lived until the time of Manasseh, and especially if Isaiah prophesied under Manasseh‘s reign, it is probable the true reason why he was put to death was that he was offensive to the monarch and his court.

The circumstances which render the supposition probable that Isaiah lived under Manasseh, and that he was put to death by him by being sawn asunder, are the following:

(1) The fact which has been stated above that Isaiah lived to complete the record of the reign of Hezekiah and of course survived him.

(2) The testimony of the Jewish writers: There is indeed much that is fabulous in their writings, and even in connection with the truths which they record; there is much that is puerile and false. However, there is no reason to doubt the main "facts" which they relate. Indeed, Josephus does not expressly state that he was slain by Manasseh, but he gives an account of the reign of Manasseh which renders it probable that if Isaiah were then alive he would have been put to death. Thus, he says (Ant. book 10, chapter 3, section 1) that ‹he barbarously slew all the righteous men that were among the Hebrews; nor would he spare the prophets, for he every day slew some of them, until Jerusalem was overflown with blood.‘ In the Talmud the following record occurs: Manasseh put Isaiah to death. The rabbi said that he condemned him and put him to death, because he said to him, "Moses, thy lord, said, ‹No man shall see me and live‘ Exodus 33:20, but thou hast said, ‹I saw the Lord upon a throne high and lifted up‘ Isaiah 6:1. Moses, thy lord, said, ‹Who will make the Lord so near that we can call to him‘; but thou hast said, ‹Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near‘ Isaiah 55:6. Moses, thy lord, said, ‹The number of thy days will I fulfill‘ Exodus 22:26; but thou hast said, ‹I will add to thy days fifteen years‘ Isaiah 38:5, etc. See Gesenius, Einlei. p. 12. The testimony of the Jews on this subject is uniform. Michaelis (the Preface to Isaiah) has referred to the following places in proof on this point. Tract. Talmud. Jabhamoth, 49; "Sanhedrin, fol. 103; Jalkut, part ii. fol. 38; Schalscheleth Hakkab." fol. 19. Rashi and Abarbanel in their commentaries give the same statement.

(3) The testimony of the early Christian writers is the same. Justin Martyr, in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, speaking of Isaiah, says, ὅν πρίον ζυλῳ ἐπρίσατε *on prioni zulō eprisate* ‹whom ye sawed asunder with a wooden saw.‘ Tertullian (de patientia, c. 14) says, His patientiae viribus

secatur Esaias. - Lactantius (lib. iv. c. 2) says, Esais, quem ipsi Judaei serra consectum crudelissime necaverunt. - Augustine (de Civit. Dei, lib. 18, c. 24) says, ‹the prophet Isaiah is reputed to have been slain by the impious King Manasseh.‘ Jerome (on Isaiah 57:1) says, that the prophet prophesied in that passage of his own death, for ‹it is an undisputed tradition among us, that he was sawn asunder by Manasseh, with a wooden saw.‘ These passages and others from the Jewish writers and from the fathers are to be found in Michaelis‘ Preface to Isaiah; in Gesenius‘ Introduction; and in Carpzov, Crit. Sacr. In a matter of simple fact, there seems to be no reason to call this testimony into question. It is to be remembered that Jerome was well acquainted with Hebrew, that he dwelt in Palestine, and no doubt has given the prevalent opinion about the death of Isaiah.

(4) The character of Manasseh was such as to make it probable that, if Isaiah lived at all during his reign, Manasseh would seek his death. In 2 Kings 21:16, it is said of Manasseh that he ‹shed innocent blood very much, until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another.‘ This account is in entire accordance with that of Josephus, quoted above. In the early part of his reign, it is recorded that he did evil, and especially that he raised the high places and the altars of idolatry which Hezekiah had destroyed, and endeavored to restore again the abominations which had existed in the time of Ahab, 2 Kings 21:2-3. It is scarcely credible that such a man as Isaiah would see all this done without some effort to prevent it; and it is certain that such an effort would excite the indignation of Manasseh. If, however, Manasseh cut off the righteous men of Jerusalem, as Josephus testifies, and as the author of the Books of Kings would lead us to believe, there is every probability that Isaiah would also fall a sacrifice to his indignation. It is not necessary in order to this to suppose that Isaiah appeared much in public; or that, being then an old man, he should take a prominent part in the transactions of that period. That we have no recorded prophecy of that time, as we have of the times of Uzziah, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, leaves it probable that Isaiah had withdrawn from the more public functions of the prophetic office, and probably (see section 4 of this introduction) had given himself to the calm and holy contemplation of future and better times under the Messiah. But still Isaiah‘s sentiments would be known to the monarch; and his influence while he lived among the people may have been materially in the way of the designs of Manasseh. Manasseh, therefore, may have

regarded it as necessary to remove him, and in the slaughter of the good men and prophets of his time, there is every probability that Isaiah would have been made a victim.

(5) It affords some confirmation of this statement that Paul Hebrews 11:37 affirms of some of the ancient saints, that they were ‹sawn asunder.‘ In the Old Testament there is no express mention of any one‘s being put to death in this manner, but it has been common with all expositors, from the earliest periods, to suppose that Paul had reference to Isaiah. The universal tradition on this subject among the Hebrews makes this morally certain. It is certain that Paul could not have made such an enumeration unless there was a well-established tradition of some one or more who had suffered in this manner; and all tradition concurs in assigning it to Isaiah.

(6) The character of the second part of the prophecies of Isaiah Isaiah 56:1-12; Jeremiah 1:6, we learn that an earlier call than this to the prophetic office sometimes occurred. On this supposition, Isaiah would have been 82 years of age at the death of Hezekiah. There is no improbability, therefore, in the supposition that he might have lived 10 or even 15 years or more, under the long reign of Manasseh. The priest Jehoiada attained the great age of 130 years 2 Chronicles 24:15. Evidently, Isaiah lived a retired and a temperate life. It is the uniform tradition of the oriental Christians that he lived to the age of 120 years; see Hengstenberg‘s Christol. vol. i. p. 278.

Where Isaiah lived is not certainly known nor are many of the circumstances of his life known. Isaiah‘s permanent residence, in the earlier part of his prophetic life, seems to have been at Jerusalem. During the reign of the ungodly Ahaz, he came forth boldly as the reprover of sin, and evidently spent a considerable part of his time near the court, 2 Kings 14:1. Thus, David Kimchi on Isaiah 1:1, writes, ‹We are ignorant of his family, from what tribe he was, except that our doctors have handed down by tradition, that Amotz and Amaziah were brothers.‘ And thus Rabbi Solomon says, ‹It is handed down to us from our ancestors that Amotz and Amaziah were brothers.‘ The same is said also by Rabbi Levi (in Megilla, c. i. fol. 10); and by Abarbanel, Preface fol. 1 (quoted by Michaelis, Preface to Isa.) In this supposition there is nothing improbable: and the fact that he was admitted so freely to the counsels of Hezekiah, and that he went so boldly

to Ahaz Isaiah 7:1, may seem to give some countenance to the idea that he was connected with the royal family.

Isaiah‘s father was evidently well known; see Isaiah 1:1, and elsewhere, where his name is introduced. Indeed, it is not improbable that most of the prophets were descended from families that were highly respectable, since they generally mention the name of their father as a name that is well known; compare Ezekiel 1:3; Jeremiah 1:1; Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Jonah 1:1; Zephaniah 1:1; Zechariah 1:1. In the other prophets the name of the “father” is omitted, probably because he was obscure and unknown. It is morally certain that Isaiah was not connected with the Levitical order, since if he had been, this would have been designated as in Jeremiah 1:1; Ezekiel 1:3. The wife of Isaiah is called “a prophetess” Isaiah 8:3, and it is supposed by some that she had the spirit of prophecy, but the more probable opinion is that the wives of the prophets were called prophetesses, as the wives of the priests were called “priestesses.”

On the question as to whether Isaiah had more than one wife, see the notes at Isaiah 7:3, the meaning of which is, “the remainder shall return” - designed, undoubtedly, to be a sign or pledge that the remnant of the Jews who should be carried away at “any time” would return; or that the whole nation would not be destroyed and become extinct. This was one of the axioms or fundamental points in all the writings of this prophet; and whatever calamity or judgment he foretold, it was always terminated with the assurance that the nation would still be ultimately preserved, and greatly enlarged, and glorified. Isaiah seems to have resolved this idea to keep as much as possible before the minds of his countrymen, and to this end he gave his son a name that would be to them a pledge of his deep conviction of this truth.

The name of the other is “Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz” Isaiah 8:1, “haste to the spoil; haste to the prey” - a name significant of the fact that the Assyrians Isaiah 15:1-9 and notes at Isaiah 16:1-14); and there is abundant evidence that Isaiah was studied by the other prophets. The regard with which he was held by the Lord Jesus, and by the writers of the New Testament will be shown in another part of this introduction (section 6). Josephus (Ant. book 11, chapter 1, section 2) says that Cyrus was moved by

the reading of Isaiah to the acknowledgment of the God of Israel, and to the restoration of the Jews, and to the rebuilding of the temple. After stating (section 1) the decree which Cyrus made in favor of the Jews, he adds, ‹This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind of his prophecies: for this prophet had said that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision, "My will is that Cyrus whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations will send back my people to their own land, and build my temple."

This was foretold by Isaiah 44:28; ‹That saith of Cyrus, He is my Shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid;‘ compare Isaiah 45:1 ff. On the genuineness of this passage of Josephus see Whiston‘s note. It is justly remarked (see Jahn‘s observation, quoted by Hengstenberg, Christol. i. 279) that this statement of Josephus furnishes the only explanation of the conduct of Cyrus toward the Jews. It is only a commentary on Ezra 1:2, where Cyrus says, ‹Yahweh, the God of heaven and earth hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem which is in Judah.‘ It is incredible that Cyrus would not have seen the prophecy Isaiah 44:28 respecting himself before he made this proclamation.

The writings of the fathers are full of the praise of Isaiah. Jerome says of him that he is not so much to be esteemed a prophet as an evangelist. And he adds, ‹he has so clearly explained the whole mystery of Christ and the church that you will regard him not as predicting future events but as composing a history of the past.‘ In Jerome‘s "Epistle ad Paulinum" he says, ‹Isaiah seems to me not to have composed a prophecy but the gospel!‘ And in Jerome‘s preface he says, ‹that in his (Isaiah‘s) discourse he is so eloquent, and is a man of so noble and refined elocution, without any mixture of rusticity, that it is impossible to preserve or transfuse the beauty of his style in a translation;‘ compare the Confessions of Augustine, ix. 5; De Civita. Dei. lib. viii. c. 29. Moses Amyraldus said of Isaiah that he ‹seems to thunder and give off lightning; he seems to confound and mingle not Greece, as was formerly said of Pericles; not Judea, and the neighboring regions, but heaven and earth and all the elements;‘ see Michaelis‘ Preface to Isaiah, pp. 8-10; compare Josephus, Ant. book 10, chapter 3; also 2 Kings

19:2. It may be added here, that although his writings are not so ancient as those of Moses, or as those of Homer and Hesiod, yet they are more ancient than most of the admired Classic productions of Greece, and are far more ancient than any of the Latin Classics. As an "ancient writer" he demands respect. And laying out of view altogether the idea of his inspiration, and his "religious" character, he has a claim as a poet, an orator, a writer of eminent beauty and unrivaled sublimity to the attention of those who are seeking eminence in literature.

No reason can be given why in a course of mental training, Isaiah, and the language in which he wrote, should be neglected, while Hesiod and Homer, with the language in which they wrote, should be the objects of admiration and of diligent culture. In no book, perhaps, can the mere man of taste be more gratified than in the study of Isaiah; by no writings would the mind be more elevated in view of the beautiful and the sublime, or the heart be more refined by the contemplation of the pure. Few - very few of the Greek and Latin Classical writers - can be put into the hands of the young without endangering the purity of their morals; but Isaiah may be studied in all the periods of youth, and manhood, and old age, only to increase the virtue of the heart and the purity of the imagination, at the same time that he enriches and expands the understanding. And while no one who has just views of the inestimable value of the Greek and Latin Classics in most of the respects contemplated in education would wish to see them banished from the schools, or displaced from seminaries of learning, yet the lover of ancient writings, of purity of thought and diction, of sweet and captivating poetry, of the beautiful and sublime in writing, of perhaps the oldest language of the world, and of the pure sentiments of revelation, may hope that the time will come when the Hebrew language shall be deemed worthy of culture in American schools and colleges as well as the Latin and Greek; and that as a part of the training of American youth, Isaiah may be allowed to take a place "at least" as honorable as Virgil or Homer - as Cicero or Demosthenes.

It is indeed a melancholy reflection which we are compelled to make on the seminaries of learning in our land - a Christian land - that the writings of the Hebrew prophets and poets have been compelled to give place to the poetry and the mythology of the Greeks; and that the books containing the

only system of pure religion are required to defer to those which were written under the auspices of idolatry, and which often express sentiments, and inculcate feelings, which cannot be made to contribute to the purity of the heart, or be reconciled with the truth as revealed from heaven. As specimens of taste; as models of richness of thought and beauty of diction; as well as for their being the vehicles in which the knowledge of the only true religion is conveyed to man, these writings have a claim on the attention of the young. If the writings of Isaiah were mere human compositions; if they had come down to us as the writings of Demosthenes and Homer have done; and if they had not been connected with "religion," we might be permitted to express the belief that the Jewish "Classics," along with the Classics of Greece and Rome, would have been allowed an honorable place in all the seminaries of learning, and in all the public and private libraries of the land.

Section 3. The Times of Isaiah

As we have seen, Isaiah lived for the greater part of a century, and possibly even more than a century. It is probable also that for a period of more than 70 years he exercised the prophetic function. During that long period, important changes must have occurred; and a knowledge of some of the leading events of his time is necessary to understand his prophecies. Indeed, a simple knowledge of historical facts will often make portions of his prophecies clear which would otherwise be entirely unintelligible.

The kingdom of Israel, which during the reigns of David and Solomon had been so mighty and so magnificent, was divided into two separate kingdoms 990 years before Christ, or 240 years before Isaiah entered into his prophetic office. The glory of these kingdoms had departed; and they had been greatly weakened by contentions with each other and by conflicts with surrounding nations. In a particular manner, the kingdom of Israel (Samaria, Ephraim, the ten tribes, as it was indiscriminately called) had been governed by a succession of wicked princes, had become deeply imbued with idolatry, and had so far provoked God as to make it necessary to remove them to a foreign land. It was during the time in which Isaiah discharged the duties of the prophetic function that that kingdom was utterly overturned and the inhabitants were transplanted to a distant country. In the year 736 b.c., or not far from 20 years after Isaiah entered into his work, Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria killed Rezin, king of Damascus, the ally of Pekah, the king of Samaria. Tiglath-Pileser entered the land of Israel

and took many cities and captives, chiefly in Gilead and Galilee, and he carried many of the inhabitants to Assyria; 2 Kings 16:5-9; Amos 1:5; 2 Kings 15:29; 1 Chronicles 5:26.

This was the first captivity of the kingdom of Israel. Shalmaneser succeeded Tiglath-Pileser as king of Assyria in 724 b.c. In the year 721 b.c. Shalmaneser besieged Samaria, and, after a siege of three years, he took it. He carriedthe inhabitants which Tiglath-Pileser had not removed beyond the Euphrates he and placed them in cities there Hosea 13:16; 1 Chronicles 5:26. This was the end of the kingdom of Israel, after it had subsisted for 254 years. Isaiah exercised the prophetic function during about 30 of the last years of the kingdom of Israel. But his residence was principally at Jerusalem; and not many of his predictions have reference to the kingdom of Israel. Most of his prophecies which have reference to the Jews relate to the kingdom of Judah and to Jerusalem.

The kingdom of Judah, whose capital was Jerusalem, had greatly declined from the splendor and magnificence which had existed under David and Solomon. It had been greatly weakened by the revolt of the ten tribes, and by the wars in which it had been engaged with the kingdom of Samaria, as well as with surrounding nations. Though its kings were superior in virtue and piety to the kings of Israel, yet many of them had been unworthy to be the descendants of David and their conduct had exposed them greatly to divine displeasure.

When Isaiah entered into his prophetic office, the throne was occupied by Uzziah; or as he is elsewhere called, Azariah. He succeeded his father Amaziah, and was 16 years old when he came to the throne, and he reigned for 52 years. Uzziah began his reign in the year 809 b.c., and, of course, his reign extended to the year 757 b.c. His general character was that of integrity and piety. He was a worshipper of the true God, yet he did not remove the groves and high places which had been established in the land for idolatrous worship. He greatly strengthened Jerusalem, was successful in his wars with the Philistines, with the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and extended his kingdom somewhat into surrounding regions. Near the close of his life he was guilty of one act of rashness and folly in claiming as a monarch the right of going into the temple of the Lord, and of burning

incense upon the altar. For this sin he became a leper and remained so until his death; 2 Chronicles 26:21. During this period, the affairs of the government were administered by his son, Jotham; 2 Chronicles 26:21. During the reign of Uzziah it is probable that Isaiah exercised the prophetic function for only a short time, perhaps for a single year. None of Isaiah‘s prophecies can be proved with certainty to relate to Uzziah‘s reign except what is contained in Isaiah 6:1-13. It is more natural, however, to suppose that those in the previous five chapters were delivered durring the reign of Uzziah.

Uzziah (Azariah) was succeeded by his son, Jotham. He ascended the throne at the age of 25, and reigned for 16 years in Jerusalem. The general character of Jotham was like that of his father. He was upright; and he was not guilty of idolatry. Yet, the high places were not removed, the groves still remained, and the state of the people was corrupt 2 Kings 15:32-36; 2 Chronicles 27:1-9. Jotham carried forward the plan which his father had commenced of fortifying the city 2 Chronicles 26:3 and of enlarging and beautifying his kingdom. In a particular manner, Jotham is said to have built a high gate to the house of the Lord, and to have fortified Ophel; 2 Chronicles 26:3. Ophel was a mountain or “bluff,” which was situated between Mount Zion and Mount Moriah. From the base of this bluff flowed the waters of Siloam. This hill was capable of being strongly fortified and of contributing much to the defense of the city, and, accordingly, it became one of the strongest places in Jerusalem. Jotham also built cities, and castles, and towns in the mountains and forests of Judea 2 Chronicles 26:4, and it is evident that his great aim was to beautify and strengthen his kingdom. The principal wars in which he was engaged were with the Ammonites, whom he subdued and laid under tribute 2 Chronicles 26:5.

It was during the reign of Jotham that very important events occurred in the vast empire of the East. The ancient empire of the Assyrians which had governed Asia for more than 1,300 years was dissolved upon the death of Sardanapalus in the year 747 b.c. Sardanapalus was distinguished for sloth and luxury. He sunk into the lowest depths of depravity, clothed himself as a woman, spun amidst the companies of his concubines, painted his face and decked himself as a harlot. So debased was he that his reign became intolerable. He became odious to his subjects and particularly to Arbaces

the Mede, and to Belesis the Babylonian. Belesis was a captain, a priest, and an astrologer.

So, by the rules of his art, he took it upon himself to assure Arbaces that he should dethrone Sardanapalus, and become lord of all his dominions. Arbaces listened to him, and promised him the chief place over Babylon if his prediction proved to come true. Arbaces and Belesis promoted a revolt, and the defection spread among the Medes, Babylonians, Persians, and Arabians, who had been subject to the Assyrian empire. They mustered an army of not less than 400,000 men, but were at first defeated by Sardanapalus, and driven to the mountains; but they again rallied and were again defeated with great slaughter, and put to flight toward the hills. Belesis, however, persisted in the opinion that the gods would give them the victory, and a third battle was fought, in which they were again defeated. Belesis again encouraged his followers; and it was determined to try to secure the aid of the Bactrians.

Sardanapalus, supposing victory was secure, and that there could be no more danger, had returned to his pleasures, and given himself and his army up to riot and dissipation. Belesis and Arbaces, with the aid of the Bactrians, fell upon the army, sunk in inglorious ease and vanquished it entirely. Somehow they drew Sardanapalus outside the walls of his capital. Here, closely besieged, he sent away his three sons and two daughters into Paphlagonia. In Nineveh Sardanapalus determined to defend himself, trusting to an ancient prophecy, “that Nineveh could never be taken until the river became her enemy;” and as he deemed this impossible, he regarded himself as secure. He maintained his position, and resisted the attacks of his enemies for two years, until the river, swelled by great rains, rose and overflowed a considerable part of it. Regarding his affairs as now desperate, he caused a vast pile of wood to be raised in a court of his palace, in which he placed his gold and silver and royal apparel, and within which he enclosed his eunuchs and concubines, and retired within his palace, and caused the pile to be set on fire, and was consumed himself with the rest; Universal History, the Ancient Part, vol. iii. pp. 354-358. London edition, 1779.

From this kingdom, thus destroyed, arose the two kingdoms of Assyria, as mentioned in the Scriptures, and of Babylonia. Arbaces, who, according to Prideaux, is the same as Tiglath-Pileser (compare however, Universal History, vol. v. 359), obtained a large part of the empire. Belesis had Babylon, Chaldea, and Arabia. Belesis, according to Prideaux (Connection, book i. p. 114), was the same as Nabonassar, or Baladan (see the note at Isaiah 39:1); and was the king from whom was reckoned the famous era of Nabonassar, commencing in the 747th year before the Christian era. It is not improbable that there was some degree of dependence of the Babylonian portion of the empire upon the Assyrian empire; or that the king of Babylon was regarded as a viceroy to the king of Assyria, since we know that among the colonists sent by Shalmaneser to populate Samaria after the ten tribes were carried away were some from Babylon, which is there mentioned in such a manner as to leave the impression that it was a province of Assyria 2 Kings 17:24. The kingdom of Babylon, however, ultimately acquired the ascendency, and the Assyrian kingdom was merged into the Chaldean monarchy. This occurred about 100 years after the reign of Nabonassar, or Baladan, and was effected by an alliance formed between Nabopolassar and Cyaxares the Median; see Robinson, Calmet, "Babylonia"; compare the note at Isaiah 39:1. It should be observed, however, that the history of the Assyrian empire is one of the most obscure portions of ancient history; see the article "Assyria" in Robinson, Calmet.

There is no decided evidence that Isaiah delivered any prophecies during the reign of Jotham. Most commentators have supposed that the prophecies in 2 Kings 16:2; 2 Chronicles 28:5. The character of Ahaz was the reverse of that of his father; and, excepting Manasseh, his grandson, there was probably not a more impious prince who ever sat on the throne of Judah, nor was there a reign that was on the whole more disastrous than his. A statement of his evil deeds and a brief record of the calamitous events of his reign is given in 2 Chronicles 28:15. It was at this juncture, and when Ahaz trembled with alarm at the prospect of the invasion of the kings of Syria and Samaria, that he resolved to call in the aid of the Assyrians, and thus to repel the apprehended invasion.

Though he had been able to defeat the united armies of Syria and Samaria once 2 Kings 16:5, yet those armies returned once more, and Ahaz

in alarm determined to seek the aid of Assyria. For this purpose he sent messengers, with terms of most humble submission and entreaty, and with the most costly presents that his kingdom could furnish, to secure the alliance and aid of Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria 2 Kings 16:7-8. It was at this time, when Ahaz was so much alarmed, that Isaiah met him at the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller‘s field Isaiah 7:3-4, and assured him that he had no occasion to fear the united armies of Syria and Samaria; that Jerusalem was safe, and that God would be its protector. He assured him that the kingdoms of Syria and Samaria would not be enlarged by the accession and conquest of the kingdom of Judah Isaiah 7:7-9. So, Isaiah advised Ahaz to ask for a sign (demonstration) from Yahweh that this would be fulfilled Isaiah 7:10-11.

Ahaz indignantly, though with the appearance of religious scruple, said that he would not ask for a sign Isaiah 7:12. The secret reason, however, why he was not solicitous to procure a sign from Yahweh was that he had formed an alliance with the king of Assyria and scorned the idea of recognizing his dependence upon Yahweh. Isaiah, therefore, proceeded Isaiah 7:13. to assure him that Yahweh would himself give a sign anyway and would furnish a demonstration to him that the land would be soon forsaken of both the kings which Ahaz dreaded. See the notes at Isaiah 7:17 ff and Isaiah 7:16).

At about the same time, the kingdom of Judah was threatened with an invasion from the Edomites and Philistines 2 Chronicles 28:17-18. In this emergency, Ahaz had recourse to his old ally the king of Assyria 2 Chronicles 28:20-21. To secure his friendship, Ahaz made him a costly present obtained from the temple, from his own house, and from the princes 2 Chronicles 28:21. The king of Assyria professedly accepted the offer, marched against Rezin the king of Syria, took Damascus, and killed Rezin, agreeably to the prediction of Isaiah Isaiah 7:16. While Tiglath-Pileser was at Damascus, Ahaz visited him, and being much charmed with an altar which he saw there, he sent a model of it to Urijah the priest to have one constructed like it in Jerusalem 2 Kings 16:10. This was done. Ahaz returned from Damascus, offered sacrifice upon the new altar which he had had constructed, and gave himself up to every kind of idolatry and abomination 2 Kings 16:12. Ahaz offered sacrifice to the gods of Damascus

on the pretence that they had defended Syria and that it might be rendered propitious to defend his own kingdom 2 Chronicles 28:23. Then Ahaz broke up the vessels of the temple, shut up the doors, and erected altars to the pagan deities in every part of Jerusalem 2 Chronicles 28:24-25. Thus, Ahaz finished his inglorious reign in the 36th year of his age, and he was buried in the city of Jerusalem, but not in the sepulchres of the kings, on account of his gross abominations 2 Chronicles 28:27.

The prediction of Isaiah Isaiah 8:8) was not accomplished during the time of Ahaz, but was literally fulfilled in the calamities which occurred by the invasion of Sennacherib in the time of Hezekiah (see the notes at 2 Chronicles 29:1. Hezekiah‘s character was the reverse of that of his father. One of the first acts of his reign was to remove the evils introduced during the reign of Ahaz, and to restore again the pure worship of God. Hezekiah began the work of reform by destroying the high places, cutting down the groves, and overturning the altars of idolatry. He destroyed the brass serpent which Moses had made, and which had become an object of idolatrous worship. He ordered the doors of the temple to be rebuilt, and the temple itself was thoroughly cleansed and repaired 2 Kings 18:1-6; 2 Chronicles 28:18. Successful in his efforts to reform the religion of his country and in his wars with the Philistines 2 Kings 18:8, he resolved to cast off the inglorious yoke of servitude to the king of Assyria 2 Kings 18:7. Therefore, Hezekiah refused to pay the tribute which had been promised to the Assyrian monarch which had been paid by his father, Ahaz.

As might have expected, this resolution excited the indignation of the king of Assyria, and led to the resolution to compel submission. Sennacherib, therefore, invaded the land with a great army; spread desolation through no small part of it; and was rapidly advancing toward Jerusalem. Hezekiah saw his error, and, alarmed, he sought to avoid the threatened blow. So, he put the city in the best possible posture of defense. He fortified it, enclosed it with a second wall, erected towers, repaired the Millo fortification in the City of David, stopped up all the fountains, and made darts and shields so that the city might be defended 2 Chronicles 32:1-8. He tried to prepare himself as well as possible to meet the mighty foe; and he did all that he could to inspire confidence in the true God among the people (see the notes at Isaiah 22:9-11).

Yet, as if not quite confident that Hezekiah could be able to hold out during a siege, and to resist an army so mighty as that of Sennacherib, he sent ambassadors to him, acknowledged his error, and sued for peace. Sennacherib proposed that Hezekiah should send him 300 talents of silver, and 30 talents of gold, and gave the implied assurance that if this were done his army should be withdrawn 2 Kings 18:13-14. Hezekiah readily agreed to send what was demanded. And to accomplish this, Hezekiah emptied the treasury, and stripped the temple of its ornaments 2 Kings 18:15-16. Sennacherib then went on down to Egypt (see the notes at Isaiah 36:2. To this embassy no answer was returned by the messengers of Hezekiah Isaiah 36:21-22; and the messengers of Sennacherib returned to him at Libnah (see the note at Isaiah 37:8). At this period, Sennacherib was alarmed by the rumor that Tirhakah, whom he had so much reason to dread, was advancing against Sennacherib Isaiah 37:9, and again Sennacherib sent messengers to Hezekiah to induce Hezekiah to surrender, intending evidently to anticipate the news that Tirhakah was coming, and to secure the conquest of Jerusalem without being compelled to settle down before it in a long siege. This message, like the former, was unsuccessful. Hezekiah spread the case before Yahweh Isaiah 37:15-20, and Hezekiah received the answer that Jerusalem was safe. Sennacherib advanced to attack the city, but, in a single night 185,000 of his men were destroyed by an angel of the Lord, and he himself fled to his capital, where he was slain by his two sons Isaiah 37:36-38.

These events were among the most important in Jewish history. Isaiah lived during their occurrence; and a large portion of his prophecies from Isaiah 38:1. Hezekiah prayed to God for the preservation of his life, and an assurance was given to him that he would live 15 years longer Isaiah 38:5. In attestation of this, and as a demonstration of it, the shadow on the sun-dial of Ahaz was made to recede ten degrees (see the notes at Isaiah 38:8).

Hezekiah, after his signal success over his foe, and the entire deliverance of his kingdom from the long dreaded invasion, and his recovery from the dangerous illness, became eminently prosperous and successful. He was caressed and flattered by foreign princes, presents of great value were given to him, and he surrounded himself with the usual

splendor and magnificence of an oriental monarch 2 Chronicles 32:23, 2 Chronicles 32:27-28. As a consequence of this, his heart was lifted up with pride; he gloried in his wealth and magnificence, and even became proud of the divine interposition in his favor. To show what was in his heart, and to humble him, he was left to display his treasures in an ostentatious manner to the ambassadors of Merodach-Baladan, king of Babylon 2 Chronicles 32:25, 2 Chronicles 32:31, and, for this act, received the assurance that all his treasures and his family would be carried in inglorious bondage to the land from whence the ambassadors came (2 Kings 20:12-18; see the notes at Isaiah 39:1-8). The rest of the life of Hezekiah was in peace Isaiah 39:8. He died at the age of 54, and was buried in the most honored of the tombs of the kings of Judah 2 Chronicles 32:33, and was deeply lamented by a weeping people at his death.

The reign of Hezekiah stretched through a considerable portion of the prophetic ministry of Isaiah. A large part of his prophecies are, therefore, presumed to have been uttered during this reign. It is probable that to this period we are to attribute the entire series from 2 Chronicles 32:11 - another proof that Babylon was at this time a dependent province of the Assyrian monarchy. In Babylon, Manasseh repented of his sins and humbled himself, and he was again returned to his land and his throne. After his restoration, he removed the worship of idols, and re-established the worship of Yahweh. He built a wall on the west side of Gihon, and extended it around to Mount Ophel, and put Jerusalem in a posture of defense. He broke down and removed the altars which he himself had erected in Jerusalem and in the temple; and he removed all traces of idolatrous worship except the high places, which he still allowed to remain. There is evidence of his reformation, and the latter part of his reign appears to have passed in comparative happiness and virtue.

It was only during the early part of his reign that Isaiah lived, and there is in his prophecies no express mention made of Manasseh. If Isaiah lived during any part of it, it is evident that he withdrew entirely, or nearly so, from the public exercise of his prophetic functions, and retired to a comparatively private life. There is evidently between the close of Isaiah 39:1-8 of his prophecy, and the period when the latter part of his prophecies commences Isaiah 40 an interval of considerable duration. It is not a

violation of probability that Isaiah after the death of Hezekiah, being an old man, withdrew much from public life, that he saw and felt that there was little hope of producing reform during the impious career of Manasseh, and that, in the distress and anguish of his soul, he gave himself up to the contemplation of the happier times which would yet occur under the reign of the Messiah. It was during this period, I suppose, that Isaiah composed the latter part of his prophecies, from Isaiah 40 to Isaiah 66.

The nation was full of wickedness. An impious prince was on the throne. Piety was banished, and the friends of Yahweh were bleeding in Jerusalem. The nation was given up to idolatry. The kingdom was approaching the period of its predicted fall and ruin. Isaiah saw the tendency of events; he saw how hopeless the attempt at reform would be. He saw that the captivity of Babylon was hastening on, and that the nation was preparing for that gloomy event. In this dark and disastrous period, he seems to have withdrawn himself from the contemplation of the joyless present, and to have given his mind to the contemplation of happier future scenes. An interval perhaps of some 10 or 15 years may be supposed to have elapsed between his last public labors in the time of Hezekiah, and the prophecies which compose the remainder of the book.

During this interval, Isaiah may have withdrawn from public view, and fixed his mind upon the great events of future times. In his visions he sees the nation about to go into captivity. Yet he sees also that there would be a return from bondage, and he comforts the hearts of the pious with the assurance of such a return. He announces the name of the monarch by whom that deliverance would be accomplished, and gives assurance that the captive Jews would return to their own land again. But Isaiah is not satisfied with the announcement of this comparatively unimportant deliverance. With that he connects a far greater and more important deliverance, that from sin, under the Messiah. Isaiah fixes his eye, therefore, on the future glories of the kingdom of God, sees the long promised Messiah, describes his person, his work, his doctrine, and states in glowing language the effects of his coming on the happiness and destiny of mankind. As Isaiah advances in his prophetic descriptions, the deliverance from Babylon seems to die away and is forgotten or it is lost in the contemplation of the event to which it had a resemblance - the coming of

the Messiah - as the morning star is lost in the superior glory of the rising sun.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The period of the world in which Isaiah lived was in some respects a forming period. It was during his life that the kingdom of assyria, which had so long swayed a scepter of entire dominion over the East, began to wane, and that its power was broken. The kingdom of babylon, which ultimately became so vast and mighty, and which destroyed Assyria itself was established during his life on a basis that secured its future independence and grandeur. The kingdom of Macedon, whose rise was followed by so great events under the emperor Alexander, was founded about the time when Isaiah began his prophetic life (814 b.c.), by Caranus. carthage had been founded about half a century before (869 b.c.); and rome was founded during his life, 753 b.c. syracuse was built by Archias of Corinth, during his life, 769 b.c. It is of some importance in recollecting the events of ancient history to group them together, and some advantage may be derived to the student from connecting these events with the name and life of Isaiah.

The following tables, copied mainly from Jahn‘s Biblical Archaeology, will give a correct view of the principal chronological events in the time of Isaiah, and may be of use in the correct understanding of his prophecies:

d **Table I - The Kingdoms**

d

d **b.c.JudahIsraelAssyriaMediaBabylonOthers**

d

d 825AmaziahJeroboam II.
41 years.Arbaces, 29 years.

d

d 814Jonah, the prophet.Macedonia

d

d 811Uzziah, 52 years.Amos, the prophet.

d

d 797Interreg-num, 79 years.

d

d 784Hosea, the prophet.
Interreg-num, 12 years.

d

d 773Zechariah, 6 months.
Shallum, 1 month.Phul, 21 years.

d

d 772Menachem, 10 years.

d

d 761Isaiah, the prophet.Pekahiah, 2 years.

d

d 759Jotham, 16 years.

Micah, the prophet.Pekah, 20 years.

d

d 753Tiglath-Pileser, 19 years.Rome

d

d 747Nabonassar 14, or Merodach-Baladan.

d

d 743Ahaz, 16 years

d

d 740Conquers Damascus, Galilee & Gilead.

d

d 739Interreg-num, 9 years

d

d 734Shalmaneser, 14 years.Nadius, 2, years.

d

d 730Hosea, 9 years.Porus, 5 years.

d

d 728Hezekiah, 29 years.Jugaeus, 5 years.

d

d 722Overthrow of Israel

d

d

d **Table II - The Kingdom**

d

d **b.c.JudahAssyriaMediaBabylon**

d

d 721

d Hezekiah

d

d 720

d Sennacherib, 7 years.

d

d 718

d Dejocces, 53 years.

d

d 714

d Senn. In Judea.

d

d 713

d Essar-haddon, 35 years.

d

d 709

d Arkianus, 5 years.

d

d 704

d Interreg. 2 years.

d

d 702

d Belibus, 3 years.

d

d 699

d Manasseh, 55 yearsApronadius, 6 years.

d

d 693

d Rigebelus, 1 year.

d

d 692

d Messomordacus, 4 years.

d

d

Analysis of the Chapter

This chapter contains:

I. the inscription or title to the whole Book of Isaiah Isaiah 1:1; and,

II. an entire prophecy respecting the land of Judah. In regard to the title see the notes at Isaiah 1:1.

The remainder of the chapter Isaiah 6:1 that the vision of Yahweh, which Isaiah had in the temple, occurred during the last year of the reign of Uzziah. The only indication which we can have of the time when this prophecy was uttered, is to be derived from its location, and from the accordance of its contents with the state of things in Judea. It is evident that the anchor of the arrangement, whoever he was, regarded it as properly placed in the order of time before the account of the vision of Yahweh, that is, as having been uttered before the death of Uzziah. Nor are the contents of such a nature as to render it improbable that the collector has followed the natural order in which the prophecies were delivered.

On some accounts, indeed, it might better be regarded as spoken during the reign of Ahaz; but at any time of the Jewish history in which Isaiah lived, it is not an inappropriate description of the character of the Jewish people. There is one internal indication indeed that it was not delivered in the time of Ahaz. Ahaz bad filled the land with the groves and altars of idolatry. See the Introduction, 3. But this prophecy does not allude to idolatry, as the leading and characteristic sin. It is a description of a people who still kept up the form of the worship of Yahweh; of a people deeply depraved indeed, and suffering under the tokens of the divine displeasure, but who were professedly the worshippers of the true God. It is descriptive of a time when the nation was distinguished for hypocrisy rather than idolatry. It naturally falls, therefore, into the time of Uzziah, or Jotham - as it cannot be supposed that it delivered during the reign of Hezekiah, it would be so far misplaced as to constitute the introductory chapter to the whole series of prophecies.

In regard to the time when it was uttered, and the time to which it refers, there have been very different opinions. Abarbanel, Grotius, and Rosenmuller, suppose that it refers to the times of Uzziah; De Wette supposes that it relates to the reign of Jotham; Piscator, Hensler, Arnold, regard it as relating to the reign of Ahaz.; and Jarchi, Vitringa, and

Eichhorn, refer it to the times of Hezekiah. In such a variety of opinion it is impossible to fix the time with any certainty. Nor is it very material. It was not an inappropriate description of the general character of the Jewish people; and there can be no doubt that there were times during the long prophetic life of Isaiah, when it would be found to accord fully with the condition of the nation. Unhappily, also, there are times in the church now, when it is fully descriptive of the character of the professed people of God, and it contains truths, and fearful denunciations, not less appropriate to them, than they were to the people who lived in the time of Isaiah.

The prophecy is highly objurgatory and severe in its character. It is made up of reproof, and of assurances that the evils which they were suffer. tug were for their hypocrisy, and other sins. It commences with a solemn and very sublime address to heaven and earth to witness the dccp depravity, and the pcrvading corruption of the land of Judah. It was such as was adapted to attract the attention, and to amaze all beings in heaven and on earth, Isaiah 1:2-4. The prophet then proceeds to state that the existing calamities of the nation had been inflicted on account of their sins, and that for those sins the land was laid waste, Isaiah 1:5-9. Yet they kept up the appearance of religion. They were constant and regular, externally, in offering sacrifices. But their character was deeply hypocritical. The services of God were so false and hollow, that he spurned and despised them. They were a weariness to him, and a burden, Isaiah 1:10-15. The prophet then calls on the sinful nation to turn from their sins, and to seek God, with the assurance that he was willing to re-admit them to his favor; to pardon all their crimes, and to receive them as his own children, Isaiah 1:16-20. If they did not do it, he assures them that heavier judgments would come upon them than they had yet experienced, Isaiah 1:21-25; and that God would so deal with them as to effect a change in the nation, and to restore the happier and purer state of things existing in former days. The wicked would be punished, and Zion would be redeemed, Isaiah 1:26-31.

Verse 1

The vision - The first verse evidently is a title, but whether to the whole book or only to a part of it has been questioned. As it stands here, however, it seems clearly intended to include the entire book, because it embraces all that was seen during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah; that

is, during the whole prophetic life of the prophet. The same title is also given to his prophecies in 2 Chronicles 32:32: ‹Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold they are written in the vision of Isaiah.‘ Vitringa supposes that the former part of this title, ‹the vision of Isaiah,‘ was at first affixed to the single prophecy contained in the first chapter, and that the latter part was inserted afterward as an introduction to the whole book. This might have been done by Isaiah himself if he collected his prophecies into a volume, or by some other inspired man who collected and arranged them; see the Introduction to Numbers 12:6; Numbers 24:4; 1 Samuel 3:1; Psalm 89:19; Daniel 2:19; Daniel 7:2; Daniel 8:1; Nahum 1:1; Genesis 15:1; Isaiah 21:2; Isaiah 22:1. Hence, the prophets were anciently called "Seers," as those who saw or witnessed events which were yet to come; compare 1 Samuel 9:9: ‹He that is now called a prophet was beforetime called a "Seer;"‘ 1 Samuel 9:11, 1 Samuel 9:18-19; 1 Chronicles 9:22; 1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Kings 18:13. In these visions the objects probably were made to pass before the mind of the prophet as a picture, in which the various events were delineated with more or less distinctness, and the prophecies were spoken, or recorded, as the visions appeared to the observer. As many events could be represented only by symbols, those symbols became a matter of record, and are often left without explanation. On the nature of the prophetic visions, see Introduction, Section 7. (4.)

Of Isaiah - The name Isaiah ישׁעיהו *yeshaʿyâhû* from ישׁע *yeshaʿ* - salvation, help, deliverance - and יהוה *yehovâh* or Jehovah, means ‹salvation of Yahweh,‘ or ‹Yahweh will save.‘ The Vulgate renders it "Isaias"; the Septuagint has: Ησαΐας *Eesaias* "Esaias." This is also retained in the New Testament; Matthew 3:3; Matthew 4:14; Matthew 12:17; Matthew 15:7; Mark 7:6; Luke 4:17; John 12:39; Acts 8:28; Romans 9:27, etc. In the book of Isaiah itself we find the form ישׁעיהו *yeshaʿyâhû* but in the inscription the rabbis give the form ישׁעיה *yeshaʿyâh* It was common among the Hebrews to incorporate the name Yahweh, or a part of it, into their proper names; see the note at Isaiah 7:14. Probably the object of this was to express veneration or regard for him - as we now give the name of a parent or friend to a child; or in many cases the name may have been given to record some signal act of mercy on the part of God, or some special interposition of his goodness. The practice of incorporating the name of the God that was worshipped into proper names was common in the East. Thus the name "Bel," the principal idol worshipped in Babylon, appears in the proper names of the kings, as

Belshazzar, etc.; compare the note at Isaiah 46:1. It is not known that the name was given to Isaiah with any reference to the nature of the prophecies which he would deliver; but it is a remarkable circumstance that it coincides so entirely with the design of so large a portion of his predictions. The substance of the latter portion of the book, at least, is the salvation which Yahweh would effect for his people from their oppressers in Babylon, and the far mightier deliverance which the world would experience under the Messiah.

The son of Amoz - See the Introduction, Section 2. "Concerning Judah." The Jews after the death of Solomon were divided into two kingdoms; the kingdom of Judah, and of Israel, or Ephraim. The kingdom of Judah included the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Benjamin was a small tribe, and it was not commonly mentioned, or the name was lost in that of Judah. The kingdom of Israel, or Ephraim, included the remaining ten tribes. Few of the prophets appeared among them; and the personal ministry of Isaiah does not appear to have been at all extended to them.

Jerusalem - The capital of the kingdom of Judah. It was on the dividing line between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. It is supposed to have been founded by Melchizedek, who is called king of Salem Genesis 14:18, and who is supposed to have given this name "Salem" to it. This was about 2000 years before Christ. About a century after its foundation as a city, it was captured by the "Jebusites," who extended its walls and built a citadel on Mount Zion. By them it was called Jebus. In the conquest of Canaan, Joshua put to death its king Joshua 10:23, and obtained possession of the town, which was jointly occupied by the Hebrews and Jebusites until the latter were expelled by David, who made it the capital of his kingdom under the name of "Jebus-Salem," or, for the sake of easier pronunciation by changing the Hebrew letter ב (*b*) into the Hebrew letter ר (*r*), "Jerusalem." After the revolt of the ten tribes, it of course became the capital of the kingdom of Judah. It was built on hills, or rocks, and was capable of being strongly fortified, and was well adapted to be the capital of the nation. For a more full description of Jerusalem, see the notes at Matthew 2:1. The vision which is here spoken of as having been seen respecting Judah and Jerusalem, pertains only to this chapter; see Isaiah 2:1.

In the days of Uzziah - In the time, or during the reign of Uzziah; 2 Chronicles 26:5-15. He had under him an army of more than three hundred thousand men. But he became proud - attempted an act of sacrilege - was

smitten of God, and died a leper. But though the kingdom under Uzziah was flourishing, yet it had in it the elements of decay. During the previous reign of Joash, it had been invaded and weakened by the Assyrians, and a large amount of wealth had been taken to Damascus, the capital of Syria; 2 Chronicles 24:23-24. It is not improbable that those ravages were repeated during the latter part of the reign of Uzziah; compare Isaiah 1:7.

Jotham - He began to reign at the age of twenty-five years, and reigned sixteen years; 2 Chronicles 27:1-2.

Ahaz - He began to reign at the age of twenty, and reigned sixteen years. He was a wicked man, and during his reign the kingdom was involved in crimes and calamities; 2 Chronicles 28.

Hezekiah - He was a virtuous and upright prince. He began his reign at the age of twenty-five years, and reigned twenty-nine; 2 Chronicles 29; see the Introduction Section 3,

Verse 2

Hear, O heavens - This is properly the beginning of the prophecy. It is a sublime commencement; and is of a highly poetic character. The heavens and the earth are summoned to bear witness to the apostasy, ingratitude, and deep depravity of the chosen people of God. The address is expressive of deep feeling - the bursting forth of a heart filled with amazement at a wonderful and unusual event. The same sublime beginning is found in the song of Moses, Deuteronomy 32:1:

Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak;

And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

Compare Psalm 4:3-4. Thus also the prophets often invoke the hills and mountains to hear them; Ezekiel 6:3: ‹Ye mountains of Israel, hear the words of the Lord God: Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains, and to the hills, and to the rivers, and to the valleys;‘ compare Ezekiel 36:1. ‹Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord,‘ Jeremiah 2:12. By the heavens therefore, in this place, we are not to understand the inhabitants of heaven, that is, the angels, anymore than by the hills we are to understand the inhabitants of the mountains. It is high poetic language, denoting the importance of the subject, and the remarkable and amazing truth to which the attention was to be called.

Give ear, O earth - It was common thus to address the earth on any remarkable occasion, especially anyone implying warm expostulation,

Jeremiah 5:19; Jeremiah 22:29; Micah 1:2; Micah 6:2; Isaiah 34:1; Isaiah 49:13.

For - Since it is Yahweh that speaks, all the universe is summoned to attend; compare Psalm 33:8-9: ‹Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the World stand in awe of him. For he spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast.‘

The Lord - - יהוה *yehovâh* or Jehovah. The small capitals used here and elsewhere throughout the Bible in printing the word Lord, denote that the original word is Yahweh. It is derived from the verb היה *hâyâh* "to be;" and is used to denote "being," or the fountain of being, and can be applied only to the true God; compare Exodus 3:14: ‹And God said unto Moses, I Am That I Am, אהיה אשר אהיה *'eheyeh 'ăsher 'eheyeh* Exodus 6:3; Numbers 11:21; Isaiah 47:8. It is a name which is never given to idols, or conferred on a creature; and though it occurs often in the Hebrew Scriptures, as is indicated by the small capitals, yet our translators have retained it but four times; Exodus 6:3; Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 12:2; Isaiah 26:4. In combination, however, with other names, it occurs often. Thus in Isaiah, meaning the salvation of Yahweh; "Jeremiah," the exaltation or grandeur of Yahweh, etc.; compare Genesis 22:14: ‹Abraham called the name of the place "Jehovah-jireh,'" Exodus 17:15; Judges 6:24; Ezekiel 48:35. The Jews never pronounced this name, not even in reading their own Scriptures. So sacred did they deem it, that when it occurred in their books, instead of the word Yahweh, they substituted the word אדני *'ădonāy* "Lord." Our translators have shown respect to this feeling of the Jews in regard to the sacredness of the name; and hence, have rendered it by the name of Lord - a word which by no means conveys the sense of the word Yahweh. It would have been an advantage to our version if the word Yahweh had been retained wherever it occurs in the original.

I have nourished - Hebrew "I have made great;" גדלתי *gîdaletîy* In Piel, the word means "to make great, to cause to grow;" as e. g., the hair; Numbers 6:5, plants, Isaiah 44:14; then to educate or bring up children; Isaiah 49:21; 2 Kings 10:6

And brought up - רוממתי *romamethîy* from רום *rûm* "to lift up" or "exalt." In Piel it means to bring up, nourish, educate; Isaiah 23:4. These words, though applied often to the training up of children, yet are used here also to denote the elevation to which they had been raised. He had not merely trained them up, but he had trained them up to an elevated station; to

special honor and privileges. “Children.” Hebrew בנים *bânnîym* - sons.” They were the adopted children of God; and they are represented as being weak, and ignorant, and helpless as children, when he took them under his fatherly protection and care; Hosea 11:1: ‹When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt;‘ compare the note at Matthew 2:15; Isaiah 63:8-16.

They have rebelled - This complaint was often brought against the Jews; compare Isaiah 63:10; Jeremiah 2:6-8. This is the sum of the charge against them. God had shown them special favors. He recounted his mercy in bringing them out of Egypt; and on the ground of this, he demanded obedience and love; compare Exodus 20:1-3. And yet they bad forgotten him, and rebelled against him. The Targum of Jonathan, an ancient Chaldee version, has well expressed the idea here. ‹Hear, O heavens, which were moved when I gave my law to my people: give ear, O earth, which didst tremble before my word, for the Lord has spoken. My people, the house of Israel, whom I called sons - I loved them - I honored them, and they rebelled against me.‘ The same is true substantially of all sinners; and alas, how often may a similar expostulation be made with the professed people of God!

Verse 3

The ox … - The design of this comparison is to show the great stupidity and ingratitude of the Jews. Even the least sagacious and most stupid of the animals, destitute as they are of reason and conscience, evince knowledge anal submission far more than the professed people of God. The ox is a well known domestic animal, remarkable for patient willingness to toil, and for submission to his owner.

Knoweth his owner - Recognizes, or is submissive to him.

The ass - A well known animal, proverbial for dulness and stupidity.

His master‘s crib - אבוס *'êbûs* from אבס *'âbas* to heap up, and then to fatten. Hence, it is applied to the stall, barn, or crib, where cattle are fed, or made fat; Job 39:9; Proverbs 14:4. The donkey has sufficient knowledge to understand that his support is derived from that. The idea is, that the ox was more submissive to laws than the Jews; and that even the most stupid animal better knew from where support was to be derived, than they did the source of their comfort and protection. The donkey would not wander away, and the ox would not rebel as they had done. This comparison was very striking, and very humiliating, and nothing could be more suited to bring

down their pride. A similar comparison is used elsewhere. Thus, in Jeremiah 8:7, the Jews are contrasted with the stork: ‹Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle Dove, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.‘ This idea has been beautifully expressed by Watts:

The brutes obey their God,
And bow their necks to men;
But we more base, more brutish things,
Reject his easy reign.

Compare Hosea 11:4.

But Israel - The name Israel, though after the division of the tribes into two kingdoms specifically employed to denote that of the ten tribes, is often used in the more general sense to denote the whole people of the Jews, including the kingdom of Judah. It refers here to the kingdom of Judah, though a name is used which is not inappropriately characteristic of the whole people.

Doth not know - The Latin Vulgate, the Septuagint, and the Arabic, add the word ‹me.‘ The word know is used in the sense of recognizing him as their Lord; of acknowledging him, or submitting to him.

Doth not consider - Hebrew, Do not "understand." They have a stupidity greater than the brute.

Verse 4

Ah! sinful nation - The word rendered ‹ah!‘ - הוי *hôy* - is not a mere exclamation, expressing astonishment. It is rather an interjection denouncing threatening, or punishment. ‹Wo to the sinful nation.‘ Vulgate, ‹Vae genti peccatrici.‘ The corruption pertained to the nation, and not merely to a part. It had become general.

Laden with iniquity - The word translated "laden" - כבד *kebed* - denotes properly anything "heavy," or burdensome; from כבד *kâbad* "to be heavy." It means that they were oppressed, and borne down with the "weight" of their sins. Thus we say, Sin sits "heavy" on the conscience. Thus Cain said, ‹My punishment is greater than I can bear;‘ Genesis 4:13. The word is applied to an "employment" as being burdensome; Exodus 18:18: ‹This thing is too "heavy" for thee.‘ Numbers 11:14: ‹I am not able to bear eli this people alone; it is too "heavy" for me.‘ It is applied also to a "famine," as being heavy, severe, distressing. Genesis 12:10: ‹For the famine was "grievous" (כבד *kâbed* heavy) in the land;‘ Genesis 41:31. It is

also applied to "speech," as being heavy, dull, unintelligible. Exodus 4:10: ‹I am slow (heavy כבד *kebad*) of speech, and of a slow (heavy כבד *kebad*) tongue.' It is not applied to sin in the Scriptures, except in this place, or except in the sense of making atonement for it. The idea however, is very striking - that of a nation - an entire people, bowed and crushed under the enormous weight of accumulated crimes. To pardon iniquity, or to atone for it, is represented by bearing it, as if it were a heavy burden. Exodus 28:38, Exodus 28:43, ‹That Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things.' Leviticus 10:17: ‹God hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation.' Leviticus 22:9; Leviticus 16:22; Numbers 18:1; Isaiah 53:6: ‹Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.' Isaiah 53:11: ‹He shall bear their iniquities.' 1 Peter 2:24: ‹Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.'

A seed - זרע *zera*ʿ from זרע *zâra*ʿ to sow, to scatter, to disperse. It is applied to seed sown in a field; Judges 6:3; Genesis 1:11-12; Genesis 47:23; to plants set out, or engrafted; or to planting, or transplanting a nation. Isaiah 17:10: ‹And thou shalt set it (תזרענו *tizerâʿenû* shalt sow, or plant it) with strange slips.' Hence, it is applied to children, posterity, descendants, from the resemblance to seed sown, and to a harvest springing up, and spreading. The word is applied by way of eminence to the Jews, as being the seed or posterity of Abraham, according to the promise that his seed should be as the stars of heaven; Genesis 12:7; Genesis 13:15-16; Genesis 15:5, Genesis 15:18; Genesis 17:7, …

Children - Hebrew sons - the same word that is used in Isaiah 1:2. They were the adopted people or sons of God, but they had now become corrupt.

That are corrupters -

d mashchiytiym - משחיתים *mashechîythîym* from שחת *shachath* to destroy, to lay waste, as an invading army does a city or country; Joshua 22:33; Genesis 19:13. To destroy a vineyard; Jeremiah 12:10. To break down walls; Ezekiel 26:4. Applied to conduct, it means to destroy, or lay waste virtuous principles; to break down the barriers to vice; to corrupt the morals. Genesis 6:12: ‹And God looked upon the earth, and it was corrupt - נשחתה *nîshechâthâh* for all flesh had corrupted his way - השחית *hîshechîyth* - upon the earth;' Deuteronomy 4:16; Deuteronomy 31:29; Judges 2:19. They were not merely corrupt themselves, but they corrupted others by their example. This is always the case. When people become infidels and profligates themselves, they seek to make as many more as possible. The

Jews did this by their wicked lives. The same charge is often brought against them; see Judges 2:12; Zephaniah 3:7.

They have provoked - Hebrew נאצו *nî'ătsû* ‹They have despised the Holy One;‘ compare Proverbs 1:30; Proverbs 5:12; Proverbs 15:5. Vulgate, ‹They have blasphemed.‘ Septuagint, παρωργίσατε *parōrgisate* ‹You have provoked him to anger.‘ The meaning is, that they had so despised him, as to excite his indignation.

The Holy One of Israel - God; called the Holy One of Israel because he was revealed to them as their God, or they were taught to regard him as the sacred object of their worship.

They are gone away backward - Lowth: ‹They have turned their backs upon him.‘ The word rendered "they are gone away," נזרו *nâzorû* from זור *zûr* means properly, to become estranged; to be alienated. Job 19:13: ‹Mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me.‘ It means especially that declining from God, or that alienation, which takes place when people commit sin; Psalm 78:30.

Verse 5

Why … - The prophet now, by an abrupt change in the discourse, calls their attention to the effects of their sins. Instead of saving that they had been smitten, or of saying that they had been punished for their sins, he assumes both, and asks why it should be repeated. The Vulgate reads this: ‹Super quo - on what part - shall I smite you anymore?‘ This expresses well the sense of the Hebrew - על־מה *ʿal -meh* - upon what; and the meaning is, ‹what part of the body can be found on which blows have not been inflicted? On every part there are traces of the stripes which have been inflicted for your sins.‘ The idea is taken from a body that is all covered over with weals or marks of blows, and the idea is, that the whole frame is one continued bruise, and there remains no sound part to be stricken. The particular chastisement to which the prophet refers is specified in Isaiah 1:7-9. In Isaiah 1:5-6, he refers to the calamities of the nation, under the image of a person wounded and chastised for crimes. Such a figure of speech is not uncommon in the classic writers. Thus Cicero (de fin. iv. 14) says, ‹quae hie reipublicae vulnera imponebat hie sanabat.‘ See also Tusc. Quaes. iii. 22; Ad Quintum fratrem, ii. 25; Sallust; Cat. 10.

Should ye be stricken - Smitten, or punished. The manner in which they had been punished, he specities in Isaiah 1:7-8. Jerome says, that the sense is, ‹there is no medicine which I can administer to your wounds. All

your members are full of wounds; and there is no part of your body which has not been smitten before. The more you are afflicted, the more will your impiety and iniquity increase.‘ The word here, תכו *tukû* from נכה *nâkâh* means to smite, to beat, to strike down, to slay, or kill. It is applied to the infliction of punishment on an individual; or to the judgments of God by the plague, pestilence, or sickness. Genesis 19:2: ‹And they smote the men that were at the door with blindness.‘ Numbers 14:12: ‹And I will smite them with the pestilence.‘ Exodus 7:25: ‹After that the Lord had smitten the river,‘ that is, had changed it into blood; compare Isaiah 1:20; Zechariah 10:2. Here it refers to the judgments inflicted on the nation as the punishment of their crimes.

Ye will revolt - Hebrew You will add defection, or revolt. The effect of calamity, and punishment, will be only to increase rebellion. Where the heart is right with God, the tendency of affliction is to humble it, and lead it more and more to God. Where it is evil, the tendency is to make the sinner more obstinate and rebellious. This effect of punishment is seen every where. Sinners revolt more and more. They become sullen, and malignant, and fretful; they plunge into vice to seek temporary relief, and thus they become more and more alienated from God.

The whole head - The prophet proceeds to specify more definitely what he had just said respecting their being stricken. He designates each of the members of the body - thus comparing the Jewish people to the human body when under severe punishment. The word head in the Scriptures is often used to denote the princes, leaders, or chiefs of the nation. But the expression here is used as a figure taken from the human body, and refers solely to the punishment of the people, not to their sins. It means that all had been smitten - all was filled with the effects of punishment - as the human body is when the head and all the members are diseased.

Is sick - Is so smitten - so punished, that it has become sick and painful. Hebrew לחלי *lâchŏlîy* - for sickness, or pain. The preposition ל denotes a state, or condition of anything. Psalm 69:21. ‹And in (ל) my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink.‘ The expression is intensive, and denotes that the head was entirely sick.

The whole heart faint - The heart is here put for the whole region of the chest or stomach. As when the head is violently pained, there is also sickness at the heart, or in the stomach, and as these are indications of entire

or total prostration of the frame so the expression here denotes the perfect desolation which had come over the nation.

Faint - Sick, feeble, without vigor, attended with nausea. Jeremiah 8:18: ‹When I would comfort myself in my sorrow, my heart is faint within me;‘ Lamentations 1:22. When the body is suffering; when severe punishment is inflicted, the effect is to produce landor and faintness at the seat of life. This is the idea here. Their punishment had been so severe for their sins, that the heart was languid and feeble - still keeping up the figure drawn from the human body.

Verse 6

From the sole of the foot … - Or is we say, ‹from head to foot,‘ that is, in every part of the body. There may be included also the idea that this extended from the lowest to the highest among the people. The Chaldee paraphrase is, ‹from the lowest of the people even to the princes - all are contumacious and rebellious.‘

No soundness - מתם *methôm* from תמם *tâmam* to be perfect, sound, uninjured. There is no part unaffected; no part that is sound. It is all smitten and sore.

But wounds - The precise shade of difference between this and the two following words may not be apparent. Together, they mean Such wounds and contusions as are inflicted upon man by scourging, or beating him. This mode of punishment was common among the Jews; as it is at the East at this time. Abarbanel and Kimchi say that the word rendered here “wounds” (פצע *petsa*‘ a verbal from פצע *pâtsa*‘ to wound, to mutilate), means an open wound, or a cut from which blood flows.

Bruises - חבורה *chabbûrâh* This word means a contusion, or the effect of a blow where the skin is not broken; such a contusion as to produce a swelling, and livid appearance; or to make it, as we say, black and blue.

Putrifying sores - The Hebrew rather means recent, or fresh wounds; or rather, perhaps, a running wound, which continues fresh and open; which cannot be cicatrized, or dried up. The Septuagint renders it elegantly πληγή φλγμαίνουσα *plēgē flegmainous* a swelling, or tumefying wound. The expression is applied usually to inflammations, as of boils, or to the swelling of the tonsils, etc.

They have not been closed - That is, the lips had not been pressed together, to remove the blood from the wound. The meaning is, that nothing had been done toward healing the wound. It was an unhealed, undressed,

all-pervading sore. The art of medicine, in the East, consists chiefly in external applications; accordingly the prophet‘s images in this place are all taken from surgery. Sir John Chardin, in his note on Proverbs 3:8, ‹It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones,‘ observes, that the comparison is taken from the plasters, ointments, oils, and frictions, which are made use of in the East in most maladies. ‹In Judea,‘ says Tavernier, ‹they have a certain preparation of oil, and melted grease, which they commonly use for the healing of wounds.‘ Lowth. Compare the note at Isaiah 38:21.

Neither mollified with ointment - Neither made soft, or tender, with ointment. Great use was made, in Eastern nations, of oil, and various kinds of unguents, in medicine. Hence, the good Samaritan is represented as pouring in oil and wine into the wounds of the man that fell among thieves Luke 10:34; and the apostles were directed to anoint with oil those who were sick; James 5:14; compare Revelation 3:18.

Ointment - Hebrew oil. שׁמן *shemen* The oil of olives was used commonly for this purpose. The whole figure in these two verses relates to their being punished for their sins. It is taken from the appearance of a man who is severely, beaten, or scourged for crime; whose wounds had not been dressed, and who was thus a continued bruise, or sore, from his head to his feet. The cause of this the prophet states afterward, Isaiah 1:10 ff. With great skill he first reminds them of what they saw and knew, that they were severely punished; and then states to them the cause of it. Of the calamities to which the prophet refers, they could have no doubt. They were every where visible in all their cities and towns. On these far-spreading desolations, he fixes the eye distinctly first. Had he begun with the statement of their depravity, they would probably have revolted at it. But being presented with a statement of their sufferings, which they all saw and felt, they were prepared for the statement of the cause. To find access to the consciences of sinners, and to convince them of their guilt, it is often necessary to remind them first of the calamities in which they are actually involved; and then to search for the cause. This passage, therefore, has no reference to their moral character. It relates solely to their punishment. It is often indeed adduced to prove the doctrine of depravity; but it has no direct reference to it, and it should not be adduced to prove that people are depraved, or applied as referring to the moral condition of man. The account of their moral character, as the cause of their calamities, is given in

Isaiah 1:10-14. That statement will fully account for the many woes which had come on the nation.

Verse 7

Your country is desolate - This is the literal statement of what he had just affirmed by a figure. In this there was much art. The figure Isaiah 1:6 was striking. The resemblance between a man severely beaten, and entirely livid and sore, and a land perfectly desolate, was so impressive as to arrest the attention. This had been threatened as one of the curses which should attend disobedience; Leviticus 26:33:

And I will scatter you among the heathen,
And will draw out a sword after you:
And your land shall be desolate,
And your cities waste.

Compare Isaiah 1:31; Deuteronomy 28:49-52. It is not certain, or agreed among expositors, to what time the prophet refers in this passage. Some have supposed that he refers to the time of Ahaz, and to the calamities which came upon the nation during his reign; 2 Chronicles 28:5-8. But the probability is, that this refers to the time of Uzziah; see the Analysis of the chapter. The reign of Uzziah was indeed prosperous; 2 Kings 14:8-14; Isaiah 1:4. It is applied to foreigners, that is, those who were not Israelites, Exodus 30:33; and is often used to denote an enemy, a foe, a barbarian; Psalm 109:11:

Let the extortioner catch all that he hath,
And let the strangers plunder his labor.

Ezekiel 11:9; Ezekiel 28:10; Ezekiel 30:12; Hosea 7:9; Hosea 8:7. The word refers here particularly to the Syrians.

Devour it - Consume its provisions.

In your presence - This is a circumstance that greatly heightens the calamity, that they were compelled to look on and witness the desolation, without being able to prevent it.

As overthrown by strangers - זרים כמהפכה *kemahpêkâh zâryîm* - from הפך *hâphak* to turn, to overturn, to destroy as a city; Genesis 19:21-25; Deuteronomy 29:22. It refers to the changes which an invading foe produces in a nation, where everything is subverted; where cities are destroyed, walls are thrown down, and fields and vineyards laid waste. The land was as if an invading army had passed through it, and completely overturned everything. Lowth proposes to read this, ‹as if destroyed by an

inundation;‘ but without authority. The desolation caused by the ravages of foreigners, at a time when the nations were barbarous, was the highest possible image of distress, and the prophet dwells on it, though with some appearance of repetition.

Verse 8

And the daughter of Zion - Zion, or Sion, was the name of one of the hills on which the city of Jerusalem was built. On this hill formerly stood the city of the Jebusites, and when David took it from them he transferred to it his court, and it was called the city of David, or the holy hill. It was in the southern part of the city. As Zion became the residence of the court, and was the most important part of the city, the name was often used to denote the city itself, and is often applied to the whole of Jerusalem. The phrase ‹daughter of Zion‘ here means Zion itself, or Jerusalem. The name daughter is given to it by a personification in accordance with a common custom in Eastern writers, by which beautiful towns and cities are likened to young females. The name mother is also applied in the same way. Perhaps the custom arose from the fact that when a city was built, towns and villages would spring up round it - and the first would be called the mother-city (hence, the word metropolis). The expression was also employed as an image of beauty, from a fancied resemblance between a beautiful town and a beautiful and well-dressed woman. Thus Psalm 45:13, the phrase daughter of Tyre, means Tyre itself; Psalm 137:8, daughter of Babylon, that is, Babylon; Isaiah 37:22, ‹The virgin, the daughter of Zion;‘ Jeremiah 46:2; Isaiah 23:12; Jeremiah 14:17; Numbers 21:23, Numbers 21:32, (Hebrew); Judges 11:26. Is left. נותרה *nôtherâh* The word used here denotes left as a part or remnant is left - not left entire, or complete, but in a weakened or divided state.

As a cottage - literally, “a shade,” or “shelter” - כסכה *kesûkkâh* a temporary habitation erected in vineyards to give shelter to the grape gatherers, and to those who were uppointed to watch the vineyard to guard it from depredations; compare the note at Matthew 21:33. The following passage from Mr. Jowett‘s ‹Christian Researches,‘ describing what he himself saw, will throw light on this verse. ‹Extensive fields of ripe melons and cucumbers adorned the sides of the river (the Nile). They grew in such abundance that the sailors freely helped themselves. Some guard, however, is placed upon them. Occasionally, but at long and desolate intervals, we may observe a little hut, made of reeds, just capable of containing one man;

being in fact little more than a fence against a north wind. In these I have observed, sometimes, a poor old man, perhaps lame, protecting the property. It exactly illustrates Isaiah 1:8.‘ ‹Gardens were often probably unfenced, and formerly, as now, esculent vegetables were planted in some fertile spot in the open field. A custom prevails in Hindostan, as travelers inform us, of planting in the commencement of the rainy season, in the extensive plains, an abundance of melons, cucumbers, gourds, etc. In the center of the field is an artificial mound with a hut on the top, just large enough to shelter a person from the storm and the heat;‘ Bib. Dic. A.S.U. The sketch in the book will convey a clear idea of such a cottage. Such a cottage would be designed only for a temporary habitation. So Jerusalem seemed to be left amidst the surrounding desolation as a temporary abode, soon to be destroyed.

As a lodge - The word lodge here properly denotes a place for passing the night, but it means also a temporary abode. It was erected to afford a shelter to those who guarded the enclosure from thieves, or from jackals, and small foxes. ‹The jackal,‘ says Hasselquist, ‹is a species of mustela, which is very common in Palestine, especially during the vintage, and often destroys whole vineyards, and gardens of cucumbers.‘

A garden of cucumbers - The word cucumbers here probably includes every thing of the melon kind, as well as the cucumber. They are in great request in that region on account of their cooling qualities, and are produced in great abundance and perfection. These things are particularly mentioned among the luxuries which the Israelites enjoyed in Egypt, and for which they sighed when they were in the wilderness. Numbers 11:5: ‹We remember - the cucumbers and the melons,‘ etc. The cucumber which is produced in Egypt and Palestine is large - usually a foot in length, soft, tender, sweet, and easy of digestion (Gesenius), and being of a cooling nature, was especially delicious in their hot climate. The meaning here is, that Jerusalem seemed to be left as a temporary, lonely habitation, soon to be forsaken and destroyed.

As a besieged city - נצורה כעיר *keʿîyr netsôrâh* Lowth. ‹As a city taken by siege.‘ Noyes. “‹So is the delivered city.‘ This translation was first proposed by Arnoldi of Marburg. It avoids the incongruity of comparing a city with a city, and requires no alteration of the text except a change of the vowel points. According to this translation, the meaning will be, that all things round about the city lay desolate, like the withered vines of a

cucumber garden around the watchman‘s hut; in other words, that the city alone stood safe amidst the ruins caused by the enemy, like the hut in a gathered garden of cucumber.” Noyes. According to this interpretation, the word נצורה *netsôrâh* is derived not from צור *tsûr* to besiege, to press, to straiten; but from נצר *nâtsar* to preserve, keep, defend; compare Ezekiel 6:12. The Hebrew will bear this translation; and the concinnity of the comparison will thus be preserved. I rather prefer, however, the common interpretation, as being more obviously the sense of the Hebrew, and as being sufficiently in accordance with the design of the prophet. The idea then is, that of a city straitened by a siege, yet standing as a temporary habitation, while all the country around was lying in ruins. Jerusalem, alone preserved amidst the desolation spreading throughout the land, will resemble a temporary lodge in the garden - itself soon to be removed or destroyed. The essential idea, whatever translation is adopted, is that of the solitude, loneliness, and temporary continuance of even Jerusalem, while all around was involved in desolation and ruin.

Verse 9

Except … - It is owing entirely to the mercy of God, that we are not like Sodom. The prophet traces this not to the goodness of the nation, not to any power or merit of theirs, but solely to the mercy of God. This passage the apostle Paul has used in an argument to establish the doctrine of divine sovereignty in the salvation of people; see the note at Romans 9:29.

The Lord - Hebrew Yahweh. Note Isaiah 1:2.

Of hosts - צבאות *tsebâ'ôth* - the word sometimes translated “Sabaoth”; Romans 9:29; James 5:4. The word means literally armies or military hosts. It is applied, however, to the angels which surround the throne of God; 1 Kings 22:19; 2 Chronicles 18:18; Psalm 103:21; and to the stars or constellations that appear to be marshalled in the sky; Jeremiah 33:22; Isaiah 40:26. This host, or the “host of heaven,” was frequently an object of idolatrous worship; Deuteronomy 4:19; Deuteronomy 17:3; 2 Kings 17:16. God is called Yahweh of hosts because he is at the head of all these armies, as their leader and commander; he marshals and directs them - as a general does the army under his command. ‹This,‘ says Gesenius, ‹is the most common name of God in Isaiah, and in Jeremiah, Zechariah, and Malachi. It represents him as the ruler of the hosts of heaven, that is, the angels and the stars. Sometimes, but less frequently, we meet with the appellation Yahweh, God of hosts. Hence, some suppose the expression Yahweh of

hosts to be elliptical. But it is not a correct assertion that Yahweh, as a proper name, admits of no genitive. But such relations and adjuncts as depend upon the genitive, often depend upon proper names. So in Arabic, one is called Rebiah of the poor in reference to his liability.‘ The name is given here, because to save any portion of a nation so wicked implied the exercise of the same power as that by which he controlled the hosts of heaven.

Remnant - A small part - that which is left. It means here, that God had spared a portion of the nation, so that they were not entirely overthrown.

We should have been as Sodom … - This does not refer to the character of the people, but to their destiny. If God had not interposed to save them they would have been overwhelmed entirely as Sodom was; compare Genesis 19:24-25.

Verse 10

Hear the word of the Lord - The message of God. Having stated the calamities under which the nation was groaning, the prophet proceeds to address the rulers, and to state the cause of all these woes.

Ye rulers of Sodom - The incidental mention Sodom in the previous verse gives occasion for this beautiful transition, and abrupt and spirited address. Their character and destiny were almost like those of Sodom, and the prophet therefore openly addresses the rulers as being called to preside over a people like those in Sodom. There could have been no more severe or cutting reproof of their wickedness than to address them as resembling the people whom God overthrew for their enormous crimes.

Verse 11

To what purpose - לי למה *lâmâh lîy* ‹What is it to me; or what profit or pleasure can I have in them?‘ God here replies to an objection which might be urged by the Jews to the representation which had been made of their guilt. The objection would be, that they were strict in the duties of their religion, and that they even abounded in offering victims of sacrifice. God replies in this and the following verses, that all this would be of no use, and would meet with no acceptance, unless it were the offering of the heart. He demanded righteousness; and without that, all external offerings would be vain. The same sentiment often occurs in the Old Testament.

Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices
As in obeying the voice of the Lord?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

And to hearken than the fat of rams.
1 Samuel 15:22.
To what purpose shall frankincense be brought unto me from Sabah?
Or the rich aromatic reed from a far country?
Your burnt-offerings are not acceptable,

Nor your sacrifices pleasant unto me.
Jeremiah 6:20. *Blaney.*
For I desired mercy and not sacrifice;
And the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.
Hosea 6:6.
I hate, I despise your solemn feast days,
And I will not smell in your solemn assemblies;
Though ye offer me your burnt-offerings,

And your meat-offerings

I will not accept them;

Neither will I regard the thank-offerings of your fat beasts.

Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs;

For I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

But let judgment run down as waters,

And righteousness as a mighty stream.
Amos 5:21-24.

Is the multitude - There was no deficiency in the amount of offerings. It was admitted that they complied in this respect with the requirements of the law; and that they offered an abundance of sacrifices, so numerous as to be called a multitude - רב *rôb* a vast number. Hypocrites abound in outward religious observances just in proportion to their neglect of the spiritual requirements of God‘s word; compare Matthew 23:23.

Your sacrifices - זבחיכם *zibechēykeb* from זבח *zâbach* to slay; especially to slay for sacrifice. The word used here denotes any sacrifice which was made by blood; but is distinguished from the burnt-offering from the fat, that this was not entirely consumed. It is applied to the sin-offering, trespass-offering, thank-offering. The word also stands opposed to the offerings which were made without blood מנחה *minchāh* Any offering that consisted in an animal that was slain came under this general denomination of sacrifice, Exodus 10:25; Leviticus 17:8; Numbers 15:5.

burnt-offerings - עלות *'olôth* from עלה *ʿâlâh* to go up, ascend. It is applied to a sacrifice that was wholly consumed, or made to ascend on an altar. It corresponds to the Greek ὁλόκαυστον *holokauston* that which is entirely consumed. Such offerings abounded among the Hebrews. The burnt-offering was wholly consumed on the altar, excepting the skin and the blood. The blood was sprinkled round the altar, and the other parts of the animal which was slain, were laid upon the altar and entirely burned; see Job 7:4: ‹I am full - שׂבעתי *s'âbaʿetîy* - of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day.‘ Proverbs 25:17:

Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbor‘s house,
Lest he be weary (Hebrew full) of thee, and hate thee.

Fat … - They were required to offer, not the lame, or the diseased Deuteronomy 15:21; Deuteronomy 17:1; Leviticus 23:12; Malachi 1:7-8; and God admits here that they had externally complied with this requirement. The fat was burned on the altar.

I delight not - That is; I delight; not in them when offered without the heart; or I delight not in them in comparison with works of righteousness; see Amos 5:21-24; Psalm 51:16-19.

Verse 12

When you come to appear before me - The temple was in Jerusalem, and was regarded as the habitation, or dwelling-place, of the God of Israel. Particularly, the most holy place of the temple was deemed the place of his sacred abode. The Shekinah - from שׁכן *shâkan* to dwell - the visible symbol of his presence, rested on the cover of the ark, and from this place he was accustomed to commune with his people, and to give responses to their requests. Hence, ‹to appear before God,‘ Hebrew ‹to be seen before my face,‘ לראות פני *lerâ'ôth pânāy* for את פני *'et pânāy* means to appear in his temple as a worshipper. The phrase occurs in this sense in the following places: Exodus 34:23-24; Deuteronomy 31:11; 1 Samuel 1:22; Psalm 42:3.

Who hath required this - The Jews were required to appear there to worship God Exodus 23:17; Deuteronomy 16:16; but it was not required that they should appear with that spirit and temper. A similar sentiment is expressed in Psalm 50:16.

At your hand - From you. The emphasis in this expression is to be laid on your. ‹Who has asked it of you?‘ It was indeed the duty of the humble, and the sincere, to tread those courts, but who had required such hypocrites as they were to do it? God sought the offerings of pure worshippers, not those of the hypocritical and the profane.

To tread my courts - The courts of the temple were the different areas or open spaces which surrounded it. None entered the temple itself but the priests. The people worshipped God in the courts assigned them around the temple. In one of those courts was the altar of burnt-offerings; and the sacrifices were all made there; see the notes at Matthew 21:12. To tread his courts was an expression therefore, equivalent to, to worship. To tread the courts of the Lord here, has the idea of profanation. Who has required you to tread those courts with this hollow, heartless service? It is often used in the sense of treading down, or trampling on, 2 Kings 7:17-20; Daniel 8:7-10; Isaiah 63:3-16.

Verse 13

Bring no more - God does not intend absolutely to forbid this kind of worship, but he expresses his strong abhorrence of the manner in which it was done. He desired a better state of mind; he preferred purity of heart to all this external homage.

Vain - Hebrew “offering of vanity” - שוא *shâv'* - offerings which were hollow, false, deceitful, and hypocritical.

Oblations - מנחת *minchath* This word properly denotes a gift, or present, of any kind Genesis 32:13, and then especially a present or offering to the Deity, Genesis 4:3-5. It does not denote a bloody offering, but what is improperly rendered in the Old Testament, a meat-offering Leviticus 2:1; Leviticus 6:14; Leviticus 9:17 - an offering made of flour or fruits, with oil and frankincense. A small part of it was burned upon the altar, and the remainder was eaten by Aaron and his sons with salt, Leviticus 2:1, Leviticus 2:9, Leviticus 2:13. The proper translation would have been meat or flour-offering rather than meat-offering, since the word meat with us now denotes animal food only.

Incense - More properly frankincense. This is an aromatic or odoriferous gum, which is obtained from a tree called Thurifera. Its leaves were like those of a pear-tree. It grew around Mount Lebanon, and in Arabia. The gum was obtained by making incisions in the bark in dogdays. It was much used in worship, not only by the Jews, but by the pagan. When burned, it produced an agreeable odor; and hence, it is called a sacrifice of sweet smell, an odor acceptable to God; compare Philemon 4:18. That which was burned among the Jews was prepared in a special manner, with a mixture of sweet spices. It was offered by the priest alone, and it was not lawful to prepare it in any other way than that prescribed by the law: see Exodus 30:34, …

Is an abomination - Is hateful, or an object of abhorrence; that is, as it was offered by them, with hollow service, and with hypocritical hearts.

The new moons - On the appearance of the new moon. in addition to the daily sacrifices, two bullocks, a ram, and seven sheep, with a meal-offering, were required to be offered to God, Numbers 10:10; Numbers 28:11-14. The new moon in the beginning of the month Tisri (October), was the beginning of their civil year, and was commanded to be observed as a festival, Leviticus 23:24-25. The appearance of the new moon was announced by the blowing of silver trumpets, Numbers 10:10. Hence, the annual festival was called sometimes, ‹the memorial of the blowing of trumpets.‘ The time of the appearance of the new moon was not ascertained, as with us, by astronomical calculation; but persons were stationed, about the time it was to appear, on elevated places in the vicinity of Jerusalem, and when it was discovered, the trumpet was sounded. Moses did not command that this should be observed as a festival except at the beginning of the year, but it is not improbable that the Jews observed each return of the new moon as such.

And sabbaths - שׁבת *shabbâth* from שׁבת *shâbath* “to cease to do anything”; “to rest from labor.” The words used here are all in the singular number, and should have been rendered ‹the new moon, and the sabbath, and the calling of the assembly;‘ though used in a collective sense. The sabbaths here refer not only to the weekly sabbaths, but to all their days of rest. The word sabbath means properly a day of rest Genesis 2:2-3; and it was applied not only to the seventh day, but particularly to the beginning and the close of their great festivals, which were days of unusual solemnity and sacredness, Leviticus 16:31; 23:24-39.

The calling of assemblies - The solemn convocations or meetings at their festivals and fasts.

I cannot away with - Hebrew לא אוכל *lo' 'ûkal* - I cannot bear, or endure.

It is iniquity - That is, in the way in which it is conducted. This is a strong emphatic expression. It is not merely evil, and tending to evil; but it is iniquity itself. There was no mixture of good.

Even the solemn meeting - The word which is used here - עצרה *ʿătsârâh* - comes from the verb עצר *ʿâtsar* which signifies to shut up, or to close; and is applied to the solemnities which concluded their great feasts, as being periods of unusual interest and sacredness. It was applied to such solemnities, because they shut up, or closed the sacred festivals. Hence, that day was called the great day of the feast, as being a day of special solemnity and impressiveness; see the note at John 7:37; compare Leviticus 23:3-36. In the translation of this word, however, there is a great variety in the ancient versions. Vulgate, ‹Your assemblies are iniquitous.‘ Septuagint, ‹Your new moons, and sabbaths, and great day, I cannot endure; fasting and idleness.‘ Chald. Paraph., ‹Sacrifice is abominable before me; and your new moons, and sabbaths, “since you will not forsake your sins, so that your prayer may be heard in the time of your assembling.” Syriac, ‹In the beginning of your months, and on the sabbath, you convene an assembly, but I do not eat that (that is, sacrifices) which has been Obtained by fraud and violence.‘ The English translation has, however, probably expressed the correct sense of the Hebrew.

Verse 14

Your appointed feasts - That is, your assemblies convened on regular set times - מועד *môʿêd* from יעד *yâʿad* to fix, to appoint. Hengstenberg (Chris. iii. p. 87) has shown that this word (מועדים *môʿĕdîym*) is applied in the Scriptures only to the sabbath, passover, pentecost, day of atonement, and feast of tabernacles. Prof. Alexander, *in loc*. It is applied to those festivals, because they were fixed by law to certain periods of the year. This verse is a very impressive repetition of the former, as if the soul was full of the subject, and disposed to dwell upon it.

My soul hateth - I hate. Psalm 11:5. The nouns נפשׁ *nephesh* soul, and רוח *rûach* spirit, are often used to denote the person himself, and are to be construed as “I.” Thus, Isaiah 26:9: ‹With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early;‘ that is, ‹I myself

seek thee; I myself do desire thee.‘ So the phrase, ‹deliver my soul,‘ - נפשי *napheshîy* - that is, deliver me, Psalm 22:20; Psalm 84:3; Psalm 86:13-14; that thy soul may bless me, Genesis 27:19; his soul shall dwell at ease, Psalm 25:13; compare Numbers 11:6; Leviticus 16:29; Isaiah 55:2-3; Job 16:4. So the word spirit: ‹Thy watchfulness hath preserved my spirit‘ - רוּחי *rûchîy* - Job 10:12; compare Psalm 31:6; 1 Kings 21:5. The expression here is emphatic, denoting cordial hatred: odi ex animo.

They are a trouble - טרח *ṭôrach* In Deuteronomy 1:12, this word denotes a burden, an oppressive lead that produces weariness in bearing it. It is a strong expression, denoting that their acts of hypocrisy and sin had become so numerous, that they became a heavy, oppressive lead.

I am weary to bear them - This is language which is taken from the act of carrying a burden until a man becomes weary and faint. So, in accordance with human conceptions, God represents himself as burdened with their vain oblations, and evil conduct. There could be no more impressive statement of the evil effects of sin, than that even Omnipotence was exhausted as with a heavy, oppressive burden.

Verse 15

Ye spread forth your hands - This is an expression denoting the act of supplication. When we ask for help, we naturally stretch out our hands, as if to receive it. The expression therefore is equivalent to ‹when ye pray, or implore mercy.‘ Compare Exodus 9:29; Exodus 17:11-12; 1 Kings 8:22.

I will hide mine eyes … - That is, I will not attend to, or regard your supplications. The Chaldee Paraphrase is, ‹When your priests expand their hands to pray for you.‘

Your hands … - This is given as a reason why he would not hear. The expression full of blood, denotes crime and guilt of a high order - as, in murder, the hands would be dripping in blood, and as the stain on the hands would be proof of guilt. It is probably a figurative expression, not meaning literally that they were murderers, but that they were given to rapine and injustice; to the oppression of the poor, the widow, etc. The sentiment is, that because they indulged in sin, and came, even in their prayers, with a determination still to indulge it, God would not hear them. The same sentiment is elsewhere expressed; Psalm 66:18: ‹If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me;‘ Proverbs 28:9: ‹He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination;‘ Jeremiah 16:10-12; Zechariah 7:11-12; Proverbs 1:28-29. This is the reason why the

prayers of sinners are not heard - But the truth is abundantly taught in the Scriptures, that if sinners will forsake their sins, the greatness of their iniquity is no obstacle to forgiveness; Isaiah 1:18; Matthew 11:28; Luke 16:11-24.

Verse 16

Wash you - This is, of course, to be understood in a moral sense; meaning that they should put away their sins. Sin is represented in the Scriptures as defiling or polluting the soul Ezekiel 20:31; Ezekiel 23:30; Hosea 5:8; Hosea 9:4; and the removal of it is represented by the act of washing; Psalm 51:2: ‹Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin;‘ Jeremiah 4:14: ‹O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved;‘ Job 9:30; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Hebrews 10:22; 2 Peter 2:22; Revelation 1:5; Revelation 7:14. It is used here in close connection with the previous verse, where the prophet says that their hands were flied with blood. He now admonishes them to wash away that blood, with the implied understanding, that then their prayers would be heard. It is worthy of remark, also, that the prophet directs them to do this themselves. He addresses them as moral agents, and as having ability to do it. This is the uniform manner in which God addresses sinners in the Bible, requiring them to put away their sins, and to make themselves a new heart. Compare Ezekiel 18:31-32.

The evil of your doings - This is a Hebraism, to denote your evil doings.

From before mine eyes - As God is omniscient, to put them away from before his eyes, is to put them away altogether. To pardon or forgive sin, is often expressed by hiding it; Psalm 51:9:

Hide thy face from my sins.

Cease to do evil - Compare 1 Peter 3:10-11. The prophet is specifying what was necessary in order that their prayers might be heard, and that they might find acceptance with God. What he states here is a universal truth. If sinners wish to find acceptance with God, they must come renouncing all sin; resolving to put away everything that God hates, however dear it may be to the heart. Compare Mark 9:43-47.

Verse 17

Learn to do well - , To learn here is to become accustomed to, to practice it. To do well stands opposed to all kinds of evil. “Seek judgment.” The word “judgment” - מִשְׁפָּט *mishpâṭ* - here means justice. The direction

refers particularly to magistrates, and it is evident that the prophet had them particularly in his view in all this discourse. Execute justice between man and man with impartiality. The word "seek" - דרשׁוּ *dîreshû* - means to pursue, to search for, as an object to be gained; to regard, or care for it, as the main thing. Instead of seeking gain, and bribes, and public favor, they were to make it an object of intense interest to do justice.

Relieve - - אשׁרוּ *'asherû* - literally, make straight, Or right (margin, righten). The root - אשׁר *'âshar* - means to proceed, to walk forward in a direct line; and bears a relation to ישׁר *yâshar* to be straight. Hence, it often means to be successful or prosperous - to go straight forward to success. In Piel, which is the form used here, it means to cause to go straight; and hence, applied to leaders, judges, and guides, to conduct those under their care in a straight path, anal not in the devices and crooked Ways of sin; Proverbs 23:19:

Hear thou, my son, and he wise,

And guide אשׁר *'asher* "make straight") thine heart in the way.

The oppressed - Him to whom injustice has been done in regard to his character, person, or property; compare the notes at Isaiah 58:6.

Judge the fatherless - Do justice to him - vindicate his cause. Take not advantage of his weak and helpless, condition - his ignorance and want of experience. This charge was particularly necessary on account of the facilities which the guardians of orphans have to defraud or oppress, without danger of detection or punishment. Orphans have no experience. Parents are their natural protectors; and therefore God especially charged on their guardians to befriend and do justice to them; Deuteronomy 24:17: ‹Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor the fatherless, nor take the widow‘s raiment to pledge.‘

Plead for - Contend for her rights. Aid her by vindicating her cause. She is unable to defend herself; she is liable to oppression; and her rights may be taken away by the crafty and designing. It is remarkable that God so often insists on this in the Scriptures, and makes it no small part of religion; Deuteronomy 14:29; Deuteronomy 24:17; Exodus 22:22: ‹Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.‘ The ancient views of piety on this subject are expressed in the language, and in the conduct of Job. Thus, impiety was said to consist in oppressing the fatherless and widow.

They drive away the donkey of the fatherless,

They take the widow‘s ox for a pledge.
Job 24:3.
He evil-entreateth the barren that beareth not,
And doeth not good to the widow.
Job 24:21.
Job‘s own conduct was an illustration of the elevated and pure views of ancient piety:
When the ear heard me, then it blessed me;
And when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me;
Because I delivered the poor that cried,

And the fatherless,

And him that had none to help him.

The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me;

And I caused the widow‘s heart to leap for joy.
Job 29:11-13.
See also Jeremiah 7:6; Malachi 3:5; James 1:27. Hence, God is himself represented as the vindicator of the rights of the widow and orphan:
A father of the fatherless,
And a judge of the widows,
Is God in his holy habitation.
Psalm 68:5.
Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive;
And let thy widows trust in me.
Jeremiah 49:11.
Verse 18
Come now - This is addressed to the nation of Israel; and the same exhortation is made to all sinners. It is a solemn act on the part of God, submitting the claims and principles of his government to reason, on the supposition that men may see the propriety of his service, and of his plan.
Let us reason together - ונוכחה *venivākechâh* from יכח *yâkach* not used in Kal, but in Hiphil; meaning to show, to prove. Job 13:15: ‹Surely I will prove my ways (righteous) before him;‘ that is, I will justify my ways before him. Also to correct, reprove, convince, Job 32:12; to rebuke,

reproach, censure, Job 6:25; to punish, Job 5:17; Proverbs 3:12; to judge, decide, Isaiah 11:3; to do justice, Isaiah 11:4; or to contend, Job 13:3; Job 16:21; Job 22:4. Here it denotes the kind of contention, or argumentation, which occurs in a court of justice, where the parties reciprocally state the grounds of their cause. God had been addressing magistrates particularly, and commanding them to seek judgment, to relieve the oppressed, to do justice to the orphan and widow; all of which terms are taken from courts of law. He here continues the language, and addresses them as accustomed to the proceedings of courts, and proposes to submit the case as if on trial. He then proceeds Isaiah 1:18-20, to adduce the principles on which he is willing to bestow pardon on them; and submits the case to them, assured that those principles will commend themselves to their reason and sober judgment.

Though your sins be as scarlet - The word used here - שׁנים *shānîym* - denotes properly a bright red color, much prized by the ancients. The Arabic verb means to shine, and the name was given to this color, it is supposed by some, on account of its splendor, or bright appearance. It is mentioned as a merit of Saul, that he clothed the daughters of Israel in scarlet, 2 Samuel 1:24, Our word scarlet, denoting a bright red, expresses the color intended here. This color was obtained from the eggs of the coccus ilicis, a small insect found on the leaves of the oak in Spain, and in the countries east of the Mediterranean. The cotton cloth was dipped in this color twice; and the word used to express it means also double-dyed, from the verb שׁנה *shânâh* to repeat. From this double-dying many critics have supposed that the name given to the color was derived. The interpretation which derives it from the sense of the Arabic word to shine, however, is the most probable, as there is no evidence that the double-dying was unique to this color. It was a more permanent color than that which is mentioned under the word crimson. White is an emblem of innocence. Of course sins would be represented by the opposite. Hence, we speak of crimes as black, or deep-dyed, and of the soul as stained by sin. There is another idea here. This was a fast, or fixed color. Neither dew, nor rain, nor washing, nor long usage, would remove it. Hence, it is used to represent the fixedness and permanency of sins in the heart. No human means will wash them out. No effort of man, no external rites, no tears, no sacrifices, no prayers, are of themselves sufficient to take them away. They are deep fixed in the heart, as the scarlet color was in the Web of cloth, and an almighty power is needful to remove them.

Shall be as white as snow - That is, the deep, fixed stain, which no human power could remove, shall be taken away. In other words, sin shall be pardoned, and the soul be made pure. White, in all ages, has been the emblem of innocence, or purity; compare Psalm 68:14; Ecclesiastes 9:8; Daniel 7:9; Matthew 17:2; Matthew 28:3; Revelation 1:14; Revelation 3:4-5; Revelation 4:4; Revelation 7:9, Revelation 7:13.

Though they be red - The idea here is not materially different from that expressed in the former part of the verse. It is the Hebrew poetic form of expressing substantially the same thought in both parts of the sentence. Perhaps, also, it denotes intensity, by being repeated; see Introduction, 8.

Like crimson - כתולע *katôlâʿ* The difference between scarlet and crimson is, that the former denotes a deep red; the latter a deco red slightly tinged with blue. Perhaps this difference, however, is not marked in the original. The purple or crimson color was obtained commonly from a shellfish, called murex, or purpura, which abounded chiefly in the sea, near Tyre; and hence, the Tyrian dye became so celebrated. That, however, which is designated in this place, was obtained, not from a shellfish, but a worm (Hebrew: תולע *tôlâʿ* snail, or conchylium - the Helix Janthina of Linnaeus. This color was less permanent than the scarlet; was of a bluish east; and is commonly in the English Bible rendered blue. It was employed usually to dye wool, and was used in the construction of the tabernacle, and in the garments of the high priest. It was also in great demand by princes and great men, Judges 8:26; Luke 14:19. The prophet has adverted to the fact that it was employed mainly in dying wool, by what he has added, ‹shall be as wool.‘

As wool - That is, as wool undyed, or from which the color is removed. Though your sins appear as deep-stained, and as permanent as the fast color of crimson in wool, yet they shall be removed - as if that stain should be taken away from the wool, and it should be restored to its original whiteness.

Verse 19

If ye be willing - If you submit your wills, and become voluntary in your obedience to my law.

And obedient - Hebrew If you will hear; that is, my commands.

Ye shall eat … - That is, the land shall yield its increase; and you shall be saved from pestilence, war, famine, etc. The productions of the soil shall no more be devoured by strangers, Isaiah 1:7; compare the notes at Isaiah

65:21-23. This was in accordance with the promises which God made to their fathers, and the motives to obedience placed before them, which were drawn from the fact, that they should possess a land of distinguished fertility, and that obedience should be attended with eminent national prosperity. Such an appeal was adapted to the infancy of society, and to the circumstances of the people. It should be added, however, that with this they connected the idea, that God would be their God and Protector; and, of course, the idea that all the blessings resulting from that fact would be theirs; Exodus 3:8: ‹And I am come down to deliver them out of the band of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey;‘ compare Exodus 3:17; Exodus 13:5; Deuteronomy 28:1-9. In accordance with this, the language of promise in the New Testament is, that of inheriting the earth, that is, the land, Note, Matthew 5:5. The expression here means, that if they obeyed God they should be under his patronage, and be prospered. It refers, also, to Isaiah 1:7, where it is said, that strangers devoured the land. The promise here is, that if they were obedient, this calamity should be removed.

Verse 20

But if ye refuse, ye shall be devoured with the sword - Your enemies shall come in, and lay waste the land. This prediction was fulfilled, in consequence of their continuing to rebel, when the land was desolated by Nebuchadnezzar, and the nation was carried captive to Babylon. It illustrates a general principle of the divine government, that if people persevere in rebelling against God, they shall be destroyed. The word devour is applied to the sword, as if it were insatiable for destruction. Whatever destroys may be figuratively said to devour; see the notes at Isaiah 34:5-6; compare Isaiah 5:24; Lamentations 2:3; Ezekiel 15:4; Joel 2:3; Revelation 11:5 - where fire is said to devour.

The mouth of the Lord - Yahweh Himself. This had been spoken by the mouth of the Lord, and recorded, Leviticus 26:33:

And I will scatter you among the heathen,
And will draw out a sword after you;
And your land shall be desolate
And your cities waste.

On these points God proposed to reason; or rather, perhaps, these principles are regarded as reasonable, or as commending themselves to men. They are the great principles of the divine administration, that if

people obey God they shall prosper; if not, they shall be punished. They commend themselves to people as just and true; and they are seen and illustrated every where.

Verse 21

How is - This is an expression of deploring, or lamenting. It indicates that that had occurred which was matter of grief. The prophet had stated the principles of the divine government; had urged the people to reason with God; and had affirmed his willingness to pardon. But it was seen that they would not repent. They were so wicked and perverse, that there was no hope of their reformation. His mind is full of this subject; he repeats the charge of their wickedness Isaiah 1:21-23, and states what must be the consequences.

The faithful city - Jerusalem. It is represented here under the image of a wife - once faithful to her husband; once a devoted and attached partner. Jerusalem was thus once. In former days, it was the seat of the pure worship of God; the place where his praise was celebrated, and where his people came to offer sincere devotion. In the Scriptures, the church is often represented under the image of a wife, to denote the tenderness and sacredness of the union; Hosea 2:19-20; Isaiah 62:5; Isaiah 54:6; Revelation 21:9.

An harlot - She has proved to be false, treacherous, unfaithful. The unfaithfulness of the people of God, particularly their idolatry, is often represented under the idea of unfaithfulness to the marriage contract; Jeremiah 3:8-9; Jeremiah 5:7; Jeremiah 13:27; Jeremiah 23:14; Ezekiel 16:32; Ezekiel 23:37; Joshua 2:2; Joshua 4:2.

It was full of judgement - It was distinguished for justice and righteousness.

Lodged in it - This is a figurative expression, meaning that it was characterized as a righteous city. The word ילין *yālîyn* is from לון *lûn* to pass the night, to remain through the night Genesis 19:2; and then to lodge, to dwell; Psalm 25:13; Job 17:2; Job 29:19. In this place it has the sense of abiding, remaining, continuing permanently. Jerusalem was the home of justice, where it found protection and safety.

Now murderers - By murderers here are meant probably unjust judges; people who did not regard the interests of the poor, the widow, and the orphan; and who therefore, by a strong expression, are characterized as

murderers. They had displaced justice from its home; and had become the permanent inhabitants of the city; compare the note at Isaiah 1:15.

Verse 22

Thy silver - The sentiment in this verse, as it is explained by the following, is, thy princes and people have become corrupt, and polluted. Silver is used here to denote what should have been more valuable - virtuous princes.

Dross - This word - סיג *sîg* - means the scoriae, or baser metal, which is separated from the purer in smelting. It is of little or no value; and the expression means, that the rulers had become debased and corrupt, as if pure silver had been converted wholly to dross.

Thy wine - Wine was regarded as the most pure and valuable drink among the ancients. It is used, therefore, to express that which should have been most valued and esteemed among them - to wit, their rulers.

Mixed with water - Diluted, made weak. According to Gesenius, the word rendered "mixed" - מהול *mâhûl* - is from מהל *mâhal* the same as מול *mûl* to circumcise; and hence, by a figure common with the Arabians, to adulterate, or dilute wine. The word does not occur in this sense elsewhere in the Scriptures, but the connection evidently requires it to be so understood. Wine mixed with water is that which is weakened, diluted, rendered comparatively useless. So with the rulers and judges. They had lest the strength and purity of their integrity, by intermingling those things which tended to weaken and destroy their virtue, pride, the love of gifts, and bribes, etc. Divested of the figure, the passage means, that the rulers had become wholly corrupt.

Verse 23

Thy princes … - This is an explanation of the previous verse. Princes mean here those attached to the royal family; those who by rank, or office, had an influence over the people.

Rebellious - Against God. The corruption of a nation commonly begins with the rulers.

Companions of thieves - That is, they connive at the doings of robbers; they do not bring them to justice; they are their accomplices, and are easily bribed to acquit them.

Every one loveth gifts - Every magistrate can be bribed.

Followeth afar rewards - רדף *rodēph* This word denotes the act of pursuing after in order to obtain something; and means here that they made

it an object to obtain rewards by selling or betraying justice They sell justice to the highest bidder. No more distressing condition of a people can be conceived than this, where justice could not be secured between man and man, and where the wicked could oppress the poor, the widow, and the orphan, as much as they pleased, because they knew they could bribe the judge.

They judge not - They do not render justice to; Isaiah 1:17. The Chaldee has well expressed the sense of a part of this verse: ‹They say, each one to his neighbor, Favour me in my judgment, or do me good in it, and I will recompense you in your cause.‘

The cause of the widow come unto them - Or, rather, come before them. They would not take up her cause, but rather the cause of those who were esteemed able to offer a bribe, and from whom a gift might be expected, if a decision was made in their favor.

Verse 24

Therefore saith the Lord … - The prophet having stated the guilt of the nation, proceeds to show the consequences of their crimes; or to foretell what would happen. The name of God is repeated, to attract attention; to fill the mind with awe; and to give emphasis to the solemn sentence which was about to be uttered.

The Lord - אדון *'âdôn* This word properly denotes master, lord, owner. Genesis 24:9: "lord over his whole house." 1 Kings 16:24: "owner of the hill Samaria." It is applied here to Yahweh, not as a special title, or as one of the names which he assumes to himself, but as owner, proprietor, master, ruler of the nation. The word, when applied to God as one of his special titles, has the form of an ancient plural termination, אדני *'ădonāy* The root is probably דון *dôn* to judge, which in ancient times was also closely connected with the idea of ruling.

The Lord of hosts - Yahweh - ruling in the hosts of heaven, and therefore able to accomplish his threatenings; note, Isaiah 1:9.

The mighty One of Israel - He who had been their defender in the days of their peril; who had manifested his mighty power in overthrowing their enemies; and who had shown, therefore, that he was able to inflict vengeance on them.

Ah - הוי *hôy* This is an expression of threatening. It is that which is used when an affront is offered, and there is a purpose of revenge; see Isaiah 1:4.

I will ease me - This refers to what is said in Isaiah 1:14, where God is represented as burdened with their crimes. The Hebrew word is, I will be consoled, or comforted - that is, by being delivered from my foes - אנחם *'enâchem* from נחם *nâcham* in Niphil, to suffer pain, to be grieved; and hence, to have pity, to show compassion. In Piel, to console or comfort one‘s-self; to take revenge. The idea included in the word is that of grief or distress, either in beholding the sufferings of others, or from some injury received from others. Hence, in Piel, it denotes to obtain relief from that distress, either by aiding the distressed object, or by taking revenge. In both instances, the mind, by a law of its nature, finds relief. The passion expends itself on its proper object, and the mind is at ease. It is used here in the latter sense. It is an instance where God uses the language which people employ to denote passion, and where they obtain relief by revenge. When applied to God, it is to be understood in accordance with his nature, as implying simply, that he would punish them; compare the note at Isaiah 1:13. It means that he had been pained and grieved by their crimes; his patience had been put to its utmost trial; and now he would seek relief from this by inflicting due punishment on them. An expression explaining this may be seen in Ezekiel 5:13; ‹Then shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted.‘ Also, Deuteronomy 28:63: ‹As the Lord rejoiced over you, to do you good; so the Lord will rejoice over you, to destroy you.‘

Mine adversaries - The enemies to his law and government among the rebellious Jews. The expression in this verse is a remarkable instance of God‘s adapting himself to our apprehension, by using our language. Instances occur often in the Scriptures where language expressive of human passions is applied to God; and as human language must be employed in revelation, it was indispensable. But those expressions are not to be understood as they are when applied to the passions of mankind. In God, they are consistent with all that is pure, and glorious, and holy, and should be so understood. The Chaldee renders this verse, ‹I will console the city of Jerusalem; but woe to the impious, when I shall be revealed to take vengeance on the enemies of my people.‘ But this is manifestly a false interpretation; and shows how reluctant the Jews were to admit the threatenings against themselves.

Verse 25

And I will turn my hand upon thee - This expression is capable of two significations. The hand may be stretched out for two purposes, either to inflict punishment, or to afford help and protection. The phrase here refers evidently to the latter, to the act of redeeming and restoring his people, Isaiah 1:26-27. The idea may be thus expressed: ‹I will stretch out my hand to punish my enemies Isaiah 1:24, and will turn my hand upon thee for protection, and recovery.‘

Purge away - This refers to the process of smelting, or purifying metals in the fire. It means, I will remove all the dross which has accumulated Isaiah 1:22, and will make the silver pure. This was commonly done by fire; and the idea is, that he would render his own people pure by those judgments which would destroy his enemies who were intermingled with them.

Purely - The original word here - כבר *kabor* - has been commonly understood to mean, according to purity; that is, effectually or entirely pure. Thus it is translated by the Septuagint, and by the Latin Vulgate. But by the Chaldee it is translated, ‹I will purify thee as with the herb borith.‘ The word may mean lye, alkali, or potash, Job 9:30; and it may mean also borax - a substance formed of alkali and boracic acid, much used in purifying metals. The essential idea is, I will make you effectually, or entirely pure.

Thy tin - Tin is with us a well-known white metal. But the word used here does not mean tin. It denotes the stannum of the ancients; a metal formed of lead mixed with silver ore. Here it means, I will take away all the impure metal mixed with thee; varying the idea but little from the former part of the verse.

Verse 26

And I will restore … - That is, I will give you such judges as the nation had in former days - in the times of Moses, Joshua, etc. Most of the charges in this chapter are against the magistrates. The calamities of the nation are traced to their unfaithfulness and corruption, Isaiah 1:17-23. God now says that he will remove this cause of their calamity, and give them pure magistrates.

Thy counselors - Thy advisers; that is, those occupying places of trust and responsibility. When this should be, the prophet does not say. The Jewish commentators suppose that he refers to the time after the return from captivity, and to such men as Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah; and to the times of Hyrcanus and Herod, Jerome supposes that the times of the

Messiah are referred to. It is impossible to determine which is the correct opinion; though, as the Babylonian captivity was the punishment of those national sins which the prophet was denouncing, it is more probable that he refers to the time immediately succeeding that punishment, when the nation would be restored. I am inclined, therefore, to the opinion, that the prophet had reference solely to the prosperity of the Jewish nation, under a succession of comparatively virtuous princes, after the Babylonian captivity.

Thou shalt be called … - The principal cause of your wickedness and calamity, that is, your unfaithful rulers being removed and punished, you shall afterward be distinguished as a city of righteousness.

The faithful city - That is, faithful to Yahweh - faithful in keeping his laws, and maintaining the rites of his religion as formerly; compare Isaiah 1:21.

Verse 27

Zion - See the note at Isaiah 1:8. The word Zion here is used to designate the whole Jewish people to whom the prophet had reference; that is, the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem, Isaiah 1:1.

Shall be redeemed - The word used here - פדה *pâdâh* - is employed in two senses in the Scriptures. It implies always the idea of deliverance, as from captivity, danger, punishment, slavery, sin. But this idea occurs:

(1) sometimes without any reference to a price paid, but simply denoting to deliver, or to set at liberty; and

(2) in other instances the price is specified, and then the word occurs under the strict and proper sense of redeem; that is, to rescue, or deliver, by a ransom price.

Instances of the former general sense occur often; as e. q., to deliver from slavery without mere ion of a price; Deuteronomy 7:8: ‹The Loan loved you, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen.‘ See also Jeremiah 15:21; Jeremiah 31:11. The idea of delivering in any way from danger occurs often; Job 5:20: ‹In famine he shall redeem thee from death, and in war from the power of the sword;‘ 1 Kings 1:29: ‹As Jehovah liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress.‘ 1 Samuel 4:9. But the word often occurs in connection with the mention of the price, and in this sense the words rendered redeem are commonly used in the New Testament; see Exodus 13:13; Numbers 18:15-17; compare Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 1:18; Revelation 5:9; Ephesians 1:17. Matthew 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:6. In these last

places, the blood of Christ, or his atoning sacrifice, is mentioned as the price, or the valuable consideration, by which deliverance from sin is effected; compare the note at Isaiah 43:3. In the case now before us, however, the word is used in the general sense, to denote that God would rescue and save his people from the calamities and judgments to which they were to be subjected on account of their sins. Though they were to be taken captive for their sins, yet they should again be delivered and restored to their land. The Septuagint evidently so understands it: ‹Her captivity shall be saved with judgment and with mercy.‘ The Chaldee Paraphrase renders it in a manner somewhat similar: ‹But Zion, when judgment shall have been accomplished in her, shall be redeemed; and they who keep the law shall be returned to it in righteousness.‘

With judgment - In a righteous, just manner. That is, God shall evince his justice in doing it; his justice to a people to whom so many promises had been made, and his justice in delivering them from long and grievous oppression. All this would be attended with the displays of judgment, in effecting their deliverance. This might be evinced

(1) in keeping his promises made to their fathers;

(2) in delivering an oppressed people from bondage; and

(3) in the displays of judgment on the nations necessary in accomplishing the deliverance of the Jews. This is the common interpretation.

It may be, however, that the expression does not refer to the character of God, which is not at all the subject of discourse, but to the character of the people that should be redeemed. Before, the nation was corrupt; after the captivity, they would be just. Zion should be redeemed; and the effect of that redemption would be, that the people would be reformed, and holy, and just. This does not refer, properly, to redemption by the Lord Jesus, though it is equally true that that will be accomplished with justice, that is, in entire consistency with the character of a just and holy God.

Her converts - This is an unhappy translation. The Hebrew here means simply, ‹they that return of her‘ (margin); that is, those who return from captivity. It is implied that all would not return - which was true - but those who did return, would come back in righteousness.

With righteousness - This refers to the character of those who shall return. The prediction is, that the character of the nation would be reformed

Isaiah 1:26; that it would be done by means of this very captivity; and that they who returned would come back with a different character from the nation at the time that Isaiah wrote. They would be a reformed, righteous people. The character of the nation was greatly improved after the captivity. Their propensity to idolatry, in a particular manner, was effectually restrained; and probably the character of the people after the captivity, for morals and religion, was not inferior to the best periods of their history before.

Verse 28

And the destruction - Hebrew שֹׁבֶר *sheber* - the breaking, or crushing, that is, the punishment which was about to come upon them; compare Lamentations 2:11; Lamentations 3:47; Proverbs 16:18.

Of the transgressors - "Revolters," or those that rebel against God.

And of the sinners - Of all the sinners in the nation, of all kinds and degrees.

Together - At the same time with the redemption of Zion.

Shall be consumed - יִכְלוּ *yîkelû* from כָּלָה *kâlâh* to be completed, or finished; to be consumed, wasted away; to vanish, or disappear. It denotes complete and entire extinction; or the completing of anything. It is applied to a cloud of smoke, that entirely dissolves and disappears:

As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away:
So he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more,
Job 7:9.

But the wicked shall perish,
And the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs;

They shall consume,

Into smoke shall they cosume away.
Psalm 37:20.

It is applied to time, as vanishing and disappearing Job 7:6; and to the destruction or perishing of men; Jeremiah 16:4; Ezekiel 5:13. The idea is that of complete and entire consumption and destruction, so that none shall be left. Applied to future punishment, it means that the destruction of sinners shall be total and complete. There shall be no sinner who shall not be destroyed; and there shall be none destroyed whose destruction shall not be entire and total. The expression here refers to the heavy calamities which

were about to come upon the guilty nation, but it is as descriptive of the future punishment that shall come upon the wicked.

Verse 29

For they shall be ashamed - That is, when they see the punishment that their idolatry has brought upon them, they shall be ashamed of the folly and degradation of their worship. Moreover, the gods in which they trusted shall yield them no protection, and shall leave them to the disgrace and confusion of being forsaken and abandoned.

Of the oaks - Groves, in ancient times, were the favorite places of idolatrous worship. In the city of Rome, there were thirty-two groves consecrated to the gods. Those were commonly selected which were on hills, or high places; and they were usually furnished with temples, altars, and all the implements of idolatrous worship. Different kinds of groves were selected for this purpose, by different people. The Druids of the ancient Celtic nations in Gaul, Britain, and Germany, offered their worship in groves of oak - hence the name Druid, derived from δρῦς *drus* an oak. Frequent mention is made in the Scriptures of groves and high places; and the Jews were forbidden to erect them; Deuteronomy 16:21; 1 Kings 16:23; 2 Kings 16:4; Ezekiel 6:13; Ezekiel 16:16, Ezekiel 16:39; Exodus 34:13; Judges 3:7; 1 Kings 18:19; Isaiah 17:8; Micah 5:14. When, therefore, it is said here, that they should be ashamed of the oaks, it means that they should be ashamed of their idolatrous worship, to which they were much addicted, and into which, under their wicked kings, they easily fell.

Their calamities were coming upon them mainly for this idolatry. It is not certainly known what species of tree is intended by the word translated oaks. The Septuagint has rendered it by the word "idols" - ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων αὐτῶν *apo tōn eidōlōn autōn* The Chaldee, ‹ye shall be confounded by the groves of idols.' The Syriac version also has idols. Most critics concur in supposing that it means, not the oak, but the terebinth or turpentine tree - a species of fir. This tree is the Pistacia Terebinthus of Linnaeus, or the common turpentine tree, whose resin or juice is the China or Cyprus turpentine, used in medicine. The tree grows to a great age, and is common in Palestine. The terebinth - now called in Palestine the but'm-tree - ‹is not an evergreen, as is often represented; but its small, leathered, lancet-shaped leaves fall in the autumn, and are renewed in the spring.

The flowers are small, and are followed by small oval berries, hanging in clusters from two to five inches long, resembling much the clusters of the vine when the grapes are just set. From incisions in the trunk there is said to flow a sort of transparent balsam, constituting a very pure and fine species of turpentine, with an agreeable odor like citron or jessamine, and a mild taste, and hardening gradually into a transparent gum. The tree is found also in Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, the south of France, and in the north of Africa, and is described as not usually rising to the height of more than twenty feet.' Robinson's Bib. Researches, iii. 15,16. It produces the nuts called the pistachio nuts. They have a pleasant, unctuous taste, resembling that of almonds, and they yield in abundance a sweet and pleasant oil. The best Venice turpentine, which, when it can be obtained pure, is superior to all the rest of its kind, is the produce of this tree. The picture in the book will give you an idea of the appearance of the terebinth. The Hebrew word אילים *'ēylîym* from איל *'eyl* or more commonly אלה *'ēlâh* seems to be used sometimes as the Greek δρῦς *drus* is, to denote any large tree, whether evergreen or not; and especially any large tree, or cluster of trees, where the worship of idols was celebrated.

Which ye have desired - The Jews, until the captivity at Babylon, as all their history shows, easily relapsed into idolatry. The meaning of the prophet is, that the punishment at Babylon would be so long and so severe as to make them ashamed of this, and turn them from it.

Shall be confounded - Another word meaning to be ashamed.

For the gardens - The places planted with trees, etc., in which idolatrous worship was practiced. ‹In the language of the Hebrews, every place where plants and trees were cultivated with greater care than in the open field, was called a garden. The idea of such an enclosure was certainly borrowed from the garden of Eden, which the bountiful Creator planted for the reception of his favorite creature. The garden of Hesperides, in Eastern fables, was protected by an enormous serpent; and the gardens of Adonis, among the Greeks, may be traced to the same origin, for the terms horti Adenides, the gardens of Adonis, were used by the ancients to signify gardens of pleasure, which corresponds with the name of Paradise, or the garden of Eden, as horti Adonis answers to the garden of the Lord. Besides, the gardens of primitive nations were commonly, if not in every instance, devoted to religious purposes. In these shady retreats were celebrated, for a long succession of ages, the rites of pagan superstition.' - Paxton. These

groves or gardens were furnished with the temple of the god that was worshipped, and with altars, and with everything necessary for this species of worship. They were usually, also, made as shady and dark as possible, to inspire the worshippers with religious awe and reverence on their entrance; compare the note at Isaiah 66:17.

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Verse 30

For ye … - The mention of the tree in the previous verse, gives the prophet occasion for the beautiful image in this. They had desired the oak, and they should be like it. That, when the frost came, was divested of its beauty, and its leaves faded, and fell; so should their beauty and privileges and happiness, as a people, fade away at the anger of God.

A garden that hath no water - That is therefore withered and parched up; where nothing would flourish, but where all would be desolation - a most striking image of the approaching desolation of the Jewish nation. In Eastern countries this image would be more striking than with us. In these hot regions, a constant supply of water is necessary for the cultivation, and even for the very existence and preservation of a garden. Should it lack water for a few days, everything in it would be burned up with neat and totally destroyed. In all gardens, therefore, in those regions; there must be a constant supply of water, either from some neighboring river, or from some fountain or reservoir within it. To secure such a fountain became an object of indispensable importance, not only for the coolness and pleasantness of the garden, but for the very existence of the vegetation. Dr. Russell, in his Natural History of Aleppo, says, that ‹all the gardens of Aleppo are on the banks of the river that runs by that city, or on the sides of the rill that supplies their aqueduct;‘ and all the rest of the country he represents as perfectly burned up in the summer months, the gardens only retaining their verdure, on account of the moistness of their situation.

Verse 31

And the strong - Those who have been thought to be strong, on whom the people relied for protection and defense - their rulers, princes, and the commanders of their armies.

As tow - The coarse or broken part of flax, or hemp. It means here that which shall be easily and quickly kindled and rapidly consumed. As tow burns and is destroyed at the touch of fire, so shall the rulers of the people be consumed by the approaching calamities.

And the maker of it - This is an unhappy translation. The word פעלו *poʿălô* may be indeed a participle, and be rendered ‹its maker,‘ but it is more commonly a noun, and means his work, or his action. This is its plain meaning here. So the Latin Vulgate, the Septuagint, and the Chaldee. It means, that as a spark enkindles tow, so the works or deeds of a wicked nation shall be the occasion or cause of their destruction. The ambition of one man is the cause of his ruin; the sensuality of a second is the cause of his; the avarice of a third is the cause of his. These passions, insatiable and ungratified, shall be the occasion of the deep and eternal sorrows of hell. So it means here, that the crimes and hypocrisy of the nation would be the real cause of all the calamities that would come upon them as a people.

Shall both burn together - The spark and the flame from the kindled flax mingle, and make one fire. So the people and their works would be enkindled and destroyed together. They would burn so rapidly, that nothing could extinguish them. The meaning is, that the nation would be punished; and that all their works of idolatry and monuments of sin would be the occasion of their punishment, and would perish at the same time. The "principle" involved in this passage teaches us the following things:

(1) That the wicked, however mighty, shall be destroyed.

(2) That their works will be the "cause" of their ruin - a cause necessarily leading to it.

(3) That the works of the wicked - all that they do and all on which they depend - shall be destroyed.

(4) That this destruction shall be final. Nothing shall stay the flame. No tears of penitence, no power of men or devils, shall "put out" the fires which the works of the wicked shall enkindle.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

Analysis of Isaiah 2:7, Isaiah 2:16, Isaiah 2:20; Isaiah 3:18-23), and this accords best with the time of Uzziah, or the time of Jotham. Some have referred it to the return from Babylon, others to the times of the Messiah. The description in Isaiah 2:2-4, and Isaiah 4:5-6, cannot easily be referred to any other times than those of the Messiah.

The main scope of the prophecy is, to denounce the crimes which prevailed in the time when it was delivered; to threaten certain punishment for these crimes; and to assure the nation that there would be happier times when those crimes should have received their appropriate punishment, and when the nation should be reformed. The prophecy has relation solely to the kingdom of Judah, Isaiah 2:1. The prophet opens the prophecy Isaiah 2:2 by a brief but striking statement of the happy period when the Messiah should come, and the happy influence of his advent, Isaiah 2:2-4. It would seem, in looking at the entire prophecy, as if he had been contemplating the sins of the nation which then abounded, until his heart was sickened, and he involuntarily cast his mind forward to brighter and happier days when these things should cease, and the Messiah should reign in his glory. See Introduction, Section 7. The future times of the Messiah he exhibits, by showing Isaiah 2:2 that the benefits of the true religion would be extended to all people, and would be so conspicuous as to attract their attention, as if the temple, the place of the worship of the true God, should be made conspicuous in the sight of all nations. It would excite a deep interest, and a spirit of earnest inquiry everywhere Isaiah 2:3, and the effect of his reign would be to put an end to wars, and to introduce ultimately universal peace Isaiah 2:4. In view of that, the prophet Isaiah 2:5 exhorts all the people to turn from their sins, and to walk in the light of Jehovah. This leads him to a statement of the crimes which he would seem to have been contemplating, and the punishment which must follow from their prevalence. The statement of the crimes and their punishment is somewhat intermingled, but they may be exhibited so as to be contemplated separately and distinctly.

Crimes

Forsaking Jehovah;

Patronage of soothsayers;

Alliance with strangers Isaiah 2:6;

Accumulation of treasures;

Preparation of war-chariots Isaiah 2:7;

Universal and debasing idolatry Isaiah 2:8-9.

Punishments

God would so judge them as to produce universal consternation Isaiah 2:10.

He would humble their pride, and bring them low Isaiah 2:11-12.

He would smite and destroy all their wealth, and the sources of national corruption and depravity Isaiah 2:13-17.

He would entirely destroy the idols Isaiah 2:13.

He would produce universal terror and alarm Isaiah 2:19-21.

In view of these heavy judgments, the prophet calls on the people Isaiah 2:22 to cease to trust in men, since all were mortal, and unworthy of their confidence.

In Isaiah 3:1-15, intermingled with the account of their sins.

There would be calamity, the removal of the means of support, and the removal of the men in whom the nation had reposed confidence Isaiah 3:1-4.

There would be oppression, and a violation of, and disregard of all the proper laws of social life Isaiah 3:5.

There would be a state of anarchy and calamity, so that no one would be willing to be a leader, or undertake to remove the difficulties of the nation, or hold an office of trust Isaiah 3:6-7.

Jerusalem would be ruined Isaiah 3:8.

The cause of this was pride and hypocrisy Isaiah 3:8-9.

The prophet states the principles of the divine administration - that it should be well with the righteous, but ill with the wicked Isaiah 3:12-15.

The rulers of the nation were corrupt and oppressive Isaiah 3:12-15.

The chapter closes Isaiah 3:16-26 with a graphic description of the gaiety, pride, and folly of the female part of the Jewish community, and with the assurance that they would be involved in the calamities which were coming upon the nation.

Isaiah 4:1-6 is a continuation of the same prophecy. It contains the following parts:

1. A statement of the general calamity of the nation, indicated by the fact that the "men" would be destroyed, and that the women would apply to the few that remained that they might be called by their name, and their reproach be taken away Isaiah 4:1.

2. At that future time there would be a looking to the Messiah; a feeling that God only could interpose and save them; and a high estimate placed on the ‹Branch of Jehovah‘ - the Messiah, to whom alone they could look for deliverance Isaiah 4:2.

3. The people would turn to God, and there would be a reformation from their national sins Isaiah 4:3-4. The judgments of Yahweh would be effectual to the removal of the special crimes which the prophet had denounced, and the nation would become holy.

God would, in that future time, become the protector of his people, and the symbols of his presence and protection would be manifest everywhere in the midst of them Isaiah 4:5-6.

It is evident, therefore, that this prophecy was uttered when the nation was proud, haughty, and hypocritical; when they had been successfully engaged in commerce, and when the means of luxury abounded; when the national pride and vanity were manifested in dress, and luxury, and in the oppressive acts of the rulers; when general disorder and anarchy prevailed,

and when a part of the nation at least was idolatrous. The entire prophecy may be regarded as a condemnation of these sins, and a solemn declaration that "for" these sins, wherever they prevail, the judgments of God will be poured out on a people. The prophecy, also, contemplates happier and purer times, and contains the assurance that the "series" of judgments which God would bring on a guilty people would "ultimately" have the effect to purify them, and that all these crimes and calamities would be succeeded by the pure and peaceful reign of the Messiah. It is in accordance with the manner of Isaiah, when he surveys existing crimes; when he sees the degradation of his countrymen, and is deeply distressed; when he portrays the judgments that must "certainly" come upon them; and when, as if sickened with the contemplation of their crimes and calamities, his mind seeks repose in the contemplation of the purer and happier period when the Messiah should reign, and peace, prosperity, and purity should prevail.

Verse 1

The word - This indicates that this is the commencement of a new prophecy. It has no immediate connection with the preceding. It was delivered doubtless at a different time, and with reference to a different class of events. In the previous chapter the term "vision" is used Isaiah 2:1, but the meaning is substantially the same. The term "word" דבר *dâbâr* denotes a "command, a promise, a doctrine, an oracle, a revelation, a message, a thing," etc. It means here, that Isaiah foresaw certain "future events" or "things" that would happen in regard to Judah and Jerusalem.

Judah … - see the notes at Isaiah 1:1.

Verse 2

In the last days - הימים באחרית *be'achărîyth hāyâmîym* In the "after" days; in the "futurity" of days; that is, in the time to come. This is an expression that often occurs in the Old Testament. It does not of itself refer to any "particular" period, and especially not, as our translation would seem to indicate, to the end of the world. The expression properly denotes "only future time" in general. But the prophets were accustomed to concentrate all their hopes on the coming of the Messiah. They saw his advent as giving character, and sublimity, and happiness to all coming times. Hence, the expression came to denote, by way of eminence, the times of the Messiah, and is frequently used in the New Testament, as well as the Old, to designate those times; see Acts 2:17; compare Joel 2:28; Hebrews 1:2; 1

Peter 1:5, 1 Peter 1:20; 1 John 2:18; Genesis 49:1; Micah 4:1; Deuteronomy 4:30; Jeremiah 48:47; Daniel 11:28.

The expressions which follow are figurative, and cannot well be interpreted as relating to any other events than the times of the Messiah. They refer to that future period, then remote, which would constitute the "last" dispensation of things in this world - the "last" time - the period, however long it might be, in which the affairs of the world would be closed. The patriarchal times had passed away; the dispensation under the Mosaic economy would pass away; the times of the Messiah would be the "last" times, or the last dispensation, under which the affairs of the world would be consummated. Thus the phrase is evidently used in the New Testament, as denoting the "last" time, though without implying that that time would be short. It might be longer than "all" the previous periods put together, but it would be the "last" economy, and under that economy, or "in" that time, the world would be destroyed, Christ would come to judgment, the dead would be raised, and the affairs of the world would be wound up. The apostles, by the use of this phrase, never intimate that the time would be short, or that the day of judgment was near, but only that "in" that time the great events of the world's history would be consummated and closed; compare 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5. This prophecy occurs in Micah Micah 4:1-5 with scarcely any variation. It is not known whether Isaiah made use of Micah, or Micah of Isaiah, or both of an older and well-known prophecy. Hengstenberg ("Chris." i., pp. 289,290) supposes that Isaiah copied from Micah, and suggests the following reasons:

1. The prediction of Isaiah is disconnected with what goes before, and yet begins with the copulative ו (*v*), "and." In Micah, on the contrary, it is connected with what precedes and follows.

2. In the discourses of the prophets, the promise usually follows the threatening. This order is observed by Micah; in Isaiah, on the contrary, the promise contained in the passage precedes the threatening, and another promise follows. Many of the older theologians supposed that the passages were communicated alike by the Holy Spirit to both writers. But there is no improbability in supposing that Isaiah may have availed himself of language used by Micah in describing the same event.

The mountain of the Lord‘s house - The temple was built on mount Moriah, which was hence called the mountain of the Lord‘s house. The temple, or the mountain on which it was reared, would be the object which would express the public worship of the true God. And hence, to say that that should be elevated higher than all other hills, or mountains, means, that the worship of the true God would become an object so conspicuous as to be seen by all nations; and so conspicuous that all nations would forsake other objects and places of worship, being attracted by the glory of the worship of the true God.

Shall be established - Shall be fixed, rendered permanent.

In the top of the mountains - To be in the top of the mountains, would be to be “conspicuous,” or seen from afar. In other words, the true religion would be made known to all people.

Shall flow unto it - This is a figurative expression, denoting that they would be converted to the true religion. It indicates that they would come in multitudes, like the flowing of a mighty river. The idea of the “flowing” of the nations, or of the movement of many people toward an object like a broad stream, is one that is very grand and sublime; compare Psalm 65:7. This cannot be understood of any period previous to the establishment of the gospel. At no time of the Jewish history did any events occur that would be a complete fulfillment of this prophecy. The expressions evidently refer to that period elsewhere often predicted by this prophet Isaiah 11:10; Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:22; Isaiah 54:3; Isaiah 60:3, Isaiah 60:5, Isaiah 60:10; Isaiah 62:2; Isaiah 66:12, Isaiah 66:19, when “the Gentiles” would be brought to the knowledge of the true religion. In Isaiah 66:12, there occurs a passage remarkably similar, and which may serve to explain this:

‹Behold I will extend peace to her (to Zion) as a river;

And the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream.‘

Under the Messiah, through the preaching of the apostles and by the spread of the gospel, this prophecy was to receive its full accomplishment.

Verse 3

And many people shall go - This denotes a prevalent “desire” to turn to the true God, and embrace the true religion. It is remarkable that it speaks of an inclination among them to “seek” God, as if they were satisfied of the folly and danger of their ways, and felt the necessity of obtaining a better religion. In many cases this has occurred. Thus, in modern times, the people of the Sandwich Islands threw away their gods and remained without any

religion, as if waiting for the message of life. Thus, too, the pagan not unfreguently come from a considerable distance at missionary stations to be instructed, and to receive the Bible and tracts. Perhaps this is to be extensively the mode in which Christianity is to be spread. God, who has all power over human hearts, may excite the pagan to anxious inquiry; may show them the folly of their religion; and may lead them to this "preparation" to embrace the gospel, and this disposition to "go" and seek it. He has access to all people. By a secret influence on the understanding, the heart, and the conscience of the pagan, he can convince them of the folly of idolatry and its vices. He can soften down their prejudices in favor of their long-established systems; can break down the barriers between them and Christians; and can dispose them to receive with joy the messengers of salvation. He can raise up, among the pagan themselves, reformers, who shall show them the folly of their systems. It cannot be doubted that the universal triumph of the gospel will be preceded by some such remarkable preparation among the nations; by a secret, silent, but most mighty influence from God on the pagan generally, that shall loosen their hold on idolatry, and dispose them to welcome the gospel. And the probability that this state of things exists already, and will more and more, should be an inducement to Christians to make more vigorous efforts to send every where the light of life.

He will teach us of his ways - He will make us acquainted with his will, and with the doctrines of the true religion.

For out of Zion - These are the words of the "prophet," not of the people. The prophet declares that the law would go from Zion; that is, Zion would be the center from which it would be spread abroad; see the note at Isaiah 1:8. Zion is put here for Jerusalem, and means that the message of mercy to mankind would be spread "from" Jerusalem. Hence, the Messiah commanded his disciples to tarry ‹in Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high.‘ Luke 24:49. Hence, also, he said that repentance and remission of sins should ‹be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem‘ - perhaps referring to this very passage in Isaiah; Luke 24:47.

The law - This is put here for the doctrines of the true religion in general. The law or will of God, under the reign of the Messiah, would proceed from Zion.

The word of the Lord - The message of his mercy to mankind; that which he has "spoken" respecting the salvation of men. The truth which is

here taught is, “that Zion or the church is the source of religious truth, and the center of religious influence in the world.” This is true in the following respects:

(1) Zion was the source of religious truth to the ancient world. Knowledge was gained by travel; and it is capable of about as clear demonstration as any fact of ancient history, that no inconsiderable part of the knowledge pertaining to God in ancient Greece was obtained by contact with the sages of distant lands, and that the truths held in Zion or Jerusalem thus radiated from land to land, and mind to mind.

(2) The church is now the center of religious truth to the world around it.

(a) The world by its philosophy never originates a system of religion which it is desirable to retain, and which conveys any just view of God or the way of salvation.

(b) The most crude, unsettled, contradictory, and vague opinions on religion prevail in this community called ‹the world.‘

(c) If “in” this community there are any opinions that are true and valuable, they can in most instances be traced to “the church.” They are owing to the influence of the pulpit; or to an early training in the Bible; or to early teaching in the Sabbath-school, or to the instructions of a pious parent, or to the “general” influence which Christianity exerts on the community.

(3) The church holds the power of “reformation” in her hands, every cause of morals advancing or retarding as she enters into the work, or as she withdraws from it.

(4) The pagan world is dependent on the church for the knowledge of the true religion. There are “no” systems of truth that start up on a pagan soil. There is no elastic energy in a pagan mind. There is no recuperative power to bring it back to God. There is no “advance” made toward the truth in any pagan community. There is no well-spring of life to purify the soul. The effect of time is only to deepen the darkness, and to drive them farther from God. They only worship mere shapeless blocks; they bow down before worse looking idols; they enter less elegant and more polluted temples. The idols of the pagan are not constructed with half the skill and taste evinced two thousand years ago; nor are their temples built with such exquisite art. No idol of the pagan world now can compare with the statue

of Minerva at Athens; no temple can be likened to the Parthenon; no sentiment of paganism in China, India, or Africa, can be compared with the views of the sages of Greece. The pagan world is becoming worse and worse, and if ever brought to better views, it must be by a "foreign" influence; and that influence will not go forth from philosophy or science, but "from the church." If light is ever to spread, it is to go forth from Zion; and the world is dependent on "the church" for any just knowledge of God and of the way to life, The ‹law is to go forth from Zion;‘ and the question whether the million of the human family are to be taught the way to heaven, is just a question whether the church can be roused to diffuse abroad the light which has arisen on her.

Verse 4

And he shall judge - Or he shall exercise the office of a judge, or umpire. This "literally" refers to the God of Jacob Isaiah 2:3, though it is clear that the meaning is, that he will do it by the Messiah, or under his reign. One office of a judge is to decide controversies; to put an end to litigations, and thus to promote peace. The connection shows that this is the meaning here. Nations that are contending shall be brought to peace by the influence of the reign of the Messiah, and shall beat their swords into plowshares. In other words, the influence of the reign of the Messiah shall put a period to wars, and reduce contending nations to peace.

And shall rebuke - Shall "reprove" them for their contentions and strifes.

Lowth: ‹Shall work conviction in many peoples.‘

Noyes: ‹He shall be a judge of the nations,

And an umpire of many kingdoms.‘

He shall show them the evil of war; and by reproving them for those wicked passions which cause wars, shall promote universal peace. This the gospel everywhere does; and the tendency of it, if obeyed, would be to produce universal peace. In accordance with predictions like these, the Messiah is called the Prince of Peace Isaiah 9:6; and it is said that of his peace there shall be no end; Isaiah 9:7.

And they shall beat … - They shall change the arts of war to those of peace; or they shall abandon the pursuits of war for the mild and useful arts of husbandry; compare Psalm 46:9; Hosea 2:20. A similar prophecy is found in Zechariah 9:10. The following extracts may serve to illustrate this

passage: ‹The Syrian plow, which was probably used in all the regions around, is a very simple frame, and commonly so light, that a man of moderate strength might carry it in one hand. Volney states that in Syria it is often nothing else than the branch of a tree, cut below a bifurcation, and used without wheels. The plowshare is a piece of iron, broad but not large, which tips the end of the shaft. So much does it resemble the short sword used by the ancient warriors, that it may, with very little trouble, be converted into that deadly weapon; and when the work of destruction is over, reduced again to its former shape, and applied to the purposes of agriculture.‘

Their spears - Spears were much used in war. They were made of wood, with a sharpened piece of iron or other metal attached to the end. The pruning-hook, made for cutting the limbs of vines or trees, is, in like manner, a long piece of wood with a crooked knife attached to it. Hence, it was easy to convert the one into the other.

Pruning-hooks - Hooks or long knives for trimming vines. The word here, however, means anything employed in “reaping or mowing,” a sickle, or a scythe, or any instrument to “cut with,” as well as a pruning-hook. These figures, as images of peace, are often used by the prophets. Micah Micah 4:4 has added to this description of peace in Isaiah, the following:

But they shall sit
Every man under his vine,
And under his fig-tree;

And none shall make them afraid:
For the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

Joel Joel 3:10 has reversed the figure, and applied it to war prevailing over peace:

Beat your plowshares into swords;
And your pruning-hooks into spears.

The same emblems to represent peace, which are used here by Isaiah, also occur in pagan poets. Thus Martial; Epigr. xiv. 34:

Falx ex ense.
Pax me certa ducis placidos conflavit in usus,
Agricolae nunc sum, militis ante fui.

So Virgil; Georg. 1,507:

Squalent abductis arva colonis,

Et curvae rigidum falces conflantur in ensem.

So also Ovid; Fast. 1,699:

Sarcula cessabunt, versique in pila ligones.

Nation shall not lift up … - This is a remarkable prediction of universal peace under the gospel. The prediction is positive, that the time will come when it shall prevail. But it has not yet been fully accomplished. We may remark, however, in relation to this:

(1) That the tendency of the gospel is to promote the arts, and to produce the spirit of peace.

(2) It will dispose the nations to do right, and thus to avoid the occasions of war.

(3) It will fill the mind with horror at the scenes of cruelty and blood that war produces.

(4) It will diffuse honor around the arts of peace, and teach the nations to prize the endearments of home and country, and the sweet scenes of domestic life.

(5) Just so far as it has influence over princes and rulers, it will teach them to lay aside the passions of ambition and revenge, and the love of conquest and ‹glory,‘ and indispose them to war.

(6) The tendency of things now is toward peace. The laws of nations have been established under the gospel. Difficulties can even now be adjusted by negotiation, and without a resort to arms.

(7) Wars are far less barbarous than they were formerly. The gospel has produced humanity, mildness, and some degree of justice even in war. It has put an end to the unmerciful treatment of prisoners; has prevented their being sold as slaves; has taught even belligerents not to murder women and children.

(8) Nothing remains to be done to make peace universal but to send the gospel abroad through every land. When that is done, the nations will be disposed to peace; and the prophet, therefore, has predicted the universal

prevalence of peace "only" when all nations shall be brought under the influence of the gospel.

Verse 5

O house of Jacob - This is a direct address, or exhortation, of the prophet to the Jews. It is made in view of the fact that God had gracious purposes toward them. He intended to distinguish them by making them the source of blessings to all nations. As this was to be their high destiny, he exhorts them to devote themselves to him, and to live to his honor. The word "house" here means the "family, or nation." The phrase is applied to the Jews because their tribes were descended from the twelve sons of Jacob.

Let us walk - Let us "live." The word "walk" is often used to denote human life or conduct; compare Isaiah 2:3; Romans 6:4; Romans 8:1; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 6:16, …

In the light of the Lord - The sense of this is: Let us obey the commandments of Yahweh; or, as the Chaldee expresses it, ‹Let us walk in the doctrine of the law of the Lord.' The idea may be thus expressed: ‹Let us not walk in the darkness and error of sin and idolatry, but in the light or instruction which God sheds upon us by his law. He teaches us what we should do, and let us obey him.' "Light" is often, in the Scriptures, thus put for instruction, or teaching; compare the note at Matthew 4:16; note at John 1:4; also, note at Ephesians 5:8.

Verse 6

Therefore - The prophet proceeds in this and the following verses, to state the reasons of their calamities, and of the judgments that had come upon them. Those judgments he traces to the crimes which he enumerates - crimes growing chiefly out of great commercial prosperity, producing pride, luxury, and idolatry.

Thou hast forsaken - The address is changed from the exhortation to the house of Jacob Isaiah 2:5 to God, as is frequently the case in the writings of Isaiah. It indicates a state where the mind is full of the subject, and where it expresses itself in a rapid and hurried manner.

Hast forsaken - Hast withdrawn thy protection, and given them over to the calamities and judgments which had come upon them.

They be replenished - Hebrew, They are "full." That is, these things abound.

From the East - Margin, "More than the East." The meaning of the expression it is not easy to determine. The word translated "East," קדם *qedem* denotes also "antiquity," or that which is "of old," as well as the East. Hence, the Septuagint renders it, ‹their land is, as of old, filled.' The Chaldee, ‹their land is filled with idols as at the beginning.' Either idea will suit the passage; though our translation more nearly accords with the Hebrew than the others. The "East," that is, Arabia, Persia, Chaldea, etc., was the country where astrology, soothsaying, and divination particularly abounded; see Daniel 2:2; Deuteronomy 18:9-11.

And are soothsayers - Our word "soothsayers" means "foretellers, prognosticators," persons who pretend to predict future events "without inspiration," differing in this from true prophets. What the Hebrew word means, it is not so easy to determine. The word ענים ʿ*onenîym* may be derived from ענן ʿ*ânân* "a cloud" - and then would denote those who augur from the appearance of the clouds, a species of divination from certain changes observed in the sky; compare Leviticus 19:26: ‹Neither shall ye - observe times.' 2 Kings 21:6. This species of divination was expressly forbidden; see Deuteronomy 18:10-12: ‹There shall not be found among you anyone that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter,' etc. Or the word may be derived from עין ʿ*ayin* "an eye," and then it will denote those who fascinate, enchant, or bewitch by the eye. It is probable that the word includes "augury, necromancy, and witchcraft," in general - all which were expressly forbidden by the law of Moses; Deuteronomy 18:10-12.

Like the Philistines - The Philistines occupied the land in the southwest part of Palestine. The Septuagint uses the word "foreigners" here, as they do generally, instead of the Philistines.

And they please themselves - The word used here - שׂפק *s'âphaq* - means literally "to clap the hands" in token of joy. It may also mean, "to join the hands, to shake hands," and then it will signify that they "joined hands" with foreigners; that is, they made compacts or entered into alliances with them contrary to the law of Moses. The Septuagint seems to understand it of unlawful marriages with the women of surrounding nations - τέκνα πολλὰ ἀλλόφυλλα ἐγενήθη αὐτοῖς *tekna polla allophula egenēthē autois* compare Nehemiah 13:23. It means probably, in general, that they entered into improper alliances, whether they were military, matrimonial, or commercial, with the surrounding nations. The words "children of

strangers" may mean, with the descendants of the foreigners with whom Moses forbade any alliances. The Jews were to be a separate and special people, and, in order to this, it was necessary to forbid all such foreign alliances; Exodus 23:31-32; Exodus 34:12-15; Psalm 106:3, Psalm 106:5; Ezra 9:1-15,

Verse 7

Their land also is full of silver and gold - This "gold" was brought chiefly from Ophir. Solomon imported vast quantities of silver and gold from foreign places; 2 Chronicles 8:18; 2 Chronicles 9:10; 1 Chronicles 29:4; compare Job 28:16; 1 Kings 10:21, 1 Kings 10:27; 2 Chronicles 9:20. ‹And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones.' ‹It was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.' From these expressions we see the force of the language of Isaiah - ‹their land is full,' etc. This accumulation of silver and gold was expressly forbidden by the law of Moses; Deuteronomy 17:17: ‹Neither shall he (the king of Israel) greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.' The reason of this prohibition was, that it tended to produce luxury, effeminacy, profligacy, the neglect of religion, and vice. It is on this account that it is brought by the prophet as an "accusation" against them that their land was thus filled.

Treasures - Wealth of all kinds; but chiefly silver, gold, precious stones, garments, etc.; compare the note at Matthew 6:19.

Their land also is full of horses - This was also forbidden in the law of Moses; Deuteronomy 17:16: ‹But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses.' This law, however, was grossly violated by Solomon; 1 Kings 10:26: ‹And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen; he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.' It is not quite clear "why" the use of horses was forbidden to the Jews. Perhaps several reasons might have concurred:

(1) Egypt was distinguished for producing fine horses, and the Egyptians used them much in war Deuteronomy 17:16; and one design of God was to make the Jews distinguished in all respects from the Egyptians, and to keep them from commerce with them.

(2) Horses were chiefly used "in war," and the tendency of keeping them would be to produce the love of war and conquest.

(3) The tendency of keeping them would be to lead them to put "trust" in them rather than in God for protection. This is hinted at in Psalm 20:7: ‹Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of Yahweh our God.‘

(4) "Horses" were regarded as consecrated "to the sun;" see "Univ. Hist. Anc. P.," vol. x., 177. Ed. 1780. They were sacrificed in various nations to the sun, their swiftness being supposed to render them an appropriate offering to that luminary. There is no evidence, however, that they were used for sacrifice among the Hebrews. They were probably employed to draw the chariots in the solemn processions in the worship of the sun. The ancient Persians, who were sun-worshippers, dedicated white horses and chariots to the sun, and it is supposed that other nations derived the practice from them. The sun was supposed to be drawn daily in a chariot by four wondrous coursers, and the fate of Phaeton, who undertook to guide that chariot and to control those coursers, is known to all. The use of horses, therefore, among the Hebrews in the time of Ahaz, when Isaiah lived, was connected with idolatry, and it was mainly on this account that the prophet rebuked their use with so much severity; 2 Kings 23:11. It may be added, that in a country like Judea, abounding in hills and mountains, cavalry could not be well employed even in war. On the plains of Egypt it could be employed to advantage; or in predatory excursions, as among the Arabs, horses could be used with great success and effect, and Egypt and Arabia therefore abounded with them. Indeed, these may be regarded as the native countries of the horse. As it was the design of God to separate, as much as possible, the Jews from the surrounding nations, the use of horses was forbidden.

Chariots - "Chariots" were chiefly used in war, though they were sometimes used for pleasure. Of those intended for war there were two kinds; one for the generals and princes to ride in, the other to break the enemy‘s ranks. These last were commonly armed with hooks or scythes. They were much used by the ancients; Joshua 11:4; Judges 1:19. The Philistines, in their war against Saul, had 30,000 chariots, and 6000 horsemen; 1 Samuel 13:5. There is no evidence, however, that the Jews used chariots for war. Solomon had many of them 1 Kings 10:26, but they do not appear to have been used in any military expedition, but to have been

kept for display and pleasure. Judea was a mountainous country, and chariots would have been of little or no use in war.

Verse 8

Their land also is full of idols - compare Hosea 8:4; Hosea 10:1. Vitringa supposes that Isaiah here refers to idols that were kept in private houses, as Uzziah and Jotham were worshippers of the true God, and in their reign idolatry was not publicly practiced. It is certain, however, that though Uzziah himself did right, and was disposed to worship the true God, yet he did not effectually remove idolatry from the land. The high places were not removed, and the people still sacrificed and burned incense on them; 2 Kings 15:4. It was customary with the pagan to keep in their houses "Penates or household gods" - small images, which they regarded as "protectors," and to which they paid homage: compare Genesis 30:19; Judges 17:5; 1 Samuel 19:13; Hosea 3:4. ‹This is a true and literal description of India. The traveler cannot proceed a "mile" through an inhabited country without seeing idols, and vestiges of idolatry in every direction. See their vessles, their implements of husbandry, their houses, their furniture, their ornaments, their sacred trees, their "domestic" and public temples; and they all declare that the land is full of idols.‘ - "Roberts."

The work of their own hands … - Idols. It is often brought as proof of their great folly and degradation that they paid homage to what "they" had themselves made. See this severely satirized in Isaiah 40:18-20; Isaiah 41:6-7; Isaiah 44:9-17.

Verse 9

And the mean man - That is, the man in humble life, the poor, the low in rank - for this is all that the Hebrew word here - אדם *'âdâm* - implies. The distinction between the two words here used - אדם *'âdâm* as denoting a man of humble rank, and איש *'îysh* as denoting one of elevated rank - is one that constantly occurs in the Scriptures. Our word "mean" conveys an idea of moral baseness and degradation, which is not implied in the Hebrew.

Boweth down - That is, before idols. Some commentators, however, have understood this of bowing down in "affliction," but the other is probably the true interpretation.

And the great man - The men in elevated rank in life. The expressions together mean the same as "all ranks of people." It was a common or universal thing. No rank was exempt from the prevailing idolatry.

Therefore forgive them not - The Hebrew is "future" - להם ואל־תשא *ve'al -tis'â' lâhem* Thou wilt not "bear" for them; that is, thou wilt not bear away their sins (by an atonement), or ‹thou wilt not forgive them;' - but agreeable to a common Hebrew construction, it has the force of the imperative. It involves a "threatening" of the prophet, in the form of an address to God ‹So great is their sin, that thou, Lord, wilt not pardon them.' The prophet then proceeds, in the following verses, to denounce the certainty and severity of the judgment that was coming upon them.

Verse 10

Enter into the rock - That is, into the "holes or caverns" in the rocks, as a place of refuge and safety; compare Isaiah 2:19, and Revelation 6:15-16. In times of invasion by an enemy, it was natural to flee to the fastnesses or to the caverns of rocks for refuge. This expression is highly figurative and poetic. The prophet warns them to flee from danger. The sense is, that such were their crimes that they would certainly be punished; and he advises them to flee to a place of safety.

And hide thee in the dust - In Isaiah 2:19, this is ‹caves of the dust.' It is parallel to the former, and probably has a similar meaning. But "may" there not be reference here to the mode prevailing in the East of avoiding the monsoon or poisonous heated wind that passes over the desert? Travelers there, in order to be safe, are obliged to throw themselves down, and to place their mouths close to the earth until it has passed.

For fear of the Lord - Hebrew ‹From the face of the terror of the Lord.' That is, the punishment which God will inflict will sweep over the land, producing fear and terror.

And for the glory … - That is, the honor or splendor which will attend him when he comes forth to inflict judgment on the people; Isaiah 2:19-20.

Verse 11

The lofty looks - Hebrew ‹The eyes of pride,' that is, the proud eyes or looks. Pride commonly evinces itself in a lofty carriage and supercilious aspect; Psalm 18:27.

Shall be humbled - By the calamities that shall sweep over the land. This does not mean that he shall be brought "to be" humble, or to have a humble heart, but that that on which he so much prided himself would be taken away.

The Lord alone … - God will so deal with them as to vindicate his honor; to turn the attention entirely on himself, and to secure the reverence

of all the people. So terrible shall be his judgments, and so "manifestly" shall they come from "him," that they shall look away from everything else to "him" alone.

In that day - In the day of which the prophet speaks, when God would punish them for their sins, Reference is probably made to the captivity at Babylon. It may be remarked, that one design of punishment is to lead people to regard and honor God. He will humble the pride of people, and so pass before them in his judgments, that they shall be compelled to "acknowledge" him as their just Sovereign and Judge.

Verse 12

The day … - This expression evidently denotes that the Lord would inflict severe punishment upon every one that was lofty. Such a severe infliction is called "the day of the Lord of hosts," because it would be a time when "he" would particularly manifest himself, and when "he" would be recognized as the inflicter of that punishment. "His" coming forth in this manner would give "character" to that time, and would be the prominent "event." The punishment of the wicked is thus freguently called "the day of the Lord;" Isaiah 13:6, Isaiah 13:9: ‹Behold the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger,‘ etc.; Jeremiah 46:10: ‹The day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance.‘ Ezekiel 30:3; Zephaniah 1:7, Zephaniah 1:14; Joel 2:31; see also in the New Testament, 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10.

Every one that is proud and lofty - Or, rather, every "thing" that is high and lofty. The phrase is not restricted to "persons," though it embraces them. But though the language here is general, the reference is doubtless, mainly, to the princes, magistrates, and nobility of the nation; and is designed not only to designate them as men of rank and power, but as men who were haughty in their demeanour and feelings. At the same time, there is included in the language, as the subsequent verses show, all on which the nation prided itself.

Verse 13

And upon all the cedars of Lebanon - This is a beautiful specimen of the poetic manner of writing, so common among the Hebrews, where spiritual and moral subjects are represented by grand or beautiful imagery taken from objects of nature. Mount Lebanon bounded Palestine on the north. It was formerly much celebrated for its large and lofty cedars. These cedars were from thirty-five to forty feet in girth, and very high. They were

magnificent trees, and were valuable for ceiling: statues, or roofs, that required durable, and beautiful timber. The roof of the temple of Diana of Ephesus, according to Pliny, was of cedar, and no small part of the temple of Solomon was of this wood. A few lofty trees of this description are still remaining on Mount Lebanon. ‹After three hours of laborious traveling,‘ says D‘Arvieux, ‹we arrived at the famous cedars about eleven o‘clock. We counted twenty-three of them. The circumference of these trees is thirty-six feet. The bark of the cedar resembles that of the pine; the leaves and cone also bear considerable resemblance. The stem is upright, the wood is hard, and has the reputation of being incorruptible. The leaves are long, narrow, rough, very green, ranged in tufts along the branches; they shoot in spring, and fall in the beginning of winter. Its flowers and fruit resemble those of the pine. From the full grown trees, a fluid trickles naturally, and without incision; this is clear, transparent, whitish, and after a time dries and hardens; it is supposed to possess great virtues. The place where these great trees are stationed, is in a plain of nearly a league in circumference, on the summit of a mount which is environed on almost all sides by other mounts, so high that their summits are always covered with snow. This plain is level, the air is pure, the heavens always serene.‘

Maundrell found only sixteen cedars of large growth, and a natural plantation of smaller ones, which were very numerous. One of the largest was twelve yards six inches in girth, and thirty-seven yards in the spread of its boughs. At six yards from the ground, it was divided into five limbs, each equal to a great tree. Dr. Richardson visited them in 1818, and found a small clump of large, tall, and beautiful trees, which he pronounces the most picturesque productions of the vegetable world that he had ever seen. In this clump are two generations of trees; the oldest are large and massy, rearing their heads to an enormous height, and spreading their branches to a great extent. He measured one, not the largest in the clump, and found it thirty-two feet in circumference. Seven of these trees appeared to be very old, the rest younger, though, for want of space, their branches are not so spreading.

Bush‘s “Illustrations of Scripture.” ‹The celebrated cedar-grove of Lebanon,‘ says Dr. Robinson, ‹is at least two days journey from Beirut, near the northern, and perhaps the highest summit of the mountain. It has been often and sufficiently described by travelers for the last three centuries; but

they all differ as to the number of the oldest trees, inasmuch as in counting, some have included more and some less of the younger ones. At present, the number of trees appears to be on the increase, and amounts in all to several hundred. This grove was long held to be the only remnant of the ancient cedars of Lebanon. But Seetzen, in 1805, discovered two other groves of greater extent; and the American Missionaries, in traveling through the mountains, have also found many cedars in other places. The trees are of all sizes, old and young; but none so ancient and venerable as those usually visited.‘ “Bib. Researches,” iii., 440; 441. The cedar, so large, lofty, and grand, is used in the Scriptures to represent kings, princes, and nobles: compare Ezekiel 31:3; Daniel 4:20-22; Zechariah 11:1-2; Isaiah 14:8. Here it means the princes and nobles of the land of Israel. The Chaldee renders it, ‹upon all the strong and mighty kings of the people.‘

And upon all the oaks of Bashan - “Bashan” was east of the river Jordan, in the limits of the half tribe of Manasseh. It was bounded on the north and east by Gilead, south by the river Jabbok, and west by the Jordan. It was celebrated for pasturage, and for producing fine cattle; Numbers 21:33; Numbers 32:33; Psalm 22:12; Ezekiel 39:18; Amos 4:1; Micah 7:14. Its lofty oaks are also particularly celebrated; Ezekiel 27:6; Amos 2:9; Zechariah 11:2. The sense here is not different from the former member of the sentence - denoting the princes and nobles of the land.

Verse 14

And upon all the high mountains - Judea abounded in lofty mountains, which added much to the grandeur of its natural scenery. Lowth supposes that by mountains and hills are meant here, ‹kingdoms, republics, states, cities;‘ but there are probably no parallel places where they have this meaning. The meaning is probably this: high mountains and hills would not only be objects of beauty or grandeur, but also places of defense, and protection. In the caverns and fastnesses of such hills, it would be easy for the people to find refuge when the land was invaded. The meaning of the prophet then is, that the day of God‘s vengeance should be upon the places of refuge and strength; the strongly fortified places, or places of sure retreat in cases of invasion; compare the notes at Isaiah 2:19.

Hills that are lifted up - That is, high, elevated hills.

Verse 15

Every high tower - Towers, or fortresses, were erected for defense and protection. They were made on the walls of cities, for places of observation

(compare the note at Isaiah 21:5), or in places of strength, to be a refuge for an army, and to be a point from which they might sally out to attack their enemies. They were "high" to afford a defense against being scaled by an enemy, and also that from the top they might look abroad for observation; and also to annoy an enemy from the top, when the foe approached the walls of a city.

Every fenced wall - הומה בצורה *betsûrâh hômâh* The word "fenced," בצורה *betsûrâh* is from בצר *bâtsar* to make inaccessible, and hence, to fortify. It denotes a wall that is inaccessible, or strongly fortified. Cities were commonly surrounded by high and strong walls to defend them from enemies. The sense is, God would overturn all their strong places of refuge and defense.

Verse 16

And upon all the ships of Tarshish - Ships of Tarshish are often mentioned in the Old Testament, but the meaning of the expression is not quite obvious; see 1 Kings 10:22; 2 Chronicles 9:21; 2 Chronicles 20:36-37; Psalm 48:7, … It is evident that "Tarshish" was some distant land from which was imported silver, iron, lead, tin, etc. It is now generally agreed that "Tartessus" in Spain is referred to by the Tarshish of Scripture. Bruce, however, supposes that it was in Africa, south of Abyssinia; see the note at Isaiah 60:9. That it was in the "west" is evident from Genesis 10:4; compare Psalm 72:10. In Ezekiel 28:13, it is mentioned as an important place of trade; in Jeremiah 10:9, it is said that silver was procured there; and in Ezekiel 28:12, it is said that iron, lead, silver, and tin, were imported from it. In 2 Chronicles 9:21, it is said that the ships of Tarshish returned every three years, bringing gold and silver, ivory, apes and peacocks. These are productions chiefly of India, but they might have been obtained in trade during the voyage. In Isaiah 23:1; Isaiah 60:9, the phrase, ‹ships of Tarshish,' seems to denote ships that were bound on long voyages, and it is probable that they came to denote a particular kind of ships adapted to long voyages, in the same way as the word "Indiaman" does with us. The precise situation of "Tarshish" is not necessary to be known in order to understand the passage here. The phrase, ‹ships of Tarshish,' denotes clearly ships employed in foreign trade, and in introducing articles of commerce, and particularly of luxury. The meaning is, that God would embarrass, and destroy this commerce; that his judgments would be on their articles of luxury, The Septuagint renders it, ‹and upon every ship of the sea, and upon

every beautiful appearance of ships.‘ The Targum, ‹and upon those who dwell in the isles of the sea, and upon those who dwell in beautiful palaces.‘

And upon all pleasant pictures - Margin, ‹pictures of desire;‘ that is, such as it should be esteemed desirable to possess, and gaze upon; pictures of value or beauty. Tatum, ‹costly palaces.‘ The word rendered ‹pictures,‘ שׂכיות *s'ekîyôth* denotes properly “sights,” or objects to be looked at; and does not designate “paintings” particularly, but everything that was designed for ornament or luxury. Whether the art of painting was much known among the Hebrews, it is not now possible to determine. To a certain extent, it may be presumed to have been practiced; but the meaning of this place is, that the divine judgment should rest on all that was designed for mere ornament and luxury; and, from the description in the previous verses, there can be no doubt that such ornaments would abound.

Verse 17

And the loftiness … - see the note at Isaiah 2:11. The repetition of this makes it strongly emphatic.

Verse 18

And the idols - Note, Isaiah 2:8.

Abolish - Hebrew, ‹Cause to pass away or disappear.‘ He shall entirely cause their worship to cease. This prediction was most remarkably fulfilled. Before the captivity at Babylon, the Jews were exceedingly prone to idolatry. It is a remarkable fact that no such propensity was ever evinced “after” that. In their own land they were entirely free from it; and scattered as they have been into all lands, they have in every age since kept clear from idolatry. Not an instance, probably, has been known of their relapsing into this sin; and no temptation, or torture, has been sufficient to induce them to bow down and worship an idol. This is one of the few instances that have occurred where affliction and punishment have “completely” answered their design.

Verse 19

And they shall go - That is, the worshippers of idols.

Into the holes of the rocks - Judea was a mountainous country, and the mountains abounded with caves that offered a safe retreat for those who were in danger. Many of those caverns were very spacious. At En-gedi, in particular, a cave is mentioned where David with six hundred men hid himself from Saul in the “sides” of it; Judges 6:2; 1 Samuel 13:6. Thus, ‹because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made them the dens which

are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds.‘ Judges 6:2. To these they fled in times of hostile invasion. ‹When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait (for the people were distressed), then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits;‘ 1 Samuel 13:6; compare Jeremiah 41:9. Mahomet speaks of a tribe of Arabians, the tribe of Thamud, who ‹hewed houses out of the mountains to secure themselves;‘ Koran, ch. xv. and xxvi. Grots or rooms hewed out of rocks for various purposes are often mentioned by travelers in Oriental regions: see Maundrell, p. 118, and Burckhardt‘s “Travels in Syria,” and particularly Laborde‘s “Journey to Arabia Petrea.” Such caves are often mentioned by Josephus as affording places of refuge for banditti and robbers; “Ant.,” B. xiv. ch. 15, and “Jewish Wars,” B. i. ch. 16. To enter into the caves and dens, therefore, as places of refuge, was a very natural image to denote consternation. The meaning here is, that the worshippers of idols should be so alarmed as to seek for a place of security and refuge; compare Isaiah 2:10.

When he ariseth - This is an expression often used in the Scriptures to denote the commencement of doing anything. It is here derived, perhaps, from the image of one who has been in repose - as of a lion or warrior, rousing up suddenly, and putting forth mighty efforts.

To shake terribly the earth - An image denoting the presence of God, for judgment or punishment. One of the magnificent images which the sacred writers often use to denote the presence of the Lord is, that the earth shakes and trembles; the mountains bow and are convulsed; 2 Samuel 22:8: ‹Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved, because he was wroth;‘ See also Isaiah 2:9-16; Judges 5:4; Habakkuk 3:6-10: ‹The mountains saw thee and trembled;‘ Hebrews 12:26: ‹Whose voice then shook the earth.‘ The image here denotes that he would come forth in such wrath that the very earth should tremble, as if alarmed his presence. The mind cannot conceive more sublime images than are thus used by the sacred writers.

Verse 20

In that day - That is, in the time when God would come forth to inflict punishment. Probably the day to which the prophet refers here was the time of the captivity at Babylon.

A man shall cast … - That is, “all” who have idols, or who have been trusting in them. Valuable as they may be - made of gold and silver; and

much as he may "now" rely on them or worship them, yet he shall then see their vanity, and shall cast them into dark, obscure places, or holes, where are moles and bats.

To the moles - לחפר פרות *lachepor pērôth* Probably this should be read as a single word, and it is usually interpreted "moles." Jerome interprets it as mice or moles, from חפר *châphar* "to dig." The word is formed by doubling the radical letters to give "intensity." Similar instances of words being divided in the Hebrew, which are nevertheless to be read as one, occur in 2 Chronicles 24:6; Jeremiah 46:20; Lamentations 4:3; Ezekiel 27:6. The mole is a well-known animal, with exceedingly small eyes, that burrows under ground, lives in the dark, and subsists on roots. The bat lives in o d ruins, and behind the bark of trees, and flies only in the night. They "resemble" each other, and are used here in connection, because "both" dwell amidst ruins and in obscure places; both are regarded as animals of the lowest order; both are of the same genus, and both are almost blind. The sense is, therefore, that the idols which had before been so highly venerated, would now be despised, and cast into obscure places, and amidst ruins, as worthless; see Bochart's "Hieroz.," P. i., Lib. iii., p. 1032. Ed. 1663.

And to the bats - ‹The East may be termed the country of bats; they hang by hundreds and thousands in caves, ruins, and under the roofs of large buildings. To enter such places, especially after rain, is "most" offensive. I have lived in rooms where it was sickening to remain, on account of the smell produced by those creatures, and whence it was almost impossible to expel them. What from the appearance of the creature, its sunken diminutive eye, its short legs (with which it cannot walk), its leather-like wings, its half-hairy, oily skin, its offensive ordure ever and anon dropping on the ground, its time for food and sport, darkness, makes it one of the most disgusting creatures to the people of the East. No wonder, then, that its name is used by the Hindoos (as by the prophet) for an epithet of contempt. When a house ceases to please the inhabitants, on account of being haunted, they say, Give it to the "bats." "Alas! alas! my wife and children are dead; my houses, my buildings, are all given to the bats." People ask, when passing a tenantless house, "Why is this habitation given to the bats?"' - "Roberts." The meaning is, that the man would throw his idols into such places as the bats occupy - he would so see their vanity, and so despise them, as to throw them into old ruins and dark places.

Verse 21

To go - That is, that he may go.

Clefts of the rocks - see the note at Isaiah 2:19.

Into the tops … - The tops of such rocks were not easily accessible, and were, therefore, deemed places of safety. We may remark here, how vain were the refuges to which they would resort - as if they were safe from "God," when they had fled to the places in which they sought safety from "man." The image here is, however, one that is very sublime. The earth shaking; the consternation and alarm of the people; their renouncing confidence in all to which they had trusted; their rapid flight; and their appearing on the high projecting cliffs, are all sublime and terrible images. They denote the severity of God's justice, and the image is a faint representation of the consternation of people when Christ shall come to judge the earth; Revelation 6:15-17.

Verse 22

Cease ye from man - That is, cease to confide in or trust in him. The prophet had just said Isaiah 2:11, Isaiah 2:17 that the proud and lofty people would be brought low; that is, the kings, princes, and nobles would be humbled. They in whom the people had been accustomed to confide should show their insufficiency to afford protection. And he calls on the people to cease to put their reliance on any of the devices and refuges of men, implying that trust should be placed in the Lord only; see Psalm 146:3-4; Jeremiah 17:5.

Whose breath is in his nostrils - That is, who is weak and short-lived, and who has no control over his life. All his power exists only while he breathes, and his breath is in his nostrils. It may soon cease, and we should not confide in so frail and fragile a thing as the breath of man; see Psalm 146:3-5:

Put not your trust in princes,
Nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.
His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth;

In that very day his thoughts perish.

Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help,
Whose hope is in the Lord his God.

The Chaldee has translated this verse, ‹Be not subject to man when he is terrible, whose breath is in his nostrils; because today he lives, and

tomorrow he is not, and shall be reputed as nothing.‘ It is remarkable that this verse is omitted by the Septuagint, as Vitringa supposes, because it might seem to exhort people not to put confidence in their rulers.

For wherein … - That is, he is unable to afford the assistance which is needed. When God shall come to judge people, what can man do, who is weak, and frail, and mortal? Refuge should be sought in God. The exhortation of the prophet here had respect to a particular time, but it may be applied in general to teach us not to confide in weak, frail, and dying man. For life and health, for food and raiment, for home and friends, and especially for salvation, we are dependent on God. He alone can save the sinner; and though we should treat people with all due respect, yet we should remember that God alone can save us from the great day of wrath.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

For - This is a continuation of the previous chapter. The same prophecy is continued, and the force of the argument of the prophet will not be seen unless the chapters are read together; see the Analysis prefixed to Isaiah 2:22, the prophet had cautioned his countrymen against confiding in man. In this chapter, a reason is given here why they should cease to do it - to wit, that God would soon take away their kings and princes.

The Lord - האדון *hā'âdôn* see the note at Isaiah 1:24.

The Lord of hosts - see the note at Isaiah 1:9. The prophet calls the attention of the Jews particularly to the fact that this was about to be done by Yahweh "of hosts" - a title which he gives to God when he designs to indicate that that which is to be done implies special strength, power, and majesty. As the work which was now to be done was the removal of the mighty men on which the nation was depending, it is implied that it was a work of power which belonged especially to the God of armies - the Almighty.

Doth take away - Is about to remove. In the Hebrew, the word here is a "participle," and does not mark the precise time. It has reference here, however, to the future.

From Jerusalem … - Note Isaiah 1:1.

The stay - In the Hebrew, the words translated "stay" and "staff" are the same, with the exception that the former is in the masculine, and the latter in the feminine gender. The meaning is, that God would remove "all kinds of support," or "everything" on which they relied. The reference is undoubtedly to the princes and mighty men on whose counsels and aid the nation was resting for defense; see Isaiah 3:2-3.

The whole stay of bread - We use a similar expression when we say that "bread is the staff of life." The Hebrews often expressed the same idea, representing the "heart" in man as being "supported or upheld" by bread, Genesis 18:5 (margin); Judges 19:5 (margin); Leviticus 26:26; Psalm 105:16.

Stay of water - He would reduce them from their luxuries introduced by commerce Jeremiah 38:21; Jeremiah 38:9; Lamentations 4:4: "The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his month for thirst; the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them."

Verse 2

The mighty man - The hero, The idea expressed is not simply that of personal strength and prowess, but the higher one of military eminence or heroism. "Prof. Alexander." This was fully accomplished in the time of Nebuchadnezzar; 2 Kings 24:14.

And the prudent - This word in the original - קסם *qosēm* - means properly "a diviner," or a "soothsayer." But it is sometimes used in a good sense; see Proverbs 16:10, "margin." The Chaldee understands it of a man "who is consulted," or whose opinion is asked, in times of perplexity or danger. The word was originally applied to false prophets, diviners, and soothsayers, who claimed the power of looking into futurity. It came, however, to denote also the man of sagacity, the statesman, the experienced counselor, who from the records of the past could judge of the future, and to whom, therefore, the nation could look in times of perplexity and danger. Vitringa supposes that it may refer here to the false prophets on whose advice the nation might be relying.

The ancient - The old man. Such men, especially among the Hebrews, were deemed particularly qualified to give advice. They had experience; they kept the traditions of their fathers; they had conversed with the wise of the preceding generation; and in a land where there were few books, and knowledge was to be gained mainly by conversation and experience, great respect was shown them; see Leviticus 19:32; 2 Chronicles 31:17; 1 Kings 12:6, 1 Kings 12:8.

Verse 3

The captain of fifty - By this was probably denoted an officer in the army. The idea is, that the commanders of the various divisions of the army should be taken away.

The honourable man - Hebrew פנים נשׂוא *nes'û' pânîym* "The man of elevated countenance." That is, the man high in office. He was so called from the aspect of dignity which a man in office would assume. In the previous chapter, the phrase is used to denote rather the "pride" which attended such officers, than the dignity of the office itself.

And the counselor - Note, Isaiah 1:26.

The cunning artificer - Hebrew, The man wise in mechanic arts: skilled in architecture, etc.

And the eloquent orator - לחשׁ נבון *nebôn lâchash* literally, skilled or learned in whispering, in conjuration, in persuasion. The word לחשׁ *lachash*

denotes properly a whispering, sighing, or calling for help; (Isaiah 26:16, ‹they have poured out a prayer,‘ לחשׁ *lachash* - a secret speech, a feeble sigh for aid.) It is applied to the charm of the serpents - the secret breathing or gentle noise by which the charm is supposed to be effected; Psalm 58:6; Jeremiah 8:17; Ecclesiastes 10:11. In Isaiah 3:20 of this chapter it denotes a charm or amulet worn by females; see the note at that verse. It is also applied to magic, or conjuration - because this was usually done by gentle whispering, or incantation; see the note at Isaiah 8:19. From this use of the word, it comes to denote one that influences another; one who persuades him in any way, as an orator does by argument and entreaty. Ancient orators also probably sometimes used a species of recitative, or measured cadence, not unlike that employed by those who practiced incantations. Jerome says that it means here, ‹a man who is learned, and acquainted with the law, and the prophets.‘ Chaldee, ‹The prudent in council.‘ It "may" be used in a good sense here; but if so, it is probably the only place where the word is so used in the Old Testament. A prophecy similar to this occurs in Hosea 3:4: ‹For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim.‘

Verse 4

And I will give children - Not children in respect to age so much as in regard to talent for governing. I will commit the land to the government of weak and imbecile princes. This would naturally occur when the wise and great were removed; compare Ecclesiastes 10:16: ‹Wo to thee, O land, when thy king is a child;‘ compare Isaiah 3:12.

And babes shall rule … - That is, babes in experience and knowledge. This was fully accomplished in the succession of weak and wicked princes that succeeded Isaiah, until the time of Zedekiah, the last of them, when the temple was taken by Nebuchadnezzar. - "Lowth."

Verse 5

And the people shall be oppressed - This describes the state of anarchy and confusion which would exist under the reign of children and babes Isaiah 3:4, when all law would be powerless, and all rights violated, and when the feeble would be oppressed and borne down by the strong. The word used here, properly denotes that "unjust exactions or demands" would be made, or that the people would be "urged" to fulfill them.

Every one by another - In turn they shall oppress and vex one another. Hebrew ‹man by man; and man by his neighbor‘ - a strong mode of expression, denoting that there would be a state of mutual strife, and violation of rights; compare 1 Kings 20:20.

The child … - All ranks of society shall be broken up. All respect due from one rank in life to another shall be violated.

Shall behave himself proudly - The word used here means rather to "urge," or "press on." The child shall "crowd on" the old man. This was particularly descriptive of a state of anarchy and disorder, from the fact that the Jews inculcated so much respect and deference for age; see the note at Isaiah 3:2.

The ancient - The old man.

And the base - The man of low rank in life. The word properly means the man that is despised, the vile, the ignoble; 1 Samuel 18:23; Proverbs 7:9.

The honorable - All the forms of respect in life would be broken up; all the proper rules of deference between man and man would be violated. Neither dignity, age, nor honor would be respected.

Verse 6

When a man shall take hold … - In this verse, and the following verses, the prophet continues to describe the calamitous and ruined state that would come upon the Jews; when there would be such a want of wealth and people, that they would seize upon anyone that they thought able to defend them. The act of "taking hold" here denotes "supplication" and "entreaty," as when one in danger or distress clings to that which is near, or which may be likely to aid him; compare Isaiah 4:1; 1 Samuel 15:27,

His brother - His kinsman, or one of the same tribe and family - claiming protection because they belonged to the same family.

Of the house of his father - Descended from the same paternal ancestors as himself. Probably this refers to one of an ancient and opulent family - a man who had kept himself from the civil broils and tumults of the nation, and who had retained his property safe in the midst of the surrounding desolation. In the previous verse, the prophet had said that one characteristic of the times would be a want of respect for "the aged" and "the honorable." He here says that such would be the distress, that a man would be "compelled" to show respect to rank; he would look to the ancient and wealthy families for protection.

Thou hast clothing - In ancient times wealth consisted very much in changes of garments; and the expression, ‹thou hast clothing,‘ is the same as ‹you are rich, you are able to assist us;‘ see Exodus 12:34; Exodus 20:26; Genesis 45:22; 2 Kings 5:5.

And let this ruin … - This is an expression of entreaty. ‹Give us assistance, or defense. We commit our ruined and dilapidated affairs to thee, and implore thy help.‘ The Septuagint reads this, ‹and let my food,‘ that is, my support, ‹be under thee‘ - do thou furnish me food. There are some other unimportant variations in the ancient versions, but the sense is substantially given in our translation. It is expressive of great distress and anarchy - when there would be no ruler, and every man would seek one for himself. The whole deportment evinced here by the suppliant is one of submission, distress, and humility.

Verse 7

In that day shall he swear - Hebrew, יִשָּׂא *yîshā'* ‹Shall he lift up‘ - that is, the voice, or the hand. To lift up the hand was one of the modes of taking an oath. Perhaps it means only that he should lift up “the voice” - that is, “should answer;” compare Numbers 14:1. The Vulgate, the Septuagint, and the Chaldee, read it simply ‹he shall answer.‘

I will not be an healer - Hebrew, ‹a binder up,‘ Isaiah 1:6. The Vulgate renders it, ‹I am not a physician.‘ The Septuagint and the Chaldee, ‹I am not sufficient to be a leader.‘ The meaning is, that the state of affairs was so ruinous and calamitous that he would not attempt to restore them; as if, in the body, disease should have so far progressed that he would not undertake to restore the person, and have him “die” under his hands, so as to expose himself to the reproach of being an unsuccessfill and unskillful physician.

Is neither bread nor clothing - I am not rich. I have not the means of providing for the needs of the people, or to maintain the rank of a ruler. ‹It is customary,‘ says Sir John Chardin, ‹to gather together an immense quantity of clothes, for their fashions never alter.‘ ‹The kings of Persia have great wardrobes, where they have always many hundreds of habits ready, designed for presents, and sorted.‘ - “Lowth.” The description here is one of very great calamity and anarchy. So great would be the ruin and danger, that men would be unwilling to be chosen to the office of princes and rulers, and none could be found who would desire to possess the highest honors of the nation. Generally men “aspire” to office; here they were unwilling, on account of the disordered and ruined state of affairs, even to accept of it.

Verse 8

For Jerusalem … - The prophet proceeds to show the cause of this state of things. ‹These are the words of the prophet, and not of him who was chosen leader.‘ - “Jerome.”

Is ruined - It would be so ruined, and the prospect of preserving it would be so completely taken away, that no one could be induced to undertake to defend and protect it.

Judah - The kingdom of Judah, of which Jerusalem was the capital; Note Isaiah 1:1.

Is fallen - Hebrew, “falls;” that is, is about to fall - as a tower or a tree falls to ruin. If the “capital” fell and was ruined, the kingdom would also fall as a matter of course.

Because their tongue … - This is the “reason” why Judah was ruined. By word and deed - that is, in every way they opposed God. The “tongue” here represents their “language,” their manner of speaking. It was proud, haughty, rebellious, perhaps blasphemous.

To provoke - To irritate; to offend.

The eyes of his glory - This is a Hebrew expression to denote “his glorious eyes.” The eye quickly expresses anger or indignation. We perceive these passions in the flashing of the eye sooner than in any other part of the countenance. Hence, to “provoke the eyes,” is an expression signifying simply to excite to anger, or to excite him to punish them. Lowth proposes to render this ‹to provoke the cloud of his glory‘ - referring to the Shekinah or cloud that rested over the ark in the temple. By a slight variation of the Hebrew text, reading ענן *ʿânân* instead of עני *ʿēnēy* it may be so read, and the Syriac so translates it: but the change in the Hebrew text does not seem to be authorized.

Verse 9

The show of their countenance - The word rendered “the show” is probably derived from a word signifying “to know,” or “to recognize,” and here denotes “impudence” or “pride.” Septuagint, ‹The shame of their face.‘

Doth witness against them - “Answers” to them; or “responds” to them (ענתה *ʿânetâh*). There is a correspondence between the feeling of the heart and the looks, an “answering” of the countenance to the purposes of the soul that shows their true character, and betrays their plans. The prophet refers here to the great law in physiology that the emotions of the heart will be usually “expressed” in the countenance; and that by the marks of pride,

vanity, and malice there depicted, we may judge of the heart; or as it is expressed in our translation, that the expression of the face will "witness" against a wicked man.

They declare … - By their deeds. Their crimes are open and bold. There is no attempt at concealment.

As Sodom - see Genesis 19:5; compare the note at Isaiah 1:10.

Wo unto their soul - They shall bring woe upon themselves; they deserve punishment. This is an expression denoting the highest abhorrence of their crimes.

They have rewarded evil … - They have brought the punishment upon themselves by their own sins.

Verse 10

Say ye to the righteous - The meaning of this verse and the following is sufficiently plain, though expositors have given some variety of interpretation. They declare a great principle of the divine administration similar to what is stated in Isaiah 1:19-20. Lowth reads it, ‹Pronounce ye a blessing on the just; verily good (shall be to him).‘

That it shall be well … - The word rendered ‹well,‘ means ‹good.‘ The sense evidently is, that in the divine administration it shall be well to be righteous. The Septuagint has rendered this in a remarkable manner, connecting it with the previous verse: ‹Wo unto their soul, for they take evil counsel among themselves, saying, ‹Let us bind the righteous, for he is troublesome unto us:‘ therefore, they shall eat the fruit of their doings.‘

They shall eat … - That is, they shall receive the appropriate "reward" of their works, and that reward shall be happiness. As a farmer who sows his field and cultivates his farm, eats the fruit of his labor, so shall it be with the righteous. A similar expression is found in Proverbs 1:31:

Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way,
And be filled with their own devices.

Also Jeremiah 6:19: ‹I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thought;‘ compare Galatians 6:8.

Verse 11

Wo unto the wicked - To all the wicked - but here having particular reference to the Jews whom Isaiah was addressing.

It shall be ill with him - The word "ill" is the only word here in the original. It is an emphatic mode of speaking - expressing deep abhorrence and suddenness of denunciation. ‹Woe to the impious! Ill!‘

For the reward of his hands - Of his conduct. The hands are the instruments by which we accomplish anything, and hence, they are put for the whole man.

Shall be given him - That is, shall be repaid to him; or he shall be justly recompensed for his crimes. This is the principle on which God rules the world. It shall be well here and hereafter, with those who obey God; it shall be ill here and forever, with those who disobey him.

Verse 12

As for my people, children are their oppressors - This refers, doubtless, to their civil rulers. They who "ought" to have been their "protectors," oppressed them by grievous taxes and burdens. But whether this means that the rulers of the people were "literally" minors, or that they were so in "disposition and character," has been a question. The original word is in the singular number (מעולל *meʿôlēl*), and means a "child," or an infant. It may, however, be taken collectively as a noun of multitude, or as denoting more than one. To whom reference is made here cannot easily be determined, but possibly to "Ahaz," who began to reign when he was twenty years old; 2 Kings 16:2. Or it may mean that the "character" of the princes and rulers was that of inexperienced children, unqualified for government.

Are their oppressors - literally, ‹are their exactors,‘ or their "taxers" - the collectors of the revenue.

And women rule over them - This is not to be taken literally, but it means either that the rulers were under the influence of the "harem," or the females of the court; or that they were effeminate and destitute of vigor and manliness in counsel. The Septuagint and the Chaldee render this verse substantially alike: ‹Thy exactors strip my people as they who gather the grapes strip the vineyard.‘

They which lead thee - Hebrew "They who bless thee, or call thee blessed." (See the margin.) This refers, doubtless, to the public teachers, and the false prophets, who "blessed" or flattered the people, and who promised them safety in their sins.

Cause thee to err - Lead you astray; or lead you into sin and danger.

And destroy - Hebrew "Swallow up."

Verse 13

The Lord standeth up - To "stand up" may mean the same as to "arise." God would not sit in silence and see their wicked conduct; but he

would come forth to inflict on them exemplary and deserved chastisement.

To plead - To "litigate," to contend with, that is, to condemn, to inflict punishment.

Verse 14

With the ancients … - With the old men, the counselors.

Ye have eaten up the vineyard - Hebrew ‹Ye have burnt up‘ - that is, you have oonsumed or destroyed it. By the vineyard is represented the Jewish republic or people; Psalm 80:9-13; compare the notes at Isaiah 5:1-7. The princes and rulers had, by their exactions and oppressions, ruined the people, and destroyed the country.

The spoil of the poor - The "plunder" of the poor; or that which you have taken from the poor by exactions and oppressions. The word "spoil" commonly means the plunder or booty which is obtained in war.

Verse 15

What mean ye - What is your object? Or, What advantage is it to you? Or, By what right or pretence do you do this?

Beat my people to pieces - That is, that you trample on them; or cruelly oppress them; Psalm 94:5.

And grind the faces of the poor - This is an expression also denoting great oppression. It is taken from the act of grinding a substance on a stone until it is worn away and nothing is left. So, by their cruel exactions, by their injustice to the poor, they exhausted their little property until nothing was left. The word "faces" here is synonymous with "persons" - or with the poor themselves. The word "face" is often used in the sense of "person;" Exodus 33:14; 2 Samuel 18:11. A similar description, though in still stronger language, is found in Micah 3:2-3:

Who pluck off their skin from off them,
And their flesh from off their bones;
Who also eat the flesh of my people,

And flay their skin from off them;

And they break their bones, and chop them in pieces,

As for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron.

Verse 16

Moreover, the Lord saith - In the previous parts of this prophecy, the prophet had rebuked the princes, magistrates, and the people generally. In the remainder of this chapter, he reproves with great severity the pride, luxury, and effeminacy of the female part of the Jewish community. Some interpreters have understood this as designed to reprove the pride and luxury of the "cities" and "towns" of Judah, regarded as "daughters of Zion;" see the note at Isaiah 1:8. But this interpretation is far-fetched and absurd. On this principle everything in the Bible might be turned into allegory.

The daughters of Zion - Jewish females; they who dwelt in "Zion." Perhaps he means particularly those who dwelt in Zion, the capital - or the females connected with the court. It is probable that the prophet here refers to the prosperous reign of Uzziah (2 Chronicles 26:5, …), when by successful commerce luxury would naturally abound.

Are haughty - Are proud.

And walk with stretched-forth necks - Displaying the neck ostentatiously; elevating or extending it as far as possible. Septuagint, ὑψηλῷ τραχήλῳ *hupsēlō trachēlō* with elevated or exalted neck; that is, with that indication of pride and haughtiness which is evinced by a lofty demeanour. ‹When the females dance (in India), they stretch forth their necks, and hold them away, as if their heads were about to fall from their shoulders.‘ - "Roberts."

And wanton eyes - עינים ומשקרות *ûmeshaqerôth ʿēynāyîm* The word שקר *shâqar* usually means "to lie, to deceive," and may here refer to the art of alluring by a wanton or fascinating glance of the eye. There has been great diversity of opinion about the meaning of this expression. Lowth proposes to read it, ‹and falsely setting off their eyes with paint,‘ in allusion to a custom known to prevail in the East, of coloring the eye-lids with stibium, or the powder of lead ore. This was done the better to exhibit the white of the eye, and was supposed by many to contribute to the healthful action of the eye itself. This practice is known to prevail extensively now; but it is not clear that the prophet here has reference to it. The expression is usually interpreted to mean ‹deceiving with the eyes,‘ that is, "alluring" or "enticing" by the motion of the eyes. The "motion" of the eyes is mentioned Proverbs 6:13-14 as one mode of "deceiving" a person:

He winketh with his eyes,
He speaketh with his feet,

He teacheth with his fingers;

Frowardness is in his heart,
He deviseth mischief continually.

Compare the notes at Job 42:14. The meaning here, doubtless, is, that they attempted to entice by the "motion" or "glance" of the eye. The Chaldee seems to have understood this of staining the eyes with stibium.

Mincing as they go - Margin, ‹Tripping nicely;‘ that is, walking with an affected gait - a mode which, unhappily, is too well known in all ages to need a more particular description. Roberts, speaking of the dance in India, says, ‹Some parts of the dance consist of a tripping or mincing step, which they call tatte-tatee. The left foot is put first, and the inside of the right keeps following the heel of the former.‘

And making a tinkling with their feet - That is, they adorn themselves with "ankle rings," and make a tinkling or noise with them to attract attention. The custom of wearing rings on the fingers and wrists has been common every where. In addition to this, Oriental females often wore them on the "ankles" - a custom in itself not more unreasonable or absurd. The custom is mentioned by travelers in Eastern countries in more modern times. Thus, Michaelis says, ‹In Syria and the neighboring provinces, the more opulent females bind ligaments around their feet, like chains, or bracelets, united by small chains of silver and gold, and exhibit them by their sound as they walk.‘ And Pliny ("Nat. Hist.," lib. xxiii., ch. 12) says, ‹Silver has succeeded to gold in the luxury of the females who form bracelets for their feet of that, since an ancient custom forbids them to wear gold.‘ Frequent mention is made of these ornaments, says Rosenmuller, in the Arabic and Persian poems. Roberts, speaking of the ornaments on the feet of females in India, says, ‹The first is a large silver curb like that which is attached to a bridle; the second is of the same kind, but surrounded by a great number of small bells; the third resembles a bracelet; and the fourth is a convex hoop, about two inches deep.‘

Verse 17

Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab - There is some diversity of rendering to this expression. The Septuagint reads it: ‹The Lord will humble the principal daughters of Zion‘ - those who belong to the court, or to the families of the princes. The Chaldee, ‹The Lord will prostrate the glory of the daughters of Zion.‘ The Syriac is the same. The Hebrew word שׂפח

s'îphach translated ‹will smite with a scab,‘ means to “make bald,” particularly to make the hair fall off by sickness. Our translation conveys the idea essentially, that is, that God would visit them with disease that would remove the hair which they regarded as so great an ornament, and on which they so much prided themselves. Few things would be so degrading and humiliating as being thus made bald. The description in this verse means, that God would humble and punish them; that they who so adorned themselves, and who were so proud of their ornaments, would be divested of their joyful attire, and be borne naked into captivity in a foreign land.

Verse 18

In that day - That is, in the time when he would inflict this exemplary punishment on them - probably the calamitous times of the Babylonian captivity.

The Lord will take away - By the agents that he shall choose to employ in this work. - The prophet proceeds to specify the various ornaments that composed the female apparel in his time. It is not easy to describe them particularly, nor is it necessary. The “general” meaning of the passage is plain: and it is clear from this, that they greatly abounded in ornaments.

The bravery - This word “we” apply to valor or courage. The word here used, however, meaus “ornament, adorning,” or “glory.”

Of their tinkling ornaments - This is the same word which is used in Isaiah 3:16, and refers to the chains or clasps with which they ornamented their feet and ankles, and which made a tinkling noise as they walked.

And their cauls - Margin, ‹net-works.‘ The Septuagint is the same. It is commonly supposed to mean “caps of net-work” worn on the head. According to others, the word refers to small “suns” or “spangles” worn on the hair, answering to the following word “moons.” ‹The caul is a strap, or girdle, about four inches long, which is placed on the top of the head, and which extends to the brow, in a line with the nose. The one I have examined is made of gold, and has many joints; it contains forty-five rubies, and nine pearls, which give it a net-work appearance.‘ - “Roberts.”

Their round tires like the moon - Hebrew “moons.” This refers to small ornaments in the shape of crescents, or half-moons, commonly worn on the neck. They were also sometimes worn by men, and even by camels; Judges 8:21 (margin), Judges 8:26. It is probable that these ornaments might originally have had some reference to the moon as an object of worship, but it does not appear that they were so worn by the females of

Judea - They are still worn by the females of Arabia. - "Rosenmuller." Roberts says of such ornaments in India, ‹The crescent is worn by Parvati and Siva, from whom proceed the lingam, and the principal impurities of the system. No dancing girl is in full dress without her round tires like the moon.‘ This ornament is still found under the name of "chumarah." ‹The chumarah, which signifies moon, is a splendid ornament worn by the women of western Asia in front of their head-dresses. It is usually made of gold, set with precious stones and pearls. They are sometimes made of the crescent form, but the most common are such as the engraving represents. They often have Arabic characters inscribed upon them, and sometimes a sentence from the Koran is used by the Mahometan women of Arabia Felix.‘

Verse 19

The chains - Margin, "sweet balls." The word used here is derived from the verb נטף *nâṭaph* to drop, to fall in drops, or to distil," as juice from a plant. Hence, it means that which "resembles drops" - as pearls, or precious stones, used as ornaments for the neck or ears. We retain a similar word as applicable to the ornaments of the ears, by calling them "drops." The Chaldee renders this "chains," and so also the Vulgate. The Septuagint understands it of a "hanging" or "pendant" ornament - and this is its undoubted meaning - an ornament pendant like gum distilling from a plant. ‹These consist, first, of one most beautifully worked, with a pendant ornament for the neck; there is also a profusion of others which go round the same part, and rest on the bosom. In making curious chains, the goldsmiths of England do not surpass those of the East.‘ - "Roberts."

And the bracelets - For the wrists. The Chaldee translates it, ‹bracelets for the hands.‘ These ornaments were very ancient; see Genesis 24:22; Numbers 31:50. - Mahomet promises to those who shall follow him, gold and silver bracelets. ‹The bracelets are large ornaments for the wrists, in which are sometimes enclosed small bells.‘ - "Roberts."

Mufflers - Margin, "spangled ornaments." The word used here is derived from a verb, "to tremble, to shake" - רעל *râʿal* - and the name is given to the ornament, whatever it was, probably from its "tremulous" motion. Perhaps it means a "light, thin veil;" or possibly, as in the margin, spangled ornaments, producing a tremulous, changing aspect. In Zechariah 7:2, the word is used to denote ‹trembling‘ - giddiness, or intoxication. It was early customary, and is still common in Oriental countries, for the

females to wear veils. No female ventures abroad without her veil. That which is supposed to be intended here, is described by the Arabian scholiast Safieri, quoted by Gesenius. It is drawn tight over the upper part of the head, but the part around the eyes is open, and a space left to see through, and the lower part is left loose and flowing, and thus produces the "tremulous" appearance indicated in this place; see the notes and illustrations at Isaiah 3:24.

Verse 20

The bonnets - The "tiara, head-dress, or turban." The word comes from the verb "to adorn." The "turban" is almost universally worn in the East. It was worn by the priests, Exodus 39:28; by the bridegroom, Isaiah 61:10; Ezekiel 24:17; and by women. Its form is well known.

And the ornaments for the legs - The word used here is derived from a verb signifying "to walk, to go," particularly to walk in a stately and formal manner - with a measured step, הצעדות *hatseʿādôth* from צעד *tsâʿad* and thus refers to a proud and lofty gait. The "ornament" which is here referred to is supposed to have been a short chain extending from one foot to the other, worn by the Eastern women to give them a measured and stately gait. - "Gesenius." This "chain" is supposed to have been attached by hooks or clasps to the ‹tinkling ornaments‘ mentioned in Isaiah 3:16. Safieri mentions these ornaments, and thus describes them: ‹The word denotes a small chain, with which females, when they walk, connect their feet, in order to make their steps equal.‘ Happily these ornaments are unknown in modern times, at least in Western countries. They are still retained in the East.

And the head-bands - This word means "girdles" of any kind, still commonly worn on the head. A picture in the book illustrates one of the usual forms of the head-band.

And the tablets - The Hebrew is, as in the margin, ‹the houses of the soul.‘ The word translated "soul" means also the "breath;" and hence, as one of its meanings, that which is "breathed," "or which is smelled; "scent; fragrancy, odor." The word "houses" here may denote also "boxes" - as boxes of perfumes. The phrase here means, undoubtedly, "smelling boxes" or "bottles," containing perfumes or fragrant odors. The word "tablets" has no meaning here.

And the ear-rings - It is by no means certain that the original means ear-rings. The word לחשים *lechāshîym* is derived from the verb לחש *lâchash*

signifying “to whisper,” and then “to conjure, to charm” (see the note at Isaiah 3:3); and here probably denotes precious stones worn by the females as “amulets” or “charms.” The word is often used to denote charming “serpents” - from their “hissing” and it has been supposed probable that these amulets were small images of serpents. There is no doubt that such ornaments were worn by Oriental females. ‹These ornaments seem to have been amulets, often gems and precious stones, or plates of gold and silver, on which certain magic formulas were inscribed, which were worn suspended from the neck or ears by Oriental females.‘ - “Gesenius.” The following extract will furnish an explanation of these ornaments: ‹Besides ornamental rings in the nose and the ears, they (Oriental females) wore others round the legs, which made a tinkling as they went.

This custom has also descended to the present times, for Rauwolf met with a number of Arabian women on the Euphrates, whose ankles and wrists were adorned with rings, sometimes a good many together, which, moving up and down as they walked, made a great noise. Chardin attests the existence of the same custom in Persia, in Arabia, and in very hot countries, where they commonly go without stockings, but ascribes the tinkling sound to little bells fastened to those rings. In the East Indies, golden bells adorned the feet and ankles of the ladies from the earliest times; they placed them in the flowing tresses of their hair; they suspended them round their necks, and to the golden rings which they wore on their fingers, to announce their superior rank, and extort the homage which they had a right to expect from the lower orders; and from the banks of the Indus, it is probable the custom was introduced into the other countries of Asia. The Arabian females in Palestine and Syria delight in the same ornaments, and, according to the statements of Dr. Clarke, seem to claim the honor of leading the fashion.‘ - ‹Their bodies are covered with a long blue tunic; upon their heads they wear two handkerchiefs, one as a hood, and the other bound over it, as a fillet across the temples.

Just above the right nostril, they place a small button, sometimes studded with pearl, a piece of glass, or any other glittering substance; this is fastened by a plug, thrust through the cartilage of the nose. Sometimes they have the cartilaginous separation between the nostrils bored for a ring, as large as those ordinarily used in Europe for hanging curtains; and this pendant in the upperlip covers the mouth; so that, in order to eat, it is

necessary to raise it. Their faces, hands, and arms are tatooed, and covered with hideous scars; their eyelashes and eyes being always painted, or rather dirtied, with some dingy black or blue powder. Their lips are dyed of a deep and dusky blue, as if they had been eating blackberries. Their teeth are jet black; their nails and fingers brick red; their wrists, as well as their ankles, are laden with large metal cinctures, studded with sharp pyramidical knobs and bits of glass. Very ponderous rings are also placed in their ears.‘ - “Paxton.”

Verse 21

The rings - Usually worn on the fingers.

And nose-jewels - The custom of wearing jewels in the “nose” has generally prevailed in savage tribes, and was common, and is still, in Eastern nations - among the Arabians, Persians, etc. Sir John Chardin says, ‹It is the custom in almost all the East for the women to wear rings in their noses, in the left nostril, which is bored low down in the middle. These rings are of gold, and have commonly two pearls and one ruby between, placed in the ring. I never saw a girl or young woman in Arabia, or in all Persia, who did not wear a ring in this manner in her nostrils.‘ - Harmer‘s “Obs.,” iv., p. 318. The picture in the book illustrates the usual form of this ornament in the East.

Verse 22

The articles which are mentioned in the remaining part of this description, are entire articles of apparel; those which had preceded were chiefly single ornaments.

The changeable suits of apparel - The word which is used here in the original comes from a verb signifying “to pull of” as a shoe; to unclothe one‘s-self; and it here denotes the more “costly” or “valuable” garments, which are not worn on common occasions, and which are “laid aside” in ordinary employments. This does not refer to any “particular” article of dress, but to splendid and costly articles in general. ‹The Eastern ladies take great pride in having many changes of apparel, because their fashions never alter. Thus the net brocades worn by their grandmothers are equally fashionable for themselves.‘ - “Roberts.”

And the mantles - From the verb “to cover,” or “to clothe.” The word “mantle” does not quite express the force of the original. It means the fuller “tunic” which was worn over the common one, with sleeves, and which

reached down to the feet. ‹A loose robe,‘ says Roberts, ‹which is gracefully crossed on the bosom.‘

And the wimples - Our word “wimple” means a “hood,” or “veil,” but this is not the meaning of the Hebrew word in this place. It means a wide, broad garment, which could be thrown over the whole, and in which the individual usually slept. ‹Probably the fine muslin which is sometimes thrown over the head and body.‘ - “Roberts.”

And the crisping-pins - This phrase with us would denote “curling-irons.” But the Hebrew here denotes a very different article. It means “money-bags,” or “purses.” These were often made very large, and were highly ornamented; compare 2 Kings 5:23. Frequently they were attached to the girdle.

Verse 23

The glasses - There is a great variety of opinion about the expression used here. That ancient Jews had “looking-glasses,” or mirrors, is manifest from the account in Exodus 38:8. These “mirrors” were made of polished plates of brass. The Vulgate and Chaldee understand this of “mirrors.” The Septuagint understands by it a “thin, transparent covering like gauze,” perhaps like silk. The word is derived from the verb “to reveal, to make apparent,” etc., and applies either to mirrors or to a splendid shining garment. It is probable that their excessive vanity was evinced by carrying small mirrors in their hands - that they might examine and adjust their dress as might be necessary. This is now done by females of Eastern nations. Shaw informs us that, ‹In the Levant, looking-glasses are a part of female dress. The Moorish women in Barabary are so fond of their ornaments, and particularly of their looking-glasses, which they hang upon their breasts, that they will not lay them aside, even when, after the drudgery of the day, they are obliged to go two or three miles with a pitcher or a goat-skin to fetch water.‘ - “Burder.” In Egypt, the mirror was made of mixed metal, chiefly of copper, and this metal was so highly polished, that in some of the mirrors discovered at Thebes, the luster has been partially restored, though they have been buried in the earth for many centuries. The mirror was nearly round, inserted in a handle of wood, stone, or metal, whose form varied according to the taste of the owner. The picture in the book will give you an idea of the ancient form of the mirror, and will show that they might be easily carried abroad as an ornament in public; compare Wilkinson‘s “Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians,” vol. iii., pp. 384-386.

And the fine linen - Anciently, the most delicate and fine garments were made from linen which was obtained chiefly from Egypt; see the note at Luke 16:19.

And the hoods - Or, "turbans."

And the veils - This does not differ probably from the veils worn now, except that those worn by Eastern females are "large," and made so as to cover the head and the shoulders, so that they may be drawn closely round the body, and effectually conceal the person; compare Genesis 24:65.

Verse 24

And it shall come to pass - The prophet proceeds to denounce the "judgment" or "punishment" that would come upon them for their pride and vanity. In the calamities that would befall the nation, all their ornaments of pride and vainglory would be stripped off; and instead of them, they would exhibit the marks, and wear the badges of calamity and grief.

Instead of sweet smell - Hebrew בשֹׂם *bôs'em* aromatics, perfumes, spicy fragrance; such as they used on their garments and persons. ‹No one ever enters a company without being well perfumed; and in addition to various scents and oils, they are adorned with numerous garlands, made of the most odoriferous flowers.‘ - "Roberts." ‹The persons of the Assyrian ladies are elegantly clothed and scented with the richest oils and perfumes. When a queen was to be chosen to the king of Persia, instead of Vashti, the virgins collected at Susana, the capital, underwent a purification of twelve months‘ duration, to wit: "six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odors." The general use of such precious oil and fragrant perfumes among the ancient Roamns, particularly among the ladies of rank and fashion, may be inferred from these words of Virgil:

Arabrosiaeque comae divinum vertice odorem Spiravere:

AEni. 403.

"From her head the ambrosial locks breathed divine fragrance."

Paxton.

A stink - This word properly means the fetor or offensive smell which attends the decomposition of a deceased body. It means that the bodies which they so carefully adorned, and which they so assiduously endeavored to preserve in beauty by unguents and perfumes, would die and turn to corruption.

And instead of a girdle - Girdles were an indispensable part of an Oriental dress. Their garments were loose and flowing, and it became

necessary to gird them up when they ran, or danced, or labored.

A rent - There has been a great variety of opinion about the meaning of this word. The most probable signification is that which is derived from a verb meaning "to go around, encompass;" and hence, that it denotes "a cord." Instead of the beautiful girdle with which they girded themselves, there shall be "a cord" - an emblem of poverty, as the poor had nothing else with which to gird up their clothes; a humiliating description of the calamities which were to come upon proud and vain females of the court.

And instead of well-set hair - Hair that was curiously braided and adorned. ‹No ladies pay more attention to the dressing of the hair than these (the dancing girls of India), for as they never wear caps, they take great delight in this their natural ornament.' - "Roberts." Miss Pardoe, in ‹The City of the Sultan,' says, that after taking a bath, the slaves who attended her spent an hour and a half in dressing and adorning her hair; compare 1 Peter 3:3.

Instead of a stomacher - It is not certainly known what is meant by this, but it probably means some sort of "girdle," or a platted or stiffened ornament worn on the breast. ‹I once saw a dress beautifully plaited and stiffened for the front, but I do not think it common.' - "Roberts."

A girding of sackcloth - This is a coarse cloth that was commonly worn in times of affliction, as emblematic of grief; 2 Samuel 3:31; 1 Kings 20:31; 1 Kings 21:27; Job 16:15; Isaiah 32:11.

And burning - The word used here does not occur elsewhere. It seems to denote "a brand, a mark burnt in, a stigma;" perhaps a sun-burned countenance, indicating exposure in the long and wearisome journey of a captivity over burning sands and beneath a scorching sun.

Instead of beauty - Instead of a fair and delicate complexion, cherished and nourished with care. Some of the articles of dress shown in the book exhibit several varieties of the costume of an Oriental female. To what "particular" time the prophet refers in this chapter is not known, perhaps, however, to the captivity at Babylon. To whatever he refers, it is one of the most striking reproofs of vanity and pride, especially the pride of female ornament, any where to be found. And although he had "particular" reference to the Jewish females, yet there is no impropriety in regarding it as applicable to all such ornaments wherever they may be found. They indicate the same state of the heart, and they must meet substantially the same rebuke from God. The body, however delicately pampered and

adorned, must become the prey of corruption. ‹The worm shall feed sweetly on it, and the earth-worm shall be its covering;‘ compare Isaiah 14:2; Job 24:20. The single thought that the body must die - that it must lie and moulder in the grave - should check the love of frivolous adorning, and turn the mind to a far more important matter - the salvation of the soul, which cannot die; to ‹the ornament of a weak and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price;‘ 1 Peter 3:4.

Verse 25

Thy men - This is an address to Jerusalem itself, by a change not uncommon in the writings of Isaiah. In the calamities coming on them, their strong men should be overcome, and fall in battle.

Verse 26

And her gates - Cities were surrounded with walls, and were entered through gates opening into the principal streets. Those gates became, of course, the places of chief confluence and of business; and the expression here means, that in all the places of confluence, or amidst the assembled people, there should be lamentation on account of the slain in battle, and the loss of their mighty men in war.

And she - Jerusalem is often represented as a female distinguished for beauty. It is here represented as a female sitting in a posture of grief.

Being desolate, shall sit upon the ground - To sit on the ground, or in the dust, was the usual posture of grief and mourning, denoting great depression and humiliation; Lamentations 2:10; Lamentations 3:28; Jeremiah 15:17; Job 3:13; Ezra 9:3-5. It is a remarkable coincidence, that in the medals which were made by the Romans to commemorate the captivity of Judea and Jerusalem, Judea is represented under the figure of a female sitting in a posture of grief, under a palm tree, with this inscription - judea capta. The passage here, however, refers not to the captivity by the Romans, but to the first destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. It is a tender and most affecting image of desolation. During the captivity at Babylon, it was completely fulfilled; and for ages since, Judea might be appropriately represented by a captive female sitting pensively on the ground.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

In that day - The time of calamity referred to in the close of the previous chapter. This is a continuation of that prophecy, and there was no reason why these six verses should have been made a separate chapter. That the passage refers to the Messiah, is apparent from what has been stated in the note at the commencement of the prophecy Isaiah 2:1-4, and from the expressions which occur in the chapter itself; see the notes at Isaiah 4:2, Isaiah 4:5-6.

Seven women - The number "seven" is used often to denote a "large" though "indefinite" number; Leviticus 26:28; Proverbs 24:16; Zechariah 3:9. It means that so great should be the calamity, so many "men" would fall in battle, that many women would, contrary to their natural modesty, become suitors to a single man, to obtain him as a husband and protector.

Shall take hold - Shall apply to. The expression, ‹shall take hold,' denotes the "earnestness" of their application.

We will eat our own bread … - We do not ask this in order to be maintained. We will forego that which the law Exodus 21:10 enjoins as the duty of the husband in case he has more than one wife.

Only let us be called by thy name - Let us be regarded as "thy wives." The wife then, as now, assumed the name of the husband. A remarkably similar expression occurs in Lucan (B. ii. 342). Marcia there presents a similar request to Cato:

Da tantum nomen inane

Connubii; liceat tumulo scripsisse, Catonis Marcia.

‹Indulge me only with the empty title of wife.

Let there only be inscribed on my tomb, "Marcia, wife of Cato."'

To take away my reproach - The reproach of being unmarried; compare Genesis 30:23; 1 Samuel 1:6.

Verse 2

The branch of the Lord - צמח יהוה *yehovâh tsemach* "The sprout" of Yahweh. This expression, and this verse, have had a great variety of interpretations. The Septuagint reads it, ‹In that day God shall shine in counsel with glory upon the earth, to exalt, and to glorify the remnant of Israel.' The Chaldee renders it, ‹In that day, the Messiah of the Lord shall be for joy and glory, and the doers of the law for praise and honor to those

of Israel who are delivered.‘ It is clear that the passage is designed to denote some signal blessing that was to succeed the calamity predicted in the previous verses. The only question is, to what has the prophet reference? The word ‹branch‘ (צמח *tsemach*) is derived from the verb (צמח *tsâmach*) signifying “to sprout, to spring up,” spoken of plants. Hence, the word “branch” means properly that which “shoots up,” or “sprouts” from the root of a tree, or from a decayed tree; compare Job 14:7-9.

The Messiah is thus said to be ‹a root of Jesse,‘ Romans 11:12; compare Isaiah 11:1, note; Isaiah 11:10, note; and ‹the root and offspring of David,‘ Revelation 22:16, as being a “descendant” of Jesse; that is, as if Jesse should fall like an aged tree, yet the “root” would sprout up and live. The word ‹branch‘ occurs several times in the Old Testament, and in most, if not all, with express reference to the Messiah; Jeremiah 23:5: ‹Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign;‘ Jeremiah 33:15: ‹In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David;‘ Zechariah 3:8; Zechariah 6:12. In all these places, there can be no doubt that there is reference to him who was “to spring up” from David, as a sprout does from a decayed and fallen tree, and who is, therefore, called a “root,” a “branch” of the royal stock. There is, besides, a special beauty in the figure.

The family of David, when the Messiah was to come, would be fallen into decay and almost extinct. Joseph, the husband of Mary, though of the royal family of David Matthew 1:20; Luke 2:4, was poor, and the family had lost all claims to the throne. In this state, as from the decayed root of a fallen tree, a “sprout” or “branch” was to come forth with more than the magnificence of David, and succeed him on the throne. The name ‹branch,‘ therefore, came to be significant of the Messiah, and to be synonymous with ‹the son of David.‘ It is so used, doubtless, in this place, as denoting that the coming of the Messiah would be a joy and honor in the days of calamity to the Jews. Interpreters have not been agreed, however, in the meaning of this passage. Grotius supposed that it referred to Ezra or Nehemiah, but ‹mystically to Christ and Christians.‘ Vogellius understood it of the “remnant” that should return from the Babylonian captivity. Michaelis supposed that it refers to the Jews, who should be a “reformed” people after their captivity, and who should spring up with a new spirit. Others have regarded it as a poetic description of the extraordinary fertility

of the earth in future times. The reasons for referring it to the Messiah are plain:

(1) The word has this reference in other places, and the representation of the Messiah under the image of a branch or shoot, is, as we have seen, common in the Scriptures. Thus, also, in Isaiah 53:2, he is called also שׁרשׁ *shoresh* root, and יונק *yônēq* a tender plant, a sucker, sprout, shoot, as of a decayed tree; compare Job 8:16; Job 14:7; Job 15:30; Ezekiel 17:22. And in reference to the same idea, perhaps, it is said, Isaiah 53:8, that he was נגזר *nîgezar* "cut off," as a branch, sucker, or shoot is cut off by the vine-dresser or farmer from the root of a decayed tree. And thus, in Revelation 5:5, he is called ῥίζα Δαβὶδ *riza Dabid* - the root of David.

(2) This interpretation accords best with the "magnificence" of the description, Isaiah 4:5-6; and,

(3) It was so understood by the Chaldee interpreter, and, doubtless, by the ancient Jews.

Shall be beautiful and glorious - Hebrew, ‹Shall be beauty and glory;‘ that is, shall be the chief ornament or honor of the land; shall be that which gives to the nation its chief distinction and glory. In such times of calamity, his coming shal be an object of desire, and his approach shall shed a rich splendor on that period of the world.

And the fruit of the earth - פרי הארץ *perîy hâ'ârets* correctly rendered "fruit of the earth, or of the land." The word ‹earth‘ is often in the Scriptures used to denote the land of Judea, and perhaps the article here is intended to denote that that land is particularly intended. This is the parallel expression to the former part of the verse, in accordance with the laws of Hebrew poetry, by which one member of a sentence expresses substantially the same meaning as the former; see the Introduction, Section 8. If the former expression referred to the "Messiah," this does also. The ‹fruit of the earth‘ is that which the earth produces, and is here not different in signification from the "branch" which springs out of the ground. Vitringa supposes that by this phrase the Messiah, according to his human nature, is meant. So Hengstenberg ("Christology, *in loc*.") understands it; and supposes that as the phrase "branch of Yahweh" refers to his divine origin,

as proceeding from Yahweh; so this refers to his human origin, as proceeding from the earth. But the objections to this are obvious:

(1) The second phrase, according to the laws of Hebrew parallelism, is most naturally an echo or repetition of the sentiment in the first member, and means substantially the same thing.

(2) The phrase ‹branch of Yahweh‘ does not refer of necessity to his divine nature. The idea is that of a decayed tree that has fallen down, and has left a living root which sends up a shoot, or sucker; and can be applied with great elegance to the decayed family of David. But how, or in what sense, can this be applied to Yahweh? Is Yahweh thus fallen and decayed? The idea properly is, that this shoot of a decayed family should be nurtured up by Yahweh; should be appointed by him, and should thus be "his" branch. The parallel member denotes substantially the same thing; ‹the fruit of the earth‘ - the shoot which the earth produces - or which springs up from a decayed family, as the sprout does from a fallen tree.

(3) It is as true that his human nature proceeded from God as his divine. It was produced by the Holy Spirit, and can no more be regarded as ‹the fruit of the earth‘ than his divine nature; Luke 1:35; Hebrews 10:5.

(4) This mode of interpretation is suited to bring the whole subject into contempt. There are plain and positive passages enough to prove that the Messiah had a divine nature, and there are enough also to prove that he was a man; but nothing is more adapted to produce disgust in relation to the whole subject, in the minds of skeptical or of thinking men, than a resort to arguments such as this in defense of a great and glorious doctrine of revelation.

Shall be excellent - Shall be "for exaltation," or "honor."

Comely - Hebrew, ‹For an ornament;‘ meaning that "he" would be an honor to those times.

For them that are escaped of Israel - Margin, ‹The escaping of Israel.‘ For the remnant, the small number that shall escape the calamities - a description of the pious portion of Israel which now escaped from all calamities - would rejoice in the anticipated blessings of the Messiah‘s reign, or would participate in the blessings of that reign. The idea is not, however, that the number who would be saved would be "small," but that

they would be characterized as those who had "escaped," or who had been rescued.

Verse 3

He that is left in Zion - This "properly" refers to the remnant that should remain after the mass of the people should be cut off by wars, or be borne into captivity. If it refer to the few that would come back from Babylon, it means that they would be reformed, and would be a generation different from their fathers - which was undoubtedly true. If it refer, as the connection seems to indicate, to the times of the Messiah, then it speaks of those who are ‹left,‘ while the great mass of the nation would be unbelievers, and would be destroyed. The mass of the nation would be cut off, and the remnant that was left would be holy; that is, all true friends of the Messiah would be holy.

Shall be called holy - That is, shall "be" holy. The expression ‹to be called,‘ is often used in the Scriptures as synonymous with ‹to be.‘

Every one that is written among the living - The Jews were accustomed to register the names of all the people. Those names were written in a catalogue, or register, of each tribe or family. To be written in that book, or register, meant to be alive, for when a death occurred, the name was stricken out; Exodus 32:32; Daniel 12:1; Ezekiel 13:9. The expression came also to denote all who were truly the friends of God; they whose names are written in "his" book - the book of life. In this sense it is used in the New Testament; Philemon 4:3; Revelation 3:5; Revelation 17:5. In this sense it is understood in this place by the Chaldee Par.: ‹Every one shall be called holy who is written to eternal life; he shall see the consolation of Jerusalem.‘ If the reference here is to the Messiah, then the passage denotes that under the reign of the Messiah, all who should be found enrolled as his followers, would be holy. An effectual separation would subsist between them and the mass of the people. They would be "enrolled" as his friends, and they would be a separate, holy community; compare 1 Peter 2:9.

Verse 4

When the Lord - That is, "after" God has done this, then all that are written among the living shall be called holy. The prophet in this verse states the benefits of "affliction" in purifying the people of God. He had said, in the previous verse, that all who should be left in Zion should be

called holy. He here states that "previous" to that, the defilement of the people would be removed by judgment.

Shall have washed away - The expression, "to wash," is often used to denote to "purify" in any way. In allusion to this fact is the beautiful promise in Zechariah 13:1; see the note at Isaiah 1:16.

The filth - This word here refers to their "moral" defilement - their pride, vanity, haughtiness; and perhaps to the idolatry and general sins of the people. As the prophet, however, in Isaiah 3:16-23, had particularly specified the sins of the female part of the Jewish people, the expression here probably refers especially to them, and to the judgments which were to come upon them; Isaiah 3:24. It is not departing from the spirit of this passage to remark, that the church is purified, and true religion is often promoted, by God's humbling the pride and vanity of females. A love of excessive ornament; a fondness for dress and display; and an exhibition of great gaiety, often stand grievously in the way of pure religion.

The daughters of Zion - see Isaiah 3:16.

And shall have purged - This is synonymous with the expression "to wash." It means to purify, to remove, as one removes blood from the hands by washing.

Blood of Jerusalem - Crime, blood-guiltiness - particularly the crime of "oppression, cruelty," and "robbery," which the prophet Isaiah 1:15 had charged on them.

By the spirit of judgment - This refers, doubtless, to the "calamities," or "punishment," that would come upon the nation; principally, to the Babylonian captivity. After God should have humbled and reformed the nation by a series of judgments, then they who were purified by them should be called holy. The word "spirit" here cannot be shown to be the Holy Spirit; and especially as the Holy Spirit is not represented in the Scriptures as the agent in executing judgment. It perhaps would be best denoted by the word "influence," or "power." The word properly denotes "wind, air, motion" Genesis 8:1; Job 1:19; then "breathing, exhalation, or breath" Job 7:7; Psalm 33:6; hence, it means the "soul;" and it means also God's "influence," or his putting forth his power and life-giving energy in animating and sustaining the universe; and also, as here, his putting forth any influence in accomplishing his works and designs.

And by the spirit of burning - "Fire" is often, in the Scriptures, the emblem of punishment, and also of purifying; compare the note at Matthew

3:11-12; see Malachi 3:2-3. The Chaldee translates this, ‹by the word of judgment, and by the word of consuming.‘ The reference is to the “punishments” which would be sent to purify the people “before” the coming of the Messiah.

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Verse 5

And the Lord will create - The meaning of this verse and the next is, that God would take his people into his holy care and protection. The idea is expressed by images drawn, in this verse, from the protection which he afforded to the Israelites in their journeying from Egypt. The word “create” means here, he will afford, or furnish, such a defense.

Upon every dwelling-place … - Upon all the habitations of his people; that is, they shall be secure, and regarded as under his protection. The word “upon” refers to the fact that the pillar of cloud stood “over” the tabernacle in the wilderness, as a symbol of the divine favor and presence. So his protection should be “on” or “over” the houses of all his people; compare Psalm 92:4-6.

Of mount Zion - compare the note at Isaiah 1:8.

And upon her assemblies - Their convocations; their sacred assemblies, such as were called together on the Sabbath; Leviticus 23:2; Numbers 28:18. It refers here to their “future” assemblies, and, therefore, includes the Christian church assembled to worship God.

A cloud and smoke by day - This refers to the pillar of cloud that went before the Israelites in their journey in the wilderness; Exodus 13:21; Exodus 14:20.

By day - By day, this appeared to them as a cloud; by night, as a pillar of fire; Exodus 13:21-22. That is, it was always conspicuous, and could be seen by all the people. A pillar of cloud could not have been seen by night; and God changes the symbols of his presence and protection, so that at all times his people may see them. The meaning here is, that as God gave to the Israelites a symbol of his presence and protection, so he would be the protecter and defender of his people hereafter.

For upon all the glory - Above all the “glorious object;” that is, his church, his people. It is here called ‹the glory,‘ as being a glorious, or an honorable object.

A defense - This word properly means “a covering, a protection,” from the verb “to cover,” and means that God will protect, or defend his people.

Verse 6

And there shall be a tabernacle - The reference here is to the "tabernacle," or sacred "tent" that God directed Moses to make in the wilderness. The image of the cloudy pillar mentioned in the previous verses, seems to have suggested to the mind of the prophet the idea of the tabernacle over which that pillar rested. The principal idea here is, however, not a tabernacle as a symbol of the divine protection, or of divine worship, but of a place of refuge from a tempest; that is, that they should be "safe" under his protection. In Eastern countries they dwelt chiefly in tents. The idea is, therefore, that God would furnish them a place of shelter, a hiding-place from the storm.

In the daytime from the heat - The heat in those regions was often very intense, particularly in the vast plains of sand. The "idea" here is, therefore, one that is very striking. It means, that God would furnish to them a refuge that would be like the comfort derived from a tent in a burning desert.

For a place of refuge - A place to which to flee in the midst of a storm, as a tent would be.

A covert - A place of retreat, a safe place to retire to. The figure used here is not unfrequently employed in the prophets; Isaiah 25:4; Isaiah 32:2. In eastern countries this idea would be very striking. While traversing the burning sands of a desert, exposed to the rays of a tropical sun, nothing could be more grateful than the cool shadow of a rock. Such figures are, therefore, common in oriental writings, to denote protection and agreeable shelter from calamities; see the note at Isaiah 32:2. The idea in these verses is:

(1) That God will be a defender of his people.

(2) That he will protect their families, and that his blessing will be upon their dwelling-places; compare the note at Isaiah 59:21.

(3) They may expect his blessing on their religious assemblies.

(4) God, through the promised Messiah, would be a refuge and defense.

The sinner is exposed to the burning wrath of God, and to the storms of divine vengeance that shall beat forever on the naked soul in hell. From all this burning wrath, and from this raging tempest, the Messiah is the only refuge. Through him God forgives sin; and united to him by faith, the soul

is safe. There are few images more beautiful than this. Soon the storms of divine vengeance will beat on the sinner. God will summon him to judgment. But then, he who has fled to the Messiah - the Lord Jesus - as the refuge of his soul, shall be safe. He shall have nothing to fear, and in his arms shall find defense and salvation.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

This chapter Isaiah 5:1-7. He states what he had done for them; calls on them to judge themselves whether he had not done for them all that he could have done; and, since his vineyard had brought forth no good fruit, he threatens to break down its hedges, and to destroy it.

II. The various vices and crimes which prevailed in the nation are denounced, and punishment threatened, Isaiah 5:8-10.

2. The sins of intemperance, revelry, and dissipation, Isaiah 5:11-17.

3. The sin of despising and contemning God, and of practicing iniquity as if he did not see it, or could not punish it, Isaiah 5:18-19.

4. The sin of those who pervert things, and call evil good and good evil, Isaiah 5:20.

5. The sin of vain self-confidence, pride, and inordinate self-esteem, Isaiah 5:21.

6. The sin of intemperance is again reproved, and the sin of receiving bribes; probably because these were in fact connected, Isaiah 5:22-23.

III. Punishment is denounced on the nation for indulgence in these sins, Isaiah 5:24-30. The punishment would be, that he would, call distant nations to invade their land, and it should be laid waste.

"The subject of this prophecy," says Lowth, "does not differ materially from Isa. i., but it is greatly superior to it in force, in severity, in variety, in elegance."

Verse 1

Now will I sing - This is an indication that what follows is poetic, or is adapted to be sung or chanted.

To my well-beloved - The word used here - ידיד *yedîyd* - is a term of endearment. It properly denotes a friend; a favorite; one greatly beloved. It is applied to saints as being the beloved, or the favorites of God, in Psalm 127:2; Deuteronomy 33:12. In this place, it is evidently applied to Yahweh, the God of the Jewish people. As there is some reason to believe that the

God of the Jews - the manifested Deity who undertook their deliverance from Egypt, and who was revealed as "their" God under the name of ‹the Angel of the covenant‘ - was the Messiah, so it may be that the prophet here meant to refer to him. It is not, however, to the Messiah "to come." It does not refer to the God incarnate - to Jesus of Nazareth; but to the God of the Jews, in his capacity as their lawgiver and protector in the time of Isaiah; not to him in the capacity of an incarnate Saviour.

A Song of my beloved - Lowth, ‹A song of loves,‘ by a slight change in the Hebrew. The word דוד *dôd* usually denotes ‹an uncle,‘ a father‘s brother. But it also means one beloved, a friend, a lover; Jeremiah 2:21; Jeremiah 12:10. Our Saviour also used this beautiful figure to denote the care and attention which God had bestowed on his people; Matthew 21:33 ff; Mark 12:1, following.

My beloved - God.

Hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill - Hebrew ‹On a horn of the son of oil.‘ The word "horn" used here in the Hebrew, denotes the "brow, apex," or sharp point of a hill. The word is thus used in other languages to denote a hill, as in the Swiss words "shreckhorn, buchorn." Thus "Cornwall," in England, is called in the old British tongue "Kernaw," as lessening by degrees, like a horn, running out into promontories, like so many horns; for the Britons called a horn "corn," and in the plural "kern." The term ‹horn‘ is not unfrequently applied to hills. Thus, Pococke tells us (vol. ii. p. 67), that there is a low mountain in Galilee which has both its ends raised in such a manner as to look like two mounts, which are called the ‹Horns of Hutin.‘ Harmer, however, supposes that the term is used here to denote the land of Syria, from its resemblance to the shape ofa horn; Obs. iii. 242. But the idea is, evidently, that the land on which God respresents himself as having planted his vineyard, was like an elevated hill that was adapted eminently to such a culture. It may mean either the "top" of a mountain, or a little mountain, or a "peak" divided from others. The most favorable places for vineyards were on the sides of hills, where they would be exposed to the sun. - Shaw‘s "Travels," p. 338. Thus Virgil says:

- *denique apertos*

Bacchus amat colles.

‹Bacchus loves open hills;‘ "Georg." ii. 113. The phrase, "son of oil," is used in accordance with the Jewish custom, where "son" means descendant, relative, etc.; see the note at Matthew 1:1. Here it means that it was so

fertile that it might be called the very "son of oil," or fatness, that is, fertility. The image is poetic, and very beautiful; denoting that God had planted his people in circumstances where he had a right to expect great growth in attachment to him. It was not owing to any want of care on his part, that they were not distinguished for piety. The Chaldee renders this verse, ‹The prophet said, I will sing now to Israel, who is compared to a vineyard, the seed of Abraham my beloved: a song of my beloved to his vineyard.‘

Verse 2

And he fenced it - Margin, ‹Made a wall about it.‘ The word used here is supposed rather to mean "to dig about, to grub," as with a pick-axe or spade. - "Gesenius." It has this signification in Arabic, and in one place in the Jewish Talmud. - "Kimchi." The Vulgate and the Septuagint understands it of making a hedge or fence, probably the first work in preparing a vineyard. And as ‹a hedge‘ is expressly mentioned in Isaiah 5:5, it seems most probable that that is its meaning here.

And gathered out the stones … - That it might be easily cultivated. This was, of course, a necessary and proper work.

And planted it with the choicest vine - Hebrew, ‹With the sorek.‘ This was a choice species of vine, the grapes of which, the Jewish commentators say, had very small and scarcely perceptible stones, and which, at this day, is called "serki" in Morocco; in Persia, "kishmis." - "Gesenius."

And built a tower - For the sake of watching and defending it. These towers were probably placed so as to overlook the whole vineyard, and were thus posts of observation; compare the note at Isaiah 1:8; see also the note at Matthew 21:33.

And also made a wine-press - A place in which to put the grapes for the purpose of expressing the juice; see the note at Matthew 21:33.

And he looked - He waited in expectation; as a farmer waits patiently for the vines to grow, and to bear grapes.

Wild grapes - The word used here is derived from the verb באש *bâ'ash* "to be offensive, to corrupt, to putrify;" and is supposed by Gesenius to mean "monk‘s-hood," a poisonous herb, offensive in smell, which produces berries like grapes. Such a meaning suits the connection better than the supposition of grapes that were wild or uncultivated. The Vulgate understands it of the weed called "wild vine - labruscas." The Septuagint translates it by "thorns," ἄκανθας *akanthas* That there were vines in Judea

which produced such poisonous berries, though resembling grapes, is evident; see 2 Kings 4:39-41: ‹And one went out into the fields to gather pot herbs, and he found a field vine, and he gathered from it wild fruit.‘ Moses also refers to a similar vine; Deuteronomy 32:32-33: ‹For their vine is as the vine of Sodom; their grapes are grapes of gall; their clusters are bitter.‘ Hasselquist thinks that the prophet here means the "nightshade." The Arabs, says he, call it "wolf-grapes." It grows much in vineyards, and is very pernicious to them. Some poisonous, offensive berries, growing on wild vines, are doubtless intended here.

The general meaning of this parable it is not difficult to understand; compare the notes at Matthew 21:33. Jerome has attempted to follow out the allegory, and explain the particular parts. He says, ‹By the metaphor of the vineyard is to be understood the people of the Jews, which he surrounded or enclosed by angels; by gathering out the stones, the removal of idols; by the tower, the temple erected in the midst of Judea; by the wine-press, the altar.‘ There is no propriety, however, in attempting thus minutely to explain the particular parts of the figure. The general meaning is, that God had chosen the Jewish people; had bestowed great care on them in giving them his law, in defending them, and in providing for them; that he had omitted nothing that was adapted to produce piety, obedience, and happiness, and that they had abused it all, and instead of being obedient, had become exceedingly corrupt.

Verse 3

And now … - This is an appeal which God makes to the Jews themselves, in regard to the justice and propriety of what he was about to do. A similar appeal he makes in Micah 6:3: ‹O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me.‘ He intended to "punish" them Isaiah 5:5-6, and he appeals to them for the justice of it. He would do to them as they would do to a vineyard that had been carefully prepared and guarded, and which yet was valueless. A similar appeal he makes in Isaiah 1:18; and our Saviour made an application remarkably similar in his parable of the vineyard, Matthew 21:40-43. It is not improbable that he had his eye on this very place in Isaiah; and it is, therefore, the more remarkable that the Jews did not understand the bearing of his discourse.

Verse 4

What could I … - As a man who had done what is described in Isaiah 5:2, would have done all that "could" be done for a vineyard, so God says that he has done all that he could, in the circumstances of the Jews, to make them holy and happy. He had chosen them; had given them his law; had sent them prophets and teachers; had defended them; had come forth in judgment and mercy, and he now appeals "to them" to say what "could" have been done more. This important verse implies that God had done all that he could have done; that is, all that he could consistently do, or all that justice and goodness required him to do, to secure the welfare of his people. It cannot, of course, be meant that he had no physical ability to do anything else, but the expression must be interpreted by a reference to the point in hand; and that is, an appeal to others to determine that he had done all that could be done in the circumstances of the case. In this respect, we may, without impropriety, say, that there is a limit to the power of God. It is impossible to conceive that he "could" have given a law more holy; or that he could append to it more solemn sanctions than the threatening of eternal death; or that he could have offered higher hopes than the prospect of eternal life; or that he could have given a more exalted Redeemer. It has been maintained (see the "Princeton Bib. Repert.," April 1841) that the reference here is to the future, and that the question means, ‹what remains now to be done to my vineyard as an expression of displeasure?‘ or that it is asked with a view to introduce the expression of his purpose to punish his people, stated in Isaiah 5:5. But that the above is the meaning or the passage, or that it refers to what God had actually done, is evident from the following considerations:

(1) He had specified at length Isaiah 5:2 what he had done. He had performed "all" that was usually done to a vineyard; in fencing it, and clearing it of stones, and planting in it the choicest vines, and building a wine-press in it. Without impropriety, it might be said of a man that, whatever wealth he had, or whatever power he had to do "other" things, he "could do nothing more to perfect a vineyard."

(2) It is the meaning which is most naturally suggested by the original. Literally, the Hebrew is, ‹What to do more?‘ עוד מה־לעשות *mah -laʿăs'ôth ʿôd* Coverdale renders this, as it is in our translation, ‹What more could have been done for it?‘ Luther, ‹What should one do more to my vineyard, that I have not done for it?‘ Was sollte man doth mehr thun an meinem

Weinberge, das ich nicht gethun babe an illin? Vulgate, Quid est quod debui ultra facere. ‹What is there which I ought to do more?‘ Septuagint, Τί ποιήσω ἔτι *Ti poiēsō eti* ‹What shall I do yet?‘ implying that he had done all that he could for it. The Chaldee renders it, ‹What good thing - מה טבא *mah ṭâbâ'* - shall I say that I will do to my people that I have not done for them?‘ implying that he had done for them all the good which could be spoken of. The Syriac, ‹What remains to be done to my vineyard, and I have not done it?‘ In all these versions, the sense given is substantially the same - that God had done all that could be done to make the expectation that his vineyard would produce fruit, proper. There is no reference in one of these versions to what he "would" do afterward, but the uniform reference is to what he "had" done to make the expectation "reasonable," that his vineyard would produce fruit.

(3) That this is the fair interpretation is apparent further, because, when, in Isaiah 5:5, he says what he "would do," it is entirely different from what he said he "had done." He "had" done all that could be done to make it proper to expect fruit; he now "would" do what would be a proper expression of his displeasure that no fruit had been produced. He would take away its hedge; break down its walls, and lay it waste. But in the interpretation of the passage proposed by the "Princeton Repert.," there is an entire omission of this part of the verse - ‹that I have not done in it.‘ It is not improper, therefore, to use this passage to show that God had done all that could be consistently done for the salvation of man, and the same appeal may now be made to sinners everywhere; and it may be asked, what God "could" have done for their salvation more than has been done? "Could" he have given them a purer law? "Could" he present higher considerations than have been drawn from the hope of an "eternal" heaven, and the fear of an "eternal" hell? Could he have furnished a more full atonement than has been made by the blood of his own Son? The conclusion to which we should come would be in accordance with what is said in the prophet, that God has done "all" for the salvation of sinners that in the circumstances of the case could be done, and that if they are lost, they only will bear the blame.

Verse 5

Go to - The Hebrew word here is one that is commonly rendered, ‹I pray you,‘ and is used “to call the attention to” what is said. It is the word from which we have derived the adverb “now,” נא *nā′* I will take away the hedge - A “hedge” is a fence of thorns, made by suffering thorn-bushes to grow so thick that nothing can pass through them. Here it means that God would withdraw his protection from the Jews, and leave them exposed to be overrun and trodden down by their enemies, as a vineyard would be by wild beasts if it were not protected.

The wall … - Vineyards, it seems, had a “double” enclosure. - “Gesenius.” Such a double protection might be necessary, as some animals might scale a wall that would yet find it impossible to pass through a thorn-hedge. The sense here is, that though the Jews had been protected in every way possible, yet that protection would be withdrawn, and they would be left defenseless.

Verse 6

I will lay it waste … - The description here is continued from Isaiah 5:5. The image is carried out, and means that the Jews should be left utterly without protection.

I will also command the clouds … - It is evident here, that the parable or figure is partially dropped. A farmer could not command the clouds. It is God alone who could do that; and the figure of the vineyard is dropped, and God is introduced speaking as a sovereign. The meaning is, that he would withhold his divine influences, and would abandon them to desolation. The sense of the whole verse is plain. God would leave the Jews without protection; he would remove the guards, the helps, the influences, with which he had favored them, and leave them to their own course, as a vineyard that was unpruned, uncultivated, unwatered. The Chaldee has well expressed the sense of the passage: ‹I will take away the house of my sanctuary (the temple), and they shall be trodden down. I will regard them as guilty, and there shall be no support or defense for them; they shall be abandoned, and shall become wanderers. I will command the prophets, that they shall not prophesy over them.‘ The lesson taught here is, that when a people become ungrateful, and rebellious, God will withdraw from them, and leave them to desolation; compare Revelation 2:3.

Verse 7

For the vineyard … - This is the application of the parable. God had treated the Jews as a farmer does a vineyard. This was “his” vineyard - the

object of his faithful, unceasing care. This was his "only" vineyard; on this people alone, of all the nations of the earth, had he bestowed his special attention.

His pleasant plant - The plant in which he delighted. As the farmer had been at the pains to plant the "sorek" Isaiah 5:2, so had God selected the ancient stock of the Jews as his own, and made the race the object of his chief attention.

And he looked for judgment - For justice, or righteousness.

But behold oppression - The word rendered "oppression" means properly "shedding of blood." In the original here, there is a remarkable "paranomasia," or play upon words, which is not uncommon in the Hebrew Scriptures, and which was deemed a great beauty in composition:

d He looked for "judgment,"

d משׁפט *mishpâṭ*

d

d And lo! "shedding of blood,"

d משׁפח *mis'pâch*

d

d For "rightousness,"

d צדקה *tsedâqâh*

d

d But lo! "a clamor,"

d צעקה *tseʿâqâh*

d

d

It is impossible, of course, to retain this in a translation.

A cry. A clamor - tumult, disorder; the clamor which attends anarchy, and covetousness, and dissipation Isaiah 5:8, Isaiah 5:11-12, rather than the soberness and steadiness of justice.

Verse 8

Wo unto them … - The prophet now proceeds to "specify" some of the crimes to which he had referred in the parable of the vineyard, of which the Jews had been guilty. The first is "avarice."

That join house to house - That seek to possess many houses; or perhaps that seek to live in large and magnificent palaces. A similar denunciation of this sin is recorded in Micah 2:2; Nehemiah 5:1-8. This, together with what follows, was contrary to the law of Moses. He provided that when the children of Israel should enter the land of Canaan, the land should be equitably divided; and in order to prevent avarice, he ordained the "jubilee," occurring once in fifty years, by which every man and every family should be restored to their former possession; Leviticus 25. Perhaps there could have been no law so well framed to prevent the existence, and avoid the evils of covetousness. Yet, in defiance of the obvious requirements and spirit of that law, the people in the time of Isaiah had beome generally covetous.

That lay field to field - That purchase one farm after another. The words ‹that lay,‘ mean "to cause to approach;" that is, they "join" on one farm after another.

Till there be no place - Until they reach the "outer limit" of the land; until they possess all.

That they may be placed alone - That they may displace all others; that they may drive off from their lands all others, and take possession of them themselves.

In the midst of the earth - Or rather, in the midst of the "land." They seek to obtain the whole of it, and to expel all the present owners. Never was there a more correct description of avarice. It is satisfied with no present possessions, and would be satisfied only if all the earth were in its possession. Nor would the covetous man be satisfied then. He would sit down and weep that there was nothing more which he could desire. How

different this from that "contentment" which is produced by religion, and the love of the happiness of others!

Verse 9

In mine ears - This probably refers to the prophet. As if he had said, ‹God has revealed it to me,‘ or ‹God has said in my ears,‘ i. e, to me. The Septuagint reads it, ‹These things are heard in the ears of the Lord of hosts,‘ that is, the wishes" of the man of avarice. The Chaldee, ‹The prophet said, In my ears I have heard; a decree has gone from the Lord of hosts,‘ etc.

Many houses shall be desolate - Referring to the calamities that should come upon the nation for its crimes.

Verse 10

Yea, ten acres - In this verse a reason is rendered why the houses mentioned in the previous verse should become desolate. The reason is, that the land would become sterile and barren, as a divine judgment for their oppression. To what particular time the prophet refers, here, is not apparent. It is certain, however, that the land of Canaan was frequently given up to sterility. The withholding of the early and latter rains, or the neglect of cultivation from any cause, would produce this. At present, this formerly fertile country is among the most unproductive on the face of the earth.

Ten acres - An "acre," among the Hebrews, was what could be plowed by one yoke of oxen in a day. It did not differ materially from our acre.

Shall yield one bath - One bath of wine. The "bath" was a Jewish measure for liquids, containing about seven gallons and a half. To say that "ten acres" should produce no more wine than this; was the same as to say that it would produce almost nothing.

And the seed of an homer - An "homer" was a Hebrew measure for grain, containing about eight bushels.

An ephah - The "ephah" contained about three pecks. Of course, to say that an homer of seed should produce about three pecks, would be the same as saying that it would produce almost nothing.

Verse 11

Wo unto them - The prophet, having denounced "avarice," proceeds now to another vice - that of "intemperance, or dissipation."

That rise up early … - That rise "for this purpose," when nothing else would rouse them. It may illustrate this somewhat, to remark, that it was not common among the ancients to become intoxicated at an early hour of the day; see the note at Acts 2:15; compare 1 Thessalonians 5:7. It indicated

then, as it does now, a confirmed and habitual state of intemperance when a man would do this early in the morning. ‹The Persians, when they commit a debauch, arise betimes, and esteem the morning as the best time for beginning to drink wine, by which means they carry on their excess until night.‘ - “Morier.”

That they may follow strong drink - - שׁכר *shêkār* or sichar. This word is derived from a verb signifying to drink, to become intoxicated. All nations have found out some intoxicating drink. That which was used by the Hebrews was made from grain, fruit, honey, dates, etc., prepared by fermentation. The word sometimes means the same as wine Numbers 28:7, but more commonly it refers to a stronger drink, and is distinguished from it, as in the common phrase, ‹wine and strong drink;‘ Leviticus 10:9; Numbers 6:3; Judges 13:4, Judges 13:7. Sometimes it may be used for “spiced wine” - a mixture of wine with spices, that would also speedily produce intoxication. The Chaldee renders the words חמר עתיק *chămar ʿatîyq* ‹old fermented liquor;‘ denoting the “mode” in which strong drink was usually prepared. It may be remarked here, that whatever may be the “form” in which intoxicating drink is prepared, it is substantially the same in all nations. Intoxication is caused by “alcohol,” and that is produced by fermentation. It is never created or increased by distillation. The only effect of distillation is, to collect and preserve the alcohol which existed in the beer, the wine, or the cider. Consequently, the same substance produces intoxication when wine is drank, which does when brandy is drank; the same in cider or other fermented liquor, as in ardent spirits.

That continue until night - That drink all day. This shows that the “strong drink” intended here, did not produce “sudden,” intoxication. This is an exact description of what occurs constantly in oriental nations. The custom of sitting long at the wine, when they have the means of indulgence, prevails everywhere. D‘Ar-vieux says, that while he was staying among the Arabs on mount Carmel, a wreck took place on the coast, from which one of the emirs obtained two large casks of wine. He immediately sent to the neighboring emirs, inviting them to come and drink it. They gladly came, and continued drinking for two days and two nights, until not a drop of the wine was left. In like manner, Tavernier relates that the king of Persia sent for him early one morning to the palace, when, with other persons, he was obliged to sit all the day, and late at night, drinking wine with the shah; but

at last, ‹the king growing sleepy, gave us leave to depart, which we did very willingly, having had hard labor for seventeen hours together.‘

Inflame them - Excite them; or stimulate them. We have the same phrase - denoting the "burning" tendency of strong drink. The American Indians appropriately call "fire-water."

Verse 12

The prophet proceeds to state still further the extent of their crimes. This verse contains an account of their dissipated habits, and their consequent forgetfulness of God. That they commonly had musical instruments in their feasts, is evident from many passages of the Old Testament; see Amos 6:5-6. Their feasts, also, were attended with songs; Isaiah 24:8-9.

The harp - - כנור *kinnôr* This is a well-known stringed instrument, employed commonly in sacred music. It is often mentioned as having been used to express the pious feelings of David; Psalm 32:2; Psalm 43:4; Psalm 49:5. It is early mentioned as having been invented by Jubal; Genesis 4:21. It is supposed usually to have had ten strings (Josephus, "Ant." B. x. ch. xii. Section 3). It was played by the hand; 1 Samuel 16:23; 1 Samuel 18:9. The "root" of the word כנור *kinnôr* is unknown. The word "kinnor" is used in all the languages cognate to the Hebrew, and is recognized even in the Persian. It is probable that the instrument here referred to was common in all the oriental nations, as it seems to have been known before the Flood, and of course the knowledge of it would be extended far. It is an oriental name and instrument, and from this word the Greeks derived their word κινύρα *kinura* The Septuagint renders it κιθάρα *kithara* and κινύρα *kinura* they substitute for it ὄργανον *organon* Psalm 136:2; and five times ψαλτήριον *psaltērion* Genesis 4:20; Psalm 48:4; Psalm 80:2; Psalm 149:3; Ezekiel 26:13. The harp - כנור *kinnôr* - is not only mentioned as having been invented by Jubal, but it is also mentioned by Laban in the description which be gives of various solemnities, in regard to which he assures the fleeing Jacob that it had been his wish to accompany him with all the testimonials of joy - ‹with music - תף *tôph* and כנור *kinnôr* Genesis 31:27. In the first age it was consecrated to joy and exultation. Hence, it is referred to as the instrument employed by David to drive away the melancholy of Saul 1 Samuel 16:16-22, and is the instrument usually employed to celebrate the praises of God; Psalm 33:1-2; Psalm 43:4; Psalm 49:5; Psalm 71:22-23. But the harp was not only used on sacred occasions. Isaiah also mentions it as carried about

by courtezans Isaiah 23:16, and also refers to it as used on occasions of gathering in the vintage, and of increasing the joy of the festival occasion.

So also it was used in military triumphs. Under the reign of Jehoshaphat, after a victory which had been gained over the Moabites, they returned in triumph to Jerusalem, accompanied with playing on the כנור *kinnôr* 2 Chronicles 20:27-28. The harp was generally used on occasions of joy. Only in one place, in Isaiah Isaiah 16:11, is it referred to as having been employed in times of mourning. There is no ancient figure of the כנור *kinnôr* that can be relied on as genuine. We can only say that it was an instrument made of sounding wood, and furnished with strings. Josephus says that it was furnished with ten strings, and was played with the plectrum ("Ant." B. viii. ch. x.) Suidas, in his explanation of it, makes express mention of strings or sinews (p. 318); and Pollux speaks of goats' claws as being used for the plectrum. David made it out of the ברוֹשׁ *berôsh* or fir, and Solomon out of the almug. Pfeiffer supposes, that the strings were drawn over the belly of a hollow piece of wood, and that it had some resemblance to our violin. But it is more probable that the common representation of the harp as nearly in the form of a triangle, with one side or the front part missing, is the correct one. For a full discussion of the subject, see Pfeiffer on the Music of the ancient Hebrews, "Bib. Repos." vol. vi. pp. 366-373. Montfaucon has furnished a drawing of what was supposed to be the ancient כנור *kinnôr* which is represented in the book. But, after all, the usual form is not quite certain.

Bruce found a sculpture of a harp resembling that usually put into the hands of David, or nearly in the form of a triangle, and under circumstances which led him to suppose that it was as old as the times of Sesostris.

And the viol - נבל *nebel* From this word is derived the Greek word νάβλα *nabla* and the Latin *nablium* and *nabla*. But it is not very easy to form a correct idea of this instrument. The derivation would lead us to suppose that it was something in the shape of a "bottle," and it is probable that it had a form in the shape of a leather bottle, such as is used in the East, or at least a vessel in which wine was preserved; 1 Samuel 10:3; 1 Samuel 25:18; 2 Samuel 16:1. It was at first made of the ברוֹשׁ *berôsh* or fir; afterward it was made of the almug tree, and occasionally it seems to have been made of metal; 2 Samuel 6:5; 1 Chronicles 13:8. The external parts of the instrument were of wood, over which strings were drawn in various

ways. Josephus says it had twelve strings ("Ant." B. viii. ch. x.) He says also that it was played with the fingers. - "Ibid." Hesychius and Pollux reckon it among stringed instruments. The resonance had its origin in the vessel or the bottom part of the instrument, upon which the strings were drawn. According to Ovid, this instrument was played on with both hands:

Quaravis mutus erat, voci favisse putatur
Piscis, Aroniae fabula nora lyrae.
Disce etiam duplice genialia palma
Verrere.
De Arte Amandi, lib. iii. 327.

According to Jerome, Isodorus, and Cassiodorus, it had the form of an inverted Greek Delta δ dPfeiffer supposes that this instrument was probably the same as is found represented on ancient monument. The belly of the instrument is a wooden bowl, having a small hole in the under part, and is covered over with a stretched skin, which is higher in the middle than at the sides. Two posts, which are fastened together at the top by a cross piece, pass obliquely through this skin. Five strings pass over this skin, having a bridge for their support on the cross piece. The instrument has no pins or screws, but every string is fastened by means of some linen wound with it around this cross piece. The description of this instrument is furnished by Niebuhr ("Thess." i. p. 179). It is played on in two ways, either by being struck with the finger, or by a piece of leather, or perhaps a quill hung at its side and drawn across the strings. It cannot with certainty be determined when this instrument was invented, or when it came into use among the Hebrews. It is first mentioned in the time of Saul 1 Samuel 10:5, and from this time onward it is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament. It was used particularly in the public worship of God; 2 Samuel 6:5; 1 Kings 10:12; 2 Chronicles 20:28; 2 Chronicles 29:25; 1 Chronicles 15:16; 1 Chronicles 16:5. It was usually accompanied with other instruments, and was also used in festivals and entertainments; see "Bib. Repos." vol. vi. pp. 357-365. The usual form of representing it is shown in the preceding cut, and is the form in which the lyre appears on ancient monuments, in connection with the statues of Apollo.

The drawing in the book is a representation of a lyre from a Jewish shekel of the time of Simon Maccabeus, and may have been, not improbably, a form in frequent use among the Jews.

Niebuhr has furnished us with an instrument from the East, which is supposed to bare a very near resemblance to that which is referred to by Isaiah. This instrument is represented by the picture in the book.

The tabret - תף *tôph* This was one of the instruments which were struck with the hands. It was the kettle-drum of the ancients, and it is more easy to determine its form and use than it is of most of the instruments used by the Hebrews. The Septuagint and other Greek translators render it by τύμπανον *tumpanon* This word, as well as the Latin tympanum, is manifestly derived from the Hebrew. The Arabic word "duf" applied to the same instrument is also derived from the same Hebrew word. It was an instrument of wood, hollowed out, and covered over with leather and struck with the hands - a species of drum, This form of the drum is used by the Spaniards, and they have preserved it ever since the time of the Moors. It was early used. Laban wished to accompany Jacob with its sound; Genesis 31:27. Miriam, the sister of Moses, and the females with her, accompanied the song of victory with this instrument; Exodus 15:20.

Job was acquainted with it Job 17:6; Job 21:12, and David employed it in the festivities of religion; 2 Samuel 6:5. The occasions on which it is mentioned as being used are joyful occasions, and for the most part those who play on it are females, and on this account they are called ‹drum-beating women' Psalm 68:26 - in our translation, ‹damsels playing with timbrels,' In our translation it is rendered "tabret," Isaiah 5:12; 1 Samuel 10:5; Genesis 31:26; Isaiah 24:8; Isaiah 30:32; 1 Samuel 18:6; Ezekiel 38:13; Jeremiah 31:4; Job 17:6; "tabering," Nahum 2:7; and "timbrel," Psalm 81:2; Exodus 15:20; Job 21:12; Psalm 149:3; Psalm 150:4; Judges 11:34; Psalm 68:25. It is no where mentioned as employed in war or warlike transactions. It was sometimes made by merely stretching leather over a wooden hoop, and thus answered to the instrument known among us as the tambourine. It was in the form of a sieve, and is often found on ancient monuments, and particularly in the hands of Cybele. In the East, there is now no instrument more common than this.

Niebuhr (Thes i. p. 181) has given the following description of it: ‹It is a broad hoop covered on one side with a stretched skin. In the rim there are usually thin round pullies or wheels of metal which make some noise, when this drum, held on high with one hand, is struck with the fingers of the other hand. No musical instrument perhaps is so much employed in Turkey as

this. When the females in their harems dance or sing, the time is always beat on this instrument. It is called doff.‘ See “Bib. Repos.” vol. vi. pp. 398-402. it is commonly supposed that from the word “toph, Tophet” is derived - a name given to the valley of Jehoshaphat near Jerusalem, because this instrument was used there to drown the cries of children when sacrificed to Moloch.

And pipe. - חליל *châlîyl* This word is derived either from חלל *châlal* “to bore through,” and thence conveys the idea of a flute bored through, and furnished with holes (“Gesenius”); or from חלל *châlal* “to leap” or “to dance;” and thence it conveys the idea of an instrument that was played on at the dance. - “Pfeiffer.”

The Greek translators have always rendered it by αὐλός *aulos* There are, in all, but four places where it occurs in the Old Testament; 1 Kings 1:40; Isaiah 5:12; Isaiah 30:29; Jeremiah 48:36; and it is uniformly rendered “pipe or pipes,” by our translators. The origin of the pipe is unknown. It was possessed by most ancient nations, though it differed much in form. It was made sometimes of wood, at others of reed, at others of the bones of animals, horns, etc. The “box-wood” has been the common material out of which it was made. It was sometimes used for plaintive music (compare Matthew 9:23); but it was also employed in connection with other instruments, while journeying up to Jerusalem to attend the great feasts there; see the note at Isaiah 30:29. Though employed on plaintive occasions, yet it was also employed in times of joy and pleasure. Hence, in the times of Judas Maccabeus, the Jews complained ‹that all joy had vanished from Jacob, and, that the flute and cithera were silent;‘ Job 21:11-15.

In their feasts - ‹The Nabathaeans of Arabia Petrea always introduced music at their entertainments (Strabo, xvi.), and the custom seems to have been very general among the ancients. They are mentioned as having been essential among the Greeks, from the earliest times; and are pronounced by Homer to be requisite at a feast:

Μολπή τ᾽ ὀρχηστύ; τε τά γάρ τ᾽ ἀναθήματα δαιτός.

Molpē t' orchēstu te ta gar t' anathēmata daitos Odyssey i. 152.

Aristoxenus, quoted by Plutarch, “De Musica,” says, that ‹the music was designed to counteract the effects of inebriety, for as wine discomposes the body and the mind, so music has the power of soothing them, and of

restoring their previous calmness and tranquility.‘ “See Wilkinsoh‘s Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians,” vol. ii. pp. 248,249.

But they regard not … - The reproof is especially, that they forget him in their entertainments. They employ music to inflame their passions; and amid their songs and wine, their hearts are drawn away from God. That this is the tendency of such feasts, all must know. God is commonly forgotten in such places; and even the sweetest music is made the occasion for stealing the affections from him, and of inflaming the passions, instead of being employed to soften the feelings of the soul, and raise the heart to God.

The operation of his hands - The work of his hands - particularly his dealings among the people. God is round about them with mercy and judgment, but they do not perceive him.

Verse 13

Therefore my people are gone - This is evidently used with reference to the “future.” The prophet described events as “passing before his eyes” as a vision (note, Isaiah 1:1); and he here seems to “see” the people going into captivity, and describes it as an event actually occurring.

Into captivity - Referring, doubtless, to the captivity at Babylon.

Because they have no knowledge - Because they do not choose to retain the knowledge of God.

And their honorable men - The Hebrew is, ‹The glory of the people became people of famine;‘ that is, they shall be destroyed with famine. This was to be a “punishment” for their dissipation at their feasts.

And their multitude - The mass, or body of the nation; the common people.

Dried up with thirst - Are punished in this manner for their indulgence in drinking. The punishment here specified, refers particularly to a journey through an arid, desolate region, where drink could be obtained only with difficulty. Such was the route which the nation was compelled afterward to take in going to Babylon.

Verse 14

Therefore hell - The word transated “hell,” שׁאול *she'ôl* has not the same meaning that we now attach to that word; its usual signification, among the Hebrews, was “the lower world, the region of departed spirits.” It corresponded to the Greek ἅδης *Hadēs* “hades,” or place of the dead. This word occurs eleven times in the New Testament Matthew 11:23; Matthew 16:18; Luke 10:15; Luke 16:23; Acts 2:27, Acts 2:31; 1 Corinthians 15:55;

Revelation 1:18; Revelation 6:8; Revelation 20:13-14, in all of which places, except 1 Corinthians 15:55, it is rendered "hell," though denoting, in most of those places, as it does in the Old Testament, the abodes of the dead. The Septuagint, in this place, and usually, translates the word שׁאול *she'ôl* by ἅδης *Hadēs* "Hades." It was represented by the Hebrews as "low down, or deep" in the earth - contrasted with the height of heaven; Deuteronomy 32:22; Job 11:8; Psalm 139:7-8. It was a place where thick darkness reigns; Job 10:21-22: ‹The land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself.' It is described as having "valleys, or depths," Proverbs 9:18. It is represented also as having "gates," Isaiah 38:10; and as being inhabited by a great multitude, some of whom sit on thrones, occupied in some respects as they were on earth; see the note at Isaiah 14:9. And it is also said that the wicked descend into it by openings in the earth, as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram did; Numbers 15:30, … In this place, it means evidently the "regions of the dead," without the idea of punishment; and the poetic representation is, that so many of the Jews would be cut off by famine, thirst, and the sword, that those vast regions would be obliged "to enlarge themselves" in order to receive them. It means, therefore, that while many of them would go into captivity Isaiah 5:13, vast multitudes of them would be cut off by famine, thirst, and the sword.

Opened her mouth - As if to absorb or consume them; as a "cavern," or opening of the earth does; compare Numbers 16:30.

Without measure - Without any limit.

And their glory - All that they esteemed their pride and honor shall descend together into the yawning gulf.

Their multitude - The multitude of people; their vast hosts.

Their pomp - Noise, tumult; the bustle, and shouting, and display made in battle, or war, or victory; Isaiah 13:4; Amos 2:2; Hosea 10:14.

And he that rejoiceth - All that the nation prided itself on, and all that was a source of joy, should be destroyed.

Verse 15-16

And the mean man … the mighty man - The expressions here mean that "all" ranks would be subdued and punished; see the note at Isaiah 2:9.

The eyes of the lofty … - see Isaiah 2:11, note; Isaiah 2:17, note.

Shall be exalted in judgment - In his justice; he shall so manifest his justice as to be exalted in the view of tbe people.

Shall be sanctified - Shall be "regarded" as holy. He shall so manifest his righteousness in his dealings, that it shall be seen and felt that he is a holy God.

Verse 17

Then shall the lambs feed - This verse is very variously interpreted. Most of the Hebrew commentators have followed the Chaldee interpretation, and have regarded it as desired to console the pious part of the people with the assurance of protection in the general calamity. The Chaldee is, ‹Then the just shall feed, as it is said, to them; and they shall be multiplied, and shall possess the property of the inpious.‘ By this interpretation, "lambs" are supposed, as is frequently the case in the Scriptures, to represent the people of God. But according to others, the probable design of the prophet is, to denote the state of utter desolation that was coming upon the nation. Its cities, towns, and palaces would be destroyed, so as to become a vast pasturage where the flocks would roam at pleasure.

After their manner - Hebrew, ‹According to their word,‘ that is, under their own "command," or at pleasure. They would go where they pleased without being obstructed by fences.

And the waste places of the fat ones - Most of the ancient interpreters suppose, that the waste places of the fat ones here refer to the desolate habitations of the rich people; in the judgments that should come upon the nation, they would become vacant, and strangers would come in and possess them. This is the sense given by the Chaldee. The Syriac translates it, ‹And foreigners shall devour the ruins which are yet to be restored.‘ If this is the sense, then it accords with the "first" interpretation suggested of the previous verse - that the pious should be fed, and that the proud should be desolate, and their property pass into the hands of strangers. By others (Gesenius, etc.), it is supposed to mean that strangers, or foreigners, would come in, and fatten their cattle in the desert places of the nation. The land would be so utterly waste, that they would come there to fatten their cattle in the rank and wild luxuriancy that would spontaneously spring up. This sense will suit the connection of the passage; but there is some difficulty in making it out from the Hebrew. The Hebrew which is rendered ‹the waste places of the fat ones,‘ may, however, be translated ‹the deserts that are rich - rank - luxuriant.‘ The word "stranger" denotes "foreigners;" or those who are not "permanent" dwellers in the land.

Verse 18

Wo unto them … - This is a new denunciation. It introduces another form of sin, and threatens its appropriate punishment.

That draw iniquity with cords of vanity - The general idea in this verse and the next, is, doubtless, that of plunging deeper and deeper into sin. The word "sin" here, has been sometimes supposed to mean "the punishment" for sin. The word has that meaning sometimes, but it seems here to be taken in its usual sense. The word "cords" means strings of any kind, larger or smaller; and the expression "cords of vanity," is supposed to mean "small, slender, feeble" strings, like the web of a spider. The word vanity שׁוא *shâv'* May, perhaps, have the sense here of falsehood or deceit; and the cords of deceit may denote the schemes of evil, the plans for deceiving people, or of bringing them into a snare, as the fowler springs his deceitful snare upon the unsuspecting bird. The Chaldee translates it, ‹Woe to those who begin to sin by little and little, drawing sin by cords of vanity; these sins grow and increase until they are strong, and are like a cart-rope.' The Septuagint renders it, ‹Woe to those who draw sin with a long cable;' that is," one sin is added to another, until it comes to an enormous length, and the whole is drawn along together. Probably the true idea is that of the ancient interpretation of the rabbis, ‹An evil inclination is at first like a fine hair string, but the finishing like a cart-rope.' At first, they draw sin with a slender cord, then they go on to greater deeds of iniquity that urge them on, and draw them with their main strength, as with a cart-rope. They make a strong "effort" to commit iniquity.

Verse 19

That say … - They add one sin to another for "the purpose of defying" God, and provoking him to anger. They pretend that he will not punish sin; and hence, they plunge deeply into it, and defy him to punish them.

Let him make speed - Let him come quick to punish.

And hasten his work - His punishment.

That we may see it - An expression of defiance. We would like to see him undertake it.

The counsel of the Holy One … - His threatened purpose to punish. This is the language of all sinners. They plunge deep into sin; they mock at the threatenings of God; they defy him to do his utmost; they do not believe his declarations. It is difficult to conceive more dreadful and high-handed iniquity than this.

Verse 20

Wo unto them that call evil good … - This is the fourth class of sins denounced. The sin which is reprobated here is that of "perverting and confounding" things, especially the distinctions of morality and religion. They prefer erroneous and fake doctrines to the true; they prefer an evil to an upright course of conduct. The Chaldee renders this, ‹Wo to those who say to the impious, who are prospered in this age, You are good; and who say to the meek, Ye are impious.‘ Jarchi thinks that the prophet here refers to those who worship idols, but he evidently has a more general reference to those who confound all the distinctions of right and wrong, and who prefer the wrong.

That put darkness for light - "Darkness," in the Scriptures, is the emblem of ignorance, error, false doctrine, crime. Light denotes truth, knowledge, piety. This clause, therefore, expresses in a figurative, but more emphatic manner, what was said in the previous member of the verse.

That put bitter - "Bitter and bitterness" are often used to denote "sin;" see the note at Acts 8:23; also Romans 3:14; Ephesians 4:31; Hebrews 12:15; Jeremiah 2:19; Jeremiah 4:18. The meaning here does not differ from that expressed in the other parts of the verse, except that there is "implied" the additional idea that sin "is" bitter; and that virtue, or holiness, is sweet: that is, that the one is attended with painful consequences, and the other with pleasure.

Verse 21

Wo unto them that are wise … - This is the fifth crime specified. It refers to those who are inflated with a false opinion of their own knowledge, and who are, therefore, self-confident and vain. This is expressly forbidden; Proverbs 3:7: ‹Be not wise in thine own eyes;‘ compare Proverbs 26:12.

In their own eyes - In their own opinion, or estimation.

And prudent - Knowing; self-conceited. This was, doubtless, one characteristic of the times of Isaiah. It is known to have been strikingly the characteristic of the Jews - particularly the Pharisees - in the time of our Saviour. The evil of this was,

(1) That it evinced and fostered "pride."

(2) That it rendered them unwilling to be instructed, and especially by the prophets.

As they supposed that they were already wise enough, they refused to listen to others. This is always the effect of such self-confidence: and hence, the Saviour required his disciples to be meek, and humble, and teachable as children.

Verse 22

Wo unto them that are mighty … - This is the sixth specification of crime. He had already denounced the intemperate in Isaiah 5:11. But probably this was a prevailing sin. Perhaps there was no evidence of reform; and it was needful to "repeat" the admonition, in order that people might be brought to regard it. The prophet repeats a similar denunciation in Isaiah 56:12.

Mighty - Perhaps those who prided themselves on their ability to drink "much" without becoming intoxicated; who had been so accustomed to it, that they defied its effects, and boasted of their power to resist its usual influence. A similar idea is expressed in Isaiah 56:12.

Men of strength - The Chaldee understands this of "rich" men; but, probably, the reference is to those who boasted that they were able to bear "much" strong drink.

To mingle - To mix wine with spices, dates, drugs, etc., to make it more intoxicating; Proverbs 9:2, Proverbs 9:5. They boasted that they were able to drink, without injury, liquor of extraordinary intoxicating qualities.

Strong drink - Note, Isaiah 5:11. On the subject of the strong drink used in the East, "see Harmer's Observations," vol. ii. pp. 140-148. Ed. Lond. 1808.

Verse 23

Which justify - This refers, doubtless, to magistrates. They gave unjust decisions.

For reward - For bribes.

And take away the righteousness - That is, they do not decide the cause in favor of those who have just claims, but are determined by a bribe; see the note at Isaiah 1:23. It is remarkable, that this is introduced in immediate connection with their being mighty to mingle strong drink. One effect of intemperance is to make a man ready to be "bribed." Its effect is seen as clearly in courts of justice, and in the decisions of such courts, as any where. A man that is intemperate, or that indulges in strong drink, is not qualified to be a judge.

Verse 24

Therefore as the fire … - The remainder of this chapter is occupied with predicting "judgments," or punishments, upon the people for their sins which had been specified. The Hebrew here is, ‹The tongue of fire.‘ The figure is beautiful and obvious. It is derived from the pyramidal, or tongue-like appearance of "flame." The concinnity of the metaphor in the Hebrew is kept up. The word "devoureth" is in the Hebrew "eateth:" ‹As the tongue of fire eats up,‘ etc. The use of the word "tongue" to denote "flame" is common in the Scriptures; see the note at Acts 2:3.

And the flame consumeth the chaff - The word rendered "chaff here," means rather "hay, or dried grass." The word rendered ‹consumeth,‘ denotes properly "to make to fall," and refers to the appearance when a fire passes through a field of grain or grass, consuming the stalks near the ground, so that the upper portion "falls down," or sinks gently into the flames.

So their root shall be as rottenness - Be rotten; or decayed - of course furnishing no moisture, or suitable juices for the support of the plant. The idea is, that all the sources of national prosperity among the Jews would be destroyed. The word "root" is often used to denote the source of "strength or prosperity;" Isaiah 14:30; Hosea 9:16; Job 18:16.

And their blossom - This word rather means germ, or tender branch. It also means the flower. The figure is kept up here. As the root would be destroyed, so would all that was supported by it, and all that was deemed beautiful, or ornamental.

As dust - The Hebrew denotes "fine dust," such as is easily blown about. The root would be rotten; and the flower, lacking nourishment, would become dry, and turn to dust, and blow away. Their strength, and the sources of their prosperity would be destroyed; and all their splendor and beauty, all that was ornamental, and the source of national wealth, would be destroyed with it.

They have cast away - They have refused to "obey" it. This was the cause of all the calamities that would come upon them.

Verse 25

Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled - The Lord is "enraged," or is angry. Similar expressions often occur; Numbers 11:33; 2 Kings 23:26; Deuteronomy 11:17; Psalm 56:1-13:40; Job 19:11; Psalm 2:12. The "cause" of his anger was the crimes which are specified in this chapter.

And he hath stretched forth his hand - To stretch forth the hand may be an action expressive of protection, invitation, or punishment. Here it is

the latter; compare Isaiah 14:27.

And hath smitten them - Punished them. To what this refers particularly is not clear. Gesenius supposes that the expressions which follow are descriptive of pestilence. Lowth and Rosenmuller suppose that they refer to the earthquakes which occurred in the days of Uzziah, and in the time of the prophets; Amos 1:1; Zechariah 14:5. The words, perhaps, will bear either construction.

And the hills did tremble - This expression is one that is often used in the Scriptures to denote the presence and anger of God. It is well adapted to describe an earthquake; but it is also often used poetically, to describe the presence and the majesty of the Most High; compare Psalm 144:5; Job 9:6; Job 26:11; Psalm 114:7; Jeremiah 4:24; Habakkuk 3:10; Psalm 18:7; Psalm 97:5; Psalm 104:32. The image is one that is very sublime. The earth, as if conscious of the presence of God, is represented as alarmed, and trembling. Whether it refers here to the earthquake, or to some other mode of punishment, cannot be determined. The fact, however, that such an earthquake had occurred in the time of Isaiah, would seem to fix the expression to that. Isaiah, from that, took occasion also to denounce future judgments. This was but the beginning of woes.

And their carcasses were torn - The margin here is the more correct translation. The passage means that their dead bodies were strewed, unburied, like filth, through the streets. This expression would more naturally denote a pestilence. But it may be descriptive of an earthquake, or of any calamity.

For all this - Notwithstanding all this calamity, his judgments are not at an end. He will punish the nation more severely still. In what way he would do it, the prophet proceeds in the remainder of the chapter to specify; compare Isaiah 9:12; Isaiah 10:4.

Verse 26

And he will lift up an ensign … - The idea here is, that the nations of the earth are under his control, and that he can call whom he pleases to execute his purposes. This power over the nations he often claims; compare Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1-7; Isaiah 10:5-7; Isaiah 9:11; Isaiah 8:18. An "ensign" is the "standard," or "flag" used in an army. The elevation of the standard was a signal for assembling for war. God represents himself here as simply raising the standard, expecting that the nations would come at once.

And will hiss unto them - This means that he would "collect" them together to accomplish his purposes. The expression is probably taken from the manner in which bees were hived. Theodoret and Cyril, on this place, say, that in Syria and Palestine, they who kept bees were able to draw them out of their hives, and conduct them into fields, and bring them back again, with the sound of a flute or the noise of hissing. It is certain also that the ancients had this idea respecting bees. Pliny (lib. xi. ch. 20) says: Gaudent plausu, atque tinnitu aeris, coque convocantur. ‹They rejoice in a sound, and in the tinkling of brass, and are thus called together.' AElian (lib. v. ch. 13) says, that when they are disposed to fly away, their keepers make a musical and harmonious sound, and that they are thus brought back as by a siren, and restored to their hives. So Virgin says, when speaking of bees:

Tinnitusque cie, et Matris quate cymbala circum.
Georg. iv. 64.
‹On brazen vessels beat a tinkling sound,
And shake the cymbals of the goddess round;

Then all will hastily retreat, and fill

The warm resounding hollow of their cell.'
Addison
So Ovid:
Jamque erat ad Rhodopen Pangaeaque flumina ventum,
Aeriferae comitum cum crepuere manus.
Ecce! novae coeunt volucres tinnitibus actae

Quosque movent sonitus aera sequuntur apes.
Fastor, lib. iii., 739.

See also Columella, lib. x. ch. 7; Lucan, lib. ix. ver. 288; and Claudian, "Panegyric. in sextum consul. Honorii," ver. 259; compare Bochart, "Hieroz." P. ii. lib. iv. ch. x. pp. 506,507. The prophets refer to that fact in several places, Isaiah 8:18; Zechariah 10:8. The simple meaning is, that God, at his pleasure; would collect the nations around Judea like bees, that is, in great numbers.

The end of the earth - That is, the remotest parts of the world. The most eastern nations known to them were probably the Babylonians, Medes, Persians, and perhaps the inhabitants of India. The general idea is,

that he would call in the distant nations to destroy them. In Isaiah 7:18, Egypt and Assyria are particularly specified. This was in accordance with the prediction in Deuteronomy 28:49.

Verse 27

None shall be weary - In this verse and the following, the prophet describes the condition of the army that would be summoned to the destruction of Judea. It would be composed of bold, vigorous, courageous men; they would be unwearied by long and painful journies; they would be fierce and violent; they would come fully prepared for conquest. None would be "weary," that is, fatigued with long marches, or with hard service; Deuteronomy 25:18; 2 Samuel 16:14.

Nor stumble - They shall be chosen, select men; not those who are defective, or who shall easily fall by any impediments in the way of their march.

None shall slumber - They shall be unwearied, and indefatigable, pursuing their purpose with ever watchfull vigilance - so much as not to be off their guard. They cannot be taken by surprise.

Neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed - The ancients wore a loose, large, flowing robe, or upper garment. When they labored, or ran, it was necessary to "gird" this up round the body, or to lay it aside altogether. The form of expression here may mean, that they will not relax their efforts; they will not unloose their girdle; they will not unfit themselves for vigorous action, and for battle. "In" that girdle, with which they bound up their robes, the orientals usually carried their dirks and swords; see Nehemiah 4:18; Ezekiel 22:15. It means that they should be fully, and at all times, prepared for action.

Nor the latchet of their shoes be broken - They will be constantly prepared for marches. The shoes, sandals, or "soles" were attached to the feet, not by upper leather, but were girded on by thongs or strings; see the notes at Matthew 3:2.

Verse 28

Whose arrows are sharp - Bows and arrows were the common instruments of fighting at a distance. Arrows were, of course, made sharp, and usually pointed with iron, for the purpose of penetrating the shields or coats of mail which were used to guard against them.

And all their bows bent - All ready for battle.

Their horses‘ hoofs shall be counted like flint - It is supposed that the ancients did not usually shoe their horses. Hence, a hard, solid hoof would add greatly to the value of a horse. The prophet here means, that their horses would be prepared for any fatigue, or any expedition; see a full description of horses and chariots in Bochart‘s “Hieroz.” P. i. lib. ii. ch. viii. ix.

And their wheels like a whirlwind - That is, the wheels of their chariots shall be swift as the wind, and they shall raise a cloud of dust like a whirlwind. This comparison was very common, as it is now; see “Bochart.” See, also, a magnificent description of a war-horse in Job 39:19-25.

Verse 29

Their roaring … - Their battle cry, or their shout as they enter into an engagement. Such a “shout,” or cry, was common at the commencement of a battle. War was very much a personal conflict; and they expected to accomplish much by making it as frightful and terrible as possible. A shout served not only to excite their own spirits, but to produce an impression of their numbers and courage, and to send dismay into the opposite ranks. Such “shouts” are almost always mentioned by Homer, and by other writers, in their accounts of battles. They are often mentioned, also, in the Old Testament; Exodus 32:18; Joshua 6:10, Joshua 6:16, Joshua 6:20; Jeremiah 50:15; 1 Samuel 17:20, 1 Samuel 17:52; 2 Chronicles 13:15; Job 39:25.

Like a lion - This comparison is common in the Bible; Jeremiah 51:38; Hosea 11:10; Amos 3:4; compare Numbers 23:24.

Like young lions - This variation of the expression, from the lion to the young lion, is very common. It is the Hebrew form of poetry, where the second member expresses little more than the first. Here the description is that of a lion, or more probably a “lioness” and her whelps, all ravenous, and all uniting in roaring for prey. The idea is, that the army that would come up would be greedy of plunder; they would rush on to rapine in a frightful manner.

Verse 30

They shall roar against them - The army that shall come up shall roar against the Jews. The image of “the roaring of the sea” indicates the great number that would come; that of the roaring of the “lion” denotes their fierceness and terror.

And if one look unto the land - This expression has given some perplexity, because it is supposed not to be full or complete. The whole image, it has been supposed (see "Lowth"), would be that of looking "upward" to the heaven for help, and then to the land, or "earth;" compare Isaiah 8:22, where the same expression is used. But there is no need of supposing the expression defective. The prophet speaks of the vast multitude that was coming up and roaring like the tumultuous "ocean." On "that" side there was no safety. The waves were rolling, and everything was suited to produce alarm. It was natural to speak of the "other" direction, as the "land," or the shore; and to say that the people would look there for safety. But, says he, there would be no safety there. All would be darkness.

Darkness and sorrow - This is an image of distress and calamity. There should be no light; no consolation; no safety; compare Isaiah 59:9; Amos 5:18, Amos 5:20; Lamentations 3:2.

And the light is darkened … - That which gave light is turned to darkness.

In the heavens thereof - In the "clouds," perhaps, or by the gloomy thick clouds. Lowth renders it, ‹the light is obscured by the gloomy vapor.‘ The main idea is plain, that there would be distress and calamity; and that there would be no light to guide them on their way. On the one hand a roaring, ragtag multitude, like the sea; on the other distress, perplexity, and gloom. Thus shut up, they must perish, and their land be utterly desolate.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Introduction

This chapter Isaiah 6:1-13 contains a very sublime description of the manifestation of Yahweh to Isaiah, and of a solemn commission to him to declare his purposes to the Jews. It has been supposed by many to be a solemn "inauguration" to the prophetic office, and to have been the "first" of his prophecies. But this supposition is not to be considered as just. It is evident Isaiah 1:1 that he prophesied "before" the death of Uzziah, and there is reason to suppose that the order of "time" is observed in the previous chapters; see the Introduction, Section 2. The most probable supposition of the occasion of this prophecy, is this, that the people were extremely guilty; that they were strongly indisposed to listen to the message of the prophet, and that he was, therefore, favored with this extraordinary commission in order to give his message more success and higher authority in the minds of the people. It is a new commission to make his message as impressive as possible - as if it came direct from the lips of the Almighty. The Jews say, that for this pretension that he had seen Yahweh, he was sawn asunder by "Manasseh." And to this fact Paul has been supposed to refer in Hebrews 11:37, where he says of those who had been eminent in faith, ‹they were sawn asunder;' see the Introduction, Section 2.

This vision is expressed in the language appropriate to Eastern monarchs. God is represented as sitting on a "throne," and attended by ministers, here called seraphim. His throne is elevated, and the posture of sitting denotes dignity and majesty. The language of the description is taken from the temple. The image is that of God sitting in the most holy place. Surrounding him are seen the seraphim, and the cloud filling the temple. Isaiah is represented as without the temple, near the altar. The great altar of sacrifice stood directly in front of the temple, so that if the doors of the temple had been open, and the veil separating the holy from the most holy place had been withdrawn, he would have had a distinct view of the mercy-seat. That veil between is supposed to be withdrawn, and he is permitted directly to contemplate the sacred and solemn manifestation made in the immediate dwelling-place of God. The chapter comprises, properly, three parts.

I. The vision, Isaiah 6:1-4. Yahweh is seen upon a throne, clad in the manner of an ancient monarch, with a robe and a train which filled the whole temple. He sits as a king, and is adorned in the robes of royalty, Isaiah 6:1. He is encompassed with ministering spirits - with the seraphim, in the manner of a magnificent king, Isaiah 6:2. They are seen, by the prophet, to be solemnly engaged in his worship, and to stand in the attitude of the most profound veneration, Isaiah 6:3. So awful and sublime was the worship, that even the posts of the temple were moved; the whole sacred edifice trembled at the presence of God, and at the voice of those who were engaged in his praise; and the whole temple was filled with the symbol of the divine presence and majesty, Isaiah 6:4.

II. The "effect on the prophet," Isaiah 6:5-7. He was overcome with a sense of his unworthiness, and felt that he could not live. He had seen Yahweh, and he felt that he was a ruined man, Isaiah 6:5. Yet one of the seraphim flew to the altar, and bore thence a live coal, and touched his lips, and assured him that his sin was taken away, and that he was pardoned, Isaiah 6:6-7.

III. The "commission of the prophet," Isaiah 6:8-13. God inquires who will go for him to the people, and bear his message, and the prophet expresses his readiness to do it, Isaiah 6:8. The nature of the message is stated, Isaiah 6:9-10. The "duration" - the state of things which he predicted would follow from this - is asked, and the answer is returned, Isaiah 6:11-13. It was to be until utter desolation should spread over the land, and the mass of the nation was cut off, and all were destroyed, except the small portion which it was necessary to preserve, in order to prevent the nation from becoming wholly extinct.

Verse 1

In the year - This naturally denotes a period after the death of Uzziah, though in the same year. The mention of the time was evidently made when the prophecy was composed, and it is to be presumed that the death of Uzziah had occurred at the time when the prophet saw this vision. If so, it is clear that this was not the first of his prophecies, for he saw his visions ‹in the days of Uzziah;' Isaiah 1:1. The Chaldee, however, reads this: ‹in the year when Uzziah was smitten with the leprosy;' and most of the Jewish

commentators so understand it; 2 Chronicles 26:19-20. The rabbis say that the meaning is, that he then became "civilly" dead, by ceasing to exercise his functions as a king, and that he was cut off as a leprous man from all connection with the people, and from all authority; see the Introduction, Section 3. This is, doubtless, true; but still, the more natural signification is, that this occurred in the year in which he actually died.

I saw - That is, he saw in a "vision;" see the Introduction, Section 7. (4). A similar vision is described by Micaiah; 1 Kings 22:19; see also Amos 7:1; Amos 8:1; Amos 9:1; Daniel 7:13, …

The Lord - In the original here the word is not יהוה *yehovâh* but אדני *'ădonāy* see the notes at Isaiah 1:24. Here it is applied to Yahweh; see also Psalm 114:7, where it is also so applied; and see Isaiah 8:7, and Job 28:28, where Yahweh calls himself "Adonai." The word does not itself denote essential divinity; but it is often applied to God. In some MSS., however, of Kennicott and DeRossi, the word Yahweh is found. We may make two remarks here.

(1) That Isaiah evidently meant to say that it was Yahweh who appeared to him. He is expressly so called in Isaiah 6:5-8, Isaiah 6:11.

(2) It is equally clear, from the New Testament, that Isaiah saw the messiah. John quotes the words in this chapter, Isaiah 6:10, as applicable to Jesus Christ, and then adds John 12:41, ‹these things said Esaias when he saw his glory, and spake of him.'

An inspired man has thus settled this as referring to the Messiah, and thus had established the propriety of applying to him the name Yahweh, that is, has affirmed that the Lord Jesus is divine. Jerome says, that this vision was designed to represent the doctrine of the Trinity. In John 1:18, it is said, ‹No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.' In Exodus 33:20, God says, ‹Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live;' see also 1 Timothy 6:16. These passages may be reconciled with what is here said by Isaiah, in the following manner:

(1) Isaiah does not say that he saw the Divine Essence; and all that his words fairly imply, is, that he saw a manifestation, or vision of Yahweh - some striking symbolic representation of him.

(2) It was the manifestation of Yahweh in the person of the Messiah, of the ‹only begotten Son who hath revealed or declared him,' that he saw Such manifestations of God have been made often, and all that the

declaration of Isaiah implies, of necessity, is, that he had a vision of God incarnate seated in glory, from whom he now received a new commission to go out and proclaim the truth to that wicked and rebellious generation.

Sitting upon a throne - God is thus often represented as a king, sitting on a throne; 1 Kings 22:19; Ezekiel 43:7; Jeremiah 17:12.

High and lifted up - That is, the "throne;" an indication of state and majesty. "And his train." The word "train" שׁוּליו *shûlāyv* properly signifies the skirt of a garment, or a robe; Exodus 28:33-34. Here it is evidently designed as a representation of a large, flowing robe, that filled all the most holy part of the temple. The Orientals regarded such large robes as indicative of grandeur and state. The Messiah was seen seated on a throne as a king; clothed in a large, loose, flowing robe, in the manner of oriental monarchs, and surrounded by his ministers. The design of this magnificent vision was not only to impress the prophet with a sense of the holiness of God, but also to give additional weight to his commission, as having been derived immediately from the divine majesty; compare Isaiah 6:9-10. It is remarkable that Isaiah attempts no representation of Yahweh himself. He mentions his robes; the throne; the seraphim; but mentions no form or appearance of God himself. In this there is great sublimity. There is enough mentioned to fill the mind with awe; there is enough concealed to impress as deeply with a sense of the divine majesty. It is remarkable, also, that it is not the "usual" appearance of God in the temple to which he refers. That was the "Shekinah," or visible symbol of God. That was on the mercy-seat, this was on a throne; that was a cloud, of this no form is mentioned; over that the cherubim stretched forth their wings, over this stood the seraphim; that had no clothing, this was clad in a full flowing robe.

Filled the temple - Probably, the most holy place only is intended. The large, full, magnificent robe seemed to fill up the entire holy of holies. Some have supposed that this vision was represented as appearing in the "heavens." But the expression here evidently implies, that it was seen in the "temple" at Jerusalem.

Verse 2

Above it - Either above the throne, or above him. The Septuagint renders it, ‹Round about him‘ - κύκλῳ αὐτοῦ *kuklō autou* The Chaldee, ‹The holy ministers stood on high in his presence.‘

The seraphims - The verb שׂרף *s'âraph* from which this word is derived, is uniformly translated "to burn," and is used frequently; see "Taylor." The

noun שׂרף *s'ârâph* denotes, according to Bochart, the "chersydros," a serpent that lives in lakes and moist places; but when those places are dried up, it becomes a land serpent, and then its bite is very fierce, and is attended with a most dreadful inflammation all over the body. Rabbi Solomon says, that ‹serpents are called seraphim because they burn people with the poison of their teeth,‘ perhaps because the idea of "heat and poison" were connected. The word is applied to the fiery flying serpents which bit the children of Israel, and in imitation of which a brass serpent was erected on a pole by Moses. It is translated ‹a fiery serpent‘ in Numbers 21:8; Isaiah 14:29; Isaiah 30:6. In Deut; Deuteronomy 8:15; Numbers 21:6, it is rendered ‹fiery,‘ and in the passage before us, "seraphims."

The word שׂרפה *s'erêphâh* often occurs in the sense of "burning;" Deuteronomy 29:23; 2 Chronicles 16:14; 2 Chronicles 21:19, … The Septuagint renders it "seraphim," σεραφὶμ *serafim* so the Vulgate and the Syriac. The Chaldee, ‹his holy ministers.‘ Probably it is now impossible to tell why this name was given to the representations that appeared to Isaiah. Perhaps it may have been from their "burning" ardor and zeal in the service of God; perhaps from the "rapidity" of their motion in his service - derived from the rapid motion of the serpent. Gesenius supposes that the name was derived from a signification of the word denoting "noble or excellent," and that it was on this account applied to princes, and to celestial beings. Kimchi says, that the name was given with reference to their bright, shining appearance; compare Ezekiel 1:13; 2 Kings 2:2; 2 Kings 6:17. The word is applied to celestial beings no where else, except in this chapter. There is no reason to think that the seraphim described here partook of the "form of" the serpent, as the representation seems to be rather that of a man. Thus each one Isaiah 6:2 is represented as covering his "face" and his "feet" with his wings - a description that does not pertain to the serpentine form. God is usually represented as surrounded or encompassed by heavenly beings, as his ministers; Psalm 104:4; Daniel 7:10; 1 Kings 22:19; Psalm 68:17; Hebrews 12:22. The idea is one of special magnificence and grandeur. It is derived especially from the customs of monarchs, particularly Eastern monarchs, who had numerous princes and nobles to attend them, and to give magnificence to their court.

Each one had six wings - "Wings" are emblematic of the "rapidity" of their movement; the number here, perhaps, denoting their celerity and readiness to do the will of God.

With twain he covered his face - This is designed, doubtless, to denote the "reverence and awe" inspired by the immediate presence of God; compare Amos 6:9, Amos 6:10. The Chaldee adds, ‹He covered his face so that he could not see.‘ To cover the face in this manner is the natural expression of reverence; compare the note at Isaiah 52:15. And if the pure and holy seraphim evinced such reverence in the presence of Yahweh, with what profouond awe and veneration should we, polluted and sinful creatures, presume to draw near to him! Assuredly "their" position should reprove our presumption when we rush thoughtlessly and irreverently into his presence, and should teach us to bow with lowly veneration and deep humility; compare Revelation 4:9-11.

He covered his feet - In a similar description of the cherubim in Ezekiel 1:11, it is said tha they covered "their bodies." In Isaiah, the expression clearly denotes not the feet only, but the lower extremities. This was also an expression of reverence drawn from our conceptions of propriety. The seraphim stood covered, or as if "concealing themselves" as much as possible, in token of their nothingness and unworthiness in the presence of the Holy One.

He did fly - He was quick to execute the commands of God. It may be observed, also, that among the ancients, "Mercury," the messenger of Jupiter, was always represented with wings. Milton has copied this description of the seraphim:

‹A seraph winged: six wings he wore to shade
His lineaments divine; the pair that clad
Each shoulder broad, came mantling o‘er his breast

With regal ornament; the middle pair

Girt like a starry zone his waist, and round

Skirted his loins and thighs with downy gold,

And colors dipt in heaven; the third his feet

Shadowed from either heel with feathered mail,

Sky-tinctured grain.‘

Par. Lost, Book v.

Verse 3

And one cried to another - Hebrew ‹This cried to this.‘ That is, they cried to each other in alternate responses. One cried ‹holy;‘ the second repeated it; then the third; and then they probably united in the grand chorus, ‹Full is all the earth of his glory.‘ This was an ancient mode of singing or recitative among the Hebrews; see Exodus 15:20-21, where Miriam is represented as going before in the dance with a timbrel, and the other females as following her, and "answering," or responding to her, Psalm 136:1; compare Lowth, "on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews," Lect. xix.

Holy, holy, holy - The "repetition" of a name, or of an expression, three times, was quite common among the Jews. Thus, in Jeremiah 7:4, the Jews are represented by the prophet as saying, ‹the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these. Thus, Jeremiah 22:29: ‹O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord;‘ Ezekiel 21:27: ‹I will overturn, overturn, overturn;‘ see also 1 Samuel 18:23: ‹O my son Absalom! my son, my son;‘ see also the repetition of the form of benediction among the Jews, Numbers 6:24-26:

Jehovah bless thee and keep thee;
Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee,
And be gracious unto thee;
Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee,
And give thee peace.

In like manner, the number "seven" is used by the Hebrews to denote a great, indefinite number; then a full or complete number; and then perfectness, completion. Thus, in Revelation 1:4; Revelation 3:1; Revelation 4:5, the phrase, ‹the seven spirits of God,‘ occurs as applicable to the Holy Spirit, denoting his fullness, completeness, perfection. The Hebrews usually expressed the superlative degree by the repetition of a word. Thus, Genesis 14:10: ‹The vale of Siddim, pits, pits of of clay,‘ that is, was full of pits; see Nordheimer‘s "Heb. Gram." Section 822-824. The form was used, therefore, among the Jews, to denote "emphasis;" and the expression means in itself no more than ‹thrice holy;‘ that is, supremely holy. Most commentators, however, have supposed that there is here a reference to the doctrine of the Trinity. It is not probable that the Jews so understood it; but applying to the expressions the fuller revelations of the

New Testament, it cannot be doubted that the words will express that. Assuming that that doctrine is true, it cannot be doubted, think, that the seraphs laid the foundation of their praise in that doctrine. That there was a distinct reference to the second person of the Trinity, is clear from what John says, John 12:41. No "argument" can be drawn directly from this in favor of the doctrine of the Trinity, for the repetition of such phrases thrice in other places, is merely "emphatic," denoting the superlative degree. But when the doctrine is "proved" from other places, it may be presumed that the heavenly beings were apprized of it, and that the foundation of their ascriptions of praise was laid in that. The Chaldee has rendered this, ‹Holy in the highest heavens, the house of his majesty; holy upon the earth, the work of his power; holy forever, and ever, and ever, is the Lord of hosts.' The whole expression is a most sublime ascription of praise to the living God, and should teach us in what manner to approach him.

The Lord of hosts - see the note at Isaiah 1:9.

The whole earth - Margin, ‹The earth is the fulness of his glory.' All things which he has made on the earth express his glory. His wisdom and goodness, his power and holiness, are seen every where. The whole earth, with all its mountains, seas, streams, trees, animals, and people, lay the foundation of his praise. In accordance with this, the Psalmist, in a most beautiful composition, calls upon all things to praise him; see Psalm 148:1-14.

Praise the Lord from the earth,
Ye dragons, and all deeps:
Fire and hail; snow and vapors;

Stormy wind fulfilling his word:

Mountains, and all hills;

Fruitful trees, and all cedars;

Beasts, and all cattle;

Creeping things, and flying fowl.

Verse 4

And the posts of the door - Margin, ‹Thresholds.‘ There is some difficulty in the Hebrew here, but the meaning of the expression is sufficiently apparent. It means that there was a tremour, or concussion, as if by awe, or by the sound attending the cry. It is evidently a poetic expression.

The house - The temple.

Was filled with smoke - There is here, doubtless, a reference to “the cloud” that is so often mentioned in the Old Testament as the visible symbol of the Divinity; see the note at Isaiah 4:5. A similar appearance is recorded when Solomon dedicated the temple; 1 Kings 8:10; 2 Chronicles 5:13; Ezekiel 10:4.

Verse 5

Wo is me! - That is, I am filled with overwhelming convictions of my own unworthiness, with alarm that I have seen Yahweh.

For I am undone - Margin, ‹Cut off.‘ Chaldee, ‹I have sinned.‘ Septuagint, ‹I am miserable, I am pierced through.‘ Syriac, ‹I am struck dumb.‘ The Hebrew word may sometimes have this meaning, but it also means “to be destroyed, to be ruined, to perish;” see Hosea 10:15; Zephaniah 1:2; Hosea 4:6; Isaiah 15:1. This is probably the meaning here, ‹I shall be ruined, or destroyed.‘ The reason of this, he immediately states.

A man of unclean lips - This expression evidently denotes that he was a “sinner,” and especially that he was unworthy either to join in the praise of a God so holy, or to deliver a message in his name. The vision; the profound worship of the seraphim; and the attendant majesty and glory, had deeply impressed him with a sense of the holiness of God, and of his own unfitness either to join in worship so holy, or to deliver the message of so pure a God. A similar effect is recorded in reference to Abraham; Genesis 18:27; see also Exodus 4:10, Exodus 4:12; Jeremiah 1:6. A deep consciousness of guilt, in view of the holiness and majesty of God, is also described by Job:

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear
But now mine eye seeth thee.
Wherefore I abhor myself,

And repent in dust and ashes.
Job 42:5-6.

An effect also remarkably similar is described in reference to the apostle Peter, Luke 5:8: “When Simon Peter saw it (the miracle which Jesus had

performed), he fell down at Jesus‘ knees, saying, ‹Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. ‹“

A people of unclean lips - A people who are unworthy to celebrate the praises of a God so pure and exalted.

Mine eyes have seen - In Exodus 33:20, it is said: ‹Thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live;‘ compare John 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:16. Perhaps it was in recollection of this, that Isaiah said he was undone. It is not, however, to be understood that the prophet saw Yahweh Himself, but only the “symbol” of His presence. It was for this expression, according to the tradition of the Jews, that Manasseh took occasion to put the prophet to death; see the Introduction, Section 2.

The Lord of hosts - Yahweh of hosts. John applies this to the Lord Jesus, and this proves that he is divine; see John 12:41.

Verse 6

Then flew - Isaiah is represented as standing out of the temple; the seraphim as in it.

Having a live coal - The Vulgate renders this, ‹A stone.‘ This is, probably, the original meaning of the word; see 1 Kings 19:6. It at first denoted a hot stone which was used to roast meat upon. It may also mean a coal, from its resemblance to such a stone.

From off the altar - The altar of burnt-offering. This stood in the court of the priests, in front of the temple; see the notes at Matthew 21:12. The fire on this altar was at first kindled by the Lord, Leviticus 9:24, and was kept continually burning; Leviticus 6:12-13.

Verse 7

And he laid it upon my mouth - Margin, ‹And he caused it to touch my mouth.‘ This is the more correct rendering. It was a slight, momentary touch, sufficient merely to be a “sign or token” that he was cleansed.

Thine iniquity is taken away - That is, whatever obstacle there existed to your communicating the message of God to this people, arising from your own consciousness of unworthiness, is taken away. You are commissioned to bear that message, and your own consciousness of guilt should not be a hinderance. To understand this, it should be remembered that “fire,” among the orientals, has been always regarded as an emblem of “purifying.” Thus the Sabeans, the followers or Zoroaster in Persia, worshipped “fire,” as the emblem of a pure divinity; see Malachi 3:2-3; compare Matthew 3:2. Every minister of the gospel, though conscious of

personal unworthiness and unfitness, should yet go freely and cheerfully to his work, if he has evidence that he is called and commissioned by God. "Is purged." Is purified, is removed - תכפר *tekupâr* from כפר *kâphar* "to cover, to overlay;" then to make an atonement for, to expiate, to cover sin, to pardon it, to affect or to procure forgiveness; and then to purify in general, to make whole; compare the note at Isaiah 43:3. This does not mean, that the fire from the altar had any physical effect to purify him from sin, but that it was "emblematic" of such a purifying; and probably, also, the fact that it was taken from the altar of sacrifice, was to him an indication that he was pardoned through the "atonement," or expiation there made. The Jews expected pardon in no other mode than by sacrifice; and the offering on their altar pointed to the great sacrifice which was to be made on the cross for the sins of human beings. There is here a beautiful "union" of the truths respecting sacrifice. The great doctrine is presented that it is only by sacrifice that sin can be pardoned; and the Messiah, the sacrifice himself, is exhibited as issuing the commission to Isaiah to go and declare his message to people.

Verse 8

The voice of the Lord - Hebrew: "The voice of Yahweh." He had before been addressed by one of the seraphim.

Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? - The change of number here, from the singular to the plural, is very remarkable. Jerome, on this place, says that it indicates the ‹sacrament‘ of the Trinity. The Septuagint renders it, ‹whom shall I send, and who will go to this people?‘ The Chaldee, ‹whom shall I send to prophesy, and who will go to teach?‘ The Syriac, ‹whom shall I send, and who will go?‘ The Arabic has followed the Septuagint. The use of the plural pronouns "we and us," as applicable to God, occurs several times in the Old Testament. Thus, Genesis 1:26: ‹And God said, Let us make man in our image;‘ Genesis 11:6-7: ‹And Jehovah said, Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language.‘ Such a use of the name of God in the plural is very common, but it is not clear that there is a reference to the doctrine of the Trinity. In some cases, it is evident that it cannot have such a reference, and that no "argument" can be drawn from the use of that plural form in favor of such a doctrine.

Thus, in Isaiah 19:4, the expression ‹a cruel lord,‘ is in the Hebrew in the plural, yet evidently denoting but one. The expression translated ‹the most Holy One,‘ or ‹the Holy,‘ is in the plural in Proverbs 9:10; Proverbs

30:3. In 1 Samuel 19:13, 1 Samuel 19:16, the plural form is applied to a "household god," or an image; and the plural form is applied to God in Job 30:25, ‹my Makers‘ (Hebrew); Ecclesiastes 12:1, ‹thy Creators‘ (Heb,); Psalm 121:5, ‹Yahweh is thy keepers‘ (Hebrew); see also Isaiah 54:5; Isaiah 22:2; Isaiah 43:5; Isaiah 62:5. This is called by grammarians *pluralis excellentice*, or the plural form indicating majesty or honor. It is, in all countries, used in reference to kings and princes; and as God often represents himself as a "king" in the Scriptures, and speaks in the language that was usually applied to kings in oriental countries, no argument can be drawn from expressions like these in defense of the doctrine of the Trinity. There are unanswerable arguments enough in support of that doctrine, without resorting to those which are of doubtful authority.

That there are clearer intimations of the doctrines of the Trinity, than that contained in this and similar texts, is indubitable; but we must not set aside the early and somewhat obscure intimations of a doctrine, simply because it comes afterward to be exhibited with more fulness. Such is the plan of revelation; and, instead of despising early announcements, or deeming them useless, because better "proofs" of the doctrine in question can be found, we ought to admire the wisdom and goodness of God in this gradual development of truth. The same interest belongs to the work of thus tracing the rise and progress of truth in the Bible, as belongs to that of him who traces rivers to their fountain head, and proves that, far up amid mountains all but inaccessible, rises the tiny stream, on whose broad waters, as it nears the sea, navies float in proud array. No more visible, in its earlier outflowings, is this doctrine of the Trinity; yet by and by it is the element on which Christianity doats, and in which it lives and moves. Thus we see the unity and harmony of revelation in 11 ages; the doctrine is the same; the degree of manifestation only is different. The necessity of preserving and exhibiting this unity, gives to these early intimations an unspeakable importance; though some, through an excess of candor, would abandon them to the enemy. This text, and its parallels, Genesis 1:26; Genesis 3:22; Genesis 11:7, exhibit the Trinity in Revelation‘s dawn indistinctly - partially disclosed - revealing only a "plurality" of persons. As the light increases, the "three" persons are seen moving under the lifting shadows, until, in the New Testament, baptism is commanded in the name of the

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and the existence and functions of each person are clearly unfolded.

The problem is, to account for the use of the plural number in these passages, consistently with the unity of God. The doctrine of the Trinity seems to furnish an easy and beautiful solution; but this solution has been rejected, not by Unitarians only, but by Trinitarians not a few. Various hypotheses have been offered: as, that in the creation of man Genesis 1:26, God associated with himself the heavens and the earth; or, that he consulted with angels; or, meant simply to indicate the importance of the work; or, perhaps, to supply a lesson of deliberation! These crudities are by most, however, long ago abandoned as untenable; and the solution most generally approved by such as reject that of the Trinity, is that furnished by an appeal to the "style of majesty." Oriental princes, it is alleged, from the most ancient times, used the plural number in publishing their decrees; and such is the style of royalty to this day. But, unfortunately for this theory, there is no evidence whatever that ancient potentates employed this style. "The use of the plural number by kings and princes, is quite a modern invention." The Bible does not furnish any example of it. Nor is there any evidence that God himself, on especially solemn occasions, keeping out of sight, of course, the text in question, used such style; there is abundant evidence to the contrary, the singular number being used by Yahweh in the most sublime and awful declarations.

Besides this strange use of the plural number on the part of God himself, plural names (אלהים *'elohîym* אדנים *'ădônâyîm*) are frequently given to him by the writers of the Bible; the instances in which these names occur in the singular form, are the exceptions. The name usually rendered "God" in the English Bible, is almost invariably plural - אלהים *'elohîym* Gods. That these plural forms are used of idols, as well as of the true God, is admitted; but as the special names of the true God came, in process of time, to be applied to idols, so would the special "form" of these names, and to tell us that these forms "are" so applied, is quite beside the question. We wish to know why, originally, such forms were applied to the "true" God; and it is no answer to tell us they are also applied to idols. ‹There is nothing more wonderful in the name being so used in the plural form, than in its being so used at all.

The same principle which accounts for the name God being given to pagan deities at all, will equally well account for its being given to them in the particular form in which it is applied to the true God.‘ - “Wardlaw.” This is pointed and decisive; and renders it needless to speculate here on the mode in which the name, or the plural form of it, came to be transferred to false gods, or great men. On this point, see Dr. John Pye Smith‘s “Scripture testimony to the Messiah.” It is further remarkable, that these plural appellatives are, for the most part combined with verbs and adjectives in the singular number; as, ‹Gods (he) created,‘ Genesis 1:1; and with plural adjuncts but rarely. Now, the ordinary rule of grammar might have been followed invariably, as well as in these few instances, or the departures from it might have been but few in number. That this is not the case, implies the existence of some very cogent reason, and cannot be regarded as the result, merely, of accident.

To account for the use of these plural names, our author has recourse to what is called the *pluralis majestaticus*, or *excellentiae*, according to which, nouns of dignity and majesty, in Hebrew, are said to be used in the plural form. But the existence of this *pluralis majestaticus* has never been proved. Its defense is now abandoned by the most skillful grammarians. Ewald repudiates it. And it is not a little remarkable, that some of the examples most relied on for proof of this “dignified plural,” are found, on examination, to possess nothing of the dignity, while more exact scholarship has reduced their plurality also. The examples alluded to, are, Exodus 21:29, Exodus 21:34; Exodus 22:10, Exodus 22:13; Isaiah 1:3; where the supposed plural form denotes the owner of oxen, of sheep, and of asses! - fit parties, doubtless, to be honored with the *pluralis majestaticus*. In truth, leaving out of view the plural appellatives applied to the Deity, that is, the appellatives in question, and which, therefore, cannot be adduced, there is no evidence whatever of this pretended rule. Had any rule of the kind existed, we should, without doubt, have found it exemplified, when kings, princes, nobles, generals, priests, and prophets figure on the sacred pages. That the *pluralis excellentiae* is not applied to them, is sufficient proof of its nonexistence; and should dispose rational and candid inquirers to acquiesce in the solution of the grammatical anomalies we have been considering, that is furnished by the doctrine of Trinity in Unity - the solution which, to say the least of it, is beset with fewest difficulties.

The language here idicates the "design" for which this vision was shown to Isaiah. It was to commission him to exhibit truth that would be extremely unpleasant to the nation, and that would have the certain effect of hardening their hearts. In view of the nature and effect of this message, God is represented as inquiring who would be willing to undertake it? Who had courage enough to do it? Who would risk his life? And it indicates, perhaps, that there were "few" in the nation who would be willing to do it, and that it was attended with self-denial and danger.

Here am I - This shows at once his confidence in God, and his zeal. He had been qualified for it by the extraordinary commission, and he was now ready to bear the message to his countrymen. In this attitude "we" should stand, prompt to deliver "any" message that God shall entrust to our hands, and to engage in "any" service that he calls on us to perform.

Verse 9

And he said … - The expressions which follow are those which denote hardness of heart and blindness of mind. They would hear the words of the prophet, but they would not understand him. They were so obstinately bent on iniquity that they would neither believe nor regard him. This shows the spirit with which ministers must deliver the message of God. It is their business to deliver the message, though they should know that it will neither be understood nor believed.

Hear ye indeed - Hebrew ‹In hearing, hear.‘ This is a mode of expressing emphasis. This passage is quoted in Matthew 13:14; see thenote at that place.

Verse 10

Make the heart - The word "heart" here is used in the sense of the "mind" - to denote all their mental powers. It is commonly used in this sense in the Scriptures.

Fat - Gross, heavy, dull, stupid. That is, go and proclaim such "truth" to them as shall have this effect - as shall irritate, provoke, enrage them; truth, whose delivery shall be attended, in their gross and corrupt hearts, with this blinding and infatuating influence the effect would be produced by the corrupt state of their hearts, not by any native tendency of the truth, and still less by any direct divine influence. ‹Go, and proclaim truth to a corrupt and sensual people, and the result will be that they will not hear; they are so wicked that they will not attend to it; they will become even more hardened;

yet go, and though certain of producing this effect, still proclaim it;‘ see this passage explained in the notes at John 12:40.

Their ears heavy - Dull, stupid, insensible.

And shut their eyes - The word used here means “to spread over,” and then to close. It denotes here the state of mind which is more and more indisposed to attend to the truth.

And be healed - Be restored from the malady of sin; be recovered and pardoned. Sin is often represented as a painful, loathsome malady, and forgiveness as restoration from such a malady; Isaiah 30:26; Psalm 41:3-4; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Jeremiah 3:22; Jeremiah 17:14. We may learn here,

(1) That the effect of truth is often to irritate people and make them more wicked.

(2) The truth must, nevertheless, be proclaimed.

This effect is not the fault of the truth; and it is often well that the heart should be known, and the true effect should be seen.

Verse 11

How long - The prophet did not dare to pray that this effect should not follow. He asked merely therefore “how long” this state of things must continue; how long this message was to be delivered, and how long it should be attended with these painful effects.

Until the cities … - They will remain perverse and obstinate until the land is completely destroyed by divine judgments. Still the truth is to be proclaimed, though it is known it will have no effect in reforming the nation. This refers, doubtless, to the destruction that was accomplished by the Babylonians.

The houses without man - This is strong language, denoting the certain and widespread desolation that should come upon the nation.

Verse 12

And the Lord have removed … - The land shall be given up to desolation. The men - the strength of the nation - shall be taken to a distant land.

And there be a great forsaking - A great desolation; the cities and dwellings shall be abandoned by the inhabitants; compare Isaiah 17:2; Jeremiah 4:29; Zephaniah 2:4.

Verse 13

But yet … - The main idea in this verse is plain, though there is much difficulty in the explanation of the particular phrases. The leading thought

is, that the land should not be "utterly" and finally abandoned. There would be the remains of life - as in an oak or terebinth tree when the tree has fallen; compare the notes at Isaiah 11:1.

A tenth - That is, a tenth of the inhabitants, or a very small part. Amidst the general desolation, a small part should be preserved. This was accomplished in the time of the captivity of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar. We are not to suppose that "literally" a tenth part of the nation would remain; but a part that should bear somewhat the same proportion to the entire nation, in strength and resources, that a tenth does to the whole. Accordingly, in the captivity by the Babylonians we are told 2 Kings 25:12, that ‹the captain of the guard left the poor of the land to be vinedressers and farmers;' compare 2 Kings 24:14, where it is said, that ‹Nebuchadnezzar carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths, none remained save the poorer sort of the people of the land.' Over this remnant, Nebuchadnezzar made Gedaliah king; 2 Kings 25:22.

And it shall return - This expression can be explained by the history. The prophet mentions the "return," but he has omitted the fact that this remnant should go away; and hence, all the difficulty which has been experienced in explaining this. The history informs us, 2 Kings 25:26, that this remnant, this tenth part, ‹arose and came to Egypt, for they were afraid of the Chaldees.' A part also of the nation was scattered in Moab and Edom, and among the Ammonites; Jeremiah 40:2. By connecting this idea with the prophecy, there is no difficulty in explaining it. It was of the return from Egypt that the prophet here speaks; compare Jeremiah 42:4-7. After this flight to Egypt they returned again to Judea, together with those who were scattered in Moab, and the neighboring regions; Jeremiah 40:11-12. This renmant thus collected was what the prophet referred to as "returning" after it had been scattered in Egypt, and Moab, and Edom, and among the Ammonites.

And shall be eaten - This is an unhappy translation. It has arisen from the difficulty of making sense of the passage, by not taking into consideration the circumstances just adverted to. The word translated ‹eaten' means to feed, to graze, to consume by grazing to consume by fire, to consume or destroy in any way, to remove. "Gesenius" on the word בער *bâʿar* Here it means that this remnant shall be for "destruction;" that judgments and punishments shall follow them after their return front Egypt

and Moab. Even this remnant shall be the object of divine displeasure, and shall feel the weight of his indignation; see Jeremiah 43:1-13; 44.

As a teil-tree - The word "teil" means the "linden," though there is no evidence that the linden is denoted here. The word used here - אלה *'êlâh* - is translated "elm" in Hosea 4:13, but generally "oak:" Genesis 35:4; Judges 6:11, Judges 6:19; 2 Samuel 18:9, 2 Samuel 18:14. It is here distinguished from the אלון *'allôn* "oak." It probably denotes the "terebinth," or turpentine tree, for a description of which, see the notes at Isaiah 1:29.

Whose substance - Margin, ‹Stock‘ or ‹Stem.‘ The margin is the more correct translation. The word usually denotes the upright shaft, stem, or stock of a tree. It means here, whose "vitality" shall remain; that is, they do not entirely die.

When they cast their leaves - The words ‹their leaves‘ are not in the original, and should not be in the translation. The Hebrew means, ‹in their falling‘ - or when they fall. As the evergreen did "not" cast its leaves, the reference is to the falling of the "body" of the tree. The idea is, that when the tree should fall and decay, still the life of the tree would remain. In the root there would be life. It would send up new "shoots," and thus a new tree would be produced; see the notes at Isaiah 4:2; Isaiah 11:1. This was particularly the case with the terebinth, as it is with the fir, the chestnut, the oak, the willow, etc.; see Job 14:7. The idea is, that it would be so with the Jews. Though desolate, and though one judgment would follow another, and though even the renmant would be punished, yet the race would not be extinguished. It would spring up again, and survive. This was the case in the captivity of Babylon; and again the case in the destruction of Jerusalem; and in all their persecutions and trials since, the same has always occurred. They survive; and though scattered in all nations, they still live as demonstrative of the truth of the divine predictions; Deuteronomy 28.

The holy seed - The few remaining Jews. They shall not be utterly destroyed, but shall be like the life remaining in the root of the tree. No prophecy, perhaps, has been more remarkably fulfilled than that in this verse. Though the cities be waste and the land be desolate, it is not from the poverty of the soil that the fields are abandoned by the plow, nor from any diminution of its ancient and natural fertility, that the land has rested for so many generations. Judea was not forced only by artificial means, or from local and temporary causes, into a luxuriant cultivation, such as a barren country might have been, concerning which it would not have needed a

prophet to tell that, if once devastated and abandoned it would ultimately revert to its original sterility. Phenicia at all times held a far different rank among the richest countries of the world; and it was not a bleak and sterile portion of the earth, nor a land which even many ages of desolation and neglect could impoverish, that God gave in possession and by covenant to the seed of Abraham. No longer cultivated as a garden, but left like a wilderness, Judea is indeed greatly changed from what it was; all that human ingenuity and labor did devise, erect, or cultivate, people have laid waste and desolate; all the "plenteous goods" with which it was enriched, adorned, and blessed, have fallen like seared and withered leaves when their greenness is gone; and stripped of its "ancient splendor," it is left "as an oak whose leaf fadeth," but its inherent sources of fertility are not dried up; the natural richness of the soil is unblighted; "the substance is in it," strong as that of the tell tree or the solid oak, which retain their substance when they east their leaves.

And as the leafless oak waits throughout winter for the genial warmth of returning spring, to be clothed with renewed foilage, so the once glorious land of Judea is yet full of latent vigor, or of vegetative power, strong as ever, ready to shoot forth, even "better than at the beginning," whenever the sun of heaven shall shine on it again, and "the holy seed" be prepared for being finally" the substance thereof." "The substance that is in it" - which alone has here to be proved - is, in few words, thus described by an enemy: "The land in the plains is fat and loamy, and exhibits every sign of the greatest fecundity. Were nature assisted by art, the fruits of the most distant countries might be produced within the distance of twenty leagues." "Galilee," says Malte Brun, "would be a paradise, were it inhabited by an industrious people, under an enlightened government."'

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Introduction

Probably no portion of the Bible has been regarded as so difficult of interpretation, and has given rise to so great a variety of expositions, as the prophecy which is commenced in this chapter, and which is closed in Isaiah 9:7. The importance of the prophecy respecting the Messiah (Isaiah 7:14 ff; Isaiah 8:7; Isaiah 9:1-7), is one reason why interpreters have been so anxious to ascertain the genuine sense; and the difficulties attending the supposition that there is reference to the Messiah, have been among the causes why so much anxiety has been felt to ascertain its true sense.

The prophecy which commences at the beginning of this chapter, is continued to Isaiah 9:7. An this was evidently delivered at the same time, and constitutes a single vision, or oracle. This should have been indicated in the division of the chapters. Great obscurity arises from the arbitrary, and, in many instances, absurd mode of division into chapters which has been adopted in the Bible.

This chapter, for convenience of illustration, may be regarded as divided into four parts:

I. The historical statement with which the whole account is introduced in Isaiah 7:1-2. The principal occurrences referred to in the chapter took place in the time of Ahaz. For an account of his character and reign, see the Introduction, Section 3. He was an idolater and erected the images, and altars, and groves of idolatry everywhere. He sacrificed to Baalim, and burned his children in the valley of Hinnom in honor of Moloch, and ruled Jerusalem everywhere with abominations, 2 Kings 16:2-4; 2 Chronicles 28:1-4. For these abominations, he was delivered into the hand of the king of Syria, and was subjected to calamities from the threatened invasion of the united armies of Syria and Samaria. At this time Rezin was king of Syria, of which Damascus was the capital; and Pekah was king of Israel or Sumaria. These kings, during the concluding part of the reign of Jotham, the predecessor of Ahaz, had formed an alliance and had gone up toward Jerusalem to make war upon it, but had not been able to take it.

The formation of this confederacy in the time of Jotham is distinctly declared in 2 Kings 15:37. To this confederacy Isaiah refers in Isaiah 7:1, where he says that it occurred in the days of Jotham. The statement is made by Isaiah here, doubtless, in order to trace the important matter to which he alludes to its commencement, though what he subsequently says had particular relation to Ahaz. Though the confederacy was formed in the time of Jotham, yet the consequences were of long continuance, and were not terminated until the defeat of Sennacherib in the time of Hezekiah; see Isaiah 7:1 that they went up against Jerusalem, and could not take it. He may refer here to an expedition which they made in the time of Jotham, or he may design this as a "general" statement, intricating the result of "all" their efforts, that they could not take Jerusalem. If the latter is the proper interpretation, then the statement in Isaiah 7:1, was made by Isaiah at a subsequent period, and is designed to state "all" that occurred.

It is more natural, however, to suppose that they made an attempt in the time of Jotham to take Jerusalem, but that they were unsuccessful. When Ahaz came to the throne, the alliance was continued, and the effort was renewed to take Jerusalem. Formidable preparations were made for the war, and an invading army came up upon the land. Many of the subjects of Ahaz were taken captive and carried to Damascus. Pekah killed in one day 120,000 people, and took two hundred thousand captives, and carried them toward Samaria. They were released from bondage by the solicitation of Oded, a prophet, who represented to them the impropriety of taking their brethren captive, and they were re-conveyed to Jericho; 2 Chronicles 28:5-15. At about the same time, the Assyrians took Elath, and retained it as a city belonging to them; 2 Kings 16:6. From the report of this strong alliance and from the ravages which were committed by their united forces, Ahaz was alarmed, and trembled for the safety of Jerusalem itself, Isaiah 7:3.

But instead of looking to God for aid, he formed the purpose of securing the alliance of the king of "Assyria," and for this purpose sent messengers to Tigiath-pileser with professions of deep regard, and with the most costly presents which could be procured by exhausting the treasury 2 Kings 16:7-8, to secure his friendship and cooperation. To this the king of Assyria agreed, and entered into the war by making an assault on Damascus; 2 Kings 16:9. It was this alliance, and the confidence which Ahaz had in it,

that produced his answer to Isaiah Isaiah 7:12, and his refusal to ask a sign of the Lord; and it was this alliance which subsequently involved Jerusalem in so much difficulty from the invasion of the Assyrians. The Assyrians, as might have been foreseen, consulted their own advantage, and not the benefit of Ahaz. They meant to avail themselves of the opportunity of subduing, if possible, Judea itself; and, consequently, the land was subsequently invaded by them, and Jerusalem itself put in jeopardy. This consequence was distinctly foretold by Isaiah, Isaiah 7:17-25; Isaiah 8:7-8. Yet before the alliance was secured, Ahaz was in deep consternation and alarm, and it was at this point of time that Isaiah was sent to him, Isaiah 7:2-3.

II. At this time of consternation and alarm, Isaiah was sent to Ahaz to assure him that Jerusalem would be safe, and that there was no real cause of alarm, Isaiah 7:3-9. His main object was to induce the monarch to repose confidence in Yahweh, and to believe that his kingdom, protected by God, could not be overthrown. Isaiah was directed to take with him his son, whose name (Shear-jashub - "the remnant shall return") was itself a sign or pledge that the nation should not be "utterly" destroyed, and that, consequently, it could not become permanently subject to Syria or Sumaria, Isaiah 7:3. He went to meet Ahaz at the upper pool, where, probably, Ahaz had gone, attended by many of the court, to see whether it was practicable to stop the water, so as to prevent an enemy from procuring it; compare 2 Chronicles 32:4. He directed him not to be afraid of the enemies that were coming, for they were like smoking, half-extinguished brands that could do little injury, Isaiah 7:4. He assured him that the purpose of the confederated kings should not be accomplished; that Yahweh had said that their design could not be established; and that the limits of their respective kingdoms should be the same that they were then, and should not be enlarged by the conquest and accession of Jerusalem - for that Damascus should still remain the capital of Syria, and Samaria of Ephraim, and that within sixty-five years the kingdom of Ephraim should be totally destroyed, and of course Jerusalem and Judah could not be permanently added to it. So far from having Jerusalem as a tributary and dependent province, as Renraliah had anticipated, his own kingdom was to be completely and finally destroyed, Isaiah 7:4-9. The desire of all this; as to allay the fears of Ahaz, and to induce him to put confidence in God.

III. A sign is promised - a proof or demonstration of the truth of what the prophet had spoken, Isaiah 7:10-17. To the assurance which Isaiah Isaiah 7:4-9 had given of the safety of Jerusalem, Ahaz makes no reply. His whole conduct, however, shows that he is wholly unimpressed and unaffected by what he had said, and that he put no confidence in the assuranccs of the prophet. He was not looking to God for aid, but to the king of Assyria; and he, doubtless, felt that if his aid was not obtained, his kingdom would be destroyed. He evidently had no belief in God, and no confidence in the prophet. His mind was in a restless, uneasy condition from the impending danger, and from uncertainty whether the aid of the king of Assyria could be procured. In order to induce him to turn his attention to God, the only Protector, and to calm his fears, Ahaz is commanded to ask of Yahweh any sign or miracle which he might desire, in order to confirm what the prophet had spoken, Isaiah 7:10-11.

This Ahaz refuses, Isaiah 7:12. He does it under the semblance of piety, and an unwillingness to appear to tempt Yahweh. But the "real" cause was, doubtless, that he had no confidence in Yahweh; he had no belief in what he had spoken; and he was secretly depending on the aid of the king of Assyria. His reply was couched in respectful terms, and had the appearance of piety, and was even expressed in language borrowed from the law, Deuteronomy 5:16. Yet important purposes were to be answered, by there being a sign or proof that what the prophet had said should take place. It was important that Ahaz, as the king of Judah, and as the head of the people, should have evidence that what was said was true. It was important that a suitable impression should be made on those who were present, and on the mass of the people, inducing them to put confidence in Yahweh. It was important that they should look to future times; to the certain security of the nation, and to the evidence that the nation "must" be preserved until the great Deliverer should come.

A sign is, therefore, forced upon the attention of Ahaz. The prophet tells him that however reluctant he may be to seek a sign, or however incredulous he might be, yet that Yahweh would give a token, proof, or demonstration, which would be a full confirmation of all that he had said. "That would be done which could be done only by Yahweh, and which

could be known only by him;" and "that" would be the demonstration that Jerusalem would be safe from this impending invasion. A virgin should bear a son, and before he should arrive at years of discretion, or be able to discern the difference between good and evil - that is in a short space of time, the land would be forsaken of both its kings, Isaiah 7:14-16. Who this virgin was, and what is the precise meaning of this prediction, has given perhaps, more perplexity to commentators than almost any other portion of the Bible. The "obvious" meaning seems to be this.

Some young female, who was then a virgin, and who was unmarried at the time when the prophet spoke, would conceive, and bear a son. "To" that son a name would be given, or his birth, in the circumstances in which it occurred, would make such a name proper, as would indicate that God was with them, and would be their Protector. Maternal affection would give the child the name Immanuel. The child would be nurtured up in the usual way among the Jews Isaiah 7:15 until he would be able to discern between good and evil - that is, until he should arrive at years of discretion. Between the time which should elapse from the conception of the child, and the time when he should arrive at an age to distinguish good from evil, that is in about three years, the land should be forsaken of the hostile kings, Isaiah 7:16. This seems to be the obvious meaning of this passage; and in this way only could this be a clear and satisfactory evidence to Ahaz of the certainty that the land would be entirely and permanently free from the invasion.

God only could know this; and, therefore, this was a proof of the certainty of what Isaiah had said. But though this is the obvious meaning, and though such an event only could be a sign to Ahaz that the land would be forsaken of both the invading kings, yet there is no reason to doubt that the prophet "so couched" what he said - so expressed this by the direction of the Holy Spirit, as to be applicable also to another much more important event, which was to be "also," and in a much more important sense, a sign of the protection of God - the birth of the Messiah. He, therefore, selected words which, while they were applicable to the event immediately to occur, would also cover much larger ground, and be descriptive of more important events - and events which were "in the same line and direction" with that immediately to come to pass - the certainty of the divine protection, and of ultimate freedom from all danger.

The language, therefore, has, at the commencement of the prophecy, a fullness of meaning which is not entirely met by the immediate event which was to occur, and which can be entirely fulfilled only by the great event which Isaiah ever had in his eye - the birth of the Messiah. The mind of Isaiah would very naturally be carried forward to that future event. In accordance with the laws of what may be called "prophetic suggestion or association," see Introduction, Section 7, iii. (3), and which are constantly exemplified in Isaiah, his mind would fix on better times, and more happy events. He saw the birth of a child in a future age, of which this was but the emblem. That was to be born literally of a virgin. His "appropriate" name, from his nature, and from his being the evidence of the divine favor and presence, would be "Immanuel" - as the appropriate name of this child would be Immanuel, because he would be the pledge of the divine protection and presence. The idea is, that there is a "fulness of meaning" in the words used, which will apply to future events more appropriately than to the one immediately before the writer. That there is rapid transition - a sudden carrying the mind forward to rest on a future more important event, which has been "suggested" by the language used, and which is in the mind of the speaker or writer so much more important than that which was first mentioned, as completely to absorb the attention. The reasons for the view here given are detailed at length in the notes at Isaiah 7:14-16.

IV. The prophet had thus far directed all his efforts to convince Ahaz that from the quarter from which they had apprehended danger, nothing was to be feared. He now, however Isaiah 7:17-25, proceeds to assure them that danger would come from the quarter where they least expected it - from the very quarter where Ahaz was seeking aid and deliverance - the king of Assyria. He assures him that the king of Assyria would take advantage of the alliance, and, under pretence of aiding him, would turn everything to his own account, and would ultimately bring desolation on the land of Judah. The calamities which would follow from this unhappy alliance, the prophet proceeds to state and unfold, and with that concludes the chapter. It is evident from 2 Kings 16:7, that the discourse of Isaiah made no impression on the mind of Ahaz. He sent messengers with valuable presents to Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria. Tiglath-pileser professedly entered into the views of Ahaz, and promised his aid.

He went up against Damascus and took it 2 Kings 16:9, after Ahaz had suffered a terrible overthrow from the united armies of Rezin and Pekah. The land of Samaria was laid waste by him, and a large part of the inhabitants carried captive to Assyria, 2 Kings 15:29. Thus the prediction of Isaiah, that the land should be forsaken by two kings Isaiah 7:16, was fulfilled. But this deliverance from their invasion was purchased by Ahaz at a vast price. The real purpose of Tiglath-pileser was not to aid Ahaz, but to make him and his kingdom dependent and tributary 2 Chronicles 28:21; and this alliance was the first in the succession of calamities which came upon Judah and Jerusalem, and which ended only under Hezekiah by the entire destruction of the army of Sennacherib; see 2 Kings 17:7 endeavored to throw off the yoke of Assyria, the attempt involved him in war; subjected his kingdom to invasion; and was attended with a loss of no small part of the cities and towns of his kingdom; see Isaiah 10:28-32. Thus the second part of this prophecy was fulfilled. The fuller statement of these important transactions will be found in the notes at the various passages which relate to these events.

Verse 1

In the days of Ahaz - Ahaz began to reign about 738 years before Christ. By a comparison of 2 Kings 16:5, … , with 2 Chronicles 28:5, etc., it will be seen that Judea was twice invaded by Rezin and Pekah in the reign of Ahaz; see the Analysis of the chapter.

That Rezin … - This confederacy was formed in the time of Jotham; 2 Kings 15:37. But it was not carried into execution during his reign. It is evident from this place, that it was executed in the early part of the reign of Ahaz; probably in the first or second year of his reign.

Syria - - ארם *'ărâm* so called from Aram Genesis 10:22-23, a son of Shem, and who populated its chief provinces. It comprehended the country lying between the Euphrates east, the Mediterranean west, Cilicia north, and Phenicia, Judea, and Arabia south; see the notes at Isaiah 17:1-14. Syria of the two rivers is Mesopotamia. Syria of Damascus, so called because Damascus was its capital, extended eastward along Mount Libanus, but its limits varied according to the power of the princes of Damascus. After the reign of the Seleucidae, Syria came to denote the kingdom or region of

which Antioch was the capital. Here it denotes the Syria lying around Damascus, and of which Damascus was the capital. - "Calmet."

King of Israel - Of the ten tribes, called the kingdom of Israel, or Samaria; Note, Isaiah 1:1.

Went up - Jerusalem was situated on hills, and on the highest part of the land. But it is possible that this language is derived from the fact that it was the capital. The language is used even when the region from which the traveler comes does not lie lower than the city. Thus it is not uncommon to speak of "going up" to London, Paris, etc.

Could not prevail - Hebrew, ‹Could not fight against it,‘ that is, with happy result, or with success. He was not able to take it. That the allied kings really besieged Ahaz, is evident from 2 Kings 16:5: They ‹came up to Jerusalem to war, and they besieged Ahaz, but they could not overcome him.‘ The reason why they could not take Jerusalem was, probably, not only because it was a strong place and well defended, but because there was intelligence that their own dominions were threatened with an invasion by the Assyrians, and they could not protract their siege of Jerusalem long enough to take it.

Verse 2

And it was told the house of David - That is, the royal family; or the king and princes; the government. Ahaz was the descendant and successor of David.

Syria is confederate with Ephraim - Ephraim was one of the tribes of Israel, and the kingdom of Israel was often called "Ephraim," or the kingdom of Ephraim; in the same way as the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were called the kingdom of Judah. The phrase, ‹is confederate with,‘ is in Hebrew ‹resteth on;‘ see the margin. The meaning is, that Syria was "supported by" Ephraim, or was allied with Ephraim. The kingdom of Israel, or Ephraim, was situated "between" Syria and Jerusalem. Of course, the latter could not be attacked without marching through the former, and without their aid. In this sense it was that Syria, or the Arameans, relied or "rested" on Ephraim. Though Syria was by far the stronger power, yet it was not strong enough to attack Jerusalem had the kingdom of Israel been opposed to it.

And his heart - The heart of the king - of Ahaz.

Was moved as the trees of the wood - This is a very beautiful and striking image. It expresses universal trembling, consternation, and alarm,

as the trees are moved "together" when the wind passes violently over them. A similar expression is found in Ovid - in "Canaces," Epist. xi. ver. 76,77.

Ut quatitur tepido fraxina virga noto
Sic mea vibrari pallentia membra videres.

Verse 3

Then said the Lord - In regard to the purposes for which Isaiah was sent to meet Ahaz, and the reason why this place was selected, see the Analysis of the chapter.

Thou and Shear-ashub - The meaning of the name "Shear-jashub" is, ‹the remnant shall return.‘ The names which Isaiah gave to his sons were significant or emblematic of some important events which were to occur to the Jews. They were for "signs" to the people, and had been given in order to keep before the nation the great truth that God was their protector, and that however much they might suffer or be punished, yet the nation would not be totally destroyed until the great Deliverer should come; see the note at Isaiah 7:14, and Isaiah 8:3, note. Why this name was given to this son, or on what occasion, is not certainly known. It is probable, however, that was with reference to the future calamities and captivity of the Jews, denoting that a part of the people would return to the land of their fathers: compare Isaiah 10:21-22. The name was a remembrancer given by him as a prophet, perhaps, some time before this, that the nation was not to be wholly annihilated - a truth which Isaiah everywhere keeps before them in his prophecies; compare the note at Isaiah 6:13. "Why" Shear-jashub accompanied Isaiah now is not recorded. It might be as a pledge to Ahaz of the purpose of the Lord, that the people should not be destroyed. Ahaz may have been apprized of the reason why the name was given, and his presence might serve to mitigate his fears.

At the end of the conduit - A "conduit" is a pipe, or other conductor of water. The water flowed from a fountain, but was conducted to different receptacles for the supply of the city.

Of the upper pool - Or the upper receptacle, or pond. Robinson ("Bib. Researches," i. p. 483) and Pococke ("Descr. of the East," ii. pp. 25,26) suppose that the upper and lower pools referred to by Isaiah, were on the west side of the city, the ruins of which now remain. The upper pool is now commonly called by the monks "Gihon," and by the natives "Birket el Mamilla." It lies in the basin forming the head of the valley of Hinnom or

Gihon, about seven hundred yards west-northwest from the Yafa gate, on the west of Jerusalem. The sides of this pool are built of hewn stones laid in cement, with steps at the corners by which to descend into it. The bottom is level. The dimensions are as follows:

d Length (in Eng. Feet) from east to west316

d

d Breadth at the west end200

d

d Breadth at the east end218

d

d Depth at each end18

d

d

There is no water-course, or other visible means, by which water is now brought into this reservoir, but it is probable that it was filled in the rainy seasons by the waters which flowed from the higher ground round about. From this upper pool a part of the water was conveyed into the city to the pool of Hezekiah, lying within the walls, and situated some distance to the northeastward of the Yafa gate. ‹Hezekiah stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David;‘ 2 Chronicles 32:30; compare the notes at Isaiah 22:9. This upper pool had a trench or ‹conduit,‘ and a considerable part of the waters were allowed to flow through this to the lower pool. The ‹lower pool‘ is mentioned in the Old Testament only once, and that by Isaiah Isaiah 22:9, and there without any hint of its locality. There is now a large lower pool on the western side of Jerusalem, which is not improbably the one intended, and which stands

in contrast with the one mentioned here. This pool is called by the Arabs "Birket es-Sultan." There is, at present, no other pool in the vicinity of Jerusalem to which the description in Isaiah can be well applied. This reservoir is situated in the valley of Hinnom or Gihon, southward from the Yafa gate. Its northern end is nearly upon a line with the southern wall of the city. The pool was formed by throwing strong walls across the bottom of the valley, between which the earth was wholly removed. A road crosses on the causeway at the southern end. The following are the measurements of this pool:

d Length (in Eng. Feet) along the middle592.

d

d Breadth at the north end245

d

d Breadth at the south end275

d

d Depth at north end85

d

d Depth at south end42

d

d

This reservoir was probably filled from the rains, and from the superfluous waters of the upper pool. It is now in ruins. The water from this pool would flow off into the valley of Hinnom, and thence, into the valley

of Jehoshaphat or Kedron, or subsequently into the pool of Hezekiah, situated "within" the city; see the notes at Isaiah 22:9, Isaiah 22:11. Why Ahaz was at that place, the prophet does not say. It is possible he was examining it, to see whether the fountain could be stopped up, or the water diverted so that it could not be used by the enemy, and so that they could be prevented from maintaining a protracted siege; compare 2 Chronicles 32:4. It is probable that the king had gone to this place attended by many of his counselors, and as this was the main source of the supply of water to the city, a multitude would be there, and Isaiah could have an opportunity not only to deliver his message to Ahaz and his court, but in the presence of a considerable concourse of people, and might thus inspire confidence among the alarmed and dejected inhabitants of the city.

In the highway of the fuller's field - In the place occupied as a situation on which to spread, or suspend cloth that was bleached, or dyed. This situation would be chosen because much water was needed in bleaching or dyeing cloth. The name ‹highway' denotes the public path, or road that led to this field. Probably, on one side of this highway was the aqueduct, and on the other the fuller's field. Of the fuller's field, Eusebius and Jerome merely say that it was shown in their day in the suburbs of the city. - "Onom." art. "Ager Fullonis."

Verse 4

Take heed - Hebrew ‹Keep thyself;' that is, from fear.

Neither be fainthearted - Hebrew, ‹Let not thy heart be tender;' that is, let it not be easily moved; be strong, fearless.

For the tails … - There is much beauty and force in this comparison. The "design" of Isaiah is to diminish the fear of Ahaz. Instead, therefore, of calling them "firebrands" - burning and setting on fire everything in their way - he calls them the "tails, that is, the ends," or remains of firebrand - almost consumed themselves, and harmless. And instead of saying that they were "burning and blazing," he says that they were merely "smoking" - the half-burned, decaying remains of what might have been once formidable. The prophet also is just about to announce their approaching destruction by the Assyrians; see Isaiah 7:8. He, therefore, speaks of them as already almost extinguished, and incapable of doing extensive injury.

Son of Remaliah - Pekah, Isaiah 7:1. ‹It is by way of contempt that the king of Israel is not called by his own name. The Hebrews and Arabians, when they wish to speak reproachfully of anyone, omit his proper name and

call him merely the son of this or that, especially when his father is but little known or respected. So Saul names David, in contempt, the son of Jesse; 1 Samuel 20:27, 1 Samuel 20:31.‘ - “Hengstenberg.”

Verse 6

And vex it - Margin, ‹Weaken it.‘ Probably the word means to throw into consternation or fear, by besieging it - “Gesenius.”

And let us make a breach therein - Let us break down the walls, etc.

And set a king - Subdue it, and make it tributary to the allied kingdoms of Syria and Ephraim.

The son of Tabeal - Nothing more is known of this person. He might have been some disaffected member of the royal family of David, who had sought the aid of Rezin and Pekah, and who would be allied to them, or tributary to them. It is possible that he had already a party in Jerusalem in his favor; compare Isaiah 8:12. Probably, the two kings wished to cut off such portions of the territory of Judah as should be convenient to them, and to set a king over the remainder, who should be under their control; or to divide the whole between themselves, by setting up a king who would be tributary to both.

Verse 8

For the head of Syria - The “capital.” The “head” is often used in this sense.

Is Damascus - For an account of this city, see the notes at Isaiah 17:1; compare the notes at Acts 9:2. The sense of this passage is, ‹Do not be alarmed as if Rezin was about to enlarge his kingdom, by taking Judea and making Jerusalem his capital. The revolution which these kings contemplate cannot be accomplished. The kingdoms of Syria and Israel shall not be enlarged by the conquest of Judah. The center of their power shall remain where it is now, and their dominion shall not be extended by conquest. The capital of Syria is, and shall continue to be, Damascus. The king of Syria shall be confined within his present limits, and Jerusalem, therefore, shall be safe.‘

The head of Damascus - The “ruler, or king” of Damascus is Rezin.

And within threescore and five years - There has been some inquiry why “Ephraim” is mentioned here, as the prophet in the former part of the verse was speaking of “Syria.” But it should be remembered that he was speaking of Syria and Ephraim as “confederate.” It was natural, therefore, to intimate, in close connection, that no fear was to be apprehended from

either of them. There has been much difficulty experienced in establishing the fact of the exact fulfillment of this, and in fixing the precise event to which it refers. One catastrophe happened to the kingdom of Ephraim or Israel within one or two years of this time, when Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, invaded the land and carried no small part of the people to Assyria; 2 Kings 15:29. Another occurred in the next reign, the reign of Hoshea, king of Israel, when Shalmaneser king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away captive into Assyria; 2 Kings 17:1-6.

This occurred in the twelfth year of Ahaz. But that the Israelites remained in Samaria, and kept up the forms of a civil community, and were not finally carried away until the time of Esarhaddon, is evident; compare 2 Chronicles 34:6-7, 2 Chronicles 34:33; 2 Chronicles 35:18; 2 Kings 23:19-20. Manasseh, king of Judah, was taken captive by the king of Assyria‘s captains 2 Chronicles 33:2 in the twenty-second year of his reign; that is, sixty-five years from the second year of Ahaz, when this prophecy is supposed to have been delivered. And it is also supposed that at this time Esarhaddon took away the remains of the people in Samaria, and put an end to the kingdom, and put in their place the people who are mentioned in Ezra 4:3. “Dr. Jubb, as quoted by Lowth.” The entire extinction of the people of Israel and the kingdom did not take place until Esarhaddon put new colonists from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim in the cities of Samaria, instead of the children of Israel; 2 Kings 17:24; compare Ezra 4:2, Ezra 4:10.

Long before this, indeed, the power of the kingdom had been on the wane; a large portion of the people had been removed 2 Kings 17:5-6, 2 Kings 17:18; but its entire extinction was not accomplished, and the kingdom utterly destroyed, until this was done. Until this occurred, the land might be still regarded as in the possession somewhat of its former people, and all hopes of their rising again to the dignity of a kingdom was not extinguished. But when foreigners were introduced, and took possession of the land; when all the social organization of the ancient people was dissolved; then it might be said that ‹Ephraim was forever broken,‘ and that it was demonstrated that it ‹should be no more a people.‘ Its inhabitants were transferred to a distant land, no longer to be organized into a unique community, but to mingle with other people, and finally all traces of their origin as Jews were to be lost. This event, of placing the foreigners in the

cities of Samaria, occurred just sixty-five years after it had been predicted by Isaiah. - “Dr. Usher.”

It may be asked here, how the statement of what was to occur at so remote a period as sixty-five years could be any consolation to Ahaz, or any security that the designs of the kings of Syria and Samaria should “then” fail of being accomplished? To this we may reply:

(1) It was the assurance that Jerusalem could not be finally and permanently reduced to submission before these dreaded enemies. “Their” power was to cease, and of course Jerusalem had nothing “ultimately and finally” to dread.

(2) The design was to inspire confidence in Yahweh, and to lead Ahaz to look directly to him. If these formidable powers could not ultimately prevail, and if there was a certain prediction that they should be destroyed, then it was possible for God, if Ahaz would look to him, now to interpose, and save the city. To inspire that confidence in Yahweh was the leading purpose of Isaiah.

(3) This prediction is in accordance with many which occur in Isaiah, that all the enemies of the people of God would be ultimately defeated, and that God, as the head of the theocracy, would defend and deliver his people; see the notes at Isaiah 34. A kingdom that was so soon to be destroyed as Ephraim was, could not be an object of great dread and alarm. Rosenmuller conjectures, that Isaiah refers to some unrecorded prophecy made before his time, that in sixty-five years Israel would be destroyed; and that he refers here to that prophecy to encourage the heart of Ahaz, and to remind him that a kingdom could not be very formidable that was so soon to come to an end. At all events, there is no contradiction between the prophecy and the fulfillment, for within the time mentioned here, Ephraim ceased to be a kingdom. The ancient Jewish writers, with one consent, say, that Isaiah referred here to the prophecy of Amos, who prophesied in the days of Uzziah, and whose predictions relate mainly to the kingdom of Israel. But as Amos, does not specify any particular time when the kingdom should be destroyed, it is apparent that Isaiah here could not have referred to any recorded prophecy of his.

Be broken - Its power shall be destroyed; the kingdom, as a kingdom, shall come to an end.

Verse 9

And the head of Ephraim - The capital city of Ephraim, or of Israel.

Is Samaria - This was long the capital of the kingdom of Israel. For a description of this city, see the notes at Isaiah 28:1. The meaning of the prophet is, that Samaria should continue to be the head of Ephraim; that is, Jerusalem should not be made its capital.

If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established - There is considerable variety in the interpretation of these words, though the general sense is evident. The Chaldee renders them, ‹If ye will not believe the words of the prophet, ye shall not remain.‘ It is probable that Ahaz, who was greatly alarmed, and who trembled at the formidable power of Syria and Israel united, received the annunciation of the prophet with much distrust. He was anxious about the means of defense, but did not trust in the promise of God by the prophet. Isaiah, therefore, assures him, that if he did not believe him; if he did not put confidence in God, and his promises, he should not be protected from Syria and Ephraim. They would come and destroy his kingdom. ‹You have no occasion,‘ is the language of the prophet, ‹to fear. God has resolved to protect you, and no portion of your land shall be taken by your enemies. Nevertheless, in order that you may obtain deliverance, you must believe his promise, and put your confidence in him, and not in the aid of the Assyrians. If you do this, your mind shall be calm, peaceful, and happy. But if you do “not” do this; if you rely on the aid of Assyria, you shall be troubled, alarmed, unsuccessful, and bring ruin upon yourself and nation.‘ This, therefore, is an exhortation to confide solely in the promises of God, and is one of the instances constantly occurring in the Old Testament and the New, showing, that by faith or confidence in God only, can the mind he preserved calm when in the midst of dangers.

Verse 11

Ask thee - Ask for “thyself;” ask a sign that shall be convincing to “thyself,” since thou dost not fully credit the words of the prophet. It is evident that the words of the prophet had made no impression on the mind of Ahaz. God, therefore, proposes to him to ask any “proof or demonstration” which he might select; anything that would be an indication of divine power that should put what the prophet had said beyond doubt.

Had Ahaz put confidence in God, he would have believed what the prophet said without miraculous proof. But he had no such confidence. ‹The prophet, therefore, proposes that he should ask any miraculous demonstration that what he said would come to pass. This proposition was made, probably, not so much from respect to Ahaz as to leave him without excuse, and in order that "the people" might have the assurance that the city and kingdom were safe.

A sign - A demonstration that shall confirm the promise now made, and that shall be an evidence that Jerusalem shall be safe. The word used here, and translated "sign" -

d **‹owt -** אות *'ôth* - means "a flag," or "a standard," Numbers 2:2; "a memorial or pledge" of a covenant, Genesis 17:11; any "pledge, token, or proof" of a divine mission, Judges 6:17; or a miracle performed in attestation of a divine promise or message. This is its sense here. That which Isaiah had spoken seemed highly improbable to Ahaz, and he asked him to seek a proof of it, if he doubted, by any prodigy or miracle. It was customary for miracles or prodigies to be exhibited on similar occasions; see Isaiah 38:7, where the shadow on the dial of this same Ahaz was carried backward ten degrees, in proof of what the prophet Isaiah had spoken; compare 1 Samuel 2:27-34; 1 Kings 13:1-3; Exodus 3:12; Judges 6:36-40. That the word here refers to some event which could be brought about only by divine power, is evident from the whole connection. No mere natural occurrence could have satisfied Ahaz, or convey to the people a demonstration of the truth of what the prophet was saying. And if the prophet had been unable or unwilling to give a miraculous sign, where is the fitness of the answer of Ahaz? How could he be regarded as in any way tempting God by asking it, unless it was something which God only could do? And how could the prophet bring the charge Isaiah 7:13, that he had not merely offended men, but God also? It is clear, therefore, that Isaiah was conscious that he was invested by God with the power of working a miracle, and that he proposed to perform any miracle which Ahaz should suggest that would serve to remove his doubts, and lead him to put confidence in God.

Ask it either in the depth … - He gave him his choice of a miracle - any sign or wonder in heaven, or on earth - above or below; a miracle in the sky, or from beneath the earth. Many of the versions understand the expression ‹the depth,‘ as referring to "the grave," or to the region of

departed souls - “hades.” So the Vulgate, Aquila, Symmachus. The Chaldee reads it, ‹Seek that there may be a miracle to thee upon the earth, or a sign in the heavens.‘ The literal meaning of the Hebrew is, ‹make low, ask for;‘ that is, ask for a sign below; obtain, by asking for thyself; a miracle that shall take place below. It may refer to the earth, or to the region under the earth, since it stands in contrast with that which is above. If it refers to the region under the earth, it means that Isaiah would raise the dead to life if Ahaz desired it; if to the earth, that any wonder or miracle that should take place in the elements - as a tempest, or earthquake - should be performed.

The height above - The heaven, or the sky. So the Pharisees desired to see a sign from heaven, Matthew 16:1.

Verse 12

I will not ask - In this case Ahaz assumed the appearance of piety, or respect for the command of God. In Deuteronomy 6:16, it is written, ‹Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God;‘ and Ahaz perhaps had this command in his eye. It was a professed reverence for God. But the true reason why he did not seek this sign was, that he had already entered into a negotiation with the king of Assyria to come and defend him; and that he was even stripping the temple of God of its silver and gold, to secure this assistance; 2 Kings 16:7-8. When people are depending on their own devices and resources, they are unwilling to seek aid from God; and it is not uncommon if they excuse their want of trust in him by some appearance of respect for religion.

Tempt - Try, or do a thing that shall provoke his displeasure, or seek his interposition in a case where he has not promised it. To tempt God is the same as to put him to the proof; to see whether he is able to perform what he proposed. It is evident, however, that here there would have been no “temptation” of God, since a sign had been offered him by the prophet in the name of God. ‹The answer of Ahaz can be regarded either as one of bitter scorn, as if he had said, “I will not put thy God to the proof, in which he will be found lacking. I will not embarrass thee by taking thee at thy word;” or as the language of a hypocrite who assumes the mask of reverence for God and his command.‘ - “Hengstenberg.” Chrysostom and Calvin regard the latter as the correct interpretation. If it be asked here “why” Ahaz did not put Isaiah to the test, and “secure,” if possible, the divine confirmation to the assurance that Jerusalem would be safe, the following may be regarded as the probable reasons:

(1) He was secretly relying on the aid of Assyria. He believed that he could fortify the city, and distress the enemy by turning away the supply of water, so that they could not carry on a siege, and that all the further aid which he needed could be derived from the Assyrians.

(2) If the miracle had been "really performed," it would have been a proof that Yahweh was the true God a proof which Ahaz had no desire of witnessing. He was a gross idolater; and he was not anxious to witness a demonstration which would have convinced him of the folly and sin of his own course of life.

(3) If the miracle could not be performed, as Ahaz seems to have supposed would be the case, then it would have done much to unsettle the confidence of the people, and to have produced agitation and alarm. It is probable that a considerable portion of the people were worshippers of Yahweh, and were looking to him for aid. The pious, and the great mass of those who conformed to the religion of their fathers, would have been totally disheartened; and this was a result which Ahaz had no desire to produce.

(4) Michaelis has suggested another reason, drawn from the character of idolatry. According to the prevailing notions at that period, every nation had its own gods. Those of one people were more, and those of another less powerful; see Isaiah 10:10-11; Isaiah 36:18-20; Isaiah 37:10-13. If a miracle had been performed, Ahaz might have believed that it was performed by the god of the country, who might have had the disposition, but not the power, to defend him. It would have been to the mind of the idolater no proof that the god of Syria or Samaria was not more powerful, and might not have easily overcome him. Ahaz seems to have regarded Yahweh as such a God - as one of the numerous gods which were to be worshipped, and perhaps as not the most powerful of the tutelary divinities of the nations. This was certainly the view of the surrounding idolaters Isaiah 10:10-11; Isaiah 36:18-20; and it is highly probable that this view prevailed among the idolatrous Israelites.

Verse 13

O house of David - Isaiah 7:2. By this is to be understood not only the king himself, but the princes and rulers. Perhaps in addressing him thus, there was implied no small irony and reproach. David confided in God. But "Ahaz," his descendant, feared to "tempt" God! As if God could not aid him! Worthy descendant he of the pious and devoted David!

Is it a small thing - You are not satisfied with wearying people, but you would also fatigue and wear out the patience of God.

Weary - Exhaust their patience; oppose them; prevent their sayings and messages; try their spirits, etc.

Men - prophets; the men who are sent to instruct, and admonish.

Will ye weary my God also? - Will you refuse to keep his commands; try his patience; and exhaust his long-suffering? compare Isaiah 1:14. The sense of this passage seems to be this: When Ahaz refused to believe the bare prediction of the prophet, his transgression was the more excusable. He had wearied and provoked him, but Isaiah had as yet given to Ahaz no direct demonstration that he was from God; no outward proof of his divine mission; and the offence of Ahaz might be regarded as in a sense committed against man. It was true, also, that Ahaz had, by his unbelief and idolatry, greatly tried the feelings of the pious, and wearied those who were endeavoring to promote true religion. But now the case was changed. God had offered a sign, and it had been publicly rejected. It was a direct insult to God; and an offence that demanded reproof. Accordingly, the manner of Isaiah is at once changed. Soft, and gentle, and mild before, he now became bold, open, vehement. The honor of God was concerned; a direct affront had been offered to him by the sovereign of the people of God; and it was proper for the prophet to show that "that" was an offence which affected the Divine Majesty, and demanded the severest reproof.

Verse 14

Therefore - Since you will not "ask" a pledge that the land shall be safe, Yahweh will furnish one unasked. A sign or proof is desirable in the case, and Yahweh will not withhold it because a proud and contemptuous monarch refuses to seek it. Perhaps there is no prophecy in the Old Testament on which more has been written, and which has produced more perplexity among commentators than this. And after all, it still remains, in many respects, very obscure. Its general original meaning is not difficult. It is, that in a short time - within the time when a young woman, then a virgin, should conceive and bring forth a child, and that child should grow old

enough to distinguish between good and evils - the calamity which Ahaz feared would be entirely removed. The confederacy would be broken up, and the land forsaken by both those kings. The conception and birth of a child - which could be known only by him who knows "all" future events - would be the evidence of such a result. His appropriate "name" would be such as would be a "sign," or an indication that God was the protector of the nation, or was still with them. In the examination of this difficult prophecy, my first object will be to give an explanation of the meaning of the "words and phrases" as they occur in the passage, and then to show, as far as I may be able, what was the design of the passage.

The Lord himself - Hebrew, ‹Adonai;‘ see this word explained in the the note at Isaiah 1:24. He will do it without being asked to do it; he will do it though it is rejected and despised; he will do it because it is important for the welfare of the nation, and for the confirmation of his religion, to furnish a demonstration to the people that he is the only true God. It is clearly implied here, that the sign should be such as Yahweh alone could give. It would be such as would be a demonstration that he presided over the interests of the people. If this refers to the birth of a child, then it means that this was an event which could be known only to God, and which could be accomplished only by his agency. If it refers to the miraculous conception and birth of the Messiah, then it means that that was an event which none but God could accomplish. The true meaning I shall endeavor to state in the notes, at the close of Isaiah 7:16.

Shall give you - Primarily to the house of David; the king and royal family of Judah. It was especially designed to assure the government that the kingdom would be safe. Doubtless, however, the word ‹you‘ is designed to include the nation, or the people of the kingdom of Judah. It would be so public a sign, and so clear a demonstration, as to convince them that their city and land must be ultimately safe.

A sign - A pledge; a token; an evidence of the fulfillment of what is predicted. The word does not, of necessity, denote a miracle, though it is often so applied; see the notes at Isaiah 7:11. Here it means a proof, a demonstration, a certain indication that what he had said should be fulfilled. As that was to be such a demonstration as to show that he was "able" to deliver the land, the word "here" denotes that which was miraculous, or which could be effected "only" by Yahweh.

Behold - הנה *hinnêh* This interjection is a very common one in the Old Testament. It is used to arrest attention; to indicate the importance of what was about to be said. It serves to designate persons and things; places and actions. It is used in lively descriptions, and animated discourse; when anything unusual was said, or occurred; or any thing which especially demanded attention; Genesis 12:19; Genesis 16:16; Genesis 18:9; Genesis 1:29; Genesis 40:9; Psalm 134:1. It means here, that an event was to occur which demanded the attention of the unbelieving monarch, and the regard of the people - an event which would be a full demonstration of what the prophet had said, that God would protect and save the nation.

A virgin - This word properly means a girl, maiden, virgin, a young woman who is unmarried, and who is of marriageable age. The word עלמה *ʿalmâh* is derived from the verb עלם *ʿâlam* "to conceal, to hide, to cover." The word עלם *ʿelem* from the same verb, is applied to a "young man," in 1 Samuel 17:56; 1 Samuel 20:22. The word here translated a virgin, is applied to Rebekah Genesis 24:43, and to Miriam, the sister of Moses, Exodus 2:8. It occurs in only seven places in the Old Testament. Besides those already mentioned, it is found in Psalm 68:25; Proverbs 30:19. In all these places, except, perhaps, in Proverbs, it is used in its obvious natural sense, to denote a young, unmarried female. In the Syriac, the word *alĕm* means to grow up, *juvenis factus est; juvenescere fecited*. Hence, the derivatives are applied to youth; to young men; to young women - to those who "are growing up," and becoming youths.

The etymology of the word requires us to suppose that it means one who is growing up to a marriageable state, or to the age of puberty. The word maiden, or virgin, expresses the correct idea. Hengstenberg contends, that it means one "in the unmarried state;" Gesenius, that it means simply the being of marriageable age, the age of puberty. The Hebrews usually employed the word בתולה *bethûlâh* to denote a pure virgin (a word which the Syriac translation uses here); but the word here evidently denotes one who was "then" unmarried; and though its primary idea is that of one who is growing up, or in a marriageable state, yet the whole connection requires us to understand it of one who was "not then married," and who was, therefore, regarded and designated as a virgin. The Vulgate renders it ‹virgo.‘ The Septuagint, ἡ παρθένος *hē parthenos* "a virgin" - a word which they use as a translation of the Hebrew בתולה *bethûlâh* in Exodus 22:16-17; Leviticus 21:3, Leviticus 21:14; Deuteronomy 22:19, Deuteronomy 22:23,

Deuteronomy 22:28; Deuteronomy 32:25; Judges 19:24; Judges 21:12; and in thirty-three other places (see Trommius‘ Concordance); of נערה *naʿărâh* a girl, in Genesis 24:14, Genesis 24:16, Genesis 24:55; Genesis 34:3 (twice); 1 Kings 1:2; and of עלמה ʿ*almâh* only in Genesis 24:43; and in Isaiah 7:14.

The word, in the view of the Septuagint translators, therefore conveyed the proper idea of a virgin. The Chaldee uses substantially the same word as the Hebrew. The idea of a "virgin" is, therefore, the most obvious and natural idea in the use of this word. It does not, however, imply that the person spoken of should be a virgin "when the child" should be born; or that she should ever after be a virgin. It means simply that one who was "then" a virgin, but who was of marriageable age, should conceive, and bear a son. Whether she was "to be" a virgin "at the time" when the child was born, or was to remain such afterward, are inquiries which cannot be determined by a philological examination of the word. It is evident also, that the word is not opposed to "either" of these ideas. "Why" the name which is thus given to an unmarried woman was derived from the verb to "hide, to conceal," is not agreed among lexicographers. The more probable opinion is, that it was because to the time of marriage, the daughter was supposed to be hidden or concealed in the family of the parents; she was kept shut up, as it were, in the paternal dwelling. This idea is given by Jerome, who says, ‹the name is given to a virgin because she is said to be hidden or secret; because she does not expose herself to the gaze of men, but is kept with great care under the custody of parents.‘ The sum of the inquiry here, into the meaning of the word translated "virgin," is, that it does not differ from that word as used by us. The expression means no more than that one who was then a virgin should have a son, and that this should be a sign to Ahaz.

And shall call his name - It was usual for "mothers" to give names to their children; Genesis 4:1; Genesis 19:37; Genesis 29:32; Genesis 30:18. There is, therefore, no reason to suppose, as many of the older interpreters did, that the fact that it is said the mother should give the name, was a proof that the child should have no human father. Such arguments are unworthy of notice; and only show to what means people have resorted in defending the doctrines, and in interpreting the pages of the Bible. The phrase, ‹she will name,‘ is, moreover, the same as ‹they shall name,‘ or he shall be named. ‹We are not, then, to suppose that the child should actually receive

the name Immanuel as a proper name, since, according to the usage of the prophet, and especially of Isaiah, that is often ascribed to a person or thing as a name which belongs to him in an eminent degree as an attribute; see Isaiah 9:5; Isaiah 61:6; Isaiah 62:4.‘ - “Hengstenberg.” The idea is, that that would be a name that might be “appropriately” given to the child. Another name was also given to this child, expressing substantially the same thing, with a circumstantial difference; see the note at Isaiah 8:3.

Immanuel - Hebrew ‹God with us‘ - עמנואל *ʿimmânû'êl* - from אל *'ĕl* “God,” and עמנו *ʿîmmânû* “with us.” The name is designed to denote that God would be with the nation as its protector, and the birth of this child would be a sign or pledge of it. The mere circumstance that this name is given, however, does not imply anything in regard to the nature or rank of the child, for nothing was more common among the Jews than to incorporate the name, or a part of the name, of the Deity with the names which they gave to their children. Thus, “Isaiah” denotes the salvation of Yahweh; “Jeremiah,” the exaltation or grandeur of Yahweh, each compounded of two words, in which the name Yahweh constitutes a part. Thus, also in “Elijah,” the two names of God are combined, and it means literally, “God the Yahweh.” Thus, also “Eliab,” God my faather; “Eliada,” knowledge of God; “Eliakim,” the resurrection of God; “Elihu,” he is my God; “Elisha,” salvation of God. In none of these instances is the fact, that the name of God is incorporated with the proper name of the individual, any argument in respect to his rank or character.

It is true, that Matthew Matthew 1:23 uses this name as properly expressing the rank of the Messiah; but all that can be demonstrated from the use of the name by Matthew is, that it properly designated the nature and rank of the Lord Jesus. It was a pledge, then, that God was with his people, and the name designated by the prophet had a complete fulfillment in its use as applied to the Messiah. Whether the Messiah be regarded as himself a pledge and demonstration of the presence and protection of God, or whether the name be regarded as descriptive of his nature and dignity, yet there was an “appropriateness” in applying it to him. It was fully expressive of the event of the incarnation. Jerome supposes that the name, Immanuel, denotes nothing more than divine aid and protection. Others have supposed, however, that the name must denote the assumption of our nature by God in the person of the Messiah, that is, that God became man. So Theodoret, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Lactantius, Chrysostom. Calvin, Rosenmuller, and

others. The true interpretation is, that no argument to prove that can be derived from the use of the name; but when the fact of the incarnation has been demonstrated from other sources, the "name is appropriately expressive of that event." So it seems to be used by Matthew.

It may be quite true, that no argument can be founded on the bare name, Immanuel; yet that name, "in its connection here," may certainly be regarded as a designed prediction of the incarnation of Christ. Such a design our author allows in the prophecy generally. ‹The prophet,‘ says he, ‹designedly made use of language which would be appropriate to a future and most glorious event.‘ Why, then, does he speak of the most pregnant word in the prophecy as if Matthew had accidentally stumbled on it, and, finding it would appropriately express the nature of Christ, accomodated it for that purpose? Having originally rejected the Messianic reference, and been convinced only by a more careful examination of the passage, that he was in error, something of his old view seems still to cling to this otherwise admirable exposition. ‹The name Immanuel,‘ says Professor Alexander, ‹although it might be used to signify God‘s providential presence merely Psalm 46:8,12; Psalm 89:25; Joshua 1:5; Jeremiah 1:8; Isaiah 43:2, has a latitude and pregnancy of meaning which can scarcely be fortuitous; and which, combined with all the rest, makes the conclusion almost unavoidable, that it was here intended to express a personal, as well as a providential presence … When we read in the Gospel of Matthew, that Jesus Christ was actually born of a virgin, and that all the circumstances of his birth came to pass that this very prophecy might be fulfilled, it has less the appearance of an unexpected application, than of a conclusion rendered necessary by a series of antecedent facts and reasonings, the last link in a long chain of intimations more or less explicit (referring to such prophecies as Genesis 3:15; Micah 5:2).

The same considerations seem to show that the prophecy is not merely accommodated, which is, moreover, clear fram the emphatic form of the citation τοῦτο ὅλον γέγονεν ἵνα πληρωθῇ *touto holon gegonen hina plēroothē* making it impossible to prove the existence of any quotation in the proper sense, if this be not one.‘ But, indeed, the author himself admits all this, though his language is less decided and consistent than could be wished on so important a subject.

Verse 15

Butter and honey - The word rendered "butter" (חמאה *chem'âh*), denotes not butter, but thick and curdled milk. This was the common mode of using milk as an article of food in the East, and is still. In no passage in the Old Testament does butter seem to be meant by the word. Jarchi says, that this circumstance denotes a state of plenty, meaning that the land should yield its usual increase notwithstanding the threatened invasion. Eustatius on this place says, that it denotes delicate food. The more probable interpretation is, that it was the usual food of children, and that it means that the child should be nourished in the customary manner. That this was the common nourishment of children, is abundantly proved by Bochart; "Hieroz." P. i. lib. xi. ch. li. p. 630. Barnabas, in his epistle says, ‹The infant is first nourished with honey, and then with milk.' This was done usually by the prescription of physicians.

Paulus says, ‹It is fit that the first food given to a child be honey, and then milk.' So Aetius, ‹Give to a child, as its first food, honey;' see "Bochart." Some have, indeed, supposed that this refers to the fact that the Messiah should be "man" as well as God, and that his eating honey and butter was expressive of the fact that he had a "human nature!" But against this mode of interpretation, it is hoped, it is scarcely needful now to protest. It is suited to bring the Bible into contempt, and the whole science of exegesis into scorn. The Bible is a book of sense, and it should be interpreted on principles that commend themselves to the sober judgment of mankind. The word rendered "honey" - דבשׁ *debash* - is the same word - "dibs" - which is now used by the Arabs to denote the syrup or jelly which is made by boiling down wine. This is about the consistence of molasses, and is used as an article of food. Whether it was so employed in the time of Isaiah, cannot now be determined, but the word here may be used to denote honey; compare the note at Isaiah 7:22.

That he may know - As this translation now stands, it is unintelligible. It would "seem" from this, that his eating butter and honey would "contribute" to his knowing good and evil. But this cannot be the meaning. It evidently denotes ‹until he shall know,' or, ‹at his knowing;' Nord. "Heb. Gram.," Section 1026. 3. He shall be no urished in the usual way, "until" he shall arrive at such a period of life as to know good from evil. The

Septuagint renders it, Πρινη γνῶναι αὐτὸν *Prinē gnōnai auton* - ‹before he knows.‘ The Chaldee, ‹Until he shall know.‘

To refuse the evil … - Ignorance of good and evil denotes infancy. Thus, in Nineveh, it is said there were ‹more than sixscore thousand perons that cannot discern between their right hand and left hand;‘ commonly supposed to denote infants; Jonah 4:11; compare Deuteronomy 1:39. The meaning is, that he should be nourished in the usual mode in infancy, and before he should be able to discern right from wrong, the land should be forsaken of its kings. At what particular period of life this occurs, it may not be easy to determine. A capability to determine, in some degree, between good and evil, or between right and wrong, is usually manifest when the child is two or three years of age. It is evinced when there is a capability of understanding "law," and feeling that it is wrong to disobey it. This is certainly shown at a very early period of life; and it is not improper, therefore, to suppose that here a time was designated which was not more than two or three years.

Verse 16

The land that thou abhorrest - The land concerning which thou art so much "alarmed or distressed;" that is, the united land of Syria and Ephraim. It is mentioned here as ‹the land,‘ or as one land, because they were united then in a firm alliance, so as to constitute, in fact, or for the purposes of invasion and conquest, one people or nation. The phrase, ‹which thou abhorrest,‘ means properly, which thou loathest, the primary idea of the word - קוץ *qûts* - being to feel a nausea, or to vomit. It then means to fear, or to feel alarm; and this, probably, is the meaning here. Abaz, however, evidently looked upon the nations of Syria and Samaria with disgust, as well as with alarm. This is the construction which is given of this passage by the Vulgate, Calvin, Grotius, Junins, Gataker, and Piscator, as well as by our common version. Another construction, however, has been given of the passage by Vitringa, JohnD. Michaelis, Lowth, Gesenius, Rosenmuller, Hengstenberg, and Hendewerk. According to this, the meaning is not that the "land" should be the object of abhorrence, but that the kings themselves were the objects of dislike or dread; and not merely that the two kings should be removed, but that the land itself was threatened with desolation. This construction is free from the objections of an exegetical kind to which the other is open, and agrees better with the idiom of the Hebrew. According to this, the correct translation would be:

For before the child shall learn to refuse the
Evil and to choose the good,
Desolate shall be the land, before whose two
Kings thou art in terror.‘

Of both her kings - Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the temple, and sent it as a present to the king of Assyria. Induced by this, the king of Assyria marched against Damascus and killed Rezin, 2 Kings 16:9. This occurred but a short time after the threatened invasion of the land by Rezin and Remaliah, in the “third” year of the reign of Ahaz, and, consequently, about one year after this prophecy was delivered. Pekah, the son of Remaliah, was slain by Hoshea, the son of Elah, who conspired against him, killed him, and reigned in his stead. This occurred in the fourth year of the reign of Ahaz, for Pekah reigned twenty years. Ahaz began to reign in the seventeenth year of the reign of Pekah, and as Pekah was slain after he had reigned twenty years, it follows that he was slain in the fourth year of the reign of Ahaz - perhaps not more than two yearn after this prophecy was delivered; see 2 Kings 15:27, 2 Kings 15:30; 2 Kings 16:1. We have thus arrived at a knowledge of the time intended by Isaiah in Isaiah 7:16. The whole space of time was not, probably, more than two years.

Opinions on the Intrepretation of Isaiah 7:14-16. It may be useful, therefore, to state briefly what those opinions have been, and then what seems to be the true meaning.

(i) The first opinion is that which supposes that by the ‹virgin‘ the wife of Ahaz is referred to, and that by the child which should be born, the prophet refers to Hezekiah. This is the opinion of the modern Jewish commentators generally. This interpretation prevailed among the Jews in the time of Justin. But this was easily shown by Jerome to be false. Ahaz reigned in Jerusalem but sixteen years 2 Kings 17:2, and Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign 2 Kings 18:2, and of course was not less than nine years old when this prophecy was delivered. Kimchi and Abarbanel then resorted to the supposition that Ahaz had a second wife, and that this refers to a child that was to be born of her. This supposition cannot be proved to be false, though it is evidently a mere supposition. It has been adopted by the Jews, because they were pressed by the passage by the early Christians, as

constituting an argument for the divinity of Christ. The ancient Jews, it is believed, referred it mainly to the Messiah.

(ii) Others have supposed, that the prophet designated some virgin who was then present when the king and Isaiah held their conference, and that the meaning is, ‹as surely as this virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, so surely shall the land be forsaken of its kings.‘ Thus Isenbiehl, Bauer, Cube, and Steudel held, as quoted by Hengstenberg, "Christol." i. p. 341.

(iii) Others suppose that the ‹virgin‘ was not an actual, but only an ideal virgin. Thus Michaelis expresses it: ‹By the time when one who is yet a virgin can bring forth (that is, in nine months), all will be happily changed, and the present impending danger so completely passed away, that if you were yourself to name the child, you would call him Immanuel.‘ Thus Eichhorn, Paulus, Hensler, and Ammon understand it; see "Hengstenberg."

(iv) Others suppose that the ‹virgin‘ was the prophet‘s wife. Thus Aben Ezra, Jarchi, Faber, and Gesenius. Against this supposition there is only one objection which has been urged that is of real force, and that is, that the prophet already had a son, and of course his wife could not be spoken of as a virgin. But this objection is entirely removed by the supposition, which is by no means improbable, that the former wife of the prophet was dead, and that he was about to be united in marriage to another who was a virgin.

In regard to the prophecy itself, there have been three opinions:

(i) That it refers "exclusively" to some event in the time of the prophet; to the birth of a child then, either of the wife of Ahaz, or of the prophet, or of some other unmarried female. This would, of course, exclude all reference to the Messiah. This was formerly my opinion; and this opinion I expressed and endeavored to maintain, in the first composition of these notes. But a more careful examination of the passage has convinced me of its error, and satisfied me that the passage

has reference to the Messtah. The reasons for this opinion I shall soon state.

(ii) The second opinion is, that it has "exclusive and immediate" reference to the Messiah; that it does not refer at all to any event which was "then" to occur, and that to Ahaz the future birth of a Messiah from a virgin, was to be regarded as a pledge of the divine protection, and an assurance of the safety of Jerusalem. Some of the objections to this view I shall soon state.

(iii) The third opinion, therefore, is that which "blends" these two, and which regards the prophet as speaking of the birth of a child which would soon take place of someone who was then a virgin - an event which could be known only to God, and which would, therefore, constitute a sign, or demonstration to Ahaz of the truth of what Isaiah said; but that the prophet intentionally so used language which would "also" mark a more important event, and direct the minds of the king and people onward to the future birth of one who should more fully answer to all that is here said of the child that would be born, and to whom the name Immanuel would be more appropriately given. This, I shall endeavor to show, must be the correct interpretation. In exhibiting the reasons for this opinion, we may, first, state the evidence that the prediction refers to some child that would be born "soon" as a pledge that the land would be forsaken of its kings; and secondly, the evidence that it refers also to the Messiah in a higher and fuller sense.

I. Evidence That the Prophecy Refers to Some Event Which Was Soon to Occur - To the Birth of a Child of Some One Who Was Then a Virgin, or Unmarried

(i) It is the "obvious" interpretation. It is that which would strike the great mass of people accustomed to interpret language on the principles of common sense. If the passage stood by itself; if the seventh and eighth chapters were "all" that we had; if there were no allusion to the passage in the New Testament; and if we were to sit down and merely look at the circumstances, and contemplate the narrative, the unhesitating opinion of the great mass of people would be, that it "must" have such a reference. This is a good rule of interpretation. That which strikes the mass of people; which appears to people of

sound sense as the meaning of a passage on a simple perusal of it, is likely to be the true meaning of a writing.

(ii) Such an interpretation is demanded by the circumstances of the case. The immediate point of the inquiry was not about the "ultimate and final" safety of the kingdom - which would be demonstrated indeed by the announcement that the Messiah would appear - but it was about a present matter; about impending danger. An alliance was formed between Syria and Samaria. An invasion was threatened. The march of the allied armies had commenced. Jerusalem was in consternation, and Ahaz had gone forth to see if there were any means of defense. In this state of alarm, and at this juncture, Isaiah went to assure him that there was no cause for fear. It was not to assure him that the nation should be ultimately and finally safe - which might be proved by the fact that the Messiah would come, and that, therefore, God would preserve the nation; but the pledge was, that he had no reason to fear "this" invasion, and that within a short space of time the land would ‹be forsaken of both its kings.' How could the fact that the Messiah would come more than seven hundred years afterward, prove this? Might not Jerusalem be taken and subdued, as it was afterward by the Chaldeans, and yet it be true that the Messiah would come, and that God would manifest himself as the protector of his people? Though, therefore, the assurance that the Messiah would come would be a general proof and pledge that the nation would be preserved and ultimately safe, yet it would not be a pledge of the "specific and immediate" thing which occupied the attention of the prophet, and of Ahaz. It would not, therefore, be a ‹sign' such as the prophet offered to give, or a proof of the fulfillment of the specific prediction under consideration. This argument I regard as unanswerable. It is so obvious, and so strong, that all the attempts to answer it, by those who suppose there was an immediate and exclusive reference to the Messiah, have been entire failures.

(iii) It is a circumstance of some importance that Isaiah regarded himself and his children as ‹signs' to the people of his time; see Isaiah 8:18. In accordance with this view, it seems he had named one child Shear-Jashub, Isaiah 7:3; and in accordance with the same view, he afterward named another Maher-shalal-hash-baz - both of which

names are significant. This would seem to imply that he meant here to refer to a similar fact, and to the birth of a son that should be a sign also to the people of his time.

(iv) An unanswerable reason for thinking that it refers to some event which was soon to occur, and to the birth of a child "before" the land should be forsaken of the two kings, is the record contained in Isaiah 8:1-4. That record is evidently connected with this account, and is intended to be a public assurance of the fulfillment of what is here predicted respecting the deliverance of the land from the threatened invasion. In that passage, the prophet is directed to take a great roll Isaiah 7:1, and make a record concerning the son that was to be born; he calls public witnesses, people of character and well-known reputation, in attestation of the transaction Isaiah 7:2; he approaches the prophetess Isaiah 7:3; and it is expressly declared Isaiah 7:4 that before the child should have ‹knowledge to say, My father, and my mother,' that is, be able to discern between good and evil Isaiah 7:16, ‹the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria' should be ‹taken away before the king of Assyria.' This is so evidently a completion of the prophecy in Isa. vii., and a solemn fulfilling of it in a manner that should be satisfactory to Ahaz and the people, that it is impossible, it seems to me, to regard it any otherwise than as a real transaction. Hengstenberg, and those who suppose the prophecy to refer "immediately and exclusively" to the Messiah, are obliged to maintain that that was a ‹symbolical transaction' - an opinion which might, with the same propriety, be held of any historical statement in the Bible; since there is nowhere to be found a more simple and unvarnished account of mere matter of historical fact than that. The statement, therefore, in Isaiah 7:14-16, to a child of the prophet that would be soon born, and that would be a "pledge" of the divine protection, and a "proof or sign" to Ahaz that his land would be safe.

It is no objection to this that Isaiah then had a son Isaiah 7:3, and that, therefore, the mother of that son could not be a virgin. There is no improbability in the supposition that the mother of that son was deceased, and that Isaiah was about again to be married. Such an event

is not so uncommon as to make it a matter of ridicule (see Hengstenberg, p. 342); or to render the supposition wholly incredible.

Nor is it any objection that another name was given to the child that was born to Isaiah; Isaiah 8:1, Isaiah 8:3. Nothing was more common than to give two names to children. It might have been true that the name usually given to him was Maher-shalal-hash-baz; and still true that the circumstances of his birth were such an evidence of the divine protection, and such an emblem of the divine guardianship, as to make proper the name Immanuel; see the note at Isaiah 7:14. It may be observed, also, that on the supposition of the strict and exclusive Messianic interpretation, the same objection might be made, and the same difficulty would lie. It was no more true of Jesus of Nazareth than of the child of Isaiah, that he was commonly called Immanuel. He had another name also, and was called by that other name. Indeed, there is not the slightest evidence that the Lord Jesus was "ever" designated by the name Immanuel as a proper name. All that the passage means is, that such should be the circumstances of the birth of the child as to render the name Immanuel proper; not that it would be applied to him in fact as the usual appellation.

Nor is it any objection to this view, that the mind of the prophet is evidently directed onward "to" the Messiah; and that the prophecy terminates Isaiah 8:8; Isaiah 9:1-7 with a reference to him. That this is so, I admit; but nothing is more common in Isaiah than for him to commence a prophecy with reference to some remarkable deliverance which was soon to occur, and to terminate it by a statement of events connected with a higher deliverance under the Messiah. By the laws of "prophetic suggestion," the mind of the prophet seized upon resemblances and analogies; was carried on to future times, which were suggested by something that he was saying or contemplating as about to occur, until the mind was absorbed, and the primary object forgotten in the contemplation of the more remote and glorious event; see the Introduction to Isaiah, Section 7. III. (3.)

II. Evidence That the Prophecy Refers to the Messiah

(i) The passage in Matthew 1:22-23, is an evidence that "he" regarded this as having a reference to the Messiah, and that it had a

complete fulfillment in him. This quotation of it also shows that that was the common interpretation of the passage in his time, or he would not thus have introduced it. It cannot be "proved," indeed, that Matthew means to affirm that this was the primary and original meaning of the prophecy, or that the prophet had a direct and exclusive reference to the Messiah; but it proves that in his apprehension the words had a "fulness" of meaning, and an adaptedness to the actual circumstances of the birth of the Messiah, which would accurately and appropriately express that event; see the notes at the passage in Matthew. The prophecy was not completely "fulfilled, filled up, fully and adequately met," until applied to the Messiah. That event was so remarkable; the birth of Jesus was so strictly of a virgin, and his nature so exalted, that it might be said to be a "complete and entire" fulfillment of it. The language of Isaiah, indeed, was applicable to the event referred to immediately in the time of Ahaz, and expressed that with clearness; but it more appropriately and fully expressed the event referred to by Matthew, and thus shows that the prophet designedly made use of language which would be appropriate to a future and most glorious event.

(ii) An argument of no slight importance on this subject may be drawn from the fact, that this has been the common interpretation in the Christian church. I know that this argument is not conclusive; nor should it be pressed beyond its due and proper weight. It is of force only because the united and almost uniform impression of mankind, for many generations, in regard to the meaning of a written document, is not to be rejected without great and unanswerable arguments. I know that erroneous interpretations of many passages have prevailed in the church; and that the interpretation of many passages of Scripture which have prevailed from age to age, have been such as have been adapted to bring the whole subject of scriptural exegesis into contempt. But we should be slow to reject that which has had in its favor the suffrages of the unlearned, as well as the learned, in the interpretation of the Bible. The interpretation which refers this passage to the Messiah has been the prevailing one in all ages. It was followed by all the fathers and other Christian expositors until the middle of the eighteenth century ("Hengstenberg"); and is the prevailing interpretation at the present time. Among those who have defended it,

it is sufficient to mention the names of Lowth, Koppe, Rosenmuller, and Hengstenberg, in addition to those names which are found in the well-known English commentaries. It has been opposed by the modern Jews, and by German neologists; but has "not" been regarded as false by the great mass of pious and humble Christians. The argument here is simply that which would be applied in the interpretation of a passage in Homer or Virgil; that where the great mass of readers of all classes have concurred in any interpretation, there is "presumptive evidence" that it is correct - evidence, it is true, which may be set aside by argument, but which is to be admitted to be of some account in making up the mind as to the meaning of the passage in question.

(iii) The reference to the Messiah in the prophecy accords with the "general strain and manner" of Isaiah. It is in accordance with his custom, at the mention of some occurrence or deliverance which is soon to take place, to suffer the mind to fix ultimately on the more remote event of the "same general character," or lying, so to speak, "in the same range of vision" and of thought; see the Introduction, Section 7. It is also the custom of Isaiah to hold up to prominent view the idea that the nation would not be ultimately destroyed until the great Deliverer should come; that it was safe amidst all revolutions; that vitality would remain like that of a tree in the depth of winter, when all the leaves are stripped off Isaiah 6:13; and that all their enemies would be destroyed, and the true people of God be ultimately secure and safe under their great Deliverer; see the notes at Isaiah 35:1-10.

It is true, that this argument will not be "very" striking except to one who has attentively studied this prophecy; but it is believed, that no one can profoundly and carefully examine the manner of Isaiah, without being struck with it as a very important feature of his mode of communicating truth. In accordance with this, the prophecy before us means, that the nation was safe from this invasion. Ahaz feared the extinction of his kingdom, and the "permanent" annexation of Jerusalem to Syria and Samaria. Isaiah told him that that could not occur; and proffered a demonstration, that in "a very few years" the land would be forsaken of both its kings. "On another ground also it could not be." The people of God were safe. His kingdom could not be

permanently destroyed. It must continue until the Messiah should come, and the eye of the prophet, in accordance with his usual custom, glanced to that future event, and he became "totally" absorbed in its contemplation, and the prophecy is finished Isaiah 9:1-7 by a description of the characteristics of the light that he saw in future times rising in dark Galilee Isaiah 9:1-2, and of the child that should be born of a virgin then.

In accordance with the same view, we may remark, as Lowth has done, that to a people accustomed to look for a great Deliverer; that had fixed their hopes on one who was to sit on the throne of David, the "language" which Isaiah used here would naturally suggest the idea of a Messiah. It was so animated, so ill adapted to describe his own son, and so suited to convey the idea of a most remarkable and unusual occurrence, that it could scarcely have been otherwise than that they should have thought of the Messiah. This is true in a special manner of the language in Isaiah 9:1-7.

(iv) An argument for the Messianic interpretation may be derived from the public expectation which was excited by some such prophecy as this. There is a striking similarity between it and one which is uttered by Micah, who was contemporary with Isaiah. Which was penned "first" it would not be easy to show; but they have internal evidence that they both had their origin in an expectation that the Messiah would be born of a virgin; compare the note at Isaiah 2:2. In Micah 5:2-3, the following prediction occurs: ‹But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler over Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from the days of eternity. Therefore, will he give them up, until the time when she which travaileth hath brought forth.' That this passage refers to the birth of the Messiah, is demonstrable from Matthew 2:6.

Nothing can be clearer than that this is a prediction respecting the place of his birth. The Sanhedrim, when questioned by Herod respecting the place of his birth, answered without the slightest hesitation, and referred to this place in Micah for proof. The

expression, ‹she which travaileth,‘ or, ‹she that bears shall bear‘ - ילדה יולדה *yôlēdâh yālâdâh* “she bearing shall bear” - refers evidently to some prediction of such a birth; and the word ‹she that bears‘ (יולדה *yôlēdâh*) seems to have been used somewhat in the sense of a proper name, to designate one who was well known, and of whom there had been a definite prediction. Rosenmuller remarks, ‹She is not indeed expressly called a virgin, but that she is so is self-evident, since she shall bear the hero of divine origin (from everlasting), and consequently not begotten by a mortal. The predictions throw light on each other; Micah discloses the divine origin of the person predicted, Isaiah the wonderful manner of his birth.‘ - “Ros.,” as quoted by Hengstenberg. In his first edition, Rosenmuller remarks on Micah 5:2: ‹The phrase, “she who shall bear shall bear,” denotes the “virgin” from whom, in a miraculous manner, the people of that time hoped that the Messiah would be born.‘ If Micah refers to a well-known existing prophecy, it must evidently be this in Isaiah, since no other similar prophecy occurs in the Old Testament; and if he wrote subsequently to Isaiah, the prediction in Micah must be regarded as a proof that this was the prevailing interpretation of his time.

That this was the prevailing interpretation of those times, is confirmed by the traces of the belief which are to be found extensively in ancient nations, that some remarkable person would appear, who should be born in this manner. The idea of a Deliverer, to be born of a “virgin,” is one that somehow had obtained an extensive prevalence in Oriental nations, and traces of it may be found almost everywhere among them. In the Hindoo Mythology it is said, respecting “Budhu,” that be was born of “Maya,” a goddess of the imagination - a virgin. Among the Chinese, there is an image of a beautiful woman with a child in her arms, which child, they say, was born of a virgin. The passsge in Virgil is well known:

Jam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna:
Jam nova progenies coelo demittitur alto.
Tu modo mascenti puero, quo ferrea primum

Desinet, ac toto surget gens aurea mundo.

Casta fare Lucina: tuus jam regnat Apollo.
Eclog. iv. 4ff.
Comes the last age, by Cumae‘s maid foretold;
Afresh the mighty line of years unrolled.

The Virgin now, now Saturn‘s sway returns;

Now the blest globe a heaven-sprung child adorns,

Whose genial power shall whelm earth‘s iron race,

And plant once more the golden in its place. -

Thou chaste Lucina, but that child sustain,

And lo! disclosed thine own Apollo‘s reign.
Wrangham

This passage, though applied by Virgil to a different subject, has been usually regarded as having been suggested by that in Isaiah. The coincidence of thought is remarkable on any supposition; and there is no improbability in the supposition that the expectation of a great Deliverer to be born of a virgin had prevailed extensively, and that Virgil made it up in this beautiful manner and applied it to a prince in his own time. On the prevalent expectation of such a Deliverer, see the note at Matthew 2:2.

(v) But the great and the unanswerable argument for the Messianic interpretation is derived from the conclusion of the prophecy in Isaiah 8:8, and especially in Isaiah 9:1-7. The prophecy in Isaiah 9:1-7 is evidently connected with this; and yet "cannot" be applied to a son of Isaiah, or to any other child that should be then born. If there is any passage in the Old Testament that "must" be applied to the Messiah, that is one; see the notes on the passage. And if so, it proves, that though the prophet at first had his eye on an event which was soon to occur, and which would be to Ahaz full demonstration that the land would be safe from the impending invasion, yet that he employed language which would describe also a future glorious event, and which would be a fuller demonstration that God would protect the people. He

became fully absorbed in that event, and his language at last referred to that alone. The child then about to be born would, in most of the circumstances of his birth, be an apt emblem of him who should be born in future times, since both would be a demonstration of the divine power and protection. To both, the name Immanuel, though not the common name by which either would be designated, might be appropriately given. Both would be born of a virgin - the former, of one who was then a virgin, and the birth of whose child could be known only to God - the latter, of one who should be appropriately called "the" virgin, and who should remain so at the time of his birth. This seems to me to be the meaning of this difficult prophecy. The considerations in favor of referring it to the birth of a child in the time of Isaiah, and which should be a pledge to him of the safety of his kingdom "then," seem to me to be unanswerable. And the considerations in favor of an ultimate reference to the Messiah - a reference which becomes in the issue total and absorbing - are equally unanswerable; and if so, then the twofold reference is clear.

Verse 17

The Lord shall bring … - The prophet having assured Ahaz that his kingdom should be free from the invasion that then threatened it, proceeds, however, to state to him that it would be endangered from another source.

Thy father's house - The royal family - the princes and nobles.

Days that have not come - Times of calamity that have not been equalled.

From the day that Ephraim departed from Judah - From the time of the separation of the ten tribes from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

Even the king of Assyria - This was done in the following manner. Though the siege which Rezin and Pekah had undertaken was not at this time successful, yet they returned the year after with stronger forces, and with counsels better concerted, and again besieged the city. This was in consequence of the continued and increasing wickedness of Ahaz; 2 Chronicles 28:1-5. In this expedition, a great multitude were taken captives, and carried to Damascus; 2 Chronicles 28:5. Pekah at this time also killed 120,000 of the Jews in one day 2 Chronicles 28:6;

and Zichri, a valiant man of Ephraim, killed Maaseiah the son of Ahaz. At this time, also, Pekah took no less than 200,000 of the kingdom of Judah, proposing to take them to Samaria, but was prevented by the influence of the prophet Oded; 2 Chronicles 28:8-15. In this calamity, Ahaz stripped the temple of its treasures and ornaments, and sent them to Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, to induce him to come and defend him from the united arms of Syria and Ephraim. The consequence was, as might have been foreseen, that the king of Assyria took occasion, from this, to bring increasing calamities upon the kingdom of Ahaz. He first, indeed, killed Rezin, and took Damascus; 2 Kings 16:7.

Having subdued the kingdoms of Damascus and Ephraim, Tiglath-pileser became a more formidable enemy to Ahaz than both of them. His object was not to aid Ahaz, but to distress him 2 Chronicles 28:20; and his coming professedly and at the request of Ahaz, to his help, was a more formidable calamity than the threatened invasion of both Rezin and Pekah. God has power to punish a wicked nation in his own way. When they seek human aid, he can make this a scourge. He has kings and nations under his control; and though a wicked prince may seek earthly alliance, yet it is easy for God to allow such allies to indulge their ambition and love of rapine, and make them the very instruments of punishing the nation which they were called to defend. It should be observed that this phrase, ‹even the king of Assyria,‘ is by many critics thought to be spurious, or a marginal reading, or gloss, that has by some means crept into the text. The ground of this opinion is, that it does not harmonize entirely with the following verse, where "Egypt" is mentioned as well as Assyria, and that it does not agree with the poetical form of the passage.

Verse 18

In that day the Lord shall hiss - see the note at Isaiah 5:26.

For the fly - That is, for the army, or the multitude of people. The comparison of a numerous army with "flies" is not uncommon; see Homer‘s "Iliad," B. ii. 469, etc.

- Thick as insects play,
The wandering nation of a summer‘s day.
That, drawn by milky streams at evening hours

In gathered swarms surround the rural bowers;

From pail to pail with busy murmur run

The gilded legions, glittering in the sun.
Pope.

The comparison is drawn probably from the "number," but also is intended to indicate the troublesome character, of the invaders. Perhaps, also, there is an allusion here to the well-known fact that one of the ten plagues of Egypt was caused by numerous swarms of flies; Exodus 8:21-24. An army would be brought up from that country as numerous, as troublesome, and as destructive as was that swarm of flies. The following description, by Bruce, of a species of flies in Abyssinia and the adjacent regions, will give an idea of the character of this calamity, and the force of the language used here:

‹This insect is called Zimb; it has not been described by any naturalist. It is, in size, very little larger than a bee, of a thicker proportion, and has wings, which are broader than those of a bee, placed separate, like those of a fly: they are of pure gauze, without color or spot upon them; the head is large, the upper jaw or lip is sharp, and has at the end of it a strong pointed hair, of about a quarter of an inch long; the lower jaw has two of these pointed hairs; and this pencil of hairs, when joined together, makes a resistance to the finger, nearly equal to that of a strong hog‘s bristle; its legs are serrated in the inside, and the whole covered with brown hair or down. As soon as this plague appears, and their buzzing is heard, all the cattle forsake their food, and run wildly about the plain, until they die, worn out with fatigue, fright, and hunger. No remedy remains, but to leave the black earth, and hasten down to the sands of Atbara; and there they remain, while the rains last, this cruel enemy never daring to pursue them further.

Though his size be immense, as is his strength, and his body covered with a thick skin, defended with strong hair, yet even the camel is not capable to sustain the violent punctures the fly makes with his pointed proboscis. He must lose no time in removing to the sands of Atbara, for when once attacked by this fly, his body, head, and legs, break out into

large bosses, which swell, break, and putrefy, to the certain destruction of the creature. Even the elephant and rhinoceros, who, by reason of their enormous bulk, and the vast quantity of food and water they daily need, cannot shift to desert and dry places as the season may require, are obliged to roll themselves in mud and mire, which, when dry, coats them over like armor, and enables them to stand their ground against this winged assassin; yet I have found some of these tubercles upon almost every elephant and rhinoceros that I have seen, and attribute them to this cause.

All the inhabitants of the seacoast of Melinda, down to Cape Gardefan, to Saba, and the south coast of the Red Sea, are obliged to put themselves in motion, and remove to the next sand, in the beginning of the rainy season, to prevent all their stock of cattle from being destroyed. This is not a partial emigration; the inhabitants of all the countries, from the mountains of Abyssinia northward, to the confluence of the Nile, and Astaboras, are once a year obliged to change their abode, and seek protection in the sand of Beja; nor is there any alternative, or means of avoiding this, though a hostile band were in their way, capable of spoiling them or half their substance. This fly has no sting, though he seemed to me to be rather of the bee kind; but his motion is more rapid and sudden than that of the bee, and resembles that of the gad-fly in England. There is something particular in the sound or buzzing of this insect; it is a jarring noise together with a humming, which induces me to believe it proceeds, at least in part, from a vibration made with the three hairs at his snout.'

The uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt - The remotest part of the land - that is, from the whole country. Egypt was watered by a single river; the Nile. But this river emptied into the Mediterranean by several mouths; and from this river also were cut numerous canals to water the land. These are intended by the "rivers" of Egypt; see the notes at Isaiah 19:6-7. Those canals would be stagnant for no small part of the year; and around them would be produced, as is usual near stagnant waters, great quantities of flies. This prophecy was fulfilled by the invasion of the land in subsequent times by the Egyptians; 2 Kings 23:33-34; 2 Chronicles 35:20, 2 Chronicles 35:24; 2 Chronicles 36:1-2.

And for the bee - That is, for the "army." An army is compared to "bees" on account of their number; perhaps also on account of the pungency and severity of the sting. The comparison is common; see Deuteronomy 1:44; Deuteronomy 7:20; Psalm 118:12. The Chaldee has rendered this verse, ‹The Lord shall call to a people girded with the armies of the brave, who are numerous as flies, and shall bring them from the ends of the land of Egypt; and strong armies, strong as bees, and shall bring them from the land of Assyria.‘ No prophecy was ever more completely fulfilled than this by the successive invasions of Pharaoh-Necho, Esarhaddon and Nebuchadnezzar; see 2 Chronicles 36:7-21.

Verse 19

And they shall come - The idea in this verse is, that they would spread over the land, and lay it waste. The poetic image of flies and bees is kept up; meaning, that the armies would be so numerous as to occupy and infest all the land.

And shall rest - As bees do. Thus the "locusts" are said to have "rested" in all the land of Egypt; Exodus 10:14.

In the desolate valleys - The word translated "valleys" usually means "a valley with a brook," or a brook itself. The Chaldee translates it, ‹In the streets of cities.‘ But the idea is derived from the habits of flies and bees. The meaning is, that they should fill all the land, as innumerable swarms of flies and bees - would settle down everywhere, and would infest or consume everything. Bees, probably, chose situations near to running streams. Virgil, in his directions about selecting a place for an apiary, gives the following among others:

At liquidi fontes, et stagna virentia musco
Adsint, et tennis fugiens per gramina rivus.
Georg. iv. 18,19.
But there let pools invite with moss arrayed,
Clear fount and rill that purls along the glade.
Sotheby.

In the holes of the rocks - Probably the same image is referred to here. It is well known that in Judea, as well as elsewhere, bees were accustomed to live in the holes or caverns of the rocks. They were very numerous; and the figure here is, that the Assyrians would be

numerous as the swarms of bees were in that land, even in the high and inaccessible rocks; compare Isaiah 2:19-21.

Upon all thorns - The image here is kept up of flies and bees resting on everything. "Thorns" here refer to those trees and shrubs that were of little value; but even on these they would rest.

All bushes - Hebrew ‹All trees that are commendable, or that are to be praised;' see the margin. The word denotes those shrubs and trees that were objects of "praise;" that is, that were cultivated with great attention and care, in opposition to "thorns" that grew wild, and without cultivation, and that were of little value. The meaning of the passage is, that the land would be invaded in every part, and that everything, valuable or not, would be laid waste.

Verse 20

In the same day … - The idea in this verse is the same as in the preceding, though presented in a different form. The meaning is, that "God" would bring upon them this punishment, but that he would make use of the Assyrian as an "instrument" by which to do it.

Shave - The act of shaving off the hair denotes punishment or disgrace; compare 2 Samuel 10:4: ‹Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off one half of their beards;' 1 Chronicles 19:4.

With a razor - Using them as an instrument. God here claims the power of directing them, and regards them as employed by him; see Isaiah 10:5-7.

That is hired - This is an allusion to the custom of hiring soldiers, or employing mercenary armies. Thus Great Britain employed mercenary troops, or hired of the Germans bodies of Hessians to carry on the war in America. The meaning here is, that God would employ the Assyrians as his instruments, to effect his purposes, as though they were hired and paid by the plunder and spoil of the nation.

By them beyond the river - The river Euphrates. The Euphrates is usually meant in the Scriptures where ‹the river' is mentioned without specifying the name; Psalm 72:8; Psalm 80:2. This was the river which Abraham had passed; and this, perhaps, was, for a long time, the eastern boundary of their geographical knowledge; see the note at Isaiah 11:15.

The head - The hair of the head.

The hair of the feet - Or the other parts of the body; of the lower parts of the body.

Shall consume the beard - Shall cut off the beard. This was esteemed particularly disgraceful among the Jews. It is, at this day, among all Eastern nations. The beard is regarded as a distinguished ornament; among the Mahometans, it is sworn by, and no higher insult can be offered than to treat the beard with indignity; compare the note at Isaiah 50:6. The meaning is here, that God would employ the Assyrian as his instrument to lay waste the land.

Verse 21

In that day - In the time specified in the previous verses - in the judgments that should be brought upon the land by the Egyptians and Assyrians.

A man shall nourish - Hebrew ‹Make to live:‘ that is, he shall own, or feed.

A young cow - The Hebrew denotes a heifer that gives milk. The state which is denoted by this is that of great poverty. Instead of being engaged in agriculture, of possessing great resources in that time, a man should depend, for the subsistence of himself and his family, on what a single cow and two sheep would yield. Probably this is intended also as a description of the general state of the nation, that it would be reduced to great poverty.

And two sheep - Two here seems to be used to denote a very small number. A man, that is, the generality of people, would be so reduced as to be able to purchase and keep no more.

Verse 22

For the abundance of milk … - On account, or by means of the great quantity of milk. This image also denotes that the land should be desolate, and abandoned by its inhabitants. Such a range would the cow and sheep have in the lands lying waste and uncultivated, that they would yield abundance of milk.

For butter and honey - This shall be the condition of all who are left in the land. Agriculture shall be abandoned, The land shall be desolate. The few remaining inhabitants shall be dependent on what a very few cows and sheep shah produce, and on the subsistence which may be derived from honey obtained from the rocks where bees would lodge. Perhaps, also, the swarms of bees would be increased, by the fact that

the land would be forsaken, and that it would produce abundance of wild flowers for their subsistence. The general idea is plain, that the land would be desolate. Butter and honey, that is, butter mingled with honey, is a common article of food in the East; see the note at Isaiah 7:15. D'Arvieux being in the camp of an Arab prince who lived in much splendor, and who treated him with great regard, was entertained, he tells us, the first morning of his being there, with little loaves, honey, new-churned butter, and cream more delicate than any he ever saw, together with coffee. - "Voy. dans la Pal.," p. 24. And in another place, he assures us that one of the principal things with which the Arabs regale themselves at breakfast is cream, or new butter mingled with honey. - p. 197. The statement of the prophet here, that the poor of the land should eat butter and honey, is not inconsistent with this account of D'Arvieux, that it is regarded as an article of food with which even princes treat their guests, for the idea of the prophet is, that when the land should be desolate and comparatively uninhabited, the natural luxuriant growth of the soil would produce an abundance to furnish milk, and that honey would abound where the bees would be allowed to multiply, almost without limit; see Harmer's Obs., vol. ii. p. 55. Ed. Lond. 1808.

Verse 23

The remainder of this chapter is a description of great desolation produced by the invasion of the Assyrians. "Where there were a thousand vines." Where there was a valuable vineyard. In every place, that is, that was well cultivated and valuable.

At a thousand silverlings - The word rendered ‹silvertings' here - כסף *keseph* - denotes, properly, silver, of any amount. But it is also used to denote the silver coin which was in use among the Jews, the shekel. Perhaps this was the only silver coin which, in early times, they possessed, and hence, the word shekel is omitted, and so many pieces of silver are mentioned. Thus, in Genesis 20:16, Abimelech says, that he had given Abraham, a thousand of silver' - that is, a thousand shekels. The shekel was worth about two shillings of our money. It is probable that a vineyard would be valued, in proportion to the number of vines that could be raised on the smallest space; and the meaning is here, that the land that was most fertile, and that produced the most, would be desolate, and would produce only briers and thorns. The land in

Judea admits of a high state of cultivation, and requires it, in order to make it productive. When neglected, it becomes as remarkably sterile. At present, it generally bears the marks of great barrenness and sterility. It is under the oppression of Turkish power and exactions; and the consequence is, that, to a traveler, it has the appearance of great barrenness. But, in the high state to which the Jews brought it, it was eminently fertile, and is capable still of becoming so, if it should be placed under a government that would encourage agriculture and bestow freedom. This is the account which all travelers give of it now.

Verse 24

With arrows and with bows … - This is a continuation of the description of its desolation. So entirely would it be abandoned, so utterly desolate would it be, that it would become a vast hunting-ground. It would be covered with shrubs and trees that would afford a convenient covert for wild beasts; and would yield to its few inhabitants a subsistence, not by cultivation, but by the bow and the arrow. There can scarcely be a more striking description of utter desolation. But, perhaps, the long captivity of seventy years in Babylon literally fulfilled it. Judea was a land that, at all times, was subject to depredations from wild beasts. On the banks of the Jordan - in the marshes, and amid the reeds that sprung up in the lower bank or border of the river - the lion found a home, and the tiger a resting place; compare Jeremiah 49:19. When the land was for a little time vacated and forsaken, it would be, therefore, soon filled with wild beasts; and during the desolations of the seventy years‘ captivity, there can be no doubt that this was literally fulfilled.

Verse 25

And on all hills … - All the fertile places in the mountains that used to be cultivated with the spade. Vineyards were often planted on the sides of hills; and those places were among the most productive and fertile in the land; see Isaiah 5:1.

The mattock - The spade; the garden hoe; or the weeding-hook. An instrument chiefly used, probably, in vineyards.

There shall not come thither - There shall not be.

The fear of briers and thorns - This does not make sense; or if it does, it is not a sense consistent with the connection. The idea of the whole passage is, that the land, even the most fertile parts of it, should

be given up to briers and thorns; that is, to desolation. The Hebrew here, is ambiguous. It may mean, ‹thou shalt not come there, for fear of the briers and thorns.‘ That is, the place that was formerly so fertile, that was cultivated with the spade, shall now be so completely covered with thorns, and shall furnish so convenient a resting place for wild beasts and reptiles, as to deter a man from going there. The Septuagint, and the Syriac, however, understand it differently - as denoting that those places should be still cultivated. But this is evidently a departure from the sense of the connection. Lowth understands it in the past tense; ‹where the fear of briers and thorns never came.‘ The general idea of the passage is plain, that those places, once so highly cultivated, would now be desolate.

Shall be for the sending forth … - Shall be wild, uncultivated, and desolate - vast commons on which oxen and sheep shall feed at large. “Lesser cattle.” Hebrew ‹Sheep, or the flock.‘ Sheep were accustomed to range in deserts and uncultivated places, and to obtain there, under the guidance of the shepherd, their subsistence. The description, therefore, in these verses, is one of extensive and wide desolation; and one that was accomplished in the calamities that came upon the land in the invasions by the Egyptians and Assyrians.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Introduction

In Isaiah 8:1-4. From Isaiah 8:5 to Isaiah 8:8, the prophet resumes and repeats what he had said before in Isaiah 7:17-25, that although the land should be safe from this invasion, yet one more formidable would occur by the armies of Assyria. The cause of this is stated to be, that Judah had despised the Lord, and had sought alliances with Syria and Israel. The prophet then proceeds to exhort the people to put confidence in Yahweh - assuring them that if they refused to confide in him, they must expect to be destroyed, Isaiah 8:9-18; and the chapter concludes with denouncing punishment on those that looked to necromancers and diviners, rather than to the true God. The prophecy is intimately connected with that in the previous chapter; and was delivered, evidently, not far from the same time.

Verse 1

Take thee a great roll - The word which is here translated ‹roll‘ more properly signifies tablet. So the Chaldee renders it. Those tablets were made of wood, metal, or stone, for the purpose of writing on; see Isaiah 30:8; Habakkuk 2:2. On these tablets, or smooth plates, writing was performed by cutting the letters with an iron stylus, or small chisel. The process was slow, but the writing was permanent. They sometimes used the skins of animals, or the bark of trees, and subsequently the papyrus of Egypt (compare the note at Isaiah 19:7); and it is possible that Isaiah may have used such a roll or volume on this occasion; compare Isaiah 8:16.

With a man‘s pen - The word “pen” here (חרט *chere*ṭ) denotes the iron stylus, which was used to engrave or cut the letters in the metal or wood. The phrase ‹a man‘s pen,‘ has been variously interpreted. The Chaldee renders it, ‹Write in it an open, or clear writing, or an expanded writing;‘ meaning that he should make it clear and distinct, so as to be easily read. The Syriac, ‹Write on it in the (usual) custom of men.‘ The word which is translated ‹man‘s אנוֹשׁ *'ĕnôsh* usually denotes common men, the lower ranks, in opposition to the higher ranks of society. And probably the direction means simply, ‹write on it in letters such as men commonly use; in a plain, open, distinct manner - without using any mysterious emblems or characters, but so that men may read it distinctly and easily.‘ A parallel place occurs in Habakkuk 2:2: ‹Write the vision and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.‘

Concerning - Hebrew ל (*le*). *This preposition may denote concerning, of, or to. I understand it here as referring to the heading or title of the prophecy. This was to be set over the prophecy, as a running title, to denote the main subject of it. The subject is indicated in the name which is immediately added.*

Maher - *Hasten; or, he shall hasten. "Shalal." Spoil, or prey.*

Hash - *Hasten, or make speed.*

Baz - *Spoil, or prey. The name used here is a repetition of the same idea - denoting haste in seizing prey, or spoil; and is repeated to give emphasis, and to excite attention. The idea is, that the Assyrian would hasten to his plunder - that it would be accomplished with speed. This name was to be given to a child of Isaiah; and this child was to be a sign of the event which was signified by the name; see Isaiah 8:18; compare Habakkuk 2:2-3.*

Verse 2

And I took unto me faithful witnesses - *What was the precise object in calling in these witnesses is not known. Some have supposed that it was to bear testimony to the marriage of the prophet at that time. But it may have been for the purpose of a public record of the prophecy; a record so made, that the precise time when it was delivered could be attested without dispute. The prophecy was an important one; and it was important to know, in the most authentic and undisputed manner, that such a prophecy had been delivered. It is probable that the prophecy, attested by the names of those two men, was suspended in some public place in the temple, so that it might be seen by the people, and allay their fears; and in order to remove from the multitude every suspicion that it was a prophecy after the event. That this was a real, and not a symbolic transaction, is perfectly manifest, not only from the narrative itself, but from Isaiah 8:18. They are called ‹faithful,' not off account of their private character, but because their public testimony would be credited by the people.*

To record - *To bear witness.*

Uriah the priest - *This is, doubtless, the same man that is mentioned in 2 Kings 16:10. He was a man of infamous character; the accomplice of Ahaz in corrupting the true religion; but still his testimony might be the more valuable to Ahaz, as he was associated with him in his plans.*

And Zechariah … - *It is not certainly known who this was. Perhaps he was one of the Levites whose name is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 29:13.*

Verse 3

Then said the Lord … - *The name thus given was to be emblematic of a particular event - that Assyria would soon take away the spoil of Damascus and Samaria. It is not remarkable that the name Immanuel should also be given to the same child, as signifying the presence and protection of God in defending the nation from the invaders; see the notes at Isaiah 7:14-15. Calvin thinks that all this passed in a vision before the prophet; but it has every mark of being a literal narrative of the birth of a son to Isaiah; and without this supposition, it is impossible to understand the account contained here.*

Verse 4

For before … - *This must have occurred in a short time - probably before the expiration of three years. A child would usually learn to address his parents in that time. In fact, the event here predicted occurred in less than three years from the time when the prophecy was spoken; see the notes at Isaiah 7:16.*

Before the king of Assyria - *By the king, or by his conquests. By the spoil of Samaria here, is to be understood, not the plunder which should be carried away from the city, but from the kingdom of Samaria. In other places, the land is called by the name of the capital; compare 2 Kings 17:26; 2 Kings 23:19; Jeremiah 31:5. The city of Samaria was not plundered until eighteen years after the time mentioned here by the prophet; Isaiah 8:5-6. These verses introduce again what was predicted in Isaiah 7:17, following, respecting the invasion of the land by the king of Assyria. The cause of the invasion is specified, and the consequences are foretold.*

Verse 6

Forasmuch as this people - *There has been a considerable difference of opinion among interpreters respecting the ‹people‘ to whom the prophet here refers. Some have supposed that it refers to the kingdom of Judah alone; others to a party in that kingdom; and others to the kingdom of Judah in connection with the ten tribes, or the kingdom of Israel also. The latter is probably the correct interpretation. The prophet reproves the whole nation of the Jews for despising the mild and gentle reign of the family of David, and for seeking the aid of foreign nations; the ten tribes as seeking an alliance with Rezin and Pekah; and the kingdom of Judah as seeking an alliance with the king of Assyria. It was characteristic of the nation - both of the ten tribes, and of the tribe of Judah - that they forsook the defense which they had in themselves. and sought foreign alliances. Hence, God*

says, that he will bring upon them the judgments which they deserve. That there is a joint reference to both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, is apparent from Isaiah 8:14. It cannot refer to the kingdom of Judah alone, for it could not be brought as an accusation against them, that they took pleasure in Rezin. In the opinion that it refers to the kingdoms of Israel and of Judah - to the whole Jewish people, Vitringa, Lowth, and Hengstenberg concur.

The waters of Shiloah that go softly - *That flow gently. The name Siloah, or Siloam, is found only three times in the Scriptures as applied to waters; once in this place, where it is spoken of a running water; once as a pool in Nehemiah - השלח ברכה berêkah hashelach - Isaiah 3:15, and again as a pool, in the account of the miracle of healing the man who was born blind; John 9:7, John 9:11. Siloam is on the east side of the city of Jerusalem, to the southeast of the site of the temple, and its waters flow into the valley of Jehoshaphat. The name means sent, or sending, from שלח shâlach to send, and was probably given to it because the waters were sent or made to pass through a subterranean passage or aqueduct.*

At present, it properly consists of two receptacles or reservoirs, the waters from one of which flow into the other. The first, or upper one, is now called the ‹Fountain of the Virgin,' from a tradition that it was here that the Virgin Mary resorted before her purification, in order to wash her child's linen. This fountain is on the west side of the valley of Jehoshaphat, and is about 1550 feet from the southeast corner of the city wall. The cavity of this fountain is wholly excavated in the solid rock. To enter it there is at first a descent of sixteen steps, to a level place or platform of twelve feet in diameter, and then another descent of ten steps to the water, making the whole depth twenty-five feet. The basin here is about fifteen feet long by five or six wide, and the height six or eight feet. There is some reason to suppose that this is supplied by a fountain lying under the mosque of Omar, on the site of the temple of Solomon. From this fountain the water is conducted by a subterranean passage, in a direction a little to the west of south to what is properly called the fountain of Siloam. This passage runs under the extremity of mount Ophel; is cut entirely from the solid rock, and is found by measurement to be 1750 feet in length.

At the lower part it is from ten to fifteen feet in height by two in breadth; but in the middle so low, that it can be passed only by creeping on the hands

and knees. The passage is partly fiilled up with sand. From this aqueduct the water is conveyed into the pool of Siloam, situated near where the Tyropeon, or ‹valley of cheesemongers,‘ opens into the valley of Jehoshaphat. This reservoir is fifty-three feet long, eighteen feet broad, and nineteen feet deep, though now there is usually no water remaining within it. From this reservoir the water flows off into the vale below, furnishing water for the gardens which are constructed in terraces on the side of the valley. The water in both these fountains is the same. It is sweet, and slightly brackish, but not disagreeable. It is the common water now used by the inhabitants of the neighboring village of Kefr Selwane - or the straggling village of Siloam. For a full description of this fountain, see Robinson‘s Bib. Researches, vol. i. pp. 493-514. This fountain was probably formerly included within the walls, and furnished a part of the supply of water to the city.

The meaning of this passage is this. The waters of Siloam denote the reign of Yahweh, as manifesting itself in the administration of the family of David - a mild, gentle, and munificent reign, beautifully represented by the unfailing and gently flowing waters on which the happiness of Jerusalem so much depended. That reign a large part of the nation - the ten tribes - had rejected, and had set up a separate kingdom, and had sought the aid of the king of Damascus. The remainder - the kingdom of Judah - were in like manner now disposed to reject the aid of Yahweh, and sought an alliance with the king of Assyria - beautifully represented here by the river Euphrates. The waters of Siloam - a gentle, small sweetly-flowing stream, represented the government of Yahweh. The waters of the Euphrates - violent, rapid, impetuous, and overflowing, represented the government of Assyria. The one they despised; the other they sought and admired. The power of the kingdom of David was then feeble and decayed. That of the Assyrian monarch was vigorous, mighty, vast. They despised the one, and sought the alliance of the other.

And rejoice - *That is, they confide in, and feel that in their protection riley are safe.*

In Rezin - *King of Syria.*

And Remaliah‘s son - *Pekah, king of Samaria; Isaiah 7:1. The crime here mentioned was unique to the kingdom of Israel; showing that the prophet, in part at least, had reference to them.*

Verse 7

The waters of the river - *By the river, in the Scripture, is commonly meant the river Euphrates, as being, by way of eminence, the largest river with which they were acquainted; and also as being that distinguished by the fact that Abraham had lived beyond it, and crossed it; see the note at Isaiah 7:20. In this verse the image is kept up which was commenced in Isaiah 8:6. The Jews rejected the gentle waters of Siloah, and sought the alliance of a foreign king, whose kingdom stretched along, and extended beyond the Euphrates. It was natural, therefore, to compare the invasion of the land to the overflowing of mighty waters that would sweep everything away. A similar comparison is found in Juvenal, who, in describing the introduction of Eastern customs into Rome, represents the Orontes as flowing into the Tiber: Jampridem Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes. The comparison of an invading army with an overflowing stream, or an inundation, is not uncommon; see Lucan's Phars. vi. 272. Hor. Car. iv. 14,15ff.*

Strong and many - *Violent waves, and numerous. It means that a mighty host would come up upon the land.*

Even the king of Assyria - *It has been supposed by many that this is a gloss, or explanation, which has crept into the text. There is no doubt that it expresses the true sense of the passage, but it is remarkable that Isaiah himself should furnish a literal explanation in the midst of a figurative description.*

And all his glory - *Eastern kings marched in the midst of vast splendor. They moved with all the magnificence of the court, and were attended usually with their princes and nobles; with a splendid retinue; and with all the insignia of royalty. Such was the case with Xerxes when he invaded Greece; and such, too, with Darius, and with most of the Oriental conquerors.*

And he shall come up … - *The figure of overflowing waters is here retained. To understand this, it is necessary to remark, that the Euphrates annually overflows its banks to a very considerable extent. It rises in the mountains of Armenia, and, flowing for a considerable distance in a region where the mountains are covered with snow, it falls into the level region of Mesopotamia or Syria, and flows through that region, almost parallel with the Tigris, toward the Persian Gulf. From its banks, vast numbers of canals were made, as in Egypt, to receive the water, and to render the country*

fertile. By the melting of the snows in Armenia, in the summer, the stream becomes greatly enlarged, and overflows vast portions of the adjacent country in a manner similar to the Nile. Usually the river is not very large. Otho says, that on the 12th of March, when he crossed the Euphrates, it was not more than 200 paces in width, but in its height, it extends 500 or 600 paces into the plains on the right. Thevenot observes, that near to Bir, the Euphrates seemed no larger than the Seine at Paris, but was very large when it was swollen. At Babylon, it is said to be about four hundred feet in breadth. That it overflows its banks, is abundantly attested by ancient as well as modern travelers; see Rosenmuller and Gesenius on this verse.

Its channels - *This word means either brooks, or valleys, or canals, or channels of a river. The Euphrates flowed through a level region, and it is not improbable that it had at various times made for itself many channels. Besides this, there were many canals cut in various directions to convey its waters to the gardens, farms, etc. All these the prophet says would be full - and the water would extend even far beyond them.*

Verse 8

He shall … - *That is, the Assyrians - though still retaining the idea of an overflowing stream, or a deluge of waters.*

Reach even to the neck - *Chaldee, ‹They shall come even to Jerusalem.' ‹The prophet compares Jerusalem here,' says Kimchi, ‹to the head of the human body. As when the waters reach to the neck of a man, he is very near drowning, so here, the prophet intimates that the whole land would be deluged, and that it would be nearly utterly destroyed.' The figure thus understood is a very sublime one Jerusalem was situated on hills - elevated above the surrounding country, and, in reference to the whole land, might be aptly compared to the human head. Thus, Josephus (De Bello, lib. iii. ch. ii.), describing Jerusalem, says* - Ἱεροσόλυμα προανίσχουσα τῆς περιοίκου πάσης, ὥσπερ ἡ κεφαλὴ σώματος *Hierosoluma proanischousa tēs perioikou pasēs hōsper hē kephalē sōmatos - "Jerusalem, eminent above all the surrounding region, as the head of the body." The country is represented as being laid under water - a vast sea of rolling and tumultuous waves - with Jerusalem alone rising above them, standing in solitary grandeur amidst the heaving ocean, and itself in danger each moment of being ingulphed; see a similar figure, Isaiah 30:28:*

He is spirit is like a torrent overflowing
It shall reach to the middle of the neck.

And so also, Habakkuk 3:13:
Thou didst go forth for the salvation of thy people,
For the salvation of thine anointed:
Thou didst smite the head from the house of the wicked,
Destroying the foundation even to the neck.

And the stretching out of his wings - *This is a continuation of the same idea under a new figure. The term wings is often applied to an army, as well in modern as in ancient writings. It denotes that the invading army would be so vast as, when expanded or drawn out, to fill the land.*

Shall fill the breadth - *Shall occupy the entire land, so that there shall be no city or town which he shall not invade.*

Thy land, O Immanuel - *see the note at Isaiah 7:14. If this be understood as referring to the son of Isaiah that was to be born, then it means that the child was given as a pledge that the land would be safe from the threatened invasion. It was natural, therefore, to address the child in that manner; as reminding the prophet that this land, which was about to be invaded, belonged to God, and was yet under his protection. Its meaning may be thus paraphrased: ‹O thou who art a pledge of the protection of God - whose birth is an assurance that the land is under his care, and who art given as such a sign to the nation. Notwithstanding this pledge, the land shall be full of foes. They shall spread through every part and endanger all.' Yet the name, the circumstances of the birth, the promise at that time, would all remind the prophet and the king, that, notwithstanding this, the land would be still under the protection of God. If the language be understood as referring to the future Messiah, and as an address made to him then, by calling the land his land, it is intimated that it could not be brought to utter desolation, nor could the country where he was to be born remain wasted and ruined. It would be indeed invaded; the armies of the Assyrian would spread over it, but still it was the land of Immanuel; and was to be the place of his birth, and it was to be secure until the time should arrive for him to come. The probability is, I think, that the address is here solely to the Messiah; and that the purpose of God is to fix the mind of the prophet on the fact that the Messiah must come, as an assurance that the land could not be wholly and perpetually desolate; see the notes at Isaiah 7:14.*

Verse 9

Associate yourselves - *In the previous verses the prophet had seen the Assyrian coming up on the land like an overwhelming flood. He looked upon the danger, and his mind was turned to the pledge of safety which God had given. The name Immanuel, and the promise connected with the giving of that name Isaiah 7:16, reminded him of the perfect safety of the nation, for it was a pledge that God was with them; see Isaiah 8:10. In view of this pledge of the protection of God, this verse is a spirited apostrophe to the mighty host that was about to invade the land. Though confederated and vast, yet they could not prevail. They should be scattered, much as they might be prepared for victory, for God had given a pledge that he would defend his people.*

Associate - *There has been much variety among interpreters about the meaning of the Original word used here. It may mean "to be terrified, to be alarmed," as well as to associate or become confederate. The Vulgate and Chaldee render it, ‹Be assembled, or congregated.' The Septuagint, ‹Know, ye nations,' etc. The Syriac, ‹Tremble, ye people,' etc. Still the notion of associating, confederating, or entering into an alliance, suits the connection better; answers to the parallelism in the latter part of the verse, and is equally consonant with the original.*

O ye people - *Ye people of Assyria. This is an apostrophe to the mighty multitudes that were to come up upon the land from that country.*

And ye shall be broken in pieces - *That is, though the confederacy be mighty, yet shall not prevail. It shall not accomplish that which you purpose - the entire destruction of the land of Judah.*

Give ear, all ye of far countries - *That should be particularly engaged in the confederacy - Assyria, and the kingdoms allied with it.*

Gird yourselves - *As if for war; that is, prepare yourselves thoroughly for conquest; see the note at Isaiah 5:27. The repetition of this shows the excited and agitated state of the prophet's mind. It is a strong, emphatic mode of expression - denoting that they should be certainly broken in pieces, notwithstanding the strength of their confederacy.*

Verse 10

Take counsel together - *This is an address to the same foreign nations. It refers to the designs which they would form to destroy the Jewish state.*

Speak the word - *That is, give the command - to overturn the nation of the Jews.*

It shall not stand - *It shall not be accomplished.*

For God is with us - *Hebrew ‹For Immanuel.' It indicates the confidence of the prophet in view of the promise and the pledge. His reliance was there. Though the enemies were strong and mighty; though the confederacy was formidable; yet his simple reliance was in the name Immanuel! In this he had confidence, in spite of all the violent efforts and designs of the foes of Judah; see Numbers 14:9:*

Only, rebel not ye against the Lord:
Neither fear ye the people of the land;
For they are bread for us;

Their defense is departed from them,

And Jehovah is with us,
Fear thom not.
See also Psalm 46:6-7:
The heathen raged,
The kingdoms were moved.
He uttered his voice, the earth dissolved.

Jehovah of hosts is with us;

The God of Jacob is our refuge.

Verse 11

For the Lord spake thus - *Spake that which immediately follows in the next verse. Warned him not to Unite in the alliance with foreign kingdoms which the nation was about forming.*

With a strong hand - *Margin, ‹With strength of hand.' That is, when the hand of God urged me. A strong prophetic impulse is often represented as being produced by God's laying his hand on the prophet; or by his being thus, as it were, urged or impelled to it; Ezekiel 3:14: ‹The hand of Jehovah was strong upon me;' 2 Kings 3:15: ‹And it came to pass, that when the minstrel played, the hand of the Lord came upon him;' Jeremiah 20:7: ‹O Lord, thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed;' see also Ecclesiastes 2:24; 1 Kings 18:46; 2 Kings 3:15; Ezekiel 33:22; Ezekiel 40:1; compare the Introduction, section 7. 11. (3.) The meaning is, that the prophet was*

strongly, and almost irresistibly, urged by the divine influence, to say what he was about to say.

That I should not walk … - *That I should not approve, and fall in with the design of Ahaz, and of the nation, in calling in the aid of the Assyrian armies.*

Verse 12

Say ye not - *Do not join in their purposes of forming a confederacy. Do not unite with the king and the people of Judah in their alarms about the threatened invasion by the kings of Syria and Samaria, and in their purpose to form an alliance with the king of Assyria. The reason why they should not do this, he states in Isaiah 8:13, where he exhorts the nation to put confidence in the Lord rather than in man. There has been, however, great diversity in the interpretation of this passage. The Septuagint renders the word* קֶשֶׁר *qesher ‹confederacy,‘ by the word* σκληρόν *sklēron - ‹Everything which this people say, is hard.‘ The Syriac, ‹Do not say, rebellion,‘ etc. The Chaldee understands the word in the same sense. Lowth proposes to change the word* קֶשֶׁר *qesher into* קֹדֶשׁ *qâdôsh because Dr. Seeker possessed one manuscript in which this reading was found; and he translates the passage:*

‹Say ye not it is holy,

Of everything of which this people shall say it is holy.‘

That is, ‹call not their idols holy; nor fear ye the object of their fear; that is, the gods of the idolaters.‘ But it is plain that this does not suit the connection of the passage, since the prophet is not reproving them for their idolatry, but is discoursing of the alliance between the kings of Syria and Samaria. Besides, the authority of one manuscript, without the concurrence of any ancient version, is not a sufficient authority for changing the Hebrew text. Most commentators have understood this word ‹confederacy‘ as referring to the alliance between the kings of Syria and Samaria; as if the prophet had said, ‹Do not join in the cry so common and almost universal in the nation, “There is a confederacy between those two kingdoms; there is an alliance formed which endangers our liberty” - a cry that produces alarm and trepidation in the nation.‘ Thus Rosenmuller and Gesenius explain it.

Aben Ezra, and Kimchi, however. understand it of a conspiracy, which they suppose was formed in the kingdom of Ahaz, against him and the house of David; and that the prophet warns the people against joining in such a conspiracy. But of the existence of such a conspiracy there is no evidence.

Had there been such a conspiracy, it is not probable that it would have been so well known as to make it a proper subject of public denunciation. Conspiracies are usually secret and concealed. I regard this, however, as a caution to the prophet not to join in the prevailing demand for an alliance with the king of Assyria. Ahaz trembled before the united armies of Syria and Samaria. He sought, therefore, foreign assistance - the assistance of the king of Assyria. It is probable that in this he was encouraged by the leaders of the people, and that this would be a popular measure with the mass of the nation. Yet it implied distrust of God (note, Isaiah 8:6); and, therefore, the prophet was directed not to unite with them in seeking this ‹confederacy,' or alliance, but to oppose it. The word translated ‹confederacy,' קֶשֶׁר qesher is derived from the verb קָשַׁר qâshar "to bind, to fetter;" to enter into a conspiracy. It usually refers to a conspiracy, but it may mean a combination or alliance of any kind. Or, if it here means a conspiracy, a union between Ahaz and the Assyrians may be regarded as a species of conspiracy, as it was an unnatural alliance; a species of combination against the natural and proper government of Judah - the theocracy.

Neither fear ye their fear - *Do not partake of their alarm at the invasion of the land by the united armies of Syria and Samaria. Rather put confidence in God, and believe that he is able to save you; compare 1 Peter 3:13-15.*

Verse 13

Sanctify … - *Regard Yahweh as holy; that is, worship and honor him with pious fear and reverence. Regard him as the source of safety, and the true defense. Ahaz and his people sought for aid from Assyria against the armies of Syria and Samaria. The direction here is rather to seek aid from God.*

Let him be your fear - *Do not be alarmed at what man can do Isaiah 8:12, but fear and honor God. Be afraid to provoke his wrath by looking to other sources of help when his aid only should be sought.*

Verse 14

And he shall be for a sanctuary - *The word translated sanctuary means, literally, a holy place, a consecrated place, and is usually applied to the tabernacle, or to the temple; Exodus 25:8; Leviticus 12:4; Leviticus 21:12; Jeremiah 51:51. It also means an asylum, or a refuge, to which one might flee in case of danger, and be safe; see Ezekiel 11:16. Among all ancient nations, temples were regarded as safe places to which people might flee*

when pursued, and when in danger. It was deemed sacrilege to tear a man away from a temple or an altar. That the temple was so regarded among the Jews is manifest; see 1 Kings 1:50; 1 Kings 2:28. In allusion to this, the prophet says, that Yahweh would be a sanctuary; that is, an asylum, or refuge, to whom they should flee in times of danger, and be safe; see Psalm 46:1: ‹God is our refuge and strength;' Proverbs 18:10: ‹The name of the Loan is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.' It is also well known that temples and altars were regarded as asyla among the Greeks and Romans. The reference here is rather to an altar, as the asylum, than to a city or temple; as, in the other member of the sentence, the same object is said to be a stone of stumbling - a figure which would not be applicable to a temple or a city.

A stone of stumbling - *A stone against which one should impinge, or over which he should fall. The idea is, that none could run against a hard, rough, fixed stone, or rock, without injuring himself. So the Jews would oppose the counsels of God; instead of making him their refuge and strength, they would resist his claims and appeals, and the consequence would be their destruction. It is also to be remembered, that God is often represented in the Scriptures as a rock, a firm defense, or place of safety, to those who trust in him. But instead of their thus taking refuge in him, they would oppose themselves to this firm rock, and ruin themselves; see Deuteronomy 32:4, Deuteronomy 32:15, Deuteronomy 32:18, Deuteronomy 32:30-31, Deuteronomy 32:37; Psalm 19:14; Psalm 28:1; Psalm 31:2, Psalm 31:8; Psalm 41:2; Psalm 42:9. Many of the ancient Jewish commentators applied this to the Messiah. - Gesenius in loc. It is also applied to Christ in the New Testament, 1 Peter 2:8.*

A rock of offence - *A rock over which they should fall. The English word offence, had that meaning formerly, and retains it in our translation of the Bible.*

To both the houses of Israel - *To the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel; that is, to the wicked portion of them, not to those who were truly pious.*

For a gin - *A net, or snare, to take birds. The idea is the same as in the former part of the verse. By rejecting the counsel of God; by despising his protection, and by resisting his laws, they would be unexpectedly involved in difficulties, as birds which are caught in a snare.*

Verse 15

And many among them - *Many by the invasion under the Assyrian. Many were taken captive; many killed. and many were carried to Babylon. The repetition here of so many expressions so nearly synonymous is emphatic, and shows that it would be certainly done.*

Verse 16

Bind up - *This expression is one that is applicable to a volume, or roll of writing. Thus far the prophet seems to have had the roll opened, which is mentioned in Isaiah 8:1. Now the prophecy is complete, and he directs to bind it up, or close it. Perhaps, also, it is implied that it would be useless any further to address a rebellious and headstrong people. He had delivered his message, but they disregarded it.*

The testimony - *The message; especially that of which Uriah and Zechariah had been called to bear witness, Isaiah 8:2. Any message from God is, however, sometimes called a testimony, as being that to which a prophet bears witness; Psalm 19:7; 2 Kings 11:12; Deuteronomy 4:45; Deuteronomy 6:17, Deuteronomy 6:20; 1 Kings 2:3; Nehemiah 9:34.*

Seal - *Books were made in the form of rolls, and were often sealed when completed - as we seal a letter. The mode of sealing them was not by wax only, but by uniting them by any adhesive matter, as paste, or glue. Wax in warm climates would be generally rendered useless by the heat. The meaning here is, to secure, to close up - perhaps by passing a cord or string around the volume, and making it secure, denoting that it was finished; see Daniel 8:26; Daniel 12:4.*

The law - *The communication or command which he had delivered, and which, being given by inspiration, had now the force of law.*

Among my disciples - *Most of the Jewish commentators suppose that the volume, when completed by a prophet, was given for safe keeping to his disciples, or to some employed to preserve it securely. The word disciples means those who are taught, and here means those who were taught by the prophet; perhaps the pious and holy part of the people who would listen to his instructions. The Chaldee translates this verse, ‹O prophet, preserve the testimony, lest ye testify to those who will not obey; seal and hide the law, because they will not learn it.‘*

Verse 17

And I will wait upon the Lord - *This is the commencement of a new subject. The prophet had closed his former message; but had seen that in regard to the great mass of the nation, his exhortation had been in vain. He*

now says, that having delivered his message, he would patiently look to God alone. His hope was in him, though the nation looked elsewhere; and though calamities were coming, yet he would still trust in God only.

That hideth his face - *This is a figurative expression, denoting the withdrawing of his favor and protection. He would leave them, and give them to deserved punishment; compare Job 23:9; Job 13:24; Psalm 44:24; Psalm 10:1; Psalm 104:29.*

And I will look for him - *I will expect aid from him, and will believe that his promises of final protection will yet be fulfilled; compare Habakkuk 2:3:*

For the vision is yet for an appointed time,
But at the end it shall speak, and not lie:
Though it tarry, wait for it;

Because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

Verse 18

Behold, I … - *By ‹signs and wonders,' here, it is meant that they, by the names given them, were intended to teach important lessons to the Jewish people. Their names were significant, and were designed to illustrate some important truth; and especially the prophet here intimates that they were to inculcate the truth in regard to the presence and protection of God, to induce the people to look to him. Thus the name immanuel, ‹God with us,' Isaiah 7:14; and Shear-jashub, ‹the remnant shall return,' Isaiah 7:3, were both significant of the fact that none but God could be the protector of the nation. And in like manner, it is possible that his own name, signifying the salvation of Jehovah, had been given him with such a reference. But at all events, it was a name which would remind them of the truth that he was now inculcating, that salvation was to be found in Yahweh, and that they should look to him. Names of children were often thus emblematic (see Hosea 1:1-11); and the prophets themselves were regarded as signs of important events; Ezekiel 24:24; compare the note at Isaiah 20:3. This passage is quoted with reference to the Messiah in Hebrews 2:13.*

Which dwelleth in mount Zion - *Mount Zion was the residence of the house of David, or of the court, and it was often used to signify Jerusalem itself. The sense here is, that God was the protector of Jerusalem, or regarded that as his home; see the note at Isaiah 1:8.*

Verse 19

And when they shall say - *When the people, instead of putting confidence in God, shall propose to apply to necromancers. In the time of Ahaz the people were, as they were often, much inclined to idolatry; 2 Kings 16:10. In their troubles and embarrassments, instead of looking to Yahweh, they imitated the example of surrounding nations, and applied for relief to those who professed to be able to hold converse with spirits. That it was common for idolatrous people to seek direction from those who professed that they had the power of divining, is well known; see Isaiah 19:3; Isaiah 29:4. It was expressly forbidden to the Jews to have recourse to those who made such professions; Leviticus 20:6; Deuteronomy 18:10-11. Yet, notwithstanding this express command, it is evident that it was no uncommon thing for the Jews to make application for such instructions; see the case of Saul, who made application to the woman of Endor, who professed to have a familiar spirit, in 1 Samuel 28:7-19; Deuteronomy 18:11. The word is most commonly applied to women; as it was almost entirely confined to women to profess this power; Leviticus 19:31; Leviticus 20:6; Jeremiah 48:31; Isaiah 16:7; to coo, as a dove, Isaiah 37:14; Isaiah 59:11; and then to roar like a lion; not the loud roar, but the grumbling, the suppressed roar (Bochart); Isaiah 31:4. The idea here is, probably, that of gently sighing, or mourning - uttering feeble, plaintive lamentations or sighs, as departed shades were supposed to do; and this was; probably, imitated by necromancers. By thus feigning that they conversed with the dead, they imposed on the ignorant populace, and led them to suppose that they had supernatural powers.*

Should not a people seek … - *Is it not proper that a people should inquire of the God that is worshipped, in order to be directed in perplexing and embarrassing events? Some have understood this to be a question of the idolaters, asking whether it was not right and proper for a people to seek counsel of those whom they worshipped as God. I understand it, however, as a question asked by the prophet, and as the language of strong and severe rebulge. ‹You are seeking to idols, to the necromancers, and to the dead, But Yahweh is your God. And should not a people so signally favored, a people under his special care, apply to him, and seek his direction?‘*

For the living - *On account of the affairs of the living. To ascertain what will be their lot, what is their duty, or what will occur to them.*

To the dead - *The necromancers pretended to have contact with the spirits of the dead. The prophet strongly exposes the absurdity of this. What could the dead know of this? How could they declare the future events respecting the living? Where was this authorized? People should seek God - the living God - and not pretend to hold consultation with the dead.*

Verse 20

To the law … - *To the revelation which God has given. This is a solemn call of the prophet to try everything by the revealed will of God; see Isaiah 8:16.*

If they speak not - *If the necromancers - those that pretended to have contact with the dead.*

According to this word - *According to what God has revealed. By this standard all their pretended revelations were to be tried. By this standard all doctrines are still to be tried.*

It is because - *There has been a great variety of criticism upon this verse, but our translation expresses, probably, the true idea. The word rendered here ‹because,‘* אשר *'ăsher commonly denotes ‹which;‘ but it seems here to be used in the sense of the Syriac? "Dolath," or the Greek* ὅτι *hoti No light - Margin, ‹Morning.‘ Hebrew* שׁחר *shāchar The word usually means the morning light; the mingled light and darkness of the aurora; daybreak. It is an emblem of advancing knowledge, and perhaps, also, of prosperity or happiness after calamity, as the break of day succeeds the dark night. The meaning here may be, ‹If their teachings do not accord with the law and the testimony, it is proof that they are totally ignorant, without even the twilight of true knowledge; that it is total darkness with them.‘ Or it may mean, ‹If they do not speak according to this word, then no dawn will arise, that is, no prosperity will smile upon this people.‘ - Gesenius. Lowth understands it of obscurity, darkness:*

‹If they speak not according to this word,

In which there is no obscurity.‘

But there is no evidence that the word is ever used in this sense. Others suppose that the Arabic sense of the word is to be retained here, deception, or magic. ‹If they speak not according to this oracle, in which there is no deception.‘ But the word is not used in this sense in the Hebrew. The meaning is, probably, this: ‹The law of God is the standard by which all professed communications from the invisible world are to be tested. If the necromancers deliver a doctrine which is not sustained by that, and not in

accordance with the prophetic communications, it shows that they are in utter ignorance. There is not even the glimmering of the morning twilight; all is total night, and error, and obscurity with them, and they are not to be followed.‘

Verse 21

And they shall pass - *The people who have been consulting necromancers. This represents the condition of these who have sought for counsel and direction, and who have not found it. They shall be conscious of disappointment, and shall wander perplexed and alarmed through the land.*

Through it - *Through the land. They shall wander in it from one place to another, seeking direction and relief.*

Hardly bestead - *Oppressed, borne down, agitated. The meaning is, that the people would wander about, oppressed by the calamities that were coming upon the nation, and unalleviated by all that soothsayers and necromancers could do.*

And hungry - *Famished; as one effect of the great calamities that would afflict the nation.*

They shall fret themselves - *They shall be irritated at their own folly and weakness, and shall aggravate their sufferings by self-reproaches for having trusted to false gods.*

Their king and their God - *The Hebrew interpreters understand this of the false gods which they bad consulted, and in which they had trusted. But their looking upward, and the connection, seem to imply that they would rather curse the true God - the ‹king and the God‘ of the Jewish people. They would be subjected to the proofs of his displeasure, and would vent their malice by reproaches and curses.*

And look upward - *For relief. This denotes the condition of those in deep distress, instinctively casting their eyes to heaven for aid. Yet it is implied that they would do it with no right feeling, and that they would see there only the tokens of their Creator‘s displeasure.*

Verse 22

And they shall look unto the earth - *They would look upward and find no relief, and then in despair cast their eyes to the earth to obtain help there. Yet equally in vain. The whole image is one of intense anguish brought on the nation for leaving the counselor the true God.*

And behold … - *see the note at Isaiah 5:30.*

Trouble - *Anguish, oppression, צרה tsârâh from צור tsûr to oppress, to straiten, to afflict. This is a remarkable instance of the prophet Isaiah's manner - of a rapid, impetuous, and bold style of utterance. He accumulates images; piles words on each other; and deepens the anxiety by each additional word, until we almost feel that we are enveloped by the gloom, and see objects of terror and alarm on every side.*

Dimness of anguish - *These words should be kept separate in the translation - צוקה מעוף me'ûp tsûqâh "darkness, oppression" - accumulated epithets to heighten the gloom and terror of the scene.*

And they shall be driven to darkness - *Hebrew, מנדה ואפלה va'ăpēlâh menudāch a darkness that is driven, or that is urged upon itself; that becomes condensed, accumulated, until it becomes terrible and frightful. The idea is that of a driving tempest, or an involving obscurity (מנדה menudāch from נדה nâdâh to push, thrust, impel, urge on, as a driving storm). The prophet has thus accumulated every possible idea of gloom and obscurity, and probably there is not anywhere a more graphic description of gathering darkness and trouble, and of the consternation of those involved in it, than this. So fearful and terrific are the judgments of God when he comes forth to punish people!*

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Introduction

This chapter Isaiah 9:1-4 by showing that the calamity would not be so great as in former times. It would be mitigated. There would be light - particularly in the dark regions of Zebulun and Naphtali - the provinces lying most exposed to the Syrian invasion. This light or deliverance was connected with the birth of the promised child Isaiah 9:6-7; and the mention of this leads the prophet into a magnificent description of his names, character, and reign. The prophet then returns to the threatened destruction of Israel and denounces the divine judgment against it. By the Syrians and the Philistines it would be invaded and destroyed, Isaiah 9:8-12. The effects of this, in cutting off their sources of strength, and producing general dismay and ruin, are described in the remainder of the chapter, Isaiah 9:13-21. The chapter, therefore, would impart consolation to the inhabitants of Judah, and is designed to confirm the promise that it should be safe from the threatened invasion; compare Isaiah 8:1-4.

Verse 1

Nevertheless - Notwithstanding what is said in the previous chapter of the calamities that are coming upon Israel. Hengstenberg renders this whole verse: ‹For darkness shall not be upon the land upon which there is distress; as the former time has dishonored the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; so shall the time come to honor it, the region on the border of the sea, by the side of the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.‘

The dimness - The Hebrew word hero denotes obscurity, or darkness; and is used here, as the word darkness often is in the Scriptures, to denote calamity or affliction. The dimness, or calamity, here referred to, is that which is threatened, Isaiah 8:21-22.

Shall not be such - It shall not be unbroken darkness, and unalleviated calamity; but it shall be interrupted by the rising of the great light that shall shine on the dark land of Zebulun and Naphtali.

In her vexation - The word ‹her‘ refers to the whole land of Palestine, to the afflictions that came upon the whole region. The word vexation, מוצק *mûtsâq* means oppression, calamity, or being “straitened, or pressed.”

When at the first - In the former time; on a former occasion.

He lightly afflicted - The word used here, קלל *qâlal* means properly, to be, or make light, or small; and in Hiphil, the form which occurs here, it

often means to "esteem lightly, to despise, to hold in contempt;" 2 Samuel 19:43; Ezekiel 22:7. It probably has that sense here, as the design of the prophet is evidently to speak, not of a light affliction in the former time, but of a grievous, heavy calamity - a calamity which would be well denoted by the expression, ‹he made them vile; he exposed them to contempt and derision.' The time to which reference is made here, was probably the invasion of the land by Tiglath-pileser; 2 Kings 15:29; 1 Chronicles 5:26. In that invasion, the parts of Zebulun and Naphtali were particularly afflicted. ‹Tiglath-pileser took Ijon, and Gilead, and Galilee, and all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria;' 2 Kings 15:29. This region had also been invaded by Benhadad two hundred years before the time of Isaiah; 1 Kings 15:20, and there might have been a reference to these various invasions to which this northern part of the land of Palestine had been subjected.

The land of Zebulun - The region occupied by the tribe of Zebulun. This tribe was located between the sea of Tiberias, or the lake Gennesareth, and the Mediterranean. It extended entirely across from the one to the other, and as it was thus favored with a somewhat extended seacoast, the people were more given to commerce than the other tribes, and hence, mingled more with surrounding nations.

And the land of Naphtali - The region which was occupied by this tribe was directly north of Zebulun, and of the sea of Galilee, having that sea and the tribe of Zebulun on the south and southeast, Asher on the west, and a part of the tribe of Manasseh, on the east.

And afterward - That is, in subsequent times; meaning times that were to come after the prophecy here delivered. The previous part of the verse refers to the calamities that had come upon that region in former times. The expression here refers to what was seen by the prophet as yet to occur.

Did more grievously afflict - הכביד *hîkebbîyd* This verb has very various significations. It properly means "to be heavy, to be grievous, to lie or fall heavy on anyone, to be dull, obstinate; also, to be honored, respected;" that is, of weight, or influence in society. It means, in Hiphil, the form which is used here, "to make heavy, or grievous;" 1 Kings 12:10; Isaiah 47:6; "to oppress," Nehemiah 5:15; and it also means to "cause to be honored, or distinguished, to favor. - Gesenius." The connection requires that it should have this sense here, and the passage means, that the land which he had made vile in former times, or had suffered to be despised, he

had purposed to honor, or to render illustrious by the great light that should rise on it. So Lowth, Rosenmuller, and Gesenius, translate it; see a similar use of the word in Jeremiah 30:19; 2 Chronicles 25:19; 1 Samuel 2:30.

By the way of the sea - The sea of Galilee, or Gennesareth. All this region was in the vicinity of that sea. The word "way" here, דרך *derek* means toward, or in the vicinity of. The extensive dark region lying in the vicinity of that sea, Both those tribes bordered on the sea of Tiberias, or had that as a part of their boundary.

Beyond Jordan - This expression - הירדן עבר *ʿēber hayareddēn* - means in the vicinity of Jordan; the land by the side of the Jordan, or perhaps that large region through which the upper part of the Jordan passed. It does not mean strictly on the east of Jordan, but rather the northern portion of the land. It is such language as a man would use who was describing the upper and imperfectly known regions of the country - the dark, uncivilized region through which the upper part of the Jordan flowed, and the word עבר *ʿēber* rendered here "beyond," means "side" - by the side of the Jordan.

Galilee of the nations - This was sometimes called upper Galilee. It was called ‹Galilee of the nations,‘ or of the Gentiles, because it was surrounded by them, and because the pagan were extensively intermingled with the Jews. In this region, Solomon had given to Hiram, king of Tyre, twenty cities; 1 Kings 9:2. Adjacent to this region were the countries of Phenicia, Tyre, and Sidon; and the people would naturally mingle much with them in commerce. The country abounded with hills and caverns, and, consequently, it was never possible completely to dislodge from the fastnesses the former inhabitants of the land. Strabo enumerates among the inhabitants of Galilee, Arabians and Phenicians. The inhabitants of this country are represented as having been bold and courageous, but as seditious, and prone to insolence and rebellion. If it be asked here, in what way this land had been made contemptible, or why it was regarded as an object of contempt? we may reply,

(1) The district in which these two tribes dwelt constituted the border-land toward the pagan nations.

(2) The Galileans not only dwelt in the vicinity of the pagan, but a large number of them had actually remained in the country, and it had been found impossible to expel them from it; Judges 1:30-35.

(3) The Phenicians, with whom they held commercial contact, and with whom they dwelt intermingled, were among the most corrupt of the pagan nations. To this may be added,

(4) They were far from Jerusalem, and, consequently, the influence of religion may be supposed to have been less felt among them than among the other Jews. The true religion was, in a great measure, lost upon them, and ignorance and superstition took its place. Hence, in the New Testament, they are spoken of as almost proverbially rude and ignorant.

Verse 2

The people that walked in darkness - The inhabitants of the region of Galilee. They were represented as walking in darkness, because they were far from the capital, and from the temple; they had few religious privileges; they were intermingled with the pagan, and were comparatively rude and uncultivated in their manners and in their language. Allusion to this is several times made in the New Testament; John 1:46: ‹Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?‘ John 7:52: ‹Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet;‘ Matthew 26:69; Mark 14:70. The word walked here is synonymous with lived, and denotes that thick darkness brooded over the country, so that they lived, or walked amidst it.

Have seen a great light - Light is not only an emblem of knowledge in the Scriptures, but of joy, rejoicing, and deliverance. It stands opposed to moral darkness, and to times of judgment and calamity. What is the particular reference here, is not agreed by expositors. The immediate connection seems to require us to understand it of deliverance from the calamities that were impending over the nation then. They would be afflicted, but they would be delivered. The tribes of Israel would be carried captive away; and Judah would also be removed. This calamity would particularly affect the ten tribes of Israel - the northern part of the land, the regions of Galilee - “for those tribes would be carried away not to return.” Yet this region also would be favored with a especially striking manifestation of light. I see no reason to doubt that the language of the prophet here is adapted to extend into that future period when the Messiah should come to that dark region, and become both its light and its deliverer. Isaiah may have referred to the immediate deliverance of the nation from impending calamities, but there is a fullness and richness of the language

that seems to be applicable only to the Messiah. So it is evidently understood in Matthew 4:13-16.

They that dwell - The same people are referred to here as in the former member of the verse.

In the land of the shadow of death - This is a most beautiful expression, and is special to the Hebrew poets. The word צלמות *tsalmâveth* is exceedingly poetical. The idea is that of death, as a dark substance or being, casting a long and chilly shade over the land - standing between the land and the light - and thus becoming the image of ignorance, misery, and calamity. It is often used, in the Scriptures, to describe those regions that were lying as it were in the penumbra of this gloomy object, and exposed to all the chills and sorrows of this melancholy darkness. Death, by the Hebrews, was especially represented as extending his long and baleful shadow ever the regions of departed spirits; Job 38:17:

Have the gates of death been opened to thee?
Hast thou seen the gates of the shadow of death?
Before I go - I shall not return -
To the land of darkness

And of the shadow of death.
Job 10:21

It is thus an image of chills, and gloom, and night - of anything that resembles the still and mournful regions of the dead. The Chaldee renders these two verses thus: ‹In a former time Zebulun and Naphtali emigrated; and those who remained after them a strong king shall carry into captivity, because they did not remember the power which was shown in the Red Sea, and the miracles which were done in Jordan, and the wars of the people of the cities. The people of the house of Israel who walked in Egypt as in the midst of shades, came out that they might see a great light.‘

Verse 3

Thou hast multiplied the nation - Thou hast rendered the nation strong, powerful, mighty. Several interpreters, as Calvin, Vitringa, and Le Clerc, suppose that the prophet here, and in the two following verses, speaks in the first instance of the prosperity near at hand, and of the rapid increase of the Israelites after the return from the Babylonian exile, in which the inhabitants of Galilee must have participated, as may be inferred from the accounts of Josephus respecting the great population of that

province in his time; see Jewish Wars, i. 20,23. Vitringa also directs our attention to the fact, that the Jewish people, after the exile, not only filled Judea, but spread themselves into Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy. But there seems to be no necessity for referring it to such an increase of the inhabitants. It may refer to the great increase of the Messiah‘s kingdom, or of the kingdom which he would set up, and whose commencement would be in Galilee; see Hengstenberg, Christol., vol. i. p. 354.

And not increased the joy - The Masoretes here read in the margin לו *lô* “to it,” instead of לא *lo′* “not.” Eleven manuscripts, two of them ancient, have this reading. This reading is followed by the Chaldee Paraphrase, the Syriac, and the Arabic. The Septuagint seems also to have so understood it. So also it is in the margin, and so the connection demands; and it is unquestionably the correct reading. It would then read, ‹thou hast increased for it (the nation) the joy.‘ Hengstenberg, however, suggests that the phrase may mean, ‹whose joy thou didst not before enlarge,‘ that is, upon whom thou hast before inflicted heavy sufferings. But this is harsh, and I see no reason to doubt that an error may have crept into the text.

They joy before thee according to the joy of harvest - This is a beautiful figure; and is found frequently in ancient writings. The harvest was a time of exultation and joy, and was commonly gathered amid songs and rejoicings, and concluded with a festival. The phrase ‹before thee‘ refers to the fact that the first-fruits of the harvest among the Hebrews were presented with thanksgiving before God in the temple; Deuteronomy 12:7; Deuteronomy 14:22-26.

And as men rejoice … - This is also an expression of great joy and rejoicing. Such an occasion, at the close of a battle, when great spoil or plunder had been taken, would be one of great rejoicing; see Judges 5:30; 1 Samuel 30:16; 2 Chronicles 20:25-28.

Verse 4

For thou hast broken - This verse, and the following, show the way in which the occasion of the joy had been furnished. The expression ‹thou hast‘ does not necessarily refer to the past, but is a form of expression derived from the nature of the prophetic visions, where that is described as past which is seen to pass before the eyes of the prophet; see the Introduction, section 7.

The yoke - This word is often used to denote oppression, or tyranny; Leviticus 26:13; Deuteronomy 28:48 - where oppression is described as ‹an iron yoke;‘ compare 1 Kings 12:4; Isaiah 47:6; Isaiah 58:6.

The staff of his shoulder - The word rendered staff here may mean a bough, a branch, a staff, stick, or rod. Gesenius supposes that the expression here means the rod by which punishment is inflicted, and that the, phrase ‹rod of, or for the shoulder,‘ denotes oppression and servitude. Rosenmuller thinks, that it refers rather to the custom among the ancients of placing a piece of wood, not unlike a yoke, on the necks and shoulders of slaves, as a mark of servitude. Hengstenberg understands it, ‹the staff which strikes the neck or back.‘

The rod of his oppressor - This, doubtless, refers to the chastisement which was inflicted on those in bondage, and is a phrase denoting oppression and servitude. The word ‹his‘ here refers to Israel.

As in the day of Midian - This refers to the deliverance that was accomplished under Gideon against the Midianites; see Judges 7; 8. That deliverance was a remarkable interposition of God. It was accomplished not by human strength; but was a signal manifestation of the power of God in delivering the nation from the long oppression of the Midianites. So the prophet says here, that the deliverance will be as signal a proof of the presence and power of God as is was in that day. Herder (Hebrew Poetry, vol. ii. p. 296) says, ‹At that period, in the north part of the country, a great deliverance was wrought. Then, in the obscure forests of Naphtali and Zebulun, the light of freedom went forth over all the land. So now, also, in this northern press of nations, in the way along the sea of Galilee, where now the hostile Syrians are exercising their oppressions, the light of freedom is going forth, and there shall be joy and jubilee, like that of the song of Deborah.‘

Verse 5

For every battle of the warrior - The expression used here has caused great difficulty, from the fact that it occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. The word סאון *se'ôn* rendered here battle, is supposed to mean rather greaves, or the armor of the warrior which covered the feet and the legs. It would be literally translated, ‹Every greave of those armed with greaves.‘ - Gesenius. The Chaldee renders it, ‹Forevery gift of theirs is for evil.‘ The Syriac, ‹Forevery tumult (of battle) is heard with terror.‘ Hengstenberg renders it, ‹For all war-shoes put on at the noise of battle, all garments

dipped in blood, shall be burnt, shall be the food of fire.‘ The idea, according to him, is, that the great future redemption will be like the deliverance under Gideon; ‹because, far from being accomplished by force of arms, with it all contention and war shall cease.‘ Gesenius regards the figurative expression as a general designation of that peace which shall never end. All the armor used in war shall then be burned, as being of no further use.

Is with confused noise - The word used here - רעשׁ *raʿash* - denotes, properly, a shaking, as of a spear; a concussion, tumult, noise, as of a battle. Here it is supposed to refer to the noise which the armor of the soldiers made - particularly to the noise made by the greaves, or war-shoes, worn on the feet and legs. Those greaves were fitted up; it is said, by numerous large iron hooks, or clasps, and were fastened sometimes with large nails; compare Josephus, Jewish Wars, B. vi. ch. i. section 8.

And garments - This word here refers, doubtless, to the soldier‘s cloak or blanket.

Rolled in blood - This is a description of the usual effect of war. The image of war is that of a clangor made by the armor of soldiers, and by garments that have been dipped in human blood. It is a most revolting but just image.

But this shall be - In regard to this threatened invasion and danger, this shall be the result. The meaning is this. The prophet sees the image of war and of threatened invasion. He hears the clangor of their greaves - the sound of their march; and he sees the usual emblem of battle - bloody garments. But he says here, that this invasion shall not be successful. There was no occasion of alarm. The very armor of the warrior should be burned up. The enemy should be defeated - and their greaves, and their bloody garments, should be consumed.

With burning - For burning; that is it shall be consumed.

And fuel of fire - Hebrew, ‹Food of fire.‘ This is a strong, emphatic expression - ‹it shall be to be burned - the food of fire.‘ It denotes the certainty that they would be vanquished; that the invading foe would not be successful; and that his very armory and garments would be stripped off and burned. To understand this, it is necessary to remark, that in ancient times it was customary to strip the dead which were slain in a vanquished army, and to collect their armor, their chariots, etc., and consume them. The more

valued spoils of battle were reserved as the prey of the victors, or to be suspended in temples censecrated to the gods; see Psalm 46:9-10:

He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
He breaketh the bow;
And cutteth the spear in sunder;
He burneth the chariot in the fire.

Ezekiel has carried out this description more at length:

And the inhabitants of the cities of Israel shall go forth,
And shall set on fire and burn the weapons,
Both the shields and the bucklers,

The bows and the arrows,

And the clubs and the lances.
Ezekiel 39:9.

Zechariah has a similar figure, as descriptive of the time of the Messiah:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion;
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem;
Behold, thy king cometh unto thee.

And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim,

And the horse from Jerusalem,

And the battle bow shal be cut off, etc.
Zechariah 9:9-10.

This custom prevailed among several nations. Thus Virgil:

- *scutorumque incendi victor acervos*.
AEneid, viii. 562.

There can be no doubt, I think, that the prophet here has his eye on the victories of the Messiah, and that he means to say, that in those victories all armor would be for fuel of fire; that is, that they would be achieved without hostile arms. Applied to the Messiah, it means either that his victories would be complete, or that in his victories all necessity of such armor would cease. According to this, the passage teaches that peace should be introduced by him without a conflict, and thus harmonizes with the numerous parallel passages in which peace is represented as a characteristic

mark of the times of the Messiah, when contention, war, and destruction shall cease; see Isaiah 11:6-7.

Verse 6

For - This is given as a reason of the victories that were predicted in the previous verses. That it has reference to the Messiah has been almost universally conceded; and indeed it does not seem possible to doubt it. The eye of the prophet seems to have been fixed on this great and glorious event - as attracting all his attention. The scenes of coming times, like a panorama, or picture, passed before him. Most of the picture seems to have been that of battles, conflicts, sieges, dimness, and thick darkness. But in one portion of the passing scene there was light. It was the light that he saw rising in the distant and darkened Galilee. He saw the joy of the people; the armor of war laid aside; the image of peace succeeding; the light expanding and becoming more intense as the darkness retired, until he saw in this region the Prince of Peace - the Sun of Righteousness itself. The eye of the prophet gazed intently on that scene, and was fixed on that portion of the picture: he sees the Messiah in his office, and describes him as already come, and as born unto the nation.

Unto us - For our benefit. The prophet saw in vision the darkness and gloom of the nation, and saw also the son that would be born to remove that darkness, and to enlighten the world.

A child - (ילד *yeled*). This word usually denotes a lad, a boy, a youth. It is commonly applied to one in early life; but no particular stress is to be laid on the word. The vision of the prophet is, that the long-expected Messiah is born, and is seen growing up amidst the surrounding darkness of the north of Palestine, Isaiah 9:1.

Is born - Not that he was born when the prophet spake. But in prophetic vision, as the events of the future passed before his mind, he saw that promised son, and the eye was fixed intently on him; see the Introduction, section 7, and the note at Isaiah 1:1.

A son - בן *bên* This word does not differ materially from the word translated child. In the future scenes, as they passed before the mind of the prophet, he saw the child, the son that was to be born, and described him as he appeared to his view - as a child. Fixing the eye on him, he proceeds at once to designate his character by stating the appropriate names which he would bear.

Is given - The Messiah is often represented as having been given, or sent; or as the rich gift of God; the note at Acts 4:12; John 3:16; Ephesians 1:22; John 17:4. The Messiah was pre-eminently the gift of the God of love. Man had no claim on him, and God voluntarily gave his Son to be a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

And the government shall be upon his shoulder - The sense of this passage is, that he shall rule, or that the government shall be vested in him. Various interpretations have, however, been given of the phrase ‹upon his shoulder.‘ Some have supposed, that it means simply he shall sustain the government, as the shoulder is that by which we uphold any thing. Pliny and Cicero thus use the phrase; see Rosenmuller. Others, that it means that he should wear the royal purple from a child. - Grotius. Lowth supposes that it refers to the ensign of government - the scepter, the sword, the keys, or the like, that were borne upon the shoulder, or suspended from it; see the note at Isaiah 22:22. It is evident, from this latter place, that some ensign of office was usually borne upon the shoulder. The sense is, that he should be a king, and under this character the Messiah is often predicted.

And his name shall be called - That is, his attributes shall be such as to make all these applications appropriate descriptions of his power and work. To be called, and to be, in the Hebrew, often mean the same thing. The word ויקרא *vayîqerâ'* may possibly mean, Yahweh shall call him; or it may be regarded as taken impersonally. Such a use of a verb is not uncommon in Isaiah. ‹One calls him,‘ is, according to the usage in Isaiah, as ranch as to say, he will justly bear this name; or simply, he will be.

Wonderful - פלא *pele'* This word is derived from the verb פלא *pâlâ'* to separate, to distinguish, or to make great. It is applied usually to anything that is great or wonderful, as a miracle; Exodus 15:2; Lamentations 1:9; Daniel 12:6. It is applied here to denote the unusual and remarkable assemblage of qualities that distinguished the Messiah. Those are specified more particularly in the other part of the verse; such an assemblage of quailties as to make proper the names Mighty God, etc. ‹The proper idea of the word,‘ says Hengstenberg, ‹is miraculous. It imports that the personage here referred to, in his being and in his works, will be exalted above the ordinary course of nature, and that his whole manifestation will be a miracle.‘ Yet it seems to me, that the proper idea of the word is not that of miraculous. It is rather that which is separated from the ordinary course of

events, and which is suited to excite amazement, wonder, and admiration, whether it be miraculous or not.

This will be apparent if the following places are examined, where the word occurs in various forms. It is rendered marvelous, Psalm 118:23; Psalm 139:14; Psalm 98:1; Job 5:9; wonderful, 2 Samuel 1:26; Psalm 139:14; Proverbs 30:18; Job 42:3; Psalm 72:18; Psalm 86:10; hidden, Deuteronomy 30:2; things too high, Psalm 131:1; miracles, Judges 6:13; Exodus 15:2; Psalm 77:14; Psalm 88:10; Psalm 89:5; the word is translated wonders, in the sense of miracles, in several places; and hard, Deuteronomy 17:8; Jeremiah 32:17. From these passages, it is clear that it may denote that which is miraculous, but that this idea is not necessarily connected with it. Anything which is suited to excite wonder and amazement, from any cause, will correspond with the sense of the Hebrew word. It is a word which expresses with surprising accuracy everything in relation to the Redeemer. For the Messiah was wonderful in all things. It was wonderful love by which God gave him, and by which he came; the manner of his birth was wonderful; his humility, his self-denial, his sorrows were wonderful; his mighty works were wonderful; his dying agonies were wonderful; and his resurrection, his ascension, were all suited to excite admiration and wonder.

Counsellor - This word has been sometimes joined with ‹wonderful,‘ as if designed to qualify it thus - “wonderful counselor;” but it expresses a distinct attribute, or quality. The name “counselor” here, יועץ *yû‘ēts* denotes one of honorable rank; one who is suited to stand near princes and kings as their adviser. It is expressive of great wisdom, and of qualifications to guide and direct the human race. The Septuagint translates this phrase, ‹The angel of the mighty counsel.‘ The Chaldee, ‹The God of wonderful counsel.‘

The mighty God - Syriac, ‹The mighty God of ages.‘ This is one, and but one out of many, of the instances in which the name God is applied to the Messiah; compare John 1:1; Romans 9:5; 1 John 5:20; John 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:8. The name ‹mighty God,‘ is unquestionably attributed to the true God in Isaiah 10:21. Much controversy has arisen in relation to this expression; and attempts have been made to show that the word translated “God,” אל *'ĕl* may refer to a hero, a king, a conqueror. Thus Gesenius renders, it ‹Mighty hero;‘ and supposes that the name ‹God‘ is used here in accordance with the custom of the Orientals, who ascribe divine attributes to kings. In like manner Pluschke (see Hengstenberg) says, ‹In my opinion this name is altogether symbolical. The Messiah shall be

called strength of God, or strong God, divine hero, in order by this name to remind the people of the strength of God.‘ But after all such controversy, it still remains certain that the natural and obvious meaning of the expression is to denote a divine nature. So it was evidently understood by the ancient versions; and the fact that the name God is so often applied to Christ in the New Testament proves that it is to be understood in its natural and obvious signification.

The everlasting Father - The Chaldee renders this expression, ‹The man abiding forever.‘ The Vulgate, ‹The Father of the future age.‘ Lowth, ‹The Father of the everlasting age.‘ Literally, it is the Father of eternity, עד אבי *'ĕby ʿad* The word rendered “everlasting,” עד *ʿad* properly denotes “eternity,” and is used to express “forever;” see Psalm 9:6, Psalm 9:19; Psalm 19:10. It is often used in connection with עולם *ʿôlâm* thus, עולם ועד *vāʿed ʿôlâm* “forever and ever;” Psalm 10:16; Psalm 21:5; Psalm 45:7. The Hebrews used the term father in a great variety of senses - as a literal father, a grandfather, an ancestor, a ruler, an instructor. The phrase may either mean the same as the Eternal Father, and the sense will be, that the Messiah will not, as must be the ease with an earthly king, however excellent, leave his people destitute after a short reign, but will rule over them and bless them forever (Hengstenberg); or it may be used in accordance with a custom usual in Hebrew and in Arabic, where he who possesses a thing is called the father of it.

Thus, the father of strength means strong; the father of knowledge, intelligent; the father of glory, glorious; the father of goodness, good; the father of peace, peaceful. According to this, the meaning of the phrase, the Father of eternity, is properly eternal. The application of the word here is derived from this usage. The term Father is not applied to the Messiah here with any reference to the distinction in the divine nature, for that word is uniformly, in the Scriptures, applied to the first, not to the second person of the Trinity. But it is used in reference to durations, as a Hebraism involving high poetic beauty. lie is not merely represented as everlasting, but he is introduced, by a strong figure, as even the Father of eternity. as if even everlasting duration owed itself to his paternity. There could not be a more emphatic declaration of strict and proper eternity. It may be added, that this attribute is often applied to the Messiah in the New Testament; John 8:58; Colossians 1:17; Revelation 1:11, Revelation 1:17-18; Hebrews 1:10-11; John 1:1-2.

The Prince of Peace - This is a Hebrew mode of expression denoting that he would be a peaceful prince. The tendency of his administration would be to restore and perpetuate peace. This expression is used to distinguish him from the mass of kings and princes who have delighted in conquest and blood. In contradistinction from all these, the Messiah would seek to promote universal concord, and the tendency of his reign would be to put an end to wars, and to restore harmony and order to the nations; see the tendency of his reign still further described in Isaiah 11:6-9; the note at Isaiah 2:4; see also Micah 5:4; Hosea 2:18. It is not necessary to insist on the coincidence of this description with the uniform character and instructions of the Lord Jesus. In this respect, he disappointed all the hopes of the Jewish nation, who, in spite of the plain prophecies respecting his peaceful character. expected a magnificent prince, and a conqueror.

The expressions used here imply that he would be more than human. It is impossible to believe that these appellations would be given under the Spirit of inspiration to a mere man. They express a higher nature; and they coincide with the account in the New pressions of a pompous and high-sounding character were commonly assumed by Oriental princes. The following is a single instance of their arrogance, ostentation, and pride. ‹Chosroes, king of kings, lord of lords, ruler of the nations; prince of peace, saviour of men; among the gods, a man good and eternal, but among people, a god most illustrious, glorious; a conqueror rising with the sun and giving vision at night.‘ - Theoph. Simocatta Chr., iv. 8, quoted by Gesenius. But it cannot be pretended, that the Spirit of inspiration would use titles in a manner so unmeaning and so pompous as this. Besides, it was one great object of the prophets to vindicate the name and character of the true God, and to show that all such appellations belonged to him alone.

However, such appellations might be used by surrounding nations, and given to kings and princes by the pagan, yet in the Scriptures they are not given to earthy monarchs. That this passage refers to the Messiah has been generally conceded, except by the Jews, and by a few later critics. Jarchi and Kimchi maintain that it refers to Hezekiah. They have been driven to this by the use which Christians have made of the passage against the Jews. But the absurdity of this interpretation has been shown in the notes at Isaiah 7:14. The ancient Jews incontestably referred it to the Messiah. Thus the Targum of Jonathan renders it, ‹His name shall be called God of wonderful

counsel, man abiding forever, the messiah, משיח *mâshîyach* whose peace shall be multiplied upon us in his days.‘ Thus rabbi Jose, of Galilee, says, ‹The name of the Messiah is שלום *shâlôm* as is said in Isaiah 9:6, “Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace.” ‹Ben Sira (fol. 40, of the Amsterdam Edition, 1679) numbers among the eight names of the Messiah those also taken from this passage, Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace. The later Jews, however, have rejected this interpretation, because the Messiah is here described as God.

Verse 7

Of the increase … - The word rendered “government” here, משרה *mis'râh* means properly his government as a prince - his principality, and is a continuation of the idea in the previous verse, ‹the Prince of Peace.‘ It means that his reign as a prince of peace - in extending and promoting peace, shall be unlimited.

And peace - This does not signify in the original, as our translation would seem to do, that there should be no end to the increase of his peace, but that there should be no limit to peace, that is, that his reign should be one of unlimited peace. The whole is a description of a prosperous, wide-extended, ever-growing and unlimited empire of peace.

No end - The word used here - קץ *qêts* - may refer either to space or time. The connection, however, seems to confine it to time, and to mean simply that over his wide-extended and peaceful principality he should reign forever.

Upon the throne of David - See the note at Acts 2:30. This was in accordance with the promise made to David; 1 Kings 8:25; 2 Samuel 7:12-13; Psalm 132:11. This promise was understood as referring to the Messiah. The primary idea is, that he should be descended in the line of David, and accordingly the New Testament writers are often at pains to show that the Lord Jesus was of that family; Luke 2:4. When it is said that he would sit upon the throne of David, it is not to be taken literally. The uniqueness of the reign of David was, that he reigned over the people of God. He was chosen for this purpose from humble life; was declared in his administration to be a man after God‘s own heart; and his long and prosperous reign was a reign over the people of God. To sit upon the throne of David, therefore, means to reign over the people of God; and in this sense the Messiah sat on his throne. There is also a similarity in the two administrations, in the fact

that the Messiah was taken from humble life. and that his reign will be far-extended and prosperous. But the main idea of resemblance is, that the reign of each extended over the people of God.

And upon his kingdom - That is, over the kingdom of the people of God. It does not mean particularly the Jews, but all those over whom the divine administration should be set up.

To order it - To raise up, or confirm it. The word, also, is sometimes used to denote to found a kingdom. Here it means to confirm it, to cause it to stand.

And to establish it - To place it on a firm foundation; to make it firm.

With judgment … - That is, under an administration that shall be just and right. Most kingdoms have been those of blood, and have been established by iniquity, and by the unjust overthrow of others. But the administration of the Messiah shall be established in righteousness, and shall be destined to extend and perpetuate justice and righteousness forever. "From henceforth." That is, from the time which was the period of the prophet's vision, when he saw in vision the Messiah rising in the dark parts of Galilee; Notes, Isaiah 9:1-2.

The zeal - The word used here denotes "ardor," intense desire in accomplishing an object; and means that the establishment of this kingdom was an object of intense and ardent desire on the part of Yahweh. It is also implied that nothing else than the zeal of Yahweh could do it. We may remark here:

(1) That if Yahweh feels so intense a desire for this, then the subjects of the Messiah's reign should also feel this.

(2) If Yahweh feels this zeal, and if he will certainly accomplish this, then Christians should be encouraged in their efforts to spread the gospel. His purpose to do this is their only encouragement - and a sufficient encouragement - to excite their zeal in this great and glorious work.

Verse 8

The Lord sent - Not Yahweh here, but "Adonai." It is apparent that this verse is the commencement of a new prophecy, that is not connected with that which precedes it. The strain of the preceding prophecy had respect to Judah; this is confined solely to Israel, or Ephraim. Here the division of the chapter should have been made, and should not have been again interrupted until Isaiah 10:4, where the prophecy closes. The prophecy is divided into

four parts, and each part is designed to threaten a distinct judgment on some particular, prominent vice.

I. "Crime" - their pride and ostentation, Isaiah 9:8-9. "Punishment" - the land would be invaded by the Syrians and the Philistines, Isaiah 9:11-12.

II. "Crime" - they had apostatized from God, and the leaders had caused them to err, Isaiah 9:13, Isaiah 9:16. "Punishment" - Yahweh would cut off the chief men of the nation, Isaiah 9:14-15, Isaiah 9:17.

III. "Crime" - prevalent wickedness in the nation, Isaiah 9:18. "Punishment" - the anger of Yahweh, consternation, anarchy, discord, and want, Isaiah 9:19-21.

IV. "Crime" - prevalent injustice; Isaiah 10:1-2. "Punishment" - foreign invasion, and captivity; Isaiah 10:3-4.

The poem is remarkably regular in its structure (Lowth), and happy in its illustrations. At what time it was composed is not certain, but it has strong internal evidence that it immediately followed the preceding respecting Judah.

A word - A message, or prediction; Note, Isaiah 2:1.

Into Jacob - Jacob was the ancestor of the nation. But the name came to be appropriated to the ten tribes, as constituting the majority of the people. It was at first used to denote all the Jews Numbers 23:7, Numbers 23:10, Numbers 23:23; Numbers 24:17, Numbers 24:19; Deuteronomy 32:9; 1 Chronicles 16:13; Psalm 14:7; Psalm 20:1; but it came, after the revolt of the ten tribes under Jeroboam, to be used often to denote them alone; Amos 6:8; Micah 1:5; Micah 3:1; Micah 5:8. The word or message which was sent, refers undoubtedly to that which immediately follows.

And it hath lighted upon - Hebrew ‹It fell.‘ This is but a varied expression for, he sent it to Israel.

Israel - The same as Jacob the ten tribes - the kingdom of Ephraim.

Verse 9

And all the people shall know - Shall know the message; or shall know the judgment which God denounces against their crimes. The Chaldee renders this, ‹All the people have exalted themselves, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria, in their magnitude, and in the pride of thee heart.‘

Ephraim - This is another name for Israel, as Ephraim was the principal tribe; Note, Isaiah 7:2.

And the inhabitants of Samaria - The capital of Ephraim or Israel; Note, Isaiah 7:9.

That say in the pride - This is a description of general and prevalent pride; and it is traced to the source of all pride - the heart. It was a desire of splendor, power, and magnificence, originating in the heart, and manifesting itself by the language of self-confidence and defiance at the judgments of God.

Stoutness - Hebrew ‹Greatness.‘ It means a self-confident purpose; and indicates the state of feeling in a man when he trusts to his own resources, and not to God.

Verse 10

The bricks are fallen down - The language of this verse is figurative; but the sentiment is plain. It contains the confession of the inhabitants of Samaria, that their affairs were in a ruinous and dilapidated state; but also their self-confident assurance that they would be able to repair the evils, and restore their nation to more than their former magnificence.

Bricks, in oriental countries, were made of clay and straw, and were rarely turned. Hence, exposed to suns and rains, they soon dissolved. Walls and houses constructed of such materials would not be very permanent, and to build with them is strongly contrasted with building in a permanent and elegant manner with hewn stone.

The meaning is, that their former state was one of less splendor than they designed that their subsequent state should be. Desolation had come in upon their country, and this they could not deny. But they confidently boasted that they would more than repair the evil.

We will build - Our ruined houses and walls.

With hewn stones - At once more permanent and elegant than the structures of bricks had been.

The sycamores - These trees grew abundantly on the low lands of Judea, and were very little esteemed; 1 Kings 10:27; 2 Chronicles 1:15; 2 Chronicles 9:27.

‹This curious tree seems to partake of the nature of two different species,‘ says Calmet, ‹the mulberry and the fig; the former in its leaf, and the latter in its fruit. Its Greek name, συκόμορος *sukomoros* is plainly descriptive of its character, being compounded of συκος *sukos* a fig tree, and μορος *moros* a mulberry tree. It is thus described by Norden: “They

have in Egypt divers sorts of figs; but if there is any difference between them, a particular kind differs still more. I mean that which the sycamore bears, that they name in Arabic *giomez* This sycamore is of the height of a beech, and bears its fruit in a manner quite different from other trees. It has them on the trunk itself, which shoots out little sprigs in form of a grapestalk, at the end of which grows the fruit close to one another, most like bunches of grapes. The tree is always green, and bears fruit several times in the year, without observing any certain seasons, for I have seen some sycamores which had fruit two months after others. This sort of tree is pretty common in Egypt."' They were not highly valued, though it is probable they were often employed in building.

They are contrasted with cedars here -
(1) Because the cedar was a much more rare and precious wood.
(2) Because it was a much more smooth and elegant article of building.

(3) Because it was more permanent. The grain and texture of the sycamore is remarkably coarse and spongy, and could, therefore, stand in no competition with the cedar for beauty and ornament.

We will change them - We will employ in their stead.

Cedars - The cedar was a remarkably fine; elegant, and permanent wood for building. It was principally obtained on mount Lebanon, and was employed in temples, palaces, and in the houses of the rich; see the note at Isaiah 2:18.

The sycamore is contrasted with the cedar in 1 Kings 10:27: ‹Cedars he made to be as sycamore trees.' The whole passage denotes self-confidence and pride; an unwillingness to submit to the judgments of God, and a self-assurance that they would more than repair all the evils that would be inflicted on them.

Verse 11

Therefore - This verse indicates the punishment that would come upon them for their pride.

The Lord shall set up - Hebrew, ‹Shall exalt.' That is, they shall overcome and subdue him.

The adversaries of Rezin - King of Syria, Isaiah 7:1. It should be observed here, that twenty-one manuscripts, instead of adversaries, read

princes of Rezin. The sense seems to require this; as in the following verse, it is said that the Syrians will be excited against them.

Against him - Against Ephraim.

And join his enemies together - Hebrew, ‹Mingle them together.‘ They shall be excited into wild and agitated commotion, and shall pour down together on the land and devour it. In what way this would be done is specified in Isaiah 9:12.

Verse 12

The Syrians - Isaiah 7:1. The Syrians had been the allies of the Israelites. But after the death of Rezin, it is probable that they joined the Assyrians, and united with them in the invasion of Samaria. - Aben Ezra; Grotius. “Before.” Hebrew ‹From the east.‘ Syria was situated to the east of Samaria, and the meaning is here, that they would pour in upon Samaria from that side.

And the Philistines - The Philistines occupied the country southwest of Samaria, lying along on the shores of the Mediterranean. It is not particularly mentioned in the Scriptures that they invaded Samaria after this prediction of Isaiah, but such a thing is by no means improbable. They were long unsubdued; were full of hostility to the Jewish people; and were many times engaged with them in wars and several times subdued them; 2 Chronicles 28:18. The name Palestine is derived from Philistine, although this people occupied but a small part of the country; see Reland‘s Palestine, c. vii.

Behind - That is, from the west - the region where they dwelt. The sacred writers speak as if looking toward the east, the rising sun, and they speak of the west as the region behind them; see the notes at Job 23:8-9.

And they shall devour - Hebrew, ‹They shall eat.‘ This figure is taken from a ravenous beast; and means that they should come up with raging desires, and fierce impetuosity, to destroy the nation.

With open mouth - Hebrew, ‹With the whole mouth.‘ The metaphor is derived from raging and furious animals. Chaldee, ‹In every place.‘

For all this - Notwithstanding all this.

His anger … - see the note at Isaiah 5:25.

Verse 13

For the people … - This is a reason why his anger would not cease, and it is, at the same time, the suggestion of a new crime for which the divine

judgment would rest upon them. It commences the second part of the oracle.

Turneth not - It is implied here that it was the design of the chastisement to turn them to God. In this case, as in many others, such a design had not been accomplished.

Unto him that smiteth them - To God, who had punished them.

Neither do they seek - They do not seek his protection and favor; they do not worship and honor him.

The Lord of hosts - Note, Isaiah 1:9.

Verse 14

Will cut off head and tail - This is a proverbial expression, which is explained in the following verse; see also Deuteronomy 28:13-14. The head is often used to denote those in honor and authority. The tail is an expression applicable to the lower ranks, and would commonly indicate more than simply the common people. It would imply contempt; a state of great abjectness and meanness.

Branch and rush - This is also a proverbial expression, meaning the highest and lowest; see the note at Isaiah 19:15. The word here translated branch, means properly the bough or top of the palm tree. The palm grew to a great height before it gave out any branches, and hence, the image is a beautiful one to denote those high in office and authority. The word rush means the coarse, long-jointed reed, that grows in marshes - an apt emblem of the base and worthless classes of society.

Verse 15

The ancient - The elder; the old man.

And honorable - Hebrew, ‹The man of elevated countenance.‘ The man of rank and office.

The prophet that teacheth lies - The false prophet. Of those there were many; and probably at this time many in Samaria.

Verse 16

For the leaders of this people … - Note, Isaiah 3:12. Hebrew ‹They that call this people blessed‘ - referring more particularly to the false prophets.

They that are led of them - Hebrew, ‹They that are called blessed by them.‘

Are destroyed - Hebrew, ‹Are swallowed up;‘ see the note at Isaiah 3:12. They are ruined; or swallowed up as in a vast whirlpool or vortex.

Verse 17

Shall have no joy - He shall not delight in them so as to preserve them. The parallel part of the verse shows that the phrase is used in the sense of having mercy.

In their young men - The hope and strength of the nation. The word used here commonly denotes those who are chosen, particularly for purposes of war. The sense is, that the hope and strength of the nation, that on which the chief reliance would be placed, would be cut off.

Neither shall have mercy … - Judgment would sweep through the nation, even over those who were the usual objects of the divine protection - widows and orphans; compare Psalm 10:14, Psalm 10:18; Psalm 48:5; Deuteronomy 10:18; Jeremiah 49:11; Hosea 14:3. These passages show that the fatherless and the widow are the special objects of the divine favor; and when, therefore, it is said that the Lord would not have mercy been on these, it shows the extent and severity of the divine judgments that were coming on the nation.

For every one is a hypocrite - A deceiver; a dissembler. The word used here, however. חנף *chânêph* means rather a profane or profligate man, a man who is defiled or polluted, than a dissembler. It is applied often to idolaters and licentious persons, but not to hypocrites; see Job 8:13; Job 13:16; Job 15:34; Job 17:8; Daniel 11:32.

Every mouth speaketh folly - The word rendered folly, may denote foolishness, but it is also used to denote wickedness or crime; 1 Samuel 25:23. Probably this is the meaning here. That the character here given of the Ephraimites is correct, is abundantly shown also by other prophets; see particularly Hosea.

For all this - Notwithstanding all the judgments that should come thus upon the young men, and widows, and orphans, still his anger was not turned away. This is the close of the second strophe or part of this prophecy.

Verse 18

For wickedness - This commences the third part of the prophecy, which continues to the end of the chapter. It is a description of prevailing impiety. The effects and prevalence of it are described by the image of a raging, burning flame, that spreads everywhere: first among the humble shrubbery - the briers and thorns, then in the vast forests, until it spreads over the land, and sends a mighty column of flame and smoke up to heaven.

Burneth as the fire - Spreads, rages. extends as fire does in thorns and in forests. In what respects it burns like the fire, the prophet immediately specifies. It spreads rapidly everywhere, and involves all in the effects. Wickedness is not unfrequently in the Scriptures compared to a fire that is shut up long, and then bursts forth with raging violence. Thus Hosea 7:6:

Truly, in the inmost part of it, their heart is like an oven,
While they lie in wait;
All the night their baker sleepeth;
In the morning it burneth like a blazing star.

‹As an oven conceals the lighted fire all night, while the baker takes his rest, and in the morning vomits forth its blazing flame; so all manner of concupiscence is brooding mischief in their hearts, while the ruling faculties of reason and conscience are lulled asleep, and their wicked designs wait only for a fair occasion to break forth.‘ - Horsely on Hosea; see also Isaiah 50:2; Isaiah 65:5.

It shall devour - Hebrew, ‹It shall eat.‘ The idea of devouring or eating, is one which is often given to fire in the Scriptures.

The briers and thorns - By the briers and thorns are meant, doubtless, the lower part of the population; the most degraded ranks of society. The idea here seems to be, first, that of impiety spreading like fire over all classes of people; but there is also joined with it, in the mind of the prophet, the idea of punishment. Wickedness would rage like spreading fire; but like fire, also, it would sweep over the nation accomplishing desolation and calamity, and consuming everything in the fire oft God‘s vengeance. The wicked are often compared to thorns and briers - fit objects to be burned up; Isaiah 33:12:

And the people shall be as the burnings of lime;
As thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

And shall kindle - Shall burn, or extend, as sweeping fire extends to the mighty forest.

In the thickets of the forests - The dense, close forest or grove. The idea is, that it extends to all classes of people - high as well as low.

And they shall mount up - The Hebrew word used here - יתאבכו *yit'abekû* from אבך *'âbak* - occurs nowhere else. The image is that of a far-spreading, raging fire, sending columns of smoke to heaven. So, says the prophet, is the rolling, raging, consuming fire of the sins of the nation

spreading over all classes of people in the land, and involving all in widespread desolation.

Verse 19

Through the wrath - By the anger, or indignation. This spreading desolation is the proof of his anger.

Is the land darkened - The word used here - עתם *ʿâtham* - occurs nowhere else. According to Gesenius, it is the same as תמם *tâmam* to be or make complete; and hence means, "in this place, to be consumed, or laid waste." Kimchi and Aben Ezra render it, ‹The land is darkened.‘ Septuagint, Συγκέκαυται *Sungkekautai* Chaldee, צרוכת *chărôkat* - ‹Is scorched.‘ Jerome renders it, *Conturbata est terra* - ‹The land is disturbed.‘ The effect is doubtless such as ascending and spreading columns of fire and smoke would produce, and perhaps the general word desolate had better be used in translating the word.

And the people shall be as fuel of the fire - This is an image of widespread ruin. The idea is, that they shall destroy one another as pieces of wood, when on fire, help to consume each other. The way in which it shall be done is stated more fully in the next verse.

No man shall spare his brother - There shall be such a state of wickedness, that it shall lead to anarchy, and strife, and mutual destruction. The common ties of life shall be dissolved, and a man shall have no compassion on his own brother.

Verse 20

And he shall snatch - Hebrew, ‹He shall cut off.‘ Many have supposed that this refers to a state of famine; but others regard it as descriptive of a state of faction extending throughout the whole community, dissolving the most tender ties, arid producing a dissolution of all the bonds of life. The context Isaiah 9:19, Isaiah 9:21 shows, that the latter is meant; though it is not improbable that it would be attended with famine. When it is said that he ‹would cut off his right hand,‘ it denotes a condition of internal anarchy and strife.

And be hungry - And not be satisfied. Such would be his rage, and his desire of blood, that he would be insatiable. The retarder of those on one side of him would not appease his insatiable wrath. His desire of carnage would be so great that it would be like unappeased hunger.

And he shall eat - The idea here is that of contending factions excited by fury, rage, envy, hatred, contending in mingled strife, and spreading

death with insatiable desire everywhere around them.

They shall eat - Not literally; but "shall destroy." To eat the flesh of anyone, denotes to seek one‘s life, and is descriptive of blood-thirsty enemies; Psalm 27:2: ‹When the wicked, even mine enemies and foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell;‘ Job 19:22:

Why do ye persecute me as God,
And are not satisfied with my flesh?

Compare Deuteronomy 7:16; Jeremiah 10:25; Jeremiah 30:15; Jeremiah 50:17; Hosea 7:7; see Ovid‘s Metam. 8,867:

Ipse suos artus lacero divellere morsu
Coepit; et infelix minuendo corpus alebat.

The flesh of his own arm - The Chaldee renders this, ‹Each one shall devour the substance of his neighbor.‘ Lowth proposes to read it, ‹The flesh of his neighbor.‘ but without sufficient authority. The expression denotes a state of dreadful faction - where the ties of most intimate relationship would be disregarded, represented, here by the appalling figure of a man‘s appetite being so rabid that he would seize upon and devour his own flesh. So, in this state of faction and discord, the rage would be so great that people would destroy those who were, as it were, their own flesh, that is, their nearest kindred and friends.

Verse 21

Manasseh, Ephraim - This verse is a continuation of the statement in regard to the extent and fearfulness of the faction. Those who were hitherto most tenderly and intimately allied to each other, would now be engaged in furious strife. Manasseh and Ephraim were the two sons of Joseph Genesis 46:20, and their names are used as expressive of tender union and friendship; compare Genesis 48:20. The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were near each other, and they always were allied together. The expression here denotes that they who had hitherto been joined in tender alliance, would be rent into contending factions, thirsting for each other‘s blood.

And they together - They would be united in opposing Judah while they were devouring each other, as it is not an uncommon thing for those who are opposed to each other to unite in hostility to a common foe; compare Luke 23:12. This is an image that heightens the description of the anarchy - introducing implacable animosity against another tribe, while they were contending among themselves. That such anarchies and factions existed, is apparent from all the history of the kingdom of Israel; compare 2

Kings 15:10 ff; 2 Kings 15:30. In this last passage, the death of Pekah is describer as having occurred in a conspiracy formed by Hoshea.

For all this … - see Isaiah 9:12, note Isaiah 5:25. This closes the third strophe or part of the prophecy under consideration. The fourth and last strophe occurs in Isaiah 10:1-4.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Introduction

This chapter Isaiah 10:1-4 closes the prophecy commenced in Isaiah 9:8, and should have been connected with that in the division into chapters; and the second part commences an entirely new prophecy, respecting the destruction of the Assyrians; see the Analysis prefixed to Isaiah 10:5. The first four verses of this chapter constitute the fourth strophe, or part of the prophecy, commenced in Isaiah 9:8, and contains a specification of a crime, and its punishment: "the crime," prevalent injustice ann oppression Isaiah 9:1-2; "the punishment," foreign invasion, Isaiah 9:3-4; see the note at Isaiah 9:8.

At Isaiah 10:5, there is evidently the commencement of a new prophecy, or vision; and the division into chapters should have indicated such a commencement. The prophecy is continued to the close of Isaiah 12:1-6. Its general scope is a threatening against Assyria, and the prediction of ultimate safety, happiness, and triumph to the people of Judah. It has no immediate connection with the previous vision any further than the subjects are similar, and one seems to have suggested the other. In the previous vision, the prophet bad described the threatened invasion of Ephraim or Israel, by the Syrians; in this, he describes the threatened invasion of Judah by the Assyrians. The result of the invasion of Ephraim would be the desolation of Samaria, and the captivity of the people; but the result of the invasion of Judah would be that God would interpose and humble the Assyrian, and bring deliverance to his people. This chapter is occupied with an account of the threatened invasion of Judea by the Assyrian, Isaiah 10:5-7; with, a statement of his confident boasting, and defiance of God Isaiah 10:8-14; with encouraging the people to confide in God, and not to be afraid of him; and with the assurance that he would be discomfited and overthrown, Isaiah 12:1-6.

When the prophecy was uttered, and in regard to whom, has been a question. Vitringa supposes that it was uttered in immediate connection with the foregoing, and that it is in fact a part of it. But from Isaiah 10:9, Isaiah 10:11, it is evident that at the time this prophecy was uttered, Samaria was destroyed; and from Isaiah 10:20, it is clear that it was after the ten tribes had been carried into captivity, and when the Assyrian

supposed that he could accomplish the same destruction and captivity, in regard to Jerusalem and Judah, that had taken place in regard to Samaria and Ephraim. As to the remark of Vitringa, that the prophet anticipated these future events, and spoke of them as already passed, it may be observed, that the structure and form of the expressions suppose that they were in fact passed at the time he wrote; see the notes at Isaiah 10:9, Isaiah 10:11, Isaiah 10:20. Lightfoot (Chronica Temporum) supposes that the prophet here refers to the threatened invasion of the land by Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, after he had destroyed Damascus, and when, being about to advance upon Jerusalem, Ahaz stripped the temple of its valuable ornaments, and sent them to him; 2 Kings 16:17-18.

Lowth supposes that the threatened invasion here refers to that of Sennacherib. This is, probably, the correct reference. This took place in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, 725 years before the Christian era. Hezekiah, alarmed at the approach of Sennacherib, sent messengers to him to Lachish 2 Kings 18:14, to obtain a cessation of hostilities. Sennacherib agreed to such a peace, on condition that Hezekiaih should pay him three hundred talents of silver, and thirty of gold. In order to meet this demand, Hezekiah was obliged to advance all the silver and gold in the treasury, and even to strip the temple of its ornaments. Having done this, he hoped for safety; and on this occasion, probably, this prophecy was uttered. It was designed to show that the danger of invasion was not passed; to assure them the king of Assyria would still come against the nation (compare 2 Kings 8:17, …); but that still God would interpose, and would deliver them. A further reference to this is made in Isaiah 20:1-6, and a full history given in Isaiah 37; 38; see the notes at those chapters (37); (38).

Verse 1

Wo unto them that decree unrighteous decrees - To those who frame statutes that are oppressive and iniquitous. The prophet here refers, doubtless, to the rulers and judges of the land of Judea. A similar description he had before given; Isaiah 1:10, Isaiah 1:23, …

And that write … - Hebrew, ‹And to the writers who write violence.‘ The word translated “grievousness,” עמל *ʿâmâl* denotes properly “wearisome labor, trouble, oppression, injustice.” Here, it evidently refers to the judges who declared oppressive and unjust sentences, and caused

them to be recorded. It does not refer to the mere scribes, or recorders of the judicial opinions, but to the judges themselves, who pronounced the sentence, and caused it to be recorded. The manner of making Eastern decrees differs from ours: they are first written, and then the magistrate authenticates them, or annuls them. This, I remember, is the Arab manner, according to D'Arvieux. When an Arab wanted a favor of the emir, the way was to apply to the secretary, who drew up a decree according to the request of the party; if the emir granted the favor, he printed his seal upon it; if not, he returned it torn to the petitioner. Sir John Chardin confirms this account, and applies it, with great propriety, to the illustration of a passage which I never thought of when I read over D'Arvieux. After citing Isaiah 10:1, ‹Wo unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and to the writers that write grievousness,' for so our translators have rendered the latter part of the verse in the margin, much more agreeably than in the body of the version, Sir John goes on, ‹The manner of making the royal acts and ordinances hath a relation to this; they are always drawn up according to the request; the first minister, or he whose office it is, writes on the side of it, "according to the king's will," and from thence it is sent to the secretary of state, who draws up the order in form.' - Harmer.

Verse 2

To turn aside - Their sentences have the effect, and are designed to have, to pervert justice, and to oppress the poor, or to deprive them of their rights and just claims; compare Isaiah 29:21; Proverbs 27:5.

The needy -

d daliym - דלים *dalîym* Those of humble rank and circumstances; who have no powerful friends and defenders. "From judgment." From obtaining justice.

And to take away - To take away by violence and oppression. The word גזל *gāzal* is commonly applied to robbery, and to oppression; to the taking away of spoils in battle, etc.

That widows may be their prey - That they may rob widows, or obtain their property. This crime has always been one particularly offensive in the sight of God; see the note at Isaiah 1:23. The widow and the orphan are without protectors. Judges, by their office, are particularly bound to preserve their rights; and it, therefore, evinces special iniquity when they who should be their protectors become, in fact, their oppressors, and do injustice to them without the possibility of redress. Yet this was the

character of the Jewish judges; and for this the vengeance of heaven was about to come upon the land.

Verse 3

And what will ye do - The prophet here proceeds to denounce the judgment, or punishment, that would follow the crimes specified in the previous verses. That punishment was the invasion of the land by a foreign force. ‹What will ye do? To whom will you fly? What refuge will them be?‘ Implying that the calamity would be so great that there would be no refuge, or escape.

In the day of visitation - The word "visitation" (פקדה *peqûddâh*) is used here in the sense of God‘s coming to punish them for their sins; compare Job 31:14; Job 35:15; Isaiah 26:14; Ezekiel 9:1. The idea is probably derived from that of a master of a family who comes to take account, or to investigate the conduct of his servants, and where the visitation, therefore, is one of reckoning and justice. So the idea is applied to God as designing to visit the wicked; that is, to punish them for their offences; compare Hosea 9:7.

And in the desolation - The destruction, or overthrowing. The word used here - שׁואה *shô'âh* - usually denotes a storm, a tempest Proverbs 1:27; and then sudden destruction, or calamity, that sweeps along irresistibly like a tempest; Zephaniah 1:15; Job 30:3, Job 30:14; Psalm 35:8.

Which shall come from far - That is, from Assyria, Media, Babylonia. The sense is, ‹a furious storm of war is about to rage. To what refuge can you then flee? or where can you then find safety?‘

Where will ye leave your glory - By the word "glory" here, some have understood the prophet as referring to their aged men, their princes and nobles, and as asking where they would find a safe place for them. But he probably means their "riches, wealth, magnificence." Thus Psalm 49:17:

For when he dieth, he shall carry nothing away;

His glory shall not descebd after him.

See also Hosea 9:2; Isaiah 66:12. The word "leave" here, is used in the sense "of deposit," or commit for safe keeping; compare Job 39:14. ‹In the time of the invasion that shall come up like a tempest on the land, where will you deposit your property so that it shall be safe?‘

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Verse 4

Without me - בלתי *biltîy* There has been a great variety of interpretation affixed to this expression. The sense in which our translators understood it was, evidently, that they should be forsaken of God; and that, as the effect of this, they should bow down under the condition of captives, or among the slain. The Vulgate and the Septuagint, however. and many interpreters understand the word bore as a simple negative. ‹Where will you flee for refuge? Where will you deposit your wealth so as not to bow down under a chain?‘ Vulgate, *Ne incurvemini sub vinculo*. Septuagint, Τοῦ μὴ ἐμπεσεῖν εἰς ἀπαγωνήν *tou mē empesein eis apagōnēn* - ‹Not to fall into captivity.‘ The Hebrew will bear either mode of construction. Vitringa and Lowth understand it as our translators have done, as meaning that God would forsake them, and that without him, that is, deprived of his aid, they would be destroyed.

They shall bow down - They shall be subdued, as armies are that are taken captive.

Under the prisoners - That is, under the "condition" of prisoners; or as prisoner. Some understand it to mean, that they should bear down "in the place of prisoners;" that is, in prison, But it evidently means, simply, that they should be captives.

They shall fall under the slain - They shall be slain. Gesenius renders it, "‹Among the prisoners, and "among" the slain.‘" The Chaldee reads it, ‹You shall be east into chains out of your own land, and beyond your own cities you shall be cast out slain.‘ Vitringa supposes that the prophet, in this verse, refers to the custom, among the ancients, of placing prisoners in war under a yoke of wood to indicate their captivity. That such a custom obtained, there can be no doubt; but it is not probable that Isaiah refers to it here. The simple idea is, that many of them should be taken captive, and many of them slain. This prediction was fulfilled in the invasion of Tiglath-pileser; Isaiah 10:12.

Verse 5

O Assyrian - The word הוי *hôy* is commonly used to denounce wrath, or to indicate approaching calamity; as an interjection of threatening; Isaiah 1:4. ‹Wo sinful nation;‘ Isaiah 10:8, Isaiah 10:11, Isaiah 10:18, Isaiah 10:20-21; Jeremiah 48:1; Ezekiel 13:2. The Vulgate so understands it here: *Vae Assur*; and the Septuagint, Οὐαὶ Ἀσσυρίοις *Ouai Assuriois* - ‹Woe to the Assyrians.‘ So the Chaldee and the Syriac. It is not then a simple address to the Assyrian; but a form denouncing wrath on the invader. Yet it

was not so much designed to intimidate and appal the Assyrian himself as to comfort the Jews with the assurance that calamity should overtake him. The ‹Assyrian‘ referred to here was the king of Assyria - Sennacherib, who was leading an army to invade the land of Judea.

The rod of mine anger - That is, the rod, or instrument, by which I will inflict punishment on a guilty nation. The Hebrew would bear the interpretation that the Assyrian was, an object against which God was angry; but the former is evidently the sense of the passage, as denoting that the Assyrian was the agent by which he would express his anger against a guilty people. Woe might be denounced against him for his wicked intention, at the same time that God might design to make use of his plans to punish the sins of his own people. The word "anger" here, refers to the indignation of God against the sins of the Jewish people.

And the staff - The word "staff" here, is synonymous with rod, as an instrument of chastisement or punishment; Isaiah 9:4; compare Isaiah 10:24; Nahum 1:13; Ezekiel 7:10.

In their hand - There has been considerable variety in the interpretation of this passage. Lowth and Noyes read it, ‹The staff in whose hand is the instrument of my indignation.‘ This interpretation Lowth adopts, by omitting the word הוא *hû'* on the authority of the Alexandrine copy of the Septuagint, and five manuscripts, two of them ancient. Jerome reads it, ‹Wo to the Assyrian! He is the staff and the rod of my fury; in their hand is my indignation.‘ So Forerius, Ludovicus, de Dieu, Cocceius, and others. Vitringa reads it, ‹And in the hands of those who are my rod is my indignation.‘ Schmidius and Rosenmuller, ‹And the rod which is in their hands, is the rod of mine indignation.‘ There is no necessity for any change in the text. The Hebrew, literally, is, ‹Wo to the Assyrian! Rod of my anger! And he is the staff. In their hands is my indignation.‘ The sense is sufficiently clear, that the Assyrian was appointed to inflict punishmerit on a rebellious people, as the instrument of God. The Chaldee renders it, ‹Wo to the Assyrian! The dominion (power, ruler) of my fury, and the angel sent from my face, against them, for a malediction. Septuagint, ‹And wrath in their hands.‘

In their hand - In the hand of the Assyrians, where the word ‹Assyrian‘ is taken as referring to the king of Assyria, as the representative of the nation.

Verse 6

I will send him - Implying that he was entirely in the hand of God, and subject to his direction; and showing that God has control over kings and conqueror‘s; Proverbs 21:1.

Against an hypocritical nation - Whether the prophet here refers to Ephraim, or to Judah, or to the Jewish people in general, has been an object of inquiry among interpreters. As the designs of Sennacherib were mainly against Judah. it is probable that that part of the nation was intended. This is evidently the case, if, as has been supposed, the prophecy was uttered after the captivity of the ten tribes; see Isaiah 10:20. It need scarcely be remarked, that it was eminently the characteristic of the nation that they were hypocritical; compare Isaiah 9:17; Matthew 15:17; Mark 7:6.

And against the people of my wrath - That is, those who were the objects of my wrath; or the people on whom I am about to pour out my indignation.

To take the spoil - To plunder them.

And to tread them down - Hebrew, ‹And to make them a treading down.‘ The expression is drawn from war, where the vanquished and the slain are trodden down by the horses of the conquering army. It means here, that the Assyrian would humble and subdue the people; that he would trample indignantly on the nation, regarding them with contempt, and no more to be esteemed than the mire of the streets. A similar figure occurs in Zechariah 10:5: ‹And they shall be as mighty men which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in battle.‘

Verse 7

Howbeit he meaneth not so - It is not his purpose to be the instrument, in the hand of God, of executing his designs. He has a different plan; a plan of his own which he intends to accomplish.

Neither doth his heart think so - He does not intend or design it. The “heart” here, is put to express “purpose, or will.”

It is “in his heart to cut off nations - Utterly to destroy or to annihilate their political existence.

Not a few - The ambitious purpose of Sennacherib was not confined to Judea. His plan was also to invade and to conquer Egypt; and the destruction of Judea, was only a part of his scheme; Isaiah 20:1-6. This is a most remarkable instance of the supremacy which God asserts over the purposes of wicked people. Sennacherib formed his own plan without compulsion. He devised large purposes of ambition, and intended to

devastate kingdoms. And yet God says that he was under his direction, and that his plans would be overruled to further his own purposes. Thus ‹the wrath of man would be made to praise him;‘ Psalm 76:10. And from this we may learn

(1) That wicked people form their plans and devices with perfect freedom. They lay their schemes as if there were no superintending providence; and feel, correctly, that they are not under the laws of compulsion, or of fate.

(2) That God presides over their schemes. and suffers them to be formed and executed with reference to his own purposes.

(3) That the plans of wicked people often, though they do not intend it, go to execute the purposes of God. Their schemes result in just what they did not intend - the furtherance of his plans, and the promotion of his glory

(4) That their plans are, nevertheless, wicked and abominable. They are to be judged according to what they are in themselves, and not according to the use which God may make of them by counteracting or overruling them. “Their” intention is evil; and by that they must be judged. That God brings good out of them, is contrary to their design, and a thing for which “they” deserve no credit, and should receive no reward.

(5) The wicked are in the hands of God.

(6) There is a superintending providence; and people cannot defeat the purposes of the Almighty. This extends to princes on their thrones; to the rich, the great, and the mighty, as well as to the poor and the humble - and to the humble as well as to the rich and the great. Over all people is this superintending and controlling providence; and all are subject to the direction of God.

(7) It has often happened, “in fact,” that the plans of wicked people have been made to contribute to the purposes of God. Instances like those of Pharaoh, of Cyrus, and of Sennacherib; of Pontius Pilate, and of the kings and emperors who persecuted the early Christian church, show that they are in the hand of God, and that he can overrule their wrath and wickedness to his glory. The madness of Pharaoh was the occasion of the signal displays

of the power of God in Egypt. The wickedness, and weakness, and flexibility of Pilate, was the occasion of the atonement made for the sins of the world. And the church rose, in its primitive brightness and splendor, amid the flames which persecution kindled, and was augmented in numbers, and in moral loveliness and power, just in proportion as the wrath of monarchs raged to destroy it.

Verse 8

For he saith - This verse, and the subsequent verses to Isaiah 10:11, contain the vaunting of the king of Assyria, and the descriptions of his own confidence of success.

Are not my princes altogether kings? - This is a confident boast of his "own" might and power. His own dominion was so great that even his princes were endowed with the ordinary power and "regalia" of kings. The word "princes," may here refer either to those of his own family and court - to the satraps and officers of power in his army, or around his throne: or more probably, it may refer to the subordinate governors whom he had set over the provinces which he had conquered. ‹Are they not clothed with royal power and majesty? Are they not of equal splendor with the other monarchs at the earth?‘ How great, then, must have been his "own" rank and glory to be placed "over" such illustrious sovereigns! It will be recollected, that a common title which oriental monarchs give themselves, is that of King of kings; see Ezekiel 26:7; Daniel 2:37; Ezra 7:12. The oriental princes are still distinguished for their sounding titles, and particularly for their claiming dominion over all other princes, and the supremacy over all other earthly powers.

Verse 9

Is not Calno as Carchemish? - The meaning of this confident boasting is, that none of the cities and nations against which be had directed his arms, had been able to resist him. All had fallen before him; and all were alike prostrate at his feet. Carchemish had been unable to resist him, and Calno had shared the same fate. Arpad had fallen before him, and Hamath in like manner had been subdued. The words which are used here are the same nearly that Rabshakeh used when he was sent by Sennacherib to insult Hezekiah and the Jews; Isaiah 36:19; 2 Kings 18:34. "Calno" was a city in the land of Shinar, and was probably the city built by Nimrod, called in Genesis 10:10, "Calneh," and at one time the capital of his empire. It is

mentioned by Ezekiel, Ezekiel 27:23. According to the Targums, Jerome, Eusebius, and others, Calno or Calneh, was the same city as "Ctesiphon," a large city on the bank of the Tigris, and opposite to Selcucia. - "Gesenius" and "Calmet."

Carchemish - This was a city on the Euphrates, belonging to Assyria. It was taken by Necho, king of Egypt, and re-taken by Nebuchadnezzar in the fourth year of Jehoiachin, king of Judah; 2 Kings 23:29. Probably it is the same city as Cercusium, or Kirkisia, which is situated in the angle formed by the junction of the Chebar and the Euphrates; compare Jeremiah 46:2; 2 Chronicles 25:20.

Hamath - This was a celebrated city of Syria. It is referred to in Genesis 10:18, as the seat of one of the tribes of Canaan. It is often mentioned as the northern limit of Canaan. in its widest extent; Numbers 13:21; Joshua 13:5; Judges 3:3. The Assyrians became masters of this city about 753 years before Christ; 2 Kings 17:24. Burckhardt mentions this city as situated on both sides of the river Orontes. The town is at present of considerable extent, and contains about 30,000 inhabitants. There are four bridges over the Orontes, in the town. The trade of the town now is with the Arabs, who buy here their tent-furniture, and their clothes. This city was visited by Eli Smith, in 1834. It lies, says he, on the narrow valley of the ‹Asy; and is so nearly concealed by the high banks, that one sees little of it until he actually comes up to the gates: "see" Robinson‘s "Bib. Researches," vol. iii. App. pp. 176,177.

Arpad - This city was not far from Hamath, and is called by the Greeks Epiphania; 2 Kings 18:34.

Samaria - The capital of Israel, or Ephraim. From the mention of this place, it is evident that this prophecy was written after Samaria had been destroyed; see the notes at Isaiah 7:9; Isaiah 28:1.

As Damascus - The capital of Syria; see the note at Isaiah 7:9, and the Analysis of Isaiah 17:1-14. The Septuagint has varied in their translation here considerably from the Hebrew. They render these verses, ‹And he saith, Have I not taken the region beyond Babylon, and Chalane, where the tower was built? and I have taken Arabia, and Damascus, and Samaria.‘ The main idea, however - the boast of the king of Assyria, is retained.

Verse 10-11

The argument in these two verses is this: ‹The nations which I have subdued were professedly under the protection of idol gods. Yet those idols

were not able to defend them - though stronger than the gods worshipped by Jerusalem and Samaria. And is there any probability, therefore, that the protection on which you who are Jews are leaning, will be able to deliver you?‘ Jerusalem he regarded as an idolatrous city, like others; and as all others had hitherto been unable to retard his movements, he inferred that it would be so with Jerusalem. This is, therefore, the confident boasting of “a man” who regarded himself as able to vanquish all “the gods” that the nations worshipped. The same confident boasting he uttered when he sent messengers to Hezekiah; 2 Kings 19:12: ‹Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my father destroyed; as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden, which were in Thelasar?‘ Isaiah 36:18-20: ‹Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and of Arphad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?‘

Hath found - That is, ‹I have found them unable to defend themselves by their trust in their idols, and have subdued them.‘

The kingdoms of the idols - The kingdoms that worship idols.

And whose graven images - That is, whose idols; or whose representations of the gods. The word properly signifies that which is hewn or cut out; and then the block of wood, or stone, that is carved into an image of the god. Here it, refers to the gods themselves, probably, as having been found to be impotent, though he supposed them to be more powerful that those of Jerusalem and Samaria.

Did excel - Hebrew, ‹More than Jerusalem,‘ where the inseperable preposition מ ***m*** **is used to denote comparison. They were “more” to be dreaded; or more mighty than those of Jerusalem.**

Of Jerusalem - Jerusalem and Samaria had often been guilty of the worship of idols; and it is probable that Sennacherib regarded them as idolaters in the same sense as other nations. They had given occasion for this suspicion by their having often fallen into idolatrous habits; and the Assyrian monarch did not regard them as in any manner distinguished from surrounding nations. It is not improbable that he was aware that Jerusalem worshipped Yahweh (compare Isaiah 36:20); but he doubtless regarded Yahweh as a mere tutelary divinity - the special god of that land, as Baal, Ashtaroth, etc., were of the countries in which they were adored. For it was a common doctrine among ancient idolaters, that each nation had its special

god; that the claims of that god were to be respected and regarded in that nation; and that thus all nations should worship their own gods undisturbed. Yahweh was thus regarded as the tutelary god of the Jewish nation. The sin of Sennacherib consisted in confounding Yahweh with false gods, and in then setting him at defiance.

Isaiah 10:11

Shall I not … - ‹Shall I not meet with the same success at Jerusalem that I have elsewhere? As I have overcome all others and as Jerusalem has no particular advantages; as the gods of other nations were more in number, and mightier than those of Jerusalem, and yet were unable to resist me; what is there in Jerusalem that can stay my progress?‘

Verse 12

Wherefore … - In this verse God, by the prophet, threatens punishment to the king of Assyria for his pride, and wicked designs.

His whole work - His entire plan in regard to the punishment of the Jews. He sent the king of Assyria for a specific purpose to execute his justice on the people of Jerusalem. That plan he would execute entirely by the hand of Sennacherib, and would "then" inflict deserved, punishment on Sennacherib himself, for his wicked purposes.

Upon mount Zion - Mount Zion was a part of Jerusalem (see the note at Isaiah 1:8), but it was the residence of the court, the dwelling-place of David and his successors; and perhaps here, where it is mentioned as distinct from Jerusalem, it refers to the court, the princes, nobles, or the government. ‹I will execute my purposes against the government, and the people of the city.‘

I will punish - Hebrew, ‹I will visit;‘ but here, evidently used to denote punishment; see the note at Isaiah 10:3.

The fruit of the stout heart - Hebrew, ‹The fruit of the greatness of the heart.‘ The ‹greatness of the heart,‘ is a Hebraism for pride of heart, or great swelling designs and plans formed in the heart. "Fruit" is that which a tree or the earth produces; and then anything which is produced or brought forth in any way. Here it means that which a proud heart had produced or designed, that is, plans of pride and ambition; schemes of conquest and of blood.

The glory of his high looks - Hebrew, ‹The glory of the lifting up of his eyes‘ - an expression indicative of pride and haughtiness. The word "glory,"

here, evidently refers to the self-complacency, and the air of majesty and haughtiness, which a proud man assumes. In this verse we see -

(1) That God will accomplish all the purposes of which he designs to make wicked people the instruments. “Their” schemes shall be successful just so far as they may contribute to “his” plans, and no further.

(2) When that is done, they are completely in “his” power, and under his control. He can stay their goings when he pleases, and subdue them to his will.

(3) The fact that they have been made to further the plans of God, and to execute his designs, will not free them from deserved punishment. They meant not so; and they will be dealt with according to “their” intentions, and not according to God‘s design to overrule them. “Their” plans were wicked; and if God brings good out of them, it is contrary to “their” intention; and hence, they are not to be screened from punishment because he brings good out of their plans, contrary to their designs.

(4) Wicked people “are in fact” often thus punished. Nothing is more common on earth; and all the woes of hell will be an illustration of the principle. Out of all evil God shall educe good; and even from the punishment of the damned themselves, he will take occasion to illustrate his own perfections, and, in that display of his just character, promote the happiness of holy beings.

Verse 13

For he saith - The king of Assyria saith. This verse and the following are designed to show the reason why the king of Assyria should be thus punished. It was on account of his pride, and wicked plans. He sought not the glory of God, but purposed to do evil.

For I am prudent - I am wise; attributing his success to his own understanding, rather than to God.

I have removed the bounds of the people - That is, ‹I have changed the limits of kingdoms; I have taken away the old boundaries, and made new ones at my pleasure. I have divided them into kingdoms and provinces as I pleased.‘ No higher assumption of power could have been made than thus to have changed the ancient limits of empires, and remodelled them at his will. It was claiming that he had so extended his own empire, as to have

effectually blotted out the ancient lines which had existed, so that they were now all one, and under his control. So a man who buys farms, and annexes them to his own, takes away the ancient limits; he runs new lines as he pleases, and unites them all into one. This was the claim which Sennacherib set up over the nations.

Have robbed their treasures - Their hoarded wealth. This was another instance of the claim which he set up, of power and dominion. The treasures of kingdoms which had been hoarded for purposes of peace or war, he had plundered, and appropriated to his own use; compare the note at Isaiah 46:3.

I have put down the inhabitants - I have subdued them; have vanquished them.

As a valiant man - כאביר *ka'bbîyr* Margin, ‹Many people.‘ The Keri, or Hebrew marginal reading, is כביר *kabbîyr* without the Hebrew letter א, ‹a mighty or, strong man.‘ The sense is not materially different. It is a claim that he had evinced might and valor in bringing down nations. Lowth renders it, ‹Them that were strongly seated.‘ Noyes, ‹Them that sat upon thrones.‘ The Chaldee renders the verse, not literally, but according to the sense, ‹I have made people to migrate from province to province, and have plundered the cities that were the subjects of praise, and have brought down by strength those who dwelt in fortified places. Our translation has given the sense correctly.

Verse 14

And my hand hath found, as a nest - By a beautiful and striking figure here, the Assyrian monarch is represented as describing the ease with which he had subdued kingdoms, and rifled them of their treasures. No resistance had been offered. He had taken them with as little opposition as a rustic takes possession of a nest, with its eggs or young, when the parent bird is away.

Eggs that are left - That is, eggs that are left of the parent bird; when the bird from fright, or any other cause, has gone, and when no resistance is offered.

Have I gathered all the earth - That is, I have subdued and plundered it. This shows the height of his self-confidence and his arrogant assumptions.

That moved the wing - Keeping up the figure of the nest. There was none that offered resistance; as an angry bird does when her nest is about to

be robbed.

Or opened the mouth - To make a noise in alarm. The dread of him produced perfect silence and submission.

Or peeped - Or that chirped - the noise made by young birds; the note at Isaiah 8:19. The idea is, that such was the dread of his name and power that there was universal silence. None dared to resist the terror of his arms.

Verse 15

Shall the axe … - In this verse God reproves the pride and arrogance of the Assyrian monarch. He does it by reminding him that he was the mere instrument in his hand, to accomplish his purposes; and that it was just as absurd for him to boast of what he had done, as it would be for the axe to boast when it had been welded with effect. In the axe there is no wisdom, no skill, no power; and though it may lay the forest low, yet it is not by any skill or power which it possesses. So with the Assyrian monarch. Though nations had trembled at his power, yet be was in the hand of God, and had been directed by an unseen arm in accomplishing the designs of the Ruler of the universe. Though himself free, yet he was under the direction of God, and had been so directed as to accomplish his designs.

The saw magnify itself - That is boast or exalt itself against or over him that uses it.

That shaketh it - Or moves it backward and forward, for the purpose of sawing.

As if the rod - A rod is an instrument of chastisement or punishment; and such God regarded the king of Assyria.

Should shake" itself … - The Hebrew, in this place, is as in the margin: ‹A rod should shake them that lift it up.‘ But the sense is evidently retained in our translation, as this accords with all the other members of the verse, where the leading idea is, the absurdity that a mere instrument should exalt itself against him who makes use of it. In this manner the preposition על ʿ*al* "over," or "against," is evidently understood. So the Vulgate and the Syriac.

The staff - This word here is synonymous with rod, and denotes an instrument of chastisement.

As if it were no wood - That is, as if it were a moral agent, itself the actor or deviser of what it is made to do. It would be impossible to express more strongly the idea intended here, that the Assyrian was a mere instrument in the hand of God to accomplish "his" purposes, and to be employed at his will. The statement of this truth is designed to humble him:

and if there be "any" truth that will humble sinners, it is, that they are in the hands of God; that he will accomplish his purposes by them; that when they are laying plans against him, he will overrule them for his own glory; and that they will be arrested, restrained, or directed, just as he pleases. Man, in his schemes of pride and vanity, therefore, should not boast. He is under the God of nations; and it is one part of his administration, to control and govern all the intellect in the universe. In all these passages, however, there is not the slightest intimation that the Assyrian was not "free." There is no fate; no compulsion. He regarded himself as a free moral agent; he did what he pleased; he never supposed that he was urged on by any power that violated his own liberty. If he did what he pleased, he was free. And so it is with all sinners. They do as they please. They form and execute such plans as they choose; and God overrules their designs to accomplish his own purposes. The Targum of Jonathan has given the sense of this passage; ‹Shall the axe boast against him who uses it, saying, I have cut (wood); or the saw boast against him who moves it, saying, I have sawed? When the rod is raised to smite, it is not the rod that smites, but he who smites with it.'

Verse 16

Therefore shall the Lord - Hebrew, אדון *'ādôn* The Lord of hosts - In the present Hebrew text, the original word is also אדני *'ădonāy* but fifty-two manuscripts and six editions read Jehovah. On the meaning of the phrase, "the Lord of hosts," see the note at Isaiah 1:9. This verse contains a threatening of the punishment that would come upon the Assyrian for his insolence and pride, and the remainder of the chapter is mainly occupied with the details of that punishment. The punishment here threatened is, that while he appeared to be a victor, and was boasting of success and of his plunder, God would send leanness - as a body becomes wasted with disease.

His fat ones - That is, those who had fattened on the spoils of victory; his vigorous, prosperous, and flourishing army. The prophet here evidently intends to describe his numerous army glutted with the trophies of victor, and revelling on the spoils.

Leanness - They shall be emaciated and reduced; their vigor and strength shall be diminished. In Psalm 106:15, the word "leanness," רזון *râzôn* is used to denote destruction, disease. In Micah 6:10, it denotes diminution, scantiness - ‹the scant ephah.' Here it denotes, evidently, that the army which was so large and vigorous, should waste away as with a

pestilential disease; compare Isaiah 10:19. The "fact" was, that of that vast host few escaped. The angel of the Lord killed 185,000 men in a single night; 2 Kings 18:35; see the notes at Zechariah 12:6:

In that day I shall make the governors of Judah
Like a hearth of fire among the wood,
And like a torch of fire in a sheaf;

And they shall devour all the people round about.

Verse 17

And the light of Israel - That is, Yahweh. The word "light" here, אור *'ôr* is used also to denote a "fire," or that which causes light and heat; see Ezekiel 5:2; Isaiah 44:16; Isaiah 47:14. Here it is used in the same sense, denoting that Yahweh would be "the fire" אור *'ôr* that would cause the "flame" (אֵשׁ *'êsh*) which would consume the Assyrian. Jehovah is often compared to a burning flame, or fire; Deuteronomy 4:24; Deuteronomy 9:3; Hebrews 12:29.

Shall be for a fire - By his power and his judgment he shall destroy them.

His Holy One - Israel's Holy One; that is, Yahweh - often called in the Scriptures the Holy One of Israel.

And it shall burn - That is, the flame that Yahweh shall kindle, or his judgments that he shall send forth.

And devour his thorns and his briers - An expression denoting the utter impotency of all the mighty armies of the Assyrian to resist Yahweh. As dry thorns and briers cannot resist the action of heat, so certainly and speedily would the armies of Sennacherib be destroyed before Yahweh; compare the note at Isaiah 9:18. Lowth supposes, that by ‹briers and thorns' here, the common soldiers of the army are intended, and by ‹the glory of his forest' Isaiah 10:18, the princes, officers, and nobles. This is, doubtless, the correct interpretation; and the idea is, that all would be completely consumed and destroyed.

In one day - The army of Sennacherib was suddenly destroyed by the angel; see the notes at Isaiah 37:36.

Verse 18

The glory of his forest - In these expressions, the army of Sennacherib is compared with a beautiful grove thick set with trees; and as all the beauty

of a grove which the fire overruns is destroyed, so, says the prophet, it will be with the army of the Assyrian under the judgments of God. If the ‹briers and thorns‘ Isaiah 10:17 refer to the common soldiers of his army, then the glory of the forest - the tall, majestic trees - refer to the princes and nobles. But this mode of interpretation should not be pressed too far.

And of his fruitful field - וכרמלו *vekaremilô* The word used here - “carmel” - is applied commonly to a rich mountain or promontory on the Mediterranean, on the southern boundary of the tribe of Asher. The word, however, properly means a fruitful field, a finely cultivated country, and Was given to Mount Carmel on this account, In this place it has no reference to that mountain, but is given to the army of Sennacherib to “keep up the figure” which the prophet commenced in Isaiah 10:17. That army, numerous, mighty, and well disciplined, was compared to an extensive region of hill and vale; of forests and fruitful fields; but it should all be destroyed as when the fire runs over fields and forests, and consumes all their beauty. Perhaps in all this, there may be allusion to the proud boast of Sennacherib 2 Kings 19:23, that he would ‹go up the sides of Lebanon, and cut down the cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof‘, and enter into the forest of Carmel.‘ In allusion, possibly, to this, the prophet says that God would cut down the tall trees and desolate the fruitful field - the ‹carmel‘ of his army, and would lay all waste.

Both soul and body - Hebrew, ‹From the soul to the flesh;‘ that is, entirely. As the soul and the flesh, or body, compose the entire man, so the phrase denotes the entireness or totality of anything. The army would be totally ruined.

And they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth - There is here a great variety of interpretation. The Septuagint reads it: ‹And he shall flee as one that flees from a burning flame.‘ This reading Lowth has followed; but for this there is not the slightest authority in the Hebrew. The Vulgate reads it, ‹And he shall fly for terror, “et crit terrore profugus.” The Chaldee, ‹And he shall be broken, and shall fly.‘ The Syriac, ‹And he shall be as if he had never been.‘ Probably the correct idea is, “and they shall be as when a sick man wastes away.” The words which are used (נסס כמסס *kîmesos nosēs*) are brought together for the sake of a paranomasia - a figure of speech common in the Hebrew. The word rendered in our version “fainteth” (מסס *mesos*) is probably the infinitive construct of the verb מסס *mâsas* “to melt, dissolve, faint.” It is applied to the manna that was dissolved by the heat of

the sun, Exodus 16:21; to wax melted by the fire, Psalm 68:2; to a snail that consumes away, Psalm 58:8; or to water that evaporates, Psalm 58:7.

Hence, it is applied to the heart, exhausted of its vigor and spirit, Job 7:5; to things decayed that have lost their strength, 1 Samuel 15:9; to a loan or tax laid upon a people that wastes and exhausts their wealth. It has the general notion, therefore, of melting, fainting, sinking away with the loss of strength; Psalm 22:14; Psalm 112:10; Psalm 97:5; Isaiah 19:1; Isaiah 13:7; Joshua 2:11; Joshua 5:1; Joshua 7:5. The word rendered "standard-bearer" (נסס *nosēs*) is from the verb נסס *nāsas* This word signifies sometimes "to lift up," to elevate, or to erect a flag or standard to public view, to call men to arms; Isaiah 5:26; Isaiah 11:10, Isaiah 11:12; Isaiah 13:2; Isaiah 18:3; Isaiah 49:22; and also to lift up, or to exhibit anything as a judgment or public warning, and may thus be applied to divine judgments. Gesenius renders the verb, "to waste away, to be sick." In Syriac it has this signification. Taylor ("Heb. Con.") says, that it does not appear that this word ever has the signification of a military standard under which armies fight, but refers to a standard or ensign to "call" men together, or to indicate alarm and danger. The probable signification here, is that which refers it to a man wasting away with sickness, whose strength and vigor are gone, and who becomes weak and helpless. Thus applied to the Assyrian army, it is very striking. Though mighty, confident, and vigorous-like a man in full health - yet it would be like a vigorous man when disease comes upon him, and he pines away and sinks to the grave.

Verse 19

And the rest of the trees … - Keeping up still the image of a large and once dense forest, to which he had likened the Assyrian army. ‹The rest‘ here means that which shall be left after the threatened judgment shall come upon them.

That a child may write them - That a child shall be able to number them, or write their names; that is, they shall be very few. A child can number or count but few; yet the number of those who would be left, would be so very small that even a child could count them with ease. It is probable that a few of the army of Sennacherib escaped (see the note at Isaiah 37:37); and compared with the whole army, the remnant might bear a striking resemblance to the few decaying trees of a once magnificent forest of cedars.

Verse 20

And it shall come to pass - The prophet proceeds to state the effect on the Jews, of the judgment that would overtake the army of the Assyrian. One of those effects, as stated in this verse, would be, that they would be led to see that it was in vain to look to the Assyrians any more for aid, or to form any further alliance with them, but that they should trust in the Lord alone.

The remnant of Israel - Those that would be left after the Assyrian had invaded and desolated the land.

Shall no more again stay - Shall no more depend on them. Alliances had been formed with the Assyrians for aid, and they had resulted as all alliances formed between the friends and the enemies of God do. They are observed as long as it is for the interest or the convenience of God‘s enemies to observe them; and then his professed friends are made the victims of persecution, invasion, and ruin.

Upon him that smote them - Upon the Assyrian, who was about to desolate the land. The calamities which he would bring upon them would be the main thing which would open their eyes, and lead them to forsake the alliance. One design of God‘s permitting the Assyrians to invade the land, was, to punish them for this alliance, and to induce them to trust in God.

But shall stay … - They shall depend upon Yahweh, or shall trust in him for protection and defense.

The Holy One of Israel - see Isaiah 10:17.

In truth - They shall serve him sincerely and heartily, not with feigned or divided service. They shall be so fully satisfied that the Assyrian cannot aid them, and be so severely punished forever, having formed an alliance with him, that they shall now return to Yahweh, and become his sincere worshippers. In this verse, the prophet refers, doubtless, to the times of Hezekiah, and to the extensive reformation, and general prevalence of piety, which would take place under his reign; 2 Chronicles 32:22-33. Vitringa, Cocceius, Schmidius, etc., however, refer this to the time of the Messiah; Vitringa supposing that the prophet refers “immediately” to the times of Hezekiah, but in a secondary sense, for the complete fulfillment of the prophecy, to the times of the Messiah. But it is not clear that he had reference to any other period than that which would immediately follow the invasion of Sennacherib.

Verse 21

The remnant … - That is, those who shall be left after the invasion of Sennacherib.

Shall return - Shall abandon their idolatrous rites and places of worship, and shall worship the true God.

The mighty God - The God that had evinced his power in overcoming and destroying the armies of Sennacherib.

Verse 22

For though … - In this verse, and in Isaiah 10:23. the prophet expresses positively the idea that "but" a remnant of the people should be preserved amidst the calamities. He had said Isaiah 10:20-21, that a remnant should return to God. He now carries forward the idea, and states that only a remnant should be preserved out of the multitude, however great it was. Admitting that the number was then very great, yet the great mass of the nation would be cut off, and only a small portion would remain.

Thy people Israel - Or rather, ‹thy people, O Israel,‘ making it a direct address to the Jews, rather than to God.

Be as the sand of the sea - The sands of the sea cannot be numbered, and hence, the expression is used in the Bible to denote a number indefinitely great: Psalm 119:18; Genesis 22:17; Genesis 41:49; Joshua 11:4; Judges 7:12; 1 Samuel 13:5, …

Yet a remnant - The word "yet" has been supplied by the translators, and evidently obscures the sense. The idea is, that a remnant only - a very small portion of the whole, should be preserved. Though they were exceedingly numerous as a nation, yet the mass of the nation would be cut off, or carried into captivity, and only a few would be left.

Shall return - That is, shall be saved from destruction, and return by repentance unto God, Isaiah 10:21. Or, if it has reference to the approaching captivity of the nation, it means that but a few of them would return from captivity to the land of their fathers.

The consumption - The general sense of this is plain. The prophet is giving a reason why only a few of them would return, and he says, that the judgment which God had determined on was inevitable, and would overflow the land in justice. As God had determined this, their numbers availed nothing, but the consumption would be certainly accomplished. The word "consumption" כליון *kilāyôn* from כלה *kâlâh* to complete, to finish, to waste away, vanish, disappear) denotes a languishing, or wasting away, as in disease; and then "destruction," or that which "completes" life and

prosperity. It denotes such a series of judgments as would be a "completion" of the national prosperity, or as should terminate it entirely.

Decreed - צריץ *châriyts* The word used here is derived from חרץ *châratz* to sharpen, or bring to a point; to rend, tear, lacerate; to be quick, active, diligent; and then to decide, determine, decree; because that which is decreed is brought to a point, or issue. - "Taylor." It evidently means here, that it was fixed upon or decreed in the mind of God, and that being thus decreed, it must certainly take place.

Shall overflow - שׁטף *shoṭēph* This word is usually applied to an inundation, when a stream rises above its banks and overflows the adjacent land; Isaiah 30:28; Isaiah 66:12; Psalm 78:20. Here it means evidently, that the threatened judgment would spread like an overflowing river through the land, and would accomplish the devastation which God had determined.

With righteousness - With justice, or in the infliction of justice. justice would abound or overflow, and the consequence would be, that the nation would be desolated.

Verse 23

For the Lord God of hosts - Note, Isaiah 1:9.

Shall make a consumption - The Hebrew of this verse might be rendered, ‹for its destruction is completed, and is determined on; the Lord Yahweh of hosts will execute it in the midst of the land.' Our translation, however, expresses the force of the original. It means that the destruction was fixed in the mind or purpose of God, and would be certainly executed. The translation by the Septuagint, which is followed in the main by the apostle Paul in quoting this passage, is somewhat different. ‹For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness, for a short work will the Lord make in the whole habitable world' - ἐν τῇ οἰκουμένῃ ὅλῃ *en tē oikoumenē holē* as quoted by Paul, ‹upon the earth' - ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς *epi tēs gēs* For the manner in which this passage is quoted by Paul, see the notes at Romans 9:27-28.

In the midst of all the land - That is, the land of Israel for the threatened judgment extended no further.

Verse 24

Therefore … - In this verse the prophet returns to the main subject of this prophecy, which is to comfort the people of Jerusalem with the assurance that the army of the Assyrian would be destroyed.

O my people - An expression of tenderness, showing that God regarded them as his children, and notwithstanding the judgments that he would bring upon them for their sins In the midst of severe judgments, God speaks the language of tenderness; and, even when he punishes, has toward his people the feelings of a father; Hebrews 12:5-11.

That dwelleth in Zion - literally, in mount Zion; but here taken for the whole city of Jerusalem; see the note at Isaiah 1:8.

Be not afraid … - For his course shall be arrested, and he shall be repelled and punished; Isaiah 10:25-27.

He shall smite thee - He shall, indeed, smite thee, but shall not utterly destroy thee.

And shall lift up his staff - Note, Isaiah 10:5. The "staff" here is regarded as an instrument of punishment; compare the note at Isaiah 9:4; and the sense is, that by his invasion, and by his exactions, he would oppress and punish the nation.

After the manner of Egypt - Hebrew, ‹In the way of Egypt.‘ Some interpreters have supposed that this means that Sennacherib would oppress and afflict the Jews in his going down to Egypt, or on his way there to attack the Egyptians. But the more correct interpretation is that which is expressed in our translation - "after the manner of Egypt." That is, the nature of his oppressions shall be like those which the Egyptians under Pharaoh inflicted on the Jews. There are "two" ideas evidently implied here.

(1) That the oppression would be heavy and severe. Those which their fathers experienced in Egypt were exceedingly burdensome and cruel. So it would be in the calamities that the Assyrian would bring upon them. But,

(2) Their fathers had been delivered from the oppressions of the Egyptians. And so it would be now. The Assyrian would oppress them; but God would deliver and save them. The phrase, ‹in the way of,‘ is used to denote "after the manner of," or, as an example, in Amos 4:10, ‹I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt;‘ Hebrew, ‹In the way of Egypt;‘ compare Ezekiel 20:30.

Verse 25

For yet a very little while - This is designed to console them with the hope of deliverance. The threatened invasion was brief and was soon ended by the pestilence that swept off the greater part of the army of the Assyrian.

The indignation shall cease - The anger of God against his offending people shall come to an end; his purposes of chastisement shall be completed; and the land shall be delivered.

In their destruction - על־תבליתם *ʿal -tabelîytām* from בלה *bâlâh* to wear out; to consume; to be annihilated. It means here, that his anger would terminate in the entire annihilation of their power to injure them. Such was the complete overthrow of Sennacherib by the pestilence; 2 Kings 19:35. The word used here, occurs in this form in no other place in the Hebrew Bible, though the verb is used, and other forms of the noun. "The verb," Deuteronomy 7:4; Deuteronomy 29:5; Joshua 9:13; Nehemiah 9:21, … "Nouns," Ezekiel 23:43; Isaiah 38:17; Jeremiah 38:11-12; Isaiah 17:14, et al.

Verse 26

And the Lord of hosts shall stir up - Or shall raise up that which shall rove as a scourge to him.

A scourge for him - That is, that which shall punish him. The scourge, or rod, is used to denote severe punishment of any kind. The nature of this punishment is immediately specified.

According to the slaughter of Midian - That is, as the Midianites were discomfitcd and punished. There is reference here, doubtless, to the discomfiture and slaughter of the Midianites by Gideon, as recorded in Judges 7:24-25. That was signal and entire; and the prophet means to say, that the destruction of the Assyrian would be also signal and total. The country of Midian, or Madian, was on the east side of the Elanitic branch of the Red Sea; but it extended also north along the desert of mount Seir to the country of the Moabites; see the note at Isaiah 60:6.

At the rock of Oreb - At this rock, Gideon killed the two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb Judges 7:25; and from this circumstance, probably, the name was given to the rock: Leviticus 11:15; Deuteronomy 14:14. It was on the east side of the Jordan.

And as his rod … - That is, as God punished the Egyptians in the Red Sea.

So shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt - As God overthrew the Egyptians in the Red Sea, so shall he overthrow and destroy the Assyrian. By these two comparisons, therefore, the prophet represents the complete destruction of the Assyrian army. In both of these cases, the

enemies of the Jews had been completely overthrown, and so it would be in regard to the hosts of the Assyrian.

Verse 27

His burden shall be taken away - The oppressions and exactions of the Assyrian.

From off thy shoulder - We bear a burden on the shoulder; and hence, any grievous exaction or oppression is represented as borne upon the shoulder.

And his yoke … - Another image denoting deliverance from oppression and calamity.

And the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing - In the interpretation of these words, expositors have greatly differed. The Hebrew is literally, ‹From the face of oil,‘ מפני -שמן *mîpeney -shāmen* The Vulgate renders it, literally, *a facie olei*. The Septuagint, ‹His fear shall be taken from thee, and his yoke from thy shoulders.‘ The Syraic, ‹His yoke shall be broken before the oxen.‘ The Chaldee Paraphrase, ‹The people shall be broken before the Messiah?‘ Lowth renders it, ‹The yoke shall perish from off our shoulders;‘ following the Septuagint. Grotius suggests that it means that the yoke which the Assyrians had imposed upon the Jews would be broken by Hezekiah, the king who had been annointed with oil. Jarchi also supposes that it refers to one who was anointed - to the king; and many interpreters have referred it to the Messiah, as the anointed of God. Vitringa supposes that the Holy Spirit is here intended.

Kimchi supposes, that the figure is derived from the effect of oil on wood in destroying its consistency, and loosening its fibres; and that the expression means, that the yoke would be broken or dissolved as if it were penetrated with oil. But this is ascribing a property to oil which it does not possess. Dr. Seeker supposes that, instead of “oil,” the text should read “shoulder,” by a slight change in the Hebrew. But for this conjectural reading there is no authority. Cocceius supposes, that the word “oil” here means “fatness,” and is used to denote prosperity and wealth, and that the prophet means to say, that the Assyrian would be corrupted and destroyed by the great amount of wealth which he would amass. The rabbis say, that this deliverance was performed on account of the great quantity of oil which Hezekiah caused to be consumed in the synagogues for the study of the law - a striking instance of the weak and puerile methods of interpretation which they have everywhere evinced. I confess that none of

these explanations seem to me to be satisfactory, and that I do not know what is the meaning of the expression.

Verse 28

He is come to Aiath - These verses Isaiah 10:28-32 contain a description of the march of the army of Sennacherib as he approached Jerusalem to invest it. The description is expressed with great beauty. It is rapid and hurried, and is such as one would give who was alarmed by the sudden and near approach of an enemy - as if while the narrator was stating that the invader had arrived at one place, he had already come to another; or, as if while one messenger should say, that he had come to one place, another should answer that he was still nearer, and a third, that he was nearer still, so as to produce universal consternation. The prophet speaks of this as if he "saw" it (compare the note at Nehemiah 11:31. Doubtless, the same city is meant. It was situated near Bethel eastward; Joshua 7:2. It was at this place that Joshua was repulsed on account of the sin of Achaz, though the city was afterward taken by Joshua, the king seized and hanged, and the city destroyed. It was afterward rebuilt, and is often mentioned; Ezra 2:28; Nehemiah 7:32. It is called by the Septuagint, Ἀγγαι *Angai* and by Josephus, "Aina." In the time of Eusebius and Jerome, its site and scanty ruins were still pointed out, not far distant from Bethel toward the east. The name, however, has at present wholly perished, and no trace of the place now remains. It is probable that it was near the modern Deir Diwan, about three miles to the east of Bethel: "see" Robinson's "Bib. Researches," ii. pp. 119,312,313.

He is passed to Migron - That is, he does not remain at Aiath, but is advancing rapidly toward Jerusalem. This place is mentioned in 1 Samuel 14:2, from which it appears that it was near Gibeah, and was in the boundaries of the tribe of Benjamin, to the southwest of Ai and Bethel. No trace of this place now remains.

At Michmash - This was a town within the tribe of Ephraim, on the confines of Benjamin; Ezra 2:27; Nehemiah 7:31. This place is now called Mukhmas, and is situated on a slope or low ridge of land between two small wadys, or water-courses. It is now desolate, but bears the marks of having been a much larger and stronger place than the other towns in the neigchourhood. There are many foundations of hewn stones; and some columns are lying among them. It is about nine miles to the northeast of

Jerusalem, and in the immediate neighborhood of Gibeah and Ramah. - Robinson‘s “Bib. Researches,” ii. p. 117. In the time of Eusebius it was a large village. - “Onomast.” Art. “Machmas.”

He hath laid up his carriages - Hebrew, ‹He hath deposited his weapons.‘ The word rendered “hath laid up” - יפקיד *yapeqîyd* - may possibly mean, “he reviewed,” or he took an account of; that is, he made that the place of “review” preparatory to his attack on Jerusalem. Jerome says, that the passage means, that he had such confidence of taking Jerusalem, that he deposited his armor at Michmash, as being unnecessary in the siege of Jerusalem. I think, however, that the passage means simply, that he had made Michmash one of his “stations” to which he had come, and that the expression ‹he hath deposited his armor there,‘ denotes merely that he had come there as one of his stations, and had pitched his camp in that place on the way to Jerusalem. The English word “carriage,” sometimes meant formerly, “that which is carried,” baggage, vessels, furniture, etc. - “Webster.” In this sense it is used in this place, and also in 1 Samuel 17:22; Acts 21:15.

Verse 29

They are gone over the passage - The word “passage” (מעברה *ma‘ebîrâh*) may refer to any passage or ford of a stream, a shallow part of a river where crossing was practicable; or it may refer to any narrow pass, or place of passing in mountains. The Chaldee Paraphrase renders this, ‹They have passed the Jordan;‘ but this cannot be the meaning, as all the transactions referred to here occurred in the vicinity of Jerusalem, and long after they had crossed the Jordan. In 1 Samuel 13:23, the ‹passage of Michmash‘ is mentioned as the boundary of the garrison of the Philistines. Between Jeb‘a and Mukhmas there is now a steep, precipitous valley, which is probably the ‹passage‘ here referred to. This wady, or valley, runs into another that joins it on the north, and then issues out upon the plain not far from Jericho. In the valley are two hills of a conical form, having steep rocky sides, which are probably the rocks mentioned, in connection with Jonathan‘s adventure, as a narrow defile or way between the rock Bozez on the one side, and Seneh on tbe other; 1 Samuel 14:4-5. This valley appears at a later time to have been the dividing line between the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin, for Geba on the south side of this valley was the northern limit of Judah and Benjamin 2 Kings 23:8; while Bethel on its north side was on the southern border of Ephraim; Judges 16:1-2. - Robinson‘s “Bib.

Researches," ii. p. 116. Of course it was an important place, and could be easily guarded - like the strait of Thermopylae. By his having passed this place is denoted an advance toward Jerusalem, showing that nothing impeded his progress, and that he was rapidly hastening with his army to the city.

They have taken up their lodging at Geba - They have pitched their camp there, being entirely through the defile of Michmash. Hebrew, ‹Geba is a lodging place for us;‘ that is, for the Assyrians. Perhaps, however. there is an error in the common Hebrew text here, and that it should be למו *lāmô* ‹for them,‘ instead of לנו *lānû* ‹for us.‘ The Septuagint and the Chaldee so read it, and so our translators have understood it. "Geba" here is not be confounded with ‹Gibeah of Saul,‘ mentioned just after. It was in the tribe of Benjamin 1 Kings 15:22; and was on the line, or nearly on the line, of Judah, so as to be its northern boundary; 2 Kings 23:8. It was not far from Gibeah, or Gibeon. There are at present no traces of the place known.

Ramah - This city was in the tribe of Benjamin. It was between Geba and Gibea. It was called "Ramah," from its being on elevated ground; compare the note at Matthew 2:18. "Ramah," now called "er-Ram," lies on a high hill a little east of the road from Jerusalem to Bethel. It is now a miserable village, with few houses, and these in the summer mostly deserted. There are here large square stones, and also columns scattered about in the fields, indicating an ancient place of some importance. A small mosque is here with columns, which seems once to have been a church. Its situation is very conspicuous, and commands a fine prospect. It is near Gibeah, about six Roman miles from Jerusalem. So Jerome, "Commentary" in Hosea 5:8: ‹Rama quae est juxta Gabaa in septimo lapide a Jerosolymis sita.‘ Josephus places it at forty stadia from Jerusalem; "Ant." viii. 12,3.

Is afraid - Is terrified and alarmed at the approach of Sennacherib - a beautiful variation in the description, denoting his rapid and certain advance on the city of Jerusalem, spreading consternation everywhere.

Gibeah of Saul - This was called ‹Gibeah of Saul,‘ because it was the birthplace of Saul 1 Samuel 11:4; 1 Samuel 15:34; 2 Samuel 21:6; and to distinguish it from Gibea in the tribe of Judah Joshua 15:57; and also a Gibeah where Eleazar was burled; Joshua 24:33. Jerome mentions Gibeah as in his day level with the ground. - "Epis. 86, ad Eustoch." It has been almost wholly, since his time, unnoticed by travelers. It is probably the same as the modern village of Jeba, lying in a direction to the southwest of

Mukhmas. This village is small, and is half in ruins. Among these there are occasionally seen large hewn stones, indicating antiquity. There is here the ruin of a small tower almost solid, and a small building having the appearance of an ancient church. It is an elevated place from which several villages are visible. - Robinson‘s “Bib. Researches,” ii. p. 113.

Is fled - That is, the inhabitants have fled. Such was the consternation produced by the march of the army of Sennacherib, that the city was thrown into commotion, and left empty.

Verse 30

Lift up thy voice - That is, cry aloud from alarm and terror. The prophet here changes the manner of describing the advance of Sennacherib. He had described his rapid march from place to place Isaiah 10:28-29, and the consternation at Ramah and Gibeah; he now changes the mode of description, and calls on Gallim to lift up her voice of alarm at the approach of the army, so that it might reverberate among the hills, and be heard by neighboring towns.

Daughter - A term often applied to a beautiful city or town; see the note at Isaiah 1:8.

Gallim - This was a city of Benjamin, north of Jerusalem. It is mentioned only in this place and in 1 Samuel 25:44. No traces of this place are now to be found.

Cause it to be heard - That is, cause thy voice to be heard. Raise the cry of distress and alarm.

Unto Laish - There was a city of this name in the northern part of Palestine, in the bounds of the tribe of Dan; Judges 18:7, Judges 18:29. But it is contrary to all the circumstances of the case to suppose, that the prophet refers to a place in the north of Palestine. It was probably a small village in the neighborhood of Gallim. There are at present no traces of the village; in Joshua 21:18, where Jeremiah was born; Jeremiah 1:1. ‹Anata, which is, doubtless, the same place here intended, is situated on a broad ridge of land, at the distance of one hour and a quarter, or about three miles, from Jerusalem. Josephus describes Anathoth as twenty stadia distant from Jerusalem (Ant. x. 7,3); and Eusebius and Jerome mention it as about three miles to the north of the city. ‹Anata appears to have been once a walled town, and a place of strength. Portions of the wall still remain, built of large hewn stones, and apparently ancient, as are also the foundations of some of the houses. The houses are few, and the people are poor and miserable.

From this point there is an extensive view over the whole eastern slope of the mountainous country of Benjamin, including all the valley of the Jordan, and the northern part of the Dead Sea. From this place, also, several of the villages here mentioned are visible. - Robinson‘s “Bib. Researches,” ii. pp. 109-111.

The word “poor,” applied to it here (עניה *ʿănîyâh*) denotes afflicted, oppressed; and the language is that of pity, on account of the impending calamity, and is not designed to be descriptive of its ordinary state. The language in the Hebrew is a paranomasia, a species of writing quite common in the sacred writings; see Genesis 1:2; Genesis 4:12; Isaiah 28:10, Isaiah 28:13; Joel 1:15; Isaiah 32:7; Micah 1:10, Micah 1:14; Zephaniah 2:4; compare Stuart‘s “Heb. Gram.” Ed. 1, Section 246. The figure abounded not only in the Hebrew but among the Orientals generally. Lowth reads this, ‹Answer her, O Anathoth;‘ following in this the Syriac version, which reads the word rendered “poor” (עניה *ʿănîyâh*) as a verb from ענה *ʿânâh* to answer, or respond, and supposes that the idea is retained of an “echo,” or reverberation among the hills, from which he thinks “Anathoth,” from the same verb, took its name. But the meaning of the Hebrew text is that given in our translation. The simple idea is that of neighboring cities and towns lifting up the voice of alarm; at the approach of the enemy.

Verse 31

Madmenah - This city is mentioned nowhere else. The city of Madmanna, or Medemene, mentioned in Joshua 15:31, was in the bounds of the tribe of Simeon, and was far south, toward Gaza. It cannot be the place intended here.

Is removed - Or, the inhabitants have fled from fear; see Isaiah 10:29.

Gebim - This place is unknown. It is nowhere else mentioned.

Gather themselves to flee - A description of the alarm prevailing at the approach of Sennacherib.

Verse 32

As yet shall he remain - This is still a description of his advancing toward Jerusalem. He would make a station at Nob and remain there a day, meaning, perhaps, “only” one day, such would be his impatience to attack and destroy Jerusalem.

At Nob - Nob was a city of Benjamin, inhabited by priests; Nehemiah 11:32. When David was driven away by Saul, he came to this city, and

received supplies from Ahimelech the priest; 1 Samuel 21:1-6. Nob must have been situated somewhere upon the ridge of the mount of Olives, to the northeast of the city. So Jerome, professedly from Hebrew tradition, says, ‹Stans in oppidulo Nob et procul urbem conspiciens Jerusalem.‘ - “Commentary *in loc*.” Messrs. Robinson and Smith sought all along the ridge of the mount of Olives, from the Damascus road to the summit opposite to the city, for some traces of an ancient site which might be regarded as the place of Nob; but without the slightest success. - “Bib. Researches,” ii. p. 150.

He shall shake his hand - That is, in the attitude of menace, or threatening. This language implies, that the city of Nob was so near to Jerusalem that the latter city could be seen from it; and the description denotes, that at the sight of Jerusalem Sennacherib would be full of indignation, and utter against it the threat of speedy and complete ruin.

The mount of the daughter of Zion - See the note at Isaiah 1:8. The Chaldee renders this, ‹He shall come, and stand in Nob, the city of the priests, over against the wall of Jerusalem, and shall answer and say to his army, “Is not this that city of Jerusalem against which I have assembled all my armies, and on account of which I have made an exaction on all my provinces? And lo, it is less and more feeble than any of the defenses of the people which I have subjected in the strength of my hand.” Over against that he shall stand, and shake his head, and shall bring his hand against the mount of the sanctuary which is Zion, and against the court which is in Jerusalem.‘ Jarchi and Kimchi say, that Nob was so near to Jerusalem that it could be seen from thence; and hence, this is mentioned as the last station of the army of the Assyrian, the end of his march, and where the prize seemed to be within his grasp.

Verse 33

Behold, the Lord … - The prophet had described, in the previous verses, the march of the Assyrians toward Jerusalem, station by station. He had accompanied him in his description until he had arrived in full sight of the city, which was the object of all his preparation. He had described the consternation which was felt at his approach in all the smaller towns. Nothing had been able to stand before him; and now, flushed with success, and confident that Jerusalem would fall, he stands before the devoted city. But here, the prophet announces that his career was to close; and here his arms to be stayed. Here he was to meet with an overthrow, and Jerusalem

would still be safe. This is the design of the prophecy, to comfort the inhabitants of Jerusalem with the assurance that they still would be safe.

Will lop the bough - The word "bough" here (פארה *pû'râh*) is from פאר *pâ'ar* to adorn, to beautify; and is given to a branch or bough of a tree on account of its beauty. It is, therefore, descriptive of that which is beautiful, honored, proud; and is applied to the Assyrian on account of his pride and magnificence. In Isaiah 10:18-19, the prophet had described the army of the Assyrian as a magnificent forest. Here he says that the glory of that army should be destroyed, as the vitality and beauty of the waving bough of a tree is quickly destroyed when it is lopped with an axe. There can scarcely be conceived a description, that would more beautifully represent the fading strength of the army of the Assyrian than this.

With terror - In such a way as to inspire terror.

The high ones of stature - The chief men and officers of the army.

Verse 34

And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest - The army of the Assyrians, described here as a thick, dense forest; compare Isaiah 10:18-19.

With iron - As a forest is cut down with an axe, so the prophet uses this phrase here, to keep up and carry out the figure. The army was destroyed with the pestilence 2 Kings 19:35; but it fell as certainly as a forest falls before the axe.

And Lebanon - Lebanon is here evidently descriptive of the army of the Assyrian, retaining the idea of a beautiful and magnificent forest. Thus, in Ezekiel 31:3, it is said, ‹the king of the Assyrians was a cedar of Lebanon with fair branches.‘ Lebanon is usually applied to the Jews as descriptive of them (Jeremiah 22:6, Jeremiah 22:23; Zechariah 10:10; 11: l), but it is evidently applied here to the Assyrian army; and the sense is, that that army should be soon and certainly destroyed, and that, therefore, the inhabitants of Jerusalem had no cause of alarm; see the notes at Isaiah 37.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Introduction

This chapter Isaiah 10:5, … He had described the deliverance from that danger; Isaiah 10:33-34. The mention of this deliverance directs his thoughts to that far greater deliverance which would take place under the Messiah; and immediately Isaiah 11:1-5.

(ii) The peace and prosperity which would follow from his advent; Isaiah 11:6-9.

(iii) The fact that, the Gentiles would he called to partake of the privileges of his reign; Isaiah 11:10.

(iv) The restoration of the exiles to their native land under his reign; Isaiah 11:11-12.

(v) The fact, that his reign would put a period to dissensions and strifes between the contending nations of the Jews; Isaiah 11:13; and

(vi) The universal prevalence of his religion, and the deliverance of his people; Isaiah 11:14-16.

Verse 1

And there shall come forth a rod - In the previous chapter, the prophet had represented the Assyrian monarch and his army under the image of a dense and flourishing forest, with all its glory and grandeur. In opposition to this, he describes the illustrious personage who is the subject of this chapter, under the image of a slender twig or shoot, sprouting up from the root of a decayed and fallen tree. Between the Assyrian, therefore, and the person who is the subject of this chapter, there is a most striking and beautiful contrast. The one was at first magnificent - like a vast spreading forest - yet should soon fall and decay; the other was the little sprout of a decayed tree, which should yet rise, expand and flourish.

A rod - (חטר *choṭîr*). This word occurs in but one other place; Proverbs 14:3: ‹In the mouth of the foolish is a “rod” of pride.‘ Here it means, evidently, a branch, a twig, a shoot, such as starts up from the roots of a

decayed tree, and is synonymous with the word rendered "branch" (צמח *tsemach*) in Isaiah 4:2; see the Note on that place.

Out of the stem - (מגזע *mîgezaʿ*). This word occurs but three times in the Old Testament; see Job 14:8; where it is rendered "stock:"

Though the root thereof wax old in the earth,

And the stock thereof die in the ground;

And in Isaiah 40:24: ‹Yea, their "stock" shall not take root in the earth.‘ It means, therefore, the stock or stump of a tree that has been cut down - a stock, however, which may not be quite dead, but where it may send up a branch or shoot from its roots. It is beautifully applied to an ancient family that is fallen into decay, yet where there may be a descendant that shall rise and flourish; as a tree may fall and decay, but still there may be vitality in the root, and it shall send up a tender germ or sprout.

Of Jesse - The father of David. It means, that he who is here spoken of should be of the family of Jesse, or David. Though Jesse had died, and though the ancient family of David would fall into decay, yet there would arise from that family an illustrious descendant. The beauty of this description is apparent, if we bear in recollection that, when the Messiah was born, the ancient and much honored family of David had fallen into decay; that the mother of Jesus, though pertaining to that family, was poor, obscure, and unknown; and that, to all appearance, the glory of the family had departed. Yet from that, as from a long-decayed root in the ground, he should spring who would restore the family to more than its ancient glory, and shed additional luster on the honored name of Jesse.

And a branch - (נצר *nêtser*). A twig, branch, or shoot; a slip, scion, or young sucker of a tree, that is selected for transplanting, and that requires to be watched with special care. The word occurs but four times; Isaiah 60:21: ‹They shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting;‘ Isaiah 14:19: ‹But thou art cast out of thy grave as an abominable branch;‘ Daniel 11:7. The word rendered branch in Jeremiah 23:5; Jeremiah 33:15, is a different word in the original (צמח *tsemach*), though meaning substantially the same thing. The word "branch" is also used by our translators, in rendering several other Hebrew words; "see" Taylor‘s "Concordance." Here the word is synonymous with that which is rendered "rod" in the previous part of the verse - a shoot, or twig, from the root of a decayed tree.

Out of his roots - As a shoot starts up from the roots of a decayed tree. The Septuagint renders this, ‹And a flower (ἄνθος *anthos*) shall arise from

the root.‘ The Chaldee, ‹And a king shall proceed from the sons of Jesse, and the Messiah from his sons‘ sons shall arise;‘ showing conclusively that the ancient Jews referred this to the Messiah.

That this verse, and the subsequent parts of the chapter, refer to the Messiah, may be argued from the following considerations:

(1) The fact that it is expressly applied to him in the New Testament. Thus Paul, in Romans 15:12, quotes the tenth verse of this chapter as expressly applicable to the times of the Messiah.

(2) The Chaldee Paraphrase shows, that this was the sense which the ancient Jews put upon the passage. That paraphrase is of authority, only to show that this was the sense which appeared to be the true one by the ancient interpreters.

(3) The description in the chapter is not applicable to any other personage than the Messiah. Grotius supposes that the passage refers to Hezekiah; though, ‹in a more sublime sense,‘ to the Messiah. Others have referred it to Zerubbabel. But none of the things here related apply to either, except the fact that they had a descent from the family of Jesse; for neither of those families had fallen into the decay which the prophet here describes.

(4) The peace, prosperity, harmony and order, referred to in the subsequent portions of the chapter, are not descriptive of any portion of the reign of Hezekiah.

(5) The terms and dcscriptions here accord with other portions of the Scriptures, as applicable to the Messiah. Thus Jeremiah Jeremiah 23:5; Jeremiah 33:15 describes the Messiah under the similitude of a “branch, a germ or shoot - using, indeed, a different Hebrew word, but retaining the same idea and image; compare Zechariah 3:8. It accords also with the description by Isaiah of the same personage in Isaiah 4:2; see the note on the place.

(6) I may add, that nearly all commentators have referred this to the Messiah; and, perhaps, it would not be possible to find greater unanimity in regard to the interpretation of any passage of Scripture than on this.

Verse 2

And the Spirit of the Lord - The Spirit of Yahweh. Chaldee, ‹And there shall rest upon him the spirit of prophecy from before Yahweh.‘ In the previous verse, the prophet had announced his origin and his birth. In this, he proceeds to describe his extraordinary endowments, as eminently holy, pure, and wise. There can be no doubt that reference is here had to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the sacred Trinity, as descending upon him in the fullness of his influences, and producing in him perfect wisdom, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. The Spirit of Yahweh shall rest upon him - a Spirit producing wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, etc. All these are lit the Scriptures traced to the agency of the Holy Spirit; see 1 Corinthians 12:8-11. The meaning here is, that the Messiah should be endowed with these eminent prophetic gifts and qualifications for his ministry by the agency of the Holy Spirit. It was by that Spirit that the prophets had been inspired (see 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16); and as the Messiah was to be a prophet Deuteronomy 18:15, Deuteronomy 18:18, there was a fitness that he should be endowed in the same manner. If it be asked how one, who was divine in his own nature, could be thus endowed by the aid of the Spirit, the answer is, that he was also to be a man descended from the honored line of David, and that as a man he might be furnished for his work by the agency of the Holy Spirit. His human nature was kept pure; his mind was made eminently wise; his heart always retained the fear and love of God, and there is no absurdity in supposing that these extraordinary endowments were to be traced to God. That he was thus under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is abundantly taught in the New Testament. Thus, in Matthew 3:16, the Holy Spirit is represented as descending on him at his baptism, In John 3:34, it is said, ‹For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him;‘ compare Colossians 1:19.

Shall rest upon him - That is, shall descend on him, and remain with him. It shall not merely come upon him, but shall attend him permanently; compare Numbers 11:25-26.

The spirit of wisdom - The spirit producing wisdom, or making him wise. Wisdom consists in the choice of the best means to secure the best ends. This attribute is often given to the Messiah in the New Testament, and was always evinced by him; compare 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:17; Colossians 2:3: ‹In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.‘

And understanding - The difference between the words here rendered wisdom and understanding is, that the former denotes wisdom properly; and the latter, that judgment resulting from wisdom, by which we distinguish things, or decide on their character.

The spirit of counsel - That by which be shall be qualified to "give" counsel or advice; the qualification of a public instructor and guide; see the note at Isaiah 9:6.

And might - Strength, vigor, energy; that strength of heart and purpose which will enable a man to meet difficulties, to encounter dangers, to be bold, open, and fearless in the discharge of his duties. It is not necessary to remark, that this characteristic was found in an eminent degree in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Of knowledge - That is, the knowledge of the attributes and plans of Yahweh; compare Matthew 11:27: ‹Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son.‘ John 1:18: ‹No man hath seen God at I any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him;‘ 1 John 5:20.

And of the fear of the Lord - The fear of Yahweh is often used to denote piety in general, as consisting in a reverence for the divine commands, and a dread of offending him; "that is," a desire to please him, which is piety; compare Job 28:28; Psalm 19:9; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 3:13; Proverbs 15:33; Proverbs 19:23. That this characteristic was found eminently in the Lord Jesus, it is not necessary to attempt to prove.

Verse 3

And shall make him of quick understanding - (והריחו *vahărîychô*) The Septuagint renders this, ‹And the spirit of the fear of God shall fill him.‘ The Chaldee, ‹And the Lord shall draw him near to him in his fear.‘ The Syriac, ‹And he shall be resplendent (like the sun, or the stars) in the fear of the Lord.‘ The Hebrew word used here is probably derived from ריח *rêyach* used only in Hiphil, "to smell;" and is kindred with רוח *rûach* "wind, breath," for fragrant substances "breathe out" an odor. - "Gesenius." It then denotes "to take delight in smelling" Exodus 30:38; Leviticus 26:31; and thence, by an easy transition, to take delight in anything; Amos 5:21. The reason is, that the objects of smell are usually pleasant and agreeable; and especially such as were the aromatics used in public worship. The sense here is, probably, that he would take pleasure in the fear of Yahweh, that is,

in piety, and in devoting himself to his service. The interpretation given in our translation, is that given by many expositors; though that above suggested is probably the correct one. The word is used to denote "pleasure" in a thing; it is not used anywhere, it is believed, to denote a quick understanding; compare Exodus 5:21; Philemon 4:18. The idea which is conveyed by our translators is, probably, derived from "the discernment of the quality" of objects by an acute sense of smell, and hence, they interpreted the word to denote an acute discrimination of any objects.

And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes - He sha 1 not judge of things by their external appearance. or with partiality. This is language which is applicable to a magistrate, and is spoken of the Messiah as the descendant of David, and as sitting on his throne as a ruler of his people. He who judges ‹after the sight of his eyes,' does it according to external appearances, showing favor to rank, to the rich, and the great; or judging as things "appear" without a close and careful inquiry into their true nature and bearings; compare John 7:24: ‹Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment;' Deuteronomy 1:16-17.

Neither reprove - יוכיח *yôkiyach* This word means "to show, to prove; to correct, reprove, convince; to reproach, or censure; to punish; to judge, decide, etc." Here it is evidently used as synonymous with ‹shall he judge' in the former part of the parallelism - retaining the idea of a just judge, who decides not according to the hearing of the ears, but according to justice.

After the hearing of his ears - Not by plausible statements, and ingenious defenses, but by weighing evidence, and by an impartial examination of the true merits of the case. This belonged to the Lord Jesus, because,

(1) He was never influenced by any undue regard to rank, honor, or office. His opinions were always impartial; his judgments without bias or favoritism.

(2) He was able to discern the true merits of every case. He knew what was in man, saw the true state of the heart, and, therefore, was not deceived or imposed upon as human judges are; see John 2:24-25; compare Revelation 2:28; John 6:64.

Verse 4

Shall he judge the poor - That is, he shall see that impartial justice is done them; he shall not take part with the rich against the poor, but shall

show that he is the friend of justice. This is the quality of a just and upright magistrate, and this character the Lord Jesus everywhere evinced. He chose his disciples from among the poor; he condescended to be their companion and friend; he provided for their needs; and he pronounced their condition blessed; Matthew 5:3. There may be a reference here to the poor in spirit - the humble, the penitent; but the main idea is, that he would not be influenced by any undue regard for the higher ranks of life, but would be the friend and patron of the poor.

And reprove - הוכיח *hôkiyach* And judge, decide, or argue for; that is, he shall be their friend and their impartial judge; Isaiah 11:3.

With equity - With uprightness, or uncorrupted integrity.

For the meek of the earth - ענוי־ארץ *ʿanevēy 'ārets* For the humble, the lower class; referring to those who were usually passed by, or oppressed by those in power.

And he shall smite the earth - By the "earth" here, or the land, is meant evidently "the wicked," as the following member of the parallelism shows. Perhaps it is intended to be implied, that the earth, when he should come, would be eminently depraved; which was the fact. The characteristic here is that of an upright judge or prince, who would punish the wicked. To "smite" the earth, or the wicked, is expressive of punishment; and this characteristic is elsewhere attributed to the Messiah; see Psalm 2:9-12; Revelation 2:27. The trait is that of a just, upright, impartial exercise of power - such as would be manifested in the defense of the poor and the innocent, and in the punishment of the proud and the guilty.

With the rod of his mouth - The word שׁבט *shêbet* rendered here ‹rod,‘ denotes properly a stick, or staff; a rod for chastisement or correction Proverbs 10:13; Proverbs 13:24; Job 9:34; Job 21:9; the staff, or scepter of a ruler - as an emblem of office; a measuring rod; a spear, etc.; Note, Isaiah 10:5. It is not elsewhere applied to the mouth, though it is often used in other connections. It means that which goes out of the mouth - a word command threatening decision; and it is implied that it would go forth to pronounce sentence of condemnation, and to punish. His word would be so just, impartial, and authoritative, that the effect would be to overwhelm the wicked. In a sense similar to this, Christ is said to have been seen by John, when ‹out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword‘ Revelation 1:16; that is, his commands and decisions were so authoritative, and so certain in their execution, as to be like a sharp sword; compare Hebrews 4:12; Isaiah

49:2: ‹And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword.‘ The discriminating preaching, the pungent discourses, the authoritative commands of the Lord Jesus, when on earth, showed, and his judicial decisions in the day of judment will show, the manner of the fulfillment of the prediction.

And with the breath of his lips - This is synonymous with the previous member of the parallelism. ‹The breath of his lips‘ means that which goes forth from his lips - his doctrines, his commands, his decisions.

Shall he slay the wicked - That is, he shall condemn the wicked; or, he shall sentence them to punishment. This is descriptive of a prince or ruler, who by his commands and decisions effectually subdues and punishes the wicked; that is, he does justice to all. Grotius interprets this, ‹by his prayers,‘ referring it to Hezekiah, and to the influence of his prayers in destroying the Assyrians. The Chaldee Paraphrast translates it, ‹And by the word of his lips he shall slay the impious Armillus.‘ By "Armillus," the Jews mean the last great enemy of their nation, who would come after Gog and Magog and wage furious wars, and who would slay the Messiah Ben Ephraim, whom the Jews expect, but who would be himself slain by the rod of the Messiah Ben David, or the son of David. - "Castell."

Verse 5

And righteousness shall be the gridle of his loins - The sense of this verse is plain. He will always exhibit himself as a just and faithful king. "The girdle of the loins" refers to the cincture, or band, with which the ancients girded themselves. A part of their dress consisted of an outward, loose, flowing robe. This robe it was necessary to gird up, or to confine close to the body in active labor, or in running; and the meaning of the figure used here is, probably, that the virtues of righteousness and justice would adhere to him as closely and inseparably as the garment does to the body to which it was bound. The figure of representing the virtues as clothing, or describing them as parts of dress with which we are invested, is common in the Scriptures:

I put on righteousness, and it clothes me;
My judgment was as a robe and a diadem.
Job 29:14.
I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,
My soul shall be joyful in my God;

For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation,

He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness,

As a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments,

And as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.
Isaiah 61:10.

Compare Revelation 19:8, and Paul‘s beautiful description in Ephesians 6:13-17. In like manner, vice and wickedness are sometimes represented as so closely adhering to a man as to be a part of his very clothing; Psalm 109:18-19:

He clothed himself with cursing, like as with a garment.
Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him,
And for a girdle, wherewith he is girded continually.

The Chaldee renders this, ‹And the just shall be round about him on every side - סחור סחור *sehôr sehôr* - and the servants of truth shall come near to him.‘ The idea is, that he shall be distinguished for justice and truth, and that a zeal for these shall make him strong and active in executing the purposes of his reign. This closes the description of the “personal” qualities of the Messiah. The account of the effects of his reign follows in the subsequent verses.

Verse 6

The wolf also - In this, and the following verses, the prophet describes the effect of his reign in producing peace and tranquility on the earth. The description is highly poetical, and is one that is common in ancient writings in describing a golden age. The two leading ideas are those of “peace” and “security.” The figure is taken from the condition of animals of all descriptions living in a state of harmony, where those which are by nature defenseless, and which are usually made the prey of the strong, are suffered to live in security. By nature the wolf preys upon the lamb, and the leopard upon the kid, and the adder is venomous, and the bear, and the cow, and the lion, and the ox, cannot live together. But if a state of things should arise, where all this hostility would cease; where the wild animals would lay aside their ferocity, and where the feeble and the gentle would be safe; where the adder would cease to be venomous, and where all would be so mild and harmless that a little child would be safe, and could lead even the most ferocious animals, that state would represent the reign of the Messiah.

Under his dominion, such a change would be produced as that those who were by nature violent, severe, and oppressive; those whose disposition is illustrated by the ferocious and bloodthirsty propensities of the lion and the leopard, and by the poison of the adder, would be changed and subdued, and would be disposed to live in peace and harmony with others. This is the "general" idea of the passage. We are not to cut the interpretation to the quick, and to press the expressions to know what particular class of people are represented by the lion, the bear, or the adder. The "general" image that is before the prophet‘s mind is that of peace and safety, "such as that would be" if a change were to be produced in wild animals, making them tame, and peaceful, and harmless.

This description of a golden age is one that is common in Oriental writers, where the wild beasts are represented as growing tame; where serpents are harmless; and where all is plenty, peace, and happiness. Thus Jones, in his commentary on Asiatic poetry, quotes from an Arabic poet, "Ibn Onein," p. 380:

Justitia class="translit"> a qua mansuetus fit lupus fame astrictus *Esuriens licet hinnulum candidurn videat* -

‹Justice, by which the ravening wolf, driven by hunger, becomes tame, although he sees a white kid.‘ Thus, also, Ferdusi, a Persian poet:

Rerum Dominus Mahmud rex potens Ad cujus aquam potum veniunt simul agnus et lupus -

‹Mahmud, mighty king, lord of events, to whose fountain the lamb and the wolf come to drink.‘ Thus Virgil, Eclogue iv. 21:

Ipsae lactae domum referent distenta capellae
Ubera; nec magnos metuent armenta leones -
Home their full udders, goats, unurged shall bear,
Nor shall the herd the lordly lion fear.
And immediately after:
Occidet et serpens, et fallax herba veneni
Occidet -
The snake, and poison‘s treacherous weed shall die.
Wrangham.
Again, Eclogue, v. 60:
Nec lupus insidias pecori, nec retia cervis
Ulla dolum mediantur: amat bonus otia Daphnis.
So also Horace, "Epod." 16:53,54:

Nec yespertinus circumgemit ursus ovile,
Nec intumescit alta viperis humus.

See also "Claudian," Lib. ii. v. 25ff; and Theocritus, Idyl xxiv. 84, as quoted by Gesenius and Rosenmuller.

These passages are beautiful, and highly poetic; but they do not equal the beauty of the prophet. There is an exquisite sweetness in the passage of Isaiah - in the picture which he has drawn - particularly in the introduction of the security of the young child, which does not occur in the quotations from the pagan poets.

That this passage is descriptive of the times of the Messiah, there can be no doubt. It has been a question, to what particular part of his reign the prophet has reference. Some have referred it to the time when he came, and to the influence of his gospel in mitigating the ferocity of his enemies, and ultimately disposing them to suffer Christens to live with them - the infuriated enemies of the cross, under the emblem of the wolf, the bear, the leopard, and the adder, becoming willing that the Christian, under the emblem of the lamb, and the kid, should live with them without molestation. This is the interpretation of Vitringa. Others have referred it to the Millennium - as descriptive of a state of happiness, peace, and universal security then. Others have referred it to the second coming of the Messiah, as descriptive of a time when it is supposed that he will reign personally on the earth, and when there shall be universal security and peace, and when the nature of animals shall be so far changed, that the ferocity of those which are wild and ravenous shall cease, and they shall become harmless to the defenseless. Without attempting to examine these opinions at length, we may, perhaps, express the sense of the passage by the following observations:

(1) The eye of the prophet is fixed upon the reign of the Messiah, not with reference to time, but with reference to the actual facts of that reign. He saw the scene pass before his mind in vision (see the Introduction, Section 7,3: (4.) (5.), and it is not the nature of such descriptions to mark the "time," but the order, the passing aspect of the scene. "Under the reign of the Messiah," he saw that this would occur. Looking down distant times, as on a beautiful landscape, he perceived, under the mild reign of the Prince of peace, a state of things which would be well represented by the wolf

dwelling with the lamb, the leopard crouching down with the kid, and a little child safe in their midst.

(2) It was, "in fact," partially fulfilled in the earliest times of the gospel, and has been everywhere. Under that gospel, the mad passions of men have been subdued; their wild ferocious nature has been changed; their love of conquest, and war, and blood taken away; and the change has been such as would be beautifully symbolized by the change of the disposition of the wolf and the leopard - suffering the innocent and the harmless to live with them in peace.

(3) The scene will not be fully realized until the reign of the Messiah shall be extended to all nations, and his gospel shall everywhere accomplish its full effects. The vision of Isaiah here has not yet received a full completion; nor will it until the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, Isaiah 11:9. The mind is, therefore, still directed onward. In future times, under the reign of the messiah, what is here described shall occur - a state of security, and peace, and happiness. Isaiah saw that splendid vision, as in a picture, pass before the mind; the wars, and persecutions, and trials of the Messiah's kingdom were, for a time at least, thrown into the back ground, or not represented, and, in that future time, he saw what is here represented. It has been partially fulfilled in all the changes which the Messiah's reign has made in the natural ferocity and cruelty of men; in all the peace which at any time the church has been permitted to enjoy; in all the revolutions promoting human safety, welfare, and happiness, which Christianity has produced. It is to receive the complete fulfillment - τὸ ἀποτελέσμα *to spotelesma* - only in that future time when the gospel shall be everywhere established on the earth. The essential thing, therefore, in the prophecy, is the representation of the peace, safety, and harmony which shall take place under the Messiah. So to speak, it was a taking out, and causing to pass before the mind of the prophet, all the circumstances of harmony, order, and love in his reign - as, in a beautiful panoramic view of a landscape, the beauties of the whole scene may be made to pass before the mind; the circumstances that might even then, if surveyed closely, give pain, were hid from the view, or lost in the loveliness of the whole scene.

(4) That it does not refer to any literal change in the nature of animals, so that the ferocity of the untamed shall be wholly laid aside, the disposition to prey on one another wholly cease, and the poisonous nature of the adder be destroyed, seems to me to be evident:

(a) Because the whole description has a highly figurative and poetical cast.

(b) Because such figurative expressions are common in all poetry, and especially among the Orientals.

(c) Because it does not appear how the gospel has any tendency to change the nature of the lion, the bear, or the serpent. It acts on men, not on brutes; on human hearts, not on the organization of wild animals.

(d) Because such a state of things could not occur without a perpetual miracle, changing the physical nature of the whole animal creation, The lion, the wolf, the panther, are made to live on flesh. The whole organization of their teeth and digestive powers is adapted to this, and this alone. To fit them to live on vegetable food, would require a change in their whole structure, and confound all the doctrines of natural history. The adder is poisonous, and nothing but a miracle would prevent the poisonous secretion, and make his bite innocuous. But where is a promise of any such coutinued miracle as shall change the whole structure of the animal creation, and make the physical world different from what it is? It is indeed probable that wild animals and venomous serpents will wholly retire before the progress of civilization and Christianity, and that the earth may be inhabited everywhere with safety - for such is the tendency of the advance of civilization - but this is a very different thing from a change in the physical nature of the animal creation.

The fair interpretation of this passage is, therefore, that revolutions will be produced in the wild and evil passions of men - the only thing with which the gospel has to do as great “as if” a change were produced in, the animal creation, and the most ferocious and the most helpless should dwell together. The wolf (זאב *ze'êb*) is a well-known animal, so called from his yellow or golden color. The Hebrew name is formed by changing the

Hebrew letter ה (*h*) in the word זהב *zâhâb* "gold," to the Hebrew letter א - Bochart. The wolf, in the Scriptures, is described as ravenous, fierce, cruel; and is the emblem of that which is wild, ferocious, and savage among human beings; Genesis 49:27: ‹Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf;‘ Ezekiel 22:27: ‹Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey;‘ Matthew 7:15: ‹Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep‘s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves;‘ John 10:12; Matthew 10:16; Luke 10:3; Acts 20:29. The wolf is described as sanguinary and bloody Ezekiel 22:27, and as taking its prey by night, and as therefore particularly an object of dread; Jeremiah 5:6: ‹A wolf of the evenings shall spoil them; Habakkuk 1:8: ‹Their horses are more fierce than the evening wolves;‘ Zephaniah 3:3: ‹Her judges are evening wolves, they gnaw not the bones until tomorrow.‘ in the Scriptures, the wolf is constantly represented in contrast with the lamb; the one the emblem of ferocity, the other of gentleness and innocence; Matthew 10:16; Luke 10:3. The pagan poets also regard the wolf as an emblem of ferocity and cruelty:

Inde lupi cen
Raptores, atra in nebula quos improba ventris
Exegit caecos rabies, etc. -
(Virg. AEn. ii. 355ff.)
As hungry wolves, with raging appetite,
Scour through the fields, nor fear the stormy night -

Their whelps at home expect the promised food,

And long to temper their dry chaps in blood -

So rushed we forth at once.
Dryden.
Cervi, luporum praeda rapacium.
Hor. Car. Lib. iv. Ode iv. 50.

See a full illustration of the nature and habits of the wolf in Boehart, "Hieroz." Part i. B. iii. ch. x. pp. 821-830. "Shall dwell." גר *ger* Shall sojourn, or abide. The word usually denotes a residence for a time only, away from home, not a permanent dwelling. The idea here is, that they shall remain peacefully together. The same image occurs in Isaiah 65:25, in another form: ‹The wolf and the lamb shall feed together.‘

The lamb - Everywhere the emblem of mildness, gentleness, and innocence; and, therefore, applied often to the people of God, as mild, inoffensive, and forbearing; John 21:15; Luke 10:3; Isaiah 40:2. It is very often applied, by way of eminence, to the Lord Jesus Christ; John 1:29; Acts 8:32; Isaiah 2:7; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 5:6, Revelation 5:8, Revelation 5:12-13; Revelation 6:16; Revelation 7:9-10, Revelation 7:14, Revelation 7:17, "et al."

And the leopard - נמר *nâmêr* The leopard, a well-known wild beast, was regarded in Oriental countries as second in dignity only to the lion. The Arabic writers say, ‹He is second in rank to the lion, and, as there is a natural hatred between them, victory is alternate between them.' Hence, in the Scriptures, the lion and the leopard are often joined together as animals of the same character and rank; Jeremiah 5:6, and Hosea 13:7:

Therefore I will be unto them as a lion,

As a leopard by the way will I observe them.

The leopard is distinguished for his spots; Jeremiah 13:23: ‹Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?' it has small white eyes, wide jaws, sharp teeth, and is represented as extremely cruel to man. It was common in Palestine, and was an object of great dread. It lurked for its prey like the lion, and seized upon it suddenly Jeremiah 5:6; Hosea 13:7, and was particularly distinguished for its velocity Habakkuk 1:8), and is often referred to in the classic writers as an emblem of fleetness. See "Bochart." The image used here by Isaiah, that ‹the leopard should lie down with the kid,' as an emblem of peace and safety, occurs almost in the same form in the Sybilline oracles, Lib. iii:

παρδάλιές τ᾽ ἐριφοίς ἅμα βοσκήσονται, -

parklies t' eriphois hama boskēsontai -

‹Leopards shall feed together with kids.' "See" Bochart, "Hieroz." Part i. B. iii. ch. vii. pp. 786-791.

With the kid - The young of the goat; Genesis 37:21; Leviticus 23:19; Luke 15:29. Like the lamb, it was an emblem of gentleness, mildness, and inoffensiveness.

And the calf - Another emblem of inoffensiveness and innocence.

And the young lion - The Hebrew word used here - כפיר *kephîyr* - denotes one that is old enough to go abroad for prey. It is employed as emblematic of dangerous enemies Psalm 34:2; Psalm 35:17; Psalm 58:7;

and also as emblematic of young heroes, or defenders of a state; Ezekiel 38:15; Nahum 2:12.

And the fatling - The calf or other animal that was well fed, and that would be therefore particularly an object of desire to a wild beast. The beauty of the image is heightened, by the circumstance that now the ravenous beast would live with that which usually excites its keenest appetite, without attempting to injure it.

And a little child shall lead them - This is an especially beautiful image introduced into the picture of peace and prosperity. Naturally, the lion and the leopard are objects of dread to a young child. But here, the state of peace and safety is represented as not only so entire that the child might live with them in safety, but their natural ferocity is so far subdued and tamed, that they could be led by him at his will. The verisimilitude of the picture is increased by the circumstance, that these wild beasts may be so far tamed as to become subject to the will of a man, and even of a child.

Verse 7

And the cow and the bear shall feed - That is, together. Animals that by nature do not dwell together, where by nature the one would be the prey of the other, shall dwell together - animage of safety and peace.

And the lion shall eat straw like the ox - A representation of the change that will take place under the reign of the Messiah in the natural disposition of men, and in the aspect of society; as great as if the lion were to lose his natural appetite for blood, and to live on the usual food of the ox. This cannot be taken literally, for such an interpretation would suppose a change in the physical organization of the lion - of his appetites, his teeth, his digestive organs - a change which it would be absurd to suppose will ever exist. It would in fact make him a different being. And it is clear, therefore, that the whole passage is to be interpreted in "moral" sense, as denoting great and important changes in society, and in the hearts of men.

Verse 8

And the sucking child - An emblem here of harmlessness and innocence. The change in the world, under the Messiah, shall be as great as if a sucking infant should be able to play unharmed with a venomous serpent.

Shall play - Shall delight himself (שׁעשׁע *shîʿăshaʿ*) as children usually engage in their sports; compare Proverbs 8:30-31; Psalm 119:24.

On the hole of the asp - Over, or around the cavern, hole, or place of retreat of the asp. He shall play over that place as safely as if the nature of the asp was changed, and it had become innocuous. The Hebrew word rendered here "asp" (פתן *pethen*) denotes the serpent usually called the asp, whose poison is of such rapid operation that it kills almost instantly: see Job 20:14, Job 20:16; Psalm 58:4; Psalm 91:13; Deuteronomy 32:33. The word occurs in no other places in the Old Testament. This serpent is small. It is found particularly in Egypt, though also in other places; see the note at Job 20:14. It is used here as the emblem of the more sudden, malignant, and violent passions; and the idea is, that under the Messiah a change would be performed in people of malignant and deadly passions as signal "as if" the asp or adder were to lose his venom, and become innocuous to a child.

And the weaned child - But still, a young and helpless child. The image is varied, but the same idea is retained.

Shall put his hand - That is, he shall do it safely, or uninjured.

On the cockatrice' den - Margin, ‹Adder's.' The word rendered here "cockatrice" (צפעוני *tsîp'ônîy*) occurs only in the fellowing places: Isaiah 14:29; Isaiah 11:8; Isaiah 59:5; Proverbs 23:32; Jeremiah 8:17. In all these places, it is rendered cockatrice, except in Proverbs 23:32. The "cockatrice" was a fabulous kind of serpent, supposed to be hatched from the egg of a cock. The serpent here designated is, doubtless, a species of the "adder," more venomous, perhaps, than the פתן *pethen* but still belonging to the same species. Bochart ("Hieroz." P. ii. lib. iii. ch. ix.) supposes that the "basilisk" is intended - a species of serpent that, he says, was supposed to poison even with its breath. The general idea is the same here as above. It is in vain to attempt to spiritualize these expressions, and to show that they refer to certain individuals, or that the animals here designated refer to particular classes of the enemies of the gospel. It is a mere poetic description, denoting great peace and security; and all the changes in the mad, malignant, and envenomed passions of people, that may be necessary to produce and perpetuate that peace. Pope has versified this description in the following beautiful manner:

The lambs with wolves shall graze the verdant mead,
And boys, in flowery bands, the tigers lead.
The steer and lion at one crib shall meet,

And harmless serpents lick the pilgrim's feet.

The smiling infant in his hand shall take

The crested basilisk, and speckled snake;

Pleased, the green luster of the scales survey,

And, with their forked tongue, shall innocently play.
Messiah.

Verse 9

They shall not hurt - That is, those who are designated above under the emblems of the lion, the leopard, the bear, and the adder.

Nor destroy in all my holy mountain - Mount Zion; used here, as elsewhere, to denote the seat of his reign on the earth, or his church; the notes at Isaiah 1:8; Isaiah 2:4. The disposition of people, naturally ferocious and cruel, shall be changed so entirely, that the causes of strife and contention shall cease. They shall be disposed to do justice, and to promote each other‘s welfare everywhere.

For the earth - That is, in the times of the Messiah, It does not say that it shall be immediate under his reign, but under his reign this shall occur on the earth.

The knowledge of the Lord - This is put for piety, as the “fear” of the Lord often is. The earth shall be full of a correct understanding of the existence, perfections, plans, and claims of God; and shall be disposed to yield to those claims - thus producing universal peace.

As the waters cover the sea - That is, the depths or the bottom of the sea; compare Habakkuk 2:14. The vast waters of the ocean cover all its depths, find their way into all the caverns, flow into all the recesses on the shore - and thus shall the knowledge of Yahweh spread like deep, flowing waters, until the earth shall be pervaded and covered with it. It is evident that a time is here spoken of which has not yet fully come, and the mind is still directed onward, as was that of the prophet, to a future period when this shall be accomplished. The prophecy has been indeed in part fulfilled. Wherever the gospel has spread, its effect has been just that which is predicted here. It has calmed and subdued the angry passions of people; changed their feelings and their conduct; disposed them to peace; and tended to mitigate national ferocity, to produce kindness to captives, and to

those who had been oppressed. It has mitigated laws that were cruel and bloody; and has abolished customs, games, sports, and pastimes that were ferocious and savage. It has often changed the bitter persecutor, as it did Saul of Tarsus, to the mildness and gentleness of a lamb; and it has spread an influence over nations tending to produce humanity and benevolence. It has produced mildness, gentleness, and love, in the domestic circle; changed a the cruel and lordly husband to a companion and friend; and the character of the stern and inexorable father to one of paternal kindness and peace. Wherever it has spread "in truth" and not "in form merely," it has shed a mild, calming, and subduing influence over the passions, laws, and customs of people. But its effects have been but partially felt; and we are led, therefore, to look forward to future times, when the prophecy shall be entirely fulfilled, and the power of the gospel shall be felt in all nations.

Verse 10

And in that day - That future time when the reign of the Messiah shall be established; Note, Isaiah 3:2; Isaiah 4:1. The prophet, having described the birth, and the personal characteristics of the great personage to whom he referred, together with the peaceful effects of his reign, proceeds to state the result of that reign in some other respects. The first is Isaiah 11:10, that the "Gentiles" would be brought under his reign; the second Isaiah 11:14, that it would be attended with the restoration of the scattered people of Judea; and the third Isaiah 11:15-16, that it would be followed by the destruction of the enemies of the people of God.

There shall be a root of Jesse - There shall be a sprout, shoot, or scion of the ancient and decayed family of Jesse; see the note at Isaiah 5:1. Chaldee, ‹There shall be a son of the sons of Jesse.‘ The word "root" here - שׁרשׁ *shoresh* - is evidently used in the sense of a root that, is alive when the tree is dead; a root that sends up a shoot or sprout; and is thus applied to him who should proceed from the ancient and decayed family of Jesse; see Isaiah 53:2. Thus in Revelation 5:5, the Messiah is called ‹the" root" of David,‘ and in Revelation 22:16, ‹the root and the offspring of David.‘

Which shall stand - There is reference here, doubtless, to the fact that military ensigns were sometimes raised on mountains or towers which were permanent, and which, therefore, could be rallying points to an arm or a people. The idea is, that the root of Jesse, that is, the Messiah, should be conspicuous, and that the nations should flee to him, and rally around him

as a people do around a military standard. Thus the Saviour says John 12:32: ‹And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.‘

For an ensign - For a standard, or a sign round which they shall rally.

Of the people - That is, as the parallelism shows, of the Gentiles.

To it shall the Gentiles seek - The pagan world shall look to it for safety and deliverance. In the Scriptures, the world is spoken of as divided into Jews and Gentiles. All who are not Jews come under this appellation. This is a distinct prophecy, that other nations than the Jews should be benefited by the work of the Messiah, and constitute a part of his kingdom. This fact is often referred to by Isaiah, and constitutes a very material feature in his prophecies; Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:22; Isaiah 54:3; Isaiah 60:3, Isaiah 60:5, Isaiah 60:11, Isaiah 60:16; Isaiah 61:6, Isaiah 61:9; Isaiah 62:2; Isaiah 66:12, Isaiah 66:19. The word "seek" here, is used in the sense of seeking as a Deliverer, or a Saviour: they shall apply to him for instruction, guidance, and salvation; or they shall apply to him as a nation looks to its deliverer to protect it; compare Isaiah 8:19; 2 Kings 1:3; Isaiah 65:1.

And his rest - The rest, peace, and quietness, which he shall give. This evidently includes all the rest or peace which he shall impart to those who seek him. The word מנוחה *menûchâh* sometimes denotes "a resting place," or a habitation Numbers 10:33; Micah 2:10; Psalm 132:8; but it also denotes "a state of rest, quietness;" Rth 1:9 ; Jeremiah 45:3; Psalm 23:2; Psalm 95:11; Deuteronomy 12:9; Isaiah 28:12; Isaiah 46:1. Here it evidently means the latter. It may refer,

(1) To the peace which he gives to the conscience of the awaened and troubled sinner Matthew 11:28-30; or

(2) To the prosperity and peace which his reign shall produce.

Shall be glorious - Hebrew, ‹Shall be glory.‘ That is, shall be full of glory and honor. It shall be such as shall confer signal honor on his reign. The Chaldee understands this of his place of residence, his palace, or court. ‹And the place of his abode shall be in glory.‘ The Vulgate renders it, ‹and his sepulchre shall be glorious.‘

‹By his rest, we are not to understand his grave - or his death - or his Sabbath - or the rest he gives his people - but his place of rest, his residence. There is no need of supplying a preposition before glory, which is an abstract used for a concrete - glory, for glorious. The church, Christ‘s home, shall be glorious from his presence, and the accession of the

Gentiles.‘ - (Alexander.) This is a beautiful rendering; it is, moreover, consistent with the letter and spirit of the passage. Some include both ideas.

Verse 11

And it shall come to pass - The prophet having, in the previous verse, stated the effect of the reign of the Messiah on the Gentile world, proceeds to state the result on the scattered Jews. Whether it is to be a literal re-collecting of the scattered tribes to the land of their fathers, has been a subject of debate, and is still so by expositors. We may be able to determine what is the correct general interpretation after the particular phrases have been examined.

In that day - That future time referred to in this whole prophecy. The word “day” is often used to denote a long time - or the time during which anything continues, as “the day” denotes all the hours until it is terminated by night. So “day” denotes the time of a man‘s life - ‹his day;‘ or time in general; or the time when one shall be prominent, or be the principal object at that time. Thus it is applied to the time of the Messiah, as being the period of the world in which he will be the prominent or distinguished object; John 8:56: ‹Abraham rejoiced to see my day;‘ Luke 17:24: ‹So shall the Son of man be in his day.‘ The expression here means, that somewhere in that future time, when the Messiah should appear, or when the world should be put under him as the Mediator, the event would take place which is here predicted. As the word ‹day‘ includes “all” the time of the Messiah, or all his reign from his first to his second advent, it is not to be supposed that the event would take place when he was personally on earth. Isaiah saw it in vision, as “one” of the events which was to occur after the ‹root of Jesse‘ should stand as an ensign to the nations.

That the Lord shall set his hand - That Yahweh shall undertake this, and accomplish it. To set the hand to anything is to undertake to perform it.

The second time - שׁנית *shênîyth* This word properly means, as it is here translated, the second time, implying that the prophet here speaks of a deliverance which would resemble, in some respects, a “former” deliverance or recovery. By the former recovery to which he here refers, he cannot mean the deliverance from Egypt under Moses, for at that time there was no recovery from scattered and distant nations. Besides, if “that” was the reference by the former deliverance, then that mentioned here as the ‹second‘ deliverance would be that from the Babylonian captivity. But on

the return from that captivity, there was not a collecting of the Jews from all the nations here specified. When the Jews were led back to Judea under Nehemiah, there is no record of their having been collected from ‹Egypt,‘ or from ‹Cush,‘ or from ‹the islands of the sea.‘ It is evident, therefore, I think, that by the former deliverance to which the prophet here alludes - the deliverance which was to precede that designated here as the "second" - he refers to the return from the captivity of Babylon; and by the ‹second,‘ to some still more future recovery that should take place under the administration of the Messiah. This is further confirmed from the fact that the whole scope of the prophecy points to that future period.

To recover - Hebrew, ‹To possess,‘ or, to obtain possession of - לִקְנוֹת *lîqenôth* This word properly means to obtain possession of by purchasing or buying anything. But it is also applied to any possession obtained of an object by power, labor, skill, or by delivering from bondage or captivity, and is thus synonymous with "redeem" or "deliver." Thus it is applied to the deliverance of the people from Egypt; Deuteronomy 32:6; Exodus 15:16; Psalm 74:2. It means here, that Yahweh would redeem, rescue, recover his people; but it does not specify the "mode" in which it would be done. Any mode - either by collecting and rescuing them from the regions into which they were scattered into one place, or by a "spiritual" turning to him, wherever they might be, would meet the force of this word. If in the lands where they were scattered, and where they had wandered away from the true God, they were converted, and should become again his people, the event would correspond with all that is meant by the word here.

They would "then" be purchased, possessed, or recovered to himself, by being delivered from their spiritual oppression. It is not necessary, therefore, to resort to the interpretation that they should, in the ‹second‘ deliverance, be restored literally to the land of Canaan. Any argument for that doctrine from this passage must be drawn from the word here used - ‹recover‘ - and that "that" idea is not necessarily involved in this word is abundantly manifest from its familiar use in the Old Testament. All that that word implies, is, that they should "be possessed" by God as his people; an idea which is fully met by the supposition that the scattered Jews everywhere will be converted to the Messiah, and thus become his true people. For this use of the word, see Genesis 25:10; Genesis 47:22; Genesis 49:30; Genesis 50:13; Joshua 24:32; 2 Samuel 12:3; Leviticus 27:24;

Nehemiah 5:8. In no place does it necessarily imply the idea of "collecting or restoring" a scattered people to their Own land.

The remnant of his people - That is, the remnant of the Jews, still called his people. In all the predictions respecting the calamities that should ever come upon them, the idea is "always" held out that the nation would not be wholly extinguished; but that, however great the national judgments, a remnant would still survive. This was particularly true in regard to the fearful judgments which Moses denounced on the nation if they should be disobedient, and which have been so strikingly fulfilled; Deuteronomy 28:62; that Yahweh would scatter them among all people, from the one end of the earth even to the other, Deuteronomy 28:64; and that among these nations they should find no ease, neither should the sole of their foot have rest.

In like manner it was predicted that they should be scattered everywhere. ‹I will scatter them also among the pagan, whom neither they nor their fathers have known. I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach, a proverb, a taunt, and a curse, in all places whither I will drive them;' Jeremiah 9:16; Jeremiah 24:9-10. ‹I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds;' Ezekiel 5:10. ‹I will also scatter them among the nations, among the pagan, and disperse them in the countries;' Ezekiel 12:15, ‹I will sift the house of Israel among the nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. They shall be wanderers among the nations;' Amos 9:9. ‹I will make a full end of the nations whither I have driven thee, but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished;' Jeremiah 46:28.

From all these, and from numerous other passages in the Old Testament, it is evident that it was designed that the Jewish nation should never be wholly destroyed; that though they were scattered among the nations, they should still be a distinct people; that while other nations would wholly cease to exist, yet that a "remnant" of the Jewish people, with the national peculiarities and customs, would still survive. How entirely this has been fulfilled, the remarkable history of the Jewish people everywhere testifies. Their present condition on the earth, as a people scattered in all nations, yet surviving; without a king and a temple, yet preserving their national

prejudices and peculiarities, is a most striking fulfillment of the prophecy; see Keith‘s “Evidence of the Fulfillment of Prophecy,” pp. 64-82.

From Assyria - The name Assyria is commonly applied to that region of country which lies between Media, Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Babylon, and which is now called Kurdistan. The boundaries of the kingdom have often varied, and, as a kingdom or separate nation, it has long since ceased to exist. The name “Assyria” in Scripture is given,

(1) To ancient Assyria, lying east of the Tigris, and between Armenia, Susiana, and Media - the region comprising mostly the modern kingdoms and the pashalic of Mosul.

(2) Most generally the name Assyria means the “kingdom of Assyria,” including Babylonia and Mesopotamia, and extending to the Euphrates; Isaiah 7:20; Isaiah 8:7.

(3) After the overthrow of the Assyrian empire, the name continued to be applied to those countries which were formerly held under its dominion - including Babylonia 2 Kings 23:29; Jeremiah 2:18, Persia Ezra 6:22, and Syria. - “Robinson; Calmet.”

It is in this place applied to that extensive region, and means that the Jews scattered there - of whom there have always been many - shall be brought under the dominion of the Messiah. If the Nestorian Christians in the mountains of Kurdistan are the descendants of the lost ten tribes (see the note at Isaiah 11:12), then the reference here is, doubtless, to them. There are, however, other Jews there, as there always has been; “see” Dr. Grant‘s work on ‹The Nestorians, or, the Lost Ten tribes,‘ New York, 1841.

And from Egypt - The well-known country in Africa, watered by the Nile. In all ages, there have been many Jews there. Its vicinity to Palestine; its remarkable fertility, and the advantages which it offered to them, attracted many Jews there; and at some periods they have composed no inconsiderable part of the population. It was in this country that the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek language, called the Septuagint, was made, for the use of the numerous Jews residing there. At present they are numerous there, though the exact number is unknown: During the reign of Bonaparte, an estimate was made, for his information, of the number of Jews in the world, and, in that estimate, 1,000,000 was assigned to the Turkish empire - probably about a third part of all on the earth. A large portion of this number is in Egypt.

And from Pathros - This was one of the three ancient divisions of Egypt. It was the same as Upper Egypt, or the southern part of Egypt, the "Coptic" portion of that country. The inhabitants of that country are called "Pathrusini." To that place many of the Jews retired in the calamities of the nation, notwithstanding the remonstrances of Isaiah; Jeremiah 44:1, Jeremiah 44:15. For this act God severely threatened them; see Jeremiah 44:26-29.

And from Cush - The Chaldee reads this, ‹And from Judea.‘ The Syriac, ‹And from Ethiopia.‘ This country denotes, properly, the regions settled by the descendants of Cush, the oldest son of Ham; Genesis 10:8. Commentators have differed very much about the region understood in the Scriptures by the name Cush. Bochart supposes that by it the southern parts of Arabia are always meant. Gesenius supposes, that by Cush is always meant a region in Africa. Michaelis supposes that by Cush the southern part of Arabia and the African Ethiopia were both intended. In the Scriptures, however, it is evident that the name is given to different regions.

(1) It means what may be called the "Oriental Cush," including the region of the ancient Susiana, and bounded on the south by the Persian Gulf, and on the west and southwest by the Tigris, which separates it from the Arabian Irak. This province has the name Chusastan, or Chusistan, and was, probably, the ancient "Cush" mentioned in Zephaniah 3:10: From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, (Hebrew, Cush), my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.‘ The principal rivers there were the Ulai, the Kur, the Chobar, and the Choaspes. The same place is referred to in 2 Kings 17:24, where the king of Assyria is said to have ‹brought men from Babylon, and from "Cuthah," and from Ava,‘ where the word "Cuthah" evidently refers to Cush, the Armenian mode of pronouncing Cush by exchanging the letters "Shin" for "Tav," as they always do in pronouncing "Ashur," calling it "Athur, etc.;" see the Chaldee Paraphrase, and the Syriac version, "passim."

(2) "Cush," as employed by the Hebrews, "usually" denoted the southern parts of Arabia, and was situated chiefly along the coast of the Red Sea, since there are several passages of Scripture where the name "Cush" occurs which can be applied to no other country, and least of all to the African Cush or Ethiopia; see Numbers 12:1, where the woman whom Moses married is called an ‹Ethiopian,‘ (Hebrew, ‹Cushite‘). It can be

scarcely supposed that she came from the distant regions of Ethiopia in Africa, but it is evident that she came from some part of Arabia. Also Habakkuk 3:7, says:

I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction;

And the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

From which it is evident, that "Cushan" and "Midian" were countries adjacent; that is, in the southern part of Arabia; compare 2 Chronicles 21:16; 2 Chronicles 14:9.

(3) The word "Cush" is applied to Ethiopia, or the country south of Egypt, now called Abyssinia. This country comprehended not only Ethiopia above Syene and the cataracts, but likewise Thebais, or Upper Egypt; compare Jeremiah 13:23; Daniel 11:3; Ezekiel 30:4-5; Isaiah 44:14; see the notes at Isaiah 18:1. To which of these regions the prophet here refers, it is not easy to determine. As the other countries mentioned here, however, are chiefly in the East, it is most natural to suppose that he refers to "the Oriental Cush" mentioned under the first division. The general idea of the prophet is plain, that the scattered Jews should be gathered back to God.

And from Elam - This was the name of a country originally possessed by the Persians, and so called from the son of Shem of the same name; Genesis 14:1. It was the southern part of Persia, situated on the Persian Gulf, and included, probably, the whole of the region now called Susiana or Chusistan. The city Susa or Shushan was in it; Daniel 8:2.

And from Shinar - This was a part of Babylonia, and is supposed to be the plain lying between the Tigris and the Euphrates; Genesis 10:10; Genesis 11:2; Daniel 1:2; Zechariah 5:11. It was the region elsewhere called Mesopotamia. The Septuagint renders it, ‹And from Babylon;‘ and it is remarkable that Luke Acts 2:9, where he has reference, probably, to the place, speaks of ‹the dwellers in Mesopotamia‘ as among those who heard ‹the wonderful works of God‘ in their own language. It was in this plain that the tower of Babel was commenced; Isaiah 10:9. "And from the islands of the sea." This expression probably denotes the islands situated in the Mediterranean, a part of which were known to the Hebrews. But, as geography was imperfectly known, the phrase came to denote the regions lying west of the land of Canaan; the unknown countries which were situated in that sea, or west of it, and thus included the countries lying around the Mediterranean. The word translated, ‹islands‘ here (איים *'îyîym*) means properly "habitable dry land," in opposition to water; Isaiah 42:13: ‹I

will make the rivers "dry land;"' where to translate it "islands" would make nonsense. Hence, it means also land adjacent to water, either washed by it, or surrounded by it, that is, a maritime country, coast, or island. Thus it means "coast" when applied to Ashdod Isaiah 20:6; to Tyre Isaiah 22:2, Isaiah 22:6; to Peloponnesus or Greece (called Chittim, Ezekiel 27:6). It means an "island" when applied to Caphtor or Crete Jeremiah 47:4; Amos 9:7. The word was commonly used by the Hebrews to denote distant regions beyond the sea, whether coasts or islands, and especially the maritime countries of the West, to them imperfectly known through the voyages of the Pheonicians; see the note at Isaiah 41:1; compare Isaiah 24:15; Isaiah 40:15; Isaiah 42:4, Isaiah 42:10, Isaiah 42:12; Isaiah 51:5.

Verse 12

And he shall set up an ensign - See Isaiah 11:10. The Messiah shall stand in view of the nations, as a standard is erected by a military leader. An ensign or standard was usually lifted up on the mountains or on some elevated place (compare Isaiah 18:3); and the meaning here is, that the Messiah would be the conspicuous object around which the nations would rally.

And shall assemble - This word, אסף *'âsaph* properly means, to gather, collect, to assemble together, as fruits are collected for preservation Exodus 23:10; to collect a people together Numbers 21:16; to gather or collect gold; 2 Kings 22:4. It may also mean to gather or collect anything for destruction Jeremiah 8:13; and hence, to take out of the way, to kill, destroy; 1 Samuel 15:6. Here, it is evidently synonymous with the word ‹recover' in Isaiah 11:11. It cannot be proved that it means that God will "literally" re-assemble all the scattered Jews, for the "collecting them," or regathering them to himself "as his people," though they may be still scattered among the nations, is all that the words necessarily imply. Thus when the word is used, as it is repeatedly, to denote the death of the patriarchs, where it is said they were ‹gathered to their fathers,' it does not mean that they were buried in the same grave, or the same vicinity, but that they were united to them in death; they partook of the same lot; they all alike went down to the dead; Genesis 25:8; Genesis 35:29; Genesis 49:29; Numbers 20:24; Deuteronomy 32:50.

The outcasts of Israel - The name ‹Israel,' applied at first to all the descendants of Jacob, came at length to denote the ‹kingdom of Israel,' or of the ‹ten tribes,' or of ‹Ephraim,' as the tribes which revolted under

Jeroboam were called. In this sense it is used in the Scriptures after the time of Jeroboam, and thus it acquired a technical signification, distinguishing it from Judah.

The dispersed of Judah - ‹Judah,‘ also, though often used in a general sense to denote the Jews as such, without reference to the distinction in tribes, is also used technically to denote the kingdom of Judah, as distinguished from the kingdom of Israel. The tribe of Judah was much larger than Benjamin, and the name of the latter was lost in the former. A considerable part of the ten tribes returned again to their own land, with those of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin; a portion remained still in the countries of the East, and were intermingled with the other Jews who remained there. All distinctions of the tribes were gradually abolished, and there is no reason to think that the ‹ten tribes,‘ here referred to by the name ‹Israel,‘ have now anywhere a distinct and separate existence; see this point fully proved in a review of Dr. Grant‘s work on ‹” The Nestorians, or, the Lost Ten tribes,”‘ in the “Bib. Rep.” for October 1841, and January 1842, by Prof. Robinson. The literal meaning here then would be, that he would gather the remains of those scattered people, whether pertaining to ‹Israel‘ or ‹Judah,‘ from the regions where they were dispersed.

It does not necessarily mean that they would be regathered in their distinctive capacity as ‹Israel‘ and ‹Judah,‘ or that the distinction would be still preserved, but that the people of God would be gathered together, and that all sources of alienation and discord would cease. The meaning, probably, is, that under the Messiah all the remains of that scattered people, in all parts of the earth, whether originally pertaining to ‹Israel‘ or ‹Judah,‘ should be collected into one spiritual kingdom, constituting one happy and harmonious people. To the fulfillment of this, it is not necessary to be supposed that they would be literally gathered into one place, or that they would be restored to their own land, or that they would be preserved as a distinct and separate community. The leading idea is, that the Messiah would set up a glorious kingdom in which all causes of alienation and discord would cease.

From the four corners of the earth - Chaldee, ‹From the four winds of the earth.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹From the four wings (πτερύγων *pterugōn*) of the earth.‘ It means, that they should be collected to God from each of the four parts of the earth - the east, the west, the north, and the south. The Hebrew word rendered here ‹corners,‘ means properly “wings.”

It is applied, however, to the corner, or border of a thing, as a skirt, or mantle 1 Samuel 24:5, 1 Samuel 24:11; Deuteronomy 23:1; and hence, to the boundaries, or corners of the earth, because the earth seems to have been represented as a quadrangular plain; Ezekiel 7:2.

Verse 13

The envy also - The word "envy" here, is used in the sense of "hatred," or the hatred which arose from the "ambition" of Ephraim, and from the "prosperity" of Judah. Ephraim here, is the name for the kingdom of Israel, or the ten tribes. The reasons of their envy and enmity toward Judah, all arising from their ambition, were the following:

(1) This tribe, in connection with those which were allied to it, constituted a very large and flourishing part of the Jewish nation. They were, therefore, envious of any other tribe that claimed any superiority, and particularly jealous of Judah.

(2) they occupied a central and commanding position in Judea, and naturally claimed the pre-eminence over the tribes on the north.

(3) they had been formerly highly favored by the abode of the ark and the tabernacle among them, and, on that account, claimed to be the natural "head" of the nation; Joshua 18:1, Joshua 18:8, Joshua 18:10; Judges 18:31; Judges 21:19; 1 Samuel 1:3, 1 Samuel 1:24.

(4) when Saul was king, though he was of the tribe of Benjamin 1 Samuel 9:2, they submitted peaceably to his reign, because the Benjaminites were in alliance with them, and adjacent to them. But when Saul died, and the kingdom passed into the hands of David, of the tribe of Judah, their natural rival, thus exalting that powerful tribe, they became dissatisfied and restless. David kept the nation united; but on his death, they threw off the yoke of his successor, and became a separate kingdom. From this time, their animosities and strifes became an importer and painful part of the history of the Jewish nation, until the kingdom of Ephraim was removed. The language here is evidently figurative, and means, that in the time here referred to under the messiah, the causes of animosity, before existing, would cease; that contentions between those who are, by nature, brethren, and who ought to evince the spirit of brethren, would come to an end; and that those animosities and strike would be succeeded by a state of

amity and peace. When the scattered Jews shall be regathered to God under the Messiah, all the contentions among them shall cease, and they shall be united under one king and prince. All the causes of contention which had so long existed, and which had produced such disastrous results, would come to an end. The strifes and contentions of these two kingdoms, once belonging to the same nation, and descended from the same ancestors - the painful and protracted "family broil" - was the object that most prominently attracted the attention, then, of the prophets of God. The most happy idea of future blessedness which was presented to the mind of the prophet, was that period when all this should cease, and when, under the Messiah, all should be harmony and love.

And the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off - That is, Judah shall be safe; the people of God shall be delivered from their enemies - referring to the future period under the Messiah, when the church should be universally prosperous.

Judah shall not vex Ephraim - Shall not oppress, disturb, or oppose. There shall be peace between them. The church prospers only when contentions and strifes cease; when Christians lay aside their animosities, and love as brethren, and are "united" in the great work of spreading the gospel around the world. That time will yet come. When that time comes, the kingdom of the Son of God will be established. "Until" that time, it will be in vain that the effort is made to bring the world to the knowledge of the truth; or if not wholly in vain, the efforts of Christians who seek the conversion of the world will be retarded, embarrassed, and greatly enfeebled. How devoutly, therefore, should every friend of the Redeemer pray, that all causes of strife may cease, and that his people may be united, as the heart of one man, in the effort to bring the whole world to the knowledge of the truth.

Verse 14

But they shall fly - The design of this verse is, to show the rapid and certain spiritual conquests which would result from the conversion of the scattered Jewish people. The Jews understood this literally, as referring to the conquests over their enemies. But if the exposition which has been given of this chapter thus far is correct, the passage is to be interpreted as a figurative description of the triumph of the people of God under the Messiah. The "time" to which it refers, is that which shall succeed the conversion of the scattered Jews. The "effect" of the gospel is represented

under an image which, to Jews, would be most striking - that of conquest over the neighboring nations with whom they had been continually at war. Philistia, Edom, Moab, and Ammon, had been always the enemies of Judea; and to the Jews, no figurative representation could be more striking than that, "after" the union of Judah and Ephraim, they should proceed in rapid and certain conquest to subdue their ancient and formidable enemies. The meaning of the phrase ‹they shall fly,‘ is, they shall hasten with a rapid motion, like a bird. They shall do it quickly, without delay, as an eagle hastens to its prey. It indicates their "suddenly" engaging in this, and the celerity and certainty of their movements. As the united powers of Judah and Ephraim would naturally make a sudden descent on Philistia, so the Jews, united under the Messiah, would go to the rapid and certain conversion of those who had been the enemies of the cross.

Upon the shoulders - בכתף *bekâthêph* There has been a great variety in the interpretation of this passage; and it is evident that our translation does not express a very clear idea. The Septuagint renders it, ‹And they shall fly in the ships of foreigners, and they shall plunder the sea.‘ The Chaldee, ‹And they shall be joined with one shoulder, that is, they shall be "united" shoulder to shoulder, that they may smite the Philistines who are in the west.‘ The Syriac, ‹But they shall "plow" the Philistines;‘ that is, they shall subdue them, and cultivate their land. The word rendered, ‹shoulder,‘ means, properly, "the shoulder," as of a man or beast Isaiah 46:7; Isaiah 49:22; Numbers 7:9; Job 31:22; Ezekiel 24:4; the undersetters or shoulders to support the lavers 1 Kings 7:30; a corner or side of a building Exodus 38:14; and is applied to "the side" of anything, as the side of a building, the border of a country, a city, or sea (1 Kings 6:8; 1 Kings 7:39; Numbers 34:11; Joshua 15:8, Joshua 15:10-11, …) Here it seems to mean, not that the Jews would be borne "upon" the shoulder of the Philistines, but that they would make a sudden and rapid descent "upon their borders:" they would invade their territory, and carry their conquest ‹toward the west.‘ The construction is, therefore, ‹they shall make a rapid descent on the borders of the Philistines,‘ or, in other words, the spiritual conquest over the enemies of the church of God shall be certain and rapid.

The Philistines - Philistia was situated on the southwestern side of the land of Canaan. The Philistines were therefore adjacent to the Jews, and were often involved in war with them. They were among the most constant and formidable enemies which the Jews had.

Toward the west - This does not mean that they should be borne on the shoulders of the Philistines to the west; but that they should make a sudden and rapid descent on the Philistines, who "were" west of them. It stands opposed to the nations immediately mentioned as lying "east" of the land of Judea.

They shall spoil - They shall plunder; or, they shall take them, and their towns and property, as the spoil of war. That is, they shall vanquish them, and make them subject to them. According to the interpretation which has been pursued in this chapter, it means, that the enemies of God shall be subdued, and brought to the knowledge of the truth, in a rapid and decisive manner. The language is that which is drawn from the idea of conquest; the idea is that of a rapid and far-spreading conversion among the nations, to the gospel.

Them of the east - Hebrew, ‹The sons of the east; that is, the nations east of Judea.

They shall lay their hand - Hebrew, ‹Edom and Moab shall be the laying on of their hand;' that is, they shall lay their hand on those nations for conquest and spoil; they shall subdue them.

Edom - Idumea; the country settled by the descendants of Esau - a country that was south of Judea, and extended from the Dead Sea to the Elanitic gulf of the Red Sea. They were an independent people until the time of David, and were reduced to subjection by him, but they afterward revolted and became again independent. They were often engaged in wars with the Jews, and their conquest was an object that was deemed by the Jews to be very desirable (see the notes at Deuteronomy 23:3; see the notes at Isaiah 15:1-9; Isaiah 16:1-14.)

And the children of Ammon - The Ammonites, the descendants of Ammon, a son of Lot. Their country lay southeast of Judea Deuteronomy 2:19-21. Their territory extended from the river Arnon north to the river Jabbok, and from the Jordan far into Arabia. It was directly north of Moab, They were often engaged, in alliance with the Moabites, in waging war against the Jews.

Shall obey them - Hebrew, ‹Shall be their obedience.' All these descriptions are similar. They are not to be interpreted literally, but are designed to denote the rapid triumphs of the truth of God after the conversion of the Jews; and the sense is, that the conquests of the gospel will be as sudden, as great, and as striking over its enemies, as would have

been the complete subjugation of Philistia, Moab, Ammon, and Edom, to the victorious army of the Jews.

Verse 15

And the Lord - The prophet goes on with the description of the effect which shall follow the return of the scattered Jews to God. The language is figurative, and is here drawn from that which was the great storehouse of all the imagery of the Jews - the deliverance of their fathers from the bondage of Egypt. The general sense is, that all the embarrassments which would tend to impede them would be removed; and that God would make their return as easy and as safe, as would have been the journey of their fathers to the land of Canaan, if the ‹Egyptian Sea‘ had been removed entirely, and if the ‹river,‘ with its ‹seven streams,‘ by nature so formidable a barrier, had been dried up, and a path had been made to occupy its former place. Figuratively, the passage means, that all the obstructions to the peace and safety of the people of God would be removed, and that their way would be easy and safe.

The tongue - The Hebrews applied the word ‹tongue‘ to anything that resembled a tongue - to a bar of gold Joshua 7:21, Joshua 7:24; to a flame of fire (note, Isaiah 5:24; compare Acts 2:3); to a bay of the sea, or a gulf, from its shape Joshua 15:5; Joshua 18:19. So we speak of a tongue of land. When it is said that the Lord would ‹utterly destroy‘ it, it is equivalent to saying that it would be entirely dried up; that is, so as to present no obstruction.

Of the Egyptian Sea - Some interpreters, among whom is Vitringa, have supposed that by the tongue of the Egyptian Sea mentioned here, is meant the river Nile, which flows into the Mediterranean, here called, as they suppose, the Egyptian Sea. Vitringa observes that the Nile, before it flows into the Mediterranean, is divided into two streams or rivers, which form the Delta or the triangular territory lying between these two rivers, and bounded on the north by the Mediterranean. The eastern branch of the Nile being the largest, he supposes is called the tongue or “bay” of the Egyptian Sea. But to this interpretation there are obvious objections:

(1) It is not known that the Mediterranean is elsewhere called the Egyptian Sea.

(2) This whole description pertains to the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt The imagery is all drawn from that. But, in their departure, the Nile constituted no obstruction. Their place of residence, in

Goshen, was east of the Nile. All the obstruction that they met with, from any sea or river, was from the Red Sea.

(3) The Red Sea is divided, at its northern extremity, into two bays, or forks, which may be called the "tongues" of the sea, and across one of which the Israelites passed in going from Egypt. Of these branches, the western one was called the Heroopolite branch, and the eastern, the Elanitic branch. It was across the western branch that they passed. When it is said that Yahweh would ‹destroy‘ this, it means that he would dry it up so that it would be no obstruction; in other words, he would take the most formidable obstructions to the progress of his people out of the way.

And with his mighty wind - With a strong and powerful wind. Michaelis supposes that by this is meant a tempest. But there is, more probably, a reference to a strong and steady hot wind, such as blows over burning deserts, and such as would have a tendency to dry up even mighty waters. The illustration is, probably, derived from the fact that a strong east wind was employed to make a way through the Red Sea Exodus 14:21. If the allusion here be rather to a mighty wind or a tempest, than to one that is hot, and that tends to evaporate the waters even of the rivers, then it means that the wind would be so mighty as to part the waters, and make a path through the river, as was done in the Red Sea and at the Jordan. The "idea" is, that God would remove the obstructions to the rapid and complete deliverance and conversion of people.

Shall he shake his hand - This is to indicate that the mighty wind will be sent from God, and that it is designed to effect this passage through the rivers. The shaking of the band, in the Scripture, is usually an indication of anger, or of strong and settled purpose (see Isaiah 10:32; Isaiah 13:2; Zechariah 2:9).

Over the river - Many have understood this as referring to the Nile; but two considerations show that the Euphrates is rather intended:

(1) The term ‹the river‘ (הנהר *hanâhâr*) is usually applied to the Euphrates, called the river, by way of eminence; and when the term is used without any qualification, that river is commonly intended (see the notes at Isaiah 7:20; Isaiah 8:7; compare Genesis 31:21; Genesis 36:37; 1 Kings 4:21; Ezra 4:10, Ezra 4:16; Ezra 5:3).

(2) the effect of this smiting of the river is said to be Isaiah 11:16 that there would be a highway for the people "from Assyria," which could be

caused only by removing the obstruction which is produced by the Euphrates lying between Judea and some parts of Assyria.

And shall smite it - That is to dry it up, or to make it pasable.

In the seven streams - The word ‹streams‘ here (נחלים *nechâlîym*) denotes streams of much less dimensions than a river. It is applied to a "valley" with a brook running through it Genesis 26:19; and then to any small brook or stream, or rivulet Genesis 32:24; Psalm 74:15. Here it denotes brooks or streams that would be fordable. When it is said that the river should be smitten ‹in the seven streams,‘ the Hebrew does not mean that it was "already" divided into seven streams, and that God would smite "them," but it means, that God would smite it "into" seven streams or rivulets; that is, into "many" such rivulets (for the number seven is often used to denote a large indefinite number, Note, Isaiah 4:1); and the expression denotes, that though the river presented an obstruction, in its natural size, which they could not overcome, yet God would make new channels for it, and scatter it into innumerable rivulets or small streams, so that they could pass ever it dry-shod.

A remarkable illustration of this occurs in Herodotus (i. 189): ‹Cyrus, in his march to Babylon, arrived at the river Gyndes, which, rising in the mountains of Matiene, and passing through the country of the Darneans, loses itself in the Tigris; and this, after flowing by Opis, is finally discharged into the Red Sea. While Cyrus was endeavoring to pass this river, which could not be perfomed without boats, one of the white consecrated horses boldly entering the stream, in his attempts to cross it, was borne away by the rapidity of the current, and totally lost. Cyrus, exasperated by the accident, made a vow that he would render this stream so very insignificant, that women should hereafter be able to cross it without so much as wetting their feet. He accordingly suspended his designs on Babylon, and divided his forces into two parts; he then marked out with a line on each side of the river, one hundred and eighty trenches; these were dug according to his orders, and so great a number of people were employed that he accomplished his purpose; but he thus wasted the whole of that summer‘ (see also Seneca, "De Ira." iii. 21).

Go over dry-shod - Hebrew, ‹In shoes, or sandals.‘ The waters in the innumerable rivulets to which the great river should be reduced, would be so shallow, that they could even pass them in their sandals without wetting their feet - a strong figurative expression, denoting that the obstruction

would be completely removed. ‹The prophet, under these metaphors, intends nothing else than that there would be no impediment to God when he wished to deliver his people from captivity.‘ - (Calvin.)

Verse 16

And there shall be an highway - All obstructions shall be removed, and they shall be permitted to return without hinderance (compare the note at Isaiah 35:8).

For the remnant of his people from Assyria - See note at Isaiah 11:11.

Like as it was to Israel … - That is, God will remove all obstructions as he did at the Red Sea; he will subdue all their enemies; he will provide for their needs; and he will interpose by the manifest marks of his presence and protection, as their God and their friend. The general view of the chapter is, therefore, that it, refers to the triumph of the Messiah‘s kingdom; that it is not yet fully accomplished; and that the time is coming when the scattered Jews shall be regathered to God - not returned to their own land, but brought again under his dominion under the administration of the Messiah; and that this event shall be attended with a sudden removal of the obstructions to the gospel, and to its rapid spread everywhere among the nations. Comparing this with the present state of the Jews, we may remark, in regard to this prospect:

(1) That they are now, and will continue to be, scattered in all nations. They have been driven to all parts of the earth - wanderers without a home - yet continuing their customs, rites, and special opinions; and continuing to live, notwithstanding all the efforts of the nations to crush and destroy them.

(2) They speak nearly all the languages of the world. They are acquainted with all the customs, prejudices, and opinions of the nations of the earth. They would, therefore, be under no necessity of engaging in the laborious work of learning language - which now occupies so much of the time, and consumes so much of the strength of the modern missionary.

(3) The law of God is thus in all nations. It is in every synagogue; and it has been well said, that the law there is like extinguished candles, and that all that is needful to illuminate the world, is to light those candles. Let the Jew everywhere be brought to see the true meaning of his law; let the light of evangelical truth shine into his synagogue, and the world would be at once illuminated. The truth would go with the rapidity of the sunbeams

from place to place, until the whole earth would be enlightened with the knowledge of the Redeemer.

(4) The Jews, when converted, make the best missionaries. There is a freshness in their views of the Messiah when they are converted, which Gentile converts seldom feel. The apostles were all Jews; and the zeal of Paul shows what converted Jews will do when they become engaged in making known the true Messiah. If it has been a characteristic of their nation that they would ‹compass sea and land to make one proselyte,‘ what will their more than three million accomplish when they become converted to the true faith of the Redeemer? We have every reason, therefore, to expect that God intends to make great use yet of the Jews, whom he has preserved scattered everywhere - though they be but a ‹remnant‘ - in converting the world to his Son. And we should most fervently pray, that they may be imbued with love to their long-rejected Messiah, and that they may everywhere become the missionaries of the cross.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Introduction

This chapter Isaiah 12:1-6 is a part of the vision which was commenced in Isaiah 10:5. The prophet had foretold the deliverance of the nation from the threatened invasion of Sennacherib John 7:14, notes at John 7:37). This custom was not required by Moses, and probably arose from the command in Isaiah 12:3 of this chapter. Our Saviour applied it to himself, to the benefits of his gospel, and to the influences of the Spirit John 7; and the ancient Jews so applied it also. ‹Why is it called the house of drawing? Because from thence they draw the Holy Spirit; as it is written, "and ye shall draw water with joy from the fountains of salvation."‘ - ("Jerusalem Talmud" as quoted by Lowth.)

Verse 1

And in that day - The day referred to in the previous chapter, the time of the Messiah, when the effects of his reign shall be seen everywhere. The duty of praise, however, is couched in such language as to make it applicable to the event predicted in the former part of the prophecy Isaiah 10:6 ff.) If it is supposed to be applied to the time of the Messiah, then it is language which every redeemed sinner may use, that God was angry with him, but that his anger is turned away. As applicable to the redeemed, it is an acknowledgement which they all feel, that they have no claim to his mercy, and that it lays the foundation for unceasing praise that his anger is turned away by the plan of salvation.

Verse 2

Behold, God is my salvation - Or, God is the author, or source, of my salvation. It has not been brought about by any human hands, but is to be traced directly to him. The value of a gift is always enhanced by the dignity and excellency of the giver, and it confers an inestimable value on the blessings of salvation, that they are conferred by a being no less than the infinite God. It is not by human or angelic power; but it is to be traced directly and entirely to Yahweh.

I will trust, and not be afraid - Since God is its author; since he is able to defend me, and to perfect that which he has begun, I will confide in him, and not be afraid of the power or machinations of any enemy. In his hands I am safe. God is the foundation of our confidence; and trusting in him, his people shall never be moved.

For the Lord Jehovah - This is one of the four places in which our translators have retained the original word Yahweh, though the Hebrew word occurs often in the Scriptures. The other places where the word Jehovah is retained in our version are, Exodus 6:3; Psalm 68:18; lsa. Psalm 26:4. The original in this place is יה יהוה *yâh yehovâh* The word יה *yâh* is an abbreviation of the word Yahweh. The abbreviated form is often used for the sake of conciseness, particularly in the Psalms, as in the expression "Hallelujah" (הללו־יה *halelû -yâh*), that is, praise Yahweh (Psalm 89:9; Psalm 94:7, Psalm 94:12; Psalm 104:35; Psalm 105:15; Psalm 106:1, Psalm 106:48; Psalm 111:1; Psalm 113:1, "et al.") In this place, and Isaiah 26:4, "the repetition" of the name seems to be used to denote "emphasis;" or perhaps to indicate that Yahweh is the same always - an unchangeable God. In two codices of Kennicott, however, the name יה *yâh* is omitted, and it has been conjectured by some that the repetition is an error of transcribers; but the best MSS. retain it. The Septuagint, the Chaldee, and the Syriac, however, omit it.

Is my strength and my song - The same expression occurs in the hymn that Moses composed after the passage of the Red Sea, in imitation of which this song is evidently composed; Exodus 15:2:

Jehovah is my strength and my song,
And he is become my salvation.

The word ‹strength‘ means, that he is the source of strength, and implies that all who are redeemed are willing to acknowledge that all their strength is n God. The word ‹song‘ implies that he is the proper object of praise; it is to celebrate his praise that the ‹song‘ is composed.

He also is become my salvation - This is also found in the song of Moses Exodus 15:2. It means that God had become, or was the author of salvation. It is by his hand that the deliverance bas been effected, and to him should be the praise.

Verse 3

Therefore - In view of all his mercies, the Hebrew is, however; simply, ‹" and" ye shall draw.‘ It has already been intimated that the Jews applied this passage to the Holy Spirit: and that probably on this they based their custom of drawing water from the fountain of Siloam at the feast of the dedication (note, John 7:37). The fountain of Siloam was in the eastern part of the city, and the water was borne from that fountain in a golden cup, and was poured, with every expression of rejoicing, on the sacrifice on the altar.

It is not probable, however, that this custom was in use in the time of Isaiah. The language is evidently figurative; but the meaning is obvious. A fountain, or a well, in the sacred writings, is an emblem of that which produces joy and refreshment; which sustains and cheers. The figure is often employed to denote that which supports and refreshes the soul; which sustains man when sinking from exhaustion, as the babbling, fountain or well refreshes the weary and fainting pilgrim (compare John 4:14).

It is thus applied to God as an overflowing fountain, suited to supply the needs of all his creatures Jeremiah 2:13; Jeremiah 17:13; Psalm 36:9; Proverbs 14:27; and to his plan of salvation - the sources of comfort which he has opened in the scheme of redeeming mercy to satisfy the needs of the souls of people Zechariah 13:1; Isaiah 41:18; Revelation 7:17. The word ‹rivers‘ is used in the same sense as ‹fountains‘ in the above places Isaiah 42:15; Isaiah 43:19-20. Generally, in the Scriptures, streams, fountains, rivers, are used as emblematic of the abundant fullness and richness of the mercies which God has provided to supply the spiritual necessities of men. The idea here is, therefore, that they should partake abundantly of the mercies of salvation; that it was free, overflowing, and refreshing - like waters to weary pilgrims in the desert; and that their partaking of it would be with joy. It would fill the soul with happiness; as the discovery of an abundant fountain, or a well in the desert, fills the thirsty pilgrim with rejoicing.

Verse 4

And in that day - (see Isaiah 12:1).

Call upon his name - Margin, ‹Proclaim.‘ It denotes to call upon him in the way of celebrating his praise. The whole hymn is one of praise, and not of prayer.

Declare among the people - Among all people, that they may be brought to see his glory, and join in the celebration of his praise.

His doings - Particularly in regard to the great events which are the subject of the previous predictions - his interposition in saving people by the Messiah from eternal death.

Make mention - Hebrew, ‹Cause it to be remembered‘ (see the note at Isaiah 62:6).

That his name is exalted - That it is worthy of adoration and praise. It is worthy to be exalted, or lifted up in view of the nations of the earth 2

Samuel 22:47; Psalm 21:13; Psalm 46:10.

Verse 5

Sing unto the Lord - This is the same expression which occurs in the song of Moses Exodus 15:21. Isaiah evidently had that in his eye.

He hath done excellent things - Things that are exalted (גאות *gê'ûth*); that are worthy to be celebrated, and had in remembrance; things that are majestic, grand, and wonderful.

This is known in all the earth - Or, more properly, ‹Let this be known in all the earth.‘ It is worthy of being celebrated everywhere. It should be sounded abroad through all lands. This expresses the sincere desire of all who are redeemed, and who are made sensible of the goodness and mercy of God the Saviour. The instinctive and the unceasing wish is, that the wonders of the plan of redeeming mercy should be everywhere known among the nations, and that all flesh should see the salvation of our God.

Verse 6

Cry out - (צהלי *tsahalîy*). This word is usually applied to the neighing of a horse Jeremiah 5:8; Jeremiah 8:16. It is also used to express joy, pleasure, exultation, by a clear and loud sound of the voice Isaiah 10:30; Isaiah 12:6; Isaiah 14:14; Isaiah 54:1; Jeremiah 31:7; Jeremiah 50:11. It is here synonymous with the numerous passages in the Psalms, and elsewhere, where the people of God are called on to exult, to shout, to make a noise as expressive of their joy Psalm 47:1; Psalm 148:1-14; Psalm 149:1-9; Isaiah 42:11; Isaiah 44:23; Jeremiah 31:7; Zephaniah 3:14; Zechariah 9:9.

And shout - (ורני *vāronîy*). This word properly means to cry aloud Proverbs 1:20; Proverbs 8:3; to cry for help Lamentations 2:19; to raise a shout of joy, to rejoice, or exult Leviticus 9:24; Job 38:7; to praise, or celebrate with joy Psalm 33:1; Psalm 51:15; Psalm 59:17; Psalm 89:13. Here it denotes the joy in view of God‘s mercies, which leads to songs of exalted praise.

Thou inhabitant of Zion - Thou that dwellest in Zion; that is, thou who art numbered with the people of God (note, Isaiah 1:8). The margin here is in accordance with the Hebrew - ‹Inhabitress of Zion;‘ and the word used here is applicable to the people, rather than to an individual.

For great is the Holy One of Israel - That is, God has shown himself great and worthy of praise, by the wonderful deliverance which he has worked for his people. Thus closes this beautiful hymn. It is worthy of the theme - worth to be sung by all. O, may all the redeemed join in this song of

deliverance; and may the time soon come, when the beautiful vision of the poet shall be realized, in the triumphant song of redemption echoing around the world:

‹One song employs all nations; and all cry,
"Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us!"
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks

Shout to each other, and the mountain-tops

From distant mountains catch the flying joy;

Till, nation after nation taught the strain,

Earth rolls the rapturous hosanna round.'
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ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Introduction

Analysis of Isaiah 12:1-6, is occupied with a series of prophecies respecting the Jews. The second portion, from Isaiah 35:1-10 inclusive, consists of a number of separate predictions respecting other nations, with which the Jews were in various ways more or less connected. See Introduction.

The thirteenth and the fourteenth chapters, with the exception of the last five verses of Isaiah 1:1, the reign of the last of whom closed 710 years before the Christian era; and, since the Jews were carried captive to Babylon 586 years before that era, the prophecy must have been delivered 124 years before that event; and, as Babylon was taken by Cyrus 536 years before Christ, it must have been delivered at least 174 years before its accomplishment. Theodoret supposed that this prophecy was published during the latter part of the reign of Hezekiah. Cocceius and Lightfoot supposed that it was delivered about the same period as the former, and this also is the opinion of Vitringa. All that is of importance, is, that if it was a true prophecy of Isaiah, as there is the fullest demonstration, it must have been delivered at least 170 years before the event which it foretells was accomplished. The material points to settle in regard to the prophecies are:

(1) whether they were delivered before the event;

(2) whether the things predicted could have been foreseen by human sagacity;

(3) whether the prediction is so clear, and particular, as to correspond with the event, or not to be mere vague conjecture; and

(4) whether there is such an occurrence of events as to constitute in fact a fulfillment of the prophecy.

If these things meet, there is the fullest evidence that the prediction was from God.

At the time when this prophecy was delivered, the Jews were in the secure possession of their own capital and country. They were harassed, indeed, by surrounding nations, but they were still free. They had no controversy with Babylon; nor had they reason to apprehend danger from that distant people. Their being borne to that land, was itself, in the time of

Isaiah, a distaut event, and one that then was not likely to occur. It is remarkable that Isaiah does not distinctly "foretell" that event here, but throws himself to a period of time "beyond" that, when they "would be" in captivity, and predicts their deliverance. His prophecy "supposes" that event to have occurred. It is a vision passing before his mind "after" that event had taken place; when they would be in Babylon; and when they would be sighing for deliverance Isaiah 14:1-2. The prophet, therefore, may be conceived in this vision as taking his "stand" beyond an event which had not yet occurred - the captivity of the Jews and their removal to Babylon - and predicting "another" event still more future, which would result in their deliverance - the complete overthrow of the city, and the consequent deliverance of the Jewish people. We are to conceive him standing, as it were, amidst the captive Jews, and directing his eye onward to the complete recovery of the nation by the destruction of Babylon itself. Isaiah 14:1-2. See Introduction, Section 7, III. (4.)

This prophecy of the destruction of Babylon was delivered, we have seen, at least 174 years before the event occurred. At the time when it was delivered, nothing was more improbable than the ruin of that city as described by Isaiah Isaiah 13:19-22. It was one of the largest, most flourishing, and perhaps the most strongly fortified city of the world. The prediction that it should be like ‹Sodom and Gomorrah;' that it should ‹never be inhabited;' that the wild beast of the desert should lie there; and that dragons should be in their pleasant palaces, was wholly improbable; and could have been foreseen only by God. There were no natural causes that were leading to this which man could perceive, or of which a stranger and a foreigner, like Isaiah, could have any knowledge. This will appear evident by a brief description of the condition of this celebrated city. babylon (derived from babel, and probably built on the same spot as the tower of Babel) was the capital of Babylonia, or Chaldea, and was probably built by Nimrod; but it was a long period before it obtained its subsequent size and splendor.

It was enlarged by Belus, and so greatly beautified and improved by Semiramis, that she might be called not improperly the foundress of it. It was subsequently greatly increased and embellished by Nebuchadnezzar. It stood in the midst of a large plain, and on a very deep and fertile soil. It was

on both sides of the river Euphrates, and of course was divided by that river into two parts. The two parts were connected by a bridge near the center of the city; and there is also said to have been a tunnel, or subterranean passage, made from the palace on the east of the river to the palace on the west, made under the river. The old city was on the east, and the new city, built by Nebuchadnezzar, was on the west. Both these divisions were enclosed by one wall, and the whole formed a complete square, which Herodotus, who visited it, and who is the most ancient author who has written on it, says, was 480 furlongs in compass, or 120 furlongs on each side: that is, it was fifteen miles on each side, or sixty miles in compass.

Public belief has been greatly staggered by the accounts which are thus given of the size of Babylon. But the account of the extent of the walls given, by ancient authors, is nearly uniform. Thus Herodotus says it was 480 stadia, or furlongs, in circumference. Pliny and Solinus make it the same. Strabo says it was 385 stadia in circumference; Diodorus, 360; Clitarchus, who accompanied Alexander, says it was 365, and Curtius says it was 368. According to the lowest of these estimates, it could not have been less than twelve miles square, or forty-eight miles in circumference; and was at least eight times as large in extent as London and its appendages; and somewhat larger than the entire district of Columbia. - (Calmet, and "Edin. Ency.") It is not to be inferred, however, that all this vast space was compactly built. It was enclosed with a wall; but a considerable portion of it might have been occupied with the public squares, with palaces, and with hanging gardens, or, possibly, might have been unoccupied.

The walls of Babylon are said by Herodotus to have been eighty-seven feet thick, and 350 high. They were built of brick, or clay dried in the sun, and not burned; and were cemented by a kind of glutinous earth, or bitumen, with which the adjacent region abounded. The whole city was surrounded by an immense ditch, from which this clay had been taken to make the walls of the city, and which, being always filled with water, contributed materially to its defense. There were 100 gates to the city, twenty-five on each side. These gates were ofsolid brass. Between every two of them there were three towers, raised ten feet above the walls. From the gates there were streets, each 151 feet in width, which ran through the city, so that there were fifty streets in all, cutting each other at right angles,

and forming 676 squares in the city. A bridge sixty feet in width crossed the Euphrates in the center of the city, and at the extremities of the bridge were two palaces, the old palace on the east, and the new palace on the west.

The temple of Belus, which occupied almost a square, was near the old palace on the east. Babylon was celebrated for its hanging gardens, built on arches, near 400 feet square, and which were elevated one above another, by terraces, until they reached the height of the walls of the city. On the highest terrace was an aqueduct for watering the gardens, supplied with water by a pump, or probably by the "Persian wheel," by which the water of the Euphrates was raised to this extraordinary height. In order to prevent the danger of being overflown by the rise in the Euphrates, two canals were cut from the river at a considerable distance above the town, by which the superabundant waters were carried into the Tigris. It is to be borne in mind, however, in order to a just view of this prophecy, that Babylon did not attain its highest splendor and magnificence until "after" the time of Isaiah. It was under Nebuchadnezzar, who ascended the throne of Babylon about 100 years after Isaiah died, that it rose to its highest degree of splendor and power. When Isaiah lived, though it was a city of great wealth and power, and distinguished for great commercial advantages, yet it was then dependent on Assyria. It did not become the capital of the vast kingdom of Chaldea until 680 years before Christ, according to the chronology of Hales, when Assaradon became master of Babylon, and reunited the empires of Assyria and Chaldea.

Babylon was the natural seat of empire in the East, and was early distinguished for its commercial advantages. A simple glance at the map of Asia will convince anyone that somewhere in the vicinity of Babylon is the natural seat of power in the East, and that few places on the globe are more eligibly situated for a vast trade, as it was conducted before the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope. The commerce from the rich regions of Asia naturally passed through Babylon on its way to Europe, and to Western Asia. It was the center of a vast fertile region, the productions of which were conveyed to Babylon, and from which they would naturally be borne down on the Euphrates to the ocean; see the note at Isaiah 43:14. The first empire of which the earliest historians furnish any trace, was in the land of Shinar, the land of the Chaldeans Genesis 10:8-10; Genesis 11:1-9. Syria,

Arabia, Tyre with all her wealth, and distant Egypt, were subject and tributary to it.

The natural advantages of that region for a vast capital, are shown by the fact, that amidst all changes and revolutions, empire has been disposed to fix her permanent seat somewhere on the banks of the Tigris or the Euphrates. Thus, Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was long a mighty and magnificent commercial city, as well as the proud capital of a vast empire. Thus, when Babylon fell, Seleucia rose on the banks of the Tigris, as if prosperity and power were unwilling to leave the fertile plains watered by those rivers. Thus, near Seleucia, arose Ctesiphon, the winter residence of the Parthian monarchs. And thus, under the sway of the Arabians, long after Nineveh, and Babylon, and Seleucia had fallen, Bagdad and Ormus rivaled Babylon and Seleucia, and ‹became, like them, the resort of the merchant, and the home of the learned.‘ ‹At this time Bagdad and Bussora are faded tokens of the splendor of these which have faded and fallen.‘ The fact that there was in that vicinity such a succession of celebrated cities, demonstrates that there were there some important commercial advantages.

Among those advantages respecting Babylon, was the fact that it was the center of a vast fertile region; that it naturally received the productions of Armenia on the north; and that its midway position rendered it the natural thoroughfare for the caravan trade between Eastern and Western Asia. Accordingly, Babylon was early distinguished for its commerce and manufactures. Babylonian garments, of uncommon value, had made their way to Palestine as early as the times of Joshua Joshua 7:21. Tapestries embroidered with figures of griffons, and other monsters of Eastern imagination, were articles of export. Carpets were made there of the finest material and workmanship, and formed an article of extensive exportation. They were in high repute in the time of Cyrus, whose tomb at Pasargada was adorned with them. - (Arrian, “Exped. Alex.,” vi. 29.) Babylonian robes were also highly esteemed for the fineness of their texture and the brilliancy of their purple, and were used by the royal family of Persia. The commerce of that city and of Babylonia consisted in the traffic in emeralds and other precious stones; silver and gold; carpets, tapestries, and other manufactured cloths; cotton and pearls; cinnamon and other spicery, obtained from the East; and, in general, of whatever articles were produced

in the eastern parts of Asia, which were naturally brought to Babylon on the way to Western Asia and to Europe. For a learned and interesting article on the commerce of Babylon, see "Bib. Rep." vol. vii. pp. 364-390.

Thus, by the fertility of the soil; by its size and strength; by its strong and lofty walls; by its commercial advantages; and by everything that could contribute to the defense of an ancient city, Babylon seemed to be safe; and if there was any ancient city that appeared to bid defiance to the attacks of enemies, or to the ravages of time, it was Babylon. Yet Isaiah said that it should be destroyed; and in the course of our exposition we shall be greatly struck, not only with the certain fulfillment of the prediction, but with the wonderful accuracy and minuteness of the entire prophetic statement.

The vision opens Isaiah 13:2-3, with the command of God to assemble his forces to go forth, and accomplish his work in regard to the city. By a beautiful poetic image, the prophet represents himself as "immediately," on the issuing of this command, listening to the tumult and noise caused by those who were assembling for war; by the gathering together of nations; by their assembling from a far country to destroy the whole land Isaiah 13:4-5. He then proceeds to depict the consternation that would follow; the alarm of the people; and their distress, when the day of the Lord should come Isaiah 13:6-10. Then, changing the mode of address from himself to God, he sets forth, in a variety of the most distressing and appalling images, the destruction that would come upon the inhabitants of Babylon - the humbling of their pride Isaiah 13:11; the almost entire destruction of the people Isaiah 13:12; the flight of the inhabitants Isaiah 13:13-14; the murder of those who should flee; and the destruction of their wives and children Isaiah 13:15-16. He then specifies Isaiah 13:17 the instruments by which this should be done, and closes the chapter Isaiah 13:19-22 with a minute and most particular account of the complete and final overthrow of the city; of its entire and everlasting desolation. The subsequent chapter which is a continuation of this prophecy, is occupied with an account of the deliverance of the Jews from their captivity, and with a further description of the humbling of that proud city and of its monarch. See an analysis of it at the commencement of the chapter.

The thirteenth chapter ‹is one of the most beautiful examples that can be given of elegance of composition, variety of imagery, and sublimity of sentiment and diction in the prophetic style.‘ - (Lowth.) It may be added, that it is one of the clearest predictions of a future event that can anywhere be found; and that the exact and minute fulfillment of it furnishes the highest possible evidence that Isaiah ‹spake as he was moved by the Holy Spirit.‘

Verse 1

The burden of Babylon - Or, the burden "respecting," or "concerning" Babylon. This prophecy is introduced in a different manner from those which have preceded. The terms which Isaiah employed in the commencement of his previous prophecies, were vision (see the note at Isaiah 1:1), or word Isaiah 2:1. There has been considerable diversity of opinion in regard to the meaning of the word ‹burden,‘ which is here employed. The Vulgate renders it, *Onus* - ‹Burden,‘ in the sense of load. The Septuagint Ὅρασις *Horasis* - ‹Vision.‘ The Chaldee, ‹The burden of the cup of malediction which draws near to Babylon.‘ The Hebrew word משׂא *mas's'â'* from נשׂא *nâs'â'* to lift, to raise up, to bear, to bear away, to suffer, to endure"), means properly that which is borne; that which is heavy; that which becomes a burden; and it is also applied to a gift or present, as that which is borne to a man 2 Chronicles 17:11.

It is also applied to a proverb or maxim, probably from the "weight" and "importance" of the sentiment condensed in it Proverbs 30:1; Proverbs 31:1. It is applied to an oracle from God 2 Kings 4:25. It is often translated ‹burden‘ Isaiah 15:1-9; Isaiah 19:1; Isaiah 21:11, Isaiah 21:13; Isaiah 22:1; Isaiah 23:1; Isaiah 30:6; Isaiah 46:1; Jeremiah 23:33-34, Jeremiah 23:38; Nehemiah 1:1; Zechariah 1:1; Zechariah 12:1; Malachi 1:1. By comparing these places, it will be found that the term is applied to those oracles or prophetic declarations which contain sentiments especially weighty and solemn; which are employed chiefly in denouncing wrath and calamity; and which, therefore, are represented as weighing down, or oppressing the mind and heart of the prophet. A similar useage prevails in all languages. We are all familiar with expressions like this. We speak of news or tidings of so melancholy a nature as to weigh down, to sink, or depress our spirits; so heavy that we can scarcely bear up under it, or endure it. And so in this case, the view which the prophet had of the awful judgments of God and of

the calamities which were coming upon guilty cities and nations, was so oppressive, that it weighed down the mind and heart as a heavy burden. Others, however, suppose that it means merely a message or prophecy which is taken up, or borne, respecting a place, and that the word indicates nothing in regard to the nature of the message. So Rosenmuller, Gesenius, and Cocceius, understand it. But it seems some the former interpretation is to be preferred. Grotins renders it, ‹A mournful prediction respecting Babylon.‘

Did see - Saw in a vision; or in a scenical representation. The various events were made to pass before his mind in a vision, and he was permitted to see the armies mustered; the consternation of the people; and the future condition of the proud city. This verse is properly the title to the prophecy.

Verse 2

Lift ye up a banner - A military ensign or standard. The vision opens here; and the first thing which the prophet hears, is the solemn command of God addressed to the nations as subject to him, to rear the standard of war, and to gather around it the mighty armies which were to be employed in the destruction of the city. This command, ‹Lift ye up a banner,‘ is addressed to the leaders of those armies to assemble them, and to prepare them for war.

Upon the high mountain - It was customary for military leaders to plant a standard on a tower, a fortress, a city, a high mountain, or any elevated spot, in order that it might be seen afar, and be the rallying point for the people to collect together (see the note at Isaiah 11:10). Here, the prophet does not refer to any particular "mountain," but means simply, that a standard should be raised, around which the hosts should be assembled to march to Babylon. The Chaldee renders it, ‹Over the city dwelling in security, lift up the banner.‘

Exalt the voice - Raise up the voice, commanding the people to assemble, and to prepare for the march against Babylon, Perhaps, however, the word ‹voice‘ here (קול *qôl*) refers to the "clangor," or sound, of a trumpet used for mustering armies. The word is often used to denote "any" noise, and is frequently applied to thunder, to the trumpet, etc.

Unto them - That is, to the Medes and Persians, who were to be employed in the destruction of Babylon.

Shake the hand - In the way of beckoning; as when one is at so great a distance that the voice cannot be heard, the hand is waved for a sign. This

was a command to beckon to the nations to assemble for the destruction of Babylon.

That they may go into the gates of the nobles - The word rendered here ‹nobles‘ (נדיבים *nedîybîym*) means, properly, “voluntary, free, liberal;” then those who are noble, or liberally-minded, from the connection between nobleness and liberality; then those who are noble or elevated in rank or office. In this sense it is used here; compare Job 12:21; Job 34:18; 1 Samuel 2:8; Psalm 107:40; and Proverbs 8:16, where it is rendered ‹princes;‘ Numbers 21:18, where it is rendered ‹nobles.‘ Lowth renders it here ‹princes.‘ Noyes renders it ‹tyrants ‹ - a sense which the word has in Job 21:28 (see the note at that place). There is no doubt that it refers to Babylon; and the prophet designs probably to speak of Babylon as a magnificent city - a city of princes, or nobles. The Chaldee renders it, ‹That they may enter its gates, which open to them of their own accord;‘ retaining the original signification of “voluntariness” in the Hebrew word, and expressing the idea that the conquest would be easy. Our common translation has expressed the correct sense.

Verse 3

I have commanded - This is the language of God in reference to those who were about to destroy Babylon. “He” claimed the control and direction of all their movements; and though the command was not understood by “them” as coming from him, yet it was by his direction, and in accordance with his plan (compare the notes at Isaiah 10:7; Isaiah 45:5-6). The “command” was not given by the prophets, or by an audible voice; but it was his secret purpose and direction that led them to this enterprise.

My sanctified ones - The Medes and Persians; not called ‹sanctified because they were holy, but because they were set apart by the divine intention and purpose to accomplish this. The word ‹sanctify‘ (קדשׁ *qâdash*) often means “to set apart” - either to God; to an office; to any sacred use; or to any purpose of religion, or of accomplishing any of the divine plans. Thus, it means to dedicate one to the office of priest Exodus 28:41; to set apart or dedicate an altar Exodus 39:36; to dedicate a people Exodus 19:10-14; to appoint, or institute a fast Joel 1:14; Joel 2:15; to sanctify a war Joel 3:9, that is, to prepare one‘s-self for it, or make it ready. Here it means, that the Medes and Persians were set apart, in the purpose of God, to accomplish his designs in regard to Babylon (compare the note at Isaiah 10:5-6).

My mighty ones - Those who are strong; and who are so entirely under my direction, that they may be called mine.

For mine anger - To accomplish the purposes of my anger against Babylon.

Even them that rejoice in my highness - It cannot be supposed that the Medes and Persians really exulted, or rejoiced in God or in his plans, for it is evident that, like Sennacherib Isaiah 47:6). The word rendered ‹my highness‘ (גאותי *ga'ăvāthîy*) means, properly, "my majesty," or "glory." When applied to people, as it often is, it means pride or arrogance. It means here, the high and exalted plan of God in regard to Babylon. It was a mighty undertaking; and one in which the power, the justice, and the dominion of God over nations would be evinced. In accomplishing this, the Medes and Persians would rejoice or exult, not as the fulfilling of the plan of God; but they would exult as if it were their own plan, though it would be really the glorious plan of God. Wicked people often exult in their success; they glory in the execution of their purposes; but they are really accomplishing the plans of God, and executing his great designs.

Verse 4

The noise of a multitude in the mountains - The prophet here represents himself as hearing the confused tumult of the nations assembling to the standard reared on the mountains Isaiah 13:2. This is a highly beautiful figure - a graphic and vivid representation of the scene before him. Nations are seen to hasten to the elevated banner, and to engage in active preparations for the mighty war. The sound is that of a tumult, an excited multitude hastening to the encampment, and preparing for the conquest of Babylon.

Like as of a great people - Hebrew, ‹The likeness of a great people.‘ That is, such a confused and tumultuous sound as attends a great multitude when they collect together.

A tumultuous noise - Hebrew, ‹The voice of the tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together.‘

The Lord of hosts - Yahweh, the God of hosts, or armies (note Isaiah 1:9).

Mustereth - Collects; puts in military array. Over all this multitude of nations, hastening with confused sounds and tumult like the noise of the sea, putting themselves in military array, God, unseen, presides, and prepares them for his own great designs. It is not easy to conceive a more

sublime image than these mighty hosts of war, unconscious of the hand that directs them, and of the God that presides over them, moving as he wills, and accomplishing his plans.

Verse 5

They come - That is, ‹Yahweh and the weapons of his indignation‘ - the collected armies come. The prophet sees these assembled armies with Yahweh, as their leader, at their head.

From a far country - The country of the Medes and Persians. These nations, indeed, bordered on Babylonia, but still they stretched far to the north and east, and, probably, occupied nearly all the regions to the east of Babylon which were then known.

From the end of heaven - The Septuagint renders this, Ἀπ᾽ ἄκρου θεμελίου τοῦ οὐρανοῦ *Ap' akrou themeliou tou ouranou* - ‹From the "extreme foundation" of the heaven.‘ The expression in the Hebrew, ‹From the end, or extreme peri of heaven,‘ means, the distant horizon by which the earth appears to be bounded, where the sky and the land seem to meet. In Psalm 19:6, the phrase, ‹from the end of the heaven‘ denotes the east, where the sun appears to rise; and ‹unto the ends of it‘ denotes the west:

His going forth is from the end of the heaven;
And his circuit unto the ends of it.

It is here synonymous with the phrase, ‹the end of the earth,‘ in Isaiah 5:26.

Even the Lord - The word ‹even,‘ introduced here by the translators, weakens the three of this verse. The prophet means to say that Yahweh is coming at the head of those armies, which are the weapons of his indignation.

The weapons of his indignation - The assembled armies of the Medes and Persians, called ‹the weapons of his indignation,‘ because by them he will accomplish the purposes of his anger against the city of Babylon (see the note at Isaiah 10:5).

To destroy the whole land - The whole territory of Babylonia, or Chaldea. Not only the city, but the nation and kingdom.

Verse 6

Howl ye - Ye inhabitants of Babylon, in view of the approaching destruction.

The day of the Lord - The time when Yahweh will inflict vengeance on you draws near (see the note at Isaiah 2:12; compare Isaiah 13:9).

As a destruction from the Almighty - Not as a desolation from man, but as destruction sent from him who has all power in heaven and on earth. Destruction meditated by man might be resisted; but destruction that should come from the Almighty must be final and irresistible. The word ‹Almighty‘ שׁדי *shadday* one of the names given to God in the Scriptures, denotes, properly, "one who is mighty," or who has all power; and is correctly rendered Almighty, or Omnipotent; Genesis 17:1; Genesis 28:3; Genesis 48:3; Exodus 6:3; Rth 1:20 ; Job 5:17; Job 6:4, Job 6:14; Job 8:3, Job 8:5; Job 11:7; Job 13:4; Job 15:25. In the Hebrew here, there is a paronomasia or "pun" - a figure of speech quite common in the Scriptures, which cannot be retained in the translation - ‹It shall come as a destruction (כשׁד *keshod*) from the Almighty (משׁדי *mîshadday*).‘

Verse 7

Therefore shall all hands be faint - This is designed to denote the consternation and alarm of the people. They would be so terrified and alarmed that they would have no courage, no hope, and no power to make resistance. They would abandon their plans of defense, and give themselves up to despair (compare Jeremiah 50:43: ‹The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble; anguish took hold of him, and pangs as of a Women in travail;‘ Ezekiel 7:17; Zephaniah 3:16).

And every man‘s heart shall melt - Or, shall faint, so that he shall have no courage or strength (compare Deuteronomy 20:8). The fact was, that the destruction of Babylon took place in the night. It came suddenly upon the city, while Belshazzar was at his impious feast; and the alarm was so unexpected and produced such consternation, that no defense was attempted (see Daniel 5:30; compare the notes at Isaiah 45:1).

Verse 8

They shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth - This comparison is often used in the Scriptures to denote the deepest possible pain and sorrow, as well as the suddenness with which any calamity comes upon a people Psalm 48:6; Isaiah 21:3; Isaiah 42:14; Jeremiah 6:24; Jeremiah 13:21; Jeremiah 22:23; Jeremiah 49:24; Jeremiah 50:43; Hosea 13:13; Micah 4:9-10; John 16:21; Galatians 4:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:3.

They shall be amazed one at another - They shall stare with a stupid gaze on one another, indicating a state of great distress, anxiety, and alarm. They shall look to each other for aid, and shall meet in the countenances of others the same expressions of wonder and consternation.

Their faces shall be as flames - Their faces shall glow or burn like fire. When grief and anguish come upon us, the face becomes inflamed. The face in fear is usually pale. But the idea here is not so much that of fear as of anguish; and, perhaps, there is mingled also here the idea of indignation against their invaders.

Verse 9

The day of the Lord cometh - See Isaiah 13:6.

Cruel - (אכזרי *'akezārîy*). This does not mean that "God" is cruel, but that the ‹day of Yahweh' that was coming should be unsparing and destructive to them. It would be the exhibition of "justice," but not of "cruelty;" and the word stands opposed here to mercy, and means that God would not spare them. The effect would be that the inhabitants of Babylon would be destroyed.

Fierce anger - Hebrew, (חרון אף *'aph chărôn*) ‹A glow, or burning of anger.' The phrase denotes the most intense indignation (compare Numbers 25:4; Numbers 32:14; 1 Samuel 28:18).

To lay the land desolate - Chaldea, Isaiah 13:5.

Verse 10

For the stars of heaven - This verse cannot be understood literally, but is a metaphorical representation of the calamities that were coming upon Babylon The meaning of the figure evidently is, that those calamities would be such as would be appropriately denoted by the sudden extinguishment of the stars, the sun, and the moon. As nothing would tend more to anarchy, distress, and ruin, than thus to have all the lights of heaven suddenly and forever quenched, this was an apt and forcible representation of the awful calamities that were coming upon the people. Darkness and night, in the Scriptures, are often the emblem of calamity and distress (see the note at Matthew 24:29). The revolutions and destructions of kingdoms and nations are often represented in the Scriptures under this image. So respecting the destruction of Idumea Isaiah 34:4:

And all the hosts of heaven shall be dissolved,
And the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll;
And all their host shall fall down,

As the leaf falleth from off the vine,
And as a falling fig from the fig-tree.

So in Ezekiel 32:7-8, in a prophecy respecting the destruction of Pharaoh, king of Egypt:

And when I shall put time out,
I will cover the heavens, and make the stoa thereof dark,
I will cover the sun with a cloud,

And the moon shall not give her light.

And the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee.
And set darkness upon thy land.
(Compare Joel 2:10; Joel 3:15-16.) Thus in Amos 8:9:
I will cause the sun to go down at noon,
And I will darken the earth in a clear day.
See also Revelation 6:12-14:
And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo,
The sun became black as sackcloth of hair,
And the moon became as blood;

And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth,

Even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs

When she is shaken of a mighty wind:
And the heaven deputed as a scroll when it is rolled together.

Many have supposed that these expressions respecting the sun, moon, and stars, refer to kings, and princes, and magistrates, as the "lights" of the state; and that the sense is, that their power arid glory should cease. But it is rather a figurative representation, denoting calamity "in general,' and describing a state of extreme distress, such as would be if all the lights of heaven should suddenly become extinct.

And the constellations thereof - (וכסיליהם *ûkîsîylēyhem*). The word (כסיל *kesîyl*) means properly "a fool;" Proverbs 1:32; Proverbs 10:1, Proverbs 10:18; Proverbs 13:19-20, "et al." It also denotes "hope, confidence, expectation" Job 31:24; Proverbs 3:26; Job 8:14; also "the reins, the flanks or loins" Leviticus 3:4, Leviticus 3:10, Leviticus 3:15; Psalm 38:7. It is also, as here, applied to a constellation in the heavens, but the connection of this meaning of the word with the other significations is

uncertain. In Job 9:9; Job 38:31, it is translated ‹Orion.‘ In Amos 5:8, it is translated the ‹seven stars‘ - the Pleiades. In Arabic, that constellation is called ‹the giant.‘ According to an Eastern tradition, it was Nimrod, the founder of Babylon, afterward translated to the skies; and it has been supposed that the name the “impious” or “foolish one” was thus given to the deified Nimrod, and thus to the constellation. The rabbis interpret it “Simis.” The word ‹constellations‘ denotes clusters of stars, or stars that appear to be near to each other in the heavens, and which, on the celestial globe, are reduced to certain figures for the convenience of classification and memory, as the bear, the bull, the virgin, the balance. This arrangement was early made, and there is no reason to doubt that it existed in the time of Isaiah (compare the notes at Job 9:9).

Verse 11

And I will punish the world - By the ‹world‘ here is evidently meant the Babylonian empire, in the same way as ‹all the world‘ in Luke 2:1, means Judea; and in Acts 11:28, means the Roman empire. Babylonia, or Chaldea, was the most mighty empire then on earth, and might be said to comprehend the whole world.

And I will cause the arrogancy - This was the prevailing sin of Babylon, and it was on account of this pride mainly that it was overthrown (see the notes at Isaiah 47:1-7; compare Daniel 4:22, Daniel 4:30).

Verse 12

I will make a man … - I will so cut off and destroy the men of Babylon, that a single man to defend the city will be more rare and valuable than fine gold. The expression indicates that there would be a great slaughter of the people of Babylon.

Than fine gold - Pure, unalloyed gold. The word used here (פז *pâz*) is often distinguished from common gold Psalm 19:11; Psalm 119:127; Proverbs 8:19.

Than the golden wedge of Ophir - The word (כתם *kethem*) rendered ‹wedge‘ means properly “gold;” yellow gold; what is hidden, precious, or hoarded; and is used only in poetry. It indicates nothing about the shape of the gold, as the word, wedge would seem to suppose. ‹Ophir was a country to which the vessels of Solomon traded, and which was particularly distinguished for producing gold; but respecting its particular situation, there has been much discussion. The ‹ships of Tarshish‘ sailed from Ezion-geber on the Red Sea, and went to Ophir 1 Kings 9:26; 1 Kings 10:22; 1

Kings 22:48. Three years were required for the voyage; and they returned freighted with gold, peacocks, apes, spices, ivory, and ebony (1 Kings 9:28; 1 Kings 10:11-12; compare 2 Chronicles 8:18). The gold of that country was more celebrated than that of any other country for its purity. Josephus supposes that it was in the East Indies; Bruce that it was in South Africa; Rosenmuller and others suppose that it was in Southern Arabia. It is probable that the situation of Ophir must ever remain a matter of conjecture. The Chaldee Paraphrase gives a different sense to this passage. ‹I will love those who fear me, more than gold in which people glory; and those who observe the law more than the tried gold of Ophir.‘ (On the situation of Ophir the following works may be consulted: The "Pictorial Bible," vol. ii. pp. 364-369; Martini Lipenii, "Dissert. de Ophir;" Joan. Christophori Wichmanshausen "Dissert. de Navig. Ophritica:" H. Relandi, "Dissert. de Ophir;" Ugolini, "Thes. Sac. Ant." vol. viii.; and Forster "On Arabia.")

Verse 13

Therefore I will shake the heavens - A strong, but common figure of speech in the Scriptures, to denote great commotions, judgments, and revolutions. The figure is taken from the image of a furious storm and tempest, when the sky, the clouds, the heavens, appear to be in commotion; compare 1 Samuel 22:8:

Then the earth shook and trembled,
The foundation of heaven moved and shook,
Because he was wroth.

See also Isaiah 24:19-20; Haggai 2:6-7.

And the earth shall remove out of her place - A common figure in the Scriptures to denote the great effects of the wrath of God; as if even the earth should be appalled at his presence, and should tremble and flee away from the dread of his anger. It is a very sublime representation, and, as carried out often by the sacred writers, it is unequalled in grandeur, probably, in any language. Thus the hills, the mountains, the trees, the streams, the very heavens, are represented as shaken, and thrown into consternation at the presence of God; see Habakkuk 3:6, Habakkuk 3:10:

He stood and measured the earth;
He beheld and drove asunder the nations;
And the everlasting mountains were scattered.

The perpetual hills did bow;

His ways are everlasting.

The mountains saw thee and they trembled;

The overflowing of the water passed by;

The deep uttered his voice,
And did lift up his hands on high.

See Revelation 20:11: ‹And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.‘ The figure in Isaiah is a strong one to denote the terror of the anger of God against Babylon.

Verse 14

And it shall be - Babylon shall be.

As the chased roe - Once so proud. lofty, arrogant, and self-confident; it shall be as the trembling gazelle, or the timid deer pursued by the hunter, and panting for safety. The word (צבי *tsebîy*) denotes a deer of the most delicate frame; the species that is most fleet and graceful in its movements; properly the "gazelle" (see Bochart‘s "Hieroz." i. 3. 25). ‹To hunt the antelope is a favorite amusement in the East, but which, from its extraordinary swiftness, is attended with great difficulty. On the first alarm, it flies like an arrow from the bow, and leaves the best-mounted hunter, and the fleetest dog, far behind. The sportsman is obliged to call in the aid of the falcon, trained to the work, to seize on the animal, and impede its motions, to give the dogs time to overtake it. Dr. Russel thus describes the chase of the antelope: "They permit horsemen, without dogs, if they advance gently, to approach near, and do not seem much to regard a caravan that passes within a little distance; but the moment they take the alarm, they bound away, casting from time to time a look behind: and if they find themselves pursued, they lay their horns backward, almost close on the shoulders, and flee with incredible swiftness. When dogs appear, they instantly take the alarm, for which reason the sportsmen endeavor to steal upon the antelope unawares, to get as near as possible before slipping the dogs; and then, pushing on at full speed, they throw off the falcon, which being taught to strike or fix upon the cheek of the game, retards its course by repeated

attacks, until the greyhounds have time to get up."' - (Burder's "Orient. Cus.")

As a sheep - Or like a scattered flock of sheep in the wilderness that has no shepherd, and no one to collect them together; an image also of that which is timid and defenseless.

That no man taketh up - That is astray, and not under the protection of any shepherd. The meaning is, that that people, once so proud and self-confident, would become alarmed, and scattered, and be afraid of everything.

They shall every man turn unto his own people - Babylon was the capital of the pagan world. It was a vast and magnificent city; the center of many nations. It would be the place, therefore, where numerous foreigners would take up a temporary residence, as London and other large cities are now. Jeremiah Jeremiah 50:37 describes Babylon as containing a mingled population - ‹and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her' - that is, "the colluvies gentium," as Tacitus describes Rome in his time. Jeremiah also Jeremiah 50:28 describes this mingled multitude as fleeing and escaping out of the land of Babylon, when these calamities should come upon them. The idea in Isaiah is, that this great and mixed multitude would endeavor to escape the impending calamities, and flee to their own nations.

Verse 15

Every one that is found - In Babylon, or that is overtaken in fleeing from it. This is a description of the capture of the city, and of the slaughter that would ensue, when the invaders would spare neither age nor sex.

Every one that is joined unto them - Their allies and friends. There shall be a vast, indiscriminate slaughter of all that are found in the city, and of those that attempt to flee from it. Lowth renders this, ‹And all that are collected in a body;' but the true sense is given in our translation. The Chaldee renders it, ‹And every one who enters into fortified cities shall be slain with the sword.'

Verse 16

Their children also shall be dashed to pieces - This is a description of the horrors of the capture of Babylon; and there can be none more frightful and appalling than that which is here presented. That this is done in barbarous nations in the time of war, there can be no doubt. Nothing was more common among American savages, than to dash out the brains of

infants against a rock or a tree, and it was often done before the eyes of the afflicted and heartbroken parents. That these horrors were not unknown in Oriental nations of antiquity, is evident. Thus, the Psalmist implies that it would be done in Babylon, in exact accordance with this prediction of Isaiah; Psalm 137:8-9:

O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed:
Happy shall he be who rewardeth these as thou hast served us;
Happy shall he be who taketh and dasheth thy little ones
Against the stones.

Thus, also, it is said of Hazael, that when he came to be king of Syria, he would be guilty of this barbarity in regard to the Jews (2 Kings 8:13; compare Nahum 3:10). It was an evidence of the barbarous feelings of the times; and a proof that they were far, very far, from the humanity which is now deemed indispensable even in war.

Their houses shall be spoiled - Plundered. It is implied here, says Kimchi, that this was to be done also ‹before their eyes,‘ and thus the horrors of the capture would be greatly increased.

Verse 17

Behold, I will stir up - I will cause them to engage in this enterprise. This is an instance of the control which God claims over the nations, and of his power to excite and direct them as he pleases.

The Medes - This is one of the places in which the prophet specified, “by name,” the instrument of the wrath of God. Cyrus himself is subsequently mentioned Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1 as the agent by which God would accomplish his purposes. It is remarkable, also, that ‹the Medes‘ are mentioned here many years before they became a separate and independent nation. It was elsewhere predicted that the Medes would be employed in this siege of Babylon; thus, in Isaiah 21:2: ‹Go up, O Elam (that is, Persia), besiege, O Media;‘ Jeremiah 51:11: ‹Jehovah hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes, for his device is against Babylon to destroy it.‘ Media was a country east of Assyria, which is supposed to have been populated by the descendants of Madai, son of Japheth Genesis 10:2. Ancient Media extended on the west and south of the Caspian Sea, from Armenia, on the north, to Faristan or Persia proper, on the south.

It was one of the most fertile regions of Asia. It was an ancient kingdom. Ninus, the founder of the Assyrian monarchy, is said to have encountered one of its kings, whom he subdued, and whose province he made a part of

the Assyrian empire. For 520 years, the Medes were subject to the Assyrians; but, in the time of Tiglath-pileser and Shalmaneser, they revolted, and, by the destruction of the army of Sennacherib before Jerusalem - an event which was itself subsequent to the delivery of this prophecy respecting Babylon - they were enabled to achieve their independence. At the time when this prophecy was uttered, therefore, Media was a dependent province of the kingdom of Assyria. Six years they passed in a sort of anarchy, until, about 700 years b.c., they found in Dejoces an upright statesman, who was proclaimed king by universal consent. His son and successor, Phraortes, subdued the Persians, and all upper Asia, and united them to his kingdom.

He also attacked Assyria, and laid siege to Nineveh, the capital, but was defeated. Nineveh was finally taken by his successor, Cyaxares, with the aid of his ally, the king of Babylon; and Assyria became a province of Media. This widely-extended empire was delivered by him to his son Astyages, the father of Cyrus. Astyages reigned about 35 years, and then delivered the vast kingdom to Cyrus, about 556 years b.c., under whom the prediction of Isaiah respecting Babylon was fulfilled. In this way arose the Medo-Persian kingdom, and henceforward "the laws of the Medes and Persians" are always mentioned together Esther 1:9; Esther 10:2; Daniel 6:8, Daniel 6:12. From this time, all their customs, rites, and laws, became amalgamated. - (Herod. i. 95-130). In looking at this prophecy, therefore, we are to bear in mind:

(1) the fact that, when it was uttered, Media was a dependent province of the kingdom of Assyria;

(2) that a long time was yet to elapse before it would become an independent kingdom;

(3) that it was yet to secure its independence by the aid of that very Babylon which it would finally destroy;

(4) that no human foresight could predict these revolutions, and that every circumstance conspired to render this event improbable.

The great strength and resources of Babylon; the fact that Media was a dependent province, and that such great revolutions must occur before this

prophecy could be fulfilled, render this one of the most striking and remarkable predictions in the sacred volume.

Which shall not regard silver … - It is remarkable, says Lowth, that Xenophon makes Cyrus open a speech to his army, and, in particular, to the Medes, who made the principal part of it, with praising them for their disregard of riches. ‹Ye Medes and others who now hear me, I well know, that you have not accompanied me in this expedition with a view of acquiring wealth.‘ - (“Cyrop.” v.) That this was the character of the Medes, is further evident from several circumstances. ‹He reckoned, says Xenophon, that his riches belonged not anymore to himself than to his friends. So little did he regard silver, or delight in gold, that Croesus told him that, by his liberality, he would make himself poor, instead of storing up vast treasures for himself. The Medes possessed, in this respect, the spirit of their chief, of which an instance, recorded by Xenophon, is too striking and appropriate to be passed over.

When Gobryas, an Assyrian governor, whose son the king of Babylon had slain, hospitably entertained him and his army, Cyrus appealed to the chiefs of the Medes and Hyrcanians, and to the noblest and most honorable of the Persians, whether, giving first what was due to the gods, and leaving to the rest of the army their portion, they would not overmatch his generosity by ceding to him their whole share of the first and plentiful booty which they had won from the land of Babylon. Loudly applauding the proposal, they immediately and unanimously consented; and one of them said, “Gobryas may have thought us poor, because we came not loaded with coins, and drink not out of golden cups; but by this he will know, that men can be generous even without gold.”‘ (“See” Keith “On the Prophecies,” p. 198, Ed. New York, 1833.) This is a remarkable prediction, because this is a very unusual circumstance in the character of conquerors. Their purpose has been chiefly to obtain plunder, and, especially, gold and silver have been objects to them of great value. Few, indeed, have been the invading armies which were not influenced by the hope of spoil; and the want of that characteristic among the Medes is a circumstance which no human sagacity could have foreseen.

Verse 18

Their bows also - Bows and arrows were the usual weapons of the ancients in war; and the Persians were particularly skilled in their use.

According to Xenophon, Cyrus came to Babylon with a great number of archers and slingers (Cyrop. ii. 1).

Shall dash the young men … - That is, they shall dash the young men to pieces, or kill them by their bows and arrows. Vulgate, ‹And with their arrows shall they slay the young.‘ The meaning of the word here rendered ‹dash to pieces,‘ is to smite suddenly to the ground.

Verse 19

And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms - That is, the capital or chief ornament of many nations. Appellations of this kind, applied to Babylon, abound in the Scriptures. In Daniel 4:30, it is called ‹great Babylon;‘ in Isaiah 14:4, it is called ‹the golden city;‘ in Isaiah 47:5, ‹the lady of kingdoms;‘ in Jeremiah 51:13, it is, spoken of as ‹abundant in treasures;‘ and, in Jeremiah 51:41, as ‹the praise of the whole earth.‘ All these expressions are designed to indicate its immense wealth and magnificence. It was the capital of a mighty empire, and was the chief city of the pagan world.

The beauty of the Chaldees‘ excellency - Hebrew, ‹The glory of the pride of the Chaldees;‘ or the ornament of the proud Chaldees. It was their boast and glory; it was that on which they chiefly prided themselves. How well it deserved these appellations we have already seen.

Shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah - Genesis 19:24. That is, shall be completely and entirely overthrown; shall cease to be inhabited, and shall be perfectly desolate. It does not mean that it shall be overthrown in the same manner as Sodom was, but that it should be as completely and entirely ruined. The successive steps in the overthrow of Babylon, by which this prophecy was so signally fulfilled, were the following:

(1) The taking of the city by Cyrus. This was accomplished by his clearing out the “Pallacopas,” a canal that was made for the purpose of emptying the superfluous waters of the Euphrates into the lakes and marshes formed by it in the south - west borders of the province toward Arabia. Into this canal he directed the waters of the Euphrates, and was thus enabled to enter the city in the channel of the river under the walls (see the notes at Isaiah 45:1-2). He took the city by surprise, and when the inhabitants, confident of security, had given themselves up to the riot of a grand public festival; and the king and the nobles were revelling at a public entertainment. From this cause, also, it happened that the waters, which

were thus diverted from their usual channel, converted the whole country into a vast, unhealthy morass, that contributed greatly to the decline of Babylon.

(2) The "second" capture of Babylon by Darius Hystaspes. Cyrus was not the destroyer of the city, but he rather sought to preserve its magnificence, and to perpetuate its pre-eminence among the nations. He left it to his successor in all its strength and magnificence. But, after his death, it rebelled against Darius, and bade defiance to the power of the whole Persian empire. Fully resolved not to yield, they adopted the resolution of putting every woman in the city to death, with the exception of their mothers and one female, the best beloved in every family, to bake their bread. All the rest, says Herodotus (iii. 150), were assembled together and strangled. The city was taken at that time by Darius, by the aid of Zopyrus, son of Megabyzus, who, in order to do it, mutilated himself beyond the power of recovery. He cut off his nose and ears, and having scourged himself severely, presented himself before Darius. He proposed to Darius to enter the city, apparently as a deserter who had been cruelly treated by Darius, and to deliver the city into his hands.

He was one of the chief nobles of Persia; was admitted in this manner within the walls; represented himself as having been punished because he advised Darius to raise the siege; was admitted to the confidence of the Babylonians; and was finally entrusted with an important military command. After several successful conflicts with the Persians, and when it was supposed his fidelity had been fully tried, he was raised to the chief command of the army; and was appointed to the responsible office of τειχοφύλαξ *teichophulax* or guardian of the walls. Having obtained this object, he opened the gates of Babylon to the Persian army, as he had designed, and the city was taken without difficulty (Herod. iii. 153-160). As soon as Darius had taken the city, he ‹leveled the walls, and took away the gates, neither of which things had Cyrus done before. Three thousand of the most distinguished of the nobility he ordered to be crucified; the rest he suffered to remain.‘ - (Herod. iii. 159.)

(3) After its conquest by Darius, it was always regarded by the Persian monarchs with a jealous eye. Xerxes destroyed the temples of the city, and,

among the rest, the celebrated temple or tower of Belus (Strabo, xvi. 1,5.) ‹Darius,‘ says Herodotus, ‹had designs upon the golden statue in the temple of Belus, but did not dare to take it; but Xerxes, his son, took it, and slew the priest who resisted its removal.‘

(4) The city was captured a third time, by Alexander the Great. Mazaeus, the Persian general, surrendered the city into his hands, and he entered it with his army - “velut in aciem irent” - ‹as if they were marching to battle.‘ - (Q. Curtius, v. 3.) It was afterward taken by Antigonus, by Demetrius, by Antiochus the Great, and by the Parthians; and each successive conquest contributed to its reduction.

(5) Cyrus transferred the capital from Babylon to Susa or Shusan Nehemiah 1:1; Ezra 2:8; Ezra 4:16; Ezra 9:11, Ezra 9:15, which became the capital of the kingdom of Persia, and, of course, contributed much to diminish the importance of Babylon itself.

(6) Seleucus Nicator founded Seleucia in the neighborhood of Babylon, on the Tigris, chiefly with a design to draw off the inhabitants of Babylon to a rival city, and to prevent its importance. A great part of its population migrated to the new city of Seleucia (Plin. “Nat. Hist.” vi. 30). Babylon thus gradually declined until it lost all its importance, and the very place where it stood was, for a long time, unknown. About the beginning of the first century, a small part of it only was inhabited, and the greater portion was cultivated (Diod. Sic. ii. 27). In the second century, nothing but the walls remained (Pausanius, “Arcad.” c. 33). It became gradually a great desert; and, in the fourth century, its walls, repaired for that purpose, formed an enclosure for wild beasts, and Babylon was converted into a hunting place for the pastime of the Persian monarchs. After this, there is an interval of many ages in the history of its mutilated remains, and of its mouldering decay (Keith, “On the Prophecies,” p. 216; Jerome, “Commentary on Isa.” ch. xiv.) Benjamin of Tudela vaguely alludes to the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, which, he says, could not be entered, on account of its being the abode of dragons and wild beasts. Sir John Maundeville, who traveled over Asia, 1322 a.d., says, that ‹Babylone is in the grete desertes of Arabye, upon the waye as men gert towarde the kyngdome of Caldce. But it is full longe sithe ony man durste neyhe to the toure, for it is

alle deserte and full of dragons and grete serpentes, and fulle dyverse veneymouse bestes all abouten.‘

Verse 20

It shall never be inhabited - This has been completely fulfilled. It is now, and has been for centuries, a scene of wide desolation, and is a heap of ruins, and there is every indication that it will continue so to be. From Rauwolff‘s testimony it appears, that in the sixteenth century ‹there was not a house to be seen;‘ and now the ‹eye wanders over a barren desert, in which the ruins are nearly the only indication that it had ever been inhabited. It is impossible to behold this scene and not be reminded how exactly the predictions of Isaiah and Jeremiah have been fulfilled, even in the appearance Babylon was doomed to present, “that she should never be inhabited.”‘ - (Keppel‘s “Narrative,” p. 234.) ‹Babylon is spurned alike by the heel of the Ottoman, the Israelites, and the sons of Ishmael.‘ - (Mignan‘s “Travels,” p. 108.) ‹It is a tenantless and desolate metropolis.‘ - (Ibid. p. 235; see Keith “On Prophecy,” p. 221.)

Neither shall it be dwelt in … - This is but another form of the expression, denoting that it shall be utterly desolate. The following testimonies of travelers will show how this accomplished: ‹Ruins composed, like those of Babylon, of heaps of rubbish impregnated with nitre, cannot be cultivated.‘ - (Rich‘s “Memoir,” p. 16.) ‹The decomposing materials of a Babylonian structure doom the earth on which they perish, to lasting sterility. On this part of the plain, both where traces of buildings are left, and where none stood, all seemed equally naked of vegetation; the whole ground appearing as if it had been washed over and over again by the coming and receding waters, until every bit of genial soil was swept away; its half-clay, half-sandy surface being left in ridgy streaks, like what is often seen on the flat shores of the sea after the retreating of the tide.‘ - (Sir R. K. Porter‘s “Travels,” vol. ii. p. 392.) ‹The ground is low and marshy, and presents not the slightest vestige of former buildings, of any description whatever.‘ - (Buckingham‘s “Travels,” vol. ii. p. 278.) ‹The ruins of Babylon are thus inundated so as to render many parts of them inaccessible, by converting the valleys among them into morasses.‘ - (Rich‘s “Memoir,” p. 13.)

Neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there - The Arabians dwelt chiefly in tents; and were a wandering people, or engaged in traffic which

was conducted in caravans traveling from place to place. The idea here is, that Babylon, so far from being occupied as a permanent residence for any people, would be unfit even for a resting place. It would be so utterly desolate, so forsaken, and so unhealthy, that the caravan would not even stop there for a night. What a charge this from its former splendor! How different from the time when it was the place of magnificent palaces, when strangers flocked to it, and when people from all nations were collected there!

Neither shall the shepherds … - This is an additional image of desolation. Babylon was situated in the midst of a most fertile region. It might be supposed that, though it was to be destroyed, it would still furnish pasturage for flocks. But no, says the prophet, it shall be so utterly and entirely desolate, that it shall not even afford pasturage for them. The reasons of this are:

(1) that the whole region round about Babylon was laid under water by the Euphrates after the city was taken, and became a stagnant pool, and of course an unfit place for flocks; and

(2) that Babylon was reduced to an extended scene of ruins; and on those ruins - those extended wastes of broken walls, of bricks and cement - no grass would grow.

The prophecy has been remarkably fulfilled. It is said that the Arabs cannot be persuaded to remain there even for a night. They traverse these ruins by day without fear; but at night the superstitious dread of evil spirits deters them from remaining there. ‹Captain Mignan was accompanied by six Arabs completely armed, but he "could not induce them to remain toward night, from the apprehension of evil spirits. It is impossible to eradicate this idea from the minds of these people, who are very deeply imbued with superstition … And when the sun sunk behind the Mujelibe, and the moon would have lighted his way among the ruins, it was with infinite regret that he obeyed the summons of his guides."‘ - (Mignan‘s "Travels," as quoted by Keith, pp. 221,222.) ‹All the people of the country assert that it is extremely dangerous to approach the mound‘ (the mound in Babylon called Kasr, or Palad) ‹after nightfall, on account of the multitude of evil spirits by which it is haunted.‘ - (Rich‘s "Memoir on the Ruins of Babylon," p. 27.) The Joseph Wolff, speaking of his visit to Babylon, says,

‹I inquired of them (the Yezeedes), whether the Arabs ever pitched their tents among the ruins of Babylon. No, said they, the Arabs believe that the ghost of Nimrod walks amidst them in the darkness, and no Arab would venture on so hazardous an experiment.‘

Verse 21

But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there - Hebrew, (ציים *tsîyîym*). This word denotes properly those animals that dwell in dry and desolate places, from צי *tsîy* "a waste, a desert." The ancient versions have differed considerably in the interpretation. The Septuagint in different places renders it, Θηριά *Thēria* - ‹Wild animals;‘ or δαιμόνια *daimonia* - ‹Demons.‘ The Syriac, ‹Wild animals, spirits, sirens.‘ Vulgate, ‹Beasts, demons, dragons.‘ Abarbanel renders it, ‹Apes.‘ This word is applied to people, in Psalm 72:9; Psalm 74:14; to animals, Isaiah 23:13; Isaiah 34:14; Jeremiah 50:39. Bochart supposes that wild cats or catamounts are here intended. He has proved that they abound in eastern countries. They feed upon dead carcasses, and live in the woods, or in desert places, and are remarkable for their howl. Their yell resembles that of infants. ("See" Bochart‘s "Hieroz." i. 3. 14. pp. 860-862.)

And their houses shall be full of doleful creatures - Margin, ‹Ochim,‘ or ‹Ostriches.‘ אחים *'ochîym* The Septuagint renders this ‹Clamours,‘ or ‹Howlings,‘ without supposing that it refers to any particular animals. The Hebrew word is found nowhere else. Bochart supposes that the yell or howl of wild animals is intended, and not animals themselves ("Hieroz." i. 3. 15).

And owls shall dwell there - Hebrew, ‹Daughters of the owl or ostrich.‘ The owl is a well-known bird that dwells only in obscure and dark retreats, giving a doleful screech, and seeking its food only at night. It is not certain, however, that the owl is intended here. The Septuagint renders it, Σειρῆνες *Seirēnes* - ‹Sirens.‘ The Chaldee, ‹The daughter of the ostrich.‘ Bochart has gone into an extended argument to prove that the ostrich is intended here ("Hieroz." xi. 2. 14). The Hebrew does not particularly denote the kind of bird intended, but means those that are distinguished for their sound - ‹the daughters of sound or clamor.‘ ‹The ostrich is a sly and timorous creature, delighting in solitary barren deserts. In the night they frequently make a very doleful and hideous noise; sometimes groaning as if they were in the greatest agonies.‘ (Shaw‘s "Travels," vol. ii. p. 348,8vo; Taylor‘s "Heb. Con.;" see Job 30:29; Isaiah 34:13; Isaiah 43:20; Jeremiah 50:39; Micah

1:8; Leviticus 11:16; Deuteronomy 14:15; Lamentations 4:3.) The word does not elsewhere occur.

And satyrs shall dance there - (שׂעירים *s'eʿîrîym*). A "satyr," in mythology, was a sylvan deity or demigod, represented as a monster, half man and half goat, having horns on his head, a hairy body, with the feet and tail of a goat (Webster). The word used here properly denotes that which is "hairy," or "rough," and is applied to "goats" in Genesis 25:25; Psalm 68:21; Leviticus 13:10, Leviticus 13:25-26, Leviticus 13:30, Leviticus 13:32. It is often rendered "hair." ("see" Taylor). In Isaiah 34:14, it is rendered ‹satyr;' in Deuteronomy 32:2, it is rendered ‹the small ram;' in Leviticus 17:7, and 2 Chronicles 11:15, it is rendered ‹the devils,' meaning objects of worship, or idols. Bochart supposes that it refers to the idols that were worshipped among the Egyptians, who placed "goats" among their gods. Doderlin supposes that it means either "fawns," or a species of the monkey tribe, resembling in their rough and shaggy appearance the wild goat.

They are here represented as ‹dancing;' and in Isaiah 34:14, as ‹crying to each other.' It is evident that the prophet intends animals of a rough and shaggy appearance; such as are quick and nimble in their motions; such as dwell in deserts, in forests, or in old ruins; and such as answer to each other, or chatter. The description would certainly seem more applicable to some of the "simia" or monkey tribe than to any other animals. It is "possible," indeed, that he means merely to make use of language that was well known, as describing animals that the ancients "supposed" had an existence, but which really had not, as the imaginary beings called satyrs. But it is possible, also, that he means simply wild goats (compare Bochart's "Hieroz." xi. 6. 7). The Septuagint renders it Δαιμόνια *Daimonia* - ‹Demons, or devils.' The Vulgate, *Pilosi* - ‹Shaggy, or hairy animals.' The Chaldee, ‹Demons.' The essential idea is, that such wild animals as are supposed to dwell in wastes and ruins, would hold their revels in the forsaken and desolate palaces of Babylon. The following remarks of Joseph Wolff may throw light on this passage: ‹I then went to the mountain of Sanjaar, which was full of Yezeedes. One hundred and fifty years ago, they believed in the glorious doctrine of the Trinity, and worshipped the true God; but being severely persecuted by the neighboring Yezeedes, they have now joined them, and are worshippers of the devil.

These people frequent the ruins of Babylon, and dance around them. On a certain night, which they call the Night of Life, they hold their dances around the desolate ruins, in honor of the devil. The passage which declares that "satyrs shall dance there," evidently has respect to this very practice. The original word translated "satyr," literally means, according to the testimony of the most eminent Jewish rabbis, "devil worshippers."' ‹It is a curious circumstance,' says Mr. Rich, in his "Memoir on the Ruins of Babylon," p. 30, in describing the Mujelibe, ‹that here I first heard the oriental account of satyrs. I had always imagined the belief of their existence was confined to the mythology of the west; but a Choadar who was with me when I examined this ruin, mentioned by accident, that in this desert an animal is found resembling a man from the head to the waist, but having the thighs and legs of a sheep or a goat; he said also that the Arabs hunt it with dogs, and eat the lower parts, abstaining from the upper on account of their resemblance to the human species.' ‹The Arabians call them Sied-as-sad, and say that they abound in some woody places near Semava on the Euphrates.'

Verse 22

And the wild beasts of the islands - (איים *'îyîym*); see the notes at Isaiah 11:11; Isaiah 41:1, on the word rendered ‹islands.' The word denotes islands, or coasts, and as those coasts and islands were unknown and unexplored, the word seems to have denoted unknown and uninhabited regions in general. Boehart supposes that by the word here used is denoted a species of wolves, the jackal, or the "thoes." It is known as a wild animal, exceedingly fierce, and is also distinguished by alternate howlings in the night ("see" Bochart's "Hieroz." i. 3. 12). The word wolf probably will not express an erroneous idea here. The Chaldee renders it, ‹Cats.'

Shall cry - Hebrew, ‹Shall answer, or respond to each other.' This is known to be the custom of wolves and some other wild animals, who send forth those dismal howls in alternate responses at night. This alternation of the howl or cry gives an additional impressiveness to the loneliness and desolation of forsaken Babylon.

And dragons - (תנין *tannîyn*). This word, in its various forms of "tannim, taninim, tannin, and tannoth," denotes sometimes "jackals or thoes," as in Job 30:29; Psalm 44:19; Micah 1:8; Malachi 1:3. But it also denotes a great fish, a whale, a sea monster, a dragon, a serpent. It is

translated ‹a whale‘ in Genesis 1:21; Job 7:12; Ezekiel 32:2; ‹serpents,‘ Exodus 7:9-10, Exodus 7:12; ‹dragons,‘ or ‹dragon,‘ Deuteronomy 32:33; Nehemiah 2:13; Psalm 44:19; Psalm 74:13; Psalm 91:13; Psalm 148:7; Isaiah 27:1; Isaiah 51:9; Jeremiah 14:6; Jeremiah 51:34; Malachi 1:3, "et al.;" and once ‹sea monsters,‘ Lamentations 4:3. A "dragon" properly means a kind of winged serpent much celebrated in the dark ages. Here it may not improperly be rendered "jackal" ("see" Bochart‘s "Hieroz." i. 1. 9, p. 69).

In their pleasant palaces - Hebrew, ‹Their palaces of luxury and pleasure.‘ The following testimonies from travelers will show how minutely this was accomplished: ‹There are many dens of wild beasts in various parts.‘ ‹There are quantities of porcupine quills.‘ ‹In most of the cavities are numberless bats and owls.‘ ‹These caverns, over which the chambers of majesty may have been spread, are now the refuge of jackals and other savage animals. The mouths of their entrances are strewed with the bones of sheep and "goats;" and the loathsome smell that issues from most of them is sufficient warning not to proceed into the den.‘ - (Sir R. K. Porter‘s "Travels," vol. ii. p. 342.) ‹The mound was full of large holes; we entered some of them, and found them strewed with the carcasses and skeletons of animals recently killed. The ordure of wild beasts was so strong, that prudence got the better of curiosity, for we had no doubt as to the savage nature of the inhabitants. Our guides, indeed, told us that all the ruins abounded in lions and other wild beasts; so literally has the divine prediction been fulfilled, that wild beasts of the deserts should lie there.‘ - (Keppel‘s "Narrative," vol. i. pp. 179,180.)

And her time is near to come - This was spoken about 174 years before the destruction of Babylon. But we are to bear in mind that the prophet is to be supposed to be speaking to the captive Jews "in" Babylon, and speaking to them respecting their release (see Isaiah 14:1-2; compare remarks on the Analysis of this chapter). Thus considered, supposing the prophet to be addressing the Jews in captivity, or ministering consolation to them, the time was near. Or if we suppose him speaking as in his own time, the period when Babylon was to be destroyed was at no great distance.

On this whole prophecy, we may observe:

(1) That it was uttered at least 170 years before it was fulfilled. Of this there is all the proof that can be found in regard to any ancient writings.

(2) When uttered, there was the strongest improbability that it would be fulfilled. This improbability arose from the following circumstances:

(a) The Jews were secure in their own land, and they had no reason to dread the Babylonians; they had no wars with them, and it was improbable that they would be plucked up as a nation and carried there as captives. Such a thing had never occurred, and there were no circumstances that made it probable that it would occur.

(b) The great strength and security of Babylon rendered it improbable. It was the capital of the pagan world; and if there was any city that seemed impregnable, it was this.

(c) It was improbable that it would be overthrown by "the Medes." Media, at the time when the prophecy was uttered, was a dependent province of Assyria (note, Isaiah 13:17), and it was wholly improbable that the Medes would revolt; that they would subdue their masters; that they would be united to the Persians, and that thus a new kingdom would arise, that should overthrow the most mighty capital of the world.

(d) It was improbable that Babylon would become uninhabitable. It was in the midst of a most fertile country; and by no human sagacity could it have been seen that the capital would be removed to Susa, or that Seleucia would be founded, thus draining it of its inhabitants; or that by the inundation of waters it would become unhealthy. How could mere human sagacity have foreseen that there would not be a house in it in the sixteenth century; or that now, in 1839, it would be a wide and dreary waste? Can any man now tell what London, or Paris, or New York, or Philadelphia, will be two years hence? Yet a prediction that those cities shall be the residence of ‹wild beasts of the desert,‘ of ‹satyrs‘ and ‹dragons,‘ would be as probable now as was the prediction respecting Babylon at the time when Isaiah uttered these remarkable prophecies.

(3) The prophecy is not vague conjecture. It is not a "general" statement. It is minute, and definite, and particular; and it has been as definitely, and minutely, and particularly fulfilled.

(4) This is one of the evidences of the divine origin of the Bible. How will the infidel account for this prophecy and its fulfillment? It will not do to say that it is accident. It is too minute, and too particular. It is not human sagacity. No human sagacity could have foretold it. It is not "fancied fulfillment." It is real, in the most minute particulars. And if so, then Isaiah was commissioned by Yahweh as he claimed to be - for none but the omniscient jehovah can foresee and describe future events as the destruction of Babylon was foreseen and described. And if "this" prophecy was inspired by God, by the same train of reasoning it can be proved that the whole Bible is a revelation from heaven. For a very interesting account of the present state of the ruins of Babylon, furnishing the most complete evidence of the fulfillment of the Prophecies in regard to it, the reader may consult an article in the "Amos Bib. Rep.," vol. viii. pp. 177-189. (See also the two "Memoirs on the Ruins of Babylon," by C. John Rich, Esq. London, 1816 and 1818.) The frontispiece to this volume, compiled from the sketches of recent travelers, gives accurate and interesting views of those ruins.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Introduction

This chapter Isaiah 14:27. A considerable portion of the chapter is a poem of unequalled beauty and sublimity. It is to be remembered that this prophecy was uttered at least 174 years before they were carried into captivity; and the design of the prophet is, to declare the certainty of their release after they should be subjected to this bondage. He, doubtless, intended that this prophecy should be borne with them, in memory at least, to Babylon, and that it should comfort and sustain them when there (see the Introduction to Isaiah 13:1-3. This general declaration respecting the deliverance of the Jews, is followed by a triumphant song on that subject, that is singularly beautiful in its imagery, and sublime in its conception. ‹It moves in lengthened elegiac measure, like a song of lamentation for the dead, and is full of lofty scorn and contumely from beginning to the end.‘ - (Herder‘s “Spirit of Hebrew Poetry,” by Marsh, vol. ii. p. 206.) It may be called the triumphal song of the Jews when delivered from their long and oppressive bondage. The parts and design of this poem may be thus expressed:

I. A chorus of Jews is introduced, expressing their surprise at the sudden and entire downfall of Babylon, and the complete destruction of the proud and haughty city. The whole earth is full of joy and rejoicing that the city, so long distinguished for oppressions and arrogance, is laid low; and even “the cedars” of Lebanon are introduced as uttering a most severe taunt over the fallen tyrant, and expressing their security now that he is no more Isaiah 14:4-8.

II. The scene is immediately changed from earth to hell. Hades, or the region of the dead, is represented as moved at the descent of the haughty king of Babylon to those abodes. Departed monarchs rise from their thrones, and insult him on being reduced from his pride and magnificence to the same low state as themselves Isaiah 14:9-11. This portion of the ode is one of the boldest personifications ever attempted in poetry: and is executed with remarkable brevity and force - so much so that we almost seem to “see” the illustrious shades of the dead rise from their couches to meet the descending king of Babylon.

III. The Jews now resume the speech Isaiah 14:12-17. They address the king of Babylon as fallen from heaven - like the bright star of the morning. They speak of him as the most magnificent and proud of the monarchs of the earth. They introduce him as expressing the most extravagant purposes of ambition; as designing to ascend to heaven, and to make his throne above the stars; and as aiming at equality with God. They then speak of him as cast down to hell, and as the object of reproach by all those who shall behold him.

IV. The scene is again changed. Certain persons are introduced who are represented as seeing the fallen king of Babylon - as looking narrowly upon him, to make themselves sure that it was he - and as taunting him with his proud designs and his purposes to make the world a wilderness Isaiah 14:15-20. They see him cast out and naked; lying among the undistinguished dead, and trodden under feet; and contrast his condition with that of monarchs who are usually deposited in a splendid mausoleum. But the once haughty king of Babylon is represented as denied even a common burial, and as lying undistinguished in the streets.

V. The whole scene of the poem is closed by introducing God as purposing the certain ruin of Babylon; as designing to cut off the whole of the royal family, and to convert the whole city into pools of water, and a habitation for the bittern Isaiah 14:21-23. This is declared to be the purpose of Yahweh; and a solemn declaration is made, that when “he” makes a purpose none can disannul it.

VI. A confirmation of this is added Isaiah 14:24-27 in a fragment respecting the destruction of the army of the Assyrian under Sennacherib, by which the exiles in Babylon would be comforted with the assurance, that he who had destroyed the Assyrian host with such ease could also effect his purposes respecting Babylon (see the remarks introductory to Isaiah 14:24).

‹I believe it may be affirmed,‘ says Lowth, that there is no poem of its kind extant in any language, in which the subject is so well laid out, and so happily conducted, with such a richness of invention, with such a variety of images, persons, and distinct actions, with such rapidity and ease of transition in so small a compass, as in this ode of Isaiah. For beauty of

disposition, strength of coloring, greatness of sentiment, brevity, perspicuity, and force of expression, it stands, among all the monuments of antiquity, unrivaled.‘

The king of Babylon, who was the subject of this prediction, and who reigned when Babylon was taken, was Belshazzar (see Isaiah 14:22).

Verse 1

For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob - That is, he will pity the captive Jews in Babylon. He will not abandon them, but will remember them, and restore them to their own land.

And will yet choose Israel - Will show that he regards them as still his chosen people; or will again “choose” them by recovering them from their bondage, and by restoring them to their country as his people. The names ‹Jacob‘ and ‹Israel‘ here simply denote the Jews. They do not imply that all of those who were to be carried captive would return, but that as a people they would be restored.

And set them … - Hebrew, ‹Will cause them to rest in their own country;‘ that is, will give them peace, quietness, and security there.

And the stranger shall be joined to them - The ‹stranger,‘ here, probably refers to those foreigners who would become proselytes to their religion, while they were in Babylon. Those proselytes would be firmly united with them, and would return with them to their own land. Their captivity would be attended with this advantage, that many even of those who led them away, would be brought to embrace their religion, and to return with them to their own country. If it is asked what “evidence” there is that any considerable number of the people of Chaldea became Jewish proselytes, I answer, that it is expressly stated in Esther 8:17: ‹And many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them. Ezra, indeed, has not mentioned the fact, that many of the people of Babylonia became proselytes to the religion of the Jews, but it is in accordance with all that we know of their history, and their influence on the nations with which, from time to time, they were connected, that many should have been thus joined to them. We know that in subsequent times many of other nations became proselytes, and that multitudes of the Egyptians, the Macedonians, the Romans, and the inhabitants of Asia Minor, embraced the Jewish religion, or became what were called

‹proselytes of the gate.‘ They were circumcised, and were regarded as entitled to a part of the privileges of the Jewish people (see Acts 2:9-11; compare Acts 17:4, Acts 17:17). Tacitus, speaking of his time, says, that every abandoned man, despising the religion of his country, bears tribute and revenue to Jerusalem, whence it happens that the number of the Jews is greatly increased.‘ - (“Hist.” v. 5.) That the Jews, therefore, who were in Babylon should induce many of the Chaldeans during their long captivity to become proselytes, is in accordance with all their history.

Verse 2

And the people shall take them - That is, the people in Babylon.

And bring them to their place - That is, they shall attend them to the land of Judea, and aid in restoring them to their own country. There is reference here, doubtless, to the fact that Cyrus would assist them (compare Ezra 1:1-11), and that many of the inhabitants of Chaldea who would become proselytes, would be willing to accompany them to their own land.

And the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord - Not in a foreign land, and among strangers and foes, but in their own land, and among the institutions of their own religion. They would be willing to return with them, and occupy a humble place among them, as servants, for the sake of enjoying the privileges of the true religion. It was a matter of course among the Hebrews, that proselytes would be regarded as occupying a less elevated place in society than native-born Jews.

And they shall take them captive … - That is, they shall induce them to become proselytes; to be willing to accompany them to their own homes, and to become their servants there. It does not mean that they would subdue them by force; but they would be able, by their influence there, to disarm their opposition; and to induce them to become the friends of their religion.

And they shall rule over their oppressors - This is one instance where the people of God would show that they could disarm their oppressors by a mild and winning demeanour, and in which they would be able to induce others to join with them. Such would be the force of their example and conduct, of their conversation and of their deportment, even in the midst of proud and haughty Babylon, that their oppressors would be won to embrace the religion of their captives. If, in proud and haughty Babylon, those who loved the Lord could thus do good; if, when they were “captives,” they could have such an influence over their haughty masters, where is there a

place in which the friends of God may not be useful by their example, their conversation, and their prayers?

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Verse 3

And it shall come to pass - That is, then thou shalt take up a taunting song against the king of Babylon Isaiah 14:4.

That the Lord shall give thee rest - (compare Isaiah 38:12). The nature of this predicted rest, is more fully described in Ezekiel 28:25-26.

From thy sorrow - The long pain of thy captivity in Babylon.

And from thy fear - Hebrew, ‹Trembling.‘ That is, the apprehension of the ills to which they were continually exposed. Trembling is usually one effect of fear.

And from thy hard bondage - The severe and galling servitude of seventy years.

Verse 4

That thou shalt take up - Thou shalt utter, declare, or commence. The word ‹take up,‘ is used in the sense of utter, speak, or declare, in Exodus 20:7; Exodus 23:1; Psalm 15:2.

This proverb - (המשל *hamâshâl*). Vulgate, ‹Parable.‘ Septuagint Τὸν ρῆνον *ton thrēnon* - ‹Lamentation.‘ The Hebrew word משל *mâshâl* usually rendered “proverb,” is also rendered “a parable,” or “a by-word.” It properly denotes “a metaphor, a comparison, a similitude;” and is applied usually to a brief and pungent sentiment or maxim, where wisdom is embodied in few words. In these the ancients abounded. They had few books; and hence arose the necessity of condensing as much as possible the sentiments of wisdom, that they might be easily remembered, and transmitted to future times. These maxims were commonly expressed in figurative language, or by a brief comparison, or short parable, as they are with us. The word also means, figurative discourse generally; and hence, a song or poem Numbers 23:7, Numbers 23:18; Job 27:1; Job 29:1; Psalm 49:5. It is also used to denote a satire, or a song of triumph over enemies Micah 2:4; Hebrews 4:6; Joel 2:17. It is evidently used in this sense here - to denote a taunting speech, a song of triumph over the prostrate king of Babylon. In this beautiful song, there are all the elements of the most pungent satire, and all the beauties of the highest poetry.

Against the king of Babylon - Over the king of Babylon, or in regard to him. It is not certain that any particular king of Babylon is here intended. If

there was, it was probably Belshazzar, in whose reign the city was taken (see the notes at Isaiah 14:22). It may, however, be designed to denote the Babylonian empire - the kingdom that had oppressed the Jews; and thus the king may be referred to as the head of the nation, and as the representative of the whole people.

How hath the oppressor ceased! - The word ‹oppressor‘ (נגשׂ *nogēs′*) denotes, properly, the "exactor of tribute," and refers here to the fact that Babylon had oppressed its dependent provinces, by exacting large revenues from them, and thus cruelly oppressing them.

Ceased - Ceased to exact tribute; or (Hebrew) ‹is at rest.‘ It is now at rest, and no more puts forth its power in oppressing its dependent provinces.

The golden city - Babylon. The word used here (מדהבה *madehēbâh*) occurs nowhere else in the Bible. According to the Jewish Commentators, it means "an exactress of gold," as if derived from דהב *dehab* used for זהב *zehab* gold. Gesenius and Michaelis prefer another reading (מרהבה *marehēbâh*), from (רהב *râhab*), and suppose that it means oppression. The Vulgate renders it "tribute" - ‹The tribute hath ceased.‘ The Septuagint Ἐπισπουδαστής *Epispoudastēs* - ‹Solicitor, or exactor (of gold).‘ Vitringa supposes that the word means "gold," and that it refers to the golden scepter of its kings that had now ceased to be swayed over the prostrate nations. The most probable sense is, that it means the exactress of gold, or of tribute. This best expresses the force of the word, and best agrees with the parallelism. In this sense it does not refer to the magnificence of the city, but to its oppressive acts in demanding tribute of gold from its dependent provinces.

Verse 5

The Lord hath broken - Yahweh, by the hand of Cyrus.

The staff of the wicked - That is, the scepter of the king of Babylon. The word rendered ‹staff‘ (מטה *maṭēh*) may mean either a bough, stick, staff, rod, or a scepter. The scepter was the symbol of supreme power. It was in the form of a staff, and was made of wood, ivory, or gold. It here means that Yahweh had taken away the power from Babylon, and destroyed his dominion.

Verse 6

He who smote - This may either refer to the king of Babylon, or to the rod or scepter which he had used, and which was now broken. Herder refers

it to the scepter, ‹that which smote the nations.‘ (On the meaning of the word “smote,” see the notes at Isaiah 10:20)

The people - The nations that were subject to his authority.

With a continual stroke - Margin, ‹A stroke without removing.‘ Vulgate, *Plaga insanabili* - ‹With an incurable plague.‘ - Septuagint the same - Πληγῇ ἀνιάτῳ *Plēgē aniatō* The Hebrew is, as in the margin, ‹A smiting without removing,‘ or without cessation. There was no relaxation in its oppressions, it was always engaged in acts of tyranny.

He that ruled the nations - Babylon was the capital of a vast empire, and that empire was composed of many dependent nations.

Is persecuted - By those that make war upon it. Its turn had come to be oppressed, and overthrown.

And none hindereth - No nation opposes the invader. None of the dependent kingdoms of Babylon have any real attachment to it, but all rejoice at its downfall. The most mighty kingdom of the earth is helpless and ruined. What a change was this! How sudden and striking the revolution! And what a warning to proud and guilty cities!

Verse 7

The whole earth is at rest - The kingdom of Babylonia, or Chaldea, extended nearly over the whole pagan world. Now that Babylon was fallen, and that those oppressions would cease, the world is represented as in peace and quietness.

They break forth into singing - That is, the inhabitants of all the nations that were subject to Babylon now rejoice that they are released from its galling and oppressive yoke.

Verse 8

Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee - They join with the inhabitants of the nations in rejoicing at thy downfall - for they now, like those inhabitants, are suffered to remain undisturbed. (On the word rendered “fir trees,” see the notes at Isaiah 1:29.) It is evident that a species of evergreen is meant; and probably some species that grew in Syria or Palestine. The idea is plain. The very forest is represented as rejoicing. It would be safe from the king of Babylon. He could no longer cut it down to build his palaces, or to construct his implements of war. This figure of representing the hills and groves, the trees, the mountains, and the earth, as exulting, or as breaking forth into joy, is common in the Scriptures:

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;

Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.
Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein:

Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice

Before the Lord.
Psalm 96:11-13.
Let the floods clap their hands.
Let the hills be joyful together

Before the Lord.
Psalm 98:8-9.
Praise the Lord from the earth,
Ye dragons and all deeps;

Fire and hail; snow and vapor;

Stormy wind fulfilling his word:

Mountains and all hills;

Fruitful trees and all cedars.
Psalm 148:7-12.
(Compare 1 Chronicles 16:31; Habakkuk 3:10-11.)

The cedars of Lebanon - (note, Isaiah 10:34). The cedars of Lebanon were much celebrated for building; and it is not impossible that the king of Babylon had obtained timber from that mountain with which to construct his palaces at Babylon. They are now represented as rejoicing that he is fallen, since they would be safe and undisturbed. A similar figure of speech occurs in Virgil, "Ecl." v. 68:

Peace, peace, mild Daphnis loves; with joyous cry.
The untill'd mountains strike the echoing sky;
And rocks and towers the triumph spread abroad -

‹A god! Menalcas! Daphnis is a god!'
Wrangham

It is a beautiful figure; and is a fine specimen of the poetry of the Hebrews, where everything is animated, and full of life.

Since thou art laid down - Since thou art dead.

No feller - No one to cut us down. Jowett ("Chris. Res.") makes the following remarks on this passage on his visit to Lebanon: ‹As we passed through the extensive forest of fir trees situated between Deir-el-Karat and Ainep, we had already heard, at some distance, the stroke of one solitary axe, resounding from hill to hill. On reaching the spot, we found a peasant, whose labor had been so far successful, that he had felled his tree and lopped his branches. He was now hewing it in the middle, so as to balance the two halves upon his camel, which stood patiently by him waiting for his load. In the days of Hiram, king of Tyre, and subsequently under the kings of Babylon, this romantic solitude was not so peaceful; that most poetic image in Isaiah, who makes these very trees vocal, exulting in the downfall of the destroyer of nations, seems now to be almost realized anew - "Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us."'

Verse 9

Hell from beneath - The scene is now changed. The prophet had represented the people of all the subject nations as rejoicing that the king of Babylon had fallen, and had introduced even the trees of the forest as breaking forth into joy at this event. He now transfers the scene to the mournful regions of the dead; follows the spirit of the departed king of Babylon - the man who once gloried in the magnificence of his kingdom and his court, and who was more distinguished for pride and arrogance than all other monarchs - down to the land of darkness, and describes his reception there. This portion of the ode is signally sublime, and is managed with great power and skill. It is unequalled, perhaps, by any writings for boldness, majesty, and, at the same time, for its severe sarcasm. The word ‹hell' here (שׁאול *she'ôl*) is rendered by the Vulgate, "*infernus*;" and by the Septuagint, ὁ ᾅδης *ho Hadēs* "Hades."

It properly means the grave, and then the dark regions of the lower world - the region of ghosts and shades a place where thick darkness reigns. The verb from which it is derived means, properly, "to ask, to demand, to require, to seek;" and this name (שׁאול *she'ôl*) is supposed to have been given to the grave, and to the regions of departed spirits, from the insatiable demand which they are constantly making of the living (see the note at

Isaiah 5:14, where the word is explained). The word denotes, says Taylor ("Heb. Con."), ‹The underground parts of the earth, otherwise called the nether, or lower parts of the earth; the earth beneath in opposition to the earth above, where people and other animals live. In "sheol" are the foundations of the mountains Deuteronomy 32:22. In "sheol "men penetrate by digging into the earth Amos 9:2. Into "sheol" the roots of trees do strike down Ezekiel 31:16.

Into "sheol," Korah, Dathan, and Abiram went down alive Numbers 16:30, Numbers 16:33. In "sheol" the body is corrupted and consumed by worms Job 17:13-14; Psalm 16:10; Psalm 49:14. They that rest together in the dust are said "to go down to the bars, or strong gates of sheol" Job 17:16. In "sheol" there is no knowledge, nor can any praise God or give thanks there Psalm 6:5; Ecclesiastes 9:10; Isaiah 38:10-11. "Sheol" and the pit, death and corruption, are synonymous Psalm 16:10; Psalm 89:48; Proverbs 1:12; Proverbs 7:27; Ezekiel 31:16; Hosea 13:14. A grave is one particular cavity purposely digged for the interment of a dead person; "sheol" is a collective name for all the graves. He that is in the grave is in "sheol;" but he that is in "sheol" may not be in a grave, but in any pit, or in the sea. In short, it is the region of the dead; which is figuratively considered as a city or large habitation with gates and bars in which there are many chambers Proverbs 7:27.' "Sheol" is never full, but is always asking or craving more Proverbs 27:20; Hebrews 2:5. Here it means, not a place of punishment, but the region of the dead, where the ghosts of the departed are considered as residing together.

From beneath - From beneath the earth. "Sheol" was always represented as being "in" or "under" the ground, and the grave was the avenue or door that led to it (see the note at Isaiah 5:14.)

Is moved for thee - Is roused to meet thee; is surprised that a monarch once so proud and magnificent is descending to it. The image here is taken from the custom of the ancients in burying, especially of burying princes and kings. This was usually done in caves or sepulchres excavated from a rock (see the notes and illustrations on Isaiah 66:4). Mr. Stephens, in his "Travels in Egypt, Arabia Petrea, and the Holy land," has given an account of the manner in which he passed a night in Petra, which may serve to illustrate this passage: ‹We ascended the valley, and rising to the summit of the rocky rampart, of Petra, it was almost dark when we found ourselves

opposite a range of tombs in the suburbs of the city. Here we dismounted; and selecting from among them one which, from its finish and dimensions, must have been the last abode of some wealthy Edomite, we prepared to pass the night within its walls.

In the front part of it was a large chamber, about twenty-five feet square, and ten feet high; and behind this was another of smaller dimensions, furnished with receptacles of the dead, not arranged after the manner of shelves along the wall, as in the catacombs I had seen in Italy and Egypt, but cut lengthwise in the rock, like ovens, so as to admit the insertion of the body with the feet foremost. My plans for the morrow being all arranged, the Bedouins stretched themselves out in the outer chamber, while I went within; and seeking out a tomb as far back as I could find, I crawled in feet first, and found myself very much in the condition of a man buried alive. I had just room enough to turn round; and the worthy old Edomite for whom the tomb was made, never slept in it more quietly than I did.‘ (Vol. ii. pp. 82,83,86.) To understand the passage before us, we are to form the idea of an immense and gloomy cavern, all around which are niches or cells made to receive the bodies of the dead. In this vast vault monarchs repose in grandeur suitable to their former rank, each on his couch, ‹in glory,‘ with their arms beside them (see Isaiah 14:18). These mighty shades - these departed monarchs - are represented as rising from their couches to meet the descending king of Babylon, and receive him with insults on his fall. The Hebrew word for “moved” denotes more than our translation conveys. It means that they were “agitated” - they “trembled” - they advanced toward the descending monarch with trepidation. The idea of the shades of the mighty dead thus being troubled, and rising to meet the king of Babylon, is one that is exceedingly sublime.

It stireth up - “Sheol” stirreth up; that is, they are stirred up or excited. So the Septuagint renders it ‹All the giants who rule the earth rise up to thee.‘

The dead - Hebrew, רפאים *repā'îym* The Septuagint renders this, Ὀι γίγαντες *hoi gigantes* ‹giants.‘ So the Vulgate and the Chaldee, The meaning of this word has been a subject of great difference of opinion among lexicographers. It is sometimes found as a gentile noun to denote the sons of Raphah, called “Rephaim” 2 Samuel 21:16, 2 Samuel 21:18, a Canaanite race of giants that lived beyond Jordan Genesis 14:5; Genesis 15:20, from whom Og the son of Bashan was descended Deuteronomy

3:11. It is sometimes used to denote all the giant tribes of Canaan Deuteronomy 2:11, Deuteronomy 2:20; and is particularly applied to people of extraordinary strength among the Philistines 2 Samuel 21:16, 2 Samuel 21:18. Vitringa supposes that the term was given to the spirits of the dead on account of the fact that they appeared to be "larqer" than life; that they in their form and stature resembled giants. But a more probable opinion is, that it is applied to the shades of the dead as being weak, feeble, or without power or sensation, from the word רפא *râpâ'* weak, feeble, powerless. This interpretation is strongly confirmed by the place before us Isaiah 14:10, ‹Art thou become weak as we?‘ The word is rendered ‹giants‘ in the following places: Deuteronomy 2:11, Deuteronomy 2:20; Deuteronomy 3:13; Joshua 21:4; Joshua 15:8; Joshua 17:15; Joshua 18:16; 2 Samuel 21:16, 2 Samuel 21:18, 2 Samuel 21:20, 2 Samuel 21:22; 1 Chronicles 20:5-6, 1 Chronicles 20:8. It is rendered ‹Rephaims,‘ Genesis 14:5; Genesis 15:20; 2 Samuel 5:18, 2 Samuel 5:22; 2 Samuel 23:13. It is rendered ‹the dead‘ Job 26:5; Psalm 88:10; Proverbs 2:18; Proverbs 9:18; Proverbs 21:16; Isaiah 26:14. It here means the departed spirits of the dead - the inhabitants of that dark and dismal region, conceived by the Hebrews to be situated beneath the ground, where dwell the departed dead before their final destiny is fixed - called "sheol" or "hades." It is not the residence of the wicked only - the place of punishment - but the place where all the dead are supposed to be congregated before their final doom is pronounced.

(The author entertains unique views of the state of knowledge among the Hebrews regarding the future world - views which will be found fully canvassed in the preface to the volumes on Job. As to the alleged notion of all the dead dwelling in some dismal region before their final doom is pronounced, we have there taken pains to show that the righteous in ancient times entertained no such gloomy expectations. The opinions of the ancient Hebrews on this subject, must be taken from passages in which they expressly treat of it, and intimate plainly what their belief is, and not from passages confessedly full of poetical imagery. Nor are we to construe popular and poetical phraseology so strictly and literally as to form a theological creed out of it, in contradiction to the actual belief of those who daily used that phraseology. Because Englishmen speak of the dead "indiscriminately" as having "gone to the grave," and "to the land of spirits," must we, out of this, construct a Popish purgatory as the national belief?

Yet this would be just as reasonable in the case of the English, as in the case of the Jews. The reader will appreciate the following observations of Professor Alexander on the place: ‹Two expressions have been faithfully transcribed by interpreters, from one another, in relation to this passage, with a very equivocal effect upon its exposition. The one is, that it is full of biting sarcasm - an unfortunate suggestion of Calvin‘s, which puts the reader on the scent for irony, and even wit, instead of opening his mind to impressions of sublimity and tragic grandeur. The other, for which Calvin is in no degree responsible, is, that we have before us not a mere prosopopeia, or poetical creation of the highest order, but a chapter from the popular belief of the Jews, as to the locality, contents, and transactions of the unseen world. Thus Gesenius, in his Lexicon and Commentary, gives a minute topographical description of “Sheol,” as the Hebrews believed it to exist.

With equal truth, a diligent compiler might construct a map of hell, as conceived of by the English Puritans, from the descriptive portions of the Paradise Lost. The infidel interpreters of Germany regard the scriptural and Classical mythology precisely in the same light. But when Christian writers copy their expressions or ideas, they should take pains to explain whether the popular belief of which they speak was true or false, and, if false, how it could lie countenanced and sanctioned by inspired writers. This kind of exposition is, moreover, chargeable with a rhetorical incongruity, in landing the creative genius of the poet, and yet making all his grand creations commonplace articles of popular belief. The true view of the matter, as determined both by piety and taste, appears to be, that the passage now before ns comprehends two elements, and only two religious verities or certain facts, and poetical embellishments. The admission of a “tertium quid,” in the shape of superstitious fables, is as false in rhetoric as in theology.‘)

The chief ones of the earth. - Margin, ‹Leaders,‘ or ‹great goats.‘ The Hebrew word means properly “great goats,” or goats that are leaders of the flock. Perhaps there is intended to be a slight degree of sarcasm in applying this word to princes and monarchs. It is nowhere else applied to princes, though the word is often used or applied to rams, or to the chief goats of a flock.

From their thrones - In "hades," or "sheol." They are there represented as occupying an eminence similar to that which distinguished them on earth.

Verse 10

All they shall speak … - Language of astonishment that one so proud, and who apparently never expected to die, should be brought down to that humiliating condition. It is a severe taunt at the great change which had taken place in a haughty monarch.

Verse 11

Thy pomp - Thy magnificence (see the note at Isaiah 5:14).

The noise of thy viols - Instruments of music were often used in their feasts; and the meaning here is, that instead of being surrounded with splendor, and the instruments of music, the monarch was now brought down to the corruption and stillness of the grave. The instrument referred to by the word ‹viol' (נבל *nēbel* plur. נבלים *nebalîym* Greek νάβλα *nabla* Latin *nablium*), was a stringed instrument usually with twelve strings, and played by the pecten or by the hand (see the notes and illustrations on Isaiah 5:12). Additional force is given by all these expressions if they are read, as Lowth reads them, as questions asked in suprise, and in a taunting manner, over the haughty king of Babylon - ‹Is thy pride then brought down to the grave?' etc.

The worm - This word, in Hebrew (רמה *rimmâh*), denotes a worm that is found in putrid substances Exodus 16:25; Job 7:5; Job 21:26.

Is spread under thee - Is become thy couch - instead of the gorgeous couch on which thou wert accustomed to repose.

And the worm - (תולעה *tôlêʿâh*) - the same word which occurs in Isaiah 1:18, and rendered there as "crimson" (see the note on that verse). This word is usually applied to the insect from which the crimson dye was obtained; but it is also applied to the worm which preys upon the dead Exodus 16:20; Isaiah 66:24.

Cover thee - Instead of the splendid covering which was over thee when reposing on thy couch in thy palace. What could be more humiliating than this language? How striking the contrast between his present situation and that in which he reposed in Babylon! And yet this language is as applicable to all others as to that prond and haughty king. It is equally true of the great and mighty everywhere; of the rich, the frivolous, the beautiful, and the proud who lie on beds of down, that they will soon lie where worms shall

be their couch and their covering. How ought this reflection to humble our pride! How should it lead us to be prepared for that hour when the grave shall be our bed; and when far away from the sound of the viol and the harp; from the sweet voice of friendship and the noise of revelry, we shall mingle with our native dust!

Verse 12

How art thou fallen from heaven - A new image is presented here. It is that of the bright morning star; and a comparison of the once magnificent monarch with that beautiful star. He is now exhibited as having fallen from his place in the east to the earth. His glory is dimmed; his brightness quenched. Nothing can be more poetic and beautiful than a comparison of a magnificent monarch with the bright morning star! Nothing more striking in representing his death, than the idea of that star falling to the earth!

Lucifer - Margin, ‹Day-star‘ (הילל *hēylēl* from הלל *hâlal* "to shine"). The word in Hebrew occurs as a noun nowhere else. In two other places Ezekiel 21:12; Zechariah 11:2, it is used as a verb in the imperative mood of Hiphil, and is translated ‹howl‘ from the verb ילל *yālal* "to howl" or "cry." Gesenius and Rosenmuller suppose that it should be so rendered here. So Noyes renders it, ‹Howl, son of the morning!‘ But the common translation seems to be preferable. The Septuagint renders it, Ἑωσφόρος *Heōsphoros* and the Vulgate, ‹Lucifer, the morning star.‘ The Chaldee, ‹How art thou fallen from high, who wert splendid among the sons of men.‘ There can be no doubt that the object in the eve of the prophet was the bright morning star; and his design was to compare this magnificent oriental monarch with that. The comparison of a monarch with the sun, or the other heavenly bodies, is common in the Scriptures.

Son of the morning - This is a Hebraism (see the note at Matthew 1:1), and signifies that that bright star is, as it were, the production, or the offspring of morning; or that it belongs to the morning. The word ‹son‘ often thus denotes possession, or that one thing belongs to another. The same star in one place represents the Son of God himself; Revelation 21:16: ‹I am - the bright and morning star.‘

Which didst weaken the nations - By thy oppressions and exactions, rendering once mighty nations feeble.

Verse 13

For thou hast said in thine heart - It was thy purpose or design.

I will ascend into heaven - Nothing could more strikingly show the arrogance of the monarch of Babylon than this impious design. The meaning is, that he intended to set himself up as supreme; he designed that all should pay homage to him; be did not intend to acknowledge the authority of God. It is not to be understood literally; but it means that he intended "not" to acknowledge any superior either in heaven or earth, but designed that himself and his laws should be regarded as supreme.

Above the stars of God - The stars which God has made. This expression is equivalent to the former that he would ascend into heaven.

I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation - The word rendered ‹congregation‘ מועד *môʿêd* from יעד *yâʿad* "to fix, appoint"), properly means a fixed or definite time; then an "appointed" place of meeting; then a meeting itself; an assembly, a congregation. What is referred to here it is difficult to determine. The Septuagint renders it, ‹On a high mountain, on the lofty regions which lie to the north.‘ The Chaldee, ‹I will sit in the mount of covenant, in the regions of the north.‘ Grotius supposes that when the king of Babylon said he would ascend into heaven, he meant the land of Judea, which was called heaven because it was dedicated to God; that when he said be would ascend above the stars, he meant to denote those ‹who were learned in the law;‘ that by the ‹mount of the congregation,‘ he meant mount Moriah where was the temple; and that by the ‹side of the north,‘ he meant mount Zion, which, he says, was on the north of Jerusalem. It is remarkable that the usually accurate Grotius should have fallen into this error, as mount Zion was not on the north of Jerusalem, but was south of mount Moriah. Vitringa defends the same interpretation in the main, but supposes that by the ‹mount of the congregation‘ is meant mount Zion, and by ‹the sides of the north;‘ is meant mount Moriah lying north of Zion. He supposes that mount Zion is called ‹the mount of the congregation,‘ not because the congregation of Israel assembled there, but because it was the "appointed place" where God met his people, or where he manifested himself to them, and appeals to the following places where the word which is here lrcndered ‹congregation‘ is applied, in various forms, to the manifestation which God thus made Exodus 25:22; Exodus 29:42-43; Psalm 74:8. So Lowth supposes that it refers to the place where God promised to meet with his people Exodus 25:22; Exodus 29:42-43, and to commune with them, and translates it ‹the mount of the divine presence.‘ But to this interpretation there are great objections:

(1) The terms here employed ‹the mount of the congregation,‘ ‹the sides of the north,‘ are not elsewhere applied to mount Zion, and to mount Moriah.

(2) It does not correspond with the evident design of the king of Babylon. His object was not to make himself master of Zion and Moriah, but it was to exalt himself above the stars; to be elevated above all inferior beings; and to be above the gods.

(3) It is a most forced and unnatural interpretation to call the land of Judea ‹heaven,‘ to speak of it as being ‹above the stars of God,‘ or as ‹above the heights of the clouds;‘ and it is clear that the king of Babylon had a much higher ambition, and much more arrogant pretensions, than the conquest of what to him would be the comparatively limited province of Judea.

However important that land appeared to the Jews as their country and their home; or however important it was as the place of the solemnities of the true religion, yet we are to remember that it had no such consequence in the eyes of the king of Babylon. He had no belief in the truth of the Jewish religion, and all Judea compared with his other vast domains would appear to be a very unimportant province. It is evident, therefore, I think, that the king of Babylon did not refer here to Judea, or to Zion. The leading idea of his heart, which ought to guide our interpretation, was, that he designed “to ascend in authority over all inferior beings, and to be like the Most High.” We are to remember that Babylon was a city of idolatry; and it is most probable that by ‹the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north,‘ there is reference to a belief prevalent in Babylon that the gods had their residence on some mountain of the north.

This was a common opinion among the ancients. The Hindus call that mountain “Meru;” the Persians, who are followers of Zoroaster, “Al Bordsch;” the Arabs, “Kafe;” and the Greeks, “Olympus.” The common opinion was that this mountain was in the center of the world, but the Hindoos speak of it as to the north of themselves in the Himalaya regions; the followers of Zoroaster in the mountains of Caucasus, lying to the north of their country; and the Greeks speak of Olympus, the highest mountain north of them in Thessaly. The Hindoo belief is thus referred to by Ward: ‹In the book of Karma-Vipaka, it is said that the heavenly Vishnu, Brahma, and Siva, are upon the three peaks of the mountain Su-Meru, and that at the

foot of this mountain are the heavens of twenty-one other gods.‘ (“View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos,” vol. i. p. 13.) So Wilford, in a Treatise on the mountain Caucasus, in the “Asiatic Researches,” vol. vi. p. 488, says, ‹The Hindoos regard the mountain Meru as the dwelling-place of the gods.

In the Puranas it is said, that upon the mountain Meru there is eternal day, for a space of fourteen degrees around the mountain Su-Meru, and consequently eternal night for the same space on the opposite side; so the Hindoos are constrained to admit that Su-Meru is directly upon the top of the shadow of the earth, and that from the earth to that peak there is a vast cone-formed hill, dense as other earthly bodies, but invisible, impalpable, and impassable by mortals. On the side of this hill are various abodes, which, the higher one ascends, become the more beautiful, and which are made the dwellings of the blessed, according to the degrees of their desert. God and the most exalted of the divine beings have their abodes on the sides of the north, and on the top of this mountain.‘ According to the Zendavesta, the Al Bordsch is the oldest and the highest of the mountains; upon that is the throne of Ormuzd, and the assemblage of the heavenly spirits (Feruer; see Rosenmuller, “Alterthumskunde,” vol. i. pp. 154-157).

Thus in Babylon, some of the mountains north in Armenia may have been supposed to be the special dwelling-place of the gods. Such a mountain would “appear” to be under the north pole, and the constellations would seem to revolve around it. It is not improbable that the Aurora Borealis, playing often as it does in the north with special magnificence, might have contributed to the belief that this was the special abode of the gods. Unable to account - as indeed all moderns are - for these special and magnificent lights in the north, it accorded with the poetic and mythological fancy of the ancients to suppose that they were designed to play around, and to adorn the habitation of the gods. This disposition to make the mountains of the north the seat of the gods, may have arisen also in part from the fact that the country on the north of Babylon was a volcanic region, and that the light emitted from volcanoes was an appropriate manifestation of the glory of superior invisible beings. ‹On the borders of the Caspian (Sea), in the country around the Bakir, there is a tract called The Field of Fire, which

continually emits inflammable gas, while springs of naphtha and petroleum occur in the same vicinity, as also mud volcanoes.

In the chain of Elburs, to the south of this sea, is a lofty mountain, which, according to Morier, sometimes emits smoke, and at the base of which there are several craters where sulphur and saltpetre are procured in sufficient abundance to be used in commerce.‘ (Lyell‘s Geology, vol. i. p. 297.) We find some trades of these ideas in the Scriptures. The north is often mentioned as the seat of the whirlwind, the storm, and especially as the residence of the cherubim. Thus in Ezekiel‘s vision of the cherubim, the whole magnificent scene is represented as coming from the north - as if the appropriate abode of the cherubim:

‹I looked, and lo! a whirlwind from the north
Came sweeping onward, a vast cloud that rolled
In volumes, charged with gleaming fire, along,

And east its splendors all around.

Brow from within shone forth, what seemed the glow

Of gold and silver molten in the flame,

And in the midst thereof the form expressed,

As of a fourfold living thing - a shape

That yet contained the semblance of a man.‘

Ezekiel 1:4-5, trans. in Marsh‘s Herder.

Thus, in Ezekiel 28:14, Tyre is said to be ‹the anointed cherub that covereth,‘ and to have been ‹upon the holy mountain of God,‘ or “the gods” - evidently meaning, not Zion, but some mountain in the vicinity of Eden (see Isaiah 14:13). Thus also, in Zechariah 6:1-8, four chariots are represented as coming out of the mountains, the first chariot with red horses, the second with black horses, the third with white horses, and the fourth with bay horses. The horses that have gone through the earth are Isaiah 14:8 represented as going to the “north” as their place of rest. These passages, particularly the one from Ezekiel, show that the northern regions

were regarded as the seat of striking and special manifestations of the divine glory (compare Job 23:9, note; Job 37:22, note). And it is probable that, in the view of the Babylonians, the northern mountains of Armenia, that seemed to be near the north pole, around which the constellations revolved, and that appeared to be surmounted and encompassed by the splendid light of the Aurora Borealis, were regarded as the special place where the gods held their assemblies, and from where their power went forth through the nations. Over all their power it was the intention of the king of Babylon to ascend, and even to rise above the stars that performed their revolutions around the seats of the gods in the north; to be "supreme" in that assembly of the gods, and to be regarded there as the supreme and incontrollable director of even all the gods. It is probable, says Mitford ("Life of Milton," vol. i. p. 73), that from this scarcely intelligible hint Milton threw up his palace for his fallen angels: thus:

At length into the limits of the north
They came, and Satan to his royal seat,
High on a hill, far blazing as a mount

Raised on a mount, with pyramids and towers,

From diamond quarries hewn, and rocks of gold.

The palace of great Lucifer, so call

That structure in the dialect of men

Interpreted; which not long after he

Affecting an equality with God,

In imitation of that mount, whereon

Messiah was declared in sight of heaven,

The mountain of the congregation called, etc.

Verse 14

I will be like the Most High - There is a remarkable resemblance between this language and that used in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, in regard to antichrist: ‹He, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.‘ And this similarity is the more remarkable, because antichrist is represented, in Revelation 17:4-5, as seated in babylon - the spiritual seat of arrogance, oppression, and pride. Probably Paul had the passage in Isaiah in his eye when he penned the description of antichrist.

Verse 15

Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell - Hebrew, ‹To sheol‘ (compare Isaiah 14:9).

To the sides of the pit - The word ‹pit,‘ here, is evidently synonymous with "hell" or "hades," represented as a deep, dark region under ground. The dead were often buried in caves, and the descent was often dark and dreary, to the vaults where they reposed. Hence, it is always represented as going down; or, as the "inferior" regions. The ‹sides of the pit‘ here stand opposed to the ‹sides of the north.‘ He had sought to "ascend" to the one; he should be "brought down" to the other. The reference here is, doubtless, to the land of shades; to the dark and dismal regions where the departed dead are supposed to dwell - to "sheol." So the parallelism proves. But the image or figure is taken from the custom of burying, where, in a deep natural cavern, or a sepulchre excavated from a rock, the dead were ranged around the "sides" of the cavern in niches or recesses excavated for that purpose (see the note at Isaiah 14:9).

Verse 16

They that see thee - That is, after thou art dead. The scene here changes, and the prophet introduces those who would contemplate the body of the king of Babylon after he should be slain - the passers-by arrested with astonishment, that one so proud and haughty was at last slain, and cast out among the common dead Isaiah 14:19.

Shall narrowly look upon thee - To be certain that they were not deceived. This denotes great astonishment, as if they could scarcely credit the testimony of their senses. It also expresses insult and contempt. They ask whether it is possible that one who so recently shook the kingdoms of the earth should now lie east out as unworthy of a burial.

That made the earth to tremble - That agitated the world by his ambition.

Verse 17

That made the world as a wilderness - That made cities and kingdoms desolate.

That opened not the house of his prisoners - This is a description of his oppression and cruelty. Of course many prisoners would be taken in war. Instead of giving them liberty, he threw them into prison and kept them there. This may be rendered, ‹his prisoners he did not release that they might return home‘ (see the Margin). The Chaldee renders it, ‹To his prisoners he did not open the door.‘ The sense is substantially the same. The idea is, that he was cruel and oppressive. He threw his captives into dungeons, and found pleasure in retaining them there.

Verse 18

All the kings of the nations - That is, this is the common way in which the kings are buried.

Lie in glory - They lie in a magnificent mausoleum; they are surrounded with splendor even in their tombs. It is well known that vast sums of money were expended to rear magnificent mausoleums as the burial place of kings. With this design, probably, the pyramids of Egypt were reared; and the temple of Bel in Babylon, we are told, was employed for this purpose. Josephus says that vast quantities of money were buried in the sepulchre of David. The kings of Israel were buried in a royal burying place on Mount Zion 2 Chronicles 21:20; 2 Chronicles 35:24; Nehemiah 3:16. For a description of the sepulchre of David, and of sepulchres in general, “see” Calmet‘s “Dict.” Art. “Sepulchre” (compare Ezekiel 32.)

Every one in his own house - In a sepulchre constructed for himself. It was usual for kings to have a splendid tomb constructed for themselves.

Verse 19

But thou art cast out of thy grave - Thou art not buried like other kings in a magnificent sepulchre, but art cast out like the common dead. This was a mark of the highest infamy (see Isaiah 34:3; Ezekiel 29:5; Jeremiah 22:19). Nothing was considered more disgraceful than to be denied the privileges of an honorable burial (see the note at Isaiah 53:9). On the fulfillment of this prophecy, see the note at Isaiah 14:20.

As an abominable branch - (נתעב כנצר *kenêtser nîte'āb*). The Septuagint renders this, ‹And thou shalt be cast upon the mountains as a dead body that is abominable, with many dead that are slain by the sword, descending to Hades.‘ The Chaldee, ‹And thou shalt be cast out of thy sepulchre as a branch that is hid.‘ Lowth supposes that by ‹abominable

branch‘ there is allusion to a tree on which a malefactor was hanged, that was regarded as detestable, and cursed. But there are obvious objections to this interpretation. One is, that the word “branch (netser)” is never applied to a tree. It means “a shoot, a slip, a scion” (note, Isaiah 11:1). Another objection is, that there seems here to be no necessary allusion to such a tree; or to anything that would lead to it. Jerome says, that the word “netser” denotes a shoot or sucker that starts up at the root of a plant or tree, and that is useless to the farmer, and which he therefore cuts off. So, says he, the king of Babylon shall be cast off - as the farmer throws away the useless sucker. This is probably the correct idea. The word “abominable” means, therefore, not only that which is “useless,” but indicates that the shoot or sucker is “troublesome” to the farmer. It is an object that he “hates,” and which he gets clear of as soon as possible. So the king of Babylon would be cast out as useless, hateful, abominable; to be thrown away, as the noxious shoot is, as unfit for use, and unworthy to be preserved.

As the raiment of those that are slain - As a garment that is all defiled with gore, and that is cast away and left to rot. The garments of those slain in battle, covered with blood and dirt, would be cast away as polluted and worthless, and so would be the king of Babylon. Among the Hebrews such garments were regarded with special abhorrence (Rosenmuller); perhaps from the dread which they had of touching a dead body, and of course of anything that was found on a dead body.

Thrust through with a sword - That is, the slain thrust through. The effect of this was to pollute the garment with blood, and to render it useless.

That go down to the stones of the pit - The ‹pit‘ here means the grave or sepulchre Isaiah 14:15. The phrase ‹stones of the pit,‘ conveys the idea that the grave or sepulchre was usually either excavated from the solid rock, or constructed of stones. The idea is simply, that those who were slain with the sword were buried in the usual manner, though their bloody garments defiled were cast away. But the king of Babylon should not have even the honor of such a burial as was given to those who fell in battle.

As a carcase trodden under foot - Unburied; as the body of a brute that is exposed to the air, and denied the honor of a sepulchre.

Verse 20

Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial - That is, even with those who are slain with the sword in battle, and to whom is granted the privilege of a decent burial.

Hast destroyed thy land - Hast been a cruel, harsh, and oppressive prince.

The seed of evil-doers - The posterity of the wicked.

Shall never be renowned - Hebrew, ‹Shall never be called,‘ or ‹named‘ (לא־יקרא *lo' -yîqārē'*); that is, shall never be distinguished, celebrated, or honored. This is a general proposition; but the prophet here possibly designs to apply it to the king of which he is speaking, as having been descended from ancestors that were wicked; or more probably it is a new circumstance, more fully explained in the following verse, that his posterity should be cut off from the honor of succeeding him on the throne, and that they, as well as he, should be loaded with disgrace. The design is to affirm the fact that the Babylonian dynasty would end with him; and that his posterity would be reduced from the honors which they had hoped to have inherited. At the same time, the general proposition is applicable not only to the posterity of the king of Babylon, but to all. It is a great truth pertaining to the divine administration, that the descendants of wicked people shall be dishonored. So it is with the posterity of a traitor, a pirate, a drunkard, a man of profligacy. They are involved in disgrace, poverty, and calamity, as the result of the sin of their ancestor.

Verse 21

Prepare slaughter for his children - That is, cut them off not only from inheriting the honor of their father, but from life. This command seems to be directed to the Medes and Persians, and denotes that they would thus cut off his children.

For the iniquity of their fathers - On account of the crimes of their ancestors - the pride, haughtiness, and oppression of the kings of Babylon. This is the statement of a general principle of the divine administration, that the consequences of crime often pass over from the perpetrator, and impinge on his descendants (see Exodus 20:5).

That they do not rise - That they do not rise to occupy the places of their fathers; that they be degraded and reduced from their elevation and honored.

Nor fill the face of the world with cities - The Septuagint renders this, ‹And fill the land with wars.‘ The Chaldee, ‹And fill the face of the world with “enemies.”‘ The Syriac, ‹And fill the face of the earth with war.‘ These versions evidently took the word ערים *ʿārîym* to mean “enemies” or “wars” - a sense which the word sometimes may have. But the common

interpretation is to be preferred. The apprehension was, that they would fill the land, if they lived, with such cities of pride, magnificence, and wickedness, as "Babylon" was, and that thus crimes would be multiplied and prolonged; and hence, the purpose of God was not only to cut off Babylon - the "model" of all cities of arrogance and pride - but also to cut off those who would be disposed to rear similar cities, and to fill the land again with crime.

Verse 22

For I will rise up against them, saith the Lord of hosts - That is, against the family of, the king of Babylon.

And cut off from Babylon the name - That is, all the "males" of the royal family, so that the name of the monarch shall become extinct (compare Rth 4:5 ; Isaiah 56:5).

And remnant - All that is left of them; so that the family shall cease to exist.

The son and nephew - Everyone of the family who could claim to be an heir of the throne. The dynasty shall cease; and the proud and haughty family shall become wholly extinct. This is the solemn purpose in regard to the "family" of the monarch of Babylon. It only remains to inquire when and how it was fulfilled.

The circumstances which it was said would exist in regard to the king of Babylon here spoken of, are the following:

(1) That he would be a proud, haughty, and oppressive prince (Isaiah 14:17, and throughout the prophecy).

(2) That when he died he would be east out with the common dead, and denied the common honors of the sepulchre - especially the honors which all other monarchs have in their burial Isaiah 14:18-20.

(3) That his posterity would be cut off, and that he would have no one to succeed him on his throne; or that the dynasty and the kingdom would terminate in him Isaiah 14:21-22.

In regard to the application and the fulfillment of this prophecy there have been three opinions.

I. That it does not refer to an “individual” sovereign, but to the kings of Babylon in general; that the description is designed to be applicable to the succession or the dynasty, as signally haughty, proud, and oppressive; and that the prophet means to say that that haughty and wicked reign of kings should cease. To this, the objections are obvious -

(1) The whole aspect and course of the prophet seems to have reference to an “individual.” Such an individual the prophet seems to have constantly in his eye. He descends to “sheol” Isaiah 14:9; he is proud, ambitious, oppressive, cast out; all of which circumstances refer naturally to an individual, and not to a “succession” or dynasty.

(2) The main circumstance mentioned in the prophecy is applicable only to an individual - that he should be “unburied” Isaiah 14:18-21. It was not true of all the kings of Babylon that they were unburied, and how could it be said respecting a “succession” or a dynasty at all that it should be east out of the grave as an abominable branch; and that it should not be joined with others in burial? All the circumstances, therefore, lead us to suppose that the prophet refers to an individual.

II. The Jews, in general, suppose that it refers to Nebuchadnezzar. But to this interpretation, the objections are equally obvious:

(1) It was not true that Nebuchadnezzar had no one to succeed him on the throne; or that his family was totally cut off, as it was foretold of this king of Babylon that his would be Isaiah 14:21-22.

(2) It was not true that he was denied the privileges of a burial which kings commonly enjoy. To meet this difficulty, the Jews have invented the following story Thev say that when Nebuchadnezzar was driven from society during his derangement Daniel 5:30.

(b) It was in the confusion of the capture of the city - amidst the tumult caused by the sudden and unexpected invasion of Cyrus. It is therefore altogether improbable that he had a regular and an honored burial. Like the common dead, he would lie in the palace where he fell, or in the street.

(c) There is no evidence that Cyrus gave him an honorable sepulchre.

(4) none of his posterity occupied the throne to give honor to the memory of their father.

(5) in him the dynasty and the kingdom ended. Immediately the kingdom on his death was given to the Medes and Persians Daniel 5:28-31. None of the names of his posterity, if he had any, are known; and God cut off from him ‹the name and remnant, the son and nephew,‘ as was predicted (see Prideaux‘s “Connection,” i. 2. 257-271, Ed. 1815).

Verse 23

I will also make it a possession for the bittern - The word ‹bittern,‘ in English, means a bird with long legs and neck, that stalks among reeds and sedge, feeding upon fish. The Hebrew word (קִפֹּד *qîppod*), occurs but five times Isaiah 34:11; Zephaniah 2:14. According to Bochart and Gesenius, it means the hedgehog. It has been variously rendered. Some have supposed it to be a land animal; some an aquatic animal; and most have regarded it as a fowl. Bochart has proved that the hedgehog or porcupine is found on the shores of the Euphrates. He translates this place, ‹I will place Babylon for an habitation of the porcupine, even the pools of water;‘ that is, the pools that are round about Babylon shall become so dry that porcupines may dwell there (see Bochart, “Hieroz.” iii. 36. pp. 1036-1042).

And pools of water - Bochart supposes this means, even the pools of water shall become dry. But the common interpretation is to be preferred, that Babylon itself should become filled with pools of water. This was done by Cyrus‘ directing the waters of the Euphrates from their channel when the city was taken, and by the fact that the waters never returned again to their natural bed, so that the region was overflowed with water (see the notes at Isaiah 13.)

And I will sweep it with the besom of destruction - A besom is a broom; and the sense here is, that God would entirely destroy Babylon, and render it wholly uninbabitable.

Verse 24

The Lord of hosts - (see the note at Isaiah 1:9). It is evident that this verse and the three following, is not directly connected with that which goes before, respecting Babylon. This pertains to the Assyrian; that had relation to Babylon. Vitringa says that this is attached to the prophecy respecting Babylon, and is a unique yet not altogether foreign argument, and is a sort

of epilogue to the prophecy respecting Babylon. The design, he says, is this. As the events which had been foretold respecting Babylon seemed so great and wonderful as to be almost incredible, the prophet, in order to show the Jews how easily it could be accomplished, refers them to the case of Sennacherib, and the ease with which he and his army had been destroyed. Lowth supposes that the Assyrians and Babylonians here are one people. Rosenmuller supposes that this prophecy respecting Sennacherib has been "displaced" by the collector of the prophecies of Isaiah, and that it should have been attached to the prophecy respecting the Assyrian monarch (see Genesis 24:7; Exodus 13:5, Exodus 13:11; Exodus 33:1; Numbers 32:10; Hebrews 3:18; Hebrews 6:13). Yahweh is often represented as making use of an oath to denote the strong confirmation, the absolute certainty of what he utters. The oath here was designed to comfort the Jews, when they should be in Babylon, with the assurance that what he had thus solemnly promised would assuredly come to pass.

As I have thought - As I have designed, or intended. God's promises never fail; his purposes shall all be accomplished (compare Isaiah 46:10-11). This passage is full proof that God does not "change:" that whatever his purposes are, they are inflexible. Change supposes imperfection; and it is often affirmed that God is immutable 1 Samuel 15:29; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17.

Verse 25

That I will break - That I will break his power; that I will discomfit and destroy his army.

The Assyrian - Sennacherib (see Isaiah 10:33-34).

Then shall his yoke - The yoke of the Assyrian (see the note at Isaiah 10:27).

Verse 26

This is the purpose - This is the sum of the whole design - a design that embraces the destruction both of the king of Assyria, and of Babylon.

Upon the whole earth - The successive kingdoms of Assyria and Babylonia embraced the whole earth, and to destroy them would in fact affect all the nations.

Verse 27

For the Lord of hosts - (see the note at Isaiah 1:9).

Who shall disannul it? - Who has power to defeat his purposes? Difficult as they may be in appearance, and incredible as their fulfillment

may seem, yet his purposes are formed in full view of all the circumstances; and there is no power to resist his arm, or to turn him aside from the execution of his designs. By this assurance God designed to comfort his people when they should be in Babylon in a long and dreary captivity (compare Psalm 137:1-9.) And by the same consideration his people may be comforted at all times. His plans shall stand. None can disannul them. No arm has power to resist him. None of the schemes formed against him shall ever prosper. Whatever ills, therefore, may befall his people; however thick, and gloomy, and sad their calamities may be; and however dark his dispensations may appear, yet they may bare the assurance that all his plans are wise, and that they all shall stand. No matter how many, or how mighty may be the foes of the church; no matter how strong their cities, or their ramparts; no matter how numerous their armies, or how self-confident may be their leaders, they have no power to resist God. If their plans are in his way they will be thrown down; if revolutions are necessary among human beings to accomplish His purposes, they will be brought about; if cities and armies need to be destroyed in order that "his" plans may succeed, and his church be safe, they will be demolished, just as the army of Sennacherib was laid pale in death, and as Babylon - the haughtiest of cities - was overthrown. Who can stand against God? and who can resist the execution of his will?

Verse 28

In the year that king Ahaz died - This is the caption or title to the following prophecy, which occupies the remainder of this chapter. This prophecy has no connection with the preceding; and should have been separated from it in the division into chapters. It relates solely to Philistia; and the design is to comfort the Jews with the assurance that they had nothing to apprehend from them. It is not to call the Philistines to lamentation and alarm, for there is no evidence that the prophecy was promulgated among them (Vitringa); but it is to assure the Jews that they would be in no danger from their invasion under the reign of the successor of Ahaz, and that God would more signally overthrow and subdue them than had been done in his time. It is not improbable that at the death of Ahaz, and with the prospect of a change in the government on the accession of his successor, the Philistines, the natural enemies of Judah, had meditated the invasion of the Jews. The Philistines had been subdued in the time of Azariah 2 Kings 15:1-7, or Uzziah, as he is called in 2 Chronicles 26:1, who

was the son and successor of Amaziah. He broke down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Gabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and effectually subdued and humbled them 2 Chronicles 26:6. In the time of Ahaz, and while he was engaged in his unhappy controversies with Syria and Ephraim, the Philistines took advantage of the enfeebled state of Judah, and made successful war on it, and took several of the towns 2 Chronicles 28:18; and at his death they had hope of being able to resist Judah, perhaps the more so as they apprehended that the reign of Hezekiah would be mild, peaceable, and unwarlike. Isaiah, in the prophecy before us, warns them not to entertain any such fallacious expectations, and assures them that his reign would be quite as disastrous to them as had been the reign of his predecessors.

Was this burden - See the note at Isaiah 13:1.

Verse 29

Rejoice not thou - Rejoice not at the death of Ahaz, king of Judah. It shall be no advantage to thee. It shall not be the means of making an invasion on Judah more practicable.

Whole Palestina - We apply the name "Palestine" to the whole land of Canaan. Formerly, the name referred only to Philistia, from which we have derived the name Palestine. The word פלשת *peleshet* means properly the land of sojourners or strangers, from פלשׁ *pālash* "to rove about, to wander, to migrate." The Septuagint renders it, Ἀλλοφυλοι *Allophuloi* - ‹strangers,‘ or ‹foreigners,‘ and Γῆ ἀλλοφύλων *Gē allophulōn* - ‹land of strangers.‘ Philistia was situated on the southwestern side of the land of Canaan, extending along the Mediterranean Sea from Gaza on the south, to Lydda on the north. The Philistines were a powerful people, and had often been engaged in wars with Judah. They had made a successful attack on it in the time of Ahaz; and amidst the feebleness and distractions which they supposed might succeed on the change of the government of Judah, and the administration of an inexperienced prince like Hezekiah, they hoped to be still more successful, and would naturally rejoice at the death of Ahaz. When the prophet says ‹" whole" Palestina,‘ he means to say that no part of Philistia would have occasion to rejoice at the succession of Hezekiah (see Isaiah 14:31).

Because the rod of him that smote thee is broken - It was not true that they had been smitten during the reign of Ahaz, but it had been done by his predecessor Uzziah. Perhaps the prophet refers to that prince, and to his

death. He had smitten and subdued them. At his death they would rejoice; and their joy had been continued during the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz. They would now rejoice the more that a young and inexperienced prince was to ascend the throne. Their joy had been that "Uzziah" had died, and that joy had been augmenting since his death. But the prophet now tells them that they will have no further occasion for such joy.

For out of the serpent‘s root - That is, there shall spring forth from the serpent, or shall succeed the serpent, as a shoot or sprout springs from the root of a decayed tree (see the note at Isaiah 11:1). By the serpent here, is undoutedly intended king Uzziah, who had so severely chastised the Philistines. The word ‹serpent‘ נחש *nāchâsh* denotes a serpent of any kind, and usually one far less venomous than that which is meant by the word translated cockatrice. Probably the prophet does not give this name "serpent" to Uzziah or to Ahaz, or the name "cockatrice" to Hezekiah, because he regarded the names as properly descriptive of their character, but because they were so regarded by the Philistines. They were as odious and offensive to them, and as destructive of their plans, as venomous reptiles would be.

Shall come forth a cockatrice - (see the note at Isaiah 59:5). A basilisk, or adder, a serpent of most venomous nature (see the note at Isaiah 11:8). That is, though Uzziah is dead, yet there shall spring up from him one far more destructive to you than he was; one who shall carry the desolations of war much further, and who shall more effectually subdue you. Most commentators have concurred in supposing that Hezekiah is here referred to, who ‹smote the Philistines even unto Gaza and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city‘ 2 Kings 18:8. This is, doubtless, the correct interpretation. The Chaldee renders it, however, ‹Because there shall proceed from the descendants of Jesse the Messiah, and his works shall be among you as a flying serpent.‘ This interpretation Rosenmuller supposes is correct; but it is evidently foreign to the scope of the passage.

Verse 30

And the first-born of the poor shall feed - That is, there shall be safety to those parts of Judah which have long been exposed to the invasions of the Philistines. Philistia bordered on Judea, and was constantly making wars upon it, so that there was no safety felt. Isaiah now says, that Hezekiah would so effectually and completely subdue them that there should be no

danger from their invasion. The phrase ‹the first-born of the poor‘ is an Hebraism, a strong, emphatic expression, denoting those who are the most poor; the most abject sons of poverty; those who have an eminence or a double portion of need, as the first-born among the Hebrews were entitled to special distinctions and privileges. The idea is, that even the most poor and defenseless would be safe.

Shall feed - That is, they shall be supplied with food; they shall feed safely as a flock does that is guarded from wild beasts. They shall be no longer alarmed, but shall dwell in security, peace, and plenty.

And I will kill thy root - The word rendered ‹root‘ denotes properly the root of a plant, which being dried up or killed, the plant of course withers and dies. So God says that he would effectually and entirely destroy the power of the Philistines.

Slay thy remnant - That is, shall slay all that pertains to thee. Or, he shall dry up the root, and the branches shall wither and die also. The whole power of the nation shall be withered and destroyed.

Verse 31

Howl, O gate - That is, ye who throng the gate. The gates of a city were the chief places of concourse.

Cry, O city - The prophet here fixes the attention upon some principal city of Philistia, and calls upon it to be alarmed in view of the judgments that were about to come upon the whole land.

Art dissolved - The word ‹dissolved‘ (מוג *mûg*) is applied to that which melts, or which wastes away gradually, and then to that which faints or disappears. It means here that the kingdom of Philistia would disappear, or be destroyed. It probably conveys the idea of its fainting, or becoming feeble from fear or apprehension.

From the north a smoke - From the regions of Judah, which lay north and east of Philistia. The ‹smoke‘ here probably refers to a cloud of dust that would be seen to rise in that direction made by an invading army.

And none shall be alone in his appointed times - There has been a great variety of interpretation in regard to this passage. Lowth renders it, ‹And there shall not be a straggler among his levies.‘ The Hebrew is, as in the margin, ‹And not solitary in his assemblies.‘ The Septuagint renders it, Καί οὐκ ἔσται τοῦ εἶναι *Kai ouk estai tou einai* - ‹And it is not to be endured.‘ The Chaldee, ‹And there shall be none who shall retard him in his times.‘ The Arabic, ‹Neither is there anyone who can stand in his footsteps.‘

The Vulgate, ‹Neither is there anyone who can escape his army.‘ Aben Ezra renders it, ‹No one of the Philistines shall dare to remain in their palaces, as when a smoke comes into a house all are driven out.‘ Probably the correct idea is given by Lowth; and the same interpretation is given by Gesenius, Rosenmuller, Dathe, and Michaelis. No one of the invading army of Hezekiah shall come by himself; no one shall be weary or be a straggler; the army shall advance in close military array, and in dense columns; and this is represented as the cause of the cloud or smoke that the prophet saw rising, the cloud of dust that was made by the close ranks of the invading host (compare Isaiah 5:27).

Verse 32

What shall one then answer - The design of this verse is obvious. It is to show that Judea would be safe from the invasions of the Philistines, and that God was the protector of Zion. For this purpose the prophet refers to messengers or ambassadors who should be sent for any purpose to Jerusalem, either to congratulate Hezekiah, or to form an alliance with the Jews. The prophet asks what answer or information should be given to such messengers when they came respecting their state? The reply is, that Yahweh had evinced his purpose to protect his people.

Of the nation - Of any nation whose ambassadors should be sent into Judea.

That the Lord hath founded Zion - That he is its original founder, and that he has now shown his regard for it by protecting it from the Philistines. It would be safe from their attacks, and Yahweh would thus show that he had it under his own protection. The Septuagint renders this, ‹And what shall the kings of the Gentiles then answer? That the Lord hath founded Zion.‘ The scope of the passage is the assurance that Zion would be safe, being founded and preserved by Yahweh; and that the Philistines had no cause of triumph at the death of Ahaz, since God would still be the protector of his people. The doctrine established by this passage is, that in all the changes which take place by the death of kings, princes, magistrates, and ministers; and in all the revolutions which occur in kingdoms, the enemies of the people of God have no cause for rejoicing. God is the protector of his church; and he will show that he has founded Zion, and that his people are safe, No weapon that is formed against his people shall prosper, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church.

Shall trust in it - In Zion. It was a strongly fortified city, God was its protector, and in times of calamity his people could betake themselves there in safety. In this strong place the most weak and defenseless - the poorest of the people, would be safe. In the church of God, the poor are the objects of as deep regard as the rich; the humble, the meek, the weak, the feeble, are there safe, and no power of an enemy can reach or affect them. God is their defender and their friend; and in his arms they are secure.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Introduction

Analysis of Isaiah 15:1-9 and Isaiah 16:1-14

Section I - The Time of the Prophecy

This and the following chapter make one entire prophecy, and should not have been divided. At what time it was delivered is unknown. The only period which is designated is, that it was to be fulfilled in three years from the time when it was uttered Isaiah 16:14. Lowth supposes that it was delivered soon after the former, in the first years of the reign of Hezekiah, and that it was fulfilled in the fourth year of his reign, when Shalmanezer invaded the kingdom of Israel. He supposes that he might have marched through Moab, and secured its strong places on his way to Judea. Gesenius supposes that it was uttered by some contemporary of Isaiah, or by some earlier prophet, without the epilogue Isaiah 16:14, as a general denunciation against Moab; and that it was adopted by Isaiah and applied to the Moabites during his own time. This he argues because of the repetition of geographical names; the play upon those names; the roughness and harshness of the expressions; and many favorite phrases which, he, says, are foreign to ‹the genuine Isaiah.‘ He supposes that it had its origin in the national animosity which subsisted between the Jews and the Moabites; and that it might have been composed on account of the tribute which had been witcheld, 896 b.c.; or on account of the corruption of the Moabites, 949 b.c.; or on the taking possession of the territory by Reuben and Gad. But this is evidently conjectural.

It is fair to presume that it is a production of Isaiah himself, unless it can be proved that he did not write it; and the argument from the style, to prove that it was written by some other person than Isaiah, does not seem to be sufficient. It may have been written by Isaiah at an early period of his life, and subsequently incorporated into his prophecies, and adapted by himself to a state of things existing in an advanced period of his prophetic life (see the note at Isaiah 16:14). Compare, however, the arguments of Gesenius in his Commentary, and in the “Bib. Rep.,” vol. vii. pp. 120,121. It is certain that it was composed when the tribute was witcheld from Judah which was due from the Moabites (see Isaiah 16:1).

Section II - History of Moab

The land of Moab, so called from Moab the son of Lot, by his oldest daughter Genesis 19:31-37, was situated on the east side of the river Jordan, and adjacent to the Dead Sea, and on both sides of the river Arnon, although, strictly and properly speaking, the river Arnon was regarded as its northern boundary. Its capital city was on the river Arnon. The first residence of Lot, after fleeing from Sodom, was "Zoar" Genesis 19:30, on the southeast of the Dead Sea; from thence he removed into the mountainous region where his two sons were born Genesis 19:30. The country was originally occupied by race of giants called "Emim" Deuteronomy 2:10, whom the Moabites conquered and expelled. A considerable part of this country was subsequently conquered by Sihon, king of the Amorites, who made the Arnon the boundary of the land of Moab, and Heshbon his capital (Numbers 21:26; compare Numbers 21:13; Judges 11:18).

The Israelites passed by theft land in journeying to Canaan, without distressing or embarrassing them; because God had said that he had given ‹Ar to the children of Lot for a possession' Deuteronomy 2:9. But the adjacent region in the possession of the Amorites, the Israelites took, after a signal victory, and gave to the tribes of Reuben and Gad Numbers 21:31-35. Thus the territory of the Jews, being bounded by the river Arnon, was adjacent to that of Moab. It is evident, however, though the Arnon was the proper boundary of Moab, yet that a considerable portion of country on the north of that river was usually regarded as lying in the land of Moab, though strictly within the limits of the territory formerly of the Amorites, and subsequently of the tribes of Reuben and Gad. Thus mount Nebo is said to be in the land of Moab Deuteronomy 32:49; Deuteronomy 34:1, though it was properly within the limits of the Amorites. And thus many of the places in the prophecy before us were on the north of that river, though specified as in the country of Moab. It is probable that the boundary was never regarded as permanently fixed, though the river Arnon was its natural and usual limit.

There was always a great antipathy between the Jews and the Moabites, and they were the natural and constant enemies of the Jewish nation. The foundation of the enmity was laid far back in their history. Balaam seduced the Israelites to sin by means of the daughters of Moab Numbers 25:1-2; and God ordered that this people should not enter into the congregation of

his people, or be capable of office, to the tenth generation, because they had the inhumanity to refuse the children of Israel a passage through their land in their journey to Canaan Deuteronomy 23:3.

Eglon, king of the Moabites, was the first who oppressed Israel after the death of Joshua. Ehud killed him and subdued the Moabites Judges 3:21. Toward the end of this period, however, peace and friendship were restored, mutual honors were reciprocated, as the history of Ruth shows, and Moab appears to have been a place of refuge for outcasts and emigrant Hebrews Rth 1:1 ; 1 Samuel 22:3; Jeremiah 40:11; Isaiah 16:3. David subdued Moab and Ammon, and made them tributary 2 Samuel 8:2-12; 2 Samuel 23:20. The right to levy this tribute seems to have been transferred to Israel after the division of the kingdom, for after the death of Ahab, they refused to pay the customary tribute of 100,000 lambs and as many rams 2 Kings 1:1; 2 Kings 3:4; Isaiah 16:1. Soon after the death of Ahab they began to revolt 2 Kings 3:4-5. They were subsequently engaged in wars with the Jews. Amos (Amos 1:13 ff) denounced great calamities on them, which they probably suffered under Uzziah and Jotham, kings of Judah 2 Chronicles 26:7-8; 2 Chronicles 27:5. Calmet supposes that they were carried captive by Nebuchadnezzar beyond the Euphrates, as the prophets had threatened Jeremiah 9:26; Jeremiah 12:14-15; Jeremiah 25:11-12; Jeremiah 48:47; Jeremiah 49:3, Jeremiah 49:6, Jeremiah 49:39; Jeremiah 50:16; and that they were restored by Cyrus to their land, as many other captive nations were. It is probable that, in the latter times, they were subject to the Asmonean kings, and finally to Herod the Great. (Robinson; Calmet.) It is remarkable that Jeremiah has introduced much of this chapter into his prophecy in his 48th chapter.

Section III - Comparison of Isaiah With Jeremiah

In order to see the resemblance between the two prophecies, I insert here a comparison of the corresponding parts, following the order of Isaiah.

Isaiah 15:2; Jeremiah 48:37. "every head bald … "

Isaiah 15:3; Jeremiah 48:38. "everyone shall howl … "

Isaiah 15:4; Jeremiah 48:34. "Heshbon shall cry … "

Isaiah 15:5; Jeremiah 48:34; Jeremiah 48:3, Jeremiah 48:5. "from Zoar to Horonaim … "

Isaiah 15:6; Jeremiah 48:34. "Nimrim shall be desolate."

Isaiah 15:7; Jeremiah 48:36. "the riches … is perished."

(Isaiah 15:8-9; Isaiah 16:1-5, are missing in Jeremiah.)

Isaiah 16:6; Jeremiah 48:29-30. "the pride of Moab … "

Isaiah 16:7; Jeremiah 48:31. "shall howl … and mourn … "

Isaiah 16:8-9; Jeremiah 48:32. "the weeping of Sibnah … "

Isaiah 16:10; Jeremiah 48:33. "gladness is taken away … "

Isaiah 16:11; Jeremiah 48:36. "my bowels shall sound … "

Section IV - Moab After the Exile

After the exile, intimate connections took place between the Jews and the Moabites by marriages (Ezra 9:1 ff; Nehemiah 13:1). These marriages, however, were dissolved by Ezra as being, in his view, contrary to the law of Moses. In the time of the Maccabees little mention is made of them (compare Daniel 11:41); but Josephus mentions them in the history of Alexander Jannaeus. Heshbon and Nadaba, Lemba and Oronas, Gelithon and Zara, cities of Moab, are there mentioned as being at that time in the possession of the Jews (Jos. "Ant." xiii. 15. 4). After that, their name is lost under that of the Arabians, as was also the case with Edom and Ammon. At the time of Abulfeda, Moab proper, south of the river Arnon, bore the name of Karrak, from the city of that name (compare the note at Isaiah 15:1); the territory north of the Arnon, the name of Belka, which includes also the country of the Amorites. Since that time the accounts of the country are exceedingly meagre, and it is only until quite recently that the state of Moab has attracted the attention of travelers.

It has been ranged and ravaged by the predatory tribes of Arabs, and, through fear of them, few travelers have ventured to visit it. In February and March, 1806, however, Mr. Seetsen, not without danger of losing his life,

undertook a tour from Damascus down to the south of the Jordan and the Dead Sea, and thence to Jerusalem; and, in his journey, threw much unexpected light on the prophecy before us, especially in regard to the places mentioned here. He found a multitude of places, or the ruins of places, still bearing the old names, and thus has set bounds to the perfectly arbitrary designations of the old maps. In September 1812, that distinguished German traveler, I. L. Burckhardt, made the same tour from Damascus down to Karrak, from where he pursued his journey over Wady Mousa, or Petra, and thence to Cairo in Egypt. In 1818, a company of intelligent English travelers (Bankes, Irby, Mangles, and Legh), made a journey from Karrak to the land of the Edomites, particularly to Petra, and thence back, on the other side of the Jordan, to Tiberius. In some respects they confirmed, and, in others, extended the accounts of Seetsen (see Gesenius‘ “Commentary”). In the notes at these chapters, I have endeavored to embody the principal information found in these writers on the topography of Moab.

Section V - Analysis of This Prophecy

‹The prophecy,‘ says Prof. Stuart (“Bib. Rep.” vii. 110), ‹is a piece replete with vivid description, with animated and impassioned thought, with poetic diction, and with scenes which are adapted to make a deep impression on the mind of the reader.‘ The prophecy in the two chapters contains the following parts:

I. The capitals of Moab are destroyed suddenly in one night Isaiah 15:1.

II. In the midst of the consternation, the people hasten to the high places, and to the altars and temples of the gods, to implore protection. They are seen in the streets with sackcloth, and on the tops of the houses, crying out with loud lamentations, and every expression of sorrow and despair Isaiah 15:2-4.

III. Some of the fugitives flee to Zoar for protection, and others to Luhith and Horonaim, hastening to countries beyond their own borders, because everything in their own land was withered and dried up Isaiah 15:5-7.

IV. Consternation and desolation are spread throughout the land, and even the streams are full of blood, and wild beasts are seen coming up upon the land Isaiah 15:8-9.

V. The prophet pities them, weeps with them Isaiah 15:5; Isaiah 16:1:11, and advises them to seek the favor of Judah by sending to them the customary tribute which was due, and which had been for a long time witcheld Isaiah 16:1.

VI. Some of the fugitives are seen at the fords of Arnon endeavoring to escape to Judea, and making supplication for reception, and imploring blessings on the land Isaiah 16:2-6. But see the notes at Isaiah 16:2-7, for another view of the design of this passage. The view here given is that suggested by Gesenius and Prof, Stuart.

VII. They are repulsed, and the answer to their supplication is given in such a tone as to show the deep sense of the injury received from Moab which the Jewish people entertained Isaiah 16:7.

VIII. The prophet then proceeds in his description of the utter wasting of the country of Moab - desolation which excited the deepest feelings in his heart, and so great as to move his most tender compassion Isaiah 16:8-12.

IX. Then follows a limitation of the time when all this would take place. Within three years all this would be fulfilled Isaiah 16:13-14.

Verse 1

The burden of Moab - (see the note at Isaiah 13:1). This is the title of the prophecy. The Chaldee renders this, ‹The burden of the cup of malediction which is to come upon Moab.‘

Because in the night - The fact that this was to be done in the night denotes the suddenness with which the calamity would come upon them. Thus the expression is used in Job to denote the suddenness and surprise with which calamities come:

Terrors take hold on him as waters,
A tempest stealeth him away in the night.
Job 27:20

So a thief is represented as coming in the night - in a sudden and unexpected manner Job 24:14:

The murderer in the night is as a thief.

See also Matthew 24:43; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 3:3; Revelation 16:15.

Ar of Moab - This was the capital of Moab. it was situated on the south of the river Arnon. It was sometimes called "Rabbath Moab." Isaiah Isaiah 16:7-11 calls it the city ‹with walls of burnt brick.' Under the name of Areopolis it occurs in Eusebius and Stephen of Byzantium, and in the acts of many Synods of the fifth and sixth centuries, when it was the seat of a bishop (Reland's "Palestine," pp. 577,578). Abulfeda says that in his time it was a small town. Jerome says that the city was destroyed by an earthquake when he was young, probably about 315 a.d. Burckhardt found a place called Rabba about twenty miles south of the river Arnon, which he supposed to be the ancient Ar. Seetsen found there ruins of considerable compass; especially the ruins of an old palace or temple, of which portions of the wall and some pillars are still standing. Legh says, ‹There are no traces of fortifications to be seen; but, upon an eminence, were a dilapidated Roman temple and some tanks.'

Is laid waste - That is, is about to be laid waste. This passed before the mind of Isaiah in a vision, and he represents it as it appeared to him, as already a scene of desolation.

And brought to silence - Margin, ‹Cut off.' The word may mean either. The sense is, that the city was to be destroyed, for so the word דמה *dâmâh* often means Hosea 4:5-6; Hosea 10:7, Hosea 10:15; Jeremiah 6:2; Jeremiah 47:5; Zephaniah 1:11.

Kir of Moab - Probably this city was the modern Kerek or Karak. The Chaldee renders it by the name כרכא *kerakā'* or ‹fortress,' hence, the name Kerek or Karak. According to Burckhardt, it lies about three hours, and according to Abulfeda twelve Arabic miles, south of Ar Moab, upon a very high and steep rocky hill, from which the prospect extends even to Jerusalem, and which, formed by nature for a fortress, overlooks the whole surrounding country. In the wars of the Maccabees (2 Maccabees 12:17) it is mentioned under the name of Κάρακα *Karaka* and it is now known by the name of "Kerek" or "Karak." In the time of the crusades, a pagan prince built there under king Fulco (in the year 1131) a very important castle, which was very serviceable to the Franks, and in 1183 it held out successfully against a formidable siege of a month by Saladin. Abulfeda speaks of it as so strong a fortress that one must abandon even the wish to take it. It has been visited in modern times by Seetsen, Burckhardt, and the

company of English travelers referred to above. The place has still a castle, into which the whole surrounding country brings its grain for safe keeping. The small and poor town is built upon the remains of once important edifices, and is inhabited by Moslems and Christians. It is the seat of a bishop, though the bishop resides at Jerusalem (see Gesenius, "Commentary *in loc*.")

Verse 2

He is gone up - That is, the inhabitants of Moab in consternation have fled from their ruined cities, and have gone up to other places to weep.

To Bajith, and to Dibon - Lowth supposes that these two words should be joined together, and that one place is denoted. The Chaldee renders it, ‹Ascend into the houses of Dibon.‘ Kimchi supposes that the word (בית *bayith*) denotes a temple. It usually means "house," and hence, may mean a temple of the gods; that is, the principal "house" in the land. This interpretation is adopted by Gesenius and Noyes. Vitringa supposes it to mean Beth-Meon Jeremiah 48:24, or Beth-Baal-Meon Joshua 13:17, north of the Arnon, now "Macin." I have adopted the translation proposed by Kimchi as better expressing the sense in my view than that which makes it a proper name. Dibon, perhaps the same place as Dimon in Isaiah 15:9, was a city given by Moses to Gad, and afterward yielded to Reuben Numbers 32:3, Numbers 32:33-34; Joshua 13:9. It was again occupied by the Moabites Jeremiah 48:18, Jeremiah 48:2. Eusebius says it was a large town on the north of the river Arnon. Seetsen found there ruins under the name of Diban in a magnificent plain. Hence, "Dibon" is here appropriately described as "going up" from a plain to weep; and the passage may be rendered, ‹Dibon is weeping upon the high places.‘

To weep - Over the sudden desolation which has come upon the principal cities.

Moab shall howl over Nebo - Nebo was one of the mountains on the east of the Jordan. It was so high that from it an extended view could be taken of the land of Canaan opposite. It was distinguished as being the place where Moses died Deuteronomy 32:49; Deuteronomy 34:1. The meaning of this is, that on mount Nebo, Moab should lift up the voice of wailing. Jerome says that the idol Chamos, the principal idol of Moab, was on mount Nebo, and that this was the place of its worship. This mountain was near the northern extremity of the Dead Sea. Mount Nebo was completely barren when Burckhardt passed over it, and the site of the

ancient city had not been ascertained ("Travels in Syria," p. 370.) On its summit, says Burckhardt, was a heap of stones overshadowed by a very large wild pistacia tree. At a short distance below, to the southwest, is the ruined place called Kereyat.

And over Medeba - This was a city east of the Jordan in the southern part of the territory allotted to Reuben. It was taken from the Reubenites by the Moabites. Burckhardt describes the ruins of this town, which still bears the same name. He says of it, it is ‹built upon a round hill; but there is no river near it. It is at least half an hour in circumference. I observed many remains of private houses, constructed with blocks of silex; but not a single edifice is standing. There is a large birket, tank, or cistern, which, as there is no spring at Medeba, might be still of use to the Bedouins, were the surrounding ground cleared of the rubbish to allow the water to flow into it; but such an undertaking is far beyond the views of the wandering Arabic On the west side of the town are the foundations of a temple built with large stones, and apparently of great antiquity. A part of its eastern wall remains, constructed in the same style as the castle wall at Ammon. At the entrance to one of the courts stand two columns of the Doric order. In the center of one of the courts is a large well.' ("Travels in Syria," pp. 366,367.)

On all their heads shall be baldness … - To cut off the hair of the head and the beard was expressive of great grief. It is well known that the Orientals regard the beard with great sacredness and veneration, and that they usually dress it with great care, Great grief was usually expressed by striking external acts. Hence, they lifted up the voice in wailing; they hired persons to howl over the dead; they rent their garments; and for the same reason, in times of great calamity or grief, they cut off the hair, and even the beard. Herodotus (ii. 36) speaks of it as a custom among all nations, except the Egyptians, to cut off the hair as a token of mourning. So also Homer says, that on the death of Patroclus they cut off the hair as expressive of grief (Iliad, xxiii. 46,47):

Next these a melancholy band appear,
Amidst lay dead Patroclus on a bier;
O'er all the course their scattered locks they threw.
Pope

See also "Odyss." iv. 197. This was also the custom with the Romans (Ovid. "Amor." 3,5,12); the Egyptians (Diod. i. 84); the Scythians (Herod. iv. 71); and the modern Cretans. The principle on which this is done is, that

thereby they are deprived of what is esteemed the most beautiful ornament of the body; an idea which lies at the foundation of mourning in all countries and ages. The loss of the beard, also, was the highest calamity, and would be expressive of the deepest grief. ‹It is,‘ says D‘Arvieux, who has devoted a chapter to the exposition of the sentiments of the Arabs in regard to the beard, ‹a greater mark of infamy in Arabia to cut a man‘s beard off, than it is with us to whip a fellow at the cart‘s tail, or to burn him in the hand. Many people in that country would far rather die than incur that punishment. I saw an Arab who had received a musket shot in the jaw, and who was determined rather to perish than to allow the surgeon to cut his beard off to dress his wound. His resolution was at length overcome; but not until the wound was beginning to gangrene. he never allowed himself to be seen while his beard was off; and when at last he got abroad, he went always with his face covered with a black veil, that he might not be seen without a beard; and this he did until his beard had grown again to a considerable length.‘ (“Pic. Bib.,” vol. ii. p. 100.) Burckhardt also remarks, that the Arabs who have, from any cause, had the misfortune to lose their beards invariably conceal themselves from view until their beards are grown again (compare Isaiah 3:24; Isaiah 22:12; Jeremiah 41:5; Micah 1:16). The idea is, that the Moabites would be greatly afflicted. Jeremiah has stated the same thing of Moab Jeremiah 48:37:

For every head shall be bald, and every beard be clipt;
And upon all hands shall be cuttings,
And upon the loins sackcloth.

Verse 3

In their streets - Publicly. Everywhere there shall be lamentation and grief. Some shall go into the streets, and some on the tops of the houses.

They shall gird themselves with sackcloth - The common token of mourning; and also worn usually in times of humiliation and fasting. It was one of the outward acts by which they expressed deep sorrow (Genesis 37:34; 2 Samuel 3:31; 1 Kings 21:27; 2 Kings 19:1; Job 16:15; the note at Isaiah 3:24).

On the tops of the houses - The roofs of the houses in the East were, and still are, made flat, and were places of resort for prayer, for promenade, etc. The prophet here says, that all the usual places of resort would be filled

with weeping and mourning. In the streets, and on the roofs of the houses, they would utter the voice of lamentation.

Shall howl - It is known that, in times of calamity in the East, it is common to raise an unnatural and forced howl, or long-continued shriek. Persons are often hired for this purpose Jeremiah 9:17.

Weeping abundantly - Hebrew, ‹Descending into weeping;‘ “that is,” going, as we would say, “deep into it,” or weeping much; immersed as it were in tears (compare Jeremiah 13:17; Jeremiah 14:17).

Verse 4

And Heshbon shall cry - This was a celebrated city of the Amorites, twenty miles east of the Jordan Joshua 13:17. It was formerly conquered from the Moabiltes by Sihon, and became his capital, and was taken by the Israelites a little before the death of Moses Numbers 21:25. After the carrying away of the ten tribes it was recovered by the Moabites. Jeremiah Jeremiah 48:2 calls it ‹the pride of Moab.‘ The town still subsists under the same name, and is described by Burckhardt. He says, it is situated on a hill, southwest from El Aal (Elealeh). ‹Here are the ruins of an ancient town, together with the remains of some edifices built with small stones; a few broken shafts of columns are still standing, a number of deep wells cut in the rock, and a large reservoir of water for the summer supply the inhabitants.‘ (“Travels in Syria,” p. 365.)

And Elealeh - This was a town of Reuben about a mile from Heshbon Numbers 32:37. Burckhardt visited this place. Its present name is El Aal. ‹It stands on the summit of a hill, and takes its name from its situation - Aal, meaning “the high.” It commands the whole plain, and the view from the top of the hill is very extensive, comprehending the whole of the southern Belka. El Aal was surrounded by a well built wall, of which some parts yet remain. Among the ruins are a number of large cisterns, fragments of walls, and the foundations of houses, but nothing worthy of notice. The plain around it is alternately chalk and flint.‘ (“Travels in Syria,” p. 365.)

Even unto Jahaz - This was a city east of Jordan, near to which Moses defeated Sihon. It was given to Reuben Deuteronomy 2:32, and was situated a short distance north of Ar, the capital of Moab.

The armed soldiers of Moab - The consternation shall reach the very army. They shall lose their courage, and instead of defending the nation, they shall join in the general weeping and lamentation.

His life shall be grievous - As we say of a person who is overwhelmed with calamities, that his life is wearisome, so, says the prophet, shall it be with the whole nation of Moab.

Verse 5

My heart shall cry out for Moab - This is expressive of deep compassion; and is proof that, in the view of the prophet, the calamities which were coming upon it were exceedingly heavy. The same sentiment is expressed more fully in Isaiah 16:11; see also Jeremiah 48:36: ‹My heart shall sound for Moab like pipes.‘ The phrase denotes great inward pain and anguish in view of the calamities of others; and is an expression of the fact that we feel ourselves oppressed and borne down by sympathy on account of their sufferings (see the note at Isaiah 21:3). It is worthy of remark, that the Septuagint reads this as if it were ‹“his” heart‘ - referring to the Moabites, ‹the heart of Moab shall cry out.‘ So the Chaldee; and so Lowth, Michaelis, and others read it. But there is no authority for this change in the Hebrew text; nor is it needful. In the parallel place in Jeremiah 48:36, there is no doubt that the heart of the prophet is intended; and here, the phrase is designed to denote the deep compassion which a holy man of God would have, even when predicting the ills that should come upon others. How much compassion, how much deep and tender feeling should ministers of the gospel have when they are describing the final ruin - the unutterable woes of impenitent sinners under the awful wrath of God in the world of woe!

His fugitives - Margin, ‹Or to the borders thereof, even as an heifer‘ (בריחיה *berîychehā*). Jerome and the Vulgate render this ‹her “bars,”‘ and it has been explained as meaning that the voice of the prophet, lamenting the calamity of Moab, could be heard as far as the “bars,” or gates, of Zoar; or that the word “bars” means “princes, that is,” protectors, a figure similar to “shields of the land” Hosea 4:18. The Septuagint renders it, Ἐν αὐτὴ *en autē* - ‹The voice of Moab in her is heard to Zoar.‘ But the more correct rendering is, undoubtedly, that of our translation, referring to the fugitives who should attempt to make their escape from Moab when the calamities should come upon her.

Unto Zoar - Zoar was a small town in the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, to which Lot fled when Sodom was overthrown Genesis 19:23. Abulfeda writes the name Zoghar, and speaks of it as existing in his day. The city of Zoar was near to Sodom, so as to be exposed to the danger of

being overthrown in the same manner that Sodom was, Zoar being exempted from destruction by the angel at the solicitation of Lot Genesis 19:21. That the town lay on the east side of the Dead Sea, is apparent from several considerations. Lot ascended from it to the mountain where his daughters bore each of them a son, who became the ancestors of the Moabites and the Ammonites. But these nations both dwelt on the east side of the Dead Sea. Further, Josephus, speaking of this place, calls it Ζοάρων τῆς Ἀραβίας *Zoarōn tēs Arabias* - ‹Zoar of Arabia‘ (Bell. Jud. iv. 8,4). But the Arabia of Josephus was on the east of the Dead Sea. So the crusaders, in the expedition of King Baldwin, 1100 a.d., after marching from Hebron, proceeded around the lake, and came, at length, to a place called "Segor," doubtless the Zoghar of Abulfeda. The probability, therefore, is, that it was near the southern end of the sea, but on the eastern side. The exact place is now unknown. In the time of Eusebius and Jerome, it is described as having many inhabitants, and a Roman garrison. In the time of the crusaders, it is mentioned as a place pleasantly situated, with many palm trees. But the palm trees have disappeared, and the site of the city can be only a matter of conjecture (see Robinson‘s "Bib. Researches," vol. ii. pp. 648-651).

An heifer of three years old - That is, their fugitives flying unto Zoar shall lift up the voice like an heifer, for so Jeremiah in the parallel place explains it Jeremiah 48:34. Many interpreters have referred this, however, to Zoar as an appellation of that city, denoting its flourishing condition. Bochart refers it to Isaiah, and supposes that he designed to say that "he" lifted his voice as an heifer. But the more obvious interpretation is that given above, and is that which occurs in Jeremiah. The expression, however, is a very obscure one. See the various senses which it may bear, examined in Rosenmuller and Gesenius *in loc*. Gesenius renders it, ‹To Eglath the third;‘ and supposes, in accordance with many interpreters, that it denotes a place called "Eglath," called the third in distinction from two other places of the same name; though he suggests that the common explanation, that it refers to a heifer of the age of three years, may be defended. In the third year, says he, the heifer was most vigorous, and hence, was used for an offering Genesis 15:9. Until that age she was accustomed to go unbroken, and bore no yoke (Pliny, 8,4,5). If this refers to Moab, therefore, it may mean that hitherto it was vigorous, unsubdued, and active; but that now, like the heifer, it was to be broken and brought under

the yoke by chastisement. The expression is a very difficult one, and it is impossible, perhaps, to determine what is the true sense.

By the mounting up of Luhith - The "ascent" of Luhith. It is evident, from Jeremiah 48:5, that it was a mountain, but where, is not clearly ascertained. Eusebius supposes it was a place between Areopolis and Zoar (see Reland's "Palestine," pp. 577-579). The whole region there is mountainous.

In the way of Horonaim - This was, doubtless, a town of Moab, but where it was situated is uncertain. The word means "two holes." The region abounds to this day with caves, which are used for dwellings (Seetzen). The place lay, probably, on a declivity from which one descended from Luhith.

A cry of destruction - Hebrew, ‹Breaking.' A cry "appropriate" to the great calamity that should come upon Moab.

Verse 6

For the waters of Nimrim - It is supposed by some that the prophet here states the cause why the Moabites would flee to the cities of the south, to wit, that the "waters" of the northern cities would fail, and the country become desolate, and that they would seek support in the south. But it is more probable that he is simply continuing the description of the desolation that would come upon Moab. Nimrah, or Beth Nimra, meaning a "house of limpid waters," was a city of Reuben east of the Dead Sea (Numbers 32:3; compare Jeremiah 48:34). It was, doubtless, a city celebrated for its pure fountains and springs of water. Here Seetzen's chart shows a brook flowing into the Jordan called "Nahr Nimrim, or Wady Shoaib." ‹On the east of the Jordan over against Jericho, there is now a stream called Nimlim - doubtless the ancient Nimrim. This flows into the Jordan, and as it flows along gives fertility to that part of the country of Moab.' (Eli Smith.) It is possible that the waters failed by a common practice in times of war when an enemy destroyed the fountains of a country by diverting their waters, or by casting into them stones, trees, etc. This destructive measure of war occurs, with reference to Moab, in 2 Kings 3:25, when the Israelites, during an incursion into Moab, felled the fruit trees, cast stones into the plowed grounds, and "closed the fountains, or wells."

For the hay is withered away - The waters are dried up, and the land yields nothing to support life.

Verse 7

Therefore, the abundance they have gotten - Their wealth they shall remove from a place that is utterly burned up with drought, where the waters and the grass fail, to another place where they may find water.

To the brook of willows - Margin, ‹The valley of the Arabians.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹I will lead them to the valley of the Arabians, and they shall take it.‘ So Saadias. It might, perhaps, be called the valley of the Arabians, because it was the boundary line between them and Arabia on the south. Lowth renders it, ‹To Babylon.‘ The probability is, that the prophet refers to some valley or brook that was called the brook of the willows, from the fact that many willows grew upon its bank. Perhaps it was the small stream which flows into the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, and which forms the boundary of Arabia Petrea of the province of Jebal. They withdrew toward the south, where toward Petra or Sela they had their property in herds Isaiah 16:1, for probably the invader came from the north, and drove them in this direction. Lowth, and most commentators, suppose that ‹they‘ in this verse refers to the enemies of Moab, and that it means that they would carry away the property of Moab to some distant place. But the more probable meaning is, that when the waters of the Nimrim should fail, they would remove to a place better watered; that is, they would leave their former abode, and wander away. It is an image of the desolation that was coming upon the land.

Verse 8

For the cry is gone round about … - The cry of distress and calamity has encompassed the whole land of Moab. There is no part of the land which is not filled with lamentation and distress.

The howling - The voice of wailing on account of the distress.

Unto Eglaim - This was a city of Moab east of the Dead Sea, which, Eusebius says, was eight miles south of Ar, and hence, says Rosenmuller, it was not far from the south border of Moab. It is mentioned by Josephus (“Ant.” xiv. 1), as one of the twelve cities in that region which was overthrown by Alexander the Great.

Unto Beer-elim - literally, “the well of the princes.” Perhaps the same as that mentioned in Numbers 21:14-18, as being in the land of Moab, and near to Ar:

The princes digged the well,
The nobles of the people digged it.

Verse 9

For the waters of Dimon - Probably the same as "Dibon" Isaiah 15:2. Eusobius says it was a large town on the northern bank of the river Arnon. Jerome says that the letters "m and b" are often interchanged in oriental dialects (see the note at Isaiah 15:2).

Shall be full of blood - That is, the number of the slain of Moab shall be so great, that the blood shall color the waters of the river - a very common occurrence in times of great slaughter. Perhaps by the "waters" of Dimon the prophet does not mean the river Arnon, but the small rivulets or streams that might flow into it near to the city of Dibon. Probably there were winter brooks there, which do not run at all seasons. The Chaldee renders it, ‹The waters of Dimon shall be full of blood, because I will place upon Dimon an assembly of armies.'

For I will bring more upon Dimon - Hebrew, ‹I will bring additions;' that is, I will bring upon it additional calamities. Jerome says, that by those additional calamities, the prophet refers to the "lions" which are immediately after mentioned. "Lions upon him that escapeth of Moab." Wild beasts upon those who escaped from the slaughter, and who took refuge in the wilderness, or on the mountains. The Chaldee renders it, ‹A king shall ascend with an army, and shall destroy the remainder of their land.' Aben Ezra interprets it of the king of Assyria; and Jarchi of Nebuchadnezzar, who is called a lion in Jeremiah 4:7. Vitringa also supposes that Nebnchadnezzar is meant. But it is more probable that the prophet refers to wild beasts, which are often referred to in the Scriptures as objects of dread, and as bringing calamities upon nations (see Leviticus 26:22; Jeremiah 5:6; Jeremiah 15:3; 2 Kings 18:25).

Upon the remnant of the land - Upon all those who escaped the desolation of the war. The Septuagint and the Arabic render this, ‹Upon the remnant of Adama,' understanding the word rendered ‹land' (אדמה *'ădâmâh*), as the name of a city. But it more probably means the land.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Introduction

This chapter Isaiah 16:1-14 is a continuance of the former, and the scope of it is, to give advice to the Moabites, and to threaten them with punishment in case, as the prophet foresaw, they should neglect or refuse to follow it. The advice was Isaiah 16:1-5, to send the customary tribute to the king of Judah; to seek his protection, and to submit themselves to him. But the prophet foresaw that, through the pride of Moab Isaiah 16:6, they would refuse to recognize their subjection to Judah, and that, as a consequence, they would be doomed to severe punishment Isaiah 16:7-11, and to a certain overthrow within a specified time Isaiah 16:12-14. See the "Analysis" prefixed to Isaiah 15:1-9.

Verse 1

Send ye the lamb - Lowth renders this, ‹I will send forth the son from the ruler of the land;‘ meaning, as he supposes, that under the Assyrian invasion, even the young prince of Moab would be obliged to flee for his life through the desert, that he might escape to Judea; and "that" thus God says that "he" would send him. The only authority for this, however, is, that the Septuagint reads the word ‹send‘ in the future tense (ἀποστελῶ *apostelō*) instead of the imperative; and that the Syraic reads בר *bar* instead of כר *kar* "a lamb." But assuredly this is too slight an authority for making an alteration in the Hebrew text. This is one of the many instances in which Lowth has ventured to suggest a change in the text of Isaiah without sufficient authority. The Septuagint reads this: ‹I will send reptiles (ἑρπετὰ *herpeta*) upon the land. Is not the mountain of the daughter of Zion a desolate rock?‘ The Chaldee renders it, ‹Bear ye tribute to the Messiah, the anointed of Israel, who is powerful over you who were in the desert, to Mount Zion.‘ And this, understanding by the Messiah the anointed king of Israel, is probably the true rendering.

The word ‹lamb‘ (כר *kar*) denotes, properly, a pasture lamb, a fat lamb, and is usually applied to the lamb which was slain in sacrifice. Here it probably means a lamb, or "lambs" collectively, as a tribute, or acknowledgment of subjection to Judah. Lambs were used in the daily sacrifice in the temple, and in the other sacrifices of the Jews. Large numbers of them would, therefore, be needed, and it is not improbable that the "tribute" of the nations subject to them was often required to be paid in

animals for burnt-offering. Perhaps there might have been this additional reason for that - that the sending of such animals would be a sort of incidental acknowledgment of the truth of the Jewish religion, and an offering to the God of the Hebrews. At all events, the word here seems to be one that designates "tribute;" and the counsel of the prophet is, that they should send their "tribute" to the Jews.

To the ruler of the land - To the king of Judah. This is proved by the addition at the close of the verse, ‹unto the mount of the daughter o Zion.' It is evident from 2 Samuel 8:2, that David subdued the Moabites, and laid them under tribute, so that the ‹Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts.' That "lambs" were the specific kind of tribute which the Moabites were to render to the Jews as a token of their subjection, is clearly proved in 2 Kings 3:4: ‹And Mesha, king of Moab, was a sheep-master, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand rams, with the wool.' This was in the time of Ahab. But the Moabites after his death revolted from them, and rebelled 2 Kings 4:5. It is probable that as this tribute was laid by "David" before the separation of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, and as the kings of Judah claimed to be the true successors of David and Solomon, they demanded that the tribute should be rendered to "them," and not to the kings of Israel, and this is the claim which Isaiah enforces in the passage before us. The command of the prophet is to regain the lost favor of Israel by the payment of the tribute that was due. The territory of Moab was in early times, and is still, rich in flocks of sheep. Seetzen made his journey with some inhabitants of Hebron and Jerusalem who had purchased sheep in that region. Lambs and sheep were often demanded in tribute. The Persians received fifty thousand sheep as a tribute annually from the Cappadocians, and one hundred thousand from the Medes (Strabo, ii. 362).

From Sela in the wilderness - The word ‹Sela' (סלע *sela'*) means "a rock;" and by it here there can be no doubt that there is intended the city of that name which was the capital of "Arabia Petrea." The city was situated within the bounds of Arabia or Idumea, but was probably at this time in the possession of the Moabites. It was, therefore, the remotest part of their territory, and the sense may be, ‹Send tribute even from the remotest pat of your land;' or it may be, that the region around that city was particularly favorable to pasturage, and for keeping flocks. To this place they had fled with their flocks on the invasion from the north (see the note at Isaiah 15:7). Vitringa says that that desert around Petra was regarded as a vast common,

on which the Moabites and Arabians promiscuously fed their flocks. The situation of the city of Sela, or (πέτρα *petra*) Petra, meaning the same as Sela, a rock, was for a long time unknown, but it has lately been discovered.

It lies about a journey of a day and a ball southeast of the southern extremity of the Dead Sea. It derived its name from the fact that it was situated in a vast hollow in a rocky mountain, and consisted almost entirely of dwellings hewn out of the rock. It was the capital of the Edomites 2 Kings 19:7; but might have been at this time in the possession of the Moabites. Strabo describes it as the capital of the Nabatheans, and as situated in a vale well watered, but encompassed by insurmountable rocks (xvi. 4), at a distance of three or four days‘ journey from Jericho. Diodorus (19,55) mentions it as a place of trade, with caves for dwellings, and strongly fortified by nature. Pliny, in the first century, says, ‹The Nabatheans inhabit the city called Petra, in a valley less than two (Roman) miles in amplitude, surrounded by inaccessible mountains, with a stream flowing through it‘ (“Nat. Hist.” vi. 28).

Adrian, the successor of Trajan, granted important privileges to that city, which led the inhabitants to give his name to it upon coins. Several of these are still extant. In the fourth century, Petra is several times mentioned by Eusebius and Jerome, and in the fifth and sixth centuries appears as the metropolitan see of the Third Palestine (see the article “Petra” in Reland‘s “Palestine”). From that time, Petra disappeared from the pages of history, and the metropolitan see was transferred to Rabbah. In what way Petra was destroyed is unknown. Whether it was by the Mahometan conquerors, or whether by the incursions of the hordes of the desert, it is impossible now to ascertain. All Arabian writers of that period are silent as to Petra. The name became changed to that which it bears at present - Wady Musa, and it was not until the travels of Seetzen, in 1807, that it attracted the attention of the world. During his excursion from Hebron to the hill Madurah, his Arab guide described the place, exclaiming, ‹Ah! how I weep when I behold the ruins of Wady Musa.‘ Seetzen did not visit it, but Burckhardt passed a short time there, and described it. Since his time it has been repeatedly visited (see Robinson‘s “Bib. Researches,” vol. ii. pp. 573-580).

This city was formerly celebrated as a place of great commercial importance, from its central position and its being so securely defended. Dr.

Vincent (in his “Commerce of the Ancients,” vol. xi. p. 263, quoted in Laborde‘s “Journey to Arabia Petrea,” p. 17) describes Petra as the capital of Edom or Sin, the Idumea or Arabia Petrea of the Greeks, the Nabatea considered both by geographers, historians, and poets, as the source of all the precious commodities of the East. The caravans in all ages, from Minea in the interior of Arabia, and from Gerka on the gulf of Persia, from Hadramont on the ocean, and some even from Sabea in Yemen, appear to have pointed to Petra as a common center; and from Petra the trade seems to have branched out into every direction - to Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, through Arsinoe, Gaza, Tyre, Jerusalem, Damascus, and a variety of intermediate roads that all terminated on the Mediterranean. Strabo relates, that the merchandise of India and Arabia was transported on camels from Leuke Kome to Petra, and thence, to Rhinocolura and other places (xvi. 4,18,23,24).

Under the Romans the trade was still more prosperous. The country was rendered more accessible, and the passage of merchants facilitated by military ways, and by the establishment of military posts to keep in check the predatory hordes of the neighboring deserts. One great road, of which traces still remain, went from Petra to Damascus; another went off from this road west of the Dead Sea to Jerusalem, Askelon, and other parts of the Mediterranean (Laborde, p. 213; Burckhardt, 374,419). At a period subsequent to the Christian era there always reigned at Petra, according to Strabo, a king of the royal lineage, with whom a prince was associated in the government (Strabo, p. 779). The very situation of this city, once so celebrated, as has been remarked above, was long unknown. Burckhardt, under the assumed name of Sheikh Ibrahim, in the year 1811, made an attempt to reach Petra under the pretext that he had made a vow to sacrifice a goat in honor of Aaron on the summit of Mount Hor near to Petra. He was permitted to enter the city, and to remain there a short time, and to “look” upon the wonders of that remarkable place, but was permitted to make no notes or drawings on the spot.

His object was supposed to be to obtain treasures, which the Arabs believe to have been deposited there in great abundance, as all who visit the ruins of ancient cities and towns in that region are regarded as having come there solely for that purpose. If assured that they have no such design, and if

the Arabs are reminded that they have no means to remove them, it is replied ‹that, although they may not remove them in their presence, yet when they return to their own land, they will have the power of "commanding" the treasures to be conveyed to them, and it will be done by magic.‘ (Burckhardt‘s "Travels in Syria," pp. 428,429.)

Burckhardt‘s description of this city, as it is brief, may be here given "verbatim:" ‹Two long days‘ journey northeast from Akaba (a town at the extremity of the Elanitic branch of the Red Sea, near the site of the ancient Ezion-geber), is a brook called Wady Musa, and a valley of the same name. This place is very remarkable for its antiquities, and the remains of an ancient city, which I take to be Petra, the capital of Arabia Petrea, a place which, so far as I know, no European traveler has ever explored. In the red sandstone of which the vale consists, there are found more than two hundred and fifty sepulchres, which are entirely hewn out of the rock, generally with architectural ornaments in the Grecian style. There is found there a mausoleum in the form of a temple (obviously the same which Legh and Laborde call the temple of victory) on a colossal scale, which is likewise hewn out of the rock, with all its apartments, portico, peristylum, etc. It is an extremely fine monument of Grecian architecture, and in a fine state of preservation. In the same place there are yet other mausoleums with obelisks, apparently in the Egyptian style; a whole amphitheater hewn out of the solid rock, and the remains of a palace and many temples.‘

Mr. Bankes, in company of Mr. Legh, and Captains Irby and Mangles, have the merit of being the first persons who, as Europeans, succeeded to any extent in making researches in Petra. Captains Irby and Mangles spent two days among its temples, tombs, and ruins, and have furnished a description of what they saw. But the most full and satisfactory investigation which has been made of these ruins, was made by M. de Laborde, who visited the city in 1829, and was permitted to remain there eight days, and to examine it at leisure. An account of his journey, with splendid plates, was published in Paris in 1830, and a translation in London 1836. To this interesting account the reader must be referred. It can only be remarked here, that Petra, or Sela, was a city entirely encompassed with lofty rocks, except in a single place, where was a deep ravine between the rocks which constituted the principal entrance.

On the east and west it was enclosed with lofty rocks, of from three to five hundred feet in height; on the north and south the ascent was gradual from the city to the adjacent hills. The ordinary entrance was through a deep ravine, which has been, until lately, supposed to have been the only way of access to the city. This ravine approaches it from the east, and is about a mile in length. In the narrowest part it is twelve feet in width, and the rocks are on each side about three hundred feet in height. On the northern side, there are tombs excavated in the rocks nearly the entire distance. The stream which watered Petra runs along in the bottom of the ravine, going through the city, and descending through a ravine to the west (see Robinson‘s “Bib. Researches,” vol. ii. 514,538.) The city is wholly uninhabited, except when the wandering Arab makes use of an excavated tomb or palace in which to pass the night, or a caravan pauses there.

The rock which encompasses it is a soft freestone. The tombs, with which almost the entire city was encompassed, are cut in the solid rock, and are adorned in the various modes of Grecian and Egyptian architecture. The surface of the solid rock was first made smooth, and then a plan of the tomb or temple was drawn on the smoothed surface, and the workmen began at the top and cut the various pillars, entablatures, and capitals. The tomb was then excavated from the rock, and was usually entered by a single door. Burckhardt counted two hundred and fifty of these tombs, and Laborde has described minutely a large number of them. For a description of these splendid monuments, the reader must be referred to the work of Laborde, pp. 152-193. Lend. Ed.

That this is the Sela referred to here there can be no doubt; and the discovery of this place is only one of the instances out of many, in which the researches of oriental travelers contribute to throw light on the geography of the Scriptures, or otherwise illustrate them. For a description of this city, see Stephen‘s “Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petrea, and the Holy land,” vol. ii. ch. iv. p. 65ff; the work of Laborde referred to above; and Robinson‘s “Bib. Researches,” vol. ii. pp. 573-580,653-659.

To the mount of the daughter of Zion - To Mount Zion; that is, to Jerusalem (note, Isaiah 1:8). The meaning of this verse, therefore, is, ‹Pay the accustomed tribute to the Jews. Continue to seek their protection, and

acknowledge your subjection to them, and you shall be safe. They will yield you protection, and these threatened judgments will not come upon you. But refuse, or withhold this, and you will be overthrown.‘

Verse 2

For it shall be - It shall happen in the time of the calamity that shall come upon Moab.

As a wandering bird - (See Isaiah 10:14.) The same idea is presented in Proverbs 27:8:

As a bird that wanders from her nest,
So is a man that wandereth from his place.

The idea here is that of a bird driven away from her nest, where the nest is destroyed, and the young fly about without any home or place of rest. So would Moab be when the inhabitants were driven from their dwellings. The reason why this is introduced seems to be, to enforce what the prophet had said in the previous verse - the duty of paying the usual tribute to the Jews, and seeking their protection. The time is coming, says the prophet, when the Moabites shall be driven from their homes, and when they will need that protection which they can obtain by paying the usual tribute to the Jews.

The daughters of Moab - The females shall be driven from their homes, and shall wander about, and endeavor to flee from the invasion which has come upon the land. By the apprehension, therefore, that their wives and daughters would be exposed to this danger, the prophet calls upon the Moabites to secure the protection of the king of Judah.

At the fords of Arnon - Arnon was the northern boundary of the land of Moab. They would endeavor to cross that river, and thus flee from the land, and escape the desolations that were coming upon it. The river Arnon, now called Mujeb, flows in a deep, frightfully wild, and rocky vale of the same name Numbers 21:15; Deuteronomy 2:24; Deuteronomy 3:9, in a narrow bed, and forms at this time the boundary between the provinces of Belka and Karrak (Seetzen). Bridges were not common in the times here referred to; and, indeed, permanent bridges among the ancients were things almost unknown. Hence, they selected the places where the streams were most shallow and gentle, as the usual places of crossing.

Verse 3

Take counsel - Hebrew, ‹Bring counsel;‘ or cause it to come (הבאו *hâbî'îû* or as it is in the *keri* הביאי). The Vulgate, renders this in the singular number, and so is the *keri*, and so many manuscripts J. D. Michaelis,

Lowth, Etchhorn, Gesenius, and Noyes, regard Isaiah 16:3-5 as a supplicatory address of the fugitive Moabites to the Jews to take them under their protection, and as imploring a blessing on the Jewish people if they would do it; and Isaiah 16:6 as the negative answer of the Jews, or as a refusal to protect them on account of their pride. But most commentators regard it as addressed to the Moabites by the prophet, or by the Jews, calling upon the Moabites to afford such protection to the Jews who might be driven from their homes as to secure their favor, and confirm the alliance between them; and Isaiah 16:6 as an intimation of the prophet, that the pride of Moab is such that there is no reason to suppose the advice will be followed. It makes no difference in the sense here, whether the verb ‹give counsel‘ be in the singular or the plural number.

If singular, it may be understood as addressed to "Moab" itself; if plural, to the "inhabitants" of Moab. Vitringa supposes that this an additional advice given to the Moabites by the prophet, or by a chorus of the Jews, to exercise the offices of kindness and humanity toward the Jews, that thus they might avoid the calamities which were impending. The "first" counsel was Isaiah 16:1, to pay the proper tribute to the Jewish nation; "this" is Isaiah 16:3-5 to show to those Jews who might be driven from their land kindness and protection, and thus preserve the friendship of the Jewish nation. This is, probably, the correct interpretation, as if he had said, ‹ake counsel; seek advice in your circumstances; be not hasty, rash, impetuous, unwise; do not cast off the friendship of the Jews; do not deal unkindly with those who may seek a refuge in your land, and thus provoke the nation to enmity; but let your land be an asylum, and thus conciliate and secure the friendship of the Jewish nation, and thus mercy shall be reciprocated and shown to you by him who shall occupy the throne of David‘ Isaiah 16:5. The "design" is, to induce the Moabites to show kindness to the fugitive Jews who might seek a refuge there, that thus, in turn, the Jews might show them kindness. But the prophet foresaw Isaiah 16:6 that Moab was so proud that he would neither pay the accustomed tribute to the Jews, nor afford them protection; and, therefore, the judgment is threatened against them which is finally to overthrow them.

Execute judgment - That is, do that which is equitable and right; which you would desire to be done in like circumstances.

Make thy shadow - A "shadow or shade," is often in the Scriptures an emblem of protection from the burning heat of the sun, and thence, of these

burning, consuming judgments, which are represented by the intense heat of the sun (note, Isaiah 4:6; compare Isaiah 25:4; Isaiah 32:2; Lamentations 4:20).

As the night - That is, a deep, dense shade, such as the night is, compared with the intense heat of noon. This idea was one that was very striking in the East. Nothing, to travelers crossing the burning deserts, could be more refreshing than the shade of a far-projecting rock, or of a grove, or of the night. Thus Isaiah counsels the Moabites to be to the Jews - to furnish protection to them which may be like the grateful shade furnished to the traveler by the rock in the desert. The figure used here is common in the East. Thus it is said in praise of a nobleman: ‹Like the sun, he warmed in the cold; and when Sirius shone, then was he coolness and shade.‘ In the "Sunna" it is said: ‹Seven classes of people will the Lord overshadow with his shade, when no shade will be like his; the upright Imam, the youth,‘ etc.

Hide the outcasts - The outcasts of Judah - those of the Jews who may be driven away from their own homes, and who may seek protection in your land. Moab is often represented as a place of refuge to the outcast Hebrews (see the Analysis to Isaiah 15:1-9.)

Bewray not him that wandereth - Reveal not (תגלי *tegalîy*), do not show them to their pursuer; that is, give them concealment and protection.

Verse 4

Let mine outcasts - This may be understood as the language of Judea, or of God. ‹Mine outcasts‘ may mean the exiles of Judea, or God may call them "his." The sense is essentially the same. It denotes those who were fugitives, wanderers, exiles from the land of Judea, and who took refuge in the land of Moab; and God claims for them protection.

Dwell with thee - Not dwell permanently, but sojourn (יגורו *yāgûrû*), let them remain with you as exiles; or let them find a refuge in your land.

Be thou a covert to them - A refuge; a hiding-place; a place of "secrecy" (סתר *sêther*).

From the face of the spoiler - That is, the conqueror from whose desolating career they would seek a refuge in the land of Moab. Who this "spoiler" would be, is not known. It would seem to be some invader who was carrying desolation through the land of Judea. It may be observed, however, that Lowth, by setting the points aside, supposes that this should be read, ‹Let the outcasts of Moab sojourn with thee, O Zion.‘ So Noyes. But this seems to me not to suit the connection and the design; which is, to

persuade the Moabites to conciliate the favor of the Jews by affording a hiding-place to their fugitives.

For the extortioner is at an end - literally, ‹there is an end, or there will be an end of the oppressor; or he will be wonting.‘ The Chaldee renders it, ‹The enemy is at an end.‘ The idea here seems to be, that the oppressor in the land of Judea would not continue there always; the exiles of the Jews might soon return; and Judea be able "then" to return kindness to Moab. Judea did not ask that her exiles should permanently abide in Moab, but asked only a temporary refuge, with the certainty that she would be soon delivered from her oppressions, and would then be able to furnish aid to Moab in return.

The oppressors are consumed - Or, ‹the treader down,‘ he that has trodden down the nations "shall" soon be removed, and "then," in turn, Judea will be able to repay the kindness which is now asked at the hand of Moab, in pemitting her exiles to remain in their land.

Verse 5

And in mercy - In benignity; kindness; benevolence.

Shall the throne be established - The throne of the king of Judah. That is, he that shall sit upon the throne of David shall be disposed to repay the kindness which is now sought at the hand of Moab, and shall be able to do it.

And he shall sit upon it - The king of Israel.

In truth - In faithfulness; that is, shall be true and faithful. His character shall be such that he will do justice, and will furnish protection and aid to the Moabites, if they now receive the fugitives of Israel.

In the tabernacle of David - In the dwelling place; the palace of David; for so the word "tabernacle, or tent" (אהל *'ôhel*) seems to be used here. It means "temple" in Ezekiel 41:1. It denotes a habitation, or dwelling place, in general, in Proverbs 14:11; Psalm 52:7; Psalm 91:10. The palace, court, or "citadel" of David, was on mount Zion; and the sense here is, that the king to whom Israel refers would be a worthy successor of David - just, true, faithful, benignant, and disposed to repay the favors now sought at the hand of Moab.

Seeking judgment - Anxious to do right; and seeking an opportunity to recompense those who had shown any favor to the people of the Jews. Moab, therefore, if she would now afford protection to the Jews, might be certain of a recompense.

And hasting righteousness - Not tardy and slow in doing what should be done - anxious to do justice to all. It is implied here also, that a king who would be so just, and so anxious to do "right" to all, would not only be ready to show kindness to the Moabites, if they protected the fugitives of Judea, but would also be disposed to do "right" if they refused that protection; that is, would be disposed to inflict "punishment" on them. Alike, therefore, by the hope of the protection and favor of the king of the Jews, and by the dread of punishment, the prophet endeavors to persuade Moab now to secure their favor by granting protection to their exiles.

Verse 6

We have heard of the pride of Moab - We Jews; we have "all" heard of it; that is, we "know" that he is proud. The evident design of the prophet here is, to say that Moab was so proud, and was well known to be so haughty, that he would "reject" this counsel. He would neither send the usual tribute to the land of Judea Isaiah 16:1, thus acknowledging his dependence on them; nor would he give protection to the exiled Jews as they should wander through his land, and "thus" endeavor to conciliate their favor, and secure their friendship. As a consequence of this, the prophet proceeds to state that heavy judgments would come upon Moab as a nation.

He is very proud - The same thing is stated in the parallel place in Jeremiah 48:29 (compare Isaiah 16:11). Moab was at ease; he was confident in his security; he feared nothing; he sought "no" means, therefore, of securing the friendship of the Jews.

And his wrath - As the result of pride and haughtiness. Wrath or indignation is excited in a proud man when he is opposed, and when the interests of others are not made to give way to his.

But his lies shall not be so - The Hebrew phrase (לא־כן *lo' kên*) - ‹not so‘ here seems to be used in the sense of ‹not right;‘ ‹not firm, or established;‘ that is, his vain boasting, his false pretensions, his "lies" shall not be confirmed, or established; or they shall be vain and impotent. In the parallel place in Jeremiah, it is, ‹But it shall not be so; his lies shall not effect it.‘ The word rendered ‹his lies‘ here (בדיו *badāyv*), means his boasting, or vain and confident speaking. In Isaiah 44:25, it is connected with the vain and confident responses of diviners and soothsayers. Here it means that Moab boasted of his strength and security, and did not feel his need of the friendship of the Jews; but that his security was false, and that it should not result according to his expectations. That Moab was proud, is

also stated in Isaiah 25:8; and that he was disposed to give vent to his pride by reproaching the people of God, is apparent from Zechariah 2:8:

I have heard the reproach of Moab,
And the revilings of the children of Ammon,
Whereby they have reproached my people,

And boasted themselves upon their border.

Verse 7

Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab - One part of the nation shall mourn for another; they shall howl, or lament, in alternate responses. Jerome renders it, ‹the people (shall howl) to the city; the city to the provinces.‘ The general idea is, that there would be an universal lamentation throughout the land. This would be the punishment which would result from their pride in neglecting to send the tribute and seeking the favor of the Jews; or they would lament because the expectation of finding a refuge among the Israelites was taken away.

For the foundations - On account of the foundations of Kir-hareseth, for they shall be overthrown; that is, that city shall be destroyed. The word rendered here ‹foundations‘ (אשישי *'ăshîyshēy*), occurs nowhere else but in this place, and in Hosea 3:1. The Septuagint renders it: ‹The inhabitants.‘ The Chaldee, ‹Men.‘ Jeremiah, in the parallel place, renders it also ‹men‘ Jeremiah 48:31. In Hosea 3:1, it is rendered ‹flagons of wine‘ - and it has been supposed by many that it has this sense here, as this would agree with what is immediately added of the fields of Heshbon, and the vine of Sibmah. Rosenmuller renders it by ‹strong people, or heroes;‘ and supposes that it means that the “strong” people of Kir-hareseth would be destroyed, and that they would mourn on that account. The probable sense is, that that on which the city rested, or was based, was to be destroyed. So Kimchi, Jarchi, and the Syriac understand it.

Kir-ha-reseth - literally, “wall of potsherds, or of bricks.” Aquila renders it, Τοιχῳ ὀστρακίνῳ *Toichō ostrakinō* Symmachus, Τείχει ὀστρακίνῳ *Teichei ostrakinō* This was a city of Moab, but where it was situated is unknown. Vitringa supposes that it was the same as Kir Moab Isaiah 15:1, which, Gesenius says, is not improbable, for it is now mentioned as in ruins, and as one of the chief cities.

Verse 8

For the fields of Heshbon - (See the note at Isaiah 15:4.)

Languish - They are parched up with drought. The ‹fields‘ here evidently mean “vineyards,” for so the parallelism demands. So in Deuteronomy 32:32:

Their vine is of the vine of Sodom,
And of the fields of Gomorrah.

And the vine of Sibmah - Sibmah, or Shibmah, was a city of Reuben Numbers 32:38; Joshua 13:19. Jeremiah, in the parallel place Jeremiah 48:32 speaks of the vine of Sibmah also. He also says that the enemies of Moab had taken Sibmah, and that the vine and wine had been destroyed Jeremiah 48:33. There was no more certain mode of producing desolation in a land where grapes were extensively cultivated than to cut down the vines. The Turks constantly practice that in regard to their enemies, and the result is, that wide desolation comes upon the countries which they invade. At this time it is probable that Sibmah belonged to the Moabites. It is mentioned here as being distinguished for the luxuriant production of the grape. Seetzen still found the vine cultivated in that region. Jerome says, that between Sibmah and Heshbon there was scarcely a distance of five hundred paces, half a Roman mile.

The lords of the heathen - The princes of the pagan nations that had come to invade Moab. The words ‹have broken down‘ (הלמו *hâlemû*) may be taken in either of two senses, either to beat, strike, or break down, as in our version; or “to be” beaten, or smitten with wine - that is, to become intoxicated - like the Greek οἰνοπλὴξ *oinoplēx* - “smitten with wine.” The former is doubtless the sense here.

The principal plants thereof - The chose vines of it - “her sorek” (שׂרוקיה *s'erûqehā*). (See the notes at Isaiah 5:2.)

They are come - That is, the vines of Sibmah had spread or extended themselves even to Jazer, indicating their great luxuriance and fertility.” Jazer was a city at the foot of the mountains of Gilead which was given to Gad, and afterward to the Levites Joshua 21:39. Jerome says it was about fifteen miles from Heshbon. Seetzen found the ruins of a city called Szar, and another place called Szir, from which a small stream (Nahar Szir) flows into the Jordan (Gesenius). That the shoots of the vine of Sibmah reached unto Jazer and the desert, is a beautiful poetic expression for the extensive spread and luxuriance of the vine in that region.

They wandered - The vines "wandered" in the desert. They found no twig or tree to which they could attach themselves, and they spread around in wild luxuriancy.

Through the wilderness - The wilderness or desert of Arabia, which encompassed Moab.

Her branches are stretched out - Are extended far, or are very luxuriant.

They are gone over the sea - Called in the parallel place in Jeremiah 48:32, ‹the Sea of Jazer;‘ probably some lake that had that name near the city of Jazer. It may "possibly" mean the Dead Sea, but that name is not elsewhere given to the Dead Sea in the Scriptures. It has been objected by some to this statement that modern travelers have not found any such place as the ‹Sea of Jazer;‘ or any lake in the vicinity of Jazer. But we may observe -

(1) that Seetzen found a stream flowing into the Jordan near Jazer; and

(2) that it is possible that a pond or lake may have once there existed which may have been since, in the course of ages, filled with sand.

It is known, for example, that in the vicinity of Suez the ancient narrow gulf there, and the large inland sea made by the Bitter lakes, have been choked up by the sand of the desert. Seetzen also says that he saw some pools near the source of the stream called Nahar Szir ("river Szir"). Prof. Stuart. "Bib. Rep." vol. vii. p. 158. The whole description of the vines of Sibmah is poetic; designed, not to be literally understood, but to denote their remarkable luxuriance and fertility. A similar description of a "vine" - though there used to denote the Jewish people - occurs in Psalm 80:8-11:

Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt;
Thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it;
Thou preparedst room before it,

And didst cause it to take deep root,

And it filled the land.

The hills were covered with the shadow of it,

And the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars.

She sent out her boughs unto the sea,

And her branches unto the river.

Verse 9

Therefore, I will bewail - So great is the desolation that I, the prophet, will lament it, though it belongs to another nation than mine own. The expression indicates that the calamity will be great (see the note at Isaiah 15:5).

With the weeping of Jazer - That is, I will pour out the same lamentation for the vine of Sibmah which I do for Jazer; implying that it would be deep and bitter sorrow (see Jeremiah 48:32).

I will water thee with my tears - Indicating the grievous calamities that were coming upon those places, on account of the pride of the nation. They were to Isaiah foreign nations, but he had a heart that could feel for their calamities.

For the shouting for thy summer fruits - The shouting attending the ingathering of the harvest (note, Isaiah 9:3). The word used here (הידד *hēydâd*), denotes, properly, a joyful acclamation, a shout of joy or rejoicing, such as was manifested by the vintager and presser of grapes Jeremiah 25:30; Jeremiah 48:33; or such as was made by the warrior Jeremiah 51:14. Here it means, that in the time when they would expect the usual shout of the harvest, it should not be heard, but instead, thereof, there should be the triumph of the warrior. Literally, ‹upon thy summer fruits, and upon thy harvests has the shouting fallen;‘ that is, the shout of the warrior has fallen upon that harvest instead of the rejoicing of the farmer. So Jeremiah evidently understands it Jeremiah 48:32: ‹The spoiler is fallen upon thy summer fruits, and upon thy vintage.‘ Lowth proposes here a correction of the Hebrew text, but without necessity or authority.

Verse 10

And gladness … - The gladness and joy that was commonly felt in the field producing a rich and luxuriant harvest.

Out of the plentiful field - Hebrew, ‹From Carmel;‘ but Carmel means a fruitful field as well as the mountain of that name (see the note at Isaiah 10:18).

I have made their vintage shouting to cease - That is, by the desolation that has come upon the land. The vineyards are destroyed; and of

course the shout of joy in the vintage is no more heard.

Verse 11

Wherefore my bowels - This is also an expression of the deep grief of the prophet in view of the calamities which were coming upon Moab. The "bowels" in the Scriptures are everywhere represented as the seat of compassion, pity, commiseration, and tender mercy Genesis 43:30: ‹His bowels did yearn upon his brother‘ - he deeply felt for him, he greatly pitied him 1 Kings 3:26; Psalm 25:6; Proverbs 12:10; Isaiah 63:15; Jeremiah 4:19; Jeremiah 31:20; Philemon 1:8; Philemon 2:1. In classic writers, the word ‹bowels‘ denotes the "upper" viscera of victims - the heart, the lungs, the liver, which were eaten during or after the sacrifice (Robinson, "Lex.," on the word σπλάγχνον *splangchnon*). In the Scriptures, it denotes the "inward parts" - evidently also the upper viscera, regarded as the seat of the emotions and passions. The word as we use it - denoting the lower "viscera" - by no means expresses the sense of the word in the Scriptures, and it is this change in the signification which renders the use of the very language of the Bible unpleasant or inappropriate. We express the idea by the use of the word "heart" - the seat of the affections.

Shall sound like an harp - The "bowels" are represented in the Scriptures as affected in various modes in the exercise of pity or compassion. Thus, in Lamentations 1:20, Jeremiah says, ‹My bowels are troubled‘ (see Lamentations 2:1; Jeremiah 31:20). Job Job 30:27, says, ‹My bowels boiled, and rested not;‘ there was great agitation; deep feeling. Thus, Jeremiah 4:19:

My bowels! My bowels! I am pained at my very heart.

My heart "maketh a noise" in me.

So Isaiah 63:15: ‹Where is the sounding of thy bowels and mercies?‘ The word ‹sound‘ here means to make a tumultuous noise; and the whole expression here denotes that his heart was affected with the calamities of Moab as the strings of the harp vibrate when beaten with the plectrum or the band. His heart was deeply pained and affected by the calamities of Moab, and responded to those calamities, as the strings of the harp did to the blow of the plectrum.

Mine inward parts - The expressions used here are somewhat analogous to ours of the "beating of the heart," to denote deep emotion. Forster says of the savages of the South Sea that they call compassion "a barking of the bowels."

For Kirharesh - (See the note at Isaiah 16:7.)

Verse 12

When it is seen - When it occurs; that is, when Moab actually "becomes" weary.

Is weary on the high place - The "high place" denotes the place of idolatrous worship, and here means the same as the temple of Chemosh or his sanctuary. Temples and altars were usually constructed on such places, and especially the temples of the pagan gods. Moab is represented here as looking to her gods for protection. Weary, exhausted, worn down with calamities, she is represented as fleeing from the desolate towns and cities, and taking refuge at the altar, and seeking assistance there. This, says Jerome, is the final misery. She is now forsaken of those aids to which she had always trusted, and on which she had relied. Her people slain; her towns destroyed; her strong places broken down; her once fertile fields languishing and desolate, she flees to the shrine of her god, and finds even her god unable to aid and defend her.

Shall come to his sanctuary - To his "principle" sanctuary; or to the temple of the principal god which they worshipped - the god "Chemosh" 1 Kings 11:7. This does not mean the temple at Jerusalem, though Kimchi so understands it; but the temple of the chief divinity of Moab. Jerome says that this temple was on mount Nebo.

Shall not prevail - That is, her prayer shall not be heard.

Verse 13

This is the word - This is the substance of the "former" predictions respecting Moab. This has been the "general course" or sense of the prophecies respecting Moab, during all its history.

Since that time - Formerly; from former times. There had been a course of predictions declaring in general that Moab should be destroyed, and the prophet says here that he had expressed their general sense; or that "his" predictions accorded with them all - for they all predicted the complete overthrow of Moab. He now says Isaiah 16:14 that these general prophecies respecting Moab which had been of so long standing were now to be speedily accomplished. The prophecies respecting Moab, foretelling its future ruin, may be seen in Exodus 15:15; Numbers 21:29; Numbers 24:17; Psalm 60:8; Psalm 108:9; Amos 2:2; Zephaniah 2:9. It "may," however, be intended here that the former portion of this prophecy had been uttered by Isaiah himself during the early part of his prophetic life. He is supposed to

have prophesied some sixty or more years ("see" Introduction, Section 3); and it may be that the prophecy in the fifteenth and the previous part of the sixteenth chapter had been uttered during the early part of his life without specifying the time when it would be fulfilled; but now he says, that it would be accomplished in three years. Or it may be that some other prophet had uttered the prediction which he now repeats with additions at the close. The fact that Isaiah had done this on some occasions seems probable from the beginning of Micah 4:1-3 (see the Analysis to Isaiah 15:1-9, and the notes at Isaiah 2:2).

Verse 14

But now the Lord hath spoken - This refers to the particular and specific prophecy of Isaiah that destruction should come upon them in three years. Instead of a "general but indefinite" prediction of calamity to the Moabites, such as had been uttered by the former prophets, or by Isaiah himself before, it was now specific and definite in regard to the "time" when it should be fulfilled.

Within three years - We have no means of ascertaining the exact fulfillment of this prediction, nor do we certainly know by whom it was accomplished.

As the years of an hireling - A man that is hired has a certain time specified during which he is to labor; the years, the months, the days for which he is engaged are agreed on, nor will he suffer any addition to be made to it. So the prophet says that the very time is fixed. It shall not be varied. It will be adhered to by God - as the time is adhered to between a man who employs another and him who is hired. And it means, that "exactly at the time" which is here specified, the predicted destruction should come upon Moab.

The glory of Moab - That in which it glories, or boasts - its wealth, its armies, its cities, towns, etc.

Shall be contemned - Shall be esteemed of no value; shall be destroyed.

And the remnant - There shall be few cities, few people, and very little wealth that shall escape the desolation (compare Isaiah 10:25; Isaiah 24:6). Jerome says that ‹this prophecy was delivered after the death of Ahaz, and in the reign of Hezekiah, during whose reign the ten tribes were led by Sennacherib, king of the Assyrians, into captivity. And, therefore, after three years, the Assyrians came and destroyed Moab, and very few were left in the land who could inhabit the deserted cities, or cultivate the desolate

fields.‘ But it is not certainly known to what particular time the prophecy refers. In regard to the present state of Moab, and the complete fulfillment of the prophecies respecting it, the following works may be consulted: Newton, “On the Prophecies;” Keith, “On the Prophecies;” Burckhardt‘s “Travels in Syria;” and Captains Irby and Mangles‘ “Travels.” In regard to the fulfillment of these predictions respecting the destruction of Moab, it may be sufficient to refer to the remarks which I have made on the particular places which are mentioned in these two chapters, and to the writers mentioned above.

All travelers concur in the general desolation of that country which was once so thickly studded with towns, and that abounded so richly in flocks, and produced so luxuriantly the grape. It is now strewed with ruins. All the cities of Moab have disappeared. Their place is characterized in the map of Volney‘s “Travels, by the ruins of towns.” Burckhardt, who encountered many difficulties in so desolate and dangerous a land, thus records the brief history of a few of them: ‹The ruins of Eleale, Heshbon, Meon, Medaba, Dibon, Arver, all situated on the north side of the Arnon, still subsist to illustrate the history of the Beni-Israel‘ (“Life and Travels,” prefixed to the “Travel‘s in Nubia,” pp. 48,49). ‹And it might be added,‘ says Keith, ‹that they still subsist to confirm the inspiration of the Jewish Scriptures, for the desolation of each of these cities was the theme of a distinct prediction‘ (“Prophecies,” p. 129). Within the boundaries of Moab, Burckhardt enumerates about “fifty” ruined cities, many of them extensive. In general they are a broken down and undistinguishable mass of ruins; but, in some instances, there are remains of temples, sepulchral monuments, traces of hanging gardens, entire columns lying on the ground, and dilapidated walls made of stones of large dimensions (see “Travels in Syria,” pp. 311-456).

In view of these two chapters, constituting one prophecy, and the facts in regard to the present state of the country of Moab, we may observe that we have here clear and unanswerable evidence of the genuineness and truth of the sacred records. That evidence is found in the “particularity” with which “places” are mentioned; and in the fact that impostors would not “specify” places, any further than was unavoidable. Mistakes, we all know, are liable to be made by those who attempt to describe the “geography” of places which they have not seen. Yet here is a description of a land and its numerous towns, made nearly three thousand years ago, and in its

“particulars” it is sustained by all the travelers in modern times. The ruins of the same towns are still seen; their places, in general, can be designated; and there is a moral certainty, therefore, that this prophecy was made by one who “knew” the locality of those places, and that, therefore, the prophecy is ancient and genuine.

An impostor would never have attempted such a description as this; nor could he have made it so accurate and true. In the language of Prof. Stuart (“Bib. Rep.,” vol. vii. pp. 108,109), we may say, ‹How obviously everything of this kind serves to give confirmation to the authority and credibility of the sacred records! Do sceptics undertake to scoff at the Bible, and aver that it is the work of impostors who lived in later ages? Besides asking them what “object” impostors could have in forging a book of such high and lofty principles, we may ask - and ask with an assurance that need not fear the danger of being put to the blush - whether impostors of later ages could possibly have so managed, as to preserve all the “localities” in complete order which the Scriptures present? Rare impostors they must indeed have been - people possessed of more knowledge of antiquity than we can well imagine could ever be possessed by such as would condescend to an imposition of such a character. In fact the thing appears to be morally impossible, if one considers it in the light of “antiquity,” when so little knowledge of a geographical kind was in existence, and when mistakes respecting countries and places with which one was not personally familiar, were almost, if not altogether, unavoidable.

‹How happens it, now, that the authors of the Old Testament Scriptures should have possessed such a wonderful tact in geography, as it would seem they did, unless they lived at the time and in the countries of which they have spoken? This happens not elsewhere. It is but yesterday since one of the first scientific writers on geology in Great Britain, published to the world the declaration that our Mississippi and Missouri rivers “belong to the tropics.” Respectable writers, even in Germany, the land of Classical attainments, have sometimes placed Coelo-Syria on the east of the Anti-Libanus ridge, or even seemed to transfer Damascus over the mountains, and place it between the two Lebanon ridges in the valley.‘ No such mistakes occur in the sacred writers. They write as people who were familiar with the geography of places named; they mention places with the

utmost familiarity; and, after a lapse of three thousand years, every successive traveler who visits Moab, Idumea, or Palestine, does something to confirm the accuracy of Isaiah. Towns, bearing the same name, or the ruins of towns, are located in the same relative position in which he said they were; and the ruins of once splendid cities, broken columns, dilapidated walls, trodden down vineyards, and half-demolished temples, proclaim to the world that those cities are what he said they would be, and that he was under the inspiration of God.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Introduction

The prophecy which comprises Isaiah 17:1-11, professes, by its title, to be against Damascus only. But it relates to the kingdom of Samaria no less than to Damascus. The reason is, that the kingdoms of Israel and Damascus were confederated against the kingdom of Judah. The design of the prophecy may have been to warn the kingdom of Israel of the approaching destruction of the city of Damascus, and, by this means, to keep them from forming an alliance with them against Judah. When it was delivered is unknown. Lowth supposes that it was immediately after the prophecies in the seventh and eighth chapters, in the reign of Ahaz, and this supposition is not improbable, though it is not quite certain. He also supposes that it was fulfilled when Damascus was taken captive by Tiglath-pileser, and its inhabitants carried to Kir 2 Kings 16:9, and when he overran, also, a great part of the kingdom of Israel, and carried its inhabitants captive to Assyria.

In regard to the "time" when it was uttered, there can be little doubt that it was when the alliance existed between Damascus and the kingdom of Ephraim, or Samaria, for on no oilier supposition can it be accounted for, that the two kingdoms were united in the prophecy (see Isaiah 17:3). The scope or design of the prophecy is indicated in the close Isaiah 17:14: ‹This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us;‘ and one design, at least, was to give an assurance to the kingdom of Judah, that the alliance between Damascus and Samaria was not to be dreaded, but that the kingdom of Judah would be safe. No alliance formed against them would be successful; no purpose to destroy them should be an abject of dread.

The prophecy may be regarded as consisting of three parts.

I. The prediction of the divine judgment against Damascus Isaiah 17:1-2.

II. The prediction respecting Ephraim, the ally of Damascus, and its fulfillment Isaiah 17:3-11.

III. A prediction respecting the Assyrians, and the calamities that should come upon them as a nation Isaiah 17:12-14.

The kingdom of Syria, or Damascus, was overthrown in the fourth year of the reign of Ahaz. It is clear, therefore, that the prophecy was delivered

before that time. And if so, its proper place, in the collection of the prophecies of Isaiah: would have been immediately after the ninth chapter. The reason why it is placed here, Lightfoot supposes to be, that in the seventh and eighth chapters the special design was to denounce judgment on the two kingdoms of Damascus and Ephraim; but that the design here was to connect the prediction of those judgments with the surrounding kingdoms, and to show how they would be affected by it. The prophecy is, therefore, placed amidst those which relate to foreign nations; or to kingdoms out of the land of Canaan.

Damascus was a celebrated city of Syria, and was long the capital of the kingdom of Damascus. It was a city in the time of Abraham, for the steward in his house, Eliezer, was said to be of Damascus Genesis 15:2. It is situated in a very fertile plain at the foot of mount Anti-Libanus, and is surrounded by hills. It is watered by a river which the ancients caned "Chrysorrhoas," as if it flowed with gold. This river was divided into several canals, which were conducted to various parts of the city. It rose in the mountains of Anti-Libanus, and it is probable that the branches of that river were anciently called Abana and Pharpar 2 Kings 5:12. This river is now called the Barraday, and the unique beauty and fertility of Damascus is owing wholly to it. It rises in the adjacent mountains of Anti-Libanus, and, by numerous natural and artificial channels, is made to spread over the plain on which the city stands. It waters the whole extent of the gardens - an extent of country about nine miles in diameter, in the midst of which the city is situated - and when this is done, the water that is left flows off to the southeast through the plain, where, amid the arid sands, it is soon absorbed or evaporated, and the river disappears. The gardens are planted with all kinds of trees; mostly such as produce fruit, among which the apricot holds the ascendancy. Pomegranate, orange, lemon, and fig trees abound, and rising above these are other trees of huge proportions, intermingled with the poplar and sometimes the willow. Into every garden of the city water is carried, and this river, thus divided, gives to Damascus the beauty for which it has been so celebrated. The Persian geographers say, that the plain of Damascus is one of the four paradises of the East, and it is now said that there is not in all Syria a more delightful place.

From the time of Abraham until David, the Scripture says nothing of Damascus. In his time it was subdued, and brought under his authority.

Toward the end of the reign of Solomon, the authority of the Jews was cast off by Rezin, and Damascus became again independent. Jeroboam, king of Israel, again conquered Damascus, and brought Syria into subjection 2 Kings 14:25; but after his death the Syrians again established their independence. Rezin became king of Damascus, and entered into an alliance with Pekah, king of Israel, and, unitedly, they invaded Judah, and made great havoc in its territories (see the notes at 2 Kings 16:5). Tiglath-pileser, however, king of Assyria, came to the assistance of the king of Judah and took Damascus, and destroyed it, and killed Rezin, and carried the Syrians into captivity beyond the Euphrates. To this event, probably, Isaiah refers in the prophecy before us. He, however, did not foretell its utter and "perpetual" ruin as he did that of Babylon. Damascus again recovered from its calamities. Holofernes again took it (Ezekiel 27:2. The Romans took it in the time, and by the agency, of Pompey the Great, about sixty years before Christ. It afterward fell into the hands of the Arabians. It was taken by the Ottomans 1517 a.d.; and has since been in the possession of the Turks. At present, it has a population of about 100,000. The name by which it is now known is "El-Sham." It is a part of the pashalic of Damascus, which extends to the southern extremity of the Dead Sea. Mehemet Ali of Egypt obtained possession of it without resistance, in June 1832, and since that time it has been under the jurisdiction of his son Ibrahim. It is regarded by Mussulmans as a place of special sanctity. According to them, Mecca has the first place, Jerusalem the next, and Damascus the third.

The prophecy respecting Damascus occupies Isaiah 17:1-11. The general sense is, that Damascus and its allies would be greatly enfeebled and almost destroyed. Its fulfillment is to be referred to the invasion of Damascus by Tiglath-pileser and the Assyrians. The remainder of the chapter Isaiah 17:12-14 is a distinct prophecy (see the notes at Isaiah 17:12).

Verse 1

The burden of Damascus - The oracle indicating calamity or destruction to Damascus (see the note at Isaiah 13:1). "Damascus is taken away." That is, it shall be destroyed. It was represented to the prophet in vision as destroyed (see the note at Isaiah 1:1).

And it shall be a ruinous heap - See Isaiah 35:2. This took place under the kings of Assyria, and particularly under Tiglath-pileser. This was in the fourth year of Ahaz 2 Kings 16:9.

Verse 2

The cities of Aroer - By "Aroer" here seems to be meant a tract or region of country pertaining to Damascus, in which were situated several cities. Grotius supposes that it was a tract of country in Syria which is called by Ptolemy "Aueira" - Αὔειρα *Aueira* Vitringa supposes that one part of Damascus is meant by this, as Damascus was divided by the river in the same manner that Babylon was. There were several cities of the name of "Aroer." One was on the river Arnon in the land of Moab Deuteronomy 2:36; Deuteronomy 3:12; Joshua 12:3. Burckhardt found this city under the name of *Aroer*. There was another city of this name further north, over against Rabbath-Ammon Joshua 13:25. There was a third city of this name in the tribe of Judah 1 Samuel 30:28. Of the city of Araayr which Burckhardt visited, nothing is now remarkable but its entire desolation. Gesenius supposes ("Commentary *in loc*.") that the phrase ‹the cities of Aroer‘ means the cities round about Aroer, and that were connected with it, similar to the phrase ‹daughters of a city.‘ This city he supposes was near the river Arnon, within the limits of Moab, and that the prediction here was fufilled by Tiglath-pileser, when he carried away the inhabitants of Galilee, Gilead, and other places mentioned in 2 Kings 15:29. There can be no doubt that it was under the jurisdiction of Damascus.

Are forsaken - Are desolate, and the inhabitants have fled.

They shall be for flocks … - (See the note at Isaiah 5:17.)

Verse 3

The fortress - The strong place of defense; the fortified place.

Shall cease - Shall come to an end; shall cease to be, for so the word שׁבת *shâbath* is often used, Genesis 8:22; Isaiah 24:8; Lamentations 5:15.

From Ephraim - The name given to the kingdom of Israel, or to the ten tribes, because Ephraim was the largest of the ten, and was a leading tribe in their councils (see the note at Isaiah 7:2). Ephraim, or the kingdom of Samaria, is mentioned here in connection with Damascus or Syria, because they were confederated together, and would be involved in the same overthrow.

And the remnant of Syria - That which is left of the kingdom of Syria after the capital Damascus shall be destroyed.

They shall be as the glory of the children of Israel - That is, as the defenses, or the strongly fortified towns and fastnesses of the kingdom of Israel shall pass away or be destroyed, so shall it be with the kingdom of Damascus. As they are allied with each other, they shall fare alike. The Chaldee reads this, ‹And the dominion shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus.‘

Verse 4

The glory of Jacob - "Jacob" is used here to denote the kingdom of Israel, or Samaria. The word ‹glory‘ here denotes dignity, power; that on which they relied, and of which they boasted.

Shall be made thin - Shall be diminished, as a body wastes away by disease, and becomes feeble. The prophet sets forth the calamities of Ephraim by two figures; the first is that of a "body" that becomes emaciated by sickness, the other that of the harvest when all the fruits are gathered except a few in the upper branches Isaiah 17:5-6.

And the fatness his flesh shall wax lean - He shall become feeble, as a man does by wasting sickness. Chaldee, ‹The riches of his glory shall be removed.‘

Verse 5

And it shall be … - This is the other figure by which the prophet sets forth the calamities that were coming upon Ephraim - an image designed to denote the fact that the inhabitants and wealth of the land would be collected and removed, as the farmer gathers his harvest, and leaves only that which is inaccessible in the upper boughs of the tree, or the gleanings in the field.

As when the harvest-man gathereth the corn - The wheat, the barley, etc.; for so the word "corn" - now applied by us almost exclusively to maizes means in the Scriptures. The sense in this passage is plain. As the farmer cuts down and collects his grain and removes it from the harvest field, so the enemies of Ephraim would come and remove the people and their wealth to a distant land. This received a complete fulfillment when the ten tribes were removed by the Assyrians to a distant land. This was done by Tiglath-pileser 2 Kings 15:29, and by Shalmaneser 2 Kings 17:6.

And reapeth the ears with his arm - As he collects the standing grain with one arm so that he can cut it with the sickle in the other hand. The word rendered ‹reapeth‘ (קצר *qâtsar*) means here "to collect together" as a

reaper does the standing grain in his arm. The word rendered ‹ears‘ (שִׁבֳּלִים *shîbălîym*) means here rather the spires or stalks of standing grain.

In the valley of Rephaim - The valley of Rephaim is mentioned in 2 Samuel 5:18, 2 Samuel 5:22; 2 Samuel 23:13; 1 Chronicles 11:15; 1 Chronicles 14:9. The name means ‹the Giants;‘ but why it was given to it is now unknown. In passing from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, it lies on the left, and descends gradually to the southwest, until it contracts in that direction into a deeper and narrower valley, called wady el-Werd, which unites further on with wady Ahmed, and finds its way to the Mediterranean. The plain extends nearly to Jerusalem, and is terminated by a slight rocky ridge forming the brow of the valley of Hinnom (see Josephus, "Ant." vii. 4. 1; viii. 12. 4; also Robinson‘s "Bib. Researches," vol. i. pp. 323,324). It seem to have been distinguished for its fertility, and is used here to denote a fertile region in general.

Verse 6

Yet gleaning-grapes … - They shall not all be removed, or destroyed. A "few" shall be left, as a man who is gathering grapes or olives will leave a few that are inaccessible on the topmost boughs, or the furthest branches. Those would be usually the poorest, and so it may be implied that those left in Israel would be among the poorer inhabitants of the land.

Two or three - A very few - such as would be left in gathering grapes, or in endeavoring to shake olives from a tree.

Four or five - A very few that would remain on the furthest branches, and that could not be shaken off or reached.

Verse 7

At that day shall a man look to his Maker - Instead of confiding in their strongly fortified places and armies, they shall look for aid and protection to the God that made them, and who alone can help them. National afflictions and judgments often have the effect to turn the eyes of even a wicked and rebellious people to God. They feel their danger; they are convinced of their guilt; they see that no one but God can protect them; and for a time they are willing, even by humiliation and fasting, to seek the divine protection.

His eyes shall have respect … - He shall look up to, or regard.

The Holy One of Israel - The God of Israel; the true God. As the Syrians were allied with the kingdom of Samaria or Ephraim, they were, of course, acquainted with the true God, and in some sense acknowledged

him. In these times of impending calamity, they would be led to seek him, and implore his aid and protection. There is no reason to believe, however, that they would turn permanently to him, or become his true worshippers.

Verse 8

And he shall not look to the altars - That is, the altars of the gods which the Syrians worshipped, and the altars of the false gods which had been erected in the land of Israel or Samaria by its wicked kings, and particularly by Ahaz. Ahaz fancied an altar which he saw at Damascus when on a visit to Tiglath-pileser, and ordered Urijah the priest to construct one like it in Samaria, on which he subsequently offered sacrifice 2 Kings 16:10-13. It is well known, also, that the kings of Israel and Judah often reared altars to false gods in the high places and the groves of the land (see 2 Kings 21:3-5). The Ephraimites were particularly guilty in this respect Hosea 8:11: ‹Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin.‘

Which his fingers have made - Perhaps indicating that the idols which they worshipped had been constructed with special art and skill (see Isaiah 2:8).

Either the groves - The altars of idols were usually erected in groves, and idols were worshipped there before temples were raised (see Exodus 34:13; Deuteronomy 7:5; Deuteronomy 12:3; Judges 3:7; 1 Kings 14:23; 1 Kings 18:19; 2 Chronicles 33:3; compare the notes at Isaiah 1:29).

Or the images - Margin, ‹Sun images‘ (חמנים *chamānîym*). This word is used to denote idols in general in Leviticus 26:30; 2 Chronicles 24:4. But it is supposed to denote properly images erected to the sun, and to be derived from חמה *chamāh* “the sun.” Thus the word is used in Job 30:28; Isaiah 24:23; Isaiah 30:26; Job 31:26).

Verse 9

His strong cities - The cities of the united kingdoms of Damascus and Samaria.

Be as a forsaken bough - There has been much difficulty in the interpretation of this passage. Lowth says, ‹No one has ever been able to make any tolerable sense of these words;‘ and proposes himself the translation,

In that day shall his strongly fenced cities become
Like the desertion of the Hivites and the Amorites;

Following in this the translation of the Septuagint, but doing violence to the Hebrew text. Rosenmuller translates it, ‹As the remnant of a grove when the thicket is cut down, and when few trees are left.‘ The word rendered ‹bough‘ (חרֹשׁ *choresh*) means, properly, a thicket, or thick foliage, a wood that is entangled or intricate 1 Samuel 23:15-16, 1 Samuel 23:18; 2 Chronicles 27:4; and probably this is the idea here. The phrase may be rendered, ‹as the leavings or residue of a grove, copse, or entangled wood;‘ and the idea is, that as a "few" trees might be left when the axeman cuts down the grove, so a few inferior and smaller towns should be left in the desolation that would come upon Damascus.

And an uppermost branch - Isaiah 17:6. As a few berries are left in the topmost branch of the olive, or the vine, so shall I a few cities or people be left in the general desolation.

Which they left - Which "are" left, or which the invaders would leave.

Because of the children of Israel - literally, ‹from the face,‘ that is, before the children of Israel. Lowth supposes that it refers to the Amorites, who left their land before the Israelites, or gave up their land for them. Vitringa renders it, ‹On account of the children of Israel;‘ and supposes that it means that a few cities were spared by the purpose of God in the invasion by Tiglath-pileser, to be a residence of the Israelites that should remain; or that, for some reason which is not known, the Assyrians chose to spare a few towns, and not wholly to destroy the country. The "general" idea is plain, that a few towns would be left, and that it would be "before" the children of Israel, or in their presence, or in order that they might continue to dwell in them. Jerome interprets the whole as referring to the time when the land of Judea was forsaken on the invasion of the Romans.

And there shall be desolation - The land shall be desolated, except the few cities and towns that shall be left, like the gleaning of the olive tree.

Verse 10

Because thou … - Because the kingdom of Israel or Samaria had done it.

The God of thy salvation - The God in whom alone was salvation; or who alone could protect thee (compare Micah 7:7; Hosea 2:15).

The rock of thy strength - God. A rock of strength is a strongly fortified place; or a rock which an enemy could not successfully assail. High rocks were selected as a place of refuge from an invading foe (see the notes at Isaiah 1:10, Isaiah 1:21). In allusion to this, God is often called "a

Rock," and a strong tower Deuteronomy 32:4, Deuteronomy 32:15, Deuteronomy 32:18, Deuteronomy 32:30-31, Deuteronomy 32:37; 1 Samuel 2:2; 2 Samuel 22:2-3, 2 Samuel 22:32; Psalm 18:31, Psalm 18:46; Psalm 19:14; Psalm 28:1; Psalm 30:1-2.

Shalt thou plant pleasant plants - Plants that are suited to produce pleasure or delight; that is, you shall cultivate your fields, and set them out with choice vines and plants in hope of a future harvest, but you shall be disappointed.

And shall set it with strange slips - The word ‹slips‘ means the "cuttings" of the vine that are set in the ground to grow; or the shoot or sucker that is taken off and "set out," or put in the earth to take root and grow, as is often done by farmers and gardeners. The word ‹strange‘ here means "foreign," those which are procured from a distance, and which are, therefore, esteemed valuable; plants selected with care. This does not mean, as Lowth supposes, strange and idolatrous worship, and the vicious practices connected with it; but it means that, though they should be at great pains and expense in cultivating their land, yet the enemy would come in and make it desolate.

Verse 11

In the day … - Thou shalt cultivate it assiduously and constantly. Thou shalt be at special pains that it may be watered and pruned, in order that it may produce abundantly.

And in the morning - With early care and attention - denoting the pains that would be bestowed on the young plant.

The harvest shall be a heap - The margin reads this, ‹the harvest shall be removed in the day of inheritance, rendering it as if the word נד *nêd* usually meaning a heap, were derived from נוד *nûd* to shake, move, wander; or, as if it were to be removed. Probably the translation in the text is correct; and the sense is, ‹When from the plant which was so beautiful and valuable, and which you cherished with so much care, you expected to obtain a rich harvest, you had only sorrow and inexpressible disappointment.‘ The figure used here is supposed by Rosenmuller to be that of hendiadys (ἕν διὰ δυοῖν *hen dia duoin*)by which the phrases ‹shall be an heap,‘ and ‹desperate sorrow,‘ are to be taken together, meaning ‹the heap of the harvest shall be inexpressible sorrow.‘

In the day of grief - The word rendered ‹grief‘ here (נחלה *nachălâh*) means, properly, "inheritance, heirship, possession," and should have been

so rendered here. It means that in the day when they "hoped" to possess the result of their planting, or in the time of the usual harvest, they would obtain only grief and disappointment.

And desperate sorrow - The word rendered ‹desperate' (אנשׁ *'ânash*), denotes that which is "weak, mortal, incurable" Job 34:6; Jeremiah 17:16; Jeremiah 30:12, Jeremiah 30:15. The sense here is, that there would be grievous disappointment, and that there would be no remedy for it; and the idea of the whole is, that calamities were coming upon the nation which would blast all their hopes, and destroy all their prospects. The prophecy was fulfilled in the invasion by Tiglath-pileser, and the army of the Assyrians.

The twelfth verse commences a new prophecy, which has no connection with that which precedes it; and which in itself gives no certain indication of the time when it was uttered, or of the people to which it relates. It is a broken and detached piece, and is evidently the description of some army rushing to conquest, and confident of success, but which was to be overtaken with sudden calamity. The entire description is so applicable to the invasion of the land of Judah by the army of Sennacherib, and his overthrow by the angel of Yahweh, that by the common consent of interpreters it has been regarded as referring to it (see the notes at Isaiah 10). But when it was spoken, or why it was placed here, is unknown. It may be added that many commentators, and, among the rest, Gesenius, have supposed that the following chapter is a part of this prophecy. The general sense of the prophecy is, that numerous hostile nations would overrun Palestine, but that Yahweh would destroy them all.

Verse 12

Wo to the multitude … - The word ‹woe' (הוי *hôy*) may be either an interjection simply directing the attention to them, or it may be a word indicating approaching calamity and judgment (see the note at Isaiah 5:6). Gesenius supposes that it is rather the language of compassion, on account of the evil which they threatened to bring upon the people of God, like 1 Kings 13:30, ‹Ah! wo, my brother!'

The multitude of many people - Or, the tumult of many nations - a description of the noise attending an invading army made up of many nations mingled together, such as was that of Sennacherib.

Which make a noise … - This is a beautiful description of a vast army, and of the shouting, the tumult, the din, which attends its march. The same comparison occurs in Jeremiah 6:23; Psalm 65:7 (see Ezekiel 43:2; Revelation 1:15; Revelation 14:2; Revelation 19:6).

And to the rushing of nations - The rushing of mighty armies to conquest.

Verse 13

God shall rebuke them - The word ‹God‘ is not here in the original, but is evidently to be supplied. The word ‹rebuke‘ means that he would disarrange their plans, prevent their success, and defeat their purposes. It shows the great power of God, that he can thus by a “rebuke” - a word - arrest mighty nations, and discomfit thom when they are tumultuously hastening onward in the confidence of victory. This discomfiture refers, doubtless, to the overthrow of Sennacherib and his army by the pestilence (2 Kings 19:35; see the notes at Isaiah 37:36).

And they shall flee far off - The whole army of Sennacherib was not destroyed, but a part with himself returned to Assyria 2 Kings 19:36.

And shall be chased as the chaff … - Denoting the case with which God would do it, and the certain and entire discomfiture of the army. The figure is one that is very striking in describing an army that is routed, and that flees in disorder (compare Job 21:18; Psalm 1:4; Psalm 35:5; Isaiah 29:5; Hosea 13:3).

And like a rolling thing - Margin, ‹Thistle-down.‘ It means, literally, anything that “rolls” (גלגל *galgal* from גלל *gâlal* to roll). It is applied to chaff, stubble, or anything that is driven about by a whirlwind Psalm 83:14.

Verse 14

At evening-tide trouble - In the time of evening - that is, in the night.

Before the morning he is not - That is, he is destroyed. This is strikingly descriptive of the destruction of the army of Sennacherib on that fatal night when the angel of the Lord killed 185,000 men (see the note at Isaiah 37:36).

This is the portion of them that spoil us - Of those who would plunder us. This is a “general” declaration in regard to the enemies of the Jewish people. This is the lot, the end, the destiny of all who attempt to destroy them. That is, the people of God shall be safe whoever rises up against them; and whatever may be the number, or the power of their foes, they shall be overthrown.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Introduction

‹The eighteenth chapter of Isaiah,‘ says bishop Horsley, ‹is one of the most obscure passages of the ancient prophets. It has been considered as such by the whole succession of interpreters from Jerome to Dr. Lowth.‘ ‹The object of it,‘ says Dr. Lowth, ‹the end and design of it; the people to whom it is addressed; the history to which it belongs; the person who sends the messengers; and the nation to whom they are sent, are all obscure and doubtful. Much of the obscurity lies in the highly figurative cast of the language, and in the ambiguity of some of the principal words, arising from the great variety of the senses often comprehended under the primary meaning of a single root.‘

Lowth supposes that Egypt is the country referred to; that the prophecy was delivered before the return of Sennacherib‘s expedition to Egypt; and that it was designed to give to the Jews, and perhaps likewise to the Egyptians, an intimation of the destruction of their great and powerful enemy. Taylor, the editor of Calmet‘s "Dictionary," supposes that it relates to a people lying in southern, or Upper Egypt, or the country above the cataracts of the Nile, that is, Nubia; and that the people to whom the message is sent are those who were situated north on the river Nile: where the various streams which go to form the Nile become a single river; and that the nation represented as ‹scattered and peeled,‘ or as he renders it, ‹a people contracted and deprived,‘ that is, in their persons, refers to the Pigmies, as they are described by Homer, Sirabo, and others (see this view drawn out in the "Fragments" appended to Calmet‘s "Dict." No. cccxxii.) Rosenmuller says of this prophecy, that ‹it is involved in so many: and so great difficulties, on account of unusual expressions and figurative sentences, and the history of those times, so little known to us, that it is impossible to explain and unfold it.

We seem to be reading mere "enigmas," in explaining which, although many learned interpreters have taken great pains, yet scarcely two can be found who agree.‘ Gesenius connects it with the closing verse of the previous chapter; and so does also Vitringa. Gesenius supposes that it refers to a nation in distant Ethiopia in alliance with Israel. To this, says he, and to all the nations of the earth, the prophet addresses himself, in order to draw

their attention to the sudden overthrow which God would bring upon the enemy, after he has quietly looked upon their violence for a long time. According to this view, the prophecy belongs to the period immediately preceding the 14th year of Hezekiah, when the Assyrian armies had already overrun, or were about to overrun Palestine on their way to Egypt, and the prophet confidently predicts their destruction. At this time, he remarks, Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, with a part of Egypt, had armed himself against the Assyrians, for which purpose he had probably entered into an alliance with the Hebrews. To this friend and ally of Israel, the prophet gives the assurance that God was about to destroy completely the common enemy, the Assyrian. By some, the land here referred to has been supposed to be Egypt; by others, Ethiopia in Africa; by others, Judea; by others, the Roman empire; and others have supposed that it refers to the destruction of Gog and Magog in the times of the Messiah. Vitringa supposes that the prophecy must be referred either to the Egyptians or the Assyrians; and as there is no account, he says, of any calamity coming upon the Egyptians like that which is described in Isaiah 17:4-6, and as that description is applicable to the destruction of the Assyrians under Sennacherib, he regards it as referring to him.

Calvin says that many have supposed that the Troglodytes of Upper Egypt are meant here, but that this is improbable, as they were not known to have formed any alliances with other nations. He supposes that some nation is referred to in the vicinity of Egypt and Ethiopia, but what people he does not even conjecture. Amidst this diversity of opinion, it may seem rash to hazard a conjecture in regard to the situation of the nation who sent the messengers, and the nation to whom they were "sent;" and it is obviously improper to hazard such a conjecture without a careful examination of the phrases and words which occur in the prophecy. When that is done - when the characteristics of the nation have been fully determined, then, perhaps, we may be able to arrive at some satisfactory conclusion in regard to this very difficult portion of the Bible. The prophecy consists of the following parts:

1. The prophet addresses him self to the nation here described as a ‹land shadowing with wings,‘ and as sending ambassadors, in a manner designed to call their attention to the great events soon to occur Isaiah 18:1-2.

2. He addresses all nations, calling upon them also to attend to the same subject Isaiah 18:3.

3. He says that God had revealed to him that destruction should come upon the enemies here referred to, and that the immense host should be left to the beasts of the earth, and to the fowls of the mountains Isaiah 18:4-6.

4. The consequence, he says, of such events would be, that a present would be brought to Yahweh from the distant nation ‹scattered and peeled,‘ and whose land the rivers had spoiled Isaiah 18:7.

Verse 1

Woe to the land - (הוי *hôy*). This word, as has been already remarked (the note at Isaiah 17:12), may be a mere interjection or salutation, and would be appropriately rendered by ‹Ho!‘ Or it may be a word denouncing judgment, or wrath, as it is often used in this prophecy (the note at Isaiah 5:8).

Shadowing with wings - (צלצל כנפים *tsîletsal kenāpāîym*). This is one of the most difficult expressions in the whole chapter; and one to which as yet, probably, no satisfactory meaning has been applied. The Septuagint renders it, Οὐαὶ γῆς πλοὶων πτέρυγες *Ouai gēs ploiōn pteruges* - ‹Ah! wings of the land of ships.‘ The Chaldee, ‹Woe to the land in which they come in ships from a distant country, and whose sails are spread out as an eagle which flies upon its wings.‘ Grotius renders it, ‹The land whose extreme parts are shaded by mountains.‘ The word rendered, ‹shadowed‘ צלצל *tsîletsal* occurs only in this place and in Job 41:7, where it is translated ‹fish-spears‘ - but as we know nothing of the “form” of those spears, that place throws no light on the meaning of the word here. The word is derived, evidently, from צלל *tsālal* which has three significations:

(1) “To be shady, dark, obscure;” and hence, its derivatives are applied to anything that “makes” a shade or shadow - particularly “shady trees” Job 40:21-22; the shades of night 1 Samuel 3:11; 2 Kings 21:13; “to quiver,” spoken of the lips Habakkuk 3:16; and hence, its derivatives are applied to anything that makes a sound by “tinkling” - an instrument of music; a cymbal made of two pieces of metal that are struck together 2 Samuel 6:5; 1 Chronicles 15:16; 1 Chronicles 16:42; 1 Chronicles 25:6; 2 Chronicles 5:12; Nehemiah 12:27; Psalm 150:5)

(3) It means "to sink" Exodus 15:10. From the sense of making "a shade," a derivative of the verb צלצל *tselâtsâl* - the same as used here except the points - is applied to locusts because they appear in such swarms as to obscure the rays of the sun, and produce an extended shade, or shadow, over a land as a cloud does; or because they make a rustling with their wings.

The word used here, therefore, may mean either "shaded, or rustling, or rattling," in the manner of a cymbal or other tinkling instrument. It may be added, that the word may mean a "double shade," being a doubling of the word צל *tsêl* a "shade, or shdow," and it has been supposed by some to apply to Ethiopia as lying betwen the tropics, having a "double shadow;" that is, so that the shadow of objects is cast one half of the year on the north side, and the other half on the south. The word ‹wings‘ is applied in the Scriptures to the following things, namely:

(1) The wing of a fowl. This is the literal, and common signification.

(2) The skirts, borders, or lower parts of a garment, from the resemblance to wings Numbers 15:38; 1 Samuel 24:5, 1 Samuel 24:11; Zechariah 8:13. Also a bed-covering Deuteronomy 33:1.

(3) The extremities or borders of a country, or of the world Job 37:3; Isaiah 24:16; Ezekiel 17:3, Ezekiel 17:7.

(4) The "wing" or extremity of an army, as we use the word "wing" Isaiah 8:8; Jeremiah 48:40; Daniel 9:27.

(5) The expanding rays of the morning, because the light "expands or spreads out" like wings Psalm 139:9; Malachi 4:2.

(6) The "wind" - resembling wings in rapid motion Psalm 18:10, Psalm 18:21; Psalm 104:3; Hosea 4:19.

(7) The battlement or pinnacle of the temple - or perhaps the porches extended on each side of the temple like wings (Daniel 9:27; compare Matthew 4:5).

(8) “Protection” - as wings are a protection to young birds in their nest (see Psalm 18:8; Psalm 36:7; Psalm 61:4; Psalm 91:4; Matthew 23:37). It has been proposed by some to apply this description to “ships,” or the sails of vessels, as if a land was designated which was covered with “sails,” or the “wings” of vessels. So the Septuagint, and the Chaldee. But there is no instance in which the word “wings” is so applied in the Scriptures.

The expression used here “may,” therefore, be applied to many things; and it is not easy to determine its signification. The “general” idea is, that of “something” that abounds in the land that is stretched out or expanded; that, as it were, “covers” it, and so abounds as to make a shade or shadow everywhere. And it may be applied:

(1) to a nation that abounds with birds or fowls, so that they might be said to shade the land;

(2) to a nation abounding with locusts, shading the land or making a rustling noise; or

(3) to a nation furnishing protection, or stretching out its wings, as it were, for the defense of a feeble people. So Vitringa interprets this place, and supposes that it refers to Egypt, as being the nation where the Hebrews sought protection. Or

(4) to a country that is shaded with trees, mountains, or hills. So Grotius supposes it means here, and thinks that it refers to Ethiopia, as being bounded by high hills or mountains.

(5) It “may” mean a people distinguished for navigation - abounding in “sails” of vessels - as if they were everywhere spread out like wings. So the Septuagint and the Chaldee understand this; and the interpretation has some plausibility, from the fact that light vessels are immediately mentioned.

(6) The editor of Calmet‘s “Dictionary” supposes that it refers to the “winged Cnephim” which are sculptured over the temple gates in Upper-Egypt. They are emblematic representatives of the god “Cneph,” to which the temples are dedicated, and abound in Upper Egypt. The symbol of the “wings” is supposed to denote the “protection” which the god extended over the land.

(7) Gesenius ("Com. on Isaiah") renders it, ‹land rustling with wings,‘ and supposes that the word rendered ‹shadowing,‘ denotes the "rustling" sound that is made by the clangor of weapons of war. Amidst this variety of interpretation, it is, perhaps, not possible to determine the meaning of the phrase. It has no parallel expression to illustrate it; and its meaning must be left to conjecture.

Almost anyone of the above significations will suit the connection; and it is not very material which is chosen. The one that, perhaps, best suits the connection, is that of the Septuagint and the Chaldee, which refers it to the multitude of ships that expand their sails, and appear to fill all the waters of the land with wings.

Which is beyond - (מעבר *mēʿēber*). This does not, of necessity, mean "beyond," though that is its usual signification. It properly means "from the passing, the passages, the crossing over," of a river; and may be rendered what is on the other side; or over against. It sometimes means on this side, as if used by one living on the other side Deuteronomy 4:49; Joshua 13:27; 1 Kings 4:24; in which places it has not the sense of "beyond," but means either on this side, or lying alongside. The sense here is, probably, that this country was situated "not far" from the rivers of Cush, "probably" beyond them, but still it is implied that they were not "far" beyond them, but were rather at their passings over, or crossing-places; that is, near them.

The rivers of Ethiopia - Hebrew, ‹Rivers of Cush.‘ (On the meaning of the word ‹Cush,‘ see the note at Isaiah 11:11) It is sometimes applicable to Ethiopia or Nubia - that is, the portion of Egypt above the cataracts of the Nile. Compare Jeremiah 13:23: ‹Can the Ethiopian (the "Cushite") change his skin?‘ (see also Ezekiel 29:10). This word does not determine with certainty the country to which reference is made - for the country of Cush "may" mean that east of the Euphrates, or southern Arabia, or southern Egypt. Egypt and Cush are, however, sometimes connected (2 Kings 19:9; Psalm 68:31; Isaiah 20:3; Isaiah 43:3; Nahum 3:9; compare Daniel 11:43). The "probability" from the use of this word is, that some part of Upper Egypt is intended. Ethiopia in part lies beyond the most considerable of the streams that make up the river Nile.

Verse 2

That sendeth ambassadors - That is, "accustomed" to send messengers. What was the design of their thus sending ambassadors does not appear. The prophet simply intimates the fact; a fact by which they were

well known. It may have been for purposes of commerce, or to seek protection. Bochart renders the word translated ‹ambassadors‘ by “images,” and supposes that it denotes an image of the god Osiris made of the papyrus; but there does not seem to be any reason for this opinion. The word ציר *tsîyr* may mean an idol or image, as in Isaiah 45:16; Psalm 49:15. But it usually denotes ambassadors, or messengers Joshua 9:4; Proverbs 25:13; Proverbs 13:17; Isaiah 57:9; Jeremiah 49:14; Obadiah 1:1.

By the sea - What “sea” is here meant cannot be accurately determined. The word ‹sea‘ (ים *yâm*) is applied to various collections of water, and may be used in reference to a sea, a lake, a pond, and even a large river. It is often applied to the Mediterranean; and where the phrase “Great Sea” occurs, it denotes that Numbers 34:6-7; Deuteronomy 11:24. It is applied to the Lake of Gennesareth or the Sea of Galilee Numbers 34:11; to the Salt Sea Genesis 14:3; to the Red Sea often (Exodus 13:10; Numbers 14:25; Numbers 21:4; Numbers 33:10, “et al.”) It is also applied to “a large river,” as, “e. g., the Nile” Isaiah 19:5; Nehemiah 3:8; and to the Euphrates Jeremiah 51:36. So far as this “word” is concerned, therefore, it may denote either the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Nile, or the Euphrates. If the country spoken of is Upper Egypt or Nubia, then we are naturally led to suppose that the prophet refers either to the Nile or the Red Sea.

Even in vessels of bulrushes - The word rendered ‹bulrushes‘ (גמא *gôme'*) is derived from the verb גמא *gâmâ'* “to swallow, sip, drink;” and is given to a reed or bulrush, from its “imbibing” water. It is usually applied in the Scriptures to the Egyptian “papyrus” - a plant which grew on the banks of the Nile, and from which we have derived our word “paper.” ‹This plant,‘ says Taylor (“Heb. Con.”), ‹grew in moist places near the Nile, and was four or five yards in height. Under the bark it consisted wholly of thin skins, which being separated and spread out, were applied to various uses. Of these they made boxes and chests, and even boats, smearing them over with pitch.‘ These *laminoe*, or skins, also served the purpose of paper, and were used instead of parchment, or plates of lead and copper, for writing on. This plant, the *Cyperus Papyrus* of modern botanists, mostly grew in Lower Egypt, in marshy land, or in shallow brooks and ponds, formed by the inundation of the Nile. ‹The papyrus,‘ says Pliny, ‹grows in the marsh lands of Egypt, or in the stagnant pools left inland by the Nile, after it has returned to its bed, which have not more than two cubits in depth.

The root of the plant is the thickness of a man‘s arm; it has a triangular stalk, growing not higher than ten cubits (fifteen feet), and decreasing in breadth toward the summit, which is crowned with a thyrsus, containing no seeds, and of no use except to deck the statues of the gods. They employ the roots as firewood, and for making various utensils. They even construct small boats of the plant; and out of the rind, sails, mats, clothes, bedding, ropes; they eat it either crude or cooked, swallowing only the juice; and when they manufacture paper from it, they divide the stem by means of a kind of needle into thin plates, or laminae, each of which is as large as the plant will admit. All the paper is woven upon a table, and is continually moistened with Nile water, which being thick and slimy, furnishes an effectual species of glue. In the first place, they form upon a table, pefectly horizontal, a layer the whole length of the papyrus, which is crossed by another placed transversely, and afterward enclosed within a press.

The different sheets are then hung in a situation exposed to the sun, in order to dry, and the process is finally completed by joining them together, beginning with the best. There are seldom more than twenty slips or stripes produced from one stem of the plant.‘ (Pliny, xiii. 11,12.) Wilkinson remarks, that ‹the mode of making papyri was this: the interior of the stalks of the plant, after the rind had been removed, was cut into thin slices in the direction of their length, and these being laid on a flat board, in succession, similar slices were placed over them at right angles, and their surfaces being cemented together by a sort of glue, and subjected to the proper deuce of pressure, and well dried, the papyrus was completed.‘ (“Ancient Egyptians,” vol. iii. p. 148.) The word used here is translated ‹bulrushes‘ in Exodus 2:3, where the little ark is described in which Moses was laid near the Nile; the ‹rush‘ in Job 8:11; and ‹rushes,‘ in Isaiah 35:7.

It does not elsewhere occur. That the ancients were in the practice of making light boats or vessels from the papyrus is well known. Thus Theophrastus (in the “History of Plants,” iv. 9) says, that ‹the papyrus is useful for many things, for from this they make vessels,‘ or ships (πλοῖα *ploia*). Thus, Pliny (xiii. 11,22) says, *ex ipso quidem papyro navigia texunt* - ‹from the papyrus they weave vessels.‘ Again, (vi. 56,57): ‹Even now,‘ says he, ‹in the Britannic Ocean useful vessels are made of bark; on the Nile from the papyrus, and from reeds and rushes.‘ Plutarch describes Isis going

in search of the body of Osiris, ‹through the fenny country in a bark made of the papyrus (ἐν βαριδι παπυοινη *en baridi papnoinē*) where it is supposed that persons using boats of this description (ἐν παπυρινοις ὀκαφεσι πλωοντας *en papurinois okaphisi pleontas*) are never attacked by crocodiles out of respect to the goddess,‘ (De Isaiah 18:1-7.) Moses, also, it will be remembered, was exposed on the banks of the Nile in a similar boat or ark. ‹She took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it With slime and with pitch, and put the child therein‘ Exodus 2:3. The same word occurs here (גמא *gôme'*) which is used by Isaiah, and this fact shows that such boats were known as early as the time of Moses. Lucan also mentions boats made of the papyrus at Memphis:

Conseritur bibula Memphitis cymba papyro.

- Phar. iv: 136.

At Memphis boats are woven together from the marshy papyrus

The sculptures of Thebes, Memphis, and other places, abundantly show that they were employed as punts, or canoes for fishing, in all parts of Egypt, during the inundation of the Nile.‘ (Wilkinson‘s Ancient Egyptians, vol. iii. p. 186.) In our own country, also, it will be remembered, the natives were accustomed to make canoes, or vessels, of the bark of the birch, with which they often adventured on even dangerous navigation. The circumstance here mentioned of the גמא *gôme'* (the papyrus), seems to fix the scene of this prophecy to the region of the Nile. This reed grew nowhere else; and it is natural, therefore, to suppose, that some nation living near the Nile is intended. Taylor, the editor of Calmet, has shown that the inhabitants of the upper regions of the Nile were accustomed to form floats of hollow earthen vessels, and to weave them together with rushes, and thus to convey them to Lower Egypt to market. He supposes that by ‹vessels of bulrushes,‘ or rush floats, are meant such vessels. (For a description of the “floats” made in Upper Egypt with “jars,” see Pococke‘s “Travels,” vol. i. p. 84, Ed. London, 1743.) ‹I first saw in this voyage (on the Nile) the large floats of earthen-ware; they are about thirty feet wide, and sixty feet long, being a frame of palm boughs tied together about four feet deep, on which they put a layer of large jars with the mouths uppermost; on these they make another floor, and then put on another layer of jars, and so a third, which last are so disposed as to trim the float, and leave room for the men to go between. The float lies across the river, one end being lower down than the other; toward the lower end on each side they have four long poles with which they row

and direct the boat, as well as forward the motion down.‘ Mr. Bruce, in his “Travels,” mentions vessels made of the papyrus in Abyssinia.

Upon the waters - The waters of the Nile, or the Red Sea.

Saying - This word is not in the Hebrew, and the introduction of it by the translators gives a peculiar, and probably an incorrect, sense to the whole passage. As it stands here, it would seem to be the language of the inhabitants of the land who sent the ambassadors, usually saying to their messengers to go to a distant nation; and this introduces an inquiry into the characteristics of the nation to “whom” the ambassadors are sent, as if it were a “different” people from those who are mentioned in Isaiah 17:1. But probably the words which follow are to be regarded as the words of the prophet, or of God Isaiah 17:4, giving commandment to those messengers to “return” to those who sent them, and deliver the message which follows: ‹You send messengers to distant nations in reed boats upon the rivers. Return, says God, to the land which sent you foth, and announce to them the will of God. Go rapidly in your light vessels, and bear this message, for it shall speedily be executed, and I will sit calmly and see it done‘ Isaiah 17:4-6. A remarkably similar passage, which throws great light on this, occurs in Ezekiel 30:9: ‹In that day shall messengers go forth from me (God) in ships to make the careless Ethiopians afraid, and great pain shall come upon them, as in the day of Egypt, for lo, it cometh.‘

Go, ye swift messengers - Hebrew, ‹Light messengers.‘ This is evidently addressed to the boats. Achilles Tatius says that they were frequently so light and small, that they would carry but one person (Rosenmuller).

To a nation - What nation this was is not known. The “obvious” import of the passge is, that it was some nation to whom they were “accustomed” to send ambassadors, and that it is here added merely as “descriptive” of the people. Two or three characterstics of the nation are mentioned, from which we may better learn what people are referred to.

Scattered - (ממשך *memushāk*). This word is derived from משך *mâshak* “to seize, take, hold fast;” to draw out, extend, or prolong; to make double or strong; to spread out. The Septuagint renders it, Ἔθνος μετέωρον *Ethnos meteōron* - ‹A lofty nation.‘ Chaldee, ‹A people suffering violence.‘ Syraic, ‹A nation distorted.‘ Vulgate, ‹A people convulsed, and lacerated.‘ It “may” denote a people “spread out” over a great extent of country; or a people “drawn out in length” - that is, extended over a country of considerable

length, but of comparatively narrow breadth, as Egypt is; so Vitringa understands it. Or it may mean a people "strong, valiant;" so Gesenius understands it. This best suits the connection, as being a people ‹terrible hitherto.‘ Perhaps all these ideas may be united by the supposition, that the nation was drawn out or extended over a large region, and was, "therefore," a powerful or mighty people. The idea of its being "scattered" is not in the text. Taylor renders it, ‹A people of short stature; contracted in height; that is, dwarfs.‘ But the idea in the text is not one that is descriptive of "individuals," but of the "collected" nation; the people.

And peeled - (מרט *môraṭ* from מרט *mâraṭ*) to make smooth, or sharpen, as a sword," Ezra 9:3; Nehemiah 13:25; Isaiah 50:6). The Septuagint renders it, Ξένον λαὸν καὶ χαλεπόν *Cenon laon kai chalepon* - ‹A foreign and wicked people.‘ Vulgate, ‹To a people lacerated.‘ The Syriac renders the whole verse, ‹Go, swift messengers, to a people perverse and torn; to a people whose strength has been long since taken away; a people defiled and trodden down; whose land the rivers have spoiled.‘ The word used here is capable of two significations:

(1) It may denote a people who are shaved or made smooth by removing the hair from the body. It is known to have been the custom with the Egyptians to make their bodies smooth by shaving off the hair, as Herodotus testifies (xi. 37). Or,

(2) It may be translated, as Gesenius proposes, a people valiant, fierce, bold, from the sense which the verb has "to sharpen" a sword Ezekiel 21:15-16.

The former is the most obvious interpretation, and agrees best with the proper meaning of the Hebrew word; the latter would, perhaps, better suit the connection. The editor of Calmer supposes that it is to be taken in the sense of "diminished, small, dwarfish," and would apply it to the "pigmies" of Upper Egypt.

To a people terrible - That is, warlike, fierce, cruel. Hebrew, ‹A people feared.‘ If the Egyptians are meant, it may refer to the fact that they had always been an object of terror and alarm to the Israelites from their early oppressions there before their deliverance under Moses.

From their beginning hitherto - Hebrew, ‹From this time, and formerly.‘ It has been their general character that they were a fierce, harsh,

oppressive nation. Gesenius, however, renders this, ‹To the formidable nation (and) further beyond;‘ and supposes that two nations are referred to, of which the most remote and formidable one, whose land is washed by streams, is the proper Ethiopian people. By the other he supposes is meant the Egyptian people. But the scope of the whole prophecy rather requires us to understand it of one people.

A nation meted out - Hebrew, ‹Of line line‘ (קו־קו *qav -qav*). Vitringa renders this, ‹A nation of precept and precept;‘ that is, whose religion abounded with rites and ceremonies, and an infinite multitude of “precepts or laws” which prescribed them. Michaelis renders it, ‹A nation measured by a line;‘ that is, whose land had been divided by victors. Doderlin renders it, ‹A nation which uses the line;‘ that is, as he supposes, which extended its dominion over other provinces. The Septuagint renders it, Ἔθνος ἀνέλπιστον *ethnos anelpiston* - ‹A nation without hope.‘ Aquila, Ἔθνος ὑπόμενον *ethnos hupomenon* - ‹A nation enduring or patient.‘ Jonathan, the Chaldee, אגיסא עמא ובויזא - ‹A nation oppressed and afflicted.‘ Aben Ezra explains it as meaning ‹A nation like a school-boy learning line after line.‘ Theodore Hasaeus endeavors to prove that the reference here is to Egypt, and that the language is taken from the fact that the Egyptians were early distinguished for surveying and mensuration.

This science, he supposes, they were led to cultivate from the necessity of ascertaining the height of the Nile at its annual inundation, and from the necessity of an accurate survey of the land in order to preserve the knowledge of the right of property in a country inundated as this was. In support of this, he appeals to Servius (“ad” Virg. “Ecl.” iii. 41), where he says of the “radius” mentioned there, ‹The Radius is the rod of the philosophers, by which they denote the lines of geometry. This art was invented in the time when the Nile, rising beyond its usual height, confounded the usual marks of boundaries, to the ascertaining of which they employed philosophers who divided the land by “lines,” whence the science was called geometry.‘ Compare Strabo (“Geo.” xvii. 787), who says that Egypt was divided into thirty “nomes,” and then adds, ‹that these were again subdivided into other portions, the smallest of which were farms αἱ ἄρουραι haiarouraithere was a necessity for a very careful and subtle division, on account of the continual confusion of the limits which the Nile produced when it overflowed, adding, to some, taking away from others, changing the forms, obliterating the signs by which one farm was

distinguished from another. Hence, it became necessary to re-survey the country; and hence, they suppose, originated the science of geometry‘ (see also Herodot. “Euterpe,” c. 109). Hence, it is supposed that Egypt came to be distinguished by the use of “the line” - or for its skill in surveying, or in geometry - or a nation “of the line” (see the Dissertation of Theodore Hasaeus, קו קו גוי - “De Gente kau kau,” in Ugolin‘s “Thes. Ant. Sac.” vii. 1568-1580). The word (קו *qav*) means, properly, “a cord, a line,” particularly a measuring line Ezekiel 47:3; 2 Kings 21:13: ‹I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria‘ that is, I will destroy it like Samaria. Hence, the phrase here may denote a people accustomed “to stretch out such lines” over others; that is, to lay them waste.

It is applied usually to the line connected with a plummet, which a carpenter uses to mark out his work (compare Job 38:5; Isaiah 28:17; Isaiah 34:11; Zephaniah 2:1); or to a line by which a land or country is measured by the surveyor. Sometimes it means “a precept, or rule,” as Vitringa has rendered it here (compare Isaiah 28:10). But the phrase ‹to stretch out a line,‘ or ‹to measure a people by a line,‘ is commonly applied to their destruction, as if a conqueror used a line to mark out what he had to do (see this use of the word in 2 Kings 21:13: Isaiah 28:17; Isaiah 34:11; Lamentations 2:8; Zechariah 1:16). This is probably its sense here - a nation terrible in all its history, and which had been distinguished for stretching lines over others; that is, for marking them out for destruction, and dividing them as it pleased. It is, therefore, a simple description, not of the nation as “being itself” measured out, but as extending its dominion over others.

And trodden down - (מבוסה *mebûsâh*). Margin, ‹And treading under foot,‘ or, ‹that meteth out and treadeth down.‘ The margin here, as is frequently the case, is the more correct rendering. Here it does not mean that “they were trodden down,” but that it was a characteristic of their nation that “they trod down others;” that is, conquered and subdued other nations. Thus the verb is used in Psalm 44:6; Isaiah 14:25; Isaiah 53:6; Isaiah 63:18; Jeremiah 12:10. Some, however, have supposed that it refers to the fact that the land was trodden down by their feet, or that the Egyptians were accustomed to lead the waters of the Nile, when it overflowed, by “treading” places for it to flow in their fields. But the former is the more correct interpretation.

Whose land the rivers have spoiled - Margin, ‹Despise.‘ The Hebrew word (בזאו *bâz'eû*) occurs nowhere else. The Vulgate renders it, *Diripuerunt* - ‹Carry away.‘ The Chaldee reads it, ‹Whose land the people plunder.‘ The word is probably of the same signification as בזז *bâzaz* “to plunder, lay waste.” So it was read by the Vulgate and the Chaldee; and this reading is found in four manuscripts. The word is in the present tense, and should be rendered not ‹have spoiled,‘ but ‹spoil.‘ It is probably used to denote a country the banks of whose rivers are washed away by the floods. This description is particularly applicable to Nubia or Abyssinia - the region above the cataracts of the Nile. One has only to remember that these streams continually wash away the banks and bear the earth to deposit it “on” the lands of Lower Egypt, to see that the prophet had this region particularly in his eye.

He could not have meant Egypt proper, because instead of “spoiling” the lands, or washing them away, the Nile constantly brings down a deposit from the upper regions that constitutes its great fertility. The “rivers” that are mentioned here are doubtless the various branches of the Nile (see Bruce‘s “Travels,” ch. iii., and Burckhardt‘s “Travels in Nubia.” The Nile is formed by the junction of many streams or branches rising in Abyssinia, the principal of which are the Atbara; the Astapus or Blue River; and the Astaboras or White River. The principal source of the Nile is the Astapus or Blue River, which rises in the Lake Coloe, which Bruce supposes to be the head of the Nile. This river on the west, and the various branches of the Atbara on the east, nearly encompass a large region of country called Meroe, once supposed to be a large island, and frequently called such. The whole description, therefore, leads us to the conclusion that a region is mentioned in that country called in general “Cush;” that it was a people living on rivers, and employing reed boats or skiffs; that they were a fierce and warlike people; and that the country was one that was continually washed by streams, and whose soil was carried down by the floods. All these circumstances apply to Nubia or Abyssinia, and there can be little doubt that this is the country intended.

Verse 3

All ye inhabitants of the world - These are to be regarded as the words of the prophet summoning all nations to attend to that which was about to occur. Grotius, however, and some others, suppose that they are the words

of the Ethiopians. The meaning is, that the events which are here predicted would be of so public a nature as to attract the attention of all the world.

When he - Vitringa supposes that this means the Assyrians lifting up a standard on the mountains of Judea. But the better interpretation is that which refers it to the people of Nubia, mustering their forces for war. ‹All nations behold when that people collects an army; sounds the trumpet for war; and arrays its military forces for battle. See then the judgments that God will inflict on them - their discomfiture Isaiah 18:4-7, and their turning to Yahweh, and sending an offering to him Isaiah 18:7.‘ According to this interpretation, it will refer to the people making preparation for battle; and perhaps it may mean that they were preparing to join the enemies of Judea - “not improbably preparing to join the forces of Sennacherib, and to invade Judea.” For this purpose it may have been that the messengers were sent to negotiate the terms of alliance with Sennacherib; and the object of the prophecy is, to assure the Jews that this people, as well as Sennacherib, would be discomfited, and that they would yet bring an offering to God Isaiah 18:7.

Lifteth up an ensign - A military standard (see the note at Isaiah 5:26).

And when he bloweth a trumpet - Also a signal for an army to assemble (see the note at Isaiah 13:2).

Verse 4

For so the Lord said unto me - So Yahweh has revealed his purpose, that is, to execute punishment on the people who have been described in the previous verses. Their state as there described is that of a fierce people making ready for war, and probably designing an alliance with the enemies of Judea, and marshalling their armies for that purpose. Yahweh here reveals to the prophet that they shall be discomfited, and shows the manner in which it will be done. He says he will sit calm while these preparations are going on - as the sun shines serenely on the earth while the harvest is growing, and the dew falls gently on the herb; but that “before” their plans are completed, he will interpose and destroy them, as if one should appear suddenly before the harvest is ripe and cut it down. The “design,” therefore, of this part of the prophecy is to comfort the Jews, and to assure them that there is no danger to them from the preparations which were made against them - for Yahweh calmly beholds the proud rage of the enemy.

I will take my rest - I will not interpose. I will remain calm - not appearing to oppose them, but keeping as calm, and as still, as if I seemed

to favor their plans - as the sun shines on the herb, and the gentle dew falls on the grass, until the proper time for me to interpose and defeat them shall arise Isaiah 18:5-6.

I will consider - I will look on; that is, I will not now interpose and disarrange their plans before they are complete. We learn here,

(1) That God sees the plans of the wicked;

(2) That he sees them "mature" them without attempting then to interpose to disarrange them;

(3) That he is calm and still, because he designs that those plans shall be developed; and

(4) That the wicked should not indulge in any dreams of security and success because God does not interpose to thwart their plans while they are forming them. He will do it in the proper time.

In my dwelling-place - In heaven. I will sit in heaven and contemplate leisurely the plans that are going forward.

Like a clear heat - A serene, calm, and steady sunshine, by which plants and herbs are made to grow. There seem to be two ideas blended here: the first, that of the "stillness" with which the sun shines upon the herbs; and the other, that of the fact that the sun shines that the herbs "may grow."

Upon herbs - Margin, ‹After rain‘ (עלי־אוי ʿ*ălēy 'ôry*). The word אוי *'ôr* usually signifies "light," or "fire." The plural form (ואורות *ô'ôrôth*) is used to denote herbs or vegetables in two places, in 2 Kings 4:39, and Isaiah 26:19. For in the Shemitic languages the ideas of "sprouting, being grown, growing" etc., are connected with that of the shining of the sun, or of light; that which grows in the light; that is, vegetables. But in the singular phorm the word is not thus used, unless it be in this place. That it may have this signiphication cannot be doubted; and this interpretation makes good sense, and suits the connection. The rabbis generally interpret it as it is in the margin - ‹rain.‘ In proof of this they appeal to Job 36:30; Job 37:11; but the word in these passages more properly denotes a cloud of light or of lightning, than rain. The common interpretation is probably correct, which regards the word אור *'ôr* here as the same as אורה *'ôrâh* - ‹herbs‘ (see Vitringa). The Syriac reads it על־יאר ʿ*al -yeor* - ‹upon the river.‘ The

parallelism seems to require the sense of "herb," or something that shall answer to ‹harvest‘ in the corresponding member.

And like a cloud of dew - Such a dew was still, and promoted the growth of vegetables. The idea is that of stillness and rest where there is no storm or tempest to dissipate the gently-falling dew. This is an emblem of the perfect quietness with which God would regard the preparations for war until the proper time would come for him to interpose. The whole passage is similar to Psalm 2:4-5:

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh;
Jehovah shall have them in derision.
Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,
And vex them in his hot displeasure.

The idea is, that he would be as calm as the sun is upon the herb, or the dew upon the harvest field, until the time should come when it would be proper for him to interpose, and disconcert their counsels. When and how this would be done is stated in the following verses; and the whole passage is most striking illustration of the manner with which God contemplates the machinations and evil designs of the wicked.

Verse 5

For afore the harvest - This verse is evidently figurative, and the image is drawn from that which is commenced in the previous verse. There, God is represented as calmly regarding the plans of the people here referred to - as the sun shines serenely on the herb, or the dew falls on the grass. "That" figure supposes that they had "formed" plans, and that they were advancing to maturity, like a growing harvest, while God surveyed them without interposition. This verse continues the figure, and affirms "that those plans shall not be mature;" that God will interpose and defeat them "while" they are maturing - as if a man should enter the harvest field and cut it down after it had been sown, or go into the vineyard, and cut down the vines while the green grape was beginning to ripen. It is, therefore, a most beautiful and expressive figure, intimating that all their plans would be foiled even when they had the prospect of a certain accomplishment.

When the bud is perfect - The word ‹bud‘ here (פרח *perach*) denotes either a "blossom," or a sprout, shoot, branch. Here it denotes probably the "blossom" of the grain; or it may be the grain when it is "set." Its meaning is, when their plans are maturing, and there is every human prospect that they will be successful.

And the sour grape is ripening - Begins to turn; or is becoming mature.

In the flower - (נצה *netsâh*). The blossom. This should be read rather, ‹and the flower is becoming a ripening grape.‘ The common version does not make sense; but with this translation the idea is clear. The sense is the same as in the former phrase - when their plans are maturing.

He shall cut off the sprigs - The shoots; the small limbs on which the grape is hanging, as if a man should enter a vineyard, and, while the grape is ripening, should not only cut off the grape, but the small branches that bore it, thus preventing it from bearing again. The idea is, not only that God would disconcert their "present" plans, but that he would prevent them from forming any in future. Before their plans were matured, and they obtained the anticipated triumph, he would effectually prevent them from forming such plans again.

Verse 6

They shall be left together - The figure here is dropped, and the literal narration is resumed. The sense is, that the army shall be slain and left unburied. Perhaps the "branches and twigs" in the previous verse denoted military leaders, and the captains of the armies, which are now represented as becoming food for beasts of the field and for birds of prey.

To the fowls of the mountains - Their dead bodies shall be unburied, and shall be a prey to the birds that prey upon flesh.

And to the beasts of the earth - The wild animals: the beasts of the forest.

And the fowls shall summer upon them - Shall pass the summer, that is, they shall continue to be unburied. "And the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them." They shall be unburied through the winter; probably indicating that they would furnish food for the fowls and the wild beasts for a long time. On the multitude of carcasses these animals will find nourishment for a whole year, that is, they will spend the summer and the winter with them. When this was fulfilled, it is, perhaps, not possible to tell, as we are so little acquainted with the circumstances of the people in relation to whom it was spoken. If it related, as I suppose, to the people of Nubia or Ethiopia forming an alliance with the Assyrians for the purpose of invading Judea, it was fulfilled probably when Sennacherib and his assembled hosts were destroyed. Whenever it was fulfilled, it is quite evident that the design of the prophecy was to give comfort to the Jews,

alarmed and agitated as they were at the prospect of the preparations which were made, by the assurance that those plans would fail, and all the efforts of their enemies be foiled and disconcerted.

Verse 7

In that time - When shall thus be disconcerted, and their armies be overthrown.

Shall the present be brought … - The word ‹present‘ (שִׁי *shay*) denotes a gift, and is found only in the phrase ‹to bring gifts,‘ or ‹presents‘ Psalm 68:30; Psalm 76:11. It means here evidently a tribute, or an offering to Yahweh as the only true God; and possibly may mean that the people would be converted to him, and embrace the true religion.

Of a people … - From a people. The description which follows is the same precisely as in Isaiah 18:2. Numerous repetitions of this kind will be recollected by the classic reader in the "Iliad."

To the place of the name … - The place where Yahweh is worshipped, that is, Jerusalem (compare the notes at Isaiah 1:8-9). We have no means of knowing with certainty when or how this prophecy was fulfilled. That the Jewish religion spread into Upper Egypt, and that the Christian religion was afterward established there, there can be no doubt. The Jews were scattered into nearly every nation, and probably many of this people became proselytes, and went with them to Jerusalem to worship (see Acts 2:10; Acts 8:27). ‹The Abyssinian annals represent the country as converted to Judaism several centuries before the Christian era; and it certainly retains many appearances bearing the stamp of that faith. In the fourth century, the nation was converted to Christianity by the efforts of Frumentius, an Egyptian, who raised himself to high favor at court. Abyssinia remained impenetrable to the arms or the creed of the followers of Mahomet, and, affording shelter to the refugees from Egypt and Arabia, it became more decidedly Christian.‘ ‹The Abyssinians profess the same form of Christianity with the Copts of Egypt, and even own the supremacy of the patriarch at Cairo. They combine with their Christian profession many Judaical observances, such as circumcision, abstinence from meats, and the observance of Saturday as well as Sunday as a Sabbath.‘ ("Encyc. of Geography," vol. ii. pp. 585,588.) in these facts - in the prevalence of the true religion there in former periods, the prophecy may be regarded as having been in part fulfilled. Still, as is the case with a large portion of the prophecies of Isaiah, we must regard this as having reference to a period of greater light and truth than has yet existed

there; and as destined to receive a more complete fulfillment when all lands shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Introduction

This prophecy respecting Egypt extends only through this chapter. Its general scope and design is plain. It is intended to describe the calamities that would come upon Egypt, and the effect which they would have in turning the people to God. The scene is laid in Egypt; and the following things passed before the mind of the prophet in vision:

1. He sees Yahweh coming in a cloud to Egypt Isaiah 19:1.

2. The effect of this is to produce alarm among the idols of that nation Isaiah 19:2.

3. A state of intrnal commotion and discord is described as existing in Egypt; a state of calamity so great that they would seek relief from their idols and necro-mancers Isaiah 19:2-3.

4. The consequence of these dissensions and internal strifes would be, that they would be subdued by a foreign and cruel prince Isaiah 19:4.

5. To these political calamities there would be added "physical" sufferings Isaiah 19:5-10 - the Nile would be dried up, and all that grew on its banks would wither Isaiah 19:5-7; those who had been accustomed to fish in the Nile would be thrown out of employment Isaiah 19:8; and those that were engaged in the manufacture of linen would, as a consequence, be driven from employment Isaiah 19:9-10.

6. All counsel and wisdom would fail from the nation, and the kings and priests be regarded as fools Isaiah 19:11-16.

7. The land of Judah would become a terror to them Isaiah 19:17.

8. This would be followed by the conversion of many of the Egyptians to the true religion Isaiah 19:18-20; Yahweh would become their protector, and would repair the breaches that had been made, and remove the evils which they had experienced Isaiah 19:21-22, and a strong alliance would be formed between the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Jews, which should secure the divine blessing and favor Isaiah 19:23-25.

This is the outline of the prophecy. In regard to the "time" when it was delivered, we have no certain knowledge. Lowth supposes that it refers to times succeeding the destruction of the army of Sennacherib. After that event, he says, the affairs of Egypt were thrown into confusion; intestine broils succeeded; these were followed by a tyranny of twelve princes, who divided the country between them, until the distracted affairs settled down under the dominion of Psammetichus, who held the scepter for fifty-four years. Not long after this, the country was invaded and conquered by Nebuchadnezzar; and then by the Persians under Cambyses, the son of Cyrus. Alexander the Great subsequently invaded and took the country, and made Alexandria the capital of his empire. Many Jews were invited there by Alexander, and under the favor of the Ptolemies they flourished there; the true religion became prevalent in the land, and multitudes of the Egyptians, it is supposed, were converted to the Jewish faith.

Dr. Newton ("Diss. xii. on the Prophecies") supposes, that there was a "general" reference here to the conquest by Nebuchadnezzar, and a "particular" reference to the conquest under Cambyses the son of Cyrus. He supposes that the anarchy described in Isaiah 19:2, refers to the civil wars which arose between Apries and Amasis in the time of Nebuchadnezzars invasion, and the civil wars between Tachos, Nectanebus, and the Mendesians, a little before the country was subdued by Ochus. The cruel king mentioned in Isaiah 19:4, into whose hands they were delivered, he supposes was Nebuchadnezzar, or more probably Cambyses and Ochus, one of whom put the yoke on the neck of the Egyptians, and the other riveted it there. The Egyptians say that Cambyses, after he killed Apis, a god worshipped in Egypt, was stricken with madness; but his actions, says Prideaux, show that he was mad long before. Ochus was the most cruel of the kings of Persia. The final deliverance of the nation, and the conversion to the true God, and the alliance between Egypt, Assyria and Israel Isaiah 19:18-25, he supposes, refers to the deliverance that would be introduced by Alexander the Great, and the protection that would be shown to the Jews in Egypt under the Ptolemies.

Vitringa, Gesenius, Grotius, Rosenmuller, and others, suppose that the anarchy described in Isaiah 19:2, refers to the discord which arose in the time of the δωδεκαρχία *dōdekarchia* or the reign of the twelve kings, until Psammetichus prevailed over the rest, and that he is intended by the ‹cruel

lord‘ and ‹fierce king,‘ described in Isaiah 19:4. In other respects, their interpretation of the prophecy coincides, in the main, with that proposed by Dr. Newton.

A slight glance at some of the leading events in the history of Egypt, may enable us more clearly to determine the application of the different parts of the prophecy.

Egypt, a well-known country in Africa, is, for the most part, a great valley through which the Nile pours its waters from south to north, and is skirted on the east and west by ranges of mountains which approach or recede more or less from the river in different parts. Where the valley terminates toward the north, the Nile divides itself, about forty or fifty miles from the Mediterranean, into several parts, enclosing the territory called the Delta - so called because the various streams flowing from the one river diverge as they flow toward the sea, and thus form with the coast a triangle in the shape of the Greek letter Δ *D* southern limit of Egypt proper is Syene Ezekiel 29:10; Ezekiel 30:6, or Essuan, the border of Ethiopia. Here the Nile issues from the granite rocks of the cataracts and enters Egypt proper. This is N. lat. 24 degrees.

Egypt was anciently divided into forty-two “nomes” or districts, which were little provinces or counties. It was also divided into Upper and Lower Egypt. Upper Egypt was called Thebais, from Thebes the capital, and extended south to the frontier of Ethiopia. Lower Egypt contained principally the Delta and the parts on the Mediterranean. The capital was Cairo.

The most common division, however, was into three parts, Lower, Middle, and Upper Egypt. In Lower Egypt, lying on the Mediterranean, were the cities of Pithon, Raamses, Heliopolis, etc. In this division, also, was the land of Goshen. In Middle Egypt was Moph, or Memphis, Hanes, etc. In Upper Egypt was No-Ammon, or Thebes, and Syene, the southern limit of Egypt.

The ancient history of Egypt is obscure. It is agreed on all hands, however, that it was the early seat of civilization; and that this civilization

was introduced from the south, and especially from Meroe. The country in the earliest times was possessed by several kings or states, which were at length united into one great kingdom. Not long after the death of Joseph, it came into the possession of the Hyksos or Shepherd kings, probably an Arabian nomadic tribe. After they were driven out, the whole country came again under one sovereign, and enjoyed great prosperity. The first king of the 19th dynasty, as it is called by Manetho, was the celebrated Sesostris, about 1500 years b.c. His successors were all called by the general name of Pharaoh, that is, kings. The first who is mentioned by his proper name is Shishak 1 Kings 14:25-26, supposed to be the Sesonchosis of Manetho, who reigned about 970 years b.c. Geseuius says, that in the time of the Jewish king Hezekiah, there reigned at the same time in Egypt three dynasties; an Ethiopic (probably over Upper Egypt), a Saitish, and a Tanitish dynasty - of which at last sprung the dodekarchy, and whose dominion ultimately lost itself in the single reign of Psammetichus. The Ethiopic continued forty years, and consisted of three kings - Sabaco, Sevechus, and Tarakos, or Tearko - of which the two last are mentioned in the Bible, Sevechus under the name of So, סוא *sô'* probably סוא *seve'* Sevechus - as the ally of Hosea, king of Israel 2 Kings 17:4,722 b.c., and Tarakos the same as Tirhakah, about the time of the 16th year of the reign of Hezekiah (714 b.c.) Instead of this whole dynasty, Herodotus (ii. 137,139), and Diodorus (i. 65), give us only one name, that of Sabaco. Contemporary with these were the four, or according to Eusebius, five, first kings of the dynasty of Saite, Stephinates, Nerepsus, Nichao I, who was slain by an Ethiopian king, and Psammetichus, who made an end of the dodekarchy, and reigned fifty-four years.

Of the Tanitish dynasty, Psammus and Zeth are mentioned (Introduction to Isaiah 19:4, that he was a ‹cruel lord.‘

Egypt was afterward conquered by Cambyses, and became a province of the Persian empire about 525 b.c. Thus it continued until it was conquered by Alexander the Great, 350 b.c., after whose death it formed, together with Syria, Palestine, Lybia, etc., the kingdom of the Ptolemies. After the battle of Actium, 30 b.c. it became a Roman province. In 640 a.d., it was conquered by the Arabs, and since that time it has passed from the bands of the Caliphs into the hands of the Turks, and since 1517 a.d. it has been

regarded as a province of the Turkish empire. This is an outline of the principal events of the Egyptian history. The events predicted in this chapter will be stated in their order in the comments on the particular verses. The two leading points which will guide our interpretation will be, that Psammetichus is intended in Isaiah 19:4, and that the effects of Alexander‘s conquest of Egypt are denoted from Isaiah 19:18 to the end of the chapter. Keeping these two points in view, the interpretation of the chapter will be easy. On the history of Egypt, and the commotions and revolutions there, the reader may consult Wilkinson‘s “Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians,” vol. i., particularly pp. 143-180.

Verse 1

The burden of Egypt - This is the title to the prophecy. For the meaning of the word “burden,” see the note at Isaiah 13:1. The word ‹Egypt‘ in the original is מצרים *mîtserayîm* and it was so called after Mizraim the second son of Ham, and grandson of Noah. Sometimes it is called Mazor 2 Kings 19:24; Isaiah 19:6; Isaiah 37:25; Micah 7:12; where, however, our English version has rendered the word by “besieged place or fortress.” The ancient name of the country among the inhabitants themselves was “Chimi or Chami” (Χημυ *Chēmu*). The Egyptian word signified “black,” and the name was probably given from the black deposit made by the slime of the Nile. ‹Mizraim, or Misrim, the name given to Egypt in the Scriptures, is in the plural form, and is the Hebrew mede of expressing the “two regions of Egypt” (so commonly met with in the hieroglyphics), or the “two Misr,” a name still used by the Arabs, who call all Egypt, as well as Cairo, Musr or Misr.‘ (Wilkinson‘s “Ancient Egyptians,” vol. i. p. 2). The origin of the name ‹Egypt‘ is unknown. Egyptus is said by some to have been an ancient king of this country.

Behold, the Lord - This is a bold introduction. Yahweh is seen advancing to Egypt for the purpose of confounding its idols, and inflicting punishment. The leading idea which the prophet wishes probably to present is, that national calamities - anarchy, commotion, revolution, as well as physical sufferings - are under the government and direction of Yahweh.

Rideth upon a swift cloud - Yahweh is often thus represented as riding on a cloud, especially when he comes for purposes of vengeance or punishment:

And he rode upon a cherub and did fly,

Yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.
Psalm 18:10
Who maketh the clouds his chariot,
Who walketh upon the wings of the wind.
Psalm 104:3

‹I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven‘ Daniel 7:13. So the Saviour is represented as coming to judgment in the clouds of heaven Matthew 24:30. Compare the sublime description in Habakkuk 3:3-10.

And the idols of Egypt - It is well known that Egypt was celebrated for its idolatry. They worshipped chiefly the heavenly bodies; but they worshipped also all kinds of animals, probably as living symbols of their gods. "Shall be moved." That is, shall tremble, be agitated, alarmed; or shall be removed from their place, and overthrown. The word will bear either construction. Vitringa inclines to the latter.

And the heart of Egypt - The strength; the courage; the rigor. We use the word "heart" in the same sense now, when we speak of a stout heart; a courageous heart, etc.

Shall melt - The word used here denotes "to dissolve;" and is applied to the heart when its courage fails - probably from the sensation of weakness or fainting. The fact alluded to here was probably the disheartening circumstances that attended the civil commotions in Egypt, when the people felt themselves oppressed by cruel rulers. See the Analysis of the chapter.

Verse 2

And I will set - (סכסכתי *sîksaketîy*). This word (from סכך *sākak*) means properly "to cover," to spread over, to hide, conceal, to protect. Another signification of the verb is, to weave, to intermingle. It may mean here, ‹I will arm the Egyptians against each other‘ (Gesenius); or, as in our version, ‹I will mingle, confound, or throw them into discord and strife.‘ The Septuagint renders it, Ἐπεγερθήσονται *Epegerthēsontai* - ‹They shall be excited,‘ or, ‹raised up.‘ Symmachus, Συμβαλῶ *Sumbalō* Syriac and Chaldee, ‹I will excite.‘ The sense is, that there would be discord and civil war, and this is traced to the agency or overruling providence of God - meaning that he would "permit and overrule" it. Compare the notes at Isaiah 45:7: ‹I make peace, and I create evil; I, Yahweh, do all these things;‘ Amos 3:6: ‹Shall there be evil in a city and Jehovah hath not done it?‘ The civil war here referred to was probably that which arose between the twelve

kings in the time of the dodekarchy (see the Analysis to the chapter), and which resulted in the single dominion of Psammetichus. Dr. Newton ("On the Prophecies," xii.) supposes, however, that the prophet refers to the civil wars between Apries and Amasis at the time of the invasion by Nebuchadnezzar. But it agrees much better with the former discord than with this. The description which follows is that of anarchy or civil strife, where "many" parties are formed, and would naturally lead to the supposition that there were more than two engaged.

And kingdom against kingdom - Septuagint, Νόμος έπὶ νόμων *Nomos epi nomōn* - ‹Nome against nomes.‘ Egypt was formerly divided into forty-two "nomes" or districts. The version by the Septuagint was made in Egypt, and the translators would naturally employ the terms which were in common use. Still the event referred to was probably not that of one "nome" contending against another, but a civil war in which one dynasty would be excited against another (Gesenius), or when there would be anarchy and strife among the different members of the dodekarchy. See the Analysis of the chapter.

Verse 3

And the spirit of Egypt - (see Isaiah 19:1). They shall be exhausted with their long internal contentions and strifes; and seeing no prospect of deliverance, and anxious that the turmoils should end, they shall seek counsel and refuge in their gods and necromancers, but in vain.

Shall fail - (נבקה *nâbeqâh*). Margin, ‹Be emptied.‘ The word means, literally, "to pour out, empty, depopulate." Here it means that they would become disheartened and discouraged.

And I will destroy - Margin, as the Hebrew, ‹I will swallow up.‘ So the word is used in Psalm 107:27, ‹All their wisdom is destroyed‘ (Hebrew, ‹swallowed up. ‹)

And they shall seek to the idols - According to Herodotus (ii. 152), Psammetichus had consulted the oracle of Latona at Butos, and received for answer that the sea should avenge his cause by producing brazen men. Some time after, a body of Ionians and Carians were compelled by stress of weather to touch at Egypt, and landed there, clad in brass armor. Some Egyptians, alarmed at their appearance, came to Psammetichus, and described them as brazen men who had risen from the sea, and were plundering the country. He instantly supposed that this was the accomplishment of the oracle, and entered into an alliance with the

strangers, and by their aid was enabled to obtain the victory over his foes. Compare the different accounts of Diodorus in the Analysis of this chapter. The whole history of Egypt shows how much they were accustomed to consult their idols (see Herodot. ii. 54ff, 82,83,139,152). Herodotus says (ii. 83), that the art of divination in Egypt was confined to certain of their deities. There were in that country the oracles of Hercules, of Apollo, of Mars, of Diana, and of Jupiter; but the oracle of Latona in Butos was held in greater veneration than any of the rest.

And to the charmers - (אטים *'îṭîym*). This word occurs nowhere else. The root אטט *'âṭaṭ* in Arabic, means "to mutter, to make a gentle noise;" and this word probably denotes conjurors, diviners (see the note at Isaiah 8:19). The Septuagint renders it, ‹Their idols.'

And to them that have familiar spirits - (see the note at Isaiah 8:19). The Septuagint renders this, ‹Those who speak from the ground.'

And to the wizards - Septuagint - Ἐγγαστριμύθους *Engastrimuthous* - ‹Ventriloquists.' The Hebrew word means a wise man, a soothsayer, a magician (ידעני*ם yîdî'onîym* from ידע *yâda'* "to know;" see Leviticus 19:31; Leviticus 20:6; Deuteronomy 18:11). This fake science abounded in Egypt, and in most Oriental countries.

Verse 4

And the Egyptians - The Egyptian nation; the entire people, though divided into factions and contending with each other.

Will I give over - Margin, ‹Shut up.' The Hebrew word (סכר *sākar*) usually has the sense of shutting up, or closing. Here it means that these contentions would be "closed" or concluded by their being delivered to of a single master. The Septuagint renders it, Παραδώσω *Paradōsō* - ‹I will surrender.'

Into the hands of a cruel lord - Hebrew, ‹Lords of cruelty, or severity.' The word rendered ‹lord,' meaning master, is in the Hebrew in the plural number (אדנים *'ădônîy*). It is, however, generally supposed that it is *pluralis excellentiae* - denoting majesty and dignity, and applicable to a "single" monarch. The connection requires this, for the state here described would be different from that where "many" rule, and it seems to suppose that "one" should succeed to the many who had been contending. In the parallel member, also, a name in the singular number is used - ‹a fierce king;' and as this evidently denotes the same, it follows that the word here is used to denote a single monarch. The plural form is often thus used in the Hebrew

(see Psalm 7:10; Ezekiel 29:3; Hosea 12:1). God here claims jurisdiction over the nation, and says that "he" will do it - a most striking illustration of the power which he asserts over contending people to deliver them to whomsoever he will.

Dr. Newton supposes that this was Nebuchadnezzar, or more properly Cambyses, by whom Egypt was made subject to the authority of Persia, and who was eminently a cruel man, a madman. But the more probable interpretation is that which refers it to Psammetichus. twelve kings were in contention, of whom he was one. He called in the aid of the Arabians, the pirates of Caria and Iona (Herodot. ii. 152; see the Analysis of the chapter; Diod. i. 66). This was in the twentieth year of the reign of Manasseh. Psammetichus reigned fifty-four years and was succeeded by Nechus his son, called in Scripture Pharaoh-Necho, and often mentioned under that name. Psammetichus, during a considerable part of his reign, was engaged in wars with Assyria and Palestine. He is here called a ‹cruel lord;' that is, an oppressive monarch, probably because he secured the kingdom by bringing in to his aid foreign mercenaries - robbers and pirates, and because his wars made his government oppressive and burdensome.

A fierce king - Hebrew, ‹A king of strength' - a description particularly applicable to one who, like Psammetichus, had subdued eleven rivals, and who had obtained the kingdom by conquest.

Verse 5

And the waters shall fail - Here commences a description of the "physical" calamities that would come upon the land, which continues to Isaiah 19:10. The previous verses contained an account of the national calamities by civil wars. It may be observed that discord, anarchy, and civil wars, are often connected with physical calamities; as famine, drought, pestilence. God has the elements, as well as the hearts of people, under his control; and when he chastises a nation, he often mingles anarchy, famine, discord, and the pestilence together. Often, too, civil wars have a "tendency" to produce these calamities. They annihilate industry, arrest enterprise, break up plans of commerce, and divert the attention of people from the cultivation of the soil. This might have been in part the case in Egypt; but it would seem also that God, by direct agency, intended to afflict them by drying up their streams in a remarkable manner.

From the sea - The parallelism here, as well as the whole scope of the passage, requires us to understand this of the Nile. The word ים *yâm* is

sometimes used to denote a large river (see the notes at Isaiah 11:15; Isaiah 18:2). The Nile is often called a sea. Thus Pliny ("Nat. Hist." ii. 35) says, ‹The water of the Nile resembles the sea.‘ Thus, Seneca ("Quaest. Nat." v. 2) says, ‹By continued accessions of water, it stagnates (stagnat) into the appearance of a broad and turbid sea.‘ Compare Herodot. ii. 97; Diod. i. 12,96; ‹To this day in Egypt, the Nile is el-Bahr, "the sea," as its most common appellation.‘ ‹Our Egyptian servant,‘ says Dr. Robinson, ‹who spoke English, always called it "the sea."‘ ("Bib. Rescarches," vol. i. 542).

And the river - The Nile.

Shall be wasted - This does not mean "entirely," but its waters would fail so as to injure the country. It would not "overflow" in its accustomed manner, and the consequence would be, that the land would be desolate. It is well known that Egypt derives its great fertility entirely from the overflowing of the Nile. So important is this, that a public record is made at Cairo of the daily rise of the water. When the Nile rises to a less height than twelve cubits, a famine is the inevitable consequence, for then the water does not overflow the land. When it rises to a greater height than sixteen cubits, a famine is almost as certain - for then the superabundant waters are not drained off soon enough to allow them to sow the seed. The height of the inundation, therefore, that is necessary in order to insure a harvest, is from twelve to sixteen cubits. The annual overflow is in the month of August. The prophet here means that the Nile would not rise to the height that was desirable - or the waters should "fail" - and that the consequence would be a famine.

Verse 6

And they shall turn the rivers far away - (האזיחו *he'ezenîychû*), probably from זנח *zânach* "to have an offensive smell; to be rancid, or putrid." The word in this form occurs nowhere else. It is in the Hiphil conjugation, and is probably a form made from a mixture with the Chaldee. The sense is not doubtful. It means ‹the rivers shall become putrid - or have an offensive smell;‘ that is, shall become stagnant, and send forth unwholesome "miasmata" producing sickness, as stagnant waters often do. The Vulgate renders it, ‹And the rivers shall fail.‘ The Septuagint, ‹And the Egyptians shall drink the waters from the sea, but the river shall fail, and be dried up, and the rivers shall fail, and the streams (διῶρυχες *diōruches*) of the river, and all the assembling (συναγωγή *sunagōgē*) waters shall be dried up.‘

And the brooks of defense - Hebrew, ‹The rivers of מצור *mâtsôr* The word מצור *mâtsôr* often means "straitness, affliction;" then a siege, a wall, a bulwark, a fortification. But, probably, it here means "Egypt," or the same as מצרים *mîtserayîm* (compare Isaiah 37:25; 2 Kings 18:24; Mark 7:12). Perhaps the Hebrews may have thought of Egypt as a strongly fortified place, and thus have given the name to it; or possibly this may have been a modification of the name "Mitsraim."

The reeds and flags - Which grew on the banks of the Nile - the papyrus, etc. (see the note at Isaiah 18:2)

Verse 7

The paper reeds - (ערות ʿ*ârôt*). This is not the word which occurs in Isaiah 18:2, and which, it is supposed, means there the papyrus (see the note on that place). Interpreters have been divided in regard to the meaning of the word here. Gesenius derives it from ערה ʿ*ârâh* "to be naked, open, bare;" and supposes that it means an open place, a place naked of wood, and that it here denotes the pastures on the banks of the Nile. So Rosenmuller interprets it of the green pastures on the banks of the Nile; and the Hebrew commentators generally so understand it. The Vulgate renders it, ‹And the bed (*alveus*) of the river shall be dried up from the fountain.‘ So the Chaldee, ‹And their streams shall be desolate.‘ It probably denotes, not paper reeds, but the green pastures that were beside the brooks, or along the banks of the Nile.

By the brooks - Hebrew, ‹Rivers‘ (יארי *ye'orēy*). By the ‹brooks‘ here, in the plural number, the prophet probably means the artificial canals which were cut in every direction from the Nile for the purpose of conveying the waters to various parts of the land.

By the mouth of the brooks - At the mouth of the canals, or where they emptied into the Nile. Such meadows, being "near" the Nile, and most sure of a supply of water, would be more valuable than those which were remote, and are, therefore, particularly specified.

Shall wither … - That is, there shall be utter and entire desolation. If the Nile ceased to overflow; if the streams, reservoirs, and canals, could not be filled, this would follow as a matter of course. Everything would dry up.

Verse 8

The fishers also - In this verse, and the two following, the prophet describes the calamities that would come upon various classes of the inhabitants, as the consequence of the failing of the waters of the Nile. The

first class which he mentions are the fishermen. Egypt is mentioned Numbers 11:5, as producing great quantities of fish. ‹We remember the fish which we did eat in Eypt freely.‘ ‹The Nile,‘ says Diodorus (i.), ‹abounds with incredible numbers of all sorts of fish.‘ The same was true of the artificial canals, and lakes, and reservoirs of water Isaiah 19:10. Herodotus (ii. 93) says that large quantities of fish were produced in the Nile: ‹At the season of spawning,‘ says he, ‹they move in vast multitudes toward the sea. As soon as that season is over they leave the sea, return up the river, and endeavor to regain their accustomed haunts.‘ As a specimen of his "credulity," however, and also of the attention which he bestowed on natural history, the reader may consult the passage here referred to in regard to the mode of their propagation.

He also says that it is observed of the fish that are taken in their passage to the sea, that they have ‹the left part of their heads depressed.‘ Of those that are taken on their return, the "right" side of the head is found to be depressed. This he accounts for by observing, that ‹the cause of this is obvious: as they pass to the sea they rub themselves on the banks on the left side; as they return they keep closely to the same bank, and, in both instances, press against it, that they may not be obliged to deviate from their course by the current of the stream.‘ Speaking of the Lake Moeris, Herodotus says, that ‹for six months the lake empties itself into the Nile, and the remaining six, the Nile supplies the lake. During the six months in which the waters ebb, the fishing which is here carried on furnishes the royal treasury with a talent of silver (about 180) every day‘ (ii. 149). ‹The silver which the fishery of this lake produced, was appropriated to find the queen with clothes and perfumes.‘ (Diod. i. 52.) The Lake Moeris is now farmed for 30 purses (about 193) annually.

Michaud says that the Lake Menzaleh now yields an annual revenue of 800 purses,‘ about 5364. ‹The great abundance of fish produced in the Nile was an invaluable provision of nature, in a country which had neither extended pasture grounds, nor large herds of cattle, and where grain was the principal production. When the Nile inundated the country, and filled the lakes and canals with its overflowing waters, these precious gifts were extended to the most remote villages in the interior of the valley, and the plentiful supply of fish which they obtained was an additional benefit conferred upon them at this season of the year.‘ (Wilkinson‘s "Ancient

Egyptians," vol. iii. pp. 62,63.) Hence, the greatness of the calamity here referred to by the prophet when the lakes and canals should be dried up. The whole country would feel it.

And all they that cast angle - Two kinds of fishermen are mentioned - those who used a hook, and those who used the net. The former would fish mainly in the "brooks" or canals that were cut from the Nile to water their lands. For the various methods of fishing, illustrated by drawings, the reader may consult Wilklnson's "Ancient Egyptians," vol. ii. p. 21; vol. iii. p. 53ff.

Verse 9

Moreover - In addition to the calamities that will come upon the fishermen, the drying up of the river will affect all who are supported by that which the overflowing of its waters produced.

They that work in short flax - Egypt was celebrated anciently for producing flax in large quantities, and of a superior quality (see Exodus 9:31; 1 Kings 10:28). The fine linen of Egypt which was manufactured from this is celebrated in Scripture Proverbs 7:16; Ezekiel 27:7. The Egyptians had early carried the art of manufacturing linen to a great degree of perfection. As early as the exode of the Hebrews, we find that the art was known by which stuffs made of linen or other materials were curiously worked and embroidered. ‹And thou shalt make an hanging for the door of the tent, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine-twined linen, made with needlework' (Exodus 26:36; compare Exodus 27:16; Exodus 36:37). So Ezekiel 27:7: ‹Fine linen, with broidered work from Egypt.' So also Martial refers to embroidery with the needle in Egypt:

Haec tibi Memphitis tellus dat munera; victa est
Pectine Niliaco jam Babylonis acus.
Martial, xiv. Ep. 50.

In regard to the "fineness" of the linen which was produced and made in Egypt, we may introduce a statement made by Pliny when speaking of the "nets" which were made there. ‹So delicate,' says he, ‹were some of them, that they would pass through a man's ring, and a single person could carry a sufficient number of them to surround a whole wood. Julius Lupus, who died while governor of Egypt, had some of those nets, each string of which consisted of 150 threads; a fact perfectly surprising to those who are not aware that the Rhodians preserve to this day, in the temple of Minerva, the remains of a linen corslet, presented to them by Amasis, king of Egypt,

whose threads are composed each of 365 fibres.‘ (Pliny, xix. 1.) Herodotus also mentions this corslet (iii. 47), and also another presented by Amasis to the Lacedemonians, which had been carried off by the Samians: ‹It was of linen, ornamented with numerous figures of animals, worked in gold and cotton.

Each thread of the corslet was worthy of admiration. For though very fine, every one was composed of 360 other threads, all distinct; the quality being similar to that dedicated to Minerva at Lindus, by the same monarch.‘ Pliny (xix. 1) mentions four kinds of linen that were particularly celebrated in Egypt - the Tanitic, the Pelusiac, the Butine, and the tentyritic. He also says that the quantity of flax cultivated in Egypt was accounted for, by their exporting linen to Arabia and India. It is now known, also, that the cloth used for enveloping the dead, and which is now found in abundance on the mummies, was “linen.” This fact was long doubted, and it was until recently supposed by many that the cloth was made of cotton. This fact that it is linen was settled beyond dispute by some accurate experiments made by Dr. Ure, Mr. Bauer, and Mr. Thompson, with the aid of powerful microscopes.

It was found that linen fibres uniformly present a cylindrical form, transparent, and articulated, or jointed like a cane, while the fibres of cotton have the appearance of a flat ribbon, with a hem or border at the edge. In the mummy cloths, it was found, without exception, that the fibres were linen. Vast quantities of linen must, therefore, have been used. The linen of the mummy cloths is generally coarse. The warp usually contains about 90 threads in the inch; the woof about 44. Occasionally, however, very fine linen cloth is found, showing the skill with which the manufacture was executed. Sir John G. Wilkinson observes, that a piece of linen in his possession from Egypt had 540 (or 270 double) threads in one inch in the warp. Some of the cambric which is now manufactured has but 160 threads in the inch in the warp, and 140 in the woof. It is to be remembered, also, that the linen in Egypt was spun by hand, and without the aid of machinery (see, on this whole subject, Wilkinson‘s “Ancient Egyptians,” vol. iii. pp. 113-142. Ed. Lond. 1837). The word rendered ‹fine‘ here denotes, according to Gesenius, “combed or hatchelled.” The word ‹fine,‘ however, expresses the idea with sufficient accuracy. Fine linen was used for

clothing; but was so expensive that it was worn chiefly by the rich and by princes Luke 16:19.

They that weave networks - Margin, ‹White-works.‘ According to Gesenius the word הורי *hôrây* means “white linen” - that which is fully bleached. The word הוד *hôd* means “a hole or cavern,” but is not applied to cloth. The parallelism seems rather to require that the word should mean ‹white,‘ or that which would correspond to ‹fine,‘ or valuable; and it is not known that the Egyptians had the art of working lace from linen. Saadias supposes that “nets” are meant, as being made with holes or meshes; but it is evident that a finer work is intended than that.

Shall be confounded - Hebrew, ‹Shall be ashamed.‘ That is, they shall be thrown out of employment, and not know what to do.

Verse 10

And they shall be broken - There has been a great variety of opinion in regard to the interpretation of this verse, and much difficulty in the construction of the Hebrew words. The Vulgate renders it, ‹And its wet places shall fail; all who make ponds to take fish.‘ The Septuagint, ‹And all who make beer (ζύθον *zuthon*) shall lament, and shall afflict their souls.‘ This ζύθον *zuthon* was a sort of malt liquor made of fruits by fermentation, and was used in Egypt in the place of wine, since the grape did not flourish there. Jerome on this place says, that this was much used also in Dalmatia and Pannonia, and was commonly called “Sabaium.” The Chaldee renders this, ‹And the place where they weave cloth shall be trodden down, and the place where they make fish ponds, and where they collect waters, each one for his own life.‘ This variety of reading arises chiefly from the different modes of “pointing” the Hebrew words.

The word rendered ‹broken‘ (מדכאים *medâkâ'iym*) means “trodden down,” from דכא *dâkâ'* “to tread, or trample down,” and agrees in the Hebrew with the word rendered ‹purposes - the proposes shall be trodden down.‘ The word ‹purposes‘ (שתתיה *shâtoteyhâ*) is found only in the plural, and is translated in Psalm 11:3, ‹foundations,‘ from שית *shiyth* “foundation or pillar.” According to this, it would mean that all “the pillars or foundations, that is, probably all the “nobles” of Egypt, would be trodden down. But this does not well suit the connection. Others derive it from שתה *shâtâh* “to drink;” and suppose that it means that which is prepared for drink shall be trodden down or destroyed. Others suppose that it is derived from שתה *shâtâh* “to weave,” and that it refers to the places where they

wove the cloth, that is, their looms; or to the places where they made their nets. And others suppose that it is not the "places" where they wove which are intended, but the "weavers themselves." Forerius supposes it to be derived from שׁתת *shâthath* "to place, lay," and that it refers to the "banks or dykes" that were made to retain the waters in the canals, and that these would be trodden down. This, it seems to me, is the most probable interpretation, as it suits the connection, and agrees with the derivation of the word. But the meaning cannot be certainly ascertained.

All that make sluices - There has been quite as great a variety in the intepretation of this passage as in the former. The word rendered ‹sluices‘ (שׂכר *s'eker*), our translators understand in the sense of places where the water would be retained for fish ponds - made by artificial banks confining the waters that overflow from the Nile. This sense they have given to the word, as if it were derived from סכר *sâkar* "to shut up, to enclose." The Septuagint reads it as if it meant the Hebrew שׁכר *shêkār* or strong drink; and so also the Syriac renders it - as if from שׁכר *shēkâr* "to drink." There is no doubt that by a difference of pointing it may have this signification. But the most probable interpretation, perhaps, is that which derives it from שׂכר *s'âkar* "to hire," and means that they made those places for reward, or for gain. They thus tolled for hire; and the prophet says, that they who thus made enclosures for fish in order to make a livelihood, would be trodden down - that is, they would fail of their purposes.

Ponds for fish - The word rendered ‹fish‘ (נפשׁ *nephesh*), denotes properly any living thing ("see the margin"), but if the usual interpretation is given of this verse, it is evident that fish are intended. The description, therefore, in this entire passage, from verse fifth to verse tenth, is designed to denote the calamities which would come upon Egypt from the failure of the waters of the Nile; and the slightest knowledge of the importance of the Nile to that country will show that all these calamities would follow from such a failure.

Verse 11

Surely the princes - The following verses, to Isaiah 19:16, are designed to describe further the calamities that were coming upon Egypt by a want of wisdom in their rulers. They would be unable to devise means to meet the impending calamities, and would actually increase the national misery by their unwise counsels. The word ‹princes‘ here is taken evidently for the rulers or counselors of state.

Of Zoan - The Vulgate, Septuagint, and Chaldee, render this ‹Tanis.‘ Zoan was doubtless the Tans of the Greeks (Herod. ii. 166), and was a city of Lower Egypt, built, according to Moses Numbers 13:22, seven years after Hebron. It is mentioned in Psalm 78:12; Isaiah 19:11, Isaiah 19:13; Isaiah 30:4; Ezekiel 30:14. It was at the entrance of the Tanitic mouth of the Nile, and gave name to it. Its ruins still exist, and there are seen there at present numerous blocks of granite, seven obelisks of granite, and a statue of Isis. It was the capital of the dynasty of the Tanitish kings until the time of Psammetichus; it was at this place principally that the miracles done by Moses were performed. ‹Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt; in the field of Zoan‘ Psalm 78:12. Its ruins are still called "San," a slight change of the word Zoan. The Ostium Taniticum is now the "Omm Faredje."

Are fools - They are unable to meet by their counsels the impending calamities. Perhaps their folly was evinced by their flattering their sovereign, and by exciting him to plans that tended to the ruin, rather than the welfare of the kingdom.

The wise counselors of Pharaoh - Pharaoh was the common name of the kings of Egypt in the same way as "Caesar" became afterward the common name of the Roman emperors - and the king who is here intended by Pharaoh is probably Psammetichus (see the note at Isaiah 19:4).

How say ye … - Why do you "flatter" the monarch? Why remind him of his ancestry? Why attempt to inflate him with the conception of his own wisdom? This was, and is, the common practice of courtiers; and in this way kings are often led to measures most ruinous to their subjects.

Verse 12

Where are they? - This whole verse is an appeal by the prophet to the king of Egypt respecting the counselors and soothsayers of his kingdom. The sense is, ‹a time of distress and danger is evidently coming upon Egypt. They pretend to be wise; and there is now occasion for all their wisdom, and opportunity to evince it. Let them show it. Let them declare what is coming upon the nation, and take proper measures to meet and remove it; and they will then demonstrate that it would be proper for Pharaoh to repose confidence in them.‘ But if they could not do this, then he should not suffer himself to be deluded, and his kingdom ruined, by their counsels.

Verse 13

The princes of Zoan - (the note at Isaiah 19:11). This "repetition" is intensive and emphatic, and shows the deep conviction of the prophet of their folly. The design is to show that "all" the counselors on which the Egyptians depended were fools.

The princes of Noph - The Vulgate, the Septuagint, and the Chaldee, render this ‹Memphis,‘ and there is no doubt that this is the city intended. The name Memphis may have easily arisen from Noph. It was written also "Moph," and hence, Memphis. It is called "Menouf" by the Copts and Arabians. According to Plutarch, the name Memphis means "the port of the good." The situation of Memphis has been a subject of considerable dispute, and has afforded matter for long and laborious investigation. Sicard and Shaw fix its site at Djezeh or Ghizeh, opposite to old Cairo. Pococke, D‘Anville, Niebuhr, and other writers and travelers, place Memphis more in the direction of Mitraheny, about fifteen miles further south, on the banks of the Nile, at the entrance of the plain of the mummies, at the north of which the pyramids are placed. It was the residence of the ancient kings of Egypt until the time of the Ptolemies, who commonly resided at Alexandria. Memphis retained its splendor until it was conquered by the Arabians, about 641 a.d. At the supposed site of Memphis south of Ghizeh, there are large mounds of rubbish, a colossal statue sunk in the ground, and a few fragments of granite, which remain to test the existence of this renowned capital. In Strabo‘s time, although partly in ruins, it was yet a populous city, second only to Alexandria. The total disappearance of the ancient edifices of Memphis is easily accounted for by the circumstance, that the materials were employed for the building of adjacent cities. Fostal rose out of the ruins, and when that city was again deserted, these ruins migrated again to the more modern Cairo (see Robinson‘s "Bib. Researches," vol. i. p. 40).

They have also seduced Egypt - That is, they have by their counsels caused it to err, and have led it into its present embarrassment.

The stay … - Hebrew, פנה *pinnâh* - the "corner; that is, those who should have been the support. So the word is used to denote the head or leader of a people in Judges 20:2, Judges 20:14; 1 Samuel 14:38; Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16; Zechariah 10:4.

Verse 14

The Lord hath mingled - The word מסך *mâsak* "to mingle," is used commonly to denote the act of mixing spices with wine to make it more intoxicating Proverbs 9:2, Proverbs 9:5; Isaiah 5:22. Here it means that

Yahweh has poured out into the midst of them a spirit of giddiness; that is, has produced consternation among them. National commotions and calamities are often thus traced to the overruling providence of God (see the note at Isaiah 19:2; compare Isaiah 10:5-6).

A perverse spirit - Hebrew, ‹A spirit of perverseness.‘ The word rendered ‹perverse‘ is derived from עוה *ʿâvâh* "to be crooked or perverted." Here it means, that their counsels were unwise, land such as tended to error and ruin.

To err as a drunken man … - This is a very striking figure. The whole nation was reeling to and fro, and unsettled in their counsels, as a man is who is so intoxicated as to reel and to vomit. Nothing could more strikingly express, first, the "fact" of their perverted counsels and plans, and secondly, God‘s deep abhorrence of the course which they were pursuing.

Verse 15

Neither shall there be any work - The sense is, that there shall be such discord that no man, whether a prince, a politician, or a priest, shall be able to give any advice, or form any plan for the national safety and security, which shall be successful.

Which the head or tail - High or low; strong or weak: those in office and those out of office; all shall be dispirited and confounded. Rosenmuller understands by the head here, the "political" orders of the nation, and by the tail the "sacerdotal" ranks. But the meaning more probably is, the highest and the lowest ranks - all the politicians, and priests, and princes, on the one hand, as the prophet had just stated Isaiah 19:11-15; and all the artificers, fishermen, etc., on the other, as he had stated Isaiah 19:8-10. This verse, therefore, is a "summing up" of all he had said about the calamities that were coming upon them.

Branch or rush - See these words explained in the note at Isaiah 9:14.

Verse 16

In that day shall Egypt be like unto women - Timid; fearful; alarmed. The Hebrews often, by this comparison, express great fear and consternation Jeremiah 51:30; Nahum 3:13.

Because of the shaking of the hand - The shaking of the hand is an indication of threatening or punishment (note, Isaiah 10:32; Isaiah 11:15).

Verse 17

And the land of Judah - The fear and consternation of Egypt shall be increased when they learn what events are occurring there, and what

Yahweh has purposed in regard to it.

Shall be a terror - This cannot be understood to mean that they were in danger from an invasion by the Jews, for at that time they were not at war, and Judah had no power to overrun Egypt. Jarchi and Kimchi suppose that the passage means that the Egyptians would hear what had occurred to the army of Sennacherib on its overthrow, and that they would be alarmed as if a similar fate was about to come upon them. But the more probable interpretation is that which refers it to the "invasion" of Judah by Sennacherib. The Egyptians would know of that. Indeed, the leading design of Sennacherib was to invade Egypt, and Judah and Jerusalem were to be destroyed only "in the way" to Egypt. And when the Egyptians heard of the great preparations of Sennacherib, and of his advance upon Judah (see Isaiah 10:28-31), and knew that his design was to invade them, ‹the land of Judah‘ would be ‹a terror,‘ because they apprehended that he would make a rapid descent upon them. Vitringa, however, supposes that the sense is, that the Egyptians in their calamities would remember the prophecies of Jeremiah and others, of which they had heard, respecting their punishment; that they would remember that the prophecies respecting Judah had been fulfilled, and that thus Judah would be a terror to them "because" those predictions had come out of Judah. This is plausible, and it may be the correct explanation.

Which he hath determined against it - Either against Judah, or Egypt. The Hebrew will bear either. It may mean that they were alarmed at the counsel which had been formed by Yahweh against Judah, and which was apparently about to be executed by the invasion of Sennacherib, and that thus they feared an invasion themselves, or that they learned that a purpose of destruction was formed by Yahweh against themselves, and that Judah became thus an object of terror, because the prophecies which were spoken there were certain of being fulfilled. The latter is the interpretation given by Vitringa, and perhaps is the moss probable.

Verse 18

In that day - The word ‹day‘ is used in Scripture in a large signification, "as including the whole period under consideration," or the whole time that is embraced in the scope of a prophecy. In this chapter it is used in this sense; and evidently means that the event here foretold would take place "somewhere" in the period that is embraced in the design of the prophecy. That is, the event recorded in this verse would occur in the series

of events that the prophet saw respecting Egypt (see Isaiah 4:1). The sense is, that somewhere in the general time here designated Isaiah 19:4-17, the event here described would take place. There would be an extensive fear of Yahweh, and an extensive embracing of the true religion, in the land of Egypt.

Shall five cities - The number ‹five‘ here is evidently used to denote an "indefinite" number, in the same way as ‹seven‘ is often used in the Scriptures (see Leviticus 26:8). It means, that several cities in Egypt would use that language, one of which only is specified.

The language of Canaan - Margin, ‹Lip of Canaan.‘ So the Hebrew; but the word often means ‹language.‘ The language of Canaan evidently means the "Hebrew" language; and it is called ‹the language of Canaan‘ either because it was spoken by the original inhabitants of the land of Canaan, or more probably because it was used by the Hebrews who occupied Canaan as the promised land; and then it will mean the language spoken in the land of Canaan. The phrase used here is employed probably to denote that they would be converted to the Jewish religion; or that the religion of the Jews would flourish there. A similar expression, to denote conversion to the true God, occurs in Zephaniah 3:9: ‹For there I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.‘

And swear to the Lord of hosts - That is, they shall "devote" themselves to him; or they shall bind themselves to his service by solemn covenant; compare Deuteronomy 10:20; Isaiah 45:20, where conversion to God, and a purpose to serve him, is expressed in the same manner by "swearing" to him, that is, by solemnly devoting themselves to his service.

One shall be called - The name of one of them shall be, etc. Why "one" particularly is designated is not known.

The city of destruction - There has been a great variety of interpretation in regard to this expression. Margin, ‹Heres,‘ or, ‹The sun.‘ The Vulgate, ‹The city of the sun;‘ evidently meaning Heliopolis. The Septuagint Ασεδέκ *Asedik* - ‹The city Asedek.‘ The Chaldee, ‹The city of the house of the sun (בית שמש *bēyith shemesh*), which is to be destroyed.‘ The Syriac, ‹The city of Heres.‘ The common reading of the Hebrew text is, עיר ההרס *'iyr haheres* This reading is found in most MS. editions and versions. The word הרס *heres* commonly means "destruction," though it may also mean "deliverance;" and Gesenius supposes the name was to be

given to it because it was to be a “delivered” city; that is, it would be the city to which ‹the saviour‘ mentioned in Isaiah 19:20, would come, and which he would make his capital. Ikenius contends that the word ‹Heres‘ is taken from the Arabic, and that the name is the same as Leontopolis - ‹The city of the lion,‘ a city in Egypt. But besides other objections which may be made to this interpretation, the signification of “lion” is not given to the word in the Hebrew language.

The common reading is that which occurs in the text - the city of “Heres.” But another reading (החרס *hacheres*) is found in sixteen manuscripts, and has been copied in the Complutensian Polyglot. This word (חרס *cheres*) properly means the “sun,” and the phrase means the city of the sun; that is, Heliopolis. Onias, who was disappointed in obtaining the high priesthood (149 b.c.) on the death of his uncle Menelaus, fled into Egypt, and ingratiated himself into the favor of Ptolemy Philometer and Cleopatra, and was advanced to the highest rank in the army and the court, and made use of his influence to obtain permission to build a temple in Egypt like that at Jerusalem, with a grant that he and his descendants should always have a right to officiate in it as high priests. In order to obtain this, he alleged that it would be for the interest of Egypt, by inducing many Jews to come and reside there, and that their going annually to Jerusalem to attend the great feasts would expose them to alienation from the Egyptians, to join the Syrian interest (“see” Prideaux‘s “Connection,” under the year 149 b.c. Josephus expressly tells us (“Ant.” xiii. 3. 1-3), that in order to obtain this layout, he urged that it had been predicted by Isaiah six hundred years before, and that in consequence of this, Ptolemy granted him permission to build the temple, and that it was built at Leontopolis. It resembled that at Jerusalem, but was smaller and less splendid. It was within the Nomos or prefecture of Heliopolis, at the distance of twenty-four miles from Memphis. Onias pretended that the very place was foretold by Isaiah; and this would seem to suppose that the ancient reading was that of ‹the city of the sun.‘ He urged this prediction in order to reconcile the Jews to the idea of another temple besides that at Jerusalem, because a temple erected in Egypt would be an object of disapprobation to the Jews in Palestine. Perhaps for the same reason the translation of Isaiah in the Septuagint renders this, Ἀσεδέκ *Asedek* - ‹The city of Asedek,‘ as if the original were צדקה *tsedâqâh* - ‹The city of righteousness‘ - that is, a city where

righteousness dwells; or a city which was approved by God. But this is manifestly a corruption of the Hebrew text.

It may be proper to remark that the change in the Hebrew between the word rendered ‹destruction‘ (הרס *heres*), and the word ‹sun‘ (חרס *cheres*), is a change of a single letter where one might be easily mistaken for the other - the change of the Hebrew letter ה (*h*) into the Hebrew letter ח (*ch*). This might have occurred by the error of a transcriber, though the circumstances would lead us to think it not improbable that it “may” have been made designedly, but by whom is unknown. It “may” have been originally as Onias pretended and have been subsequently altered by the Jews to counteract the authority which he urged for building a temple in Egypt; but there is no certain evidence of it. The evidence from MSS. is greatly in favor of the reading as in our translation (הרס *heres*), and this may be rendered either ‹destruction,‘ or more probably, according to Gesenius, ‹deliverance,‘ so called from the “deliverance” that would be brought to it by the promised saviour Isaiah 19:20.

It may be added, that there is no evidence that Isaiah meant to designate the city where Onias built the temple, but merely to predict that many cities in Egypt would be converted, one of which would be the one here designated. Onias took “advantage” of this, and made an artful use of it, but it was manifestly not the design of Isaiah. Which is the true reading of the passage it is impossible now to determine; nor is it important. I think the most probable interpretation is that which supposes that Isaiah meant to refer to a city saved from destruction, as mentioned in Isaiah 19:20, and that he did not design to designate any particular city by name. The city of Heliopolis was situated on the Pelusian branch of the Nile, about five miles below the point of the ancient Delta. It was deserted in the time of Strabo; and this geographer mentions its mounds of ruin, but the houses were shown in which Eudoxus and Plato had studied.

The place was celebrated for its learning, and its temple dedicated to the sun. There are now no ruins of ancient buildings, unless the mounds can be regarded as such; the walls, however, can still be traced, and there is an entire obelisk still standing. This obelisk is of red granite, about seventy feet high, and from its great antiquity has excited much attention among the

learned. In the neighboring villages there are many fragments which have been evidently transferred from this city. Dr. Robinson who visited it, says, that ‹the site about two hours N. N. E. from Cairo. The way thither passes along the edge of the desert, which is continually making encroachments, so soon as then ceases to be a supply of water for the surface of the ground. The site of Heliopolis is marked by low mounds, enclosing a space about three quarters of a mile in length, by half a mile in breadth, which was once occupied by houses, and partly by the celebrated temple of the sun. This area is now a plowed field, a garden of herbs; and the solitary obelisk which rises in the midst is the sole remnant of the splendor of the place. Near by it is a very old sycamore, its trunk straggling and gnarled, under which legendary tradition relates that the holy family once. rested.‘ (“Bib. Researches,” vol. i. pp. 36,37.) The illustration in the book, from the Pictorial Bible, will give an idea of the present appearance of Heliopolis.

Verse 19

In that day shall there be an altar - An “altar” is properly a place on which sacrifices are offered. According to the Mosaic law, but one great altar was to be erected for sacrifices. But the word ‹altar‘ is often used in another sense to denote a place of “memorial;” or a place of worship in general (Joshua 22:22-26. It is clear that Isaiah did not intend that this should be taken “literally,” or that there should be a rival temple and altar erected in Egypt, but his description is evidently taken in part from the account of the religion of the patriarchs who erected altars and pillars and monuments to mark the places of the worship of the true God. The parallelism here, where ‹pillars‘ are mentioned, shows in what sense the word ‹altar‘ is used. It means that the worship of the true God would be established in Egypt, and that certain “places” should be set apart to his service. “altars” were among the first places reared as connected with the worship of God (see Genesis 8:20; Genesis 12:7; Genesis 35:1; Exodus 17:15).

To the Lord - To Yahweh - the true God.

And a pillar - That is, a memorial to God. Thus Jacob set up the stone on which he had lain ‹for a pillar,‘ and poured oil on it Genesis 28:18. Again Genesis 35:14, he set up a pillar to mark the place where God met him and talked with him (compare Genesis 31:13; Leviticus 26:1; Deuteronomy 16:22). The word ‹pillar,‘ when thus used, denotes a stone, or

column of wood, erected as a monument or memorial; and especially a memorial of some manifestation of God or of his favor. Before temples were known, such pillars would naturally be erected; and the description here means simply that Yahweh would be worshipped in Egypt.

At the border thereof - Not in one place merely, but in all parts of Egypt. It is not improbable that the "name" of Yahweh, or some rude designation of the nature of his worship, would be inscribed on such pillars. It is known that the Egyptians were accustomed to rear pillars, monuments, obelisks, etc., to commemorate great events, and that the names and deeds of illustrious persons were engraven on them; and the prophet here says, that such monuments should be reared to Yahweh. In regard to the fulfillment of this prophecy, there can be no question. After the time of Alexander the Great, large numbers of Jews were settled in Egypt. They were favored by the Ptolemies, and they became so numerous that it was deemed necessary that their Scriptures should be translated into Greek for their use, and accordingly the translation called the Septuagint was made. See Introduction, Section 8,1, (1).

Verse 20

And it shall be for a sign - The altar, and the pillar. This shows that the altar was not to be for sacrifice, but was a "memorial," or designed to designate a place of worship.

They shall cry to the Lord because of the oppressors - That is, oppressed and borne down under the exactions of their rulers, they shall seek deliverance from the true God - one instance among many of the effect of affliction and oppression in leading people to embrace the true religion.

And he shall send them a saviour - Who this "saviour" would be, has been a subject on which there has been a great difference of opinion. Grotius supposes that it would be "the angel" by which the army of Sennacherib would be destroyed. Gesenius thinks it was Psammetichus, who would deliver them from the tyranny of the eleven kings who were contending with each other, or that, since in Isaiah 19:4, he is called a ‹severe lord,‘ it is probable that the promise here is to be understood of a delivering or protecting angel. But it is evident that some person is here denoted who would be sent "subsequently" to the national judgments which are here designated. Dr. Gill supposes that by the saviour here is meant the Messiah; but this interpretation does not suit the connection, for it is evident that the event here predicted, was to take place before the coming of Christ.

Vitringa and Dr. Newton suppose with more probability that Alexander the Great is here referred to, who took possession of Egypt after his conquest in the East, and who might be called "a saviour," inasmuch as he delivered them from the reign of the oppressive kings who had tyrannized there, and inasmuch as his reign and the reigns of those who succeeded him in Egypt, would be much more mild than that of the former kings of that country.

That Alexander the Great was regarded by the Egyptians as a saviour or deliverer, is apparent from history. Upon his coming to Egypt, the people submitted to him cheerfully, out of hatred to the Persians, so that he became master of the country without any opposition (Diod. Sic. xvii. 49; Arrian, iii. 3,1; Q. Curtius, iv. 7,8, as quoted by Newton). He treated them with much kindness; built the city of Alexandria, calling it after his own name, designing to make it the capital of his empire; and under him and the Ptolemies who succeeded him, trade revived, commerce flourished, learning was patronized, and peace and plenty blessed the land. Among other things, Alexander transplanted many Jews into Alexandria, and granted them many privileges, equal to the Macedonians themselves (Jos. "Bell. Jud." ii. 18. 7; "Contra Ap." ii. 4). ‹The arrival of Alexander,' says Wilkinson ("Ancient Egyptians," vol. i. pp. 213,214), ‹was greeted with universal satisfaction.

Their hatred of the Persians, and their frequent alliances with the Greeks, who had fought under the same banners against a common enemy, naturally taught the Egyptians to welcome the Macedonian army with the strongest demonstrations of friendship, and to consider their coming as a direct interposition of the gods; and so wise and considerate was the conduct of the early Ptolemies, that they almost ceased to regret the period when they were governed by their native princes.' Under the Ptolemies, large numbers of the Jews settled in Egypt. For their use, as has been remarked, the Old Testament was translated into Greek, and a temple was built by Onias, under the sixth Ptolemy. Philo represents the number of the Jews in Egypt in his time at not less than one million. They were settled in nearly all parts oF Egypt; but particularly in Heliopolis or the city of the sun, in Migdol, in Tahpanes, in Noph or Memphis, in Pathros or Thebais Jeremiah 44:1 - perhaps the five cities referred to in Isaiah 19:18.

And a great one - (ורב *vârâb*). A mighty one; a powerful saviour. The name ‹great' has been commonly assigned to Alexander. The Septuagint

renders this, ‹Judging (κρίνων *krinōn*), he shall save them;‘ evidently regarding רב *râb* as derived from ריב *riyb* “to manage a cause, or to judge.” Lowth renders it, ‹A vindicator.‘ The word means “great, mighty;” and is repeatedly applied to a prince, chief, or captain 2 Kings 25:8; Esther 1:8; Daniel 1:3; Daniel 2:48; Daniel 5:11.

Verse 21

And the Lord shall be known to Egypt - Shall be worshipped and honored by the Jews who shall dwell there, and by those who shall be proselyted to their religion.

And the Egyptians shall know the Lord - That many of the Egyptians would be converted to the Jewish religion there can be no doubt. This was the result in all countries where the Jews had a residence (compare the notes at Acts 2:9-11).

And shall do sacrifice - Shall offer sacrifices to Yahweh. They would naturally go to Jerusalem as often as practicable, and unite with the Jews there, in the customary rites of their religion.

And oblations - The word מנחה *minichāh* ‹oblation,‘ denotes any offering that is not a “bloody” sacrifice - a thank-offering; an offering of incense, flour, grain, etc. (see the notes at Isaiah 1:13) The sense is, that they should be true worshippers of God.

They shall vow a vow … - They shall be sincere and true worshippers of God. The large numbers of the Jews that dwelt there; the fact that many of them doubtless were sincere; the circumstances recorded Acts 2:9-11, that Jews were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost; and the fact that the true religion was carried to Egypt, and the Christian religion established there, all show how fully this prediction was fulfilled.

Verse 22

And the Lord shall smite Egypt - That is, in the manner described in the previous part of this prophecy Isaiah 19:2-10.

And heal it - Or restore it to more than its former splendor and prosperity, as described in the previous verses Isaiah 19:18-20. He shall send it a saviour; he shall open new sources of prosperity; and he shall cause the true religion to flourish there. These advantages would be more than a compensation for all the calamities that he would bring upon it.

And they shall return … - These calamities shall be the means of their conversion to Yahweh.

Verse 23

There shall be a highway - A communication; that is, there shall be an alliance between Egypt and Assyria, as constituting parts of one empire, and as united in the service of the true God. The same figure of a "highway" is found in Isaiah 11:16 (see the note on that place). The truth was, that Alexander, by his conquests, subjected Assyria and Egypt, and they constituted parts of his empire, and were united under him. It was true, also, that there were large numbers of Jews in both these countries, and that they were united in the service of the true God. They worshipped him in those countries; and they met at Jerusalem at the great feasts, and thus Judah, Assyria, and Egypt, were united in his worship.

And the Assyrian shall come into Egypt - There shall be free and uninterrupted contact between the two nations, as parts of the same empire.

And the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians - In the same armies; under the same leader. This was the case under Alexander the Great. Or the word ‹serve‘ may mean that they would serve God unitedly. So Lowth and Noyes render it.

Verse 24

In that day shall Israel be the third - That is, the three shall be united as one people. Instead of being rival, hostile, and contending kingdoms, they shall be united and friendly; and instead of having different and jarring religions, they shall all worship the same God. The prophecy rather refers to the spread of the true religion, and the worship of the true God, than to a political or civil alliance.

Even a blessing - It shall be a source of blessing, because from Judea the true religion would extend into the other lands.

In the midst of the land - That is, "the united land" - composed of the three nations now joined in alliance. Judea was situated in the "midst" of this united land, or occupied a central position between the two. It was also true that it occupied a central position in regard to the whole earth, and that from it, as a radiating point, the true religion was disseminated throughout all nations.

Verse 25

whom the Lord of hosts shall bless - That is, which united country he shall acknowledge as truly worshipping him, and on which he shall bestow his favors as his favored people.

Assyria the work of my hands - This is synonymous with the expression ‹my people.‘ It means that the arrangements by which the true

religion would be established among them, were the work of God. Conversion to God is everywhere in the Scriptures spoken of as his work, or creation; see Ephesians 2:10: ‹For we are his workmanship; created in Christ Jesus unto good works‘ (compare 2 Corinthians 5:17; Psalm 100:3).

Israel mine inheritance - The land and people which is especially my own - a name not unfrequently given to Israel. For a learned examination of the various hypotheses in regard to the fulfillment of this prophecy, see Vitringa. He himself applies it to the times succeeding Alexander the Great. Alexander he regards as the ‹saviour‘ mentioned in Isaiah 19:20; and the establishment of the true religion referred to by the prophet as that which would take place under the Ptolemies. Vitringa has proved - what indeed is known to all who have the slightest knowledge of history that there were large numbers of Jews under the Ptolemies in Egypt, and that multitudes became proselytes to the Jewish faith.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Introduction

This prophecy occupies this single chapter. Its design and scope it is not difficult to understand. The time when it was delivered is designated in Isaiah 20:1, and was manifestly in the reign of Hezekiah. The Assyrian empire had extended its conquests over Syria, Damascus, and Ephraim or Samaria 2 Kings 18:9-12. The king of Assyria lied sent Tartan to take possession of Ashdod, or Azotus, the maritime key of Palestine, and there was evident danger that the Assyrians would overthrow the government of Judah, and secure also the conquest of Egypt. In these circumstances of danger, the main reliance of Judah was on the aid which they hoped to derive from Egypt and Ethiopia Isaiah 20:5, as being alone able to repel the Assyrians. They relied rather on that aid than on God. To "recall" them from this, and to show them the vanity of such a dependence, and to lead them to rely on God, Isaiah was sent to them to be a sign; or to indicate by a symbolic action what would be the fate of the Egyptians on whom they were placing their reliance Isaiah 20:4. By showing the Jews what would be the destiny of Egypt, he designed to withdraw them from resting on their assistance, and to turn them to God for protection and aid.

Verse 1

In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod - Tartan was one of the generals of Sennacherib. Ashdod, called by the Greeks Azotus, was a seaport on the Mediterranean, between Askelon and Ekron, and not far from Gaza (Reland's "Palestine," iii.) It was one of the five cities of the Philistines, assigned to the tribe of Judah, but never conquered by them Joshua 13:8; Joshua 15:46-47. The temple of Dagon stood here; and here the ark of God was brought after the fatal battle of Eben-ezer (1 Samuel 5:1, following.) It sustained many sieges, and was regarded as an important place in respect to Palestine, and also to Egypt. It was taken by Tartan, and remained in the possession of the Assyrians until it was besieged by Psammetichus, the Egyptian king, who took it after a siege of twenty-nine years (Herod. ii. 157). It was about thirty miles from Gaza. It is now a small village, and is called "Esdud." It was besieged and taken by Tartan as preparatory to the conquest of Egypt; and if the king who is here called "Sargon" was Sennacherib, it probable that it was taken before he threatened Jerusalem.

Sargon the king of Assyria - Who this "Sargon" was is not certainly known. Some have supposed that it was Sennacherib; others that it was Shalmaneser the father of Sennacherib, and others that it was Esar-haddon the successor of Sennacherib - (Michaelis). Rosenmuller and Gesenius suppose that it was a king who reigned "between" Sbalmaneser and Sennacherib. Tartan is known to have been a general of Sennacherib 2 Kings 18:17, and it is natural to suppose that he is here intended. Jerome says that Senacherib had seven names, and Kimchi says that he had eight; and it is not improbable that "Sargon" was one of those names. Oriental princes often had several names; and hence, the difficulty of identifying them. See Vitringa on this place.

Verse 2

By Isaiah - Margin, ‹By the hand of Isaiah.' So the Hebrew. That is, by the instrumentality of Isaiah. He sent him to make known the fate of the Egyptians, and the folly of trusting in them on this occasion.

Go, and loose the sackcloth - For the meaning of the word "sackcloth," see the note at Isaiah 3:24. It was commonly worn as an emblem of mourning. But there is reason to believe that it was worn also by the prophets, and was regarded, in some degree, as their appropriate dress. It was made usually of the coarse hair of the goat, and was worn as a zone or girdle around the loins. That this was the dress of Elijah is apparent from 2 Kings 1:8: ‹He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather;' that is, he was clothed in a garment made of hair. The same was true of John the Baptist Matthew 3:4. That the prophets wore ‹a rough garment' is apparent also from Zechariah 13:4: ‹Neither shall they (the false prophets) wear a rough garment (Hebrew, A garment of hair) to deceive;' that is, the false prophets shall not assume the dress of the true prophets for the purpose of deluding the people, or to make them think that they are true prophets. It is evident, therefore, that this hairy garment was regarded as a dress that pertained particularly to the prophets. It is well known, also, that the ancient Greek philosophers had a special dress to distinguish them from the common people. Probably the custom of wearing "hair cloth" among the monks of later ages took its rise from this example of the prophets. His removing this garment was designed to be a sign or an emblem to show that the Egyptians should be stripped of all their possessions, and carried captive to Assyria.

Walking naked - That is, walking "without this special prophetic garment. It does not mean that he was in a state of entire nudity, for all that he was directed to do was to lay this garment - this emblem of his office - aside. The word "naked," moreover, is used in the Scriptures, not to denote an absolute destitution of clothing, but that the "outer" garment was laid aside (see the note at John 21:7). Thus it is said of Saul 1 Samuel 19:24 that he ‹stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel, and lay down naked all that day;' that is, he stripped off his royal robes, and was "naked or unclothed" in that respect. He removed his "special" dress as a king, or military chieftain, and appeared in the ordinary dress. It cannot be supposed that the king of Israel would be seen literally without raiment. So David is said to have danced "naked" before the ark, that is, with his royal robes laid aside. How "long" Isaiah walked in this manner has been a matter of doubt (see the note at Isaiah 20:3). The prophets were accustomed to use symbolic actions to denote the events which they foretold (see the note at Isaiah 8:18). Thus the children of Isaiah, and the names given to them, were significant of important events (Isaiah 8:1-3; compare Jeremiah 18:1-6; Jeremiah 43:8-9); in both of which places he used emblematic actions to exhibit the events concerning which he prophesied in a striking manner. Thus also the prophets are expressly called ‹signs and wonders' Zechariah 3:8; Ezekiel 12:6.

Verse 3

Like as - That is, as Isaiah has gone stripped of his special garment as a prophet, so shall the Egyptians and Ethiopians be stripped of all that they value, and be carried captive into Assyria.'

Hath walked … three years - A great deal of difficulty has been felt in the interpretation of this place, from the strong improbability that Isaiah should have gone in this manner for a space of time so long as our translation expresses. The Septuagint renders this, ‹As my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years, three years shall be for signs and wonders to the Egyptians and Ethiopians.' The phrase in the Hebrew, ‹three years,' "may" either be taken in connection with the preceding part of the sentence, as in our translation, meaning that he actually walked so long; or it may be taken with that which follows, and then it will denote that he was a sign and wonder with reference to the captivity of the Egyptians and Ethiopians; and that by this symbolic action he in some way indicated that they would be carried away captive for that space of time; or, as Aben Ezra

and Abarbanel suppose, that he signified that their captivity would commence after three years. Lowth supposes that it means that his walking was for three days, and that the Hebrew text bas been corrupted. Vitringa also seems to suppose that this is possible, and that a day was a symbolic sign for a year. Rosenmuller supposes that this prophetic action was continued during three years "at intervals," so that the subject might be kept before the mind of the people. But the supposition that this means that the symbolic action of walking naked and barefoot continued for so long a time in any manner, is highly improbable.

(1) The Hebrew does not necessarily require it. It "may" mean simply that his actions were a sign and wonder with reference to a three years' captivity of the Egyptians.

(2) It is in itself improbable that he should so long a time walk about Jerusalem expressly as a sign and wonder, when a much shorter period would have answered the purpose as well.

(3) Such a sign would have hardly met the circumstances of the case. Asdod was taken. The Assyrian king was advancing.

The Jews were in consternation and looking to Egypt for help; and amidst this agitation and alarm, there is the highest improbability that Isaiah would be required to remain a sign and wonder for the long space of three years, when decided action was needed, and when, unless prevented, the Jews would have formed a speedy alliance with the Egyptians. I suppose, therefore, that the entire sense of the phrase will be expressed by translating it, ‹my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot, "a three years' sign and wonder;'" that is, a sign and indication that "a three years' calamity" would come upon Egypt and Ethiopia. Whether this means that the calamity would "commence" in three years from that time, or that it should "continue" three years, perhaps we cannot determine. Grotius thinks that it means that it would occur "after" three years; that is, that the war between the Assyrians and Ethiopians would continue during that time only. In what manner Isaiah indicated this, is not certainly known. The conjecture of Lowth is not improbable, that it was by appearing three "days" naked and barefoot, and that each day denoted a year. Or it may have been that he appeared in this manner for a short period - though but once - and "declared" that this was the design or purport of the action.

Upon Egypt … - With reference to; or as a sign in regard to Egypt. It does not mean that he was in Egypt, but that his action "had reference" to Egypt.

And Ethiopia - Hebrew, כוּשׁ *kûsh* - (see the note at Isaiah 11:11). Whether this denotes the African Cush or Ethiopia, or whether it refers to the "Cush" in Arabia, cannot be determined. The latter is the more probable supposition, as it is scarcely probable that the Assyrian would extend his conquests south of Egypt so as to subdue the African Ethiopia. Probably his conquest embraced the "Cush" that was situated in the southern regions of Arabia.

Verse 4

So shall the king of Assyria - The emphasis here is on the word "so." As Isaiah has walked naked, that is, stripped off his usual clothing, "so" shall the Egyptians and Ethiopians be led away "stripped" of all their possessions.

The Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives - The Egyptians and Ethiopians, or Cushites, were often united in an alliance, and appear to have been when this prophecy was delivered. Thus Nahum 3:8:

Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite;
Put and Lubim were thy helpers.

To the shame of Egypt - It shall be a disgrace to them to be subdued, and to be carried captive in so humiliating a manner. It is remarked by Belzoni (‹Operations and Recent Discoveries in Egypt and Nubia‘), that in the figures on the remains of their temples, prisoners are often represented as naked, or only in aprons, with disheveled hair, and with their hands chained. He also remarks, that on a "bas-relief," on the recently-discovered graves of the kings of Thebes, a multitude of "Egyptian and Ethiopian prisoners" are represented - showing that Egypt and Ethiopia were sometimes "allied," alike in mutual defense and in bondage (compare Isaiah 47:2, and Nahum 3:5).

Verse 5

And they shall be afraid - The Jews, or the party or faction among the Jews, that were expecting aid from allied Ethiopia and Egypt. When they shall see them vanquished, they shall apprehend a similar danger to themselves; and they shall be ashamed that they ever confided in a people so little able to aid them, instead of trusting in the arm of God.

Egypt their glory - Their boast, as if Egypt was able to save them. The word rendered here ‹glory‘ (תפארת *tiph'ereth*) means properly, “ornament, praise, honor;” and then it may mean the “object” of glory, or that in which people boast or confide. That is its sense here (compare Isaiah 10:12; Isaiah 13:19; Zechariah 12:7).

Verse 6

And the inhabitant - The dwellers generally.

Of this isle - The word אי *'iy* “isle” is used here in the sense of “coast, or maritime” country, and is evidently applied to Palestine, or the land of Canaan, which is a narrow coast lying on the Mediterranean. That the word is often used in this sense, and may be applied to a maritime country, see the notes at Isaiah 13:22; Isaiah 41:1. The connection here requires us to understand it of Palestine.

Shall say … - Shall condemn their own folly in trusting in Egypt, and seeking deliverance there.

And how shall we escape? - They shall be alarmed for their own safety, for the very nation on which they had relied had been made captive. And when the “stronger” had been subdued, how could the feeble and dependent escape a similar overthrow and captivity? All this was designed to show them the folly of trusting in the aid of another nation, and to lead them to put confidence in the God of their fathers.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Introduction

The prophecy which commences this chapter occupies the first ten verses. That it relates to Babylon is apparent from Isaiah 21:2, Isaiah 21:9. The object is to foretell the destruction of that city by the Medes and Persians, and the design is the same as in the more extended and minute description of the same event in Isaiah 21:10.

This oracle, or ode, is one of singular beauty. It is distinguished for its brevity, energy, and force, for the variety and the rapidity of the action, and for the vivid manner in which the events are made to pass before the mind. It is the language of strong excitement and of alarm; language that expresses rapid and important movements; and language appropriate to great vigor of conception and sublimity in description. In the oracle the prophet supposes himself in Babylon, and the events which are described are made to pass rapidly in vision (see the Introduction, Section 7,4) before him. He first sees Isaiah 21:1 the dreadful storm coming at a distance (the hostile armies), approaching like a whirlwind and threatening destruction to everything in its way. He then Isaiah 21:2 hears God‘s direction to the invading armies; represents himself as made acquainted with the design of the vision, and hears the command of God to Elam (Persia) and Media to go up and commence the siege.

Regarding himself as among the exiles in the midst of Babylon, he Isaiah 21:3-4 describes himself as deeply affected in view of this sudden invasion, and of the calamities that were coming upon Babylon. In Isaiah 21:5, he describes the state of the Babylonians. They are represented, first as preparing the table, making ready for feasting and revelry, setting the watch on the watch-tower, and giving themselves up to dissipation; and secondly, as suddenly alarmed, and summoned to prepare for war. He then (Isaiah 21:6-9 declares the way in which the princes of Babylon would be roused from their revelry. But it is described in a very remarkable manner. He does not “narrate” the events, but he represents himself as directed to appoint a watchman Isaiah 21:6 to announce what he should see. That watchman Isaiah 21:7 sees two chariots - representing two nations coming rapidly onward to execute the orders of God. So rapid is their approach, so terrible their march, that the watchman cries out Isaiah 21:9 that Babylon is

fallen, and will be inevitably destroyed. The prophecy is then closed Isaiah 21:10 by an address to the afflicted Jews whom God had ‹threshed,‘ or punished by sending them captive to Babylon, and with the declaration that this was intended by the Lord of hosts to be declared unto them. The whole design of the prophecy, therefore, is to console them, and to repeat the assurance given in Isaiah 13; 14, that Babylon would be destroyed, and that they would be delivered from bondage.

Verse 1

The burden - (see the note at Isaiah 13:1).

Of the desert - There have been almost as many interpretations of this expression, as there have been interpreters. That it means Babylon, or the country about Babylon, there can be no doubt; but the question why this phrase was applied, has given rise to a great diversity of opinions. The term ‹desert‘ (מדבר *midbâr*) is usually applied to a wilderness, or to a comparatively barren and uncultivated country - a place for flocks and herds (Psalm 65:13; Jeremiah 9:9 ff); to an actual waste, sandy desert Isaiah 32:15; Isaiah 35:1; and particularly to the deserts of Arabia Genesis 14:6; Genesis 16:7; Deuteronomy 11:24. It may here be applied to Babylon either historically, as having been “once” an unreclaimed desert: or by “anticipation,” as descriptive of what it “would be” after it should be destroyed by Cyrus, or possibly both these ideas may have been combined. That it was “once” a desert before it was reclaimed by Semiramis is the testimony of all history; that it is “now” a vast waste is the united testimony of all travelers. There is every reason to think that a large part of the country about Babylon was formerly overflowed with water “before” it was reclaimed by dykes; and as it was naturally a waste, when the artificial dykes and dams should be removed, it would again be a desert.

Of the sea - (ים *yâm*). There has been also much difference of opinion in regard to this word. But there can be no doubt that it refers to the Euphrates, and to the extensive region of marsh that was covered by its waters. The name ‹sea‘ (ים *yâm*) is not unfrequently given to a large river, to the Nile, and to the Euphrates (see the note at Isaiah 11:15; compare Isaiah 19:5). Herodotus (i. 184), says, that ‹Semiramis confined the Euphrates within its channel by raisin great dams against it; for before, it overflowed the whole country like a sea.‘ And Abydenus, in Eusebius, (“Prepara. Evang.,” ix. 457) says, respecting the building of Babylon by

Nebuchadnezzar, that ‹it is reported that all this was covered with water, and was called a sea - λέγεται δὲ πάντα μεν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὕδωρ εἶναι, θαλασσων καλουμένην *legetai de panta men ech archēs hudōr einai thalassōn kaloumenēn* (Compare Strabo, "Geog." xvi. 9,10; and Arrianus, "De Expedit. Alexandri," vii. 21). Cyrus removed these dykes, reopened the canals, and the waters were suffered to remain, and again converted the whole country into a vast marsh (see the notes at Isaiah 8:8 (compare Habakkuk 1:11), an army is compared to an overflowing and rapid river.

In the south - Whirlwinds or tempests are often in the Scriptures represented as coming from the south, Zechariah 9:14; Job 37:9:

Out of the south cometh the whirlwind,
And cold out of the north.

So Virgil:

- *creberque procellis*
Africus -
AEneid, i. 85.

The deserts of Arabia were situated to the south of Babylon, and the south winds are described as the winds of the desert. Those winds are represented as being so violent as to tear away the tents occupied by a caravan (Pietro della Valle, "Travels," vol. iv. pp. 183,191). In Job 1:19, the whirlwind is represented as coming ‹from the wilderness; that is, from the "desert" of Arabia (compare Jeremiah 13:24; Hosea 13:15).

So it cometh from the desert - (see Isaiah 13:4, and the note on that place). God is there represented as collecting the army for the destruction of Babylon ‹on the mountains,‘ and by mountains are probably denoted the same as is here denoted by the desert. The country of the "Medes" is doubtless intended, which, in the view of civilized and refined Babylon, was an uncultivated region, or a vast waste or wilderness.

From a terrible land - A country rough and uncultivated, abounding in forests or wastes.

Verse 2

A grievous vision - Margin, as in Hebrew ‹Hard.‘ On the word ‹vision,‘ see the note at Isaiah 1:1. The sense here is, that the vision which the prophet saw was one that indicated great calamity Isaiah 21:3-4.

Is declared unto me - That is, is caused to pass before me, and its meaning is made known to me.

The treacherous dealer - (חבוגד *chabôgēd*). The perfidious, unfaithful people. This is the usual signification of the word; but the connection here does not seem to require the signification of treachery or perfidy, but of "violence." The word has this meaning in Habakkuk 2:5, and in Proverbs 11:3, Proverbs 11:6. It refers here to the Medes; and to the fact that oppression and violence were now to be exercised toward Babylon. Lowth renders this:

‹The plunderer is plundered, and the destroyer is destroyed;'

But the authority for so rendering it is doubtful. He seems to suppose that it refers to Babylon. The Hebrew evidently means, that there is to be plundering and devastation, and that this is to be accomplished by a nation accustomed to it, and which is immediately specified; that is, the united kingdom of Media and Persia. The Chaldee renders it, ‹They who bring violence, suffer violence; and the plunderers are plundered.' Jarchi says, that the sense of the Hebrew text according to the Chaldee is, ‹Ah! thou who art violent! there comes another who will use thee with violence; and thou plunderer, another comes who will plunder thee, even the Medes and Persians, who will destroy and lay waste Babylon.' But the Hebrew text will not bear this interpretation. The sense is, that desolation was about to be produced by a nation "accustomed" to it, and who would act toward Babylon in their true character.

Go up - This is an address of God to Media and Persia (see the note at Isaiah 13:17).

O Elam - This was the name of the country originally possessed by the Persians, and was so called from Elam a son of Shem Genesis 10:22. It was east of the Euphrates, and comprehended properly the mountainous countries of Khusistan and Louristan, called by the Greek writers "Elymais." In this country was Susa or Shushan, mentioned in Daniel 8:2. It is here put for Persia in general, and the call on Elam and Media to go up, was a call on the united kingdom of the Medes and Persians.

Besiege - That is, besiege Babylon.

O Media - (see the note at Isaiah 13:17).

All the sighing thereof have I made to cease - This has been very differently interpreted by expositors. Some understand it (as Rosenmuller, Jerome, and Lowth,) as designed to be taken in an "active" sense; that is, all the groaning "caused" by Babylon in her oppressions of others, and particularly of God's people, would cease. Others refer it to the army of the

Medes and Persians, as if "their" sighing should be over; that is, their fatigues and labors in the conquest of Babylon. Calvin supposes that it means that the Lord would be deaf to the sighs of Babylon; that is, he would disregard them and would bring upon them the threatened certain destruction. The probable meaning is that suggested by Jerome, that God would bring to an end all the sighs and groans which Babylon had caused in a world suffering under her oppressions (compare Isaiah 14:7-8).

Verse 3

Therefore - In this verse, and the following, the prophet represents himself as "in" Babylon, and as a witness of the calamities which would come upon the city. He describes the sympathy which he feels in her sorrows, and represents himself as deeply affected by her calamities. A similar description occurred in the pain which the prophet represents himself as enduring on account of the calamities of Moab (see Isaiah 15:5, note; Isaiah 16:11, note).

My loins - (see the note at Isaiah 16:11).

With pain - The word used here (חלחלה *chalchâlâh*) denotes properly the pains of parturition, and the whole figure is taken from that. The sense is, that the prophet was filled with the most acute sorrow and anguish, in view of the calamities which were coming on Babylon. That is, the sufferings of Babylon would be indescribably great and dreadful (see Nahum 2:11; Ezekiel 30:4, Ezekiel 30:9).

I was bowed down - Under the grief and sorrow produced by these calamities.

At the hearing it - The Hebrew may have this sense, and mean that these things were made to pass before the eye of the prophet, and that the sight oppressed him, and bowed him down. But more probably the Hebrew letter מ (*m*) in the word משמע *mishemoa'* is to be taken "privatively," and means, ‹I was so bowed down or oppressed that I could not see; I was so dismayed that I could not hear;' that is, all his senses were taken away by the greatness of the calamity, and by his sympathetic sufferings. A similar construction occurs in Psalm 69:23: ‹Let their eyes be darkened that they see not' (מראות *mēre'ôth*) that is, "from" seeing.

Verse 4

My heart panted - Margin, ‹My mind wandered.' The Hebrew word rendered ‹panted' (תעה *tâʿâh*) means to wander about; to stagger; to be giddy; and is applied often to one that staggers by being intoxicated.

Applied to the heart, it means that it is disquieted or troubled. The Hebrew word "heart" here is to be taken in the sense of "mind."

The night of my pleasure - There can be no doubt that the prophet here refers to the night of revelry and riot in which Babylon was taken. The prophet calls it the night of "his" pleasure, because he represents himself as being "in" Babylon when it should be taken, and, therefore, uses such language as an inhabitant of Babylon would use. "They" would call it the night of their pleasure, because it was set apart to feasting and revelry.

Hath he turned into fear - God has made it a night of consternation and alarm. The prophet here refers to the fact that Babylon would be taken by Cyrus during that night, and that consternation and alarm would suddenly pervade the affrighted and guilty city (see Daniel 5).

Verse 5

Prepare the table - This verse is one of the most striking and remarkable that occurs in this prophecy, or indeed in any part of Isaiah. It is language supposed to be spoken in Babylon. The first direction - perhaps supposed to be that of the king - is to prepare the table for the feast. Then follows a direction to set a watch - to make the city safe, so that they might revel without fear. Then a command to eat and drink: and then immediately a sudden order, as if alarmed at an unexpected attack, to arise and anoint the shield, and to prepare for a defense. The "table" here refers to a feast - that impious feast mentioned in 2 Samuel 1:21). The Chaldee renders it, ‹Fit, and polish your arms.' The Septuagint, ‹Prepare shields.' Shields were instruments of defense prepared to ward off the spears and arrows of an enemy in battle. They were usually made of a rim of brass or wood, and over this was drawn a covering of the skin of an ox or other animal in the manner of a drum-head with us. Occasionally the hide of a rhinoceros or an elephant was used. Burckhardt ("Travels in Nubia") says that the Nubians use the hide of the hippopotamus for the making of shields. But whatever skin might be used, it was necessary occasionally to rub it over with oil lest it should become hard, and crack, or lest it should become so rigid that an arrow or a sword would easily break through it. Jarchi says, that ‹shields were made of skin, and that they anointed them with the oil of olive.' The sense is, ‹Prepare your arms! Make ready for battle!'

Verse 6

Go, set a watchman - This was said to Isaiah in the vision. He represents himself as in Babylon, and as hearing God command him to set a

watchman on the watch-tower who would announce what was to come to pass. All this is designed merely to bring the manner of the destruction of the city more vividly before the eye.

Verse 7

And he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen - This passage is very obscure from the ambiguity of the word רכב *rekeb* - ‹chariot.‘ Gesenius contends that it should be rendered ‹cavalry,‘ and that it refers to cavalry two abreast hastening to the destruction of the city. The word רכב *rekeb* denotes properly a chariot or wagon Judges 5:28; a collection of wagons 2 Chronicles 1:14; 2 Chronicles 8:6; 2 Chronicles 9:25; and sometimes refers to the "horses or men" attached to a chariot. ‹David houghed all the chariots‘ 2 Samuel 8:4; that is, all the "horses" belonging to them. ‹David killed of the Syrians seven hundred chariots‘ 2 Samuel 10:18; that is, all "the men" belonging to seven hundred chariots. According to the present Masoretic pointing, the word רכב *rekeb* does not mean, perhaps, anything else than a chariot strictly, but other forms of the word with the same letters denote "riders or cavalry." Thus, the word רכב *rakâb* denotes a horseman 2 Kings 9:17; a charioteer or driver of a chariot 1 Kings 22:34; Jeremiah 51:21. The verb רבב *râbab* means "to ride," and is usually applied to riding on the backs of horses or camels; and the sense here is, that the watchman saw "a riding," or persons riding two abreast; that is, "cavalry," or men borne on horses, and camels, and asses, and hastening to attack the city.

With a couple of horsemen - The word ‹couple‘ (צמד *tsemed*) means properly a "yoke or pair;" and it means here that the cavalry was seen "in pairs, that is," two abreast.

A chariot of asses - Or rather, as above, "a riding" on donkeys - an approach of men in this manner to battle. Asses were formerly used in war where horses could not be procured. Thus Strabo (xv. 2,14) says of the inhabitants of Caramania, ‹Many use donkeys for war in the want of horses.‘ And Herodotus (iv. 129) says expressly that Darius Hystaspes employed donkeys in a battle with the Scythians.

And a chariot of camels - A "riding" on camels. Camels also were used in war, perhaps usually to carry the baggage (see Diod. ii. 54; iii. 44; Livy, xxxvii. 40; Strabo, xvi. 3). They are used for all purposes of burden in the East, and particularly in Arabia.

Verse 8

And he cried, A lion - Margin, ‹As a lion.‘ This is the correct rendering. The particle כ (*k*) - ‹as,‘ is not unfrequently omitted (see Isaiah 62:5; Psalm 11:1). That is, ‹I see them approach with the fierceness, rapidity, and terror of a lion (compare Revelation 10:3).

My lord, I stand continually upon the watch-tower - This is the speech of the watchman, and is addressed, not to Yahweh, but to him that appointed him. It is designed to show the "diligence" with which he had attended to the object for which he was appointed. He had been unceasing in his observation; and the result was, that now at length he saw the enemy approach like a lion, and it was certain that Babylon now must fall. The language used here has a striking resemblance to the opening of the "Agamemnon" of AEschylus; being the speech of the watchman, who had been very long upon his tower looking for the signal which should make known that Troy had fallen. It thus commences:

‹Forever thus! O keep me not, ye gods,
Forever thus, fixed in the lonely tower
Of Atreus‘ palace, from whose height I gaze

O‘er watched and weary, like a night-dog, still

Fixed to my post; meanwhile the rolling year

Moves on, and I my wakeful vigils keep

By the cold star-light sheen of spangled skies.‘
Symmons, quoted in the "Pictorial Bible."

I am set in my ward - My place where one keeps watch. It does not mean that he was confined or imprisoned, but that he had kept his watch station (מִשְׁמֶרֶת *mishemeret* from שָׁמַר *shâmar* "to watch, to keep, to attend to").

Whole nights - Margin, ‹Every night.‘ It means that he had not left his post day or night.

Verse 9

And, behold … a chariot of men - This place shows that the word ‹chariot‘ (רֶכֶב *rekeb*) may denote something else than a wagon or carriage, as a chariot drawn by men cannot be intended. The sense can be expressed,

perhaps, by the word "riding," ‹I see a riding of men approach;‘ that is, I see "cavalry" drawing near, or men riding and hastening to the battle.

With a couple of horsemen - The word ‹with‘ is not in the Hebrew. The meaning is, ‹I see a riding of men, or cavalry; and they come in pairs, or two abreast.‘ A part of the sentence is to be supplied from Isaiah 21:7. He saw not only horsemen, but riders on donkeys and camels.

And he answered - That is, the watchman answered. The word ‹answer,‘ in the Scriptures, means often merely to commence a discourse after an interval; to begin to speak Job 3:2; Daniel 2:26; Acts 5:8.

Babylon is fallen - That is, her ruin is certain. Such a mighty army is drawing near, and they approach so well prepared for battle, that the ruin of Babylon is inevitable. The "repetition" of this declaration that ‹Babylon is fallen,‘ denotes emphasis and certainty. Compare Psalm 92:9:

For lo, thine enemies, O Lord,
For lo, thine enemies shall perish.

Psalm 93:3:

The floods have lifted up, O Lord;
The floods have lifted up their waves.

A similar description is given of the fall of Babylon in Jeremiah 50:32; Jeremiah 51:8; and John has copied this description in the account of the overthrow of the mystical Babylon Revelation 18:1-2. Babylon was distinguished for its pride, arrogance, and haughtiness. It became, therefore, the emblem of all that is haughty, and as such is used by John in the Apocalypse; and as such it was a most striking emblem of the pride, arrogance, haughtiness, and oppression which have always been evinced by Papal Rome.

And all the graven images - Babylon was celebrated for its idolatry, and perhaps was the place where the worship of idols commenced. The principal god worshipped there was Belus, or Bel (see the note at Isaiah 46:1).

Are broken … - That is, shall be destroyed; or, in spite of its idols, the whole city would be ruined.

Verse 10

O my threshing - The words ‹to thresh,‘ ‹to tread down,‘ etc., are often used in the Scriptures to denote punishments inflicted on the enemies of God. An expression likes this occurs in Jeremiah 51:33, in describing the destruction of Babylon: ‹The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor;

it is time to thresh her.‘ In regard to the mode of threshing among the Hebrews, and the pertinency of this image to the destruction of the enemies of God, see the note at Isaiah 28:27. Lowth, together with many others, refers this to Babylon, and regards it as an address of God to Babylon in the midst of her punishment: ‹O thou, the object on which I shall exercise the severity of my discipline; that shall lie under my afflicting hand like grain spread out upon the floor to be threshed out and winnowed, to separate the chaff from the wheat.‘ But the expression can be applied with more propriety to the Jews; and may be regarded as the language of “tenderness” addressed by God through the prophet to his people when they should be oppressed and broken down in Babylon: ‹O thou, my people, who hast been afflicted and crushed; who hast been under my chastening hand, and reduced to these calamities on account of your sins; hear what God has spoken respecting the destruction of Babylon, and your consequent certain deliverance.‘ Thus it is the language of consolation; and is designed, like the prophecies in Matthew 1:1).

That which I have heard … - This shows the scope or design of the whole prophecy - to declare to the Jews the destruction that would come upon Babylon, and their own consequent deliverance. It was important that they should be “assured” of that deliverance, and hence, Isaiah “repeats” his predictions, and minutely states the manner in which their rescue would be accomplished.

Verse 11

Analysis of Isaiah 21:11, Isaiah 21:12. - VISION 17. Dumah, or Idumea.

This prophecy is very obscure. It comprises but two verses. When it was delivered, or on what occasion, or what was its design, it is not easy to determine. Its brevity has contributed much to its obscurity; nor, amidst the variety of interpretations which have been proposed, is it possible to ascertain with entire certainty the true explanation. Perhaps no portion of the Scriptures, of equal length, has been subjected to a greater variety of exposition. It is not the design of these Notes to go at length into a detail of opinions which have been proposed, but to state as accurately as possible the sense of the prophet. Those who wish to see at length the opinions which have been entertained on this prophecy, will find them detailed in Vitringa and others.

The prophecy relates evidently to Idumea. It stands in connection with that immediately preceding respecting Babylon, and it is probable that it was delivered at that time. It has the appearance of being a reply by the prophet to language of “insult or taunting” from the Idumeans, and to have been spoken when calamities were coming rapidly on the Jews. But it is not certain that that was the time or the occasion. It is certain only that it is a prediction of calamity succeeding to prosperity - perhaps prosperity coming to the afflicted Hebrews in Babylon, and of calamity to the taunting Idumeans, who had exulted over their downfall and captivity, and who are represented as sneeringly inquiring of the prophet what was the prospect in regard to the Jews. This is substantially the view given by Vitringa, Rosenmuller, and Gesenius.

According to this interpretation, the scene is laid in the time of the Babylonlsh captivity. The prophet is represented as having been placed on a watch-tower long and anxiously looking for the issue. It is night; that is, it is a time of calamity, darkness, and distress. In this state of darkness and obscurity, someone is represented as calling to the prophet from Idumea, and tauntingly inquiring, what of the night, or what the prospect was. He asks, whether there was any prospect of deliverance; or whether these calamities were to continue, and perhaps whether Idumea was also to be involved in them with the suffering Jews. To this the prophet answers, that the morning began to dawn - that there was a prospect of deliverance. But he adds that calamity was also coming; calamity probably to the nation that made the inquiry - to the land of Idumea - “perhaps” calamity that should follow the deliverance of the Hebrew captives, who would thus be enabled to inflict vengeance on Edom, and to overwhelm it in punishment. The morning dawns, says the watchman; but there is darkness still beyond. Light is coming - but there is night also: light for us - darkness for you. This interpretation is strengthened by a remarkable coincidence in an independent source, and which I have not seen noticed, in the 137th Psalm. The irritated and excited feelings of the captive Jews against Edom; their indignation at the course which Edom pursued when Jerusalem was destroyed; and their desire of vengeance, are all there strongly depicted, and accord with this interpretation, which supposes the prophet to say that the glad morning of the deliverance of the “Jews” would be succeeded by a

dark night to the taunting Idumean. The feelings of the captured and exiled Jews were expressed in the following language in Babylon Psalm 137:7:

Remember, O Jehovah, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem;
Who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation.

That is, we desire vengeance on Idumea, who joined with our enemies when Jerusalem was destroyed; and when Jerusalem shall be again rebuilt, we pray that they may be remembered, and that punishment may be inflicted on them for exulting over our calamities. The watchman adds, that if the Idumean was disposed to inquire further, he could. The result could be easily ascertained. It was clear, and the watchman would be disposed to give the information. But he adds, ‹return, come;‘ perhaps meaning, ‹repent; then come and receive an answer;‘ denoting that if the Idumeans "wished" a favorable answer, they should repent of their treatment of the Jews in their calamities, and that "then" a condition of safety and prosperity would be promised them.

As there is considerable variety in the ancient versions of this prophecy, and as it is brief, they may be presented to advantage at a single view. The Vulgate does not differ materially from the Hebrew. The following are some of the other versions:

Septuagint: "The vision of Idumea." Unto me he called out of Seir, Guard the fortresses - Φυλάσσετε ἐπάλξεις *phulassete epalcheis*). I guard morning and night. If you inquire, inquire, and dwell with me. In the grove (δρυμῷ *drumō*) thou shalt lie down, and in the way of Dedan (Δαιδά n *Daidan*).

Chaldee: "The burden of the cup of malediction which is coming upon Duma." - He cries to me from heaven, O prophet, prophesy; O prophet, prophesy to them of what is to come. The prophet said, There is a reward to the just, and revenge to the unjust. If you will be converted, be converted while you can be converted.

Syriac: "The burden of Duma." The nightly watchman calls to me out of Seir. And the watchman said, The morning cometh and also the night. If ye will inquire, inquire, and then at length come.

Arabic: “A prophecy respecting Edom and Seir, the sons of Esau.” Call me from Seir. Keep the towers. Guard thyself morning and evening. If you inquire, inquire.

It is evident, from this variety of translation, that the ancient interpreters felt that the prophecy was enigmatical and difficult. It is not easy, in a prophecy so brief, and where there is scarcely any clue to lead us to the historical facts, to give an interpretation that shall be entirely satisfactory and unobjectionable. Perhaps the view given above may be as little liable to objection as any one of the numerous interpretations which have been proposed.

Verse 11

The burden - (see the note at Isaiah 13:1). This word ‹burden‘ naturally leads to the supposition that “calamity” in some form was contemplated in the prophecy. This is also indicated in the prophecy by the word night.

Of Dumah - Dumah (דומה *dûmâh*) is mentioned in Genesis 25:14, and 1 Chronicles 1:30, as one of the twelve sons of Ishmael. It is known that those sons settled in Arabia, and that the Arabians derive their origin from Ishmael. The name ‹Dumah,‘ therefore, properly denotes one of the wandering tribes of the Ishmaelites. The Septuagint evidently read this as if it had been אדום *'ĕdôm* - Edom or Idumea - Ἰδουμαία *Idoumaia* Jakut mentions two places in Arabia to which the name ‹Dumah‘ is given, Dumah Irak, and Dumah Felsen. The former of these, which Gesenius supposes is the place here intended, lies upon the borders of the Syrian desert, and is situated in a valley seven days‘ journey from Damascus, according to Abulfeda, in lon. 45 degrees E.; and in lat. 29 degrees 30‘ N; and about three and a half days‘ journey from Medina. Niebuhr mentions Dumah as a station of the Wehabites (see Gesenius, “Commentary *in loc*.”) There can be little doubt that the place referred to is situated on the confines of the Arabian and Syrian deserts, and that it is the place called by the Arabians “Duma the stony, or Syrian Duma” (Robinson‘s Calmet). It has a fortress, and is a place of strength Jerome says, ‹Duma is not the whole province of Idumea, but is a certain region which lies toward the south, and is twenty miles distant from a city of Palestine called Eleutheropolis, near which are the mountains of Seir.‘ It is evident from the prophecy itself that Idumea is particularly referred to, for the prophet immediately adds, that the voice came to him from mount ‹Seir,‘ which was the principal mountain of

Idumea. Why the name ‹Dumah‘ is used to designate that region has been a matter on which critics have been divided.

Vitringa supposes that it is by a play upon the word ‹Dumah,‘ because the word “may” be derived from דמם *dâmam* to be silent, to be still; and that it is used to denote the “silence,” or the “night,” which was about to come upon Idumea; that is, the calamity of which this was a prediction. Kocher supposes that the prophet used the word denoting ‹silence‘ (דומה *dûmâh*) by a paranomasia, and by derision for אדום *'ĕdôm* as if Idumea was soon to be reduced to silence, or to destruction. Idumea, or the country of Edom, is frequently referred to by the prophets (see Jeremiah 49:7-10, Jeremiah 49:12-18; Ezekiel 35:1-4, Ezekiel 35:7, Ezekiel 35:9, Ezekiel 35:14-15; Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11; Malachi 1:3-4). For a description of Idumea, and of the prophecies respecting it, see the notes at Genesis 14:6, but Esau made war upon them and destroyed them (compare Genesis 36:8-9; Deuteronomy 2:5, Deuteronomy 2:12). Here it is put for the country of Idumea, and the sense is, that the whole land, or the inhabitants of the land, are heard by the prophet in a taunting manner asking him what of the night.

Watchman - (see the note at Isaiah 21:6). The prophet Isaiah is here referred to (compare Isaiah 52:8; Isaiah 56:10). He is represented as being in the midst of the calamities that had come upon Judea, and as having his station in desolate Jerusalem, and looking for the signs of returning day. The eye is turned toward the east - the source from where light comes, and from where the exiles would return to their own land. Thus anxiously waiting for the indications of mercy to his desolate country, he hears this taunting voice from Idumea, asking him what was the prospect? what evidence there was of returning prosperity?

What of the night? - (compare Habakkuk 2:1). ‹How stands the night? What is the prospect? What have you to announce respecting the night? How much of it is passed? And what is the prospect of the dawn?‘ ‹Night‘ here is the emblem of calamity, affliction, oppression, as it often is in the Scriptures (compare Job 35:10; Micah 3:6); and it refers here probably to the calamities which had come upon Judea. The inquiry is, How much of that calamity had passed? What was the prospect? How long was it to continue? How far was it to spread? The inquiry is “repeated” here to denote “intensity” or “emphasis,” manifesting the deep interest which the inquirer had in the result, or designed to give emphasis and point to the cutting taunt.

Verse 12

The watchman said - Or rather "saith;" indicating that this is the answer which the prophet returned to the inquiry from Idumea.

The morning cometh - There are signs of approaching day. The ‹morning‘ here is an emblem of prosperity; as the light of the morning succeeds to the darkness of the night. This refers to the deliverance from the captivity of Babylon, and is to be supposed as having been spoken near the time when that captivity was at an end - or nearly at break of day after the long night of their bondage. This declaration is to be understood as referring to a different people from those referred to in the expression which immediately follows - ‹and also the night.‘ ‹The morning cometh‘ - to the captive Jews; ‹and also the night‘ - to some other people - to wit, the Idumeans. It "might" mean that the morning was to be succeeded by a time of darkness to the same people; but the connection seems to demand that we understand it of others.

And also the night - A time of calamity and affliction. This is emphatic. It refers to the Idumeans. ‹The morning cometh to the captive Jews; it shall be closely succeeded by a night - a time of calamity - to the taunting Idumeans.‘ During the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, the Idumeans invaded and took possession of the southern part of Judea. The prophet here refers to the fact, perhaps, that on the return of the Jews to their native land, they would revenge this by expelling them, and by inflicting punishment on the land of Edom. For a full proof that calamities came upon the land of Idumea, see Keith "On the Prophecies." Art. "Idumea," and the notes at Obadiah 1:8-21:

Shall I not in that day, saith the Lord,
Even destroy the wise men out of Edom,
And understanding out of the mount of Esau?

And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed,

To the end that every one of the mount of Esau

May be cut off by slaughter.

For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee,

And thou shalt be cut off for ever.

In the day that thou stoodest on the other side;

In the day that the stranger carried away captive his forces;

And foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem;

Even thou wast as one of them.

But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother

In the day that he became a stranger;

Neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah

In the day of their destruction;

Neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress.

For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen;

As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee;
Thy reward shall return upon thine own head, etc.
In this prophecy these circumstances are all to be found;
(1) the hostility of the Edomites against Jerusalem, and the part which they took in the destruction of the city, in Isaiah 21:10-14;
(2) the fact of the deliverance of the Jews from captivity, in Isaiah 22:17;

(3) the consequent vengeance upon the Idumeans Isaiah 34:5-6.
This remarkable coincidence in an independent prophecy is a strong circumstance to prove that the interpretation above proposed is correct. In regard to the general reasons for the interpretation here proposed, and the lessons which the prophecy is suited to convey, I may be permitted to refer to my "Practical Sermons," pp. 325-341.

Verse 13

Analysis of Isaiah 21:13-17. - Vision 18. "Arabia."

The remainder of this chapter is occupied with a single prophecy respecting Arabia. It was "probably" delivered about the time that the former was uttered - during the reign of Hezekiah, and before the invasion of Sennacherib. It had reference, I suppose, to Sennacherib; and was designed to foretell the fact that, either in his march to attack Judea, or on his return from Egypt, he would pass through Arabia, and perhaps oppress and overthrow some of their clans. At all events, it was to be fulfilled within a year after it was uttered Isaiah 21:16, and refers to "some" foreign invasion that was to conic upon their land. Rosenmuller supposes that it relates to the same period as the prophecy in Jeremiah 49:28, following, and refers to the time when Nebuchadnezzar sent Nebuzaradan to overran the lands of the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Philistines, the Arabians, the Idumeans, and others who had revolted from him, and who had formed an alliance with Zedekiah.

The sentiment of the prophecy is simple - that within a year the country of Arabia would be overrun by a foreign enemy. The form and manner of the prophecy is highly poetic and beautiful. The images are drawn from customs and habits which pertain to the Arabians, and which characterize them to this day. In Isaiah 21:13, the prophecy opens with a declaration that the caravans that were accustomed to pass peacefully through Arabia would be arrested by the apprehension of war. They would seek a place of refuge in the forests and fastnesses of the land. Thither also the prophet sees the Arabians flocking, as if to exercise the rites of hospitality, and to minister to the needs of the oppressed and weary travelers. But the reasons why "they" are there, the prophet sees to be that "they" are oppressed and driven out of their land by a foreign invader, and "they" also seek the same places of security and of refuge Isaiah 21:14-15. All this would be accomplished within a year Isaiah 21:16; and the result would be, that the inhabitants of Arabia would be greatly diminished Isaiah 21:17.

Isaiah 21:13

The burden - (see the note at Isaiah 13:1).

Upon Arabia - (בערב *baʿărâb*). This is an unusual form. The title of the prophecies is usually without the ב (*b*) rendered ‹upon.‘ Lowth supposes this whole title to be of doubtful authority, chiefly because it is missing in most MSS. of the Septuagint. The Septuagint connects it with the preceding prophecy respecting Dumab, and makes this a continuance of that. The preposition ב (*b*) - ‹upon,‘ means here "respecting, concerning," and is used

instead of על ʿ*al* as in Zechariah 9:1. Arabia is a well-known country of western Asia, lying south and southeast of Judea. It was divided into three parts, Arabia Deserta, on the east; Arabia Petrea, lying south of Judea; and Arabia Felix, lying still further south. What part of Arabia is here denoted it may not be easy to determine. It is probable that it was Arabia Petrea, because this lay between Judea and Egypt, and would be exposed to invasion by the Assyrians should they invade Egypt; and because this part of Arabia furnished, more than the others, such retreats and fastnesses as are mentioned in Isaiah 21:13-15.

In the forest - (ביער *baya*ʿ*ar*). The word (יער *ya*ʿ*ar*) ‹forest‘ usually denotes a grove, a collection of trees. But it may mean here, any place of refuge from a pursuing foe; a region of thick underwood; an uncultivated, inaccessible place, where they would be concealed from an invading enemy. The word rendered ‹forest‘ is commonly supposed to mean a forest in the sense in which that word is now used by us, meaning an extensive wood - large tract of land covered with trees. It is doubtful, however, whether the word is so used in the Bible. The Rev. Eli Smith stated to me that he had visited several of the places in Palestine to which the word (יער *ya*ʿ*ar*) ‹forest‘ or ‹grove‘ is given, and that he was satisfied that there never was a forest there in our use of the word. The same word יער *ya*ʿ*ar* - the י (*y*) not being used to begin a word in Arabic, but the ו (*v*) being used instead of it - occurs often in Arabic. It means, as used by the Arabs, a rough, stony, impassable place; a place where there are no roads; which is inaccessible; and which is a safe retreat for robbers - and it is not improbable that the word is so used here.

In Arabia - (בערב *ba*ʿ*ărâb*). The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Chaldee, understand this of the “evening” - ‹In the evening.‘ The word ערב ʿ*ereb* with different points from those which the Masorites have used here, means “evening,” but there is no necessity of departing from the translation in our English version. The sense would not be materially affected whichever rendering should be preferred.

Shall ye lodge - Shall you pass the night. This is the usual signification of the word. But here it may be taken in a larger sense, as denoting that they would pitch their tents there, or that they would seek a refuge there. The sense I suppose to be this: ‹O ye traveling caravans of Dedan! Ye were accustomed to pass through Arabia, and to find a safe and hospitable entertainment there. But now, the Arabians shall be overrun by a foreign

enemy; they shall be unable to show you hospitality, and to insure your safety in their tents, and for fear of the enemy still in the land you will be obliged to seek a lodging in the inaccessible thickets of the forests.‘ The passage is intended to denote the “change” that had taken place, and to show the “insecurity” for caravans.

O ye traveling companies - Ye “caravans” (ארחות *'orechôt*). This word usually signifies “ways, paths, cross roads.” But it is used here evidently to denote those who “traveled” in such ways or paths; that is, caravans of merchants. So it is used in Job 6:19: ‹The caravans of Tema.‘ It is well known that in the East it is usual for large companies to travel together, called “caravans.” Arabia Petrea was a great thoroughfare for such companies.

Of Dedanim - Descendants of “Dedan.” There are two men of this name mentioned in the Old Testament - the son of Raamah, the son of Cush, mentioned in Genesis 10:7; and the son of Jokshan, the son of Abraham by Keturah Genesis 25:3. The descendants of the latter settled in Arabia Petrea, and the descendants of the former near the Persian Gulf. It is not easy to determine which is here intended, though most probably those who dwelt near the Persian Gulf, because they are often mentioned as merchants. They dealt in ivory, ebony, etc., and traded much with Tyre Ezekiel 27:21, and doubtless also with Egypt. They are here represented as passing through Arabia Petrea on their way to Egypt, and as compelled by the calamities in the country to find a refuge in its fastnesses and inaccessible places.

Verse 14

Of the land of Tema - Tema was one of the sons of Ishmael Genesis 25:15, and is supposed to have populated the city of Thema in Arabia Deserta. The word denotes hero one of the tribes of Ishmael, or of the Arabians. Job speaks Job 6:19 of ‹the troops of Tema,‘ and Jeremiah Jeremiah 25:23 connects Tema and Dedan together. Jerome and Eusebius say that the village of Theman (Θαιμάν *Thaiman*) existed in their time. It was, according to Jerome, five, and according to Eusebius, fifteen miles from Petra, and was then occupied as a Roman garrison (*Onomas Urb. et Locor*). Ptolemy speaks of a city called Themme (Θαιμάν *Themmē*) in Arabia Deserta. This city lies, according to D‘Anville, in longitude 57 degrees East, and in latitude 27 degrees North. According to Seetsen, it is on the road usually pursued by caravans from Mecca to Damascus. Lowth

renders it ‹The southern country,‘ but without authority. The Septuagint renders it, Θαιμάν *Thaiman* - ‹Thaiman.‘

Brought water - Margin, ‹Bring ye.‘ This might be rendered in the imperative, but the connection seems rather to require that it be read as a declaration that they did so. To bring water to the thirsty was an act of hospitality, and especially in eastern countries, where water was so scarce, and where it was of so much consequence to the traveler in the burning sands and deserts. The idea is, that the inhabitants of the land would be oppressed and pursued by an enemy; and that the Arabians, referred to by the prophet Isaiah 21:13, would be driven from their homes; and be dependent on others; that they would wander through the vast deserts, deprived of the necessaries of life; and that they would be dependent on the charity of the people of Tema for the supply of their needs. The following illustration of this passage has been kindly furnished me by the Rev. Eli Smith, missionary to Syria, showing that Isaiah, in mentioning "hospitality" as one of the virtues of the inhabitants of Tema, drew from the life. ‹Even in Hebrew prophecy hospitality is distinctly recognized as a trait in the Arab character. Isaiah says, "the inhabitants of Tema," etc. Tema is known as an oasis in the heart of Arabia, between Syria and Mecca. And among the scraps of ante-Mahometan poetry that have reached us, is one by Samaciel, a prince of this same Tema. In extolling the virtues of his tribe he says -

"No fire of ours was ever extinguished at night without a guest, and of our guests never did one disparage us."

‹In the passage quoted from Isaiah, it is to the thirsty and hungry in flight, that the inhabitants of Tema are represented as bringing water and bread, as if hastening to afford them protection. The extent to which this protection is sometimes carried, is finely illustrated by a traditionary anecdote in the life of Samaciel, the prince and poet of Tema just mentioned. In some feud among the tribes in his neighborhood, a prince (Amru el-Keis) fled to Samaciel, left with him his treasures, and was conducted by him beyond the reach of his enemies. They assembled their forces, and marched upon Tema. On their way Samaciel‘s son fell into their hands. Presenting the young man before his castle, they proposed to the father the dreadful alternative, of delivering up to them what his guest had left, or seeing his son massacred. Samaciel‘s sense of honor dictated the reply -

"He honored me, and I'll honor him … Treachery is a chain to the neck that never wears out." So he defended the rights of his guest, and his son was slain.'

They prevented - Our word ‹prevent' usually means at present, to hinder, to obstruct. But in the Scriptures, and in the Old English sense of the word, it means to anticipate, to go before. That is the sense of the word קדמו *qidemû* here. They "anticipated" their needs by bread; that is, they supplied them. This was an ancient and an honorable rite of hospitality. Thus Melchizedek Genesis 14:17-18 is said to have come out and met Abraham, when returning victorious from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, with bread and wine.

Him that fled - The inhabitant of the land of Arabia that fled before the invader, perhaps the inhabitants of Kedar Isaiah 21:16, or of some other part of Arabia. It is not meant that the "whole" land of Arabia would be desolate, but that the invasion would come upon certain parts of it; and the inhabitants of other portions - as of Tema - would supply the needs of the fugitives.

Verse 15

For they fled - The inhabitants of one part of the land.

The grievousness of war - Hebrew, כבד *kobed* - "the weight, the heaviness, the oppression" of war; probably from the calamities that would result from the march of the Assyrian through their land, either on his way to Judea or to Egypt.

Verse 16

Within a year - What has been said before was figurative. Here the prophet speaks without a metaphor, and fixes the time when this should be accomplished. It is not usual for the prophets to designate the exact "time" of the fulfillment of their prophecies in this manner.

According to the years of an hireling - Exactly; observing the precise time specified Job 7:1. See the phrase explained on Isaiah 16:14.

All the glory - The beauty, pride, strength, wealth, etc.

Of Kedar - Kedar was a son of Ishmael Genesis 25:15. He was the father of the Kedareneans or "Cedrai," mentioned by Pithy ("Nat. Hist." v. 11). They dwelt in the neighborhood of the Nabatheans, in Arabia Deserta. These people lived in tents, and were a wandering tribe, and it is not possible to fix the precise place of their habitation. They resided, it is supposed, in the south part of Arabia Deserts, and the north part of Arabia

Petrea. The name ‹Kedar‘ seems to be used sometimes to denote Arabia in general, or Arabia Deserts particularly (see Psalm 120:5; Isaiah 42:11; Isaiah 60:7; Jeremiah 2:10; Jeremiah 49:28; Ezekiel 26:21).

Shall fail - Shall be consumed, destroyed (כלה *kâlâh*).

Verse 17

And the residue of the number - That is, those who shall be left in the invasion. Or perhaps it may be read, ‹There shall be a renmant of the number of bowmen; the mighty people of Kedar shall be diminished.‘

Of archers - Hebrew, ‹Of the bow;‘ that is, of those who use bows in war. The bow was the common instrument in hunting and in war among the ancients.

Shall be diminished - Hebrew, ‹Shall be made small;‘ they shall be reduced to a very small number. We cannot indeed determine the precise historical event to which this refers, but the whole connection and circumstances seem to make it probable that it referred to the invasion by the Assyrian when he went up against Judah, or when he was on his way to Egypt.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 22

Introduction

This chapter is made up of "two" prophecies, one comprising the first fourteen verses, and addressed to the city of Jerusalem; and the other Isaiah 22:15-25 relating to the fall of Shebna, the prefect of the palace, and to the promotion of Eliakim in his place. They may have been delivered nearly at the same time, but the subjects are distinct.

The first Isaiah 22:1-14 relates to Jerusalem. It has reference to some period when the city was besieged, and when universal consternation spread among the people. The prophet represents himself as in the city, and as a witness of the alarm.

1. He describes Isaiah 22:1-3 the consternation that prevailed in the city at the approach of the enemy. The inhabitants flee to the tops of the houses, either to observe the enemy or to make a defense, and the city is filled with distress, mingled with the tumultuous mirth of a portion who regard defense as hopeless, and who give themselves up to revelry and gluttony, because they apprehended that they must at all events soon die.

2. The prophet then describes Isaiah 22:4-8 his own grief at the impending calamity, and especially at the state of things within the city. He portrays the distress; describes those who cause it, and the people engaged in it; and says that the valleys around the city are filled with chariots, and that the horsemen of the enemy have come to the very gate.

3. He then describes the preparations which are made in the city for defense Isaiah 22:9-11. The inhabitants of the city had endeavored to repair the breaches of the walls; had even torn down their houses to furnish materials, and had endeavored to secure the "water" with which the city was supplied from the enemy; but they had not looked to God as they should have done for protection. The scope of the prophecy, therefore, is, to reprove them for not looking to God, and also for their revelry in the very midst of their calamities.

4. The prophet then describes the state of "morals" within the city Isaiah 22:12-14. It was a time when they should have humbled themselves, and

looked to God. He called them to fasting and to grief; but they supposed that the city "must" be taken, and that they must die, and a large portion of the inhabitants, despairing of being able to make a successful defense, gave themselves up to riot and drunkenness. To reprove this, was one design of the prophet; and perhaps, also, to teach the general lesson that men, in view of the certainty of death, should not madly and foolishly give themselves to sensual indulgence.

There has been a difference of opinion in regard to the event to which this prophecy refers. Most have supposed that it relates to the invasion by Sennacherib; others have supposed that it relates to the destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar. Vitringa and Lowth suppose that the prophet had "both" events in view; the former in Isaiah 22:1-5, and the latter in the remainder of the prophecy. But it is not probable that it has a twofold reference. It has the appearance of referring to a "single" calamity; and this mode of interpretation should not be departed from without manifest necessity. The general aspect of the prophecy has reference, I think, to the invasion by Sennacherib. He came near the city; the city was filled with alarm; and Hezekiah prepared himself to make as firm a stand against him as possible, and put the city in the best possible state of defense. The description in Isaiah 22:9-11 agrees exactly with the account given of the defense winch Hezekiah made against Sennacherib in 2 Chronicles 32:2, following; and particularly in regard to the effort made to secure the fountains in the neighborhood for the use of the city, and to prevent the Assyrians from obtaining it. In 2 Chronicles 32:2 ff, we are told that Hezekiah took measures to stop all the fountains of water without the city, and the brook ‹that ran through the midst of the land,' in order that the Assyrians under Sennacherib should not find water; and that he repaired the walls, and built new towers of defense in the city, and placed guards upon them. These circumstances of "coincidence" between the history and the prophecy, show conclusively that the reference is entirely to the invasion under Sennacherib. This occurred 710 b.c.

Verse 1

The burden - (see the note at Isaiah 13:1). "The valley" גיא *gay'* Septuagint, Φάραγγος *Pharangos* - ‹Valley.' Chaldee, ‹The burden of the prophecy respecting the city which dwells (that is, is built) in the valley,

which the prophets have prophesied concerning it.‘ There can be no doubt that Jerusalem is intended (see Isaiah 22:9-10). It is not usual to call it “a valley,” but it may be so called, either

(1) because there were several valleys “within” the city and adjacent to it, as the vale between mount Zion and Moriah; the vale between mount Moriah and mount Ophel; between these and mount Bezetha; and the valley of Jehoshaphat, without the walls of the city; or

(2) more probably it was called “a valley” in reference to its being “encompassed with hills,” rising to a considerable elevation above the city.

Thus mount Olivet was on the east, and overlooked the city. Jerusalem is also called a “valley,” and a “plain,” in Jeremiah 21:13: ‹Behold, I am against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, and rock of the plain, saith the Lord.‘ Thus it is described in Reland‘s “Palestine:” - ‹The city was in the mountain region of Judea, in an elevated place, yet so that in respect to the mountains by which it was surrounded, it seemed to be situated in a humble place, because mount Olivet, and other mountains surrounding it, were more elevated.‘ So Phocas says, ‹The holy city is placed in the midst of various valleys and hills, and this is wonderful (Θαυμαστόν *Thaumaston*) in it, that at the same time the city seems to be elevated and depressed, for it is elevated in respect to the region of Judea, and depressed in respect to the hills around it.‘ (Reland‘s “Palestine,” iii. 802, in Ugolini‘s “Thesaurus,” vi.) It was common with Isaiah and the other prophets to designate Jerusalem and other places, not by their proper names, but by some appellation that would be descriptive (see Isaiah 21:1; Isaiah 29:1).

Of vision - (see the note at Isaiah 1:1). The word here means that Jerusalem was eminently the place where God made known his will to the prophets, and manifested himself to his people by “visions.”

What aileth thee now? - What is the cause of the commotion and tumult that exists in the city? The prophets throws himself at once into the midst of the excitement; sees the agitation and tumult, and the preparations for defense which were made, and asks the “cause” of all this confusion.

That thou art wholly gone up to the house-tops - That all classes of the people had fled to the house-tops, so much that it might be said that all the city had gone up. Houses in the East were built in a uniform manner in ancient times, and are so to this day. (See a description of the mode of building in the notes at Matthew 9:1 ff.) The roofs were always flat, and were made either of earth that was trodden hard, or with large flat stones.

This roof was surrounded with a balustrade Deuteronomy 22:8, and furnished a convenient place for walking, or even for eating and sleeping. Whenever, therefore, anything was to be seen in the street, or at a distance; or when there was any cause of alarm, they would naturally resort to the roof of the house. When there was a tower in the city, the inhabitants fled to that, and took refuge on its top (see Judges 9:50-53). The image here is, therefore, one of consternation and alarm, as if on the sudden approach of an enemy.

Verse 2

Thou that art full of stirs - Of tumult, of commotion, of alarm. Or, perhaps, this whole description may mean that it was formerly a city distinguished for the hum of business, or for pleasure; a busy, active, enterprising city. The Hebrew will bear this, but I prefer the former interpretation, as indicating mingled alarm and consternation, and at the same time a disposition to engage in riot and revelry.

A joyous city - A city exulting; rejoicing; given to pleasure, and to riot. (See the description of Nineveh in Zephaniah 2:15) It is remarkable that the prophet has blended these things together, and has spoken of the tumult, the alarm, and the rejoicing, in the same breath. ‹This may be either because it was the "general" character of the city thus to be full of revelry, dissipation, and riot, and he designates it by that which "usually and appropriately" described it; or because it was, even then, notwithstanding the general consternation and alarm, given up to revelry, and the rather on account of the approaching danger. So he describes the city in Isaiah 22:12-13.

Thy slain men are not slain with the sword - The words ‹thy slain‘ here (חלליך *chĕlâlayikā*), seem to be intended to be applied to the soldiers on whom the defense of the city rested; and to mean those who had not died an honorable death "in" the city in its defense, but who had "fled" in consternation, and who were either taken in their flight and made captive, or who were pursued and put to death. To be slain with the sword here is equivalent to being slain in an honorable engagement with the enemy. But here the prophet speaks of their consternation, their cowardice, and of their being partly trampled down in their hasty and ignominious flight by each other; and partly of the fugitives being overtaken by the enemy, and thus put to death.

Verse 3

All thy rulers are fled together - The general idea in this verse is plain. It is designed to describe the consternation which would take place on the approach of the invader, and especially the timidity and flight of those on whom the city relied for protection and defense. Hence, instead of entering calmly and firmly on the work of defense, no inconsiderable part of the rulers of the city are represented as fleeing from the city, and refusing to remain to protect the capital. The word rendered ‹thy rulers‘ (קציניך *qitsiynayik*) denotes either the civil rulers of the city, or military leaders. It is most usually applied to the latter Joshua 10:24; Judges 11:6, Judges 11:11; Daniel 11:18, and probably refers here to military commanders.

They are bound by the archers - Hebrew as in the margin, ‹Of the bow.‘ There has been a great variety in the interpretation of this passage. The Septuagint reads it, Σκληρῶς δεδεμένοι εἰσί *sklērōs dedemenoi eisi* - ‹And the captives are bound with severity.‘ The Chaldee, ‹And the captives migrate from before the extending of the bow.‘ Jarchi renders it, ‹Who from the fear of arrows were bound so that they shut themselves up in the city.‘ Houbigant and Lowth render it, ‹They are fled from the bow,‘ reading it הסרו *hâserû* instead of the present Hebrew text אסרו *'usrû* but without the slightest authority. Vitringa renders it, ‹They were bound from treading, that is, extending, or using the bow;‘ or ‹They were bound by those who tread, that is, use the bow;‘ indicating that they were so bound that they could not use the bow in defense of the city. I think that the “connection” here requires that the word אסרו *'usrû* should be used in the sense of being “bound” or influenced by fear - they were so intimidated, so much under the influence of terror, so entirely unmanned and disabled by alarm, that they could not use the bow; or this was caused “by” the bow, that is, by the bowmen or archers who came to attack the city. It is true that no other instance occurs in which the word is used in precisely this sense, but instances in abundance occur where strong passion is represented as having a controlling or disabling influence over the mind and body; where it takes away the energy of the soul, and makes one timid, feeble, helpless, as if bound with cords, or made captive. The word אסר *'âsar* commonly means to bind with cords, or to fetter; to imprison Genesis 42:24; Judges 16:5; 2 Kings 17:4: to yoke 1 Samuel 6:7, 1 Samuel 6:10; and then to bind with a vow Numbers 30:3. Hence, it may mean to “bind” with fear or consternation.

Which have fled from far - That is, either they have fled far away; or they had fled from far in order to reach Jerusalem as a place of safety. Probably the latter is the sense.

Verse 4

Look away from me - Do not look upon me - an indication of deep grief, for sorrow seeks to be alone, and grief avoids publicity and exposure.

I will weep bitterly - Hebrew, ‹I will be bitter in weeping.‘ Thus we speak of "bitter" sorrow, indicating excessive grief (see the note at Isaiah 15:5; compare Jeremiah 13:17; Jeremiah 14:17; Lamentations 1:16; Lamentations 2:11; Micah 1:8-9).

Labour not - The sense is, ‹My grief is so great that I cannot be comforted. There are no topics of consolation that can be presented. I must be alone, and allowed to indulge in deep and overwhelming sorrow at the calamities that are coming upon my nation and people.‘

Because of the spoiling - The desolation; the ruin that is coming upon them.

The daughter of my people - Jerusalem (see the note at Isaiah 1:8; compare Jeremiah 4:11; Jeremiah 6:14; Jeremiah 8:19, Jeremiah 8:21-22; Lamentations 2:11; Lamentations 4:3, Lamentations 4:6, Lamentations 4:10).

Verse 5

For it is a day of trouble and of treading down - When our enemies trample on everything sacred and dear to us, and endanger all our best interests (see Psalm 44:6; Luke 21:24).

And of perplexity - In which we know not what to do. We are embarrassed, and know not where to look for relief.

By the Lord God of hosts - That is, he is the efficient cause of all this. It has come upon us under his providence, and by his direction (see the note at Isaiah 10:5).

In the valley of vision - In Jerusalem (see the note at Isaiah 22:1).

Breaking down the walls - There has been much variety in the interpretation of this place. The Septuagint renders it, ‹In the valley of Zion they wander, from the least to the greatest; they wander upon the mountains.‘ See a discussion of the various senses which the Hebrew phrase may admit, in Rosenmuller and Gesenius. Probably our common version has given the true sense, and the reference is to the fact that the walls of the city became thrown down, either in the siege or from some

other cause. If this refers to the invasion of Sennacherib, though his army was destroyed, and he was unable to take the city, yet there is no improbability in the supposition that he made some breaches in the walls. Indeed this is implied in the account in 2 Chronicles 32:5.

And of crying to the mountains - Either for help, or more probably of such a loud lamentation that it reached the surrounding hills, and was re-echoed back to the city. Or perhaps it may mean that the shout or clamor of those engaged in building or defending the walls, reached to the mountains. Compare Virg. "AEncid," iv. 668:

- *resonat magnis plangoribus aether*.

Rosenmuller renders it, ‹A cry - to the mountains!‘ That is, a cry among the people to escape to the hills, and to seek refuge in the caves and fastnesses there (compare Judges 6:2; Matthew 24:16; Mark 13:14).

Verse 6

And Elam - The southern part of Persia, perhaps used here to denote Persia in general (see the note at Isaiah 21:2). Elam, or Persia, was at this time subject to Assyria, and their forces were united doubtless in the invasion of Judea.

Bare the quiver - A ‹quiver‘ is a case in which arrows are carried. This was usually hung upon the shoulders, and thus "borne" by the soldier when he entered into battle. By the expression here, is meant that Elam was engaged in the siege, and was distinguished particularly for skill in shooting arrows. That the Elamites were thus distinguished for the use of the bow, is apparent from Ezekiel 32:24, and Jeremiah 49:35.

With chariots of men and horsemen - Lowth proposes, instead of ‹men,‘ to read ארם *'ărâm* "Syria," instead of אדם *'âdâm* "man," by the change of the single Hebrew letter ד (*d*) into the Hebrew letter ר (*r*). This mistake might have been easily made where the letters are so much alike, and it would suit the parallelism of the passage, but there is no authority of MSS. or versions for the change. The words ‹chariots of men - horsemen,‘ I understand here, as in Isaiah 21:7, to mean "a troop or riding" of men who were horsemen. Archers often rode in this manner. The Scythians usually fought on horseback with bows and arrows.

Kir - Kir was a city of Media, where the river Kyrus or Cyrus flows 2 Kings 16:9; Amos 1:5; Amos 9:7. This was evidently then connected with the Assyrian monarchy, and was engaged with it in the invasion of Judea. Perhaps the name ‹‘Kir‘ was given to a region or province lying on the river

Cyrus or Kyrus. This river unites with the Araxes, and falls into the Caspian Sea.

Uncovered the shield - (see the note at Isaiah 21:5). Shields were protected during a march, or when not in use, by a covering of cloth. Among the Greeks, the name of this covering was Σάγμα *Sagma* Shields were made either of metal or of skin, and the object in covering them was to preserve the metal untarnished, or to keep the shield from injury. To "uncover the shield," therefore, was to prepare for battle. The Medes were subject to the Assyrians in the time of Hezekiah 2 Kings 16:9; 2 Kings 17:6, and of course in the time of the invasion of Judea by Sennacherib.

Verse 7

Thy choicest valleys - Hebrew, ‹The choice of thy galleys;' meaning the most fertile and most valued lands in the vicinity of the city. The rich and fertile vales around Jerusalem would be occupied by the armies of the Assyrian monarch. What occurs in this verse and the following verses to Isaiah 22:14, is a prophetic description of what is presented historically in Isaiah 36:11-13.

Verse 8

And he discovered - Hebrew, ויגל *vayegal* - ‹He made naked, or bare.' The expression, ‹He discovered,' means simply that it "was" uncovered, without designating the agent.

The covering of Judah - The word used here (מסך *mâsak*) denotes properly "a covering," and is applied to the "curtain" or veil that was before the tabernacle Exodus 26:36; Exodus 39:38; and to the curtain that was before the gate of the court Exodus 35:17; Exodus 39:40. The Septuagint understands it of the "gates" of Judah, ‹They revealed the gates (τὰς πύλας *tas pulas*) of Judah.' Many have understood it of the defenses, ramparts, or fortifications of Judah, meaning that they were laid open to public view, that is, were demolished. But the more probable meaning, perhaps, is, that the invading army exposed Judah to every kind of reproach; stripped off everything that was designed to be ornamental in the land; and thus, by the figure of exposing one to reproach and shame by stripping off all his clothes, exposed Judah in every part to reproach. Sennacherib actually came up against all the fortified cities of Judah, and took them and dismantled them 2 Kings 18:13; Isaiah 36:1. The land was thus laid bare, and unprotected.

And thou didst look - Thou Judah; or the king of Judah. Thou didst cast thine eyes to that armory as the last resort, and as the only hope of defense.

To the armor - Or rather, perhaps, the "armory, the arsenal" (נשק *nesheq*). The Septuagint renders it, ‹To the choice houses of the city‘ (compare Nehemiah 3:19).

Of the house of the forest - This was built within the city, and was called the house of the forest of Lebanon, probably from the great quantity of cedar from Lebanon which was employed in building it 1 Kings 7:2-8. In this house, Solomon laid up large quantities of munitions of war 1 Kings 10:16-17; and this vast storehouse was now the principal reliance of Hezekiah against the invading forces of Sennacherib.

Verse 9

Ye have seen also the breaches - You who are inhabitants of the city. That such breaches were actually made, see 2 Chronicles 32:5.

Of the city of David - Of Jerusalem, so called because it was the royal residence of David. Zion was usually called the city of David, but the name was given also to the entire city.

And ye gathered together … - That is, Hezekiah and the people of the city collected those waters.

Of the lower pool - (For a description of the upper and lower pool, see the notes at Isaiah 7:3). The superfluous waters of the lower pool usually flowed into the valley of Hinnom, and thence, into the valley of Jehoshaphat, mingling with the waters of the brook Kedron. It would seem from the passage here that those waters were not usually retained for the use of the city, though it was possible to retain them in case of a drought or a siege. At present, the lower pool is without the walls, but Hezekiah appears to have extended a temporary wall around it so as to enclose it (see the note at Isaiah 22:11). This he did, probably for two purposes;

(1) to cut off the Assyrians from the supply of water; and

(2) to retain "all" the water in the city to supply the inhabitants during the siege; see 2 Chronicles 32:4, where it is expressly declared that Hezekiah took this measure to distress the Assyrians.

Verse 10

And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem - That is, you have taken an estimate of their number so as to ascertain how many can be spared to be pulled down to repair the walls; or you have made an estimate

of the amount of materials for repairing the walls, which would be furnished by pulling down the houses in Jerusalem.

To fortify the wall - The houses in Jerusalem were built of stone, and therefore they would furnish appropriate materials for repairing the walls of the city. In 2 Chronicles 32:5, it is said that Hezekiah not only repaired the broken walls of the city on the approach of Sennacherib, but ‹raised up the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance.‘

Verse 11

Ye made also a ditch - That is, they made a "reservoir" to retain the water. The word ‹ditch,‘ however, will well describe the character of the pool of Gihon on the west side of the city (see the notes at Isaiah 7:3).

Between the two walls for the water of the old pool - Hezekiah built one of these walls himself (2 Chronicles 32:5, 2 Chronicles 32:30; compare 2 Kings 25:5, and Jeremiah 39:4). Between these two walls the water would be collected so as to be accessible to the inhabitants of the city in case of a siege. Before this, the water had flowed without the walls of the city, and in a time of siege the inhabitants would be cut off from it, and an enemy would be able easily to subdue them. To prevent this, Hezekiah appears to have performed two works, one of which was particularly adapted to the times of the siege, and the other was of permanent utility.

(1) He made a wall on the west side of Gihon, so as to make the pool accessible to the inhabitants of the city, as described here by Isaiah; and

(2) he ‹stopped the upper water-course of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David‘ 2 Chronicles 32:30.

By this is not improbably meant that he constructed the pool which is now known as the ‹pool of Hezekiah.‘ This reservoir lies within the walls of the city, some distance northeastward of the Yafa Gate, and just west of the street that leads to the church of the Holy Sepulchre. Its sides run toward the cardinal points. Its breadth at the north end is 144 feet, its length on the east side about 240 feet. The depth is not great. The bottom is rock, and is leveled and covered with cement. The reservoir is now supplied with water during the rainy season by the small aqueduct or drain brought down from the upper pool, along the surface of the ground and under the wall at or near the Yafa Gate (compare Robinson‘s "Bib. Researches," vol. i. p. 487). This was deemed a work of great utility, and was one of the acts which particularly distinguished the reign of Hezckiah. It is not only mentioned in

the Books of Kings and Chronicles, but the son of Sirach has also mentioned it in his encomium on Hezekiah: ‹Hezekiah fortified his city, and brought in water into the midst thereof; he digged the hard rock with iron, and made wells for water‘ (Sirach 48:17).

But ye have not looked - You have not relied on God. You have depended on your own resources; and on the defenses which you have been making against the enemy. This probably described the "general" character of the people. Hezekiah, however, was a pious man, and doubtless really depended on the aid of God.

The maker thereof - God; by whose command and aid all these defenses are made, and who has given you ability and skill to make them.

Long ago - God had made this fountain, and it had "long" been a supply to the city. He had a claim, therefore, to their gratitude and respect.

Verse 12

And in that day - In the invasion of Sennacherib. It might be rendered, ‹And the Lord, Yahweh of hosts, on such a day calls to weeping;‘ intimating that in such a time it was a general truth that God required those who were thus afflicted to weep, and fast, and pray.

Call to weeping - That is, by his providence; or, it was "proper" that at such a time they should weep. Affliction, oppression, and calamity are indications from God "always" that we ought to be humbled, and to prostrate ourselves before Him.

And to baldness - To plucking off the hair, or shaving the head - one of the emblems of grief among the ancients Job 1:20; Micah 1:16.

And to girding with sackcloth - (see the note at Isaiah 3:24).

Verse 13

And behold … - When they ought to give themselves to fasting and prayer, they gave themselves up to revelry and riot.

Let us eat and drink - Saying, Let us eat and drink. That is, it is inevitable that we must soon die. The army of the Assyrian is approaching, and the city cannot stand against him. It is in vain to make a defense, and in vain to call upon God. Since we "must" soon die, we may as well enjoy life while it lasts. This is always the language of the epicure; and it seems to be the language of no small part of the world. Probably if the "real" feelings of the great mass of worldly people were expressed, they could not be better expressed than in this passage of Isaiah: ‹We must soon die at all events. We cannot avoid that, for it is the common lot of all. And since we have been

sent into a dying world; since we had no agency in being placed here; since it is impossible to prevent this doom, we may as well "enjoy" life while it lasts, and give ourselves to pleasure, dissipation, and revelry.

While we can, we will take our comfort, and when death comes we will submit to it, simply because we cannot avoid it.' Thus, while God calls people to repentance and seriousness; and while he would urge them, by the consideration that, this life is short, to prepare for a better life; and while he designs that the nearness of death should lead them to think solemnly of it, they abuse all His mercies, endeavor to thwart all His arrangements, and live and die like the brutes. This passage is quoted by Paul in his argument on the subject of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:32. Sentiments remarkably similar to this occur in the writings of the Greek and Roman poets. Among the Egyptians, the fact that life is short was urged as one argument for promoting soberness and temperance, and in order to produce this effect, it was customary at their feasts to have introduced, at some part of the entertainment, a wooden image of Osiris in the form of a human mummy standing erect, or lying on a bier, and to show it to each of the guests, warning him of his mortality, and of the transitory nature of human pleasures.

He was reminded that one day he would be like that; and was told that people ‹ought to love one another, and to avoid those evils which tend to make them consider life too long, when in reality it is too short, and while enjoying the blessings of this life, to bear in mind that life was precarious, and that death would soon close all their comforts.' (See Wilkinson's "Ancient Egyptians," vol. ii. pp. 409-411.) With the Greeks and Romans, however, as well as the Jews in the time of Isaiah, the fact of the shortness of life was used to produce just the contrary effect - to prompt them to dissipation and licentiousness. The fact of the temporary pilgrimage of man served as an inducement to enjoy the pleasures of life while they lasted, since death was supposed to close the scene, and no prospect was held out of happiness in a future state. This sentiment was expressed in their songs at their entertainments to urge themselves on to greater indulgence in wine and in pleasure. Thus, in Anacreon, Ode 4:

Εις εαυτον
Ο δ᾽Ερως χιτωνα δησας
Υπερ αυχενος παπυρῳ

Μεθυ μοι διηκονειτὸ
Τροχος αρματος γαροια
Βιοτος τρεχει κυλισθεις

Ολιγη δε κεισομεσθα
Κονις, οστεων λυθεντων
Τι σε δει λιθον μυριζειν;
Τι δε γῃ χεειν ματαια;

Εμε μαλλον, ως ετι ζω,
Μυριζον, καλει δ᾽ εταιρην.
Πριν, Ερως, εκει με απελθειο
Υπο νερτερων χορειας,
Σκεδασαι θελω μεριμνας.
Ho d' Erōs chitōna dēesas
Huper auchenos papurō
Methu moi diēkoneito Trochos armatos gar oia
Biotos trechei kulistheis

Oligē de keisomestha
Konis osteōn luthentōn Ti se dei lithon murizein class="translit">Ti de gē cheein mataia class="translit">eme mallon *hōs eti zō Murizon kalei d' hetairēn*
Prin Erōs ekei me apelthein
Hupo nerterōn choreias Skedasai thelō merimnas ‹In decent robe behind him bound,

Cupid shall serve the goblet round;

For fast away our moments steal,

Like the swift chariot‘s rolling wheel;

The rapid course is quickly done,

And soon the race of life is run.

Then, then, alas! we droop, we die;

And sunk in dissolution lie:

Our frame no symmetry retains,

Nought but a little dust remains.

Why o‘er the tomb are odors shed?

Why poured libations to the dead?

To me, far better, while I live,

Rich wines and balmy fragrance give.

Now, now, the rosy wreath prepare,

And hither call the lovely fair.

Now, while I draw my vital breath,

Ere yet I lead the dance of death,

For joy my sorrows I‘ll resign,
And drown my cares in rosy wine.‘
A similar sentiment occurs in Horace. Odyssey iii. 13:
Huc vina, et unguente, et nimium brevis
Flores amoenos ferre jube rosae.
Dum res, et aetas, et sororum
Fila trium patiuntur atra.
And still more strikingly in Petronius, “Satyric.” c. 34, “ad finem:”
Heu, heu, nos miseros, quam torus homuncio nil est!
Sic erimus cuncti, postquam nos auferat Orcus:
Ergo vivamus, dum licet esse, bene.

The same sentiments prevailed among the Jews in the time of the author of the Book of Wisdom (Wisd. 11:1-9): ‹Our life is short and tedious, and in

the death of a man there is no remedy: neither was there any man known to have returned from the grave. For we are born at all adventure; and we shall be hereafter as though we had never been, for the breath in our nostrils is as smoke, and a little spark in the moving of our heart. Come on, therefore, let us enjoy the good things that are present; let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments, and let no flower of the spring pass by us; let us crown ourselves with rose buds before they be withered; let none of us go without his part of our voluptuousness; let us leave tokens of our joyfulness in every place.‘ It was with reference to such sentiments as these, that Dr. Doddridge composed that beautiful epigram which Dr. Johnson pronounced the finest in the English language:

‹Live while you live,‘ the sacred preacher cries,
‹And give to God each moment as it flies;‘
‹Live while you live,‘ the Epicure would say,

‹And seize the pleasures of the present day.‘

Lord, in my view, let both united be,

I live to pleasure when I live to thee.

Verse 14

It was revealed in mine ears, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you until ye die - That is, the sin is so aggravated that it shall never be expiated or pardoned. Few sins can be more aggravated than revelry and riot, thoughtlessness and mirth over the grave. Nothing can show a more decided disregard of God, and nothing a more grovelling and sensual disposition. And yet, it is the common sin of the world; and there can be nothing more melancholy than that a race hastening to the grave should give itself to riot and dissipation. One would think that the prospect of a speedy and certain death would deter people from sin. But the very reverse is true. The nearer they approach death, the more reckless and abandoned do they often become. The “strength and power” of depravity is thus shown in the fact that people can sin thus when near the grave, and with the most fearful warnings and assurances that they are soon to go down to eternal wo.

Verse 15

Analysis of Isaiah 22:15-25. - Vision 20.

The remainder of this chapter Isaiah 22:15-25 is occupied with a prediction respecting Shebna, and the promotion of Eliakim in his place. From the prophecy itself it appears that Shebna was prefect of the palace Isaiah 22:15, or that he was in the highest authority in the time of Hezekiah. That he was an unprincipled ruler is evident from the prophecy, and hence, Isaiah was directed to predict his fall, and the elevation of another in his place. Whether this Shebna is the same that is mentioned in Isaiah 36:3, is not known. The Shebna there mentioned is called a "scribe" Isaiah 22:22, and that was "after" the fall of Shebna mentioned here, for it occurred after Eliakim had been placed over the palace. Eliakim was then in office, and was sent on that embassy to Sennacherib Isaiah 36:2, Isaiah 36:22; Isaiah 37:2. The probability is, therefore, that this was some other man of the same name, unless it may have been that "Shebna," after being degraded from the rank of prefect of the palace or prime minister, became "a scribe," or had an inferior office under Eliakim. The prophecy contains the following things:

1. A "command" to Isaiah to go to Shebna, and to reprove him for his self-confidence in his sin Isaiah 22:15-16.

2. A declaration that he should be carried captive to a foreign land Isaiah 22:17-18.

3. A declaration that he should be deposed and succeeded by Eliakim Isaiah 22:20.

4. A description of the character and honors of Eliakim, and his qualifications for the office Isaiah 22:21-24, and

5. A confirmation of the whole prophecy, or a summing up the whole in a single declaration Isaiah 22:25.

Isaiah 22:15

Thus saith the Lord God of hosts - (see the note at Isaiah 1:9).

Go, get thee - Hebrew, ‹Go, come to.‘ This was one of the instances in which the prophets were directed to go personally, and even at the hazard of their life, to those who were high in office, and to denounce on them the divine judgment for their sins.

Unto this treasurer - (הסכן *hassokēn*). The Vulgate renders this, ‹To him who dwells in the tabernacle.‘ The Septuagint renders it, Εἰς τὸ

παστοφό rion *Eis to pastophorion* denoting properly what is borne into a recess, cell, or chapel, and referring properly to a place where an idol was placed in a temple; and then any recess, or chamber, as a treasury, and referring here to the room which the treasurer of the temple occupied. The Hebrew word שׁכן *shâkan* means "to dwell with anyone;" then to be an associate or friend, and hence, the participle is applied to one entrusted with the care of anything, a steward, a treasurer. Jerome explains this in his Commentary as meaning, ‹go to him who dwells in the tabernacle, which in Hebrew is called Sochen.' He understands by this some room, or recess in the temple, where the treasurer or the prefect of the temple dwelt. Our translators have expressed probably the true sense by the word ‹treasurer.'

Which is over the house - That is, either who is over the temple, or over the palace. I understand it of the latter. Shebna was not high priest, and the expression, ‹over the house,' more properly denotes one who had the rule of the palace, or who was the principal minister of the king. See 1 Kings 18:3: ‹And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house.' What was the offence or crime of Shebna, it is impossible to say. The Jewish commentators say that he was intending to betray the city to Sennacherib, but although this is possible it has no direct proof.

Verse 16

What hast thou here? - This verse contains a severe repoof of the pride and ostentation of Shebna, and of his expectation that he would be buried where be had built his own tomb. It also contains an "implied" declaration that he would not be permitted to lie there, but would be removed to a distant land to be buried in some less honorable manner. It is probable that Isaiah met him when he was at the sepulchre which he had made, and addressed this language to him there: ‹What hast thou here? What right to expect that thou wilt be buried here, or why do you erect this splendid sepulchre, as if you were a holy man, and God would allow you to lie here?' Probably his sepulchre had been erected among the sepulchres of holy people, and perhaps in some part of the royal burying place in Jerusalem.

And whom hast thou here? - Who among the dead that are entombed here are connected with you, that you should deem yourself entitled to lie with them? If this was the royal cemetery, these words might be designed to intimate that he had no connection with the royal family; and thus his

building a tomb there was an evidence of vain glory, and of an attempt to occupy a place, even in death, to which he had no title.

That thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here - Sepulchres were hewn or cut out of rocks (see the note at Isaiah 14:9). It was usual also for princes and rich people to have their sepulchres or tombs constructed while they were themselves alive (see Matthew 27:60). Shebna was doubtless a man of humble birth, none of whose ancestors or family had been honored with a burial in the royal cemetery, and hence, the prophet reproves his pride in expecting to repose with the royal dead.

He that heweth him out a sepulchre on high - On some elevated place, that it might be more conspicuous. Thus Hezekiah 2 Chronicles 32:33 was buried ‹in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David.‘ Hebrew, במעלה *bemaʿălēh* - ‹In the highest.‘ Septuagint, Ἐν ἀναβάσει *en anabasei* Such sepulchres are still found in Persia. They consist of several tombs, each hewn in a high rock near the top, the front of the rock being adorned with figures in *relievo*. ‹Sepulchres of this kind are remarkably exemplified in the very ancient tombs excavated in the cliffs of the mountain of sepulchres at Naksh-i-Roustan, a full description of which may be found in Sir Robert Ker Porter‘s “Travels.” They are excavated in an almost perpendicular cliff of about 300 feet high. There are two rows, of which the uppermost are the most ancient and interesting, presenting highly sculptured fronts about fifty-three feet broad, crowned by a representation of an act of Sabean worship. To the lowest of them, which, however, he describes as not less than sixty feet from the ground, Sir Robert could gain access only by being drawn up by means of a rope fastened around his waist, by some active natives who had contrived to clamber up to the ledge in front of the tomb. These appear to be royal sepulchres, and probably not later than the time of the kings of Persia mentioned in Scripture.‘ (“Pict. Bible.”) Two objects were probably contemplated by such sepulchres. One was security from desecration. The other was ostentation - sepulchres thus excavated furnishing an opportunity for the display of architectural taste in front, and being conspicuous objects. Such sepulchres are found at Petra (see the notes at Isaiah 16:1), and it is probable that Shebna sought this kind of immortality. - Many a man who has done nothing to deserve celebrity by his noble deeds while living, seeks it by the magnificence of his tomb.

Verse 17

Behold, the Lord will carry thee away - Of the historical fact here referred to we have no other information. To what place he was to be carried, we know not. It is probable, however, that it was to Assyria.

With a mighty captivity - Hebrew, גבר *geber* - ‹Of a man,‘ or perhaps, ‹O man.‘ If it means ‹the captivity of a man,‘ the sense is, a strong, irresistible, mighty captivity where the word "man" is emphatic, and means such as a mighty man would make. Compare Job 38:3: ‹Gird up now thy loins like a man.‘ The margin reads this, he ‹who covered thee with an excellent covering, and clothed thee gorgeously, shall surely turn and toss thee.‘ But the text conveys more nearly the idea of the Hebrew word, which denotes the action of "casting away, or throwing" from one as a man throws a stone. See the same use of the word טול *ṭûl* in 1 Samuel 18:2; 1 Samuel 20:33; Jeremiah 17:13; Jeremiah 22:26, Jeremiah 22:28; Jonah 1:5, Jonah 1:12, Jonah 1:16. "And will surely cover thee." ‹Thy face,‘ says Lowth, for this was the condition of mourners. The Chaldee is, ‹Shall cover thee with confusion.‘ So Vitringa, who supposes that it means that although Shebna was endeavoring to rear a monument that should perpetuate his name and that of his family, God would cover them with ignominy, and reduce them to their primitive, obscure, and humble condition.

Verse 18

He will surely violently turn - Lowth has well expressed the sense of this:

He will whirl thee round and round, and cast thee away.

Thus it refers to the action of throwing a stone with a "sling," when the sling is whirled round and round several times before the string is let go, in order to increase the velocity of the stone. The idea is here, that God designed to cast him into a distant land, and that he would give such an "impulse" to him that he would be sent afar, so far that he would not be able to return again.

Like a ball - A stone, ball, or other projectile that is cast from a sling.

Into a large country - Probably Assyria. When this was done we have no means of determining.

And there the chariots of glory shall be the shame of thy lord‘s house - Lowth renders this,

- And there shall thy glorious chariots
Become the shame of the house of thy lord.

Noyes renders it,

There shall thy splendid chariots perish,
Thou disgrace of the house of thy lord.

The Chaldee renders it, ‹And there the chariots of thy glory shall be converted into ignominy, because thou didst not preserve the glory of the house of thy lord.‘ Probably the correct interpretation is that which regards the latter part of the verse, ‹the shame of thy lord‘s house,‘ as an address to him as the shame or disgrace of Ahaz, who had appointed him to that office, and of Hezekiah, who had continued him in it. The phrase ‹the chariots of thy glory,‘ means splendid or magnificent chariots; and refers doubtless to the fact that in Jerusalem he had affected great pride and display, and had, like many weak minds, sought distinction by the splendor of his equipage. The idea here is, that the ‹chariot of his glory,‘ that is, the vehicle in which he would ride, would be in a distant land, not meaning that in that land he would ride in chariots as magnificent as those which he had in Jerusalem, but that he would be conveyed there, and probably be borne in an ignominous manner, instead of the splendid mode in which he was carried in Jerusalem. The Jews say that when he left Jerusalem to deliver it into the hands of the enemy, they asked him where his army was; and when he said that they had turned back, they said, ‹thou hast mocked us;‘ and that thereupon they bored his heels, and tied him to the tails of horses, and that thus he died.

Verse 19

And from thy state - From thy office; thy place of trust and responsibility.

Shall he pull thee down - That is, “God” shall do it. The prophet here uses the third person instead of the first. Such a change of person is very common in the writings of the prophets (see Stuart‘s “Heb. Gram.” 563-565, sixth Ed.)

Verse 20

My servant Eliakim - A man who will be faithful to me; who will be trustworthy, and to whom the interests of the city may be safely confided; a man who will not seek to betray it into the hands of the enemy. Of Eliakim we know nothing more than what is stated here, and in 1 Chronicles 6:13.

Verse 21

And I will clothe him with thy robe - He shall succeed thee in the office, and wear the garments which are appropriate to it.

And strengthen him with thy girdle - That is, he shall wear the same girdle that thou didst (see the note at Isaiah 3:24). In that girdle was usually the purse, and to it was attached the sword. Often, among the Orientals, the girdle was adorned with gold and precious stones, and was regarded as the principal embellishment of the dress.

And he shall be a father … - A counselor; a guide; one who can be trusted in time of danger and difficulty. We use, the word "father" in the same sense, when we speak of the ‹father of his country.'

Verse 22

And the key - A key is that by which a house is locked or opened. To possess that is, therefore, to have free access to it, or control over it. Thus we give possession of a house by giving the "key" into the hands of a purchaser, implying that it is his; that he has free access to it; that he can close it when he pleases, and that no other one, without his permission, has the right of access to it.

Of the house of David - Of the house which David built for his royal residence; that is, of the palace. This house was on Mount Zion; and to have the key of that house was to have the chief authority at court, or to be prime minister (see the note at Isaiah 22:15). To be put in possession of that key, therefore, was the mark of office, or was a sign that he was entrusted with the chief authority in the government.

Will I lay upon his shoulder - (see Isaiah 9:6). This seems to have been designed as an emblem of office. But in what way it was done is unknown. Lowth supposes that the key was of considerable magnitude, and was made crooked, and that thus it would lie readily on the shoulder. He has observed also, that this was a well-known badge or emblem of office. Thus the priestess of Ceres is described as having a key on the shoulder (Callim. "Ceres," ver. 45); and thus in AEschyl. "Supp." 299, a female high in office is described as having a key. But it is not known in what way the key was borne. It may have been borne on the shoulder, being so made as to be easily carried there; or it may have been attached to the shoulder by a belt or strap, as a sword is; or it may have been a mere emblem or figure fashioned into the robe, and worn as a sign of office; or the figure of a key may have been worn on the shoulder as an epaulet is now, as a sign of office and authority. If the locks were made of wood, as we have reason to suppose, then the key was probably large, and would answer well for a sign of office. ‹How much was I delighted when I first saw the people,

especially the Moors, going along the streets with each his key on his shoulder. The handle is generally made of brass (though sometimes of silver), and is often nicely worked in a device of filigrane. The way it is carried is to have the corner of a kerchief tied to the ring; the key is then placed on the shoulder, and the kerchief hangs down in front. At other times they have a bunch of large keys, and then they have half on one side of the shoulder, and half on the other. For a man thus to march along with a large key on his shoulder, shows at once that he is a person of consequence. "Raman is in great favor with the Modeliar, for he now carries the key." "Whose key have you got on your shoulder?" "I shall carry my key on my own shoulder."' - (Roberts)

So he shall open … - This phrase means, that he should have the highest authority in the government, and is a promise of unlimited power. Our Saviour has made use of the same expression to denote the unlimited power conferred on his apostles in his church Matthew 16:19; and has applied it also to himself in Revelation 3:7.

Verse 23

And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place - The word ‹nail' here (יתד *yâtēd*) means properly a peg, pin, or spike; and is applied often to the pins or large spikes which were used to drive into the ground to fasten the cords of tents. It is also applied to the nails or spikes which are driven into walls, and on which are suspended the garments or the utensils of a family. In ancient times, every house was furnished with a large number of these pegs, or nails. They were not "driven" into the walls after the house was made, but they were "worked in" while the walls were going up. The houses were usually made of stone; and strong iron hooks, or spikes, were worked into the mortar while soft, and they answered the double purpose of nails to hang things on, and of cramp-irons, as they were so bent as to hold the walls together. These spikes are described by Sir John Chardin (Harmer's "Observations," vol. i. p. 191) as ‹large nails with square heads like dice, well made, the ends being so bent as to make them cramp-irons. They commonly,' says he, ‹place them at the windows and doors, in order to hang upon them, when they like, veils and curtains.' It was also the custom to suspend in houses, and especially temples, suits of armor, shields, helmets, swords, etc., that had been taken in war as spoils of victory, or which had been used by illustrious ancestors, and these spikes were used for that purpose also. The word is here applied to a leader, or officer; and it

means that he would be fixed and permanent in his plans and office; and that as a pin in the wall sustained the ornaments of the house "safely," so all the glory of the house of David, all that was dear and valuable to the nation, might be reposed on him Isaiah 22:24.

And he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house - A glorious seat; that is, all his family and kindred would be sustained, and honored by him; or their honor and reputation might rest securely on him, and his deeds would diffuse a luster and a glory over them all. Every virtuous, patriotic, benevolent, and pious son diffuses a luster on all his kindred; and this is one of the incitements to virtuous and elevated deeds which God has presented in the government of the world.

Verse 24

And they shall hang upon him - This figure is a continuation of that commenced in the previous verse; and is derived from the custom of "hanging" clothes or ornaments on the spikes that were fixed in the walls; and, perhaps, more particularly from the custom of suspending shields, swords, suits of armor, etc., taken in battle, around the walls of a temple. A great portion of the wealth of the ancients consisted in gold and silver vessels, and in changes of raiment. These would be hung around a house in no inconsiderable degree for ostentation and parade. ‹Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold; and all the vessels of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; none were of silver' 1 Kings 10:21. ‹The vessels in the house of the forest of Lebanon were two hundred targets and three hundred shields of beaten gold' 1 Kings 10:16-17. That these were hung on spikes or pins around the house is apparent from Isaiah 5:12; Isaiah 14:11); but it properly denotes a bottle made of skin for holding wine, and which, being made of the whole skin of a goat or sheep, indicated the vessels of large dimensions. Here it refers to the members of the family of Eliakim who were more wealthy and influential than those denoted by the small vessels. The glory of the whole family would depend on him. His virtues, wisdom, integrity, and valor in defending and saving the Hebrew commonwealth, would diffuse honor over the whole family connection, and render the name illustrious.

Verse 25

In that day shall the nail - Not Eliakim, but Shebna. Eliakim was to be fastened, that is, confirmed in office. But Shebna was to be removed.

That is fastened in the sure place - Or, that was once fastened, or was supposed to be fastened - a phrase appropriate to an office which the incumbent supposed to be firm or secure. It here refers to Shebna. He was regarded as haying a permanent hold on the office, and was making provisions for ending his days in it.

Be removed - To a distant land Isaiah 22:17-18, or simply taken down.

And be cut down, and fall - As a spike, pin, or peg would be taken away from the wall of a house.

And the burden that was upon it - All that it sustained - as the spikes in the wall of a house sustained the cups of gold, the raiment, or the armor that belonged to the family. Here it means, all that was dependent on Shebna - the honor of his family, his emoluments, his hope of future fame, or of an honored burial. All these would fail as a matter of course, when he was removed from his office. This is one instance of the usual mode of the divine administration. The errors of a man entrusted with office entail poverty, disgrace, and misery on all who are connected with him. Not only is his own name disgraced, but his sin "diffuses itself," as it were, on all connected wit him. It involves them in want, and shame, and tears; and the design is to deter those in office from sin, by the fact that their crimes and errors "will" thus involve the innocent in calamiry, and shed disgrace and woe on those whom they love.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 23

Introduction

This prophecy respects Tyre, and extends only to the end of this chapter. It is made up of a succession of "apostrophes" directed either to Tyre itself, or to the nations with which it was accustomed to trade. The first part of the prophecy Isaiah 23:1-13 is occupied with the account of the "judicial sentence" which God had passed upon Tyre. This is not done in a direct and formal manner, but by addresses to the various people with whom the Tyrians had commercial contact, and who would be particularly affected by its destruction. Thus Isaiah 23:1 the prophet calls on the ships of Tarshish to ‹howl‘ because their advantageous commerce with Tyre must cease. This intelligence respecting the calamities that had come upon Tyre, he says would be brought to them ‹from the land of Chittim‘ Isaiah 23:1, that is, from the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean. In Isaiah 23:2, the calamity is described as coming directly on the island on which Tyre was built. In the subsequent verses, the prophet describes the sources of the wealth of Tyre Isaiah 23:3, and declares that her great luxury and splendor would be destroyed Isaiah 23:5-12. In Isaiah 23:13, the prophet says that this would be done by the ‹Chaldeans;‘ and this verse serves to fix the time of the fulfillment to the siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar. In this all commentators probably (except Grotius, who supposes that it refers to Aexander the Great) are agreed. Indeed, it seems to be past all doubt, that the events here referred to pertain to the siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar. In the remainder of the prophecy (Isaiah 23:14 to the end of the chapter), the prophet declares the "time" during which this calamity would continue. He declares that it would be only for seventy years Isaiah 23:14, and that after that, Tyre would be restored to her former splendor, magnificence, and successful commerce Isaiah 23:16-17; and that then her wealth would be consecrated to the service of Yahweh Isaiah 23:18.

The "design" of the prophecy is, therefore, to foretell the calamities that would come upon a rich, proud, and luxurious city; and tries to show that God was Governor and Ruler over the nations of the earth. Tyre became distinguished for pride, luxury, and consequent dissipation; and the destruction that was to come upon it was to be a demonstration that wicked nations and cities wound incur the displeasure of God, and would be destroyed.

Tyre, the subject of the prophecies, particularly of Isaiah and Ezekiel, who both predicted its overthrow Matthew 11:21, Matthew 11:22; Matthew 15:21; Mark 3:8; Mark 7:24, Mark 7:31; Luke 10:13-14. It was on the coast of the Mediterranean, about lat. 33 degrees 20‘ N., and was about twenty miles south of Sidon. It was one of the cities allotted to the tribe of Asher Joshua 19:29, but it is probable that the ancient inhabitants were never driven out by the Israelites. It seems to have been occupied by the Canaanites, and is always mentioned as inhabited by a distinct people from the Jews 2 Samuel 24:7; 1 Kings 7:13-14; 1 Kings 9:12; Ezra 3:7; Nehemiah 13:16; Psalm 83:7; Psalm 87:4. It was probably built by a colony from Sidon: since Isaiah Isaiah 23:12 calls it the ‹daughter of Zidon,‘ and it is said Isaiah 23:2 to have been replenished by Sidon. That Sidon was the most ancient city there can be no doubt. “Sidon” was the oldest son of Canaan Genesis 10:15, and the city of Sidon is mentioned by the patriarch Jacob Genesis 49:13, and in the time of Joshua it is called ‹Great Sidon‘ Joshua 11:8. Strabo affirms that “after Sidon,” Tyre was the most celebrated city of the Phenicians. Justin (xviii. 1,5), expressly declares that the Sidonians, being besieged by the king of Ascalon, went in ships and built Tyre. But though Tyre was the ‹daughter‘ of Sidon, yet it soon rivaled in importance, and in commercial enterprise.

Among the ancient writers, Tyre is mentioned as Palaeo-Tyrus (Παλαίτυρος *Palaituros*) or ancient Tyre, and as Insular Tyre. The former was built on the “coast,” and was doubtless built first, though there is - evidence that the latter was early used as a place for anchorage, or a harbor. In Old Tyre, or Tyre on the coast, undoubtedly also the most magnificent edifices would be built, and the principal business would there be at first transacted. Probably Insular Tyre was built either because it furnished a better harbor, or because, being inaccessible to an invading army, it was more secure. Insular Tyre, as the name imports, was built on an island, or a “rock,” about three quarters of a mile from the coast, or from Old Tyre. Probably the passage from one to the other was formerly by a ferry, or in boats only, until Alexander the Great, in his siege of the city, built a mole from the ruins of the old city to the new. This mole, or embankment, was not less than 200 feet in breadth, and constituted a permanent connection between Tyre and the mainland. Insular Tyre was remarkably safe from the

danger of invasion. It commanded the sea, and of course had nothing to dread from that quarter; and the only mode in which it could become accessible to Alexander, was to build this gigantic causeway from the mainland.

Tyre was distinguished for its enterprise, its commercial importance, its luxury, and its magnificence. Few, perhaps none, of the cities of antiquity, were more favorably situated for commerce. It was the natural seaport of Palestine and Syria, and it was favorably situated for commerce with all the cities and states bordering on the Mediterranean, and, indeed, with all the known world. The luxuries of the East passed through Tyre (see Isaiah 23:13), and according to the predictions also of Ezekiel. The desolation was entire. The city was destroyed, and the inhabitants driven into foreign lands (see Isaiah 23:7, note; Isaiah 23:12, note). The city lay desolate for seventy years (see Isaiah 23:15, note; Isaiah 23:17, note), and Old Tyre was in ruins in the time of the invasion of Alexander the Great. A new city had risen, however, on the island, called New Tyre, and this city was taken by Alexander, after a siege of eight months. Near the shore the water is said to have been shallow, but near the new city it was three fathoms, or nineteen feet in depth. The city of Tyre was taken by Alexander 332 b.c. and 241 years after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar, and consequently about 170 years after it had been rebuilt.

It was not, however, entirely destroyed by Alexander, and became an object of contention to his successors. It was successively invested by Antigonas and Ptolemy, and fell into the hands of the latter. In the apostolic age it seems to have regained somewhat of its ancient splendor. There were some Christians here Acts 21:3-4. At present it belongs to Syria. It was often an object of contention during the crusades, and was distinguished as the first archbishopric under the patriarchate of Jerusalem. It gradually sunk into decay, lost its importance, and became a place of utter ruin. Volney noticed there, in 1784, the choir of the ancient church, the remains of the walls of the city which can still be traced, and some columns of red granite, a species unknown in Syria. In the time when it was visited by Volhey and Maundrell, it was a miserable village, where the inhabitants subsisted chiefly by fishing.

Its exports consist only of a few sacks of corn and cotton; and the only merchant of which it could boast in the time when Volney was there, was a solitary Greek, who could hardly gain a livelihood. At present, Tyre, or, as it is called, "Sur," is nothing more than a market town, a small seaport, hardly deserving the name of a city. Its chief export is the tobacco raised on the neighboring hills; with some cotton, and also charcoal and wood from the more distant mountains. The houses are for the most part mere hovels, very few being more than one story high, with flat roofs. The streets are narrow lanes, crooked, and filthy. Yet the many scattered palm trees throw over the place an oriental charm; and the numerous Pride of India trees interspersed among the houses and gardens, with their beautiful foliage, give it a pleasing aspect. It has a population of less than three thousand souls. In 1837, an earthquake was felt here to a very considerable extent. A large part of the eastern wall was thrown down, and the southern wall was greatly shattered, and several houses were destroyed (see Robinson's "Bib. Researches," vol. iii. p. 400; Robinson's Calmet; "Edin. Ency.;" Newton, "On the Prophecies," vol. xi.; Keith, "On the Prophecies;" and the "Travels" of Volney and Maundrell. On the ancient commercial importance of Tyre, also, and its present situation, and the "cause" of its decline, the reader may consult an article in the "Amos Bib. Rep." for October 1840).

Verse 1

The burden of Tyre - (see the note at Isaiah 13:1)

Howl - This is a highly poetic description of the destruction that was coming on Tyre. The ships of Tarshish traded there; and the prophet now addresses the ships, and calls upon them to lament because the commerce by which they had been enriched was to be destroyed, and they were to be thrown out of employ.

Ye ships of Tarshish - (see the note at Isaiah 2:16). The ‹Tarshish' here referred to, was doubtless a city or country in Spain (Ταρτησσὸς *Tartēssos*), and was the most celebrated emporium to which the Phenicians traded. It is mentioned by Diod. Sic., v. 35-38; Strabo, iii. 148; Pliny, "Nat. Hist." iii. 3. According to Jeremiah 10:9, it exported silver; according to Ezekiel 27:12, Ezekiel 27:25, it exported silver, iron, tin, and lead, to the Tyrian market. In this chapter Isaiah 23:1, Isaiah 23:6, Isaiah 23:10, it is represented as an important Phenician or Tyrian colony. All the circumstances agree with the supposition that "Tartessus" in Spain is the

place “here” referred to. The name ‹Tartessus‘ (Ταρτησσὸς *Tartēssos*) is derived from the Hebrew תרשיש *tarshiysh* by a change simply in the pronunciation (see Bochart, “Geo. Sacra,” iii. 7, and John D. Michaelis, “Spicileg. Geo. Heb.” i. 82-103).

For it is laid waste - Tyre is laid waste; that is, in vision it was made to pass before the mind of the prophet as laid waste, or as it “would” be (see the notes at Isaiah 1:1).

So that there is no house - It would be completely destroyed. This was the case with old Tyre after the conquest by Nebuchadnezzar, and it remained so. See the analysis of the chapter.

No entering in - No harbor; no port; where the ships could remain, and with which they could continue to trade. Tyre was once better situated for commerce, and had greater natural advantages, than any port in the Mediterranean. Those advantages have, however, to a great extent passed away, and natural causes combine to confirm the truth of the divine predictions that it should cease to be a place of commerce. The merchandise of India, which was once conveyed overland through Babylon and Palmyra, and which found its natural outlet at Tyre, is now carried around the Cape of Good Hope, and will never again be restored to its old channel. Besides, Tyre itself, which once had so fine a harbor, has ceased to be a safe haven for large vessels. Robinson (George) says of its harbor, in 1830, ‹It is a small circular basin, now quite filled up with sand and broken columns, leaving scarcely space enough for small boats to enter.

The few fishing boats that belong to the place are sheltered by some rocks to the westward of the island.‘ (“Travels in Syria and Palestine,” vol. i. p. 269). Shaw, who visited Tyre in 1738, says of the harbor, ‹I visited several creeks and inlets, in order to discover what provision there might have been formerly made for the security of their vessels. Yet, notwithstanding that Tyre was the chief maritime power of this country, I could not discover the least token of either “cothon” or harbor that could have been of extraordinary capacity. The coasting ships, indeed, still and a tolerably good shelter from the northern winds, under the southern shore, but are obliged immediately to return when the winds change to the west or south; so that there must have been some better station than this for their security and reception. In the N. N. E. part, likewise, of the city, we see the traces of a safe and commodious basin, lying within the walls; but which, at the same time, is very small, scarce forty yards in diameter.

Yet even this port, small as it is at present, is, notwithstanding, so choked up with sand and rubbish, that the boats of those poor fishermen who now and then visit this renowned emporium, can, with great difficulty, only be admitted‘ (“Travels,” pp. 330,331. Ed. fol. Oxon. 1738). Dr. Robin son says of the port of Tyre, ‹The inner port Dr basin on the north was formerly enclosed by a wall, running from the north end of the island in a curve toward the main land. Various pieces and fragments of this wall yet remain, sufficient to mark its course; but the port itself is continually filling up more and more with sand, and now-a-days boats only can enter it. Indeed, our host informed us, that even within his own recollection, the water covered the open place before his own house, which at present is ten or twelve rods from the sea, and is surrounded with buildings; while older people remember, that vessels formerly anchored where the shore now is‘ (“Bib. Researches,” vol. iii. p. 397).

From the land of Chittim - This means, probably, from the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean. In regard to the meaning of the word “Chittim,” the following is the note of Gesenius on this verse: ‹Among the three different opinions of ancient and modern interpreters, according to which they sought for the land of Chittim in Italy, Macedonia, and Cyprus, I decidely prefer the latter, which is also the opinion of Josephus (“Ant.” i. 6,1). According to this, Chittim is the island Cyprus, so called from the Phoenician colony, Kition, (Citium), in the southern part of the island, but still in such a sense, that this name Chittim was, at a later period, employed also in a wider sense, to designate other islands and countries adjacent to the coasts of the Mediterranean, as, e. g., Macedonia (Daniel 11:30; Ezekiel 27:6, which agrees very well with Cyprus: “Of the oaks of Bashan do they make them oars; thy ships‘ benches do they make of ivory, encased with cedar from the isles of Chittim.” The sense of this passage is, that the fleets coming from Tarshish (Tartessus) to Tyre, would, on their way, learn from the inhabitants of Cyprus the news of the downfall of Tyre.‘

It is revealed to them - If we understand “Chittim” to denote the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean, it means that the navigators in the ships of Tarshish would learn the intelligence of the destruction of Tyre from those coasts or islands where they might stop on their way. Tyre was of so much commercial importance that the news of its fall would spread into all the islands of the Mediterranean.

Verse 2

Be still - This is the description of a city which is destroyed, where the din of commerce, and the sound of revelry is no longer heard. It is an address of the prophet to Tyre, indicating that it would be soon still, and destroyed.

Ye inhabitants of the isle - (of Tyre). The word ‹isle‘ (אִי *'iy*) is sometimes used to denote a "coast or maritime region" (see the note at Isaiah 20:6), but there seems no reason to doubt that here it means the island on which New Tyre was erected. This may have been occupied even before Old Tyre was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, though the main city was on the crest.

Thou whom the merchants of Zidon - Tyre was a colony from Sidon; and the merchants of Sidon would trade to Tyre as well as to Sidon.

Have replenished - Hebrew, ‹have filled,‘ that is, with merchandise, and with wealth. Thus, in Ezekiel 27:8, Tyre is represented as having derived its seamen from Sidon: ‹Theinhabitants of Sidon and of Arvad were thy mariners.‘ And in Ezekiel 27:9-23, Tyre is represented as having been filled with shipbuilders, merchants, mariners, soldiers, etc., from Gebal, Persia, Lud, Phut, Tarshish, Jayvan, Tubal, Mesheck, Dedan, Syria, Damascus, Arabia, etc.

Verse 3

And by great waters - That is, by the abundant-waters, or the overflowing of the Nile. Tyre was the mart to which the superabundant productions of Egypt were borne (see Joshua 13:3; 1 Chronicles 13:5; Jeremiah 2:18). The word שִׁחוֹר *shichor* is derived from שָׁחַר *shachar* "to be black" Job 30:30, and is given to the Nile from its color when it brings down the slime or mud by which Egypt is rendered so fertile. The Greeks gave to the river the name Μέλας *Melas* ("black"), and the Latins call it "Melo" - (Serv. ad Virg. "Geor." iv. 291. It was called "Siris" by the Ethiopians; perhaps the same as Sihor. The upper branches of the Nile in Abyssinia all receive their names from the "color" of the water, and are called the White River, the Blue River, etc.

The harvest of the river - The productions caused by the overflowing of the river. Egypt was celebrated for producing grain, and Rome and Greece derived no small part of their supplies from that fertile country. It is also evident that the inhabitants of Palestine were early accustomed to go to Egypt in time of scarcity for supplies of grain (see Genesis 37:25, Genesis

37:28, and the history of Joseph, Genesis 4143) That the "Tyrians" traded with Egypt is also well known. Herodotus (ii. 112) mentions one entire quarter of the city of Memphis that was inhabited by the Tyrians.

Is her revenue - Her resources are brought from thence.

She is a mart of nations - How true this was, see Ezekiel 27. No place was more favorably situated for commerce; and she had engrossed the trade nearly of all the world.

Verse 4

Be thou ashamed, O Zidon - Tyre was a colony of Sidon. Sidon is here addressed as the mother of Tyre, and is called on to lament over her daughter that was destroyed. In Isaiah 23:12, Tyre is called the ‹daughter of Sidon;' and such appellations were commonly given to cities (see the note at Isaiah 1:8). Sidon is here represented as ashamed, or grieved - as a mother is who is bereft of all her children.

The sea hath spoken - New Tyre was on a rock at some distance from the land, and seemed to rise out of the sea, somewhat as Venice does It is described here as a production of the sea, and the sea is represented as speaking by her.

Even the strength of the sea - The fortress, or strong place (מעוז *māʿôz*) of the sea. Tyre, on a rock, might be regarded as the strong place, or the defense of the Mediterranean. Thus Zechariah Zechariah 9:3 says of it. ‹And Tyrus did build herself a stronghold' (מצור *mâtsôr*).

Saying, I travail not - The expresssions which follow are to be regarded as the language of Tyre - the founder of colonies and cities. The sense is, ‹My wealth and resources are gone. My commerce is annihilated. I cease to plant cities and colonies, and to nourish and foster them, as I once did, by my trade.' The idea of the whole verse is, that the city which had been the mistress of the commercial world, and distinguished for founding other cities and colonies, was about to lose her importance, and to cease to extend her colonies and her influence over other countries. Over this fact, Sidon, the mother and founder of Tyre herself, would be humbled and grieved that her daughter, so proud, so rich, and so magnificent, was brought so low.

Verse 5

As at the report concerning Egypt - According to our translation, this verse would seem to mean that the Sidonians and other nations had been pained or grieved at the report of the calamities that had come upon Egypt,

and that they would be similarly affected at the report concerning Tyre. In accordance with this, some (as Jarchi) have understood it of the plagues of Egypt, and suppose that the prophet means to say, that as the nations were astonished at that, so they would be at the report of the calamities that would come upon Tyre. Others refer it to the calamities that. would come upon Egypt referred to in Isaiah 19, and suppose that the prophet means to say, that as the nations would be amazed at the report of these calamities, so they would be at the report of the overthrow of Tyre. So Vitringa. But the sense of the Hebrew may be expressed thus: ‹As the report, or tidings of the destruction of Tyre shall reach Egypt, they shall be pained at the tidings respecting Tyre.‘ So Lowth, Noyes, Rosenmuller, Grotius, Calvin. They would be grieved, either

(1) because the destruction of Tyre would injure the commerce of Egypt; or

(2) because the Egyptians might fear that the army of Nebuchadnezzar would come upon them, and that they would share the fate of Tyre.

Sorely pained - The word used here (יחילו *yâchîylû*) is commonly applied to the severe pain of parturition.

Verse 6

Pass ye over - That is, ye inhabitants of tyre. This is an address to Tyre, in view of her approaching destruction; and is designed to signify that when the city was destroyed, its inhabitants would flee to its colonies, and seek refuge and safety there. As Tarshish was one of its principal colonies, and as the ships employed by Tyre would naturally sail to Tarshish, the inhabitants are represented as fleeing there on the attack of Nebucbadnezzar. That the inhabitants of Tyre did fire in this manner, is expressly asserted by Jerome upon the authority of Assyrian histories which are now lost. ‹We have read,‘ says he, ‹in the histories of the Assyrians, that when the Tyrians were besieged, after they saw no hope of escaping, they went on board their ships, and fled to Cartilage, or to some islands of the Ionian and AEgean Sea‘ (Jerome *in loc*.) And again (on Isaiah 15:2).

Ye inhabitants of the isle - Of Tyre. The word ‹isle,‘ however, may be taken as in Isaiah 20:6 (see the note on that place), in, the sense of coast, or maritime country in general, and possibly may be intended to denote Old Tyre, or the coast of Phenicia in general, though most naturally it applies to the city built on the island.

Verse 7

Is this your joyous city - Is this the city that was just now so full of happiness, of revelry, of business, of gaiety, of rejoicing? (see the note at Isaiah 22:2)

Whose antiquity is of ancient days - Strabo (xvi. 756) says, ‹After Sidon, Tyre, a splendid and most ancient city, is to be compared in greatness, beauty, and antiquity, with Sidon.‘ Curtius (Hist. Alex. iv. 4) says, ‹The city was taken, distinguished both by its antiquity, and its great variety of fortune.‘ Arrian (ii. 16) says, that ‹the Temple of Hercules at Tyre was the most ancient of those which the memory of people have preserved.‘ And Herodotus (ii. 44) says, that in a conversation which he had with the priest of that temple, he informed him that it had then existed for 2300 years. Josephus, indeed, says (Ant. viii. 3. 1) that Tyre was built but 240 years before the temple was built by Solomon - but this was probably a mistake. Justin (xviii. 3) says that Tyre was founded in the year of the destruction of Troy. Its very high antiquity cannot be doubted.

Her own feet shall carry her afar off - Grotius supposes that by feet here, the ‹feet of ships‘ are intended, that is, their sails and oars. But the expression is designed evidently to stand in contrast with Isaiah 23:6, and to denote that a part of the inhabitants would go by land into captivity. Probably many of them were taken prisoners by Nebuchadnezzar; and perhaps many of them, when the city was besieged, found opportunity to escape and flee by land to a distant place of safety.

Verse 8

Who hath taken this counsel? - To whom is this to be traced? Is this the work of man, or is it the plan of God? - questions which would naturally arise at the contemplation of the ruin of a city so ancient and so magnificent. The object of this question is to trace it all to God; and this perhaps indicates the scope of the prophecy - to show that God reigns, and does all his pleasure ever cities and kingdoms.

The crowning city - The distributer of crowns; or the city from which dependent towns, provinces, and kingdoms had arisen. Many colonies and cities had been founded by Tyre. Tartessus in Spain, Citium in Cyprus, Carthage in Africa, and probably many other places were Phenician colonies, and derived their origin from Tyre, and were still its tributaries and dependants (compare Ezekiel 27:33).

Whose merchants are princes - Princes trade with thee; and thus acknowledge their dependence on thee. Or, thy merchants are splendid,

gorgeous, and magnificent like princes. The former, however, is probably the meaning.

Whose traffickers - (כנעניה *kîneʿâneyhâ* Canaanites). As the ancient inhabitants of Canaan were "traffickers or merchants," the word came to denote merchants in general (see Job 41:6; Ezekiel 17:4; Hosea 12:7; Zephaniah 1:1 l). So the word Chaldean came to mean astrologers, because they were celebrated for astrology.

Verse 9

The Lord of hosts hath purposed it - (see the note at Isaiah 1:9). It is not by human counsel that it has been done. Whoever is the instrument, yet the overthrow of wicked, proud, and vicious cities and nations is to be traced to the God who rules in the empires and kingdoms of the earth (see the notes at Isaiah 10:5-7).

To stain, the pride of all glory - Margin, ‹Pollute.‘ The Hebrew word (חלל *chalēl*) means properly to bore, or pierce through; to open, make common Leviticus 19:29; then to profane, defile, pollute, as, e. g., the sanctuary Leviticus 19:8; Leviticus 21:9, the Sabbath Exodus 31:14, the name of God Leviticus 18:21; Leviticus 19:12. Here it means that the destruction of Tyre would show that God could easily level it all with the dust. The destruction of Tyre would show this in reference to all human glory, because:

(1) it was one of the most ancient cities;

(2) it was one of the most magnificent;

(3) it was one: of the most strong, secure, and inaccessible;

(4) it was the one of most commercial importante, most distinguished in the view of nations; and

(5) its example would be the most striking and impressive.

God often selects the most distinguished and important cities and people to make them examples to others, and to show the ease with which he can bring all down to the earth.

To bring into contempt … - To bring their plans and purposes into contempt, and to show how unimportant and how foolish are their schemes in the sight of a holy God.

Verse 10

Pass through thy land as a river - This verse has been very variously understood. Vitringa supposes that it means that all that held the city together - its fortifications, walls, etc., would be laid waste, and that as a river flows on without obstruction, so the inhabitants would be scattered far and near. Everything, says he, would be leveled, and the field would not be distinguishable from the city. Grotius thus renders it: ‹Pass to some one of thy colonies; as a river flows from the fountain to the sea, so do you go to the ocean.‘ Lowth understands it also as relating to the time of the destruction of Tyre, and to the escape which the inhabitants would then make.

‹Overflow thy land like a river,
O daughter of Tarshish; the mound (that kept in thy waters)
Is no more.‘

The Septuagint renders it, ‹Cultivate (Ἐργάζον *Ergazon*) thy land, for the ships shall no more come from Carthage‘ (Καρχηδόνος *Karchēdonos*) Probably the true meaning is that which refers it to the time of the siege, and to the fact that the inhabitants would seek other places when their defense was destroyed. That is, ‹Pass through thy territories, thy dependent cities, states, colonies, and seek a refuge there; or wander there like a flowing stream.‘

As a river - Perhaps the allusion is to the Nile, as the word יאר *ye'or* is usually given to the Nile; or it may be to any river that flows on with a mighty current when all obstructions are removed. The idea is, that as waters flow on when the barriers are removed, so the inhabitants of Tyre would pour forth from their city. The idea is not so much that of rapidity, as it is they should go like a stream that has no dikes, barriers, or obstacles now to confine its flowing waters.

O daughter of Tarshish - Tyre; so called either because it was in some degree sustained and supplied by the commerce of Tarshish; or because its inhabitants would become the inhabitants of Tarshish, and it is so called by anticipation. The Vulgate renders this, “Filia marias” - ‹Daughter of the sea. Juntos supposes that the prophet addresses those who were then in the city who were natives of Tarshish, and exhorts them to flee for safety to their own city.

There is no more strength - Margin, ‹Girdle.‘ The word מזח *mēzach* means properly a girdle Job 12:31. It is applied to that which binds or secures the body; and may be applied here perhaps to that which secured or

bound the city of Tyre; that is, its fortifications, its walls, its defenses. They would all be leveled; and nothing would secure the inhabitants, as they would flow forth as waters that are pent up do, when every barrier is removed.

Verse 11

He stretched out his hand - That is, Yahweh (see Isaiah 23:9). To stretch out the hand is indicative of punishment (see the notes at Isaiah 5:25; Isaiah 9:12), and means that God has resolved to inflict exemplary punishment on Tyre and its dependent colonies.

Over the sea - That is, over the sea coast of Phenicia; or over the cities that were built on the coast. This alludes to the fact that Nebuchadnezzar would lay siege to these cities, and would ravage the maritime coast of Phenicia. It is not improbable also that, having taken Tyre, he would extend his conquests to Citium, on the island of Cyprus, and destroy as many of the dependent cities of Tyre as possible.

The Lord hath given a commandment - The control here asserted over Nebuchadnezzar is similar to that which he asserted over the Assyrian Sennacherib (see the note at Isaiah 10:5).

Against the merchant city - Hebrew, ‹Against Canaan‘ (על־כנען *'el - kenaʿan*). The word ‹Canaan‘ may here be used as in Isaiah 23:8, to denote a place given to merchandise or traffic, since this was the principal employment of the inhabitants of this region; but it is rather to be taken in its obvious and usual sense in the Scriptures, as denoting the land of Canaan, and as denoting that Nebuchadnezzar would be sent against that, and especially the maritime parts of it, to lay it waste.

To destroy the strongholds thereof - That is, the strongholds of Canaan; as Tyre, Sidon, Accho, etc. Tyre, especially, was strongly fortified, and was able long to resist the arms of the Chaldeans.

Verse 12

And he said - God said Isaiah 23:9.

Thou shalt no more rejoice - The sense is, that Tyre was soon to be destroyed. It does not mean that it should never afterward exult or rejoice, for the prophet says Isaiah 23:17, that after its destruction it would be restored, and again be filled with exultation and joy.

O thou oppressed Virgin - Lowth renders this, ‹O thou deflowered virgin,‘ expressing the sense of the word המעשׁקה *hameʿushâqâh* O daughter of Zidon - Isaiah 23:4. “Pass over to Chittim” (see the note at Isaiah 23:1).

The idea is, that under the siege the inhabitants of Tyre would seek refuge in her colonies, and the cities that were dependent on her.

There also shalt thou have no rest - It is not improbable that Nebuchadnezzar would carry his arms to Cyprus - on which the city of Citium was - where the Tyrians would take refuge first. Megasthenes, who lived about 300 years before Christ, says of Nebuchadnezzar that he subdued a great part of Africa and Spain, and that he carried his arms so far as the Pillars of Hercules (see Newton, On the Prophecies, xi. 11). But whether this refers to the oppressions which Nebuchadnezzar would bring on them or not, it is certain that the colonies that sprung from Phenicia were exposed to constant wars after this. Carthage was a colony of Tyre, and it is well known that this city was engaged in hostility with the Romans until it was utterly destroyed. Indeed all the dependent colonies of ancient Tyre became interested and involved in the agitations and commotions which were connected with the conquests of the Roman empire.

Verse 13

Behold the land of the Chaldeans - This is a very important verse, as it expresses the source from where these calamities were coming upon Tyre; and as it states some historical facts of great interest respecting the rise of Babylon. In the previous verses the prophet had foretold the certain destruction of Tyre, and had said that whoever was the agent, it was to be traced to the overruling providence of God. He here states distinctly that the agent in accomplishing all this would be the Chaldeans - a statement which fixes the time to the siege of Nebuchadnezzar, and proves that it does not refer to the conquest by Alexander the Great. A part of this verse should be read as a parenthesis, and its general sense has been well expressed by Lowth, who has followed Vitringa:

‹Behold the land of the Chaldeans;
This people was of no account;
(The Assyrian founded it for the inhabitants of the desert;

They raised the watch towers, they set up the palaces thereof;)
This people hath reduced her to a ruin.‘

Behold - Indicating that what he was about to say was something unusual, remarkable, and not to be expected in the ordinary course of events. That which was so remarkable was the fact that a people formerly so

little known, would rise to such power as to be able to overturn the ancient and mighty city of Tyre.

The land of the Chaldeans - Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Chaldea or Babylonia. The names Babylon and Chaldea are often interchanged as denoting the same kingdom and people (see Isaiah 48:14, Isaiah 48:20; Jeremiah 50:1; Jeremiah 51:24; Ezekiel 12:13). The sense is, ‹Lo! the power of Chaldea shall be employed in your overthrow.‘

This people - The people of Babylonia or Chaldea.

Was not - Was not known; had no government or power; was a rude, nomadic, barbarous, feeble, and illiterate people. The same phrase occurs in Deuteronomy 32:21, where it also means a people unknown, rude, barbarous, wandering. That this was formerly the character of the Chaldeans is apparent from Job 1:17, where they are described as a nomadic race, having no established place of abode, and living by plunder.

Till the Assyrian - Babylon was probably founded by Nimrod (see the notes at Psalm 72:9; Psalm 74:14; and to animals in Isaiah 13:21 (notes); Isaiah 34:14. Here it denotes, I suppose, those who had been formerly inhabitants of the deserts around Babylon - the wandering, rude, uncultivated, and predatory people, such as the Chaldeans were Job 1:17; and means that the Assyrian who founded Babylon collected this rude and predatory people, and made use of them in building the city. The same account Arrian gives respecting Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, who says, that ‹Philip found them wandering and unsettled (πλανήτας καὶ ἀπόρους *planētas kai aporous*), feeding small flocks of sheep upon the mountains, that he gave them coats of mail instead of their shepherd‘s dress, and led them from the mountain to the plain, and gave them cities to dwell in, and established them with good and wholesome laws.‘ (Hist. Alex vii.)

They set up the towers thereof - That is, the towers in Babylon, not in Tyre (see the notes at Isaiah 13) Herodotus expressly says that the Assyrians built the towers and temples of Babylon (i. 84).

And he brought it to ruin - That is, the Babylonian or Chaldean brought Tyre to ruin: to wit, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of a people formerly unknown and rude, would be employed to destroy the ancient and magnificent city of Tyre.

Verse 14

“Howl … Isaiah 23:1.

For your strength - That which has been your support and strength; to wit, Tyre (compare Ezekiel 26:15-18).

Verse 15

Tyre shall be forgotten - Shall cease to be a place of importance in commerce; shall be unheard of in those distant places to which ships formerly sailed.

Seventy years, according to the days of one king - ‹That is, of one kingdom (see Daniel 7:17; Daniel 8:20).‘ (Lowth) The word ‹king‘ may denote dynasty, or kingdom. The duration of the Babylonian monarchy was properly but seventy years. Nebuchadnezzar began his conquest in the first year of his reign, and from thence to the taking of Babylon by Cyrus was seventy years. And at that time the nations that had been conquered and subdued by the Babylonians would be restored to liberty. Tyre was, indeed, taken toward the middle of that period, and its subjugation referred to here was only for the remaining part of it. ‹All these nations,‘ says Jeremiah Jeremiah 25:11, ‹shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.‘ Some of them were conquered sooner, and some later; but the end of this period was the common time of deliverance to them all. So Lowth, Newton, Vitringa, Aben Ezra, Rosenmuller, and others, understand this. That ‹the days at one king‘ may denote here kingdom or dynasty, and be applied to the duration of the kingdom of Babylon, is apparent from two considerations, namely,

(1) The word ‹king‘ must be so understood in several places in the Scriptures; Daniel 7:17: ‹These great beasts which are four, are four great kings which shall arise out of the earth,‘ that is, dynasties, or succession of kings (Daniel 8:20; so Revelation 17:12).

(2) The expression is especially applicable to the Babylonian monarchy, because, during the entire seventy years which that kingdom lasted, it was under the dominion of one family or dynasty. Nebuchadnezzar founded the Babylonian empire, or raised it to so great splendor, that he was regarded as its founder, and was succeeded in the kingdom by his son Evil-Merodach, and his grandson Belshazzar, in whose reign the kingdom terminated; compare Jeremiah 27:7: ‹And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son‘s son.‘ The period of seventy years is several times mentioned, as a period during which the nations that were subject to Babylon would be oppressed, and after that they should be set at liberty (see Jeremiah 25:11-12; Jeremiah 29:10; compare Jeremiah 46:26).

Shall Tyre sing as an harlot - Margin, as the Hebrew, ‹It shall be unto Tyre as the song of an harlot.‘ That is, Tyre shall be restored to its former state of prosperity and opulence; it shall be adorned with the rich productions of other climes, and shall be happy and joyful again. There are two ideas here; one that Tyre would be again prosperous, and the other that she would sustain substantially the same character as before. It was common to compare cities with females, whether virtuous or otherwise (see the note at Isaiah 1:8). The same figure which is used here occurs in Isaiah 47:1; Nahum 3:4; Revelation 18:3, Revelation 18:9).

Verse 16

Take an harp - This is a continuation of the figure commenced in the previous verse, a direct command to Tyre as an harlot, to go about the city with the usual expressions of rejoicing. Thus Donatus, in Terent. Eunuch., iii. 2,4, says:

‹*Fidicinam esse meretricum est*;‘

And thus Horace:

‹*Nec meretrix tibicina, cujus*

Ad strepitum salias.‘

1Epis. xiv. 25.

Thou harlot that hast been forgotten - For seventy years thou hast lain unknown, desolate, ruined.

Make sweet melody … - Still the prophet keeps up the idea of the harlot that had been forgotten, and that would now call her lovers again to her dwelling. The sense is, that Tyre would rise to her former splendor, and that the nations would be attracted by the proofs of returning prosperity to renew their commercial contact with her.

Verse 17

The Lord will visit Tyre - He will restore her to her former wealth and magnificence.

And she shall turn to her hire - The word ‹hire‘ here denotes the wages or reward that is given to an harlot; and the idea which was commenced in the previous verses is here continued - of Tyre as an harlot - frivolous, splendid, licentious, and holding intercourse with strangers and foreigners. The gains of that commerce with other nations are here represented as her hire.

And shall commit fornication … - Shall again be the mart of commerce Isaiah 23:3; shall have contact with all the nations, and derive

her support, splendor, luxury, from all. The idea is, that she would be restored to her former commercial importance, and perhaps, also, the prophet intends to intimate that she would procure those gains by dishonest acts, and by fraudulent pretexts. After the destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, it remained desolate until the close of the Babyloian monarchy. Then a new city was built on the island, that soon rivaled the former in magnificence. That new city was besieged and taken by Alexander the Great, on his way to the conquests of the East.

Verse 18

And her merchandise - The prophecy here does not mean that this would take place immediately after her rebuilding, but that subsequent to the seventy years of desolation this would occur.

Shall be holiness to the Lord - This undoubtedly means, that at some future period, after the rebuilding of Tyre, the true religion would prevail there, and her wealth would be devoted to his service. That the true religion prevailed at Tyre subsequently to its restoration and rebuilding there can be no doubt. The Christian religion was early established at Tyre. It was visited by the Saviour Matthew 15:21, and by Paul. Paul found several disciples of Christ there when on his way to Jerusalem Acts 21:3-6. It suffered much, says Lowth, under the Diocletian persecution. Eusebius (Hist. x. 4.) says that ‹when the church of God was founded in Tyre, and in other places, much of its wealth was consecrated to God, and was brought as an offering to the church, and was presented for the support of the ministry agreeable to the commandments of the Lord.‘ Jerome says, ‹We have seen churches built to the Lord in Tyre; we have beheld the wealth of all, which was not treasured up nor hid, but which was given to those who dwelt before the Lord.‘ It early became a Christian bishopric; and in the fourth century of the Christian era, Jerome (Commentary in Ezekiel 26:7; Ezekiel 27:2) speaks of Tyre as the most noble and beautiful city of Phenicia, and as still trading with all the world. Reland enumerates the following list of bishops as having been present from Tyre at various councils; namely, Cassius, Paulinus, Zeno, Vitalis, Uranius, Zeno, Photius, and Eusebius (see Reland‘s Palestine, pp. 1002-1011, in Ugolin vi.) Tyre continued Christian until it was taken by the Saracens in 639 a.d.; but was recovered again by Christians in 1124. In 1280, it was conquered by the Mamelukes, and was taken by the Turks in 1516. It is now under the dominion of the Sultan as a part of Syria.

It shall not be treasured … - It shall be regarded as consecrated to the Lord, and freely expended in his service.

For them that dwell before the Lord - For the ministers of religion. The language is taken from the custom of the Jews, when the priests dwelt at Jerusalem. The meaning is, that the wealth of Tyre would be consecrated to the service and support of religion.

For durable clothing - Wealth formerly consisted much in changes of raiment; and the idea here is, that the wealth of Tyre would be devoted to God, and that it would be furnished for the support of those who ministered at the altar.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Introduction

The previous chapters, from the thirteenth to the twenty-third inclusive, have been occupied mainly in describing the destruction of nations that were hostile to the Jews, or great and distressing calamities that would come ripen them. The prophet had thus successively depicted the calamities that would come upon Babylon, Damascus, Moab, Nubia, Egypt, Dumah, and Tyre. In Isaiah 25:1-12;

(3) of a song of praise suitable to celebrate the triumphs of the true religion in Isaiah 27:1-13.

When the prophecy was uttered is wholly unknown. In regard to the events to which it relates, there has been a great diversity of opinion, and scarcely are any two interpreters agreed. Grotius regards it as relating to the carrying away of the ten tribes by Shalmaneser. Hensler supposes that it refers to the invasion of Sennacherib. Vitringa supposes that it relates to the times of the Maccabees, and to the trials and I persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes. Noyes regards it as descriptive of the destruction of the land by Nebuchadnezzar, and of the return of the Jews from exile. Calvin considers the account in these four chapters as a summing up, or recapitulation of what the prophet had said in the previous prophecies respecting Babylon, Moab, Egypt, etc.; and then of the prosperity, and of the spread of the true religion which would succeed these general and far-spread devastations.

Subsequently to each of these predictions respecting calamity, the prophet had foretold prosperity and the advance of truth; and he supposes that this is a mere condensing or summing up of what he had said more at length in the preceding chapters. Lowth supposes that it may have a reference to all the great desolations of the country by Shalmaneser, by Nebuchadnezzar, and by the Romans, especially to that of the Romans, to which some parts of it, he says, seem to be especially applicable. It is certain that the prophet employs general terms; and as he gives no certain indications of the time, or the circumstances under which it was delivered, it is exceedingly difficult to determine either. The general drift of the prophecy is, however, plain. It is a prediction of prosperity, and of the prevalence of true religion after a series of oppressive judgments should have come upon the land. It is designed, therefore, to be consolatory to the Jews under impending calamities, and to convey the assurance that though

they would be oppressed, yet their sufferings would be succeeded by occasions of gratitude and joy. In this respect, it accords with the general strain of the prophecies of Isaiah, that the people of God would. be protected; that their name and nation should not be wholly obliterated; and that the darkest seasons of trial would be succeeded by deliverance and joy.

On the whole, it seems to me, that the prophecy relates to the calamities that would come upon the nation by the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, and the carrying away to Babylon, and the subsequent deliverance from the oppressive bondage, and the joy consequent on that. According to this interpretation, the twenty-fourth chapter is occupied mainly with the description of the calamities that would come upon the land by the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar; the twenty-fifth describes the deliverance from that oppressive bondage, and the re-establishment of the true religion on Mount Zion, with a rapid glance at the ultimate prevalence of religion trader the Messiah, suggested by the deliverance from the Babylonian bondage; the twentysixth chapter is a song expressive of joy at this signal deliverance - in language, in the main, so general that it is as applicable to the redemption under the Messiah as to the deliverance from Babylon; and the twenty-seventh chapter is descriptive of the effect of this captivity and subsequent deliverance in purifying Jacob Isaiah 27:6-9, and recovering the nation to righteousness.

The twenty-fourth chapter is composed of three parts.

1. Isaiah 24:1-12 contains a description of the calamities that would come upon the whole land, amounting to far-spread and wide desolation - with a graphic description of the effects of it on the inhabitants Isaiah 24:2, on the land Isaiah 24:3-6, on the wine, the amusements, the song, etc. Isaiah 24:7-12, causing all gaiety and prosperity to come to an end.

2. Isaiah 24:13-17 contains a statement by the prophet that a few would be left in the land amidst the general desolation, and that they would be filled with joy that they had escaped. From their retreats and refuges, their fastnesses and places of security, they would lift up the song of praise that they had been preserved.

3. Isaiah 24:18-23 contains a further description of augmented judgment that would come upon the land - a more severe and lengthened calamity stretching over the country, agitating it like an earthquake. Yet there is even here Isaiah 24:22-23, an indication that there would be deliverance, and that the Lord of hosts would reign on Mount Zion - a description which is extended through the next chapter, and which constitutes the scope and substance of that chapter.

In the division of the prophecy into chapters, that chapter should have been connected with this as a part of the same prophecy, and a continuance of the same subject. Indeed, but for the length of the prophecy, these four chapters should have been thrown into one, or if the prophecy had been broken up into chapters, important aids would have been rendered to a correct understanding of it had there been some indication in the margin that they constituted one prophecy or vision.

Verse 1

Maketh the earth empty - That is, will depopulate it, or take away its inhabitants, and its wealth. The word ‹earth‘ here (ארץ *'ārets*) is used evidently not to denote the whole world, but the land to which the prophet particularly refers - the land of Judea. It should have been translated the land (see Joel 1:2). It is possible, however, that the word here may be intended to include so much of the nations that surrounded Palestine as were allied with it, or as were connected with it in the desolations under Nebuchadnezzar.

And turneth it upside down - Margin, ‹Perverteth the face thereof.‘ That is, everything is thrown into confusion; the civil and religious institutions are disorganized, and derangement everywhere prevails.

And scattereth abroad … - This was done in the invasion by the Chaldeans by the carrying away of the inhabitants into their long and painful captivity.

Verse 2

As with the people, so with the priest - This does not mean in moral character, but in destiny. It does not mean that the character of the priest would have any influence on that of the people, or that because the one was corrupt the other would be; but it means that all would be involved in the same calamity, and there would be no favored class that would escape. The

prophet, therefore, enumerate the various ranks of the people, and shows that all classes would be involved in the impending calamity.

As with the taker of usury - He who lends his money at interest. It was contrary to the Mosaic law for one Israelite to take interest of another Leviticus 25:36; Deuteronomy 23:19; Nehemiah 5:7, Nehemiah 5:10; but it is not probable that this law was very carefully observed, and especially in the corrupt times that preceded the Babylonian captivity.

Verse 3

The land - Hebrew, ‹The earth,‘ as in Isaiah 24:1. It is here rendered correctly ‹the land,‘ as it should have been there - meaning the land of Canaan.

And spoiled - Its valuable possessions shall become the prey of the invading foe. This is an emphatic repetition of the declaration in Isaiah 24:1, to show the absolute certainty of that which was threatened.

Verse 4

The earth mourneth - The word ‹earth‘ here, as in Isaiah 24:1, means the land of Judea, or that and so much of the adjacent countries as would be subject to the desolation described. The figure here is taken from flowers when they lose their beauty and languish; or when the plant that lacks moisture, or is cut down, loses its vigor and its vitality, and soon withers (compare the note at Isaiah 1:30; Isaiah 34:4; Psalm 1:3).

The world - (תבל *têbêl*). Literally, the inhabitable world, but used here as synonymous with the ‹land,‘ and denoting the kingdoms of Judah and Israel (compare the note at Isaiah 13:11)

The haughty people - Margin, as in the Hebrew, ‹Height of the people.‘ It denotes the great, the nobles, the princes of the land. The phrase is expressive of rank, not of their moral character.

Verse 5

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof - The statements in this verse are given as a reason why the curse had been pronounced against them, and why these calamities had come upon them, Isaiah 24:6. The first reason is, that the very earth become polluted by their crimes. This phrase may denote that injustice and cruelty prevailed to such an extent that the very earth was stained with gore, and covered with blood under the guilty population. So the phrase is used in Numbers 33:33; Psalm 106:38. Or it may mean in general that the wickedness of the people was great, and was accumulating, and the very earth under them was polluted by

sustaining such a population. But the former is probably the correct interpretation.

Changed the ordinance - Or, the statute (חק *chôq*). This word, from חקק *châqaq* to engrave, and then to make or institute a law or an ordinance, is usually applied to the positive statutes appointed by Moses. The word statute accurately expresses the idea. These they had changed by introducing new statutes, and had in fact, if not in form, repealed the laws of Moses, and introduced others.

Broken the everlasting covenant - The word ‹covenant‘ here is evidently used, as it is often, in the sense of law. By the term ‹everlasting covenant,‘ Vitringa correctly supposes is denoted the laws of nature, the immutable laws of justice and right, which are engraven on the conscience, and which are inflexible and perpetual.

Verse 6

Therefore hath the curse devoured - Eaten it up; a figurative expression that is common in the Scriptures, denoting that the desolation is widespread and ruinous.

Are burned - (חרו *chârû*). Instead of this reading, Lowth proposes to read: חרבו *chârebû* ‹Are destroyed.‘ The Septuagint reads it, ‹Therefore the inhabitants of the land shall be poor.‘ The Syriac, ‹The inhabitants of the land shall be slain.‘ But there is no authority from the manuscripts to change the text as proposed by Lowth, Nor is it necessary. The prophet does not mean that the inhabitants of the land were consumed by fire. The expression is evidently figurative. He is speaking of the effect of wrath or the curse, and that effect is often described in the Scriptures as burning, or consuming, as a fire does. The sense is, that the inhabitants of the land are brought under the withering, burning, consuming effect of that wrath; and the same effects are produced by it as are seen when a fire runs over a field or a forest. Hence, the word here used (חרה *chârâh* “to burn, to be kindled”) is often used in connection with wrath, to denote burning or raging anger. Exodus 22:23: ‹His anger burns.‘ Genesis 30:2: ‹And the anger of Jacob was kindled against Rachel; Genesis 44:18; Job 27:2-3; Job 42:7; Genesis 31:6: ‹His anger was kindled.‘ Psalm 37:1, Psalm 37:7-8; Proverbs 24:19 Compare Job 30:30:

My skin is black upon me,
And my bones are burnt with heat.

The sense is, that the inhabitants of the land were wasted away under the wrath of God, so that few were left; as the trees of the forest are destroyed before a raging fire.

And few men are left - This was literally true after the invasion of the land by the Chaldeans 2 Kings 24:14-16.

Verse 7

The new wine languisheth - The new wine (תירוֹשׁ *tîyrôsh*), denotes properly must, or wine that was newly expressed from the grape, and that was not fermented, usually translated ‹new wine,‘ or ‹sweet wine.‘ The expression here is poetic. The wine languishes or mourns because there are none to drink it; it is represented as grieved because it does not perform its usual office of exhilarating the heart, and the figure is thus an image of the desolation of the land.

The vine languisheth - It is sickly and unfruitful, because there are none to cultivate it as formerly. The idea is, that all nature sympathizes in the general calamity.

All the merry-hearted - Probably the reference is mainly to those who were once made happy at the plenteous feast, and at the splendid entertainments where wine abounded. They look now upon the widespread desolation of the land, and mourn.

Verse 8

The mirth of tabrets - The joy and exultation which is produced by tabrets. On the words ‹tabret‘ (תף *tôph*) and ‹harp‘ (כנור *kinnôr*), see the notes at Isaiah 5:12.

Verse 9

drink wine with a song - That is, accompanied with a song, as the usual mode was in their feasts.

Strong drink - On the word שׁכר *shêkār* see the note at Isaiah 5:11.

Shall be bitter … - They shall cease to find pleasure in it in consequence of the general calamitics that have come upon the nation.

Verse 10

The city of confusion - That Jerusalem is here intended there can be no doubt. The name ‹city of confusion.‘ is probably given to it by anticipation of what it would be; that is, as it appeared in prophetic vision to Isaiah (see the note at Isaiah 1:1). He gave to it a name that would describe its state when these calamities should have come upon it. The word rendered ‹confusion‘ (תהו *tôhû*) does not denote disorder or anarchy, but is a word

expressive of emptiness, vanity, destitution of form, waste. It occurs Genesis 1:2: ‹And the earth was without form.‘ In Job 26:7, it is rendered ‹the empty place;‘ in 1 Samuel 12:21; Isaiah 45:18-19, ‹in vain;‘ and usually ‹emptiness,‘ ‹vanity‘, ‹confusion‘ (see Isaiah 24:10; Isaiah 40:17; Isaiah 41:29). In Job 12:24; Psalm 107:40, it denotes a wilderness. Here it means that the city would be desolate, empty, and depopulated.

Is broken down - Its walls and dwellings are in ruins.

Every house is shut up - That is, either because every man, fearful of danger, would fasten his doors so that enemies could not enter; or more probably, the entrance to every house would be so obstructed by ruins as to render it impossible to enter it.

Verse 11

There is a crying for wine in the streets - The inhabitants of the city, turned from their dwellings, would cry for wine to alleviate their distress, and to sustain them in their calamity (compare Isaiah 16:8-10).

All joy is darkened - Is gone, or has departed, like the joyful light at the setting of the sun.

Verse 12

And the gate is smitten with destruction - The word rendered ‹destruction‘ may denote ‹a crash‘ (Gesenius). The idea is, that the gates of the city, once so secure, are how battered down and demolished, so that the enemy ran enter freely. Thus far is a description of the calamities that would come upon the nation. The following verses show that, though the desolation would be general, a few of the inhabitants would be left - circumstance thrown in to mitigate the prospect. of the impending ruin.

Verse 13

In the midst of the land - That is, in the midst of the land of Canaan.

There shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree - A few shall be left, as in gathering olives a few will remain on the highest and outermost boughs (see the notes at Isaiah 17:5-6).

Verse 14

They shall lift up their voice - They who are left in the land; or who are not carried away to Babylon. ‹To lift up the voice‘ in the Scriptures may denote either grief or joy; compare Genesis 21:6; 1 Samuel 24:16; Judges 2:4; Rth 1:9 , … , where to lift up the voice is conected with weeping; and Ezekiel 21:22; Psalm 93:3; Isaiah 40:29; Isaiah 42:11, etc., where it is connected with exultation and joy. The latter is evidently the idea here, that

the few who would escape from captivity by fleeing to neighboring countries, would lift up their voice with exultation that they had escaped.

They shall sing for the majesty of the Lord - They shall sing on account of the glory, or goodness of Yahweh, wire had so mercifully kept and preserved them.

They shall cry aloud from the sea - From the isles and coasts of the Mediterranean where they would have escaped, and where they would find a refuge. No doubt many of the inhabitants adjacent to the sea, when they found the land invaded, would betake themselves to the neighboring islands, and find safety there until the danger should be overpast. Lowth renders this,

‹The waters shall resound with the exaltation of Jehovah,‘

Where he supposes מים should be rendered as if pointed מים *mayâm* ‹waters,‘ not as it is in the present Hebrew text, מים *miyâm* ‹from the sea.‘ The sense is not materially different; but there seems to be no good reason for departing from the usual interpretation.

Verse 15

Wherefore glorify ye the Lord - The prophet, in this verse, calls upon the people to join in the praise of Yahweh wherever they are scattered. In the previous verse he describes the scattered few who were left in the land, or who had escaped to the adjacent islands in the sea, as celebrating the praises of God where they were. In this verse he calls on all to join in this wherever they were scattered.

In the fires - Margin, ‹Valleys.‘ The Septuagint reads, Ἐν τοῖς νήσοις *En tois nēsois* - ‹In the islands.‘ The Chaldee, ‹Therefore, when light shall come to the just, they shall glorify the Lord.‘ Lowth supposes that the word: בארים *bâ'uriym* should have been באיים *bâ'iyiym* ‹in the islands,‘ or ‹coasts.‘ But the MSS. do not give authority for this reading; the only authority which Lowth refers to being that of the Septuagint. Other conjectures have been made by others, but all without any authority from MSS. The Hebrew world in the plural form does not occur elsewhere in the Scriptures. The proper signification of the word אור *'ôr* is light, and it is applied

(a) to daylight, or daybreak, 1 Samuel 14:36; Nehemiah 8:3;

(b) to light from daybreak to mid-day, Job 24:14;

(c) the sun, Job 31:26; Job 37:21;

(d) light as the emblem of happiness;

(e) light as the emblem of knowledge is also used to denote fire, Ezekiel 5:2; Isaiah 44:16; Isaiah 47:14,

In the plural form it is applied, in connection with the word "Thummim," to the gems or images which were on the breastplate of the high priest, and from which responses were obtained. Exodus 28:30: ‹And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim (האורים *hâ'ûriym*) and the Thummim' (compare Leviticus 8:8; Ezra 2:63). Probably it was thus used to denote the splendor or beauty of the gems there set, or perhaps the light or instruction which was the result of consulting the oracle. The proper meaning of the word is, however, light, and it usually and naturally suggests the idea of the morning light, the aurora; perhaps, also, the northern light, or the aurora borealis. It in no instance means caves, or valleys. Vitringa supposed it referred to caves, and that the address was to the "Troglodytes," or those who had been driven from their homes, and compelled to take up their residence in caves. The word probably refers either to the regions of the morning light, the rising of the sun; or of the northern light, the aurora borealis; and in either case, the reference is doubtless to those who would be carried away to Babylon, and who were called on there by the prophet to glorify God. ‹In those regions of light, where the morning dawns; or where the northern skies are illuminated at night, there glorify God' (see the note at Isaiah 14:13). The reasons for this opinion are,

(1) That such is the natural and proper sense of the word. It properly refers to light, and not to caves, to valleys, or to islands.

(2) The parallelism, the construction, demands such an interpretation.

It would then be equivalent to calling on the scattered people to glorify God in the East, and in the West; in the regions of the rising sun and in the coasts of the sea; or wherever they were scattered. And the sense is,

(1) that they should be encouraged to do this by the prospect of a return;

(2) that it was their duty still to do this wherever they were; and

(3) that the worship of the true God would be in fact continued and celebrated, though his people were scattered, and driven to distant lands.

In the isle of the sea - The coasts and islands of the Mediterranean Isaiah 24:14)

Verse 16

From the uttermost part of the earth - The word ‹earth‘ here seems to be taken in its usual sense, and to denote countries without the bounds of Palestine, and the phrase is equivalent to remote regions or distant countries (see the note at Isaiah 11:12). The prophet here represents himself as hearing those songs from distant lands as a grand chorus, the sound of which came in upon and pervaded Palestine. The worship of God would be still continued, though the temple should be destroyed, the inhabitants of the land dispersed, and the land of Judea be a widespread desolation. Amidst the general wreck and woe, it was some consolation that the worship of Yahweh was celebrated anywhere.

Have we heard songs - Or, we do hear songs. The distant celebrations of the goodness of God break on the ear, and amidst the general calamity these songs of the scattered people of God comfort the heart.

Glory to the righteous - This is the burden and substance of those songs. Their general import and design is, to show that there shall be honor to the people of God. They are now afflicted and scattered. Their temple is destroyed, their land waste, and ruin spreads over the graves of their fathers. Yet amidst these desolations, their confidence in God is unshaken; their reliance on him is firm. They still believe that there shall be honor and glory to the just, and that God will be their protector and avenger. These assurances served to sustain them in their afflictions, and to shed a mild and cheering influence on their saddened hearts.

But I said - But I, the prophet, am constrained to say. This the prophet says respecting himself, viewing himself as left in the land of Canaan; or more probably he personifies, in this declaration, Jerusalem, and the inhabitants of the land that still remained there. The songs that came in from distant lands; the echoing praises from the exiles in the east and the west seeming to meet and mingle over Judea, only served to render the abounding desolation more manifest and distressing. Those distant praises recalled the solemn services of the temple, and the happiness of other times, and led each one of those remaining, who witnessed the desolations, to exclaim, ‹my leanness.‘

My leanness, my leanness - The language of Jerusalem, and the land of Judea. This language expresses calamity. The loss of flesh is emblematic of a condition of poverty, want, and wretchedness - as sickness and affliction waste away the flesh, and take away the strength; Psalm 109:24:

My knees are weak through fasting,
And my flesh faileth of fatness.
Psalm 102:5:
By reason of the voice of my groaning
My bones cleave to my flesh.
See also Job 6:12; Job 19:20; Lamentations 3:4. Leanness is also put to denote the displeasure of God, in Psalm 106:15:
And he gave them their request;
But sent leanness into their soul.
Compare Isaiah 10:16.

The treacherous dealers - The foreign nations that disregard covenants and laws; that pursue their object by deceit, and stratagem, and fraud. Most conquests are made by what are called the stratagems of war; that is, by a course of perfidy and deception. There can be no doubt that the usual mode of conquest was pursued in regard to Jerusalem. This whole clause is exceedingly emphatic. The word implying treachery (בגד *bâgad*) is repeated no less than five times in various forms in this single clause, and shows how strongly the idea had taken possession of the mind of the prophet. The passage furnishes one of the most remarkable examples of the "paronomasia" occurring in the Bible. בגדו בגדים בגדו ובגד בוגדים *bâgâdû bogidiym bâgâdû ûbeged bôgediym* In fact, this figure abounds so much in this chapter that Gesenius contends that it is not the production of Isaiah, but a composition belonging to a later and less elegant period of Hebrew literature.

Verse 17

Fear, and the pit - This verse is an explanation of the cause of the wretchedness referred to in the previous verse. The same expression is found in Jeremiah 48:43, in his account of the destruction that would come upon Moab, a description which Jeremiah probably copied from Isaiah - There is also here in the original a "paronomasia" that cannot be retained in a translation - פחד ופחת ופח *pachad vâpachath vâpach* - where the form פח *pach* occurs in each word. The sense is, that they were nowhere safe; that if they escaped one danger, they immediately fell into another. The expression is equivalent to that which occurs in the writings of the Latin classics:
Incidit in Scyllam cupiens vitare Charybdin.
The same idea, that if a man should escape from one calamity he would fall into another, is expressed in another form in Amos 5:19:

As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him;
Or went into a house, and leaned his hand on the wall,
And a serpent bit him.

In the passage before us, there is an advance from one danger to another, or the subsequent one is more to be dreaded than the preceding. The figure is taken from the mode of taking wild beasts, where various nets, toils, or pitfalls were employed to secure them. The word ‹fear‘ (פחד *pachad*), denotes anything that was used to frighten or arouse the wild beasts in hunting, or to drive them into the pitfall that was prepared for them. Among the Romans the name ‹fears‘ ("formidines") was given to lines or cords strung with feathers of all colors, which, when they fluttered in the air or were shaken, frightened the beasts into the pits, or the birds into the snares which were prepared to take them (Seneca, De Ira, ii. 122; virg. AE. xii. 7499; Geor. iii. 372). It is possible that this may be referred to here under the name of ‹fear.‘ The word ‹pit‘ (פחת *pachat*) denotes the pitfall; a hole dug in the ground, and covered over with bushes, leaves, etc., into which they might fall unawares. The word ‹snare‘ (פח *pach*) denotes a net, or gin, and perhaps refers to a series of nets enclosing at first a large space of ground, in which the wild beasts were, and then drawn by degrees into a narrow compass, so that they could not escape.

Verse 18

From the noise of the fear - A cry or shout was made in hunting, designed to arouse the game, and drive it to the pitfall. The image means here that calamities would be multiplied in all the land, and that if the inhabitants endeavored to avoid one danger they would fall into another.

And he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit - A figure taken still from hunting. It was possible that some of the more strong and active of the wild beasts driven into the pitfall would spring out, and attempt to escape, yet they might be secured by snares or gins purposely contrived for such an occurrence. So the prophet says, that though a few might escape the calamities that would at first threaten to overthrow them, yet they would have no security. They would immediately fall into others, and be destroyed.

For the windows on high are open - This is evidently taken from the account of the deluge in Genesis 7:11: ‹In the six hundredth year of Noah‘s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows (or

flood-gates, Margin) of heaven were opened.‘ The word ‹windows‘ here (ארבות *'ărubôth*) is the same which occurs in Genesis, and properly denotes a grate, a lattice, a window, and then any opening, as a sluice or floodgate, and is applied to a tempest or a deluge, because when the rain descends, it seems like opening sluices or floodgates in the sky. The sense here is, that calamities had come upon the nation resembling the universal deluge.

And the foundations of the earth do shake - An image derived from an earthquake - a figure also denoting far-spreading calamities.

Verse 19

The earth is utterly broken down - The effect as it were of an earthquake where everything is thrown into commotion and ruin.

The earth is moved exceedingly - Everything in this verse is intense and emphatic. The verbs are in the strongest form of emphasis: ‹By breaking, the land is broken;‘ ‹by scattering, the land is scattered;‘ ‹by commotion, the land is moved.‘ The repetition also of the expression in the same sense three times, is a strong form of emphasis; and the whole passage is designed to denote the utter desolation and ruin that had come upon the land.

Verse 20

The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard - This is descriptive of the agitation that occurs in an earthquake when everything is shaken from its foundation, and when trees and towers are shaken by the mighty concussion. The same figure is used in Isaiah 29:9. See also the description of a tempest at sea, in Psalm 107:27:

They reel to and fro,
And stagger like a drunken man,
And are at their wit‘s end.

And shall be removed like a cottage - Or rather, shall move or vacillate (התנודדה *hitenôdedâh*) like a cottage. The word “cottage” (מלונה *melûnâh* from לין *lîyn* “to pass the night, to lodge for a night”) means properly a temporary shed or lodge for the watchman of a garden or vineyard (see the note at Isaiah 1:8). Sometimes these cottages were erected in the form of a hut; and sometimes they were a species of hanging bed or couch, that was suspended from the limbs of trees. They were made either by interweaving the limbs of a tree, or by suspending them by cords from the branches of trees, or by extending a cord or cords from one tree to another, and laying a couch or bed on the cords. They were thus made to

afford a convenient place for observation, and also to afford security from the access of wild beasts. Travelers in the East even now resort to such a temporary lodge for security (see Niebuhr‘s Description of Arabia). These lodges were easily moved to and fro, and swung about by the wind - and this is the idea in the verse before us. The whole land was agitated as with an earthquake; it reeled like a drunkard; it moved, and was unsettled, as the hanging couch on the trees was driven to and fro by the wind.

And the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it - Like a vast incumbent weight on a dwelling which it cannot sustain, and beneath which it is crushed.

And it shall fall, and not rise again - This does not mean, as I apprehend, that the nation should never be restored to its former dignity and rank as a people, for the prophet immediately Isaiah 24:23 speaks of such a restoration, and of the re-establishment of the theocracy; but it must mean that in those convulsions it would not rise. It would not be able to recover itself; it would certainly be prostrated. As we say of a drunkard, he may stumble often, and partially recover himself, yet he will certainly fall so as not then to be able to recover himself, so it would be with that agitated and convulsed land. They would make many efforts to recover themselves, and they would partially succeed, yet they would ultimately be completely prostrate in the dust.

Verse 21

In that day - In the time of the captivity at Babylon.

Shall punish - Hebrew as the Margin, ‹Shall visit upon‘ (see the note at Isaiah 10:12).

The host of the high ones - There have been various interpretations of this expression. Jerome understands it of the host of heaven, and thinks it refers to the fact that in the day of judgment God will judge not only earthly things but celestial, and especially the sun and moon and stars, as having ‹been the objects of idolatrous worship (see Deuteronomy 4:19; Daniel 8:10; Daniel 11:13). Compare Psalm 18:17; Jeremiah 25:30, where the words ‹on high‘ are used to denote heaven. Aben Ezra supposes that by the phrase is meant angels, who preside over the governors and kings of the earth, in accordance with the ancient opinion that each kingdom was under the tutelage of guardian angels. To this Rosenmuller seems to assent, and to suppose that the beings thus referred to were evil spirits or demons to whom the kingdoms of the world were subject. Others, among whom is Grotius,

have supposed that the reference is to the images of the sun, moon, and stars, which were erected in high places, and worshipped by the Assyrians. But probably the reference is to those who occupied places of power and trust in the ecclesiastical arrangement of Judea, the high priest and priests, who exercised a vast dominion over the nation, and who, in many respects, were regarded as elevated even over the kings and princes of the land. The comparison of rulers with the sun, moon, and stars, is common in the Scriptures; and this comparison was supposed especially to befit ecclesiastical rulers, who were regarded as in a particular manner the lights of the nation.

Upon the earth - Beneath, or inferior to those who had places of the highest trust and honor. The ecclesiastical rulers are represented as occupying the superior rank; the princes and rulers in a civil sense as in a condition of less honor and responsibility. This was probably the usual mode in which the ecclesiastical and civil offices were estimated in Judea.

Verse 22

And they shall be gathered together - That is, those who occupy posts of honor and influence in the ecclesiastical and civil polity of the land. "As prisoners." Margin, as in the Hebrew, ‹With the gathering of prisoners.‘ The reference is to the custom of collecting captives taken in war, and chaining them together by the hands and feet, and thrusting them in large companies into a prison.

In the pit - Margin, ‹Dungeon.‘ The sense is, that he rulers of the land should be made captive, and treated as prisoners of war. This was undoubtedly true in the captivity under Nebuchadnezzar. The people were assembled; were regarded as captives; and were conveyed together to a distant land.

And shall be shut up in the prison - Probably this is not intended to be taken literally, but to denote that they would be as secure as if they were shut up in prison. Their prison-house would be Babylon, where they were enclosed as in a prison seventy years.

And after many days - If this refers, as I have supposed, to the captivity at Babylon, then these ‹many days‘ refer to the period of seventy years.

Shall they be visited - Margin, ‹Found wanting.‘ The word used here (פקד *pâqad*) may be used either in a good or bad sense, either to visit for the purpose of reviewing, numbering, or aiding; or to visit for the purpose

of punishing. It is probably, in the Scriptures, most frequently used in the latter sense (see 1 Samuel 15:2; Job 31:14; Job 35:15; Psalm 89:33; Isaiah 26:14; Jeremiah 9:24). But it is often used in the sense of taking account of, reviewing, or mustering as a military host (see Numbers 1:44; Numbers 3:39; 1 Kings 20:15; Isaiah 13:4). In this place it may be taken in either of these senses, as may be best supposed to suit the connection. To me it seems that the connection seems to require the idea of a visitation for the purpose of relief or of deliverance; and to refer to the fact that at the end of that time there would be a reviewing, a mustering, an enrollment of those who should have been carried away to their distant prison-house, to ascertain how many remained, and to marshal them for their return to the land of their fathers (see the books of Ezra and Nehemiah). The word here used has sometimes the sense expressed in the margin, ‹found wanting‘ (compare 1 Samuel 20:6; 1 Samuel 25:15; Isaiah 38:10); but such a sense does not suit the connection here. I regard the verse as an indication of future mercy and deliverance. They would be thrown into prison, and treated as captives of war; but after a long time they would be visited by the Great Deliverer of their nation, their covenant-keeping God, and reconducted to the land of their fathers.

Verse 23

Then the moon shall be confounded - The heavenly bodies are often employed in the sacred writings to denote the princes and kings of the earth. These expressions are not to be pressed *ad unguem* as if the sun denoted one thing and the moon another; but they are general poetic expressions designed to represent rulers, princes, and magistrates of all kinds (compare Ezekiel 32:7; Joel 2:30-31).

Shall be confounded - Shall be covered with shame. That is, shall appear to shine with diminished beauty, as if it were ashamed in the superior glory that would shine around it. The sense is, that when the people should be returned to their land, the theocracy would be restored, and the magnificence of the kings and other civil rulers would be dimmed in the superior splendor of the reign of God. Probably there is reference here to the time when Yahweh would reign in Jerusalem through, or by means of, the messiah.

In Mount Zion - (see the note at Isaiah 1:8). This would take place subsequently to the captivity, and pre-eminently under the reign of the messiah.

And before his ancients - That is, before the elders of the people; in the presence of those entrusted with authority and rule.

Gloriously - He would reign gloriously when his laws should be respected and obeyed; when his character as King and Ruler should be developed; and when, under his scepter, his kingdom should be augmented and extended. On this glad prospect the eye of the prophet was fixed; and this was the bright and splendid object in the ‹vision‘ that served to relieve the darkness that was coming upon the nation. Present calamities may be borne, with the hope that Yahweh will reign more gloriously hereafter; and when the effect of all shall be such as to exalt Yahweh in the view of the nations. It may be added that when Yahweh, by the Messiah, shall reign over all the earth, all the glory of princes and monarchs shall be dimmed; the celebrity of their wisdom and power and plans shall be obscured in the superior splendor of the wisdom of God, in reigning through his Son over the human race. Come that blessed day; and speedily let the glory of the moon be confounded, and the sun be ashamed, and all inferior magnificence t fade away before the splendor of the Sun of righteousness!

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 25

Introduction

For the general design and scope of this chapter, see the Analysis to Isaiah 24:23; and in view of this future deliverance the prophet breaks out into this beautiful song of praise. It was not unusual for the prophets to express, by anticipation, such songs of praise as would be celebrated by the people in times of signal deliverance (see the notes at Isaiah 12:1-6) This song of praise is one of the most beautiful that is to be found in the writings of Isaiah. The essential idea is that which was hinted at in Isaiah 24:23, that Yahweh would reign with a glory that would obscure the brightness of the sun and the moon on Mount Zion. Filled with the idea, the prophet fixes the eye on those future glories, and declares what shall occur under that reign. He sees Yahweh reigning there for a long series of years; and during that reign he sees Isaiah 25:6 that he would provide a way by which the darkness might be removed from all nations Isaiah 25:7; that he would originate that plan by which death would be swallowed up in victory Isaiah 25:8; and that there he would execute a plan by which all his enemies would be laid low Isaiah 25:9-12. The hymn is designed, therefore, to celebrate the faithfulness of God in fulfilling his ancient promises, and delivering his people from their long captivity by the destruction of Babylon Isaiah 25:1-5; and the future glories that would shine forth under the reign of Yahweh on Mount Zion, including the arrangements of redeeming mercy for the world.

Verse 1

O Lord, thou art my God - The prophet speaks, not in his own name, but in the name of the people that would be delivered from bondage. The sense is, that Yahweh had manifested himself as their covenant-keeping God; and that in view of his faithfulness in keeping his promises, they now had demonstration that he was their God.

I will exalt thee - A form of expression often used to denote praise Psalm 118:28; Psalm 145:1, meaning that the worshipper would exalt God in the view of his own mind, or would regard him as above all other beings and objects.

For thou hast done wonderful things - On the meaning of the Hebrew, פלא *pel'* - ‹wonderful,‘ see the note at Isaiah 9:6.

Thy counsels of old - Which were formed and revealed long since. The counsels referred to are those respecting the delivery of his people from bondage, which had been expressed even long before their captivity commenced, and which would be now completely and triumphantly fulfilled.

Are faithfulness - Have been brought to pass; do not fail.

And truth - Hebrew, אמן *'omen* - whence our word Amen. Septuagint, Γένοιτο *Genoito* - ‹Let it be.‘ The word denotes that the purposes of God were firm, and would certainly be fulfilled.

Verse 2

For thou hast made - This is supposed to be uttered by the Jews who should return from Babylon, and therefore refers to what would have been seen by them. In their time it would have occurred that God had made of the city an heap.

Of a city - I suppose the whole scope of the passage requires us to understand this of Babylon. There has been, however, a great variety of interpretation of this passage. Grotius supposed that Samaria was intended. Calvin that the word is used collectively, and that various cities are intended. Piscator that Rome, the seat of antichrist, was intended. Jerome says that the Jews generally understand it of Rome. Aben Ezra and Kimchi, however, understand it to refer to many cities which they say will be destroyed in the times of Gog and Magog. Nearly all these opinions may be seen subjected to an examination, and shown to be unfounded, in Vitringa.

An heap - It is reduced to ruins (see the notes at Jeremiah 30:18; Amos 1:4, Amos 1:7, Amos 1:10, Amos 1:12. Here it is applied to Babylon on account of its splendor, as if it were a vast palace, the residence of princes.

Of strangers - Foreigners; a term often given to the inhabitants of foreign lands, and especially to the Babylonians (see the note at Isaiah 1:7; compare Ezekiel 28:7; Joel 3:17). It means that this was, by way of eminence, The city of the foreigners; the capital of the whole Pagan world; the city where foreigners congregated and dwelt.

It shall never be built - (See the notes at Isaiah 13:19-22)

Verse 3

The strong people - The reference here is not probably to the Babylonians, but to the surrounding nations. The deliverance of the Jews, and the destruction of Babylon, would be such striking events that they

would lead the surrounding nations to acknowledge that it was the hand of God.

The city of the terrible nations - The word ‹city‘ here is taken probably in a collective sense, to denote the cities or the strong places of the surrounding nations which would be brought thus to tremble before God. The destruction of a city so proud and wicked as Babylon would alarm them, and would lead them to fear that they might share the same fate, especially as many of them had been associated in oppressing the now delivered people of the land of Judea.

Verse 4

For thou hast been a strength to the poor - Thou hast sustained and upheld them in their trials, and hast delivered them. God is often spoken of as the strength of his people. Isaiah 26:4: ‹In the Lord Yahweh is everlasting strength.‘ Psalm 27:1: ‹The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?‘ Psalm 28:8; Psalm 29:11; Psalm 31:2; Psalm 46:1; Isaiah 45:24. By the ‹poor‘ and the ‹needy‘ here undoubtedly are mean; the captive Jews who had been stripped of their wealth, and carried from their homes, and confined in Babylon.

A refuge - A place of safety; a retreat; a protection. God is often spoken of as such a refuge; Deuteronomy 33:27: ‹The eternal God is thy refuge.‘ 2 Samuel 22:3; Psalm 9:9; Psalm 14:6; Psalm 46:1, Psalm 46:7, Psalm 46:11; Psalm 57:1; Psalm 59:16)

From the storm - This word (זרם *zerem*) usually denotes a tempest of wind and rain. Here it is put for calamity and affliction. The figure is common in all languages.

A shadow from the heat - (See Isaiah 4:6, note; Isaiah 16:3, note; compare Isaiah 32:2.)

When the blast of the terrible ones - Of the fierce, mighty, invading enemies. When they sweep down all before them as a furious tempest does.

Is as a storm against the wall - For ‹wall‘ here (קיר *qiyr*), Lowth proposes to read קוּר *qûr* from קרר *qârar* to be cold or cool, and supposes that this means a winters storm. In this interpretation also Vitringa and Cappellus coincide. But there is no need of supposing an error in the text. The idea is, probably, that of a fierce driving storm that would prostrate walls and houses; meaning a violent tempest, and intending to describe in a striking manner the severity of the calamities that had come upon the nation.

Verse 5

Thou shalt bring down the noise - The tumult; the sound which they make in entering into battle; or the note of triumph, and the sound of revelry. The phrase may refer either to their shout of exultation over their vanquished foes; or to the usual sound of revelry; or to the hum of business in a vast city.

Of strangers - Of foreigners (see the note at Isaiah 25:2).

As the heat in a dry place - The parallelism here requires that we should suppose the phrase ‹with the shadow of a cloud‘ to be supplied in this hemistich, as it is obscurely expressed in our translation by the word ‹even,‘ and it would then read thus:

As the beat in a dry place (by the shadow of a cloud),
The noise of the strangers shalt thou humble;
As the heat by the shadow of a cloud,
The exultation of the formidable ones shalt thou bring low.

The idea thus is plain. Heat pours down intensely on the earth, and if unabated would wither up every green thing, and dry up every stream and fountain. But a cloud intervenes, and checks the burning rays of the sun. So the wrath of the ‹terrible ones,‘ the anger of the Babylonians, raged against the Jews. But the mercy of God interposed. It was like the intervening of a cloud to shut out the burning rays of the sun. It stayed the fury of their wrath, “and rendered them impotent to do injury, just as the intense burning rays of the sun are completely checked by an interposing cloud.

The branch of the terrible ones - This is a very unhappy translation. The word זמיר *zâmiyr* is indeed used to denote a branch, or bough, as derived from זמר *zâmar* “to prune a vine;” but it also has the I sense of “a song;” a song of praise, or a song of exultation, from a second signification of זמר *zâmar* “to sing; perhaps” from the song with which the work of the vineyard was usually accompanied. See the verb used in this sense in Judges 5:3; Psalm 9:12; Psalm 30:5; Psalm 47:7; and the word which occurs here (zamir) used in the sense of a song in Psalm 119:54; 2 Samuel 23:1; Job 35:10. Here it is undoubtedly used in the sense of a song, meaning either a shout of victory or of revelry; and the idea of the prophet is, that this would be brought low by the destruction of Babylon, and by the return of the captive Jews to their own land.

Verse 6

And in this mountain - In mount Zion, that is, in Jerusalem. The following verses undoubtedly refer to the times of the Messiah. Several of the expressions used here are quoted in the New Testament, showing that the reference is to the Messiah, and to the fact that his kingdom would commence in Jerusalem. and then extend to all people.

Shall the Lord of hosts - (See the note at Isaiah 1:9.)

Make unto all people - Provide for all people. He shall adapt the provisions of salvation not only to the Jews, but to people everywhere. This is one of the truths on which Isaiah loved to dwell, and which in fact constitutes one of the peculiarities of his prophecy. It is one of the chief glories of the gospel, that it is unto all people. See Isaiah 57:7; Daniel 5:19; Daniel 7:14; compare Luke 2:10: ‹I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people‘

A feast - A feast, or entertainment, was usually observed, as it is now, on occasion of a great victory, or any other signal success. It is, therefore, emblematic of an occasion of joy. Here it is used in the twofold sense of an occasion of joy, and of an abundance of provisions for the necessities of those who should be entertained. This feast was to be prepared on mount Zion - in the provision which would be made in Jerusalem by the Messiah for the spiritual needs of the whole world. The arrangements for salvation arc often represented under the image of an ample and rich entertainment (see Luke 14:16; Revelation 19:19; Matthew 13:11).

Of fat things - Of rich delicacies. Fat things and marrow are often used as synonymous with a sumptuous entertainment, and are made emblematic Of the abundant provisions of divine mercy (see Isaiah 55:2; Psalm 63:5; Psalm 36:8: ‹I shall be satisfied with the fatness of thy house. ‹)

A feast of wines on the lees - The word which is used here (שׁמרים *shemâriym*) is derived from שׁמר *shâmar* to keep, preserve, retain, and is applied usually to the lees or dregs of wine, because they retain the strength and color of the wine which is left to stand on them. It is also in this place applied to wine which has been kept on the lees, and is therefore synonymous with old wine; or wine of a rich color and flavor. This fact, that the color and strength of wine are retained by its being suffered to remain without being poured from one vessel into another, is more fully expressed in Jeremiah 48:11:

Moab hath been at ease from his youth,
And he hath settled on his lees,

And hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel,

Neither hath he gone into captivity;

Therefore his taste remaineth in him,
And his scent is not changed.

Compare Zephaniah 1:12. It is well known that wines, unless retained for a considerable time on the lees, lose their flavor and strength, and are much less valuable (compare the notes at John 2:10; notes at John 1:11).

Of fat things full of marrow - Marrow is also an emblem of richness, or the delicacy of the entertainment Psalm 63:5.

Of wines on the lees well refined - The word rendered ‹well refined‘ (מזקקים *mezuqqāqiym*) is usually applied to the purifying of metals in a furnace 1 Chronicles 28:18; 1 Chronicles 29:4; Job 28:1. When applied to wine, it denotes that which has been suffered to remain on the lees until it was entirely refined and purified by fermentation, and had become perfectly clear.

Verse 7

And he will destroy - Hebrew, ‹He will swallow up,‘ that is, he will abolish, remove, or take away.

In this mountain the face of the covering - In mount Zion, or in Jerusalem. This would be done in Jerusalem, or on the mountains of which Jerusalem was a part, where the great transactions of the plan of redemption would be accomplished. The word ‹face‘ here is used as it is frequently among the Hebrews, where the face of a thing denotes its aspect. or appearance, and then the thing itself. Thus ‹the face of God‘ is put for God himself; the ‹face of the earth‘ for the earth itself; and the ‹face of the vail‘ means the veil itself, or the appearance of the veil. To cover the head or the face was a common mode of expressing grief (see 2 Samuel 15:30; 2 Samuel 19:5; Esther 6:12). It is probable that the expression here is taken from this custom, and the veil over the nations here is to be understood as expressive of the ignorance, superstition, crime, and wretchedness that covered the earth.

Verse 8

He will swallow up - This image is probably taken from a whirlpool or maelstrom in the ocean that absorbs all that comes near it. It is, therefore, equivalent to saying he will destroy or remove Isaiah 25:7. In this place it

means that be will abolish death; that is, he will cause it to cease from its ravages and triumphs. This passage is quoted by Paul in his argument respecting the resurrection of the dead 1 Corinthians 15:54. He does not, however, quote directly from the Hebrew, or from the Septuagint, but gives the substance of the passage. His quoting it is sufficient proof that it refers to the resurrection, and float its primary design is to set forth the achievements of the gospel - achievements that will be fully realized only when death shall cease its dominion, and when its reign shall be forever at an end.

Death - Vitringa supposes that by ‹death‘ here is meant the wars and calamities with which the nation had been visited, and which would cease under the Messiah. In this interpretation Rosenmuller concurs. It is possible that the word may have this meaning in some instances; and it is possible that the calamities of the Jews may have suggested this to the prophet, but the primary sense of the word here, I think, is death in its proper signification, and the reference is to the triumphs of God through the Messiah in completely abolishing its reign, and introducing eternal life. This was designed, doubtless, to comfort the hearts of the Jews, by presenting in a single graphic description the gospel as adapted to overcome all evils, and even to remove the greatest calamity under which the race groans - death.

In victory - Hebrew, לנצח *lānetsach* Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:54, has translated this, Εἰς νῖκος *Eis nikos* - ‹Unto victory.‘ The word νῖκος *nikos* (victory) is often the translation of the word (see 2 Samuel 2:26; Job 36:7; Lam: Lamentations 3:18; Amos 1:2; Amos 8:7); though here the Septuagint has rendered it ‹strong (or prevailing) death shall be swallowed up.‘ The word may be derived from the Chaldee verb נצח *netsach* to conquer, surpass; and then may denote victory. It often, however, has the sense of permanency, duration, completness, eternity; and may mean for ever, and then entirely or completely. This sense is not materially different from that of Paul, ‹unto victory.‘ Death shall be completely, permanently, destroyed; that is, a complete victory shall be gained over it. The Syriac unites the two ideas of victory and perpetuity. ‹Death shall be swallowed up in victory forever.‘ This will take place under the reign of the Messiah, and shall be completed only in the morning of the resurrection, when the power of death over the people of God shall be completely and forever subdued.

Will wipe away tears from off all faces - This is quoted in Revelation 21:4, as applicable to the gospel. The sense is, that Yahweh would devise a plan that would be suited to furnish perfect consolation to the afflicted; to comfort the broken-hearted; and that would in its final triumphs remove calamity and sorrow from people forever. The fullness of this plan will be seen only in heaven. In anticipation of heaven, however, the gospel now does much to alleviate human woes, and to wipe away tears from the mourner‘s eyes. This passage is exquisitely beautiful. The poet Burns once said that he could never read it without being affected to tears. It may be added that nothing but the gospel will do this. No other religion can furnish such consolation; and no other religion is, therefore, adapted to man.

And the rebuke of his people - The reproach; the contempt; the opposition to them. This refers to some future period when the church shall be at peace, and when pure religion shall everywhere prevail. Hitherto the people of God have been scorned and persecuted, but the time will come when persecution shall cease, the true religion shall everywhere prevail, the church shall have rest, and its triumphs shall spread everywhere on the earth.

Verse 9

And it shall be said in that day - By the people of God. This shall be the language of exultation and joy which they shall use.

Lo, this is our God - This is the language of those who now see and hail their Deliverer. It implies that such deliverance, and such mercy could be bestowed only by God, and that the fact that such mercies had been bestowed was proof that he was their God.

We have waited for him - Amidst many trials, persecutions, and calamities, we have looked for the coming of our God to deliver us, and we will rejoice in the salvation that he brings.

This is the Lord - This is Yahweh. It is Yahweh that has brought this deliverance. None but he could do it. The plan of redeeming mercy comes from him, and to him is to be traced all the benefits which it confers on man.

Verse 10

For in this mountain - In mount Zion.

Shall the land of the Lord rest - “The hand” in the Scriptures is often used as the symbol of protection and defense. By the expression that the hand of Yahweh should REST on mount Zion, is meant probably that be

would be its defender; his protection would not be withdrawn, but would be permanent there. For an illustration of the phrase, see a similar use of the word hand as denoting protection, in Ezra 7:6, Ezra 7:28; Ezra 8:18, Ezra 8:22, Ezra 8:31; Nehemiah 2:8.

And Moab - (For an account of Moab, see the notes at Isaiah 15:1-9; Isaiah 16:1-14.) Moab here seems to be used in a general sense to denote the enemies of God, a and the declaration that it would be trodden down seems designed to indicate that the foes of God and his people would all be destroyed (compare the notes at Exodus 16:29; 2 Samuel 2:23. Here it may mean that Moab, or the enemies of God, would be trodden down and destroyed in their own land.

As straw is trodden down for the dunghill - As straw is suffered to lie in the yard where cattle lie, to be trodden down by them for the purpose of making manure. Lowth renders this,

‹As the straw is threshed under the wheels of the car.‘

The Septuagint renders it in the same way. Lowth supposes that there has been an error in transcribing the Hebrew text, and that the former reading was מדכבה instead of מדמנה. But there is not the slightest evidence from the MSS that any such mistake has occurred. Nor is it necessary to suppose it. The image is one that is not of unfrequent occurrence in the Scriptures, to denote the complete and disgraceful prostration of an enemy (see Psalm 83:10; 2 Kings 9:37; Jeremiah 8:2; Jeremiah 9:22; Jeremiah 16:4; Jeremiah 25:33).

Verse 11

And he shall spread forth his hands - The sense is, that Yahweh would stretch out his hands everywhere, prostrating his enemies, and the enemies of his people. Lowth, however, applies this to Moab, and supposes that it is designed to represent the action of one who is in danger of sinking, and who, in swimming, stretches out his hands to sustain himself. In order to this, he supposes that there should be a slight alteration of a single letter in the Hebrew. His main reason for suggesting this change is, that he cannot conceive how the act of the stretch out of the hands of a swimmer can be any illustration of the action of God in extending his hands ever Moab to destroy it. It must be admitted that the figure is one that is very unusual. Indeed it does not anywhere else occur. But it is the obvious meaning of the Hebrew text; it is so understood in the Vulgate, the Chaldee, the Syriac, and the figure is one that is net unintelligible. It is that of a swimmer who

extends his hands and arms as far as possible, and who by force removes all that is in his way in passing through the water. So Yahweh would extend his hands over all Moab. He would not confine the desolation to any one place, but it would be complete and entire. He would subject all to himself, as easily as a swimmer makes his way through the waters.

With the spoils of their hands - The word rendered here ‹spoils‘ (ארבות *'ârebôth*), Lowth renders, ‹The sudden gripe.‘ The Chaldee renders it substantially in the same manner, ‹With the laying on of his hands,‘ that is, with all his might. Kimchi also understands it of the gripe of the hands or the arms. The Septuagint renders it, ‹Upon whatsoever he lays his hands,‘ that is, God shall humble the pride of Moab in respect to everything on which he shall lay his hands. The word properly and usually signifies snares, ambushes, craft; and then, by a natural metonymy, the plunder or spoils which he had obtained by snares and ambushes - which seems to be the sense here. It would all perish with Moab, and the land would thus be completely subdued.

Verse 12

And the fortress … - Thy strong defenses shall be destroyed. This is spoken of Moab (compare the notes at Isaiah 15:1-9; Isaiah 16:1-14), and is designed to be emblematic of the enemies of the people of God (compare the notes at Isaiah 34) The repetition of the expressions ‹bring down,‘ ‹lay low,‘ and ‹bring to the ground,‘ is designed to make the sentence emphatic, and to indicate that it would certainly be accomplished.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 26

Introduction

For the general scope and design of this chapter, see the remarks at the commencement of Isaiah 25:1-12. It is a song of praise supposed to be sung by the Jews on their return to their own land, and in the re-establishment of the government of God with the ordinances of worship on Mount Zion. It was usual, as has been already remarked, to celebrate any great event with a song of praise, and the prophet supposes that the recovered Jews would thus be disposed to celebrate the goodness of Yahweh in again restoring them to their own land, and to the privileges of their own temple service. There are some indications that this was designed to be sung with a chorus, and with alternate responses, as many of the Psalms were. The ode opens with a view of Jerusalem as a strong city, in which they might find protection under the guardianship of God Isaiah 26:1. Then there is a response, or a call, that the gates of the strong city should be open to receive the returning nation Isaiah 26:2.

This is followed by a declaration of the safety of trusting in Yahweh, and a call on all to confide in him Isaiah 26:3-4. The reason of this is stated Isaiah 26:5-7, that Yahweh humbled the proud, and guarded the ways of the just. The confidence of the Jews in Yahweh is next described Isaiah 26:3, Isaiah 26:9; and this is followed by a declaration Isaiah 26:10-11 that the wicked would not recognize the hand of God; and by an assertion that all their deliverance had been performed by God Isaiah 26:12. This is succeeded by an acknowledgment that they had submitted to other lords than Yahweh; but that now they would submit to him alone Isaiah 26:13-14. The declaration succeeds that God had enlarged their nation Isaiah 26:15; and this is followed by a description of their calamities, and their abortive efforts to save themselves Isaiah 26:16-18. Many had died in their captivity, yet there is now the assurance that they should live again Isaiah 26:19; and a general call on the people of God to enter into their chambers, and hide themselves there until the indignation should be overpast Isaiah 26:20, with the assurance that Yahweh would come forth to punish the oppressors for their iniquity Isaiah 26:21. With this assurance the poem closes.

Verse 1

In that day shall this song be sung - By the people of God, on their restoration to their own land.

We have a strong city - Jerusalem. This does not mean that it was then strongly fortified, but that God would guard it, and that thus it would be strong. Jerusalem was easily capable of being strongly fortified Psalm 25:2; but the idea here is, that Yahweh would be a protector, and that this would constitute its strength.

Salvation will God appoint for walls - That is, he will himself be the defender of his people in the place of walls and bulwarks. A similar expression occurs in Isaiah 60:18 (see also Jeremiah 3:23, and Zechariah 2:5).

Bulwarks - This word means properly bastions, or ramparts. The original means properly a *pomoerium*, or antemural defense; a space without the wall of a city raised up like a small wall. The Syriac renders it, *Bar shuro* - ‹Son of a wall,‘ meaning a small wall. It was usually a breastwork, or heap of earth thrown up around the city, that constituted an additional defense, so that if they were driven from that they could retreat within the walls.

Verse 2

Open ye the gates - This is probably the language of a chorus responding to the sentiment in Isaiah 26:1. The captive people are returning; and this cry is made that the gates of the city may be thrown open, and that they may be permitted to enter without obstruction (compare Psalm 24:7, Psalm 24:9; Psalm 118:19).

That the righteous nation which keepeth the truth - Who, during their long captivity and contact with pagan nations, have not apostatized from the true religion, but have adhered firmly to the worship of the true God. This was doubtless true of the great body of the captive Jews in Babylon.

Verse 3

Thou wilt keep him - The following verses to Isaiah 26:11, contain moral and religious reflections, and seem designed to indicate the resignation evinced by the ‹righteous nation‘ during their long afflictions. Their own feelings they are here represented as uttering in the form of general truths to be sources of consolation to others.

In perfect peace - Hebrew as in the Margin, ‹Peace, peace;‘ the repetition of the word denoting, as is usual in Hebrew, emphasis, and here

evidently meaning undisturbed, perfect peace. That is, the mind that has confidence in God shall not be agitated by the trials to which it shall be subject; by persecution, poverty, sickness, want, or bereavement. The inhabitants of Judea had been borne to a far distant land. They had been subjected to reproaches and to scorn Psalm 137:1-9; had been stripped of their property and honor; and had been reduced to the condition of prisoners and captives. Yet their confidence in God had not been shaken. They still trusted in him; still believed that he could and would deliver them. Their mind was, therefore, kept in entire peace. So it was with the Redeemer when he was persecuted and maligned (1 Peter 2:23; compare Luke 23:46). And so it has been with tens of thousands of the confessors and martyrs, and of the persecuted and afflicted people of God, who have been enabled to commit their cause to him, and amidst the storms of persecution, and even in the prison and at the stake, have been kept in perfect peace.

Whose mind is stayed on thee - Various interpretations have been given of this passage, but our translation has probably hit upon the exact sense. The word which is rendered ‹mind‘ (יצר *yētser*) is derived from יצר *yâtsar* to form, create, devise; and it properly denotes that which is formed or made Psalm 103:14; Isaiah 29:16, Hebrews 2:18. Then it denotes anything that is formed by the mind - its thoughts, imaginations, devices Genesis 8:21; Deuteronomy 31:21. Here it may mean the thoughts themselves, or the mind that forms the thoughts. Either interpretation suits the connection, and will make sense. The expression, ‹is stayed on thee,‘ in the Hebrew does not express the idea that the mind is stayed on God, though that is evidently implied. The Hebrew is simply, whose mind is stayed, supported (סמוך *sâmûk*); that is, evidently, supported by God. There is no other support but that; and the connection requires us to understand this of him.

Verse 4

Trust ye in the Lord for ever - The sense is, ‹Let your confidence in God on no occasion fail. Let no calamity, no adversity, no persecution, no poverty, no trial of any kind, prevent your reposing entire confidence in him.‘ This is spoken evidently in view of the fact stated in the previous verse, that the mind that is stayed on him shall have perfect peace.

For in the Lord Jehovah - ‹This is one of the four places where our translators have retained the original word Yahweh (compare Exodus 6:3; Psalm 133:1-3:18; the notes at Isaiah 12:2). The original is יהוה ביה *beyâhh*

yehovâh the first word, יה *yâhh* (compare Psalm 68:4), being merely an abridged form of Yahweh. The same form occurs in Isaiah 12:2. The union of these two forms seems designed to express, in the highest sense possible, the majesty, glory, and holiness of God; to excite the highest possible reverence where language fails of completely conveying the idea.

Is everlasting strength - Hebrew as in the Margin, ‹The rock of ages;‘ a more poetic and beautiful expression than in our translation. The idea is, that God is firm and unchangeable like an eternal rock; and that in him we may find protection and defense for everlasting ages (see Deuteronomy 32:4, et al.; 1 Samuel 2:2; 2 Samuel 22:32, 2 Samuel 22:47; 2 Samuel 23:3; Psalm 18:31; Psalm 19:14; Psalm 28:1; Psalm 42:9; Psalm 62:2, Psalm 62:6-7, … , where God is called ‹a rock‘).

Verse 5

The lofty city, he layeth it low - The city of Babylon (see the note at Isaiah 25:12; compare Isaiah 14:1, note)

Verse 6

The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor - That is, evidently, those who had been despised by them, and who had been overcome and oppressed by them. The obvious reference here is to the Jews who had been captives there. The idea is not necessarily that the ‹poor‘ referred to here I would be among the conquerors, but that when the Babylonians should be overcome, and their city destroyed, those who were then oppressed should be in circumstances of comparative prosperity. No doubt the Jews, who in subsequent times traveled to the site of Babylon for purposes of traffic, would trample indignantly on the remains of the city where their fathers were captives for seventy years, and would exult in the idea that their own once down-trodden city Jerusalem was in a condition of comparative prosperity. That there were many Jews in Babylon after that city began to decline from its haughtiness and grandeur, we learn expressly from both Philo and Josephus. Thus Philo (De Legatione ad Caium, p. 792) says, that ‹it is known that Babylon and many other satraps were possessed by the Jews, not only by rumour, but by experience.‘ So Josephus (Ant. xv. 2.) says, that there were in the time of Hyrcanus many Jews at Babylon.

Verse 7

The way of the just is uprightness - The Hebrew is literally, ‹The way to the just is uprightness;‘ the word ‹way‘ probably refers to God‘s way, or his dealings with the righteous. The sentiment is, that his dealings with

them are just; that though they are afflicted and oppressed, yet that his ways are right, and they will yet perceive it. This is language supposed to be used by the captive Jews after they had seen the proud city of Babylon taken, and after God had come forth to restore them to their own land. The word ‹uprightness‘ in the original is in the plural number, but is often used in the sense of straightness Proverbs 23:31; Psalm 9:9; Psalm 58:2; Psalm 99:4.

Thou most upright - Evidently an address to God, as being most just, and as having now evinced his uprightness in the deliverance of his people. The same epithet is applied to him in Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 25:8; 92:16.

Dost weigh the path of the just - The word used here (פלס *pâlac*) may mean to weigh as in a balance Psalm 58:3; but it may also mean, and does usually, to make straight or smooth; to beat a path; to make level Psalm 78:50; Proverbs 4:26; Proverbs 5:21. Here it probably means, that God had made the way smooth, or exactly level. He had removed all obstacles, and had conducted his people in a plain and leveled way (see the notes at Isaiah 40:3-4).

Verse 8

Yea, in the way of thy judgements - The word ‹judgments‘ often refers to the statutes or laws of God. But it may also refer to the afflictions and trials with which he visits or judges people; the punishments which they endure for their sins. In which sense the word is used here it is not easy to determine. Lowth understands it of the ‹laws‘ of Yahweh. So Kimchi, who says that the sense is, that during their captivity and trials, they had not remitted anything of their love and piety toward God. I am inclined to the belief that this is the true interpretation, because in the corresponding member of the parallelism they are represented as saying that the desire of their soul was to God, and to the remembrance of him, implying that they sought by an observance of his laws to please him, and to secure his favor.

The desire of our soul is to thy name - The word ‹name‘ is used here, as it is often, to denote God himself. They desired that he would come and deliver them; they earnestly wished that he would manifest himself to them as their friend.

And to the remembrance of thee - The word ‹remembrance‘ (זכר *zēker*) is often equivalent to name, appellation, or that by which anyone is remembered, or known. Thus Exodus 3:15:

This is my name for ever;

And this is my memorial זכרי *zikeriy* unto all generations.

So Psalm 30:4:

Sing unto Yahweh, O ye saints of his;

And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness;

That is, at his holy memorial (Margin,) or name. In the place before us it seems to be used in the sense of name or appellation; that is, that by which God would be remembered or known.

Verse 9

With my soul … in the night - By desiring God in the night, and by seeking him early, is meant that the desire to seek him was unremitted and constant. The prophet speaks of the pious Jews who were in captivity in Babylon; and says that it was the object of their unremitted anxiety to please God, and to do his will.

For when thy judgments are in the earth - This is given as a reason for what had just been said, that in their calamity they had sought God without ceasing. The reason is, that the punishments which he inflicted were intended to lead people to learn righteousness. The sentiment is expressed in a general form, though there is no doubt that the immediate reference is to the calamities which the Jews had suffered in their removal to Babylon as a punishment for their sins.

Learn righteousness - The design is to warn, to restrain, and to reform them. The immediate reference here was undoubtedly to the Jews, in whom this effect was seen in a remarkable manner in their captivity in Babylon. But it is also true of other nations; and though the effect of calamity is not always to turn a people to God, or to make them permanently righteous, yet it restrains them, and leads them at least to an external reformation, It is also true in regard to nations as well as individuals, that they make a more decided advance in virtue and piety in days of affliction than in the time of great external prosperity (compare Deuteronomy 6:11-12).

Verse 10

Let favor be showed to the wicked - This is designed as an illustration of the sentiment in the previous verse - that judgments were needful in order that wicked people might be brought to the ways of righteousness. The truth is general, that though wicked people are favored with success in their enterprises, yet the effect will not be to lead them to the ways of virtue and religion. How often is this illustrated in the conduct of wicked people! How often do they show, when rolling in wealth, or when surrounded with

the comforts of the domestic circle, that they feel no need of the friendship of God, and that their heart has no response of gratitude to make for all his mercies! Hence, the necessity, according to the language of the song before us, that God should take away their property, remove their friends, or destroy their health, in order that they may be brought to honor him. To do this, is benevolence in God, for whatever is needful to bring the sinner to the love of God and to the ways of virtue, is kindness to his soul.

In the land of uprightness - Even when others are just and pious around him; when this is so much the general characteristic that it may be called ‹the land of integrity,‘ yet he will pursue his way of iniquity, though in it he may be solitary. Such is his love of sin, that neither the favor of God nor the general piety around him - neither the mercy of his Maker nor the influence of holy examples, will lead him in the way of piety and truth.

Will not behold the majesty of the Lord - Will not see that which makes the Lord glorious in his dealings with people, so as to love and adore him. He is blind, and sees no evidence of loveliness in the character of God.

Verse 11

Lord, when thy hand is lifted up - This is an explanation of the sentiment expressed in the former verse. The lifting up of the hand here refers, doubtless, to the manifestations of the majesty and goodness of the Lord.

They will not see - They are blind to all the exhibitions of power, mercy, and goodness.

But they shall see - They shall yet be brought to recognize thy hand. They shall see thy favor toward thy children, and thy judgment on thy foes. The divine dealings will be such that they shall be constrained to recognize him, and to acknowledge his existence and perfections.

And be ashamed - Be confounded because they did not sooner recognize the divine goodness.

For their envy at thy people - The word ‹their‘ is not in the Hebrew, and the sense is, that they shall see the zeal of Yahweh in behalf of his people, and shall be ashamed that they did not sooner recognize his hand. The word rendered ‹envy‘ (קנאה *qin'âh*) may mean envy Ecclesiastes 4:4; Ecclesiastes 9:6, but it more properly and frequently means zeal, ardor, 2 Kings 10:16; Isaiah 9:6).

Yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them - Or rather, ‹Yea, the fire in regard to thy enemies shall devour them.‘ The sense is, that when his

people were delivered, his foes would be destroyed; his zeal for his people would also be connected with indignation against his foes. The deliverance of his people from Babylon, and the commencement of the downfall of that city, were simultaneous, and the cause was the same.

Verse 12

Thou wilt ordain peace - The word ‹peace‘ here seems to stand opposed to the evils of various kinds which they had experienced in the captivity at Babylon; and to refer net only to peace, but also to prosperity, and to the continued divine favor.

For thou hast wrought all our works in us - Or rather, ‹for us‘ (לנו *lânû*). It is owing to thy hand that we are saved.

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Verse 13

Other lords beside thee have had dominion - The allusion here is to the kings of Babylon who had subdued and oppressed them, and who in their long captivity had held them in subjection to their laws.

But by thee only will we make mention of thy name - This may be better rendered, ‹but only thee, thy name will we henceforward commemorate.‘ The words ‹by thee,‘ and ‹thy name,‘ are put in apposition, and denote the same thing. The word ‹make mention‘ (נזכיר *nazekiyr*) means literally to cause to be remembered; to commemorate; to celebrate. The idea is, that during their long captivity they had been subject to the dominion of other lords than Yahweh; but now that they were restored to their own land, they would acknowledge only Yahweh as their Lord, and would henceforward celebrate only his name.

Verse 14

They are dead - That is, the kings and tyrants to whom reference is made in Isaiah 26:13. The principal enemies of the Jews, who had oppressed them, were slain when Babylon was taken by Cyrus (see the notes at Isaiah 14:9-10; compare Psalm 88:11; Proverbs 2:18; Proverbs 9:18; Proverbs 21:16). The sense here is, that they had died and gone to the land of shades, and were now unable anymore to reach or injure the people of God.

Therefore - Or rather, “for”; the word לכן *lākên* being used evidently in the sense of because that, as in Genesis 38:26; Numbers 11:31; Numbers 14:13; Psalm 42:7; Psalm 45:3. The declaration that follows is given as the

reason why they were dead, and incapable of again injuring or annoying them.

Hast thou visited … - (see the note at Isaiah 24:22) The word ‹visit‘ here is used in the sense of to punish.

And made all their memory to perish - Hast blotted out their name; hast caused their celebrity to cease.

Verse 15

Thou hast increased the nation - That is, the Jewish nation (see the note at Isaiah 9:3). The nation was not only enlarged by its regular increase of population, but many converts attended them on their return from Babylon, and probably many came in from surrounding nations on the rebuilding of their capital.

Thou hadst removed it far … - Or rather, thou hast extended far all the borders of the land. The word rendered ‹removed‘ (רחק *râchaq*) means usually to put far away, and here it may mean to put far away the borders or boundaries of the nation; that is, to extend them far. The word ‹unto‘ is not in the original; and the phrase rendered ‹ends of the earth,‘ may mean the borders. or boundaries of the land. The parallelism requires this construction, and it is indeed the obvious one, and has been adopted by Lowth and Noyes.

Verse 16

Poured out a prayer - Margin, ‹Secret speech.‘ The Hebrew word לחשׁ *lachash* means properly a whispering, muttering; and thru a sighing, a calling for help. This is the sense here. In their calamity they sighed, and called on God for help.

Verse 17

Like as a woman with child … - This verse is designed to state their griefs and sorrows during the time of their oppression in Babylon. The comparison used here is one that is very frequent in the sacred writings to represent any great suffering (see Psalm 48:6; Jeremiah 6:24; Jeremiah 13:21; Jeremiah 22:23; Jeremiah 49:24; Jeremiah 50:43; Micah 4:9-10).

Verse 18

We have been … - This refers to sorrows and calamities which they had experienced in former times, when they had made great efforts for deliverance, and when those efforts had proved abortive. Perhaps it refers to the efforts of this kind which they had made during their painful captivity of seventy years. There is no direct proof indeed, that during that time they

attempted to revolt, or that they organized themselves for resistance to the Babylonian power; but there can be no doubt that they earnestly desired deliverance, and that their condition was one of extreme pain and anguish - a condition that is strikingly represented here by the pains of childbirth. Nay, it is not improbable that during that long period there may have been abortive efforts made at deliverance, and that here they refer to those efforts as having accomplished nothing.

We have as it were brought forth wind - Our efforts have availed nothing. Michaelis, as quoted by Lowth, explains this figure in the following manner: ‹Rariorem morbum describi, empneumatosin, aut ventosam molam dictum; quo quae laborant diu et sibi, et peritis medicis gravidae videntur, tandemque post omnes verae gravitatis molestias et labores ventum ex utero emittant; quem morbum passim describunt medici.‘ (Syntagma Comment. vol. ii. p. 165.) Grotius thinks that the reference is to birds, ‹Quae edunt ova subventanea,‘ and refers to Pliny x. 58. But the correct reference is, doubtless, that which is mentioned by Michaelis.

Neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen - We had no power to subdue them; and notwithstanding all our exertions their dominion was unbroken. This refers to the Babylonians who had dominion over the captive Jews.

Verse 19

Thy dead men shall live - Very various interpretations have been given of this verse, which may be seen at length by comparing Vitringa, Rosenmuller, Gesenius, and Poole‘s Synopsis. In Isaiah 26:14, the chorus is represented as saying of the dead men and tyrants of Babylon that had oppressed the captive Jews, that they should not rise, and should no more oppress the people of God. In contradistinction from this fate of their enemies, the choir is here introduced as addressing Yahweh (compare Isaiah 26:16), and saying ‹thy dead shall live;‘ that is, thy people shall live again shall be restored to to vigor, and strength, and enjoyment. They had been dead; that is, civilly dead in Babylon; they were cut off from their privileges, torn away from their homes, made captives in a foreign land. Their king had been dethroned; their temple demolished; their princes, priests, and people made captive; their name blotted from the list of nations; and to all intents and purposes, as a people, they were deceased. This figure is one that is common, by which the loss of privileges and enjoyments, and

especially of civil rights, is represented as death. So we speak now of a man‘s being dead in law; dead to his country; spiritually dead; dead in sins. I do not understand this, therefore, as referring primarily to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; but to the captives in Babylon, who were civilly dead, and cut off by their oppressors from their rights and enjoyments as a nation.

Shall live - Shall be restored to their country. and be reinstated in all their rights and immunities as a people among the nations of the earth. This restoration shall be as striking as would be the resurrection of the dead front their graves. Though, therefore, this does not refer primarily to the resurrection of the dead, yet the illustration is drawn from that doctrine, and implies that that doctrine was one with which they were familiar. An image which is employed for the sake of illustration must be one that is familiar to the mind, and the reference here to this doctrine is a demonstration that the doctrine of the resurrection was well known.

Together with my dead body shall they arise - The words ‹together with‘ are not in the original. The words rendered ‹my dead body‘ (נבלתי *nebēlâthiy*) literally means, ‹my dead body,‘ and may be applied to a man, or to a beast Leviticus 5:2; Leviticus 7:24. It is also applied to the dead in general; to the deceased; to carcasses, or dead bodies (see Leviticus 11:11; Psalm 79:2; Jeremiah 7:33; Jeremiah 9:22; Jeremiah 16:18; Jeremiah 26:23; Jeremiah 34:20). It may, therefore, be rendered, ‹My deceased, my dead;‘ and will thus be parallel with the phrase ‹thy dead men,‘ and is used with reference to the same species of resurrection. It is not the language of the prophet Isaiah, as if he referred to his own body when it should be dead, but it is the language of the choir that sings and speaks in the name of the Jewish people. “That people” is thus introduced as saying “my” dead, that is, “our” dead, shall rise. Not only in the address to Yahweh is this sentiment uttered when it is said ‹thy dead shall rise,‘ but when the attention is turned to themselves as a people, they say ‹our dead shall rise;‘ those that pertain to our nation shall rise from the dust, and be restored to their own privileges and land.

Awake and sing - In view of the cheering and consolatory fact just stated that the dead shall rise, the chorus calls on the people to awake and rejoice. This is an address made directly to the dejected and oppressed people, as if the choir were with them.

Ye that dwell in dust - To sit in dust, or to dwell in the dust, is emblematic of a state of dejection, want, oppression, or poverty Psalm 44:25; Psalm 119:25; Isaiah 25:12; Isaiah 26:5; Isaiah 47:1. Here it is supposed to be addressed to the captives in Babylon, as oppressed, enslaved, dejected. The "language" is derived from the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and proves that that doctrine was understood and believed; the sense is, that those wire were thus dejected and humbled should be restored to their former elevated privileges.

For thy dew - This is evidently an address to Yahweh. "His" dew is that which he sends down from heaven, and which is under his direction and control. Dew is the emblem of that which refreshes and vivifies. In countries where it rains but seldom, as it does in the East, the copious dews at night supply in some sense the want of rain. "Thence dew" is used in Scripture as an emblem of the graces and influences of the Spirit of God by which his people are cheered and comforted, as the parched earth and the withered herbs are refreshed by the copious dews at night. Thus in Hosea 14:5:

I will be as the dew unto Israel;
He shall grow as the lily,
And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

The prophet here speaks of the captivity in Babylon. Their state is represented as a state of death - illustrated by the parched earth, and the decayed and withered herbs. But his grace and favor would visit them, and they would be revived.

As the dew of herbs - As the dew that falls on herbs. This phrase has, however, been rendered very variously. The Vulgate renders it, ‹Thy dew is as the dew of light.' The Septuagint: ‹Thy dew shall be healing (ἴαμα *iama*) unto them.' The Chaldee, ‹Thy dew shall be the dew of light.' But the most correct and consistent translation is undoubtedly that which renders the word אורת *'ôroth* herbs or vegetables (compare 2 Kings 9:19).

And the earth shall cast out the dead - This is language which is derived from the doctrine of the resurrection of the body; and shows also that that doctrine was understood by the Hebrews in the time of Isaiah. The sense is, that as the earth shall cast forth its dead in the resurrection, so the people of God in Babylon should be restored to life, and to their former privileges in their own land.

Verse 20

Come, my people - This is an epilogue (Rosenmuller), in which the choir addresses the people, and entreats them to be tranquil during that convulsion by which their oppressors would be punished, and the way made for their deliverance. The image is taken from seeking a shelter when a storm rages, until its fury is spent. The address is to the captive Jews in Babylon. The tempest that would rage would be the wars and commotions by which Babylon was to be overthrown. While that storm raged, they were exhorted to be calm and serene.

Enter thou into thy chambers - Into places of retirement, where the storm of indignation on your enemies shall not reach or affect you.

Hide thyself as it were … - Do not mingle in the scenes of battle, lest you should partake of the general calamity.

For a little moment - Implying that the war would not rage long. Babylon was taken in a single night (see the notes at Isaiah 13; 14), and the call here is for the people of God to be calm while this battle should rage in which the city should be taken.

Until the indignation … - Not, as Lowth supposes, the indignation of God against his people, but the storm of his indignation against their enemies the Babylonians. That would be soon ‹overpast,‘ the city would be taken, the storms of war would cease to rage, and then they would be delivered, and might safely return to their own land.

Verse 21

For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place - That is, from heaven, which is the dwelling-place or residence of God Psalm 115:3; Ezekiel 3:12; Micah 1:3. When God executes vengeance, he is represented as coming from his abode, his dwelling-place, his capitol, as a monarch goes forth to war to destroy his foes.

To punish the inhabitants of the earth - The land of Chaldea, or of Babylon.

The earth also shall disclose her blood - Blood, in the Scriptures, often denotes “guilt.” The sense here is, that the land of Chaldea would reveal its guilt; that is, the punishment which God would inflict would be a revelation of the crimes of the nation. There is a resemblance here to the language which was used respecting the blood of Abel, Genesis 4:10: ‹The voice of thy brother‘s blood (Hebrew as here, “bloods”) crieth unto me from the ground.

And shall no more cover her slain - Shall no more be able to conceal its guilt in slaying the people of God. By these hopes, the Jews were to be comforted in their calamity; and no doubt this song was penned by Isaiah long before that captivity, in order that, in the midst of their protracted and severe trials, they might be consoled with the hope of deliverance, and might know what to do when the storms of war should rage around the place of their captivity, and when the proud city was to fall. They were not to mingle in the strife; were to take no part with either their foes or their deliverers; but were to be calm, gentle, peaceful, and to remember that all this was to effect their deliverance. Compare Exodus 14:13-14: ‹Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Yahweh; Yahweh shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.‘ There are times when the children of God should look calmly on the conflicts of the people of this world. They should mingle with neither party, for they should remember that Yahweh presides over these agitations, and that their ultimate end is to bring deliverance to his church, and to advance the interests of his kingdom on the earth. Then they should be mild, gentle, prayerful; and should look up to God to make all these agitations and strifes the means of advancing the interests of his kingdom.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Introduction

For the general design of this chapter see the analysis of Isaiah 27:1, and may be examined at length in Vitringa. I regard the most simple and obvious interpretation as the correct one; and that is, that it is a continuation of the vision commenced in Isaiah 24:1, the Isaiah 25:1, and the Isaiah 26:1 chapters. In the Isaiah 25:1 and the Isaiah 26:1 chapters, the main design was to show the joy which would be evinced on their rescue from that land. The main purpose of this is to show the effect of that captivity and deliverance in purifying the Jews themselves, and in overcoming their propensity to idolatry, on account of which the captivity had been suf fered to take place. The "design" of the chapter is, like that of many others in Isaiah, to comfort them when they should be oppressed during their long and painful exile. The general plan of the chapter is:

1. A statement that their great enemy, the leviathan, should be destroyed Isaiah 27:1; and,

2. A song, in alternate responses, respecting the people of God, under the image of a vineyard yielding rich wines Isaiah 27:2-13. In this song Yahweh's protection over the vineyard is shown Isaiah 27:3; he declares that he is not actuated by fury Isaiah 27:4; his people are exhorted to trust in him Isaiah 27:5; a full promise that the Jews shall yet flourish is given Isaiah 27:6; Yahweh says that his judgments are mild on them Isaiah 27:7-8, and that the design is to purify his people Isaiah 27:9, for their sins they should be punished Isaiah 27:10-11; yet that they should be restored to their own land, and worship him in the holy mount at Jerusalem Isaiah 27:12-13.

Verse 1

In that day - In that future time when the Jews would be captive in Babylon, and when they would sigh for deliverance (see the note at Isaiah 26:1). This verse might have been connected with the previous chapter, as it refers to the same event, and then this chapter would have more appropriately commenced with the poem or song which begins in Isaiah 27:2.

With his sore - Hebrew, הקשה *haqāshâh* - ‹Hard.' Septuagint, Τὴς ἁγίαν *Tēn hagian* - ‹Holy.' The Hebrew means a sword that is hard, or well-

tempered and trusty.

And great, and strong sword - The sword is an emblem of war, and is often used among the Hebrews to denote war (see Genesis 27:40; Leviticus 26:25). It is also an emblem of justice or punishment, as punishment then, as it is now in the Turkish dominions, was often inflicted by the sword Deuteronomy 32:41-42; Psalm 7:12; Hebrews 11:37. Here, if it refers to the overthrow of Babylon and its tyrannical king, it means that God would punish them by the armies of the Medes, employed as his sword or instrument. Thus in Psalm 17:13, David prays, ‹Deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword‘ (compare the notes at Isaiah 10:5-6).

Leviathan - לויתן *livyâthân* The Septuagint renders this, Τὴν δράκοντα *Tēn drakonta* - ‹The dragon.‘ The word ‹leviathan‘ is probably derived from לוה *lâvâh* in Arabic, to weave, to twist (Gesenius); and literally means, “the twisted animal.” The word occurs in six places in the Old Testament, and is translated in Job 3:8, ‹mourning,‘ Margin, ‹leviathan;‘ in Job 41:1, ‹leviathan‘ - in which chapter is an extended description of the animal; in Psalm 74:14, it is rendered ‹leviathan,‘ and seems to be applied to Pharaoh; and in Psalm 104:26, and in the passage before us, where it is twice also rendered ‹leviathan.‘ Bochart (Hierez. ii. 5. 16-18) has gone into an extended argument to show that by the leviathan the crocodile is intended; and his argument is in my view conclusive. On this subject, Bochart, Dr. Good (on Ezekiel 29:3-5, the dragon, or the crocodile of the Nile, represents Pharaoh; in Ezekiel 22:2, Pharaoh is compared to a young lion, and to a whale in the seas; in Psalm 74:13-14, Pharaoh is compared to the dragon, and to the leviathan. In Job 26:13. The term ‹piercing,‘ is, in the Margin, ‹Crossing like a bar.‘ The Septuagint renders it, Ὄφιν Φεύγοντα *Ophin pheugonta* - ‹Flying serpent. The Hebrew, בריח *bāriyach* rendered ‹piercing,‘ is derived from ברץ *bârach* to flee;” and then to stretch across, or pass through, as a bar through boards Exodus 36:33. Hence, this word may mean fleeing; extended; cross bar for fastening gates; or the cross piece for binding together the boards for the tabernacle of the congregation Exodus 26:26; Exodus 36:31. Lowth renders it, ‹The rigid serpent;‘ probably with reference to the hard scales of the crocodile. The word “extended, huge, vast,” will probably best suit the connection. In Job 26:13, it is rendered, ‹the crooked serpent;‘ referring to the constellation in the heavens by the name of the Serpent (see the note at that place). The idea of piercing is not in the Hebrew word, nor is it ever used in that sense.

That crooked serpent - This is correctly rendered; and refers to the fact that the monster here referred to throws itself into immense volumes or folds, a description that applies to all serpents of vast size. Virgil has given a similar description of sea monsters throwing themselves into vast convolutions:

‹*Ecce autem gemini a Tenedo tranquilla per alta*
- *immensis orbibus angues*.‘
- *AEn. ii. 203.*

And again:

‹*Sinuantque immensa volumine terga*.‘
Idem. 208.

The reference in Isaiah, I suppose, is not to “different” kings or enemies of the people of God, but to the same. It is customary in Hebrew poetry to refer to the same subject in different members of the same sentence, or in different parts of the same parallelism.

The dragon - Referring to the same thing under a different image - to the king of Babylon. On the meaning of the word ‹dragon,‘ see the note at Isaiah 13:22.

In the sea - In the Euphrates; or in the marshes and pools that encompass Babylon (see Isaiah 11:15, note; Isaiah 18:2, note). The sense of the whole verse is, that God would destroy the Babylonian power that was to the Jews such an object of loathsomeness and of terror.

Verse 2

Sing ye unto her - That is, sing unto, or respecting the vineyard. The word rendered ‹sing‘ (ענו ʿ*anû*) signifies properly, “answer, respond to;” and then, sing a responsive song, where one portion of the choir responds to another (see Exodus 15:21). This has been well expressed here by Lowth in his translation:

‹To the beloved Vineyard, sing ye a responsive song.‘

It is the commencement of a song, or hymn respecting Judea, represented under the image of a vineyard, and which is probably confirmed to the close of the chapter.

A vineyard - (see the notes at Isaiah 5:1 ff) The Hebrew phrase rendered ‹a vineyard of red wine‘ is the title to the song; or the responsive song respects the ‹vineyard of red wine.‘

Of red wine - (חמר *chemer*). Lowth proposes to read instead of this, חמד *chemed* pleasantness, beauty, or beloved.” He observes that many

manuscripts have this meaning, and that it is followed by the Septuagint and the Chaldee. The Septuagint reads it: Ἀμπελών καλλὸς *Ampelōn kallos* - ‹Beautiful vineyard.‘ This would well suit the connection, and this slight error in transcribing might have easily occurred. But the authority in the manuscripts for the change is not conclusive. The word which now occurs in the text denotes properly “wine,” from חמר *châmar* to “ferment.” The word חמר *châmar* also has the signification “to be red” Psalm 75:9; Job 16:16; and according to this, our translators have rendered it ‹of red wine.‘ Bochart (Geog. Sac. ii. 1,29) renders it, ‹A vineyard fertile in producing wine.‘ The correct translation would be one that would not seem very congruous in our language, ‹a vineyard of wine,‘ or ‹a wine-vineyard.‘

Verse 3

I the Lord do keep it - There is understood here or implied an introduction; as ‹Yahweh said‘ (compare Psalm 121:3-5).

I will water it every moment - That is, constantly, as a vinedresser does his vineyard.

Verse 4

Fury is not in me - That is, I am angry with it no more. He had punished his people by removing them to a distant land. But although he had corrected them for their faults, yet he had not laid aside the affection of a Father.

Who would set - Hebrew, ‹Who would give me.‘ The Septuagint renders this, ‹Who would place me to keep the stubble in the field?‘ Great perplexity has been felt in regard to the interpretation of this passage. Lowth translates it:

‹O that I had a fence of the thorn and the brier;‘

evidently showing that he was embarrassed with it, and could not make of it consistent sense. The whole sentence must refer either to the people of God, or to his enemies. If to his people, it would be an indication that they were like briers and thorns, and that if his fury should rage they would be consumed, and hence, he calls upon them Isaiah 27:5 to seize upon his strength, and to be at peace with him. If it refers to his enemies, then it expresses a wish that his enemies were in his possession; or a purpose to go against them, as fire among thorns, and to consume them if they should presume to array themselves against his vineyard. This latter I take to be the true sense of the passage. The phrase ‹who would set me,‘ or in Hebrew, ‹who will give me,‘ may be expressed by “utinam,” indicating strong

desire; and may be thus paraphrased: ‹I retain no anger against my people. I have indeed punished them; but my anger has ceased. I shall now defend them. If they are attacked by foes, I will guard them. When their foes approach, "I desire, I earnestly wish," that they may be in my possession, that I may destroy them - as the fire rages through briers and thorns.' It expresses a firm determination to defend his people and to destroy their enemies, unless Isaiah 27:5, which he would prefer, they should repent, and be at peace with him.

The briers and thorns - His enemies, and the enemies of his people (compare the notes at Isaiah 9:17; Isaiah 10:17). Perhaps the phrase is used here to denote enemies, because briers and thorns are so great enemies to a vineyard by impeding growth and fertility.

I would go through them - Or, rather, I would go against them in battle to destroy them.

I would burn them up together - As fire devours the thorns and briers; that is, I would completely destroy them.

Verse 5

Or let him - The Hebrew word rendered here or (אוֹ *'ô*) means "unless;" and the sense is, the enemies of the Jewish people shall be completely destroyed as briers are by fire, "unless" they flee to God for a refuge.

Take hold of my strength - That is, let the enemy take hold of me to become reconciled to me. The figure here is taken probably from the act of fleeing to take hold of the horns of the altar for refuge when one was pursued (compare 1 Kings 1:50; 1 Kings 2:28).

That he may make peace with me - With me as the guardian of the vineyard. If this were done they would be safe.

And he shall make peace with me - That is, even the enemy of me and of my vineyard "may" be permitted to make peace with me. Learn,

(1) That God is willing to be reconciled to his enemies.

(2) That peace must be obtained by seeking his protection; by submitting to him, and laying hold of his strength.

(3) That if this is not done, his enemies must be inevitably destroyed.

(4) He will defend his people, and no weapon that is formed against them shall prosper.

Verse 6

He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root - This language is derived from the vine, as the shoots or cuttings of the vine take root and flourish. To take root, therefore, is an emblem denoting that the descendants of Jacob, or the people of God, would increase and prosper.

Shall blossom and bud - An image also taken from the vine, or from fruit trees in general, and meaning that they should greatly flourish in the time succeeding their return from the captivity.

And fill the face of the world with fruit - On the meaning of the word ‹face,‘ see the note at Isaiah 25:7. The sense is, that the people of God would so increase and flourish that the true religion would ultimately fill the entire world. The same idea of the universal prevalence of the true religion is often advanced by this prophet, and occurs in various parts of the hymns or songs which we are now considering (see Isaiah 25:6-8). The figure which is used here, drawn from the vine, denoting prosperity by its increase and its fruit, is beautifully employed in Psalm 92:13-14:

Those that be planted in the house of Yahweh,
Shall flourish in the courts of our God.
They shall still bring forth fruit in old age;

They shall be rich and green.

Verse 7

Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote them? - Has God punished his people in the same manner and to the same extent as he has their enemies? It is implied by this question that he had not. He had indeed punished them for their sins, but he had I not destroyed them. Their enemies he had utterly destroyed.

According to the slaughter of those that are slain by him - Hebrew, ‹According to the slaying of his slain.‘ That is, not as our translation would seem to imply, that their enemies had been slain “BY” them; but that they were ‹their slain,‘ inasmuch as they had been slain on their account, or to promote their release and return to their own land. It was not true that their enemies had been slain “by” them; but it was true that they had been slain on their account, or in order to secure their return to their own country.

Verse 8

In measure … - This verse in our translation is exceedingly obscure, and indeed almost unintelligible. Nor is it much more intelligible in Lowth, or in Noyes; in the Vulgate, or the Septuagint. The various senses which have been given to the verse may be seen at length in Vitringa and Rosenmuller. The idea, which I suppose to be the true one, without going into an examination of others which have been proposed, is the following, which is as near as possible a literal translation:

In moderation in sending her (the vineyard)
Away didst thou judge her,
Though carrying her away with a rough tempest
In the time of the east wind.

The word rendered ‹measure‘ (סאסאה *sa'se'âh*) occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. It is probably derived from סאה *se'âh* "a measure;" usually denoting a measure of grain, containing, according to the rabbis, a third part of an ephah, that is, about "a peck." The word used here is probably a contraction of סאה סאה *se'âh se'âh* literally, "measure by measure," i: e., "moderately," or in moderation. So the rabbis generally understand it. The idea is ‹small measure by small measure,‘ not a large measure at a time; or, in other words, moderately, or in moderation. It refers, I suppose, to the fact that in inflicting judgment on his people, it had not been done with intolerable severity. The calamity had not been so overwhelming as entirely to cut them off, but had been tempered with mercy.

When it shooteth forth - This expression does not convey an intelligible idea. The Hebrew, בשלחה *beshallechâh* - literally, "in sending her forth," from שלח *shâlach* "to send," or "to put forth" - refers, I suppose, to the fact that God had sent her, that is, his vineyard, his people, forth to Babylon; he had cast them out of their own land into a distant country, but when it was done it was tempered with mercy and kindness. In this expression there is indeed a mingling of a metaphor with a literal statement, since it appears rather incongruous to speak of sending forth a "vineyard;" but such changes in expressions are not uncommon in the Hebrew poets.

Thou wilt debate with it - Or, rather, thou hast "judged" it; or hast punished it. The word ריב *riyb* means sometimes to debate, contend, or strive; but it means also to take vengeance 1 Samuel 25:39, or to punish; to contend with anyone so as to overcome or punish him. Here it refers to the fact that God "had" had a contention with his people, and had punished them by removing them to Babylon.

He stayeth - (הגה *hâgâh*). This word means in one form "to meditate," to think, to speak; in another, "to separate," as dross from silver, to remove, to take away Proverbs 25:4-5. Here it means that he "had" removed, or separated his people from their land as with the sweepings of a tempest. The word ‹stayeth‘ does not express the true sense of the passage. It is better expressed in the margin, ‹when he removeth it.‘

His rough wind - A tempestuous, boisterous wind, which God sends. Winds are emblematic of judgment, as they sweep away everything before them. Here the word is emblematic of the calamities which came upon Judea by which the nation was removed to Babylon; and the sense is, that they were removed as in a tempest; they were carried away as if a violent storm had swept over the land.

In the day of the east wind - The east wind in the climate of Judea was usually tempestuous and violent; Job 27:21:

The east wind carrieth him away and he departeth;
And, as a storm, hurleth them out of his place.

Jeremiah 18:17:

I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy.

(Compare Genesis 41:6; Exodus 10:13; Exodus 14:21; Job 38:24; Psalm 78:26; Habakkuk 1:6). This wind was usually hot, noxious, blasting and scorching (Taylor).

Verse 9

By this - This verse states the whole design of the punishment of the Jews. They were taken away from their temple, their city, and their land; they were removed from the groves and altars of idolatry by which they had been so often led into sin; and the design was to preserve them henceforward from relapsing into their accustomed idolatry.

The iniquity of Jacob - The sin of the Jewish people, and particularly their tendency to idolatry, which was their easily besetting sin.

Be purged - (see the note at Isaiah 1:25).

And this is all the fruit - And this is all the "object" or "design" of their captivity and removal to Babylon.

When he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalk stones - That is, Yahweh shall make the stones of the altars reared in honor of idols like chalk stones; or shall throw them down, and scatter them abroad like stones that are easily beaten to pieces. The sense is, that Yahweh, during their

captivity in Babylon, would overthrow the places where they had worshipped idols.

The groves and images shall not stand up - The groves consecrated to idols, and the images erected therein (see the note at Isaiah 17:8).

Verse 10

Yet the defensed city - Gesenius supposes that this means Jerusalem. So Calvin and Piscator understand it. Others understand it of Samaria, others of Babylon (as Vitringa, Rosenmuller, and Grotius), and others of cities in general, denoting those in Judea, or in other places. To me it seems plain that Babylon is referred to. The whole description seems to require this; and especially the fact that this song is supposed to be sung after the return from captivity to celebrate their deliverance. It is natural, therefore, that they should record the fact that the strong and mighty city where they had been so long in captivity, was now completely destroyed. For the meaning of thee phrase ‹defensed city,‘ see the note at Isaiah 25:2.

Shall be desolate - (see Isaiah 25:2; compare the notes at Proverbs 3:33; Proverbs 21:20; Proverbs 24:15).

And left like a wilderness - See the description of Babylon in the notes at Isaiah 13:20-22.

There shall the calf feed - It shall become a vast desert, and be a place for beasts of the forest to range in (compare Isaiah 7:23; see the note at Isaiah 5:17).

And consume the branches thereof - The branches of the trees and shrubs that shall spring up spontaneously in the vast waste where Babylon was.

Verse 11

When the boughs thereof are withered - This is a further description of the desolation which would come upon Babylon. The idea is, that Babylon would be forsaken until the trees should grow and decay, and the branches should fall to be collected for burning. That is, the desolation should be entire, undisturbed, and long continued The idea of the desolation is, therefore, in this verse carried forward, and a new circumstance is introduced to make it more graphic and striking. Lowth, however, supposes that this refers to the vineyard, and to the fact that the vine-twigs are collected in the East from the scarcity of fuel for burning. But it seems to me that the obvious reference is to Babylon, and that it is an image of the great and prolonged desolation that was coming upon that city.

They shall be broken off - That is, by their own weight as they decay, or by the hands of those who come to collect them for fuel.

The women come - Probably it was the office mainly of the women to collect the fuel which might be necessary for culinary purposes. In eastern climates but little is needed; and that is collected of the twigs of vineyards, of withered stubble, straw, hay, dried roots, etc., wherever they can be found.

And set them on fire - That is, to burn them for fuel.

Of no understanding - Of no right views of God and his government - wicked, sinful Proverbs 6:32; Proverbs 18:2; Jeremiah 5:21.

Verse 12

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall beat off - The word which is used here (חבט *châbaṭ*) means properly "to beat off with a stick," as fruit from a tree Deuteronomy 20:20. It also means to beat out grain with a stick Judges 6:11; Rth 2:17 The word which is rendered in the other member of the sentence, ‹shall be gathered‘ (לקט *lâqaṭ*), is applied to the act of "collecting" fruit after it has been beaten from a tree, or grain after it has been threshed. The use of these words here shows that the image is taken from the act of collecting fruit or grain after harvest; and the expression means, that as the farmer gathers in his fruit, so God would gather in his people. In the figure, it is supposed that the garden or vineyard of Yahweh extends from the Euphrates to the Nile; that his people are scattered in all that country; that there shall be agitation or a shaking in all that region as when a farmer beats off his fruit from the tree, or beats out his grain; and that the result would be that all those scattered people would be gathered into their own land. The time referred to is, doubtless, after Babylon should be taken; and in explanation of the declaration it is to be remembered that the Jews were not only carried to Babylon, but were scattered in large numbers in all the adjacent regions. The promise here is, that from all those regions where they had been scattered they should be re-collected and restored to their own land.

From the channel of the river - The river here undoubtedly refers to the river Euphrates (see the note at Isaiah 11:15).

Unto the stream of Egypt - The Nile. "And ye shall be gathered one by one." As the farmer collects his fruits one by one - collecting them carefully, and not leaving any. This means that God will not merely collect

them as a nation, but as "individuals." He will see that none is overlooked, and that all shall be brought in safety to their land.

Verse 13

The great trumpet shall be blown - This verse is designed to describe in another mode the same fact as that stated in Isaiah 27:12, that Yahweh would re-collect his scattered people. The figure is derived from the trumpet which was blown to assemble a people for war (Grotius); or from the blowing of the trumpet on occasion of the great feasts and festivals of the Jews (Vitringa). The idea is, that God would summon the scattered people to return to their own land. The "way" in which this was done, or in which the will of God would be made known to them, is not specified. It is probable, however, that the reference here is to the decree of Cyrus Ezra 1:1, by which they were permitted to return to their own country.

Which were ready to perish - Who were reduced in numbers, and in power, and who were ready to be annihilated under their accumulated and long-continued trials.

In the land of Assyria - The ten tribes were carried away into Assyria 2 Kings 17:6; and it is probable that many of the other two tribes were also in that land. A portion of the ten tribes would also be re-collected, and would return with the others to the land of their fathers. Assyria also constituted a considerable part of the kingdom of the Chaldeans, and the name Assyria may be given here to that country in general.

And the outcasts - Those who had fled in consternation to Egypt and to other places when these calamities were coming upon the nation (see Jeremiah 41:17-18; Jeremiah 42:15-22).

And shall worship the Lord - Their temple shall be rebuilt; their city shall be restored; and in the place where their fathers worshipped shall they also again adore the living God. This closes the prophecy which was commenced in Isaiah 24; and the design of the whole is to comfort the Jews with the assurance, that though they were to be made captive in a distant land, yet they would be again restored to the land of their fathers, and again worship God there. It is almost needless to say that this prediction was completely fulfilled by the return of the Jews to their own country under the decree of Cyrus.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 28

Introduction

This chapter comprises a new prophecy and relates to a new subject. Gesenius supposes that it is to be connected with the following to to the close of Isaiah 35:1-10, and that it relates to the Assyrian war in which the ten tribes were carried away captive. Doederlin supposes that this chapter and the two following were uttered at the same time, and relate to the same subject; Hensler, that the prophecy closes at Isaiah 28:1-4. Perhaps it was in the time of Ahaz, or in the beginning of the reign of Hezekiah, when Samaria or Ephraim had entered into a league with Rezin, king of Damascus, and may therefore synchronize with Isaiah 28:1-4.

2. The fact that Yahweh would preserve and defend a portion of his people - those who comprise the kingdom of Judah Isaiah 28:1-4.

II. God would preserve the residue of his people, yet they also deserved rebuke, and would be also subjected to punishment Isaiah 28:5-6 and be their glory and strength.

2. Yet they deserved, on many accounts, to be reproved, particularly because many even of the priests and prophets were intemperate Isaiah 28:7-8.

3. They also disregarded the messengers of God, and treated their messages with contempt and scorn, as being vain repetitions and a mere stammering Isaiah 28:9-13.

4. They regarded themselves as safe, since they were firm and united, and had as it were made a league with death Isaiah 28:14-15.

5. God, in view of their sins, threatens them with deserved punishment Isaiah 28:16-21. This would occur in the following manner:

(a) He would lay in Zion a corner stone, tried and precious, and all that regarded that should be safe Isaiah 28:16.

(b) Yet heavy judgments would come upon the guilty and the unbelieving. Judgment would be laid to the line, and the storms of divine

vengeance would sweep away their false refuges, and their covenant with death should not avail them Isaiah 28:17-21.

(c) The people are therefore admonished to attend to this, for the destruction was determined upon the whole land Isaiah 28:22.

(d) The whole account of their punishment is concluded by a reference to the conduct of a farmer, and an illustration is drawn from the fact that he takes various methods to secure his harvest. He plows, he sows, and in various ways he thrashes his grain. So in various ways God would deal with his people. He would instruct, admonish, correct, and punish them, in order that he might sect the greatest amount of piety and good fruits from them. Chastisement was just as necessary for them as it was for the farmer in various modes to beat out his grain Isaiah 28:28-29.

Verse 1

Wo - (see the note at Isaiah 18:1). The word here is used to denounce impending judgment.

To the crown of pride - This is a Hebrew mode of expression, denoting the proud or haughty crown. There can be no doubt that it refers to the capital of the kingdom of Ephraim; that is, to Samaria. This city was built by Omri, who purchased ‹the hill Samaria‘ of Shemer, for two talents of silver, equal in value to 792British pounds, 11 shillings, 8d., and built the city on the hill, and called it, after the name of Shemer, Samaria 1 Kings 16:24. Omri was king of Israel (925 b.c.), and he made this city the capital of his kingdom. The city was built on a pleasant and fertile hill, and surrounded with a rich valley, with a circle of hills beyond; and the beauty of the hill on which the city was built suggested the idea of a wreath or chaplet of flowers, or a “crown.” After having been destroyed and reduced to an inconsiderable place, it was restored by Herod the Great, 21 b.c., who called it “Sebaste” (Latin, “Augusta”), in honor of the Emperor Augustus. It is usually mentioned by travelers under the name of Sebaste. Maundrell (Travels, p. 58) says, ‹Sebaste, the ancient Samaria, is situated on a long mount of an oval figure; having first a fruitful valley, and then a ring of hills running round it.‘ The following is the account which is given by Richardson: ‹Its situation is extremely beautiful, and strong by nature; more

so, I think, than Jerusalem. It stands on a fine large insulated hill, compassed all round by a broad, deep valley.

The valley is surrounded by four hills, one on each side, which are cultivated in terraces to the top, sown with grain, and planted with fig and olive trees, as is also the valley. The hill of Samaria, likewise, rises in terraces to a height equal to any of the adjoining mountains.‘ Dr. Robinson, who visited this place in 1838, says, ‹The find round swelling hill, or almost mountain of Samaria, stands alone in the midst of the great basin of some two hours (seven or eight miles) in diameter, surrounded by higher mountains on every side. It is near the eastern side of the basin; and is connected with the eastern mountains, somewhat after the manner of a promontory, by a much lower ridge, having a wady both on the south and on the north. The mountains and the valleys around are to a great extent arable, and enlivened by many villages and the hand of cultivation. From all these circumstances, the situation of the ancient Samaria is one of great beauty.

The hill itself is cultivated to the top; and, at about midway of the ascent, is surrounded by a narrow terrace of level land like a belt, below which the roots of the hill spread off more gradually into the valleys. The whole hill of Sebastich (the Arabic form for the name Sebaste) consists of fertile soil; it is cultivated to the top, and has upon it many olive and fig trees. It would be difficult to find, in all Palestine, a situation of equal strength, fertility, and beauty combined. In all these particulars, it has very greatly the advantage over Jerusalem.‘ (Bib. Researches, vol. iii. pp. 136-149). Standing thus by itself, and cultivated to the top, and exceedingly fertile, it was compared by the prophet to a crown, or garland of flowers - such as used to be worn on the head, especially on festival occasions.

To the drunkards of Ephraim - Ephraim here denotes the kingdom of Israel, whose capital was Samaria (see the note at Isaiah 7:2). That intemperance was the prevailing sin in the kingdom of Israel is not improbable. It prevailed to a great extent also in the kingdom of Judah (see Isaiah 28:7-8: compare Isaiah 5:11, note; Isaiah 5:22, note).

Whose glorious beauty is a fading flower - That is, it shall soon be destroyed, as a flower soon withers and fades away. This was fulfilled in the destruction that came upon Samaria under the Assyrians when the ten tribes were carried into captivity 2 Kings 17:3-6. The allusion in this verse to the

‹crown‘ and ‹the fading flower‘ encircling Samaria, Grotius thinks is derived from the fact that among the ancients, drunkards and revellers were accustomed to wear a crown or garland on their heads, or that a wreath or chaplet of flowers was usually worn on their festival occasions. That this custom prevailed among the Jews as well as among the Greeks and Romans, is apparent from a statement by the author of the Book of Wisdom:

‹Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ornaments,
And let no flower of the spring pass by us;
Let us crown ourselves with rose-buds before they are withered.‘
- Wisdom Romans 2:7, Romans 2:8.

Which are on the head - Which flowers or chaplets are on the eminence that rises over the fat valleys; that is, on Samaria, which seemed to stand as the head rising from the valley.

Of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine - That are occupied by, or in the possession of, those who are overcome with wine. Margin, ‹Broken‘ with wine. Hebrew, (יין הלומי *hălûmēy yâyin*) ‹Smitten with wine;‘ corresponding to the Greek ὀινοπλὴξ *oinoplēx* that is, they were overcome or subdued by it. A man‘s reason, conscience, moral feelings, and physical strength are all overcome by indulgence in wine, and the entire man is prostrate by it. This passage is a proof of what has been often denied, but which further examination has abundantly confirmed, that the inhabitants of wine countries are as certainly intemperate as those which make rise of ardent spirits.

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Verse 2

Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one - The Hebrew of this passage is, ‹Lo! there is to the Lord (לאדני *la'donāy*) mighty and strong.‘ Lowth renders it,

‹Behold the mighty one, the exceedingly strong one,‘

And supposes that it means the Lord himself. It is evident, however, that something must be understood as being that which the Lord ‹hath,‘ for the Hebrew properly implies that there is something strong and mighty which is under his control, and with which, as with a tempest, he will sweep away and destroy Ephraim. Jarchi supposes that רוח *rûach* (“wind”) is understood; Kimchi thinks that the word is יום *yôm* (“day”); others believe that חיל *chayil* (“an army”) is understood. But I think the obvious

interpretation is to refer it to the Assyrian king, as the agent by which Yahweh would destroy Samaria 2 Kings 17:3-6. This power was entirely under the direction of Yahweh, and would be employed by him in accomplishing his purpose on that guilty people (compare the notes at Isaiah 10:5-6).

As a tempest of hail - A storm of hail is a most striking representation of the desolation that is produced by the ravages of an invading army (compare Job 27:21; the note at Isaiah 30:30; also Hosea 13:15).

A flood of mighty waters - This is also a striking description of the devastating effects of an invading army (compare Psalm 90:5; Jeremiah 46:7-8)

Shall cast down to the earth - To cast it to the earth means that it should be entirely humbled and destroyed (see the note at Isaiah 25:12).

With the hand - Septuagint: βίᾳ *bia* - ‹Force,‘ ‹violence.‘ This is its meaning here; as if it were taken in the hand, like a cup, and dashed indignantly to the ground.

Verse 4

As the hasty fruit before the summer - The word rendered ‹hasty fruit‘ (בכורה *bikûrâh*); in Arabic, *bokkore* in Spanish, *albacore*), denotes the "early fig." this ripens in June; the common fig does not ripen until August. Shaw, in his "Travels," p. 370, says: ‹No sooner does the "boccore" (the early fig) draw near to perfection in the middle or latter end of June, than the "kermez" or summer fig begins to be formed, though it rarely ripens before August, about which time the same tree frequently throws out a third crop, or the winter fig, as we may call it. This is usually of a much longer shape and darker complexion than the kermez, hanging and ripening on the tree after the leaves are shed; and provided the winter be mild and temperate it is gathered as a delicious morsel in the spring.‘ Robinson (George), ("Travels in Palestine and Syria," vol. i. p. 354), says, ‹The fig tree, which delights in a rocky and parched soil, and is therefore often found in barren spots where nothing else will grow, is very common in Palestine and the East. The fruit is of two kinds, the "boccore" and the "kermouse." The black and white boccore, or early fig, is produced in May; but the kermouse, or the fig properly so called, which is preserved and exported to Europe, is rarely ripe before September.‘ Compare Hosea 9:10. The phrase ‹before the summer‘ means before the heat of the summer, when the common fig was usually ripe. The idea here is this, the early fig would be

plucked and eaten with great greediness. So the city of Samaria would be seized upon and destroyed by its enemies.

Which when he that looketh upon it seeth … - That is, as soon as he sees it he plucks it, and eats it at once. He does not lay it up for future use, but as soon as he has it in his hand he devours it. So soon as the Assyrian should see Samaria he would rush upon it, and destroy it. It was usual for conquerors to preserve the cities which they took in war for future use, and to make them a part of the strength or ornament of their kingdom. But Samaria was to be at once destroyed. Its inhabitants were to be carried away, and it would be demolished as greedily as a hungry man plucks and eats the first fig that ripens on the tree.

Verse 5

In that day - This verse commences a new subject, and affirms that while the kingdom of Israel should be destroyed, the kingdom of Judah would be preserved, and restored (compare Isaiah 28:1, Isaiah 28:3 as adorning the kingdom and capital of Israel. Yahweh and his government would be to them their chief glory and ornament.

Unto the residue of his people - To the kingdom of Judah, comprising the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. This doubtless refers to the comparatively prosperous and happy times of the reign of Hezekiah.

Verse 6

And for a spirit of judgment - (compare the note at Isaiah 1:26; Isaiah 11:2). The sense of this passage is, that Jehovah would enlighten the judges of the land, so that they should understand what was right, and be disposed to do it.

To him that sitteth in judgment - This is to be understood collectively, and means those who sat upon the bench of justice; that is, the magistracy in general.

And for strength to to them that turn the battle to the gate - That is, to the very gate of their enemies; who not only repel their foes from their own city, but who drive them even to the gates of their own cities, and besiege them there. Thus 2 Samuel 11:23: ‹And we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate;‘ that is, we drove them back unto their own gates.

Verse 7

But they also have erred through wine - In the previous verses the prophet had said that the kingdom of Judah should be saved, while that of

Ephraim should be destroyed. Yet he does not deny that they also were guilty of crimes for which punishment would come upon them. To portray these crimes, and to declare the certain judgment which awaited them, is the design of the remainder of the chapter. The word rendered ‹have erred‘ (שׁגוּ *shâgû*) refers usually to the fact that people "stagger" or "reel" through wine, and is applied commonly to those who are intoxicated Proverbs 20:1. The subsequent part of this verse shows, however, that it does not refer merely to the fact that they stagger and reel as intemperate people do, but that it had an effect on their ‹vision‘ and ‹judgment;‘ that is, it disqualified them for the discharge of their duties as priests and as prophets. In this part of the verse, however, the simple idea is, that they reel or stagger through wine, that is, they are addicted to intoxication. In the subsequent part of the verse the prophet states the effect in producing indistinctness of vision and error of judgment.

And through strong drink - (see the note at Isaiah 5:11).

They are out of the way - (תעוּ *tāʿû*). They wander; stagger; reel (compare the notes at Isaiah 19:14).

The priest and the prophet - Probably these persons are specified to denote the higher classes of society. It is probable that the prophet also designs to indicate the enormity of the sins of the nation, from the fact that those who were especially devoted to religion, and who were supposed to have immediate communication with God, were addicted to intemperance.

They are swallowed up of wine - They are completely absorbed by it (see the note at Isaiah 25:7); they not only themselves indulge in its use, but they are themselves, as it were, swallowed up by it, so that their reason, and strength, and virtue are all gone - as a vessel is absorbed in a maelstrom or whirlpool.

They err in vision - For the sense of the word ‹vision,‘ see the note at Isaiah 1:1. The prophet here states the effect of the use of wine and strong drink on their mental and moral powers. It was the office of the prophets to declare the will of God; probably also to explain the sense of the sacred Scriptures, and to address the people on their duty. Here the prophet says that the effect of their intemperance was that they had themselves no correct and clear views of the truth, and that they led the people into error.

They stumble in judgment - There were many important subjects on which the priests sat in judgment among the Hebrews, particularly in all matters pertaining to religion. By the influence of intoxicating liquors they

were disqualified for the high and holy functions of their office; and the consequence was, that the nation was corrupt, and was exposed to the heavy judgments of God.

Verse 8

For all tables … - The tables at which they sit long in the use of wine (see the note at Isaiah 5:11). There was no place in their houses which was free from the disgusting and loathsome pollution produced by the use of wine.

Verse 9

whom shall he teach knowledge? - This verse commences a statement respecting another form of sin that prevailed among the people of Judah. That sin was contempt for the manner in which God instructed them by the prophets, and a disregard for his communications as if they were suited to children and not to adults. That "scoffing" was the principal sin aimed at in these verses, is apparent from Isaiah 28:14. Vitringa supposes that these words Isaiah 28:9-10 are designed to describe the manner of teaching by the priests and the prophets as being puerile and silly, and adapted to children. Michaelis supposes that the prophet means to signify that it would be a vain and fruitless labor to attempt to instruct these persons who were given to wine, because they were unaccustomed to sound and true doctrine. Others have supposed that he means that these persons who were thus given to wine and strong drink were disqualified to instruct others, since their teachings were senseless and incoherent, and resembled the talk of children. But the true sense of the passage has undoubtedly been suggested by Lowth. According to this interpretation, the prophet speaks of them as deriders of the manner in which God had spoken to them by his messengers. ‹What!‘ say they, ‹does God treat us as children? Does he deal with us as we deal with infants just weaned, perpetually repeating and inculcating the same elementary lessons, and teaching the mere rudiments of knowledge?‘ The expression, therefore, ‹whom shall he teach knowledge?‘ or, ‹whom does he teach?‘ is an expression of contempt supposed to be spoken by the intemperate priests and prophets - the leaders of the people. ‹whom does God take us to be? Does he regard us as mere children? Why are we treated as children with an endless repetition of the same elementary instruction?‘

To understand doctrine - Hebrew as Margin, ‹Hearing,‘ or ‹report‘ Isaiah 53:1. The sense is, For whom is that instruction intended? whom

does he wish to be taught by it?

Them that are weaned from the milk … - Does he regard and treat us as mere babes?

Verse 10

For precept must be upon precept - This is probably designed to ridicule the concise and sententious manner of the prophets, and especially the fact that they dwelt much upon the same elementary truths of religion. In teaching children we are obliged to do it by often repeating the same simple lesson. So the profane and scoffing teachers of the people said it had been with the prophets of God. It had been precept upon precept, and line upon line, in the same way as children had been instructed. The meaning is, ‹there is a constant repetition of the command, without ornament, imagery, or illustration; without an appeal to our understanding, or respect for our reason; it is simply one mandate after another, just as lessons are inculcated upon children.‘

Line upon line - This word (קו *qav*), properly means “a cord, a line;” particularly a measuring cord or line (2 Kings 21:13; Ezekiel 47:13; see the note at Isaiah 18:2). Here it seems to be used in the sense of “a rule,” “law,” or “precept.” Grotius thinks that the idea is taken from schoolmasters who instruct their pupils by making lines or marks for them which they are to trace or imitate. There is a repetition of similar sounds in the Hebrew in this verse which cannot be conveyed in a translation, and which shows their contempt in a much more striking manner than any version could do - לקו קו לקו קו לצו צו לצו צו כי *kîy tsav lâtsâv tsav lâtsâv qav lâqâv qēv lâqâv* Here a little and there a little - In the manner of instructing children, inculcating elementary lessons constantly. It may be observed here that God‘s method of imparting religious truth has often appeared to a scoffing world to be undignified and foolish. Sinners suppose that he does not sufficiently respect their understanding, and pay a tribute to the dignity of their nature. The truths of God, and his modes of inculcating them, are said to be adapted to the understandings of childhood and of age; to imbecility of years, or to times when the mind is enfeebled by disease.

Verse 11

For - This verse is to be understood as a response to what the complaining and dissatisfied people had said, as expressed in the previous verse. God says that he will teach them, but it should be by another tongue - a foreign language in a distant land. Since they refused to hearken to the

messages which he sent to them, and which they regarded as adapted only to children, he would teach them in a manner that should be "much more" humiliating; he would make use of the barbarous language of foreigners to bring them to the true knowledge of God.

With stammering lips - The word which is used here is derived from a verb (לעג *lâʿâg*), which means to speak unintelligibly: especially to speak in a foreign language, or to stammer; and then to mock, deride, laugh at, scorn (compare Isaiah 33:19; Proverbs 1:26; Proverbs 17:5; Psalm 2:4; Psalm 59:9; Job 22:19). Here it means in a foreign or barbarous tongue; and the sense is, that the lessons which God wished to teach would be conveyed to them through the language of foreigners - the Chaldeans. They should be removed to a distant land, and there, in hearing a strange speech, in living long among foreigners, they should learn the lesson which they refused to do when addressed by the prophets in their own land.

Verse 12

To whom he said - To whom God had said; that is, to the Jews. He had taught them the way of rest through the prophets, but they had refused to learn.

This is the rest - That is, this is the true way of happiness, to wit, by keeping the commands of God which had been so often repeated as to become to them objects of satiety and disgust.

This is the refreshing - This is the way in which the mind may be comforted.

Verse 13

But the word of the Lord was unto them - Or, rather, but the word of Yahweh "shall be" unto them. This refers to the mode in which God said He would instruct them in a foreign land. They had complained Isaiah 28:9-10 that his instructions had been like a short lesson constantly repeated, as we instruct children. God here says that it should be as they said it was - they would be carried away to a distant land, and long abide among strangers; they would have ample time there to acquire instruction, and all that they would receive would be lesson after lesson of the same kind - line upon line, one judgment following another, until the lesson of their disobedience had been fully inculcated, and they had been brought to true repentance.

Here a little, and there a little - So they had said Isaiah 28:10 the lessons of God were to them by the prophets. So God says his lessons "shall be" to them by judgment. It shall not come in one sudden and overpowering

burst of indignation, but it shall be, as it were, dealt out to them in small portions that it may not be soon exhausted.

That they might go … - That they may go into captivity, and stumble, and be broken by the judgments of God. God will so deal out the lessons of his judgment and wrath, that as a people they shall be broken up, and made prisoners, and be borne to a distant land.

Verse 14

Wherefore … - This verse commences a direct address to the scoffing and scornful nation, which is continued to the close of Isaiah 28:22. It is addressed particularly to the rulers in Jerusalem, as being the leaders in crime, and as being eminently deserving of the wrath of God.

Ye scornful men - Ye who despise and reproach God and his message; who fancy yourselves to be secure, and mock at the threatened judgments of the Almighty.

Verse 15

We have made a covenant with death - We are not to suppose that they had formally said this, but that their conduct was as if they had said it; they lived as securely as if they had entered into a compact with death not to destroy them, and with hell not to devour them. The figure is a very bold one, and is designed to express the extraordinary stupidity of the nation. It is most strikingly descriptive of the great mass of people. They are as little anxious about death and hell as if they had made a compact with the king of terrors and the prince of darkness not to destroy them. They are as little moved by the appeals of the gospel, by the alarms of God‘s providence, by the preaching of his word, and by all the demonstrations that they are exposed to eternal death, as though they had proved that there was no hell, or had entered into a solemn covenant that they should be unmolested. A figure similar to this occurs in Job 5:23:

For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field;
And the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.

Compare Hosea 2:18.

And with hell - Hebrew, ‹Sheol‘ - the land of shades, or of departed spirits (see the note at Isaiah 5:14). It is nearly synonymous here with death.

When the overflowing scourge shall pass through - There is here, in our translation, a little confusion of metaphor, since we speak usually of an overflowing “stream,” and not of an overflowing “scourge.” The word ‹scourge‘ (שׁיט *shayiṭ*) means usually “a whip, a scourge,” the same as שׁוט

shôṭ and then means any punishment or calamity (see the note at Isaiah 10:26; compare Job 9:23; Job 5:21. Here its means severe judgments or calamities, as overflowing like water, or inundating a people.

We have made lies … - That is, they acted as if they had a safe refuge in falsehood. They sought security in false doctrines, and regarded themselves as safe from all that the prophets had denounced.

Verse 16

Therefore thus saith the Lord - God. This verse is introductory to the solemn threatening which follows. Its design seems to be this. The prophet was about to utter an awful threatening of the judgment of God upon the nation. It might be supposed, perhaps, that the intention was completely to sweep them, and destroy them - that the threatened calamity would remove every vestige of the Jewish people and of the true religion together. To meet this supposition, God says that this should not occur. Zion was founded on a rock. It should be like an edifice that was reared on a firm, well-tried cornerstone - one that could endure all the storms that should beat around it, and be unmoved. The general sentiment of the verse is, therefore, that though a tempest of calamity was about to beat upon the people for their sins; though the temple was to be destroyed, the city laid in ashes, and many of the people slain; yet it was the purpose of God that his empire on earth should not be destroyed. A foundation, a cornerstone was to be laid that would be unshaken and unmoved by all the assaults of the foes of God, and all who were truly resting on that should be safe. The perpetuity of his kingdom, and the safety of his true people, is, therefore, the essential idea in this passage. That it refers to the Messiah, and is designed to show that his kingdom will be perpetual because it is reared on him, we shall see by an examination of the words which occur in the verse.

In Zion - (see the note at Isaiah 1:8). Zion here is put for his empire, kingdom, or church in general on earth. To lay a cornerstone in Zion, means that his kingdom would be founded on a rock, and would be secure amidst all the storms that might beat upon it.

For a foundation a stone - That is, I lay a firm foundation which nothing can move; I build it on a rock so that the storms and tempests of calamity cannot sweep it away (compare Matthew 7:24-25). The Targum renders this, ‹Lo! I appoint in Zion a king, a strong, mighty, and terrible king.‘ That the passage before us has reference to the Messiah there can be no doubt. The writers of the New Testament so understood and applied it.

Thus it is applied by Peter 1 Peter 2:6, ‹Wherefore, also, it is contained in the Scripture, Behold I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded‘ (see the notes at Romans 9:33; compare Romans 10:11; Matthew 21:42; Luke 20:17-18; Luke 2:34; Ephesians 2:20). Such a reference also exactly suits the conection. The stability of the kingdom of God on earth rests on the Messiah. God had determined to send him; and, consequently, amidst all the agitations and revolutions that could take place among his ancient people, this promise was sure, and it was certain that he would come, and that his church would be preserved.

A tried stone - The word which is used here is applied commonly to "metals" which are tried in the fire to test their quality (see Job 23:10; Psalm 66:10; Jeremiah 9:6; Zechariah 13:9). The idea is, that God would lay for a foundation not a stone whose qualities are unknown, and whose stability might be doubtful, but one whose firmness and solidity were so fully known, that the foundation and the superstructure would be secure.

A precious cornerstone - The word ‹precious‘ (Septuagint, and 1 Peter 2:6, ἔμτιμον *entimon*) refers to the fact that the most solid stone would be used to sustain the corner of the edifice. The principal weight of the superstructure rests on the corners, and hence, in building, the largest and firmest blocks are selected and placed there.

He that believeth - He that confides in that; he that believes that that foundation is firm, and that he is secure in trusting in that, shall not make haste. The great doctrine of faith in the Messiah as a ground of security and salvation, on which so much stress is laid in the New Testament, is here distinctly adverted to. The sense is, that confidence in him should keep the mind firm, and preserve him that believes in safety.

Shall not make haste - The Septuagint renders it, Οὐ᾽ μὴ καταισχυνθῇ *Ou mē kataischunthē* - ‹Shall not be ashamed.‘ So Peter, 1 Peter 2:6; and Paul, Romans 9:33. The Hebrew word יחיש *yachiysh* from חוש *chôsh* means properly "to make haste;" and then to urge on; and then to be afraid, to flee. The idea is derived from one who is alarmed, and flees to a place of safety. The specific thought here is that of a man on whose house the tempest beats, and who apprehends that the foundation is insecure, and leaves it to seek a more safe position. The prophet says here, that the foundation on which Zion was reared would be so firm that if a man trusted to that he would have no cause of alarm, however, much the storms should beat

around it. The same idea essentially is conveyed in the version of the Septuagint, and by Paul and Peter, where it is rendered ‹shall not be ashamed,‘ or ‹confounded.‘ That is, he shall have no reason to be ashamed of his confidence in the firm foundation; he shall not flee from it as a man does who puts his trust in that which fails him in the day of trial.

Verse 17

Judgment also will I lay to the line - The sense of this is, I will judge them according to the exact rule of law, as an architect frames everything according to the rule which he uses. In other words, there shall be no mercy intermingled. The line is used by a carpenter for measuring; the plummet consists of a piece of lead attached to a string, and is also used by carpenters to obtain a perpendicular line. A carpenter works exactly according to the lines which are thus indicated, or his frame would not be properly adjusted. So God says that he would judge the people of Jerusalem according to the exact rule, without any intermingling of mercy.

And the hail … - (see the note at Isaiah 28:2). Hail, hailstones, and floods of waters are frequent images of the divine vengeance and wrath Psalm 105:32; Isaiah 22:19; Isaiah 30:30; Ezekiel 13:13; Ezekiel 38:22; Revelation 8:7; Revelation 11:19; Revelation 16:21.

Verse 18

And your covenant with death - (see the note at Isaiah 28:15).

Shall be disannulled - The word rendered ‹shall be disannulled,‘ (וכפר *vekupar* from כפר *kâphar*), properly means “to cover, overlay;” then to pardon, forgive; then to make atonement, to expiate. It has the idea of blotting out, forgiving, and obliterating - because a writing in wax was obliterated or “covered” by passing the “stylus” over it. Hence, also, the idea of abolishing, or rendering nought, which is the idea here. “When the overflowing scourge” (see the note at Isaiah 28:15).

Then ye shall be trodden down by it - There is in this verse a great intermingling of metaphor, not less than three figures being employed to denote the calamity. There is first the scourge, an instrument of punishment; there is then the idea of inundating waters or floods; then there is also the idea of a warrior or an invading army that treads down an enemy. All the images are designed to denote essentially the same thing, that the judgments of God would come upon the land, and that nothing in which they had trusted would constitute a refuge.

Verse 19

From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you - It shall not delay, or be hindered, or put back. As soon as the judgment is sent forth from God it shall come upon you.

For morning by morning - Continually; without intermission. It shall be like floods and tempests that have no intermission; that are repeated every day, and continued every night, until everything is swept before them.

And it shall be a vexation - It shall be an object of alarm, of agitation, of distress - זועה *zevâʿâh* from זוע *zûaʿ* "to move oneself;" to tremble with alarm; to be troubled Ecclesiastes 12:3; Daniel 5:19; Daniel 6:27; Hebrews 2:7. Here it means that the calamity would be so great that it would fill the mind with horror only to hear of it. For similar expressions denoting the effect of hearing a report of the judgments of God, see 1 Samuel 3:11; 2 Kings 21:12; Jeremiah 19:3.

The report - Margin, ‹Doctrine‘ (see the note at Isaiah 28:9).

Verse 20

For the bed is shorter … - This is evidently a proverbial saying, and means that they would find all their places of defense insufficient to secure them. They seek repose and security - as a man lies down to rest at night. But they find neither. His bed furnishes no rest; his scanty covering furnishes no security from the chills of the night. So it would be with those who sought protection in idols, in the promises of false prophets, and in the aid which might be obtained from Egypt. So it is with sinners. Their vain refuges shall not shield them. The bed on which they seek rest shall give them no repose; the covering with which they seek to clothe themselves shall not defend them from the wrath of God.

Verse 21

For the Lord shall rise up - To rise up is indicative of going forth to judgment, as when one rises from his seat to accomplish anything.

As in mount Perazim - There is reference here, doubtless, to the event recorded in 2 Samuel 5:20-21, and 1 Chronicles 14:11, where David is said to have defeated the Philistines at Baal-Perazim. This place was near to the valley of Rephaim 2 Samuel 5:19, and not far from Jerusalem. The word ‹Perazim‘ is from פרץ *pârats* to tear, or break forth, as waters do that have been confined; and is indicative of sudden judgment, and of a complete overthrow. It was on that account given to the place where David obtained a signal and complete victory 2 Samuel 5:20; and it is here referred to, to denote that God would come forth in a sudden manner to destroy Jerusalem

and Judea. He would come upon them like bursting waters, and sweep them away to a distant land.

As in the valley of Gibeon - In 1 Chronicles 14:16, it is said that after the victory of Baal-Perazim, ‹David smote the host of the Philistines from Gibeon even to Gaza.‘ This victory is doubtless referred to here, and not the victory of Joshua over the Gibeonites Joshua 10:10, as Vitringa and others suppose.

That he may do his work, his strange work - This is called his strange work because it would be inflicted on his people. He had destroyed their enemies often, but now he was about to engage in the unusual work of coming forth against his own people, and sweeping them away to a distant land. The work of judgment and punishment may be called the "strange" work of God always, inasmuch as it is not that in which he delights to engage, and is foreign to the benevolence of his heart. It is especially so when his own people are the objects of his displeasure, and when their sins are such as to demand that he should visit them with the tokens of his wrath.

Verse 22

Now therefore - In view of the certain judgment which God will bring upon you.

Be ye not mockers - This was the prevailing sin Isaiah 28:9-14, and on account of this sin in part the judgment of God was about to come upon the guilty nation.

Lest your bands be made strong - Lest your confinement should be more severe and protracted. God would punish them according to their sins, and if they now ceased to mock and deride him it would greatly mitigate the severity of their punishment (compare Isaiah 24:22).

For I have heard … - I, the prophet, have heard Yahweh of hosts threaten a consumption.

A consumption … - (see this phrase explained in the note at Isaiah 10:23)

Upon the whole earth - The whole land of Judea (see the note at Isaiah 24:1).

Verse 23

Give ye ear - In this verse the prophet introduces an important and striking illustration drawn from the science of agriculture. It is connected with the preceding part of the chapter, and is designed to show the propriety

of what the prophet had said by an appeal to what they all observed in the cultivation of their lands. The previous discourse consists mainly of reproofs and of threatenings of punishment on God‘s people for their profane contempt of the messengers of God. He had threatened to destroy their nation, and so remove them for a time to a distant land. This the prophet had himself said Isaiah 28:21 was his ‹strange work.‘ To vindicate this and to show the propriety “of God‘s adopting every measure, and of not always pursuing the same course in regard to his people,” he draws an illustration from the farmer. He is not always doing the same thing. He adopts different methods to secure a harvest.

He adapts his plans to the soil and to the kind of grain; avails himself of the best methods of preparing the ground, sowing the seed, collecting the harvest, and of separating the grain from the chaff. He does not always plow; nor always sow; nor always thresh. He does not deal with all kinds of land and grain in the same way. Some land he plows in one mode, and some in another; and in like manner, some grain he threshes in one mode, and some in another - adapting his measures to the nature of the soil, and of the grain. Some grain he beats out with a flail; some he bruises; but yet he will be careful not to break the kernel, or destroy it in threshing it. However severe may appear to be his blows, yet his object is not to crush and destroy it Isaiah 28:28, but it is to remove it from the chaff, and to save it. In all this he acts the part of wisdom, for God has taught him what to do Isaiah 28:26, Isaiah 28:29. So, says the prophet, God will not deal with all of his people in the same manner, nor with them always in the same mode. He will vary his measures as a farmer does. When mild and gentle measures will do, he will adopt them. When severe measures are necessary, he will resort to them. His object is not to destroy his people, anymore than the object of the farmer in threshing is to destroy his grain. The general dedicate the propriety of God‘s engaging in what the prophet calls his ‹strange act,‘ and ‹strange work,‘ in punishing his people. The allegory is one of great beauty, and its pertinency and keeping are maintained throughout; and it furnishes a most important practical lesson in regard to the mode in which God deals with his people.

Verse 24

Doth the plowman … - The question here asked implies that he does “not” plow all the day. The interrogative form is often the most emphatic

mode of affirmation.

All day - The sense is, does he do nothing else but plow? Is this the only thing which is necessary to be done in order to obtain a harvest? The idea which the prophet intends to convey here is this. A farmer does not suppose that he can obtain a harvest by doing nothing else but plow. There is much else to be done. So it would be just as absurd to suppose that God would deal with his people always in the same manner, as it would be for the farmer to be engaged in nothing else but plowing.

Doth he open … - That is, is he always engaged in opening, and breaking the clods of his field? There is much else to be done besides this. The word ‹open‘ here refers to the furrows that are made by the plow. The earth is laid open as it were to the sunbeams, and to the showers of rain, and to the reception of seed. The word rendered ‹break‘ (יִשְׁדֵּד *yshadēd*) properly means "to harrow," that is, to break up the clods by harrowing Job 39:10; Hosea 10:11.

Verse 25

When he hath made plain … - That is, when he has leveled, or made smooth the surface of the ground by harrowing, or rolling it.

Doth he not scatter abroad - He does not sow one kind of grain merely, but different species according to the nature of the soil, or according to his wishes in regard to a crop.

The fitches - (קֶצַח *qetsach*). Vulgate, Gith; a kind of cockle (Nigella Romana), an herb of sweet savor. Septuagint, Μικρόν μελάνθιον *Mikron melanthion* The word ‹fitch‘ denotes a small species of pea. The Hebrew word, however, which occurs nowhere else but here, probably denotes fennel, or dill, an herb whose seed the ancients mixed with their bread in order to give it a more agreeable relish.

And scatter the cummin - (כַּמֹּן *kammôn*). Vulgate, *Cyminum* - ‹Cummin.‘ Septuagint, Κύμινον *Kuminon* - also ‹Cummin.‘ The word properly denotes an annual plant whose seeds have a bitterish warm taste with an aromatic flavor (Webster). The seeds of this plant were used as a condiment in sauces.

And cast in the principal wheat - Margin, ‹The wheat in the principal place.‘ Vulgate, *Per ordinem* - ‹In its proper order, place, proportion.‘ So Lowth, ‹In due measure.‘ So Aben Ezra and Kimchi render it, ‹By measure;‘ and they suppose it means that if too much wheat be sown on the land, it will grow too thick, and that the spires will crowd and suffocate

each other. Our translators have rendered the word שׂורה *s'ôrâh* ‹principal,‘ as if it were derived from שׂרה *s'ârâh* “to rule,” and seem to have supposed that it denoted wheat that was especially excellent, or distinguished for its good qualities. Gesenius supposes that it means ‹fat wheat,‘ from an Arabic signification of the word. Probably the word is designed to denote “quality,” and to convey the idea that wheat is the principal, or chief grain that is sown; it is that which is most valued and esteemed.

And the appointed barley - The barley is a well-known grain. The word rendered ‹appointed‘ (נסמן *nisemân*), occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. Castellio, Taylor, Grotius, Calvin, our translators, and others, suppose that it is derived from a Hebrew word which does not now occur - סמן *sâman* “to designate, to mark, to seal;” and that it means barley that had been put aside and marked as especially excellent, or seed-barley. In Chaldee, the word סמן *simman* occurs in the sense of “to seal, to mark, to designate” (Chaldee Par. Numbers 17:3; 2 Kings 9:13; Esther 5:1). The Septuagint, translated it κέγχρον *kengchron* and the Vulgate, Aquila, and Theodotion, understand the word as denoting a species of grain, the millet. The idea is probably that expressed by Grotius, and in our version - of barley that had been selected as seed-barley on account of its excellent quality.

And the rye - Margin, ‹Spelt.‘ The word usually denotes “spelt” - a kind of wheat now found in Flanders and Italy, called German wheat. It may, however, denote rye.

In their place - literally, ‹In the border.‘ Septuagint, Ἐν τοῖς ὁρίοις σου *En tois horiois sou* - ‹In thy borders.‘ The idea seems to be that the spelt or rye was sown in the borders of the field while the wheat was sown in the middle; or that the rye was sown in its “proper bounds,” or in the places which were adapted to it, and best suited to promote its growth.

Verse 26

For his God doth instruct him … - Margin, ‹He bindeth it in such sort as his God doth teach him.‘ The more correct idea is conveyed in the text. The word יסרו *yiserô* properly means, he instructs, admonishes, or teaches him. The idea that skill in agriculture is communicated by God is not one that is discordant to reason, or to the general teachings of the Bible. Thus the achitectural and mechanical skill of Bezaleel and Aholiab, by which they were enabled to make the tabernacle, is said expressly to have been imparted to them by God Exodus 31:2-6. Thus also Noah was taught how to

build the ark Genesis 6:14-16. We are not, indeed, to suppose that the farmer is inspired; or that God communicates to him by special revelation where, and when, and how he shall sow his grain, but the sense is, that God is the author of all his skill. He has endowed him with understanding, and taught him by his providence. It is by the study of what God teaches in the seasons, in the soil, in the results of experience and observation, that he has this art. He teaches him also by the example, the counsel, and even by the failures of others; and all the knowledge of agriculture that he has is to be traced up to God.

Verse 27

For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument - The word used here (חרוץ *chârûts*) denotes properly that which is pointed or sharp, and is joined with מורג *môrag* in Isaiah 41:15 - meaning there the threshing dray or sledge; a plank with iron or sharp stones that was drawn by oxen over the grain (compare 2 Samuel 24:22; 1 Chronicles 21:23). In the passage before us, several methods of threshing are mentioned as adapted to different kinds of grain, all of which are at the present time common in the East. Those which are mentioned under the name of the ‹threshing instrument,‘ and ‹a cart wheel,‘ refer to instruments which are still in use in the East. Niebuhr, in his “Travels in Arabia,” says, (p. 299,) ‹In threshing their grain, the Arabians lay the sheaves down in a certain order, and then lead over them two oxen dragging a large stone.‘ ‹They use oxen, as the ancients did, to beat out their grain, by trampling on the sheaves, and dragging after them a clumsy machine.

This machine is not a stone cylinder; nor a plank with sharp stones, as in Syria; but a sort of sledge consisting of three rollers, fitted with irons, which turn upon axles. A farmer chooses out a level spot in his fields, and has his grain carried thither in sheaves, upon donkeys or dromedaries. Two oxen are then yoked in a sledge; a driver then gets upon it, and drives them backward and forward upon the sheaves; and fresh oxen succeed in the yoke from time to time. By this operation the chaff is very much cut down; it is then winnowed, and the grain thus separated.‘ ‹This machine,‘ Niebuhr adds, ‹is called Nauridj. It bas three rollers which turn on three axles; and each of them is furnished with some irons which are round and flat. Two oxen were made to draw over the grain again and again the sledge above mentioned, and this was done with the greatest convenience to the driver; for he was seated in a chair fixed on a sledge.‘ See the illustration in the

book to get an idea of this mode of threshing, and of the instruments that were employed.

Neither is a cart wheel - This instrument of threshing is described by Boehart (Hieraz. i. 2. 32. 311), as consisting of a cart or wagon fitted with wheels adapted to crush or thresh the grain. This, he says, was used by the Carthagenians who came from the vicinity of Canaan. It appears to have been made with serrated wheels, perhaps almost in the form of circular saws, by which the straw was cut fine at the same time that the grain was separated from the chaff.

But the fitches are beaten out with a staff - With a stick, or flail. That is, pulse in general, beans, pease, dill, cummin, etc., are easily beaten out with a stick or flail. This mode of threshing is common everywhere. It was also practiced, as with us, in regard to barley and other grain, where there was a small quantity, or where there was need of special haste (see Rth 2:17 ; Judges 6:11).

Verse 28

Bread corn - Hebrew, לחם *lechem* - ‹Bread.‘ But the word evidently denotes the material from which bread is made. The word is used in the same sense in Isaiah 30:23.

Is bruised - That is, is more severely bruised than the dill and the cummin; it is pressed and crushed by passing over it the sledge, or the wain with serrated wheels. The word דקק *dâqaq* means often to break in pieces; to make small or fine. It is, however, applied to threshing, as consisting in beating, or crushing (Isaiah 41:15: ‹Thou threshest the mountains, and beatest them small‘ - ותדק *vetâdoq* Because he will not ever be threshing it - The word rendered ‹because‘ (כי *kîy*) evidently here means “although” or “but”; and the sense is, that he will not always continue to thresh it; this is not his only business. It is only a part of his method by which he obtains grain for his bread. It would be needless and injurious to be always engaged in rolling the stone or the sledge over the grain. So God takes various methods with his people. He does not always pursue the same course. He sometimes smites and punishes them, as the farmer beats his grain. But he does not always do it. He is not engaged in this method alone; nor does he pursue this constantly. It would crush and destroy them. “He, therefore, smites them just enough to secure, in the best manner, and to the fullest extent, their obedience; just as the farmer bruises his sheaves enough to separate all the grain from the chaff.” When this is done, he pursues other

methods. Hence the various severe and heavy trials with which the people of God are afflicted.

Nor bruise it with his horsemen - Lowth renders this, ‹With the hoofs of his cattle;‘ proposing to read פרסין instead of פרשיו *pârâshâyv* by a change of a single Hebrew letter ס (*s*), instead of the Hebrew letter שׁ (*sh*). So the Syriac and the Vulgate; and so Symmachus and Theodotion. But the word פרשׁ *pârâsh* may denote not only a "horsesman," but the "horse" itself on which one rides (see Bochart, Hieroz. i. 2,6. p. 98. Compare the note at Habakkuk 1:8; 2 Samuel 1:6; Isaiah 21:7, Isaiah 21:9). That horses were used in treading out grain there can be no doubt. They are extensively used in this country; and though in Palestine it is probable that oxen were chiefly employed Deuteronomy 25:4 in the early times, yet there is no improbability in supposing that in the times subsequent to Solomon, when horses abounded, they were preferred. Their more rapid motion, and perhaps the hardness of their hoofs, makes them more valuable for this service (see Michaelis‘ "Commentary on the Laws of Moses," vol. ii. App. pp. 430-514, Lond. Ed. 1814). There are here, therefore, four modes of threshing mentioned, all of which are common still in the East.

1. The sledge with rollers, on which were pieces of iron, or stone, and which was dragged over the grain.

2. The cart or wain, with serrated wheels, and which was also drawn over the grain.

3. The flail, or the stick.

4. The use of cattle and horses.

Verse 29

This also cometh … - That is, these various devices for threshing his grain comes from the Lord no less than the skill with which he tills his land. (see Isaiah 28:26).

And excellent in working - Or rather, who magnifies (חגדיל *chigdiyl*) his wisdom (תושיה *tûshîyâh*). This word properly means wisdom, or understanding Job 11:6; Job 12:16; Job 26:3; Proverbs 3:21; Proverbs 8:14; Proverbs 18:1. The idea of the prophet is, that God, who had so wisely taught the farmer, and who had instructed him to use such various methods in his husbandry, would also be himself wise, and would pursue similar

methods with his people. He would not always pursue the same unvarying course, but would vary his dispensations as they should need, and as would best secure their holiness and happiness. We see:

1. The reason of afflictions. It is for the same cause which induces the farmer to employ various methods on his farm.

2. We are not to expect the same unvarying course in God‘s dealings with us. It would be as unreasonable as to expect that the farmer would be always plowing, or always threshing.

3. We are not to expect always the same kind of afflictions. The farmer uses different machines and modes of threshing, and adapts them to the nature of the grain. So God uses different modes, and adapts them to the nature, character, and disposition of his people. One man requires one mode of discipline, and another another. At one time we need one mode of correction to call us from sin and temptation; at another another. We may lay it down as a general rule, that “the divine judgments are usually in the line of our offences;” and by the nature of the judgment we may usually ascertain the nature of the sin. If a man‘s besetting sin is “pride,” the judgment will usually be something that is suited to humble his pride; if it be covetousness, his property may be removed, or it may be made a curse; if it be undue attachment to children or friends, they may be removed.

4. God will not crush or destroy his people. The farmer does not crush or destroy his grain. In all the various methods which he uses, he takes care not to pursue it too far, and not to injure the grain. So with God‘s dealings with his people. His object is not to destroy them, but it is to separate the chaff from the wheat; and he will afflict them only so much as may be necessary to accomplish this. He will not be always bruising his people, but will in due time remit his strokes - just as the thresher does.

5. We should, therefore, bear afflictions and chastisements with patience. God deals with us in mercy - and the design of all his dispensations toward us in prosperity and adversity; in sickness and in health; in success and in disappointment, is to produce the richest and most abundant fruits of righteousness, and to prepare us to enter into his kingdom above.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 29

Introduction

This chapter relates solely to Jerusalem - here called Ariel (see the note at Isaiah 29:1). It is not immediately connected with the preceding or the following chapters, though it is not improbable they were delivered about the same time. At what time this was delivered is not known, though it is evident that it was before the invasion by Sennacherib, and probably before the time of Hezekiah. The prophecy in the chapter consists of two parts: (I) The invasion of Judea by Sennacherib, and its sudden deliverance Isaiah 29:1-8. (II) A reproof of the Jews for their infidelity and impiety.

I. The invasion of Judea, and the distress that would be brought upon Jerusalem, and its sudden deliverance Isaiah 29:1-8.

1. Ariel would be filled with grief and distress Isaiah 29:1-2.

2. Yahweh would encamp against it and besiege it, and it would be greatly straitened and humbled Isaiah 29:3-4.

3. Yet the besieging army would be visited with sudden calamity and destruction - represented here by thunder, and tempest, and flame Isaiah 29:5-6.

4. The enemy would vanish as a dream, and all his hopes would be disappointed, as the hopes of a hungry and thirsty man are disappointed who dreams of having satisfied his hunger and thirst Isaiah 29:7-8.

There can be no doubt, I think, that this portion of the prophecy refers to the sudden and dreadful overthrow of Sennacherib; and the design of this portion of the prophecy is to give the assurance, that though Jerusalem would be in imminent danger, yet it would be suddenly delivered.

II. The second part consists of reproofs of the inhabitants of Jerusalem for their infidelity and impiety.

1. They were full of error, and all classes of people were wandering from God - reeling under error like a drunken man Isaiah 29:9.

2. A spirit of blindness and stupidity everywhere prevailed among the people Isaiah 29:10-12.

3. Formality and external regard for the institutions of religion prevailed, but without its life and power Isaiah 29:13.

4. They attempted to lay deep and skillful plans to hide their wickedness from Yahweh Isaiah 29:15.

5. They were unjust in their judgments, making a man an offender for a word, and perverting just judgment Isaiah 29:21.

6. For all this they should be punished.
(a) The wisdom of their wise men should fail Isaiah 29:14.
(b) The scorner would be consumed Isaiah 29:20.
7. There would be an overturning, and the people would be made acquainted with the law of God, and the truly pious would be comforted Isaiah 29:16-19. Those who had erred would be reformed, and would come to the true knowledge of God Isaiah 29:22-24.

Verse 1

Wo - (compare the note at Isaiah 18:1).

To Ariel - There can be no doubt that Jerusalem is here intended. The declaration that it was the city where David dwelt, as well as the entire scope of the prophecy, proves this. But still, it is not quiet clear why the city is here called "Ariel." The margin reads, ‹O Ariel, that is, the lion of God.‘ The word (אריאל *'ărîy'ēl*) is compounded of two words, and is usually supposed to be made up of ארי *'ărîy* "a lion," and אל *'ēl* God; and if this interpretation is correct, it is equivalent to a strong, mighty, fierce lion - where the word ‹God‘ is used to denote greatness in the same way as the lofty cedars of Lebanon are called cedars of God; that is, lofty cedars. The "lion" is an emblem of strength, and a strong lion is an emblem of a mighty warrior or hero. 2 Samuel 23:20: ‹He slew two "lion-like" אריאל *'ărîy'êl* men of Moab‘ 1 Chronicles 11:22. This use of the word to denote a hero is common in Arabic (see Bachart, "Hieroz.," i. 3. 1).

If this be the sense in which it is used here, then it is applied to Jerusalem under the image of a hero, and particularly as the place which was distinguished under David as the capital of a kingdom that was so celebrated for its triumphs in war. The word ‹Ariel‘ is, however, used in another sense in the Scriptures, to denote an "altar" Ezekiel 43:15-16, where in the Hebrew the word is "Ariel." This name is given to the altar, Bachart supposes ("Hieroz.," i. 3. 1), because the altar of burnt-offering "devours" as it were the sacrifices as a lion devours its prey. Gesenius,

however, has suggested another reason why the word is given to the altar, since he says that the word ארי *'ărîy* is the same as one used in Arabic to denote a fire-hearth, and that the altar was so called because it was the place of perpetual burnt-offering. The name "Ariel," is, doubtless, given in Ezekiel to an altar; and it may be given here to Jerusalem because it was the place of the altar, or of the public worship of God. The Chaldee renders it, ‹Wo to the altar, the altar which was constructed in the city where David dwelt.' It seems to me that this view better suits the connection, and particularly Isaiah 29:2 (see Note), than to suppose that the name is given to Jerusalem because it was like a lion. If this be the true interpretation, then it is so called because Jerusalem was the place of the burnt-offering, or of the public worship of God; the place where the fire, as on a hearth, continually burned on the altar.

The city where David dwelt - David took the hill of Zion from the Jebusites, and made it the capital of his kingdom 2 Samuel 5:6-9. Lowth renders this, ‹The city which David besieged.' So the Septuagint: Ἐπολέμησε *Epolemēse* and so the Vulgate, *Expugnavit*. The word חנה *châhâh* properly means "to encamp, to pitch one's tent" Genesis 26:17, "to station oneself." It is also used in the sense of encamping "against" anyone, that is, to make war upon or to attack (see Isaiah 29:3, and Psalm 27:3; 2 Samuel 12:28); and Jerome and others have supposed that it has this meaning here in accordance with the interpretation of the Septuagint and the Vulgate. But the more correct idea is probably that in our translation, that David pitched his tent there; that is, that he made it his dwelling-place.

Add ye year to year - That is, ‹go on year after year, suffer one year to glide on after another in the course which you are pursuing.' This seems to be used ironically, and to denote that they were going on one year after another in the observance of the feasts; walking the round of external ceremonies as if the fact that David had dwelt there, and that that was the place of the great altar of worship, constituted perfect security. One of the sins charged on them in this chapter was "formality" and "heartlessness" in their devotions Isaiah 29:13, and this seems to be referred to here.

Let them kill sacrifices - Margin, ‹Cut off the heads.' The word here rendered ‹kill' (נקף *nâqaph*) may mean to smite; to hew; to cut down Isaiah 10:34; Job 19:26. But it has also another signification which better accords with this place. It denotes to make a circle, to revolve; to go round a place Joshua 6:3, Joshua 6:11; to surround 1 Kings 7:24; 2 Kings 6:14; Psalm

17:9; Psalm 22:17; Psalm 88:18. The word rendered ‹sacrifices‘ (חגים *chagiym*) may mean a sacrifice Exodus 23:18; Psalm 118:27; Malachi 2:3, but it more commonly and properly denotes feasts or festivals Exodus 10:9; Exodus 12:14; Leviticus 23:39; Deuteronomy 16:10, Deuteronomy 16:16; 1 Kings 8:2, 1 Kings 8:65; 2 Chronicles 7:8-9; Nehemiah 8:14; Hosea 2:11, Hosea 2:13. Here the sense is, ‹let the festivals go round;‘ that is, let them revolve as it were in a perpetual, unmeaning circle, until the judgments due to such heartless service shall come upon you. The whole address is evidently ironical, and designed to denote that all their service was an unvarying repetition of heartless forms.

Verse 2

Yet I will distress Ariel - The reference here is doubtless to the siege which God says Isaiah 29:3 he would bring upon the guilty and formal city.

And there shall be heaviness and sorrow - This was true of the city in the siege of Sennacherib, to which this probably refers. Though the city was delivered in a sudden and remarkable manner (see the note at Isaiah 29:7-8), yet it was also true that it was reduced to great distress (see Isaiah 29:1 Jerusalem is called ‹Ariel,‘ because it contained the great altar, and was the place of sacrifice. The word "Ariel" here is to be understood in the sense "of the hearth of the great altar;" and the meaning is, ‹I will indeed make Jerusalem like the great altar; I will make it the burning place of wrath where my enemies shall be consumed as if they were on the altar of burnt sacrifice.‘ Thus in Isaiah 30:9, it is said of Yahweh that his ‹fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.‘ This is a strong expression, denoting the calamity that was approaching; and though the main reference in this whole passage is to the distress that would come upon them in the invasion of Sennacherib, yet there is no impropriety in supposing that there was presented to the mind of the prophet in vision the image of the total ruin that would come yet upon the city by the Chaldeans - when the temple, the palaces, and the dwellings of the magnificent city of David would be in flames, and like a vast blazing altar consuming that which was laid upon it.

Verse 3

And I will camp against thee - That is, I will cause an army to pitch their tents there for a siege. God regards the armies which he would employ as under his control, and speaks of them as if he would do it himself (see the note at Isaiah 10:5).

Round about - (כדור *kadûr*). As in a circle; that is, he would encompass or encircle the city. The word used here דור *dûr* in Isaiah 22:18, means a ball, but here it evidently means a circle; and the sense is, that the army of the besiegers would encompass the city. A similar form of expression occurs in regard to Jerusalem in Luke 19:43: ‹For the days shall come upon thee, than thine enemies shall cast a trench (χάρακα *charaka* - "a rampart," a "mound") about thee σοί *soi* "against thee"), and "compass thee round" περικυκλώτονσί σε *perikuklōsousi se* "encircle thee").‘ So also Luke 21:20. The Septuagint renders this, ‹I will encompass thee as David did;‘ evidently reading it as if it were כדוד *kadûd* and Lowth observes that two manuscripts thus read it, and he himself adopts it. But the authority for correcting the Hebrew text in this way is not sufficient, nor is it necessary. The idea in the present reading is a clear one, and evidently means that the armies of Sennacherib would encompass the city.

With a mount - A rampart; a fortification. Or, rather, perhaps, the word מצב *mutsâb* means a post, a military station, from יצב *yâtsab* "to place, to station." The word in this form occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures, but the word מצב *matsâb* occurs in 1 Samuel 13:23; 1 Samuel 14:1, 1 Samuel 14:4; 2 Samuel 23:14, in the sense of a military post, or garrison.

I will rise forts - That is, ramparts, such as were usually thrown up against a besieged city, meaning that it should be subjected to the regular process of a siege. The Septuagint reads, Πύργου *Purgou* ‹Towers;‘ and so also two manuscripts by changing the Hebrew letter ד (*d*) into the Hebrew letter ר (*r*). But there is no necessity for altering the Hebrew text. Lowth prefers the reading of the Septuagint.

Verse 4

And shalt speak out of the ground - (see the note at Isaiah 8:19). The sense here is, that Jerusalem, that had been accustomed to pride itself on its strength I would be greatly humbled and subdued. Its loud and lofty tone would be changed. It would use the suppressed language of fear and alarm as if it spoke from the dust, or in a shrill small voice, like the pretended conversers with the dead.

And thy speech shall whisper out of the dust - Margin, ‹Peep,‘ or ‹Chirp,‘ (see the note at Isaiah 8:19).

Verse 5

Moreover - These verses Isaiah 29:5, Isaiah 29:7-8 contain a beautiful description of the destruction of the army of Sennacherib. Though they had

laid the plan of a regular siege; though the city, in itself, would not be able to hold out against them, and all was alarm and conscious imbecility within; yet in an instant the siege would be raised, and the advancing hosts of the Assyrians would all be gone.

The multitude of thy strangers - The multitude of the strangers that shall besiege thee; called ‹thy strangers,‘ because they besieged, or oppressed thee. The word ‹strangers‘ here, as elsewhere, means "foreigners" (see the note at Isaiah 1:7; compare Isaiah 2:6; Isaiah 5:17; Isaiah 14:1; Isaiah 25:2, Isaiah 25:5; Isaiah 29:5; Isaiah 60:10).

Shall be like small dust - Light, fine dust that is easily dissipated by the wind.

Of the terrible ones - Of the invading, besieging army, that is so much the object of dread.

As chaff that passeth away - (see the note at Isaiah 17:13). This image of chaff driven before the wind, to denote the sudden and entire discomfiture of enemies, is common in the Scriptures (see Job 21:18; Psalm 1:4; Psalm 35:5; Hosea 13:13).

Yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly - The forces of Sennacherib were destroyed in a single night by the angel of the Lord (Isaiah 37:36; the note at Isaiah 10:12, Isaiah 10:28-34, note), and the siege of Jerusalem was of course immediately raised.

Verse 6

Thou shalt be visited - This is an address to the mighty army of the Assyrian. Such transitions are not uncommon in the writings of Isaiah. His eye seems to have been directed in vision to the hosts of Sennacherib, and to their sudden dispersion and destruction Isaiah 29:5, and by a sudden, but not unnatural transition, he turns and addresses the army itself, with the assurance that it should be punished (compare Isaiah 30:30).

With thunder … - The army of the Assyrian was cut off by an angel sent forth from God Isaiah 37:36. It is "possible" that all the agents here referred to may have been employed in the destruction of the Assyrian host, though they are not particularly specified in the history. But it is not absolutely. necessary to understand this verse in this manner. The image of thunder, earthquakes, and lightning, is an impressive representation of sudden and awful judgment in any manner. The sense is, that they should be suddenly destroyed by the direct visitation of God (see Isaiah 9:5; Isaiah 26:11).

And the flame of devouring fire - Lightning, that seems to "devour," or that suddenly consumes.

Verse 7

And the multitude of all the nations - The Assyrians, and their allied hosts.

And her munition - Her fortresses, castles, places of strength 2 Samuel 5:7; Ecclesiastes 9:14; Ezekiel 19:9.

Shall be as a dream of a night vision - In a dream we seem to see the objects of which we think as really as when awake, and hence, they are called visions, and visions of the night Genesis 46:2; Job 4:13; Job 7:14; Daniel 2:28; Daniel 4:5; Daniel 7:1, Daniel 7:7, Daniel 7:13, Daniel 7:15. The specific idea here is not that of the "suddenness" with which objects seen in a dream appear and then vanish, but it is that which occurs in Isaiah 29:8, of one who dreams of eating and drinking, but who awakes, and is hungry and thirsty still. So it was with the Assyrian. He had set his heart on the wealth of Jerusalem. He had earnestly desired to possess that city - as a hungry man desires to satisfy the cravings of his appetite. But it would be like the vision of the night; and on that fatal morning on which he should awake from his fond dream Isaiah 37:36, he would find all his hopes dissipated, and the longcherished desire of his soul unsatisfied still.

Verse 8

It shall even be … - This is a most striking figure representing the earnest desire of the Assyrian to possess the city of Jerusalem, and his utter disappointment. The comparison is elegant and beautiful in the highest degree. It is performed up to great perfection; and is perfectly suited to illustrate the object in view. The same image substantially is found in the classic writers; and this, says Lowth, may, for beauty and ingenuity, fairly come in competition with one of the most elegant of Virgil (greatly improved from Homer, "Iliad" xxii. 119), where he has applied to a different purpose, but not so happily, the same image of the ineffectual workings of the imagination in a dream:

Ac veluti in somnis oculos ubi languida pressit
Nocte quies, nequicquam avidos extendere cursus
Velle videmur, et in mediis conatibus aegri

Succidimus; non lingua valet, non corpore notae

Sufficiunt vires; nec, vox, nec verba scquuniur.
AEniad xii. 908.
And as when slumber seals the closing sight,
The sick wild fancy labors in the night,

Some dreadful visionary foe we shun,

With airy strides, but strive in vain to run;

In vain our baffled limbs their powers essay,

We faint, we struggle, sink, and fall away;

Drained of our strength we neither fight nor fly,

And on the tongue the struggling accents die.
Pitt.

See also Lucretius (iv. 10-19), who also expresses the same image as Isaiah. As the simile of the prophet is drawn from nature, an extract which describes the actual occurrence of such a circumstance will be agreeable. ‹The scarcity of water,‘ says Park, ‹was greater here at Bubaker than at Benown. Day and night the wells were crowded with cattle lowing, and fighting with each other to come at the trough. Excessive thirst made many of them furious; others being too weak to contend for the water, endeavored to quench their thirst by devouring the black mud from the gutters near the wells; which they did with great avidity, though it was commonly fatal to them. This great scarcity of water was felt by all the people of the camp; and by none more than myself. I begged water from the negro slaves that attended the camp, but with very indifferent success, for though I let no opportunity slip, and was very urgent in my solicitations both to the Moors and to the negroes, I was but ill supplied, and frequently passed the night in the situation of Tantalus. No sooner had I shut my eyes, than fancy would convey me to the streams and rivera of my native land; there, as I wandered along the verdant bank, I surveyed the clear stream with transport, and hastened to swallow the delightful draught; but alas! disappointment awakened me, and I found myself a lonely captive, perishing of thirst amid the wilds of Africa.‘ (“Travels in Africa”).

Verse 9

Stay yourselves - Thus far the prophet had given a description of the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib, and of his sudden overthrow. He now turns to the Jews, and reproves their stupidity, formality, and hypocrisy; and the remainder of the chapter is occupied with a statement of the prevalence of these sins, of the judgments that must follow, and of the fact that there should yet be an extensive reformation, and turning to the Lord. The word rendered ‹stay yourselves‘ (התמהמהו *hîtemahemehû*) means properly "to linger," tarry, delay Genesis 19:16; Genesis 43:10; 2 Samuel 15:28. Here it seems to denote that state of mind in which anyone is "fixed in astonishment;" in which one stops, and stares at some strange and unexpected occurrence. The object of amazement which the prophet supposes would excite astonishment, was the stupidity, dulness, and hypocrisy of a people who had been so signally favored (compare Habakkuk 1:5).

Cry ye out, and cry - There is in the original here a paronomasia which cannot be conveyed in a translation. The word which is used (השתעשעו *hîsheta'ashe'û*) is one form of the verb שעע *shâ'a'* which means, usually, to make smooth, rub, spread over; hence, in the Hithpael form which is used here, to be spread over; and hence, is applied to the eyes Isaiah 6:10, to denote blindness, as if they were overspread with something by reason of which they could not see. Here it probably means, ‹be ye dazzled and blinded,‘ that is, ye be astonished, as in the former part of the verse. The idea seems to be that of some object of sudden astonishment that dims the sights and takes away all the powers of vision. The word is used in the same sense in Isaiah 32:3; compare Isaiah 35:5; Isaiah 42:19. Probably the idea here would be well expressed by our word "stare," ‹stare and look with a stupid surprise;‘ denoting the attitude and condition of a man who is amazed at some remarkable and unlooked for spectacle.

They are drunken, but not with wine - The people of Jerusalem. They reel and stagger, but the cause is not that they are drunken with wine. It is a moral and spiritual intoxication and reeling. They err in their doctrines and practice; and it is with them as it is with a drunken man that sees nothing clearly or correctly, and cannot walk steadily. They have perverted all doctrines; they err in their views of God and his truth, and they are irregular and corrupt in their conduct.

Verse 10

For the Lord hath poured out upon you - The word rendered ‹hath poured out‘ (נסך *nâsak*) is usually referred to the act of pouring out a libation, or drink-offering in worship Exodus 30:9; Hosea 9:4; Isaiah 30:1. Here it means that Yahweh had, as it were, “drenched them” (Septuagint, πεπότικε *pepotike*) with a spirit of stupefaction. This is traced to God in accordance with the usual custom in the Bible, by which his providential agency is recognized in all events (see the notes at Isaiah 6:9-10). Compare the notes at Romans 11:8), where this passage is quoted from the Septuagint, and is applied to the Jews in the time of the apostle Paul.

The spirit of deep, sleep - The word rendered ‹deep sleep,‘ is the same as is used in Genesis 2:21, to denote the sleep that God brought on Adam; and in Genesis 15:12, to denote the deep sleep that fell on Abraham, and when a horror of great darkness fell upon him; and in 1 Samuel 26:12, to denote the deep sleep that came upon Saul when David approached and took away the spear and the cruise of water from his bolster. Here it means spiritual sluggishness, inactivity, stupidity, that prevailed everywhere among the people in regard to the things of religion.

The seers - Those that see visions, another name for the prophets (see the note at Isaiah 1:1).

Hath he covered - That is, he has covered their eyes; or they are all blind.

Verse 11

And the vision of all - The vision of all the prophets; that is, all the revelations which God has made to you (see the note at Isaiah 1:1). The prophet refers not only to his own communications, but to those of his contemporaries, and of all who had gone before him. The sense is, that although they had the communications which God had made to them, yet they did not understand them. They were as ignorant of their true nature as a man who can read is of the contents of a letter that is sealed up, or as a man who cannot read is of the contents of a book that is handed to him.

As the words of a book - Margin, ‹Letter.‘ The word ספר *sêpher* may mean either. It properly means anything which is “written” (Deuteronomy 24:1, Deuteronomy 24:3; Jeremiah 32:11; Daniel 1:4), but is commonly applied to a book Exodus 17:14; Joshua 1:8; Joshua 8:34; Psalm 40:8.

That is sealed - (see the note at Isaiah 8:16).

Verse 12

And the book is delivered … - That is, they are just as ignorant of the true nature and meaning of the revelations of God as a man is of the contents of a book who is utterly unable to read.

Verse 13

Wherefore the Lord said - This verse, with the following, is designed to denounce the divine judgment on their formality of worship. They kept up the forms of religion, but they witcheld the affections of their hearts from God; and he, therefore, says that he will proceed to inflict on them exemplary and deserved punishment.

This people draw near me - That is, in the temple, and in the forms of external devotion.

And with their lips do honor me - They professedly celebrate my praise, and acknowledge me in the forms of devotion.

But have removed their heart - Have witcheld the affections of their hearts.

And their fear toward me - The worship of God is often represented as "fear" Job 28:28; Psalm 19:9; Psalm 34:11; Proverbs 1:7.

Is taught by the precept of men - That is, their views, instead of having been derived from the Scriptures, were drawn from the doctrines of mankind. Our Saviour referred to this passage, and applied it to the hypocrites of his own time Matthew 15:8-9. The latter part of it is, however, not quoted literally from the Hebrew, nor from the Septuagint, but retains the sense: ‹But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.' He quoted it as strikingly descriptive of the people when he lived, not as saying that Isaiah referred directly to his times.

Verse 14

I will proceed to do - Hebrew, ‹I will add to do;' that is, I will do it.

For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish - I will bring calamity upon them which shall baffle all the skill and wisdom of their wise men.

Shall be hid - That is, shall not appear; shall vanish. It shall not be sufficient to prevent the calamities that shall come upon the nation.

Verse 15

Woe unto them that seek deep … - That is, who attempt to conceal their "real" intentions under a plausible exterior, and correct outward deportment. This is most strikingly descriptive of the character of a hypocrite who seeks to conceal his plans and his purposes from the eyes of people and of God. His external conduct is fair; his observance of the duties

of religion exemplary; his attendance on the means of grace and the worship of God regular; his professions loud and constant, but the whole design is to "conceal" his real sentiments, and to accomplish some sinister and wicked purpose by it.

From the Lord - This proves that the design of the hypocrite is not always to attempt to deceive his fellowmen, but that he also aims to deceive God.

Verse 16

Surely your turning of things upside down - Your perversion of all things. They had no just views of truth. They deemed mere formality to be all that was required. They attempted to conceal their plans even from Yahweh; and everything in the opinions and practice of the nation had become perverted and erroneous. There has been much diversity in rendering this phrase. Luther renders it, ‹O how perverse ye are.‘ Lowth renders it,

‹Perverse as ye are! shall the potter be esteemed as the clay?‘

Rosenmuller also accords with this interpretation, and renders it, ‹O your perversity,‘ etc. The sense of the passage seems to be this: ‹Your "changing of things" is just as absurd as it would be for the thing formed to say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? It is as absurd for you to find fault with the government of God as it would be for the clay to complain of want of skill in the potter. You complain of God‘s laws, and worship Him according to the commandments of people. You complain of his requirements, and offer to him the service of the mouth and the lip, and witchold the heart. You suppose that God does not see you, and do your deeds in darkness. All this supposes that God is destitute of wisdom, and cannot see what is done, and it is just as absurd as it would be in the clay to complain that the potter who fashions it has no understanding.‘

Shall be esteemed … - The "literal" translation of this passage would be, ‹Your perverseness is as if the potter should be esteemed as the clay;‘ that is, as if he was no more qualified to form anything than the clay itself.

For shall the work … - This passage is quoted by the apostle Paul Romans 9:20-21 to show the right which God has to do with his creatures as shall seem good in his sight, and the impropriety of complaining of his distinguishing mercy in choosing to life those whom he pleases. The sense of the passage is, that it would be absurd for that which is made to complain of the maker as having no intelligence, and no right to make it as he does. It

would be absurd in the piece of pottery to complain of the potter as if he had no skill; and it is equally absurd in a man to complain of God, or to regard him as destitute of wisdom.

Verse 17

Is it not yet a very little while - The idea here is, ‹you have greatly perverted things in Jerusalem. The time is at hand when there shall be "other" overturnings - when the wicked shall be cut off, and when there shall be poured out upon the nation such judgments that the deaf shall hear, and the blind see, and when those who have erred in spirit shall come to understanding' Isaiah 29:18-24.

And Lebanon shall be tutored into a fruitful field - This is evidently a proverbial expression, denoting any great revolution of things. It is probable that in the times of Isaiah the whole chain of Lebanon was uncultivated, as the word is evidently used here in opposition to a fruitful field (see the note at Isaiah 2:13). The word which is rendered ‹fruitful field' (כרמל *karmel*) properly denotes "a fruitful field," or a finely cultivated country (see Isaiah 10:18). It is also applied to a celebrated mountain or promontory on the Mediterranean Sea, on the southern boundary of the tribe of Asher. It runs northwest of the plain of Esdraelon, and ends in a promontory or cape, and forms the bay of Acco. The mountain or promontory is about 1500 feet high; and abounds in caves or grottoes, and was celebrated as being the residence of the prophets Elijah and Elisha (see 1 Kings 18:19, 1 Kings 18:42; 2 Kings 2:25; 2 Kings 4:25; 2 Kings 19:23; compare the note at Isaiah 35:2). More than a thousand caves are said to exist on the west side of the mountain, which it is said were formerly inhabited by monks. But the word here is to be taken, doubtless, as it is in our translation, as denoting a well-cultivated country. Lebanon, that is now barren and uncultivated, shall soon become a fertile and productive field. That is, there shall be changes among the Jews that shall be as great as if Lebanon should become an extensively cultivated region, abounding in fruits, and vines, and harvests. The idea is this: ‹The nation is now perverse, sinful, formal, and hypocritical. But the time of change shall come. The wicked shall be reformed; the number of the pious shall be increased; and the pure worship of God shall succeed this general formality and hypocrisy. The prophet does not say when this would be. He simply affirms that it would be before "a great while" - and it may, perhaps, be referred to the times succeeding the captivity (compare Isaiah 32:15; Isaiah 35:1-10; Isaiah 1:6).

And the fruitful field be esteemed as a forest - That is, there shall be great changes in the nation, as if a well-cultivated field should be allowed to lie waste, and grow up into a forest. Perhaps it means that that which was then apparently flourishing would be overthrown, and the land lie waste. Those who were apparently in prosperity, would be humbled and punished. The effect of this revolution is stated in the following verses.

Verse 18

Shall the deaf hear the words of the book - They who now have the law and do not understand it, the people who seem to be deaf to all that God says, shall hear and understand it.

Shall see out of obscurity … - That is, the darkness being removed, they shall see clearly the truth of God, and discern and love its beauty. Their eyes are now blinded, but then they shall see clearly.

Verse 19

The meek - The word ‹meek‘ usually refers to those who are patient in the reception of injuries, but the Hebrew word used here (ענוים *ʿănâviym*) means properly the oppressed, the afflicted, the unhappy Psalm 9:13; Psalm 10:12, Psalm 10:17; Proverbs 3:34; Isaiah 11:4. It involves usually the idea of humility or "virtuous suffering" (compare Psalm 25:9; Psalm 37:11; Psalm 69:33). Here it may denote the pious of the land who were oppressed, and subjected to trials.

Shall increase - Margin, as in Hebrew, ‹Add.‘ It means, that they should greatly rejoice in the Lord. They should see the evidence of the fulfillment of his predictions; they should see the oppressors punished Isaiah 29:20-21, and Yahweh coming forth to be their protector and defender Isaiah 29:22-24.

And the poor among men - The poor people; or the needy. Doubtless the idea is that of the pious poor; those who feared God, and who had been subjected to the trials of oppression and poverty.

Verse 20

For the terrible one - The violent one (עריץ *ʿârîyts*), the oppressor, who had exercised cruelty over them. This, I suppose, refers to the haughty among the Jews themselves; to those who held offices of power, and who abused them to oppress the poor and needy.

And the scorner - (see Isaiah 28:14, Isaiah 28:22).

Is consumed - Shall be entirely destroyed.

And all that watch for iniquity - That is, who anxiously seek for opportunities to commit iniquity.

Verse 21

That make a man an offender - literally, ‹who cause a man to sin‘ (מחטיאי *machăṭîy'ēy*); that is, who hold a man to be guilty, or a criminal. Lowth renders this singularly enough:

‹Who bewildered the poor man in speaking.‘

Grotius supposes it means, ‹Who on account of the word of God, that is, the true prophecy, treat men as guilty of crime.‘ Calvin supposes it means, ‹Who bear with impatience the reproofs and denunciation of the prophets, and who endeavor to pervert and distort their meaning.‘ Hence, he supposes, they proposed artful and captious questions by which they might ensnare them. Others suppose that it refers to the fact that they led people into sin by their new doctrines and false views. The connection, however, seems to require that it should be understood of judicial proceedings, and the sense is probably correctly expressed by Noyes:

‹Who condemned the poor man in his cause.‘

This interpretation is also that which is proposed by Rosenmuller and Gesenius. According to the interpretation above suggested, the word rendered ‹who make an offender,‘ means the same as who holds one guilty, that is, condemns.

A man - (אדם *'âdâm*). It is well known that this word stands in contradistinction to איש *'îysh* and denotes usually a poor man, a man in humble life, in opposition to one who is rich or of more elevated rank. This is probably the sense here, and the meaning is, that they condemned the poor man; that is, that they were partial in their judgments.

For a word - (בדבר *bedâbâr*). “In” a word; denoting the same as “a cause” that is tried before a court of justice. So Exodus 18:16: ‹When they have “a matter” (דבר *dâbâr* “a word”), they come unto me.‘ So Exodus 18:22: ‹And it shoji be that every great “matter” (Hebrew every great “word”) that they shall bring unto me.‘ So Exodus 22:8 (in the English version 9): ‹For all manner of trespass,‘ Hebrew for every word of trespass; that is, for every suit concerning a breach of trust. So also Exodus 24:14: ‹If any man have “any matters” to do,‘ (Hebrew, ‹any “words, ‹“) that is, if anyone has a law suit.

And lay a snare - To lay a snare is to devise a plan to deceive, or get into their possession; as birds are caught in snares that are concealed from

their view.

That reproveth - Or rather, that "contended" or "pleaded;" that is, that had a cause. The word יכח *yâkach* means often to contend with any one; to strive; to seek to confute; to attempt to defend or justify, as in a court of law Job 13:15; Job 19:5; Job 16:21; Job 22:4. It is also applied to deciding a case in law, or pronouncing a decision Isaiah 11:3-4; Genesis 31:37; Job 9:33. Here it means one who has brought a suit, or who is engaged in a legal cause.

In the gate - Gates of cities being places of concourse, were usually resorted to for transacting business, and courts were usually held in them Genesis 23:10, Genesis 23:18; Deuteronomy 17:5, Deuteronomy 17:8; Deuteronomy 21:19; Deuteronomy 22:15; Deuteronomy 25:6-7; Rth 4:1 . The sense is, they endeavored to pervert justice, and to bring the man who had a cause before them, completely within their power, so that they might use him for their own purposes, at the same time that they seemed to be deciding the cause justly.

And turn aside the just - The man who has a just or righteous cause.

For a thing of nought - Or a decision which is empty, vain (בתהו *batôhû*), and which should be regarded as null and void,

Verse 22

Therefore - In consequence of the happy change which shall take place in the nation when the oppressor shall be removed Isaiah 29:20-21, and when the poor and the meek shall rejoice Isaiah 29:19, and the ignorant shall be instructed Isaiah 29:18, Jacob shall not be ashamed of his descendants as he was before, nor have cause to blush in regard to his posterity.

Who redeemed Abraham - That is, who brought him out of a land of idolaters, and rescued him from the abominations of idolatry. The word ‹redeem,‘ here (פדה *pâdâh*), properly denotes "to ransom, that is, to redeem a captive, or a prisoner with a price paid Exodus 13:13; Exodus 34:20. But it is also used as meaning to deliver in general, without reference to a price, to free in any manner, to recover 2 Samuel 4:9; 1 Kings 1:29; Job 5:20; Psalm 71:23. It is used in this general sense here; and means that Yahweh had rescued Abraham from the evils of idolatry, and made him his friend. The connection, also, would seem to imply that there was a reference to the promise which was made to Abraham that he should have a numerous posterity (see Isaiah 29:23).

Jacob shall not now be ashamed - This is a poetical introduction of Jacob as the ancestor of the Jewish people, as if the venerable patriarch were looking upon his children. Their deportment had been such as would suffuse a father‘s cheeks with shame; henceforward in the reformation that would occur he would “not” be ashamed of them, but would look on them with approbation.

Neither shall his face wax pale - The face usually becomes pale with fear: but this may also occur from any strong emotion. Disappointment may produce paleness as well as fear; and perhaps the idea may be that the face of Jacob should no more become pallid as “if” he had been disappointed in regard to the hopes which he had cherished of his sons.

Verse 23

But when he seeth his children - The sense is, ‹he shall not be ashamed of his sons, for he shall see them henceforward walking in the ways of piety and virtue.‘

The work of my hands - That is, this change Isaiah 29:17-19 by which the nation will be reformed, will be produced by the agency of God himself. The sentiment is in accordance with the doctrines of the Scriptures everywhere, that people are recovered from sin by the agency of God alone (compare Isaiah 60:21; Ephesians 2:10).

In the midst of him - In the midst of his people. The name Jacob is often employed to denote all his posterity, or the whole nation of the Jews.

Verse 24

They also that erred in spirit - (see Isaiah 29:9-10).

Shall learn doctrine - When” this would occur the prophet does not state. It “may” be intended to denote the times of Hezekiah; or the times subsequent to the captivity; or possibly it may refer to the times under the Messiah. All that the prophet teaches is, that at some future period in the history of the Jews, there would be such a reform that they should be regarded as the worthy descendants of the pious patriarch Jacob.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 30

Introduction

It is probable that the prophecy in this chapter was delivered about the same time as that in the previous chapter, and on the same general occasion. It is evident that it refers to the time of Hezekiah, when the Jews were alarmed by an apprehended invasion of the king of Assyria. Hezekiah had revolted from the king of Assyria 2 Kings 18:7; and it is probable that many of the leaders of the Jews began to be alarmed at the prospect that their land would be invaded by him, especially as it was known that it was the intention of Sennacherib to make war on Egypt, and that he could easily take Judea in his way. In such circumstances it was natural that they should propose an alliance with the Egyptians, and seek to unite their forces with theirs to repel the common danger. Instead of looking to God, and relying on his aid, they had probably entered into such an alliance, offensive and defensive Isaiah 31:1. To see the impropriety of such a league, it is to be remembered that God had promised to be the protector of his people, and that he had prohibited alliances with the surrounding nations; that it was a leading part of the Jewish policy, as instituted by Moses, to keep them a distinct and independent people; and that special care had been exercised to keep them from returning to the customs, or depending on the aid of the Egyptians. This alliance had been formed unquestionably contrary to the solemn counsel and warning of Isaiah Isaiah 20:1-6, and he now reproves them for it, and endeavors to recall them again to confidence in God.

The following is a summary of the contents of the chapter:

I. The prophet denounces ‹wo‘ on them for seeking the aid of Egypt Isaiah 30:1-2.

II. He assures them that Egypt would be unable to help them, and that the effect would be that they would yet be ashamed themselves of the alliance Isaiah 30:3-7.

III. The prophet is directed to make a solem record that the prevailing character of the Jews was that of a rebellious people Isaiah 30:8-11.

IV. The judgment of God is denounced against them for forming this alliance, under the image of a wall that is ready to fall on them, and destroy them Isaiah 30:12-14.

V. The prophet tells them of the true way in which they may have peace and confidence, and that is, by putting their trust in God, and assures them that God waits to become their defender Isaiah 30:15-18.

VI. God "would" yet bless them. The people would see the vanity of their reliance on Egypt, and would turn unto God, and their turning to him would be attended with most rich and valuable blessings. These blessings are described in highly figurative and beautiful language Isaiah 30:19-26)

VII. Yahweh would show himself the protector of his people; and would, in a signal and sudden manner, overthrow and destroy the Assyrian, and deliver his people Isaiah 30:27-33.

The scope, therefore, of the chapter is to lead them to look away from Egypt, and to put confidence in God, at whose hand they were about to experience so signal a deliverance from the much dreaded invasion of Sennacherib.

Verse 1

Wo, - (see the note at Isaiah 18:1).

To the rebellious children - To those whom he had nourished as children, and who had rebelled against him (see the note at Isaiah 1:23).

That take counsel, but not of me - They look to Egypt, and depend on a human arm.

And that cover with a covering - The idea here, according to our translation, is, that they seek protection or a covering from the impending calamity. Lowth renders this, ‹Who ratify covenants;‘ supposing that the reference is to the fact that in ancient times compacts were formed by offering sacrifices, and by pouring out libations. The Hebrew, according to Lowth, means, ‹who pour out a libation.‘ So the Septuagint renders it, Συνθήκας *sunthēkas* - ‹And thou hast made covenants.‘ The Syriac renders it, ‹Who pour out libations.‘ The Hebrew word נסך *nâsak* properly conveys the idea of pouring out, and is applied:

(1) to the act of pouring out wine as a drink offering, or as a libation to God Genesis 35:14; Exodus 30:9; 1 Chronicles 11:18; Hosea 9:4;

(2) to the act of pouring out oil, that is, to anointing kings and rulers Psalm 2:6; Daniel 11:8;

(3) to the act of pouring out melted metals, that is, to cast them Isaiah 40:19; Isaiah 44:10.

The word also may have a meaning kindred to סכך *sâkak* and denote "to cover," as in Isaiah 25:7. Various derivatives from the word are rendered ‹to cover withal' Numbers 4:7; ‹the covering' Isaiah 28:20; ‹the web,' that is, that which is woven for a covering Judges 16:13-14. The idea, however, which best suits the connection here is probably that suggested by Lowth, in accordance with the Septuagint, and the Syriac, and adopted by Rosenmuller, Gesenius, and others, "to make a libation;" that is, to ratify a covenant, or compact.

But not of my Spirit - It was not such as was suggested by his Spirit, and not such as he would approve.

That they may add sin to sin - They add to the sin of rebellion against God that of forming an alliance. Sins do not usually stand alone. When one is committed, it is often necessary to commit others in order to carry out and complete the plan which that contemplated.

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Verse 2

That walk to go down to Egypt - Hebrew, ‹Going in the descent to Egypt.' That is, they do it by their ambassadors Isaiah 30:4. The journey to Egypt from Palestine is always represented as going down Genesis 12:10; Genesis 42:3; Genesis 43:15; Numbers 20:15; Deuteronomy 10:22.

To strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh - To form an alliance with Pharaoh, that thus they might be able to repel the threatened invasion. Pharaoh was the general name of the kings of Egypt, in the same manner as Caesar was the common name of the emperors of Rome.

To trust in the shadow of Egypt - A ‹shadow' (צל *tsêl*) is an emblem of protection and defense, as a shade is a protection from the burning rays of the sun (see the note at Isaiah 4:6).

Verse 3

Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame - (see the note at Isaiah 20:5).

Your confusion - Hebrew, ‹For reproach.' It would either occur that the Egyptians "would" not enter into an alliance; or that if they did, they "could" not defend them, and in either case it would be the source of deep regret and shame.

Verse 4

For his princes - The sense of this verse seems to be this. The prophet is stating the fact that the Jews would be ashamed of their attempted alliance with Egypt. In this verse, and the following, he states the manner in which they would be made sensible of their folly in seeking this alliance. He therefore enumerates several circumstances in regard to the manner in which the alliance had been sought, and the disappointment that would follow after all their vain confidence. He therefore states Isaiah 30:4, that the Jews had employed persons of the highest respectability and honor, even princes, to secure the alliance; that they had gone to Egypt with much difficulty - through a land where lions, and vipers, and fiery serpents abounded; that they had at much hazard taken their treasures down to Egypt in order to secure the alliance Isaiah 30:5-6, and that after all, the Egyptians could not aid them. The phrase ‹his princes,‘ refers to the princes of Judah, the ambassadors that the Jews sent forth, and the idea is, that they regarded the alliance as of so much importance that they had employed their most honorable men - even their princes - to secure it.

Were at Zoan - Had come to Zoan, or were there on the business of their embassy. On the situation of Zoan, see the notes at Isaiah 19:11, Isaiah 19:13. It was the residence of the kings in Lower Egypt, and would be the place to which the ambassadors would naturally resort to negotiate an alliance.

Came to Hanes - Respecting the situation of this place there has been much diversity of opinion among interpreters. The Chaldee renders it by the more full word “Tahpanhes;” and Grotius supposes that the word is contracted from Tahpanhes Jeremiah 43:7-8, and that the name was sometimes abbreviated and written חנס *chânēs* Vitringa supposes that it was Anusis, situated in the Delta of the Nile, and the residence of the king of the same name. Herodotus (ii. 137) mentions a city of that name, Ἄνυσίς *Anusis* Anusis was a king of Egypt before the irruption of the Ethiopians, and it was not uncommon for a king to give his own name to a city. Probably Anusis is the city intended here; and the sense is, that they had come to the royal residence for the purpose of negotiating an alliance. It is known that in the time of Jeremiah (588 years before Christ) “Tahpanhes” was the capital of the nation (see Jeremiah 43:9).

Verse 5

They were all ashamed - That is, all the legates or ambassadors. When they came into Egypt, they found them either unwilling to enter into an

alliance, or unable to render them any aid, and they were ashamed that they had sought their assistance rather than depend on God (compare Jeremiah 2:36).

Verse 6

The burden of the beasts of the south - The word ‹south‘ here refers doubtless to the country to the south of Judea; and particularly to Egypt. Thus it is used in Daniel 11:5-6. The phrase ‹beasts of the south,‘ here refers to the animals that were traveling to Egypt. Isaiah, in vision, sees the caravan heavily laden with treasures pursuing a southern direction on its way to Egypt. The word ‹burden‘ is used in two senses, to denote that which is borne, a heavy burden; or an oracle, a solemn prophetic message (see the notes at Isaiah 15:1; Isaiah 17:1; Isaiah 19:1). Many understand the word here in the latter sense, and regard this as the title of a prophetic message similar to those in Isaiah 15:1; Isaiah 17:1; Isaiah 19:1. But the word is doubtless used here in its ordinary signification, to denote the load which is borne on animals, and here especially the treasures which were borne down to Egypt, for the purpose of securing their friendly alliance. The prophet sees the caravan, or the beasts of the ambassadors heavily laden with rich treasures, traveling southward toward Egypt, and cries out, ‹O the heavy burden, the load of treasures going to the south!‘

Into the land of trouble and anguish - Egypt; so called either because it was the land where the Hebrews had formerly suffered so severe oppressions; or because it was a land where the subjects were now grievously oppressed, and borne down with cruel laws; or because it was yet to be a land of trouble, from which the Jews could expect no aid. The general idea is, that Egypt was not a land of liberty and happiness, but a country where cruelty, oppression, and woe abounded. One source of trouble, as emblematic of all, the prophet immediately mentions when he designates that it abounded with venomous reptiles.

The viper - (אפעה *'eph'eh*). Septuagint, Ἀσπίδες *Aspides* ‹asps‘ (see Isaiah 59:5). This is a well-known species of serpent. It is probably the same as the *El -Effah* of the Arabs which is thus described by Mr. Jackson: ‹It is remarkable for its quick and penetrating poison; it is about two feet long and as thick as a man‘s arm, beautifully spotted with yellow and brown, and sprinkled over with blackish specks, similar to the horn-nosed snake. They have a wide mouth, by which they inhale a great quantity of air, and when inflated therewith they eject it with such force as to be heard

at a considerable distance.‘ It is well known that Egypt produced venomous reptiles in abundance. Cleopatra destroyed herself with the bite of an asp which she had concealed for that purpose.

And fiery flying serpent - (מעופף שׂרף *s'ârâph meʿôpēp*). Septuagint, Ἔκγονα ἀσπίδων περομένων *Ekgona aspidōn petomenōn* This is the flying serpent so often referred to in the Scriptures. See a description of it in the notes at Isaiah 14:29. It is known to have abounded in the Arabian deserts, and was doubtless found also in Egypt as being in the same latitude, and infested with similar reptiles. Niebuhr thus describes a species of serpent which answers to this account. ‹There is at Bakra a sort of serpents which they call *Heie Sursurie* or *Heie Thiare* They commonly keep upon the date trees; and as it would be laborious for them to come down from a very high tree in order to ascend another, they twist themselves by the tail to a branch of the former, which, making a spring, by the motion they give it, throw themselves to the second. Hence, it is that the modern Arabs call them the flying serpents - *Heie Thiare* Lord Anson, as quoted by Niebuhr, also speaks of them as follows: ‹The Spaniards informed us that there was often found in the woods a most mischievous serpent, called the flying snake, which, they said, darted itself from the boughs of trees on either man or beast that came within its reach, and whose sting they took to be inevitable death.‘ There was a species of serpent which the Greeks called Αξοντίας *Acontias* and the Roman *Jaculus*, from their swift darting motion, and perhaps the same species is here referred to which Lucan calls *Jaculique volucres*. That these venomous reptiles abounded in Egypt is expressly testified by profane writers. Thus Ammianus says (xxii. 15), that ‹Egypt nourishes innumerable serpents, basilisks, and twoheaded serpents (amphisbaenas), and the seytalus (a serpent of a glistening color), and the acontias (Latin, *Jaculus*), and adders, and vipers, and many others.‘

They will carry their riches - Presents, designed to induce the Egyptians to enter into the alliance. That it was a common custom to make presents when one king sent an embassy to another, whether the design was to show friendship or civility, or to form an alliance, is well known in regard to all the nations of the East. The custom prevails at the present day, and is often referred to in Scripture (see 1 Kings 15:19; 2 Kings 16:8; 2 Kings 18:14-15).

Verse 7

For the Egyptians shall help in vain - That is, if they enter into the alliance, they shall not be able to defend you from the invader. The other member of the sentence would seem to imply that they would make promises of aid, and would even boast of being able to deliver them, but that they would fail in their promises.

Therefore have I cried - Therefore have I the prophet cried, that is, I do call her so.

Concerning this - Concerning this country; that is, Egypt. Some have understood this as referring to Jerusalem, but the connection requires us to understand it of Egypt.

Their strength is to sit still - This is evidently designed to be an expressive appellation of Egypt. The word rendered here, without much propriety, ‹strength‘ (רהב *râhab*) is a proper name of Egypt, and is several times applied to it; Isaiah 51:9:

Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab
And wounded the dragon?

In this passage there can be no doubt that it refers to Egypt. So in Psalm 87:4; Psalm 89:10 (see the margin). Why it was given to Egypt is unknown, and can only be conjectured. Bochart (“Geog. Sacra,” i. 4. 24) supposes that it is derived from the word ῥιβι *ribi* which singifies “a pear,” and that it was given to the Delta or Lower Egypt on account of its form, as somewhat resembling a pear. But there is not clear evidence that such was the meaning of the word, and there is no reason why we should forsake the usual sense of the Hebrew word. The verb רהב *râhab* means to urge, press on, attack Proverbs 6:3; to be highspirited, fierce, full of courage; to behave proudly Isaiah 3:5; and has, in most instances, a relation to pride, to arrogance, to boasting Job 9:13; Psalm 40:4. The noun “Rahab” indicates ferocity, haughtiness, boasting, insolence; and the name was doubtless given to Egypt on account of its insolence and pride. It is used here because Egypt would be full of self-confidence, and would boast that she could aid the suppliant Jews, and deliver them from the threatened invasion. The phrase rendered ‹to sit still,‘ is a part of the name which the prophet gave to her. Though she boasted, yet would she sit still; she would be inefficient, and would do nothing; and the whole name, therefore, may be rendered, ‹I call her, the blusterer that sitteth still;‘ that is, ‹they are courageous in talking; cowards in acting.‘ (Taylor)

Verse 8

Now go - This is a direction to the prophet to make a permanent record of the character of the Jewish people. The fact to be recorded was, that they were rebellious Isaiah 30:9; the design for which the record was to be made was to show to future times that this had been the uniform character of the nation. The record was to be preserved that it might be a proof of the care of God toward the nation even in the midst of their long-continued and obstinate perverseness.

Write it before them - Before the Jews themselves, that they may see the record, and may have it constantly before them.

In a table - Or ON a table. The word לוח *lûach* denotes a tablet either of stone to engrave upon Deuteronomy 9:9; Exodus 31:18; or of wood 1 Kings 7:36. It is not improbable that this was to be exposed to public view in some conspicuous place near the temple.

And note it - Engrave it; that is, record it.

In a book - On parchment, or in the usual way of writing (see the note at Isaiah 8:1).

For the time to come - Hebrew as Margin, ‹The latter day.‘ It was to be made in order that future ages might know what had been the character of that people, and what had been the patience and forbearance of God in regard to them.

Verse 9

That this is a rebellious people - (see the note at Isaiah 1:2).

Lying children - They had promised in solemn covenant to take Yahweh as their God, but they had been unfaithful to their vows.

Verse 10

Which say to the seers - The prophets (see the note at Isaiah 1:1).

See not - They desire not that they should communicate to them the will of Yahweh.

Prophesy not unto us right things - It is not probable that they "openly" demanded of the prophets that they should declare falsehood and deceit, but their conduct was as if they had required that. The sense is, they bore with impatience the theatenings and commands of the true prophets; they were offended at their plainness and their reproofs of their vices; and they preferred the false prophets, who fell in with their prejudices, and who did not denounce the judgment of God for their crimes.

Speak unto us smooth things - That is, those things which are in accordance with our feelings, prejudices, and desires; which assure us of

prosperity and success, and which will not disturb us with the apprehension of punishment. This was spoken particularly of their desire to make a league with Egypt, an enterprise for which the true prophets threatened them with the divine displeasure, but which probably the false prophets encouraged.

Prophesy deceits - Not that they would openly and avowedly demand to be deceived, but they demanded that which the prophet says would be deceits. No man "professedly" desires to be deceived; but many a man is willing to put himself under that kind of teaching which is deceit, and which he might know to be falsehood if he would examine it.

Verse 11

Get ye out of the way - Or, rather, ‹Recede from the way;‘ or ‹Turn aside from the way.‘ The words "way" and "path" are used to denote the true religion, or the true doctrines of God Matthew 7:14; Matthew 22:16; John 14:4; Acts 18:26; Acts 19:9, Acts 19:23; 2 Peter 2:15. The request here was that the true prophets would recede from the stern and true precepts of religion, and turn to the ways of falsehood and deceit.

Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us - The sense of this is, ‹Let us hear no more of this name. We are weary of constantly hearing it, as if there was nothing else but the ceaseless repetition of the name "The Holy One of Israel.‘" It is to be remembered that the prophets spoke in this name, and often commenced their prophecies with the announcement, ‹thus saith the Holy One of Israel.‘ No one more frequently used this than Isaiah (see Isaiah 30:12, Isaiah 30:15; compare Isaiah 1:4; Isaiah 5:19, Isaiah 5:24; Isaiah 10:20; Isaiah 12:6; Isaiah 17:7; Isaiah 29:19; Isaiah 31:1; Isaiah 41:14). It is probable that a reference constantly to the fact that he was holy, was that which most troubled them. How descriptive of the feelings of sinners! How striking an illustration of the fact that they do not wish to hear of the name or laws of the Holy Lord God! And what a melancholy proof of depravity is it when people pursue such a course that they do not wish to hear of Him, and desire no more to be troubled with His name and laws!

Verse 12

Wherefore thus saith the Holy One - Yahweh. There may be some reference here to the fact adverted to in Isaiah 30:11, that they were weary of the name of the Holy One of Israel, and of the perpetual reiteration of his commands. Isaiah, as if to show them how little he was disposed to comply

with their prejudices, again makes an appeal to that name, and urges the authority of Yahweh. It is often proper to "repeat" the very doctrine to which sinners object, and which has given them offence. That they are offended, shows that their minds are "awake" to the truth, and gives some indication that their consciences trouble them. Ministers of God should never shrink from their duty because people oppose them; they should never cease to speak in the name and by the authority of the Holy One of Israel, because that name may excite opposition and disgust.

Ye despise this word - That is, the word or message of Yahweh Isaiah 28:13-14; or perhaps it means the word ‹Holy One of Israel.' The sense is, that they did not trust in the promise and protection of Yahweh, but relied on human aid.

And trust in oppression - Margin, ‹Fraud.' The word עֹשֶׁק *'osheq* properly denotes oppression, or extortion Ecclesiastes 5:7; Ezekiel 22:7, Ezekiel 22:12; then, that which is obtained by extortion, and also by fraud Leviticus 6:4; Psalm 62:11; Ecclesiastes 7:7. It may refer here to the fact that they had, by unjust and oppressive exactions, obtained the treasures referred to in Isaiah 30:6, by which they hoped to conciliate the favor of Egypt; or it may mean that they trusted in their fraudulent purposes toward God, that is, to a false and perfidious course, by which they were unfaithful to him.

Perverseness - A crooked, perverse, rebellious course. They refused submission to Yahweh, and relied on the aid of strangers.

Verse 13

Therefore this iniquity - That is, this refusing to trust in Yahweh, and this intention to seek the alliance of Egypt. The general sense of the figure here is, that their depending on Egypt would involve them ultimately in complete and awful ruin - ruin that should come upon them as suddenly as when a wall that had been long swelling out gives way.

As a breach ready to fall - Like a breaking forth, or a bursting in a wall.

Swelling out in a high wall - That is, where the foundation is not firm, and where one part of the wall sinks, and it inclines to one side until it suddenly bursts forth. A similar figure is used by the Psalmist Psalm 62:3:

Ye shall be slain all of you
As a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence.

Whose breaking cometh suddenly - Though it has been long leaning and swelling, yet the actual bursting forth would be in an instant. So would it be with the destruction that would come upon the Jews. Though by their sins they had been long preparing for it, yet it would come upon them by a sudden and tremendous crash. So it will be with all sinners. Destruction may seem to be long delayed - as a wall may be long inclining, and may seem to prepare imperceptibly to fall; but in due time it will come suddenly upon them, when too late to obtain relief.

Verse 14

And he shall break it as the breaking - That is, its breaking shall be like the breaking of a potter‘s vessel. The Septuagint reads it, ‹And its fall (τὸ πτῶμα *to ptōma*) shall be like the breaking of an earthen vessel,‘

As the breaking of the potter‘s vessel - That is, as an earthen, fragile vessel, which is easily dashed to pieces. The image here is all drawn from the bursting forth, or the complete ruin of the swelling wall; but the sense is, that the Jewish republic would be entirely broken, scattered, demolished.

He shall not spare in the bursting of it - Figuratively in the bursting of the wall; literally in the destruction of the Jewish state and polity.

A sherd - A piece of pottery; a fragment.

To take fire from the hearth - Large enough to carry coals on.

Or to take water withal out of the pit - Out of the fountain, or pool; that is, it shall be broken into small fragments, and the ruin shall be complete - as when a wall tumbles down and is completely broken up. The sense is, that the republic of Israel would be completely ruined, so that there should not be found a man of any description who could aid them. The prophet does not specify when this would be. It is not necessary to suppose that it would occur on the invasion of Sennacherib, or that it would be the immediate consequence of seeking the aid of Egypt, but that it would be a consequence, though a remote one. Perhaps the figure used would lead us to look to some remote period. A high wall will begin to give way many years before its fall. The swell will be gradual, and perhaps almost imperceptible. For some time it may appear to be stationary; then perhaps some new cause will produce an increase of the projecting part, until it can no longer sustain itself, and then the ruin will be sudden and tremendous. So it would be with the Jews. The seeking of the alliance with Egypt was “one” cause - though a remote one - of their final ruin. Their forsaking God and seeking human aid, was gradually but certainly “undermining” the foundations of the state - as

a wall may be gradually undermined. Frequent repetitions of that would more and more impair the real strength of the republic, until, for their accumulated acts of want of confidence, the patience of God would be exhausted, and the state would fall like a mighty, bursting wall. The prophecy was fulfilled in the invasion of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans; it had a more signal and awful fulfillment in its destruction by the Romans.

Verse 15

For thus saith the Lord God - The design of this verse is to give a reason for the destruction that should come upon them. That reason was, that God had indicated to them the path of truth and safety, but they chose not to follow it, and refused to put confidence in him.

In returning - In returning to God; that is, if you are converted to him.

And rest - That is, by calmly reposing on God for assistance, and not seeking the alliance of Egypt (see Exodus 14:13).

In quietness - In a collected, quiet state of mind.

In confidence - By putting simple trust in God.

Shall be your strength - You shall be safe; your enemies shall not be able to overcome and subdue you.

But ye would not - When Jerusalem was threatened by Sennacherib, Hezekiah did put this confidence in God, and reposed calmly and securely on his promises Isaiah 36:15, Isaiah 36:18, Isaiah 36:21; but it is not improbable that when the city was first threatened, and Hezekiah heard of the preparations made by the Assyrians, he had joined with the party in Jerusalem who proposed an alliance with Egypt, and that this was known to Sennacherib Isaiah 36:6. Probably, however, before the invasion had actually commenced he had seen the impropriety of this, either because the aid of Egypt could not be secured, or because Isaiah had warned him of this, and had been brought to put his trust entirely in Yahweh. Yet the offence had been "committed" of refusing to put implicit confidence in Yahweh, and of seeking the aid of Egypt, and for that the punishment is threatened in this chapter Isaiah 30:16-17.

Verse 16

But ye said, No - Ye who proposed an alliance with Egypt.

For we will flee upon horses - The word ‹flee‘ (נוּס *nûc*), usually signifies to flee before or from any person or thing. But here it seems to have the notion of making a rapid motion in general, and not to refer to the fact that they expected to flee "from" their enemy, for it does not seem to

have been a part of their expectation. The idea seems to be that by their alliance with Egypt they would secure the means of "rapid motion," whatever might be the necesity or occasion for it, whether against or from an enemy. The sense is, ‹we will by this alliance secure the assistance of cavalry;' and, doubtless, the design was to employ it in the attack and discomfiture of their foes. It will be recollected that Moses Deuteronomy 17:16 strictly forbade that the future monarch of the Jews should ‹multiply horses to himself, to cause the people to return to Egypt,' and that consequently the employment of cavalry was against the laws of the nation. For the reasons of this prohibition, see the note at Isaiah 2:7. The attempt, therefore, in the time of Hezekiah to call in the aid of the cavalry of Egypt, was a violation of both the letter and the spirit of the Jewish institutions (compare Isaiah 31:1; Hosea 14:4).

Therefore shall ye flee - You shall fly before your enemies; you shall be defeated and scattered.

We will ride upon the swift - That is, upon fleet horses or coursers. Arabia was celebrated, and is still, for producing fleet coursers, and the same was formerly true of Egypt (see the note at Isaiah 2:7).

Verse 17

One thousand … - The sense of this is, that you shall be easily alarmed and overcome by those who are inferior in numbers and strength. The number ‹one thousand,' is put for a large indefinite number; probably meaning all.

At the rebuke of one - The number one here is put to denote a very small number; a number in the ordinary course of warfare entirely disproportionate to those who would be vanquished. There is probably a reference here to the prediction in Deuteronomy 32:30:

How should one chase a thousand,
And two put ten thousand to flight,
Except their Rock had sold them
And Yahweh had shut them up?

At the rebuke of five - Of a very small number.

Till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain - The word rendered ‹beacon' (תרן *toren*), (Greek ἱστὸς *histos* "a mast"), denotes properly the mast of a ship Isaiah 33:23; Ezekiel 27:5; then anything resembling a mast, a flagstaff, or a beacon of any kind. It may refer to a staff or mast erected on a promontory to warn sailors, or to be a landmark -

as it is not improbable that the masts of ships would be employed for that purpose; or it may refer to a flagstaff, erected on a conspicuous place, to which the nation could rally in time of war. On the sea coasts of America such beacons are often erected. Those which I have seen consist of a pole erected on an eminence or rising ground, with a cask or barrel painted white on the top. The idea seems to be, that of a long pole erected for any purpose, and which was standing alone, stripped of its leaves and branches, and without ornament. So would be the few, solitary, and scattered Jews when driven before their enemies.

And as an ensign on a hill - (see Isaiah 5:26, note; Isaiah 11:12, note). The idea is, that those who should escape would be few in number, and would stand alone, as a beacon in view of all the nations, to admonish them of the justice of God, and the truth of his threatening - like an ensign floating on a hill that can be seen from afar. What a striking description is this of the condition of the Jews in our times, and indeed in all ages since their dispersion! Their strength, and influence, and power as a people are gone. They stand as beacons to warn the nations of the evils of a want of confidence in God, and of his justice.

Verse 18

And therefore - The sense of the words rendered ‹and therefore,‘ may be better expressed by the phrase, ‹yet moreover,‘ meaning, that notwithstanding their sins, and the necessity of punishing them, Yahweh would be longsuffering, and would yet bring the nation to repentance.

And therefore will he be exalted - Lowth renders this in accordance with a conjecture of Houbigant, ‹Shall he expect in silence, by reading ידום *yâdûm* instead of ירום *yârûm* But there is no authority for this except a single MS. Rosenmuller supposes it means, in accordance with the interpretation of Jarchi, that he would delay, that is, that his mercy would be “long” or his judgment remote. But the sense seems to be, that God would be so forbearing that his character would be “exalted,” that is, that people would have more elevated conceptions of his truth, mercy, and faithfulness.

For the Lord is a God of judgment - He will do what is right. He will spare the nation still; and yet establish among them the true religion, and they shall flourish.

Blessed are all they that wait for him - This seems to have been recorded to encourage them, when the threatened calamities should come upon them, to put their confidence in God, and to trust that he would yet

appear and restore the nation to himself. This verse is the commencement of the annunciation of the blessings which should yet be conferred on them. The description of these blessings is continued to Isaiah 30:26.

Verse 19

For the people shall dwell in Zion - (see the note at Isaiah 1:8). The language here is evidently adapted to a return from the captivity. The whole design of the passage Isaiah 30:19-26 is to describe a future state of prosperity by images mainly drawn from the idea of temporal enjoyment. The sense is, that in some period subsequent to the calamities that would befall them for their improper reliance on the aid of Egypt Isaiah 30:16-17, there would be prosperity, peace, and joy in Jerusalem. The order of events, as seen by the prophet in vision, seems to be this. He sees the people threatened with an invasion by Sennacherib. He sees them forget their reliance on God and seek the aid of Egypt. He sees, as a consequence of this, a long series of calamities resulting in the downfall of the republic, the destruction of the city, and the captivity at Babylon. Yet he sees, in the distant prospect, prosperity, happiness, security, piety, the blessing of God, and rich and abundant future mercies resting on his people. That the blessings under the Messiah constitute a part of this "series" of mercies no one can doubt who attentively considers the language in Isaiah 30:25-26.

Thou shalt weep no more - (see the note at Isaiah 25:8).

He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry - When in your calamities you shall cry unto him for deliverance, he shall hear you, and restore you to your own land. This is in accordance with the statements in Isaiah 26:8-9 (see the notes at these verses), that in their captivity in Babylon they would seek God.

He will answer thee - (see Jeremiah 29:12-14).

Verse 20

And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity - The bread that is eaten in a time of calamity; that is, he would bring upon them sore distress and want.

The water of affliction - Margin, ‹Oppression.‘ That is, water drank in times of affliction and oppression, or in the long and weary days of captivity.

Yet shall not thy teachers - Your public instructors and guides Psalm 74:9; Isaiah 43:27; Daniel 12:3; Amos 8:11-12. This refers to "all" those who would be the true guides and teachers of the people of God in

subsequent times; and relates, therefore, not only to prophets and pious men whom God would raise up under their own dispensation, but also to all whom he would appoint to communicate his will. It is a promise that the church of God should never want a pious and devoted ministry qualified to make known his will and defend his truth.

Be removed into a corner - The word used here (יכנף *yikânēp* from כנף *kânap*) occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. It is probably derived from כנף *kânâp* "a wing;" and in the Syriac and Chaldee, it means to collect together. The Septuagint renders this, ‹And they who deceived thee shall no more come near unto thee.‘ The Syriac, ‹And he (that is, the Lord) shall no more collect thy seducers.‘ The Chaldee, ‹And he shall no more take away his own glory from the house of his sanctuary.‘ Rosenmuller, in accordance with Schultens, renders it, ‹And thy teachers shall no more hide themselves,‘ referring to the fact that the wing of a fowl furnishes a hiding-place or shelter. This would accord with the general idea that they should not be removed from public view. Lowth, singularly, and without authority from versions or manuscripts, renders it,

‹Yet the timely rain shall no more be restrained.‘

The general idea is, evidently, that they should be no more taken away; and probably the specific idea is that proposed by Taylor ("Heb. Con."), that thy teachers shall no more, as it were, be winged, or fly away; that is, be removed by flight, or as a flock of birds moving together rapidly on the wing.

Verse 21

And thine ears shall hear a word - A command or admonition. You shall not be left without spiritual guides and directors.

Behind thee - That is, says Vitringa, the voice of conscience, as an "invisible" guide, shall admonish you. The idea, however, seems to be that if they were ignorant of the way, or if they were inclined to err, they should be admonished of the true path which they ought to pursue. The idea is taken either from the practice of teachers who are represented as "following" their pupils and admonishing them if they were in danger of going astray (Grotius; or from shepherds, who are represented as following their flocks, and directing them when they wandered. The Jews understand this voice ‹from behind‘ to be the בת כל *bath kol* - ‹the daughter of the voice;‘ a divine admonition which they suppose attends the pious. The essential thought is, that they would not be left without a guide and

instructor; that, if they were inclined to go astray, they would be recalled to the path of truth and duty. Perhaps there is the idea, also, that the admonition would come from some "invisible" influence, or from some unexpected quarter, as it is often the case that those who are inquiring on the subject of religion receive light from quarters where they least expected, and from sources to which they were not looking. It is also true that the admonitions of Providence, of conscience, and of the Holy Spirit, seem often to come from "behind" us. that is, they "recall" us from the path in which we were going, and restrain us from a course that would be fraught with danger.

When ye turn to the right hand … - When you shall be in danger of wandering from the direct and straight path. The voice shall recall you, and direct you in the way in which you ought to go.

Verse 22

Ye shall defile also - That is, you shall regard them as polluted and abominable. This is language which is often used respecting their treatment of the images and altars of idolatry when they became objects of abomination, and when they were induced to abandon them (see 2 Kings 23:8, 2 Kings 23:10, 2 Kings 23:16). It is not improbable that before destroying them they would express their abhorrence of them by some act of polluting or defiling them, as significant of their contempt for the objects of degraded idolatry (see the note at Isaiah 2:20). The sense of the whole passage is, that the effect of the judgments which God was about to bring upon the nation would be, to turn them from idolatry, to which as a nation they had been signally prone.

The covering - The images of idols were usually made of wood or clay, and overlaid with gold. That gold and silver were used "to plate" them is apparent from Deuteronomy 7:25; and the whole process of making them from wood, and then of overlaying them with plates of gold and silver is described with graphic power and severity of irony in Isaiah 40:19-20; Isaiah 41:6-7.

Thy graven images of silver - Margin, ‹The graven images of thy silver.‘ Probably the construction in the text is correct, as meaning that the images were not made of entire silver, but of wood or clay, plated with silver.

And the ornament - The golden plates or the covering of the images.

Thy molten images - The word ‹molten‘ refers to those which were made by “casting” (see the notes at Isaiah 40:19-20).

Thou shalt cast them away - (see the note at Isaiah 2:20). This would be in accordance with the express direction of Moses; Deuteronomy 7:25: ‹The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire; thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein, for it is an abomination unto the Lord thy God.‘

Verse 23

Then shall he give the rain of thy seed - That is, he shall send rain on the seed which is sown. You will be allowed to cultivate the soil without molestation, and God will give you fruitful seasons and abundant harvests. This is a poetic description of a happy or golden age, when there would be peace and prosperity (compare the notes at Isaiah 11:6-7).

And bread of the increase of the earth - And bread which the ground shall produce.

And it shall be fat and plenteous - It shall be rich and abundant; that is, there shall be prosperity and an ample supply for your needs.

Feed in large pastures - This is a description of security when their cattle should be permitted to roam at large, and have abundant pasturage - an image of prosperity that would be very gratifying to a people whose main conception of wealth consisted in abundance of flocks and herds.

Verse 24

The young donkeys that ear the ground - Hebrew, ‹Labouring,‘ or ‹cultivating the ground,‘ that is, plowing it. The Old English word “ear” (from the Latin *aro*) meant to till, to cultivate. The word is now obselete, but this is the sense which it has in the Bible Genesis 45:6; Exodus 34:21; Deuteronomy 21:4; 1 Samuel 8:12.

Shall eat clean provender - Margin, ‹Leavened,‘ or ‹savory.‘ The word rendered ‹provender‘ (בליל *belîyl*) is a verbal from בלל *bâlal* “to mix, mingle, confuse;” and denotes provender that is made by “mixing” various substances, “maslin” or “farago,” a mixture of barley, oats, vetches, and beans, which seem to have been sown together, and reaped at the same time Job 6:5; Job 24:6. The word rendered ‹clean,‘ (חמיץ *châmiyts*) is not quite so plain in its signification. Kimchi explains it by נקי *nâqiy* “pure, clean.” Gesenius renders it ‹salted,‘ and supposes that it refers to fodder that was mixed with salted hay. The Septuagint renders it, ‹Provender mixed with winnowed barley.‘ But the real notion of the word is that which is

“fermented,” from חמיץ *châmēts* “to be sour;” to be leavened. Lowth renders it, ‹well fermented.‘ Noyes, ‹well seasoned.‘ The idea seems to be that of a provender made of a mixture of various substances - as of grain, beans, vetches, herbs, hay, and probably salt, which, when mixed, “would” ferment, and which was regarded as nutritious and wholesome for cattle. A similar compound is used by the Arabs still (see Bochart, i. 2,7; and Faber, and Harmer‘s “Observations,” i. 409).

Which hath been winnowed - That is, which is the pure grain, which is not fed to them as it is sometimes, before it is separated from the chaff. Grain shall be so abundant in that time of prosperity that even the cattle may be fed with grain prepared as it is usually for man.

With the shovel - The large shovel by which the grain in the chaff was thrown up in the wind that the grain might be separated from the chaff.

The fan - This word properly means that by which anything is “scattered” - a shovel by which the grain is thrown or tossed into the wind. ‹Those who form their opinion of the latter article by an English fan, will entertain a very erroneous notion. That of the East is made of the fibrous part of the palmirah or cocoa-tree leaves, and measures about a yard each way.‘ (Roberts).

Verse 25

In the day of the great slaughter - When the enemies of the people of God shall have been destroyed - probably in a time subsequent to the slaughter of the army of the Assyrians.

When the towers fall - The towers of the enemy; perhaps referring here to the towers of Babylon. After they should fall, the Jews would be favored with the time of prosperity to which the prophet here refers.

Verse 26

Moreover - In addition to all the blessings which are enumerated above.

The light of the moon - Light is in the Scriptures an emblem of purity, intelligence, happiness, prosperity; as darkness is an emblem of ignorance, calamity, and sin. This figure is often used by the poets. Thus Horace:

Soles melius nitent.

Carm. liv.: Od. v. 8.

The figure of augmenting light to denote the blessings of religion, and especially of the gospel, is often employed by Isaiah (compare the notes at Isaiah 2:5; Isaiah 9:2; Isaiah 10:17; Isaiah 13:10; Isaiah 58:8, Isaiah 58:10; Isaiah 60:1, Isaiah 60:3, Isaiah 60:19-20). The sense of this passage is, that

in those future days the light would shine intensely, and without obscurity; that though they had been walking in the light of the true religion, yet that their light would be greatly augmented, and that they would have much clearer views of the divine character and government. That this refers to the times of the Messiah there can be little or no room to doubt. It is language such as Isaiah commonly employs to describe those times; and there is a fullness and splendor about it which can suit no other period. There is nothing in the connection, moreover, which forbids such an interpretation of the passage.

Shall be as the light of the sun - Shall be clear, bright, intense. The sense is, there shall be a great increase of light, as if the light of the moon were suddenly increased to the brightness of the meridian sun.

Shall be seven-fold - Seven times as intense and clear as usual, as if the light of seven days were concentrated into one. The word ‹seven‘ in the Scriptures often denotes a complete or perfect number; and indicates "completeness" or "perfections." The phrase ‹as the light of seven days,‘ Lowth supposes is a gloss which has been introduced into the text from the margin. The reasons which he adduces for this supposition are, that it is missing in the Septuagint, and that it interrupts the rhythmical construction. But this is not sufficient authority for rejecting the words from the text. No authority of MSS. is adduced for thus rejecting them, and they are found in the Vulgate, the Chaldee, and the Syriac. They are missing, however, in the Arabic.

In the day - Vitringa supposes that this refers to the time of the Maccabees; but although there may be a reference to that time, yet the idea is evidently designed to include the future times of the Messiah. The sense of the prophet is, that subsequent to the great calamities which were to befall them, there would be a time of glorious prosperity, and the design of this was to comfort them with the assurance that their nation would not be wholly destroyed.

Bindeth up the breach of his people - Or the wound. The calamity that should come upon them is thus represented as a wound inflicted on them by the stripes of punishment (see the notes at Isaiah 1:5). Yahweh would heal it by restoring them to their own land, and to their former privileges.

Verse 27

Behold, the name of the Lord cometh - (compare the notes at Isaiah 19:1). The verses following, to the end of the chapter, are designed

evidently to describe the destruction of the army of Sennacherib. This is expressly declared in Isaiah 30:31, and all the circumstances in the prediction accord with that event. There is no necessity of supposing that this is the commencement of a new prophecy, for it is connected with the main subject in the previous part of the chapter. The whole prophecy was composed evidently in view of that threatened invasion. In the apprehension of that, they sought the aid of Egypt Isaiah 30:1-6, for that, the prophet denounces judgment on them (Isaiah 30:8 ff); in view of these judgments, however, he promises a more happy state Isaiah 30:18-26; and now, in the close of the chapter, in order to deter them from the alliance, he assures them that, without any foreign aid, the Assyrian would be destroyed by Yahweh himself. The phrase ‹name of Yahweh,‘ is probably another mode of designating Yahweh himself; as the name of God is often put for God himself (see Acts 3:6-7, Acts 3:12,30; Acts 4:10; 1 Corinthians 1:10). The idea is, that the destruction of the Assyrian hosts would be accomplished by the immediate power of Yahweh himself without any need of the aid of the Egyptian or of any foreign alliances.

From afar - That is, from heaven (compare the note at Isaiah 19:1).

Burning with his anger - Or, rather, his anger is enkindled.

And the burden thereof - Margin, ‹Grievousness of flame.‘ Lowth renders it, ‹The flame rageth violently.‘ Noyes, ‹Violent is the flame.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹A burning wrath‘ The word משׂאה *mas'â'âh* from נשׂא *nâs'â'* “to bear, lift up, carry,” means properly a lifting up Psalm 141:2; a burden Zephaniah 3:18; then a mounting up, particularly of a flame or smoke in a conflagration Judges 20:38. This seems to be the idea here, that the anger of God would be like a heavy, dark column of mingled smoke and flame bursting out, and rising up over a city.

His lips are full of indignation - All this language is of course figurative, and means that he would issue a command to destroy the Assyrians, or that they would be destroyed in such a manner as most effectively to exhibit his displeasure.

And his tongue as a devouring fire - That is, he shall issue a command that shall destroy like a raging and devouring fire.

Verse 28

And his breath - The word רוח *rûach* properly means “wind,” air in motion; then a breathing, an exhalation, a breath; then the soul, spirit, etc.

The idea here seems to be that of excited, and rapid, and agitated breathing, as when one is in anger (compare Judges 8:3; Zechariah 6:8).

As an overflowing stream - This figure is common to express desolating judgments (see the notes at Isaiah 8:8; Isaiah 10:22; Isaiah 28:17; compare Psalm 69:2, Psalm 69:15).

Shall reach to the midst of the neck - Isaiah Isaiah 8:8, in describing the invasion of Sennacherib, and comparing it to an oveflowing torrent, says it would ‹reach even to the neck;‘ that is, it would overflow the land, and even approach the head, the capital, but that that would be spared. By the use of a similar figure, and perhaps referring to that, he here says, that the judgment of God would overflow the army of the Assyrians, but that it would approach only to the neck, the head would still be spared; the commander and sovereign would not be destroyed. In accordance with this prediction, the angel in one night, as with an overflowing flood, cut off the army, and yet spared the sovereign, Sennacherib, who escaped with his life Isaiah 37:36-37. The word rendered ‹shall reach‘ (רחצה *yechĕtseh*) properly means “shall divide,” or cut into two parts Genesis 33:8; Numbers 31:37, Numbers 31:42; Judges 9:43; and the idea here seems to be that a man who is in the water seems to be “divided” into two parts, one part above, and one in the water.

To sift the nations - Doubtless many nations were laid under requisition to furnish an army so large as that of Sennaherib, as the kingdom of Assyria was made up of a number of tributary people and provinces. The word rendered ‹to sift‘ refers to the act of winnowing or fanning grain, in which the grain is “tossed” or thrown from the shovel into the air. As the chaff is driven away by the wind, so the nations in the army of Sennacherib would be scattered.

With the sieve of vanity - That is, of emptiness or perdition; he would so scatter them that nothing would be left.

A bridle in the jaws of the people - The idea is, that he had all these nations as much under his control as a man has a horse with a bridle in his mouth. The same idea the prophet has used in reference to the same subject in Isaiah 37:29:

I will put my bridle in thy jaws,
And I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

Causing them to err - That shall cause them to wander; that is, he would turn them from the path in which they had designed to go. They had

purposed to go to Jerusalem, but he would lead them back to their own land, discomfited and disheartened (see Isaiah 37:29).

Verse 29

Ye shall have a song - That is, ye inhabitants of Jerusalem shall rejoice when the army of the Assyrian is destroyed.

As in the night, when a solemnity is kept - The word ‹solemnity‘ here (חג *châg*) denotes a festival, or feast; and refers, by way of eminence, to the Passover, which is usually designated as "the feast;" that is, the principal festival of the Jews (see Matthew 27:15; John 5:1, John 5:11, John 5:13, John 5:23). This festival was kept at first at night, and was required to be so celebrated ever afterward Exodus 12:42; Deuteronomy 16:1-6.

As when one goeth with a pipe - Music was used in the daily service of the temple, and their processions and celebrations were all with instrumental music. The simple idea is, that the sudden and complete destruction of the army of Sennacherib would be the occasion of the highest joy.

Verse 30

And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard - That is, he would give command to destroy them. They could not fail to recognize his voice, and to feel that it was accomplished by him.

The lighting down of his arm - The descent of his arm - alluding to the act of striking, as with a sword, by which an army is cut down.

With the flame - (see the note at Isaiah 29:6).

And tempest, and hailstones - With us it is rare that a storm of hail would be severe enough to destroy an army. But in oriental countries and in tropical climates, storms of hail are not unfrequently of sufficient violence to do it if the army were encamped in the open field. The following extract of a letter from one of our own countrymen, will show that this would be by no means an improbable occurrence: ‹We had got perhaps a mile and a half on our way, when a cloud rising in the west gave indications of approaching rain. In a few minutes we discovered something falling from the heavens with a heavy splash, and with a whitish appearance. I could not conceive what it was, but observing some gulls near, I supposed it to be them darting for fish; but soon after discovered that they were large balls of ice falling. Immediately we heard a sound like rumbling thunder, or ten thousand carriages rolling furiously over the pavement.

The whole Bosphorus was in a foam, as though heaven‘s artillery had been charged upon us and our frail machine. Our fate seemed inevitable; our umbrellas were raised to protect us, the lumps of ice stripped them into ribbons. We fortunately had a bullock‘s hide in the boat, under which we crawled and saved ourselves from further injury. One man of the three oarsmen had his hand literally smashed, another much injured in the shoulder, Mr. H. received a blow on the leg, my right hand was somewhat disabled, and all more or less injured. It was the most awful and terrific scene I ever witnessed, and God forbid that I should be ever exposed to another. Balls of ice as large as my two fists fell into the boat, and some of them came with such violence as certainly to have broken an arm or leg, had they struck us in those parts. One of them struck the blade of an oar and split it. The scene lasted perhaps five minutes; but it was five minutes of the most awful feeling I ever experienced.

When it passed over, we found the surrounding hills covered with masses of ice, I cannot call it hail, the trees stripped of their leaves and limbs, and everything looking desolate. The scene was awful beyond all description. I have witnessed repeated earthquakes; the lightning has played, as it were, about my head; the wind roared, and the waves at one moment have thrown me to the sky, and the next have sunk me into a deep abyss. I have been in action, and have seen death and destruction around me in every shape of horror; but I never before had the feeling of awe which seized upon me on this occasion, and still haunts, and I fear forever will haunt me. My porter, the boldest of my family, who had ventured an instant from the door, had been knocked down by a hailstone, and had they not dragged him in by the heels, would have been battered to death. Two boatmen were killed in the upper part of the village, and I have heard of broken bones in abundance. Imagine to yourself the heavens suddenly frozen over, and as suddenly broken to pieces in irregular masses of from half a pound to a pound weight, and precipitated to the earth.‘ (Commodore Porter‘s “Letters from Constantinople and its Environs,” vol. i. p. 44.)

Verse 31

For through the voice of the - Lord By the command of the Lord; that is, his voice going forth in the manner specified in Isaiah 30:30.

Which smote with a rod - Who was accustomed to smite as with a rod; that is, his government was tyrannical and severe. As he had been accustomed to smite in that manner, so he would now meet the proper reward of his oppression of the nations.

Verse 32

And in every place - Margin, ‹Every passing of the rod founded.‘ Lowth renders it, ‹Whenever shall pass the rod of correction.‘ The whole design of the passage is evidently to foretell the sudden destruction of the army of the Assyrians, and to show that this would be accomplished by the agency of God. The idea seems to be, that in all those places where the rod of the Assyrian would pass, that is, where he would cause devastation and desolation, there would be the sound of rejoicing with instruments of music when he should be overthrown.

The grounded staff - The word ‹staff‘ here, or "rod," seems to refer to that by which the Assyrian smote the nations Isaiah 30:31; or rather perhaps the Assyrian king himself as a rod of correction in the hand of Yahweh (see Isaiah 10:5). The word rendered ‹grounded‘ (מוסדה *mûsâdâh*) has given great perplexity to commentators. Lowth supposes it should be מוסרה ("correction"), according to a conjecture of Le Clerc. Two manuscripts also read it in the same way. But the authority from the MSS. is not sufficient to justify a change in the present Hebrew text. This word, which is not very intelligibly rendered ‹grounded,‘ is derived from יסד *yâsad* to "found, to lay the foundation of a building" Ezra 3:12; Isaiah 54:11; then to establish, to appoint, to ordain Psalm 104:8; Habakkuk 1:12. The idea here is, therefore, that the rod referred to had been "appointed, constituted, ordained" by God; that is, that the Assyrian had been designated by him to accomplish important purposes as a rod, or as a means of punishing the nations.

Shall pass - In his march of desolation and conquest.

Which the Lord shall lay upon him - Or rather, as it should be translated, ‹upon which Yahweh should lay,‘ that is, the rod, meaning that in all those places where Yahweh should lay this appointed scourge there would be yet rejoicing.

It shall be with tabrets and harps - Those places where he had passed, and which he had scourged, would be filled with joy and rejoicing at his complete overthrow, and at their entire deliverance from the scourge. For a description of the tabret and harp, see the notes at Isaiah 5:12.

And in battles of shaking - In the Hebrew there is an allusion here to what is said in Isaiah 30:28, that he would ‹sift,‘ that is, agitate or toss the nations as in a winnowing shovel.

Will he fight with it - Margin, ‹Against them.‘ Yahweh would fight against the ‹rod,‘ to wit, the Assyrian, and destroy him (see Isaiah 37:36).

Verse 33

For Tophet - The same idea is conveyed in this verse as in the preceding, but under another form, and with a new illustration. The sense is, that the army of the Assyrians would be completely destroyed, as if it were a large pile of wood in the valley of Hinnom that should be fired by the breath of God. The word (תפתה *tâpeteh*) with the ה (*h*) paragogic), denotes properly what causes loathing or abhorrence; that which produces disgust and vomiting (from the Chaldee תיף *tūph* to spit out); Job 17:6, ‹I was an “abhorrence‘” (תפת *tôpheth*), improperly rendered in our version, ‹I was among them as a tabret.‘ The word occurs only in 2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 7:31-32; Jeremiah 19:6, Jeremiah 19:11, Jeremiah 19:13-14, and in this place. It is applied to a deep valley on the southeast of Jerusalem, celebrated as the seat of idolatry, particularly of the worship of Moloch. The name also of ‹the valley of Hinnom‘ was given to it; and hence, the name “Gehenna” γέεννα *geenna* Matthew 5:22, Matthew 5:29-30; Matthew 10:28; Matthew 18:9; Matthew 23:15, Matthew 23:33; Mark 9:43, Mark 9:45, Mark 9:47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6), as denoting the place of future torments, of which the valley of Hinnom, or Tophet, was a striking emblem.

This valley was early selected as the seat of the worship of Moloch, where his rites were celebrated by erecting a huge brass image with a hollow trunk and arms, which was heated, and within which, or on the arms of which, children were placed as a sacrifice to the horrid idol. To drown their cries, drums were beaten, which were called תף *tôph* or תפים *tôphiym* and many suppose the name Tophet was given to the place on this account (see 2 Kings 16:3; 2 Kings 21:6; 2 Kings 23:10). The name ‹valley of Hinnom,‘ or Gehenna, was probably from the former possessor or occupier of that name. In subsequent times, however, this place was regarded with deep abhorrence. It became the receptacle of all the filth of the city; and hence, in order to purify the atmosphere, and prevent contagion, it was needful to keep fires there continually burning. It was thus a most striking emblem of hell-fire, and as such is used in the New Testament. Hezekiah was firmly opposed to idolatry; and it is not improbable that he had

removed the images of Moloch, and made that valley the receptacle of filth, and a place of abomination, and that the prophet refers to this tact in the passage before us.

Is ordained - Was fitted up, appointed, constituted. The prophet by a figure represents Hezekiah as having fitted up this place as if for the appropriate punishment of the Assyrians.

Of old - Margin, as in Hebrew, ‹From yesterday.‘ This expression may mean simply ‹formerly, some time since,‘ as in Exodus 4:10; 2 Samuel 3:17. The idea here seems to be, that Tophet had been formerly, or was already prepared as if for the destruction of Sennacherib and his army. His ruin would be as certain, and as sudden, “as if,” in the valley of Tophet, the breath of Yahweh should set on fire the vast materials that had been collected, and were ready to be kindled. It does not mean that Tophet had actually been prepared “for” the army of Sennacherib; it does not mean that his army would actually be destroyed there - for it was on the other side of the city that they were cut off (see the notes at Isaiah 10:32); it does not mean that they would be consigned to hell-fire; but it means that that place had been fitted up as if to be an emblematic representation of his ruin; that the consuming fires in that valley were a striking representation of the sudden and awful manner in which the abhorred enemies of God would be destroyed.

For the king is prepared - For Hezekiah; as if the place had been fitted up for his use in order to consume and destroy his enemies. It is not meant that Hezekiah actually had this in view, but the whole language is figurative. It was as if that place had been fitted up by Hezekiah as a suitable place in which entirely to destroy his foes.

He hath made it deep and large - Vast; as if able to contain the entire army that was to be destroyed.

The pile thereof - The wood that was collected there to be consumed.

The breath of the Lord - As if Yahweh should breathe upon it, and enkindle the whole mass, so that it should burn without the possibility of being extinguished. The meaning is, that the destruction of the Assyrian would as really come from Yahweh as if he should, by his own agency, ignite the vast piles that were collected in the valley of Hinnom.

Like a stream of brimstone - Brimstone, or sulphur, is used in the Scriptures to denote a fire of great intensity, and one that cannot be extinguished Genesis 19:24; Psalm 11:6; Ezekiel 38:22; Revelation 9:17-

18. Hence, it is used to denote the eternal torments of the wicked in hell Revelation 14:10; Revelation 19:20; Revelation 21:8.

Doth kindle it - The army of the Assyrians would be destroyed in a manner which would be well represented by Yahweh‘S sending down upon a vast pile collected in the valley of Hinnom, a burning stream of sulphurous flame that should ignite and consume all before it (see the notes at Isaiah 37:36).

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CHAPTER 31

Introduction

It is evident that this chapter was composed at about the same time as the preceding, and relates to the same subject. The general object, like the former, is to dissuade the Jews from their contemplated alliance with Egypt, and to lead them to rely on God. In doing this, the prophet first denounces a woe on those who went down to Egypt to seek aid Isaiah 31:1; he then states that God will punish them for it Isaiah 31:2; he then urges the utter inability of the Egyptians to furnish the aid which was needed, since Yahweh was about to stretch out his arm over them also, and they, as well as those who sought their aid, should suffer under his displeasure Isaiah 31:3. The prophet then, in order to recall them from this contemplated alliance, and to induce them to put confidence in Yahweh, assures them by two most beautiful figures Isaiah 31:4-5 that God would protect their city in the threatened invasion, and save it from destruction. He calls on them, therefore Isaiah 31:6, to turn unto God; assures them Isaiah 31:7 that at that time every man would see the folly of trusting in idols; and finally Isaiah 31:8-9, assures them of the complete overthrow of the army of the Assyrian. The scope of the prophecy is, therefore, simple and direct; the argument condensed, impressive, and beautiful. It is not improbable, by any means, that these exhortations of Isaiah had a sensible effect on the conduct of Hezekiah. The whole narrative respecting the invasion of Sennacherib would lead to the conclusion, that at first Hezekiah himself joined in the purpose of seeking the alliance with Egypt, but that he was afterward led to abandon it, and to use all his influence to induce his people also to rely on the aid of God; compare Isaiah 36:6, with Isaiah 36:18.

Verse 1

Wo - (see the note at Isaiah 30:1).

To them that go down to Egypt - (see the note at Isaiah 30:2).

And stay on horses - (see the note at Isaiah 30:16).

And trust in chariots - (see the note at Isaiah 21:7). That they were often used in war, is apparent from the following places Joshua 11:4; Judges 1:19; 1 Samuel 13:5; 2 Samuel 8:4.

Because they are many - Because they hope to secure the aid of many. See the references above. It is evident that their confidence in them would be in proportion to the number which they could bring into the field.

But they look not … - (see the note at Isaiah 30:1)

Verse 2

Yet he also is wise - God is wise. It is in vain to attempt to deceive him, or to accomplish such purposes without his knowledge.

And will bring evil - The punishment which is due to such want of confidence in him.

But will arise against the house of the evil-doers - This is a general proposition, and it is evidently just as true now as it was in the time of Isaiah.

Verse 3

Now the Egyptians are men - They are nothing but people; they have no power but such as other people possess. The idea here is, that the case in reference to which they sought aid was one in which "divine" help was indispensable, and that, therefore, they relied on the aid of the Egyptians in vain.

And their horses flesh, and not spirit - There is need, not merely of "physical" strength, but of wisdom, and intelligence, and it is in vain to look for that in mere brutes.

Both he that helpeth - Egypt, whose aid is sought.

And he that is holpen - Judah, that had sought the aid of Egypt. Neither of them would be able to stand against the wrath of God.

Verse 4

For thus hath the Lord spoken - The design of this verse and the following is to assure the Jews of the certain protection of Yahweh, and thus to induce them to put their trust in him rather than to seek the alliance with Egypt. To do this the prophet makes use of two striking illustrations, the first of which is, that Yahweh would be no more alarmed at the number and power of their enemies than a fierce lion would be that was intent on his prey, and could not be frightened from it by any number of men that should come against him. The "point" of this comparison is, that as the lion that "was intent on his purpose" could not be frightened from it by numbers, so it would be with Yahweh, who "was equally intent on his purpose" - the defense of the city of Jerusalem. It does not mean, of course, that the purpose of God and of the lion resembled each other, but merely that there was similar "intensity of purpose," and similar adherence to it notwithstanding all opposition. The figure is one that denotes the highest

vigilance, firmness, steadiness, and a determination on the part of Yahweh that Jerusalem should not fall into the hands of the Assyrians.

Like as the lion - The divine nature and purposes are often represented in the Scriptures by metaphors, allegories, and comparisons taken from animals, and especially from the lion (see Deuteronomy 33:20; Job 10:16; Psalm 7:2; Hosea 11:10).

And the young lion - The vigorous, strong, fierce lion. The use of the two here, gives intensity and strength to the comparison. It is observable that the lion is seldom mentioned alone in the Scriptures.

Roaring on his prey - Roaring as he seizes on his prey. This is the moment of the greatest intensity of purpose in the lion, and it is therefore used by Isaiah to denote the intense purpose of Yahweh to defend Jerusalem, and not to be deterred by any number of enemies.

When a multitude of shepherds is called forth - When the neighborhood is alarmed, and all the inhabitants turn out to destroy him. This comparison is almost exactly in the spirit and language of Homer, "Il." xii. 209, following:

So pressed with hunger from the mountain‘s brow,
Descends a lion on the flocks below;
So stalks the lordly savage o‘er the plain,

In sullen majesty and stern disdain:

In vain loud mastiffs bay him from afar,

And shepherds gall him with an iron war;

Regardless, furious, he pursues his way;

He foams, he roars, he rends the panting prey.
Pope
So also Il. xviii. 161,162:
- But checked he turns; repulsed attacks again.
With fiercer shouts his lingering troops he fires
Nor yields a step, nor from his post retires;

So watchful shepherds strive to force in vain,

The hungry lion from the carcass slain.

Pope

He will not be afraid - He will be so intent on his prey that he will not heed their shouting.

Nor abase himself - That is, he will not be frightened, or disheartened.

So shall the Lord of hosts - That is, with the same intensity of purpose; with the same fixedness of design. He will be as little dismayed and diverted from his purpose by the number, the designs, and the war shout of the Assyrian armies.

Verse 5

As birds flying - This is another comparison indicating substantially the same thing as the former, that Yahweh would protect Jerusalem. The idea here is, that He would do it in the same manner as birds defend their young by hovering over them, securing them under their wings, and leaping forward, if they are suddenly attacked, to defend them. Our Saviour has used a similar figure to indicate his readiness to have defended and saved the same city Matthew 23:27, and it is possible that he may have had this passage in his eye. The phrase ‹birds flying,‘ may denote the “rapidity” with which birds fly to defend their young, and hence, the rapidity with which God would come to defend Jerusalem; or it may refer to the fact that birds, when their young are attacked, fly, or flutter around them to defend them; they will not leave them.

And passing over - פסוח *pâsoach* Lowth renders this, ‹Leaping forward.‘ This word, which is usually applied in some of its forms to the Passover Exodus 12:13, Exodus 12:23, Exodus 12:27; Numbers 9:4; Joshua 5:11; 2 Chronicles 30:18, properly means, as a verb, “to pass over,” and hence, to preserve or spare. The idea in the passage is, that Yahweh would protect Jerusalem, as a bird defends its young.

Verse 6

Turn ye unto him - In view of the fact that he will assuredly defend Jerusalem, commit yourselves unto him rather than seek the aid of Egypt.

Have deeply revolted - For the meaning of this phrase, see the note at Isaiah 29:15.

Verse 7

For in that day - That is, in the invasion of Sennacherib, and the events that shalt be consequent thereon.

Every man shall cast away his idols - (see the note at Isaiah 30:22; compare the note at Isaiah 2:20).

For a sin - Or rather, the sin which your own hands have made. The sense is, that the making of those idols had been a sin, or sin itself. It had been "the" sin, by way of eminence, which was chargeable upon them.

Verse 8

Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword - The sword is often used as an instrument of punishment. It is not meant here literally that the sword would be used, but it is employed to denote that complete destruction would come upon them.

Not of a mighty man - The idea here is, that the army should not fall by the valor of a distinguished warrior, but that it should be done by the direct interposition of God (see Isaiah 37:36).

Of a mean man - Of a man of humble rank. His army shall not be slain by the hand of mortals.

But he shall flee - The Assyrian monarch escaped when his army was destroyed, and fled toward his own land; Isaiah 37:37.

From the sword - Margin, ‹For fear of.‘ The Hebrew is ‹From the face of the sword;‘ and the sense is, that he would flee in consequence of the destruction of his host, here represented as destroyed by the sword of Yahweh.

And his young men - The flower and strength of his army.

Shall be discomfited - Margin, ‹For melting;‘ or ‹tribute,‘ or ‹tributary.‘ Septuagint, Εἰς ἥττημα *Eis hēttēma* - ‹For destruction.‘ The Hebrew word (מס *mas*), derived probably from מסס *mâsas* "to melt away, to dissolve") is most usually employed to denote a levy, fine, or tax - so called, says Taylor, because it wastes or exhausts the substance and strength of a people. The word is often used to denote that people become tributary, or vassals, as in Genesis 49:15; Deuteronomy 20:11; compare Joshua 16:10; 2 Samuel 20:24; 1 Kings 4:6; 1 Kings 5:13; Esther 10:1. Probably it does not here mean that the strength of the Assyrian army would become literally tributary to the Jews, but that they would be as if they had been placed under a levy to them; their vigor and strength would melt away; as property and numbers do under taxation and tribute.

Verse 9

And he shall pass over - Margin, ‹His rock shall pass away for fear.‘ The Hebrew would bear this, but it does not convey a clear idea. The sense

seems to be this. The word rendered ‹stronghold‘ (Hebrew, ‹His rock‘) denotes his fortifications, or the places of strength in which he trusted. Probably the Assyrian monarch had many such places which he regarded as perfectly secure, both in the limits of his own kingdom, and on the line of his march toward Judea. Those places would naturally be made strong, in order to afford a refuge in case of a defeat. The idea here is, that so great would be his alarm at the sudden destruction of his army and the failure of his plans, that in his flight he would "pass over" or "beyond" these strong places; he would not even stop to take refuge there and reorganize his scattered forces, but would flee with alarm "beyond" them, and make his way to his own capital. This appears to have been most strikingly fulfilled (see Isaiah 37:37).

And his princes - Those, perhaps, that ruled over his dependent provinces.

Shall be afraid of the ensign - That is, of any standard or banner that they saw. They would suppose that it was the standard of an enemy. This denotes a state of great consternation, when all the princes and nobles under the command of the Assyrian would be completely dismayed.

Whose fire is in Zion … - That is, whose altar is there, and always burns there. That was the place where he was worshipped, and it was a place, therefore, which he would defend. The meaning is, that they would be as certainly destroyed as the God whose altar was in Jerusalem was a God of truth, and would defend the place where he was worshipped.

And his furnace … - (see the note at Isaiah 29:1). Where his altar continually burns. The word rendered ‹furnace‘ (תנור *tannûr*) means properly a baking oven Exodus 8:3; Leviticus 2:4; Leviticus 7:9; Leviticus 11:35. This was either a large conical pot which was heated, in which the cakes were baked at the sides; or an excavation made in the earth which was heated by putting wood in it, and when that was removed, the dough was put in it. Perhaps the whole idea here is, that Yahweh had a home in Jerusalem, with the usual appendages of a house; that his fire and his oven were there, an expression descriptive of a dwelling-place. If so, then the meaning is, that he would defend his own home, and that the Assyrian could not expect to prevail against it.

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CHAPTER 32

Introduction

This chapter has been regarded by many as a continuation and conclusion of the prediction commenced in the preceding chapter. Though it was, however, probably uttered at about the same time, and with reference to the same general subject, yet there is no impropriety in its being separated. The previous chapter closes with a prediction that the Assyrian army, which had been so much the object of dread, would be totally destroyed. This would be of course followed with important consequences, some of which are depicted in this chapter. The prophet, therefore, states Isaiah 32:1-8 that the defeat of Sennacherib would be followed by the peaceful and prosperous state of the kingdom under a righteous prince; under whose reign there would be ample protection Isaiah 32:2; at which time the advantages of instruction would prevail, and the ignorant would be enlightened Isaiah 32:3-4; when there would be a proper estimate put on moral worth, and when illiberality, hypocrisy, and falsehood would be no longer held in repute Isaiah 32:5-7; and when the character of the nation would be that of a people which devised and executed large and liberal purposes Isaiah 32:8. That this has a reference to the reign of Hezekiah, has been abundantly shown by Vitringa; and, indeed, must be obvious on the slightest inspection. For,

1. It is immediately connected with the account of the destruction of Sennacherib, and evidently means that the state of things here described would immediately succeed that.

2. There is nothing in the account that does not fully accord with the prosperous and happy times of the reign of Hezekiah.

3. There are statements in it which cannot be applied directly, or with propriety literally to the times of the Messiah.

For example, the statement in the first verse that ‹princes shall rule in judgment‘ cannot be applied with any propriety to the apostles, since they are not anywhere designated by that name. That, after the usual manner of Isaiah, he might not also, in the progress of this description, have glanced at the times of the Messiah, perhaps there can be no reason to doubt. But the main and leading purpose was, doubtless, to give a description of the happy times that would succeed the destruction of the army of the Assyrian.

Calvin supposes, not improbably, I think, that this prophecy may have been uttered in the time of Ahaz, in whose reign wickedness so much abounded, and ignorance and idolatry so much prevailed. But whether the prophecy was actually "uttered" in the time of Abaz or not - which cannot now be determined - yet it may have been uttered in view of the ignorance, and superstition, and hypocrisy, which prevailed in his reign, and which extended their influence into the time of his successor, and on account of which the nation was to be subjected to the calamities arising from the invasion of Sennacherib. After that, the king Hezekiah would rule in righteousness, and his kingdom would enjoy the blessings of his mild and virtuous reign.

The prophet then Isaiah 32:10-14 proceeds to show, that "previous" to the prosperous times predicted, there would be a state of desolation and alarm. This is indicated by his calling on the daughters of luxury and fashion, who were reposing in security and confidence, to rise up in consternation at the calamities which were impending Isaiah 32:10-11, and by the assurance that there would be a time when they would sigh for the luxuries which they had before enjoyed Isaiah 32:12-14. This is descriptive of the calamities which would attend the invasion of the Assyrian. Yet the prophet says, as is usual with him, that these calamities would be succeeded by more happy times Isaiah 32:15-20. They would continue until the Spirit should be poured out from on high Isaiah 32:15, and the result of this would he the prevalence of righteousness in the nation Isaiah 32:16, and peace and safety Isaiah 32:17-18; there would be safety, and the privilege of pursuing the peaceful pursuits of agriculture, and of cultivating the entire land without molestation Isaiah 32:19-20.

Verse 1

Behold, a king - That is, Hezekiah. That it refers to him is apparent from the connection. The reign of Ahaz had been one of oppression and idolatry. This was to be succeeded by the reign of one under whom the rights of the people would be secured, and under whom there would be a state of general prosperity. This may have been uttered while Ahaz was on the throne, or it may have been when Hezekiah began to reign. Perhaps the latter is the more probable, as Ahaz might not have tolerated anything that would have looked like a reflection on his own reign; nor, perhaps, while he

was on the throne would Isaiah have given a description that would have been a contrast between his reign and that of his successor.

Shall reign in righteousness - That is, a righteous king shall reign; or his administration shall be one of justice, and strongly in contrast with that of his predecessor. This was certainly the general characteristic of the reign of Hezekiah.

And princes shall rule - Hebrew, ‹For princes, or, ‹as to princes‘ (לשׂרים *les'ârîym*). Lowth proposes to read this without the ל (*l*), as the ancient versions do. But it is not necessary to change the text. It may be rendered, ‹As to princes, they shall rule‘ (compare Psalm 16:3). The ‹princes‘ here denote the various officers of government, or those to whom the administration was confided.

In judgment - That this is a just description of the reign of Hezekiah is apparent from the history, see 2 Kings 18:3-6: ‹He removed the high places, and broke the images, and cut down the grove. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him, for he clave unto the Lord, and departed not from following him.‘

Verse 2

And a man - That is, evidently, the man referred to in the previous verse, to wit, Hezekiah.

Shall be as an hiding-place from the wind - A place where one may take refuge from a violent wind and tempest (see the note at Isaiah 25:4).

A covert - A place of shelter and security. Wind and tempest are emblematic of calamity and oppression; and the sense is, that Hezekiah would be the protector of his people, and would save them from the calamities to which they had been subjected in former reigns.

As rivers of water - This figure is often used in Isaiah (see Isaiah 35:6-7; and the notes at Isaiah 41:18). It means that the blessings of such a reign would be as grateful and refreshing as gushing fountains and running streams were to a thirsty traveler. Here it refers to the benefits that would be conferred by the reign of Hezekiah - a reign which, compared with that of his father, would be like a refreshing fountain to a weary pilgrim in a pathless desert.

As the shadow of a great rock - In a burning desert of sand nothing is more grateful than the cooling shade of a far-projecting rock. It not only excludes the rays of the sun, but it has itself a refreshing coolness that is

most grateful to a weary traveler. The same figure is often used by the classic writers (see Virgil, "Georg." iii, 145; Hesiod, ii. 106).

In a weary land - A land where there is fatigue and weariness. Probably here it is used to denote a land destitute of trees, and groves, and pleasant abodes; a land where one expects weariness and fatigue without any refreshment and shelter. The following description from Campbell's "Travels in Africa" will explain this: ‹Well does the traveler remember a day in the wilds of Africa, where the country was chiefly covered with burning sand; when, scorched with the powerful rays of an almost vertical sun, the thermometer in the shade standing at 100 degrees (Fahrenheit). He remembers long looking hither and thither for something that would afford protection from the almost insupportable heat, and where the least motion of air felt like a flame coming against the face. At length he espied a huge loose rock leaning against the front of a small cliff which faced the sun. At once he fled for refuge underneath its inviting shade. The coolness emitted from this rocky canopy he found exquisitely exhilarating. The wild beasts of the deserts were all fled to their dens, and the feathered songsters were all roosting among the thickest foliage they could find of the evergreen trees. The whole creation around seemed to groan, as if their vigor had been entirely exhausted. A small river was providentially at hand, to the side of which, after a while, he ventured, and sipped a little of its cooling water, which tasted better than the best Burgundy, or the finest old hock in the world. During all this enjoyment, the above apropos text was the interesting subject of the traveler's meditation; though the allusion as a figure, must fall infinitely short of that which is meant to be prefigured by it.'

(The whole of this passage is capable of beautiful application to the Messiah and his times; while the language of the second verse cannot be supposed descriptive of any "creature;" it is so associated in our minds with the character and functions of the Divine Redeemer, that we cannot easily acquiesce in any meaner application. ‹To interpret the sublime imagery of this verse Isaiah 32:2 in application to a mere human being, would be quite repugnant to the spirit of the sacred writers, by whom Yahweh alone is represented as the source of protection and refreshment to his people, and all trust in creatures solemnly interdicted' (Henderson). Doubtless, if Hezekiah be at all intended, it is in a typical or inferior sense only. A greater than Hezekiah is here; the language and figures used are precisely such as are elsewhere by the prophet applied to Yahweh Isaiah 4:6; Isaiah 25:4;

while the particulars characteristic of the times predicted, are just such as elsewhere he connects with gospel times (compare Isaiah 29:18; Isaiah 35:5). The things predicted, according to this view, are a righteous administration under Messiah the prince Isaiah 32:1; protection and refreshment to his subjects; protection from the wrath of God and the temptations of Satan, and the rage of the world; refreshment by the consolutions and graces of his Spirit, which are as rivers of water in this dry land' Isaiah 32:2; a desire for knowledge and such facility in the acquisition of it, that even persons ordinarily supposed disqualified should both clearly understand, and easily and accurately express the truth Isaiah 32:3-4; a just appreciation of character and estimation of people in accordance therewith Isaiah 32:5; and, finally, the prevalence of a loving, liberal spirit, setting itself to devise and execute plans of benevolence on a scale hitherto unprecedented Isaiah 32:8; Psalm 110:3; Acts 2:44-45; 2 Corinthians 8:1, 2 Corinthians 8:4; 2 Corinthians 9:2)

Verse 3

And the eyes of them that see … - The sense of this verse is, that there shall be, under the reign of this wise and pious prince, on the part of the prophets and teachers, a clear view of divine truth, and on the part of the people who hear, a disposition to hearken and to attend to it. The phrase ‹of them that see,' refers probably to the prophets, as those who were called seers (see the notes at Isaiah 29:10; Isaiah 30:10; compare 1 Samuel 9:9), or those who had visions (see the note at Isaiah 1:1) of the things that God would communicate to people. The word rendered ‹be dim' (תשעינה *tisheʿeynâh*), is derived from שעה *shâʿâh* which usually signifies "to see, to look," but it also has a meaning similar to שעע *shâʿaʿ* "to spread over, to close, to make blind." Of this fact Lowth seems not to have been aware when he proposed, without the authority of any MS., to change the text. The sense is, that those who were prophets and religious teachers should no more see obscurely, but should have clear and just views of divine truth.

And the ears of them that hear - Of the people who were instructed by their religious teachers.

Shall hearken - It shall be a characteristic of those times that they shall be disposed to attend to the truth of God.

Verse 4

The heart also of the rash - Margin, ‹Hasty.‘ The Hebrew word denotes those who hasten; that is, those who are precipitate in forming a judgment, or deciding on a course of action. They do not take time to deliberate, and consequently they are led headlong into error, and into improper courses of life.

Shall understand knowledge - They shall take time to deliberate; and they shall consequently form a more enlightened judgment.

And the tongue of the stammerers - The ‹stammerers‘ (compare the note at Isaiah 28:11) seem here to denote those who had indistinct and confused views of subjects, or who were incapable of expressing clear and intelligible views of divine truth.

Shall be ready to speak plainly - Margin, ‹Elegantly.‘ The Hebrew is צתות *tsâthôth* ‹clear,‘ ‹white,‘ usually applied to a bright, clear, white light. The sense is, that there should be no indistinctness or obscurity in their views and modes of utterance.

Verse 5

The vile person - Hebrew, ‹Fool.‘ But the connection requires us to understand this as the opposite of liberal; and it means a person who is close, miserly, narrow-minded, covetous. This person is designated, very appropriately, as a fool.

Shall be no more called liberal - It is probable that under the reign of former princes, when all views of right and wrong had been perverted, people of unprincipled character had been the subjects of flattery, and names of virtue had been attributed to them by their friends and admirers. But it would not be so under the virtuous reign of the prince here celebrated. Things would be called by their right names, and flattery would not be allowed to attribute to people, qualities which they did not possess.

Nor the churl - The word ‹churl‘ means properly a rude, surly, ill-bred man; then a miser, a niggard. The Hebrew word means properly a deceiver, a fraudulent man (Gesenius). The word avaricious, however, seems to suit the connection. Lowth renders it, ‹Niggard.‘ Noyes, ‹Crafty.‘

Bountiful - Flattery shall no more ascribe to a miserly man a character which does not belong to him.

Verse 6

For the vile person - Hebrew, ‹The fool.‘ This word more properly expresses the idea than ‹vile person.‘ The Hebrews Used the name fool to denote not only one destitute of understanding, but a knave, a dishonest

man - regarding sin as the highest folly (see 1 Samuel 25:25; 2 Samuel 3:33; Job 2:10).

Will speak villainy - Hebrew, ‹Will speak folly.‘ That is, he will act in accordance with his nature; it is his nature to speak folly, and he will do it. Under a wicked and unjust administration such persons might be the subjects flattery Isaiah 32:5, and might be raised to office and power. But under the administration of a virtuous king they would not be admitted to favor; and the reason was, that they would act out their nature, and would corrupt all around them. A monarch, therefore, who regarded the honor of his own throne, and the welfare of his subjects, would exclude them from his counsels.

To make empty the soul of the hungry - Probably this refers to spiritual hunger and thirst; and means that such a person would take away the means of knowledge from the people, and leave them to error, ignorance, and want. The sense is, that if such persons were raised to office, they would corrupt the nation and destroy their confidence in God; and this was a reason why a virtuous prince would exclude them from any participation in his government.

Verse 7

The instruments also - In the Hebrew here there is a paronomasia which cannot be imitated in a translation. The word ‹instruments‘ here denotes evidently the means by which the churl accomplishes his object; whether it be by words, by judicial decisions, or by crafty devices. This is also a kind of proverbial expression, and is given as a further reason why such a person would not be employed by a wise and virtuous prince.

Are evil - He will make use of any unprincipled means, any wicked plan or device, to accomplish his purpose. “With lying words.” With false representations; or with deceitful promises and assurances. His aim would be particularly directed to the poor and humble, as more easily deprived of their rights than the rich and powerful. It was also of greater importance to defend the rights of the poor, and therefore the prophet says that such a person should not be in the employ of a just and virtuous ruler.

Even when the needy speaketh right - That is, although the cause of the needy is one of truth and equity. When this would be manifest, the unprincipled man in power would deprive him of his rights, and, therefore, under a wise and virtuous administration, such a person should not be employed.

Verse 8

But the liberal - This seems also to have the force of a proverbial expression. The word ‹liberal‘ means generous, noble, large-hearted, benevolent; a man of large views and of public spirit; a man above covetousness, avarice, and self-seeking; a man who is willing to devote himself to the welfare of his country, and to the interests of his fellow-men. It is implied here that such persons would be selected to administer the affairs of the government I under the wise and virtuous prince of whom the prophet speaks.

Deviseth liberal things - He purposes those things which will tend to promote the public welfare, and not those merely which will conduce to his private ends and gratification.

And by liberal things shall he stand - Margin, ‹Be established.‘ That is, according to the connection, he shall be confirmed, or approved in the government of the virtuous king referred to. It is, however, a proposition in a general form, and means also that a man by a liberal course shall be established; that is, his character, reputation, hopes, shall be established by it. This is true now. If a man wishes to obtain permanent peace and honor, the esteem of his fellow-men, or the evidence of divine approbation, it can be best done by large and liberal schemes to advance the happiness of a dying world. He who is avaricious and narrow-minded has no happiness, and no durable reputation; he who is large-hearted and benevolent, has the approbation of the wise and good, the favor of God, and a firm and unshaken support in the trials of life, and in the agonies of death.

Verse 9

Rise up … - Rosenmuller supposes that this commences a new vision or prophecy; and that the former part Isaiah 32:9-14 refers to the desolation of Judea by the invasion of Sennacherib, and the latter Isaiah 32:15-20 to the prosperity which would succeed that invasion. It cannot be doubted that this is the general reference of the passage, but there does not seem to be a necessity of making a division here. The entire prophecy, including the whole chapter, relates in general to the reign of Hezekiah; and as these events were to occur during his reign, the prophet groups them together, and presents them as constituting important events in his reign. The general design of this portion of the prophecy Isaiah 32:9-14 is to show the desolation that would come upon the land of Judea in consequence of that invasion. This he represents in a poetical manner, by calling on the

daughters of fashion and ease to arouse, since all their comforts were to be taken away.

Ye women that are at ease - They who are surrounded by the comforts which affluence gives, and that have no fear of being reduced to wang (compare Isaiah 3:16-26).

Ye careless daughters - Hebrew, ‹Daughters confiding;‘ that is, those who felt no alarm, and who did not regard God and his threatenings.

Verse 10

Many days and years - Margin, ‹Days above a year.‘ This is a literal translation of the Hebrew. Septuagint, ‹Make mention of a day of a year in sorrow, with hope.‘ Targum, ‹Days with years.‘ Kimchi supposes it means ‹two years.‘ Grotius supposes it means ‹within three years.‘ Various other interpretations may be seen in Poole‘s Synopsis. Gesenius renders it, ‹For a year‘s time,‘ according to the common expression ‹a year and a day,‘ denoting a complete year, and supposes that it means a considerable time, a long period. The phrase literally means ‹the days. upon (or beyond) a year,‘ and may denote a long time; as the entire days in a year would denote a long period of suffering. Lowth renders it, not in accordance with the Hebrew, ‹Years upon years.‘ Noyes, ‹One year more, and ye shall tremble.‘ Perhaps this expresses the sense; and then it would denote not the length of time which they would suffer, but would indicate that the calamities would soon come upon them.

For the vintage shall fail - A large part of the wealth and the luxury of the nation consisted in the vintage. When the vine failed, there would be, of course, great distress. The sense is, that in consequence of the invasion of the Assyrians, either the people would neglect to cultivate the lands, or they would fail to collect the harvest. This might occur either from the dread of the invasion, or because the Assyrian would destroy everything in his march.

Verse 11

Strip ye, and make ye bare - That is, take off your joyful and splendid apparel, and put on the habiliments of mourning, indicative of a great calamity.

And gird sackcloth - (See the note at Isaiah 3:24).

Verse 12

They shall lament for the teats - Interpreters have been not a little perplexed by this expression. Lowth supposes it is to be taken in connection

with the previous verse, and that it denotes that sackcloth was to be girded upon the breast as well as upon the loins. Others have supposed that it denotes to ‹smite upon the breasts,‘ as a token of grief; others, that the word ‹breast‘ here denotes children by a synecdoche, as having been nourished by the breast, and that the women here were called to mourn over their children. But it is evident, I think, that the word breasts here is used to denote that which nourishes or sustains life, and is synonymous with fruitful fields. It is so used in Homer (Iliad, ix. 141), where οἴθαρ ἀρούρης *oithar arourēs* denotes fertility of land. And here the sense doubtless is, that they would mourn over the fields which once contributed to sustain life, but which were now desolate. In regard to the grammatical difficulties of the place, Rosenmuller and Gesenius may be consulted.

The pleasant fields - Margin, as in Hebrew, ‹Fields of desire.‘

Verse 13

Upon the land of my people - A description similar to this, in regard to the consequences of the invasion of Sennacherib, is given in Isaiah 7:20-25 (see the notes at that passage).

Yea, upon all the houses of joy - Margin, ‹Burning upon.‘ The marginal readling has originated from the supposition that the word כי *kîy* is derived from כיה *kâvâh* “to be burned.” This conjecture has been adopted by Junius and Tremellius, and by some others. But it is evidently mere conjecture, and is not demanded. The word ‹yea‘ will express the sense, meaning that desolation, indicated by the growth of thorns and briers, would come upon the cities that were then filled with joy. This does not refer to Jerusalem, which was not taken by Sennacherib, but to the other cities that were destroyed by him in his march, and this account accords with the statement in Isaiah 7:20-25.

Verse 14

Because the palaces shall be forsaken - That is, the palaces in the cities and towns which Sennacherib would lay waste. Or, if it refers, as Lowth supposes, to the invasion of the land in the time of the Chaldeans, then it relates to the palaces in Jerusalem. Vitringa supposes that the temple at Jerusalem is particularly designated by the word rendered palaces. But that is not the usual word to denote the temlple, and it is not necessary to suppose that that is particularly referred to. The word ארמון *'armôn* usually denotes a palace, or royal residence in some part of the royal citadel (see 1

Kings 16:18; Isaiah 25:2; Jeremiah 30:18; Amos 1:4, Amos 1:7, Amos 1:10, Amos 1:12).

The forts - Margin, ‹Cliffs and watch-towers.‘ Hebrew, עפל ʿ*opel* This word properly denotes a hill or a cliff, such as is an advantageous situation for fortresses. It is translated in Micah 4:8, ‹the stronghold;‘ in 2 Kings 5:24, ‹the tower;‘ in 2 Chronicles 27:3; 2 Chronicles 30:14; Nehemiah 3:27; Nehemiah 11:21, ‹Ophel.‘ With the article (the hill) it was given, by way of eminence, to a bluff or hilt lying northeast of mount Zion, and south of mount Moriah, which was surrounded and fortified with a wall (Jos. Jewish Wars, vi. 6). It extends south from mount Moriah, running down to the fountain of Siloam, lying between the valley of Jehoshaphat on the east, and the Tyropeon or valley of Cheesemongers on the west. It terminates over the pool of Siloam in a steep point of rock forty or fifty feet high. The top of the ridge is flat, and the ground is now tilled, and planted with olive and other fruit trees (see Robinson‘s Bib. Researches, vol. i. pp. 341,394). It may be used here, however, to denote a hill or cliff, a strongly-fortified place in general, without supposing of necessity that it refers to the mountain in Jerusalem.

Towers - Towers were erected on the walls of cities at convenient distances for purposes of observation.

Shall be for dens - Shall become places where banditti and robbers may abide, and secure themselves.

Forever - This is evidently one instance in which the word ‹forever‘ (עד־עולם ʿ*ad* -ʿ*ôlâm*), denotes a long time, because in the verse When the word is used without any suet limitation, it denotes proper eternity

A joy of wild asses - A place where wild animals will have unlimited range.

Verse 15

Until the Spirit - The Spirit of God, as the source of all blessings, and especially as able to meet and remove the ills of the long calamity and desolation. This evidently refers to some future period, when the evils which the prophet was contemplating would be succeeded by the spread of the true religion. If the prophet meant to confine his description of calamities to those which would attend the invasion of Sennacherib, then this refers to the piety and prosperity which would prevail after that during the reign of Hezekiah. If he designed, as Lowth supposes, to describe the calamites which would attend the invasion of the Chaldeans and the

desolation of the city of Jerusalem during the captivity, then this refers to the prosperous times that would occur after their return to their own land. And if he looked forward beyond even that, then this refers to the times of the Messiah also, and he designed to describe the happy period when the Messiah should have come, and when the Spirit should be poured out. Vitringa supposes that all three of these events are referred to. But although the expressions are such as are used in reference to the times of the Messiah, yet the word ‹until‘ seems to limit the prediction to some event previous to that. The plain sense of the passage is, that the city would lie waste, and would be a pasture for flocks, until the Spirit should be poured out; that is, would lie waste a long time, and then be succeeded by the merciful interposition of God restoring them to their land and privileges. This idea would seem to limit it. at the utmost, to the return from Babylon.

Be poured out - This is a common and usual mode of indicating that the influences of the Spirit of God would be imparted Isaiah 44:3; Ezekiel 39:29; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18.

From on high - From heaven (compare Luke 24:49).

And the wilderness be a fruitful field - Until that change shall come when the places that are desolate shall become fertile, and the places which are now fertile and prosperous shall become desolate and barren. This may refer to the time when Jerusalem, that would have lain so long waste, would be again inhabited and cultivated, and when Babylon, then so prosperous, would become desolate and ruined. The expression has a proverbial cast and denotes change and revolution (see the note at Isaiah 29:17).

Verse 16

Then judgment shall dwell - Or, justice shall make its appropriate dwelling-place there.

In the wilderness - In the place that was a wilderness, but that shall now be turned to a fruitful field.

In the fruitful field - In the nation that is like a fruitful field; in Judea restored.

Verse 17

And the work of righteousness - That which righteousness produces; or the effect of the prevalence of righteousness on the nation.

Shall be peace - There shall be no internal agitation, and no conflicts with foreign nations.

Quietness and assurance - This is a beautiful description of the happy effect of the prevalence of piety; and it is as true now as it was in the time of Isaiah. True religion would put an end to strifes and litigations; to riots and mobs; to oppressions and tumults; to alarms and robbery; to battle, and murder, and conflict.

Verse 18

And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation - In cities and towns that would not be alarmed bv internal or external foes.

And in sure dwellings - In dwellings that would be secure from invasion. - All this is descriptive of the peaceful times, and the general security which followed the return from Babylon. To this period of happiness and prosperity, Isaiah, as well as the other prophets, often refers.

Verse 19

When it shall hail - Hebrew, ברדת ברד *bârad beredeth* - ‹And it shall hail in coming down. There is a paranomasia in the original here, which cannot be expressed in a translation - a figure of speech, which, as we have seen, is common in Isaiah. ‹Hail‘ is an image of divine vengeance or punishment; and the reference here is, doubtless, to the storms of indignation that would come on the enemies of the Jews, particularly on the Assyrians (see the notes at Isaiah 30:30).

Coming down on the forest - Coming down on the army of the Assyrian, which is here called ‹a forest.‘ The same term ‹forest‘ is given to the army of the Assyrians in Isaiah 10:18-19, Isaiah 10:33-34. The sense is, that the divine judgment would come down on that army with as much severity as a storm of hail descends on a forest - stripping the leaves from the trees, destroying its beauty, and laying it waste.

And the city - According to Gesenius, this is Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire. According to Rosenmuller, Grotius, and others, it is Babylon. Hensler supposes that it is Jerusalem, and that the sense is, that as a city that is situated in a valley is safe when the storm and tempest sweep over the hills, so would it be to Jerusalem when the storm of wrath should sweep away the army of the Assyrian. But the connection evidently requires us to understand it of the capital of the enemy; though whether it be Nineveh or Babylon perhaps cannot be determined.

Shall be low in a low place - Margin, ‹Utterly abased.‘ Hebrew, ‹In humility shall be humbled.‘ The sense is, shall be completely prostrate. Those who refer this to Jerusalem suppose it refers to the time when God

should humble it by bringing the enemy so near, and exciting so much consternation and alarm. Those who refer it to Babylon suppose it relates to its destruction. If referred to Nineveh, it must mean when the pride of the capital of the Assyrian empire should be iratabled by the complete overthrow of their army, and the annihilation of their hopes. The connection seems to require us to adopt this latter interpretation. The whole verse is very obscure; but perhaps the above will express its general sense.

Verse 20

Blessed are ye - The sense of this verse is, that while the enemies of the Jews would be overthrown, they themselves would be permitted to cultivate their lands in security. Instead of predicting this directly, the prophet implies that this would occur, by declaring that those who were permitted to do this were happy.

That sow beside all waters - Hebrew, ‹Upon (על *ʿal*) all waters.‘ This may mean that they selected places near running streams as being most fertile; or it may refer, as Lowth supposes, to the manner of sowing grain, and particularly rice, in eastern countries. This is done by casting the seed upon the water. This custom is referred to in Ecclesiastes 11:1: ‹Cast thy bread,‘ that is, thy seed, ‹upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days;‘ that is, cast thy seed upon the waters when the river overflows the banks, and the seed will sink into the slime and mud, and will spring up when the waters subside, and you will find it again after many days in a rich and luxuriant harvest. Sir John Chardin thus describes this mode of sowing: They sow it (the rice) upon the water; and before sowing, while the earth is covered with water, they cause the ground to be trodden by oxen, horses, and asses, who go mid-leg deep; and this is the way they prepare the ground for sowing‘ (Harmer‘s Obs. vol. i. p. 280).

That send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass - That is, for the purpose of treading the earth while the water is on it, and preparing it for the seed. In this way the ground would need no plowing, but the seed would fall into the slime, and be sufficiently covered when the waters should subside. The idea in this verse is, that there would be a state of security succeeding the destruction of their enemies; and that they would be permitted to pursue the cultivation of the soil, unannoyed and undisturbed.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 33

Introduction

This chapter comprises a new and distinct prophecy, though manifestly relating to the same general subject as the preceding. In Isaiah 33:19 of the previous chapter, the prophet had foretold the destruction of the army of Sennacherib and this chapter is designed still further to set forth the circumstances and the effects of that destruction. That it refers to Sennacherib is apparent front the whole structure of the prophecy. So it is understood by Lowth, Rosenmuller, Grotius, and Calvin, though Vitringa supposes that it refers to the destruction of the Syrians, instead of the Assyrians, and particularly after the time, and for the crimes of Antiochus Epiphanes. All the circumstances, as well as the connection, however, agree with the invasion by Sennacherib, and agree far better with that than either with the destruction of Babylon, or the judgments that came upon the Syrians. The design of the prophecy is to assure the Jews that their nation and city would be safe notwithstanding the invasion of the Assyrian, and that Yahweh would be to them a source of constant protection and consolation Isaiah 33:21. The object of the prophecy, therefore, is to comfort them in this threatened invasion, and to lead them to look up to God.

The prophecy, or poem, is one of uncommon beauty in its structure, and is especially elegant in its expressions. It abounds, indeed, in transitions; but they are easily seen, and can be distinctly marked. The structure and design of the poem may be seen in the following analysis:

I. Woe is denounced against the Assyrian; who had invaded Judea without provocation, and who was spreading desolation over a nation that had not injured him Isaiah 33:1. This contains the general scope and purport of the chapter.

II. The Jews are introduced Isaiah 33:2 as offering up supplications to Yahweh in view of the threatened invasion, and beseeching him to be mercifull to them, and expressing their confidence in him.

III. God himself is introduced declaring the overthrow of Sennacherib Isaiah 33:3-4. This he represents Isaiah 33:3 under the image of the people - that is, the people in his army - fleeing at the noise of the tumult caused by

the desolating tempest that should sweep them away, and at the act of God's lilting up himself to scatter the nations.

IV. A chorus of Jews is introduced Isaiah 33:5-6 extolling the greatness and mercy of God Isaiah 33:5; and also celebrating the wisdom and piety of Hezekiah, who had put his confidence in God Isaiah 33:6.

V. In Isaiah 33:7-9, the despair and alarm of the Jews are described on the approach of Sennacherib. This is exhibited in the following manner:

1. The messengers whom Hezekiah had sent to Sennacherib with three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold, to propitiate his favor 2 Kings 18:14-16, return without success and weeping bitterly Isaiah 33:7.

2. The desolation is described that attended the march of Sennacherib - a desolation that extended to the highways, the cities, and to the most beautiful and fertile places, represented by hewing down Lebanon, and turning Cannel into a wilderness, Isaiah 33:8-9).

VI. God is now introduced Isaiah 33:10-13 as saying that he would take the work of the destruction of the Assyrian into his own hand, and showing that he would be himself exalted Isaiah 33:10; that he would disappoint their expectations Isaiah 33:11; that they should be totally destroyed as if by fire Isaiah 33:12, and calling on the nations near and remote to hear what he had done Isaiah 33:13.

VII. The various effects of the invasion on the inhabitants of Jerusalem are described Isaiah 33:14-19.

1. The effect on the hypocrites, producing consternation and alarm of the highest degree Isaiah 33:14.

2. This is finely contrasted with the confidence and security of the righteous in that time. They would confide in God Isaiah 33:15-16; they would see the king in his beauty Isaiah 33:17; and they would see their foe completely destroyed Isaiah 33:18-19.

VIII. The whole account is closed with a statement of the fact that Jerusalem was safe, and that the enemy would be completely destroyed Isaiah 33:20-24.

Verse 1

Wo to thee that spoilest - This description accords entirely with Sennacherib and his army, who had plundered the cities and countries

which they had invaded, and who were about to advance to Jerusalem for the same purpose (compare Isaiah 29:7-8; Isaiah 37:11).

And thou wast not spoiled - That is, thou hadst not been plundered by the Jews against whom thou art coming. It was because the war was so unprovoked and unjust, that God would bring so signal vengeance on them.

And dealest treacherously - (See the note at Isaiah 21:2). The treachery of the Assyrians consisted in the fact that when their assistance was asked by the Jews, in order to aid them against the combined forces of Syria and Samaria (see Isaiah 7:1-2), they had taken occasion from that invitation to bring desolation on Judah (see Isaiah 7:17, Isaiah 7:20; Isaiah 8:6-8, note; Isaiah 10:6, note). Hezekiah also gave to Sennacherib thirty talents of gold and three hundred talents of silver, evidently with an understanding that this was all that he demanded, and that if this was paid, he would leave the nation in peace. But this implied promise he perfidiously disregarded (see 2 Kings 18:14-15).

When thou shalt cease to spoil - This does not relier to his having voluntarily ceased to plunder, but to the fact that God would put an end to it.

Thou shalt be spoiled - This was literally fulfilled. The Assyrian monarchy lost its splendor and power, and was finally merged in the more mighty empire of Babylon. The nation was, of course, subject to the depredation of the conquerors, and compelled to submit to them. "When thou shalt make an end." The idea is, that there would be a completion, or a finishing of his acts of treachery toward the Jews, and that would be when God should overthrow him and his army.

They shall deal treacherously with thee - The words ‹they shall,‘ are here equivalent to, ‹thou shalt be dealt With in a treacherous manner.‘ The result was, that Sennacherib was treacherously slain by his own sons as he was ‹worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god‘ Isaiah 37:38, and thus the prophecy was literally fulfilled. The sense of the whole is, that God would reward their desire of plundering a nation that had not injured them by the desolation of their own land; and would recompense the perfidiousness of the kings of Assyria that had sought to subject Jerusalem to their power, by perfidiousness in the royal family itself.

Verse 2

O Lord - This is a solemn prayer to Yahweh, made by the Jews in the apprehension of the invasion of the Assyrian. It is not meant that this prayer

was actually offered, but it is a prophetic representation indicating the alarm of the Jews at his approach, and their disposition to throw themselves upon the mercy of God.

We have waited for thee - That is, we have looked for deliverance from this threatened invasion from thy hand (compare the note at Isaiah 26:8).

Be thou their arm - The arm is a symbol of strengh. It is used in the Scriptures as emblematic of the divine protection, or of the interposition of God in time of calamity and dancer Exodus 15:16; Job 40:9; Psalm 44:3; Psalm 77:15; Psalm 89:21; Psalm 98:1. Lowth proposes to read ‹our arm instead of ‹their arm;‘ and the connection would seem to demand such a reading. The Vugate and the Chaldee read it in this manner, but there is no authority from manuscripts for a change in the text. The truth seems to be, that Isaiah, impelled by prophetic inspiration, here interposes his own feelings as a Jew, and offers his own prayer that God would be the strength of the nation. The form, however, is immediately changed, and he presents the prayer of the people.

Every morning - Constantly; at all times.

In the time of trouble - Referring particularly to the trouble consequent on the invasion of the Assyrians.

Verse 3

At the noise of the tumult - Lowth supposes that this is addressed by the prophet in the name of God, or rather by God himself to the Assyrian, and that it means that notwithstanding the terror which he had caused the invaded countries, he would himself fall and become an easy prey to those whom he intended to subdue. But probably it should be regarded as a part of the address which the Jews made to Yahweh Isaiah 33:2, and the word ‹tumult‘ - המון *hâmôn* sound, noise, as of rain 1 Kings 18:41, or of music Ezekiel 26:13; Amos 5:23, or the bustle or tumult of a people 1 Samuel 4:11; 1 Samuel 14:19; Job 39:7 - refers here to the voice of God by which the army was overthrown. Yahweh is often represented as speaking to people in a voice suited to produce consternation and alarm. Thus it is said of the vision which Daniel saw of a man by the side of the river Hiddekel, ‹his words‘ were ‹like the voice of a multitude‘ (המון *hâmôn*), Daniel 10:6. And thus, in Revelation 1:10, the voice of Christ is said to have been ‹like the voice of a trulupet;‘ and in Isaiah 33:15, ‹like the sound of many waters.‘ It wilt be recollected also that it was said that God would send upon the Assyrian army ‹thunder, and an earthquake, and a great noise, with

storm and tempest, and a flame of devouring fire‘ (Isaiah 29:6; compare Isaiah 30:30); and it is doubtless to this prediction that the prophet refers here. God would come forth with the voice of indignation, and would scatter the combined armies of the Assyrian.

The people fled - The people in the army of the Assyrian. A large part of them Were slain by the angel of the Lord in a single night, but a portion of them with Sennacherib escaped and fled to their own land (Isaiah 37:36-37.

At the lifting up of thyself - Of Yahweh; as when one rouses himself to strike.

The nations - The army of Sennacherib was doubtless made up of levies from the nations that had been subdued, and that composed the Assyrian empire.

Verse 4

And your spoil - The booty that the Assyrian army bad gathered in their march toward Jerusalem, and which would now be left by them to be collected by the Jews.

Shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar - The grammatical construction here is such that this may admit of two interpretations. It may either mean, as the caterpillar or the locust is gathered; or it may mean, as the caterpillar gathers its spoil. It often occurred that in countries where the locust was an article of food, they were scraped together in large quantities, and thrown into ditches, or into reservoirs, and retained to be eaten. This is the custom in some parts of Africa. But the meaning here is, undoubtedly, that the plunder of the Assyrian army would be collected by the Jews, as the locust gathered its food. The sense is, that as locusts spread themselves out over a land, as they go to and fro without rule and without molestation, gathering whatever is in their way, and consuming everything, so the Jews in great numbers, and without regular military array, would run to and fro collecting the spoils of the Assyrian army. In a country where such devastation was made by the caterpillar and locust as in Palestine, this was a very striking figure. The word rendered ‹caterpillar‘ here חסיל *châseyl* from חסל *châsal* to cut off, consume), properly denotes the devourer, and is applied usually to a species of locust. So it is understood here by most of the versions. The Septuagint renders it, ‹As if one were gathering locusts, so will they insult you.‘

Verse 5

The Lord is exalted - (compare Psalm 97:9). The prophet here introduces a chorus of the Jews, celebrating the praises of God for delivering them from the Assyrian.

He hath filled Zion with judgment - That is, the effect of his destroying his enemies will be to fill Jerusalem with reverence for his name. The deliverance would be so signal, and the manifestation of the divine mercy so great, that the effect would be that the nation would turn to God, and acknowledge his gracious interposition (see Isaiah 30:22-26, Isaiah 30:29; Isaiah 31:6; Isaiah 32:15-18).

Verse 6

And wisdom and knowledge shall be - This verse contains evidently an address to Hezekiah, and asserts that his reign would be characterized by the prevalence of piety and knowledge. This chapter abounds in sudden transitions; and it accords with its general character that when Yahweh had been addressed Isaiah 33:5, there should then be a direct address to Hezekiah.

The stability - This word denotes firmness, steadiness, constancy; and means that in his times knowledge and the fear of the Lord would be settled on a firm foundation. The whole history of the virtuous reign of Hezekiah shows that this was fulfilled (see 2 Kings 18)

And strength of salvation - Or saving strength; that is, mighty or distinguished salvation. Thy times shah be distinguished for great reforms, and for the prevalence of the doctrines of salvation.

The fear of the Lord is his treasure - The principal riches of Hezekiah. His reign shall not be distinguished for wars and conquests, for commercial enterprise, or for external splendor, but for the prevalence of piety, and the fear of the Lord.

Verse 7

Behold - This verse introduces a new subject by a very sudden transition. It is designed, with the two following, to exhibit the desolation of the land on the invasion of Sennacherib, and the consternation that would prevail. For this purpose, the prophet introduces Isaiah 33:7 the ambassadors who had been sent to sue for peace, as having sought it in vain, and as weeping now bitterly; he represents Isaiah 33:8 the desolation that abounded, and the fact that Sennacherib refused to come to any terms; and Isaiah 33:9 the extended desolations that had come upon the fairest portions of the land.

Their valiant ones - The ‹valiant ones‘ of the Jews who had been sent to Sennacherib to obtain conditions of pence, or to enter into a negotiation with him to spare the city and the nation. The word which is rendered here ‹valiant ones‘ (אראלם *'ere'elâm*) has given great perplexity to expositors. It occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. The Septuagint renders the verse, ‹With the dread of you shall they be terrified; they, of whom you have been afraid, will, for fear of you, raise a grievous cry.‘ Jerome renders it, ‹Behold, they seeing, cry without,‘ as if the word was derived from ראה *râ'âh* to see. The Chaldee renders it, ‹And when it shall be revealed to them, the messengers of the people who went to announce peace, shall cry bitterly.‘ The Syriac, ‹If he shall permit himself to be seen by them, they shall weep bitterly.‘ Symmachus and Theodotion render it, Ἰδοὺ ὀφθήσομαι αὐτοῖς *Idou ophthēsomai autois* - ‹Lo, I will appear to them.‘ So Aquila, Ὁραθήσομαι αὐτοῖς *Horathēsomai autois* Most or all the versions seem to have read it as if it were compounded of לם אראה *'ere'eh lm* - ‹I will appear to them.‘ But probably the word is formed from אראל *'ăre'el* the same as אריאל *'ărîy'êl* (Ariel), ‹a hero‘ (see the note at Isaiah 29:1), and means “their hero” in a collective sense, or their heroes; that is, their men who were distinguished as military leaders, and who were sent to propose terms of peace with Sennacherib. The most honorable and valiant men would be selected, of course, for this purpose (compare the note at Isaiah 30:4), but they had made the effort to obtain peace in vain, and were returning with consternation and alarm.

Shall cry without - They would lift up their voice with weeping as they returned, and publicly proclaim with bitter lamentation that their efforts to obtain peace had failed.

The ambassadors of peace - When Sennacherib invaded fife land, and had advanced as far as to Lachish, Hezekiah sent messengers to him with a rich present, having stripped the temple of its gold, and sent him all the silver which was in his treasury, for the purpose of propitiating his favor, and of inducing him to return to his own land 2 Kings 18:14-16. But it was all in vain. Sennacherib sent his generals with a great host against Jerusalem, and was unmoved by all the treasures which Hezekiah had sent to him, and by his solicitations for peace 2 Kings 18:17. It was to the failure of this embassy that Isaiah refers in the passage before us.

Verse 8

The highways lie waste - This verse contains a description of the desolations that had been caused by the invasion of Sennacherib. Some have understood it as containing the account which the ambassadors sent by Hezekiah gave of the effects of the invasion. Thus Grotius interprets it. But it is probably a description made by the prophet himself, and is designed to state one cause why the messengers that had been sent out wept bitterly. They had not only failed of inducing Sennacherib to abandon his purpose of attacking Jerusalem, but they had witnessed the effects of his invasion already. The public ways were desolate. In the consternation and alarm that was produced by his approach, the roads that had been usually thronged were now solitary and still. A mournful desolation already prevailed, and they apprehended still greater calamities, and hence, they wept.

The wayfaring man ceaseth - Hebrew, ‹He that passes along the road ceases.‘ That is, there is a cessation of travel. No one is seen passing along the streets that used to be thronged.

He hath broken the covenant - This may either mean that the Assyrian king had violated the compact which had been made with him by Ahaz, by which he was to come and aid Jerusalem against the allied armies of Syria and Samaria (see the notes at 2 Kings 18:14. In that embassy Hezekiah said, ‹I have offended, return from me; that which thou puttest on me I will bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.‘ To pay this, Hezekiah exhausted his treasury, and even stripped the temple of its golden ornaments 2 Kings 18:15-16. A compact was thus made by which it was understood that Sennacherib was to withdraw his army, and depart from the land. But notwithstanding this, he still persisted in his purpose, and immediately despatched a part of his army to lay siege to Jerusalem. All the treaties, therefore, had been violated. He had disregarded that which was made with Ahaz, and that which he had now himself made with Hezekiah, and was advancing in violation of all to lay siege to the city.

He hath despised the cities - That is, he disregards their defenses, and their strength; he invades and takes all that comes in his way. He speaks of them with contempt and scorn as being unable to stand before him, or to resist his march. See his vain and confident boasting in Isaiah 10:9; Isaiah 36:19.

He regardeth no man - He spares no one, and he observes no compact with any man.

Verse 9

The earth mourneth - The land through which he has passed. For the sense of this phrase, see the note at Isaiah 24:4.

Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down - For the situation of Lebanon, see the note at Isaiah 10:34. Lebanon was distinguished for its ornaments of beautiful cedars. Here iris represented as being stript of these ornaments, and as covered with shame on that account. There is not any direct historical evidence that Sennacherib had advanced to Lebanon, though there are some intimations that this had occurred (see the note at Isaiah 14:8), and it was certainly a part of his boast that he had done it (see Isaiah 37:24). There is no improbability in supposing that he had sent a part of his army to plunder the country in the vicinity of Lebanon (see Isaiah 20:1).

Sharon is like a wilderness - Sharon was the name of a district south of mount Carmel along the coast of the Mediterranean, extending to Cesarea and Joppa. The name was almost proverbial to express any place of extraordinary beauty and fertility (see 1 Chronicles 5:16; 1 Chronicles 27:29; Isaiah 35:2; Isaiah 65:10). There was also another Sharon on the east side of the Jordan, and in the vicinity of Bashan, which was also a fertile region 1 Chronicles 5:16. To this, it is more probable that the prophet here refers, though it is not certain. The object seems to be to mention the most fertile places in the land as being now desolate.

Bashan - For an account of the situation of Bashan, subsequently called Batanea, see the note at Isaiah 2:13.

And Carmel - (see the note at Isaiah 29:17).

Shake off their fruits - The words ‹their fruits,‘ are not in the Hebrew. The Septuagint reads this: ‹Galilee and Carmel are made bare‘ (φανερὰ ἔσται, κ.τ.λ. *phanera estai etc* The Hebrew word נער *noʿēr* probably means to shake; to shake out or off; and refers here to the fact probably that Bashan and Carmel are represented as having shaken off their leaves, and were now lying desolate as in winter.

Verse 10

Now - This verse commences another transition. In the previous verses, the desolation of the land had been described, and the hopelessness of obtaining any terms of favor from Sennacherib, or of binding him to any compact, bad been stated. In this state of things, when inevitable ruin seemed to be coming upon the nation, God said that he would interpose.

Will I rise - To vengeance; or to punish the invading host. The emphasis in this passage should be placed on ‹I,‘ indicating that Yahweh would himself do what could not be effected by people.

Now will I be exalted - That is, God would so interpose that it should be manifest that it was his hand that brought deliverance.

Verse 11

Ye shall conceive chaff - An address of God to the Assyrians. The figure is one that denotes that their counsels would be in vain. Chaff and stubble are used in the Scriptures, in contrast with grain, to denote anything which is not solid, nutritious, or substantial; then anything which is frivolous, useless, vain. A similar image occurs in Isaiah 26:18 (see the note on that place; compare Isaiah 59:4).

Your breath as fire shall devour you - The word ‹breath‘ here (רוח *rûach* spirit) is evidently used in the sense of the Θυμός *thumos* and denotes anger, as in Isaiah 30:28. It refers to the haughty and arrogant spirit of Sennacherib; the enraged and excited mind intent on victory and plunder. The sense is, that his mind, so intent on conquest - so proud, excited, and angry, would be the means of his own destruction. Lowth proposes to read ‹my spirit,‘ but for this change there is no authority from manuscripts (see the notes at Isaiah 1:31).

Verse 12

And the people - In the army of Sennacherib.

As the burnings of lime - As if placed in a burning lime-kiln, where they must certainly be destroyed (see Isaiah 30:33; compare Amos 2:1).

As thorns cut up - As thorns, or small brushwood, that has been long cut up and perfectly dried are speedily consumed, so shall it be with the Assyrian army. This is an image like many that are employed, denoting that the destruction of the army of the Assyrians would be sudden and entire.

Verse 13

Hear, ye that are far off - This is an address of Yahweh, indicating that the destruction of the Assyrian army would be so signal that it would be known to distant nations, and would constitute an admonition to them.

Ye that are near - Ye Jews; or the nations immediately adjacent to Judea. The phrase ‹far and near,‘ is equivalent to all.

Verse 14

The sinners in Zion are afraid - This verse is evidently designed to describe the alarm that was produced in Jerusalem on impenitent sinners

and hypocrites by a view of the judgment of God on the army of Sennacherib. They would see his wrath on his enemies then, and in view of the terrors of his indignation in relation to that army they would be alarmed, and would ask how it would be possible for them to endure such wrath forever. If the effect of the wrath of God even for a night, when it should blaze against that great army, was so terrible, how could it be borne forever? This seems to be the general idea of the passage. A great variety of interpretations have been proposed, which may be seen in Vitringa and Poole. The phrase, ‹sinners in Zion‘ here refers to the wicked and rebellious in Jerusalem.

Fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites - Those who professed to serve God, and yet who were secretly depending on the aid of Egypt (see Isaiah 31:1-9; compare the note at Isaiah 9:17). The sentiment here is, that those who professedly are the friends of God, but who are secretly and really his enemies, are often alarmed at his judgments. When the judgments of God overtake sinners, they are conscious that they deserve also his wrath, and their minds are filled with consternation. So in a time of prevailing sickness, or of pestilence, they who have really no confidence in God, and no evidence that they are prepared to die, are filled with alarm. A true friend of God will be calm in such scenes; a hypocrite will show by his consternation that he has no religion.

Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? - Some have understood this as referring to the fires which they supposed the Assyrian would kindle in Jerusalem, apprehending that he would take and burn the city. But the more probable interpretation is that which refers it to the judgment that would be brought upon the Assyrians - the burning wrath of God like fire that would consume them. The destruction of the Assyrians is repeatedly represented under the image of a storm and tempest, where there would be the ‹flame of devouring fire‘ (see the note at Isaiah 29:6). The sense is this: ‹God has suddenly consumed that immense army of his foes. Such must be the awful punishment of the wicked. How can we abide it? We also, through among his people, are his foes, and are exposed to his wrath. How can we endure the terrors of that day when his burning indignation shall also overtake us?‘

Shall dwell with everlasting burnings - Who among us could endure to suffer amid such burning wrath forever? If that wrath is so fierce as to consume such an immense host in a single night, who could abide it should

it be continued forever and forever? This is the obvious sense of this passage; and it implies:

1. That hypocrites will be greatly alarmed when they see punishment come upon the open and avowed enemies of God.

2. That in such times they will have none of the peace and quiet confidence which his true friends have.

3. That such an alarm is evidence of conscious guilt and hypocrisy.

4. That the persons here spoken of had a belief of the doctrine of eternal punishment - a belief which hypocrites and sinners always have, else why should they be alarmed?

5. That the punishment of hypocrites in the church will be dreadful and terrific. This seems to have been the conviction here. They saw that if such judgments came upon those who had no knowledge of the true God, it must be infinitely more terrible on those who had been trained amidst the institutions of religion, and who had professed attachment to Yahweh. And so it will be in a preeminent degree among those who have been trained in the Christian church, and who have been the professed but insincere followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 15

He that walketh righteously - In this and the following verses the prophet presents, in contrast, the confidence and the security of the righteous. He first, in this verse, describes the characteristics of the righteous, and in the following verses their confidence in God, and their security and safety. The first characteristic of the righteous man is that he walks righteously; that is, he lives righteously; he does right.

And speaketh uprightly - The second characteristic - his words are well-ordered. lie is not false, perfidious, slanderous, or obscene in his words. If a private individual, his words are simple, honest, and true; if a magistrate, his decisions are according to justice.

He that despiseth the gain of oppressions - Margin, ‹Deceits‘. The third characteristic - he abhors the gain that is the result of imposition, false dealing, and false weights. Or if it mean oppressions, as the word usually does, then the sense is, that he does not oppress the poor, or take advantage

of their needy condition, or affix exorbitant prices, or extort payment in a manner that is harsh and cruel.

That shaketh his hands from holding of bribes - The fourth characteristic - this relates particularly to magistrates. They adjudge causes according to justice, and do not allow their judgment to be swayed by the prospect of reward.

That stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood - This is the fifth characteristic. It means, evidently, he who does not listen to a proposal to shed blood, or to any scheme of violence, and robbery, and murder (see the note at Isaiah 1:15).

And shutteth his eyes from seeing evil - He does not desire to see it; he is not found in the places where it is committed. A righteous man should not only have no part in evil, but he will keep himself if possible from being a witness of it. A man who sees all the evil that is going forward; that is present in every brawl and contention, is usually a man who has a fondness for such scenes, and who may be expected to take part in them. It is a remarkable fact that very few of the Society of Friends are ever seen in courts of justice as witnesses. The reason is, that they have no fondness for seeing the strifes and contentions of people, and are not found in those places where evil is usually committed. This is the sixth characteristic of the righteous man; and the sum of the whole is, that he keeps himself from all forms of iniquity.

Verse 16

He shall dwell on high - See the margin. Heights, or high places, were usually places of safety, being, inaccessible to an enemy. The sense here is, that such a man as is described in Isaiah 33:15, should be preserved from alarm and danger, as if his habitation were on a lofty cliff or rock. The particular and special meaning is, that he should be safe from the anger, wrath, and consuming fire, which the sinner and the hypocrite dreaded Isaiah 33:14.

The munitions of rocks - The literal translation of this place would be, ‹The strongholds of the rocks shall be his lofty fortress‘ (compare the note at Isaiah 2:21).

Bread shall be given him - He shall be sustained, and his life shall be preserved.

Verse 17

Thine eyes - The eyes of the righteous, described in Isaiah 33:15.

Shall see the king in his beauty - Some understand this of the Assyrian king. Thus Kimchi understands it, and supposes it means that they shall see him at the walls of Jerusalem; that is, shall see him destroyed. Vitringa supposes it means Yahweh himself as the king of his people, and that they should see him in his glory. Others suppose it relates to the Messiah. But the immediate connection requires us to understand it of Hezekiah (compare the note at Isaiah 32:1-2). The sense is, ‹You shall be defended from the hostile army of the Assyrian. You shall be permitted to live under the peaceful and prosperous reign of your pious monarch, and shall see him, not with diminished territory and resources, but with the appropriate magnificence which becomes a monarch of Israel.‘

The land that is very far off - You shall be permitted to look to the remotest part of the land of Judea as delivered from enemies, and as still under the happy scepter of your king. You shall not be confined by a siege, and straitened within the narrow walls of Jerusalem. The empire of Hezekiah shall be extended over the wide dominions that appropriately belong to him, and you shall be permitted to range freely over the whole land, even over the parts that are now occupied by the forces of the Assyrian. Virgil has a beautiful passage remarkably similar to this:

- *jurat ire, et Dorica castra,*

Desertosque videre locos, litusque relicturn.

AEn. ii. 28.

Verse 18

Thine heart - The heart of the people of Jerusalem.

Shall meditate terror - This is similar to the expression in Virgil:

- *forsan et haec olim meminisse jurabit*.

AEn. ii. 203.

The sense here is, ‹You shall hereafter think over all this alarm and distress. When the enemy is destroyed, the city saved, and the king shall reign in magnificence over all the nation then enjoying peace and prosperity, you shall recall these days of terror and alarm, and shall then ask with gratitude and astonishment, Where are they who caused this alarm? Where are now they who so confidently calculated on taking the city? They are all gone - and gone in a manner suited to excite astonishment and adoring gratitude.‘ ‹Sweet is the recollection,‘ says Rosenmuller, ‹of dangers that are passed.‘

Where is the scribe? - How soon, how suddenly has he vanished! The word scribe here (ספר *sîphēr*) evidently refers to some prominent class of officers in the Assyrian army. It is from ספר *sâphar* to count, to number, to write; and probably refers to a secretary, perhaps a secretary of state or of war, or an inspector-general, who had the charge of reviewing an army 2 Kings 25:19; Jeremiah 37:15; Jeremiah 52:25.

Where is the receiver? - Margin, as in Hebrew, ‹Weigher.‘ Vulgate, ‹Where is he that ponders the words of the law?‘ The Septuagint, ‹Where are the counselors (ουμβουλεύοντες *sumbouleuontes*)?‘ Probably the word refers to him who weighed the tribute, or the pay of the Soldiers; and means, doubtless, some officer in the army of the Assyrian; probably one whose office it was to have charge of the military chest, and to pay the army.

Where is he that counted the towers? - That is, who made an estimate of the strength of Jerusalem - either Sennacherib, or someone appointed by him to reconnoitre and report on the means which the city bad of defense (compare Isaiah 36:4).

Verse 19

Thou shalt not see a fierce people - Or, rather, ‹this fierce and boasting people you shall not see.‘ They shall not enter the city; but though they are advancing with so much confidence, they shall be suddenly cut, off and destroyed. The word rendered “fierce,” (נועז *nôʿâz* from נעז *yâʿaz*), probably means strong, or wicked. Lowth renders it, ‹barbarous people,‘ as if it were לועז *lôʿēz* Michaelis also adopts this reading by supposing an error in transcribing, a change of the Hebrew letter נ (*n*) into the Hebrew letter ל (*l*). Such a change might have easily occurred, but there is no authority from the manuscripts for making an alteration in the text The word strong, or mighty, agrees well with the connection.

A people of a deeper speech - A people whose language is so deep, that is, so dark, or obscure, that it cannot be understood by you. This refers to the army of the Assyrians, who spoke the Syrian language, which was understood by some of the Jews, but which was unintelligible to the mass (see Isaiah 36:11).

Than thou canst perceive - Than you can understand.

Of a stammering tongue - (see the note at Isaiah 28:11). Margin, ‹Ridiculous;‘ a sense which the Hebrew will bear, but the more appropriate meaning is that of a barbarous, or unintelligible foreign language.

Verse 20

Look upon Zion - Lowth renders this, ‹Thou shalt see Zion,‘ by Changing the Hebrew text in conformity with the Chaldee. There is no doubt that this accords with the sense of the passage, but there is no authority for the change It stands in contrast with what had been said in Isaiah 33:19. There, the prophet had said that they should no more see those foreign armies that were coming to invade them. Here he directs them to look upon Zion, implying that they should be permitted to behold Zion in a situation such as he proceeds to describe it. ‹You shall not see that foreign army carrying desolation as they design through the city and the land. They shall be destroyed. But behold Zion! Her you shall see quiet, prosperous, happy, peaceful.‘

The city of our solemnities - Where the religious solemnities of the nation were celebrated.

A quiet habitation - Free from invasion, and from the terrors of war.

A tabernacle - A tent; a dwelling, such as was common in the nomadic mode of life in the East. The whole city is described under the image of a tent that is fixed and undisturbed, where the family may reside in safety and comfort.

Not one of the stakes thereof - The ‹stakes‘ here refer to the poles or fixtures which were driven into the ground in order to fasten the tent, to enable them to spread it, or to the small stakes or pins that were driven in the ground in order to secure the cords by which the tent was extended. The drawing in the book will give you an idea of the mode in which tents were commonly pitched, and will serve to explain this passage, as well as the similar passage in Isaiah 54:2.

Shall ever be removed - It shall be a fixed and permanent habitation. The word ‹ever‘ must mean an indefinite period of duration. Sennacherib had designed to blot out the name of the people of God, and destroy their separate and independent existence. The prophet says that that should never be done. Jerusalem, the residence of his people and the emblem of his church, would be safe, and would not be destroyed. There would always be a safe and quiet abode for the friends of the Most High. In this sense it accords with the declaration of the Saviour, that the gates of hell should not prevail against his church.

Neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken - Cords were used in tents to fasten the cloth to the poles, or to fasten it to the pins which had

been driven into the ground, in order to extend the cloth, and to make it firm.

Verse 21

But there - In Jersalem; or in his church, of which Jerusalem was the emblem.

The glorious Lord - Lowth renders it, ‹The glorious name of Yahweh,‘ שׁם *shâm* to be a noun, as if it were pointed שׁם *shēm* So the Syriac and the Septuagint read it. The word ‹glorious‘ (אדיר *'adiyr*) means magnificent; denoting that Yahweh would manifest himself there as magnificent or great in the destruction of his enemies, and in the protection of his people.

Will be unto us a place - It seems to be harsh to say that Yahweh would be a place; but the meaning is, that he would be to them as such a place; that is, his presence and blessing would be such as would be represented by broad rivers and streams flowing through a land, or encompassing a city. Rivers and streams are sources of fertility, the channels of commerce, and objects of great beauty. Such seems to be the idea here. The presence of Yahweh would be to them a source of great prosperity and happiness; and a beauty would be thrown around the city and nation like majestic and useful rivers. It is possible that there may have been some allusion here to cities that were encompassed or penetrated by rivers and canals, like Babylon, or Thebes in Egypt. Such cities derived important advantages from rivers. But Jerusalem had nothing of this nature to contribute to its prosperity or beauty. The prophet says, that the presence of Yahweh would be to them what these rivers were to other cities.

Of broad rivers and streams - Hebrew, ‹Rivers, streams broad of hands.‘ The sense seems to be, broad rivers that are made up of confluent streams; or rivers to which many streams are tributary - like the Nile - and which are therefore made broad, and capable of navigation. The phrase used here in the Hebrew, ‹broad of hands‘ - properly denotes broad on both hands, or as we would say, on both sides; that is, the shores would be separated far from each other. The word hand is often used in Hebrew to denote the side, the shore, or the bank of a river. The following extract will show the importance of such rivers: ‹In such a highly cultivated country as England, and where great drought is almost unknown, we have not an opportunity to observe the fertilizing influence of a broad river; but in South Africa, where almost no human means are employed for improving the land, the benign influence of rivers is most evident. The Great, or

Orange River, is a remarkable instance of this. I traveled on its banks, at one time, for five or six weeks, when, for several hundred miles, I found both sides of it delightfully covered with trees of various kinds, all in health and vigor, and abundance of the richest verdure; but all the country beyond the reach of its influence was complete desert. Everything appeared to be struggling for mere existence; so that we might be said to have had the wilderness on one side, and a kind of paradise on the other.' (Campbell)

Wherein shall go - The mention of broad rivers here seems to have suggested to the prophet the idea that navigable rivers, while they were the channels of commerce, also gave to an enemy the opportunity of approaching easily with vessels of war, and attacking a city. He therefore says that no such consequence would follow, from the fact that Yahweh would be to them in the place of broad rivers. No advantage could be taken from what was to them a source of prosperity and happiness. While other cities were exposed to an enemy from the very sources from which they derived their wealth and prosperity, it would not be so with them. From what constituted their glory - the protection of Yahweh - no danger ever could be apprehended. It had all the advantages of broad rivers and streams, but with none of their attendant exposures and perils.

No galley with oars - That is, no small vessel - for larger vessels were propelled by sails. Still the reference is doubtless to a vessel of war; since vessels of commerce would be an advantage, and it would not be an object of congratulation that none of them should be there. "Neither shall gallant ship." No great (אדיר *'adiyr*) or magnificent ship; no ship fitted out for purposes of war. The sense is, therefore, that though Jerusalem should be thus favored, yet it would be unapproachable by an enemy.

Verse 22

For the Lord is our judge - Yahweh will be to us nothing but a source of happiness, truth, and prosperity. His presence will be to us only a blessing, and a means of success and joy. The repetition of the name Yahweh three times is common in the Scriptures.

Verse 23

Thy tacklings - This is evidently an address to Sennacherib. The mention of the war-galley and the ship seems to have suggested the application of the figure to the enemies of the Jews, and particularly to Sennacherib. The prophet, therefore, compares the Assyrian to a ship that was rendered unserviceable; whose sails were unfastened, and whose mast

could not be made firm, and which was therefore at the mercy of winds and waves. The Hebrew which is rendered here ‹thy tacklings are loosed,‘ means ‹thy cords are let go;‘ that is, the cords or ropes that fastened the sails, the masts, and the rudder, were loosened. In such a condition the ship would, of course, go to ruin.

They could not well strengthen their mast - They could not fix it firm or secure. It is evident that if the mast cannot be made firm, it is impossible to navigate a ship. It is to be observed here, however, that the word which our translators have rendered ‹well‘ (כֵּן *kên*), not only signifies ‹well‘ as an adverb, but is also used as a noun, and means a stand or station Genesis 40:13; Genesis 41:13; Daniel 11:20-21; and also a base or pedestal (Exodus 30:18, Exodus 30:28; Exodus 31:9; Exodus 35:16; Exodus 38:8; Leviticus 8:11; 1 Kings 7:31. It may be used here to denote the socket or base of the ship‘s mast; or the cross beam which the mast passed through, and which held it firm. This was called by the Greeks ἱστοπέδη *histopedē* (Odyssey xii. 51), or μεσόδμη, ἱστοδόκη *mesodmē histodokē* The translation, therefore, ‹They could not make fast the base of their mast,‘ would better express the sense of the Hebrew. The Septuagint renders it: ‹Thy mast gave way.‘

They could not spread the sail - Of course, as the ropes were all loosened, and the mast could not be made firm, it Would be in vain to attempt to spread a sail. The sense is, that the plan of the Assyrian would be disconcerted, his scheme discomfited, and his enterprise would come to naught. He and his army would be like a vessel at sea without sails.

Then is the prey of a great spoil divided - The word ‹divided‘ here means shall be distributed or apportioned, as plunder was usually among victors. The sense is, that much booty would be taken from the army of the Assyrian and distributed among the Jews (see the note at Isaiah 33:4). It is certain that Hezekiah had given to Sennacherib three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold, and had stripped the temple, and given the gold that was on the temple to him 2 Kings 18:14-16, and tiffs treasure was doubtless in the camp of the Assyrians. And it is certain that after this invasion of Sennacherib, the treasures of Hezekiah were replenished, and his wealth so much abounded, that he made an improper and ostentatious display of it to the ambassadors that came from Babylon 2 Kings 20:13-15; and there is every presumption, therefore, that a great amount of spoil was collected from the camp of the Assyrian.

The lame take the prey - It shall be so abundant, and shall be so entirely abandoned by the Assyrians, that even the feeble and the defenseless shall go forth to the camp and take the spoil that is left.

Verse 24

And the inhabitant - The inhabitant of Jerusalem.

Shall not say, I am sick - That is, probably, the spoil shall be so abundant, and the facility for taking it so great, that even the sick, the aged, and the infirm shall go forth nerved with new vigor to gather the spoil.

The people that dwell therein - In Jerusalem.

Shall be forgiven their iniquity - This is equivalent to saying that the calamities of the invasion would be entirely removed. This invasion is represented as coming upon them as a judgment for their sins. When the Assyrian should be overthrown, it would be a proof that the sin which had been the cause of the invasion had been forgiven, and that God was now disposed to show them favor and mercy. It is common in the Scriptures to represent any calamity as the consequence of sin, to identify the removal of the calamity and the forgiveness of the sin. Thus, the Saviour said Mark 2:5 to the man afflicted with the palsy, ‹Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.‘ And when the scribes complained, he urged that the power of forgiving sins and of healing disease was the same, or that the forgiveness of sin was equivalent to the removal of disease Mark 2:9.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 34

Introduction

The thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth chapters make one distinct and beautiful prophecy, consisting of two parts; the first containing a denunciation of judgment on the enemies of the Jews, particularly Edom Isaiah 35:1-10)

At what time the prophecy was delivered it is uncertain, and, indeed, can be determined by nothing in the prophecy itself. It is observable, however, that it is the close of the first part of the prophecies of Isaiah, the remaining chapters to the fortieth, which commences the second part of the prophecies, being occupied with an historical description of the invasion of Sennacherib and his army. It has been supposed (see the Introduction, Sections 2,3,) that between the delivery of the prophecies in the first and second portion of Isaiah, an interval of some years elapsed, and that fire second part was delivered for his own consolation, and the consolation of the people, near the close of his life.

A somewhat similar purpose, as I apprehend, led to the composition and publication of the prophecy before us. The general strain of his prophecies thus far has been, that however numerous and mighty were the enemies of the Jews, the people of God would be delivered from them all. Such was the case in regard to the allied armies of Syria and Samaria Isaiah 15:1-9; Isaiah 16:1-14; of Damascus and Ethiopia Isaiah 17:1-14; Isaiah 18:1-7; of Egypt Isaiah 20:1-6; and more particularly of the Assyrians under Sennacherib Isaiah 25:1-12; 2933The prophecy before us I regard as a kind of summing up, or recapitulation of all that he had delivered; and the general idea is, that the people of God would be delivered from all their foes, and that happier times under the Messiah would succeed all their calamities. This he had expressed often in the particular prophecies; he here expresses it in a summary and condensed manner.

Keeping this general design of the prophecy in view, we may observe that it consists of the following parts:

I. A general statement that all the enemies of the people of God would be destroyed Isaiah 34:1-4.

1. The nations of the earth are summoned to see this, and to become acquainted with the purpose of God thus to destroy all his enemies Isaiah 34:1.

2. The destruction of the enemies of God described under the image of a great slaughter Isaiah 34:2-3.

3. The same destruction described under the image of the heavens rolled together as a scroll Isaiah 34:4.

II. This general truth particularly applied to Edom or Idumea as among the most virulent of their enemies Isaiah 34:5-17.

1. Yahweh‘s vengeance would come upon the land of Idumea, and the land would be covered with the slain, and soaked in blood Isaiah 34:5-8.

2. The entire and utter desolation of the land of Idumea is foretold. The kingdom should be destroyed, the land laid waste, and the whole country become a dwelling place of wild beasts Isaiah 34:9-17.

III. The happy times that would succeed - the times of the Messiah - are exhibited Isaiah 35:1-10 in language of great beauty and sublimity. This is the substance of all that the prophet had predicted, and all his visions terminate there. The wilderness shall blossom; and the sick and afflicted shall be healed; the desolate lands shall be fertile; there shall be no enemy to annoy, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.

As so large a part of this prophecy relates to Edom, or Idumea, it may be proper to preface the exposition of the chapter with a brief notice of the history of that country, and of the causes for which God denounced vengeance upon it.

Idumea was the name given by the Greeks to the land of Edom, the country which was settled by Esau. The territory which they occupied extended originally from the Dead Sea to the Elanitic gulf of the Red Sea. Their territory, however, they extended considerably by conquest, and carried their anna to the east and northeast of Moab, and obtained possession of tile country of which Bozrah was the chief city. To this they had access through the intervening desert without crossing the country of the Moabites or Ammonites. The capital of East Idumea was Bozrah; the capital of South Edom was Petra or Selah, called, in 2 Kings 14:7, Joktheel (see the notes at Isaiah 16:1).

This country received its name from Esau, the son of Isaac, and the twin brother of Jacob. He was called Edom, which signifies red, from the color of the red pottage which he obtained from Jacob by the sale of his birthright Genesis 25:30. After his marriage, he removed to mount Seir, and made that his permanent abode, and the country adjacent to it received the name of Edom. Mount Seir had been occupied by a people called Horites, who were displaced by Esau, when he took possession of their country and made it his own Deuteronomy 2:12. The Edomites were at first governed by princes, improperly translated ‹dukes‘ in Numbers 20:14-19.

To this reasonable request the king of Edom sent a positive refusal, and came out with a strong army to resist them Numbers 20:20. This refusal was long remembered by the Jews, and was one cause of the hostile feeling which was cherished against them. The kingdom of Edom seems to have risen to a considerable degree of prosperity. There is, indeed, no direct mention made of it after this until the time of David; but it seems to have then risen into so much importance as to have attracted his attention. David carried his arms there after having obtained a victory over the Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites. It is not known, indeed, what was the cause of this war, but it is known that he killed eighteen thousand Edomites in the valley of Salt 2 Samuel 8:13; 1 Chronicles 18:12, and the rest of them were either brought into subjection under Joab, or forced to fly into foreign countries. Hadad, their young king, fled to Egypt and was favorably received by Pharaoh, and was highly honored at his court.

He was married to the sister of Tahpanes, who was the queen of Egypt 1 Kings 11:15-20. Yet though he lived at the court of Pharaoh, he waited only for an opportunity to recover his kingdom, and when David and Joab were dead, he proposed to the king of Egypt to make an effort to accomplish it. He returned to Idumea, but was unsuccessful in his attempts to overcome the garrisons which David had stationed to guard and secure the country (Joe. Ant. viii. 2). The kingdom of Edom continued under the house of David until the time of Jehoshaphat, and was probably governed by deputies or viceroys appointed by the kings of Judah. In the reign of Jehoshaphat they joined the Moabites and Ammonites in an attempt to recover their freedom, but they were unsuccessful. In the reign of Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, however, they rose in a body, and though they

suffered great slaughter, yet they regained their liberty 2 Chronicles 21:8-10.

After this, no attempts were made to subdue them for more than sixty years. In the reign of Amaziah, king of Judah, however, they were attacked, and ten thousand of them fell in battle in the valley of Salt, and many were made prisoners; their capital, Selah, was taken by storm, and the two thousand captives were by Amaziah's orders thrown down the ragged precipices near the city, and dashed in pieces (2 Kings 14:7; 2 Chronicles 25:12; Universal History, vol. i. p. 380; Ed. Lond. 1779,8vo). When the Jews were subdued by the Babylonians, and carried captive, they seem to have regarded it as a favorable opportunity to avenge all the injustice which they had suffered from the hands of the Jews. They joined the Babylonians in their attempts to subdue Jerusalem, and exulted in the fall and ruin of the city.

Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom
In the day of Jerusalem; who said
Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.
Psalm 137:7

They seem to have resolved to take full vengeance for the fact that their nation had been so long subjected by David and his successors; to have cut off such of the Jews as attempted to escape; to have endeavored to level the whole city with the ground; to have rejoiced in the success of the Babylonians, and to have imbrued their hands in the blood of those whom the Chaldeans had left - and were thus held to be guilty of the crime of fratricide by God (see particularly Obadiah 1:10-12, Obadiah 1:18; Ezekiel 25:12-14; Ezekiel 35:3-15). It was for this especially that they were denounced and threatened by the prophets with heavy judgment, and with the utter destruction of the nation Isaiah 34:5, Isaiah 34:10-17; Jeremiah 49:7-10, Jeremiah 49:12-18; Ezekiel 25:12-15; Ezekiel 35:1-15; Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11; Obadiah 1:2-3, Obadiah 1:8, Obadiah 1:17-18; Malachi 1:3-4). This refusing to aid their brethren the Jews, and joining with the enemies of the people of God, and exulting in their success, was the great crime in their history which was to call down the divine vengeance, and terminate in their complete and utter ruin.

But their exultation does not long continue, and their cruelty to the Jews did not long remain unpunished. Five years after the taking of Jerusalem,

Nebuchadnezzar humbled all the states around Judea, and particularly Idumea Jeremiah 25:15-26; Malachi 1:3-4.

During the Jewish exile, it would appear the Edomites pressed forward into the south of Palestine, of which they took possession as far as to Hebron. Here they were subsequently attacked and subdued by John Hyrcanus, and compelled to adopt the laws and customs of the Jews. The name Idumea was transferred to this part of the land of Judea which they occupied, arid this is the Idumea which is mentioned by Pliny, Ptolemy, Strabo, and other ancient writers. Indeed the name Idumea was sometimes given by the Roman writers to the whole of Palestine (Reland‘s Palestine). Idumea, including the southern part of Judea, was henceforth governed by a succession of Jewish prefects. One of these, Antipater, an Idumean by birth, by the favor of Caesar, was made procurator of all Judea. He was the father of Herod the Great, who become king of Judea, including Idumea. While the Edomites had been extending themselves to the northwest, they had in in turn been driven out from the southern portion of their own territory, and from their chief city itself, by the Nabatheans, an Arabian tribe, the descendants of Nebaioth, the oldest son of Ishmael. This nomadic people had spread themselves over the whole of desert Arabia, from the Euphrates to the borders of Palestine, and finally to the Elanitic gulf of the Red Sea. They thus grew up into the kingdom of Arabia Petrea, occupying very nearly the same territory which was comprised within the limits of ancient Edom. A king of this country, Aretas, is mentioned as cotemporary with Antiochus Epiphanes, about 166 b.c. From this time to the destruction of Jerusalem, the sovereigns of Arabia Petrea came into frequent contact with the Jews and Romans, both in war and peace.

The nominal independence of this kingdom continued for some thirty years after the destruction of Jerusalem. Under the reign of Trajan, about 105 a.d., it was overrun and conquered by Cornelius Palma, then governor of Syria, and formally annexed to the Roman empire (Dio. Cass. lxviii. 14; Atom. Marcell. xiv. 8). The kingdom of Edom was thus blotted out, and their name was lost. In their own land they ceased to be a separate people, and mingled with the other descendants of Ishmael; in Judea they became, under John Hyrcanus, converts to the Jewish faith; received the rite of circumcision; and were incorporated with the Jews. Very interesting

remains of cities and towns of Idumea, and particularly of Petrea, have been recently discovered by the travelers Burckhardt, and Seetsen (see Universal History, vol. i. pp. 370-383; Amer. Bib. Repository, vol. iii. pp. 247-270; Gesenius‘ Introduction to his Com. on this chapter; the Travels of Burckhardt, Legh, Laborde, and Stephens; Keith, On Prophecy, pp. 135-168; and Robinson‘s Bib. Researches, vol. ii. p. 551ff)

Verse 1

Come near, ye nations, to hear - That is, to hear of the judgments which God was about to execute, and the great purposes which he was about to accomplish. If the supposition be correct, that this and the following chapter contain a summing up of all that the prophet had thus far uttered; a declaration that all the enemies of the people of God would be destroyed - the most violent and bitter of whom was Idumea; and that this was to be succeeded by the happy times of the Messiah, then we see a plain reason why all the nations are summoned to hear and attend. The events pertain to them all; the truths communicated are of universal interest. “And all that is therein.” Hebrew as in Margin, ‹fulness thereof;‘ that is, all the inhabitants of the earth.

All things that come forth of it - All that proceed from it; that is, all the inhabitants that the world has produced. The Septuagint renders it: ‹The world and the people ὁ λαὸς *ho laos*) who are therein.‘

Verse 2

For the indignation of the Lord - Yahweh is about to express his wrath against all the nations which are opposed to his people.

He hath utterly destroyed them - In his purpose, or intention. The prophet represents this as so certain that it may be exhibited as already done.

Verse 3

Their slain also shall be cast out - They would lie unburied. The slaughter Would be so extensive, and the desolation would be so entire, that there would not remain enough to bury the dead (compare the notes at Isaiah 14:19).

And the mountains shall be melted with their blood - The expression here is evidently hyperbolical, and means that as mountains and hills are wasted away by descending showers and impetuous torrents, so the hills

would be washed away by the vast quantity of blood that would be shed by the anger of Yahweh.

Verse 4

And all the host of heaven - On the word ‹host‘ (צבא *tsâbâ'*), see the note at Isaiah 1:9. The heavenly bodies often represent kings and princes (compare the note at Isaiah 24:21).

Shall be dissolved - (ינמקו *venâmaqqû* This figure Vitringa supposes to be taken from the common prejudice by which the stars appear to be crystals, or gems, set in the azure vault of heaven, which may melt and flow down by the application of heat. The sense is, that the princes and nobles who had opposed God and his people would be destroyed, as if the sparkling stars, like gems, should melt in the heavens, and flow down to the earth.

And the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll - The word ‹scroll‘ here (ספר *sêpher*) means a roll, or a book. Books were made of parchment, leaves, etc., and were rolled together instead of being bound, as they are with us. The figure here is taken from what strikes the eye, that the heaven above us is “an expanse” (רקיע *râqîya*ʿ) Genesis 1:8; Psalm 104:2,) which is spread out; and which might be rolled together, and thus pass away. It is possible that there may be a reference also to the fact, that in a storm, when the sky is filled with dark rolling clouds, the heavens seem to be rolled together, and to be passing away. The sense is, that there would be great destruction among those high in office and in power - a destruction that would be well represented by the rolling up of the firmament, and the destruction of the visible heavens and their host, and by leaving the world to ruin and to night.

And all their host shall fall down - That is, their stars; either by being as it were melted, or by the fact that the expanse in which they are apparently located would be rolled up and removed, and there being no fixtures for them they would fall. The same image occurs in Revelation 6:13. One somewhat similar occurs in Virgil, Georg. i. 365ff.

As the leaf falleth off from the vine … - That is, in a storm, or when violently shaken.

Verse 5

For my sword shall be bathed in heaven - A sword is an instrument of vengeance, and is often so used in the Scriptures, because it was often employed in capital punishments (see the note at Isaiah 27:1). This passage

bas given much perplexity to commentators, on account of the apparent want of meaning of the expression that the sword would be bathed in heaven. Lowth reads it:

For my sword is made bare in the heavens;

Following in this the Chaldee which reads תתגלי *tîthgallîy* ‹shall be revealed.‘ But there is no authority from manuscripts for this change in the Hebrew text. The Vulgate renders it, Quoniam inebriatus est in coelo gladius meuse - ‹My sword is intoxicated in heaven.‘ The Septuagint renders it in the same way, Ἐμεθύσθη ἡ μάχαιρά μον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ *Emethusthē hē machaira mou en tō ouranō* and the Syriac and Arabic in the same manner. The Hebrew word רוּתה *rivetâh* from רוה *râvâh* means properly to drink to the full; to be satisfied, or sated with drink; and then to be full or satiated with intoxicating liquor, to be drunk. It is applied to the sword, as satiated or made drunk with blood, in Jeremiah 46:10:

And the sword shall devour,

And it shall be satiate, and made drunk with their blood.

And thus in Deuteronomy 32:42, a similar figure is used respecting arrows, the instruments also of war and vengeance:

I will make mine arrows drunk with blood;

And my sword shall devour flesh.

A similar figure is often used in Oriental writers, where the sword is represented as glutted, satiated, or made drunk with blood (see Rosenmuller on Deuteronomy 32:42). Thus Bohaddinus, in the lift of Saladin, in describing a battle in which there was a great slaughter, says, ‹The swords drank of their blood until they were intoxicated.‘ The idea here is, however, not that the sword of the Lord was made drunk with blood in heaven, but that it was intoxicated, or made furious with wrath; it was excited as an intoxicated man is who is under ungovernable passions; it was in heaven that the wrath commenced, and the sword of divine justice rushed forth as if intoxicated, to destroy all before it. There are few figures, even in Isaiah, that are more bold than this.

It shall come down upon Idumea - (see the Analysis of the chapter for the situation of Idumea, and for the causes why it was to be devoted to destruction).

Upon the people of my curse - The people devoted to destruction.

Verse 6

The sword of the Lord is filled with blood - The idea here is taken from the notion of sacrifice, and is, that God would devote to sacrifice, or to destruction, the inhabitants of Idumea. With reference to that, he says, that his sword, the instrument of slaughter, would be satiated with blood. "It is made fat with fatness." The allusion here is to the sacrifices which were made for sin, in which the blood. and the fat were devoted to God as an offering (see Isaiah 63:1; Jeremiah 49:13, Jeremiah 49:22; Amos 1:12; but once it is mentioned as a city of Moab Jeremiah 48:24. It probably belonged at different periods to both nations, as in their wars the possession of cities often passed into different hands. Bozrah lay southeast of Edrei, one of the capitals of Bashan, and was thus not properly within the limits of the Edomites, but was north of the Ammonites, or in the region of Auranitis, or in what is now called tho Houran. It is evident, therefore, that in the time of Isaiah, the Edomites had extended their conquests to that region.

According to Burckhardt, who visited the Houran, and who went to Bozrah, it is at this day one of the most important cities there. ‹It is situated,‘ says he, ‹in the open plain, and is at present the last inhabited place in the southeast extremity of the Houran; it was formerly the capital of the Arabia Provincia, and is now, including its ruins, the largest town in the Houran. It is of an oval shape, its greatest length being from east to west; its circumference is three quarters of an hour. It was anciently encompassed with a thick wall, which gave it the reputation of great strength Many parts of this wall, especially on the west side, remain; it was constructed of stones of moderate size, strongly cemented together. The south, and southeast quarters are covered with ruins of private dwellings, the walls Of many of which are still standing, but the roofs are fallen in. The style of building seems to have been similar to that observed in all the other ancient towns of the Houran. On the west side are springs of fresh water, of which I counted five beyond the precincts of the town, and six within the walls; their waters unite with a rivulet whose source is on the northwest side, within the town, and which loses itself in the southern plain at several hours‘ distance; it is called by the Arabs, El Djeheir. The principal ruins of Bozrah are the following: A square building which within is circular, and has many arches and niches in the wall.

The diameter of the arounda is four paces; its roof has fallen in, but the walls are entire. It appears to have been a Greek church. An oblong square

building, called by the natives Deir Boheiry, or the Monastery of the priest Boheiry. The gate of an ancient house com municating with the ruins of an edifice, the only remains of which is a large semicircular vault. The great mosque of Bozrah, which is certainly coeval with the first era of Mahometanism, and is commonly ascribed to Omar el Khattah. The walls of the mosque are covered with a fine coat of plaster, upon which are many Curie inscriptions in bas-relief, running all round the wall The remains of a temple, situated on the side of a long street which runs across the whole town, and terminates at the western gate,‘ etc. Of these, and other magnificent ruins of temples, theaters, and palaces, all attesting its former importance, Burckhardt has given a copious description in his Travels in Syria, pp. 226-235, Quarto Ed. LoRd. 1822.

Verse 7

And the unicorns - Margin, ‹Rhinoceros‘ (ראמים *re'ēmîym* from ראם *re'êm*). This was evidently an animal well known in Palestine, since it is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament (Numbers 23:22; Deuteronomy 33:17; Job 39:9-10; Psalm 22:21; Psalm 29:6; Psalm 92:10, in all which places it is translated unicorn, or unicorn). The derivation of the word is uncertain, and it has been regarded as doubtful what animal is intended. The corresponding Arabic word denotes the oryx, a large and fierce species of the antelope. Gesenius, Schultens, De Wette, and Rosenmuller suppose that the buffalo is intended by the word. Bochart regards it as denoting the gazelle, or a species of the antelope. It can hardly, however, be regarded as so small an animal as the gazelle. The gazelle is common in the neighborhood of mount Sinai; and when Laborde passed through that region his companions killed four, ‹the father and mother, and two little animals a fortnight old.‘ He says of them: ‹These creatures, which are very lively in their movements, endeavored to bite when they were caught; their hair is a brown yellow, which becomes pale and long as the animals grows old.

In appearance they resemble the Guinea pig. Their legs are of the same height, but the form of their feet is unique; instead of nails and claws, they have three toes in front and four behind, and they walk. like rabbits, on the whole length of the foot. The Arabs call it El Oueber, and know no other name for it. It lives upon the scanty herbage with which the rain in the neighborhood of springs supplies it. It does not burrow in the earth, its feet

not being calculated for that purpose; but it conceals itself in the natural holes or clefts which it finds in the rocks.‘ (Journey through Arabia Petrea, pp. 106,107. Lond. 8vo. 1836.) Taylor (Heb. Con.) supposes it means the rhinoceros; a fierce animal that has a single horn on the nose, which is very strong, and which sometimes grows to the height of thirty-seven inches. The ancient versions certainly regarded the word as denoting an animal with a single horn. It denotes here, evidently, some strong, fierce, and wild animal that was horned Psalm 22:21, but perhaps it is not possible to determine precisely what animal is meant. For a more full investigation in reference to the kind of animal denoted by the word reem, see the notes at Job 39:9. Here it represents that portion of the people which was strong, warlike, and hitherto unvanquished, and who regarded themselves as invincible.

Shall come down - Shall be subdued, humbled, destroyed.

With them - With the lambs and goats mentioned in Isaiah 34:6. All classes of the people shall be subdued and subjected to the slaughter.

And the bullocks with the bulls - The young bulls with the old. All shall come down together - the fierce and strong animals representing the fierce and strong people.

And their land shall be soaked with blood - Margin, ‹Drunken;‘ the same word which is rendered ‹bathed‘ in Isaiah 34:5.

Their dust made fat - Their land manured and made rich with the slain. A battlefield is usually distinguished afterward for its fertility. The field of Waterloo has thus been celebrated, since the great battle there, for producing rank and luxuriant harvests.

Verse 8

For it is the day of the Lord‘s vengeance - A time when Yahweh will take vengeance.

The year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion - The time when he will recompense, that is, punish those who have had a controversy with Zion.

Verse 9

And the streams thereof - The idea here is, that there would be as great and awful a destruction as if the streams everywhere should become pitch or resin, which would be set on fire, and which would fill the land with flame. This image is very striking, as we may see by supposing the rivers and streams in any land to flow not with water, but with heated pitch,

turpentine, or tar, and that this was all suddenly kindled into a flame. It cannot be supposed that this is to be taken literally. The image is evidently taken from the destruction of Sodom and Gamorrah (Genesis 19:25-28), an image which is more fully used in reference to the same subject in Jeremiah 49:17-18: ‹And Edom shall be a desolation; … as in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbor cities thereof, saith the Lord, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.‘

And the dust thereof into brimstone - The ruin shall be as entire as if all the soil were turned into brimstone, which should be ignited and left burning.

Verse 10

It shall not be quenched night nor day - That is, the burning brimstone and pitch Isaiah 34:9, the emblem of perpetual and entire desolation, shall not be extinguished.

The smoke thereof shall go up for ever - Every river and rivulet is Supposed to be heated pitch, and every particle of dust sulphur, and a l on fire, sending up from an extended region dense columns of smoke to heaven. No idea of ruin could be more sublime; no idea of the vengeance of God more terrible. This image has been copied by John to describe the future woes of the wicked Revelation 14:11, and of mystical Babylon Revelation 18:9, Revelation 18:18; Revelation 19:2-3.

From generation to generation it shall lie waste - Full confirmation of this may be seen in the travels of Seetsen, of Burckhardt, of Volney, of Irby, and Mangles, extracts of which have been collected and arranged by Keith (Evidences of Prophecy, pp. 135-168). Thus Volney says, ‹From the reports of the Arabs as of Bakir, and the inhabitants of Gaza, who frequently go to Maan and Karak, on the road of the pilgrims, there are to the southeast of the lake Asphaltites (Dead Sea), within three days‘ journey, upward of thirty ruined towns, absolutely deserted. Several of them have large edifices, with columns that may have belonged to the ancient temples, or at least to Greek churches. The Arabs sometimes make use of them to fold cattle in; but, in general, avoid them on account of the enormous scorpions with which they swarm.‘ (Volney‘s Travels, vol. ii. pp. 344-346.) It is remarkable that an infidel, as Volney was, should in this, as in numerous other instances, have given a minute confirmation of the ancient prophecies.

Seetsen says (Travels, p. 46), that he was told, that, ‹at the distance of two days and a half from Hebron he would final considerable ruins of the

ancient city of Abde, and that for all the rest of the journey be would see no place of habitation; he would meet only with a few tribes of wandering Arabs.‘ Burckhardt has given the following description on of the eastern boundary of Edom, and of the adjoining part of Arabia Petrea: ‹It might with truth be called Petrea, not only on account of its rocky mountains, but also of the elevated plain already described (that is, Shera (Seir), the territory of the Edomites, Travels, pp. 410,435), ‹which is so much covered with stones, especially flints, that it may with great propriety be called a stony desert, although susceptible of culture; in many places it is grown over with wild herbs, and must once have been thickly inhabited, for the traces of many towns and villages are met with on both sides of the Hadj road between Maan and Akaba, as well as between Mean and the plains of Houran, in which direction also are many springs.

At present all this country is a desert, and Maan is the only inhabited place in it.‘ (Burckhardt‘s Travels, p. 436.) Of the remains of ancient cities still exposed to view in different places throughout Idumea, Burckhardt describes the ruins of a large town, of which nothing remains but broken walls anti heaps of stones; the ruins of several villages in its vicinity (p. 418); the ruins of an ancient city, consisting of large heaps of hewn blocks of siliceous stone; and the extensive ruins of Arindela, an ancient town of Palestina Terria (p. 441). ‹The following ruined places are situated in Djebal Shera (Mount Seir), to the south and southwest of Wady Musa - Kalaat Beni Madha, Djerba, Basta, Eyl, Ferdakh, Anyk, Bir el Beytar, Shemakh, and Syk‘ (p. 444). Burckhardt also gives a most interesting description of the ruins of the ancient Petra which he discovered, the ancient capital of Edom, but which is too long to be transcribed here (see his Travels, pp. 422-432; compare the note at Isaiah 16:1).

None shall pass through it forever and ever - That is, it shall not be a country through which caravans shall pass; there shrill be no roads, and it shall not be deemed safe to travel through it. It will be recollected that the original source of all their calamities, and the cause of all the judgments that came upon them, was the fact that they would not let the children of Israel pass peaceably through their land on their way to Canaan (see the Introduction to the chapter). As a punishment for this, God now says that their land shall not be passed through; it shall not be a thoroughfare; there shall be no travelers in it. God usually directs his punishment of individuals

and of nations in the line of their offences, and thus his judgments become commonly a recompence in kind. Thus in 2 Samuel 22:26-27, it is said:

With the merciful, thou wilt show thyself merciful;
And with the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright.
With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure;
And with the froward thou wilt show thyself unsavory.

In accordance with this prediction that no one should pass through Edom, Volney (Travels, vol. ii. p. 344) says, ‹The country has not been visited by any traveler, but it well merits Such an attention.‘ Thus Burckhardt (Travels, p. 421) says, after he had entered, on the northeast, the territories of the Edomites, that he ‹was without protection in the midst of a desert where no traveler had ever before been seen. It was then,‘ he adds, ‹that for the first time he had ever felt fear during his travels in the desert, and his route thither was the most dangerous he had ever traveled‘ (p. 400). ‹Seetsen, on a piece of paper pasted against the wall, notified his having penetrated the country in a direct line between the Dead Sea and Mount Sinai (through Idumea), a route never before accomplished.‘ (Burckhardt‘s Syria, p. 553.) Burckhardt had determined to attempt to pass the same way as being the shortest way to Jerusalem; but he was repeatedly told it was impossible; and the difficulty of the journey is illustrated in the Travels of Captains Irby and Mangles. They offered five hundred piastres to an Arab tribe if they would conduct them to Wady Musa, but nothing would induce them to consent. ‹They said they would not go if we would give them five thousand piastres, observing that money was of no use to a man if he lost his life‘ (p. 349). So strikingly has this prediction been fulfilled.

Verse 11

But the cormorant - This and the following verses contain a description of the desolations of Edom in language remarkably similar to that employed in the account of the destruction of Babylon Isaiah 13:20-22; Isaiah 14:23. The word here translated ‹cormorant‘ (קאת *qâ'ath*), occurs in this place and in Zephaniah 2:14, where it is rendered ‹cormorant,‘ and in Leviticus 11:18; Deuteronomy 14:17; Psalm 102:6, where it is rendered ‹pelican.‘ Bochart supposes it is the ardea stellaris, or bitourn, which frequents watery places in deserts, and makes a horrible noise. The pelican is a sea-fowl, and cannot be intended here. The cormorant or water raven is a large fowl of the pelican kind, which occupies the cliffs by the sea, feeds on fish, and which is extremely voracious, and which is the emblem of a

glutton. It is not certain what fowl is intended here, but the word properly denotes a water-fowl, and evidently refers to some bird that inhabits desolate places.

And the bittern shall possess it - For a description of the bittern, see the note at Isaiah 14:23.

The owl also and the raven - Well known birds that occupy deserts, and old ruins of houses or towns. The image here is that of desolation and ruin; and the sense is, that the land would be reduced to a waste that would not be inhabited by man, but would be given up to wild animals. How well this agrees with Edom, may be seen in the Travels of Burckhardt, Seetsen, and others. In regard to the fact that the cormorant (קאת *qâ'ath*) should be found there, it may be proper to introduce a remark of Burckhardt, who seems to have had no reference to this prophecy. ‹The bird katta,‘ says he, ‹is met with in immense numbers. They fly in such large flocks that the boys often kill two or three of them at a time, merely by throwing a stick among them.‘ So also in regard to the fact that the owl and the raven shall dwell there, the following statements are made by travelers: Captain Mangles relates thatwhile he and his fellow-travelers were examining the ruins and contemplating the sublime scenery of Petra, ‹the screaming of the eagles, hawks, and owls, which were soaring above their heads in considerable numbers, seemingly annoyed at anyone approaching their lonely habitation, added much to the singularity of the scene.‘ So says Burckhardt: ‹The fields of Tafyle (situated in the immediate vicinity of Edom) are frequented by an immense number of crows.‘

And he shall stretch out upon it - This is an illusion to the fact that an architect uses a line, which is employed to lay out his work (see the note at Isaiah 28:17).

The line of confusion - A similar expression occurs in 2 Kings 21:13: ‹I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab;‘ that is, I will apply the same measure and rule of destruction to Jerusalem that has been applied to Samaria. So Edom would be marked out for desolation. It was the work which God had laid out, and which he intended to perform.

And the stones of emptiness - Probably the plummet which the architect commonly employed with his line (see the note at Isaiah 28:17). It is a fact, however, that Edom is at present an extended waste of stones and barren rocks. ‹We had before us an immense expanse of dreary country,

entirely covered with black flints, with here and there some hilly chain rising from the plain.‘ (Burckhardt‘s Travels in Syria, p. 445.)

Verse 12

They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom - A more correct rendering of this would be, ‹As to the nobles, they shall call them, but there shall be there no kingdom.‘ The idea is, that the kingdom would be desolate; there would be no people to rule. Or, there will be no nobles there who shall survive the destruction, and who can undertake the government of the state. The idea is taken from a government or constitution where the monarch is chosen from the ranks of the nobility. Idumea was formerly governed, as we have seen (see the Introduction to the chapter), by dukes or princes; and it is probable that when it became a monarchy it was a part of the constitution that the sovereign should be chosen from their ranks. The idea here is, that none would be left who could be called to the throne; or if any were left, they would be unwilling to undertake the government of a country where all was disorder and confusion.

And all her princes shall be nothing - Long since Idumea has ceased to be a kingdom, and there are neither nobles nor princes there, nor are there any remains of an organized and independent government.

Verse 13

And thorns … - (see the note at Isaiah 5:6)

It shall be an habitation of dragons - On the meaning of the word ‹dragons,‘ see the note at Isaiah 13:22.

Court for owls - A place of resort, a residence of owls. The word rendered ‹court‘ (חצִיר *châtsîyr*) means a dwelling-place, a habitation, as well as an enclosure or court. The margin is, ‹Daughters of the owl,‘ or ‹ostriches‘ (see the note at Isaiah 13:21). ‹I would,‘ says Stephens, when standing amidst the ruins of Petra, the capital of Idumea (see the note at Isaiah 16:1), and with this passage of Isaiah in his eye, ‹I would that the sceptic could stand as I did, among the ruins of this city among the rocks, and there open the sacred book, and read the words of the inspired penman, written when this desolate place was one of the greatest cities in the world. I see the scoff arrested, his cheek pale, his lip quivering, and his heart quaking with fear, as the ancient city cries out to him in a voice loud and powerful as one risen from the dead; though be would not believe Moses and the prophets, he believes the hand-writing of God himself, in the

desolation and eternal ruin around him.‘ (Incidents of Travel in Egypt, etc., vol. ii. p. 76.)

Verse 14

The wild beasts of the desert - There is in the original here a paronomasia, which cannot be conveyed in a translation. The word rendered, ‹wild beasts of the desert‘ (ציים *tsîyîym*), is rendered by the Septuagint, δαιμόνια *daimonia* ‹demons.‘ On the meaning of the word, see the note at Isaiah 13:21.

The wild beasts of the island - Margin, ‹Ijim.‘ Hebrew, איים *'îyym* (see the note at Isaiah 13:22). Probably the term denotes the jackal. Gesenius supposes it is so called from its howl, or nocturnal cry - from an Arabia word signifying to howl.

And the satyr - (see the note at Isaiah 13:21).

Shall cry to his fellow - A most striking description of the desolation, when all that is heard among the ruins shall be the doleful cry of wild beasts.

The screech-owl - Margin, ‹Night-monster.‘ The word לילית *lîylîyt* (from ליל *layil* night) properly denotes a night-spectre - a creature of Jewish superstition. The rabbis describe it in the form of a female elegantly dressed that lay in wait for children at night - either to carry them off, or to murder them. The Greeks had a similar idea respecting the female ἔμπουτα *empouta* and this idea corresponds to the Roman fables respecting the Lamice, and Striges, and to the Arabic notions of the Ghules, whom they described as female monsters that dwell in deserts, and tear men to pieces (see Gesenius, Com. *in loc*; and Bochart, Hieroz. ii. 831). The margin in our version expresses the correct idea. All this is descriptive of utter and perpetual desolation - of a land that should be full of old ruins, and inhabited by the animals that usually make such ruins their abode.

Verse 15

There shall the great owl - (קפוז *qîpôz*). Gesenius supposes that this is the arrow-snake, so called from its darting or springing, in the manner of the rattle-snake - from an obsolete root to draw oneself together, to contract. Bochart (Hieroz. ii. 3. 11. 408-419) has examined the meaning of the word at length, and comes to the conclusion that it means the serpent which the Greeks called acontias, and the Latins, jaculus - the arrow-snake. The serpent is oviparous, and nourishes its young. The ancient versions,

however, understand it in the same sense as the קִפֹּד *qippôd* in Isaiah 34:11 - the hedgehog or porcupine.

Under her shadow - This might be done by the serpent that should coil up and cherish her young.

The vultures … - The black vulture, according to Bochart; according to Gesenius, the kite, or falcon so called from its swift flight. Either of them will suit the connection.

Also be gathered, every one with her mate - They shall make their nests there; that is, this shall be their secure, undisturbed retreat.

Verse 16

Seek ye out - Lock carefully at the prediction, and its fulfillment. This seems to be addressed to the inhabitants of that land, or to any who might doubt, or be disposed to examine. They were invited to compare the prediction with the fulfillment, and see how literally all would be fulfilled - an examination which may be made now, and the prediction will be seen to have been accomplished with most surprising particularity and accuracy.

The book of the Lord - The book of Yahweh, which he has caused to be written, referring, perhaps, especially to what Isaiah has here recorded; including also what had been uttered by the other prophets in regard to Edom. The main reference is, however, doubtless, to what Isaiah has written; and the invitation is to compare his predictions with the certain and remarkable evidence of the fulfillment. ‹The prophet evidently contemplated the insertion of his prophecy among the sacred books of the Jews, from which those that followed him might judge of the correctness of the prophecy‘ (Noyes). That a collection of the various prophetic books was made, constituting one book or volume, and regarded as the work of inspiration, is well known, and is referred to during the captivity in Babylon by Daniel Isaiah 9:2. The direction to search that book accords with the command of the Saviour John 5:39, and the direction of Nicodemus John 7:32, to search the Scriptures.

No one of these shall fail - Not one of these predictions, or these things which have been spoken.

None shall want her mate - That is, none of the things which I have spoken shall want a fulfillment as its companion. The language is here evidently taken from the pairing of animals, and denotes that all that is spoken shall be entirely fulfilled. Some have understood tilts as referring to the wild animals of which he had spoken, and as meaning that in desolate

Idumea they should be appropriately paired, and should breed and increase in abundance. But the more natural interpretation is to refer it to the predictions of the prophet, as meaning that no one thing which he had uttered should want a complete fulfillment.

For my mouth - The word ‹my‘ is not in the Hebrew. The Hebrew phrase is כי־פי הוא *kîy -pîy hû'* ‹For the mouth, he hath commanded.‘ The word הוא *hû'* stands for "He," that is, Yahweh, and the phrase means the same as his mouth, that is, the mouth of God. The Septuagint renders it, ‹For the Lord hath commanded them.‘ Lowth renders it, ‹For the mouth of Jehovah,‘ changing הוא *hû'* into יהוה *yehovâh* in accordance with five manuscripts and the translation of the Septuagint.

And his spirit - The Spirit of God; that is, Yahweh himself.

Hath gathered them - Will collect, or assemble; that is, the wild beasts spoken of in the previous verses that shall occupy desolate Idumea. It shall be the agency of God that shall bring them up upon the land to occupy it forever.

Verse 17

And he hath cast the lot for them - He hath assigned to them the land of Edom to be occupied by them as their portion. This language is taken from the fact that countries were commonly apportioned, particularly among conquerors, by the lot. In this way Judea was divided among the tribes of Israel Numbers 26:55-56.

His hand hath divided it unto them by line - He has marked out, as a surveyor does, the land of Edom as the dwelling-place of the beasts of the forest. A land was usually surveyed and divided into proper parts or portions before the lot was cast Joshua 18:4-6.

They shall possess it - The wild beasts mentioned in the previous verses. The testimony of all travelers demonstrates that thus far this prediction has been strikingly fulfilled.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 35

Introduction

This chapter Isaiah 35:1-10 is a continuation of the prophecy commenced in the previous chapter. See the Analysis of Isaiah 12:1-6, and is incontestably among the most beautiful of the prophecies of Isaiah.

The chapter may be divided into the following portions:

I. The consolations which would follow the destruction of all their enemies - as great a change as if the wilderness were to blossom like the rose, and the glory and beauty of Lebanon and Carmel were given to the desert Isaiah 35:1-2.

II. The exhortation addressed to those in office and authority to comfort the feeble, and strengthen the weak, with the assurance that those blissful times would come Isaiah 35:3-4.

III. The description of the actual condition of the future period of happiness which is foretold.

1. The eyes of the blind would be opened, the deaf made to hear, and the lame man be cured Isaiah 35:5-7.

2. It would be a time of holiness. The way of access to these blessings would be open and free to all - even to all nations, but it would be a way for the pure only Isaiah 35:8.

3. It would be a time of safety. There would be no enemy that could overcome and subdue them Isaiah 35:9.

4. It would be a time of elevated joy - represented by the return to Zion from a long and painful captivity Isaiah 35:10. In the fullness of the blessings of the reign of the Messiah all their sorrow sad sighing would flee away Isaiah 35:10.

Verse 1

The wilderness and the solitary place - This is evidently figurative language, such as is often employed by the prophets. The word rendered ‹solitary place‘ (ציה *tsîyâh*), denotes properly a dry place, a place without springs and streams of water; and as such places produce no verdure, and nothing to sustain life, the word comes to mean a desert. Such expressions

are often used in the Scriptures to express moral or spiritual desolation; and in this sense evidently the phrase is used here. It does not refer to the desolations of Judea, but to all places that might be properly called a moral wilderness, or a spiritual desert; and thus aptly expresses the condition of the world that was to be benefited by the blessings foretold in this chapter. The parallel expressions in Isaiah 41:17-19; Isaiah 44:3-4, show that this is the sense in which the phrase is here used; and that the meaning is, that every situation which might be appropriately called a moral wilderness - that is, the whole pagan world - would ultimately be made glad. The sense is, that as great and happy changes would take place in regard to those desolations as if the wilderness should become a vast field producing the lily and the rose; or as if Isaiah 35:2 there should be imparted to such places the glory of Lebanon, and the beauty of Sharon and Carmel.

Shall be glad for them - This is evidently a personification, a beautiful poetic figure, by which the wilderness is represented as expressing joy. The sense is, the desolate moral world would be filled with joy on account of the blessings which are here predicted. The phrase ‹for them,‘ expressed in Hebrew by the affix מ (*m*) means, doubtless, on account of the blessings which are foretold in this prophecy. Lowth supposes, however, that the letter has been added to the word ‹shall be glad‘ (ישׂשׂו *yes'us'û*), by mistake, because the following word (מדבר *midbâr*) begins with a מ (*m*). The reading of the present Hebrew text is followed by none of the ancient versions; but it is nevertheless probably the correct reading, and there is no authority for changing it. The sense is expressed above by the phrase ‹shall rejoice on account of the things contained in this prophecy;‘ to wit, the destruction of all the foes of God, and the universal establishment of his kingdom. Those who wish to see a more critical examination of the words used here, may find it in Rosenmuller and Gesenius.

And blossom as the rose - The word rendered ‹rose‘ (חבצלת *chăbîtsâleth*) occurs only here and in Song of Song of Solomon 2:1 , where it is also rendered a ‹rose.‘ The Septuagint renders it, Κρίνον *Krinon* ‹Lily.‘ The Vulgate also renders it, *Lilium* - the lily. The Syriac renders it also by a word which signifies the lily or narcissus; or, according to the Syriac lexicographers, ‹the meadow-saffron,‘ an autumnal flower springing from poisonous bulbous roots, and of a white and violet color. The sense is not, however, affected materially whatever be the meaning of the word. Either the rose, the lily, or the saffron, would convey the idea of beauty compared

with the solitude and desolation of the desert. The word ‹rose‘ with us, as being a flower better known, conveys a more striking image of beauty, and there is no impropriety in retaining it.

Verse 2

It shall blossom abundantly - Hebrew, ‹Blossoming it shall blossom‘ - a common mode of expression in Hebrew, denoting certainty, abundance, fullness - similar to the expression Genesis 2:17, ‹Dying thou shalt die,‘ that is, thou shalt surely die. The sense here is, it shall blossom in abundance.

And rejoice even with joy - Strong figurative language, denoting the greatness of the blessings; as great as if in the waste wilderness there should be heard the voice of joy and rejoicing. The Septuagint renders this: ‹The deserts of Jordan also bloom and rejoice;‘ and Jerome applies this to the preaching of John in the wilderness adjacent to Jordan. The Septuagint evidently read ירדן *yaredēn* instead of the Hebrew ירנן *yerannēn* Lowth has followed this, and rendered it, ‹The well-watered plain of Jordan shall rejoice,‘ but without any authority from Hebrew manuscripts for the change.

The glory of Lebanon - The glory or ornament of Lebanon was its cedars (see the note at Isaiah 10:34). The sense here is, that the change would be as great under the blessings of the Messiah‘s reign as if there should be suddenly transferred to the waste wilderness the majesty and glory of mount Lebanon.

The excellency of Carmel - Carmel was emblematic of beauty, as Lebanon was of majesty, and as Sharon was of fertility. For a description of Carmel, see the note at Isaiah 29:17; of Sharon, see the note at Isaiah 33:9. The sense is clear. The blessings of the times of the Messiah would be as great, compared with what had existed before, as if the desert were made as lovely as Carmel, and as fertile as Sharon. The world that, in regard to comfort, intelligence, and piety, might be cormpared to a pathless desert, would be like the beauty of Carmel and the fertility of Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord - As manifested under the Messiah.

Verse 3

Strengthen ye - That is, you who are the religious teachers and guides of the people. This is an address made by the prophet in view of what he had said and was about to say of the proraised blessings. The sense is,

strengthen and sustain the feeble and the desponding by the promised blessings; by the assurances Isaiah 40:1).

Verse 4

Say to them - This is still an address to the ministers of religion, to make use of all the consolations which these truths and predictions furnish to confirm and strengthen the people of God.

Of a fearful heart - Of a timid, pusillanimous heart; those who tremble before their enemies. The Hebrew is, as in the Margin, ‹Of a hasty heart;‘ that is, of those who are disposed to flee before their enemies (see the note at Isaiah 30:16).

Behold, your God will come with vengeance - That is, in the manner described in the previous chapter; and, generally, he will take vengeance on all the enemies of his people, and they shall be punished. The language in this chapter is, in part, derived from the captivity at Babylon Isaiah 35:10, and the general idea is, that God would take vengeance on all their enemies, and would bring them complete and final deliverance. This does not mean that when the Messiah should come he would be disposed to take vengeance; nor do the words ‹your God‘ here refer to the Messiah; but it is meant that their God, Yahweh, would certainly come and destroy all their enemies, and prepare the way thus for the coming of the Prince of peace. The general promise is, that however many enemies might attack them, or however much they might fear them, yet that Yahweh would be their protector, and would completely humble and prostrate all their foes. The Hebrew will admit of a somewhat different translation, which I give in accordance with that proposed by Lowth. The sense is not materially varied.

Say ye to the faint-hearted, Be ye strong; fear ye not; behold your God!
Vengeance will come; the retribution of God:
He himself will come, and will deliver you.

Verse 5

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened - The images in this verse and the following are those of joy and exultation. They describe the times of happiness when God would come to save them from their foes. This passage is so accurate a description of what the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, did, that it doubtless refers to the miracles which he would perform. In not a few instances did he in fact restore the blind to sight, giving thus the most unequivocal proof that he was the Messiah sent from God Matthew 9:27; Matthew 20:30; Mark 8:23; Mark 10:46; Luke 7:21. It is a full confirmation

of the opinion that this passage refers to Christ, that the Saviour himself appeals to the fact that he restored the blind to sight, as demonstration that he was the Messiah, implying that it was predicted that this would be a part of his appropriate work (Matthew 11:5; compare Luke 4:18).

And the ears of the deaf be unstopped - Another demonstration of divine power, and another proof that would be furnished that the Messiah was from God The Lord Jesus often gave this demonstration that he was invested with divine power Matthew 11:5; Mark 7:32, Mark 7:37; Mark 9:25.

Verse 6

Then shall the lame man leap - This was literally fulfilled after the coming of the Messiah Acts 14:10; Acts 3:8. It is an emblem of the general joy which the coming of the Messiah would impart, and is an instance of the blessings which it would convey.

As an hart - The word used here denotes the stag, or male deer. In Arabic it denotes the wild, or mountain-goat. The word sometimes refers to any species of deer or antelope, and this is referred to here from its quick and sprightly nature.

And the tongue of the dumb sing - Shall be able to sing, and to praise God. On the restoration of the dumb to the benefits of language, see Matthew 9:32-33; Matthew 12:22; Matthew 15:30-31; Mark 9:17; Luke 11:14.

For in the wilderness shall waters break out - The joy shall be as great, and the blessings as numerous and refreshing, as if running fountains should suddenly break out in the desert, and the thirsty and weary traveler should be thus unexpectedly and fully supplied. The world, in regard to its real comforts without the gospel, may be not unaptly compared to g vast waste of pathless sands and arid plains. Nothing will more strongly express the blessings of the gospel than the idea of cool, refreshing, abundant fountains and streams bursting forth in such pathless wastes. This is an image which would be very expressive to those who were accustomed to cross such deserts, and it is one which is frequently employed by the sacred writers, and especially by Isaiah (see Isaiah 43:19-20; Isaiah 48:21; Isaiah 49:10-11; Isaiah 55:1; Isaiah 58:11). ‹Lameness and dumbness are the uniform effects of long walking in a desert; the sand and gravel produce the former, fatigue the latter. In such cases some of us have walked hours together without uttering a sentence; and all walked as if crippled, from the

sand and gravel getting into the shoes; but the sight of water, especially if unexpected, unloosed every tongue, and gave agility to every limb; men, oxen, goats, sheep, and dogs, ran with speed and expressions of joy to the refreshing element.‘ (Campbell‘s Travels in Africa.) The Chaldee Paraphrast understands this as referring entirely to the return from the captivity at Babylon. ‹Then shall they see the exiles of Israel assembled, ascend to their own land as the swift stags, so that they shall not be hindered.‘

Verse 7

And the parched ground shall become a pool - The idea is the same here as in the previous verse, that under the Messiah there would be blessings as great as if the parched ground‘ should become a lake of pure and refreshing water. The words ‹parched ground,‘ however, probably do not convey the sense which Isaiah intended. The image which he had in his eye is much more beautiful than that which is denoted by the ‹parched ground.‘ Lowth translates it, ‹The glowing sand.‘ The Septuagint, Ἄνυδρος *Anudros* - ‹The dry place, The Hebrew word (שׁרב *shârâb*), properly denotes the heat of the sun Isaiah 49:10; and then the phenomenon which is produced by the refraction of the rays of the sun on the glowing sands of a desert and which gives the appearance of a sea or lake of water, This phenomenon is witnessed in the deserts of Arabia and Egypt, and has been also seen occasionally in the south of France and in Russia. We have no word in English to express it. The French word by which it is commonly designated is mirage. It is caused by the refraction of the rays of the sun, an explanation of which may be found in the Edin. Encyclopaedia, vol. xiv. pp. 753-755. It is often described by travelers, and is referred to in the Koran, chapter xxiv. 39:

The works of unbelievers are like the serab in a plain,
Which the thirsty man takes to be water;
Until he comes to it, and finds that it is not.

Mr. Sale‘s note on this place in the Koran is, ‹The Arabic word serab signifies that false appearance which in the eastern countries is often seen in sandy plains about noon, resembling a large lake of water in motion, and is occasioned by the reverberation of the sunbeams, “by the quivering undulating motion of that quick succession of vapors and exhalations which are extracted by the powerful influence of the sun” (Shaw‘s Travels, p. 378). It sometimes tempts thirsty travelers out of their way, but deceives

them when they come near, either going forward (for it always appears at the same distance), or quite vanishes.‘ Q. Curtius (vii. 5) also has mentioned it, in the description of the march of Alexander the Great across the Oxus to Sogdiana: ‹The vapor of the summer sun inflamed the sands, which when they began to be inflamed all things seemed to burn. A dense cloud, produced by the unusual heat of the earth, covered the light, and the appearance of the plains was like a vast and deep sea.‘ The Arabians often refer to this in their writings, and draw images from it. ‹Like the serab of the plain, which the thirsty take to be water.‘ ‹He runs for the spoil of the serab;‘ a proverb. ‹Deceitful as the appearance of water;‘ also a proverb. ‹Be not deceived by the glimmer of the scrub;‘ another proverb. This appearance has been often described by modern travelers, (see Shaw‘s Travels, p. 375; Clarke‘s Travels, vol ii. p. 295; Belzoni‘s Travels and Operations in Egypt and Nubia, p. 196).

The same appearance has been observed in India, and in various parts of Africa. ‹During the French expedition to Egypt, the phenomena of unusual refractions were often seen. The uniformity of the extensive sandy plains of Lower Egypt is interrupted only by small eminences, on which the villages are situated, in order to escape the inundations of the Nile. In the morning and the evening, as many have remarked, objects appear in their natural position; but when the surface of the sandy ground is heated by the sun, the land seems at a certain distance terminated by a general inundation. The villages which are beyond it appear like so many islands situated in the middle of a great lake; and under each village is an inverted image of it. As the observer approaches the limits of the apparent inundation, the imaginary lake which seemed to encircle the village withdraws itself, and the same illusion is reproduced by another village more remote.‘ (Edin. Encyclopaedia, vol. xiv. p. 754.) ‹In the desert,‘ says Prof. Robinson, ‹we had frequent instances of the mirage presenting the appearance of lakes of water and islands; and as we began to descend toward Suez, it was difficult to distinguish between these appearances and the distant real waters of the Red Sea.‘ (Travels in Palestine and the adjacent regions, in 1838, Bib. Repos. April, 1839, p. 402.) Major Skinner, in his recently published Journey Overland to India, describes the appearance of the scrub in that very desert, between Palestine and the Euphrates, which probably supplied the images which the prophet employs: ‹About noon the most perfect

deception that can be conceived exhilarated our spirits, and promised an early restingplace.

We had observed a slight mirage two or three times before, but this day it surpassed all I have ever fancied. Although aware that these appearances have often led people astray, I could not bring myself to believe that this was unreal. The Arabs were doubtful, and said that, as we had found water yesterday, it was not improbable that we should find some today. The seeming lake was broken in several parts by little islands of sand that gave strength to the delusion. The dromedaries of the Sheikhs at length reached its borders, and appeared to us to have commenced to ford as they advanced, and became more surrounded by the vapor. I thought they had got into deep water, and moved with greater caution. In passing over the sand banks their figures were reflected in the water. So convinced was Mr. Calmun of its reality, that he dismounted and walked toward the deepest part of it, which was on the right hand. He followed the deceitful lake for a long time, and to our sight was strolling on the bank, his shadow stretching to a great length beyond. There was not a breath of wind; it was a sultry day, and such an one as would have added dreadfully to our disappointment if we had been at any time without water.‘

Southey has beautifully described this appearance and its effects on the traveler:

Still the same burning sun! no cloud in heaven!
The hot air quivers, and the sultry mist
Floats o‘er the desert, with a show
Of distant waters mocking their distress.

The idea of the prophet, if he refers to this phenomenon, is exceedingly beautiful. It is that the mirage, which has the appearance Only of a sheet of water, and which often deceives the traveler, shall become a real lake; that there shall be hereafter no deception, no illusion; that man, like a traveler on pathless sands, weary and thirsty, shall no more be deceived by false appearances and unreal hopes. The hopes and promises which this world can furnish are as delusive as is the mirage to the exhausted and thirsty traveler. Man approaches them, and, like that delusive appearance, they recede or vanish. If they are still seen, they are always at I a distance, and he follows the false and deceptive vision until he comes to the end of life.

But the promises of God through the Messiah, are like real lakes of water and running streams to the thirsty traveler. They never deceive, never recede, never vanish, never are unsatisfactory. Man may approach them, knowing that there is no illusion; he may satisfy his needs, and still the supply is unexhausted and inexhaustible. Others also may approach the same fountain of pure joy, with as much freedom as travelers may approach the running stream in the desert.

In the habitation of dragons - (see the note at Isaiah 13:22). The sense of this is, that the blessings which are promised shall be as great as if in such dry and desolate places there should be verdure and beauty.

Where each lay - In every place which the wild beast had occupied.

Shall be grass - Margin, ‹A court for.‘ The Hebrew word (חציר *châtsîyr*) may mean either grass, or a court, or habitation. The latter is undoubtedly the meaning of the word here, and thus it responds in the parallelism to the ‹habitation of dragons.‘

In the habitation where each lay,
Shall be a court for reeds and rushes.

Reeds and rushes - These usually grew by ponds and marshes. The image which the prophet had been employing was that era desert of sands and arid plains. He here says, that there would be verdure. In those pathless wastes there would spring up that which was nourished by water. The sense is, that those portions of the earth which are covered with moral desolation, like the pathless wastes of the desert, shall put on the appearance of moral cultivation and verdure.

Verse 8

And an highway shall be there - (see the note at Isaiah 11:16). This is language which is derived from the return of the Jews from captivity. The idea is, that there would be easy and uninterrupted access to their own land. The more remote, though main idea in the mind of the prophet seems to have been, that the way of access to the blessings of the Messiah‘s reign would be open and free to all (compare Isaiah 40:3-4).

And a way - It is not easy to mark the difference between the word “way” (דרך *derek*) and “a highway” (מסלול *maselûl*). Probably the latter refers more particularly to a raised way (from סלל *salal* to cast up), and would be expressed by our word “causeway” or “turnpike.” It was such a way as was usually made for the march of armies by removing obstructions,

filling valleys, etc. The word "way" (דרך *derek*) is a more general term, and denotes a path, or road of any kind.

And it shall be called the way of holiness - The reason why it should be so called is stated; - no impure person should travel it. The idea is, that all who should have access to the favor of God, or who should come into his kingdom, should be holy.

The unclean shall not pass over it - There shall be no idolater there; no one shall be admitted who is not a pure worshipper of Yahweh. Such is the design of the kingdom which is set up by the Messiah, and such the church of Christ should be (see Isaiah 40:3-4; Isaiah 49:11; Isaiah 62:10).

But it shall be for those - For those who are specified immediately, for the ransomed of the Lord. The Margin is, ‹For he shall be with them.' Lowth reads it,

‹But he himself shall be with them, walking in the way.'

And this, it seems to me, is the more probable sense of the passage, indicating that they should not go alone or unprotected. It would be a holy way, because their God would be with them; it would be safe, because he would attend and defend them.

The wayfaring men - Hebrew, ‹He walking in the way.' According to the translation proposed above, this refers to God, the Redeemer, who will be with his people, walking in the way with them.

Though fools - Hebrew, ‹And fools.' That is, the simple, the unlearned, or those who are regarded as fools. It shall be a highway thrown up, so direct, and so unlike other paths, that there shall be no danger of mistaking it. The friends of God are often regarded as fools by the world. Many of them are of the humbler class of life, and are destitute of human learning, and of worldly wisdom. The sense here is, that the way of salvation shall be so plain, that no one, however ignorant and unlearned, need err in regard to it. In accordance with this, the Saviour said that the gospel was preached to the poor; and he himself always represented the way to life as such that the most simple and unlettered might find it.

Verse 9

No lion shall be there - Lions abounded in all the countries adjacent to Palestine. They are, therefore, often referred to by the sacred writers, as objects of dread and alarm. The leading idea in the language of Isaiah in this whole passage, is that of a way constructed from Babylon to Judea, so straight and plain that the most simple of the people might find it and walk

in it. But such a path would lie through desert sands. It would be in the region infested with lions and other wild beasts. The prophet, therefore, suggests that there should be no cause for such dread and alarm. The sense is, that in that kingdom to which he had made reference all would be safe. They who entered it should find security and defense as they traveled that road. And it is true. They who enter the path that leads to life, find there no cause of alarm. Their fears subside; their apprehensions of punishment on account of their sins die away; and they walk that path with security and confidence. There is nothing in that way to alarm them; and though there may be many foes - fitly represented by lions and wild beasts - lying about the way, yet no one is permitted to ‹go up thereon.‘ This is a most beautiful image of the safety of the people of God, and of their freedom from all enemies that could annoy them.

But the redeemed shall walk there - The language here referred at first doubtless to those who would be rescued from the captivity at Babylon; but the main reference is to those who would be redeemed by the blood of the atonement, or who are properly called ‹the redeemed of the Lord.‘ That Isaiah was acquainted with the doctrine of redemption is apparent from Isaiah 53:1-12. There is not here, indeed, any express mention made of the means by which they would be redeemed, but the language is so general that it may refer either to the deliverance from the captivity at Babylon, or the future more important deliverance of his people from the bondage of sin by the atoning sacrifice of the Messiah. On the word rendered ‹redeem,‘ see the note at Isaiah 43:1. The idea is, that the path here referred to is appropriately designed only for the redeemed of Lord. It is not for the profane, the polluted, the hypocrite. It is not for those who live for this world, or for those who love pleasure more than they love God. The church should not be entered except by those who have evidence that they are redeemed. None should make a profession of religion who have no evidence that they belong to ‹the redeemed,‘ and who are not disposed to walk in the way of holiness. But, for all such it is a highway on which they are to travel. It is made by levelling hills and elevating valleys; it is made across the sandy desert and through the wilderness of this world; it is made through a world infested with the enemies of God and his people. It is made straight and plain, so that none need err; it is defended from enemies, so that all may be safe; it is rendered secure, because ‹He,‘ their Leader and Redeemer, shall go with and guard that way.

Verse 10

And the ransomed of the Lord - The word rendered here ‹ransomed,‘ is different from the word rendered ‹redeemed‘ in Isaiah 35:9. This word is פדויי *pedûyēy* from פדה *pâdâh* though it is not easy, perhaps not possible, to designate the difference in the sense. Doubtless there was a shade of difference among the Hebrews, but what it was is not now known. See this word explained in the note at Isaiah 1:27. The language here is all derived from the deliverance from Babylon, and the images employed by the prophet relate to that event. Still, there can be no doubt that he meant to describe the deliverance under the Messiah.

Shall return, and come to Zion - This language also is that which expresses the return from Babylon. In a more general sense, and in the sense intended particularly by the prophet, it means, doubtless, that all who are the redeemed of God shall be gathered under his protection, and shall be saved.

With songs - With rejoicing - as the ransomed captives would return from Babylon, and as all who are redeemed enter the church on earth, and will enter into heaven above.

And everlasting joy upon their heads - This may be an expression denoting the fact that joy is manifest in the face and aspect (Gesenius). Thus we say that joy lights up the countenance, and it is possible that the Hebrews expressed this idea by applying it to the head. Thus the Hebrews say Psalm 126:2:

Then was our mouth filled with laughter.

And our tongue with singing.

Or it may refer to the practice of anointing the head with oil and perfume in times of festivity and joy - in contrast with the custom of throwing ashes on the head in times of grief and calamity (Rosenmuller). Or it may refer to a custom of wearing a wreath or chaplet of flowers in times of festivity, as is often done now, and as was commonly done among the ancients in triumphal processions (Vitringa). Whichever exposition be adopted, the idea is the same, that there would be great joy, and that that joy would be perpetual and unfading. This is true of all who return to Zion under the Messiah. Joy is one of the first emotions; joy at redemption, and at the pardon of sin; joy in view of the hopes of eternal life, and of the everlasting favor of God. But this joy is not short-lived and fading, like the garland of flowers on the head; it is constant, increasing, everlasting.

And sorrow and sighing shall flee away - (See the note at Isaiah 25:8).

This is a most beautiful close of the series or succession of prophecies which we have been thus far contemplating. The result of all is, that the redeemed of the Lord shall have joy and rejoicing; that all their enemies shall be subdued, and that they shall be rescued from all their foes. In the analysis of the prophecy contained in the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth chapters, it was stated that this prophecy seemed to be a summary of all that Isaiah had before uttered, and was designed to show that all the enemies of the people of God would be destroyed, and that they would be triumphantly delivered and saved. All these minor deliverances were preparatory to and emblematic of the greater deliverance under the Messiah; and accordingly all his predictions look forward to, and terminate in that. In the portions of prophecy which we have been over, we have seen the people of God represented as in danger from the Syrians, the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Moabites, the Edomites, the Babylonians; and in reference to them all, the same result has been predicted, that they would be delivered from them, and that their enemies would be destroyed.

This has been, in the chapters which we have passed over, successively foretold of Damascus, of Egypt, of Moab, of Ethiopia, of Babylon, of Edom, and of Sennacherib; and the prophet has reached the conclusion that all the enemies of God‘s people would ultimately be destroyed, and that they would be safe under the reign of the Messiah, to which all their deliverances were preparatory, and in which they all would terminate, Having pursued this course of the prophecy; having looked at all these foes; having seen them in vision all destroyed; having seen the Prince of Peace come; having seen the wonders that he would perform; having seen all danger subside, and the preparation made for the eternal security and joy of all his people, the prophet closes this series of predictions with the beautiful statement now before us, ‹the redeemed of Yahweh shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.‘

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 36

Introduction

This chapter commences the historical portion of Isaiah, which continues to the close of Isaiah 39:1-8. The main subject is the destruction of Sennacherib and his army. It contains also an account of the sickness and recovery of Hezekiah; the song with which he celebrated his recovery; and an account of his ostentation in showing his treasures to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon. In 2 Chronicles 32:32, the following record occurs: ‹Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold they are written in the vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz;‘ and it is to this portion of Isaiah to which the author of the Book of Chronicles doubtless refers.

There was an obvious propriety in Isaiah‘s making a record of the invasion and destruction of Sennacherib. That event has occupied a considerable portion of his prophetic announcements; and as he lived to see them fulfilled, it was proper that he should record the event. The prophecy and its fulfillment can thus be compared together; and while there is the strongest internal testimony that the prophecy was uttered before the event, there is also the most striking and clear fulfillment of all the predictions on the subject.

A parallel history of these transactions occurs in 2 Chronicles 32:32. Gesenius also accords substantially with Rosenmuller in supposing that this history is an elaboration of that in the Book of Kings, and that it was reduced to its present form by some one who collected and edited the books of Isaiah after the Babylonian captivity. Vitringa supposes that both the accounts in Kings and in Isaiah have been derived from a common historical document, and have been adopted and somewhat abridged and modified by the author of the Book of Kings and by Isaiah.

It is impossible now to determine the truth in regard to this subject; nor is it of much importance. Those who are desirous of seeing the subject discussed more at length may consult Vitringa, Rosenmuller, and Gesenius. The view of Gesenius is chiefly valuable because he has gone into a comparison of the account in Isaiah with that in Kings. The following remarks are all that occur to me as desirable to make, and express the conclusion which I have been able to form on the subject:

1. The two accounts have a common origin, or are substantially the production of the same hand. This is apparent on the face of them. The same course of the narrative is pursued, the same expressions occur, and the same style of composition is found. It is possible, indeed, that the Holy Spirit might have inspired two different anthors to adopt the same style and expressions in recording the same events, but this is not the mode elsewhere observed in the Scriptures. Every sacred writer is allowed to pursue his own method of narration, and to express himself in a style and manner of his own.

2. There is no evidence that the two accounts were abridged from a more full narrative. Such a thing is possible; nor is there any impropriety in the supposition. But it lacks historical support. That there were histories among the Jews which are now lost; that there were public records which were the fountains from where the authors of the histories which we now have drew their information, no one can doubt who reads the Old Testament. Thus we have accounts of the writings of Gaff, and Iddo the seer, and Nathan, and the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and of the Book of Jehu the prophet 2 Chronicles 9:29; 2 Chronicles 20:34; 1 Kings 16:1, all of which are now lost, except so far as they are incorporated in the historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament. It is possible, therefore, that these accounts may have been abridged from some such common record, but there is no historical testimony to the fact.

3. There is no evidence that these chapters in Isaiah were inserted by Ezra, or the other inspired men who collected the Sacred Writings, and published a recension, or an edition of them after the return from Babylon. That there was such a work performed by Ezra and his contemporaries is the testimony of all the Jewish historians (see Dr. Alexander "On the Canon of Scripture"). But there is no historical evidence that they thus introduced into the writings of Isaiah an entire historical narrative from the previous histories, or that they composed this history to be inserted here. It is done nowhere else. And had it been done on this occasion, we should have had reason to expect that they would have inserted historical records of the fulfillment of all the other prophecies which had been fulfilled. We should have looked, therefore, for historical statements of the downfall of

Damascus and Syria; of the destruction of Samaria, of Moab of Babylon, and of Tyre, as proofs of the fulfillment of the predictions of Isaiah. There can be no reason why the account of the destruction of Sennacherib should have been singled out and inserted in preference to others. And this is especially true in regard to Babylon. The prophecy of Isaiah 2 Chronicles 9:29; thus the same Iddo the seer, and Shemaiah the prophet, recorded the acts of Rehoboam 2 Chronicles 12:15; thus the acts of Jehoshaphat were written in the Book of Jehu 2 Chronicles 20:34; and thus Isaiah wrote the acts of king Uzziah 2 Chronicles 26:22, and also of Hezekiah 2 Chronicles 32:32. Many of these historical sketches or fragments have not come down to us; but all that was essential to us has been doubtless incorporated into the sacred narrative, and transmitted to our own times. It is not improbable that many of these histories were mere fragments or public documents; narratives or sketches of a single reign, or some important fact in a reign, which were subsequently revised and inserted in the more extended history, so that, after all, it may be that we have all, or nearly all, of these fragments incorporated in the histories which we now possess.

5. As Isaiah is thus known to have written some portions of the history of the kings, it is probable that his history would be incorporated into the record of the kings by whomsoever that record might be composed. Indeed, the composition of the entire Books of Kings has been ascribed by many writers to Isaiah, though Grotius and some others ascribe it to Jeremiah. The general, and the probable opinion is, however, that the Books of the Kings were digested into their present form by Ezra. It is probable, therefore, I think, that Isaiah wrote the chapters in Kings respecting the invasion of Sennacherib; that the compiler of the Books of Kings, whoever he might be, adopted the fragment as a part of his history, and that the portion which we have here in Isaiah is the same fragment revised, abridged in some places, and enlarged in others, to adapt it to his purpose in introducing it into his book of prophecy. But it is admitted that this is conjecture. Every consideration, however, must lead us to suppose that this is the work of Isaiah (compare the Introduction, Section 5).

The portion of history contained in these chapters differs from the record in the Kings in several respects. There is no difference in regard to the historical facts, but the difference has respect to the fulness of the

narratives, and to the change of a few words. The most material difference is that a few sentences, and members of sentences, are omitted in Isaiah which are found in Kings. These variations will be noticed in the exposition, and it is not necessary more particularly to refer to them here.

The thirty-sixth chapter contains the following parts, or subjects:

1. Sennacherib, having taken most of the strongholds of Judea, sent Rabshakeh with a great force to besiege Jerusalem, and to summon it to surrender Isaiah 36:1-2.

2. Hezekiah sent an embassy to meet with Rabshakeh, evidently to induce him to depart from the city Isaiah 36:3.

3. This embassy Rabshakeh addressed in a proud, insolent, and taunting speech, reproaching them with putting their trust in Egypt, and with their feebleness, and assuring them that Sennacherib had come up against the city at the command of Yahweh Isaiah 36:4-10.

4. The Jewish embassy requested Rabshakeh to speak in the Aramean or Syrian language, that the common people on the wall might not hear Isaiah 36:11.

5. To this he replied, that he came that they might hear; to endearour to draw them off from trusting to Hezekiah, and to induce them to submit to Sennacherib, promising them abundance in the land to which he would take them Isaiah 36:12-20.

6. To all this, the embassy of Hezekiah said nothing, but returned, as they had been instructed, into the city, with deep expressions of sorrow and grief Isaiah 36:21-22.

Verse 1

In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah - Of his reign, 709 b.c.

That Sennacherib - Sennacherib was son and successor of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, and began to reign A.M. 3290, or 714 b.c., and reigned, according to Calmet, but four years, according to Prideaux eight years, and according to Gesenius eighteen years. The immediate occasion of this war against Judah was the fact that Hezekiah had shaken

off the yoke of Assyria, by which his father Ahaz and the nation had suffered so much under Tiglath-pileser, or Shalmaneser 2 Kings 18:7. To reduce Judea again to subjection, as well as to carry his conquests into Egypt, appears to have been the design of this celebrated expedition. He ravaged the country, took the strong towns and fortresses, and prepared then to lay siege to Jerusalem itself. Hezekiah, however, as soon as the army of Sennacherib had entered Judea, prepared to put Jerusalem into a state of complete defense. At the advice of his counselors he stopped the waters that flowed in the neighborhood of the city, and that might furnish refreshment to a besieging army, built up the broken walls, enclosed one of the fountains within a wall, and prepared shields and darts in abundance to repel the invader 2 Chronicles 32:2-5.

Sennacherib, seeing that all hope of easily taking Jerusalem was taken away, apparently became inclined to hearken to terms of accommodation. Hezekiah sent to him to propose peace, and to ask the conditions on which he would withdraw his forces. He confessed his error in not paying the tribute stipulated by his father, and his willingness to pay now what should be demanded by Sennacherib. Sennacherib demanded three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold. This was paid by Hezekiah, by exhausting the treasury, and by stripping even the temple of its gold 2 Kings 18:13-16. It was evidently understood in this treaty that Sennacherib was to withdraw his forces, and return to his own land. But this treaty he ultimately disregarded (see the note at Isaiah 33:8). He seems, however, to have granted Hezekiah some respite, and to have delayed his attack on Jerusalem until his return from Egypt. This war with Egypt he prosecuted at first with great success, and with a fair prospect of the conquest of that country.

But having laid siege to Pelusium, and having spent much time before it without success, he was compelled at length to raise the siege, and to retreat. Tirhakah king of Ethiopia having come to the aid of Sevechus, the reigning monarch of Egypt, and advancing to the relief of Pelusium, Sennacherib was compelled to raise the siege, and retreated to Judea. Here, having taken Lachish, and disregarding his compact with Hezekiah, he sent an army to Jerusalem under Rabshakeh to lay siege to the city. This is the point in the history of Sennacherib to which the passage before us refers (see Prideaux‘s “Connection,” vol. i. pp. 138-141; Jos. “Ant.” x. 1; Gesenius “*in loc*;” and Robinson‘s Calmet).

All the defended cities - All the towns on the way to Egypt, and in the vicinity of Jerusalem (see the notes at Isaiah 10:28-32).

Verse 2

And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh - In 2 Kings 18:17, it is said that he sent Tartan, and Rabsaris, and Rabshakeh. In regard to Tartan, see the note at Isaiah 20:1. It is probable that Rabshakeh only is mentioned in Isaiah because the expedition may have been mainly under his direction, or more probably because he was the principal speaker on the occasion to which he refers.

From Lachish - This was a city in the south of the tribe of Judah, and was southwest of Jerusalem Joshua 10:23; Joshua 15:39. It was situated in a plain, and was the seat of an ancient Canaanite king. It was rebuilt and fortified by Rehoboam 2 Chronicles 11:9. It was in some respects a border town, and was a defense against the incursions of the Philistines. It was therefore situated between Jerusalem and Egypt, and was in the direct way of Sennacherib in his going to Egypt, and on his return. It lay, according to Eusebius and Jerome, seven Roman miles from Eleutheropolis toward the south. No trace of the town, however, is now to be found (see Robinson‘s “Bib. Researches,” vol. ii. pp. 388,389).

With a great army - Sennacherib remained himself for a time at Lachish, though he followed not long after. It is probable that he sent forward a considerable portion of his immense army, retaining only so many forces as he judged would be necessary to carry on the siege of Lachish. In 2 Chronicles 32:9, it is said that Sennacherib, while he sent his servants to Jerusalem, ‹laid siege to Lachish and all his power with him;‘ but this must mean that he retained with him a considerable part of his army, and doubtless all that contributed to his magnificence and splendor. The word ‹power‘ in 2 Chronicles 32:9, means also ‹dominion‘ (see the margin), and denotes all the insignia of royalty: and this might have been retained while a considerable part of his forces had been sent forward to Jerusalem.

And he stood - He halted; he encamped there; He intended to make that the point of attack.

By the conduit … - (See the notes at Isaiah 7:3)

Verse 3

Then came forth unto him - Isaiah has here omitted what is recorded in 2 Kings 18:18, namely, that Rabshakeh and his companions ‹called to the

king,‘ and as the result of that probably Hezekiah sent out Eliakim.

Eliakim, Hilkiah‘s son, which was over the house - Respecting Eliakim, and his character, see the notes at Isaiah 22:20-25.

And Shebna the scribe - This may have been some other man than the one mentioned in Isaiah 22:15. He is there said to have been ‹over the house,‘ and it is stated that he should be degraded from that office, and succeeded by Eliakim. It is possible, however, that Hezekiah retained him as scribe, or as secretary (see the analysis of Isaiah 22:15-25).

And Joah, Asaph‘s son, the recorder - The “chronicler;” the officer to whom was entrusted the keeping of the records of state. The Hebrew word means ‹the remembrancer;‘ him by whose means former events might be recalled and remembered, perhaps an officer such as would be called historiographer.

Verse 4

What confidence - What is the ground of your confidence? on what do you trust? The appellation ‹great king‘ was the customary title of the kings of the Persians and Assyrians.

Verse 5

I say, sayest thou - In 2 Kings 18:20, this is ‹thou sayest;‘ and thus many manuscripts read it here, and Lowth and Noyes have adopted that reading. So the Syriac reads it. But the sense is not affected whichever reading is adopted. It is designed to show to Hezekiah that his reliance, either on his own resources or on Egypt, was vain.

But they are but vain words - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹A word of lips;‘ that is, mere words; vain and empty boasting.

On whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? - Hezekiah had revolted from the Assyrian power, and had refused to pay the tribute which had been imposed on the Jews in the time of Ahaz 2 Kings 18:7.

Verse 6

Lo, thou trustest - It is possible that Sennacherib might have been apprised of the attempt which had been made by the Jews to secure the cooperation of Egypt (see the notes at Isaiah 30:1-7; Isaiah 31:1 ff), though he might not have been aware that the negotiation was unsuccessful.

In the staff of this broken reed - The same comparison of Egypt with a broken reed, or a reed which broke while they were trusting to it, occurs in Ezekiel 29:6-7. Reeds were doubtless used often for staves, as they are now. They are light and hollow, with long joints. The idea here is, that as a

slender reed would break when a man leaned on it, and would pierce his hand, so it would be with Egypt. Their reliance would give way, and their trusting to Egypt would be attended with injury to themselves (compare Isaiah 30:5, Isaiah 30:7; Isaiah 31:3).

Verse 7

But if thou say to me - If you shall make this plea, that you believe Yahweh will protect you in your revolt. The word ‹thou‘ here refers to Hezekiah, or to the ambassadors speaking in his name. In 2 Kings 18:22, it is, ‹but if ye say unto me;‘ that is, you ambassadors. The sense is substantially the same.

Is it not he … - This is given as a reason why they should not put their confidence in Yahweh. The reason is, that he supposed that Hezekiah had removed all the altars of Yahweh from all parts of the land, and that they could not calculate on the protection of a God whose worship bad been abolished. It is probable that Sennacherib and Rabshakeh had beard of the reformation which had been effected by Hezekiah; of his destroying the groves and altars which had been consecrated in the reign of his father to idolatry, and perhaps of the fact that he had even destroyed the brass serpent which Moses had made, and which had become an object of idolatrous worship 2 Kings 18:4, and he may have supposed that all these altars and groves had been devoted to Yahweh, and were connected with his worship. He did not seem to understand that all that Hezekiah had done was only to establish the worship of Yahweh in the land.

High places - The worship of idols was usually performed in groves on high places; or on the tops of hills and mountains. It seems to have been supposed that worship in such places was more acceptable to the Deity. Perhaps it may have been because they thus seemed nearer the residence of the gods; or, perhaps, because there is sublimity and solemnity in such places - a stillness and elevation above the world which seem favorable to devotion (see 1 Samuel 9:12; 1 Kings 3:4; 2 Kings 12:2; 2 Chronicles 33:19). Chapels, temples, and altars, were erected on such places 1 Kings 13:22; 2 Kings 17:29, and ministers and priests attended there to officiate (1 Kings 12:32; 2 Kings 17:32). Even the kings of Judah, notwithstanding the express prohibition of Moses 2 Kings 12:4; 2 Kings 14:4; 2 Kings 15:4, 2 Kings 15:35; 2 Chronicles 15:17; 2 Chronicles 20:33; and Solomon himself sacrificed in chapels of this kind 1 Kings 3:2. These places Hezekiah had destroyed; that is, he had cut down the consecrated groves, and had

destroyed the chapels and temples which had been erected there. The fact that Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, had been distinguished for worshipping in such places had probably led the king of Assyria to suppose that this was the proper worship of the God of the Jews; and now that Hezekiah had destroyed them all, he seems to have inferred that he was guilty of gross irreligion, and could no longer depend on the protection of Yahweh.

And said to Judah and Jerusalem - He had commanded them to worship only in Jerusalem, at the temple. This was in strict accordance with the law of Moses; but this seems to have been understood by Sennacherib as in fact almost or quite banishing the worship of Yahweh from the land. Probably this was said to alienate the minds of the people from Hezekiah, by showing them that he had taken away their rights and privileges of worshipping God where they chose.

Verse 8

Now, therefore, give pledges - Margin, ‹Hostages.‘ The Hebrew verb (ערב *ʿârab*) means properly to mix or mingle; then, to exchange commodities by barter or traffic; then, to become surety for anyone, to exchange with him, to stand in his place; then, to pledge, to pledge one‘s life, or to give security of any kind. Here it is used in a spirit of taunting or derision, and is equivalent to what would be said among us, ‹I will bet you, or I will lay a wager, that if we should give you only two thousand horses, you could not find men enough to ride them, or men that had knowledge of horsemanship enough to guide them.‘ There was much severity in this taunt. The Jews hoped to defend themselves. Yet here was an immense army coming up to lay siege against them. What hope had they of defense? So weak and feeble were they, that Rabshakeh said they could not furnish even two thousand horsemen to resist all the host of the Assyrians. There was also, doubtless, much truth in this taunt. It was not permitted by the law of Moses for the Jews to keep cavalry, nor for their kings to multiply horses. The reason of this may be seen in the notes at Isaiah 2:7. Though some of the kings, and especially Solomon, had disregarded this law of Moses, yet Hezekiah had endeavored to restore the observance of the law, and it is probable that he find no cavalry, and that the art of horsemanship was little known in Jerusalem. As the Assyrians prided themselves on their cavalry, they consequently looked with contempt on a people who were destitute of this means of defense.

Verse 9

How then wilt thou turn away the face - The most unimportant captain in the army of Assyria commands more horsemen than this, and how can you expect to oppose even him, much more how can you be able to resist all the mighty army of the Assyrians?

One captain of the least - The word ‹captain‘ here (פחת *pachat* construct state from פחה *pechâh*) denotes a prefect or governor of a province less than a satrap, an officer who was under the satrap, and subject to him. It is applied to an officer in the Assyrian empire 2 Kings 18:24; in the Chaldean empire Jeremiah 51:23; the Persian Esther 8:9; Esther 9:3; and to the prefects of Judea in the time of Solomon 1 Kings 10:15. The word is of foreign origin.

Verse 10

And am I now come up without the Lord - Am I come up without his permission or command? Rabshakeh here speaks in the name of his master; and he means to say that he had the express command of Yahweh to inflict punishment on the Jews. It is possible that there had been conveyed to Sennacherib a rumour of what Isaiah had said (see Isaiah 10:5-6) that God would bring the Assyrians upon the Jewish people to punish them for their sins, and that Rabshakeh now pleads that as his authority, in order to show them that resistance would be vain. Or it may be that he uses the name Yahweh here as synonymous with the name of God, and means to say that he had been divinely directed to come up in that expedition. All the ancient warriors usually consulted the gods, and endeavored by auguries to obtain the divine approbation of their plans of conquest, and Rabshakeh may mean simply to say that his master came now under the divine sanction and direction. Or, which is more probable, he made use of this as a mere pretence for the purpose of influencing the people who heard him, and to whom he said he was sent Isaiah 36:12, in order to alienate their minds from Hezekiah, and to induce them to surrender. He knew that it was one of the principles of the Jews, however little they regarded it in practice, to yield to his authority. Wicked people will be glad to plead divine authority for their purposes and plans when they can have the slightest pretence for it.

Verse 11

Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language - Hebrew, ארמית *'ărâmîyt* - ‹Aramean.‘ Aram, or Aramea, properly meaning a high region, or the highlands, was of wider extent than Syria Proper, and comprehended not only Syria, but Mesopotamia. It usually denotes

however, Syria Proper, of which the capital was Damascus. The language of all this country was probably the same - the Syrian or Aramean, a language of the same family as the Hebrew, and having a strong resemblance to that and to the Chaldee. This was not properly the language of Assyria, where probably a dialect composed of the language of the Medes and Persians was employed. But the Syriac language was spoken in different parts of Assyria. It was spoken in Mesopotamia, and doubtless in some of the provinces of the Assyrian empire, and might be presumed to be understood by Rabshakeh, and those with him. The Jews had contact with the Syrians, and those who had been sent out by Hezekiah had learned to speak that. It is not probable that they understood the Medo-Persian tongue that was spoken by the Assyrians usually. The Syriac or Aramean was probably the most common language which was spoken in that region. Its knowledge prevailed in the time of the Saviour, and was that which he usually spoke.

In the Jews‘ language - (יהודית *yehûdîyt*). The language of Judah. It is remarkable that they did not call it the Hebrew language. But there might have been some national pride in regard to this. The Hebrew language had been the common language of all the Jews, and had been spoken by those of the kingdom of Israel or Samaria, as well as by those of the kingdom of Judah. But after the revolt of the ten tribes it is possible that they might have claimed the language as their own, and regarded the Hebrew - the venerable language of their fathers - as belonging to them especially, as they claimed everything that was sacred or venerable in the nation, and hence, they spoke of it as the language of Judah. The name of Judah, or Jews, which is derived from Judah, was, after the removal of the ten tribes, given to the entire nation - a name which is retained to the present time. In Isaiah 19:18, it is called the language of Canaan (see the note on that place).

In the ears of the people that are on the wall - This conference took place evidently near the city, and within hearing distance. Doubtless the people of the city, feeling a curiosity to hear the message of the Assyrian, crowded the walls. The Jewish ambassadors were apprehensive that what was said by Rabshakeh would alienate their minds from Hezekiah, and requested that the conference might be conducted in a language which they could not understand.

Verse 12

Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee? - To Hezekiah, and to you alone. A part of my purpose is to address the people, to induce

them to leave Hezekiah, and to offer no resistance to the Assyrian.

To the men that sit on the wall … - The meaning of this is, that the inhabitants of the city, if they do not surrender, will be subjected to the severest evils of famine. If they did not surrender, it was the purpose of the Assyrian to lay siege to the city, and to reduce it. But it was often the work of years to reduce and take a city. Nebuchadnezzar spent thirteen years before Tyre, and the Greeks employed ten in reducing ancient Troy. The sense here is, therefore, that unless the people could be induced to surrender to Sennacherib, they would be subjected to all the horrors of a siege, when they would be reduced to the most deplorable state of necessity and want. The idea in the whole verse is clearly expressed in the parallel place in 2 Chronicles 32:11: ‹Doth not Hezekiah persuade you to give over yourselves to die by famine and by thirst, saying, The Lord our God shall deliver us out of the hand of the king of Assyria?‘ In regard to the indelicacy of this passage, we may observe:

1. That the Masoretes in the Hebrew text have so pointed the words used, that in reading it the offensiveness would be considerably avoided. It is common in the Hebrew Scriptures, when a word is used in the text that is indelicate, to place another word in the margin, and the vowel-points that belong to the word in the margin are applied to the word in the text, and the word in the margin is thus commonly read. In accordance with this custom among the Jews, it is evident that more delicacy might have been observed by our translators in this, and in some other places of the Scriptures.

2. The customs, habits, and modes of expression of people in different nations and times, differ. What appears indelicate at one time or in one country, may not only be tolerated, but common in another. Many things are esteemed indelicate among us which are not so in polite and refined France; many expressions are so regarded now which were not in the time when the Bible was translated into English. Many things may be to us offensive which were not so to the Syrians, the Babylonians, and the Jews; and many modes of expression which are common now, and consistent with all our notions of refinement, may appear improper in some other period of the world. There are many things in Shakespere, and in most of the Old English writers, which cannot now be read without a blush. Yet need I say that those expressions will be heard with unconcern in the theater by those whose delicacy is most offended by some expression in the Bible? There are things

infinitely more offensive to delicacy in Byron, and Moore, and even Burns, than there are in the Scriptures; and yet are these not read without a murmur by those who make the loudest complaints of the slightest departure from delicacy in the Bible?

3. There is another remark to be made in regard to this. Isaiah is not at all responsible for the indelicacy of the language here. He is simply a historian. He did not say it; nor is he responsible for it. If there is indelicacy in it, it is not in recording it, but in saying it; and the responsibility is on Rabshakeh. If Isaiah undertook to make a record of an important transaction, what right had he to abridge it, or contract it, or to make it different from what it was?

4. And again: it was of importance to give the true character of the attack which was made on Jerusalem. The coming of Sennacherib was attended with pride, and insolence, and blasphemy; and it was important to state the true character of the transaction. and to record just what was said and done. Hence, Isaiah, as a faithful historian, recorded the coming of the Assyrians; the expressions of their haughtiness, insolence, and pride; their vain boasting, and their reproaches of Yahweh; and for the same reason he has recorded the gross and indelicate language which they used to add to the trials of the Jews. Let him who used the language, and not him who recorded it, bear the blame.

Verse 13

Then Rabshakeh stood - Indicating the posture of a man who intends to speak to them at a distance.

And cried with a loud voice - So that those on the wall could bear.

The words of the king … - (See the note at Isaiah 36:4)

Verse 14

Let not Hezekiah deceive you - By inducing you to put your trust in Yahweh or in himself; or with promises that you will be delivered.

Not be able to deliver you - In 2 Kings 18:29, it is added, ‹out of his hand;‘ but the sense is substantially the same.

Verse 15

Make you trust in the Lord - Rabshakeh knew that Hezekiah was professedly devoted to Yahweh, and that he would endeavor to induce the

people to trust in him. The Jews had now no other refuge but God, and as long as they put their confidence there, even Rabshakeh knew that it was hazardous to attempt to take and destroy their city. It was his policy, therefore, first to endeavor to undermine their reliance on God, before he could have any hope of success. The enemies of God‘s people cannot succeed in their designs against them until they can unsettle their confidence in Him.

Verse 16

Hearken not to Hezekiah - Do not listen to his entreaties to confide in him, and in Yahweh; do not unite with him in endeavoring to make any resistance or opposition to us.

Make an agreement with me by a present - The Septuagint read this, Ει᾽ βούλεσθε εὐλογηθῆναι *Ei boulesthe eulogēthēnai* - ‹If you wish to be blessed, or happy, come out to me.‘ The Hebrew is literally, ‹Make with me a blessing‘ (ברכה *berâkâh*). The idea of its being done ‹by a present,‘ is not in the Hebrew text. The word ‹blessing‘ here probably means the same as peace. ‹Make peace with me,‘ perhaps because peace was regarded as a blessing; and perhaps the word is used with a reference to one of the significations of: ברך *bārak* which is to kneel down, and this word may refer to their kneeling down; that is, to their offering allegiance to the king of Assyria. The former is, however, the more probable sense, that the word means peace, because this was an evident blessing, or would be the source of rich blessings to them. It is not, however, used in this sense elsewhere in the Bible. The Chaldee renders it, ‹Make peace (שׁלמא *shālâmâ'*) with me.‘

And come out to me - Surrender yourselves to me. It is evident, however, that he did not mean that be would then remove them from their city and country, but he demanded a surrender, intending to come and remove them at some other period Isaiah 36:17.

And eat ye every one of his own vine - An emblem of safety, when every man might be permitted to partake of the fruit of his own labor. All that he now professed to desire was, that they should surrender the city, and give up their means of defense, and then he would leave them in security and quietness, until it should please his master to come and remove them to a land as fertile as their own.

And drink ye every one - Another emblem of security and happiness. This promise was made to induce them to surrender. On the one hand, he threatened them with the dreadful evils of famine if they refused and

allowed their city to be besieged Isaiah 36:12; and on the other, he promised them, for a time at least, a quiet and secure residence in their own city, and then a removal to a land not inferior to their own.

Verse 17

Until I come - These are the words of the king of Assyria delivered by Rabshakeh. It was proposed that they should remain safely in Jerusalem until Sennacherib should himself come and remove them to his own land. He was now engaged in the siege of Lachish Isaiah 36:2, and it is probable that he purposed to take some other of the unsubdued towns in that part of Palestine.

And take you away - It was common for conquerors in ancient times to remove a vanquished people from their own country. They did this either by sending them forth in colonies to people some unsettled region, or by removing the body of them to the land of the conqueror. This was done for various purposes. It was sometimes to make slaves of them; sometimes for the purposes of triumph; but more commonly to secure them from revolt. In this manner the ten tribes were removed from the kingdom of Samaria; and thus also the Jews were carried to Babylon. Suetonius says (chapter xxi.) of Augustus. that he removed the Suevi and the Sicambri into Gaul, and stationed them on the Rhine. The same thing was also practiced in Egypt, for the purpose of securing the people from revolt Genesis 47:21.

A land like your own land - A fertile land, abounding in the same productions as your own.

And wine - Palestine was celebrated for the vine. The idea is, that in the land to which he would remove them, they should not want.

Verse 18

Hath any of the gods of the nations … - This is said to show them the impossibility, as he supposed, of being delivered from the arm of the king of Assyria. He had conquered all before him, and not even the gods of the nations had been able to rescue the lands where they were worshipped from the hands of the victorious invader. He inferred, therefore, that Yahweh, the God of Palestine, could not save their land.

Verse 19

Where are the gods of Hamath … - In regard to these places, see the notes at Isaiah 10:9-11.

Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? - Sepharvaim was probably in Mesopotamia. Ptolemy mentions a city there of the name of Sipphara, as

the most southern city of Mesopotamia, which is probably the same. It is evident that it was in the vicinity of Hamath and Arphad, and these are known to have been in Mesopotamia. When Shalmaneser carried Israel away captive from Samaria, he sent colonies of people into Palestine in their stead, among whom were the Sepharvaim 2 Kings 17:24, 2 Kings 17:31.

And have they delivered Samaria - (See the note at Isaiah 10:11). The author of the Books of Chronicles expresses this in a more summary manner, and says, that Rabshakeh joined Yahweh with the gods of the nations in the same language of reproach: ‹And he spake against the God of Jerusalem, as against the gods of the people of the earth, which were the work of the hands of man,‘ 2 Chronicles 32:19.

Verse 21

But they held their peace - Hezekiah had commanded them not to answer. They were simply to hear what Rabshakeh had to propose, and to report to him, that he might decide on what course to pursue. It was a case also in which it was every way proper that they should be silent. There was so much insolence, self-confidence, blasphemy, the proposals were so degrading, and the claims were so arrogant, that it was not proper that they should enter into conference, or listen a moment to the terms proposed. Their minds also were so horror-stricken with the language of insolence and blasphemy, and their hearts so pained by the circumstances of the city, that they would not feel like replying to him. There are circumstances when it is proper to maintain a profound silence in the presence of revilers and blasphemers, and when we should withdraw from them, and go and spread the case before the Lord. This was done here Isaiah 37:1, and the result showed that this was the course of wisdom.

Verse 22

With their clothes rent - This was a common mark of grief among the Jews (see 2 Samuel 3:21; 1 Kings 21:27; Ezra 9:3; Job 1:20; Job 2:12; Jeremiah 36:24; and the notes at Matthew 26:65; notes at Acts 14:14). The causes of their griefs were the insolence and arrogance of Rabshakeh; the proposal to surrender the city; the threatening of the siege on the one hand, and of the removal on the other, and the blasphemy of the name of their God, and the reproach of the king. All these things filled their hearts with grief, and they hastened to make report to Hezekiah.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 37

Introduction

This chapter contains a continuation of the historical narrative commenced in the previous chapter. Hezekiah went with expressions of grief to the temple, to spread the cause of his distress before the Lord Isaiah 37:1. He sent an embassage to Isaiah to ask his counsel in the time of the general distress Isaiah 37:2-5. Isaiah replied that he should not be afraid of the Assyrian, for that he should soon be destroyed Isaiah 37:6-7. The return of Rabshakeh to Sennacherib Isaiah 37:8. Sennacherib heard that Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, was preparing to make war upn him, and sent another embassay, with substantially the same message as the former, to induce him to surrender Isaiah 37:9-13. Hezekiah having read the letter which he sent, went again to the temple, and spread it before the Lord Isaiah 37:14. His prayer is recorded Isaiah 37:15-20. Isaiah, in answer to his prayer, reproves the pride and arrogance of Sennacherib, and gives the assurance that Jerusalem shall be safe, and that the Asssyrian shall be destroyed Isaiah 37:21-35. The chapter closes with an account of the destruction of the army of the Assyrians, and the death of Sennacherib Isaiah 37:36-38.

Verse 1

When king Hezekiah heard it - Heard the account of the words of Rabshakeh Isaiah 36:22.

That he rent his clothes - (See the note at Isaiah 36:22).

He covered himself with sackcloth - (See the note at Isaiah 3:24).

And went into the house of the Lord - Went up to the temple to spread out the case before Yahweh Isaiah 37:14. This was in accordance with the usual habit of Hezekiah; and it teaches us that when we are environed with difficulties or danger and when the name of our God is blasphemed, we should go and spread out our feelings before God, and seek his aid.

Verse 2

And he sent Eliakim - (See the note at Isaiah 36:3).

And the elders of the priests - It was a case of deep importance, and one that pertained in a special manner to the interests of religion; and he, therefore, selected the most respectable embassage that he could to present the case to the prophet.

Covered with sackcloth - Religion had been insulted. The God whom the priests served had been blasphemed, and the very temple was

threatened, and it was proper that the priests should go with the habiliments of mourning.

Unto Isaiah - It was customary on occasions of danger to consult prophets, as those who had direct communication with God, and seek counsel from them. Thus Balak sent messengers to Balaam to consult him in a time of perplexity (Numbers 22:5 ff); thus Jehoshaphat and the king of Israel consulted Micaiah in time of danger from Syria 1 Kings 22:1-13; thus Ahaziah, when sick, sent to consult Elijah 2 Kings 1:1-9; and thus Josiah sent an embassage to Huldah the prophetess to inquire in regard to the book which was found in the temple of the Lord 2 Kings 22:14)

Verse 3

This is a day of rebuke - This may refer either to the reproaches of Rabsbakeh, or more probably to the fact that Hezekiah regarded the Lord as rebuking his people for their sins. The word which is used here (תוכחה *tôkēchâh*), means more properly chastisement or punishment Psalm 149:7; Hosea 5:9.

And of blasphemy - Margin, ‹Provocation.‘ The word used here (נאצה *ne'âtsâh*), means properly reproach or contumely; and the sense is, that God and his cause had been vilified by Rabshakeh, and it was proper to appeal to him to vindicate the honor of his own name Isaiah 37:4.

For the children are come … - The meaning of this figure is plain. There was the highest danger, and need of aid. It was as in childbirth in which the pains had been protracted, the strength exhausted, and where there was most imminent danger in regard to the mother and the child. So Hezekiah said there was the most imminent danger in the city of Jerusalem. They had made all possible preparations for defense. And now, in the most critical time, they felt their energies exhausted, their strength insufficient for their defense, and they needed the interposition of God.

Verse 4

It may be the Lord thy God - The God whom thou dost serve, and in whose name and by whose authority thou dost exercise the prophetic office.

Will hear the words - Will come forth and vindicate himself in regard to the language of reproach and blasphemy which has been used. See a similar use of the word ‹hear‘ in Exodus 2:24; Exodus 3:7.

To reproach the living God - The revilings of Rabsbakeh were really directed against the true God. The reproach of the ‹living God‘ consisted in comparing him to idols, and saying that be was no more able to deleted

Jerusalem than the idol-gods had been able to defend their lands (see the note at Isaiah 36:18). The phrase ‹the living God‘ is often applied to Yahweh in contradistinction from idols, which were mere blocks of wood or stone.

For the remnant that is left - For those who survive; or probably for those parts of the land, including Jerusalem, that have not fallen into the hands of the Assyrian. Sennacherib had taken many towns, but there were many also that had not yet been subdued by him.

Verse 6

Wherewith the servants … - Hebrew, נערי *naʿărēy* - The ‹youth,‘ or the young men. The word properly denotes boys, youths, young men; and is used here probably by way of disparagement, in contradistinction from an embassy that would be truly respectable, made up of aged men.

Have blasphemed me - God regarded these words as spoken against himself and he would vindicate his own honor and name.

Verse 7

Behold, I will send a blast upon him - Margin, ‹Put a spirit into him.‘ The word rendered ‹blast‘ (רוח *rûach*) is commonly rendered ‹spirit.‘ It may denote breath, air, soul, or spirit. There is no reason to think that the word is used here in the sense of blast of wind, as our translators seem to have supposed. The sense is probably, ‹I will infuse into him a spirit of fear, by which be shall be alarmed by the rumour which he shall hear, and return to his own land.‘ The word is often used in this sense (compare 1 Samuel 16:14; see also Isaiah 31:8-9). Gesenius understands it here in the sense of will or disposition. ‹I will change his will or disposition, so that he will return to his own land.‘

And he shall hear a rumour - The rumour or report here referred to, was doubtless that respecting Tirhakah king of Ethiopia Isaiah 37:9. It was this which would alarm him, and drive him in haste from the cities which he was now besieging, and be the means of expelling him from the land.

And I will cause him … - This is said in accordance with the usual statements in the Scriptures, that all events are under God‘s providential control (compare the note at Isaiah 10:5-6).

By the sword in his own land - (See the note at Isaiah 37:38).

Verse 8

So Rabshakeh returned - Returned from Jerusalem to the camp of his master. He had received no answer to his insulting message Isaiah 36:21; he

saw there was no prospect that the city would surrender; and he therefore returned again to the camp.

And found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah - He had departed from Lachish. Why he had done this is unknown. It is possible that he had taken it, though this is not recorded anywhere in history. Or it is possible that he had found it impracticable to subdue it as speedily as he had desired; and had withdrawn from it for the purpose of subduing other places that would offer a more feeble resistance. Libnah was a city in the south of Judah Joshua 15:42, given to the priests, and declared a city of refuge 1 Chronicles 6:54, 1 Chronicles 6:57. Eusebius and Jerome say it was in the district of Eleutheropolis (Calmet). It was about ten miles to the northwest of Lachish. This city was taken by Joshua, and all its inhabitants put to the sword After taking this. Joshua next assaulted and took Lachish Joshua 10:29-32.

Verse 9

And he heard say - The report or rumour referred to in Isaiah 37:7. In what way he heard this is not intimated. It is probable that the preparations which Tirhakah had made, were well known to the surrounding regions, and that he was already on his march against Sennacherib.

Tirhakah - This king, who, by Eusebius and by most ancient writers, is called Ταρακὸς *Tarakos* was a celebrated conqueror, and had subdued Egypt to himself. He reigned over Egypt eighteen years. When Sennacherib marched into Egypt, Sevechus or Sethon was on the throne. Sennacherib having laid siege to Pelusium, Tirhakah came to the aid of the city, and, in consequence of his aid, Sennacherib was compelled to raise the siege and returned to Palestine, and laid siege to Lachish. Tirhakah succeeded Sevechus in Egypt, and was the third and last of the Ethiopian kings that reigned over that country. He probably took advantage of the distracted state that succeeded the death of Sevechus, and secured the crown for himself. This was, however, after the death of Sennacherib. The capital which he occupied was Thebes (see Prideaux‘s “Connection,” vol. i. pp. 141,145,149. Ed. 1815). As he was celebrated as a conqueror, and as he had driven Sennacherib from Pelusium and from Egypt, we may see the cause of the alarm of Sennacherib when it was rumoured that he was about to follow him into Palestine, and to make war on him there.

He is come forth - He has made preparations, and is on his way.

He sent messengers … - With letters or despatches Isaiah 37:14. Hezekiah was probably ignorant of the approach of Tirhakah, or at all events Sennacherib would suppose that he was ignorant of it; and as Sennacherib knew that there would be no hope that Hezekiah would yield if he knew that Tirhakah was approaching to make war on him, he seems to have resolved to anticipate the intelligence, and to see if it were possible to induce him to surrender. He, therefore, sent substantially the same message as before, and summoned him to capitulate.

Verse 10

Let not thy God deceive thee - The similar message which had been sent by Rabshakeh Isaiah 36:14-15 had been sent mainly to the people to induce them not to put confidence in Hezekiah, as if he would deceive them by leading them to rely on the aid of Yahweh. As that had failed, he, as a last resort, sent a similar message to Hezekiah himself, designed to alienate his mind from God, and assuring him that resistance would be vain. To convince him, he referred him Isaiah 37:11-13 to the conquests of the Assyrians, and assured him that it would be impossible to resist a nation that had subdued so many ethers. He had it not in his power to add Egypt to the list of subdued kingdoms, or it would have been done.

Verse 11

And shalt thou be delivered? - How will it be possible for you to stand out against the conquerors of the world?

Verse 12

My fathers - My predecessors on the throne.

Gozan - This was a region or country in the northern part of Mesopotamia, and on the river Chaboras. There was a river of the name of Gozan in Media, which ran through the province, and gave it its name. The river fell probably into the Chaboras. This region is known to have been under the dominion of Assyria, for Shalmaneser, when he had subdued the ten tribes, carried them away beyond the Euphrates to a country bordering on the river Gozan 2 Kings 17:6. According to Gesenius, the river which is referred to, is the Chaboras itself. He translates the passage in 2 Kings 17:6, thus: ‹And placed them in Chaleitis (Halah), and on the Chabor (Habor), a river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.‘ According to this, the river was the Chaboras, the Chabor of Ezekiel, and the region was situated on the Chaboras. This river falls into the Euphrates from the east. Ptolemy calls the region lying between the Chaboras and Laocoras by the name of

Gauzanitis, which is doubtless the same as the Hebrew Gozan. Gozan is usually mentioned in connection with cities of Mesopotamia 2 Kings 19:12; 1 Chronicles 5:26.

And Haran - This was a city of Mesopotamia, to which Abraham went after he left Ur of the Chaldees. His father died here; and from this place he was called to go into the land of promise (Genesis 11:31-32; compare the notes at Acts 7:4). It is now called Harran, and is situated in latitude 36 degree 52 minutes north; longitude 39 degrees 5 minutes east, in a flat and sandy plain, and is only populated by a few wandering Arabs, who select it as the place of residence on account of the delicious waters it contains. It belonged by conquest to the Assyrian Empire.

And Rezeph - According to Abulfeda, there were many towns of this name. One, however, was more celebrated than the others, and is probably the one here referred to. It was situated about a day‘s journey west of the Euphrates, and is mentioned by Ptolemy by the name of Ῥησαφα *Rēsapha* (Resapha).

And the children of Eden - Eden was evidently a country well known in the time of Isaiah, and was, doubtless, the tract within which man was placed when he was created. The garden or Paradise was in Eden, and was not properly itself called Eden Genesis 2:8. It is probable that Eden was a region or tract of country of considerable extent. Its situation has been a subject of anxious inquiry. It is not proper here to go into an examination of this subject. It is evident from the passage before us that it was either in Mesopotamia, or in the neighborhood of that country, since it is mentioned in connection with cities and towns of that region. It is mentioned by Amos (787 b.c.), as a country then well known, and as a part of Syria, not far from Damascus:

I will break also the bar of Damascus,
And cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven,
And him that holdeth the scepter from the house of Eden,

And the people of Syria shall go into captivity to Kir,

Saith the Lord.
Amos 1:5.

In Isaiah 51:8, Eden is referred to as a country well known, and as distinguished for its fertility:

For Yahweh shall comfort Zion;
He will comfort all her waste places,
And he will make her wilderness like Eden,
And her desert like the garden of Yahweh.

Thus also in Ezekiel 27:23, we find Eden mentioned in connection with Haran and Canneh. Canneh was probably the same as Calneh Genesis 10:10, the Calno of Isaiah Isaiah 10:9, and was, doubtless, situated in Mesopotamia, since it is joined with cities that are known to have been there (compare also Ezekiel 31:9, Ezekiel 31:16, Ezekiel 31:18). All these passages demonstrate that there was such a country, and prove also that it was either in Mesopotamia, or in a country adjacent to Mesopotamia. It is not, however, possible now to designate its exact boundaries.

In Telassar - This place is nowhere else mentioned in the Scriptures. Nothing, therefore, is known of its situation. The connection demands that it should be in Mesopotamia. The names of ancient places were so often lost or changed that it is often impossible to fix their exact locality.

Verse 13

The king of Hamath - (See the note at Isaiah 36:19).

Hena and Ivah - Hena is mentioned in 2 Kings 18:34; 2 Kings 19:13. It was evidently in Mesopotamia, and was probably the same which was afterward called Ana, situated near a ford of the Euphrates. The situation of Ivah is not certainly known. It was under the Assyrian dominion, and was one of the places from which colonists were brought to Samaria 2 Kings 17:24, 2 Kings 17:31. Michaelis supposes that it was between Berytus and Tripoli, but was under the dominion of the Assyrians.

Verse 14

And Hezekiah received the letter - Hebrew, ‹Letters‘ (plural). It is not mentioned in the account of the embassy Isaiah 37:9, that a letter was sent, but it is not probable that all embassage would be sent to a monarch without a written document.

Went up into the house of the Lord - The temple Isaiah 37:1.

And spread it before the Lord - Perhaps unrolled the document there, and spread it out; or perhaps it means simply that he spread out the contents of the letter, that is, made mention of it in his prayer. Hezekiah had no other resource. He was a man of God; and in his trouble he looked to God for aid. He, therefore, before he formed any plan, went up to the temple, and laid

his case before God. What an example for all monarchs and rulers! And what an example for all the people of God, in times of perplexity!

Verse 16

O Lord of hosts - (See the note at Isaiah 1:9).

That dwellest between the cherubims - On the cherubim, see the note at Isaiah 14:13. The reference here is doubtless to the fact that the symbol of the divine presence in the temple the Shechinah (from שׁכן *shâkan* to dwell, to inhabit; so called because it was the symbol of God‘s dwelling with his people or inhabiting the temple) - rested on the cover of the ark in the temple. Hence, God is frequently represented as dwelling between the cherubim Exodus 25:22; Psalm 80:1; Psalm 99:1. On the whole subject of the cherubim, the reader may consult an article in the Quarterly Christian Spectator for September 1836.

Thou art the God - The only God Isaiah 43:10-11.

Even thou alone - There is none besides thee - a truth which is often affirmed in the Scriptures Deuteronomy 32:39; Psalm 86:10; 1 Corinthians 8:4.

Thou hast made heaven and earth - It was on the ground of this power and universal dominion that Hezekiah pleaded that God would interpose.

Verse 17

Incline thine ear - This is evidently language taken from what occurs among people. When they are desirous of hearing distinctly, they incline the ear or apply it close to the speaker. Similar language is not unfrequently used in the Scriptures as applicable to God 2 Kings 19:16; Psalm 86:1; Psalm 31:2; Psalm 88:2; Daniel 9:18.

Open thine eyes - This is similar language applied to God, derived from the fact that when we wish to see an object, the eyes are fixed upon it (compare Job 14:3; Job 27:19).

And hear all the words - That is, attend to their words, and inflict suitable punishment. This was the burden of the prayer of Hezekiah, that God would vindicate his own honor, and save his name from reproach.

Which he hath sent - In the letters which he had sent to Hezekiah, as well as the words which he had sent to the people by Rabshakeh Isaiah 36:18-20.

To reproach the living God - (See the note at Isaiah 37:4).

Verse 18

Of a truth - It is as he has said, that all the nations had been subjected to the arms of the Assyrian. He now intends to add Jerusalem to the number of vanquished cities and kingdoms, and to boast; that he has subdued the nation under the protection of Yahweh, as he had done the nations under the protection of idol-gods.

Have laid waste all, the nations - Hebrew, as Margin, ‹All the lands.‘ But this is evidently an elliptical form of expression, meaning all the inhabitants or people of the lands. In 2 Kings 19:17, it is thus expressed. ‹The kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands.‘

Verse 19

And have cast their gods into the fire - This appears to have been the usual policy of the Assyrians and Babylonians. It was contrary to the policy which the Romans afterward pursued, for they admitted the gods of other nations among their own, and even allowed them to have a place in the Pantheon. Their design seems not to have been to alienate the feelings of the vanquished, but to make them feel that they were a part of the same people. They supposed that a vanquished people would be conciliated with the idea that their gods were admitted to participate in the honors of those which were worshipped by the conquerors of the world. But the policy of the Eastern conquerors was different. They began usually by removing the people themselves whom they had subdued, to another land (see the note at Isaiah 36:17). They thus intended to alienate their minds as much as possible from their own country. They laid everything waste by fire and sword, and thus destroyed their homes, and all the objects of their attachment. They destroyed their temples, their groves, and their household gods. They well knew that the civil policy of the nation was founded in religion, and that, to subdue them effectually, it was necessary to abolish their religion. Which was the wisest policy, may indeed admit of question. Perhaps in each case the policy was well adapted to the particular end which was had in view.

For they were no gods - They were not truly gods, and therefore they had no power of resistance, and it was easy to destroy them.

Verse 20

That all the kingdoms of the earth may know - Since he has been able to subdue all others; and since Judea alone, the land under the protection of Yahweh, would be saved, all the nations would know that it could not be by the power of an idol. The desire of Hezckiah, therefore, was not primarily

that of his own personal safely or the safety of his kingdom. It was that Yahweh might vindicate his great and holy name from reproach, and that the world might know that he was the only true God. A supreme regard to the glory of God influenced this pious monarch in his prayers, and we have here a beautiful model of the object which we should have in view when we come before God. It is not primarily that we may be saved; it is not, as the leading motive, that our friends or that the world may be saved; it is that the name of God may be honored. This motive of prayer is one that is with great frequency presented in the Bible (compare Isaiah 42:8; Isaiah 43:10, Isaiah 43:13, Isaiah 43:25; Deuteronomy 32:39; Psalm 46:10; Psalm 83:18; Nehemiah 9:6; Daniel 9:18-19).

Perhaps there could have been furnished no more striking proof that Yahweh was the true God, than would be by the defeat of Sennacherib. No other nation had been able to resist the Assyrian arms. The great power of that empire was now concentrated in the single army of Sennacherib. He was coming with great confidence of success. He was approaching the city devoted to Yahweh - the city where the temple was, and the city and people that were everywhere understood to be under his protection. The affairs of the world had arrived at a crisis; and the time had come wheu the great Yahweh could strike a blow which would be felt on all nations, and carry the terror of his name, and the report of his power throughout the earth. Perhaps this was one of the main motives of the destruction of that mighty army. God intended that his power should be felt, and that monarchs and people that arrayed themselves against him, and blasphemed him, should have a striking demonstration that be was God, and that none of the devices of his enemies could succeed.

Verse 21

Whereas thou hast prayed - Because thou hast come to me instead of relying on thy own resources and strength. In 2 Kings 19:20, it is, ‹That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, I have heard.‘

Verse 22

The virgin, the daughter of Zion - Jerusalem (see the note at Isaiah 1:8; compare the note at Isaiah 23:12). The parallelism in this and the following verses shows that the poetic form of speech is here introduced.

Hast despised thee - That is, it is secure from thy contemplated attack. The idea is, that Jerusalem would exult over the ineffectual attempts of Sennacherib to take it, and over his complete overthrow.

Hath laughed thee to scorn - Will make thee an object of derision.

Hath shaken her head at thee - This is an indication of contempt and scorn (compare Psalm 22:7; Psalm 109:25; Jeremiah 18:16; Zephaniah 2:15; Matthew 27:39).

Verse 23

When hast thou reproached? - Not an idol. Not one who has no power to take vengeance, or to defend the city under his protection, but the living God.

Exalted thy voice - That is, by thy messenger. Thou hast spoken in a loud, confident tone; in the language of reproach and threatening.

And lifted up thine eyes on high - To lift up the eyes is an indication of haughtiness and pride. He had evinced arrogance in his manner, and he was yet to learn that it was against the living and true God.

Verse 24

By thy servants - Hebrew, ‹By the hand of thy servants.‘ That is, by Rabshakeh Isaiah 37:9, Isaiah 37:14.

And hast said - Isaiah does not here quote the precise words which Rabshakeh or the other messengers had used, but quotes the substance of what had been uttered, and expresses the real feelings and intentions of Sennacherib.

By the multitude of my chariots - The word ‹chariots‘ here denotes war-chariois (see the notes at Isaiah 2:7; Isaiah 66:20).

To the height of the mountains - Lebanon is here particularly referred to. Chariots were commonly used, as cavalry was, in plains. But it is probable that Lebanon was accessible by chariots drawn by horses.

To the sides of Lebanon - On the situation of Lebanon see the notes at Isaiah 10:34; Isaiah 29:17. Sennacherib is represented as having carried desolation to Lebanon, and as having cut down its stately trees (see the note at Isaiah 33:9).

I will cut down the tall cedars thereof - Margin, ‹The tallness of the cedars thereof.‘ The boast of Sennacherib was that he would strip it of its beauty and ornament; that is, that he would lay the land waste.

And the choice fir-trees thereof - (see the note at Isaiah 14:8). The Septuagint renders it, Υπαρίσσου *Uparissou* - ‹The beauty of the cypress.‘

The word here denotes the cypress, a tree resembling the white cedar. It grew on Lebanon, and, together with the cedar, constituted its glory. Its wood, like that of the cedar, was employed for the floors and ceilings of the temple 1 Kings 5:10; 1 Kings 6:15, 1 Kings 6:34. It was used for the decks and sheathing of ships Ezekiel 27:5, for spears Nehemiah 2:4; and for musical instruments 2 Samuel 6:5.

The height of his border - The extreme retreats; the furthest part of Lebanon. In 2 Kings 19:23, it is, ‹I will enter the lodgings of his borders;‘ perhaps referring to the fact that on the ascent to the top of the mountain there was a place for the repose of travelers; a species of inn or caravansera which bounded the usual attempts of persons to ascend the mountain. Such a lodging-place on the sides or tops of mountains which are frequently ascended, is not uncommon.

And the forest his Carmel - On the meaning of the word Carmel, see the note at Isaiah 29:17. Here it means, as in that passage, a rich, fertile, and beautiful country. It is known that Lebanon was covered on the top, and far down the sides, with perpetual snow. But there was a region lying on its sides, between the snow and the base of the mountain, that was distinguished for fertility, and that was highly cultivated. This region produced grapes in abundance; and this cultivated part of the mountain, thick set with vines and trees, might be called a beautiful grove. This was doubtless the portion of Lebanon which is here intended. At a distance, this tract on the sides of Lebanon appeared doubtless as a thicket of shrubs and trees. The phrase ‹garden-forest,‘ will probably express the sense of the passage. ‹After leaving Baalbec, and approaching Lebanon, towering walnut trees, either singly or in groups, and a rich carpet of verdure, the offspring of numerous streams, give to this charming district the air of an English park, majestically bordered with snow-tipped mountains. At Deir-el-Akmaar, the ascent begins winding among dwarf oaks, hawthorns, and a great variety of shrubs and flowers. A deep bed of snow had now to be crossed, and the horses sunk or slipped at every moment. To ride was impracticable, and to walk dangerous, for the melting snow penetrated our boots, and our feet were nearly frozen. An hour and a half brought us to the cedars.‘ (Hogg.)

Verse 25

I have digged - That is, I have digged wells. This was regarded among eastern nations as an important achievement. It was difficult to find water,

even by digging, in sandy deserts; and in a country abounding with rocks, it was an enterprise of great difficulty to sink a well. Hence, the possession of a well became a valuable property, and was sometimes the occasion of contention between neighboring tribes Genesis 26:20. Hence, also to stop up the wells of water, by throwing in rocks or sand, became one of the most obvious ways of distressing an enemy, and was often resorted to Genesis 26:15, Genesis 26:18; 2 Kings 3:19, 2 Kings 3:25. To dig wells, or to furnish water in abundance to a people, became also an achievement which was deemed worthy to be recorded in the history of kings and princes 2 Chronicles 26:10. Many of the most stupendous and costly of the works of the Romans in the capital of their empire, and in the principal towns of their provinces, consisted in building aqueducts to bring water from a distance into a city.

An achievement like this I understand Sennacherib as boasting he had performed; that he had furnished water for the cities and towns of his mighty empire; that he had accomplished what was deemed so difficult, and what required so much expense, as digging wells for his people; and that he had secured them from being stopped up by his enemies, so that he and his people drank of the water in peace. Gesenius, however, understands this as a boast that he had extended the bounds of his empire beyond its original limits, and unto regions that were naturally destitute of water, and where it was necessary to dig wells to supply his armies. Rosenmuller understands it as saying: ‹I have passed over, and taken possession of foreign lands.‘ Drusius regards it as a proverbial saying, meaning ‹I have happily and successfully accomplished all that I have undertaken, as he who digs a well accomplishes that which he particularly desires.‘ Vitringa regards it as saying, ‹that to dig wells, and to drink the water of them, is to enjoy the fruit of our labors, to be successful and happy.‘ But it seems to me that the interpretation above suggested, and which I have not found in any of the commentators before me, is the correct exposition.

And drunk water - In 2 Kings 19:24, it is, ‹I have drunk strange waters;‘ that is, the waters of foreign lands. I have conquered them, and have dug wells in them. But the sense is not materially changed.

And with the sole of my feet - Expressions like this, denoting the desolations of a conqueror, are found in the classic writers. Perhaps the idea there is, that their armies were so numerous that they drank up all the waters in their march - a strong hyperbole to denote the number of their armies,

and the extent of their desolations when even the waters failed before them. Thus Claudian (De Bello Getico, 526) introduces Alaric as boasting of his conquests in the same extravagant manner, and in language remarkably similar to this:

Cum cesserit omnis
Obsequiis natura meis. Subsidere nostris
Sub pedibus montes; arescere vidimus amnes -
Fregi Alpes, galeisque Padum victricibus hausi.

So Juvenal (Sat. 10:176), speaking of the dominion of Xerxes, says:

- *credimus altos*
Defecisse amnes, epotaque ilumina Medo
Prandente.

The boast of drying up streams with the sole of the foot, is intended to convey the idea that he had not only supplied water for his own empire by digging wells, but that he had cut off the supplies of water from the others against whom he had made war. The idea perhaps is, that if such an army as his was, should pass through the streams of a country that they should invade, and should only take away the water that would adhere to the sole or the hollow of the foot on their march, it would dry up all the streams. It is strong hyperbolical language, and is designed to indicate the number of the forces which were under his command.

Of the besieged places - Margin, ‹Fenced‘ or ‹closed‘. The word rendered ‹rivers‘ (אורי *'rēy*), may denote canals, or artificial streams, such as were common in Egypt. In Isaiah 19:6, it is rendered ‹brooks,‘ and is applied to the artificial canals of Egypt (see the note on that place). The word rendered here ‹besieged places‘ (מצור *mâtsôr*), may mean distress, straitness Deuteronomy 28:53; siege Ezekiel 4:2, Ezekiel 4:7; mound, bulwark, intrenchment Deuteronomy 20:20; or it may be a proper name for Egypt, being one of the forms of the name מצרים *mitserayim* or Egypt. The same phrase occurs in Isaiah 19:6, where it means Egypt (see the note on that place), and such should be regarded as its meaning here. It alludes to the conquests which Sennacherib is represented as boasting that he had made in Egypt, that he had easily removed obstructions, and destroyed their means of defense. Though he had been repulsed before Pelusium by Tirhakah king of Ethiopia (see the note at Isaiah 36:1), yet it is not improbable that he had taken many towns there, and had subdued no small part of the country to himself. In his vain boasting, he would strive to forget

his repulse, and would dwell on the case of conquest, and the facility with which he had removed all obstructions from his way. The whole language of the verse therefore, is that of a proud and haughty Oriental prince, desirous of proclaiming his conquests, and forgetting his mortifying defeats.

Verse 26

Hast thou not heard - This is evidently the language of God addressed to Sennacherib. It is designed to state to him that he was under his control; that this was the reason Isaiah 37:27 why the inhabitants of the nations had been unable to resist him; that he was entirely in his hands Isaiah 37:28; and that lie would control him as he pleased Isaiah 37:29.

Long ago how I have done it - You boast that all this is by your own counsel and power. Yet I have done it; that is, I have purposed, planned, arranged it long ago (compare Isaiah 22:11).

That thou shouldest be to lay waste - I have raised you up for this purpose, and you have been entirely under my control (see the note at Isaiah 10:5).

Verse 27

Therefore - Not because you have so great power; but because I have rendered them incapable of resisting you.

Were of small power - Hebrew, ‹Short of hand;‘ they were feeble, imbecile, unable to resist you.

They were dismayed - Hebrew, ‹They were broken and ashamed.‘ Their spirits sank; they were ashamed of their feeble powers of resistance; and they submitted to the ignominy of a surrender.

They were as the grass of the field - The same idea is expressed by Sennacherib himself in Isaiah 10:15, though under a different image (see the note on that verse). The idea here is, as the grass of the field offers no resistance to the march of an army, so it was with the strongly fortified towns in the way of Sennacherib.

As the grass on the housetops - In eastern countries the roofs of houses are always flat. They are made of a mixture of sand gravel, or earth; and on the houses of the rich there is a firmly constructed flooring made of coals, chalk, gypsum, and ashes, made hard by being beaten or rolled. On these roofs spears of wheat, barley, or grass sometimes spring up, but they are soon withered by the heat of the sun Psalm 129:6-8. The idea here, therefore, is that of the greatest feebleness. His enemies were not simply like the grass in the field, but they were like the thin, slender, and delicate

blade that sprung up in the little earth on the roof of a house, where there was no room for the roots to strike down, and where it soon withered beneath the burning sun.

As corn blasted before it is grown up - Before it acquires any strength. The idea in all these phrases is substantially the same - that they were incapable of offering even the feeblest resistance.

Verse 28

But I know - The language of God. ‹I am well acquainted with all that pertains to you. You neither go out to war, nor return, nor abide in your capital without my providential direction‘ (see the notes at Isaiah 10:5-7).

Thy abode - Margin, ‹Sitting.‘ Among the Hebrews, sitting down, rising up, and going out, were phrases to describe the whole of a man‘s life and actions (compare Deuteronomy 6:7; Deuteronomy 28:6; 1 Kings 3:7; Psalm 121:8). God here says that he knew the place where he dwelt, and he was able to return him again to it Isaiah 37:29.

And thy rage against me - (See Isaiah 37:4).

Verse 29

Because thy rage and thy tumult - Or rather, thy pride, thy insolence, thy vain boasting.

Therefore will I put my hook in thy nose - This is a most striking expression, denoting the complete control which God had over the haughty monarch, and his ability to direct him as he pleased. The language is taken from the custom of putting a ring or hook in the nose of a wild animal for the purpose of governing and guiding it. The most violent animals may be thus completely governed, and this is often done with those animals that are fierce and untameable. The Arabs often pursue this course in regard to the camel; and thus have it under entire control. A similar image is used in respect to the king of Egypt Ezekiel 29:4. The idea is, that God would control and govern the wild and ambitious spirit of the Assyrian, and that with infinite ease he could conduct him again to his own land.

And my bridle - (See the note at Isaiah 30:28).

And I will turn thee back - (See Isaiah 37:37).

Verse 30

And this shall be a sign unto thee - It is evident that the discourse here is turned from Sennacherib to Hezekiah. Such transitions, without distinctly indicating them, are common in Isaiah. God had in the previous verses, in the form of a direct personal address, foretold the defeat of Sennacherib,

and thc confusion of his plans. He here turns and gives to Hezekiah the assurance that Jerusalem would be delivered. On the meaning of the word ‹sign,‘ see the note at Isaiah 7:14. Commentators have been much perplexed in the exposition of the passage before us, to know how that which was to occur one, two, or three years after the event, could be a sign of the fulfillment of the prophecy. Many have supposed that the year in which this was spoken was a Sabbatic year, in which the lands were not cultivated, but were suffered to lie still Genesis 1:14; or as a military ensign Numbers 2:2; or as a sign of something future, an omen Isaiah 8:18; or as a token, argument, proof Genesis 17:2; Exodus 31:13. It may be used as a sign or token of the truth of a prophecy; that is, when some minor event furnishes a proof that the whole prophecy would be fulfilled Exodus 3:12; 1 Samuel 2:34; 1 Samuel 10:7, 1 Samuel 10:9. Or it may be used as a wonder, a prodigy, a miracle Deuteronomy 4:34; Deuteronomy 6:22.

In the case before us, it seems to mean that, in the events predicted here, Hezekiah would have a token or argument that the land was completely freed from the invasion of Sennacherib. Though a considerable part of his army would be destroyed; though the monarch himself would be compelled to flee, yet Hezekiah would not from that fact alone have the assurance that he would not rally his forces, and return to invade the land. There would be every inducement arising from disappointment and the rage of defeat for him to do it. To compose the mind of Hezekiah in regard to this, this assurance was given, that the land would be quiet, and that the fact that it would remain quiet during the remainder of that year, and to the third year would be a sign, or demonstration that the Assyrian army was entirely withdrawn, and that all danger of an invasion was at an end. The sign, therefore, does not refer so much to the past, as to the security and future prosperity which would be consequent thereon.

It would be an evidence to them that the nation would be safe, and would be favored with a high degree of prosperity (see Isaiah 37:31-32). It is possible that this invasion took place when it was too late to sow for that year, and that the land was so ravaged that it could not that year be cultivated. The harvests and the vincyards had been destroyed; and they would be dependent on that which the earth had spontaneously produced in those parts which had been untilled. As it was now too late to sow the land, they would be dependent in the following year on the same scanty supply.

In the third year, however, they might cultivate their fields securely, and the former fertility would be restored.

Such as groweth of itself - The Hebrew word here (ספיח *sâphîyach*), denotes grain produced from the kernels of the former year, without new seed, and without cultivation. This, it is evident, would be a scanty supply; but we are to remember that the land had been ravaged by the army of the Assyrian.

That which springeth of the same - The word used here (שׁחיס *shâchiys*), in the parallel passage in 2 Kings 19:29 (סחיׁש *sâchiysh*), denotes that which grows of itself the third year after sowing. This production of the third year would be of course more scanty and less valuable than in the preceding year, and there can be no doubt that the Jews would be subjected to a considerable extent to the evils of want. Still, as the land would be quiet; as the people would be permitted to live in peace; it would be a sign to them that the Assyrian was finally and entirely withdrawn, and that they might return in the third year to the cultivation of their land with the assurance that this much-dreaded invasion was not again to be feared.

And in the third year - Then you may resume your agricultural operations with the assurance that you shall be undisturbed. Your two years of quiet shall have been a full demonstration to you that the Assyrian shall not return, and you may resume your employments with the assurance that all the evils of the invasion, and all apprehension of danger, are at an end.

Verse 31

And the remnant that is escaped - (See the margin.) Those that are left of the Jews. The ten tribes had been carried away; and it is not improbable that the inhabitants of the kingdom of Judah had been reduced by want, and by the siege of Lachish, Libnah, etc. It is not to be supposed that Sennacherib could have invaded the land, and spread desolation for so long a time, without diminishing the number of the people. The promise in the passage is, that those who were left should flourish and increase. The land should be at rest; and under the administration of their wise and pious king their number would be augmented, and their happiness promoted.

Shall again take root downward - Like a tree that had been prevented by any cause from growing or bearing fruit. A tree, to bear well, must be in a soil where it can strike its roots deep. The sense is, that all obstructions to their growth and prosperity would be removed.

Verse 32

Shall go forth a remnant - The word ‹remnant‘ means that which is left; and does not of necessity imply that it should be a small portion. No doubt a part of the Jews were destroyed in the invasion of Sennacherib, but the assurance is here given that a portion of them would remain in safety, and that they would constitute that from which the future prosperity of the state would arise.

And they that escape - Margin, ‹The escaping,‘ that is, the remnant.

The zeal - (See the note at Isaiah 9:7).

Verse 33

He shall not come into this city - Sennacherib encamped probably on the northeast side of the city, and his army was destroyed there (see the notes at Isaiah 10:28 ff.)

Nor shoot an arrow there - That is, nor shoot an arrow within the walls of the city.

Nor come before it with shields - (See the note at Isaiah 21:5). The meaning here is, that the army should not be permitted to come before the city defended with shields, and prepared with the means of attack and defense.

Nor cast a bank against it - A mound; a pile of earth thrown up in the manner of a fort to defend the assailants, or to give them an advantage in attacking the walls. Sieges were conducted by throwing up banks or fortifications, behind which the army of attack could be secure to carry on their operations. Towers filled with armed men were also constructed, covered with hides and other impenetrable materials, which could be made to approach the walls, and from which those who were within could safely conduct the attack.

Verse 34

By the way that he came - (Isaiah 37:29; compare Isaiah 37:37).

And shall not come into this city - (Isaiah 37:33; compare Isaiah 29:6-8).

Verse 35

For I will defend this city - Notwithstanding all that Hezekiah had done to put it in a posture of defense (2 Chronicles 32:1, following) still it was Yahweh alone who could preserve it.

For mine own sake - God had been reproached and blasphemed by Sennacherib. As his name and power had been thus blasphemed, he says

that he would vindicate himself, and for the honor of his own insulted majesty would save the city.

And for my servant David‘s sake - On account of the promise which he had made to him that there should not fail a man to sit on his throne, and that the city and nation should not be destroyed until the Messiah should appear (see Psalm 132:10-18).

Verse 36

Then the angel of the Lord went forth - This verse contains the record of one of the most remarkable events which have occurred in history. Many attempts have been made to explain the occurrence which is here recorded, and to trace the agencies or means which God employed. It may be observed that the use of the word ‹angel‘ here does not determine the manner in which it was done. So far as the word is concerned, it might have been accomplished either by the power of an invisible messenger of God - a spiritual being commissioned for this purpose; or it might have been by some second causes under the direction of an angel - as the pestilence, or a storm and tempest; or it might have been by some agents sent by God whatever they were - the storm, the pestilence, or the simoom, to which the name angel might have been applied. The word ‹angel‘ (מלאך *mal'âk*) from לאך *lâ'ak* to send) means properly one sent, a messenger, from a private person Job 1:14; from a king 1 Samuel 16:19; 1 Samuel 19:11, 1 Samuel 19:14, 1 Samuel 19:20. Then it means a messenger of God, and is applied:

(1) to an angel (Exodus 23:20; 2 Samuel 14:16; et al.);

(2) to a prophet Haggai 1:13; Malachi 3:1;

(3) to a priest Ecclesiastes 5:5; Malachi 2:7.

The word may be applied to any messenger sent from God, whoever or whatever that may be. Thus, in Psalm 104:4, the winds are said to be his angels, or messengers:

Who maketh the winds (רוחות *rûachôth*) his angels (מלאכיו *male'âkâyv*);

The flaming fire his ministers.

The general sense of the word is that of ambassador, messenger, one sent to bear a message, to execute a commission, or to perform any work or service. It is known that the Jews were in the habit of tracing all events to the agency of invisible beings sent forth by God to accomplish his purposes in this world. There is nothing in this opinion that is contrary to reason; for there is no more improbability in the existence of a good angel than there is

in the existence of a good man, or in the existence of an evil spirit than there is in the existence of a bad man. And there is no more improbability in the supposition that God employs invisible and heavenly messengers to accomplish his purposes, than there is that he employs man. Whatever, therefore, were the means used in the destruction of the Assyrian army, there is no improbability in the opinion that they were under the direction of a celestial agent sent forth to accomplish the purpose. The chief suppositions which have been made of the means of that destruction are the following:

1. It has been supposed that it was by the direct agency of an angel, without any second causes. But this supposition has not been generally adopted. It is contrary to the usual modes in which God directs the affairs of the world. His purposes are usually accomplished by some second causes, and in accordance with the usual course of events. Calvin supposes that it was accomplished by the direct agency of one or more angels sent forth for the purpose.

2. Some have supposed that it was accomplished by Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, who is supposed to have pursned Sennacherib, and to have overthrown his army in a single night near Jerusalem. But it is sufficient to say in reply to this, that there is not the slightest historical evidence to support it; and had this been the mode, it would have been so recorded, and time fact would have been stated.

3. It has been attributed by some, among whom is Prideaux (Connection, vol. i. p. 143) and John E. Faber (the notes at Harmer‘s Obs., i. 65), to the hot pestilential wind which often prevails in the East, and which is often represented as suddenly destroying travelers, and indeed whole caravans. This wind, called sam, simum, samiel, or simoom, has been usually supposed to be poisonous, and almost instantly destructive to life. It has been described by Mr. Bruce, by Sir R. K. Porter, by Niebuhr, and by others. Prof. Robinson has examined at length the supposition that the Assyrian army was destroyed by this wind, and has stated the results of the investigations of recent travelers. The conclusion to which he comes is, that the former accounts of the effects of this wind have been greatly exaggerated, and that the destruction of the army of the Assyrians cannot be attributed to any such cause. See the article winds, in his edition of

Calmet‘s Dictionary. Burckhardt says of this wind, whose effects have been regarded as so poisonous and destructive, ‹I am perfectly convinced that all the stories which travelers, or the inhabitants of the towns of Egypt and Syria, relate of the simoom of the desert are greatly exaggerated, and I never could hear of a single well-authenticated instance of its having proved mortal to either man or beast.‘ Similar testimony has been given by other modern travelers; though it is to be remarked that the testimony is rather of a negative character, and does not entirely destroy the possibility of the supposition that this so often described pestilential wind may in some instances prove fatal. It is not, however, referred to in the Scripture account of the destruction of Sennacherib; and whatever may be true of it in the deserts of Arabia or Nubia, there is no evidence whatever that such poisonous effects are ever experienced in Palestine.

4. It has been attributed to a storm of hail, accompanied with thunder and lightning. This is the opinion of Vitringa, and seems to accord with the descriptions which are given in the prophecy of the destruction of the army in Isaiah 29:6; Isaiah 30:30. To this opinion, as the most probable, I have been disposed to incline, for although these passages may be regarded as figurative, yet the more natural interpretation is to regard them as descriptive of the event. We know that such a tempest might be easily produced by God, and that violent tornadoes are not unfrequent in the East. One of the plagues of Egypt consisted in such a tremendous storm of hail accompanied with thunder, when ‹the fire ran along the ground,‘ so that ‹there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail,‘ and so that ‹the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast‘ Exodus 9:22-25. This description, in its terror, its suddenness, and its ruinous effects, accords more nearly with the account of the destruction of Sennacherib than any other which has been made. See the notes at Isaiah 30:30, for a remarkable description of the officer of a storm of hail.

5. It has been supposed by many that it was accomplished by the pestilence. This is the account which Josephus gives (Ant. x. 1. 5), and is the supposition which has been adopted by Rosenmuller, Doderlin, Michaelis, Hensler, and many others. But there are two objections to this supposition. One is, that it does not well accord with the descritption of the prophet Isaiah 29:6; Isaiah 30:30; and the other, and more material one is,

that the plague does not accomplish its work so suddenly. This was done in a single night; whereas, though the plague appears suddenly, and has been known to destroy whole armies, yet there is no recorded instance in which it has been so destructive in a few hours as in this case. It may be added, also, that the plague does not often leave an army in the manner described here. One hundred and eighty five thousand were suddenly slain. The survivors, if there were any, as we have reason to suppose Isaiah 37:37, fled, and returned to Nineveh. There is no mention made of any who lingered, and who remained sick among the slain.

Nor is there any apprehension mentioned, as having existed among the Jews of going into the camp, and stripping the dead, and bearing the spoils of the army into the city. Had the army been destroyed by the plague, such is the fear of the contagion in countries where it prevails, that nothing would have induced them to endanger the city by the possibility of introducing the dreaded disease. The account leads us to suppose that the inhabitants of Jerusalem immediately sallied forth and stripped the dead, and bore the spoils of the army into the city (see the notes at Isaiah 33:4, Isaiah 33:24). On the whole, therefore, the most probable supposition seems to be, that, if any secondary causes were employed, it was the agency of a violent tempest - a tempest of mingled hail and fire, which suddenly descended upon the mighty army. Whatever was the agent, however, it was the hand of God that directed it. It was a most fearful exhibition of his power and justice; and it furnishes a most awful threatening to proud and haughty blasphemers and revilers, and a strong ground of assurance to the righteous that God will defend them in times of peril.

It may be added, that Herodotus has given an account which was undoubtedly derived from some rumour of the entire destruction of the Assyrian army. He says (ii. 141) that when Sennacherib was in Egypt and engaged in the siege of Pelusium, an Egyptian priest prayed to God, and God heard his prayer, and sent a judgment upon him. ‹For,‘ says he, ‹a multitude of mice gnawed to pieces in one night both the bows and the rest of the armor of the Assyrians, and that it was on that account that the king, when he had no bows left, drew off his army from Pelusium.‘ This is probably a corruption of the history which we have here. At all events, the account in Herodotus does not conflict with the main statement of Isaiah,

but is rather a confirmation of that statement, that the army of Sennacherib met with sudden discomfiture.

And when they arose - At the time of rising in the morning; when the surviving part of the army arose, or when the Jews arose, and looked toward the camp of the Assyrians.

Verse 37

So Sennacherib departed - Probably with some portion of his army and retinue with him, for it is by no means probable that the whole army had been destroyed. In 2 Chronicles 32:21, it is said that the angel ‹cut off all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria.‘ His army was thus entirely disabled, and the loss of so large a part of it, and the consternation produced by their sudden destruction, would of course lead him to abandon the siege.

Went and returned - Went from before Jerusalem and returned to his own land.

And dwelt at Nineveh - How long he dwelt there is not certainly known. Berosus, the Chaldean, says it was ‹a little while‘ (see Jos. Ant. x. 1. 5). Nineveh was on the Tigris, and was the capital of Assyria. For an account of its site, and its present situation, see the American Biblical Repository for Jan. 1837, pp. 139-159.

Verse 38

As he was worshipping - Perhaps this time was selected because he might be then attended with fewer guards, or because they were able to surprise him without the possibility of his summoning his attendants to his rescue.

In the house - In the temple.

Of Nisroch his god - The god whom he particularly adored. Gesenius supposes that the word ‹Nisroch‘ denotes an eagle, or a great eagle. The eagle was regarded as a sacred bird in the Persian religion, and was the symbol of Ormuzd. This god or idol had been probably introduced into Nineveh from Persia. Among the ancient Arabs the eagle occurs as an idol Josephus calls the idol Araskes; the author of the book of Tobit calls it Dagon. Vitringa supposes that it was the Assyrian Bel, and was worshipped under the figure of Mars, the god of war. More probably it was the figure of the eagle, though it might have been regarded as the god of war.

That Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword - What was the cause of this rebellion and parricide is unknown. These two

sons subsequently became, in Armenia, the heads of two celebrated families there, the Arzerunii, and the Genunii (see Jos. Ant. x. 1,5, note).

And they escaped - This would lead us to suppose that it was some private matter which led them to commit the parricide, and that they did not do it with the expectation of succeeding to the crown.

Into the land of Armenia - Hebrew, as Margin, ‹Ararat.‘ The Chaldee renders this, ‹The land of קרדו *qaredû* that is, *Kardi -anum* or, the mountains of the Kurds. The modern Kurdistan includes a considerable part of the ancient Assyria and Media, together with a large portion of Armenia. This expression is generally substituted for Ararat by the Syriac, Chaldee, and Arabic translators, when they do not retain the original word Ararat. It is a region among the mountains of Ararat or Armenia. The Syriac renders it in the same way - ‹Of Kurdoya‘ (the Kurds). The Septuagint renders it, ‹Into Armenia.‘ Jerome says that ‹Ararat was a champaign region in Armenia, through which the Araxes flowed, and was of considerable fertility.‘ Ararat was a region or province in Armenia, near the middle of the country between the Araxes and the lakes Van and Oroomiah. It is still called by the Armenians Ararat. On one of the mountains in this region the ark of Noah rested Genesis 8:4. The name ‹Ararat‘ belongs properly to the region or country, and not to any particular mountain. For an account of this region, see Sir R. K. Porter‘s Travels, vol. i. pp. 178ff; Smith and Dwight‘s Researches in Armenia, vol. ii. pp. 73ff; and Morier‘s Second Journey, p. 312. For a very interesting account of the situation of Ararat, including a description of an ascent to the summit of the mountain which besrs that name, see the Bib. Rep. for April, 1836, pp. 390-416. ‹The origin of the name Armenia is unknown. The Armenians call themselves after their fabulous progenitor Haig, and derive the name Armen from the son of Haig, Armenag. They are probably a tribe of the ancient Assyrians; their language and history speak alike in favor of it. Their traditions say also that Haig came from Babylon.‘

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 38

Introduction

This chapter contains the record of an important transaction which occurred in the time of Isaiah, and in which he was deeply interested - the dangerous sickness, and the remarkable recovery of Hezekiah. It is introduced here, doubtless, because the account was drawn up by Isaiah (see Analysis of 2 Kings 20:1-11. But the account differs more than the records in the two previous chapters. It is abrigded in Isaiah by omitting what is recorded in Kings in Isaiah 38:4, and in the close of Isaiah 38:6, it is transposed in the statement which occurs in regard to the application of the ‹lump of figs;‘ and it is enlarged by the introduction of the record which Hezekiah made of his sickness and recovery Isaiah 38:9-20.

The contents of the chapter are:

1. The statement of the dangerous sickness of Hezekiah, and the message of God to him by the prophet Isaiah 38:1.

2. The prayer which Hezekiah offered for his recovery Isaiah 38:3.

3. The assurance which God gave to him by the prophet that his days should be lengthened out fifteen years, and the sign given to confirm it by the retrocession of the shadow on the sun-dial of Ahaz Isaiah 38:5-8.

4. The record which Hezekiah made in gratitude to God for his recovery Isaiah 38:9-20; and

5. The statement of the manner in which his recovery was effected Isaiah 38:21-22.

Verse 1

In those days - That is, his sickness commenced about the period in which the army of Sennacherib was destroyed. It has been made a question whether the sickness of Hezekiah was before or after the invasion of Sennacherib. The most natural interpretation certainly is, that it occurred after that invasion, and probably at no distant period. The only objection to this view is the statement in Isaiah 38:6, that God would deliver him out of the hand of the king of Assyria, which has been understood by many as implying that he was then threatened with the invasion. But this may mean

simply that he would be perpetually and finally delivered from his hand; that he would be secure in that independence from a foreign yoke which he had long sought 2 Kings 18:7; and that the Assyrian should not be able again to bring the Jews into subjection (see the notes at Isaiah 37:30-31; compare the note at Isaiah 38:6). Jerome supposes that it was brought upon him lest his heart should be elated with the signal triumph, and in order that, in his circumstances, he might be kept humble. Josephus (Ant. x. 2. 1) says that the sickness occurred soon after the destruction of the army of Sennacherib. Prideaux (Connection, vol. i. p. 137) places his sickness before the invasion of the Assyrians.

Was sick - What was the exact nature of this sickness is not certainly known. In Isaiah 38:21 it is said that it was ‹a boil,‘ and probably it was a pestilential boil. The pestilence or plague is attended with an eruption or boil. ‹No one,‘ says Jahn, ‹ever recovered from the pestilence unless the boil of the pestilence came out upon him, and even then he could not always be cured‘ (Biblical Antiquities, Section 190). The pestilence was, and is still, rapid in its progress. It terminates the life of those who are affected with it almost immediately, and at the furthest within three or four days. Hence, we see one ground of the alarm of Hezekiah. Another cause of his anxiety was, that he had at this time no children, and consequently he had reason to apprehend that his kingdom would be thrown into contention by conflicting strifes for the crown.

Unto death - Ready to die; with a sickness which in the ordinary course would terminate his life.

Set thine house in order - Hebrew, ‹Give command (צו *tsâv*) to thy house,‘ that is, to thy family. If you have any directions to give in regard to the succession to the crown, or in regard to domestic and private arrangements, let it be done soon. Hezekiah was yet in middle life. He came to the throne when he was twenty-five years old 2 Kings 18:2, and he had now reigned about fourteen years. It is possible that he had as yet made no arrangements in regard to the succession, and as this was very important to the peace of the nation, Isaiah was sent to him to apprize him of the necessity of leaving the affairs of his kingdom so that there should not be anarchy when he should die. The direction, also, may be understood in a more general sense as denoting that he was to make whatever arrangements might be necessary as preparatory to his death. We see here -

1. The boldness and fidelity of a man of God. Isaiah was not afraid to go in and freely tell even a monarch that he must die. The subsequent part of the narrative would lead us to suppose that until this announcement Hezekiah did not regard himself as in immediate danger. It is evident here, that the physician of Hezekiah had not informed him of it - perhaps from the apprehension that his disease would be aggravated by the agitation of his mind on the subject. The duty was, therefore, left, as it is often, to a minister of religion - a duty which even many ministers are slow to perform, and which many physicians are reluctant to have performed.

2. No danger is to be apprehended commonly from announcing to those who are sick their true condition. Friends and relatives are often reluctant to do it, for fear of agitating and alarming them. Physicians often prohibit them from knowing their true condition, under the apprehension that their disease may be aggravated. Yet here was a case in which pre-eminently there might be danger from announcing the danger of death. The disease was deeply seated. It was making rapid progress. It was usually incurable. Nay, there was here a moral certainty that the monarch would die. And this was a case, therefore, which particularly demanded, it would seem, that the patient should be kept quiet, and free from alarms. But God regarded it as of great importance that he should know His true condition, and the prophet was directed to go to him and faithfully to state it. Physicians and friends often err in this.

There is no species of cruelty greater than to suffer a friend to lie on a dying bed under a delusion. There is no sin more aggravated than that of designedly deceiving a dying man, and flattering him with the hope of recovery when there is a moral certainty that he will not, and cannot recover. And there is evidently no danger to be apprehended from communicating to the sick their true condition. It should be done tenderly, and with affection; but it should be done faithfully. I have had many opportunities of witnessing the effect of apprizing the sick of their situation, and of the moral certainty that they must die. And I cannot now recall an instance in which the announcement has had any unhappy effect on the disease. Often, on the contrary, the effect is to calm the mind, and to lead the dying to look up to God, and peacefully to repose on him. And the effect of that is always salutary. Nothing is more favorable for a recovery than a

peaceful, calm, heavenly submission to God; and the repose and quiet which physicians so much desire their patients to possess, is often best obtained by securing confidence in God, and a calm resignation to his will.

3. Every man with the prospect of death before him should set his house in order. Death is an event which demands preparation - a preparation which should not be deferred to the dying moment. In view of it, whether it comes sooner or later, our peace should be made with God and our worldly affairs so arranged that we can leave them without distraction, and without regret.

For thou shalt die, and not live - Thy disease is incurable. It is a mortal, fatal disease. The Hebrew is, ‹for thou art dead‘ (מת *mēth*); that is, you are a dead man. A similar expression occurs in Genesis 20:3, in the address which God made to Abimelech: ‹Behold thou art a dead man, on account of the woman which thou hast taken.‘ We have a similar phrase in our language, when a man is wounded, and when he says, ‹I am a dead man.‘ This is all that we are required to understand here, that, according to the usual course of the disease, he must die. It is evident that Isaiah was not acquainted himself with the secret intention of God; nor did he know that Hezekiah would humble himself, and plead with God; nor that God would by a miracle lengthen out his life.

Verse 2

Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall - The wall of the room in which he was lying He was probably lying on a couch next the wall of his room. Eastern houses usually have such couches or ottomans running along on the sides of the room on which they recline, and on which they lie when they are sick. Hezekiah probably turned his face to the wall in order that his emotion and his tears might not be seen by the bystanders, or in order that he might compose himself the better for devotion. His prayer he wished, doubtless, to be as secret as possible. The Chaldee renders this, ‹Turned his face to the wall of the house of the sanctuary;‘ that is, of the temple, so that it might appear that be prayed toward the temple. Thus Daniel; when in Babylon, is said to have prayed with his windows opened toward Jerusalem Daniel 6:10. The Mahometans pray everywhere with their faces turned toward Mecca. But there is no evidence in the Hebrew text that Hezekiah prayed in that manner. The simple idea is, that he turned over on

his couch toward the wall of his room, doubtless, for the greater privacy, and to hide his deep emotion.

Verse 3

And said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee - The object which Hezekiah desired was evidently that his life might be spared, and that he might not be suddenly cut off. He therefore makes mention of the former course of his life, not with ostentation, or as a ground of his acceptance or justification, but as a reason why his limb should not be cut off. He had not lived as many of the kings of Israel had done. He had not been a patron of idolatry. He had promoted an extensive and thorough reformation among the people. He had exerted his influence as a king in the service of Yahweh, and it was his purpose still to do it; and he, therefore, prayed that his life might be spared in order that he might carry forward and perfect his plans for the reformation of the people, and for the establishment of the worship of Yahweh.

How I have walked - How I have lived. Life, in the Scriptures, is often represented as a journey, and a life of piety is represented as walking with God (see Genesis 5:24; Genesis 6:9; 1 Kings 9:4; 1 Kings 11:33).

In truth - In the defense and maintenance of the truth, or in sincerity.

And with a perfect heart - With a heart sound, sincere, entire in thy service. This had been his leading aim; his main, grand purpose. He had not pursued his own ends, but his whole official royal influence bad been on the side of religion. This refers to his public character rather than to his private feelings. For though, as a man, he might be deeply conscious of imperfection; yet as a king, his influence had been wholly on the side of religion, and he had not declined from the ways of God.

And have done that which is good - This accords entirely with the account which is given of him in 2 Kings 18:3-5.

And Hezekiah wept sore - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹With great weeping.‘ Josephus (Ant. x. 2. 1) says, that the reason why Hezekiah was so much affected was that he was then childless, and saw that he was about to leave the government without a successor. Others suppose that it was because his death would be construed by his enemies as a judgment of God for his stripping the temple of its ornaments 2 Kings 18:16. It is possible that several things may have been combined in producing the depth of his grief. In his song, or in the record which he made to express his praise to God for his recovery, the main reason of his grief which he suggested was, the fact

that he was in danger of being cut off in the midst of his days; that the blessings of a long life were likely to be denied him (see Isaiah 38:10-12). We have here an instance in which even a good man may be surprised, alarmed, distressed, at the sudden announcement that he must die. The fear of death is natural; and even those who are truly pious are sometimes alarmed when it comes.

Verse 4

Then came the word of the Lord - In the parallel place in 2 Kings 20:4, it is said, ‹And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came unto him.‘ That is, the message of God name to Isaiah before he had left Hezekiah; or as soon as he had offered his prayer. This circumstance is omitted by Isaiah on the revision of his narrative which we have before us. But there is no contradiction. In this place it is implied that the message came to him soon, or immediately.

Verse 5

The God of David thy father - David is mentioned here, probably, because Hezekiah had a strong resemblance to him 2 Kings 18:3, and because a long and happy reign had been granted to David; and also because the promise had been made to David that there should not fail a man to sit on his throne (see the note at Isaiah 37:35). As Hezekiah resembled David, God promised that his reign should be lengthened out; and as he perhaps was then without a son and successor, God promised him a longer life, with the prospect that he might have an heir who should succeed him on the throne.

Behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years - This is perhaps the only instance in which any man has been told exactly how long he would live. Why God specified the time cannot now be known. It was, however, a full answer to the prayer of Hezekiah, and the promise is a full demonstration that God is the hearer of prayer, and that he can answer it at once. We learn here, that it is right for a friend of God to pray for life. In times of sickness, and even when there are indications of a fatal disease, it is not improper to pray that the disease may be removed, and the life prolonged. If the desire be to do good; to advance the kingdom of God; to benefit others; or to perfect some plan of benevolence which is begun, it is not improper to pray that God would prolong the life. Who can tell but that he often thus spares useful lives when worn down with toil, and when the

frame is apparently sinking to the grave, in answer to prayer? He does not indeed work miracles as he did in the case of Hezekiah, but he may direct to remedies which had not before occurred; or he may himself give a sudden and unlooked-for turn to the disease, and restore the sufferer again to health.

Verse 6

And I will deliver thee and this city - The purport of this promise is, that he and the city should be finally and entirely delivered from all danger of invasion from the Assyrians. It might be apprehended that Sennacherib would collect a large army, and return; or that his successor would prosecute the war which he had commenced. But the assurance here is given to Hezekiah that he had nothing more to fear from the Assyrians (see the notes at Isaiah 31:4-5; Isaiah 37:35). In the parallel place in 2 Kings 20:6, it is added. ‹I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David‘s sake.‘ In the parallel passage also, in 2 Kings 20:7-8, there is inserted the statement which occurs in Isaiah at the end of the chapter Isaiah 38:21-22. It is evident that those two verses more appropriately come in here. Lowth conjectures that the abridger of the history omitted those verses, and when he had transcribed the song of Hezekiah, he saw that they were necessary to complete the narrative, and placed them at the end of the chapter, with proper marks to have them inserted in the right place, which marks were overlooked by transcribers. It is, however, immaterial where the statement is made; and it is now impossible to tell in what manner the transposition occurred.

Verse 7

And this shall be a sign unto thee - That is, a sign, or proof that God would do what he had promised, and that Hezekiah would recover and be permitted to go again to the temple of the Lord Isaiah 38:22; 2 Kings 20:8. On the meaning of the word ‹sign,‘ see Isaiah 7:11, note; Isaiah 7:14, note; compare the note at Isaiah 37:30. The promise was, that he should be permitted to go to the temple in three days 2 Kings 20:5.

Verse 8

Behold, I will bring again the shadow - The shadow, or shade which is made by the interception of the rays of the sun by the gnomon on the dial. The phrase ‹bring again‘ (Hebrew, מֵשִׁיב *mēshîyb*) means to cause to return (Hiphil, from שׁוּב *shûb* to return); that is, I will cause it retrograde, or bring back. Septuagint, Στρέψω *Strepsō* - ‹I will turn back.‘ Few subjects have perplexed commentators more than this account of the sun-dial of Ahaz.

The only other place where a sun-dial is mentioned in the Scriptures is in the parallel place in 2 Kings 20:9-10, where the account is somewhat more full, and the nature of the miracle more fully represented: ‹This sign shalt thou have of the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing which he hath spoken: Shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees? And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees; nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees.‘ That is, it would be in the usual direction which the shadow takes, for it to go down, and there would be less that would be decisive in the miracle. He therefore asked that it might be moved backward from its common direction, and then there could be no doubt that it was from God; 2 Kings 20:11: ‹And Isaiah the prophet cried unto Yahweh, and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.‘

The shadow of the degrees - That is, the shadow made on the degrees; or indicated by the degrees on the dial. But there has been much difficulty in regard to the meaning of the word degrees. The Hebrew word (מעלה *maʿălâh* from עלה *ʿâlâh* to ascend, to go up) means properly an ascent; a going up from a lower to a higher region; then a step by which one ascends, applied to the steps on a staircase, etc. 1 Kings 10:19; Ezekiel 40:26, Ezekiel 40:31, Ezekiel 40:34. Hence, it may be applied to the ascending or descending figures or marks on a dial designating the ascent or descent of the sun; or the ascent or descent of the shadow going up or down by steps or hours marked on its face. The word is applied to a dial nowhere else but here. Josephus understands this as referring to the stem in the house or palace of Ahaz. ‹He desired that he would make the shadow of the sun which he had already made to go down ten steps in his house, to return again to the same place, and to make it as it was before;‘ by which he evidently regarded Hezekiah as requesting that the shadow which had gone down on the steps of the palace should return to its place ten steps backward. It is possible that the time of day may have been indicated by the shadow of the sun on the steps of the palace, and that this may have constituted what was called the sun-dial of Ahaz; but the more probable interpretation is that which regards the dial as a distinct and separate contrivance. The Septuagint renders it by the word steps, yet understanding it as Josephus does, Ἀναβαθμοὺς τοῦ οικου τοῦ πατρός σου *Anabathmous tou oikou tou patros sou* - ‹The steps of the house of thy father.‘

Which is gone down on the sun-dial of Ahaz - Margin, ‹Degrees by,‘ or ‹with the sun.‘ Hebrew, literally, ‹which has descended on the steps; or degrees of Ahaz by, or with the sun (בשמש *bashemesh*), that is, by means of the sun, or caused by the progress of the sun. The shadow had gone down on the dial by the regular course of the sun. Ahaz was the father of Hezekiah; and it is evident from this, that the dial had been introduced by him, and had been used by him to measure time. There is no mention of any instrument for keeping time in the Bible before this, nor is it possible, perhaps, to determine the origin or character of this invention, or to know where Ahaz obtained it. Perhaps all that can be known on the subject has been collected by Calmer, to whose article (Dial) in his Dictionary, and to the Fragments of Taylor appended to his Dictionary (Fragments, ii.; cii.) the reader may be referred for a more full statement on this subject than is consistent with the design of these notes.

The mention of the dial does not occur before the time of Ahaz, who lived 726 b.c.; nor is it certainly known that even after his time the Jews generally divided their time by hours. The word ‹hour‘ (καίρικός *kairikos*) occurs first in Tobit; and it has been supposed that the invention of dials came from beyond the Euphrates (Herod. ii. 109). But others suppose that it came from the Phenicians, and that the first traces of it are discoverable in what Homer says (Odyss. xv. 402) of ‹an island called Syria lying above Ortygia, where the revolutions of the sun are observed.‘ The Phenicians are supposed to have inhabited this island of Syria, and it is therefore presumed that they left there this monument of their skill in astronomy. About three hundred years after Homer, Pherecydes set up a sun-dial in the same island to distinguish the hours. The Greeks confess that Anaximander, who lived 547 b.c., under the reign of Cyrus, first divided time by hours, and introduced sun-dials among them.

This was during the time of the captivity at Babylon. Anaximander traveled into Chaldea, and it is not improbable that he brought the dial from Babylon. The Chaldeans were early distinguished for, their attention to astronomy, and it is probable that it was in Babylon that the sun-dial, and the division of the day into hours, was first used, and that the knowledge of that was conveyed in some way from Chaldea to Ahaz. Interpreters have differed greatly in regard to the form of the sun-dial used by Ahaz, and by the ancients generally. Cyril of Alexandria and Jerome believed it was a

staircase so disposed, that the sun showed the hours on it by the shadow. This, as we have seen, was the opinion of Josephus; and this opinion has been followed by many others. Others suppose it was an obelisk or pillar in the middle of a smooth pavement on which the hours were engraved, or on which lines were drawn which would indicate the hours.

Grotius, in accordance with the opinion of rabbi Elias Chomer, describes it thus: ‹It was a concave hemisphere, in the midst of which was a globe, the shadow of which fell upon several lines engraved on the concavity of the hemisphere; these lines, they say, were eight-and-twenty in number.‘ This description accords nearly with the kind of dial which the Greeks called scapha, a boat, or hemisphere, the invention of which the Greeks ascribed to a Cbaldean named Berosus (Vitruv. ix. 9). See the plate in Taylor‘s Calmet, ‹Sun-dial of Ahaz‘ (Figs. 1 and 2). Berosus was a priest of Belus in Babylon, and lived indeed perhaps 300 years after Ahaz; but there is no necessity of supposing that he was the inventor of the dial. It is sufficient to suppose that he was reputed to be the first who introduced it into Greece. He went from Babylon to Greece, where he taught astronomy first at Cos, and then at Athens, where one of his dials is still shown.

Herodotus expressly says (i. 109), ‹the pole, the gnomon, and the division of the day into twelve parts, the Greeks received from the Babylonians.‘ This sun-dial was portable; it did not require to be constructed for a particular spot to which it should be subsequently confined; and therefore one ready-made might have been brought from Babylon to Ahaz. That be had commerce with these countries appears by his alliance with Tiglath-pileser 2 Kings 16:7-8. And that Ahaz was a man who was desirous of availing himself of foreign inventions, and introducing them into his capital, appears evident from his desire to have an altar constructed in Jerusalem, similar to the one which he had seen in Damascus 2 Kings 16:10. The dial is now a well-known instrument, the principle of which is, that the hours are marked on its face by a shadow cast from the sun by a gnomon. In order to the understanding of this miracle, it is not necessary to be acquainted with the form of the ancient dial. It will be understood by a reference to any dial, and would have been substantially the same, whatever was the form of the instrument. The essential idea is, that the shadow of the gnomon which thus indicated a certain degree or

hour of the day, was made to go back ten degrees or places. It may conduce, however, to the illustration of this subject to have before the eye a representation of the usual form of the ancient dial. Therefore, see the three forms of dials which have been discovered and which are present in the book. The engraving represents:

1. A concave dial of white marble, found at Givita, in the year 1762.
2. Another concave dial, found at mount Tusculum, near Rome, in 1726.

3. A compound dial, preserved in the Elgin collection in the British Museum. It was found at Athens, supposed to have been used in marking the hours on one of the crossways of the city.

The first two are considered to resemble, if indeed they be not identical with the famous dial of Ahaz.‘

In regard to this miracle, it seems only necessary to observe that all that is indispensable to be believed is, that the shadow on the dial was made suddenly to recede from any cause. It is evident that this may have been accomplished in several ways. It may have been by arresting the motion of the earth in its revolutions, and causing it to retrograde on its axis to the extent indicated by the return of the shadow, or it may have been by a miraculous bending, or inclining of the rays of the sun. As there is no evidence that the event was observed elsewhere; and as it is not necessary to suppose that the earth was arrested in its motion, and that the whole frame of the universe was adjusted to this change in the movement of the earth, it is most probable that it was an inclination of the rays of the sun; or a miraculous causing of the shadow itself to recede. This is the whole statement of the sacred writer, and this is all that is necessary to be supposed. What Hezekiah desired was a miracle; a sign that he should recover. That was granted. The retrocession of the shadow in this sudden manner was not a natural event. It could be caused only by God; and this was all that was needed. A simple exertion of divine power on the rays of the sun which rested on the dial, deflecting those rays, would accomplish the whole result. It may be added that it is not recorded, nor is it necessary to an understanding of the subject to suppose, that the bending of the rays was permanent, or that so much time was lost. The miracle was instantaneous, and was satisfactory to Hezekiah, though the rays of the sun casting the shadow may have again been soon returned to their regular position, and the shadow restored to the place in which it would have been

had it not been interrupted. No infidel, therefore, can object to this statement, unless lie can prove that this could not be done by him who made the sun, and who is himself the fountain of power.

By which degrees it was gone down - By the same steps, or degrees on which the shadow had descended. So the Septuagint express it; ‹so the sun re-ascended the ten steps by which the shadow had gone down. It was the shadow on the dial which had gone down. The sun was ascending, and the consequence was, of course, that the shadow on a vertical dial would descend. The ‹sun‘ here means, evidently, the sun as it appeared; the rays, or the shining of the sun. A return of the shadow was effected such as would be produced by the recession of the sun itself.

Verse 9

The writing of Hezekiah - This is the title to the following hymn - a record which Hezekiah made to celebrate the goodness of God in restoring him to health. The writing itself is poetry, as is indicated by the parallelism, and by the general structure. It is in many respects quite obscure - an obscurity perhaps arising from the brevity and conciseness which are apparent in the whole piece. It is remarkable that this song or hymn is not found in the parallel passage in the Book of Kings. The reason why it was omitted there, and inserted here, is unknown. It is possible that it was drawn up for Hezekiah by Isaiah, and that it is inserted here as a part of his composition, though adopted by Hezekiah, and declared to be his, that is, as expressing the gratitude of his heart on his recovery from his disease. It was common to compose an ode or hymn of praise on occasion of deliverance from calamity, or any remarkable interposition of God (see the notes at Isaiah 12:1; Isaiah 25:1; Isaiah 26:1). Many of the Psalms of David were composed on such occasions, and were expressive of gratitude to God for deliverance from impending calamity. The hymn or song is composed of two parts. In the first part Isaiah 38:10-14, Hezekiah describes his feelings and his fears when he was suffering, and especially the apprehension of his mind at the prospect of death; and the second part Isaiah 38:15-20 expresses praise to God for his goodness.

Verse 10

I said - Probably the words ‹I said‘ do not imply that he said or spoke this openly or audibly; but this was the language of his heart, or the substance of his reflections.

In the cutting off of my days - There has been considerable diversity of interpretation in regard to this phrase. Vitringa renders it as our translators have done. Rosenmuller renders it, ‹In the meridian of my days.‘ The Septuagint, Ἐν τῷ ὕψει τῶν ἡμερῶν μου *En tō hupsei tōn hēmerōn mou* - ‹In the height of my days,‘ where they evidently read ברמי instead of בדמי, by the change of a single letter. Aquila, and the Greek interpreters generally, rendered it, ‹In the silence of my days.‘ The word used here in Hebrew (דמי *demîy*) denotes properly stillness, quiet, rest; and Gesenius renders it, ‹in the quiet of my days.‘ According to him the idea is, ‹now when I might have rest; when I am delivered from my foes; when I am in the midst of my life, of my reign, and of my plans of usefulness, I must die.‘ The sense is, doubtless, that he was about to be cut off in middle life, and when he had every prospect of usefulness, and of happiness in his reign.

I shall go to the gates of the grave - Hebrew, ‹Gates of sheol.‘ On the meaning of the word sheol, and the Hebrew idea of the descent to it through gates, see the notes at Isaiah 5:14; Isaiah 14:9. The idea is, that he must go down to the regions of the dead, and dwell with departed shades (see the note at Isaiah 38:11).

The residue of my years - Those which I had hoped to enjoy; of which I had a reasonable prospect in the ordinary course of events. It is evident that Hezekiah had looked forward to a long life, and to a prosperous and peaceful reign. This was the means which God adopted to show him the impropriety of his desire, and to turn him more entirely to his service, and to a preparation for death. Sickness often has this effect on the minds of good people.

Verse 11

I shall not see the Lord - In the original, the Hebrew which is rendered ‹Lord,‘ is not Yahweh, but יה יה *yâhh yâhh* On the meaning of it, see the note at Isaiah 12:2 (compare the note at Isaiah 7:14). The repetition of the name here denotes emphasis or intensity of feeling - the deep desire which he had to see Yahweh in the land of the living, and the intense sorrow of his heart at the idea of being cut off from that privilege. The idea here is, that Hezekiah felt that he would not be spared to enjoy the tokens of divine favor on earth; to reap the fruits of the surprising and remarkable deliverance from the army of Sennacherib; and to observe its happy results in the augmenting prosperity of the people, and in the complete success of his plans of reformation.

I shall behold man no more - I shall see the living no more; I shall die, and go among the dead. He regarded it as a privilege to live, and to enjoy the society of his friends and fellow-worshippers in the temple - a privilege from which he felt that he was about to be cut off.

With the inhabitants of the world - Or rather, ‹among the inhabitants of the land of stillness;‘ that is, of the land of shades - sheol. He would not there see man as he saw him on earth, living and active, but would be a shade in the land of shades; himself still, in a world of stillness. ‹I shall be associated with them there, and of course be cut off from the privileges of the society of living men.‘ (See Supplementary Note at Isaiah 14:9.) The Hebrew word rendered ‹world‘ (חדל *chedel*), is from חדל *châdal* "to cease, to leave off, to desist; to become languid, flaccid, pendulous." It then conveys the idea of leaving off, of resting, of being still Judges 5:6; Job 3:17; Job 14:6; Isaiah 2:22. Hence, the idea of frailty Psalm 39:5; and hence, the word here denotes probably the place of rest, the region of the dead, and is synonymous with the land of silence, such as the grave and the region of the dead are in contradistinction from the hurry and bustle of this world. Our translation seems to have been made as if the word was חלד *cheled* "life, lifetime"; hence, the world Psalm 17:14; Psalm 49:2. The Vulgate renders it, ‹Habitatorem quietis.‘ The Septuagint simply: ‹I shall behold man no more.‘

Verse 12

Mine age - The word which is used here (דור *dôr*) means properly the revolving period or circle of human life. The parallelism seems to demand, however, that it should be used in the sense of dwelling or habitation, so as to correspond with the ‹shepherd‘s tent.‘ Accordingly, Lowth and Noyes render it, ‹Habitation.‘ So also do Gesenius and Rosenmuller. The Arabic word has this signification; and the Hebrew verb דור *dûr* also means "to dwell, to remain," as in the Chaldee. Here the word means a dwelling, or habitation; that is, a tent, as the habitations of the Orientals were mostly tents.

Is departed - (נסע *nîssa*‘). The idea here is, that his dwelling was to be transferred from one place to another, as when a tent or encampment was broken up; that is, he was about to cease to dwell on the earth, and to dwell in the land of silence, or among the dead.

From me as a shepherd‘s tent - As suddenly as the tent of a shepherd is taken down, folded up, and transferred to another place. There is

doubtless the idea here that he would continue to exist, but in another place, as the shepherd would pitch his tent or dwell in another place. He was to be cut off from the earth, but he expected to dwell among the dead. The whole passage conveys the idea that he expected to dwell in another state - as the shepherd dwells in another place when he strikes his tent, and it is removed.

I have cut off like a weaver my life - This is another image designed to express substantially the same idea. The sense is, as a weaver takes his web from the loom by cutting the warp, or the threads which bind it to the beam, and thus loosens it and takes it away, so his life was to be cut off. When it is said, ‹I cut off‘ (קפדתי *qipadetiy*), the idea is, doubtless, I AM cut off; or my life is cut off. Hezekiah here speaks of himself as the agent, because he might have felt that his sins and unworthiness were the cause. Life is often spoken of as a web that is woven, because an advance is constantly made in filling up the web, and because it is soon finished, and is then cut off.

He will cut me off - God was about to cut me off.

With pining sickness - Margin, ‹From the thrum.‘ Lowth, ‹From the loom.‘ The word דלה *dalâh* means properly something hanging down or pendulous; anything pliant or slender. Hence, it denotes hair or locks Song of Song of Solomon 7:6 . Here it seems to denote the threads or thrums which tied the web to the weaver‘s beam. The image here denotes the cutting off of life as the weaver cuts his web out of the loom, or as he cuts off thrums. The word never means sickness.

From day even to night - That is, in the space of a single day, or between morning and night - as a weaver with a short web accomplishes it in a single day. The disease of Hezekiah was doubtless the pestilence; and the idea is, that God would cut him off speedily, as it were in a single day.

Wilt thou make an end of me - Hebrew, ‹Wilt thou perfect‘ or ‹finish‘ me; that is, wilt thou take my life.

Verse 13

I reckoned - There has been considerable variety in interpreting this expression. The Septuagint renders it, ‹I was given up in the morning as to a lion.‘ The Vulgate renders it, ‹I hoped until morning;‘ and in his commentary, Jerome says it means, that as Job in his trouble and anguish Isaiah 7:4 sustained himself at night expecting the day, and in the daytime waiting for the night, expecting a change for the better, so Hezekiah waited during the night expecting relief in the morning. He knew, says he, that the violence of a burning fever would very soon subside, and he thus composed

himself, and calmly waited. So Vitringa renders it, ‹I composed my mind until the morning.‘ Others suppose that the word used here (שׁויתי *shîvîythîy*), means, ‹I made myself like a lion,‘ that is, in roaring. But the more probable and generally adopted interpretation is, ‹I looked to God, hoping that the disease would soon subside, but as a lion he crushed my bones. The disease increased in violence, and became past endurance. Then I chattered like a swallow, and mourned like a dove, over the certainty that I must die.‘ Our translators, by inserting the word ‹that,‘ have greatly marred the sense, as if he had reckoned or calculated through the night that God would break his bones, or increase the violence of the disease, whereas the reverse was true. He hoped and expected that it would be otherwise, and with that view he composed his mind.

As a lion so will he break all my bones - This should be in the past tense. ‹He (God) did crush all my bones.‘ The connection requires this construction. The idea is, that as a lion crushes the bones of his prey, producing great pain and sudden death, so it was with God in producing great pain and the prospect of sudden death.

From day even to night … - (See the note at Isaiah 38:12) Between morning and night. That is, his pain so resembled the crushing of all the bones of an animal by the lion, that he could not hope to survive the day.

Verse 14

Like a crane - The word used here (סוס *sûs*) usually denotes a horse. The rabbis render it here ‹a crane.‘ Gesenius translates it ‹a swallow;‘ and in his Lexicon interprets the word which is translated ‹a swallow‘ (עגור *'āgûr*) to mean “circling,” making gyrations; and the whole phrase, ‹as the circling swallow.‘ The Syriac renders this, ‹As the chattering swallow.‘ The Vulgate, ‹As the young of the swallow.‘ The Septuagint simply reads: ‹As the swallow.‘ That two birds are intended here, or that some fowl is denoted by the word עגור *'āgûr* is manifest from Jeremiah 8:7, where it is mentioned as distinct from the סוס *sûs* (the crane) ועגור וסוס *vesûs ve'āgûr* On the meaning of the words Bochart may be consulted (Hieroz. i. 2. p. 602). It is probable that the swallow and the crane are intended. The swallow is well known, and is remarkable for its twittering. The crane is also a well-known bird with long limbs made to go in the water. Its noise may be expressive of grief.

So did I chatter - Peep, or twitter (see the note at Isaiah 8:19). The idea here is doubtless that of pain that was expressed in sounds resembling that

made by birds - a broken, unmeaning unintelligible sighing; or quick breathing, and moaning.

I did mourn as a dove - The dove, from its plaintive sound, is an emblem of grief. It is so used in Isaiah 59:11. The idea is that of the lonely or solitary dove that is lamenting or mourning for its companion:

‹Just as the lonely dove laments its mate.‘

Mine eyes fail - The word used here (דלו *dâllû*) means properly to hang down, to swing like the branches of the willow; then to be languid, feeble, weak. Applied to the eye, it means that it languishes and becomes weak.

With looking upward - To God, for relief and comfort. He had looked so long and so intensely toward heaven for aid, that his eyes became weak and feeble.

O Lord, I am oppressed - This was his language in his affliction. He was so oppressed and borne down, that he cried to God for relief.

Undertake for me - Margin, ‹Ease me.‘ The word (ערב *ʿârab*) more properly means, to become surety for him. See it explained in the the note at Isaiah 36:8. Here it means, be surety for my life; give assurance that I shall be restored; take me under thy protection (see Psalm 119:122): ‹Be surety for thy servant for good.‘

Verse 15

What shall I say? - This language seems to denote surprise and gratitude at unexpected deliverance. It is the language of a heart that is overflowing, and that wants words to express its deep emotions. In the previous verse he had described his pain, anguish, and despair. In this he records the sudden and surprising deliverance which God had granted; which was so great that no words could express his sense of it. Nothing could be more natural than this language; nothing would more appropriately express the feelings of a man who had been suddenly restored to health from dangerous sickness, and brought from the borders of the grave.

He hath both spoken unto me - That is, he has promised. So the word is often used Deuteronomy 26:17; Jeremiah 3:19. He had made the promise by the instrumentality of Isaiah Isaiah 38:5-6. The promise related to his recovery, to the length of his days, and to his entire deliverance from the hands of the Assyrians.

And himself hath done it - He himself has restored me according to his promise, when no one else could have done it.

I shall go softly - Lowth renders this, in accordance with the Vulgate, ‹Will I reflect.‘ But the Hebrew will not bear this construction. The word used here (דדה *dâdâh*) occurs in but one other place in the Bible Psalm 42:4: ‹I went with them to the house of God;‘ that is, I went with them in a sacred procession to the house of God; I went with a solemn, calm, slow pace. The idea here is, ‹I will go humbly, submissively, all my life; I will walk in a serious manner, remembering that I am traveling to the grave; I will avoid pride, pomp, and display; I will suffer the remembrance of my sickness, and of God‘s mercy to produce a calm, serious, thoughtful demeanour all my life.‘ This is the proper effect of sickness on a pious mind, and it is its usual effect. And probably, one design of God was to keep Hezekiah from the ostentatious parade usually attendant on his lofty station; from being elated with his deliverance from the Assyrian; from improper celebrations of that deliverance by revelry and pomp; and to keep him in remembrance, that though he was a monarch, yet he was a mortal man, and that he held his life at the disposal of God.

In the bitterness of my soul - I will remember the deep distress, the bitter sorrows of my sickness, and my surprising recovery; and will allow the remembrance of that to diffuse seriousness and gratitude over all my life.

Verse 16

O Lord, by these things men live - The design of this and the following verses is evidently to set forth the goodness of God, and to celebrate his praise for what he had done. The phrase ‹these things,‘ refers evidently to the promises of God and their fulfillment; and the idea is, that people are sustained in the land of the living only by such gracious interpositions as he had experienced. It was not because people had any power of preserving their own lives, but because God interposed in time of trouble, and restored to health when there was no human prospect that they could recover.

And in all these things - In these promises, and in the divine interposition.

Is the life of my spirit - I am alive in virtue only of these things.

So wilt thou recover me - Or so hast thou recovered me; that is, thou hast restored me to health.

Verse 17

Behold, for peace - That is, instead of the health, happiness, and prosperity which I had enjoyed, and which I hope still to enjoy.

I had great bitterness - Hebrew, ‹Bitterness to me, bitterness;‘ an emphatic expression, denoting intense sorrow.

But thou hast in love to my soul - Margin, ‹Loved my soul from the pit.‘ The word which occurs here (חשקת *châshaqtâ*) denotes properly to join or fasten together; then to be attached to anyone; to be united tenderly; to embrace. Here it means that God had loved him, and had thus delivered his soul from death.

Delivered it from the pit of corruption - The word rendered "corruption" (בלי *belîy*), denotes consumption, destruction, perdition. It may be applied to the grave, or to the deep and dark abode of departed spirits; and the phrase here is evidently synonymous with sheol or hades. The grave, or the place for the dead, is often represented as a pit - deep and dark - to which the living descend (Job 17:16; Job 33:18, Job 33:24-25, Job 33:30; Psalm 28:1; Psalm 30:3; Psalm 55:23; Psalm 69:15; Psalm 88:4; compare Isaiah 14:15, note, Isaiah 14:19, note).

For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back - Thou hast forgiven them; hast ceased to punish me on account of them. This shows that Hezekiah, in accordance with the sentiment everywhere felt and expressed in the Bible, regarded his suffering as the fruit of sin.

Verse 18

For the grave cannot praise thee - The Hebrew word here is sheol. It is put by metonymy here for those who are in the grave, that is, for the dead. The word ‹praise‘ here refers evidently to the public and solemn celebration of the goodness of God. It is clear, I think, that Hezekiah had a belief in a future state, or that he expected to dwell with ‹the inhabitants of the land of silence‘ Isaiah 38:11 when he died. But he did not regard that state as one adapted to the celebration of the public praises of God. It was a land of darkness; an abode of silence and stillness; a place where there was no temple, and no public praise such as he had been accustomed to. A similar sentiment is expressed by David in Psalm 6:5:

For in death there is no remembrance of thee;
In the grave who shall give thee thanks?

In regard to the Jewish conceptions of the state of the dead, see the notes at Isaiah 14:15, Isaiah 14:19.

(See the Supplementary note at Isaiah 14:9; also the Prefatory Remarks by the Editor on the Author‘s exposition of Job. The ideas entertained by the Author on the state of knowledge among the ancient saints regarding a future world, cannot but be regarded as especially unfortunate. After the fashion of some German critics, the Old Testament worthies are reduced to the same level with the heroes of Homer and Virgil, as far as this matter is concerned at least.)

Cannot hope for thy truth - They are shut out from all the means by which thy truth is brought to the mind, and the offers of salvation are presented. Their probation is at an end; their privileges are closed; their destiny is sealed up. The idea is, it is a privilege to live, because this is a world where the offers of salvation are made, and where those who are conscious of guilt may hope in the mercy of God.

Verse 19

The living, the living - An emphatic or intensive form of expression, as in Isaiah 38:11, Isaiah 38:17. Nothing would express his idea but a repetition of the word, as if the heart was full of it.

The father to the children - One generation of the living to another. The father shall have so deep a sense of the goodness of God that he shall desire to make it known to his children, and to perpetuate the memory of it in the earth.

Verse 20

The Lord was ready to save me - He was prompt, quick to save me. He did not hesitate or delay.

Therefore we will sing my songs - That is, my family and nation. The song of Hezekiah was designed evidently not as a mere record, but to be used in celebrating the praises of God, and probably in a public manner in the temple. The restoration of the monarch was a fit occasion for public rejoicing; and it is probable that this ode was composed to be used by the company of singers that were employed constantly in the temple.

To the stringed instruments - We will set it to music, and will use it publicly (see the notes at Isaiah 5:12).

Verse 21

For Isaiah had said - In the parallel place in Kings the statement in these two verses is introduced before the account of the miracle on the sun-dial, and before the account of his recovery 2 Kings 20:7-8. The order in which it is introduced, however, is not material.

Let them take a lump of figs - The word used here (דבלה *debēlâh*) denotes "a round cake" of dried figs pressed together in a mass 1 Samuel 25:18. Figs were thus pressed together for preservation, and for convenience of conveyance.

And lay it for a plaster - The word used here (מרח *mârach*) denotes properly to rub, bruise, crush by rubbing; then to rub, in, to anoint, to soften. Here it means they were to take dried figs and lay them softened on the ulcer.

Upon the boil - (משׁחין *mashechîyn*). This word means a burning sore or an inflamed ulcer Exodus 9:9, Exodus 9:11; Leviticus 13:18-20. The verb in Arabic means to be hot, inflamed; to ulcerate. The noun is used to denote a species of black leprosy in Egypt, called elephantiasis, distinguished by the black scales with which the skin is covered, and by the swelling of the legs. Here it probably denotes a pestilential boil; an eruption, or inflamed ulceration produced by the plague, that threatened immediate death. Jerome says that the plaster of figs was medicinal, and adapted to reduce the inflammation and restore health. There is no improbability in the supposition; nor does anything in the narrative prohibit us from supposing that natural means might have been used to restore him. The miracle consisted in the arrest of the shade on the sun-dial, and in the announcement of Isaiah that he would recover. That figs, when dried, were used in the Materia Medica of the ancients, is asserted by both Pliny and Celsus (see Pliny, Nat. Hist. xxiii. 7; Celsus, v. 2, quoted by Lowth.)

Verse 22

Hezekiah also had said - What evidence or proof have I that I shall be restored, and permitted to go to the temple? The miracle on the sun-dial was performed in answer to this request, and as a demonstration that he should yet be permitted to visit the temple of God (see the note at Isaiah 38:7).

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 39

Introduction

This short chapter completes the historical part of Isaiah. The same record occurs with some slight changes in 2 Kings 20:12-21. Compare the Introduction to Isaiah 39:1. This embassage contemplated also an inquiry into the truth of the report in regard to the miracle on the sun-dial 2 Chronicles 32:31.

2. Hezekiah showed them all his treasures in an ostentatious and improper manner Isaiah 39:2. This was permitted, in order that he might be tried, and might know all that was in his own heart, and not be lifted up with pride, and with the conviction of his own righteousness 2 Chronicles 32:31.

3. Isaiah is sent with a message to Hezekiah to inquire what he had done, and who those ambassadors were Isaiah 39:3-5.

4. He is directed to deliver the solemn message of God that Jerusalem should be taken, and that all its inhabitants and all its treasures should be carried to Babylon - the place from where those ambassadors came Isaiah 39:5-7.

5. Hezekiah expresses submission to the just sentence and purpose of God, and gratitude that it should not occur in his days Isaiah 39:8.

Verse 1

At that time - That is, soon after his recovery; or after he had amassed great wealth, and was surrounded with the evidences of prosperity 2 Chronicles 32:27-31.

Merodach-baladan, the son of Balddan, king of Babylon - In the parallel place in 2 Kings 20:12, this name is written Berodach-baladan, by a change of a single letter. Probably the name was written and pronounced both ways. Merodach was an idol of the Babylonians Jeremiah 50:2: ‹Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is confounded.‘ This idol, according to Gesenius, was probably the planet Mars, or Mars the god of war. To this god, as well as to Saturn, the ancient Semitic nations offered human sacrifices (see Gesenius‘ Lex. and Corem. *in loc*.) The word

‹Balddan‘ is also a compound word, and means ‹Bel is his lord.‘ The name of this idol, Merodach, was often incorporated into the proper names of kings, and of others. Thus we have the names Evil-Merodach, Messi-Mordachus, Sisimor-dachus, Mardocentes, etc. In regard to the statement of Isaiah in this verse, no small degree of difficulty has been felt by commentators, and it is not until quite recently that the difficulty has been removed, and it has been done in a manner to furnish an additional and most striking demonstration of the entire and minute accuracy of the sacred narrative. The difficulty arose from several circnmstances:

1. This king of Babylon is nowhere else mentioned in sacred history.

2. The kingdom of Assyria was yet flourishing, and Babylon was one of its dependencies.

For, only nine years before, Salmanassar the Assyrian monarch is said to have transported the inhabitants of Babylon to other parts 2 Kings 17:24, and Manasseh, not many years after, was carried captive to Babylon by the king of Assyria 2 Chronicles 33:11. These instances incontestably prove that at the time of Hezekiah, Babylon was dependent on the Assyrian kings. Who, then, it is asked, was this Merodach-baladan, king of Babylon? If he was governor of that city, how could he send an embassy of congratulation to the Jewish sovereign, then at war with his liege lord? The canon of Ptolemy gives us no king of this name, nor does his chronology appear reeoncilable with sacred history.

‹In this darkness and doubt,‘ says Dr. Wiseman, ‹we must have continued, and the apparent contradiction of this text to ether passages would have remaimed inexplicable, had not the progress of modern Oriental study brought to light a document of the most venerable antiquity. This is nothing less than a fragment of Berosus, preserved in the chronicle of Eusebius. This interesting fragment informs us, that after Sennacherib‘s brother had governed Babylon, as Assyrian viceroy, Acises unjustly possessed himself of the supreme command. After thirty days he was murdered by Merodach-baladan, who usurped the sovereignty for six months, when he was in turn killed, and was succeeded by Elibus. But after three years, Sennacherib collected an army, gave the usurper battle, conquered, and took him prisoner. Having once more reduced Babylon to his obedience, he left his son Assordan, the Esarhaddon of Scripture, as governor of the city.‘

The only objection to this satement, or to the entire consistency of this fragment with the Scripture narrative is, that Isaiah relates the murder of Sennacherib, and the succession of Esarhaddon before Merodach-baladan‘s embassy to Jerusalem. But to this Gesenius has well replied, that this arrangement is followed by the prophet in order to conclude the history of the Assyrian monarch, which has no further connection with the subject, so as not to return to it again.

By this order, also, the prophecy of his murder is more closely connected with the history of its fulfillment (Isaiah 37:7; compare Isaiah 37:38). And this solution, which supposes some interval to have elapsed between Sennacherib‘s return to Nineveh, and his death, is rendered probable by the words of the text itself. ‹He went and returned, and dwelt in Nineveh; and it came to pass,‘ etc. Isaiah 37:37-38)

Thus we have it certainly explained how there was a king, or rather a usurper in Babylon at the time when it was really a provincial city of the Assyrian empire. Nothing was more probable than that Merodach-baladan, having seized the throne, should endeavor to unite himself in league and amity with the enemies of his master, against whom he had revolted. Hezekiah, who, no less than himself, had thrown off the Assyrian yoke, and was in powerful alliance with the king of Egypt, would be his first resource. No embassy, on the other hand, could be more welcome to the Jewish monarch who had the common enemy in his neighborhood, and who would be glad to see a division made in his favor by a rebellion in the very heart of that enemy‘s kingdom. Hence arose that excessive attention which he paid to the envoys of the usurper, and which so offended Isaiah, or rather God, who, as a consequence, threatened the Babylonian captivity (see Dr. Wiseman‘s Lectures on Science and Revealed Religion, pp. 369-371Ed. And. 1837).

Sent letters - The Septuagint adds, καὶ πρέβεις *kai presbeis* - ‹and ambassadors.‘

And a present - It was customary among the Orientals, as it is now, to send a valuable present when one prince sent an embassage for any purpose to another. It is stated in 2 Chronicles 32:31, that one object of their coming was to make inquiry ‹of the wonder that was done in the land;‘ that is, of the miracle in regard to the retrocession of the shadow on the sun-dial of

Ahaz. It is well known that, from the earliest periods, the Babylonians and Chaldeans were distinguished for their attention to astronomy. Indeed, as a science, astronomy was first cultivated on the plains of Chaldea; and there the knowledge of that science was scarcely surpassed by any of the ancient nations. The report which they had heard of this miracle would, therefore, be to them a matter of deep interest as an astronomical fact, and they came to make inquiry into the exact truth of the report.

Verse 2

And Hezekiah was glad of them - Possibly he regarded himself as flattered by an embassage from so great a distance, and so celebrated a place as Babylon. It is certain that he erred in some way in regard to the manner in which he received them, and especially in the ostentatious display which he made of his treasures 2 Chronicles 32:31.

And showed them the house of his precious things - The Septuagint renders this, Νεχωθᾶ *Nechōtha* - ‹The house of Nechotha,‘ retaining the Hebrew word. The Margin, ‹Spicery.‘ The Hebrew word (נכתה *nekotoh*) properly means, according to Gesenius, a contusion, a breaking to pieces; hence, aromatic powder, or spices reduced to powder, and then any kind of aromatics. Hence, the word here may mean ‹the house of his spices,‘ as Aquila, Symmachus, and the Vulgate translate it; or ‹a treasury,‘ ‹a storehouse,‘ as the Chaldee and the Syriac here render it. It was undoubtedly a treasure or store house; but it may have taken its name from the fact, that it was mainly employed as a place in which to keep spices, unguents, and the various kinds of aromatics which were used either in public worship, or for the purposes of luxury.

The silver and the gold - Possibly Hezekiah may have obtained no small quantity of silver and gold from what was left in the camp of the Assyrians. It is certain that after he was delivered from danger he was signally prospered, and became one of the most wealthy and magnificent monarchs of the east; 2 Chronicles 32:27-28: ‹And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honor; and he made himself treasuries for silver and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels; storehouses also for the increase of grain, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks.‘ A considerable part of this wealth arose from presents which were made to him, and from gifts which were made for the service of the temple 2 Chronicles 32:23.

And the precious ointment - Used for anointing kings and priests. Or more probably the ointment here referred to was that which was in more common use, to anoint the body after bathing, or when they were to appear in public.

And all the house of his armor - Margin, ‹Vessels,‘ or ‹instruments,‘ or ‹jewels.‘ The word כלי *kelîy* denotes any article of furniture, utensil, or vessel; any trapping, instrument, or tool; and any implement of war, weapon, or arms. Probably it here refers to the latter, and denotes shields, swords, spears, such as were used in war, and such as Hezekiah had prepared for defense. The phrase is equivalent to our word arsenal (compare 2 Chronicles 32:27). Solomon had an extensive arsenal of this description 1 Kings 10:16-17, and it is probable that these were regarded as a part of the necessary defense of the kingdom.

Nor in all his dominion - Everything that contributed to the defense, the wealth, or the magnificence of his kingdom he showed to them. The purpose for which Hezekiah thus showed them all that he had, was evidently display. In 2 Chronicles 32:25, it is stated that ‹Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him, for his heart was lifted up;‘ and in 2 Chronicles 32:31, it is said, that in regard to this transaction, ‹God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.‘ The result showed how much God hates pride, and how certainly he will punish all forms of ostentation.

Verse 3

Then came Isaiah - Isaiah was accustomed to declare the will of God most freely to monarchs (see Isaiah 7)

What said these men? - What proposition have they made? What is the design of their coming? It is implied in the question that there had been some improper communication from them. To this question Hezekiah returned no answer.

And from whence came they? - It was doubtless known in Jerusalem that ambassadors had come, but it would not be likely to be known from what country they had come.

From a far country - Probably this was said in order to palliate and excuse his conducts, by intimating to the prophet that it was proper to show respectful attention to foreigners, and that he had done nothing more than was demanded by the laws of hospitality and kindness.

Verse 4

What have they seen? - It is probable that the fact that Hezekiah had showed them the treasures of his kingdom was known in Jerusalem. Such a fact would be likely to attract attention, and to produce inquiry among the people into the cause.

All that is in mine house - Here was the confessions of a frank, an honest, and a pious man. There was no concealment; no disguise. Hezekiah knew that he was dealing with a man of God - a man too to whom he had been under great obligations. He knew that Isaiah had come commissioned by God, and that it would be in vain to attempt to conceal anything. Nor does he seem to have wished to make any concealment. If he was conscious that what he had done had been improper, he was willing to confess it; and at any rate he was willing that the exact truth should be known. Had Hezekiah been like Ahaz, he might have spurned Isaiah from his presence as presenting improper inquiries. But Hezekiah was accustomed to regard with respect the messengers of God, and he was therefore willing to submit his whole conduct to the divine adjudication and reproof. Piety makes a man willing that all that he has done should be known. It saves him from double-dealing and subterfuges, and a disposition to make vain excuses; and it inclines him to fear God, to respect his ambassadors, and to listen to the voice of eternal truth.

Verse 5

Hear the word of the Lord of hosts - Hear what the mighty God that rules in heaven says of this. This is an instance of great fidelity on the part of the prophet. He felt himself sent from God in a solemn manner to rebuke sin in a monarch, and a pious monarch. It is an instance that strikingly resembles the boldness and faithfulness of Nathan when he went to David, and said, ‹Thou art the man‘ 2 Samuel 12:7.

Verse 6

Behold, the days come - The captivity of the Jews in Babylon commenced about one hundred and twenty years after this prediction (compare Jeremiah 20:5).

That all that is in thine house - That is, all the treasures that are in the treasure-house Isaiah 39:2.

And that which thy fathers have laid up in store - In 2 Kings 18:15-16, we are told that Hezekiah, in order to meet the demands of the king of Assyria, had cut off even the ornaments of the temple, and taken all the treasures which were in ‹the king‘s house.‘ It is possible, however, that

there might have been other treasures which had been accumulated by the kings before him which he had not touched.

Nothing shall be left - This was literally fulfilled (see 2 Chronicles 36:18). It is remarkable, says Vitringa, that this is the first intimation that the Jews would be carried to Babylon - the first designation of the place where they would be so long punished and oppressed. Micah Micah 4:10, a contemporary of Isaiah, declares the same thing, but probably this was not before the declaration here made by Isaiah. Moses had declared repeatedly, that, if they were a rebellious people, they should be removed from their own to a foreign land; but he had not designated the country Leviticus 26:33-34; Deuteronomy 28:64-67; Deuteronomy 30:3. Ahijah, in the time of Jeroboam 1 Kings 14:15, had predicted that they should be carried ‹beyond the river,‘ that is, the Euphrates; and Amos Amos 5:27 had said that God would carry them ‹into captivity beyond Damascus.‘ But all these predictions were now concentrated on Babylon; and it was for the first time distinctly announced by Isaiah that that was to be the land where they were to suffer so long and so painful a captivity.

Verse 7

And of that sons - Thy posterity (see the note at Matthew 1:1).

That shall issue from thee - Of the royal family. The captivity at Babylon occurred more than a hundred years after this, and of course those who were carried there were somewhat remote descendants of Hezekiah.

And they shall be eunuchs - The word used here (סריסים *sâriysiym*) denotes properly and strictly eunuchs, or such persons as were accustomed to attend on the harems of Oriental monarchs Esther 2:3, Esther 2:14-15. These persons were also employed often in various offices of the court Esther 1:10, Esther 1:12, Esther 1:15, and hence, the word often means a minister of court, a court-officer, though not literally an eunuch Genesis 37:6; Genesis 39:1. It is not easy, however, to tell when the word is to be understood literally, and when not. The Targum understands it of those who should be nurtured, or become great in the kingdom of Babylon. That the Jews were advanced to some offices of trust and power in Babylon, is evident from the case of Daniel Daniel 1:2-7. It is by no means improbable, also, that the king of Babylon would have a pride in having among the attendants at his court, or even over the harem, the descendants of the once magnificent monarchs of the Jews.

Verse 8

Good is the word of the Lord - The sense of this is, ‹I acquiesce in this; I perceive that it is right; I see in it evidence of benevolence and goodness.‘ The grounds of his acquiescence seem to have been:

1. The fact that he saw that it was just. He felt that he had sinned, and that he had made an improper display of his treasures, and deserved to be punished.

2. He felt that the sentence was mild and merciful. It was less than he deserved, and less than he had reason to expect.

3. It was merciful to him, and to his kingdom at that time. God was not coming forth to cut him off, or to involve him in anymore calamity.

4. His own reign and life were to be full of mercy still.

He had abundant cause of gratitude, therefore, that God was dealing with him in so much kindness. It cannot be shown that Hezekiah was regardless of his posterity, or unconcerned at the calamity which would come upon them. All that the passage fairly implies is, that he saw that it was right; and that it was proof of great mercy in God that the punishment was deferred, and was not, as in the case of David (2 Chronicles 32:25-26, 2 Chronicles 32:30-31.

For there shall be peace - My kingdom shall not be disturbed during my reign with a foreign invasion.

And truth - The truth of God shall be maintained; his worship shall be kept up; his name shall be honored.

In my days - During my reign. He inferred this because Isaiah had said Isaiah 39:7 that his posterity would be carried to Babylon. He was assured, therefore, that these calamities would not come in his own time. We may learn from this:

1. That we should submit to God when he punishes us. If we have right feelings we shall always see that we deserve all that we are called to suffer.

2. In the midst of severest judgments we may find some evidence of mercy. There are some considerations on which the mind may fix that will console it with the evidence of the compassion of God, and that will not only make it submissive, but fill it with gratitude.

3. We should accustom ourselves to such views of the divine dealings, and should desire to find in them the evidence of goodness and mercy, and not the evidence of wrath and severity.

It is of infinite importance that we should cherish right views of God; and should believe that he is holy, good. and merciful. To do this, we should feel that we deserve all that we suffer; we should look at what we might have endured; we should look at the mercies spared to us, as well as at those which are taken away; and we should hold to the belief, as an unwavering principle from which we are never to depart, that God is good, supremely and wholly good. Then our minds will have peace. Then with Hezekiah we may say, ‹Good is the word of Yahweh.‘ Then with the suffering Redeemer of the world we may always say, ‹Not my will, but thine be done‘ Luke 22:42.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 40

Introduction

General Introduction to Isaiah 39:1-8 had direct and immediate reference to the times in which the prophet lived, or was suggested by the events which occurred in those times. Not unfrequently, indeed, there were prophecies respecting the Messiah‘s coming Isaiah 4:1-6; 7; 9; 11; Isaiah 35:1-10, but the primary reference was to events that were then occurring, or which were soon to occur, and which were local in their character. And though the mind of the prophet is carried forward by the laws of prophetic suggestion (see the Introduction, Section 7, III. (3), and he describes the times of the Messiah, yet the immediate and primary reference of those prophecies is to Judea, or to the kingdoms and countries in the vicinity of Judea, with which the Jews were in various ways connected.

In this portion of the prophecy, however, there is little that is local and temporary. It is occupied with a prophetic statement of events which were to occur long after the time of the prophet; and which would be of interest not only to the Jewish nation, but to the whole human family. It is a beautiful and glowing description of occurrences, in which people of the present and of all subsequent times will have as deep an interest as they who have lived at any former period. Indeed it is not improbable that as the world advances in age, the interest in this portion of Isaiah will increase; and that as the gospel is carried around the globe, the beauty and accuracy of these descriptions will be more clearly seen and highly appreciated; and that nations will yet derive their highest consolations, and see the clearest proof of the inspiration of the Sacred Volume, from the entire correspondence between this portion of Isaiah and the events which are yet to gladden the world. There is no portion of the Old Testament where there is so graphic and clear a description of the times of the Messiah. None of the other prophets linger so long, and with such apparent delight, on the promised coming of the Prince of Peace; or his character and work; on the nature of his instructions, and the manner of his reception; on the trials of his life, and the painful circumstances of his death; on the dignity of his nature, and on his lowly and humble character; on the prevalence of his religion, and on its transforming and happy effects; on the consolations which he would furnish, and on the fact that his religion would bear light and joy around the world.

Lowth supposes that this prophecy was uttered in the latter part of the reign of Hezekiah. A more probable supposition is that of Hengstenberg, that it was uttered in the time of Manasseh. I have endeavored to show (Introduction, Section 2) that Isaiah lived some time during the reign of Manasseh. According to this supposition, there was probably an interval of some twelve or fourteen years between the close of the predictions in the first part, and those which occupy this portion of the book. Manasseh was a cruel prince; and his reign was cruel (see the Introduction, Section 3). It was a time of the prevalence of idolatry and sin. In this state of things, it is probable that Isaiah, who was then of great age, withdrew almost entirely from the public functions of the prophetic work, and sought personal consolation, and endeavored to furnish comfort for the pious portion of the nation, in the contemplation of the future.

In this period, I suppose, this portion of the prophecy was conceived and penned. Isaiah, in the close of the previous part of the prophecies Isaiah 39:7, had distinctly announced that the nation would be carried to Babylon. He saw that the crimes of the monarch and of the nation were such as would certainly hasten this result. He had retired from the public functions of the prophetic office, and given himself up to the contemplation of happier and purer times. He, therefore, devoted himself to the task of furnishing consolation for the pious portion of the nation, and especially of recording prophetic descriptions which would comfort the Jews when they should be held in long captivity in Babylon. We have seen (the notes at Isaiah 64:11, and the people dispirited and sad in their long and painful captivity.

He predicts the close of that captivity, and speaks of it as present to his view. He consoles the people by the assurance that it was coming to an end; names the monarch - Cyrus - by whom their oppressors were to be punished, and by whom they were to be restored to their own land; and describes, in the most beautiful and glowing imagery, their certain return. The second source of consolation is that which relates to the coming of a far more important deliverer than Cyrus, and to a far more important redemption than that from the captivity at Babylon. By the laws of prophetic suggestion, and in accordance with the usual manner of Isaiah, his mind is carried forward to much more momentous events. The descriptions

of the prophet insensibly change from the immediate subject under contemplation to the far more important events connected with the coming and work of the Messiah. This was the common rule by which the mind of Isaiah acted; and it is no wonder, therefore, that an event so strikingly resembling the deliverance of man from the bondage of sin by the Messiah as was the deliverance from the captivity of Babylon, should have been suggested by that, and that his thoughts should pass rapidly from one to the other, and the one be forgotten in the other.

The eye of the prophet, therefore, glances rapidly from the object more immediately in view in the future, to the object more remote; and he regards the return from the Babylonian captivity as introductory to a far more important deliverance. In the contemplation of that more distant event, therefore, he becomes wholly absorbed; and from this he derives his main topics of consolation. He sees the author of redemption in various scenes - now as a sufferer, humble, poor, and persecuted; and now the more distant glories of the Messiah‘s kingdom rise to view. He sees him raised up from the dead; his empire extend and spread among the Gentiles; kings and princes from all lands coming to lay their offerings at his feet; the distant tribes of men come bending before him, and his religion of peace and joy diffusing its blessings around the world. In the contemplation of these future glories, he desires to furnish consolation for his afflicted countrymen in Babylon, and at the same time a demonstration of the truth of the oracles of God, and of the certain prevalence of the true religion, which should impart happiness and peace in all future times.

The character of the period when this portion of the prophecy was delivered, and the circumstances under which it was uttered, as well as the object which the prophet had in view, may account for some remarkable features in it which cannot fail to strike the attentive reader -

1. The name of the prophet does not occur. It may have been designed that the consolation should be furnished rather by the nature of the truth, than by the name or authority of the man. When addressing monarchs, and when denouncing the vices and crimes of the age, his name is mentioned (compare Isaiah 40:1-2. The general design is, to comfort the afflicted and oppressed people of God. They are contemplated as in Babylon, and as near

the close of the exile. Jerusalem is regarded as in ruins (compare Isaiah 44:26-28; Isaiah 51:3; Isaiah 52:9; Isaiah 58:12); the land is waste and desolate Isaiah 63:18; the city and the temple are destroyed Isaiah 64:10-11. Their captivity is about to end, and the people about to be restored to their own land Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 58:12; Isaiah 9:10; Isaiah 65:9. In this situation, the prophet is directed to address words of consolation to the oppressed and long-captive Jews, and to assure them that their calamities are about to close. Jerusalem - now in ruins - was to be assured that the end of her desolation was near, for that an ample punishment had been taken for all her sins.

II. The prophet next represents the deliverance under an image taken from the march of earthly kings Isaiah 40:3-8. The voice of a herald is heard in the wilderness making proclamation, that every obstacle should be removed, that Yahweh might return to Zion conducting his people. As he had conducted them from the land of Egypt, so he was about to conduct them from Babylon, and to appear again in Jerusalem and in the temple. Between Babylon and Jerusalem there was an immense tract of country which was a pathless desert. Through this land the people would naturally be conducted; and the voice of the herald is heard demanding that a highway should be made - in the manner of a herald who preceded an army, and who required valleys to he filled, and roads to be constructed, over which the monarch and his army might pass with ease and safety. It is to be observed that the main thing here is not that the people should return, and a way be made for them, but that Yahweh was about to return to Jerusalem, and that the pathway should he made for him. He was to be their leader and guide, and this was the principal source of comfort in their return. In this, the Holy Spirit, who directed and inspired the prophet, purposely suggests language that would be applicable to a far more important even, when the herald of the Messiah should announce his coming. The main thing which the voice was to cry is represented in Isaiah 40:6-8. That was, that Yahweh was faithful to his promises, and that his predictions would be certainly fulfilled. Everything else would fade away - the grass would wither, the flower would fail, and the people would die - but the word of Yahweh would be unfailing, and this would be manifest alike in the release of the people from Babylon, and in the coming of the Messiah.

III. The messenger that brought these glad tidings to Jerusalem, is exhorted to announce the happy news to the remaining cities of Judah - to go to an eminence - to lift up the voice - and to proclaim that their God had come Isaiah 40:9.

IV. In Isaiah 40:10-11, the assurance is given that he would come ‹with a strong hand‘ - almighty and able to save; he would come as a tender and gentle shepherd, regarding especially the weak and feeble of his people - language alike applicable to God, who should conduct the people from exile to their own land, and to the Messiah; though more strikingly and completely fulfilled in the latter.

V. The mention of the omnipotence of Yahweh, who was about to conduct his people to their own land, leads the prophet into a most sublime description of his power, majesty, and glory, the object of which seems to be to induce them to put entire confidence in him Isaiah 40:12-17. God measures the waters in the hollow of his hand; he metes out the heavens with a span; he measures the dust of the earth, and weighs the mountains Isaiah 40:12. None has counseled, or can counsel him; his understanding is superior to that of all creatures Isaiah 40:13-14. The nations before him are as a drop of a bucket, and as the small dust of the balance, and as nothing Isaiah 40:15, Isaiah 40:17. All the vast forests of Lebanon, and all the beasts that roam there, would not be sufficient to constitute a burnt-offering that should be a proper expression of his majesty and glory Isaiah 40:10.

VI. From this statement of the majesty and glory of God, the prophet shows the absurdity of attempting to form an image or likeness of God, and the certainty that all who trusted in idols should be destroyed, as the stubble is swept away by the whirlwind Isaiah 40:18-25.

VII. It follows also, if God is so great and glorious, that the people should put confidence in him. They should believe that he was able to save them; they should wait on him who alone could renew their strength Isaiah 40:26-31. The entire scope and design of the chapter, therefore, is, to induce them to put their reliance in God, who was about to come to vindicate his people, and who would assuredly accomplish all his predictions and

promises. The argument is a most beautiful one; and the language is unsurpassed in sublimity.

Verse 1

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people - This is the exordium, or the general subject of this and the following chapters. The commencement is abrupt, as often happens in Isaiah and the other prophets. The scene where this vision is laid is in Babylon; the time near the close of the captivity. The topic, or main subject of the consolation, is stated in the following verse - that that captivity was about to end, and that brighter and happier days were to succeed their calamities and their exile. The exhortation to ‹comfort‘ the people is to be understood as a command of God to those in Babylon whose office or duty it would be to address them - that is, to the ministers of religion, or to the prophets. The Targum of Jonathan thus renders it: ‹Ye prophets, prophesy consolations concerning my people.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith God. O priests, speak to the heart of Jerusalem; comfort her.‘ The design of Isaiah is doubtless to furnish that which should be to them a source of consolation when amidst the deep distress of their long captivity; to furnish an assurance that the captivity was about to end, and that brighter and happier times were to ensue.

The exhortation or command is repeated, to give intensity or emphasis to it, in the usual manner in Hebrew, where emphasis is denoted by the repetition of a word. The word rendered ‹comfort‘ (from נחם *nâcham*) means properly to draw the breath forcibly, to sigh, pant, groan; then to lament, or grieve Psalm 90:13; Jeremiah 15:6; then to comfort or console one‘s-self Genesis 38:12. then to take vengeance (compare the note at Isaiah 1:24). All the forms of the word, and all the significations, indicate deep emotion, and the obtaining of relief either by repenting, or by taking vengeance, or by administering the proper topics of consolation. Here the topic of consolation is, that their calamities were about to come to an end, in accordance with the unchanging promises of a faithful God Isaiah 40:8, and is thus in accordance with what is said in Hebrews 6:17-18.

My people - The people of God. He regarded those in Babylon as his people; and he designed also to adduce such topics of consolation as would be adapted to comfort all his people in all ages.

Saith your God - The God of those whom he addressed - the God of the prophets or ministers of religion whose office was to comfort the people. We may remark here, that it is an important part of the ministerial office to administer consolation to the people of God in affiction; to exhibit to them his promises; to urge the topics of religion which are adapted to sustain them; and especially to uphold and cheer them with the assurance that their trials will soon come to an end, and will all terminate in complete deliverance from sorrow and calamity in heaven.

Verse 2

Speak ye comfortably - Hebrew, עַל־לֵב *ʿal -lēb* as in the margin, ‹To the heart.‘ The heart is the seat of the affections. It is there that sorrow and joy are felt. We are oppressed there with grief, and we speak familiarly of being pained at the heart and of being of a glad or merry heart. To speak ‹to the heart,‘ is to speak in such a way as to remove the troubles of the heart; to furnish consolation, and joy. It means that they were not merely to urge such topics as should convince the understanding, but such also as should be adopted to minister consolation to the heart. So the word is used in Genesis 34:3: ‹And his soul clave unto Dinah - and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly (Hebrew, to the heart) of the damsel;‘ Genesis 50:21: ‹And he comforted them, and spoke kindly unto them‘ (Hebrew, to their hearts); see also 2 Chronicles 32:6.

To Jerusalem - The direction is not merely to speak to the people in Babylon, but also to comfort Jerusalem itself lying in ruins. The general direction is, therefore, that the entire series of topics of consolation should be adduced - the people were to return from their bondage, and Jerusalem was to be rebuilt, and the worship of God to be restored.

And cry unto her - In the manner of a crier; or one making public and loud proclamation (compare Isaiah 40:3, Isaiah 40:9). Jerusalem is here personified. She is addressed as in ruins, and as about to be rebuilt, and as capable of consolation from this promise.

That her warfare is accomplished - Septuagint, ‹That her humiliation (ταπείνωσις *tapeinōsis*) is accomplished.‘ The Hebrew word (צבא *tsâbâʹ* ‹warfare‘) properly means an army or host (compare the note at Isaiah 1:9), and is usually applied to an army going forth to war, or marshalled for battle 2 Samuel 8:16; 2 Samuel 10:7. It is then used to denote an appointed time of service; the discharge of a duty similar to an enlistment, and is applied to the services of the Levites in the tabernacle Numbers 4:28: ‹All that enter in

to perform the service (Hebrew, to war the warfare), to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.‘ Compare Numbers 8:24-25. Hence, it is applied to human life contemplated as a warfare, or enlistment, involving hard service and calamity; an enlistment from which there is to be a discharge by death.

Is there not a set time (Hebrew, a warfare) to man upon earth?
Are not his days as the days of an hireling?
Job 7:1
But if a man die - shall he indeed live again?
All the days of my appointed time (Hebrew, my warfare) will I wait,
Till my change come.
Job 14:14

Compare Daniel 10:1. The word then means hard service, such as soldiers endure; an appointed time which they are to serve; an enlistment involving hardships, toil, privation, danger, calamity. In this sense it is applied hero to Jerusalem - to the trials, calamities, desolations to which she was subjected for her sins, and which were to endure a definite and fixed time - like the enlistment of an army. That time was now coming to an end, and to be succeeded by a release, or discharge. Vitringa, who supposes that this refers primarily and solely to the times of the Messiah, regards this as meaning that the definite time of the legal economy, a time of toil, and of vexatious and troublesome ceremonies, was about to end by the coming of the Messiah. But the more correct interpretation is, probably, that which supposes that there was a primary reference to the long and painful captivity of the Jews, in Babylon.

That her iniquity - The iniquity or sin here referred to, is that long series of acts of rebellion, corruption, and idolatry, with which the Jewish people had been chargeable, and which had rendered their captivity necessary. As a nation, that sin was now expiated, or removed by their protracted punishment in Babylon. It was a sufficient expression of the divine displeasure at the national offences, and God was satisfied (נרצה *nîretsâh*) with it, and could consistently restore them to their land, and to their former privileges. The whole language here has respect to national, and not to individual offences.

Is pardoned - Vulgate, *Dimissa est iniquitas illius*. Septuagint, Λέλυται αὐτῆς ἡ ἁμαρτία *Lelutai autēs hē hamartia* - ‹Her sin is loosed,‘ dissolved, remitted. The word ‹pardon‘ does not quite express the meaning of the word

in the original (נרצה *nîretsâh*). The word רצה *râtsâh* properly means to delight in any person or thing; to take pleasure in; then to receive graciously or favorably; to delight in sacrifices and offerings Job 33:26; Psalm 51:18; Ezekiel 20:40; and, in the Hiphil conjugation, satisfy, or pay to off, that is, to cause to be satisfied, or pleased; and then in Hophal, to be satisfied, to be paid off, to be pleased or satisfied with an expiation, or with an atonement for sins, so as to delight in the person who makes it. Here it means not strictly to pardon, but it means that they had endured the national punishment which God saw to be necessary; they had served out the long and painful enlistment which he had appointed, and now he was satisfied, and took delight in restoring them to their own land. It does not refer to the pardon of people in consequence of the atonement made by the Lord Jesus; but it may be used as an illustration of that, when God is satisfied with that atonement; and when he has pleasure or delight in setting the soul free from the bondage of sin, and admitting the sinner to his favor - as he had delight here in restoring his people to their own land.

For she hath received - Jerusalem had now been desolate for almost seventy years, on the supposition that this relates to the period near the close of the exile, and that was regarded as an ample or full expression of what she ought to suffer for her national offences.

Of the Lord‘s hand - From the hand, or by the agency of Yahweh. Whoever were the instruments, her sufferings were to be regarded as his appointment.

Double for all her sins - The word rendered ‹double‘ (כפלים *kipelayim*) is the dual form from כפל *kepel* ‹a doubling,‘ and occurs in Job 41:13:

Who will rip up the covering of his armor?

Against the doubling of his nostrils who will advance?

Good

And in Job 11:6:

And that he would unfold to them the secrets of wisdom.

That they are double to that which is;

That is, there are double-folds to God‘s wisdom, or the wisdom of of God is complicated, inexplicabIe (Gesenius). The word in Job means ‹conduplications, folds, complications, mazes, intricacies‘ (Good). Here the word has doubtless its usual and proper meaning, and denotes double, twice as much; and the expression may denote that God had inflicted on them double that which had been usually inflicted on rebellious nations, or on the

nation, before for its sins. Or the word may be used to denote abundance, and the prophet may design to teach that they had been amply, or abundantly punished for their crimes. ‹That is,‘ says Grotius, ‹as much as God judged to be sufficient.‘ ‹Double, here,‘ says Calvin, ‹is to be received for large and abundant.‘ Some have supposed (see Rosenmuller, who approves of this interpretation) that the word ‹sins here means the punishment of sins, and that the word ‹double‘ refers to the mercies or favors which they were about to receive, or which God had purposed to confer on them. So Lowth understands it; and renders the word לקחה *lâqechâh* ‹shall receive‘ (in the future):

That she shall receive at the hand of Yahweh

(Blessings) double to the punishment of all her sins.

But though it was true that their favors on their return, in the hope of the Messiah, and in their renovated privileges, would be far more numerous than their sufferings had been, yet this does not so well suit the connection, where the prophet is giving a reason why they should be released from their bondage, and restored to the privileges of their own land. That reason manifestly is, that they had suffered what was regarded by Yahweh as an ample expression of his displeasure for their national offences. It does not refer to individual sinners; nor to any power which they have to make atonement for their sins; nor does it refer to the atonement made by the Messiah. But it may be remarked, by the way, that in the sufferings of the Redeemer there has been ample satisfaction for the sins of his people. The Chaldee interpreter understands this as Rosenmuller does, that the word ‹double‘ refers to, the mercies which they had received: ‹Because she has received a cup of consolation from the presence of the Lord, as if (כאלו *ke'ilû*) she had been smitten twofold for all her sins.‘

Verse 3

The voice of him that crieth - Lowth and Noyes render this, ‹A voice crieth,‘ and annex the phrase ‹in the wilderness‘ to the latter part of the sentence:

A voice crieth, ‹In the wilderness prepare ye the way of Yahweh.‘

The Hebrew (קול קורא *qôl qôrē'*) will bear this construction, though the Vulgate and the Septuagint render it as in our common version. The sense is not essentially different, though the parallelism seems to require the translation proposed by Lowth. The design is to state the source of consolation referred to in the previous verses. The time of the exile at

Babylon was about to be completed. Yahweh was about to conduct his people again to their own country through the pathless wilderness, as he had formerly conducted them from Egypt to the land of promise. The prophet, therefore, represents himself as hearing the voice of a herald, or a forerunner in the pathless waste, giving direction that a way should be made for the return of the people. The whole scene is represented as a march, or return of Yahweh at the head of his people to the land of Judea. The idea is taken from the practice of Eastern monarchs, who whenever they entered on a journey or an expedition, especially through a barren and unfrequented or inhospitable country, sent harbingers or heralds before them to prepare the way.

To do this, it was necessary for them to provide supplies, and make bridges, or find fording places over the streams; to level hills, and construct causeways over valleys, or fill them up; and to make a way through the forest which might lie in their intended line of march. This was necessary, because these contemplated expeditions often involved the necessity of marching through countries where there were no public highways that would afford facilities for the passage of an army. Thus Arrian (Hist. liv. 30) says of Alexander, ‹He now proceeded to the River Indus, the army‘ that is, ἡ στρατιά *hē stratia* a part of the army, or an army sufficient for the purpose, ‹going before, which made a way for him, for otherwise there would have been no mode of passing through that region.‘ ‹When a great prince in the East,‘ says Paxton, ‹sets out on a journey, it is usual to send a party of men before him to clear the way.

The state of those countries in every age, where roads are almost unknown, and, from want of cultivation, in many places overgrown with brambles and other thorny plants, which renders traveling, especially with a large retinue, incommodious, requires this precaution. The Emperor of Hindoostan, in his progress through his dominions, as described in the narrative of Sir Thomas Roe‘s embassy to the court of Delhi, was preceded by a very great company, sent before him to cut up the trees and bushes, to level and snmoth the road, and prepare their place of encampment. We shall be able, perhaps, to form a more clear and precise idea from the account which Diodorus gives of the marches of Semiramis, the celebrated Queen of Babylon, into Media and, Persia. “In her march to Ecbatana,” says the historian, “she came to the Zarcean mountain, which, extending many

furlongs, and being full of craggy precipices and deep hollows, could not be passed without taking a great compass. Being therefore desirous of leaving an everlasting memorial of herself, as well as of shortening the way, she ordered the precipices to be digged down, and the hollows to be filled up; and at a great expense she made a shorter and more expeditious road; which to this day is called from her the road of Semiramis. Afterward she went into Persia, and all the other countries of Asia subjected to her dominion, and wherever she went, she ordered the mountains and precipices to be leveled, raised causeways in the plain country, and, at a great expense, made the ways passable."

The writer of the apocryphal Book of Baruch, refers to the same subject by the same images: ‹For God hath appointed that every high hill, and banks of long continuance, should be cast down, and valleys filled up, to make even the ground, that Israel may go safely in the glory of God' Isaiah 5:7. It is evident that the primary reference of this passage was to the exiles in Babylon, and to their return from their long captivity, to the land of their father. The imagery, the circumstances, the design of the prophecy, all seem to demand such an interpretation. At the same time it is as clear, I apprehend, that the prophet was inspired to use language, of design, which should appropriately express a more important event, the coming of the forerunner of the Messiah, and the work which he should perform as preparatory to his advent. There was such a striking similarity in the two events, that they could be grouped together in the same part of the prophetic vision or picture the mind would naturally, by the laws of prophetic suggestion (Introduction, Section 7, III. (3), glance from one to the other, and the same language would appropriately and accurately express both. Both could be described as the coming of Yahweh to bless and save his people; both occurred after a long state of desolation and bondage - the one a bondage in Babylon, the other in sin and national declension. The pathless desert was literally to be passed through in the one instance; in the other, the condition of the Jews was that which was not unaptly likened to a desert - a condition in regard to real piety not unlike the state of a vast desert in comparison with fruitful fields. ‹It was,' says Lowth, ‹in this desert country, destitute at that time of all religious cultivation, in true piety and works unfruitful, that John was sent to prepare the way of the Lord by preaching repentance.

That this passage has a reference to John as the forerunner of the Messiah, is evident from Matthew 3:3, where it is applied to him, and introduced by this remark: ‹For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice,‘ etc. (see also John 1:23) The events were so similar, in their main features, that the same language would describe both. John was nurtured in the desert, and passed his early life there, until he entered on his public work Luke 1:80. He began to preach in a mountainous country, lying east of Jerusalem, and sparsely inhabited, and which was usually spoken of as a desert or wilderness Matthew 3:1; and it was here that his voice was heard announcing the coming of the Messiah, and that he pointed him to his own followers John 1:28-29.

In the wilderness - Babylon was separated from Judea by an immense tract of country, which was one continued desert. A large part of Arabia, called Arabia Deserts, was situated in this region. To pass in a direct line, therefore, from Babylon to Jerusalem, it was necessary to go through this desolate country. It was here that the prophet speaks of hearing a voice commanding the hills to be leveled, and the valleys filled up, that there might be a convenient highway for the people to return (compare the notes at Isaiah 35:8-10).

Prepare ye the way - This was in the form of the usual proclamation of a monarch commanding the people to make a way for him to pass. Applied to the return of the exile Jews, it means that the command of God had gone forth that all obstacles should be removed. Applied to John, it means that the people were to prepare for the reception of the Messiah; that they were to remove all in their opinions and conduct which would tend to hinder his cordial reception, or which would prevent his success among them.

Of the Lord - Of Yahweh. Yahweh was the leader of his people, and was about to conduct them to their own land. The march therefore, was regarded as that of Yahweh, as a monarch or king, at the head of his people, conducting them to their own country; and to prepare the way of Yahweh was, therefore, to prepare for his march at the head of his people. Applied to the Messiah, it means that God was about to come to his people to redeem them. This language naturally and obviously implies, that he whose way was thus to be prepared was Yahweh, the true God. So it was undoubtedly in regard to him who was to be the leader of the exile Jews to their own land, since none but Yahweh could thus conduct them. And if it be admitted

that the language has also a reference to the Messiah, then it demonstrates that he was appropriately called Yahweh. That John the Immerser had such a view of him, is apparent from what is said of him.

Thus, John 1:15, he says of him that, ‹he was before‘ him which was not true unless he had an existence previous to his birth; he calls him, John 1:18, ‹the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father;‘ and in John 1:34, he calls him ‹the Son of God‘ (compare John 10:30, John 10:33, John 10:36). In John 3:31, he says of him, ‹he that cometh from above is above all; he that cometh from heaven is above all.‘ Though this is not one of the most direct and certain proof texts of the divinity of the Messiah, yet it is one which may be applied to him when that divinity is demonstrated from other places. It is not one that can be used with absolute certainty in an argument on the subject, to convince those who deny that divinity - since, even on the supposition that it refers to the Messiah, it may be said plausibly, and with some force, that it may mean that Yahweh was about to manifest himself by means of the Messiah; yet it is a passage which those who are convinced of the divinity of Christ from other source, will apply without hesitation to him as descriptive of his rank, and confirmatory of his divinity.

Make straight - Make a straight or direct road; one that should conduct at once to their land. The Chaldee renders this verse, ‹Prepare a way before the people of Yahweh; make in the plain ways before the congregation of our God.‘

A highway - (See the note at Isaiah 35:8).

Verse 4

Every valley shall be exalted - That is, every valley, or low piece of ground, shall be filled up so as to make a level highway, as was done in order to facilitate the march of armies. This verse is evidently designed to explain what is intended in Isaiah 40:3, by preparing the way for Yahweh. Applied to the return of the Jews from Babylon, it means simply that the impassable valleys were to be filled up so as to make a level road for their journey. If applied to the work of John, the forerunner of the Messiah, it means that the nation was to be called on to put itself in a state of preparation for his coming, and for the success of his labors among them. Vitringa, and others, have endeavored to specify what particular moral qualities in the nation are meant by the ‹valley,‘ by the ‹mountain and hill,‘ and by the ‹crooked‘ and ‹rough places.‘ But the illustrations are such as

cannot be demonstrated to be referred to by the prophet. The general sense is plain. The language, as we have seen, is taken from the march of a monarch at the head of his army. The general idea is, that all obstructions were to be removed, so that the march would be without embarrassment. As applicable to the work of John also, the language means in general, that whatever there was in the opinions, habits, conduct, in the pride, self-confidence, and irreligion of the nation that would prevent his cordial reception, was to be removed.

Every mountain and hill - They shall be dug down so as to make the journey easy. All obstructions were to be removed.

And the crooked - The word used here, (עקב *ʿâqob*) is usually rendered ‹crooked;‘ but perhaps not by any good authority. The verb עקב *ʿâqab* usually denotes to be behind; to come from behind; or, as Gesenius supposes, to be elevated like a mound, arched like a hill or tumulus, and is hence applied to the heel from the figure (see Genesis 25:26; Hosea 12:4). According to this, the word would denote properly a hill, mound, or acclivity, which would put back those who attempted to ascend.

Shall be made straight - Margin, ‹A straight place.‘ The Hebrew word (מישׁור *mîyshôr*) denotes properly "evenness," a level region, a plain. The hilly places would be reduced to a level.

And the rough places - Those which are hard, bound up, stony, difficult to pass. Such as abounded with rocks and precipices, and which presented obstructions to a journey. Such places abounded in the region lying between Palestine and Babylon.

Plain - Margin, ‹A plain place.‘ A smooth, level plain.

Verse 5

And the glory of the Lord - The phrase here means evidently the majesty, power, or honor of Yahweh. He would display his power, and show himself to be a covenant-keeping God, by delivering his people from their bondage, and reconducting them to their own land. This glory and faithfulness would be shown in his delivering them from their captivity in Babylon; and it would be still more illustriously shown in his sending the Messiah to accomplish the deliverance of his people in later days.

And all flesh - All human beings. The word ‹flesh‘ is often used to denote human nature, or mankind in general Genesis 6:12; Psalm 65:3; Psalm 145:21. The idea is, that the deliverance of his people would be such a display of the divine interposition, so that all nations would discern the

evidences of his power and glory. But there is a fullness and a richness in the language which allows that it is not to be confined to that event. It is more strikingly applicable to the advent of the Messiah - and to the fact that through him the glory of Yahweh would be manifest to all nations. Rosenmuller supposes that this should be translated,

And all flesh shall see together

That the mouth of Yahweh hath spoken it.

The Hebrew will bear this construction, but there is no necessity for departing from the translation in the common version. The Septuagint adds here the words ‹salvation of God‘ so as to read it, ‹and all flesh shall see the salvation of God,‘ and this reading has been adopted in Luke 3:6; or it may be more probable that Luke Luke 3:4-6 has quoted from different parts of Isaiah, and that he intended to quote that part, not from the version of the Septuagint, but from Isaiah 52:10. Lowth, on the authority of the Septuagint, proposes to restore these words to the Hebrew text. But the authority is insufficient. The Vulgate, the Chaldee, the Syriac, and the Hebrew manuscripts concur in the reading of the present Hebrew text, and the authority of the Septuagint is altogether insufficient to justify a change.

For the mouth of the Lord - The strongest possible confirmation that it would be fulfilled (see the note at Isaiah 34:16). The idea is, that God had certainly promised their deliverance from bondage; and that his interposition, in a manner which should attract the attention of all nations, was certainly purposed by him. Few events have ever more impressively manifested the glory of God than the redemption of his people from Babylon; none has occurred, or will ever occur, that will more impressively demonstrate his glory, wisdom, and faithfulness, than the redemption of the world by the Messiah.

Verse 6

The voice said - Or rather ‹a voice.‘ Isaiah represents himself here again as hearing a voice. The word ‹the‘ introduced in our translation, mars the sense, inasmuch as it leads to the supposition that it was the voice of the same person or crier referred to in Isaiah 40:3. But it is different. That was the voice of a crier or herald, proclaiming that a way was to be open in the desert. This is introduced for a different purpose. It is to proclaim distinctly that while everything else was fading and transitory, the promise of God was firm and secure. Isaiah therefore, represents himself as hearing a voice requiring the prophets (so the Chaldee) to make a proclamation. An inquiry

was at once made, What should be the nature of the proclamation? The answer was, that all flesh was grass, etc. He had Isaiah 40:3-5 introduced a herald announcing that the way was to be prepared for their return. He now introduces another voice with a distinct message to the people, that God was faithful, and that his promises would not fail. A voice, a command is heard, requiring those whose duty it was, to make proclamation. The voice of God; the Spirit speaking to the prophets, commanded them to cry.

And he said - Lowth and Noyes read this, ‹And I said.‘ The Septuagint and the Vulgate read it also in this manner, in the first person. Two manuscripts examined by Kennicott also read it in the first person. Houbigant, Hensler, and Doderlin adopt this reading. But the authority is not sufficient to justify a change in the Hebrew text. The Syriac and Chaldee read it as it is in the present Hebrew text, in the third person. The sense is, that the person, or prophet to whom the command came to make proclamation, made answer, ‹What shall be the nature of my proclamation?‘ It is equivalent to saying, ‹It was answered;‘ or if Isaiah is the person to whom the voice is represented as coming, it means that he answered; and is, therefore, equivalent to the reading in the Septuagint and Vulgate, and adopted by Lowth. This is the probable supposition, that Isaiah represents himself as hearing the voice, and as expressing a willingness to make proclamation, but as waiting to know what he was to proclaim.

All flesh - This is the answer; or this is what he was to proclaim. The general design or scope of the answer was, that he was to proclaim that the promise of Yahweh was secure and firm Isaiah 40:8, and that therefore God would certainly come to deliver them. To make this more impressive by way of contrast, he states that all people are weak and feeble like the grass that is soon withered. The expression does not refer particularly to the Jews in Babylon, or to any single nation or class of people, but to all people, in all places, and at all times. All princes, nobles, and monarchs; all armies and magistrates are like grass, and will soon pass away. On the one hand, they would be unable to accomplish what was needful to be done in the deliverance of the people; and on the other, their oppressors had no power to continue their bondage, since they were like grass, and must soon pass away. But Yahweh was ever-enduring, and was able to fulfill all his purposes.

Is grass - It is as feeble, weak, and as easily consumed as the grass of the field. A similar sentiment is found in Psalm 103:15-16:

As for man, his days are as grass;
As a flower of the field so he flourisheth;
For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone,
And the place thereof shall know it no more.

See also James 1:10-11. The passage in Isaiah is evidently quoted by Peter, 1 Peter 1:24-25: ‹All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever; and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you‘ - a passage which proves that Isaiah had reference to the times of the Messiah in the place before us.

And all the goodliness thereof - The word rendered ‹goodliness‘ (חסד *chesed*) denotes properly, kindness, love, goodwill, mercy, favor. Here it is evidently used in the sense of elegance, comeliness, beauty. The Septuagint renders it: δόξα *doxa* and so does Peter 1 Peter 1:24. Applied to grass, or to herbs, it denotes the flower, the beauty, the comeliness. Applied to man, it means that which makes him comely and vigorous - health, energy, beauty, talent, wisdom. His vigor is soon gone; his beauty fades; his wisdom ceases; and he falls, like the flower, to the dust. The idea is, that the plans of man must be temporary; that all that appears great in him must be like the flower of the field; but that Yahweh endures, and his plans reach from age to age, and will certainly be accomplished. This important truth was to be proclaimed, that the people might be induced not to trust in man, but put their confidence in the arm of God.

Verse 7

The grass withereth - Soon withers. Its beauty is soon gone.

The flower fadeth - Soon fades; or fades when the wind of Yahweh passes over it. So is also with man. He loses his vigor, and dies at once when Yahweh takes away his strength and beauty.

Because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it - This should be rendered, undoubtedly, ‹When the wind of Yahweh bloweth upon it.‘ The word ‹spirit‘ here does not suit the connection, and does not express the idea of the prophet. The word רוח *rûach* means, properly, “breath” - a breathing, or blowing; and is often used indeed to denote spirit, soul, life. But it often means a breath of wind; a breeze; air in motion Job 41:8; Jeremiah 2:24; Jeremiah 14:6. It is applied to the cool breeze which springs up in the evening (Genesis 3:8; compare Genesis 8:1; Isaiah 7:2; Isaiah 41:16; and also a tempest, or hurricane Job 1:19; Job 30:15; Isaiah 27:8.

The ‹wind of Yahweh‘ means that which Yahweh sends, or causes; and the expression here refers, doubtless, to the hot or poisonous east winds which blow in Oriental countries, and which wither and dry up everything before them (compare Jonah 4:8).

Surely the people is grass - Lowth reads this, ‹this people;‘ referring to the Jewish nation. So the Syriac. Perhaps it refers to the people of Babylon (so Rosenmuller), and means that mighty people would fade away like grass. But the more probable interpretation is that which regards it as referring to all people, and of course including the Jews and the Babylonians. The sense, according to this view, is, ‹all nations shall fade away. All human power shall cease. But the promise of Yahweh shall survive. It shall be unchanging amidst all revolutions; it shall survive all the fluctuations which shall take place among people. It may, therefore, be trusted with unwavering reliance.‘ To produce that reliance was the object of the proclamation. On this passage, descriptive of the state of man, the reader will at once be reminded of the beautiful language of Shakespeare:

This is the state of man! Today he puts forth
The tender leaves of hope: to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honors thick upon him;

The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,

And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely

His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,

And then he falls -
- Never to hope again.
Hen. VIII, Act. ii. Sc. 2.

In the following passage from Tasso, the same image is adopted:

The gentle budding rose (quoth he) behold,
That first scant peeping forth with virgin beams,
Half ope, half shut, her beauties doth up-fold
In their dear leaves, and less seen fairer seems,
And after spreads them forth more broad and bold,
Then languishes and dies in last extremes.
So in the passing of a day doth pass

The bud and blossom of the life of man,
Nor e‘er doth flourish more, but, like the grass
Cut down, becometh withered, pale, and wan.
Fairfax, Edit. Windsor, 1817.

Verse 8

The grass withereth … - This is repeated from the former verse for the sake of emphasis, or strong confirmation.

But the word of our God - The phrase ‹word of our God,‘ refers either to his promise to be the protector and deliverer of his people in their captivity, or, in general, means that all his promises shall be firm and unchanging.

Shall stand for ever - Amidst all revolutions among men, his promise shall be firm. It shall not only live amidst the changes of dynasties, and the revolutions of empires, but it shall continue forever and ever. This is designed for support to an afflicted and oppressed people; and it must have been to them, in their bondage, the source of high consolation. But it is equally so now. Amidst all the changes on earth; the revolutions of empires; the vanishing of kingdoms, God is the same, and his promises are unfailing. We see the grass wither at the return of autumn, or in the drought: we see the flower of the field lose its beauty, and decay; we see man rejoicing in his vigor and his health, cut down in an instant; we see cities fall, and kingdoms lose their power and vanish from among nations, but God changes not. He presides in all these revolutions, and sits calm and unmoved amidst all these changes. Not one of his promises shall fail; and at the end of all the changes which human things shall undergo, Yahweh, the God of his people, will be the same.

Verse 9

O Zion, that bringest good tidings - This is evidently the continuance of what the ‹voice‘ said, or of the annunciation which was to give joy to an afflicted and oppressed people. There has been, however, much diversity of opinion in regard to the meaning of the passage. The margin renders it, ‹Thou that tellest good tidings to Zion,‘ making Zion the receiver, and not the publisher of the message that was to convey joy. The Vulgate, in a similar way, renders it, ‹Ascend a high mountain, thou who bringest good tidings to Zion‘ (qui evangelizas Zion). So the Chaldee, understanding this as an address to the prophet, as in Isaiah 40:1, ‹Ascend a high mountain, ye prophets, who bring glad tidings to Zion.‘ So Lowth, Noyes, Gesenius.

Grotius, and others. The word מבשׂרת *mebas'eret* from בשׂר *bâs'ar* means cheering with good tidings; announcing good news; bearing joyful intelligence.

It is a participle in the feminine gender; and is appropriately applicable to some one that bears good tidings to Zion, and not to Zion as appointed to bear glad titlings. Lowth supposes that it is applicable to some female whose office it was to announce glad tidings, and says that it was the common practice for females to engage in the office of proclaiming good news. On an occasion of a public victory or rejoicing, it was customary, says he, for females to assemble together, and to celebrate it with songs, and dances, and rejoicings; and he appeals to the instance of Miriam and the chorus of women Exodus 15:20-21, and to the instance where, after the victory of David over Goliath, ‹all the women came out of the cities of Israel singing and dancing to meet Saul‘ 1 Samuel 18:7. But there are objections to this interpretation; first, if this was the sense, the word would bare been in the plural number, since there is no instance in which a female is employed alone in this service; and, secondly, it was not, according to this, the office of the female to announce good tidings, or to communicate a joyful message, but to celebrate some occasion of triumph or victory.

Grotius supposes that the word is ‹feminine in its sound, but common in its signification;‘ and thus denotes any whose office it was to communicate glad tidings. Gesenius (Commentary *in loc*.) says, that the feminine form here is used in a collective sense for מבשׂרים *mebas'eriym* in the plural; and supposes that it thus refers to the prophets, or others who were to announce the glad tidings to Zion. Vitringa coincides with our translation, and supposes that the sense is, that Zion was to make proclamation to the other cities of Judah of the deliverance; that the news was first to be communicated to Jerusalem, and that Jerusalem was entrusted with the office of announcing this to the other cities of the land; and that the meaning is, that the gospel was to be preached first at Jerusalem, and then from Jerusalem as a center to the ether cities of the land, agreeably to Luke 24:49. In this view, also, Hengstenberg coincides (Christol. vol. i. p. 424). But that the former interpretation, which regards Zion as the receiver, and not the promulgator, of the intelligence, is the true one, is apparent, I think, from the following considerations:

1. It is that which is the obvious and most correct construction of the Hebrew.

2. It is that which is found in the ancient versions.

3. It accords with the design of the passage.

The main scope of the passage is not to call upon Jerusalem to make known the glad tidings, but it is to convey the good news to Jerusalem; to announce to her, lying desolate and waste, that her hard service was at an end, and that she was to be blessed with the return of happier and better times (see Isaiah 40:2). It would be a departure from this, to suppose that the subject was diverted in order to give Jerusalem a command to make the proclamation to the other cities of the land to say nothing of the impropriety of calling on a city to go up into a high mountain, and to lift up its voice. On the meaning of the word ‹Zion,‘ see the note at Isaiah 1:8.

Get thee up into a high mountain - You who make this proclamation to Zion. It was not uncommon in ancient times, when a multitude were to be addressed, or a proclamation to be made, for the crier to go into a mountain, where he could be seen and heard. Thus Jotham, addressing the men of Shechem, is said to have gone and ‹stood on the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice‘ (Judges 9:7; compare Matthew 5:1). The sense is, that the messengers of the joyful news to Zion were to make themselves distinctly heard by all the inhabitants of the city, and of the land.

Lift up thy voice - As with a glad and important message. Do not deliver the message as if you were afraid that it should be heard. It is one of joy; and it should be delivered in a clear, decided, animated manner, as if it were important that it should be heard.

With strength - Aloud; with effort; with power (compare Isaiah 35:3-4).

Lift it up - Lift up the voice. The command is repeated, to denote emphasis. The mind is full of the subject, and the prophet repeats the command, as a man often does when his mind is full of an idea. The command to deliver the message of God with animation, earnestness, and zeal is one that is not unusual in Isaiah. It should be delivered as if it were true, and as if it were believed to be true. This will not justify, however, boisterous preaching, or a loud and unnatural tone of voice - alike offensive to good taste, injurious to the health, and destructive of the life of the preacher. It is to be remarked, also, that this command to lift up the voice,

pertains to the glad tidings of the gospel, and not to the terrors of wrath; to the proclamation of mercy, and not to the denunciation of woe. The glad tidings of salvation should be delivered in an animated and ardent manner; the future punishment of the wicked in a tone serious, solemn, subdued.

Say unto the cities of Judah - Not to Jerusalem only, but to all the cities of the land. They were alike to be blessed on the return from the captivity - Mike in the preaching of the gospel.

Behold your God! - Lo! your God returns to the city, the temple, and the land! Lo! he comes (note, Isaiah 40:3), conducting his people as a king to their land! Lo! he will come - under the Messiah in future times - to redeem and save! What a glad announcement was this to the desolate and forsaken cities of Judah! What a glad announcement to the wide world, ‹Lo! God has come to redeem and save; and the desolate world shall be visited with his salvation and smile, in his mercy through the Messiah!‘

Verse 10

Behold, the Lord God will come - (See the note at Isaiah 40:3) Applied to the condition of the Jews in exile, this means that God would come to deliver them. Applied to the times of the Messiah, it means that God would manifest himself in a powerful manner as mighty to save.

With strong hand - (בחזק *bechâzâq*). Margin, ‹Against the strong.‘ So Vitringa and others understand it; and regard it as referring to the mighty enemies of the people of God, or, as Vitringa particularly supposes, to the great foe of God and his people - the prince of darkness - the devil. Lowth also translates it in this manner, ‹Against the strong one.‘ The Septuagint renders it, Μετά ἰσχύος *Meta ischuos* - ‹With strength.‘ This is the more probable meaning - that the Lord would come with the manifestation of strength and power, able to subdue and vanquish all the enemies of his people, and to effect their complete and final salvation.

And his arm - The arm is a symbol of strength, because it is by that that we accomplish our purposes; by that a conqueror slays his enemies in battle, etc. Thus, ‹Break thou the arm of the wicked;‘ that is, diminish or destroy his power Psalm 10:15. ‹I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt‘ (Ezekiel 30:21; compare Jeremiah 48:25). Thus it is said of God, ‹Thou hast a mighty arm‘ Psalm 89:13, and, ‹His holy arm hath gotten him the victory‘ (Psalm 98:1; compare Exodus 6:6). The metaphor is taken from the act of stretching out the arm to fight in battle, where the arm is the effective instrument in subduing an enemy.

Shall rule for him - Lowth renders the phrase, לו *lō* ‹for him,‘ ‹over him:‘ - ‹And his arm shall prevail over him;‘ that is, over the strong and mighty foe. The Septuagint renders it, Μετά κυρίας *Meta kurias* - ‹With dominion.‘ But the meaning seems to be, ‹God is mighty by himself; his power resides in his own arm; he is not dependent on others; he will accomplish the deliverance in such a manner that it shall be seen that he did it alone; and he shall rule for himself, without any aid, and so that it shall be manifest that he is the sovereign.‘ In the deliverance of his people from their captivity, he so directed it, that it was manifest that he was their deliverer and sovereign; and in the redemption of man, the same thing is apparent, that the arm of God effects the deliverance, and that it is his own power that establishes the dominion.

Behold, his reward is with him - He will be ready to confer the appropriate reward on his own people. The idea seems to be taken from the custom of a conqueror, who distributes rewards among his followers and soldiers after a signal victory. This was always done in ancient wars, apparently because it seemed to be an act of justice that those who had gained the victory should share also in the result, and this participation of the booty was a stimulus to future effort, as well as a compensation for their valor. The rewards distributed consisted generally of that which was taken from the conquered; gold, and silver, and raiment, as well as captives or slaves (see Genesis 49:7; Exodus 15:9; 1 Samuel 30:26; and particularly Judges 5:30):

Have they not sped?
Have they not divided the prey;
To every man a damsel or two‘;

To Sisera a prey of divers colors,

A prey of divers colors of needle-work,

Of divers colors of needle-work on both sides,
Meet for the necks of them that take the spoil.

The idea here is -

1. That Yahweh would bestow appropriate rewards on his people.
2. That they would be conferred on his coming, and not be delayed.

3. That it should be done by the hand of God himself.

This language was applicable to the interposition of God to save his people from their long exile, and the ‹reward‘ would be ample in the restoration to their own land, and the re-establishment of his worship. It is applicable in a higher sense to the coming of the Messiah to bless the world. His reward was with him. He blessed his faithful followers on earth; he will bless them more abundantly in heaven. It will be assuredly applicable to him when he shall come to gather his people to himself in the great and last day, and the language before us is used with reference to that: ‹And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be‘ Revelation 22:12.

And his work - Margin, ‹Recompense for his work.‘ The margin here is the correct rendering. The Hebrew word strictly indeed denotes work, labor, business; but it also denotes the wages for work Leviticus 19:13; Psalm 109:20.

Verse 11

He shall feed his flock - In the previous verse, the fact had been asserted that God would come to subdue his foes, and to reward his people. In this verse, the mild and gentle character of his government over his people is predicted. It would not be that of a conqueror over vanquished subjects; but it would be mild and tender, like that of a shepherd who carries the lambs, which are unable to walk, in his own arms, and gently leads along the feeble and the delicate. The verb translated “to feed‘ (ירעה *yireʿeh*), denotes more than our word feed at present. It refers to all the care of a shepherd over his flock; and means to tend, to guard, to govern, to provide pasture, to defend from danger, as a shepherd does his flock. It is often applied in the Scriptures to God represented as the tender shepherd, and especially to the Redeemer Psalm 23:1; Ezekiel 34:23; John 10:14; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; 1 Peter 5:4. It is often applied to a leader or a ruler of a people 2 Samuel 5:2; 2 Samuel 7:7; Jeremiah 32:2. Thus Homer often uses the phrase, ποιμήν λαῶν *poimēn laōn* - ‹shepherds of the people,‘ to denote a ruler, or monarch. Here it denotes that God would evince toward his people the same tender care, guardianship and protection, which a shepherd shows for his flock.

He shall gather the lambs with his arm - This is a most beautiful expression, denoting the care of God the Saviour for the feeblest and weakest of his people, and for the young and feeble in years and piety. A

similar thing is often done by a shepherd. The tender lamb, unable to keep up with the flock, becomes weary and exhausted; and the shepherd naturally takes it in his arms and carries it. Such a shepherd as this Virgil beautifully describes:

En, ipse capellas
Protenus aeger argo; hancetiam vix, Tityre, duco;
Hic inter densas corylos modo namque gemellos,

Spem gregis, Ah! silice in nuda connixa reliquet.
Eclog. i. 12.
Lo! I my goats urge fainting o‘er the mead;
This, feebler than the rest, with pains I lead.

Yean‘d mid yon herds upon the flinty plain,

Her dying twins, my flock‘s late hope, remain.
Wrangham.

And shall gently lead … - Margin, ‹Give suck.‘ This is the more correct translation. It denotes the dams of the flock that would be easily exhausted by being overdriven, and of which there was, therefore, special care necessary. Thus Jacob says to his brother Esau, Genesis 33:13: ‹The flocks and the herds giving suck to their young are with me, and if they should be overdriven all the flock will die.‘ Of the necessity of such care and attention there is abundant evidence, and indeed it is manifest at a glance. Dr. Shaw, speaking of the exposure of the flocks in Syria, says: ‹The greatest skill and vigilance, and even tender care, are required in the management of such immense flocks as wander on the Syrian plains. Their prodigious numbers compel the keepers to remove them too frequently in search of fresh pastures, which proves very destructive to the young that have not strength to follow.‘ The following extract from Anderson‘s Tour through Greece will also serve to illustrate this passage: ‹One of the great delights in traveling through a pastoral country, is to see and feel the force of the beautiful imagery in the Scriptures, borrowed from pastoral life.

All day long the shepherd attends his flock, leading them into “green pastures,” near fountains of water, and chooses a convenient place for them to “rest at noon.” At night he drives them near his tent; and, if there is danger, encloses them in the fold. They know his voice, and follow him.

When traveling, he tenderly watches over them, and carries such as are exhausted in his arms. Such a shepherd is the Lord Jesus Christ.‘ No description could more beautifully describe the character of the Redeemer. In the New Testament, he is often described as a kind and tender shepherd, and regarding the welfare of all his flock, and as ready to give his life for them John 10:7, John 10:9-11, John 10:14-15; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; 1 Peter 5:4. We are here also strikingly reminded of the solemn command which he gave to Peter, evincing his tender regard for his flock, ‹Feed my lambs:‘ ‹Feed my sheep‘ John 16:15-17. It proves in regard to the Redeemer:

1. That his nature is mild, and gentle, and tender.

2. That he has a kind regard for all his flock, and will consult the real interest of all, as a shepherd does of his flock.

3. That he has a special solicitude for the feeble and infirm, and that they will be the objects of his tender care.

4. That he feels a particular solicitude for the young. He knows their feebleness; he is acquainted with their temptations; he sees the importance of their being trained up with care; and he looks with deep interest, therefore, on all the efforts made to guard them from the ways of sin, and to train them up for his service (compare the note at Isaiah 42:3).

Verse 12

Who hath measured - The object in this and the following verses to Isaiah 40:26, is to show the greatness, power, and majesty of God, by strong contrast with his creatures, and more especially with idols. Perhaps the prophet designed to meet and answer an implied objection: that the work of deliverance was so great that it could not be accomplished. The answer was, that God had made all things; that he was infinitely great; that he had entire control over all the nations; and that he could, therefore, remove all obstacles out of the way, and accomplish his great and gracious purposes. By man it could not be done; nor had idol-gods any power to do it; but the Creator and upholder of all could effect this purpose with infinite case. At the same time that the argument here is one that is entirely conclusive, the passage, regarded as a description of the power and majesty of God, is one of vast sublimity and grandeur; nor is there any portion of the Sacred

Volume that is more suited to impress the mind with a sense of the majesty and glory of Yahweh. The question, ‹who hath measured,‘ is designed to imply that the thing referred to here was that which had never been done, and could never be done by man; and the argument is, that although that which the prophet predicted was a work which surpassed human power, yet it could be done by that God who had measured the waters in the hollow of his hand. The word ‹waters‘ here refers evidently to the vast collection of waters in the deep - the mighty ocean, together with all the waters in the running streams, and in the clouds. See Genesis 1:6, where the firmament is said to have been made to divide the waters from the waters. A reference to the waters above the heavens occurs in Psalm 148:4:

Praise him, ye heavens of heavens,
And ye waters that be above the heavens.

And in Proverbs 30:4, a Similar description of the power and majesty of God occurs:

Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?
Who hath bound the waters in a garment?
Who hath established all the ends of the earth?

And in Job 26:8:

He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds;
And the cloud is not rent under them.

The word ‹waters‘ here, therefore, may include all the water on the earth, and in the sky. The words, ‹the hollow of his hand,‘ mean properly the hand as it is closed, forming a hollow or a cavity by which water can be taken up. The idea is, that God can take up the vast oceans, and all the waters in the lakes, streams, and clouds, in the palm of his hand, as we take up the smallest quantity in ours.

And meted out heaven - The word rendered ‹meted,‘ that is, measured (כון *kûn*), means properly to stand erect, to set up, or make erect; to found, fit, adjust, dispose, form, create. It usually has the idea of fitting or disposing. The word ‹span‘ (זרת *zeret*) denotes the space from the end of the thumb to the end of the middle finger, when extended - usually about nine inches. The idea is, that Yahweh was able to compass or grasp the heavens, though so vast, as one can compass or measure a small object with the span. What an illustration of the vastness and illimitable nature of God!

And comprehended - And measured (כל *kôl* from כול *kûl* to hold or contain); ‹Lo, the heavens, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee‘

1 Kings 8:27.

The dust of the earth - All the earth; all the dust that composes the globe.

In a measure - (בשׁלשׁ *bâshâlîsh*) Properly three; and then the third part of anything. Jerome supposes that it means the three fngers, and that the sense is, that God takes up all the dust of the earth in the first three fingers of the hand. But the more probable signification is, that the word denotes that which was the third part of some other measure, as of an ephah, or bath. In Psalm 80:5, the word is used to denote a large measure:

Thou feedest them with the bread of tears,

And givest them tears to drink in great measure (שׁלישׁ *shâlîysh*).

The idea is, that God is so great that he can measure all the dust of the earth as easily as we can measure a small quantity of grain with a measure.

And weighed the mountains in scales - The idea here is substantially the same. It is, that God is so mighty that he can weigh the lofty mountains, as we weigh a light object in scales, or in a balance; and perhaps, also, that he has disposed them on the earth as if he had weighed them out, and adapted them to their proper places and situations Throughout this entire passage, there is not only the idea of majesty and power in God, but there is also the idea that he has suited or adjusted everything by his wisdom and power, and adapted it to the condition and needs of his creatures.

Verse 13

Who hath directed - This passage is quoted by Paul in Romans 11:34, and referred to by him in 1 Corinthians 2:16. The word rendered ‹directed‘ here (תכן *tikēn*) is the same which is used in the previous verse, ‹and meted out heaven.‘ The idea here is, ‹Who has fitted, or disposed the mind or spirit of Yahweh? What superior being has ordered, instructed, or disposed his understanding? Who has qualified him for the exercise of his wisdom, or for the formation and execution of his plans?‘ The sense is, God is supreme. No one has instructed or guided him, but his plans are his own, and have all been formed by himself alone. And as those plans are infinitely wise, and as he is not dependent on anyone for their formation or execution, his people may have confidence in him, and believe that he will be able to execute his purposes.

The Spirit - The word ‹spirit‘ is used in the Bible in a greater variety of senses than almost any other word (see the note at Isaiah 40:7). It seems here to be used in the sense of mind, and to refer to God himself. There is

no evidence that it refers to the Holy Spirit particularly. ‹The word spirit, he uses,‘ says Calvin, ‹for reason, judgment. He borrows the similitude from the nature of mankind, in order that he may more accommodate himself to them; nor, as it seems to me, does he here speak of the essential Spirit of God‘ (Commentary *in loc*). The design of the prophet is not to refer to the distinction in the divine nature, or to illustrate the special characteristics of the different persons of the Godhead; but it is to set forth the wisdom of Yahweh himself, the one infinite God, as contradistinguished from idols, and as qualified to guide, govern, and deliver his people. The passage should not be used, therefore, as a proof-text in regard to the existence and wisdom of the Holy Spirit, but is suited to demonstrate only that God is untaught; and that he is independent and infinite in his wisdom.

Or being his counselor - Margin, as in Hebrew, ‹Man of his counsel.‘ He is not dependent for counsel on men or angels. He is supreme, independent, and infinite. None is qualified to instruct him; and all, therefore, should confide in his wisdom and knowledge.

Verse 14

With whom took he counsel - The sentiment of the former verse is repeated here, in order, probably, to make it more emphatic.

In the path of judgment - The way of judging correctly and wisely; or the way of administering justice. It denotes here his boundless wisdom as it is seen in the various arrangements of his creation and providence, by which all things keep their places, and accomplish his vast designs.

Verse 15

Behold, the nations - All the nations of the earth. This is designed to show the greatness of God, in comparison with that which strikes man as great - a mighty nation; and the main object seems to be, to show that God could accomplish his purposes without their aid, and that they could not resist him in the execution of his plans. If they were as nothing in comparison with him, how easily could he execute his purposes! If they were as nothing, how little could they resist the execution of his plans!

Are as a drop of a bucket - In comparison with him; or are so esteemed by him. The drop that falls from the bucket in drawing water is a trifle. It has no power, and compared with the waters of the ocean it is as nothing. So small is the power of the nations in comparison with God. “And are counted.” Are thought of, regarded, esteemed by him, or in comparison with him.

As the small dust of the balance - The small, fine dust which collects on the best finished and most accurate balance or scales, and which has no effect in making the scales uneven, or making either side preponderate. Nothing can be a more striking representation of the fact that the nations are regarded as nothing in comparison with God.

Behold, he taketh up the isles - Or he is able to do it; he could remove the isles as the fine dust is driven before the whirlwind. A more literal translation of this passage would be, ‹Lo, the isles are as the dust which is taken up,‘ or which one takes up; that is, which is taken up, and carried away by the wind. There is something unusual in the expression that God takes up the isles, and the idea is rather that the isles in his sight are regarded as the fine dust which the wind sweeps away. So the Chaldee renders it, ‹Lo, the isles are like ashes which the wind drives away.‘ The word ‹isles,‘ Vitringa and Jerome regard as denoting not the small portions of land in the sea that are surrounded by water, but lands which are encompassed and enclosed Mesopotamia. But there is no reason why it should not be taken here in its usual signification, as denoting the islands of the sea. They would serve well to be used in connection with mountains and hills in setting forth the vast power of God.

As a very little thing - (כדק *keddaq*). The word דק *daq* means theft which is beaten small, or fine; and then fine dust, chaff, or any light thing which the wind easily sweeps away.

Verse 16

And Lebanon - The expression here refers to the trees or the cedars of Lebanon. Thus it is rendered by the Chaldee: ‹And the trees of Lebanon.‘ For a description of Lebanon, see the note at Isaiah 10:34. It is probable that the word Lebanon here is not used in the limited sense in which it is sometimes employed, to denote a single mountain, or a single range of mountains, but includes the entire ranges lying north of Palestine, and which were comprehended under the general name of Libanus. The idea here is, that all these ranges of mountains, abounding in magnificent trees and forests, would not furnish fuel sufficient to burn the sacrifices which would be an appropriate offering to the majesty and glory of God.

To burn - To burn for the purpose of consuming the sacrifice.

Nor the beasts thereof for a burnt-offering - As the mountains of Lebanon were extensive forests, they would abound with wild animals. The idea is, that all those animals, if offered in sacrifice, would not be an

appropriate expression of what was due to God. It may be remarked here, if all the vast forests of Lebanon on fire, and all its animals consumed as an offering to God, were not sufficient to show forth his glory, how little can our praises express the proper sense of his majesty and honor! How profound should be our reverence for God! With what awful veneration should we come before him! The image employed here by Isaiah is one of great poetic beauty; and nothing, perhaps, could give a deeper impression of the majesty and honor of the great Yahweh.

Verse 17

Are as nothing - This expresses literally what had been expressed by the beautiful and striking imagery above.

Less than nothing - A strong hyperbolic expression denoting the utter insignificance of the nations as compared with God. Such expressions are common in the Scriptures.

And vanity - Hebrew, תהו *tôhû* - ‹Emptiness;‘ the word which in Genesis 1:2 is rendered ‹without form.‘

Verse 18

To whom then will ye liken God? - Since he is so great, what can resemble him? What form can be made like him? The main idea here intended to be conveyed by the prophet evidently is, that God is great and glorious, and worthy of the confidence of his people. This idea he illustrates by a reference to the attempts which had been made to make a representation of him, and by showing how vain those efforts were. He therefore states the mode in which the images of idols were usually formed, and shows how absurd it was to suppose that they could be any real representation of the true God. It is possible that this was composed in the time of Manasseh, when idolatry prevailed to a great extent in Judah, and that the prophet intended in this manner incidentally to show the folly and absurdity of it.

Verse 19

The workman - The Hebrew word denotes an artificer of any kind, and is applied to one who engraved on wood or stone Exodus 28:2; to a workman in iron, brass, stone, wood Exodus 35:35; Deuteronomy 27:15; or an artisan, or artificer in general. It here refers manifestly to a man who worked in the metals of which idols were commonly made. Those idols were sometimes made of wood, sometimes of clay, but more frequently, as

they are at present in India, of metal. It became, undoubtedly, a regular trade or business thus to make idol-gods.

Melteth - Casts or founds.

A graven image - (פסל *pesel*). This word commonly denotes an image carved or graven from wood Exodus 20:4; Judges 17:3; Isaiah 44:15, Isaiah 44:17; but it is also frequently applied to a molten image, or one that is cast from metals Jeremiah 10:14; Jeremiah 51:17. It is used in this sense here; as there is an incongruity in the idea of casting, or melting a graven image.

And the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold - Idols were frequently overlaid with gold or silver. Those which were in the temples of the gods were probably commonly made in this way, and probably those also which were made for private use, as far as it could be afforded. The word here rendered ‹goldsmith,‘ however, does not of necessity man a worker in gold, but a smith in general, or a worker in any kind of metals.

And casteth silver chains - For the idol. These were not to fasten it, but for the purpose of ornament. The general principle seems to have been to decorate their idols with that which was regarded as the highest ornament among the people; and as chains were used in abundance as a part of their personal ornaments among the Orientals (see the notes at Isaiah 3:23), so they made use of the same kind of ornaments for their idols. The idols of the Hindoos now are lavishly decorated in this manner.

Verse 20

He that is so impoverished - So poor. So it is generally supposed that the word used here is to be understood, though interpreters have not been entirely agreed in regard to its signification. The Septuagint renders the phrase, ‹The carpenter chooseth a sound piece of wood.‘ The Chaldee. ‹He cuts down an ash, a tree which will not rot.‘ Vulgate, ‹Perhaps he chooses a tree which is incorruptible.‘ Jarchi renders it, ‹He who is accustomed to examine, and to judge between the wood which is durable, and other wood.‘ But the signification of the word (from סכן *sâkan* “to dwell, to be familiar with anyone”) given to it by our translators, is probably the correct one, that of being too poor to make a costly oblation. This notion of poverty, Gesenius supposes, is derived from the notion of being seated; and thence of sinking down from languor or debility; and hence, from poverty or want.

That he hath no oblation - No offering; no sacrifice; no rich gift. He is too poor to make such an offering to his god as would be implied in an idol of brass or other metal, richly overlaid with plates of gold, and decorated

with silver chains. In Isaiah 40:19, the design seems to have been to describe the more rich and costly idols that were made; in this, to describe those that were made by the poor who were unable to offer such as were made of brass and gold. The word ‹oblation,‘ therefore, that is, offering, in this place, does not denote an offering made to the true God, but an offering made to an idol, such as an image was regarded to be. He could not afford a rich offering, and was constrained to make one of wood.

Chooseth a tree that will not rot - Wood that will be durable and permanent. Perhaps the idea is, that as he could not afford one of metal, he would choose that which would be the most valuable which he could make - a piece of wood that was durable, and that would thus show his regard for the god that he worshipped. Or possibly the sense may be, that he designed it should not be moved; that he expressed a fixed and settled determination to adhere to the worship of the idol; and that as he had no idea of changing his religion, the permanency and durability of the wood would be regarded as a somewhat more acceptable expression of his worship.

A cunning workman - Hebrew, ‹A wise artificer;‘ a man skilled in the art of carving, and of making images.

A graven image - An image engraved or cut from wood, in contradistinction from one that is molten or made from metals.

That shall not be moved - That shall stand long, as the expression of his devotion to the service of the idol. The wood that was commonly employed for this purpose as being most durable, as we learn from Isaiah 44:14, was the cedar, the cypress, or the oak (see the note in that place). The phrase, ‹shall not be moved,‘ does not refer so much to its being fixed in one place, as to its durability and permanency.

Verse 21

Have ye not known? - This is evidently an address to the worshippers of idols, and either designed to be addressed to the Jews themselves in the times of Manasseh, when idolatry abounded, or to all idolaters. The prophet had in the previous verses shown the manner in which the idols were made, and the folly of regarding them as objects of worship. He now turns and addresses the worshippers of these idols, as being without excuse. They might have known that these were not the true God. They had had abundant opportunity of learning his existence and of becoming acquainted with his majesty and glory. Tradition had informed them of this, and the creation of the earth demonstrated his greatness and power. The prophet, therefore,

asks them whether they had not known this? Whether their conduct was the result of ignorance? And the question implies emphatically that they had known, or had abundant opportunity to know of the existence and majesty of God. This was emphatically true of the Jews, and yet they were constantly falling into idolatrous worship.

From the beginning - Hebrew, ‹From the head,‘ that is, from the very commencement of the world. Has it not been communicated by tradition, from age to age, that there is one God, and that he is the Creator and upholder of all things? This was particularly the case with the Jews, who had had this knowledge from the very commencement of their history, and they were, therefore, entirely without excuse in their tendencies to idolatry.

From the foundations of the earth - Have you not learned the existence and greatness of God from the fact that the world has been made, and that it demonstrates the existence and perfection of God? The sacred writers often speak of the earth as resting on a foundation, as upheld, etc.:

For he hath founded it upon the seas,
And established it upon the floods.

(Psalm 24:2; see also Proverbs 8:29) Perhaps here, however, the word ‹foundation‘ refers rather to the time than to the manner in which the earth is made, and corresponds to the phrase ‹from the beginning;‘ and the sense may be, ‹Has it not been understood ever since the earth was founded? Has not the tradition of the existence and perfections of God been unbroken and constant?‘ The argument is, that the existence and greatness of God were fully known by tradition and by his works; and that it was absurd to attempt to form an image of that God who had laid the foundations of the world.

Verse 22

It is he that sitteth - Margin, ‹Him that sitteth,‘ that is, have you not known him? The Hebrew literally means ‹the sitter, or he sitting on the circle of the each;‘ and it may be connected either with Isaiah 40:21, ‹Have ye not known him sitting on the circle of the earth?‘ or with Isaiah 40:18, ‹What likeness will ye compare to him that sitteth on the circle of the earth?‘ In either case the phrase is designed to show the majesty and glory of God. The word ‹sitteth‘ refers to God as a sovereign or monarch, making the circle of the earth his throne.

The circle of the earth - Or rather, “above” (על *ʿal*) the circle of the earth. The word rendered ‹circle‘ (חוג *chûg*) denotes “a circle, sphere, or arch”; and is applied to the arch or vault of the heavens, in Proverbs 8:27;

Job 22:14. The phrase ‹circle,‘ or ‹circuit of the earth,‘ here seems to be used in the same sense as the phrase orbis terrarum by the Latins; not as denoting a sphere, or not as implying that the earth was a globe, but that it was an extended plain surrounded by oceans and mighty waters. The globular form of the earth was then unknown; and the idea is, that God sat above this extended circuit, or circle; and that the vast earth was beneath his feet.

And the inhabitants thereof are like grasshoppers - Or rather, like locusts, for so the Hebrew word properly means. This is designed to show that the inhabitants of the earth, numerous and mighty as they are, are as nothing compared with God. The idea is that God is so exalted, that, as he looks down from that elevated station, all the inhabitants of the world appear to him as locusts - a busy, agirated, moving, impatient multitude, spread over the vast circle of the earth beneath him - as locusts spread in almost interminable bands over the plains in the East. What a striking illustration of the insignificance of man as he is viewed from the heavens! What an impressive description of the nothingness of his mighty plans, and of the vanity of his mightiest works!

That stretcheth out the heavens - Referring to the firmament above, as that which seems to be stretched out, or expanded over our heads. The heavens above are often thus compared to an expanse - either solid Genesis 1:7, or to a curtain, or tent (compare the note at Isaiah 34:4).

As a curtain - The word used here (דק *doq*) denotes properly fineness, thinness; and then a fine or thin cloth, or curtain. Here it means a thin canopy that is stretched over us. The same expression occurs in Psalm 104:2 (compare Job 9:8; Isaiah 44:24). Probably the reference here is to the veil, curtain, or awning which the Orientals are accustomed to draw over the court in their houses. Their houses are constructed with an open court in the center, with the rooms ranged round it. In that court or open square there are usually fountains, if the situation is so that they can be constructed; and they are cool and refreshing places for the family to sit in the heat of the summer. In hot or rainy weather, a curtain or awning is drawn over this area. According to the imago of the prophet here, the heavens are spread out over our heads as such an awning.

And spreadeth them out as a tent - As a tent that is made for a habitation. Perhaps the idea is, that the heavens are extended like a tent in order to furnish a dwelling-place for God. Thus the Chaldee renders it. If so,

it proves that the universe, so vast, was suited up to be the dwelling-place of the High and Holy One, and is a most impressive representation of his immensity.

Verse 23

That bringeth the princes to nothing - That is, all princes and kings. No matter how great their power, their wealth, and their dignity, they are, by his hand, reduced to nothing before him. The design of this passage is to contrast the majesty of God with that of princes and nobles, and to show how far he excels them all. The general truth is therefore stated, that all monarchs are by him removed from their thrones, and consigned to nothing. The same idea is expressed in Job 12:21:

He poureth contempt upon princes,
And weakeneth the strength of the mighty.

And in Psalm 107:40:

He poureth contempt upon princes,
And causeth them to wander in the wilderness where there is no way.

The particular idea here, as appears from the next verse, is, that the princes and rulers who are opposed to God constitute no real resistance to the execution of his purposes. He can strip off their honors and glory, and obliterate even their names.

He maketh the judges of the earth - Kings and princes often executed judgment personally, and hence, the words judges and kings seem to be synonymous as they are used here, and in Psalm 2:10:

Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings;
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

Verse 24

Yea, they shall not be planted - The kings and rulers - especially they who oppose God in the execution of his purposes. The idea in this verse is, that their name and family should become extinct in the same way as a tree does from which no shoot starts up. Although they were great and mighty, like the tree that sends out far-spreading branches, and strikes its roots deep, yet God would so utterly destroy them that they should have no posterity, and their family become extinct. Princes and kings are often compared to lofty and majestic trees of the forest (compare Psalm 37:35; Daniel 4:7 ff) Vitringa supposes that wicked rulers are particularly intended here, and that the idea is, that the wicked princes that persecuted his people should be entirely extinct on the earth. He refers particularly to Pharaoh, Antiochus

Epiphanes, Nero, Domitian, Decius, Gallus, Galerius, Maxenus, Maximus, and some others, as instances of this kind, whose families soon became extinct. It may be remarked, in general, that the families of monarchs and princes become extinct usually much sooner than others. The fact may be owing in part to the usual luxury and vice in the families of the great, and in part to the direct arrangements of God, by which he designs that power shall not be forever perpetuated in one family, or line. The general idea in the passage is, that earthly princes and rulers are as nothing When compared with God, and that he can easily destroy their families and their name. But there is no improbability in the supposition of Vitringa, that the prophet refers particularly to the enemies of God and his cause, and that he intends specifically to affirm that none of these enemies could prevent or embarrass the execution of his purposes - since with infinite ease he could entirely destroy their name.

They shall not be sown - The same idea under another figure. The former referred to princes under the image of a tree; this refers to them under the image of grain that is sown. The idea is, that their family and name should be annihilated, and should not spring up in a future generation. The same image occurs in Nahum 1:14, in respect to the king of Assyria: ‹The Lord hath given commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown;‘ that is, that thy name and family should become entirely extinct.

Yea, their stock - Their stem - referring to the stump or stock of a tree. When a tree is cut down, the roots often still live, and send up shoots, or suckers, that grow into trees. Posterity is often, in the Scriptures, compared to such suckers or shoots from old and decayed trees (see the notes at Isaiah 11:1). The meaning here is, that as when a tree falls and dies without sending up any shoots, so princes should die. They should have no descendants; no one of their family should sit on their thrones.

Shall blow upon them - As God sends a tempest upon the forest and uproots the loftiest trees, so he will sweep away the families of princes. Or rather, perhaps, the idea here is, that God sends a strong and burning east wind, and withers up everything before it (see this wind described in the notes at Isaiah 37:26).

And they shall wither - Trees, and shrubs, and plants are dried up before that poisonous and fiery wind - the simoom - and so it would be with the princes before the blast of Yahweh.

And the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble - This, in its literal signification, means that the whirlwind bears away the trees of the forest, and with the same ease God would sweep away the families of the kings and princes that opposed him and oppressed his people. It may illustrate this to observe, that the effects of whirlwinds in the East are often much more violent than they are with us, and that they often bear away to a great distance the branches of trees, and even the trees themselves. The following description of a whirlwind observed by Mr. Bruce, may serve to illustrate this passage, as well as the passage in Psalm 83:13:

O my God, make them like a wheel;

As the stubble before the wind,

referring to the rotary action of the whirlwind, which often impels straw like a wheel set in rapid motion. ‹Mr. Bruce, in his journey through the desert of Senaar, had the singular felicity to contemplate this wonderful phenomenon in all its terrific majesty, without injury, although with considerable danger and alarm. In that vast expanse of desert, from west and to northwest of him, he saw a number of prodigious pillars of sand at different distances, moving, at times, with great celerity, at others, stalking on with majestic slowness; at intervals he thought they were coming, in a very few minutes, to overwhelm him and his companion. Again, they would retreat so as to be almost out of sight, their tops reaching to the very clouds. There, the tops often separated from the bodies; and these, once disjoined, dispersed in the air, and appeared no more. Sometimes they were broken near the middle, as if struck with a large cannon-shot.

About noon, they began to advance with considerable swiftness upon them, the wind being very strong at north. Eleven of these awful visitors ranged alongside of them, about the distance of three miles. The greatest diameter of the largest appeared to him, at that distance, as if it would measure ten feet. They retired from them with a wind at southeast, leaving an impression upon the mind of our intrepid traveler, to which he could give no name, though he candidly admits that one ingredient in it was fear, with a considerable deal of wonder and astonishment. He declares it was in vain to think of flying; the swiftest horse, or fastest sailing ship, could be of no use to carry them out of this danger; and the full persuasion of this riveted him to the spot where he stood. Next day, they were gratified with a similar display of moving pillars, in form and disposition like those already described, only they seemed to be more in number and less in size.

They came, several times, in a direction close upon them; that is, according to Mr. Bruce‘s computation, within less than two miles. They became, immediately after sunrise, like a thick wood, and almost darkened the sun; his rays shining through them for near an hour, gave them an appearance of pillars of fire. At another time, they were terrified by an army (as it seemed) of these sand pillars, whose march was constantly south, a number of which seemed once to be coming directly upon them; and though they were little nearer than two miles, a considerable quantity of sand fell around them. On the 21st of November, about eight in the morning, he had a view of the desert to the westward, as before, and the sands had already begun to rise in immense twisted pillars, which darkened the heavens, and moved over the desert with more magnificence than ever. The sun, shining through the pillars, which were thicker, and contained more sand, apparently, than on any of the preceding days, seemed to give those nearest them an appearance as if spotted with stars of gold.‘ (Paxton)

Verse 25

To whom then will ye liken me? - (See Isaiah 40:18) The prophet having thus set forth the majesty and glory of God, asks now with great emphasis, what could be an adequate and proper representation of such a God. And if God was such a Being, how great was the folly of idolatry, and how vain all their confidence in the gods which their own hands had made.

Verse 26

Lift up your eyes on high - Direct your eyes toward heaven, and in the contemplation of the wonders of the starry world, and of God‘s power there, learn the evidence of his ability to destroy his foes and to save his friends. Lowth connects this verse with the former, and renders it:

‹Saith the Holy One,

Lift up your eyes on high.‘

The words ‹on high‘ here are evidently synonymous with heaven, and refer to the starry worlds. The design of the passage is to convince them of the folly of idolatry, and of the power and majesty, of the true God. It is proof of man‘s elevated nature that he can thus look upward, and trace the evidences of the power and wisdom of God in the heavens; that he can raise his eyes and thoughts above the earth, and fix his attention on the works of God in distant worlds; and in the number, the order, the greatness, and the

harmony of the heavenly bodies, trace the proofs of the infinite greatness and the wisdom of God. This thought was most beautifully expressed by one of the ancient poets.

Pronaque cum spectent animalia caetera terram;
Os homini sublime dedit: ccelumque tueri,
Jussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.
Ovid, Met. i. 84-86.

In the Scriptures, God not unfrequently appeals to the starry heavens in proof of his existence and perfections, and as the most sublime exhibition of his greatness and power (see Psalm 19:1-6). And it may be remarked, that this argument is one that increases in strength, in the view of people, from age to age, just in proportion to the advances which are made in the science of astronomy. It is now far more striking than it was in the times of Isaiah; and, indeed, the discoveries in astronomical science in modern times have given a beauty and power to this argument which could have been but imperfectly understood in the times of the prophets. The argument is one that accumulates with every new discovery in astronomy; but is one - such is the vastness and beauty of the system of the universe - which can be contemplated in its fall power only amidst the more sublime contemplations of eternity. Those who are disposed to contemplate this argument more fully, may find it presented with great eloquence and beauty in Dr. Chalmers‘ Astronomical Discourses, and in Dick‘s Christian Philosopher.

Who hath created these things - These heavens. This is the first evidence of the power of God in the contemplation of the heavens, that God is their Creator. The other demonstrations referred to are the fact, that he brings out their armies as if they were a marshalled host, and understands and calls all their names.

That bringeth out their hosts - Their armies, for so the word ‹hosts‘ means (see the note at Isaiah 1:9). The word here alludes to the fact that the heavenly bodies seem to be marshalled, or regularly arrayed as an array; that they keep their place, preserve their order, and are apparently led on from the east to the west, like a vast army under a mighty leader:

Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season?
Or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?
Job 38:32

By number - As if he had numbered, or named them; as a military commander would call forth his armies in their proper order, and have them

so numbered and enrolled in the various divisions, that he can command them with ease.

He calleth them all by names - This idea is also taken from a military leader, who would know the names of the individuals that composed his army. In smaller divisions of an army, this could of course be done; but the idea is, that God is intimately acquainted with all the hosts of stars; that though their numbers appear to us so great, yet he is acquainted with each one individually, and has that knowledge of it which we have of a person or object which we recognize by a name. It is said of Cyrus, that he was acquainted by name with every individual that composed his vast army. The practice of giving names to the stars of heaven was early, and is known to have been originated by the Chaldeans. Intimations of this custom we have not unfrequently in the Scriptures, as far back as the time of Job:

Which maketh Arcturus, and Orion, and Pleiades,
And the chambers of the south.
Job 9:9
Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?
Or loose the bands of Orion?

Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season?

Or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?
Job 38:31-32

This power of giving names to all the stars, is beautifully ascribed to God in Psalm 147:4:

He telleth the number of the stars,
He calleth them all by their names.

This view of the greatness of God is more striking now than it was in the times of David or Isaiah. Little then, comparatively, was known of the number of the stars. But since the invention of the telescope the view of the heavenly world has been enlarged almost to immensity; arid though the expression ‹he calleth them all by their names,‘ had great sublimity as used in the time of Isaiah, yet it raises in us far higher conceptions of the power and greatness of God when applied to what we know now of the heavens. Yet doubtless our view of the heavens is much further beneath the sublime reality than were the prevalent views in the time of the prophet beneath those which we now have. As an illustration of this we may remark, that the

milky way which stretches across the heavens, is now ascertained to receive its white appearance from the mingling together of the light of an innumerable number of stars, too remote to be seen by the naked eye. Dr. Herschell examined a portion of the milky way about fifteen degrees long, and two broad, and found that it contained no fewer than fifty thousand stars, large enough to be distinctly counted, and he suspected that that portion contained twice as manymore, which, for the want of sufficient light in his telescope, he saw only now and then. It is to be remembered, also, that the galaxy, or milky way, which we see with the naked eye, is only one of a large number of nebulae of similar construction which are arranged apparently in strata, and which extend to great length in the heavens. According to this, and on every correct supposition in regard to the heavens, the number of the stars surpasses all our powers of computation. Yet God is said to lead them all forth as marshalled armies - how beautiful a description when applied to the nebuloe! - and to call all their names.

By the greatness of his might - It is his single and unassisted arm that conducts them; his own hand alone that sustains them.

Not one faileth - Not one is missing; not one of the immense host is out of its place, or unnoticed. All are arranged in infinite wisdom; all observe the proper order, and the proper times. How strikingly true is this, on the slightest inspection of the heavens. How im pressive and grand is it in the higher developments of the discoveries of astronomy!

Verse 27

Why sayest thou? - This verse is designed to reprove the people for their want of confidence in God. The idea is, ‹If God is so great; if be arranges the hosts of heaven with such unerring skill, causing all the stars to observe their proper place and their exact times, the interests of his people are safe in his hands.‘ Piety may always find security in the assurance that He who preserves the unbroken order of the heavens will not fail to keep and save his people. The language in this verse is to be understood as addressed to the Jews sighing for deliverance in their long and painful captivity in Babylon. Their city and temple had laid waste for many years; their captivity had been long and wearisome, and doubtless many would be ready to say, that it would never end. To furnish an argument to meet this state of despondency, the prophet sets before them this sublime description of the faithfulness and the power of God.

O Jacob - A name often given to the Jews as the descendants of Jacob.

O Israel - Denoting the same. The name Israel was given to Jacob because he had power to prevail as a prince with God Genesis 32:28; and it became the common name by which his descendants were known.

My way is hid from the Lord - That is, is not seen, or noticed. The word ‹way‘ here denotes evidently the state or condition; the manner of life, or the calamities which they experienced. The term is often thus employed to denote the lot, condition, or manner in which one lives or acts Psalm 37:5; Isaiah 10:24; Jeremiah 12:1. The phrase, ‹is hid,‘ means that God is ignorant of it, or that he does not attend to it; and the complaint here is, that God had not regarded them in their calamities, and would not interpose to save them.

And my judgment - My cause. The word here refers to their condition among the people where they were captive, and by whom they were oppressed. They are represented as being deprived of their liberty; and they here complain that God disregarded their cause, and that he did not come forth to deliver them from their oppressions and their trials.

Verse 28

Hast thou not known? - This is the language of the prophet reproving them for complaining of being forsaken and assuring them that God was faithful to his promises. This argument of the prophet, which continues to the close of the chapter, comprises the main scope of the chapter, which is to induce them to put confidence in God, and to believe that he was able and willing to deliver them. The phrase, ‹Hast thou not known? refers to the fact that the Jewish people had had an abundant opportunity of learning, in their history, and from their fathers, the true character of God, and his entire ability to save them. No people had had so much light on this subject, and now that they were in trial, they ought to recall their former knowledge of his character, and remember his dealings of faithfulness with them and their fathers. It is well for the people of God in times of calamity and trial to recall to their recollection his former dealings with his church. That history will furnish abundant sources of consolation, and abundant assurances that their interests are safe in his hands.

Hast thou not heard? - From the traditions of the fathers; the instruction which you have received from ancient times. A large part of the knowledge of the Jews was traditionary; and these attributes of God, as a faithful God, had, no doubt, constituted an important part of the knowledge which had thus been communicated to them.

The everlasting God - The God who has existed from eternity, unlike the idols of the pagan. If he was from eternity, he would be unchangeable, and his purposes could not fail.

The Creator of the ends of the earth - The phrase, ‹the ends of the earth,‘ means the same as the earth itself. The earth is sometimes spoken of as a vast plain having limits or boundaries (see Isaiah 40:22). It is probable that this was the prevailing idea among the ancients (compare Deuteronomy 33:17; 1 Samuel 2:10; Psalm 19:6; Psalm 22:27; Psalm 48:10; Psalm 65:5; Psalm 67:7; Psalm 98:3; Isaiah 43:6; Isaiah 45:22; Isaiah 52:10). The argument here is, that he who has formed the earth could not be exhausted or weary in so small a work as that of protecting his people.

Fainteth not - Is not fatigued or exhausted. That God, who has formed and sustained all things, is not exhausted in his powers, but is able still to defend and guard his people.

There is no searching of his understanding - The God who made all things must be infinitely wise. There is proof of boundless skill in the works of his hands, and it is impossible for finite mind fully and adequately to search out all the proofs of his wisdom and skill. Man can see only a part - a small part, while the vast ocean, the boundless deep of his wisdom, lies still unexplored. This thought is beautifully expressed by Zophar in Job 11:7-9:

Canst thou by searching find out God?
Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?
It is as high as heaven;
What canst thou do?
Deeper than hell;
What canst thou know:
The measure thereof is longer than the earth,
And broader than the sea.

The argument here is, that that God who has made all things, must be intimately acquainted with the needs of his people. They had, therefore, no reason to complain that their way was hidden from the Lord, and their cause passed over by him. Perhaps, also, it is implied, that as his understanding was vast, they ought not to expect to be able to comprehend the reason of all his doings; but should expect that there would be much that was mysterious and unsearchable. The reasons of his doings are often hid from his people; and their consolation is to be found in the assurance that he is

infinitely wise, and that he who rules over the universe must know what is best, and cannot err.

Verse 29

He giveth power to the faint - To his weak and feeble people. This is one of his attributes; and his people, therefore, should put their trust in him, and look to him for aid (compare 2 Corinthians 12:9). The design of this verse is to give consolation to the afflicted and down-trodden people in Babylon, by recalling to their minds the truth that it was one of the characteristics of God that he ministered strength to those who were conscious of their own feebleness, and who looked to him for support. It is a truth, however, as applicable to us as to theresa truth inestimably precious to those who feel that they are weak and feeble, and who look to God for aid.

Verse 30

Even the youths shall faint - The most vigorous young men, those in whom we expect manly strength, and who are best suited to endure hardy toil. They become weary by labor. Their powers are soon exhausted. The design here is, to contrast the most vigorous of the human race with God, and to show that while all their powers fail, the power of God is unexhausted and inexhaustible.

And the young men - The word used here denotes properly "those who are chosen or selected" (בחורים *bachûriym* Greek ἐκλεκτοὶ *eklektoi*), and may be applied to those who were selected or chosen for any hazardous enterprise, or dangerous achievement in war; those who would be selected for vigor or activity. The meaning is, that the most chosen or select of the human family - the most vigorous and manly, must be worn down by fatigue, or paralyzed by sickness or death; but that the powers of God never grow weary, and that those who trust in him should never become faint.

Verse 31

But they that wait upon the Lord - The word rendered ‹wait upon' here (from קוה *qâvâh*), denotes properly to wait, in the sense of expecting. The phrase, ‹to wait on Yahweh,' means to wait for his help; that is, to trust in him, to put our hope or confidence in him. It is applicable to those who are in circumstances of danger or want, and who look to him for his merciful interposition. Here it properly refers to those who were suffering a long and grievous captivity in Babylon, and who had no prospect of deliverance but in him. The phrase is applicable also to all who feel that

they are weak, feeble, guilty, and helpless, and who, in view of this, put their trust in Yahweh. The promise or assurance here is general in its nature, and is as applicable to his people now as it was in the times of the captivity in Babylon. Religion is often expressed in the Scriptures by ‹waiting on Yahweh,‘ that is, by looking to him for help, expecting deliverance through his aid, putting trust in him (see Psalm 25:3, Psalm 25:5, Psalm 25:21; Psalm 27:14; Psalm 37:7, Psalm 37:9, Psalm 37:34; Psalm 69:3; compare Isaiah 8:17, note; Isaiah 30:18, note).

It does not imply inactivity, or want of personal exertion; it implies merely that our hope of aid and salvation is in him - a feeling that is as consistent with the most strenuous endeavors to secure the object, as it is with a state of inactivity and indolence. Indeed, no man can wait on God in a proper manner who does not use the means which he has appointed for conveying to us his blessing. To wait on him without using any means to obtain his aid, is to tempt him; to expect miraculous interposition is unauthorized, and must meet with disappointment. And they only wait on him in a proper manner who expect his blessing in the common modes in which he imparts it to men - in the use of those means and efforts which he has appointed, and which he is accustomed to bless. The farmer who should wait for God to plow and sow his fields, would not only be disappointed, but would be guilty of provoking Him. And so the man who waits for God to do what he ought to do; to save him without using any of the means of grace, will not only be disappointed, but will provoke his displeasure.

Shall renew their strength - Margin, ‹Change.‘ The Hebrew word commonly means to change, to alter; and then to revive, to renew, to cause to flourish again, as, e. g., a tree that has decayed and fallen down (see the note at Isaiah 9:10; compare Job 14:7). Here it is evidently used in the sense of renewing, or causing to revive; to increase, and to restore that which is decayed. It means that the people of God who trust in him shall become strong in faith; able to contend with their spiritual foes, to gain the victory over their sins, and to discharge aright the duties, and to meet aright the trials of life. God gives them strength, if they seek him in the way of his appointment - a promise which has been verified in the experience of his people in every age.

They shall mount up with wings as eagles - Lowth translates this ‹They shall put forth fresh feathers like the moulting eagle;‘ and in his note on the passage remarks, that ‹it has been a common and popular opinion

that the eagle lives and retains his vigor to a great age; and that, beyond the common lot of other birds, he moults in his old age, and renews his feathers, and with them his youth.‘ He supposes that the passage in Psalm 103:5, ‹So that thy youth is renewed like the eagles,‘ refers to this fact. That this was a common and popular opinion among the ancients, is clearly proved by Bochart (Hieroz. ii. 2. 1. pp. 165-169). The opinion was, that at stated times the eagle plunged itself in the sea and cast off its old feathers, and that new feathers started forth, and that thus it lived often to the hundredth year, and then threw itself in the sea and died. In accordance with this opinion, the Septuagint renders this passage, ‹They shall put forth fresh feathers (πτεροφυήσουσιν *pterophuēsousin*) like eagles.‘ Vulgate, *Assument pennas sicut aquiloe*.

The Chaldee renders it, ‹They who trust in the Lord shall be gathered from the captivity, and shall increase their strength, and renew their youth as a germ which grows up; upon wings of eagles shall they run and not be fatigued.‘ But whatever may be the truth in regard to the eagle, there is no reason to believe that Isaiah here had any reference to the fact that it moults in its old age. The translation of Lowth was derived from file Septuagint, and not from the Hebrew text. The meaning of the Hebrew is simply, ‹they shall ascend on wings as eagles,‘ or ‹they shall lift up the wings as eagles;‘ and the image is derived from the fact that the eagle rises on the most vigorous wing of any bird, and ascends apparently further toward the sun. The figure, therefore, denotes strength and vigor of purpose; strong and manly piety; an elevation above the world; communion with God, and a nearness to his throne - as the eagle ascends toward the sun.

They shall run and not be weary - This passage, also, is but another mode of expressing the same idea - that they who trust in God would be vigorous, elevated, unwearied; that he would sustain and uphold them; and that in his service they would never faint. This was at first designed to be applied to the Jews in captivity in Babylon to induce them to put their trust in God. But it is as true now as it was at that time. It has been found in the experience of thousands and tens of thousands, that by waiting on the Lord the heart has been invigorated; the faith has been confirmed; and the affections have been raised above the world. Strength has been given to bear trial without complaining, to engage in arduous duty without fainting, to pursue the perilous and toilsome journey of life without exhaustion, and to rise above the world in hope and peace on the bed of death.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 41

Verse 1

The design of this chapter is the same as that of the preceding, and it is to be regarded as the continuation of the argument commenced there. Its object is to lead those who were addressed, to put confidence in God. In the introduction to Isaiah 41:1.

II. He specifies that he will raise up a man from the east - who should be able to overcome the enemies of the Jews, and to effect their deliverance Isaiah 41:2-4.

III. The consternation of the nations at the approach of Cyrus, and their excited and agitated fleeing to their idols is described Isaiah 41:5-7.

IV. God gives to his people the assurance of his protection, and friendship Isaiah 41:8-14. This is shown:

1. Because they were the children of Abraham, his friend, and be was bound in covenant faithfulness to protect them Isaiah 41:8-9.

2. By direct assurance that he would aid and protect them; that though they were feeble, yet he was strong enough to deliver them Isaiah 41:10-14.

V. He says that he will enable them to overcome and scatter their foes, as the chaff is driven away on the mountains by the whirlwind Isaiah 41:15-16.

VI. He gives to his people the special promise of assistance and comfort. He will meet them in their desolate condition, and will give them consolation as if fountains were opened in deserts, and trees producing grateful shade and fruit were planted in the wilderness Isaiah 41:17-20.

VII. He appeals directly to the enemies of the Jews, to the worshippers of idols. He challenges them to give any evidence of the power or the divinity of their idols; and appeals to the fact that he had foretold future events; that he had raised up a deliverer for his people in proof of his divinity, and his power to save Isaiah 41:21-29. The argument of the whole is, that the idol-gods were unable to defend the nations which trusted in them; that God would raise up a mighty prince who should be able to deliver the Jews from their long and painful calamity, and that they, therefore, should put their trust in Yahweh.

Keep silence before me - (Compare Zechariah 2:13) The idea is, that the pagan nations were to be silent while God should speak, or with a view of entering into an argument with him respecting the comparative power of himself and of idols to defend their respective worshippers. The argument is stated in following verses, and preparatory to the statement of that argument, the people are exhorted to be silent. This is probably to evince a proper awe and reverence for Yahweh, before whom the argument was to be conducted, and a proper sense of the magnitude and sacredness of the inquiry (compare Isaiah 41:21). And it may be remarked here, that the same reasons will apply to all approaches which are made to God. When we are about to come before him in prayer or praise; to confess our sins and to plead for pardon; when we engage an argument respecting his being, plans, or perfections; or when we draw near to him in the closet, the family, or the sanctuary, the mind should be filled with awe and reverence. It is well, it is proper, to pause and think of what our emotions should be, and of what we should say, before God (compare Genesis 28:16-17).

O islands - (איים *'iyiym*). This word properly means islands, and is so translated here by the Vulgate, the Septuagint, the Chaldee, the Syriac, and the Arabic. But the word also is used to denote maritime countries; Countries that were situated on seacoasts, or the regions beyond sea (see the note at Isaiah 20:6). The word is applied, therefore, to the islands of the Mediterranean; to the maritime coasts; and then, also, it comes to be used in the sense of any lands or coasts far remote, or beyond sea (see Psalm 72:10; Isaiah 24:15; the notes at Isaiah 40:15; Isaiah 41:5; Isaiah 42:4, Isaiah 42:10, Isaiah 42:12; Isaiah 49:1; Jeremiah 25:22; Daniel 11:18). Here it is evidently used in the sense of distant nations or lands; the people who were remote from Palestine, and who were the worshippers of idols. The argument is represented as being with them, and they are invited to prepare their minds by suitable reverence for God for the argument which was to be presented.

And let the people renew their strength - On the word ‹renew,‘ see the note at Isaiah 40:31. Here it means, ‹Let them make themselves strong; let them prepare the argument; let them be ready to urge as strong reasons as possible; let them fit themselves to enter into the controversy about the power and glory of Yahweh‘ (see Isaiah 41:21).

Let us come near together to judgment - The word ‹judgment‘ here means evidently controversy, argumentation, debate. Thus it is used in Job

9:32. The language is that which is used of two parties who come together to try a cause, or to engage in debate; and the sense is, that God proposes to enter into an argumentation with the entire pagan world, in regard to his ability to save his people; that is, he proposes to show the reasons why they should trust in him, rather than dread those under whose power they then were, and by whom they had been oppressed. Lowth renders it, correctly expressing the sense, ‹Let us enter into solemn debate together.‘

Verse 2

Who raised up - This word (העיר *hēʿyr*) is usually applied to the act of arousing one from sleep Zechariah 4:1; then to awake, arouse, or stir up to any enterprise. Here it means, that God had caused the man here referred to, to arouse for the overthrow of their enemies; it was by his agency that he had been led to form the plans which should result in their deliverance. This is the first argument which God urges to induce his people to put confidence in him, and to hope for deliverance; and the fact that he had raised up and qualified such a man for the work, he urges as a proof that he would certainly protect and guard his people.

The righteous man from the east - Hebrew, צדק *tsedeq* - ‹righteousness.‘ The Septuagint renders it literally, Δικαιοσὺνην *Dikaiosunēn* - ‹righteousness.‘ The Vulgate renders it, ‹The just;‘ the Syriac as the Septuagint. The word here evidently means, as in our translation, the just or righteous man. It is common in the Hebrew, as in other languages, to put the abstract for the concrete. In regard to the person here referred to, there have been three principal opinions, which it may be proper briefly to notice.

1. The first is, that which refers it to Abraham. This is the interpretation of the Chaldee Paraphrast, who renders it, ‹Who has publicly led from the east Abraham, the chosen of the just;‘ and this interpretation has been adopted by Jarchi, Kimchi, Abarbanel, and by the Jewish writers generally. They say that it means that God had called Abraham from the east; that he conducted him to the land of Canaan, and enabled him to vanquish the people who resided there, and particularly that he vanquished the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, and delivered Lot from their hands Jeremiah 1:13-15; Jeremiah 4:6; Jeremiah 6:1; Jeremiah 23:8; Jeremiah 25:9, Jeremiah 25:26; Jeremiah 31:8; Jeremiah 46:10; Jeremiah 50:3; Daniel 11:6, Daniel 11:8, Daniel 11:11. This country was situated to the northeast of Palestine, and it is believed is nowhere in the Scriptures called the country of the east.

(b) The description which is here given of what was accomplished by him who was raised up from the east, is not one that applies to Abraham. It supposes more important achievements than any that signalized the father of the faithful. There were no acts in the life of Abraham that can be regarded as subduing the ‹nations‘ before him; as ruling over ‹kings;‘ or as scattering them like the dust or the stubble. Indeed, he appears to have been engaged but in one military adventure - the rescue of Lot - and that was of so slight and unimportant a character as not to form the peculiarity of his public life. Had Abraham been referred to here, it would have been for some other trait than that of a conqueror or military chieftain.

(c) We shall see that the description and the connection require us to understand it of another - of Cyrus.

2. A second opinion is, that it refers directly and entirely to the Messiah. Many of the fathers, as Jerome, Cyril, Eusebius, Theodoret, Procopius, held this opinion. But the objections to this are insuperable.

(a) It is not true that the Messiah was raised up from the east. He was born in the land of Judea, and always lived in that land.

(b) The description here is by no means one that applies to him. It is the description of a warrior and a conqueror; of one who subdued nations, and scattered them before him.

(c) The connection and design of the passage does not admit of the interpretation. That design is, to lead the Jews in exile to put confidence in God, and to hope for a speedy rescue. In order to this, the prophet directs them to the fact that a king appeared in the east, and that he scattered the nations; and from these facts they were to infer that they would themselves be delivered, and that God would be their protector. But how would this design be accomplished by a reference to so remote an event as the coming of the Messiah?

3. The third opinion, therefore, remains, that this refers to Cyrus, the Persian monarch, by whom Babylon was taken, and by whom the Jews

were restored to their own land. In support of this interpretation, a few considerations may be adverted to.

(a) It agrees with the fact in regard to the country from which Cyrus came for purposes of conquest. He came from the land which is everywhere in the Scriptures called the East.

(b) It agrees with the specifications which Isaiah elsewhere makes, where Cyrus is mentioned by name, and where there can be no danger of error in regard to the interpretation (see Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1-4, Isaiah 45:13). Thus in Isaiah 46:11, it is said of Cyrus, ‹Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my commandments from a far country.

(c) The entire description here is one that applies in a remarkable manner to Cyrus, as will be shown more fully in the notes at the particular expressions which occur.

(d) This supposition accords with the design of the prophet.

It was to be an assurance to them not only that God would raise up such a man, but that they should be delivered; and as this was intended to comfort them in Babylon, it was intended that when they were apprised of the conquests of Cyrus, they were to be assured of the fact that God was their protector; and those conquests, therefore, were to be regarded by them as a proof that God would deliver them. This opinion is held by Vitringa, Rosenmuller, and probably by a large majority of the most intelligent commentators. The only objection of weight to it is that suggested by Lowth, that the character of ‹a righteous man‘ does not apply to Cyrus. But to this it may be replied, that the word may be used nor to denote one that is pious, or a true worshipper of God, but one who was disposed to do justly, or who was not a tyrant; and especially it may be applied to him on account of his delivering the Jews from their hard and oppressive bondage in Babylon, and restoring them to their own land.

That was an act of eminent public justice; and the favors which he showed them in enabling them to rebuild their city and temple, were such as

to render it not improper that this appellation should be given to him. It may be added also that Cyrus was a prince eminently distinguished for justice and equity, and for a mild and kind administration over his own subjects. Xenophon, who has described his character at length, has proposed him as an example of a just monarch, and his government as an example of an equitable administration. All the ancient writers celebrate his humanity and benevolence (compare Diod. xiii. 342, and the Cyropedia of Xenophon everywhere). As there will be frequent occasion to refer to Cyrus in the notes at the chapters which follow, it may be proper here to give a very brief outline of his public actions, that his agency in the deliverance of the Jews may be more fully appreciated.

Cyrus was the son of Cambyses, the Persian, and of Mandane, the daughter of Astyages, king of the Medes. Astyages is in Scripture called Ahasuerus. Cambyses was,‘ according to Xenophon (Cyr. i.), king of Persia, or, according to Herodotus (i. 107), he was a nobleman. If he was the king of Persia, of course Cyrus was the heir of the throne. Cyrus was born in his father‘s court, A.M. 3405, or 595 b.c., and was educated with great care. At the age of twelve years, his grandfather, Astyages, sent for him and his mother Mandane to court, and he was treated, of course, with great attention. Astyages, or Ahasuerus, had a son by the name of Cyaxares, who was born about a year before Cyrus, and who was heir to the throne of Media. Some time after this, the son of the king of Assyria having invaded Media, Astyages, with his son Cyaxares, and his grandson Cyrus, marched against him. Cyrus defeated the Assyrians, but, was soon after retailed by his father Cambyses to Persia, that he might be near him.

At the age of sixteen, indeed, and when at the court of his grandfather, Cyrus signalized himself for his valor in a war with the king of Babylon. Evil-Merodach, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had invaded the territories of Media, but was repelled with great loss, and Cyrus pursued him with great slaughter to his own borders. This invasion of Evil-Merodach laid the foundation of the hostility between Babylon and Media, which was not terminated until Babylon was taken and destroyed by the united armies of Media and Persia. When Astyages died, after a reign of thirty-five years, he was succeeded by his son Cyaxares, the uncle of Cyrus. He was still involved in a war with the Babylonians. Cyrus was made

general of the Persian troops, and at the head of an army of 30,000 men was sent to assist Cyaxares, whom the Babylonians were preparing to attack. The Babylonian monarch at this time was Neriglissar, who had murdered Evil-Merodach, and who had usurped the crown of Babylon. Cyaxares and Cyrus carried on the war against Babylon during the reigns of Neriglissar and his son Laborosoarchod, and of Nabonadius. The Babylonians were defeated, and Cyrus carried his arms into the countries to the west beyond the river Halys - a river running north into the Euxine Sea - and subdued Cappadocia, and conquered Croesus, the rich king of Lydia, and subdued almost all Asia Minor. Having conquered this country, he returned again, re-crossed the Euphrates, turned his arms against the Assyrians, and then laid siege to Babylon, and took it (see the notes at Daniel 5:31, and it is said there, that it was by him that Babylon was taken. But Babylon was taken by the valor of Cyrus, though acting in connection with, and under Cyaxares; and it is said to have been taken by Cyaxares, or Darius, though it was done by the personal valor of Cyrus. Josephus (Ant. xii. 13) says, that Darius with his ally, Cyrus, destroyed the kingdom of Babylon. Jerome assigns three reasons why Babylon is said in the Scriptures to have been taken by Darius or Cyaxares; first, because he was the older of the two; secondly, because the Medes were at that time more famous than the Persians; and thirdly, because the uncle ought to be preferred to the nephew. The Greek writers say that Babylon was taken by Cyrus, without mentioning Cyaxares or Darius, doubtless because it was done solely by his valor. For a full account of the reign of Cyrus, see Xen. Cyr., Herodotus, and the ancient part of the Universal History, vol. iv. Ed. Lond. 1779,8vo.

Called him to his foot - Lowth renders this, ‹Hath called him to attend his steps.‘ Noyes renders it, ‹Him whom victory meeteth in his march.‘ Grotius, ‹Called him that he should follow him,‘ and he refers to Genesis 12:1; Joshua 24:3; Hebrews 11:8. Rosenmuller renders it, ‹Who hath called from the East that man to whom righteousness occurs at his feet,‘ that is, attends him. But the idea seems to be, that God had influenced him to follow him as one follows a guide at his feet, or close to him.

Gave the nations before him - That is, subdued nations before him. This is justly descriptive of the victorious career of Cyrus. Among the nations whom he subdued, were the Armenians, the Cappadocians, the Lydians, the Phrygians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, comprising a very large portion of the world, known at that time. Cyrus subdued, according to

Xenophon, all the nations lying between the Euxine and Caspian seas on the north, to the Red Sea on the south, and even Egypt, so that his own proclamation was true: ‹Yahweh, God of heaven, hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth‘ Ezra 1:2.

And made him rule over kings - As the kings of Babylon, of Lydia, of Cappadocia, who were brought into subjection under him, and acknowledged their dependence on him.

He hath given them as the dust to his sword - He has scattered, or destroyed them by his sword, as the dust is driven before the wind. A similar remark is made by David Psalm 18:42:

Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind,
I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.

And as driven stubble - The allusion here is to the process of fanning grain. The grain was thrown by a shovel or fan in the air, and the stubble or chaff was driven away. So it is said of the nations before Cyrus, implying that they were utterly scattered.

To his bow - The bow was one of the common weapons of war, and the inhabitants of the East were distinguished for its use The idea in this verse is very beautiful, and is one that is often employed in the Sacred Scriptures, and by Isaiah himself (see Job 21:18; Psalm 1:4; Psalm 35:5; the notes at Isaiah 17:13; Isaiah 29:5; compare Hosea 13:3).

Verse 3

He pursued them - When they were driven away. He followed on, and devoted them to discomfiture and ruin.

And passed safely - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹In peace.‘ That is, he followed them uninjured; they had no power to rally, he was not led into ambush, and he was safe as far as he chose to pursue them.

Even by the way that he had not gone with his feet - By a way that he had not been accustomed to march; in an unusual journey; in a land of strangers. Cyrus had passed his early years on the east of the Euphrates. In his conquests he crossed that river, and extended his march beyond even the river Halys to the western extremity of Asia, and even to Egypt and the Red Sea. The idea here is, that he had not traveled in these regions until he did it for purposes of conquest - an idea which is strictly in accordance with the truth of history.

Verse 4

Who hath wrought and done it? - By whom has all this been accomplished? Has it been by the arm of Cyrus? Has it been by human skill and powers. The design of this question is obvious. It is to direct attention to the fact that all this had been done by God, and that he who had raised up such a man, and had accomplished all this by means of him, had power to deliver his people.

Calling the generations from the beginning - The idea here seems to be, that all the nations that dwell on the earth in every place owed their origin to God (compare Acts 17:26). The word ‹calling‘ here, seems to be used in the sense of commanding, directing, or ordering them; and the truth taught is, that all the nations were under his control, and had been from the beginning. It was not only true of Cyrus, and of those who were subdued before him, but it was true of all nations and generations. The object seems to be, to lift up the thoughts from the conquests of Cyrus to God‘s universal dominion over all kingdoms from the beginning of the world.

I the Lord, the first - Before any creature was made; existing before any other being. The description that God here gives of himself as ‹the first and the last,‘ is one that is often applied to him in the Scriptures, and is one that properly expresses eternity (see Isaiah 44:6; Isaiah 48:12). It is remarkable also that this expression, which so obviously implies proper eternity, is applied to the Lord Jesus in Revelation 1:17; Revelation 22:13.

And with the last - The usual form in which this is expressed is simply ‹the last‘ Isaiah 44:6; Isaiah 48:12. The idea here seems to be, ‹and with the last, I am the same;‘ that is, I am unchanging and eternal. None will subsist after me; since with the last of all created objects I shall be the same that I was in the beginning. Nothing would survive God; or in other words, he would exist forever and ever. The argument here is, that to this unchanging and eternal God, who had thus raised up and directed Cyrus, and who had control over all nations, they might commit themselves with unwavering confidence, and be assured that he was able to protect and deliver them.

Verse 5

The isles saw it - The distant nations (see the note at Isaiah 41:1). They saw what was done in the conquests of the man whom God in this remarkable manner had raised up; and they had had demonstration, therefore, of the mighty power of Yahweh above the power of idols.

And feared - Were alarmed, and trembled. All were apprehensive that they would be subdued, and driven away as with the tempest.

The ends of the earth - Distant nations occupying the extremities of the globe (see the note at Isaiah 40:28).

Drew near, and came - Came together for the purpose of mutual alliance, and self-defense. The prophet evidently refers to what he says in the following verses, that they formed treaties; endeavored to prepare for self-defense; looked to their idol-gods, and encouraged each other in their attempts to offer a successful resistance to the victorious arms of Cyrus.

Verse 6

They helped every one his neighbor - The idolatrous nations. The idea is, that they formed confederations to strengthen each other, and to oppose him whom God had raised up to subdue them. The prophet describes a state of general consternation existing among them, when they supposed that all was in danger, and that their security consisted only in confederation; in increased attention to their religion; in repairing their idols and making new ones, and in conciliating the favor and securing the aid of heir gods It was natural for them to suppose that the calamities which were coming upon them by the invasion of Cyrus were the judgments of their gods, for some neglect, or some prevailing crimes, and that their favor could be secured only by a more diligent attention to their service, and by forming new images and establishing them in the proper places of worship. The prophet, therefore, describes in a graphic manner, the consternation, the alarm, and the haste, everywhere apparent among them, in attempting to conciliate the favor of their idols, and to encourage each other. Nothing is more common, than for people, when they are in danger, to give great attention to religion, though they may greatly neglect or despise it when they are in safety. Men fly to temples and churches and altars in the times of plague and the pestilence; and as regularly flee from them when the calamity is overpast.

Be of good courage - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹Be strong.‘ The sense is, Do not be alarmed at the invasion of Cyrus. Make new images, set them up in the temples, show unusual zeal in religion, and the favor of the gods may be secured, and the dangers be averted. This is to be understood as the language of the idolatrous nations, among whom Cyrus, under the direction of Yahweh, was carrying his conquests and spreading desolation.

Verse 7

So the carpenter - (See the note at Isaiah 40:19).

Encouraged the goldsmith - Margin, ‹The founder‘ (see the note at Isaiah 40:19). The word properly means one who melts or smelts metals of

any kind; and may be applied either to one who works in gold, silver, or brass. The image here is that of haste, anxiety, solicitude. One workman in the manufacture of idols encouraged another, in order that the idols might be finished as soon as possible, and that thus the favor of the gods might be propitiated, and the impending danger averted.

He that smootheth with the hammer - That is, he encourages or strengthens him that smites on the anvil. The idol was commonly cast or founded, and of course was in a rough state. This required to be smoothed, or polished, and this was in part done doubtless by a small hammer.

Him that smote the anvil - The workman whose office it was to work on the anvil - forming parts of the idol, or perhaps chain.

It is ready for the sodering - The parts are ready to be welded, or soldered together. All this is descriptive of haste and anxiety to have the work done; and the object of the prophet is evidently to ridicule their vain solicitude to defend themselves against the plans and purposes of God by efforts of this kind.

And he fastened it with nails - He fixed it to its place in the temple, or in the dwelling; and thus showed a purpose that the worship of the idol should be permanent, and fixed. Hooks, or nails, were necessary to keep it in its place, and secure it from falling down. When the idol was thus fixed, they supposed that their kingdoms were safe. They judged that the gods would interpose to protect and defend them from their foes. This is a beautiful descrip tion of the anxiety, and pains, and consternation of sinners when calamity is coming upon them, and of the nature of their reliances. What could these dumb idols - these masses of brass, or silver, or stone, do to protect them? And in like manner what can all the refuges of sinners do when God comes to judge them, and when the calamities connected with death and the judgment shall overtake them? They are just as full of consternation as were the pagan who are here described; and all their refuges will be just as little to be relied on as were the senseless images which the pagan had made for their defense.

Verse 8

But thou, Israel, art my servant - This is an address directly to the Jews, and is designed to show them, in view of the truths which had just been urged, that God was their protector and friend. Those who relied on idols were trusting to that which could not aid them. But those who trusted in him were safe. For their protection he had raised up Cyrus, for this

purpose he had subdued the nations before him. God now expresses to them the assurance that though the nations should be destroyed, yet that he had chosen them, and would remember them, and his promise made to Abraham, their illustrious ancestor. The word ‹servant‘ here is used in a mild and gentle sense, not to denote bondage or slavery, but to denote that they had been engaged in his service, and that he regarded them as subject to his laws, and as under his protection.

Jacob whom I have chosen - The descendants of Jacob, whom I have selected to be my people. Abraham my friend. Hebrew, ‹Loving me,‘ my lover. Abraham was regarded as the friend of God (see 2 Chronicles 20:7). ‹And he was called the Friend of God‘ James 2:23. This most honorable appellation he deserved by a life of devoted piety, and by habitually submitting himself to the will of God. The idea in this verse is, that as they were the descendants of his friend, God deemed himself bound to protect and deliver them according to his gracious promises; and this is one of the many instances where the divine favor is manifested to descendants in consequence of the piety and prayers of their ancestors.

Verse 9

Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth - From Chaldea - regarded by the Jews as the remote part of the earth. Thus in Isaiah 13:5, it is said of the Medes that they came ‹from a far country, from the end of heaven‘ (see the note on that place). Abraham was called from Ur of the Chaldees - a city still remaining on the east of the river Euphrates. It is probably the same place as the Persian fortress Ur, between Nesibis and the Tigris. It was visited by Mr. Wolfe, Mr. Buckingham, and by others.

And called thee from the chief men thereof - Or rather, from the extremities of the earth. The word אציל *'âtsiyl* means properly “a side”; and when applied to the earth, means the sides ends, or extremities of it. In Exodus 24:11, it is rendered ‹nobles,‘ from an Arabic word signifying to he deep-rooted, and hence, those who are sprung from an ancient stock (Gesenius). In this place it is evidently used in the same sense as the word (אצל *'ētsel*) meaning “side,” in the sense of extremity, or end. The parallelism requires us to give this interpretation to the word. So Jerome renders it, *longinquis ejus* (sc. *terroe*). The Septuagint renders it, Ἐκ τῶν σκωπιῶν *Ek tōn skōpiōn* - ‹From the speculations of the earth‘ (Thompson), or rather perhaps meaning from the extremity of vision; from the countries lying in the distant horizon; or from the elevated places which offered an

extensive range of vision. The Chaldee renders it, ‹From the kingdoms I have selected thee.‘ Symmachus renders it, Ἀπὸ τῶν ἀγκῶνων *Apo tōn angkōnōn autēs* - from its angles, its corners, its extremities. Some have supposed that this refers to the deliverance from Egypt, but the more probable interpretation is that which refers it to the call of Abraham from Chaldea; and the idea is, that as God had called him from that distant land, and had made him his friend, he would preserve and guard his posterity. Perhaps it may be implied that he would be favorable to them in that same country from where he had called their illustrious progenitor, and would in like manner conduct them to the land of promise, that is, to their own land.

Verse 10

Fear thou not - This verse is plain in its meaning, and is full of consolation. It is to be regarded as addressed primarily to the exiled Jews during their long and painful captivity in Babylon; and the idea is, that they who had been selected by God to be his special people had nothing to fear. But the promise is one that may be regarded as addressed to all his people in similar circumstances, and it is as true now as it was then, that those whom God has chosen have nothing to fear.

For I am with thee - This is a reason why they should not be afraid. God was their protector, and of whom should they be afraid. ‹If God be for us, who can be against us?‘ What higher consolation can man desire than the assurance that he is with him to protect him?

Be not dismayed - The word rendered here ‹dismayed‘ (תִּשְׁתָּע *tîshettaʿ*) is derived from שָׁעָה *shâʿâh* “to see, to look”; and then to look about as one does in a state of alarm, or danger. The sense here is, that they should be calm, and under no apprehension from their foes.

For I am thy God - I am able to preserve and strengthen thee. The God of heaven was their God; and as he had all power, and that power was pledged for their protection, they had nothing to fear.

I will uphold thee - I will enable you to bear all your trials.

With the right hand of my righteousness - With my faithful right hand. The phrase is a Hebrew mode of expression, meaning that God‘s hand was faithful, that it might be relied on, and would secure them.

Verse 11

All they that were incensed against thee - They who were enraged against thee, that is, the Chaldeans who made war upon you, and reduced you to bondage.

Shall be ashamed and confounded - To be ashamed and confounded is often used as synonymous with being overcome and destroyed.

They that strive with thee - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹The men of thy strife.‘ The expression refers to their enemies, the Babylonians.

Verse 12

Thou shalt seek them - This denotes that it would be impossible to find them, for they should cease to exist. The whole verse, with the verse following, is emphatic, repeating in varied terms what was said before, and meaning that their foes should be entirely destroyed.

Verse 14

Fear not - (See the note at Isaiah 41:10).

Thou worm - This word is properly applied as it is with us, to denote a worm, such as is generated in putrid substances Exodus 16:20; Isaiah 14:11; Isaiah 66:24; or such as destroy plants Jonah 4:7; Deuteronomy 28:39. It is used also to describe a person that is poor, afflicted, and an object of insignificance Job 25:5-6:

Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not;
Yea, the stars are not pure in his sight.
How much less man, that is a worm;
And the son of man which is a worm?

And in Psalm 22:6:

But I am a worm, and no man;
A reproach of men, and despised of the people.

In the passage before us, it is applied to the Jews in Babylon as poor and afflicted, and as objects of contempt in view of their enemies. It implies that in themselves they were unable to defend or deliver themselves, and in this state of helplessness, God offers to aid them and assures them that they have nothing to fear.

And ye men of Israel - (מתי ישׂראל *yîs'erâ'ēl methēy*). Margin, ‹Few men.‘ There has been a great variety in the explanation of this phrase. Aquila renders it, Τεθνεῶτες *Tethneōtes* and Theodotion, Νεκροὶ *Nekroi* ‹dead.‘ So the Vulgate, *Qui mortui estis ex Israel*. The Septuagint renders it, ‹Fear not, Jacob, O diminutive Israel‘ (ὀλιγοστὸς Ἰσραὴλ *oligostos Israēl*). Chaldee, ‹Fear not, O tribe of the house of Jacob, ye seed of Israel.‘ Lowth renders it, ‹Ye mortals of Israel.‘ The Hebrew denotes properly, as in our translation, ‹men of Israel;‘ but there is evidently included the idea of

fewness or feebleness. The parallelism requires us so to understand it; and the word men, or mortal men, may well express the idea of feebleness.

And thy Redeemer - On the meaning of this word, see the notes at Isaiah 35:9; Isaiah 43:1, Isaiah 43:3. It is applied here to the rescue from the captivity of Babylon, and is used in the general sense of deliverer. God would deliver, or rescue them as be had done in times past. He had done it so often, that this might be regarded as his appropriate appellation, that he was the redeemer of his people.

The Holy One of Israel - The Holy Being whom the Israelites adored, and who was their protector, and their friend (see the note at Isaiah 2:4). This appellation is often given to God (see Isaiah 5:19, Isaiah 5:24; Isaiah 10:20; Isaiah 12:6; Isaiah 17:7; Isaiah 29:19; Isaiah 30:11-12). We may remark in view of these verses:

1. That the people of God are in themselves feeble and defenseless. They have no strength on which they can rely. They are often so encompassed with difficulties which they feel they have no strength to overcome, that they are disposed to apply to themselves the appellation of ‹worm,‘ and by ethers they are looked on as objects of contempt, and are despised.

2. They have nothing to fear. Though they are feeble, their God and Redeemer is strong. He is their Redeemer, and their friend, and they may put their trust in him. Their enemies cannot ultimately triumph over them, but they will be scattered and become as nothing.

3. In times of trial, want, and persecution, the friends of God should put their trust alone in him. It is often the plan of God so to afflict and humble his people, that they shall feel their utter helplessness and dependence, and be led to him as the only source of strength.

Verse 15

Behold, I will make thee … - The object of the illustration in this verse and the following is, to show that God would clothe them with power, and that all difficulties in their way would vanish. To express this idea, the prophet uses an image derived front the mode of threshing in the East, where the heavy wain or sledge was made to pass over a large pile of sheaves, and to bruise out the grain, and separate the chaff, so that the wind would drive it away. The phrase, ‹I will make thee,‘ means, ‹I will

constitute, or appoint thee,‘ that is, thou shalt be such a threshing instrument. It is not that God would make such a sledge or wain for them, but that they should be such themselves; they should beat down and remove the obstacles in the way as the threshing wain crushed the pile of grain.

A new sharp threshing instrument - A threshing wain, or a corn-drag. For a description of this, compare the notes at Isaiah 28:27-28.

Having teeth - Or, with double edges. The Hebrew word is applied to a sword, and means a two-edged sword Psalm 149:6. The instrument here referred to was serrated, or so made as to cut up the straw and separate the grain from the chaff. The following descriptions from Lowth and Niebuhr, may serve still further to illustrate the nature of the instrument here referred to. ‹The drag consisted of a sort of frame of strong planks made rough at the bottom with hard stones or iron; it was drawn by horses or oxen over the corn-sheaves spread on the floor, the driver sitting upon it. The wain was much like the drag, but had wheels of iron teeth, or edges like a saw. The axle was armed with iron teeth or serrated wheels throughout: it moved upon three rollers armed with iron teeth or wheels, to cut the straw. In Syria, they make use of the drag, constructed in the very same manner as above described.

This not only forced out the grain, but cut the straw in pieces, for fodder for the cattle, for in the eastern countries they have no hay. The last method is well known from the law of Moses, which forbids the ox to be muzzled, when he treadeth out the grain Deuteronomy 25:4.‘ (Lowth) ‹In threshing their corn, the Arabians lay the sheaves down in a certain order, and then lead over them two oxen, dragging a large stone. This mode of separating the ears from the straw is not unlike that of Egypt. They use oxen, as the ancients did, to beat out their grain, by trampling upon the sheaves, and dragging after them a clumsy machine. This machine is not, as in Arabia, a stone cylinder, nor a plank with sharp stones, as in Syria, but a sort of sledge, consisting of three rollers, suited with irons, which turn upon axles. A farmer chooses out a level spot in his fields, and has his grain carried thither in sheaves, upon donkeys or dromedaries.

Two oxen are then yoked in a sledge, a driver gets upon it, and drives them backward and forward upon the sheaves, and fresh oxen succeed in the yoke from time to time. By this operation, the chaff is very much cut down; the whole is then winnowed, and the pure grain thus separated. This

mode of threshing out the grain is tedious and inconvenient; it destroys the chaff, and injures the quality of grain.‘ (Niebuhr) In another place Niebuhr tells us that two parcels or layers of corn are threshed out in a day; and they move each of them as many as eight times, with a wooden fork of five prongs, which they call meddre. Afterward, they throw the straw into the middle of the ring, where it forms a heap, which grows bigger and bigger; when the first layer is threshed, they replace the straw in the ring, and thresh it as before. Thus, the straw becomes every time smaller, until at last it resembles chopped straw. After this, with the fork just described, they cast the whole some yards from thence, and against the wind, which, driving back the straw, the grain and the ears not threshed out fall apart from it and make another heap. A man collects the clods of dirt, and other impurities, to which any grain adheres, and throws them into a sieve. They afterward place in a ring the heaps, in which a good many entire ears are still found, and drive over them, for four or five hours together, a dozen couples of oxen, joined two and two, till, by absolute trampling, they have separated the grains, which they throw into the air with a shovel to cleanse them.

Thou shalt thresh the mountains - The words ‹mountains‘ and ‹hills‘ in this verse seem designed to denote the kingdoms greater and smaller that should be opposed to the Jews, and that should become subject to them (Rosenmuller). Grotius supposes that the prophet refers particularly to the Medes and Babylonians. But perhaps the words are used to denote simply difficulties or obstacles in their way, and the expression may mean that they would be able to overcome all those obstacles, and to subdue all that opposed them, as if in a march they should crush all the mountains, and dissipate all the hills by an exertion of power.

Verse 16

Thou shalt fan them - Keeping up the figure commenced in the previous verse. To fan here means to winnow, an operation which was performed by throwing the threshed grain up with a shovel into the air, so that the wind drove the chaff away. So all their enemies, and all the obstacles which were in their way should be scattered.

And the whirlwind shall scatter them - The ancients believed that people might be swept away by a storm or whirlwind. See Job 30:22.

And thou shalt rejoice in the Lord - In view of the aid which he has vouchsafed, and the deliverance which he has performed for you.

Shalt glory - Shalt boast, or shalt exult. You will regard God as the author of your deliverance, and joy in the proofs of his interposition, and of his gracious protection and care.

Verse 17

When the poor and needy seek water - Water is often used in the Scriptures as an emblem of the provisions of divine mercy. Bursting fountains in a desert, and flowing streams unexpectedly met with in a dry and thirsty land, are often also employed to denote the comfort and refreshment which the gospel furnishes to sinful and suffering man in his journey through this world. The ‹poor and needy‘ here, doubtless refer primarily to the afflicted captives in Babylon. But the expression of the prophet is general, and the description is as applicable to his people at all times in similar circumstances as it was to them. The image here is derived from their anticipated return from Babylon to Judea. The journey lay through a vast pathless desert (see the notes at Isaiah 40:3). In that journey when they were weary, faint and thirsty, God would meet and refresh them as if he should open fountains in their way, and plant trees with far-reaching boughs and thick foliage along the road to produce a grateful shade, and make the whole journey through a pleasant grove. As he met their fathers in their journey from Egypt to the land of Canaan, and had brought water from the flinty rock in the desert (Exodus 15:22 ff), so in their journey through the sands of Arabia Deserta, he would again meet them, and provide for all their want.

Verse 18

I will open rivers - That is, I will cause rivers to flow (see the note at Isaiah 35:7). The allusion here is doubtless to the miraculous supply of water in the desert when the Israelites had come out of Egypt. God then supplied their needs; and in a similar manner he would always meet his people, and would supply their needs as if rivers of pure water were made to flow from dry and barren hills.

In high places - The word used here denotes properly barrenness or nakedness Job 33:21; and then a hill that is bare, or destitute of trees. It is applied usually to hills in a desert Jeremiah 3:2, Jeremiah 3:21; Jeremiah 4:11; Jeremiah 7:29; Jeremiah 14:6. Such hills, without trees, and in a dry and lonely desert, were of course usually without water. The idea is, that God would refresh them as if rivers were made to flow from such hills; and it may not improperly be regarded as a promise that God would meet and

bless his people in situations, and from sources where they least expected refreshment and comfort.

And fountains in the midst of the valleys - (See Isaiah 30:25, note; Isaiah 35:6, note).

I will make the wilderness - (See the note at Isaiah 35:7).

Verse 19

I will plant in the wilderness - The image in this verse is one that is frequent in Isaiah. It is designed to show that God would furnish for his people abundant consolations, and that he would furnish unanticipated sources of comfort, and would remove from them their anticipated trials and calamities. The image refers to the return of the exiles to their own land. That journey lay through Arabia Deserta - a vast desert - where they would naturally expect to meet with nothing but barren hills, naked rocks, parched plains, and burning sands. God says that he would bless them in the same manner as if in that desolate wilderness he should plant the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the fir-tree, and should make the whole distance a grove, where fountains would bubble along their way, and streams burst forth from the hills (compare the notes at Isaiah 32:15).

The cedar - The large and beautiful cedar, with lofty height, and extended branches such as grew on Lebanon (compare Isaiah 9:10, note; Isaiah 37:24, note).

The shittah-tree - This is the Hebrew name without change, שִׁטָּה *shîṭṭâh* The Vulgate is spinam. The Septuagint renders it, Πύξον *Puchon* - ‹The box.‘ Lowth renders it, ‹The acacia.‘ Probably the acacia, or the *spina AEgyptiaca* - the Egyptian thorn of the ancients - is intended by it. It is a large tree, growing abundantly in Egypt and Arabia, and is the tree from which the gum-arabic is obtained. It is covered with large black thorns, and the wood is hard, and, when old, resembles ebony.

And the myrtle - The myrtle is a tree which rises with a shrubby upright stem, eight or ten feet high. Its branches form a dense, full head, closely garnished with oval lanceolate leaves. It has numerous small pale flowers from the axillas, singly on each footstalk (Encyc.) There are several species of the myrtle, and they are especially distinguished for their forming a dense and close top, and thus constituting a valuable tree for shade. It is a tree that grows with great rapidity.

And the oil-tree - Hebrew, ‹Tree of oil‘ that is, producing oil. Doubtless the olive is intended here, from whose fruit oil was obtained in abundance.

This was a common tree in Palestine, and was one of the most valued that grew.

The fir-tree - The word used here (ברוֹשׁ *berôsh*) is commonly rendered, in our version, ‹fir-tree‘ (Isaiah 60:13; Isaiah 55:13; Zechariah 11:2; Hosea 14:8-9; 2 Samuel 6:5; 1 Kings 5:8, 1 Kings 5:10; 1 Kings 6:15, 1 Kings 6:34; Nahum 2:3, and in other places). Our translators understood it evidently as referring to the cedar. It is often joined, however, with the cedar (see the note at Isaiah 14:8; compare Isaiah 37:24; Zechariah 11:1-2), and evidently denotes another tree, probably of the same class. It is probable that the word usually denotes the cypress. There are various kinds of cypress. Some are evergreen, and some are deciduous, as the American white cedar. The wood of these trees is remarkable for its durability. Among the ancients, coffins were made of it, and the tree itself was an emblem of mourning. It is mentioned here because its extended branches and dense foliage would produce a grateful shade.

And the pine - The Septuagint renders this Λεύκην *Leukēn* And - ‹The white poplar.‘ The Vulgate renders it, ‹The elm.‘ Gesenius supposes that a species of hard oak, holm or ilex, is intended. It is not easy, however, to determine what species of tree is meant.

The box-tree - Gesenius supposes that by this word is denoted some tall tree - a species of cedar growing on mount Lebanon that was distinguished by the smallness of its cones, and the upward direction of its branches. With us the word box denotes a shrub used for bordering flower-beds. But the word here denotes a tree - such as was sufficient to constitute a shade.

Verse 20

That they - The Jews, the people who shall be rescued from their long captivity, and restored again to their own land. So rich and unexpected would be the blessings - as if in a pathless desert the most beautiful and refreshing trees and fountains should suddenly spring up - that they would have the fullest demonstration that they came from God.

Hath created it - That is, all this is to be traced to him. In the apocryphal book of Baruch there is an expression respecting the return from Babylon remarkably similar to that which is used here by Isaiah: ‹Even the woods and every sweet-smelling tree shall overshadow Israel by the commandment of God‘ Isaiah 5:8.

Verse 21

Produce your cause - This address is made to the same persons who are referred to in Isaiah 41:1 - the worshippers of idols; and the prophet here returns to the subject with reference to a further argument on the comparative power of Yahweh and idols. In the former part of the chapter, God had urged his claims to confidence from the fact that he had raised up Cyrus; that the idols were weak and feeble compared with him; and from the fact that it was his fixed purpose to defend his people, and to meet and refresh them when faint and weary. In the verses which follow Isaiah 41:21, he urges his claims to confidence from the fact that he alone was able to predict future events, and calls on the worshippers of idols to show their claims in the same manner. This is the ‹cause‘ which is now to be tried.

Bring forth your strong reasons - Adduce the arguments which you deem to be of the greatest strength and power (compare the notes at Isaiah 41:1). The object is, to call on them to bring forward the most convincing demonstration on which they relied, of their power and their ability to save. The argument to which God appeals is, that he had foretold future events. He calls on them to show that they had given, or could give, equal demonstration of their divinity. Lowth regards this as a call on the idol-gods to come forth in person and show their strength. But the interpretation which supposes that it refers to their reasons, or arguments, accords better with the parallelism, and with the connection.

Verse 22

Let them bring them forth - Let the idols, or the worshippers of idols, bring forth the evidences of their divine nature and power. Or more probably it means, ‹let them draw near or approach.‘

And show us what shall happen - None but the true God can discern the future, and predict what is to occur. To be able to do this, is therefore a proof of divinity to which God often appeals as a demonstration of his own divine character (see Isaiah 44:7-8; Isaiah 45:3-7; Isaiah 46:9-10). This idea, that none but the true God can know all things, and can with certainty foretell future events, is one that was admitted even by the pagan (see Xen. Cyr. i. ‹The immortal gods know all things, both the past, the present, and those things which shall proceed from each thing. It was on this belief also that the worshippers of idols endeavored to sustain the credit of their idol-gods; and accordingly, nearly all the reputation which the oracle at Delphi, and other shrines, obtained, arose from the remarkable sagacity which was evinced in predicting future events, or the skillful ambiguity in which they

so couched their responses as to be able to preserve their influence whatever might be the result.

Let them show the former things what they be - The idea in this passage seems to be, ‹Let them foretell the entire series of events; let them predict in their order, the things which shall first occur, as well as those which shall finally happen. Let them not select merely an isolated and unconnected event in futurity, but let them declare those which shall have a mutual relation and dependency, and whose causes are now hid.‘ The argument in the passage is, that it required a far more profound knowledge to predict the serges of events as they should actually occur; to foretell their order of occur rence, than it did to foretell one single isolated occurrence. The latter, the false prophets of the pagan often undertook to do; and undoubtedly they often evinced great sagacity in it. But they never undertook to detail minutely a series of occurrences, and to state the order in which they would happen. In the Scriptures, it is the common way to foretell the order of events, or a series of transactions pertaining often to many individuals or nations, and stretching far into futurity. And it is perfectly manifest that none could do this but God (compare Isaiah 46:10).

Or declare us things for to come - Declare any event that is to occur; anything in the future. If they cannot predict the order of things, or a series of events, let them clearly foretell any single event in futurity.

Verse 23

That we may know that ye are gods - The prediction of future events is the highest evidence of omniscience, and of course of divinity. In this passage it is admitted that if they could do it, it would prove that they were worthy of adoration; and it is demanded, that if they were gods they should be able to make such a prediction as would demonstrate that they were invested with a divine nature.

Yea, do good, or do evil - Do something; show that you have some power; either defend your friends, or prostrate your foes; accomplish something - anything, good or bad, that shall prove that you have power. This is said in opposition to the character which is usually given to idols in the Scriptures - that they were dumb, deaf, dead, inactive, powerless (see Psalm 95:1-11) The command here to ‹do evil,‘ means to punish their enemies, or to inflict vengeance on their foes; and the idea is, that they had no power to do anything; either to do good to their worshippers, or harm to their enemies; and that thus they showed that they were no gods. The same

idea is expressed in Jeremiah 10:3-5: ‹They (idols) are upright as the palm-tree, but speak not; they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good.‘

That we may be dismayed - (See the note at Isaiah 41:10). The word ‹we‘ here refers to those who were the friends and worshippers of Yahweh. ‹That I, Yahweh, and my friends and worshippers, may be alarmed, and afraid of what idols may be able to do.‘ God and his people were regarded as the foes of idols, and God here calls on them to prove that there is any reason why he and his people should be afraid of their power.

And behold it together - That we may all see it; that I and my people may have full demonstration of your power.

Verse 24

Behold, ye are of nothing - Margin, ‹Worse than nothing.‘ This refers to idols; and the idea is, that they were utterly vain and powerless; they were as unable to render aid to their worshippers as absolute nothingness would be, and all their confidence in them was vain and foolish.

And your work - All that you do, or all that it is pretended that you do.

Of nought - Margin, ‹Worse than a viper.‘ The word used here in the common Hebrew text (אפע *'epaʿ*) occurs in no other place. Gesenius supposes that this is a corrupt reading for אפס *'epes* (nothing), and so our translators have regarded it, and in this opinion most expositors agree. Hahn has adopted this reading in his Hebrew Bible. The Jewish rabbis suppose generally that the word אפע *'epaʿ* is the same word as אפעה *'ephʿeh* a viper, according to the reading in the margin. But this interpretation is contrary to the connection, as well as the ancient versions. The Vulgate and Chaldee render it, ‹Of nought.‘ The Syriac renders it, ‹Your works are of the sword.‘ This is probably one of the few instances in which there has been a corruption of the Hebrew text (compare Isaiah 40:17; Isaiah 41:12, Isaiah 41:19).

An abomination is he that chooseth you - They who select idols as the object of worship, and offer to them homage, are regarded as abominable by God.

Verse 25

I have raised up one - In the previous verses God had shown that the idols had no power of predicting future events. He stakes, so to speak, the question of his divinity on that point, and the whole controversy between

him and them is to be decided by the inquiry whether they had the power of foretelling what would come to pass. He here urges his claims to divinity on this ground, that he had power to foretell future events. In illustration of this, he appeals to the fact that he had raised up, that is, in purpose, or would afterward raise up Cyrus, in accordance with his predictions, and in such a way that it would be distinctly seen that he had this power of foretelling future events. To see the force of this argument, it must be remembered that the Jews are contemplated as in Babylon, and near the close of their captivity; that God by the prophets, and especially by Isaiah, distinctly foretold the fact that he would raise up Cyrus to be their deliverer; that these predictions were uttered at least a hundred and fifty years before the time of their fulfillment; and that they would then have abundant evidence that they were accomplished. To these recorded predictions and to their fulfillment, God here appeals, and designs that in that future time when they should be in exile, his people should have evidence that He was worthy of their entire confidence, and that even the pagan should see that Yahweh was the true God, and that the idols were nothing. The personage referred to here is undoubtedly Cyrus (see the notes at Isaiah 41:2; compare Isaiah 45:1).

From the north - In Isaiah 41:2, he is said to have been raised up ‹from the east.‘ Both were true. Cyrus was born in Persia, in the country called in the Scriptures ‹the east,‘ but he early went to Media, and came from Media under the direction of his uncle, Cyaxares, when he attacked and subdued Babylon. Media was situated on the north and northeast of Babylon.

From the rising of the sun - The east - the land of the birth of Cyrus.

Shall he call upon my name - This expression means, probably, that he should acknowledge Yahweh to be the true God, and recognize him as the source of all his success. This he did in his proclamation respecting the restoration of the Jews to their own land: ‹Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, Yahweh, God of heaven, hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth‘ Ezra 1:2. There is no decided evidence that Cyrus regarded himself as a worshipper of Yahweh, or that he was a pious man, but he was brought to make a public recognition of him as the true God, and to feel that he owed the success of his arms to him.

And he shall come upon princes - Upon the kings of the nations against whom he shall make war (see Isaiah 41:2-3). The word rendered here ‹princes‘ (from סגן *seggen* or סגן ro n *sâgân*), denotes properly a

deputy, a prefect, a governor, or one under another, and is usually applied to the governors of provinces, or the Babyionian princes, or magistrates Jeremiah 51:23, Jeremiah 51:28, Jeremiah 51:57; Ezekiel 23:6, Ezekiel 23:12, Ezekiel 23:33; Daniel 3:2, Daniel 3:27; Daniel 6:8. It is sometimes applied, however, to the chiefs and rulers in Jerusalem in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah Ezra 9:2; Nehemiah 2:16; Nehemiah 4:8, Nehemiah 4:13; Nehemiah 5:7. Here it is used as a general term; and the sense is, that he would tread down and subdue the kings and princes of the nations that he invaded.

As upon mortar - (See the note at Isaiah 10:6).

Verse 26

Who hath declared from the beginning - The meaning of this passage is, ‹there is no one among the soothsayers, and the worshippers of idols, who has predicted the birth, the character, and the conquests of Cyrus. There is among the pagan no recorded prediction on the subject, as there is among the Jews, that when he shall have come, it may be said that a prediction is accomplished.‘

And before-time - Formerly; before the event occurred.

That we may say - That it may be said; that there may be evidence, or reason for the affirmation.

He is righteous - The words ‹he is‘ are not in the Hebrew original is simply ‹righteous‘ (צדיק *tsaddîyq*), just, that is, it is just, or true; the prediction is fulfilled. It does not refer to the character of God, but to the certainty of the fulfillment of the prediction.

There is none that showeth - There is no one among the worshippers of false gods, the soothsayers and necromancers, that has predicted these events.

None that heareth your words - There is no one that has heard such a prediction among you.

Verse 27

The first shall say to Zion - This translation is unhappy. It does not convey any clear meaning, nor is it possible from the translation to conjecture what the word ‹first‘ refers to. The correct rendering undoubtedly is, ‹I first said to Zion;‘ and the sense is, ‹I, Yahweh, first gave to Zion the announcement of these things. I predicted the restoration of the Jews to their own land, and the raising up of the man who should deliver them; and I only have uttered the prophecies respecting the time and

circumstances in which these events would occur.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹I will first give notice to Zion, and I will comfort Jerusalem in the way.‘ The Chaldee renders it ‹The words of consolation which the prophets have uttered respecting Zion in the beginning, lo, they are about to come to pass.‘ The sense of the passage is, that no one of the idol-gods, or their prophets, had predicted these events. The first intimation of them had been by Yahweh, and this had been made to Zion, and designed for its consolation.

Behold, behold them - Lo, these events are about to come to pass. Zion, or Jerusalem, was to behold them, for they were intended to effect its deliverance, and secure its welfare. The words ‹Zion‘ and ‹Jerusalem‘ here seem intended to denote the Jewish people in general, or to refer to Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish nation. The intimation had been given in the capital of the nation, and thence to the entire people.

And I will give - Or rather, I give, or I have given. The passage means, that the hearer of the good tidings of the raising up of a deliverer should be sent to the Jewish people. To them the joyful news was announced long before the event; the news of the raising up of such a man - an event of so much interest to them - was made to them long before the pagan had any intimation of it; and it would occur as the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy recorded among the Jews. The prophet refers here, doubtless, in the main, to his own prophecies uttered so long before the event would occur, and which would be distinctly known when they would be in exile in Babylon.

Verse 28

For I beheld - I looked upon the pagan world, among all the pretended prophets, and the priests of pagan idolatry.

And there was no man - No man among them who could predict these future events.

No counselor - No one qualified to give counsel, or that could anticipate by his sagacity what would take place.

That, when I asked of them - In the manner referred to in this chapter. There is no one of whom it could be inquired what would take place in future times.

Could answer a word - They were unable to discern what would come to pass, or to predict the events which are referred to here.

Verse 29

Behold, they are all vanity - They are unable to predict future events; they are unable to defend their friends, or to injure their enemies. This is the

conclusion of the trial or debate (notes, Isaiah 41:1), and that conclusion is, that they were utterly destitute of strength, and that they were entirely unworthy of confidence and regard.

Their molten images - (See the note at Isaiah 40:19).

Are wind - Have no solidity or power. The doctrine of the whole chapter is, that confidence should be reposed in God, and in him alone. He is the friend of his people, and he is able to protect them. He will deliver them from the hand of all their enemies; and he will be always their God, protector, and guide. The idols of the pagan have no power; and it is folly, as well as sin, to trust in them, or to suppose that they can aid their friend.

It may be added, also, that it is equally vain to trust in any being for salvation but God. He only is able to protect and defend us; and it is a source of unspeakable consolation now, as it was in times past, that he is the friend of his people; and that, in times of deepest darkness and distress, he can raise up deliverers, as he did Cyrus, and will in his own way and time rescue his people from all their calamities.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 42

Introduction

This chapter is a continuation of the same general subject which was presented in the two previous chapters. It is to be regarded (see the analysis of Isaiah 42:1). The chapter is, as I apprehend, occupied mainly, or entirely, with a description of the character and work of the Messiah. The evidence of this will be adduced in the notes at the chapter itself. The design for which the Messiah is introduced is to convince the Jews that God was their protector, and that it was his purpose that the long-promised Prince and Saviour should yet arise from their restored and recovered nation. Of course, if this was to occur, their national existence would be preserved. There is, therefore, in the chapter, a reference to their return to their own land, though the main scope relates to the Messiah.

The chapter may be regarded as divided into two portions. In the first Isaiah 42:1-9, the prophet describes the Messiah. Yahweh is introduced as speaking, and in Isaiah 42:1-4 he describes his character. He is the servant of Yahweh, endowed with the fullness of the Divine Spirit; meek, and lowly, and gentle, and kind; unobtrusive and noiseless in his movements, and yet securing the conquest of truth. Yahweh then Isaiah 42:5-7, addresses the Messiah himself directly, and states the object for which he had appointed him, to be a light to the Gentiles, to open the eyes of the blind, and to be the pledge of the covenant between him and his people. In Isaiah 42:8-9, Yahweh turns to the people for whom the prophecy was given, and awakens their attention to the subject, reminds them of the predictions which had been made, and says that the fulfillment of this prophecy, like all former predictions, would demonstrate his superiority over idols, and show that he was the true God.

The second part of the chapter Isaiah 42:10-12Yahweh calls on the inhabitants of all the earth to praise and glorify his name, and makes his appeal to those who are upon the sea, to the inhabitants of the isles, to the wilderness and solitary places, to the villages and the inhabitants of the rock, as all having occasion to rejoice on account of this glorious event.

(2) In Isaiah 42:13-17, Yahweh speaks particularly of the deliverance of his people and of the certainty of its being accomplished. He had long

delayed to interpose; but now he would come forth in his strength, and annihilate his foes and redeem his people, and make darkness light before them, while all the worshippers of idols should be left without defense or aid.

(3) The people of Israel are new addressed directly, and their character and duty presented Isaiah 42:18-25. They are addressed as a people blind and deaf, and are admonished to rouse themselves, and to strive to attain to true knowledge. Notwithstanding all that God had done for them, and all his gracious interposition, they had hardened their hearts, and shut their eyes, and had steeled themselves against every good impression. For this God had punished them. He had given them as a spoil to their enemies, and overwhelmed them in grievous and long-continued calamities. They were now called on to attend to his instructions and promises, and henceforward be an obedient people.

Verse 1

Behold - This word is designed to call attention to the person that is immediately referred to. It is an intimation that the subject is of importance, and should command their regard.

My servant - This phrase denotes properly anyone who acknowledges or worships God; anyone who is regarded as serving or obeying him. It is a term which may be applied to anyone who is esteemed to be a pious man, or who is obedient to the commands of God, and is often applied to the people of God Genesis 50:17; 1 Chronicles 6:49; 2 Chronicles 24:9; Daniel 6:20; Daniel 9:2; Titus 1:1; James 1:1; 1 Peter 2:16; Revelation 7:3; Revelation 15:3. The word ‹servant‘ may be applied either to Isaiah, Cyrus, or the Messiah; and the question to whom it refers here is to be decided, not by the mere use of the term, but by the connection, and by the characteristics which are ascribed to him who is here designated as the ‹servant‘ of Yahweh. There have been no less than five different views in regard to the personage here referred to; and as in the interpretation of the whole prophecy in this chapter, everything depends on this question, it is of importance briefly to examine the opinions which have been entertained.

I. One has been that it refers to the Jewish people. The translators of the Septuagint evidently so regarded it. They render it, Ἰακώβ ὁ παῖς μοῦ, κ.τ.λ. *Iakōb ho pais mou etc* - ‹Jacob is my servant, I will uphold him; Israel is my

chosen one, my soul hath embraced him.‘ Jarchi also so interprets the passage, but so modifies it as to understand by it ‹the righteous in Israel;‘ and among the moderns, Rosenmuller, Paulus, and some others adopt this interpretation. The principal reason alleged for this interpretation is, that the phrase ‹servant of Yahweh,‘ is used elsewhere in a collective sense, and applied to the Jewish people. Rosenmuller appeals particularly to Isaiah 41:8-9; to Isaiah 42:19, and to Isaiah 44:21; Isaiah 45:4; Isaiah 48:20; and argues that it is to be presumed that the prophet used the phrase in a uniform manner, and must therefore be supposed here also to refer to the Jewish people. But the objections are insuperable.

1. In Isaiah 42:6, the servant of Yahweh here referred to, is plainly distinguished from the people, where God says, ‹I will give thee for a covenant of (with) the people.‘

2. The description which the prophet gives here of the character of the ‹servant‘ of Yahweh, as meek, mild, gentle, quiet, and humble Isaiah 42:2-3, is remarkably unlike the character which the prophet elsewhere gives of the people, and is as remarkably like the character which is everywhere given of the Messiah.

3. It was not true of the Jewish people that they were appointed, as is here said of the ‹servant‘ of God Isaiah 42:7, to ‹open the blind eyes, and to bring the prisoners out of prison.‘ This is evidently applicable only to a teacher, a deliverer, or a guide; and in no sense can it be applied to the collected Jewish people.

II. A second opinion has been, that by the ‹servant of Yahweh‘ Cyrus was intended. Many of the Jewish interpreters have adopted this view, and not a few of the German critics. The principal argument for this opinion is, that what precedes, and what follows, relates particularly to Cyrus; and an appeal is made particularly to Isaiah 45:1, where he is called the Anointed, and to Isaiah 44:28, where he is called the Shepherd. But to this view also, the objections are obvious.

1. The name ‹servant of Yahweh,‘ is, it is believed, nowhere given to Cyrus.

2. The description here by no means agrees with Cyrus. That he was distinguished for justice and equity is admitted (see the note at Isaiah 41:2), but the expressions used here, that God would ‹put his Spirit upon him, that he should not cry, nor lift up his voice, so that it should be heard in the streets,‘ is one that is by no means applicable to a man whose life was spent mainly in the tumults of war, and in the pomp and carnage of battle and conquest. How can this description be applied to a man who trod down nations, and subdued kings, and who shed rivers of blood?

III. Others suppose that the prophet refers to himself. Among the Jews, Aben Ezra, and among others, Grottoes and Doderlin held this opinion. The only reason for this is, that in Isaiah 20:3, the name ‹servant‘ of Yahweh is given to Isaiah. But the objections to this are plain, and insuperable.

1. Nothing can be urged, as we have seen, from the mere use of the word ‹servant.‘

2. It is inconceivable that a humble prophet like Isaiah should have applied to himself a description expressive of so much importance as is here attributed to the servant of God. How could the establishment of a new covenant with the people of God, and the conversion of the pagan nations Isaiah 42:6-7, be ascribed to Isaiah? And in what sense is it true that he was appointed to open the eyes of the blind, and to lead the prisoners from the prison?

IV. A fourth opinion, which it may be proper just to notice, is that which is advocated by Gesenius, that the phrase here refers to the prophets taken collectively. But this opinion is one that scarce deserves a serious refutation. For,

1. The name ‹servant of Yahweh,‘ is never given to any collection of the prophets.

2. Any such collection of the prophets is a mere creature of the fancy. When did they exist? Who composed the collection? And how could the name servant designate them?

3. Of what collection of people could it be imagined that the description here given could be applied, that such a collection should not strive, nor cry; that it should be a covenant of the people, and that it should be the means of the conversion of the Gentile world?

V. The fifth opinion, therefore is, that it refers to the Messiah; and the direct arguments in favor of this, independent of the fact that it is applicable to no other one, are so strong as to put it beyond debate. A few of them may be referred to.

1. This is the interpretation of the Chaldee Paraphrase, which has retained the exposition of the ancient and early Jews. ‹Behold my servant, the Messiah (עבדי משיתא *ʿabeddîy meshîythâ'*) I will cause him to come near; my chosen.‘

2. There are such applications of the passage in the New Testament to the Lord Jesus, as to leave no room to doubt that, in view of the sacred writers, the passage had this reference. Thus, in Luke 2:32, he is spoken of as ‹a light to lighten the Gentiles‘ (compare Isaiah 42:6). In Acts 26:18, Paul speaks of him as given to the Gentiles,‘ to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light‘ (compare Isaiah 42:7). In Matthew 3:17, God says of the Redeemer, ‹This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,‘ - language remarkably similar to the passage before us Isaiah 42:1, where he says, ‹mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.‘ And the whole inquiry is put to rest by the fact that Matthew Matthew 12:17-21 expressly and directly applies the passage to the Lord Jesus, and says that it was fulfilled in him.

3. It may be added, that the entire description is one that is exactly and entirely applicable to the Lord Jesus. It is as applicable as if it had been made after he had appeared among people, and as if it were the language of biography, and not of prophecy. It is an exceedingly beautiful and tender description of the Son of God; nor can there be any objection to its application to him, except what arises from a general purpose not to apply any part of the Old Testament to him, if it can be avoided. I shall regard the passage, therefore, as applicable to him, and him alone; and suppose that

the design of the Spirit here in introducing this reference to the Messiah is, to comfort the hearts of the exile Jews with the assurance that they must be restored to their own land, because it was from them that the Messiah was to proceed, and from them that the true religion was to be spread around the world.

Whom I uphold - whom I sustain, or protect; that is, who is the object of my affection and care. In Matthew 3:17, the expression is, ‹in whom I am well pleased.‘ And so in Matthew 12:18, it is rendered, ‹my servant, whom I have chosen.‘

Mine elect - My chosen one; or the one whom I have selected to accomplish my great purposes. It implies that God had designated or appointed him for the purpose. In Matthew 12:18, it is rendered ‹my beloved.‘ It implies that he was the object of the divine favor, and that God had chosen or appointed him to perform the work of a Messiah.

In whom my soul delighteth - This language is applied the Lord Jesus in Matthew 3:17; Matthew 12:18. God regarded him as qualified for his work: he approved of what he did; he was well pleased with all his words, and thoughts, and plans. The word ‹soul‘ here, is equivalent to I myself - in whom I delight.

I have put my Spirit upon him - (Compare John 3:34): ‹For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.‘ The Lord Jesus was divine, yet as Mediator he is everywhere represented as ‹the anointed‘ of God, or as endowed with the influences of the Holy Spirit (compare the note at Isaiah 11:2). See also Isaiah 61:1, where the Messiah says of himself, ‹The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because be hath anointed me‘ (compare Luke 4:18). Before he entered upon his public ministry, the Spirit of God descended on him at his baptism Matthew 3:17, and in all his work he showed that he was endowed abundantly with that Spirit.

He shall bring forth judgment - The word ‹judgment‘ (מִשְׁפָּט *mishpâṭ*) is used in a great variety of significations. It properly means judgment, that is, the act of judging Leviticus 19:15; the place of judgment Ecclesiastes 3:16; a cause, or suit before a judge Numbers 28:5; a sentence of a judge 1 Kings 3:28; and thence guilt or crime, for which one is judged Jeremiah 51:9. It also means right, rectitude, justice; a law, or statute; a claim, privilege, or due; also manner, custom, or fashion; or an ordinance, or institution. Here it is used, probably, in the sense of the order or institution

that would be introduced under the Messiah; and it means that he would set up or establish the true religion among the Gentiles.

To the Gentiles - This is one of the many declarations which occur in Isaiah, that the Messiah would extend the true religion to pagan nations, and that they should be brought to participate in its privileges.

Verse 2

He shall not cry - He will not make a clamor or noise; he will not be boisterous, in the manner of a man of strife and contention.

Nor lift up - That is, his voice.

Nor cause his voice to be heard in the street - He shall not t use loud and angry words, as they do who are engaged in conflict, but all his teaching shall be gentle, humble, and mild. How well this agrees with the character of the Lord Jesus it is not necessary to pause to show. He was uniformly unostentatious, modest, and retiring. He did not even desire that his deeds should be blazoned abroad, but sought to be withdrawn from the world, and to pursue his humble path in perfect peace.

Verse 3

A bruised reed - The word ‹reed‘ means the cane or calamus which grows up in marshy or wet places (Isaiah 36:6; see the note at Isaiah 43:24). The word, therefore, literally denotes that which is fragile, weak, easily waved by the wind, or broken down; and stands in contrast with a lofty and firm tree (compare Matthew 11:7): ‹What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?‘ The word here, therefore, may be applied to people who are conscious of feebleness and sin; that are moved and broken by calamity; that feel that they have no strength to bear up against the ills of life. The word ‹bruised‘ (רצוץ *râtsûts*) means that which is broken or crushed, but not entirely broken off. As used here, it may denote those who are in themselves naturally feeble, and who have been crushed or broken down by a sense of sin, by calamity, or by affliction. We speak familiarly of crushing or breaking down by trials; and the phrase here is intensive and emphatic, denoting those who are at best like a reed - feeble and fragile; and who, in addition to that, have been broken and oppressed by a sense of their sins, or by calamity.

Shall he not break - Shall he not break off. He will not carry on the work of destruction, and entirely crush or break it. And the idea is, that he will not make those already broken down with a sense of sin and with calamity, more wretched. He will not deepen their afflictions, or augment

their trials, or multiply their sorrows. The sense is, that he will have an affectionate regard for the broken-hearted, the humble, the penitent, and the afflicted. Luther has well expressed this: ‹He does not cast away, nor crush, nor condemn the wounded in conscience, those who are terrified in view of their sins; the weak in faith and practice, but watches over and cherishes them, makes them whole, and affectionately embraces them.‘ The expression is parallel to that which occurs in Isaiah 61:1, where it is said of the Messiah, ‹He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted;‘ and to the declaration in Isaiah 50:4, where it is said, ‹that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.‘

The smoking flax - The word used here denotes flax, and then a wick that is made of it. The word rendered ‹smoking‘ (כהה *kēhâh*) means that which is weak, small, thin, feeble; then that which is just ready to go out, or to be extinguished; and the phrase refers literally to the expiring wick of a lamp, when the oil is almost consumed, and when it shines with a feeble and dying luster. It may denote here the condition of one who is feeble and disheartened, and whose love to God seems almost ready to expire. And the promise that he will not extinguish or quench that, means that he would cherish, feed, and cultivate it; he would supply it with grace, as with oil to cherish the dying flame, and cause it to be enkindled, and to rise with a high and steady brilliancy. The whole passage is descriptive of the Redeemer, who nourishes the most feeble piety in the hearts of his people, and who will not suffer true religion in the soul ever to become wholly extinct. It may seem as if the slightest breath of misfortune or opposition would extinguish it forever; it may be like the dying flame that hangs on the point of the wick, but if there be true religion it will not be extinguished, but will be enkindled to a pure and glowing flame, and it will yet rise high, and burn brightly.

He shall bring forth judgment - (See Isaiah 42:1). The word ‹judgment‘ here evidently denotes the true religion; the laws, institutions, and appointments of God.

Unto truth - Matthew Matthew 12:29 renders this, ‹unto victory.‘ The meaning in Isaiah is, that he shall establish his religion according to truth; he shall faithfully announce the true precepts of religion, and secure their ascendency among mankind. It shall overcome all falsehood, and all idolatry, and shall obtain a final triumph in all nations. Thus explained, it is

clear that Matthew has retained the general idea of the passage, though he has not quoted it literally.

Verse 4

He shall not fail - He shall not be weak, feeble, or disheartened. However much there may be that shall tend to discourage, yet his purpose is fixed, and he will pursue it with steadiness and ardor until the great work shall be fully accomplished. There may be an allusion in the Hebrew word here (יכהה *yîkheh*) to that which is applied to the flax (כהה *kēhâh*); and the idea may be that he shall not become in his purposes like the smoking, flickering, dying flame of a lamp. There shall never be any indication, even amidst all embarrassments, that it is his intention to abandon his plan of extending the true religion through all the world. Such also should be the fixed and determined purposes of his people. Their zeal should never fail; their ardor should never grow languid.

Nor be discouraged - Margin, ‹Broken.‘ The Hebrew word ירוץ *yârûts* may be derived either from רצץ *râtsats* to break, to break in pieces; or from רוץ *rûts* to run, to move hastily, to rush upon any one. Our translators have adopted the former. Gesenius also supposes that this is the true interpretation of the word, and that it means, that he would not be broken, that is, checked in his zeal, or discouraged by any opposition. The latter interpretation is preferred by Vitringa, Rosenmuller, Hengstenberg, and others. The Chaldee renders it, ‹Shall not labor,‘ that is, shall not be fatigued, or discouraged. The Septuagint renders it, ‹He shall shine out, and not be broken.‘ The connection seems to require the sense which our translators have given to it, and according to this, the meaning is, ‹he shall not become broken in spirit, or discouraged; he shall persevere amidst all opposition and embarrassment, until he shall accomplish his purposes.‘ We have a similar phraseology when we speak of a man‘s being heart-broken.

Till he have set judgment - Until he has secured the prevalence of the true religion in all the world.

And the isles - Distant nations (see the note at Isaiah 41:1); the pagan nations. The expression is equivalent to saying that the Gentiles would be desirous of receiving the religion of the Messiah, and would wait for it (see the notes at Isaiah 2:3).

Shall wait - They shall be dissatisfied with their own religions, and see that their idol-gods are unable to aid them; and they shall be in a posture of waiting for some new religion that shall meet their needs. It cannot mean

that they shall wait for it, in the sense of their already having a knowledge of it, but that their being sensible that their own religions cannot save them may be represented as a condition of waiting for some better system. It has been true, as in the Sandwich Islands, that the pagan have been so dissatisfied with their own religion as to east away their idols, and to be without any religion, and thus to be in a waiting posture for some new and better system. And it may be true yet that the pagan shall become extensively dissatisfied with their idolatry; that they shall be convinced that some better system is necessary, and that they may thus be prepared to welcome the gospel when it shall be proposed to them. It may be that in this manner God intends to remove the now apparently insuperable obstacles to the spread of the gospel in the pagan world. The Septuagint renders this, ‹And in his name shall the Gentiles trust,‘ which form has been retained by Matthew Matthew 12:21.

His law - His commands, the institutions of his religion. The word ‹law‘ is often used in the Scriptures to denote the whole of religion.

Verse 5

Thus saith God the Lord - This verse commences a new form of discourse. It is still Yahweh who speaks; but in the previous verses he had spoken of the Messiah in the third person; here he is introduced as speaking to him directly. He introduces the discourse by showing that he is the Creator and Lord of all things. The object of his dwelling on this seems to have been, to show that he had power to sustain the Messiah in the work to which he had called him; and to secure for him respect as having been commissioned by him who had formed the heavens and the earth, and who ruled over all. He shows that he had power to accomplish all that he had promised: and he seeks thus to elevate and confirm the hopes of the people with the assurance of their deliverance and salvation.

And stretched them out - The heavens are often represented as stretched out as a veil (Genesis 1:6, Hebrew) or as an expanse that can be rolled up (see the note at Isaiah 34:4), or as a tent for the appropriate dwelling-place of God (see the note at Isaiah 40:22). His great power and glory are indicated by the fact that he has stretched out what to us appears a vast expanse over our heads. On the grammatical construction of the word which occurs here in the Hebrew, see Rosenmuller *in loc*.

He that spread forth the earth - He stretched it out as a plain - retaining the idea which was so common among the ancients that the earth

was a vast plain, reaching from one end of the heavens to the other. The words, however, which are used here are not inconsistent with the idea that the earth is a sphere, since it may still be represented as stretched out, or expanded to a vast extent. The main idea in the passage is not to teach the form in which the earth is made, but to show that it has been made by God.

And that which cometh out of it - The productions of the earth - the trees, shrubs, grain, etc. As the verb to stretch out cannot be applied to these, some verb must be understood; as he produced, or caused to grow.

He that giveth breath and spirit to them - This refers, doubtless, to beasts as well as to people; and the idea is, that God is the source of life to all the creatures that live and move on the earth. The argument in the passage is, that as God is the creator and upholder of all; as he has given life to all, and has the universe entirely under his control, he has a right to appoint whom he will to be the medium of his favors to people, and to demand that suitable respect shall be shown to the Messiah whom he has designated for this work.

Verse 6

I the Lord have called thee in righteousness - The phrase ‹in righteousness‘ has been very differently understood by different expositors (see the note at Isaiah 41:10). The most probable meaning may be, ‹I have done it as a righteous and just God, or in the accomplishment of my righteous purposes. I am the just moral governor of the universe, and to accomplish my purposes of justice and fidelity, I have designated thee to this work.‘ Lowth has well rendered it, ‹For a righteous purpose.‘ In this work all was righteousness. God was righteous, who appointed him; it was because he was righteous, and could not save without a mediator and an atonement, that he sent him into the world; he selected one who was eminently righteous to accomplish his purpose; and he came that he might establish righteousness on the earth, and confirm the just government of God (see Isaiah 42:21).

And will hold thine hand - I will take thee by the hand, as one does who guides and leads another. The phrase denotes the same as to guard, or keep - as we protect a child by taking him by the hand.

And give thee for a covenant - This is evidently an abbreviated form of expression, and the meaning is, ‹I will give or appoint thee as the medium, or means by which a covenant shall be made with the people; or a mediator of the new covenant which God is about to establish with men‘ (see Isaiah

49:8). A similar expression occurs in Micah 5:5, where it is said of the Messiah, ‹and this man shall be the peace;‘ that is, he shall be the source of peace, or peace shall be established and maintained by him. So in Ephesians 2:14, it is said of him, ‹he is our peace.‘

Of the people - It has been doubted whether this means the Jewish people, or the Gentiles. Grotius, Hengstenberg, Vitringa, and others understand it of the Jews; Rosenmuller and others, of the Gentiles. It is not easy to determine which is the correct interpretation. But the meaning, as I apprehend, is, not that he would confirm the ancient covenant with the descendants of Abraham, as Hengstenberg and Vitringa suppose, but that his covenant would be established with all, with both Jews and Gentiles. According to this, it will refer to the Jews, not as Jews, or as already interested in the covenant, but as constituting one portion of the world; and the whole expression will mean, that his religion will be extended to Jews and Gentiles: that is, to the whole world.

For a light of the Gentiles - (See Luke 2:32). ‹Light‘ is the emblem of knowledge, instruction, and of the true religion. The Messiah is often called ‹light,‘ and the ‹light of the world‘ (see Matthew 4:16; compare the note at Isaiah 9:2; John 1:4, John 1:7, John 1:9; John 3:19; John 8:12; John 9:5; John 12:35, John 12:46; Revelation 21:23). This is one of the numerous declarations which occur in Isaiah, that the religion of the Messiah would be extended to the pagan world; and that they, as well as the Jews, would be brought to partake of its privileges.

Verse 7

To open the blind eyes - This is equivalent to saying that he would impart instruction to those who were ignorant. It relates to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles. He would acquaint them with God, and with the way of salvation. The condition of the world is often represented as one of darkness and blindness. Men see not their true character; they see not their real condition; they are ignorant of God, and of the truths pertaining to their future existence; and they need, therefore, some one who shall enlighten, and sanctify, and save them.

To bring out the prisoners from the prison - (Compare Isaiah 61:1-2). This evidently refers to a spiritual deliverance, though the language is derived from deliverance from a prison. It denotes that he would rescue those who were confined in mental darkness by sin; and that their deliverance from the thraldom and darkness of sin would be as wonderful

as if a prisoner should be delivered suddenly from a dark cell, and be permitted to go forth and breathe the pure air of freedom. Such is the freedom which the gospel imparts; nor can there be a more striking description of its happy effects on the minds and hearts of darkened and wretched people (compare 1 Peter 2:9).

Verse 8

I am the Lord - I am Yahweh. Here is also a change in the address. In the previous verses, God had addressed the Messiah. Here he turns to the people, and assures them that he is the only true God, and that he will not suffer the praise that is due to him to be given to any other, or to any graven image. The name Yahweh signifies being, or essential existence (see the note at Isaiah 1:9). It is a name which is given to none but the true God, and which is everywhere in the Scriptures used to distinguish him from all others.

That is my name - That is the name which I have chosen by which to distinguish myself from all idols, and which I regard as appropriately expressive of my existence and perfections. Thus it is used in Psalm 83:18 (compare Psalm 96:5). "And my glory." The glory, honor, or praise that is due to me.

Will I not give - I will not allow it to ascribed to another; I will not allow another to assume or receive the honor which is due to me.

To another - To any other; whether it be man, or whether it be an idol. God claims that all appropriate honors should be rendered to him, and that men should cherish no opinions, maintain no doctrines, indulge in no feelings, that would be derogatory to the honor of his name. This declaration is designed to counteract the propensity everywhere manifest to attribute to man that which belongs to God, or to ascribe to our own wisdom, skill, or power, that which he alone can accomplish.

Neither my praise - The praise which is due to me. He would not permit graven images to receive the praise of having done that which he himself had accomplished.

Verse 9

Behold, the former things are come to pass - That is, the former things which he had foretold. This is the evidence to which he appeals in proof that he alone was God, and this is the basis on which he calls upon them to believe that what he had predicted in regard to future things would also

come to pass. He had by his prophets foretold events which had now been fulfilled, and this should lead them to confide in him alone as the true God.

And new things do I declare - Things pertaining to future events, relating to the coming of the Messiah, and to the universal prevalence of his religion in the world.

Before they spring forth - There is here a beautiful image. The metaphor is taken from plants and flowers, the word צמח *tsâmach* properly referring to the springing up of plants, or to their sending out shoots, buds, or flowers. The phrase literally means, ‹before they begin to germinate,‘ that is, before there are any indications of life, or growth in the plant. The sense is, that God predicted the future events before there was anything by which it might be inferred that such occurrences would take place. It was not done by mere sagacity - as men like Burke and Canning may sometimes predict future events with great probability by marking certain political indications or developments. God did this when there were no such indications, and when it must have been done by mere omniscience. In this respect, all his predictions differ from the conjectures of man, and from all the reasonings which are founded on mere sagacity.

Verse 10

Sing unto the Lord a new song - It is common, as we have seen, to celebrate the goodness of God in a hymn of praise on the manifestation of any special act of mercy (see the notes at Isaiah 12:1-6; Isaiah 25:1-12; 26) Here the prophet calls upon all people to celebrate the divine mercy in a song of praise in view of his goodness in providing a Redeemer. The sentiment is, that God‘s goodness in providing a Saviour demands the thanksgiving of all the world.

A new song - A song hitherto unsung; one that shall be expressive of the goodness of God in this new manifestation of his mercy. None of the hymns of praise that had been employed to express his former acts of goodness would appropriately express this. The mercy was so great that it demanded a song expressly made for the occasion.

And his praise frown the end of the earth - From all parts of the earth. Let the most distant nations who are to be interested in this great

Ye that go down to the sea - That is, traders, navigators, merchants, seamen; such as do business in the great waters. The sense is, that they would be interested in the plan of mercy through a Redeemer; and hence, they are called on to celebrate the goodness of God (compare the notes at

Isaiah 60:5). This is referred to by the prophet, first, because of the great multitude who thus go down to the sea; and, secondly, because their conversion will have so important an influence in diffusing the true religion to distant nations.

And all that is therein - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹The fullness thereof.‘ All that fill it; that is, either in ships, or by dwelling on the islands and coasts. The meaning is, that all who were upon the sea - the completeness, the wholeness of the maritime population, being equally interested with all others in the great salvation, should join in celebrating the goodness of God.

The isles - A large portion of the inhabitants of the world are dwellers upon islands. In modern times, some of the most signal displays of the divine mercy, and some of the most remarkable conversions to Christianity, have been there. In the Sandwich Islands, and in Ceylon, God has poured out his Spirit, and their inhabitants have been among the first in the pagan world to embrace the gospel.

Verse 11

Let the wilderness - (See the note at Isaiah 35:1). The word here denotes the most uncultivated countries, intimating that even the most rude and barbarous people would have occasion to rejoin, and would be interested in the mercy of God.

And the cities thereof - To us there seems to be something incongruous in speaking of the ‹cities‘ in a ‹wilderness.‘ But we are to remember that the Hebrews gave the name wilderness or desert to those regions that were mostly uncultivated, or sparsely inhabited. They were places that were chiefly devoted to pasturage, and not cultivated by the plow, or regions of vast plains of sand and far-extended barrenness, with here and there an oasis on which a city might be built. Josephus, speaking of the desert or wilderness lying between Jerusalem and Jericho enumerates several villages or towns in it, showing that though it was mainly a waste, yet that it was not wholly without towns or inhabitants. We are to remember also that large towns or cities for commercial purposes, or thorough fares, were often built in the few fertile or advantageous places which were found in the midst of desert wastes. Thus we are told of Solomon 2 Chronicles 8:4, that ‹he built Tadmor in the wilderness;‘ and we know that Palmyra, and Bozrah, and Sela, were large cities that were built in the midst of regions that were generally to be regarded as deserts, or wastes.

The villages that Kedar doth inhabit - Where the inhabitants of Kedar dwell. Kedar was a son of Ishmael Genesis 25:13, the father of the Kedarenians or Cedrei, mentioned by Pliny (Nat. Hist. v. 2), who dwell in the vicinity of the Nabathaeans in Arabia Deserta. They often changed their place, though it would seem that they usually dwelt in the neighborhood of Petra, or Sela. The name Kedar is often given to Arabia Deserta, and the word may in some instances denote Arabia in general. The inhabitants of those countries usually dwell in tents, and lead a nomadic and wandering life.

Let the inhabitants of the rock sing - It is uncertain whether the word ‹rock‘ here (Hebrew, סלע *sela*‘ Greek Πέτραν *Petran* ‹Petra‘ or ‹rock‘) is to be regarded as a proper name, or to denote in a general sense those who dwell in the rocky part of Arabia. Sela, or Petra, was the name of the celebrated city that was the capital of Idumea (see the notes at Isaiah 16:1); and the connection here would rather lead us to suppose that this city was intended here, and that the inhabitants of the capital were called upon to join with the dwellers in the surrounding cities and villages in celebrating the goodness of God. But it may denote in general those who inhabited the desolate and stony region of Arabia Petrea, or whose home was among the cliffs of the rocks. If so, it is a call upon Arabia in general to rejoice in the mercy of God, and to give glory to him for providing a plan of redemption - an intimation that to the descendants of Ishmael the blessings of the gospel would be extended.

Let them shout from the top of the mountains - They who had taken refuge there, or who had made their permanent abode there. Vitringa supposes that the mountains of Paran are meant, which are situated on the north of Mount Sinai. The idea in the verse is, that all the dwellers in Arabia would celebrate the goodness of God, and join in praising him for his mercy in giving a deliverer. They were yet to partake of the benefits of his coming, and to have occasion of joy at his advent. It is possible that Cowper may have had this passage in his eye in the following description of the final and universal prevalence of the gospel:

The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks,
Shout to each other, sad the mountain-tops,
From distant mountains catch the flying joy:

Till nation after nation taught the strain,

Earth rolls the rapturous hosannas round.
Task.

Verse 12

Let them give glory … in the islands - (see the note at Isaiah 41:1). Let the distant regions praise God.

Verse 13

The Lord shall go forth - This and the following verses give the reasons why they should praise Yahweh. He would go forth in his might to overcome and subdue his foes, and to deliver his people. In his conquests, and in the establishment of his kingdom, all people would have occasion to rejoice and be glad.

As a mighty man - As a hero, as a warrior. Yahweh is often in the Scriptures represented as a hero, or a man of war:

Yahweh is a man of war:
Yahweh is his name. - Exodus 15:3.
Who is this King of glory?
Yahweh, strong and mighty;
Yahweh mighty in battle. - Psalm 24:8.
Compare Psalm 45:3; Isaiah 27:1; Isaiah 30:30,

He shall stir up jealousy - He shall rouse his vengeance, or his indignation. The word קנאה *qin'âh* means vengeance, or indignation, as well as jealousy. The image here is that of a warrior who rushes on impetuously to take vengeance on his foes.

He shall cry - He shall give a shout, or a loud clamor. Warriors usually entered a battle with a loud shout, designed to stimulate their own courage, and to intimidate their foes. All this language is taken from such an entrance on an engagement, and denotes the fixed determination of God to overthrow all his enemies.

Verse 14

I have long time holden my peace - This is the language of Yahweh, and it means that he had for a long time been patient and forbearing; but that now he would go forth as a warrior to overpower and destroy his foes.

I will destroy - The word used here (from נשם *nâsham*) denotes properly to breathe hard, to pant, as a woman in travail; and then to breathe hard in any manner. It here denotes the hard breathing which is indicative of anger, or a purpose to execute vengeance.

And devour at once - Margin, ‹Swallow,‘ or ‹Sup up.‘ The word שׁאף *sha'aph* means rather “to breathe hard, to pant, to blow, as in anger, or in the haste of pursuit.” The idea in the verse is, that Yahweh had for a long time restrained his anger against his foes, and had refrained from executing vengeance on them. But now he would rouse his righteous indignation, and go forth to accomplish his purposes in their destruction. All this language is descriptive of a hero or warrior; and is, of course, not to be regarded as applicable literally to God. He often uses the language of people, and speaks of his purposes under the image of human passions. But we are not to infer that the language is literally applicable to him, nor is it to be interpreted too strictly. It means, in general, that God would go forth with a fixed and settled purpose to destroy his foes.

Verse 15

I will make waste mountains - This verse denotes the utter desolation which God would bring upon his foes in his anger. The meaning of this part of the verse is, that he would spread desolation over the hills and mountains that were well watered and laid out in gardens and orchards. It was common to plant vineyards on the sides of hills and mountains; and indeed most of the mountains of Palestine and adjacent regions were cultivated nearly to the top. They were favorable to the culture of the vine and the olive; and by making terraces, the greater portion of the hills were thus rescued for purposes of agriculture. Yet an enemy or warrior marching through a land would seek to spread desolation through all its cultivated parts, and lay waste all its fields. God, therefore, represents himself as a conqueror, laying waste the cultivated portions of the country of his foes.

And dry up all their herbs - He would destroy all the grain and fruits on which they were depending for support.

And I will make the rivers islands - Or rather, dry land, or deserts. I will, in the heat of my anger, dry up the streams, so that the bottoms of those streams shall be dry land. The word rendered here ‹islands,‘ from אי *'îy* properly denotes dry land, habitable ground, as opposed to water, the sea, rivers, etc., and the signification ‹islands‘ is a secondary signification.

And I will dry up the pools - The pools on which they have been dependent for water for their flocks and herds. The sense of the whole passage is, I will bring to desolation those who worship idols, and the idols themselves. I will produce an entire change among them, as great as if I were to spread desolation over their cultivated hills, and to dry up all their

streams. The reference is probably to the great changes which God would make in the pagan world. All that flourished on Pagan ground; all that was nurtured by idolatry; all their temples, fanes, altars, shrines, should be overturned and demolished; and in all these things great and permanent changes would be produced. The time would have come when God could no longer bear with the growing abominations of the pagan nations, and when he would go forth as a conqueror to subdue all to himself.

Verse 16

And I will lead the blind - Having said in the previous verses what he would do to his enemies, God now speaks of his people. He would conduct them to their own land, as a blind people that needed a guide, and would remove whatever obstacle there was in their way. By the ‹blind‘ here, he refers doubtless to his own people. The term is applied originally to his people in captivity, as being ignorant, after their seventy years‘ exile, of the way of return to their own land. It is possible that it may have a reference to the fact, so often charged on them, that they were characteristically a stupid and spiritually blind people. But it is more probable that it is the language of tenderness rather than that of objurgation; and denotes their ignorance of the way of return, and their need of a guide, rather than their guilt, and hardness of heart. If applied to the people of God under the New Testament - as the entire strain of the prophecy seems to lead ns to conclude - then it denotes that Christians will feel their need of a leader, counselor, and guide; and that Yahweh, as a military leader, will conduct them all in a way which they did not know, and remove all obstacles from their path.

By a way that they knew not - When they were ignorant what course to take; or in a path which they did not contemplate or design. It is true of all the friends of God that they have been led in a way which they knew not. They did not mark out this course for themselves; they did not at first form the plans of life which they came ultimately to pursue; they have been led, by the providence of God, in a different path, and by the Spirit of God they have been inclined to a course which they themselves would never have chosen (compare the note at Isaiah 30:21).

I will make darkness light before them - Darkness, in the Scriptures, is the emblem of ignorance, sin, adversity, and calamity. Here it seems to be the emblem of adverse and opposing events; of calamities, persecutions, and trials. The meaning is, that God would make those events which seemed to be adverse and calamitous, the means of furthering his cause, and

promoting the spirit of the true religion, and the happiness of his people. This has been eminently the case with the persecutions which rite church has endured. The events which have been apparently most adverse, have been ultimately overruled to the best interests of the true religion. Such was the case with the persecutions under the Roman emperors, and in general such has been the case in all the persecutions which the church has been called to suffer.

And crooked things straight - Things which seem to be adverse and opposing - the persecutions and trials which the people of God would be called to endure.

And not forsake them - (See Isaiah 41:10, note, Isaiah 41:13, note).

Verse 17

They shall be turned back - The phrases, to be turned back, and to be suffused with shame, are frequently used in the Scriptures to denote a state of disappointment in regard to an object of trust or confidence, and especially of those who had trusted in idols (see Psalm 35:4; Psalm 70:3; Psalm 97:7; compare the notes at Isaiah 1:29; Isaiah 19:9; Isaiah 37:27; see also Ezekiel 16:52). The sense here is, that they should find no such protection in their idol-gods as they had hoped, and that they should be covered with conscious guilt forever, having trusted in them and given to them the homage which was due to the true God.

Verse 18

Hear, ye deaf - This is evidently an address to the Jews, and probably to the Jews of the time of the prophet. He had been predicting the coming of the Messiah, and the influence of his religion on the Gentile world. He had said that God would go forth to destroy the idolatry of the pagan nations, and to convince them of the folly of the worship of images, and to confound them for putting their trust in them. He seems here to have recollected that this was the easily-besetting sin of his own countrymen, and perhaps especially of the times when he penned this portion of the prophecy - under the reign of Manasseh; that that generation was stupid, blind, deaf to the calls of God, and sunk in the deepest debasement of idolatry. In view of this, and of the great truths which he had uttered, he calls on them to hear, to be alarmed, to return to God, and assures them that for these sins they exposed themselves to, and must experience, his sore displeasure. The statement of these truths, and the denouncing of these judgments, occupy

the remainder of this chapter. A similar instance occurs in Isaiah 29:18; Isaiah 42:8).

And look … that ye may see - This phrase denotes an attentive, careful, and anxious search, in order that there may be a clear view of the object. The prophet calls them to an attentive contemplation of the object, that they might have a clear and distinct view of it. They had hitherto looked at the subject of religion in a careless, inattentive, and thoughtless manner.

Verse 19

Who is blind, but my servant? - Some of the Jewish expositors suppose that by ‹servant‘ here, the prophet himself is intended, who, they suppose is here called blind and deaf by the impious Jews who rejected his message. But it is evident, that by ‹servant‘ here, the Jewish people themselves are intended, the singular being used for the plural, in a sense similar to that where they are so often called ‹Jacob‘ and ‹Israel.‘ The phrase ‹servants of God‘ is often given to his people, and is used to denote true worshippers. The word is used here to denote those who professed to be the true worshippers of Yahweh. The prophet had, in the previous verses, spoken of the blindness and stupidity of the Gentile world. He here turns to his own countrymen, and addresses them as more blind, and deaf, and stupid than they. ‹Who,‘ he asks, ‹is as blind as they are?‘ Where are any of the pagan nations so insensible to the appeals of God, and so hard-hearted? The idea of the prophet is, that the Jews had had far greater advantages, and yet they were so sunk in sin that it might be said that comparatively none were blind but they. Even the degradation of the pagan nations, under the circumstances of the case, could not be compared with theirs.

As my messenger that I sent - Lowth renders this, ‹And deaf, as he to whom I have sent my messengers.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹And deaf but those that rule over them;‘ by a slight change in the Hebrew text. The Vulgate reads it as Lowth has rendered it. The Chaldee renders it,‘ If the wicked are converted, shall they not be called my servants? And the sinners to whom I sent my prophets?‘ But the sense seems to be this: The Jewish people were regarded as a people selected and preserved by God for the purpose of preserving and extending the true religion. They might be spoken of as sent for the great purpose of enlightening the world, as God‘s messengers in the midst of the deep darkness of benighted nations, and as appointed to be the agents by which the true religion was to be perpetuated and propagated on earth. Or perhaps, the word ‹messenger‘ here may

denote collectively the Jewish leaders, teachers, and priests, who had been sent as the messengers of God to that people, and who were, with the people, sunk in deep debasement and sin.

As he that is perfect - (כמשׁלם *kîmeshullâm*). A great variety of interpretations has been offered on this word - arising from the difficulty of giving the appellation ‹perfect‘ to a people so corrupt as were the Jews in the time of Isaiah. Jerome renders it, *Qui venundatus est* - ‹He that is sold.‘ The Syriac renders it, ‹Who is blind as the prince?‘ Symmachus renders it, Ὡς ὁ τέλειος *hōs ho teleios* and Kimchi in a similar manner by תמים *tâmîym* - ‹perfect.‘ The verb שׁלם *shālam* means properly "to be whole, sound, safe"; to be completed, finished, ended: and then, to be at peace or friendship with anyone. And it may he applied to the Jews, to whom it undoubtedly refers here, in one of the following senses; either

(1) ironically, as claiming to be perfect; or

(2) as those who professed to be perfect; or

(3) as being favored with rites and laws, and a civil and sacred constitution that were complete (Vitringa); or

(4) as being in friendship with God, as Grotius and Gesenius suppose.

It most probably refers to the fact that they were richly endowed by Yahweh with complete and happy institutions adapted to their entire welfare, and such as, in comparison with other nations, were suited to make them perfect.

As the Lord‘s servant - The Jewish people, professing to serve and obey God.

Verse 20

Seeing many things - That is, the people, the Jews, spoken of here as the servants of God. They had had an opportunity of observing many things pertaining to the law, the government, and the dealing of Yahweh. They had often witnessed his interposition in the days of calamity, and he often rescued them from peril. These things they could not but have observed, much as they had chosen to disregard the lessons which they were calculated to convey.

But thou observest not - Thou dost not keep them (תשׁמר *tîshmor*); thou dost not regard them.

Opening the ears - Thou hast thine ears open. They heard the words of the law, and the instructions conveyed by tradition from their fathers, but they did not lay them to heart, or give heed to them (see the note at Isaiah 6:10).

Verse 21

The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness‘ sake - There is great variety in the translation and interpretation of this verse. Lowth renders it:

Yet Yahweh was gracious unto him for his truth‘s sake;
He hath exalted his own praise, and made it glorious.

Noyes renders it:

It pleased Yahweh for his goodness‘ sake
To give him a law great and glorious;
And yet it is a robbed and plundered people.

The Septuagint renders it, ‹The Lord God determined that he should be justified, and magnify his praise.‘ The Chaldee renders it, ‹Yahweh willed that Israel should be justified; he magnified the doers of his law, and comforted them.‘ The Syriac, ‹The Lord willed on account of his righteousness to magnify his law, and to commend it.‘ Vitringa explains it, ‹God has embraced the Jewish people in his love and favor, and regards them as acceptable to himself, not indeed on account of any merit of theirs, or on account of any external advantages, but on account of his own truth, fidelity, and equity, that he might fulfill the promises which he made to their fathers.‘ This seems to express the sense of the passage. According to this, it refers solely to the Jewish people, and not, as is often supposed, to the Messiah. The phrase, ‹is well pleased,‘ means that Yahweh takes delight in his people, or looks upon them with an eye of tenderness and affection. He finds pleasure in contemplating them as his people, and in regarding and treating thorn as such.

For his righteousness‘ sake - Not for the righteousness of his people, but on account of his own righteousness; that is, his own goodness, clemency, mercy, and forbearance. It is not because he sees in them anything that should win his love, or excite his favor, for he says Isaiah 42:22 that they are robbed, and plundered, and hid, and bound in prison. But Yahweh had selected their fathers as his own people. He had made them precious promises. He had designs of mercy toward them. He had given them a holy law. He had promised to be their protector and their God. On this accouter he was pleased with them still; and it was on account of his

own fidelity and plighted protection, that he was delighted in them as his people. The word ‹righteousness,‘ therefore (צדק *tsedeq*), is used to denote God‘s purpose to do right; that is, to adhere to his promises, and to maintain a character of fidelity and integrity. He would not fail, or violate his own pledges to his people.

He will magnify the law - The word ‹law‘ bore is used to denote the entire series of statutes, or legislative acts of God, in regard to the Jewish people - including all his promises and pledges to them. And the meaning is, that he would so deal with them as to make that law important in their view; so as to show that he regarded it as of infinite moment. He would adhere strictly himself to all his own covenant pledges in that law, so as to show that he regarded it as sacred and of binding obligation; and all his dealings with them under that law would be such as to magnify its importance and purity in their view. The Hebrew is, ‹he will make the law great;‘ that is, he will make it of great importance.

And make it honorable - Or, make it glorious, by himself showing a constant regard for it, and by so dealing with them that they should be brought to see and feel its importance. According to this, which is the obvious interpretation, the passage has no reference particularly to the Messiah. It is true, however, that the language hero used is such as would appropriately describe the work of the Redeemer; and that a large part of what he did in his public ministry, and by his atonement, was ‹to magnify the law and make it honorable;‘ - to vindicate its equity - to urge its binding obligation - to sustain its claims - to show that it could not be violated with impunity - and to demonstrate that its penalty was just. The whole effect of the Redeemer‘s work is to do honor to the law of God, nor has anything occurred in the history of our world that has done so much to maintain its authority and binding obligation, as his death on the cross, in the place of sinners.

Verse 22

But this is a people robbed and spoiled - The Jewish people, though highly favored, have been so unmindful of the goodness of God to them, that he has given them into the hand of their enemies to plunder them. This is to be conceived as spoken after the captivity, and while the Jews were in exile. Their being robbed and spoiled, therefore, refers to the invasion of the Chaldeans, and is to be regarded as spoken propheticly of the exiled and oppressed Jews while in Babylon.

They are all of them snared in holes - This passage has been variously rendered. Lowth renders it, ‹All their chosen youth are taken in the toils;‘ following in this the translation of Jerome, and rendering it as Le Clerc and Houbigant do. The Septuagint read it, ‹And I saw, and the people were plundered and scattered, and the snare was in all their private chambers, and in their houses where they hid themselves;‘ - meaning, evidently, that they had been taken by their invaders from the places where they had secreted themselves in their own city and country. The Chaldee renders it, ‹All their youth were covered with confusion, and shut up in prison.‘ The Syriac, ‹All their youth are snared, and they have hid them bound in their houses.‘ This variety of interpretation has arisen in part, because the Hebrew which is rendered in our version, ‹in holes‘ (בחורים *bachûrîym*) may be either the plural form of the word בצור *bachûr* (“chosen, selected”); and thence “youths” - selected for their beauty or strength; or it may be the plural form of the word חור *chûr* “a hole” or “cavern,” with the preposition ב (*b*) prefixed. Our translation prefers the latter; and this is probably the correct interpretation, as the parallel expression, ‹they are hid in prison-houses,‘ seems to demand this. The literal interpretation of the passage is, therefore, that they were snared, or secured in the caverns, holes, or places of refuge where they sought security.

And they are hid in prison-houses - They were concealed in their houses as in prisons, so that they could not go out with safety, or without exposing themselves to the danger of being taken captive. The land was filled with their enemies, and they were obliged to conceal themselves, if possible, from their foes.

And none saith, Restore - There is no deliverer - no one who can interpose, and compel the foe to give up his captives. The sense is, the Jewish captives were so strictly confined in Babylon, and under a government so powerful, that there was no one who could rescue them, or that they were so much the object of contempt, that there were none who would feel so much interest in them as to demand them from their foes.

Verse 23

Who among you will give ear to this? - Who is there in the nation that will be so warned by the judgments of God, that he will attend to the lessons which he designs to teach, and reform his life, and return to him? It is implied by these questions that such ought to be the effect; it is implied also that they were so sunken and abandoned that they would not do it.

These judgments were a loud call on the nation to turn to God, and, in time to come, to avoid the sins which had made it necessary for him to interpose in this manner, and give them to spoil.

Verse 24

Who gave Jacob for a spoil? - Who gave up the Jewish people to be plundered? The object of this verse is, to bring distinctly before them the fact that it was Yahweh, the God of their fathers, and of their nation, who had brought this calamity upon them. It was not the work of chance, but it was the immediate and direct act of God on account of their sins. Probably, as a people, they were not disposed to believe this; and the prophet, therefore, takes occasion to calf their attention particularly to this fact.

Verse 25

Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger - His righteous indignation in the overturning of their nation, the destruction of their temple and city, and in carrying them captive into a distant land.

And it hath set him on fire - That is, the fury of Yahweh kindled the flame of war all around the Jewish nation, and spread desolation everywhere.

Yet he knew not - They refused to attend to it, and lay it to heart. They pursued their ways of wickedness, regardless of the threatening judgments, and the impending wrath of God. They did not consider that these evils were inflicted for their crimes, nor did they turn from their sins when they were thus threatened with the wrath of God.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 43

Introduction

This chapter is evidently a continuation of the subject discussed in the previous chapters, and refers mainly to the promised deliverance from Babylon. The people of God are still contemplated by the prophet as suffering the evils of their long and painful captivity, and his object is to comfort them with the assurances of deliverance. The chapter may be regard as composed of a succession of arguments, all tending to show them that God would be their protector, and that their deliverance would be certain. These arguments are not distinguished by any very clear marks of transition, and all divisions of the chapter must he in a measure arbitrary. But perhaps the following arrangement will comprise the considerations which the prophet designed to suggest.

I. In the previous chapter he had severely rebuked the Jews, as being deaf, and blind, and had showed them that it was on account of their sins that these calamities had come upon them. Yet he now turns and says, that they are the people whom he had redeemed, and whom it was his purpose to deliver, and repeats the solemn assurance that they would be rescued Isaiah 43:1-7. This assurance consists of many items, or considerations, showing that they would be recovered, however far they were driven from their own land.

1. God had formed and redeemed them Isaiah 43:1. It followed from this that a God of covenant faithfulness would be with them in their trials Isaiah 43:2.

2. They had been so precious to him and valuable, that he had given entire nations for their ransom Isaiah 43:3. It followed from this, that he would continue to give more, if necessary, for their ransom Isaiah 43:4.

3. It was rite fixed purpose of God to gather them again, wherever they might be scattered, and they had, therefore, nothing to fear Isaiah 43:5-7.

II. God asserts his superiority to all idol-gods. He makes a solemn appeal, as he had done in Isaiah 43:8-13. In doing this, he says:

1. That none of the idols had been able to predict future events Isaiah 43:8-9.

2. That the Jewish people were his witnesses that he was the true God, and the only Saviour Isaiah 43:10-12.

3. That he had existed forever, and that none could thwart his designs Isaiah 43:13.

III. God asserts his purpose to destroy the I power of Babylon Isaiah 43:14, Isaiah 43:17. He says:

1. That he had sent to Babylon (by Cyrus) to bring down their power, and prostrate their nobles Isaiah 43:14-15; and,

2. Appeals to what he had formerly done; refers to the deliverance from Egypt, and asserts it to be his characteristic that he made a way in the sea, and led forth the chariot, the horse, the army, and the power Isaiah 43:16-17.

IV. Yet he tells them Isaiah 43:18-21, that all his former wonderful interpositions would be surpassed; that he would do a new thing - so strange, so wonderful, and marvelous, that all that he had formerly done should be forgotten.

1. They are commanded not to remember the former things Isaiah 43:18.

2. He would do anew thing - a thing which in all his former interpositions had not been done Isaiah 43:19.

3. The characteristics of the future wonder would be, that he would make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert Isaiah 43:19; and that even the wild beasts of the desert should be made to honor him Isaiah 43:20.

4. He had formed that people for himself, and they should show forth his praise Isaiah 43:21.

V. From these promises of protection and assistance, and these assurances of favor, God turns to remind them of their sins, and assures them that it was by no merit of theirs that he would thus interpose to deliver them.

1. He reminds them of their having neglected, as a people, to honor him, and having witcheld what was his due Isaiah 43:22-24; yet,

2. He would blot out their sins, but it was by no merit of theirs, but by his mere mercy Isaiah 43:25-26.

3. They had been a sinful people, and he had, therefore, humbled their power, and given the nation to reproach, and a curse Isaiah 43:27-28. The

same subject is resumed and prosecuted in the next chapter, and they should be read together without any interuption.

Verse 1

But now - This expression shows that this chapter is connected with the preceding. The sense is, "Though God has punished the nation, and showed them his displeasure Isaiah 42:24-25, yet now he will have mercy, and will deliver them.'

That created thee - The word ‹thee' is used here evidently in a collective sense as denoting the Jewish people. It is used because the names ‹Jacob' and ‹Israel' in the singular number are applied to the people. The word ‹created' is used here to denote the idea that, as the special people of God, they owed their origin to him, as the universe owed its origin to his creative power. It means that, as a people, their institutions, laws, customs, and privileges, and whatever they had that was valuable, were all to be traced to him. The same word occurs in Isaiah 43:7, and again in Isaiah 43:15, ‹I am Yahweh - the Creator of Israel, your king' (see also Isaiah 44:1; compare Psalm 100:3).

Fear not - This is to be understood as addressed to them when suffering the evils of the captivity of Babylon. Though they were captives, and had suffered long, yet they had nothing to fear in regard to their final extinction as a people. They should be redeemed from captivity, and restored again to the land of their fathers. The argument here is, that they were the chosen people of God; that he had organized them as his people for great and important purposes, and that those purposes must be accomplished. It would follow from that, that they must be redeemed from their captivity, and be restored again to their land.

For I have redeemed thee - The word גאל *gā'al* means properly "to redeem," to ransom by means of a price, or a valuable consideration, as of captives taken in war; or to redeem a farm that was sold, by paying back the price. It is sometimes used, however, to denote deliverance from danger or bondage without specifying any price that was paid as a ransom. Thus the deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian bondage is sometimes spoken of as a redemption (Exodus 6:6; Exodus 15:13; compare Genesis 18:16; Isaiah 29:22; Isaiah 44:23; Jeremiah 31:11; see the note at Isaiah 1:27). It is not improbable, however, that wherever redemption is spoken of in the Scriptures, even in the most general manner, and as denoting deliverance

from danger, oppression, or captivity, there is still retained the idea of a ransom in some form; a price paid; a valuable consideration; or something that was given in the place of that which was redeemed, and which answered the purpose of a valuable consideration, or a public reason of the deliverance. Thus, in regard to the deliverance from Egypt - Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba are mentioned as the ransom (see the note at Isaiah 43:3); and so in the deliverance from the captivity, Babylon was given in the place of the ransomed captives, or was destroyed in order that they might be redeemed. So in all notions of redemption; as, e. g., God destroyed the life of the great Redeemer, or caused him to be put to death, in order that his chosen people might be saved.

I have called thee by thy name - ‹To call by name‘ denotes intimacy of friendship. Here it means that God had particularly designated them to be his people. His call had not been general, addressed to the nations at large, but had been addressed to them in particular. Compare Exodus 31:2, where God says that he had designated ‹by name‘ Bezaleel to the work of constructing the tabernacle.

Thou art mine - They were his, because he had formed them as a people, and had originated their institutions; because he had redeemed them, and because he had particularly designated them as his. The same thing may be said of his church now; and in a still more important sense, that church is his. He has organized it; he has appointed its special institutions; he has redeemed it with precious blood; and he has called his people by name, and designated them as his own.

Verse 2

When thou passest through the waters - This is a general promise, and means that whenever and wherever they should pass through water or fire, he would protect them. It had been true in their past history as a people; and the assurance is here given in order that they might be comforted in view of the calamities which they were then suffering in Babylon. Fire and water are often used in the Scriptures to denote calamity - the latter because it overwhelms; the former because it consumes; see Psalm 69:1 - ‹The waters are come into my soul;‘ also Psalm 73:10; Psalm 124:4-5; Psalm 66:12 - ‹We went through fire and through water.‘

I will be with thee - (Compare the note at Isaiah 41:10).

And through the rivers - Also expressive of calamity and danger - like attempting to ford deep and rapid streams.

They shall not overflow thee - As was the case with the Jordan when they crossed it under the guidance of Joshua, and a pathway was made for the armies of Israel.

When thou walkest through the fire - This is expressive of calamity and danger in general like passing through fire. Yet it had a literal fulfillment in the case of the three pious Jews who were cast by Nebuchadnezzar into the burning furnace Daniel 3:25, Daniel 3:27.

Neither shall the flame kindle upon thee - It shall not only not consume thee, but it shall hog even burn, or injure thee (see Daniel 3:27). The Chaldee Paraphrase refers this verse to the passage through the Red Sea, and to the protection which God gave his people there. It is rendered, ‹In the beginning, when you passed through the Red Sea, my word was your aid. Pharaoh and Egypt, who were mighty like the waters of a river, were not able to prevail against you. And when thou didst go among a people who were formidable like fire, they could not prevail against you, and the kingdoms which were strong like flame could not consume you.‘ It is, however, to be understood rather as a promise pertaining to the future; though the language is mainly derived, undoubtedly, from God‘s protecting them in their perils in former times.

Verse 3

For I am the Lord thy God - This verse continues the statement of the reasons why he would protect them. He was Yahweh their God. He was not only the true God, but he was the God who had entered into solemn covenant with them, and who would therefore protect and defend them.

The Holy One of Israel - It was one of his characteristics that he was the God of Israel. Other nations worshipped other gods. He was the God of Israel; and as it was presumed that a god would protect his own people, so he bound himself to deliver them.

Thy Saviour - This was another characteristic. He had saved them in days of peril; and he had assumed toward them the relation of a Saviour; and he would maintain that character.

I gave Egypt for thy ransom - This is a very important passage in regard to the meaning of the word ‹ransom.‘ The word נתתי *nâthattîy* - ‹I gave‘ is rendered by Gesenius (Commentary *in loc*.), and by Noyes, in the future, ‹I will give.‘ Gesenius supposes that it refers to the fact that the countries specified would be made desolate, in order to effect the deliverance of the Jews. He observes that although Cyrus did not conquer

them, yet that it was done by his successors. In particular, he refers to the fact that Cambyses invaded and subdued Egypt (Herod. iii. 15); and that he then entered into, and subdued Ethiopia and Meroe (Strabo xvii.; Jos. Ant. ii. 10. 2). But the word properly refers to the past time, and the scope of the passage requires us to understand it of past events. For God is giving a reason why his people might expect protection, and the reason here is, that he had been their deliverer, and that his purpose to protect them was so fixed and determined, that he had even brought ruin on nations more mighty and numerous than themselves, in order to effect their deliverance.

The argument is, that if he had suffered Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba to be desolated and ruined instead of them, or in order to effect their deliverance, they had nothing to fear from Babylon or any other hostile nation, but that he would effect their deliverance even at the expense of the overthrow of the most mighty kingdoms. The word rendered ‹ransom‘ here is כפר *kôpher* It is derived from כפר *kâphar* - whence the Latin *cooperio*; the Italian *coprire*, the French *couvrir*; the Norman *coverer*, and *converer*; and the English *cover*, and means literally to cover; to cover over; to overlay with anything, as pitch, as in Genesis 6:14. Hence, to cover over sins; to overlook; to forgive; and hence, to make an expiation for sins, or to atone for transgression so that it may be forgiven Genesis 32:21; Exodus 30:15; Leviticus 4:20; 5:26; Leviticus 11:24; Leviticus 16:6; Psalm 65:4; Psalm 78:38; Proverbs 16:14; Ezekiel 45:20; Daniel 9:24. The noun (כפר *kôpher*) means:

1. A village or hamlet, as beans a cover or shelter to the inhabitants (1 Samuel 6:18; compare the word כפר *kâphâr* in 1 Chronicles 27:25; Nehemiah 6:2; Genesis 6:14.

3. The cypressflower, the alhenna of the Arabs, so called because the powder of the leaves was used to cover over or besmear the nails in order to produce the reddish color which Oriental femmes regarded as an ornament (Simonis; Exodus 29:36; Exodus 30:10, Exodus 30:16. In such an expiation, that which was offered as the ransom was supposed to take the place of that for which the expiation was made, and this idea is distinctly retained in the versions of this passage.

Thus the Septuagint, Ἐποίησα ἄλλαγμά σου Αἴγυπτον, κ.τ.λ. *Epoiēsa allagma sou Aigupton etc* - ‹I made Egypt, etc., thy ἄλλαγμα *allagma* - a commutation for thee; a change for thee; I put it in thy place, and it was destroyed instead of thee.‘ So the Chaldee, ‹I gave the Egyptians as a

commutation for thee‘ (חליפך *chălîypâk*). So the Syriac, ‹I gave Egypt in thy place.‘ The true interpretation, therefore, is, that Egypt was regarded as having been given up to desolation and destruction instead of the Israelites. One of them must perish; and God chose that Egypt, though so much more mighty and powerful, should be reduced to desolation in order to deliver his people. They took their place, and were destroyed instead of the Hebrews, in order that they might be delivered from the bondage under which they groaned. This may be used as a striking illustration of the atonement made for sin, when the Lord Jesus, the expiatory offering, was made to suffer in the stead - ἄλλαγμα *allagma* - of his people, and in order that sinners might live.

And if God‘s giving up the Egyptians to destruction - themselves so guilty and deserving of death - in order to save his people, was a proof of his love for them, how much greater is the demonstration of his love when he gives his own holy Son to the bitter pains of death on a cross, in order that his church may be redeemed! There has been much variety, as has already been intimated, in the interpretation of this, and in regard to the time and events referred to. It has, by many, been supposed to refer to the invasion by Sennacherib, who, when he was about to fall upon Jerusalem, turned his arms against the Egyptians and their allies, by which means Jerusalem was saved by devoting those nations to desolation. Vitringa explains it of Shalmaneser‘s design upon the kingdom of Judah, after he had destroyed that of Samaria, from which he was diverted by carrying the war against the Egyptians, Cusheans, and Sabeans. But of this, Lowth says, there is no clear proof in history.

Seeker supposes that it refers to the fact that Cyrus overcame those nations, and that they were given him for releasing the Jews. Lowth says, ‹perhaps it may mean, generally, that God had often saved his people at the expense of other nations, whom he had as it were in their stead given up to destruction.‘ The exact historical facts in the case cannot be clearly made out; nor is this to be wondered at, that many things of this nature should remain obscure for want of the light of history, which in regard to those times is extremely deficient. In regard to Egypt, however, I think the case is clear. Nothing is more manifest than that the prophet refers to that great and wonderful fact - the commonplace illustration of the sacred writers - that

the Egyptians were destroyed in order to effect the deliverance of the Jews, and were thus given as a ransom for them.

Ethiopia - Hebrew, ‹Cush.‘ In regard to this country, see the note at Isaiah 18:1. It is not improbable that the prophet here refers to the facts referred to in that chapter, and the destruction which it is there said would come upon that land.

And Seba - This was the name of a people descended from Cush Genesis 10:7; and hence, the name of the country which they occupied. According to Josephus (Ant. ii. 10. 2), it seems to have been Meroe, a province of Ethiopia, distinguished for its wealth and commerce, surrounded by the two arms or branches of the Nile. There still remain the ruins of a metropolis of the same name, not far from the town of Shandy (Keppel‘s Travels in Nubia and Arabia, 1829). Meroe is a great island or peninsula in the north of Ethiopia, and is formed by the Nile, and the Astaboras, which unites with the Nile. It was probably anciently called Seba, and was conquered by Cambyses, the successor of Cyrus, and by him called Meroe, after his sister. That it was near to Ethiopia is apparent from the fact that it is mentioned in connection with it (compare Psalm 72:10; Isaiah 45:14: Herod. iii. 20). They would naturally ally themselves to the Ethiopians. and share the same fate.

Verse 4

Since thou wast precious in my sight - This verse contains another reason why God would defend and deliver them. That reason was, that he had loved them as his people; and he was willing, therefore, that other people should be overcome in order that they might be saved.

Thou hast been honorable - This does not refer so much to their personal character, as to the fact that they had been honored by him with being the depository of the precious truths of his religion. It means that he had made them honorable by the favors bestowed on them; not that they were honorable in reference to their own personal character and worth.

Therefore will I give men for thee - As in the case of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba Isaiah 43:3. He would cause other nations to be destroyed, if it were necessary, in order to effect their deliverance, and to restore them to their own land. We learn here:

1. That nations and armies are in the hand of God, and at his disposal.

2. That his people are dear to his heart, and that it is his purpose to defend them.

3. That the revolutions among nations, the rise of one empire, and the fall of another, are often in order to promote the welfare of his church, to defend it in danger, and deliver it in time of calamity.

4. That his people should put the utmost confidence in God as being able to defend them, and as having formed a purpose to preserve and save them.

Expressions similar to those used in this verse occur frequently among the Arabians (see Rosenmuller *in loc*).

For thy life - Margin, ‹Person.‘ Hebrew, ‹For thy soul;‘ that is, on account of thee; or in thy place (see the notes at Isaiah 43:3).

Verse 5

Fear not - (see the note at Isaiah 41:10, Isaiah 41:14; compare Isaiah 43:1).

I will bring thy seed - Thy children; thy descendants. The sense is, I will re-collect my scattered people from all parts of the world. The passage appears to have been taken from Deuteronomy 30:3, where God promises to gather his people together again if they should be scattered among the nations, and should then repent. Vitringa understands this of the spiritual descendants of the Jews, or of those who should believe on the Messiah among the Gentiles, and who should become the people of God. But the more natural interpretation is, to refer it to the Jews who were scattered abroad during the exile at Babylon, and as a promise to re-collect them again in their own land.

From the east … - From all parts of the earth; from all lands where they were scattered. That they were driven to other places than Babylon on the invasion of their land by the Chaldeans, is abundantly manifest in the historical records Jeremiah 9:16; Ezekiel 5:12; Ezekiel 17:21; Amos 9:9; Zechariah 2:6.

Verse 6

I will say to the north, Give up - Give up my people, or restore them to their own land.

Bring my sons … - Bring all my people from the distant lands where they have been driven in their dispersion. This is a beautiful passage. As if all lands were under the control of God, and he could at once command and they would obey, he calls on them to yield up his people to their own country. He issues a commandment which is heard in all quarters of the

globe, and the scattered people of God come flocking again to their own land.

Verse 7

Every one that is called by my name - To be called by the name of anyone, is synonymous with being regarded as his son, since a son bears the name of his father (see Isaiah 44:5; Isaiah 48:1). The expression, therefore, means here, all who were regarded as the children of God; and the promise is, that all such should be re-gathered to their own land.

For I have created him - (See the note at Isaiah 43:1).

For my glory - In order to show forth, and illustrate my glory. They shall be, therefore, defended and protected; and my glory shall be shown in their recovery and salvation.

Verse 8

Bring forth the blind people - Many have understood this of the Jews. So Vitringa, Rosenmuller, Grotius, and others understand it. But Lowth, more correctly, regards it as referring to the Gentiles. It is designed as an argument to show the superiority of God over all idols, and to demonstrate that he was able to deliver his people from captivity and exile. He appeals, therefore Isaiah 43:9, to his own people in proof of his divinity and power. None of the pagan Isaiah 43:8 had been able to predict future events, none of the pagan gods, therefore, could save; but Yahweh, who had so often foretold events that were fulfilled, was able to deliver, and of that fact his own people had had abundant evidence.

That have eyes - They had natural faculties to see and know God (compare Romans 1:20), but they had not improved them, and they had, therefore, run into the sin and folly of idolatry. The phrase ‹bring forth,‘ implies a solemn appeal made by God to them to enter into an argument on the subject (compare the note at Isaiah 41:1).

Verse 9

Let all the nations be gathered together - Let them be assembled to give evidence, or to adduce proofs that their idols are worthy of confidence Isaiah 41:1.

Who among them can declare this? - Who among them hath predicted this state of things? Who has foretold the events which are now occurring? It is implied here, that Yahweh had done this, but none of the pagan gods had done it (see the note at Isaiah 41:21).

And show us former things - (see the note at Isaiah 41:22). The order of events, the manner in which one event shall succeed another. Not merely, who can declare one single event, but who can declare the succession, the order in which many events shall follow each other - a far more difficult thing than to declare one single future event. Neither had been done by the pagan; both had been done by God.

That they may be justified - That it may be demonstrated that they are what they pretend to be, and that they are worthy of the confidence of people. The word ‹justified‘ here, is used in the sense of being right, or true; - let them in this manner show that their claims are just, and well founded.

Or let them hear, and say, It is truth - (See the note at Isaiah 41:26).

Verse 10

Ye are my witnesses - They were his witnesses, because, first, he had given in them predictions of future events which had been literally fulfilled: secondly, by his power of delivering them so often manifested, he had shown that he was a God able to save. Neither of these had been done by the idol-gods (compare Isaiah 44:8).

And believe me - Or rather, confide in me.

Before me there was no God formed - I am the only true, the eternal God. In this expression, Yahweh says that he was the first being. He derived his existence from no one. Perhaps the Hebrew will bear a little more emphasis than is conveyed by our translation. ‹Before me, God was not formed,‘ implying that he was God, and that he existed anterior to all other beings. It was an opinion among the Greeks, that the same gods had not always reigned, but that the more ancient divinities had been expelled by the more modern. It is possible that some such opinion may have prevailed in the oriental idolatry, and that God here means to say, in opposition to that, that he had not succeeded any other God in his kingdom. His dominion was original, underived, and independent.

Neither shall there be after me - He would never cease to live; he would never vacate his throne for another. This expression is equivalent to that which occurs in the Book of Revelation, ‹I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last‘ Revelation 1:11; and it is remarkable that this language, which obviously implies eternity, and which in Isaiah is used expressly to prove the divinity of Yahweh, is, in the passage referred to in the Book of Revelation, applied no less unequivocally to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 11

I, even I, am the Lord - The repetition of the pronoun ‹I‘ makes it emphatic. The design is, to affirm that there was no other being to whom the name ‹Yahweh‘ pertained. There was no other one who had the attributes which the name involved; there was, therefore, no other God. On the meanins of the word Yahweh, see the note at Isaiah 1:2.

And beside me there is no Saviour - There is no one who can deliver from oppression, and captivity, and exile, such as the Jews suffered in Babylon; there is no one but he who can save from sin, and from hell. All salvation, therefore, must come from God; and if we obtain deliverance from temporal ills, or from eternal death, we must seek it from him.

Verse 12

I have declared - I have announced or predicted future events; I have warned of danger; I have marked out the path of safety. He had thus shown that he was the true God (see the note at Isaiah 41:22-23).

And have saved - I have delivered the nation in former times of danger, and have thus shown that I would protect them.

And have showed - Hebrew, ‹Caused to hear.‘ I have made known future events, and have thus showed that I was God.

When there was no strange god among you - Before the time when there was any idol in the nation, and when, therefore, it could not be pretended that deliverance was to be traced to anyone but to Yahweh. The word ‹god‘ here is not in the original, but is properly supplied. The word זר *zâr* is evidently used instead of זר אל *'êl zâr* as in Psalm 44:20; Psalm 81:9. It denotes a god that is worshipped by foreigners. The sense is, that their former deliverance could in no sense be traced to any such foreign god.

Therefore, ye are my witnesses - You who have so often been defended; you who have the predictions respecting future events, can be appealed to as evidence that I am the only true God, able to deliver. The doctrine taught in this passage is, that God may appeal to his dealings with his people as a demonstration that he is the true God, and that he is faithful and able to deliver - an appeal which may be made to his church at large in view of its trials, persecutions, and deliverances; and to every one who is his true friend and worshipper.

Verse 13

Yea, before the day was - Before the first day, or before the beginning of time; from eternity. The Septuagint renders it correctly, Ἀπ᾽ ἀρχης *Ap' archēs* and the Vulgate (*Ab initio*), ‹From the beginning.‘

I am he - I am the same Isaiah 43:10.

I will work - I will accomplish my designs.

And who shall let it? - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹Turn it back.‘ The meaning is, ‹Who can hinder it?‘ And the doctrine taught here is:

1. That God is from everlasting, for if he was before time, he must have been eternal.

2. That he is unchangeably the same - a doctrine which is, as it is here designed to be used, the only sure foundation for the security of his people - for who can trust a being who is fickle, changing, vacillating?

3. That he can deliver his people always, no matter what are their circumstances.

4. That he will accomplish all his plans; no matter whether to save his people, or to destroy his foes.

5. That no one - man or devil - can hinder him. How can the feeble arm of a creature resist God?

6. That opposition to him is as fruitless as it is wicked. If people wish for happiness, they must fall in with his plans, and aid in the furtherance of his designs.

Verse 14

Thus saith the Lord your Redeemer - This verse commences another argument for the safety of his people. It is the assurance to the Jews in Babylon that he had sent to them a deliverer, and would bring down the pride of the Chaldeans, and demolish their city.

Your Redeemer - (See the note at Isaiah 43:1).

I have sent to Babylon - That is, the Persians and Medes, under the command of Cyrus (compare the note at Isaiah 13:3). This implies that God had command over all their armies and had the power of sending them where he pleased (compare the notes at Isaiah 10:5-6). This is to be understood as seen by the prophet in vision. He sees the armies of Cyrus encompass Babylon and the haughty city fall, and then says that God had sent or directed them there.

And have brought down all their nobles - Margin, ‹Bars.‘ But the word in this place probably means neither, but rather fugitives (compare the notes at Isaiah 27:1). The word used (בריח *bârîyach*), means sometimes bar, cross-bar, that which passed from one side of the tabernacle to the other through rings, in order to carry it; thou a harbor bolt of any kind Judges 16:3; Nehemiah 3:3. But the word may also denote one who flies; a fugitive; and is properly used in that sense here. The verb ברח *bârach* from which the word is derived, means often to break away, to flee Genesis 16:8; Genesis 35:1, Genesis 35:7; 1 Samuel 19:12; Job 27:22; Jonah 1:3. Here it means those who endeavored to escape from the impending calamity and destruction; or it may refer to those who had taken refuge in Babylon from other lands, as Babylon was doubtless composed in part of those who had sought a refuge there from other nations - a conflux of strangers. But the former is the more probable interpretation; and the idea seems to be, that Yahweh had brought them down to their ships, or had led them to take refuge in their ships from the impending judgments. Jerome, however, understands it of removing the strong bars with which the prisoners of the exile Jews were protected, so that they would be permitted to go forth in peace and safety. Lowth renders it, ‹I will bring down all her strong bars.‘ The Septuagint renders it, φεύγοντες πάντας *pheugontes pantas* - ‹All that fly.‘ So the Syriac.

And the Chaldeans - The inhabitants of Babylon.

Whose cry is in the ships - Lowth renders this, ‹Exulting in their ships.‘ Noyes, ‹Ships of their delight.‘ The Vulgate, ‹Glorying in their ships.‘ The Septuagint, ‹The Chaldeans shall be bound (δεθήσονται *dethēsontai*) in ships.‘ The Syriac, ‹Who glory in their ships.‘ The sense is, probably, that the Chaldeans, when their city was taken, would seek to take refuge in their ships in which they would raise a shout (Rosenmuller). Or it may be, as Lowth supposes, that it was one of the characteristics of the Chaldeans, that they boasted of their ships, and of their commerce. Babylon was, as he remarks, favorably situated to be a commercial and naval power. It was on the large river Euphrates, and hence, had access to the Persian Gulf and the ocean; and there can be no doubt that it was engaged, in the height of its power, in commercial enterprises. On the north of the city, the Euphrates was united to the Tigris by the canal called Nahar Malca or the Royal River, and thus a large part of the produce of the northern countries, as far as the Euxine and Caspian seas, naturally descended to Babylon (Herod. i. 194).

Semiramis, the founder of Babylon, is said to have had a fleet of three thousand galleys. After the taking of the city by Cyrus, we hear indeed little of the commerce of Babylon. The Euphrates was diverted from its course, and spread over the adjacent country; and the Persian monarchs, in order to prevent the danger of invasion from that quarter, purposely obstructed the navigation, by making dams across both the Tigris and the Euphrates (Strabo xvi.) It is not to be deemed remarkable, therefore, that, in the times of its prosperity, the city of Babylon should be noted for its commerce; or as a city exulting in its shipping, or raising the sailor‘s cry - a cry such as is heard in any port now where shipping abounds. The word rendered ‹cry‘ (רנה *rinnâh*) denotes properly a shout of rejoicing or joy 1 Kings 22:36; Psalm 31:6; Psalm 42:5; and then also a mournful cry, an outcry, wailing Psalm 17:1; Psalm 61:2. Here it may mean the joyful cry of commerce; the shout of the mariner as he leaves the port, or as he returns to his home - the shout, the clamor, which is heard at the wharfs of a commercial city. Such a cry is alluded to by Virgil in the naval games which AEneas celebrated:

- *ferit athera clamor*

Nauticus.

AEneid, v. 140,1.

The sense here is, that God had sent to bring down that exulting city, and to destroy all the indications of its commercial importance and prosperity.

Verse 15

I am the Lord - I am Yahweh - proved to be such, as the connection demands that we should interpret this, by sending to Babylon and bringing down your oppressors. This interposition in destroying Babylon would be a demonstration that he was Yahweh, the only true God, and their God.

The Creator of Israel - (See the note at Isaiah 43:1).

Your King - Ruling over you, and showing the right to do it by delivering you from your foes.

Verse 16

Thus saith the Lord - This verse contains a reference to the deliverance from Egyptian servitude - the great storehouse of argument and illustration with the sacred writers; the standing demonstration of God‘s merciful interposition in behalf of their nation, and proof that he was their God.

Which maketh - Whose characteristic it is to open a path of safety for his people even when deep and rapid floods are before them The standing roof of this which undoubtedly the prophet had in his eye, was the

deliverance from Egypt. Still, I think, he did not mean to refer to that alone, but to that as an illustration of what God was, and had ever been to his people.

A way in the sea - Referring to the path made through the waters of the Red Sea when the children of Israel were permitted to go on dry ground.

Verse 17

Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse - The reference here is, undoubtedly, to the occurrences which are recorded in Exodus 14:4, following, when Pharaoh and his host are said to have followed the Israelites, but were all submerged in the sea. God is said to have brought them forth in accordance with the general statement so often made, that he controls and directs princes and nations (see the note at Isaiah 10:5-6).

They shall lie down together - They shall sink together to death, as Pharaoh and his army sunk together in a watery grave.

Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them:
They sank as lead in the mighty waters.
Exodus 15:10
The depths have covered them:
They sank into the bottom as a stone.
Exodus 15:5

They are extinct - They are destroyed, as the wick of a lamp is quenched suddenly when immersed in water. This is a striking figure, to denote the suddenness with which it was done, and the completeness of their destruction. As a flame is entirely put out when plunged beneath the water, so the whole host of the Egyptians were suddenly and completely destroyed in the Red Sea. The sentiment in this verse is, that God has power over the nations to control them; that it is one of his characteristics to lead on the enemies of his people to destruction; and that they are suddenly destroyed, and their hopes, and joys, and triumphs put out forever. If it was so in regard to the Egyptians, it will be also in regard to all his foes. And if this took place in regard to a nation, it shall also in regard to individual sinners who oppose themselves to God.

How oft is the candle of time wicked put out?
And how oft cometh their destruction upon them?
God distributeth sorrows in his anger.

They are as stubble before the wind,

And as chaff that the storm carrieth away.

Job 21:17-18

Verse 18

Remember ye not … - So great and wonderful shall be God‘s future interpositions in your behalf, that what he has done, great as that was, shall be comparatively forgotten.

The former things - The deliverance from Egypt, and the overthrow of his enemies there.

The things of old - The things that were formerly done.

Verse 19

I will do a new thing - Something that has not hitherto occurred, some unheard of and wonderful event, that shall far surpass all that he had formerly done (see the note at Isaiah 42:9).

Now it shall spring forth - (See the note at Isaiah 42:9). It shall spring up as the grass does from the earth; or it shall bud forth like the opening leaves and flowers - a beautiful figure, denoting the manner in which the events of Divine Providence come to pass.

I will even make a way in the wilderness - In this part of the verse, the prophet describes the anxious care which God would show in protecting his people, and providing for them in conducting them to their native land. See the expressions fully explained in the notes at Isaiah 41:17-19.

Verse 20

The beast of the field shall honor me - The sense of this passage is plain, and the image is highly poetical and beautiful. God would pour such copious floods of waters through the waste sandy deserts to supply his people, that even the wild beasts would be sensible of his abundant goodness, and would break forth into thanksgiving and praise for the unusual supply.

The dragons - (See the note at Isaiah 13:22). The Septuagint renders the word used here (תנין *tannîyn*), by σειρῆνες *seirēnes* - ‘sirens‘ - among the ancients a marine monster that was fabled to use sweet and alluring tones of music. It is probable, however, that the Septuagint understood here some species of wild-fowl which responded to one another. The Syriac translator here interprets it as denoting some wild animal of the canine species - a wood-dog.

And the owls - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹Daughters of the owl, or ostrich‘ (see the note at Isaiah 13:21).

Verse 21

This people have I formed for myself - To preserve the remembrance of my name; to transmit the knowledge of the true God to future times, and to celebrate my praise (see the notes at Isaiah 43:1).

They shall show forth my praise - They shall celebrate my goodness; or, by their restoration to their own land, they shall show manifestly that they are my people.

Verse 22

But thou hast not called upon me - The design of this and the following verses, is to show them that they were indebted to the divine mercy alone for their deliverance from bondage. It was not because they had been either meritorious or faithful; it was not because they had deserved these favors at his hand, for they had been a people that had been distinguished for neglecting their God. On that account, these calamities had come upon them, and their deliverance, therefore, was to be an act of mere unmerited favor.

Thou hast been weary - As a people, you have been weary of my service. They had accounted his laws grievous and oppressive; and they had groaned under what they regarded as burdensome rites and ceremonies (see Amos 8:5-6; Malachi 1:13). God here refers, doubtless, to the times before the captivity, and is stating what was the general characteristic of the people.

Verse 23

Thou hast not brought me - As a people you have witcheld from me the sacrifices which were commanded. They had not maintained and observed his worship as he had required.

The small cattle - Margin, ‹Lambs,‘ or ‹kids.‘ The Hebrew word (שֹׂה *s'eh*) denotes properly one of a flock - a sheep or a goat. It should have been so rendered here. These animals were used for burnt-offerings, and the Jews were required to offer them daily to God.

Of thy burnt-offerings - (Compare Exodus 29:38; Numbers 28:3). The burnt-offering was wholly consumed on the altar.

With thy sacrifices - Bloody offerings. There is little difference between this word and that rendered ‹burnt-offerings.‘ If there is any, it is that the word rendered ‹sacrifice‘ (זבח *zebach*) is of wider signification, and

expresses sacrifice in general; the word rendered ‹burnt-offering‘ (עלה ʿ*olâh*), denotes that which is consumed, or which ascends as an offering. The holocaust refers to its being burned; the sacrifice to the offering, however made.

I have not caused thee to serve with an offering - ‹I have not made a slave of thee; I have not exacted such a service as would be oppressive and intolerable - such as is imposed on a slave.‘ The word used here (עבד ʿ*âbad*), is often used in such a sense, and with such a reference Leviticus 25:39; ‹Thou shalt not compel him to serve the service of a bondman‘ Exodus 1:14; Jeremiah 22:13; Jeremiah 25:14; Jeremiah 30:8. The sense is, that the laws of God on the subject, were not grievous and oppressive.

With an offering - The word used here (מנחה *minchāh*) denotes properly a bloodless oblation, and is thus distinguished from those mentioned before. It consisted of flour mingled with salt, oil, and incense; or of the fruits of the earth, etc. (see the notes at Isaiah 1:11; compare Leviticus 2:2; Numbers 28:5.

Nor wearied thee - By exacting incense. I have not so exacted it as to make it burdensome and wearisome to you.

With incense - (See the note at Isaiah 1:13). The word לבונה *lebônâh* (Greek λίβανος *libanos*) denotes properly frankincense, a substance so called from its white color, from לבן *lāban* “to be white.” It is found in Arabia Isaiah 60:6; Jeremiah 6:20, and in Palestine Exodus 30:8; Exodus 37:29; Leviticus 16:13.

Verse 24

Thou hast bought me - You have not purchased this - implying that it was not produced in Palestine, but was an article of commerce. It was to be obtained only from abroad. This is expressly affirmed in Jeremiah 6:20: ‹To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from afar country?‘ That it was an article of commerce is also apparent from Ezekiel 27:19: ‹Dan also and Javan going to and fro occupied in thy fairs (that is, Tyre): bright iron, cassia, and calamus (קנה *qâneh*), were in thy market.‘

Sweet cane - The word used here (קנה *qâneh*), denotes properly “cane, reed, calamus” (Greek κάννα *kanna* and κάννη *kannē* Latin *canna*, whence the English, *cane*; French, canne; Italian, *canna*). It usually refers to a reed growing in wet or marshy ground. It denotes also sweet cane, calamus aromaticus. It is sometimes joined with the word בשׂם *bôs'em* aromatic,

odor, fragrance, spice, as in Exodus 30:23; see also Jeremiah 6:20. According to Pliny (xii. 22) it grew in Arabia, Syria, and India; according to Theophrastus, in the vales of Lebanon (Hist. Plant. ix. 7). It was used among the Hebrews in compounding the sacred perfumes Exodus 30:23. It is a knotty root, of a reddish color, and contains a soft white pith - in resemblance probably not unlike the calamus so well known in this country. Strabo and Diodorus Siculus say that it grew in Saba. Hasselquist says that it is common in the deserts of the two Arabias. It is gathered near Jumbo, a port town of Arabia Petrea, from where it is brought into Egypt. The Venetians purchase it, and use it in the composition of their ‹theriaca.‘ It is much esteemed among the Arabs on account of its fragrance. See Calmet (Art. Cane), and Gesenius (Lex. and Commentary *in loc*). It was not probably used in the worship of God anywhere except among the Hebrews. The pagans made use of incense, but I do not know that they used the calamus.

Neither hast thou filled me - Margin, ‹Made me drunk,‘ or ‹abundantly moistened.‘ The word used here (רוה *râvâh*), means properly "to drink to the full, to be satisfied, sated with drink." See it explained in the notes at Isaiah 34:6. It is applied to water which is drank, or to fat which is sucked in or drank rather than eaten Psalm 36:9; or to a sword as drinking up blood. Here it means to satiate, or to satisfy. They had not offered the fat of sacrifices so as to satiate God. Probably this passage does not mean that the Jews had wholly neglected the public worship of God; they had not worshipped him with a proper spirit, and had thus served him with their sins, and wearied him with their transgressions. It is true, also, that while they were abundant in external rites and ceremonies, they frequently made oblations to idols, rather than to the true God. Perhaps, therefore, an emphasis is to be placed on the word ‹me‘ in this passage, meaning, that however diligent and regular they had been in the performance of the external rites and duties of religion, yet that God had been neglected.

Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins - You have made it oppressive, burdensome, wearisome for me, like the hard and onerous service of a slave (see the note at Isaiah 43:23; compare the note at Isaiah 1:14).

Verse 25

I, even I, am he - This verse contains a gracious assurance that their sins would be blotted out, and the reason why it would be done. The

pronoun ‹I‘ is repeated to make it emphatic, as in Isaiah 43:11. Perhaps also God designs to show them the evil of the sins which are mentioned in the previous verses, by the assurance that they were committed against him who alone could forgive, and who had promised them pardon. The passage also reminds them, that it was God alone who could pardon the sins of which, as a nation, they had been guilty.

That blotteth out thy transgressions - This metaphor is taken from the custom of keeping accounts, where, when a debt is paid, the charge is blotted or cancelled. Thus God says he blotted out the sins of the Jews. He cancelled them. He forgave them. Of course, when forgiven, punishment could not be exacted, and he would treat them as pardoned; that is, as his friends.

For mine own sake - Not because you deserve it, or have any claim, or that it would not be right to punish you. Not even primarily to promote your happiness and salvation, but for my sake;

1. To show the benevolence of my character;

2. To promote my glory by your forgiveness and salvation (see Ezekiel 36:22).

And will not remember thy sins - They shall be forgiven. Hezekiah Isaiah 38:17 expresses the same idea by saying ‹thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.‘ We may learn from this verse:

1. That it is God only who can pardon sin. How vain, then, is it for man to attempt it! How wicked for man to claim the prerogative! And yet it is an essential part of the papal system that the Pope and his priests have the power of remitting the penalty of transgression.

2. That this is done by God solely for his own sake. It is not

(a) because we have any claim to it, for then it would not be pardon, but justice. It is not

(b) because we have any power to compel God to forgive, for who can contend with him, and how could mere power procure pardon? It is not

(c) because we have any merit, for then also it would be justice, and we have no merit. Nor is it

(d) primarily in order that we may be happy, for our happiness is a matter not worthy to be named, compared with the honor of God. But it is solely for his own sake - to promote his glory - to show his perfections - to

evince the greatness of his mercy and compassion - and to show his boundless and eternal love.

3. They who are pardoned should live to his glory, and not to themselves. For that they were forgiven, and it should be the grand purpose of their lives so to live as to show forth the goodness, compassion, and love of that merciful Being who has blotted out their sins.

4. If people are ever pardoned, they must come to God - and to God alone. They must come, not to justify themselves, but to confess their crimes. And they must come with a willingness that God should pardon them on just such terms as he pleases; at just such a time as he pleases; and solely with a view to the promotion of his own glory. Unless they have this feeling, they never can be forgiven, nor should they be forgiven.

Verse 26

Put me in remembrance - That is, urge all the arguments in your own defense which you can urge. State everything in self-vindication which can be stated. The language here is taken from the practice of courts when a cause is on trial; and God urges them on their side, to urge all in self-vindication which they can urge. On his part, he alleged that the princes and rulers of the nation had sinned Isaiah 43:27; that the whole nation had transgressed Isaiah 43:23-24, and that for this they were justly punished Isaiah 43:28. He here urges them to advance all in self-defense which they could - if they could pretend that He had forgotten anything; that they had merits which he had not considered; or that he had charged them with crime with undue severity.

Let us plead together - Hebrew, ‹Let us be judged together‘ (see the note at Isaiah 41:1).

Declare thou, that thou mayest be justified - That you may show that you are just, or righteous; that you may demonstrate that you are unjustly accused of crime, and punished with undue severity.

Verse 27

Thy first father hath sinned - This is the argument on the side of God, to show that they were neither unjustly punished, nor punished with undue severity. The argument is, that their rulers and teachers had been guilty of crime, and that therefore it was right to bring all this vengeance upon the nation. Various interpretations have been given of the phrase ‹thy first father.‘ A slight notice of them will lead to the correct exposition.

1. Many have supposed that Adam is referred to here. Thus Piscator, Calovius, and most of the fathers, understand it; and, among the Jews, Kimchi. But the objections to this are plain:

(a) Adam was not peculiarly the first father or ancestor of the Jews, but of the whole human race.

(b) The Jews never boasted, or gloried in him as the founder of their nation, but they always referred to Abraham under this appellation Matthew 3:9; John 8:33, John 8:39.

(c) It would have been irrelevant to the design of the prophet to have referred to the sin of Adam in this case. God was vindicating his own cause and conduct in destroying their capital and temple, and in sending them as captives to a distant land. How would it prove that he was right in this, to say that Adam was a transgressor? How would it demonstrate his justice in these special inflictions of his anger to refer to the apostasy of the ancestor of the whole human race?

2. Others refer it to Abraham. This was the sentiment of Jerome, and of some others; and by those who maintain this opinion, it is supposed to refer to his doubting the truth of the promise Genesis 15:8; or to the denial of his wife, and his sin in inducing her to say that she was his sister Genesis 12:11; Genesis 20:2; or to the fact that when young he was an idolater. But the obvious objection to this is, that Abraham is everywhere in the Scriptures proposed as an example of one eminently devoted to God; nor could it be said that these calamities had come upon them in consequence of his unfaithfulness, and his sins.

3. Others refer it to the rulers and princes individually. Thus Grotius refers it to Manasseh; Aben Ezra to Jeroboam, etc.

4. Others, as Vitringa, refer it to the high priest, and particularly to Uriah, who lived in the time of Ahaz, and particularly to the fact, that, in obedience to the command of Ahaz, he constructed an altar in Jerusalem like the one which he had seen and admired in Damascus 2 Kings 16:10-16. The objection to this interpretation is, that no reason can be given for

selecting this particular act from a number of similar abominations on the part of the priests and rulers, as the cause of the national calamities. It was only one instance out of many of the crimes which brought the national judgments upon them.

5. Others, as Gesenius, suppose that the word is to be taken collectively, not as referring to any particular individual, but to the high priests in general. It is not uncommon to give the name ‹father‘ thus to a principal man among a people, and especially to one eminent in religious authority. The word ‹first‘ here does not refer to time, but to rank; not the ancestor of the people, but the one having appropriately the title of father, who had the priority also in rank. The Septuagint renders it, Οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν πρῶτοι *Hoi pateres humōn prōtoi* It refers therefore, probably, to the character of the presiding officers in religion, and means that the priests, supreme in rank, and whose example was so important, had sinned; that there was irreligion at the very foundation of influence and authority; and that therefore it was necessary to bring these heavy judgments on the nation. No one acquainted with the history of the Jewish people in the times immediately preceding the captivity, can doubt that this was the character of the high priesthood.

(Gesenius and some others give the words a collective sense, as signifying either the succession of priests or ancestors in general. The interpretation which understands the phrase of Abraham, is supposed by some to be at variance with the uniform mention of that patriarch in terms of commendation. But these terms are perfectly consistent with the proposition that he was a sinner, which may here be the exact sense of חטא *châṭâ'* To the application of the phrase to Adam, it has been objected, that he was not peculiarly the father of the Jews. To this it may be answered, that if the guilt of the national progenitor would prove the point in question, much more would it be established by the fact of their belonging to a guilty race. At the same time it may be considered as implied, that all their fathers, who had since lived, shared in the original depravity; and thus the same sense is obtained that would have been expressed by the collective explanation of first father, while the latter is still taken in its strict and full sense, as denoting the progenitor of all mankind. - Alexander)

And thy teachers - Margin, ‹Interpreters.‘ The word used here (מלציך *melîytseykā*) is derived from לוץ *lûts* This word means to stammer, to speak unintelligibly; and then to speak in a foreign and barbarous language, and then to interpret, from the idea of speaking a foreign tongue. Hence, it may be used in the sense of an internuncius, or a messenger (2 Chronicles 32:31; compare the notes at Job 33:23). That it refers here to the priests, there can be no doubt, and is properly applied to them because they sustained the office of interpreting his will to the people, and generally of acting as internuncii or messengers between God and them. The Septuagint renders it, ” Ἄρχοντρς *Archontes* - ‹Rulers.‘

Verse 28

Therefore I have profaned - The princes of the sanctuary, that is, the priests, were by their office regarded as sacred, or set apart to the service of God. To depose them from that office, to subject them to punishment, and to send them into captivity, was, therefore, regarded as profaning them. They were stripped of their office, and robes, and honors, and reduced to the same condition, and compelled to meet with the same treatment, as the common people. The sense is, that he had made them common (for so the word חלל *châlal* is used in Exodus 31:14; Exodus 19:22; Leviticus 19:8; Leviticus 21:9; Malachi 1:12; Malachi 2:2); he did not regard their office; he used them all alike.

The princes of the sanctuary - Margin, ‹Holy princes.‘ It means, either those who presided over and directed the services of the sanctuary, called in 1 Chronicles 24:5, ‹governors of the sanctuary;‘ or those who were holy in office. The Septuagint renders it, Οἱ ἄρχοντες τὰ ἅγια μον *Hoi archontes ta hagia mou* - ‹Who preside over my holy things,‘ or my sanctuary. Vulgate, *Principes sanctos* - ‹Holy princes.‘ The Syriac, ‹Thy princes have profaned the sanctuary.‘ The sense is, that God had disregarded the official character of those who were set apart to the sacred office, and had punished them in common with the people at large for their sins.

And have given Jacob to the curse - The Septuagint renders it, ‹I have given Jacob to be destroyed‘ (ἀπωλέσαι *apōlesai*). The Hebrew word here (חרם *chērem*), is that which is commonly used to denote a solemn anathema, excommunication, or devotion to destruction (see the note at Isaiah 34:5).

To reproaches - The reproach, contempt, and scorn which they met with in their captivity, and in a land of strangers (compare Psalm 137:3-4).

Thus far God states the reasons why he had punished the nation. It had been on account of the national irreligion and sins, and the destruction had come upon all, but pre-eminently on the priests and the rulers. In the arbitrary division which is made in the Bible into chapters, a very improper separation has been made by making the chapter close here. The sense of the whole passage is materially injured by this division, and the scope of the whole argument is forgotten. The design of the entire argument is, to show that God would not leave his people; that though he punished them, he would not utterly destroy them; and that he would appear again for their rescue, and restore them to their own land. This argument is prosecuted in the following chapter; and in the commencement of that chapter the thought is pursued, that though God had thus punished them, yet he would appear and save them. The beginning of that chapter is properly the continuation and completion of the argument urged here, and this chapter should have closed at what is now Isaiah 44:5.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 44

Introduction

It has already been observed (the note at Isaiah 43:28), that the commencement of this chapter is properly a continuation and completion of the argument commenced there; and that the division should have been made at what is now the close of the fifth vcrsc of this chapter. This chapter may be divided into the following parts:

I. The assurance that though they had sinned Isaiah 43:23-28 God would have mercy on them, and would restore them to his favor, and to their land Isaiah 44:1-5. They had nothing to fear Isaiah 44:1-2: God would bless their offspring, and they should grew and flourish like willows by the waters Isaiah 44:3-5, and there should be among them a general turning to the Lord, and devotion to his service Isaiah 44:5.

II. An argument to show that Yahweh was the true God; and a severe and most sarcastic reproof of idolatry - designed to reprove idolaters, and to lead the people to put their confidence in Yahweh Isaiah 44:6-20. This argument consists of the following parts -

1. A solemn assertion of Yahweh himself, that there was no other God Isaiah 44:6.

2. An appeal to the fact that he only had foretold future events, and that he only could do it Isaiah 44:7-8.

3. A sarcastic statement of the manner in which idols were made, and of course, the folly of worshipping them Isaiah 44:9-20.

III. The assurance that Yahweh would deliver his people from all their calamities and oppressions Isaiah 44:21-28. This part contains:

1. The assurance that he would do it, and that their sires were blotted out Isaiah 44:21-22.

2. A calling upon the heavens and the earth to rejoice over so great and glorious an event Isaiah 44:23.

3. An appeal to what Yahweh had done, and could do, as an evidence that he could deliver his people, to wit: he had formed the heavens - he had made the earth without aid - he made diviners mad - he frustrated the plans of the wise, and he had confirmed the promises which he had made by his servants Isaiah 44:24-26; he said to Jerusalem that it should be inhabited,

and the cities of Judah that they should be rebuilt; he had dried up the rivers; and he had raised up Cyrus for the express purpose of delivering his people Isaiah 44:26-28; and by all this, it should be known that he would visit, and vindicate, and restore them.

Verse 1

Yet now hear - This should be read in immediate connection with the previous chapter. ‹Notwithstanding you have sinned, yet now hear the gracious promise which is made in regard to your deliverance.‘

Verse 2

Thus saith the Lord that made thee - (See the note at Isaiah 43:1).

And formed thee from the womb - This is equivalent to the declaration that he was their Maker, or Creator. It means, that from the very beginning of their history as a people, he had formed and moulded all their institutions, and directed all things in regard to them - as much as he is the former of the body from the commencement of its existence. It may be observed that the words, ‹from the womb,‘ are joined by some interpreters with the phrase, ‹that formed thee,‘ meaning, that he had been the originator of all their customs, privileges, and laws, from the beginning of their history; and by others with the phrase, ‹will help thee,‘ meaning, that from the commencement of their existence as a nation, he had been their helper. According to the Masoretic marks of distinction, the former is the true sense. So the Septuagint, Aben Ezra, Kimchi, Lowth, etc.; but Jerome, Luther, and some others, prefer the latter mode.

Fear not - (See the note at Isaiah 41:10). Though you have sinned as a people Isaiah 43:23-24, Isaiah 43:27, and though all these heavy judgments have come upon you Isaiah 43:28, yet you have no reason to fear that God will finally abandon and destroy you.

And thou Jeshurun - (וישׁרון *vayeshurûn*). This word occurs but four times in the Bible, as a poetical name for the people of Israel, apparently expressing affection and tenderness (Deuteronomy 32:15; Deuteronomy 33:5, Deuteronomy 33:26; and in this place). It is, says Gesenius (Commentary *in loc*.), ‹a flattering appellation (*schmeichelwort*) for Israel,‘ and is probably a diminutive from ישׁור *yāshûr* = ישׁר *yāshâr* the passive form in an intransitive verb with an active signification. The ending ון *ôn* he adds, is *terminatio charitiva* - a termination indicating affection, or kindness. In his Lexicon, he observes, however (as translated by Robinson),

that ‹it seems not improbable that it was a diminutive form of the name ישׂראל *yîs'râ'ēl* which was current in common life for the fuller form ישׂיאלון *yîs'râ'ēlûn* title of affection for Israel, but, like other common words of this sort, contracted, and more freely inflected, so as at the same time to imply an allusion to the signification of right or uprightness, contained in the root ישׂר *yâshar* Jerome renders it, *Rectissime* - ‹Most upright.‘ The Septuagint renders it, Ἠγαπημένος Ἰσραήλ *Ēgapēmenos Israēl* - ‹Beloved Israel.‘ The Syriac renders it, ‹Israel.‘ So also the Chaldee. It is, doubtless, a title of affection, and probably includes the notion of uprightness, or integrity.

Verse 3

For I will pour water - Floods, rivers, streams, and waters, are often used in the Scriptures, and especially in Isaiah, to denote plenteous divine blessings, particularly the abundant influences of the Holy Spirit (see the note at Isaiah 35:6-7). That it here refers to the Holy Spirit and his influences, is proved by the parallel expressions in the subsequent part of the verse.

Upon him that is thirsty - Or rather, ‹on the thirsty land.‘ The word צמא *tsâmē'* refers here rather to land, and the figure is taken from a burning sandy desert, where waters would be made to burst out in copious streams (see Isaiah 35:6-7). The sense is, that God would bestow blessings upon them as signal and marvelous, as if floods of waters were made to descend on the dry, parched, and desolated earth.

And floods - The word נוזלים *nôzelîym* from נזל *nâzal* "to flow," to run as liquids, means properly flowings, and is used for streams and rivers Exodus 15:8; Psalm 78:16; Proverbs 5:15; Psalm 72:6

My doctrine shall drop as the rain
My speech shall distil as the dew

As the small rain upon the tender herb,

And as the showers upon the grass.
Deuteronomy 32:2

I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed - (See Isaiah 59:21). This is in accordance with the promises everywhere made in he Bible to the people of God (see Genesis 12:7; Genesis 13:15; Genesis 15:18; Genesis 17:7-8; Exodus 20:6; Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 89:4; Isaiah 43:5). It may be regarded, first, as a promise of the richest blessings to them as parents -

since there is to a parent‘s heart no prospect so consoling as that which relates to his offspring; and, secondly, as an assurance of the perpetuity of their religion; of their return from captivity, and their restoration to their own land.

Verse 4

And they shall spring up - The idea is, that as plants and trees planted by water-courses, and in well-watered fields, grow and flourish, so should their children grow in virtue, hope, piety, and zeal.

As among the grass - They shall spring up and flourish as the grass does when abundantly watered from heaven. On the meaning of the unusual form of the word בבים *bebēyn* in the Hebrew (“in among”), see Vitringa and Rosenmuller. The ב (*b*) here is undoubtedly an error of the transcriber for כ (*k*) (“as”) - an error which, from the similarity of the letters, might be readily made. The Septuagint reads it, Ὡς *Hōs* - ‹As.‘ The Chaldee reads it, כ (*k*) (“as”).

As willows by the water-courses - Willows are usually planted in such places, and grow rapidly and luxuriantly. It denotes here, abundant increase, vigor and beauty; and means that their posterity would be greatly blessed of God. A similar figure to denote the prosperity and happiness of the righteous occurs in Psalm 1:3:

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,
That bringeth forth his fruit in his season;
His leaf also shall not wither.

These two verses teach us:

1. That God will pour his blessings on the children of his people - a promise which in all ages, when parents are faithful, is abundantly fulfilled.

2. That one of the richest blessings which can be imparted to a people is, that God‘s Spirit should descend on their children.

3. That the Spirit of God alone is the source of true happiness and prosperity to our children. All else - property, learning, accomplishment. beauty, vigor, will be vain. It is by his blessing only - by the influence of piety - that they will spring forth as among the grass, and like willows by the streams of water.

4. Parents should pray earnestly for a revival of religion. No better description can be given of a revival than that given here - the Spirit of God

descending like streams and floods on the young; and their springing forth in the graces of piety as among the grass, and growing in love to God and love to mankind like willows by the water-courses. Who would not pray for such a work of grace? What family, what congregation, what people can be happy without it?

Verse 5

One shall say - It shall be common to say this, or a profession of religion shall be common. The various expressions in this verse mean substantially the same thing - that there should prevail among the people a disposition to make a profession of attachment to Yahweh in every proper public manner. It is in immediate connection with what is said in the previous verses, that he would pour his Spirit upon them, and especially on their children. The effect would be, that many would make a public profession of religion. This refers, doubtless, in the main, to the period after their return from the captivity, and to the general prevalence of religion then. But it is also true of the people of God at all times - especially under the Messiah. God pours his Spirit like gentle dews, or rains, on the families of his people; and the effect is, that many publicly profess attachment to him.

I am the Lord‘s - I belong to Yahweh; I devote myself to him. This expresses the true nature of a profession of religion - a feeling that we are not our own, but that we belong to God. It is, that we not only feel that we are bound to worship him, but that we actually belong to him; that our bodies and spirits, and all that we have and are, are to be sacredly employed in his service (see 1 Corinthians 6:20; 2 Corinthians 7:5; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Nothing, in few words, can more appropriately describe the true nature of a profession of religion than the expression used here (אני ליהוה *layhovâh 'ānîy*) ‹For Yahweh am I‘ - ‹I am wholly, and entirely, and forever for Yahweh, to obey him; to do his will; to suffer patiently all that be appoints; to live where he directs; to die when, where, and how he pleases; to moulder in the grave according to his will; to be raised up by his power; and to serve him forever in a better world.‘

And another shall call himself by the name of Jacob - The Chaldee renders this, ‹He shall pray in the name of Jacob.‘ The idea seems to be, that he should call himself a friend of Jacob - an Israelite. He should regard himself as belonging to the same family and the same religion, as Jacob; as

worshipping the same God; and as maintaining the same belief. To call oneself by the same name as another, is indicative of friendship and affection; and is expressive of a purpose to be united to him, and to identify our interest with his. The idea is that which one would express by saying, that he cast in his interest with the people of God, or he became identified with them; as we now say, a man calls himself by the name of Christ, that is, a Christian. Jerome renders this, ‹He shall call by the name of Jacob.‘ that is, sinners to repentance (compare the note at Isaiah 43:7; Isaiah 48:1; Psalm 24:6).

And another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord - The Septuagint renders this, ‹And another shall write with his hand (χειρί *cheiri*), I am of God.‘ Lowth, ‹On his hand,‘ Aquila and Symmachus, (Χειρά *Cheira*). Lowth supposes that the allusion here is to the marks which were made indelible by puncture with ink on the hand or on other parts of the body. He supposes that the mark thus indelibly impressed was the name of the person, or the name of the master if he was a slave, or some indication by which it might be known to whom he belonged. In this way, the soldier marked himself with the name of his commander; the idolater, with the name of his god; and in this way, Procopius says, that the early Christians marked themselves. On this passage he says, ‹Because many marked their wrists or their arms with the sign of the cross, or with the name of Christ‘ (see Revelation 20:4; Spencer, De Leg. Heb. ii. 20).

But all this is too refined, and is evidently a departure from the true sense of the passage. The mark, or writing, was not on the hand, but with it - literally, ‹and this shall write his hand to Yahweh; ‹and the figure is evidently taken from the mode of making a contract or bargain, where the name is subscribed to the instrument. It was a solemn compact or covenant, by which they enrolled themselves among the worshippers of God, and pledged themselves to his service. The manner of a contract among the Hebrews is described in Jeremiah 32:10, Jeremiah 32:12, Jeremiah 32:44. A public, solemn, and recorded covenant, to which the names of princes, Levites, and priests, were subscribed, and which was sealed, by which they bound themselves to the service of God, is mentioned in Nehemiah 9:38. Here it denotes the solemn manner in which they would profess to be worshippers of the true God; and it is expressive of the true nature of a profession of religion.

The name is given in to God. It is enrolled by the voluntary desire of him who makes the profession among his friends. It is done, after the manner of solemn compacts among men, in the presence of witnesses Hebrews 12:1. Among Christians, it is sealed in a solemn manner by baptism, and the Lord‘s supper. It has, therefore, all the binding force and obligation of a solemn compact; and every professor of religion should regard his covenant with God as the most sacred of all compacts, and as having a more solemn obligation than any other. And yet, how many professors are there who would shrink back with horror from the idea of breaking a compact with man, who have no alarm at the idea of having proved unfaithful to their solemn pledge that they would belong wholly to God, and would live to him alone! Let every professor of religion remember that his profession has all the force of a solemn compact that he has voluntarily subscribed his name, and enrolled himself among the friends of God; and that there is no agreement of a more binding nature than that which unites him in public profession to the cause and the kingdom of the Saviour.

And surname himself by the name of Israel - Shall call himself an Israelite, and shall be a worshipper of the same God. The word rendered ‹shall surname‘ (כנה *kânâh* not used in the Qal, in the Piel כנה *kinnâh*) means to address in a friendly and soothing manner; to speak kindly to anyone. Gesenius renders it, ‹And kindly, soothingly names the name of Israel.‘ But the idea is probably that expressed in our translation. The word sometimes denotes a giving of flattering titles to anyone, by way of compliment Job 32:21-22:

Let me not, I pray you, accept any man‘s person;
Neither let me give flattering titles unto man.
For I know not to give flattering titles;
In so doing my Maker would soon take me away.

In Isaiah 45:4, it is rendered, ‹I have surnamed thee (Cyrus), though thou hast not known me.‘ The word does not occur elsewhere. It conveys the idea of an honorable title; and means here, I think, that he would call himself by the honorable appellation of Israel - or an Israelite - a worshipper of the God o f Jacob. It implies that a profession of the true religion is honorable, and that it is and should be esteemed so by him who makes it. It is observable, also, that this verse contains an instance of the parallelism in the Hebrew writings where the alternate members correspond

to each other. Here the first and third members, and the second and the fourth correspond to each other (see the Introduction, Section 8).

Verse 6

Thus saith the Lord - This commences, as I suppose (see Analysis), the argument to prove that Yahweh is the only true God, and that the idols were vanity. The object is, to show to the Jews, that he who had made to them such promises of protection and deliverance was able to perform what he had pledged himself to do.

The King of Israel - (See the notes at Isaiah 41:21).

And his Redeemer - (See the notes at Isaiah 43:1).

The Lord of hosts - (See the notes at Isaiah 1:9).

I am the first - (See the notes at Isaiah 41:4).

And I am the last - In Isaiah 41:4, this is expressed ‹with the last;‘ in Revelation 1:8, ‹I am Alpha and Omega.‘ The sense is, that God existed before all things, and will exist forever.

And besides me there is no God - This is repeatedly declared (Deuteronomy 4:35, Deuteronomy 4:39; see the note at Isaiah 43:10-12). This great truth it was God‹s purpose to keep steadily before the minds of the Jews; and to keep it in the world, and ultimately to diffuse it abroad among the nations, was one of the leading reasons why he selected them as a special people, and separated them from the rest of mankind.

Verse 7

And who, as I - This verse contains an argument to prove that he is God. In proof of this, he appeals to the fact that he alone can predict future events, and certainly declare the order, and the time in which they will come to pass (see the notes at Isaiah 41:21-23; Isaiah 44:9-10).

Shall call - That is, call forth the event, or command that to happen which he wills - one of the highest possible exhibitions of power. See a similar use of the word call in Isaiah 46:2; Isaiah 48:15.

And shall declare it - Declare, or announce with certainty the future event.

And set it in order - Arrange it; secure the proper succession and place (see the notes at Isaiah 41:22). The word used here (ערך *ʿârak*) denotes properly “to place in a row; set in order; arrange.” It is of the same signification as the Greek τάσσω *tassō* or τάττω *tattō* and is applied to placing the wood upon the altar in a proper manner (Genesis 22:9); or to placing the showbread in proper order on the table Leviticus 24:8; and

especially to setting an army in order, or putting it in battle array Genesis 14:8; Judges 20:20, Judges 20:22; 1 Samuel 17:2. Here it means, that God would arrange the events in a proper order - as an army is marshalled and arrayed for battle. There should be no improper sequences of events; no chance; no hap-hazard; no confusion. The events which take place under his government, occur in proper order and time, and so as best to subserve his plans.

For me - In order to execute my plans, and to promote my glory. The events on earth are for God. They are such as he chooses to ordain, and are arranged in the manner which he chooses.

Since I appointed the ancient people - ‹From my constituting the people of old;‘ that is, God had given them intimations of future events from the very period when he in times long past, had selected and appointed them as his people. They were, therefore, qualified to be his witnesses Isaiah 44:8.

And the things that are coming, let them show - (See the notes at Isaiah 41:22-23).

Verse 8

Fear ye not, neither be afraid - (see the notes at Isaiah 41:10). The word rendered here ‹be afraid,‘ occurs nowhere else in the Bible. There can be no doubt, however, in regard to its meaning. The Septuagint renders it, Μηδέ πλανᾶσθε *Mēde planasthe* - ‹Neither be deceived.‘ All the other ancient versions express the sense to fear, to be afraid (Gesenius‘ Lexicon on the word ירה *yârahh*).

Have not I told thee from that time - Have I not fully declared from the very commencement of your history as a people, in the main what shall occur?

Ye are even my witnesses - (See the notes at Isaiah 43:12).

Is there a God besides me? - This is a strong mode of affirming that there is no God besides Yahweh (see the note at Isaiah 44:6).

Yea, there is no God - Margin, ‹Rock‘ (צור *tsûr*). The word rock is often applied to God (see the note at Isaiah 30:29; compare Deuteronomy 32:4, Deuteronomy 32:30-31; Psalm 19:14; Psalm 31:2-3; Psalm 42:9; *et soepe al*. The idea is taken from the fact that a lofty rock or fastness was inaccessible by an enemy, and that those who fled there were safe.

Verse 9

They that make a graven image - A graven image is one that is cut, or sculptured out of wood or stone, in contradistinction from one that is molten, which is made by being cast. Here it is used to denote an image, or an idol-god in general. God had asserted in the previous verses his own divinity, and he now proceeds to show, at length, the vanity of idols, and of idol-worship. This same topic was introduced in Isaiah 40:18-20 (see the notes at that passage), but it is here pursued at greater length, and in a tone and manner far more sarcastic and severe. Perhaps the prophet had two immediate objects in view; first, to reprove the idolatrous spirit in his own time, which prevailed especially in the early part of the reign of Manasseh; and secondly, to show to the exile Jews in Babylon that the gods of the Babylonians could not protect their city, and that Yahweh could rescue his own people. He begins, therefore, by saying, that the makers of the idols were all of them vanity. Of course, the idols themselves could have no more power than their makers, and must be vanity also.

Are all of them vanity - (See the note at Isaiah 41:29).

And their delectable things - Margin, ‹Desirable.‘ The sense is, their valued works, their idol-gods, on which they have lavished so much expense, and which they prize so highly.

Shall not profit - Shall not be able to aid or protect them; shall be of no advantage to them (see Habakkuk 2:18).

And they are their own witnesses - They can foretell nothing; they can furnish no aid; they cannot defend in times of danger. This may refer either to the worshippers, or to the idols themselves - and was alike true of both.

They see not - They have no power of discerning anything. How can they then foresee future events?

That they may be ashamed - The same sentiment is repeated in Isaiah 44:11, and in Isaiah 45:16. The sense is, that shame and confusion must await all who put their trust in an idol-god.

Verse 10

Who hath formed a god - The Septuagint reads this verse in connection with the close of the previous verse, ‹But they shall be ashamed who make a god, and all who sculpture unprofitable things.‘ This interpretation also, Lowth, by a change in the Hebrew text on the authority of a manuscript in the Bodleian library, has adopted. This change is made by reading כי *kîy* instead of מי *mîy* in the beginning of the verse. But the authority of the change, being that of a single MS. and the Septuagint, is not

sufficient. Nor is it necessary. The question is designed to be ironical and sarcastic: ‹Who is there,‘ says the prophet, ‹that has done this? Who are they that are engaged in this stupid work? Do they give marks of a sound mind? What is, and must be the character of a man that bas formed a god, and that has made an unprofitable graven image?

Verse 11

Behold, all his fellows - All that are joined in making, and in worshipping it, are regarded as the fellows, or the companions (חברין *chăbērâyn*) of the idol-god (see Hosea 4:17 - ‹Ephraim is joined to idols‘). They and the idols constitute one company or fellowship, intimately allied to each other.

Shall be, ashamed - Shall be confounded when they find that their idols cannot aid them.

And the workmen - The allusion to the workmen is to show that what they made could not be worthy of the confidence of people as an object of worship.

They are of men - They are mortal people; they must themselves soon die. It is ridiculous, therefore, for them to attempt to make a god that can defend or save, or that should be adored.

Let them all be gathered together - For purposes of trial, or to urge their claims to the power of making an object that should be adored (see the note at Isaiah 41:1).

Let them stand up - As in a court of justice, to defend their cause (see the note at Isaiah 41:21).

They shall fear - They shall be alarmed when danger comes. They shall find that their idol-gods cannot defend them.

Verse 12

The smith with the tongs - The prophet proceeds here to show the folly and absurdity of idolatry; and in order to this he goes into an extended statement Isaiah 44:12-19 of the manner in which idols were usually made. Lowth remarks, ‹The sacred writers are generally large and eloquent on the subject of idolatry; they treat it with great severity, and set forth the absurdity of it in the strongest light. But this passage of Isaiah far exceeds anything that was ever written on the subject, in force of argument, energy of expression, and elegance of composition. One or two of the Apocryphal writers have attempted to imitate the prophet, but with very ill success (Wisd. 13:11-19; 15:7; etc.; Isaiah 44:11 ff) is one made of wood. The

phrase used here, therefore, refers to the process of axe-making with a view to cutting down a tree to make a god; and the prophet describes the ardor and activity with which it is done, to show how much haste they were in to complete it. The literal translation of this phrase is, ‹The workman (חרֹשׁ *châsh* st. const. for חרֹשׁ *châsh*) of iron (maketh) an axe.‘

Both worketh in the coals - And he works the piece of iron of which he is making an axe in the coals. He blows the coals in order to produce an intense heat (see Isaiah 54:16) - ‹Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire.‘

And fashioneth it with hammers - Forms the mass of iron into an axe. Axes were not cast, but made.

And worketh it with the strength of his arms - Or, he works it with his strong arms - referring to the fact that the arm of the smith, by constant usage, becomes exceedingly strong. A description remarkably similar to this occurs in Virgil when he is describing the Cyclops:

Illi inter sesc magna vi brachia tollunt
In numerum; versantque tenaci forcipe ferrum.
Georg. iv. 174,175.
Heaved with vast strength their arms in order rise,
And blow to blow in measured chime replies;

While with firm tongs they turn the sparkling ore,

And Etna‘s caves with ponderous anvils roar.
Sotheby.

Yea, he is hungry - He exhausts himself by his hard labor. The idea is, that he is so anxious to have it done, so engaged, so diligent, that he does not even stop to take necessary refreshment.

And his strength faileth - He works until he is completely exhausted.

He drinketh no water - He does not intermit his work even long enough to take a draught of water, so hurried is he. While the iron is hot, he works with intense ardor, lest it should grow cool, and his work be retarded - a very graphic description of what all have seen in a blacksmith‘s shop. The Rev. John Williams states that when the South Sea islanders made an idol, they strictly abstained from food; and although they might be, and were sometimes, three days about the work, no water, and he believes no

food, passed their lips all the time. This fact would convey a satisfactory elucidation of an allusion not otherwise easily explained (Pictorial Bible).

Verse 13

The carpenter - The axe is made Isaiah 44:12, and the carpenter now proceeds to the construction of the god.

Stretcheth out his rule - For the purpose of laying out his work, or measuring it. The word rendered here ‹rule,‘ however (קוו *qâv*), means properly “a line”; and should be so rendered here. The carpenter stretches out a line, but not a rule.

He marketh it out with a line - He marks out the shape; the length, and breadth, and thickness of the body, in the rough and unhewn piece of wood. He has an idea in his mind of the proper shape of a god, and he goes to work to make one of that form. The expression ‹to mark out with a line,‘ is, however, not congruous. The word which is used here, and which is rendered ‹line‘ (שׂרד *s'ered*) occurs nowhere else in the Bible. Lowth and Kimchi render it, ‹Red ochre.‘ According to this the reference is to the chalk, red clay, or crayon, which a carpenter uses on a line to mark out his work. But according to Gesenius, the word means an awl, or a stylus, or engraver; with which the artist sketches the outlines of the figure to be sculptured. A carpenter always uses such an instrument in laying out and marking his work.

He fitteth it with planes - Or rather with chisels, or carving-tools, with which wooden images were carved. Planes are rather adapted to a smooth surface; carving is performed with chisels. The word is derived from קצע *qâtsa*‘ ‹to cut off.‘ The Chaldee renders it, אזמל *'azemēl* - ‹A knife.‘ The Septuagint renders this, ‹Framed it by rule, and glued the parts together.‘

Marketh it out with the compass - From חוג *chûg* “to make a circle,” to revolve, as compasses do. By a compass he accurately designates the parts, and marks out the symmetry of the form.

According to the beauty of a man - Perhaps there may be a little sarcasm here in the thought that a god should be made in the shape of a man. It was true, however, that the statues of the gods among the ancients were made after the most perfect conceptions of the human form. The statuary of the Greeks was of this description, and the images of Apollo, of Venus, and of Jupiter, have been celebrated everywhere as the most perfect representations of the bureau form.

That it may remain in the house - To dwell in a temple. Such statues were usually made to decorate a temple; or rather perhaps temples were reared to be dwelling places of the gods. It may be implied here, that the idol was of no use but to remain in a house. It could not hear, or save. It was like a useless piece of furniture, and had none of the attributes of God.

Verse 14

He heweth him down cedars - In the previous verses, the prophet had described the formation of an axe with which the work was to be done Isaiah 44:12, and the laying out, and carving of the idol Isaiah 44:13. In this verse he proceeds to describe the material of which the idol was made, and the different purposes Isaiah 44:15-17 to which that material was applied. The object is to show the amazing stupidity of those who should worship a god made of the same material from which they made a fire to warm themselves, or to cook their food. For a description of cedars, see the notes at Isaiah 9:10.

And taketh - Takes to himself; that is, makes use of.

The cypress - (תרזה *tîrzâh*). This word occurs nowhere else in the Bible. It is probably derived from a root (תרז *târaz*) signifying to be hard, or firm. Hence, it probably means some species of wood that derived its name from its hardness or firmness. Jerome translates it, Ilex (a species of oak) - ‹the holm-oak.‘ It was an evergreen. This species of evergreen, Gesenius says, was abundant in Palestine.

And the oak - The oak was commonly used for this purpose on account of its hardness and durability.

Which he strengtheneth for himself - Margin, ‹Taketh courage.‘ The word אמץ *'îmmēts* means properly “to strenthen,” to make strong, to repair, to replace, to harden. Rosenmuller and Gesenius suppose that it means here to choose, that is, to set fast, or appoint; and they appeal to Psalm 80:15, Psalm 80:17, ‹thou madest strong for thyself.‘ Kimchi supposes that it means, that he gave himself with the utmost diligence and care to select the best kinds of wood for the purpose. Vitringa, that he was intent on his work, and did not leave the place, but refreshed himself with food in the woods without returning home, in order that be might accomplish his design. Others interpret it to mean that he girded himself with strength, and made use of his most intense efforts in felling the trees of the forest. Lowth renders it, ‹Layeth in good store of the trees of the forest.‘ It may mean that he gave himself with great diligence to the work; or may it not mean that he

planted such trees, and took great pains in watering and cultivating them for this purpose?

He planteth an ash - (ארן *'oren*). The Septuagint renders it, Πίτυν *Pitun* - ‹Pine.‘ Jerome also renders it, *Pinum*. Gesenius supposes the name was given from the fact that the tree had a tall and slender top, which, when it vibrated, gave forth a tremulous, creaking sound (from רנן *rânan*). This derivation is, however, somewhat fanciful. Most interpreters regard it as the ash - a well-known tree. In idolatrous countries, where it is common to have idols in almost every family, the business of idol-making is a very important manufacture. Of course, large quantities of wood would be needed; and it would be an object to procure that which was most pure, or as we say, ‹clear stuff,‘ and which would work easily, and to advantage. It became important, therefore, to cultivate that wood, as we do for shipbuilding, or for cabinet-work, and doubtless groves were planted for this purpose.

And the rain doth nourish it - These circumstances are mentioned to show the folly of worshipping a god that was formed in this manner. Perhaps also the prophet means to intimate that though the man planted the tree, yet that be could not make it grow. He was dependent on the rains of heaven; and even in making an idol-god he was indebted to the providential care of the true God. Men, even in their schemes of wickedness, are dependent on God. Even in forming and executing plans to oppose and resist him, they can do nothing without his aid. He preserves them, feeds them, clothes them; and the instruments which they use against him are those which he has nurtured. On the rain of heaven; on the sunbeam and the dew; on the teeming earth, and on the elements which he has made, and which he controls, they are dependent; and they can do nothing in their wicked plans without abusing the bounties of his Providence, and the expressions of his tender mercy.

Verse 15

Then shall it be for a man to burn - It will afford materials for a fire. The design of this verse and the following is, to ridicule the idea of a man‘s using parts of the same tree to make a fire to cook his victuals, to warm himself, and to shape a god. Nothing could be more stupid than the conduct here referred to, and yet it is common all over the pagan world. It shows the utter debasement of the race, that they thus of the same tree make a fire, cook their food, and construct their gods.

Verse 16

With part thereof he eateth flesh - That is, he prepares flesh to eat, or prepares his food.

He roasteth roast - He roasts meat.

Verse 18

They have not known nor understood - They are stupid, ignorant, and blind. Nothing could more strikingly show their ignorance and stupidity than this idol worship.

He hath shut their eyes - God hath closed their eyes. Margin, ‹Daubed.‘ The word used here, טה *ṭah* from טוה *ṭûah* denotes properly "to spread over"; to besmear; to plaster; as, e. g., a wall with mortar Leviticus 14:42; 1 Chronicles 29:4; Ezekiel 13:10; Ezekiel 22:28. Here it means to cover over the eyes so as to prevent vision; and hence, metaphorically, to make them stupid, ignorant, dull. It is attributed to God in accordance with the common statement of the Scriptures, that he does what he permits to be done (see the notes at Isaiah 6:9-10). It does not mean that God had done it by any physical, or direct agency, but that it had occurred under the administration of his Providence. It is also true that the Hebrew writers sometimes employ an active verb when the signification is passive, and when the main idea is, that anything was in fact done. Here the main point is not the agent by which this was done, but the fact that their eyes were blinded - and perhaps all the force of the verb טה *ṭah* used here would be expressed if it was rendered in an impersonal, or in a passive form, ‹it is covered as to their eyes,‘ that is, their eyes are shut, without suggesting that it was done by God. So the Septuagint renders it, Ἀπημαυρώθησαν *Apēmaurōthēsan* - ‹They are blind,‘ or involved in darkness.

So the Chaldee, מטמטמן *meṭmeṭemân* (also in the plural) - ‹Their eyes are obscured‘ or blind. It cannot be proved from this text that God is, by direct agency, the author by whom it was done. It was not uncommon to shut up, or seal up the eyes for various purposes in the East, and unquestionably the prophet alludes to some such custom. ‹It is one of the solemnities at a Jewish wedding at Aleppo, according to Dr. Russell, who mentions it as the most remarkable thing in their ceremonies at that time. It is done by fastening the eyelids together with a gum, and the bridegroom is the person, he says, if he remembered right, that opens the bride‘s eyes at the appointed time. It is also used as a punishment in those countries. So Sir Thomas Roe‘s chaplain, in his account of his voyages to East India, tells us of a son of the Great Mogul, whom he had seen, and with whom Sir Thomas had

conversed, that had before that time been cast into prison by his father, where his eyes were sealed up, by something put before them, which might not be taken off for three years; after which time the seal was taken away, that he might with freedom enjoy the light, though not his liberty.‘ (Harmer‘s Obs. vol. iii., pp. 507,508. Ed. Lond. 8vo, 1808.)

Verse 19

And none considereth in his heart - Margin, ‹Setteth to.‘ He does not place the subject near his heart or mind; he does not think of it. A similar phrase occurs in Isaiah 46:8: ‹Bring it again to mind.‘ It is a phrase drawn from the act of placing an object near us, in order to examine it closely; and we express the same idea by the phrase ‹looking at a thing,‘ or ‹looking at it closely.‘ The sense is, they had not attentively and carefully thought on the folly of what they were doing - a sentiment which is as true of all sinners as it was of stupid idolaters.

An abomination - A name that is often given to an idol 2 Kings 11:5, 2 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 23:13. The meaning is, that an idol was abominable and detestable in the sight of a holy God. It was that which he could not endure.

Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? - Margin, ‹That which comes of.‘ The word בּוּל *bûl* means properly “produce, increase,” and here evidently a stock or trunk of wood. So it is in the Chaldee.

Verse 20

He feedeth on ashes - There have been various interpretations of this. Jerome renders it, ‹A part of it is ashes;‘ the Chaldee, ‹Lo! half of the god is reduced to ashes;‘ the Septuagint, ‹Know thou that their heart is ashes.‘ The word rendered here ‹feedeth‘ (רעה *roʿeh*) means properly “to feed, graze, pasture”; and then, figuratively, to delight, or take pleasure in any person or thing Proverbs 13:20; Proverbs 15:14; Proverbs 28:7; Proverbs 29:3. In Hosea 12:1, ‹Ephraim feedeth on wind,‘ it means to strive after something vain or unprofitable; to seek that which will prove to be vain and unsatisfactory. So here it means, that in their idol-service they would not obtain that which they sought. It would be like a man who sought for food, and found it to be dust or ashes; and the service of an idol compared with what man needed, or compared with the true religion, would be like ashes compared with nutritious and wholesome diet. This graphic description of the effect of idolatry is just as true of the ways of sin, and of the pursuits of

the world now. It is true of the frivolous and the fashionable; of those who seek happiness in riches and honors; of all those who make this world their portion, that they are feeding on ashes - they seek that which is vain, unsubstantial, unsatisfactory, and which will yet fill the soul itself with disgust and loathing.

A deceived heart hath turned him aside - This is the true source of the difficulty; this is the fountain of all idolatry and sin. The heart is first wrong, and then the understanding, and the whole conduct is turned aside from the path of truth and duty (compare Romans 1:28).

A lie in my right hand - The right hand is the instrument of action. A lie is a name often given to an idol as being false and delusive. The sense is, that that which they had been making, and on which they were depending, was deceitful and vain. The work of their right hand - the fruit of their skill and toil, was deceptive, and could not save them. The doctrine is, that that which sinners rely on to save their souls; that which has cost their highest efforts as a scheme to save them, is false and delusive. All schemes of religion of human origin are of this description: and all will be alike deceptive and ruinous to the soul.

Verse 21

Remember these - Remember these things which are now said about the folly of idolatry, and the vanity of worshipping idols. The object of the argument is, to turn their attention to God, and to lead them to put their trust in him.

Thou art my servant - (See the notes at Isaiah 42:19; Isaiah 43:1).

Verse 22

I have blotted out - The word used here (מחה *mâchâh*), means properly "to wipe away," and is often applied to sins, as if the account was wiped off, or as we express it, blotted out (Psalm 51:3, Psalm 51:11; see the note at Isaiah 43:25). The phrase, ‹to blot out sins like a cloud,‘ however, is unusual, and the idea not very obvious. The true idea would be expressed by rendering it, ‹I have made them to vanish as a thick cloud;‘ and the sense is, as the wind drives away a thick cloud, however dark and frowning it may be, so that the sky is clear and serene, so God had caused their sins to disappear, and had removed the storm of his anger. Nothing can more strikingly represent sin in its nature and consequences, than a dense, dark, frowning cloud that comes over the heavens, and shuts out the sun, and fills the air with gloom; and nothing can more beautifully represent the nature

and effect of pardon than the idea of removing such a cloud, and leaving the sky pure, the air calm and serene, and the sun pouring down his beams of warmth and light on the earth. So the soul of the sinner is enveloped and overshadowed with a dense cloud; but pardon dissipates that cloud, and it is calm, and joyful, and serene.

And as a cloud - The Chaldee render this, ‹As a flying cloud.‘ The difference between the two words rendered here ‹thick cloud,‘ and ‹cloud‘ (עב *ʿâb* and ענן *ʿânân*) is, that the former is expressive of a cloud as dense, thick, compact; and the latter as covering or veiling the heavens. Lowth renders the latter word ‹Vapour;‘ Noyes, ‹Mist.‘ Both words, however, usually denote a cloud. A passage similar to this is found in Demosthenes, as quoted by Lowth: ‹This decree made the danger then hanging over the city pass away like a cloud.

Return unto me - Since your sins are pardoned, and such mercy has been shown, return now, and serve me. The argument here is derived from the mercy of God in forgiving them, and the doctrine is, that the fact that God has forgiven us imposes the strongest obligations to devote ourselves to his service. The fact that we are redeemed and pardoned is the highest argument why we should consecrate all our powers to him who has purchased and forgiven us.

Verse 23

Sing, O ye heavens - (see Isaiah 42:10). It is common in the sacred writings to call on the heavens, the earth, and all created things, to join in the praise of God on any great and glorious event (see Psalm 96:1, Psalm 96:11-12; Psalm 148:1-14) The occasion of the joy here was the fact that God had redeemed his people - a fact, in the joy of which the heavens and earth were called to participate. An apostrophe such as the prophet here uses is common in all writings, where inanimate objects are addressed as having life, and as capable of sharing in the emotions of the speaker. Vitringa has endeavored to show that the various objects here enumerated are emblematic, and that by the heavens are meant the angels which are in heaven; by the lower parts of the earth, the more humble and obscure republics of the pagan; by the mountains, the greater and more mighty kingdoms; by the forest, and the trees, large and spacious cities, with their nobles. So Grotius also interprets the passage. But the passage is a highly-wrought expression of elevated feeling; the language of poetry, where the prophet calls on all objects to exult; - an apostrophe to the highest heavens

and the lowest part of the earth - the mountains and the forests - the most sublime objects in nature - to exult in the fact that the Jewish people were delivered from their long and painful captivity, and restored again to their own land.

The Lord hath done it - Has delivered his people from their captivity in Babylon. There is, however, no impropriety in supposing that the eye of the prophet also rested on the glorious deliverance of his people by the Messiah; and that he regarded one event as emblematic of, and introductory to the other. The language used here will certainly appropriately express the feelings which should be manifested in view of the plan of redemption under the Messiah.

Shout, ye lower parts of the earth - The foundations of the earth; the parts remote from the high heavens. Let the highest and the lowest objects shout; the highest heavens, and the depths of the earth. The Septuagint renders it, Τὰ Θεμέλια τῆς γῆς *Ta Themelia tēs gēs* - ‹The foundations of the earth.‘ So the Chaldee.

Ye mountains - So in Psalm 148:9, Psalm 148:13: ‹Mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and all cedars - let them praise the name of the Lord.‘

O forest, and every tree therein - Referring either to Lebanon, as being the most magnificent forest known to the prophet; or to any forest as a great and sublime object.

Verse 24

Thy Redeemer - (See the note at Isaiah 43:1).

And he that formed thee from thee womb - (See the note at Isaiah 44:2).

That stretcheth forth the heavens - (See the note at Isaiah 40:22).

That spreadeth abroad the earth - Representing the earth, as is often done in the Scriptures, as a plain. God here appeals to the fact that he alone had made the heavens and the earth, as the demonstration that he is able to accomplish what is here said of the deliverance of his people. The same God that made the heavens is the Redeemer and Protector of the church, and therefore the church is safe.

Verse 25

That frustrateth - Hebrew, ‹Breaking:‘ that is, destroying, rendering vain. The idea is, that that which necromancers and diviners relied on as certain demonstration that what they predicted would be fulfilled, God makes vain and inefficacious. The event which they predicted did not

follow, and all their alleged proofs that they were endowed with divine or miraculous power he rendered vain.

The tokens - Hebrew, אתות *'othôth* - ‹Signs.‘ This word is usually applied to miracles, or to signs of the divine interposition and presence. Here it means the things on which diviners and soothsayers relied; the tricks of cunning and sleight-of-hand which they adduced as miracles, or as demonstrations that they were under a divine influence. See the word more fully explained in the notes at Isaiah 7:2.

The liars - Deceivers, boasters - meaning conjurers, or false prophets (compare Jeremiah 50:36; see also the note at Isaiah 16:6).

And maketh diviners mad - That is, makes them foolish, or deprives them of wisdom. They pretend to foretell future events, but the event does not correspond with the prediction. God orders it otherwise, and thus they are shown to be foolish, or unwise.

That turneth wise men backward - Lowth renders this, ‹Who reverseth the devices of the sages.‘ The sense is, he puts them to shame. The idea seems to be derived from the fact that when one is ashamed, or disappointed, or fails of performing what he promised, he turns away his face (see 1 Kings 2:16, margin) The ‹wise men,‘ here denote the sages; the diviners, the soothsayers; and the sense is, that they were not able to predict future events, and that when their prediction failed, they would be suffused with shame.

And maketh their knowledge foolish - He makes them appear to be fools. It is well known that soothsayers and diviners abounded in the East; and it is not improbable that the prophet here means that when Babylon was attacked by Cyrus, the diviners and soothsayers would predict his defeat, and the overthrow of his army, but that the result would show that they were utterly incapable of predicting a future event. The whole passage here has reference to the taking of Babylon by Cyrus, and should be interpreted accordingly.

Verse 26

That confirmeth the word of his servant - Probably the word ‹servant‘ here is to be taken in a collective sense, as referring to the prophets in general who had foretold the return of the Jews to their own land, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Or it may be, that the prophet refers more particularly to himself as having made a full prediction of this event. The parallel expression, ‹his messengers,‘ however, is in the plural number, and

thus it is rendered probable that the word here refers to the prophets collectively. The idea is, that it was a characteristic of God to establish the words of his servants the prophets, and that their predictions in regard to the return from the captivity in a special manner would be fulfilled.

The counsel of his messengers - The prophets whom he had sent to announce future events, and to give counsel and consolation to the nation.

That saith to Jerusalem - Jerusalem is here supposed to be lying in ruins, and the people to be in captivity in Babylon. In this situation, God is represented as addressing desolate Jerusalem, and saying, that it should be again inhabited, and that the cities of Judah should be rebuilt.

The decayed places - Margin, ‹Wastes.‘ No land, probably, was ever more completely desolated than the land of Judea when its inhabitants were carried to Babylon.

Verse 27

That saith to the deep, Be dry - Lowth supposes, that this refers to the fact that Cyrus took Babylon by diverting from their course the waters of the river Euphrates, and thus leaving the bed of the river dry, so that he could march his army under the walls of the city (see the notes at Isaiah 43:16-17. The most obvious interpretation is that of Lowth, Vitringa, etc., by which it is supposed that it refers to the drying up of the Euphrates and the streams about Babylon, when Cyrus took the city. The principal reasons for this interpretation are, first, that the entire statement in these verses has reference to the events connected with the taking of Babylon; secondly, that it is strikingly descriptive of the manner in which the city was taken by Cyrus; and thirdly, that Cyrus is expressly mentioned Isaiah 44:28, as being concerned in the transaction here referred to. The word rendered ‹deep‘ (צוּלה *tsûlâh*) denotes properly anything sunk; the depth of the sea; an abyss. ‹But it may be applied to a deep river, and especially to the Euphrates, as a deep and mighty stream. In Jeremiah 51:36, the word ‹sea‘ is applied to the Euphrates:

‹*I will dry up her sea,*

And make her springs dry.‘

Cyrus took the city of Babylon, after having besieged it a long time in vain, by turning the waters of the river into a vast lake, forty miles square, which had been constructed in order to carry off the superfluous waters in a time of inundation. By doing this, he laid the channel of the river almost dry, and was thus enabled to enter the city above and below, under the

walls, and to take it by surprise. The Septuagint renders the word ‹deep‘ here by Ἀβύσσῳ *Abussō* - ‹Abyss.‘ The Chaldee, ‹Who says to Babylon, Be desolate, and I will dry up your streams.‘

I will dry up thy rivers - Referring doubtless to the numerous canals or artificial streams by which Babylon and the adjacent country were watered. These were supplied from the Euphrates, and when that was diverted from its usual bed, of course they became dry.

Verse 28

That saith of Cyrus - This is the first time in which Cyrus is expressly named by Isaiah, though he is often referred to. He is mentioned by him only in one other place expressly by name Isaiah 45:1. He is several times mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament 2 Chronicles 26:22-23; Ezra 1:1-2, Ezra 1:7; Ezra 3:7; Ezra 4:3; Ezra 5:13, Ezra 5:17; Daniel 1:21; Daniel 6:28; Daniel 10:1. He began his reign about 550 b.c., and this prophecy was therefore delivered not far from a hundred and fifty years before he ascended the throne. None but God himself, or he whom God inspired, could have mentioned so long before, the name of him who should deliver the Jewish people from bondage; and if this was delivered, therefore, by Isaiah, it proves that he was under divine inspiration. The name of Cyrus (כורֹשׁ *kôresh* Greek Κῦ r ος *Kuros*) the Greek writers say, means ‹the sun.‘ It is contracted from the Persian word khorschid, which in that language has this signification. Cyrus was the celebrated king of the Medes and Persians, and was the son of Cambyses the Persian, and of Mandane, daughter of Astyages, king of the Medes. For an account of his character and reign, see the notes at Isaiah 41:2, where I have anticipated all that is needful to be said here.

He is my shepherd - A shepherd is one who leads and guides a flock, and then the word denotes, by a natural and easy metaphor, a ruler, or leader of a people. Thus the name is given to Moses in Isaiah 43:2; compare Psalm 77:20, and Ezekiel 34:23. The name here is given to Cyrus because God would employ him to conduct his people again to their own land. The word ‹my‘ implies, that he was under the direction of God, and was employed in his service.

And shall perform all my pleasure - In destroying the city and kingdom of Babylon; in delivering the Jewish captives; and in rebuilding Jerusalem, and the temple.

Even saying to Jerusalem - That is, I say to Jerusalem. The Vulgate, and the Septuagint renders this as meaning God, and not Cyrus, and doubtless this is the true construction. It was one of the things which God would do, to say to Jerusalem that it should be rebuilt.

And to the temple - Though now desolate and in ruins, yet it shall be reconstructed, and its foundation shall be firmly laid. The phrase ‹to Jerusalem,‘ and ‹to the temple,‘ should be rendered ‹of,‘ in accordance with a common signification of the preposition ל (*l*), and as it is rendered in the former part of the verse when speaking of Cyrus (compare Genesis 20:13; Judges 9:54). It was indeed under the direction of Cyrus that the city of Jerusalem was rebuilt, and the temple reconstructed Ezra 1:1; but still it was to be traced to God, who raised him up for this purpose. That this passage was seen by Cyrus is the testimony of Josephus, and is morally certain from the nature of the case, since, otherwise, it is incredible that he should have aided the Jews in returning to their own land, and in rebuilding their city and temple (see the Introduction, Section 2). This is one of the numerous instances in the Bible, in which God claims control and jurisdiction even over pagan princes and monarchs, and in which he says that their plans are under his direction, and made subservient to his will. It is one of the proofs that God presides over all, and that he makes the voluntary purposes of people subservient to him, and a part of the means of executing his glorious designs in relation to his people. Indeed, all the proud monarchs and conquerors of the earth have been in some sense instruments in his hand of executing his pleasure.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 45

Introduction

The subject which was introduced in the previous chapter Isaiah 44:28 constitutes the main topic of this. God had there introduced the name of Cyrus as he who was to deliver his people from their captivity, and to restore them to their own land. This chapter is almost entirely occupied with a statement of the deliverance which would be effected through him - with an occasional reference to the more important deliverance which would be effected under the Messiah. The general subject of the chapter is the overthrow of Babylon, the deliverance of the Jews by Cyrus, and the events consequent on that, adapted to give consolation to the friends of God, particularly the future conversion of the Gentiles to the true religion.

I. An apostrophe to Cyrus, stating the design for which God had raised him up, and what he would do for him Isaiah 45:1-8. This statement also comprises several items:

1. God would subdue nations before him, open brass gates, and give him the treasures of kings Isaiah 45:1-3.

2. The design for which God would do this would be, that he might deliver his people, and that the world might know that Yahweh was the true and only God Isaiah 45:4-7.

3. The joyful consequences of this event - so great that the heavens are represented as dropping down righteousness, and the earth as bringing forth salvation in consequence of it Isaiah 45:8.

II. Those who strive with their Maker are reproved and rebuked Isaiah 45:9-10. This is probably designed to apply to the people of Babylon, or to complainers in general in regard to the government of God.

III. God vindicates himself against the calumnies and objections of his enemies, and states the evidence that he is God, and the consequence of his interposition in raising up Cyrus.

1. He condescends to reason with people, and is willing to be inquired of respecting future events Isaiah 45:11.

2. He had made the earth and all things, and he had raised up Cyrus for the purpose of delivering his people Isaiah 45:12-13.

3. He states the consequence of his raising up Cyrus, and thcir deliverance, for the purpose of comforting his people Isaiah 45:14.

4. All the worshippers of idols should be ashamed and confounded Isaiah 45:15-16.

5. They who put their trust in God should never be confounded Isaiah 45:17.

IV. God vindicates his own character; and calls on the nations of idolaters to come and compare the claims of idols with him, and especially appeals, in proof that he is God, to his power of predicting future evcnts Isaiah 45:18-21.

V. The chapter closes by a call on all nations to trust in him in view of the fact that he is the only true God; and with an assurance that all should yet trust in him, and that the true religion should yet spread over the world Isaiah 45:22-25. This is designed further to comfort the people of God in their exile, and is a striking prophecy of the final universal prevalence of the gospel.

Verse 1

Thus saith the Lord to his anointed - This is a direct apostrophe to Cyrus, though it was uttered not less than one hundred and fifty years before Babylon was taken by him. The word ‹anointed‘ is that which is usually rendered "Messiah" (משיח *mâshîyach*), and here is rendered by the Septuagint, Τῷ χριστῷ μου Κύρῳ *Tō christō mou Kurō* - ‹To Cyrus, my Christ,‘ i. e, my anointed. It properly means "the anointed," and was a title which was commonly given to the kings of Israel, because they were set apart to their office by the ceremony of anointing, who hence were called οι χρυστοὶ Κυρίου *hoi christoi Kuriou* - 'The anointed of the Lord' 1 Samuel 2:10, 1 Samuel 2:35; 1 Samuel 12:3, 1 Samuel 12:5; 1 Samuel 16:6; 1 Samuel 24:7, 1 Samuel 24:11; 1 Samuel 26:9, 1 Samuel 26:11, 1 Samuel 26:23; 2 Samuel 1:14, 2 Samuel 1:16; 2 Samuel 19:22-23. There is no evidence that the Persian kings were inaugurated or consecrated by oil, but this is an appellation which was common among the Jews, and is applied to Cyrus in accordance with their usual mode of designating kings. It means here that God had solemnly set apart Cyrus to perform an important public service in his cause. It does not mean that Cyrus was a man of piety, or a

worshipper of the true God, of which there is no certain evidence, but that his appointment as king was owing to the arrangement of God‘s providence, and that he was to be employed in accomplishing his purposes. The title does not designate holiness of character, but appointment to an office.

Whose right hand I have holden - Margin, ‹Strengthened.‘ Lowth, ‹whom I hold fast by the right hand.‘ The idea seems to be, that God had upheld, sustained, strengthened him as we do one who is feeble, by taking his right hand (see the notes at Isaiah 41:13; Isaiah 42:6)

To subdue nations before him - For a general account of the conquests of Cyrus, see the notes at Isaiah 41:2. It may be added here, that ‹besides his native subjects, the nations which Cyrus subdued, and over which he reigned, were the Cilicians, Syrians, Paphlagonians, Cappadocians, Phrygians, Lydians, Carians, Phenicians, Arabians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Bactrians, Saeae, and Maryandines. Xenophon describes his empire as extending from the Mediterranean and Egypt to the Indian Ocean, and from Ethiopia to the Euxine Sea, and conveys a physical idea of its extent by observing that the extremities were difficult to inhabit, from opposite causes - some from excess of heat, and others from excess of cold; some from a scarcity of water, and others from too great abundance.‘ - (Pictorial Bible.)

And I will loose the loins of kings - The ancients dressed in a large, loose, flowing robe thrown over an under-garment or tunic, which was shaped to the body. The outer robe was girded with a sash when they toiled, or labored, or went to war, or ran. Hence, ‹to gird up the loins‘ is indicative of preparation for a journey, for labor, or for war. To unloose the girdle, or the loins, was indicative of a state of rest, repose, or feebleness; and the phrase here means that God would so order it in his providence that the kings would be unprepared to meet him, or so feeble that they would not be able to resist him (compare Job 38:3; Jeremiah 1:17). See also Job 12:21:

He poureth contempt upon princes,

And weakeneth the strength of the mighty;

Margin, more correctly, ‹Looseth the girdle of the strong.‘ There was a literal fulfillment of this in regard to Belshazzar, king of Babylon, when the city was taken by Cyrus. When the hand came forth on the walls of his palace, and the mysterious finger wrote his condemnation, it is said, ‹Then the king‘s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that

the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against the other‘ Daniel 5:6. The Vulgate renders this, ‹I will turn the backs of kings.‘

To open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut - The folding gates of a city, or a palace. It so happened in the scene of revelry which prevailed in Babylon when Cyrus took it, that the gates within the city which led from the streets to the river were left open. The city was not only enclosed with walls, but there were walls within the city on each side of the river Euphrates with gates, by which the inhabitants had access to the water of the river. Had not these gates been left open on that occasion, contrary to the usual custom, the Persians would have been shut up in the bed of the river, and could all have been destroyed. It also happened in the revelry of that night, that the gates of the palace were left open, so that there was access to every part of the city. Herodotus (i. 191) says, ‹If the besieged had been aware of the designs of Cyrus, or had discovered the project before its actual accomplishment, they might have effected the total destruction of these troops. They had only to secure the little gates which led to the river, and to have manned the embankments on either side, and they might have enclosed the Persians in a net from which they could never have escaped; as it happened they were taken by surprise; and such is the extent of that city, that, as the inhabitants themselves affirm, they who lived in the extremities were made prisoners before the alarm was communicated to the center of the palace.‘ None but an omniscient Being could have predicted, a hundred and fifty years before it occurred, that such an event would take place; and this is one of the many prophecies which demonstrate in the most particular manner that Isaiah was inspired.

Verse 2

I will go before thee - To prepare the way for conquest, a proof that it is by the providence of God that the proud conquerors of the earth are enabled to triumph. The idea is, I will take away everything that would retard or oppose your victorious march.

And make the crooked paths straight - (See the note at Isaiah 40:4). The Chaldee renders this, ‹My word shall go before thee, and I will prostrate the walls.‘ Lowth renders it, ‹Make the mountains plain.‘ Noyes, ‹Make the high places plain.‘ The Septuagint renders it, Ὄρη ὁμαλιῶ *Orē homaliō* - ‹Level mountains.‘ Vulgate, *Gloriosos terroe humiliabo* - ‹The high places of the earth I will bring down.‘ The word הדורים *hădûrîym* is from הדר *hâdar* to be large, ample, swollen, tumid; and probably means the

swollen tumid places, that is, the hills or elevated places; and the idea is, that God would make them level, or would remove all obstructions out of his way.

I will break in pieces the gates of brass - Ancient cities were surrounded by walls, and secured by strong gates, which were not unfrequently made of brass. To Babylon there were one hundred gates, twenty-five on each side of the city, which, with their posts, were made of brass. ‹In the circumference of the walls,‘ says Herodotus (i. 179), ‹at different distances, were a hundred massy gates of brass, whose hinges and frames were of the same metal.‘ It was to this, doubtless, that the passage before us refers.

The bars of iron - With which the gates of the city were fastened. ‹One method of securing the gates of fortified places among the ancients, was to cover them with thick plates of iron - a custom which is still used in the East, and seems to be of great antiquity. We learn from Pitts, that Algiers has five gates, and some of these have two, some three other gates within them, and some of them plated all over with iron. Pococke, speaking of a bridge near Antioch, called the iron bridge, says, that there are two towers belonging to it, the gates of which are covered with iron plates. Some of these gates are plated over with brass; such are the enormous gates of the principal mosque at Damascus, formerly the church of John the Baptist‘ (Paxton). The general idea in these passages is, that Cyrus would owe his success to divine interposition; and that that interposition would be so striking that it would be manifest that he owed his success to the favor of heaven. This was so clear in the history of Cyrus, that it is recognized by himself, and was also recognized even by the pagan who witnessed the success of his arms. Thus Cyrus says Ezra 1:2, ‹Jehovah, God of heaven, hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth.‘ Thus Herodotus (i. 124) records the fact that Harpagus said in a letter to Cyrus, ‹Son of Cambyses, heaven evidently favors you, or you could never have thus risen superior to fortune.‘ So Herodotus (i. 205) says that Cyrus regarded himself as endowed with powers more than human:, ‹When he considered the special circumstances of his birth, he believed himself more than human. He reflected also on the prosperity of his arms, and that wherever he had extended his excursions, he had been followed by success and victory.‘

Verse 3

And I will give thee the treasures of darkness - The treasures which kings have amassed, and which they have laid up in dark and secure places. The word ‹darkness,‘ here, means that which was hidden, unknown, secret (compare Job 12:22). The treasures of the kings of the East were usually hidden in some obscure and strong place, and were not to be touched except in cases of pressing necessity. Alexander found vast quantities of treasure thus hidden among the Persians; and it was by taking such treasures that the rapacity of the soldiers who followed a conqueror was satisfied, and in fact by a division of the spoils thus taken that they were paid. There can be no doubt that large quantities of treasure in this manner would be found in Babylon. The following observations from Harmer (Obs. pp. 111,511-513), will show that it was common to conceal treasures in this manner in the East; ‹We are told by travelers in the East, that they have met with great difficulties, very often from a notion universally disseminated among them, that all Europeans are magicians, and that their visits to those eastern countries are not to satisfy curiosity, but to find out, and get possession of those vast treasures they believe to be buried there in great quantities.

These representations are very common; but Sir John Chardin gives us a more particular and amusing account of affairs of this kind: “It is common in the Indies, for those sorcerers that accompany conquerors, everywhere to point out the place where treasures are bid. Thus, at Surat, when Siragi came thither, there were people who, with a stick striking on the ground or against walls, found out those that had been hollowed or dug up, and ordered such places to be opened.” He then intimates that something of this nature had happened to him in Mingrelia. Among the various contradictions that agitate the human breast, this appears to be a remarkable one; they firmly believe the power of magicians to discover bidden treasures, and yet they continue to hide them. Dr. Perry has given us all account of some mighty treasures hidden in the ground by some of the principal people of the Turkish empire, which, upon a revolution, were discovered by domestics privy to the secret.

D‘Herbelot has given us accounts of treasures concealed in the same manner, some of them of great princes, discovered by accidents extremely remarkable: but this account of Chardin‘s, of conquerors pretending to find out hidden treasures by means of sorcerers, is very extraordinary. As, however, people of this cast have made great pretences to mighty things, in

all ages, and were not unfrequently confided in by princes, there is reason to believe they pretended sometimes, by their art, to discover treasures, anciently, to princes, of which they had gained intelligence by other methods; and, as God opposed his prophets, at various times, to pretended sorcerers, it is not unlikely that the prophet Isaiah points at some such prophetic discoveries, in those remarkable words Isaiah 45:3: "And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel." I will give them, by enabling some prophet of mine to tell thee where they are concealed.

Such a supposition throws a great energy into those words.‘ The belief that the ruins of cities abound with treasures that were deposited there long since, prevails in the East, and the inhabitants of those countries regard all travelers who come there, Burckhardt informs us, as coming to find treasures, and as having power to remove them by enchantment. ‹It is very unfortunate,‘ says he, ‹for European travelers, that the idea of treasures being hidden in ancient edifices is so strongly rooted in the minds of the Arabs and Turks; they believe that it is sufficient for a true magician to have seen and observed the spot where treasures are hidden (of which be is supposed to be already informed by the old books of the infidels who lived on the spot), in order to be able afterward at his ease to command the guardian of the treasure to set the whole before him. It was of no avail to tell them to follow me and see whether I searched for money.

Their reply was, "Of course you will not dare to take it out before us, but we know that if you are a skillful magician you will order it to follow you through the air to whatever place you please." If the traveler takes the dimensions of a building or a column, they are persuaded it is a magical proceeding.‘ (Travels in Syria, pp. 428,429. Ed. Lond. 4to, 1822.) Laborde, in his account of a visit to Petra, or Sela, has given an account of a splendid temple cut in the solid rock, which is called the Khasne, or ‹treasury of Pharaoh.‘ It is sculptured out of an enormous block of freestone, and is one of the most splendid remains of antiquity. It is believed by the Arabs to have been the place where Pharaoh, supposed to have been the founder of the costly edifices of Petra, had deposited his wealth. ‹After having searched in vain,‘ says Laborde, ‹all the coffins and funeral monuments, to find his

wealth, they supposed it must be in the urn which surmounted the Khasne. But, unhappily, being out of their reach, it has only served the more to kindle their desires.

Hence, whenever they pass through the ravine, they stop for a moment, charge their guns, aim at the urn, and endeavor by firing at it, to break off some fragments, with a view to demolish it altogether, and get at the treasure which it is supposed to contain.‘ (Laborde‘s Sinai and Petra, p. 170. Ed. Lond. 1836.) The treasures which Cyrus obtained in his conquests are known to have been immense. Sardis, the capital of Croesus, king of Lydia, the most wealthy monarch of his time, was, according to Herodotus (i. 84), given up to be plundered; and his hoarded wealth became the spoil of the victor (see also Xen. Cyr. vii.) That Babylon abounded in treasures is expressly declared by Jeremiah Jeremiah 51:13: ‹O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures.‘ These treasures also, according to Jeremiah Jeremiah 50:37, became the spoil of the conqueror of the city. Pithy also has given a description of the wealth which Cyrus obtained in his conquests, which strikingly confirms what Isaiah here declares: ‹Cyrus, in the conquest of Asia, obtained thirty-four thousand pounds weight of gold, besides golden vases, and gold that was made with leaves, and the palm-tree, and the vine.

In which victory also he obtained five hundred thousand talents of silver, and the goblet of Semiramis, which weighed fifteen talents.‘ (Nat. Hist. 33. 3.) Brerewood has estimated that this gold and silver amounted to one hundred and twenty-six million, and two hundred and twenty-four thousand pounds sterling. (De Pon. et Men. 10.) Babylon was the center of an immense traffic that was carried on between the eastern parts of Asia and the western parts of Asia and Europe. For a description of this commerce, see an article in the Bib. Rep. vol. vii. pp. 364-390. Babylonian garments, it will be remembered, of great value, had made their way to Palestine in the time of Joshua Joshua 7:21. Tapestries embroidered with figures of griffons and other monsters of eastern imagination were articles of export (Isaac Vossius, Observatio). Carpets were made there of the finest materials and workmanship, and formed an article of extensive exportation. They were of high repute in the times of Cyrus; whose tomb at Pasargada was adorned with them (Arrian, Exped. Alex. vi. 29). Great quantities of gold were used

in Babylon. The vast image of gold erected by Nebuchadnezzar in the plain of Dura is proof enough of this fact. The image was sixty cubits high and six broad Daniel 3:1. Herodotus (i. 183) informs us that the Chaldeans used a thousand talents of frankincense annually in the temple of Jupiter.

That thou mayest know - That from these signal successes, and these favors of heaven, you may learn that Yahweh is the true God. This he would learn because he would see that he owed it to heaven (see the note at Isaiah 45:2); and because the prediction which God had made of his success would convince him that he was the true and only God. That it had this effect on Cyrus is apparent from his own proclamation (see Ezra 1:2). God took this method of making himself known to the monarch of the most mighty kingdom of the earth, in order, as he repeatedly declares, that through his dealings with kingdoms and people he may be acknowledged.

Which call thee by thy name - (See the notes at Isaiah 43:1). That thou mayest know that I, who so long before designated thee by name, am the true God. The argument is, that none but God could have foretold the name of him who should be the deliverer of his people.

Am the God of Israel - That the God of Israel was the true and only God. The point to be made known was not that he was the God of Israel, but that the God of Israel was Yahweh the true God.

Verse 4

For Jacob my servant‘s sake - (see the note at Isaiah 42:19). The statement here is, that God had raised up Cyrus on account of his own people. The sentiment is common in the Bible, that kings and nations are in the hand of God; and that he overrules and directs their actions for the accomplishment of his own purposes, and especially to protect, defend, and deliver his people (see the note at Isaiah 10:5; compare Isaiah 47:6).

I have surnamed thee - On the meaning of the word ‹surname,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 44:5. The reference here is to the fact that he had appointed him to accomplish important purposes, and had designated him as his ‹shepherd‘ Isaiah 44:28, and his ‹anointed‘ Isaiah 45:1.

Though thou hast not known me - Before he was called to accomplish these important services, he was a stranger to Yahweh, and it was only when he should have been so signally favored of heaven, and should be made acquainted with the divine will in regard to the deliverance of his people and the rebuilding of the temple Ezra 1:1-3, that he would be acquainted with the true God.

Verse 5

I am the Lord … - (see the notes at Isaiah 42:8; Isaiah 43:2; Isaiah 44:8; Isaiah 45:14, Isaiah 45:18, Isaiah 45:22).

I girded thee … - (see the note at Isaiah 45:1). The sense is, I girded thee with the girdle - the military belt; I prepared thee, and strengthened thee for war and conquest. Even people who are strangers to the true God are sustained by him, and are unable to accomplish anything without his providential aid.

Verse 6

That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west - This phrase is evidently used here to designate the whole world. Kimchi says, that the reason why the north and the south are not mentioned here is, that the earth from the east to the west is perfectly inhabitable, but not so from the north to the south. That this was accomplished, see Ezra 1:1 ff Cyrus made public proclamation that Yahweh had given him all the kingdoms of the earth, and had commanded him to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. The purpose of all this arrangement was, to secure the acknowledgment of the truth that Yahweh was the only true God, as extensively as possible. Nothing could be better adapted to this than the actual course of events. For,

1. The conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar was an event which would be extensively known throughout all nations.

2. Babylon was then the magnificent capital of the pagan world, and the kingdom of which it was the center was the most mighty kingdom of the earth.

3. The fact of the conquest of Babylon, and the manner in which it was done, would be known all over that empire, and would attract universal attention. Nothing had ever occurred more remarkable; nothing more fitted to excite the wonder of mankind.

4. The hand of Yahweh was so manifest in this, and the prophecies which had been uttered were so distinctly fulfilled, that Cyrus himself acknowledged that it was of Yahweh. The existence, the name, and the truth of Yahweh became known as far as the name and exploits of Cyrus; and there was a public recognition of the true God by him who had conquered

the most mighty capital of the world, and whose opinions and laws were to enter into the constitution of the Medo-Persian empire that was to succeed.

Verse 7

I form the light, and create darkness - Light, in the Bible, is the emblem of knowledge, innocence, pure religion, and of prosperity in general; and darkness is the emblem of the opposite. Light here seems to be the emblem of peace and prosperity, and darkness the emblem of adversity; and the sentiment of the verse is, that all things prosperous and adverse are under the providential control and direction of God. Of light, it is literally true that God made it; and emblematically true that he is the source of knowledge, prosperity, happiness, and pure religion. Of darkness, it is literally true also that the night is formed by him; that he withdraws the light of the sun, and leaves the earth enveloped in gloomy shades. It is emblematically true also that calamity, ignorance, disappointment, and want of success are ordered by him; and not less true that all the moral darkness, or evil, that prevails on earth, is under the direction and ordering of his Providence. There is no reason to think, however, that the words ‹darkness‘ and ‹evil‘ are to be understood as referring to moral darkness; that is, sin.

A strict regard should be had to the connection in the interpretation of such passages; and the connection here does not demand such an interpretation. The main subject is, the prosperity which would attend the arms of Cyrus, the consequent reverses and calamities of the nations whom he would subdue, and the proof thence furnished that Yahweh was the true God; and the passage should be limited in the interpretation to this design. The statement is, that all this was under his direction. It was not the work of chance or hap-hazard. It was not accomplished or caused by idols. It was not originated by any inferior or subordinate cause. It was to be traced entirely to God. The successes of arms, and the blessings of peace were to be traced to him; and the reverses of arms, and the calamities of war to him also. This is all that the connection of the passage demands; and this is in accordance with the interpretation of Kimchi, Jerome, Rosenmuller, Gesenius, Calvin, and Grotius. The comment of Grotius is, ‹Giving safety to the people, as the Persians; sending calamities upon the people, as upon the Medes and Babylonians.‘ Lowth, Jerome, Vitringa, Jahn, and some others, suppose that there is reference here to the prevalent doctrine among the Persians, and the followers of the Magian religion in general, which

prevailed all over the East, and in which Cyrus was probably educated, that there are two supreme, independent, co-existent and eternal causes always acting in opposition to each other - the one the author of all good, and the other of all evil; and that these principles or causes are constantly struggling with each other.

The good being or principle, they call light; and the evil, darkness; the one, Oromasden, and the other Ahrimanen. It was further the doctrine of the Magians that when the good principle had the ascendency, happiness prevailed; and when the evil principle prevailed, misery abounded. Lowth supposes, that God here means to assert his complete and absolute superiority over all other things or principles; and that all those powers whom the Persians supposed to be the original authors of good and evil to mankind were subordinate, and must be subject to him; and that there is no power that is not subservient to him, and under his control. That these opinions prevailed in very early times, and perhaps as early as Isaiah, there seems no good reason to doubt (Hyde, de Relig. Veter. Persar, xxii.) But there is no good evidence that Isaiah here referred to those opinions. Good and evil, prosperity and adversity, abound in the world at all times; and all that is required in order to a correct understanding of this passage is the general statement that all these things are under providential direction.

I make peace - I hush the contending passions of mankind; I dispose to peace, and prevent wars when I choose - a passage which proves that the most violent passions are under his control. No passions are more uncontrollable than those which lead to wars; and nowhere is there a more striking display of the Omnipotence of God than in his power to repress the pride, ambition, and spirit of revenge of conquerors and kings:

Which stilleth the noise of the seas,
The noise of their waves,
And the tumult of the people.
Psalm 65:7

And create evil - The parallelism here shows that this is not to be understood in the sense of all evil, but of that which is the opposite of peace and prosperity. That is, God directs judgments, disappointments, trials, and calamities; he has power to suffer the mad passions of people to rage, and to afflict nations with war; he presides over adverse as well as prosperous events. The passage does not prove that God is the author of moral evil, or

sin, and such a sentiment is abhorrent to the general strain of the Bible, and to all just views of the character of a holy God.

Verse 8

Drop down, ye heavens, from above - That is, as a result of the benefits that shall follow from the rescue of the people from their captivity and exile. The mind of the prophet is carried forward to future times, and he sees effects from that interposition, as striking as if the heavens should distil righteousness; and sees the prevalence of piety and happiness as if they should string out of the earth. It may be designed primarily to denote the happy results of their return to their own land, and the peace and prosperity which would ensue. But there is a beauty and elevation in the language which is better applicable to the remote and distant consequences of their return - the coming and reign of the Messiah. The figure is that of the rain and dew descending from heaven, and watering, the earth, and producing fertility and beauty; and the idea is, that piety and peace would prevail in a manner resembling the verdure of the fields under such rains and dews. A figure remarkably similar to this is employed by the Psalmist Psalm 85:11-12:

Truth shall spring out of the earth;
And righteousness shall look down from heaven.
Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good -
And our land shall yield her increase.

The phrase, ‹drop down, ye heavens, from above,‘ means, pour forth, or distil, as the clouds distil, or drop down the rain or dew Psalm 45:12-13. It is appropriately applied to rain or dew, and here means that righteousness would be as abundant as if poured down like dews or showers from heaven. The Septuagint however, render it, ‹Let the heavens above be glad,‘ but evidently erroneously.

And let the skies - The word used here (שׁחקים *shechaqiym*) is derived from the verb שׁצק *shâchaq* “to rub,” pound fine, or beat in pieces; and is then applied to dust (see Isaiah 40:15); to a thin cloud; a cloud of dust; and then to clouds in general Job 36:28; Job 37:18; Job 38:37. The sense here is, that righteousness should be poured down like rain from the clouds of heaven; that is, it should be abundant, and should prevail on the earth.

Pour down righteousness - The result of the deliverance from the captivity shall be, that righteousness shall be abundant. During the captivity they had been far away from their native land; the temple was destroyed;

the fire had ceased to burn on the altars; the praises of God had ceased to be celebrated in his courts; and all the means by which piety had been nourished had been withdrawn. This state of things was strikingly similar to the earth when the rain is witcheld, and all verdure droops and dies. But after the return from the exile, righteousness would abound under the re-establishment of the temple service and the means of grace. Nor can there be any doubt, I think, that the mind of the prophet was also fixed on the prevalence of religion which would yet take place under the Messiah, whose coming, though remotely, would be one of the results of the return from the exile, and of whose advent, that return would be so strikingly emblematic.

Let the earth open - As it does when the showers descend and render it mellow, and when it brings forth grass and plants and fruits.

And let them bring forth salvation - The Chaldee renders this, ‹Let the earth open, and the dead revive, and righteousness be revealed at the same time.‘ The idea is, let the earth and the heavens produce righteousness, or become fruitful in producing salvation. Salvation shall abound as if it descended like showers and dews, and as if the fertile earth everywhere produced it. Vitringa supposes that it means that the hearts of people would be opened and prepared for repentance and the reception of the truth by the Holy Spirit, as the earth is made mellow and adapted to the reception of seed by the rain and dew.

And let righteousness spring up together - Let it at the same time germinate as a plant does. It shall spring forth like green grass, and like flowers and plants in the well-watered earth. The language in the verse is figurative, and very beautiful. The idea is, that peace, prosperity, and righteousness start up like the fruits of the earth when it is well watered with the dews anti rains of heaven; that the land and world would be clothed in moral loveliness; and that the fruits of salvation would be abundant everywhere. That there was a partial fulfillment of this on the return to the land of Canaan, there can be no doubt. The Jews were, for a time at least, much more distinguished for piety than they had been before. Idolatry ceased; the temple was rebuilt; the worship of God was re-established; and the nation enjoyed unaccustomed prosperity. But there is a richness and fullness in the language which is not met by anything that occurred in the return from the exile; and it doubtless receives its entire fulfillment only under that more important deliverance of which the return

from Babylon was but the emblem. As referred to the Messiah, and to his reign, may we not regard it as descriptive of the following things?

1. The prevalence and diffusion of the knowledge of salvation under his own preaching and that of the apostles. Religion was revived throughout Judea, and spread with vast rapidity throughout almost the whole of the known world. It seemed as if the very heavens shed down righteousness on all lands, and the earth, so long barren and sterile, brought forth the fruits of salvation. Every country partook of the benefits of the descending showers of grace, and the moral world put on a new aspect - like the earth after descending dews and rains.

2. It is beautifully descriptive of a revival of religion like that on the day of Pentecost. In such scenes, it seems as if the very heavens ‹poured down‘ righteousness. A church smiles under its influence like parched and barren fields under rains and dews, and society puts on an aspect of loveliness like the earth after copious showers. Salvation seems to start forth with the beauty of the green grass, or of the unfolding buds, producing leaves and flowers and abundant fruits. There cannot be found anywhere a more beautiful description of a genuine revival of pure religion than in this verse.

3. It is descriptive, doubtless, of what is yet to take place in the better days which are to succeed the present, when the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth. All the earth shall be blessed, as if descending showers should produce universal fertility, and every land, now desolate, barren, sterile, and horrid by sin, shall become ‹like a well-watered garden‘ in reference to salvation.

Verse 9

Wo unto him that striveth with his Maker! - This verse commences a new subject. Its connection with the preceeding is not very obvious. It may be designed to prevent the objections and cavils of the unbelieving Jews who were disposed to complain against God, and to arraign the wisdom of his dispensations in regard to them, in permitting them to be oppressed by their enemies, and in promising them deliver ance instead of preventing their captivity. So Lowth understands it. Rosenmuller regards it as designed to meet a cavil, because God chose to deliver them by Cyrus, a foreign prince, and a stranger to the true religion, rather than by one of their own

nation. Kimchi, and some others, suppose that it is designed to repress the pride of the Babylonians, who designed to keep the Jews in bondage, and who would thus contend with God. But perhaps the idea is of a more general nature.

It may be designed to refer to the fact that any interposition of God, any mode of manifesting himself to people, meets with enemies, and with those who are disposed to contend with him, and especially any display of his mercy and grace in a great revival of religion. In the previous verse the prophet had spoken of the revival of religion. Perhaps he here adverts to the fact that such a manifestation of his mercy would meet with opposition. So it was when the Saviour came, and when Christianity spread around the world; so it is in every revival now; and so it will be, perhaps, in the spreading of the gospel throughout the world in the time that shall usher in the millennium. Men thus contend with their Maker; resist the influences of his Spirit; strive against the appeals made to them; oppose his sovereignty; are enraged at the preaching of the gospel, and often combine to oppose him. That this is the meaning of this passage, seems to be the sentiment of the apostle Paul, who has borrowed this image, and has applied it in a similar manner: ‹Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel auto honor, and another unto dishonor?‘ Romans 9:20-21It is implied that people are opposed to the ways which God takes to govern the world; it is affirmed that calamity shall follow all the resistance which people shall make. This we shall follow, because, first, God has all power, and all who contend with him must be defeated and overthrown; and, secondly, because God is right, and the sinner who opposes him is wrong, and must and will be punished for his resistance.

Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds … of the earth - Lowth renders this,

Woe unto him that contendeth with the power that formed him;

The potsherd with the moulder of the clay.

The word rendered ‹potsherd‘ (חרֶשׂ *cheresh*) means properly “a shard,” or “sherd,” that is, a fragment of an earthen vessel Leviticus 6:28; Leviticus 11:33; Job 2:8; Job 41:22; Psalm 22:16. It is then put proverbially for

anything frail and mean. Here it is undoubtedly put for man, regarded as weak and contemptible in his efforts against God. Our translation would seem to denote that it was appropriate for man to contend with equals, but not with one so much his superior as God; or that he might have some hope of success in contending with his fellowmen, but none in contending with his Maker. But this sense does not well suit the connection. The idea in the mind of the prophet is not that such contentions are either proper or appropriate among people, but it is the supreme folly and sin of contending with God; and the thought in illustration of this is not that people may appropriately contend with each other, but it is the superlative weakness and fragility of man. The translation proposed, therefore, by Jerome, ‹Wo to him who contends with his Maker - *testa de samiis terrae* - a potsherd among the earthen pots (made of the earth of Samos) of the earth‘ - and which is found in the Syriac, and adopted by Rosenmuller, Gesenius, and Noyes, is doubtless the true rendering. According to Gesenius, the particle את *'êth* here means “by” or “among”; and the idea is, that man is a potsherd among the potsherds of the earth; a weak fragile creature among others equally so - and yet presuming impiously to contend with the God that made him. The Septuagint renders this, ‹Is anything endowed with excellence? I fashioned it like the clay of a potter. Will the plowman plow the ground all the day long? Will the clay say to the potter,‘ etc.

Shall the clay … - It would be absurd for the clay to complain to him that moulds it, of the form which he chooses to give it. Not less absurd is it for man, made of clay, and moulded by the hand of God, to complain of the fashion in which he has made him; of the rank which he has assigned him in the scale of being; and of the purposes which he designs to accomplish by him.

He hath no hands - He has no skill, no wisdom, no power. It is by the hand chiefly that pottery is moulded; and the hands here stand for the skill or wisdom which is evinced in making it. The Syriac renders it, ‹Neither am I the work of thy hands.‘

Verse 10

Wo unto him that saith unto his father … - It is wicked and foolish for a son to complain of his father or mother in regard to his birth, or of his rank and condition of life. Probably the idea is, that if a child is by his birth placed in circumstances less advantageous than others, he would have no right to com plain of his parents, or to regard them as having acted

improperly in having entered into the marriage relation. In like manner it would be not less improper, certainly, to complain of God who has brought us into existence by his own power, and who acts as a sovereign in the various allotments of our lives. The design is to rebuke the spirit of complaining against the allotments of Providence - a spirit which perhaps prevailed among the Jews, and which in fact is found everywhere among people; and to show that God, as a sovereign, has a right to dispose of his creatures in the manner which he shall judge to be best. The passage proves:

1. That man is formed by God, and that all his affairs are ordered by him as really as the work of the potter is moulded by the hands of the workman.

2. That God had a design in making man, and in ordering and arranging his circumstances in life.

3. That man is little qualified to judge of that design, and not at all qualified to pronounce it unwise, anymore than the clay could charge him that worked it into a vessel with want of wisdom; and,

4. That God is a sovereign, and does as he pleases. He has formed man as he chose, as really as the potter moulds the clay into any shape which he pleases. He has given him his rank in creation; given him such a body - strong, vigorous, and comely; or feeble, deformed, and sickly, as he pleased; he has given him such an intellect - vigorous, manly, and powerful; or weak, feeble, and timid, as he pleased; he has determined his circumstances in life - whether riches, poverty, an elevated rank, or a depressed condition, just as he saw fit; and he is a sovereign also in the dispensation of his grace - having a right to pardon whom he will; nor has man any right to complain.

This passage, however, should not be adduced to prove that God, in all respects, moulds the character and destiny of people as the potter does the clay. Regard should be had in the interpretation to the fact that God is just, and good, and wise, as well as a sovereign; and that man is himself a moral agent, and subject to the laws of moral agency which God has appointed. God does nothing wrong. He does not compel man to sin, and then condemn him for it. He does not make him a transgressor by physical power, as the potter moulds the clay, and then doom him for it to destruction. He does his pleasure according to the eternal laws of equity;

and man has no right to call in question the rectitude of his sovereign dispensations.

Verse 11

Thus saith the Lord - This verse is designed still further to illustrate the general subject referred to in this chapter, and especially to show them, that instead of complaining of his designs, or of finding fault with his sovereignty, it was their privilege to inquire respecting his dealings, and even to ‹command‘ him. He was willing to be inquired of, and to instruct them in regard to the events which were occurring.

And his Maker - (See the note at Isaiah 43:1).

Ask me of things to come - I alone can direct and order future events; and it is your duty and privilege to make inquiry respecting those events. Lowth renders this as a question, ‹Do ye question me concerning my children?‘ But the more correct rendering is doubtless that in our translations, where it is represented as a duty to make inquiry respecting future events from God. The idea is:

1. That God alone could direct future events, and give information respecting them.

2. That instead of complaining of his allotments, they should humbly inquire of him in regard to their design, and the proper manner of meeting them; and

3. That if they were made the subject of humble, fervent, believing prayer, he would order them so as to promote their welfare, and would furnish them grace to meet them in a proper manner.

Concerning my sons - Those who are my adopted children. It is implied that God loved them as his children, and that they had the privilege of pleading for his favor and regard, with the assurance that he would be propitious to their cry, and would order events so as to promote their welfare.

And concerning the work of my hands - In regard to what I do. This is also read as a question by Lowth; ‹And do ye give me directions concerning the work of my hands?‘ According to this interpretation, God would reprove them for presuming to give him direction about what he should do, in accordance with the sentiment in Isaiah 45:9-10. This interpretation also is adopted by Vitringa, Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and some others. Grotius renders it, ‹Hinder, if you can, my doing what I will with them. Thus you will show

what you can do, and what I can do.‘ Rosenmuller supposes it to mean, ‹Commit my sons, and the work of my hands to me: suffer me to do with my own what I will.‘ It seems to me, however, that the word ‹command‘is here to be taken rather as indicating the privilege of his people to present their desires in the language of fervent and respectful petition; and that God here indicates that he would, so to speak, allow them to direct him; that he would hear their prayers, and would conform the events of his administration to their wishes and their welfare. This is the most obvious interpretation; and this will perhaps suit the connection as well as any other. Instead of complaining, and opposing his administration Isaiah 45:9-10, it was their privilege to come before him and spread out their needs, and even to give direction in regard to future events, so far as the events of his administration would bear on them, and he would meet their desires. Thus interpreted, it accords with the numerous passages of the Bible which command us to pray; and with the promises of God that he will lend a listening ear to our cries.

Verse 12

I have made the earth - God here asserts that he had made all things, doubtless with a view to show that he was able to hear their cry, and to grant an answer to their requests. His agency was visible everywhere, alike in forming and sustaining all things, and in raising up for them a deliverer. They might, therefore, go before him with confidence, and spread out all their needs.

Have stretched out the heavens - (See the notes at Isaiah 40:26).

And all their host - The stars (see the notes at Isaiah 40:26).

Have I commanded - All are under my direction and control. What more can be needed by his people than the friendship and protection of him who made the heavens and the earth, and who leads on the stars!

Verse 13

I have raised him up - That is. Cyrus (see the notes at Isaiah 41:2).

In righteousness - In Isaiah 41:2, he is called ‹the righteous man.‘ He had raised him up to accomplish his own righteous plans. It does not necessarily mean that Cyrus was a righteous man (see the notes at Isaiah 41:2).

And I will direct all his ways - Margin, ‹Make straight.‘ This is the meaning of the Hebrew word (see the notes at Isaiah 40:4). The sense here

is, I will make his paths all smooth and level, that is, whatever obstacles are in his way I will remove, and give him eminent success.

He shall build my city - Jerusalem. See Ezra 1:2, where, in his proclamation, Cyrus says, ‹Jehovah, God of heaven, hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.‘ It is very probable that Cyrus was made acquainted with these predictions of Isaiah. Nothing would be more natural than that the Jews in Babylon, when he should become master of the city, knowing that he was the monarch to whom Isaiah referred, and that he had been raised up for their deliverance, should acquaint him with these remarkable prophecies, and show him that God bad long before designated aim to accomplish this great work (compare the notes at Isaiah 44:28).

And he shall let go my captives - Hebrew, ‹My captivity,‘ or ‹my migration;‘ that is, those of his people who were in captivity.

Not for price - They shall not be purchased of him as slaves, nor shall they be required to purchase their own freedom. They shall be sent away as freemen, and no price shall be exacted for their ransom (compare Isaiah 52:3). The Jews in Babylon were regarded as captives in war, and therefore as slaves.

Nor for reward - The Hebrew word used here (שׁחד *shochad*) denotes properly that which is given to conciliate the favor of others, and hence, often a bribe. Here it means, that nothing should be given to Cyrus for their purchase, or to induce him to set them at liberty. He should do it of his own accord. It was a fact that he not only released them, but that he endowed them with rich arid valuable gifts, to enable them to restore their temple and city Ezra 1:7-11.

Verse 14

Thus saith the Lord - This verse is designed to denote the favors which in subsequent times would be conferred on Jerusalem, the city which Isaiah 45:13 was to be rebuilt. It bas reference, according to Lowth, to the conversion of the Gentiles, and their admission into the church of God. Grotius, however, understands it as addressed to Cyrus, and as meaning that, because he had released the Jews without reward, therefore God would give him the wealth of Egypt, Ethiopia, Sabaea, and that those nations should be subject to him. But in this opinion probably he stands alone, and the objections to it are so obvious that they need not be specified. Some of the Jewish interpreters suppose that it refers to the same events as those

recorded in Isaiah 43:3, and that it relates to the fact that God had formerly given those nations for the deliverance and protection of his people. They suppose that particular reference is had to the slaughter and destruction of the army of Sennacherib. Vitringa regards it as referring to the fact that proselytes should be made from all these nations to the true religion, and finds, as he supposes, a fulfillment of it in the times of the Saviour and the apostles. In regard to the true meaning of the passage; we may observe:

1. That it refers to the times that would succeed their return from their exile; and not to events that were then past. This is apparent on the face of the passage.

2. It relates to Jerusalem, or to the people of God, and not to Cyrus. This is evident, because it was not true that these nations became subject to Cyrus after his taking Babylon, for it was not Cyrus, but his son Cambyses that invaded and subdued Egypt, and because the whole phraseology has reference to a conversion to religion, and not to the subjection involved in the conquests of war.

3. It appropriately relates to a conversion to the true God, and an embracing of the true religion. This is implied in the language in the close of the verse, ‹saying, Surely God is in thee; and there is none else, there is no God.‘

4. The passage, therefore, means, that subsequent to their return from Babylon, there would be the conversion of those nations; or that they - perhaps mentioned here as the representatives of great and mighty nations in general - would be converted to the true faith, and that their wealth and power would be consecrated to the cause of Yahweh. The time when this was to be, is not fixed in the prophecy itself. It is only determined that it was to be subsequent to the return from the exile, and to be one of the consequences of that return. The fulfillment, therefore, may be sought either under the first preaching of the gospel, or in times still more remote. A more full explanation will occur in the examination of the different parts of the verse.

The labor of Egypt - That is, the fruit, or result of the labor of Egypt; the wealth of Egypt (see the word thus used in Job 10:3; Psalm 78:46; Isaiah 55:2; Jeremiah 3:24; Jeremiah 20:5; Ezekiel 23:9). The idea is, that

Egypt would be converted to the true religion, and its wealth consecrated to the service of the true God. The conversion of Egypt is not unfrequently foretold Psalm 68:31:

Princes shall come out of Egypt.

Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

See the notes at Isaiah 19:18-22 - where the conversion of Egypt is introduced and discussed at length.

And merchandise of Ethiopia - On the situation of Ethiopia, see the notes at Isaiah 18:1. The word ‹merchandise‘ here means the same as wealth, since their wealth consisted in their traffic. That Cush or Ethiopia would be converted to the true religion and be united to the people of God, is declared in the passage above quoted from Psalm 68:31; and also in various other places. Thus in Psalm 67:4: ‹Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there;‘ Zephaniah 3:10: ‹From beyond the ruins of Ethiopia, my suppliants, even the daughters of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.‘

And of the Sabeans, men of stature - (סבאים *sebâ'îym*). The inhabitants of Seba (סבא *sebâ'* not שׁבא *shebâ'*). Sheba and the Sabeans of that name were a country and people of Arabia Felix - comprising a considerable part of the country now known as Yemen, lying in the southwest part of Arabia Joel 3:8; Job 1:15. That country abounded in frankincense, myrrh, spices, gold, and precious stones 1 Kings 10:1; Isaiah 60:6; Jeremiah 6:20. Seba, here referred to, was a different country. It was inhabited by a descendant of Cush Genesis 10:7, and was probably the same as Meroe in Upper Egypt (see the notes at Isaiah 43:3). That this people was distinguished for height of stature is expressly affirmed by Herodotus (iii. 20), who says of the Ethiopians, among whom the Sabeans are to be reckoned, that they were ‹the tallest of men‘ (λέγονται εἶναι μέγιστοι ἀνθρώπων *legontai einai megistoi anthrōpōn*); and Solinus affirms that the Ethiopians are ‹twelve feet high.‘ Agatharchides, an ancient Greek poet, quoted by Bochart (Phaleg. ii. 26), says of the Sabeans, τὰ σώματά ἐστι τῶν κατοικούντων ἀξιολογωτερα *ta sōmata esti tōn katoikountōn achiologōtera* - ‹the bodies of those who dwell there are worthy of special remark.‘ This shows at least a coincidence between the accounts of Scripture and of profane writers. This country is alluded to by Solomon in Psalm 72:10:

The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents;

The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

They are connected here with the Egyptians, and with the inhabitants of Ethiopia or Cush; and their conversion to the true religion would occur probably about the same time. Doubtless the Christian religion was early introduced into these countries, for among those converted on the day of Pentecost, were foreigners from Egypt, and the adjacent countries Acts 2:10-11, who would carry the gospel with them on their return. See also the ease of the eunuch of Ethiopia Acts 8:26-39, by whom, undoubtedly, the gospel was conveyed to that region The first bishop of Ethiopia was Frumentius, who was made bishop of that country about 330 a.d. There is a current tradition among the Ethiopians that the Queen of Sheba, who visited Solomon, was called *Maqueda* and that she was not from Arabia, but was a queen of their own country. They say that she adopted the Jewish religion, and introduced it among her people; and the eunuch, who was treasurer under Queen Candace, was probably a Jew by religion if not by birth. Yet there will be in future times a more signal fulfillment of this prophecy, when the inhabitants of these countries, and the people of all other nations, shall be converted to the true religion, and shall give themselves to God (compare the notes at Isaiah 60:3-14). That prophecy has a remarkable similarity to this, and indeed is little more than a beautiful expansion of it.

Shall come over unto thee - To thy religion; or shall be united to thee in the worship of the true God. It denotes a change not of place, but of character, and of religion.

And they shall be thine - A part of thy people; united to thee. The whole language of this description, however, is taken from the custom in the conquests of war, where one nation is made subject to another, and is led along in chains. It is here figurative, denoting that the true religion would make rapid and extensive conquests among the pagan; that is, that the true religion would everywhere triumph over all others. The phrase ‹shall come over,‘ denotes that their subjection would be voluntary, and that they should freely abandon their own systems; while the phrases ‹shall be thine,‘ ‹in chains,‘ denote the triumphant and mighty power of the truth.

They shall come after thee - You shall precede them in the honor of having conveyed to them the true religion, and in that priority of rank which always belongs to those who are first blessed with intelligence, and with the revelation of God.

In chains shall they come over - Language taken from conquests, when subjugated nations are led along as captives; and here denoting the power of

that truth which would subdue their false systems, and bring them into complete and entire subjection to the true religion. This does not mean that it would be against their will, or that they could not have resisted it; but merely that they would be in fact as entirely subject to the true religion as are prisoners of war, in chains, to the will of their conquerors (see the notes at Isaiah 14:1-2).

And they shall fall down unto thee - Recognizing thee as having the knowledge of the true God. To fall down is indicative of reverence; and it means here that Jerusalem would be honored as being the source from where the true religion should emanate (compare Luke 24:47). An expression similar to that used here occurs in Isaiah 49:23: ‹And kings - and queens - shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet.‘

They shall make supplication unto thee - Lowth renders this, ‹And in suppliant guise address thee.‘ The Hebrew properly means, they shall pray unto thee; but the idea is, that they should come as suppliants to Jerusalem, confessing that there was the knowledge of the only true God, and praying her inhabitants to impart to them an acquaintance with the true religion (see the notes at Isaiah 2:3). The idea indicated by this is, that there would be a condition of anxious solicitude among pagan nations on the subject of the true religion, and that they would seek counsel and direction from those who were in possession of it. Such a state has already existed to some extent among the pagan; and the Scriptures, I think, lead us to suppose that the final spread and triumph of the gospel will be preceded by such an inquiry prevailing extensively in the pagan world. God will show them the folly of idolatry; he will raise up reformers among themselves; the extension of commercial contact will acquaint them with the comparative happiness and prosperity of Christian nations; and the growing consciousness of their own inferiority will lead them to desire that which has conferred so extensive benefits on other lands, and lead them to come as suppliants, and ask that teachers and the ministers of religious may be sent to them. One of the most remarkable characteristics of the present time is, that pagan nations are becoming increasingly sensible of their ignorance and comparative degradation; that they welcome the ministers and teachers sent out from Christian lands; and the increased commerce of the world is thus preparing the world for the final spread of the gospel.

God is in thee - In Jerusalem; or thou art in possession of the only true system of religion, and art the worshipper of the only true God (see Isaiah 49:7; Isaiah 60:14).

Verse 15

Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself - That is, that hidest thy counsels and plans. The idea is, that the ways of God seems to be dark until the distant event discloses his purpose; that a long series of mysterious events seem to succeed each other, trying to the faith of his people, and where the reason of his doings cannot be seen. The remark here seems to be made by the prophet, in view of the fact, that the dealings of God with his people in their long and painful exile would be to them inscrutable, but that a future glorious manifestation would disclose the nature of his designs, and make his purposes known (see Isaiah 55:8-9): ‹My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways‘ (compare Psalm 44:24; the notes at Isaiah 8:17).

The Saviour - Still the Saviour of his people, though his ways are mysterious and the reasons of his dealings are unknown. The Septuagint renders this, ‹For thou art God, though we did not know it, O God of Israel the Saviour.‘ This verse teaches us that we should not repine or complain under the mysterious allotments of Providence. They may be dark now. But in due time they will be disclosed, and we shall be permitted to see his design, and to witness results so glorious, as shall satisfy us that his ways are all just, and his dealings right.

Verse 16

They shall be ashamed and confounded - That is, they shall find all their hopes fail, and shall be suffused with shame that they were ever so senseless as to trust in blocks of wood and stone (see the notes at Isaiah 1:29; Isaiah 20:5; Isaiah 30:5; Isaiah 43:17).

They shall go to confusion - They shall all retire in shame and disgrace. That is, when they have gone to supplicate their idols, they shall find them unable to render them any aid, and they shall retire with shame.

Verse 17

But Israel shall be saved - Referring primarily to the Jews in Babylon, but affirming the universal truth that the true Israel (compare Romans 2:28-29), that is, the people of God, shall be saved from all their trials, and shall be brought to his everlasting kingdom.

In the Lord - By Jehovah - ביהוה *bayohvâh* Septuagint, Ἀπὸ κυρίου *Apo kuriou* It shall be done by the power of Yahweh, and shall be traced to him alone. No more human power could have saved them from their captivity in Babylon; no human power can save the soul from hell.

With an everlasting salvation - It shall not be a temporary deliverance; but it shall be perpetual. In heaven his people shall meet no more foes; they shall suffer no more calamity: they shall be driven into no exile; they shall never die.

Ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded - This means:

1. That they should never find God to fail, that is, to be either unable or unwilling to befriend and rescue them Psalm 46:1.

2. That they should never be ashamed, that is, have cause to regret that they had put their trust in him.

The idea is, that they who become his friends never regret it; never are ashamed of it. The time never can come, when anyone who has become a true friend of God will regret it. In prosperity or adversity; in sickness or health; at home or abroad; in safety or in danger; in life or in death: there will be no situation in which they will be ashamed that they gave their hearts to God. There never have been any true Christians who regretted that they became the friends of the Redeemer. Their religion may have exposed them to persecution; their names may have been east out as evil; they may have been stripped of their property; they may have been thrown into dungeons, laid on the rack, or led to the stake; but they have not regretted that they became the friends of God. Nor will they ever regret it. No man on a dying bed regrets that he is a friend of God. No man at the judgment bar will be ashamed to be a Christian. And in all the interminable duration of the world to come, the period never will, never can arrive, when anyone will ever be ashamed that he gave his heart early, and entirely to the Redeemer. Why then should not all become his friends? Why will not people pursue that course which they know they never can regret, rather than the ways of sin and folly, which they know must cover them with shame and confusion hereafter?

Verse 18

For thus saith the Lord - This verse is designed to induce them to put uuwavering confidence in the true God. For this purpose, the prophet enumerates the great things which God had done in proof that he alone was A mighty, and was worthy of trust.

He hath established it - That is, the earth. The language here is derived from the supposition that the earth is laid upon a foundation, and is made firm. The Septuagint renders this, ‹God who displayed the earth to view, and who, having made it, divided it (διώρισεν αὐτὴν *diōrisen autēn*) that is, parcelled it out to be inhabited. This accords well with the scope of the passage.

He created it not in vain - He did not form it to remain a vast desert without inhabitants.

He formed it to be inhabited - By man, and the various tribes of animals. He makes it a convenient habitation for them; adapts its climates, its soil, and its productions, to their nature; and makes it yield abundance for their support. The main idea, I think, in the statement of this general truth, is, that God designed that the earth at large should be inhabited; and that, therefore, he intended that Judea - thru lying waste while the captives were in Babylon - should be re-populated, and again become the happy abode of the returning exiles. So Grotius interprets it. The Jews, from this passage, infer, that the earth shall be inhabited after the resurrection - an idea which has every probability, since there will not be fewer reasons why the earth shall be inhabited then than there are now; nor can there be any reasons why the earth should then exist in vain anymore than now.

And there is none else - (See the note at Isaiah 45:6).

Verse 19

I have not spoken in secret - The word rendered ‹secret‘ (סתר *sîther*) denotes a hiding, or covering; and the phrase here means secretly, privately. He did not imitate the pagan oracles by uttering his predictions from dark and deep caverns, and encompassed with the circumstances of awful mystery, and with designed obscurity.

In a dark place of the earth - From a cave, or dark recess, in the manner of the pagan oracles. The pagan responses were usually given from some dark cavern or recess, doubtless the bettcr to impress with awe the minds of those who consulted the oracles, and to make them more ready to credit the revelations of the fancied god. Such was the seat of the Sybil, mentioned by Virgil, AEn. vi. 4:

Excisum Euhoicae latus ingens rupis in antrum

Such also was the famous oracle at Delphi. Strobe (ix.) says, ‹The oracle is said to be a hollow cavern of considerable depth, with an opening not very wide.‘ Diodorus, giving an account of this oracle, says, ‹that there was

in that place a great chasm, or cleft in the earth; in which very place is now situated what is called the Adytum of the temple.‘ In contradistinction from all this, God says that he had spoken openly, and without these circumstances of designed obscurity and darkness. In the language here, there is a remarkable resemblance to what the Saviour said of himself, and it is not improbable that he had this passage in his mind: ‹I spoke openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing‘ John 18:20. A similar declaration occurs in Deuteronomy 30:11: ‹This commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.‘

I said not to the seed of Jacob - The seed, or the race of Jacob, here means his people: and the idea is, that he had not commanded them to call upon him without his being ready to answer them.

Seek ye me in vain - The phrase, ‹seek ye,‘ may refer to worship in general; or more properly to their calling upon him in times of calamity and trial. The sense is, that it had not been a vain or useless thing for them to serve him; that he had been their protector, and their friend; and that they had not gone to him, and spread out their needs for nothing. It is still true, that God does not command his people to seek him in vain (compare Deuteronomy 32:47). His service is always attended with a rich blessing to them; and they are his witnesses that he confers on them inexpressibly great and valuable rewards. It follows from this - first, that his people have abundant encouragement to go to him in all times of trial, persecution, and affliction; secondly, that they have encouragement to go to him in a low state of religion, to confess their sins, to supplicate his mercy, and to pray for the influences of his Holy Spirit, and the revival of his work; and, thirdly, that the service of God is always attended with rich reward. Idols do not benefit those wire serve them. The pursuit of pleasure, gain, and ambition, is often attended with no reward, and is never attended with any benefits that satisfy the needs of the undying mind; but the service of God meets all the needs of the soul; fills all its desires, and confers permanent and eternal rewards.

I the Lord speak righteousness - This stands in opposition to the pagan oracles, which often gave false, delusive, and unjust responses. But not so with God. He had not spoken, as they did, from deep and dark plates - fit emblems of the obscurity of their answers; he had not, as they had,

commanded a service that was unprofitable and vain; and he had not, as they had, uttered oracles which were untrue and fitted to delude.

I declare things that are right - Lowth renders this, ‹Who give direct answers;‘ and supposes it refers to the fact, that the pagan oracles often give ambiguous and deceitful responses. God never deceived. His responses were always true and unambiguous.

Verse 20

Assemble yourselves, and come - This, like the passage in Isaiah 41:1 ff, is a solemn appeal to the worshippers of idols, to come and produce the evidences of their being endowed with omniscience, and with almighty power, and of their having claims to the homage of their worshippers.

Ye that are escaped of the nations - This phrase has been very variously interpreted. Kimchi supposes that it means those who were distinguished among the nations, their chiefs, and rulers; Aben Ezra, that the Babylonians are meant especially; Vitringa, that the phrase denotes proselytes, as those who have escaped from the idolatry of the pagan, and have embraced the true religion; Grotius, that it denotes those who survived the slaughter which Cyrus inflicted on the nations. Rosenmuller coincides in opinion with Vitringa. The word used here (פליט *pâlîy*ṭ) denotes properly one who has escaped by flight from battle, danger, or slaughter Genesis 14:13; Joshua 8:32. It is not used anywhere in the sense of a proselyte; and the idea here is, I think, that those who escaped from the slaughter which Gyrus would bring on the nations, were invited to come and declare what benefit they had derived from trusting in idol-gods. In Isaiah 45:16, God had said they should all be ashamed and confounded who thus put their trust in idols; and he here calls on them as living witnesses that it was so. Those who had put their confidence in idols, and who had seen Cyrus carry his arms over nations notwithstanding their vain confidence, could now testify that no reliance was to be placed on them, and could be adduced as witnesses to show the importance of putting their trust in Yahweh.

That set up the wood - The word ‹wood‘ is used here to show the folly of worshipping an image thus made, and to show how utterly unable it was to save.

Verse 21

Tell ye, and bring them near - That is, announce, and bring forward your strongest arguments (see the notes at Isaiah 41:1).

Who hath declared this from ancient time? - Who has clearly announced the events respecting Cyrus, and the conquest of Babylon, and the deliverance from the captivity? The argument is an appeal to the fact that God had clearly foretold these events long before, and that therefore he was the true God. To this argument he often appeals in proof that he alone is God (see the note at Isaiah 41:22-23).

And there is no God else beside me - (See Isaiah 45:5).

A just God - A God whose attribute it is always to do right; whose word is true; whose promises are fulfilled; whose threatenings are executed; and who always does that which, under the circumstances of the case, ought to be done. This does not refer particularly to the fact that he will punish the guilty, but, in the connection here, rather seems to mean that his course would be one of equity.

And a Saviour - Saving his people. It was a characteristic of him, that he saved or preserved his people; and his equity, or truth, or justice, was seen in his doing that. His being ‹a just God‘ and ‹a Saviour‘ are not set here in contrast or contradiction, as if there was any incongruity in them, or as if they needed to be reconciled; but they refer to the same thing, and mean that he was just and true in saving his people; it was a characteristic of him that be was so true to his promises, and so equitable in his government, that he would save them. There is here no unique and special reference to the work of the atonement. But the language is such as will accurately express the great leading fact in regard to the salvation of sinners. It is in the cross of the Redeemer that God has shown himself eminently to be just, and yet a Saviour; true, and merciful; expressing his abhorrence of sin, and yet pardoning it; maintaining the honor of his violated law, and yet remitting its penalty and forgiving the offender. It is here, in the beautiful language of the Psalmist Psalm 85:10, that

Mercy and truth are met together,

Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

The same idea is expressed in Romans 3:26: ‹That he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.‘ It is the glory of the character of God that he can be thus just and merciful at the same time; that he can maintain the honor of his law, secure the stability of his government, and yet extend pardon to any extent. No human administration can do this. Pardon under a human government always does much to weaken the authority of the government, and to set aside the majesty of the law. If never

exercised, indeed, government assumes the form of tyranny; if often, the law loses its terrors, and crime will walk fearless through the earth. But in the divine administration, through the atonement, pardon may be extended to any extent, and yet the honor of the law be maintained, for the substituted sufferings of the innocent in the place of the guilty, will in fact do more to restrain from transgression than where the guilty themselves suffer. Of no human administration can it be said that it is at the same time just, and yet forgiving; evincing hatred of the violation of the law, and yet extending mercy to any extent to the violators of the laws. The blending together of these apparently inconsistent attributes belongs only to God, and is manifested only in the plan of salvation through the atonement.

Verse 22

Look unto me, and be ye saved - This is said in view of the declaration made in the previous verse, that he is a just God and a Saviour. It is because he sustains this character that all are invited to look to him; and the doctrine is, that the fact that God is at the same time just and yet a Saviour, or can save consistently with his justice, is an argument why they should took to him, and confide in him. If he is at the same time just - true to his promises; righteous in his dealings; maintaining the honor of his law and government, and showing his hatred of sin; and also merciful, kind, and forgiving, it is a ground of confidence in him, and we should rejoice in the privilege of looking to him for salvation. The phrase ‹look unto me‘ means the same as, direct the attention to as we do to one from whom we expect aid. It denotes a conviction on our part of helplessness - as when a man is drowning, he casts an imploring eye to one on the shore who can help him; or when a man is dying, he casts an imploring eye on a physician for assistance. Thus the direction to look to God for salvation implies a deep conviction of helplessness and of sin; and a deep conviction that he only can save. At the same time it shows the ease of salvation. What is more easy than to look to one for help? What more easy than to cast the eyes toward God the Saviour? What more reasonable than that he should require us to do it? And what more just than that God, if people will not look to him in order that they may be saved, should cast them off forever? Assuredly, if a dying, ruined, and helpless sinner will not do so simple a thing as to look to God for salvation, he ought to be excluded from heaven, and the universe will acquiesce in the decision which consigns him to despair.

All the ends of the earth - For the meaning of this phrase, see the note at Isaiah 40:28. The invitation here proves:

1. That the offers of the gospel are universal. None are excluded. The ends of the earth, the remotest parts of the world, are invited to embrace salvation, and all those portions of the world might, under this invitation, come and accept the offers of life.

2. That God is willing to save all; since he would not give an invitation at all unless he was willing to save them.

3. That there is ample provision for their salvation; since God could not invite them to accept of what was not provided for them, nor could he ask them to partake of salvation which had no existence.

4. That it is his serious and settled purpose that all the ends of the earth shall be invited to embrace the offers of life.

The invitation has gone from his lips, and the command has gone forth that it should be carried to every creature Mark 16:15, and now it pertains to his church to bear the glad news of salvation around the world. God intends that it shall be done, and on his church rests the responsibility of seeing it speedily executed.

For I am God - This is a reason why they should look to him to be saved. It is clear that none but the true God can save the soul. No one else but he can pronounce sin forgiven; no one but he can rescue from a deserved hell. No idol, no man, no angel can save; and if, therefore, the sinner is saved, he must come to the true God, and depend on him. That he may thus come, whatever may have been his character, is abundantly proved by this passage. This verse contains truth enough, if properly understood and applied, to save the world; and on the ground of this, all people, of all ages, nations, climes, ranks, and character, might come and obtain eternal salvation.

Verse 23

I have sworn by myself - This verse contains a fuller statement of the truth intimated in the previous verse, that the benefits of salvation should yet be extended to all the world. It is the expression of God‘s solemn purpose that all nations should yet be brought to acknowledge him, and

partake of the benefits of the true religion. The expression, ‹I have sworn by myself,‘ denotes a purpose formed in the most solemn manner, and ratified in the most sacred form. God could swear by no greater Hebrews 6:13, Hebrews 6:16; and this, therefore, is the most solemn assurance that could be possibly given that the purpose which he had formed should be executed. To swear by himself is the same as to swear by his life, or to affirm solemnly that the event shall as certainly occur as that he exists. The same idea is often expressed by the phrase, ‹as I live.‘ See a parallel declaration in Numbers 14:21: ‹But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord‘ (compare Numbers 14:28; Isaiah 49:18; Jeremiah 22:24; Ezekiel 5:11; Ezekiel 14:16, Ezekiel 14:18, Ezekiel 14:20; Zephaniah 2:9; Romans 14:11). This passage is quoted by Paul in Romans 14:11, where the phrase, ‹I have sworn by myself‘ is rendered, ‹as I live, saith the Lord,‘ showing that they are equivalent expressions.

The word is gone out of my mouth - The Septuagint renders this, ‹Righteousness shall proceed from my mouth, my words shall not return.‘ Lowth renders it, ‹Truth is gone forth from my mouth; the word, and it shall not be revoked.‘ Jerome, ‹The word of righteousness has gone forth from my mouth, and shall not return.‘ Rosenmuller accords with the interpretation a of Lowth. Probably the correct translation is ‹righteousness‘ (that is, the righteous sentence, or purpose, where the word צדקה *tsedâqâh* is used in the sense of truth, see Isaiah 45:19), has gone out of my mouth, the word (that is, the promise), and it shall not return.‘ In this construction the י (*y*) before לא *lo'* has the force of a relative pronoun, and is to be referred to דבר *dâbâr* ‹the word.‘ The sense is, that God had spoken it, and that all which he has spoken shall certainly be fulfilled. The fact that the declaration has once passed his lips, is full proof that the purpose shall be accomplished. This is not to be understood of any promise which he had made before, but it is a solemn declaration which he now makes by the prophet.

That unto me every knee shall bow - To bow or bend the knee, is indicative of homage or adoration; and the idea is, that all should yet acknowledge him to be God (see the note at Romans 14:11). The ancient mode of offering adoration, or of paying homage, was to place the knee on the ground, and then slowly to incline the body until the head touched the earth. This is practiced now in eastern countries (compare Genesis 41:43; 1 Kings 19:18; 2 Chronicles 6:13; Matthew 27:29; Romans 11:4; Philemon

2:10; Ephesians 3:14). The obvious and proper signification of this is, that the time would come when God would be everywhere acknowledged as the true God. It refers therefore to the future period of glory on the earth, when all people shall have embraced the true religion, and when idolatry shall have come to an end.

Every tongue shall swear - This expression is evidently taken from the practice of taking an oath of allegiance to a sovereign, and here means that all would solemnly acknowledge him to be the true God, and submit themselves to his government and will. See the phrase explained in the the note at Isaiah 19:18. That this refers to the Messiah and his times, is apparent from the fact that it is twice referred to by the apostle Paul, and applied by him to the Lord Jesus and his religion Romans 14:11; Philemon 2:10. It is a glorious promise which remains yet to be fulfilled, and there is no promise in the Bible more certain than that this earth shall yet be filled with the knowledge of the true God.

Verse 24

Surely, shall one say - Margin, ‹He shall say of me, In the Lord is all righteousness and strength.‘ The design of the verse is, to set forth more fully the effect of the prevalence of the true religion; and the main thought is, that there shall be an universal acknowledgment that salvation and strength were in Yahweh alone. Idols and people could not save; and salvation was to be traced to Yahweh only. A literal translation of the passage would be, ‹Truly in Jehovah, he said unto me,‘ or it is said unto me, that is, I heard it said, ‹is righteousness and strength,‘ that is, this would be everywhere the prevailing sentiment that righteousness and strength were to be found in Yahweh alone. The sense is, first, that it was by him alone that they could be pardoned and justified; and, secondly, that it was by him alone that they could obtain strength to meet their enemies, to overcome their sins, to discharge their duties, to encounter temptations, to hear afflictions, and to support them in death. These two things, righteousness and strength, are all that man needs. The whole of religion consists essentially in the feeling that righteousness and strength are to be found in God our Saviour. The Septuagint renders this, ‹Every tongue shall swear to God, saying, Righteousness and glory shall come unto him, and all those who make distinctions among them shall be ashamed.‘

Even to him shall men come - For the purpose of being saved (see the notes at Isaiah 2:3).

And all that are incensed against him - All that are opposed to his government and laws.

Shall be ashamed - (See the note at Isaiah 45:16). The enemies of God shall see their own feebleness and folly; and they shall be ashamed that they have endeavored to oppose one so mighty and so glorious as the living God. The multitudes that have in various ways resisted him shall see the folly of their course, and be overwhelmed with shame that they have dared to lift the hand against the God that made the heavens. Jarchi renders this, ‹All who have opposed themselves to God, shall come to him, led by penitence on account of the things which they have done, and shall be ashamed.‘

Verse 25

In the Lord - It shall be only in Yahweh that they shall find justification, and this must mean, that it is by his mercy and grace. The entire passage here, I suppose, has reference to the times of the Redeemer (see the notes at Isaiah 45:21-24). If so, it means that justification can be obtained only by the mercy of God through a Redeemer. The great truth is, therefore, here brought into view, which constitutes the sum of the New Testament, that people are not justified by their own works, but by the mercy and grace of God.

All the seed of Israel - All the spiritual seed or descendants of Jacob. It cannot mean that every individual shall be justified and saved, for the Bible abundantly teaches the contrary (see Matthew 8:11-12; Romans 2:28-29; Romans 4:9-13).

Be justified - Be regarded and treated as righteous. Their sins shall be pardoned, and they shall be acknowledged and treated as the children of God (see the notes at Romans 3:24-25). To justify, here, is not to pronounce them innocent, or to regard them as deserving of his favor; but it is to receive them into favor, and to resolve to treat them as if they had not sinned; that is, to treat them as if they were righteous. All this is by the mere mercy and grace of God, and is through the merits of thc Redeemer, who died in their place.

And shall glory - Or rather, shall praise and celebrate his goodness. The word used here (חלל *châlal*) means, in the Piel, “to sing, to chant, to celebrate the praises of anyone” 1 Chronicles 16:36; Psalm 44:9; Psalm 117:1; Psalm 145:2, and is the word of which the word “hallelujah” is in part composed. Here it means, that the effect of their being justified by Yahweh would be, that they would be filled with joy, and would celebrate

the goodness of God. This effect of being justified, is more fully stated in Romans 5:1-5. It is a result which always follows; and a disposition to praise and magnify the name of God in view of his boundless mercy in providing a way by which sinners may be justified, is one of the first promptings of a renewed heart, and one of the evidences that a soul is born again.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 46

Introduction

This chapter is a continuation of the argument before commenced to show the folly of idolatry, and to induce the captive and exile Jews to put their trust in Yahweh. The argument consists of the following particulars:

I. The idols of Babylon should be overthrown Isaiah 46:1-2. The prophet sees those idols removed from their places, laid on beasts of burden and borne away. They were unable to deliver their city from the arm of the conqueror, but were themselves carried into captivity. The exiles, therefore, had the certain prospect of deliverance.

II. God appeals to the fact, that be had always protected the Jewish people; that he had dealt with them as a parent in the infancy and youth of their nation, and be solemnly assures them that be would not leave them in their old age and their trials Isaiah 46:3-4.

III. He shows them the folly of idolatry, and the vanity of idols Isaiah 46:5-7. They could not aid or defend in the day of trial; and, therefore, the people should put their trust in the true God.

IV. He appeals to them by the recollection of former events, and reminds them of his merciful interposition Isaiah 46:8-9.

V. He appeals to them by the fact that he had prcdicted future events, and especially by the fact that he had raised up a distinguished conqueror - Cyrus - who would accomplish all his pleasure Isaiah 46:10-11.

VI. He assures them that his righteous purpose was near to be accomplished, and that he would restore Zion to its former splendor, and that his salvation should be made known to his people Isaiah 46:12-13.

The scene of this prophecy is laid in Babylon, and at the time when the city was about to be taken by Cyrus, and the Jews about to be delivered from captivity. The idols of the Chaldeans, unable to defend their city, are borne in haste away for safety, and Cyrus is at the gates. The design is to give to the exiles there an assurance that when they should see these things, they should conclude that their deliverance drew near; and to furnish them thus with ample demonstration that Yahweh was the true God, and that he

was their protector and friend In their long and painful captivity also, they would have these promises to comfort them; and when they surveyed the splendor of the idol worship in Babylon, and their hearts were pained with the prevalent idolatry, they would have also the assurance that those idols were to be removed, and that that idolatry would come to an end.

Verse 1

Bel boweth down - Bel or Belus (בל *bēl* from בעל *beʿēl* the same as בעל *baʿal* was the chief domestic god of the Babylonians, and was worshipped in the celebrated tower of Babylon (compare Jeremiah 50:2; Jeremiah 51:44). It was usual to compound names of the titles of the divinities that were worshipped, and hence, we often meet with this name, as in Bel-shazzar, Bel-teshazzar, Baal-Peor, Baal-zebub, Baal-Gad, Baal-Berith. The Greek and Roman writers compare Bel with Jupiter, and the common name which they give to this idol is Jupiter Belus (Pliny, Nat. Hist. xxxvii. 10; Cic. De Nat. Deor. iii. 16; Diod. ii. 8,9). Herodotus (i. 181-183) says, that in the center of each division of the city of Babylon (for the Euphrates divided the city into two parts) there is a circular space surrounded by a wall. In one of these stands the royal palace, which fills a large and strongly defended space.

The temple of Jupiter Belus, says he, occupies the other, whose huge gates of brass may still be seen. It is a square building, each side of which is of the length of two furlongs. In the midst, a tower rises of the solid depth and height of one furlong; on which, resting as a base, seven other turrets are built in regular succession. The ascent on the outside, winding from the ground, is continued to the highest tower; and in the middle of the whole structure there is a convenient resting place. In this temple there is a small chapel, which contains a figure of Jupiter in a sitting posture, with a large table before him; these, with the base of the table, and the sear of the throne, are all of the purest gold. There was formerly in this temple a statue of solid gold, twelve cubits high. This was seized, says Herodotus, by Xerxes, who put the priest to death who endeavored to prevent its removal.

The upper room of this tower was occupied as an observatory. The idol Baal, or Bel, was especially the god of the Phenicians, of the Canaanites, of the Chaldeans, of the Moabites, and of some of the surrounding nations. The most common opinion has been, that the idol was the sun (see the notes at Isaiah 17:8-9), and that, under this name, this luminary received divine

honors. But Gesenius supposes that by the name Jupiter Belus was not denoted Jupiter, ‹the father of the gods,‘ but the planet Jupiter, Stella Jovis, which was regarded, together with Venus, as the giver of all good fortune; and which forms with Venus the most fortunate of all constellations under which sovereigns can be born. The planet Jupiter, therefore, he supposes to have been worshipped under the name Bel, and the planet Venus under the name of Astarte, or Astareth (see Gesenius, Commentary zu Isaiah, ii. 333ff, and Robinson‘s Calmet, Art. Baal). The phrase ‹boweth down,‘ means here, probably, that the idol sunk down, fell, or was removed. It was unable to defend the city, and was taken captive, and carried away. Jerome renders *Confractus est Bel* - ‹Bel is broken.‘ The Septuagint, Ἔπεσε Βὴλ *Epese Bēl* - ‹Bel has fallen.‘ Perhaps in the language there is allusion to the fact that Dagon fell before the ark of God 1 Samuel 5:2-3, 1 Samuel 5:7. The sense is, that even the object of worship - that which was regarded as the most sacred among the Chaldeans - would be removed.

Nebo stoopeth - This was an idol-god of the Chaldeans. In the astrological mythology of the Babylonians, according to Gesenius (Commentary zu Isaiah ii. 333ff), this idol was the planet Mercury. He is regarded as the scribe of the heavens, who records the succession of the celestial and terrestrial events; and is related to the Egyptian Hermes and Anubis. The extensive worship of this idol among the Chaldeans and Assyrians is evident from the many compound proper names occurring in the Scriptures, of which this word forms a part, as Neb-uchadnezzar, Neb-uzaradan: and also in the classics, as Nab-onad, Nab-onassar. Nebo was, therefore, regarded as an attendant on Bel, or as his scribe. The exact form of the idol is, however, unknown. The word ‹stoopeth,‘ means that it had fallen down, as when one is struck dead he falls suddenly to the earth; and the language denotes conquest, where even the idols so long worshipped would be thrown down. The scene is in Babylon, and the image in the mind of the prophet is that of the city taken, and the idols that were worshipped thrown down by the conqueror, and carried away in triumph.

Their idols were upon the beasts - That is, they are laid upon the beasts to be borne away in triumph. It was customary for conquerors to carry away all that was splendid and valuable, to grace their triumph on their return; and nothing would be a more certain indication of victory, or a more splendid accompaniment to a triumph, than the gods whom the vanquished nations had adored. Thus in Jeremiah 48:7, it is said, ‹And

Chemosh shall go forth into captivity, with his priests and his princes together‘ (compare Jeremiah 44:3, margin.)

Your carriages - That is, they were laden with the idols that were thus borne off in triumph.

They are a burden - They are so numerous; so heavy; and to be borne so far. This is a very striking and impressive manner of foretelling that the city of Babylon would be destroyed. Instead of employing the direct language of prophecy, the prophet represents himself as seeing the heavy laden animals and wagons moving along slowly, pressed down under the weight of the captured gods to be borne into the distant country of the conqueror. They move forth from Babylon, and the caravan laden with the idols, the spoils of victory, is seen slowly moving forward to a distant land.

Verse 2

They stoop - Bel, and Nebo, and all the Babylonian gods (see Isaiah 46:1).

They could not deliver the burden - The word ‹burden‘ here, probably means the load of metal, wood, and stone, of which the idols were composed. The gods whom the Babylonians worshipped had not even power to protect the images which were made to represent them, and which had now become a heavy burden to the animals and wains which were carrying them away. They could not rescue them from the hands of the conqueror; and how unable were they, therefore, to defend those who put their trust in them. The Vulgate renders this, ‹They could not deliver him that bare them.‘ The Septuagint, ‹You are carrying them like a burden bound on the weary, faint, and hungry; who are all without strength, and unable to escape from battle; and as for them, they are carried away captives!‘

But themselves - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹Their soul.‘ The sense is, that the gods thus worshipped, so far from being able to defend those who worshipped them, had themselves become captive, and were borne to a distant land.

Verse 3

Hearken unto me - From this view of the captive gods, the address is now turned to the Jews. The utter vanity of the idols had been set before them; and in view of that, God now addresses his own people, and entreats them to put their trust in him. The address he commences with words of

great tenderness and endearment, designed to lead them to confide in him as their Father and friend.

And all the remnant - All who were left from slaughter, and all who were borne into captivity to Babylon. The language here is all full of tenderness, and is suited to inspire them with confidence in God. The idols of the pagan, so far from being able to protect their worshippers, were themselves carried away into ignoble bondage, but Yahweh was himself able to carry his people, and to sustain them.

Which are borne by me - Like an indulgent father, or a tender nurse, he had carried them from the very infancy of their nation. The same image occurs in Deuteronomy 1:31: ‹And in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into thins place.‘ A similar figure occurs in Exodus 19:4: ‹Ye have seen, how I bare you on eagles‘ wings, and brought you unto myself‘ (so Deuteronomy 32:11-12; compare Numbers 11:12; Isaiah 63:9). All this here stands opposed to the idols of the Babylonians. They were unable to protect their people. They were themselves made captive. But God had shown the part of a father and a protector to his people in all times. He had sustained and guided them; he had never forsaken them; he had never, like the idol-gods, been compelled to leave them in the power of their enemies. From the fact that he had always, even from the infancy of their nation, thus protected them, they are called on to put their trust in him.

Verse 4

And even to your old age, I am he - Or rather, I am the same. I remain, unchangeably, with the same tenderness, the same affection, the same care. In this the care of God for his people surpasses that of the most tender parent, and the most kind nourisher of the young. The care of the parent naturally dies away as the child reaches manhood, and he is usually removed by death before the son or daughter that excited so much solicitude in infancy and childhood, reaches old age. But not so with God. His people are always the objects of his tender solicitude. Age does not make them less dependent, and experience only teaches them more and more their need of his sustaining grace. The argument here is, that he who had watched over the infancy of his people with so much solicitude, would not leave them in the exposures, and infirmities, and trials of the advanced years of their history. The doctrine is, first, that his people always need his

protection and care; secondly, that he will never leave nor forsake them; thirdly, that he who is the God of infancy and childhood will be the God of age, and that he will not leave or forsake his people, who have been the objects of his care and affection in childhood, when they become old. For though this passage refers primarily to a people, or a community as such, yet I see no reason why the principle should not be regarded as applicable to those who are literally aged. They need the care of God no less than childhood does; and if they have walked in his ways in the vigor and strength of their life, he will not cast them off ‹when they are old and gray-headed.‘ Hoary hairs, therefore, if ‹found in the way of righteousness.‘ may trust in God; and the ‹second childhood‘ of man may find him no less certainly a protector than the first.

Verse 5

To whom will ye liken me - (see the notes at Isaiah 40:18, Isaiah 40:25). The design of this and the following verses is to show the folly of idolatry, and the vanity of trusting in idols. This is a subject that the prophet often dwells on. The argument here is derived from the fact that the idols of Babylon were unable to defend the city, and were themselves carried away in triumph Isaiah 46:1-2. If so, how vain was it to rely on them! how foolish to suppose that the living and true God could resemble such weak and defenseless blocks!

Verse 6

They lavish gold - The word used here means properly to shake out; and then to pour out abundantly, or in a lavish manner. It is used in connection with the idea of squandering in Deuteronomy 21:20; Proverbs 23:21; Proverbs 28:7. Here the idea is, that they spared no expense; they poured out gold as if it were vile and worthless, in order to make an idol. The design of this verse is, to show the superstition of those who were idolaters; and, particularly, how much they were willing to devote in order to maintain idol-worship.

Out of the bag - They pour their gold out of the bag, or purse, where they have kept it; that is, they lavish it freely.

And weigh silver in the balance - Perhaps the idea is here, that they used silver so lavishly that they did not wait to count it, but weighed it as they would the grosser metals. The word used here and translated ‹balance‘ (קנה *qâneh*), means properly “cane, reed, calamus”; then a measuring reed

or rod Ezekiel 40:3, Ezekiel 40:5; then a rod, or beam of a balance, or scales (Greek ζυγὸς *zugos*).

And hire a goldsmith - (See the notes at Isaiah 40:19-20).

And he maketh it a god - The goldsmith manufactures the gold and the silver into an image. The object of the prophet is to deride the custom of offering divine homage to a god formed in this manner (see the notes at Isaiah 44:9-19).

Verse 7

They bear him upon the shoulder - They carry the idol which they have made on their shoulder to the temple, or place where it is to be fixed. This circumstance, with the others, is doubtless introduced to show how ridiculous and absurd it was to offer divine homage to a god whom they could thus carry about on the shoulder.

And set him in his place - Fix the idol on its basis or pedestal, in its proper niche, or place in the temple. The whole design of this verse is to contrast the idol with Yahweh. Yahweh is uncreated and eternal; the idol, on the contrary, is made by human beings, is borne about, is fixed in its place, has no power to move, remains there until it is taken down, and has no ability either to hear or save those who worship it.

Verse 8

Remember this - Bear in mind what is now said of the manner in which idols are made. This is addressed, doubtless, to the Jews, and is designed to keep them from idolatry.

And show yourselves men - Act as men; throw away the childish trifles of idolaters. The word used here (התאשׁשׁו *hithe'oshâshû'* occurs nowhere else in the Bible. It is according to Gesenius, derived from איש *'îysh* "a man," and means to act "as a man." A similar word is used in 1 Corinthians 16:13 (ἀνδρίζεσθε *andrizesthe* from ἀνήρ *anēr* a man), and is correctly rendered there, ‹quit you like men.‘ This Greek word often occurs in the Septuagint. It is used as a translation of אמץ *'âmats* in Joshua 1:6-7, Joshua 1:9, Joshua 1:18; 1 Chronicles 28:20; 2 Chronicles 32:7; Nehemiah 2:1; of גדל *gâdal* in Rth 1:12 ; of חזק *châzaq* in Deuteronomy 31:6-7, Deuteronomy 31:23; Joshua 10:25; 2 Kings 2:12; 2 Kings 12:8; 1 Chronicles 28:20, and in several other places. Jerome renders the Hebrew word here, ‹Be confounded;‘ the Septuagint, Στενάξατε *Stenachate*) - ‹Groan;‘ the Syriac, ‹Consider,‘ or understand. The meaning is, that they were to act as became people - not as children; as became those endowed with an immortal mind,

and not as the brutes. So Kimchi renders it: ‹Be men, and not brutes, which neither consider nor understand.‘

O ye transgressors - Ye who have violated the laws of God by the worship of idols. In the time of Manasseh, the Israelites were much addicted to idolatry, and probably this is to be regarded as addressed to them, and as designed to recall them from it to the worship of the true God.

Verse 9

Remember the former things … - Bear in mind the repeated and constant proofs that have been given that Yahweh is the true God - the proofs derived from the prediction of future events, and from the frequent interpositions of his providence in your behalf as a nation.

For I am God - (See the notes at Isaiah 44:6).

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Verse 10

Declaring the end from the beginning - Foretelling accurately the course of future events. This is an argument to which God often appeals in proof that he is the only true God (see Isaiah 41:22-23; Isaiah 43:12; Isaiah 44:26).

My counsel shall stand - My purpose, my design, my will. The phrase ‹shall stand‘ means that it shall be stable, settled, fixed, established. This proves:

1. That God has a purpose or plan in regard to human affairs. If he had not, he could not predict future events, since a contingent event cannot be foreknown and predicted; that is, it cannot be foretold that an event shall certainly occur in one way, when by the very supposition of its being contingent it may happen either that way, or some other way, or not at all.

2. That God‘s plan will not be frustrated. He has power enough to secure the execution of his designs, and he will exert that power in order that all his plans may be accomplished. We may observe, also, that it is a matter of unspeakable joy that God has a plan, and that it will be executed. For

(1) If there were no plan in relation to human things, the mind could find no rest. If there was no evidence that One Mind presided over human affairs; that an infinitely wise plan had been formed, and that all things had been adjusted so as best to secure the ultimate accomplishment of that plan, everything would have the appearance of chaos, and the mind must be filled

with doubts and distractions. But our anxieties vanish in regard to the apparent irregularities and disorders of the universe, when we feel that all things are under the direction of an Infinite Mind, and will be made to accomplish his plans, and further his great designs.

(2) If his plans were not accomplished, there would be occasion of equal doubt and dismay. If there was any power that could defeat the purposes of God; if there was any stubbornness of matter, or any inflexible perverseness in the nature of mind; if there were any unexpected and unforeseen extraneous causes that could interpose to thwart his plans, then the mind must be full of agitation and distress. But the moment it can fasten on the conviction that God has formed a plan that embraces all things, and that all things which occur will be in some way made tributary to that plan, that moment the mind can be calm in resignation to his holy will.

And I will do all my pleasure - I will accomplish all my wish, or effect all my desire. The word rendered here ‹pleasure‘ (חפץ *chepēts*) means properly delight or pleasure 1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 1:2; Psalm 16:3; Ecclesiastes 5:4; Ecclesiastes 12:10; then desire, wish, will Job 31:16; and then business, cause, affairs Isaiah 53:10. Here it means that God would accomplish everything which was to him an object of desire; everything which he wished, or willed. And why should he not? Who has power to hinder or prevent him Romans 9:19? And why should not we rejoice that he will do all that is pleasing to him? What better evidence have we that it is desirable that anything should be done, than that it is agreeable, or pleasing to God? What better security can we have that it is right, than that he wills it? What more substantial and permanent ground of rejoicing is there in regard to anything, than that it is such as God prefers, loves, and wills?

Verse 11

Calling a ravenous bird from the east - There can be no doubt that Cyrus is intended here (see the notes at Isaiah 41:2, Isaiah 41:25). The east here means Persia. The word rendered ‹ravenous bird‘ (עיט *ʿayiṭ*) is rendered ‹fowl‘ in Job 28:7; ‹bird‘ or ‹birds‘ in Jeremiah 12:9; ‹fowls‘ in Genesis 15:11; Isaiah 18:6; and ‹ravenous birds‘ in Ezekiel 39:4. It does not occur elsewhere in the Bible. It is used here as an emblem of a warlike king, and the emblem may either denote the rapidity of his movements - moving with the flight of an eagle; or it may denote the devastation which he would spread - an emblem in either sense especially applicable to Cyrus. It is not

uncommon in the Bible to compare a warlike prince to an eagle Jeremiah 49:22; Ezekiel 17:3; and the idea here is, probably, that Cyrus would come with great power and velocity upon nations, like the king of birds, and would pounce suddenly and unexpectedly upon his prey. Perhaps also there may be here allusion to the standard or banner of Cyrus. Xenophon (Cyrop. vii.) says that it was a golden eagle affixed to a long spear; and it is well remarked by Lowth, that Xenophon has used the very word which the prophet uses here, as near as could be, expressing it in Greek letters. The word of the prophet is עיט *ʿayiṭ* the Greek word used by Xenophon is ἀετὸς *aetos* The Chaldee has, however, given a different rendering to this passage: ‹I, who say that I will gather my captivity from the east, and will lead publicly like a swift bird from a distant land the sons of Abraham, my friend.‘

The man that executeth my counsel - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹Of my counsel.‘ It may either mean the man whom he had designated by his counsel; or it may mean the man who should execute his purpose.

Yea, I have spoken - He spake it by the prophets; and the idea is, that all that he had spoken should be certainly accomplished.

Verse 12

Hearken unto me - This is designed to call the attention of the skeptical and unbelieving Jews to the important truth which he was delivering. Many among them might be disposed to say that the fulfillment was delayed, and he therefore calls upon them to attend particularly to his solemn declarations.

Ye stout-hearted - The phrase ‹stout-hearted‘ would naturally, denote those who were bold and courageous. But here it evidently means those whose hearts were strong against God; who nerved themselves to resist and oppose his plans and government; who were stubborn and rebellious.

Verse 13

I bring near my righteousness - The word ‹righteousness‘ here evidently denotes his truth; the fulfillment of his promises. His righteous and true character would be manifested to them so plainly and clearly that they would be able no longer to doubt. It would not be remote in time, or in place, but it would be so near that they could see it, and so plain that they could no longer doubt or misunderstand it.

And my salvation shall not tarry - The people shall be delivered from their bondage at the exact time which has been predicted.

I will place salvation in Zion - Zion or Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, and salvation shall emanate from that as from a center to the whole world.

Israel my glory - The people whom he had chosen, and who reflected his glory. God‘s honor and glory on earth are seen in, and by the church, and he designs that the church shall be the means of making his glory known among people. Or it may mean I will give my glory to Israel. I will show to them my perfections, and will make their nation the place of the manifestations of my glorious attributes.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 47

Introduction

In the closing verse of the previous chapter, add had given the assurance that his people should certainly be delivered from their captivity in Babylon, and restored to their own land. In this chapter, he describes the vengeance which he would take on Babylon, and the entire chapter is occupied in portraying, under various images, the prostration and humiliation of that proud and oppressive seat of magnificence and of empire. Babylon is described under the image of a lady, carefully nourished and decorated; and all the images of her destruction are drawn from those circumstances which would tend to humble a happy and proud female that had been accustomed to luxury, and unused to scenes of humiliation, poverty, and bereavement. The scope of the chapter is, to state the crimes for which she would be humbled and punished, and the manner in which it would be done. These are intermingled, but they may be contemplated separately. The chapter may, therefore, be regarded as consisting of the following items:

I. Babylon is addressed, by an apostrophe to her, as the seat of empire, and her humiliation is directly predicted under the image of a happy and delicately reared female, suddenly reduced to circumstances of great humiliation and disgrace Isaiah 47:1-5. She is commanded to sit down in the dust; she should no longer be treated as tender and delicate Isaiah 47:1; she would be reduced to the most abject condition - like a delicate and tender female from elevated life compelled to perform the most menial offices, and stripped of all her fine attire Isaiah 47:2-3; she was to sit in darkness, or obscurity; her honor was to be taken away, and she was no more to be called the lady of kingdoms Isaiah 47:5; and all this was to be done by Yahweh, to take vengeance on the oppressors of his people Isaiah 47:3-4.

II. God states the reasons why he would thus humble and punish her Isaiah 47:6-7. It was because she had shown no mercy to his people, and had laid a heavy yoke on an ancient nation Isaiah 47:6; and because she had vainly calculated that her power and magnificence would continue forever, notwithstanding the manner in which she had oppressed the people whom God had given into her hand Isaiah 47:7.

III. The nature of the punishment which should come upon her for this is more distinctly and fully predicted, intermingled with further statements of the causes why she should be punished and humbled Isaiah 47:8-9. The causes were, that luxury and effeminacy abounded; that she was proud, and did not apprehend that it was possible that she should be reduced from her state of magnificence and grandeur; and that she had cherished sorcerers and enchantments. The punishment was, that she should be reduced in a moment to the condition of a widow, and to the state of one who had been suddenly bereft of all hcr children.

IV. The crime and the punishment of the city are further stated Isaiah 47:10-11. The crime was, that she had supposed no avenging God saw her; and that she had become proud and vain of her wisdom and knowledge. The punishment would be, that evil would come upon her from a quarter where she little expected it, and in a manner which she could not prevent.

V. Babylon is sarcastically called on to invoke to her aid those in whom she had trusted - the astrologers, the star-gazers, and those who practiced sorcery and enchantments Isaiah 47:12-13.

VI. The chapter concludes with a statement of the utter vanity of the sorcerers, and the absolute folly of trusting in them Isaiah 47:14-15. Even the flame would pass over them; and so far were they from having any power to deliver those who trusted in them, that they had no power to preserve themselves from ruin.

This chaptcr, therefore, contains many very particular statements about the manner in which Babylon was to be destroyed, statements which will be found to have been fulfilled with surprising accuracy. They are statements, moreover, which could not have been the result of conjecture, or mere political sagacity, for political conjecture and sagacity do not descend to minute particulars and details. It is to be borne in remembrance that this prophecy was uttered a hundred and fifty years before its fulfillment, and that there were no circumstances existing in the time of Isaiah which could have laid the foundation for conjecture in regard to the events predicted here. The temple was then standing; the city of Jerusalem was strongly

fortified; the kingdom of Judah was powerful; Babylon was just rising into magnificence; the power which ultimately overthrew it had scarcely begun to start into being: and none of the causes which ultimately led Cyrus to attack and destroy it, had as yet an existence. And if these things were so then the conclusion is inevitable that Isaiah was under the influence of divine inspiration. It is the particularity of the description in the prophets long before the events occurred, which, more than anything else, distinguishes them from mere political conjecture; and if the particular descriptions here and elsewhere recorded of the overthrow of Babylon, and of other future events, were actually made before the events occurred, then the conclusion is irresistible that they were inspired by God.

Verse 1

Come down - Descend from the throne; or from the seat of magnificence and power. The design of this verse has already been stated in the analysis. It is to foretell that Babylon would be humbled, and that she would be reduced from her magnificence and pride to a condition of abject wretchedness. She is therefore represented as a proud female accustomed to luxury and ease, suddenly brought to the lowest condition, and compelled to perform the most menial services.

And sit in the dust - To sit on the ground, and to cast dust on the head, is a condition often referred to in the Scriptures as expressive of humiliation and of mourning Joshua 8:6; Job 2:12; Job 10:9; Psalm 22:15; Lamentations 3:29. In this manner also, on the medals which were struck by Titus and Vespasian to commemorate the capture of Jerusalem, Jerusalem is represented under the image of a female sitting on the ground under a palm-tree, with the inscription Judaea capta (see the notes at Isaiah 3:26). The design here is, to represent Babylon as reduced to the lowest condition, and as having great occasion of grief.

O virgin daughter of Babylon - It is common in the Scriptures to speak of cities under the image of a virgin, a daughter, or a beautiful woman (see the notes at Isaiah 1:8; Isaiah 37:22; compare Lamentations 1:15; Jeremiah 31:21; Jeremiah 46:11). Kimchi supposes that the term ‹virgin‘ is here given to Babylon, because it had remained to that time uncaptured by any foreign power; but the main purpose is doubtless to refer to Babylon as a beautiful and splendid city, and as being distinguished for delicacy, and the prevalence of what was regarded as ornamental. Gesenius supposes that the

words ‹virgin daughter of Babylon,‘ denote not Babylon itself, but Chaldea, and that the whole land or nation is personified. But the common interpretation, and one evidently more in accordance with the Scripture usage, is to refer it to the city itself.

There is no throne - Thou shalt be reduced from the throne; or the throne shall be taken away. That is, Babylon shall be no longer the seat of empire, or the capital of kingdoms. How truly this was fulfilled, needs not to be told to those who are familiar with the history of Babylon. Its power was broken when Cyrus conquered it; its walls were reduced by Darius; Seleucia rose in its stead, and took away its trade and a large portion of its inhabitants, until it was completely destroyed, so that it became for a long time a question where it had formerly stood (see the notes at Isaiah 16:1-14)

Thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate - A place to which luxuries flow, amid where they abound. The allusion is to a female that bad been delicately and tenderly brought up, and that would be reduced to the lowest condition of servitude, and even of disgrace. It is possible that there may be an allusion here to the effeminacy and the consequent corruption of morals which prevailed in Babylon, and which made it a place sought with greediness by those who wished to spend their time in licentious pleasures. The corruption of Babylon, consequent on its wealth and magnificence, was almost proverbial, and was unsurpassed by any city of ancient times. The following extract from Curtius (v. 1), which it would not be proper to translate, will give some idea of the prevailing state of morals:

‹*Nihil urbis ejus corruptius moribus, nihil ad irritandas illiciendasque immodicas voluptates instructius. Liberos conjugesque cum hospitibus stupro coire, modo pretium flagitii detur, parentes maritique patituntur. Babylonii maxime in vinum, et quae ebrietatem sequuntur effusi sunt. Foeminarum conviva ineuntium, in principio modestus est habitus, dein summa quaeque amicula exuunt paulatimque pudorem profanant; ad ultimum (horror auribusest) ima corporum velamenta projiciunt. Nee meretricum hoc dedecus est, sed matronarum virginumque apud quas comitas habetur vulgati corporis vilitas*.‘

See also the description of a loathsome, disgusting, and abominable custom which prevailed nowhere else, even in the corrupt nations of antiquity, except Babylon, in Herod. i. 199. I cannot transcribe this passage. The description is too loathsome, and would do little good. Its substance is

expressed in a single sentence, πασᾶν γυναῖκα ἐπιχωρίην … μιχθὴναι ἀνδρὶ ξείνῳ *pasan gunaika epichōriēn … michthēnai andri cheinō* It adds to the abomination of this custom that it was connected with the rites of religion, and was a part of the worship of the gods! Strabo, speaking of this custom (iii. 348), says, Ἔθος κατά τι λόγιον ξένῳ μίγνυσθαι *Ethos kata ti logion chenō mignusthai* See also Baruch 6:43, where the same custom is alluded to. For an extended description of the wealth and commerce of Babylon, see an article in the Amer. Bib. Rep. vol. vii. pp. 364-390.

Verse 2

Take the millstones, and grind meal - The design of this is plain. Babylon, that had been regarded as a delicately-trained female, was to be reduced to the lowest condition of poverty and wretchedness - represented here by being compelled to perform the most menial and laborious offices, and submitting to the deepest disgrace and ignominy. There is an allusion here to the custom of grinding in the East. The mills which were there commonly used, and which are also extensively used to this day, consisted of two stones, of which the lower one was convex on the upper side, and the upper one was concave on thee lower side, so that they fitted into each other. The hole for receiving the grain was in the center of the upper stone, and in the process of grinding the lower one was fixed, and the upper one was turned round, usually by two women (see Matthew 24:41), with considerable velocity by means of a handle. Watermills were not invented until a little before the time of Augustus Caesar; and windmills long after. The custom of using handmills is the primitive custom everywhere, and they are still in use in some parts of Scotland, and generally in the East. (See Mr. Pennant‘s “Tour to the Hebrides,” and the Oriental travelers generally. Grinding was usually performed by the women, though it was often regarded as the work of slaves. It was often inflicted on slaves as a punishment.

Molendum in pistrino; vapulandum; habendae compedes.

Terent. Phormio ii. 1. 19.

In the East it was the usual work of female slaves see (Exodus 11:5, in the Septuagint) ‹Women alone are employed to grind their corn.‘ (Shaw, “Algiers and Tunis,” p. 297) ‹They are the female slaves that are generally employed in the East at those handmills. It is extremely laborious, and esteemed the lowest employment in the house.‘ (Sir John Chardin,

Harmer‘s Obs. i. 153) Compare Lowth, and Gesen. “Commentary uber Isaiah.” This idea of its being a low employment is expressed by Job 31:10: ‹Let my wife grind unto another.‘ The idea of its being a most humble and laborious employment was long since exhibited by Homer:

A woman next, then laboring at the mill,
Hard by, where all his numerous mills he kept.
Gave him the sign propitious from within.

twelve damsels toiled to turn them, day by day

Meal grinding, some of barley, some of wheat,

Marrow of man The rest (their portion ground)

All slept, one only from her task as yet

Ceased not, for she was feeblest of them all;

She rested on her mill, and thus pronounced:

‹Jove, Father, Governor, of heaven and earth!
‹O grant the prayer
Of a poor bond-woman. Appoint their feast,
This day the last, that in Ulysses‘ house,

The suitors shall enjoy, for whom I drudge,

Grinding, to weariness of heart and limb,

Meal for their use.‘
Cowper

The sense here is, that Babylon should be reduced to the lowest state, like that of reducing a female delicately and tenderly reared, to the hard and laborious condition of working the handmill - the usual work of slaves.

Uncover thy locks - Gesenius renders this, ‹Raise thy veil.‘ The word used here (צמה *tsamâh*) is rendered ‹locks,‘ in 1 Corinthians 11:15); or it may denote a veil. To remove either would be regarded as disgraceful. It is

known that oriental females pay great attention to their hair, and also that it is a universal custom to wear a close veil. To remove either, and to leave the head bare, or the face exposed, was deemed highly humiliating and dishonorable (see the notes at Isaiah 3:24). ‹The head,‘ says the Editor of the "Pictorial Bible," ‹is the seat of female modesty in the East; and no woman allows her head to be seen bare. In our traveling experience, we saw the faces of very many women, but never the bare head of any except one - a female servant, whose face we were in the constant habit of seeing, and whom we accidentally surprised while dressing her hair. The perfect consternation, and deep sense of humiliation which she expressed on that occasion, could not easily be forgotten, and furnish a most striking illustration of the present text.‘

Make bare the leg - In the interpretation of this, also, commentators vary. Jerome renders it, "Discoopteri humerum" - ‹Uncover the shoulder.‘ The Septuagint, Ἀνακάλυψαι τὰς πολιάς *Anakalupsai tas polias* - ‹Uncover thy gray locks.‘ The Syriac, ‹Cut off thy hoary hairs.‘ Jarchi and Kimchi suppose it means, ‹Remove the waters from the paths, so that they might pass over them.‘ The word used here (שׁבל *shobel*), is derived from שׁבל *shâbal* "to go; to go up, to rise; to grow; to flow copiously." Hence, the noun in its various forms means a path Psalm 77:19; Jeremiah 18:15; ears of corn, שׁבלת *shibbôleth* Genesis 41:5, Judges 12:6; Rth 2:2 ; Job 24:24; Isaiah 17:5; floods Psalm 69:15; branches Zechariah 4:12. In no place has it the certain signification of a leg; but it rather refers to that which flows: flows copiously; and probably here means the train of a robe (Gesenius, and Rosenmuller): and the expression means ‹uncover, or make bare the train;‘ that is, lift it up, as would be necessary in passing through a stream, so that the leg would be made bare. The Orientals, as is well known, wore a long, loose, flowing robe, and in passing through waters, it would be necessary to lift, or gather it up, so that the legs would be bare. The idea is, that she who had sat as a queen, and who had been clad in the rich, loose, and flowing robe which those usually wore who were in the most elevated ranks of life, would now be compelled to leave the seat of magnificence, and in such a manner as to be subject to the deepest shame and disgrace.

Uncover the thigh - By collecting, and gathering up the train of the robe, so as to pass through the streams.

Pass over the rivers - Hebrew, ‹Pass the rivers;‘ that is, by wading, or fording them. This image is taken from the fact that Babylon was

surrounded by many artificial rivers or streams, and that one in passing from it would be compelled to ford many of them. It does not mean that the population of Babylon would be removed into captivity by the conquerors - for there is no evidence that this was done; but the image is that of Babylon, represented as a delicately-reared and magnificently attired female, compelled to ford the streams. The idea is, that the power and magnificence of the city would be transferred to other places. Rosenmuller remarks that it is common in the countries bordering on the Tigris and the Euphrates, for females of bumble rank to ford the streams, or even to swim across them.

Verse 3

Thy nakedness - This denotes the abject condition to which the city would be reduced. All its pride would be taken away; and it would be brought to such a state as to fill its inhabitants with the deepest mortification and shame. Vitringa supposes that it means, that all the imbecility and weakness; the vileness; the real poverty; the cruelty and injustice of Babylon, would be exposed. But it more probably means, that it would be reduced to the deepest ignominy. No language could more forcibly express the depths of its shame and disgrace than that which the prophet here uses.

I will take vengeance - This expresses literally what had been before expressed in a figurative manner. The whole purpose of God was to inflict vengeance on her for her pride, her luxury, and oppression, and especially for her want of kindness toward his people (see Isaiah 47:6).

And I will not meet thee as a man - This phrase has been very variously interpreted. Jerome renders it, ‹And man shall not resist me.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹I will take that which is just of thee, and will no more deliver thee up to men.‘ The Syriac, ‹I will not suffer man to meet thee.‘ Grotius, ‹I will not suffer any man to be an intercessor.‘ So Lowth, ‹Neither will I suffer man to intercede with me.‘ Noyes, ‹I will make peace with none.‘ So Gesenius (Lex. by Robinson) renders it, ‹I will take vengeance, and will not make peace with man; that is, will make peace with none before all are destroyed.‘ The word used here (אפגע *'epega*ʿ) is derived from פגע *pâga*ʿ which means, “to strike upon” or “to strike against”; “to impinge upon anyone, or anything; to fall upon in a hostile manner” 1 Samuel 22:17; “to kill, to slay” Judges 8:21; Judges 15:12; “to assail with petitions, to urge, entreat anyone” Rth 1:16 ; Jeremiah 7:16; “to light upon, or meet with anyone” Genesis 28:11, and then, according to Gesenius, “to

strike a league with anyone, to make peace with him." Jarchi renders it, ‹I will not solicit any man that he should take vengeance;‘ that is, I will do it myself. Aben Ezra, ‹I will not admit the intercession of any man.‘ Vitringa renders it. ‹I will take vengeance, and will not have a man to concur with me; that is, although I should not have a man to concur with me who should execute the vengeance which I meditate; on which account I have raised up Cyrus from Persia, of whom no one thought.‘ In my view, the meaning which best accords with the usual sense of the word, is that proposed by Lowth, that no one should be allowed to interpose, or intercede for them. All the interpretations concur in the same general signification, that Babylon should be totally destroyed; and that no man, whether, as Jerome supposes, by resistance, or as Lowth, by intercession, should be allowed to oppose the execution of the divine purpose of vengeance.

Verse 4

As for our Redeemer - This verse stands absolutely, and is not connected with the preceding or the following. It seems to be an expression of admiration, or of grateful surprise, by which the prophet saw Yahweh as the Redeemer of his people. He saw, in vision, Babylon humbled, and, full of the subject, he breaks out into an expression of grateful surprise and rejoicing. ‹O! our Redeemer! it is the work of our Saviour, the Holy One of Israel! How great is his power! How faithful is he! How manifestly is he revealed! Babylon is destroyed. Her idols could not save her. Her destruction has been accomplished by him who is the Redeemer of his people, and the Holy One of Israel.‘ Lowth regards this verse as the language of a chorus that breaks in upon the midst of the subject, celebrating the praises of God. The subject is resumed in the next verse.

Verse 5

Sit thou silent - The same general sentiment is expressed here as in the preceding verses, though the figure is changed. In Isaiah 47:1-3, Babylon is represented under the image of a frivolous and delicately-reared female, suddenly reduced from her exalted station, and compelled to engage in the most menial and laborious employment. Here she is represented as in a posture of mourning. To sit in silence is emblematic of deep sorrow, or affliction (see Lamentations 2:10): ‹The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground and keep silence, they have cast up dust upon their heads;‘ - see the note at Isaiah 3:26: ‹And she (Jerusalem) being desolate shall sit upon the ground;‘ Job 2:13: ‹So they (the three friends of Job) sat down

with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him, for they saw that his grief was very great.‘ Compare Ezra 9:4.

Get thee into darkness - That is, into a place of mourning. Persons greatly afflicted, almost as a matter of course, shut out the light from their dwellings, as emblematic of their feelings. This is common even in this country - and particularly in the city in which I write where the universal custom prevails of making a house dark during the time of mourning. Nature prompts to this, for there is an obvious similarity between darkness and sorrow. That this custom also prevailed in the East is apparent (see Lamentations 3:2): ‹He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, and not into light;‘ Isaiah 47:9, and that she would seek a place of darkness and silence where she might fully indulge her grief.

O daughter of the Chaldeans - (See the notes at Isaiah 47:1).

For thou shalt no more be called The lady of kingdoms - The magnificence, splendor, beauty, and power, which have given occasion to this appellation, and which have led the nations by common consent to give it to thee, shall be entirely and forever removed. The appellation, ‹lady of kingdoms.‘ is equivalent to that so often used of Rome, as ‹the mistress of the world;‘ and the idea is, that Babylon sustained by its power and splendor the relation of mistress, and that all other cities were regarded as servants, or as subordinate.

Verse 6

I was worth with my people - In this verse and the following, a reason is assigned why God would deal so severely with her. One of the reasons was, that in executing the punishment which he had designed on the Jewish people, she had done it with pride, ambition, and severity; so that though God intended they should be punished, yet the feelings of Babylon in doing it, were such also as to deserve his decided rebuke and wrath.

I have polluted mine inheritance - Jerusalem and the land of Judea see the notes at Isaiah 43:28). He had stripped it of its glory; caused the temple and city to be destroyed; and spread desolation over the land. Though it had been done by the Chaldeans, yet it had been in accordance with his purpose, and under his direction Deuteronomy 4:20; Psalm 28:9.

Thou didst show them no mercy - Though God had given up his people to be punished for their sins, yet this did not justify the spirit with which the Chaldeans had done it, or make proper the cruelty which they had

evinced toward them. It is true that some of the Jewish captives, as, e. g., Daniel, were honored and favored in Babylon. It is not improbable that the circumstances of many of them were comparatively easy while there, and that they acquired possessions and formed attachments there which made them unwilling to leave that land when Cyrus permitted them to return to their own country. But it is also true, that Nebuchadnezzar showed them no compassion when he destroyed the temple and city, that the mass of them were treated with great indignity and cruelty in Babylon. See Psalm 137:1-3, where they pathetically and beautifully record their sufferings:

By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down,
Yea, we wept when we remembered Zion.
For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song;

And they that wasted us rcquired of us mirth.
Saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

Thus also Jeremiah Jeremiah 1:17 describes the cruelty of their conquerors: ‹Israel is a scattered sheep - the lions have driven him away; this Nebuchadnezzar hath broken his bones‘ (see also 2 Kings 25:5, 2 Kings 25:6, 2 Kings 25:27; Jeremiah 51:34; Lamentations 4:16; Lamentations 5:11-14).

Upon the ancient - That is, upon the old man. The idea is, that they had oppressed, and reduced to hard servitude, those who were venerable by years, and by experience. To treat the aged with veneration is everywhere in the Scriptures regarded as an important and sacred duty Leviticus 19:32; Job 32:4-6; and to disregard age, and pour contempt on hoary hairs, is everywhere spoken of as a crime of an aggravated nature (compare 2 Kings 2:23-25; Proverbs 30:17). That the Chaldeans had thus disregarded age and rank, is a frequent subject of complaint among the sacred writers:

They respected not the persons of the priests,
They favored not the elders.
Lamentations 4:16
Princes are hanged up by their hand.
The faces of eiders were not honored.
Lamentations 5:12

Laid the yoke - The yoke in the Bible is an emblem of slavery or bondage Leviticus 26:13; Deuteronomy 28:48; of afflictions and crosses Lamentations 3:27; of punishment for sin Lamentations 1:14; of God‘s

commandments Matthew 11:29-30. Here it refers to the bondage and affliction which they experienced in Babylon.

Verse 7

And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever - This passage describes the pride and self-confidence of Babylon. She was confident in her wealth; the strength of her gates and walls; and in her abundant resources to resist an enemy, or to sustain a siege. Babylon was ten miles square; and it was supposed to contain provisions enough to maintain a siege for many years. There were, moreover, no symptoms of internal decay; there were no apparent external reasons why her prosperity should not continue; there were no causes at work, which human sagacity could detect, which would prevent her continuing to any indefinite period of time.

Thou didst not lay these things to thy heart - Thou didst not consider what, under the government of a holy and just God, must be the effect of treating a captured and oppressed people in this manner. Babylon supposed, that notwithstanding her pride, and haughtiness, and oppressions, she would be able to stand forever.

Neither didst remember the latter end of it - The end of pride, arrogance, and cruelty. The sense is, that Babylon might have learned from the fate of other kingdoms that had been, like her, arrogant and cruel, what must inevitably be her own destiny. But she refused to learn a lesson from their doom. So common is it for nations to disregard the lessons which history teaches; so common for individuals to neglect the warnings furnished by the destruction of the wicked.

Verse 8

Therefore hear now this - The prophet proceeds, in this verse and the following, to detail more particularly the sins of Babylon, and to state the certainty of the punishment which would come upon her. In the previous verses, the denunciation of punishment had been figurative. It had been represented under the image of a lady delicately trained and nurtured, doomed to the lowest condition of life, and compelled to stoop to the most menial offices. Here the prophet uses language without figure, and states directly her crimes, and her doom.

That art given to pleasures - Devoted to dissipation, and to the effeminate pleasures which luxury engenders (see the notes at Isaiah 47:1). Curtius, in his History of Babylon as it was in the times of Alexander (v. 5. 36), Herodotus (i. 198), and Strabo Georg. xvi.), have given a description of

it, all representing it as corrupt, licentious, and dissipated in the extreme. Curtius, in the passage quoted on Isaiah 47:1, says, among other things, that no city was more corrupt in its morals; nowhere were there so many excitements to licentious and guilty pleasures.

That dwellest carelessly - In vain security; without any consciousness of danger, and without alarm (compare Zephaniah 2:15).

I am, and none else besides me - The language of pride. She regarded herself as the principal city of the world, and all others as unworthy to be named in comparison with her (compare the note at Isaiah 45:6). Language remarkably similar to this occurs in Martial‘s description of Rome (xii. 8):

Terrarum dea gentiumque, Roma,

Cui par est nihil, et nihil secundum -

Rome, goddess of the earth and of nations, to whom nothing is equal, nothing second.‘

I shall not sit as a widow - On the word ‹sit,‘ see the note at Isaiah 47:1. The sense is, that she would never be lonely, sad, and afflicted, like a wife deprived of her husband, and a mother of her children. The figure is changed from Isaiah 47:1, where she is represented as a virgin; but the same idea is presented under another form (compare the note at Isaiah 23:4).

Verse 9

In a moment, in one day - This is designed, undoubtedly, to describe the suddenness with which Babylon would be destroyed. It would not decay slowly, and by natural causes, but it would not decay slowly, and by natural causes, but it would be suddenly and unexpectedly destroyed. How strikingly this was fulfilled, it is not needful to pause to state (see Isaiah 14:1, note) In the single night in which Babylon was taken by Cyrus, a death-blow was given to all her greatness and power, and at that moment a train of causes was originated which did not cease to operate until it became a pile of ruins.

The loss of children, and widowhood - Babylon would be in the situation of a wife and a mother who is instantaneously deprived of her husband, and bereft of all her children.

They shall come upon thee in their perfection - In full measure; completely; entirely. You shall know all that is meant by this condition. The state referred to is that of a wife who is suddenly deprived of her husband, and who, at the same time, and by the same stroke, is bereft of all her children. And the sense is, that Babylon would know all that was meant by

such a condition, and would experience the utmost extremity of grief which such a condition involved.

For the multitude of thy sorceries - This was one of the reasons why God would thus destroy her, that sorceries and enchantments abounded there. Lowth, however, renders this, ‹Notwithstanding the multitude of thy sorceries.‘ So Noyes, ‹In spite of thy sorceries.‘ The Hebrew is, ‹in the multitude (ברב *berôb*) of thy sorceries.‘ Jerome renders it, ‹On account of (“propter”) the multitude of thy sorceries.‘ The Septuagint: ‹In (ἐν *en*) thy sorcery.‘ Perhaps the idea is, that sorcery and enchantment abounded, and that these calamities would come notwithstanding all that they could do. They would come in the very midst of the abounding necromancy and enchantments, while the people practiced these arts, and while they depended on them. That this trust in sorcery was one cause why these judgments would come upon them, is apparent from Isaiah 47:10-11. And that they would not be able to protect the city, or that these judgments would come in spite of all their efforts, is apparent from Isaiah 47:13. The idea is exactly expressed by a literal translation of the Hebrew. They would come upon her in, that is, “in the very midst” of the multitude of sorceries and enchantments. The word rendered here ‹sorceries,‘ means magic, incantation, and is applied to the work of magicians (2 Kings 9:22; Nehemiah 3:4; Micah 5:11; compare Exodus 7:2; Deuteronomy 18:10; Daniel 2:2; Malachi 3:5). Magic, it is well known, abounded in the East, and indeed this may be regarded as the birthplace of the art (see the note at Isaiah 2:6).

And for the great abundance of thine enchantments - Hebrew, ‹And in the strength;‘ that is, in the full vigor of thine enchantments. While they would abound, and while they would exert their utmost power to preserve the city. The word rendered ‹enchantments,‘ means properly society, company, community - from being associated, or bound together; and then spells, or enchantments, from the notion that they bound or confined the object that was the subject of the charm. The idea was that of controlling, binding, or restraining anyone whom they pleased, by the power of a spell.

Verse 10

For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness - The word ‹wickedness‘ here refers doubtless to the pride, arrogance, ambition, and oppressions of Babylon. It means, that she had supposed that she was able by these to maintain the ascendancy over other nations, and perpetuate her dominion.

She supposed that by her great power, her natural advantages, and her wealth, she could resist the causes which had operated to destroy other nations. Men often confide in their own wickedness - their cunning, their artifices, their frauds, their acts of oppression and cruelty, and suppose that they are secure against the judgments of God.

None seeth me - Compare Psalm 10:11: ‹He said in his heart, God hath forgotten; he hideth his thee; he will never see it.‘ See also Psalm 94:7.

Thy wisdom - Probably the wisdom here referred to, was that for which Babylon was distinguished, the supposed science of astrology, and the arts of divination and of incantation. It may, however, refer to the purposes of the kings and princes of Babylon; and the meaning may be, that it had been perverted and ruined by relying on their counsels. But it more probably refers to the confidence in the wisdom and science which prevailed there.

Hath perverted thee - Margin, ‹Caused thee to turn away.‘ That is, hath turned thee away from the path of virtue, truth, and safety. It has been the cause of thy downfall.

I am … - (See Isaiah 47:8)

Verse 11

Therefore shall evil come upon thee - In consequence of thy pride and self-confidence; of the prevalence of corruption, licentiousness, and sin; of the prevalence of the arts of magic and of divination abounding there; and of the cruel and unfeeling oppression of the people of God; for all these crimes ruin shall come certainly and suddenly upon thee.

Thou shalt not know from whence it cometh - Margin, ‹The morning thereof.‘ The margin expresses the true sense of the phrase. The word used here (שׁחר *shachar*) means "the aurora," the dawn, the morning (see the notes at Isaiah 14:12). Lowth has strangely rendered it, ‹Evil shall come upon thee, which thou shalt not know how to deprecate.‘ But the word properly means the dawning of the morning, the aurora; and the sense is, that calamity should befall them whose rising or dawning they did not see, or anticipate. It would come unexpectedly and suddenly, like the first rays of the morning. It would spring up as if from no antecedent cause which would seem to lead to it, as the light comes suddenly out of the darkness.

And mischief - Destruction; ruin.

Thou shalt not be able to put it off - Margin, ‹Expiate.‘ This is the sense of the Hebrew (see the notes at Isaiah 43:3). The meaning is, that they could not then avert these calamities by any sacrifices, deprecations, or

prayers. Ruin would suddenly and certainly come; and they had nothing which they could offer to God as an expiation by which it could then be prevented. We need not say how strikingly descriptive this is of the destruction of Babylon. Her ruin came silently and suddenly upon her, as the first rays of morning light steal upon the world, and in such a way that she could not meet it, or turn it away.

Verse 12

Stand now with thy enchantments - (See the notes at Isaiah 47:9). This is evidently sarcastic and ironical. It is a call on those who practiced the arts of magic to stand forth, and to show whether they were able to defend the city, and to save the nation.

Wherein thou hast labored - Or in practicing which thou hast been diligently employed.

From thy youth - From the very commencement of thy national existence. Babylon was always distinguished for these arts. Now was a time when their value was to be put to the test, and when it was to be seen whether they were able to save the nation.

If so be - Or perhaps or possibly, they may be able to profit thee - the language of irony. Perhaps by the aid of these arts you may be able to repel your foes.

Verse 13

Thou art wearied - Thou hast practiced so many arts, and practiced them so long, that thou art exhausted in them. The ‹counsels‘ here referred to, are those which the astrologers and diviners would take in examining the prognostications, and the supposed indications of future events.

Let now the astrologers - Call in now the aid of the various classes of diviners on whom thou hast relied to save thee from the impending calamity and ruin. The words rendered here ‹astrologers‘ (שׁמים הברי *hoberēy shâmayim*) mean properly “the dividers of the heavens;” those who divided, or cut up the heavens for the purpose of augury, or to take a horoscope (Gesenius). What this art was is not certainly known. It is probable that it referred to their designating certain stars, or constellations, or conjunctions of the planets in certain parts of the heavens, as being fortunate and propitious, and certain others as unfortunate and unpropitious. At first, astrology was synonymous with astronomy. But in process of time, it came to denote the science which professes to discover certain

connections between the position and movements of the heavenly bodies, and the events which occur on the earth.

It was supposed that the rising and setting, the conjunction and opposition of the planets, exerted a powerful influence over the fates of people; over the health of their bodies, the character of their minds, and the vicissitudes of their lives. Some regarded, it would seem, the positions of the stars as mere signs of the events which were to follow; and others, and probably by far the larger portion, supposed that those positions had a positive influence in directing and controlling the affairs of this lower world. The origin of this science is involved in great obscurity. Aristotle ascribes the invention to the Babylonians and Egyptians. Ptolemy concurs in this opinion, and Cicero traces it to the same origin. Lucian says that both these nations, as well as the Lybians, borrowed it from the Ethiopians, and that the Greeks owed their knowledge of this pretended science to the poet Orpheus. The science prevailed, it is probable, however, much more early in India; and in China it appears to be coeval with their history.

The Arabians have been distinguished for their attachment to it; and even Tycho Brahe was a zealous defender of astrology, and Kepler believed that the conjunctions of the planets were capable of producing great effects on human affairs. It is also a remarkable fact that Lord Bacon thought that the science required to be purified from errors rather than altogether rejected. Those who wish to inquire into the various systems of astrology, and the arts by which this absurd science has maintained an influence in the world, may consult the "Edin. Encyclopedia," Art. "Astrology," and the authorities enumerated there. The thing referred to in the passage before us, and which was practiced in Babylon, was, probably, that of forecasting future events, or telling what would occur by the observation of the positions of the heavenly bodies.

The star-gazers - Those who endeavor to tell what will occur by the contemplation of the relative positions of the stars.

The monthly prognosticators - Margin, ‹That give knowledge concerning the months.‘ That is, at the commencement of the months they give knowledge of what events might be expected to occur during the month; - perhaps from the dip of the moon, or its riding high or low, etc. Something of this kind is still retained by those persons who speak of a dry or wet moon; or who expect a change of weather at the change of the moon

- all of which is just as wise as were the old systems of astrology among the Chaldeans. This whole passage would have been more literally and better translated by preserving the order of the Hebrew. ‹Let them stand up now and save thee, who are astrologers; who gaze upon the stars, and who make known at the new moons what things will come upon thee.‘

Verse 14

Behold, they shall be as stubble - They shall be no more able to resist the judgments which are coming upon the city, than dry stubble can resist the action of the fire. A similar figure is used in Isaiah 1:31 (see the notes at that verse). Compare also Isaiah 29:6; Isaiah 30:30, where fire is a symbol of the devouring judgments of God.

They shall not deliver themselves - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹Their souls.‘ The meaning is, that they would be unable to protect themselves from the calamities which would come upon them and the city.

There shall not be a coal to warm at - The meaning is, that they would be entirely consumed - so completely, that not even a coal or spark would be left, as when stubble, or a piece of wood, is entirely burned up. According to this interpretation, the sense is, that the judgments of God would come upon them and the city, so that entire destruction would ensue. Rosenmuller, however, Cocceius, and some others, suppose this should be rendered, ‹there shall not remain a coal so that bread could be baked by it.‘ But the more common, and more correct interpretation, is that suggested above. Compare Gesenius and Rosenmuller on the place.

Verse 15

With whom thou hast labored - The multitude of diviners, astrologers, and merchants, with whom thou hast been connected and employed. The idea is, that Babylon had been the mart where all of them had been assembled.

Even thy merchants from thy youth - Babylon was favorably situated for traffic; and was distinguished for it. Foreigners and strangers had resorted there, and it was filled with those who had come there for purposes of trade. The sense here is, that the same destruction which would come upon the diviners, would come on all who had been engaged there in traffic and merchandise. It does not mean that the individuals who were thus engaged would be destroyed, but that destruction would come upon the business; it would come in spite of all the efforts of the astrologers, and in spite of all the mercantile advantages of the place. The destruction would be

as entire as if a fire should pass over stubble, and leave not a coal or a spark. What a striking description of the total ruin of the commercial advantages of Babylon!

From thy youth - From the very foundation of the city.

They shall wander every one to his own quarter - All shall leave Babylon, and it shall be utterly forsaken as a place of commerce, and all who have been engaged in mercantile transactions there shall go to other places. The phrase, ‹his own quarter‘ (לעברו *leʿeberô*), means, “to his own way;” they shall be driven from Babylon, and wander to other places. They shall flee from the danger; and if they practice their arts, or engage in commerce, it shall be done in other places besides Babylon.

None shall save thee - How truly this was fulfilled need not here be stated. All its arts of astrology, its wealth, its mercantile advantages, the strength of its walls and gates, were insufficient to save it, and now it lies a wide waste - a scene of vast and doleful ruin (see the notes at Isaiah 13; 14) So certainly will all the predictions of God be accomplished; so vain are the arts and devices of man, the strength of fortifications, and the advantages for commerce, when God purposes to inflict his vengeance on a guilty nation. The skill of astrology, the advantages of science, accumulated treasures, brass gates and massive walls, and commercial advantages, the influx of foreigners, and a fertile soil, cannot save it. All these things are in the hands of God; and he can withdraw them when he pleases. Babylon once had advantages for commerce equal to most of the celebrated marts now of Europe and America. So had Palmyra, and Tyre, and Baalbec, and Petra, and Alexandria, and Antioch. Babylon was in the midst of a country as fertile by nature as most parts of the United States. She had as little prospect of losing the commerce of the world, and of ceasing to be a place of wealth and power, as Paris, or London, or Liverpool, or New York. Yet how easy was it for God, in the accomplishment of his plans, to turn away the tide of her prosperity, and reduce her to ruins.

How easy, in the arrangements of his providence, to spread desolation over all the once fertile plains of Chaldea, and to make those plains pools of water. And so with equal ease, if he pleases, and by causes as little known as were those which destroyed Babylon, can he take away the commercial advantages of any city now on earth. Tyre has lost all its commercial importance; the richly-laden caravan has ceascd to pause at Petra; Tadmor lies waste. Baalbec is known only by the far-strewed ruins, and Nineveh

and Babylon are stripped of all. that ever made them great, and can rise no more. God has taken away the importance and the power of Rome, once, like Babylon, the mistress of the world, by suffering the malaria to desolate all the region in her vicinity; and so with equal truth, all that contributes to the commercial importance of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, London, or Paris, are under the control of God. By some secret causes he could make these cities a wide scene of ruins; and they may be, if they are like Babylon and Tyre and Tadmor in their character, yet like them in their doom. They should feel that the sources of their prosperity and their preservation are not in themselves, but in the favor and protection of God. Virtue, justice, and piety, will better preserve them than wealth; and without these they must be, in spite of their commercial advantages, what the once celebrated cities of antiquity now are.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 48

Introduction

This chapter contains renewed assurances of the deliverance of the exile Jews from Babylon. It is designed, in the main, to state the causes for which the captivity would occur, and to furnish the assurance also that, notwitbstanding the judgment that should come upon them, God would deliver them from bondage. It contains lamentations that there was a necessity for bringing these calamities upon them; assurances that God had loved them; appeals to themselves in proof that all that they had suffered had been predicted; and a solemn command to go forth out of Babylon. It is to be regarded as addressed to the exile Jews in Babylon, though it is not improbable that the prophet designed it to have a bearing on the Jews of his own time, as given to idolatry, and that he intended that the former part of the chapter should be an indirect rebuke to them by showing them the consequences of their proneness to idolatry. The chapter is exceedingly tender, and full of love, and is an expression of the kindness which God has for his own people.

It is not very susceptible of division, or of easy analysis, but the following topics present probably the main points of the chapter.

I. A reproof of the Jews for their idolatrous tendencies, reminding them that this was the characteristic of the nation, and indirectly intimating that all their calamitics would come upon them on account of that Isaiah 48:1-8. This part contains:

1. An address to the Jews, as those who professed to worship God, though in insincerity and hypocrisy Isaiah 48:1-2.

2. A solemn declaration of God that he had foretold all these events, and that they could not be traced in any manner to the power of idols, and that he, therefore, was God Isaiah 48:3-7.

3. Their character had been that of rebellion and treachery, from the very commencement of their history Isaiah 48:8.

II. Promises of deliverance from the evils which their sins had brought upon them, with expressions of regret that their conduct hurl been such as to make such judgments necessary Isaiah 48:9-19.

1. God says that he would restrain his anger, and would not wholly cut them of Isaiah 48:9.

2. The purpose of the calamities brought upon them was to refine and purify them, as in a furnace Isaiah 48:10.

3. All his dealings with them had been for his own glory, and so as to promote his own honor Isaiah 48:11.

4. An assertion of his power, and his ability to accomplish what he had purposed Isaiah 48:12-13.

5. He had solemnly purposed to destroy Babylon, and the Chaldeans Isaiah 48:14.

6. He had raised up for that purpose one who should accomplish his designs Isaiah 48:15-16.

7. He expresses his deep regret that their conduct had been such as to make it necessary to bring these heavy judgments on them, and states what would have been the result if thcy had observed his commandments. Their peace would have been as a river, their righteousness as the waves of the sea, and their offspring as the sand Isaiah 48:17-19.

III. A command to go forth from Babylon, implying the highest assurance that they should be delivered from their long and painful captivity Isaiah 48:20-22.

1. They should go out with singing and triumph; and the ends of the earth should see it Isaiah 48:20.

2. God would provide for them in the deserts, and cause the waters to flow for them in their journey through the pathless wilderness Isaiah 48:21.

The chapter concludes with a general declaration that the wicked have no peace, implying that they only have peace and security who put their trust in God Isaiah 48:22.

Verse 1

Hear ye this - This is an address to the Jews regarded as in Babylon, and is designed to remind them of their origin, and of their privileges as the descendants of Jacob, and having the name of Israel (compare the notes at Isaiah 43:1).

And are come forth out of the waters of Judah - This metaphor is taken from a fountain which sends forth its streams of water, and the idea is,

that they owed their origin to Judah, as the streams flowed from a fountain. A similar figure is used by Balaam in describing the vast increase of the Jews: Deuteronomy 33:28: ‹The fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine.‘ So Psalm 68:26:

Bless ye God in the congregations,
Jehovah, ye that are of the fountain of Israel.

Margin

The idea is, that Judah was the fountain, or origin of the people who were then exiled in Babylon. The ten tribes had revolted, and had been carried away, and the name of Benjamin had been absorbed in that of Judah, and this had become the common name of the nation. Perhaps Judah is mentioned here with honor as the fountain of the nation, because it was from him that the Messiah was to descend Genesis 49:10: and this mention of his name would serve to bring that promise to view, and would be an assurance that the nation would not be destroyed, nor the power finally depart until He should come.

Which swear by the name - Who worship Yahweh, and acknowledge him as the only true God (see the notes at Isaiah 19:18; Isaiah 45:23; compare Isaiah 48:1; Isaiah 65:16).

And make mention - That is, in your prayers and praises. You acknowledge him, and profess to worship him.

But not in truth - In a hypocritical manner; not in sincerity. Compare Jeremiah 5:2: ‹And though they say, The Lord liveth, surely they swear falsely.‘

Verse 2

For they call themselves of the holy city - Of Jerusalem (see Isaiah 52:1; Nehemiah 11:1; Matthew 4:5; Matthew 27:53; Isaiah 1:9). The object of the prophet in here mentioning his holy name is, probably, to show them the guilt of their conduct. He was Yahweh, the source of all existence. He was the God of all the hosts of heaven, and all the armies on earth. How wicked, therefore, it was to come before him in a false and hypocritical manner, and while they were professedly worshipping him, to be really offering their hearts to idols, and to be characteristically inclined to relapse into idolatry!

Verse 3

I have declared the former things - That is, in former times I have predicted future events by the prophets, which have come to pass as they

were foretold. Though the fulfillment might have appeared to be long delayed, yet it came to pass at the very time, showing it to be an exact fulfillment of the prophecy. The design of thus referring to the former predictions is, to remind them of their proneness to disregard his declarations, and to recall to their attention the fact that all that he said would be certainly accomplished. As a people, they had been prone to disbelieve his word. He saw that the same thing would take place in Babylon, and that there also they would disbelieve his prophecies about raising up Cyrus, and restoring them to their own land. He therefore endeavors to anticipate this, by reminding them of their former unbelief, and of the fact that all that he had foretold in former times had come to pass.

From the beginning - In regard to this, and the meaning of the phrase, ‹the former things, see the notes at Isaiah 41:22; Isaiah 43:9. The phrase. ‹former things,‘ refers to the things which precede others; the series, or order of events.

I did them suddenly - They came to pass at an unexpected time; when you were not looking for them, and when perhaps you were doubting whether they would occur, or were calling in question the divine veracity. The idea is, that God in like manner would, certainly, and suddenly, accomplish his predictions about Babylon, and their release from their captivity.

Verse 4

Because I knew that thou art obstinate - I made these frequent predictions, and fulfilled them in this striking manner, because I knew that as a people, you were prone to unbelief, and in order that you might have the most full and undoubted demonstration of the truth of what was declared. As they were disinclined to credit his promises, and as he saw that in their long captivity they would be prone to disbelieve what he had said respecting their deliverance under Cyrus, he had, therefore, given them these numerous evidences of the certainty of the fulfillment of all his prophecies, in order that their minds might credit what he said about their return to their own land.

That thou art obstinate - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹Hard,‘ The sense is, that they were obstinate and intractable - an expression probably taken from a bullock which refuses to receive the yoke. The word hard, as expressive of obstinacy, is often combined with others. Thus, in Exodus 32:9; Exodus

34:9, ‹hard of neck,‘ that is, stiff-necked, stubborn; ‹hard of face‘ Ezekiel 2:4; ‹hard of heart‘ Ezekiel 3:7. The idea is, that they were, as a people, obstinate, rebellious, and indisposed to submit to the laws of God - a charge which is often brought against them by the sacred writers, and which is abundantly verified by all their history as a people (compare Exodus 32:9; Exodus 33:3-5; Exodus 34:9; Deuteronomy 9:6-13; Deuteronomy 31:27; 2 Chronicles 30:8; Ezekiel 2:4; Acts 7:51).

Thy neck is an iron sinew - The word גיד *giyd* means properly a cord, thong, or band; then a nerve, sinew, muscle, or tendon. The metaphor is taken from oxen when they make their neck stiff, and refuse to submit it to the yoke.

And thy brow brass - Thy forehead is hard and insensible as brass. The phrase is applied to the shameless brow of a harloi Jeremiah 3:3; Ezekiel 3:7, where there is an utter want of modesty, and consummate impudence. A brow of brass is an image of insensibility, or obstinacy (so in Jeremiah 6:28).

Verse 5

I have even from the beginning declared it to thee - He had foretold future events, so that they had abundant demonstration thai he was the true God, and so that they could not be under a mistake in regard to the source of their deliverances from danger.

Mine idol hath done them - The idols and molten images had not foretold these events and when they came to pass, it could not, therefore, be pretended that they had been produced by idols. By predicting them, Yahweh kept up the proof that he was the true God, and demonstrated that he alone was worthy of their confidence and regard.

Verse 6

Thou hast heard - You are witnesses that the prediction was uttered long before it was fulfilled.

See all this - Behold how it is all fulfilled. Bear witness that the event is as it was predicted.

And will ye not declare it? - Will you not bear witness to the entire fulfillment of the prophecy? God appeals to them as qualified to testify that what he had declared had come to pass, and calls on them to make this known as a demonstration that he alone was God (see the notes at Isaiah 44:8).

I have showed thee new things from this time - From this time I make known a thing which has not before occurred, that you may have a similar demonstration that Yahweh is God. The ‹new thing‘ here referred to, is, doubtless, the prediction of the deliverance from the captivity at Babylon - a new thing, in contradistinction from those which had been before predicted, and which were already fulfilled (see the notes at Isaiah 42:9; Isaiah 43:19).

Even hidden things - Events which are so concealed that they could not be conjectured by any political sagacity, or by any contemplation of mere natural causes. They are, as it were, laid up in dark treasurehouses (compare Isaiah 45:3), and they can be known only by him to whom ‹the darkness shineth as the day,‘ and to whom the night and the day are both alike Psalm 139:12.

Verse 7

They are created now - The Septuagint renders this, Νῦν γίνεται *nun ginetai* - ‹Done now;‘ and many expositors interpret it in the sense that they are now brought into light, as if they were created. Aben Ezra renders it, ‹They are decreed and determined by me.‘ Rosenmuller supposes that it refers to the revelation, or making known those things. Lowth renders it, ‹They are produced now, and not of old.‘ Noyes, ‹It is revealed now, and not long ago.‘ But the sense is probably this: God is saying that they did not foresee them, nor were they able to conjecture them by the contemplation of any natural causes. There were no natural causes in operation at the time the predictions were made, respecting the destruction of Babylon, by which it could be conjectured that that event would take place; and when the event occurred, it was as if it had been created anew. It was the result of Almighty power and energy, and was to be traced to him alone. The sense is, that it could no more be predicted, at the time when the prophecy was uttered, from the operation of any natural causes, than an act of creation could be predicted, which depended on the exercise of the divine will alone. It was a case which God only could understand, in the same way as he alone could understand the purposes and the time of his own act of creating the world.

And not from the beginning - The events have not been so formed from the beginning that they could be predicted by the operation of natural causes, and by political sagacity.

Even before the day when thou heardest them not - The sense of this probably, ‹and before this day thou hast not heard of them;‘ that is, these predictions pertain to new events, and are not to be found in antecedent

prophecies. The prophet did not speak now of the deliverance from Egypt, and of the blessings of the promised land, which had constituted the burden of many of the former prophecies, but he spoke of a new thing; of the deliverance from Babylon, and of events which they could by no natural sagacity anticipate, so that they could claim that they knew them.

Lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them - The taking of Babylon by Cyrus, and the deliverance of the exiles from their bondage, are events which can be foreseen only by God. Yet the prophet says that he had declared these events, which thus lay entirely beyond the power of human conjecture, long before they occurred, so that they could not possibly pretend that they knew them by any natural sagacity, or that an idol had effected this.

Verse 8

Yea, thou heardest not - This verse is designed to show not only that these events could not have been foreseen by them, but that when they were actually made known to them, they were stupid, dull, and incredulous. It is not only re-affirming what had been said in the previous verses, but is designed to show that they were characteristically and constantly a perverse, hardened, and insensible people. The phrase, ‹thou heardest not,‘ therefore means that they did not attend to these things when they were uttered, and were prone to disregard God, and all his predictions and promises.

Yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened - The word ‹that‘ which is here supplied by our translators, greatly obscures the sense. The meaning is, ‹from the first, thine ear was not open to receive them‘ (Lowth); that is, they were stupid, insensible, and uniformly prone to disregard the messages of God. To open the ear, denotes a prompt and ready attention to what God says (see Isaiah 50:5), and to close the ear denotes an unwillingness to listen to what is spoken by him.

For I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously - I knew that, as a people, you are characteristically false and perfidious. This does not refer to their conduct toward other nations, but to their conduct toward God. They were false and unfaithful to him, and the sense is, that if God had not foretold the destruction of Babylon and their deliverance from it so clearly that there could have been no misunderstanding of it, and no perversion, they would have also perverted this, and ascribed it to something else than to him. Perhaps they might, as their forefathers did, when they came out of

Egypt Exodus 32:4, have ascribed it to idols (compare Isaiah 48:5), and the result might have been a relapse into that very sin, to cure which was the design of removing them to Babylon.‘

And wast called - This was thy appropriate appellation.

From the womb - From the very commencement of your national history; from the very time when the nation was first organized (see the notes at Isaiah 44:2).

Verse 9

For my name‘s sake - (See the notes at Isaiah 43:25; compare Isaiah 66:5). It is possible that the design of this verse may be, to answer an objection. ‹If the character of the nation is such, it might be said, ‹why should God desire to restore them again to their own land? If their sins have been so great as to make these heavy judgments proper, why not suffer them to remain under the infliction of the deserved judgment? Why should God interpose? why raise up Cyrus? why overthrow Babylon? why conduct them across a pathless wilderness, and provide for them in a sandy desert?‘ To this the answer is, that it was not on their account. It was not because they were deserving of his favor, nor was it primarily and mainly in order that they might be happy. It was on his own account - in order to show his covenant faithfulness; his fidelity to the promises made to their fathers, his mercy, his compassion, his readiness to pardon, and his unchanging love. And this is the reason why he ‹defers his anger,‘ in relation to any of the children of people. His own glory, and not their happiness, is the main object in view. And this is right. The glory, the honor, and the happiness of God, are of more importance than the welfare of any of his creatures; because, first, they are in themselves of more importance, just in proportion as God is more elevated than any of his creatures; and, secondly, the welfare of any or all of his creatures depends on the maintaining of the honor of God, and of his government, and on the manifestation of his perfections to the universe (see the treatise of President Edwards on The end for which God created the world, in Works, vol. iii. New York Ed. 1830).

Will I defer mine anger - That is, I will spare you, and restore you again to your own land (see the note at Isaiah 48:11).

And for my praise will I refrain for thee - Will I refrain my anger in reference to you as a nation. The word used here (חטם *châṭam*) denotes properly to muzzle, and is commonly employed with reference to an animal

in order to tame or subdue it. Here it means that God would restrain himself; He would not put forth His anger in order to destroy them. Learn hence:

1. That God acts with reference to his own glory, in order to manifest his own perfections, and to secure his praise.

2. That the reason why the wicked are not cut off sooner in their transgressions is, that He may show his forbearance, and secure praise by long-suffering.

3. That the reason why the righteous are kept amidst their frequent failures in duty, their unfaithfulness, and their many imperfections, is, that God may get glory by showing his covenant fidelity.

4. That it is one evidence of piety - and one that is indispensable - that there should be a willingness thai God should secure his own glory in his own way, and that there should be a constant desire that his praise should be promoted, whatever may befall his creatures.

Verse 10

Behold, I have refined thee - This refers to the Jews in their afflictions and captivity in Babylon. It states one design which he had in view in these afflictions - to purify them. The word used here, and rendered ‹refined‘ (צרף *tsâraph*), means properly to melt; to smelt metals; to subject them to the action of fire, in order to remove the scoria or dross from them (see the notes at Isaiah 1:25). Then it means to purify in any manner. Here it means that God had used these afflictions for the same purpose for which fire is used in regard to metals, in order that every impurity in their moral and religious character might be removed.

But not with silver - Margin, ‹For.‘ Hebrew, בכסף *bekâseph* Many different interpretations of this have been proposed. Jerome renders it, Non quasi argentum - ‹Not as silver.‘ The Septuagint, Οὐχ ἕνεκεν ἀργυρίου *ouch heneken arguriou* - ‹Not on account of silver.‘ Grotius explains it, ‹I have a long time tried thee by afflictions, but nothing good appears in thee;‘ that is, I have not found you to be silver, or to be pure, as when a worker in metals applies the usual heat to a mass of ore for the purpose of separating the dross, and obtains no silver. Gesenius explains it to mean, ‹I sought to make you better by afflictions, but the end was not reached; you were not as silver

which is obtained by melting, but as dross.‘ Rosenmuller supposes it means, that he had not tried them with that intensity of heat which was necessary to melt and refine silver; and remarks, that those skilled in metals observe that gold is easily liquified, but that silver requires a more intense heat to purify it. Jarchi renders it, ‹Not by the fire of Gehenna as silver is melted by the fire.‘ Kimchi explains it, ‹Not as one who is smelting silver, and who removes all the scoria from it, and so consumes it that nothing but pure silver remains. If that had been done, but few of you would have been left.‘ Vitringa supposes that it means, that God had sent them to Babylon to be purified, yet it was not to be done with silver. It was by the agency of a people who were wicked, sinful, and unbelieving. Amidst this variety of interpretation, it is difficult to determine the sense. Probably it may be, I have melted thee, and found no silver; or the result has not been that you have been shown to be pure by all your trials; and thus it will agree with what is said above, that they were perverse, false, and rebellious as a people.

I have chosen thee - Lowth renders this, ‹I have tried thee.‘ The Vulgate and the Septuagint, however, render it, ‹I have chosen thee.‘ The word used here (from בחר *bâchar*) means, according to Gesenius:

1. To prove, to try, to examine; and the primary idea, according to him, is that of rubbing with the lapis Lydius, or touchstone, or else of cutting in pieces for the purpose of examining.

2. To approve, choose, or select. This is the most common signification in the Hebrew Bible Genesis 13:11; Exodus 17:9; Joshua 24:15; Job 9:14; Job 15:5; Job 29:25.

3. To delight in Genesis 6:2; Isaiah 1:29. Probably the meaning here is, ‹I have proved or tried thee in the furnace of affliction.‘ It was true, however, that God had chosen or selected their nation to be his people when they were suffering in the furnace of affliction in Egypt; and it is also true that God chooses sinners now, or converts them, as the result of heavy affliction. Possibly this may be the idea, that their affliction had prepared them to embrace his offers and to seek consolation in him; and he may design to teach that one effect of affliction is to prepare the mind to embrace the offers of mercy.

In the furnace of affliction - Referring particularly to their trials in Babylon. Afflictions are often likened to fire - from the fact that fire is used to purify or try metals, and afflictions have the same object in reference to the people of God.

Verse 11

For mine own sake - (See Isaiah 48:9). The expression here is repeated to denote emphasis. He had thrown them into the furnace of affliction on his own account, that is, in order that his own name should not be profaned by their irreligion and idolatry, and that the glory which was due to him should not be given to idols.

For how should my name be polluted? - The sense is, that it would be inconsistent with his perfections to see his name profaned without endeavoring to correct and prevent it; and in order to this, that he brought these afflictions upon them. They had profaned his name by their irreligion and hypocrisy. In order to correct this evil, and to prevent it in future, he had brought these national judgments on them, and removed them to Babylon. The doctrine here taught is, that when the conduct of God‘s professed people is such as to dishonor God, and to make his name a subject of reproach with the wicked, he will visit them with heavy judgments. He cannot indulge them in a course of life which will reflect dishonor on his own name.

And I will not give my glory unto another - (See the notes at Isaiah 42:8). The sense here is this. The Jews had, as a nation, been prone to ascribe to idols that which was due to God alone. To correct this, and to make an effectual reform, he had removed them to Babylon, and doomed them to a long and painful captivity there. It may be added that the punishment was effectual, and that their long trial in Babylon served entirely to correct all their idolatrous propensities as a nation.

Verse 12

Hearken unto me - This is a solemn call on the Jews in Babylon to attend to what he was now about to say. It is the commencement of a new part of the argument, containing the assurance that he would deliver them, and utterly destroy the Chaldeans. He begins, therefore, by asserting that he is the only true God, and that he is able to accomplish all his purposes.

My called - The people whom I have chosen, or called.

I am he - I am the same; or I am the true and only God.

I am the first - (See the notes at Isaiah 41:4; Isaiah 44:6).

Verse 13

Mine hand also hath laid … - I am the Creator of all things, and I have all power, and am abundantly able to deliver you from all your foes.

And my right hand hath spanned the heavens - Margin, ‹The palm of my right hand hath spread out.‘ The sense is, that he by his right hand had spanned, or measured the heavens. The phrase is designed to show his greatness and his power (see the notes at Isaiah 40:12).

When I call unto them - (See the note at Isaiah 40:26). The sense here is, that he who had power thus to command the hosts of heaven, and to secure their perfect obedience by his word, had power also to defend his people, and to deliver them from their foes, and conduct them in safety to their own land.

Verse 14

All ye, assemble yourselves and hear - Ye Jews who are in Babylon, gather together, and listen to the assurance that God is able to protect you, and that he will certainly restore you to your own country.

Which among them - Who among the pagan?

Hath declared these things? - The things relating to the destruction of Babylon, and the rescue of his people. This is an appeal similar to that which God has often made, that he alone can predict future events. None of the astrologers, soothsayers, or diviners of Babylon had been able to foretell the expedition and the conquests of Cyrus, and the capture of the city. If they had been able to foresee the danger, they might have guarded against it, and the city might have been saved. But God had predieted it a hundred and fifty years before it occurred, and this demonstrated, therefore, that he alone was God.

The Lord hath loved him - Lowth renders this, ‹He whom Jehovah hath loved will execute his will on Babylon.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹Loving thee, I will execute thy will against Babylon.‘ There can be no doubt that it refers to Cyrus, and that the meaning is, that he whom Yahweh had loved would accomplish his will on Babylon. It does not necessarily mean that Yahweh was pleased with his moral character, or that he was a pious man (compare the notes at Isaiah 41:2); but that he was so well pleased with him as an instrument to accomplish his purposes, that he chose to employ him for that end.

He will do his pleasure on Babylon - He will accomplish all his desire on that city; that is, he will take, and subdue it. The word ‹his‘ here, may

refer either to Cyrus or to Yahweh. Probably it means that Cyrus would do to Babylon what would be pleasing to Yahweh.

And his arm - The arm is a symbol of strength, and is the instrument by which we execute our purposes.

Verse 15

I, even I, have spoken - The word ‹I‘ is repeated to give emphasis, and to furnish the utmost security that it should be certainly accomplished. It means, that Yahweh, and he alone, had declared this, and that it was entirely by his power that Cyrus had been raised up, and had been made prosperous.

Yea, I have called him - (See the note at Isaiah 41:2).

I have brought him - I have led him on his way in his conquests.

And he shall make his way prosperous - There is a change of person in this verse, from the first to the third, which is quite common in the writings of Isaiah.

Verse 16

Come ye near unto me - (see Isaiah 48:14).

I have not spoken in secret - (See the notes at Isaiah 45:19). The idea here is, that he had foretold the raising up of Cyrus, and his agency in delivering his people, in terms so plain that it could not be pretended that it was conjectured, and so clear that there was no ambiguity.

From the time that it was, there am I - From the moment when the purpose was formed, and when it began to be accomplished, I was present. The meaning is, that everything in regard to raising up Cyrus, and to the delivery of his people from Babylon, had been entirely under his direction.

And now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me - There is evidently a change in the speaker here. In the former part of the verse, it is God who is the speaker. But here it is he who is sent to bear the message. Or, if this should be regarded, as Lowth and many others suppose, as the Messiah who is speaking to the exiled Jews, then it is an assertion that he had been sent by the Lord God and his Spirit. There is an ambiguity in the original, which is not retained in our common translation. The Hebrew is, ‹And now the Lord Yahweh hath sent me, and his Spirit;‘ and the meaning may be either, as in our version, that Yahweh and his Spirit were united in sending the person referred to; or that Yahweh had sent him, and at the same time had also sent his Spirit to accompany what he said. Grotius renders it, ‹The Lord by his Spirit bas given me these commands.‘ Jerome understands the word ‹Spirit‘ as in the nominative case, and as meaning that

the Spirit united with Yahweh in sending the person referred to - Dominus Deus misit me, et spiritus ejus.

The Septuagint, like the Hebrew, is ambiguous - Νῦν κύριος κύριος ἀπέστειλέ με, καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ *Nun kurios kurios apesteile me kai to pneuma autou* The Syriac has the same ambiguity. The Targum of Jonathan renders it, ‹And now Jehovah (ייָ *yeyâ*) God hath sent me and his word.‘ It is perhaps not possible to determine, where there is such ambiguity in the form of the sentence, what is the exact meaning. As it is not common, however, in the Scriptures, to speak of the Spirit of God as sending, or commissioning his servants; and as the object of the speaker here is evidently to conciliate respect for his message as being inspired, it is probably to be regarded as meaning that he had been sent by Yahweh and was accompanied wish the influences of his Spirit. Many of the reformers, and others since their time have supposed that this refers to the Messiah, and have endeavored to derive a demonstration from this verse of the doctrine of the Trinity. The argument which it has been supposed these words furnish on that subject is, that three persons are here spoken of, the person who sends, that is, God the Father; the person who is sent, that is, the Messiah; and the Spirit, who concurs in sending him, or by whom he is endowed.

But the evidence that this refers to the Messiah is too slight to lay the foundation for such an argument; and nothing is gained to the cause of truth by such forced interpretations. “It would require more time, and toil, and ingenuity to demonstrate that this passage had reference to the Messiah, than it would to demontstrate the doctrine of the Trinity, and the divinity of the Redeemer, from the unequivocal declarations of the New Testament.” The remark of Calvin on this verse, and on this mode of interpretation, is full of good sense: ‹This verse interpreters explain in different ways. Many refer it to Christ, but the prophet designs no such thing. Cavendoe autem sunt nobis violentoe et coactoe interpretations - (such forced and violent interpretations are to be avoided).‘ The scope of the passage demands, as it seems to me, that it should be referred to the prophet himself. His object is, to state that he had not come at his own instance, or without being commissioned. He had been sent by God, and was attended by the Spirit of inspiration. He foretold events which the Spirit of God alone could make known to mankind. It is, therefore, a strong asseveration that his words

demanded their attention, and that they had every ground of consolation, and every possible evidence that they would be rescued from their bondage. It is a full claim to divine inspiration, and is one of the many assertions which are found in the Scriptures where the sacred writers claim to have been sent by God, and taught by his Spirit.

Verse 17

Thy Redeemer - (see the notes at Isaiah 41:14; Isaiah 43:1).

Which teacheth thee to profit - Teaching you what things will most conduce to your welfare. The reference hero is chiefly to the afflictions which they suffered in Babylon.

Which leadeth thee - I am thy conductor and guide. God taught them, as he does his people now, by his Providence, his revealed word, and his Spirit, the way in which they ought to go. It is one of his characteristics that he is the guide and director of his people.

Verse 18

O that thou hadst heardened to my commandments! - This expresses the earnest wish and desire of God. He would greatly have preferred that they should have kept his law. He had no wish that they should sin, and that these judgments should come upon them. The doctrine taught here is, that God greatly prefers that people should keep his laws. He does not desire that they should be sinners, or that they should be punished. It was so with regard to the Jews; and it is so with regard to all. In all cases, at all times, and with reference to all his creatures, he prefers holiness to sin; he sincerely desires that there should be perfect obedience to his commandments. It is to be remarked also that this is not merely prospective, or a declaration in the abstract. It relates to sin which had been actually committed, and proves that even in regard to that, God would have preferred that it had not been committed. A declaration remarkably similar to this, occurs in Psalm 81:13-16:

O that my people had hearkened unto me,
And Israel had walked in my ways;
I should soon have subdued their‘ enemies,

And turned their hand against their adversaries

The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him:

But their time should have endured forever.

He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat;
And with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

Compare Deuteronomy 22:29; Isaiah 5:1-7; Ezekiel 18:23-32; Matthew 23:37; Luke 19:21.

Then had thy peace been as a river - The word ‹peace‘ here (שׁלום *shâlôm*) means properly wholeness, soundness, and then health, welfare, prosperity, good of every kind. It then denotes peace, as opposed to war, and also concord and friendship. Here it evidently denotes prosperity in general, as opposed to the calamities which actually came upon them.

As a river - That is, abundant - like a full, flowing river that fills the banks, and that conveys fertility and blessedness through a land. ‹The pagan, in order to represent the Universal power and beneficence of Jupiter, used the symbol of a river flowing from his throne; and to this the Sycophant in Plautus alludes (Trium. Act iv. Sc. 2, v. 98), in his saying that he had been at the head of that river:

Ad caput amuis, quod de coelo exoritur, sub solio Jovis.

See also Wemyss‘ Key to the Symbolical Language of Scripture, Art. River. Rivers are often used by the sacred writers, and particularly by Isaiah, as symbolic of plenty and prosperity Isaiah 32:2; Isaiah 33:21; Isaiah 41:18; Isaiah 43:19.

And thy righteousness - The holiness and purity of the nation. Religion, with all its inestimable benefits, would have abounded to the utmost extent. Instead of the prevailing idolatry and corruption, the hypocrisy and insincerity which had abounded, and which made it necessary for God to remote them, they would have been distinguished for sincerity, purity, love, and holy living. And this proves that God would have preferred the prevalence of holiness.

As the waves of the sea - What can be a more beautiful or sublime image than this? What can more strikingly represent the abundance of the blessings which religion would have conferred on the land? The waves of the sea are an emblem of plenty. They seem to be boundless. They are constantly rolling. And so their righteousness would have been without a limit; and would have rolled unceasingly its rich blessings over the land.

Who can doubt that this would have been a better state, a condition to have been preferred to that which actually existed?

Verse 19

Thy seed also - Instead of being reduced to a small number by the calamities incident to war, and being comparatively a small and powerless people sighing in captivity, you would have been a numerous and mighty nation. This is another of the blessings which would have followed from obedience to the commands of God; and it proves that a people who are virtuous and pious will become numerous and mighty. Vice, and the diseases, the wars, and the divine judgments consequent on vice, tend to depopulate a nation, and to make it feeble.

As the sand - This is often used to denote a great and indefinite number (Genesis 22:17; Genesis 32:12; Genesis 41:49; Joshua 11:4; Judges 7:12; 1 Samuel 13:5; 2 Samuel 17:11; 1 Kings 4:20-29; Job 29:18; Psalm 139:18; the note at Isaiah 10:22; Hosea 1:10; Revelation 20:8).

And the offspring of thy bowels - On the meaning of the word used here, see the note at Isaiah 22:24.

Like the gravel thereof - literally, ‹and the offspring of thy bowels shall be like its bowels,‘ that is, like the offspring of the sea. The phrase refers probably rather to the fish of the sea, or the innumerable multitudes of animals that swim in the sea, than to the gravel. There is no place where the word means gravel. Jerome, however, renders it, *Ut lapili ejus* - ‹As its pebbles.‘ The Septuagint Ὡς ὁ χοῦς τῆς γῆς *hōs ho chous tēs gēs* - ‹As the dust of the earth.‘ The Chaldee also renders it, ‹As the stones of the sea;‘ and the Syriac also. The sense is essentially the same that the number of the people of the nation would have been vast.

His name should not have been out off - This does not imply of necessity that they had ceased to be a nation when they were in Babylon, but the meaning is, that if they had been, and would continue to be, obedient, their national existence would have been perpetuated to the end of time. When they ceased to be a distinct nation, and their name was blotted out among the kingdoms of the earth, it was for national crime and unbelief Romans 11:20.

Verse 20

Go ye forth of Babylon - The prophet now directly addresses those who were in exile in Babylon, and commands them to depart from it. The design of this is, to furnish the assurance that they should be delivered, and

to show them the duty of leaving the place of their long captivity when the opportunity of doing it should occur. It is also designed to show that when it should occur, it would be attended with great joy and rejoicing.

Flee ye from the Chaldeans with a voice of singing - With the utmost exultation and joy. They should rejoice that their captivity was ended; they should exult at the prospect of being restored again to their own land.

Utter it even to the end of the earth - It is an event so great and wonderful that all the nations should be made acquainted with it.

The Lord hath redeemed … - Yahweh has rescued from captivity his people (see the notes at Isaiah 43:1).

Verse 21

And they thirsted not - This is a part of that for which they would be called to celebrate his name. It was not merely that he had redeemed them, but that he had abundantly provided for their needs in the desert, and guided them safe through the pathless wilderness to their own land (see the notes at Isaiah 35:6-7; Isaiah 41:17-18).

He caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them - The allusion here is undoubtedly to the fact that God caused the waters to flow out of the rock that Moses smote in the wilderness Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:11. This is not to be regarded as literally true that God would, in like manner, smite the rocks and cause waters to flow by miracle on their return from Babylon. There is no record that any such event took place, and it is not necessary so to understand this passage. It is a part of the triumphant song which they are represented as singing after their return to their own land. In that song, they celebrate his gracious interposition in language that was familiar to them, and by illustrations that were well known. They therefore speak of his mercy to them as if he had smitten the rock in the desert on their return, and caused the waters to flow; and the sense is, that his mercy to them then was similar to his goodness to their fathers when he led them to the land of promise. He met all their necessities; and his gracious interposition was experienced all the way as really as though he had smitten the rock, or caused cool and refreshing fountains to break out in the desert.

Verse 22

There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked - This verse contains a sentiment whose truth no one can doubt. To the transgressor of the laws of God there can be no permanent peace, enjoyment, or prosperity. The word peace is used in the Scriptures in all these senses (see the note at

Isaiah 48:18). There may be the appearance of joy, and there may be temporary prosperity. But there is no abiding, substantial, permanent happiness, such as is enjoyed by those who fear and love God. This sentiment occurs not unfrequently in Isaiah. It is repeated in Isaiah 57:21; and in Isaiah 57:20, he says that ‹the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.‘ Of the truth of the declaration here there can be no doubt; but it is not perfectly apparent why it is introduced here. It is probably a part of the song with which they would celebrate their return; and it may have been used for one of the following reasons:

1. As a general maxim, expressed in view of the joy which they had in their return to their own land. They had elevated peace and triumph and joy. This was produced by the fact that they had evidence that they were the objects of the divine favor and protection. How natural was it in view of these blessings to say, that the wicked had no such comfort, and in general, that there was no peace to them of any kind, or from any quarter. Or,

2. It may have been uttered in view of the fact that many of their countrymen may have chosen to remain in Babylon when they returned to their own land. They probably formed connections there, amassed wealth, and refused to attend those who returned to Judea to rebuild the temple. And the meaning may be, that they, amidst all the wealth which they might have gained, and amidst the idolatries which prevailed in Babylon, could never enjoy the peace which they now had in their return to the land of their fathers.

Whatever was the reason why it was used here, it contains a most important truth which demands the attention of all people. The wicked, as a matter of sober truth and verity, have no permanent and substantial peace and joy. They have none:

1. In the act of wickedness. Sin may be attended with the gratifications of bad passions, but in the act of sinning, as such, there can be no substantial happiness.

2. They have no solid, substantial, elevated peace in the business or the pleasures of life. This world can furnish no such joys as are derived from

the hope of a life to come. Pleasures ‹pall upon the sense,‘ riches take wings; disappointment comes; and the highest earthly and sensual pleasure leaves a sad sense of want - a feeling that there is something in the capacities and needs of the undying mind which has not been filled.

3. They have no peace of conscience; no deep and abiding conviction that they are right. They are often troubled; and there is nothing which this world can furnish which will give peace to a bosom that is agitated with a sense of the guilt of sin.

4. They have no peace on a deathbed. There may be stupidity, callousness, insensibility, freedom from much pain or alarm. But that is not peace, anymore than sterility is fruitfulness; or than death is life; or than the frost of winter is the verdure of spring; or than a desert is a fruitful field.

5. There is often in these circumstances the reverse of peace. There is not only no positive peace, but there is the opposite. There is often disappointment, care, anxiety, distress, deep alarm, and the awful apprehension of eternal wrath. There is no situation in life or death, where the sinner can certainly calculate on peace, or where he will be sure to find it. There is every probability that his mind will be often filled with alarm, and that his deathbed will be one of despair.

6. There is no peace to the wicked beyond the grave. “A sinner can have no peace at the judgment bar of God; he can have no peace in hell.” In all the future world there is no place where he can find repose; and whatever this life may be, even if it be a life of prosperity and external comfort, yet to him there will be no prosperity in the future world, and no external or internal peace there.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 49

Introduction

In the chapters which precede this, the deliverance from Babylon has been the main subject of the prophecy. There has been, indeed, decided reference in many places to the Messiah and his times: but the primary idea has been the restoration from Babylon. In this chapter, it has been commonly supposed that the Messiah is introduced directly and personally, and that there is a primary reference to him and his work. There has been, indeed, great difference of opinion among interpreters on this point; but the common sentiment has been, that the chapter has a direct reference to him. Some of the opinions which have been held may be briefly referred to as introductory to the exposition of the chapter - since the exposition of the whole charter will be affected by the view which is taken of its primary and main design. This statement will be abridged from Hengstenberg (Christology, vol. i.)

1. According to some, the people of Israel are here introduced as speaking. This is the opinion of Paulus, Doderlin, and Rosenmuller. The argument on which Rosenmuller relies is, that in Isaiah 49:3, the speaker is expressly called ‹Israel.‘ According to this idea, the whole people are represented as a prophet who is here introduced as speaking; who had labored in vain; and who, though Israel was not to be gathered, was in future times to be the instructor of the whole world Isaiah 49:4-6. Yet this interpretation is forced and unnatural. To say nothing of the impropriety of representing the collected Jewish people as a prophet - an idea not to be found elsewhere; according to this interpretation, the people are represented as laboring in vain, when as yet they had made no effort for the conversion of the pagan, and, in Isaiah 49:5, this same people, as a prophet, is represented as ‹not gathered,‘ and then, in Isaiah 49:6, turning to the Gentiles in order to be a light to them, and for salvation to the ends of the earth. It should be added, also, that even the ancient Jewish commentators who have applied Isaiah 53:1-12 to the Jewish people, have not ventured on such an interpretation hera The only argument on which Rosenmuller relies in favor of this interpretation - that drawn from the fact that the name ‹Israel‘ is given to the speaker - will be considered in the notes at Isaiah 49:3.

2. According to others, the prophet here refers to himself. This opinion was held by Jarchi, Aben Ezra, Kimchi, Grotius, and, among recent interpreters, by Koppe, Hensler and Staudlin. But this interpretation has little probability. It is incredible that the prophet should speak of himself as the light of the pagan world. The speaker represents himself as not satisfied Isaiah 49:6 that the Jewish people should be given to him, but as sent for the salvation of the ends of the earth. Before this same individual who thus speaks, and who is rejected and despised by the Jewish people, kings and princes are represented as prostrating themselves with the deepest reverence Isaiah 49:7. But it is certain that Isaiah never formed any such extravagant expectations for himself. Besides, there is the same objection to applying the name ‹Israel‘ Isaiah 49:3 to the prophet Isaiah which there is to the Messiah.

3. Gesenius supposes that this refers, not to the prophet Isaiah alone, but to the collective body of the prophets, as represented by him. But to this view also there are insuperable objections.

(1) Everything in the statement here proves that the subject is an individual, and not a mere personification. The personal pronouns are used throughout (see Isaiah 49:1-2, Isaiah 49:4, etc.), and the whole aspect of the account is that relating to an individual. It would be as proper to regard a statement made anywhere respecting an individual as referring to some collective body, as to interpret this in this manner.

(2) The prophets taken collectively cannot hear the name ‹Israel‘ Isaiah 49:3; and even Gesenius admits this, and in order to evade the force of it, denies the genuineness of the word ‹Israel‘ in the third verse.

(3) The prophets nowhere represent themselves as called to exert an influence on the pagan world, but their representation is, that the pagan would be converted by the Messiah.

4. The only other opinion which has been extensively held, is that which refers the chapter directly to the Messiah. This was the opinion of the Christian fathers generally, and is the opinion of Lowth, Vitringa, Calvin, Hengstenberg, and of most modern interpreters. The particular reasons for

this opinion will be more clearly seen in the notes at the chapter itself, particularly Isaiah 49:1-9. In favor of this interpretation it may be observed in general:

(1) That if the other interpretations which have been referred to are unfounded, it follows as a matter of course that it must have reference to the Messiah.

(2) The accurate agreement of the words and phrases in the prophecy with the character of the Redeemer, as developed in the New Testament, proves the same thing.

(3) It is referred to the times of the Messiah in Acts 13:47, and in 2 Corinthians 6:2.

The chapter may be contemplated under the following division of parts, or subjects, namely,:

I. The Messiah is introduced as himself speaking, and stating the object of his mission, and his rejection by the Jewish nation, and the fact that he would be for a light to the Gentiles Isaiah 49:1-6. This portion consists of the following subjects:

1. The exordium, in which he calls the distant nations to hear his voice Isaiah 49:1.

2. His call to the office of the Messiah, and his qualifications for the work Isaiah 49:1-3. He was called from the womb Isaiah 49:1; he was eminently endowed for the work, as a sharp sword, or a polished shaft is for battle Isaiah 49:2; he was the selected servant of God, by whom he designed to be glorified Isaiah 49:3.

3. The want of success in his work Isaiah 49:4. He had labored in vain, yet he could commit his cause to God with the certainty of entire future success, and with the assurance of the divine approbation.

4. His future success would be glorious Isaiah 49:5-6. He would yet gather in the tribes of Israel, and be for a light to the pagan world, and for salvation to the ends of the earth.

II. A direct promise from Yahweh to the Messiah of ultimate success in his work Isaiah 49:7-12.

1. Men would indeed despise and reject him.

2. Yet kings and princes would arise and honor him Isaiah 49:7.

3. Yahweh had heard him, and would yet give him for a covenant to the world; a mediator to recover the earth back to himself Isaiah 49:8.

4. He would lead forth the prisoners, and those who sat in darkness Isaiah 49:9: he would protect and provide for them so that the sun should not smite them, and so that their needs should be supplied Isaiah 49:10: he would remove all obstructions front their path, and would level mountains and exalt valleys Isaiah 49:11: and his followers would come from far, from a distant land Isaiah 49:12.

III. A song of praise in view of the glorious results of the work of the Messiah Isaiah 49:13.

IV. Zion is comforted with the assurance that God had not forgotten her Isaiah 49:14-21.

1. Zion had said that Yahweh had forgotten her, and left her to suffer alone without pity or compassion Isaiah 49:14.

2. God assures her that he could no more forget her than a mother could forget her child Isaiah 49:15.

3. He had engraven her name on the palms of his hands Isaiah 49:16.

4. All her enenmies and destroyers would flee away Isaiah 49:17.

5. She would be yet decorated and adorned as a bride, instead of being desolate Isaiah 49:18; and would be greatly increased and enlarged by accessions from the Gentile world, so that the place where she dwelt would be too strait for her Isaiah 49:19-21.

V. God would extend salvation, with all its blessings, to the Gentiles. Kings and queens would become the patrons of the church of God, and all the foes of himself and his cause be destroyed Isaiah 49:22-26.

Verse 1

Listen - This is the exordium, or introduction. According to the interpretation which refers it to the Messiah, it is to be regarded as the voice

of the Redeemer calling the distant parts of the earth to give a respectful attention to the statement of his qualifications for his work, and to the assurances that his salvation would be extended to them (compare Isaiah 41:1). The Redeemer here is to be regarded as having already come in the flesh, and as having been rejected and despised by the Jews (see Isaiah 49:4-5), and as now turning to the Gentile world, and proffering salvation to them. The time when this is supposed to occur, therefore, as seen by the prophet, is when the Messiah had preached in vain to his own countrymen, and when there was a manifest fitness and propriety in his extending the offer of salvation to the pagan world.

O isles - Ye distant lands (see the note at Isaiah 41:1). The word is used here, as it is there, in the sense of countries beyond sea; distant, unknown regions; the dark, pagan world.

Ye people from far - The reason why the Messiah thus addresses them is stated in Isaiah 49:6. It is because he was appointed to be a light to them, and because, having been rejected by the Jewish nation, it was resolved to extend the offers and the blessings of salvation to other lands.

The Lord hath called me from the womb - Yahweh hath set me apart to this office from my very birth. The stress here is laid on the fact that he was thus called, and not on the particular time when it was done. The idea is, that he had not presumptuously assumed this office; he had not entered on it without being appointed to it; he had been designated to it even before he was born (see Isaiah 49:5). A similar expression is used in respect to Jeremiah Jeremiah 1:5: ‹Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.‘ Paul also uses a similar expression respecting himself Galatians 1:15: ‹But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother‘s womb.‘ That this actually occurred in regard to the Redeemer, it is not needful to pause here to show (see Luke 1:31).

From the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name - This is another form of stating the fact that he had been designated to this office from his very infancy. Many have supposed that the reference here is to the fact that Mary was commanded by the angel, before his birth, to call his name Jesus Luke 1:31. The same command was also repeated to Joseph in a dream Matthew 1:21. So Jerome, Vitringa, Michaelis, and some others understand it. By others it has been supposed that the phrase ‹he hath made mention of my name is the same as to call. The Hebrew is literally, ‹He has

caused my name to be remembered from the bowels of my mother.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹He hath called my name.‘ Grotius renders it, ‹He has given to me a beautiful name, by which salvation is signified as about to come from the Lord.‘ I see no objection to the supposition that this refers to the fact that his name was actually designated before he was born. The phrase seems obviously to imply more than merely to call to an office; and as his name was thus actually designated by God, and as he designed that there should be special significancy and applicability in the name, there can be no impropriety in supposing that this refers to that fact. If so, the idea is, that he was not only appointed to the work of the Messiah from his birth, but that he actually had a name given him by God before he was born, which expressed the fact that he would save people, and which constituted a reason why the distant pagan lands should hearken to his voice.

Verse 2

And he hath made my mouth - The idea here is, that he had qualified him for a convincing and powerful eloquence - for the utterance of words which would penetrate the heart like a sharp sword. The mouth here, by an obvious figure, stands for discourse. The comparison of words that are pungent, penetrating, powerful, to a sword, is common. Indeed the very terms that I have incidentally used, ‹pungent,‘ ‹penetrating,‘ are instances of the same kind of figure, and are drawn from a needle, or anything sharp and pointed, that penetrates. Instances of this occur in the following places in the Scriptures: ‹The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies‘ Ecclesiastes 12:11. ‹The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow‘ Hebrews 4:12. In Revelation 1:16, probably in reference to this passage, the Redeemer is represented as seen by John as having a ‹sharp two-edged sword‘ proceeding out of his mouth. So in Isaiah 19:15: ‹And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword.‘ The bold and striking metaphor of the sword and arrow applied to powerful discourse, has been used also by pagan writers with great elegance and force. In the passages quoted by Lowth, it is said of Pericles by Aristophanes:

‹His powerful speech
Pierced the hearer‘s soul, and left behind
Deep in his bosom its keen point infixt.‘

So Pindar, Olym. ii. 160:

‹Come on! thy brighest shafts prepare,
And bend, O Muse, thy sounding bow:
Say, through what paths of liquid air
Our arrows shall we throw?‘
West

A similar expression occurs in a fragment of Eupolis, in Diod. Sic. xii. 40, when speaking of Pericles:

- καὶ μόνος τῶν ῥητόρων
τὸ κέντρον ἐγκατέλειπε τοῖς ἀκροωμένοις.
- *kai monos tōn rētorōn*
to kentron egkateleipe tois akroōmenois similar metaphor occurs frequently in Arabic poetry. ‹As arrows his words enter into the heart?

In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me - This passage has been very variously interpreted. Many have understood it as meaning that the shadow of the hand of God would cover or defend him - as a shade or shadow protects from heat. The word ‹shadow‘ is used for protection in Isaiah 25:4; Psalm 17:8; Psalm 36:8. This is the interpretation which Gesenius adopts. Piscator says that it means that God protected him from the snares of the Scribes and Pharisees. Others suppose that it means that he was hidden or protected, as the sword is in the sheath, which is under the left hand, so that it can be easily drawn by the right hand. But Vitringa remarks that the figure here is that of a drawn sword, and he supposes that the meaning is, that the shadow of the hand of God is what covers and defends it, and serves, as it were, for a scabbard. Hengstenberg coincides with this opinion, and supposes that the image is taken from a dirk which a man carries in his hand, and which he suddenly draws forth in the moment of attack. In the parallel member of the sentence, the Redeemer is represented as an arrow that is laid up in a quiver, ready to be drawn forth at any moment. Here, the image is that of a sword under the divine protection, and the idea is, that the shadow of the hand of God constitutes the protection, the covering of the sword. He is the defender of the Messiah, and of his words; and his hand shall guard him as the scabbard does the sword, or as the quiver does the arrow. The Messiah, like the sword, and the polished arrow, was suited for the execution of the plans of God, and was ready at any moment to be engaged in his cause. His words, his doctrines, would be like the sharp sword and polished arrow. They would penetrate

the heart of his foes, and by his doctrines, and the truths which he would teach, he would carry his conquests around the world.

And made me a polished shaft - The word rendered ‹polished‘ (ברור *bârûr*), may mean either chosen, or polished. It properly means that which is separated, or severed from others; then select, chosen. Then it may mean anything which is cleansed, or purified, and here may denote an arrow that is cleansed from rust; that is, polished, or made bright. The word ‹shaft‘ (חץ *chēts*), means properly an arrow; and the sense here is, that the Messiah pierced the hearts of people like a pointed and polished arrow that is sped from the bow. “In his quiver.” The word ‹quiver‘ means the covering that was made for arrows, and which was so slung over the shoulder that they could be readily reached by the hand as they should be needed.

Hath he hid me - ‹Before his appearing,‘ says Hengstenberg, ‹the Messiah was concealed with God like a sword kept in its sheath, or like an arrow lying in the quiver.‘ But perhaps this is too much refined and forced. The meaning is, probably, simply that he had protected him. ‹God, by his own power,‘ says Calvin, ‹protected Christ and his doctrine, so that nothing could hinder its course.‘ Yet there is, undoubtedly, the idea that he was adapted to produce rapid and mighty execution; that he was fitted, like an arrow, to overcome the foes of God; and that he was kept in the ‹quiver‘ for that purpose.

Verse 3

And said unto me - That is, as I suppose, to the Messiah. God said to him that he was his servant; he by whom he would be particularly glorified and honored.

Thou art my servant, O Israel - There has been great variety, as was intimated in the analysis of the chapter, in the interpretation of this verse. The question of difficulty is, to whom does the word ‹Israel‘ refer? And if it refer to the Messiah, why is this name given to him? There is no variety in the ancient versions, or in the MSS. The opinions which have been maintained have been referred to in the analysis, and are briefly these:

1. The most obvious interpretation of the verse, if it stood alone, would be to refer it to the Jews as ‹the servant of Jehovah,‘ in accordance with Isaiah 41:8, by whom he would be glorified in accordance with the declaration in Isaiah 44:23. This is the opinion of Rosenmuller and of some others. But the objection to this is, that the things which are affirmed of this ‹servant,‘ by no means apply to the Jews. It is evidently an individual that is

addressed; and in no conceivable sense can that be true of the Jews at large which is affirmed of this person in Isaiah 49:4 ff.

2. It has been referred to Isaiah. This was the opinion of Grotius, Dathe, Saadias, Doderlin, and others. Grotius supposes it means, ‹thou art my servant for the good of Israel.‘ So Dathe renders it: ‹It is for Israel‘s benefit that I will glorify myself in thee.‘ Saadias renders it, ‹Thou art my ambassador to Israel.‘ Aben Ezra says of the passage, ‹Thou art my servant, descended from Israel, in whom I will be glorified. Or, the sense is this: Thou who in my eyes art reputed as equal to all Israel.‘ But, as has been remarked in the analysis, this interpretation is attended with all the difficulty of the interpretation which refers it to the Messiah, and is inconsistent with the known character of Isaiah, and with the declarations made of the person referred to in the following verses. There is certainly no more reason why the name ‹Israel‘ should be given to Isaiah, than there is why it should be given to the Messiah; and it is certain that Isaiah never arrogated to himself such high honor as that of being a light to the Gentiles, and a covenant of the people, and as being one before whom kings would rise up, and to whom princes would do homage.

3. Gesenius supposes that the word ‹Israel‘ is not genuine, but has come by error into the text. But for this there is no authority except one manuscript, to which he himself attaches no weight.

4. The only other interpretation, therefore, is that which refers it to the Messiah. This, which has been the common exposition of commentators, most manifestly agrees with the verses which follow, and with the account which occurs in the New Testament.

The account in Isaiah 49:4-8, is such as can be applied to no other one than he, and is as accurate and beautiful a description of him as if it had been made by one who had witnessed his labors, and heard from him the statement of his own plans. But still, a material question arises, why is this name ‹Israel‘ applied to the Messiah? It is applied to him nowhere else, and it is certainly remarkable that a name should be applied to an individual which is usually applied to an entire people. To this question the following answers, which are, indeed, little more than conjectures, may be returned:

1. Lowth and Vitringa suppose that it is because the name, in its full import and signification, can be given only to him; and that there is a reference here to the fact recorded in Genesis 32:28, where Jacob is said to have wrestled with God, and prevailed, and was, in consequence of that, called Israel. The full import of that name, says Lowth, pertains only to the Messiah, ‹who contended powerfully with God in behalf of mankind.‘

2. It is common in the Scriptures to use the names which occurred in the history of the Jews as descriptive of things which were to occur under the times of the Messiah, or as representing in general events that might occur at any time. Thus the names, Moab, Edom, Ashur, were used to denote the foes of God in general; the name of Elijah was given to John the Baptist (Hengstenberg).

3. In accordance with this, the name David is not unfrequently given to the Messiah, and he is spoken of under this name, as he was to be his descendant and successor.

4. For the same reason, the name Israel may be given to him - nor as the name of the Jewish people - but the name of the illustrious ancestor of the Jewish race, because he would possess his spirit, and would, like him, wrestle with God. He was to be a prince having power with God (compare Genesis 32:28), and would prevail. In many respects there would be a resemblance between him and this pious and illustrious ancestor of the Jewish people.

In whom I will be glorified - This means that the result of the Redeemer‘s work would be such as eminently to honor God. He would be glorified by the gift of such a Saviour; by his instructions, his example, the effect of his ministry while on earth, and by his death. The effect of the work of the Messiah as adapted to glorify God, is often referred to in the New Testament (see John 12:28; John 13:31-32; John 14:13; John 16:14; John 17:1-5).

Verse 4

Then I said - I the Messiah. In the previous verses he speaks of his appointment to the office of Messiah, and of his dignity. The design here is to prepare the way for the announcement of the fact that he would make

known his gospel to the pagan, and would be for a light to the Gentiles. For this purpose he speaks of his labors among his own countrymen; he laments the little success which attended his work at the commencement, but consoles himself with the reflection that his cause was with God, and that his labors would not go unrewarded.

I have labored in vain - This is to be regarded as the language of the Messiah when his ministry would be attended with comparatively little success; and when in view of that fact, he would commit himself to God, and resolve to extend his gospel to other nations. The expression used here is not to be taken absolutely, as if he had no success in his work, but it means that he had comparatively no success; he was not received and welcomed by the united people; he was rejected and despised by them as a whole. It is true that the Saviour had success in his work, and far more success than is commonly supposed (see the notes at 1 Corinthians 15:6). But it is also true that by the nation at large he was despised and and rejected. The idea here is, that there were not results in his ministry, at all commensurate with the severity of his labors, and the strength of his claims.

I have spent my strength for nought - Comparatively for nought. This does not mean that he would not be ultimately as successful as he desired to be (compare the notes at Isaiah 53:11); but it means, that in his personal ministry he had exhausted his strength, and seen comparatively little fruit of his toils.

Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord - My cause is committed to him, and he will regard it. This expresses the confidence of the speaker, that God approved of his work, and that he would ultimately give such effect to his labors as he had desired. The sense is, ‹I know that Jehovah approves my work, and that he will grant me the reward of my toils, and my sufferings.‘

And my work with my God - Margin, ‹Reward‘ (see the notes at Isaiah 40:10). The idea is, that he knew that God would own and accept his work though it was rejected by mankind. It indicates perfect confidence in God, and a calm and un wavering assurance of his favor, though his work was comparatively unsuccessful - a spirit which, it is needless to say, was evinced throughout the whole life of the Redeemer. Never did he doubt that God approved his work; never did he become disheartened and desponding, as if God would not ultimately give success to his plans and to the labors of his life. He calmly committed himself to God. He did not attempt to avenge

himself for being rejected, or for any of the injuries done him. But he left his name, his character, his reputation, his plans, his labors, all with God, believing that his cause was the cause of God, and that he would yet be abundantly rewarded for all his toils. This verse teaches:

1. That the most faithful labors, the most self-denying toil, and the efforts of the most holy life, may be for a time unsuccessful. If the Redeemer of the world had occasion to say that he had labored in vain, assuredly his ministers should not be surprised that they have occasion to use the same language. It maybe no fault of the ministry that they are unsuccessful. The world may be so sinful, and opposition may be got up so mighty, as to frustrate their plans, and prevent their success.

2. Yet, though at present unsuccessful, faithful labor will ultimately do good, and be blessed. In some way, and at some period, all honest effort in the cause of God may be expected to be crowned with success.

3. They who labor faithfully may commit their cause to God, with the assurance that they and their work will be accepted. The ground of their acceptance is not the success of their labors. They will be acceptable in proportion to the amount of their fidelity and self-denying zeal (see the notes at 2 Corinthians 2:15-16).

4. The ministers of religion, when their message is rejected, and the world turns away from their ministry, should imitate the example of the Redeemer, and say, ‹my judgment is with Jehovah. My cause is his cause; and the result of my labors I commit to him.‘ To do this as he did, they should labor as he did; they should honestly devote all their strength and talent and time to his service; and then they can confidently commit all to him, and then and then only they will find peace, as he did, in the assurance that their work will be ultimately blessed, and that they will find acceptance with him.

Verse 5

And now, saith the Lord that formed me - This verse contains the reason why he cherished the hope that his work would not be unaccepted. The reason is, that Yahweh had said to him that he should be glorious in his eyes, and that he would be his strength. He stood so high in his favor, and

he had such assurances of that favor, that he could confidently commit himself to his care.

That formed thee from the womb - Who appointed me before I was born to the office of a servant to accomplish important purposes (see the notes at Isaiah 49:1).

To bring Jacob again to him - To recover the Jewish people again to the pure worship of Yahweh. To them the Messiah was first to be sent, and when they rejected him, he was to proffer the same salvation to the Gentiles (see Isaiah 49:6; compare Matthew 21:33-43). Accordingly the Saviour spent his life in preaching to the Jews, and in endeavoring to bring them back to God, and for this purpose he regarded himself as sent (Matthew 15:24; see Acts 3:26).

Though Israel be not gathered - This metaphor is taken from a scattered flock which a shepherd endeavors to gather, or collect to himself. There is great variety in the interpretation of this expression. The margin reads it, ‹That Israel may be gathered to him, and I may‘ be glorious. So Lowth, ‹That Israel unto him may be gathered.‘ So Noyes, ‹To gather Israel to him.‘ Jerome renders it, ‹Israel shall not be gathered.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹To gather Jacob unto him, and Israel.‘ The Syriac, ‹That I may gather Jacob unto him, and assemble Israel.‘ This variety has arisen front the different readings in the Hebrew text. The reading in the text is לא *lo′* (“not”); but instead of this the marginal reading, or the Qere‘ of the Masoretes is, לו *lô* “to him.” ‹Five manuscripts (two ancient),‘ says Lowth, ‹confirm the Qere‘, or marginal construction of the Masoretes; and so read Aquila, and the Chaldee, Septuagint, and Arabic.‘ Gesenius and Rosenmuller adopt this, and suppose that לא *lo′* is only a different form of writing לו *lô* Grotius and Hengstenberg render it as it is in our version. It is impossible to determine the true reading; and the only guide is the context, and the views which shall be entertained of the design of the passage. To me it seems that the parallelism demands that we should adopt the reading of the Keri, the Septuagint, the Chaldee, and the Syriac, and which has been adopted by Lowth. According to this, it means that he had been appointed to gather in the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and gave his life to it. Other parts of this statement Isaiah 49:4-6 show, that by them he was rejected, and that then salvation was sent to other parts of the world. Luther renders it, ‹That Israel be not carried away.‘

Yet shall I be - Or, "and" (ו *ve) I shall be glorious. The sense is, that as the result of this appointment he would be in some way glorious in the sight of Yahweh. Though he would be rejected by the nation, yet he would be honored by God. He would not only approve his character and work, but would secure his being honored among people by making him the light of the Gentiles (compare Isaiah 43:4).*

And my God shall be my strength - *He might be rejected by the people, but in God he would find an unfailing source of support and consolation. It is not needful to say, that this applies most accurately to the cbaracter of the Redeemer as exhibited in the New Testament.*

Verse 6

And he said - *That is, Yahweh said in his promise to the Messiah.*

It is a light thing - *Margin, ‹Art thou lighter than that thou,' etc. Lowth renders it, ‹It is a small thing.' Hengstenberg, ‹It is too little that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob.' The sense is, that God designed to glorify him in an eminent degree, and that it would not be as much honor as be designed to confer on him, to appoint him merely to produce a reformation among the Jews, and to recover them to the spiritual worship of God. He designed him for a far more important work - for the recovery of the Gentile world, and for the spread of the true religion among all nations. The Septuagint renders this, It is a great thing for thee to be called my servant.' The Chaldee proposes it as a question, ‹Is it a small thing for you that you are called my servant?'*

My servant - *(See Isaiah 49:3).*

To raise up the tribes of Jacob - *Hebrew, (להקים lehâqiym) - ‹To establish,' or confirm the tribes of Jacob; that is, to establish them in the worship of God, and in prosperity. This is to be understood in a spiritual sense, since it is to be synonymous with the blessings which he would bestow on the pagan. His work in regard to both, was to be substantially the same. In regard to the Jews, it was to confirm them in the worship of the true God; and in regard to the pagan, it was to bring them to the knowledge of the same God.*

And to restore - *To bring back (להשיב lehâshiyb) that is, to recover them from their sin and hypocrisy, and bring them back to the worship of the true and only God. The Chaldee, however, renders this, ‹To bring back the captivity of Israel.' But it means, doubtless, to recover the alienated Jewish people to the pure and spiritual worship of God.*

The preserved of Israel - *Lowth renders this, ‹To restore the branches of Israel;‘ as if it were* נצרי *netsârēy in the text, instead of* נצורי *netsûrēy The word* נצר *nêtser means "branch" (see the notes at Isaiah 11:1; Isaiah 14:9), and Lowth supposes that it means the branches of Israel; that is, the descendants of Israel or Jacob, by a similitude drawn from the branches of a tree which are all derived from the same stem, or root. The Syriac here renders it, ‹The branch of Israel.‘ But the word properly means those who are kept, or preserved (from* נצר *nâtsar "to keep, preserve"), and may be applied either literally to those who were kept alive, or who survived any battle, captivity, or calamity - as a remnant; or spiritually, to those who are preserved for purposes of mercy and grace out of the common mass that is corrupt and unbelieving. It refers here, I suppose, to the latter, and means those whom it was the purpose of God to preserve out of the common mass of the Jews that were sunk in hypocrisy and sin. These, it was the design of God to restore to himself, and to do this, was the primary object in the appointment of the Messiah.*

I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles - *I will appoint thee to the higher office of extending the knowledge of the true religion to the darkened pagan world. The same expression and the same promise occur in Isaiah 42:6 (see the notes at that verse).*

That thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth - *(See the note at Isaiah 42:10). The true religion shall be extended to the pagan nations, and all parts of the world shall see the salvation of God. This great work was to be entrusted to the Redeemer, and it was regarded as a high honor that he should thus be made the means of diffusing light and truth among all nations. We may learn hence, first, that God will raise up the tribes of Jacob; that is, that large numbers of the Jews shall yet be ‹preserved,‘ or recovered to himself; secondly, that the gospel shall certainly be extended to the ends of the earth; thirdly, that it is an honor to be made instrumental in extending the true religion. So great is this honor, that it is mentioned as the highest which could be conferred even on the Redeemer in this world. And if he deemed it an honor, shall we not also regard it as a privilege to engage in the work of Christian missions, and to endeavor to save the world from ruin? There is no higher glory for man than to tread in the footsteps of the Son of God; and he who, by self-denial and charity, and personal toil and prayer, does most for the conversion of*

this whole world to God, is most like the Redeemer, and will have the most elevated seat in the glories of the heavenly world.

Verse 7

Thus saith the Lord - *This verse contains a promise of the future honor that should await the Redeemer, and of the success which should crown his work. The sense is, that Yahweh had promised to him who was despised and rejected, that kings and princes should yet rise up and honor him.*

The Redeemer of Israel - *(See the note at Isaiah 43:1).*

To him whom man despiseth - *On the construction of the Hebrew here, see Gesenius, Vitringa, and Hengstenberg. The phrase לבזה־נפשׁ libezoh - nephesh (to the despised of soul), means evidently one who is despised, rejected, contemned by people. The word ‹soul' here (נפשׁ nephesh) means the same as man; that is, every man. It was a characteristic of him that he was despised and rejected by all; and the prophet, in this verse, has given a summary of all that be has said respecting him in Isaiah 53:1-12.*

To him whom the nation abhorreth - *The word ‹nation' here refers doubtless to the Jewish people, as in Isaiah 1:4; Isaiah 10:6. The word rendered ‹abhorreth' means "for an abomination" (למתעב limetâʿēb), Piel participle, from תעב tâʿab), and the idea is, that he was regarded as an abomination by the people. The same idea is more fully expressed in Isaiah 53:3-4, that the Messiah would be rejected and treated with abhorrence by the nation as such - a statement which the slightest acquaintance with the New Testament will lead anyone to see has been literally fulfilled. No being ever excited more abhorrence; no man was ever regarded with so much abomination by any people as Jesus of Nazareth was, and still is, by the Jewish people. He was condemned by the Sanhedrim; publicly rejected by the nation; and at the instigation and by the desire of the assembled people at Jerusalem, he was executed as a malefactor in the most shameful and ignominious manner then known (see Luke 23:18-23). To this day, his name excites the utmost contempt among Jews, and they turn from him and his claims with the deepest abhorrence. The common name by which he is designated in the Jewish writings is Tolvi - ‹the crucified;' and nothing excites more deep abhorrence and contempt than the doctrine that they, and all others, can be saved only by the merits of ‹the crucified.' The Chaldee renders all this in the plural, ‹To those who are contemned among the people, to those who have migrated to ether kingdoms, to those who serve other lords.'*

To a servant of rulers - *This probably means that the Messiah voluntarily submitted himself to human power, and yielded obedience to human rulers. The idea, if interpreted by the facts as recorded in the New Testament, is, that though he was the ruler of all worlds, yet he voluntarily became subject to human laws, and yielded submission and obedience to human rulers. For this purpose he conformed to the existing institutions of his country at the time when he lived; he paid the customary tax or tribute that was laid for the support of religion Matthew 17:27; he submitted to a trial before the Sanhedrim, and before Pilate, though both were conducted in a manner that violated all the principles of justice; and he submitted to the unjust decree which condemned him to die. He was, therefore, all his life, subject to rulers. He was not only exemplary and strict in obeying the laws of the land; but he became, in a more strict sense, their servant, as he was deprived of his liberty, comfort, and life at their caprice. He refrained himself from exerting his divine power, and voluntarily became subject to the will of others.*

Kings shall see and arise - *That is, kings shall see this, and shall rise up with demonstrations of respect and reverence. They shall see the fulfillment of the divine promises by which he is destined to be the light of the nations, and they shall render him honor as their teacher and Redeemer. To rise up, or to prostrate themselves, are both marks of respect and veneration.*

Princes also shall worship - *The word used here, (יִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ yîshettachăvû), from שׁחה shâchâh) means "to bow down, to incline oneself"; it then means "to prostrate oneself" before anyone, in order to do him honor or reverence. This was the customary mode of showing respect or reverence in the East. It consisted generally in falling upon the knees, and then touching the forehead to the ground, and is often alluded to in the Bible (see Genesis 42:6; Genesis 18:2; Genesis 19:1; Nehemiah 8:6). This honor was paid not only to kings and princes as superior 2 Samuel 9:8, but also to equals Genesis 23:7; Genesis 37:7, Genesis 37:9-10. It was the customary form of religious homage, as it is still in the East, and denoted sometimes religious worship Genesis 22:5; 1 Samuel 1:3; but not necessarily, or always (see the note at Matthew 2:11; compare Matthew 8:2; Matthew 14:33; Matthew 15:25; Matthew 18:26; Mark 5:6). Here it does not mean that they would render to him religious homage, but that they would show him honor, or respect.*

Because of the Lord that is faithful - *It is because Yahweh is faithful in the fulfillment of his promises, and will certainly bring this to pass. The fact that he shall be thus honored shall be traced entirely to the faithfulness era covenant-keeping God.*

And he shall choose thee - *Select thee to accomplish this, and to be thus a light to the pagan world. It is needless to say that this has been fulfilled. Kings and princes have bowed before the Redeemer; and the time will yet come when in far greater numbers they shall adore him. It is as needless to say, that these expressions can be applied to no other one than the Messiah. It was not true of Isaiah that he was the light of the pagan, or for salvation to the ends of the earth; nor was it true of him that kings arose and honored him, or that princes prostrated themselves before him, and did him reverence. Of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus alone, was all this true; and the assurance is thus given, that though he was rejected by his own nation, yet the time will come when the kings and princes of all the world shall do him homage.*

Verse 8

Thus saith the Lord - *Still an address to the Messiah, and designed to give the assurance that he should extend the true religion, and repair the evils of sin on the earth. The Messiah is represented as having asked for the divine favor to attend his efforts, and this is the answer, and the assurance that his petition had not been offered in vain.*

In an acceptable time - *Hebrew, ‹In a time of delight or will,' that is, a time when Yahweh was willing, or pleased to hear him. The word* רצין *râtsôn means properly delight, satisfaction, acceptance Proverbs 14:35; Isaiah 56:7; will, or pleasure Esther 8:1; Psalm 40:9; Daniel 8:4-11; then also goodwill, favor, grace Proverbs 16:15; Proverbs 19:12. The Septuagint renders this,* Καιρῷ δεκτῷ *Kairō dektō - ‹In an acceptable time.' So Jerome, Gesenius, and Hengstenberg render it, ‹In a time of grace or mercy.' The main idea is plain, that Yahweh was well pleased to hear him when he called upon him, and would answer his prayers. In a time of favor; in a time that shall be adjudged to be the best fitted to the purposes of salvation, Yahweh will be pleased to exalt the Messiah to glory, and to make him the means of salvation to all mankind.*

Have I heard thee - *Have I heard thy petitions, and the desires of thy heart. The giving of the world to the Messiah is represented as in answer to his prayer in Psalm 2:8:*

Ask of me, and I shall give time the pagan for thine inheritance,

And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

And in a day of salvation - *In a time when I am disposed to grant salvation; when the period for imparting salvation shall have arrived.*

Have I helped thee - *Have I imparted the assistance which is needful to accomplish the great purpose of salvation to the world. This passage is quoted by Paul in 2 Corinthians 6:2, and is by him applied to the times of the Messiah. It means that the time would come, fixed by the purpose of God, which would be a period in which he would be disposed, that is, well pleased, to extend salvation to the world through the Messiah: and that in that time he would afford all the requisite aid and help by his grace, for the extension of the true religion among the nations.*

I will preserve thee - *That is, the cause of the Redeemer would be dear to the heart of God, and he would preserve that cause from being destroyed on the earth.*

And give thee for a covenant of the people - *The ‹people‘ (עם 'âm) refers doubtless primarily to the Jews - the better portion of the Israelite people - the true Israel Romans 2:28-29. To them he was first sent, and his own personal work was with them (see the notes at Isaiah 49:6). On the meaning of the phrase ‹for a covenant,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 42:6.*

To establish the earth - *Margin, as Hebrew, ‹To raise up.‘ The language is derived from restoring the ruins of a land that has been overrun by an enemy, when the cities have been demolished, and the country laid waste. It is to be taken here in a spiritual sense, as meaning that the work of the Messiah would be like that which would be accomplished if a land lying waste should be restored to its former prosperity. In regard to the spiritual interests of the people, he would accomplish what would be accomplished if there should be such a restoration; that is, he would recover the true Israel from the ravages of sin, and would establish the church on a firm foundation.*

To cause to inherit the desolate heritages - *The image here is taken from the condition of the land of Israel during the Babylonian captivity. It was in ruins. The cities were all desolate. Such, spiritually, would be the condition of the nation when the Messiah should come; and his work would be like restoring the exiles to their own land, and causing them to re-enter on their former possessions. The one would be an appropriate emblem of*

the other; and the work of the Messiah would be like rebuilding dilapidated towns; restoring fertility to desolate fields; replanting vineyards and olive gardens; and diffusing smiling peace and plenty over a land that had been subjected to the ravages of fire and sword, and that had long been a scene of mournful desolation.

Verse 9

That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth - *This language occurs also in Isaiah 42:7. For an explanation of it, see the notes on that place.*

To them that are in darkness - *Synonymous with being prisoners, as prisoners are usually confined in dark cells.*

Show yourselves - *Hebrew, ‹Reveal,‘ or manifest yourselves; that is, as those who come out of a dark cell come into light, so do you, who have been confined in the darkness of sin, come forth into the light of the Sun of righteousness, and be manifest as the redeemed.*

They shall feed in the ways - *In the remainder of this verse, and in the following verses, the Messiah is represented under the image of a shepherd, who leads forth his flock to green fields, and who takes care that they shall be guarded from the heat of the sun, and shall not hunger nor thirst. The phrase ‹they shall feed in the ways,‘ means, probably, that in the way in which they were going they should find abundant food. They should not be compelled to turn aside for pasturage, or to go and seek for it in distant places. It is equivalent to the language which so often occurs, that God would provide for the needs of his people, even when passing through a desert, and that he would open before them unexpected sources of supply.*

And their pastures shall be in all high places - *This means, that on the hills and mountains, that are naturally barren and unproductive, they should find an abundance of food. To see the force of this, we are to remember that in many parts of the East the hills and mountains are utterly destitute of vegetation. This is the case with the mountainous regions of Horeb and Sinai, and even with the mountains about Jerusalem, and with the hills and mountains in Arabia Deserta. The idea here is, that in the ways, or paths that were commonly traveled, and where all verdure would be consumed or trodden down by the caravans, and on the hills that were usually barren and desolate, they would find abundance. God would supply them as if he should make the green grass spring up in the hard-trodden way, and on the barren and rocky hills vegetation should start up suddenly in abundance, and all their needs should be supplied.*

This is an image which we have frequently had in Isaiah, and perhaps the meaning may be, that to his people the Redeemer would open unexpected sources of comfort and joy; that in places and times in which they would scarcely look for a supply of their spiritual needs, he would suddenly meet and satisfy them as if green grass for flocks and herds should suddenly start up in the down-trodden way, or luxuriant vegetation burst forth on the sides and the tops of barren, rocky, and desolate hills. Harmer, however, supposes that this whole description refers rather to the custom which prevailed in the East, of making feasts or entertainments by the sides of fountains or rivers. ‹To fountains or rivers,' Dr. Chandler tells us in his Travels, ‹the Turks and the Greeks frequently repair for refreshment; especially the latter, in their festivals, when whole families are seen sitting on the grass, and enjoying their early or evening repast, beneath the trees, by the side of a rill' - (Travels in Asia Minor, p. 21.) Compare 1 Kings 1:9. Thus Harmer supposes that the purpose of the prophet is, to contrast the state of the Jews when they were shut up in prison in Babylon, secluded from fresh air, and even the light itself, or in unwholesome dungeons, with their state when walking at liberty, enjoying the verdure, and the enlivening air of the country; passing from the tears, the groans, and the apprehensions of such a dismal confinement, to the music, the songs, and the exquisite repasts of Eastern parties of pleasure (see Harmer's Obs., vol. ii. pp. 18-25; Ed. Lond. 1808). The interpretation, however, above suggested, seems to me most natural and beautiful.

Verse 10

They shall not hunger nor thirst - *All their needs shall be abundantly provided for, as a shepherd will provide for his flock. In the book of Revelation, this entire passage is applied Isaiah 7:16-17 to the happiness of the redeemed in heaven, and the use which is made of it there is not foreign to the sense in Isaiah. It means that the Messiah as a shepherd shall abundantly satisfy all the needs of his people; and it may with as much propriety be applied to the joys of heaven, as to the happiness which they will experience on earth. Their longing desires for holiness and salvation; their hungering and thirsting after righteousness Matthew 5:6, shall be abundantly satisfied.*

Neither shall the heat nor sun smite them - *In Revelation 7:16, this is, ‹Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat;' that is, the burning heat*

of the sun shall not oppress them - an image of refreshment, protection, and joy, as when the traveler in burning sands finds the grateful shade of a rock or of a grove (see the notes at Isaiah 4:6; Isaiah 14:3; Isaiah 25:4; Isaiah 32:2). The word rendered here ‹heat' (שׁרב shârâb), denotes properly heat, burning; and then the heated vapor which in burning deserts produces the phenomenon of the mirage (see it explained in the notes at Isaiah 35:7). It is equivalent here to intense heat; and means that they shall not be exposed to any suffering like that of the intense heat of the burning sun reflected from sandy wastes.

For he that hath mercy on them - *That God and Saviour who shall have redeemed them shall be their shepherd and their guide, and they shall have nothing to fear.*

Even by the springs of water - *In Revelation 7:17, ‹Shall lead them unto living fountains of waters' (see the notes at Isaiah 35:6). The whole figure in this verse is taken from the character of a faithful shepherd who conducts his flock to places where they may feed in plenty; who guards them from the intense heat of a burning sun on sandy plains; and who leads them beside cooling and refreshing streams. It is a most beautiful image of the tender care of the Great Shepherd of his people in a world like this - a world in its main features, in regard to real comforts, not unaptly compared to barren hills, and pathless burning sands.*

Verse 11

And I will make all my mountains a way - *I will make all the mountains for a highway; or an even, level way. That is, he would remove all obstructions from their path. The image is taken from the return from Babylon to the land of Palestine, in which God so often promises to make the hills a plain, and the crooked places straight (see the notes at Isaiah 40:4).*

And my highways shall be exalted - *That is, the way shall be cast up (see Isaiah 57:14; Isaiah 62:10), as when a road is made over valleys and gulf (see the notes at Isaiah 40:4).*

Verse 12

Behold, these shall come from far - *That is, one part shall come from a distant land, and another from the north and west. This is a statement of the fulfillment of the promise made to him Isaiah 49:6-7, that he should be for a light to the Gentiles, and that kings and princes should rise up and honor him. The words ‹from far,' denote a distant land, without specifying the*

particular direction from which they would come. The most distant nations should embrace his religion, and submit to him. Lowth and Seeker understand it of Babylon; Grotius of the East, that is, Persia, and the other countries east of Judea. But it more properly denotes any distant country; and the sense is, that converts should be made from the most distant lands.

And lo, these - *Another portion.*

From the north - *The regions north of Palestine.*

And from the west - *Hebrew, ‹From the sea;' that is, the Mediterranean. This word is commonly used to denote the west. The western countries known to the Hebrews were some of the islands of that sea, and a few of the maritime regions. The idea here in general is, that those regions would furnish many who would embrace the true religion. If it be understood as referring to the Messiah, and the accession to his kingdom among the Gentiles, it is needless to say that the prediction has been already strikingly fulfilled. Christianity soon spread to the west of Palestine, and the countries in Europe have been thus far the principal seat of its influence and power. It has since spread still further to the west; and, from a western world unknown to Isaiah, million have come and acknowledged the Messiah as their Redeemer.*

And these - *Another portion, carrying out the idea that they were to come from every part of the world.*

From the land of Sinim - *There have been many different opinions in regard to the ‹land of Sinim.' The name ‹Sinim' (סינים siyniym) occurs nowhere else in the Bible, and of course it is not easy to determine what country is meant. It is evident that it is some remote country, and it is remarkable that it is the only land specified here by name. Some, it is said, should come from far, some from the north, others from the west, and another portion from the country here specifically mentioned. Jerome understands it of the south in general - Isti de terra Australi. The Septuagint understands it as denoting Persia -* Ἄλλοι δὲ ἐκ γῆς Περσῶν *alloi di ek gēs Persōn The Chaldee also interprets it as Jerome has done, of the south. The Syriac has not translated it, but retained the name Sinim. The Arabic coincides with the Septuagint, and renders it, ‹From the land of Persia.' Grotius supposes that it means the region of Sinim to the south of Palestine, and Vitringa also coincides with this opinion.*

Bochart supposes that it means the same as Sin or Syene, that is, Pelusium, a city of Egypt; and that it is used to denote Egypt, as Pelusium

was a principal city in Egypt. In Ezekiel 30:15, Sin or Pelusium (margin) is mentioned as ‹the strength of Egypt.' Gesenius supposes that it refers to the Chinese, and that the country here referred to is Sina or China. ‹This very ancient and celebrated people,' says he, ‹was known to the Arabians and Syrians by the name Sin, Tein, Tshini; and a Hebrew writer might well have heard of them, especially if sojourning in Babylon, the metropolis as it were of all Asia. This name appears to have been given to the Chinese by the other Asiatics; for the Chinese themselves do not employ it, and seem indeed to be destitute of any ancient domestic name, either adopting the names of the reigning dynasties, or ostentatiously assuming high-sounding titles, as "people of the empire in the center of the world." ‹The Rev. Peter Parker, M. D., missionary to China, remarked in an address delivered in Philadelphia, that ‹the Chinese have been known from time immemorial by the name Tschin. Tschin means a Chinaman.' When they first received this appellation, cannot be determined, nor is the reason of its being given to them now known.

As there is remarkable permanency in the names as well as in the customs of the East, it is possible that they may have had it from the commencement of their history. If so, there is no improbability in supposing that the name was known to the Jews in the time of Isaiah. Solomon had opened a considerable commerce with the East. For this he had built Palmyra, or Tadmor, and caravans passed constantly toward Palestine and Tyre, conveying the rich productions of India. The country of Tschin or Sinim may be easily supposed to have been often referred to by the foreign merchants as a land of great extent and riches, and it is not impossible that even at that early day a part of the merchandise conveyed to the west might have come from that land. It is not necessary to suppose that the Hebrews in the time of Isaiah had any very extensive or clear views of that country; but all that is necessary to be supposed is that they conceived of the nation as lying far in the east, and as abounding in wealth, sufficiently so to entitle it to the pre-eminency which it now has in the enumeration of the nations that would be blessed by the gospel.

If this be the correct interpretation - and I have on a re-examination come to this opinion, though a different view was given in the first edition of these Notes - then the passage furnishes an interesting prediction respecting

the future conversion of the largest kingdom of the world. It may be added, that this is the only place where that country is referred to in the Bible, and there may be some plausibility in the supposition that while so many other nations, far inferior in numbers and importance, are mentioned by name, one so vast as this would not wholly be omitted by the Spirit of Inspiration.

Verse 13

Sing, O heavens - *In view of the glorious truths stated in the previous verses, that kings should rise up, and princes worship; that the Messiah would be for a light to the Gentiles, and that the true religion would be extended to each of the four quarters of the globe. The idea in this verse is, that it was an occasion on which the heavens and the earth would have cause to exult together. It is common in Isaiah thus to interpose a song of praise on the announcement of any great and glorious truth, and to call on the heavens and the earth to rejoice together (see the notes at Isaiah 12:1-6; Isaiah 42:10-11; Isaiah 44:23).*

Verse 14

But Zion said - *On the word ‹Zion,‘ see the note at Isaiah 1:8. The language here is that of complaint, and expresses the deep feeling of the people of God amidst many calamities, afflictions, and trials. It may be applicable to the exile Jews in Babylon during their long captivity, as if God had forsaken them; or to those who were waiting for the coming of the Messiah, and who were sighing for the divine interposition under him to restore the beauty of Zion, and to extend his kingdom; or in general, to the church when wickedness triumphs in a community, and when God seems to have forsaken Zion, and to have forgotten its interests. The language here was suggested, doubtless, by a view of the desolations of Jerusalem and Judea, and of the long and painful captivity in Babylon; but it is general, and is applicable to the people of God, in all times of similar oppression and distress. The object of the prophet is to furnish the assurance that, whatever might be the trials and the sufferings of his people, God had not forgotten them, and he neither could nor would forsake them. For this purpose, he makes use of two most striking and forcible arguments Isaiah 49:15-16, to show in the strongest possible manner that the interests of his people were safe.*

Verse 15

Can a woman forget her sucking child? - *The design of this verse is apparent. It is to show that the love which God has for his people is stronger than that which is produced by the most tender ties created by any natural relation. The love of a mother for her infant child is the strongest attachment in nature. The question here implies that it was unusual for a mother to be unmindful of that tie, and to forsake the child that she should nourish and love.*

That she should not have compassion - *That she should not pity and succor it in times of sickness and distress; that she should see it suffer without any attempt to relieve it, and turn away, and see it die unpitied and unalleviated.*

Yea, they may forget - *They will sooner forget their child than God will forget his afflicted and suffering people. The phrase ‹they may forget,' implies that such a thing may occur. In pagan lands, strong as is the instinct which binds a mother to her offspring, it has not been uncommon for a mother to expose her infant child, and to leave it to die. In illustration of this fact, see the notes at Romans 1:31.*

Verse 16

Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands - *This is another argument in answer to the complaint of Zion in Isaiah 49:14. There have been various interpretations of this passage. Grotius supposes that it refers to a custom of placing some mark or sign on the hand, or on one of the fingers when they wished to remember anything, and appeals to Exodus 13:9. Lowth supposes that it is an allusion to some practice common among the Jews at that time, of making marks on their hands or arms by means of punctures in the skin with some sign or representation of the city or temple, to show their zeal and affection for it. In illustration of this, he refers to the fact that the pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre are accustomed to get themselves marked in this manner with what are called the signs of Jerusalem. Vitringa supposes that it alludes to the custom of architects, in which they delineate the size, form, and proportions of an edifice on parchment, before they commence building it - such as we mean by the draft or model of the building; and that the sense here is, that God, in like manner, had delineated or drawn Jerusalem on his hands long before it was founded, and had it constantly before his eyes. According to this, the idea is, that God had laid out the plan of Jerusalem long before it was built, and that it was so dear to him that he had even engraven it on his hands. Others*

have supposed that it refers to a device on a signet, or on a ring worn on the finger or the wrist, and that the plan of Jerusalem was drawn and engraven there. To me, it seems that the view of Lowth is most accordant with probability, and is best, sustained by the Oriental customs. The essential idea is, that Zion was dear to his heart; and that he had sketched or delineated it as an object in which he felt a deep interest - so deep as even to delineate its outlines on the palms of his bands, where it would be constantly before him.

Thy walls - *The meaning is, that he constantly looked upon them; that he never forgot them. He had a constant and sacred regard for his people, and amidst all their disasters and trials, still remembered them.*

Verse 17

Thy children - *The children of Zion - the true people of God. But there is here considerable variety in the interpretation. The Hebrew of the present text is* בניך *bânâyîk ("thy sons"). But Jerome reads it, Structores tui - ‹Thy builders;' as if it were* בונין *. The Septuagint renders it, ‹Thou shalt be speedily built (* ταχὺ οἰκοδομηθήσῃ *tachu oikodomēthēsē) by those by whom thou hast been destroyed.' The Chaldee renders it, ‹Those that rebuild thy waste places shall hasten.' The Syriac reads it, ‹Thy sons;' and the Arabic, ‹Thou shalt be rebuilt by those by whom thou hast been destroyed.' But there is no good authority for changing the present Hebrew text. nor is it necessary. The sense probably is, the descendants of those who dwelt in Zion, who are now in exile, shall hasten to rebuild the wastes of the desolate capital, and restore its ruins. And may it not mean, that in the great work under the Messiah, of restoring the nation to the worship of God, and of spreading the true religion, God would make use of those who dwelt in Zion; that is, of the Jews, as his ambassadors?*

They that made thee waste - *Language drawn from the destruction of Jerusalen. The sense is, that they would seek no longer to retain possession, but would permit its former inhabitants to return, and engage in repairing its ruins.*

Verse 18

Lift up thine eyes round about - *That is, see the multitudes that shall be converted to thee; see thy ruined city rise again in its former beauty; see the Gentiles come and yield themselves to the worship of the true God; see kings and princes approach and do thee homage.*

All these gather themselves - *That is, from a far country, from the north, the west, and the south, Isaiah 49:12.*

As I live, saith the Lord - *The customary form of an oath when Yahweh swears It is a solemn assurance that the event shall as certainly occur as he has an existence (see the note at Isaiah 45:23; compare Jeremiah 22:24; Ezekiel 5:11; Ezekiel 14:16, Ezekiel 14:18, Ezekiel 14:20; Ezekiel 16:48).*

Thou shalt surely clothe thee with them - *Zion is here represented, as it is often elsewhere, as a female (see the note at Isaiah 1:8); and the accession of converts from abroad is represented under the figure of bridal ornaments. The accession of converts karo the Gentiles should be to her what jewels are to a bride.*

And bind them on thee as a bride doth - *The sentence here is manifestly incomplete. It means, as a bride binds on her ornaments. The Septuagint has supplied this, and renders it, ‹As a bride her ornaments' (* ὡς κόσμον νύμφη *hōs kosmon numphē). The sentiment is, that the accession of the large humber of converts under the Messiah to the true church of God, would be the real ornament of Zion, and would greatly increase her beauty and loveliness.*

Verse 19

For thy waste and thy desolate places - *Thy land over which ruin has been spread, and ever which the exile nation mourns.*

And the land of thy destruction - *That is, thy land laid in ruins. The construction is not uncommon where a noun is used to express the sense of an adjective. Thus in Psalm 2:6, the Hebrew phrase (margin) is correctly rendered ‹my holy hill.' Here the sense is, that their entire country had been so laid waste as to be a land of desolation.*

Shall even now be too narrow - *Shall be too limited to contain all who shall become converted to the true God. The contracted territory of Palestine shall be incapable of sustaining all who will acknowledge the true God, and who shall be regarded as his friends.*

And they that swallowed thee up - *The enemies that laid waste thy land, and that "absorbed," as it were, thy inhabitants, and removed them to a distant land. They shall be all gone, and the land shall smile again in prosperity and in loveliness.*

Verse 20

The children which thou shalt have - *The increase of the population shall be so great.*

After thou hast lost the other - *Hebrew, ‹The sons of thy widowhood.' That is, after thou hast lost those that have been killed in the wars, and those that have died in captivity in a distant land, there shall be again a great increase as if they were given to a widowed mother. And perhaps the general truth is taught here, that the persecution of the people of God will be attended ultimately with a vast increase; and that all the attempts to obliterate the church will only tend finally to enlarge and strengthen it.*

Shall say again in thy ears - *Or, shall say to thee.*

The place is too strait for me - *There is not room for us all. The entire language here denotes a vast accession to the church of God. It is indicative of such an increase as took place when the gospel was proclaimed by the apostles to the Gentiles, and of such an increase as shall Yet more abundantly take place when the whole world shall become converted to God.*

Verse 21

Then shalt thou say in thine heart - *Thou shalt wonder at the multitude, and shalt ask with astonishment from where they all come. This verse is designed to describe the great increase of the true people of God under the image of a mother who had been deprived of her children, who should suddenly see herself surrounded with more than had been lost, and should ask in astonishment from where they all came.*

Who hath begotten me these - *The idea here is, that the increase would be from other nations. They would not be the natural increase of Zion or Jerusalem, but they would come in from abroad - as if a family that had been bereaved should be increased by an accession from other families.*

I have lost my children - *Jerusalem had been desolated by wars, and had become like a widow that was bereft of all her sons (compare the notes at Isaiah 47:8-9).*

A captive, and removing to and fro - *A captive in Babylon, and compelled to wander from my own land, and to live in a strange and distant country.*

These, where had they been? - *The image in this entire verse is one of great beauty. It represents a mother who had been suddenly deprived of all her children, who had been made a widow, and conveyed as a captive from land to land. She had seen ruin spread all around her dwelling, and regarded herself as alone. Suddenly she finds herself restored to her home, and surrounded with a happy family. She sees it increased beyond its former*

numbers, and herself blessed with more than her former prosperity. She looks with surprise on this accession, and asks with wonder from where all these have come, and where they have been. The language in this verse is beautifully expressive of the agitation of such a state of mind, and of the effect which would be thus produced. The idea is plain. Jerusalem had been desolate. Her inhabitants had been carried captive, or had been put to death. But she should be restored, and the church of God would be increased by a vast accession from the Gentile world, so much that the narrow limits which had been formerly occupied - the territory of Palestine - would now be too small for the vast numbers that would be united to those who professed to love and worship God.

Verse 22

Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles - *To lift up the hand is a sign of beckoning to, or inviting; and the idea here is, that God would call the Gentiles to partake of the blessings of the true religion, and to embrace the Messiah (see the notes at Isaiah 11:11).*

And set up my standard to the people - *To the people of other lands; the word here being synonymous with the word Gentiles. A standard, or an ensign was erected in times of war to rally the forces of a nation around it; and the sense here is, that God would erect an ensign high in the sight of all the nations, and would call them to himself, as a military leader musters his forces for battle; that is, he would call the nations to embrace the true religion. See this phrase explained in the the note at Isaiah 11:12.*

They shall bring thy sons in their arms - *Margin, ‹Bosom.' Jerome renders it, In ulnis - ‹In their arms.' The Septuagint,* Ἐν κόλπῳ *En kolpō - ‹In the bosom.' Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion,* Ἀγκαλας *Agkalas - ‹In their arms.' If it means bosom, as Gesenius renders it, it refers to the bosom of a garment in which things are carried. But it more probably means in the arms, as children are borne; and the idea is, that the distant nations would come and bear with them those who were the children of Zion, that is, those who would become the true friends and worshippers of God.*

And thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders - *Referring, doubtless, to the manner in which children were carried. In Isaiah 66:12, the same idea is expressed by their being carried upon the sides, referring to the custom still prevalent in the East, of placing a child when it is nursed astride on the side of the mother. The following quotation will more fully*

explain the customs here alluded to. ‹It is a custom in many parts of the East, to carry their children astride upon the hip, with the arm around the body. In the kingdom of Algiers, where the slaves take the Children out, the boys ride upon their shoulders; and in a religious procession, which Symes had an opportunity of seeing at Ava, the capital of the Burman empire, the first personages of rank that passed by were three children borne astride, on people‘s shoulders. It is evident, from these facts, that the Oriental children are carried sometimes the one way, sometimes the other.

Nor was the custom, in reality, different in Judea, though the prophet expresses himself in these terms: "They shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders;" for, according to Dr. Russel, the children able to support themselves are usually carried astride on the shoulders; but in infancy they are carried in the arms, or awkwardly on one haunch. Dandini tells us that, on horseback, the Asiatics "carry their children upon their shoulders with great dexterity. These children hold by the head of him who carries them, whether he be on horseback or on foot, and do not hinder him from walking or doing what he pleases." This augments the import of the passage in Isaiah, who speaks of the Gentiles bringing children thus; so that distance is no objection to this mode of conveyance, since they may thus be brought on horseback from among the people, however remote.‘ (Paxton) ‹Children of both sexes are carried on the shoulders.

Thus may be seen the father carrying his son, the little fellow being astride on the shoulder, having, with his hands, hold of his father‘s head. Girls, however, sit on the shoulder, as if on a chair, their legs banging in front, while they also, with their hands, lay hold of the head. In going to, or returning from pagan festivals, thousands of parents and their children may be thus seen marching along with joy.‘ (Roberts) The sense is, that converts should come from every land - that the nations should flock to the standard of the Messiah. And why may it not be regarded as a legitimate interpretation of this passage, that those who come should bring their children, their sons and their daughters, with them? That they were borne upon the arm, or upon the shoulder, is indicative of their being young children; and that is no forced interpretation of this passage which regards it as teaching, that the parents who should be converted among the Gentiles

should bring their offspring to the Redeemer, and present them publicly to God.

Verse 23

And kings shall be thy nursing fathers - *Margin, ‹Nourishers.' That is, they would patronize the church of God; they would protect it by their laws, and foster it by their influence and become the personal advocates of the cause of Zion. The idea is properly that of guarding, educating, and proriding for children; and the sense is that kings and princes would evince the same tender care for the interests of the people of God which a parent or a nurse does for a child. It is needless to say that this has been already to a considerable extent fulfilled, and that many princes and monarchs have been the patrons of the church, though doubtless it is destined to a more ample fulfillment still in the brighter days of this world's history, when the gospel shall spread everywhere. It is remarkable that, in the Sandwich and South Sea Islands, the Christian religion has been uniformly, almost, taken under the protection of the kings and chiefs since its first introduction there, and has been carried forward and extended under their direct authority.*

They shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth - *A posture indicating the profoundest reverence. This is the common posture of showing great respect in the East.*

And lick up the dust of thy feet - *An act denoting the utmost possible respect and veneration for the church and people of God.*

For they shall not be ashamed that wait for me - *They who worship me shall not be ashamed of the act requiring the deepest self-abasement, to show their reverence for me. Even those of most elevated rank shall be willing to humble themselves with the profoundest expressions of adoration.*

Verse 24

Shall the prey be taken from the mighty? - *This seems to be the language of Zion. It is not exactly the language of incredulity; it is the language of amazement and wonder. God had made great promises. He had promised a restoration of the captive Jews to their own land, and of their complete deliverance from the power of the Chaldeans. He had still further promised that the blessings of the true religion should be extended to the Gentiles, and that kings and queens should come and show the profoundest adoration for God and for his cause. With amazement and wonder at the greatness of these promises, with a full view of the difficulties to be*

surmounted, Zion asks here how it can be accomplished. It would involve the work of taking the prey from a mighty conqueror, and delivering the captive from the hand of the strong and the terrible - a work which had not been usually done.

Or the lawful captive delivered? - *Margin, ‹The captivity of the just.' Lowth reads this, ‹Shall the prey seized by the terrible be rescued?' So Noyes. Lowth says of the present Hebrew text, that the reading is a ‹palpable mistake;' and that instead of* צדיק *tsadiyq ("the just"), the meaning should be* עריץ *ʿârîyts ("the terrible"). Jerome so read it, and renders it, A robusto - ‹The prey taken by the strong.' So the Syriac reads it. The Septuagint renders it, ‹If anyone is taken captive unjustly (* ἀδίκως *adikōs), shall he be saved?' But there is no authority from the manuscripts for changing the present reading of the Hebrew text; and it is not necessary. The word ‹just,' here may either refer to the fact that the just were taken captive, and to the difficulty of rescuing them; or perhaps, as Rosenmuller suggests, it may be taken in the sense of severe, or rigid, standing opposed to benignity or mercy, and thus may be synonymous with severity and harshness; and the meaning may be that it was difficult to rescue a captive from the hands of those who had no clemency or benignity, such as was Babylon. Grotius understands it of those who were taken captive in a just war, or by the rights of war. But the connection rather demands that we should interpret it of those who were made captive by those who were indisposed to clemency, and who were severe and rigid in their treatment of their prisoners. The idea is, that it was difficult or almost impossible to rescue captives from such hands, and that therefore it was a matter of wonder and amazement that that could be accomplished which God here promises.*

Verse 25

But thus saith the Lord - *The meaning of this verse is, that however difficult or impracticable this might seem to be, yet it should be done. The captives taken by the terrible and the mighty should be rescued, and should be restored to their own land.*

Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away - *Margin, as Hebrew, ‹The captivity of the mighty.' That which could not have been rescued by any ordinary means. The language here refers undoubtedly to Babylon, and to the captivity of the Jews there.*

The prey of the terrible - *Of a nation formidable, cruel, and not inclined to compassion; in the previous verse described as ‹just,‘ that is, indisposed to mercy.*

For I will contend with him - *I will punish the nation that has inflicted these wrongs on thee, and will thus rescue thee from bondage.*

Verse 26

And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh - *The language used here is that which appropriately describes the distresses resuiting from discord and internal strifes. Similar language occurs in Isaiah 9:20 (see the note on that verse). Their rage shall be excited against each other; and there shall be anarchy, internal discord, and the desire of mutual revenge. They shall destroy themselves by mutual conflicts, until they are gorged with slaughter, and drunk with blood.*

And they shall be drunken with their own blood - *A similar expression occurs in Revelation 16:6: ‹For they have shed the blood of the prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink.‘ This expression describes a state of internal strife, where blood would be profusely shed, and where it would be, as it were, the drink of those who were contending with each other. Grotius supposes that it refers to the conflicts between the Persians and the Medes, and those of the Medes and Persians with the Babylonians. Vitringa supposes it received its fulfillment in the contests which took place in the Roman empire, particularly during the reign of Diocletian, when so many rivals contended for the sovereignty. Perhaps, however, it is in vain to attempt to refer this to any single conflict, or state of anarchy. The language is general; and it may mean in general that God would guard and protect his people; and that in doing this, he would fill the ranks of his foes with confusion, and suffer them to be torn and distracted with internal strifes; and amidst those strifes, and by means of them, would secure the deliverance and safety of his own people. It has not unfrequently happened that he has suffered or caused discord to spring up among the enemies of his people, and distracted their counsels, and thus secured the safety and welfare of those whom they were opposing and persecuting.*

As with sweet wine - *Margin, ‹New.‘ The Hebrew word (עסיס ʿâsiys) means ‹must,‘ or new wine Joel 1:5; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13. The Septuagint renders it,* Οἶνον νέον *Oinon neon - ‹New wine.‘ The ‹must,‘ or new wine, was the pure juice which ran first after the grapes had been laid in a heap preparatory to pressure. The ancients had the art of preserving this for a*

long time, so as to retain its special flavor, and were in the habit of drinking it in the morning (see Hor. Sat. ii. 4). This had the intoxicating property very slightly, if at all; and Harmer (Obs. vol. ii. p. 151) supposes that the kind here meant was rather such as was used in ‹royal palaces for its gratefulness,' which was capable of being kept to a great age. It is possible, I think, that there may be an allusion here to the fact that it required a ‹large quantity of the must' or new wine to produce intoxication, and that the idea here is that a large quantity of blood would be shed.

And all flesh - *The effect of all this shall be to diffuse the true religion throughout the world. The result of the contentions that shall be excited among the enemies of the people of God; of their civil wars and mutual slaughter; and of the consequent protection and defense of the people whom they were endeavoring to destroy, shall be to diffuse the true religion among the nations, and to bring all people to acknowledge that he who thus protects his church is the true and only God. It would be easy to show the fulfillment of this prediction from the records of the past, and from the efforts which have been made to destroy the church of God. But that would be foreign to the design of these notes. A very slight acquaintance with the repeated efforts to destroy the ancient people of God in Egypt, in the wilderness, in Babylon, and under Antiochus Epiphanes; with the early persecution of the Christians in Judea; with the successive persecutions in the Roman empire from the time of Nero to Diocletian; with the persecution of the Waldenses in Switserland; of the Huguenots in France; and of the Reformers in England, will be sufficient to convince anyone that God is the protector of the church, and that no weapons formed against her shall prosper. Her enemies shall be distracted in their counsels, and left to anarchy and overthrow; and the church shall rise resplendent from all their persecutions, and shall prosper ultimately just in proportion to their efforts to destroy it.*

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 50

Introduction

This chapter properly consists of two parts.

The first comprises the first three verses, and contains a statement of the reasons why the Jews had been rejected and punished. They are to be regarded as in exile in Babylon. It might be alleged by some of the unbelieving among them, that the calamities which came upon them were proof of caprice in God, or of want of faithfulness, or of power, and not any proof that they were suffering under his righteous displeasure. To meet these implied charges, and to show them the true cause of their suffering, is the design of this portion of the chapter. In this, God says:

1. That their sufferings were not the result of mere will, or of caprice, on his part, as a husband often puts away his wife without any good reason Isaiah 50:1.

2. There was a reason for their rejection, and that reason was, their sins. They had brought all these calamities Upon themselves and had, in fact sold themselves.

3. It was not for want of power on the part of God to save them. His hand was not shortened, and he had abundantly shown that he had power to defend his people Isaiah 50:2-3. He was able to dry up the sea, and to make the rivers a desert, and he clothed the heavens with blackness, and he was abundantly able, therefore, to save his people.

II. The second part of the chapter comprises the portion from Isaiah 50:4-11. This relates to a different subject; and, in regard to it, there has been considerable variety of interpretation. A speaker is introduced who claims to be eminently qualified for file office to which he was called Isaiah 50:4; who has been amply endowed by God for the embassage on which he is sent Isaiah 50:5; who meets with opposition, and who yet receives it all with meekness Isaiah 50:6; who puts his trust in God, and confides in him alone Isaiah 50:7-9; and who calls on all who fear the Lord to hear him Isaiah 50:10; and who threatens to inflict punishment on all who do not listen to him Isaiah 50:11. This portion of the chapter has been referred, by

different interpreters, to different individuals. Grotius, Rosenmuller, and Gesenius, suppose that it refers to the prophet himself. Doderlein, Dathe, Koppe, Augusti, and some others, suppose that it refers either to the prophet himself, or to some other one living in exile at the time of the captivity. Jerome says that this, also, was the prevailing interpretation among the Jews in his time. Paulus supposes that it is not the prophet who speaks, but the better and more pious portion of the Jewish people. But the more common interpretation is that which refers it to the Messiah. In favor of this interpretation, the following considerations may be suggested:

1. The prophet himself is not known to have been in the circumstances here described Isaiah 50:6; nor is there any evidence that this can be applied to him. Of any other prophet to whom it would apply we have no knowledge, nor would there be any propriety in so applying the language of Isaiah, if we did know of any such one.

2. The Messianic interpretation has almost universally prevailed in the Christian church - an argument of value only as showing that when so many agree in interpreting any writing, there is presumptive proof that they have not mistaken its meaning.

3. All the characteristics of the servant of God here referred to, apply to the Redeemer, and are descriptive of him and of his work. All that is said of his humiliation and meekness; of the opposition which he encountered, and of his confidence in God, applies eminently to the Lord Jesus, and to no other one.

4. The closing part Isaiah 50:11, where the speaker threatens to inflict punishment on his foes, cannot be used with reference to Isaiah or any other prophet, but has a striking applicability to the Messiah.

5. In Luke 18:32, the passage Isaiah 50:6 is applied by the Lord Jesus to himself. He says that the prophecies in regard to him must be fulfilled, and, among other things, says that the fact that he should be ‹spitted on,‘ should be a fulfillment of a prophecy - statement which has an obvious and manifest reference to this passage in Isaiah.

The passage, if it refers to the Messiah, relates particularly to his humiliation and sufferings, and accords with that in Isaiah 53:1-12. It embraces the following points:

1. He was endowed for his work, and especially suited to comfort the afflicted and weary Isaiah 50:4.

2. He was entirely obedient to God, and submitted to all his arrangements with cheerfulness Isaiah 50:5.

3. He submitted with meekness to all the injuries inflicted on him by others - even to their deepest expressions of contempt Isaiah 50:6.

4. He was sustained in these trials because he put his trust in God, and believed that he could deliver him Isaiah 50:7-9.

5. He calls upon all who feared God to put their trust in him, and stay themselves upon their God - an address to the pious portion of the nation Isaiah 50:10.

6. He warns those who were trusting to themselves, and who were seeking their own welfare only, that he would himself inflict exemplary punishment upon them, and that they should lie down in sorrow Isaiah 50:11.

Verse 1

Thus saith the Lord - To the Jews in Babylon, who were suffering under his hand, and who might be disposed to complain that God had dealt with them with as much caprice and cruelty as a man did with his wife, when he gave her a writing of divorce, and put her away without any just cause.

Where is the bill of your mother‘s divorcement? - God here speaks of himself as the husband of his people, as having married the church to himself, denoting the tender affection which he had for his people. This figure is frequently used in the Bible. Thus in Isaiah 62:5: ‹As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee;‘ ‹For thy Maker is thy husband‘ Isaiah 54:5; ‹Turn, O backsliding children,

saith the Lord, for I am married unto you‘ Jeremiah 3:14. Thus in Revelation 21:9, the church is called ‹the bride, the Lamb‘s wife.‘ Compare Deuteronomy 24:1; compare Matthew 19:8).

It originated probably from the erroneous views which then prevailed of the nature of the marriage compact. It was extensively regarded as substantially like any other compact, in which the wife became a purchase from her father, and of course as she had been purchased, the husband claimed the right of dismissing her when he pleased. Moses nowhere defines the causes for which a man might put away his wife, but left these to be judged of by the people themselves. But he regulated the way in which it might be done. He ordained a law which was designed to operate as a material check on the hasty feelings, the caprice, and the passions of the husband. He designed that it should be with him, if exercised, not a matter of mere excited feeling, but that he should take time to deliberate upon it; and hence, he ordained that in all cases a formal instrument of writing should be executed releasing the wife from the marriage tie, and leaving her at liberty to pursue her own inclinations in regard to future marriages Deuteronomy 24:2.

It is evident that this would operate very materially in favor of the wife, and in checking and restraining the excited passions of the husband (see Jahn‘s Bib. Antiq. Section 160; Michaelis‘ Commentary on the Laws of Moses, vol. i. pp. 450-478; ii. 127-40. Ed. Lond. 1814,8vo.) In the passage before us, God says that he had not rejected his people. He had not been governed by the caprice, sudden passion, or cruelty which husbands often evinced. There was a just cause why he had treated them as he had, and he did not regard them as the children of a divorced wife. The phrase, ‹your mother,‘ Here is used to denote the ancestry from whom they were descended. They were not regarded as the children of a disgraced mother.

Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you - Among the Hebrews, a father had the right, by the law of Moses, if he was oppressed with debt, to sell his children Exodus 21:7; Nehemiah 5:5. In like manner, if a man had stolen anything, and had nothing to make restitution, he might be sold for the theft Exodus 22:3. If a man also was poor and unable to pay his debts, he might be sold Leviticus 25:39; 2 Kings 4:1; Matthew 18:25. On the subject of slavery among the Hebrews, and the Mosaic laws in regard to it, see Michaelis‘ Commentary on the Laws of Moses, vol. ii. pp. 155,

following In this passage, God says that he had not been governed by any such motives in his dealings with his people. He had not dealt with them as a poor parent sometimes felt himself under a necessity of doing, when he sold his children, or as a creditor did when a man was not able to pay him. He had been governed by different motives, and he had punished them only on account of their transgressions.

Ye have sold yourselves - That is, you have gone into captivity only on account of your sins. It has been your own act, and you have thus become bondmen to a foreign power only by your own choice.

Is your mother put away - Retaining the figure respecting divorce. The nation has been rejected, and suffered to go into exile, only on account of its transgressions.

Verse 2

Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? - That is, when I came to call you to repentance, why was there no man of the nation to yield obedience? The sense is, that they had not been punished without warning. He had called them to repentance, but no one heard his voice. The Chaldee renders this, ‹Wherefore did I send my prophets, and they did not turn? They prophesied, but they did not attend.‘

When I called, was there none to answer? - None obeyed, or regarded my voice. It was not, therefore, by his fault that they had been punished, but it was because they did not listen to the messengers which he had sent unto them.

Is my hand shortened at all? - The meaning of this is, that it was not because God was unable to save, that they had been thus punished. The hand, in the Scriptures, is an emblem of strength, as it is the instrument by which we accomplish our purposes. To shorten the hand, that is, to cut it off, is an emblem of diminishing, or destroying our ability to execute any purpose (see Isaiah 59:1). So in Numbers 11:23: ‹Is the Lord‘s hand waxed short?‘

That it cannot redeem? - That it cannot rescue or deliver you. The idea is, that it was not because he was less able to save them than he had been in former times, that they were sold into captivity, and sighed in bondage.

Behold, at my rebuke - At my chiding - as a father rebukes a disobedient child, or as a man would rebuke an excited multitude. Similar language is used of the Saviour when he stilled the tempest on the sea of Gennesareth: ‹Then he arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there

was a great calm‘ Matthew 8:26. The reference here is, undoubtedly, to the fact that God dried up the Red Sea, or made a way for the children of Israel to pass through it. The idea is, that he who had power to perform such a stupendous miracle as that, had power also to deliver his people at any time, and that, therefore, it was for no want of power in him that the Jews were suffering in exile.

I make the rivers a wilderness - I dry up streams at pleasure, and have power even to make the bed of rivers, and all the country watered by them, a pathless, and an unfruitful desert.

Their fish stinketh - The waters leave them, and the fish die, and putrify. It is not uncommon in the East for large streams and even rivers thus to be dried up by the intense heat of the sun, and by being lost in the sand. Thus the river Barrady which flows through the fertile plain on which Damascus is situated, and which is divided into innumerable streams and canals to water the city and the gardens adjacent to it, after flowing to a short distance from the city is wholly lost - partly absorbed in the sands, and partly dried up by the intense rays of the sun (see Jones‘ ‹Excursions to Jerusalem, Egypt, etc. ‹) The idea here is, that it was God who had power to dry up those streams, and that he who could do that, could save and vindicate his people.

Verse 3

I clothe the heavens with blackness - With the dark clouds of a tempest - perhaps with an allusion to the remarkable clouds and tempests that encircled the brow of Sinai when he gave the law. Or possibly alluding to the thick darkness which he brought over the land of Egypt (Exodus 10:21; Grotius). In the previous verse, he had stated what he did on the earth, and referred to the exhibitions of his great power there. He here refers to the exhibition of his power in the sky; and the argument is, that he who had thus the power to spread darkness over the face of the sky, had power also to deliver his people.

I make sackcloth their covering - Alluding to the clouds. Sackcloth was a coarse and dark cloth which was usually worn as an emblem of mourning (see the note at Isaiah 3:24). The same image is used in Revelation 6:12: ‹And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair.‘ To say, therefore, that the heavens were clothed with sackcloth, is one of the most striking and impressive figures which can be conceived.

Verse 4

The Lord God hath given me - This verse commences a new subject, and the deliverer is directly introduced as himself speaking. The reasons why this is supposed to refer to the Messiah, have been given in the analysis to the chapter. Those reasons will be strengthened by the examination of the particular expressions in the passage, and by showing, as we proceed in the exposition, in what way they are applicable to him. It will be assumed that the reference is to the Messiah; and we shall find that it is a most beautiful description of his character, and of some of the principal events of his life. This verse is designed to state how he was suited for the special work to which he was called. The whole endowment is traced to Yahweh. It was he who had called him; he who had given him the tongue of the learned, and he who had carefully and attentively qualified him for his work.

The tongue of the learned - Hebrew, ‹The tongue of those who are instructed;‘ that is, of the eloquent; or the tongue of instruction (παιδείας *paideias* Septuagint); that is, he has qualified me to instruct others. It does not mean human science or learning; nor does it mean that any other had been qualified as he was, or that there were any others who were learned like him. But it means that on the subject of religion he was eminently endowed with intelligence, and with eloquence. In regard to the Redeemer‘s power of instruction, the discourses which he delivered, as recorded in the New Testament, and especially his sermon on the mount, may be referred to. None on the subject of religion ever spake like him; none was ever so well qualified to instruct mankind (compare Matthew 13:54).

That I should know how to speak a word in season - The Hebrew here is, ‹That I might know how to strengthen with a word the weary;‘ that is, that he might sustain, comfort, and refresh them by his promises and his counsels. How eminently he was suited to alleviate those who were heavy laden with sin and to comfort those who were burdened with calamities and trials, may be seen by the slightest reference to the New Testament, and the most partial acquaintance with his instructions and his life. The weary here are those who are burdened with a sense of guilt; who feel that they have no strength to bear up under the mighty load, and who therefore seek relief (see Matthew 11:28).

He wakeneth morning by morning - That is, he wakens me every morning early. The language is taken from an instructor who awakens his pupils early, in order that they may receive instruction. The idea is, that the

Redeemer would be eminently endowed, under the divine instruction and guidance, for his work. He would be one who was, so to speak, in the school of God; and who would be qualified to impart instruction to others.

He wakeneth mine ear - To awaken the ear is to prepare one to receive instruction. The expressions, to open the ear, to uncover the ear, to awaken the ear, often occur in the Scriptures, in the sense of preparing to receive instruction, or of disposing to receive divine communications. The sense here is plain. The Messiah would be taught of God, and would be inclined to receive all that he imparted.

To hear as the learned - Many translate the phrase here ‹as disciples,‘ that is, as those who are learning. So Lowth; ‹With the attention of a learner.‘ So Noyes; ‹In the manner of a disciple.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹He has given me an ear to hear.‘ The idea is, probably, that he was attentive as they are who wish to learn; that is, as docile disciples. The figure is taken from a master who in the morning summons his pupils around him, and imparts instruction to them. And the doctrine which is taught is, that the Messiah would be eminently qualified, by divine teaching, to be the instructor of mankind. The Chaldee paraphrases this, ‹Morning by morning, he anticipates (the dawn), that he may send his prophets, if perhaps they my open the ears of sinners, and receive instruction.‘

Verse 5

The Lord God hath opened mine ear - This is another expression denoting that he was attentive to the import of the divine commission (see Psalm 40:6).

And I was not rebellious - I willingly undertook the task of communicating the divine will to mankind. The statement here is in accordance with all that is said of the Messiah, that he was willing to come and do the will of God, and that whatever trials the work involved he was prepared to meet them (see Psalm 40:6-8; compare Hebrews 10:4-10).

Verse 6

I gave my back to the smiters - I submitted willingly to be scourged, or whipped. This is one of the parts of this chapter which can be applied to no other one but the Messiah. There is not the slightest evidence, whatever may be supposed to have been the probability, that Isaiah was subjected to any such trial as this, or that he was scourged in a public manner. Yet it was literally fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 27:26; compare Luke 18:33).

And my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair - literally, ‹My cheeks to hose who pluck, or pull.‘ The word used here (מרט *māraṭ*) means properly to polish, to sharpen, to make smooth; then to make smooth the head, to make bald; that is, to pluck out the hair, or the beard. To do this was to offer the highest insult that could be imagined among the Orientals. The beard is suffered to grow long, and is regarded as a mark of honor. Nothing is regarded as more infamous than to cut it off (see 2 Samuel 10:4), or to pluck it out; and there is nothing which an Oriental will sooner resent than an insult offered to his beard. ‹It is a custom among the Orientals, as well among the Greeks as among other nations, to cultivate the beard with the utmost care and solicitude, so that they regard it as the highest possible insult if a single hair of the beard is taken away by violence.‘ (William of Tyre, an eastern archbishop, Gesta Dei, p. 802, quoted in Harmer, vol. ii. p. 359.) It is customary to beg by the beard, and to swear by the beard. ‹By your beard; by the life of your beard; God preserve your beard; God pour his blessings on your beard,‘ - are common expressions there. The Mahometans have such a respect for the board that they think it criminal to shave (Harmer, vol. ii. p. 360). The Septuagint renders this, ‹I gave my cheeks to buffering‘ (εἰς ῥαπίσμα *eis rapisma*); that is, to being smitten with the open hand, which was literally fulfilled in the case of the Redeemer Matthew 26:67; Mark 14:65. The general sense of this expression is, that he would be treated with the highest insult.

I hid not my face from shame and spitting - To spit on anyone was regarded among the Orientals, as it is everywhere else, as an expression of the highest insult and indignity Deuteronomy 25:9; Numbers 12:14; Job 30:10. Among the Orientals also it was regarded as an insult - as it should be everywhere - to spit in the presence of any person. Thus among the Medes, Herodotus (i. 99) says that Deioces ordained that, ‹to spit in the king‘s presence, or in the presence of each other, was an act of indecency.‘ So also among the Arabians, it is regarded as an offence (Niebuhr‘s Travels, i. 57). Thus Monsieur d‘Arvieux tells us (Voydans la Pal. p. 140) ‹the Arabs are sometimes disposed to think, that when a person spits, it is done out of contempt; and that they never do it before their superiors‘ (Harmer, iv. 439). This act of the highest indignity was performed in reference to the Redeemer Matthew 26:67; Matthew 27:30; and this expression of their contempt he bore with the utmost meekness. This expression is one of the proofs that this entire passage refers to the Messiah. It is said Luke 17:32

that the prophecies should be fulfilled by his being spit upon, and yet there is no other prophecy of the Old Testament but this which contains such a prediction.

Verse 7

For the Lord God will help me - That is, he will sustain me amidst all these expressions of contempt and scorn.

Shall I not be confounded - Hebrew, ‹I shall not be ashamed;‘ that is, I will bear all this with the assurance of his favor and protection, and I will not blush to be thus treated in a cause so glorious, and which must finally triumph and prevail.

Therefore have I set my face like a flint - To harden the face, the brow, the forehead, might be used either in a bad or a good sense - in the former as denoting shamelessness or haughtiness (see the note at Isaiah 48:4); in the latter denoting courage, firmness, resolution. It is used in this sense here; and it means that the Messiah would be firm and resolute amidst all the contempt and scorn which he would meet, and would not shrink from any kind or degree of suffering which should be necessary to accomplish the great work in which he was engaged. A similar expression occurs in Ezekiel 3:8-9: ‹Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant, harder than a flint, have I made thy forehead; fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks.‘

Verse 8

He is near that justifieth me - That is, God, who will vindicate my character, and who approves what I do, does not leave nor forsake me, and I can with confidence commit myself and my cause to him (see the note at Isaiah 49:4). The word justify here is not used in the sense in which it is often in the Scriptures, to denote the act by which a sinner is justified before God, but in the proper, judicial sense, that he would declare him to be righteous; he would vindicate his character, and show him to be innocent. This was done by all the testimonies of God in his favor - by the voice which spake from heaven at his baptism - by the miracles which he performed, showing that he was commissioned and approved by God - by the fact that even Pilate was constrained to declare him innocent - by the wonders that attended his crucifixion, showing that ‹he was a righteous man,‘ even in the view of the Roman centurion Luke 23:47, and by the fact that he was raised from the dead, and was taken to heaven, and placed at the

right hand of the Father - thus showing that his whole work was approved by God, and furnishing the most ample vindication of his character from all the accusations of his foes.

Who will contend with me? - This question indicates confidence in God, and in the integrity of his own character. The language is taken from transactions in the courts of justice; and it is a solemn call, on any who would dare to oppose him, to enter into a trial, and allege the accusations against him before the tribunal of a holy God.

Let us stand together - Before the seat of judgment as in a court (compare the note at Isaiah 41:1).

Who is mine adversary? - Margin, ‹Who is the master of my cause?‘ The Hebrew is ‹Lord (בעל *baʿal*) of judgment.‘ The expression means not merely one who has a lawsuit, or a cause, but one who is ‹lord of the judgment,‘ i. e, possessor of the cause, or one who has a claim, and can demand that the judgment should be in his favor. And the call here is on any who should have such a claim to prefer against the Messiah; who should have any real ground of accusation against him; that is, it is an assertion of innocence.

Let him come near to me - Let him come and make his charges, and enter on the trial.

Verse 9

The Lord God will help me - (See Isaiah 50:7). In the Hebrew this is, ‹The Lord Jehovah,‘ as it is in Isaiah 50:7 also, and these are among the places where our translators have improperly rendered the word יהוה *yehovâh* (Jehovah) by the word ‹God.‘

Who is he that shall condemn me? - If Yahweh is my advocate and friend, my cause must be right. Similar language is used by the apostle Paul: ‹If God be for us, who can be against us?‘ Romans 8:31; and in Psalm 118:6:

Jehovah is on my side; I will not fear:
What can man do unto me?

They all shall wax old - All my enemies shall pass away, as a garment is worn out and cast aside. The idea is, that the Messiah would survive all their attacks; his cause, his truth and his reputation would live, while all the power, the influence, the reputation of his adversaries, would vanish as a garment that is worn out and then thrown away. The same image respecting his enemies is used again in Isaiah 51:8.

The moth shall eat them up - The moth is a well known insect attached particularly to woolen clothes, and which soon consumes them (see the note at Job 4:19). In eastern countries, where wealth consisted much in changes of raiment, the depredations of the moth would be particularly to be feared, and hence, it is frequently referred to in the Bible. The sense here is, that the adversaries of the Messiah would be wholly destroyed.

Verse 10

Who is among you that feareth the Lord? - This whole prophecy is concluded with an address made in this verse to the friends of God, and in the next to his enemies. It is the language of the Messiah, calling on the one class to put their trust in Yahweh, and threatening the other with displeasure and wrath. The exhortation in this verse is made in view of what is said in the previous verses. It is the entreaty of the Redeemer to all who love and fear God, and who may be placed in circumstances of trial and darkness as he was. to imitate his example, and not to rely on their own power, but to put their trust in the arm of Yahweh. he had done this Isaiah 50:7-9. He had been afflicted, persecuted, forsaken, by people Isaiah 50:6, and he had at that time confided in God and committed his cause to him; and he had never left or forsaken him. Encouraged by his example, he exhorts all others to cast themselves on the care of him who would defend a righteous cause.

That feareth the Lord - Who are worshippers of Yahweh.

That obeyeth the voice of his servant - The Messiah (see the note at Isaiah 42:1). This is another characteristic of piety. They who fear the Lord will also obey the voice of the Redeemer John 5:23.

That walketh in darkness - In a manner similar to the Messiah Isaiah 50:6. God‘s true people experience afflictions like others, and have often trials especially their own. They are sometimes in deep darkness of mind, and see no light. Comfort has forsaken them, and their days and nights are passed in gloom.

Let him trust in the name of the Lord - The Messiah had done this Isaiah 50:8-9, and he exhorts all others to do it. Doing this they would obtain divine assistance, and would find that he would never leave nor forsake them.

And stay upon his God - Lean upon him, as one does on a staff or other support. This may be regarded still as the language of the merciful

Redeemer, appealing to his own example, and entreating all who are in like circumstances, to put their trust in God.

Verse 11

Behold, all ye that kindle a fire - This verse refers to the wicked. In the previous verse, the Messiah had called upon all the pious to put their trust in God, and it is there implied that they would do so. But it would not be so with the wicked. In times of darkness and calamity, instead of trusting in God they would confide in their own resources, and endeavor to kindle a light for themselves in which they might walk. But the result would be, that they would find no comfort, and would ultimately under his hand lie down in sorrow. The figure is continued from the previous verse. The pious who are in darkness wait patiently for the light which Yahweh shall kindle for them But not so with the wicked. They attempt to kindle a light for themselves, and to walk in that. The phrase, ‹that kindle a fire,‘ refers to all the plans which people form with reference to their own salvation; all which they rely upon to guide them through the darkness of this world. It may include, therefore, all the schemes of human philosophy, of false religion, of paganism, of infidelity, deism, and self-righteousness; all dependence on our good works, our charities ties, and our prayers. All these are false lights which people enkindle, in order to guide themselves when they resolve to cast off God, to renounce his revelation, and to resist his spirit. It may have had a primary reference to the Jews, who so often rejected the divine guidance, and who relied so much on themselves; but it also includes all the plans which people devise to conduct themselves to heaven. The confidence of the pious Isaiah 50:10 is in the light of God; that of the wicked is in the light of people.

That compass yourselves about with sparks - There has been considerable variety in the interpretation of the word rendered here sparks (זיקות *ziyqôth*). It occurs nowhere else in the Bible, though the word זקים *ziqqiym* occurs in Proverbs 26:18, where it is rendered in the text ‹firebrands,‘ and in the margin ‹flames,‘ or ‹sparks.‘ Gesenius supposes that these are different forms at the same word, and renders the word here, ‹burning arrows, fiery darts.‘ The Vulgate renders it ‹flames.‘ The Septuagint, φλογὶ *phlogi* - ‹flame.‘ In the Syriac the word has the sense of lightning. Vitringa supposes it means ‹faggots,‘ and that the sense is, that they encompass themselves with faggots, in order to make a great conflagration. Lowth renders it, very loosely, ‹Who heap the fuel round

about.‘ But it is probable that the common version has given the true sense, and that the reference is to human devices, which give no steady and clear light, but which may be compared with a spark struck from a flint. The idea probably is, that all human devices for salvation bear the same resemblance to the true plan proposed by God, which a momentary spark in the dark does to the clear shining of a bright light like that of the sun. If this is the sense, it is a most graphic and striking description of the nature of all the schemes by which the sinner hopes to save himself.

Walk in the light of your fire - That is, you will walk in that light. It is not a command as if he wished them to do it, but it is a declaration which is intended to direct their attention to the fact that if they did this they would lie down in sorrow. It is language such as we often use, as when we say to a young man, ‹go on a little further in a career of dissipation, and you will bring yourself to poverty and shame and death.‘ Or as if we should say to a man near a precipice, ‹go on a little further, and you wilt fall down and be dashed in pieces.‘ The essential idea is, that this course would lead to ruin. It is implied that they would walk on in this way, and be destroyed.

This shall ye have - As the result of this, you shall lie down in sorrow. Herder renders this:

One movement of my hand upon you,
And ye shall lie down in sorrow.

How simple and yet how sublime an expression is this! The Messiah but lifts his hand and the lights are quenched. His foes lie down sad and dejected, in darkness and sorrow. The idea is, that they would receive their doom from his hand, and that it would he as easy for him as is the uplifting or waving of the hand, to quench all their lights, and consign them to grief (compare Matthew 25)

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 51

Introduction

This chapter, together with Isaiah 52:1-12, is one connected portion, and injury has been done by separating it. It is a part of Isaiah of exquisite beauty, and is a most suitable introduction to the important portion which follows Isaiah 52:13-15; Isaiah 53:1-12 respecting the Messiah. This is designed chiefly to comfort the Jews in their exile. They are regarded as in Babylon near the close of their captivity, and as earnestly desiring to be rescued. It is somewhat dramatic in its character, and is made up of alternate addresses of God and his people - the one urging the strong language of consolation, and the other fervent petitions for deliverance. The following analysis will give a correct view of the chapter:

I. God addresses them in the language of consolation, and directs them to remember the founder of their nation, and assures them that he is able also to deliver them Isaiah 51:1-3.

1. He speaks of them as pious, and as seeking the Lord Isaiah 51:1.

2. They were to remember Abraham and Sarah - the quarry, so to speak, from which the nation had been hewed; they were to remember how feeble they were, and yet how God had made a great nation of them, and to feel assured that God was equally able to conduct them forth and to multiply them into a great nation Isaiah 51:1-2.

3. A direct promise that God would comfort Zion, and make it like Eden Isaiah 51:3.

II. God calls upon his people to hearken to him, with the assurance that he would extend the true religion even to the Gentile world, and that his salvation should be more permanent than were the heavens Isaiah 51:4-6.

1. He would make his religion a light to the Jewish people Isaiah 51:4. Though now in darkness, yet they should be brought forth into light.

2. He would extend it to the isles - to the pagan world Isaiah 51:5.

3. It should be everlasting. The heavens should grow old and vanish, but his salvation should not be abolished Isaiah 51:6.

III. God assures them that they have no reason to despond on account of the number and power of their enemies. However mighty they were, yet

they should be consumed as the moth eats up a garment, and as the worm consumes wool Isaiah 51:7-8.

IV. The people are introduced as calling upon God, and as beseeching him to interpose as he had done in former times in their behalf Isaiah 51:9-10. In this appeal they refer to what God had done in former periods when he cut Rahab, that is, Egypt, in pieces, and delivered his people, and they cry to him to interpose in like manner again, and to deliver them.

V. To this petition Yahweh replies Isaiah 51:11-16 He assures them -

1. That his redeemed shall return with joy and triumph Isaiah 51:11.

2. He that had made the heavens was their comforter, and they had nothing to fear from man, or the fury of any oppressor Isaiah 51:12-13.

3. The captive exile was soon to be unloosed, and they hastened that they might be restored; that is, it would soon occur Isaiah 51:14.

4. Yahweh, who had divided the sea, was their protector. He had given them a solemn promise, and he had covered his people with the shadow of his hand, and he would defend them Isaiah 51:15-16.

VI. The chapter closes with a direct address to Jerusalem, and with assurances that it shall be rebuilt, and that it would he no more visited with such calamities Isaiah 51:17-23.

1. The calamities of Jerusalem are enumerated. She had drunk the cup of the fury of Yahweh; she had been forsaken of those who were qualified to guide her; desolation and destruction had therefore come upon her; her sons had fainted in the streets, and had drunk of the fury of God Isaiah 51:17-20.

2. God promises deliverance. She was drunken, but not with wine. God had taken out of her hand the cup of trembling, and she should no more drink it again; he would put that cup into the hand of those who had afflicted her, and they should drink it Isaiah 51:21-23.

Verse 1

Hearken unto me - That is, to the God of their fathers, who now addresses them. They are regarded as in exile and bondage, and as desponding in regard to their prospects. In this situation, God, or perhaps more properly the Messiah (compare the notes at Matthew 3:9, where he

says, ‹For I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.‘

The hole of the pit - The word rendered ‹hole‘ means such an excavation as men make who are taking stones from a quarry. It expresses substantially the same idea as the previous member of the verse. This language is sometimes addressed to Christians, with a view to produce humility by reminding them that they have been taken by God from a state of sin, and raised up, as it were, from a deep and dark pit of pollution. But this is not the sense of the passage, nor will it bear such an application. It may be used to denote that God has taken them, as stone is taken from the quarry; that he found them in their natural state as unhewn blocks of marble are; that he has moulded and formed them by his own agency, and fitted them into his spiritual temple; and that they owe all the beauty and grace of their Christian deportment to him; that this is an argument to prove that he who had done so much for them as to transform them, so to speak, from rough and unsightly blocks to polished stones, fitted for his spiritual temple on earth, is able to keep them still, and to fit them for his temple above. Such is the argument in the passage before us; and such a use of it is, of course, perfectly legitimate and fair.

Verse 2

Look unto Abraham - What was figuratively expressed in the former verse is here expressed literally. They were directed to remember that God had taken Abraham and Sarah from a distant land, and that from so humble a beginning he had increased them to a great nation. The argument is, that he was able to bless and increase the exile Jews, though comparatively feeble and few.

For I called him alone - Hebrew, ‹For one I called him;‘ that is, he was alone; there was but one, and he increased to a mighty nation. So Jerome, *Quia unum vocavi eum*. So the Septuagint, Ὅτι εἷς ἦν *hoti heis ēn* - ‹For he was one.‘ The point of the declaration here is, that God had called one individual - Abraham - and that he had caused him to increase until a mighty nation had sprung from him, and that he had the same power to increase the little remnant that remained in Babylon until they should again become a mighty people.

Verse 3

For the Lord shall comfort Zion - On the word ‹Zion,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 1:8. The meaning here is, that he would again restore it from its

ruins. The argument is drawn from the statement in the previous verses. If God had raised up so great a nation from so humble all origin, he had power to restore the waste places of Judea to more than their former beauty and prosperity (see the notes at Isaiah 40:1).

And he will make her wilderness - Judea is here represented as lying waste. It is to be remembered that the time to which the prophet here refers is that of the captivity, and near its close. Of course, as that would have continued seventy years, in so long a period Judea would have become almost an extended wilderness, a wide waste. Any country, that was naturally as fertile as Judea, would in that time be overrun with briers, thorns, and underbrush, and even with a wild and luxuriant growth of the trees of the forest.

Like Eden - Genesis 2:8. Septuagint, Ὡς παράδεισον κυρίου *Hōs paradeison kuriou* - ‹As the paradise of the Lord.‘ The idea is. that it should be again distinguished for its beauty and fertility.

Joy and gladness - The sound of rejoicing and praise shall be again heard there, where are now heard the cries of wild beasts.

The voice of melody - Hebrew, ‹A psalm The praises of God shall again be celebrated.

Verse 4

Hearken unto me, my people - Lowth reads this;

Attend unto me, O ye people,

And give ear unto me, O ye nations.

The reason why he proposes this change is, that he supposes the address here is made to the Gentiles and not to the Jews, and in favor of the change he observes, that two manuscripts read it in this manner. Gesenius (Commentary) says that three codices read עמים *ʿammiym* (“peoples”), instead of עמי *ʿamiy* (“my people”); and that thirteen MSS. read לאומים *le'ûmiym* (“nations”), instead of לאומי *leûmiy* (“my nation”). Noyes also has adopted this reading. But the authority is too slight to justify a change in the text. The Vulgate reads it in accordance with the present Hebrew text, and so substantially do the Septuagint. They render it, ‹Hear me, hear me, my people, and ye kings, give ear unto me.‘ It is not necessary to suppose any change in the text. The address is to the Jews; and the design is, to comfort them in view of the fact that the pagan would be brought to partake of the privileges and blessings of the true religion. They would not only be restored to their own land, but the true religion would be extended also to

the distant nations of the earth. In view of this great and glorious truth, Yahweh calls on his people to hearken to him, and receive the glad announcement. It was a truth in which they were deeply interested, and to which they should therefore attend.

For a law shall proceed from me - The idea here is, that Yahweh would give law to the distant nations by the diffusion of the true religion.

And I will make my judgment to rest for a light - The word ‹judgment‘ here is equivalent to law, or statute, or to the institutions of the true religion. The word rendered here ‹to rest‘ (ערגיע ʿ*aregiya*ʿ from רגע *râga*ʿ), Lowth renders, ‹I will cause to break forth.‘ Noyes renders it, ‹I will establish.‘ The Vulgate, *Requiescet* - ‹Shall rest.‘ The Septuagint renders it simply, ‹My judgment for a light of the nation.‘ The word properly means ‹to make afraid,‘ to terrify, to restrain by threats; rendered ‹divideth‘ in Job 26:12; Isaiah 51:15; then, to be afraid, to shrink from fear, and hence, to be still, or quiet, as if cowering down from fear. Here it means that he would set firmly his law; he would place it so that it would be established and immovable.

Verse 5

My righteousness is near - The word ‹righteousness‘ is used in a great variety of significations. Here it means, probably, the faithful completion of his promises to his people (Lowth).

My salvation is gone forth - The promise of salvation is gone forth, and already the execution of that purpose is commenced. He would soon deliver his people; he would at no distant period extend salvation to all nations.

And mine arm shall judge the people - That is, shall dispense judgment to them. The ‹arm‘ here is put for himself, as the arm is the instrument by which we execute our purposes (see the notes at Isaiah 51:9).

The isles shall wait upon me - The distant nations; the pagan lands (see the note at Isaiah 41:1). The idea is, that distant lands would become interested in the true religion, and acknowledge and worship the true God.

Verse 6

Lift up your eyes to the heavens - The design of directing their attention to the heavens and the earth is, probably, to impress them more deeply with a conviction of the certainty of his salvation in this manner, namely, the heavens and the earth appear firm and fixed; there is in them no apparent tendency to dissolution and decay. Yet though apparently thus

fixed and determined, they will all vanish away, but the promise of God will be unfailing.

For the heavens shall vanish away - The word which is rendered here ‹shall vanish away‘ (מלח *mâlach*), occurs nowhere else in the Bible. The primary idea, according to Gesenius, is that of smoothness and softness. Then it means to glide away, to disappear. The idea here is, that the heavens would disappear, as smoke is dissipated and disappears in the air. The idea of the vanishing, or the disappearing of the heavens and the earth, is one that often occurs in the Scriptures (see the notes at Isaiah 34:4; compare Psalm 102:26; Hebrews 1:11-12; 2 Peter 3:10-12).

The earth shall wax old … - Shall decay, and be destroyed (see Psalm 102:26).

And they that dwell therein shall die in like manner - Lowth renders this, ‹Like the vilest insect.‘ Noyes, ‹Like flies.‘ The Vulgate, and the Septuagint, however, render it as it is in our version. Rosenmuller renders it, ‹As flies.‘ Gesenius renders it, ‹Like a gnat.‘ This variety of interpretation arises from the different explanation of the word כן *kên* which usually means, ‹as, so, thus, in like manner, etc.‘ The plural form, however, (כנים *kiniym*), occurs in Psalm 105:31, and is rendered by the Septuagint, σκνῖφες *skniphes* and by the Vulgate, *sciniphes*, a species of small gnats, very troublesome from their sting, which abounds in the marshy regions of Egypt; and according to this the idea is, that the most mighty inhabitants of the earth would die like gnats, or the smallest and vilest insects. This interpretation gives a more impressive sense than our version, but it is doubtful whether it can be justified. The word occurs nowhere else in this sense, and the authority of the ancient versions is against it. The idea as given in the common translation is not feeble, as Gesenius supposes, but is a deeply impressive one, that the heavens, the earth, and all the inhabitants should vanish away together, and alike disappear.

But my salvation shall be for ever - It is a glorious truth that the redemption which God shall give his people shall survive the revolutions of kingdoms, and the consummation of all earthly things. It is not improbable that the Saviour had this passage in his eye when he said, ‹heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away‘ Matthew 24:35.

Verse 7

Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness - My people who are acquainted with my law, and who are to be saved. This is addressed to the

pious parlor the Jewish nation.

Fear ye not the reproach of men - If we have the promise of God, and the assurance of his favor, we shall have no occasion to dread the reproaches and the scoffs of people (compare Matthew 10:28).

Verse 8

For the moth - (see Isaiah 50:9). The idea is, that they shall be consumed as the moth eats up a garment; or rather, that the moth itself shall consume them as it does a garment: that is, that they were so weak when compared with Yahweh that even the moth, one of the smallest, and most contemptible of insects, would consume them. An expression remarkably similar to this occurs in Job 4:18-20:

Behold in his servants he putteth no confidence,
And his angels he chargeth with frailty;
How much more true is this of those who dwell in houses of clay,

Whose foundation is in the dust!

They are crashed before the moth-worm!

Between morning and evening they are destroyed;
Without anyone regarding it, they perish forever.

Perhaps the following extract from Niebuhr may throw some light on the passage, as showing that man may be crushed by so feeble a thing as a worm ‹A disease very common an Yemen is the attack of the Guiney-worm, or the ‹Verea-Medinensis,‘ as it is called by the physicians of Europe. This disease is supposed to be occasioned by the use of the putrid waters, which people are obliged to drink in various parts of Yemen; and for this reason the Arabians always pass water, with the nature of which they are unacquainted, through a linen cloth before using it. When one unfortunately swallows the eggs of this insect, no immediate consequence follows; but after a considerable time the worm begins to show itself through the skin. Our physician, Mr. Cramer, was within a few days of his death attacked by five of these worms at once, although this was more than five months after we left Arabia. In the isle of Karek I saw a French officer named Le Page, who, after a long and difficult journey, performed on foot, and in an Indian dress, between Pondicherry and Surat, through the heat of India, was busy extracting a worm out of his body. He supposed he had got it by drinking

bad water in the country of the Mahrattas. This disorder is not dangerous if the person who is affected can extract the worm without breaking it. With this view it is rolled on a small bit of wood as it comes out of the skin. It is slender as a thread, and two or three feet long. If unluckily it be broken, it then returns into the body, and the most disagreeable consequences ensue - palsy, a gangrene, and sometimes death.‘ A thought similar to that of Isaiah respecting man, has been beautifully expressed by Gray:

To contemplation‘s sober eye,
Such is the race of man;
And they that creep, and they that fly,
Shall end where they began.
Alike the busy and the gay,
But flutter through life‘s little day,
In fortune‘s varying colors drest;
Brush‘d by the hand of rough mischance,
Or chill‘d by age, their airy dance
They leave, in dust to rest.

And the worm shall eat them like wool - The word rendered ‹worm‘ (סס *sās*), probably means the same as the moth. The Arabic renders it by moth, weevil. The Septuagint, σής *sēs* It is of unfrequent occurrence in the Scriptures.

Verse 9

Awake, awake - This verse commences a new subject (see the analysis of the chapter). It is the solemn and impassioned entreaty of those who were in exile that God would interpose in their behalf, as he did in behalf of his people when they were suffering in cruel bondage in Egypt. The word ‹awake‘ here, which is addressed to the arm of Jehovah, is a petition that it might be roused from its apparent stupor and inactivity, and its power exerted in their behalf.

O arm of the Lord - The arm is the instrument by which we execute any purpose. It is that by which the warrior engages in battle, and by which he wields the weapon to prostrate his foes. The arm of Yahweh had seemed to slumber; For seventy years the prophet sees the oppressed and suffering people in bondage, and God had not come forth to rescue them. He hears them now lifting the voice of earnest and tender entreaty, that he would interpose as he had in former times, and save them from the calamities which they were enduring.

Awake, as in the ancient days - That is, in the time when the Jews were delivered from their bondage in the land of Egypt.

Art thou not it - Art thou not the same arm? Was it not by this arm that the children of Israel were delivered from bondage, and may we not look to it for protection still?

That hath cut Rahab - That is, cut it in pieces, or destroyed it. It was that arm which wielded the sword of justice and of vengeance by which Rahab was cut in pieces. The word ‹Rahab‘ here means Egypt. On the meaning of the word, see the notes at Isaiah 30:7; compare Psalm 88:8; Psalm 89:10.

And wounded the dragon - The word rendered here "dragon" (תנין *tannîyn*) means properly any great fish or sea monster; a serpent, a dragon (see the notes at Isaiah 27:1), or a crocodile. Here it means, probably, the crocodile, as emblematic of Egypt, because the Nile abounded in crocodiles, and because a monster so unwieldy and formidable and unsightly, was no unapt representation of the proud and cruel king of Egypt. The king of Egypt is not unfrequently compared with the crocodile (see Psalm 34:13-14; Ezekiel 29:3; Ezekiel 32:2). Here the sense is, that he had sorely wounded, that is, had greatly weakened the power of that cruel nation, which for strength was not unfitly represented by the crocodile, one of the most mighty of monsters, but which, like a pierced and wounded monster. was greatly enfeebled when God visited it with plagues, and destroyed its hosts in the sea.

Verse 10

Art thou not it - Art thou not still the same? The ground of the appeal is, that the same arm that dried up the sea, and made a path for the Jewish people, was still able to interpose and rescue them.

Which hath dried the sea - The Red Sea when the children of Israel passed over Exodus 14:21. This is the common illustration to which the Hebrew prophets and poets appeal, when they wish to refer to the interposition of God in favor of their nation (compare Isaiah 43:16).

For the ransomed to pass over - Those who had been ransomed from Egypt. The word rendered ‹ransomed‘ is that which is commonly rendered ‹redeemed.‘ The argument in this verse is, that he who had overcome all the obstacles in the way of their deliverance from Egypt, was able also to overcome all the obstacles in the way of their deliverance from Babylon; and that he who had thus interposed might be expected again to manifest his

mercy, and save them again from oppression. The principle involved in the argument is as applicable now as it was then. All God‘s past interpositious - and especially the great and wonderful interposition when be gave his Son for his church - constitute an argument that be will still continue to regard the interests of his people, and will interpose in their behalf and save them.

Verse 11

Therefore the redeemed of the Lord - This is probably the language of Yahweh assuring them, in answer to their prayer, that his ransomed people should again return to Zion.

And everlasting joy shall be upon their head - This entire verse occurs also in Isaiah 35:10. See it explained in the note on that verse. The custom of singing alluded to here on a journey is now very common in the East. It is practiced to relieve the tediousness of a journey over extended plains, as well as to induce the camels in a caravan to move with greater rapidity. The idea here is, that the caravan that should return from Babylon to Jerusalem, across the extended plains, should make the journey amidst general exultation and joy - cheered on their way by songs, and relieving the tedium of their journey by notes of gladness and of praise.

Verse 12

I even I am he that comforteth you - The word ‹I‘ is repeated here to give emphasis to the passage, and to impress deeply upon them the fact that their consolation came alone from God. The argument is, that since God was their protector and friend, they had no occasion to fear anything that man could do.

Of a man that shall die - God your comforter will endure forever. But all men - even the most mighty - must soon die. And if God is our protector, what occasion can we have to fear what a mere mortal can do to us?

And of the son of man - This phrase is common in the Hebrew Scriptures, and means the same as man.

Shall be made as grass - They shall perish as grass does that is cut down at mid-day (see the notes at Isaiah 40:6-7).

Verse 13

And forgettest the Lord thy Maker - These verses are designed to rebuke that state of the mind - alas! too common, even among the people of God - where they are intimidated by the number and strength of their foes, and forget their dependence on God, and his promises of aid. In such circumstances God reproves them for their want of confidence in him, and

calls on them to remember that he has made the heavens, and has all power to save them.

That hath stretched forth the heavens - (See the notes at Isaiah 40:12, Isaiah 40:26).

And hast feared continually every day - They had continually feared and trembled before their oppressors.

Because of the fury of the oppressor - Those who had oppressed them in Babylon.

As if he were ready to destroy - Margin, ‹Made himself ready,‘ The idea is, that he was preparing to destroy the people - perhaps as a marksman is making ready his bow and arrows. The oppressor had been preparing to crush them in the dust, and they trembled, and did not remember that God was abundantly able to protect them.

And where is the fury of the oppressor? - What is there to dread? The idea is, that the enemies of the Jews would be cut off, and that they should therefore put their confidence in God, and rely on his promised aid.

Verse 14

The captive exile - Lowth renders this, evidently very improperly, ‹He marcheth on with speed who cometh to set the captive free;‘ and supposes that it refers to Cyrus, if understood of the temporal redemption from the captivity at Babylon; in the spiritual sense, to the Messiah. But the meaning evidently is, that the exile who had been so long as it were enchained in Babylon, was about to be set free, and that the time was very near when the captivity was to end. The prisoner should not die there, but should be conducted again to his own land. The word used here, and rendered ‹captive exile‘ (צעה *tsoʿeh* from צעה *tsâʿâh*), means properly ‹that which is turned on one side,‘ or inclined, as, e. g., a vessel for pouring Jeremiah 48:12. Then it means that which is inclined, bent, or bowed down as a captive in bonds. The Chaldee renders this, ‹Vengeance shall be quickly revealed, and the just shall not die in corruption, and their food shall not fail.‘ Aben Ezra renders it, ‹Bound.‘ The idea is, that they who were bowed down under bondage and oppression in Babylon, should very soon be released. This is one of the numerous passages which show that the scene of the prophetic vision is Babylon, and the time near the close of the captivity, and that the design of the prophet is to comfort them there, and to afford them the assurance that they would soon be released.

And that he should not die in the pit - That is, in Babylon, represented as a prison, or a pit. The nation would be restored to their own land. Prisoners were often confined in a deep pit or cavern, and hence, the word is synonymous with prison. The following extract from Pax. ton will illustrate this. ‹The Athenians, and particularly the tribe of Hippothoontis, frequently condemned offenders to the pit. It was a dark, noisome hole, and had sharp spikes at the top, that no criminal might escape; and others at the bottom, to pierce and torment those unhappy persons who were thrown in. Similar to this place was the Lacedemonian Καιαδας *Kaiadas* into which Aristomenes the Messenian being cast, made his escape in a very surprising manner.‘ Compare also Genesis 37:20; Numbers 16:30; Psalm 9:15; Psalm 28:1; Psalm 30:3, Psalm 30:9; Psalm 40:2; Psalm 55:23; Psalm 119:85; Psalm 140:10; Jeremiah 37:21; Zechariah 9:11.

Nor that his bread should fail - His needs shall be supplied until he is released.

Verse 15

But I am the Lord thy God - In order to show them that he was able to save them, God again refers to the fact that he had divided the sea, and delivered their fathers from bondage and oppression.

That divided the sea - The Red Sea. The Chaldee renders this, ‹That rebuked the sea.‘ The Septuagint, Ὁ ταράσσων *ho tarassōn* - ‹Who disturbs the sea.‘ or, who excites a tempest. Lowth renders it, ‹Who stilleth at once the sea.‘ The Hebrew word is the same which occurs in Isaiah 51:4, where it is rendered, ‹I will make my judgment to rest‘ (רגע *râga*ʿ). Probably the idea here is, that he restrains the raging of the sea as if by fear; that is, makes it tranquil or still by rebuking it. He had this power over all raging seas, and he had shown it in a special manner by his rebuking the Red Sea and making it rest, and causing a way to be made through it, when the children of Israel came out of Egypt.

The Lord of hosts is his name - (See the notes at Isaiah 1:9; compare the notes at Isaiah 42:8).

Verse 16

And I have put my words in thy mouth - That is, he had committed his truth to the Jewish people; to Zion. He had entrusted them with his statutes and his laws; he had given them the promise of the Messiah, and through him the assurance that the true religion would be spread to other

nations. He would, therefore, preserve them, and restore them again to their own land.

And have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand - That is, I have protected thee (see the notes at Isaiah 49:2).

That I may plant the heavens - Lowth renders this, ‹To stretch out the heavens.‘ Noyes, ‹To establish the heavens.‘ Jerome, *Ut plantes coelos* - ‹That thou mayest plant the heavens.‘ The Septuagint, Ἐν ᾗ ἔστησα τὸν οὐρανὸν *En ē estēsa ton ouranon* ‹By which I have established heaven.‘ The Chaldee renders it, ‹In the shadow of my power have I protected thee, that I might raise up the people of whom it was said, that they should be multiplied as the stars of heaven.‘ But the language here is evidently entirely figurative. It refers to the restoration of the Jews to their own land; to the re-establishment of religion there; to the introduction of the new economy under the Messiah, and to all the great changes which would be consequent on that. This is compared with the work of forming the heavens, and laying the foundation of the earth. It would require almighty power; and it would produce so great changes, that it might be compared to the work of creating the universe out of nothing. Probably also the idea is included here that stability would be given to the true religion by what God was about to do permanency that might be compared with the firmness and duration of the heavens and the earth.

And say unto Zion … - That is, God would restore them to their own land, and acknowledge them as his own.

Verse 17

Awake, awake - (See the notes at Isaiah 51:9). This verse commences an address to Jerusalem under a new figure or image. The figure employed is that of a man who has been overcome by the cup of the wrath of Yahweh, that had produced the same effect as inebriation. Jerusalem had reeled and fallen prostrate. There had been none to sustain her, and she had sunk to the dust. Calamities of the most appalling kind had come upon her, and she is now called on to arouse from this condition, and to recover her former splendor and power.

Which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord - The wrath of Yahweh is not unfrequently compared to a cup producing intoxication. The reason is, that it produces a similar effect. It prostrates the strength, and makes the subject of it reel, stagger, and fall. In like manner, all calamities are represented under the image of a cup that is drunk, producing a prostrating

effect on the frame. Thus the Saviour says, ‹The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?‘ (John 18:11; compare Matthew 20:22-23; Matthew 26:39, Matthew 26:42). The effects of drinking the cup of God‘s displeasure are often beautifully set forth. Thus, in Psalm 75:8:

In the hand of Jehovah there is a cup, and the wine is red;
It is full of a mixed liquor, and he poureth out of the same,
Verily the dregs thereof all the ungodly of the earth shall wring them out and drink them.

Plato, as referred to by Lowth, has an idea resembling this. ‹Suppose,‘ says he, ‹God had given to men a medicating potion inducing fear; so that the more anyone should drink of it, so much the more miserable he should find himself at every draught, and become fearful of everything present and future; and at last, though the most courageous of people, should become totally possessed by fear; and afterward, having slept off the effects of it, should become himself again.‘ A similar image is used by Homer (Iliad, xvi. 527ff), where he places two vessels at the threshold of Jupiter, one of good, the other of evil. He gives to some a mixed potion of each; to others from the evil vessel only, and these are completely miserable:

Two urns by Jove‘s high throne have ever stood
The source of evil one, and one of good;
From thence the cup of mortal man he fills,

Blessings to these; to those distributes ills.

To most he mingles both: The wretch decreed

To taste the bad unmix‘d, is curs‘d indeed;

Pursued by wrongs, by meagre famine driven,

He wanders, outcast by both earth and heaven:

The happiest taste not happiness sincere,
But find the cordial draught is dash‘d with care.

But nowhere is this image handled with greater force and sublimity than in this passage of Isaiah. Jerusalem is here represented as staggering under the effects of it; she reels and falls; none assist her from where she might

expect aid; not one of them is able to support her. All her sons had fainted and become powerless Isaiah 51:20; they were lying prostrate at the head of every street, like a bull taken in a net, struggling in vain to rend it, and to extricate himself. Jehovah‘s wrath had produced complete and total prostration throughout the whole city.

Thou hast drunken the dregs - Gesenius renders this, ‹The goblet cup.‘ But the common view taken of the passage is, that it means that the cup had been drunk to the dregs. All the intoxicating liquor had been poured off. They had entirely exhausted the cup of the wrath of God. Similar language occurs in Revelation 14:10: ‹The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation.‘ The idea of the dregs is taken from the fact that, among the ancients, various substances, as honey, dates, etc., were put into wine, in order to produce the intoxicating quality in the highest degree. The sediment of course would remain at the bottom of the cask or cup when the wine was poured off. Homer, who lived about a thousand years before Christ, and whose descriptions are always regarded as exact accounts of the customs in his time, frequently mentions potent drugs as being mixed with wines. In the ‹Odyssey‘ (iv. 220), he tells us that Helen prepared for Telemachus and his companions a beverage which was highly stupefactive, and soothing to his mind. To produce these qualities, he says that she threw into the wine drugs which were:

Νηπενθες τ᾽ ἀλοχον τε κακων ἐπιληθον ἁπαντων -

Nēpenthes t' alochon te kakōn epilēthon apantōn -

Grief-assuaging, rage-allaying, and the oblivious antidote for every species of misfortune. Such mixtures were common among the Hebrews. It is possible that John Revelation 14:10 refers to such a mixture of the simple juice of the grape with intoxicating drugs when he uses the expression implying a seeming contradiction, κεκερασμένου ἀκράτου *kekerasmenou akratou* - (mixed, unmixed wine) - rendered in our version, ‹poured out without mixture.‘ The reference is rather to the pure juice of the grape mixed, or mingled with intoxicating drugs.

The cup of trembling - The cup producing trembling, or intoxication (compare Jeremiah 25:15; Jeremiah 49:12; Jeremiah 51:7; Lamentations 4:21; Habakkuk 2:16; Ezekiel 23:31-33). The same figure occurs often in the Arabic poets (see Gesenius Commentary zu. Isa. *in loc*.)

And wrung them out - (מציתם *mâtsiym*). This properly means, to suck out; that is, they had as it were sucked off all the liquid from the dregs.

Verse 18

There is none to guide her - The image here is taken from the condition of one who is under the influence of an intoxicating draught, and who needs some one to sustain and guide him. The idea is, than among all the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the time of the calamity, there was none who could restore to order the agitated and distracted affairs of the nation. All its wisdom was destroyed; its counsels perplexed; its power overcome.

All the sons whom she hath brought forth - All the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Verse 19

These two things are come unto thee - Margin, ‹Happened.‘ That is, two sources of calamity have come upon thee; to wit, famine and the sword, producing desolation and destruction; or desolation by famine, and destruction by the sword (see Lowth on Hebrew Poetry, Lect. xix.) The idea here is, that far-spread destruction had occurred, caused by the two things, famine and the sword.

Who shall be sorry for thee? - That is, who shall be able so to pity thee as to furnish relief?

Desolation - By famine.

And destruction - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹Breaking.‘ refers to the calamities which would be inflicted by the sword. The land would be desolated, and famine would spread over it. This refers, doubtless, to the series of calamities that would come upon it in connection with the invasion of the Chaldeans.

By whom shall I comfort thee? - This intimates a desire on the part of Yahweh to give them consolation. But the idea is, that the land would be laid waste, and that they who would have been the natural comforters should be destroyed. There would be none left to whom a resort could be had for consolation.

Verse 20

Thy sons - Jerusalem is here represented as a mother. Her sons, that is, her inhabitants, had become weak and prostrate everywhere, and were unable to afford consolation.

They lie at the head of all the streets - The ‹head‘ of the streets is the same which in Lamentations 2:19; Lamentations 4:1, is denominated ‹the

top of the streets.‘ The head or top of the streets denotes, doubtless, the beginning of a way or street; the corner from which other streets diverge. These would be public places, where many would be naturally assembled, and where, in time of a siege, they would be driven together. This is a description of the state produced by famine. Weak, pale, and emaciated, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, in the places of public concourse, would lie prostrate and inefficient, and unable to meet and repel their foes. They would be overpowered with famine, as a wild bull is insnared in a net, and rendered incapable of any effort. This reters undoubtedly to the famine that would be produced during the siege of the Babylonians. The state of things under the siege has been also described by Jeremiah:

Arise, cry out in the night;
In the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart before the Lord;
Lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children,

That faint for hunger at the top of every street.

The young and old lie on the ground in the streets,

My virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword;

Thou hast slain them in the day of thy anger;

Thou hast killed, and not pitied.
- *Lamentations 2:19-21*
The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of
His mouth for thirst;

The young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them;

They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets;

They that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills.
- *Lamentations 4:4-5*

As a wild bull in a net - The word rendered here ‹wild bull‘ is תוא *tô'* Gesenius supposes it is the same as תאו *t'ô* a species of gazelle, so called from its swiftness. Aquila, Symm. and Theod. render it here, Ὀρυξ *Oruch* -

‹Oryx;‘ Jerome also renders it, Oryx - ‹A wild goat‘ or stag. The Septuagint renders it, Σευτλίον ἡμίεφθον *Seutlion hēmiephthon* - ‹A parboiled beet!‘ The Chaldee, ‹As broken bottles.‘ Bochart (Hieroz. i. 3. 28), supposes it means a species of mountain-goat, and demonstratos that it is common in the East to take such animals in a net. Lowth renders it, ‹Oryx.‘ The streets of Hebrew towns, like those of ancient Babylon, and of most modern Oriental cities, had gates which were closed at night, and on some occasions of broil and danger. A person then wishing to escape would be arrested by the closed gate and if he was pursued, would be taken somewhat like a wild bull in a net. It was formerly the custom, as it is now in Oriental countries, to take wild animals in this manner. A space of ground of considerable extent - usually in the vicinity of springs and brooks, where the animals were in the habit of repairing morning and evening - was enclosed by nets into which the animals were driven by horsemen and hounds, and when there enclosed, they were easily taken. Such scenes are still represented in Egyptian paintings (see Wilkinson‘s Ancient Egyptians, vol. iii. pp. 2-36), and such a custom prevailed among the Romans. Virgil represents AEneas and Dido as repairing to a wood for the purpose of hunting at break of day, and the attendants as surrounding the grove with nets or toils.

Venatum AEneas, unaque miscrrima Dido,
In nemus ire parant, ubi primos crastinus ortus
Extulerit Titan, radusque retexerit orbem.

His ego nigrantem conmixta grandine nimbum,

Dum trepidant alae, saltusque indagine cingunt,

Desuper infundam, et tonitru coelum omne ciebo.
AEn. iv. 117ff.

The idea here is plain. It is, that as a wild animal is secured by the toils of the hunter, and rendered unable to escape, so it was with the inhabitants of Jerusalem suffering under the wrath of God. They were humbled, and prostrate, and powerless, and were, like the stag that was caught, entirely at the disposal of him who had thus insnared them.

Verse 21

And drunken, but not with wine - Overcome and prostrate, but not under the influence of intoxicating drink. They were prostrate by the wrath of God.

Verse 22

I have taken out of thy hand the cup of trembling - (See the notes at Isaiah 51:17). This verse contains a promise that they would be delivered from the effect of the wrath of God, under which they had been suffering so long.

Thou shalt no more drink it again - Thou shalt no more be subject to similar trials and calamities (see Isaiah 54:7-9). Probably the idea here is, not that Jerusalem would never be again destroyed, which would not be true, for it was afterward subjected to severer trials under the Romans; but that the people who should then return - the pious exiles - should be preserved forever after from similar sufferings. The object of the prophet is to console them, and this he does by the assurance that they should be subjected to such trials no more.

Verse 23

But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee - The nations that have made war upon thee, and that have reduced thee to bondage, particularly the Babylonians. The calamities which the Jews had suffered, God would transfer to their foes.

Which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over - This is a striking description of the pride of eastern conquerors. It was not uncommon for conquerors actually to put their feet on the necks of conquered kings, and tread them in the dust. Thus in Joshua 10:24, ‹Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war that went with them, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings.‘ So David says, ‹Thou has given me the necks of mine enemies‘ Psalm 18:40. ‹The emperor Valerianus being through treachery taken prisoner by Sapor king of Persia, was treated by him as the basest and most abject slave, for the Persian monarch commanded the unhappy Roman to bow himself down and offer him his back, on which he set his foot in order to mount his chariot, or his horse, whenever he had occasion.‘ (Lactantius, as quoted by Lowth) Mr. Lane (Modern Egyptians, vol. i. p. 199) describes an annual ceremony which may serve to illustrate this passage: ‹A considerable number of Durweeshes, says he (I am sure there were not less than sixty, but I could not count their number), laid themselves down upon

the ground, side by side, as close as possible to each other, having their backs upward, having their legs extended, and their arms placed together beneath their foreheads.

When the Sheikh approached, his horse hesitated several minutes to step upon the back of the first prostrate man; but being pulled and urged on behind, he at length stepped upon them: and then without apparent fear, ambled with a high pace over them all, led by two persons, who ran over the prostrate men, one sometimes treading on the feet, and the other on the heads. Not one of the men thus trampled on by the horse seemed to be hurt; but each the moment that the animal had passed over him, jumped up and followed the Sheikh. Each of them received two treads from the horse, one from one of his fore-legs, and a second from a hind-leg.' It seems probable that this is a relic of an ancient usage alluded to in the Bible, in which captives were made to lie down on the ground, and the conqueror rode insultingly over them.

Thou hast laid thy body as the ground - That is, you were utterly humbled and prostrated (compare Psalm 66:11-12). From all this, however, the promise is, that they should be rescued and delivered. The account of their deliverance is contained in the following chapter Isaiah 52:1-12; and the assurance of rescue is there made more cheering and glorious by directing the eye forward to the coming of the Messiah Isaiah 52:13-15; Isaiah 53:1-12, and to the glorious results which would follow from his advent (Isaiah 54:1). These chapters are all connected, and they should be read continuously. Material injury is done to the sense by the manner in which the division is made, if indeed any division should have been made at all.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 52

Introduction

This chapter is intimately connected with the preceding, and, with that, constitutes one connected portion (see the analysis of Isaiah 52:13 of this chapter, where there commences a prophecy extending through Isaiah 53:1-12, relating solely to the Messiah, and constituting the most important and interesting part of the Old Testament. In this chapter, the object is to console the pious part of the Jewish community. The general topic is, the promise of a rich blessing, first at the deliverance from the captivity at Babylon, and then, in a more complete sense, at the coming of the Messiah. The chapter comprises the following topics:

1. Jerusalem, long in bondage, is called on to arise and shake herself from the dust, and to put on her beautiful garments Isaiah 52:1-2. She is addressed in accordance with language that is common in Isaiah, and the other prophets, as a female sitting on the ground, covered with dust, and mourning over her desolations.

2. Yahweh expressly promises to deliver his people from their captivity and bondage Isaiah 52:3-6. In stating this, he says Isaiah 52:3, that they had sold themselves for nothing, and should be redeemed without money; he appeals to the fact that be had delivered them from Egyptian oppression in former years, and that he was as able to deliver them now Isaiah 52:4; and he says Isaiah 52:5-6, that he would have compassion on them now that they were suffering under their grievous bondage, and would furnish them with the most ample demonstration that he alone was God.

3. The prophet, in vision, sees the messenger on the mountains that comes to proclaim restoration to Zion Isaiah 52:7-8. He speaks of the beauty of the feet of him who bears the glad message Isaiah 52:7; and says that when that messenger is seen bearing the glad tidings,‘ the watchman‘ should join in the exultation Isaiah 52:8.

4. Jerusalem, and all the waste and desolate regions of Judea, are called on to break out into singing at the glad and glorious events which would occur when the people of God should be again restored Isaiah 52:9-10.

5. In view of all this, the people are called on to depart from Babylon, and to return to their own land Isaiah 52:11-12. They were to go out pure. They were not to contaminate themselves with the polluted objects of idolatry. They were about to bear back again to Jerusalem the consecrated vessels of the house of Yahweh, and they should be clean and holy. They should not go out with haste, as if driven out, but they would go defended by Yahweh, and conducted by him to their own land.

6. At Isaiah 52:13, the subject and the scene changes. The eye of the prophet becomes fixed on that greater future event to which the deliverance from Babylon was preparatory, and the whole attention becomes absorbed in the person, the manner of life, and the work of the Messiah. This part of the chapter Isaiah 52:13-15, is an essential part of the prophecy which is continued through Isaiah 53:1-12, and should by no means have been separated from it. In this portion of the prophecy, all reference to the captivity at Babylon ceases; and the eye of the prophet is fixed, without vacillating, on the person of the Redeemer. In no other portion of the Old Testament is there so clear and sublime a description of the Messiah as is furnished here; and no other portion demands so profoundly and prayerfully the attention of those who would understand the great mystery of redeeming mercy and love.

Verse 1

Awake, awake - (See the notes at Isaiah 51:9). This address to Jerusalem is intimately connected with the closing verses of the preceding chapter. Jerusalem is there represented as down-trodden in the dust before her enemies. Here she is described under the image of a female that had been clad in the habiliments of mourning, and she is now called on to arise from this condition, and to put on the garments that would be indicative of gladness and of joy. The idea is, that the time had come now in which she was to be delivered from her long captivity, and was to be restored to her former prosperity and splendor.

Put on thy strength - Hebrew, ‹Clothe thyself with thy strength.‘ The idea is, exert thyself, be strong, bold, confident; arise from thy dejection, and become courageous as one does when he is about to engage in an enterprise that promises success, and that demands effort.

Put on thy beautiful garments - Jerusalem is here addressed, as she often is, as a female (see the note at Isaiah 1:8). She was to lay aside the garments expressive of grief and of captivity, and deck herself with those which were appropriate to a state of prosperity.

The uncircumcised and the unclean - The idea is, that those only should enter Jerusalem and dwell there who would be worshippers of the true God. The uncircumcised are emblems of the impure, the unconverted, and the idolatrous; and the meaning is, that in future times the church would be pure and holy. It cannot mean that no uncircumcised man or idolater would ever again enter the city of Jerusalem, for this would not be true. It was a fact that Antiochus and his armies, and Titus and his army entered Jerusalem, and undoubtedly hosts of others did also who were not circumcised. But this refers to the future times, when the church of God would be pure. Its members would, in the main, be possessors of the true religion, and would adorn it. Probably, therefore, the view of the prophet extended to the purer and happier times under the Messiah, when the church should be characteristically and eminently holy, and when, as a great law of that church, none should be admitted, who did not profess that they were converted.

Verse 2

Shake thyself from the dust - To sit on the ground, to sit in the dust, is an expression descriptive of mourning Job 2:13. Jerusalem is here called on to arise and shake off the dust, as indicating that the days of her grief were ended, and that she was about to be restored to her former beauty and splendor.

Arise and sit down - There is an incongruity in this expression in our translation, which does not occur in the original. The idea in the Hebrew is not that which seems to be implied in this expression to arise and sit down in the same place, but it means to arise from the dust, and sit in a more elevated, or honorable place. She had been represented as sitting on the earth, where her loose flowing robes would be supposed to become covered with dust. She is here called on to arise from that humble condition, and to occupy the divan, or a chair of dignity and honor. Lowth renders this, ‹Ascend thy lofty seat,‘ and supposes it means that she was to occupy a throne, or an elevated seat of honor, and he quotes oriental customs to justify this interpretation. Noyes renders it, ‹Arise and sit erect.‘ The Chaldee renders it, ‹Rise, sit upon the throne of thy glory.‘ The following

quotation, from Jowett‘s Christian Researches, will explain the custom which is here alluded to: ‹It is no uncommon thing to see an individual, or group of persons, even when very well dressed, sitting with their feet drawn under them, upon the bare earth, passing whole hours in idle conversation.

Europeans would require a chair, but the natives here prefer the ground. In the heat of summer and autumn, it is pleasant to them to while away their time in this manner, under the shade of a tree. Richly adorned females, as well as men, may often be seen thus amusing themselves. As may naturally be expected, with whatever care they may, at first sitting down, choose their place, yet the flowing dress by degrees gathers up the dust; as this occurs, they, from time to time, arise, adjust themselves, shake off the dust, and then sit down again. The captive daughter of Zion, therefore, brought down to the dust of suffering and oppression, is commanded to arise and shake herself from that dust, and then, with grace, and dignity, and composure, and security, to sit down; to take, as it were, again her seat and her rank, amid the company of the nations of the earth, which had before afflicted her, and trampled her to the earth.‘

Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck - Jerusalem had been a captive, and confined as a prisoner. She is now called on to cast off these chains from her neck, and to be again at liberty. In captivity, chains or bands were attached to various parts of the body. They were usually affixed to the wrists or ankles, but it would seem also that sometimes collars were affixed to theneck. The idea is, that the Jews, who had been so long held captive, were about to be released, and restored to their own land.

Verse 3

Ye have sold yourselves for nought - You became captives and prisoners without any price being paid for you. You cost nothing to those who made you prisoners. The idea is, that as they who had made them prisoners had done so without paying any price for them, it was equitable that they should be released in the same manner. When their captors had paid nothing for them, God would suffer nothing to be paid for them in turn; and they should be released, as they had been sold, without a price paid for them. Perhaps God intends here to reproach them for selling themselves in this manner without any compensation of any kind, and to show them the folly of it; but, at the same time, he intends to assure them that no price would be paid for their ransom.

Ye shall be redeemed - You shall be delivered from your long and painful captivity without any price being paid to the Babylonians. This was to be a remarkable proof of the power of God. Men do not usually give up captives and slaves, in whatever way they may have taken them, without demanding a price or ransom. But here God says that he designs to effect their deliverance without any such price being demanded or paid, and that as they had gone into captivity unpurchased, so they should return unpurchased. Accordingly he so overruled events as completely to effect this. The Babylonians, perhaps, in no way could have been induced to surrender them. God, therefore, designed to raise up Cyrus, a mild, just, and equitable prince; and to dispose him to suffer the exiles to depart, and to aid them in their return to their own land. In this way, they were rescued without money and without price, by the interposition of another.

Verse 4

For thus saith the Lord God - In order to show them that he could redeem them without money, God reminds them of what had been done in former times. The numerous captives in Egypt, whose services were so valuable to the Egyptians, and whom the Egyptians were so unwilling to suffer to depart, he had rescued by his own power, and had delivered for ever from that bondage. The idea here is, that with the same ease he could rescue the captives in Babylon, and restore them to their own land without a price.

My people went down - That is, Jacob and his sons. The phrase ‹went down,‘ is applied to a journey to Egypt, because Judea was a mountainous and elevated country compared with Egypt, and a journey there was in fact a descent to a more level and lower country.

To sojourn there - Not to dwell there permanently, but to remain there only for a time. They went in fact only to remain until the severity of the famine should have passed by, and until they could return with safety to the land of Canaan.

And the Assyrians oppressed them without cause - A considerable variety has existed in the interpretation of this passage. The Septuagint renders it, ‹And to the Assyrians they were carried by force.‘ Some have supposed that this refers to the oppressions that they experienced in Egypt, and that the name ‹Assyrian‘ is here given to Pharaoh. So Forerius and Cajetan understand it. They suppose that the name, ‹the Assyrian,‘ became, in the apprehension of the Jews, the common name of that which was

proud, oppressive, and haughty, and might therefore be used to designate Pharaoh. But there are insuperable objections to this. For the name ‹the Assyrian‘ is not elsewhere given to Pharaoh in the Scriptures, nor can it be supposed to be given to him but with great impropriety. It is not true that Pharaoh was an Assyrian; nor is it true that the Israelites were oppressed by the Assyrians while they remained in Egypt. Others have supposed that this refers to Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans in general, and that the name ‹the Assyrian‘ is given them in a large and general sense, as ruling over that which constituted the empire of Assyria, and that the prophet here refers to the calamities which they were suffering in Babylon. But the objection to this is not the less decisive.

It is true that Babylon was formerly a part or province of Assyria, and true also that in the time of the Jewish captivity it was the capital of the kingdom of which the former empire of Assyria became a subject province. But the name Babylonian, in the Scriptures, is kept distinct from that of Assyrian, and they are not used interchangeably. Nor does the connection of the passage require us to understand it in this sense. The whole passage is in a high degree elliptical, and something must be supplied to make out the sense. The general design of it is, to show that God would certainly deliver the Jews from the captivity at Babylon without money. For this purpose, the prophet appeals to the former instances of his interposition when deliverance had been effected in that way. A paraphrase of the passage, and a filling up of the parts which are omitted in the brief and abrupt manner of the prophet, will show the sense. ‹Ye have been sold for nought, and ye shall be ransomed without price.

As a proof that I can do it, and will do it, remember that my people went down formerly to Egypt, and designed to sojourn there for a little time, and that they were there reduced to slavery, and oppressed by Pharaoh, but that I ransomed them without money, and brought them forth by my own power. Remember, further, how often the Assyrian has oppressed them also, without cause. Remember the history of Sennacherib, Tiglath-pileser, and Salmaneser, and how they have laid the land waste, and remember also how I have delivered it from these oppressions. With the same certainty, and the same ease, I can deliver the people from the captivity at Babylon.‘ The prophet, therefore, refers to different periods and events; and the idea is, that God had delivered them when they had been oppressed alike by the

Egyptian, and by the Assyrians, and that he who had so often interposed would also rescue them from their oppression in Babylon.

Verse 5

Now, therefore, what have I here? - In Babylon, referring to the captivity of the Jews there. The idea is, that a state of things existed there which demanded his interposition as really as it did when his people had been oppressed by the Egyptians, or by the Assyrian. His people had been taken away for nought; they were subject to cruel oppressions; and his own name was continually blasphemed. In this state of things, it is inferred, that he would certainly come to their rescue, and that his own perfections as well as their welfare demanded that he should interpose to redeem them. The phrase, ‹what have I here?‘ is equivalent to saying, what shall I do? what am I properly called on to do? or what reason is there now in Babylon for my interposition to rescue my people? It is implied, that such was the state of things, that God felt that there was something that demanded his interposition.

That my people is taken away for nought - This was one thing existing in Babylon that demanded his interposition. His people had been made captive by the Chaldeans, and were now suffering under their oppressions. This had been done ‹for nought;‘ that is, it had been done without any just claim. It was on their part a mere act of gross and severe oppression, and this demanded the interposition of a righteous God.

They that rule over them make them to howl - Lowth renders this, ‹They that are lords over them make their boast of it.‘ Noyes renders it, ‹And their tyrants exult.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹My people are taken away for nought: wonder ye, and raise a mournful cry‘ (ὀλολύζετε *ololuzete*). Jerome renders it, ‹Their lords act unjustly, and they therefore howl when they are delivered to torments.‘ Aben Ezra supposes that by ‹their lords‘ here, or those who rule over them, are meant the rulers of the Jewish people, and that the idea is, that they lament and howl over the calamities and oppressions of the people. But it is probable, after all, that our translators have given the true sense of the text, and that the idea is, that they were suffering such grievous oppressions in Babylon as to make them lift up the cry of lamentation and of grief. This was a reason why God should interpose as he had done in former times, and bring deliverance.

And my name continually every day is blasphemed - That is, in Babylon. The proud and oppressive Babylonians delight to add to the sorrows of the exiles by reproaching the name of their God, and by saying that he was unable to defend them and their city from ruin. This is the third reason why God would interpose to rescue them. The three reasons in this verse are, that they had been taken away for nought; that they were suffering grievous and painful oppression; and that the name of God was reproached. On all these accounts he felt that he had something to do in Babylon, and that his interposition was demanded.

Verse 6

Therefore my people shall know my name - The idea in this verse is, that his people should have such exhibitions of his power as to furnish to them demonstration that he was God.

Verse 7

How beautiful upon the mountains - This passage is applied by Paul to the ministers of the gospel (see Romans 10:15). The meaning here seems to be this: Isaiah was describing the certain return of the Jews to their own land. He sees in vision the heralds announcing their return to Jerusalem running on the distant hills. A herald bearing good news is a beautiful object; and he says that his feet are beautiful; that is, his running is beautiful. He came to declare that the long and painful captivity was closed, and that the holy city and its temple were again to rise with splendor, and that peace and plenty and joy were to be spread over the land. Such a messenger coming with haste, the prophet says, would be a beautiful object. Some have supposed (see Campbell on the Gospels, Diss. v. p. 11, Section 3,4), that the idea here is, that the feet of messengers when they traveled in the dust were naturally offensive and disgusting, but that the messenger of peace and prosperity to those who had been oppressed and afflicted by the ravages of war, was so charming as to transform a most disagreeable into a pleasing object.

But I cannot see any such allusion here. It is true that the feet of those who had traveled far in dry and dusty roads would present a spectacle offensive to the beholder; and it is true also, as Dr. Campbell suggests, that the consideration that they who were coming were messengers of peace and safety would convert deformity into beauty, and make us behold with delight this indication of their embassy. But it seems to me that this passage has much higher beauty. The idea in the mind of the prophet is not, that the

messenger is so near that the sordid appearance of his feet could be seen. The beholder is supposed to be standing amidst the ruins of the desolated city, and the messenger is seen running on the distant hills. The long anticipated herald announcing that these ruins are to rise, at length appears. Seen on the distant hills, running rapidly, he is a beautiful object. It is his feet, his running, his haste, that attracts attention; an indication that he bears a message of joy, and that the nation is about to be restored. Nahum, who is supposed to have lived after Isaiah, has evidently copied from him this beautiful image:

Behold upon the mountains the feet of the joyful messenger,
Of him that announceth peace;
Celebrate, O Judah, thy festivals; perform thy vows;

For no more shall pass through thee the wicked one;

He is utterly cut off.
Nahum 1:15

That publisheth peace - This declaration is general, that the coming of such a messenger would be attended with joy. The particular and special idea here is, that it would be a joyful announcement that this captivity was ended, and that Zion was about to be restored.

That bringeth good tidings of good - He announces that which is good or which is a joyful message.

That saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth - That is, thy God has delivered the people from their captivity, and is about to reign again in Zion. This was applied at first to the return from the captivity. Paul, as has been already observed, applies it to the ministers of the gospel. That is, it is language which will well express the nature of the message which the ministers of the gospel bear to their fellow-men. The sense is here, that the coming of a messenger bringing good news is universally agreeable to people. And it the coming of a messenger announcing that peace is made, is pleasant; or if the coming of such a messenger declaring that the captivity at Babylon was ended, was delightful, how much more so should be the coming of the herald announcing that man may be at peace with his Maker?

Verse 8

Thy watchmen - This language is taken from the custom of placing watchmen on the walls of a city, or on elevated towers, who could see if an

enemy approached, and who of course would be the first to discern a messenger at a distance who was coming to announce good news. The idea is, that there would be as great joy at the announcement of the return of the exiles, as if they who were stationed on the wall should see the long-expected herald on the distant hills, coming to announce that they were about to return, and that the city and temple were about to be rebuilt. It was originally applicable to the return from Babylon. But it contains also the general truth that they who are appointed to watch over Zion and its interests, will rejoice at all the tokens of God‘s favor to his people, and especially when he comes to bless them after long times of darkness, depression, and calamity. It is by no means, therefore, departing from the spirit of this passage, to apply it to the joy of the ministers of religion in the visits of divine mercy to a church and people. ‹Shall lift up the voice.‘ That is, with rejoicing.

With the voice together shall they sing - They shall mingle their praises and thanksgivings. The idea is, that all who are appointed to guard Zion, should feel a common interest in her welfare, and rejoice when the Lord comes to visit and bless his people. The Hebrew here is more abrupt and emphatic than our common translation would make it. It is literally, ‹The voice of thy watchmen! They lift up the voice together; they sing‘ - as if the prophet suddenly heard a shout. It is the exultling shout of the watchmen of Zion; and it comes as one voice, with no discord, no jarring.

For they shall see eye to eye - Lowth renders this, ‹For face to face shall they see.‘ Noyes, ‹For with their own eyes shall they behold.‘ Jerome renders it, *Oculo ad oculum* - ‹Eye to eye.‘ The Septuagint renders it, Ὀφθαλμοὶ πρός ὀφθαλμοὺς, κ.τ.λ. *Ophthalmoi pros ophthalmous etc* ‹Eyes shall look to eyes when the Lord shall have mercy upon Zion.‘ Interpreters have been divided in regard to its meaning. The sense may be, either that they shall see face to face, that is, distinctly, clearly, as when one is near another; or it may mean that they shall be united - they shall contemplate the same object, or look steadily at the same thing. Rosenmuller, Gesenius, Forerius, Junius. and some others, understand it in the former sense. So the Chaldee, ‹For they shall see with their own eyes the great things which the Lord will do when he shall bring back his own glory to Zion.‘ The phrase in Hebrew occurs in no other place, except in Numbers 14:14, which our translators have rendered, ‹For thou, Lord, art seen face to face.‘ Hebrew,

‹Eye to eye;‘ that is, near, openly, manifestly, without any veil or interposing medium.

The expression, ‹face to face,‘ meaning openly, plainly, manifestly, as one sees who is close to another, occurs frequently in the Bible (see Genesis 32:30; Exodus 33:11; Deuteronomy 5:4; Deuteronomy 34:10; Judges 6:22; Proverbs 27:19; Ezekiel 20:35; Acts 25:16; 1 Corinthians 13:12; 2 John 1:12; 3 John 1:14). So the phrase, ‹mouth to mouth,‘ occurs in a similar sense Numbers 12:8. And there can be but little doubt, it seems to me, that this is the sense here, and that the prophet means to say, that the great and marvelous doings of Yahweh would be seen openly and manifestly, and that the watchmen would thence have occasion to rejoice. Another reason for this opinion, besides the fact that it accords with the common usage, is, that the phrase, ‹to see eye to eye,‘ in the sense of being united and harmonious, is not very intelligible. It is not easy to form an image or conception of the watchman in this attitude as denoting harmony. To look into the eyes of each other does not of necessity denote harmony, for people oftentimes do this for other purposes. The idea therefore is, that when Yahweh should bring back and bless his people, the watchmen would have a full and glorious exhibition of his mercy and goodness, and the result would be, that they would greatly rejoice, and unitedly celebrate his name. According to this interpretation, it does not mean that the ministers of religion would have the same precise views, or embrace the same doctrines, however true this may be, or however desirable in itself, but that they would have an open, clear, and bright manifestation of the presence of God, and would lift up their voices together with exultation and praise.

When the Lord shall bring again Zion - Zion here denotes the people who dwelt in Jerusalem; and the idea is, when the Lord shall again restore them to their own land. It is not a departure from the sense of the passage, however, to apply it in a more general manner, and to use it as demonstrating that any signal interposition of God in favor of his people should be the occasion of joy, and shall lead the ministers of religion to exult in God, and to praise his name.

Verse 9

Break forth into joy - Jerusalem, at the time here referred to, was lying waste and in ruins. This call on the waste places of Jerusalem to break out into expressions of praise, is in accordance with a style which frequently

occurs in Isaiah, and in other sacred writers, by which inanimate objects are called on to manifest their joy (see the notes at Isaiah 14:7-8; Isaiah 42:11).

For the Lord hath comforted his people - That is, he does comfort his people, and redeem them. This is seen by the prophet in vision, and to his view it is represented as if it were passing before his eyes.

He hath redeemed Jerusalem - On the meaning of the word ‹redeemed,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 43:1-3. The idea here is, that Yahweh was about to restore his people from their long captivity, and again to cause Jerusalem to be rebuilt.

Verse 10

The Lord hath made bare his holy arm - That is, in delivering his people from bondage. This metaphor is taken from warriors, who made bare the arm for battle; and the sense is, that God had come to the rescue of his people as a warrior, and that his interpositions would be seen and recognized and acknowledged by all the nations. The metaphor is derived from the manner in which the Orientals dressed. The following extract from Jowett‘s Christian Researches will explain the language: ‹The loose sleeve of the Arab shirt, as well as that of the outer garment, leaves the arm so completely free, that in an instant the left hand passing up the right arm makes it bare; and this is done when a person, a soldier, for example, about to strike with the sword, intends to give the arm full play. The image represents Yahweh as suddenly prepared to inflict some tremendous, yet righteous judgment, so effectual “that all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God.”‘ The phrase ‹holy arm,‘ seems to mean that God would be engaged in a holy and just cause. It would not be an arm of conquest, or of oppression; but it would be made bare in a holy cause, and all its inflictions would be righteous.

And all the ends of the earth - For an explanation of the phrase ‹the ends of the earth,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 40:28. The meaning here is, that the deliverance of his people referred to would be so remarkable as to be conspicuous to all the world. The most distant nations would see it, and would be constrained to recognize his hand. It was fulfilled in the rescue of the nation from the captivity at Babylon. The conquest of Babylon was an event that was so momentous in its consequences, as to be known to all the kingdoms of the earth; and the proclamation of Cyrus Ezra 1:1-2, and the consequent restoration of his people to their own land, were calculated to make the name of Yahweh known to all nations.

Verse 11

Depart ye, depart ye - This is a direct address to the exiles in their captivity. The same command occurs in Isaiah 48:20 (see the notes on that place). It is repeated here for the sake of emphasis; and the urgency of the command implies that there was some delay likely to be apprehended on the part of the exiles themselves. The fact seems to have been, that though the captivity was at first attended with every circumstance suited to give pain, and though they were subjected to many privations and sorrows in Babylon (see Psalm 137:1-9), yet that many of them became strongly attached to a residence there, and were strongly indisposed to return. They were there seventy years. Most of those who were made captive would have died before the close of the exile. Their children, who constituted the generation to whom the command to return would be addressed, would have known the land of their fathers only by report.

It was a distant land; and was to be reached only by a long and perilous journey across a pathless desert. They had been born in Babylon. It was their home; and there were the graves of their parents arid kindred. Some had been advanced to posts of office and honor: many, it is probable, had lands, and friends, and property in Babylon. The consequence would, therefore, be, that there would be strong reluctance on their part to leave the country of their exile, and to encounter the perils and trials incident to a return to their own land. It is not improbable, also, that many of them may have formed improper connections and attachments in that distant land, and that they would be unwilling to relinquish them, and return to the land of their fathers. It was necessary, therefore, that the most urgent commands should be addressed to them, and the strongest motives presented to them, to induce them to return to the country of their fathers. And after all, it is evident that but comparatively a small portion of the exile Jews ever were prevailed on to leave Babylon, and to adventure upon the perilous journey of a return to Zion.

Touch no unclean thing - Separate yourselves wholly from an idolatrous nation, and preserve yourselves pure. The apostle Paul 2 Corinthians 6:17-18 has applied this to Christians, and uses it as expressing the obligation to come out from the world, and to be separate from all its influences. Babylon is regarded by the apostle as not an unapt emblem of the world, and the command to come out from her as not an improper expression of the obligation to the friends of the Redeemer to be separate

from all that is evil. John Revelation 18:4 has applied this passage also to denote the duty of true Christians to separate themselves from the mystical Babylon - the papal community - and not to be partaker of her sins. The passage is applied in both these instances, because Babylon, in Scripture language, is regarded as emblematic of whatever is oppressive, proud, arrogant, persecuting, impure, and abominable.

That bear the vessels of the Lord - That bear again to your own land the sacred vessels of the sanctuary. It is to be remembered that when the Jews were taken to Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar carried there all the sacred utensils of the temple, and that they were used in their festivals as common vessels in Babylon 2 Chronicles 36:18; Daniel 5:2-5. These vessels Cyrus commanded to be again restored, when the exiles returned to their own land Ezra 1:7-11. They whose office it was to carry them, were the priests and Levites Numbers 1:50; Numbers 4:15; and the command here pertains particularly to them. They were required to be holy; to feel the importance of their office, and to be separate from all that is evil. The passage has no original reference to ministers of the gospel, but the principle is implied that they who are appointed to serve God as his ministers in any way should be pure and holy.

Verse 12

For ye shall not go out with haste - As if driven out, or compelled to flee. You shall not go from Babylon as your fathers went from Egypt, in a rapid flight, and in a confused and tumultuous manner (see Deuteronomy 16:3). The idea here is, that they should have time to prepare themselves to go out, and to become fit to bear the vessels of the Lord. It was a fact that when they left Babylon they did it with the utmost deliberation, and had ample time to make any preparation that was necessary.

For the Lord will go before you - Yahweh will conduct you, as a general advances at the head of an army. The figure here is taken from the march of an army, and the image is that of Yahweh as the leader or head of the host in the march through the desert between Babylon and Jerusalem (see the notes at Isaiah 40:3-4).

And the God of Israel will be your rereward - Margin, ‹Gather you up.‘ The Hebrew word used here (אסף *'âsaph*) means properly to collect, to gather together, as fruits, etc. It is then applied to the act of bringing up the rear of an army; and means to be a rear-ward, or guard, agmen claudere - as collecting, and bringing together the stragglers, and defending the army in

its march, from an attack in the rear. The Septuagint renders it, ‹The God of Israel is he who collects you‘ (ὁ ἐπισυνάγων ὑμᾶς *ho episunagōn humas*), that is, brings up the rear. The Chaldee, ‹The God of Israel will collect together your captivity.‘ Here the chapter should have closed, for here closes the account of the return of the exiles from Babylon. The mind of the prophet seems here to leave the captive Jews on their way to their own land, with Yahweh going at their head, and guarding the rear of the returning band, and to have passed to the contemplation of him of whose coming all these events were preliminary and introductory - the Messiah. Perhaps the rationale of this apparent transition is this.

It is undoubtedly the doctrine of the Bible that he who was revealed as the guide of his people in ancient times, and who appeared under various names, as ‹the angel of Yahweh,‘ ‹the angel of the covenant,‘ etc., was he who afterward became incarnate - the Saviour of the world. So the prophet seems to have regarded him; and here fixing his attention on the Yahweh who was thus to guide his people and be their defense, by an easy transition the mind is carried forward to the time when he would be incarnate, and would die for people. Leaving, therefore, so to speak, the contemplation of him as conducting his people across the barren wastes which separated Babylon from Judea, the mind is, by no unnatural transition, carried forward to the time when he would become a man of sorrows, and would redeem and save the world. According to this supposition, it is the same glorious Being whom Isaiah sees as the protector of his people, and almost in the same instant as the man of sorrows; and the contemplation of him as the suffering Messiah becomes so absorbing and intense, that he abruptly closes the description of him as the guide of the exiles to their own land.

He sees him as a sufferer. He sees the manner and the design of his death. He contemplates the certain result of that humiliation and death in the spread of the true religion, and in the extension of his kingdom among men. Henceforward, therefore, to the end of Isaiah, we meet with no reference, if we except in a very fcw instances, to the condition of the exiles in Babylon, or to their return to their own land. The mind of the prophet is absorbed in describing the glories of the Messiah, and the certain spread of his gospel around the globe.

Verses 13-15

Notes on Isaiah 52:13-15 and Isaiah 53:1-12

The most important portion of Isaiah, and of the Old Testament, commences here, and here should have been the beginning of a new chapter. It is the description of the suffering Messiah, and is continued to the close of the next chapter. As the closing verses of this chapter are connected with the following chapter, and as it is of great importance to have just views of the design of this portion of Isaiah, it is proper in this place to give an analysis of this part of the prophecy. And as no other part of the Bible has excited so much the attention of the friends and foes of Christianity; as so various and conflicting views have prevailed in regard to its meaning: and as the proper interpretation of the passage must have an important bearing on the controversy with Jews and infidels, and on the practical views of Christians, I shall be justified in going into an examination of its meaning at considerably greater length than has been deemed necessary in other portions of the prophecy. It may be remarked in general:

(1) That if the common interpretation of the passage, as describing a suffering Saviour, be correct, then it settles the controversy with the Jews, and demonstrates that their notions of the Messiah are false.

(2) If this was written at the time when it is claimed by Christians to have been written, then it settles the controversy with infidels. The description is so particular and minute; the correspondence with the life, the character, and the death of the Lord Jesus, is so complete, that it could not have been the result of conjecture or accident. At the same time, it is a correspondence which could not have been brought about by an impostor who meant to avail himself of this ancient prophecy to promote his designs, for a large portion of the circumstances are such as did not depend on himself, but grew out of the feelings and purposes of others. On the supposition that this had been found as an ancient prophecy, it would have been impossible for any impostor so to have shaped the course of events as to have made his character and life appear to be a fulfillment of it. And unless the infidel could either make it out that this prophecy was not in existence, or that, being in existence, it was possible for a deceiver to create an exact coincidence between it and his life and character and death, then, in all honesty, he should admit that it was given by inspiration, and that the Bible is true.

(3) A correct exposition of this will be of inestimable value in giving to the Christian just views of the atonement, and of the whole doctrine of redemption. Probably in no portion of the Bible of the same length, not even in the New Testament, is there to be found so clear an exhibition of the purpose for which the Saviour died. I shall endeavor, therefore, to prepare the way for an exposition of the passage, by a consideration of several points that are necessary to a correct understanding of it.

Section 1. Evidence that It was Written Before

The Birth of Jesus of Nazareth

On this point there will be, and can be, no dispute among Jews and Christians. The general argument to prove this, is the same as that which demonstrates that Isaiah wrote at all before that time. For a view of this, the reader is referred to the Introduction. But this general argument may be presented in a more specific form, and includes the following particulars:

(1) It is quoted in the New Testament as part of the prophetic writings then well known (see Matthew 8:17; John 12:38; Acts 8:28-35; Romans 10:16; 1 Peter 2:21-25). That the passage was in existence at the time when the New Testament was written, is manifest from these quotations. So far as the argument with the infidel is concerned, it is immaterial whether it was written 700 years before the events took place, or only fifty, or ten. It would still be prophecy, and it would still be incumbent on him to show how it came to be so accurately accomplished.

(2) It is quoted and translated by writers who undoubtedly lived before the Christian era. Thus, it is found in the Septuagint, and in the Chaldee - both of which can be demonstrated to have been made before Christ was born.

(3) There is not the slightest evidence that it has been interpolated or corrupted, or changed so as to adapt it to the Lord Jesus. It is the same in all copies, and in all versions.

(4) It has never even been pretended that it has been introduced for the purpose of furnishing an argument for the truth of Christianity. No infidel has ever pretended that it does not stand on the same footing as any other portion of Isaiah.

(5) It is such a passage as Jews would not have forged. It is opposed to all their prevailing notions of the Messiah. They have anticipated a magnificent temporal prince and a conqueror: and one of the main reasons why they have rejected the Lord Jesus has been, that he was obscure in his origin, poor, despised, and put to death; in other words, because be has corresponded so entirely with the description here. No passage of the Old Testament has ever given them greater perplexity than this, and it is morally certain that if the Jews had ever forged a pretended prophecy of the Messiah, it would not have been in the language of this portion of Isaiah. They would have described him as the magnificent successor of David and Solomon; as a mighty prince and a warrior; as the head of universal empire, and would have said that by his victorious arms he would subdue the earth to himself, and would make Jerusalem the capital of the world. They never would have described him as despised and rejected by people, and as making his grave with the wicked in his death.

(6) Christians could not have forged and interpolated this. The Jews have always jealously guarded their own Scriptures; and nothing would have so certainly excited their attention as an attempt to interpolate a passage like this, furnishing at once an irrefragable argument against their opinions of the Messiah, and so obviously applicable to Jesus of Nazareth. It is, moreover, true, that no Jewish writer has ever pretended that the passage has either been forged, or changed in any way, so as to accommodate it to the opinions of Christians respecting the Messiah. These remarks may seem to be unnecessary, and this argument useless, to those who have examined the authenticity of the sacred writings. They are of use only in the argument with the enemies of Christianity. For, if this passage was written at the time when it is supposed to have been, and if it had reference to the Lord Jesus, then it demonstrates that Isaiah was inspired, and furnishes an argument for the truth of revelation which is irrefragable. It is incumbent on the unbeliever to destroy all the alleged proofs that it was written by Isaiah, or, as an honest man, he should admit the truth of inspiration and of prophecy, and yield his heart to the influence of the truth of the Bible. In general, it may be observed, that an attempt to destroy the credibility of this portion of Isaiah as having been written several hundred years before the Christian era, would destroy the credibility of all the

ancient writings; and that we have as much evidence that this is the production of Isaiah, as we have of the credibility or the authenticity of the writings of Homer or Herodotus.

Section 2. History of the Interpretation of the Passage by the Jews

In order to a clear understanding of the passage, it is proper to give a summary view of the modes of interpretation which have prevailed in regard to it both among Jews and Christians. For this historical view, I am indebted mainly to Hengstenberg, Chris. i. p. 484ff. The several opinions which have prevailed among the Jewish expositors are the following:

There is the fullest evidence that the passage was applied by the early Jews, both before and after the birth of Jesus, to the Messiah, until they were pressed by its application to Jesus of Nazareth, and were compelled ill self-defense to adopt some other mode of interpretation; and even after that, it is evident, also, that not a few of the better and more pious portion of the Jewish nation still continued to regard it as descriptive of the Messiah. So obvious is the application to the Messiah, so clear and full is the description, that many of them have adopted the opinion that there would be two Messiahs, one a suffering Messiah, and the other a glorious and triumphant prince and conqueror. The Old Testament plainly foretold that the Messiah would be ‹God and man; exalted and debased; master and servant; priest and victim; prince and subject; involved in death, and yet a victor over death; rich and poor; a king, a conqueror, glorious; a man of griefs, exposed to infirmities, unknown, and in a state of abjection and humiliation.‘ (Calmet.) All these apparently contradictory qualities bad their fulfillment in the person of Jesus of Nazareth; but they were the source of great difficulty to the Jews, and have led to the great variety of opinions which have prevailed among them in regard to him.

In the Lord Jesus they harmonize; but when the Jews resolved to reject him, they were at once thrown into endless embarrassment in regard to the character, coming, and work of him whom they had so long expected. The following extract from Calmet (Dictionary) will explain some of the modern prevailing views of him, and is neeessary to a clear understanding of the grounds which have been taken in the interpretation of this prophecy: ‹Some of them, as the famous Hillel, who lived, according to the Jews, before Christ, maintain that the Messiah was already come in the person of Hezekiah; others, that the belief of the coming of the Messiah is no article

of faith. Buxtorf says, that the greater part of the modern rabbis believe that the Messiah has been come a good while, but keeps himself concealed in some part of the world or other, and will not manifest himself, because of the sins of the Jews. Jarchi affirms, that the Hebrews believe that the Messiah was born on the day of the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Some assign him the terrestrial paradise for his habitation; others the city of Rome, where, according to the Talmudists, he keeps himself concealed among the leprous and infirm, at the gate of the city, expecting Elias to come and manifest him.

A great number believe that he is yet to come, but they are strangely divided about the time and the circumstances of his coming. Some expect him at the end of 6000 years. Kimchi, who lived in the twelfth century, believed that the coming of the Messiah was very near. Some have fixed the time of the end of their misfortunes to a.d. 1492, others to 1598, others to 1600, others yet later. Last of all, tired out with these uncertainties, they have pronounced an anathema against any who shall pretend to calculate the time of the coming of the Messiah.‘

It is capable, however, of clear demonstration, that the ancient Jews, before the birth of Jesus, were not thus embarrassed in the interpretation of their own prophets. The following extracts from their writings will show that the opinion early prevailed that the passage before us had reference to the Messiah, and that they had to some extent right views of him. Even by the later Jewish interpreters who give a different exposition of the prophecy, it is admitted that it was formerly referred to the Messiah. This is admitted by Aben Ezra, Jarchi, Abarbanel, and Moses Nachmanides. Among the testimonies of the ancient Jews are the following: The Chaldee Paraphrast, Jonathan, expressly refers it to the Messiah. Thus, in Isaiah 52:13, he renders the first member, Behold, my servant the Messiah shall prosper.‘ Thus, in the Medrasch Tanchuma (an old commentary on the Pentateuch), on the words ‹Behold, my servant shall prosper,‘ it is remarked, This is the king Messiah, who is high, and lifted up, and very exalted, higher than Abraham, exalted above Moses, higher than the ministering angels.‘ Similar is the language of rabbi Moses Haddarschan on Genesis 1:3: ‹Yahweh spake: Messiah, my righteous one, those who are concealed with thee, will be such that their sins will bring a heavy yoke upon thee. The Messiah

answered: Lord of the world, I cheerfully take upon myself those plagues and sorrows. Immediately, therefore, the Messiah took upon himself, out of love, all torments and sufferings, as it is written in Isaiah 53:1-12, "He was abused and oppressed."' Many other passages may be seen collected by Hengstenberg, Chris. i. 485,486.

But this interpretation was abandoned by the Jewish interpreters when the passage was urged against them by Christians as demonstrating that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, and when they could not reconcile it with their prevailing notions that the Messiah was to be a magnificent temporal prince. Gesenius asserts that ‹the later Jews, no doubt, relinquished this interpretation in consequence of their controversy with Christians.' The Jews early formed the opinion that the Messiah was to be a king like David and Solomon, and was to be distinguished as a conqueror. They, therefore looked exclusively at the passages of the Old Testament which spoke of his exaltation, and they were rendered averse to applying a passage like this to him, which spoke of his poverty, rejection, humiliation, and death. They did not or would not, understand how passages apparently so contradictory, could be applied to the same individual; and they therefore fixed their attention on those which predicted his exaltation and majesty, and rejected the idea that the Messiah would be a sufferer. So long as they applied this portion of Isaiah to the Messiah, they could not deny that there was a remarkable correspondence between it and Jesus of Nazareth, and they were unable to meet the force of the argument thence derived in favor of his claims to the Messiahsip. It became necessary, therefore, for the Jews to seek some other explanation of the passage, and to deny that it had reference to the Messiah. Accordingly, the great effort of the Jewish interpreters has been to ascertain to whom the passage can be made, with any show of probability, to apply. The great mass agree that it is not to be applied to the Messiah, and this is now the prevailing opinion among them.

Among the more modern Jewish expositors who agree that the passage is not to be applied to the Messiah, the following opinions have prevailed:

1. The most commonly received opinion is, that it refers to the Jewish people. This is the opinion of Jarchi, Aben Ezra, Kimchi, Abarbancl, and Lipmann. According to them, the prophecy describes the condition of the

Jews in their present calamity and exile; the firmness with which they endure it for the honor of God, and resist every temptation to forsake his law and worship; and the prosperity honor and glory which they shall obtain in the time of their redemption. In Isaiah 53:1-10, the pagan are regarded as speaking, and making an humble and penitential confession that they have hitherto mistaken the people of God, and unjustly despised them on account of their sufferings, since it now appears front their exaltation that those sufferings have not been inflicted on them on account of their sins.

2. Others take the appellation, ‹salvation of Yahweh,‘ in the passage, to mean, the pious portion of the nation taken collectively, and regarded as making a kind of vicarious satisfaction for the ungodly. This class of interpreters among the Jews, however, has been small. They refer it to those among them who endure much affliction and suffering, but more especially to those who are publicly put to death. They mention particularly rabbi Akiba as one who suffered martyrdom in this manner. This interpretation retains, indeed, the essential idea of substitution Which runs through the passage, and it is not improbable that it is on this account that it has found so little favor with the modern Jews, since they reject with abhorrence the whole doctrine of vicarious sufferings as designed to make an atonement for others.

3. A few others among the Jews make the passage refer to an individual. Abarbanel, besides supposing that it refers to the Jewish people in general, suggests also that it may refer particularly to Isaiah. rabbi Saddias Haggaon explained the whole as referring to Jeremiah. Still the passage is so plain in its general meaning, the reference to the Messiah is so obvious, that the rabbis have not been able, with all their ingenuity, to propose an interpretation that shall be entirely satisfactory to their nation. It has probably been the means of the conversion of more Jews from the errors of their system to Christianity, than any other portion of their Scriptures. We know that, as it was explained and applied by Philip, it was the means of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch Acts 8:27-40. And so Jo. Isaac Levita, a learned Jew, says it was the means of first leading him to the Christian religion. ‹I frankly confess,‘ says he, ‹that this chapter first conducted me to the Christian faith. For more than a thousand times I read this chapter, and

accurately compared it with many translations, I found that it contained a hundred more mysteries respecting Christ, than are found in any version.‘ Many similar instances occur, says Hengstenberg, in the reports of Missionaries among the Jews.

Section 3. History of the Interpretation of the Passage by Christians

For seventeen centuries the view which was taken of this passage was uniform. By all the fathers of the Christian church it was regarded as having an indisputable reference to Christ. In their arguments with the Jews, it was quoted as containing a full refutation of their opinions respecting the Messiah, and as demonstrating that Jesus of Nazareth was he who had been so long announced by the prophets as ‹he who was to come.‘ In their arguments with infidels, it was a strong proof to which they appealed of the truth of revelation; and in their homilies and expositions it was referred uniformly to the Lord Jesus. If we except Grotius, who supposed that it referred to Jeremiah, who, he says (note at Isaiah 52:13), was figura Christi - the type of the Messiah - it was not until the last quarter of the sixteenth century that this interpretation began to be called in question. The reason why the uniform exposition of the Christian church was abandoned then by any was, that it could no longer be retained consistently with the notions which prevailed, especially in Germany, of the Bible. The grand principle which began to prevail in the interpretation of the Bible was, that all which is there recorded is to be accounted for on natural principles. But if this passage refers to the Messiah, it harmonizes so exactly with the life and character of the Redeemer, and it is so entirely removed from the possible range of mere conjecture, that it cannot be accounted for except on the supposition of supernatural revelation. Many professed Christian interpreters, therefore, have sought other ways of explaining it, and have diligently inquired to whom it referred. As a specimen of the manner in which the exposition of the Bible has been conducted in Germany, we may just refer to the opinions which have prevailed in the interpretation of this, the plainest and most splendid of all the prophecies pertaining to the Messiah.

1. Comparatively the greatest number of the non-Messianic interpreters make the whole Jewish people the subject. A large number of German expositors, whose names may be seen in Hengstenberg‘s Christol. i. 494, have adopted this view. The only difference between this interpretation and that adopted by the later Jews is, that the German critics suppose it refers to

the Jews in the Babylonian exile, while the Jews suppose that it refers to their nation suffering in their present exile.

2. It was held by Eckermann that it refers to the Jewish nation in the abstract, in opposition to its individual members. In other words, it seems to have been held that the nation in the abstract was guilty and was suffering, while the individual members were innocent, and escaped suffering and punishment.

3. It has been held that it refers to the pious part of the Jewish people, as contrasted with the ungodly. This opinion was defended by Paulus. His view is the following: The pious part of the Jewish people were carried into captivity with the ungodly, not on account of their own sins, but the sins of the latter. The ungodly inferred that the hope of the pious that Yahweh would help them was in vain, but as the exile came to an end, and the pious returned, they saw that they had erred, and that their hope was wellgrounded. They deeply lament, therefore, that they have not long ago done penance.

4. One author has maintained that the Jewish priesthood is the subject of the prophecy, but in this he stands alone.

5. It has been maintained by others that the prophets collectively are referred to in the passage. This was at first the opinion of Rosenmuller, but was abandoned by him, and was then defended by De Wette, and is maintained by Gesenius.

6. Others have referred it to some individual. Thus Grotius supposes that Jeremiah is meant. Augusti supposed that Uzziah was intended. Others that Hezekiah was meant; and others that Isaiah here referred to himself; and others that it refers to some unknown prophet slain by the Jews in their exile; and others that it refers to the Maccabees!

These strange and absurd opinions are specimens of the unhappy manner of exposition which has prevailed among the German neologists; and they are specimens, too, of the reluctance of the human mind to embrace the truth as it is in Jesus, and of its proneness to the wildest

aberrations, where mere human reason is suffered to take the reins in the interpretation of the Bible. Perhaps there is scarcely to be found an instance of interpretation that is more suited to humble us in regard to the proneness of people to err, than in these modes of explaining this beautiful portion of Isaiah. And there is not to be found anywhere a more striking proof of the reluctance of the human mind to contemplate the sufferings and death of the Redeemer of the world, or to embrace the great and glorious truth that people can be saved only by the vicarious sacrifice of the Son of God.

Section 4. Proof that it Refers to the Messiah

More ample proof of this will be furnished in the exposition of the passage itself, than can now be given. But still, it may not be improper to refer to a few of the considerations which go to demonstrate that the prophet here refers to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. He refers to an individual, and not to a people, or a nation. It is not either to the collective body of the Jewish people, or to the pious portion of the Jewish people, or to the collective body of the prophets. This is evident on the slightest examination of the passage. The prophet speaks of the ‹servant of Yahweh;‘ and the whole representation is that of an individual, and not of any collective body of people. Thus his visage was marred, and his form was disfigured: he was as a tender plant; he was despised; he was rejected; he was smitten, wounded, put to death; he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich. Of what collective body of people could this be said? How absurd to apply this to a nation, or to any portion of a nation! It cannot be applied (A) to the whole people. In Isaiah 53:3, the subject is called ‹a man,‘ an appellation which cannot be given to a nation.

Nor is there an instance in all the sacred writings where there can be found such an extended allegory as this would be, on the supposition that this refers to the Jewish people. Besides, with what possible propriety can it be said of a nation that it has borne the griefs and carried the sorrows of others; that it was stricken for the transgression of the people of God; that it was made an offering for sin; and that it made intercession for the sin of the transgressors? If this refers to a nation, then all settled views of interpretation are at an end. The circumstances which are usually supposed to mark individual existence may in all other circumstances in like manner be supposed to mean nations, and we shall have no longer any way-marks in guiding us in the interpretation of the plainest writings. Nor (B) can it

refer to the pious portion of the Jewish people taken collectively. For the subject of the prophecy suffers voluntarily; he himself innocent, bears the sins of others Isaiah 53:4-6, Isaiah 53:9; his sufferings are the efficient cause of the righteousness of his people Isaiah 53:11; and he suffers quietly and patiently, without allowing himself to be provoked to bitterness against the authors of his sufferings. Of all these four marks, not one belongs to the people of Israel. For

(a) they went not voluntarily into the Babylonian exile, but were carried there by violence.

(b) They did not suffer innocently, but suffered for their sins.

(c) The sufferings of the Jews can in no sense be represented as the cause of the righteousness of others.

(d) Nor did the Jews evince that patience and devotedness to the will of God which is here attributed to the subject of this prophecy.

How can it be said that they were led like a lamb to the slaughter, that they did not open the mouth to complain, when even the noblest and best of them poured out their sadness in complaints and lamentations? Compare Jeremiah 20:7 ff; Jeremiah 15:10-21; Psalm 137:8-9. Nor (C) can it refer to the prophets taken collectively, as Gesenius supposes. On this it is sufficient to ask, Where did such a collection of the prophets ever exist? When did they suffer together? What evidence is there that they were in exile? Where and when did they take upon themselves the sins of the people, or suffer for them, or make their grave with the wicked and the rich in their death, or see of the travail of the soul, and become the means of the justification of many? All that has been said in favor of this is so entirely the work of conjecture, and is so manifestly designed to evade the obvious reference to the Messiah, that it is necessary to refer to it only as a specimen of the manner of interpretation which has prevailed, and which still prevails in the explanation of the sacred Scriptures. But if the passage does not refer either to the collective Jewish people, or to the pious portion of them, or to the prophets regarded as a collective body, then it must refer to an individual, and the only question is whether, it refers to the Messiah, or to some

individual of the Jewish nation. As a simple and satisfactory argument that it refers to some individual, an appeal might be made to the common sense of the mass of people. Not one in a million - and he not unless he had some favorite hypothesis to defend - would ever suppose, on reading the passage, that it could have any reference to a collection of people of any kind. But the common sense of the mass of people is generally the best criterion of the meaning of any written document, and the best interpreter of the Bible.

II. If it refers to an individual, it must refer to the Messiah. It cannot refer to Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or Uzziah, or Akiba, for the following, among other reasons:

(a) The advocates of this theory have not been able to agree on any individual to whom it can be applied. Grotius suggested Jeremiah, some others Uzziah, or Isaiah, and some of the Jews Akiba. But each of these theories has been confined to the single interpreter who suggested it, and has been rejected by all the rest of the world. What better proof could there be that there is not even plausibility in the statement? What stronger demonstration that it is a theory got up on purpose to avoid the reference to the Messiah?

(b) None of the individuals named had any claim to the statements here made respecting the individual sufferer. Did kings shut their months at them, and stand in awe of them? Did Jeremiah sprinkle many nations? Did Uzziah bear the griefs and the sorrows of people? Did Yahweh lay on Isaiah the iniquity of all people? Did either of them make their grave with the wicked and the rich in their death? But if it cannot be shown to have reference to any other individual, then the fair inference is, that it refers to the Messiah.

III. The argument that it refers to the Messiah has all the force of tradition in its favor. We have seen that the Jews, in more ancient times, referred this prophecy to the Messiah. This fact proves that such is the obvious reference. When their minds were not prejudiced and blinded by their hatred of Jesus of Nazareth, and their opposition to his claims; when they were looking forward with deep anxiety to the coming of a deliverer, they applied this passage to him. And though there were embarrassments in

their minds, and they were not well able to explain how this was consistent with what is elsewhere stated of his exalted nature, yet such was its obvious reference to the Messiah, that they did not dare to call it in question. Such was the fact in the Christian church for seventeen hundred years. It was the unbroken and the unvarying voice of interpretation. Now this proves, not indeed that it is necessarily the true interpretation, for that is to be settled on other grounds than mere tradition, but that it is the exposition which the language naturally conveys. The unvarying sense affixed to any written document for seventeen hundred years, is likely to be the true sense. And especially is this so, if the document in question has been in the hands of the learned and the unlearned; the high and the low; the rich and the poor; the bond and the free; and if they concur in giving to it the same interpretation, such an interpretation cannot easily or readily be set aside.

IV. The quotations in the New Testament prove that it refers to the Messiah. They go to demonstrate at the same time two points; first, that such was the prevailing mode of interpretation at that time, otherwise the passage would not have been quoted as proof that Jesus was the Messiah; and secondly, that such is the correct mode of interpretation. The places where it is quoted are the following:

1. In John 12:37-38, ‹But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?‘ In this passage, Isaiah 53:1 is quoted to explain the unbelief of the Jewish people in the time of the Saviour, with the formula ἵνα πληρωθῇ *hina plērōthē* - ‹that it might be fulfilled,‘ the usual formula in quoting a passage from the Old Testament which is fulfilled in the New. No one can doubt that John meant to be understood as affirming that the passage in Isaiah had a designed applicability to the person and the times of the Redeemer. The same passage is quoted by Paul in Romans 10:16: ‹But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?‘

2. The passage in Luke 22:37 is still more decisive. ‹For I say unto you, That this that is written must yet be accomplished me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end,‘ that is,

a completion, a fulfillment. Here Isaiah 52:12 is expressly and directly applied by the Saviour himself to his own sufferings and death. No one can doubt that he meant to say that it had original reference to him, and would be fulfilled in him. The same passage is applied, and in the same sense, by Mark Mark 15:28, to the sufferings and death of the Redeemer.

3. In Acts 8:35, Isaiah 53:7-8 is applied by Philip the evangelist to the Redeemer; and is explained as having a reference to him.

4. In Matthew 8:17, the declaration of Isaiah Isaiah 53:4, ‹Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses,‘ is applied expressly to the Messiah. These passages, directly quoting Isaiah, and applying them to the Messiah, demonstrate that in view of the writers of the New Testament, and of the Saviour himself, Isaiah had reference to the Messiah. To those who admit the inspiration and the divine authority of the New Testament, these proofs are sufficient demonstration of the position.

V. This view is enforced by another consideration. It is, that not only is the passage expressly quoted in the New Testament, but it is alluded to in connection with the death of the Redeemer as an atoning sacrifice for sin, in such a manner as to show that it was regarded by the sacred writers as having reference to the Messiah. It is sufficient here to refer to the following places: Mark 9:12; John 3:5; Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 1:19; 1 Peter 2:21-25. A careful examination of these passages would convince anyone, that the writers of the New Testament were accustomed to regard the passage in Isaiah as having undoubted reference to the Messiah, and that this was so universally the interpretation of the passage in their times, as to make it proper simply to refer to it without formally quoting it. It may be added here, that it accords with the current and uniform statement in the New Testament about the design of the death of the Redeemer.

VI. One other argument may be here referred to, which I propose to state more at length when the exposition of the fifty-third chapter shall have been made. It arises from the exact correspondence between the passage and the events in the life, the sufferings, and the death of the Redeemer - a correspondence so minute that it cannot he the result of accident; so much

depending on external circumstances and on the agency of others, that it could not have been Produced by the effort of an impostor; and so unique that it can be found in no other person but the Messiah. We shall he better able to appreciate the force of this argument when we have the correct exposition of the passage before us.

To the view which has thus been taken of the design of this portion of Isaiah, there occurs one objection, often made by infidels, which I deem it important here to notice. It is, that the transactions here referred to are represented as past, and that it must be supposed to refer to some event which had occurred before the time when this was written. This ground has also been taken by Gesenius in proof that it cannot refer to tile Messiah: ‹The suffering, contempt, and death,‘ says he, ‹of the servant of God, are here represented throughout as past, since all in Isaiah 53:1-10, is in the praeter. Only the glorification is future, and is represented in the future tense.‘ In reply to this, we may observe:

1. That the transactions referred to are not all represented as past. The glorification of the person referred to is described in the future tense, and of course as a future event Isaiah 52:13-15; Isaiah 53:11-12. It may be added also here, that those who will examine the Hebrew, will perceive that not everything in regard to his sufferings is represented as past (see Isaiah 53:7-8, Isaiah 53:10). But,

2. The true answer to this objection is to be found in a correct view of the nature of prophecy; and the objection has been supposed to have force only because the true character of prophecy has not been apprehended. It is a feature of the true nature of prophecy that the prophet is placed in vision in the midst of the scenes which he describes as future. He describes the events as if they were actually passing before his eyes. See this view of prophecy explained in the Introduction, Section 7. According to this, Isaiah is to be regarded as placed in vision amidst the scenes which he describes. He looks on the suffering Redeemer. He describes his humiliation, his rejection, his trial, his death, and the feelings of those who rejected him, as if it actually occurred before his eyes. He sees him now rejected by people and put to death; but he also casts his eye into the future and sees him exalted, and his religion spreading into all the world. Though, therefore, the

events which he describes were to occur several hundred years afterward, yet they are portrayed, as his other prophecies are, as passing before his eyes, and as events which he was permitted in vision to see.

Analysis

In Isaiah 52:13-15, Yahweh speaks of his servant the Messiah, and describes the state of his humiliation, and of his subsequent exaltation. These verses contain, in fact, an epitome of what is enlarged upon in the next chapter. The sum of it is, that his servant should be, on the whole, prospered and exalted Isaiah 52:13; yet he would he subjected to the deepest trial and humiliation Isaiah 52:14; but as the result of this, he would redeem the nations of the earth, and their kings and rulers would regard him with profound reverence Isaiah 52:15. A display of the divine perfections would accompany the work of the servant of Yahweh such as they had never beheld, and they would be called on to contemplate wonders of which they had not before heard.

Isaiah 53:1-12 contains a more minute explanation and statement of what is said in general in Isaiah 52:13-15. For convenience, it may be regarded as divided into the following portions:

I. An expression of amazement and lamentation at the fact that so few had embraced the annunciation respecting the Messiah, and had been properly affected by the important statements respecting his sufferings, his death, and his glorification Isaiah 53:1.

II. A description of his rejection, his sufferings, his death Isaiah 53:2-10. Here the prophet describes the scene as actually passing before his eyes. He speaks as if he himself were one of the Jewish nation who had rejected him, and who had procured his death. He describes the misapprehension under which it was done, and the depth of the sorrow to which the Messiah was subjected, and the design which Yahweh had in view in these sufferings.

1. His appearance and rejection are described Isaiah 53:2-3. He is as a shrub that grows in a parched soil without beauty; he is a man of sorrows, instead of being, as they expected, a magnificent prince; he has disappointed their expectations, and there is nothing that corresponded with their anticipations, and nothing, therefore, which should lead them to desire him.

2. The design for which he endured his sorrows is stated Isaiah 53:4-6. He was thought by the people to be justly put to death, and they judged that God had judicially smitten and afflicted him Isaiah 53:4. But this was not

the cause. It was because he had borne the sorrows of the nation, and was wounded for their sins Isaiah 53:4-5. They had all gone astray, but Yahweh had caused to meet on him the iniquity of all.

3. The manner of his sufferings is described Isaiah 53:7-8. He was patient as a lamb; was taken from prison, and cut off.

4. The manner of his burial is described Isaiah 53:9. It was with the rich. The reason why his grave was thus distinguished from that of malefactors was, that in fact he had done no evil. God, therefore, took care that that fact should he marked even in his burial, and though he died with malefactors, yet, as the purpose of the atonement did not require ignominy after death, he should not he buried with them.

5. The design for which all this was done is stated Isaiah 53:10. It was that his soul might be made an offering for sin, and that it was thus well-pleasing or acceptable to God that he should suffer and die.

III. The result of his sufferings and humiliation is described Isaiah 53:10-12.

1. He would see a numerous spiritual posterity, and be abundantly satisfied for all his pains and sorrows Isaiah 53:10-11.

2. By the knowledge of him, a great number would be justified and saved Isaiah 53:11.

3. He would be greatly honored, and proceed to the spiritual conquest of all the world Isaiah 53:12.

Isaiah 52:13

Behold, my servant - The word ‹behold.‘ indicates here that a new object is pointed out to view, and that it is one that claims attention on account of its importance. It is designed to direct the mind to the Messiah. The point of view which is here taken, is between his humiliation and his glorification. He sees him as having been humbled and rejected Isaiah 52:14-15; Isaiah 53:2-10; about to be exalted and honored Isaiah 52:13-15; Isaiah 53:10-12. The word ‹servant‘ refers to the Messiah. Compare the notes at Isaiah 49:5, where the word ‹servant‘ is applied also to the Messiah. It means that he would be employed in doing the will of God, and that he would submit to him as a servant does to the law of his master.

Shall deal prudently - Margin, ‹Prosper.‘ The word שׂכל *s'âkal* is used in a twofold signification. It means either to act wisely, or to be prosperous. In this latter sense it is used in Joshua 1:7-8; 2 Kings 18:7; Jeremiah 10:21; Proverbs 17:8. It is not easy to determine what is the meaning here. Jerome renders it, intelligent - ‹Shall be wise or prudent.‘ The Septuagint renders it, Συνήσει ὁ παῖς μοῦ *Sunēsei ho pais mou* - ‹My servant shall be intelligent.‘ The Chaldee renders it, ‹Behold my servant the Messiah shall prosper‘ (יצלח *yatslach*). The Syriac retains the Hebrew word. Jun. and Tremell. render it, ‹Shall prosper;‘ Castellio, ‹Shall be wise.‘ Lowth renders it, ‹Shall prosper;‘ and in this Gesenius and Noyes concur. Hengstenberg proposes to unite the two meanings, and to render it, ‹He shall reign well,‘ as indicative of the prosperous and wise government of the Messiah. It seems to me that the parallelism requires us to understand this not of his personal wisdom and prudence, but of the success of his enterprise. This verse contains a summary statement of what would occur under the Messiah. The general proposition is, that he would be ultimately successful, and to this the prophet comes Isaiah 53:12. He here sees him in affliction, humble, rejected, and despised. But he says that this was not always to be. He would be ultimately exalted. It is on this that he fixes the eye, and it is this which cheers and sustains the prophet in the contemplation of the sufferings of the Messiah.

He shall be exalted - In this part of the verse, the prophet combines the verbs which denote elevation or exaltation. The idea is, that he would be exalted to the highest pitch of honor. The word ‹exalted,‘ with us, is often synonymous with praise; but here it means, he shall be elevated (נשׂא *nâs'â'*), or lifted up. The reference here is, undoubtedly, to the fact that the Redeemer would be greatly honored on earth as the Prince and Saviour of the world Isaiah 53:12, and that in view of the universe he would be elevated to the highest conceivable rank. This is described in the New Testament by his being placed ‹at the right hand of God‘ Mark 16:19; by the fact that ‹angels and authorities and powers are made subject unto him‘ 1 Peter 3:22; by the fact that God has ‹set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named‘ Ephesians 1:20-22; and by the fact that he will return in great glory to judge the world Isaiah 52:14

As many were astonished at thee - This verse is closely connected with the following, and they should be read together. The sense is, ‹as many

were shocked at him - his form was so disfigured, and his visage so marred - so he shall sprinkle many nations.‘ That is, the one fact would correspond with the other. The astonishment would be remarkable; the humiliation would be wonderful, and suited to attract the deepest attention; and so his success and his triumph would correspond with the depth of his humiliation and sufferings. As he had in his humiliation been subjected to the lowest condition, so that all despised him; so hereafter the highest possible reverence would be shown him. Kings and nobles would shut their mouths in his presence, and show him the profoundest veneration. A change of person here occurs which is not uncommon in the Hebrew poets. In Isaiah 52:13, Yahweh speaks of the Messiah in the third person; here he changes the form of the address, and speaks of him in the second person.

In the following verse the mode of address is again changed, and he speaks of him again in the third person. Lowth, however, proposes to read this in the third person, ‹As many were astonished at him,‘ on the authority of two ancient Hebrew manuscripts, and of the Syriac and Chaldee. But the authority is not sufficient to justify a change in the text, nor is it necessary. In the word rendered ‹astonished‘ (שׁממו *shâmmû*), the primary idea is that of being struck dumb, or put to silence from sudden astonishment. Whether the astonishment is from admiration or abhorrence is to be determined by the connection. In the latter sense, it is used in Jeremiah 18:16; Jeremiah 19:8. Here it evidently refers to the fact that he was disfigured, and destitute of apparent beauty and attractiveness from his abject condition and his sufferings. They were struck with amazement that one so abject, and that had so little that was attractive, should presume to lay claim to the character of the Messiah. This idea is more fully expressed in the following chapter. Here it is stated in general that his appearance was such as to excite universal astonishment, and probably to produce universal disgust. They saw no beauty or comeliness in him (see Isaiah 53:2). This expression should also be regarded as standing in contrast with what is added in Isaiah 52:15. Here it is said they were amazed, astonished, silent, at his appearance of poverty and his humiliation; there it is said, ‹kings should shut their mouths at him,‘ that is, they would be so deeply impressed with his majesty and glory that they would remain in perfect silence - the silence not of contempt, but of profound veneration.

His visage - מראהו *mare'ēhû* This word denotes properly sight, seeing, view; then that which is seen; then appearance, form, looks Exodus 24:17;

Ezekiel 1:16-28; Daniel 10:18. Here it means, his appearance, his looks. It does not necessarily refer to his face, but to his general appearance. It was so disfigured by distress as to retain scarcely the appearance of a man.

Was so marred - (מִשְׁחַת *mishechath*). This word properly means destruction. Here it means defaced, destroyed, disfigured. There was a disfiguration, or defacement of his aspect, more than that of man.

More than any man - (מֵאִישׁ *mē'iysh*). This may either mean, more than any other man, or that he no longer retained the appearance of a man. It probably means the latter - that his visage was so disfigured that it was no longer the aspect of a man. Castellio renders it, *Ut non jam sit homo, non sit unus de humano genere*.

And his form - (תֹּאַר *to'ărô*). This word denotes a form or a figure of the body 1 Samuel 28:14. Here it denotes the figure, or the appearance, referring not to the countenance, but to the general aspect of the body.

More than the sons of men - So as to seem not to belong to people, or to be one of the human family. All this evidently refers to the disfiguration which arises from excessive grief and calamity. It means that he was broken down and distressed; that his great sorrows had left their marks on his frame so as to destroy the beautiful symmetry and proportions of the human form. We speak of being crushed with grief; of being borne down with pain; of being laden with sorrow. And we all know the effect of long-continued grief in marring the beauty of the human countenance, and in bowing down the frame. Deep emotion depicts itself on the face, and produces a permanent impression there. The highest beauty fades under long-continued trials, though at first it may seem to be set off to advantage. The rose leaves the cheek, the luster forsakes the eye, vigor departs from the frame, its erect form is bowed, and the countenance, once brilliant and beautiful, becomes marked with the deep furrows of care and anxiety.

Such seems to be the idea here. It is not indeed said that the sufferer before this had been distinguished for any extraordinary beauty - though this may not be improperly supposed - but that excessive grief had almost obliterated the traces of intelligence from the face, and destroyed the aspect of man. How well this applies to the Lord Jesus, needs not to be said. We have, indeed, no positive information in regard to his personal appearance. We are not told that he was distinguished for manliness of form, or beauty of countenance. But it is certainly no improbable supposition that when God prepared for him a body Hebrews 10:5 in which the divinity should

dwell incarnate, the human form would be rendered as fit as it could be for the indwelling of the celestial inhabitant. And it is no unwarrantable supposition that perfect truth, benevolence, and purity, should depict themselves on the countenance of the Redeemer; as they will be manifested in the very aspect wherever they exist - and render him the most beautiful of human beings - for the expression of these principles and feelings in the countenance constitutes beauty (compare the notes at Isaiah 53:2). Nor is it an improbable supposition, that this beauty was marred by his long-continued and inexpressibly deep sorrows, and that he was so worn down and crushed by the sufferings which he endured as scarcely to have retained the aspect of a man.

Isaiah 52:15

So - (כֵּן *kên*). This word corresponds to ‹as‘ (כאשר *ka'ăsher*) in the former verse. ‹In like manner as many were astonished or shocked at thee - so shall he sprinkle many nations.‘ The one is to be in some respects commensurate with the other. The comparison seems to consist of two points:

1. In regard to the numbers. Many would be shocked: many would be sprinkled by him. Large numbers would be amazed at the fact of his sorrows; and numbers correspondently large would be sprinkled by him.

2. In the effects. Many would be struck dumb with amazement at his appearance; and, in like manner, many would be struck dumb with veneration or respect. He would be regarded on the one hand as having scarce the form of a man; on the other, even kings would be silent before him from profound reverence and awe.

Shall he sprinkle many nations - The word rendered here ‹sprinkle‘ (יזה *yazzeh*) has been very variously rendered. Jerome renders it, Asperget - ‹Shall sprinkle.‘ The Septuagint, ‹So shall many nations express admiration (θαυμάσονται *thaumasontai*) at him.‘ The Chaldee, ‹So shall he scatter,‘ or dissipate (יבדר *yebaddar*) ‹many people.‘ The Syriac renders it, ‹Thus shall he purify,‘ cleanse, make expiation for ‹many nations.‘ The Syriac verb used here means to purify, to cleanse, to make holy; and, in aph., to expiate; and the idea of the translator evidently was, that he would purify by making expiation. See the Syriac word used in Luke 3:17; Acts 11:9; Acts 24:18; Hebrews 9:22; Hebrews 10:4. Castellio renders it as Jerome does; and Jun. and Tremell., ‹He shall sprinkle many nations with stupor.‘ Interpreters

have also varied in the sense which they have given to this word. Its usual and proper meaning is to sprinkle, and so it has been here commonly interpreted. But Martini, Rosenmuller, and Gesenius suppose that it is derived from an Arabic word meaning to leap, to spring, to spring up, to leap for joy, to exult; and that the idea here is, that he should cause many nations to exult, or leap for joy. Parallel places, says Gesenius, occur in Isaiah 49:6-7; Isaiah 51:5. Against the common interpretation, ‹to sprinkle,‘ he objects:

1. That the verb could not be construed without the accusative, and that if it means that he would sprinkle with blood, the word blood would be specified.

2. That the connection is opposed to the idea of sprinkling, and that the antithesis requires some word that shall correspond with שׁמם *shāmam* ‹shall be astonished,‘ and that the phrase ‹they shall be joyful,‘ or ‹he shall cause them to exult with joy,‘ denotes such antithesis.

To this it may be replied, that the usual, the universal signification of the word (נזה *nāzâh*) in the Old Testament is to sprinkle. The word occurs only in the following places, and is in all instances translated ‹sprinkle‘ Exodus 29:21; Leviticus 5:9; Leviticus 6:6-17, Leviticus 6:27; Leviticus 8:11, Leviticus 8:30; Leviticus 14:7, Leviticus 14:16, Leviticus 14:27, Leviticus 14:51; Leviticus 16:14-15, Leviticus 16:19; Numbers 8:7; Numbers 19:4, Numbers 19:18-19, Numbers 19:21; 2 Kings 9:33; Isaiah 63:3. It is properly applicable to the act of sprinkling blood, or water; and then comes to be used in the sense of cleansing by the blood that makes expiation for sin, or of cleansing by water as an emblem of purifying. In Ezekiel 36:25, the practice of sprinkling with consecrated water is referred to as synonymous with purifying - though a different word from this is used (זרק *zâraq*), ‹and I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.‘ If the word used here means ‹to sprinkle,‘ it is used in one of the following significations:

1. To sprinkle with blood, in allusion to the Levitical rite of sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice, meaning that in that way sin would be expiated and removed Leviticus 14:51; Leviticus 16:14; Hebrews 9:19; Hebrews 10:22; or,

2. By an allusion to the custom of sprinkling with water as emblematic of purity, or cleansing Numbers 8:7; Numbers 19:18; Ezekiel 36:25. If used in the former sense, it means, that the Redeemer would make expiation for sin, and that his blood of purifying would be sprinkled on the nations.

If in the latter, as is most probable, then it means that he would purify them, as objects were cleansed by the sprinkling of water. If in either sense, it means substantially the same thing - that the Redeemer would purify, or cleanse many nations, that is, from their sins, and make them holy. Still there is a difficulty in the passage which does not seem to be solved. This difficulty has been thus expressed by Taylor (Concord.): ‹It seems here to have a special meaning, which is not exactly collected from the other places where this word is used. The antithesis points to regard, esteem, admiration. So shall he sprinkle, engage the esteem and admiration of many nations. But how to deduce this from the sense of the word I know not.‘ It was to meet this difficulty that Martini, Rosenmuller, and Gesenius, propose the sense of leaping, exulting, filling with joy, from the Arabic. But that signification does not accord with the uniform Hebrew usage, and probably the sense of purifying is to be retained. It may be remarked that whichever of the above senses is assigned, it furnishes no argument for the practice of sprinkling in baptism. It refers to the fact of his purifying or cleansing the nations, and not to the ordinance of Christian baptism; nor should it be used as an argument in reference to the mode in which that should be administered.

The kings shall shut their mouths at him - Or rather, kings. It does not refer to any particular kings; but the idea is, that he would be honored by kings. To shut the mouths here indicates veneration and admiration. See Job 29:9-10, where reverence or respect is indicated in the same way:

The princes refrained talking,
And laid their hand upon their mouth:
The nobles held their peace,
And their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth.

See also Micah 7:16; compare Job 5:16; Psalm 107:42.

For that which had not been told them - In this part of the verse a reason is given for the veneration which kings would evince. It is, that they should receive intelligence of this wonderful exaltation of the messenger of

God which had not before been made known to them as it had been to the Jews. Or, in other words, the great mystery of the incarnation and redemption would contain truths and wonders which they had not contemplated elsewhere. No such events would have occurred within the range of their observation; and the wonders of redemption would stand by themselves as unparalleled in all that they had heard or seen. What is here predicted has been fulfilled. The mystery of the incarnation and the atonement; the sufferings and the death of the Redeemer; his exaltation and his glory, are events which are unparalleled in the history of the world. They are events suited in their nature to excite the profoundest admiration, and to induce kings and nobles to lay their hand on their mouth in token of veneration. No monarch on earth could have evinced such condescension as did the Son of God; none has been elevated to so high a rank in the universe as the Redeemer. That the Son of God should become a man; that his visage should be so disfigured by grief as to have scarcely the aspect of a human being; that he should suffer and die as he did; and that he should be exalted as he is over this whole world.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 53

Verse 1

Who hath believed our report? - The main design of the prophet in all this portion of his prophecy is, undoubtedly, to state the fact that the Redeemer would be greatly exalted (see Isaiah 52:13; Isaiah 53:12). But in order to furnish a fair view of his exaltation, it was necessary also to exhibit the depth of his humiliation, and the intensity of his sorrows, and also the fact that he would be rejected by those to whom he was sent. He, therefore, in this verse, to use the language of Calvin, breaks in abruptly upon the order of his discourse, and exclaims that what he had said, and what he was about to say, would be scarcely credited by anyone. Prelimmary to his exaltation, and to the honors which would be conferred on him, he would be rejected and despised. The word ‹report‘ (שְׁמוּעָה *shemûʿâh*) denotes properly that which is heard, tidings, message, news. Margin, ‹Hearing‘ or ‹doctrine.‘ The Septuagint renders it, Ἀκοή *Akoē* - ‹Rumour,‘ ‹message.‘ It refers to the annunciation, message, or communication which had been made respecting the Messiah. ‹The speaker here is Isaiah, and the word ‹our‘ refers to the fact that the message of Isaiah and of the other prophets had been alike rejected. He groups himself with the other prophets, and says that the annunciation which they had made of the Redeemer had been disregarded The interrogative form is often assumed when it is designed to express a truth with emphasis; and the idea is, therefore, that the message in regard to the Messiah had been rejected, and that almost none had credited and embraced it.

And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? - The arm is that by which we execute a purpose, and is often used as the emblem of power (see the notes at Isaiah 33:2; Isaiah 40:10). Here it denotes the omnipotence or power of God, which would be exhibited through the Messiah. ‹The sense is, ‹Who has perceived the power evinced in the work of the Redeemer? To whom is that power manifested which is to be put forth through him, and in connection with his work?‘ It refers not so much, as it seems to me, to his power in working miracles, as to the omnipotence evinced in rescuing sinners from destruction. In the New Testament, the gospel is not unfrequently called ‹the power of God‘ Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18, for it is that by which God displays his power in saving people. The idea here is, that comparatively few would be brought under that power, and be

benefited by it; that is, in the times, and under the preaching of the Messiah. It is to be remembered that the scene of this vision is laid in the midst of the work of the Redeemer. The prophet sees him a sufferer, despised and rejected. He sees that few come to him, and embrace him as their Saviour. He recalls the ‹report‘ and the announcement which he and other prophets had made respecting him; he remembers the record which had been made centuries before respecting the Messiah; and he asks with deep emotion, as if present when the Redeemer lived and preached, who had credited what he and the other prophets had said of him. The mass had rejected it all. The passage, therefore, had its fulfillment in the events connected with the ministry of the Redeemer, and in the fact that he was rejected by so many. The Redeemer was more successful in his work as a preacher than is commonly supposed, but still it is true that by the mass of the nation he was despised, and that the announcement which had been made of his true character and work was rejected.

Verse 2

For he shall grow up before him - In this verse, the prophet describes the humble appearance of the Messiah, and the fact that there was nothing in his personal aspect that corresponded to the expectations that bad been formed of him; nothing that should lead them to desire him as their expected deliverer, but everything that could induce them to reject him. He would be of so humble an origin, and with so little that was magnificent in his external appear ance, that the nation would despise him. The word rendered ‹he shall grow up‘ (ויעל *vayaʿal* from עלה *ʿâlâh*), means properly, “to go up, to ascend.” Here it evidently applies to the Redeemer as growing up in the manner of a shoot or sucker that springs out of the earth. It means that he would start, as it were, from a decayed stock or stump, as a shoot springs up from a root that is apparently dead. It does not refer to his manner of life before his entrance on the public work of the ministry; not to the mode and style of his education; but to his starting as it were out of a dry and sterile soil where any growth could not be expected, or from a stump or stock that was apparently dead (see the notes at Isaiah 11:1). The phrase ‹before him‘ (לפניו *lepânâyv*), refers to Yahweh. He would be seen and observed by him, although unknown to the world. The eyes of people would not regard him as the Messiah while he was growing up, but Yahweh would, and his eye would be continually upon him.

As a tender plant - The word used here (יונק *yônēq* from ינק *yânaq* to suck, Job 3:12; Joel 2:16), may be applied either to a suckling, a sucking child Deuteronomy 32:25; Psalm 8:3, or to a sucker, a sprout, a shoot of a tree Job 8:16; Job 14:7; Job 15:30; Ezekiel 17:22; Hosea 14:7. Jerome here renders it, *Virgultum*. The Septuagint renders it, Ἀνηγγείλαμεν ὡς παιδίον ἐναντίον αὐτοῦ *anēngeilamen hōs paidion enantion autou* - ‹We have made proclamation as a child before him.‘ But what idea they attached to it, it is impossible now to say; and equally so to determine how they came to make such a translation. The Chaldee also, leaving the idea that it refers to the Messiah, renders it, ‹And the righteous shall be magnified before him as branches which flourish, and as the tree which sends its roots by the fountains of water; thus shall the holy nation be increased in the land.‘ The Syriac translates it, ‹He shall grow up before him as an infant.‘ The idea in the passage is plain. It is, that the Messiah would spring up as from an ancient and decayed stock, like a tender shoot or sucker. He would be humble and unpretending in his origin, and would be such that they who had expected a splendid prince would be led to overlook and despise him.

And as a root - (וכשרש *vekashoresh*). The word ‹root‘ here is evidently used by synecdoche for the sprout that starts up from a root (see the notes at Isaiah 11:10, where the word is used in the same sense).

Out of a dry ground - In a barren waste, or where there is no moisture. Such a sprout or shrub is small, puny, and withered up. Such shrubs spring up in deserts, where they are stinted for want of moisture, and they are most striking objects to represent that which is humble and unattractive in its personal appearance. The idea here is, that the Messiah would spring from an ancient family decayed, but in whose root, so to speak, there would be life, as there is remaining life in the stump of a tree that is fallen down; but that there would be nothing in his external appearance that would attract attention, or meet the expectations of the nation. Even then he would not be like a plant of vigorous growth supplied with abundant rains, and growing in a rich and fertile soil, but he would be like the stinted growth of the sands of the desert. Can anything be more strikingly expressive of the actual appearance of the Redeemer, as compared with the expectation of the Jews? Can there be found anywhere a more striking fulfillment of a prophecy than this? And how will the infidel answer the argument thus furnished for the fact that Isaiah was inspired, and that his record was true?

He hath no form - That is, no beauty. He has not the beautiful form which was anticipated; the external glory which it was supposed he would assume. On the meaning of the word ‹form,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 52:14. It is several times used in the sense of beautiful form or figure (Genesis 29:17; Genesis 39:6; Genesis 41:18; Deuteronomy 21:11; Esther 2:17; compare 1 Samuel 16:18). Here it means the same as beautiful form or appearance, and refers to his state of abasement rather than to his own personal beauty. There is no evidence that in person he was in any way deformed, or otherwise than beautiful, except as excessive grief may have changed his natural aspect (see the note at Isaiah 52:14).

Nor comeliness - (הדר *hâdâr*). This word is translated honor, glory, majesty Deuteronomy 33:17; Psalm 29:4; Psalm 149:9; Daniel 11:20; excellency Isaiah 35:2; beauty Proverbs 20:29; Psalm 110:3; 2 Chronicles 20:21. It may be applied to the countenance, to the general aspect, or to the ornaments or apparel of the person. Here it refers to the appearance of the Messiah, as having nothing that was answerable to their expectations. He had no robes of royalty; no diadem sparkling on his brow; no splendid retinue; no gorgeous array.

And when we shall see him - This should be connected with the previous words, and should be translated, ‹that we should regard him, or attentively look upon him.‘ The idea is, that there was in his external appearance no such beauty as to lead them to look with interest and attention upon him; nothing that should attract them, as people are attracted by the dazzling and splendid objects of this world. If they saw him, they immediately looked away from him as if he were unworthy of their regard.

There is no beauty that we should desire him - He does not appear in the form which we had anticipated. He does not come with the regal pomp and splendor which it was supposed he would assmne. He is apparently of humble rank; has few attendants, and has disappointed wholly the expectation of the nation. In regard to the personal appearance of the Redeemer, it is remarkable that the New Testament has given us no information. Not a hint is dropped in reference to his height of stature, or his form; respecting the color of his hair, his eyes, or his complexion. In all this, on which biographers are usually so full and particular, the evangelists are wholly silent. There was evidently design in this; and the purpose was probably to prevent any painting, statuary, or figure of the Redeemer, that would have any claim to being regarded as correct or true. As it stands in

the New Testament, there is lust the veil of obscurity thrown over this whole subject which is most favorable for the contemplation of the incarnate Deity. We are told flint he was a man; we are told also that he was God. The image to the mind‘s eye is as obscure in the one case as the other; and in both, we are directed to his moral beauty, his holiness, and benevolence, as objects of contemplation, rather than to his external appearance or form.

It may be added that there is no authentic information in regard to his appearance that has come down to us by tradition. All the works of sculptors and painters in attempting to depict his form are the mere works of fancy, and are undoubtedly as unlike the glorious reality as they are contrary to the spirit and intention of the Bible. There is, indeed, a letter extant which is claimed by some to have been written by Publius Lentulus, to the Emperor Tiberius, in the time when the Saviour lived, and which gives a description of his personal appearance. As this is the only legend of antiquity which even claims to be a description of his person, and as it is often printed, and is regarded as a curiosity, it may not be improper here to present it in a note. This letter is pronounced by Calmer to be spurious, and it has been abundantly proved to be so by Prof. Robinson (see Bib. Rep. vol. ii. pp. 367-393). The main arguments against its anthenticity, and which entirely settle the question, are:

1. The discrepancies and contradictions which exist in the various copies.

2. The fact that in the time of the Saviour, when the epistle purports to have been written, it can be demonstrated that no such man as Publius Lentulus was governor of Judea, or had any such office there, as is claimed for him in the inscriptions to the epistle.

3. That for fifteen hundred years no such epistle is quoted or referred to by any writer - a fact which could not have occurred if any such epistle had been in existence.

4. That the style of the epistle is not such as an enlightened Roman would have used, but is such as an ecclesiastic would have employed.

5. That the contents of the epistle are such as a Roman would not have used of one who was a Jew.

See these arguments presented in detail in the place above referred to. It may be added, that this is the only pretended account which bas come down to us respecting the personal appearance of the Saviour, except the fable that Christ sent his portrait to Abgar, king of Edessa, in reply to a letter which he had sent requesting him to come and heal him; and the equally fabulous legend, that the impression of his countenance was left upon the handkerchief of the holy Veronica.

Verse 3

He is despised - This requires no explanation; and it needs no comment to show that it was fulfilled. The Redeemer was eminently the object of contempt and scorn alike by the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Romans. In his life on earth it was so; in his death it was still so; and since then, his name and person have been extensively the object of contempt. Nothing is a more striking fulfillment of this than the conduct of the Jews at the present day. The very name of Jesus of Nazareth excites contempt; and they join with their fathers who rejected him in heaping on him every term indicative of scorn.

Rejected of men - This phrase is full of meaning, and in three words states the whole history of man in regard to his treatment of the Redeemer. The name ‹The Rejected of Men,‘ will express all the melancholy history; rejected by the Jews; by the rich; the great and the learned; by the mass of people of every grade, and age, and rank. No prophecy was ever more strikingly fulfilled; none could condense more significancy into few words. In regard to the exact sense of the phrase, interpreters have varied. Jerome renders it, *Novissium virorum* - ‹The last of men;‘ that is, the most abject and contemptible of mankind. The Septuagint, ‹His appearance is dishonored (ἄτιμον *atimon*) and defective (ἐκλειπον *ekleipon*) more than the sons of men.‘ The Chaldee, ‹He is indeed despised, but he shall take away the glory of all kings; they are infirm and sad, as if exposed to all calamities and sorrows.‘ Some render it, ‹Most abject of men,‘ and they refer to Job 19:14, where the same word is used to denote those friends who forsake the unfortunate.

The word חדל *châdêl* used here, is derived from the verb חדל *châdal* which means "to cease, to leave off, to desist"; derived, says Gesenius (Lexicon), from the idea of becoming languid, flaccid; and thence transferred to the act of ceasing from labor. It means usually, to cease, to desist from, to leave, to let alone (see 1 Kings 22:6-15; Job 7:15; Job 10:20; Isaiah 2:22). According to Gesenius, the word here means to be left, to be destitute, or forsaken; and the idea is, that be was forsaken by people. According to Hengstenberg (Christol.) it means ‹the most abject of men,' he who ceases from men, who ceases to belong to the number of men; that is, who is the most abject of men. Castellio renders it, *Minus quash homo* - ‹Less than a man.' Junius and Tremellius, *Abjectissimus virorum* - ‹The most abject of men.' Grotius, ‹Rejected of men.' Symmachus, Ἐλάχιστος ἀνδρῶν *Elachistos andrōn* - ‹the least of men.' The idea is, undoubtedly, somehow that of ceasing from human beings, or from being regarded as belonging to mankind.

There was a ceasing, or a withdrawing of that which usually pertains to man, and which belongs to him. And the thought probably is, that he was not only ‹despised,' but that there was an advance on that - there was a ceasing to treat him as if he had human feelings, and was in any way entitled to human fellowship and sympathy. It does not refer, therefore, so much to the active means employed to reject him, as to the fact that he was regarded as cut off from man; and the idea is not essentially different from this, that he was the most abject and vile of mortals in the estimation of others; so vile as not to be deemed worthy of the treatment due to the lowest of men. This idea has been substantially expressed in the Syriac translation.

A man of sorrows - What a beautiful expression! A man who was so sad and sorrowful; whose life was so full of sufferings, that it might be said that that was the characteristic of the man. A similar phraseology occurs in Proverbs 29:1, ‹He that being often reproved,' in the margin, ‹a man of reproofs;' in the Hebrew, ‹A man of chastisements,' that is, a man who is often chastised. Compare Daniel 10:11: ‹O Daniel, a man greatly beloved,' Margin, as in Hebrew, ‹A man of desires; that is, a man greatly desired. Here, the expression means that his life was characterized by sorrows. How remarkably this was fulfilled in the life of the Redeemer, it is not necessary to attempt to show.

And acquainted with grief - Hebrew, חלי וידוע *viydûa‘ choliy* - ‹And knowing grief.‘ The word rendered ‹grief‘ means usually sickness, disease Deuteronomy 7:15; Deuteronomy 28:61; Isaiah 1:5; but it also means anxiety, affliction Ecclesiastes 5:16; and then any evil or calamity Ecclesiastes 6:2. Many of the old interpreters explain it as meaning, that he was known or distinguished by disease; that is, affected by it in a remarkable manner. So Symm. Γνωστός νόσῳ *Gnōstos nosō* Jerome (the Vulgate) renders it, *Scientem infirmitatem*. The Septuagint renders the whole clause, ‹A man in affliction (ἐν πληγῇ *en plēgē*), and knowing to bear languor, or disease‘ (εἰδὼ; φέρειν μαλακίαν *eidōs pherein malakian*). But if the word here means disease, it is only a figurative designation of severe sufferings both of body and of soul. Hengstenberg, Koppe, and Ammon, suppose that the figure is taken from the leprosy, which was not only one of the most severe of all diseases, but was in a special manner regarded as a divine judgment. They suppose that many of the expressions which follow may be explained with reference to this (compare Hebrews 4:15). The idea is, that he was familiar with sorrow and calamity. It does not mean, as it seems to me, that he was to be himself sick and diseased; but that he was to be subject to various kinds of calamity, and that it was to be a characteristic of his life that he was familiar with it. He was intimate with it. He knew it personally; he knew it in others. He lived in the midst of scenes of sorrow, and be became intimately acquainted with its various forms, and with its evils. There is no evidence that the Redeemer was himself sick at any time - which is remarkable - but there is evidence in abundance that he was familiar with all kinds of sorrow, and that his own life was a life of grief.

And we hid as it were our faces from him - There is here great variety of interpretation and of translation. The margin reads, ‹As an hiding of faces from him,‘ or ‹from us,‘ or, ‹He hid as it were his face from us.‘ The Hebrew is literally, ‹And as the hiding of faces from him, or from it;‘ and Hengstenberg explains it as meaning, ‹He was as an hiding of the face before it.‘ that is, as a thing or person before whom a man covers his face, because he cannot bear the disgusting sight. Jerome (the Vulgate) renders it, ‹His face was as it were hidden and despised.‘ The Septuagint, ‹For his countenance was turned away‘ (ἀπέστρυπταὶ *apestraptai*). The Chaldee, ‹And when he took away his countenance of majesty from us, we were

despised and reputed as nothing.‘ Interpreters have explained it in various ways.

1. ‹He was as one who hides his face before us;‘ alluding, as they suppose, to the Mosaic law, which required lepers to cover their faces Leviticus 13:45, or to the custom of covering the face in mourning, or for shame.

2. Others explain it as meaning, ‹as one before whom is the covering of the face, that is, before whom a man covers the face from shame or disgust. So Gesenius.

3. Others, ‹He was as one causing to conceal the face,‘ that is, he induced others to cover the face before him. His sufferings were so terrible as to induce them to turn away. So John H. Michaelis.

The idea seems to be, that he was as one from whom people hide their faces, or turn away. This might either arise from a sight of his sufferings, as being so offensive that they would turn away in pain - as in the case of a leper; or it might be, that he was so much an object of contempt, and so unlike what they expected, that they would hide their faces and turn away in scorn. This latter I suppose to be the meaning; and that the idea is, that he was so unlike what they had expected, that they hid their faces in affected or real contempt.

And we esteemed him not - That is, we esteemed him as nothing; we set no value on him. In order to give greater energy to a declaration, the Hebrews frequently express a thing positively and then negatively. The prophet had said that they held him in positive contempt; he here says that they did not regard him as worthy of their notice. He here speaks in the name of his nation - as one of the Jewish people. ‹We, the Jews, the nation to whom he was sent, did not esteem him as the Messiah, or as worthy of our affection or regard.‘

Verse 4

Surely - This is an exceedingly important verse, and is one that is attended with considerable difficulty, from the manner in which it is quoted in the New Testament. The general sense, as it stands in the Hebrew, is not indeed difficult. It is immediately connected in signification with the previous verse. The meaning is, that those who had despised and rejected

the Messiah, had greatly erred in condemning him on account of his sufferings and humiliation. ‹We turned away from him in horror and contempt. We supposed that he was suffering on account of some great sin of his own. But in this we erred. It was not for his sins but for ours. It was not that he Was smitten of God for his own sins - as if he had been among the worst of mortals - but it was because he had taken our sins, and was suffering for them. The very thing therefore that gave offence to us, and which made us turn away from him, constituted the most important part of his work, and was really the occasion of highest gratitude. It is an acknowledgment that they had erred, and a confession of that portion of the nation which would be made sensible of their error, that they had judged improperly of the character of the sufferer. The word rendered ‹surely‘ (אכן *'âkēn* Vulgate, *vere*), is sometimes a particle strongly affirming, meaning truly, of a certain truth Genesis 28:16; Exodus 2:14; Jeremiah 8:8. Sometimes it is an adversative particle, meaning but yet Psalm 31:23; Isaiah 49:24. It is probably used in that sense here, meaning, that though he was despised by them, yet he was worthy of their esteem and confidence, for he had borne their griefs. He was not suffering for any sins of his own, but in a cause which, so far from rendering him an object of contempt, made him worthy of their highest regard.

He hath borne - Hebrew, נשׂא *nâs'â'* Vulgate, *Tulit*. Septuagint, φερει *pherei* - ‹He bears.‘ Chald. ‹He prayed (יבעי *yibeʿēy*) for, or on account of our sins.‘ Castilio, Tulit ac toleravit. In these versions, the sense is that of sustaining, bearing, upholding, carrying, as when one removes a burden from the shoulders of another, and places it on his own. The word נשׂא *nâs'a'* means properly “to take up, to lift, to raise” Genesis 7:17, ‹The waters increased, and lifted up the ark;‘ Genesis 29:1, ‹And Jacob lifted up his feet (see the margin) and came.‘ Hence, it is applied to lifting up a standard Jeremiah 4:6; Jeremiah 50:2: to lifting up the hand Deuteronomy 32:40; to lifting up the head Job 10:15; 2 Kings 25:27; to lifting up the eyes (Genesis 13:10, et soepe); to lifting up the voice, etc. It then means to bear, to carry, as an infant in the arms Isaiah 46:3; as a tree does its fruit Ezekiel 17:8, or as a field its produce Psalm 70:3; Genesis 12:6.

Hence, to endure, suffer, permit Job 21:3. ‹Bear with me, suffer me and I will speak.‘ Hence, to bear the sin of anyone, to take upon one‘s self the suffering which is due to sin (see the notes at Isaiah 53:12 of this chapter; compare Leviticus 5:1, Leviticus 5:17; Leviticus 17:16; Leviticus 20:19;

Leviticus 24:15; Numbers 5:31; Numbers 9:13; Numbers 14:34; Numbers 30:16; Ezekiel 18:19-20). Hence, to bear chastisement, or punishment Job 34:31: ‹I have borne chastisement, I will not offend anymore.‘ It is also used in the sense of taking away the sin of anyone, expiating, or procuring pardon Genesis 50:17; Leviticus 10:17; Job 7:21; Psalm 33:5; Psalm 85:3. In all cases there is the idea of lifting, sustaining, taking up, and conveying away, as by carrying a burden. It is not simply removing, but it is removing somehow by lifting, or carrying; that is, either by an act of power, or by so taking them on one‘s own self as to sustain and carry them. If applied to sin, it means that a man must bear the burden of the punishment of his own sin, or that the suffering which is due to sin is taken up and borne by another.

If applied to diseases, as in Matthew 8:17, it must mean that he, as it were, lifted them up and bore them away. It cannot mean that the Saviour literally took those sicknesses on himself, and became sick in the place of the sick, became a leper in the place of the leper, or was himself possessed with an evil spirit in the place of those who were possessed Matthew 8:16, but it must mean that he took them away by his power, and, as it were, lifted them up, and removed them. So when it is said Isaiah 53:12 that he ‹bare the sins of many,‘ it cannot mean literally that he took those sins on himself in any such sense as that he became a sinner, but only that he so took them upon himself as to remove from the sinner the exposure to punishment, and to bear himself whatever was necessary as a proper expression of the evil of sin. Peter undoubtedly makes an allusion to this passage Isaiah 53:12 when he says 1 Peter 2:24, ‹Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree‘ (see the notes at Isaiah 53:12). Matthew Matthew 8:17 has translated it by ἔλαβε *elabe* (“he took”), a word which does not differ in signification essentially from that used by Isaiah. It is almost exactly the same word which is used by Symmachus (ἀνελαβε *anelabe*).

Our griefs - The word used here (חלי *chăliy*) means properly sickness, disease, anxiety, affliction. It does not refer to sins, but to sufferings. It is translated ‹sickness‘ Deuteronomy 28:61; Deuteronomy 7:15; 2 Chronicles 21:15; 1 Kings 17:17; ‹disease‘ Ecclesiastes 6:2; 2 Chronicles 21:18; 2 Chronicles 16:12; Exodus 15:26; ‹grief‘ (Isaiah 53:3-4; compare Jeremiah 16:4). It is never in our version rendered sin, and never Used to denote sin. ‹In ninety-three instances,‘ says Dr. Magee (On atonement and Sacrifice, p.

229, New York Ed. 1813), ‹in which the word here translated (by the Septuagint) ἁμαρτίας *hamartias* or its kindred verb, is found in the Old Testament in any sense that is not entirely foreign from the passage before us, there occurs but this one in which the word is so rendered; it being in all other cases expressed by ἀσθένεια *astheneia* μαλακία *malakia* or some word denoting bodily disease.‘ ‹That the Jews,‘ he adds, ‹considered this passage as referring to bodily diseases, appears from Whitby, and Lightfoot. Hor. Heb. on Matthew 8:17.‘ It is rendered in the Vulgate, *Languores* - ‹Our infirmities.‘ In the Chaldee, ‹He prayed for our sins.‘ Castellio renders it, *Morbos* - ‹Diseases;‘ and so Junius and Tremellius. The Septuagint has rendered it in this place: Ἁμαρτίας *Hamartias* - ‹Sins;‘ though, from what Dr. Kennicott has advanced in his Diss. Gen. Section 79, Dr. Magee thinks there can be no doubt that this is a corruption which has crept into the later copies of the Greek. A few Greek manuscripts of the Septuagint also read it ἀσθενείας *astheneias* and one copy reads μαλακίας *malakias* Matthew 8:17 has rendered it, ἀσθενείας *astheneias* - ‹infirmities,‘ and intended no doubt to apply it to the fact that the Lord Jesus healed diseases, and there can be no doubt that Matthew has used the passage, not by way of accommodation, but in the true sense in which it is used by Isaiah; and that it means that the Messiah would take upon himself the infirmities of people, and would remove their sources of grief. It does not refer here to the fact that he would take their sins. That is stated in other places Isaiah 53:6, Isaiah 53:12. But it means that he was so afflicted, that he seemed to have taken upon himself the sicknesses and sorrows of the world; and taking them upon himself he would bear them away. I understand this, therefore, as expressing the twofold idea that he became deeply afflicted for us, and that. being thus afflicted for us, he was able to carry away our sorrows. In part this would be done by his miraculous power in healing diseases, as mentioned by Matthew; in part by the influence of his religion, in enabling people to bear calamity, and in drying up the fountains of sorrow. Matthew, then, it is believed, has quoted this passage exactly in the sense in which it was used by Isaiah; and if so, it should not be adduced to prove that he bore the sins of men - true as is that doctrine, and certainly as it has been affirmed in other parts of this chapter.

And carried - Hebrew, (סבל *sābal*). This word means properly to carry, as a burden; to be laden with, etc. Isaiah 46:4, Isaiah 46:7; Genesis 49:15. It is applied to carrying burdens 1 Kings 5:15; 2 Chronicles 2:2; Nehemiah

4:10, Nehemiah 4:17; Ecclesiastes 12:5. The verb with its derivative noun occurs in twenty-six places in the Old Testament, twenty-three of which relate to carrying burdens, two others relate to sins, and the other Lamentations 5:7 is rendered, ‹We have borne their iniquities.‘ The primary idea is undoubtedly that of carrying a burden; lifting it, and bearing it in this manner.

Our sorrows - The word used here (מכאב *make'ob* from כאב *kâ'ab* "to have pain, sorrow, to grieve, or be sad"), means properly "pain, sorrow, grief." In the Old Testament it is rendered ‹sorrow‘ and ‹sorrows‘ Ecclesiastes 1:18; Lamentations 1:12-18; Isaiah 65:14; Jeremiah 45:3; Jeremiah 30:15; ‹grief‘ Job 16:6; Psalm 69:26; 2 Chronicles 6:29; ‹pain‘ Job 33:19; Jeremiah 15:18; Jeremiah 51:8. Perhaps the proper difference between this word and the word translated griefs is, that this refers to pains of the mind, that of the body; this to anguish, anxiety, or trouble of the soul; that to bodily infirmity and disease. Kennicott affirms that the word here used is to be regarded as applicable to griefs and distresses of the mind. ‹It is evidently so interpreted,‘ says Dr. Magee (p. 220), ‹in Psalm 32:10, ‹Many sorrows shall be to the wicked;‘ and again, Psalm 69:29, ‹But I am poor and sorrowful;‘ and again, Proverbs 14:13, ‹The heart is sorrowful;‘ and Ecclesiastes 1:18, ‹He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow;‘ and so Ecclesiastes 2:18; Isaiah 65:14; Jeremiah 30:15.‘ Agreeably to this, the word is translated by Lowth, in our common version, and most of the early English versions, ‹Sorrows.‘ The Vulgate renders it, Dolores: the Septuagint, ‹For us he is in sorrow‘ (ὀδυνᾶται *odunatai*), that is, is deeply grieved, or afflicted.

The phrase, therefore, properly seems to mean that he took upon himself the mental sorrows of people. He not only took their diseases, and bore them away, but he also took or bore their mental griefs. That is, he subjected himself to the kind of mental sorrow which was needful in order to remove them. The word which is used by Matthew Matthew 8:17, in the translation of this, is νόσου *nosou* This word(νόσος *nosos*) means properly sickness, disease Matthew 4:23-24; Matthew 9:35; but it is also used in a metaphorical sense for pain, sorrow, evil (Rob. Lex.) In this sense it is probable that it was designed to be used by Matthew. He refers to the general subject of human ills; to the sicknesses, sorrows, pains, and trials of life; and he evidently means, in accordance with Isaiah, that he took them on himself. He was afflicted for them. He undertook the work of removing

them. Part he removed by direct miracle - as sickness; part he removed by removing the cause - by taking away sin by the sacrifice of himself - thus removing the source of all ills; and in regard to all, he furnished the means of removing them by his own example and instructions, and by the great truths which he revealed as topics of consolation and support. On this important passage, see Magee, On atonement and Sacrifice, pp. 227-262.

Yet we did esteem him stricken - Lowth, ‹Yet we thought him judicially stricken.‘ Noyes, ‹We esteemed him stricken from above.‘ Jerome (the Vulgate), ‹We thought him to be a leper.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹We considered him being in trouble (or in labor, ἐν πόνῳ *en poiō*) and under a stroke (or in a plague or divine judgment, ἐν πληγή *en plēgē*), and in affliction.‘ Chaldee, ‹We thought him wounded, smitten from the presence of God, and afflicted.‘ The general idea is, that they thought he was subjected to great and severe punishment by God for his sins or regarded him as an object of divine disapprobation. They inferred that one who was so abject and so despised; who suffered so much and so long, must have been abandoned by God to judicial sufferings, and that he was experiencing the proper result and effect of his own sins. The word rendered ‹stricken,‘ (נגוע *nâgûʿa*) means properly “struck,” or “smitten.”

It is applied sometimes to the plague, or the leprosy, as an act by which God smites suddenly, and destroys people Genesis 12:17; Exodus 11:1; Leviticus 13:3, Leviticus 13:9, Leviticus 13:20; 1 Samuel 6:9; Job 19:21; Psalm 73:5, and very often elsewhere. Jerome explains it here by the word leprous; and many of the ancient Jews derived from this word the idea that the Messiah would be afflicted with the leprosy. Probably the idea which the word would convey to those who were accustomed to read the Old Testament in Hebrew would be, that he was afflicted or smitten in some way corresponding to the plague or the leprosy; and as these were regarded as special and direct divine judgments, the idea would be that he would be smitten judicially by God. or be exposed to his displeasure and his curse. It is to be particularly observed here that the prophet does not say that he would thus be in fact smitten, accursed, and abandoned by God; but only that he would be thus esteemed, or thought, namely, by the Jews who rejected him and put him to death. It is not here said that he was such. Indeed, it is very strongly implied that he was not, since the prophet here is introducing them as confessing their error, and saying that they were

mistaken. He was, say they, bearing our sorrows, not suffering for his own sins.

Smitten of God - Not that he was actually smitten of God, but we esteemed him so. We treated him as one whom we regarded as being under the divine malediction, and we therefore rejected him. We esteemed him to be smitten by God, and we acted as if such an one should be rejected and contemned. The word used here (נכה *nâkâh*) means "to smite, to strike," and is sometimes employed to denote divine judgment, as it is here. Thus it means to smite with blindness Genesis 19:11; with the pestilence Numbers 14:12; with emerods 1 Samuel 5:6; with destruction, spoken of a land Malachi 4:6; of the river Exodus 7:25 when he turned it into blood. In all such instances, it means that Yahweh had inflicted a curse. And this is the idea here. They regarded him as under the judicial inflictions of God, and as suffering what his sins deserved. The foundation of this opinion was laid in the belief so common among the Jews, that great sufferings always argued and supposed great guilt, and were proof of the divine displeasure. This question constitutes the inquiry in the Book of Job, and was the point in dispute between Job and friends.

And afflicted - We esteemed him to be punished by God. In each of these clauses the words, ‹For his own sins,‘ are to be understood. We regarded him as subjected to these calamities on account of his own sins. It did not occur to us that he could be suffering thus for the sins of others. The fact that the Jews attempted to prove that Jesus was a blasphemer, and deserved to die, shows the fulfillment of this, and the estimate which they formed of him (see Luke 23:34; John 16:3; Acts 3:17; 1 Corinthians 2:8).

Verse 5

But he was wounded - Margin, ‹Tormented.‘ Jerome and the Septuagint also render this, ‹He was wounded.‘ Junius and Tremellius, ‹He was affected with grief.‘ The Chaldee has given a singular paraphrase of it, showing how confused was the view of the whole passage in the mind of that interpreter. ‹And he shall build the house of the sanctuary which was defiled on account of our sins, and which was delivered on account of our iniquities. And in his doctrine, peace shall be multiplied to us. And when we obey his words, our sins shall be remitted to us.‘ The Syriac renders it in a remarkable manner, ‹He is slain on account of our sins,‘ thus showing that it was a common belief that the Messiah would be violently put to death. The word rendered ‹wounded‘ (מחלל *mecholâl*), is a Pual participle, from

חלל *châlal* to bore through, to perforate, to pierce; hence, to wound 1 Samuel 31:3; 1 Chronicles 10:3; Ezekiel 28:9. There is probably the idea of painful piercing, and it refers to some infliction of positive wounds on the body, and not to mere mental sorrows, or to general humiliation. The obvious idea would be that there would be some act of piercing, some penetrating wound that would endanger or take life. Applied to the actual sufferings of the Messiah, it refers undoubtedly to the piercing of his hands, his feet, and his side. The word ‹tormented,‘ in the margin, was added by our translators because the Hebrew word might be regarded as derived from חול *chûl* to writhe, to be tormented, to be pained - a word not unfrequently applied to the pains of parturition. But it is probable that it is rather to be regarded as derived from חלל *châlal* "to pierce, or to wound."

For our transgressions - The prophet here places himself among the people for whom the Messiah suffered these things, and says that he was not suffering for his own sins, but on account of theirs. The preposition ‹for‘ (מן *min*) here answers to the Greek διά *dia* on account of, and denotes the cause for which he suffered and means, even according to Gesenius (Lex.), here, ‹the ground or motive on account of, or because of which anything is done.‘ Compare Deuteronomy 7:7; Judges 5:11; Esther 5:9; Psalm 68:30; Romans 4:25: ‹Who was delivered for (διά *dia*) our offences.‘ Compare 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24. Here the sense is, that the reason why he thus suffered was, that we were transgressors. All along the prophet keeps up the idea that it was not on account of any sin of which he was guilty that he thus suffered, but it was for the sins of others - an idea which is everywhere exhibited in the New Testament.

He was bruised - The word used here (דכא *dâkâ′*) means properly to be broken to pieces, to be bruised, to be crushed Job 6:9; Psalm 72:4. Applied to mind, it means to break down or crush by calamities and trials; and by the use of the word here, no doubt, the most severe inward and outward sufferings are designated. The Septuagint renders it, Μεμαλάκιστα *Memalakista* - ‹He was rendered languid,‘ or feeble. The same idea occurs in the Syriac translation. The meaning is, that he was under such a weight of sorrows on account of our sins, that he was, as it were, crushed to the earth. How true this was of the Lord Jesus it is not necessary here to pause to show.

The chastisement of our peace - That is, the chastisement by which our peace is effected or secured was laid upon him; or, he took it upon himself,‘ and bore it, in order that we might have peace. Each word here is exceedingly important, in order to a proper estimate of the nature of the work performed by the Redeemer. The word ‹chastisement‘ (מוּסָר *mûsâr*), properly denotes the correction, chastisement, or punishment inflicted by parents on their children, designed to amend their faults Proverbs 22:15; Proverbs 23:13. It is applied also to the discipline and authority of kings Job 22:18; and to the discipline or correction of God Job 5:17; Hosea 5:2. Sometimes it means admonition or instruction, such as parents give to children, or God to human beings. It is well rendered by the Septuagint by Παιδεία *Paideia* by Jerome, *Disciplina*. The word does not of necessity denote punishment, though it is often used in that sense.

It is properly that which corrects, whether it be by admonition, counsel, punishment, or suffering. Here it cannot properly mean punishment - for there is no punishment where there is no guilt, and the Redeemer had done no sin; but it means that he took upon himself the sufferings which would secure the peace of those for whom he died - those which, if they could have been endured by themselves, would have effected their peace with God. The word peace means evidently their peace with God; reconciliation with their Creator. The work of religion in the soul is often represented as peace; and the Redeemer is spoken of as the great agent by whom that is secured. ‹For he is our peace‘ (Ephesians 2:14-15, Ephesians 2:17; compare Acts 10:36; Romans 5:1; Romans 10:15). The phrase ‹upon him,‘ means that the burden by which the peace of people was effected was laid upon him, and that he bore it. It is parallel with the expressions which speak of his bearing it, carrying it, etc. And the sense of the whole is, that he endured the sorrows, whatever they were, which were needful to secure our peace with God.

And with his stripes - Margin, ‹Bruise.‘ The word used here in Hebrew (חבורה *chabbûrâh*) means properly stripe, weal, bruise, that is, the mark or print of blows on the skin. Greek Μώλωπι *Mōlōpi* Vulgate, *Livore*. On the meaning of the Hebrew word, see the notes at Isaiah 1:6. It occurs in the following places, and is translated by stripe, and stripes (Exodus 21:25, bis); bruises Isaiah 1:6; hurt Genesis 4:23; blueness Proverbs 20:30; wounds Psalm 38:5; and spots, as of a leopard Jeremiah 13:23. The proper idea is the weal or wound made by bruising; the mark designated by us

when we speak of its being ‹black and blue.‘ It is not a flesh wound; it does not draw blood; but the blood and other humors are collected under the skin. The obvious and natural idea conveyed by the word here is, that the individual referred to would be subjected to some treatment that would cause such a weal or stripe; that is, that he would be beaten, or scourged. How literally this was applicable to the Lord Jesus, it is unnecessary to attempt to prove (see Matthew 27:26). It may be remarked here, that this could not be mere conjecture How could Isaiah, seven hundred years before it occurred, conjecture that the Messiah would be scourged and bruised? It is this particularity of prediction, compared with the literal fulfillment, which furnishes the fullest demonstration that the prophet was inspired. In the prediction nothing is vague and general. All is particular and minute, as if he saw what was done, and the description is as minutely accurate as if he was describing what was actually occurring before his eyes.

We are healed - literally, it is healed to us; or healing has happened to us. The healing here referred to, is spiritual healing, or healing from sin. Pardon of sin, and restoration to the favor of God, are not unfrequently represented as an act of healing. The figure is derived from the fact that awakened and convicted sinners are often represented as crushed, broken, bruised by the weight of their transgressions, and the removal of the load of sin is repesented as an act of healing. ‹I said, O Lord, be merciful unto me; heal my soul, for I have sinned againt thee‘ Psalm 41:4. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed‘ Psalm 6:2. ‹Who forgiveth all thine, iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases Psalm 103:3. The idea here is, that the Messiah would be scourged; and that it would be by that scourging that health would be imparted to our souls.

It would be in our place, and in our stead; and it would be designed to have the same effect in recovering us, as though it had been inflicted on ourselves. And will it not do it? Is it not a fact that it has such an effect? Is not a man as likely to be recovered from a course of sin and folly, who sees another suffer in his place what he ought himself to suffer, as though he was punished himself? Is not a wayward and dissipated son quite as likely to be recovered to a course of virtue by seeing the sufferings which his career of vice causes to a father, a mother, or a sister, as though he himself When subjected to severe punishment? When such a son sees that he is bringing down the gray hairs of his father with sorrow to the grave; when he sees that he is breaking the heart of the mother that bore him; when he sees a

sister bathed in tears, or in danger of being reduced to poverty or shame by his course, it will be far more likely to reclaim him than would be personal suffering, or the prospect of poverty, want, and an early death. And it is on this principle that the plan of salvation is founded. We shall be more certainly reclaimed by the voluntary sufferings of the innocent in our behalf, than we should be by being personally punished. Punishment would make no atonement, and would bring back no sinner to God. But the suffering of the Redeemer in behalf of mankind is adapted to save the world, and will in fact arrest, reclaim, and redeem all who shall ever enter into heaven.

(Sin is not only a crime for which we were condemned to die, and which Christ purchased for us the pardon of, but it is a disease which tends directly to the death of our souls, and which Christ provided for the cure of. By his stripes, that is, the sufferings he underwent, he purchased for us the Spirit and grace of God, to mortify our corruptions, which are the distempers of our souls; and to put our souls in a good state of health, that they may be fit to serve God, and prepare to enjoy him. And by the doctrine of Christ‘s cross, and the powerful arguments it furnisheth us with against sin, the dominion of sin is broken in us, anal we are fortified against that which feeds the disease - Henry.)

Verse 6

All we, like sheep, have gone astray - This is the penitent confession of those for whom he suffered. It is an acknowledgment that they were going astray from God; and the reason why the Redeemer suffered was, that the race had wandered away, and that Yahweh had laid on him the iniquity of all. Calvin says, ‹In order that he might more deeply impress on the minds of people the benefits derived from the death of Christ, he shows how necessary was that healing of which he had just made mention. There is here an elegant antithesis. For in ourselves we were scattered; in Christ we are collected together; by nature we wander, and are driven headlong toward destruction; in Christ we find the way by which we are led to the gate of life.‘ The condition of the race without a Redeemer is here elegantly compared to a flock without a shepherd, which wanders where it chooses, and which is exposed to all dangers. This image is not unfrequently used to denote estrangement from God 1 Peter 2:25: ‹For ye were as sheep going

astray, but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.‘ Compare Numbers 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17; Psalm 119:176; Ezekiel 34:5; Zechariah 10:2; Matthew 9:36. Nothing could more strikingly represent the condition of human beings. They had wandered from God. They were following their own paths, and pursuing their own pleasures. They were without a protector, and they were exposed on every hand to danger.

We have turned every one to his own way - We had all gone in the path which we chose. We were like sheep which have no shepherd, and which wander where they please, with no one to collect, defend, or guide them. One would wander in one direction, and another in another; and, of course, solitary and unprotected. they would be exposed to the more danger. So it was, and is, with man. The bond which should have united him to the Great Shepherd, the Creator, has been broken. We have become lonely wanderers, where each one pursues his own interest, forms his own plans, and seeks to gratify his own pleasures, regardless of the interest of the whole. If we had not sinned, there would have been a common bond to unite us to God, and to each other. But now we, as a race, have become dissocial, selfish, following our own pleasures, and each one living to gratify his Own passions. What a true and graphic description of man! How has it been illustrated in all the selfish schemes and purposes of the race! And how is it still illustrated every day in the plans and actions of mortals!

And the Lord hath laid on him - Lowth renders this, ‹Yahweh hath made to light on him the iniquity of us all.‘ Jerome (the Vulgate) renders it, *Posuit Dominns in eo* - ‹The Lord placed on him the iniquity of us all.‘ The Septuagint renders it. Κύριος παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἡμῶν Kurios *paredōken auton tais hamartiais hēmōn* - ‹The Lord gave him for our sins.‘ The Chaldee renders it, ‹From the presence of the Lord there was a willingness (רעוא *raʿăvâ′*) to forgive the sins of all of us on account of him.‘ The Syriac has the same word as the Hebrew. The word used here (פגע *pâgaʿ*) means, properly, to strike upon or against, to impinge on anyone or anything, as the Greek πηγνύω *pēgnuō* It is used in a hostile sense, to denote an act of rushing upon a foe (1 Samuel 22:17; to kill, to slay Judges 8:21; Judges 15:12; 2 Samuel 1:15. It also means to light upon, to meet with anyone Genesis 28:11; Genesis 32:2. Hence, also to make peace with anyone; to strike a league or compact Isaiah 64:4. It is rendered, in our English version, ‹reacheth to‘ Joshua 19:11, Joshua 19:22, Joshua 19:26-27, Joshua 19:34; ‹came,‘ Joshua 16:7; ‹met‘ and ‹meet‘ Genesis 32:1; Exodus

23:4; Numbers 35:19; Joshua 2:16; Joshua 18:10; Rth 2:22 ; 1 Samuel 10:5; Isaiah 64:5; Amos 5:19; ‹fail‘ Judges 8:21; 1 Samuel 22:17; 2 Samuel 1:15; 1 Kings 2:29; ‹entreat‘ Genesis 18:8; Rth 1:16 ; Jeremiah 15:11; ‹make intercession‘ Isaiah 59:16; Isaiah 53:12; Jeremiah 7:16; Jeremiah 27:18; Jeremiah 36:25; ‹he that comes between‘ Job 36:22; and ‹occur‘ 1 Kings 5:4. The radical idea seems to be that of meeting, occurring, encountering; and it means here, as Lowth has rendered it, that they were caused to meet on him, or perhaps more properly, that Yahweh caused them to rush upon him, so as to overwhelm him in calamity, as one is overcome or overwhelmed in battle. The sense is, that he was not overcome by his own sins, but that he encountered ours, as if they had been made to rush to meet him and to prostrate him. That is, he suffered in our stead; and whatever he was called to endure was in consequence of the fact that he had taken the place of sinners; and having taken their place, he met or encountered the sufferings which were the proper expressions of God‘s displeasure, and sunk under the mighty burden of the world‘s atonement.

The iniquity of us all - (See the notes at Isaiah 53:5). This cannot mean that he became a sinner, or was guilty in the sight of God, for God always regarded him as an innocent being. It can only mean that he suffered as if he had been a sinner; or, that he suffered that which, if he had been a sinner, would have been a proper expression of the evil of sin. It may be remarked here:

1. That it is impossible to find stronger language to denote the fact that his sufferings were intended to make expiation for sin. Of what martyr could it be said that Yahweh had caused to meet on him the sins of the world?

2. This language is that which naturally expresses the idea that he suffered for all people. It is universal in its nature, and naturally conveys the idea that there was no limitation in respect to the number of those for whom he died.

Verse 7

He was oppressed - (נגשׁ *niggas'*). Lowth renders this, ‹It was exacted.‘ Hengstenberg, ‹He was abased.‘ Jerome (the Vulgate), ‹He was offered because he was willing.‘ The Septuagint ‹He, on account of his affliction, opened not his mouth,‘ implying that his silence arose from the extremity of

his sorrows. The Chaldee renders it, ‹He prayed, and he was heard, and before he opened his mouth he was accepted.‘ The Syriac, ‹He came and humbled himself, neither did he open his mouth.‘ Kimchi supposes that it means, ‹it was exacted;‘ and that it refers to the fact that taxes were demanded of the exiles, when they were in a foreign land. The word used here (נגשׁ *nāgas′*) properly means, “to drive,” to impel, to urge; and then to urge a debtor, to exact payment; or to exact tribute, a ransom, etc. (see Deuteronomy 15:2-3; 2 Kings 23:35.) Compare Job 3:18; Zechariah 9:8; Zechariah 10:4, where one form of the word is rendered ‹oppressor;‘ Job 39:7, the ‹driver;‘ Exodus 5:6, ‹taskmasters;‘ Daniel 11:20, ‹a raiser of taxes.‘ The idea is that of urgency, oppression, vexation, of being hard pressed, and ill treated. It does not refer here necessarily to what was exacted by God, or to sufferings inflicted by him - though it may include those - but it refers to all his oppressions, and the severity of his sufferings from all quarters. He was urged impelled, oppressed, and yet he was patient as a lamb.

And he was afflicted - Jahn and Steudel propose to render this, ‹He suffered himself to be afflicted.‘ Hengstenberg renders it, ‹He suffered patiently, and opened not his mouth.‘ Lowth, ‹He was made answerable; and he opened not his mouth.‘ According to this, the idea is, that he had voluntarily taken upon himself the sins of people, and that having done so, he was held answerable as a surety. But it is doubtful whether the Hebrew will bear this construction. According to Jerome, the idea is that he voluntarily submitted, and that this was the cause of his sufferings. Hensler renders it, ‹God demands the debt, and he the great and righteous one suffers.‘ It is probable, however, that our translation has retained the correct sense. The word ענה *ʿânâh* in Niphil, means to be afflicted, to suffer, be oppressed or depressed Psalm 119:107, and the idea here is, probably, that he was greatly distressed and afflicted. He was subjected to pains and sorrows which were hard to be borne, and which are usually accompanied with expressions of impatience and lamentation. The fact that he did not open his mouth in complaint was therefore the more remarkable, and made the merit of his sufferings the greater.

Yet he opened not his mouth - This means that he was perfectly quiet, meek, submissive, patient, He did not open his mouth to complain of God on account of the great sorrows which he had appointed to him; nor to God on account of his being ill-treated by man. He did not use the language of

reviling when he was reviled, nor return upon people the evils which they were inflicting on him (compare Psalm 39:9). How strikingly and literally was this fulfilled in the life of the Lord Jesus! It would seem almost as if it had been written after he lived, and was history rather than prophecy. In no other instance was there ever so striking an example of perfect patience; no other person ever so entirely accorded with the description of the prophet.

He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter - This does not mean that he was led to the slaughter as a lamb is, but that as a lamb which is led to be killed is patient and silent, so was he. He made no resistance. He uttered no complaint. He suffered himself to be led quietly along to be put to death. What a striking and beautiful description! How tender and how true! We can almost see here the meek and patient Redeemer led along without resistance; and amidst the clamor of the multitude that were assembled with various feelings to conduct him to death, himself perfectly silent and composed. With all power at his disposal, yet as quiet and gentle as though he had no power; and with a perfect consciousness that he was going to die, as calm and as gentle as though he were ignorant of the design for which they were leading him forth. This image occurs also in Jeremiah, Jeremiah 11:19, ‹But I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter.‘

As a sheep - As a sheep submits quietly to the operation of shearing. Compare 1 Peter 2:23, ‹Who when he was reviled, reviled not again.‘ Jesus never opened his mouth to revile or complain. It was opened only to bless those that cursed him, and to pray for his enemies and murderers.

Verse 8

He was taken from prison - Margin, ‹Away by distress and judgment.‘ The general idea in this verse is, that the sufferings which he endured for his people were terminated by his being, after some form of trial, cut off out of the land of the living. Lowth renders this, ‹By an oppressive judgment he was taken off.‘ Noyes, ‹By oppression and punishment he was taken away.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹In his humiliation (ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει *en tē tapeinōsei*), his judgment (ἡ κρίσις αὐτοὺ *hē krisis autou*), (his legal trial. Thomson), was taken away;‘ and this translation was followed by Philip when he explained the passage to the eunuch of Ethiopia Acts 8:33. The eunuch, a native of Ethiopia, where the Septuagint was commonly used, was reading this portion of Isaiah in that version, and the version was sufficiently accurate to express the general sense of the passage, though it is by no means a literal translation.

The Chaldee renders this verse, ‹From infirmities and retribution he shall collect our captivity, and the wonders which shall be done for us in his days who can declare? Because he shall remove the dominion of the people from the land of Israel; the sins which my people have sinned shall come even unto them.‘ The Hebrew word which is here used (עצר ʿ*otser* from עצר ʿ*âtsar* "to shut up, to close," means properly "a shutting up," or "closure"; and then constraint, oppression, or vexation. In Psalm 107:39, it means violent restraint, or oppression. It does not mean prison in the sense in which that word is now used. It refers rather to restraint, and detention; and would be better translated by confinement, or by violent oppressions. The Lord Jesus, moreover, was not confined in prison. He was bound, and placed under a guard, and was thus secured. But neither the word used here, nor the account in the New Testament, leads us to suppose that in fact he was incarcerated. There is a strict and entire conformity between the statement here, and the facts as they occurred on the trial of the Redeemer (see John 18:24; compare the notes at Acts 8:33).

And from judgment - From a judicial decision; or by a judicial sentence. This statement is made in order to make the account of his sufferings more definite. He did not merely suffer affliction; he was not only a man of sorrows in general; he did not suffer in a tumult, or by the excitement of a mob: but he suffered under a form of law, and a sentence was passed in his case (compare Jeremiah 1:16; 2 Kings 25:6), and in accordance with that he was led forth to death. According to Hengstenberg, the two words here ‹by oppression,‘ and ‹by judicial sentence,‘ are to be taken together as a hendiadys, meaning an oppressive, unrighteous proceeding. So Lowth understands it. It seems to me, however, that they are rather to be taken as denoting separate things - the detention or confinement preliminary to the trial, and the sentence consequent upon the mock trial.

And who shall declare his generation? - The word rendered ‹declare‘ means to relate, or announce. ‹Who can give a correct statement in regard to it‘ - implying either that there was some want of willingness or ability to do it. This phrase has been very variously interpreted; and it is by no means easy to fix its exact meaning. Some have supposed that it refers to the fact that when a prisoner was about to be led forth to death, a crier made proclamation calling on anyone to come forward and assert his innocence, and declare his manner of life. But there is not sufficient proof that this was done among the Jews, and there is no evidence that it was done in the case

of the Lord Jesus. Nor would this interpretation exactly express the sense of the Hebrew. In regard to the meaning of the passage, besides the sense referred to above, we may refer to the following opinions which have been held, and which are arranged by Hengstenberg:

1. Several, as Luther, Calvin, and Vitringa, translate it, ‹Who will declare the length of his life?‘ that is, who is able to determine the length of his future days - meaning that there would be no end to his existence, and implying that though he would be cut off, yet he would be raised again, and would live forever. To this, the only material objection is, that the word דור *dôr* (generation), is not used elsewhere in that sense. Calvin, however, does not refer it to the personal life of the Messiah, so to speak, but to his life in the church, or to the perpetuity of his life and principles in the church which he redeemed. His words are: ‹Yet we are to remember that the prophet does not speak only of the person of Christ, but embraces the whole body of the church, which ought never to be separated from Christ. We have, therefore, says he, a distinguished testimony respecting the perpetuity of the church. For as Christ lives for ever, so he will not suffer his kingdom to perish‘ - (Commentary *in loc*.)

2. Others translate it, ‹Who of his contemporaries will consider it,‘ or ‹considered it?‘ So Storr, Doderlin, Dathe, Rosenmuller and Gesenius render it. According to Gesenius it means, ‹Who of his contemporaries considered that he was taken out of the land of the living on account of the sin of my people?‘

3. Lowth and some others adopt the interpretation first suggested, and render it, ‹His manner of life who would declare?‘ In support of this, Lowth appeals to the passages from the Mishna and the Gemara of Babylon, where it is said that before anyone was punished for a capital crime, proclamation was made before him by a crier in these words, ‹Whosoever knows anything about his innocence, let him come and make it known.‘ On this passage the Gemara of Babylon adds, ‹that before the death of Jesus, this proclamation was made forty days; but no defense could be found.‘ This is certainly false; and there is no sufficient reason to think that the custom prevailed at all in the time of Isaiah, or in the time of the Saviour.

4. Others render it, ‹Who can express his posterity, the number of his descendants?‘ So Hengstenberg renders it. So also Kimchi.

5. Some of the fathers referred it to the humanity of Christ, and to his miraculous conception. This was the belief of Chrysostom. See Calvin *in loc*. So also Morerius and Cajetan understood it.

But the word is never used in this sense. The word דור *dôr* (generation), means properly an age, a generation of human beinigs; the revolving period or circle of human life; from דור *dûr* a circle Deuteronomy 23:3-4, Deuteronomy 23:9; Ecclesiastes 1:4. It then means, also, a dwelling, a habitation Psalm 49:20; Isaiah 38:12. It occurs often in the Old Testament, and is in all other instances translated ‹generation,‘ or ‹generations.‘ Amidst the variety of interpretations which have been proposed, it is perhaps not possible to determine with any considerable degree of certainty what is the true sense of the passage. The only light, it seems to me, which can be thrown on it, is to be derived from the 10th verse, where it is said, ‹He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days;‘ and this would lead us to suppose that the sense is, that he would have a posterity which no one would be able to enumerate, or declare. According to this, the sense would be, ‹He shall be indeed cut off out of the land of the living. But his name, his race shall not be extinct. Notwithstanding this, his generation, race, posterity, shall be so numerous that no one shall be able to declare it.‘ This interpretation is not quite satisfactory, but it has more probabilities in its favor than any other.

For - (כי *kîy*). This particle does not here denote the cause of what was just stated, but points out the connection (compare 1 Samuel 2:21; Ezra 10:1). In these places it denotes the same as ‹and.‘ This seems to be the sense here. Or, if it be here a causal particle, it refers not to what immediately goes before, but to the general strain and drift of the discourse. All this would occur to him because he was cut off on account of the transgression of his people. He was taken from confinement, and was dragged to death by a judicial sentence, and he should have a numerous spiritual posterity, because he was cut off on account of the sins of the people.

He was cut off - This evidently denotes a violent, and not a peaceful death. See Daniel 9:26: ‹And after threescore and two weeks shall the Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹For his

life is taken away from the earth.‘ The word used here (גזר *gâzar*), means properly “to cut, to cut in two, to divide.” It is applied to the act of cutting down trees with an axe (see 2 Kings 6:4). Here the natural and obvious idea is, that he would be violently taken away, as if he was cut down in the midst of his days. The word is never used to denote a peaceful death, or a death in the ordinary course of events; and the idea which would be conveyed by it would be, that the person here spoken of would be cut off in a violent manner in the midst of his life.

For the transgression of my people - The meaning of this is not materially different from ‹on account of our sins.‘ ‹The speaker here - Isaiah - does not place himself in opposition to the people, but includes himself among them, and speaks of them as his people, that is, those with whom he was connected‘ - (Hengstenberg). Others, however, suppose that Yahweh is here introduced as speaking, and that he says that the Messiah was to be cut off for the sins of his people.

Was he stricken - Margin, ‹The stroke upon him;‘ that is, the stroke came upon him. The word rendered in the margin ‹stroke‘ (נגע *nega*‘), denotes properly a blow Deuteronomy 17:8: Deuteronomy 21:5; then a spot, mark, or blemish in the skin, whether produced by the leprosy or any other cause. It is the same word which is used in Isaiah 53:4 (see the note on that verse). The Hebrew, which is rendered in the margin ‹upon him‘ (למו *lâmô*) has given rise to much discussion. It is properly and usually in the plural form, and it has been seized upon by those who maintain that this whole passage refers not to one individual but to some collective body, as of the people, or the prophets (see Analysis prefixed to Isaiah 52:13), as decisive of the controversy. To this word Rosenmuller, in his Prolegomena to the chapter, appeals for a decisive termination of the contest, and supposes the prophet to have used this plural form for the express purpose of clearing up any difficulty in regard to his meaning. Gesenius refers to it for the same purpose, to demonstrate that the prophet must have referred to some collective body - as the prophets - and not to an individual. Aben Ezra and Abarbanel also maintain the same thing, and defend the position that it can never be applied to an individual. This is not the place to go into an extended examination of this word. The difficulties which have been started in regard to it, have given rise to a thorough critical examination of the use of the particle in the Old Testament, and an inquiry whether it is ever used in the singular number. Those who are disposed to see the process and the

result of the investigation, may consult Ewald‘s Hebrew Grammar, Leipzig, 1827, p. 365; Wiseman‘s Lectures, pp. 331-333, Andover Edit., 1837; and Hengstenberg‘s Christology, p. 523. In favor of regarding it as used here in the singular number and as denoting an individual, we may just refer to the following considerations:

1. It is so rendered by Jerome, and in the Syriac version.

2. In some places the suffix מו *mô* attached to nouns, is certainly singular. Thus in Psalm 11:7, (פניטו *pânēyṭô*) ‹His face,‘ speaking of God; Job 27:23, ‹Men shall clap their hands at him‘ (עלימו *ʿâlēymô*), where it is certainly singular; Isaiah 44:15, ‹He maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto‘ (למו *lâmô*).

3. In Ethiopic the suffix is certainly singular (Wiseman).

These considerations show that it is proper to render it in the singular number, and to regard it as referring to an individual. The Septuagint renders it, Εἰς Θάνατον *Eis Thanaton* - ‹Unto death,‘ and evidently read it as if it were an abbreviation of למות *lāmûth* and they render the whole passage, ‹For the transgressions of my people he was led unto death.‘ This translation is adopted and defended by Lowth, and has also been defended by Dr. Kennicott. The only argument which is urged, however, is, that it was so used by Origen in his controversy with the Jews; that they made no objection to the argument that he urged; and that as Origen and the Jews were both acquainted with the Hebrew text, it is to be presumed that this was then the reading of the original. But this authority is too slight to change the Hebrew text. The single testimony of Origen is too equivocal to determine any question in regard to the reading of the Hebrew text, and too much reliance should not be reposed even on his statements in regard to a matter of fact. This is one of the many instances in which Lowth has ventured to change the Hebrew text with no sufficient authority.

Verse 9

And he made his grave with the wicked - Jerome renders this, *Et dabit impios pro sepultura et divitem pro morte sua*. The Septuagint renders it, ‹I will give the wicked instead of his burial (ἀντὶ τῆς ταφῆς *anti tēs taphēs*), and the rich in the place, or instead of his death‘ (ἀντὶ τοῦ θανάτου *anti tou*

thanatou). The Chaldee renders it, ‹He will deliver the wicked into Gehenna, and the rich in substance who oppress, by a death that is destructive, that the workers of iniquity may no more be established, and that they may no more speak deceit in their mouth.‘ The Syriac renders it beautifully, ‹the wicked gave a grave.‘ Hengstenberg renders it, ‹They appointed him his grave with the wicked (but he was with a rich man after his death); although he had done nothing unrighteous, and there was no guile in his mouth.‘ The sense, according to him, is, that not satisfied with his sufferings and death, they sought to insult him even in death, since they wished to bury his corpse among criminals. It is then incidentally remarked, that this object was not accomplished. This whole verse is exceedingly important; and every word in it deserves a serious examination, and attentive consideration. It has been subjected to the closest investigation by critics, and different interpretations have been given to it. They may be seen at length in Rosenmuller, Gesenius, and Hengstenberg. The word rendered ‹he made‘ (וַיִּתֵּן *vayitēn* from נָתַן *nâthan*) is a word of very frequent occurrence in the Scriptures. According to Gesenius, it means:

1. To give, as:
(a) to give the hand to a victor;
(b) to give into the hand of anyone, that is, the power;

(c) to give, that is, to turn the back;

(d) to give, that is, to yield fruit as a tree;

(e) to give, that is, to show compassion:

(f) to give honor, praise, etc.:

(g) to give into prison, or into custody.
2. To sit, place, put, lay;
(a) to set before anyone;
(b) to set one over any person or thing;

(c) to give one‘s heart to anything; that is, to apply the mind, etc.
3. To make;
(a) to make or constitute one as anything;

(b) to make a thing as something else.

The notion of giving, or giving over, is the essential idea of the word, and not that of making, as our translation would seem to imply; and the sense is, that he was given by design to the grave of the wicked, or it was intended that he should occupy such a grave. The meaning then would be:

And his grave was appointed with the wicked;
But he was with a rich man in his death -
Although he had done no wrong,
Neither was there any guile in his mouth.

But who gave, or appointed him? I answer:

1. The word may either here be used impersonally, as in Psalm 72:15. ‹to him shall be given,‘ margin, ‹one shall give,‘ Ecclesiastes 2:21, meaning, that someone gave, or appointed his grave with the wicked; that is, his grave was appointed with the wicked; or,

2. The phrase ‹my people‘ (עמי ʿammîy) must be supplied; my people appointed his grave to be with the wicked; or,

3. God gave, or appointed his grave with the wicked.

It seems to me that it is to be regarded as used impersonally, meaning that his grave was appointed with the wicked; and then the sense will be, that it was designed that he should be buried with the wicked, without designating the person or persons who intended it. So it is correctly rendered by Lowth and Noyes, ‹His grave was appointed with the wicked.‘

With the wicked - It was designed that he should be buried with the wicked. The sense is, that it was not only intended to put him to death, but also to heap the highest indignity on him. Hence, it was intended to deny him an honorable burial, and to consign him to the same ignominious grave with the violators of the laws of God and man. One part of an ignominious punishment has often been to deny to him who has been eminent in guilt an honorable burial. Hence, it was said of Ahab 1 Kings 21:19, that the dogs should lick his blood; and of Jezebel that the dogs should eat her 1 Kings 21:23. Thus of the king of Babylon Isaiah 14:19, that he should ‹be cast out of his grave as an abominable branch‘ (see the note on that place). Hence, those who have been especially guilty are sometimes quartered, and their

heads and other parts of the body suspended on posts, or they are hung in chains, and their flesh left to be devoured by the fowls of heaven.

So Josephus (Ant. iv. 8. 6), says, ‹He that blasphemeth God, let him be stoned; and let him hang on a tree all that day, and then let him be buried in an ignominious and obscure manner.‘ The idea here is, that it was intended to cast the highest possible indignity on the Messiah; not only to put him to death, but even to deny him the privilege of an honorable burial, and to commit him to the same grave with the wicked. How remarkably was this fulfilled! As a matter of course, since he was put to death with wicked people, he would naturally have been buried with them, unless there had been some special interposition in his case. He was given up to be treated as a criminal; he was made to take the vacated place of a murderer - Barabbas - on the cross; he was subjected to the same indignity and cruelty to which the two malefactors were; and it was evidently designed also that he should be buried in the same manner, and probably in the same grave. Thus in John 19:31, it is said thai the Jews, because it was the preparation, in order that their bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath day, ‹besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away;‘ intending evidently that their death should be hurried in the same cruel manner, and that they should be buried in the same way. Who can but wonder at the striking accuracy of the prediction!

And with the rich - (עשיר *ʿâshîyr*). The words ‹he was,‘ are here to be supplied. ‹But he was with a rich man in his death? The particle ו (*v*), rendered "and," is properly here adversative, and means "but, yet." The meaning is, that although he had been executed with criminals, and it had been expected that he would be interred with them, yet he was associated with a rich man in his death; that is, in his burial. The purpose which had been cherished in regard to his burial was not accomplished. The word עשיר *ʿâshîyr* (from עשר *ʿâshar* "to be straight, to prosper, to be happy," and then "to be rich"), means properly the rich, and then the honorable and noble. It occurs very often in the Bible (see Taylor‘s Concord.), and is in all cases in our English version rendered ‹rich.‘ Gesenius contends, however, that it sometimes is to be taken in a bad sense, and that it means proud, arrogant, impious, because riches are a source of pride, and pride to a Hebrew is synonymous with impiety.

He appeals to Job 27:19, in proof of this. But it is evident that the place in Job, ‹The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered,‘ may be

understood as speaking of a rich man as he is commonly found; and the word there does not mean proud, or wicked, but it means a rich man who is without religion. In all places where the word occurs in the Bible, the primary idea is that of a rich man - though he may be righteous or wicked, pious or impious, a friend of God or an enemy. That is to be determined by the connection. And the natural and proper idea here is that of a man who is wealthy, though without any intimation with regard to his moral character. It is rather implied that the man referred to would have a character different from ‹the wicked,‘ with whom his grave was appointed. Several interpreters, however, of the highest charactor, have supposed that the word here refers to the ungodly, and means, that in his death he was associated with the ungodly.

Thus Calvin supposes that it refers to the Scribes and Pharisees, and the impious and violent Romans who rushed upon him to take his life. Luther remarks that it means, ‹a rich man; one who gives himself to the pursuit of wealth; that is, an ungodly man.‘ But the objection is insuperable that the word in the Bible never is used in this sense, to denote simply a wicked or an ungodly man. It may denote a rich man who is ungodly - but that must be determined by the connection. The simple idea in the word is that of wealth, but whether the person referred to be a man of fair or unfair, pure or impure character, is to be determined by other circumstances than the mere use of the word. So the word ‹rich‘ is used in our language, and in all languages. The principal reason why it has here been supposed to mean ungodly is, that the parallelism is supposed to require it. But this is not necessary. It may be designed to intimate that there was a distinction between the design which was cherished in regard to his burial, and the fact. It was intended that he should have been interred with the wicked; but in fact, he was with the rich in his death.

In his death - Margin, ‹Deaths‘ (במתיו *bemothāyv*). Lowth renders this, ‹His tomb.‘ He understands the Hebrew letter beth (b) as radical and not servile; and supposes that the word is במות *bâmôth* (hills); that is, sepulchral hills. Tombs, he observes, correctly, were often hills or tumuli erected over the bodies of the dead; and he supposes that the word hill, or high place, became synonymous with a tomb, or sepulchre. This interpretation was first suggested by Aben Ezra, and has been approved by CEcolampadius,

Zuingle, Drusius, Ikin, Kuinoel, and others. But the interpretation is liable to great objections.

1. It is opposed to all the ancient versions.

2. There is no evidence that the word במות *bâmôth* is ever used except in one place (Ezekiel 43:7, where it means also primarily high places, though there perhaps dedenoting a burial-place), in the sense of βωμός *bōmos* a tomb, or place of burial. It denotes a high place or height; a stronghold, a fastness, a fortress; and then an elevated place, where the rites of idolatry were celebrated; and though it is not improbable that those places became burial-places - as we bury in the vicinity of a place of worship yet the word simply and by itself does not denote a tumulus, or an elevated place of burial. The word here, therefore, is to be regarded as a noun from מות *mâveth* or מות *môth* plural מותים *môthîym* meaning the same as ‹after his death‘ - ‹the grave.‘ The plural is used instead of the singular in Ezekiel 28:8-10; and also Job 21:32: ‹Yet he shall be brought to the grave;‘ Margin, as Hebrew, ‹graves.‘ The sense, therefore, is, that after his death he would be with a man of wealth, but without determining anything in regard to his moral character.

The exact fulfillment of this may be seen in the account which is given of the manner of the burial of the Saviour by Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57-60. Joseph was a rich man. He took the body, and wound it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, a tomb hewn out of a rock - that is, a grave designed for himself; such as a rich man would use, and where it was designed that a rich man should be laid. He was buried with spices John 19:39-40; embalmed with a large quantity of myrrh and aloes, ‹about a hundred pound weight,‘ in the mode in which the rich were usually interred. How different this from the interment of malefactors! How different from the way in which he would have been buried if he had been interred with them as it had been designed! And how very striking and minutely accurate this prophecy in circumstances which could not possibly have been the result of conjecture! How could a pretended prophet, seven hundred years before the event occurred, conjecture of one who was to be executed as a malefactor, and with malefactors, and who would in the ordinary course of events be buried with malefactors, conjecture that he would be rescued from such an ignominious burial by the interposition of a

rich man, and buried in a grave designed for a man of affluence, and in the manner in which the wealthy are buried?

Because - (על *ʿal*). This word here has probably the signification of although. It is used for אשר על *ʿal 'ăsher* Thus, it is used in Job 16:17: ‹Not for any injustice in my hands;‘ Hebrew, ‹Although there is no injustice in my hands.‘ The sense here demands this interpretation. According to our common version, the meaning is, that he was buried with the rich man because he had done no violence, and was guilty of no deceit; whereas it is rather to be taken in connection with the entire strain of the passage, and to be regarded as meaning, that he was wounded, rejected, put to death, and buried by the hands of men, although he had done no violence.

He had done no violence - The precise sense of the expression is, that he had not by harsh and injurious conduct provoked them to treat him in this manner, or deserved this treatment at their hands. In accordance with this, and evidently with this passage in his eye, the apostle Peter says of the Lord Jesus, ‹who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth‘ 1 Peter 2:20-22.

Neither was any deceit in his mouth - He was no deceiver, though he was regarded and treated as one. He was perfectly candid and sincere, perfectly true and holy. No one can doubt but this was exactly fulfilled in the Lord Jesus; and however it may be accounted for, it was true to the life, and it is applicable to him alone. Of what other dweller on the earth can it be said that there was no guile found in his mouth? Who else has lived who has always been perfectly free from deceit?

Verse 10

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him - In this verse, the prediction respecting the final glory and triumph of the Messiah commences. The design of the whole prophecy is to state, that in consequence of his great sufferings, he would be exalted to the highest honor (see the notes at Isaiah 52:13). The sense of this verse is, ‹he was subjected to these sufferings, not on account of any sins of his, but because, under the circumstances of the case, his sufferings would be pleasing to Yahweh. He saw they were necessary, and he was willing that he should be subjected to them. He has laid upon him heavy sufferings. And when he has brought a sin-offering, he shall see a numerous posterity, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper through him.‘ The Lord was ‹pleased‘ with his sufferings, not because he has delight in the sufferings of innocence; not because the sufferer was in

any sense guilty or ill-deserving; and not because he was at any time displeased or dissatisfied with what the Mediator did, or taught. But it was:

1. Because the Messiah had voluntarily submitted himself to those sorrows which were necessary to show the evil of sin; and in view of the great object to be gained, the eternal redemption of his people, he was pleased that he would subject himself to so great sorrows to save them. He was pleased with the end in view, and with all that was necessary in order that the end might be secured.

2. Because these sufferings would tend to illustrate the divine perfections, and show the justice and mercy of God. The gift of a Saviour, such as he was, evinced boundless benevolence; his sufferings in behalf of the guilty showed the holiness of his nature and law; and all demonstrated that he was at the same time disposed to save, and yet resolved that no one should be saved by dishonoring his law, or without expiation for the evil which had been done by sin.

3. Because these sorrows would result in the pardon and recovery of an innumerable multitude of lost sinners, and in their eternal happiness and salvation. The whole work was one of benevolence, and Yahweh was pleased with it as a work of pure and disinterested love.

To bruise him - (See the notes at Isaiah 53:5). The word here is the infinitive of Piel. ‹To bruise him, or his being bruised, was pleasing to Yahweh;‘ that is, it was acceptable to him that he should be crushed by his many sorrows. It does not of necessity imply that there was any positive and direct agency on the part of Yahweh in bruising him, but only that the fact of his being thus crushed and bruised was acceptable to him.

He hath put him to grief - This word, ‹hath grieved him,‘ is the same which in another form occurs in Isaiah 53:4. It means that it was by the agency, and in accordance with the design of Yahweh, that he was subjected to these great sorrows.

When thou shalt make his soul - Margin, ‹His soul shall make.‘ According to the translation in the text, the speaker is the prophet, and it contains an address to Yahweh, and Yahweh is himself introduced as speaking in Isaiah 53:11. According to the margin, Yahweh himself speaks, and the idea is, that his soul should make an offering for sin. The Hebrew will bear either. Jerome renders it, ‹If he shall lay down his life for sin.‘ The

Septuagint renders it in the plural, ‹If you shall give (an offering) for sin, your soul shall see a long-lived posterity.‘ Lowth renders it, ‹If his soul shall make a propitiatory sacrifice.‘ Rosenmuller renders it, ‹If his soul, that is, he himself, shall place his soul as an expiation for sin.‘ Noyes renders it, ‹But since he gave himself a sacrifice for sin.‘ It seems to me that the margin is the correct rendering, and that it is to be regarded as in the third person. Thus the whole passage will be connected, and it will be regarded as the assurance of Yahweh himself, that when his life should be made a sacrifice for sin, he would see a great multitude who should be saved as the result of his sufferings and death.

His soul - The word rendered here ‹soul‘ (נפשׁ *nephesh*) means properly breath, spirit, the life, the vital principle Genesis 1:20-30; Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:11; Deuteronomy 12:23. It sometimes denotes the rational soul, regarded as the seat of affections and emotions of various kinds Genesis 34:3; Psalm 86:4; Isaiah 15:4; Isaiah 42:1; Genesis 26:10; Jeremiah 51:5; also a sacrifice for guilt; a sin-offering; an expiatory sacrifice. It is often rendered ‹trespass-offering‘ Leviticus 5:19; Leviticus 7:5; Leviticus 14:21; Leviticus 19:21; 1 Samuel 6:3, 1 Samuel 6:8, 1 Samuel 6:17). It is rendered ‹guiltiness‘ Genesis 26:10; ‹sin‘ Proverbs 14:9; ‹trespass‘ Numbers 5:8. The idea here is, clearly, that he would be made an offering, or a sacrifice for sin; that by which guilt would be expiated and an atonement made. In accordance with this, Paul says 2 Corinthians 5:21, that God ‹made him to be sin for us‘ (ἁμαρτίαν *hamartian*), that is, a sin-offering; and he is called ἱλασμὸς *hilasmos* and ἱλαστήριον *hilastērion* a propitiatory sacrifice for sins Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10. The idea is, that he was himself innocent, and that he gave up his soul or life in order to make an expiation for sin - as the innocent animal in sacrifice was offered to God as an acknowledgment of guilt. There could be no more explicit declaration that he who is referred to here, did not die as a martyr merely, but that his death had the high purpose of making expiation for the sins of people. Assuredly this is not language which can be used of any martyr. In what sense could it be said of Ignatius or Cranmer that their souls or lives were made an offering (אשׁם *'âshâm* or ἱλασμὸς *hilasmos*) for sin? Such language is never applied to martyrs in the Bible; such language is never applied to them in the common discourses of people.

He shall see his seed - His posterity; his descendants. The language here is taken from that which was regarded as the highest blessing among

the Hebrews. With them length of days and a numerous posterity were regarded as the highest favors, and usually as the clearest proofs of the divine love. ‹Children‘s children are the crown of old men‘ Proverbs 17:6. See Psalm 127:5; Psalm 128:6: ‹Yea, thou shalt see thy children‘s children, and peace upon Israel.‘ So one of the highest blessings which could be promised to Abraham was that he would be made the father of many nations Genesis 12:2; Genesis 17:5-6. In accordance with this, the Messiah is promised that he shall see a numerous spiritual posterity. A similar declaration occurs in Psalm 22:30, which is usually applied to the Messiah. ‹A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.‘ The natural relation between father and son is often transferred to spiritual subjects. Thus the name father is often given to the prophets, or to teachers, and the name sons to disciples or learners. In accordance with this, the idea is here, that the Messiah would sustain this relation, and that there would be multitudes who would sustain to him the relation of spiritual children. There may be emphasis on the word ‹see‘ - he shall see his posterity, for it was regarded as a blessing not only to have posterity, but to be permitted to live and see them. Hence, the joy of the aged Jacob in being permitted to see the children of Joseph Genesis 48:11: ‹And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face; and lo, God hath showed me also thy seed.

He shall prolong his days - His life shall be long. This also is language which is taken from ‹the view entertained among the Hebrews that long life was a blessing, and was a proof of the divine favor. Thus, in 1 Kings 3:14, God says to Solomon, ‹if thou wilt walk in my ways, and keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days‘ (see Deuteronomy 25:15; Psalm 21:4; Psalm 91:16; Proverbs 3:2). The meaning here is, that the Messiah, though he should be put to death, would yet see great multitudes who should be his spiritual children. Though he should die, yet he would live again, and his days should be lengthened out. It is fulfilled in the reign of the Redeemer on earth and in his eternal existence and glory in heaven.

And the pleasure of the Lord - That is, that which shall please Yahweh; the work which he desire and appoints.

Shall prosper - (See the notes at Isaiah 52:13, where the same word occurs).

In his hand - Under his government and direction. Religion will be promoted and extended through him. The reward of all his sufferings in

making an offering for sin would be, that multitudes would be converted and saved; that his reign would be permanent, and that the work which Yahweh designed and desired would prosper under his administration.

Verse 11

He shall see of the travail of his soul - This is the language of Yahweh, who is again introduced as speaking. The sense is, he shall see the fruit, or the result of his sufferings, and shall be satisfied. He shall see so much good resulting from his great sorrows; so much happiness, and so many saved, that the benefit shall be an ample compensation for all that he endured. The word rendered here ‹travail‘ (עמל *ʿâmâl*), denotes properly labor, toil; wearisome labor; labor and toil which produce exhaustion; and hence, sometimes vexation, sorrow, grief, trouble. It is rendered ‹labor‘ Psalm 90:10; Psalm 105:44; Jeremiah 20:18; Ecclesiastes 2:11-20; ‹perverseness‘ Numbers 21:21; sorrow‘ Job 3:10; ‹wickedness‘ Job 4:8; ‹trouble‘ Job 5:6-7; Psalm 73:5; ‹mischief‘ Job 15:35; Psalm 7:13; Psalm 10:7-14; Psalm 94:20; ‹travail,‘ meaning labor, or toil Ecclesiastes 4:4-6; ‹grievousness‘ Isaiah 10:1; ‹iniquity‘ Habakkuk 1:13; ‹toil‘ Genesis 41:51; ‹pain‘ Psalm 25:18; and ‹misery‘ Proverbs 31:7. The word ‹travail‘ with us has two senses, first, labor with pain, severe toil; and secondly, the pains of childbirth. The word is used here to denote excessive toil, labor, weariness; and refers to the arduous and wearisome labor and trial involved in the work of redemption, as that which exhausted the powers of the Messiah as a man, and sunk him down to the grave.

And shall be satisfied - That is, evidently, he shall be permitted to see so much fruit of his labors and sorrows as to be an ample recompence for all that he has done. It is not improbable that the image here is taken from a farmer who labors in preparing his soil for the seed, and who waits for the harvest; and who, when he sees the rich and yellow field of grain in autumn, or the wain heavily laden with sheaves, is abundantly satisfied for what he has done. He has pleasure in the contemplation of his labor, and of the result; and he does not regret the wearisome days and the deep anxiety with which he made preparation for the harvest. So with the Redeemer. There will be rich and most ample results for all that he has done. And when he shall look on the multitude that shall be saved; when he shall see the true religion spreading over the world; when he shall behold an immense host which no man can number gathered into heaven; and when he shall witness the glory that shall result to God from all that he has done,

he shall see enough to be an ample compensation for all that he has endured, and he shall look on his work and its glorious results with pleasure.

We may remark here that this implies that great and most glorious results will come out of this work. The salvation of a large portion of the race, of multitudes which no man can number, will be necessary to be any suitable remuneration for the sufferings of the Son of God. We may be assured that he will be ‹satisfied,‘ only when multitudes are saved; and it is, therefore, morally certain that a large portion of the race, taken as a whole, will enter into heaven. Hitherto the number has been small. The great mass have rejected him, and have been lost. But there are brighter times before the church and the world. The pure gospel of the Redeemer is yet to spread around the globe, and it is yet to become, and to be for ages, the religion of the world. Age after age is to roll on when all shall know him and obey him; and in those future times, what immense multitudes shall enter into heaven! So that it may yet be seen, that the number of those who will be lost from the whole human family, compared with those who will be saved, will be no greater in proportion than the criminals in a well-organized community who are imprisoned are, compared with the number of obedient, virtuous, and peaceful citizens.

By his knowledge - That is, by the knowledge of him. The idea is, by becoming fully acquainted with him and his plan of salvation. The word knowledge here is evidently used in a large sense to denote all that constitutes acquaintance with him. Thus Paul says Philemon 3:10, ‹That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.‘ It is only by the knowledge of the Messiah; by an acquaintance with his character, doctrines, sufferings, death, and resurrection, that anyone can be justified. Thus the Saviour says John 17:3, ‹And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.‘ People are to become acquainted with him; with his doctrines, and with his religion, or they can never be regarded and treated as righteous in the sight of a holy God.

Shall my righteous servant - On the meaning of the word ‹servant,‘ as applied to the Messiah, see the notes at Isaiah 52:13. The word ‹righteous‘ (צדיק *tsadiyq*), Lowth supposes should be omitted. His reasons are:

1. That three manuscripts, two of them ancient, omit it.

2. That it makes a solecism in this place, for, according to the constant usage of the Hebrew language, the adjective, in a phrase of this kind, ought to follow the substantive; and,

3. That it makes the hemistich too long.

But none of these reasons are sufficient to justify a change in the text. The phrase literally is, ‹the righteous, my servant;‘ and the sense is, evidently, ‹my righteous servant.‘ The word righteous, applied to the Messiah, is designed to denote not only his personal holiness, but to have reference to the fact that he would‘ make many righteous (יצדיק *yitseddiyq*). It is applicable to him, because he was eminently holy and pure, and because also he was the source of righteousness to others; and in the work of justification it is important in the highest degree to fix the attention on the fact, that he by whom the sinner was to be justified was himself perfectly holy, and able to secure the justification and salvation of all who entrusted their souls to him. No man could feel secure of salvation unless he could commit his soul to one who was perfectly holy, and able to ‹bring in everlasting righteousness.‘

Justify - (יצדיק *yatsediyq*). The word צדק *tsâdaq* is of very frequent occurrence in the Bible; and no word is more important to a correct understanding of the plan of salvation than this, and the corresponding Greek word δικαιῶ *dikaiō* On the meaning of the Greek word, see the notes at Romans 1:17. The Hebrew word means to be right, straight, as if spoken of a way Psalm 23:3. Hence,

1. To be just, righteous, spoken of God in dispensing justice Psalm 55:6; and of laws Psalm 19:10.

2. To have a just cause, to be in the right;

(a) in a forensic sense Genesis 38:26; Job 9:16-20; Job 10:15; Job 13:18;

(b) of disputants, to be in the right Job 23:12;

(c) to gain one‘s cause, to be justified Job 15:14; Job 23:9; Psalm 143:2. But in this sense the Messiah will justify no one. He did not come to declare that men were upright, just, innocent. Nor will he justify them because they can show that they have not committed the offences charged on them, or that they had a right to do what they have done. The whole work of

justification through the Redeemer proceeds on the supposition that people are not in fact innocent, and that they cannot vindicate their own conduct.

4. In Hiphil, the word means, to pronounce just, or righteous. In a forensic sense, and as applied to the act of justification before God, it means to declare righteous, or to admit to favor as a righteous person; and in connection with the pardon of sin, to resolve to treat as righteous, or as if the offence had not been committed. It is more than mere pardon; it involves the idea of a purpose to treat as righteous, and to acknowledge as such. It is nor to declare that the person is innocent, or that he is not ill deserving, or that he had a right to do as he had done, or that he has a claim to mercy - for this is not true of any mortal; but it is to pardon, and to accept him as if the offence had not been committed - to regard him in his dealings with him, and treat him ever onward as if he were holy. This sense of the word here is necessary, because the whole passage speaks of his bearing sin, and suffering for others, and thus securing their justification. It does not speak of him as instructing people and thus promoting religion; but it speaks of his dying for them, and thus laying the foundation for their justification. They are justified only in connection with his bearing their iniquities; and this shows that the word is used here in the forensic sense, and denotes that they will be regarded and treated as righteous on account of what he has suffered in their behalf.

For he shall bear - On the meaning of the word bear, see the notes at Isaiah 53:4.

Their iniquities - Not that he became a sinner, or that sin can be transferred, which is impossible. Guilt and ill desert are personal qualities, and cannot be transferred from one to another. But the consequences of guilt may pass over to another; the sufferings, which would be a proper expression of the evil of sin, may be assumed by another. And this was done by the Redeemer. He stood between the stroke of justice and the sinner, and received the blow himself. He intercepted, so to speak, the descending sword of justice that would have cut the sinner down, and thus saved him. He thus bore their iniquities; that is, he bore in his own person what would have been a proper expression of the evil of sin if he had been himself the sinner, and had been guilty (see the notes at Isaiah 53:6). It is in connection with this that people become justified; and it is only by the fact that he has thus borne their iniquities that they can be regarded as righteous in the sight

of a holy God. They become interested in his merits just as he became interested in their iniquities. There is in neither case any transfer of personal properties; but there is in both cases a participation in the consequences or the results of conduct. He endured the consequences or results of sin; we partake of the consequences or the results of his sufferings and death in our behalf. This is the great cardinal doctrine of justification; the peculiarity of the Christian scheme; the glorious plan by which lost people may be saved, and by which the guilty may become pardoned, and be raised up to endless life and glory; the articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesia. luther.

Verse 12

Therefore will I divide him - I will divide for him (לו *lô*). This verse is designed to predict the triumphs of the Messiah. It is language appropriate to him as a prince, and designed to celebrate his glorious victories on earth. The words here used are taken from the custom of distributing the spoils of victory after a battle, and the idea is, that as a conqueror takes valuable spoils, so the Messiah would go forth to the spiritual conquest of the world, and subdue it to himself. Rosenmuller renders this, Dispertsam ei multos - ‹I will divide to him the many;‘ that is, he shall have many as his portion. Hengstenberg, ‹I will give him the mighty for a portion.‘ So the Septuagint, ‹Therefore he shall inherit (κληρονομήσει *klēronomēsei*) many.‘ So Lowth, ‹Therefore will I distribute to him the many for his portion.‘ But it seems to me that the sense is, that his portion would be with the mighty or the many (ברבים *bârabbîym*) and that this interpretation is demanded by the use of the preposition ב (*b*) in this case, and by the corresponding word את *'êth* prefixed to the word ‹mighty.‘ The sense, according to this, is, that the spoils of his conquests would be among the mighty or the many; that is, that his victories would not be confined to a few in number, or to the feeble, but the triumphs of his conquests would extend afar, and be found among the potentates and mighty people of the earth.

The word rendered here ‹the great‘ (רבים *rabbîym*), may mean either many or powerful and great. The parallelism here with the word עצומים *ʿătsûmîym* (the mighty), seems to demand that it be understood as denoting the great, or the powerful, though it is differently rendered by the Vulgate, the Septuagint, the Chaldee, by Castellio, and by Junius and Tremellius. The sense is, I think, that his conquests would be among the great and the mighty. He would overcome his most formidable enemies, and subdue them to himself. Their most valued objects; all that constituted their wealth, their

grandeur, and their power, would be among the spoils of his victories. It would not be merely his feeble foes that would be subdued, but it would be the mighty, and there would be no power, however formidable, that would be able to resist the triumphs of his truth. The history of the gospel since the coming of the Redeemer shows how accurately this has been fulfilled. Already he has overcome the mighty, and the spoils of the conquerors of the world have been among the trophies of his victories. The Roman empire was subdued; and his conquests were among these conquerors, and his were victories over the subduers of nations. It will be still more signally fulfilled in coming times, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever Revelation 11:15.

And he shall divide the spoil with the strong - And with the mighty, or with heroes, shall he divide the plunder. The idea here is not materially different from that which was expressed in the former member of the sentence. It is language derived from the conquests of the warrior, and means that his victories would be among the great ones of the earth; his conquests over conquerors. It was from language such as this that the Jews obtained the notion, that the Messiah would be a distinguished conqueror, and hence, they looked forward to one who as a warrior would carry the standard of victory around the world. But it is evident that it may be applied with much higher beauty to the spiritual victories of the Redeemer, and that it expresses the great and glorious truth that the conquests of the true religion will yet extend over the most formidable obstacles on the earth.

Because he hath poured out his soul unto death - His triumphs would be an appropriate reward for his sufferings, his death, and his intercession. The expression ‹he poured out his soul,‘ or his life (נפשו *napeshô* see the notes at Isaiah 53:10), is derived from the fact that the life was supposed to reside in the blood (see the notes at Romans 3:25); and that when the blood was poured out, the life was supposed to flow forth with it. As a reward for his having thus laid down his life, he would extend his triumphs over the whole world, and subdue the most mighty to himself.

And he was numbered with the transgressors - That is, he shall triumph because he suffered himself to be numbered with the transgressors, or to be put to death with malefactors. It does not mean that he was a transgressor, or in any way guilty; but that in his death he was in fact numbered with the guilty, and put to death with them. In the public

estimation, and in the sentence which doomed him to death, he was regarded and treated as if he had been a transgressor. This passage is expressly applied by Mark to the Lord Jesus Mark 15:28.

And he bare the sin of many - (נשׂא *nâs'â'*). On the meaning of this word ‹bare,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 53:4; and on the doctrine involved by his bearing sin, see the note at Isaiah 53:4-6, Isaiah 53:10. The idea here is, that he would triumph because he had thus borne their sins. As a reward for this God would bless him with abundant spiritual triumphs among people, and extend the true religion afar.

And made intercession for the transgressors - On the meaning of the word rendered here ‹made intercession‘ (יפגיע *yapegîyʿa*), see the notes at Isaiah 53:6, where it is rendered ‹hath laid on him.‘ The idea is. that of causing to meet, or to rush; and then to assail, as it were, with prayers, to supplicate for anyone, to entreat (see Isaiah 59:16; Jeremiah 36:25). It may not refer here to the mere act of making prayer or supplication, but rather perhaps to the whole work of the intercession, in which the Redeemer, as high priest, presents the merit of his atoning blood before the throne of mercy and pleads for people (see Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1). This is the closing part of his work in behalf of his people and of the world; and the sense here is, that he would be thus blessed with abundant and wide extended triumph, because he made intercession. All his work of humiliation, and all his toils and sufferings, and all the merit of his intercession, became necessary in order to his triumph, and to the spread of the true religion. In consequence of all these toils, and pains, and prayers, God would give him the victory over the world, and extend his triumphs around the globe. Here the work of the Mediator in behalf of human beings will cease. There is to be no more suffering, and beyond his intercessions he will do nothing for them. He will come again indeed, but he will come to judge the world, not to suffer, to bleed, to die, and to intercede. All his future conquests and triumphs will be in consequence of what he has already done; and they who are not saved because he poured out his soul unto death, and bare the sin of many, and made intercession, will not be saved at all. There will be no more sacrifice for sin, and there will be no other advocate and intercessor.

We have now gone through perhaps at tedious length, this deeply interesting and most important portion of the Bible. Assuming now (see the remarks prefixed to Isaiah 52:13 ff) that this was written seven hundred

years before the Lord Jesus was born, there are some remarks of great importance to which we may just refer in the conclusion of this exposition.

1. The first is, the minute accuracy of the statements here as applicable to the Lord Jesus. While it is apparent that there has been no other being on earth, and no "collective body of men," to whom this can be applied, it is evident that the whole statement is applicable to the Redeemer. It is not the general accuracy to which I refer; it is not that there is some resemblance in the outline of the prediction; it is, that the statement is minutely accurate. It relates to his appearance, his rejection, the manner of his death, his being pierced, his burial. It describes, as minutely as could have been done after the events occurred, the manner of his trial of his rejection, the fact of his being taken from detention and by a judicial sentence, and the manner in which it was designed that he should be buried, and yet the remarkable fact that this was prevented, and that he was interred in the manner in which the rich were buried (see the notes at Isaiah 53:2-3, Isaiah 53:7-10).

2. This coincidence could never have occurred if the Lord Jesus had been an impostor. To say nothing of the difficulty of attempting to fulfill a prediction by imposture and the general failure in the attempt, there are many things here which would have rendered any attempt of this kind utterly hopeless. A very large portion of the things referred to in this chapter were circumstances over which an impostor could have no control and which he could bring about by no contrivance, no collusion, and no concert. They depended on the arrangements of Providence, and on the voluntary actions of people, in such a way that he could not affect them. How could he so order it as to grow up as a root out of a dry ground; to be despised and rejected of men; to be taken from detention and from a judicial sentence though innocent; to have it designed that be should be buried with malefactors, and to be numbered with transgressors, and yet to be rescued by a rich man, and placed in his tomb?

This consideration becomes more striking when it is remembered that not a few people claimed to be the Messiah, and succeeded in imposing on many, and though they were at last abandoned or punished, yet between their lives and death, and the circumstances here detailed, there is not the shadow of a coincidence. It is to be remembered also that an impostor

would not have aimed at what would have constituted a fulfillment of this prophecy. Notwithstanding the evidence that it refers to the Messiah, yet it is certain also that the Jews expected no such personage as that here referred to. They looked for a magnificent temporal prince and conqueror; and an impostor would not have attempted to evince the character, and to go through the circumstances of poverty, humiliation, shame, and sufferings, here described. What impostor ever would have attempted to fulfill a prophecy by subjecting himself to a shameful death? What impostor could have brought it about in this manner if he had attempted it? No; it was only the true Messiah that either would or could have fulfilled this remarkable prophecy. Had an impostor made the effort, he must have failed; and it was not in human nature to attempt it under the circumstances of the case. All the claims to the Messiahship by impostors have been of an entirely different character from that referred to here.

3. We are then prepared to ask an infidel how he will dispose of this prophecy. That it existed seven hundred years before Christ is as certain as that the poems of Homer or Hesiod had an existence before the Christian era; as certain as the existence of any ancient document whatever. It will not do to say that it was forged - for this is not only without proof, but wound destroy the credibility of all ancient writings. It will not do to say that it was the result of natural sagacity in the prophet - for whatever may be said of conjectures about empires and kingdoms, no natural sagacity can tell what will be the character of an individual man, or whether such a man as here referred to would exist at all. It will not do to say that the Lord Jesus was a cunning impostor and resolved to fulfill this ancient writing, and thus establish his claims, for, as we have seen, such an attempt would have belied human nature, and if attempted, could not have been accomplished. It remains then to ask what solution the infidel will give of these remarkable facts. We present him the prophecy - not a rhapsody, not conjecture, not a general statement; but minute, full, clear, unequivocal, relating to points which could not have been the result of conjecture: and over which the individual had no control. And then we present him with the record of the life of Jesus - minutely accurate in all the details of the fulfillment - a coincidence as clear as that between a biography and the original - and ask him to explain it. And we demand a definite and consistent answer to this. To turn away from it does not answer it. To laugh, does not answer it, for

there is no argument in a sneer or a jibe. To say that it is not worth inquiry is not true, for it pertains to the great question of human redemption. But if he cannot explain it, then he should admit that it is such a prediction as only God could give, and that Christianity is true.

4. This chapter proves that the Redeemer died as an atoning sacrifice for people. He was not a mere martyr, and he did not come and live merely to set us an example. Of what martyr was the language here ever used, and how could it be used? How could it be said of any martyr that he bore our griefs, that he was bruised for our iniquities, that our sins were made to rush and meet upon him, and that he bare the sin of many? And if the purpose of his coming was merely to teach us the will of God, or to set us an example, why is such a prominence here given to his sufferings in behalf of others? Scarcely an allusion is made to his example, while the chapter is replete with statements of his sufferings and sorrows in behalf of others. It would be impossible to state in more explicit language the truth that he died as a sacrifice for the sins of people; that he suffered to make proper expiation for the guilty. No confession of faith on earth, no creed, no symbol, no standard of doctrine, contains more explicit statements on the subject. And if the language used here does not demonstrate that the Redeemer was an atoning sacrifice, it is impossible to conceive how such a doctrine could be taught or conveyed to people.

5. This whole chapter is exceedingly important to Christians. It contains the most full, continuous statement in the Bible of the design of the Redeemer‘s sufferings and death. And after all the light which is shed on the subject in the New Testament; after all the full and clear statements made by the Redeemer and the apostles; still, if we wish to see a full and continuous statement on the great doctrine of the atonement, we naturally recur to this portion of Isaiah. If we wish our faith to be strengthened, and our hearts warmed by the contemplalion of his sufferings, we shall find no part of the Bible better adapted to it than this. It should not only be the subject of congratulation, but of much fervent prayer. No man can study it too profoundly. No one can feel too much anxiety to understand it. Every verse, every phrase, every word should be pondered until it fixes itself deep in the memory, and makes an eternal impression on the heart. If a man understands this portion of the Bible, he will have a correct view of the plan

of salvation. And it should be the subject of profound and prayerful contemplation until the heart glows with love to that merciful God who was willing to give the Redeemer to such sorrow, and to the gracious Saviour who, for our sins, was willing to pour out his soul unto death. I bless God that I have been permitted to study it; and I pray that this exposition - cold and imperfect as it is - may be made the means yet of extending correct views of the design of the Redeemer‘s death among his friends, and of convincing those who have doubted the truth of the Bible, that a prophecy like this demonstrates that the book in which it occurs must be from God.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 54

Introduction

This chapter, probably closely connected in sense with the preceding, and growing out of the great truths there revealed respecting the work of the Messiah, contains a promise of the enlargement, the moral renovation, and the future glory of the kingdom of God, especially under the Messiah. Like the preceding and succeeding chapters, it may have been primarily designed to give consolation to the exiles in Babylon, but it was consolation to be derived from what would occur in distant times under the Messiah, and in the spread of the true religion. Few and feeble as they were then; oppressed and captive; despised and apparently forsaken, they were permitted to look forward to future days, and had the assurance of a vast increase from the Gentile world, and of permanent glory. The design of the whole chapter is consolatory, and is a promise of what would certainly result from the purpose of sending the Messiah to die for the world.

The chapter may be regarded as divided into the following portions:

I. An address to the people of God, or to Jerusalem, regarded as then feeble, and promising great enlargement Isaiah 54:1-6.

1. Promise of a great increase, under a two-fold image; first, Of a woman who had been barren, and who subsequently had many children Isaiah 54:1; and, secondly, Of a tent that was to be enlarged, in order to accommodate those who were to dwell in it Isaiah 54:2-3.

2. The foundation of this promise or assurance, that Yahweh was the husband and protector of his people Isaiah 54:4-6.

II. The covenant which Yahweh had made with his people was firm and immovable Isaiah 54:7, Isaiah 54:10.

1. He had indeed forsaken them for a little while, but it was only to gather them again with eternal and unchanging favor Isaiah 54:7-8.

2. His covenant with them would be as arm as that which he had made with Noah, and which he had so steadily observed Isaiah 54:9.

3. It would be even more firm than the hills Isaiah 54:10. They would depart, and the mountains would be removed; but his covenant with his people would be unshaken and eternal.

III. A direct address to his people, as if agitated and tossed on a heaving sea, promising future stability and glory Isaiah 54:11-14.

1. They were then like a ship on the stormy ocean, and without comfort.

2. Yet there would be a firm foundation laid. These agitations would cease, and she would have stability.

3. The future condition of his people would be glorious. His church would rise on the foundation - the foundation of sapphires - like a splendid palace made of precious stones Isaiah 54:11-12.

4. All her children would be taught of Yahweh, and their peace and prosperity be great Isaiah 54:13.

5. She would be far from oppression and from fear Isaiah 54:14.

IV. She would be safe from all her foes. No weapon that should be formed against her would prosper. All they who made any attack on her were under his control, and God would defend her from all their assaults Isaiah 54:15-17.

Verse 1

Sing, O barren - That is, shout for joy, lift up the voice of exultation and praise. The ‹barren‘ here denotes the church of God under the Old Testament, confined within the narrow limits of the Jewish nation, and still more so in respect to the very small number of true believers, and which seemed sometimes to be deserted of God, her husband (Lowth). It is here represented under the image of a female who had been destitute of children, and who now has occasion to rejoice on the reconciliation of her husband (Isaiah 54:6; Lowth), and on the accession of the Gentiles to her family. The Chaldee renders it, ‹Rejoice, O Jerusalem, who hast been as a sterile woman that did not bear.‘ The church is often in the Bible compared to a female, and the connection between God and his people is often compared with that between husband and wife (compare Isaiah 62:5; Revelation 21:2-9; Revelation 22:17).

Thou that didst not bear - Either referring to the fact that the church was confined within the narrow limits of Judea; or that there had been in it a small number of true believers; or addressed to it in Babylon when it was oppressed, and perhaps constantly diminishing in number. I think it probable that it refers to the latter; and that the idea is, that she saw her sons destroyed in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, and that she was not augmented by any accessions while in Babylon, but would have great

occasion for rejoicing on her return, and in her future increase under the Messiah by the accession of the Gentiles.

Break forth into singing - (Compare Isaiah 14:7; Isaiah 44:23; Isaiah 49:13).

For more are the children of the desolate - The ‹desolate‘ here refers to Jerusalem, or the church. By the ‹married woman,‘ Rosenmuller supposes the prophet means other nations which flourished and increased like a married woman. Grotius supposes that he means other cities which were inhabited, and that Jerusalem would surpass them all in her prosperity and in numbers. But the phrase seems to have somewhat of a proverbial cast, and probably the idea is that there would be a great increase, a much greater increase than she had any reason to apprehend. As if a promise was made to a barren female that she should have more children than those who were married usually had, so Jerusalem and the church would be greatly enlarged, far beyond what usually occurred among nations. The fulfillment of this is to be looked for in the accession of the Gentiles Isaiah 54:3. ‹The conversion of the Gentiles is all along considered by the prophet as a new accession of adopted children, admitted into the original church of God, and united with it‘ (Lowth). See the same idea presented at greater length in Isaiah 49:20-22.

Verse 2

Enlarge the place of thy tent - The same idea occurs in Isaiah 49:19-20 (see the notes at that chapter). The curtains of thy habitations. The word ‹curtain‘ does not quite express the sense here. It is commonly with us used to denote the cloth hanging round. a bed or at a window, which may be spread or drawn aside at pleasure, or the hanging in theaters to conceal the stage from the spectators. The word here, however, denotes the canopy or cloth used in a tent; and the idea is, that the boundaries of the church were to be greatly enlarged, in order to accommodate the vast accession from the pagan world.

Spare not - Do not be parsimonious in the provision of the materials for greatly enlarging the tent to dwell in.

Lengthen thy cords - (See the note at Isaiah 33:20).

Verse 3

For thou shalt break forth - (See the notes at Isaiah 49:19-20).

And make the desolate cities - (See the notes at Isaiah 44:26).

Verse 4

Fear not … - (See Isaiah 41:10, note, Isaiah 41:14, note).

Neither shalt thou be confounded - All these words mean substantially the same thing; and the design of the prophet is to affirm, in the strongest possible manner, that the church of God should be abundantly prospered and enlarged. The image of the female that was barren is kept up, and the idea is, that there should be no occasion of the shame which she felt who had no children.

For thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth - In the abundant increase and glory of future times, the circumstances of shame which attended their early history shall be forgotten. The ‹youth‘ of the Jewish people refers doubtless to the bondage of Egypt, and the trials and calamities which came upon them there. So great should be their future prosperity and glory, that all this should be forgotten.

The reproach of thy widowhood - The captivity at Babylon, when they were like a woman bereft of her husband and children (see the notes at Isaiah 49:21).

Verse 5

For thy Maker is thine husband - Both these words, ‹maker‘ and ‹husband,‘ in the Hebrew are in the plural number. But the form is evidently the *pluralis excellentiae* - a form denoting majesty and honor (see 1 Samuel 19:13, 1 Samuel 19:16; Psalm 149:2; Proverbs 9:10; Proverbs 30:3; Ecclesiastes 12:1; Hosea 12:1). Here it refers to ‹Yahweh of hosts,‘ necessarily in the singular, as Yahweh is one Deuteronomy 6:4. No argument can be drawn from this phrase to prove that there is a distinction of persons in the Godhead, as the form is so often used evidently with a singular signification. That the words here properly have a singular signification was the evident understanding of the ancient interpreters. Thus Jerome *Quia dominabitur tui qui fecit te* - ‹Because he shall rule ever thee who made thee‘ So the Septuagint, Ὅτι κύριος ὁ ποιῶν σε, κ.τ.λ. *Hoti kurios ho poiōn se etc* ‹For the Lord who made thee, the Lord of Sabaoth,‘ etc. So the Chaldee and the Syriac. Lowth renders it, ‹For thy husband is thy Maker.‘ The word rendered ‹husband,‘ from בעל *baʿal* denotes properly the lord, maker, or ruler of anyone; or the owner of anything. It often, however, means, to be a husband Deuteronomy 21:13; Deuteronomy 24:1; Isaiah 62:5; Malachi 2:11, and is evidently used in that sense here. The idea is, that Yahweh would sustain to his people the relation of a husband; that he who had made them, who had originated all their laws and institutions,

and moulded them as a people (see the note at Isaiah 43:1), would now take his church under his protection and care (see the notes at Isaiah 62:5).

And thy Redeemer - (See Notes on Isaiah 43:1-3.)

The God of the whole earth - He shall no more be regarded as uniquely the God of the Jewish people, but shall be acknowledged as the only true God, the God that rules over all the world. This refers undoubtedly to the times of the gospel, when he should be acknowledged as the God of the Gentiles as well as the Jews (see Romans 3:29).

Verse 6

For the Lord hath called thee - This is designed to confirm and illustrate the sentiment in the previous verse. God there says that he would be a husband to his people. Here he says, that although he had for a time apparently forsaken them, as a husband who had forsaken his wife, and although they were cast down and dejected like a woman who had thus been forsaken, yet he would now restore them to favor.

Hath called thee - That is, will have called thee to himself - referring to the future times when prosperity should be restored to them.

As a woman forsaken - Forsaken by her husband on account of her offence.

And grieved in spirit - Because she was thus forsaken.

And a wife of youth - The Septuagint renders this very strangely, ‹The Lord hath not called thee as a wife forsaken and disconsolate; nor as a wife that hath been hated from her youth;‘ showing conclusively that the translator here did not understand the meaning of the passage, and vainly endeavored to supply a signification by the insertion of thee negatives, and by endeavoring to make a meaning. The idea is that of a wife wedded in youth; a wife toward whom there was early and tender love, though she was afterward rejected. God had loved the Hebrew people as his people in the early days of their history. Yet for their idolatry he had seen occasion afterward to cast them off, and to doom them to a long and painful exile. But he would yet love them with all the former ardor of affection, and would greatly increase and prosper them.

When thou wast refused - Or, that hath been rejected. Lowth, ‹But afterward rejected.‘ It may be rendered, ‹Although (כי *kîy* has often the sense of although) thou wert rejected,‘ or ‹although she was rejected.‘ The idea is, that she had been married in youth, but had been afterward put away.

Verse 7

For a small moment - The Chaldee and Syriac render this, ‹In a little anger.‘ Lowth has adopted this, but without sufficient authority. The Hebrew means, ‹For a little moment;‘ a very short time. The reference here is probably to the captivity at Babylon, when they were apparently forsaken by Yahweh. Though to them this appeared long, yet compared with their subsequent prosperity, it was but an instant of time. Though this had probably a primary reference to the captivity then, yet there can be no impropriety in applying it to other similar cases. It contains an important principle; that is, that though God appears to forsake his people, yet it will be comparatively but for a moment. He will remember his covenant, and however long their trials may seem to be, yet compared with the subsequent mercies and the favors which shall result from them, they will seem to be but as the sorrows of the briefest point of duration (compare 2 Corinthians 4:17).

But with great mercies - The contrast here is not that of duration but of magnitude. The forsaking was ‹little,‘ the mercies would be ‹great.‘ It would be mercy that they would be recalled at all after all their faults and crimes; and the mercy which would be bestowed in the enlargement of their numbers would be inexpressibly great.

Will I gather thee - Will I collect thee from thy dispersions, and gather thee to myself as my own people.

Verse 8

In a little wrath - The Syriac renders this, ‹In great wrath.‘ The Vulgate, ‹In a moment of indignation.‘ The Septuagint, ‹In a little wrath.‘ (Noyes renders it in accordance with the view of Rosenmuller, ‹In overflowing wrath.‘ This variety of interpretation has arisen from the various meanings affixed to the unusual word שׁצף *shetsep* This word occurs nowhere else in the Bible. Gesenius supposes that it is used for the sake of paronomasia with קצף *qetsep* ‹wrath,‘ instead of שׁטף *sheṭep* This word frequently occurs, and means a gushing out, an overflowing, an inundation, a flood Nehemiah 1:8; Job 38:25; Psalm 32:6; Proverbs 27:4. According to this it would mean, ‹in my overflowing anger,‘ in accordance with the expression in Proverbs 27:4, ‹anger is outrageous,‘ more correctly in the margin, ‹An overflowing.‘ The parallelism, however, seems to demand the sense of short or momentary, as it stands opposed to ‹everlasting.‘ But it is not possible to demonstrate that the Hebrew word has this signification.

Rosenmuller agrees with Gesenius in the opinion that it should be rendered ‹In overflowing wrath;‘ and perhaps as the parallelism of the word ‹everlasting‘ will be sufficiently secured by the phrase ‹for a moment,‘ the probability is in favor of this interpretation. Then it will mean that the wrath, though it was but for a moment, was overflowing. It was like a deluge; and all their institutions, their city, their temple, their valued possessions, were swept away.

I hid my face from thee - This is expressive of displeasure (see the note at Isaiah 53:3; compare Job 13:24; Job 34:29; Psalm 30:7; Psalm 44:24; Isaiah 8:17). Here it refers to the displeasure which he had manifested in the punishment which he brought on them in Babylon.

For a moment - (See the note at Isaiah 54:7). This stands opposed to the ‹everlasting kindness‘ which he would show to them.

But with everlasting kindness - This is true:

1. Of the church at large under the Messiah. It is the object of the unchanging affection and favor of God.

2. Of each individual Christian. He will make him blessed in an eternal heaven.

Verse 9

For this is as the waters of Noah unto me - As it was in the time of the flood of waters, so shall it be now. ‹I then solemnly promised that the waters should not again drown the earth, and I have kept that promise. I now promise with equal solemnity that I will bestow perpetual favor on my true people, and will shed upon them eternal and unchanging blessings.‘ ‹The waters of Noah,‘ here mean evidently the flood that came upon the world in his time, and from which he and his family were saved. Lowth, on the authority of one manuscript and of the Vulgate, Syriac, Symmachus, and Theodotion, reads this, ‹In the days of Noah? But the authority is not sufficient to change the Hebrew text, and the sense is as clear as if it were changed.

As I have sworn - Genesis 8:21-22. God appeals to this not only because the oath and promise had been made, but because it had been kept.

That I would not be wroth - The idea seems here to be that no calamities should spread over the whole church, and sweep it away, as the waters swept over the world in the time of Noah, or as desolation swept

over Jerusalem and the whole land of Canaan in the time of the exile at Babylon. There would be indeed persecutions and calamities, but the church would be safe amidst all these trials. The period would never arrive when God would forsake the church, and when he would leave it to perish. One has only to recollect how God has guarded the church, even during the most dangerous periods, to see how remarkably this has been fulfilled. His covenant has been as sure as that which was made with Noah, and it will be as secure and firm to the end of time.

Verse 10

For the mountains shall depart - (See the notes at Isaiah 51:6).

The covenant of my peace - That is, the covenant by which I promise peace and prosperity to thee.

Verse 11

O thou afflicted - In the previous verses, Yahweh had merely promised protection, and had in general terms assured them of his favor. Here he shows that they should not only be defended, but that his church would rise with great beauty, and be ornamented like a most splendid palace or temple. This is to be regarded as addressed primarily to the exiles in Babylon near to the close of their seventy years‘ captivity. But nothing forbids us to apply it to the church in all similar circumstances when persecuted, and when she is like a ship rolling on the heaving billows of the ocean.

Tossed with tempest - Lowth, ‹Beaten with the storm.‘ The idea is that of a ship that is driven by the tempest; or any object that is tossed about with a whirlwind (סערה *soʿărâh*). See Jonah 1:11-13; Hosea 13:3; Hebrews 3:14. The figure is especially striking in an Oriental country. Tempests and whirlwinds there, are much more violent than they are with us, and nothing there can stand before them (see Harmer‘s Obs. vol. i. p. 92ff Ed. Loud. 1808).

And not comforted - They were far away from all the comforts which they had enjoyed in their own land, and they were apparently forsaken by God.

Behold, I will lay thy stones - It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to compare the prosperity of the church to a splendid temple or palace. In the book of Tobit (Revelation 21:18-21, a similar description occurs of the New Jerusalem. Possibly John had his eye upon this passage in Isaiah, though he has greatly amplified the description. The passage here undoubtedly contains a figurative description of the future prosperity and glory of the

church of God. Lowth remarks on it, justly, ‹These seem to be general images to express beauty, magnificence, purity, strength, and solidity, agreeably to the ideas of eastern nations; and to have never been intended to be strictly scrutinized or minutely and particularly explained, as if they had each of them some precise moral and spiritual meaning.‘ The phrase ‹I will lay thy stones,‘ refers to the work of masonry in laying down the foundation of a building, or the stones of which a building is composed, in mortar or cement. Literally, ‹I cause to lie down.‘ The word here used (רבץ *râbâts*) is usually appropriated to an animal that crouches or lies down.

With fair colors - This translation by no means conveys the idea of the original. The sense is not that the stones would have fair colors, but that the cement which would be used would be that which was commonly employed to make the most valued colors. The edifice which would be reared would be as costly and magnificent as if the very cement of the stones consisted of the most precious coloring matter; the purest vermilion. The word rendered here ‹fair colors‘ (פוך *pûk*) denotes properly, seaweed, from which an alkaline paint was prepared; then paint itself, dye, fucus, and also that with which the Hebrew women tinged their eyelashes (*stibium*). This is composed of the powder of lead ore, and was drawn with a small wooden bodkin through the eyelids, and tinged the hair and the edges of the eyelids with a dark sooty color, and was esteemed to be a graceful ornament. This practice is of great antiquity.

It was practiced by Jezebel (see 2 Kings 9:30, where the same word is used as here); it was practiced among the Greeks and Romans (Xen. Cyr. i. 11); and it is still practiced in Africa (see Shaw‘s Travels, pp. 294,295). The word used here is rendered ‹paint,‘ or ‹painted‘ 2 Kings 9:30; Jeremiah 22:14; and ‹glistening stones‘ 1 Chronicles 29:2. It does not occur elsewhere. In the passage in Chronicles it may mean the carbuncle, as it is rendered here by the Septuagint, (ἄνθρακα *anthraka*); but it here denotes, doubtless, the valued paint or dye which was used as an ornament. The description here is that the very stones should be laid in cement of this description, and is of course equivalent to saying that it would be in the most costly and magnificent manner. It may be added, however, that it would not be the mere fact that the stibium would constitute the cement that the prophet seems to refer to, but probably he also means to intimate that this would contribute greatly to the beauty of the city. The cement in which bricks or stones is laid in a building is partly visible, and the beauty of the

structure would be augmented by having that which was regarded as constituting the highest ornament used for cement.

And thy foundations with sapphires - The sapphire is a well-known gem distinguished for its beauty and splendor. In hardness it is inferior to the diamond only. Its colors are blue, red, violet, green, white, or limpid.

Verse 12

And I will make thy windows - The word rendered here ‹windows‘ is rendered by Jerome propugnacula - ‹fortresses,‘ bulwarks, ramparts; and by the Septuagint, Επαλξεις *Epalcheis* - ‹Bulwarks,‘ or rather, pinnacles on the walls. The Hebrew word שׁמשׁות *shîmâshôt*) is evidently derived from שׁמשׁ *shemesh* (the sun); and has some relation in signification to the sun, either as letting in light, or as having a radiated appearance like the sun. Gesenius renders it, ‹notched battlements, the same as sun, or rays of the sun.‘ Faber (Hebrew Archaeol., p. 294) supposes that the name was given to the turrets or battlements here referred to, because they had some resemblance to the rays of the sun. I think it prob able that the prophet refers to some radiated ornament about a building, that had a resemblance to the sun, or to some gilded turrets on the walls of a city. I see no evidence in the ancient versions that the word refers to windows.

Of agates - Agates are a class of silicious, semi-pellucid gems, of many varieties, consisting of quarts-crystal flint, horn-stone, chalcedony, amethyst, jasper, cornelian, etc., variegated with dots, zones, filaments, ramifications, and various figures. They are esteemed the least valuable of all the precious stones. They are found in rocks, and are use, for seals, rings, etc. (Webster.) The Hebrew word כדכד *kadekkod* from כדד *kâdad* to beat, to pound, and then to strike fire, seems to denote a sparkling gem or ruby. It is not often used. It is rendered by Jerome, Jaspidem. The Septuagint, Ιασπιν *Iaspin* - ‹Jasper,‘ a gem of a green color. It may be observed that it is not probable that such a stone would be used for a window, for the purpose of letting in light.

And thy gates - See Revelation 21:21 - ‹And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl.‘ The gates of the city would be made of most precious stones.

Of carbuncles - The carbuncle is a beautiful gem of a deep red color, with a mixture of scarlet, called by the Greeks anthrax, found in the East Indies. It is usually about a quarter of an inch in length. When held up to the sun it loses its deep tinge, and becomes exactly the color of a burning coal

(Webster). Hence, its name in Greek. The Hebrew name אקדח *'eqeddâch* is derived from קדח *qâdach* "to burn," and denotes a flaming or sparkling gem. The word occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible.

And all thy borders - All thy boundaries; or the whole circuit of thy walls. See Revelation 21:18 - ‹And the building of the wall of it was of jasper.' The idea is, that the whole city would be built in the most splendid manner. Its foundations and all its stones would be laid in the most precious cement; its turrets, towers, battlements, gates, and the circuit of its walls, would be made of the most precious gems. In general, there can be no doubt that this is designed to represent the future glory of the church under the Redeemer, and perhaps also to furnish an emblematic representation of heaven (compare Revelation 21:2). Kimchi supposes that this may possibly be taken literally, and that Jerusalem may be yet such as is here described. Abarbanel supposes that it may refer to the time when the Oriental world, where these gems are principally found, shall be converted, and come and join in rebuilding the city and the temple.

But the whole description is one of great beauty as applicable to the church of God; to its glories on earth; and to its glory in heaven. Its future magnificence shall be as much greater than anything which has yet occurred in the history of the church, as a city built of gems would be more magnificent than Jerusalem was in the proudest days of its glory. The language used in this verse is in accordance with the Oriental manner. The style of speaking in the East to denote unexampled splendor is well illustrated in the well-known Oriental tale of Aladdin, who thus gives his instructions: ‹I leave the choice of materials to you, that is to say, porphyry, jasper, agate, lapis lazuli, and the finest marble of the most varied colors. But I expect that in the highest story of the palace, you shall build me a large hall with a dome, and four equal fronts; and that instead of layers of bricks, the walls be made of massy gold and silver, laid alternately: and that each front shall contain six windows, the lattices of all which, except one, which must be left unfinished and imperfect, shall be so enriched with art and symmetry, with diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, that they shall exceed everything of the kind ever seen in the world' (Pictorial Bible).

Verse 13

And all thy children - All that dwell in this splendid city; all that are the true friends of the Redeemer. It shall be a part of their future glory that

they shall be all under divine instruction and guidance. See Jeremiah 31:34 - ‹And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them.‘

And great shall be the peace of thy children - (See the notes at Isaiah 2:4; Isaiah 9:6).

Verse 14

In righteousness shalt thou be established - This is language which is appropriately addressed to a city or commonwealth. The idea is, that it would not be built up by fraud, and rapine, and conquest, as many cities had been, but by the prevalence of justice.

Thou shalt be far from oppressions - That is, thou shalt be far from being oppressed by others. So the connection demands. The Hebrew would bear an active signification, so that it might be read, ‹be thou far from oppression,‘ that is, be far from oppressing others. But the design of the prophet is rather to promise than to command; and the idea is, that they should have no occasion to fear the violence of others anymore.

For it shall not come near thee - This doubtless refers to the security, perpetuity, and prosperity of the church under the Messiah.

Verse 15

Behold, they shall surely gather together - The idea in this verse is, that the enemies of the people of God would indeed form alliances and compacts against them, but it would not be under the divine direction, and they would not be able to prevail against the church. The word rendered here ‹gather together‘ (גור *gûr*) means properly ‹to turn aside from the way‘; then to sojourn for a time; then to assemble against anyone. It seems here to refer to the gathering together of hostile forces to form an alliance, or to wage war. Great variety, however, has prevailed in the interpretation of the passage, but this seems to be the sense of it. Jerome renders it, ‹Lo, a foreigner shall come who was not with me, the stranger shall hereafter be joined to thee,‘ and seems to understand it of the proselytes that should be made. This sense is found expressly in the Septuagint, ‹Lo, proselytes shall come to thee through me, and they shall sojourn with thee, and fly to thee‘ The Chaldee renders it, ‹Lo, the captivity of thy people shall be surely gathered unto thee, and in the end the kings of the people which were assembled to afflict thee, O Jerusalem, shall fall in the midst of thee.‘ But the above seems to be the correct sense. Alliances would be formed;

compacts would be entered into; leagues would be made by the enemies of the people of God, and they would be assembled to destroy the church. This has often been done. Formidable confederations have been entered into for the purpose, and deep-laid plans have been devised to destroy the friends of the Most High. See Psalm 2:2: ‹The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed.‘ No small part of history is a record of the combinations and alliances which have been entered into for the purpose of driving the true religion from the world.

But not by me - Not under my direction, or by my command.

Shall fall for thy sake - Hebrew, עליך *ʿâlaîyk* - ‹Shall fall unto thee.‘ Lowth, ‹Shall come over to thy side.‘ The phrase seems to mean that they should ‹fall to them,‘ that is, that they should lay aside their opposition, break up their alliances against the church, and come over to it. In proof of this interpretation, Rosenmuller appeals to the following places: 1 Chronicles 12:19-20; 2 Chronicles 15:9; Jeremiah 21:9; Jeremiah 39:9. The passage, therefore, looks to the future conversion of the enemies of the church to the true faith. It has, doubtless, been partially fulfilled in the conversion of nations that have been leagued against the gospel of the Redeemer. There was a striking fulfillment in the times that succeeded the persecutions of Christians in the Roman empire. After all the power of the empire had been enlisted in ten successive persecutions to destroy the church, the very empire that had thus opposed the church was converted to the Christian faith. In a still more signal manner will this be fulfilled when all the powers of the earth now leagued against the gospel shall be brought under the influences of the true religion.

Verse 16

Behold, I have created the smith - The sense of this verse is, ‹Everything that can effect your welfare is under my control. The smith who manufactures the instruments of war or of torture is under me. His life, his strength, his skill, are all in my hands, and he can do nothing which I shall not deem it best to permit him to do. So with the enemy of the church himself - the waster who destroys. I bare made him, and he is wholly under my control and at my disposal.‘ The smith who bloweth the coals, denotes the man who is engaged in forging instruments for war, or for any other purpose. Here it refers to him who should be engaged in forging instruments of battle to attack the church; and why should it not refer also

to him who should be engaged in making instruments of torture - such as are used in times of persecution?

That bringeth forth an instrument for his work - Lowth, ‹According to his work.‘ Noyes, ‹By his labor.‘ The idea is, that he produces an instrument as the result of his work.

I have created the waster to destroy - I have formed every man who is engaged in spreading desolation by wars, and I have every such man under my control (see the notes at Isaiah 10:5-7; Isaiah 37:26-27; Isaiah 46:1-6). The sense here is, that as God had all such conquerors under his control, they could accomplish no more than he permitted them to do.

Verse 17

No weapon that is formed - No instrument of war, no sword, or spear; no instrument of persecution or torture that is made by the smith, Isaiah 54:16.

Shall prosper - On the meaning of this word, see the notes at Isaiah 52:13. The sense here is, that it shall not have final and ultimate prosperity. It might be permitted for a time to appear to prosper - as persecutors and oppressors have done; but there would not be final and complete success.

And every tongue - No one shall be able to injure you by words and accusations. If a controversy shall arise; if others reproach you and accuse you of imposture and deceit, you will be able ultimately to convince them of error, and, by manifestation of the truth, to condemn them. The language here is derived probably from courts of justice (see the notes at Isaiah 41:1); and the idea is, that truth and victory, in every strife of words, would be on the side of the church. To those who have watched the progress of discussions thus far on the subject of the true religion, it is needless to say that this has been triumphantly fulfilled. Argument, sophism, ridicule, have all been tried to overthrow the truth of the Christian religion. Appeals have been made to astronomy, geology, antiquities, history, and indeed to almost every department of science, and with the same want of success. Poetry has lent the charm of its numbers; the grave historian has interwoven with the thread of his narrative covert attacks and sly insinuations against the Bible; the earth has been explored to prove that‘ He who made the world and revealed its age to Moses was mistaken in its age;‘ and the records of Oriental nations, tracing their history up cycles of ages beyond the Scripture account of the creation of the world, have been appealed to, but thus far in all these contests ultimate victory has declared in favor of the Bible. And no

matter from what quarter the attack has come, and no matter how much learning and talent have been evinced by the adversaries of the Bible, God has raised up some Watson, or Lardner, or Chalmers, or Buckland, or Cuvier, or Wiseman, to meet these charges, and to turn the scales in favor of the cause of truth. They who are desirous of examining the effects of the controversy of Christianity with science, and the results, can find them detailed with great learning and talent in Dr. Wiseman‘s Lectures on the connection between Science and Revealed Religion, Andover, 1837.

This is the heritage - The inheritance which awaits those who serve God is truth and victory. It is not gold and the triumph of battle. It is not the laurel won in fields of blood. But it is, the protection of God in all times of trouble; his friendship in all periods of adversity; complete victory in all contests with error and false systems of religion; and preservation when foes rise up in any form and endeavor to destroy the church, and to blot out its existence and its name.

And their righteousness is of me - Or rather, ‹this is the righteousness, or the justification which they obtain of me; this is that which I impart to them as their justification.‘ The idea is not that their righteousness is of him, but that this justification or vindication from him is a part of their inheritance and their portion.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 55

Introduction

This chapter is closely connected in sense with the preceding chapter. It flows from the doctrines stated in Isaiah 53:1-12, and is designed to state what would follow from the coming of the Messiah. It would result from that work that the most free and full invitations would be extended to all people to return to God, and to obtain his favor. There would be such ample provision made for the salvation of human beings, that the most liberal invitations could be extended to sinners. The main idea in the chapter, I conceive to be, that the effect of the work of the Redeemer would be to lay the foundation for a universal invitation to people to come and be saved. So ample would be the merits of his death Isaiah 53:1-12, that all might come and partake of eternal life. To state this, I suppose to be the main design of this chapter. It may be regarded as comprising the following parts:

I. A universal invitation to come and embrace the provisions of mercy.

1. All were invited to come, even they who were the most poor and needy, who had no money, as freely as to running waters and streams Isaiah 55:1.

2. They were now regarded as spending their money and their labor for that which produced no permanent satisfaction - descriptive of the world in its vain efforts to find enjoyment Isaiah 55:2.

3. If they would come to God they should live, and he would make with them an eternal covenant Isaiah 55:3.

II. To encourage them to this, the assurance is presented that God had given the Messiah to be a leader of the people, and that under him distant nations should embrace the truth and be saved Isaiah 55:4-5.

III. In view of the fullness of the provisions of mercy, and of the fact that a great leader had been provided, all are encouraged to come and seek God. This invitation is pressed on their attention by several considerations:

1. Yahweh might now be found, and he was ready to pardon abundantly all sinners who were disposed to forsake the error of their way and to return to him Isaiah 55:6-7.

2. God shows that his plans were high above those of people, and his thoughts more elevated than theirs, and his counsels should stand. The rain descended on the earth and accomplished his great plans, and so it would be

with his word. His promises would be fulfilled, and his designs would take effect, and there was, therefore, every encouragement to come, and partake of his favor and his grace Isaiah 55:8-11.

3. There should be rich and abundant blessings attending their return to God, and universal rejoicing from their embracing the religion of the Redeemer, and becoming interested in his mercy and salvation Isaiah 55:12-13.

There is not to be found in the Bible a chapter more replete with rich invitations than this, nor perhaps is there anywhere to be found one of more exquisite beauty. To the end of the world it will stand as the fullest conceivable demonstration that God intended that the offers of salvation should be made to all people, and that he designs that his gospel shall accomplish the great plans which he had in view when he devised the scheme of redemption. While this precious chapter remains in the book of God, no sinner need despair of salvation who is disposed to return to him; no one can plead that he is too great a sinner to be saved; no one can maintain successfully that the provisions of mercy are limited in their nature or their applicability to any portion of the race; and no minister of the gospel need be desponding about the success of the work in which he is engaged. The gospel shall just as certainly produce the effect which God intended as the rain which comes down in fertilizing showers upon the dry and thirsty earth.

Verse 1

Ho - (הוי *hôy*). This word here is designed to call attention to the subject as one of importance.

Every one that thirsteth - The word ‹thirst‘ often indicates intense desire, and is thus applied to the sense of want which sinners often have, and to their anxious wishes for salvation. It is not improbable that the Savior had this passage in his eye when he pronounced the blessing on those who hunger and thirst after righteousness Matthew 5:6. No needs are so keen, none so imperiously demand supply, as those of hunger and thirst. They occur daily; and when long continued, as in the case of those who are shipwrecked, and doomed to wander months or years over burning sands with scarcely any drink or food, nothing is more distressing. Hence, the figure is often used to denote any intense desire for anything, and especially an ardent desire for salvation (see Psalm 42:2; Psalm 63:1; Psalm 143:6;

John 7:37). The invitation here is made to all. ‹Everyone‘ (כל *kôl*) is entreated to come. It is not offered to the elect only, or to the rich, the great, the noble; but it is made to all. It is impossible to conceive of language more universal in its nature than this; and while this stands in the Word of God, the invitation may be made to all, and should be made to all, and must be made to all. It proves that provision is made for all. Can God invite to a salvation which has not been provided? Can he ask a man to partake of a banquet which has no existence? Can he ask a man to drink of waters when there are none? Can he tantalize the hopes and mock the miseries of people by inviting them to enter a heaven where they would be unwelcome, or to dwell in mansions which have never been provided? (compare Matthew 11:28; Mark 16:15; John 7:37; Revelation 22:17).

Come ye to the waters - Water, floods, overflowing streams, or copious showers, are often used in the Scriptures to denote abundant blessings from God, and especially the blessings which would exist under the Messiah (see Isaiah 35:6; Isaiah 43:20; Isaiah 44:3).

And he that hath no money - The poor; they who would be unable to purchase salvation if it were to be sold. The idea here is the absolute freeness of the offer of salvation. No man can excuse himself for not being a Christian because he is poor; no man who is rich can ever boast that he has bought salvation, or that he has obtained it on more easy terms because he had property.

Come ye, buy and eat - (Compare Matthew 13:44-46). That is, procure it without paying a price. The word rendered here ‹buy‘ (שׁבר *shâbar*), properly means to break, then to purchase etc. (grain), as that which is broken in a mill (Gesenius), or that which breaks hunger; compare Eng. breakfast (Castell.)

Buy wine - (יין *yayin*). Wine was commonly used in their feasts, and indeed was an article of common drink (see the notes at Isaiah 25:6). Here it is emblematic of the blessings of salvation spoken of as a feast made for people. Wine is usually spoken of as that which exhilarates, or makes glad the heart Judges 9:13; 2 Samuel 13:28; Psalm 104:15, and it is possible that the image here may be designed specifically to denote that the blessings of salvation make people happy, or dissipate the sorrows of life, and cheer them in their troubles and woes.

And milk - Milk, in the Scriptures, is used to denote that which nourishes, or is nutritious Deuteronomy 32:14; Judges 4:1; Judges 5:25;

Isaiah 7:22; 1 Corinthians 9:7. It is mentioned as used with wine in Song of Song of Solomon 5:1 , ‹I have drunk my wine with my milk;‘ and with honey Song of Song of Solomon 4:11 , ‹Honey and milk are under my tongue.‘ The sense here is, that the blessings of the gospel are suited to nourish and support the soul as well as to make it glad and cheerful.

Without money … - None are so poor that they cannot procure it; none are so rich that they can purchase it with gold. If obtained at all by the poor or the rich, it must be without money and without price. If the poor are willing to accept of it as a gift, they are welcome; and if the rich will not accept of it as a gift, they cannot obtain it. What a debt of gratitude we owe to God, who has thus placed it within the reach of all: How cheerfully and thankfully should we accept float as a gift which no wealth, however princely, could purchase, and which, being purchased by the merits of the Redeemer, is put within the reach of the humblest child of Adam!

Verse 2

Wherefore do ye spend money - Margin, ‹Weigh.‘ That is, in Hebrew, ‹weigh silver.‘ Before money was coined, the precious metals were weighed, and hence, to make a payment is represented as weighing out silver Genesis 23:16.

For that which is not bread - The idea here is, that people are endeavoring to purchase happiness, and are disappointed. Bread is the support of life; it is therefore emblematic of whatever contributes to support and comfort. And in regard to the pursuit of happiness in the pleasures of life, and in ambition, vanity, and vice, people are as much disappointed, as he would be who should spend his money, and procure nothing that would sustain life.

And your labor for that which satisfieth not - You toil, and expend the avails of your labor for that which does not produce satisfaction. What a striking description of the condition of the world! The immortal mind will not be satisfied with wealth, pleasure, or honor. It never has been. Where is the man who is satisfied with his wealth, and who says it is enough? Where is there one who is satisfied with pleasure, and vanity, and gaiety? There is a void in the heart which these things do not, cannot fill. There is a consciousness that the soul was made for higher and nobler purposes, and that nothing but God can meet its boundless desires. Where is the man who has ever been satisfied with ambition? Alexander wept on the throne of the world; and though Diocletian and Charles V descended voluntarily from the

throne to private life, it was because there was nothing in royalty to satisfy the soul, and not because they found happiness enough there. There never was a more simple and true description of this whole world than in this expression of Isaiah, that people are spending their money and their labor for that which satisfieth not.

Hearken diligently unto me - The idea is, that by attending to his words and embracing his offers, they would find that without money or price which they were vainly seeking at so much expense and with so much toil.

And eat … - The prophet here returns to the image in the former verse. They were invited to partake of that which would nourish the soul, and which would fill it with joy.

And let your soul delight itself in fatness - ‹Fatness in the Scriptures is used to denote the richest food Genesis 27:28-39; Job 36:16; Psalm 65:11, and hence, is an emblem of the rich and abundant blessings resulting from the favor of God Psalm 36:9; Psalm 63:5.

Verse 3

Hear, and your soul shall live - That is, if you attend to my command and embrace my promises, you shall live. Religion in the Scriptures is often represented as life John 5:40; John 6:33; John 8:13; John 20:31; Romans 5:17-18; Romans 6:4; Romans 8:6; 1 John 5:12; Revelation 2:7-10. It stands opposed to the death of sin - to spiritual and eternal death.

And I will make an everlasting covenant with you - On the word ‹covenant,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 28:18; Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:8. Here it means that God would bind himself to be their God, their protector, and their friend. This covenant would be made with all who would come to him. It would not be with the nation of the Jews, as such, or with any community, as such, but it would be with all who should embrace the offers of life and salvation.

Even the sure mercies of David - I will confirm to you, and fulfill in you, the solemn promises made to David. The transaction here referred to is that which is celebrated in Psalm 89:2-4:

For I have said, mercy shall be built up forever;
Thy faithfulness hast thou established in the very heavens.
I have made a covenant with my chosen,

I have sworn unto David my servant,

Thy seed will I establish forever,
And build up thy throne to all generations.

A kingdom had thus been promised to David, and he had been assured that the true religion should flourish among those who were to succeed him in Israel. The prophet here says that this solemn promise. would be fulfilled in those who should embrace the Messiah, and that God would ratify with them this covenant. The word rendered here ‹mercies‘ (חסד *chesed*), properly means kindness, goodwill, pity, compassion; then goodness, mercy, grace. The word rendered ‹sure,‘ denotes that which is established, or confirmed; that in which confidence may be placed. The whole expression denotes that the covenant made with David was one which promised great favors, and was one which was not to be abrogated, but which was to be perpetual. With all who embraced the Messiah, God would enter into such an unchanging and unwavering covenant - a covenant which was not to be revoked.

Verse 4

Behold, I have given him - This is evidently the language of God respecting the Messiah, or of David as representing the Messiah. Rosenmuller supposes that the name David here is used to designate the Messiah, and in support of this appeals to Ezekiel 34:23-24; Ezekiel 37:24-25; Jeremiah 30:9; Hosea 3:5. An examination of these passages will show that they all refer to the Messiah by the name of David; and it is morally certain that in the passage before us, the name David Isaiah 55:3 suggested the Messiah. It seems to me that this is to be regarded as a direct address respecting the Messiah, and that the object of the speaker here is to state a reason why he should be embraced. That reason was that God had constituted him as a leader. The Chaldee renders this, ‹Lo, I have constituted him as a prince to the people, a king and ruler over all kingdoms.‘ Kimchi says that it means that the Messiah would be a monitor or a mediator between people and him who would accuse them. Grotius supposes that Jeremiah is intended here; but in that opinion he is destined undoubtedly to stand forever alone. The almost unbroken interpretation, from the earliest times, is that which refers it directly to the Messiah.

For a witness to the people - Noyes renders this, ‹A ruler.‘ Rosenmuller, ‹A monitor,‘ - one whose office it was publicly to admonish, or reprove others in the presence of witnesses. Jerome renders it, ‹A

witness.‘ The Septuagint, Μαρτύριον *Marturion* - ‹A testimony.‘ The Chaldee (רב *rab*), ‹A prince.‘ The Hebrew word (עד ʿ*ēd*) means properly “a witness” Proverbs 19:5-9; then testimony, witness borne Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17; then a prince, chief, lawgiver, commander. Compare the use of the verb in 2 Kings 17:13; Psalm 50:7; Psalm 81:9; Lamentations 2:13. The parallelism requires us to understand it in this sense here - as one who stood forth to bear solemn testimony in regard to God to his law, and claims, and plans; and one who, therefore, was designated to be the instructor, guide, and teacher of people.

A leader - Chaldee, ‹A king.‘ The idea is, that he would sustain the relation of a sovereign. One of the important offices of the Messiah is that of king.

A commander - Or, rather, a lawgiver. He would originate the laws and institutions of his people.

Verse 5

Behold, thou shalt call … - This is evidently an address to the Messiah, and is a promise that the Gentiles should be called by him to the fellowship of the gospel.

That thou knowest not - The phrase ‹thou knowest not,‘ means a nation that had not been regarded as his own people.

And nations that knew not thee - The pagan nations that were strangers to thee.

Shall run unto thee - Indicating the haste and anxiety which they would have to partake of the benefits of the true religion.

Because of the Lord thy God - From respect to the God who had appointed the Messiah, and who had organized the Church.

For he hath glorified thee - John 16:5. God had glorified him by appointing him to be the Messiah; and he would glorify him in the future triumphs of the gospel, in the day of judgment, and in the eternal splendors of heaven.

Verse 6

Seek ye the Lord - The commencement of religion in the heart is often represented as seeking for God. or inquiring for his ways Deuteronomy 4:29; Job 5:8; Job 8:5; Psalm 9:10; Psalm 14:2; Psalm 27:8. This is to be regarded as addressed not to the Jewish exiles only or uniquely, but to all in view of the coming and work of the Messiah. That work would be so full

and ample that an invitation could be extended to all to seek after God, and to return to him. It is implied here:

1. That people are by nature ignorant of God - since they are directed to ‹seek‘ for him.

2. That if people will obtain his favor it must be sought. No man becomes his friend without desiring it; no one who does not earnestly seek for it.

3. That the invitation to seek God should be made to all. In this passage it is unlimited (compare Isaiah 55:7). Where there are sinners, there the invitation is to be offered.

4. That the knowledge of God is of inestimable value. He would not command people to seek that which was worthless; he would not urge it with so much earnestness as is here manifested if it were not of inexpressible importance.

While he may be found - It is implied here:

1. That God may now be found.

2. That the time will come when it will be impossible to obtain his favor.

The leading thought is, that under the Messiah the offer of salvation will be made to people fully and freely. But the period will come when it will be withdrawn. If God forsakes human beings; if he wholly withdraws his Spirit; if they have committed the sin which hath never forgiveness; or if they neglect or despise the provisions of mercy and die in their sins, it will be too late, and mercy cannot then be found. How unspeakably important, then, is it to seek for mercy at once - lest, slighted now, the offer should be withdrawn. or lest death should Overtake us, and we be removed to a world where mercy is unknown! How important is the present moment - for another moment may place us beyond the reach of pardon and of grace! How amazing the stupidity of men who suffer their present moments to pass away unimproved, and who, amidst the gaieties and the business of life, permit the day of salvation to pass by, and lose their souls! And how just is the condemnation of the sinner! If a man will not do so simple a thing as to ask for pardon, he ought to perish. The universe will approve the

condemnation of such a man; and the voice of complaint can never be raised against that Holy Being who consigns such a sinner to hell.

Call ye upon him - That is, implore his mercy (see Romans 10:13; compare Joel 2:32). How easy are the terms of salvation! How just will be the condemnation of a sinner if he will not call upon God! Assuredly, if people will not breathe out one broken-hearted petition to the God of heaven that they may be saved, they have only to blame themselves if they are lost. The terms of salvation could be made no easier; and man can ask nothing more simple.

While he is near - In an important sense God is equally near to us at all times. But this figurative language is taken from the mode of speaking among people, and it denotes that there are influences more favorable for seeking him at some periods than others. Thus God comes near to us in the preaching of his word, when it is borne with power to the conscience; in his providences, when he strikes down a friend and comes into the very circle where we move, or the very dwelling where we abide; when he lays his hand upon us in sickness, he is near us by day and by night; in a revival of religion, or when a pious friend pleads with us, God is near to us then, and is calling us to his favor. These are favorable times for salvation; times which, if they are suffered to pass by unimproved, return no more; periods which will all soon be gone, and when they are gone, the sinner irrecoverably dies.

Verse 7

Let the wicked … - In this verse we are told what is necessary in order to seek God and to return to him, and the encouragement which we have to do it. The first step is for the sinner to forsake his way. He must come to a solemn pause, and resolve to abandon all his transgressions. His evil course; his vices; his corrupt practices; and his dissipated companions, must be forsaken.

And the unrighteous man - Margin, "Man of iniquity." This is a literal translation. The address is made to all people, for all are such.

His thoughts - The Hebrew word denotes all that is the object of thought; and the idea is, that the man must abandon his plans and purposes of life. The thoughts, in the sight of a holy God, are not less important than the external deportment; and no man can obtain his favor who is not ready to abandon his erroneous opinions, his pride and vanity, his plans of evil, and his purposes of life that are opposed to God.

And let him return unto the Lord - Man, in the Scriptures, is everywhere described as having wandered away from the true God. Religion consists in returning to him for pardon, for consolation, for protection, for support. The true penitent is desirous of returning to him, as the prodigal son returned to his father‘s house; the man who loves sin chooses to remain at a distance from God.

And to our God - The God of his people; the God of the speaker here. It is the language of those who have found mercy. The idea is, that he who has bestowed mercy on us, will be ready to bestow it on others. ‹We have returned to God. We have had experience of his compassion, and we have such a conviction of his overflowing mercy, that we can assure all others that if they will return to our God, he will abundantly pardon them.‘ The doctrine is, that they who have found favor have a deep conviction of the abounding compassion of God, and such a sense of the fullness of his mercy, that they are disposed to offer the assurance to all others, that they may also obtain full forgiveness. Compare Revelation 22:17 - ‹And let him that heareth say, Come.‘

For he will abundantly pardon - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹Multiply to pardon.‘ He abounds in forgiveness. This is the conviction of those who are pardoned; this is the promise of inestimable worth which is made to all who are willing to return to God. On the ground of this promise all may come to him, and none who come shall be sent empty away.

Verse 8

For my thoughts are not your thoughts - Interpreters have differed in regard to the connection of this verse with the preceding. It is evident, I think, that it is properly connected with the subject of pardon; and the sense must be, that the plans and purposes of God in regard to forgiveness are as far above those of people as the heavens are higher than the earth, Isaiah 55:9. But in what respects his plan of pardon differs from those of people, the prophet does not intimate, and can be understood only by the views which are presented in other parts of the Bible. The connection here would seem to demand some such view as the following:

1. People find it difficult to pardon at all. They harbor malice; they seek revenge; they are slow to forgive an injury. Not so with God. He harbors no malice; he has no desire of revenge; he has no reluctance to forgive.

2. It may refer to the number of offences. People, if they forgive once, are slow to forgive a second time, and still more reluctant to forgive a third time, and if the offence is often repeated they refuse to forgive altogether. Not so with God. No matter how often we have violated his law, yet be can multiply forgiveness in proportion to our faults.

3. The number of the offenders. People may pardon one or a few who injure them, but if the number is greatly increased, their compassions are closed, and they feel that the world is arrayed against them. Not so with God. No matter how numerous the offenders - though they embrace the inhabitants of the whole world - yet he can extend forgiveness to them all.

4. In regard to the aggravation of offences. People forgive a slight injury. However, if it is aggravated, they are slow to pardon. But not so with God. No matter bow aggravated the offence, he is ready to forgive. It may be added:

5. That his thoughts in regard to the mode of pardon are far above ours. The plan of forgiveness through a Redeemer - the scheme of pardon so fully illustrated in Isaiah 53:1-12, and on which the reasoning of the prophet here is based - is as far above any of the modes of pardon among people, as the heavens are above the earth. The scheme which contemplated the incarnation of the Son of God; which proffered forgiveness only through his substituted sufferings, and in virtue of his bitter death, was one which man could not have thought of, and which surpasses all the schemes and plans of people. In this respect, God‘s ways are not, our ways, and his thoughts are not our thoughts.

But at the same time that this passage, refers primarily to the subject of pardon, and should be interpreted as having a main reference to that, it is also true of the ways of God in general. His ways are not our ways, and his thoughts are not ours in regard to his plans in the creation and government of the world. He has plans for accomplishing his purposes which are different from ours, and he secures our own welfare by schemes that cross our own. He disappoints our hopes; foils our expectations; crosses our designs; removes our property, or our friends; and thwarts our purposes in life. He leads us in a path which we bad not intended: and secures our

ultimate happiness in modes which are contrary to all our designs and desires. It follows from this:

1. That we should form our plans with submission to the higher purposes of God.

2. We should resign ourselves to him when he chooses to thwart our plans, and to take away our comforts.

Verse 9

For as the heavens … - This verse is designed merely to illustrate the idea in the former. There is as great a difference between the plans of God and those of people, as between the heavens and the earth. A similar comparison occurs in Psalm 103:11 -

For as the heaven is high alcove the earth,
So great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

Compare Psalm 57:10 -

For thy mercy is great unto the heavens,
And thy truth unto the clouds.

Also Psalm 89:2 -

Mercy shall be built up forever,
Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.

The idea in all these passages is substantially the same - that the mercy and compassion of God are illimitable.

Verse 10

For as the rain cometh down - The meaning of this verse and the following is plain. This refers evidently, as the whole passage does, to the times which should succeed the coming of the Messiah. The hearts of people by nature are what the earth would be without the rains of heaven - barren and sterile. But God says that his truth shall certainly accomplish an effect similar to that produced by descending showers. The rain never descends in vain. It makes the earth fertile, beautiful, and lovely. So would it be with his truth in the moral world. The comparison of truth with descending rain or dews is exceedingly beautiful, and occurs not unfrequently in the Bible. See Deuteronomy 32:2 -

My doctrine shall drop as the rain,
My speech shall distil as the dew,

As the small rain upon the tender herb,

And as the showers upon the grass.

Compare 2 Samuel 23:4; Psalm 72:6; Isaiah 5:6; the note at Isaiah 44:3.

And the snow - This is a part of the emblem or symbol designed to denote the fertilizing effect of the truth of God. The snow, as well as the rain, accomplishes important purposes in rendering the earth fertile. It constitutes a covering that contributes to the warmth and preservation of plants and vegetation in the colder latitudes, and on the hills and mountains is accumulated in the winter months to fill the streams, or produce the overflowing of the rivers in the spring and the summer. This expression should not, however, be pressed ad unguem in the interpretation, as if it contained any special spiritual signification. It is a part of the general description of that which descends from heaven to render the earth fertile.

From heaven - From the clouds.

And returneth not thither - That is, not in the form in which they descend on the earth. They return not there as rain and snow. The main idea is, they do not return without accomplishing the effect which God intends.

And bud - Put forth its increase; causes it to sprout up, or germinate. The word ‹bud‘ is applied rather to the small protuberance on the ends of limbs and branches, which contains the germ of the future leaf or flower. This word צמח *tsâmach* means rather “to germinate,” or to cause to vegetate in general. It is applied to the putting forth of vegetation. on the earth when the showers descend.

Verse 11

So shall my word be - All the truth which God reveals is as much adapted to produce an effect on the hard and sterile hearts of men as the rain is on the earth.

It shall not return unto me void - It shall not return to me without accomplishing that which I intend.

And it shall prosper - (See the note at Isaiah 52:13). This proves:

1. That God has a design in giving his Word to people. He has as distinct an intention in his Word as he has in sending down rain upon the earth.

2. That whatever is his design in giving the gospel, it shall be accomplished. It is never spoken in vain, and never fails to produce the effect which he intends. The gospel is no more preached in vain than the rain falls in vain. And though that often falls on barren rocks, or on arid

sands; on extended plains where no vegetation is produced, or in the wilderness ‹where no man is,‘ and seems to our eyes in vain, yet it is not so. God has a design in each drop that falls on sands or rocks, as really as in the copious shower that falls on fertile fields. And so the gospel often falls on the hard and barren hearts of men. It is addressed to the proud, the sensual, the avaricious, and the unbelieving, and seems to be spoken in vain, and to return void unto God. But it is not so. He has some design in it, and that will be accomplished. It is proof of the fullness of his mercy. It leaves people without excuse, and justifies himself. Or when long presented - apparently long in vain - it ultimately becomes successful, and sinners are at last brought to abandon their sins, and to turn unto God. It is indeed often rejected and despised. It falls on the ears of people apparently as the rain falls on the hard rock, and there are, so to speak, large fields where the gospel is preached as barren and unfruitful of any spiritual good as the extended desert is of vegetation, and the gospel seems to be preached to almost entire communities with as little effect as is produced when the rains fall on the deserts of Arabia, or of Africa. But there will be better and happier times. Though the gospel may not now produce all the good effects which we may desire, yet it will be ultimately successful to the full wish of the widest benevolence, and the whole world shall be filled with the knowledge and the love of God.

Verse 12

For ye shall go out with joy - This language is that which is properly applicable to the exiles in Babylon, but there can be no doubt that the prophet looks also to the future happier times of the Messiah (compare the notes at Isaiah 52:7).

The mountains and the hills - Language like this is common in Isaiah, where all nature is called on to rejoice, or where inanimate objects are represented as expressing their sympathy with the joy of the people of God (see the note at Isaiah 14:8; Isaiah 35:1-2, Isaiah 35:10; Isaiah 42:10-11; Isaiah 44:23). Indeed, this imagery is common in all poetry. Thus, Virgil:

Ipsi laetitia voces ad sidera jactant,
Intonsi montes: ipsae jam carmina rupes,
Ipsa sonant arhusta.
Ec. v. 62ff.
The untill‘d mountains strike the echoing sky;

And rocks and towers the triumph speed abroad.

Wrangham

Such language occurs especially in the poetry of the Orientals. Thus, when the god Ramar was going to the desert, says Roberts, it was said to him, ‹The trees will watch for you; they will say, He is come, he is come; and the white flowers will clap their hands. The leaves as they shake will say, Come, come, and the thorny places will be changed into gardens of flowers.‘

And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands - To clap the hands is expressive of joy and rejoicing (compare 2 Kings 11:12; Psalm 47:1). Thus, in Psalm 98:8, it is said:

Let the floods clap their hands;

Let the hills be joyful together.

Among the Jews the language was sometimes used to express malignant joy at the calamity of others (compare Job 27:3; Job 34:37; Lamentations 2:15; Ezekiel 25:6). Here it is an expression of the universal rejoicing which would attend the extension of the kingdom of God on the earth.

Verse 13

Instead of the thorn - (Compare the notes at Isaiah 11:6-8; Isaiah 35:1-2; Isaiah 41:19; Isaiah 42:20). The word rendered ‹thorn‘ (נעצוּץ *naʿătsûts*) occurs only here and in Isaiah 7:19. It evidently means a thorn, hedge, or thorny-bush.

Shall come up the fir tree - (ברוֹשׁ *berôsh* see the notes at Isaiah 14:8; Isaiah 37:24; Isaiah 60:13; Zechariah 11:2). A change would be produced in the moral condition of man as great as if in the natural world the rough and useless thorn should be succeeded by the beautiful and useful cypress (compare Isaiah 60:13).

And instead of the brier - The brier is everywhere an emblem of desolation, and of an uncultivated country (see Isaiah 5:6; Isaiah 7:23-24).

The myrtle-tree - (see the notes at Isaiah 41:19). The idea here is, that under the gospel the change would be as great in the moral world as if a field all overrun with briers should at once become thick set with myrtles.

And it shall be to the Lord - The reference here is to all that had been said in the chapter. The gift of the Messiah; the universal offer of the gospel; the bestowing of pardon; the turning of the wicked unto God; and the great and salutary changes produced by the gospel, would all be a memorial of the benevolence and glory of Yahweh.

For a name - It should tend to diffuse his name; to spread abroad a knowledge of himself.

An everlasting sign - On the meaning of the word rendered ‹sign,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 7:14, Here it means that it would be an eternal memorial of the mercy and goodness of Yahweh.

That shall not be cut off - The gospel with its rich and varied blessings shall erect enduring monuments in the earth, to the praise and honor of God. It will be more enduring as a memorial of him than all altars and statues, and temples erected to celebrate and perpetuate idolatry; as wide-diffused as are his works of creation, and more fruitful of blessings than anything elsewhere conferred on man.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 56

Introduction

This chapter, to Isaiah 56:9, is evidently a continuation of the same general subject which is discussed in the previous chapters, and is closely connected with the great truths communicated in Isaiah 52:13-15, and Isaiah 53:1-12, respecting the work of the Messiah. The general design of the prophet seems to be to state the happy results which would follow his coming. In Isaiah 55:1-13, he states that it would lay the foundation for the offer of the gospel to all people, and that it should certainly be successful on the earth and finally triumph, and produce great and important changes. In this chapter Isaiah 56:1-9 the same idea is presented in another form, that no one would be excluded from the offer of salvation, and that strangers and foreigners would become connected, with equal privileges, with the people of God. At Isaiah 56:9, a new subject is introduced - the invasion of the land of Judea by foreign armies and the consequent punishment of the wicked and idolatrous part of the nation. This subject is continued in the following chapter. The following analysis will present a view of the design and scope of this.

I. The kingdom of God was near. The great work of man‘s redemption, to which the prophet referred, would not be long delayed, and those who were expecting the coming of the Messiah should be holy Isaiah 56:1.

II. The blessedness of those who should be admitted to the privileges connected with the kingdom of God, and the coming of the Messiah.

1. Who they would be.

(1) The man who kept the Sabbath Isaiah 56:2-4.

(2) The stranger and foreigner Isaiah 56:3-6.

(3) The eunuch Isaiah 56:3-4.

2. The privileges of thus being admitted to the favor and friendship of God.

(1) They should be brought to his holy mountain.

(2) They should be made joyful in the house of prayer.

(3) Their offerings should be accepted.

(4) These favors should be extended to all people Isaiah 56:7-8.

III. A prophecy respecting the invasion of the land on account of the crimes of the nation.

1. The invasion is represented under the image of wild beasts coming to devour Isaiah 56:9.

2. The cause of this.

(1) The indolence and unfaithfulness of the watchmen.

(2) Their selfishness, avarice, and covetousness.

(3) Their revelry and intemperance Isaiah 56:10-12.

Verse 1

Thus saith the Lord - That is, in view of the fact that the kingdom of God was to come at no distant period. Yahweh states what was necessary to prepare themselves for it, and what was the character which he demanded of those who were disposed to embrace its offers, and who would be admitted to its privileges.

Keep ye judgment - Margin, ‹Equity.‘ Break off your sins, and be holy. A somewhat similar declaration was made by John the Baptist when he announced the coming of the Messiah: ‹Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand‘ Matthew 3:2. The general idea is, that it was not only appropriate that the prospect of his coming and his near approach should lead them to a holy life, but it was necessary in order that they might escape his indignation.

My salvation is near to come - It is to be borne in mind that this was regarded as addressed to the Jews in exile in Babylon, and there is probably a primary reference in the words to the deliverance which they were about to experience from their long and painful captivity. But at the same time the language is appropriate to the coming of the kingdom of God under the Messiah, and the whole scope of the passage requires us to understand it of that event. Language similar to this occurs frequently in the New Testament, where the sacred writers seem to have had this passage in their eye (see Matthew 3:2; Luke 21:31; Romans 13:11; compare Isaiah 62:1-11). It is to be regarded, therefore, as having a reference to the future coming of the Messiah - perhaps as designed to describe the series of deliverances which were to close the painful bondage in Babylon, and to bring the people of God to perfect freedom, and to the full fruition of his favor. Though the actual coming of the Messiah at the time of the exile was at a

period comparatively remote, yet the commencement of the great work of their deliverance was near at hand. They were soon to be rescued, and this rescue was to be but the first in the train of deliverances that would result in the entire redemption of the people of God, and was to be the public pledge that all that he had promised of the redemption of the world should be certainly effected.

To be revealed - To be made known; to be publicly manifested.

Verse 2

Blessed is the man - Hebrew, ‹The blessings of the man‘ (see Psalm 1:1). The sense is, ‹happy is the man.‘ The word here rendered ‹man‘ (אנוש *'ĕnôsh*) usually denotes a man in humble life or in a subordinate rank, in contradistinction from איש *'îysh* a man in elevated rank. As the object of the prophet here is particularly to say, that the ‹stranger‘ and the ‹eunuch‘ would be admitted to these privileges, it is possible that he designedly used a word denoting one in bumble life. The particular blessing to which he refers is specified in Isaiah 56:7-8.

That doeth this - That is, this which the prophet soon specifies - keeping the Sabbath, and abstaining from evil.

And the son of man - Another form of expression denoting man.

That layeth hold on it - Hebrew, ‹Binds himself fast to it;‘ or seizes upon it with strength. That is, he adheres firmly to the purpose, as a man seizes upon a thing with an intention not to let it go.

That keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it - Who sacredly observes the day of holy rest which God has appointed. The Sabbath was one of the special rites of the Jewish religion, and one of the most important of their institutions. Its observance entered essentially into the idea of their worship, and was designed to be the standing memorial or sign between God and the Jewish nation Exodus 31:13-17. At home, in their own nation, it kept up the constant sense of religion; abroad, when they traveled among strangers, it would serve to remind all of the special nature of their institutions, and be the public evidence that they were the worshippers of Yahweh. Hence, as this served to distinguish them from other people, it comes to be used here to signify the observance of the rites which pertained to the public worship of God; and evidently includes whatever was to be perpetual and unchanging in the public worship of the Creator. It is remarkable that the prophet does not pronounce a blessing on him who came to bloody altars with sacrifices, or him who burned incense, or him who conformed to the

unique rites of the Jewish religion. These rites were to pass away, and the obligation to observe them was to cease; and in this indirect manner the sacred writer has given an intimation that there would be blessings on those who did not observe those rites, and that the period would arrive when the divine favor and mercy would descend on people in a different channel. In regard to the importance of the Sabbath, see the note at the close of Isaiah 58:1-14.

And keepeth his hand … - That is, is an upright, holy, honest man. He not only worships God and keeps the Sabbath, but he is upright in the discharge of all the duties which he owes to his fellow-men. These two specifications are evidently designed to include all the influences of religion - the proper service and worship of God, and an upright and holy life. Never in fact are they separated, and the religion of the Bible was designed to secure the one as much as the other.

Verse 3

Neither let the son of the stranger - The foreigner who shall become a proselyte to the true religion.

That hath joined himself - That has embraced the true faith, and become a worshipper of the true God. It is evidently implied here that there would be such proselytes, and that the true religion would be extended so as to include and embrace them. The idea is, that they should be admitted to the same privileges with those who had been long recognized as the people of God.

The Lord hath utterly separated - Let him not esteem himself to be an outcast, or cut off from the privileges of the people of God. This language is used with reference to the opinion which prevailed among the Jews, that the Gentiles were excluded from the privileges of the people of God, and it is designed to intimate that hereafter all such barriers would be broken down. They who entered the church as proselytes from the pagan world, were not to come in with any sense of inferiority in regard to their rights among his people; but they were to feel that all the barriers which had heretofore existed were now broken down, and that all people were on a level. There is to be no assumption of superiority of one nation or rank over another; there is to be no sense of inferiority of one class in reference to another.

Neither let the eunuch say - This class of men was usually set over the harems of the East Esther 2:3, Esther 2:14-15; Esther 4:5; and they were employed also as high officers at court Esther 1:10, Esther 1:12, Esther

1:15; Daniel 1:3; Acts 8:27. The word is sometimes used to denote a minister of court; a court officer in general Genesis 37:6; Genesis 39:1. The Targum often renders the word by רבא *rabbâ'* "a prince."

Behold, I am a dry tree - A dry tree is an emblem of that which is barren, useless, unfruitful. By the law of Moses such persons could not be enrolled or numbered in the congregation of the Lord Deuteronomy 23:2. The sense here is, that they should not hereafter be subjected to the religious and civil disabilities to which they had been. These external barriers to the full privileges among the people of God, would be removed. All classes and ranks would be admitted to the same privileges; all would be on the same level (see Isaiah 56:5).

Verse 4

For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs - Even the eunuchs, who have hitherto been excluded from the privileges of the people of God, and who have been regarded as a separated and degraded people, shall be admitted to the same privileges as others.

That keep my sabbaths - The word is used here in the plural, though the weekly Sabbath is probably particularly intended. It may be, however, that the word is used to represent religious observances in general (see the notes at Isaiah 56:2).

And choose the things that please me - Who will be willing to sacrifice their own pleasure and preferences to those things which I choose, and in which I delight.

And take hold of my covenant - Hold fast, or steadily maintain my covenant. On the meaning of the word ‹covenant,' see the notes at Isaiah 28:18; Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:8; Isaiah 54:10.

Verse 5

Will I give in mine house - That is, they shalt be admitted to all the privileges of entering my house of prayer, and of being regarded as my true worshippers, and this shall be to them a more invaluable privilege than would be any earthly advantages. The word ‹house' here refers undoubtedly to the temple, regarded as emblematic of the place of public worship in all ages.

And within my walls - The walls of the city where God dwelt, referring primarily to the walls of Jerusalem. They should be permitted to dwell with God, and be admitted to all the privileges of others. All, of all classes and conditions, under the reign of the Messiah, should be regarded as on a level,

and entitled to equal advantages. There should be no religious disabilities arising from caste, age, country, color, or rank of life. Those who had any physical defect should not on that account be excluded from his favor, or be regarded as not entitled to his offers of mercy. The lame, therefore, the halt, the blind; the man of color, the african, the red man of the woods; the Hindu and the Islander; all are to be regarded as alike invited to participate in the favor of God, and none are to be excluded from the ‹house‘ erected to his praise, and from within the ‹walls‘ of the holy city where he dwells.

A place - Hebrew, יד *yâd* - ‹A hand.‘ The word is, however, used to denote ‹a place‘ Deuteronomy 23:13; Numbers 2:17; Joshua 8:10. It is sometimes used in the sense of ‹monument,‘ or ‹trophy‘ 1 Samuel 15:12; 2 Samuel 18:18, as if a monument were a handpointing out or showing anything. The word here denotes, however, a place, and means that the excluded foreigner and the eunuch should be admitted to a place in the temple of God; that is, should be admitted to the favor of God, and be permitted to dwell with him.

And a name - As it was regarded among the Hebrews as one of the highest honors to have a numerous posterity, the idea here is, that they should be admitted to the highest possible honor - the honor of being regarded as the children of God, and treated as his friends.

And I will give them an everlasting name - Their memory shall not perish. They shall be admitted to eternal and unchangeable honors - the everlasting honor of being treated as the friends of God.

Verse 6

Also the sons of the stranger - (see the note at Isaiah 56:3). The conditions on which they should be admitted to the same privileges are specified, and are the following:

1. They were to ‹join themselves to the Lord‘ (see the note at Isaiah 56:3).

2. This should be with a purpose to ‹serve him.‘ Their aim and design should be to keep his commandments and to do his will.

3. They were to ‹love the name of the Lord;‘ that is, to love Yahweh himself, for the ‹name‘ of the Lord is often used as denoting the Lord himself.

4. They were to keep his sabbaths (see the notes at Isaiah 56:4).

5. They were to take hold of his covenant (see the notes at Isaiah 56:4).

On these conditions the sons of the foreigner were to be admitted to all the privileges of the children of God, and to be united with all who love and serve him.

Verse 7

Even them will I bring to my holy mountain - (See the notes at Isaiah 2:3). That is, they should be admitted to the fellowship and privileges of his people.

And make them joyful - In the participation of the privileges of the true religion, and in the service of God, they shall be made happy.

In my house of prayer - In the temple - here called the house of prayer. The language here is all derived from the worship of the Jews, though the meaning evidently is, that under the new dispensation, all nations would be admitted to the privileges of his people, and that the appropriate services of religion which they would offer would be acceptable to God.

Their burnt-offerings - That is, their worship shall be as acceptable as that of the ancient people of God. This evidently contemplates the future times of the Messiah, and the sense is, that in those times, the Gentiles would be admitted to the same privileges of the people of God, as the Jewish nation had been. It is true that proselytes were admitted to the privileges of religion among the Jews, and were permitted to offer burnt-offerings and sacrifices, nor can there be a doubt that they were then acceptable to God. But it is also true that there was a conviction that they were admitted as proselytes, and that there would be a superiority felt by the native-born Jews over the foreigners who were admitted to their society. Under the Jewish religion this distinction was inevitable, and it would involve, in spite of every effort to the contrary, much of the feeling of caste - a sense of superiority on the one hand, and of inferiority on the other; a conviction on the one part that they were the descendants of Abraham, and the inheritors of the ancient and venerable promises, and on the other that they had come in as foreigners, and had been admitted by special favor to these privileges. But all this was to be abolished under the Messiah. No one was to claim superiority on account of any supposed advantage from birth, or nation, or country; no one, however humble he might feel in respect to God and to his own deserts, was to admit into his bosom any sense of inferiority in regard to his origin, his country, his complexion, his former

character. All were to have the same near access to God, and the offering of one was to be as acceptable as that of another.

For mine house - This passage is quoted by the Saviour Matthew 21:13, to show the impropriety of employing the temple as a place of traffic and exchange. In that passage he simply quotes the declaration that it should be ‹a house of prayer.‘ There are two ideas in the passage as used by Isaiah; first, that the temple should be regarded as a house of prayer; and, secondly, that the privileges of that house should be extended to all people. The main design of the temple was that God might be there invoked, and the inestimable privilege of calling on him was to be extended to all the nations of the earth.

Verse 8

The Lord God - This verse is a continuation of the promise made in the previous verses, that those of other nations would be united to the ancient people of God. The sense is, that Yahweh would not only gather back to their country those who were scattered abroad in other lands, but would also call to the same privileges multitudes of those who were now aliens and strangers.

Which gathereth the outcasts of Israel - Who will collect again and restore to their own country those of the Jews who were scattered abroad - the exiles who were in distant lands.

Yet will I gather others to him - To Israel; that is, to the Jews (see John 10:16).

Besides those - Margin, ‹To his gathered.‘ To those who are collected from their exile and restored to their own country, I will add many others of other nations. This completes the promise referred to in this and the previous chapters. The next verse introduces a new subject, and here a division should have been made in the chapters. The great truth is here fully expressed, that under the Messiah the pagan world would be admitted to the privileges of the people of God. The formidable and long-existing barriers between the nations would be broken down. No one nation would be permitted to come before God claiming any special privileges; none should regard themselves as in any sense inferior to any other portion of the world on account of their birth, their rank, their privileges by nature. Under this economy we are permitted to live - happy now in the assurance that though we were once regarded as strangers and foreigners, yet we are ‹now fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God‘ Ephesians 2:19.

The whole world lies on a level before God in regard to its origin - for God ‹has made of one blood all the nations of mankind to dwell on the face of all the earth‘ Acts 18:26. The whole race is on a level in regard to moral character - for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. And the whole race is on a level in regard to redemption - for the same Saviour died for all; the same heaven is offered to all; and the same eternal and most blessed God is ready to admit all to his favor, and to confer on all everlasting life. What thanks do ‹we owe to the God of grace for the blessings of the eternal gospel; and how anxious should we be that the offers of salvation should in fact be made known to all people! The wide world may be saved, and there is not one of the human race so degraded in rank, or color, or ignorance, that he may not be admitted to the same heaven with Abraham and the prophets, and whose prayers and praises would not be as acceptable to God as those of the most magnificent monarch who ever wore a crown.

Verse 9

All ye beasts of the field - This evidently commences a new subject, and refers to some invasion of the land of Judea. In the previous chapter, the prophet had comforted the people by the assurance of the coming of the Messiah, and by the fact that they should be enlarged by the accession of the Gentiles. He proceeds here to a more disagreeable part of the subject. The design is, to reprove particularly the sins of the rulers of the people, and to assure them that such conduct would incur the vengeance of heaven. The sins reproved are indolence and inattention to duty Isaiah 56:10-12; a spirit of self-indulgence and of slumber, avarice and selfishness, and luxury and intemperance. The vengeance here referred to, Lowth supposes to be the invasion of the land by the Chaldeans, and perhaps by the Romans. Grotius supposes that it refers to the Egyptians, and to bands of robbers from the Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites. Vitringa strangely enough refers it to the barbarous nations which broke in upon the Christian church to lay it waste and destroy it during the decline of the Roman empire, particularly the Huns, Saracens, Turks, Turcomans, Tartars, etc. But the connection seems to demand that it should be understood of some events, not far distant from the time of the prophet, which would be a proper punishment of the crimes then existing. According to this interpretation, the reference here, I suppose, is to the invasion of the land by

the Chaldeans. They would come as wild beasts, to spread terror and devastation before them. And so great were the national crimes, that the prophet calls on them to come and devour all before them. The comparison of invaders to wild beasts is not uncommon in the Scriptures. Thus Jeremiah 12:9 -

Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird,
The birds round about are against her;
Come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field,
Come to devour.

So Jeremiah 50:17 -

Israel is a scattered sheep;
The lions have driven him away;
First the king of Assyria hath devoured him,
And last this Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon, hath broken his bones.

See also Isaiah 9:11.

Verse 10

His watchmen - The prophet proceeds to specify the sins which had thus induced God to send the desolating armies of foreign nations. The first is specified in this verse, the apathy, indifference, and unfaithfulness, which prevailed among those who were appointed to guard their interests and defend the cause of truth. The word rendered ‹his watchmen‘ (צפו *tsophâv*) is derived from צפה *tsâphâh* "to look about; to view from a distance; to see afar." It is applied appropriately to those who were stationed on the walls of a city, or on a tower, in order that they might see the approach of an enemy 1 Samuel 14:16; 2 Samuel 13:34; 2 Samuel 18:24. It is then applied to prophets, who are as it were placed on an elevated post of observation, and who are able to cast the eye far into future scenes, and to predict future events (Jeremiah 6:17; Ezekiel 3:17; the note at Isaiah 21:6-11; Isaiah 52:8; compare Isaiah 62:6). Here it refers undoubtedly to the public teachers of the Jews who had failed to perceive the crimes and dangers of the people; or who, if they had seen them, had neglected to warn them of the prevalence of sin, and of the dangers to which they were exposed.

Are blind - They have become willfully blind to the existence of idolatry and vice, or they are so corrupt in sentiment and practice, that they fail to notice the existence of the prevailing sins.

They are all ignorant - Hebrew, ‹They do not know.‘ This may either mean that they were not possessed of the proper qualifications for the office

of prophets, or that they were so immersed in sin themselves, and so indolent, that they did not observe the existence of the national sins. In either case, they were unfit for the station.

They are all dumb dogs - Dogs are appointed to guard a house or flock, and to give notice of the approach of a robber by night Job 30:1. They are thus an emblem of a prophet - appointed to announce danger. Generally in the Scriptures the dog is mentioned as the symbol of uncleanness, of vileness, of apostasy, of that which deserved the utmost contempt (Deuteronomy 23:18; 1 Samuel 24:14; 2 Samuel 9:8; Proverbs 26:11; Philemon 3:2; 2 Peter 2:22; Revelation 21:8; Revelation 22:15; compare Virg. Georg. i. 470). But here the dog is an emblem of vigilance. The phrase ‹dumb dogs,‘ is applicable to prophets who from any cause failed to warn the nation of their guilt and danger.

They cannot bark - They cannot give warning of the danger which threatens. The reason why they could not do this the prophet immediately states. They loved to slumber - they delighted in indolence and repose.

Sleeping - Margin, ‹Dreaming,‘ or ‹Talking in their sleep.‘ The word חזים *hoziym* is from חזה *hâzâh* “to dream, to talk in one‘s dreams.” It is kindred to חזה *châzâh* “to see,” and the primary idea seems to be that of nocturnal visions. The Septuagint renders it, Ενυπνιαξόμενοι κοίτην *Enupniachomenoi koitēn* - ‹Sleeping in bed.‘ Aquila, φανταζόμενοι *phantazomenoi* - ‹Having visions,‘ or phantasms. The idea is that probably of dreaming, or drowsing; a state of indolence and unfaithfulness to their high trust. Perhaps also there is included the idea of their being deluded by vain imaginations, and by false opinions, instead of being under the influence of truth. For it is commonly the case that false and unfaithful teachers of religion are not merely inactive; they act under the influence of deluding and delusive views - like people who are dreaming and who see nothing real. Such was probably the case with the false prophets in the time of Isaiah.

Lying down - As dogs do who are indolent. They are inactive, unfaithful, and delighting in ease.

Loving to slumber - Perhaps there was never a more graphic and striking description of an indolent and unfaithful ministry than this. Alas, that it should be too true of multitudes who bear the sacred office, and who are appointed to warn their fellow-men of danger! How many come still under the description of dumb dogs who cannot bark, and who love to

slumber!‘ Some are afraid of giving offence; some have no deep sense of the importance of religious truth, and the actual danger of the ungodly; some embrace false opinions - led on by day-dreams and fictions of the imagination, as unreal, as vain, and as inconsistent, as are the incoherent expressions which are uttered in sleep; some engage in worldly projects, and fill up their time with the cares and plans of this life; and some are invincibly indolent. Nothing will rouse them; nothing induce them to forego the pleasures of sleep, and ease, and of an inactive life. The friends of God are unrebuked when they err; and an inactive and unfaithful ministry suffers the great enemy to come and bear away the soul to death, as an unfaithful mastiff would suffer the thief to approach the dwelling without warning the inmates. But the mastiff is usually more faithful than an indolent ministry. To the deep shame of man be it spoken, there are more ministers of religion who are indolent, inactive, and unfaithful, than there are of the canine race. Instinct prompts them to act the part which God intends; but alas, there are men - men in the ministry - whom neither instinct, nor conscience, nor reason, nor hope, nor fear, nor love, nor the command of God, nor the apprehension of eternal judgment, will rouse to put forth unwearied efforts to save souls from an eternal hell!

Verse 11

Yea, they are greedy dogs - Margin, ‹Strong of appetite.‘ Literally, ‹Strong of soul‘ (עזי־נפשׁ *ʿazēy -nephesh* Jerome renders it, *Canes impudentissimi*. So the Septuagint, Κύνες ἀναιδεῖς τῇ ψυχῇ *Kunes anaideis tē psuchē* - ‹Dogs impudent in soul.‘ They were greedy and insatiable in that which the soul or the appetite demands. The idea here is, that the prophets to whom reference is here made were sensual, and disposed to gorge themselves; living only for carnal indulgence, insensible to the rights of others, and never satisfied.

And they are shepherds that cannot understand - Who are ignorant of the needs of the people, and who cannot be made to comprehend what is needed by them (see Isaiah 56:10).

They all look to their own way - That is, they are all selfish. The ministers of religion are set apart not to promote their own interests bug the welfare and salavation of others.

Every one for his gain - For his own private ends and emoluments.

From his quarter - Lowth, ‹From the highest to the lowest.‘ So Rosenmuller. Septuagint, Κατὰ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ *Kata to heautou* - ‹Each one

according to his own purpose.‘ The Hebrew is literally, ‹From his end,‘ or extremity. Genesis 19:4: ‹From every quarter‘ (מקצה *mîqqâtseh*) that is, from one end to the other; one and all, the whole. This seems to be the idea here, that one and all were given to selfishness, to covetousness, and to indulgence in luxury and sensuality.

Verse 12

Come ye, say they - (compare the notes at Isaiah 22:13). That is, one says to another, ‹I will fetch wine;‘ or as we would say, ‹I will take another glass.‘ The object is to describe a drinking-bout, or carousal, when the glass is shoved around, and there is drinking to excess. The language denotes the state of exhilaration and excitement when sitting at the table, and already under the influence of wine. This is not designed to be descriptive of the people at large, but of the ‹watchmen,‘ or public teachers of the nation, and it certainly shows a state of most lamentable degeneracy and corruption. Unhappily, however, it has not been confined to the times of Manasseh. There have been periods in the history of the Christian church, and there are still portions of that church, where the language used here with so much severity would be an appropriate description even of the Christian ministry; scenes where the professed heralds of salvation sit long at the wine, and join with the frivolous, the worldly, and the profane, in ‹shoving round‘ the sparkling cup. No severer language is used in the prophets to describe and denounce any class of sinners than is appropriated to such people; at no time has the church more occasion to sit in the dust and to weep, than when her ministers ‹rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; and continue until night, until wine inflame them Isaiah 5:11.

We will fill ourselves with strong drink - (See the notes at Isaiah 5:11).

And tomorrow … - That is, indulgence of this kind was habitual. There was an intention to continue it. It was not that they had been once overtaken and had erred; but it was that they loved it, and meant to drink deeper and deeper. So now the guilt of ministers is greatly aggravated in the same way. It is not merely that they drink wine; it is not even that they on a single occasion drink too much, and say and do foolish and wicked things - liable as all are to this who indulge in drinking wine at all, and certainly as ministers will do it who indulge in the habit; it is that they mean to do it; they resolve not to abandon it, but purpose to persevere in the habit ‹tomorrow.‘ Hence, such people refuse to join a Society of Temperance;

hence, they oppose such societies as ultra and fanatical; and hence, by not joining them, they proclaim to the world, ‹Come ye, and I will take another glass, and tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.‘ It is this settled purpose - this fixed resolution, stretching into future time, and embracing coming years, that is so offensive to God. And there is not on earth a condition of more public iniquity than when the ministers of religion take this bold and open stand, and resolve that they will not abandon intoxicating drinks, but will continue to drink ‹tomorrow,‘ and ever onward. Hopeless is the work of reformation when the ministers of religion take this stand; and dark is the prospect for the church on earth, when the messengers of salvation cannot be induced to stand before the church of God as examples and advocates for temperance on the most strict and uncompromising principles.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 57

Introduction

This chapter is evidently closely connected in sense with Isaiah 56:9-12. In the closing part of the last chapter the prophet had said that the land of Israel would be invaded by foreign armies, represented under the image of ravening beasts come to devour. One of the causes of this he had also stated, namely, the general licentiousness, avarice, and intemperance of the rulers of the nation. The same general subject is pursued in this chapter, which has been very improperly separated from the preceding. In this the prophet states specifically the sins of the nation at large, evidently as a reason why the calamities of the foreign invasion were coming upon them. It is probable that the chapter has primary reference to the times of Manasseh. Of the characteristics of his cruel reign, see the Introduction, Section 3. It was a time of persecution and blood. The righteous were put to death; the public service of God was profaned and desecrated; and the evils of idolatry were seen and felt, under the royal patronage, throughout the land. Yet notwithstanding this, the nation was stupid and insensible. They were not affected as they should have been by the fact that the righteous were cut off by persecution, and that idolatry was patronized throughout the land. A few, like the prophets, felt, and deeply felt. Their hearts were desponding, and their spirits drooped. To encourage them, and to rebuke the mass of the stupid and guilty nation, was the design of this chapter.

It may be regarded as divided into three parts:

I. The fact that the righteous were put to death, and yet that the nation was sunk in deep and deplorable stupidity.

1. The proof of the insensibility of the nation, visible in the fact that the just were taken away, and that they were unmoved Isaiah 57:1.

2. A statement of the comparative happy condition of the righteous, though they suffered under persecution, and were put to a violent death (Isaiah 57:1, last part, Isaiah 57:2). So far as they were concerned it was well, for

(1) they were taken away from more fearful approaching evils.

(2) they entered into rest.

II. A solemn address of Yahweh, himself sitting as judge on the tribunal, and stating the crimes and demonstrating the guilt of the nation Isaiah 57:3-14.

1. The nation summoned before him as having been apostatized - under the image so common in the prophets of their being guilty of adultery Isaiah 57:3.

2. They were guilty of falsehood and unfaithfulness to him, and of deriding his government and laws Isaiah 57:4.

3. The statement of the prevalence of idolatry in all parts of the nation, under every green tree, in every valley, in the clefts of the rocks, upon every mountain, and in every secret place Isaiah 57:5-8.

4. They bad gone and sought alliance with foreign powers; under the image of a woman unfaithful to her marriage vow Isaiah 57:9.

5. They had not feared God in the prevalence of the evil and in the corruption of the nation Isaiah 57:10-11.

6. For all this God denounces heavy judgment Isaiah 57:12-14. Their works should not profit them Isaiah 57:12; nothing on which they relied could deliver them (Isaiah 57:13, first part); but the pious who confided in God should be protected (Isaiah 57:13, last part); and the stumbling-block should be taken up out of the way of his people Isaiah 57:14.

III. Consolation and assurances of pardon, protection, and peace to those who would repent and put their trust in God. Their state contrasted with that of the wicked Isaiah 57:15-21.

1. The righteous Isaiah 57:15-19.

(1) Though God was high and great and holy, yet he dwelt with the lowly and the penitent. They were, therefore, encouraged to return Isaiah 57:15.

(2) Though he had entered into controversy with his people for their sins, yet he would not continue it forever. The feeble powers of man could not long endure the expressions of his displeasure, and he therefore would withdraw the tokens of his wrath Isaiah 57:16.

(3) He had indeed punished his people for their covetousness, but he would restore comfort to those who mourned over their sins Isaiah 57:17-18.

(4) He was the author of peace, and all who were afar off, and all who were near, who would return to him, should enjoy it Isaiah 57:19.

2. The wicked. Their condition was one strongly contrasted with that of the righteous Isaiah 57:20-21.

(1) They were like the troubled sea Isaiah 57:20.

(2) They had no peace Isaiah 57:21.

Verse 1

The righteous perisheth - This refers, as I suppose, to the time of Manasseh (see the Introduction, Section 3). Grotius supposes, that it refers to king Josiah; Vitringa, that it refers to martyrs in general. But it seems probable to me that the prophet designs to describe the state of stupidity which prevailed in his own time, and to urge as one proof of it, that the pious part of the nation was taken away by violent death, and that the nation was not affected by it. Such was the guilt of Manasseh; so violent was the persecution which he excited against the just, that it is said of him that he ‹shed innocent blood very much, until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another‘ 2 Kings 22:16. There is evidence (see the Introduction, Section 2), that Isaiah lived to his time, and it is probable that he himself ultimately fell a victim to the race of Manasseh. Though he had, on account of his great age, retired from the public functions of the prophetic office, yet he could not be insensible to the existence of these evils, and his spirit would not suffer him to be silent even though bowed down by age, when the land was filled with abominations, and when the best blood of the nation was poured out like water. The word rendered ‹perisheth‘ (אבד *'ābad*) as well as the word rendered ‹taken away‘ (אסף *'âsaph*) denotes violence, and is indicative of the fact that they were removed by a premature death.

And no man layeth it to heart - No one is aroused by it, or is concerned about it. The sentiment of the passage is, that it is proof of great stupidity and guilt when people see the righteous die without concern. If the pious die by persecution and others are not aroused, it shows that they acquiesce in it, or have no confidence in God, and no desire that his people should be preserved; if they die in the ordinary mode and the people are unaffected, it shows their stupidity. The withdrawment of a pious man from the earth is a public calamity. His prayers, his example, his life, were among the richest blessings of the world, and people should be deeply affected when they are withdrawn; and it shows their guilt and stupidity when they

see this with indifference. It increases the evidence of this guilt when, as is sometimes the case, the removal of the righteous by death is an occasion of joy. The wicked hate the secret rebuke which is furnished by a holy life, and they often feel a secret exultation when such people die.

And merciful men - Margin, ‹Men of kindness,‘ or ‹godliness.‘ Lowth and Noyes render it, ‹Pious men.‘ The Septuagint, Ἄνδρες δίκαιοι *Andres dikaioi* - ‹Just men.‘ The Hebrew word denotes “mercy” or “kindness” (חסד *chesed*). Here it probably means, ‹Men of mercy;‘ that is, people who are the subjects of mercy; people who are pious, or devoted to God.

Are taken away - Hebrew, ‹Are gathered.‘ That is, they are gathered to their fathers by death.

None considering - They were not anxious to know what was the design of Divine Providence in permitting it.

From the evil to come - Margin, ‹That which is evil.‘ The idea here evidently is, that severe calamities were coming upon the nation. God was about to give them up to foreign invasion (Isaiah 56:9 ff); and the true reason why the just were removed was, that they may not be subject to the divine wrath which should come upon the nation; they were not to be required to contemplate the painful state of things when an enemy should fire the cities, the palaces, and the temple, and cause the sacred services of religion to cease. It was a less evil for them to be removed by death - even by the painful death of persecution - than to be compelled to participate in these coming sorrows. At the same time this passage may be regarded as inculcating a more general truth still. It is, that the pious are often removed in order that they may not be exposed to evils which they would experience should they live. There might be the pains and sorrows of persecution; there might be long and lingering disease; there might be poverty and want; there might be the prevalence of iniquity and infidelity over which their hearts would bleed; there might be long and painful conflicts with their own evil hearts, or there might be danger that they would fall into sin, and dishonor their high calling. For some or all these reasons the righteous may be withdrawn from the world; and could we see those reasons as God does, nothing more would be necessary to induce us to acquiesce entirely in the justice of his dealings.

Verse 2

He shall enter into peace - Lowth, ‹He shall go in peace.‘ So the margin. Vulgate, ‹Peace shall come.‘ Septuagint, ‹His sepulture (ἡ ταφὴ

αὐτοῦ *hē taphē autou*) shall be in peace.‘ The idea is, that by his death the righteous man shall enter into rest. He shall get away from conflict, strife, agitation, and distress. This may either refer to the peaceful rest of the grave, or to that which awaits the just in a better world. The direct meaning here intended is probably the former, since the grave is often spoken of as a place of rest. Thus Job Job 3:17, speaking of the grave, says:

There the wicked cease from troubling; And there the weary be at rest.

The connection here seems also to demand the same sense, as it is immediately added, ‹they shall rest in their beds.‘ The grave is a place of peace:

Nor pain, nor grief, nor anxious fear,
Invade thy bounds; no mortal woes
Can reach the peaceful sleeper here,

While angels watch the soft repose.
- *Watts*

At the same time it is true that the dying saint ‹goes in peace!‘ He has calmness in his dying, as well as peace in his grave. He forgives all who have injured him; prays for all who have persecuted him; and peacefully and calmly dies. He lies in a peaceful grave - often represented in the Scriptures as a place of repose, where the righteous ‹sleep‘ in the hope of being awakened in the morning of the resurrection. He enters into the rest of heaven - the world of perfect and eternal repose. No persecution comes there; no trial awaits him there; no calamity shall meet him there. Thus, in all respects, the righteous leave the world in peace; and thus death ceases to be a calamity, and this most dreaded of all evils is turned into the highest blessing.

They shall rest in their beds - That is, in their graves.

Each one walking in his uprightness - Margin, ‹Before him.‘ The word נכח *nakkoch* means “straight, right,” and is used of one who walks straight forward. It here means an upright man, who is often represented as walking in a straight path in opposition to sinners, who are represented as walking in crooked ways Psalm 125:5; Proverbs 2:15; Isaiah 59:8; Philemon 2:15. The sense here is, that all who are upright shall leave the world in peace, and rest quietly in their graves.

Verse 3

But draw near hither - That is, come near to hear the solemn sentence which God pronounces in regard to your character and doom. This is addressed to the impenitent and unbelieving part of the nation, and is designed to set before them the greatness of their sin, and the certainty that they would be punished.

Ye sons of the sorceress - You who are addicted to sorcery and enchantments; who consult the oracles of the pagan rather than the only true God. On the meaning of the word used here, see the notes at Isaiah 2:6. The Hebrews, like other inhabitants of the East, were much addicted to this, and particularly in the time of Manasseh 2 Kings 21:6: ‹And he made his sons pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits, and wizards.‘ So much were they devoted to this in his time, that they might be called, by way of eminence, ‹the sons of the sorceress;‘ as if a sorceress had been their mother, and they had grown up to walk in her steps, and to imitate her example.

The seed of the adulterer - Implying that the obligations of the marriage contract were disregarded, and that licentiousness prevailed in the nation. Amidst the other abominations which existed under the wicked and corrupt reign of Manasseh Matthew 12:39; Matthew 16:4; John 8:1 ff.) In the language here, however, there is a reference to the fact that the nation had apostatized from God, and they were guilty of spiritual adultery - that is, of unfaithfulness to God. They fixed their affections on other objects than God, and loved the images of idol-worship more than they did their Creator.

Verse 4

Against whom do ye sport yourselves? - The word here rendered ‹sport‘ (ענג *ʿānag*) means properly “to live delicately and tenderly”; then “to rejoice, to take pleasure or delight.” Here, however, it is evidently used in the sense of to sport oneself over anyone, that is, to deride; and the idea is, probably, that they made a sport or mockery of God, and of the institutions of religion. The prophet asks, with deep indignation and emotion, against whom they did this. Were they aware of the majesty and glory of that Being whom they thus derided?

Against whom make yea wide mouth? - That is, in derision or contempt Psalm 35:21: ‹Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me.‘

And draw out the tongue? - Lowth, ‹Loll the tongue;‘ or, as we would say, ‹run out the tongue.‘ Perhaps it was done with a rapid motion, as in

mockery of the true prophets when they delivered the message of God (compare 2 Chronicles 36:16). Contempt was sometimes shown also by protruding the lips Psalm 22:7: ‹They shoot out the lip;‘ and also by gaping upon a person Psalm 22:13; ‹They gaped upon me with their mouths.‘

Are ye not children of transgression? - That is, in view of the fact that you make a sport of sacred things, and deride the laws and the prophets of God.

A seed of false-hood - A generation that is unfaithful to God and to his cause.

Verse 5

Inflaming yourselves - Burning, that is, with lust. The whole language here is derived from adulterous intercourse. The sense is, that they were greatly addicted to idolatry, and that they used every means to increase and extend the practice of it. The Vulgate, however, renders this, ‹Who console yourselves.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹Invoking (παρακαλοῦντες *parakalountes*) idols.‘ But the proper meaning of the Hebrew word חמם *châmam* is, "to become warm; to be inflamed, or to burn as with lust."

With idols - Margin, ‹Among the oaks.‘ Hebrew, באלים *bā'ēlîym* Vulgate, *In diis* - ‹With the gods.‘ Septuagint, Εἴδωλα *Eidōla* - ‹Idols.‘ So the Chaldee and Syriac. The Hebrew may denote ‹with gods,‘ that is, with idol-gods; or it may denote, as in the margin, ‹among the oaks,‘ or the terebinth groves, from איל *'ēyl* plural אילים *'ēylîym* or אלים *'ēlym* (the terebinth). See the word explained in the note at Isaiah 1:29. Kimchi and Jarchi here render it by ‹the terebinth tree.‘ Lowth renders it, ‹Burning with the lust of idols;‘ and probably this is the correct interpretation, for, if it had meant oaks or the terebinth tree, the phrase would have been "under" (תחת *tachath*) instead of "in" or "with" (ב *b*).

Under every green tree - (See the notes at Isaiah 1:29; compare Deuteronomy 22:2; 2 Kings 17:10; 2 Chronicles 28:4).

Slaying the children - That is, sacrificing them to the idol-gods. This was commonly done by burning them, as when they were offered to Moloch, though it is not improbable that they were sometimes sacrificed in other ways. It was a common custom among the worshippers of Moloch. Thus it is said of Ahaz 2 Chronicles 28:3, that he ‹burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire.‘ The same thing is said of Manasseh, to whose time the prophet most probably refers. ‹And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son

of Hinnom‘ (2 Chronicles 33:6; compare Jeremiah 7:31). The same thing was practiced in the countries of the Babylonian empire 2 Kings 17:31, and from Deuteronomy 12:31, it is evident that it was commonly practiced by pagan nations. The Phenicians, according to Eusebius (Praep. Evan. iv. 16), and the Carthagenians, according to Diodorus Siculus (xx. 14), practiced it.

In the valleys - The place where these abominations were practiced by the Jews was the valley of the son of Hinnom (see the references above); that is, the valley of Jehoshaphat, lying to the south and the southeast of Jerusalem. A large hollow, brass statue was erected, and the fire was enkindled within it, and the child was placed in his heated arms, and thus put to death. The cries of the child were drowned by the music of the תף *tôph* or kettle-drums (see the notes at Isaiah 5:12, where this instrument is fully described), and hence, the name of the valley was Tophet.

Under the clefts of the rocks - Dark and shady groves, and deep and sombre caverns were the places where the abominable rites of the pagan superstitions were practiced (compare the notes at Isaiah 11:1).

Verse 6

Among the smooth stones of the streams - In the original here, there is a paronomasia, which cannot be fully retained in our English version. There has been also considerable diversity of opinion in regard to the sense of the passage, from the ambiguity of the words in the original. Jerome (the Vulgate) renders it, *In partibus torrentis pars tua* - ‹Thy portion is in the parts of the torrent.‘ The Septuagint translates it ‹This is thy portion; this is thy lot. The word rendered in our version, ‹smooth stones‘ (חלק *chēleq*), means properly smoothness, hence, barrenness or bare place; and supposes that the idea is, their lot was in the bare places of the valley, that is, in the open (not wooded) places where they worshipped idols - an interpretation not very consistent with the fact that groves were commonly selected as the place where they worshipped idols. It seems to me, therefore, that the idea of smoothness here, whether of the valley or of the stones, is not the idea intended. Indeed, in no place, it is believed, does the word mean ‹smooth stones;‘ and it is difficult to conceive what was the exact idea which our translators intended to convey, or why they supposed that such worship was celebrated among the smooth or much-worn stones of the running stream. The true idea can probably be obtained by reverting to the primitive sense of the word as derived from the verb. The verb חלק *châlaq* means:

1. To smooth.

2. To divide, to distribute, to appropriate - as the dividing of spoil, etc.

Hence, the noun also means dividing, or portion, as that which is divided - whether an inheritance, or whether the dividings of spoil after battle. Retaining this idea, the literal sense, as I conceive, would be this in which also something of the paronomasia will be retained: ‹Among the dividings of the valley is thy dividing,‘ that is, thy portion In the places where the valley divides, is thy lot. Thy lot is there instead of the place which God appointed. There you worship; there you pour out your libations to the false gods; and there you must partake of the protection and favor which the gods whom you worship can give. You have chosen that as your inheritance, and by the results of that you must abide.

Of the stream - The word rendered here ‹stream‘ (נחל *nachal*), means either a stream, or a rivulet of water Numbers 34:5; Jeremiah 7:18. It was common also in the worship of the true God (see Genesis 35:14). Among the Hebrews it consisted of wine and oil Exodus 29:40; Numbers 15:5-7; Leviticus 23:13.

Thou hast offered a meat-offering - On the word used here (מנחה *minchāh*) see the notes at Isaiah 1:13; Isaiah 43:23. The word ‹meat‘ formerly denoted in the English language food in general, and was not confined as it is now to animal food. Hence, the word ‹meat-offering‘ is so often used in the Scriptures when a sacrifice is intended which was not a bloody sacrifice. The mincha was in fact an offering of meal, fine flour, etc., mingled with oil Leviticus 14:10; Numbers 7:13, and was distinguished expressly from the bloody sacrifice. The word ‹meal-offering‘ would much more appropriately express the sense of the original than ‹meat-offering.‘ This was a common offering made to idols as well as to the true God, and was designed as an expression of thankfulness.

Should I receive comfort in these? - It is implied that God could not behold them but with displeasure, and that for them he would punish them. The Vulgate and the Septuagint express it well as: ‹On account of these things shall I not be enraged?‘

Verse 7

Upon a lofty and high mountain - The design of this verse and the following, is, to show the extent, the prevalence, the publicity, and the grossness of their idolatry. The language is that which would appropriately express adulterous intercourse, and is designed to show the abhorrence in which God held their conduct. The language is easy to be understood, and it

would not be proper to go into an extended explanation of the phrases used. It is common in the Scriptures to compare idolatry among the people of God, with unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. The declaration that they had placed their bed on a high mountain, means, that in the rites of idolatrous worship, there was no concealment. It was public and shameless.

Verse 8

Behind the doors - In every part of their habitations - behind the doors and posts and beams of their houses, they had erected the memorials of idolatrous worship.

Hast thou set up thy remembrance - That is, they had filled their houses with the images of tutelary gods, or with something dedicated to them. The Greeks and Romans had their Lares and Penates - their household or domestic gods - the images of which were in every family. The same was true of the apostate Hebrews. They had filled their houses with the memorials of idol-worship, and there was no part of their dwellings in which such memorials were not to be found. When a people forget God, the memorials of their apostasy will be found in every part of their habitations. The shrines of idol-gods may not be there; the beautiful images of the Greek and Roman mythology, or the clumsy devices of less refined pagans, may not be there; but the furniture, the style of living, will reveal from ‹behind every door and the posts‘ of the house that God is forgotten, and that they are influenced by other principles than a regard to his name. The sofa, the carpet, the chandelier, the center-table, the instruments of music, the splendid mirror, may be of such workmanship as to show, as clearly as the image of a pagan god, that Yahweh is not honored in the dwelling, and that his law does not control the domestic arrangements. It may be added here that this custom of the Hebrews of placing the images of idols in their dwellings, was in direct violation of the law of Moses. They were expressly directed to write the laws of God on the posts of the house and on the gates Deuteronomy 6:9; Deuteronomy 11:20; and a curse was denounced against the man who made a graven or molten image and put it in a secret place Deuteronomy 27:15.

For thou hast discovered thyself - This language is taken from adulterous intercourse, and is designed to show the love which they had for idolatrous worship, and the extent of their unfaithfulness to God.

And made thee a covenant with them - Margin, ‹Hewed it for thyself larger than theirs. The true sense is, that they had made an agreement with

idolaters, or had entered into a covenant with them.

Thou lovedst their bed - Margin, ‹Thou providest room.‘ Literally, ‹Thou lovest their bed; thou hast provided a place for it.‘ The word יד *yâd* rendered here ‹where,‘ means literally a hand; then a side, a place (see the notes at Isaiah 56:5). The passage means, that they had delighted in the temples, altars, groves, and sacrifices of idolatry, and had provided a place for them in their own land.

Verse 9

And thou wentest to the king - Margin, ‹Respectedst.‘ Jerome renders this, ‹Thou hast adorned thyself with royal ointment, and hast multiplied thy painting; and evidently understands it as a continuance of the sentiment in the previous verses as referring to the kind of decoration which harlots used. The Septuagint renders it, ‹Thou hast multiplied thy fornication with them, and hast done it with many who are far from thee.‘ The Chaldee renders it, ‹When thou didst keep the law thou wert prosperous in the kingdom; and when thou didst abound in good works, then thine armies were multiplied.‘ Lowth supposes that the king of Egypt or Assyria is intended, and that the prophet refers to the fact, that the Hebrews had sought an alliance with them, and in order to secure it, had carried a present of valuable unguents, after the manner of the East. Rosenmuller supposes, that by the king an idol was intended, and that the sense is, that they had anointed themselves with oil, and prepared perfumes, in order to be acceptable to the idol; that is, had decorated themselves as harlots did.

Grotius supposes that it means that they had imitated foreign kings, and copied the customs of other nations, and refers to the example of Ahaz 2 Kings 16:10. Others suppose that the word ‹king‘ is to be taken collectively, and that it means that they had sought the alliance, and imitated the customs of foreign nations in general. It is probable that the prophet refers to some such fact. On former occasions, they had sought the alliance of the king of Assyria (see Isaiah 7:1); and on one occasion, at least, they had meditated an alliance with the king of Egypt (Isaiah 30:2 ff.) The essential idea is, that they had proved unfaithful to Yahweh. This idea is presented here under the image of a female unfaithful to her husband, who had decorated and perfumed herself that she might allure others. Thus the Jews had forsaken God, and had endeavored to make themselves agreeable in the sight of other nations, and had courted their friendship and alliance. The word I ‹king,‘

according to this, refers not to idols, but to foreign princes, whose assistance had been sought.

And didst increase thy perfumes - That is, for the purpose of rendering thyself agreeable, after the manner of a licentious female (see Proverbs 7:17). The custom of perfuming the person was common in the East, and is still practiced there.

And didst send thy messengers - That is, to distant nations, for the purpose of securing their alliance.

And didst debase thyself even unto hell - On the meaning of the word ‹hell,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 5:14. The idea is, that they had sunk to the deepest possible debasement. In forsaking Yahweh; in seeking foreign alliances; in their anxiety to secure their aid when Yahweh was abundantly able and willing to protect them, they had sunk to the lowest degradation of character and condition. The sentiment is, that people degrade themselves when they do not put confidence in God, and when, distrusting his ability, they put reliance on any other aid than his. If people have God for their protector, why should they court the friendship of earthly princes and kings?

Verse 10

Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way - That is, in the length of thy journeys in order to procure foreign aid. Thou hast traveled to distant nations for this purpose, and in doing it, hast become weary without securing the object in view.

Yet saidst thou not, There is no hope - ‹Thou didst not say it is to be despaired of (נואש *nô'âsh*), or it is vain. Though repulsed in one place, you applied to another; though weary, you did not give it up. Instead of returning to God and seeking his aid, you still sought human alliances, and supposed you would find assistance from the help of people.‘ This is a striking illustration of the conduct of people in seeking happiness away from God. They wander from object to object; they become weary in the pursuit, yet they do not abandon it; they still cling to hope though often repulsed - and though the world gives them no permanent comfort - though wealth, ambition, gaiety, and vice all fail in imparting the happiness which they sought, yet they do not give it up in despair. They still feel that it is to be found in some other way than by the disagreeable necessity of returning to God, and they wander from object to object, and from land to land, and

become exhausted in the pursuit, and still are not ready to say, ‹there is no hope, we give it up in despair, and we will now seek happiness in God.‘

Thou hast found the life of thine hand - Margin, ‹Living.‘ Lowth, ‹Thou hast found the support of thy life by thy labor.‘ Noyes, ‹Thou yet findest life in thy hand. Much diversity of opinion has prevailed in regard to the interpretation of this passage. Vitringa interprets the whole passage of their devotion to idols, and supposes that this means that they had borne all the expense and difficulty and toil attending it because it gratified their hearts, and because they found a pleasure in it which sustained them. Calvin supposes that it is to be understood ironically. ‹Why didst thou not repent and turn to me? Why didst thou not see and acknowledge thy madness? It was because thou didst find thy life in thy hand. All things prospered and succeeded according to thy desire, and conferred happiness.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹Because in full strength (ἐνισχύουσα *enischuousa*) thou hast done this; therefore thou shouldst not supplicate me.‘ Jerome explains it to mean, ‹because they have done the things referred to in the previous verses, therefore they had not supplicated the Lord, trusting more in their own virtues than in God.‘ The Syriac renders it, ‹The guilt of thy hand has contracted rust for thee, therefore thou hast not offered supplication.‘ The Chaldee renders it, ‹Thou hast amassed wealth, therefore thou didst not repent.‘ Kimchi explains it to mean, ‹Thou hast found something which is as pleasant to thee as the food is which is the life of man.‘ The phrase ‹life of thy hand‘ occurs nowhere else.

The hand is the instrument by which we execute our purposes; and by the life of the hand here, there seems to be meant that which will give full and continued employment. They had found in these things that which effectually prevented them from repenting and returning to God. ‹They had relied on their own plans rather than on God; they had sought the aid of foreign powers; they had obtained that which kept them from absolute despair, and from feeling their need of the assistance of God. Or, if it refers to their idol-worship, as Vitringa supposes, then it means that, not withstanding all the trouble, toil, and expense which they had experienced, they had found so much to gratify them that they continued to serve them, and were unwilling to return to God.

Therefore thou wast not grieved - Lowth, ‹Thou hast not utterly fainted.‘ The word used here (חלה *châlâh*) means “to be polished”; then to be worn down in strength; to be weak or exhausted Judges 16:7; then to be

sick, diseased, made weak. Here it means, that either by the aid Which they had obtained by foreign alliances, or by the gratification experienced in the service of idols, they had found so much to uphold them that they had not been in utter despair. And the passage may teach the general truth, that not withstanding all the trials and disappointments of life, still sinners find so much comfort in the ways of sin, that they are not utterly overwhelmed in despair. They still find the ‹life of their hand in them.‘ If a plan fails, they repeat it, or they try another. In the pursuits of ambition, of wealth, and of fashion, notwithstanding all the expense, and irksomeness, and disappointment, they find a kind of pleasure which sustains them, and enough success to keep them from returning to God. It is this imperfect pleasure and success which the world gives amidst all its disappointments, and this hope of less diminished joys and more ample success. in schemes of gain, and pleasure, and ambition, that sustains the votaries of this world in their career, and keeps them from seeking the pure and unmingled pleasures of religion. When the world becomes all gloom, and disappointment, and care, then there is felt the necessity of a better portion, and the mind is turned to God. Or when, as is more common, the mind becomes convinced that all the joys which the world can give - allowing the utmost limit to what is said by its friends of its powers - are poor and trifling compared with the joys which flow from the eternal friendship of God, then the blessings of salvation are sought with a full heart; and then man comes and consecrates the fullness of his energies and his immortal vigor to the service of the God that made him.

Verse 11

And of whom hast thou been afraid - The sense of this verse is exceedingly obscure. The design is evidently to reprove the Jews for the course which they had been pursuing in practicing idolatry, and in seeking the alliance of foreign powers. The main scope of the passage seems to be, to state that all this was proof that they did not fear God. Their conduct did not originate from any reverence for him, or any respect to his commands. And the question, ‹of whom hast thou been afraid?‘ seems to mean that they had not been afraid of God. If they had had any reverence for any being or object that had led to the course which they had pursued, it was not for God.

That thou hast lied - That thou hast been false and unfaithful to God. The image is here kept up of unfaithfulness to the marriage vow Isaiah 57:6-8.

And hast not remembered me - The proof of this was, that they had fallen into idolatry, and had sought the alliance and friendship of foreign powers.

Have not I held my peace - The idea here seems to be, that God had been silent a long time, and they had, therefore, been emboldened to sin. He had, as it were, connived at their apostasy and infidelity; and they had thus cast off the fear of him, and given themselves wholly to idolatry. Compare Ecclesiastes 8:11.

Verse 12

I will declare thy righteousness - This is evidently spoken ironically. The sense is, ‹you have devoted yourselves to idols, and you have sought the aid of foreigners. I will now announce to you the true nature of the deliverance which they can bring to you.‘ This is done in the following verse.

Verse 13

When thou criest - That is, when you are in trouble, and feel your need of help.

Let thy companies deliver thee - The word used here (קבוץ *qibûts*) means, properly, "a gathering; a throng; a collection." Here it refers either to the throngs of the idols which they had collected. and on which they relied; or to the collection of foreigners which they had summoned to their assistance. The idea is, that if people trust to other objects for aid than the arm of God, they will be left in the day of trial to such assistance as they can render them.

But the wind shall carry - They shall be like the protection which the wind sweeps away. The Saviour expresses a similar sentiment in Matthew 7:26-27.

Vanity shall take them - Lowth and Noyes, ‹A breath shall take them off.‘ The word הבל *hebel* properly means a breath; and probably denotes here a gentle breeze, the slightest breath of air, denoting the entire instability of the objects on which they trusted, when they could be so easily swept off.

Shall possess the land - The assurances of the favor and friendship of God are usually expressed in this way (compare the notes at Isaiah 49:8). See Psalm 37:11; ‹The meek shall inherit the earth.‘ Compare Psalm 69:35-36; Matthew 5:5.

And shall inherit my holy mountain - In Jerusalem. That is, they shall be admitted to elevated spiritual privileges and joys - as great as if they had possession of a portion of the mount on which the temple was built, and were permitted to dwell there.

Verse 14

And shall say - Lowth, ‹Then will I say.‘ Noyes, ‹Men will say.‘ The word אמר *'âmar* seems to be used here impersonally, and to mean, ‹One shall say;‘ that is it shall be said. The Septuagint and the Syriac render it, ‹They shall say.‘ The idea is, that the obstacles would be removed from the path of those who put their trust in God. The language is derived from the return from the exile, as if persons should go before them and should cry, ‹Cast ye up;‘ or as if the cry of the people all along their journey should be, ‹Remove the obstacles to their return.‘

Cast ye up, cast ye up - That is, remove the obstacles; level the hills; take up any obstruction out of the way (compare the notes at Isaiah 35:8; Isaiah 40:3-4). This cry is often heard before the coming of a distinguished prince or conqueror in the East. Joseph Wolff stated, in a lecture in Philadelphia (Sept. 18,1837), that, on entering Jerusalem from the west, in the direction of Gaza, the road, for a considerable distance from Jerusalem, was so full of stones, that it was impracticable to ride, and those who were entering the city were obliged to dismount. When the Pasha (Ibrahim, son of Mehemet Ali) approached Jerusalem, it was customary for a considerable number of laborers to go before him, and remove the stones from the way. This was done amidst a constant cry, ‹Cast up, cast up the way; remove the stones, remove the stones.‘ And on a placard, or standard, it was written, ‹the Pasha is coming;‘ and everywhere the cry was heard, ‹the Pasha is coming, the Pasha is coming; cast up the way, remove the stones.‘

Verse 15

For thus saith - The design of this verse is, to furnish the assurance that the promise made to the people of God would certainly be accomplished. It was not to be presumed that he was so high and lofty, that he did not condescend to notice the affairs of people; but though he, in fact, dwelt in eternity, yet he also had his abode in the human heart. Many of the ancient pagans supposed that God was so lofty that be did not condescend to notice human affairs. This was the view of the Epicureans (see the notes at Acts 17:18); and the belief extensively prevailed in the Oriental world, that God had committed the management of the affairs of people to inferior beings

which he had created. This was the basis of the Gnostic philosophy. According to this, God reposed far in the distant heavens, and was regardless of the affairs and plans of mortals, and personally unconcerned in the government of this lower world. But the Bible reveals him as a very different being. True, he is vast and illimitable in his existence and perfections; but, at the same time, he is the most condescending of all beings. He dwells with people, and he delights in making his home with the penitent and the contrite.

The high and lofty One - One manuscript reads ‹Yahweh,‘ before ‹saith;‘ and Lowth has adopted the reading; but the authority is not sufficient. The sense is, that he who is here spoken of is, by way of eminence, The high and holy One; the most high and the most exalted being in the universe. He is so far above all creatures of all ranks that it is not needful to specify his name in order to designate him. No one can be compared with him; no one so nearly approaches him that there can be any danger of confounding him with other beings.

That inhabiteth eternity - (Compare the notes at Isaiah 9:6). The word ‹eternity‘ here evidently stands in contrast with the ‹contrite and humble spirit;‘ and it seems to be used to denote the elevated place of an eternal dwelling or heaven. He dwells not only among human beings, but he dwells in eternity - where time is unknown - in a world where succession is not marked - and long before the interminable duration was broken in upon by the revolutions of years and days.

Whose name is Holy - (See the notes at Isaiah 1:4; Isaiah 30:11; Isaiah 41:14; Isaiah 43:3, Isaiah 43:8, Isaiah 43:14; Isaiah 47:4). “I dwell in the high and holy place.” In heaven - uniformly represented as far exalted above the earth, and as the special home or dwelling-place of God. Thus, in Isaiah 63:15, heaven is called the habitation of the holiness and glory of Yahweh.

With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit - The word ‹contrite‘ (דכא *dakkâ'*) means properly that which is broken, crushed, beaten small, trodden down. Here it denotes a soul that is borne down with a sense of sin and unworthiness; a heart that is, as it were, crushed under a superincumbent weight of guilt (see Psalm 34:18; Psalm 138:6).

To revive the spirit - literally, ‹to make alive.‘ The sense is, he imparts spiritual life and comfort. He is to them what refreshing rains and genial suns and dews are to a drooping plant.

Verse 16

For I will not contend for ever - I will not be angry with my people forever, nor always refuse to pardon and comfort them (see Psalm 103:9). This is to be regarded as having been primarily addressed to the Jews in their long and painful exile in Babylon. It is, however, couched in general language; and the idea is, that although God would punish his people for their sins, yet his wrath would not be perpetual. If they were his children, he would visit them again in mercy, and would restore to them his favor.

For the spirit should fail before me - Critics have taken a great deal of pains on this part of the verse, which they suppose to be very obscure. The simple meaning seems to be, that if God should continue in anger against people they would be consumed. The human soul could not endure a long-continued controversy with God. Its powers would fail; its strength decay; it must sink to destruction. As God did not intend this in regard to his own people; as he meant that his chastisements should not be for their destruction, but for their salvation; and as he knew how much they could bear, and how much they needed, he would lighten the burden, and restore them to his favor. And the truth taught here is, that if we are his children, we are safe. We may suffer much and long. We may suffer so much that it seems scarcely possible that we should endure more. But he knows how much we can bear; and he will remove the lead, so that we shall not be utterly crushed. A similar sentiment is found in the two following elegant passages of the Psalms, which are evidently parallel to this, and express the same idea:

But he being full of compassion,
Forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not;
Yea many a time burned he his anger away,

And did not stir up all his wrath.

For he remembered that they were but flesh;

A wind that passeth away and returneth not again.
Psalm 78:38-39
He will not always chide;
Neither will he keep his anger forever.
Like as a father pitieth his children,

So the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

For he knoweth our frame;

He remembereth that we are dust.
Psalm 103:9, *Psalm 103:13-14*

The Hebrew word which is rendered here ‹should fail‘ (עטף *ʿâṭaph*), means properly to cover, as with a garment; or to envelope with anything, as darkness. Then it is used in the sense of having the mind covered or muffled up with sorrow; and means to languish, to be faint or feeble, to fail. Thus it is used in Psalm 61:2; Psalm 107:5; Psalm 142:3; Lamentations 2:11-12, Lamentations 2:19; Jonah 2:7. Other interpretations of this verse may be seen in Rosenmuller; but the above seems to be the true sense. According to this, it furnishes ground of encouragement and comfort to all the children of God who are afflicted. No sorrow will be sent which they will not be able to endure, no calamity which will not be finally for their own good. At the same time, it is a passage full of alarm to the sinner. How can he contend forever with God? How can he struggle always with the Almighty? And what must be the state in that dreadful world, where God shall contend for ever with the soul, and where all its powers shall be crushed beneath the vengeance of his eternal arm!

Verse 17

For the iniquity of his covetousness - The guilt of his avarice; that is, of the Jewish people. The word rendered here ‹covetousness‘ (בצע *betsaʿ*) means "plunder, rapine, prey"; then unjust gains, or lucre from bribes 1 Samuel 7:3; Isaiah 33:15; or by any other means. Here the sense is, that one of the prevailing sins of the Jewish people which drew upon them the divine vengeance, was avarice, or the love of gain. Probably this was especially manifest in the readiness with which those who dispensed justice received bribes (compare Isaiah 2:7). See also Jeremiah 6:13: ‹For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness.‘

And smote him - That is, I brought heavy judgments on the Jewish people.

I hid me - I withdrew the evidences of my presence and the tokens of my favor, and left them to themselves.

And he went on frowardly - Margin, ‹Turning away.‘ That is, abandoned by me, the Jewish people declined from my service and sunk deeper into sin. The idea here is, that if God withdraws from his people, such is their tendency to depravity, that they will wander away from him, and sink deeper in guilt a truth which is manifest in the experience of individuals, as well as of communities and churches.

Verse 18

I have seen his ways - That is, either his ways of sin, or of repentance most probably it means the former; and the idea is, that God had seen how prone his people were to sin, and that he would now interpose and correct their proneness to sin against him, and remove from them the judgments which had been brought upon them in consequence of their crimes.

And will heal him - That is, I will pardon and restore him. Sin, in the Scriptures, is often represented as a disease, and pardon and salvation as a healing of the disease (2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 41:4; Jeremiah 3:22; Jeremiah 17:4; Jeremiah 32:6; Hosea 14:4; see the notes at Isaiah 6:10).

And to his mourners - To the pious portion that mourned over their sin; or to the nation which would sigh in their long and painful captivity in Babylon.

Verse 19

I create the fruit of the lips - The Chaldee and Syriac render this, ‹The words of the lips.‘ The ‹fruit‘ of the lips is that which the lips produce, that is, words; and the reference here is doubtless to offerings of praise and thanksgiving. See Hebrews 13:15; where the phrase, ‹fruit of the lips‘ (καρπὸς χειλέων *karpos cheileōn*), is explained to mean praise. Compare Hosea 14:2, where the expression, ‹we will render the calves of the lips,‘ means that they would offer praise. The sense here is, that God bestowed such blessings as made thanksgiving proper, and thus, he ‹created the fruit of the lips.‘

Peace, peace - The great subject of the thanksgiving would be peace. The peace here referred to probably had a primary reference to the cessation of the calamities which would soon overwhelm the Jewish nation, and their restoration again to their own land. But the whole strain of the passage also shows that the prophet had a more general truth in his view, and that he refers to that peace which would diffuse joy among all who were far off, and those who were near. Paul evidently alludes to this passage in Ephesians 2:14-17. Thus understood, the more general reference is to the

peace. which the Messiah would introduce, and which would lay the foundation for universal rejoicing and praise (compare the notes at Isaiah 2:4; Isaiah 9:5).

To him that is far off - Applied by the apostle Paul to the Gentiles, who are represented as having been far off from God, or as aliens or strangers to him Ephesians 2:17.

And to him that is near - That is, to the Jewish people Ephesians 2:17, represented as having been comparatively near to God in the enjoyment of religious privileges.

Verse 20

But the wicked - All who are transgressors of the law and who remain unpardoned. The design of this is to contrast their condition with that of those who should enjoy peace. The proposition is, therefore, of the most general character. All the wicked are like the troubled sea. Whether prosperous or otherwise; rich or poor; bond or free; old or young; whether in Christian, in civilized, or in barbarous lands; whether living in palaces, in caves, or in tents; whether in the splendor of cities, or in the solitude of deserts; All are like the troubled sea.

Are like the troubled sea - The agitated (נגרֹשׁ *nigrâsh*), ever-moving and restless sea. The sea is always in motion, and never entirely calm. Often also it lashes into foam, and heaves with wild commotion.

When it cannot rest - Lowth renders this, ‹For it never can be at rest.‘ The Hebrew is stronger than our translation. It means that there is no possibility of its being at rest; it is unable to be still (יוּכל לא השׁקט כי *kîy hasheqēṭ lo' yûkal*). The Septuagint renders it, ‹But the wicked are tossed like waves (κλυδωνισθήσονται *kludōnisthēsontai*), and are not able to be at rest.‘ The idea, as it seems to me, is not exactly that which seems to be conveyed by our translation, that the wicked are like the sea, occasionally agitated by a storm and driven by wild commotion, but that, like the ocean, there is never any peace, as there is no peace to the restless waters of the mighty deep.

Whose waters - They who have stood on the shores of the ocean and seen the waves - especially in a storm - foam, and roll, and dash on the beach, will be able to appreciate the force of this beautiful figure, and cannot but have a vivid image before them of the unsettled and agitated bosoms of the guilty. The figure which is used here to denote the want of

peace in the bosom of a wicked man, is likewise beautifully employed by Ovid:

Cumque sit hibernis agitatum fluctibus aequor,
Pectora sunt ipso turbidiora mari.
Trist. i. x. 33

The agitation and commotion of the sinner here referred to, relates to such things as the following:

1. There is no permanent happiness or enjoyment. There is no calmness of soul in the contemplation of the divine perfections, and of the glories of the future world. There is no substantial and permanent peace furnished by wealth, business, pleasure; by the pride, pomp, and flattery of the world. All leave the soul unsatisfied, or dissatisfied; all leave is unprotected against the rebukes of conscience, and the fear of hell.

2. Raging passions. The sinner is under their influence. and they may be compared to the wild and tumultuous waves of the ocean. Thus the bosoms of the wicked are agitated with the conflicting passions of pride, envy, malice, lust, ambition, and revenge. These leave no peace in the soul; they make peace impossible. People may learn in some degree to control them by the influence of philosophy; or a pride of character and respect to their reputation may enable them in some degree to restrain them; but they are like the smothered fires of the volcano, or like the momentary calm of the ocean that a gust of wind may soon lash into foam. To restrain them is not to subdue them, for no man can tell how soon he may be excited by anger, or how soon the smothered fires of lus may burn.

3. Conscience. Nothing more resembles an agitated ocean casting up mire and dirt, than a soul agitated by the recollections of past guilt. A deep dark cloud in a tempest overhangs the deep; the lightnings play and the thunder rolls along the sky, and the waves heave with wild commotion. So it is with the bosom of the sinner. Though there may be a temporary suspension of the rebukes of conscience, yet there is no permanent peace. The soul cannot rest; and in some way or other the recollections of guilt will be excited, and the bosom thrown into turbid and wild agitation.

4. The fear of judgment and of hell. Many a sinner has no rest, day or night, from the fear of future wrath. His troubled mind looks onward, and

he sees nothing to anticipate but the wrath of God, and the horrors of an eternal hell. How invaluable then is religion! All these commotions are stilled by the voice of pardoning mercy, as the billows of the deep were hushed by the voice of Jesus. How much do we owe to religion! Had it not been for this, there had been no peace in this world. Every bosom would have been agitated with tumultuous passion; every heart would have quailed with the fear of hell. How diligently should we seek the influence of religion! We all have raging passions to be subdued. We all have consciences that may be troubled with the recollections of past guilt. We are all traveling to the bar of God, and have reason to apprehend the storms of vengeance. We all must soon lie down on beds of death, and in all these scenes there is nothing that can give permanent and solid peace but the religion of the Redeemer. Oh! that stills all the agitation of a troubled soul; lays every billow of tumultuous passion to rest; calms the conflicts of a guilty bosom; reveals God reconciled through a Redeemer to our souls, and removes all the anticipated terrors of a bed of death and of the approach to the judgment bar. Peacefully the Christian can die - not as the troubled sinner, who leaves the world with a bosom agitated like the stormy ocean but as peacefully as the gentle ripple dies away on the beach.

How blest the righteous when they die,
When holy souls retire to rest I
How mildly beams the closing eye,

How gently heaves the expiring breast!

So fades a summer cloud away;

So sinks the gale when storms are o‘er;

So gently shuts the eve of day;

So dies a wave along the shore.
- Barbauld

Verse 21

There is no peace - (see the note at Isaiah 48:22).

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 58

Introduction

The design of this chapter is to reprove the Jews for a vain dependence on the performance of the outward forms of worship. The nation is represented as diligent in the performance of the external rites of their religion, and as expecting to avert the divine judgments by the performance of those rites. They are represented as filled with amazement, that though they were thus diligent and faithful, they had no tokens of the divine approbation, but were left as if forsaken by God. The main scope of the chapter is to state the reasons why their religious services met with no tokens of the divine acceptance, and the blessings which would follow the proper performance of their duties.

It is not certainly known to what period the prophet refers, whether to the Jews in his own time, or to the Jews regarded as in Babylon. Rosenmuller supposes the reference is wholly to the Jews suffering in their captivity, and practicing their religious rites with a view of obtaining the divine favor and a release. He argues this because there is no reference here to sacrifices, but merely to fasting, and the observance of the Sabbath; duties which they could perform even when far away from the temple, and from their own land. But it seems more probable that the reference here to fasting is designed as an instance or specimen of the character of the people, and that this is made so prominent because they abounded so much in it, and were so hypocritical in its observance. It is possible that it was composed at or near the time of some of the public fasts during the reign of Manasseh, and that the fact that the external rites of religion were observed amidst the abominations of that wicked reign roused the indignation of the prophet, and led him to pour forth this severe reproof of the manner in which they approached God.

The chapter comprises the following subjects:

I. A direction to the prophet openly and boldly to reprove the sins of the nation Isaiah 58:1.

II. The fact that the Jewish people were regular and diligent in the observance of the external duties of religion, and that they expected the divine favor on the ground of those observances Isaiah 58:2-3.

III. The prophet states the reason why their excessive and punctual religious duties had not been accepted or followed with the divine favor and blessing.

1. They still continued their heavy exactions on others, and made everything tributary to their own pleasure Isaiah 58:3.

2. They did it for strife and debate; with hoarse contentions and angry passions Isaiah 58:4.

3. It was with an affected and hypocritical seriousness and solemnity, not as a proper expression of a deep sense of sin Isaiah 58:5.

IV. The prophet states the true ways in which the favor of God might be obtained, and the happy results which would follow the proper observance of his commands, and the proper discharge of the duties of religion.

1. The proper mode of fasting, and the happy results Isaiah 58:6-9.

(1) The kind of fasting which God had chosen Isaiah 58:6-7. It was to loose the bands of wickedness, and undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free, and to aid the poor and needy.

(2) The consequence of this Isaiah 58:8-9. Their light would break forth as the morning, and the nation would prosper, and their prayers would be heard.

2. The special duty of removing the yoke of oppression, and of regarding the poor and the oppressed, and the consequences Isaiah 58:9-12.

(1) The duty. God requires the yoke of oppression to he put away, and the oppressed and the poor to be regarded by his people (Isaiah 58:9, last clause, 10).

(2) The consequences which would follow from this Isaiah 58:10-12. Their light would rise in obscurity, and their darkness would be as noonday; Yahweh would be their guide, and the waste places would be repaired, and the desolations cease.

3. The duty of keeping the Sabbath, and the consequences Isaiah 58:13-14.

(1) The duty Isaiah 58:13. They were to cease to do their own pleasure, and to call it holy, and to regard it with delight.

(2) The consequences Isaiah 58:14. They would then find delight in the service of Yahweh; and they would ride upon the high places of the earth, and be abundantly blessed and prospered.

Verse 1

Cry aloud - Margin, ‹With the throat;‘ that is, says Gesenius, with open throat, with full voice coming from the throat and breast; while one who speaks low uses only the lips and tongue 1 Samuel 1:13. The Chaldee here introduces the word prophet, ‹O prophet, cry aloud.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹Cry with strength.‘ (ἐν ἰσχύΐ *en ischui*).

Spare not - That is, do not spare, or restrain the voice. Let it be full, loud, and strong.

Lift up thy voice like a trumpet - Speak loud and distinct, so that the language of reproof may be heard. The sense is, the people are insensible and stupid. They need something to rouse them to a sense of their guilt. Go and proclaim it so that all may hear. Speak not in whispers; speak not to a part, but speak so earnestly that their attention will be arrested, and so that all shall hear (compare the notes at Isaiah 40:9). “And show my people.” This either refers to the Jewish people in the time of the prophet; or to the same people in their exile in Babylon; or to the people of God after the coming of the Messiah. Vitringa supposes that it refers to the nominally Christian Church when it should have sunk into the sins and formalities of the papacy, and that the direction here is to the true ministers of God to proclaim the sins of a corrupt and degenerate church. The main reason assigned by him for this is, that there is no reference here to the temple, to the sacrifices, or to the idolatry which was the prevailing sin in the time of Manasseh. Rosenmuller, for a similar reason, supposes that it refers to the Jews in Babylon. But it has already been remarked (see the analysis to the chapter), that this reason does not appear to be satisfactory.

It is true that there is no reference here to the temple or to sacrifices, and it may be true that the main sin of the nation in the time of Manasseh was idolatry; but it is also true that formality and hypocrisy were prominent sins, and that these deserved reproof. It is true that while they adhered to the public forms of religion, the heart was not in them; and that while they relied on those forms, and were surprised that the divine favor was not manifested to them on account of their observance, there was a good reason why that favor was witcheld, and it was important that that reason should be stated clearly and fully. It is probable, therefore, that the reference here is to the times of the prophet himself, and that the subject of rebuke is the formality, hypocrisy, and prevalent sins of the reign of Manasseh.

Verse 2

Yet they seek me daily - The whole description here is appropriate to the character of formalists and hypocrites; and the idea is, that public worship by sacrifice was celebrated daily in the temple, and was not intermitted. It is not improbable also that they kept up the regular daily service in their dwellings.

And delight to know my ways - Probably this means, they profess to delight to know the ways of God; that is, his commands, truths, and requirements. A hypocrite has no real delight in the service of God, or in his truth, but it is true at the same time that there may be a great deal of professed interest in religion. There may be a great deal of busy and bustling solicitude about the order of religious services; the external organization of the church; the ranks of the clergy; and the claims of a liturgy. There may be much pleasure in theological discussion; in the metaphysics of theology; in the defense of what is deemed orthodoxy. There may be much pleasure in the mere music of devotion. There may be pleasure in the voice of a preacher, and in the power of his arguments. And there may be much pleasure in the advancement of the denomination to which we are attached; the conversion of people not from sin, but from a side opposite to us; and not to holiness and to God, but to our party and denomination. True delight in religion is in religion itself; in the service of God as such, and because it is holy. It is not mere pleasure in creeds, and liturgies, and theological discussions, and in the triumph of our cause, nor even in the triumph of Christianity as a mere party measure; but it is delight in God as he is, in his holy service, and in his truth.

As a nation that did righteousness - As a people would do who really loved the ways of righteousness.

They ask of me the ordinances of justice - Their priests and prophets consult about the laws and institutions of religion, as if they were really afraid of violating the divine commands. At the same time that they are full of oppression, strife, and wickedness, they are scrupulously careful about violating any of the commands pertaining to the rites of religion. The same people were subsequently so conscientious that they did not dare to enter the judgment-hall of Pilate lest they should disqualify themselves from partaking of the Passover, at the same time that they were meditating the death of their own Messiah, and were actually engaged in a plot to secure his crucifixion! John 19:28. It is often the case that hypocrites are most

scrupulous and conscientious about forms just as they are meditating some plan of enormous guilt, and accomplishing some scheme of deep depravity.

They take delight in approaching to God - There is a pleasure which even a hypocrite has in the services of religion, and we should not conclude that because we find pleasure in prayer and praise, that therefore we are truly pious. Our pleasure may arise from a great many other sources than any just views of God or of his truth, or an evidence that we have that we are his friends.

Verse 3

Wherefore have we fasted - They had fasted much, evidently with the expectation of delivering themselves from impending calamities, and securing the divine favor. They are here introduced as saying that they had been disappointed. God had not interposed as they had expected. Chagrined and mortified, they now complain that he had not noticed their very conscientious and faithful regard for the duties of religion.

And thou seest not? - All had been in vain. Calamities still impended; judgments threatened; and there were no tokens of the divine approbation. Hypocrites depend on their fastings and prayers as laying God under obligation to save them. If he does not interpose, they complain and murmur. When fasting is the result of a humble and broken heart, it is acceptable; when it is instituted as a means of purchasing the divine favor, and as laying God under obligation, it can be followed by no happy result to the soul.

Have we afflicted our soul - By fasting. Twenty-one manuscripts (six ancient), says Lowth, have this in the plural number - ‹our souls‘ and so the Septuagint, Chaldee, and the Vulgate. The sense is not materially affected, however. It is evident here that they regarded their numerous fastings as laying the foundation of a claim on the favor of God, and that they were disposed to complain when that claim was not acknowledged. Fasting, like other religious duties, is proper; but in that, as in all other services of religion, there is danger of supposing that we bring God under obligations, and that we are laying the foundation of a claim to his favor.

Thou takest no knowledge - Thou dost not regard our numerous acts of self-denial.

Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure - The prophet here proceeds to state the reasons why their fastings were not succeeded as they supposed they would be, by the divine favor. The first reason which he

states is, that even when they were fasting, they were giving full indulgence to their depraved appetites and lusts. The Syriac has well rendered this, ‹In the day of your fasting you indulge your lusts, and draw near to all your idols.‘ This also was evidently the case with the Jews in the time of the Saviour. They were Characterized repeatedly by him as ‹an evil and adulterous generation,‘ and yet no generation perhaps was ever more punctual and strict in the external duties of fasting and other religious ceremonies.

And exact all your labors - This is the second reason why their fasting was attended with no more happy results. The margin renders this ‹griefs,‘ or things wherewith ye grieve others.‘ Lowth renders it, ‹All your demands of labor ye rigorously exact.‘ Castellio renders it, ‹And all things which are due to you, you exact.‘ The word rendered here ‹labors‘ denotes usually hard and painful labor; toil, travail, etc. The Septuagint renders it here, ‹And goad (ὑπονύσσετε *huponussete*) all those who are under your control‘ (τοὺς ὑποχειρίους ὑμῶν *tous hupocheirious humōn*). The idea seems to be that they were at that time oppressive in exacting all that was due to them; they remitted nothing, they forgave nothing. Alas, how often is this still true! People may be most diligent in the external duties of religion; most abundant in fasting and in prayer, and at the same time most unyielding in demanding all that is due to them. Like Shylock - another Jew like those in the time of Isaiah - they may demand ‹the pound of flesh,‘ at the same time that they may be most formal, punctual, precise, and bigoted in the performance of the external duties of religion. The sentiment taught here is, that if we desire to keep a fast that shall be acceptable to God, it must be such as shall cause us to unbind heavy burdens from the poor, and to lead us to relax the rigor of the claims which would be oppressive on those who are subject to us (see Isaiah 58:6).

Verse 4

Behold, ye fast for strife and debate - This is a third characteristic of their manner of fasting, and a third reason why God did not regard and accept it. They were divided into parties and factions, and probably made their fastings an occasion of augmented contention and strife. How often has this been seen! Contending denominations of Christians fast, not laying aside their strifes; contending factions in the church fast in order to strengthen their party with the solemn sanctions of religion. One of the most certain ways for bigots to excite persecution against those who are opposed

to them is to ‹proclaim a fast;‘ and when together, their passions are easily inflamed, their flagging zeal excited by inflammatory harangues, and their purpose formed to regard and treat their dissentient brethren as incorrigible heretics and irreconcilable foes. It may be added, also, that it is possible thus to prostitute all the sacred institutions of religion for party and inflammatory purposes. Even the ordinance of the Lord‘s Supper may be thus abused, and violent partisans may come around the sacred memorials of a Saviour‘s body and blood, to bind themselves more closely together in some deed of persecution or violence, and to animate their drooping courage with the belief that what has been in fact commenced with a view to power, is carried on from a regard to the honor of God.

And to smite with the fist of wickedness - Lowth renders this, in accordance with the Septuagint. ‹To smite with the fist the poor;‘ but this translation can be obtained only by a most violent and wholly unauthorized change in the Hebrew text. The idea is plain, that ‹even when fasting‘ they were guilty of strife and personal combats. Their passions were unsubdued, and they gave vent to them in disgraceful personal encounters. This manifests a most extraordinary state of society, and is a most melancholy instance to show how much people may keep up the forms of religion, and even be punctual and exact in them, when the most violent and ungovernable passions are raging in their bosoms, and when they seem to be unconscious of any discrepancy between the religious service and the unsubdued passions of the soul.

Ye shall not fast … - It is not acceptable to God. It must be offensive in his sight.

To make your voice to be heard on high - That is, in strife and contention. So to contend and strive, says Grotius, that your voice can be heard on the mountain top. Rosenmuller, however, supposes that it means, that their fast was so conducted that they could not expect that their prayers would ascend to heaven and be heard by God. But it seems to me that the former is the correct interpretation. Their fastings were accompanied with the loud and hoarse voice of contention and strife, and on that account could not be acceptable to God.

Verse 5

Is it such a fast that I have chosen? - Is this such a mode of fasting as I have appointed and as I approve?

A day for a man to afflict his soul? - Margin, ‹To afflict his soul for a day.‘ The reading in the text is the more correct; and the idea is, that the pain and inconvenience experienced by the abstinence from food was not the end in view in fasting. This seems to have been the mistake which they made, that they supposed there was something meritorious in the very pain incurred by such abstinence. Is there not danger of this now? Do we not often feel that there is something meritorious in the very inconveniences which we suffer in our acts of self denial? The important idea in the passage before us is, that the pain and inconvenience which we may endure by the most rigid fasting are not meritorious in the sight of God. They are not that at which he aims by the appointment of fasting. He aims at justice, truth, benevolence, holiness Isaiah 58:6-7; and he esteems the act of fasting to be of value only as it will be the means of leading us to reflect on our faults, and to amend our lives.

Is it to bow down his head - A bulrush is the large reed that grows in marshy places. It is, says Johnson, without knots or joints. In the midst of water it grows luxuriantly, yet the stalk is not solid or compact like wood, and, being unsupported by joints, it easily bends over under its own weight. it thus becomes the emblem of a man bowed down with grief. Here it refers to the sanctimoniousness of a hypocrite when fasting - a man without real feeling who puts on an air of affected solemnity, and ‹appears to others to fast.‘ Against that the Saviour warned his disciples, and directed them, when they fasted, to do it in their ordinary dress, and to maintain an aspect of cheerfulness Matthew 6:17-18. The hypocrites in the time of Isaiah seemed to have supposed that the object was gained if they assumed this affected seriousness. How much danger is there of this now! How often do even Christians assume, on all the more solemn occasions of religious observance, a forced sanctimoniousness of manner; a demure and dejected air; nay, an appearance of melancholy - which is often understood by the worm to be misanthropy, and which easily slides into misanthropy! Against this we should guard. Nothing more injures the cause of religion than sanctimoniousness, gloom, reserve, coldness, and the conduct and deportment which, whether right or wrong, will be construed by those around us as misanthropy. Be it not forgotten that the seriousness which religion produces is always consistent with cheerfulness, and is always accompanied by benevolence; and the moment we feel that our religious

acts consist in merely bowing down the head like a bulrush, that moment we may be sure we shall do injury to all with whom we come in contact.

And to spread sackcloth and ashes under him - On the meaning of the word ‹sackcloth,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 3:24. It was commonly worn around the loins in times of fasting and of any public or private calamity. It was also customary to sit on sackcloth, or to spread it under one either to lie on, or to kneel on in times of prayer, as an expression of humiliation. Thus in Esther 4:3, it is said. ‹and many lay on sackcloth and ashes:‘ or, as it is in the margin, ‹sackcloth and ashes were laid under many;‘ (compare 1 Kings 21:27). A passage in Josephus strongly confirms this, in which he describes the deep concern of the Jews for the danger of Herod Agrippa, after having been stricken suddenly with a violent disorder in the theater of Caesarea. ‹Upon the news of his danger, immediately the multitude, with their wives and children, “sitting upon sackcloth according to their country rites,” prayed for the king; all places were filled with wailing and lamentation; while the king, who lay in an upper room, beholding the people below thus falling prostrate on the ground, could not himself refrain from tears‘ (Antiq. xix. 8. 2). We wear crape - but for a somewhat different object. With us it is a mere sign of grief; but the wearing of sackcloth or sitting on it was not a mere sign of grief, but was regarded as tending to produce humiliation and mortification. Ashes also were a symbol of grief and sorrow. The wearing of sackcloth was usually accompanied with ashes Daniel 9:3; Esther 4:1, Esther 4:3. Penitents, or those in affliction, either sat down on the ground in dust and ashes Job 2:8; Job 42:6; Jonah 3:6; or they put ashes on their head 2 Samuel 13:19; Lamentations 3:16; or they mingled ashes with their food Psalm 102:9. The Greeks and the Romans had also the same custom of strewing themselves with ashes in mourning. Thus Homer (Iliad, xviii. 22), speaking of Achilles bewailing the death of Patroclus, says:

Cast on the ground, with furious hands he spread
The scorching ashes o‘er his graceful head,
His purple garments, and his golden hairs;
Those he deforms, and these he tears.

Laertes (Odys. xxiv. 315), shows his grief in the same manner:

Deep from his soul he sighed, and sorrowing spread
A cloud of ashes on his hoary head.

So Virgil (AEn. x. 844), speaking of the father of Lausus, who was brought to him wounded, says:

Canitiem immundo deformat pulvere.

Wilt thou call this a fast? - Wilt thou suppose that these observances can be such as God will approve and bless? The truth here taught is, that no mere outward expressions of penitence can be acceptable to God.

Verse 6

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? - Fasting is right and proper; but that which God approves will prompt to, and will be followed by, deeds of justice, kindness, charity. The prophet proceeds to specify very particularly what God required, and when the observance of seasons of fasting would be acceptable to him.

To loose the bands of wickedness - This is the first thing to be done in order that their fasting might be acceptable to the Lord. The idea is, that they were to dissolve every tie which unjustly bound their fellowmen. The Chaldee renders it, ‹Separate the congregation of impiety;‘ but the more probable sense is, that if they were exercising any unjust and cruel authority over others; if they had bound them in any way contrary to the laws of God and the interests of justice, they were to release them. This might refer to their compelling others to servitude more rigidly than the law of Moses allowed; or to holding them to contracts which had been fraudulently made; or to their exacting strict payment from persons wholly incapacitated to meet their obligations; or it might refer to their subjecting others to more rigid service than was allowed by the laws of Moses, but it would not require a very ardent imagination for anyone to see, that if he held slaves at all, that this came fairly under the description of the prophet. A man with a tender conscience who held slaves would have been likely to suppose that this part of the injunction applied to himself.

To undo the heavy burdens - Margin, ‹Bundles of the yoke.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹Dissolve the obligations of onerous contracts.‘ The Chaldee, ‹Loose the obligations of the writings of unjust judgment.‘ The Hebrew means, ‹Loose the bands of the yoke,‘ a figure taken from the yoke which was borne by oxen, and which seems to have been attached to the neck by cords or bands (see Fragments to Taylor‘s Calmer. No. xxviii.) The yoke, in the Scripture, is usually regarded as an emblem of oppression, or compulsory toil, and is undoubtedy so used here. The same word is used to denote ‹burden‘ (מוטה *môṭâh*), which in the subsequent member is rendered ‹yoke,‘ and the word which is rendered ‹undo (התר *hatîr* from נתי *nātar*), is elsewhere employed to denote emancipation from servitude. The phrase

here employed would properly denote the release of captives or slaves, and would doubtless be so understood by those whom the prophet addressed. Thus, in Psalm 105:17-20:

He sent a man before them, even Joseph,
Who was sold for a servant;
Whose feet they hurt with fetters;

He was laid in iron:

Until the time when his word came,

The word of the Lord tried him.

The king sent and loosed him (ויתירהו *vaytîyrēhû*),
Even the ruler of the people, and let him go free.

And let the oppressed go free - Margin, ‹Broken.‘ The Hebrew word רצוצים *retsûtsîym* is from the word רצץ *rātsats* meaning "to break, to break down" (see the notes at Isaiah 42:3); to treat with violence, to oppress. It may be applied to those who are treated with violence in any way, or who are broken down by bard usage. It may refer, therefore, to slaves who are oppressed by bondage and toil; or to inferiors of any kind who are subjected to hard usage by those who are above them; or to the subjects of a tyrant groaning under his yoke. The use of the phrase here, ‹go free,‘ however, seems to limit its application in this place to those who were held in bondage. Jerome renders it, ‹Free those who are broken‘ (confracti). The Septuagint Τεθρασμένος *Tethrasmenos* - ‹Set at liberty those who are broken down.‘ If slavery existed at the time here referred to, this word would be appropriately understood as including that - at least would be so understood by the slaves themselves - for if any institution deserves to be called oppression, it is theft of slavery.

This interpretation would be confirmed by the use of the word rendered free. That word (חפשים *chophshîym*) evidently refers to the act of freeing a slave. The person who had once been a slave, and who had afterward obtained his freedom, was denominated חפשי *chophshîy* (see Jahn, Bib. Ant. Section 171). This word occurs, and is so used, in the following places; Exodus 21:12, ‹And the seventh (year) he shall go free;‘ Exodus 21:5, ‹I will not go out free;‘ Exodus 26:27, ‹He shall let him go free;‘

Deuteronomy 15:12, ‹Thou shalt let him go free;‘ Deuteronomy 15:13, ‹When thou sendest him out free‘ Deuteronomy 15:18, ‹When thou sendest him away free;‘ Job 3:19, ‹The servant is free from his master;‘ that is, in the grave, where there is universal emancipation. Compare Jeremiah 34:9-11, Jeremiah 34:14, Jeremiah 34:16 where the same Hebrew word is used, and is applied expressly to the emancipation of slaves. The word is used in other places in the Bible except the following: 1 Samuel 17:25, ‹And make his father‘s house free in Israel,‘ referring to the favor which was promised to the one who would slay Goliath of Gath. Job 39:5: ‹Who hath sent out the wild donkey free?‘ Psalm 88:5: ‹Free among the dead.‘ The usage, therefore, is settled that the word properly refers to deliverance from servitude. It would be naturally understood by a Hebrew as referring to that, and unless there was something in the connection which made it necessary to adopt a different interpretation, a Hebrew would so understand it of course. In the case before us, such an interpretation would be obvious, and it is difficult to see how a Jew could understand this direction in any other way, if he was an owner. of slaves, than that be should set them at once at liberty.

And that ye break every yoke - A yoke, in the Scriptures, is a symbol of oppression, and the idea here is, that they were to cease all oppressions, and to restore all to their lust and equal rights. The prophet demanded, in order that there might be an acceptable ‹fast,‘ that everything which could properly be described as a ‹yoke‘ should be broken. How could this command be complied with by a Hebrew if he continued to retain his fellow-men in bondage? Would not its fair application be to lead him to emancipate those who were held as slaves? Could it be true, whatever else he might do, that he would fully comply with this injunction, unless this were done? If now this whole injunction were fairly complied with in his land, who can doubt that it would lead to the emancipation of the slaves? The language is such that it cannot well be misunderstood. The prophet undoubtedly specifies those things which properly denote slavery, and demands that they should all be abandoned in order to an acceptable ‹fast to the Lord,‘ and the fair application of this injunction would soon extinguish slavery throughout the world.

Verse 7

Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry? - The word renderd ‹deal‘ (פרס *pâras*), means to divide, to distribute. The idea is, that we are to

apportion among the poor that which will be needful for their support, as a father does to his children. This is everywhere enjoined in the Bible, and was especially regarded among the Orientals as an indispensable duty of religion. Thus Job Job 31:16-22 beautifully speaks of his own practice:

If I have witheld the poor from his desire,
Or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail;
Or have eaten my morsel myself alone,

And the fatherless hath not eaten thereof;

If I have seen any perish for want of clothing,

Or any poor without covering; - …

Then let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade,
And mine arm be broken from the bone.

And that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house - Margin, ‹Afflicted‘ Hospitality to all, and especially to the friendless and the stranger, was one of the cardinal virtues in the Oriental code of morals. Lowth renders this, ‹The wandering poor.‘

When thou seest the naked … - This duty is also plain, and is everywhere enjoined in the Bible (compare Matthew 25:38).

And that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh - That is, from thine own kindred or relations who are dependent on thee. Compare Genesis 29:14; Genesis 37:27; where the word ‹flesh‘ is used to denote near relations - relations as intimate and dear as if they were a part of our flesh and blood Genesis 2:23. To hide oneself from them may denote either, first, to be ashamed of them on account of their poverty or humble rank in life; or, secondly, to witchold from them the just supply of their needs. Religion requires us to treat all our kindred, whatever may be their rank, with kindness and affection, and enjoins on us the duty of providing for the needs of those poor relatives who in the providence of God are made dependent on us.

Verse 8

Then shall thy light - (See the notes at Isaiah 44:7). The idea here is, that if they were faithful in the discharge of their duty to God, he would bless them with abundant prosperity (compare Job 11:17). The image is,

that such prosperity would come on the people like the spreading light of the morning.

And thine health - Lowth and Noyes render this, ‹And thy wounds shall be speedily healed over.‘ The authority on which Lowth relies, is the version of Aquila as reported by Jerome, and the Chaldee. The Hebrew word used here, (ארוכה *'ărûkâh*), means properly “a long bandage” (from ארך *'ârak* “to make long”), such as is applied by surgeons to heal a wound (compare the notes at Isaiah 1:6). It is then used to denote the healing which is secured by the application of the bandage; and figuratively here means their restoration from all the calamities which had been inflicted on the nation. The word rendered ‹spring forth‘ (from צמח *tsâmach*) properly relates to the manner in which plants germinate (compare the notes at Isaiah 42:9). Here the sense is, that if they would return to God, they would be delivered from the calamities which their crimes had brought on them, and that peace and prosperity would again visit the nation.

And thy righteousness shall go before thee - Shall be thy leader - as an army is conducted. The idea is that their conformity to the divine laws would serve the purpose of a leader to conduct them in the ways of peace, happiness, and prosperity.

The glory of the Lord - The allusion here is doubtless to the mode in which the children of Israel came out of Egypt (see the notes at Isaiah 6:5).

Shall be thy rere-ward - Margin, ‹Shall gather thee up.‘ That is, shall bring up the rear (see the notes at Isaiah 52:12).

Verse 9

Then shalt thou call - The sense is, that if we go before God renouncing all our sins, and desirous of doing our duty, then we have a right to expect that he will hear us. But if we go indulging still in sin; if we are false and hollow and hypocritical in our worship; or if, while we keep up the regular forms of devotion, we are nevertheless guilty of oppression, cruelty, and dishonesty, we have no right to expect that he will hear us (see the notes at Isaiah 1:15).

If thou take away … the yoke - (See the notes at Isaiah 58:6).

The putting forth of the finger - That is, if you cease to contemn and despise others; if you cease to point at them the finger of scorn. It was usual to make use of the middle finger on such occasions. Thus Martial, ii. 28,2:

Rideto multum -

- *et digitum porrigito medium*.

So Juvenal, Sat. x. 52:

- *mediumque ostenderet unguem*.

And speaking vanity - Lowth and Noyes render it thus, ‹The injurious speech.‘ Kimchi understands it of words of contention and strife. The word used here (און *'âven*) denotes either nothingness, vanity, a vain and empty thing Isaiah 41:29; Zechariah 10:2; or falsehood, deceit Psalm 36:4; Proverbs 17:4; or unworthiness, wickedness, iniquity Job 36:21; Isaiah 1:13; here it means, probably, every kind of false, harsh, and unjust speaking - all of which probably I abounded among the Jews. The Septuagint renders it, Ῥῆμα γογγυσμοῦ *Rēma gongusmou* - ‹The word of murmuring.‘

Verse 10

And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry - Lowth, on the authority of eight manuscripts, renders this, ‹If thou bring forth thy bread to the hungry.‘ So the Syriac and Noyes. But the authority is not sufficient to justify the change in the text, nor is it necessary. The word ‹soul‘ here is synonymous with heart, or benevolent affection; and the idea is, if they expressed benevolent affection or kindness toward those in want.

Then shall thy light rise in obscurity - That is, it will be as if the cheerful light of the sun should rise amidst the shades of midnight. The sense is, that their calamities and trials would be suddenly succeeded by the bright and cheerful light of prosperity.

Verse 11

And the Lord shall guide thee continually - Yahweh will go before you and will lead you always.

And satisfy thy soul in drought - (See the notes at Isaiah 41:17-18). The word rendered ‹drought‘ (Margin, ‹droughts;‘ Hebrew, צחצחות *tsachetsâchôth*) means “dry places” - places exposed to the intense heat of a burning sun and parched up for the want of moisture. The idea is, that God would provide for them as if in such places copious rains were to fall, or refreshing fountains to burst forth.

And make fat thy bones - Lowth, ‹Shall renew thy strength.‘ Noyes, ‹Strengthen thy bones.‘ Jerome renders it, ‹Shall liberate thy bones.‘ The Septuagint ‹Thy bones shall be made fat.‘ The idea is undoubtedly that of vigorous prosperity, and of strength. Job Job 21:24 expresses a similar idea of a strong man dying:

‹His watering places for flocks abound with milk,

And his bones are moist with marrow.‘

For the propriety of this translation, which differs from the common version, see my notes on Job, *in loc*. The word used here (חלץ *châlats*), however, does not often, if ever, denote to make fat. It rather means to be manful, active, brave, ready for war; and the idea here is, probably, derived from the preparation which is made for the active services of war, rather than that of being made fat.

And thou shalt be like a watered garden - Syriac, ‹Like paradise.‘ This is a most beautiful image to denote continued prosperity and blessedness - an image that would be particularly striking in the East. The ideas of happiness in the Oriental world consisted much in pleasant gardens, running streams, and ever-flowing fountains, and nothing can more beautifully express the blessedness of the continued favor of the Almighty. The following extract from Campbell (African Light), may illustrate this passage: ‹In a hot climate, where showers seldom fall, except in what is called the rainy season, the difference between a well and ill watered garden is most striking. I remember some gardens in Africa, where they could lead no water upon them, the plants were all stinted, sickly, or others completely gone, only the hole left where the faded plant had been. The sight was unpleasant, and caused gloom to appear in every countenance; they were pictures of desolation. But in other gardens, to which the owners could bring daily supplies of water from an overflowing fountain, causing it to traverse the garden, every plant had a green, healthy appearance, loaded with fruit, in different stages toward maturity, with fragrant scent proceeding from beds of lovely flowers; and all this produced by the virtue God hath put into the single article of water.‘

Whose waters fail not - Margin, ‹Lie,‘ or ‹Deceive.‘ Hebrew, כזב *kâzab* - ‹Lie.‘ Waters or springs lie or deceive when they become dried up, or fail in the dry seasons of the year. They deceive the shepherd who expected to obtain water there for himself or his flock; they deceive the caravan which had traveled to the well-known fountain where it had been often refreshed, and where, it is now found, its waters are dried up, or lost in the sand. Hence, such a brook or fountain becomes an emblem of a false and deceitful friend Job 6:15:

My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook,
As the stream of brooks they pass away.

But in the supplies which God makes for his people there is no such deception. The fountains of pardon, peace, and joy are ever open and ever full. The streams of salvation are always flowing. The weary pilgrim may go there at any season of the year, and from any part of a desolate world, and find them always full, refreshing, and free. However far may be the pilgrimage to them from amidst the waste and burning climes of sin, however many come to slake their thirst, and however frequently they come, they find them always the same. They never fail; and they will continue to flow on to the end of time.

Verse 12

And they that shall be of thee - They that spring from thee; or thy people.

Shall build the old waste places - Shall repair the old ruins, and restore the desolate cities and fields to their former beauty. This language is taken from the condition of Judea during the long captivity at Babylon. The land would have been desolated by the Chaldeans, and lain waste for a period of seventy years. Of course all the remains of their former prosperity would have gone to decay, and the whole country would be filled with ruins. But all this, says the prophet, would be restored if they were obedient to God. and would keep his law. Their descendants would be so numerous that the land would be entirely occupied and cultivated again, and cities and towns would rise with their former beauty and magnificence.

Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations - That is, the foundations which had endured for generations. The word ‹foundations‘ here (מוסד *môsâd*), means properly the foundation of a building, that is, on which a building rests. Here it means the foundation when that alone remains; and is equivalent to ruins. The Hebrew phrase translated ‹of many generational‘ (דור־ודור *dôr -vâdôr* generation and generation), is equivalent to one generation after another, and is the usual form of the superlative degree. The exact amount of time is not designated; but the phrase is equivalent to a long time - while one generation passes away after another. Vitringa applies this to the gospel, and supposes that it means that the church, after long decay and desolation, would rise to its former beauty and glory. The promise is indeed general; and though the language is taken from the recovery of Palestine from its ruins after the captivity, yet there can be no objection to applying it in a more general sense, as teaching that the people of God, if they are faithful in keeping his commandments, and in

manifesting the spirit which becomes the church, will repair the ruins which sin has made in the world, and rebuild the wastes and the desolations of many ages.

Sin has spread its desolations far and wide. Scarce the foundations of righteousness remain in the earth. Where they do remain, they are often covered over with ruined fragments, and are surrounded by frightful wastes. The world is full of the ruins which sin has caused; and there could be no more striking illustration of the effects of sin on all that is good, than the ruins of Judea during the seventy years of exile, or than those of Palmyra, of Baalbec, of Tyre, of Ephesus, and of Persepolis, at present. It is for the church of God to rebuild these wastes, and to cause the beauties of cultivated fields, and the glories of cities rebuilt, to revisit the desolate earth; in other words, to extend the blessings of that religion which will yet clothe the earth with moral loveliness, as though sin had not spread its gloomy and revolting monuments over the world.

And thou shalt be called - The name which shall appropriately designate what you will do.

The repairer of the breach - Lowth, ‹The repairer of the broken mound.‘ The phrase properly means, ‹the fortifier of the breach;‘ i. e:, the one who shall build up the breach that is made in a wall of a city, either by the lapse of time, or by a siege.

The restorer of paths to dwell in - Lowth and Noves render this, ‹The restorer of paths to be frequented by inhabitants.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹And thou shalt cause thy paths to rest in the midst of thee;‘ and Jerome. Avertens semitas in quietem - ‹Turning the paths into rest,‘ which the Jewish exposition explains to mean, ‹Thou shalt build walls so high that no enemy can enter them.‘ So Grotius renders it, ‹Turning thy paths to rest;‘ that is, thou shalt leave no way of access to robbers. The Chaldee renders it, ‹Converting the wicked to the law.‘ The common English version has probably expressed correctly the sense. The idea is, that they would repair the public highways which had long lain desolate, by which access was had to their dwelling-places. It does not mean, however, that the paths or ways were to be places in which to dwell, but that the ways which led to their dwelling-places were to be restored, or repaired. These roads, of course, in the long desolations would be ruined. Thorns, and brambles, and trees would have grown upon them; and having been long neglected, they would be impassable. But the advantages of a free contact from one dwelling and

one city to another, and throughout the land, would be again enjoyed. Spiritually applied, it means the same as the previous expression, that the church of God would remove the ruins which sin has caused, and diffuse comfort and happiness around the world. The obstructed and overrun paths to a quiet and peaceable dwelling on earth would be cleared away, and the blessings of‘ the true religion would be like giving free and easy access from one tranquil and prosperous dwelling-place to another.

Verse 13

If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath - The evident meaning of this is, that they were sacredly to observe the Sabbath, and not to violate or pollute it (see the notes at Isaiah 56:2). The idea, says Grotius, is, that they were not to travel on the Sabbath day on ordinary journeys. The ‹foot‘ is spoken of as the instrument of motion and travel. ‹Ponder the paths of thy feet‘ Proverbs 4:26; that is, observe attentively thy goings. ‹Remove thy foot from evil‘ Proverbs 4:27; that is, abstain from evil, do not go to execute evil. So here, to restrain the foot from the Sabbath, is not to have the foot employed on the Sabbath; not to be engaged in traveling, or in the ordinary active employments of life, either for business or pleasure.

From doing thy pleasure on my holy day - Two things may here be observed:

1. God claims the day as his, and as holy on that account. While all time is his, and while he requires all time to be profitably and usefully employed, he calls the Sabbath especially his own - a day which is to be observed with reference to himself, and which is to be regarded as belonging to him. To take the hours of that day, therefore, for our pleasure, or for work which is not necessary or merciful, is to rob God of that which he claims as his own.

2. We are not to do our own pleasure on that day. That is, we are not to pursue our ordinary plans of amusement; we are not to devote it to feasting, to riot, or to revelry. It is true that they who love the Sabbath as they should will find ‹pleasure‘ in observing it, for they have happiness in the service of God. But the idea is, here, that we are to do the things which God requires, and to consult his will in the observance. It is remarkable that the thing here adverted to, is the very way in which the Sabbath is commonly violated. It is not extensively a day of business, for the propriety of a periodical cessation from toil is so obvious, that people will have such days recurring at moderate intervals. But it is a day of pastime and amusement; a day not

merely of relaxation from toil, but also of relaxation from the restraints of temperance and virtue. And while the Sabbath is God‘s great ordinance for perpetuating religion and virtue, it is also, by perversion, made Satan‘s great ordinance for perpetuating intemperance, dissipation, and sensuality.

And call the Sabbath a delight - This appropriately expresses the feelings of all who have any just views of the Sabbath. To them it is not wearisome, nor are its hours heavy. They love the day of sweet and holy rest. They esteem it a privilege, not a task, to be permitted once a week to disburden their minds of the cares, and toils, and anxieties of life. It is a ‹delight‘ to them to recall the memory of the institution of the Sabbath, when God rested from his labors; to recall the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, to the memory of which the Christian Sabbath is consecrated; to be permitted to devote a whole day to prayer and praise, to the public and private worship of God, to services that expand the intellect and purify the heart. To the father of a family it is the source of unspeakable delight that he may conduct his children to the house of God, and that he may instruct them in the ways of religion. To the Christian man of business, the farmer, and the professional man, it is a pleasure that he may suspend his cares, and may uninterruptedly think of God and of heaven. To all who have any just feeling, the Sabbath is a ‹delight;‘ and for them to be compelled to forego its sacred rest would be an unspeakable calamity.

The holy of the Lord, honorable - This more properly means, ‹and call the holy of Yahweh honorable.‘ That is, it does not mean that they who observed the Sabbath would call it ‹holy to Yahweh and honorable;‘ but it means that the Sabbath was, in fact, ‹the holy of Yahweh,‘ and that they would regard it as ‹honorable.‘ A slight inspection of the Hebrew will show that this is the sense. They who keep the Sabbath aright will esteem it a day “to be honored” (מכבד *mekubâd*).

And shalt honor him - Or rather, shalt honor it; to wit, the Sabbath. The Hebrew will bear either construction, but the connection seems to require us to understand it of the Sabbath rather than of the Lord.

Not doing thine own ways - This is evidently explanatory of the phrase in the beginning of the verse. ‹if thou turn away thy foot.‘ So the Septuagint understands it: Οὐκ άρεῖς τὸς πόδα σου ἐπ᾽ ἔργῳ *Ouk areis ton poda sou ep' ergō* - ‹And will not lift up thy foot to any work.‘ They were not to engage in secular labor, or in the execution of their own plans, but were to regard the day as belonging to God, and to be employed in his service alone.

Nor finding thine own pleasure - The Chaldee renders this, ‹And shalt not provide on that day those things which are necessary for thee.‘

Nor speaking thine own words - Lowth and Noyes render this, ‹From speaking vain words.‘ The Septuagint, ‹Nor utter a word in anger from thy mouth.‘ The Chaldee renders it, ‹Words of violence.‘ It is necessary to add some epithet to make out the sense, as the Hebrew is literally, ‹and to speak a word.‘ Probably our common translation has expressed the true sense, as in the previous members of the verse the phrase ‹thine own‘ thrice occurs. And according to this, the sense is, that on the Sabbath our conversation is to be such as becomes a day which belongs to God. It is not less important that our conversation should be right on the Sabbath than it is that our conduct should be.

Verse 14

Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord - That is, as a consequence of properly observing the Sabbath, thou shalt find pleasure in Yahweh. It will be a pleasure to draw near to him, and you shall no longer be left to barren ordinances and to unanswered prayers. The delight or pleasure which God‘s people have in him is a direct and necessary consequence of the proper observance of the Sabbath. It is on that day set apart by his own authority, for his own service, that he chooses to meet with his people, and to commune with them and bless them; and no one ever properly observed the Sabbath who did not find, as a consequence, that he had augmented pleasure in the existence, the character, and the service of Yahweh. Compare Job 22:21-26, where the principle stated here - that the observance of the law of God will lead to happiness in the Almighty - is beautifully illustrated (see also Psalm 37:4).

And I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth - A phrase like this occurs in Deuteronomy 32:13: ‹He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of fields.‘ In Habakkuk 3:19, the phrase also occurs: ‹He will make my feet like hinds‘ feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.‘ So also Psalm 18:33: ‹He maketh my feet like hinds‘ feet, and setteth me upon my high places.‘ In Amos 4:13, it is applied to God: ‹He maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth.‘ Kimchi, Calvin, and Grotius suppose that the idea here is, that God would restore the exiled Jews to their own land - a land of mountains and elevated places, more lofty than the surrounding regions. Vitringa says that the phrase is taken from a

conqueror, who on his horse or in his chariot, occupies mountains, hills, towers, and monuments, and subjects them to himself. Rosenmuller supposes it means, ‹I will place you in lofty and inaccessible places, where you will be safe from all your enemies.‘ Gesenius also supposes that the word ‹high places‘ here means fastnesses or strongholds, and that to walk over those strongholds, or to ride over them, is equivalent to possessing them, and that he who has possession of the fastnesses has possession of the whole country (see his Lexicon on the word במה *bâmâh* No. 2). I give these views of the most distinguished commentators on the passage, not being able to determine satisfactorily to myself what is the true signification. Neither of the above expositions seems to me to be entirely free from difficulty. The general idea of prosperity and security is undoubtedly the main thing intended; but what is the specific sense couched under the phrase ‹to ride on the high places of the earth,‘ does not seem to me to be sufficiently explained.

And feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father - That is, thou shalt possess the land promised to Jacob as an inheritance.

For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it - This formula often occurs when an important promise is made, and it is regarded as ample security for the fulfillment that Yahweh has promised it. What more ample security can be required, or conceived, than the promise of the eternal God?

Remarks on Isaiah 58:1-14

I. From Isaiah 58:1-6, and the exposition given of these verses, particularly Isaiah 58:6, we may make the following remarks respecting slavery.

1. That the prophets felt themselves at entire liberty to animadvert on slavery as an evil. They did not feel themselves restrained from doing it by the fact that slavery was sustained by law, or by the plea that it was a civil institution, and that the ministers of religion had nothing to do with it. The holy men who were sent by God as his ambassadors, did not suppose that, in lifting up the voice against this institution, they were doing anything contrary to what fairly came within their notice as religious teachers, nor did they regard it as, in such a sense, a civil institution that they were not to advert to it.

It is often said in our country that slavery is a civil institution; that it pertains solely to political affairs; that the constitution and the laws suppose

its existence, and make provision for its perpetuity; that it is not appropriate for the ministers of religion, and for ecclesiastical bodies to intermeddle with it. This plea, however, might have been urged with much more force among the Hebrews. Their constitution was, what ours is not, of divine appointment, and it would have been easy for a friend of slavery to say that the prophets were interfering with what was sanctioned by the laws, and with the arrangements which were made for its perpetuity in the commonwealth. Why would not such an argument have as much weight then as it should be allowed to have now?

2. The prophet Isaiah felt himself at entire liberty to exhort the people to restore their slaves to freedom. He considered that slavery was as proper a subject for him to discuss as any other. He treated it as entirely within his province, and did not hesitate at all to express his views on it as an evil, and to demand that the evil should cease, in order to an acceptable worship of God.

3. He does not speak of it as a good and desirable institution, or as contributing to the welfare of the community. It is, in his view, a hard and oppressive system; a system which should be abandoned if people would render acceptable service to God. There is no apology made for it; no pleading for it as a desirable system; no attempt made to show that it is in accordance with the laws of the land and with the laws of God. It would not be difficult to imagine what would be the emotions of Isaiah if, after he had written this 58th chapter of his prophecies, it should be represented that he was the friend of slavery, or if he were to read some of the vindications of the systems published in this Christian land by ministers of the gospel, and by ecclesiastical bodies, or should hear the sentiments uttered in debate in Synods, Assemblies, Conferences, and Conventions.

4. It may be inferred from the exposition given, that Isaiah did not suppose that slavery was in accordance with the spirit of the Mosaic institutions, or that those institutions were designed to perpetuate it. His treatment of it is just such as would be natural on the supposition that the Mosaic institutions were so made that, while it was for a while tolerated - just as polygamy and divorce were - yet that it was the tendency and design of the Mosaic system ultimately to remove the evil entirely, and to make the

Hebrews throughout a free people, and that it was therefore proper for him, as a prophet, to enjoin on them the duty of letting all the oppressed go free. It may be added, that if this was proper in the time of Isaiah, it cannot be less proper under the light of the gospel and in the nineteenth century.

II. From the closing portion of this chapter Isaiah 58:13-14, we may derive the following important inferences respecting the Sabbath:

1. It is to be of perpetual obligation. The whole chapter occurs in the midst of statements that relate to the times of the Messiah. There is no intimation that the Sabbath was to be abolished, but it is fairly implied that its observance was to be attended with most happy results in those future times. At all events, Isaiah regarded it as of binding obligation, and felt that its proper observance was identified with the national welfare.

2. We may see the manner in which the Sabbath is to be observed. In no place in the Bible is there a more full account of the proper mode of keeping that holy day. We are to refrain from ordinary traveling and employments; we are not to engage in doing our own pleasure; we are to regard it with delight, and to esteem it a day worthy to be honored; and we are to show respect to it by not performing our own ordinary works, or pursuing pleasures, or engaging in the common topics of conversation. In this description there occurs nothing of unique Jewish ceremony, and nothing which indicates that it is not to be observed in this manner at all times. Under the gospel, assuredly, it is as proper to celebrate the Sabbath in this way, as it was in the times of Isaiah, and God doubtless intended that it should be perpetually observed in this manner.

3. Important benefits result from the right observance of the Sabbath. In the passage before us, these are said to be, that they who thus observed it would find pleasure in Yahweh, and would be signally prospered and be safe. But those benefits are by no means confined to the Jewish people. It is as true now as it was then, that they who observe the Sabbath in a proper manner find happiness in the Lord - in his existence, perfections, promises, law, and in communion with him - which is to be found nowhere else. Of this fact there are abundant witnesses now in every Christian church, and they will continue to be multiplied in every coming age. And it is as true

that the proper observance of the Sabbath contributes to the prosperity and safety of a nation now, as it ever did among the Jewish people. It is not merely from the fact that God promises to bless the people who keep his holy day; though this is of more value to a nation than all its armies and fleets; but it is, that there is in the institution itself much that tends to the welfare and prosperity of a country.

It is a time when worldliness is broken in upon by a periodical season of rest, and when the thoughts are left free to contemplate higher and purer objects. It is a time when more instruction is imparted on moral and religious subjects, than on all the other days of the week put together. The public worship of God tends to enlarge the intellect, and purify the heart. No institution has ever been originated that has contributed so much to elevate the common mind; to diffuse order, peace, neatness, decency among people, and thus to perpetuate and extend all that is valuable in society, as the Sabbath. Anyone may be convinced of this, who will be at the pains to compare a neighborhood, a village, or a city where the Sabbath is not observed with one where it is; and the difference will convince him at once, that society owes more to the Sabbath than to any single institution besides, and that in no way possible can one-seventh portion of the time be so well employed as in the manner contemplated by the Christian day of rest.

4. Society will have seasons of cessation from labor, and when they are not made occasions for the promotion of virtue, they will be for the promotion of vice. Thus among the Romans an annual Saturnalia was granted to all, as a season of relaxation from toil, and even from the restraints of morality, besides many other days of periodical rest from labor. Extensively among pagan nations also, the seventh day of the week, or a seventh portion of the time, has been devoted to such relaxation. Thus, Hesiod says, Ἑβδομον ἱερον ἡμαρ *Hebdomon hieron hēmera* - The seventh day ‹is holy.‘ Homer and Callimachus give it the same title. Philo says of the seventh any. Ἑόρτη γὰρ ου᾽ μιας πολέως η χώρας ἐστὶν ἀλλὰ τοῦ πακτὸς *Heortē gar ou mias poleōs ē chōras estin alla tou pantos* - ‹It is a feast, not of one city or one country only, but of all.‘ Josephus (Contra Apion. ii.), says, ‹There is no city, however barbarous, where the custom of observing the seventh day which prevails among the Jews is not also observed.‘ Theophilus of Antioch (ii.), says, ‹Concerning the seventh day,

which all people celebrate.‘ Eusebius says, ‹Almost all the philosophers and poets acknowledge the seventh day as holy.‘ See Grotius, De Veritate, i.

It is evident that this custom did not originate by chance, nor was it kept up by chance. It must have been originated by far-spreading tradition, and must have been observed either because the day was esteemed to be holy, or because it was found to be convenient or advantageous to observe such a periodical season of rest. In accordance with this feeling, even the French nation during the Revolution, while they abolished the Christain Sabbath, felt so deeply the necessity of a periodical rest from labor, that they appointed the decade - or one day in ten, to be observed as a day of relaxation and amusement. Whatever, therefore, may have been the origin of the Sabbath, and whatever may be the views which may be entertained of its sacredness, it is now reduced to a moral certainty that people will have a periodical season of cessation from labor. The only question is, In what way shall it be observed? Shall it be devoted to amusement, pleasure, and vice; or shall it be employed in the ways of intelligence, virtue, and religion? It is evident that such a periodical relaxation may be made the occasion of immense good to any community; and it is not less evident that it may be the occasion of extending far the evils of intemperance, profaneness, licentiousness, and crime. It is vain to attempt to blot out wholly the observance of the Christian Sabbath; and since it will and must be observed as a day of cessation from toil, all that remains is for society to avail itself of the advantages which may be derived from its proper observance, and to make it the handmaid of temperance, intelligence, social order, and pure religion.

5. It is deeply, therefore, to be regretted that this sacred institution has been, and is so widely abused in Christian lands. As it is, it is extensively a day of feasting, amusement, dissipation, and revelry. And while its observance is, more decidedly than anything else, the means of perpetuating virtue and religion on earth, it is perhaps not too much to say that it is the occasion of more intemperance, vice, and crime than all the other days of the week put together. This is particularly the case in our large cities and towns. A community cannot be disbanded from the restraints of labor one-seventh part of the time without manifest evil, unless there are salutary checks and restraints. The merchant cannot safely close his counting-room;

the clerk and apprentice cannot safely be discharged; the common laborer cannot safely be dismissed from toil, unless there is something that shall be adapted on that day to enlarge the understanding, elevate the morals, and purify the heart. The welfare of the community demands that; and nowhere more than in this country. Who can doubt that a proper observance at the holy Sabbath would contribute to the prosperity of this nation? Who can doubt that the worship of God; the cultivation of the heart; the contemplation of moral and religious truth; and the active duties of benevolence, would contribute more to the welfare of the nation, than to devote the day to idleness, amusement, dissipation, and sin?

6. While the friends of religion, therefore, mourn over the desecration of the Christian Sabbath, let them remember that their example may contribute much to secure a proper observance of that day. On the friends of the Redeemer it devolves to rescue the day from desecration; and by the divine blessing it may be done. The happiness of every Christian is indissolubly connected with the proper observance of the Sabbath. The perpetuity of the true religion, and its extension throughout the earth, is identified with the observance of the Sabbath. And every true friend of God the Saviour, as he values his own peace, and as he prizes the religion which he professes to love, is bound to restrain his foot on the Sabbath; to cease to find his own pleasure, and to speak his own words on that holy day; and to show that the Sabbath is to him a delight, and that he esteems it as a day to be honored and to be loved.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 59

Introduction

This chapter is closely connected in sense with the preceding, and is designed to illustrate the same general sentiment; that the reason why the religious services of the nation were not accepted, and the nation delivered from calamity, was their hypocrisy and their other sins. The previous chapter contained a bold and energetic reproof of their expectation of the divine favor, when they were observing only external rites without repentance, and even when they continued to practice oppression and cruelty. This beautiful chapter states more in detail their sins, and the consequences of their transgressions. The following arrangement of the parts of the chapter, will show its design and scope at a single view.

I. It was not because Yahweh was unable to save them that they were exposed to such judgments, and visited with such calamities Isaiah 59:1. They were, therefore, not to blame him. This general principle is stated, in order to prevent what commonly occurs when people suffer much - a disposition to throw the blame on God.

II. It was for their sins that they were exposed to these judgments Isaiah 59:2-8. The prophet proceeds to specify those sins in detail, with a view to bring them to conviction and to repentance.

1. The general principle is stated, that it was their sins alone which had separated between them and God Isaiah 59:2.

2. Their hands were defiled with blood (Isaiah 59:3, part first).

3. Their lips had spoken falsehood (Isaiah 59:3, last part).

4. There was no justice among them (Isaiah 59:4, part first).

5. Their plans were mischievous (Isaiah 59:4, second part).

6. Their actions were like the egg of the cockatrice, hateful and destructive as that egg when hatched Isaiah 59:5.

7. Their works were like the web of a spider, which could never be a covering of righteousness Isaiah 59:6.

8. Their feet run to evil (Isaiah 59:7, part first).

9. Their thoughts were evil (Isaiah 59:7, second part).

10. They were strangers to the way of peace Isaiah 59:8.

III. After this statement of the prevalent sins of the nation, the prophet introduces the people as making confession, that it was for these and similar sins that they were exposed to the divine displeasure. Identifying himself with the people, he enumerates the calamities to which they were exposed, as a consequence of the sins which prevailed Isaiah 59:9-14. They were in darkness; they waited in vain for light; they stumbled at noon-day; they vented their sorrows like the roaring of bears, or the plaintive cry of the dove, but all in vain.

IV. Yahweh is represented as seeing this state of deep guilt; a state where there was deep conviction of that guilt, and a readiness to make confession; and as wondering that there was no intercessor, and as himself interposing to bring deliverance and salvation Isaiah 59:15-18. The characteristics of him who should come to accomplish these purposes, were righteousness, salvation, vengeance, and zeal Isaiah 59:17, he would come to take recompence on his foes, and to reward the wicked according to their deeds Isaiah 59:18.

V. The effect of this would be that the name of Yahweh would be feared from the rising to the setting sun. Yahweh would erect a barrier against the enemy when he should come in like a flood; and the Redeemer would come to Zion to effect deliverance for those who should truly repent Isaiah 59:19-20.

VI. A covenant would be established between God and those who would turn away from transgressions Isaiah 59:21. The nature of that covenant was, that its blessings would be perpetual. The spirit which God would give, and the words which he would put into their mouths, would abide with them and their posterity forever.

‹As this chapter,‘ says Lowth, ‹is remarkable for the beauty, strength, and variety of the images with which it abounds; so it is especially distinguished by the eloquence of the composition, and the exact construction of the sentences. From the first verse to the two last, it falls

regularly into stanzas of four lines.‘ This poetical form of the chapter must be apparent to the slightest observation of the reader; and there is perhaps no instance of more regular construction of the various members and parts of a composition in the writings of the Hebrews.

The chapter has evidently a primary reference to the character of the nation in the times of Isaiah. The deep depravity which is described, is such as existed in the times of Manasseh; and one object of the prophet was manifestly to bring them to conviction for their sins; and to show them why they were suffering, or about to suffer, from the expressions of the divine displeasure. But the chapter evidently also looks forward to future times, and the close of it refers so manifestly to the times of the Messiah, that it is impossible not to apply it to him.

Verse 1

Behold, the Lord‘s hand is not shortened - On the meaning of this phrase, see the notes at Isaiah 50:2.

Neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear - On the meaning of this phrase, see the notes at Isaiah 6:10.

Verse 2

But your iniquities - That is, the sins which the prophet had specified in the previous chapter, and which he proceeds further to specify in this.

Have separated - The word used here (בדל *bâdal*) conveys the idea of division, usually by a curtain or a wall Exodus 26:33; Ezekiel 42:20. Thus the ‹firmament‘ (רקיע *râqîya*‘ “expanse”) is said to have “divided” or “separated” (מבדיל *mabedîyl*) the waters from the waters Genesis 1:6. The idea here is, that their sins were like a partition between them and God, so that there was no contact between them and him.

And your sins have hid his face from you - Margin, ‹Made him hide.‘ The Hebrew word here is in Hiphil, meaning ‹to cause to hide.‘ Kimchi and Aben Ezra understand it as causing him to hide his face; Vitringa as hiding, his face. The metaphor, says Vitringa, is not taken from a man who turns away his face from one because he does not choose to attend to what is said, but from something which comes between two persons, like a dense cloud, which hides one from the other. And, according to this, the idea is, that their sins had risen up like a thick, dark cloud between them and God, so that they had no clear view of him, and no contact with him - as a cloud

hides the face of the sun from us. A similar idea occurs in Lamentations 3:44:

Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud,

That our prayers should not pass through.

But it seems to me more probable that the Hiphil signification of the verb is here to be retained, and that the idea is, that their sins had caused Yahweh to hide or turn away his face from their prayers from an unwillingness to hear them when they were so deeply immersed in sin. Thus the Septuagint, ‹On account of your sins he has turned away his face (ἀπέστρεψε τὸ πρόωπον *apestrepse to prosōpon*) from you, so that he will not have mercy‘ (τοῦ μὴ ἐλεῆσαι *tou mē eleēsai*). It is universally true that indulgence in sin causes God to turn away his face, and to witchold mercy and compassion. He cannot pardon those who indulge in transgression, and who are unwilling to abandon the ways of sin (compare the notes at Isaiah 1:15).

Verse 3

For your hands are defiled with blood - The prophet proceeds here more particularly to specify the sins of which they were guilty; and in order to show the extent and depth of their depravity, he specifies the various members of the body - the hands, the fingers, the lips, the tongue, the feet as the agents by which people commit iniquity. See a similar argument on the subject of depravity in Romans 3:13-15, where a part of the description which the prophet here gives is quoted by Paul, and applied to the Jews in his own time. The phrase ‹your hands are defiled with blood,‘ means with the blood of the innocent; that is, they were guilty of murder, oppression, and cruelty. See a similar statement in Isaiah 1:15, where the phrase ‹your hands are full of blood‘ occurs. The word rendered here ‹defiled‘ (גאל *gā'al*) means commonly to redeem, to ransom; then to avenge, or to demand and inflict punishment for bloodshed. In the sense of defiling it occurs only in the later Hebrew writers - perhaps used in this sense because those who were avengers became covered, that is, defiled with blood.

And your fingers with iniquity - The fingers in the Scriptures are represented as the agents by which any purpose is executed Isaiah 2:8, ‹Which their own fingers have made‘ (compare Isaiah 17:8). Some have supposed that the phrase used here means the same as the preceding, that they were guilty of murder and cruelty. But it seems more probable that the idea suggested by Grotius is the true sense, that it means that they were

guilty of rapine and theft. The fingers are the instruments by which theft - especially the lighter and more delicate kinds of theft - is executed. Thus we use the word ‹light-fingered‘ to denote anyone who is dexterous in taking and conveying away anything, or anyone who is addicted to petty thefts.

Your lips have spoken lies - The nation is false, and no confidence can be reposed in the declarations which are made.

Your tongue hath muttered - On the word rendered ‹muttered‘ (הגה *hâgâh*), see the notes at Isaiah 8:19. Probably there is included in the word here, the idea that they not only spoke evil, but that they did it with a complaining, discontented, or malicious spirit. It may also mean that they calumniated the government of God, and complained of his laws; or it may mean, as Grotius supposes, that they calumniated others - that is, that slander abounded among them.

Perverseness - Hebrew, עולה *ʿavlâh* - ‹Evil ‹ - the word from which our word evil is derived.

Verse 4

None calleth for justice - Or rather, there is no one who brings a suit with justice; no one who goes into court for the purpose of obtaining justice. There is a love of litigation; a desire to take all the advantage which the law can give; a desire to appeal to the law, not for the sake of having strict justice done, but for the sake of doing injury to others, and to take some undue advantage.

Nor any pleadeth for truth - Or, no one pleadeth with truth. He does not state the cause as it is. He makes use of cunning and falsehood to gain his cause.

They trust in vanity - They confide in quirks and evasions rather than in the justice of their cause.

They conceive mischief - They form plans of evil, and they execute them when they are fully ripe. Compare Job 15:35, where the same phrase occurs. The sense is, that they form plans to injure others, and that they expect to execute them by fraud and deceit.

Verse 5

They hatch cockatrice‘ eggs - Margin, ‹Adders‘.‘ On the meaning of the word rendered here ‹cockatrice,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 11:8. Some poisonous serpent is intended, probably the adder, or the serpent known among the Greeks as the basilisk, or cerastes. This figurative expression is designed to show the evil nature and tendency of their works. They were as

if they should carefully nourish the eggs of a venomous serpent. Instead of crushing them with the foot and destroying them, they took pains to hatch them, and produce a venomous race of reptiles. Nothing can more forcibly describe the wicked character and plans of sinners than the language used here - plans that are as pernicious, loathsome, and hateful as the poisonous serpents that spread death and ruin and alarm everywhere.

And weave the spider‘s web - This phrase, in itself, may denote, as some have understood it, that they formed plans designed to seize upon and destroy others, as spiders weave their web for the purpose of catching and destroying insects. But the following verse shows that the language is used rather with reference to the tenuity and gossamer character of the web, than with any such designs. Their works were like the web of the spider. They bore the same relation to true piety which the web of the spider did to substantial and comfortable raiment. They were vain and useless. The word rendered here ‹web‘ properly denotes the cross-threads in weaving, the woof or filling; and is probably derived from a word signify ing a cross-beam (see Rosenmuller *in loc*; also Bochart, Hieroz. ii. 4. 23).

He that eateth of their eggs dieth - That is, he who partakes of their counsels, or of the plans which they form, shall perish. Calvin says that the meaning is, that ‹whosoever had anything to do with them would find them destructive and pestiferous.‘ Similar phrases, comparing the plans of the wicked with the eggs and the brood of the serpent, are common in the East. ‹It is said,‘ says Roberts, speaking of India, ‹of the plans of a decidedly wicked and talented man, “That wretch! he hatches serpents‘ eggs.” “Beware of the fellow, his eggs are nearly hatched.” “Ah, my friend, touch not that affair, meddle not with that matter; there is a serpent in the shell.”‘

And that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper - On the meaning of the word rendered here ‹viper,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 30:6. Margin, ‹Sprinkled, is as if there brake out a viper. Jerome renders it, ‹Which if pierced, breaks out into a basilisk.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹And he who was about to eat of their eggs having broken one that was putrid (συντρίψας οὔριον *suntripsas ourion*), found in it a basilisk (βασόλισκον *basiliskon*). ‹The difference of translation in the text and the margin of the common version has arisen from the fact that the translators supposed that the word used here (זוּרה *zûrâh*) might be derived from זרה *zârâh* to sprinkle, or to scatter. But it is formed from the word זור *zûr* to squeeze, to press, to crush; and in Job 39:15, is applied to the fact that the

ostrich might crush her eggs with her foot. The sense here is, that when their plans were developed, they would be found to be evil and pernacious - as when an egg should be broken open, a venomous setpent would come forth. The viper, it is true, brings forth its young alive, or is a viviparous animal. But Bochart has remarked, that though it produces its young in this manner, yet that during the period of gestation the young are included in eggs which are broken at the birth. This is a very impressive illustration of the character and plans of the wicked. The serpents here referred to are among the most venomous and destructive that are known. And the comparison here includes two points -

1. That their plans resembled the egg of the serpent. The nature of the egg cannot be easily known by an inspection. It may have a strong resemblance to those which would produce some inoffensive and even useful animals. It is only when it is hatched that its true nature is fully developed. So it is with the plans of the wicked. When forming, their true nature may not be certainly known, and it may not be easy to determine their real character.

2. Their plans, when developed, are like the poisonous and destructive production of the serpent‘s egg. The true nature is then seen; and it is ruinous, pernicious, and evil.

Verse 6

Their webs shall not become garments - The spider‘s web is unfit for clothing; and the idea here is, that their works are as unfit to secure salvation as the attenuated web of a spider is for raiment. The sense is, says Vitringa, that their artificial sophisms avail nothing in producing true wisdom, piety, virtue, and religion, or the true righteousness and salvation of people, but are airy speculations. The works of the self-righteous and the wicked; their vain formality, their false opinions, their subtle reasonings, and their traditions, are like the web of the spider. They bide nothing, they answer none of the purposes of a garment of salvation. The doctrine is, that people must have some better righteousness than the thin and gossamer covering which their own empty forms and ceremonies produce (compare Isaiah 64:6).

Verse 7

Their feet run to evil - In accordance with the design of the prophet to show the entireness of their depravity, he states that all their members were employed in doing evil. In Isaiah 59:3-6. he had remarked that depravity had extended to their hands, their fingers, their lips, and their tongue; he here states that their feet also were employed in doing evil. Instead of treading the paths of righteousness, and hastening to execute purposes of mercy and justice, they were employed in journeyings to execute plans of iniquity. The words ‹run,‘ and ‹make haste,‘ are designed to intimate the intensity of their purpose to do wrong. They did not walk slowly; they did not even take time to deliberate; but such was their desire of wrong-doing, that they hastened to execute their plans of evil. People usually walk slowly and with a great deal of deliberation when any good is to be done; they walk rapidly, or they run with haste and alacrity when evil is to be accomplished. This passage is quoted by the apostle Paul Romans 3:15, and is applied to the Jews of his own time as proof of the depraved character of the entire nation.

They make haste to shed innocent blood - No one can doubt that this was the character of the nation in the time of Manasseh (see the Introduction, Section 3). It is not improbable that the prophet refers to the bloody and cruel reign of this prince. That it was also the character of the nation when Isaiah began to prophesy is apparent from Isaiah 1:15-21.

Their thoughts - That is, their plans and purposes are evil. It is not merely that evil is done, but they intended that it should be done. They had no plan for doing good; and they were constantly laying plans for evil.

Wasting - That is, violence, oppression, destruction. It means that the government was oppressive and tyrannical; and that it was the general character of the nation that they were regardless of the interests of truth and righteousness.

And destruction - Margin, ‹Breaking.‘ The word commonly means breaking or breach; then a breaking down, or destruction, as of a kingdom Lamentations 2:11; Lamentations 3:47; or of individuals Isaiah 1:28. Here it means that they broke down or trampled on the rights of others.

Are in their paths - Instead of marking their ways by deeds of benevolence and justice, they could be tracked by cruelty and blood. The path of the wicked through the earth can be seen usually by the desolations which they make. The path of conquerors can be traced by desolated fields, and smouldering ruins, and forsaken dwelling-places, and flowing blood;

and the course of all the wicked can be traced by the desolations which they make in their way.

Verse 8

The way of peace they know not - The phrase ‹way of peace‘ may denote either peace of conscience, peace with God, peace among themselves, or peace with their fellow-men. Possibly it may refer to all these; and the sense will be, that in their whole lives they were strangers to true contentment and happiness. From no quarter had they peace, but whether in relation to God, to their own consciences, to each other, or to their fellow-men, they were involved in continual strife and agitation (see the notes at Isaiah 57:20-21).

And there is no judgment in their goings - Margin, ‹Right.‘ The sense is, that there was no justice in their dealings. there was no disposition to do right. They were full of selfishness, falsehood, oppression, and cruelty.

They have made them crooked paths - A crooked path is an emblem of dishonesty, fraud, deceit. A straight path is an emblem of sincerity, truth, honesty, and uprightness (see Psalm 125:5; Proverbs 2:15; and the notes at Isaiah 40:4). The idea is, that their counsels and plans were perverse and evil. We have a similar expression now when we say of a man that he is ‹straightforward,‘ meaning that he is an honest man.

Verse 9

Therefore is judgment far from us - This is the confession of the people that they were suffering not unjustly on account of their crimes. The word ‹judgment‘ here is evidently to be taken in the sense of vengeance or vindication. The idea is this, ‹we are subjected to calamities and to oppressions by our enemies. In our distresses we cry unto God, but on account of our sins he does not hear us, nor does he come to vindicate our cause.‘

Neither doth justice overtake us - That is, God does not interpose to save us from our calamities, and to deliver us from the hand of our enemies. The word justice here is not to be regarded as used in the sense that they had a claim on God, or that they were now suffering unjustly, but it is used to denote the attribute of justice in God; and the idea is, that the just God, the avenger of wrongs, did not come forth to vindicate their cause, and to save them from the power of their foes.

We wait for light - The idea here is, that they anxiously waited for returning prosperity.

But behold obscurity - Darkness. Our calamities continue, and relief is not afforded us.

For brightness - That is, for brightness or splendor like the shining of the sun an emblem of happiness and prosperity.

Verse 10

We grope for the wall like the blind - A blind man, not being able to see his way, feels along by a wall, a fence, or any other object that will guide him. They were like the blind. They had no distinct views of truth, and they were endeavoring to feel their way along as well as they could. Probably the prophet here alludes to the threatening made by Moses in Deuteronomy 28:28-29, ‹And the Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart; and thou shalt grope at noon-day as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways.‘

We stumble at noon-day as in the night - The idea here is, that they were in a state of utter disorder and confusion. Obstacles were in their way on all hands, and they could no more walk than people could who at noon-day found their path filled with obstructions. There was no remission, no relaxation of their evils. They were continued at all times, and they had no intervals of day. Travelers, though at night they wander and fall, may look for approaching day, and be relieved by the returning light. But not so with them. It was all night. There were no returning intervals of light, repose and peace. It was as if the sun was blotted out, and all was one long, uninterrupted, and gloomy night.

We are in desolate places - There has been great variety in the interpretation of this phrase. Noyes, after Gesenius. translates it, ‹In the midst of fertile fields we are like the dead.‘ One principal reason which Gesenius gives for this translation (Commentary *in loc*.) is, that this best agrees with the sense of the passage, and answers better to the previous member of the sentence, thus more perfectly preserving the parallelism:

At noon-day we stumble as in the night;
In fertile fields we are like the dead.

Thus, the idea would be, that even when all seemed like noon-day they were as in the night; and that though they were in places that seemed luxuriant, they were like the wandering spirits of the dead. Jerome renders it, *Caliginosis quasi mortui*. The Septuagint, ‹They fall at mid-day as at midnight: they groan as the dying‘ (ὡς ἀποθνήσκοντες στενάξουσιν *hōs apothnēskontes stenachousin*). The Syriac follows this. ‹We groan as those

who are near to death.‘ The Chaldee renders it, ‹It (the way) is closed before us as the sepulchre is closed upon the dead;‘ that is, we are enclosed on every side by calamity and trial, as the dead are in their graves. The derivation of the Hebrew word אשׁמנים *'ashemanîym* is uncertain, and this uncertainty has given rise to the variety of interpretation. Some regard it as derived from שׁמם *shâmam* to be laid waste, to be desolate; and others from שׁמן *shâman* to be, or become fat.

The word שׁמנים *shemannîym* in the sense of fatness, that is, fat and fertile fields, occurs in Genesis 27:28, Genesis 27:39; and this is probably the sense here. According to this, the idea is, we are in fertile fields like the dead. Though surrounded by lands that are adapted to produce abundance, yet we are cut off from the enjoyment of them like the dead. Such is the disturbed state of public affairs; and such the weight of the divine judgments, that we have no participation in these blessings and comforts. The idea which. I suppose, the prophet means to present is, that the land was suited to produce abundance, but that such was the pressure of the public calamity, that all this now availed them nothing, and they were like the dead who are separated from all enjoyments. The original reference here was to the Jew suffering for their sins, whether regarded as in Palestine under their heavy judgments, or as in Babylon, where all was night and gloom. But the language here is strikingly descriptive of the condition of the world at large. Sinners at noon-day grope and stumble as in the night. In a world that is full of the light of divine truth as it beams from the works and the word of God, they are in deep darkness. They feel their way as blind people do along a wall, and not a ray of light penetrates the darkness of their minds. And in a world full of fertility, rich and abundant and overflowing in its bounties, they are still like ‹the dead.‘ True comfort and peace they have not; and they seem to wander as in the darkness of night, far from peace, from comfort, and from God.

Verse 11

We roar all like bears - This is designed still further to describe the heavy judgments which had come upon them for their sins. The word rendered here ‹roar‘ (from המה *hâmâh* like English, to hum, German, hummen, spoken of bees), is applied to any murmuring, or confused noise or sound. It sometimes means to snarl, as a dog Psalm 59:7, Psalm 59:15; to coo, as a dove Ezekiel 7:16; it is also applied to waves that roar Psalm 46:4;

Isaiah 51:15; to a crowd or tumultuous assemblage Psalm 46:7; and to music Isaiah 16:11; Jeremiah 48:36. Here it is applied to the low growl or groan of a bear. Bochart (Hieroz. i. 3. 9), says, that a bear produces a melancholy sound; and Horace (Epod. xvi. 51), speaks of its low groan:

Nee vespertinus circumgemit ursus ovile.

Here it is emblematic of mourning, and is designed to denote that they were suffering under heavy and long-continued calamity. Or, according to Gesenius (Commentary *in loc*.), it refers to a bear which is hungry, and which growls, impatient for food, and refers here to the complaining, dissatisfaction, and murmuring of the people, because God did not come to vindicate and relieve them.

And mourn sore like doves - The cooing of the dove, a plaintive sound, is often used to denote grief (see Ezekiel 7:16; compare the notes at Isaiah 38:14).

We look for judgment … - (See the notes at Isaiah 59:9.)

Verse 12

Our sins testify against us - Hebrew, ‹Answer against us.‘ The idea is, that their past lives had been so depraved that they became witnesses against them (compare the notes at Isaiah 3:9).

We know them - We recognize them as our sins, and we cannot conceal from ourselves the fact that we are transgressors.

Verse 13

In transgressing - That is, we have been guilty of this as a continuous act.

And lying against the Lord - We have proved false to Yahweh. Though we have been professedly his people, yet we have been secretly attached to idols, and have in our hearts been devoted to the service of false gods.

And departing away from our God - By the worship of idols, and by the violation of his law.

Speaking oppression and revolt - Forming plans to see how we might best take advantage of the poor and the defenseless, and to mature our plans of revolt against God.

Conceiving and uttering from the heart - (See the notes at Isaiah 59:4). The idea is, that they had formed in their hearts schemes of deception, and that in their conversation and their lives they had given utterance to them. All this is the language of genuine contrition, where there is a consciousness of deep guilt in the sight of God. There is an

overpowering sense of the evil of sin. and a willingness to make the most full and ample acknowledgment, however mortifying it may be, of the errors and follies of the life.

Verse 14

And judgment is turned away backward - The word ‹judgment‘ is not used, as in Isaiah 59:9, to denote the divine interposition to avenge and deliver them, but it is used in the sense of justice, or lust decisions between man and man. The verse contains a further confession of the evil of their course of life; and, among other things, they acknowledged that they had been unjust in their legal decisions. They had been influenced by partiality and by bribes; they had condemned the innocent, they had acquitted the guilty. Judgment had thus been lumped back by their sins when it seemed to be approaching and entering the city.

And justice standeth afar off - This is a beautiful figure. justice is represented as standing at a distance from the city. Deterred by their sins, it would not enter. They prevented its approach, and it was unknown among them.

For truth is fallen in the street - Or rather, perhaps, in the gate - the place where justice was administered. The language here is all taken from courts of justice, and the idea is, that there was no justice in their decisions, but that their courts were unprincipled and corrupt.

And equity cannot enter - It stood at a distance, and the impenetrable mass of guilt effectually prevented its approach to the capital.

Verse 15

Yea, truth faileth - That is, it is not to be found, it is missing. The word used here (from עדר *ʿâdar*) means “to be left, to remain” 2 Samuel 17:22; then “to be missing or lacking” 1 Samuel 30:19; Isaiah 40:26. Here it means that truth had no existence there.

And he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey - Margin, ‹Is accounted mad.‘ Noyes renders this, ‹And he that departeth from evil is plundered.‘ Grotius renders it, ‹The innocent man lies open to injury from all.‘ The Septuagint, ‹They took away the mind from understanding;‘ or, ‹They substituted opinion in the place of knowledge.‘ (Thompson‘s Translation.) The phrase, ‹He that departeth from evil,‘ means evidently a man who did not, and would not, fall in with the prevailing iniquitous practices, but who maintained a life of honesty and piety. It was one of the evils of the times that such a man would be harassed, plundered, ill-treated.

The word rendered ‹maketh himself a prey‘ (משׁתולל *mishetôlēl* from שׁלל *shâlal*), is a word usually signifying to strip off, to plunder, to spoil. Some have supposed that the word means to make foolish, or to account mad, in Job 12:17, Job 12:19. Thus, in the passage before us, the Septuagint understood the word, and this sense of the word our translators have placed in the margin. But there is no reason for departing here from the usual signification of the word as denoting to plunder, to spoil; and the idea is, that the people of honesty and piety were subject to the rapacity of the avaricious, and the oppression of the mighty. They regarded them as lawful prey, and took every advantage in stripping them of their property, and reducing them to want. This completes the statement of the crimes of the nation, and the existence of such deeds of violence and iniquity constituted the basis on which God was led to interpose and effect deliverance. Such a state of crime and consequent suffering demanded the divine interposition; and when Yahweh saw it, he was led to provide a way for deliverance and reform.

The passage before us had a primary reference to the prevalence of iniquity in the Jewish nation. But it is language also that will quite as appropriately describe the moral condition of the world as laying the foundation for the necessity of the divine interposition by the Messiah. Indeed, the following verses undoubtedly refer to him. No one, it is believed, can attentively read the passage, and doubt this. The mind of the prophet is fixed upon the depravity of the Jewish nation. The hands, the tongue, the eyes, the feet, the fingers, were all polluted. The whole nation was sunk in moral corruption; and this was but a partial description of what was occurring everywhere on the earth. In such a state of things in the Jewish nation, and in the whole world, the question could not but arise, whether no deliverer could be found. Was there no way of pardon; no way by which deserved and impending wrath could be diverted? From this melancholy view, therefore, the prophet turns to him who was to be the Great Deliverer, and the remainder of the chapter is occupied with a most beautiful description of the Redeemer, and of the effect of his coming. The sentiment of the whole passage is, “that the deep and extended depravity of man was the foundation of the necessity of the divine interposition in securing salvation, and that in view of the guilt of people, God provided one who was a Glorious Deliverer, and who was to come to Zion as the Redeemer.”

And the Lord saw it - He saw there was no righteousness; no light; no love; no truth. All was violence and oppression: all was darkness and gloom.

And it displeased him - Margin, ‹Was evil in his eyes.‘ So Jerome, ‹It appeared evil in his eyes.‘ Septuagint, Καὶ οὐκ ἤρεσεν αὐτῷ *Kai ouk ēresen autō* - ‹And it did not please him.‘ The Hebrew, וירע *vayēra*‘ means, literally, ‹It was evil in his eyes.‘ That is, it was painful or displeasing to him. The existence of so much sin and darkness was contrary to the benevolent feelings of his heart.

That there was no judgment - No righteousness; no equity; and that iniquity and oppression abounded.

Verse 16

And he saw that there was no man - That is, no wise and prudent man qualified to govern the affairs of the people. Or, that there was no man qualified to interpose and put an end to these evils; no one qualified to effect a reformation, and to save the nation from the calamities which their sins deserved. The reason why God provided a Redeemer was, that such was the extent and nature of human depravity, that no one on earth could arrest it, and save the world. A similar expression occurs in Isaiah 41:28.

And wondered - This is language adapted to the mode of speaking among men. It cannot be taken literally, as if God was amazed by suddenly coming to the knowledge of this fact. It is designed to express, with great emphasis, the truth, that there was no one to intercede, and that the wicked world was lying in a helpless condition.

That there was no intercessor - On the meaning of the word here rendered ‹intercessor,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 53:6. The Chaldee renders it, ‹There was no man who could stand and pray for them.‘ In Isaiah 63:5, Isaiah expresses the idea in the following language: I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold.‘

Therefore his arm - On the meaning of this phrase, see the notes at Isaiah 40:10 (compare Isaiah 51:5; Isaiah 63:5). The idea is, that salvation was to be traced to God alone. It did not originate with man, and it was not accomplished by his agency or help.

And his righteousness, it sustained him - Sustained by the consciousness that he was doing right, he went forward against all opposition, and executed his plan. This is language derived from the mode of speaking among people, and it means that as a man who is engaged in a

righteous cause is sustained amidst much opposition by the consciousness of integrity, so it is with God. The cause of redemption is the great cause of righteousness on earth. In this cause the Redeemer was sustained by the consciousness that he was engaged in that which was designed to vindicate the interests of truth and justice, and to promote righteousness throughout the universe.

Verse 17

For he put on righteousness - That is, God the Redeemer. The prophet here introduces him as going forth to vindicate his people clad like an ancient warrior. In the declaration that he ‹put on righteousness,‘ the essential idea is, that he was pure and holy. The same image is used by the prophet in another figure in Isaiah 11:5 (see the note at that place).

As a breastplate - The breastplate was a well-known piece of ancient armor, designed to defend the breast from the darts and the sword of an enemy. The design here is, to represent the Redeemer as a hero; and accordingly allusion is made to the various parts of the armor of a warrior. Yet he was not to be literally armed for battle. Instead of being an earthly conqueror, clad in steel, and defended with brass, his weapons were moral weapons, and his conquests were spiritual. The various parts of his weapons were ‹righteousness.‘ ‹salvation,‘ and ‹zeal.‘ This statement should have been, in itself, sufficient to keep the Jews front anticipating a Messiah who would be a bloody warrior and distinguished for deeds of conquest and blood. This figure of speech is not uncommon. Paul (in Ephesians 6:14-17; compare 2 Corinthians 6:7) has carried it out to greater length, and introduced more particulars in the description of the spiritual armor of the Christian.

And an helmet of salvation - The helmet was a piece of defensive armor for the head. It was made of iron or brass, and usually surmounted by a crest of hair. It was designed to guard the head from the stroke of a sword. No particular stress should be laid on the fact, that it is said that ‹salvation‘ would be the helmet. The design is to represent the Redeemer by the figure of a hero clad in armor, yet there seems to be no particular reason why salvation should be referred to as the helmet, or righteousness as the cuirass or breastplate. Nothing is gained by a fanciful attempt to spiritualize or explain them.

And he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing - By ‹garments,‘ here, Vitringa supposes that there is reference to the interior

garments which were worn by the Orientals corresponding to the tunic of the Romans. But it is more probable that the allusion is to the other parts of the dress or armor in general of the ancient warrior. The statement that he was clad in the garments of vengeance means, that he would go forth to vindicate his people, and to take vengeance on his foes. It would not be for mere defense that he would be thus armed for battle; but he would go forth for aggressive movements, in subduing his enemies and delivering his people (compare Isaiah 63:1-6).

And was clad with zeal as a cloak - The cloak worn by men in military as well as in civil life, was a loose flowing robe or mantle that was thrown over the body, usually fastened on the right shoulder by a hook or clasp, and suffered to flow in graceful folds down to the feet. In battle, it would be laid aside, or secured by a girdle about the loins. Vitringa remarks, that, as it was usually of purple color, it was adapted to represent the zeal which would burn for vengeance on an enemy. But the whole figure here is that drawn from a warrior or a conqueror: a hero prepared alike for defense and offence. The idea is, that he would be able to defend and vindicate his people, and to carry on aggressive warfare against his enemies. But it was not to be a warfare literally of blood and carnage. It was to be such as would be accomplished by righteousness, and zeal, and a desire to secure salvation. The triumph of righteousness was the great object still; the conquests of the Redeemer were to be those of truth.

Verse 18

According to their deeds - The general sentiment of this verse is plain, though there is not a little difficulty in the construction of the Hebrew. Lowth pronounces the former part of the verse, as it stands in the Hebrew text, to be ‹absolutely unintelligible. By a slight change in the Hebrew as it now stands (reading בעל *baʿal* "lord," instead of כעל *keʿal* "as according to"), Lowth supposes that he has obtained the true sense, and accordingly translates it:

He is mighty to recompense;

He that is mighty to recompense shall requite.

This translation is substantially according to the Chaldee, but there is no authority from manuscripts to change the text in this place. Nor is it necessary. The particle כעל *keʿal* occurs as a preposition in Isaiah 63:7, in the sense of ‹as according to,‘ or ‹according to,‘ and is similar in its form to the word מעל *mēʿal* which often occurs in the sense of from above, or from

upon Genesis 24:64; Genesis 40:19; Isaiah 34:16; Jeremiah 36:11; Amos 7:11. The sense of the verse before us is, that God would inflict just punishment on his enemies. It is a general sentiment, applicable alike to the deliverance from Babylon and the redemption of his church and people at all times. In order to effect the deliverance of his people it was necessary to take vengeance on those who had oppressed and enslaved them. So in order to redeem his church, it is often necessary to inflict punishment on the nations that oppose it, or to remove by death the adversaries that stand in his way. This punishment is inflicted strictly according to their deeds. The principal thought here is, undoubtedly, that as they had opposed and oppressed the people of God, so he would take vengeance on them. He would remove his enemies, and prepare the way in this manner for the coming of his kingdom.

To the islands - On the use of the word ‹islands‘ in Isaiah, see the notes at Isaiah 41:1. The idea here is, that he would ‹repay recompence‘ or take vengeance on the foreign nations which had oppressed them.

Verse 19

So shall they fear - That is, the result of the divine interposition to punish his enemies, shall be to secure the acknowledgment of the existence and perfections of Yahweh in every part of the world. See especially the notes at Isaiah 45:6.

When the enemy shall come in - There has been great variety in the interpretation of this passage, and it is remarkable that our translators have departed from all the ancient versions, and that the present translation differs from nearly all the modern expositions of the place. Lowth renders it:

When he shall come like a river straitened in his course,
Which a strong wind driveth along.

Jerome (the Vulgate) renders it, ‹When he shall come as a violent river which the Spirit of the Lord (*spiritus Domini*, or the wind of the Lord, that is, a strong wind) drives along. The Septuagint, ‹For the wrath of the Lord will come like an impetuous stream; it will come with fury.‘ The Chaldee, ‹When they shall come who oppress, like an overflowing of the river Euphrates.‘ The Syriac, ‹Because when the oppressor shall come as a river, the Spirit of the Lord shall humble him.‘ The reason of this variety of interpretation is the ambiguity of the Hebrew words which occur in the verse. The word which in our common version is rendered ‹the enemy‘ (צר

tsâr from צרר *tsârar* to press, compress, bind up together; intrans. to be straitened, or compressed), may mean either:

1. "An adversary, enemy, persecutor," synonymous with אויב *'ôyēb* as in Numbers 10:9; Deuteronomy 32:27; Job 16:9; or,

2. "Straits, affliction" Psalm 4:2; Psalm 18:7; Psalm 44:11; or,

3. "Strait, narrow" Numbers 22:26; Job 41:7.

‹It may be, therefore, here either a noun meaning an enemy; or it maybe an adjective qualifying the word river, and then will denote a river that is closely confined within its banks, and that is urged forward by a mass of accumulating waters, or by a mighty wind. According to this, it will mean that Yahweh will come to take vengeance with the impetuosity of a river that swells and foams and is borne forward with violence in its course. The comparison of a warrior or hero with such a mighty and impetuous torrent, is exceedingly forcible and beautiful, and is not uncommon (see the notes at Isaiah 8:7). The phrase rendered ‹the Spirit of the Lord' (יהוה רוח *rûach yehovâh*), may denote ‹the wind of Yahweh,' or a strong, violent, mighty wind. The appropriate signification of the word רוח *rûach* is wind, or breath; and it is well known that the name of God is often in the Scriptures used to denote that which is mighty or vast, as in the phrase, mountains of God, cedars of God, etc.

There is no reason why it should be here regarded as denoting ‹the Spirit of God,' - the great agent of enlightening and reforming the world. It may be understood, as Lowth and others have applied it, to denote a strong and violent wind - a wind urging on a mass of waters through a compressed and straitened place, and thus increasing their impetuosity and violence. The phrase ‹Spirit of God' (אלהים רוח *rûach 'ĕlohîym*), is used to denote a strong wind, in 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16; Isaiah 40:7; Ezekiel 12:14; Ezekiel 13:13. The word rendered in our version, ‹shall lift up a standard' (נססה *nosesâh*), rendered in the margin, ‹put him' to flight,' if derived from נסס *nāsas* and if written with the points נססה *nāsesâh* would denote to lift up, to elevate, as a standard or banner, or anything to oppose and retard a foe. But the word is probably derived from נוס *nûs* to flee, in the Piel נוסס *nôsēs* "to impel, to cause to flee."

Here it means, then, that the mighty wind impels or drives on the compressed waters of the stream, and the whole passage means that Yahweh

would come to deliver his people, and to prostrate his foes with the impetuosity of a violent river compressed between narrow banks, and driven on by a mighty wind. True, therefore, as it is, that when a violent enemy assails the church; when he comes in with error, with violence, and with allies, like a flood, Yahweh will rear a standard against him, and the influences of the Spirit of God may be expected to interpose to arrest the evil; yet this passage does not teach that doctrine, nor should it be so applied. It does teach that Yahweh will go forth with energy and power to defend his people and to prostrate his foes.

sa40

Verse 20

And the Redeemer shall come - On the meaning of the word rendered here ‹Redeemer,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 43:1. This passage is applied by the apostle Paul to the Messiah Romans 11:26; and Aben Ezra and Kimchi, among the Jews, and Christians generally, suppose that it refers to him.

To Zion - On the word ‹Zion,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 1:8. The Septuagint renders this, Ἕνεκεν Σιὼν *Heneken Siōn* - ‹On account of Zion.‘ The apostle Paul Romans 11:26, renders this, ‹There shall come out of Zion (ἐκ Σιὼν *ek Siōn*) the Deliverer,‘ meaning that he would arise among that people, or would not be a foreigner. The idea in Isaiah, though substantially the same, is rather that he would come as a deliverer from abroad; that is, he would come from heaven, or be commissioned by God. When it is said that he would come to Zion, it is not meant that he would come exclusively to the Jews, but that his mission would be primarily to them.

And unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob - There is much variety in the interpretation of this passage. Paul Romans 11:26 quotes it thus, ‹and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob;‘ and in this he has literally followed the Septuagint. The Vulgate renders it as in our translation. The Chaldee, ‹And shall turn transgressors of the house of Jacob to the law.‘ The Syriac, ‹To those who turn iniquity from Jacob.‘ Lowth has adopted the rendering of the Septuagint, and supposes that an error has crept into the Hebrew text. But there is no good authority for this supposition. The Septuagint and the apostle Paul have retained substantially, as Vitringa has remarked, the sense of the text. The main idea of the prophet is, that the effect of the coming of the Messiah would be to turn people from their sins. He would enter into covenant only with those

who forsook their transgressions, and the only benefit to be derived from his coming would be that many would be thus turned from their iniquities.

Verse 21

As for me - In the previous part of the chapter, the prophet has spoken. Here Yahweh is introduced as speaking himself, and as declaring the nature of the covenant which he would establish. In the verse previous, it had been stated that the qualifications on the part of people for their partaking of the benefits of the Redeemer‘s work, were, that they should turn from transgression. In this verse, Yahweh states what he would do in regard to the covenant which was to be established with his people. ‹So far as I am concerned, I will enter into a covenant with them and with their children.‘

This is my covenant with them - (Compare the notes at Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:8; Isaiah 54:10). The covenant here referred to, is that made with people under the Messiah. In important respects it differed from that made with the Jewish people under Moses. The word, ‹covenant‘ here is evidently equivalent, as it is commonly, when applied to a transaction between God and human beings, to a most solemn promise on his part; and the expression is a most solemn declaration that, under the Messiah, God would impart his Spirit to those who should turn from transgression, and would abundantly bless them and their offspring with the knowledge of his truth. When it is said, ‹this is my covenant,‘ the import evidently is, ‹this is the nature or the tenure of my covenant, or of my solemn promises to my people under the Messiah. It shall certainly occur that my Spirit will be continually imparted to thy seed, and that my words will abide with thee and them forever.‘

My Spirit that is upon thee - The word ‹thee‘ here does not refer, as Jerome and others suppose, to the prophet, but to the pious Hebrew people. The covenant under the Messiah, was not made especially with the prophet or his posterity, but is a promise made to the church, and here evidently refers to the true people of God: and the idea is, that the Spirit of God would be continually imparted to his people, and to their descendants forever. It is a covenant made with true believers and with their children.

And my words - The Chaldee understands this of prophecy. But it seems rather to refer to the truth of God in general which he had revealed for the guidance and instruction of his church.

Shall not depart out of thy mouth - This phrase probably means, that the truth of God would be the subject of perpetual meditation and

conversation. The covenant would be deemed so precious that it would constantly dwell on the tongues of those who were interested in it.

Thy seed's seed - Thy descendants; thy posterity.

From henceforth and for ever - This is in accordance with the promises which everywhere occur in the Scriptures, that God would bless the posterity of his people, and that the children of the pious should partake of his favor. See Exodus 20:6: ‹Showing mercy unto thousands (that is, thousands of generations) of them that love me and keep my commandments.' Compare Deuteronomy 4:37; Deuteronomy 5:29; Deuteronomy 7:9; Psalm 89:24, Psalm 89:36; Jeremiah 32:39-40. There is no promise of the Bible that is more full of consolation to the pious, or that has been more strikingly fulfilled than this. And though it is true that not all the children of holy parents become truly pious; though there are instances where they are signally wicked and abandoned, yet it is also true that rich spiritual blessings are imparted to the posterity of those who serve God and who keep his commandments. The following facts are well known to all who have ever made any observation on this subject:

1. The great majority of those who become religious are the descendants of those who were themselves the friends of God. Those who now compose the Christian churches, are not those generally who have been taken from the ways of open vice and profligacy; from the ranks of infidelity; or from the immediate descendants of scoffers, drunkards, and blasphemers. Such people usually tread, for a few generations at least, in the footsteps of their fathers. The church is composed mainly of the descendants of those who have been true Christians, and who trained their children to walk in the ways of pure religion.

2. It is a fact that comparatively a large proportion of the descendants of the pious themselves for many generations become true Christians. I know that it is often thought to be otherwise, and especially that it is often said that the children of clergymen are less virtuous and religious than others. But it should be remembered that such cases are more prominent than others, and especially that the profane and the wicked have a malicious pleasure in making them the subject of remark. The son of a drunkard will be intemperate without attracting notice - for such a result is expected; the son of an infidel will be an infidel; the son of a scoffer will be a scoffer; of a thief a thief; of a licentious man licentious, without being the subject of

special observation. But when the son of an eminent Christian treads the path of open profligacy, it at once excites remark, because such is not the usual course, and is not usually expected; and because a wicked world has pleasure in marking the case, and calumniating religion through such a prominent instance of imperfection and sin.

But such is not the common result of religious training. Some of the most devotedly pious people of this land are the descendants of the Huguenots who were expelled from France. A very large proportion of all the piety in this country has been derived from the ‹Pilgrims,‘ who landed on the rock of Plymouth, and God has blessed their descendants in New England and elsewhere with numerous revivals of religion. I am acquainted with the descendants of John Rogers, the first martyr in Queen Mary‘s reign, of the tenth and eleventh generations. With a single exception, the oldest son in the family has been a clergymen - some of them eminently distinguished for learning and piety; and there are few families now in this land a greater proportion of whom are pious than of that. The following statistical account made of a limited section of the country, not more favored or more distinguished for piety than many others, accords undoubtedly with similar facts which are constantly occurring in the families of those who are the friends of religion. The Secretary of the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society made a limited investigation, in the year 1838, for the purpose of ascertaining the facts about the religious character of the families of ministers and deacons with reference to the charge so often urged that the ‹sons and daughters of ministers and deacons were worse than common children.‘ The following is the result.

In 268 families which he canvassed, he found 1290 children over fifteen years of age. Of these children 884, almost three-fourths, are hopefully pious; 794 have united with the churches; sixty-one entered the ministry; only seventeen are dissipated, and about half only of these became so while with their parents. In eleven of these families there are 123 children, and all but seven pious. In fifty-six of these families there are 249 children over fifteen, and all hopefully pious. When and where can any such result be found in the families of infidels, of the vicious, or of irreligious people? Indeed, it is the great law by which religion and virtue are perpetuated in

the world. that God is faithful to this covenant, and that he blesses the efforts of his friends to train up generations for his service.

3. All pious parents should repose on this promise of a faithful God. They may and should believe that it is his design to perpetuate religion in the families of those who truly serve and obey him. They should be faithful in imparting religious truth; faithful in prayer, and in a meek, holy, pure, and benevolent example; they should so live that their children may safely tread in their footsteps; they should look to God for his blessing on their efforts, and their efforts will not be in vain. They shall see their children walk in the ways of virtue; and when they die, they may leave the world with unwavering confidence that God will not suffer his faithfulness to fail; that he will not break his covenant, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips Psalm 89:33-34.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 60

Introduction

In this chapter there is commenced a most glowing and beautiful description of the ‹golden age‘ under the Messiah. The description is continued to the close of Isaiah 62:1-12. It is adorned with the highest ornaments of poetry; the future glory of the church is displayed under the most splendid colors, and with every variety of imagery. It is designed to set forth the glory of that time when the Gentries shall be gathered into the church, and when the whole world shall become tributary to the Messiah, and be illuminated with the light of Christian truth. The main design of the chapter is to foretell the conversion of the pagan world, and the happy and peaceful times which shall exist when that has occurred. In doing this, the highest beauties of prophetic imagery are introduced, and the powers of the inspired prophet seem to have been taxed to the utmost to convey a just view of the glory of the scene. That it refers to the time of the Messiah no one can doubt who reads it. And that it refers to events which have not yet fully occurred is, I think, equally clear, and will be made apparent in the notes. In accordance with the usual mede in Isaiah (see the Introduction, Section 7,4), the prophet throws himself into the midst of the future scene Isaiah 60:1, and the events are described as passing in vision before his eyes. He sees the light as already shining, and the glory of Yahweh as actually arisen upon the church; he sees the Gentiles flocking to the Redeemer, and bringing their most valued and precious objects, and laying them at his feet.

The chapter may, for convenience, be regarded as consisting of three parts:

I. An invocation to the church to arise, and to enjoy and diffuse the light which had risen upon her Isaiah 60:1-2, the earth elsewhere was enveloped in deep darkness, but the light of Messiah‘s reign and of truth was with her.

II. The declaration that the Gentile world would be converted to the true religion, and would participate in the blessings of the reign of the Messiah.

1. The assurance that this event would occur Isaiah 60:3.

2. The church directed to look around, and behold the multitudes that were flocking to her Isaiah 60:4.

3. Specifications of those who would come and participate in the benefits of the reign of the Messiah.

(1) The abundance of the sea would come.

(2) The wealth of the Gentiles Isaiah 60:5.

(3) The camels and dromedaries from Midian, Ephah, and all they who resided in Sheba would come with their gold and incense Isaiah 60:6.

(4) The flocks of Kedar, and the rams of Nebaioth would be offered Isaiah 60:7.

(5) The multitude would be so great as to excite astonishment: and lead to the inquiry who they were. They would come like clouds; they would fly for safety as doves do to their windows in an approaching tempest Isaiah 60:8.

(6) The distant islands - the pagan coasts, would wait for the gospel; and the commerce of the world be made tributary to the spread of truth Isaiah 60:9.

(7) The sons of strangers would be employed in defending Zion, and kings would become the servants of the church Isaiah 60:10.

4. So great would be the anxiety to embrace the provisions of mercy, and so numerous the converts from the Pagan world, that the gates of Zion would never be closed day or night Isaiah 60:11.

5. The nation that refused this homage would be certainly destroyed Isaiah 60:12.

6. Then follows a beautiful poetical description of the conversion of the Pagan world, and of the fact that the most valued and valuable objects of the Gentiles would be consecrated to the church, under the image of bringing the beautiful trees of Lebanon to adorn the grounds around the temple Isaiah 60:13-14.

7. Zion would be made an eternal excellency Isaiah 60:15.

8. There would thus be furnished the fullest proof of the faithfulness of God, and of the fact that Yahweh was the Redeemer and Saviour of his people.

III. The happy state of the church in those times.

1. It would be an age when peace and justice would characterize the rulers Isaiah 60:17.

2. Violence, contention, wasting, would be known no more Isaiah 60:18.

3. There would be uninterrupted prosperity, and the constant reign of truth Isaiah 60:19-20.

4. The people would be all holy Isaiah 60:21.

5. Their numbers would be greatly augmented, as if a small one should become a strong nation Isaiah 60:22.

Verse 1

Arise - This is evidently addressed to the church, or to Zion regarded as the seat of the church. It is represented as having been in a state of affliction and calamity (compare the notes at Isaiah 3:26; Isaiah 52:1-2). She is now called on to arise from the dust, and to impart to others the rich privileges which were conferred on her.

Shine - (אורי *'ôrîy*). Lowth renders this, ‹Be thou enlightened.‘ Margin, ‹Be enlightened, for thy light cometh.‘ Noyes, ‹Enjoy light.‘ Septuagint Φωτίζου φωτίζου *Phōtizou phōtizou* - ‹Be enlightened; be enlightened, O Jerusalem.‘ Herder renders it, ‹Be light.‘ Vitringa regards the expression as equivalent to this, ‹pass into a state of light. That is, enjoy light thyself, and impart it freely to others, Gesenius renders it, ‹Shine, be bright; that is, be surrounded and resplendent with light.‘ The idea probably is this, ‹rise now from a state of obscurity and darkness. Enter into light; enter into times of prosperity.‘ It is not so much a command to impart light to others as it is to be encompassed with light and glory. It is the language of prophecy rather than of command; a call rather to participate in the light that was shining than to impart it to others. The Septuagint and the Chaldee here add the name ‹Jerusalem,‘ and regard it as addressed directly to her.

Thy light is come - On the word ‹light,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 58:8, Isaiah 58:10. The light here referred to is evidently that of the gospel; and

when the prophet says that that light ‹is come,‘ he throws himself into future times, and sees in vision the Messiah as having already come, and as pouring the light of salvation on a darkened church and world (compare the notes at Isaiah 9:2).

And the glory of the Lord - There is refer once here, doubtless, to the Shechinah or visible splendor which usuallv accompanied the manifestations of God to his people (see the notes at Isaiah 4:5). As Yahweh manifested himself in visible glory to the Israelites during their journey to the promised land, so he would manifest himself in the times of the Messiah as the glorious protector and guide of his people. The divine character and perfections would be manifested like the sun rising over a darkened world.

Is risen upon thee - As the sun rises. The word used here (זרח *zârach*) is commonly applied to the rising of the sun Genesis 32:31; Exodus 22:2; 2 Samuel 23:4; Psalm 104:22. The comparison of the gospel to the sun rising upon a dark world is exceedingly beautiful, and often occurs in the Bible (compare Malachi 4:2; Luke 1:78, margin.)

Upon thee - Upon thee, in contradistinction from other nations and people. The gospel shed its first beams of glory on Jerusalem.

Verse 2

For behold - Lo, darkness covers the earth. This is designed to turn the attention to the fact that all the rest of the world would be enveloped in deep spiritual night.

Darkness - (See the notes at Isaiah 45:7).

Shall cover the earth - Shall envelope the whole world except where it is illuminated by the gospel. It is needless to say that this was the fact when the Messiah came, and that it is still extensively true also.

And gross darkness - Lowth renders this, ‹A thick vapor.‘ Herder. ‹Deep obscurity.‘ Septuagint, Γνόφος *Gnophos* - Cloud, shade, tempest. The Hebrew word (ערפל ʿ*ărâpel*) usually denotes thick cloud, cloudy darkness, gloom; and is often applied to the thick clouds of a tempest Exodus 20:18; Deuteronomy 4:11; Psalm 18:10. It is a word of intenser meaning than that which is rendered ‹darkness‘ (חשך *chôshek*) and the idea here is, that the nations would be enveloped in a cloud of ignorance and sin so dense and obscure that no light could penetrate it - a description strikingly applicable to the whole pagan world.

But the Lord shall arise upon thee - Like the sun. That is, Yahweh would manifest his perfections to them in a glorious manner.

Shall be seen upon thee - There is more emphatic meaning in the original here than is conveyed in our translation. The Hebrew word (יראה *yērâ'eh*) does not mean merely that that glory would be visible, but that it would be conspicuous. It would be so bright and luminous that it would be seen afar - like a cloud or column of glory standing over Jerusalem that would be conspicuous to far distant people.

Verse 3

And the Gentiles shall come - So splendid shall be that glory, that it will attract the distant nations, and they shall come and participate in the blessings of the gospel. This contains the main statement which it is the design of this chapter to illustrate. The prophet had frequently made this statement before in general terms (compare Isaiah 2:3; Isaiah 11:10; Isaiah 49:22; Isaiah 54:3); but he here goes into a more particular account, and more fully describes the blessings which would result from this accession to the true church.

And kings - (Compare Isaiah 49:7, note; Isaiah 49:23, note; Isaiah 52:15, note).

To the brightness of thy rising - This does not mean that the church was to arise with the splendor of the sun; but ‹thy rising‘ means the rising upon her - called her rising, because it would shed its beams on her. It is correctly rendered by Lowth - ‹The brightness of thy sunrising;‘ by Noyes and Herder. ‹The brightness that riseth upon thee.‘

Verse 4

Lift up thine eyes - Jerusalem is here addressed as a female with eyes cast down from grief. She is directed to lift them up, and to see the great multitudes that were flocking to her. Wherever she could turn her eyes, she would behold them hastening to come to her. In this verse and the following verses, the prophet goes into a particular statement of what he referred to in general terms in Isaiah 60:3. The first thing which be specifies is, that the dispersed sons and daughters of the Jewish people would be gathered back.

Thy sons shall come from far - They who have been driven into exile into distant lands shall again return. This is in accordance with the predictions so often made in Isaiah, that the scattered sons of the Jewish people would be again collected (see the notes at Isaiah 49:17-18.)

And thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side - The Septuagint renders this, ‹And thy daughters shall be borne upon the shoulders‘ (ἐπ᾽ ὤμων ἀρθήσονται *ep' ōmōn arthēsontai*). Lowth also says, that one

manuscript reads it ‹upon shoulders,‘ and another has both ‹shoulder‘ and ‹side.‘ The translation of the Septuagint, and these different readings of the manuscripts have probably been caused by the supposed improbability of the fact, that children were nursed or carried on the side (compare Isaiah 49:22). But Sir John Chardin says that it is the general custom in the East to carry the children astride upon the hip, with the arms around the body. The word, however, which is rendered ‹nursed‘ in our translation (תאמנה *tē'âmanâh* from אמן *'âman*), means, properly, "to stay, to sustain, support; to bear or carry a child" Numbers 11:12; hence, "to be faithful, firm." It is not certain that it is in any instance used in the sense of nursing; but it more probably means here, they shall be borne. It implies that the church would evince deep solicitude for the education and welfare of the young - as a mother does for her children; and that it would be one of the blessings of those times that that solicitude should be felt and manifested.

Verse 5

Then shalt thou see - Lowth renders this, ‹Then shalt thou fear and overflow with joy;‘ and supposes that it refers to the agitation and anxiety of mind attending the scene, and to the joy consequent on the numerous conversions. His authority for this change is, that forty manuscripts (two of them ancient) have תיראי, ‹thou shalt fear,‘ instead of תראי *tîre'îy* ‹thou shalt see.‘ But though the change is of a single letter, there is not sufficient authority to make it, nor does the sense require it. The Vulgate, Septuagint, Chaldee, Syiac, Arabic, and Castellio, all render it in accordance with the present reading of the Hebrew text. The idea is, that Jerusalem would look with deep interest on the great multitude that would be converted to her, and that the effect would be to cause the heart to overflow with joy.

And flow together - This translation, it is believed, by no means conveys the true sense of the passage. Indeed, it is difficult to make sense of the translation. It is true that the Hebrew word נהר *nâhar* means "to flow, to flow together"; whence the word נהר *nâhâr* ‹river.‘ But it may be used in the sense of flowing, or overflowing with joy; or it may seem to shine, to be bright, the same as נור *nûr* (Gesenius); and thence to be cheered, to rejoice, as when the countenance is bright and cheerful (compare Job 3:4). Taylor (Hebrew Concordance) renders it, ‹And be enlightened, or have the light flow upon thee.‘ The true idea is, doubtless, that of rejoicing; denoting the happiness which will always exist in the church when many are seen to come and give themselves to God.

And thine heart shall fear - The heart shall be ruffled, agitated, deeply excited by the view of the numbers that are converted, and by the evidence thus furnished of the divine favor and presence. The effect of numerous simultaneous conversions in a revival of religion, is always to produce awe and reverence. There is a conviction that God is near, and that this is his work; and a deep veneration produced by the demonstrations of his power which does not exist in other circumstances. This effect is described also by Jeremiah, Jeremiah 33:9: ‹And they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I shall procure unto her‘ (Jerusalem).

And be enlarged - Shall be swelled or filled with joy.

Because the abundance of the sea - Margin, ‹Noise of the sea shall be turned unto thee.‘ Lowth and Noyes render it, ‹The riches of the sea.‘ So the Septuagint, Πλοῦτος θαλάσσης *Ploutos thalassēs* The Chaldee renders it, ‹There shall be transferred to thee the wealth of the west‘ (עתר מערבא *ʿôtar maʿarebâ'*). The Hebrew word המון *hămôn* properly denotes a noise or sound; as of rain, of the raging of the ocean, or of a multitude of people. Then it denotes a multitude or crowd of people itself Isaiah 13:4; Isaiah 33:3; Daniel 10:6; a host or army Judges 4:7; Daniel 11:11-13; a multitude of waters Jeremiah 10:13; Jeremiah 51:16. It then denotes a multitude of possessions; a vast amount of wealth Psalm 37:16; Ecclesiastes 5:9. Here it may refer either to the multitude of the people that dwelt on the islands of the sea, or to their wealth that would be brought and devoted to Zion. As various kinds of property are immediately specified, it seems most natural to refer it to that; and then the idea is, that the wealth possessed by lands beyond the sea, or surrounded by the sea, would be devoted to the church of God. It will be remembered, that nearly all the wealth that was imported by Solomon and others to Judea came from beyond sea, and that it was natural to speak of such places as abounding in riches. The idea is, that the wealth of all those distant lands would be consecrated to the church - an idea denoting its great prosperity and glory when all lands should come under the influence of the truth.

Shall be converted - Hebrew, ‹Shall be turned.‘ Instead of being employed in idolatry and sin; in purposes of pleasure and mere magnificence, it shall be turned to a different purpose.

The forces of the Gentiles - Margin, ‹wealth.‘ The margin has undoubtedly the correct interpretation. The word used here (חיל *chayil*

construct חיל *chēyil*), usually, indeed, denotes strength, might, valor; an army, forces, host; but it also means riches, wealth Genesis 24:29; Deuteronomy 8:17-18; Rth 4:11 ; Job 20:15. The Septuagint renders the passage, ‹The riches of the sea, and of the nations, and of the people will come over to thee.‘ The sense is, that the wealth of the pagan world would be consecrated to the service of the church. To some extent, this has been the case, No small part of the great wealth of the Roman empire was I devoted to the service of the Christian church; and the wealth of what was then Pagan Europe, and of what was then Pagan and unknown America, has been, to a considerable extent, devoted to the Redeemer. The time will come when the wealth of India, of China, of Africa, and of the entire world, shall be devoted to the service of God, in a manner far more decided than has yet occurred in the most favored Christian lands.

Verse 6

The multitude of camels - Lowth renders this, ‹An inundation of camels.‘ The Hebrew word properly denotes an inundation or overflowing of waters, but it is not improperly applied to a numerous caravan or company of animals. The camel is a well-known useful animal that constitutes the principal beast of burden in Arabia, and that may, indeed, be said to constitute its wealth. It is frequently spoken of as ‹the ship of the desert.‘ The description here is strictly applicable to Arabia; and, undoubtedly, the prophet meant to say, that that country would be blessed with the true religion, and that her merchandise and wealth would become tributary to the church of God.

Shall cover thee - Shall come in such multitudes as to fill thee. and to be spread out all over thee. Thus we speak of a land being covered with flocks and herds.

The dromedaries - The dromedary is a species of camel that is found principally in Arabia, with one bunch or protuberance on its back, in distinction from the Bactrian camel, which has two bunches (Webster). ‹It is found,‘ says Dr. Shaw, ‹in Barbary, though much more rarely there than in the Levant. It is chiefly remarkable for its prodigious swiftness; the Arabs affirming that it will run over as much ground in one day as one of their best horses will perform in eight or ten. The Shiekh who conducted us to Mount Sinai rode upon a camel of this kind, and would frequently divert us with an instance of its great abilities. For he would depart from our caravan, reconnoitre another just in view, and return to us again in less than a quarter

of an hour. It differeth from the common camel in being of a finer and rounder shape, and in having on its back a lesser bunch or protuberance.‘ (Shaw‘s Travels, p. 240.) Hence, in Jeremiah 2:23, the prophet speaks of the ‹swift dromedary.‘ The idea here is, that these fleet animals, so valuable to the inhabitants of Arabia, would come bringing their merchandise for the service of the church of God; that is, the wealth of Midian and Ephah would be devoted to him.

Midian - Midian was the fourth son of Abraham and Keturah Genesis 25:2, and was the father of the Midianites. The Midianites are frequently mentioned in the Scriptures (Genesis 37:28-36; Numbers 25:17; Numbers 31:2; Judges 6:7-16; Judges 7:23, Judges 7:25, et al.) As early as the time of Jacob they were employed in traffic, and were associated with the Ishmaelites in this business, for it was to a company of these people that Joseph was sold by his brethren Genesis 37:28. ‹The original and appropriate district of the Midianites seems to have been on the east side of the Elanitic branch of the Red Sea, where the Arabian geographers place the city of Madian. But they appear to have spread themselves northward, probably along the desert coast of Mount Seir, to the vicinity of the Moabites; and on the other side, also, they covered a territory extending to the neighborhood of Mount Sinai‘ (Robinson‘s Calmet). Generally, the names Midianites and Ishmaelites seem to have been nearly synonymous.

Ephah - Ephah was the oldest son of Midian Genesis 25:4, and dwelt in Arabia Petraea, and gave name to the city of Ephah, called here by the Septuagint, Γαιφά *Gaipha* (Goepha). This city, and the small extent of country around it, constituted a part of Midian on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, to which the territories of Midian extended. It abounded in dromedaries and camels Judges 6:6.

All they from Sheba shall come - Sheba is celebrated in the Scriptures chiefly as the place from where the Queen of that country came to visit Solomon 1 Kings 10:1; 2 Chronicles 9:1. That it abounded in wealth, may be inferred from the train which accompanied her, and from the presents with which she came to Solomon. ‹And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and much fine gold, and precious stones‘ 1 Kings 10:2. Whether it was the same country as Seba has been a matter of uncertainty (compare the notes at Isaiah 43:3). It is elsewhere Psalm 72:10 mentioned as a place from where presents should be brought to Solomon:

The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents;
The kings of Sheba and Seha shall offer gifts.

It is usually mentioned as a place in which gold and incense abounded. ‹To him shall be given the gold of Sheba Psalm 72:15; ‹To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba‘ Jeremiah 6:20; ‹The merchants of Sheba were thy merchants‘ Ezekiel 27:22. According to Bruce, it was situated in Abyssinia in Ethiopa, and this has been the common opinion. It was south of Egypt, and the contact between Sheba and Jerusalem was not difficult; and probably a constant traffic was maintained between the two countries. In the time of the Mamclukes, before the conquest of Egypt and Arabia by Selim, a caravan constantly set out from Abyssinia for Jerusalem (compare the notes at Isaiah 45:14).

They shall bring gold and incense - That this country abounded in incense, see the passages of Scripture referred to above. On the meaning of the wood ‹incense,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 1:13. The idea is, that they would bring the most valuable productions of their country and devote them to God - perhaps designed to show that the wealth of Africa should yet be consecrated to the cause of the true religion.

And they shall show forth - These distant lands shall join in the worship of Yahweh.

Verse 7

All the flocks of Kedar - On the word ‹Kedar,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 21:16. The Kedarenians were a wandering tribe that frequently changed their residence, though it is probable they usually dwelt in the south part of Arabia Deserta, or the north of Arabia Petraea. They are mentioned as dwelling in beautiful tents Psalm 120:5; compare Isaiah 21:16-17; Isaiah 42:11. The language here also means that that which constituted their principal wealth would come and enrich Jerusalem, or the church of God.

The rams of Nebaioth - Nebaioth was also a son of Ishmael Genesis 25:13; 1 Chronicles 1:29, and was the father of the Nabatheans. They were a people of Arabia Petraea, and lived principally by plunder, trade, and the keeping of flocks. The country of Nabathea extended, it is supposed, from the Euphrates to the Red Sea, and embraced Petra, the capital of Arabia Deserts, and also Medaba. It is not possible, however, to fix the exact boundaries of the various tribes of Arabians. The general idea is, that their most valuable possessions would be devoted to God.

Shall minister unto thee - That is, by coming up as an acceptable sacrifice on the altar.

They shall come up with acceptance on mine altar - It is by no means necessary to understand this literally. The Jews were accustomed to express their ideas of worship by sacrifices, and the prophet naturally employed that language. The sense is, that the conversion of the wandering tribes of Arabia would be as certain and as signal as if the numerous flocks of Kedar and Nebaioth should be devoted to Yahweh in sacrifice. All that was valuable there would be employed in his service; the people would come with their most precious offerings and consecrate them to God. It is evident that this remains to be fulfilled. Paul, indeed, preached in Arabia Galatians 1:17; and, doubtless, there were some conversions to Christianity there. But, as a people, they never have been converted to the true God; and in all ages they have been the victims of either idolatry or superstition. The time will come, however, when Arabia, so interesting as settled by the descendants of Abraham; so interesting in the bold, active, and energetic character of its tribes; so interesting as using a language that is one of the most refined and far-spoken of the earth; and so interesting as being, in some parts at least, among the most fertile and beautiful of the earth, shall be converted to God. Probably the most balmy, pure, and pleasant climate of the world is the southern part of Arabia Felix - the country of Yemen; and when the Arabs shall bring their energy of character to the service of the true God, and the gospel shall be preached in their language to all their tribes, no one can predict the effect which this shall have on the entire conversion of the world.

And I will glorify - I will honor my glorious house, that is, the temple. Lowth, ‹And my beauteous house I will yet beautify.‘ The idea is, that he would adorn the temple by bringing the distant nations, with their most valuable possessions, to worship there. That is, the true religion would yet appear glorious when the nation should acknowledge it and submit to its requirements.

Verse 8

Who are these that fly as a cloud? - In multitudes so numerous, that they appear as a dense cloud. The prophet, in vision, sees a vast multitude coming to Jerusalem, or hastening to embrace the true religion - so numerous as to excite surprise, and to lead to the question, Who can they be? (compare Isaiah 49:21.) It is not uncommon to compare a multitude of

persons to a cloud. Thus Livy (xxxv. 49), *Rex contra peditum equitumque nubes jactat*. Thus in Hebrews 12:1, the number of witnesses who are said to encompass Christians is compared to a cloud (νέφος μαρτύρων *nephos marturōn*). So Virgil (Geor. iv. 60) compares a swarm of bees to a cloud - *obscuramque trahi vento mirabere nubem*. The Chaldee understands this of swift clouds, and takes the point of the comparison to be the velocity with which they would come. ‹Who are these that come publicly (בגלי *bigelay*) as swift clouds?‘ But the comparison relates probably to the number, rather than to the swiftness with which they would come. Converts would be multiplied in such numbers, that they would seem to be like dense clouds making their way to Zion. This strikingly expresses the fact of the numerous conversions among the Gentiles, and is a most beautiful description of a revival of religion.

And as the doves to their windows - Lowth renders this, ‹Like doves upon the wing‘ - supposing with Houbigant, that there is a slight error in the Hebrew text. The Septuagint renders it, Σὺν νοσσοῖς *Sun nossois* - ‹With their young.‘ But the true idea is contained in the common version. Doves fly to their houses, or to their windows, in an approaching storm. In like manner converts would hasten to Zion from the pagan world. They would come in great numbers, and would feel that if there they would be safe. Morier, in his “Second Journey,” p. 140, has well illustrated this passage - ‹In the environs of the city‘ (Ispahan), says he, ‹to the westward, near Zainderood, are many pigeon-houses, erected at a distance from habitations, for the purpose of collecting pigeon‘s dung for manure; They are large, round towers, rather broader at the bottom than at the top, crowned by conical spiracles, through which the pigeons descend. Their interior resembles a honey-comb, pierced with a thousand holes, each of which forms a snug retreat for a nest. The extraordinary flights of pigeons which I have seen upon one of these buildings affords, perhaps, a good illustration of Isaiah 60:8. Their great numbers, and the compactness of their mass, literally looked like a cloud at a distance, and obscured the sun in their passage.‘ The prediction here has already, in part at least, been fulfilled. The rapid conversions in file time of the apostles accorded with this prediction. In numerous revivals of religion, also, has there been a fulfillment of it; and we are yet to anticipate a far more striking and glorious completion of it in the conversion of the pagan world to the Christian faith.

Verse 9

Surely the isles - On the meaning of the word ‹isles‘ in Isaiah, see the notes at Isaiah 41:1.

Shall wait for me - (See the notes at Isaiah 41:4).

And the ships of Tarshish - (See the notes at Isaiah 2:16). The main idea here is clear. These ships were the principal vessels known to the Hebrews as employed in foreign commerce, and the prophet employs the name to denote ships in general that sailed to distant ports. They will be employed in importing the most valuable productions of distant climes to Zion, and in collecting those who should be converted to God; that is, the commerce of the world would be made tributary to religion, and the ships that sail to distant lands would be employed in advancing the cause of salvation.

First - Among the first, in the first rank; they shall be among the most active and useful agents in diffusing the knowledge of the truth. Twenty-five manuscripts and the Syriac read it, ‹As at the first.‘ Jarchi and Kimchi suppose it means, as at the first; that is, as in the time of Solomon. But the idea is, that the ships which trade to the most distant regions will be among the principal instrumentalities employed in the conversion of the pagan world to Christianity. To some extent this has already been done. The servants of God have been borne already to almost every pagan land; and the time may come when it shall be deemed an essential object of those engaged in foreign commerce to diffuse a knowledge of civilization, and of the arts of life; of science, and of pure religion.

To bring thy sons from far - Those who shall be converted from distant lands - as if they were to come personally and worship at Jerusalem (see the notes at Isaiah 49:22).

Unto the name of the Lord thy God - Lowth renders this, ‹Because of the name.‘ So the Septuagint, Διὰ τὸ ὄνομα *dia to onoma etc* The idea is, that all this wealth would be devoted to Yahweh, and employed in his service.

Because he hath glorified thee - He has honored thee by imparting to thee the true religion, and making me the means of diffusing it around the world.

Verse 10

And the sons of strangers - They who have been devoted to a foreign and a false religion shall become devoted to the true religion, and engage in the service of the true God.

Shall build up thy walls - Jerusalem is represented as a ruined city. Her walls had been thrown down, and were lying prostrate. In restoring her to her former magnificence, strangers and foreigners would lend their cheerful aid. The idea is, that they would become tributary to the church, and esteem it a privilege to be engaged in any service, however laborious, that would promote its best interests.

And their kings - (See the notes at Isaiah 49:23).

For in my wrath I smote thee - Referring to the calamities which he had, from time to time, brought on Jerusalem (see Isaiah 57:17).

But in my favor - (See the notes at Isaiah 54:8).

Verse 11

Therefore thy gates shall be open continually - The main idea here is, probably, that the accession from the pagan world, and the consequent influx of converts, would be so great, that there would be a necessity that the gates should never be closed. It is possible, also, that the prophet meant to describe that time as a period of security and peace. The gates of cities were closed in time of war, and at night, to guard them from danger. But in those times, such would be the prevalence of peace, and such would be the purposes for which the multitude of strangers would come from all parts of the world, that the gates might be left open, and the city unguarded at all times. The sense is -

1. That there will be immense multitudes that shall enter the true church from the pagan world.

2. That the gospel will be constantly and unceasingly offered to people. The doors of the church shall at no time be closed. By day and by night, at all seasons and in all places, people may come and obtain salvation. None shall be excluded because the gates shall be closed upon them; none because they are strangers and have come from distant lands; none because there will be no room; none because the conflux shall be so great that the provisions of mercy will be exhausted.

3. It will be a time of safety when the world shall be brought under the influence and the dominion of the Prince of Peace. There will be no need of closing the gates of cities, or of building walls around them. There will be no need to guard against hostile armies or the intrusions of hordes of banditti. There will be no need of guarding against the fraud, oppressions,

and dishonest arts of other people. If the principles of the true religion everywhere prevailed, there would be no need of wails to cities, or gates, or bars; no need of ramparts, of ships of war, and of fortifications; no need of bolts and locks and iron chests to guard our property. No true Christian needs to guard himself or his property against another true Christian. No lock, no bolt, no wall, no gate, no iron safe has been made in order to guard against a man who is the sincere friend of the Redeemer. They are made to guard against wicked people; and when universal truth and righteousness prevail, they may be suffered to rust and rot for want of use. Should the principles of Christianity be everywhere diffused, the walls of all cities might be suffered to fall down; their gates to stand open until they should decay; ships of war to lie in the dock until they should sink to the bottom, forts and fleets to be dismantled; and the whole business of making locks and shackles, and of building prisons and manufacturing instruments of war, would come to an end.

That men may bring unto thee - So many shall be coming with the wealth of the Gentiles, that the gates shall be continually open.

The forces of the Gentiles - The wealth of the pagan (see the notes at Isaiah 60:5).

And that their kings may be brought - Lowth renders this, ‹That their kings may come pompously attended.‘ Noyes, ‹May come with their retinues.‘ The Chaldee renders it, ‹And their kings be brought bound,‘ or in chains. But the Hebrew word used here (נהוּגים *nehûgîym*) denotes simply that they would be led or conducted in any way; and the idea is, that they would be induced, by the force of truth, to come and devote themselves to the service of God, They might be expected, indeed, to come, as Lowth says, pompously attended, but this idea is not in t the Hebrew text.

Verse 12

For the nation and kingdom - Perhaps this is given as a reason for What is said in the previous verse - that kings and their subjects should come to Zion and embrace the true religion, because if it were not done they would perish. This is certainly one reason why sinners hasten to embrace the Saviour; and when this truth becomes deeply impressed on a community, it is one of the means of a revival of religion. An apprehension of danger; a certain anticipation of ruin if the gospel is not embraced; a conviction that ‹there is salvation in no other,‘ is often a means of leading people to seek the Saviour.

That will not serve thee - That will not become the servant of the church of God: that is, that will not promote its interests, obey its laws, and maintain the true religion.

Shall perish - This is applied particularly here to a ‹nation‘ and a ‹kingdom.‘ The idea is, that no nation can flourish that does not obey the law of God, or where the worship of the true God is not maintained. History is full of affecting illustrations of this. The ancient republics and kingdoms fell because they had not the true religion. The kingdoms of Babylon, Assyria, Macedonia, and Egypt; the Roman empire, and all the ancient monarchies and republics, soon fell to ruin because they had not the salutary restraints of the true religion, and lacked the protection of the true God. France east off the government of God in the Revolution, and was drenched in blood. It is a maxim of universal truth, that the nation which does not admit the influence of the laws and the government of God must be destroyed. No empire is strong enough to wage successful war with the great Yahweh; and sooner or later, notwithstanding all that human policy can do, corruption, sensuality, luxury, pride, and far-spreading vice, will expose a nation to his displeasure, and bring down the heavy arm of his vengeance.

There is no truth of more vital interest to this nation (America) than this; no declaration in any ancient writing expressive of the course of events in this world, that hangs with note portentous interest over this republic, than that ‹the nation that will not serve god shall perish.‘ As a nation, we have nothing else to depend on but our pubic virtue, our intelligence, our respect for the laws of heaven. Our defense is not to be in standing armies - but in God, as our living and everwatchful protector and friend. Our hope is not in a vast navy, in strong ramparts, in frowning battlements, but in the favor of the Most High. No martial array, no strong fortresses, no line-of-battle-ships, can save a nation that has cast off the government of God, and that is distinguished for the violation of treaties and for oppression, bribery, and corruption. The nation that violates the Sabbath; that tramples on the rights of unoffending men and women; that disregards the most solemn compacts; and that voluntarily opens upon itself the floodgates of infidelity and vice, must expect to meet with the displeasure of the Almighty. And it is as true of an individual as it is of a nation. Of any human or angelic being; of any association or combination of human beings or angels that does not obey God, it is true that they shall be utterly destroyed.

Verse 13

The glory of Lebanon - The ‹glory of Lebanon,‘ here means the trees that grew on Lebanon (see the notes at Isaiah 35:2).

Shall come unto thee - That is, thy beauty and glory will be as great as if those valuable trees were brought and planted around the temple.

The fir-tree - (See the notes at Isaiah 41:19; Isaiah 55:13).

The box - (See also the notes at Isaiah 41:19).

To beautify the place of my sanctuary - The site of the temple, as if they were planted around it, and as if the magnificence of Lebanon was transferred there at once. The idea is, that the most valuable and glorious objects in distant nations would be consecrated to the service of the true God.

And I will make the place of my feet glorious - Lowth renders this, ‹I will glorify the place whereon I rest my feet;‘ and he supposes thai the ark is meant as the place on which God rested his feet as a footstool. In support of this, he appeals to Psalm 99:5, ‹Worship at his footstool;‘ and 1 Chronicles 28:2. So Rosenmuller understands it, and appeals further to Psalm 132:7. Doubtless the main idea is, that the temple was regarded as the sacred dwelling-place of God - and that he means to say, that every place in his temple, even where, to keep up the figure, he rested his feet when he sat on the throne, would be filled with magnificence and glory.

Verse 14

The sons of them that afflicted thee - In the previous verses the prophet had said that strangers and foreigners would become tributary to the true religion. Here, to give variety and interest to the description, he says, that even the descendants of those who had oppressed them would become tributary to them, and acknowledge them as favored by Yahweh.

Shall come bending unto thee - Shall come to time in a posture of humiliation and respect, In regard to the fulfillment of this, we may observe:

1. That there was a partial fulfillment of it in the conquest of Babylon. The sons, the descendants of those who had destroyed Jerusalem, and led the Jews into captivity, were constrained to acknowledge them, and, under Cyrus, to reconduct them to the land of their fathers (see the notes at Isaiah 14:1-2).

2. It has often occurred, in times of persecution, that the immediate descendants of the persecutors, and that too by means of the persecution, became converted to the true religion, and acknowledged the God of those whom they bad persecuted to be the true God.

3. It often occurs in times when there is no open and public persecution. Many of those now in the church are the children or descendants of those who had been the enemies of the gospel. They themselves did all that could be done, by their lives and examples, to train up their children in opposition to it. But the sovereign mercy of God interposed, and from such he selected heralds of salvation and preachers of righteousness to a lost world, or such as should become shining lights in the more obscure walks of the Christian life.

And all they that despised thee - There shall yet be a universal acknowledgment of the true religion even in those nations that have spurned the gospel. This does not mean that all who have ever despised the true religion shall be converted and saved, but that there shall be a universal acknowledgement that it is of God, and that the church is under his care. See an explanation of this sentiment in the notes at Isaiah 45:23.

At the soles of thy feet - In a posture of the utmost reverence and submission (see Revelation 3:9; compare the notes at Isaiah 49:23).

And they shall call thee - They shall honor thee as the favored of the Lord; as the abode of the true God (see Isaiah 2:3).

The Zion … - The Zion, or the royal court where the holy God that is worshipped in Israel dwells.

Verse 15

Whereas thou hast been forsaken - Hebrew, ‹Instead of (תחת *tachath*) thy being forsaken,‘ that is, thy subsequent prosperity shall come in the place of thy being formerly forsaken. The forsaking here refers to the various calamities, persecutions, and trials, which she had been called to endure.

So that no man went through thee - When the country was desolate and abandoned, so that no caravan passed from one part of it to another, or made it a thoroughfare in going to other lands (compare Lamentations 1:4; see the notes at Isaiah 34:10).

I will make thee an eternal excellency - Lowth, ‹An everlasting boast.‘ Noyes, ‹Glory.‘ I will make you forever honored or exalted, so that you

shall no more be desolate and abased.

A joy of many generations - A subject of joy from generation to generation; that is, one age after another.

Verse 16

Thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles - This expression means, ‹Whatever is valuable and rich which they possess shall contribute to your welfare.‘ The idea is the same substantially which occurs in the previous parts of the chapter, that the riches of the pagan world would become tributary to the advancement of the true religion.

And thou shall suck the breast of kings - The Chaldee renders this, ‹And thou shalt be satisfied with the riches of the people, and shalt delight thyself with the spoil of kings.‘ The phrase to suck ‹the breast of kings is unusual; but the sense is simple and plain, that kings and their wealth should be made to contribute to sustain the church. See the sentiment explained in the notes at Isaiah 49:23.

And thou shalt know - By the protection which shall be extended to thee, and by the accession which shall be made to thee, thou shalt have full proof that Yahweh is thy protector and friend. The conversion of the pagan world shall demonstrate that Yahweh is the friend of his church and people.

Verse 17

For brass I will bring gold - This commences the description of the happy times when the Gentiles should be led to embrace the true religion, and when the wealth of the world would be consecrated to the service of the true God. The idea is, that all things would be changed for the better. The golden age should come; and a change from the calamities to which reference had been made by the prophet, would take place as great as if, in all purposes of life, gold should be used where brass is commonly used; and silver where iron is commonly used; and brass where wood is used; and iron where stones are used. Calvin supposes, not improbably, that allusion is here made to the temple, and that, in describing the future glory of the church, the prophet says that the change would be as glorious as if, in all places where brass and iron and wood and stone had been used, gold and silver and brass and iron should be respectively used in their places. The Chaldee renders this, ‹Instead of the brass which they took away from thee, O Jerusalem, I will bring gold; and instead of the iron I will bring silver; and instead of the wood, brass; and instead of the stones, iron.‘ Jarchi, Kimchi, and Grotius, accord with this interpretation. But it is probably

designed as a poetical description of the glory of the future age, and of the great changes which would take place in human society under the influence of the gospel. No one can doubt that the gospel produces these changes; and that the changes of society caused by the gospel are as beautiful and striking as though gold and silver should be substituted for brass and iron, and brass and iron for wood and stone. Such changes shall yet take place everywhere on the earth; and the world shall ye be beautified, enriched, and adorned by the prevalence of the true religion.

I will also make thy officers peace - Thy officers shall be appointed to promote peace and shall secure it. The sense is, that wars would be ended, and that universal concord and harmony would prevail in the church under the guidance of those appointed to administer to its affairs (compare Isaiah 2:4; Isaiah 9:6). The word ‹officers,‘ here denotes those who should be appointed to superintend the affairs of the church (from פקד *pâqad*), to visit, review, superintend, oversee), and refers here to all who should be appointed to rule in the church. The word itself may be applicable either to civil magistrates or to the ministers of religion. The Septuagint renders it, Ἄρχοντα *Archontas* - ‹Rulers,‘ and they translate the passage, ‹I will give thy rulers in peace‘ ἐν εἰρήνη *en eirēnē*).

And thine exactors - They who should exact, or collect tribute or taxes. The word from which the noun used here is derived (נגשׁ *nâgas'*), means “to urge, impel, drive” - hence the noun ‹taskmaster‘ - ἐργοδιώκτης *ergodiōktēs* (Exodus 3:7; Job 3:18); then to urge a debtor, to exact a debt; then to rule or have dominion; to appoint and exact taxes, etc. Here it refers to magistrates, and it means that they would be mild and equal in their exactions.

Righteousness - They shall not lay unequal or oppressive burdens; they shall not oppress in the collection of taxes. The idea is, that righteousness would prevail in every department of the church and the state.

Verse 18

Violence shall no more be heard in thy land - This is a most beautiful description of the peace and prosperity which would prevail in the times of the Messiah. If the gospel, in its purity, should prevail on earth, there would be no more scenes of violence and war. The battle-shout would be heard no more; the cry of violence, the clangor of arms would resound no more. The pure gospel of the Redeemer has never originated one war; never produced one scene of bloodshed; never once prompted to violence and strife. There has been no war in any age or in any land which the principles of the

gospel, if acted on by both the contending nations, would not have prevented; there have been no scenes of bloodshed which would not have been avoided if that had been suffered to control the hearts of people. And no one who believes the Bible to be a revelation from God, can doubt that the time will come when the mad passions of kings and nations shall be subdued, and when wars shall cease to be known except in the melancholy and disgraceful records of past events (compare the notes at Isaiah 2:4).

Wasting - The waste of life and property; the burning of cities, towns, and villages; and the desolution which spreads over farms and plantations on the march of a victorious enemy.

Nor destruction - Hebrew, שֹׁבר *sheber* - ‹Breaking.‘ The breaking or treading down caused by the march of a triumphant army.

In thy borders - Within thy bounds or limits. Thy whole country shall be peace and prosperity; that is, wherever the gospel shall spread there shall be security and peace.

But thou shalt call thy walls Salvation - Thou shalt live securely within thy walls, and shalt speak of them as furnishing protection or salvation. The time will come when the church shall have no reason to apprehend danger from abroad, and when all shall be peace within.

And thy gates Praise - Because, says Grotius, those who are appointed to watch at their gates shall announce the approach of no enemy, but shall, with the highest security, celebrate the praises of God. Praise would be celebrated in all the places of public concourse, and perfect protection would be ascribed to all her walls; that is, in the church there would be entire security, and everywhere the praises of God would be celebrated.

Verse 19

The sun shall be no more - A similar expression denoting the great prosperity and happiness of the church, occurs in Isaiah 30:26 (see the note at that place). The language here is exceedingly beautiful, and the idea is plain. It is designed to foretell the great glory which would exist in the church under the Messiah; a glory compared with which all that is furnished by the sun, moon, and stars would be as nothing. Expressions singular to this, and probably derived from this, are used by John in describing the lot of heaven. ‹And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof‘ Revelation 21:23. ‹And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light‘

Revelation 22:5. The idea is, the light and beauty of truth would be so great; the divine perfections shine forth so illustriously under the gospel, that the eye would be attracted to that light as superior to all the natural splendor of the sun and moon. All the wonders and beauties of the natural world would be lost in the superior brightness that would shine in the moral world.

Neither for brightness - In order to give light; or, with her brightness she shall not shine on the night.

Shall the moon give light unto thee - The beauty of the moon shall be lost in the superior effulgence of the rays of truth.

But the Lord shall be unto thee - He will furnish a revelation that will disclose far more of his perfections and his glory, and that will be far more valuable to thee as a light and guide, than all the splendor of the heavenly bodies.

And thy God thy glory - The honor of the church shall be that it has the true God for its protector. Its joys shall be found, not in the objects of nature - the beauty of created things - but in the glory of the divine perfections, and in the laws and plans of the Redeemer. His name, his attributes, his laws, his protecting care, constitute her main glory. It is an honor to the church to have such a God and Redeemer; an honor to share his favor, and to be under his everwatchful eye. The glory of the church is not her wealth, her numbers, her influence, nor the rank and talent of her ministers and members; it is the character of her sovereign Lord, and in his perfections it is right that she should exult and rejoice.

Verse 20

Thy sun shall no more go down - There shall be no total and long night of calamity, error, and sin. This is designed to describe the flourishing and glorious state of the church. It, of course, does not mean that there should be no times of calamity, no period of ignorance, no scenes of persecution; but it means that there should not be total night. Truth should reign on the earth, and there never would be a time when the light of salvation would be extinct. There never would be a time like that when Jerusalem was wholly destroyed, and a long total night came over the land. There never would be a time when the Sun of righteousness would not shine, or when the world would be wholly deprived of the illumination of his beams. The church would be perpetual. It would live through all changes, and survive all revolutions, and to the end of time the light of salvation would shine upon a darkened world. Since the Messiah came the light of revelation has never

been wholly withdrawn from the world, nor has there been a period in which total and absolute night has come over all the church of God. But the prophet, probably, referred to far more glorious times than have yet occurred. The period is coming when the light of salvation will shine upon the earth with unclouded and universal splendor, as if the sun having ascended to the meridian should stand there in a blaze of glory age after age; when there shall be no alternation of day and night when the light shall not be obscured by clouds; and when there shall be no eclipse of his glory.

Neither shall thy moon - This language is poetic, and means that there would be no such obscurity in the church as there would be in the world should the sun and moon be withdrawn. Light and beauty unobscured would fill the whole heavens, and the darkness of night would be henceforward unknown.

Withdraw itself - Hebrew, יאסף *yē'âsēp* - ‹Be collected,‘ that is, shall not be withdrawn, or shall not wane. The Septuagint, Οὐκ ἐκλείψει *Ouk ekleipsei* - ‹Shall not be eclipsed,‘ or shall not fail.

The days of thy mourning - (See the notes at Isaiah 25:8). The description here, therefore, is one of great glory and happiness in the church. That period will yet arrive; and no friend of God and of the happiness of man can think of that time without praying most sincerely that it may soon come, when the Sun of righteousness, in the fullness of his glory, shall ascend to the meridian, and stand there without one obscuring cloud, and pour the splendor of the noontide beams all over a darkened world. Some of the ideas in this chapter, descriptive of the glorious times of the gospel, have been beautifully versified by Pope in his Messiah:

Rise, crown‘d with light, imperial Salem, rise!
Exalt thy tow‘ry head, and lift thy eyes!
See a long race thy spacious courts adorn;

See future sons and daughters yet unborn,

In crowding ranks on every side arise,

Demanding life, impatient for the skies!

See barbarous nations at thy gates attend,

Walk in thy light, and in thy temple bend:

See thy bright altars throng‘d with prostrate kings,

And heap‘d with products of Sabcan springs!

For thee Idumea‘s spicy forests blow,

And seeds of gold in Ophir‘s mountains glow;

See heaven its sparkling portals wide display,

And break upon them in a flood of day!

No more the rising sun shall gild the morn,

Nor evening Cynthia fill her silver horn;

But lost, dissolved in thy superior rays,

One tide of glory, one unclouded blaze,

O‘erflow thy courts; the light himself shall shine

Reveal‘d, and God‘s eternal day be thine!

The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,

Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away;

But fix‘d his word, his saving power remains;

Thy realm forever lasts, thine own Messiah reigns!

Verse 21

Thy people also shall be all righteous - (See the notes at Isaiah 4:2).

They shall inherit the land for ever - (See the notes at Isaiah 49:8; Isaiah 54:3; compare Isaiah 65:9; Matthew 5:5).

The branch of my planting - On the meaning of the word branch, see the notes at Isaiah 11:1; Isaiah 14:19. Here it means a scion or shoot which Yahweh had planted, and which had sprung up under his culture. Grotius supposes it means posterity. The idea seems to be, that they would inherit the land and all which would grow up under the culture of the hand of Yahweh.

The work of my hands - The language here is taken from the cultivation of the land of Canaan; but the sense is, that the church would inherit all that God had done for its welfare. Applied to the work of redemption, it means that the result of all the labors, self-denials, and sacrifices of the Redeemer, become the inheritance of the church. The comforts, joys, hopes, consolations of his people are the fruit of his self-denial, ‹the work of his hands,‘ and they are permitted to enjoy it all - as if God should cultivate a fruitful field and give the avails entirely to them.

That I may be glorified - (See Isaiah 49:3; Isaiah 61:3; the notes at Isaiah 42:8; Isaiah 43:7). God would be glorified in having made so ample provision for their welfare, and in their being made happy by him. He is always glorified when others enjoy the fruits of his benevolence, and when they are made pure and happy as the result of his purposes and plans.

Verse 22

A little one shall become a thousand - There shall be a great increase, as if one, and that the smallest, should be multiplied to a thousand. The idea is, that the people, then small in number, would be greatly increased by the accession of the Gentile world. Lowth and Noyes render this, ‹The little one.‘ Grotius, ‹The least one.‘ So the Septuagint, Ο ὀλιγιστὸς *Ho oligistos* I the Lord will hasten it in his time - Noyes, ‹Its time.‘ Lowth ‹Due time.‘ Septuagint, ‹I will do it in the proper time‘ (κατα καιρὸν *kata kairon*). The sense is, that this would be done at the proper time - called, in Galatians 4:4, ‹the fullness of time.‘ There was a proper season when this was to be accomplished. There were important preparations to be made before it could be done. The nations, under the divine arrangement, were to be put into a proper position to receive the Messiah. He was not to come until:

1. The experiment had been fairly made to show how weak and feeble man was without a rerelation - to show that philosophy, and learning, and the policy of statesmen, could do nothing effectual for the salvation of men.

2. He was not to come until the world should be at peace, and until there would be facilities for the rapid propagation of religion in all lands.

3. Or was he to come until all that had been said in prophecy should be fulfilled - until all the circumstances should combine, which had been foretold as favorable to the introduction of the reign of the Messiah. But when that period should arrive, then the Lord would ‹hasten‘ it.

There would be no unnecessary delay; none which the circumstances of the case did not call for. So it will be in the universal spread of the gospel referred to in this chapter. When the world shall be moulded into a proper state to welcome it; when the nations are prepared to receive it and profit by it; then the universal propagation shall be hastened, and a nation shall be born in a day (see the notes at Isaiah 66:8). Meantime, for the coming of that day we should pray and labor. By the diffusion of truth: by schools; by the spread of the Bible; by preaching; by the translation of the Word of God into every language: by establishing the press in all the strong points of Pagan influence; by placing missionaries in all the holds of power in the pagan world; and by training up many to enter into the harvest, the Christian world should prepare for the universal conversion of the world to God. In due time it shall be hastened. and ‹he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry‘ Hebrews 10:37.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 61

Introduction

This chapter, in its design and structure, is intimately connected with the preceding. That it refers to the Messiah will be shown in the notes at Isaiah 61:1-3, and the main scope and design of the chapter is to show some of the glorious results of his coming.

The chapter may be regarded as divided into the following parts, namely:

I. The public address or proclamation of the Messiah, stating the design for which he had been appointed to his office, and the consolatory nature of his message Isaiah 61:1-3.

II. The happy effects and privileges of his coming Isaiah 61:4-9.

1. The effects of his coming in restoring the old wastes, and in building up the long-fallen ruins Isaiah 61:4-5.

(1) The aid of others would be called in for this.

(2) The sons of foreigners would become tributary to them, and feed their flocks and plow their fields, and dress their vines - that is, the pagan world would become subject to the church.

2. The privileges which would result from Ms coming Isaiah 61:6-9.

(1) Absolutely. They would be named friends of God, and enjoy the wealth of the pagan world.

(2) Comparatively. Their state would be far more than a recompence for all they had suffered.

(3) In the honor which would be put upon them. Their name would be known abroad, and their children be honored as the blessed of the Lord.

III. The occasion of rejoicing which the church would have in this Isaiah 61:10-11.

1. In the beauty and honor with which she would be clothed.

2. In the abundant increase of righteousness and purity.

Verse 1

The Spirit of the Lord God - Hebrew, The Spirit of the Lord Yahweh.‘ The Chaldee renders this, ‹The prophet said, the spirit of prophecy from the presence of Yahweh God is upon me.‘ The Syriac, ‹The Spirit of the Lord God.‘ The Septuagint, Πνεῦμα Κυρίου *Pneuma Kuriou* - ‹The Spirit of the

Lord,‘ omitting the word אדני *'ădonāy* So Luke quotes it in Luke 4:18. That this refers to the Messiah is abundantly proved by the fact that the Lord Jesus expressly applied it to himself (see Luke 4:21). Rosenmuller, Gesenius, and some others, suppose that it refers to Isaiah himself, and that the idea is, that the prophet proclaims his commission as authorized to administer consolation to the suffering exiles in Babylon. It cannot be denied that the language is such as may be applied in a subordinate sense to the office of the prophet, and that the work of the Redeemer is here described in terms derived from the consolation and deliverance afforded to the long-suffering exiles. But in a much higher sense it refers to the Messiah, and received an entire completion only as applied to him and to his work. Even Grotius, who has been said to ‹find Christ nowhere in the Old Testament,‘ remarks, ‹Isaiah here speaks of himself, as the Chaldee observes; but in him we see not an obscure image of Christ.‘ Applied to the Redeemer, it refers to the time when, having been baptized and set apart to the work of the Mediatorial office, he began publicly to preach (see Luke 4:21). The phrase ‹the Spirit of Yahweh is upon me,‘ refers to the fact; that he had been publicly consecrated to his work by the Holy Spirit descending on him at Iris baptism Matthew 3:16; John 1:32, and that the Spirit of God had been imparted to him ‹without measure‘ to endow him for his great office (John 3:34; see the notes at Isaiah 11:2).

Because the Lord hath anointed me - The word rendered ‹hath anointed‘ (משׁח *mâshach*), is that from which the word Messiah is derived (see the notes at Isaiah 45:1). prophets and kings were set apart to their high office, by the ceremony of pouring oil on their heads; and the idea here is that God had set apart the Messiah for the office which he was to bear, and had abundantly endowed him with the graces of which the anointing oil was an emblem. The same language is used in reference to the Messiah in Psalm 45:7 (compare Hebrews 1:9).

To preach good tidings - On the meaning of the word (בשׂר *bâs'ar*) rendered here ‹to preach good tidings,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 52:7. The Septuagint renders it, Εὐαγγελίσασθαι *Euangelisasthai* - ‹To evangelize,‘ to preach the gospel.

Unto the meek - The word rendered ‹meek‘ (ענוים ʿ*ănâviym*) properly denotes the afflicted, the distressed, the needy. The word ‹meek‘ means those who are patient in the reception of injuries, and stands opposed to revengeful and irascible. This is by no means the sense of the word here. It

refers to those who were borne down by calamity in any form, and would be particularly applicable to those who had been sighing in a long captivity in Babylon. It is not improperly rendered by the Septuagint by the word πτωχοῖς *ptōchois* ‹poor,‘ and in like manner by Luke Luke 4:18; and the idea is, that the Redeemer came to bring a joyful message to those who were oppressed and borne down by the evils of poverty and calamity (compare Matthew 11:5).

To bind up the broken-hearted - (See the notes at Isaiah 1:6). The broken-hearted are those who are deeply afflicted and distressed on any account. It may be either on account of their sins, or of captivity and oppressionk, or of the loss of relations and friends. The Redeemer came that he might apply the balm of consolation to all such hearts, and give them joy and peace. A similar form of expression occurs in Psalm 147:3:

He healeth the broken in heart,
And bindeth up their wounds.

To proclaim liberty to the captives - This evidently is language which is taken from the condition of the exiles in their long captivity in Babylon. The Messiah would accomplish a deliverance for those who were held under the captivity of sin similar to that of releasing captives from long and painful servitude. The gospel does not at once, and by a mere exertion of power, open prison doors, and restore captives to liberty. But it accomplishes an effect analogous to this: it releases the mind captive under sin; and it will finally open all prison doors, and by preventing crime will prevent the necessity of prisons, and will remove all the sufferings which are now endured in confinement as the consequence of crime. It may be remarked further, that the word here rendered ‹liberty‘ (דרור *derôr*) is a word which is properly applicable to the year of Jubilee, when all were permitred to go free Leviticus 25:10: ‹And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty (דרור *derôr*) throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.‘ So in Jeremiah 34:8-9, it is used to denote the manumission of slaves: ‹To proclaim liberty (דרור *derôr*) unto them; that every man should let his man-servant and every man his maid-servant, being an Hebrew, or an Hebrewess, go free.‘ So also Isaiah 61:1, of the same chapter.

So also in Ezekiel 46:17, it is applied to the year in which the slave was by law restored to liberty. Properly, therefore, the word has reference to the freedom of those who are held in bondage, or to servitude; and it may be

implied that it was to be a part of the purpose of the Messiah to proclaim, ultimately, universal freedom, and to restore all people to their just rights. If this is the sense - and I see no reason to doubt it - while the main thing intended was that he should deliver people from the inglorious servitude of sin, it also means, that the gospel would contain principles inconsistent with the existence of slavery, and would ultimately produce universal emancipation. Accordingly it is a matter of undoubted fact that its influence was such that in less than three centuries it was the means of abolishing slavery throughout the Roman empire; and no candid reader of the New Testament can doubt that if the principles of Christianity were universally followed, the last shackle would soon fall from the slave. Be the following facts remembered:

1. No man ever made another originally a slave under the influence of Christian principle. No man ever kidnapped another, or sold another, BECAUSE it was done in obedience to the laws of Christ.

2. No Christian ever manumitted a slave who did not feel that in doing it he was obeying the spirit of Christianity, and who did not have a more quiet conscience on that account.

3. No man doubts that if freedom were to prevail everywhere, and all men were to be regarded as of equal civil rights, it would be in accordance with the mind of the Redeemer.

4. Slaves are made in violation of all the precepts of the Saviour. The work of kidnapping and selling men, women, and children; of tearing them from their homes, and confining them in the pestilential holds of ships on the ocean, and of dooming them to hard and perpetual servitude, is not the work to which the Lord Jesus calls his disciples.

5. Slavery, in fact, cannot be maintained without an incessant violation of the principles of the New Testament. To keep people in ignorance; to witchold from them the Bible; to prevent their learning to read; to render nugatory the marriage contract, or to make it subject to the will of a master; to deprive a man of the avails of Iris own labor without his consent; to make him or his family subject to a removal against his will; to prevent parents

from training up their children according to their own views of what is right; to fetter and bind the intellect and shut up the avenues to knowledge as a necessary means of continuing the system; and to make people dependent wholly on others whether they shall hear the gospel or be permitted publicly to embrace it, is everywhere deemed essential to the existence of slavery, and is demanded by all the laws which rule over the regions of a country cursed with this institution. In the whole work of slavery, from the first capture of the unoffending person who is made a slave to the last act which is adopted to secure his bondage, there is an incessant and unvarying trampling on the laws of Jesus Christ. Not one thing is done to make and keep a slave in accordance with any command of Christ; not one thing which would be done if his example were followed and his law obeyed. Who then can doubt that he came ultimately to proclaim freedom to all captives, and that the prevalence of his gospel will yet be the means of universal emancipation? (compare the notes at Isaiah 58:6).

And the opening of the prison - This language also is taken from the release of those who had been confined in Babylon as in a prison; and the idea is, that the Redeemer would accomplish a work for sinful and suffering people like throwing open the doors of a prison and bidding the man who had been long lying in a dungeon to go free. On the grammatical structure of the verb rendered here ‹opening of the prison‘ (פקח־קוח *peqach -qôach*), Gesenius (Lexicon) and Rosenmuller may be consulted. According to Gesenius, it should be read as one word. So many manuscripts read it. It occurs nowhere else. It means here deliverance. The Septuagint renders it, ‹And sight to the blind,‘ which is followed by Luke. The sentiment which is found in the Septuagint and in Luke, is a correct one, and one which elsewhere occurs in the prophets (see Isaiah 34:5): and as the sentiment was correct, the Saviour did not deem it necessary to state that this was not the literal translation of the Hebrew. Or more properly the Saviour in the synagogue at Nazareth Luke 4:19 used the Hebrew, and when Luke came to record it, he quoted it as he found it in the version then in common use. This was the common practice with the writers of the New Testament. The Evangelist wrote probably for the Hellenists, or the Greek Jews, who commonly used the Septuagint version, and he quotes that version as being the one with which they were familiar. The sense is not materially varied whether the Hebrew be followed, or the version by the Septuagint. The

Arabic version agrees nearly with the Evangelist. Horne (Introduction, ii. 403) is of opinion that the Hebrew formerly contained more than we now find in the manuscripts and the printed editions. Of that, however, I think there is no good evidence.

Verse 2

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord - (see the notes at Isaiah 49:8). There is probably an allusion here to the year of Jubilee, when the trumpet was blown, and liberty was proclaimed throughout all the land (so Leviticus 25:9-10). In like manner the Messiah would come to proclaim universal liberty - liberty to all the world from the degrading servitude of sin. The time of his coming would be a time when Yahweh would be pleased to proclaim through him universal emancipation from this ignoble bondage, and to restore to all the privilege of being the freedmen of the Lord.

And the day of vengeance of our God - (See the notes at Isaiah 34:8). This is language adapted to the deliverance from Babylon. The rescue of his people would be attended with vengeance on their enemies. This was not quoted by the Saviour in his discourse at Nazareth, or if quoted, the fact is not recorded by Luke (see Luke 4:19). The text which the Saviour took then as the foundation of his discourse Luke 4:21, seems to have ended with the clause before this, It is not to be inferred, however, that he did not consider the subsequent expressions as referring to himself, but it was not necessary to his purpose to quote them. Regarded as applicable to the Redeemer and his preaching, this doubtless refers to the fact that his coming would be attended with vengeance on his foes. It is a great truth, manifest everywhere, that God‘s coming forth at any time to deliver his people is attended with vengeance on his enemies. So it was in the destruction of Idumea - regarded as the general representative of all the foes of God (see the notes at Isaiah 35:1-10); so it was in the deliverance from Egypt - involving the destruction of Pharaoh and his host; so in the destruction of Babylon and the deliverance of the captives there. So in like manner it was in the destruction of Jerusalem; and so it will be at the end of the world 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.

To comfort all that mourn - The expression, ‹all that mourn,‘ may refer either to those who mourn over the loss of earthly friends and possessions, or to those who mourn over sin. In either case the gospel has afforded abundant sources of consolation (see the notes at Isaiah 25:8).

Verse 3

To appoint unto them - Hebrew, ‹To place;‘ that is, to place happiness before them; to give them joy arid consolation.

That mourn in Zion - (See the notes at Isaiah 1:8). The mourners in Zion mean those who dwelt in Jerusalem; then all those who are connected with the church of God - his poor and afflicted people.

To give unto them beauty for ashes - In the Hebrew there is here a beautiful paronomasia, which cannot be transferred to our language - אפר תחת פאר *pe'ēr tachath 'êpher* The word rendered ‹beauty‘ (פאר *pe'ēr*) means properly a head-dress, turban, tiara, or diadem; and the idea is, that the Redeemer would impart to his mourning people such an ornament instead of the ashes which in their grief they were accustomed to easy on their heads. For the use of the word, see Isaiah 3:20; Isaiah 61:10; Exodus 39:29; Ezekiel 24:17-23. It was common among the Orientals to east dust and ashes upon their heads in time of mourning, and as expressive of their grief (compare the notes at Isaiah 57:5; 2 Samuel 13:19).

The oil of joy - The oil of joy denotes that which was symbolic or expressive of joy. Oil or ointment was employed on occasions of festivity and joy (see the notes at Isaiah 57:9); but its use was abstained from in times of public calamity or grief (see 2 Samuel 14:2).

The garment of praise - That is, the garment or clothing which shall be expresive of praise or gratitude instead of that which shall indicate grief.

For the spirit of heaviness. - Instead of a heavy, burdened, and oppressed spirit. The word used here (כהה *kēhâh*), usually means faint, feeble, weak (see the notes at Isaiah 42:3). It is applied to a lamp about to go out Isaiah 42:3; to eyes bedimmed, or dull 1 Samuel 3:2; to a faint or pale color Leviticus 13:39. Here it denotes those of a faint and desponding heart. These expressions are figurative, and are taken from the custom which prevailed more in Oriental countries than elsewhere - and which is founded in nature - of expressing the emotions of the mind by the manner of apparel. These customs are stated in the book of Judith. She ‹pulled off the sackcloth which she had on, and pus off the garments of her widowhood, and washed her body all over with water, and anointed herself with precious ointment, and braided the hair of her head, and put on a tire upon it (Greek, μιτρε *mitre*), and put on her garments of gladness wherewith she was clad during the life of Manasses her husband. And she took sandals upon her feet, and put about her her bracelets, and her chains,

and her rings, and her ear-rings, and all her ornaments, and decked herself bravely to allure the eyes of all men that should see her‘ Isaiah 10:3-4.

That they might be called - That is, those who had mourned in Zion.

Trees of righteousness - In the Hebrew, ‹Oaks,‘ or terebinth trees. By their being oaks of righteousness is meant people distinguished for righteousness or justice. The Septuagint renders it, Γενεαὶ *Geneai* - ‹Generations;‘ Jerome, Fortes - ‹Strong;‘ the Chaldee, ‹Princes;‘ the Syriac, ‹Rams;‘ but the word properly denotes the oak, or the terebinth tree - a lofty, strong, and magnificent tree. It is not uncommon to represent people by trees (see Isaiah 1:29-30; Psalm 92:12-14):

The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree;
He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon,
Those that be planted in the house of the Lord,

Shall flourish in the courts of our God.

They shall still bring forth fruit in old age;
They shall be fat and flourishing.

See also the beautiful description in Psalm 1:3, and in Jeremiah 17:8. The idea here is, that they who had been oppressed and borne down by calamity and by a sense of sin, would become vigorous and strong; and would be such as aptly to be compared to majestic trees with far-spreading branches - an image everywhere of that which is truly beautiful.

The planting of the Lord - Those whom Yahweh had truly planted; that is, those who were under his care and culture (see the notes at Isaiah 60:21). The same figure is used by the Saviour. ‹Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up‘ Matthew 15:13.

That he might be glorified - (See the notes at Isaiah 60:21).

Verse 4

And they shall build the old wastes - (See the notes at Isaiah 58:12).

Verse 5

And strangers shall stand - (See the notes at Isaiah 14:1-2; Isaiah 60:10).

And feed your flocks - The keeping of flocks constituted a very considerable part of the husbandry of those who dwelt in Palestine. Of course, any considerable prosperity of a spiritual nature would be well represented by an accession of foreigners, who should come to relieve them

in their toil. It is not necessary to suppose that this is to be taken literally, nor that it should be so spiritualized as to suppose that the prophet refers to churches and their pastors, and to the fact, that those churches would be put under the care of pastors from among the pagan. The idea is, that it would be a time of signal spiritual prosperity, and when the accession would be as great and important as if foreigners were to come in among a people, and take the whole labor of attending their flocks and cultivating their fields.

Your plowmen - Hebrew, אכר *'ikkâr* from which probably is derived the Greek ἀγρός *agros* the Gothic *akr*; the German *acker*; and the English *acre*. It means properly a digger or cultivator of the soil, or farmer Jeremiah 51:26; Amos 5:16.

And vine-dressers - The sense here accords with that which has been so repeatedly said before, that the pagan world would yet become tributary to the church (see the notes at Isaiah 9:5-7, Isaiah 9:9-10).

Verse 6

But ye shall be named - The idea here literally is, ‹There will be no need of your engaging in the business of agriculture. All that will be done by others; and you, as ministers of God, may engage wholly in the duties of religion. The world shall be tributary to you, and you shall enjoy the productions of all lands; and you may, therefore, devote yourselves exclusively to the service of Yahweh, as a kingdom of priests.‘ A similar promise occurs in Exodus 19:6: ‹And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.‘ The idea is, that there would be a degree of spiritual prosperity, as great as if they were permitted to enjoy all the productions of other climes; as if all menial and laborious service were performed by others; and as if they were to be entirely free from the necessity of toil, and were permitted to devote themselves exclusively to the services of religion.

Ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles - (See the notes at Isaiah 60:5-11).

And in their glory - In what constitutes their glory, or what they regard as valuable; that is, their wealth, their talents, and their power.

Shall you boast yourselves? - There has been considerable variety of interpretation in regard to the meaning of the word used here. Jerome renders it, *Et in gloria earum superbietis*. The Septuagint, ‹In their wealth ye shall be admired‘ (θαυμασθήσεσθε *thaumasthēsesthe*). The Chaldee and Syriac render it, ‹In their splendor ye shall glory.‘ The word used is ימר

yâmar It occurs nowhere else, it is believed, except in Jeremiah 2:11, twice, where it is tendered ‹changed.‘ ‹Hath a nation changed (ההימיר *hahēymiyr*) their gods, which are yet no gods? But my people have changed (המיר *hēmiyr*) their glory for that which doth not profit.‘ In the passage before us, it is used in Hithpael, and means properly to exchange oneself with anyone. Here it means, ‹In their splendor we shall take their places,‘ that is, we shall enjoy it in their stead. We shall avail ourselves of it as if we were to enter into their possessions, and as if it were our own. The sense is, it shall come to enrich and adorn the church. It shall cleavage places, and shall all belong to the penple of God - in accordance with that which has been so often said by Isaiah, that the wealth of the world would become tributary to the church.

Verse 7

For your shame - That is, instead of the reproach and humiliation which you have been called to experience.

You shall have double - A double inheritance or reward (see the notes at Isaiah 40:2).

And for confusion - The word ‹confusion‘ here means the same as a blush of shame, and refers to the scenes of humiliation and sorrow which the nation had passed through on account of its sins.

They shall rejoice - There is here a change from the second to the third person - a change which is not unfrequent in Isaiah. The same persons, however, are intended.

In their portion - That is, you shall be permitted to rejoice in the augmented privileges which you shall enjoy. They will be more than a compensation for all the calamities which you have been called to endure.

Therefore in their land - This is to be regarded as addressed to the exiles in Babylon, and the promise is, that the people of God would be restored again to their own land, and to more than their former privileges and blessings there.

The double - Double of what they formerly possessed; that is, their blessings would be greatly increased and multiplied. Applied to the times of the Messiah, to which the prophet undoubtedly refers, it means that the privileges of the friends of God would be far greater than had been enjoyed even in the most favored times under the former dispensation.

Everlasting joy - (See the notes at Isaiah 35:10).

Verse 8

For I the Lord love judgment - That is, ‹I shall delight in rendering to my people what is right. It is right that they should enjoy my protection, and be favored with the tokens of my kindness. Loving justice and right, therefore, I will confer on them the privileges and blessings which they ought to enjoy, and which will be a public expression of my favor and love.‘

I hate robbery for burnt-offering - There has been great variety in the interpretation of this phrase. Lowth renders it, ‹Who hate rapine and iniquity.‘ Noyes, ‹I hate rapine and iniquity.‘ Jerome, as in our translation, *Et odio habens rapinam in holocausto*. The Septuagint, Μισῶν ἁρπάγματα ἐξ ἀδικίας *Misōn harpagmata ech adikias* - ‹Hating the spoils of injustice.‘ The Chaldee, ‹Far from before me be deceit and violence.‘ The Syriac, ‹I hate rapine and iniquity.‘ This variety of interpretation has arisen from the different views taken of the Hebrew בעולה *beʿôlâh* The Syriac evidently prefixed the conjunction, ו (*v*), "and," instead of the preposition, ב (*b*), "with" or "for"; and, perhaps, also the Septuagint so read it. But this change, though slight, is not necessary in order to give a consistent rendering to the passage. The connection does not necessarily lead us to suppose that any reference would be made to ‹burnt-offering,‘ and to the improper manner in which such offerings were made; but the idea is rather, that God hated rapine and sin; he hateth such acts as those by which his people had been removed from their land, and subjected to the evils of a long and painful captivity. And this is undoubtedly the sense of the passage. The Hebrew word עולה *ʿôlâh* usually without the,ו means properly "a holocaust," or "what is made to ascend" (from עלה *ʿâlâh* to ascend) from an altar. But the word here is the construct form for עולה *ʿavîlâh* "evil, wickedness"; whence our word "evil" (see Job 24:20; Psalm 107:42). And the sense here is, hate rapine or plunder (גזל *gāzēl*) with iniquity;‘ that is, accompanied, as it always is, with iniquity and sin. And hating that as I do, I will vindicate my people who have been plundered in this way; and who have been borne into captivity, accompanied with deeds of violence and sin.

And I will direct their work in truth - literally, ‹I will give them work in truth or faithfulness;‘ that is, I will give them the reward of their work faithfully. They shall be amply recompensed for all that they have done and suffered in my cause.

And I will make - (See the notes at Isaiah 55:3).

Verse 9

And their seed - The figure here is taken from the feelings of a parent who desires his children to be esteemed, and who regards it as an honor that they become so distinguished that their fame extends to distant lands.

Shall be known - Shall be distinguished or honored. For this use of the word ‹known,‘ see Psalm 67:2; Psalm 76:1; Psalm 79:10.

And their offspring - (See the notes at Isaiah 48:19). The Chaldee and the Syriac render this, ‹Their children‘s children.‘ The sense is, that the true friends of the church shall be everywhere honored. Distant lands shall be acquainted with them, and shall be disposed to show them distinguished respect.

Among the people - The people of distant lands.

All that see them shall acknowledge them - The time shall come when the true friends of the Redeemer will be universally honored. They shall be regarded as the favored of the Lord; and instead of being persecuted and despised, the nations of the earth will regard them as worthy of their confidence and esteem.

Verse 10

I wilt greatly rejoice in the Lord - This is the language of the prophet in the name of the church; or, as Vitringa supposes, the language of a chorus introduced here by the prophet. The Chaldee regards it as the language of Jerusalem, and renders it, ‹Jerusalem said, I will surely rejoice in the Lord.‘ The sentiment is, that the prosperity and enlargement of Zion is an occasion of joy, and should lead to thanksgiving and praise. The phrase, ‹I will rejoice in the Lord,‘ means that the joy would arise from the view of the faithfulness and perfections of Yahweh manifested in the redemption of his people. See similar expressions of joy in the song of Mary Luke 1:46-47.

For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation - That is, Jerusalem or the church.

He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness - The word rendered ‹robe‘ here means mantle, or a large and loose garment thrown over the other parts of the dress. Such garments are for protection and for ornament, and the image is that of the church defended and ornamented by God (see the notes at Isaiah 49:18).

As a bridegroom decketh himself - Margin, ‹As a priest.‘ The Hebrew is, ‹As a bridegroom adorns himself as a priest‘ (יכהן *yekahēn*); that is, as he makes splendid his head-dress in the manner of a priest.

With ornaments - (פאר *pe'ēr*). With a tiara, head-dress, diadem. See the word explained in Isaiah 61:3. The Septuagint renders it, Μίτραν *Mitran* - ‹Mitre.‘ The allusion is to the dress of the Jewish high - priest when he discharged the functions of his office, and particularly to the mitre and the plate or crown of gold which he wore in front of it Exodus 29:6. It is not easy to give full force to the metaphor of the prophet in another language. The Hebrew, as near as we can express it, is, ‹As a bridegroom attires himself as a priest with a crown or mitre.‘ The version by Aquila and Symmachus comes nearest to it - Ὡς νυμφιον ἱερατευομενον στεφανῳ *Hōs numphion hierateuomenon stephanō* The sense is, that the church should be adorned with the highest ornament and beauty; not for the mere purpose of decoration, but as if it were a priest engaged in offering continually the sacrifice of prayer and praise.

And as a bride - See this explained in the notes at Isaiah 49:18. The word rendered ‹jewels‘ here (כלי *kelîy*) does not of necessity mean merely jewels. It properly means an apparatus, implement, utensil, vessel; and then dress, ornament of any kind; and would be better rendered here, in a more general sense, bridal ornaments.

Verse 11

For as the earth bringeth forth - This figure is several times used by the prophet (see the notes at Isaiah 45:8; Isaiah 55:10-11). The idea is an exceedingly beautiful one, that, on the coming of the Messiah, truth and righteousness would spring up and abound like grass and fruits in the vegetable world when the earth is watered with rain.

Her bud - The word ‹bud‘ we now apply usually to the small bunch or protuberance on the branches of a plant, containing the rudiments of the future leaf or flower. The Hebrew word, however, (צמח *tsemach*), rather means the germ, the shoot, or the young and tender plant as it comes up from the earth; that which first appears from the seed.

So the Lord God will cause righteousness to spring forth - (See the notes at Isaiah 42:19; Isaiah 43:9; Isaiah 44:4; Isaiah 45:8).

Before all the nations - The sense is, that righteousness would abound over all the earth, and that all the world would yet join in celebrating the praises of God.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 62

Introduction

The same general subject is pursued in this chapter which has been presented in the chapters which have gone before. The scope of the chapter is consolatory, and the design is to furnish such assurances of the divine favor toward the afflicted people of God, as would uphold and comfort them in their trials. The language is such as would be addressed to the exiles in Babylon, but the main reference is undoubtedly to the times of the Messiah. The chapter may be conveniently regarded as comprising the following portions:

I. A speaker is introduced saying that he would have no rest until Zion should rise and obtain restoration from her degradation Isaiah 62:1-5. This portion contains assurances of the divine favor, and a promise of the future restoration and glory of Jerusalem. Who this speaker is, will be considered in Isaiah 62:1. The following are the assurances of the speaker.

1. He would give himself no peace until splendor and glory should spread over Zion Isaiah 62:1.

2. The Gentiles would partake of the blessings conferred on Zion, and kings would come and unite with her Isaiah 62:2.

3. Zion would be as beautiful and glorious as a royal crown in the hand of Yahweh Isaiah 62:3.

4. She would be no more desolate and forsaken Isaiah 62:4.

5. Yahweh would delight in Zion as a young married man delights in his bride Isaiah 62:5.

II. The speaker says that he had set watchmen on the walls of Zion, and they are commanded to give him no rest - to be urgent and importunate in prayer, until Jerusalem should be made glorious in the earth Isaiah 62:6-7.

III. The solemn assurance that Yahweh had sworn that there would be peace and security from the invasions of enemies Isaiah 62:8-9. The land would be no more subjected to plunder from abroad, but there would be that kind of safety and security which exists when a man sows and reaps without annoyance.

IV. The people are directed to prepare the way for the coming of Yahweh Isaiah 62:10-12. A crier proclaims his approach, and directs that all obstructions should be removed.

Verse 1

For Zion‘s sake - (See the notes at Isaiah 1:8). On account of Zion; that is, on account of the people of God.

I will not hold my peace - There have been very various opinions in regard to the person referred to here by the word ‹I.‘ Calvin and Gesenius suppose that the speaker here is the prophet, and that the sense is, he would not intermit his labors and prayers until Zion should be restored, and its glory spread through all the earth. The Chaldee Paraphrast supposes that it is God who is the speaker, and this opinion is adopted by Grotius. Vitringa regards it as the declaration of a prophetic choir speaking in the name of the officers of the church, and expressing the duty of making continual intercession for the extension of the Redeemer‘s kingdom. Estius supposes it to be the petition of the Jewish people praying to God for their restoration. Amidst such a variety of interpretation it is not easy to determine the true sense. If it is the language of God, it is a solemn declaration that he was intent on the deliverance of his people, and that he would never cease his endeavors until the work should be accomplished.

If it is the language of the prophet, it implies that he would persevere, notwithstanding all opposition, in rebuking the nation for its sins, and in the general work of the prophetic office, until Zion should arise in its glory. If the former, it is the solemn assurance of Yahweh that the church would be the object of his unceasing watchfulness and care, until its glory should fill the earth. If the latter, it expresses the feelings of earnest and devoted piety; the purpose to persevere in prayer and in active efforts to extend the cause of God until it should triumph. I see nothing in the passage by which it can be determined with certainty which is the meaning; and when this is the case it must be a matter of mere conjecture. The only circumstance which is of weight in the case is, that the language, ‹I will not be silent,‘ is rather that which is adapted to a prophet accustomed to pray and speak in the name of God than to God himself; and if this circumstance be allowed to have any weight, then the opinion will incline to the interpretation which supposes it to refer to the prophet. The same thing is commanded the watchman on the walls of Zion in Isaiah 62:6-7; and if this be the correct interpretation, then

it expresses the appropriate solemn resolution of one engaged in proclaiming the truth of God not to intermit his prayers and his public labors until the true religion should be spread around the world.

I will not rest - While I live, I will give myself to unabated toil in the promotion of this great object (see the notes at Isaiah 62:7).

Until the righteousness thereof - The word here is equivalent to salvation, and the idea is, that the deliverance of his people would break forth as a shining light.

Go forth as brightness - The word used here is commonly employed to denote the splendor, or the bright shining of the sun, the moon, or of fire (see Isaiah 60:19; compare Isaiah 4:5; 2 Samuel 23:4; Proverbs 4:18). The meaning is, that the salvation of people would resemble the clear shining light of the morning, spreading over hill and vale, and illuminating all the world.

As a lamp that burneth - A blazing torch - giving light all around and shining afar.

Verse 2

And the Gentiles shall see - (see Isaiah 11:10:÷; come a up I father me say Isaiah 49:22; Isaiah 60:3, Isaiah 60:5, Isaiah 60:16).

And all kings thy glory - (See the notes at Isaiah 49:7, Isaiah 49:23; Isaiah 52:15; Isaiah 60:3, Isaiah 60:10-11, Isaiah 60:16).

And thou shalt be called by a new name - A name which shall be significant and expressive of a greatly improved and favored condition (see Isaiah 62:4). The idea is, that they would not be in a condition in which a name denoting humiliation, poverty, and oppression would be appropriate, but in circumstances where a name expressive of prosperity would be adapted to express their condition. On the custom of giving significant names, see the notes at Isaiah 7:3; Isaiah 8:1.

Which the mouth of the Lord shall name - Which shall be the more valuable because Yahweh himself shall confer it, and which must therefore be appropriate (see the notes at Isaiah 62:4, Isaiah 62:12.)

Verse 3

Thou shalt also be a crown of glory - On the application of the word ‹crown‘ to a place, see the notes at Isaiah 28:1, where it is applied to Samaria. Some difficulty has been felt by expositors in explaining this, from the fact that a crown or diadem was worn on the head and not held in the hand, and some have supposed that the word ‹crown‘ here is equivalent

to any ornament which might be either horne in the hand or worn on the head; others have supposed that the reference is to the custom of carrying a chaplet or garland in the hand on festival occasions. But probably the sense is this, ‹Thou shalt I be so beautiful and prosperous as to be appropriately regarded as a splendid crown or diadem. God shall keep thee as a beautiful diadem - the crown of beauty among the cities of the earth, and as that which is most comely and valuable in his sight.‘ This is the sense expressed by Gataker and Rosenmuller.

And a royal diadem - Hebrew, ‹A diadem of a kingdom.‘ The diadem is the wreath or chaplet, usually set with diamonds, which is "encircled" (צניף *tsânîyph* from צנף *tsânaph*) to roll or wind around, to encircle) around the head. It here means such as was usually worn by monarchs; and the sense is, that Jerusalem would become exceedingly beautiful in the sight of God.

Verse 4

Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken - That is, thou shalt be no more so forsaken as to make such an I appellation proper. This refers to the new name which the prophet says Isaiah 62:2 will be conferred on her.

Neither shall thy land - Thy country shall no more be so wasted that the term desolation (שׁממה *shemâmâh* Greek ἔρημος *erēmos*) shall be properly applied to it.

But thou shalt be called Hepzi-bah - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹My delight is in her.‘ The idea is, that Yahweh would show her such favor, and he would have so much pleasure in his people, that this name of endearment would be appropriately given to her. The Septuagint renders this, Θέλημα ἐμὸν *Thelēma emon* - ‹My will,‘ or my delight. The sense is, that Jerusalem would be eminently the object of his delight.

And thy land Beulah - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹Married;‘ or rather, ‹thou art married.‘ The Septuagint renders it, Οἰκουμένη *Oikoumenē* - ‹Inhabited.‘ Lowth renders it, ‹The wedded matron.‘ The figure is taken from a female who had been divorced, and whose appropriate name was Forsaken.‘ God says here that the appropriate name henceforward would not be the Forsaken, but the married one - the one favored and blessed of God (see the notes at Isaiah 54:4-6, where this figure is extended to greater length. By a similar figure the church is represented as the beautiful bride of the Lamb of God Revelation 21:9; Revelation 19:7.

Verse 5

For as a young man marrieth a virgin - Roberts remarks on this, ‹In general no youth marries a widow. Such a thing I scarcely ever heard of (in India), nor will it ever be except under some very extraordinary circumstances, as in the case of a queen, princess, or great heiress. Even widowers also, if possible, always marry virgins.‘ The idea here is, that Yahweh would have delight in his people, which would be properly represented by the affection which a young man has for his bride.

So shall thy sons marry thee - Lowth renders this, ‹So shall thy restorer wed thee.‘ He supposes that the word rendered in our common version, ‹thy sons‘ (בניך *bânâyîk*), should be pointed בניך *bonayîk* as a participle from בנה *bânâh* ‹to build,‘ rather than from בן *bên* ‹a son.‘ The parallelism requires some such construction as this; and the unusual form of expression, ‹thy sons shall be wedded to thee,‘ seems also to demand it. The Septuagint renders it, ‹As a young man cohabits (συνοικῶν *sunoikōn*) with a virgin (bride, παρθένῳ *parthenō*), so shall thy, sons dwell with thee (κατοικήσουσιν οἱ υἱοί σου *katoikēsousin hoi huioi sou*). So the Chaldee. the conjecture of Lowth has been adopted by Koppe and Doderlin. Rosenmuller supposes that there is here a mingling or confusion of figures, and that the idea is, that her sons should possess her - an idea which is frequently conveyed by the word בעל *Baʿal* which is used here. To me it seems that there is much force in the conjecture of Lowth, and that the reference is to God as the ‹builder,‘ or the restorer of Jerusalem, and that the sense is that he would be ‹married,‘ or tenderly and indissolubly united to her. If it be objected that the word is in the ‹plural (בניך *bonayîk*) it may be observed thai the word commonly applied to God (אלהים *'ĕlohîym*) is also plural, and that an expression remarkably similar to the one before us occurs in Isaiah 54:5, ‹For thy Maker is thy husband‘ (Hebrew, בעליך *boʿălayk* ‹Thy husbands.‘) It is not uncommon to use a plural noun when speaking of God. It should be remembered that the points in the Hebrew are of no authority, and that all the change demanded here is in them.

And as the bridegroom - Margin, as in Hebrew,‘ With the joy of the bridegroom.‘

Over the bride - In the possession of the bride - probably the most tender joy which results from the exercise of the social affections.

Verse 6

I have set watchmen upon thy walls - (See the notes at Isaiah 21:6-11). The speaker here is undoubtedly Yahweh; and by watchmen he means those

whom he had appointed to be the instructors of his people - the ministers of religion. The name ‹watchmen‘ is often given to them (Ezekiel 3:17; Ezekiel 33:7; see the notes at Isaiah 52:8; Isaiah 56:10).

Which shall never hold their peace - The watches in the East are to this day performed by a loud cry as they go their rounds. This is done frequently in order to mark the time, and also to show that they are awake to their duty. “The watchmen in the camp of the caravans go their rounds, crying one after another, ‹God is one; He is merciful‘; and often add, ‹Take heed to yourselves‘“ - (Tavernier). The truth here taught is, that they who are appointed to be the ministers of religion should be ever watchful and unceasing in the discharge of their duty.

Ye that make mention of the Lord - Margin, ‹That are the Lord‘s remembrancers.‘ These are evidently the words of the prophet addressing those who are watchmen, and urging them to do their duty, as he had said Isaiah 62:1 he was resolved to do his, Lowth renders this, ‹O ye that proclaim the name of Yahweh.‘ Noyes, ‹O ye that praise Yahweh.‘ But this does not express the sense of the original as well as the common version. The Hebrew word המזכירים *hamazekiyriym* from זכר *zâkar* “to remember”) means properly those bringing to remembrance, or causing to remember. It is a word frequently applied to the praise of God, or to the celebration of his worship Psalm 20:7; Psalm 38:1; Psalm 45:17; Psalm 70:1; Psalm 102:12. In such instances the word does not mean that they who are engaged in his service cause Yahweh to remember, or bring things to his recollection which otherwise he would forget; but it means that they would keep up his remembrance among the people, or that they proclaimed his name in order that he might not be forgotten. This is the idea here. It is not merely that they were engaged in the worship of God; but it is, that they did this in order to keep up the remembrance of Yahweh among people. In this sense the ministers of religion are ‹the remembrancers‘ of the Lord.

Keep not silence - Hebrew, ‹Let there be no silence to you.‘ That is, be constantly employed in public prayer and praise.

Verse 7

And give him no rest - Margin, ‹Silence.‘ In Hebrew the same word (דמי *dŏmiy*) as in Isaiah 62:6. The idea is, ‹Keep not silence yourselves, nor let him rest in silence. Pray without ceasing; and do not intermit your efforts until the desires of your hearts shall be granted, and Zion shall be established, and the world saved.‘

Till he establish - Until he shall establish Jerusalem, and restore it to its former rank and privileges.

Till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth - That it may be the subject of universal commendation and rejoicing, instead of being an object of reproach and scorn. The truth taught here is, that it is the privilege and duty of the ministers of God to pray unceasingly for the extension of his kingdom. Day and night the voice of prayer is to be urged, and urged as if they would give Yahweh no rest until the desires of their hearts should be granted (compare Luke 18:1 ff).

Verse 8

The Lord hath sworn by his right hand - An oath was taken in various forms among the ancients. It was usually done by lifting up the hand toward beaten and appealing to God. As God could swear by no greater Hebrews 6:13, he is represented as swearing by himself (see the notes at Isaiah 45:23). Here he is represented as swearing by his right hand and by his arm - the strong instrument by which he would accomplish his purposes to defend and save his people. The sense is, that he solemnly pledged the strength of his arm to deliver them, and restore them to their own land.

Surely I will no more give - Margin, as in Hebrew, ‹If I give.‘ That is, I will not give.

Thy corn to be meat - The word ‹corn‘ in the Scriptures means all kinds of grain - especially wheat, barley, etc. The word ‹meat‘ was formerly used to denote all kinds of food, and was not restricted as it is now usually to animal food. The meaning is, that they should not be subjected to the evils of foreign invasion and conquest.

And the sons of the stranger - Foreigners, Isaiah 60:10.

Shall not drink thy wine - The productions of your toil shall be safe, and you shall enjoy them yourselves. All this denotes a state of safety and prosperity, such as there would be if they were allowed to cultivate the soil without interruption, and were permitted to enjoy the fruit of their labors.

Verse 9

But they that have gathered it shall eat it - There shall be a state of security, so that every man may enjoy the avails of his own labor. Nothing is a more certain indication of liberty and prosperity than this - that every man may securely enjoy the avails of his own labor. Nothing more certainly marks the advance of civilization, and nothing so much tends to encourage

industry and to promote prosperity. When a man has no security that what he sows shall be reaped by himself; when there is danger that it will be destroyed or consumed by foreign invaders; or, when it is liable to be taken by arbitrary power to minister to the needs and luxuries of the great, there will be no industry, no incitement to labor. Such is the condition always in war. Such is the condition now in the Turkish dominions; and such is the state in savage life, and in all uncivilized communities. And as the tendency of true religion is to repress wars, to establish order, and to diffuse just views of the rights of man, it everywhere promotes prosperity by furnishing security that a man shall enjoy the avails of his own productive industry. Wherever the Christian religion prevails in its purity, there is seen the fulfillment of this prophecy; and the extension of that religion everywhere would promote universal industry, order, and law.

And praise the Lord - They shall not consume it on their lusts, nor shall they partake of it without gratitude. God shall be acknowledged as the bountiful giver, and they shall render him appropriate thanksgiving.

And they that have brought it together - They who have gathered in the vintage.

Shall drink it in the courts of my holiness - It would be drank with gratitude to God in the feasts which were celebrated at the temple (see Leviticus 6:16; Deuteronomy 12:17-18; Deuteronomy 14:23). The idea is, that the effect of true religion would be to produce security and liberty, and to make people feel that all their blessings came from God; to partake of them with gratitude, and to make them the occasion of praise and thanksgiving.

Verse 10

Go through, go through the gates - The connection of this with what goes before is not very apparent, and there has been a great diversity of opinion in regard to it among interpreters. Grotius supposes that it refers to the priests and Levites who are referred to also in the previous verses, and that it is a command for them to enter into the temple. Calvin supposes that it refers to the Christian church, and that the idea is, that the gates of it should be continually open for the return of penitent sinners. Rosenmuller supposes that it is an address to the cities lying between Babylon and Jerusalem, and that the idea is, that their gates would be thrown open for the return of the exiles, and that all obstacles would be taken out of the way. Others suppose that it refers to the Jews, and that the command is to them to

go through the gates of Babylon, and an immediate order is added to the people to prepare the way for them. This last seems to me to be the sense of the passage. It is a direction to the exiles in Babylon to go forth and return to their own land. The gates so long closed against their return would be thrown open, and they would now have liberty to depart for their own country. Thus explained, the connection is apparent. The watchmen were commanded to pray until this was done Isaiah 62:7; the prophet had said that he would not rest until it was done Isaiah 62:1; Yahweh had promised this in a most solemn manner Isaiah 62:8-9; and now those prayers are heard, and that promise is about to be fulfilled, and they are commanded to leave the city and enter upon their journey to their own land (compare the notes at Isaiah 52:10-12).

Prepare ye the way of the people - (Compare the notes at Isaiah 40:3).

Cast up, cast up the highway - (See the notes at Isaiah 57:14).

Gather out the stones - Clear it from the stones - in other words, make a smooth path on which they can travel with ease. The word which is used here (סקל *sāqal*) commonly denotes to stone, or to pelt with stones, a species of capital punishment among the Hebrews 2 Samuel 16:6-13. Hence, it means to pile up stones in a heap; and it has also the signification of removing stones from a field Isaiah 5:2, and here of removing them from the way when they are an obstruction to the traveler. Harmer supposes that the word here means to pile up stones at proper distances, as a kind of landmark in the deserts, in order to mark the way for travelers - a practice which, he says, is quite common in Arabia. But the more correct interpretation is, that they were to remove the stones from the way, in order that the journey might be made with ease.

Lift up a standard - As when an army is about to march. They were about to be collected from their dispersions and restored to their own land, and the command is given, that the banner might be reared that they might rally around it (see the notes at Isaiah 10:18; Isaiah 59:19; Isaiah 49:22).

Verse 11

Behold the Lord hath proclaimed - Proclamation is made to all nations that Yahweh is about to come and rescue his people.

Say ye to the daughter of Zion - To Jerusalem (see the notes at Isaiah 1:8).

Thy salvation cometh - Lowth renders this, ‹Lo!, thy Saviour cometh.‘ So the Vulgate, the Septuagint, the Chaldee, and the Syriac. The Hebrew

word properly means salvation, but the reference is to God as the Deliverer or Saviour. The immediate allusion is probably to the return from Babylon, but the remote and more important reference is to the coming of the Redeemer (see the notes at Isaiah 40:1-10).

Behold, his reward is with him - See these words explained in the notes at Isaiah 40:10.

Verse 12

And they shall call them - It shall be the honorable and just name by which they shall be known, that they are a holy people, and that they are the redeemed of Yahweh. No name is so honorable as that; no one conveys so much that is elevated and ennobling as to say of one, ‹he is one whom Yahweh has redeemed from sin and death and hell by atoning blood.‘ He who has a just sense of the import of this name, will desire no Other record to be made of his life - no other inscription on his tomb - than that he is one who has been redeemed by Yahweh.

And thou shalt be called - (See the notes at Isaiah 62:2).

Sought out - The city much sought after, or much desired - to wit, by converts who shall come from afar; by foreigners who shall come to do thee honor (see Isaiah 2:3; Isaiah 40:5-6, Isaiah 40:10-11; Isaiah 49:18-22). Or it may mean that Jerusalem would be a city sought out and desired by Yahweh; that is, no more forsaken by him. So Gesenius understands it.

A city not forsaken - No longer given up to the invasions of a foreign enemy, and abandoned to long desolation. The idea is, that the church and people of God would be the object of his kind protecting care henceforward, and would enjoy his continued smiles.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 63

Introduction

This chapter and the following relate to the same general subject, and should not have been separated. The subject with which they are introduced is the destruction of the enemies of God Isaiah 63:1-6, and this is followed by tender expressions of confidence in Yahweh, and by earnest supplications, on the part of his people, that he would interpose in their behalf. The prophet sees in vision a magnificent conqueror, stained with the blood of his enemies, returning from Edom, and from its capital Bozrah - a warrior flushed with victory, unsubdued, unweakened, and coming with the pride and stateliness of conquest. Who he is, is the object of inquiry; and the answer is, that he is a great and holy deliverer. Why his gorgeous robes are thus polluted with blood, becomes also a question of intense anxiety. The reply of the conqueror is, that he has been forth to subdue mighty foes; that he went alone; that there was none that could aid; and that he had trodden them down as a treader of grapes treads in the wine-press. The whole image here is that of a triumphant, blood-stained warrior, returning from the conquest of Idumea.

Who is referred to here has been a question in which interpreters have greatly differed in opinion. The following are some of the opinions which have been expressed.

1. Some have referred it to Judas Maccabeus. This was the opinion of Grotius, who supposed that it was designed to represent his conquest of Idumea (Daniel 10:13.

3. Others have referred it to Yahweh subduing his enemies, and restoring safety to his people. This is the opinion of Calvin, Piscator, Junius, Noyes, and Gesenius.

4. The mass of interpreters have referred it to the Messiah. This is the opinion, among the ancients, of Origen, Jerome, Cyril, Eusebius, and Procopius; and among the moderns, of Lowth, Cocceius - of course, Calovius, etc. But to this opinion Calvin makes the following weighty objection; ‹Christians,‘ says he, ‹have violently distorted this passage by referring it to Christ, when the prophet simply makes an announcement

respecting God. And they have reigned that Christ was red because he was covered with his own blood, which he poured out on the cross. But the simple sense is, that the Lord here goes forth in the sight of his people with red garments, that all might understand that he was their vindicator and avenger‘ - (Commentary *in loc*.). The objections to an immediate and direct application to Christ, seem to me to be insuperable.

(1) There is no reference to it in the New Testament as applicable to him.

(2) The blood with which the hero was stained, was not his own blood, but that of his foes; consequently all the applications of the words and phrases here to the Messiah as stained with his own blood are misplaced.

(3) The whole image of the prophet is that of a triumphant warrior, returning from conquest, himself unharmed and unwounded, not that of a meek and patient sufferer such as the Messiah. It is, therefore, not without the greatest perversion that it can be referred to the Messiah, nor should it be so employed. (These objections against the application of the passage to the Messiah, seem to be fatal only to one aspect of it, namely, that which presents the Messiah as stained with his own blood; but though the warrior here very clearly appears stained with the blood of others, not his own, but the blood of vanquished foes, still that warrior may be the Messiah, and this one of the numerous passages in which he is represented as a victorious conqueror Psalm 45:3; Revelation 6:2; Revelation 19:11-16. The beautiful accommodation of the language in the third verse to the sufferings of Christ, seems to have led to the forced application of the whole passage to the Redeemer‘s passion. It certainly refers, however, to a conquering, not a suffering, Messiah. Alexander supposes the conqueror to be Yahweh, or the Messiah; Henderson, the divine Logos, the Angel or Messenger of the divine presence, who acted as the Protector and Saviour of ancient Israel. Edom is generally taken as the type of the enemies of Israel, or of the church; and this prophecy announces their overthrow - E. D.)

5. Vitringa supposes that there is described under the emblem used here, the final and peremptory manner with which the Messiah, the vindicator and avenger of his people, will take severe vengeance, with the shedding of

much blood, on the princes, people, subjects, and patrons of idolatrous and apostate Rome; that the true church on the earth would be reduced to extremities; would be destitute of protectors; and that the Messiah would interpose and by his own power destroy the foes of his people.

The whole passage Isaiah 63:1-6 has a striking resemblance to Isaiah 39:1-8, and the note at that chapter). It is to be remembered that Idumea was a formidable foe to the Jews; that there had been frequent wars between them; and especially that they had greatly provoked the anger of the Hebrews, and deserved the severest divine vengeance for uniting with the Chaldeans when they took Jerusalem, and for urging them to raze it to its foundation Psalm 137:7. On these accounts, Idumea was to he destroyed. Vengeance was to be taken on this foe; and the destruction of ldumea became a kind of Fledge and emblem of the destruction of all the enemies of the people of God. Thus it is used here; and the prophet sees in vision Yahweh returning in triumph from the complete overthrow of the capital of that nation, and the entire destruction of the inhabitants. He sees the mighty warrior return from the conquest; his raiment stained with blood; and he inquires who he is, and receives for answer that he has been alone to the conquest of the foes of his people. The idea is, that all those foes would be destroyed, and that it would be done by the power of God alone. The chapter, therefore, I do not regard as immediately referring to the Messiah, but to Yahweh, and to his solemn purpose to destroy the enemies of his people, and to effect their complete deliverance. It may be further remarked that the portion in Isaiah 63:1-6, is a responsive song; a species of composition common in the Bible (see Psalm 24:1-10; Psalm 134:1-3; Isaiah 64:1-12 may be divided into three parts.

I. The destruction of Edom Isaiah 63:1-6.

1. The view of the conquering hero coming from Bozrah, and the inquiry by the people who he is (Isaiah 63:1, first part). He comes with dyed garments, yet glorious, and with the state and air of a conqueror.

2. The response of Yahweh the conqueror, that it was he who was mighty to save (Isaiah 63:1, last part).

3. The inquiry of the people why he was thus red in his apparel, as if he had been treading in the wine-press Isaiah 63:2.

4. The answer of Yahweh Isaiah 63:3-6.

(1) He had indeed trod the Wine-press, and he had done it alone. He had trod down the people in his anger, and their blood had been sprinkled on lids raiment.

(2) The day of his vengeance had arrived, and the year of his redeemed had come.

(3) No one had been able to do it, and he had gone forth alone, and had trod down their strength in his fury.

II. A hymn of thanksgiving in view of the deliverance performed, and of the many mercies conferred on Israel Isaiah 63:7-14.

1. A general acknowledgment of his mercy Isaiah 63:7.

2. His choice of them as his people Isaiah 63:8.

3. His sympathy for them in all their trials Isaiah 63:9.

4. His kindness and compassion, illustrated by a reference to his leading them through the wilderness, notwithstanding their ingratitude and sin Isaiah 63:10-14.

III. An earnest supplication in view of the condition of Israel Isaiah 63:15-19; Isaiah 64:1-12. The arguments are very beautiful and various for his interposition.

1. An appeal to Yahweh in view of his former mercies Isaiah 63:15.

2. An argument from the fact that he was their Father, though they should be disowned and despised by all others Isaiah 63:16.

3. Earnest intercession from the fact that his enemies had trodden down the sanctuary, and that those who never acknowledged him, ruled in the land that he had given to his own people Isaiah 63:17-19.

4. An earnest pleading with God, in view of the inestimable value of the favors which he conferred - the fact that there was nothing so much to be desired, that the world could confer nothing that was to be compared with his favor Isaiah 64:1-5.

5. An argument derived from the general prevalence of irreligion among the people Isaiah 64:6-7.

6. Tender and affectionate pleading from the fact that they were his people Isaiah 64:8-9.

7. A tender and affectionate argument from the fact that the holy city was waste; the temple in ruins; and the beautiful house where their fathers worshipped had been burned up with fire Isaiah 64:10-12.

This last passage Isaiah 64:10-12, proves that the scene of this prayer and vision is laid in Babylon. The time is after Jerusalem had been destroyed, the temple fired, and their sacred things transported; after Edom had joined with the Chaldeans in demanding the entire destruction of the city and temple, and had urged them on to the work of destruction Psalm 137:7; after the Idumeans had invaded the territories of Judea, and established a kingdom there. In their exile they are represented as calling upon God, and they are assured that the kingdom of their enemies would be wholly destroyed.

Verse 1

Who is this - The language of the people who see Yahweh returning as a triumphant conqueror from Idumea. Struck with his stately bearing as a warrior; with his gorgeous apparel; and with the blood on his raiment, they ask who he could be? This is a striking instance of the bold and abrupt manner of Isaiah. He does not describe him as going forth to war nor the preparation for battle; nor the battle itself, nor the conquests of cities and armies; but he introduces at once the returning conqueror having gained the victory - here represented as a solitary warrior, moving along with majestic gait from Idumea to his own capital, Jerusalem. Yahweh is not unfrequently represented as a warrior (see the notes at Isaiah 42:13).

From Edom - On the situation of Edom, and for the reasons of the animosity between that country and Judea, see the Aanlysis to Revelation 19:13, the Son of God is represented as clothed in a similar manner: ‹And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood.‘ In Isaiah 63:3, the answer of Yahweh to the inquiry why his raiment was red, shows that the color was to be attributed to blood.

From Bozrah - On the situation of Bozrah, see the notes at Isaiah 34:6. It was for a time the principal city of Idumea, though properly lying within the boundaries of Moab. In Isaiah 34:6, Yahweh is represented as having ‹a

great sacrifice in Bozrah;‘ here he is seen as having come from it with his garments red with blood.

This that is glorious in his apparel - Margin, ‹Decked.‘ The Hebrew word (הדור *hâdûr*) means “adorned, honorable, or glorious.” The idea is, that his military apparel was gorgeous and magnificent - the apparel of an ancient warrior of high rank.

Traveling in the greatness of his strength - Noyes renders this, ‹Proud in the greatness of his strength,‘ in accordance with the signification given by Gesenius. The word used here (צעה *tsâʿâh*) means properly “to turn to one side, to incline, to be bent, bowed down as a captive in bonds” Isaiah 51:14; then “to bend or toss back the head as an indication of pride” (Gesenius). According to Taylor (Concord.) the word has ‹relation to the actions, the superb mien or manner of a triumphant warrior returning from battle, in which he has got a complete victory over his enemies. And it may include the pomp and high spirit with which he drives before him the prisoners which he has taken.‘ It occurs only in this place and in Isaiah 51:14; Jeremiah 2:20; Jeremiah 48:12. The Septuagint omits it in their translation. The sense is doubtless that Yahweh is seen returning with the tread of a triumphant conqueror, flushed with victor, and entirely successful in having destroyed his foes. There is no evidence, however, as Taylor supposes, that he is driving his prisoners before him, for he is seen alone, having destroyed all his foes.

I that speak in righteousness - The answer of the advancing conqueror. The sense is, ‹It is I, Yahweh, who have promised to deliver my people and to destroy their enemies, and who have now returned from accomplishing my purpose.‘ The assurance that he speaks in righteousness, refers here to the promises which he had made that be would rescue and save them.

Mighty to save - The sentiment is, that the fact that he destroys the foes of his people is an argument that he can save those who put their trust in him. The same power that destroys a sinner may save a saint; and the destruction of a sinner may be the means of the salvation of his own people.

Verse 2

Wherefore art thou red? - The inquiry of the people. Whence is it that that gorgeous apparel is stained with blood?

And thy garment like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? - Or rather the ‹wine-press.‘ The word used here (גת *gath*) means the place where the grapes were placed to be trodden with the feet, and from which the juice

would flow off into a vat or receptacle. Of course the juice of the grape would stain the raiment of him who was employed in this business, and would give him the appearance of being covered with blood. ‹The manner of pressing grapes,‘ says Burder, ‹is as follows: having placed them in a hogshead, a man with naked feet gets in and tread the grapes; in about an hour‘s time the juice is forced out; he then turns the lowest grapes uppermost, and tread them for about a quarter of an hour longer; this is sufficient to squeeze the good juice out of them, for an additional pressure would even crush the unripe grapes and give the whole a disagreeable flavor.‘ The following statement of I. D. Paxton, in a letter from Beyrout, March 1,1838, will show how the modern custom accords with that in the time of Isaiah: ‹They have a large row of stone vats in which the grapes are thrown, and beside these are placed stone troughs, into which the juice flows. People get in and tread the grapes with their feet. It is hard work, and their clothes are often stained with the Juice. The figures found in Scripture taken from this are true to the life.‘ This method was also employed in Egypt. The presses there, as represented on some of the paintings at Thebes, consisted of two parts; the lower portion or vat, and the trough where the men with naked feet trod the fruit, supporting themselves by ropes suspended from the roof (see Wilkinson‘s Ancient Egyptians, ii, 155). Vitringa also notices the same custom.

Huc, pater O Lenae, veni; nudataque musto
Tinge nero mecum direptis crura cothurnis.
Georg. ii. 7,8

This comparison is also beautifully used by John, Revelation 14:19-20: ‹And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press even unto the horses‘ bridles.‘ And in Revelation 19:15, ‹And he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.‘ The comparison of blood to wine is not uncommon. Thus in Deuteronomy 32:14, ‹And thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.‘ Calvin supposes that allusion is here made to the wine-press, because the country around Bozrah abounded with grapes.

Verse 3

I have trodden the wine-press alone - I, Yahweh, have indeed trod the wine-press of my wrath, and I have done it alone (compare the notes at

Isaiah 34:5-6). The idea here is, that he had completely destroyed his foes in Idumea, and had done it by a great slaughter.

For I will tread - Or rather, I trod them. It refers to what he had done; or what was then past.

And their blood shall be sprinkled - Or rather, their blood was sprinkled. The word used here (נצח *nētsach*) does not commonly mean blood; but splendor, glory, purity, truth, perpetuity, eternity. Gesenius derives the word, as used here, from an Arabic word meaning to sprinkle, to scatter; and hence, the juice or liquor of the grape as it is sprinkled or spirted from grapes when trodden. There is no doubt here that it refers to blood - though with the idea of its being spirted out by treading down a foe.

And I will stain all my raiment - I have stained all my raiment - referring to the fact that the slaughter was extensive and entire. On the extent of the slaughter, see the notes at Isaiah 34:6-7, Isaiah 34:9-10.

Verse 4

For the day of vengeance - (See the notes at Isaiah 34:8).

And the year of my redeemed is come - The year when my people are to be redeemed. It is a year when their foes are all to be destroyed, and when their entire liberty is to be effected.

Verse 5

And I looked and there was none to help - The same sentiment is expressed in Isaiah 59:16 (see the note at that verse).

None to uphold - None to sustain or assist. The design is to express the fact that he was entirely alone in this work: that none were disposed or able to assist him. Though this has no direct reference to the plan of salvation, or to the work of the Messiah as a Redeemer, yet it is true of him also that in that work he stood alone. No one did aid him or could aid him; but alone he ‹bore the burden of the world‘s atonement.‘

My fury, it upheld me - My determined purpose to inflict punishment on my foes sustained me. There is a reference doubtless to the fact that courage nerves the arm and sustains a man in deadly conflict; that a purpose to take vengeance, or to inflict deserved punishment, animates one to make efforts which he could not otherwise perform. In Isaiah 59:16, the sentiment is, ‹his righteousness sustained him;‘ here it is that his fury did it. There the purpose was to bring salvation; here it was to destroy his foes.

Verse 6

And I will tread them down - Or rather, ‹I did tread them down.‘ The allusion here is to a warrior who tramples on his foes and treads them in the dust (see the notes at Isaiah 25:10).

And made them drunk - That is, I made them reel and fall under my fury like a drunken man. In describing the destruction of Idumea in Isaiah 34:5, Yahweh says that his sword was made drunk, or that it rushed intoxicated from heaven. See the notes on that verse. But here he says that the people, under the terrors of his wrath, lost their power of self-command, and fell to the earth like an intoxicated man. Kimchi says that the idea is, that Yahweh extended the cup of his wrath for them to drink until they became intoxicated and fell. An image of this kind is several times used in the Scriptures (see the notes at Isaiah 51:17; compare Psalm 75:8). Lowth and Noyes render this, ‹I crushed them.‘ The reason of this change is, that according to Kennicott, twenty-seven manuscripts (three of them ancient) instead of the present Hebrew reading ואשכרם *va'ăshakerēm* ‹And I will make them drunk,‘ read ואשברם *va'ăshaberēm* ‹I will break or crush them.‘ Such a change, it is true, might easily have been made from the similarity of the Hebrew letters, כ (*k*) and ב (*b*). But the authority for the change does not seem to me to be sufficient, nor is it necessary. The image of making them stagger and fall like a drunken man, is more poetic than the other, and is in entire accordance with the usual manner of writing by the sacred penman. The Chaldee renders it, ‹I cast to the lowest earth the slain of their strong ones.‘

And I will bring down their strength - I subdued their strong places, and their mighty armies. Such is the sense giver, to the passage by our translators. But Lowth and Noyes render it, more correctly, ‹I spilled their life-blood upon the ground.‘ The word which our translators have rendered ‹strength‘ (נצח *nētsach*), is the same word which is used in Isaiah 63:3, and which is rendered there ‹blood‘ (see the note at that verse). It is probably used in the same sense here, and means that Yahweh had brought their blood to the earth; that is, he had spilled it upon the ground. So the Septuagint renders it, ‹I shed their blood (κατήγαγον τὸ αίμα *katēgagon to haima*) upon the earth.‘ This finishes the vision of the mighty conqueror returning from Edom. The following verse introduces a new subject. The sentiment in the passage is, that Yahweh by his own power, and by the might of his own arm, would subdue all his foes and redeem his people. Edom in its hostility to his people, the apt emblem of all his foes, would be

completely humbled; and in its subjugation there would be the emblem and the pledge that all his enemies would be destroyed, and that his own church would be safe. See the notes at Isaiah 35:1-10.

Verse 7

I will mention - This is evidently the language of the people celebrating the praises of God in view of all his mercies in former days. See the analysis to the chapter. The design of what follows, to the close of Isaiah 64:1-12, is to implore the mercy of God in view of their depressed and ruined condition. They are represented as suffering under the infliction of long and continued ills; as cast out and driven to a distant land; as deprived of their former privileges, and as having been long subjected to great evils. Their temple is destroyed; their city desolate; and their whole nation afflicted and oppressed. The time is probably near the close of the captivity; though Lowth supposes that it refers to the Jews as scattered over all lands, and driven away from the country of their fathers. They begin their petitions in this verse with acknowledging God‘s great mercies to their fathers and to their nation; then they confess their own disobedience, and supplicate, by various arguments, the divine mercy and favor. The Chaldee commences the verse thus, ‹The prophet said, I will remember the mercy of the Lord.‘ But it is the language of the people, not that of the prophet. The word rendered ‹mention‘ (אזכיר *'azekiyr*), means properly, I will cause to remember, or to be remembered (see the notes at Isaiah 62:6).

And the praises of the Lord - That is, I will recount the deeds which show that he is worthy of thanksgiving. The repetitions in this verse are designed to be emphatic; and the meaning of the whole is, that Yahweh had given them abundant cause of praise, notwithstanding the evils which they endured.

Verse 8

For he said - Yahweh had said. That is, he said this when he chose them as his unique people, and entered into solemn covenant with them.

Surely they are my people - The reference here is to the fact that he entered into covenant with them to be their God.

Children that will not lie - That will not prove false to me - indicating the reasonable expectation which Yahweh might have, when he chose them, that they would be faithful to him.

So he was their Saviour - Lowth renders this, ‹And he became their Saviour in all their distress;‘ connecting this with the first member of the

following verse, and translating that, ‹it was not an envoy, nor an angel of his presence that saved them.‘ So the Septuagint renders it, ‹And he was to them for salvation εἰς σωτηρίαν *eis sōtērian*) from all their affliction.‘ The Chaldee render it, ‹And his word was redemption (פריק *pâriyq*) unto them.‘ But the true idea probably is, that he chose them, and in virtue of his thus choosing them he became their deliverer.

Verse 9

In all their affliction he was afflicted - This is a most beautiful sentiment, meaning that God sympathized with them in all their trials, and that he was ever ready to aid them. This sentiment accords well with the connection; but there has been some doubt whether this is the meaning of the Hebrew. Lowth renders it, as has been already remarked, ‹It was not an envoy, nor an angel of his presence that saved him.‘ Noyes, ‹In all their straits they had no distress.‘ TheSeptuagint renders it, ‹It was not an ambassador (οὐ᾽ πρέσβυς *ou presbus*), nor an angel (οὐδὲ ἄγγελος *oude angelos*), but he himself saved them.‘ Instead of the present Hebrew word (צר *tsâr* ‹affliction‘), they evidently read it, ציר *tsiyr* ‹a messenger.‘ The Chaldee renders it, ‹Every time when they sinned against him, so that he might have brought upon them tribulation, he did not afflict them.‘ The Syriac, ‹In all their calamities he did not afflict them.‘ This variety of translation has arisen from an uncertainty or ambiguity in the Hebrew text.

Instead of the present reading (לא *lo′* ‹not‘) about an equal number of manuscripts read לו *lô* ‹to him,‘ by the change of a single letter. According to the former reading, the sense would be, ‹in all their affliction, there was no distress,‘ that is, they were so comforted and supported by God, that they did not feel the force of the burden. According to the other mode of reading it, the sense would be, ‹in all their affliction, there was affliction to him;‘ that is, he sympathized with them, and upheld them. Either reading makes good sense, and it is impossible now to ascertain which is correct. Gesenius supposes it to mean, ‹In all their afflictions there would be actually no trouble to them. God sustained them, and the angel of of his presence supported and delivered them.‘ For a fuller view of the passage, see Rosenmuller. In the uncertainty and doubt in regard to the true reading of the Hebrew, the proper way is not to attempt to change the translation in our common version. It expresses an exceedingly interesting truth, and one that is suited to comfort the people of God; - that he is never unmindful of their sufferings; that he feels deeply when they are afflicted; and that he hastens

to their relief. It is an idea which occurs everywhere in the Bible, that God is not a cold, distant, abstract being; but that he takes the deepest interest in human affairs, and especially that he has a tender solicitude in all the trials of his people.

And the angel of his presence saved them - This angel, called ‹the angel of the presence of God,‘ is frequently mentioned as having conducted the children of Israel through the wilderness, and as having interposed to save them Exodus 23:20, Exodus 23:31; Exodus 32:34; Exodus 33:2; Numbers 20:16. The phrase, ‹the angel of his presence,‘ (Hebrew, פניו מלאך פ *male'âk pânâyv* ‹angel of his face,‘ or ‹countenance‘), means an angel that stands in his presence, and that enjoys his favor, as a man does who stands before a prince, or who is admitted constantly to his presence (compare Proverbs 22:29). Evidently there is reference here to an angel of superior order or rank, but to whom has been a matter of doubt with interpreters. Jarchi supposes that it was Michael, mentioned in Daniel 10:13-21. The Chaldee renders it, ‹The angel sent (שליח *shelîyach*) from his presence.‘ Most Christian interpreters have supposed that the reference is to the Messiah, as the manifested guide and defender of the children of Israel during their long journey in the desert. This is not the place to go into a theological examination of that question. The sense of the Hebrew here is, that it was a messenger sent from the immediate presence of God, and therefore of elevated rank. The opinion that it was the Son of God is one that can be sustained by arguments that are not easily refuted. On the subject of angels, according to the Scripture doctrine, the reader may consult with advantage an article by Dr. Lewis Mayer, in the Bib. Rep., Oct. 1388.

He redeemed them - (See the notes at Isaiah 43:1).

And he bare them - As a shepherd carries the lambs of the flock, or as a nurse carries her children; or still more probably, as an eagle bears her young on her wings Deuteronomy 32:11-12. The idea is, that he conducted them through all their trials in the wilderness, and led them in safety to the promised land (compare the notes at Isaiah 40:11).

All the days of old - In all their former history. He has been with them and protected them in all their trials.

Verse 10

But they rebelled - Against God. This charge is often made against the Jews; and indeed their history is little more than a record of a series of

rebellions against God.

And vexed - Or rather ‹grieved.‘ The Hebrew word עצב ʿâtsab in Piel, means to pain, to afflict, to grieve. This is the idea here. Their conduct was such as was suited to produce the deepest pain - for there is nothing which we more deeply feel than the ingratitude of those who have been benefited by us. Our translators have supposed that the word conveyed the idea of provoking to wrath by their conduct (thus the Septuagint renders it παρώξυναν τὸ πνεύμα, κ.τ.λ. *parōxunan to pneuma etc* but the more appropriate sense is, that their conduct was such as to produce pain or grief. Compare Ephesians 4:30: ‹Grieve not (μὴ λυπεῖτε *mē lupeite*) the Holy Spirit.‘ Psalm 78:40; Psalm 95:10. Hebrews 3:10-17.

His Holy Spirit - The Chaldee renders this, ‹But they were unwilling to obey, and they irritated (provoked, blasphemed רגז *râgaz*) against the words of the prophets.‘ But the reference seems rather to be to the Spirit of God that renewed, comforted, enlightened, and sanctified them. Grotius, Rosenmuller, and Gesenius, suppose that this means God himself - a Spirit of holiness. But, with the revelation of the New Testament before us, we cannot well doubt that the real reference here is to the third person of the Trinity - the renewer and sanctifier of the people of God. It may be admitted, perhaps, that the ancient Hebrews would refer this to God himself, and that their views of the offices of the different persons in the divine nature were not very clearly marked, or very distinct. But this does not prove that the real reference may not have been to ‹the Holy Spirit.‘ The renewer and sanctifier of the human heart at all times has been the same.

And when any operations of the mind and heart pertaining to salvation are referred to in the Old Testament, nothing should forbid us to apply to the explanation of the expressions and the facts, the clear light which we have in the New Testament - in the same way as when the ancients speak of phenomena in the physical world, we deem it not improper to apply to the explanation of them the established doctrines which we now have in the physical sciences. By this we by no means design to say that the ancients had the same knowledge which we have, or that the language which they used conveyed the same idea to them which it now does to us, but that the events occurred in accordance with the laws which we now understand, and that the language may be explained by the light of modern science. Thus the word eclipse conveyed to them a somewhat different idea from what it does to us. They supposed it was produced by different causes. Still they

described accurately the facts in the case; and to the explanation of those facts we are permitted now to apply the principles of modern science. So the Old Testament describes facts occurring under the influence of truth. The facts were clearly understood. What shall hinder us, in explaining them, from applying the clearer light of the New Testament? Admitting this obvious principle, I suppose that the reference here was really to the third person of the Trinity; and that the sense is, that their conduct was such as was suited to cause grief to their Sanctifier and Comforter, in the same way as it is said in the New Testament that this is done now.

He was turned - He abandoned them for their sins, and left them to reap the consequences.

And he fought against them - He favored their enemies and gave them the victory. He gave them up to a series of disasters which finally terminated in their long and painful captivity, and in the destruction of their temple, city, and nation. The sentiment is, that when we grieve the Spirit of God, he abandons us to our chosen course, and leaves us to a series of spiritual and temporal disasters.

Verse 11

Then he remembered - He did not forget his solemn premises to be their protector and their God. For their crimes they were subjected to punishment, but God did not forget that they were his people, nor that he had entered into covenant with them. The object of this part of the petition seems to be, to recall the fact that in former times God had never wholly forsaken them, and to plead that the same thing might occur now. Even in the darkest days of adversity, God still remembered his promises, and interposed to save them. Such they trusted it would be still.

Moses and his people - Lowth renders this, ‹Moses his servant,‘ supposing that a change had occurred in the Hebrew text. It would be natural indeed to suppose that the word ‹servant‘ would occur here (see the Hebrew), but the authority is not sufficient for the change. The idea seems to be that which is in our translation, and which is approved by Vitringa and Gesenius. ‹He recalled the ancient days when he led Moses and his people through the sea and the wilderness.‘

Where is he - The Chaldee renders this, ‹Lest they should say, Where is he?‘ that is, lest surrounding nations should ask in contempt and scorn, Where is the protector of the people, who defended them in other times? According to this, the sense is that God remembered the times of Moses and

interposed, lest his not doing it should bring reproach upon his name and cause. Lowth renders it, ‹How he brought them up;‘ that is, he recollected his former interposition. But the true idea is that of one asking a question. ‹Where now is the God that formerly appeared for their aid? And though it is the language of God himself, yet it indicates that state of mind which arises when the question is asked, Where is now the former protector and God of the people?

That brought them up out of the sea - The Red Sea, when he delivered them from Egypt. This fact is the subject of a constant reference in the Scriptures, when the sacred writers would illustrate the goodness of God in any great and signal deliverance.

With the shepherd of his flock - Margin, ‹Shepherds.‘ Lowth and Noyes render this in the singular, supposing it to refer to Moses. The Septuagint, Chaldee, and Syriac, also read it in the singular. The Hebrew is in the plural (רעי *roʿēy*), though some manuscripts read it in the singular. If it is to be read in the plural, as the great majority of manuscripts read it, it probably refers to Moses and Aaron as the shepherds or guides of the people. Or it may also include others, meaning that Yahweh led up the people with all their rulers and guides.

Where is he that put his Holy Spirit within him? - (see the notes at Isaiah 63:10). Hebrew, בקרבו *beqirebô* - ‹In the midst of him,‘ that is, in the midst of the people or the flock. They were then under his guidance and sanctifying influence. The generation which was led to the land of Canaan was eminently pious, perhaps more so than any other of the people of Israel (compare Joshua 24:31; Judges 2:6-10). The idea here is, that God, who then gave his Holy Spirit, had seemed to forsake them. The nation seemed to be abandoned to wickedness; and in this state, God remembered how he had formerly chosen and sanctified them; and he proposed again to impart to them the same Spirit.

Verse 12

That led them by the right hand of Moses - (See the notes at Isaiah 41:10-13; Isaiah 45:1).

Dividing the water before them - Exodus 14:21.

To make himself an everlasting name - He designed to perform a work which, it would be seen, could not be performed by any false god or by any human arm, and to do it in such circumstances, and in such a manner, that it might be seen everywhere that this was the true God (compare the notes at

Isaiah 45:6). The deliverance from Egypt was attended with such amazing miracles, and with such a sudden destruction of his foes, that none but the true God could have performed it. Egypt was at that time the center of all the science, civilization, and art known among mankind; and what occurred there would be known to other lands. God, therefore, in this signal manner, designed to make a public demonstration of his existence and power that shall be known in all lands, and that should never be forgotten.

Verse 13

That led them through the deep - They went through the deep on dry land - the waters having divided and left an unobstructed path.

As an horse in the wilderness - As an horse, or a courser, goes through a desert without stumbling. This is a most beautiful image. The reference is to vast level plains like those in Arabia, where there are no stones, no trees, no gullies, no obstacles, and where a fleet courser bounds over the plain without any danger of stumbling. So the Israelites were led on their way without falling. All obstacles were removed, and they were led along as if over a vast smooth plain. Our word ‹wilderness,‘ by no means expresses the idea here. We apply it to uncultivated regions that are covered with trees, and where there would be numerous obstacles to such a race-horse. But the Hebrew word (מדבר *midbâr*) rather refers to “a desert, a waste” - a place of level sands or plains where there was nothing to obstruct the fleet courser that should prance over them. Such is probably the meaning of this passage, but Harmer (Obs. i. 161ff) may be consulted for another view, which may possibly be the correct one.

Verse 14

As a beast that goeth down into the valley - As a herd of cattle in the heat of the day descends into the shady glen in order to find rest. In the vale, streams of water usually flow. By those streams and fountains trees grow luxuriantly, and these furnish a cool and refreshing shade. The cattle, therefore, in the heat of the day, naturally descend from the hills, where there are no fountains and streams, and where they are exposed to an intense sun, to seek refreshment in the shade of the valley. The figure here is that of resting in safety after exposure; and there are few more poetic and beautiful images of comfort than that furnished by cattle lying quietly and safely in the cool shade of a well-watered vale. This image would be much more striking in the intense heat of an Oriental climate than it is with us. Harmer (Obs. i. 168ff) supposes that the allusion here is to the custom

prevailing still among the Arabs, when attacked by enemies, of withdrawing with their herds and flocks to some sequestered vale in the deserts, where they find safety. The idea, according to him, is, that Israel lay thus safely encamped in the wilderness; that they, with their flocks and herds and riches, were suffered to remain unattacked by the king of Egypt; and that this was a state of grateful repose, like that which a herd feels after having been closely pursued by an enemy, when it finds a safe retreat in some quiet vale. But it seems to me that the idea first suggested is the most correct - as it is, undoubtedly the most poetical and beautiful of a herd of cattle leaving the hills, and seeking a cooling shade and quiet retreat in a well-watered vale. Such repose, such calm, gentle, undisturbed rest, God gave his people. Such he gives them now, amidst sultry suns and storms, as they pass through the world.

The Spirit of the Lord - (See the note at Isaiah 63:10).

So didst thou lead - That is, dividing the sea, delivering them from their foes, and leading them calmly and securely on to the land of rest. So now, amidst dangers seen and unseen, God leads his people on toward heaven. He removes the obstacles in their way; he subdues their foes; he ‹makes them to lie down in green pastures, and leads them beside the still waters‘ Psalm 23:2; and he bears them forward to a world of perfect peace.

Verse 15

Look down from heaven - This commences an earnest appeal that God would have mercy on them in their present calamities and trials. They entreat him to remember his former mercies, and to return and bless them, as he had done in ancient times.

And behold from the habitation - (See the notes at Isaiah 57:15).

Where is thy zeal - That is, thy former zeal for thy people; where is now the proof of the interest for their welfare which was vouchsafed in times that are past.

And thy strength - The might which was formerly manifested for their deliverance and salvation.

The sounding of thy bowels - Margin, ‹Multitude.‘ The word rendered ‹sounding‘ (המון *hâmôn*), means properly a noise or sound, as of rain; 1 Kings 18:41; of singing, Ezekiel 26:13; of a multitude, 1 Samuel 4:14; 1 Samuel 14:19. It also means a multitude, or a crowd of people Isaiah 13:4; Isaiah 33:3. Here it relates to an emotion or affection of the mind; and the phrase denotes compassion, or tender concern for them in their sufferings. It

is derived from the customary expression in the Bible that the bowels, that is, the organs in the region of the chest - for so the word is used in the Scriptures - were the seat of the emotions, and were supposed to be affected by any strong and tender emotion of the mind (see the notes at Isaiah 16:11). The idea here is, ‹Where is thy former compassion for thy people in distress?‘

Are they restrained? - Are they witcheld? Are thy mercies to be exercised no more?

Verse 16

Doubtless - Hebrew, כי *kîy* - ‹For;‘ verily; surely. It implies the utmost confidence that he still retained the feelings of a tender father.

Thou art our father - Notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, and though we should be disowned by all others, we will still believe that thou dost sustain the relation of a father. Though they saw no human aid, yet their confidence was unwavering that he had still tender compassion toward them.

Though Abraham be ignorant of us - Abraham was the father of the nations - their pious and much venerated ancestor. His memory they cherished with the deepest affection, and him they venerated as the illustrious patriarch whose name all were accustomed to speak with reverence. The idea here is, that though even such a man - one so holy, and so much venerated and loved - should refuse to own them as his children, yet that God would not forget his paternal relation to them. A similar expression of his unwavering love occurs in Isaiah 49:15: ‹Can a woman forget her sucking child?‘ See the note at that place. The language here expresses the unwavering conviction of the pious, that God‘s love for his people would never change; that it would live when even the most tender earthly ties are broken, and when calamities so thicken around us that we seem to be forsaken by God; and are forsaken by our sunshine friends, and even by our most tender earthly connections.

And Israel acknowledge us not - And though Jacob, another much honored and venerated patriarch, should refuse to recognize us as his children. The Jewish expositors say, that the reason why Abraham and Jacob are mentioned here and Isaac omitted, is, that Abraham was the first of the patriarchs, and that all the posterity of Jacob was admitted to the privileges of the covenant, which was not true of Isaac. The sentiment here is, that we should have unwavering confidence in God. We should confide

in him though all earthly friends refuse to own us, and cast out our names as evil. Though father and mother and kindred refuse to acknowledge us, yet we should believe that God is our unchanging friend; and it is of more value to have such a friend than to have the most honored earthly ancestry and the affections of the nearest earthly relatives. How often have the people of God been called to experience this! How many times in the midst of persecution; when forsaken by father and mother; when given up to a cruel death on account of their attachment to the Redeemer, have they had occasion to recoil this beautiful sentiment, and how unfailingly have they found it to be true! Forsaken and despised; cast out and rejected; abandoned apparently by God and by people, they have yet found, in the arms of their heavenly Father, a consolation which this world could not destroy, and have experienced his tender compassions attending them even down to the grave.

Our Redeemer - Margin, ‹Our Redeemer, from everlasting is thy name.‘ The Hebrew will bear either construction. Lowth renders it, very loosely, in accordance with the reading of one ancient manuscript, ‹O deliver us for the sake of thy name.‘ Probably the idea is that which results from a deeply affecting and tender view of God as the Redeemer of his people. The heart, overflowing with emotion, meditates upon the eternal honors of his name, and is disposed to ascribe to him everlasting praise.

Verse 17

O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways? - Lowth and Noyes render this, ‹Why dost thou suffer us to wander from thy way?‘ Calvin remarks on the passage, ‹The prophet uses a common form of speaking, for it is usual in the Scriptures to say that God gives the wicked over to a reprobate mind, and hardens their hearts. But when the pious thus speak, they do not intend to make God the author of error or sin, as if they were innocent - *nolunt Deum erroris aut sceleris facere auctorem, quasi sint innoxii* - or to take away their own blameworthiness. But they rather look deeper, and confess themselves, by their own fault, to be alienated from God, and destitute of his Spirit; and hence it happens that they are precipitated into all manner of evils. God is said to harden and blind when he delivers those who are to be blinded to Satan (Satanae excaecandos tradit), who is the minister and the executor of his wrath.‘ (Commentary *in loc*.) This seems to be a fair account of this difficult subject.

At all events, this is the doctrine which was held by the father of the system of Calvinism; and nothing more should be charged on that system,

in regard to blinding and hardening people, than is thus avowed (compare the notes at Isaiah 6:9-10; Matthew 13:14-15). It is not to be supposed that this result took place by direct divine agency. It is not by positive power exerted to harden people and turn them away from God. No man who has any just views of God can suppose that he exerts a positive agency to make them sin, and then punishes them for it; no one who has any just views of man, and of the operations of his own mind, can doubt that a sinner is voluntary in his transgression. It is true, at the same time, that God foresaw it, and that he did not interpose to prevent it. Nay, it is true that the wickedness of people may be favored by his abused providence - as a pirate may take advantage of a fair breeze that God sends, to capture a merchant-man; and true, also, that God foresaw it would be so, and yet chose, on the whole, that the events of his providence should be so ordered.

His providential arrangements might be abused to the destruction of a few, but would tend to benefit and save many. The fresh gale that drove on one piratical vessel to crime and bloodshed, might, at the same time, convey many richly freighted ships toward the port. One might suffer; hundreds might rejoice. One pirate might be rendered successful in the commission of crime; hundreds of honest people might be benefited. The providential arrangement is not to compel people to sin, nor is it for the sake of their sinning. It is to do good, and to benefit many - though this may draw along, as a consequence, the hardening and the destruction of a few. He might, by direct agency, prevent it, as he might prevent the growth of the briers and thorns in a field; but the same arrangement, by witcholding suns and dews and rains, would also prevent the growth of flowers and grain and fruit, and turn extended fertile lands into a desert. It is better that the thorns and briers should be suffered to grow, than to convert those fields into a barren waste.

Return - That is, return to bless us.

The tribes of thine inheritance - The Jewish tribes spoken of as the heritage of God on the earth.

Verse 18

The people of thy holiness - The people who have been received into solemn covenant with thee.

Have possessed it but a little while - That is, the land meaning that the time during which they had enjoyed a peaceable possession of it, compared with the perpetuity of the promise made, was short. Such is the idea given

to the passage by our translators. But there is considerable variety in the interpretation of the passage among expositors. Lowth renders it:

It is little, that they have taken possession of thy holy mountain;

That our enemies have trodden down thy sanctuary.

Jerome renders it, ‹It is as nothing (quasi nihilum), they possess thy holy people; our enemies have trodden down thy sanctuary.‘ The Septuagint renders it, ‹Return on account of thy servants, on account of the tribes of thine inheritance, that we may inherit thy holy mountains for a little time‘ ἵνα μικρὸν κληρονομήσωμεν τοῦ ὄρους τοῦ ἁγίου *hina mikron klēronomēsōmen tou orous tou hagiou*). It has been generally felt that there was great difficulty in the place. See Vitringa. The sense seems to be that which occurs in our translation. The design is to furnish an argument for the divine interposition, and the meaning of the two verses may be expressed in the following paraphrase: ‹We implore thee to return unto us, and to put away thy wrath. As a reason for this, we urge that thy temple thy holy sanctuary - was possessed by thy people but a little time. For a brief period there we offered praise, and met with our God, and enjoyed his favor. Now thine enemies trample it down. They have come up and taken the land, and destroyed thy holy place Isaiah 64:11. We plead for thine interposition, because we are thy covenant people. Of old we have been thine. But as for them, they were never thine. They never yielded to thy laws. They were never called by thy name. There is, then, no reason why the temple and the land should be in their possession, and we earnestly pray that it may be restored to the tribes of thine ancient inheritance.‘

Our adversaries - This whole prayer is supposed to be offered by the exiles near the close of their captivity. Of course the language is such as they would then use. The scene is laid in Babylon, and the object is to express the feelings which they would have then, and to furnish the model for the petitions which they would then urge. We are not, therefore, to suppose that the temple when Isaiah lived and wrote was in ruins, and the land in the possession of his foes. All this is seen in vision; and though a hundred and fifty years would occur before it would be realized, yet, according to the prophetic manner, he describes the scene as actually passing before him (see the Introduction, Section 7; compare the notes at Isaiah 64:11).

Verse 19

We are thine - We urge it as a reason for thy interposition to restore the land and the temple, that we are thine from ancient times. Such I take to be the meaning of the passage - in accordance with the common translation, except that the expression מעולם *mēʿôlâm* ‹from ancient times,‘ rendered by our translators in connection with לא *lo′* ‹never,‘ is thus connected with the Jewish people, instead of being regarded as applied to their enemies. The idea is, that it is an argument why God should interpose in their behalf, that they had been for a long time his people, but that his foes, who then had possession of the land, had never submitted to his laws. There has been, however, great variety in interpreting the passage. Lowth renders it:

We have long been as those whom thou hast not ruled;
We have not been called by thy name.

Noyes renders it better:

It has been with us as if thou hadst never ruled over us,
As if we had not been called by thy name.

Symmachus and the Arabic Saadias render it in the same manner. The Septuagint renders it, ‹We have been as at the beginning when thou didst not rule over us, neither were we called by thy name;‘ that is, we have gone back practically to our former pagan condition, by rejecting thy laws, and by breaking thy covenant. Each of these interpretations makes a consistent sense, but it seems to me that the one which I have expressed above is more in accordance with the Hebrew.

Thou never barest rule over them - Over our enemies - regarded in the prophetic vision as then in possession of the land. The idea is, that they have come into thy land by violence, and laid waste a nation where they had no right to claim any jurisdiction, and have now no claim to thy protection.

They were not called by thy name - Hebrew, ‹Thy name was not called upon them.‘ They were aliens and strangers who had unjustly intruded into the heritage of the Lord.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 64

Introduction

For an analysis of this chapter, see the Analysis prefixed to Isaiah 63. This chapter is closely connected with that in its design, and should not have been separated from it. This is one of the many instances where the division seems to have been made without any intelligent view of the scope of the sacred writer.

Verse 1

Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens - That is, in view of the considerations urged in the previous chapter. In view of the fact that the temple is burned up Isaiah 64:11; that the city is desolate; that the land lies waste, and that thine own people are carried captive to a distant land. The phrase ‹rend the heavens,‘ implies a sudden and sublime descent of Yahweh to execute vengeance on his foes, as if his heart was full of vengeance, and the firmament were violently rent asunder at his sudden appearance. It is language properly expressive of a purpose to execute wrath on his foes, rather than to confer blessings on his people. The latter is more appropriately expressed by the heavens being gently opened to make way for the descending blessings. The word rendered here ‹rend‘ (קרע *qâra*ʿ), means properly to tear asunder, as, e. g., the garments in grief Genesis 37:29; 2 Samuel 13:31; or as a wild beast does the breast of anyone Hosea 13:8. The Septuagint, however, render it by a milder word - ἀνοίξης *anoixēs* - ‹If thou wouldst open the heavens,‘ etc. So the Syriac renders it by ‹O that thou wouldst open,‘ using a word that is usually applied to the opening of a door. God is often represented as coming down from heaven in a sublime manner amidst tempests, fire, and storms, to take vengeance on his foes. Thus Psalm 18:9:

He bowed the heavens also and came down;
And darkness was under his feet.

Compare Habakkuk 3:5-6. It should be remembered that the main idea in the passage before us is that of Yahweh coming down to destroy his foes. His people entreat him to descend with the proofs of his indignation, so that every obstacle shall be destroyed before him, Thus he is described in Psalm 144:5-6:

Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down;
Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke;

Cast forth lightning, and scatter them,
Shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.

That the mountains might flow down at thy presence - The idea here is, that the presence of Yahweh would be like an intense burning heat, so that the mountains would melt and flow away. It is a most sublime description of his majesty, and is one that is several times employed in the Bible. Thus in relation to his appearance on Mount Sinai, in the song of Deborah Judges 5:4-5:

The earth trembled and the heavens dropped,
The clouds also dropped water.
The mountains melted from before Yahweh,
Even Sinai from before Yahweh, the God of Israel.

So Psalm 97:5:

The hills melted like wax at the presence of Yahweh,
At the presence of Yahweh (the God) of the whole earth.

So also in Micah 1:3-4:

Lo, Yahweh cometh forth out of his place,
And will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth
And the mountains shall be molten under him.

And the valleys shall be cleft,

As wax before the fire,

And as the waters pour down a precipice.

Verse 2

As when the melting fire burneth - Margin, ‹The fire of meltings.‘ Lowth renders it, ‹As when the fire kindleth the dry fuel.‘ So Noyes, ‹As fire kindleth the dry stubble.‘ The Septuagint render it: Ὡς κηρὸς ἀπὸ προσώπου πυρὸς τήκεται *Hōs kēros apo prosōpou puros tēketai* - ‹As wax is melted before the fire.‘ So the Syriac renders it. The Hebrew word rendered here in the margin ‹meltings‘ (המסים *hămâsîym*), properly means, according to Gesenius, brushwood, twigs. So Saddias renders it. And the true idea here is, that the presence of Yahweh would cause the mountains to melt, as a fire consumes light and dry brushwood or stubble. Dr. Jubb supposes that the meaning is, ‹As the fire of things smelted burneth‘ - an

idea which would furnish a striking comparison, but there is much doubt whether the Hebrew will bear that construction.

The comparison is a very vivid and sublime one, as it is in the view given above - that the presence of Yahweh would set on fire the mountains, and cause them to flow down as under the operation of an intense heat. I do not know that there is reason to suppose that the prophet had any reference to a volcanic eruption, or that he was acquainted with such a phenomenon - though Syria and Palestine abounded in volcanic appearances, and the country around the Dead Sea is evidently volcanic (see Lyell‘s Geology, i. 299); but the following description may furnish an illustration of what would be exhibited by the flowing down of the mountains at the presence of Yahweh, and may serve to show the force of the language which the prophet employs in these verses. It is a description of an eruption of Vesuvius in 1779, by Sir William Hamilton. ‹Jets of liquid lava,‘ says he, ‹mixed with stones and scoriae, were thrown up to the height of at least 10,000 feet, having the appearance of a column of fire.

The falling matter being nearly as vividly inflamed as that which was continually issuing forth from the crater, formed with it one complete body of fire, which could not be less than two miles and a half in breadth, and of the extraordinary height above mentioned, casting a heat to the distance of at least six miles around it.‘ Speaking of the lava which flowed from the mountain, he says, ‹At the point where it issued from an arched chasm in the side of the mountain, the vivid torrent rushed with the velocity of a flood. It was in perfect fusion, unattended with any scoriae on its surface, or any gross material not in a state of complete solution. It flowed with the translucency of honey, in regular channels, cut finer than art can imitate, and glowing with all the splendor of the sun‘ (Lyell‘s Geology, i. 316). Perhaps there can be conceived no more sublime representation of what was in the mind of the prophet than such an overflowing volcano. It should be observed, however, that Gesenius supposes that the word which is rendered Isaiah 64:1-3, ‹flow down‘ (נזלו *nāzolû*), is derived, not from נזל *nāzal* to flow, to run as liquids do; but from זלל *zâlal* to shake, to tremble, to quake as mountains do in an earthquake. But it seems to me that the connection rather demands the former signification, as the principal elements in the figure is fire - and the office of fire is not to cause to tremble, but to burn or

melt. The effect here described as illustrative of the presence of God, was that produced by intense burning heat.

The fire causeth the waters to boil - Such an effect was anticipated at the presence of Yahweh. The idea is still that of an intense heat, that should cause all obstacles to be consumed before the presence of the Lord. To illustrate this, the prophet speaks of that which is known to be most intense, that which causes water to boil; and the prayer is, that Yahweh would descend in the manner of such intense and glowing fire, in order that a the foes of the people might be destroyed, and all the obstacles to the restoration of his people removed. The exact point of the comparison, as I conceive, is the intensity of the heat, as emblematic of the majesty of Yahweh, and of the certain destruction of his foes.

To make thy name known - By the exhibition of thy majesty and glory.

Verse 3

When thou didst terrible things - In delivering the people from Egypt, and in conducting them to the promised land.

Which we looked not for - Which we had never before witnessed, and which we had no right to expect.

Thou camest down - As on Mount Sinai.

The mountains flowed down - (See the notes above). The reference is to the manifestations of smoke and fire when Yahweh descended on Mount Sinai (see Exodus 19:18).

Verse 4

For since the beginning of the world - This verse is quoted, though not literally, by the apostle Paul, as illustrating the effects of the gospel in producing happiness and salvation (see the notes at 1 Corinthians 2:9). The meaning here is, that nowhere else among people had there been such blessings imparted, and such happiness enjoyed; or so many proofs of love and protection, as among those who were the people of God, and who feared him.

Men have not heard - In no nation in all past time have deeds been heard of such as thou hast performed.

Nor perceived by the ear - Paul 1 Corinthians 2:9 renders this ‹neither have entered into the heart of man,‘ ‹which,‘ says Lowth, ‹is a phrase purely Hebrew, and which should seem to belong to the prophet.‘ The phrase, ‹Nor perceived by the ear,‘ he says, is repeated without force or propriety, and he seems to suppose that this place has been either willfully

corrupted by the Jews, or that Paul made his quotation from some Apocryphal book - either the ascension of Esaiah, or the Apocalypse of Elias, in both of which the passage is found as quoted by Paul. The phrase is wholly omitted by the Septuagint and the Arabic, but is found in the Vulgate and Syriac. There is no authority from the Hebrew manuscripts to omit it.

Neither hath the eye seen - The margin here undoubtedly expresses the true sense. So Lowth renders it, ‹Nor hath the eye seen a God beside thee, which doeth such things for those that trust in him.‘ In a similar manner, the Septuagint translates it, ‹Neither have our eyes seen a God beside thee (οὐδὲ οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἡμῶν εἶδον θεὸν πλήν σου *oude hoi ophthalmoi hēmōn eidon theon plēn sou*), and thy works which thou hast done for those who wait for mercy.‘ The sense is, no eye had ever seen such a God as Yahweh; one who so richly rewarded those who put their trust in him. In the Hebrew, the word rendered ‹O God,‘ may be either in the accusative or vocative case, and the sense is, that Yahweh was a more glorious rewarder and protector than any of the gods which had ever been worshipped by the nations.

What he hath prepared - Hebrew, יעשׂה *yaʿăs'eh* - ‹He doeth,‘ or will do. So the Septuagint, Ἃ ποιήσεις *Ha poiēseis* - ‹What thou wilt do.‘ The sense given by our translators - ‹What he hath prepared,‘ has been evidently adopted to accommodate the passage to the sense given by Paul 1 Corinthians 2:9, ἃ ἡτοίμασεν, κ.τ.λ. *ha ētoimasen etc* ‹What God has prepared.‘ But the idea is, in the Hebrew, not what God has prepared or laid up in the sense of preserving it for the future; but what he bad already done in the past. No god had done what he had; no human being had ever witnessed such manifestations from any other god.

For him that waiteth for him - Lowth and Noyes, ‹For him who trusteth in him.‘ Paul renders this, ‹For them that love him,‘ and it is evident that he did not intend to quote this literally, but meant to give the general sense. The idea in the Hebrew is, ‹For him who waits (למחכה *limchakēh*) for Yahweh,‘ that is, who feels his helplessness, and relies on him to interpose and save him. Piety is often represented as an attitude of waiting on God Psalm 25:3, Psalm 25:5, Psalm 25:21; Psalm 27:14; Psalm 37:9; Psalm 130:5. The sense of the whole verse is, that God in his past dealings had given manifestations of his existence, power, and goodness, to those who were his friends, which had been furnished nowhere else. To those

interpositions the suppliants appeal, as a reason why he should again interpose, and why he should save them in their heavy calamities.

Verse 5

Thou meetest him - Perhaps there are few verses in the Bible that have given more perplexity to interpreters than this; and after all that has been done, the general impression seems to be, that it is wholly inexplicable, or without meaning - as it certainly is in our translation. Noyes says of his own translation of the last member of the verse, ‹I am not satisfied with this or any other translation of the line which I have seen.‘ Lowth says, ‹I am fully persuaded that these words as they stand at present in the Hebrew text are utterly unintelligible. There is no doubt of the meaning of each word separately, but put together they make no sense at all. I conclude, therefore, that the copy has suffered by transcribers in this place.‘ And after proposing an important change in the text, without any authority, he says, ‹perhaps these may not be the very words of the prophet, but, however, it is better than to impose upon him what makes no sense at all, as they generally do who pretend to render such corrupted passages.‘ Arch. Secker also proposed an important change in the Hebrew text, but there is no good authority in the manuscripts, it is believed, for any change.

Without repeating what has been said by expositors on the text, I shall endeavor to state what seems to me to be its probable signification. Its general purpose, I think, is clear. It is to urge, as an argument for God‘s interposition, the fact that he was accustomed to regard with pleasure those who did well; yet to admit that he was now justly angry on account of their sins, and that they had continued so long in them that they had no hope of being saved but in his mercy. An examination of the words and phrases which occur, will prepare us to present at a single view the probable meaning. The word rendered ‹thou meetest,‘ (פגעת *pâgaʿethâ*) means probably to strike upon, to impinge; then to fall upon in a hostile manner, to urge in any way as with petitions and prayers; and then to strike a peace or league with anyone. See the word explained in the notes at Isaiah 47:3. Here it means, as I suppose, to meet for purposes of peace, friendship, protection; that is, it was a characteristic of God that he met such persons as are described for purposes of kindness and favor; and it expresses the belief of the petitioners that whatever they were suffering, still they had no doubt that it was the character of God to bless the righteous.

That rejoiceth - This translation evidently does not express the sense of the Hebrew, unless it be understood as meaning that God meets with favor those who rejoice in doing righteousness. So Gesenius translates it, ‹Thou makest peace with him who rejoices to do justice; that is, with the just and upright man thou art in league, thou delightest in him.‘ So Noyes renders it, ‹Thou art the friend of those who joyfully do righteousness.‘ Lowth ‹Thou meetest with joy those who work righteousness.‘ Jerome, ‹Thou meetest him who rejoices and does right.‘ The phrase used (אֶת־שָׂשׂ *'eth -s'ās'*) seems to me to mean, ‹With joy,‘ and to denote the general habit of God. It was a characteristic of him to meet the just ‹with joy,‘ that is, joyfully.

And worketh righteousness - Hebrew, ‹And him that doeth righteousness;‘ that is, ‹thou art accustomed to meet the just with joy, and him that does right.‘ It was a pleasure for God to do it, and to impart to them his favors.

Those that remember thee in thy ways - On the word ‹remember,‘ used in this connection, see the notes at Isaiah 62:6. The idea is, that such persons remembered God in the modes which he had appointed; that is, by prayer, sacrifices, and praise. With such persons he delighted to meet, and such he was ever ready to succor.

Behold, thou art wroth - This is language of deep feeling on the part of the suppliants. Notwithstanding the mercy of God, and his readiness to meet and bless the just, they could not be ignorant of the fact that he was now angry with them. They were suffering under the tokens of his displeasure; but they were not now disposed to blame him. They felt the utmost assurance that he was just, whatever they might have endured. It is to be borne in mind, that this is language supposed to be used by the exiles in Babylon, near the close of the captivity; and the evidences that God was angry were to be seen in their heavy sorrows there, in their desolate land, and in the ruins of their prostrate city and temple (see the notes at Isaiah 64:10-11).

In those is continuance - Lowth has correctly remarked that this conveys no idea. To what does the word ‹those‘ refer? No antecedent is mentioned, and expositors have been greatly perplexed with the passage. Lowth, in accordance with his too usual custom, seems to suppose that the text is corrupted, but is not satisfied with any proposed mode of amending it. He renders it, ‹because of our deeds, for we have been rebellious;‘ changing entirely the text - though following substantially the sense of the

Septuagint. Noyes renders it, ‹Long doth the punishment endure, until we be delivered;‘ but expresses, as has been already remarked, dissatisfaction even with this translation, and with all others which he has seen. Jerome renders it, *In ipsis fuimus semper* - ‹We have always been in them,‘ that is, in our sins. The Septuagint, Διὰ τοῦτο ἐπλανήθημεν *Dia touto eplanēthēmen etc* ‹Because of this we wandered, and became all of us as unclean, and all our righteousness as a filthy rag.‘ It seems to me that the phrase בהם *bâhem* ‹in them,‘ or ‹in those,‘ refers to sins understood; and that the word rendered ‹continuance‘ (עולם *ʿôlâm*) is equivalent to a long former period; meaning that their sins had been of long continuance, or as we would express it, ‹we have been always sinners.‘ It is the language of humble confession, denoting that this had been the characteristic of the nation, and that this was the reason why God was angry at them.

And we shall be saved - Lowth renders this, or rather substitutes a phrase for it, thus, ‹For we have been rebellious‘ - amending it wholly by conjecture. But it seems to me that Castellio has given an intelligible and obvious interpretation by regarding it as a question: ‹Jamdiu peccavimus, et serv-abimur?‘ ‹Long time have we sinned, and shall we be saved?‘ That is, we have sinned so long, our offences have been so aggravated, how can we hope to be saved? Is salvation possible for such sinners? It indicates a deep consciousness of guilt, and is language such as is used by all who feel their deep depravity before God. Nothing is more common in conviction for sin, or when suffering under great calamities as a consequence of sin, than to ask the question whether it is possible for such sinners to be saved. I have thus given, perhaps at tedious length, my view of this verse, which has so much perplexed commentators. And though the view must be submitted with great diffidence after such a man as Lowth has declared it to be without sense as the Hebrew text now stands, and though no important doctrine of religion is involved by the exposition, yet some service is rendered if a plausible and probable interpretation is given to a much disputed passage of the sacred Scriptures, and if we are saved from the necessity of supposing a corruption in the Hebrew text.

Verse 6

But we are all as an unclean thing - We are all polluted and defiled. The word used here (טמא *ṭâmēʹ*), means properly that which is polluted and defiled in a Levitical sense; that is, which was regarded as polluted and abominable by the law of Moses Leviticus 5:2; Deuteronomy 14:19, and

may refer to animals, people, or things; also in a moral sense Job 14:4. The sense is, that they regarded themselves as wholly polluted and depraved.

And all our righteousnesses - The plural form is used to denote the deeds which they had performed - meaning that pollution extended to every individual thing of the numerous acts which they had done. The sense is, that all their prayers, sacrifices, alms, praises, were mingled with pollution, and were worthy only of deep detestation and abhorrence.

As filthy rags - ‹Like a garment of stated times‘ (עדים *ʿiddiym*) - from the obsolete root עדד *ʿâdad* "to number, to reckon, to determine," e. g., time. No language could convey deeper abhorrenee of their deeds of righteousness than this reference - as it is undoubtedly - to the *vestis menstruis polluta*. ‹*Non est ambigendum*,‘ says Vitringa, ‹*quin vestis* עדים *ʿiddiym notet linteum aut pannum immundum ex immunditie legali*, *eundemque foedum aspectu*; *cu-jusmodi fuerit imprimis vestis*, *pannus*, *aut linteum feminae menstruo profluvio laborantis*; *verisimile est*, *id potissimum hae phrasi designari*. *Sic accepit earr Alexandrinus*, *vertens*, ὡς ῥάκος ἀποκαθη μένης *hōs rakos apokathē menēs - ut pannus sedentis*; *proprie*: *ut pannus mulieris languidae et desidentis ex menstruo* παθήματι *pathēmati* ‹ (Leviticus 15:33; compare Leviticus 20:18; Lamentations 1:17).

And we all do fade as a leaf - We are all withered away like the leaf of autumn. Our beauty is gone; our strength is fled (compare the notes at Isaiah 40:6-7; Isaiah 50:1-11:30). What a beautiful description this is of the state of man! Strength, vigor, comeliness, and beauty thus fade away, and, like the ‹sere and yellow leaf‘ of autumn, fall to the earth. The earth is thus strewed with that which was once comely like the leaves of spring, now falling and decaying like the faded verdure of the forest.

And our iniquities like the wind - As a tempest sweeps away the leaves of the forest, so have we been swept away by our sins.

Verse 7

And there is none that calleth upon thy name - The nation is corrupt and degenerate. None worship God in sincerity.

That stirreth up himself - The word used here (מתעורר *miteʿôrēr*) refers to the effort which is requisite to rouse oneself when oppressed by a spirit of heavy slumber; and the idea here is, that the nation was sunk in spiritual torpor, and that the same effort was needful to excite it which was requisite to rouse one who had sunk down to deep sleep. How aptly this describes the state of a sinful world! How much disposed is that world to

give itself to spiritual slumber! How indisposed to rouse itself to call upon God! No man rises to God without effort; and unless men make an effort for this, they fall into the stupidity of sin, just as certainly as a drowsy man sinks back into deep sleep.

To take hold of thee - The Hebrew word (חזק *châzaq*) means properly to bind fast, to gird tight, and then to make firm or strong, to strengthen; and the idea of strengthening oneself is implied in the use of the word here. It means, that with the consciousness of feebleness we should seek strength in God. This the people referred to by the prophet were indisposed to do. This the world at large is indisposed to do.

For thou hast hid thy face - Thou bast withdrawn thy favor from us, as a people, on account of our sins. This is an acknowledgment that one effect of his withdrawing his favor, and one evidence of it was, that no one was disposed to call upon his name. All had sunk into the deep lethargy of sin.

And hast consumed us - Margin, ‹Melted.‘ The Hebrew word (מוג *mûg*) means "to melt, to flow down"; and hence, in Piel, to cause to melt or flow down. It is used to denote the fact that an army or host of people seem to melt away, or become dissolved by fear and terror Exodus 15:15; Job 30:22. ‹Thou dissolvest (תמגגני *thîmogegēniy*) my substance;‘ that is, thou causest me to dissolve before thy indignation. This is described as one of the effects of the wrath of God, that his enemies vanish away, or are dissolved before him.

Because of our iniquities - Margin, as Hebrew, ‹By the hand;‘ that is, our iniquities have been the hand, the agent or instrument by which this has been done.

Verse 8

But now, O Lord, thou art our Father - (See the notes at Isaiah 63:16).

We are the clay - The idea seems to be, that their condition then had been produced by him as clay is moulded by the potter, and that they were to be returned and restored entirely by him - as they had no more power to do it than the clay had to shape itself. The sense is, that they were wholly in his hand and at his disposal (see the notes at Isaiah 29:16; Isaiah 45:9).

And thou our potter - Thou hast power to mould us as the potter does the clay.

And we all are the work of thy hand - That is, as the vessel made by the potter is his work. We have been formed by thee, and we are dependent

on thee to make us what thou wilt have us to be. This whole verse is an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God. It expresses the feeling which all have when under conviction of sin; and when they are sensible that they are exposed to the divine displeasure for their transgressions. Then they feel that if they are to be saved, it must be by the mere sovereignty of God; and then they implore his interposition to ‹mould and guide them at his will.‘

Verse 10

Thy holy cities are a wilderness - It is to be remembered that this is supposed to be spoken near the close of the exile in Babylon. In accordance with the usual custom in this book, Isaiah throws himself forward by prophetic anticipation into that future period, and describes the scene as if it were passing before his eyes (see the Introduction, Section 7). He uses language such as the exiles would use; he puts arguments into their mouths which it would be proper for them to use; he describes the feelings which they would then have. The phrase, ‹thy holy cities,‘ may either mean the cities of the holy land - which belonged to God, and were ‹holy,‘ as they pertained to his people; or it may mean, as many critics have supposed, the different parts of Jerusalem. A part of Jerusalem was built on Mount Zion, and was called the ‹upper city,‘ in contradistinction from that built on Mount Acra, which was called the ‹lower city.‘ But I think it more probable that the prophet refers to the cities throughout the land that were laid waste.

Are a wilderness - They were uninhabited, and were lying in ruins.

Zion is a wilderness - On the name ‹Zion,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 1:8. The idea here is, that Jerusalem was laid waste. Its temple was burned; its palaces destroyed; its houses uninhabited. This is to be regarded as being uttered at the close of the exile, after Jerusalem had been lying in ruins for seventy years - a time during which any forsaken city would be in a condition which might not improperly be called a desert. When Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, he burned the temple, broke down the wall, and consumed all the palaces with fire (2 Chronicles 36:19). We have only to conceive what must have been the state of the city seventy years after this, to see the force of the description here.

Verse 11

Our holy and our beautiful house - The temple. It was called ‹holy,‘ because it was dedicated to the service of God; and ‹beautiful,‘ on account of its extraordinary magnificence. The original word more properly means glorious.

Where our fathers praised thee - Few attachments become stronger than that which is formed for a place of worship where our ancestors have long been engaged in the service of God. It was now a great aggravation of their sufferings, that that beautiful place, consecrated by the fact that their forefathers had long there offered praise to God, was lying in ruins.

Is burned up with fire - (See 2 Chronicles 36:19).

And all our pleasant things - All that is precious to us (Hebrew); all the objects of our desire. The reference is to their temples, their homes, their city - to all that was dear to them in their native land. It would be difficult to find a passage anywhere in the Bible - or out of it - that equals this for tenderness and true pathos. They were an exiled people; long suffering in a distant land with the reflection that their homes were in ruins; their splendid temple long since fired and lying in desolation; the rank grass growing in their streets, and their whole country overrun with wild beasts, and with a rank and unsubdued vegetation. To that land they longed to return, and here with the deepest emotion they plead with God in behalf of their desolate country. The sentiment here is, that we should go to God with deep emotion when his church is prostrate, and that then is the time when we should use the most tender pleadings, and when our hearts should be melted within us.

Verse 12

Wilt thou refrain thyself - Wilt thou refuse to come to our aid? Wilt thou decline to visit us, and save us from our calamities?

Wilt thou hold thy peace - Wilt thou not speak for our rescue, and command us to be delivered? Thus closes this chapter of great tenderness and beauty. It is a model of affectionate and earnest entreaty for the divine interposition in the day of calamity. With such tender and affectionate earnestness may we learn to plead with God! Thus may all his people learn to approach him as a Father: thus feel that they have the inestimable privilege, in times of trial, of making known their needs to the High and Holy One. Thus, when calamity presses on us; when as individuals or as families we are afflicted; or when our country or the church is suffering under long trials, may we go to God and humbly confess our sins, and urge his promises, and take hold of his strength, and plead with him to interpose. Thus pleading, be will hear us; thus presenting our cause, he will interpose to save.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 65

Introduction

It is generally supposed that this chapter is closely connected in sense with the preceding; and that its object is, to defend the proceedings of God in regard to the Jews, and especially with reference to the complaint in the preceding chapter. If so, it is designed to state the reasons why he had thus afflicted them, and to encourage the pious among them with the expectation of great future prosperity and safety. A general view of the chapter may be obtained by a glance at the following analysis of the subjects introduced in it.

I. God states in general that he had called another people who had not sought him, and extended the blessings of salvation to those who had been strangers to his name Isaiah 65:1. This is evidently intended to show that many of his ancient people would be rejected, and that the blessings of salvation would be extended to others Romans 10:20. In the previous chapter they had pled Isaiah 64:9, that they were ‹all‘ his people; they had urged, because their nation had been in covenant with God, that he should interpose and save them. Here an important principle is introduced, that they were not to be saved of course because they were Jews; and that others would be introduced to his favor who belonged to nations which had not known him, while his ancient covenant people would be rejected. The Jews were slow to believe this; and hence, Paul says Romans 10:20 that Isaiah was ‹very bold‘ in advancing so unpopular a sentiment.

II. God states the true reason why he had punished them Isaiah 65:2-7. It was on account of their sins. It was not because he was changeable, or was unjust in his dealings with them. He had punished them, and he had resolved to reject a large portion of them, though they belonged to his ancient covenant people, on account of their numerous and deeply aggravated crimes. He specifies particularly:

1. That they had been a rebellious people, and that he had stretched out his hands to them in vain, inviting them to return.

2. That they were a people which had constantly provoked him by their idolatries; their abominable sacrifices; and by eating the things which he had forbidden.

3. That they were eminently proud and self-righteous, saying to others, Stand by yourselves, for we are holier than you.

4. That for these sins God could not but punish them. His law required it, and his justice demanded that he should not pass such offences by unnoticed.

III. Yet he said that the whole nation should not be destroyed. His elect would be saved; in accordance with the uniform doctrine of the Scriptures, that all the seed of Abraham should not be cut off, but that a remnant should be kept to accomplish important purposes in reference to the salvation of the world Isaiah 65:8-10.

IV. Yet the wicked portion of the nation should be cut off, and God, by the prophet, describes the certain punishment which awaited them Isaiah 65:11-16.

1. They would be doomed to slaughter.

2. They would be subjected to hunger and want, while his true servants would have abundance.

3. They would cry in deep sorrow, while his servants would rejoice.

4. Their destruction would be a blessing to his people, and the result of their punishment would be to cause his own people to see more fully the value of their religion, and to prize it more.

V. Yet there would be future glory and prosperity, such as his true people had desired, and such as they had sought in their prayers; and the chapter concludes with a glowing description of the glory which would bless his church and people Isaiah 65:17-25.

1. God would create new heavens and a new earth - far surpassing the former in beauty and glory Isaiah 65:17.

2. Jerusalem would be made an occasion of rejoicing Isaiah 65:18.

3. Its prosperity is described as a state of peace, security, and happiness Isaiah 65:19-25.

(1) great age would be attained by its inhabitants, and Jerusalem would be full of venerable and pious old men.

(2) they would enjoy the fruit of their own labor without annoyance.

(3) their prayers would be speedily answered - even while they were speaking.

(4) the true religion would produce a change on the passions of people as if the nature of wild and ferocious animals were changed, and the wolf and the lamb should feed together, and the lion should eat straw like the ox. There would be universal security and peace throughout the whole world where the true religion would be spread.

There can be no doubt, I think, that this refers to the times of the Messiah. Particular proof of this will be furnished in the exposition of the chapter. It is to be regarded, indeed, as well as the previous chapter, as primarily addressed to the exiles in Babylon, but the mind of the prophet is thrown forward. He looks at future events. He sees a large part of the nation permanently rejected. He sees the Gentiles called to partake of the privileges of the true religion. He sees still a remnant of the ancient Jewish people preserved in all their sufferings, and future glory rise upon them under the Messiah, when a new heavens and a new earth should be created. It is adapted, therefore, not only to comfort the ancient afflicted people of God, but it contains most important and cheering truth in regard to the final prevalence of the true religion, and the state of the world when the gospel shall everywhere prevail.

Verse 1

I am sought of them that asked not for me - That is, by the Gentiles. So Paul applies it in Romans 10:20. Lowth translates the word which is rendered, ‹I am sought,‘ by ‹I am made known.‘ Noyes, ‹I have heard.‘ The Septuagint renders it, Ἐμφανὴς ἐγενήθην *Emphanēs egenēthēn* - ‹I became manifest.‘ Jerome, ‹They sought me who had not before inquired for me.‘ The Chaldee, ‹I am sought in my word by those who had not asked me before my face.‘ The Hebrew word דרשׁ *dârash* means properly “to frequent a place, to search or seek”; and in the Niphal - the form used here - “to be sought unto, to grant access to anyone; hence, to hear and answer prayer” Ezekiel 14:3; 20:3-31. Here there is not only the idea that he was sought, but that they obtained access to him, for he listened to their supplications. The phrase, ‹That asked not for me,‘ means that they had not been accustomed to worship the true God. The idea is, that those had obtained mercy who had not been accustomed to call upon him.

I am found of them - Paul has rendered this Romans 10:20, Ἐμφανὴς ἐγενόμην *Emphanēs egenomēn* - ‹I was made manifest.‘ The idea is, that they obtained his favor.

I said, Behold me, behold me - I offered them my favor, and invited them to partake of salvation. Paul has omitted this in his quotation.

Unto a nation - This does not refer to any particular nation, but to people who had never been admitted to favor with God.

That was not called by my name - (See the notes at Isaiah 63:19).

Verse 2

I have spread out my hands - To spread out the hands is an action denoting invitation or entreaty Proverbs 1:24. The sense is, that God had invited the Jews constantly to partake of his favors, but they had been rebellious, and had rejected his offers.

All the day - I have not ceased to do it. The Chaldee renders this, ‹I sent my prophets all the day to a rebellious people.‘

Unto a rebellious people - (See the notes at Isaiah 1:2). Paul renders this, Πρὸς λαον ἀπειθοῦντα καὶ ἀντιλέγοντα *Pros laon apeithounta kai antilegonta* - ‹Unto a disobedient and gainsaying people;‘ but the sense is substantially preserved.

Which walketh - In what way they did this, the prophet specifies in the following verse. This is the general reason why he had rejected them, and why he had resolved to make the offer of salvation to the Gentiles. This, at first, was a reason for the calamities which God had brought upon the nation in the suffering of the exile, but it also contains a general principle of which that was only one specimen. They had been rebellious, and God had brought this calamity upon them. It would be also true in future times, that he would reject them and offer salvation to the pagan world, and would be found by those who had never sought for him or called on his name.

Verse 3

A people - This verse contains a specification of the reasons why God had rejected them, and brought the calamities upon them.

That provoketh me to anger - That is, by their sins. They give constant occasion for my indignation.

Continually - (תמיד *tâmîyd*). It is not once merely, but their conduct as a people is constantly such as to excite my displeasure.

To my face - There is no attempt at concealment. Their abominations are public. It is always regarded as an additional affront when an offence is

committed in the very presence of another, and when there is not even the apology that it was supposed he did not see the offender. It is a great aggravation of the guilt of the stoner, that his offence is committed in the very presence, and under the very eye, of God.

That sacrificeth in gardens - (See the notes at Isaiah 1:29).

And burneth incense - On the meaning of the word ‹incense,‘ see the notes at Isaiah 1:13.

Upon altars of brick - Margin, ‹Bricks.‘ The Hebrew is simply, ‹Upon bricks.‘ The command of God was that the altars for sacrifice should be made of unhewn stone Exodus 20:24-25. But the pagan had altars of a different description, and the Jews had sacrificed on those altars. Some have supposed that this means that they sacrificed on the roofs of their houses, which were flat, and paved with brick, or tile, or plaster. That altars were constructed sometimes on the roofs of their houses, we know from 2 Kings 23:12, where Josiah is said to have beaten down the ‹altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the king of Judah had made.‘ But it is not necessary to suppose that such sacrifices are referred to here. They had disobeyed the command of God, which required that the altars should be made only of unhewn stone. They had built other altars, and had joined with the pagan in offering sacrifices thereon. The reason why God forbade that the altar should be of anything but unhewn stone is not certainly known, and is not necessary to be understood in order to explain this passage. It may have been, first, in order effectually to separate his people from all others, as well in the construction of the altar as in anything and everything else; secondly, because various inscriptions and carvings were usually made on altars, and as this tended to superstition, God commanded that the chisel should not be used at all in the construction of the altars where his people should worship.

Verse 4

Which remain among the graves - That is, evidently for purposes of necromancy and divination. They do it to appear to hold converse with the dead, and to receive communications from them. The idea in necromancy was, that departed spirits must be acquainted with future events, or at least with the secret things of the invisible world where they dwelt, and that certain persons, by various arts, could become intimate with them, or ‹familiar‘ with them, and, by obtaining their secrets, be able to communicate important truths to the living. It seems to have been supposed

that this acquaintance might be increased by lodging in the tombs and among the monuments, that they might thus be near to the dead, and have more intimate communion with them (compare the notes at Isaiah 8:19-20). It is to be recollected, that tombs among the ancients, and especially in Oriental countries, were commonly excavations from the sides of hills, or frequently were large caves. Such places would furnish spacious lodgings for those who chose to reside there, and were, in fact, often resorted to by those who had no houses, and by robbers (see Matthew 8:28; Mark 5:3).

And lodge in the monuments - Evidently for some purpose of superstition and idolatry. There is, however, some considerable variety in the exposition of the word rendered here ‹monuments,‘ as well as in regard to the whole passage. The word rendered ‹lodge‘ (יליני *yâliynû*), means properly to pass the night, and refers not to a permanent dwelling in any place, but to remaining over night; and the probability is, that they went to the places referred to, to sleep - in order that they might receive communications in their dreams from idols, by being near them, or in order that they might have communication with departed spirits. The word rendered ‹monuments‘ (נצורים *netsûrîym*) is derived from נצר *nâtsar* to watch, to guard, to keep; then to keep from view, to hide - and means properly hidden recesses; and dark and obscure retreats. It may be applied either to the adyta or secret places of pagan temples where their oracles were consulted and many of their rites were performed; or it may be applied to sepulchral caverns, the dark and hidden places where the dead were buried. The Septuagint renders it, ‹They sleep in tombs and in caves (ἐν τοῖς σπηλαίοις *en tois spēlaiois*) for the purpose of dreaming‘ (διὰ ἐνύπνια *dia enupnia*); in allusion to the custom of sleeping in the temples, or near the oracles of their gods, for the purpose of obtaining from them communications by dreams. This custom is not unfrequently alluded to by the ancient writers. An instance of this kind occurs in Virgil:

- *huc dona sacerdos*
Cum tulit, et caesarum ovium sub nocte silenti
Pellibus incubuit stratis, somnosque petivit:

Multa modis simulacra videt volitantia miris,

Et varias audit voces, fruiturque Deorum,

Colloquio, atque imis Acheronta affatur Avernis.
AEaeid, vii. 86-91.
‹Here in distress the Italian nations come,
Anxious to clear their doubts and earn their doom;

First on the fleeces of the slaughter‘d sheep,

By night the sacred priest dissolves in sleep;

When in a train before his slumbering eye,

Their airy forms and wondrous visions fly:

He calls the powers who guard the infernal floods,

And talks inspired familiar with the gods.‘
Pitt

In the temples of Serapis and AEsculapius, it was common for the sick and infirm who came there to be cured, to sleep there, with the belief that the proper remedy would be communicated by dreams. ‹The following places may also be referred to as illustrating this custom: Pausan. Phoc. 31; Cic. Divin. i. 43; Strabo vi. 3,9; S. H. Meibom. De incubatione in fanta Deorum olim facta. Helmst. 1659,4. Lowth and Noyes render it, ‹In caverns.‘ The Chaldee renders it, ‹Who dwelt in houses which are built of the dust of sepulchres, and abide with the dead bodies of dead people.‘ There can be no doubt that the prophet here alludes to some such custom of sleeping in the tombs, for the alleged purpose of conversing with the dead, or in temples for the purpose of communion with the idols by dreams, or with the expectation that they would receive responses by dreams (compare the notes at Isaiah 14:9)

Which eat swine‘s flesh - This was expressly forbidden by the Jewish law Leviticus 11:7, and is held in abomination by the Jews now. Yet the flesh of the swine was freely eaten by the pagan; and when the Jews conformed to their customs in other respects, they doubtless forgot also the law commanding a distinction to be made in meats. Antiochus Epiphanes compelled the Jews to eat swine‘s flesh as a token of their submission, and of their renouncing their religion. The case of Eleazer, who chose to die as a

martyr, rather than give such a proof that he had renounced his religion, and who preferred death rather than to dissemble, is recorded in 2 Maccabees 6:19-31. See also the affecting case of the mother and her seven sons, who all died in a similar manner, in 2 Maccabees 7. Yet it seems that, in the time of Isaiah, they had no such devotedness to their national religion. They freely conformed to the nations around them, and thus gave public demonstration that they disregarded the commands of Yahweh. It is also to be observed, that swine were often sacrificed by the pagan, and were eaten in their feasts in honor of idols. The crime here referred to, therefore, was not merely that of partaking of the flesh, but it was that of joining with the pagan in idolatrous sacrifices. Thus Ovid says:

Prima Ceres avidae gavisa est sanguine porcae,
Ulta suas merita caede nocentis opes.
Fastor, i. 349

So Horace:

- *immolet aequis*
Hic porcum Laribus -
Serm. ii. 164

Thus, Varro (De Re Rustic. ii. 4), says ‹The swine is called in Greek ὗς *hus* (formerly θῦς *thus*), and was so called from the word which signifies to sacrifice (θύειν *thuein*), for the swine seem first to have been used in sacrifices. Of this custom we have vestiges in the fact, that the first sacrifices to Ceres are of the swine; and that in the beginning of peace, when a treaty is made, a hog is sacrificed; and that in the beginning of marriage contracts in Etruria, the new wife and the new husband first sacrifice a hog. The primitive Latins, and also the Greeks in Italy, seem to have done the same thing.‘ Spencer (De Leg. Heb i. 7) supposes that this was done often in caves and dark recesses, and that the prophet refers to this custom here. If this view be correct, then the offence consisted not merely in eating swine‘s flesh, but in eating it in connection with sacrifices, or joining with the pagan in their idolatrous worship.

And broth of abominable things - Margin, ‹Pieces.‘ Lowth says that this was for ‹lustrations, magical arts, and other superstitious and abominable practices.‘ The word rendered here ‹broth,‘ and in the margin ‹pieces‘ (פרק *pârâq*), is derived from the verb פרק *pâraq* to break (whence the Latin *frango*; the Goth. *brikan*; the Germ. *breoken*; and the English *break*), and means that which is broken, or a fragment; and hence, broth or

soup, from the fragments or crumbs of bread over which the broth is poured. The Septuagint renders this, ‹And all their vessels are polluted.‘ It is not improbable that the broth or soup used here was in some way employed in arts of incantation or necromancy. Compare Shakespeare‘s account of the witches in Macbeth:

1. Witch: Where hast thou been, sister?
2. Witch: Killing swine.

Act i. Sc. 3.

Hec: Your vessels and your spells provide,
Your charms, and everything beside.

Act iii. Sc. 5.

1. Witch: Round about the caldron go,
In the poison‘d entrails throw,
Toad that under the cold stone,

Days and nights hath thirty-one,

Fillet of a finny snake,

In the caldron boil and bake,

Eye of newt, and toe of frog,

Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,

Adder‘s fork, and blind worm‘s sting,

Lizard‘s leg, and howlet‘s wing,

For a charm of powerful trouble,

Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

Act iv. Sc. 1.

It seems probable that some such magical incantations were used in the time of Isaiah. Such things are known to have been practiced in regions of idolatry (see Marco Polo, De Region. Orient., iii. 24). ‹When the priests of the idol,‘ says he, ‹wish to engage in sacred things, they call the consecrated

girls, and with them, in the presence of the idols, they engage in the dance, and sing aloud. These girls bear with them vessels of food, which they place on the table before the idols, and they entreat the gods to eat of the food, and particularly they pour out broth made of flesh before them, that they may appease them.‘ The whole scene here described by the prophet is one connected with idolatry and magical incantations; and the prophet means to rebuke them for having forsaken God and fallen into all the abominable and stupid arts of idolaters. It was not merely that they had eaten the flesh of swine, or that they had made broth of unclean meats - which would have been minor, though real offences - it was that they had fallen into all the abominable practices connected with idolatry and necromancy.

Verse 5

Which say, Stand by thyself - Who at the time that they engage in these abominations are distinguished for spiritual pride. The most worthless people are commonly the most proud; and they who have wandered farthest from God have in general the most exalted idea of their own goodness. It was a characteristic of a large part of the Jewish nation, and especially of the Pharisees, to be self-righteous and proud. A striking illustration of this we have in the following description of the Hindu yogis, by Roberts: ‹Those men are so isolated by their superstition and penances, that they hold but little contact with the rest of mankind. They wander about in the dark in the place of burning the dead, or “among the graves;” there they affect to hold converse with evil and other spirits; and there they pretend to receive intimations respecting the destinies of others. They will eat things which are religiously clean or unclean; they neither wash their bodies, nor comb their hair, nor cut their nails, nor wear clothes. They are counted to be most holy among the people, and are looked upon as beings of another world.‘

These are a smoke in my nose - Margin, ‹Anger.‘ The word rendered ‹nose‘ (אף *'aph*) means sometimes nose Numbers 11:20; Job 40:24, and sometimes ‹anger,‘ because anger is evinced by hard breathing. The Septuagint renders this, ‹This is the smoke of my anger.‘ But the correct idea is, probably, that their conduct was offensive to God, as smoke is unpleasant or painful in the nostrils; or as smoke excites irritation when breathed, so their conduct excited displeasure (Rosenmuller). Or it may mean, as Lowth suggests, that their conduct kindled a smoke and a fire in his nose as the emblems of his wrath. There is probably an allusion to their

sacrifices here. The smoke of their sacrifices constantly ascending was unpleasant and provoking to God.

A fire that burneth all the day - The idea here probably is, that their conduct kindled a fire of indignation that was continually breathed out upon them. A similar figure occurs in Deuteronomy 32:22: ‹For a fire is kindled in mine anger,‘ or in my nose (באפי *be'appîy*), ‹and shall burn unto the lowest hell.‘ So in Psalm 18:8:

There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,
And fire out of his mouth devoured.

Compare Ezekiel 38:18.

Verse 6

Behold, it is written before me - That is, the crimes of which they had been guilty, or the sentence which would be consequent thereon. The allusion is to the custom of having the decrees of kings recorded in a volume or on a table, and kept in their presence, so that they might be seen and not forgotten. An allusion to this custom of opening the books containing a record of this kind on trials, occurs in Daniel 7:10, ‹The judgment was set, and the books were opened.‘ So also Revelation 20:12, ‹And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.‘ So here. An impartial record had been made, and God would recompense them according to their deeds.

I will not keep silence - Nothing shall compel me to desist from declaring a sentence which shall be just and right.

But will recompense, even recompense - That is, I will certainly requite them. The word is repeated in accordance with the usual manner in Hebrew to denote emphasis.

Into their bosom - (See Psalm 79:12; Jeremiah 32:18; Luke 6:38). The word bosom, here refers to a custom among the Orientals of making the bosom or front of their garments large and loose, so that articles could be carried in them, answering the purpose of our pockets (compare Exodus 4:6-7; Proverbs 6:27). The sense here is, that God would abundantly punish them for their sins.

Verse 7

Your iniquities - Their idolatry and their forsaking God, and their arts of necromancy.

And the iniquities of your fathers together - The consequences of your own sins, and of the long defection of the nation from virtue and pure religion, shall come rushing upon you like accumulated floods. This is in accordance with the Scripture doctrine everywhere, that the consequences of the sins of ancestors pass over and visit their posterity (see Exodus 20:5; Exodus 34:7; Numbers 14:18; Job 21:19; Luke 11:50-51; the notes at Romans 5:19). The case here was, that the nation had been characteristically prone to wander from God, and to fall into idolatry. Crime had thus been accumulating, like pent-up waters, for ages, and now it swept away every barrier. So crime often accumulates in a nation. Age after age rolls on, and it is unpunished, until it breaks over every obstacle, and all that is valuable and happy is swept suddenly away.

Which have burnt incense upon the mountains - (See the notes at Isaiah 65:3).

And blasphemed me upon the hills - That is, they have dishonored me by worshipping idols, and by denying me in that public manner. Idols were usually worshipped on high places.

Will I measure their former work - I will recompense them; I will pour the reward of their work or of their doings into their bosom.

Verse 8

Thus saith the Lord - This verse is designed to keep their minds from utter despair, and to assure them that they should not be utterly destroyed. See the analysis of the chapter.

As the new wine - The Hebrew word used here (תירוֹשׁ *tîyrôsh*), means properly "must" or "new wine" (see the notes at Isaiah 24:7). The Septuagint renders it here, ὁ ῥὼξ *ho rōx* a grain or berry; meaning probably a good grape. The Chaldee renders it, ‹As Noah was found pure in the generation of the deluge, and I said I would not destroy them, that I might rise up a generation from him, so will I do on account of my servants, that I may not destroy all.' Jerome renders it, *Granum* - ‹A kernel,' or berry.

Is found in the cluster - Expositors have differed in the interpretation of this passage. The true image seems to be taken from collecting grapes when a large part of them were in some way damaged or spoiled - either by the quality of the vine, or by a bad season, or by having been gathered too early, or being suffered to remain too long in a heap. In such a case the vine-dresser would be ready to throw them away. But in the mass he would find a few that were ripe and good. While he was throwing away the mass,

someone would say that a part was good, and would entreat him not to destroy it. So with the Jews. The mass was corrupt, and was to be cut off. But still a portion should be left. This is in accordance with the doctrine everywhere occurring in Isaiah and elsewhere in the Scriptures, that the whole Jewish nation should not be cut off, but that a remnant should be preserved (see the notes at Isaiah 6:13; compare Isaiah 1:9; Isaiah 7:3; Isaiah 10:21; Isaiah 11:11-16).

For a blessing - That which is regarded as a blessing; that is wine (compare Judges 9:13).

So will I do - The whole nation shall not be cut off, but a remnant shall be kept and saved.

Verse 9

And I will bring forth a seed - I will give descendants to Jacob, who shall share my favor and repossess the land.

An inheritor of my mountains - The mountains of Palestine - Jerusalem and the vicinity - called the mountains of God because he claimed that land as his special residence, and the place where his holy religion was established.

And mine elect - They who have been chosen by me to maintain my religion in the world.

Verse 10

And Sharon - Sharon was properly a district south of Mount Carmel, along the coast of the Mediterranean, and extending from. Caesarea to Joppa. In the Scripture, this is almost a proverbial name to denote extraordinary beauty and fertility (see the notes at Isaiah 30:9; Isaiah 32:5).

Shall be a fold of flocks - At the time contemplated here by the prophet - the close of the exile - that whole country would have lain waste about seventy years. Of course, during that long period it would be spread over with a wild luxuriance of trees and shrubs. Once it was celebrated pasture-ground, and was exceedingly beautiful as a place for flocks and herds. Such a place it would be again When the exiles should return, and cultivate their native land. The following description of Sharon, in the spring of 1824, by Mr. Thompson, an American Missionary, will give an idea of the natural appearance of that part of Palestine. The view taken was from a high tower in Ramla. ‹The whole valley of Sharon, from the mountains of Jerusalem to the sea, and from the foot of Carmel to the hills of Gaza, is spread before you like a painted map, and is extremely beautiful, especially at evening,

when the last rays of the setting sun gild the distant mountain tops, the weary farmer returns from his labor, and the bleating flocks come frisking and joyful to their fold. At such a time I saw it, and lingered long in pensive meditation, until the stars looked out from the sky, and the cool breezes of evening began to shed soft dews on the feverish land. What a paradise was here when Solomon reigned in Jerusalem, and sang of the roses of Sharon!‘

And the valley of Achor - This was a valley near to Jericho, and was distinguished as the place where Achan was put to death by stoning Joshua 7:24; Joshua 15:7; Hosea 2:15. The word Achor (עכור *ʿâkôr*), means properly “causing affliction,” and the name was probably given to that valley from the trouble or affliction which was there caused to the Israelites from the sin of Achan. The phrase, ‹the valley of Achor,‘ would probably thence become a proverbial expression to denote that which caused trouble of any kind. And the sense here probably is, that that which had been to the nation a source of calamity should become a source of blessing - as if a place distinguished for causing trouble should become as celebrated for producing happiness. As that valley had been a source of great trouble on their first entering into the land of Canaan, so it would become a place of great exultation, peace, and joy, on their return from their exile. They would naturally enter Canaan near to that valley, and the place which to them had been once the occasion of so much distress, would be found a quiet and peaceful place where their herds might lie down in safety (compare Hosea 2:15).

Verse 11

But ye are they that forsake the Lord - Or rather, ‹Ye who forsake Yahweh, and who forget my holy mountain, I will number to the sword.‘ The design of this verse is to remind them of their idolatries, and to assure them that they should not escape unpunished.

That forget my holy mountain - Mount Moriah, the sacred mountain on which the temple was built.

That prepare a table - It was usual to set food and drink before idols - with the belief that the gods consumed what was thus placed before them (see the notes at Isaiah 65:4). The meaning here is, that the Jews had united with the pagan in thus ‹preparing a table;‘ that is, setting it before the idols referred to, and placing food on it for them.

For that troop - Margin, ‹Gad.‘ Perhaps there is nowhere a more unhappy translation than this. It has been made evidently because our

translators were not aware of the true meaning of the word, and did not seem to understand that it referred to idolatry. The translation seems to have been adopted with some reference to the paronomasia occurring in Genesis 49:19; ‹Gad, a troop shall overcome him‘ - יגודנו גדוד גד *gâd gedûd yegûdenû* - where the word Gad has some resemblance to the word rendered troop. The word Gad itself, however, never means troop, and evidently should not be so rendered here. Much has been written on this place, and the views of the learned concerning Gad and Meni are very various and uncertain. Those who are disposed to examine the subject at length, may consult Rosenmuller, Vitringa, and Gesenius on the passage; and also the following works.

On this passage the reader may consult the Dissertation el David Mills, De Gad et Meni, and also the Dissertation of Jo. Goth. Lakemacher, De Gad et Meni, both of which are to be found in Ugolin‘s Thesaurus, xxiii. pp. 671-718, where the subject is examined at length. Mills supposes that the names Gad and Meni are two names for the moon - *sidus bonum*, and μηνη *mēnē* He remarks that ‹on account of the power which the moon is supposed to exert over sublunary things, it was often called the goddess Fortune. It is certain that the Egyptians by Τύχη *Tuchē* (Fortune), which they numbered among the gods who were present at the birth of man, understood the moon.‘ Among the Arabians and Persians the moon is said to have been denominated *Sidus felix et faustum* - ‹The happy and propitious star.‘ See Rosenmuller *in loc*. Lakemather supposes that two idols are meant - Hecate and Mann Vitringa and Rosenmuller suppose that the sun and moon are intended. Grotius supposes that the name Gad means the same as the goddess Fortune, which was worshipped by the Hebrews, Chaldeans, and Arabians; and that Meni means a divinity of that name, which Strabo says was worshipped in Armenia and Phrygia. Other opinions may be seen in Vitringa. That two idols are intended here, there can be no doubt. For,

1. The circumstance mentioned of their preparing a table for them, and pouring out a drink-offering, is expressive of idolatry.

2. The connection implies this, as the reproof in this chapter is to a considerable extent for their idolatry.

3. The universal opinion of expositors, though they have varied in regard to the idols intended, proves this.

Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and the rabbis generally suppose that by Gad the planet Jupiter was intended, which they say was worshipped throughout the East as the god of fortune, and this is now the prevalent opinion. The word גד *gad* says Gesenius, means fortune, especially the god Fortune, which was worshipped in Babylon. He supposes that it was the same idol which was also called Baal or Bel (compare the notes at Isaiah 46:1), and that by this name the planet Jupiter - *Stella Jovis* - was intended, which was regarded throughout the East as the genius and giver of good fortune, hence called by the Arabians *bona fortuna major* - ‹the greater good fortune.‘ The word ‹Meni,‘ on the other hand, Gesenius supposes to denote the planet Venus, called in the East *bolla fortuna minor* - ‹the lesser good fortune.‘ The Vulgate renders this, *Fortunae* - ‹To Fortune.‘ The Septuagint, Τῷ δαιμονίῳ *tō daimoniō* - ‹To a demon;‘ though, in the corresponding member, Meni is rendered by τῇ τύχῃ *tē tuchē* - ‹To Fortune,‘ and it is possible that the order of the words has been inverted, and that they meant to render the word Gad by Fortune. The Chaldee renders it simply, לטעון *leṭaʿevân* - ‹To idols.‘ It is agreed on all hands that some idol is here referred to that was extensively worshipped in the East; and the general impression is, that it was an idol representing Fortune. But whether it was the Sun, or the planet Jupiter, is not easy to determine.

That it was customary to place a table before the idol has been already remarked, and is expressly affirmed by Jerome. ‹In all cities,‘ says he, ‹and especially in Egypt, and in Alexandria, it was an ancient custom of idolatry, that on the last day of the year, and of the last month, they placed a table filled with food of various kinds, and a cup containing wine and honey mixed together - poculum mulso mistum - either as an expression of thankfulness for the fertility of the past year, or invoking fertility for the coming year.‘ Thus Herodotus (iii. 18) also describes the celebrated table of the sun in Ethiopia. ‹What they call the table of the sun was this: A plain in the vicinity of the city was filled, to the height of four feet, with roasted flesh of all kinds of animals, which was carried there in the night under the inspection of magistrates; during the day, whoever pleased was at liberty to go and satisfy his hunger. The natives of the place affirm that the earth

spontaneously produces all these viands; this, however, is what they call the table of the sun.‘

And that furnish the drink-offering - In all ancient worship, it was customary to pour out a libation, or a drink-offering. This was done among idolaters, to complete the idea of a repast. As they placed food before the idols, so they also poured out wine before them, with the idea of propitiating them (see the notes at Isaiah 57:6).

To that number - Margin, ‹Meni.‘ The phrase, ‹to that number‘ evidently conveys no idea, and it would have been much better to have retained the name Meni, without any attempt to translate it. The rendering, ‹to that number‘ was adopted because the word מני *menîy* is derived from מנה *mânâh* to allot, to appoint, to number. Various opinions also have been entertained in regard to this. Rosenmuller and many others suppose that the moon is intended, and it has been supposed that the name Meni was given to that luminary because it numbered the months, or divided the time. Bynaeus and David Mills have endeavored to demonstrate that this was the moon, and that this was extensively worshipped in Eastern nations. Vitringa supposes that it was the same deity which was worshipped by the Syrians and Philistines by the name of Astarte, or Ashtaroth, as it is called in the Scripture; or as οὐρανίης *ouraniēs* the queen of heaven; and if the name Gad be supposed to represent the sun, the name Meni will doubtless represent the moon.

The goddess Ashtaroth or Astarte, was a goddess of the Sidonians, and was much worshipped in Syria and Phenicia. Solomon introduced her worship in Jerusalem 1 Kings 11:33. Three hundred priests were constantly employed in her service at Hierapolis in Syria. She was called ‹the queen of heaven;‘ and is usually mentioned in connection with Baal. Gesenius supposes that the planet Venus is intended, regarded as the source of good fortune, and worshipped extensively in connection with the planet Jupiter, especially in the regions of Babylonia. It seems to be agreed that the word refers to the worship of either the moon or the planet Venus, regarded as the goddess of good fortune. It is not very material which is intended, nor is it easy to determine. The works referred to above may be consulted for a more full examination of the subject than is consistent with the design of these notes. The leading idea of the prophet is, that they were deeply sunken and debased in thus forsaking Yahweh, and endeavoring to propitiate the favor of idol-gods.

Verse 12

Therefore will I number you to the sword - There is undoubtedly an allusion here to the idol Meni mentioned in Isaiah 65:11, and a play upon the name, in accordance with a custom quite common in the sacred Scriptures. The word מניתי *mâniytiy* ‹I will number,‘ is derived from מנה *mânâh* the same word from which מני *menîy* is derived. The idea is, since they worshipped a god whose name denoted number - perhaps one who was supposed to number or appoint the fates of people - God would number them. He would determine their destiny. It would not be done by any idol that was supposed to preside over the destinies of people; not by blind fate, or by anyone of the heavenly bodies, but it would be by an intelligent and holy God. And thus numbering or determining their lot would not be in accordance with their expectations, imparting to them a happy fortune, but would be devoting them to the sword; that is, to destruction. The allusion is, probably, to the calamities which God afterward brought on them by the invasion of the Chaldeans.

And ye shall all bow down to the slaughter - This is evidently strong, and probably hyperbolic language, meaning that a large portion of the nation would be cut off by the sword. The allusion here is, I think, to the slaughter of the Jewish people in the invasion of the Chaldeans. The evil of idolatry prevailed, in the time of Isaiah, under the reign of Manasseh; and in the time of Zedekiah it had increased so much even in Jerusalem, that it was said, ‹All the chief priests and the people transgressed very much after all the abominations of the pagan; and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem … . And they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, until there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young people with the sword, in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man or him that stooped for age; he gave them all into their hand 2 Chronicles 36:14, 2 Chronicles 36:16-17. It is possible, also, that this is intended to express a more general truth, and to intimate that when his people forsake him he will punish them; but the primary reference, it is proable, was to the slaughter caused by the Babylonians when they destroyed Jerusalem.

Because when I called - When I called you by the prophets to repentance and to my service (see Proverbs 1:24 ff.)

Ye did not answer - You showed the same disregard and contempt which a child does who suffers a parent to call him, and who pays no attention to it. One of the chief aggravations of human guilt is, that the sinner pays no attention to the calls of God. He pretends not to hear; or he hears to disregard it. No more decided contempt can be shown to the Almighty; no deeper proof of the stupidity and guilt of people can be furnished.

But did evil before mine eyes - (See the notes at Isaiah 65:3).

Verse 13

Therefore, thus saith the Lord God - The design of this verse is to show what would be the difference between those who kept and those who forsook his commandments. The one would be objects of his favor, and have abundance; the other would be objects of his displeasure, and be subjected to the evils of poverty, grief, and want.

My servants shall eat - Shall have abundance. They shall be objects of my favor.

But ye - Ye who revolt from me, and who worship idols.

Shall be hungry - Shall be subjected to the evils of want. The idea is, that the one should partake of his favor; the other should be punished.

Verse 14

Shall sing for joy of heart - They who serve me shall have abundant occasion of rejoicing. But ye - shall howl. You shall shriek under the anguish and distress that shall come upon you.

For vexation of spirit - Margin, as in Hebrew, ‹Breaking.‘ That is, your spirit shall be broken and crushed under the weight of the calamities that shall come upon you.

Verse 15

And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen - To my people; to those whom I have selected to be my friends. The word rendered here ‹curse‘ (שְׁבוּעָה *shebûʿâh*) means properly “an oath,” or “a swearing”; and then “an imprecation” or “a curse” (see Numbers 5:21; Daniel 9:11). The sense here seems to be, that their punishment would be so great that it would become the subject of imprecation when others wished to bind themselves in the most solemn manner by an oath. The pious, who wished to confirm a promise or a covenant in the most solemn manner, would say,

‹If we do not perform the promise, then let us experience the same punishment at the hand of God which they have done‘ (compare Jeremiah 29:22). Or it may mean, that their name would be used proverbially, like that of Sodom, as a signal example of wickedness and of the abhorrence of God.

And call his servants by another name - So disgraceful and dishonorable shall be that name, that Yahweh will apply another name to his people. Is there not an allusion here to the designed change of the name by which the people of God are known? Has it not been by the special providence of God that his true people are now known by another appellation? Is there any name on earth now that is more the subject of reproach and execration than all the appellations by which his ancient people were known? The name Jew - what ideas does it convey to all the nations of the earth? It is connected with reproach; a name regarded as belonging to a people accursed by God; a name more universally detested than any other known among people. And was it not because this name would be thus dishonored, reproached, and despised, that another was given to the true people of God - the name CHRISTIAN - an honored name - denoting true attachment to the Messiah?

Verse 16

That he who blesseth himself in the earth - That is, he who shall invoke blessings on himself.

Shall bless himself in the God of truth - Or by the true God. He shall not seek a blessing from a false god; but he shall come before the true God, and seek a blessing at his hand.

And he that sweareth - Every oath that is taken in the land shall be by the true God. There shall be no swearing by idols; but the true God shall be everywhere acknowledged.

Because the former troubles are forgotten - The former punishments and calamities shall be passed away. The favor of God shall be restored. His pure worship shall be re-established, and his name shall be celebrated again in the land. The image here is one of returning prosperity and favor; a state when the happiness will be so great that all the former trials will be regarded as not worthy of recollection.

Verse 17

For behold - The idea in this verse is, that there should be a state of glory as great as if a new heaven and a new earth were to be made.

I create new heavens - Calamity and punishment in the Bible are often represented by the heavens growing dark, and being rolled up like as a scroll, or passing away (see the notes at Isaiah 13:10; Isaiah 34:4). On the contrary, prosperity, happiness, and the divine favor, are represented by the clearing up of a cloudy sky; by the restoration of the serene and pure light of the sun; or, as here, by the creation of new heavens (compare the notes at Isaiah 51:16). The figure of great transformations in material things is one that is often employed in the Scriptures, and especially in Isaiah, to denote great spiritual changes (see Isaiah 51:3; Isaiah 35:1-2, Isaiah 35:7; Isaiah 60:13, Isaiah 60:17). In the New Testament, the phrase used here is employed to denote the future state of the righteous; but whether on earth, after it shall have been purified by fire, or in heaven, has been a subject of great difference of opinion (see 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1).

The passage before us is highly poetical, and we are not required to understand it literally. There is, so far as the language is concerned, no more reason for understanding this literally than there is for so understanding the numerous declarations which affirm that the brute creation will undergo a change in their very nature, on the introduction of the gospel Isaiah 51:16.

Verse 18

But be ye glad and rejoice - (See the notes at Isaiah 51:11).

Forever - It is not to be momentary happiness - like a bright morning that is soon overcast with clouds. The joy of God‘s people is to endure for ever, and they shall have ceaseless cause of praise and thanksgiving.

I create Jerusalem a rejoicing - A source of rejoicing; or a place of rejoicing.

And her people a joy - That is, in themselves joyful, and a source of joy to all others. The idea is, that the church would be a place of the highest happiness, and that they who were redeemed would have occasion of perpetual joy. The Saviour did not come to minister gloom, nor is the true effect of religion to make his people melancholy. Religion produces seriousness; but seriousness is not inconsistent with permanent happiness. Religion produces deep thought and soberness of deportment and conversation; but this is not inconsistent with a heart at ease, or with a good conscience, or with permanent joy. Religion fills the mind with hope of eternal life; and the highest happiness which the soul can know must be in connection with the prospect of unchanging blessedness beyond the grave.

Verse 19

And I will rejoice in Jerusalem - (See the notes at Isaiah 62:5).

And the voice of weeping shall no more be heard - (See the notes at Isaiah 25:7-8).

Verse 20

There shall be no more thence - The Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Vulgate, read this, ‹There shall not be there.‘ The change requires the omission of a single letter in the present Hebrew text, and the sense seems to demand it. The design of the prophet here is, to describe the times of happiness and prosperity which would succeed the calamities under which the nation had been suffering. This he does by a great variety of images, all denoting substantially the same thing. In Isaiah 65:17, the change is represented to be as great as if a new heaven and a new earth should be created; in this verse the image is, that the inhabitants would reach a great age, and that the comparatively happy times of the patriarchs would be restored; in Isaiah 65:21, the image is taken from the perfect security in their plans of labor, and the fact that they would enjoy the fruit of their toil; in Isaiah 65:25, the image employed is that taken from the change in the nature of the animal creation. All these are poetic images designed as illustrations of the general truth, and, like other poetic images, they are not to be taken literally.

An infant of days - A child; a sucking child. So the Hebrew word, עול *ʿûl* denotes. The Septuagint renders it, ‹Nor shall there be there anymore an untimely birth (ἄωρος *aōros*) and an old man who has not filled up his time.‘ The idea is not that there should be no infant in those future times - which would be an idea so absurd that a prophet would not use it even in poetic fiction - but that there will not be an infant who shall not fill up his days, or who will be short-lived. All shall live long, and all shall be blessed with health, and continual vigor and youth.

Nor an old man that hath not filled his days - They shall enjoy the blessings of great longevity, and that not a longevity that shall be broken and feeble, but which shall be vigorous and happy. In further illustration of this sentiment, we may remark,

1. That there is no reason to suppose that it will be literally fulfilled even in the millenium. If it is to be regarded as literally to be fulfilled, then for the same reason we are to suppose that in that time the nature of the lion will be literally changed, and that he will eat straw like the ox, and that the

nature of the wolf and the lamb will be so far changed that they shall lie down together Isaiah 65:25. But there is no reason to suppose this; nor is there any good reason to suppose that literally no infant or child will die in those times, or that no old man will be infirm, or that all will live to the same great age.

2. The promise of long life is regarded in the Bible as a blessing, and is an image, everywhere, of prosperity and happiness. Thus the patriarchs were regarded as having been highly-favored people, because God lengthened out their days; and throughout the Scriptures it is represented as a proof of the favor of God, that a man is permitted to live long, and to see a numerous posterity (see Genesis 45:10; Psalm 21:4; Psalm 23:6; Psalm 128:6 (Hebrew); Psalm 91:16; Proverbs 3:2-14; Proverbs 17:6.

3. No one can doubt that the prevalence of the gospel everywhere would greatly lengthen out the life of man. Let anyone reflect on the great number that are now cut off in childhood in pagan lands by their parents, all of whom would have been spared had their parents been Christians; on the numbers of children who are destroyed in early life by the effects of the intemperance of their parents, most of whom would have survived if their parents had been virtuous; on the numbers of young men now cut down by vice, who would have continued to live if they had been under the influence of the gospel; on the immense hosts cut off, and most of them in middle life, by war, who would have lived to a good old age if the gospel had prevailed and put a period to wars; on the million who are annually cut down by intemperance and lust, and other raging passions, by murder and piracy, or who are punished by death for crime; on the million destroyed by pestilential disease sent by offended heaven on guilty nations; and let him reflect that these sources of death will be dried up by the prevalence of pure virtue and religion, and he will see that a great change may yet take place literally in the life of man.

4. A similar image is used by the classic writers to denote a golden age, or an age of great prosperity and happiness. Thus the Sybil, in the Sybilline Oracles, B. vii., speaking of the future age, says, Στήσει δὲ τὸ γένος, ὡς πάρος ἦν σοι *Stēsei de to genos hōs paros ēn soi* - ‹A race shall be restored as it was in the ancient times.‘ So Hesiod, describing the silver age,

introduces a boy as having reached the age of an hundred years, and yet but a child:

Ἀλλ᾽ ἑκατόν μὲν παῖς ἔτεα παρὰ μητέρι κεδνρ,

Ἐτρέφετ ἀτάλλων υέγα νήπιος ᾧ ἔνι οἴκῳ.

All' hekaton men tais etea para mēteri kednr Etrephet atallōn mega nēpios ō eni oikō For the child shall die an hundred years old - That is, he that is an hundred years old when he dies, shall still be a child or a youth. This is nearly the same sentiment which is expressed by Hesiod, as quoted above. The prophet has evidently in his eye the longevity of the patriarchs, when an individual of an hundred years of age was comparatively young - the proportion between that and the usual period of life then being about the same as that between the age of ten and the usual period of life now. We are not, I apprehend, to suppose that this is to be taken literally, but it is figurative language, designed to describe the comparatively happy state referred to by the prophet, as if human life should be lengthened out to the age of the patriarchs, and as if he who is now regarded as an old man, should then be regarded as in the vigor of his days. At the same time it is true, that the influence of temperance, industry, and soberness of life, such as would exist if the rules of the gospel were obeyed, would carry forward the vigor of youth far into advancing years, and mitigate most of the evils now incident to the decline of life.

The few imperfect experiments which have been made of the effect of entire temperance and of elevated virtue; of subduing the passions by the influence of the gospel, and of prudent means for prolonging health and life, such as the gospel will prompt a man to use, who has any just view of the value of life, show what may yet be done in happier times. It is an obvious reflection here, that if such effects are to be anticipated from the prevalence of true religion and of temperance, then he is the best friend of man who endeavors most sedulously to bring others under the influence of the gospel, and to extend the principles of temperance and virtue. The gospel of Christ would do more to prolong human life than all other causes combined; and when that prevails everywhere, putting a period, as it must, to infanticide, and war, and intemperance, and murder, and piracy, and suicide, and duelling, and raging and consuming passions, then it is impossible for the most vivid imagination to conceive the effect which shall be produced on the health and long life, as well as on the happiness of mankind.

But the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed - The sense of this appears to be, ‹not all who reach to a great age shall be judged to be the friends and favorites of God. Though a sinner shall reach that advanced period of life, yet he shall be cursed of God and shall be cut down in his sins. He shall be held to be a sinner and shall die, and shall be regarded as accursed.‘ Other interpretations of this expression may be seen in Poole and in Vitringa. The above seems to me to be the true exposition.

Verse 21

And they shall build houses - (See the notes at Isaiah 62:8-9).

Verse 22

They shall not build, and another inhabit - Every man shall enjoy the avails of his labor.

For as the days I of a tree are the days of my people - That is, in that future time, such shall be the length of the lives of the people (see Isaiah 65:21). The Septuagint renders this, ‹The days of the tree of life.‘ The Syriac, ‹As the days of trees.‘ The Chaldee as the Septuagint. The idea is, that the lives of his people would be greatly prolonged (see the notes at Isaiah 65:20). A tree is among the most long-lived of material objects. The oak, the terebinth, the cypress, the cedar, the banyan, attain to a great age. Many trees also live to a much longer period than a thousand years. The Baobab tree of Senegal (Adansonia digitata) is supposed to attain the age of several thousand years. Adanson inferred that one which he measured, and found to be thirty feet in diameter, had attained the age of 5150 years. Having made an incision to a certain depth, he first counted three hundred rings of annual growth, and observed what thickness the tree had gained in that period. The average rate of growth of younger trees, of the same species, was then ascertained, and the calculation made according to a supposed mean rate of increase. De Candolle considers it not improbable that the celebrated Taxodium, of Chapultepec, in Mexico, which is 117 feet in circumference, may be still more aged. In Macartney‘s Embassy to China, i. 131, an account is given of a tree of this description, which was found to be at the base no less than fifty-six feet in girth. On the longevity of trees, see Bibliotheca Univ., May 1831, quoted in Lyell‘s Geology, ii. 261. The idea here is, simply, that his people would attain to an age like that of the trees of the forest; that is, that the state of things under the Messiah would be as if human life were greatly prolonged (see the notes at Isaiah 65:20).

And mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands - Margin, ‹Make them continue long,‘ or ‹wear out.‘ The word used here (יבלו *yeballû* from בלה *bâlâh*) means properly to fall, to fall away, to fail; to wear out, to wax old Deuteronomy 8:4; Deuteronomy 29:4; Isaiah 50:9; Isaiah 51:6; hence, in Piel, to consume. The idea here is, that they would live to consume; that is, to enjoy the productions of their own labor. Their property should not be wrested from them by injurious taxation, or by plunder; but they would be permitted long to possess it, until they should wear it out, or until it should be consumed. Vulgate, ‹The works of their hands shall be of long continuance (*inveterabunt*),‘ or shall be kept a long time. The Septuagint, ‹For the works of their labors (των πόνων *tōn ponōn*) shall become old, or of long continuance (παλαιώσου *palaiōsousin*).‘ See the notes at Isaiah 62:8-9.

Verse 23

They shall not labor in vain - That is, either because their land shall be unfruitful, or because others shall plunder them.

Nor bring forth for trouble - Lowth renders this, ‹Neither shall they generate a short-lived race.‘ Noyes, ‹Nor bring forth children for an early death.‘ The Septuagint renders it, Οὐδὲ τεκνοποιήσουσιν εἰς κατάραν *Oude teknopoiēsousin eis kataran* - ‹Nor shall they bring forth children for a curse.‘ The Chaldee, ‹Nor shall they nourish them for death.‘ There can be no doubt that this refers to their posterity, and that the sense is, that they should not be the parents of children who would be subject to an early death or to a curse. The word rendered here ‹bring forth‘ (ילדו *yēledû*) is a word that uniformly means to bear, to bring forth as a mother, or to beget as a father. And the promise here is, that which would be so grateful to parental feelings, that their posterity would be long-lived and respected. The word rendered here ‹trouble‘ (בהלה *behâlâh*) means properly “terror,” and then the effect of terror, or that which causes terror, sudden destruction. It is derived from בהל *bâhal* to trouble, to shake, to be in trepidation, to flee, and then to punish suddenly; and the connection here seems to require the sense that their children should not be devoted to sudden destruction.

For they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord - (See the notes at Isaiah 59:21).

Verse 24

Before they call, I will answer - That is, their desires shall be anticipated, God will see their needs, and he will impart to them the

blessings which they need. He will not wait to be applied to for the blessing. How many such blessings do all his people receive at the hand of God! How ready is he to anticipate our needs! How watchful is he of our necessities; and how rich his benevolence in providing for us! Even the most faithful and prayerful of his people receive numerous favors and comforts at his hand for which they have not directly asked him. The prayer for the supply of our daily food, ‹Give us this day our daily bread,‘ God had anticipated, and had prepared the means of answering it, long before, in the abundant harvest. Had he waited until the prayer was offered, it could not have been answered without a miracle. Ever watchful, he anticipates our necessities, and in his providence and grace lays the foundation for granting the favor long before we ask him.

And while they are yet speaking, I will hear - So it was with Daniel (Daniel 9:20-21; compare Psalm 32:5). So it was with the early disciples when they were assembled in an upper room in Jerusalem, and when the Spirit of God descended with great power on the day of Pentecost Acts 2:1-2. So when Paul and Silas, in the prison at Philippi, ‹prayed and sang praises to God,‘ he heard them and came for their rescue Acts 16:25-26. So it has often been - and especially in revivals of religion. When his people have been deeply impressed with a sense of the languishing state of religion; when they have gone unitedly before God and implored a blessing; God has heard their prayers, and even while they were speaking has begun a work of grace. Hundreds of such instances have occurred, alike demonstrating the faithfulness of God to his promises, and suited to encourage his people, and to excite them to prayer. It is one of the precious promises pertaining to the blessings of the reign of the Messiah, that the answer of prayer shall be immediate - and for this his people should look, and this they should expect. God can as easily answer prayer at once as to delay it; and when the proper state of mind exists, he is as ready to answer it now as to defer it to a future time. What encouragement have we to pray! How faithful, how fervent should we be in our supplications! How full of guilt are we if one single blessing is witcheld from our world that might have been imparted if we had prayed as we ought; if one single soul shall be lost who might have been saved if we had not been unfaithful in prayer!

Verse 25

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together - (See the notes at Isaiah 11:6.

Like the bullock - Or the ox - the cattle that herd together - for so the Hebrew word (בקר *bâqâr*) means. The word may be app ied to a bullock, an ox, or a cow.

And dust shall be the serpent‘s meat - There is evidently here an allusion to the sentence pronounced on the serpent in Genesis 3:14. The meaning of the declaration here is, probably, that dust should continue to be the food of the serpent. The sentence on him should be perpetual. He should not be injurious to man - either by tempting him again, or by the venom of his fangs. The state of security would be as great under the Messiah as if the most deadly and poisonous kinds of reptiles should become wholly innoxious, and should not attempt to prey upon people. It is to be remembered that many of the serpent kind included under the general word used here (נחשׁ *nāchâsh*), were dangerous to people; and indeed a large portion of them are deadly in their bite. But in future times there will be a state of security as great as if the whole serpent tribe were innocuous and should live on the dust alone. There can be no doubt that the prophet means here to describe the passions and evil propensities of people, which have a strong resemblance to the ferocity of the wolf, or the lion, and the deadly poison of the serpent, and to say that those passions would be subdued, and that peace and concord would prevail on the earth (see the notes at Isaiah 11:8).

They shall not hurt nor destroy - See this explained in the notes at Isaiah 11:9. All this is partially realized wherever the gospel prevails, but it will be more fully realized when that gospel shall exert its full power and shall be spread around the world.

ISAIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 66

Introduction

It is generally supposed that this chapter is a continuation of the subject of the foregoing (Lowth). The general design is to reprove the hypocritical portion of the nation, and to comfort the pious with the assurance of the favor of God, the accession of the Gentile world, and the destruction of the foes of the church. The Jews valued themselves much upon the pomp of their temple-worship and the splendor of their ritual; they supposed that that was to he perpetual; and they assumed great merit to themselves for the regular servives of their religion. Before the captivity in Babylon they were prone to fall into idolatry; afterward they were kept from it, and to the present time they have not been guilty of it - so effectual was that heavy judgment in correcting this national propensity. But after their captivity their national proneness to sin assumed another form. That love of form and strict ceremony; that dependence on mere rites and the external duties of religion; that heartless and pompous system of worship commenced, which ultimately terminated in Pharisaic pride, and which was scarcely less an object of abhorrence to God than gross idolatry. To that state of things the prophet probably looked forward; and his object in this chapter was to reprove that reliance on the mere forms of external worship, and the pride in their temple and its service which he saw would succeed the return from the exile in Babylon.

It is generally agreed that the reference here is to the state of things which would follow the return from Babylon. Lowth supposes that it refers to the time when Herod would be rebuilding the temple in the most magnificent manner, and when, notwithstanding the heavy judgment of God was hanging over their heads, the nation was formal in its worship, and proud and self-confident, as if it was the favorite of God. Vitringa supposes that it refers to the time of the introduction of the new economy, or the beginning of the times of the Messiah.

That it refers to times succeeding the captivity at Babylon, and is designed to be at once a prophetic description and a reproof of the sins which would prevail after their return, is apparent from the whole structure of the chapter, and particularly from the following considerations:

1. There is no one description, as in the former chapters, of the land as desolate, or the city of Jerusalem and the temple in ruins (see Isaiah 64:10-11).

2. There is no charge against them for being idolatrous, as there had been in the previous chapters (see especially Isaiah 65:3-4, Isaiah 65:11). The sin that is specified here is of a wholly different kind.

3. It is evidently addressed to them when they were either rebuilding the temple, or when they greatly prided themselves on its service (see Isaiah 66:1).

4. It is addressed to them when they were engaged in offering sacrifice with great formality, and with great reliance on the mere external services of religion; when sacrifice had degenerated into mere form, and when the spirit with which it was done was as abominable in the sight of God as the most odious of all crimes.

From these considerations, it seems to me that the chapter is designed to refer to a state of things that would succeed the return from the exile at Babylon, and be a general description of the spirit with which they would then engage in the worship of God. They would indeed rebuild the temple according to the promise; but they would manifest a spirit in regard to the temple which required the severe reproof of Yahweh. They would again offer sacrifice in the place where their fathers had done it; but though they would be effectually cured of their idolatrous tendencies, yet they would evince a spirit that was as hateful to God as the worst form of idolatry, or the most heinous crimes. A large portion, therefore, of the nation would still be the object of the divine abhorrence, and be subjected to punishment; but the truly pious would be preserved, and their number would be increased by the accession of the Gentile world.

As an additional consideration to show the correctness of this view of the time to which the chapter refers, we may remark, that a large part of the prophecies of Isaiah are employed in predicting the certain return from the exile, the re-establishment of religion in their own land, and the resumption of the worship of God there. It was natural, therefore, that the spirit of

inspiration should glance at the character of the natron subsequent to the return, and that the prophet should give, in the conclusion of his book, a summary graphic description of what would occur in future times. This I take to be the design of the closing chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah. He states in general the character of the Jewish people after the return from the exile; condemns the sins with which they would then be chargeable; comforts the portion of the nation that would be disposed in sincerity to serve God; predicts the rapid and glorious increase of the church; declares that the enemies of God would be cut off; affirms that all the world would yet come at stated seasons to worship before God; and closes the whole book by saying that the people of God would go forth and see all their enemies slain. This general view may be more distinctly seen by the following analysis of the chapter:

I. Yahweh says that heaven was his throne, and the earth his footstool, and that no house which they could build for him would adequately express his glory; no external worship would suitably declare his majesty. He preferred the homage of an humble heart to the most magnificent external worship; the tribute of a sincere offering to the most costly outward devotion Isaiah 66:1-2.

II. He declares his sense of the evil of mere external worship, and threatens punishment to the hypocrites who should engage in this manner in his service Isaiah 66:3-4. In these verses it is implied that in the service of the temple after the return from the exile, there would be a spirit evinced in their public worship that would be as hateful to God as would lie murder or idolatry, or as would be the cutting off a dog‘s neck or the sacrifice of swine; that is, that the spirit of hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and pride, would be supremely odious in his sight. They were not therefore to infer that because they would be restored from the exile, therefore their worship would be pure and acceptable to God. The fact would be that it would become so utterly abominable in his sight that he would cut them off and bring all their fears upon them; that is, he would severely punish them.

III. Yet even then there would be a portion of the people that would hear the word of the Lord, and to whom he would send comfort and deliverance. He therefore promises to his true church great extension, and especially the accession of the Gentiles Isaiah 66:5-14.

1. A part of the nation would cast out, and persecute the other, under pretence of promoting the glory of God and doing his will Isaiah 66:5. Yet Yahweh would appear for the joy of the persecuted portion, and the persecutors would be confounded.

2. A sound is heard as of great agitation in the city; a voice indicating great and important revolutions Isaiah 66:6. This voice is designed to produce consolation to his people; dismay to his foes.

3. A promise is given of the great and sudden enlargement of Zion - an increase when conversions would be as sudden as if a child were born without the ordinary delay and pain of parturition; as great as if a nation were born in a day Isaiah 66:7-9.

4. All that love Zion are called on to rejoice with her, for the Gentile nations would come like a flowing stream, and the church would be comforted, as when a mother comforteth her child Isaiah 66:10-14.

IV. God would punish his foes. He would devote idolaters to destruction Isaiah 66:15-17.

V. He would send the message of salvation to those who were in distant parts of the world Isaiah 66:19-21.

VI. At that time, the worship of God would everywhere be regularly and publicly celebrated. From one new moon to another: and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh would come and worship before God Isaiah 66:23.

VII. The friends of God would be permitted to see the final and interminable ruin of all the transgressors against the Most High Isaiah 66:24. Their destruction would be complete; their worm would not die, and their fire would not be quenched and the whole scene of the work of redemption would be wound up in the complete and eternal salvation of all the true people of God, and in the complete and eternal ruin of all his foes. With this solemn truth - a truth relating to the final retribution of mankind, the prophecies of Isaiah appropriately close. Where more properly could be the winding up of the series of visions in this wonderful book, than in a view of the complete destruction of the enemies of God; how more sublimely than by representing the whole redeemed church as going forth

together to look upon their destruction, as victors go forth to look upon a mighty army of foes slain and unburied on the battlefield?

Verse 1

The heaven is my throne - (See the notes at Isaiah 57:15). Here he is represented as having his seat or throne there. He speaks as a king. heaven is the place where he holds his court; from where he dispenses his commands; and from where he surveys all his works (compare 2 Chronicles 6:18; Matthew 5:34). The idea here is, that as God dwelt in the vast and distant heavens, no house that could be built on earth could be magnificent enough to be his abode.

The earth is my footstool - A footstool is that which is placed under the feet when we sit. The idea here is, that God was so glorious that even the earth itself could be regarded only as his footstool. It is probable that the Saviour had this passage in his eye in his declaration in the sermon on the mount, ‹Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God‘s throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool‘ Matthew 5:34-35.

Where is the house that ye build unto me? - What house can you build that will be an appropriate dwelling for him who fills heaven and earth? The same idea, substantially, was expressed by Solomon when he dedicated the temple: ‹But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded!‘ 1 Kings 8:27. Substantially the same thought is found in the address of Paul at Athens: ‹God, that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands‘ Acts 17:24.

And where is the place of my rest? - It has already been intimated (in the analysis) that this refers probably to the time subsequent to the captivity. Lowth supposes that it refers to the time of the rebuilding of the temple by Herod. So also Vitringa understands it, and supposes that it refers to the pride and self-confidence of those who then imagined that they were rearing a structure that was worthy of being a dwelling-place of Yahweh. Grotius supposes that it refers to the time of the Maccabees, and that it was designed to give consolation to the pious of those times when they were about to witness the profanation of the temple by Antiochus, and the cessation of the sacrifices for three years and a half. ‹God therefore shows,‘ says he, ‹that there was no reason why they should be offended in this thing.

The most acceptable temple to him was a pious mind; and from that the value of all sacrifices was to be estimated.‘ Abarbanel supposes that it refers to the times of redemption.

His words are these: ‹I greatly wonder at the words of the learned interpreting this prophecy, when they say that the prophet in this accuses the people of his own time on account of sacrifices offered with impure hands, for lo! all these prophecies which the prophet utters in the end of his book have respect to future redemption.‘ See Vitringa. That it refers to some future time when the temple should be rebuilt seems to me to be evident. But what precise period it refers to - whether to times not far succeeding the captivity, or to the times of the Maccabees, or to the time of the rebuilding of the temple by Herod, it is difficult to find any data by which we can determine. From the whole strain of the prophecy, and particularly from Isaiah 66:3-5, it seems probable that it refers to the time when the temple which Herod had reared was finishing; when the nation was full of pride, self-righteousness, and hypocrisy; and when all sacrifices were about to be superseded by the one great sacrifice which the Messiah was to make for the sins of the world. At that time, God says that the spirit which would be evinced by the nation would be abominable in his sight; and to offer sacrifice then, and with the spirit which they would manifest, would be as offensive as murder or the sacrifice of a dog (see the notes at Isaiah 66:3).

Verse 2

For all those things hath mine hand made - That is the heaven and the earth, and all that is in them. The sense is, ‹I have founded for myself a far more magnificent and appropriate temple than you can make; I have formed the heavens as my dwelling-place, and I need not a dwelling reared by the hand of man.‘

And all those things have been - That is, have been made by me, or for me. The Septuagint renders it, ‹All those things are mine?‘ Jerome renders it, ‹All those things were made;‘ implying that God claimed to be the Creator of them all, and that, therefore, they all belonged to him.

But to this man will I look - That is, ‹I prefer a humble heart and a contrite spirit to the most magnificent earthly temple‘ (see the notes at Isaiah 57:15).

That is poor - Or rather ‹humble.‘ The word rendered ‹poor‘ (עני *ʿânîy*), denotes not one who has no property, but one who is down-trodden,

crushed, afflicted, oppressed; often, as here, with the accessory idea of pious feeling Exodus 24:12; Psalm 10:2, Psalm 10:9. The Septuagint renders it, Ταπεινὸν *Tapeinon* - ‹Humble;‘ not πτωχόν *ptōchon* (poor). The idea is, not that God looks with favor on a poor man merely because he is poor - which is not true, for his favors are not bestowed in view of external conditions in life - but that he regards with favor the man that is humble and subdued in spirit.

And of a contrite spirit - A spirit that is broken, crushed, or deeply affected by sin. It stands opposed to a spirit that is proud, haughty, self-confident, and self-righteous.

And that trembleth at my word - That fears me, or that reveres my commands.

Verse 3

He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man - Lowth and Noyes render this, ‹He that slayeth an ox, killeth a man.‘ This is a literal translation of the Hebrew. Jerome renders it, ‹He who sacrifices an ox is as if (quasi) he slew a man.‘ The Septuagint, in a very free translation - such as is common in their version of Isaiah - render it, ‹The wicked man who sacrifices a calf, is as he who kills a dog; and he who offers to me fine flour, it is as the blood of swine.‘ Lowth supposes the sense to be, that the most flagitious crimes were united with hypocrisy, and that they who were guilty of the most extreme acts of wickedness at the same time affected great strictness in the performance of all the external duties of religion. An instance of this, he says, is referred to by Ezekiel, where he says, ‹When they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it‘ Ezekiel 23:39.

There can be no doubt that such offences were often committed by those who were very strict and zealous in their religious services (compare Isaiah 1:11-14, with Isaiah 66:21-23. But the generality of interpreters have supposed that a different sense was to be affixed to this passage. According to their views, the particles as if are to be supplied; and the sense is, not that the mere killing of an ox is as sinful in the sight of God as deliberate murder, but that he who did it in the circumstances, and with the spirit referred to, evinced a spirit as odious in his sight as though he had slain a man. So the Septuagint, Vulgate, Chaldee, Symmachus, and Theodotion, Junius, and Tremellius, Grotius, and Rosenmuller, understand it. There is probably an allusion to the fact that human victims were offered by the

pagan; and the sense is, that the sacrifices here referred to were no more acceptable in the sight of God than they were.

The prophet here refers, probably, first, to the spirit with which this was done. Their sacrifices were offered with a temper of mind as offensive to God as if a man had been slain, and they had been guilty of murder. They were proud, vain, and hypocritical. ‹They had forgotten the true nature and design of sacrifice, and such worship could not but be an abhorrence in the sight of God. Secondly, It may also be implied here, that the period was coming when all sacrifices would be unacceptable to God. When the Messiah should have come; when he should have made by one offering a sufficent atonement for the sins of the whole world; then all bloody sacrifices would be needless, and would be offensive in the sight of God. The sacrifice of an ox would be no more acceptable than the sacrifice of a man; and all offerings with a view to propitiate the divine favor, or that implied that there was a deficiency in the merit of the one great atoning sacrifice, would be odious to God.

He that sacrificeth a lamb - Margin, ‹Kid‘ The Hebrew word (שֶׂה *s'eh*) may refer to one of a flock, either of sheep or goats Genesis 22:7-8; Genesis 30:32. Where the species is to be distinguished, it is usually specified, as, e. g., Deuteronomy 14:4, כשְׂבִים שֶׂה עִזִּים וּשֶׂה *ves'ēh ʿîzzym s'ēh kîs'âbîym* (one of the sheep and one of the goats). Both were used in sacrifice.

As if he cut off a dog‘s neck - That is, as if he had cut off a dog‘s neck for sacrifice. To offer a dog in sacrifice would have been abominable in the view of a Jew. Even the price for which he was sold was not permitted to be brought into the house of God for a vow (Deuteronomy 23:18; compare 1 Samuel 17:43; 1 Samuel 24:14). The dog was held in veneration by many of the pagan, and was even offered in sacrifice; and it was, doubtless, partly in view of this fact, and especially of the fact that such veneration was shown for it in Egypt, that it was an object of such detestation among the Jews. Thus Juvenal, Sat. xiv. says:

Oppida tota canem venerantur, nemo Dianam.

‹Every city worships the dog; none worship Diana.‘ Diodorus (B. i.) says, ‹Certain animals the Egyptians greatly venerate (σέβονται *sebontai*), not only when alive, but when they are dead, as cats, ichneumons, mice, and dogs.‘ Herodotus says also of the Egyptians, ‹In some cities, when a cat dies all the inhabitants cut off their eyebrows; when a dog dies, they shave

the whole body and the head.‘ In Samothracia there was a cave in which dogs were sacrificed to Hecate. Plutarch says, that all the Greeks sacrificed the dog. The fact that dogs were offered in sacrifice by the pagan is abundantly proved by Bochart (Hieroz. i. 2. 56). No kind of sacrifice could have been regarded with higher detestation by a pious Jew. But God here says, that the spirit with which they sacrificed a goat or a lamb was as hateful in his sight as would be the sacrifice of a dog: or that the time would come when, the great sacrifice for sin having been made, and the necessity for all other sacrifice having ceased, the offering of a lamb or a goat for the expiation of sin would be as offensive to him as would be the sacrifice of a dog.

He that offereth an oblation - On the word rendered here ‹oblation‘ (מנחה *minchāh*). See the notes at Isaiah 1:13.

As if he offered swine‘s blood - The sacrifice of a hog was an abomination in the sight of the Hebrews (see the notes at Isaiah 65:4). Yet here it is said that the offering of the מנחה *minchāh* in the spirit in which they would do it, was as offensive to God as would be the pouring out of the blood of the swine on the altar, Nothing could more emphatically express the detestation of God for the spirit with which they would make their offerings, or the fact that the time would come when all such modes of worship would be offensive in his sight.

He that burneth incense - See the word ‹incense‘ explained in the notes at Isaiah 1:13. The margin here is, ‹Maketh a memorial of.‘ Such is the usual meaning of the word used here (זכר *zâkar*), meaning to remember, and in Hiphil to cause to remember, or to make a memorial. Such is its meaning here. incense was burned as a memorial or a remembrance-offering; that is, to keep up the remembrance of God on the earth by public worship (see the notes at Isaiah 62:6).

As if he blessed an idol - The spirit with which incense would be offered would be as offensive as idolatry. The sentiment in all this is, that the most regular and formal acts of worship where the heart is lacking, may be as offensive to God as the worst forms of crime, or the most gross and debasing idolatry. Such a spirit often characterized the Jewish people, and eminently prevailed at the time when the temple of Herod was nearly completed, and when the Saviour was about to appear.

Verse 4

I also will choose their delusions - Margin, ‹Devices.‘ The Hebrew word rendered here ‹delusions‘ and ‹devices‘ (תעלולים *taʿălûlîym*) properly denotes petulance, sauciness; and then vexation, adverse destiny, from עלל *ʿâlal* to do, to accomplish, to do evil, to maltreat. It is not used in the sense of delusions, or devices; and evidently here means the same as calamity or punishment. Compare the Hebrew in Lamentations 1:22. Lowth and Noyes render it, Calamities; though Jerome and the Septuagint understand it in the sense of illusions or delusions; the former rendering it, ‹Illusiones, and the latter ἐμπαίγματα *empaigmata* - ‹delusions.‘ The parallelism requires us to understand it of calamity, or something answering to ‹fear,‘ or that which was dreaded; and the sense undoubtedly is, that God would choose out for them the kind of punishment which would be expressive of his sense of the evil of their conduct.

And will bring their fears upon them - That is, the punishment which they have so much dreaded, or which they had so much reason to apprehend.

Because when I called - (See the notes at Isaiah 65:12).

But they did evil before mine eyes - (See the notes at Isaiah 65:3).

Verse 5

Hear the word of the Lord - This is an address to the pious and persecuted portion of the nation. It is designed for their consolation, and contains the assurance that Yahweh would appear in their behalf, and that they should be under his protecting care though they were cast out by their brethren. To whom this refers has been a question with expositors, and it is perhaps not possible to determine with certainty. Rosenmuller supposes that it refers to the pious whom the ‹Jews and Benjaminites repelled from the worship of the temple.‘ Grotius supposes that it refers to those ‹who favored Onias;‘ that is, in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. Vitringa supposes that the address is to the apostles, disciples, and followers of the Lord Jesus; and that it refers to the persecution which would be excited against them by the Jewish people. This seems to me to be the most probable opinion:

1. Because the whole structure of the chapter (see the analysis) seems to refer to the period when the Messiah should appear.

2. Because the state of things described in this verse exactly accords with what occurred on the introduction of Christianity. They who embraced the Messiah were excommunicated and persecuted; and they who did it

believed, or professed to believe, that they were doing it for the glory of God.

3. The promise that Yahweh would appear for their joy, and for the confusion of their foes, is one that had a clear fulfillment in his interposition in behalf of the persecuted church.

Your brethren that hated you - No hatred of others was ever more bitter than was that evinced by the Jews for those of their nation who embraced Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. If this refers to his time, then the language is plain. But to whatever time it refers, it describes a state of things where the pious part of the nation was persecuted and opposed by those who were their kinsmen according to the flesh.

That cast you out - The word used here is one that is commonly employed to denote excommunication or exclusion from the privileges connected with the public worship of God. It is language which will accurately describe the treatment which the apostles and the early diciples of the Redeemer received at the hand of the Jewish people (see John 16:2, and the Acts of the Apostles generally).

For my name‘s sake - This language closely resembles that which the Saviour used respecting his own disciples and the persecutions to which they would be exposed: ‹But all these things will they do unto you for my name‘s sake, because they know not him that sent me‘ (John 15:21; compare Matthew 10:22; Matthew 24:9). I have no doubt that this refers to that period, and to those scenes.

Said, Let the Lord be glorified - That is, they profess to do it to honor God; or because they suppose that he requires it. Or it means, that even while they were engaged in this cruel persecution, and these acts of excommunicating their brethren, they professed to be serving God, and manifested great zeal in his cause. This has commonly been the case with persecutors. The most malignant and cruel persecutions of the friends of God have been originated under the pretext of great zeal in his service, and with a professed desire to honor his name. So it was with the Jews when they crucified the Lord Jesus. So it is expressly said it would be when his disciples would be excommunicated and put to death John 16:2. So it was in fact in the persecutions excited by the Jews against the apostles and early Christians (see Acts 6:13-14; Acts 21:28-31). So it was in all the persecutions of the Waldenses by the Papists; in all the horrors of the

Inquisition; in all the crimes of the Duke of Alva. So it was in the bloody reign of Mary; and so it has ever been in all ages and in all countries where Christians have been persecuted. The people of God have suffered most from those who have been conscientious persecutors; and the most malignant foes of the church have been found in the church, persecuting true Christians under great pretence of zeal for the purity of religion. It is no evidence of piety that a man is full of conscientious zeal against those whom he chooses to regard as heretics. And it should always be regarded as proof of a bad heart, and a bad cause, when a man endeavors to inflict pain and disgrace on others, on account of their religious opinions, under pretence of great regard for the honor of God.

But he shall appear to your joy - The sense is, that God would manifest himself to his people as their vindicator, and would ultimately rescue them from their persecuting foes. If this is applied to Christians, it means that the cause in which they were engaged would triumph. This has been the case in all persecutions. The effect has always been the permanent triumph and estalishment of the cause that was persecuted.

And they shall be ashamed - How true this has been of the Jews that persecuted the early Christians! How entirely were they confounded and overwhelmed! God established permanently the persecuted; he scattered the persecutors to the ends of the earth!

Verse 6

A voice of noise from the city - That is, from the city of Jerusalem. The prophet sees in a vision a tumult in the city. He hears a voice that issues from the temple. His manner and language are rapid and hurried - such as a man would evince who should suddenly see a vast tumultuous assemblage, and hear a confused sound of many voices. There is also a remarkable abruptness in the whole description here. The preceding verse was calm and solemn. It was full of affectionate assurance of the divine favor to those whom the prophet saw to be persecuted. Here the scene suddenly changes. The vision passes to the agitating events which were occurring in the city and the temple, and to the great and sudden change which would be produced in the condition of the church of God. But to whom or what this refers has been a subject of considerable difference of opinion. Grotius understands it of the sound of triumph of Judas Maccabeus, and of his soldiers, rejoicing that the city was forsaken by Antiochus, and by the party of the Jews who adhered to him.

Rosenmuller understands it of the voice of God, who is seen by the prophet taking vengeance on his foes. There can be no doubt that the prophet, in vision, sees Yahweh taking recompence on his enemies - for that is expressly specified. Still it is not easy to determine the exact time referred to, or the exact scene which passes before the mind of the prophet. To me it seems probable that it is a scene that immediately preceded the rapid extension of the gospel, and the great and sudden increase of the church by the accession of the pagan world (see the following verses); and I would suggest, whether it is not a vision of the deeply affecting and agitating scenes when the temple and city were about to be destroyed by the Romans; when the voice of Yahweh would be heard in the city and at the temple, declaring the punishment which he would bring on those who had cast out and rejected the followers of the Messiah Isaiah 66:5; and when, as a result of this, the news of Salvation was to be rapidly spread throughout the pagan world.

This is the opinion, also, of Vitringa. The phrase rendered here ‹a voice of noise‘ (קול שׁאון *qôl shâ'ôn*), means properly the voice of a tumultuous assemblage; the voice of a multitude. The word ‹noise‘ (שׁאון *shâ'ôn*) is applied to a noise or roaring, as of waters Psalm 65:8; or of a crowd or multitude of people Isaiah 5:14; Isaiah 42:4; Isaiah 24:8; and of war Amos 2:2; Hosea 10:14. Here it seems probable that it refers to the confused clamor of war, the battle cry raised by soldiers attacking an army or a city; and the scene described is probably that when the Roman soldiers burst into the city, scaled the walls, and poured desolation through the capital.

A voice from the temple - That is, either the tumultous sound of war already having reached the temple; or the voice of Yahweh speaking from the temple, and commanding destruction on his foes. Vitringa supposes that it may mean the voice of Yahweh breaking forth from the temple, and commanding his foes to be slain. But to whichever it refers, it doubtless means that the sound of the tumult was not only around the city, but in it; not merely in the distant parts, but in the very midst, and even at the temple.

A voice of the Lord that rendereth recompence - Here we may observe:

1. That it is recompence taken on those who had cast out their brethren Isaiah 66:5.

2. It is vengeance taken within the city, and on the internal, not the external enemies.

3. It is vengeance taken in the midst of this tumult.

All this is a striking description of the scene when the city and temple were taken by the Roman armies. It was the vengeance taken on those who had cast out their brethren; it was the vengeance which was to precede the glorious triumph of truth and of the cause of the true religion.

Verse 7

Before she travailed, she brought forth - That is, Zion. The idea here is, that there would be a great and sudden increase of her numbers. Zion is here represented, as it often is, as a female (see Isaiah 1:8), and as the mother of spiritual children (compare Isaiah 54:1; Isaiah 49:20-21). The particular idea here is, that the increase would be sudden - as if a child were born without the usual delay and pain of parturition. If the interpretation given of Isaiah 66:6 be correct, then this refers probably to the sudden increase of the church when the Messiah came, and to the great revivals of religion which attended the first preaching of the gospel. Three thousand were converted on a single day Acts 2, and the gospel was speedily propagated almost all over the known world. Vitringa supposes that it refers to the sudden conversion of the Gentiles, and their accession to the church.

She was delivered of a man child - Jerome understands this of the Messiah. who was descended from the Jewish church. Grotius supposes that the whole verse refers to Judas Maccabeus, and to the liberation of Judea under him before anyone could have hoped for it! Calvin (Commentary *in loc*.) supposes that the word male here, or manchild, denotes the manly or generous nature of those who should be converted to the church; that they would be vigorous and active, not effeminate and delicate (generosam prolem, non mollem aut effeminatam). Vitringa refers it to the character and rank of those who should be converted, and applies it particularly to Constantine, and to the illustrious philosophers, orators, and senators, who were early brought under the influence of the gospel. The Hebrew word probably denotes a male, or a man-child, and it seems to me that it is applied here to denote the character of the early converts to the Christian faith. They would not be feeble and effeminate; but vigorous, active,

energetic. It may, perhaps, also be suggested, that, among the Orientals, the birth of a son was deemed of much more importance, and was regarded as much more a subject of congratulation than the birth of a female. If an allusion be had to that fact, then the idea is, that the increase of the church would be such as would be altogether a subject of exultation and joy.

Verse 8

Who hath heard such a thing? - Of a birth so sudden. Usually in childbirth there are the pains of protracted parturition. The earth brings forth its productions gradually and slowly. Nations rise by degrees, and are long in coming to maturity. But here is such an event as if the earth should in a day be covered with a luxurious vegetation, or as if a nation should spring at once into being. The increase in the church would be as great and wonderful as if these changes were to occur in a moment.

Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? - That is, to produce its grass, and flowers, and fruit, and trees. The idea is, that it usually requires much longer time for it to mature its productions. The germ does not start forth at once; the flower, the fruit, the yellow harvest, and the lofty tree are not produced in a moment. Months and years are required before the earth would be covered with its luxuriant and beautiful productions But here would be an event as remarkable as if the earth should bring forth its productions in a single day.

Or shall a nation be born at once? - Such an event never has occurred. A nation is brought into existence by degrees. Its institutions are matured gradually, and usually by the long process of years. But here is an event as remarkable as if a whole nation should be born at once, and stand before the world, mature in its laws, its civil institutions, and in all that constitutes greatness. In looking for the fulfillment of this, we naturally turn the attention to the rapid progress of the gospel in the times of the apostles, when events occurred as sudden and as remarkable as if the earth, after the desolation of winter or of a drought, should be covered with rich luxuriance in a day, or as if a whole nation should start into existence, mature in all its institutions, in a moment. But there is no reason for limiting it to that time. Similar sudden changes are to be expected still on the earth; and I see no reason why this should not be applied to the spread of the gospel in pagan lands, and why we should not yet look for the rapid propagation of Christianity in a manner as surprising and wonderful as would be such an

instantaneous change in the appearance of the earth, or such a sudden birth of a kingdom.

Verse 9

Shall I bring to the birth? - The sense of this verse is plain. It is, that God would certainly accomplish what he had here predicted, and for which he had made ample arrangements and preparations. He would not commence the work, and then abandon it. The figure which is used here is obvious; but one which does not render very ample illustration proper. Jarchi has well expressed it: ‹*Num ego adducerem uxorem meam ad sellam partus, sc. ad partitudinem, et non aperirem uterum ejus, ut foetum suum in lucem produceret? Quasi diceret; an ego incipiam rem nec possim eam perficere?* ‘

Shall I cause to bring forth? - Lowth and Noyes render this, ‹Shall I, who begat, restrain the birth?‘ This accurately expresses the idea. The meaning of the whole is, that God designed the great and sudden increase of his church; that the plan was long laid; and that, having done this, he would not abandon it, but would certainly effect his designs.

Verse 10

Rejoice ye with Jerusalem - The idea which is presented in this verse is, that it is the duty of all who love Zion to sympathize in her joys. It is one evidence of piety to rejoice in her joy; and they who have no true joy when God pours down his Spirit, and, in a revival of religion, produces changes as sudden and transforming as if the earth were suddenly to pass from the desolation of winter to the verdure and bloom of summer; or when the gospel makes rapid advances in the pagan world, have no true evidence that they love God or his cause. Such scenes awaken deep interest in the bosoms of angels, and in the bosom of God the Saviour; and they who love that God and Saviour will rejoice in such scenes, and will mingle their joys and thanksgivings with the joys and thanksgivings of those who are thus converted and saved.

All ye that mourn for her - That sympathize in her sorrows, and that mourn over her desolations.

Verse 11

That ye may suck - The same figure occurs in Isaiah 60:16; and substantidally in Isaiah 49:23. See the note at those places.

That ye may milk out - The image is an obvious one. It means that they who sympathized with Zion would be nourished by the same truth, and

comforted with the same sources of consolation.

And be delighted with the abundance of her glory - Margin, ‹Brightness.‘ Lowth renders this, ‹From her abundant stores.‘ Noyes, ‹From the fullness of her glory.‘ Jerome (the Vulgate), ‹And that you may abound with delights from every kind of her glory.‘ The Septuagint, ‹That sucking ye may be nourished from the commencement‘ (Thompson); ‹or the entrance of her glory‘ (ἀπὸ εἰσόδου δόξης αὐτῆς *apo eisodou doxēs autēs*). This variety of interpretation has arisen from the uncertain meaning of the word זיז *zîyz* rendered ‹abundance.‘ Gesenius supposes that it is derived from זוז *zûz* meaning:

1. To move;

2. To glance, to sparkle, to radiate, from the idea of rapid motion; hence, to flow out like rays, to spout like milk; and hence, the noun זיז *zîyz* means a breast.

This derivation may be regarded as somewhat fanciful; but it will show why the word ‹brightness‘ was inserted in the margin, since one of the usual significations of the verb relates to brightness, or to sparkling rays. Aquila renders it, Ἀπὸ παντοδαπίας *Apo pantodapias* - ‹From every kind of abundance.‘ Symmachus, Ἀπὸ πλήθους *Apo plēthou* - ‹From the multitude.‘ The word probably refers to the abundance of the consolations which Zion possessed. Lowth proposes to change the text; but without any authority. The Chaldee renders it, ‹That ye may drink of the wine of her glory;‘ where they probably read יין *yayin* (“wine”), instead of the present reading.

Of her glory - The abundant favors or blessings conferred on Zion. The glory that should be manifested to her would be the knowledge of divine truth, and the provisions made for the salvation of people.

Verse 12

For thus saith the Lord - This verse contains a promise of the conversion of the Gentiles, and the fact that what constituted their glory would be brought and consecrated to the church of God.

I will extend - The word rendered, I will extend (נטה *nâṭâh*) means properly to stretch out, as the hand or a measure; then to spread out or expand, as a tent is spread out, to which it is often applied Genesis 12:8; Genesis 26:5; or to the heavens spread out over our heads like a tent or a curtain Isaiah 40:22. Here it may mean either that peace would be spread out over the country like the Nile or Euphrates spread out over a vast region in an inundation; or it may mean, as Gesenius supposes, ‹I will turn peace

upon her like a river; that is, as a stream is turned in its course.‘ To me it seems that the former is the correct interpretation; and that the idea is, that God would bring prosperity upon Zion like a broad majestic river overflowing all its banks, and producing abundant fertility.

Peace - A general word denoting prosperity of all kinds - a favorite word with Isaiah to describe the future happiness of the church of God (see Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 26:12; Isaiah 32:17; Isaiah 45:7; Isaiah 48:18; Isaiah 52:7; Isaiah 54:13; Isaiah 55:12; Isaiah 57:19).

Like a river - That is, says Lowth like the Euphrates. So the Chaldee interprets it. But there is no evidence that the prophet refers particularly to the Euphrates. The image is that suggested above - of a river that flows full, and spreads over the banks - at once an image of sublimity, and a striking emblem of great prosperity. This same image occurs in Isaiah 48:18. See the note at that place.

And the glory of the Gentiles - (See the notes at Isaiah 60:5, Isaiah 60:11).

Like a flowing stream - Like the Nile, says Vitringa. But the word נחל *nachal* is not commonly applied to a river like the Nile; but to a torrent, a brook, a rivulet - either as flowing from a perennial fountain, or more commonly a stream running in a valley that is swelled often by rain, or by the melting of snows in the mountain (see Reland‘s Palestine, chapter xlv.) Such is the idea here. The peace or prosperity of Zion would be like such a swollen stream - a stream overflowing (שׁוטף *shôṭēph*) its banks.

Then shall ye suck - Isaiah 66:11.

Ye shall be borne upon her sides - See this phrase explained in the notes at Isaiah 60:4.

And be dandled upon her knees - As a child is by its nurse or mother. The idea is, that the tenderest care would be exercised for the church; the same care which an affectionate mother evinces for her children. The insertion of the word ‹her‘ here by our translators weakens the sense. The meaning is, not that they should be borne upon the sides and dandled upon the knees of Zion or of the church; but that God would manifest to them the feelings of a parent, and treat them with the tenderness which a mother evinces for her children. As a mother nurses her children at her side (compare the notes at Isaiah 60:4), so would God tenderly provide for the church; as she affectionately dandles her children on her knees, so tenderly and affectionately would he regard Zion.

Verse 13

As one whom his mother comforteth - See the notes at Isaiah 49:15, where the same image occurs.

Verse 14

And when ye see this - This great accession to the church from the Gentile world.

Your bones shall flourish like an herb - This is an image which is often employed in the Scriptures. When the vigor of the body fails, or when it is much afflicted, the bones are said to be feeble or weakened, or to be dried Psalm 6:2; Psalm 51:8; Psalm 22:14, Psalm 22:17; Psalm 38:3; Lamentations 1:13; Proverbs 14:30; Proverbs 17:22. like manner, prosperity, health, vigor, are denoted by making the bones fat (see the notes at Isaiah 58:11; Proverbs 15:20), or by imparting health, marrow, or strength to them Proverbs 3:8; Proverbs 16:24. The sense here is, that their vigor would be greatly increased.

The hand of the Lord shall be known - That is, it shall be seen that he is powerful to defend his people, and to punish their enemies.

Verse 15

For behold, the Lord will come with fire - The Septuagint reads this ‹As fire‘ (ὡς πύρ *hōs pur*). Fire is a common emblem to denote the coming of the Lord to judge and punish his enemies Psalm 50:3:

Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence;
A fire shall devour before him,
And it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

So Habakkuk 2:5:

Before him went the pestilence,
And burning coals went forth at his feet.

So Psalm 97:3:

A fire goeth before him,
And burneth up his enemies round about.

So it is said 2 Thessalonians 1:8, that the Lord Jesus will be revealed ‹in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God‘ (compare Hebrews 10:27; 2 Peter 3:7). So Yahweh is said to breathe out fire when he comes to destroy his foes:

There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,
And fire out of his mouth devoured;
Coals were kindled by it.

Psalm 18:8

Compare the notes at Isaiah 29:6; Isaiah 30:30. This is a general promise that God would defend his church, and destroy his foes. To what this particularly applies, it may not be possible to determine, and instead of attempting that, I am disposed to regard it as a promise of a general nature, that God, in those future times, would destroy his foes, and would thus extend protection to his people. So far as the language is concerned, it may be applied either to the destruction of Jerusalem, to any mighty overthrow of his enemies, or to the day of judgment. The single truth is, that all his enemies would be destroyed as if Yahweh should come amidst flames of fire. That truth is enough for his church to know; that truth should be sufficient to fill a wicked world with alarm.

And with his chariots like a whirlwind - The principal idea here is, that he would come with immense rapidity, like a chariot that was borne forward as on the whirlwind, to destroy his foes. God is often represented as coming in a chariot - a chariot of the clouds, or of a whirlwind. Psalm 104:3:

Who maketh the clouds his chariot,
Who walketh upon the wings of the wind.

Compare Psalm 18:10; see the note at Isaiah 19:1. See also Jeremiah 4:13:

Behold, he shall come up as clouds,
And his chariots shall be as a whirlwind.

Chariots were commonly made with two wheels, though sometimes they had four wheels, to which two horses, fiery and impetuous, were attached; and the rapid movement, the swift revolving wheels, and the dust which they raised, had no slight resemblance to a whirlwind (compare the notes at Isaiah 21:7, Isaiah 21:9). They usually had strong and sharp iron scythes affixed to the extremities of their axles, and were driven into the midst of the army of an enemy, cutting down all before them. Warriors sometimes fought standing on them, or leaping from them on the enemy. The chariots in the army of Cyrus are said to have been capacious enough to permit twenty men to fight from them.

To render his anger with fury - Lowth renders this, ‹To breathe forth his anger.‘ Jerome translates it, *Reddere*, that is, to render. The Septuagint, Ἀποδοῦναι *Apodounai* to give, or to render. Lowth proposes, instead of the present text, as pointed by the Masorites, להשיב *lehâshîyb* to read it להשיב

lehashîyb as if it were derived from נשׁב *nâshab* But there is no necessity of a change. The idea is, that God would recompense his fury; or would cause his hand to turn upon them in fury.

With fury - Lowth renders this, ‹In a burning heat.‘ The word used (חמה *chēmâh*) properly means “heat,” then anger, wrath; and the Hebrew here might be properly rendered, ‹heat of his anger;‘ that is, glowing or burning wrath, wrath that consumes like fire.

With flames of fire - His rebuke shall consume like fiery flames; or it shall be manifested amidst such flame.

Verse 16

For by fire and by his sword - The sword is an instrument by which punishment is executed (see the notes at Isaiah 34:5; compare Romans 13:4).

Will he plead with all flesh - Or rather, he will judge (נשׁפט *nîshephaṭ*), that is, he will execute his purposes of vengeance on all the human race. Of course, only that part is intended who ought to be subject to punishment; that is, all his foes.

And the slain of the Lord shall be many - The number of those who shall be consigned to woe shall be immense - though in the winding up of the great drama at the close of the world, there is reason to hopethat a large proportion of the race, taken as a whole, will be saved. Of past generations, indeed, there is no just ground of such hope; of the present generation there is no such prospect. But brighter and happier times are to come. The true religion is to spread over all the world, and for a long period is to prevail; and the hope is, that during that long period the multitude of true converts will be so great as to leave the whole number who are lost, compared with those who are saved, much less than is commonly supposed. Still the aggregate of those who are lost, ‹the slain of the Lord,‘ will be vast. This description I regard as having reference to the coming of the Lord to judgment (compare 2 Thessalonians 1:8); or if it refer to any other manifestation of Yahweh for judgment, like the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, it has a strong resemblance to the final judgment; and, like the description of that by the Saviour Matthew 24, the language is such as naturally to suggest, and to be applicable to, the final judgment of mankind.

Verse 17

They that sanctify themselves - That is, who attempt to purify themselves by idolatrous rites, by ablutions, and lustrations. The design

here is, to describe those who will be exposed to the wrath of God when he shall come to execute vengeance.

And purify themselves in the gardens - (See the notes at Isaiah 65:3).

Behind one tree in the midst - This passage has not a little exercised the ingenuity of commentators. It is quite evident that our translators were not able to satisfy themselves with regard to its meaning. In the margin they have rendered it, ‹one after another,‘ supposing that it may mean that the idolaters engaged in their sacrifices in a solemn procession, walking one after another around their groves, their shrines, or their altars. In the translation in the text, they seem to have supposed that the religious rites referred to were celebrated behind one particular selected tree in the garden. Lowth renders it, ‹After the rites of Achad.‘ Jerome renders it, In hortis post januam intrinsecus - ‹In the gardens they sanctify themselves behind the gate within.‘ The Septuagint, ‹Who consecrate and purify themselves (εἰς τοὺς κήπους, καὶ ἐν τοῖς προθύροις ἔσθοντες, κ.τ.λ. *eis tous kēpous kai en tois prothurois hesthontes etc* for the gardens, and they who, in the outer courts, eat swine‘s flesh,‘ etc. The Chaldee renders the phrase סיעא בחר סיעא *siyʿā' bāchar siyʿā'* - ‹Multitude after multitude.‘ The vexed Hebrew phrase used here, אחד אחר *'achar 'achad* it is very difficult to explain. The word אחר *'achar* means properly after; the after part; the extremity; behind - in the sense of following after, or going after anyone. The word אחד *'achad* means properly one; someone; anyone. Gesenius (Commentary at the place) says that the phrase may be used in one of the three following senses:

1. In the sense of one after another. So Sym. and Theo. render it - ὀπίσω ἀλλήλων *opisō allēlōn* Luther renders it, Einer hier, der andere da- ‹one here, another there.‘

2. The word אחד *'achad* may be understood as the name of a god who was worshipped in Syria, by the name of Adad. This god is that described by Macrobius, Sat., i. 23: ‹Understand what the Assyrians think about the power of the sun. For to the God whom they worship as Supreme they give the name Adad, and the signification of this name is One.‘ That the passage before us refers to this divinity is the opinion of Lowth, Grotius, Bochart, Vitringa, Dathe, and others. ‹The image of Adad,‘ Macrobius adds, ‹was designated by inclined rays, by which it was shown that the power of heaven was in the rays of the sun which were sent down to the earth.‘ The same god is referred to by Pliny (Hist. Nat. xxxvii. 71), where he mentions

three gems which received their names from three parts of the body, and were called ‹The veins of Adad, the eye of Adad, the finger of Adad;‘ and he adds, ‹This god was worshipped by the Syrians.‘ There can be no doubt that such a god was worshipped; but it is by no means certain that this idol is here referred to. It is not improbable, Vitringa remarks, that the name Adad should be written for Achadh, for the ease of pronunciation - as a slight change in letters was common for the purpose of euphony. But it is still not quite clear that this refers to any particular idol.

3. The third opinion is that of Gesenius and accords substantially with that which our translators have expressed it the text. According to that, it should be rendered ‹Those who sanctify and purify themselves in the (idol) groves after one in the midst;‘ that is, following and imitating the one priest who directed the sacred ceremonies. It may mean that a solemn procession was formed in the midst of the grove, which was led on by the priest, whom all followed; or it may mean that they imitated him in the sacred rites. It seems tome probable that this refers to some sacred procession in honor of an idol, where the idol or the altar was encompassed by the worshippers, and where they were led on by the officiating priest. Such processions we know were common in pagan worship.

In the midst - In the midst of the sacred grove; that is, in the darkest and obscurest recess. Groves were selected for such worship on account of the sacred awe which it was supposed their dark shades would produce and cherish. For the same reason, therefore, the darkest retreat - the very middle of the grove - would be selected as the place where their religious ceremonies would be performed. I see no evidence that there is any allusion to any tree here, as our translators seem to have supposed; still less, that there was, as Burder supposes, any allusion to the tree of life in the midst of the garden of Eden, and their attempts to cultivate and preserve the memory of it; but there is reason to believe that their religious rites would be performed in the center, or most shady part of the grove.

Eating swine‘s flesh - That is, in connection with their public worship (see the notes at Isaiah 65:4).

And the abomination - The thing which is held as abominable or detestable in the law of God. Thus the creeping thing and the reptile were regarded as abominations Leviticus 11:41-42. They were not to be eaten;

still less were they to be offered in sacrifice (compare Exodus 8:26; Deuteronomy 20:16; Deuteronomy 29:17; see the notes at Isaiah 65:3).

And the mouse - The Hebrew word used here means the dormouse - a small field-mouse. Jerome understands it as meaning the glis, a small mouse that was regarded as a great delicacy by the Romans. They were carefully kept and fattened for food (see Varro, De Rust., iii. 15). Bochart (Hieroz., i. 3,34) supposes that the name used here is of Chaldaic origin, and that it denotes a field-mouse. Mice abounded in the East, and were often exceedingly destructive in Syria (see Bochart; compare 1 Samuel 5:4). Strabo mentions that so vast a multitude of mice sometimes invaded Spain as to produce a pestilence; and in some parts of Italy, the number of field-mice was so great that the inhabitants were forced to abandon the country. It was partly on account of its destructive character that it was held in abomination by the Hebrews. Yet it would seem that it was eaten by idolaters; and was, perhaps, used either in their sacrifices or in their incantations (see the notes at Isaiah 65:4). Vitringa supposes that the description in this verse is applicable to the time of Herod, and that it refers to the number of pagan customs and institutions which were introduced under his auspices. But this is by no means certain. It may be possible that it is a general description of idolatry, and of idolaters as the enemies of God, and that the idea is, that God would come with vengeance to cut off all his foes.

Verse 18

For I know their works - The word ‹know,‘ says Lowth, is here evidently left out of the Hebrew text, leaving the sense quite imperfect. It is found in the Syriac; the Chaldee evidently had that word in the copy of the Hebrew which was used; and the Aldine and Complutensian editions of the Septuagint have the word. Its insertion is necessary in order to complete the sense; though the proof is not clear that the word was ever in the Hebrew text. The sense is, that though their abominable rites were celebrated in the deepest recesses of the groves, yet they were not concealed from God.

That I will gather all nations and tongues - They who speak all languages (compare Revelation 7:9; Revelation 10:11; Revelation 11:9). The sense is, that the period would come when Yahweh would collect all nations to witness the execution of his vengeance on his foes.

And see my glory - That is, the manifestation of my perfections in the great events referred to here - the destruction of his enemies, and the

deliverance of his people. To what particular period this refers has been a point on which expositors are by no means agreed. Grotius says it means, that such shall be the glory of the Jewish people that all nations shall desire to come and make a covenant with them. The Jewish interpreters, and among them Abarbanel (see Vitringa), suppose that it refers to a hostile and warlike assembling of all nations in the time of the Messiah, who, say they, shall attack Jerusalem with the Messiah in it, and shall be defeated. They mention particularly that the Turks and Christians shall make war on Jerusalem and on the true Messiah, but that they shall be overthrown. Vitringa supposes that it refers to the assembling of the nations when the gospel should be at first proclaimed, and when they should be called into the kingdom of God. Many of the fathers referred it to the final judgment. It is difficult to determine, amidst this variety of opinion, what is the true meaning. Opinions are easily given, and conjectures are easily made; and the opinions referred to above are entitled to little more than the appellation of conjecture. It seems to me, that there is involved here the idea of the judgment or punishment on the enemies of God, and at about the same time a collecting of the nations not only to witness the punishment, but also to become participants of his favor. In some future time, Yahweh would manifest himself as the punisher of his enemies, and all the nations also would be permitted to behold his glory, as if they were assembled together.

Verse 19

And I will set a sign among them - (See the notes at Isaiah 11:12; Isaiah 18:3). On the meaning of the word ‹sign‘ (אות *'ôth*), see the notes at Isaiah 7:11. What is its meaning here is to be determined by the connection. That would seem to me to require some such interpretation as this: That when God should come Isaiah 66:17-18 to take vengeance on his foes, and to manifest his glory, he would establish some mark or memorial; would erect some standard, or give some signal, by which his true friends would escape, and that he would send them to distant nations to proclaim his truth and gather together those who had not seen his glory. What that sign should be, he does not here say. Whether a standard, a secret communication, or some intimation beforehand, by which they should know the approaching danger and make their escape, is not declared. It is by no means easy to determine with certainty on this passage; and it certainly becomes no one to speak dogmatically or very confidently.

But it seems to me that the whole passage may have been intended, by the Holy Spirit, to refer to the propagation of the gospel by the apostles. The heavy judgments referred to may have been the impending calamities over Jerusalem. The glory of God referred to, may have been the signal manifestation of his perfections at that period in the approaching destruction of the city, and in the wonders that attended the coming of the Messiah. The gathering of the nations Isaiah 66:18 may possibly refer to the collecting together of numerous people from all parts of the earth about that time; that is, either the assembled people at the time of the Saviour‘s death Acts 2:8, Acts 2:11, or the gathering of the armies of the Romans - a commingled multitude from all nations - to inflict punishment on the Jewish nation, and to behold the manifestation of the divine justice in the destruction of the guilty Jewish capital.

The ‹sign‘ here referred to, may denote the intimations which the Redeemer gave to his disciples to discern these approaching calamities, and to secure their safety by flight when they should be about to appear Matthew 24:15-18. By these warnings and previous intimations they were to be preserved. The sign was ‹among them,‘ that is, in the very midst of the nation; and the object of the intimation was, to secure their safety, and the speedy propagation of the true religion among all nations. Deeply sensible that there is great danger of erring here, and that the above view may be viewed as mere conjecture, I cannot, however, help regarding it as the true exposition. If there is error in it, it may be pardoned, for it will probably be felt by most readers of these notes that there has not been a too frequent reference in the interpretation proposed to the times of the Christian dispensation.

And I will send those that escape of them - According to the interpretation suggested above, this refers to the portion of the Jewish nation that should escape from the tokens of the divine displeasure; that is, to the apostles and the early disciples of the Redeemer. The great mass of the nation would be abandoned and devoted to destruction. But a remnant would be saved (compare Isaiah 1:9; Isaiah 11:11, Isaiah 11:16). Of that remnant, God would send a portion to make his name known to those who had not heard it, and they would lead distant nations to the knowledge of his truth. The whole passage is so accurately descriptive of what occurred in the times when the gospel was first preached to the pagan world, that there

can be little danger of error in referring it to those times. Compare Vitringa on the passage for a more full view of the reasons of this interpretation. The names of the places which follow are designed to specify the principal places where the message would be sent, and stand here as representatives of the whole pagan world.

To Tarshish - (See the notes at Isaiah 2:16; Isaiah 23:1; Isaiah 60:19). Tarshish was one of the most distant seaports known to the Hebrews; and whether it be regarded as situated in Spain, or in the East Indies, or south of Abyssinia (see the notes above) it equally denotes a distant place, and the passage means that the message would be borne to the most remote regions.

Pul - This is supposed to denote some region in Africa. Jerome renders it, ‹Africa.‘ The Septuagint, Φοὺδ *Foud* - ‹Phud.‘ Bochart, Phaleg. iv. 26, supposes that it means Philae, a large island in the Nile, between Egypt and Ethiopia; called by the Egyptians Pilak, i e., the border, or far country (see Champollion, l‘Egypte, i. 158). There are still on that island remains of some very noble and extensive temples built by the ancient Egyptians.

And Lud - Jerome renders this, ‹Lydia.‘ The Septuagint ‹Lud.‘ There was a Lydia in Asia Minor - the kingdom of the celebrated Croesus; but it is generally supposed that this place was in Africa. Ludim was a son of Mizraim Genesis 10:13, and the name Ludim, or Lybians, referring to a people, several times occurs in the Bible Jeremiah 46:9; Ezekiel 27:10; Ezekiel 30:5. These African Lybians are commonly mentioned in connection with Pul, Ethiopia, and Phut. Bochart supposes that Abyssinia is intended, but it is by no means certain that this is the place referred to. Josephus affirms that the descendants of Ludim are long since extinct, having been destroyed in the Ethiopian wars. It is clear that some part of Egypt is intended, says Calmer, but it is not easy to show exactly where they dwelt.

That draw the bow - (משכי קשת *moshekēy qeshet*). The Septuagint here renders the Hebrew phrase simply by Μοσὸχ *Mosoch* understanding it of a place. Lowth supposes that the Hebrew phrase is a corruption of the word Moschi, the name of a nation situated between the Euxine and the Caspian seas. But there is no authority for supposing, as he does, that the word ‹bow‘ has been interpolated. The Chaldee renders it, ‹Drawing and smiting with the bow.‘ The idea is, that the nations here referred to were distinguished for the use of thw bow. The bow was in common use in wars;

and it is by no means improbable that at that time they had acquired special fame in the use of this weapon.

To Tubal - Tubal was the fifth son of Japhet, and is here joined with Javan because they were among the settlers of Europe. The names before mentioned together relate to Africa, and the sense there is, that the message should be sent to Africa; here the idea is, that it should be sent to Europe. Tubal is commonly united with Meshech, and it is supposed that they populated countries bordering on each other. Bochart labors to prove that by Meshech and Tubal are intended the Muscovites and the Tibarenians. The Tibarenians of the Greeks were the people inhabiting the country south of the Caucasus, between the Black Sea and the Araxes. Josephus says, that ‹Tubal obtained the Thobelians (Θωβήλους *Thōbēlous*) who are reckoned among the Iberians.‘ Jerome renders it, ‹Italy.‘ It is not possible to determine with certainty the country that is referred to, though some part of Europe is doubtless intended.

And Javan - Jerome renders this, ‹Greece.‘ So the Septuagint, Εἰς τήν Ἑλλάδα *Eis tēn Hellada* - ‹To Greece.‘ Javan was the fourth son of Japhet, and was the father of the Ionians and the Greeks Genesis 10:2-4. The word ‹Ionia,‘ Greek Ἰων *Iōn* Ἰωνία *Iōnia* is evidently derived from the word rendered here ‹Javan‘ (יון *yâvân*), and in the Scriptures the word comprehends all the countries inhabited by the descendants of Javan, as well in Greece as in Asia Minor. Ionia properly was the beautiful province on the western part of Asia Minor - a country much celebrated in the Greek classics for its fertility and the salubrity of its climate - but the word used here includes all of Greece. Thus Daniel Daniel 11:2, speaking of Xerxes, says, ‹He shall stir up all against the realm of Javan.‘ Alexander the Great is descried by the same prophet as ‹king of Javan‘ Daniel 8:21; Daniel 10:20. The Hindus call the Greeks Yavanas - the ancient Hebrew appellation. It is needless to say, on the supposition that this refers to the propagation of the gospel by the apostles, that it was fulfilled. They went to Greece and to Asia Minor in the very commencement of their labors, and seme of the earliest and most flourishing churches were founded in the lands that were settled by the descendants of Javan.

To the isles afar off - (See the notes at Isaiah 41:1).

That have not heard my fame - Hebrew, ‹Who have not heard my report,‘ that is, who were ignorant of the true God.

Neither have seen my glory - The glory which he had manifested to the Hebrews in giving his law, and in the various exhibitions of his character and perfections among them.

Verse 20

And they shall bring all your brethren - That is, as great success shall attend them as if they should bring back all who had gone there when scattered abroad, and should present them as an offering to Yahweh. The image here is taken from the scene which would be presented, should the distant nations be seen bringing the scattered exiles in all lands on horses, and on palanquins, and on dromedaries, again to Jerusalem, and presenting them before Yahweh in the city where they formerly dwelt. It is the image of a vast caravan, conducted by the pagan world when they had become tributary to the people of God, and when they united to return them to their own land. The spiritual signification is, that all they who should be appropriately called, brethren,‘ all who should be the true friends of God, should be brought and offered to Yahweh; that is, there should be a great accession to the people of God from the pagan world.

For an offering unto the Lord. - Hebrew, מנחה *minchāh* - not a bloody offering or sacrifice: but an offering such as was made by flour, oil, etc. (see the notes at Isaiah 1:13.)

Out of all nations - The truth shall be proclaimed in all lands, and a vast accession shall be made from all parts of the world to the true church of God. To understand this description, we must form an idea of immense caravans proceeding from distant parts of the world to Jerusalem, bearing along the converts to the true religion to be dedicated to the service of Yahweh.

Upon horses - Horses were little used by the Hebrews (see the notes at Isaiah 2:7), but they are much used by the Arabs, and form an important part of the caravan that goes to distant places.

And in chariots - (Compare the notes at Isaiah 66:15). It is, however, by no means certain that the word used here refers to a wheeled vehicle, Such vehicles were not used in caravans. The editor of the Ruins of Palmyra tells us that the caravan they formed to go to that place, consisted of about two hundred persons, and about the same number of beasts of carriage, which were an odd mixture of horses, camels, mules, and asses; but there is no account of any vehicle drawn on wheels in that expedition, nor do we find an account of such things in other eastern journeys (Harmer). Coaches,

Dr. Russel assures us, are not in use in Aleppo, nor are they commonly used in any of the countries of the East. The Hebrew word used here (רכב *rekeb*), means properly riding - riders, cavalry (see it explained in the notes at Isaiah 21:7); then any vehicle for riding - whether a wagon, chariot, or litter. Lowth renders it, ‹In litters.‘ Pitts, in his account of the return from Mecca, describes a species of litter which was borne by two camels, one before and another behind, which was all covered over with searcloth, and that again with green broadcloth, and which was elegantly adorned. It is not improbable that some such vehicle is intended here, as it is certain that such things as wagons or chariots are not found in oriental caravans.

And in litters - Margin, ‹Coaches.‘ But the word litters more properly expresses the idea. Lowth renders it, ‹Counes.‘ Thevenot tells us that counes are hampers, or cradles, carried upon the backs of camels, one on each side, having a back, head, and sides, like great chairs. A covering is commonly laid over them to protect the rider from wind and rain. This is a common mode of traveling in the East. The coune, or hamper, is thrown across the back of the camel, somewhat in the manner of saddle-bags with us. Sometimes a person sits on each side, and they thus balance each other, and sometimes the end in which the person is placed is balanced by provisions, or articles of furniture in the other. ‹At Aleppo,‘ says Dr. Russel, ‹women of inferior condition in long journeys are commonly stowed, one on each side of a mule, in a sort of covered cradles.‘ The Hebrew word used here (צב *tsab*), means properly a litter, a sedan coach - what can be lightly or gently borne.

The Septuagint renders it, Ἐν λαμπήναις ἡμιόνων μετὰ σκιαδίων *En lampēnais hēmionōn meta skiadiōn* - ‹In litters of mules, with shades or umbrellas.‘ Perhaps the following description of a scene in the khan at Acre, will afford an apt illustration of this passage. ‹The bustle was increased this morning by the departure of the wives of the governor of Jaffa. They set off in two coaches of a curious description, common in this country. The body of the coach was raised on two parallel poles, somewhat similar to those used for sedan chairs only that in these the poles were attached to the lower par; of the coach - throwing consequently the center of gravity much higher, and apparently exposing the vehicle, with its veiled tenant, to an easy overthrow, or at least to a very active jolt. Between the poles strong mules were harnessed, one before and one behind; who, if they should prove capricious, or have very uneven or mountainous ground to

pass, would render the situation of the ladies still more critical.' (Jowett's Christian Researches in Syria, pp. 115,116, Amos Ed.)

And upon swift beasts - Dromedaries. So Lowth and Noyes render it; and so the word used here - כרכרות *kirekârôt* - properly denotes. The word is derived from כיר *kārar* to dance; and the name is given to them for their bounding or dancing motion, their speed being also sometimes accelerated by musical instruments (Bochart, Hieroz. i. 2,4). For a description of the dromedary, see the notes at Isaiah 60:6.

As the children of Israel - As the Jews bear an offering to Yahweh in a vessel that is pure, The utmost attention was paid to the cleanliness of their vessels in their public worship.

Verse 21

And I will also take of them for priests - I will give to them an honorable place in my public service; that is, I will make them ministers of religion as if they were priests and Levites. This cannot be taken literally - because the priests and Levites among the Jews were determined by law, and by regular genealogical descent, and there was no provision for substituting any in their place. But it must mean that under the condition of things described here, those who should be brought from the distant pagan world would perform the same offices in the service of God which had been performed formerly by the priests and Levites that is, they would be ministers of religion. The services of God would no longer be performed by the descendants of Aaron, or be limited to them, but would be performed by others who should be called to this office from the pagan world.

Verse 22

For as the new heavens and the new earth - (See the notes at Isaiah 65:17).

Shall remain before me - They shall not pass away and be succeeded by others. The idea is, that the state of things here described would be permanent and abiding.

So shall your seed and your name remain - (See the notes at Isaiah 65:15).

Verse 23

And it shall come to pass - As the prophet closes the book and winds up his whole prophecy, he directs the attention to that future period which had occupied so much of his attention in vision, when the whole world should be acquainted with the true religion, and all nations should worship

Yahweh. Of such a book there could be no more appropriate close; and such a contemplation especially became the last prophetic moments of the ‹evangelical prophet‘ Isaiah.

From one new moon to another - Margin, ‹New moon to his new moon.‘ The Hebrew literally is, ‹As often as the month cometh in its month;‘ that is, in its time, every month, every new moon (Gesenius, Lexicon, on the word מדי *midēy*). The Hebrews held a festival on the return of each month, or at every new moon (see the notes at Isaiah 1:14). A similar prophecy occurs in Zechariah 14:16: ‹And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came up against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.‘ In regard to the meaning of this, it is evident that it cannot be taken literally. In the nature of things it would be impossible for all nations to go literally before Yahweh in Jerusalem once a month, or once a year, to worship. It must then be meant that at periodical seasons, all the human family would worship Yahweh. The festivals of the new moon, the feast of tabernacles, and the sabbaths, were the set time among the Hebrews for the worship of God; and the idea is, that on set times, or at regularly recurring intervals, the worship of God would yet be celebrated in all lands. I see no evidence, therefore, that this means that there should be established on the earth the habit of meeting for prayer, or for the worship of God once a month - anymore than the passage above quoted from Zechariah proves that a feast like that of tabernacles would be celebrated once a year. But the idea is clear, that the time would come when Yahweh would be worshipped regularly and periodically everywhere; that in all nations his worship would be established in a manner similar in some respects to that which prevailed among his people in ancient times.

And from one Sabbath to another - (Compare the notes at Isaiah 58:13-14). There can be no permanent worship of God, and no permanent religion on earth, without a Sabbath; and hence it was, that while the observance of the feasts of tabernacles, and of the Passover, and of the new moons, made a part of the ceremonial law, the law respecting the sabbaths was incorporated with the ten commandments as of moral and perpetual obligation; and it will be literally true that all the race shall yet be brought to worship God on the return of that holy day. It was instituted in paradise; and as one design of the plan of redemption is to bring man back to the state in which he was in paradise, so one effect of the true religion everywhere

will be, and is, to make people reverence the Sabbath of the Lord. No man becomes truly pious who does not love the holy Sabbath. No nation ever has been, or ever can be converted which will not, and which does not, love and observe that day. Every successful effort to propagate the true religion is a successful effort to extend the practice of observing it; and just as certain as it is that Christianity will be spread around the world, so cerrain will it be that the Sabbath will be observed in all lands. The period is, therefore, yet to arrive when the delightful spectacle will be presented of all the nations of the earth bowing on the return of that day before the living God. The plans of this life will be suspended; toil and care will be laid aside; and the sun, as he rolls around the world, will rouse nation after nation to the worship of the true God; and the peace and order and loveliness of the Christian Sabbath will spread over all the hills and vales of the world. Who that loves the race will not desire that such a period may soon come? Who can wonder that Isaiah should have fixed his eye in the close of his prophetic labors on a scene so full of loveliness, and so replete with honor to God, and with goodwill to people?

Shall all flesh - All the human family, all nations - a most unequivocal promise that the true religion shall yet prevail around the world.

Come to worship before me - That is, they shall assemble for the worship of God in their respective places of devotion.

Verse 24

And they shall go forth - The sense of this verse evidently is, that the pious and happy worshippers of God shall see the punishment which he will execute on his and their foes, or shall see them finally destroyed. It refers to the time when the kingdom of God shall be finally and perpetually established, and when all the mighty enemies of that kingdom shall be subdued and punished. The image is probably taken from a scene where a people whose lands have been desolated by mighty armies are permitted to go forth after a decisive battle to walk over the fields of the slain, and to see the dead and the putrifying bodies of their once formidable enemies.

And look upon the carcasses of the men - The dead bodies of the foes of God (see Isaiah 66:15-16).

For their worm shall not die - This image is evidently taken from the condition of unburied bodies, and especially on a battlefield. The Hebrew word (תולע *tôlâʿ*) properly refers to the worms which are generated in such corrupting bodies (see Exodus 16:20; the notes at Isaiah 14:11). It is

sometimes applied to the worm from which the crimson or deep scarlet color was obtained (the notes at Isaiah 1:18); but it more properly denotes that which is produced in putrid substances. This entire passage is applied by the Saviour to future punishment; and is the fearful image which he employs to denote the final suffering of the wicked in hell. My views on its meaning may be seen in the notes at Mark 9:44, Mark 9:46.

Neither shall their fire be quenched - The fire that shall consume them shall burn perpetually. This image is taken evidently from the fires kindled, especially in the valley of Hinnom, to consume puffed and decaying substances. That was a valley on the south side of Jerusalem, into which the filth of the city was thrown. It was the place where, formerly, an image of brass was raised to Moloch, and where children were offered in sacrifice 2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chronicles 28:3. See a description of this in the notes at Matthew 5:22. This place was subsequently regarded as a place of special abomination by the Jews. The filth of the city was thrown there, and it became extremely offensive. The air was polluted and pestilential; the sight was terrific; and to preserve it in any manner pure, it was necessary to keep fires continually burning there. The extreme loathsomeness of the place, the filth and putrefaction, the corruption of the atmosphere, and the lurid fires blazing by day and by night, made it subsequently one of the most appalling and loathsome objects with which a Jew was acquainted.

It was called the gehenna of fire, and was the image which the Saviour often employed to denote the future punishment of the wicked. In that deep and loathsome vale it seems to have been the common expectation of the Jews that some great battle would be fought which would establish the supremacy of their nation over all others. Hence, the Chaldee renders this, ‹They shall go forth, and shall look upon the dead bodies of the sinners who have rebelled against my word; because their souls shall not die, and their fire shall not be extinguished; and the wicked shall be judged in Gehenna (בגיהנם *begēyhînâm* from גי *gay* and הנם *hinnôm* hence coming down into Greek as γέεννα *geenna*), until the righteous shall say, We have seen enough.‘ It is, however, by no means certain that Isaiah refers here especially to the valley of Hinnom. The image in his mind is evidently that of a vast army slain, and left to putrify on the field unburied, and where fires would be kindled in part to consume the heaps of the slain, and in part to save the air from pestilential influences, All the enemies of God and his

church would be like such a vast host strewed on the plains, and the perpetuity of his kingdom would be finally established.

And they shall be an abhorring - An object of loathing. So the Hebrew word דראון *dêrâ'ôn* means. It is derived from דרא *dârâ'* an obsolete root, signifying, in Arabic, to thrust away, to repel. Jerome renders it, *Ad satietatem visionis* - understanding by it, that all flesh should look upon those dead bodies Until they were satisfied. The Septuagint, Εἰς ὅρασιν *Eis horasin* - ‹For a vision;‘ or that all flesh might look upon them. It is evident that the Septuagint reads the word as if it were derived from the verb ראה *râ'âh*), “to see.”

Unto all flesh - (See Isaiah 66:23). The sense is, that so entire would be their overthrow, and such objects of loathing would they become, that all the friends of God would turn from them in abhorrence. All the enemies of God would be destroyed; the pure religion would triumph, and the people of God would be secure.

It may be made a question, perhaps, to what period this refers. The Saviour Mark 9:44, Mark 9:46, applied the language to the future punishment of the wicked, and no one, I think, can doubt that in Isaiah it includes that consummation of worldly affairs. The radical and essential idea in the prophet is, as it seems to me, that such would be the entire overthrow and punishment of the enemies of God; so condign their punishment; so deep their sufferings; so loathsome and hateful would they be when visited with the divine vengeance for their sins, that they would be an object of loathing and abhorrence. They would be swept off as unworthy to live with God, and they would be consigned to punishment - loathsome like that of ever gnawing worms on the carcasses of the slain, and interminable and dreadful like everconsuming and extinguishable fires.

This is the consummation of the series of bright visions that passed before the mind of Isaiah, and is an appropriate termination of this succession of wonderful revelations. Where could it more appropriately close than in the final triumph of the true religion, and in the complete and final destruction of all the enemies of Gods. The vision stretches on to the judgment, and is closed by a contemplation of those scenes which commence there, but which never end. The church is triumphant. Its conflicts cease. Its foes are slain. Its Redeemer is revealed; and its everlasting happiness is founded on a basis which can never be shaken.

Here I close my labors in endeavoring to elucidate the visions of this wonderful prophet. I thank God - the source of every right feeling and every holy desire, and the suggester of every plan that will in any way elucidate his word or promote his glory - that he ever inclined my heart to these studies. I thank him for the preservation of my life, and the continuance of my health, until I am permitted to bring this work to a close. I record, with grateful emotions, my deep conviction, that if in any way I have been enabled to explain that which was before dark; to illustrate that which was obscure; or to present any views which have not before occurred to those who may peruse this work, it is owing to the gracious influences of his Holy Spirit. And I desire to render thanks to the Great Source of light and truth, if I have been enabled to throw any light on the prophecies recorded here more than 2500 years ago; or to confirm the faith of any in the truth of the inspiration of the Bible by tracing the evidences of the fulfillment of those predictions.

And I now commend the work to the blessing of God, and devote it to the glory of his name and to the advancement of the Redeemer‘s kingdom, with a humble prayer that it may be useful to other minds; but with the deep conviction, that whatever may be its effect on other minds, I have been abundantly compensated for all my labor in the contemplation of the inimitable beauties, and the sublime visions of Isaiah. thanks to God for this book; thanks for all its beauties, its consolations, its promises, its views of the Messiah, its predictions of the certain triumph of truth, and its glowing descriptions of the future conquest of the church, when God shall extend to it ‹peace like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream.‘ Come soon that blessed day, when ‹the ransomed of the Lord shall return to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads‘ Isaiah 35:10; when ‹the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose‘ Isaiah 35:1; and when it shall be announced to the church, ‹thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself, for Yahweh shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended‘ Isaiah 60:20.

May I be permitted to close my labors on this book in the beautiful language of Vitringa? ‹These words Isaiah 66:23-24 express the final doom

of the two opposite classes of people, the righteous and the wicked, when, after various preparatory judgments of God, the fates of all ages, and our own also, shall be determined; with which also this divine book of Isaiah itself is terminated.

Be it our lot, with those who are holy; with those who fear God and love the truth; with the humble, meek, and merciful, and with those who persevere in every good work to the end of life, from the gracious sentence of our great Lord, Saviour, and Judge, Jesus Christ, to obtain, by the will of the Father, the same portion with them. In which hope, I also, now deeply affected, and prostrate before his throne, give humble thanks to God the Father, and his Son Christ Jesus, through the Spirit, for the grace and light with which he has endowed me, his unworthy servant, in commencing and completing the commentary on this book; entreating, with earnest prayer, of his grace and mercy, that, pardoning those errors into which erroneously I may have fallen, he will employ this work, such as it is, to the glory of his name, the use of the church, and the consolation of his people; and to Him be the glory throughout all ages.‘

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Jeremiah

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JEREMIAH INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Jeremiah

1. jeremiah was by birth a priest, and dwelt at Anathoth, a village in the tribe of Benjamin, about three miles north of Jerusalem. The name is not found until the time of David, when, however, it seems to have become common (see 1 Chronicles 12:4, 1 Chronicles 12:10, 1 Chronicles 12:13), and most probably it signifies that Yahweh shall exalt.

It is a subject of dispute whether or not Hilkiah, the father of Jeremiah, was the high priest of that name, who found the Book of the Law in the Temple 2 Kings 22:8. It is at least possible that he was. The more than ordinary respect felt for the prophet by Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, and other reasons support the supposition that Jeremiah was a man of high birth.

His call to the prophetic office came in the 13th year of Josiah. It was a time when danger was once again gathering around the little kingdom of Judah, and to Jeremiah was assigned a more directly political position than to any other of "the goodly fellowship of the prophets;" as both the symbols shown to him and the very words of his institution prove. If we glance back at the previous history, we find that the destruction of Sennacherib's army in the 14th year of Hezekiah (693 b.c.), though it had not freed the land from predatory incursions, had nevertheless put an end to all serious designs on the part of the Assyrians to reduce it to the same condition as that to which Salmaneser had reduced Samaria. The danger of Judaea really rose from Egypt on the one hand and Babylon on the other. In Egypt Psammetichus put an end to the subdivision of the country, and made himself sole master in the 17th year of Assurbanipal (649 b.c.), being the 24th of Manasseh. Since he reigned for 54 years, he was - during the last 18 or 19 years of his life - contemporary with Josiah, but it was his successor Necho who killed Josiah at Megiddo. Meanwhile, as Egypt grew in strength, so Nineveh declined, partly from the effects of the Scythian invasion, but still more from the growing power of the Medes, and from Babylon having achieved its independence.

Two years after the battle of Megiddo, Nineveh fell before a combined attack of the Medes under Cyaxares and the Babylonians under Nabopalassar. But Nabopalassar does not seem to have been otherwise a

warlike king, and Egypt remained the dominant power until the fourth year of Jehoiakim. In that year, 586 b.c., according to the cylinders, Nebuchadnezzar defeated Necho at Carchemish. Having peaceably succeeded his father, he returned to Judaea, and Jehoiakim became his vassal. After three years of servitude Jehoiakim rebeled 2 Kings 24:1, and died. Three months afterward, his son Jehoiachin, the queen-mother, and a large number of nobles and artificers, were carried captive to Babylon.

The growth of Egypt into a first-rate power under Psammetichus Jeremiah 2:18, Jeremiah 2:36, raised the question of a close alliance with him. The youthful Jeremiah gave his voice against it. Josiah recognized that voice as inspired, and obeyed. His obedience cost him his life at Megiddo; but four years later Necho was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish. On that day, the fate of the Jewish nation was decided, and the primary object of Jeremiah‘s mission then ceased.

The ministry of Jeremiah really belonged to the last 18 years of Josiah‘s reign. Judah‘s probation was then going on, her salvation still possible; though each year Judah‘s guilt became heavier, her condemnation became more certain. But to the eye of man, her punishment seemed more remote than ever. Jehoiakim was the willing vassal of Egypt, the supreme power. No wonder that, being an irreligious man, he scorned all of Jeremiah‘s predictions of utter and early ruin. It is no wonder that he destroyed Jeremiah‘s scroll, as merely the record of the outpourings of mere fanaticism. It was his last chance, his last offer of mercy: and as he threw the torn fragments of the scroll onto the fire, he symbolically threw there his royal house, his doomed city, the Temple, and all the people of the land. It was in this fourth year of Jehoiakim that Jeremiah boldly foretold the greatness of Nebuchadnezzars empire, and the wide limits over which it would extend. This prophecy Jeremiah 36:26. When Jeremiah appears again, Nebuchadnezzar was advancing upon Jerusalem to execute the prophecy contained in Jeremiah 36:30-31. And with the death of Jehoiakim, the first period of Judah‘s history was brought to a close. Though Jeremiah remained with Zedekiah, and tried to influence him for good, yet Jeremiah‘s mission was over. Jeremiah himself testifies that the Jewish Church had gone with Jehoiachin to Babylon. Zedekiah and those who remained in Jerusalem were only the refuse of a fruit-basket from which everything

good had been culled Jeremiah 24:1-10, and their destruction was only a matter of course. Jeremiah held no distinctive office toward them.

Such was the political state of things in the evil days in which Jeremiah was commissioned to make Yahweh‘s last appeal to His covenant-people. However, to understand the prophet‘s position fully, the moral change which had come over the Jews, and which was the real cause of the nation‘s ruin, must be noted.

Up to the time of Manasseh, though there had been bad as well as good kings, and though there had probably always been a certain amount of nature-worship and of unauthorized rites upon the hill-tops, yet the service of Yahweh had been the sole established and even dominant religion of the people. But upon Manasseh‘s accession a new order of things began; and, in spite of his repentance, it continued throughout his long reign of 55 years. Not only was there the open establishment of idolatry, but a reign of terror commenced, during which not only the prophets, but all who were distinguished for religion and virtue, were cruelly murdered. The reign of Manasseh was important in another particular. During it the land was slowly recovering from its utterly exhausted state at the end of the Assyrian wars; and when Josiah came to the throne, there was both great prosperity among the people, and also a better state of feeling. Great and good men stood forward as leaders in defense of their national religion and covenant-God. And the nation itself had become as dissatisfied with Baal and Moloch as their forefathers had been with Yahweh. In his 18th year Josiah entered with all his heart into the work of restoring the national religion, and labored with a stern earnestness to remove every vestige of idol-worship from the land. This was half the work; the other half was entrusted to Jeremiah. The king could cleanse the land; the word of God alone, speaking to their consciences, could cleanse men‘s hearts. Therefore, the office of Jeremiah was to show that a change of morals must accompany the public reformation effected by Josiah, or it would not be accepted.

It was in Josiah‘s 13th year, when entire quiet prevailed in the political world, and Jeremiah was himself little more than 20 years of age, that his appointment took place, and two symbols were shown to him by which he learned the main reasons why the word of Yahweh was entrusted to his

charge. By the first, the branch of an almond-tree, he was taught that judgment was awake in the land. Judah must decide at once whether she will serve Yahweh or Baalim, and her choice must be real. If she chooses Yahweh, she must prove that such is her choice by worshipping Him in purity and holiness. For, secondly, by the symbol of the seething caldron, he learned that a dreadful calamity was impending over his country.

There are in Jewish history two overwhelming catastrophes: The first being the destruction of the holy city and temple by Nebuchadnezzar. And the second was the destruction of the holy city and temple by Titus. The preaching of Jeremiah caused the first to be a new birth to the chosen people. The preaching of Christ caused the Christian Church to spring forth from the other. But if their preaching had been more generally listened to, Jerusalem might have been saved each time. It was because people passed on without heeding the warning that the nation thus fell twice Luke 19:42.

Jeremiah was not, however, one "dumb before the shearers, and that opened not his mouth" Isaiah 53:7. Of all the prophets there is not one who so frankly lays open to us his brooding melancholy nature. He discloses to us his innermost thoughts. We find him sensitive to a most painful degree, timid, shy, hopeless, desponding, constantly complaining, and dissatisfied with the course of events, with the office which had been thrust upon him, and with the manner of the Divine Providence. Jeremiah was not one whose sanguine temperament made him see the bright side of things, nor did he quickly find peace and happiness in doing his Master's will. And yet we never find him rebuked, because he was doing his duty to the utmost extent of his powers. Timid in resolve he was unflinching in execution. As fearless when he had to face the whole world as he was dispirited and prone to complaining when alone with God. He is a noble example of the triumph of the moral over the physical nature. His whole strength lay in his determination to do what was right at whatever cost. He made everything yield to whatever his conscience told him he ought to do. Danger, opposition, mockery without; fear, despondency, disappointment within, availed nothing to shake his constant mind. The sense of duty prevailed over every other consideration; and in no saint were the words of Paul 2 Corinthians 12:9 better exemplified.

Many of the same characteristics may be seen in Jeremiah‘s style of writing. He did not possess those gifts which make the orator.

He did not have any of that strength and vigor, nor of that warmth of imagination, which characterize Isaiah and Micah. His usual method is to set his main thought before the mind in a succession of images. They seldom grow out of one another, but simply form a succession of illustrations, each of which is full of poetry, but with this remarkable peculiarity, that Jeremiah never uses his picture as such, but mixes up with it words which are appropriate, not to the metaphor, but to the idea which he is illustrating (e. g., Jeremiah 1:15; Jeremiah 6:3-5). His simile is constantly dismissed almost before it has been fully presented to the mind in order that he may declare his meaning in plain and unvarnished prose. This fullness of illustration, often diffuse and inconsecutive, is exactly in harmony with Jeremiah‘s subject. No lot could have been more dreary to a man of intense patriotism like Jeremiah than to see the ruin of his country steadily approaching, to mark each step of its advance, to have to point out its causes, and to know the sole remedy, but also to know that none would heed his words. Could he have only witnessed the return of the exiles, and have known that the restoration of the Jewish Church was, humanly speaking, His work, his despondency would have given way to joy. But no such comfort was vouchsafed him. He was required to give up all the innocent joys of life Jeremiah 15:17; to abandon the most cherished privilege of a Jew, and live unmarried Jeremiah 16:2; and to abstain even from the civilities and sympathies of society Jeremiah 16:5; only to be an object of universal abhorrence. This was Jeremiah‘s calling; not to be a poet or orator, but to persuade people by the force of his moral character, and to conquer by suffering.

And his style is in keeping with the man. He spoke as he thought. Ever brooding over his message to his people it presented itself to his mind in many aspects, but was in substance ever the same. We have no change of subjects in his prophecy. He has only the single cry of Woe! All he can do is to adapt his unvarying tale to the existing state of things, and to present it under new images. He is a true poet, but the poet of sorrow. Though sorrow comes only occasionally, yet it comes to all, and then Jeremiah, the prophet of suffering, is full of instruction for us. Perhaps no book of Holy Scripture

sets so plainly before people the great issues which depend upon right and wrong.

2. There can be little doubt that the Book of Jeremiah grew out of the scroll which Baruch wrote down at the prophet‘s mouth in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and which was completed and read before the king in his fifth year, in the ninth month Jeremiah 36:2. However, since Jeremiah 21:1-14 was written during the reign of Zedekiah, Jeremiah 19:1-15, along with (perhaps) Jeremiah 19:1-15. From 2 Kings 22:8 that this is just what we should expect; his young mind must have been deeply penetrated by such a scene as that described in 2 Kings 23:1-3. And such quotations in a book of which the genuineness is acknowledged, are of the greatest possible value for the criticism of the writings from which they are taken.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The words of Jeremiah - The usual title of the prophetic books is "the Word of the Lord," but the two books of Amos and Jeremiah are called the words of those prophets, probably because they contain not merely the words of those prophets, probably because they contain not merely prophecies, but also the record of much which belongs to the personal history of the writers. This title might therefore be translated the "life of Jeremiah" or "acts of Jeremiah," though some understand by it a collection of the prophecies of Jeremiah. One derivation of Jeremiah's name is "God exalteth."

Hilkiah, may have been the high priest of that name.

That were - Or, who was, i. e., dwelt. The meaning is, that Jeremiah was a priest who dwelt at Anathoth.

Verse 2

Came - literally, was (and in Jeremiah 1:4); the phrase implies that Jeremiah possessed God's word from that time onward, not fitfully as coming and going, but constantly.

The thirteenth year of his reign - According to the ordinary reckoning, this would be 629 b.c., but if the Ptolemaic canon be right in putting the capture of Jerusalem at 586 b.c., it would be two years later, namely 627 b.c. However, according to the Assyrian chronology, it would be 608 b.c. It was the year after that in which Josiah began his reforms.

Verse 3

The whole period contained in this verse is no less than 40 years and 6 months, namely, 18 years under Josiah, two periods of 11 years each under Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, and 3 months under each of the omitted kings, Jehoahaz and Jeconiah.

In the fifth month - The capture of Jerusalem took place in the fourth month, but its destruction was in the fifth month (see the marginal references), the ninth day of which was subsequently kept as a fast-day Zechariah 7:3.

Verse 4

This history of Jeremiah's call to his office formed a part of his first address to the people. He claimed to act by an external authority, and to

speak not his own words but those of Yahweh; and this even when resisting the divine call (see Jeremiah 15:13; Jeremiah 20:7, Jeremiah 20:14-18).

Verse 5

Rather, "Before I formed thee in the belly." I approved of thee (as one fit for the prophetic office)," and before thou camest forth from the womb" I made thee holy (dedicated thee to holy uses); I have appointed thee (now by this public call to be) "a prophet unto the nations."

Unto the nations - The privileges contained in this verse are so great as in their full sense to be true only of Christ Himself, while to Jeremiah they belong as being in so many particulars a type of Christ.

Verse 6

There is no resistance on Jeremiah's part, but he shrinks back alarmed.

I cannot speak - i. e., "I cannot prophesy," I have not those powers of oratory necessary for success. The prophets of Israel were the national preachers in religious matters, and their orators in political.

I am a child - This implies nothing very definite about Jeremiah's age. Still the long duration of his prophetic mission makes it probable that he was very young when called to the office, as also were Isaiah, Hosea, Zechariah, and others.

Verse 7

Jeremiah suggested two difficulties, the first inexperience, the second timidity. God now removes the first of these. Inexperience is no obstacle where the duty is simple obedience His timidity is removed by the promise given him in the next verse.

Verse 9

Touched - "Made it touch." This was the symbol of the bestowal of divine grace and help, by which that want of eloquence, which the prophet had pleaded as a disqualification, was removed.

Verse 10

I have … set thee over - literally, I have made thee Pakeed, i. e., deputy. This title is given only to these invested with high authority (e. g. Genesis 41:34; 2 Chronicles 24:11; Jeremiah 20:1; Jeremiah 29:26). From God's side, the prophet is a mere messenger, speaking what he is told, doing what he is commanded. From man's side, he is God's vicegerent, with power "to root out, and to pull down."

Root out … pull down - In the Hebrew, the verbs present an instance of the alliteration so common in the prophets, and agreeable to oriental taste.

The former signifies the destruction of anything planted, the latter refers to buildings.

To throw down - More exactly, to tear in pieces. There are four words of destruction, and but two words of restoration, as if the message were chiefly of evil. And such was Jeremiah‘s message to his contemporaries. Yet are all God‘s dealings finally for the good of His people. The Babylonian exile was, for the moment, a time of chastisement; it also became a time of national repentance (see Jeremiah 24:5-7).

Verse 11

What seest thou? - If we admit a supernatural element in prophecy, visions would be the most simple means of communication between God and man.

A rod of an almond tree - Many translate “a staff of almond wood.” The vision would thus signify that God - like a traveler, staff in hand - was just about to set forth upon His journey of vengeance. But the rendering of the King James Version is supported by Genesis 30:37. The word rendered “almond” comes from a root signifying “to be awake;” and as the almond blossoms in January, it seems to be awake while other trees are still Sleeping, and therefore is a fit emblem of activity.

Verse 12

Hasten - Rather, I watch over “my word to perform it.”

Verse 13

The first vision was for the support of the prophet‘s own faith during his long struggle with his countrymen: the second explains to him the general nature of his mission. He was to be the bearer of tidings of a great national calamity about to break forth item the north. He sees a caldron. It was a vessel of metal Ezekiel 24:11, large enough to prepare the meal of a numerous community 2 Kings 4:38, and broad at the top, as it was also used for washing purposes Psalm 60:8. This caldron was boiling furiously.

The face … - More correctly the margin, i. e toward the south. We must suppose this caldron set upon a pile of inflammable materials. As they consume it settles down unevenly, with the highest side toward the north, so that its face is turned the other way and looks southward. Should it still continue so to settle, the time must finally come when it will be overturned, and will pour the whole mass of its boiling contents upon the south.

Verse 14

Out of the north … - The caldron represents the great military empires upon the Euphrates. In Hezekiah‘s time, Nineveh was at their head; but stormed by the armies of Cyaxares and Nabopalassar it is itself now the victim whose limbs are seething in the caldron, and the seat of empire has been transferred to Babylon. But whoever may for the time prevail, the tide of passion and carnage is sure finally to pour itself upon Judaea.

An evil shall break forth - "The evil shall be opened," shall show itself, be disclosed from the north: that special evil, which from the days of Micah Micah 3:12 all the prophets had denounced upon the Jews if they lapsed into idolatry. At present the caldron is fiercely boiling upon the Euphrates. As soon as either of the parties struggling there gains the victory it will pour the whole seething mass over other countries in the shape of an invading army (see Jeremiah 25:17-26).

Verse 15

I will call - I am calling. The judgment has begun. God is summoning His hosts to the war.

Families - The various races by which the provinces of the Babylonian empire were populated.

They shall set every one his throne - The chiefs of these various races come as God‘s ministers to hold solemn court, and give sentence in His name (see Jeremiah 25:9). They therefore set each one his throne in the usual place for administering justice, namely, the entering in of the gates, where a large open space was always left in cities for the purpose. Viewed in one light war is the boiling caldron of human passion, upset by hazard, and bringing only ruin in its course; in the other it is God sitting in judgment, with the kings of the earth as His assessors, solemnly pronouncing sentence upon the guilty.

Against all the walls … - Sentence judicially pronounced, the nations come to execute judgment by mounting as enemies upon her walls and storming her cities.

Verse 16

In accordance with the custom of law courts, the crimes of the guilty city are mentioned in the sentence. The charges brought against her are three: first, the desertion of the true God; next, the offering incense to false gods, and, lastly, the making obeisance to, or bowing down 2 Kings 5:18 before images of human workmanship.

Verse 17

Gird up thy loins - A symbol of preparation for earnest exertion, and implying also firm purpose, and some degree of alacrit

Be not dismayed … - literally, "be not dismayed at their faces, lest I dismay thee before their faces." Naturally despondent and self-distrustful, there was yet no feebleness in Jeremiah's character. There was in him a moral superiority of the will, which made him, at any cost to himself, faithfully discharge whatever his conscience told him was his duty.

Verse 18

Metaphorically the walls and fortifications of the city represent the prophet's power of patiently enduring the attacks of his enemies; while the iron pillar, supporting the whole weight of the roof Judges 16:29; 1 Kings 7:21), signifies that no trials or sufferings would crush his steadfast will.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

In the prophecies contained in Jeremiah 2:1-13 contains an appeal from God to all Israel, i. e., the whole twelve tribes, proving to them His past love, and that their desertion of Him was without ground or reason. In the second Jeremiah 2:14-28 the prophet shows that Israel‘s calamities were entirely the result of her apostasy. In the last Jeremiah 2:293:5 we see Judah imitating Samaria‘s sin, and hardening itself against correction.

Verse 1

Moreover - literally, And. Notice the connection between Jeremiah‘s call and first prophecy.

Verse 2

Up to this time Jeremiah had lived at Anathoth, he is now to make Jerusalem the scene of his ministrations.

I remember … - Or, I have remembered for thee the grace “of thy youth, the love of thine espousals,” thy going “after me in the wilderness” in an unsown land. Jeremiah contrasts the present unfriendly relations between Yahweh and His people with their past love. Israel, as often elsewhere, is represented as a young bride Ezekiel 16:8; Hosea 2:20; Joel 1:8. The walking after God in the wilderness was an act of love on Israel‘s part. Israel did leave Egypt at Moses‘ bidding, and at Sinai was solemnly espoused to Yahweh.

Verse 3

Render: “Israel” is an offering consecrated to Yahweh, His firstfruits of increase. The firstfruits were God‘s consecrated property, His portion of the whole harvest. Pagan, i. e., unconsecrated, nations must not meddle with Israel, because it is the nation consecrated to God. If they do, they will bring such guilt upon themselves as those incur who eat the first-fruits Leviticus 22:10, Leviticus 22:16.

Verse 6

Modern researches have shown that this description applies only to limited portions of the route of the Israelites through the Sinaitic peninsula.

Verse 7

A plentiful country - literally, “a land of the Carmel,” a Carmel land (see 1 Kings 18:19, note; Isaiah 29:17, note).

Verse 8

The guilt of this idolatry is ascribed to the four ruling classes:

(a) The accusation brought against the priests is indifference.

(b) "They that handle the law" belonged also to the priestly class Deuteronomy 33:10. Their offence was that "they knew not God." Compare Micah 3:11.

(c) The third class are "the pastors" or shepherds, that is the temporal rulers. Their crime is disobedience.

(d) The fourth class are "the prophets." It was their business to press the moral and spiritual truths of the law home to the hearts of the people: but they drew their inspiration from Baal, the Sun-god. Upon the corruption of the prophetic order at this time, see the Jeremiah 14:13 note.

Things that do not profit - Here idols, which are not merely unreal, but injurious. See 1 Samuel 12:21; Isaiah 44:9.

Verse 9

Plead - The word used by the plaintiff setting forth his accusation in a law-court (see Job 33:13 note).

With you - The present generation, who by joining in Manasseh's apostasy have openly violated Yahweh's covenant. The fathers made the nation what it now is, the children will receive it such as the present generation are now making it to be, and God will judge it according as the collective working of the past, the present, and the future tends to good or to evil.

Verse 10

Kedar signifies the whole East, and the isles of Chittim (Isaiah 23:12 note) the West. If then you traverse all lands from west to east, it will be impossible to find any nation guilty of such apostasy as that committed by Israel.

Verse 11

A nation - A Gentile nation, in strong antithesis to people, the appellation of Israel.

Their glory - Though the worship of the one true God is a nation's greatest glory, yet it is irksome because it puts a constraint on human passions.

That which doth not profit - Israel had exchanged the prosperity which was God‘s reward of obedience for the calamities which resulted from idol-worship.

Verse 12

Be astonished - The King James Version uses this word as equivalent “to be stupefied.”

Desolate - Or, “be dry.” In horror at Israel‘s conduct the heavens shrivel and dry up.

Verse 13

The pagan are guilty of but one sin - idolatry; the covenant-people commit two - they abandon the true God; they serve idols.

Fountain - Not a spring or natural fountain, but a tank or reservoir dug in the ground (see Jeremiah 6:7), and chiefly intended for storing living waters, i. e., those of springs and rivulets. The cistern was used for storing up rain-water only, and therefore the quantity it contained was limited.

Verse 14

It was Israel‘s glory to be Yahweh‘s servant Jeremiah 30:10, and slaves born in the house were more prized than those bought with money as being more faithful Genesis 14:14. Cannot Yahweh guard His own household? How happens it that a member of so powerful a family is spoiled? In the next verse the prophet gives the reason. Israel is a runaway slave, who has deserted the family to which he belongs by right of birth, and thereby brought upon himself trouble and misery.

Verse 15

Upon him - Rather, against him. Israel has run away from his master‘s house, but only to find himself exposed to the beasts of prey in the wilderness.

They made his land waste - The prophet points to the actual results of Israel‘s until the multiplication of wild beasts rendered human life unsafe 2 Kings 17:25, but the Assyrian invasions had reduced Judaea to almost as sad a state.

Burned - Others render, “leveled to the ground.”

Verse 16

Noph, i. e., Napata, a town situated in the extreme south of Egypt. Some take it to be Memphis (see Isaiah 19:13 note).

Tahapanes - Daphne Pelusii, a bordertown toward Palestine.

Have broken the crown of thy head - literally, shall depasture the crown of thy head; i. e., make it bald; baldness was accounted by the Jews a sign of disgrace 2 Kings 2:23, and also a mark of mourning Isaiah 15:2; Isaiah 22:12. The Egyptians in slaying Josiah, and capturing Jerusalem, brought ruin, disgrace, and sorrow upon the Jews.

Verse 17

The way - Either, the journey through the wilderness, or the way of holiness.

Verse 18

Sihor - The Nile. To lean upon Egypt was a violation of the principles of theocracy.

The two rivers are the two empires, and to drink their waters is to adopt their principles and religion. Compare also Isaiah 8:6-7.

Verse 19

Correct thee - Or, "chastise thee." Alliances with foreign powers shall bring trouble and not safety.

Verse 20

Transgress - Rather, as in marg. If the "yoke" and "bands" refer to the slavery in Egypt from which Yahweh freed Israel, the sense is - "For of old time I Yahweh broke thy yoke, I burst thy bands," not that thou mightest be free to do thy own will, but that thou mightest serve me: "and thou saidst, I will not serve."

When … - "For … under every leafy tree thou" layest thyself down as a harlot. The verb indicates the eagerness with which she prostrates herself before the objects of her idolatrous worship.

Verse 21

A noble vine - Properly, a Sorek vine (see Isaiah 5:2), which produced a red wine Proverbs 23:31, and had a lasting reputation Genesis 49:11.

A right seed - literally, "a seed of truth," i. e., true, genuine seed, not mixed with weeds, nor with seed of an inferior quality. Compare Matthew 13:24.

How then art thou turned - Or, "How then" hast thou changed thyself "unto me" (i. e., to my hurt or vexation) "into the degenerate" branches "of a strange vine?" The stock, which was God's planting, was genuine, and of the noblest sort: the wonder was how such a stock could produce shoots of a totally different kind Deuteronomy 32:32.

Verse 22

Nitre - Or, natron, a mineral alkali, found in the Nile valley, where it effloresces upon the rocks and surfaces of the dykes, and in old time was carefully collected, and used to make lye for washing (see Proverbs 25:20).

Sope - A vegetable alkali, now called "potash," because obtained from the ashes of plants. Its combination with oils, etc., to form soap was not known to the Hebrews until long after Jeremiah's time, but they used the lye, formed by passing water through the ashes. Thus then, though Israel use both mineral and vegetable alkalies, the most powerful detergents known, yet will she be unable to wash away the stains of her apostasy.

Thine iniquity is marked - i. e., as a stain.

Verse 23

In their defense of themselves (compare Jeremiah 2:35), the people probably appealed to the maintenance of the daily sacrifice, and the Mosaic ritual: and even more confidently perhaps to Josiah's splendid restoration of the temple, and to the suppression of the open worship of Baal. All such pleas availed little as long as the rites of Moloch were still privately practiced.

Thy way in the valley - i. e., of Hinnom (see 2 Kings 23:10 note). From the time of Ahaz it had been the seat of the worship of Moloch, and the prophet more than once identifies Moloch with Baal. "Way" is put metaphorically for "conduct, doings."

Traversing - Interlacing her ways. The word describes the tangled mazes of the dromedary's course, as she runs here and there in the heat of her passion.

Verse 24

A wild donkey used to the wilderness - The type of an untamed and reckless nature.

Snuffeth up the wind - The wind brings with it the scent of the male. Israel does not wait until temptation comes of itself, but looks out for any and every incentive to idolatry.

Occasion … month - i. e., the pairing season.

Verse 25

God the true husband exhorts Israel not to run barefoot, and with parched throat, like a shameless adulteress, after strangers.

There is no hope - i. e., It is in vain.

Verse 27

"Stone" being feminine in Hebrew is here represented as the mother.

Arise, and save us - Whether it be idolatry or infidelity, it satisfies only in tranquil and prosperous times. No sooner does trouble come, than the deep conviction of the existence of a God, which is the witness for Him in our heart, resumes its authority, and man prays.

Verse 28

A question of bitter irony. Things are made for some use. Now is the time for thy deities to prove themselves real by being useful. When every city has its special deity, surely among so many there might be found one able to help his worshippers.

O Judah - Hereto the argument had been addressed to Israel: suddenly the prophet charges Judah with the habitual practice of idolatry, and points to the conclusion, that as Jerusalem has been guilty of Samaria's sin, it must suffer Samaria's punishment.

Verse 30

Your own sword hath detoured your prophets - An allusion probably to Manasseh 2 Kings 21:16. Death was the usual fate of the true prophet Nehemiah 9:26; Matthew 23:37.

Verse 31

Or, "O generation" that ye are! An exclamation Of indignation at their hardened resistance to God.

A land of darkness - This word is written in Hebrew with two accents, as being a compound, signifying not merely darkness, but the darkness of Yahweh, i. e., very great darkness.

We are lords - Others render it: We rove about, wander about at our will, go where we like.

Verse 32

A bride treasures all her life the girdle, which first indicated that she was a married woman, just as brides now treasure the wedding ring; but Israel, Yahweh's bride Jeremiah 2:2, cherishes no fond memorials of past affection.

Verse 33

Why trimmest thou thy way - literally, "Why makest thou thy way good," a phrase used here of the pains taken by the Jews to learn the idolatries of foreign nations.

The wicked ones … - Or, "therefore thou hast taught" thy ways wickednesses."

Verse 34

I have not found it … - Rather, thou didst not find them breaking into thy house. The meaning is, that these poor innocents had committed no crime: they were not thieves caught in the act, whom the Law permitted men to slay Exodus 22:2, and therefore Israel in killing them was guilty of murder. The one crime here of theft is put for crime generally.

Upon all these - Or, because of all this. Thou killedst the poor innocents, not for any crime, but because of this thy lust for idolatry.

Verse 35

Because I am innocent - Rather, But "I am innocent," or, "I am acquitted." Those blood-stains cannot be upon my skirts, because now, in king Josiah's days, the idolatry of Manasseh has been put away.

Shall turn from me - Or, has turned away "from me."

Plead - Or, enter into judgment.

Verse 36

To change thy way - The rival parties at Jerusalem looked one to Assyria, the other to Egypt, for safety. As one or other for the time prevailed, the nation "changed its way," sending its embassies now eastward to Nineveh, now westward to Memphis.

Thou also … - literally, also of Egypt "shalt thou be ashamed." This was literally fulfilled by the failure of the attempt to raise the siege of Jerusalem Jeremiah 37:5.

Verse 37

From him - From it, from this Egypt, which though fem. as a land, yet as a people may be used as a masc. (compare Jeremiah 46:8). Now that Nineveh is trembling before the armies of Cyaxares and Nabopalassar, thou hastenest to Egypt, hoping to rest upon her strength: but thou shalt retrace thy steps, with thy hands clasped upon thy head, disgraced and discarded.

Confidences - Those in whom thou confidest.

In them - literally, "with respect to them."

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

They say - Or, That is to say. The prophet has completed his survey of Israel‘s conduct, and draws the conclusion that as an adulterous wife could not be taken back by her husband, so Israel has forfeited her part in the covenant with God. Apparently the opening word, which literally means “to say,” only introduces the quotation in the margin.

Yet return again to me - Or, “and thinkest thou to return unto me!” The whole argument is not of mercy, but is the proof that after her repeated adulteries, Israel could not again take her place as wife. To think of returning to God, with the marriage-law unrepealed, was folly.

Verse 2

These words are not the language of consolation to the conscience-stricken, but of vehement expostulation with hardened sinners. They prove, therefore, the truth of the interpretation put upon the preceding verse.

As the Arabian … - The freebooting propensities of the Bedouin had passed in ancient times into a proverb. As eager as the desert-tribes were for plunder, so was Israel for idolatry.

Verse 4

Or, Hast thou Not from this time called “me, My Father, thou art the” husband “of my youth?” i. e., from the time of Josiah‘s reforms in his eighteenth year, in opposition to “of old time” Jeremiah 2:20.

Verse 5

Rather, “Will he, the young husband,” retain, “keep up His anger forever!” These words should be joined to Jeremiah 3:4.

Behold … - Rather, “Behold, thou hast spoken” thus, but thou hast “done evil things” persistently. The King James Version translates as if Judah‘s words and deeds were both evil. Really her words were fair, but her deeds proved them to be false.

And here ends the prophecy, most interesting as showing what was the general nature of Jeremiah‘s exhortations to his countrymen, during the 14 years of Josiah‘s reign. He sets before them God and Israel united by a covenant of marriage, to the conditions of which Yahweh is ever true, while Israel practices with zest every form of idolatry. Therefore, the divine blessing is withheld. It is an honest and manly warning, and the great lesson it teaches us is, that with God nothing avails but a real and heartfelt

repentance followed by a life of holiness and sincere devotion to His service.

Jeremiah 3:6-11. Israel therefore is invited to, return to the marriage-covenant by repentance Jeremiah 3:12-14, in which case she and Judah, accepted upon the like condition, shall become joint members of a spiritual theocracy. Jeremiah 3:15-18. The repentance which God requires must be real Jeremiah 3:194:4.

Verse 6

Backsliding Israel - The original is very strong: Hast thou seen Apostasy? i. e., Israel: as though Israel were the very personificatiom of the denial of God.

She is gone up - Rather, she goes; it is her habitual practice.

Verse 7

Or, "And I said (i. e., within myself), After she has done all these things, she will return to me." But she did not return.

Treacherous - literally, "Falsehood," i. e., false, faithless. The character of the two sisters is plainly marked. Samaria is apostate; she abandons Yahweh's worship altogether. Judah maintains the form only; her secret desires are set upon the orgies of pagan worship.

Verse 8

Rather, "And I saw" that because apostate "Israel" had "committed adultery, I had put her away, and given her" the writing of her divorcement, "yet" false "Judah her sister feared not." … The expression, "For all the causes whereby," is probably the actual formula with which writings of divorcement commenced.

Verse 9

Lightness - Others render as in the margin.

Defiled - Rather, profaned. The land especially consecrated to Yahweh's service was treated by Judah as a common land.

Verse 10

Her treacherous sister Judith - These words are a sort of refrain, thrice Jeremiah 3:7-8, Jeremiah 3:10 repeated before God finally pronounces Judah more culpable than Israel.

Verse 11

Hath justified herself - Judah had had the benefit of the warning given by Israel‘s example. Both abandon Yahweh‘s service for idolatry, but Israel is simply “apostate,” Judah is also false.

The verse is important,

(1) as accounting for the destruction of Jerusalem so soon after the pious reign of Josiah. Manasseh‘s crimes had defiled the land, but it was by rejecting the reforms of Josiah that the people finally profaned it, and sealed their doom:

(2) As showing that it is not by the acts of its government that a nation stands or falls. Ahaz and Manasseh lent the weight of their influence to the cause of idolatry: Hezekiah and Josiah to the cause of truth. But the nation had to determine which should prevail. Excepting a remnant it embraced idolatry, and brought upon itself ruin: in the remnant the nation again revived Jeremiah 24:5, Jeremiah 24:7.

Verse 12

The north - The ten tribes, settled by Salmanezer in the north of Assyria.

I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you - literally, I will not cause my face “to fall upon you:” i. e., “I will not receive you with averted looks.” The “and” before this clause should be omitted, as also before the next clause, “I will not keep … ”

I will not keep - All God‘s promises and threats are conditional upon man‘s conduct.

Verse 13

Acknowledge - literally, “know thy iniquity;” know that thy doings are iniquitous.

Scattered thy ways - Wandered in search of those idolatries which foreign nations practice.

Verse 14

Children … married - The twofold relationship gives a double certainty of acceptance. As children, they were sure of a father‘s love, as a wife they might hope for a revival of past affection from the husband of their youth.

One of a city, and two of a family - The family (in Hebrew) is far larger than a city, as it embraces all the descendants of a common ancestor. Thus, the tribe of Judah was divided into only four or five families. However national the apostasy, it does not involve in its guilt the few who are faithful, and the promises are still their rightful possession.

To Zion - To the true Church. The fulfillment of the promise began with the return to Palestine after the Babylonian exile, but is complete only in Christianity.

Verse 15

Pastors - "Kings, rulers" (compare Jeremiah 2:8). Not military usurpers Hosea 8:4, but true servants of God, as David 1 Samuel 13:14.

Verse 16

In those days - This and the phrase "the latter days," had become under the Messianic teaching of the prophets a regular formula for the time of Christ's coming, when all the nation's hopes would be fulfilled.

The ark was the center of the Mosaic economy, containing within it the two tables' of the Law as the conditions of the covenant and having over it, upon the mercy-seat, the Shechinah as the visible sign of God's presence. But "in those days" the symbol must pass away, because God will then dwell in His people by the gift of the Holy Spirit 1 Corinthians 3:16, and the terms of the covenant will be written on their hearts Jeremiah 31:33.

Neither shall they visit it - Rather, neither shall they miss it; i. e., they will not trouble about it, nor regret its loss.

Neither shall that be done anymore - Rather, "neither shall it (the ark) be made anymore;" it shall not be renewed or repaired, because the tabernacle of God will be one "made without hands" Hebrews 9:11, even the heart of His believing people.

Verse 17

The throne of the Lord - Yahweh's throne shall not be the ark, but Jerusalem, i. e., the Christian Church Revelation 21:2; Galatians 4:26.

To Jerusalem - The Septuagint and Syriac are probably right in omitting this word.

Imagination … - Stubbornness (margin). A word always used in a bad sense, for "obstinacy."

Verse 18

With - To (margin). The prophet has just described the return of the ten tribes Jeremiah 3:14, etc. Israel is represented as the first to repent, and

Judah must go to her, in order that they may come together back to the holy land, divided no longer into Jews and Israelites, but merged into one people.

Out of the land of the north - The objection that the Jews were not carried like the Israelites into the northern provinces of Assyria Jeremiah 3:12, but into Babylonia, misinterprets the whole prophecy, the gist of which is that in case of Israel‘s repentance, Judah must humbly seek her out, and be content henceforward to take the inferior place, as having been the more guilty (see Jeremiah 3:11).

Verse 19

But I - (emphatic). “And I.” The emphasis lies in the abundant goodness of God contrasted with Israel‘s waywardness.

How … ? - Rather, How … ! i. e., How gloriously! With what honor will I place thee among the children!

Goodly … of the hosts … - Rather, “a heritage of the chief beauty of nations.” The general sense is, that Israel “possesses the most beautiful territory of any nation.”

And I said - This clause is not the answer to a difficulty, as in the King James Version, but completes the description of God‘s loving purpose. “I said within myself that I would treat thee as a son, and give thee a glorious inheritance: I also said, that ye would return my love, would call me Father, and be untrue to me no more.”

Verse 20

Surely as - Rather: “Just as.”

Verse 21

Upon the high places - Upon those bare table-lands, which previously had been the scene of Israel‘s idolatries Jeremiah 3:2. The prophet supposes the offer of mercy to Israel if repentant to have been accepted, and describes Israel‘s agony of grief now that she is convinced of her sins.

Weeping and supplications - literally, “the weeping of earliest prayers for mercy.”

For they have … - Rather, because “they hare perverted their way,” literally, made it crooked. It gives the reason of their cry for mercy.

Verse 22

Yahweh‘s answer to their prayer in Jeremiah 3:21 is immediately followed by their acceptance of the offer of divine mercy.

For - Rather, because … This profession of faith gives the reason why they return to Yahweh. The whole description is most graphically

conceived. The people weeping upon the hills: God‘s gracious voice bidding them return: the glad cry of the penitents exclaiming that they come: the profession of faith won from them by the divine love; these form altogether a most touching picture of a national repentance.

Verse 23

Rather, Surely “in vain from the hills” is the revelry of the mountains. The penitents contrast in it the uselessness of idol-worship with the salvation which Yahweh gives to His people.

Verse 24

For … - And. It is the continuation of the thought in Jeremiah 3:23. Idolatry was there described as unprofitable, here as ruinous and hurtful.

Shame - literally, the shame (Bosheth, personified), that is, “Baal.” The names “Bosheth” and “Baal” are constantly interchanged. Compare Judges 6:31-32.

Their flocks and their herds - The temperate and sober enjoyments connected with Yahweh‘s sacrifices led to no excess, whereas in idol-worship the people, after sitting down “to eat and drink, rose up to play,” and wasted both health and substance in licentious revelry.

Their sons … - This probably refers to human sacrifices.

Verse 25

We lie down … - Or, We will lie down: we are ready to throw ourselves upon the ground in bitter humiliation.

Covereth - literally, shall cover us. We will hide our face from others.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

The conclusion of both sides of the prophecy; to Israel, Jeremiah 4:1-2; to Judah, Jeremiah 4:3-4.

Verse 1

Return - The repentance of Israel described in Jeremiah 3:21-25 was a hope, and not a reality. The return, literally, would be their restoration to their land; spiritually, their abandoning their sins.

Jeremiah 4:1-2 should be translated as follows:

If thou wouldst return, O Israel, saith Yahweh.

Unto Me thou shalt return:

And if thou wouldst remove thy abominations from before Me,

And not wander to and fro,

But wouldst swear truly, uprightly; and justly

By the living Yahweh;

Then shall the pagan bless themselves … -

In him - In Yahweh. Two great truths are taught in this verse;

(1) that the Gentiles were to be members of the Church of the Messiah;

(2) that Israel‘s special office was to be God‘s mediator in this great work.

Thus, Jeremiah is in exact accord with the evangelical teaching of Isaiah.

Verse 3

To the men - To each man “of Judah.” They are summoned individually to repentance.

Break up - literally, Fallow for you a fallow ground, i. e., do not sow the seeds of repentance in unfit soil, but just as the farmer prepares the ground, by clearing it of weeds, and exposing it to the sun and air, before entrusting to it the seed, so must you regard repentance as a serious matter, requiring forethought, and anxious labor. To sow in unfallowed ground was practically to sow on land full of thorns.

Verse 4

See the Deuteronomy 10:16 note. Nature, such as it is in itself, unconsecrated to God, is to be removed from our inner selves, that a new and spiritual nature may take its place.

Lest my fury … - God is long-suffering, but unless this change take place, the time of judgment must at length come to all as it came to Jerusalem - "like fire" (compare 1 Corinthians 3:13; Philemon 2:12-13).

Jeremiah 10:25, but broken at the beginning of Jeremiah 7 by a new heading. The subject of them all is the same, namely, the approaching devastation of Judaea by a hostile army in punishment of its persistence in idolatry. The prophecy of Jeremiah 7 was probably written in the first year of Jehoiakim, while as regards the rest they probably extended over a considerable period of time. This group, which we may reasonably believe to have come down to us much as it stood in Jehoiakim's scroll, gives us a general view of the nature of Jeremiah's efforts during that important period, when under Josiah a national reformation was still possible, and the exile might have been averted. The prophecy Jeremiah 7, spoken in the first year of Jehoiakim, when the probation of Judah was virtually over, was the solemn closing of the appeal to the conscience of the people, and a protest, while the new king was still young upon his throne, against that ruinous course upon which he so immediately entered.

Verse 5

Rather, Make proclamation "in Judah, and in Jerusalem" bid them hear, "and say, Blow the trumpet" throughout "the land:" cry aloud "and say etc." The prophecy begins with a loud alarm of war. The verse sets forth well, in its numerous commands, the excitement and confusion of such a time.

Verse 6

The standard - A flag or signal, to which the people were to rally.

d **Retire, stay not -** Rather, gather your goods together: linger not; "for I" (emphatic, Yahweh) am bringing at this very time etc.

Verse 7

Rather, A "lion" … a "destroyer" of nations: a metaphor descriptive of the impending calamity. A lion is just rousing himself from his lair, but no common one. It is destroyer, not of men, but of nations.

Is on his way - literally, "has broken up his encampment." Jeremiah uses a military term strictly referring to the striking of tents in preparation

for the march.

Without an inhabitant - The final stage of destruction, actually reached in the utter depopulation of Judaea consequent upon Gedaliah‘s murder.

Verse 8

Is not turned … - As long as their sins are unrepented of, so long must their punishment continue.

Verse 10

Ah, Lord God! - Alas! my Lord Yahweh: an expression of disapproval on Jeremiah‘s part. Jeremiah had constantly to struggle against the misgivings of his own melancholy nature, but he never let them prevent him from doing his duty. See the introduction of Jeremiah.

Ye shall have peace - These words are generally referred to the false prophets; they rather refer to real prophecies of future blessedness promised to the Jews. Jeremiah could not reconcile the doom he was now commanded to pronounce, either with his previous prophecy, or with what he read in the writings of his predecessors. Time only could solve the difficulty. Upon the struggles of the prophets to understand their own predictions see 1 Peter 1:10-11.

Unto the soul - The sword has reached the life. i. e., has inflicted a mortal wound.

Verse 11

At that time - See Jeremiah 4:7. Though the revelation of the certainty of Judah‘s ruin wrings from Jeremiah a cry of despair, yet it is but for a moment; he immediately returns to the delivery of God‘s message.

A dry wind - literally, A clear wind. The Samum is probably meant, a dry parching east wind blowing from the Arabian desert, before which vegetation withers, and human life becomes intolerable.

Not to fan … - The Syrian farmers make great use of the wind for separating the chaff from the grain: but when the Samum blows labor becomes impossible. It is not for use, but for destruction.

Verse 12

Or, as in the margin; i. e., a wind more full, more impetuous than those winds which serve for fanning and cleansing the grain.

Unto me - Rather, for me: to perform my will.

Verse 13

His troops move on in large masses like dark threatening clouds Joel 2:2.

Woe unto us! for we are spoiled - Jeremiah‘s own cry of grief.

Verse 14

Thy vain thoughts - “Thy” iniquitous “thoughts.” “Aven,” the word used here, is especially applied to the sin of idolatry: thus Bethel is generally called Bethaven by Hosea (Hosea 4:15; Hosea 5:8, …), because instead of being the house of God, El, it was the house of an iniquity, Aven, the golden calf.

Verse 15

Dan - The border-town of Palestine on the north Deuteronomy 34:1.

Mount Ephraim - The northern boundary of Judaea itself. The invading army presses on so rapidly, that scarcely have the news arrived of its appearance at Dan, before fresh messengers announce that it has traversed the whole length of Galilee, and is now defiling through the mountains of Samaria.

Affliction - The same word, aven, occurs in Jeremiah 4:14, and apparently there is a play upon its double meaning: for from a root signifying worthlessness, it is used both for wickedness and for misery. Thus, the “iniquity” of Judah proves also, to be her “affliction,” as being the cause of the ruin inflicted by the enemy.

Verse 16

Proclaim ye to the pagan, “Behold!” Cry aloud concerning “Jerusalem, that watchers” are on their way “from a far country: and” will “give out their voice against the cities of Judah.” The pagan are summoned to witness the chastisement of Jerusalem, that they may take warning thereby. By “watchers” are meant besiegers, who will surround the city with a line of sentinels.

Verse 17

Jeremiah compares the tents of the besiegers on guard round Jerusalem to the booths erected by shepherds or farmers for the protection of their flocks or produce.

Verse 18

Thy wickedness - This siege is thy wickedness, i. e., in its results; or better, this is thy wretchedness, this army and thy approaching ruin is thy misery.

Because - “For.” To feel that one‘s misery is the result of one‘s own doings adds bitterness to the anguish, and makes it reach, penetrate to the heart.

Verse 19

The verse is best translated as a series of ejaculations, in which the people express their grief at the ravages committed by the enemy:

"My bowels! My bowels!" I writhe in pain!

The walls of my heart! "My heart" moans for me!

I cannot keep silence!

For "thou hast heard, O my soul," the trumpet's voice!

"The alarm of war!"

Verse 20

Destruction … - Or, breaking upon breaking Jeremiah 4:6. The news of one breaking, one violent calamity, follows close upon another.

My curtains - The curtains of the tent, put here for the tents themselves. tents were the ordinary habitations of the Israelites.

Verse 21

The standard - See Jeremiah 4:6. The alarm caused by the invasion is graphically described. The people are dispersed over the land following their usual pursuits, when tidings come of the enemy's approach. The only chance of escape is a hasty flight. Flags stream from the hills to mark the safest route, while the blasts of the trumpet quicken the steps of the wavering.

Verses 23-26

In four verses each beginning with "I beheld," the prophet sees in vision the desolate condition of Judaea during the Babylonian captivity.

Jeremiah 4:23

Without form, and void - Desolate and void (see Genesis 1:2 note). The land has returned to a state of chaos (marginal reference note).

And the heavens - And upward to the heavens. The imagery is that of the last day of judgment. To Jeremiah's vision all was as though the day of the Lord had come, and earth returned to the state in which it was before the first creative word (see 2 Peter 3:10).

Jeremiah 4:24

Moved lightly - "Reeled to and fro," from the violence of the earthquake.

Jeremiah 4:26

The fruitful place - The Carmel Jeremiah 2:7, where the population had been most dense, and the labors of the farmer most richly rewarded, has become the wilderness.

At the presence - i. e., because of, at the command of Yahweh, and because of His anger.

Verse 27

Desolate - a waste.

One of the most striking points of prophecy is, that however severe. may be the judgment pronounced against Judah, there is always the reservation, that the ruin shall not be complete Jeremiah 3:14.

Verse 28

For … - Because of this doom upon Judah.

I have purposed it - The Septuagint arrangement restores the parallelism:

For I have spoken, and will not repent,

I have purposed, and will not turn back from it.

Verse 29

The whole city … - Rather, Every city is fleeing. All the inhabitants of the tokens flee to Jerusalem for protection, or seek refuge in the woods and rocks.

The horsemen and bowmen - The cavalry Jeremiah 4:13 and bowmen formed the chief strength of the Assyrian armies.

They shall go - They have gone.

Verse 30

Translate, And thou, O plundered one, what effectest thou, that "thou clothest thyself with" scarlet, that "thou deckest" thyself "with ornaments of gold," that thou enlargest thine eyes with antimony (2 Kings 9:30 note)? "In vain" dost thou beautify thyself; "thy lovers" despise" thee, they" seek "thy life." Jerusalem is represented as a woman who puts on her best attire to gain favor in the eyes of her lovers, but in vain.

Verse 31

For a cry have I heard as of one writhing in vain:

Anguish as of one that bringeth forth her first-born:

The cry of the daughter of Zion.

She gasps for breath: she stretches out her palms:

Woe is me! for my soul faints before the murderers.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

The capture and the destruction of Jerusalem was owing to its utter immorality. Josiah‘s reforms were frustrated by the immorality prevalent among all classes. The prophet sees evil triumphing, but we must not take his words so literally as to conclude that there were no good men then in Jerusalem (compare Jeremiah 4:27; Jeremiah 24:5).

Verse 1

The broad places - The open spaces next the gates, and other places of concourse.

A man - Or, anyone.

That executeth - "That" practiceth.

Truth - uprightness, probity (so in Jeremiah 5:3).

Verse 2

Though they take the most binding form of oath, they do so only as a means of deceiving others.

Verse 3

Upon the truth - God looks to the "faith," the upright purpose of the heart, and without it the nominal fealty of an oath is an abomination.

Verse 4

Therefore - More simply "and."

They are foolish - Or, they act foolishly (see Numbers 12:11), not having that knowledge which would enable them to guide their ways with discretion.

Verse 5

They have known … - Men of education, who read the Scriptures, and learn from them the nature of God‘s judgments.

But these - literally, surely they (compare Jeremiah 5:4).

The yoke - The Mosaic law.

And burst … - They have torn off, torn themselves loose from.

The bonds - The fastenings by which the yoke was fixed upon the necks of the oxen.

Verse 6

Evenings - See the margin. From its habit of skulking about in the twilight the wolf is often called the "evening wolf" Habakkuk 1:8; Zephaniah 3:3, but the word used here means a sandy desert.

Leopard - panther.

Verse 7

Rather, Why, "for what reason" should "I pardon thee?"

When … - Or, "though I bound them to me by oath, yet they committed adultery."

The harlots' houses - The harlot's house, i. e., the temple of an idol; the prophet had also in view (see Jeremiah 5:8) the unchastity which accompanied most forms of nature-worship.

Verse 8

In the morning - Render, they rove about. Some prefer, "(horses) from Mesech."

Verse 10

Her walls - It is Possible that not the city walls, but those of a vineyard are meant. Judaea is God's vineyard Isaiah 5:1-7, and God permits the enemy to enter the vineyard to destroy her.

Battlements - tendrils. The tendrils and branches of Judah's vine are given up to ruin, but not the stock. See Isaiah 6:13 note.

Verse 12

It is not he - i. e., Who speaks by the prophets.

Verse 13

Word - Rather, speaker. Literally, And he who speaketh is not in them, i. e., there is no one who speaketh in them; what the prophets say has no higher authority than themselves.

Thus … - i. e., May the evil which the prophets threaten fall upon their head.

Verse 15

Israel is not put here for the ten tribes, but for the whole house of Jacob, of which Judah was now the representative.

Mighty - "permanent, enduring." The word is the usual epithet of the rocks Numbers 24:21, and of ever-flowing streams Deuteronomy 21:4, Hebrew). It describes therefore a nation, whose empire is firm as a rock, and ever rolling onward like a mighty river. The epithet "ancient" refers simply to time.

Whose laguage thou knowest not - This would render them more pitiless, as they would not understand their cries for mercy.

Verse 16

Their quiver - See Jeremiah 4:29, note.

Verse 17
Or,
It shall eat "thine harvest and thy bread:"

They shall eat "thy sons and thy daughters."

It shall eat thy sheep and thy cattle:

It shall eat "thy vines and thy fig-trees."
They shall impoverish … - Or, It shall batter thy "fortified cities, wherein thou" trustest, with weapons of war. There is probably reference here to an instrument like a battering-ram, with which the Assyrians beat down the walls of their enemies.
Verse 19
The reason why God so chastises His people. As they in a land especially consecrated to Yahweh had served "strange" (i. e., foreign gods, so shall they in a land belonging to others be the slaves of strangers.
Verses 20-31
Against the God
(1) of Creation Jeremiah 5:22, and

(2) of Providence Jeremiah 5:24,

They sin, not merely by apostasy, but by a general immorality extending to all classes Jeremiah 5:25-28. It is in this immorality that their idolatry has its root.
Jeremiah 5:22
The sea is the symbol of restless and indomitable energy, chafing against all resistance, and dashing to pieces the works whereby man endeavors to restrain its fury. Yet God has imposed upon it laws which it must obey, and keeps it in its appointed place, not by barriers of iron but by a belt of sand. Modern science has shown that the resisting power of sand is enormous. A wave which would shatter rocks fails powerless upon sand.
Can they not prevail - The opposite of "thou couldest" Jeremiah 3:5. The sea, the mightiest of God's works, cannot prevail, cannot break God's laws, because He has not endowed it with free-will. Man, physically impotent, can prevail, because, being made in God's image, he is free.

Jeremiah 5:23

The heart, or will of the Jews was first "revolting," literally a will that "drew back" from God, because it disliked His service; and secondly it was "rebellious," a will that actively resisted Him. Compare Deuteronomy 21:18, Deuteronomy 21:20.

Jeremiah 5:24

As God‘s Providence addresses itself chiefly to the thoughtful, Jeremiah says in their heart. By the intelligent study of God‘s dealings men perceive that they are not merely acts of power but also of love.

The appointed weeks - literally, He guardeth, maintaineth, for us the weeks which are the statutes or settled laws "of the harvest." These were the seven weeks from the Passover to Pentecost, and were as important for the ingathering of the crops as the rainy seasons for their nourishment.

Jeremiah 5:25

It was not that the rains did not fall, or that the harvest weeks were less bright; the good was there, but the wickedness of the community blocked up the channels, through which it shou d have reached the people. The lawlessness and injustice of the times kept the mass of the people in poverty.

Jeremiah 5:26

Rather, he spieth about like the crouching down of fowlers; they have set the fatal snare; "they catch men."

Trap - literally, "The destroyer;" it was probably a gin, which strangled the birds caught in it.

Jeremiah 5:27

Deceit - The wealth gained by deceit and fraud.

Jeremiah 5:28

Fatness is admired in the East as a sign of wealth.

They shine - This word is used of the sleekness of the skin, soft and smooth as ivory.

They overpass the deeds of the wicked - literally, "They have overpassed words of wickedness," i. e., they go to excess in wickedness.

Yet they prosper - Or, that they (the orphans) may prosper, enjoy their rights.

Jeremiah 5:30

Rather, A terrible "and horrible thing" has happened "in the land."

Jeremiah 5:31

Bear rule by their means - Rather, “The priests” rule at their hands, i. e., govern according to their false prophecies, guidance, and directions.

My people love to have it so - False teaching lightens the yoke of God‘s Law, and removes His fear from the conscience: and with this, man is ready to be content.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Introduction

Jeremiah proceeds to unveil the judgment impending upon Jerusalem, and his description of it is divided into five parts, each beginning with the words "Thus saith Jehovah."

Verse 1

Jeremiah addresses the men of Benjamin, either as being his own tribesmen, or as a name appropriate to the people of Jerusalem, which also was situate in the tribe of Benjamin.

Gather yourselves to flee - Gather your goods together to remove them to a place of safety.

Blow the trumpet in Tekoa - The name of Tekoa is almost identical with the verb "to blow": but it was not chosen merely for the alliteration, but because it was the last town in Judaea (about 11 miles south of Jerusalem), upon the very border of the desert, where the fugitives would halt.

A sign - Rather, a signal.

Beth-haccerem - Or, the "Vineyard-House," which was situated halfway between Jerusalem and Tekoa.

Appeareth - "Is bending over;" is bending forward in eagerness to seize its prey.

Verse 2

The whole verse is difficult, but should probably be translated; "to a pasturage, yea a luxuriant pasturage, have I likened (or, have reduced to silence, i. e., destroyed) the daughter of Zion."

Verse 3

To it shall come "shepherds with their flocks:"

They have pitched upon it "their tents round about:"

They have pastured each his hand, "i. e., side."

The pasture is so abundant that each feeds his flock, i. e., plunders Jerusalem, at the side of his own tent.

Verse 4

Prepare ye war - Rather, Sanctify ye war against her. War in ancient times was never undertaken without religions solemnities (see Deuteronomy 20:2 note). For some of these compare Ezekiel 21:21-23.

At noon - The mid-day heat is so great in the East as to be usually passed under shelter 2 Samuel 4:5; Song of Song of Solomon 1:7 . The morning-march of an army was made fasting, and was usually over by eight or nine. But so great is the impatience of the Chaldeans for the assault that they cry, "we will make the assault at noon!"

Woe unto us! - Or,

Alas for us! "for the day" has turned

For the evening shadows are lengthening!

Verse 5

Up! and we will make the assault "by night!"

And destroy "her palaces."

The generals delay the assault until the next morning. The soldiers consider themselves aggrieved at this, and clamour for a night attack.

Verse 6

Hew ye down trees - Rather, her trees: for the simple purpose of clearing the approaches.

Cast a mount - literally, pour: the earth was emptied out of the baskets, in which it was carried to the required spot upon the backs of laborers.

Wholly - Or,

"She "is the city" that is visited:

"Wholly oppression" is "in the midst of her!"

She is visited, - i. e., punished; she is ripe for punishment.

Verse 7

As a fountain casteth out - Better, As a cistern "cooleth."

Before me … - Before My face continually there is disease and wounding: Disease as the result of poverty and want: wounding, or, the commission of deeds of actual violence.

Verse 8

Be thou instructed - Be thou chastised: learn the lesson which chastisement is intended to teach thee.

Lest my soul - Lest I Myself - not "depart from thee," God does not willingly leave His people, but - "be torn from thee."

Verse 9

They … - Each word indicates the completeness of Judah's ruin.

Turn back thine hand - Addressed perhaps to Nebuchadnezzar as God's servant Jeremiah 25:9. He is required to go over the vine once again, that no grapes may escape.

Into the baskets - Better, "upon the tendrils." While the Jews carried captive to Babylon escaped, misery gleaned the rest again and again.

Verse 10

Give warning - Rather testify.

Reproach - They make the Word of God the object of their ridicule.

Verse 11

Or, But I am filled with "the fury of Yahweh: I am weary with holding" it "in." Pour it out "upon the children" in the street, and upon the company of youths "together;" for both man and "wife shall be taken;" the older and he whose days are full. With emphatic abruptness Jeremiah bids himself give full utterance to God's message. And the message is to reach all. Five stages of human life are successively marked out.

Verse 12

Turned - Violently transferred. Houses, fields, wives, all they most valued, and most jealously kept to themselves - are gone.

Verse 13

Given to covetousness - literally, everyone has gained gains. The temper of mind which gains the world is not that which gains heaven.

Falsely - Rather, "fraudulently."

Verse 14

Healed - Rather, "tried to heal."

Of the daughter - These words are omitted by a majority of manuscripts, but found in most of the versions.

Slightly - literally, "according to," i. e., as if it were, a "trifle: making nothing" of it. This cry of "peace" was doubtless based upon Josiah's reforms.

Verse 15

They are brought to shame because

They have “committed abomination:”

Shame nevertheless they feel not;

To blush nevertheless they know not;

“Therefore they shall fall among” the falling;

“At the time” when “I visit them, they shall” stumble,

“Saith Yahweh.”

The fact is expressed that their conduct was a disgrace to them, though they did not feel it as such. “Abomination” has its usual meaning of idolatry Jeremiah 4:1.

Verse 16

The sense is: God‘s prophet has declared that a great national calamity is at hand. “Make inquiries; stand in the ways; ask the passers by. Your country was once prosperous and blessed. Try to learn what were the paths trodden in those days which led your ancestors to happiness. Choose them, and walk earnestly therein, and find thereby rest for your souls.” The Christian fathers often contrast Christ the one goodway with the old tracks, many in number and narrow to walk in, which are the Law and the prophets.

Verse 17

Watchmen - The prophets Isaiah 52:8.

The second of the trumpet - This was the signal for flight Jeremiah 6:1; Amos 3:6. Similarly the prophet‘s warning was to move men to escape from God‘s judgments.

Verse 18

God summons three witnesses to hear His sentence.

(1) the Gentiles.

(2) all mankind, Jews and Gentiles.

(3) nature (see Jeremiah 6:19).

What is among them - Rather, "what happens" in them; i. e., "Know what great things I will do to them."

Verse 19

The fathers understood this to be the decree rejecting the Jews from being the Church.

Verse 20

The sweet cane - The same as the scented cane of Exodus 30:23 (see the note).

Your burnt offerings - The rejection of ritual observances is proclaimed by the two prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, who chiefly assisted the two pious kings, Hezekiah and Josiah, in restoring the temple-service. God rejects not the ceremonial service, but the substitution of it for personal holiness and morality. Compare 1 Samuel 15:22; Isaiah 1:11; Micah 6:6-8.

Verse 21

"Behold," I give unto "this people" causes of stumbling,
And they shall stumble against them:

Fathers and sons together,

"The neighbor and his friend shall perish."

This is the natural consequence of their conduct. Their service of Yahweh was a systematic hypocrisy: how then could they walk uprightly with their fellow-men? When God lays stumblingblocks in men's way, it is by the general action of His moral law James 1:13-14, by which willful sin in one point reacts upon the whole moral nature James 2:10.

Verse 22

Raised - Or, awakened, to undertake distant expeditions.

The sides of the earth - Or ends, the most distant regions (see Jeremiah 25:32).

Verse 23

Spear - Properly, a javelin for hurling at the enemy (see 1 Samuel 17:6 note): an ordinary weapon of the Babylonians.

Cruel - ruthless, inhuman. In the Assyrian monuments warriors put the vanquished to death; rows of impaled victims hang round the walls of the besieged towns; and men collect in heaps hands cut from the vanquished.

Horses, set in array - A full stop should be put after horses. It - the whole army, and not the cavalry only - is "set in array."

As men for war against thee - Rather, as a warrior for battle "against thee."

Verse 24

The effect upon the Jewish people of the news of Nebuchadnezzars approach.

Wax feeble - Are relaxed. It is the opposite of what is said in Jeremiah 6:23 of the enemy, "They lay hold etc." Terror makes the hands of the Jews hold their weapons with nerveless grasp.

Verse 25

For the sword of the enemy - literally, "for to the enemy a sword; i. e., for the enemy is armed," he has a commission from God to execute judgment. See Jeremiah 12:12; Isaiah 10:5, and Psalm 17:13 note.

Fear is on every side - Magor-Missabib, Jeremiah's watchword (compare Jeremiah 20:3, Jeremiah 20:10). The "and" before it should be omitted.

Verse 26

Wallow thyself in ashes - Violent distress is accustomed to find relief in eccentric actions, and thus the wallowing in ashes shows that Jerusalem's grief is unbearable.

The spoiler - Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 27

Render it:

I have set thee among My people as a prover of ore,

And thou shalt know and try their way.

They are all of them rebels of rebels (i. e., utter rebels):

Slander-walkers, were copper and iron,

Corrupters all of them.

The bellows glow: from their fire lead only!

In vain hath the smelter smelted,

And the wicked are not separated.

Refuse-silver have men called them:

For Yahweh hath refused them.

The intermixture throughout of moral words and metallurgical terms is remarkable.

Verse 29

The bellows are burned - Worn out by continual blowing. The prophet has exhausted all his efforts. His heart, consumed by the heat of divine inspiration, can labor no more. Others translate "The bellows snort," i. e., blow furiously. More probably, "The bellows glow" with the strong heat of the fire.

Plucked away - Separated. The smelter‘s object is to separate the metal from the dross.

Verse 30

Reprobate - See the margin; not really silver, but the dross.

The Lord hath rejected them - This then is the end. The smelter is God‘s prophet: the bellows the breath of inspiration: the flux his earnestness in preaching. But in vain does the fervour of prophecy essay to melt the hearts of the people. They are so utterly corrupt, that no particle even of pure metal can be found in them. All the refiner‘s art is in vain. They have rejected all God‘s gifts and motives for their repentance, and therefore Yahweh has rejected them as an alloy too utterly adulterate to repay the refiner‘s toil.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1-2

In Jeremiah 10:1-2. The temple had several entrances 2 Chronicles 4:9; and the gate or door here mentioned is probably that of the inner court, where Baruch read Jeremiah‘s scroll Jeremiah 36:10. The prophet stood in the doorway, and addressed the people assembled in the outer court.

All ye of Judah - Better, literally all Judah (compare Jeremiah 26:2).

Verse 3

If the people repented, instead of being led into captivity, God would maintain their national existence. It is a promise of the continuance of an old blessing.

Verse 4

The temple of the Lord - Thrice repeated, to emphasize the rejection of the cry ever upon the lips of the false prophets. In their view the maintenance of the temple-service was a charm sufficient to avert all evil.

These - The buildings of the temple, to which Jeremiah is supposed to point. The Jews put their trust in the material buildings.

Verses 5-7

A summary of the conditions indispensable on man‘s part, before he can plead the terms of the covenant in his favor.

Jeremiah 7:6

In this place - i. e., in Jerusalem. The prophet refers to innocent blood shed there judicially. Of one such judicial murder Jehoiakim had already been guilty Jeremiah 26:23.

Jeremiah 7:7

Why then do not the Jews still possess a land thus eternally given them? Because God never bestows anything unconditionally. The land was bestowed upon them by virtue of a covenant Genesis 17:7; the Jews had broken the conditions of this covenant Jeremiah 7:5-6, and the gift reverted to the original donor.

Verse 10

We are delivered - Jeremiah accuses them of trusting in the ceremonial of the temple instead of leading holy lives. “You break,” he says, “the Ten Commandments, and then you go to the Temple; and when the service is over you say, We are delivered. We have atoned for our past actions, and may start afresh with easy minds upon a new course of wickedness.”

Verse 11

Robbers - literally, tearers, those who rob with violence. The temple was the place which sheltered them. It had been consecrated to God. Now that it harbors miscreants, must it not as inevitably be destroyed as a den of robbers would be by any righteous ruler?

Verse 12

Go ye unto my place in Shiloh - This argument roused the indignation of the people Jeremiah 26:8-9, Jeremiah 26:11. The ark, Jeremiah shows, had not always been at Jerusalem. The place first chosen, as the center of the nation‘s worship, was Shiloh, a town to the north of Bethel, situated in the powerful tribe of Ephraim (Joshua 18:1 note). The ruin of Shiloh is ascribed Psalm 78:58-64 to the idolatry which prevailed in Israel after the death of Joshua; a similar ruin due to similar causes should fall on Jerusalem Jeremiah 7:14. The site of Shiloh is identified with Seilun, the ruins of which are so insignificant as to bear out Jerome‘s remark, “At Silo, where once was the tabernacle and ark of the Lord, there can scarcely be pointed out the foundation of an altar.”

At the first - In the first stage, the first period of the existence of the Jewish commonwealth, Shiloh was to the Judges what Jerusalem subsequently was to the kings; and as the fall of Shiloh through the wickedness of Eli‘s sons marked the period when the government by Judges was to pass away, and the second stage begin; so the power of the kings perished at the fall of Jerusalem, and left the way clear for the third stage of Jewish polity, government by the scribes.

Verse 13

Rising up early and speaking - A proverbial expression for “speaking zealously and earnestly.” It is used only by Jeremiah.

Verse 15

The whole seed of Ephraim - i. e., the whole of the nine northern tribes. Their casting out was a plain proof that the possession of the symbols of God‘s presence does not secure a Church or nation from rejection, if unworthy of its privileges.

Verse 16

They had reached that stage in which men sin without any sense of guilt (see 1 John 5:16).

Neither make intercession to me - In Jeremiah 14:7-9 we have an intercessory prayer offered by Jeremiah, but not heard. The intercession of

Moses prevailed with God Numbers 11:2; Numbers 14:13-20; Numbers 16:22, because the progress of the people then wins upward; the progress now was from bad to worse, and therefore in Jeremiah 15:1 we read that the intercession even of Moses and Samuel (see 1 Samuel 12:23) would profit nothing.

Verse 17

The proof of the hopeless immorality of the people is this, that they worship pagan deities

(1) generally in the cities of Judah, and not in the capital only; and

(2) publicly in the streets of Jerusalem. Such public idolatry could have been practiced only in the reign of a king like Jehoiakim.

Verse 18

Children … fathers … women - All members of the family take part in this idolatry.

Cakes - Probably very similar to those offered at Athens to Artemis.

To the queen of heaven - A Persian and Assyrian deity, who was supposed to symbolize a quality possessed by moonlight of giving to nature its receptive power, as the sun represented its quickening power. The moon thus became generally the symbol of female productiveness, and was worshipped as such at Babylon. Disgraceful usages to which every woman was obliged once to submit formed part of her worship.

Verse 19

Do they not provoke … - literally, Is it not themselves ("that they provoke") to the shame of their faces?

Verse 20

Upon man, and upon beast - All creation in some mysterious way shares in man's fall and restoration Romans 8:19-22.

Verse 21

The meaning is, Increase your sacrifices as you will. Acid burnt-offering to peace-offerings. All is in vain as long as you neglect the indispensable requirements of obedience and moral purity. Eat flesh is equivalent to sacrifice. The flesh of animals offered in sacrifice was usually eaten by the offerers, and this meal was regarded as a symbol of reconciliation. God and man partook of the same victim, and so were made friends. This passage Jeremiah 7:21-28 is the Haphtarah (lesson) from the prophets, after the

Parashah, Leviticus 68, or Lesson from the Law. The selection of such a Haphtarah shows that the Jews thoroughly understood that their sacrifices were not the end of the Law, but a means for spiritual instruction.

Verse 23

Obey … - These words are not found verbatim in the Pentateuch, but are a sum mary of its principles. Sacrifice is never the final cause of the covenant, but always obedience (Exodus 19:5-6; Leviticus 11:45. Compare Amos 5:25 (taken in conjunction with Joshua 5:2-7) proves that the ceremonial law was not observed during the 40 years‘ wandering in the wilderness. A thing so long in abeyance in the very time of its founder, could not be of primary importance.

sa40

Verse 24

Imagination - Better, as in the margin.

And went backward - literally, as in the margin; i. e., they turned their back upon Me to follow their own devices.

Verse 27

Rather, Though thou … yet etc.

Verse 28

A nation - The “nation.” Israel holds so unique a position among all nations that for it to disobey God is marvelous.

Truth … - Fidelity to God. Though they have the name of Yahweh often upon their lips and swear by Him Jeremiah 5:2, yet it is only profession without practice.

Verses 29-33

Jeremiah summons the people to lament over the miserable consequences of their rejection of God. In the valley of Hinnom, where lately they offered their innocents, they shall themselves fall before the enemy in such multitudes that burial shall be impossible, and the beasts of the field unmolested shall prey upon their remains.

Jeremiah 7:29

The daughter of Zion, defiled by the presence of enemies in her sanctuary, and rejected of God, must shear off the diadem of her hair, the symbol of her consecration to God, just as the Nazarite, when defiled by contact with a corpse, was to shave his crowned head.

Take up a lamentation … - Or, lift up a “lamentation on the bare hill-sides” Jeremiah 3:2.

Jeremiah 7:30

They have set their abominations … - Probably a reference to the reign of the fanatic Manasseh, in whose time the worship of Astarte and of the heavenly bodies was the established religion of the land 2 Kings 21:3-5, and even the temple was used for idolatrous services. The people had never heartily accepted Josiah‘s reformation.

Jeremiah 7:31

The high places - Here, probably, not natural hills, but artificial mounts, on which the altars were erected.

Tophet (marginal reference note) is not here a proper name; as applied to Baal-worship the term is not an ordinary one, but almost unique to Jeremiah. Comparing this verse with Jeremiah 19:5; Jeremiah 32:35, it will be found that Baal is in those passages substituted for Tophet. Just as it is the practice of the prophets to substitute “Bosheth, shame,” for Baal (see Jeremiah 3:24), so here Jeremiah uses “Tophet, an object of abhorrence” (compare Job 17:6 note), in just the same way.

Valley of the son of Hinnom - See Joshua 15:8 note.

To burn … - The children were not burned alive, but slain first Ezekiel 16:21.

Jeremiah 7:32

The valley of slaughter - Where they killed their helpless children, there shall they be slaughtered helplessly by their enemies.

Till there be no place - Rather, for want of room elsewhere.

Verse 34

Silence and desolation are to settle upon the whole land.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

Not the living only but the dead shall be exposed to the ruthless violence of the enemy, who will ransack the graves of the wealthier classes.

Verse 2

Loved … served … walked … sought … worshipped - There is great force in the piled-up verbs by which their worship of the heavenly bodies is described. The prophet beginning with the heart‘s “love” describes that worship) in the various stages of its development, and then contrasts its fulness with the miserable reward which ensues.

Verse 3

This evil family - The whole Jewish race.

Which remain - The words are omitted by the Septuagint and Syriac versions.

Verse 4

The prophet here resumes from Jeremiah 7:28 the main subject of his prophecy. He again invites the Jews to repentance.

Shall they fall? - The argument is that when men fall, they do not lie upon the ground, but endeavor to get up again: and when a man loses his way, he does not persist in going on, but turns round, and retraces his steps. Israel then will be only following the dictates of comnon sense in desisting from that which she now knows to be her ruin.

Verse 5

When men act as in Jeremiah 8:4, why is God‘s own people alone an exception?

Slidden back … backsliding - The same words as “turn” and “return” in Jeremiah 8:4. They should be rendered, “Why doth this people of Jerusalem turn away with a perpetual turning?”

Deceit - i. e., idolatry; because men worship in it that which is false, and it is false to the worshippers.

Refuse - From a feeling of dislike.

Verse 6

I hearkened and heard - God, before passing sentence, carefully listens to the words of the people. Compare Genesis 11:5, where the divine judgment is preceded by the Almighty going down to see the tower.

Not aright - Or, "not-right;" which in the Hebrew idiom means that which is utterly wrong.

No man repented - The original phrase is very striking: No "man had pity upon his own wickedness." If men understood the true nature of sin, the sinner would repent out of very pity upon himself.

As the horse rusheth - literally, "overfloweth." It is a double metaphor; first, the persistence of the people in sin is compared to the fury which at the sound of the trumpet seizes upon the war-horse; and then its rush into the battle is likened to the overflowing of a torrent, which nothing can stop in its destructive course.

Verse 7

Jeremiah appeals to the obedience which migratory birds render to the law of their natures. The "stork" arrives in Palestine about March 21, and after a six weeks' halt departs for the north of Europe. It takes its flight by day, at a vast height in the air ("in the heaven"). The appearance of the "turtle-dove" is one of the pleasant signs of the approach of spring.

The crane and the swallow - Rather, "the swift and the crane."

Verse 8

The law of the Lord - The "Torah," or written law, the possession of which made the priests and prophets so boastfully exclaim, "We are wise."

Lo, certainly … - Rather, Verily, lo! the lying pen "of the scribes" hath made it - the Law - into a lie. The mention of "scribes" in this place is a crucial point in the argument whether or not the Pentateuch or Torah is the old law-book of the Jews, or a fabrication which gradually grew up, but was not received as authoritative until after the return from the captivity. It is not until the time of Josiah 2 Chronicles 34:13 that "scribes" are mentioned except as political officers; here, however, they are students of the Torah. The Torah must have existed in writing before there could have been an order of men whose special business it was to study it; and therefore to explain this verse by saying that perhaps the scribes were writers of false prophecies written in imitation of the true, is to lose the whole gist of the passage. What the scribes turned into a lie was that Law of which they had just boasted that they were the possessors. Moreover, the scribes undeniably became possessed of preponderating influence during the exile: and on the return from Babylon were powerful enough to prevent the restoration of the kingly office. That there should be along with the priests and Levites men who devoted themselves to the study of the written Law, and who in the

time of Josiah had acquired such influence as to be recognized as a distinct class - is just what we should expect from the rapid progress of learning, which began with Elisha‘s active management of the schools of the prophets, and culminated in the days of Hezekiah. Jeremiah‘s whole argument depends upon the fact that there were in his days men who claimed to be “wise” or “learned” men because of their study of the Pentateuch, and is entirely inconsistent with the assumptions that Jeremiah wrote the book of Deuteronomy, and that Ezra wrote parts of Exodus and the whole of Leviticus.

Verse 9

They have rejected the word of the Lord - It became in the hands of the Soferim or scribes a mere code of ceremonial observance. Compare Mark 7:13.

Verses 10-12

These verses are almost identical with Jeremiah 6:12-15.

Jeremiah 8:10

To them that shall inherit them - Rather, “to those that shall take possession of them, i. e., “to conquerors who shall take them by force.

Verse 13

Or, “I will gather and sweep them away, saith Jehovah: there are no grapes on the vine, and no figs on the fig-tree, and the leaf is dry: therefore will I appoint those that shall pass over them.” Judah is a vine which bears no fruit: a tree which makes even no profession of life, for her leaf is dry. Many explain the last words of an army sweeping over the land like a flood.

Verse 14

The people rouse one another to exertion. “Why,” they ask, “do we remain here to be overwhelmed?” They are ready now to follow the command given (see the marginal reference), but with the conviction that all hope is over.

Let us be silent there - Rather, let us perish there, literally “be put to silence.”

Water of gall - i. e., poison. The word rendered “gall” was probably the belladonna, or night-shade, to the “berries” of which the grapes of Israel were compared.

Verse 15

Health … trouble - Or, “rest … terror.”

Verse 16

Dan - i. e. the northern boundary of the land.

His strong ones - i. e., "his war-horses."

Verse 17

I will send - Or, am sending. No prophet changes his metaphors so suddenly as Jeremiah. The invading army is now compared to snakes, whom no charming can soothe, and whose bite is fatal. Compare Numbers 21:5-6.

Cockatrices - "Vipers." See Isaiah 11:8 note.

Verse 18

Rather, "O my comfort in sorrow: my heart faints for me." The word translated "comfort" is by some supposed to be corrupt. With these mournful ejaculations a new strophe begins, ending with Jeremiah 9:1, in which the prophet mourns over the miserable fate of his countrymen, among whom he had been earnestly laboring, but all in vain.

Verse 19

Or, "Behold the voice of the cry for help of the daughter of my people from a distant land: Is not Yahweh in Zion? Is not her king there? Why have they provoked Me to anger with their carved images, with foreign vanities?" Their complaint, "Is there no Jehovah in Zion?" is met by God demanding of them the reason why instead of worshipping Him they have set up idols.

Verse 20

The summer - Rather, the fruit-gathering, which follows the grain-harvest. The grain has failed; the fruit-gathering has also proved unproductive; so despair seized the people when they saw opportunities for their deliverance again and again pass by, until God seemed utterly to have forgotten them.

Verse 21

For the hurt … hurt - literally, "Because of the breaking … broken." These are the words of the prophet, whose heart is crushed by the cry of his countrymen.

I am black - Or, I go mourning.

Verse 22

No physician there - i. e., in Gilead. Balm used to grow in Israel for the healing of the nations. Her priests and prophets were the physicians. Has Israel then no balm for herself? Is there no physician in her who can bind up

her wound? Gilead was to Israel what Israel spiritually was to the whole world.

Why then is not the health … recovered? - Or, "why then has no bandage," or plaster of balsam, "been laid upon my people?"

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

This verse is joined in the Hebrew to the preceding chapter. But any break at all here interrupts the meaning.

A fountain - Rather, "a reservoir," in which tears had been stored up, so that the prophet might weep abundantly.

Verses 2-9

From their punishment the prophet now turns to their sins.

Jeremiah 9:2

The prophet utters the wish that he might be spared his daily striving, and in some lone wilderness give way to his sorrow, without restraint.

A lodging place - It was usual to build in the desert, either by private charity or at the public expense, caravanserais, to receive travelers for a single night, who had however to bring their own supplies with them.

An assembly - Or, a gang.

Treacherous - Faithless toward one another.

Jeremiah 9:3

Rather, "And they bend their tongue to be their bow of lies, i. e." just as men before a battle get their bows ready, so they of set purpose make ready to do mischief, only their arrows are lying words: "neither do they rule faithfully in the land, i. e." Judaea.

Jeremiah 9:4

In a state of such utter lawlessness, the bonds of mutual confidence are relaxed, and suspicion takes its place.

Utterly supplant - An allusion to the name of Jacob Genesis 27:36. It might be rendered, "every brother is a thorough Jacob."

Will walk with slanders - Or, slandereth.

Jeremiah 9:6

A continuation of the warning given in Jeremiah 9:4. "Trust no one: for thou dwellest surrounded by deceit on every side." Their rejection of God is the result of their want of honesty in their dealings with one another 1 John 4:20.

Jeremiah 9:7

I will melt them, and try them - The punishment is corrective rather than retributive. The terms used are those of the refiner of metals, the first being the smelting to separate the pure metal from the ore; the second the

testing to see whether the metal is pure, or still mixed with alloy. God will put the nation into the crucible of tribulation, that whatever is evil being consumed in the fire, all there is in them of good may be purified.

For how shall I do … - Rather, "for how" else could I act with reference to the "daughter of my people?"

Jeremiah 9:8

An arrow shot out - Rather, "a murderous arrow."

In heart he layeth his wait - Rather, "inwardly he layeth his ambush."

Verses 10-22

The punishment described in general terms in the preceding three verses is now detailed at great length.

Jeremiah 9:10

The habitations i. e - the temporary encampments of the shepherds (see Jeremiah 6:3).

So that none can … - Or, "They are parched up, with no man to pass through them; neither do they hear the voice of cattle; from the birds of the heaven even to the beasts they "are fled, they are gone."

Jeremiah 9:11

Dragons - Rather, jackals.

Jeremiah 9:12

For what the land perisheth … - This is the question proposed for consideration. The prophet calls upon the wise man to explain his question; that question being, Wherefore did the land perish? He follows it by the assertion of a fact: "It is parched like the wilderness with no man to pass through."

Jeremiah 9:13

The cause of the chastisement about to fall upon Jerusalem, was their desertion of the divine Law.

Jeremiah 9:14

Imagination - Or, as in the margin.

Which their fathers taught them - It was not the sin of one generation that brought upon them chastisement: it was a sin, which had been handed down from father to son.

Jeremiah 9:15

I will feed them … - Rather, I am feeding them. The present participle used here, followed by three verbs in the future, shows that the judgment has beam, of which the successive stages are given in the next clause.

Wormwood - See Deuteronomy 29:18, note, and for "water of gall," Jeremiah 8:14, note.

Jeremiah 9:16

This verse is taken from Leviticus 26:33. The fulfillment of what had been so long before appointed as the penalty for the violation of Yahweh's covenant is one of the most remarkable proofs that prophecy was something more than human foresight.

Till I have consumed them - See Jeremiah 4:27 note. How is this "consuming" consistent with the promise to the contrary there given? Because it is limited by the terms of Jeremiah 9:7. Previously to Nebuchadnezzars destruction of Jerusalem God removed into safety those in whom the nation should revive.

Jeremiah 9:17

The mourning women - Hired to attend at funerals, and by their skilled wailings aid the real mourners in giving vent to their grief. Hence, they are called "cunning," literally "wise" women, wisdom being constantly used in Scripture for anything in which people are trained.

Jeremiah 9:18

Take up a wailing for us - i. e., for the nation once God's chosen people, but long spiritually dead.

Jeremiah 9:19

Forsaken - Or, left: forced to abandon the land.

Because our dwellings … - Rather, "because they have east down our dwellings." The whole verse is a description of their sufferings. See 2 Kings 25:1-12.

Jeremiah 9:20

The command is addressed to the women because it was more especially their part to express the general feelings of the nation. See 1 Samuel 18:6; 2 Samuel 1:24. The women utter now the death-wail over the perishing nation. They are to teach their daughters and neighbors the "lamentation, i. e., dirge," because the harvest of death would be so large that the number of trained women would not suffice.

Jeremiah 9:21

Death is come up … - i. e., death steals silently like a thief upon his victims, and makes such havoc that there are no children left to go "without," nor young men to frequent the open spaces in the city.

Jeremiah 9:22

The “handful” means the little bundle of grain which the reaper gathers on his arm with three or four strokes of his sickle, and then lays down. Behind the reaper came one whose business it was to gather several of these bundles, and bind them into a sheaf. Thus, death strews the ground with corpses as thickly as these handfuls lie upon the reaped land, but the corpses lie there unheeded.

Verse 23

To the end of Jeremiah 10 the prophet urges upon the people the practical conclusion to be drawn from God‘s righteous dealings with them. The three things on which men most pride themselves are shown in this verse to have proved vain.

Verse 24

This is the prophet‘s remedy for the healing of the nation. It is the true understanding and knowledge of God, of which the first means the spiritual enlightenment of the mind 1 Corinthians 2:13-14, the other the training of the heart unto obedience John 8:31-32. This knowledge of God is further said to find in Him three chief attributes,

(1) “lovingkindness,” i. e., readiness to show grace and mercy;

(2) “judgment,” a belief in which is declared in Hebrews 11:6 to be essential to faith;

(3) “righteousness,” which is essential to religion absolutely.

Unless men believe that God‘s dealings with them in life and death are right and just, they can neither love nor reverence him.

Verse 25

All them which are circumcised … - Rather, “all circumcised in uncircumcision,” i. e., all who though outwardly circumcised have no corresponding inward purity.

Verse 26

All that are in the utmost corners - Really, all who have the corners of their hair shorn. The people meant are those Arabs who cut the hair close upon the forehead and temples, but let it grow long behind. See Leviticus 19:27.

For all these nations are uncircumcised - Or, “for all the pagan are uncircumcised.” circumcision probably prevailed partially in the pagan mysteries as a sign of special sanctity, but to the Jews alone it represented their covenant-relation to God.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 2

Signs of heaven - Extraordinary appearances, such as eclipses, comets, and the like, which seemed to the pagan to portend national calamities. To attribute importance to them is to walk in pagan ways.

Verse 3

The customs - Better, as the marg, "the ordinances," established institutions, "of the peoples, i. e." pagan nations.

Verse 4

They deck it - It was covered with plates of gold and silver, and then fastened with nails in its place, that it might not "more, i. e." tumble down.

The agreement in this and the following verses with the argument in Jeremiah 9:23-24) their true glory is their God, not an idol of wood, but the King of nations. Then comes the sad feeling that they have rejected God and chosen idols Jeremiah 10:17-18; then the nation's deep grief Jeremiah 10:19-22 and earnest prayer Jeremiah 10:23-25. It is quite possible that only portions of the concluding part of Jeremiah's templesermon were embodied in Baruch's scroll, and that had the whole been preserved, we should have found the thoughts as orderly in development as those in Jeremiah 79.

Verse 5

They are upright … - Rather, "They are like a palm tree of turned work, i. e." like one of those stiff inelegant pillars, something like a palm tree, which may be seen in oriental architecture. Some translate thus: "They are like pillar's in a garden of cucumbers, i. e." like the blocks set up to frighten away the birds; but none of the ancient versions support this rendering.

Verse 6

For as much as - Or, "No one is like unto thee, O Jehovah." In Jeremiah 10:6-11, the prophet contrasts God's greatness with the impotence of idols.

Verse 7

O King of nations - i. e., pagan nations. Yahweh is not the national God of the Jews only, but He reigns over all mankind Psalm 22:28.

It - i. e., everything.

In all their kingdoms - More correctly, "in all their royalty or kingship."

Verse 8

Brutish - Jeremiah 10:21 and foolish Theirs was the brutishness of men in a savage state, little better than mere animals: their folly that of stupidity.

The stock … - Rather, the instruction of idols is a piece of wood. That is what they are themselves, and "ex nihilo nihil fit" (from nothingness, nothing is made).

Verse 9

Or, "It is a piece of wood (Jeremiah 10:8 note); yea, beaten silver it is, which is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz: it is the work etc."

Tarshish … Uphaz - See the marginal reference and Genesis 10:4. Possibly Uphaz was a place in the neighborhood of the River Hyphasis.

Blue and purple - Both colors were purple, from dyes obtained from shellfish: but the former had a violet, the latter a red tinge.

Verse 11

This verse is (in the original) in Chaldee. It was probably a proverbial saying, which Jeremiah inserts in its popular form.

Verse 12

Discretion - Or, understanding. The three attributes ascribed to the Creator are very remarkable. The creation of the earth, the material world, is an act of "power;" the "establishing," i. e., the ordering and arranging it as a place fit for man's abode, is the work of his "wisdom;" while the spreading out the heavens over it like a tent is an act of "understanding," or skill. Naturally, the consideration of these attributes has led many to see here an allusion to the Holy Trinity.

Verse 13

When … - i. e., the rushing downpour of rain follows immediately upon the thunder. The rest of the verse is identical with marginal reference; but probably the words belong to Jeremiah, the Psalm being of comparatively late date.

With rain - For the rain Psalm 135:7.

Verse 14

In his knowledge - Rather, "without knowledge; i. e., on comparing his powerless idols with the terrific grandeur of a tropical thunderstorm the man who can still worship them instead of the Creator is destitute of knowledge.

Every founder … - Or, "every goldsmith is put to shame etc." He has exhausted his skill on what remains an image.

Verse 15

Rather, "They are vanity, a work of mockery," deserving only ridicule and contempt.

Verse 16

The portion, of Jacob - i. e., Yahweh. He is not like gods made by a carpenter and goldsmith.

Of all things - literally, of the all, the universe.

The rod of his inheritance - See Psalm 74:2; compare Isaiah 63:17. The rod is the scepter, and Israel the people over whom Yahweh especially rules.

Verse 17

The prophet now returns to the main subject of his sermon, the conquest of Judaea.

Thy wares - Rather, thy bundle, which could contain a few articles for necessary use, and be carried in the hand. They are going into exile.

O inhabitant of the fortress - i. e., thou that art besieged, that inhabitest a besieged town.

Verse 18

Sling out - A similar metaphor for violent ejection occurs in Isaiah 22:18 (see the note).

At this once - Or, "at this time." Previous invasions had ended either in deliverance, or at most in temporary misfortune. God's long-suffering is exhausted, and this time Judaea must cease to be an independent nation.

That they may find it so - Omit "so," and explain either

(1) "I will distress them" with the rigors of a siege "that they may feel it, i. e., the distress; or,

(2) "that they may find" Me, God, that which alone is worth finding.

Verses 19-25

The lamentation of the daughter of Zion, the Jewish Church, at the devastation of the land, and her humble prayer to God for mercy.

Jeremiah 10:19

Grievous - Rather, "mortal," i. e., fatal, incurable.

A grief - Or, "my grief."

Jeremiah 10:20

tabernacle - i. e., "tent." Jerusalem laments that her tent is plundered and her children carried into exile, and so "are not," are dead Matthew 2:18, either absolutely, or dead to her in the remote land of their captivity. They can aid the widowed mother no longer in pitching her tent, or in hanging up the curtains round about it.

Jeremiah 10:21

Therefore they shall not prosper - Rather, "therefore they have not governed wisely." "The pastors," i. e., the kings and rulers Jeremiah 2:8, having sunk to the condition of barbarous and untutored men, could not govern wisely.

Jeremiah 10:22

The "great commotion" is the confused noise of the army on its march (see Jeremiah 8:16).

Dragons - i. e., jackals; see the marginal reference.

Jeremiah 10:23

At the rumour of the enemy's approach Jeremiah utters in the name of the nation a supplication appropriate to men overtaken by the divine justice.

Jeremiah 10:24

With judgment - In Jeremiah 30:11; Jeremiah 46:28, the word "judgment" (with a different preposition) is rendered "in measure." The contrast therefore is between punishment inflicted in anger, and that inflicted as a duty of justice, of which the object is the criminal's reformation. Jeremiah prays that God would punish Jacob so far only as would bring him to true repentance, but that he would pour forth his anger upon the pagan, as upon that which opposes itself to God Jeremiah 10:25.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

The prophecy contained in Jeremiah 11:2 was that renewed by Josiah in his 18th year, after the discovery of the Book of the Law in the temple 2 Kings 23:3; while Jeremiah 11:13 apparently refers to the public establishment of idolatry by Manasseh Jeremiah 21:3. The people took no hearty part in Josiah‘s reformation, and the prophet therefore sets before them the consequences that will inevitably fellow upon their disloyalty to their covenant-God. The prophecy was probably called forth by the conspiracy of the men of Judah and of his own relatives of Anathoth to murder Jeremiah Jeremiah 11:18-23; Jeremiah 12:1-6, for such deeds, which but too well represented the nation‘s whole course, punishment must come, if unrepented of.

Verse 2

The words of this covenant - The phrase used 2 Kings 23:3 to describe the contents of the Book of the Law.

Verse 4

From the iron furnace - Rather, out of “the iron furnace,” Egypt (see Deuteronomy 4:20). The constant reference to Deuteronomy shows how great had been the effect upon Jeremiah‘s mind of the public recitation of the “Book of the covenant” found in the temple.

Verse 5

As it is this day - God had kept the terms of the covenant. Whether the promised land would permanently remain the property of the Jews would depend upon their observance of their part of the covenant.

So be it, O Lord - Or, “Amen, Yahweh.” The prophet was literally obeying the command given in Deuteronomy 27:14-26, and the same word should be kept in both places.

Verse 6

Proclaim … - Probably Jeremiah accompanied Josiah in his progress 2 Kings 23:15-20, and everywhere read to the people the words of the newly-found book.

Verse 8

I will bring - Rather, I have brought. The breach of the covenant upon their part had always brought temporal calamity. The last examples were the

deportation of the ten tribes by Salmanezer, and the leading of Manasseh prisoner to Babylon in chains (2 Chronicles 33:11).

Verse 9

A conspiracy - The defection from the covenant was as general as if it had been the result of preconcerted arrangement. The decided course taken by Josiah may, however, have led the opposite party to secret combinations against him.

Verse 10

Their forefathers - literally, "their fathers, the first ones:" in allusion to the idolatries committed in the wilderness, and by the generations whose history is given in the Book of Judges.

And they went after - Rather, yea! they have walked "after other gods to serve them." The "they" refers to the men of Jeremiah's day.

Verse 11

I will bring - Or, am bringing.

Verse 13

That shameful thing - i. e., Baal; public establishment of idolatry, such as actually took place in the reign of Manasseh (2 Chronicles 33:3. Contrast 2 Kings 18:4).

Verses 14-17

A parenthesis. As in Jeremiah 7:16, all intercession is forbidden, and for this reason. Prayer for others for the forgiveness of their sins avails only when they also pray. The cry of the people now was that of the guilty smarting under punishment, not of the penitent mourning over sin.

Jeremiah 11:15

This passage, like Isaiah 1:12, rebukes the inconsistency of Judah's public worship of Yahweh with their private immorality and preference for idolatry. Translate it: "What hath My beloved in My house to practice guile there? The great men and the holy flesh (i. e., the sacrifices) shall pass away from thee."

Jeremiah 11:16

The "goodly" or "shapely fruit," signifies the righteousness and faith which ought to have been the result of Israel's possession of extraordinary privileges. The tree did not bear this fruit, and God now destroys it by a thunderstorm.

Verse 18

Rather, “gave me knowledge of it, and I knew it.” Jeremiah shows Jeremiah 11:18-23, that the general conspiracy of the people against Yahweh and the special plot against himself was revealed to him by God.

Verse 19

Like a lamb or an ox - Rather, “like a tame lamb.” Jeremiah had lived at Anathoth as one of the family, never suspecting that, like a tame lamb, the time would come for him to be killed.

The tree with the fruit thereof - The words are those of a proverb or dark saying. All the Churches agree in understanding that under the person of Jeremiah these things are said by Christ.

Verse 22

The young men - i. e., those of the legal age for military service.

Verse 23

No remnant - 128 men of Anathoth returned from exile Ezra 2:23; Nehemiah 7:27. Jeremiah‘s denunciation was limited to those who had sought his life. The year of their visitation would be the year of the siege of Jerusalem, when Anathoth being in its immediate vicinity would have its share of the horrors of war.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Introduction

Some divide Jeremiah 12:1-7, Jeremiah 12:14-17 from discourses of Jeremiah not preserved at length; others regard it as a connected discourse occasioned by a drought in the days of Josiah (compare Jeremiah 12:4); others see in the "evil neighbors" Jeremiah 12:14, an allusion to the bands of Syrians etc., who infested the land after Jehoiakim's revolt from Nebuchadnezzar. More probably the outburst of expostulation Jeremiah 12:1-4 was occasioned by the plot of the men of Anathoth, and upon it the rest follows naturally.

Verse 1

Yet let me talk … - Rather, yet will I speak with thee on a matter of right. This sense is well given in the margin. The prophet acknowledges the general righteousness of God's dealings, but cannot reconcile with it the properity of the conspirators of Anathoth This difficulty was often present to the minds of the saints of the Old Testament, see Job 21:7 ff; Psalm 37; Psalm 73.

Happy - Rather, secure, tranquil.

Verse 2

Their veins - i. e., their heart. The reins were regarded by the Jews as the seat of the affections.

Verse 3

Thou hast seen me … - Rather, "Thou seest me and triest mine heart" at all times, and knowest the sincerity of its devotion" toward Thee."

Pull them out - The original is used Jeremiah 10:20 of the rending asunder of the cords of the tent, and Ezekiel 17:9 of the tearing up of roots. Jeremiah does not doubt God's justice, or the ultimate punishment of the wicked, but he wants it administered in a summary way.

Prepare - literally, "sanctify," i. e., devote.

Verse 4

The Hebrew divides this verse differently. "How long shall the land mourn, and the herb of the whole field wither? Because of the wickedness of them that dwell therein cattle and fowl have ceased to be: for he will not see, say they, our latter end." The people mock the prophet, saying, In spite of all his threatenings we shall outlive him.

Jeremiah complained that at a time of great general misery powerful men throve upon the ruin of others: even the innocent cattle and fowl suffered with the rest. To him it seemed that all this might have been cured by some signal display of divine justice. If God, instead of dealing with men by general and slow-working laws, would tear (out some of the worst offenders from among the rest, the land might yet be saved.

Verse 5-6

Yahweh rebukes Jeremiah‘s impatience, showing him by two proverbial sayings, that there were still greater trials of faith in store for him. Prosperous wickedness is after all a mere ordinary trial, a mere “running with the footmen;” he will have to exert far greater powers of endurance.

And if in the land … - Rather, “and in a land of peace thou art secure; but how wilt thou do amid the pride of Jordan?” if thou canst feel safe only where things are tranquil, what wilt thou do in the hour of danger? The “pride of Jordan” is taken to, mean the luxuriant thickets along its banks, famous as the haunt of lions (compare Jeremiah 49:19; Jeremiah 50:44; Zechariah 11:3). What will the prophet do when he has to tread the tangled maze of a jungle with the lions roaring round him?

Jeremiah 12:6

Called a multitude - Rather, “called aloud.” Compare Jeremiah 4:5. In all this Jeremiah was the type of Christ (compare Zechariah 13:6; Mark 3:21; John 7:5).

Verses 7-9

Yahweh shows that the downfall of the nation was occasioned by no want of love on His part, but by the nation‘s conduct.

Left - More correctly, cast away.

Jeremiah 12:8

Judah has not merely refused obedience, but become intractable and fierce, like an untamed lion. It has roared against God with open blasphemy. As His favor is life, so is His hatred death, i. e., Jerusalem‘s punishment shall be as if inflicted by one that hated her.

Jeremiah 12:9

Rather, “Is My heritage unto Me as a speckled bird? Are the birds upon her round about? Come, assemble all the wild beasts: bring them to devour her.” By “a speckled” or parti-colored “bird” is probably meant some kind of vulture.

Verse 10

Nebuchadnezzar and his confederate kings trampled Judah under foot, as heedless of the ruin they were inflicting as the shepherds would be who led their flocks to browse in spring upon the tender shoots of the vine.

Verse 11

Desolate - The force of the protest lies in this word. Thrice the prophet uses it.

Layeth it to heart - Rather, laid it "to heart." The desolate land must put up its silent cry to God, because the people had refused to see the signs of the coming retribution.

Verse 12

Through - in. Even these remote scaurs do not escape, polluted as they had been by the nation's idolatries.

Shall devour - Or, devoureth. These hosts of war come as Yahweh's sword.

No flesh shall have peace - "Flesh" in Genesis 6:3 means mankind as sinners; here, Judah. "Peace" in Hebrew has the wider signification of "welfare, happiness." Hence, their salutation in life was, "Peace be to thee," and in death "In Peace" was engraved upon their sepulchres.

Verse 13

Shall reap … shall not profit - Rather, have reaped … have profited nothing. The force of the proverb is that all their labors had ended only in disappointment.

And they shall be ashamed of your revenues - Or, yea, be ashamed of your produce - the produce of the fields.

Verse 14

The prophet addresses the spoilers.

Evil neighbors - The Syrians, Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, and Philistines, who at all times took advantage of Judah's weakness. The special mercy to Judah was the prelude to mercy to the whole Gentile world.

Verse 16

The accomplishment of this blessing depends upon both Judah and the Gentiles reversing their past conduct. Then shall the believing Gentile be admitted within the fold of the true, because spiritual, Israel - Christ's Church.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Introduction

The date of this prophecy Jeremiah 13:18 i. e., Nehushta, the mother of Jehoiachin. We have in it one of those symbolic acts by which great lessons were taught the people more impressively than by words Alter the burning of the scroll in the fourth year of Jehoiakim Jeremiah disappeared from Jerusalem, and did not show himself there again for seven years. In the last few mournful days of Jehoiakim, he was once again seen in the streets of Jerusalem, with his prophetic robe of black camel‘s hair girt about with this girdle, mildewed and waterstained as the symbol of the pitiable estate of a nation which had rejected its God. His place of refuge may have been near the Euphrates. Many such acts alleged to have been performed by the prophets may have been allegories, but this we believe to have been literally true.

Verse 1

A linen girdle - The appointed dress of the priestly order (Leviticus 16:4, …).

Put it not in water - i. e., do not wash it, and so let it represent the deep-grained pollution of the people.

Verse 4

In a hole of the rock - "In a cleft of the rock." As there are no fissured rocks in Babylonia, the place where Jeremiah hid the girdle must have been somewhere in the upper part of the river.

Verse 6

Many days - The seventy years‘ captivity.

Verse 10

This verse limits the application of the symbol. Only the ungodly and the idolatrous part of the people decayed at Babylon. The religious portion was strengthened and invigorated by the exile Jeremiah 24:5-7.

Verse 11

The reason why the girdle was chosen as the symbol. Similarly, Israel was the people chosen and set apart that in and by them the Holy Spirit might work for the salvation of mankind.

Verse 12

Bottle - jar, the "potter‘s vessel" of Isaiah 30:14: a new symbol, but with the same meaning, the approaching destruction of Jerusalem Jeremiah

13:14.

Verse 13

The kings … - i. e., his successors in general. In the fall of Jerusalem four kings in succession were crushed.

Verse 14

All orders and degrees of men in the state would be broken in indiscriminate destruction.

Verse 15

Be not proud - Both the symbols were of a nature very humiliating to the national self-respect.

Verse 16

The dark mountains - Rather, "the mountains of twilight." Judah is not walking upon the safe highway, but upon dangerous mountains: and the dusk is closing round her. While then the light still serves let her return unto her God.

And, while ye look … - Translate, "and ye wait for light, and He turn it (the light) into the shadow of death, yea change it into clouded darkness."

Verse 17

The Lord's flock - The people carried away captive with Jeconiah formed the Jewish Church, as we are expressly told, whereas Zedekiah and the people of Jerusalem possessed only the externals of the Church and not its reality. It is for this reason that the seventy years' exile counts from Jeconiah's captivity.

Verse 18

The queen - i. e., "the queen-mother:" the word signifies literally "the great lady." The king's mother took precedence of his wives.

Sit down - The usual position of slaves.

For your principalities … - Rather, "for the ornaments of your heads, even the crown of your majesty, shall come down."

Verse 19

Shall be shut up - Rather, "are shut up, and no man openeth them." The cities of the Negeb, the southern district of Judah, are blockaded, with no one to raise the siege. The captivity was the inevitable result of the capture of the fortified towns. An army entering from the north would march along the Shefelah, or fertile plain near the seacoast, and would capture the outlying cities, before it attacked Jerusalem, almost inaccessible among the mountains.

Judah shall be … - Translate, "Judah is … "

Verse 20

Jerusalem is asked where the cities, which once lay grouped round her, like a goodly flock of sheep, are gone? The question implies blame.

Verse 21

Translate, "What wilt thou say, O Jerusalem, when He, Yahweh, shall set over thee for head those whom thou hast taught to be thy bosom friends?" The foreign powers, whose friendship she has been courting, will become her tyrants.

Verse 22

Made bare - Rather, "ill-used, treated with violence." The long flowing robes worn by ladies of rank, are to be laid aside, that they might do menial work, bare-legged, like slaves. The ill-usage to the heels is the having to tramp barefoot, a thing very painful to women accustomed to the seclusion of the female apartments.

Verse 23

This verse answers the question, May not Judah avert this calamity by repentance? No: because her sins are too inveterate. By the Ethiopian (Hebrew: Cushite) is meant not the Cushite of Arabia but of Africa, i. e., the negro.

Verse 24

Stubble - Broken straw separated from the wheat after the grain had been trampled out by the oxen. Sometimes it was burned as useless; at other times left to be blown away by the wind from the desert.

Verse 25

The portion of thy measures - i. e., "thy measured portion" Job 11:9. Others render it: "the portion of thy lap," the upper garment being constantly used for holding things Rth 3:15 .

In falsehood i. e - in idols (see the marginal reference).

Verse 26

Therefore will I - literally, "And I also;" I also must have my turn, I too must retaliate. Compare Nahum 3:5.

Verse 27

And thine abominations - "Even thy abominations." The prophet sums up the three charges against Judah, namely, spiritual adultery, inordinate eagerness after idolatry (see the note at Jeremiah 5:7 note), and shameless participation in pagan orgies.

In the fields - "in the field," the open, unenclosed country (see Jeremiah 6:25; Jeremiah 12:4).

Wilt thou not … once be? - "Or, how long yet ere thou be made clean!" These words explain the teaching of Jeremiah 13:23. Repentance was not an actual, but a moral impossibility, and after a long time Judah was to be cleansed. It was to return from exile penitent and forgiven.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Introduction

The occasion of this prophecy Jeremiah 1415 was a drought, the terrible effects of which are described with much force. Probably, therefore, it belongs to the early years of Jehoiakim, when Jeremiah saw all the efforts of Josiah‘s reign utterly frustrated.

Verse 1

The dearth - Really, the drought,

Verse 2

They are black unto the ground - The people assembled at the gates, the usual places of concourse, are in deep mourning and sit humbly on the ground.

Verse 3

Little ones - mean ones, the common people. The word is unique to Jeremiah Jeremiah 48:4.

The pits - i. e., tanks for holding water.

Covered their heads - The sign of grief.

Verse 4

Is chapt - Rather, is dismayed. “The ground” is used metaphorically for the people who until the ground.

In the earth - i. e., “in the land.”

Verse 6

Like dragons - “Like jackals” Jeremiah 9:11.

No grass - The keen sight of the wild donkey is well known, but they look around in vain for herb.

Verse 7

Do thou it - Rather, “deal thou, act thou for Thy Name‘s sake, i. e., not according to the strict measure of right and wrong, but as a God merciful and gracious.

Verse 9

Astonied - The word may possibly mean “one who is taken by surprise and loses his presence of mind.”

Verse 10

The answer is addressed to the people. Jeremiah had prayed as their representative, but he must not intercede: for to the same degree that God

was determined to punish them, to the same degree (thus) they love to continue their offence." Compare Jeremiah 15:6 note.

Therefore the Lord … - Translate:

"And Yahweh hath no pleasure in them:

Now will He remember their iniquity and visit their sins."

Interference in their behalf is out of the question.

Verse 12

Their cry i. e - prayer offered aloud.

Oblation - A meat-offering Leviticus 2:1.

The sword, famine, and pestilence - The two latter ever follow upon the track of the first Ezekiel 5:12, and by these God will consume them, yet so as to leave a remnant. The chastisement, which crushes those who harden themselves against it, purifies the penitent.

Verse 13

The false prophets in Jeremiah's days were so numerous and influential an to counteract and almost nullify the influence of the true prophet. We find in Isaiah the first indications of the internal decay of the prophetic order; and Micah, his contemporary, denounces the false prophets in the strongest terms Micah 3:5, Micah 3:11. For the secret of their power see Jeremiah 5:31.

Verse 14

Divination - i. e., "conjuring," the abuse of the less understood powers of nature. It was strictly forbidden to all Jews Deuteronomy 18:10.

A thing of nought - Probably a small idol made of the more precious metals Isaiah 2:20. These methods the prophet declares to be the "deceit of their heart, i. e., not self-deceit, but a willful and intentional fraud.

Verse 16

I will pour … - i. e., their wickedness shall be brought home to them.

Verse 17

A message from God to the effect that the calamity would be so overwhelming as to cause perpetual weeping; it is set before the people under the representation of Jeremiah's own sorrow.

The virgin daughter of my people - The epithet testifies to God's previous care of Judah. She had been as jealously guarded from other

nations as virgins are in an oriental household (compare Song of Song of Solomon 4:12).

Verses 19-22

A second (compare Jeremiah 14:7-9) earnest intercession, acknowledging the wickedness of the nation, but appealing to the covenant and to God‘s Almighty power.

Lothed - More exactly, “hath thrown away as worthless.”

Jeremiah 14:20

Our wickedness, and - Omit and. National sin is the sin of the fathers, perpetuated generation after generation by the children.

Jeremiah 14:21

This verse is in the original very emphatic, and consists of a series of broken ejaculations: “Abhor not for thy name‘s sake! Disgrace - lightly esteem” in Deuteronomy 32:15 - “not the throne of thy glory! Remember! Break not etc. with us!” The throne of Yahweh‘s glory is Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 14:22

None of the idols of the Gentiles can put an end to this present distress.

Art not thou he, O Lord our God! - Rather, “art thou not Yahweh our God?”

Thou hast made all these things - i. e., the heaven with its showers.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verse 1

Cast them out of my sight - Rather, "send them out of My presence, and let them go away." The prophet is to dismiss them, because their mediators, Moses and Samuel, whose intercession had been accepted in old times (marginal references), would intercede now in vain.

Verse 3

Kinds - literally, as the margin, i. e., classes of things. The first is to destroy the living, the other three to mutilate and consume the dead.

To tear - literally, "to drag along the ground." It forcibly expresses the contumely to which the bodies of the slain will be exposed.

Verse 4

To be removed - Rather, "to be a terror."

Because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah - The name of the pious father intensifies the horror at the wickedness of the son.

Verse 6

This verse gives the reason of the refusal of Yahweh to hear the prophet's intercession. The punishment due has been delayed unto wearisomeness, and this seeming failure of justice has made Judah withdraw further from God.

Verse 7

I will fan them … - Or, "I have winnowed them with a winnowing shovel." The "gates of the land" mean the places by which men enter or leave it. As God winnows them they are driven out of the land through all its outlets in every direction.

I will bereave - Rather, "I have bereaved, I have destroyed my people." Omit "of children."

Since they return not … - Rather, "from their ways they have not returned."

Verse 8

Translate, "I have brought upon them, even upon the mother of the young man, a spoiler etc." The word rendered "young man" means a picked warrior. The mother has borne a valiant champion; but neither his prowess nor the numerous offspring of the other can avail to save those who gave them birth; war bereaves both alike.

At noonday - i. e., unexpectedly, as armies used to rest at noon (see Jeremiah 6:4 note).

I have caused him … - Rather, "I have brought suddenly upon her," the mother of the young warrior, "anguish and terrors."

Verse 9

She hath been ashamed - Or, "is ashamed." To a Hebrew mother to be childless was a disgrace. Many consider that Jeremiah 15:7-9 refer to the battle of Megiddo, and depict the consternation of Jerusalem at that sad event. If so, in the sun going down while it was day, there will be a reference to the eclipse on September 30,610 b.c.

Verse 10

Jeremiah vents his sorrow at the rejection of his prayer. In reading these and similar expostulations we feel that we have to do with a man who was the reluctant minister of a higher power, from where alone he drew strength to be content to do and suffer.

Strife - More exactly, "lawsuit;" the sense is, "I am as a man who has to enter into judgment with and reprove the whole earth."

I have neither lent … - i. e., I have no personal cause of quarrel with the people, that I should thus be perpetually at strife with them. The relations between the moneylender and the debtor were a fruitful source of lawsuits and quarrelling.

Verse 11

Shall be well with thy remnant - Or, thy loosing shall be for good; in the sense of being set free, deliverance.

To entreat thee well … - Rather, "to supplicate thee in the time of evil etc.;" fulfilled in Jeremiah 21:1-2; Jeremiah 37:3; Jeremiah 42:2.

Verse 12

The steel - "brass," i. e., bronze. By the "iron" is meant Jeremiah's intercession; but this cannot alter the divine purpose to send Judah into exile, which is firm as steel and brass. For "brass" see Exodus 25:3 note. The alloy of copper and zinc now called brass was entirely unknown to the ancients.

Verse 13

Jeremiah is personally addressed in the verse, because he stood before God as the intercessor, representing the people.

(1) God would give Judah's treasures away for nothing; implying that He did not value them.

(2) the cause of this contempt is Judah‘s sins.

(3) this is justified by Judah having committed them throughout her whole land.

Verse 14

Render, “And I will make thee serve thine enemies in a land thou knewest not.”

For a fire … - See the marginal reference. The added words show that the punishment then predicted is about to be fulfilled.

Verses 15-18

This is the prayer of a man in bitter grief, whose human nature cannot at present submit to the divine will. God‘s long-suffering toward the wicked seemed to the prophet to be the abandonment of himself to death; justice itself required that one who was suffering contumely for God‘s sake should be delivered.

Rebuke - i. e., reproach, contumely.

Jeremiah 15:16

Thy words were found - Jeremiah‘s summons to the prophetic office had not been expected or sought for by him.

I did eat them - i. e., I received them with joy. This eating of the divine words expresses also the close union between that which came from God and the prophet‘s own being.

I am called by thy name - i. e., I am consecrated to Thy service, am ordained to be Thy prophet.

Jeremiah 15:17

Rather, “I sat not in the assembly of the laughers, and was merry.” From the time God‘s words came to Jeremiah he abstained from things innocent, and a gravity came over him beyond his years.

I sat alone because of thy hand - As a person consecrated to God he would also be “separated.” See Jeremiah 1:5; compare Acts 13:2.

With indignation - The prophet thus taught of God sees the sins of the people as offences against God, and as involving the ruin of His Church.

Jeremiah 15:18

Why is my pain perpetual - i. e., Are all my labors to be in vain?

As a liar … - Really, "as a deceitful brook," a brook which flows only in the winter, the opposite of the "perennial stream" of Amos 5:24. Jeremiah had expected that there would be a perpetual interference of Providence in his behalf, instead whereof things seemed to take only their natural course.

Verse 19

Jeremiah had questioned God's righteousness (see Jeremiah 12:1 note); he is told, "If thou return," if thou repent thee of thy doubts, and think only of thy duty, "then will I bring thee again, then will I cause thee again to stand before Me." To stand before a person means to be his chief officer or vicegerent. It implies therefore the restoration of Jeremiah to the prophetic office.

If thou take forth the precious from the vile - i. e., if thou cause the precious metal to come forth from the dross. Jeremiah was to separate in himself what was divine and holy from the dross of human passion. Let him abandon this mistrust, this sensitiveness, this idea that God did not deal righteously with him, and then "he shall be as God's mouth, i. e., as the organ by which God speaks.

Let them return … - Rather, "they shall return unto thee, but thou shalt not return unto them." A flattering prophet perishes with the people whom his soft speeches have confirmed in their sin: but the truthful speaking of God's word saves both.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verse 1

In this prophecy Jeremiah 16:1-18, the punishment of the people is set forth in even sterner terms than in the last. The whole land is likened to a desert covered with the bodies of the dead, who lie unbemoaned and uncared for; and the prophet himself is commanded to abstain from the common usages of mankind that his motto of life, as well as his words, may warn the people of the greatness of the approaching calamity. There is, however, to be finally a return from exile, but only after the idolatry of the nation has been severely punished. The prophecy was probably written about the close of Jehoiakim‘s reign.

Verse 2

As marriage was obligatory upon the Jews, the prohibition of it to Jeremiah was a sign that the impending calamity was so great as to override all ordinary duties. Jeremiah was unmarried, but the force of the sign lay in its being an exception to the ordinary practice of the prophets.

In this place - The whole of Judaea.

Verse 3

The times were such that for “the present distress” it was wise for all to abstain from marriage 1 Corinthians 7:26; Matthew 24:19.

Verse 6

Cut themselves … make themselves bald - Both these practices were strictly forbidden in the Law (marginal references) probably as being pagan customs, but they seem to have remained in common use. By “making bald” is meant shaving a bare patch on the front of the head.

Verse 7

Tear themselves - Better as in the margin; “break broad for them.” It was customary upon the death of a relative to fast, and for the friends and neighbors after a decent delay to come and comfort the mourner, and urge food upon him 2 Samuel 12:17; food was also distributed at funerals to the mourners, and to the poor.

Cup of consolation - Marginal reference note.

Verse 11

The severe sentence passed upon them is the consequence of idolatry persisted in through many generations until it has finally deepened into national apostasy.

Verse 12

Imaginations - Read stubbornness.

Verse 13

And there shall ye … - Ironical, and "there ye may serve other gods day and night, since I will shew you no favor."

Verse 14-15

These two verses, by promising a deliverance greater than that from Egypt, implied also a chastisement more terrible than the bondage in the iron furnace there. Instead of their being placed in one land, there was to be a scattering into the north and many other countries, followed finally by a restoration.

Verse 16

The scattering of the people is to be like that of hunted animals, of which but few escape, the ancient method of hunting being to enclose a large space with beaters and nets, and so drive everything within it to some place where it was destroyed. The destruction of the whole male population was one of the horrible customs of ancient warfare, and the process is called in Herodotus "sweeping the country with a drag-net." The same authority tells us that this method could only be effectually carried out on an island. Literally, understood, the fishers are the main armies who, in the towns and fortresses, capture the people in crowds as in a net, while the hunters are the light-armed troops, who pursue the fugitives over the whole country, and drive them out of their hiding places as hunters track out their game.

Verse 17

This chastisement arises not from caprice, but is decreed upon full knowledge and examination of their doings.

Verse 18

First - Before the return from exile.

I will recompense their iniquity … double - The ordinary rule of the Law (Isaiah 40:2 note). Sin is twofold; there is the leaving of God's will undone, and the actual wrongdoing. And every punishment is twofold: first, there is the loss of the blessing which would have followed upon obedience, and secondly, the presence of actual misery.

Because they have defiled … - Rather, "because they have profaned My land with the carcases of their detestable things" (their lifeless and hateful idols, the very touch of which pollutes like that of a corpse, Numbers 19:11); "and hare filled My inheritance with their abominations."

Verse 21

This once - Whether we consider the greatness of the national disgrace and suffering caused by it, or its effect upon the mind of the Jews, the burning of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, followed by the captivity of the people at Babylon, stands out as the greatest manifestation of God‘s “hand” in all His dealings with them.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

This section Jeremiah 17:1-4 is inseparably connected with the preceding. Judah‘s sin had been described Jeremiah 16:19 as one of which the very Gentiles will become ashamed. and for which she will shortly be punished by, an intervention of God‘s hand more marked than anything in her previous history. Jeremiah now dwells upon the indelible nature of her sin.

A pen of iron - i. e., an iron chisel for cutting inscriptions upon tables of stone.

The point of a diamond - The ancients were well acquainted with the cutting powers of the diamond.

Altars - Not Yahweh‘s one altar, but the many altars which the Jews had set up to Baalim Jeremiah 11:13. Though Josiah had purged the land of these, yet in the eleven years of Jehoiakim‘s reign they had multiplied again, and were the external proofs of Judah‘s idolatry, as the table of her heart was the internal witness.

Verse 2

While their children remember their altars - Perhaps an allusion to their sacrifices of children to Moloch. Present perhaps at some such blood-stained rite, its horrors would be engraven forever upon the memory.

Groves - "Asherahs," i. e., wooden images of Astarte (see Exodus 34:13 note).

Verse 3

O my mountain in the field - i. e., Jerusalem or Zion, called the Rock of the Plain in Jeremiah 21:13. "The field" is the open unenclosed country, here contrasted with the privileged height of Zion.

Or sin - i. e., because of thy sin.

Verse 4

The verb rendered "discontinue" is that used of letting the land rest Exodus 23:11, and of releasing creditors Deuteronomy 15:2 in the sabbatical year. As Judah had not kept these sabbatical years she must now discontinue the tillage of God‘s inheritance until the land had had its rest. "Even thyself may mean and that through thyself," through thine own fault.

Verses 5-18

In the rest of the prophecy Jeremiah dwells upon the moral faults which had led to Judah‘s ruin.

Jeremiah 17:6

Like the heath - Or, “like a destitute man” Psalm 102:17. The verbs “he shall see” (or fear) and “shall inhabit” plainly show that a man is here meant and not a plant.

Jeremiah 17:8

The river - Or, “water-course” Isaiah 30:25, made for purposes of irrigation.

Shall not see - Or, “shall not fear Jeremiah 17:6.” God‘s people feel trouble as much as other people, but they do not fear it because they know

(1) that it is for their good, and

(2) that God will give them strength to bear it.

Jeremiah 17:9

The train of thought is apparently this: If the man is so blessed Jeremiah 17:7-8 who trusts in Yahweh, what is the reason why men so generally “make flesh their arm”? And the answer is: Because man‘s heart is incapable of seeing things in a straightforward manner, but is full of shrewd guile, and ever seeking to overreach others.

Desperately wicked - Rather, mortally sick.

Jeremiah 17:10

The answer to the question, “who can know it?” To himself a man‘s heart is an inscrutable mystery: God alone can fathom it.

Ways - Rather, way, his course of life. The “and” must be omitted, for the last clause explains what is meant “by man‘s way,” when he comes before God for judgment. It is “the fruit,” the final result “of his doings, i. e., his real character as formed by the acts and habits of his life.

Jeremiah 17:11

Rather, “As the partridge hath gathered eggs which it laid not, so … ” The general sense is: the covetous man is as sure to reap finally disappointment only as is the partridge which piles up eggs not of her own laying, and is unable to hatch them.

A fool - A Nabal. See 1 Samuel 25:25.

Jeremiah 17:12, Jeremiah 17:13

Or, “Thou throne … thou place … thou hope … Yahweh! All that forsake Thee etc.” The prophet concludes his prediction with the expression

of his own trust in Yahweh, and confidence that the divine justice will finally be vindicated by the punishment of the wicked. The "throne of glory" is equivalent to Him who is enthroned in glory.

Jeremiah 17:13

Shall be written in the earth - i. e., their names shall quickly disappear, unlike those graven in the rock forever Job 19:24. A board covered with sand is used in the East to this day in schools for giving lessons in writing: but writing inscribed on such materials is intended to be immediately obliterated. Equally fleeting is the existence of those who forsake God. "All men are written somewhere, the saints in heaven, but sinners upon earth" (Origen).

Jeremiah 17:15

This taunt shows that this prophecy was written before any very signal fulfillment of Jeremiah's words had taken place, and prior therefore to the capture of Jerusalem at the close of Jehoiakim's life. "Now" means "I pray," and is ironical.

Jeremiah 17:16

I have not hastened from - i. e., I have not sought to escape from.

A pastor to follow thee - Rather, "a shepherd after Thee." "Shepherd" means "ruler, magistrate" (Jeremiah 2:8 note), and belongs to the prophet not as a teacher, but as one invested with authority by God to guide and direct the political course of the nation. So Yahweh guides His people Psalm 23:1-2, and the prophet does so "after Him," following obediently His instructions.

The woeful day - literally, "the day of mortal sickness:" the day on which Jerusalem was to be destroyed, and the temple burned.

Right - Omit the word. What Jeremiah asserts is that he spake as in God's presence. They were no words of his own, but had the authority of Him before whom he stood. Compare Jeremiah 15:19.

Jeremiah 17:17

A terror - Rather, "a cause of dismay," or consternation Jeremiah 1:17. By not fulfilling Jeremiah's prediction God Himself seemed to put him to shame.

Jeremiah 17:18

Confounded - Put to shame.

Destroy them … - Rather, break them with a double breaking: a twofold punishment, the first their general share in the miseries attendant

upon their country‘s fall; the second, a special punishment for their sin in persecuting and mocking God‘s prophet.

Verses 19-27

This prophecy on the observance of the Sabbath, is the first of a series of short predictions. arranged probably in chronological order among themselves, but in other respects independent of one another. Its tone is mild, and dissuasive rather of future neglect than condemnatory of past misconduct; and it may be assigned to the commencement of Jehoiakim‘s reign. Its similarity to the prophecy contained in Jeremiah 22:1-5 makes it probable that they were contemporaneous.

Jeremiah 17:19

The gate of the children of the people - Perhaps the principal entrance of the outer court of the temple. Very probably there was traffic there, as in our Lord‘s time, in doves and other requisites for sacrifice, and so the warning to keep the Sabbath was as necessary there as at the city gates.

Jeremiah 17:21

To yourselves - literally, “in your souls, i. e., in yourselves.” They were to be on their guard from the depths of their own conscience, thoroughly and on conviction.

Bear no burden on the sabbath day - Apparently the Sabbath day was kept negligently. The country people were in the habit of coming to Jerusalem on the Sabbath to attend the temple service, but mingled traffic with their devotions, bringing the produce of their fields and gardens with them for disposal. The people of Jerusalem for their part took Jeremiah 17:22 their wares to the gates, and carried on a brisk traffic there with the villagers. Both parties seem to have abstained from manual labor, but did not consider that buying and selling were prohibited by the fourth commandment.

Jeremiah 17:25

A picture of national grandeur. The prophet associates with the king the princes of the Davidic lineage, who in magnificent procession accompany the king as he goes in and out of Jerusalem.

Shall remain forever - Or, “shall be inhabited forever:” populousness is promised.

Jeremiah 17:26

The reward for keeping the Sabbath day holy consists in three things;

(1) in great national prosperity,

(2) in the lasting welfare of Jerusalem, and

(3) in the wealth and piety of the people generally, indicated by their numerous sacrifices.

Bringing sacrifices of praise - Rather, "bringing praise." This clause covers all that precedes.

The verse is interesting as specifying the exact limits of the dominions of the Davidic kings, now confined to Judah and Benjamin. These two tribes are divided according to their physical conformation into

(1) the Shefelah, or low country lying between the mountains and the Mediterranean;

(2) the mountain which formed the central region, extending to the wilderness of Judah, on the Dead Sea; and

(3) the Negeb, or arid region, which lay to the south of Judah.

Jeremiah 17:27

Upon disobedience follows the anger of God, which will consume like a fire all the, splendor of the offending city.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Verse 1

In the first prophecy of the series Jeremiah 18:11-12. They have made their final choice: and thereupon follows the third prophecy of "the broken vessel" Jeremiah 19:1-15 in which the utter overthrow of city and kingdom is foretold. We should thus place this prophecy of the potter very early in the reign of Jehoiakim; and that of the broken vessel at the commencement of his fourth year. This internal evidence is confirmed by external proof.

Verse 2

House - i. e., workshop. The clay-field where the potters exercised their craft lay to the south of Jerusalem just beyond the valley of Hinnom. Compare Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 27:10.

Verse 3

The wheels - literally, "the two wheels." The lower one was worked by the feet to give motion to the upper one, which was a flat disc or plate of wood, on which the potter laid the clay, and moulded it with his fingers as it revolved rapidly.

Verse 6

So are ye in mine hand - When a vessel was ruined, the potter did not throw it away, but crushed it together, dashed it back upon the wheel, and began his work afresh, until the clay had taken the predetermined shape. It was God's purpose that Judaea should become the proper scene for the manifestation of the Messiah, and her sons be fit to receive the Saviour's teaching and carry the good tidings to all lands. If therefore at any stage of the preparation the Jewish nation took such a course as would have frustrated this purpose of Providence, it was crushed by affliction into an unresisting mass, in which the formative process began again immediately.

Verse 7

At what instant - literally, "in a moment." Here, "at one time - at another time."

Verse 8

I will repent of the evil … I will repent of the good - All God's dealings with mankind are here declared to be conditional. God changeth not, all depends upon man's conduct.

Verse 11

The word rendered "frame" is a present participle, and is the same which as a noun means "a potter." God declares that He is as free to do what He will with the Jews as the potter is free to shape as he will the clay.

Devise a device - "I am purposing a purpose."

Verse 12

And they said - Better, But they say.

Imagination - Or, stubbornness, see Jeremiah 3:17.

Verse 13

The contrast between the chaste retirement of a virgin and Judah's eagerness after idolatry, serves to heighten the horror at her conduct.

Verse 14

Rather, "Will the snow of Lebanon fail from the rock of the field?" The meaning probably is, "Will the snow of Lebanon fail from its rocks which tower above the land of Israel?" The appeal of the prophet is to the unchangeableness of one of nature's most beautiful phenomena, the perpetual snow upon the upper summits of Lebanon.

Shall the cold … - literally, "shall the strange, i. e., foreign, "cool, down-flowing waters be plucked up?" The general sense is: God is Israel's Rock, from whom the never-failing waters flow Jeremiah 2:13: but men may and do abandon the cool waters which descend front above to seek their happiness in channels of their own digging.

Verse 15

Because - "For." Jeremiah returns to, and continues the words of, Jeremiah 18:13.

Vanity - A word meaning "falsehood," which signifies that the worship of idols is not merely useless but injurious.

They have caused them to stumble - Judah's prophets and priests were they who made her to err Jeremiah 5:31. The idols were of themselves powerless for good or evil.

In their ways … - Or, "in their ways, the everlasting paths, to walk in byways, in a road not cast up. The paths of eternity" carry back the mind not to the immediate but to the distant past, and suggest the good old ways in which the patriarchs used to walk. The "road cast up" means one raised sufficiently to keep it out of the reach of floods etc.

Verse 16

Hissing - Not derision, but the drawing in of the breath quickly as men do when they shudder.

Way his head - Or, "shake his head," a sign among the Jews not of scorn but of pity. The desolation of the land of Israel is to fill people with dismay.

Verse 17

I will shew them the back - The hiding of God's face is the sure sign of His displeasure Isaiah 1:15; Isaiah 59:2.

Verse 18

The Jews were only hardened by the foregoing prophecy, and determined to compass Jeremiah's death.

Let us devise devices - i. e., "deliberately frame a plot" for his ruin (see Jeremiah 18:11 note).

The law shall not perish … - As the Law of Moses was imperishable, the people probably drew the conclusion that the Levitical priesthood must also endure forever, and therefore that Jeremiah's predictions of national ruin were blasphemous (compare Acts 6:13-14).

Let us smite him with the tongue - Their purpose was to carry a malicious report of what he had said to king Jehoiakim, and so stir up his anger against him.

Verse 19

The voice - i. e., the outcry and threats.

Verse 20

Jeremiah had been laboring earnestly to avert the ruin of his country, but the Jews treated him as farmers do some noxious animal which wastes their fields, and for which they dig pitfalls.

Verse 21

Pour out … sword - literally, "pour them out upon the hands of the sword, i. e., give them up to the sword."

Put to death - Rather, slain of death. The prophet's phrase leaves it entirely indefinite in what way the men are to die.

Verse 22

The sack of the city follows with all the horrible cruelties practiced at such a time.

Verse 23

Yet, Lord - Better, But, Lord. They conceal their plots, but God knows, and therefore must punish.

Neither blot out … - Or, "blot not out their sin from before Thy face that they may be made to stumble before Thee."

Thus - Omit this word. Since there is an acceptable time and a day of salvation, so there is a time of anger, and Jeremiah‘s prayer is that God would deal with his enemies at such a time, and when therefore no mercy would be shown. On imprecations such as these, see Psalm 109 introductory note. Though they did not flow from personal vengeance, but from a pure zeal for God‘s honor, yet they belong to the legal spirit of the Jewish covenant. We must not, because we have been shown a “more excellent way,” condemn too harshly that sterner spirit of justice which animated so many of the saints of the earlier dispensation.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Introduction

The present prophecy Jeremiah 18:1, note; Jeremiah 18:6, note). It is the symbol of the obdurate, of those who have taken their final form Revelation 22:11. In solemn procession he must bear the vessel out to the place of doom, the valley of Gehenna. There he was to break the vessel; and just as all the art of the potter would be of no avail to restore the broken fragments, so did God proclaim the final destruction of Jerusalem such as it then was, and of that generation which inhabited it.

Verse 1

Get (i. e., purchase) a potter‘s earthen bottle - The "bottle" was a flask with a long neck, and took its name from the noise made by liquids in running out.

The ancients - These "elders" were the regularly constituted representatives of the people (see Jeremiah 29:1; Numbers 11:16), and the organization lasted down to our Saviour‘s time Matthew 26:47. Similarly the priests had also their representatives 2 Kings 19:2. Accompanied thus by the representatives of Church and State, the prophet was to carry the earthen bottle, the symbol of their mean origin and frail existence, outside the walls of Jerusalem.

Verse 2

The valley … - See Jeremiah 7:31 note.

The east gate - Others render "the pottery gate." Two gates led into the valley of Hinnom, the Fountain-gate at the southeast corner, and the Dung-gate on the southwest side of Zion; some think that "the east gate" was neither of these, but a small or postern gate, used for throwing out rubbish, the valley having been put to this degrading use from the time that Josiah defiled it 2 Kings 23:10. And thus the mean symbol of a proud nation was carried out through a back door to be broken upon the heaps of refuse already cast there.

Verse 3

Kings - Plural because the message Jeremiah 19:3-9, related not especially to the reigning king, but to the whole royal house.

Verse 4

Have estranged this place - They have not recognized the sanctity of this place, but have treated it as a strange place, by worshipping in it strange

gods.

Innocents - i. e., guiltless persons.

Verse 7

Make void - The verb used here is that from which "bottle" Jeremiah 19:1 is derived, and as it represents the sound made by the water running out, it would be better translated, "pour out." Jeremiah perhaps carried the bottle to Tophet full of water, the symbol in the East of life Isaiah 35:6; Isaiah 41:18, and at these words emptied it before the assembled elders.

Verse 11

Made whole again - literally, "healed." In this lies the distinction between this symbol and that of Jeremiah 18:4. The plastic clay can be shaped and re-shaped until the potter forms with it the vessel he had predetermined: the broken bottle is of no further use, but its fragments are cast away forever upon the heaps of rubbish deposited in Tophet.

Verse 13

Because of all - literally, "with reference to all," limiting the denunciation to those houses whose roofs had been defiled with altars.

Upon whose roofs they have burned incense - See 2 Kings 23:12, note.

Verse 14-15

Since it was this repetition of the prophecy in the temple which so greatly irritated Pashur, these two verses ought to be joined to the next chapter.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Introduction

The breaking of the bottle Jeremiah 36:5. It is probable also that Jehoiakim‘s scroll ended with the prophecy of the potter‘s vessel, and the account of the contumelies to which the prophet had in consequence been exposed. One prophecy, however, at least in our present book, is of a later date, that of the linen girdle Jeremiah 13.

Verse 1

Pashur, the father probably of the Gedaliah mentioned in Jeremiah 38:1, was the head of the 16th course (shift) of priests (marginal reference); the other Pashur Jeremiah 21:1 belonged to the fifth course, the sons of Melchiah. Both these houses returned in great strength from the exile. See Ezra 2:37-38.

Chief governor - Or, “deputy governor.” The Nagid or governer of the temple was the high priest 1 Chronicles 9:11, and Pashur was his Pakid, i. e., deputy (see Jeremiah 1:10 note). Zephaniah held this office Jeremiah 29:26, and his relation to the high priest is exactly defined 2 Kings 25:18; Jeremiah 52:24. The Nagid at this time was Seraiah the high priest, the grandson of Hilkiah, or (possibly) Azariah, Hilkiah‘s son and Jeremiah‘s brother 1 Chronicles 6:13, Ezra 7:1.

Verse 2

Jeremiah the prophet - Jeremiah is nowhere so called in the first 19 chapters. In this place he thus characterizes himself, because Pashur‘s conduct was a violation of the respect due to the prophetic office.

The stocks - This instrument of torture comes from a root signifying to “twist.” It thus implies that the body was kept in a distorted position. Compare Acts 16:24.

The high gate … - Rather, “the upper gate of Benjamin in the house of Yahweh (compare 2 Kings 15:35);” to be distinguished from the city gate of Benjamin leading toward the north.

Verse 3

Magor-missabib - See Jeremiah 6:25 note. Jeremiah uses it no less than five times, having probably adopted it as his watchword from Psalm 31:13.

Verse 4

A terror to thyself, and to all thy friends - Jeremiah plays upon the meaning of Magormissabib saying that Pusbur would be a terror to all

around. It is remarkable that he prophesies no evil of Pashur Jeremiah 20:6. His was to be the milder fate of being carried into captivity with Jehoiachin, and dying peaceably at Babylon Jeremiah 20:6, whereas his successor Zephaniah was put to death at Riblah Jeremiah 52:24, Jeremiah 52:27. His punishment probably consisted in this. He had prophesied "lies." When then he saw the dreadful slaughter of his countrymen, Jehoiakim put to death, his young son dragged into captivity, and the land stripped of all that was best, his conscience so condemned him as the guilty cause of such great misery that in the agonies of remorse he became a terror to himself and his friends.

Verse 5

All the strength - "All the stores."

The labors - The gains of the citizens.

Verse 6

Thou hast prophesied lies - Pushur belonged to the warlike party, whose creed it was, that Judaea by a close alliance with Egypt might resist the arms of Assyria.

Verses 7-18

In the rest of the chapter we have an outbreak of deep emotion, of which the first part ends in a cry of hope Jeremiah 20:13, followed nevertheless by curses upon the day of his birth. Was this the result of feelings wounded by the indignities of a public scourging and a night spent in the stocks? Or was it not the mental agony of knowing that his ministry had (as it seemed) failed? He stands indeed before the multitudes with unbending strength, warning prince and people with unwavering constancy of the national ruin that would follow necessarily upon their sins. Before God he stood crushed by the thought that he had labored in vain, and spent his strength for nothing.

It is important to notice that with this outpouring of sorrow Jeremiah's ministry virtually closed. Though he appeared again at Jerusalem toward the end of Jehoiakim's reign, yet it was no longer to say that by repentance the national ruin might be averted. During the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the die was cast, and all the prophet henceforward could do, was to alleviate a punishment that was inevitable.

Jeremiah 20:7

Thou hast deceived me … - What Jeremiah refers to is the joy with which he had accepted the prophetic office Jeremiah 15:16, occasioned

perhaps by taking the promises in Jeremiah 1:18 too literally as a pledge that he would succeed.

Thou art stronger than I - Rather, "Thou hast taken hold of me." God had taken Jeremiah in so firm a grasp that he could not escape from the necessity of prophesying. He would have resisted, but the hand of God prevailed.

I am in derision daily - literally, "I am become a laughing-stock all the day, i. e., peripetually.

Jeremiah 20:8

Translate," For as often as I speak, I must complain; I call out, Violence and spoil."

From the time Jeremiah began to prophesy, he had had reason for nothing but lamentation. Daily with louder voice and more desperate energy he must call out "violence and spoil;" as a perpetual protest against the manner in which the laws of justice were violated by powerful men among the people.

Jeremiah 20:9

Seeing that his mission was useless, Jeremiah determined to withdraw from it.

I could not stay - Rather, "I prevailed not," did not succeed. See Jeremiah 20:7.

Jeremiah 20:10

The defaming - Rather, "the talking." The word refers to people whispering in twos and threes apart; in this case plotting against Jeremiah. Compare Mark 14:58.

Report … - Rather, "Do you report, and we will report him: i. e., they encourage one another to give information against Jeremiah.

My familiars - literally, "the men of my peace" Psalm 41:9. In the East the usual salutation is "Peace be to thee:" and the answer, "And to thee peace." Thus, the phrase rather means acquaintances, than familiar friends.

Enticed - literally, "persuaded, misled," the same word as "deceived Jeremiah 20:7." Compare Mark 12:13-17.

Jeremiah 20:11

A mighty terrible one - Rather, "a terrible warrior." The mighty One Isaiah 9:6 who is on his side is a terror to them. This change of feeling was the effect of faith, enabling him to be content with calmly doing his duty, and leaving the result to God.

For … - Rather, "because they have not acted wisely (Jeremiah 10:21 note), with an everlasting disgrace that shall never be forgotten."

Jeremiah 20:12

This verse is repeated almost verbatim from Jeremiah 11:20.

Jeremiah 20:13

Sing - Jeremiah's outward circumstances remained the same, but he found peace in leaving his cause in faith to God.

Jeremiah 20:14

This sudden outbreak of impatience after the happy faith of Jeremiah 20:13 has led to much discussion. Possibly there was more of sorrow in the words than of impatience; sorrow that the earnest labor of a life had been in vain. Yet the form of the expression is fierce and indignant; and the impatience of Jeremiah is that part of his character which is most open to blame. He does not reach that elevation which is set before us by Him who is the perfect pattern of all righteousness. Our Lord was a prophet whose mission to the men of His generation equally failed, and His sorrow was even more deep; but it never broke forth in imprecations. See Luke 19:41-42.

Jeremiah 20:16

The cry - is the sound of the lamentation Jeremiah 20:8; "the shouting" is the alarm of war.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 22

Introduction

With the last verse of Jeremiah 21:1-14 begins a digest of various prophecies Jeremiah 24:1-10 in which he shows the pitiable condition of Zedekiah and his people.

Verse 1

By sending this embassy Zedekiah acknowledged that Jeremiah held the same position in the kingdom which Isaiah had held under Hezekiah 2 Kings 19:2. Pashur and Zephaniah belonged to the party who were for resisting Nebuchadnezzar by force of arms.

Verse 2

Nebuchadrezzar - A more correct way of spelling the name than Nebuchadnezzar.

According to all his wondrous works - The king and his envoys expected some such answer as Isaiah had given on a former occasion Isaiah 37:6.

Verse 4

Without the walls - These words are to be joined to wherewith ye fight.

Verse 6

A great pestilence - As the result of the excessive crowding of men and animals in a confined space with all sanitary regulations utterly neglected.

Verse 8

Compare the marginal reference; but here the alternative is a life saved by desertion to the enemy, or a death by famine, pestilence, and the sword within the walls.

Verse 9

He that … falleth to the Chaldeans - This was to counsel desertion, and would have been treason in an ordinary man: but the prophets Spoke with an authority above that even of the king, and constantly interfered in political matters with summary decisiveness. Compare Matthew 24:16-18.

A prey - Something not a man‘s own, upon which he seizes in the midst of danger, and hurries away with it. So must the Jews hurry away with their lives as something more than they had a right to, and place them in the Chaldaean camp as in a place of safety.

Verse 11

Rather, And as to the royal house of Judah, Hear ye. Omit say. The words are no command to the prophet, but form his introduction to the discourse which extends to the end of Jeremiah 23:8. The king and his officers are to hear the gist of all the messages sent to the royal house since the accession of Jehoiakim.

Verse 12

Execute judgment - As the administration of justice was performed in old time in person, the weal of the people depended to a great degree upon the personal qualities of the king (see 2 Samuel 15:4). And as "the oppressor" was generally some powerful noble, it was especially the king's duty to see that the weaker members of the community were not wronged.

Verse 13

Inhabitant - is feminine, the population of Jerusalem being always personified as a woman, the daughter of Zion. Omit and. Jerusalem is at once a valley and a rock Jeremiah 17:3. The people are described as priding themselves on the impregnability of their city.

Verse 14

The forest - This suggested to the Jew the idea of everything grand and stately.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 23

Introduction

This prophecy Jeremiah 21:11-14, states the conditions upon which it was still possible for the house of David to ensure a long era of prosperity. It belongs therefore to the beginning of Jehoiakim‘s reign.

Verse 1

Go down - i. e., from the temple to the king‘s house. Compare 2 Chronicles 23:20.

Verse 6

Omit and. “Thou art a Gilead unto me, a summit of Lebanon.”

Yet surely - literally, if not, the form of an oath with the imprecation omitted. For the full form see Numbers 14:23.

A wilderness, and cities - Omit and. The meaning is: If the house of David does not hear God‘s words, though it be now grand as Lebanon, God will make it a wilderness, even uninhabited cities; the house of David being regarded as equivalent to the kingdom of Judah.

Verse 7

Prepare - i. e., consecrate, see Jeremiah 6:4 note.

Thy choice cedars - The chief members of the royal lineage and the leading officers of state.

Verses 10-12

In the two foregoing prophecies Jeremiah stated the general principle on which depend the rise and downfall of kings and nations. He now adds for Zedekiah‘s warning the history of three thrones which were not established.

The first is that of Shallum the successor of Josiah, who probably took the name of Jehoahaz on his accession (see the marginal references notes).

Jeremiah 22:10

The dead - i. e., Josiah 2 Chronicles 35:25.

That goeth away - Rather, that is gone away.

Verse 13

Far worse is the second example. Shallum was no heartless tyrant like Jehoiakim, who lived in splendor amid the misery of the nation, and perished so little cared for that his body was cast aside without burial.

His chambers - Really, his upper chambers. From the absence of machinery the raising of materials for the upper stories was a difficult task, especially when massive stones were used.

His work - Giveth him not his wages.

Verse 14

Large chambers - spacious upper chambers.

It is cieled - Or, roofing it.

Vermilion - The pigment which gives the deep red color still bright and untarnished on many ancient buildings.

Verse 15

i. e., Will thy buildings make thy reign continue? These words imply that Jehoiakim was looking forward to, and taking measures to secure, a long continuance of power (compare Habakkuk 2:9-13. If so, Jeremiah probably wrote this prophecy before Jehoiakim revolted 2 Kings 24:1; and it, therefore, probably belongs to the same date as Jeremiah 36:30, written in the interval between Nebuchadnezzars first conquest of Jerusalem, and Jehoiakim‘s rebellion, and when Jeremiah was out of the reach of the tyrant‘s power.

Closest thyself in cedar - Rather, viest “in cedar;” i. e., viest with Solomon.

Did not thy father eat and drink … - i. e., he was prosperous and enjoyed life. There is a contrast between the life of Josiah spent in the discharge of his kingly duties, and that of Jehoiakim, busy with ambitious plans of splendor and aggrandisement.

Verse 17

Covetousness - literally, gain. Besides exacting forced labor Jehoiakim, to procure the necessary means for the vast expenses he incurred, put innocent people to death on various pretexts, and escheated their property.

Verse 18

Boldly by name is the judgment at length pronounced upon Jehoiakim. Dreaded by all around him, he shall soon lie an unheeded corpse, with no one to lament. No loving relative shall make such wailing as when a brother or sister is carried to the grave; nor shall he have the respect of his subjects, Ah Lord! or, Ah his glory!

Verse 19

The burial of an ass - i. e., he shall merely be dragged out of the way, and left to decay unheeded. Nothing is known of the fulfillment of this prophecy.

Verse 20

The third example, Jehoiachin. With him all the best and noblest of the land were dragged from their homes to people the void places of Babylon.

The passages - Really, Abarim, a range of mountains to the south of Gilead, opposite Jericho (see Numbers 27:12; Deuteronomy 32:49). Jeremiah names the chief ranges of mountains, which overlook the route from Jerusalem to Babylon, in regular order, beginning with Lebanon upon the north, then Bashan on the northeast, and lastly Abarim on the southeast.

Thy lovers - i. e., the nations in alliance with Judah, especially Egypt, whose defeat at Carchemish Jeremiah 46:2 gave all western Asia into the power of Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 21

Prosperity - literally, as in the margin. God spake thus not once only, but whenever Judah was at peace.

Verse 22

Shall eat up all thy pastors - literally, shall depasture (Jeremiah 2:16 note) thy pastors. Those who used to drive their flocks to consume the herbage shall themselves be the first prey of war. The "pastors" mean not the kings only, but all in authority.

Verse 23

Lebanon is the usual metaphor for anything splendid. and is here put for Jerusalem, but with special reference to the kings whose pride it was to dwell in palaces roofed with cedar Jeremiah 22:14.

How gracious shalt thou be - Or, How wilt thou groan!

Verse 24

The words "king of Judah," belong to Coniah, and prove that he was king regnant when the prophet wrote. The prophet gives him the name by which he was known when in a private station 1 Chronicles 3:16 as he had done previously with Jehoahaz. These two kings bore their royal names for so short a time that they probably never got into general use.

The signet - The badge of office. To part with it, was to part with the royal authority.

Verse 26

Mother - See Jeremiah 13:18. It was her relationship, not to the dead king, but to the king regnant, which made her powerful.

Verse 28

Idol - Rather, vessel. Is Coniah a mere piece of common earthenware in which the potter has no pleasure, and therefore breaks it? It is a lamentation

over Jehoiachin‘s hard fate, and that of his seed. This and the two following verses may have been written after the king had been carried into captivity.

Verse 29

Earth - On the repetition compare Jeremiah 7:4 note.

Verse 30

Childless - No child to sit on David‘s throne. See 1 Chronicles 3:17 note.

Jeconiah was the last king of David‘s line. His uncle indeed actually reigned after him, but perished with his sons long before Jeconiah‘s death (literally 10): and yet from so dead a trunk, from a family so utterly fallen, that spiritual King came forth whose name is “Yahweh our righteousness” Jeremiah 23:5-6.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 23

Verse 1

The pastors - shepherds, i. e., civil rulers Jeremiah 2:8.

The sheep of My pasture - literally, of My pasturing, the sheep of whom I am shepherd. The people do not belong to the rulers but to God.

Verse 2

They had scattered them first spiritually by leading them into idolatry; and secondly, many had literally been taken to Egypt with Jehoahaz, many in Jehoiakim‘s time had fled there, while others fell away to the Chaldaeans: and finally the best of the land had been carried to Babylon with Jeconiah.

Driven away - i. e., made them outcasts. In the East, shepherds never drive their flocks, but go ahead of them John 10:4-5.

Have not visited them - i. e., have not concerned yourselves about their conduct.

Verse 3

While there is no promise of restoration for the kings, there is for the people (see Jeremiah 4:27), because they had been led astray by their rulers.

Have driven them - The evil shepherds drove the people into exile by leading them into sin: and God by inflicting punishment.

Their folds - Or, their pastures.

Verse 4

Shepherds - Men like Ezra, Nehemiah, and the Maccabees, raised up especially by God. It is a revocation of the promise made to David 2 Samuel 7:12-16 so far as the earthly throne was concerned.

They shall fear no more … - The effect of good government will be general security.

Neither shall they be lacking - Not one sheep shall be missing or lost.

Verse 5

Even with the temporal kingship abolished, David‘s mercies are still sure.

A righteous Branch - Or, sprout, germ (see Isaiah 4:2 note). The sprout is that in which the root springs up and grows, and which, if it be destroyed, makes the root perish also.

And a king shall reign … - Rather, and he shall reign as king. David‘s family is to be dethroned (temporally), that it may reign gloriously

(spiritually). But compare Jeremiah 33:17, note; Jeremiah 33:25, note.

Verse 6

This is his name whereby he shall be called - From remote antiquity the person here spoken of has been understood to be "the righteous germ," and this alone is in accordance with the grammar and the sense. Nevertheless, because Jeremiah Jeremiah 33:15-16 applies the name also to Jerusalem, some understand it of Israel.

the Lord OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS - Messiah is here called:

(1) Yahweh, and

(2) our righteousness, because He justifies us by His merits.

Some render, He by whom Yahweh works righteousness. Righteousness is in that case personal holiness, which is the work of the Spirit after justification.

Verse 9

Because of the prophets - Rather, concerning "the prophets." These words should come first, as being the title of this portion of the prophecy Jeremiah 23:9-40.

Verse 10

Because of swearing - Rather, because of the curse denounced against sin Jeremiah 11:3. The mourning probably refers to the drought Jeremiah 12:4.

The pleasant places - "Pastures."

Their course - Their mode of life.

Their force is not right - "Their heroism," that on which they pride themselves as mighty men, "is not right," is wrong (see Jeremiah 8:6 note).

Verse 11

For both prophet and priest are profane - While by their office they are consecrated to God, they have made themselves common and unholy by their sins. See Jeremiah 3:9 note.

Yea, in my house - This may refer to sins such as those of the sons of Eli 1 Samuel 2:22, or that they had defiled the temple by idolatrous rites.

Verse 12

Every word denotes the certainty of their fall. "Their path is like slippery places in darkness:" and on this path "they are pushed with

violence." External circumstances assist in urging on to ruin those who choose the path of vice.

Verse 13

And I have seen folly … - Rather, "Also I have seen." The prophet contrasts the prophets of Samaria with those of Jerusalem. In the conduct of the former God saw folly (literally that which is insipid, as being unsalted). It was stupidity to prophesy by Baal, an idol.

In Baal - i. e., in the name of Baal.

Verse 14

Rather, "But in the prophets of Jerusalem" etc. Their conduct is more strongly condemned than that of the Baal-priests.

They strengthen … - First by neglecting to warn and rebuke sinners: secondly by the direct influence of their bad example.

They are all of them - They have become, "all of them," i. e., the people of Jerusalem, and not the prophets only.

Verse 15

Profaneness - Desecration.

Verse 16

How were the people to know the false prophets from the true? The former bring a message that fills with vain hopes, or "speak a vision" out of their own invention.

Verse 17

Still - "Continually." This verse gives the chief test by which the false prophet is to be detected, namely, that his predictions violate the laws of morality.

Verse 18

The prophet now applies this test to the circumstances of the times. A whirlwind has already gone forth Jeremiah 23:19. Had these false prophets stood in God's secret "Council" (so in Jeremiah 23:22), they like Jeremiah would have labored to avert the danger by turning men from their evil way.

Verse 19

Rather, "Behold, the tempest of Yahweh, even hot anger hath gone forth and a whirlwind shall burst upon the head of the wicked."

Verse 20

The latter days - The proper and final development of any event or series of events. Thus, the expression is used of the Christian dispensation

as the full development of the Jewish Church. Here it means the destruction of Jerusalem, as the result of the sins of the Jews.

Consider - Rather, understand. When Jerusalem is destroyed, the exiles - taught by adversity - will understand that it was sin which brought ruin upon their country.

Verse 21

Ran - i. e., hurried to take upon them the responsibilites of the prophetic office.

Verse 22

They should have turned them … - The work of the true prophet, which is to turn men from evil unto good.

Verse 23

At hand - Or, near. An appeal to the omnipotence of God in demonstration of the wickedness of the prophets. His power is not limited, so that He can notice only things close to Him, but is universal.

Verse 25

In Deuteronomy 13:1 "a dreamer of dreams" is used in a bad sense, and with reason. God communicating His will by dreams was a thing too easy to counterfeit for it not to be misused.

Verse 26

Some translate, "How long? Is it in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies, and prophesy the deceit of their heart - do they purpose to make My people forget My name by their dreams which they tell one to another?"

Verse 27

To his neighbor - i. e., to one another, to the people about him, to anyone.

As their fathers … - Rather, "as their fathers forgot My name through Baal." The superstition which attaches importance to dreams keeps God as entirely out of men‘s minds as absolute idolatry.

Verse 28

A dream … faithfully - Rather, as "a dream" … as truth. The dream is but a dream, and is to be told as such, but God‘s word is to be spoken as certain and absolute truth.

The dreams are the chaff, worthless, with nothing in them; the wheat, the pure grain after it is cleansed and winnowed is God‘s word. What have these two in common?

Verse 29

Like as a fire - God‘s word is the great purifier which destroys all that is false and aves, only the genuine metal. Compare Hebrews 4:12.

Like a hammer … - God‘s word rouses and strengthens the conscience and crushes within the heart everything that is evil.

Verse 30

Jeremiah gives in succession the main characteristics of the teaching of the false prophets. The first is that they steal God‘s words from one another. Having no message from God, they try to imitate the true prophets.

Verse 31

That use their tongues - literally, that take their tongues. Their second characteristic. They have no message from God, but they take their tongues, their only implement, and say, He saith, using the solemn formula by which Yahweh affirms the truth of His words. Solemn asseverations seemed to give reality to their emptiness.

Verse 32

The third characteristic. See Jeremiah 23:25.

Lightness - Vain, empty, talk.

Verse 33

Burden - Here a prophecy, either

(1) as being something weighty: or

(2) a something said aloud.

Isaiah brought the word into general use: Jeremiah never used it, though his predictions were all of impending evil. The false prophets, however, applied it in derision to Jeremiah‘s prophecies, playing upon its double sense, and so turning solemn realities into mockery (see Jeremiah 23:34).

What burden? - Or, according to another reading, Ye are the burden.

I will even forsake you - Rather, and I will cast you away. From the idea of a burden the thought naturally arises of refusing to bear it, and throwing it off.

Verse 35

The proper words for prophecy. It is to be called an answer when the people have come to inquire of Yahweh: but His word when it is sent unasked.

Verse 36

Every man‘s word … - Rather, every man‘s burden shall be his word; i. e., his mocking use of the word “burden” shall weigh him down and crush him.

Perverted - i. e., put into a ridiculous light.

Verse 38

Since - Or, But if ye say.

Verse 39

Translate, “Therefore, behold, I will even take you up (or will burden you), and I will cast you, and the city which I gave you and your fathers, out of my presence.”

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Introduction

This prophecy Jeremiah 24:1-10 is the final outcome of what has gone before. Never perhaps has a reigning king been addressed in such contemptuous terms. When Jeconiah was carried to Babylon, Zedekiah, the priests, prophets, and people of Jerusalem congratulated themselves upon being saved from such a fate: really all that was good among them was then culled out, and placed in safety; and they were left behind because they were not worth the taking.

Verse 1

Omit "were." "Set before," i. e put in the appointed place for offerings of firstfruits in the forecourt of the temple.

Carpenters - "Craftsmen" (see the marginal reference).

Verse 2

Fig-trees bear three crops of figs, of which the first is regarded as a great delicacy.

Verses 4-10

The complete fulfillment of this prophecy belongs to the Christian Church. There is a close analogy between Jeremiah at the first destruction of Jerusalem and our Lord at the second. There the good figs were those converts picked out by the preaching of Christ and the Apostles; the bad figs were the mass of the people left for Titus and the Romans to destroy.

Jeremiah 24:5

Acknowledge … for their good - Specially their spiritual good. Put a comma after Chaldaeans.

Jeremiah 24:8

That dwell in the land of Egypt - Neither those carried captive with Jehoahaz into Egypt, nor those who fled there, are to share in these blessings. The new life of the Jewish nation is to be the work only of the exiles in Babylon.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 25

Introduction

It was immediately after the battle of Carchemish (605 b.c.) between Egypt and Babylon, and probably before Nebuchadnezzar and his victorious army appeared in Palestine, that Jeremiah delivered this prophecy Jeremiah 36:29. It belongs to the year of Jeremiah‘s greatest activity, when he was using his utmost efforts to detach Jehoiakim from Egypt, and prevail upon him to accept frankly the position of a king subject to Nebuchadnezzar, not only as a matter of policy but of religious duty. It was this latter aspect of the appeal that made the king reject it. He burned the prophet‘s scroll, tried to slay the prophet, and heard the voice of God no more during the rest of his reign.

Verse 1

The fourth year - See Daniel 1:1 note. This invasion of Judaea, in which Daniel was carried captive to Babylon, was according to the date of the years the fourth, but according to the actual time the third, year of the Jewish king. Nebuchadnezzar was not yet fully king, but associated with his father Nabopalassar.

Verse 3

The three and twentieth year - i. e., nineteen under Josiah, and four under Jehoiakim. This prophecy divides itself into three parts,

(1) the judgment of Judah Jeremiah 25:3-11, and Babylon‘s doom Jeremiah 25:12-14;

(2) the wine-cup of fury Jeremiah 25:15-29;

(3) the judgment of the world Jeremiah 25:30-38.

Verse 5

Turn ye - i. e., Repent ye; the great summons of God to mankind at all times (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; compare Matthew 3:2).

Verse 9

The term families is probably used here to signify the widespread empire of Nebuchadnezzar.

My servant - This title, so remarkable in the Old Testament as the especial epithet, first of Moses, and then of the Messiah, is thrice given to

Nebuchadnezzar, and marks the greatness of the commission entrusted to him.

Verse 10

Take from them … the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle - (or, lamp). To denote the entire cessation of domestic life. The one was the sign of the preparation of the daily meal, the other of the assembling of the family after the labors of the day were over.

Verse 11

Seventy years - The duration of the Babylonian empire was really a little short of this period. But the 70 years are usually calculated down to the time when the Jews were permitted to return to their country (compare Jeremiah 29:10).

Verse 12

Perpetual desolations - The ruins of Babylon form its only lasting memorial.

Verse 13

The Septuagint places a full stop after "book," and take the rest as a title "what Jeremiah prophesied against the nations," which series there immediately follows. In the Masoretic Text, this series is deferred to the end Jeremiah 4649, and with Jeremiah 5051, forms one entire series. Other reasons make it probable that the Septuagint has preserved for us an earlier text, in which all direct mention of the king of Babylon is omitted and the 70 years are given as the duration of Judah's captivity, and not of the Babylonian empire. The fuller text of the Masorites is to be explained by the dislocation which Jehoiakim's scroll evidently suffered.

Verse 14

Shall serve themselves of them also - i. e., shall impose forced labor upon the Chaldaeans, and reduce them also to servitude.

Verse 15

Saith - Or, hath said. This prophecy - placed by the Septuagint after those against the nations - forms an impressive statement of the manner in which the new kingdom of Babylon was to execute Yahweh's wrath upon the nations far and near.

Verse 16

Be moved - Rather, stagger.

Verse 17

Then took I the cup - Not actually offering the wine-cup - Holy Scripture has suffered much from this materialistic way of explaining it: but publicly proclaiming this prophecy in Jerusalem, as the central spot of God‘s dealings with men, and leaving it to find its way to the neighboring states.

Verse 18

As it is this day - Words omitted by the Septuagint, and probably added by Jeremiah after the murder of Gedaliah had completed the ruin of the land.

Verse 19

The arrangement is remarkable. Jeremiah begins with the south, Egypt; next Uz on the southeast, and Philistia on the southwest; next, Edom, Moab, and Ammon on the east, and Tyre, and Sidon, and the isles of the Mediterranean on the west; next, in the Far East, various Arabian nations, then northward to Media and Elam, and finally the kings of the north far and near.

Verse 20

The mingled people - Either auxiliaries; or, rather, a constituent portion of the people of Egypt, who were not of pure blood.

Azzah - i. e., Gaza.

The remnant of Ashdod - A sentence which none but a contemporary writer could have used. Psammetichus, after a siege of 29 years, had captured and destroyed Ashdod, except for a feeble remnant.

Verse 22

The isles - Rightly explained in the margin; it probably refers here to Cyprus.

Verse 23

Dedan - See the Isaiah 21:13 note.

Buz - See Job 32:2 note.

All that are … - See the marginal reference note.

Verse 24

Arabia - That part which bordered on Palestine, and was inhabited mainly by Ishmaelites.

The mingled people - Compare the Jeremiah 25:20 note. In Arabia there seem to have been many tribes of Cushite origin, who by intermarriage with other tribes had become of mixed blood.

Verse 25

Zimri - Probably a district between Arabia and Persia. "Elam" is put in Scripture for the whole of Persia.

Verse 26

All the kingdoms of the world … - In accordance with the usage of Holy Scripture this universality is limited. It is moral and not geographical.

Sheshach - Jerome says that this is the name Babel written in cypher, the letters being transposed. Another example occurs in Jeremiah 51:1, where the words "the heart of my risers up" become the Chaldaeans. The Septuagint omits the clause containing the name.

Verse 27

The metaphors denote the helplessness to which the nations are reduced by drinking the wine-cup of fury Jeremiah 25:15.

Verse 30

Yahweh has risen like a lion from His covert, and at His roaring the whole world is filled with terror and confusion.

Upon his habitation - Against His pasture; i. e., Judaea. Yahweh comes forth as the lion to destroy the sheep which lie terrified within the circle of the tents.

A shout - The vintage-shout, here used for the war-cry. Compare Isaiah 16:9; Isaiah 63:3.

Verse 31

A noise - The trampling of an army in motion. Compare Amos 2:2.

A controversy - i. e., a suit at law.

Will plead - Or, will hold judgment. As judge He delivers the wicked to the sword.

Verse 32

A great whirlwind - Or, storm.

The coasts of the earth - See Jeremiah 6:22 note. The thunderstorm seen first on the edge of the horizon overspreads the heaven, and travels from nation to nation in its destructive course.

Verse 33

Lamented - See the marginal reference and Jeremiah 8:2.

Verses 34-36

Principal of the flock - i. e., noble ones.

Wallow yourselves in the ashes - Rather, roll yourselves on the ground.

For … - Read; "for your days for being slaughtered are accomplished, and I will scatter you" (or, (dash you in pieces).

Fall like a pleasant vessel - The comparison suggests the idea of change from a thing of value into worthless fragments.

Jeremiah 25:36

Hath spoiled - Or, spoileth.

Verse 37

The peaceable habitations - The pastures of peace, the peaceable fields where the flocks lately dwelt in security. See Jeremiah 25:30 note.

Verse 38

Yahweh has risen up, like a lion that leaves its covert, eager for prey, that He may execute judgment upon the wicked.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 26

Verse 1

Jeremiah 26:4-6 contain a summary of the prediction contained in Jeremiah 7, and that again is but an outline of what was a long address.

Verse 9

The charge against Jeremiah was that of prophesying falsely, for which the penalty was death Deuteronomy 18:20. They assumed that it was absolutely impossible that Jerusalem ever could become like Shiloh.

Against Jeremiah - unto Jeremiah. They regularly constituted themselves a congregation to take part in his trial.

Verse 10

The princes of Judah - The priests could scourge a man etc., but could not then try him for his life, as the Sanhedrim subsequently did until the Romans deprived them of the power.

The new gate - That built by Jotham 2 Kings 15:35, and probably a usual place for trials.

Verse 11

This man is worthy to die - literally, A sentence of death is to this man, i. e., is his desert.

Verses 12-15

The answer of Jeremiah is simple and straightforward. Yahweh, he affirmed, had truly sent him, but the sole object of his prophesying had been to avert the evil by leading them to repentance. If they would amend their ways God would deliver them from the threatened doom. As for himself he was in their hands, but if they put him to death they would bring the guilt of shedding innocent blood upon themselves and upon the city.

Verse 16

This man … - literally, There is not to this man a sentence of death, i. e., he is acquitted by the princes and the congregation.

Verse 17

The elders of the land - The heads and spokesmen of the congregation, who added their approval after the princes who represented the king had given their decision.

Verse 19

Thus might we procure … - Rather, And we should commit a great evil against our own souls; i. e., by putting Jeremiah to death, we should commit

a sin which would prove a great misfortune to ourselves.

Verse 20

This narrative of Urijah‘s fate was no part of the speech of the elders, who would not be likely to contrast the behavior of the reigning king so unfavorably with that of Hezekiah. Moreover, it would have been a precedent, not for acquitting Jeremiah, but for putting him to death. Jeremiah, when he reduced the narrative to writing, probably added this history to show the ferocity of Jehoiakim, and the danger to which he had been himself exposed.

Verse 21

His mighty men - The commanders of his army; the princes are the civil officers.

Verse 22

Elnathan - Possibly the king‘s father-in-law 2 Kings 24:8.

Verse 23

Out of Egypt - As Jehoiakim was a vassal of Egypt, he would easily obtain the surrender of a man accused of treason.

Verse 24

Ahikam - See the marginal reference. His son Gemariah lent Jeremiah his room for the public reading of Jehoiakim‘s scroll, and another son Gedaliah was made governor of the land by the Chaldaeans Jeremiah 39:14; the family probably shared the political views of Jeremiah.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Introduction

In Jeremiah 2729 we see with what energy, and yet thoughtfulness, Jeremiah enforced the lessons of Jeremiah 25. These chapters belong to the first four years of Zedekiah.

The spelling of certain proper names in these chapters has led some to argue that they were revised and corrected in Ezra‘s time, if not by Ezra himself. Others think the fact of no importance whatever.

Verse 1

Of Jehoiakim - Really, of Zedekiah, as the Syriac reads (see Jeremiah 27:3). In the Septuagint the verse is missing. Some scribe has confused the title of this chapter with that of Jeremiah 26.

Verse 2

Yokes - Two curved pieces of wood, the one put over the neck of the ox, the other under, and then fastened together by bonds or cords (compare Psalm 2:3). Compare the marginal references.

Verse 3

Come - Or, are come. The ambassadors of these five kings had probably come to Jerusalem to consult about forming a league to throw off the Babylonian supremacy. The attempt failed.

Verse 7

His son, and his son‘s son - Evil-Merodach and Nabonadius (see Daniel 5:1 note).

Shall serve themselves of him - See the marginal reference. After long servitude to the Persian and Median kings, the Selucidae ruined the remains of Babylon.

Verse 9

Dreamers - literally, as in the margin. People dream dreams for themselves, and go to diviners to ask the explanation of them.

Verse 10

To remove you far … - That would be the result of their vaticinations.

Verse 11

Nations … - Rather, the nation.

Verses 13-15

Zedekiah was restless under the Babylonian yoke, and the false prophets found only too ready a hearing from him. He is addressed in the plural because his feelings were fully shared by the mass of the officers of state and by the people.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 28

Verse 1

In the beginning … Zedekiah - Probably a gloss put into the margin to explain "the same year," from where it has crept into the text.

Gibeon - A city of priests Joshua 21:17. Hananiah was probably a priest as well as a prophet. He chose either a Sabbath or a new moon, that he might confront Jeremiah not only in the presence of the priests, but also of all the people. He used Jeremiah 28:2 the solemn formula which claims direct inspiration.

Verse 3

Within two full years - literally, In yet two years even days. Hananiah probably was induced to fix this date by the expectation that the confederacy then on foot would defeat Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 4

Jeconiah - Zedekiah not being popular, the people would have preferred the young king, who had not reigned long enough to make enemies. Probably also Zedekiah had started for Babylon Jeremiah 51:59.

Verses 6-9

Jeremiah's own wishes concurred with Hananiah's prediction, but asserts that that prediction was at variance with the language of the older prophets.

Jeremiah 28:9

Then shall the prophet … - Or, "shall be known as the prophet whom the Lord hath truly sent."

Verse 10

The multitude would see in Hananiah's act a symbol of deliverance.

Verse 16

I will cast thee - Rather, I send thee away. God had not sent Hananiah to prophesy, but He does now send him away to die.

Taught rebellion - As Nebuchadnezzar was Yahweh's servant, to teach rebellion against him was to teach rebellion against his Master.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 29

Introduction

Appended to this history of the struggle with the false prophets at home is a letter addressed to the exiles at Babylon Jeremiah 29. There was at Babylon as at Jerusalem the same determination of the Jews never to submit quietly to a foreign rule. This Jeremiah sought to quell. His words found credence, but not without resistance on the part of the false prophets.

Verse 1

The residue of the ciders - i. e., such of the elders as were still alive.

Verse 2

The queen - The queen-mother.

Verse 3

Elasah - Probably brother of Ahikam Jeremiah 26:24, and therefore an acceptable person at the Chaldaean court. As Zedekiah had to go in person to Babylon in his fourth year Jeremiah 51:59, this embassy was probably sent two or three years earlier. Its date, however, was subsequent to the vision in Jeremiah 24:1-10. It is appended therefore to Jeremiah 28, not as later in point of time, but because of the similarity of subject.

Verses 4-7

As the exile was God‘s doing for their good, they were to make the best of their position, and acquire wealth and influence; whereas if they were always restlessly looking out for the opportunity of returning home, they would rapidly fall into poverty and dwindle away.

Jeremiah 29:7

Seek the peace of the city … - Not only because their welfare for seventy years was bound up with that of Babylon, but because it would have degraded their whole moral nature to have lived as conspirators, banded together against the country that was for the time their home.

Verse 8

Your prophets and your diviners - The evils from which the people had suffered so cruelly at home followed them in their exile.

Dreams which ye cause to be dreamed - As long as there was a market for dreams, so long there would be plenty of impostors to supply them.

Verse 10

After seventy years - literally, according to the measure of the fulfillment of 70 years for Babylon. The 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11 note) are

primarily the length of the Babylonian empire, and only in a secondary sense that of the Jewish exile.

Verse 11

An expected end - Rather, a future and a hope. The nation shall not come to an end; the exile shall be followed by a restoration.

Verse 14

Turn away your captivity - Or, "restore your prosperity."

Verses 16-20

These verses are not in the Septuagint. But the text of the Septuagint is here throughout so brief and confused as to be explicable only on the supposition, that it represents what was left behind in Egypt when Jeremiah died, copied probably with extreme haste, and with no opportunity of careful collation afterward. On the other hand the Hebrew text represents no hurried transcript, but the original manuscript, and is especially trustworthy in the case of these letters sent to Babylon (see also Jeremiah 27:3.

Jeremiah 29:17

Vile - The word does not occur elsewhere, but comes from a root signifying to shudder, and thus has an intense meaning.

Verse 22

A curse - There is a play here of words. which probably was the cause why the death of these men passed into a proverb. One of them was named ben-Kolaiah; and they are to be made a curse (קללה *qelâlâh*), because Nebuchadnezzar had roasted (קלה *qâlâh*) them. Compare the marginal reference note.

Verse 23

Villany - Elsewhere folly, in the sense of lewdness Judges 20:6, unchastity.

Verses 24-29

A narrative showing the effects of Jeremiah's letter. Shemaiah the leader of the false prophets wrote to Zephaniah, urging him to restrain the prophet's zeal with the prison and the stocks.

Jeremiah 29:24

To Shemaiah - Rather, concerning.

The Nehelamite - Not as in the margin; but one belonging to the village of Nehlam (unknown).

Jeremiah 29:26

Officers - Deputy high priests who had the oversight of the temple.

Mad - See 2 Kings 9:11 note. Many of the symbolic actions of the prophets, such as that of Jeremiah going about with a yoke on his neck, would be mocked at by the irreverent as passing the line between prophecy and madness.

Prisons - Rather, the stocks Jeremiah 20:2.

The stocks - Rather, collar.

Jeremiah 29:28

This captivity is long - Rather, It is long. God‘s anger, their punishment, the exile, the time necessary for their repentance - all is long to men who will never live to see their country again.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 30

Verse 1

In Jeremiah 3039, not all written at the same time, are gathered together whatsoever God had revealed to Jeremiah of happier import for the Jewish people. This subject is "the New covenant." In contrast then with the rolls of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, we here have one containing the nation's hope. A considerable portion was written in the 10th year of Zedekiah, when famine and pestilence were busy in the city, its capture daily more imminent, and the prophet himself in prison. Yet in this sad pressure of earthly troubles Jeremiah could bid his countrymen look courageously onward to the fulfillment of those hopes, which had so constantly in his darkest hours comforted the heart and nerved the arm of the Jew. The scroll consists of three portions:

(1) "a triumphal hymn of Israel's salvation," Jeremiah 3031;

(2) Jeremiah 32; and

(3) Jeremiah 33.

Verse 2

Write … in a book - To be read and meditated upon by them in private. This makes it exceedingly probable that the date of these two chapters was also the 10th year of Zedekiah, immediately after the purchase of the field from Hanameel.

All the words - i. e., the scroll was to be a summary of whatever of hope and mercy had been contained in previous predictions.

Verse 5

Better, as in the margin. The prophet places his hearers in the center of Babylon, and describes it as convulsed with terror as the armies of Cyrus draw near. The voice of trembling is the war-cry of the advancing host: while fear and no peace implies that even among the exiles there is only alarm at the prospect of the city, where they had so long dwelt, being destroyed.

Verse 7

That day - i. e., the day of the capture of Babylon.

It is even the time of Jacob‘s trouble - Rather, and it is a time of trouble to Jacob, i. e., of anxiety to the Jews, for the usages of war were so brutal that they would be in danger when the enemy made their assault.

Verse 8

Bonds - See Jeremiah 27:2 note.

Shall no more serve themselves - i. e., shall no more exact forced labor of him Jeremiah 22:13.

Verse 9

David their king - See Jeremiah 23:5-6; i. e., Messiah.

Verse 10-11

These two verses are considered by some very similar in style to the last 27 chapters of Isaiah. The contrast, however, between the full end made with the pagan, and the certainty that Israel shall never so perish, is one of Jeremiah‘s most common topics.

Jeremiah 30:11

In measure - See the Jeremiah 10:24 note.

Verse 12

Incurable - Mortal, fatal.

Verse 13

That thou mayest be bound up - Others put a stop after “cause,” and translate, For binding thy wound, healing plaster thou hast none.

Verse 14

For the multitude … - Or,

Because of the multitude of thine iniquity,

Because thy sins are strong.

Judah‘s lovers are the nations which once sought her alliance (see Jeremiah 22:20; Jeremiah 27:3).

Verse 15

Translate it:

Why criest thou because of thy breaking?

Because thy pain is grievous?

Because of the multitude of thine iniquity,

Because thy sins are strong,

I have done these things unto thee.

Verse 16

Therefore - i. e., Because thou hast undergone thy punishment and cried out in consciousness of thy guilt.

Verse 17

Restore health - Or, "apply a bandage" (Jeremiah 8:22 note). For they called read "they call."

Verses 18-22

The prophet speaks of Judah as the type of the Church, with Immanuel as her king.

Jeremiah 30:18

tents - The word suggests that a considerable portion of the people were still nomads.

The city … the palace - Or, each city … each palace. The heap means an artificial mount to keep the city out of the reach of inundations, and to increase the strength of the fortifications.

Shall remain after the manner thereof - Rather, shall be inhabited according to its rights, i. e., suitably.

Jeremiah 30:19

Them - i. e., the city and palace. Render the last words, become few become mean, i. e., despised, lightly esteemed.

Jeremiah 30:21

Translate, And his glorious one shall spring from himself, and his ruler shall go forth from his midst … who is this that hath pledged his heart, i. e., hath staked his life, to dealt near unto Me? i. e., "Messiah shall be revealed to them out of their own midst." He can draw near unto God without fear of death, because being in the form of God, and Himself God, He can claim equality with God Philemon 2:6.

Jeremiah 30:22

This is the effect of Messiah's ministry. Men cannot become God's people, until there has been revealed one of themselves, a man, who can approach unto God, as being also God, and so can bridge over the gulf which separates the finite from the Infinite.

Verse 23-24

Compare the marginal reference. These verses would more appropriately be attached to the next chapter, for which they form a suitable introduction.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 32

Verse 1

At the same time - literally, At that time, i. e., "the latter day." mentioned in Jeremiah 30:24.

Verse 2

The people which were left of the sword - A promise of the restoration of the ten tribes to their land.

The wilderness - Either the desert which lay between Assyria and Palestine; or more probably an allusion to the wilderness of Mount Sinai.

Found grace … rest - Rather, "shall certainly find grace; I will go to give Israel rest.

Verse 3

Of old - From afar (margin). See Jeremiah 30:10. To the Jew God was enthroned in Zion, and thus when His mercy was shown unto the exiles in Assyria it came from a distant region 2 Chronicles 6:20, 2 Chronicles 6:38.

With lovingkindness … - Rather, I have continued lovingkindness unto thee.

Verse 4

O virgin of Israel - i. e., the whole people (compare Jeremiah 14:17 note).

Verse 5

Shall eat them as common things - Rather, shall eat the fruit. Literally, as in the margin. For three years the fruit of a newly-planted tree was not to be touched, that of the fourth year was consecrated to God, but on the fifth year it was profane, i. e., unconsecrated, and so might be applied to the owner's use Leviticus 19:23-25.

Verse 6

This verse anticipates a time when the schism caused by Jeroboam is over. Ephraimite watchmen equally with the tribe of Judah watch for the new moon that they may go up to Jerusalem to keep the appointed Feasts.

Verse 7

Among - Or, because of. Israel is the chief or, first of the nations Deuteronomy 26:19, and Yahweh summons mankind to rejoice, because the remnant of Israel is about to be restored to its old position.

Verse 8

The coasts of the earth - See Jeremiah 6:22 note.

Thither - Really, here. Not to the north country, but to Palestine, where Jeremiah wrote. A company is the word constantly used of Israel at the Exodus Exodus 16:3 as an organized community.

Verse 9

Weeping - For joy, not for sorrow.

Supplications - The conviction that God is guiding them, encourages them to pray.

Ephraim is My firstborn - The house of Joseph is thus to be restored to its old preeminence.

Verse 10

The isles - The coast land of the Mediterranean, used here to show that the most distant countries are to hear and marvel at Israel‘s wonderful restoration.

Verse 12

Omit together. The ten tribes are to flow like a river down from Zion‘s height to their own land, there to reap the rich produce of their tillage. In Jerusalem they would be occupied with religious duties, but after these are rendered to God, they are to disperse each to his own fields.

Sorrow - Rather, languish, pine.

Verse 13

Both gives the idea of the men dancing, which is incorrect. Except at a religious solemnity 2 Samuel 6:14, dancing was confined to women. Render and young men and old rejoice together.

Verses 15-22

The religious character of the restoration of the ten tribes. Chastisement brought repentance, and with it forgiveness; therefore God decrees their restoration.

Jeremiah 31:15

Ramah, mentioned because of its nearness to Jerusalem, from which it was distant about five miles. As the mother of three tribes, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh, Rachel is regarded as the mother of the whole ten. This passage is quoted by Matthew (marginal reference) as a type. In Jeremiah it is a poetical figure representing in a dramatic form the miserable condition of the kingdom of Ephraim devastated by the sword of the Assyrians.

Jeremiah 31:16

Rachel‘s work had been that of bearing and bringing up children, and by their death she was deprived of the joy for which she had labored: but by their being restored to her she will receive her wages.

Jeremiah 31:17

In thine end - i. e., for thy time to come (see the Jeremiah 29:11 note).

Jeremiah 31:18

As a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke - literally, like an untaught calf. Compare the Hosea 10:11 note. Ephraim, like an untrained steer, had resisted Yahweh‘s will.

Jeremiah 31:19

After that I was turned - i. e., after I had turned away from Thee. In Jeremiah 31:18 it has the sense of turning to God.

Instructed - Brought to my senses by suffering. The smiting upon the thigh is a sign of sorrow. Compare Ezekiel 21:17.

The reproach of my youth - i. e., the shame brought upon me by sins of my youth.

Jeremiah 31:20

Moved to compassion by Ephraim‘s lamentation, Yahweh shows Himself as tender and ready to forgive as parents are their spoiled (rather, darling) child.

For … him - Or, “that so often as I speak concerning him,” i. e., his punishment.

My bowels are troubled - The metaphor expresses the most tender internal emotion.

Jeremiah 31:21

Waymarks - See 2 Kings 23:17 note.

High heaps - Or, signposts, pillars to point out the way.

Set thine heart - Not set thy affection, but turn thy thoughts and attention (in Hebrew the heart is the seat of the intellect) to the highway, even the way by which thou wentest.

Jeremiah 31:22

Israel instead of setting itself to return hesitates, and goes here and there in a restless mood. To encourage it God gives the sign following.

A woman shall compass a man - i. e., the female shall protect the strong man; the weaker nature that needs help will surround the stronger with loving and fostering care. This expresses a new relation of Israel to the Lord, a new covenant, which the Lord will make with His people (Jeremiah

31:31 following). The fathers saw in these words a prophecy of the miraculous conception of our Lord by the Virgin.

Verse 23

As yet - Or, Again, once move. The prophet now turns to Judah. By the mountain of holiness is meant not the temple only, but all Jerusalem, of which the temple was the most sacred spot, and that by which all the rest was made holy.

Verse 24

Go forth - "Go about." Judah shall have its settled population and fixed abodes; and shepherds shall move about with their flocks, wherever pasture is to be found.

Verse 25

Sorrowful - Or, languishing Jeremiah 31:12.

Verse 26

The prophet, seeming to himself to awake and look up in the midst of his sleep (whether ecstatic or not we cannot tell), rejoiced in a revelation so entirely consolatory, and unlike his usual message of woe.

Verses 27-34

The prophet shows that the happiness of Israel and Judah, united in one prosperous nation, will rest upon the consciousness that their chastisement has been the result of sins which they have themselves committed, and that God's covenant depends not upon external sanctions, but upon a renewed heart.

Jeremiah 31:27

So rapid shall be the increase that it shall seem as if children and young cattle sprang up out of the ground.

Jeremiah 31:29, Jeremiah 31:30

A sour grape - Better, sour grapes. The idea that Jeremiah and Ezekiel (marginal reference) modified the terms of the second Commandment arises from a mistaken exegesis of their words. Compare Jeremiah 32:18; Deuteronomy 24:16. The obdurate Jews made it a reproach to the divine justice that the nation was to be sorely visited for Manasseh's sin. But this was only because generation after generation had, instead of repenting, repeated the sins of that evil time, and even in a worse form. justice must at length have its course. The acknowledgment that each man died for his own iniquity was a sign of their return to a more just and right state of feeling.

Jeremiah 31:31

A time is foretold which shall be to the nation as marked an epoch as was the Exodus. God at Sinai made a covenant with His people, of which the sanctions were material, or (where spiritual) materially understood. Necessarily therefore the Mosaic Church was temporary, but the sanctions of Jeremiah‘s Church are spiritual - written in the heart - and therefore it must take the place of the former covenant Hebrews 8:13, and must last forever. The prophecy was fulfilled when those Jews who accepted Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, expanded the Jewish into the Christian Church.

Jeremiah 31:32

Although … - i. e., although as their husband (or, “lord” (Baal, compare Hosea 2:16)) I had lawful authority over them. The translation in Hebrews 8:9 agrees with the Septuagint here, but the balance of authority is in favor of the King James Version.

Jeremiah 31:33

The old law could be broken Jeremiah 31:32; to remedy this God gives, not a new law, but a new power to the old law. It used to be a mere code of morals, external to man, and obeyed as a duty. In Christianity, it becomes an inner force, shaping man‘s character from within.

Jeremiah 31:34

I will forgive their iniquity - The foundation of the new covenant is the free forgiveness of sins (compare Matthew 1:21). It is the sense of this full unmerited love which so affects the heart as to make obedience henceforward an inner necessity.

Verse 35

Divideth … - Rather, stirreth up the sea so that its waves roar.

Verse 36

If those - If these. From the uniformity of God‘s operations in the material world, the prophet deduces the certainty of a similar uniformity in God‘s dealings with man in things spiritual.

A nation - A people. Israel has long ceased to be a nation, but it still exists as a numerous, influential, and distinct people. In Matthew 28:19-20 Jeremiah‘s prophecy receives its Christian application, and Israel becomes the Church, with the promise of perpetual existence. It has no national existence, but its members ought to be a strongly marked people, refusing to be merged in the world, while everywhere they pervade and influence it.

Verse 37

All the seed - Unworthy members of Israel may be cast away, but the race shall never entirely cease to exist.

Verse 38

To the Lord - Or, for Yahweh: for His dwelling in the hearts of a people prepared to be His temple.

Verse 39

Over … Gareb - Or, straight along the hill Gareb. Probably the hill of lepers, outside the old walls, toward the southwest.

Goath - Goah. Unknown.

Verse 40

The whole valley of the dead bodies - Probably some part of the Valley of Ben-Hinnom. Comparing Zechariah 2:4, the conclusion seems evident that Jeremiah‘s words are to be spiritually understood. His city is one that renders holy unto Yahweh what was before unclean. Compare John‘s new Jerusalem Revelation 21:27.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 32

Introduction

The Chaldaeans were already besieging the city, the prophet was in prison for foretelling its certain capture, and yet he bought with all the proper legal solemnities an estate, of which Leviticus 25:25 he had the right of redemption. The price apparently was small, but was more than the land commercially was worth. Jeremiah was now verging on 60, and only 10 of the 70 years of the captivity had passed by. But though the estate was not worth the purchase, the opportunity was precious as a means of assuring the people that (God would certainly bring them back. Jeremiah records, Jeremiah 32:16-25 how his heart misgave him, upon which Jeremiah 32:26-44God unfolds to hint the full meaning of the sign, and assures him of the certainty of Israel‘s restoration.

Verse 1

The siege of Jerusalem began in Zedekiah‘s ninth year Jeremiah 39:1, but was temporarily raised upon the approach of an Egyptian army. See Jeremiah 37; 38.

Verse 2

The prison - Or, the guard, a part of the king‘s palace, probably where the royal guard had its quarters.

Verse 3

For the prophecies on which the charge was grounded see Jeremiah 21:4-7, Jeremiah 21:9.

Verse 5

I visit - In the sense of punishment. See Jeremiah 39:6-7; Jeremiah 52:11.

Verse 7

Hanameel was strictly the first-cousin of Jeremiah. In Hebrew all the terms of relationship are used in a more loose way than with us.

Verse 8

The right of inheritance is thine - Hanameel therefore had no children, and at his death the land would have been Jeremiah‘s by right of birth. According to the Law Numbers 35:5, it must have been part of the suburbs of Anathoth, within less than a mile, which was all the priests and Levites might cultivate.

Verse 9

Seventeen shekels of silver - literally, as in the margin, probably a legal formula. Jeremiah bought Hanameel‘s life-interest up to the year of Jubilee, and no man‘s life was worth much in a siege like that of Jerusalem. As Jeremiah had no children, at his death the land would devolve to the person who would have inherited it had Jeremiah not bought it. He therefore bought what never was and never could have been of the slightest use to him, and gave for it what in the growing urgency of the siege might have been very serviceable to himself. Still, as the next heir. it was Jeremiah‘s duty to buy the estate, independently of the importance of the act as a sign to the people; and evidently he gave the full value.

Verse 10-11

Translate: And I wrote the particulars of the purchase in the deed … And I took the purchase-deed, both that which was sealed containing the oiler and the conditions, and that which was open etc. There were two indentures, of which one was called the purchase-deed, and was signed by the purchaser and the witnesses. It was then sealed, not in our sense of appending a seal in place of signatures, but to close it up. The open deed was probably an exact copy, and was that intended for common use. In case its authenticity was called in question, the sealed copy would have to be produced before the judge, the seal opened, and if its contents agreed with those of the open deed, the decision would be in the buyer‘s favor.

By the offer is probably meant the specification. The conditions, literally, the statutes, would be the stipulations and terms of the sale, e. g. as to its restoration at the year of jubile, its price etc. The placing of the deeds in jar was of course intended to preserve them from damp during the long years of the exile.

Verse 15

Possessed - bought.

Verse 17

(27).

d **Too hard -** literally, too wonderful.

Verse 18

Recompensest - The recompence is placed in the bosom, because, in the East, the garments are so arranged as to form a pocket there. Thus then, men must receive and carry with them God‘s requital for their deeds.

Verse 20

The sense is, who hast set, i. e., performed Exodus 10:2 signs etc., and hast continued working them unto this day, both in lsrael and among men (i. e., the pagan).

Verse 23

Possessed - See Jeremiah 8:10 note.

Verse 24

The mounts - See Jeremiah 6:6 note.

Verse 25

For - See the margin. It is enough to place the command side by side with the state of Jerusalem to show how contrary it is to all the rules of human prudence. The prophet is sure that God will explain to him his difficulty.

Verses 26-44

The answer is divided into two parts;

(a) Jeremiah 32:26-35, the sins of Judah are shown to be the cause of her punishment:

(b) Jeremiah 32:36-44, this punishment was not for Judah‘s destruction, but for her amendment.

Jeremiah 32:28

I will give - Or, I am giving.

Jeremiah 32:30

From their youth - God‘s mighty deeds for Israel began in Egypt Jeremiah 32:20, and so did Israel‘s sin.

Jeremiah 32:34, Jeremiah 32:35

These verses are repeated from Jeremiah 7:30-31, but with two important variations. Baal is put for Tophet, and to Molech instead of in the fire. Molech the king and Baal the lord are different names of the sun-god, but in altered relations. Molech is the sun as the mighty fire, which in passing through the signs of the Zodiac burns up its own children. It is an old Canaanite worship, carried by the Phoenicians to all their colonies, and firmly established in Palestine at the time when the Israelites conquered the country.

Jeremiah 32:39

One heart, and one way - Compare Jeremiah 3:13. Under the new covenant they will with one consent walk in the one narrow path of right-

doing Matthew 7:14. Forever, i. e., every day, constantly.

Jeremiah 32:40

God‘s new covenant Jeremiah 31:31 is on God‘s side, I will not turn away from them to do them good, i. e., I will never cease from doing them good. On their side, I will put My fear in their hearts that they depart not from Me. In these two conditions consists the certainty of the eternal duration of the covenant Matthew 28:20.

Jeremiah 32:41

Assuredly - literally, in truth, i. e., in verity, in reality. It refers to God‘s firm purpose, rather than to the safety and security of the people. The new covenant is one of grace, indicated by God‘s rejoicing over His people, and “planting them with His whole heart.”

Jeremiah 32:43

Fields - literally, The field, the open unenclosed country Jeremiah 4:17. In Jeremiah 32:44 fields refers to the several portions of it which belonged to individuals, and of which the boundaries were shown by landmarks.

Jeremiah 32:44

Subscribe evidences - See Jeremiah 32:10. In order to bring the certainty of the return from exile more vividly before the mind, the prophet enumerates the several subdivisions of the territory of the kings of Judah.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 33

Introduction

The promises of Jeremiah 33:15-16, in whom both the Levitical priesthood and the Davidic kingdom are combined Jeremiah 33:17-18, and God‘s covenant with mankind made perpetual Jeremiah 33:19-26.

Verse 1

The prison - The guard.

Verse 2

Or, Thus saith Yahweh the doer of it, Yahweh who formeth it, that He may establish it, Yahweh is His name. The word “it” means whatsoever Yahweh wills.

Verse 3

Mighty things - Or, as in the margin. The words are probably a quotation from Isaiah 48:6.

Verse 4

By … by - Rather, against … against. As the works of the enemy approached the walls, houses were pulled down to build inner fortifications. Swords are mentioned in Ezekiel 26:9 (translated, axes), as used for breaking down the towers in the walls. See Jeremiah 5:17, note.

Verse 5

Render, They, i. e., the Jews come to fight with the Chaldaeans, and to fill them, i. e., the houses, with the dead bodies etc.

Verse 6

I will bring it health and cure - I will lay upon it a bandage and healing, i. e., a healing bandage, a plaster with healing medicines.

Verse 7

At the first - i. e., before their sins had provoked God to anger.

Verse 9

It - The city, Jerusalem.

They shall fear and tremble - With terror, because of the eternal opposition between right and wrong, truth and error. The nations of the earth as opposed to Israel represent the world as opposed to the Church.

Verse 10

Which ye say shall be desolate - Of which ye say, It is desolate … The prophet first sees Judaea silent and desolate during the 70 years‘ captivity:

and then describes the two things, men and cattle, without which land is valueless.

Verse 11

Praise the Lord … - The customary formula of thanksgiving in many of the later Psalms, and from its occurrence in 2 Chronicles 5:13; 2 Chronicles 7:3, 2 Chronicles 7:6 ff probably a regular part of the liturgical service of the temple.

Shall say … shall bring the sacrifice of praise - Or, say … as they bring praise, i. e., a thank-offering (see the marginal reference) into the house of the Lord

At the first - Before the captivity, and when still unpolluted by the sins which have brought upon it so heavy a chastisement.

Verse 12

An habitation - "A shepherd‘s encampment." The words, "causing their flocks to lie down," mean gathering them into the fold at night.

Verse 13

Telleth - i. e., counts the number of his sheep.

Verse 14

That good thing - Better, the good word Jeremiah 29:10, with reference to the promise already given Jeremiah 23:5-6.

Verse 15-16

Compare the marginal reference. When the good word was spoken, the name Yahweh our Righteousness was given to the righteous Sprout: here it is given to Jerusalem, i. e., to the Church, because it is her business mediately to work on earth that righteousness which Christ works absolutely. Compare Ephesians 1:23.

Verse 17-18

Read literally, these verses promise the permanent restoration of the Davidic throne and (of the Levitical priesthood. As a matter of fact Zedekiah was the last king of David‘s line, and the Levitical priest-hood has long passed away. Both these changes Jeremiah himself foretold Jeremiah 22:30; Jeremiah 3:16. In what way then is this apparent contradiction (compare Isaiah 66:20-23; Ezekiel 4048) to be explained? The solution is probably as follows. It was necessary that the Bible should be intelligible to the people at the time when it was written, and in some degree to the writer. The Davidic kingship and the Levitical priest-hood were symbols, which represented to the Jew all that was most dear to his heart in the state of

things under which he lived. Their restoration was the restoration of his national and spiritual life. Neither was so restored as to exist permanently. But that was given instead, of which both were types, the Church, whose Head is the true prophet, priest and King.

Verse 21-22

This promise also has been not literally, but spiritually fulfilled, for in this sense only have the seed of David and the Levites been multiplied.

Verse 24

Considerest thou not - literally, Hast thou not seen, i. e., noticed?

This people - i. e., the Jews.

Thus … - Or, and "My people they have despised," so that they are "no more a nation" in their sight. They say that God has rejected Judah as well as Israel: and thus they despise themselves in their relation to God as His covenant-people, by regarding their national existence as about immediately to cease forever.

Verse 25

The ordinances of heaven and earth - i. e., the whole order of nature Nature is not more firmly established than God‘s purposes in grace.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 34

Introduction

The ordinary view of this prophecy Jeremiah 32:3-5, is not so probable as that which takes it in connection with Jeremiah 21:1-14. Jeremiah had then informed Zedekiah by his messengers that Jerusalem would certainly be captured: but he was still in a condition to obtain good terms, and the prophet goes to him and lays before him the alternative. Zedekiah with all the obstinacy of a weak man chose to continue the war, and lost kingdom, eyesight, and liberty.

Verse 1

People - Peoples, i. e., tribes, races, under the rule of one man.

Verse 5

In peace - See Jeremiah 12:12 note.

Burn odors - "Make a burning." The burning was probably that of piles of wood, and spices were added only as an special honor. It was not a Jewish custom to burn the dead. As these burnings depended upon the estimation in which the dead king was held, the verse implies a prosperous reign, such as Zedekiah might have had as an obedient vassal to BabyIon.

I have pronounced the word - I have spoken the word.

Verse 7

This marks the exact time, that it was early in the campaign, while the outlying fortresses still occupied the attention of Nebuchadnezzars army. Lachish and Azekah were strong cities in the plain toward Egypt and must be taken before the Chaldseans could march upon Jerusalem: otherwise the Egyptians might collect there and fall upon them.

Verses 8-22

It is usual with commentators to say that, the laws dealing with the emancipation of the Hebrew slaves, as also that of the land resting during the sabbatical year, were not observed. The narrative teaches us the exact contrary. The manumission of the slaves on the present occasion was the spontaneous act of Zedekiah and the people. They knew of the law, and acknowledged its obligation. The observance of it was, no doubt, lax: the majority let their own selfish interests prevail; but the minority made might give way to right, and Zedekiah supported their efforts though only in a weak way.

Early in January, in the ninth year of Zedekiah, the Chaldaean army approached Jerusalem. The people made a covenant with the king, who appears as the abettor of the measure, to let their slaves go free. Possibly patriotism had its share in this: and as Jerusalem was strongly fortified, all classes possibly hoped that if the slaves were manumitted, they too would labor with a more hearty good-will in resisting the enemy. In the summer of the same year the Egyptians advanced to the rescue, and Nebuchadnezzar withdrew to meet their attack. The Jews with a strange levity, which sets them before us in a most despicable light, at once forced the manumitted slaves back into bondage. With noble indignation Jeremiah rebukes them for their treachery, assures them that the Chaldaean army will return, and warns them of the certainty of the punishment which they so richly merited.

Jeremiah 34:8

As the Chaldaean army swept over the country the wealthier classes would all flee to Jerusalem, taking with them their households. And as the Mosaic Law was probably more carefully kept there than in the country, the presence in these families of slaves who had grown grey in service may have given offence to the stricter classes at the capital.

To proclaim liberty unto them - The words are those of the proclamation of the year of jubile to the people, whereupon it became their duty to set their slaves free.

Jeremiah 34:9

Should serve himself of them - Should make them serve him (see Jeremiah 25:14).

Jeremiah 34:11

They turned, and caused … to return - But afterward they again made the slaves return.

Jeremiah 34:13

The house of bondmen - The miserable prison in which, after being worked in the fields all day in gangs, the slaves were shut up at night.

Jeremiah 34:16

At their pleasure - literally, for themselves.

Jeremiah 34:17

I will make you to be removed into - "I will cause you to be a terror unto." Men would shudder at them.

Jeremiah 34:18

The words … - The Jews spoke of "cutting" a covenant, because the contracting parties cut a calf in twain and passed between the pieces. Thus cutting a covenant and cutting a calf in twain, meant the same thing.

Jeremiah 34:21

Which are gone up from you - i. e., which have departed for the present, and have raised the siege.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 35

Verse 2

The house - The family.

The Rechabites - The Rechabites were a nomadic tribe not of Jewish but of Kenite race, and connected with the Amalekites Numbers 24:21; 1 Samuel 15:6, from whom however they had separated themselves, and made a close alliance with the tribe of Judah Judges 1:16, on whose southern borders they took up their dwelling 1 Samuel 27:10. While, however, the main body of the Kenites gradually adopted settled habits, and dwelt in cities 1 Samuel 30:29, the Rechabites persisted in leading the free desert life, and in this determination they were finally confirmed by the influence and authority of Jonadab, who lived in Jehu‘s reign. He was a zealous adherent of Yahweh 2 Kings 10:15-17, and possibly a religious reformer; and as the names of the men mentioned in the present narrative are all compounded with Yah, it is plain that the tribe continued their allegiance to Him.

The object of Jonadab in endeavoring to preserve the nomad habits of his race was probably twofold. He wished first to maintain among them the purer morality and higher feeling of the desert contrasted with the laxity and effeminacy of the city life; and secondly he was anxious for the preservation of their freedom. Their punctilious obedience Jeremiah 35:14 to Jonadab‘s precepts is employed by Jeremiah to point a useful lesson for his own people.

The date of the prophecy is the interval between the battle of Carchemish and the appearance of Nebuchadnezzar at Jerusalem, Jeremiah 35:11 at the end of the same year. It is consequently 17 years earlier than the narrative in Jeremiah 34:8 ff

Verse 3

Jaazaniah was the chief of that portion of the tribe which had taken refuge in Jerusalem.

Verse 4

The title man of God, i. e., prophet, belongs to Hanan, identified by many with Hanani 2 Chronicles 16:7. The sons of Hanan were probably his disciples. If so, we find a religious school or sect, regularly established in

the precincts of the temple, of whose views and modes of interpretation we know nothing. Plainly however, the Hananites were friendly to Jeremiah, and lent him their hall for his purpose.

The chamber of the princes - Probably the council-chamber in which the great officers of state met for the despatch of business.

The keeper of the door - There were three of these keepers, answering to the outer and inner courts of the temple, and the entrance to the temple itself. They were officers of high rank, having precedence next to the high priest and his deputy.

Verse 5

Pots - "Bowls," to fill the cups.

Verse 6-7

Wine is the symbol of a settled life, because the vine requires time for its growth and care in its cultivation, while the preparation of the wine itself requires buildings, and it then has to be stored up before it is ready for use. The drink of nomads consists of the milk of their herds.

Jeremiah 35:7

Strangers - Because not of Jewish blood, though wandering in their territory.

Verses 8-10

Our father - Not merely our ancestor, but the founder of our institutions.

Verse 11

The Syrians - The Septuagint substitutes Assyrians for Syrians, but marauding bands of the Aramaeans are probably meant.

Verse 13

Jeremiah, accompanied by the main body of the Rechabites, went into one of the courts of the temple, and there addressed to the people the rebuke following.

Verse 14

Are performed - Are established, i. e., are maintained in full force.

Unto this day - i. e., for more than 200 years.

Verse 15

All … the prophets - The Rechabites had had but one lawgiver: the Jews had had a succession of messengers from God.

Verse 19

Travelers bear witness to the existence of a large tribe who represent themselves as the descendants of the Rechabites. The prediction was also literally fulfilled in the Rechabites being in some way incorporated into the tribe of Levi, whose office especially it was to “stand before” Yahweh Deuteronomy 10:8.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 36

Introduction

Historical events connected with the collection of Jeremiah‘s prophecies into a volume, and with his personal history immediately before and after the siege of Jerusalem Jeremiah 36-44.

Jeremiah 36. Attached to the prophecies relating to Israel and Judah is an account of the circumstances under which very many of them, and also the prophecies concerning the Gentiles, were first formed into one volume. See the introduction of Jeremiah.

Verse 1

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim - See Jeremiah 25:1 note. The present chapter belongs to the very end of that year. The capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar took place early in Jehoiakim‘s fourth year, long before the writing of Jehoiakim‘s scroll. The humiliation seems to have sunk deeply into the heart of Jehoiakim, and when Jeremiah prophesied extended dominion to the Chaldaeans Jeremiah 36:29, his anger knew no bounds. It was the fact that judgment had begun which made it expedient to gather Jeremiah‘s predictions into one volume, with the object:

(1) of inducing the people to repent, and

(2) of persuading the king to be a true subject of the Chaldaean empire.

Verse 2

A roll of a book - A parchment-scroll, consisting of several skins sewn together, and cut of an even breadth, with a piece of wood at one end (or, in case of larger volumes, at both ends) on which to roll them up.

Write therein all the words … - The phrase means that the roll was to contain “all the counsel of God” Acts 20:27 upon the special point mentioned in Jeremiah 36:3; and that the prophet was not to keep anything back.

Verse 3

Compare Jeremiah 26:3. In point of date Jeremiah 26: is immediately prior to the present.

Verse 5

Shut up - Hindered from going; perhaps through fear of Jehoiakim.

Verse 6

The fasting day - A fasting day. Baruch was to wait for a proper opportunity Jeremiah 36:9.

Verse 7

They will present their supplication - i. e., humbly. See the margin. The phrase also contained the idea of the prayer being accepted.

Verse 8

Reading - To read.

Verse 9

The ninth month answers to our December, and the fast was probably in commemoration of the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldaeans in the previous year.

Verse 10

Gemariah seems to have inherited his father‘s office of public scribe or secretary of state (see 2 Kings 22:3). As brother of Ahikam, he would be favorable to Jeremiah.

The higher court - The inner court; into which it was not lawful for the people to enter, but the chamber probably itself formed one of its sides, and could be approached from the outer court.

Verse 11

Probably as his father had lent Jeremiah the hall, Michaiah had been commanded to bring Gemariah Jeremiah 36:12 tidings, as soon as the reading was over, of the nature of the prophet‘s words, and the effect produced by them upon the people.

Verse 12

The scribe‘s chamber - The chancery in which the king‘s business was conducted. Probably Elishama was one of the “principal scribes of the host” Jeremiah 52:25, i. e., the secretary of state for war. The business which had brought together “all the princes” would have reference to the Chaldaean war.

Verse 14

Jehudi signifies a Jew and Cushi an Ethiopian, but it seems reasonable to conclude that they are genuine, proper names.

Verse 16

They were afraid both one and other - literally, “they trembled each to his neighbor,” i. e., they showed their alarm by their looks and gestures one

to another. They felt that what he had so consistently prophesied for a period of 23 years would in all probability be fulfilled.

We will surely tell - Rather, We must tell the king. It was their official duty.

Verse 17

The scroll might have been drawn up by Baruch from memoranda of his own without the prophet‘s direct authority. The princes therefore did not ask from curiosity, but to obtain necessary information.

Verse 18

He pronounced - He used to say aloud, he dictated. Baruch‘s office was merely mechanical. He contributed nothing but hand, pen, and ink.

Verse 20

The court - i. e., The inner quadrangle of the palace, in which was the royal residence.

They laid up the roll - They left the scroll in charge, i. e., in the care of someone.

Verse 22

The winterhouse - A separate portion of the palace was used for residence according to the season (marginal reference).

And there was a fire on the hearth … - And the fire-pan burning before them. On the middle of the floor was a brazier containing burning charcoal.

Verse 23

Leaves - Columns: literally folding-doors; the word exactly describes the shape of the columns of writing upon the scroll.

Penknife - "Scribe‘s knife;" used to shape the reed for writing, and to make erasures in the parchment.

On the hearth - Or, in the fire-pan. The conduct of the king shows how violent was his temper.

Verse 25

It is remarkable to find Elnathan interceding for Jeremiah after the office he had discharged toward Urijah Jeremiah 26:22.

Verse 26

Hammelech - Either a proper name or a prince of the blood royal (see the margin; Jeremiah 38:6; 1 Kings 22:26).

Verse 29

The king of Babylon … - These words do not prove that Nebuchadnezzar had not already come, and compelled Jehoiakim to become his vassal. The force lies in the last words, which predict such a coming as would make the land utterly desolate: and this would be the result of the king throwing off the Chaldaean yoke.

Verse 30

He shall have none to sit … - The 3 months‘ reign of Jehoiakim was too destitute of real power to be a contradiction to this prediction.

Verse 32

Many like words - The second scroll was thus a more complete record of the main lessons taught by Jeremiah during the long course of his inspired ministry.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 37

Verse 1

It is evident that Zedekiah was well affected toward Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 3738, dealing with events during the siege of Jerusalem, we have an account of his relations with Jeremiah and of the prophet‘s personal history up to the capture of the city.

Verse 3

This embassy is not to be confounded with that Jeremiah 21:1 which took place when Nebuchadnezzar was just marching upon Jerusalem; this was in the brief interval of hope occasioned by the approach of an Egyptian army to raise the siege. The Jews were elated by this temporary relief, and miserably abused it Jeremiah 34:11. Zedekiah seems to some extent to have shared their hopes, and to have expected that the prophet would intercede for the city as successfully as Isaiah had done Isaiah 37:6. Jehucal was a member of the warlike party Jeremiah 38:1, as also was the deputy high priest Zephaniah, but otherwise he was well affected to Jeremiah.

Verse 5

Then - And. Pharaoh-Hophra Jeremiah 44:30, the Apries of Herodotus, probably withdrew without giving Nebuchadnezzar battle. After a reign of 25 years, he was dethroned by Amasis, but allowed to inhabit his palace at Sais, where finally he was strangled.

Verses 7-10

Jeremiah‘s answer here is even more unfavorable than that which is given in Jeremiah 21:4-7. So hopeless is resistance that the disabled men among the Chaldaeans would alone suffice to capture the city and burn it to the ground.

Verse 11

Was broken up for fear of - Or, “had got them up from the face of.” It was simply a strategic movement.

Verse 12

To separate himself thence … - To receive a share thence. When the siege was temporarily raised, the first object would be food, and, accordingly, Jeremiah accompanied by others, who, like himself, had a right to share in the produce of the priests‘ lands at Anathoth, started there to see whether any stores remained which might be available for their common use.

Verse 13

A captain of the ward - Captain of the watch, whose business was to examine all who went in and out.

The gate of Benjamin - The northern gate, also called the gate of Ephraim.

Thou fallest away … - His well-known views made Jeremiah a suspected person, though the charge was groundless.

Verse 14

The princes - Not the noblemen trained in the days of Josiah and Jeremiah‘s friends Jeremiah 26:16, but those described in Jeremiah 24:8. They assumed that the accusation was true; they first scourged and then imprisoned Jeremiah.

Verse 15

The house - Probably the official residence of the secretary of state.

Verse 16

Dungeon - literally, house of a cistern or pit, and evidently underground. In this cistern-like excavation were several cells or arched vaults, in one of which with little light and less ventilation Jeremiah remained a long time.

Verse 21

The prison - the watch (marginal reference).

Piece - literally, a circle, i. e., a round cake.

The bakers‘ street - It is usual in oriental towns for each trade to have a special place set apart for it. Compare Acts 10:6.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 38

Introduction

The object of the princes in imprisoning Jeremiah in Jonathan‘s house had been to get him out of the way, as his predictions depressed the minds of the people. This purpose was frustrated by his removal to the guard-house, where he was with the soldiery, and his friends had free access to him Jeremiah 32:12. Therefore, the princes determined upon the prophet‘s death. Zedekiah was powerless Jeremiah 38:5, and Jeremiah was thrown into a miry pit.

Verse 1

Had spoken - Spake; or, was speaking.

Verse 4

For thus … - Because he makes the men of war dispirited. No doubt this was true. Jeremiah, however, did not speak as a private person, but as the representative of the government; the temporal ruler in a theocracy being responsible directly to God.

Verse 5

All real power was in their hands, and as they affirmed that Jeremiah‘s death was a matter of necessity, the king did not dare refuse it to them.

Verse 6

The dungeon - The cistern. Every house in Jerusalem was supplied with a subterranean cistern, so well constructed that the city never suffered in a siege from want of water. So large were they that when dry they seem to have been used for prisons Zechariah 9:11.

Hammelech - See Jeremiah 36:26 note.

The prison - The guard. They threw Jeremiah into the nearest cistern, intending that he should die of starvation. Some have thought that Psalm 69 was composed by Jeremiah when in this cistern.

Verse 7

Ebed-melech - i. e., the king‘s slave. By “Ethiopian” or Cushite is meant the Cushite of Africa, or negro. It seems (compare 2 Kings 23:11) as if such eunuchs (or, chamberlains) took their names from the king, while the royal family and the princes generally bore names compounded with the appellations of the Deity.

Verse 10

Thirty men - So large a number suggests that Zedekiah expected some resistance. (Some read "three" men.)

Verse 11

Old cast clouts … - Rags of torn garments and rags of worn-out garments.

Verse 14

The third entry - There was probably a passage from the palace to the temple at this entry, and the meeting would take place in some private chamber close by.

Verse 15

Wilt thou not hearken … ! - Rather, Thou wilt not hearken.

Verse 16

That made us this soul - This very unusual addition to the formula of an oath 1 Samuel 20:3 was intended to strengthen it. By acknowledging that his soul was God's workmanship Zedekiah also implied his belief in God's power over it.

Verse 19

The Jews that are fallen to the Chaldaeans - These deserters probably formed a numerous party, and now would be the more indignant with Zedekiah for having rejected their original advice to submit.

Verse 22

All the women that are left - Belonging to the harems of former kings (compare 1 Kings 2:22), attendants, and slaves.

Thy friends … - This satirical song (compare Obadiah 1:7) should be translated as a distich:

Thy friends have urged thee on and prevailed upon thee:

Thy feet are stuck in the mire; they have turned back.

Thy friends - literally "men of thy peace," thy acquaintance Jeremiah 20:10. They urge Zedekiah on to a hopeless struggle with the Chaldaeans, and when he gets into difficulties leave him in the lurch.

Verse 23

So - And. In addition to the ridicule there shall be the miseries of the capture.

Thou shalt cause this city to be burned - literally, as margin. It shall be thy own act as completely as if done with thine own hand.

Verse 28

And he was there when … - These words are altered by some to “and it came to pass when” etc., and taken to form the opening of Jeremiah 39.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 39

Verse 1

"The Capture of Jerusalem" - The majority of the particulars given in Jeremiah 39:1-14 occur again (marginal reference); and are by some regarded as an interpolation. The external evidence (that of the versions) is, however, in favor of their authenticity. Jeremiah 39:14 is to be reconciled with Jeremiah 40:1-4 by remembering that Gedaliah had left Jerusalem and gone to Mizpah Jeremiah 40:6, a city in the immediate neighborhood; and as he was not at home to protect the prophet, nothing is more probable than that Jeremiah in company with the main body of captives was brought to Ramah in chains.

Verse 3

These princes were four:

(1) Nergal, Sharezer, i. e., Nirgal-sar-usur (May Nergal protect the king);

(2) Samgar-Nebo (Be gracious, O Nebo);

(3) Sarsechim. No explanation is given at present of this name. He was Rab-saris, i. e., chief of the eunuchs (2 Kings 18:17 note).

(4) another Nergal-sharezer, who was Rab-mag, i. e., chief of the Magians. He is known in history as Neriglissar, the son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar, and probably his vicegerent during his seven years of madness. Two years after his death Neriglissar murdered Evil-Merodach, Nebuchadnezzars son, and seized the crown, but after a reign of four years was slain in battle against Cyrus, when disputing with him the crown of Media. See Daniel 5:1 note.

The middle gate - Probably that which separated the city of Zion from the lower town.

Verses 4-10

Compare the marginal reference. The differences between the two accounts are slight.

Verse 13

Nebuzar-adan is in the inscriptions Nabu-zir-iddina (Nebo has given offspring); and Nebushasban, Nabu-sizibanni (Nebo save me), whom some identify with Sarsechim Jeremiah 39:3.

Verse 14

Jeremiah was to be taken out of the court of the watch, and placed in the palace close by.

He dwelt among the people - i. e., he was no longer in custody, but master of his own actions.

Verse 15

This prophecy probably came to Jeremiah after his interview with Zedekiah Jeremiah 38:14, but is added here as a supplement in order not to break the sequence of events.

Verse 17

Of whom thou art afraid - The Chaldaeans. Ebed-melech apparently looked forward with much alarm to the b oodshed sure to take place at the storming of the city.

Verse 18

A prey unto thee - An unexpected and unlooked-for gain. He had given proof of faith in courageously delivering God‘s prophet.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 40

Verse 1

As what follows is mainly a historical narrative, it seems that the title "The word … " was appropriate not merely to a prediction of the future, but to an account of the past, if written by a prophet. The Jews regarded history as inspired if written by a seer, and thus their historical books are called "the early prophets."

Ramah - Probably all the prisoners of note were collected at Ramah indiscriminately, and examined there.

Bound in chains - The prisoners were probably fastened together in couples by one hand, and a rope passed down the center to bind them in a long line, and prevent attempts at escape.

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Verse 5

Now while he was not yet gone back - Most modern commentators render "And as he yet answered nothing, Return then, he said, to Gedaliah … "

Victuals - A ration of food.

A reward - A present.

Verse 7

The men would be the old and infirm: the women those whose husbands and protectors had perished in the wars (e. g. Jeremiah 41:10). The word children includes all the inferior members of a household.

Verse 9-10

To serve the Chaldeans - literally, as margin; to be their minister and lieutenant. Gedaliah supposed that officers of high rank would come from time to time from Babylon to look after the king‘s interests. But whatever was ordered would be done through him, as being the prime minister.

Gather ye wine - As Jerusalem was captured in the fifth month, August, it would now be autumn, and there would be fruit upon the trees, enough to maintain the scanty population during the winter.

Taken - Or, seized. Every captain had probably occupied some place by force as his head quarters, and Gedaliah bids them retain them. He frankly accepts the whole existing state of things, as a necessary step toward re-establishing confidence.

Verse 14

It is difficult to say what object Baalis can have had in murdering Gedaliah. As an ally of Zedekiah Jeremiah 27:3, he may have had a spite against the family of Ahikam for opposing, as most probably they did at Jeremiah‘s instigation, the league proposed Jeremiah 27. Ishmael‘s motive was envy and spite at seeing a subject who had always opposed the war now invested with kingly power, in place of the royal family.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 41

Verse 1

The seventh month - Gedaliah‘s government lasted less than two months.

Even - Rather, and. Ishmael was descended probably from Elishama the son of David 2 Samuel 5:16. Ten grandees each with his retinue would have aroused suspicion, but the smallness of Ishmael‘s following put Gedaliah completely off his guard.

Verse 5

These three towns all lay in the tribe of Ephraim, and in the district planted by Salmaneser with Cuthites; but through the fact of these men having cut themselves (see Jeremiah 16:6 note), is suspicious, yet they were probably pious Israelites, going up to Jerusalem, carrying the meat offering usual at the feast of tabernacles, of which this was the season, and mourning over the destruction, not of the city, but of the temple, to the repairs of which we find the members of this tribe contributing in Josiah‘s time 2 Chronicles 34:9.

Verse 6

Ishmael‘s conduct seems to have been dictated by the malicious desire utterly to frustrate Gedaliah‘s work.

Weeping - By this artifice he lured them into Mizpah. The Septuagint: “as they were … weeping.”

Verse 7

The pit - the cistern, and in Jeremiah 41:9.

Verse 8

Treasures - Hidden stores; which would be of great value to Ishmael in his retreat back to Baalis.

Verse 9

Because of Gedaliah - By the side “of Gedaliah.” Ishmael now cast beside Gedaliah‘s body those of the pilgrims.

Verse 12

An open pool still exists at Gibeon, and a large subterranean reservoir fed by a copious natural spring. Gibeon is about two miles north of Mizpah.

Verse 17

The habitation of Chimham - The Hebrew text has Geruth-Chemoham, of which place nothing is known. The Masoretes read: Geruth-

Chimham, the Khan or Caravanserai of Chimham, son of the rich Barzillai (marginal reference). The substitution is incapable now of proof or disproof, but it is possibly right.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 42

Verse 1

Among those delivered by Johanan from Ishmael had been Jeremiah and Baruch Jeremiah 43:6; and to them now all, without exception, come for counsel.

Jezaniah - He is called Azariah in Jeremiah 43:2. The Septuagint, in both places, call him Azariah. Since there is little reason for identifying him with Jezaniah the Maachathite Jeremiah 40:8, it is probable that the Septuagint is right in calling him in both places Azariah, and that the reading Jezaniah arose from some scribe assuming that his name must be found in the earlier list.

Verse 5

Between us - Against us, as in Jeremiah 42:19 (margin.)

According to all things - literally, "according to the whole word as to which Yahweh thy God shall send thee to us."

Verse 6

We - The form used here occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament, but is the regular form of the pronoun in the Talmud. It is one out of many instances of Jeremiah using the popular instead of the literary language of his times.

Verse 7

After ten days - On previous occasions Jeremiah when consulted answered at once Jeremiah 21:3. The present delay (compare Jeremiah 28:12) was probably granted by God in order to free the minds of the people from the panic caused by the murder of Gedaliah and their fear of Chaldaean vengeance. Jeremiah could have had no doubt that the flight into Egypt was contrary to the tenor of his former prophecies.

Verse 10

I repent me - As punishment had been inflicted, the divine justice was satisfied.

Verse 12

Or, I will give you compassion before (i. e., obtain pity from) the king of Babylon, and "he shall have mercy upon you, and let you dwell upon your own soil."

Verse 14

Egypt had lost the battle of Carchemish, but it had not been the scene itself of military operations; while Judaea, from the date of the battle of Megiddo, had perpetually been exposed to the actual horrors of war.

Verse 16-17

Translate it: "Then shall the sword of which ye are afraid reach you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine whereof ye pine shall cleave close unto you in Egypt, and there shall ye die; and all the men who have set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there shall die … by the pestilence, nor shall they have anyone that is left or escaped from the evil which I will bring upon them."

Verse 18

A curse - contempt, or ignominy.

Verse 19

The request made in Jeremiah 42:3 has been fulfilled: Yahweh has spoken. The prophet now adds these four verses as a sort of epilogue, in which he urges upon them the several points of the divine message. In the ten days which had intervened between the request and the answer Jeremiah had become aware that neither princes nor people were prepared to obey unless the answer was in accordance with their own wishes. He does therefore his best to convince them, but as usual it was his lot to speak the truth to willful men, and gain no hearing.

Verse 20

Ye dissembled in your hearts - Or, "ye have led yourselves astray," i. e., your sending me to ask counsel of God was an act of self-delusion. You felt so sure that God would direct you to go into Egypt, that now that He has spoken to the contrary, you are unable to reconcile yourselves to it.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 43

Verses 1-3

These captains belonged to the party who had all along resisted Jeremiah‘s counsels, and had led Zedekiah astray. Now however that events had proved that the prophet‘s counsels had been wise and true, they cannot for shame find fault with him, but they affirm that he is under the influence of Baruch, a traitor who has sold himself to the Chaldaeans, and seeks only the hurt of the people.

These captains belonged to the party who had all along resisted Jeremiah‘s counsels, and had led Zedekiah astray. Now however that events had proved that the prophet‘s counsels had been wise and true, they cannot for shame find fault with him, but they affirm that he is under the influence of Baruch, a traitor who has sold himself to the Chaldaeans, and seeks only the hurt of the people.

Verse 4

All the people - Many, nevertheless, would be unwilling agents, compelled to do what their unscrupulous leaders forced upon the community.

Verse 5

All the remnant of Judah that were returned - In this way, the utter depopulation of the land was completed. Thus was fulfilled the predictions of Jeremiah 24:8-10, and the sole hope of the nation now centered in the exiles at Babylon Jeremiah 24:5-7.

Verse 7

Tahpanhes - See the Jeremiah 2:16 note.

Verse 8

On arriving at the frontiers of Egypt, the captains would be compelled to halt in order to obtain the king‘s permission to enter his country. Jeremiah therefore takes the opportunity to predict, first, the downfall of Egypt; and secondly, that of the false gods.

Verse 9

Brickkiln - Possibly, a pavement of brick. Jeremiah was to take a few large stones, such, nevertheless, as he could carry in his hand, and build with them, in the propylaea before the royal palace, something that would

serve to represent the dais upon which the seat of kings was usually placed. By hiding them in the clay is meant plastering them over with mortar.

Verse 10

My servant - See Jeremiah 25:9 note.

That I have hid - i. e., that I have embedded in the mortar by the instrumentality of my prophet.

Pavilion - Rather, canopy. It probably means the parasol held over kings, which had a tall and thick pole, grasped with both hands, and in the early times a somewhat small circular top.

Verse 11

According to each man‘s destiny, he will either die of famine, pestilence, or in battle; or he will be led captive; or be put to death by the executioner.

Verse 12

I will kindle - Or, “he shall kindle.”

He shall burn them … - i. e., he shall burn the temples, and carry away the gods.

And he shall array - literally, “And he shall wrap himself in the land of Egypt as the shepherd wrappeth himself in his cloak, and shall (go forth thence in peace;” i. e., With as great ease as a shepherd throws his cloak round him when going forth to watch his flock by night in the field, so easily shall the king of Babylon take possession of all the glory of Egypt, throw it round him, and depart without anyone resisting his progress.

Verse 13

Images - Rather, pillars (compare the Isaiah 19:19 note), obelisks.

Beth-shemesh - Heliopolis, famous for its obelisks.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 44

Introduction

Jeremiah‘s last prophecy Jeremiah 44, in which he boldly rebukes the tendency of the Jews to idolatry, which seems to have grown only the stronger in their tribulation. The address was evidently made to them at some festival, and though the Jews lived in the hope of being able soon to return to Judaea from Egypt, yet we find that they had spread over the whole land, representatives of their communities having come to Pathros not only from Migdol and Tahpanhes, but even from Noph.

Verse 1

Migdol - Magdolum, a strong fortress on the northern boundary of Egypt.

Verse 3

In that they went to burn incense, and to serve - Or, by going to burn incense to serve thereby other gods.

Verse 4

Howbeit I sent - And I sent.

Verse 7

Your souls - i. e., your own selves.

Verse 8

Cut yourselves off - Rather, cut (them, Jeremiah 44:7) off from you.

Verse 9

The wickedness of their wives - Many accept the reading of the Septuagint: the “wickedness of your princes.” “The kings, the princes, the people,” and finally “their wives,” is a summary enumeration of all classes, by whose united persistence in sin the ruin of their country had been consummated.

Verse 11

All Judah - i. e., all Judah in Egypt, yet even there with exceptions (see Jeremiah 44:14, Jeremiah 44:28), while Judah in Babylon was entirely exempt from this denunciation.

Verse 14

Literally, “And there shall not be to the remnant of Judah, which are going to sojourn there in the land of Egypt, one that escapes or remains etc.” The word rendered “escapes” means one who slips away, saves himself by a stealthy flight Genesis 14:13; the word “remains,” one who

survives when all the rest perish Job 18:19. Of all those now going down to Egypt none shall return to Judaea except a few miserable fugitives, who shall steal away as men who flee in battle 2 Samuel 19:3. For really years Jewish settlers had gone to Egypt in great numbers, and these old settlers would be treated in the same way as the Egyptians, but these fugitives, with no knowledge of the Egyptian language or ways, would have no friends in the country to aid them, and would also be recognized by the Chaldaeans as inveterate enemies, and mercilessly slain.

Verse 15

Had burned incence - Omit "had;" burned incense. This appeal of the prophet was made at a public festival held somewhere in Pathros, i. e., Upper Egypt: for the women are assembled in a great congregation (compare Jeremiah 26:9), here formed for religious purposes. As they advance in regular procession to worship the moon-goddess, in accordance as it seems with a vow Jeremiah 44:17, Jeremiah meets them, makes the procession halt upon its way, and pronounces in Yahweh's name words of solemn warning. The reply that all the settlers in Egypt were formally putting themselves under the Queen of heaven's protection was made by the heads of the congregation.

Verse 17

Whatsoever thing … - Or, the whole word (or thing) which hath gone forth out of our mouth; i. e., the vows we have made. They would not let Jeremiah's expostulations prevent the carrying out of the special object which had brought them together: otherwise the Queen of heaven would be offended, and avenge himself.

Verse 18

The suppression of this popular idolatry had apparently been regarded with much ill-will in Josiah's time, and many may even have ascribed to it his defeat at Megiddo. Probably Jehoiakim had again permitted it, but Zedekiah, during the miseries of his reign, had forbidden it, and the people ascribed the fall of Jerusalem to the neglect of their favorite goddess.

Verse 19

Burned … poured … did - Or, burn … pour … do.

To worship her - Rather, to represent her image. The cakes Jeremiah 7:18 were made in the shape of a crescent to represent the moon.

Our men - i. e., our husbands (margin). They had the authority of their husbands for what they were doing. Jeremiah must leave them alone, and

discuss the matter with those who alone had the right to interfere.

Verse 21

Them - The various acts of idolatry involved in burning incense to an image.

Verse 22

Could no longer bear - The prophet corrects in these words the error of their argument in Jeremiah 44:17. God is long-suffering, and therefore punishment follows slowly upon sin.

Verses 24-30

Earnest as was the preceding expostulation, Jeremiah sees that it has produced no effect. He therefore utters his last warning, and with this last resistance to the sins of a debased and godless people, his earthly ministry closed.

Jeremiah 44:25

And fulfilled with your hand - Your hands. Jeremiah pointed to their hands, in which they were carrying the crescent-shaped cakes which they had vowed to the goddess. Their idolatry therefore was an accomplished deed, as the symbols held in their hands testified.

Ye will surely accomplish - Or, Accomplish then your vows. It is not a prediction, but is ironical, and means that as they will take no warning, they must needs have their way.

Jeremiah 44:26

My name shall no more be named … - God swears by His own great Name that He will be their national God no longer. Yahweh repudiates His covenant-relation toward them.

Jeremiah 44:27

I will watch - I am watching over them, not for good, but for evil: like a panther Jeremiah 5:6 lying in wait to spring upon passengers.

Shall be consumed - This is the result of Yahweh‘s repudiation of thee covenant. When He was their God He watched over them for good: now His protection is withdrawn, and He is their enemy, because of the wickedness whereby their rejection was made necessary. See the Jeremiah 6:9 note.

Jeremiah 44:28

Literally, “And fugitives from the sword (see Jeremiah 44:14) shall return from the land of Egypt to the land of Judah, mere of number, i. e., so few that they can be counted: and all the remnant of Jadah that are going

etc." So unendurable shall be their sufferings in Egypt, that the men now abandoning Judaea in the hope of finding an asylum there shall be glad to return like runaways from a lost battle.

Whose words … - Whose word shall stand, from Me or from them, i. e., the one prediction, that their descent into Egypt would be their ruin, which they denied.

Jeremiah 44:30

Pharaoh-Hophra came to the throne the year before Jerusalem was captured. He reigned for 19 years, probably the last 10 years as a prisoner. See the notes at Jeremiah 37:5; notes at Jeremiah 46:12.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 45

Introduction

The long catalogue of calamities so consistently denounced by Jeremiah against his country Jeremiah 45:1-5, made a most painful impression upon Baruch‘s mind. He was of ambitious temperament Jeremiah 45:5, and being of noble birth as the grandson of Maaseiah, the governor of Jerusalem in Josiah‘s time 2 Chronicles 34:8, and a scribe, he appears to have looked forward either to high office in the state, or far more probably to being invested with prophetic powers. This address tells Baruch to give up his ambitious hopes, and be content with escaping with life only. Like the prophecy of the 70 years of exile, it would become a prediction of good only after really troubles had been undergone and pride was quelled. As regards the place of this prophecy it would come in order of time next to Jeremiah 36, but as that was a public, and this a private prophecy, they would not be written upon the same scroll. When the last memorials of Jeremiah‘s life were added to the history of the fall of Jerusalem, Baruch attached to them this prediction, which - humbled by years, and the weight of public and private calamity - he now read with very different feelings from those which filled his mind in his youth.

Verse 1

These words - i. e., the words of Jehoiakim‘s scroll.

Verse 3

Grief to my sorrow - Baruch‘s sorrow is caused by the sinfulness of the Jewish nation, to which God adds grief by showing how severely it will be punished.

I fainted in - Or, “am weary with” Psalm 6:6.

Verse 4

land - Or, earth. Baruch‘s lot was cast in one of those troublous times when God enters into judgment with all flesh Jeremiah 45:5. It was not Judaea only but the whole known world that was thrown into turmoil by Nebuchadnezzars energy Jeremiah 25:26.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 46

Introduction

The prophecies against foreign nations are collected into one scroll Jeremiah 49:34-39 spoken in the first year of Zedekiah. The seven earlier prophecies belonging to the fourth year of Jehoiakim were written at the same time, and arranged as they at present stand. It is no doubt intentional that these prophecies against the nations are in number 7 (compare Amos 1:3; Amos 2:4).

Jeremiah 46:3-12;

(b) a prediction that the conqueror would invade Egypt from one end to the other Jeremiah 46:14-28.

Possibly a long delay intervened between these predictions.

Verse 1

Against the Gentiles - Or, concerning the nations Jeremiah 4649:33.

Verse 2

Against … - i. e., relating to, concerning. So Jeremiah 48:1; Jeremiah 49:1; see the note at Jeremiah 46:13.

Pharaoh-necho - See 2 Kings 23:29 note.

In - (at)

d **Carchemish -** (The Gargamis of the inscriptions, now Jerabis, on the Euphrates, about 16 miles south of Birejik.)

Verse 3

Order ye … - "i. e., prepare ye, make ready." The buckler was a small round target carried by the lightly-armed troops: the shield belonged to the heavily-armed troops, and was large enough to protect the whole body.

Verse 4

From the infantry the prophet proceeds to the chariots, in which the Egyptians placed great confidence.

Get up, ye horsemen - Or, "mount the steeds."

Furbish - i. e., polish, sharpen.

Brigandines - In old times brigand meant a soldier, and we still call a division of an army a brigade, and a commander a brigadier, i. e., a

brigandier, or captain of brigands. Similarly a brigandine means a soldier‘s equipment, and is put here for a coat of mail.

Verse 5

Literally, “Why have I seen? They are terror-stricken! they are giving way back!” The Egyptian host feels that the battle is lost, and overborne by the enemy loses heart, and in despair, yet not without a struggle, gives way. It is remarkable, that while Jeremiah in his warning addressed to Jerusalem uses the most simple and unadorned prose, his language concerning the Gentile nations is, on the contrary, full of brilliant poetry.

Look not back - turn not back. They make no halt, and no attempt to rally.

Fear was round about - The prophets watch-word, Magor-missabib (see Jeremiah 6:25).

Verse 6

Translate it: “The swift shall not flee away, and the hero shall not escape: in the north on the bank of the river Euphrates they shall stumble and fall.”

Verse 7

In Jeremiah 46:3-6 we saw only a mighty army marshalling for battle, and its hasty flight. In Jeremiah 46:7-12 the prophet tells us at whose defeat we have been present.

A flood - the Nile. The metaphor describing the advance of the Egyptian army is naturally drawn from the annual overflow of their own sacred stream.

Whose waters are moved … - literally, his waters toss to and fro as the rivers, the natural branches of the Nile in Lower Egypt.

Verse 9

Rather, Go up, advance, ye horses; and drive furiously, ye chariots; and let the mighty men go forth. They march out of Egypt, arranged in three divisions, cavalry, chariots, and infantry, to begin the campaign. The armies of Egypt were composed chiefly of mercenaries. Cush (see the margin), the Nubian negro, and Phut, the Libyans of Mauritania, supplied the heavy-armed soldiers Jeremiah 46:3; and Ludim, the Hamite Lydians of North Africa (see Genesis 10:13 note), a weaker race, served as light-armed troops.

Verse 10

Rather, But that "day belongeth to the Lord Yahweh of hosts." They march forth in haughty confidence, but that day, the day to which they are looking forward in proud hope of victory, is Yahweh's day, a day on which they will be the victims sacrificed in His honor.

Verse 11

Balm - i. e., balsam, the usual remedy for wounds Jeremiah 8:22.

In vain shalt … - Or, in vain hast thou multiplied medicines: healing-plaster hast thou none. Nothing shall avail to heal the blow.

Verse 12

The land - The earth; the world rings with the cry of grief.

Against the mighty - Against the mighty man, i. e., one mighty man against another. The champions hired to fight Egypt's battle get in one another's way, and so are slaughtered together.

Verse 13

A new prophecy, foretelling the successful invasion of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, has been appended to the hymn of triumph, because they both relate to the same kingdom. This prophecy was probably spoken in Egypt to warn the Jews there, that the country which they were so obstinately determined to make their refuge would share the fate of their native land.

How … should come - Or, concerning the coming "of Nebuchadrezzar."

Verse 14

The sword shall devour - "The sword" hath devoured "those round about thee." One after another the nations have been consumed by Nebuehadnezzar; and now at length Tyre, which so long had withstood him, has fallen, and his forces are about to fall upon Egypt (Jeremiah 2:16 note). Hence, the summons to arrange themselves in their ranks, and to prepare for battle by putting on their armor.

Verse 15

Translate it: "Why is thy mighty one cast down? He stood not, because Yahweh thrust him down." The "mighty one" is explained by the Septuagint to be the bull Apis. Thus:

(1) the chief deity of Egypt Jeremiah 46:15;

(2) the army of mercenaries Jeremiah 46:16;

(3) the king, Pharaoh Jeremiah 46:17, are the three upon whom the Egyptians trusted.

Verse 16

Literally, as in the margin, i. e., Yahweh hath made many to stumble.

Arise … - The Egyptian army being composed of mercenaries, has no patriotic feeling and immediately that the battle is lost, they propose to abandon the country which has hired them, and return each to his native land.

Verse 17

Translate it with the versions: "They have called (or, Call ye) the name of Pharaoh king of Egypt - A noise: he hath overstepped the appointed time." For this custom of giving prophetic names see Jeremiah 20:3; Isaiah 8:3, … The words mean that Pharaoh is a mere empty sound, and that he has allowed the years of prosperity, which he enjoyed at the beginning of his reign, to pass by; having misused them, nothing now remains but his ruin.

Verse 18

As Tabor is - Omit "is." "He shall come like a Tabor among the mountains, and like a Carmel by the sea." Tabor rises in the form of a truncated cone to the height of about 1,350 feet above the plain of Esdraelon, its total height above the sea level being 1,805 feet. Its shape and the wide extent of the plain around it make it a far more conspicuous object than other mountains in sight of equal elevation. Similarly, Carmel is a most commanding mountain, because it rises from the edge of the wide expanse of the Mediterranean.

Verse 19

Literally, "O thou inhabitant daughter of Egypt," an equivalent here for Egypt and its whole population.

Furnish thyself … - literally, make for thee vessels of banishment, not merely the packages necessary, but their outfit generally.

Verse 20

Is like - Or, is. Her god was the steer Apis Jeremiah 46:15, and she is the spouse.

But destruction cometh; it cometh out of the north - More probably, "a gadfly from the north has come upon her." This is a sort of insect which stings the oxen and drives them to madness. Compare Isaiah 7:18.

Verse 21

Rather, "Also her hirelings in the midst of her are like calves of the stall." The mercenaries of Egypt - Nubians, Moors, and Lydians Jeremiah 46:9 - were destroyed at the battle of Carchemish, and their place was taken by hirelings from Asia Minor, Carians, and Ionians, whom Hophra took into his pay to the number of 30,000 men. These he settled in the midst of Egypt, in the fertile lands above Bubastis, in the Delta, where, well paid and fed and with great privileges, they became as calves of the stall. Their mutiny cost Hophra his crown.

For they also are turned back … - literally, "for they also have lurched the back, they flee together, they stand not: for the day of their destruction is come upon them, the time of their visitations."

Verse 22

The voice thereof - Her voice, i. e., the voice of Egypt. The word here probably means the busy sound of life and activity in the towns of Egypt, the tramping of her hosts, and the turmoil of camp and city. All this at the approach of the Chaldaean army shall depart, as the snake flees away when disturbed in its haunts by the wood-cutters.

March with an army - Advance with might.

With axes - The comparison of the Chaldaean warriors to woodcutters arose from their being armed with axes. As the Israelites did not use the battle-axe, their imagination would be the more forcibly struck by this weapon.

Verse 23

Or, "They have cut down her forest, saith Yahweh, for it is impenetrable," i. e., just as a pathless forest must be cleared to assist agriculture and the passage to and fro of men, so must the false worship and the material prosperity of Egypt be overthrown.

Grasshoppers - The invading host advances as multitudinous as the locusts which consume the whole vegetation of the land on which they alight.

Verse 24

The daughter … - i. e., the inhabitants "of Egypt shall be disgraced."

Verse 25

The multitude of No - Rather, Amon of No. Ammon or Jupiter-Ammon was the first of the supreme triad of Thebes. He was the deity invisible and unfathomable, whose name signifies "the concealed." No-Amon, is the

sacred city of Thebes, the capital of Upper Egypt. First then Yahweh‘s anger falls upon the representatives of the highest divine and human powers, Amon of No and Pharaoh. It next punishes Egypt generally, and her gods and her kings, for each city had its special divinity, and inferior rulers were placed in the several parts of the country. Finally, Pharaoh is again mentioned, with “all who trust in him,” i. e., the Jews, who had made Egypt their confidence and not God.

Verse 26

Afterward … - The invasion of Nebuchadnezzar is to be a passing calamity, the severity of which will be felt chiefly by the Jews, but no subjugation of Egypt is to be attempted, and after the Chaldaean army has withdrawn things will resume their former course.

Verse 27-28

These two verses are a repetition of Jeremiah 30:10-11, with those slight variations which Jeremiah always makes when quoting himself. Egypt‘s fall and restoration have been foretold; but the prophet closes with a word of exhortation to the many erring Jews who dwelt there. Why should they flee from their country, and trust in a pagan power, instead of endeavoring to live in a manner worthy of the noble destiny which was their true glory and ground of confidence?

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 47

Verse 1

that Pharaoh - Pharaoh-Necho though defeated at Carchemish, was probably able to seize Gaza upon his retreat, when obviously the possession of so strong a fortress would be most useful to him to prevent the entrance of the victorious Chaldaeans into Egypt.

Verse 2

Waters rise up - A metaphor for the assembling of an army (compare the marginal references).

Out of the north - The Chaldaean army must cross the Euphrates at Carchemish.

An overflowing flood - Or, "torrent." To understand the metaphors of the Bible we must keep the natural phenomena of the country in mind. In Palestine rivers are torrents, dashing furiously along in the rainy seasons, and dry, or nearly so, in the summer.

All that is therein - The marginal rendering contrasts the wealth of Egypt, which forms its fullness, and the inhabitants.

Verse 3

His strong horses - War-horses, chargers.

The rushing of his chariots - Rather, the rattling, the crashing noise which they make as they advance.

For feebleness of hands - The Philistines flee in such panic that a father would not even turn round to see whether his sons were effecting their escape or not.

Verse 4

Because of the day that cometh to spoil - "Because" the day has come "to devastate."

The Philistines are called Tyre's remaining (i. e., last) helper, because all besides who could have assisted her have already succumbed to the Chaldaean power. The judgment upon Philistia was in connection with that upon Tyre, and it was fulfilled by expeditions sent out by Nebuchadnezzar under him lieutenants to ravage the country and supply his main army with provisions.

The country of Caphtor - The coastland of Caphtor. The Philistines came from the coast of the Egyptian Delta, and are called "a remnant" because they had been greatly reduced in numbers, partly by the long war

of Psammetichus against Ashdod, partly by the capture of Gaza Jeremiah 47:1, and partly by Assyrian invasions.

Verse 5

Baldness - Extreme mourning (see Jeremiah 16:6).

Is cut off - Others render, is speechless through grief.

With the remnant of their valley - Others, O remnant of their valley, how long wilt thou cut thyself? Their valley is that of Gaza and Ashkelon, the low-lying plain, usually called the Shefelah, which formed the territory of the Philistines. The reading of the Septuagint is remarkable: "the remnant of the Anakim," which probably would mean Gath, the home of giants 1 Samuel 17:4.

Jeremiah 47:6. Or, Alas, Sword of Yahweh, how long wilt thou not rest? For the answer, see Jeremiah 47:7.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 48

Introduction

This prophecy Jeremiah 48:43-44, from Isaiah 24:17-18. Jeremiah‘s introduction of passages from older writers being accepted, it would seem that the passages borrowed are so inwoven with that which is Jeremiah‘s own, that they cannot be omitted as a later interpolation without destroying the whole. On the other hand in that which is the writer‘s own, and even in many of the alterations of the borrowed passages, Jeremiah‘s mode of expression is so clearly to be recognized that the whole must be acknowledged to be his.

From Isaiah 16:13 it has been conjectured that Isaiah had an ancient prophecy before him, and that Jeremiah drew from the same source. Bearing in mind the number of prophetic writings mentioned in the Books of Chronicles which have not come down to us, there is nothing unreasonable in such a supposition.

Verse 1

Against Moab - Concerning Moab.

Is confounded - Is brought to shame.

Misgab - The high fort; some special fortress, probably Kir-haraseth 2 Kings 3:25.

Verse 2

No more praise of Moab - literally, “The glory of Moab is no more,” i. e., Moab has no more cause for boasting.

Heshbon - This town now belonged to the Ammonites Jeremiah 49:3 but was on the border. The enemy encamped there arranges the plan of his campaign against Moab.

In the original there is a play of words upon the names Heshbon and Madmen.

Verse 3

Omit shall be. “Spoiling and great destruction,” literally breaking, is the cry heard from Horonaim Isaiah 15:5.

Verse 4

Moab - Probably the city elsewhere called Ar-Moab. See the Septuagint of this verse.

Verse 5

Luhith was situated upon an eminence, and Jeremiah describes one set of weeping fugitives as pressing close upon another.

In the going down of Horonaim … - Rather, in the descent of Horonaim they have heard the distresses of the cry of breaking, i. e., the cry of distress occasioned by the ruin inflicted by the enemy. It was situated in a hollow, probably near the Dead Sea.

Verse 6

Like the heath - Or, Like a destitute man. See the marginal reference note.

Verse 7

Works - Possibly the products of labor. The versions render fortifications.

Chemosh - As the national god of Moab Numbers 21:29, he represents the whole land; and his being led into captivity implies the total ruin of those under his protection. His name here spelled Chemish is repeated in Car-chemish, i. e., the fortress of Chemish.

Verse 8

The valley - The lowlands on the east bank of the Jordan, and at the top of the Dead Sea.

The plain - An upland pasture; it answers very much to downs: so in Jeremiah 48:21.

Verse 10

Deceitfully - Better as in the margin.

Verse 11

Moab from the time it conquered the Emims Deuteronomy 2:9-10, and so became a nation, had retained quiet possession of its land, and enjoyed comparative prosperity. From the Moabite Stone we gather that King Mesha, after the death of Ahab threw off the yoke of Israel; nor except for a short time under Jeroboam II was Israel able to bring the Moabites back into subjection. They gradually drove the Reubenites back, and recovered most of the territory taken from the Amorites by Moses, and which originally had belonged to them.

He hath settled on his lees - Good wine was thought to be the better for being left to stand upon its sediment Isaiah 25:6, and in all cases its flavor was rendered thereby stronger (marginal reference). “By being emptied from vessel to vessel” it became vapid and tasteless. So a nation by going

into captivity is rendered tame and feeble. By his taste is meant the flavor of the wine, and so Moab‘s national character.

Verse 12

I will send - tilters “unto him and they shall” tilt “him, and they shall empty his vessels, and break their” pitchers “in pieces.” “Pitchers” originally meant “skins,” but the word came to signify small earthenware jars Isaiah 30:14: thus the Chaldaeans shall destroy of Moab everything that has contained the wine of her political life both small and great.

Verse 13

Israel was ashamed of Beth-el - After Salmaneser had carried Israel away, they could trust no longer in the calf of Bethel established by Jeroboam.

Verse 14

Mighty - Heroes, veteran warriors.

Verse 15

Rather, “Moab is spoiled,” and her cities have gone up, i. e., in smoke, have been burned Joshua 8:20-21. Others render, “The waster of Moab and of her towns is coming up to the attack, and her chosen youths are gone down to the slaughter.”

Verse 16

Near to come - Twenty-three years elapsed between the fourth year of Jehoiakim, when this prophecy was spoken, and its accomplishment by the invasion of Moab five years after the capture of Jerusalem. So slowly does God‘s justice move onward.

Verse 17

The lamentation over Moab uttered by those “round about him,” i. e., the neighboring nations, and those “that know his name,” nations more remote, who know little more than that, there is such a people, takes the form of an elegy. The metaphorical expressions, “staff of strength,” and “rod” or “scepter of beauty,” indicate the union of power and splendor in the Moabite kingdom.

Verse 18

Sit in thirst - Jeremiah draws a picture of the conquered inhabitants, collected outside the walls, waiting for their captors to march them away to the slave mart. The enemy occupied with plundering the houses of Dibon thinks little of the hunger and thirst of his prisoners.

Strong holds - The remains of the fortifications of Dibon are still visible.

Verse 19

Aroer - On the Arnon, due south of Dibon. If Dibon falls, the turn of Aroer will come next, and therefore its inhabitants are to be on the look out, asking for news.

Verse 20

Or, "Moab is ashamed, because she (Dibon) is broken" by her fortifications being battered down.

Verse 21

Holon - This place apparently took its name from caverns in its neighborhood.

Verse 22

Beth-diblathaim - i. e., "the house of the two cakes of figs," perhaps so called from two hills in its neighborhood. Hosea 1:3 note.

Verse 23

Beth-meon - Meon is probably the Moabite Olympus, and thus Beth-Baal-Meon, the full name of this town Joshua 13:17, would signify the place where the heavenly Baal was worshipped.

Verse 24

Kerioth - A synonym of Ar, the old capital of Moab. It appears to have been a considerable place, and has been identified with El-Korriat, situated on the long ridge of Mount Attarus.

Bozrah - Probably the Bosora mentioned in 1 Maccabees 5:26 in company with Bosor, i. e., Bezer. Since the word means sheepfolds, it was no doubt a common name for places in this upland region, fit only for pasturage.

Verse 25

The horn - i. e., his pride (marginal reference); his arm, i. e., his strength Jeremiah 17:5.

Verse 26

Make ye him drunken - With the wine-cup of God's fury, until terror deprive him of his senses.

Verse 27

Was he found … - Or, "was he found among thieves that so often as thou speakest of him" thou waggest thy head? - in contempt for a fallen enemy.

Verse 28

Dwell in the rock - See Jeremiah 4:29. The sole chance of escape is refuge in inaccessible fastnesses.

In the sides … - On the further side "of the mouth of the pit." The wild rock pigeon invariably selects deep ravines for its nesting and roosting.

Verse 30

But it shall not be so - Most commentators translate, "I know, saith Jehovah, his arrogancy, and the emptiness of his boastings; they have worked emptiness."

Verse 31

Mine heart … - Rather, "there shall be mourning for" etc.

Verse 32

Or, "More than the weeping of Jazer" over its ruined vineyards "will I weep for thee, O vine of Sibmah." Compare the marginal reference. Jazer lies in an upland valley about 15 miles north of Heshbon.

Thy plants … - "Thy branches are gone over the sea, i. e." the power of Moab is felt even on the western side of the Dead Sea; "they reached etc."

Verse 33

Winepresses - Rather, "wine-vats," into which the wine runs from the presses.

Their shouting shall be no shouting - The vintage shout is - silence. For the vines have been destroyed, and desolation reigns where once was the joyful cry of those who tread the grapes.

Verse 34

The meaning is that, taking up the lamentation of Heshbon, the Moabites break forth into a wail, heard as far as Elealeh, scarcely two miles distant Numbers 32:37, but thence spreading over the land to towns on the southern and southwestern borders of the land.

An heifer of three years old - Applied in Isaiah 15:5 to Zoar, but here to Horonaim. Some take "an heifer" as a proper name, and render it: "Eglah for the third part" (compare Isaiah 19:24). Zoar, Horonaim, and Eglah formed a tripolis, or confederacy of three towns, and Eglah might therefore be put after either one or the other.

Nimrim - Probably the Wady-en-Nemeirah at the southeastern end of the Dead Sea.

Verse 36

Like pipes - A wind instrument, used at funerals Matthew 9:23.

The riches that he hath gotten - literally, "that which remains over, a superfluity."

Verse 37

Cuttings - Compare Jeremiah 16:6, and marginal references.

Verse 38

Generally - Rather, entirely.

Verse 39

Literally, "How is it broken down! they wail! How hath Moab tutored the back in shame! Yea, Moab is become a laughter and a terror Jeremiah 17:17 to all who are round about him."

Verse 40

The rapid and irresistible attack of Nebuchadnezzar is compared to the impetuous dash of the eagle on its prey Deuteronomy 28:49.

Verse 41

Surprised - captured by force.

Verse 45

Because of the force - Rather, without force. Translate it: "The fugitives have stood, (i. e., halted) powerless in the shadow of Heshbon." As Heshbon was the capital of the Ammonites, the sense is that the defeated Moabites looked to Ammon for protection.

But afire … - Not only will Ammon refuse aid to Moab, but her ruin is to come forth from Heshbon. To show this Jeremiah has recourse to the old triumphal poetry of the Mosaic age (marginal reference).

The corner - i. e., of the beard … "the crown of the head." The fire of war consumes both far and near, both hair and beard, i. e., everything that it can singe and destroy.

The tumultuous ones - literally, "sons of the battle-shout," the brave Moabite warriors.

Verse 47

Bring again the captivity - (Or, "restore the prosperity.") A similar promise is given to Egypt, Ammon, and Elam Jeremiah 46:26; Jeremiah 49:6.

Thus far … Moab - An editorial note by the same hand as the last words of Jeremiah 51:64.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 49

Introduction

To the north of the Moabites lay the country of the Ammonites, a closely allied nation Genesis 19:37-38 who claimed that the land assigned to the tribe of Gad had originally belonged to them Judges 11:13. They seem to have been far less civilized than the Moabites, and possessed but one stronghold, Rabbah, not devoting themselves to agriculture, but wandering with their flocks over the Arabian wastes. When, however, Tiglath-Pileser carried the inhabitants of Gilead into captivity, the Ammonites occupied much of the vacant land, and many of them probably adopted a more settled life; at this time they even possessed Heshbon, once the frontier town between Reuben and Gad. It is this seizure of the territory of Gad which forms the starting-point of Jeremiah‘s prediction. Older prophecies against Ammon are Amos 1:13-15; Zephaniah 2:8-11.

Verse 1

Hath Israel no sons? - i. e., the Ammonites in seizing Gilead have acted as if the country had no rightful owner. The sons of Israel were to return from captivity, and the land was their hereditary property.

Their king - Milcom (and in Jeremiah 49:3), see the margin. The Ammonite god stands for the Ammonites just as Chemosh Jeremiah 48:7 is the equivalent of the Moabites.

Inherit - i. e., take possession of.

Verse 2

Rabbah - i. e., the “great city.” See 2 Samuel 12:27 note for a distinction between Rabbah, the citadel, and the town itself, lying below upon the Jabbok.

Daughters - i. e., unwalled villages (and in Jeremiah 49:3).

Shall Israel be heir … - i. e., “shall be victor over his victors;” compare Micah 1:15.

Verse 3

Ai - Not the town on the west of the Jordan Joshua 7:2; a place not mentioned elsewhere. For Ai some read Ar.

Hedges - Fields were not divided by hedges until recent times; the term probably means the walls which enclose the vineyards Numbers 22:24.

Verse 4

Thy flowing valley - The (fertile) valley in which Rabbah was situated. The Septuagint again has: "in the valleys of the Anakim," as in Jeremiah 47:5 (see the note).

Verse 5

Every man right forth - The Ammonites will live in terror of the tribes which rove in the neighborhood, and at the slightest alarm will flee straight away without resistance.

Verse 6

In 1 Maccabees 5:6,7, the Ammonites appear again as a powerful nation.

Verses 7-22

Edom stretched along the south of Judah from the border of Moab on the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean and the Arabian deserts, and held the same relation to Judah which Moab held toward the kingdom of Israel. Although expressly reserved from attack by Moses Deuteronomy 2:5, a long feud caused the Edomites to cherish so bitter an enmity against Judah, that they exulted with cruel joy over the capture of Jerusalem by the Chaldaeans, and showed great cruelty toward those why fled to them for refuge.

Of the prophecies against Edom the first eight verses of Obadiah are also found in Jeremiah (see the marginal references). As Jeremiah wrote before the capture of Jerusalem, and Obadiah apparently after it (see Jeremiah 49:13-14), it might seem certain that Obadiah copied from Jeremiah. Others held the reverse view; while some consider that the two prophets may both have made common use of some ancient prediction. See the introduction to Obadiah.

The prophecy is divisible into three strophes. In the first Jeremiah 49:7-13, the prophet describes Edom as terror-stricken.

Jeremiah 49:7

Teman - A strip of land on the northeast of Edom, put here for Edom generally. Its inhabitants were among those "children of the East" famed for wisdom, because of their skill in proverbs and dark sayings.

Jeremiah 49:8

Dwell deep - Jeremiah 49:30. The Dedanites, who were used to travel through the Edomite territory with their caravans, are advised to retire as far as possible into the Arabian deserts to be out of the way of the invaders.

Jeremiah 49:9

Translate it: "If vintagers come to thee, they will not leave any gleaning: if thieves by night, they will destroy their fill."

Jeremiah 49:10

But - For. The reason why the invaders destroy Edom so completely. His secret places are the hiding-places in the mountains of Seir.

His seed - Esau's seed, the Edomites; his brethren are the nations joined with him in the possession of the land, Amalek, and perhaps the Simeonites; his neighbors are Dedan, Tema, Buz.

Jeremiah 49:11

As with Moab Jeremiah 48:47, and Ammon Jeremiah 49:6, so there is mercy for Edom. The widows shall be protected, and in the orphans of Edom the nation shall once again revive.

Jeremiah 49:12

Translate it: "Behold they whose rule was not to drink of the cup shall surely drink etc." It was not the ordinary manner of God's people to suffer from His wrath: but now when they are drinking of the wine-cup of fury Jeremiah 25:15, how can those not in covenant with Him hope to escape?

Jeremiah 49:14-18

The second strophe, Edom's chastisement.

Jeremiah 49:14

Rumour - Or, "revelation."

Ambassador - Or, messenger, i. e., herald. The business of an ambassador is to negotiate, of a herald to carry a message.

Jeremiah 49:15

Small … - Rather, small among the nations, i. e., of no political importance.

Jeremiah 49:16

Edom's "terribleness" consisted in her cities being hewn in the sides of inaccessible rocks, from where she could suddenly descend for predatory warfare, and retire to her fastnesses without fear of reprisals.

The clefts of the rock - Or, the fastnesses of Sela, the rock-city, Petra (see Isaiah 16:1).

The hill - i. e., Bozrah.

Jeremiah 49:17

Better, "And Edom shall become a terror: every passer by shalt be terrified, and shudder etc."

Jeremiah 49:18

Neighbour … - Admah and Zeboim.

A son of man - i. e., "Any man." From 536 a.d. onward, Petra suddenly vanishes from the pages of history. Only in the present century was its real site discovered.

Jeremiah 49:19-22

Concluding strophe. The fall of Edom is compared to the state of a flock worried by an enemy strong as a lion Jeremiah 4:7, and swift as an eagle.

Jeremiah 49:19

The swelling of Jordan - Or, the pride of Jordan, the thickets on his banks (marginal reference note).

Against the habitation of the strong - Or, to the abiding pasturage. The lion stalks forth from the jungle to attack the fold, sure to find sheep there because of the perennial (evergreen) pasturage: "but I will suddenly make him (the flock, Edom) run away from her (or it, the pasturage)."

And who is a chosen … - Better, and I will appoint over it, the abandoned land of Edom, him who is chosen, i. e., my chosen ruler Nebuchadnezzar.

Who will appoint me the time? - The plaintiff, in giving notice of a suit, had to mention the time when the defendant must appear (see the margin). Yahweh identifies himself with Nebuchadnezzar Jeremiah 25:9, and shows the hopelessness of Edom's cause. For who is like Yahweh, His equal in power and might? Who will dare litigate with Him, and question His right? etc.

Jeremiah 49:20

Surely the least … - Rather, Surely they will worry them, the feeble ones of the flock: surely their pasture shall be terror-stricken over them. No shepherd can resist Nebuchadnezzar Jeremiah 49:19, but all flee, and leave the sheep unprotected. Thereupon, the Chaldaeans enter, and treat the poor feeble flock so barbarously, that the very fold is horrified at their cruelty.

Jeremiah 49:21

Is moved - Quakes.

At the cry … - The arrangement is much more poetical in the Hebrew, The shriek - to the sea of Suph (Exodus 10:19 note) is heard its sound.

Jeremiah 49:22

Nebuchadnezzar shall swoop down like an eagle, the emblem of swiftness.

Verse 23

Though the superscription is confined to Damascus, the prophecy relates to the whole of Aram, called by us Syria, which was divided into two parts, the northern, of which Hamath was the capital, and the southeastern, belonging to Damascus.

Hamath is confounded - Or, is ashamed. For Hamath see Isaiah 10:9 note. Arpad lay about fourteen miles north of Aleppo, at a place now called Tel Erfad.

Fainthearted - The sinews are relaxed unknit, through terror.

There is sorrow on the sea - In the sea. As the sea is used (marginal reference) of the agitation of the thoughts of evil men, its sense here also probably is, there is sorrow, or rather anxiety, in the agitated hearts of the Syrians.

Verse 24

And turneth - Omit and. The original is a rapid sequence of unconnected sentences. "Damascus is unnerved; she turned to flee, and a trembling seized her; anguish and writhings took hold of her etc."

Verse 25

An exclamation of sorrow wrung from the prophet at the thought of the people of Damascus remaining to be slaughtered. The words my joy express the prophet's own sympathy. The praise of Damascus for beauty has been universal from the days of Naaman 2 Kings 5:12, to those of recent travelers.

Verse 27

See the marginal reference and 1 Kings 11:14 note.

Verse 28

Hazor, derived from a word signifying an unwalled village, is a general appellative of those Arab tribes who were partially settled, while Kedar signifies the Bedawin, who used only tents. Some think that Hazor is another way of spelling Jetor, i. e., Ituraea, whose inhabitants, with the Kedarenes, would naturally be called the sons of the East.

Shall smite - Or, smote.

Verse 29

Curtains - The hangings of the tents.

Fear is on every side - Magor-missabib (see Jeremiah 6:25 note); a cry, indicating the panic which followed the unexpected onset of the enemy.

Verse 30

A purpose against you - Others read "against them" (the wealthy nation, Jeremiah 49:31).

Verse 31

The wealthy nation - Or, a nation at rest, living securely and in confidence.

Which dwell alone - They dwell alone, i. e., have neither alliances with other nations, nor contact by commerce.

Verse 32

Them … corners - Or, those who clip the corners of their beards (compare Jeremiah 9:26).

Verse 33

Dragons - i. e., jackals.

Verse 34

Against Elam - Or, concerning Elam. This country, better known as Susiana, is the modern Chuzistan, and lies on the east of Chaldaea, from which it is separated by the Tigris. In the cuneiform inscriptions we find the Elamites on friendly terms with Babylon. The suggestion therefore that they served as auxiliaries in the Chaldaean army in the expedition against Judah is not improbable. It was in the first year of Zedekiah that this prophecy was written, and thus it is a little prior to the prophecies against Babylon Jeremiah 51:59, which immediately follow. The words, "the Elam," appear in the Septuagint in Jeremiah 25:14, followed by this prophecy, while in Jeremiah 26:1 we find, "In the beginning of the reign of king Zedekiah there was this word about Elam," followed in Jeremiah 49:2 by the prophecy (Jeremiah 46 of the Hebrew) against Egypt. This is a proof simply of the confusion which existed in the Egyptian transcripts of the prophecies relating to the nations.

Verse 35

The bow was the national weapon of Elam, and therefore the "chief of their might," that on which their strength in war depended.

Verse 36

In a whirlwind violent gales seem to blow from every quarter, and whatever is exposed to their fury they scatter over the whole country. With similar violence the whole nation of Elam shall be dispersed far and wide.

Verse 38

Literally, king and princes. Elam will lose its independence, and henceforward have no native ruler with his attendant officers.

Verse 39

Elam - Elam was subject to Babylon Daniel 8:2, and its capital Shushan a favorite residence of the Persian kings Esther 1:2. Of its subsequent fate we know little; the Elamites continued to exist, and members of their nation were present at Pentecost among those chosen to represent the Gentile world at the first preaching of the Gospel Acts 2:9.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 50

Introduction

Many critics have endeavored to show that this prophecy Jeremiah 50:1, and the appended history Jeremiah 51:59-64;

(b) The general admission that the style is Jeremiah‘s;

(c) The fact that the author was living at Jerusalem (Jeremiah 50:5, where read “hitherward,” not “thitherward”);

(d) The Medes and not the Persians are described as the future conquerors of Babylon Jeremiah 51:11, Jeremiah 51:28.

The knowledge of topography and Babylonian customs is not more than Jeremiah may have learned from the Chaldaeans when they were at Jerusalem in the fourth, and again in the eleventh year of Jehoiakim: and there was constant contact by letter and otherwise between Babylon and Jerusalem.

The prophecy may be considered essential to the right discharge by Jeremiah of the duties of his office. He had foretold the capture and ruin of Jerusalem, not from love to Babylon, but as a necessary act of the divine justice, and as the one remedy for Judah‘s sins. He recognized the Chaldaeans as Yahweh‘s ministers; but recognizing also that they practiced wanton barbarities, and claimed the g ory for themselves and their gods, he proclaimed that Babylon must be punished for its cruelty, its pride, and its idolatry.

The date is fixed by Jeremiah 51:59. With this agrees the internal evidence.

Though deficient in arrangement the prophecy is full of grand ideas; and the similarity between passages in this prophecy and Isaiah illustrates the large knowledge which Jeremiah evidently possessed of the earlier Scriptures, and the manner in which, consciously or unconsciously, he has perpetually imitated them in his own writings.

Verse 1

Against … against - Concerning.

Verse 2

Confounded … confounded - ashamed … ashamed.

Merodach - This deity, in the inscriptions Marduk, was the tutelary god of Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar, who called his son Evil-Merodach, appears to have been especially devoted to his service. He was really identical with Bel, and his equivalent among the planets was Jupiter: and as such he was styled "King of heaven and earth."

Verse 3

Out of the north - Media lay to the northwest of Babylon. This constant use of the north, the quarter where the sun never shines, and therefore the region of darkness, is symbolic of the region from where danger ever comes.

They shall remove … - Translate it (as in Jeremiah 9:10): "from man even to cattle they are fled, they are gone."

Verse 4

The fall of Babylon is to be immediately followed by the return of the exiles homewards, in tearful procession, because they go as penitents; and yet with joy, because their faces are toward Zion. The cessation moreover of the schism between Israel and Judah is one of the signs of the times of the Messiah Isaiah 11:12-13, and symbolically represents the gathering together of the warring empires of the world under the peaceful scepter of the Church's King.

Going and weeping: they shall go - Omit the colon; i. e., "they go ever onward weeping."

Verse 5

Thitherward - Hereward; the writer evidently was at Jerusalem.

Verse 6

Their shepherds … mountains - Some translate it: Their shepherds, i. e., civil rulers (Jeremiah 2:8 note) "have led them astray upon the seducing moutains." - the mountains being the usual places where idolatry was practiced.

Their restingplace - Their fold Psalm 23:2.

Verse 7

Offend not - i. e., "are not guilty." Israel having left the fold, has no owner, and may therefore be maltreated with impunity.

Habitation of justice - In Jeremiah 31:23 applied to Jerusalem: here, Yahweh alone is the true pasturage, in whom His people will find safety, rest, and plenty.

Verse 8

So firmly did the Jews settle themselves in Babylon under Jeremiah's counsels, that they were the last to abandon the place.

He goats - See Isaiah 14:9 note.

Verse 9

I will raise - Or, stir up.

An assembly of great nations - The Medo-Persian empire was as much an aggregate of discordant nations as that of Babylon.

From thence - From the north, i. e., by the great nations coming thence.

Return in vain - A proverbial expression for ill success (compare Isaiah 55:11). Here the skillful warrior returns not empty.

Verse 10-11

Or, "Chaldaea shall become a spoil … for thou wast glad, thou exultedst, ye plunderers of mine heritage."

Because ye are grown fat - Rather, for thou leapedst, skippedst as an animal does when playing.

As the heifer at grass - Or, as a heifer threshing. When threshing cattle were allowed to eat their fill Deuteronomy 25:4, and so grew playful.

Bellow as bulls - Better as in the margin.

Verse 12

Your mother - i. e., Babylon. Confounded … ashamed. Or, ashamed … blush.

Behold … - Translate, "Behold she is the hindermost of the nations, a desert, a thirsty land, and a waste:" - the reason why Babylon is to blush. Once the head of gold Daniel 2:32, she is now the lowest of earthly powers.

Verse 14

place the colon after bow.

Verse 15

Shout - i. e., spoken of the war-cry. So in Isaiah 42:13, where God is compared to a warrior, it is said He shall shout (the King James Version cry), i. e., raise the war-cry.

Site hath given her hand - The sign of submission (compare 1 Chronicles 29:24 margin).

Foundations - Or, buttresses. The Septuagint: "battlements."

Verse 16

The population is to be destroyed so utterly that the rich fields of Babylonia are to remain untilled.

They shall turn - The full force of the words will be seen if it be remembered that it had been the policy of Nebuchadnezzar to compel citizens selected from the vanquished nations to settle in Babylonia.

Verse 17

Israel is a scattered sheep - i. e., is like a flock which has been scared and driven in all directions, for lions have chased him.

First the king … - Rather, the first lion "ate him, even the king of Assyria; and this one, the last, heath picked his bones, even Nebuchadrezzar etc." The constant wasting of the land by the Assyrians had so lessened the number of Israel, that Nebuchadnezzar had but the bones to pick.

sa40

Verse 19

Or, "I will bring Israel (the scared sheep) back to his pasturage (see Jeremiah 50:7) and he shall graze etc." The places named are the districts of Palestine most famous for their rich herbage.

Verse 20

Those days - The days of the Messiah.

Reserve - Or, permit to remain: hence, the remnant, a word pregnant with meaning in the language of the prophets. See Isaiah 8:18 note (2).

Verse 21

The land of Merathaim - of double rebellion. Like Mitsraim, i. e., the two Egypts, Aram-Naharaim, i. e., Syria of the two rivers, or Mesopotamia, it is a dual. It may have been a real name; or - the dual ending being intensive - it may mean the land of very great rebelliousness.

Pekod - Possibly a Babylonian town.

Waste - Rather, slay, Jeremiah 50:27.

Verse 23

The hammer - Babylon, by whose instrumentality Yahweh had crushed the nations, is now cut asunder, i. e., the head of iron or bronze is cut away from the wooden handle, and broken.

Verse 24

I have laid a snare for thee - Babylon, the impregnable, was taken (according to Herodotus) by Cyrus by stratagem. Having diverted the

waters of the Euphrates, he entered the city by the river channel: but see Daniel 5:1 note.

And thou wast not aware - Better literally, and thou didst not know it.

Verse 25

By a grand figure the prophet describes Yahweh arming Himself that in person He may execute justice upon the wicked city.

For this is the work - Rather, for my Lord Yahweh of hosts hath a work to do in the land of the Chaldaeans.

Verse 26

Against her - Or, to her, in order to plunder her. Her storehouses (literally granaries) are to burst open, the grain piled up in heaps, and finally they are to devote her to destruction, i. e., to burn her wealth with fire.

From the utmost border - (Or, "from the first of you even to the last").

Let nothing of her be left - literally, let her have no remnant. Contrast Jeremiah 5:10.

Verse 27

Her bullocks - Her strong youths.

Verse 28

The voice of them … - i. e., There is a sound of fugitives escaping from Babylonia. The Jews saw in the fall of Babylon Yahweh's vengeance for His temple.

Verse 29

Or, "Summon the archers to Babylon, even all who bend the bow: encamp against her etc." In this portion of the prophecy the capture of Babylon is regarded as the punishment due to her for burning the temple Jeremiah 50:28.

Verse 31

Babylon is here called Pride, just as in Jeremiah 50:21 she was called Double-rebellion.

Verse 32

Him … his … him - Or, her.

Verse 33

Were oppressed - are "oppressed together: and all their captors have laid firm hold upon them: they have refused to let them go." The restoration of Israel and Judah to their land is necessary. As Babylon will not let them go, it must be broken, and its empire destroyed.

Verse 34

Redeemer - i. e., גאל *gā'al* Yahweh is Israel‘s next relative, bound by law to avenge him, as well as to ransom him from captivity. It was the Go‘el‘s duty also to plead his kinsman‘s cause. How thoroughly Yahweh will execute this duty for Israel is shown in the Hebrew by the triple repetition of the same word; literally “in pleading He will plead their plea.”

The land … - Rather, “the earth.” Babylon has hitherto by its ambition kept the world in unrest: now by its fall men everywhere can dwell in security.

Verse 35

Omit “is.” A summons comes from Yahweh, Israel‘s Goel, to the sword to fall upon all the elements of Babylon‘s greatness. The princes were her rulers at home and her generals in war. The wise men were those upon whose learning she so prided herself (Daniel 1:4 note).

Verse 36

Liars - Soothsayers, fortune-tellers.

Verse 37

The mingled people - i. e., the foreigners serving as mercenaries in her army.

Verse 38

A drought - Rather, “a sword,” i. e., military skill and forethought.

They are mad upon their idols - Omit their. The word for idols, literally terrors Psalm 88:16 is used in this one place only of objects of worship. Probably it refers to those montrous forms invented as representations of their deities.

Verse 39

Wild beasts of the islands - Jackals.

Owls - Ostriches (marginal reference note).

Verses 41-43

An application to Babylon of the doom against Jerusalem Jeremiah 6:22-24.

Jeremiah 50:41

The coasts of the earth - See the Jeremiah 6:22 note.

Verses 44-46

A similar application to Babylon of what was said of Edom (marginal reference).

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CHAPTER 51

Verse 1

In the midst of them that rise up against me - Or, in Leb-kamai, the cipher for Kasdim, i. e., Chaldaea. This cipher was not necessarily invented by Jeremiah, or used for concealment. It was probaby first devised either for political purposes or for trade, and was in time largely employed in the correspondence between the exiles at Babylon and their friends at home. Thus, words in common use like Sheshach Jeremiah 25:26 and Leb-kamai, would be known to everybody.

Verse 2

Fanners - Or, winnowers.

Verse 3

The man who bends the bow, and the heavy-armed soldier who vaunts himself in his coat of mail (Jeremiah 46:4 note), represent the Babylonians who defend the city.

Verse 4

Translate it: "And they," i. e., the young men who form her host Jeremiah 51:3, "shall fall slain in the land of the Chaldaeans, and pierced through in her streets," i. e., the streets of Babylon.

Verse 7

Literally, "A golden cup is Babel in the hand of Yahweh, intoxicating the whole earth." Jeremiah beholds her in her splendor, but the wine whereof she makes the nations drink is the wrath of God. As God's hammer Jeremiah 50:23, Babylon was strong: as His cup of gold, she was rich and beautiful, but neither saves her from ruin.

Verse 8

Destroyed - literally, broken, as was the hammer Jeremiah 50:23. The cup, though of metal, is thrown down so violently as to be shattered by the fall.

Howl for her - The persons addressed are the many inhabitants of Babylon who were dragged from their homes to people its void places, and especially the Israelites. They have dwelt there long enough to feel pity for her, when they contrast her past magnificence with her terrible fall. Compare Jeremiah 29:7.

Verse 9

Omit would. All was done that it was possible to do to heal her.

To the skies - Or, to the clouds.

Verse 10

Yahweh hath brought to the light those things which prove us to be righteous: i. e., by punishing Babylon He hath justified

Verse 11

Make bright - Rather, Sharpen.

The Medes Genesis 10:2 were a branch of the great Aryan family, who as conquerors had seized upon the vast regions extending from the Caspian Sea to the eastern borders of Mesopotamia, but without being able to dispossess the Turanian tribes who had previously dwelt there. They were divided into numerous clans, each with its own local chief, the leaders of the larger sections being those who are here called kings.

Verse 12

Upon the walls of Babylon - Or, "against the walls." The King James Version takes the word ironically, as a summons to Babylon to prepare for her defense; others take it as a summons to the army to make the attack.

Verse 13

Upon many waters - The great wealth of Babylonia was caused not merely by the Euphrates, but by a vast system of canals, which served for defense as well as for irrigation.

The measure of thy covetousness - i. e., the appointed end of thy gain. Some render it: the ell of thy cutting off, i. e., the appointed measure at which thou art to be cut off, at which thy web of existence is to be severed from the loom.

Verse 14

Rather, "Surely I have filled thee with men as with locusts, and they shall sing over thee the vintage-song." The vintage-shout suggests the idea of trampling Babylon under foot, as the vintagers trample the grapes; a metaphor of the divine wrath.

Verses 15-19

A transcript of Jeremiah 10:12-16.

Verse 20

Or, Thou art my maul, weapons of war etc. The maul or mace Proverbs 25:18 only differs from the hammer Jeremiah 50:23 in being used for warlike purposes.

Omit the "will" in "will I break." The crushing of the nations was going on at the time when the prophet wrote. Most commentators consider that Babylon was the mace of God.

Verse 23

Captains … rulers - Jeremiah 51:28. Pashas and Sagans. The prophet dwells at length upon Babylon's destructiveness.

Verse 25

O destroying mountain - A volcano which by its flames and hot lava-streams "destroys the whole land."

A burnt mountain - A burned-out mountain, of which the crater alone remains. Such was Babylon. Its destructive energy under Nebuchadnezzar was like the first outbreak of volcanic fires; its rapid collapse under his successors was as the same volcano when its flames have burned out, and its crater is falling in upon itself.

Verse 26

The prophet means that:

(1) Babylon would never again be the seat of empire. Nor

(2) would any new development of events take its rise thence.

Verse 27

Ararat, see the Genesis 8:4 note. Minni, probably the western portion of Armenia, as Ararat was that in the center and to the east. Armenia was at this time subject to Media. Ashchenaz was between the Euxine and the Caspian Seas.

A captain - Some prefer the Septuagint rendering in Nahum 3:17: "a mingled mass of people." (Others, a "scribe," an Assyrian term.)

The rough caterpillers - i. e., locusts in their third stage, when their wings are still enveloped in rough horny cases, which stick up upon their backs. It is in this stage that they are so destructive.

Verse 28

His dominion - This belonged not to the subordinate rulers, but to the chief, e. g., to Cyrus.

Verse 29

The literal translation is:

Then the earth quaked and writhed;

For the thoughts of Yahweh against

Babel have stood fast;

To make Babel a waste without inhabitant.

Verse 30

Have forborn to fight - Or, have ceased to fight: in despair when they saw that the conflict was hopeless.

Holds - The word properly means an acropolis, and so any inaccessible place of refuge.

They have burned - i. e., the enemy have burned.

Bars - i. e., fortifications (compare Amos 1:5).

Verse 31

The royal palace was a strong fortification in the heart of the city. The messengers thus met one another.

At one end - Rather, from all sides, entirely, completely.

Verse 32

The passages are stopped - The ferries are seized, occupied. The historians state that when Cyrus captured the city his troops moved down the bed of the river and occupied all these ferries, finding at each of them the gates negligently left open. See the Daniel 5:1 note.

The reeds - literally, the marshes or pools, which formed an important part of the defenses of Babylon, were dried up as completely as a piece of wood would be consumed by fire.

Verse 33

Translate, "The daughter of Babylon is as a threshing-floor at the time when it is trampled," i. e., trodden hard in readiness for the threshing: "yet a little while and the harvest-time" shall come to her, i. e., overtake her. In the East, the grain when reaped is carried at once to the threshing-floor, a level spot carefully prepared beforehand, usually about 50 feet in diameter, and trampled hard. The grain after it has been beaten out by a sledge drawn over it by oxen is separated from the chaff and stored up in granaries.

Verse 34-35

Literally, "Nebuchadrezzar … hath devoured us, hath crushed us, he hath set as aside as an empty vessel, he hath swallowed as like a crocodile,

he hath filled his maw with my delicacies Genesis 49:20, he hath cast us out. My wrong and my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitress of Zion say: and my blood be etc." Nebuchadnezzar had devoured Jerusalem, had treated her as ruthlessly as a crocodile does its prey, and for this cruelty he and Babylon are justly to be punished.

Verse 36

Her sea - Probably the great lake dug by Nitocris to receive the waters of the Euphrates.

Her springs - Her reservoir; the whole system of canals dug Jeremiah 51:13. The wealth of Babylonia depended upon irrigation.

Verse 37

Heaps - Of rubbish, formed in this case by the decay of the unburned bricks of which Babylon was built. It is these heaps which have yielded such a large wealth of historical documents in our own days.

Dragons - Jackals Jeremiah 10:22.

Verse 38

Yell - Or, growl.

Verse 39

In their heat … - While, like so many young lions, they are in the full glow of excitement over their prey, God prepares for them a drinking-bout to end in the sleep of death. Compare Daniel 5:1.

Verse 40

Lambs … rams … he goats - i. e., all classes of the population (see Isaiah 34:6 note).

Verse 41

Sheshach - Babylon: see the Jeremiah 51:1 note.

Surprised - i. e., seized, captured.

Verse 42

By a grand metaphor the invading army is compared to the sea.

Verse 43

A wilderness - Or, a desert of sand.

A land wherein - Rather, "a land - no man shall dwell in them (i. e., its cities), and no human being shall pass through them."

Verse 44

The sacred vessels plundered from Jerusalem, and laid up in the very temple of Bel, should be restored; the men and women dragged from other

lands to people the city, released; and its wall falling would show the insignificance to which it should be reduced.

Verse 45

The fierce anger of the Lord - i. e., against Babylon. The people of God are to flee away that they may not be involved in the miseries of Babylon. See the Jeremiah 50:8 note.

Verse 46

Literally, "And beware lest your heart faint, and ye be afraid because of the rumour that is heard in the land: for in one year shall one rumour come, and afterward in another year another rumour; and violence shall be in the land etc." The fall of Babylon was to be preceded by a state of unquiet, men's minds being unsettled partly by rumors of the warlike preparations of the Medes, and of actual invasions: partly by intestine feuds. So before the conquest of Jerusalem by the Romans the Church had similar warnings Matthew 24:6-7.

Verse 47

Therefore - The exiles were to note these things as signs of the approach of God's visitation.

Confounded - Or, ashamed.

Verse 49

Render, "As Babylon caused the slain of Israel to fall, so because of Babylon, hare fallen the slain of (or, in) the whole earth." Babylon has to answer for the general carnage caused by its wars.

Verse 50

Afar off - Or, from afar, from Chaldaea, far away from Yahweh's dwelling in Jerusalem. The verse is a renewed entreaty to the Jews to leave Babylon and journey homewards, as soon as Cyrus grants them permission.

Verse 51

Confounded - Or, ashamed. The verse is a statement of the wrong done to the exiles by Babylon, and so leads naturally to Babylon's punishment Jeremiah 51:52.

Verse 54

A cry - i. e., the war-cry.

Verse 55

Render, "For Yahweh wasteth Babylon, and will make to cease from her the loud noise (of busy life); and their wares (the surging masses of the

enemy) roar like many waters: the noise of their shouting is given forth, i. e., resounds."

Verse 56

Every one … - Or, "Their bows are broken, for Yahweh is a God of recompenses; He will certainly requite."

Verse 58

The broad walls - Herodotus makes the breadth of the walls 85 English feet.

Broken - See the margin. i. e., the ground beneath them shall be laid bare by their demolition.

The people - Or, peoples. Jeremiah concludes his prophecy with a quotation from Habakkuk; applying the words to the stupendous works intended to make Babylon an eternal city, but which were to end in such early and utter disappointment.

Verses 59-64

Historical appendix. In his fourth year Zedekiah journeyed to Babylon either to obtain some favor from Nebuchadnezzar, or because he was summoned to be present on some state occasion. Jeremiah took the opportunity of sending to the exiles at Babylon this prophecy.

Jeremiah 51:59

Seraiah - Brother to Baruch.

A quiet prince - literally, "prince of the resting place, i. e., quartermaster." It was his business to ride forward each day, and select the place where the king would halt and pass the night.

Jeremiah 51:60

In a book - literally, in one book, on one scroll of parchment.

Jeremiah 51:61

And shalt see, and shalt read - Or, then see that thou read etc.

Jeremiah 51:62-64

The sinking of the scroll was not for the purpose of destroying it, but was a symbolic act (compare the marginal reference); and the binding of a stone to it signified the certainty of the hasty ruin of the city.

Jeremiah 51:64

Thus far … - Whoever added Jeremiah 52, evidently felt it his duty to point out that it was not written by Jeremiah.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 52

Verse 1

Jeremiah 52:28-30, for the narrative given in 2 Kings 25:22-26, where see the notes.

Verse 3

It - i. e., Zedekiah‘s evil doing.

Presence, that Zedekiah - Or, punctuate; “presence. And Zedekiah” etc.

Verse 7

Broken up … the plain - Or, “broken into … the Arabah” Deuteronomy 1:1.

Verse 11

Put him in prison … - Not found in 2Kings, for in the contemporaneous history what befell Zedekiah at Riblah would alone be known. It was no doubt added by the same hand which inserted the account of the deportations to Babylon.

Verse 12

Served - The word implies high office.

Verse 13

Houses of the great - Rather, every great house; i. e., the larger houses only.

Verse 15

Certain of the poor of the people, and - Omit (as in 2 Kings 25:11), being inserted through some confusion with Jeremiah 52:16.

Multitude - Possibly workmen. The object of Nebuchadnezzar was to people Babylon, not with paupers, but with men of a better class, artisans and workmen, who would enrich it.

Verse 16

Husbandmen - Men who tilled little plots of ground with the mattock.

Verse 20

twelve brasen bulls that were under - Omitted in 2Kings and in Jeremiah 27:19. Probably rightly, for what is said here of their being under the bases is a mistake. The bases were under the ten lavers. The Septuagint makes sense by translating it: “the twelve brasen bulls under the sea.”

Verse 21

The fillet means a measuring line; the pillars were 12 cubits, i. e., 18 feet, in circumference, and thus the diameter would be 5 feet 9 inches. As the brass was four fingers, i. e., scarcely four inches thick, the hollow center would be more than five feet in diameter.

Verse 23

On a side - The 96 were toward the four winds, 24 toward the north, 24 toward the east, and so on. Add one at each corner, and the whole 100 is made up.

Verse 25

An eunuch … men of war - Or, who had charge of men of war. The King James Version makes him commander-in-chief; he was second in command, i. e., a lieutenant, possibly one among many others of equal rank.

Verse 28

Seventh year - The suggestion is now generally received, that the word ten has dropped out before seven, and that the deportations mentioned here are all connected with the final war against Zedekiah. The calculation of Nebuchadnezzars reign is different from that used elsewhere, showing that the writer had access to a document not known to the compiler of the Book of Kings. In each date there is a difference of one year. The Septuagint omits Jeremiah 52:28-30.

The number of the exiles carried away is small compared with the 42,360 men who returned Ezra 2:64-65, leaving a large Jewish population behind at Babylon. But a continual drain of people from Judaea was going on, and the 10,000 carried away with Jehoiachin formed the nucleus and center, and gave tone to the whole (see 2 Kings 24:14). When they began to thrive in Babylon, large numbers would emigrate there of their own accord.

A comparison of this chapter with the parallel portion of 2Kings shows that though not free from clerical errors and mistakes of copyists the body of the text is remarkably sound. Many of the differences between the two texts are abbreviations made purposely by the compiler of the Book of Kings; others are the result of negligence; and upon the whole the text of the Book of Kings is inferior to that of the Appendix to the Book of Jeremiah. Bearing in mind, however, that possibly they are not two transcripts of the same text, but the result of an independent use by two different writers of the same original authority, their complete agreement, except in trivial matters and mistakes easy of correction, is a satisfactory

proof of the general trust-worthiness of the Masoretic Text in all more important particulars.

JEREMIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE
Lamentations

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Contents

Introduction to Lamentations

The prophecy of Jeremiah is immediately followed in the English Version by five lyric poems, the title of which in the versions is taken from the general nature of the contents; thus the Septuagint called these poems Θρῆνοι *Thrēnoi* Threni, i. e. Dirges, and the Syriac and Vulgate "Lamentations." In the Hebrew Bible the "Lamentations" are arranged among the Kethubim, or (holy) writings, because of the nature of their contents: the Lamentations as being lyrical poetry are classed not with prophecies, but with the Psalms and Proverbs. This classification is probably later than the translation of the Septuagint, who have appended the Lamentations to Jeremiah‘s prophecy, inserting between them the apocryphal book of Baruch, and in fact counting the three as only one book. Although no name is attached to these poems in the Hebrew, yet both ancient tradition (Septuagint, Josephus, the Targum of Jonathan, the Talmud, etc.) and internal evidence point to Jeremiah as the author. The time of the composition of these poems is certainly the period immediately after the capture of Jerusalem, and probably during the month which intervened between the capture of Jerusalem and its destruction.

Their subject is the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldaeans. In the "first" of these poems the prophet dwells upon the miseries of hunger, of death in battle, of the profanation and plundering of the sanctuary, and of impending exile, oppressed by which the city sits solitary. In the "second," these same sufferings are described with more intense force, and in closer connection with the national sins which had caused them, and which had been aggravated by the faithlessness of the prophets. In the "third," Jeremiah acknowledges that chastisement is for the believer‘s good, and he dwells more upon the spiritual aspect of sorrow, and the certainty that finally there must be the redeeming of life for God‘s people, and vengeance for His enemies. In the "fourth," Judah‘s sorrows are confessed to have been caused by her sins. Finally, in the "fifth," Jeremiah prays that Zion‘s reproach may be taken away, and that Yahweh will grant repentance unto His people, and renew their days as of old.

The structure of the first four poems is highly artificial. They are arranged in 22 portions, according to the number of the letters of the

Hebrew alphabet; but in the first three poems each portion is again subdivided into three double clauses, the third differing from the first and second in that each also of these divisions begins with the same letter. In Lamentations 1:12.

LAMENTATIONS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This poem Lamentations 1:1-11 describe the misery which has befallen the Jews; in Lamentations 1:12-22, Jerusalem laments over her sufferings.

Verse 1

In these two verses is the same sad image as appears in the well-known medal of Titus, struck to celebrate his triumph over Jerusalem. A woman sits weeping beneath a palm-tree, and below is the legend "Judaea capta."

Translate Lamentations 1:1:

How sitteth solitary the city that was full of people:

She is become as a widow that was great among the nations:

A princess among provinces she is become a vassal.

Tributary - In the sense of personal labor Joshua 16:10.

Verse 2

Lovers … friends - i. e. the states in alliance with Judaea, and all human helpers.

Verse 3

Because of … - i. e. the people, not of Jerusalem only, but of the whole land, "is gone into exile to escape from the affliction and laborious servitude," to which they are subject in their own land.

Persecutors … between the straits - Rather, "pursuers … in the midst of her straits." The Jews flee like deer to escape from the invading Chaldaeans, but are driven by them into places from where there is no escape.

Verse 4

Zion, as the holy city, is the symbol of the religious life of the people, just as Judah in the previous verse represents their national life. The "virgins" took a prominent part in all religious festivals Jeremiah 31:13; Exodus 15:20.

Verse 5

Are the chief … prosper - Or, "are become the head" … are at rest. Judaea is so entirely crushed that her enemies did not need to take precautions against resistance on her part.

Children - i. e. "young children," who are driven before the enemy (literally the adversary), not as a flock of lambs which follow the shepherd, but for sale as slaves.

Verse 6

Her princes … - Jeremiah had before his mind the sad flight of Zedekiah and his men of war, and their capture within a few miles of Jerusalem Jeremiah 39:4-5.

Verse 7

Jerusalem remembers in the days of her affliction,
And of her homelessness,
All her pleasant things which have been from the days of old:

Now that her people fall by the hand of the adversary,

And she hath no helper;

Her adversaries have seen her,
They have mocked at her sabbath-keepings.

The word rendered "homelessless" means wanderings, and describes the state of the Jews, cast forth from their homes and about to be dragged into exile.

Sabbaths - Or, sabbath-keepings, and the cessation from labor every seventh day struck foreigners as something strange, and provoked their ridicule.

Verse 8

Grievously sinned - literally, "Jerusalem hath sinned a sin," giving the idea of a persistent continuance in wickedness.

Removed - Or, become an abomination. Sin has made Jerusalem an object of horror, and therefore she is cast away.

Yea, she sigheth … - Jerusalem groans over the infamy of her deeds thus brought to open shame, and turns her back upon the spectators in order to hide herself.

Verse 9

Her filthiness is in her skirts - Her personal defilement is no longer concealed beneath the raiment Jeremiah 13:22.

She came down wonderfully - Jerusalem once enthroned as a princess must sit on the ground as a slave.

Verse 10

Her pleasant things - Chiefly, the sacred vessels of the temple 2 Chronicles 36:10.

Sanctuary … congregation - Even a Jew might not enter the innermost sanctuary, which was for the priests only; but now the tramp of pagan soldiery has been heard within its sacred precincts.

Verse 11

Sigh … seek - Are sighing … are seeking. The words are present participles, describing the condition of the people. After a siege lasting a year and a half the whole country, far and near, would be exhausted.

To relieve the soul - See the margin, i. e. to bring back life to them. They bring out their jewels and precious articles to obtain with them at least a meal.

Verses 12-16

The lamentation of the city, personified as a woman in grief over her fate.

Lamentations 1:13

It prevaileth - Or, hath subdued.

He hath turned me back - Judaea, like a hunted animal, endeavors to escape, but finds every outlet blocked by nets, and recoils from them with terror and a sense of utter hopelessness.

Lamentations 1:14

Bound by his hand - As the plowman binds the yoke upon the neck of oxen, so God compels Judah to bear the punishment of her sins.

They are wreathed, and … - Or, they are knotted together, "they come up" etc. Judah's sins are like the cords by which the pieces of the yoke are fastened together Jeremiah 27:2; they are knotted and twined like a bunch upon the neck, and bind the yoke around it so securely that it is impossible for her to shake it off.

He hath made … - Or, it hath made "my strength" to stumble. The yoke of punishment thus imposed and securely fastened, bows down her strength by its weight, and makes her totter beneath it.

The Lord - The third distich of the verse begins here, and with it a new turn of the lamentation. The title Adonai (properly, my Lord) is in the Lamentations used by itself in fourteen places, while the name Yahweh is less prominent; as if in their punishment the people felt the lordship of the Deity more, and His covenant-love to them less.

Lamentations 1:15

The Lord hath trodden under foot - Or, אדני *'ădonāy* has made contemptible (i. e. put into the balance, made to go up as the lighter weight,

and so made despicable) "my war-horses" (put metaphorically for heroes).

In the midst of me - They had not fallen gloriously in the battlefield, but remained ignominiously in the city.

Assembly - Or, "a solemn feast;" the word especially used of the great festivals Leviticus 23:2. אדני *'ădonāy* has proclaimed a festival, not for me, but against me.

The Lord hath trodden … - Or, "אדני *'ădonāy* hath trodden the winepress for the virgin daughter of Judah." See Jeremiah 51:14 note. By slaying Judah's young men in battle, God is trampling for her the winepress of His indignation.

Verse 17

Spreadeth forth her hands - In prayer Exodus 9:29, Exodus 9:33, but Zion entreats in vain. There is no one to comfort her - not God, for He is chastising her, nor man, for all the neighboring nations have become her enemies. See Lamentations 1:2.

That his adversaries … - Rather, that those round about him should be his adversaries; all the neighboring states should regard him with aversion.

Jerusalem is … - i. e. is become an abomination. The words are virtually the same as in Lamentations 1:8.

Verse 18

People - peoples, pagan nations.

Verse 19

I called for … - Rather, to "my lovers."

While they sought their meat - literally, "for they sought food for themselves to revive their souls." Complete the sense by adding, "and found none."

Verse 20

Troubled - Or, inflamed with sorrow.

Turned within me - Agitated violently.

At home there is as death - i. e. "in the house" there are pale pining forms, wasting with hunger, and presenting the appearance of death.

Verse 21

They have heard … - Or, "They heard that I sigh," that I have "no comforter."

Thou wilt bring the day … - literally, thou hast brought "the day thou hast proclaimed, and they shall be like unto me." The day of Judah's

punishment was the proof that the nations now triumphing over Jerusalem‘s fall would certainly be visited.

LAMENTATIONS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

This poem Lamentations 2:1-10, the prophet describes the punishment which has fallen upon Zion; Lamentations 2:11-22 are a lamentation and a prayer.

Verse 1

How … - Or, "How" doth "אדני *'ădonāy* cover." He hath east down etc. By God's footstool seems to be meant the ark. See Psalm 99:5 note.

Verse 2

Habitations - The dwellings of the shepherds in the pastures Jeremiah 49:19. These are described as swallowed up by an earthquake, while the storm itself throws down the fortified cities of Judah.

Polluted - i. e. profaned it, made common or unclean what before was holy.

Verse 3

Since the horn is the symbol of power, the cutting off of every horn means the depriving Israel of all power of resistance. The drawing back of God's right hand signifies the withdrawal of that special Providence which used to protect the chosen people.

And he burned … - Or, "and" he kindled a fire in Jacob: as the active enemy of "Jacob," Himself applying the torch.

Verse 4

He stood with his right hand … - i. e. that right hand so often stretched out to help now grasped a weapon ready for Judah's destruction.

Were pleasant - Or, was "pleasant." Put full stop after "eye." Begin the third distich thus:

In the tabernacle - (or, tent) of the daughter of Zion.

Verse 5

Literally, אדני *'ădonāy* has become "as an enemy."

Verse 6

tabernacle - Or, covert Jeremiah 25:38, i. e. such a tent of boughs as was put up at the Feast of Tabernacles. The words mean, "the Lord hath (as) violently destroyed His booth. as a man might tear down a shed in "a garden."" Compare Isaiah 1:8.

His places of the assembly - Or, "His great festivals" (Lamentations 1:15 note). It is the Word rendered "solemn feasts" in the next clause, and

rightly joined there with "sabbaths," the weekly, as the other were the annual festivals. It is no longer אדני *'ădonāy* but the Lord (Yahweh) who lets them pass into oblivion. He had once instituted them for His own honor, now He lets them lie forgotten.

Hath despised … - Or, "hath rejected" king and priest. With the destruction of the city the royal authority fell: with the ruined temple and the cessation of the festivals the functions of the priest ceased.

Verse 7

sanctuary - The holy of holies; "the walls of her palaces" are those of the sacred buildings.

Verse 8

A line - Compare Isaiah 34:11. The destruction is systematic and thorough.

Verse 9

Her gates are sunk into the ground - So completely destroyed, that one might suppose they had been swallowed up in an abyss.

Her king - The prophet's lamentation, occupied before chiefly with the buildings of the city and temple, now turns to the people, beginning with their temporal rulers.

The law is no more - The Jewish Law, the Torah, came to an end when it no longer had a local habitation. Its enactments were essentially those not of a universal religion, but of a national religion, and the restoration of the nation with a material temple was indispensable to its continued existence. It was only when elevated to be a universal religion, by being made spiritual, that it could do without ark, temple, and a separate people.

Her prophets also find … - With the Torah, the special gift of prophecy also ceased, since both were unique to the theocracy; but it was not until the establishment of Christianity that they were finally merged in higher developments of grace.

Verse 11

Troubled - See the margin reference note.

Liver - As the heart was regarded by the Jews as the seat of the intellect, so the liver (or bowels) was supposed to be the seat of the emotions. The pouring out of the liver upon the ground meant that feelings had entirely given way under the acuteness of sorrow, and he could no longer restrain them.

Verse 12

They say - Or, "They keep saying:" it was an oft-repeated cry, even while expiring upon their mother's bosom.

Verse 13

Equal - i. e. "compare." Zion's breach, i. e. her destruction, is measureless, like the ocean.

Verse 14

Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee - The Septuagint and Vulgate give the true meaning, "stupidity" (see Jeremiah 23:13 note).

To turn away thy captivity - The right sense is, "They have not disclosed to thee thy sins, that so thou mightest repent, and I might have turned away thy captivity."

Burdens - Applied contemptuously to predictions which proved "false" or "empty," i. e. failed of accomplishment. On the deduction to be drawn from this, see Jeremiah 28:9.

Causes of banishment - The result of the teaching of the false prophets would be that God would "drive out" the Jews from their land.

Some render the words "false … banishment" by "oracles of falsehood and seduction."

Verse 15

Compare the scene round the cross of the Redeemer Matthew 27:39.

Verse 16

Seen it - Omit "it." The intensity of the enemy's exultation is shown by the heaping up of unconnected words. We have found what we sought, have seen what we looked for.

Verse 17

That which he had devised - Or, what he purposed. Zion's ruin was the fulfillment of God's determination, of which they had been forwarned from the days of old (see the margin reference).

Fulfilled - Or, finished.

Verse 18

Their heart - That of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The prophet bids the wall, as the representative of the people who had dwelt secure under its protection, shed floods of tears on their behalf. Broken up by the enemy, it could be their guardian no longer, but by its ruins it might still cry unto the Lord in their behalf.

A river - Or, a brook or torrent.

Rest - Properly, the torpor and numbness which follows upon excessive grief.

Apple of thine eye - See Psalm 17:8 note.

Verse 19

In - (or at) the beginning of the watches "At the beginning of each night-watch" means all the night through. The Hebrews divided the night into three watches.

Verse 20

The sense is: "See, Yahweh, and look! whom hast Thou treated thus? Shall women eat their fruit - children whom they must still carry?" the swaddled child being one still needing to be nursed and borne in their arms.

Verse 21

Omit "them" and "and," which weaken the intensity of the passage.

Verse 22

Thou hast called as in a solemn day - i. e. "Thou" callest "like a feast day," i. e. like the proclaiming of a festival.

My terrors round about - The prophet's watch-word (Jeremiah 6:25 note). God now proclaims what Jeremiah had so often called out before, "Magor-missabib." On every side were conquering Chaldaeans.

LAMENTATIONS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

This elegy 2 Corinthians 12:10.

Verse 1

That hath seen affliction - i. e. hath experienced, suffered it.

Verse 3

Is he turned; he turneth - Or, "surely against me" hath he turned "his hand" again and again "all the day long."

Verse 4

Made old - Or, wasted: his strength slowly wasted as he pined away in sorrow.

He hath broken my bones - This clause completes the representation of the sufferer's physical agonies. Here the idea is that of acute pain.

Verse 5

He hath builded … - The metaphor is taken from the operations in a siege.

Gall and travail - Or "travail;" i. e. bitterness and weariness (through toil).

Verse 6

Or, "He hath" made me to dwell "in darkness," i. e. in Sheol or Hades, "as those" forever "dead."

Verse 7

The prophet feels as if enclosed within walls, and fettered.

Verse 8

Shout - i. e. call for help.

Shutteth out - Or, "shutteth in." God has so closed up the avenues to the place in which he is immured, that his voice can find no egress.

Verse 9

Inclosed - Or, hedged Lamentations 3:7.

Hath, made crooked - Or, "hath" turned aside. A solid wall being built across the main road, Jeremiah turns aside into by-ways, but finds them turned aside, so that they lead him back after long wandering to the place from where he started.

Verses 10-18

Having dwelt upon the difficulties which hemmed in his path, he now shows that there are dangers attending upon escape.

Lamentations 3:11

The meaning is, "God, as a lion, lying in wait, has made me turn aside from my path, but my flight was in vain, for springing upon me from His ambush lie has torn me in pieces."

Desolate - Or, astonied, stupefied that he cannot flee. The word is a favorite one with Jeremiah.

Lamentations 3:12

This new simile arises out of the former one, the idea of a hunter being suggested by that of the bear and lion. When the hunter comes, it is not to save him.

Lamentations 3:14

Metaphor is dropped, and Jeremiah shows the real nature of the arrows which rankled in him so deeply.

Lamentations 3:15

"He hath" filled me to the full with bitterness, i. e. bitter sorrows Job 9:18.

Lamentations 3:16

Broken my teeth with gravel stones - His bread was so filled with grit that in eating it his teeth were broken.

Lamentations 3:17

Prosperity - literally, as in the margin, i. e. I forgot what good was, I lost the very idea of what it meant.

Lamentations 3:18

The prophet reaches the verge of despair. But by struggling against it he reaches at length firm ground.

Verse 19

Remembering - Or, as in the margin. It is a prayer to Yahweh.

My misery - Or, "my" homelessness (Lamentations 1:7 note).

Verse 21

This I recall - Rather, "This will I bring back to my heart, therefore will I hope." Knowing that God hears the prayer of the contrite, he begins again to hope.

Verse 22

Verses 22-42 are the center of the present poem, as it also holds the central place in the whole series of the Lamentations. In them the riches of God's grace and mercy are set forth in the brightest colors, but no sooner are they ended than the prophet resumes the language of woe.

That we - He is speaking as the representative of all sufferers.

Verse 24

The Lord is my portion - "My portion is Yahweh," see Numbers 18:20; Psalm 16:5 ff.

Therefore will I hope in him - A more full expression of the confidence present in the prophet's mind in Lamentations 3:21, but based now upon God's faithfulness in showing mercy.

Verses 25-27

In these three verses, each beginning in the Hebrew with the word good, we have first the fundamental idea that Yahweh Himself is good, and if good to all, then especially is He so to those who being in adversity can yet wait in confidence upon His mercy.

Lamentations 3:26

And quietly wait - literally, "and be in silence," i. e. abstain from all complaining.

Lamentations 3:27

The yoke - Or, a "yoke." By bearing a yoke in his youth, i. e. being called upon to suffer in early age, a man learns betimes the lesson of silent endurance, and so finds it more easy to be calm and patient in later years.

Verses 28-30

Translate:

Let him sit alone and keep silence;
For He (God) hath laid the yoke upon him.
Let him place his mouth in the dust;
Perchance there is hope.
Let him offer his cheek to him that smiteth him;
Let him be filled to the full with reproach.

It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth, but only if he bear it rightly. To attain this result, let him learn resignation, remembering who has laid the yoke upon him. This reverential silence is described Lamentations 3:29, as putting the mouth in the dust, and so lying prostrate before the Deity; while Lamentations 3:30 the harder task is imposed of bearing contumely with meekness (margin reference), and not shrinking from the last dregs of the cup of reproach. Many who submit readily to God are indignant when the suffering comes through men.

Verses 31-33

Reasons for the resignation urged in the previous triplet.

Verses 34-36

Neither does God approve of wanton cruelty inflicted by one man on another. Three examples are given: the treatment of prisoners of war; the procuring an unjust sentence before a legal tribunal acting in the name of God (see Exodus 21:6); and the perversion of justice generally.

Verses 37-39

Why then does a loving God, who disapproves of suffering when inflicted by man upon man, Himself send sorrow and misery? "Because of sins."

Lamentations 3:37

Literally, "Who is this that spake and it was done, though אדני *'ădonāy* commanded it not?"

Lamentations 3:39

So long as God spares a man's life, why does he complain? The chastisement is really for his good; only let him use it aright, and he will be thankful for it in the end.

A man for the punishment of his sins - Translate: Let "each man sigh for," i. e. because of, "his sins." Instead of complaining because God sends him sorrow, let him rather mourn over the sins which have made punishment necessary. The sense of the King James Version is, Why does a man … complain "for his sins?" i. e. for the necessary results of them in chastisement.

Verses 40-42

The prophet urges men to search out their faults and amend them.

Lamentations 3:40

And turn again to the Lord - Or, "and return to Yahweh." The prep. (to) in the Hebrew implies not half way, but the whole.

Lamentations 3:41

Literally, "Let us lift up our heart unto our hands unto God in heaven;" as if the heart first lifted up the hands, and then with them mounted up in prayer to God. In real prayer the outward expression is caused by the emotion stirring within.

Verse 43

In verses 43-66, far from pardoning, God is still actively punishing His people.

Rather, "Thou hast covered" Thyself "with wrath and pursued (Lamentations 1:3 note) us." The covering (here and in Lamentations 3:44)

is that of clothing and enwrapping.

Verse 45
Omit "as."
Verse 47
Desolation - Or, devastation.
Verses 48-51
The deep sympathy of the prophet, which pours itself forth in abundant tears over the distress of his people.
Lamentations 3:51
Or, "Mine eye" causeth pain to my soul, i. e. maketh my soul ache, because of the sad fate of the maidens (Lamentations 1:4, Lamentations 1:18, …).
Verse 52
Or, "They who without cause are mine enemies have hunted me sore like a bird." Probably the prophet is speaking of his personal sorrows.
Verse 53
They have cut off my life in the dungeon - Or, "They destroyed my life in the pit," i. e. tried to destroy it by casting me into the cistern, and covering the month with a stone. See the margin reference.
Verse 54
Waters flowed over mine head - A figurative expression for great mental trouble.
Verses 55-66
A prayer for deliverance and for vengeance upon his enemies.
Lamentations 3:55
Out of the low dungeon - "The lowest pit" of Psalm 88:6. Some consider that Jeremiah 38:6 note).
Lamentations 3:56
Thou hast heard - In sending Ebedmelech to deliver me. The next clause signifies "Hide not thine ear to my relief to my cry," i. e. to my cry for relief.
Lamentations 3:58
God now appears as the prophet's next of kin, pleading the lawsuits of his soul, i. e. the controversies which concern his salvation. and rescuing his life, in jeopardy through the malice of his enemies.
Lamentations 3:59

Wrong - Done to him by the perversion of justice.

Lamentations 3:60, Lamentations 3:61

Imaginations - Or, devices.

Lamentations 3:63

Their sitting down, and their rising up - i. e. all the ordinary actions of their life.

Musick - Or, song, "the subject of it."

Lamentations 3:64-66

The versions render the verbs in these verses as futures, "Thou shalt render unto them a recompence," etc.

Lamentations 3:65

Give them sorrow of heart - Or, "Thou wilt give them" blindness "of heart."

Lamentations 3:66

Persecute … - Or, pursue them in anger and destroy them, etc.

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CHAPTER 4

Introduction

In this poem Lamentations 4:1-11 which have befallen Judah are the punishment of her sin Lamentations 4:12-20, and will therefore end - when chastisement has had its proper effect - in her restoration Lamentations 4:21-22.

Verse 1

The stones of the sanctuary - Or, the hallowed stones, literally stones of holiness, a metaphor for the people themselves. The actual stones of the temple would not be thus widely thrown about as to be seen everywhere, but the prophet has already affirmed this of the young children dying of hunger (compare Lamentations 2:19).

Verse 2

The precious sons of Zion - The whole nation was consecrated to God, and formed "a kingdom of priests" Exodus 19:6: in this respect, a type of the Christian Church 1 Peter 2:5.

Comparable to fine gold - literally, "weighed with" solid gold, and so equal to their weight in it. With this is contrasted the hollow pitcher easily broken, and made of materials of no intrinsic value.

Verse 3

Sea monsters - Rather, jackals.

Their young ones - "Their" whelps. The term is applied only to the young of dogs, lions, and the like.

Verse 5

They that were brought up in scarlet - literally, "those that were carried upon scarlet;" young children in arms and of the highest birth now lie on the dirt-heaps of the city.

Verse 6

Rather, "For" the iniquity "of the daughter of my people was greater than" the sin "of Sodom." The prophet deduces this conclusion from the greatness of Judah's misery (compare Jeremiah 30:11; see also Luke 13:1-5).

No hands stayed on her - Or, "no hands were round about her." Sodom's sufferings in dying were brief: there were no starving children, no mothers cooking their offspring for food.

Verse 7

The Nazarites from their temperance were remarkable for health and personal beauty, besides being held in religious veneration.

Rubies - Or, corals.

Their polishing was of sapphire - Or, their shape was "a sapphire." The allusion is no longer to color, but to form. Their shape was exact and faultless as the cutting of a precious stone.

Verse 8

Their visage … - Their form (their whole person, see 1 Samuel 28:14) … as in the margin. See Job 30:30.

It is withered, it is become like a stick - Or, It has become dry like a piece of wood.

Verse 10

Pitiful - i. e. tender-hearted, compassionate. meat is used for food Psalm 69:21. What is here stated actually occurred during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus.

Verse 12

Though Jerusalem had been several times captured 1 Kings 14:26; 2 Kings 14:13; 2 Kings 23:33-35, yet it had been so strongly fortified by Uzziah and his successors as to have been made virtually impregnable. Its present capture by Nebuchadnezzar had cost him a year and a half's siege.

Verse 13

The blood of the just - Jeremiah 26:7-24 exhibits priests and prophets as the prime movers in an attempt to silence the word of God by putting Jeremiah to death. Compare the margin reference to Matthew.

Verse 14

They have wandered - God's ministers, consecrated to His service, wandered through the city blinded by the insatiable lust of slaughter. It was a pollution to touch their garments.

Verse 15

Men cried to these priests, "Away! Unclean! Away! Away! Touch not." "Unclean" was the cry of the leper whenever he appeared in public: here it is the warning shout of those who meet the murderers.

When they fled away and wandered - These priests fled away from the city, but with uncertain steps, not knowing where to find refuge. They find themselves abhorred abroad as well as at home.

It is quite possible that this verse records a real occurrence, if not during the siege, at all events during the last years of Zedekiah's reign.

Verse 16

Literally, The countenance of Yahweh hath scattered them, has driven these outlawed priests here and there, "and He will no more regard them" with favor.

Verses 17-20

A rapid sketch of the last days of the siege and the capture of the king.

Lamentations 4:17

Rather, "Still do our eyes waste away looking for our vain help."

In our watching - Or, "on our watchtower."

Lamentations 4:18

Or, They hunted "our steps that we could not go out into the streets. To hunt" means here to lie in ambush, and catch by snares; and the streets are literally "the wide places," especially at the gates. Toward the end of the siege the towers erected by the enemy would command these places.

Lamentations 4:19

Our persecutors are … - Our pursuers (Lamentations 1:3 note) "were swifter thorn the eagles of heaven."

They pursued us - Or, they chased us.

Mountains … wilderness - The route in going from Jerusalem to Jericho leads first over heights, beginning with the Mount of Olives, and then descends into the plain of the Ghor.

Lamentations 4:20

The breath of our nostrils - Zedekiah is not set before us as a vicious king, but rather as a man who had not strength enough of character to stem the evil current of his times. And now that the state was fallen he was as the very breath of life to the fugitives, who would have no rallying point without him.

In their pits - The words are metaphorical, suggesting that Zedekiah was hunted like a wild animal, and driven into the pitfall.

Verse 21-22

The prophet ends his elegy with the language of Messianic hope. The earthly king had fallen Lamentations 4:20; but Israel cannot really perish. First then Edom, the representative of the Church's foes, is ironically told to rejoice. Rejoice she did at the capture of Jerusalem Lamentations 4:22

The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished - literally, Thy iniquity is ended. This is the result of Judah having borne her punishment.

And as it is not just to punish twice for the same thing, therefore Jeremiah adds, “He will not send thee again into captivity;” not meaning that under all circumstances Judah would have immunity from exile; - for that would depend upon her future conduct: but that her present guilt being expiated, she would have nothing to fear on its account.

He will discover thy sins - See the margin. As Edom rejoices when the Church is chastised, so is the day of the Church‘s triumph that also on which the wicked meet with retribution.

LAMENTATIONS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

This final chapter Lamentations 5 consists of the same number of verses as there are letters in the Hebrew alphabet, but they no longer begin with the letters in regular order. Strict care is shown in the form and arrangement of the poem, each verse being compressed into a very brief compass, consisting of two members which answer to one another both in idea and expression. It is mainly occupied with the recapitulation of sufferings Lamentations 5:2-18, and finally closes with earnest prayer.

Verse 1

What is come upon us - literally, "what" has happened "to us:" our national disgrace.

Verse 2

Turned - "transferred." The inheritance was the land of Canaan Leviticus 20:24.

Aliens - Or, "foreigners:" i. e. the Chaldaeans upon their conquest of the country.

Verse 3

Our mothers are as widows - The particle "as" suggests that the whole verse is metaphorical. Our distress and desolation is comparable only to that of fatherless orphans or wives just bereaved of their husbands.

Verse 4

Better as in the margin cometh to us for price. The rendering of the the King James Version spoils the carefully studied rhythm of the original. The bitterness of the complaint lies in this, that it was their own property which they had to buy.

Verse 5

Our necks … - i. e. we were pursued so actively that our enemies seemed to be leaning over our necks ready to seize us.

We labor - We were wearied, "there was no rest for us:" being chased incessantly.

Verse 6

"To give the hand" means to submit oneself. Absolutely it was Babylon that had just destroyed their national existence, but Jeremiah means that all feelings of patriotism were crushed, and the sole care that remained was the desire for personal preservation. To secure this the people would readily

have submitted to the yoke either of Egypt or Assyria, the great powers from which in their past history they had so often suffered.

Verse 7

And are not; and we … - Or, they are not; "we have borne their iniquities." Our fathers who began this national apostasy died before the hour of punishment.

Verse 8

Servants - i. e. Slaves. A terrible degradation to a high-spirited Jew.

Verse 9

We gat - Or, We get "our bread at the peril of our lives." This verse apparently refers to those who were left in the land, and who in gathering in such fruits as remained, were exposed to incursions of the Bedouin, here called "the sword of the desert."

Verse 10

Our skin … - Or, is fiery red like an oven because of the fever-blast "of famine."

Verse 11

They ravished - They humbled.

Verse 12

After the princes had been put to death their bodies were hung up by the hand to expose them to public contumely. Old age, again, no more availed to shield men from shameful treatment than the high rank of the princes. Such treatment of conquered enemies was not uncommon in ancient warfare.

Verse 13

They took the young men to grind - Or, "The young men" have borne the mill, a menial and laborious task usually performed by slaves (compare Isaiah 47:2).

The children fell under the wood - Or, lads have stumbled under burdens of wood. By lads are meant youths up to the age of military service; another form of menial labor.

Verse 14

The gate - The gate was the place for public gatherings, for conversation, and the music of stringed instruments.

Verse 16

Literally, "The crown of our head is fallen," i. e. what was our chief ornament and dignity is lost; the independence of the nation, and all that

gave them rank and honor.

Verse 17

Is faint … - Or, has become "faint" - have become "dim." "For this," i. e. for the loss of our crown etc.

Verse 18

The foxes - Or, jackals. As these animals live among ruins, and shun the presence of man, it shows that Zion is laid waste and deserted.

Verse 19

Remainest - Or, reignest. The earthly sanctuary is in ruins, but the heavenly throne in unchangeable glory.

Verse 22

Literally, "Unless thou hast utterly rejected us," unless "thou art very wroth against us." This is stated as a virtual impossibility. God's anger can be but temporary Psalm 30:5, and therefore the very supposition is an indirect expression of hope.

This verse speaks of the possibility of an utter rejection through God's wrath. Therefore, to remove so painful a thought, and to make the book more suited for public reading, Lamentations 5:21 is repeated in many manuscripts intended for use in the synagogue. The same rule is observed in the synagogue with the two last verses of Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, and Malachi.

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Ezekiel

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EZEKIEL INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Ezekiel

We know scarcely anything of Ezekiel except what we learn from the book that bears his name. Of the date and authorship of this book there has scarcely been any serious question. The Book of Ezekiel has always formed part of the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament. Ezekiel is found in the most ancient versions.

Ezekiel, "God strengtheneth" or "hardeneth," was the son of Buzi, a priest probably of the family of Zadok. He was one of those who went into exile with Jehoiachin 2 Kings 24:14, and would seem to have belonged to the higher class, a supposition agreeing with the consideration accorded to him by his fellow exiles (Ezekiel 8:1, etc.). The chief scene of his ministry was Tel-Abib in northern Mesopotamia, on the river Chebar, along the banks of which were the settlements of the exiles. He was probably born in or near Jerusalem, where he must certainly have lived many years before he was carried into exile. The date of his entering upon the prophetic office is given in Ezekiel 1:1; and if, as is not unlikely, he entered upon this office at the legal age of 30, he must have been about 14 years of age when Josiah died. In this case, he could not have exercised the priestly functions at Jerusalem. However, since his father was a priest Ezekiel 1:3, no doubt he was brought up in the courts of the temple, and so became familiar with its services and arrangements.

Ezekiel lived in a house of his own, was married, and lost his wife in the ninth year of his exile. Of the rest of his life we know nothing.

The period during which Ezekiel prophesied in Chaldea was signalized by the miserable reign of Zedekiah, ending in his imprisonment and death - by the destruction of the temple, the sack of Jerusalem, and the final deportation of its inhabitants - by Gedaliah's short regency over the poor remnant left behind in the country, his treacherous murder, and the flight of the conspirators, conveying Jeremiah with them into Egypt - and by Nebuchadnezzars conquests in the neighboring countries, and especially his prolonged siege of Tyre.

The year in which Ezekiel delivered his prophecies against Egypt corresponds with the first year of the reign of Pharaoh-Hophra, the Apries of Herodotus. The accession (589 b.c.) of this king to the Egyptian throne affected very materially the future of the kingdom of Judah. Since the first capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the Jews had found the service of the Chaldaeans a hard one, and were ready at any moment to rise and shake off the yoke. Egypt was the only power from which they could hope for effectual support; and Egypt had long been inactive. The power of Necho was broken at Carchemish (605 b.c., Jeremiah 46:2; 2 Kings 24:7). Apries, during his reign of 19 years, was determined to recover the ground which his grandfather and father had lost in Palestine and in Syria. No doubt rumors of these designs had reached the Jews, both in Jerusalem and in captivity, and they were watching their opportunity to break with Babylon and ally themselves with Egypt. Against such an alliance Ezekiel came forward to protest. He told his countrymen that their hopes of safety did not lay in shaking off a yoke, which they could not do without the grossest perjury, but in repenting of their sins and turning to the God of their fathers.

The fallacy of the hopes entertained by the Jews of deliverance through Egypt was soon made manifest. In the course of the final siege of Jerusalem, Hophra attempted a diversion which proved unsuccessful. Nebuchadnezzar left the siege of Jerusalem to attack the Egyptians, who - forced to retreat over the borders - offered no further resistance to the captor of Jerusalem Jeremiah 37:5-8. It was at this time that Ezekiel commenced the series of prophecies against Egypt Ezekiel 8:5., and clung to the exiles Ezekiel 14:3., though probably in a less decided degree. Mixed up with this unfaithfulness to the true God there was prevalent a superstitious confidence in His disposition to protect the city and people, once His own. Utterly disregarding the conditional character of His promises, and the more spiritual nature of His blessings, people satisfied themselves that the once glorious Jerusalem never would and never could be overthrown Ezekiel 13:2. Hence, arose the foolish rebellions of Zedekiah, commencing in reckless perjury, and terminating in calamity and disgrace. Connected with this feeling was a strange reversal of the relative positions of the exiles and of the Jews at home. The latter, though only the most ordinary of the people 2 Kings 24:14, afflicted to despise their exiled countrymen Ezekiel 11:14.; and Ezekiel had to assure his fellow-exiles that to them and not to the Jews

in Palestine belonged the enduring title of God‘s people Ezekiel 11:16-17, Ezekiel 11:20.

But though the voice of the prophet may have sounded back to the country which he had left, yet Ezekiel‘s special mission was to those among whom he dwelt.

(a) He had to convince them of God‘s utter abhorrence of idolatry, and of the sure and irrevocable doom of those who practiced it;

(b) He had to show that the Chaldaeans were the instruments of God, and that therefore resistance to them was both hopeless and unlawful;

(c) He had to destroy their presumptuous confidence in external privileges, to open their eyes to a truer sense of the nature of the divine promises; and, lastly,

(d) He had to raise their drooping hearts by unfolding to them the true character of the divine government, and the end for which it was administered.

The Book of Ezekiel may be said in this respect to be the moral of the captivity. The captivity was not simply a divine judgment, but a preparation for a better state, an awakening of higher hopes. It was Ezekiel‘s part to direct and satisfy these hopes. He was to set before his countrymen the prospect of a restoration, reaching far beyond a return to their native soil; he was to point to an inauguration of divine worship far more solemn than what was to be secured by the reconstruction of the city or temple on its original site in its original form. Their very condition was intended, and was calculated, to stir their hearts to their inmost depths, and awaken thoughts which must find their answer in the messages characteristic of Gospel truth. In the Law there had been intimations of restoration upon repentance Deuteronomy 30:1-10: but this is expanded by Ezekiel Ezekiel 37:9-10.

The mission of Ezekiel should be compared with that of his countryman, Jeremiah, who began his prophetic office earlier, but continued it through the best part of the time during which Ezekiel himself labored. Both had to

deliver much the same messages, and there is a marked similarity in their utterances. But Jeremiah‘s mission was incomparably the more mournful one. Ezekiel‘s task was, indeed, a bitter one; but personally he soon acquired respect and attention, and if at first opposed, was at last listened to if not obeyed. He may have been instrumental, together with Daniel, in working that reformation in the Jewish people, which certainly was, to some extent, effected during the captivity.

One of the immediate effects of the captivity was the reunion of the severed tribes of Israel. The political reasons which had severed them were at an end; a common lot begat sympathy in the sufferers; and those of the ten tribes who even in their separation had been conscious of a natural unity, and could not but recognize in the representative of David the true center of union, would be naturally inclined to seek this rarity in amalgamation with the exiles of Judah. In the course of the years which had elapsed since their exile, the numbers of the ten tribes may well have wasted away, partly through absorption among the pagan who surrounded them; and thus the exiles from Judah may have far exceeded in number and importance those who yet remained of the exiles of Israel. Accordingly, we find in Ezekiel the terms which Judah and Israel applied indiscriminatey to those among whom the prophet dwelt (see Ezekiel 14:1); and the sins of Israel, no less than those of Judah, are summed up in the reproof of his countrymen.

All descendants of Abraham were again being drawn together as one people, and this was to be effected by the separated members gathering again around the legitimate center of government and of worship, under the supremacy of Judah. The amalgamation of the exiles of Israel and of Judah is in fact distinctly predicted by Jeremiah Jeremiah 3:18; a prediction which had its accomplishment in the restoration of the people to their native land by the decree of Cyrus (compare also Ezekiel 37:16.). Attempts have been made from time to time to discover the LOST ten tribes, by persons expecting to find, or thinking that they have found, them existing still as a separate community. According to the foregoing view, the time of captivity was the time of reunion. Ezekiel‘s mission was “to the house of Israel,” not only to those who came out with him from Jerusalem or Judah, but to those

also of the stock whom he found residing in a foreign land, where they had been settled for more than 100 years Ezekiel 37:16; Ezekiel 48:1.

The order and the character of the prophecies which this book contains are in strict accordance with the prophet‘s mission. His first utterances are those of bitter denunciation of judgment upon a rebellious people, and these threatenings are continued until the storm breaks in full fury upon the deserted city. Then the note is changed. There are yet indeed threatenings, but they are for unfaithful shepherds, and for the enemies of God‘s people. The remainder of the book is full of reassurances, of hopes and promises of renovation and blessing, in which the spiritual predominates over the temporal, and the kingdom of Christ takes the place of the kingdom upon Mount Zion.

The prophecies are therefore in general arranged in chronological order. So far as the people of God were concerned, there are two chief groups:

(1) those delivered before the destruction of the city Isaiah 6:2) have much more in common with the cherubim of the Jewish temple than with the winged figures of Assyria. And though, here and there, we find traces of the place of his sojourn (as in Ezekiel 4:1), it is but seldom. By the waters of Babylon the prophet remembered Zion, and his language, like his subject, was, for the most part, not of Chaldaea but of Jerusalem.

The various systems of interpretation of Ezekiel‘s prophecies have been summed up under the heads of:
(1) Historical
(2) Allegorical

(3) Typical

(4) Symbolical

(5) Judaistical

To many the prophecy is still in the course of fulfillment. The temple in its completeness is for the time when the kingdom of Christ shall be fully

established, and He shall have put down all rule and all principalities and power, to deliver up the kingdom unto the Father, that God may be all in all (see the Revelation 17:16 and Ezekiel 23:36, etc.). The repetition of such descriptions by the Christian seer must be owing to something more than the mere employment of figurative language already in use; in fact, just as our Lord‘s predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem are so mixed up with those of the end of the world, that we learn to regard the destruction of the city as the type and anticipation of the final judgment, so in the adoption of Ezekiel‘s language and figures by John, we see a proof of the extended meaning of the older prophecies. It is one conflict, waged from the first, and waging still; the conflict of evil with good, of the world with God, to be accomplished only in the final consummation, to which the Book of Revelation manifestly conducts us.

There is one feature in the writings of Ezekiel, which deserves particular notice. This is (to use a modern term) their eschatological character, i. e. their reference not merely to “an” end, but to “the” very end of all (see, e. g. James 4:1). These predictions of Ezekiel are therefore not to be interpreted simply as illustrative of, but as directly predictive of, the future of the church, Jewish and Christian, until the end of time. This view is confirmed by the introduction of passages setting forth in the strongest terms individual responsibility (see especially Ezekiel 11:19.).

The parts of the book were probably arranged by the prophet himself, who, at the same time, prefixed the dates to the several prophecies. The precision of these dates affords a clear proof that the prophecies were in the first instance orally delivered, written down at the time of their delivery, and afterward, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, put together into one volume, to form a part of those Scriptures which God has bequeathed as a perpetual inheritance to His church.

Some have thought that the frequent insertion of passages from older writers is characteristic rather of an author than of a prophet; but even if Ezekiel, the priest, imbued not only with the spirit, but also with the letter, of the Law engrafted it upon his predictions, this can in no degree lessen the authority of his commission as a prophet. The greater part of this book is written in prose, although the images employed are highly poetical. Some

portions, however, may be regarded as poetry; as, for instance, the dirge of the kings Ezekiel 19:1-14, the lay of the sword Ezekiel 21:8, the dirges of Tyre Ezekiel 27; 28 and of Egypt Ezekiel 3132. The language bears marks of the later style, which was introduced at the time of the Babylonian captivity.

Points of contact in the writings of Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, and John, are numerous, and the principal will be found noted in the marginal references.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The first three chapters of Ezekiel contain the account of Ezekiel‘s call.

A mighty whirlwind issues from the north, and a dark cloud appears in that quarter of the heavens. In the midst of the cloud is an area of dazzling brightness surrounded by encircling flames. Therein are seen four beings of strange and mysterious shape standing so as to form a square, below their feet are four wheels, and over their heads a throne on which is seated the likeness of a man dimly seen, while a voice issuing from the throne summons the prophet to his office.

Verse 1

The thirtieth year - being closely connected with as I, is rather in favor of considering this a personal date. It is not improbable that Ezekiel was called to his office at the age prescribed in the Law for Levites Numbers 4:23, Numbers 4:30, at which age both John the Baptist and our Lord began their ministry. His call is probably to be connected with the letter sent by Jeremiah to the captives Ezekiel 1:2 a Jewish, date; but it is not certain that this accession formed an era in Babylon and Ezekiel does not elsewhere give a double date, or even a Babylonian date. Others date from the 18th year of Josiah, when Hilkiah discovered the Book of the Law (supposed to be a jubilee year): this would give 594 b.c. as the 30th year, but there is no other instance in Ezekiel of reckoning from this year.

The captives - Not in confinement, but restricted to the place of their settlement.

The fourth month - “Month” is not expressed in the original. This is the common method. Before the captivity the months were described not by proper names but by their order, “the first, the second,” etc.; the first month corresponding nearly with our “April.” After the captivity, the Jews brought back with them the proper names of the months, “Nisan” etc. (probably those used in Chaldaea).

Chebar - The modern “Khabour” rises near Nisibis and flows into the Euphrates near “Kerkesiah,” 200 miles north of Babylon.

Visions of God - The exposition of the fundamental principles of the existence and nature of a Supreme God, and of the created angels, was called by the rabbis “the Matter of the Chariot” (compare 1 Chronicles

28:18) in reference to the form of Ezekiel‘s vision of the Almighty; and the subject was deemed so mysterious as to call for special caution in its study. The vision must be compared with other manifestations of the divine glory Exodus 24:10; Isaiah 6:1; Daniel 7:9; Revelation 4:2. Each of these visions has some of the outward signs or symbols here recorded. If we examine these symbols we shall find them to fall readily into two classes,

(1) Those which we employ in common with the writers of all ages and countries. “Gold, sapphire, burnished brass,” the “terrible crystal” are familiar images of majestic glory, “thunders, lightnings” and “the rushing storm” of awful power. But

(2) We come to images to our minds strange and almost grotesque. That the “Four Living Creatures” had their groundwork in the cherubim there can be no doubt. And yet their shapes were very different. Because they were symbols not likenesses, they could yet be the same though their appearance was varied.

Of what are they symbolic? They may, according to the Talmudists, have symbolized orders of Angels and not persons; according to others they were figures of the Four Gospels actuated by one spirit spread over the four quarters of the globe, upon which, as on pillars, the Church is borne up, and over whom the Word of God sits enthroned. The general scope of the vision gives the best interpretation of the meaning.

Ezekiel saw “the likeness of the glory of God.” Here His glory is manifested in the works of creation; and as light and fire, lightning and cloud, are the usual marks which in inanimate creation betoken the presence of God Psalm 18:6-14 - so the four living ones symbolize animate creation. The forms are typical, “the lion” and “the ox” of the beasts of the field (wild and tame), “the eagle” of the birds of the air, while “man” is the rational being supreme upon the earth. And the human type predominates over all, and gives character and unity to the four, who thus form one creation. Further, these four represent the constitutive parts of man‘s nature: “the ox” (the animal of sacrifice), his faculty of suffering; “the lion” (the king of beasts), his faculty of ruling; “the eagle” (of keen eye and soaring wing), his faculty of imagination; “the man,” his spiritual faculty, which actuates all the rest.

Christ is the Perfect Man, so these four in their perfect harmony typify Him who came to earth to do His Father‘s will; and as man is lord in the kingdom of nature, so is Christ Lord in the kingdom of grace. The “wings” represent the power by which all creation rises and falls at God‘s will; the “one spirit,” the unity and harmony of His works; the free motion in all directions, the universality of His Providence. The number “four” is the symbol of the world with its “four quarters;” the “veiled” bodies, the inability of all creatures to stand in the presence of God; the “noise of the wings,” the testimony borne by creation to God Psalm 19:1-3; the “wheels” connect the vision with the earth, the wings with heaven, while above them is the throne of God in heaven. Since the eye of the seer is turned upward, the lines of the vision become less distinct. It is as if he were struggling against the impossibility of expressing in words the object of his vision: yet on the summit of the throne is He who can only be described as, in some sort, the form of a man. That Yahweh, the eternal God, is spoken of, we cannot doubt; and such passages as Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3; John 1:14; John 12:41, justify us in maintaining that the revelation of the divine glory here made to Ezekiel has its consummation or fulfillment in the person of Christ, the only-begotten of God (compare Revelation 1:17-18).

The vision in the opening chapter of Ezekiel is in the most general form - the manifestation of the glory of the living God. It is repeated more than once in the course of the book (compare Ezekiel 8:2, Ezekiel 8:4; Ezekiel 9:3; 10; Ezekiel 11:22; Ezekiel 40:3). The person manifested is always the same, but the form of the vision is modified according to special circumstances of time and place.

Verse 2

The Jewish date. This verse and Ezekiel 1:3, which seem rather to interrupt the course of the narrative, may have been added by the prophet when he revised and put together the whole book. The word “captivity” (as in Ezekiel 1:1) refers to the “transportation” of the king and others from their native to foreign soil. This policy of settling a conquered people in lands distant from their home, begun by the Assyrians, was continued by the Persians and by Alexander the Great. The Jews were specially selected for such settlements, and this was no doubt a Providential preparation for

the Gospel, the dispersed Jews carrying with them the knowledge of the true God and the sacred Scriptures, and thus paving the way for the messengers of the kingdom of Christ.

Verse 3

Came expressly - The phrase marks that it was in truth a heaven-sent vision.

The hand of the Lord - A phrase in all prophecy implying a "constraining" power, because the spirit "constrains" the prophet independently of his own will.

Verse 4

Out of the north - From this quarter the Assyrian conquerors came upon the holy land. The vision, though seen in Chaldaea, had reference to Jerusalem, and the seer is to contemplate judgment as it is coming upon the holy land. Others consider the words expressive of the special seat of the power of Yahweh. The high mountain range of Lebanon that closed in the holy land on the north naturally connected to the inhabitants of that country the northern region with the idea of height reaching to heaven, from which such a vision as this might be supposed to come.

Infolding itself - Forming a circle of light - flames moving round and round and following each other in rapid succession, to be as it were the framework of the glorious scene.

Amber - The original word occurs only in Ezekiel. The Septuagint and the Vulgate have "electrum," a substance composed by a mixture of silver and gold, which corresponds very well to the Hebrew word. The brightness, therefore, is that of shining metal, not of a transparent gum. Render it: "out of the midst thereof," like Ezekiel 1:7 burnished gold out of the midst of fire.

Verse 5

Living creatures - The Hebrew word answers very nearly to the English "beings," and denotes those who live, whether angels, men (in whom is the breath of life), or inferior creatures.

Verse 6

In the Revelation of John each "beast" has its own distinctive character, here each unites in itself the four characters; there each has six wings, like the Seraphim Isaiah 6:2, here only four.

Verse 7

The “foot” seems here to mean the lower part of the leg, including the knee, and this was “straight,” i. e. upright like a man‘s. The “sole” is the “foot” as distinguished from the “leg,” the leg terminated in a solid calf‘s hoof. This was suitable for a being which was to present a front on each of its four sides. Ezekiel was living in a country on the walls of whose temples and palaces were those strange mixed figures, human heads with the bodies of lions and the feet of calves, and the like, which we see in the Babylonian and Assyrian monuments. These combinations were of course symbolic, and the symbolism must have been familiar to Ezekiel. But the prophet is not constructing his cherubim in imitation of these figures, the Spirit of God is revealing forms corresponding to the general rules of eastern symbolism.

Verse 8

Or, “They had the hands of a man under their wings on all four sides, just as they had wings and faces on all four sides.”

Verse 9

Two of the wings were in the act of flying, so stretched out that the extremity of each touched a wing of a neighboring living creature, similarly stretched out. This was only when they were in motion. See Ezekiel 1:24.

They went every one straight forward - The four together formed a square, and never altered their relative position. From each side two faces looked straight out, one at each corner - and so all moved together toward any of the four quarters, toward which each one had one of its four faces directed; in whatsoever direction the whole moved the four might be said all to go “straight forward.”

Verse 10

Each living creature had four faces, in front the face of a man, that of a lion on the right side, that of an ox on the left side, and that of an eagle behind, and the “chariot” would present to the beholder two faces of a man, of a lion, of an eagle, and of an ox, according to the quarter from which he looked upon it.

Verse 11

Thus … - Rather, And their faces and their wings were separated above. All four formed a whole, yet the upper parts of each, the heads and the wings (though touching), rose distinct from one another. Two wings of each, as in the case of Isaiah‘s Seraphim, were folded down over the body: and two were in their flight Ezekiel 1:9 “stretched upward” parted) so as to

meet, each a wing of the neighboring living creature, just as the wings of the cherubim touched one another over the mercy-seat of the ark.

Verse 12

The "chariot," though composed of distinct parts, was to be considered as a whole. There was one spirit expressive of one conscious life pervading the whole, and guiding the motions of the whole in perfect harmony.

Verse 13

Lamps - "like the appearance of" flames. Omit the "and" before "like." The "bright flames" resembled "coals of fire."

It went up - i. e. "fire went up."

Verse 15

Translate it: "one wheel upon the earth by" each of "the liviing creatures" on his four sides (i. e. on the four sides of each of the living creatures). There was a wheel to "each" of the living creatures: it was set "by," i. e. immediately "beneath" the feet of the living creature, and was constructed for direct motion in any of the four lines in which the creatures themselves moved. Their "work" or make, i. e. their construction, was "a wheel in the middle of a wheel;" the wheel was composed of two circumferences set at right angles to each other, like the equator and meridian upon a globe. A wheel so placed and constructed did its part alike on each side of the living creature beneath which it stood. The "ten bases" of the temple 1 Kings 7:27-36 were constructed with lions, oxen, and cherubim, between the ledges and wheels at the four corners attached beneath so as to move like the wheels of a chariot.

Verse 17

Upon their four sides - i. e. straight in the direction toward which their faces looked. Since the four quarters express all directions, the construction of the living creatures was such that they could move in each direction alike.

Verse 18

Rings - The felloes (circumference) of the wheels: they were both high and terrible. The "eyes" may have been no more than dazzling spots adding to their brilliancy. But it seems more likely that they had a symbolic meaning expressing either the universal fulfillment of God's will through His creation (2 Chronicles 16:9; compare Ezekiel 10:12), or the constant and unceasing praise which His works are ever rendering to Him Revelation 4:8. The power of nature is no blind force. it is employed in the service of

God‘s Providence, and the stamp of reason is impressed all over it. It is this very thing that makes the power of nature terrible to him who is at enmity with God.

Verse 20

Whithersoever the spirit of the four living creatures was to go, the wheels went - there was the spirit of the wheels to go. All four creatures together with their wheels are here called “the living creature,” because they formed a whole, one in motion, and in will, for one spirit was in them.

Verse 22

“The color” (Hebrew, “eye”) “of the terrible crystal” refers to the dazzling brightness of the “firmament,” a clear bright expanse between the “throne” and the “living creatures,” separating heaven from earth.

Verse 23

Every one had two, which covered … - Or, each one had two wings covering his body on either side.

Verse 24

The voice of the Almighty - Thunder.

The voice of speech - Rendered in Jeremiah 11:16 “a great tumult.” Some take it to describe the rushing of a storm.

Verse 25

A voice from the firmament - Compare Ezekiel 3:12; in the midst of the tumult, are heard articulate sounds declaring the glory of God.

Verse 26

Sapphire - Clear heavenly blue.

The appearance of a man - Deeply significant is the form of this manifestation. Here is no angel conveying God‘s message to man, but the glory of the Lord Himself. We recognize in this vision the prophetic annunciation of the Holy Incarnation. We are told little of the extent to which the human form was made evident to the prophet. For the vision was rather to the mind than to the bodily eye, and even inspired language was inadequate to convey to the hearer the glory which eye hath not seen or ear heard, and which only by special revelation it hath entered into the heart of man to conceive.

Verse 28

The rainbow is not simply a token of glory and splendor. The “cloud” and the “day of rain” point to its original message of forgiveness and mercy,

and this is especially suited to Ezekiel‘s commission, which was first to denounce judgment, and then promise restoration.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

The second and third chapters of Ezekiel contain the direct commission conveyed to Ezekiel in connection with the vision just recorded. The commission was repeated more than once, at what intervals of time we are not told. The communication is from without, the vision and the words are from God.

Verse 1

Son of man - This phrase (which occurs elsewhere in Scripture) is applied especially to Ezekiel and Daniel, the prophets of the captivity. Ezekiel is thus reminded of his humanity, at the time when he is especially permitted to have contact with God.

Verse 2

The spirit - i. e. "the Spirit of God."

Verse 3-4

Nation - literally, as in the margin - the word which usually distinguishes the pagan from God's people. Here it expresses that Israel is cast off by God; and the plural is used to denote that the children of Israel are not even "one nation," but scattered and disunited.

Translate: "I send thee to the children of Israel, the rebellious nation that have rebelled against Me (they and their fathers have transgressed against Me, even to this very day), and the children impudent and stiff-hearted: I do send thee unto them."

Verse 5

A rebellious house - A phrase employed continually by Ezekiel in bitter irony, in the place of house of Israel, as much as to say, "House no longer of Israel, but of rebellion." Compare Isaiah 30:9.

Verse 9

Was sent - Rather, was put forth.

A roll of a book - The book was one of the ancient kind written on skins rolled up together. Hence, our English volume Psalm 40:7. The writing was usually on one side, but in this case it was written within and without, on both sides, the writing as it were running over, to express the abundance of the calamities in store for the devoted people. To eat the book signifies to be

thoroughly possessed with its contents (compare Ezekiel 3:10; Jeremiah 15:16). There should be no break between Ezekiel 2:10 and Ezekiel 3.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

Before, there was a direct commission, now there is a symbolic action. John has the same vision (Revelation 10:8 ff), but there that is expressed, which is here left to be inferred, namely, that "as soon as he had eaten it his belly was bitter." The sweetness in the mouth denoted that it was good to be a messenger of the Lord (compare the margin reference), but the bitterness which accompanied it, denoted that the commission brought with it much sorrow.

Verse 6

To many people - To various nations using diverse languages.

Surely - The thought is that expressed by our Saviour Himself (margin reference). Some render it: "but I have sent thee unto these; they can hearken" etc.

Verse 8

I have made … thy forehead strong - I have given thee a strength superior to theirs; a metaphor taken from horned animals.

Verse 9

Adamant - Or, diamond Jeremiah 17:1, which was employed to cut flint. Ezekiel's firmness being that of a diamond, he should cut a stroke home to the hardened hearts of a rebellious people. For "though" read "for."

Verse 11

Thy people - God's people.

Verse 12

I heard behind me - The commission having been given, and the prophet transported to the place of his ministry, the chariot of the vision passes away with the proper tokens Ezekiel 1:24-25. A voice from above the firmament is now heard proclaiming the divine glory.

From his place - The place where the glory of the Lord had revealed itself in the vision. The words are to be joined to "saying:" put a comma after Lord.

Verse 13

That touched - literally, touching. The living creatures in their flight raised their wings, so as to touch each other.

Verse 14

Lifted me up - We are not to suppose that the prophet was miraculously transported from one place to another in the land of his captivity. Compare Matthew 4:1; Acts 8:39. He had been in an ecstatic vision Ezekiel 1:1, and now guided by the Spirit he goes forth among his countrymen.

The heat of my spirit - Full of the righteous indignation, which God inspired, against the sin which he was to denounce.

But the hand - and "the hand." The Lord strengthened him for his mission.

Verse 15

Tel-abib - , on the river Chebar was the chief seat of the Jewish exiles in Babylonia. The name "Tel-abib" ("mount of ears of corn") was probably given on account of its fertility.

I sat where they sat - Rather, "And I saw them sitting there and I sat there."

Astonished - Rather, silent, with fixed and determined silence (compare Ezra 9:3-4). "To be silent" was characteristic of mourners Lamentations 3:28; "to sit" their proper attitude Isaiah 3:26; Lamentations 1:1; "seven days" the set time of mourning Job 2:13.

Verse 16

The Lord guards both Ezekiel and his countrymen from dwelling exclusively on the national character of his mission. In the midst of the general visitations, each individual was to stand as it were alone before Him to render account of his doings, and to be judged according to his works.

Verse 17

Watchman - The priests and ministers of the Lord were often so called. Ezekiel is especially distinguished by this title Ezekiel 33:7. The duties of a watchman are twofold,

(1) to wait and watch what God will order,

(2) to watch over and superintend the people.

Isaiah describes and censures unfaithful watchmen Isaiah 56:10.

Verses 18-21

This passage anticipates the great moral principle of divine government Ezekiel 3:20

I lay a stumblingblock before him - I bring him to trial by placing difficulties and temptations in his way (compare Ezekiel 7:19; Ezekiel 44:12 margin; Ezekiel 14:3-4). It is true that God tempts no man in order to his destruction, but in the course of His Providence He permits men to be tried in order that their faith may be approved, and in this trial some who seem to be righteous fall.

Because thou … his blood … - So far as the prophet was concerned, the neglect of his duty is reckoned as the cause of the seemingly righteous man‘s fall.

His righteousness … - Or, righteousnesses, i. e. acts of righteousness. The "righteous" man here is one, who had hitherto done the "acts of righteousness" prescribed by the Law, but when trial came was shown to lack the "principle of righteousness."

Ezekiel 3:21

The repetition of the word "righteous" is to be noted. There seems to be an intimation that sin is alien to the character of a "righteous" man. Compare 1 John 3:7-9.

Verse 23

A fresh revelation of the glory of the Lord, to impress upon Ezekiel another characteristic of his mission. Now he is to learn that there is "a time to be silent" as well as "a time to speak," and that both are appointed by God. This represents forcibly the authoritative character and divine origin of the utterances of the Hebrew prophets.

Verse 24

"Shut" in the privacy of his own chamber he is to receive a message from Yahweh. This "shutting up," however, and the "bands" (Ezekiel 3:25, used figuratively) were signs of the manner in which Ezekiel‘s countrymen would close their ears, hindering him as far as in them lay from delivering the message of the Lord.

With this verse commences a series of symbolic actions enjoined to the prophet in order to foretell the coming judgments of Jerusalem Ezekiel 4; 5. Generally speaking symbolic actions were either literal and public, or figurative and private. In the latter case they impressed upon the prophet‘s mind the truth which he was to enforce upon others by the description of the action as by a figure. Difficulties have arisen, because interpreters have not chosen to recognize the figurative as well as the literal mode of prophesying. Hence, some, who would have all literal, have had to accept

the most strange and unnecessary actions as real; while others, who would have all figurative, have had arbitrarily to explain away the most plain historical statement. There may be a difference of opinion as to which class one or other figure may belong; but after all, the determination is not important, the whole value of the parabolic figure residing in the lesson which it is intended to convey.

Verse 26

And I will make - Rather, Then will I "make." One action is the consequence of the other. Because the people would silence the prophet, God to punish them will close his mouth (compare Isaiah 6:9; Matthew 13:14).

Verse 27

He that heareth … - The judicial blindness of which Ezekiel speaks had already fallen upon the great body of the nation (Ezekiel 14:4. Compare Revelation 2:7; Revelation 22:11).

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

In 2 Kings 24:20.

Verse 1

A tile - Rather, a brick. Sun-dried or kiln-burned bricks were from very early times used for building walls throughout the plain of Mesopotamia. The bricks of Nineveh and Babylon are sometimes stamped with what appears to be the device of the king in whose reign they were made, and often covered with a kind of enamel on which various scenes are portrayed. Among the subjects depicted on such bricks discovered at Nimroud are castles and forts.

sa40

Verse 2

Lay siege against it - The prophet is represented as doing that which he portrays. The leading features of a siege are depicted. See the Jeremiah 6:6 note.

The camp - Encampments. The word denotes various hosts in various positions around the city.

Fort - It was customary in sieges to construct towers of vast height, sometimes of 20 stories, which were wheeled up to the walls to enable the besiegers to reach the battlements with their arrows; in the lower part of such a tower there was commonly a battering-ram. These towers are frequently represented in the Assyrian monuments.

Battering rams - Better than the translation in the margin. Assyrian monuments prove that these engines of war are of great antiquity. These engines seem to have been beams suspended by chains generally in moveable towers, and to have been applied against the walls in the way familiar to us from Greek and Roman history. The name "ram" was probably given to describe their mode of operation; no Assyrian monument yet discovered exhibits the ram's head of later times.

Verse 3

An iron pan - Another figure in the coming siege. On Assyrian sculptures from Nimroud and Kouyunjik there are sieges of cities with "forts, mounts, and rams;" and together with these we see a kind of shield set up on the ground, behind which archers are shooting. Such a shield would be represented by the "flat plate" (margin). Ezekiel was directed to

take such a plate (part of his household furniture) and place it between him and the representation of the city.

A sign to the house of Israel - This "sign" was not necessarily acted before the people, but may simply have been described to them as a vivid representation of the event which it foretold. "Israel" stands here for the kingdom of Judah (compare Ezekiel 3:7, Ezekiel 3:17; Ezekiel 5:4; Ezekiel 8:6). After the captivity of the ten tribes the kingdom of Judah represented the whole nation. Hence, prophets writing after this event constantly address their countrymen as the house of Israel without distinction of tribes.

Verse 4

The siege being thus represented, the condition and suffering of the inhabitants is exhibited by the condition of one, who, bound as a prisoner or oppressed by sickness, cannot turn from his right side to his left. The prophet was in such a state.

Bear their iniquity - The prophet was, in a figure, to bear their iniquities for a fixed period, in order to show that, after the period thus foretold, the burden of their sins should be taken off, and the people be forgiven. Compare Leviticus 16:21-22.

Verse 5

According to the number of the days - Or, "to be to thee as a number of days (even as)" etc. Compare the margin reference. Some conceive that these "days" were the years during which Israel and Judah sinned, and date in the case of Israel from Jeroboam's rebellion to the time at which Ezekiel wrote (circa 390 years); and in the case of Judah from Josiah's reformation. But it seems more in accordance with the other "signs," to suppose that they represent not that which had been, but that which shall be. The whole number of years is 430 Ezekiel 4:5-6, the number assigned of old for the affliction of the descendants of Abraham Genesis 15:13; Exodus 12:40. The "forty years" apportioned to Judah Ezekiel 4:6, bring to mind the 40 years passed in the wilderness; and these were years not only of punishment, but also of discipline and preparatory to restoration, so Ezekiel would intimate the difference between the punishments of Israel and of Judah to be this, that the one would be of much longer duration with no definite hope of recovery, but the other would be imposed with the express purpose of the renewal of mercy.

Verse 7

Therefore thou shalt set thy face - Or, "And etc." i. e., direct thy mind to that subject.

Thine arm shall be uncovered - A sign of the execution of vengeance Isaiah 52:10.

Verse 8

I will lay bands upon thee - Contrast margin reference. The Lord will put constraint upon him, to cause him to exercise his office. In the retirement of his house, figuratively bound and under constraint, he shall not cease to proclaim the doom of the city.

The days of thy siege - Those during which he should thus foretell the approaching calamity.

Verse 9

Two things are prefigured in the remainder of this chapter,

(1) the hardships of exile,

(2) the straitness of a siege.

To the people of Israel, separated from the rest of the nations as holy, it was a leading feature in the calamities of their exile that they must be mixed up with other nations, and eat of their food, which to the Jews was a defilement (compare Ezekiel 4:13; Amos 7:17; Daniel 1:8.)

Fitches - A species of wheat with shorn ears.

In one vessel - To mix all these varied seeds was an indication that the people were no longer in their own land, where precautions against such mixing of seeds were prescribed.

Three hundred and ninety days - The days of Israel's punishment; because here is a figure of the exile which concerns all the tribes, not of the siege which concerns Judah alone.

Verse 10

meat - A general term for food, which in this case consists of grain. Instead of measuring, it was necessary in extreme scarcity to weigh it Leviticus 26:26; Revelation 6:6.

Twenty shekels a day - The shekel contained about 220 grains, so that 20 shekels would be about 56 of a pound.

From time to time - Thou shalt receive and eat it at the appointed interval of a day.

Verse 11

Water by measure - This probably corresponds to the water of affliction 1 Kings 22:27; Isaiah 30:20. The measure of the hin is variously

estimated by Jewish writers. The sixth part of a hin will be according to one estimate about 610ths, according to another 910ths of a pint. The lesser estimate is more suitable here.

Verse 12

In eastern countries where fuel is scarce the want is supplied by dried cow-dung laid up for the winter. Barley cakes were (and are) baked under hot ashes without an oven. The dung here is to be burned to ashes, and the ashes so employed.

Verse 13

The ceremonial ordinances in relation to food were intended to keep the nation free from idolatrous usages; everywhere among the pagan idol feasts formed a leading part in their religious services, and idol meats were partaken of in common life. Dispersion among the Gentiles must have exposed the Jews to much which they regarded as common and unclean. In Ezekiel‘s case there was a mitigation Ezekiel 4:15 of the defilement, but still legal defilement remained, and the chosen people in exile were subjected to it as to a degradation.

Verse 14

Abominable flesh - Flesh that had become corrupt and foul by overkeeping. Compare Leviticus 19:7.

Verse 16

The staff of bread - Bread is so called because it is that on which the support of life mainly depends.

With astonishment - With dismay and anxiety at the calamities which are befalling them.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

Translate it: take thee a sharp sword, for a barber‘s razor thou shalt take it thee. Even if the action were literal, the use of an actual sword would best enforce the symbolic meaning. The “head” represents the chief city, the “hair” the inhabitants - its ornament and glory - the “hair cut from the head” the exiles cast forth from their homes. It adds to the force of the representation that “to shave the head” was a token of mourning Job 1:20, and was forbidden to the priests Leviticus 21:5. Thus, in many ways, this action of Ezekiel “the priest” is significant of calamity and ruin. The sword indicates the avenging power; the shaving of the head the removal of grace and glory; the scales and weights the determination of divine justice. Compare Zechariah 13:8-9.

Verse 2

“The third part burnt in the midst of the city” represents those who perished within the city during the siege; “the third part smitten about it” (the city) “with” the sword, those who were killed about the city during the same period: “the third part scattered to the wind” those who after the siege were dispersed in foreign lands.

In the midst of the city - The prophet is in exile, and is to do this in the midst of Jerusalem. His action being ideal is fitly assigned to the place which the prophecy concerns.

When the days of the siege are fulfilled - i. e., “when the days of the figurative representation of the siege are fulfilled.”

Verse 3-4

Of the third part a few are yet to be taken and kept in the fold of the garment (representing those still to remain in their native land), and yet even of those few some are to be cast into the fire. Such was the fate of those left behind after the destruction of Jerusalem Ezekiel 5:4

Thereof - Or, from thence, out of the midst of the fire. Omit “For.”

Verse 5

I have set it in the midst of the nations - It was not unusual for nations to regard the sanctuary, which they most revered, as the center of the earth. In the case of the holy land this was both natural and appropriate. Egypt to the south, Syria to the north, Assyria to the east and the Isles of the Gentiles in the Great Sea to the west, were to the Jew proofs of the central position

of his land in the midst of the nations (compare Jeremiah 3:19). The habitation assigned to the chosen people was suitable at the first for separating them from the nations; then for the seat of the vast dominion and commerce of Solomon; then, when they learned from their neighbors idol-worship, their central position was the source of their punishment. Midway between the mighty empires of Egypt and Assyria the holy land became a battlefield for the two powers, and suffered alternately from each as for the time the one or the other became predominant.

Verse 6

They - The inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Verse 7

Because ye multiplied - Some prefer: Because ye have raged tumultuously."

Neither have done according to the judgments - (or, ordinances) of the nations The reproach is that the Israelites have not even been as faithful to their one true God as the nations have been to their false gods (compare 2 Kings 17:33).

Verse 8

Execute judgments - As upon the false gods of Egypt Exodus 12:12; Numbers 33:4.

Verse 9

Compare Matthew 24:21. The calamities of the Babylonian were surpassed by the Roman siege, and these again were but a foreshadowing of still more terrible destruction at the last day.

Verse 12

The judgments Ezekiel 5:12-17 of "famine, pestilence," and the "sword," were precisely those which attended the coming siege of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 15:2 ff). The "drawing out the sword after them" indicates that the anger of God will follow them even to the land of their exile (compare Jeremiah 42:19-22; Leviticus 26:25), and that the horrors of the Babylonian siege are but the beginning of the sorrows of the nation.

Verse 13

Comforted - In the sense of "consoling oneself" and "feeling satisfaction in punishing;" hence, to "avenge oneself."

The fury is to "rest" upon them, abide, so as not to pass away. The "accomplishment" of the divine anger is not the "completion" in the sense of bringing it to a close, but in the sense of carrying it out to the full.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

The former prophecies concerned the city of Jerusalem and the inhabitants of Judaea. The present is addressed to the whole land and people of Israel, which is to be included in a like judgment, The ground of the judgment is "idolatry," and the whole rests on Deuteronomy 12. The prophecy is against the "mountains" of Israel, because the mountains and valleys were the seats of idol-worship. It is also the proclamation of the final judgment of Israel. It is the picture of the future judgment of the world.

Verse 3

Rivers - Or, "ravines," which were, like the mountains, favorite seats of idol-rites 2 Kings 23:10.

Verse 4

Images - See the margin and margin reference, and the Ezekiel 8:16 note.

Idols - The Phoenicians were in the habit of setting up "heaps" or "pillars" of stone in honor of their gods, which renders the use of the word more appropriate.

Verse 7

The force of the words is, "When the slain shall fall in the midst of you, then at last ye shall know that I am the Lord." So in Ezekiel 6:10 where the knowledge implies a recognition of the merciful intent of Yahweh's dispensations, and therefore, a hope of restoration.

Verse 9

I am broken … - Translate: "because" I have broken "their whorish heart, which hath departed from me," and their eyes etc. Since Ezekiel is addressing the Church of God through Israel, we are to note here that the general principle of the divine administration is laid down. Sin leads to judgment, judgment to repentance, repentance to forgiveness, forgiveness to reconciliation, reconciliation to a knowledge of communion with God.

Verses 11-14

The gleam of hope is but transitory. Darkness again gathers round, for as yet the prophet is predicting judgment.

Ezekiel 6:11

Smite … stamp - Well-known modes of expressing grief.

Ezekiel 6:13

Sweet savor - Compare Genesis 8:21. Words, applied to the smell of sacrifices accepted by God, applied here to idol-sacrifices in irony.

Ezekiel 6:14

Toward Diblath - Or, "Diblathaim," the "Diblathan" of the Moabite stone, one of the double cities of Moab (see Ezekiel 25:9) to the east of which lay the great desert of Arabia. Some read: "unto Riblah" Jeremiah 52:9 and take the margin rendering.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

A dirge. Supposing the date of the prophecy to be the same as that of the preceding, there were now but four, or perhaps three, years to the final overthrow of the kingdom of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 3-4

A kind of refrain, repeated in Ezekiel 7:8-9, as the close of another stanza.

Verse 5

An only evil - An evil singular and remarkable above all others.

Verse 6

The end is come: it watcheth for thee - The end (personified) so long slumbering now awakes and comes upon thee.

Verses 7-10

The morning - Rather, "The conclusion:" a whole series (literally circle) of events is being brought to a close. Others render it: Fate.

The day of trouble … - Or, The day is near; a tumult Zechariah 14:13, and not the echo of (or, shouting on) the mountains. The contrast is between the wild tumult of war and the joyous shouts of such as keep holiday.

Ezekiel 7:10

Rod - Used here for tribe Exodus 31:2. The people of Judah have blossomed into proud luxuriance. In Ezekiel 7:11 it means the rod to punish wickedness. The meaning of the passage is obscure, owing to the brief and enigmatic form of the utterance. We may adopt the following explanation. The Jews had ever exulted in their national privileges - everything great and noble was to be from them and from theirs; but now Yahweh raises up the rod of the oppressor to confound and punish the rod of His people. The furious Chaldaean has become an instrument of God‘s wrath, endued with power emanating not from the Jews or from the multitude of the Jews, or from any of their children or people; nay, the destruction shall be so complete that none shall be left to make lamentation over them.

Verse 12

The day - Either of temporal or final judgment.

It was grievous for an Israelite to part with his land. But now the seller need not mourn his loss, nor the buyer exult in him gain. All should live the pitiful lives of strangers in another country.

Verse 13

Although they were yet alive - Though they be yet among the living.

Which shall not return … - He (i. e. the seller) shall not return; and, every man living in his iniquity, they shall gather no strength. Exile being the punishment of iniquity, the exiles were said to "live in their iniquity."

Verse 16

As doves whose natural abode is the valleys moan lamentably when driven by fear into the mountains, so shall the remnant, who have escaped actual death, moan in the land of their exile.

Verse 18

Various signs of mourning common in eastern countries. Baldness was forbidden to the Israelites Deuteronomy 14:1. They seem, however, in later times to have adopted the custom of foreign nations in this matter, not without permission. Compare Isaiah 22:12.

Verse 19

Shall be removed - literally, "shall be an unclean thing" Leviticus 20:21; their gold shall be unclean and abominable in their eyes.

The stumblingblock of their iniquity - See Ezekiel 3:20. Their gold and silver used in making images was the occasion of their sin.

Verse 20

Or, And "the beauty of his ornament, he" (the people) turned "it" to pride.

Have I set it far from them - Rather, as in the margin - therefore have I made it their defilement and their disgrace.

Verse 22

My secret place - The inner sanctuary, hidden from the multitude, protected by the most high.

Verse 23

Make a chain - Forge the chain, the chain of imprisonment determined for them.

Verse 24

The worst of the pagan - The most cruel and terrible of nations - the Chaldaeans.

The pomp of the strong - Compare Leviticus 26:19 "The strong" are those who pride themselves in imaginary strength.

Their holy places - What elsewhere is called “God‘s Holy place” is here “their holy places,” because God disowns the profaned sanctuary. In the marginal rendering “they” must mean “the worst of the pagan.”

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Introduction

The prophecies contained in these chapters Ezekiel 8:1 with Ezekiel 20:1). Although they were not all delivered on the same day, they may be regarded as a whole. They contain in fact a review of the condition of the people of Judah, including those who were still in the holy land, and those who were with the prophet exiles in Chaldaea. This is first represented by a vision Ezekiel 811 in which the seer is transported in spirit to the Temple of Jerusalem; and next - the prophet having again taken his stand as a man among men - by symbolic act, parables, figures, etc., addresses his fellow-exiles.

Verse 1

The elders of Judah - The prophet‘s fellow-exiles are no longer unwilling to hear him Ezekiel 2:1-10. They sat as mourners. The message here is not as in Ezekiel 6:2, but distinctly to Judah, that portion of the people whose exile Ezekiel shared.

Verse 2

The appearance of fire - In margin reference, seen as the appearance of a man enthroned upon the cherubim. Here He stands apart from the throne revealing Himself to His servant. Compare Daniel 3:25 note.

Amber - See the margin reference note.

Verse 3

In the visions of God - Ezekiel was not transported “in the body,” but rapt “in spirit,” while he still sat amidst the elders of Judah.

The inner gate - Or, the gate of the inner court. This gate, leading from the outer to the inner court (the court of the priests), is called Ezekiel 8:5 “the gate of the altar,” because it was from this side that the priests approached the brass altar. The prophet is on the “outside” of this gate, so that the “image of jealousy” was set up in the outer or people‘s court over against the northern entrance to the priest‘s court. This image was the image of a false god provoking Yahweh to “jealousy” Deuteronomy 32:16, Deuteronomy 32:21; 1 Kings 14:22. It may be doubted whether the scenes described in this chapter are intended to represent what actually occurred. They may be ideal pictures to indicate the idolatrous corruption of priests and people. And this is in accordance with the symbolic character of the number “four;” the four idolatries representing the idolatries in all the four

quarters of the world. The false gods of pagandom are brought into the temple in order that they may be detected and exposed by being brought face to face with the God of revelation. Still history proves that the ideal picture was supported by actual facts which had occurred and were occurring.

Verse 4

The glory of the Lord having departed from His seat between the cherubims in the holy of holies (see Ezekiel 9:3) rests in the threshold of the temple, to execute vengeance before it quits the house altogether Ezekiel 10:18. The "there" in the inner court, which was "full of the brightness of the Lord'S glory" Ezekiel 10:4, and at the gate of which Ezekiel stands.

Verse 7

The door of the court - The seer is brought to another spot. In Ezekiel's time there were various buildings on the space around the inner court which formed a court or courts, not improbably enclosed by a wall. The idolatries here were viewed as taking place in secret, and it is more in accordance with the temple arrangements to suppose that such chambers as would give room for those rites should belong to the outer than to the inner court. The seer is now outside the wall of the outer court, by the door which leads from it out of the temple-boundary. By breaking through the wall he enters into a chamber which stands in the outer court against the wall near the gate.

Verse 10

There is clearly a reference to the idolatry of Egypt. Many subterranean chambers in rocks upon the shores of the Nile exhibit ornamentation and hieroglyphical characters, some of which are representative of the objects of idolatrous worship. Such chambers fitted them for the scene of the ideal picture by which Ezekiel represented Egyptian idolatry. The Egyptian worship of animals is well known.

Verse 11

Seventy men - Compare Exodus 24:9-10. The vision may have pointed to the contrast between the times. The number "seven" is symbolic of the covenant between Yahweh and His people, and so the "seventy" men exhibit forcibly the breach of the covenant. It is a figure of the covert idolatry of the whole people.

Verse 12

In the dark - Hidden in the secret places which the seer dug through the wall to discover.

Chambers of his imagery - i. e., chambers painted with images.

Verse 14

The seer is now brought back to the same gate as in Ezekiel 8:3.

It is not certain that this verse refers to any special act of Tammuz-worship. The month in which the vision was seen, the sixth month (September), was not the month of the Tammuz-rites. But that such rites had been performed in Jerusalem there can be little doubt. Women are mentioned as employed in the service of idols in Jeremiah 7:18. There is some reason for believing that the weeping of women for Tammuz passed into Syria and Palestine from Babylonia, Tammuz being identified with Duv-zi, whose loss was lamented by the goddess Istar. The festival was identical with the Greek "Adoniacs." The worship of Adonis had its headquarters at Byblos, where at certain periods of the year the stream, becoming stained by mountain floods, was popularly said to be red with the blood of Adonis. From Byblos it spread widely over the east and was thence carried to Greece. The contact of Zedekiah with pagan nations Jeremiah 32:3 may very well have led to the introduction of an idolatry which at this time was especially popular among the eastern nations.

This solemnity was of a twofold character, first, that of mourning, in which the death of Adonis was bewailed with extravagant sorrow; and then, after a few days, the mourning gave place to wild rejoicings for his restoration to life. This was a revival of nature-worship under another form - the death of Adonis symbolized the suspension of the productive powers of nature, which were in due time revived. Accordingly, the time of this festival was the summer solstice, when in the east nature seems to wither and die under the scorching heat of the sun, to burst forth again into life at the due season. At the same time there was a connection between this and the sun-worship, in that the decline of the sun and the decline of nature might be alike represented by the death of Adonis. The excitement attendant upon these extravagances of alternate wailing and exultation were in complete accordance with the character of nature-worship, which for this reason was so popular in the east, especially with women, and led by inevitable consequence to unbridled license and excess. Such was in Ezekiel's day one of the most detestable forms of idolatry.

Verse 16

The inner court - The court of the priests.

About five and twenty men - Rather, as it were five etc. This was the number of the heads of the 24 courses (shifts) with the high priest presiding over them. These then were the representatives of the priests, as the seventy were of the people. In the temple the seat of the Divine Majesty was at the west, perhaps appointed for this very purpose, to guard against the idolatrous adoration of the rising sun. Therefore the idolatrous priests must in worshipping the false sun-god turn their backs upon the True. The worship of the heavenly bodies was one of the earliest forms of idolatry Job 31:26-27 and was expressly forbidden in the Law Deuteronomy 17:3. In its earliest form, it was conducted without the intervention of images, the adoration being addressed to the heavenly bodies themselves: this form, continued among the Persians, seems to have been introduced afresh into Jerusalem at the time of Ezekiel. Compare, also, 2 Kings 23:11-12. The images (compare Ezekiel 6:4, Ezekiel 6:6) were probably columns set up in honor of the sun, not images in human form. This simpler mode of sunworship was soon changed. The sun, or the god supposed to preside over it, was represented as a person, whose image was set up and adored.

Verse 17

"Violence" represents sin against man, "abominations" sins against God. These went hand in hand in Jerusalem.

And have returned - After the reformation effected for a time by Josiah's zeal, they have gone back to their old state.

They put the branch to their nose - An allusion to a then familiar practice, of which we find no clear traces elsewhere. Ezekiel is describing the attitude usual in such devotions, the branch held before the mouth, but wishing to represent it in contemptuous and derogatory terms, he substitutes the word "nose" for "mouth."

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Introduction

The punishment of the dwellers in Jerusalem.

Verse 1

Them that have charge - The angels who have charge to execute God‘s sentence.

Every man - “angels,” not “men.”

Verse 2

Six men - angels of wrath - figurative of destruction. They come from the north, the quarter from which invading armies entered the holy land. These “six” angels, with the “one among them,” a superior over the six, make up the number “seven,” a number symbolic of God‘s covenant with His people.

The higher gate - The north gate of the court of the priests. The temple rose by platforms; as there was a north gate to the outer and also to the inner court, the latter was probably distinguished as the “higher gate.” It was built by Jotham 2 Kings 15:35.

Clothed with linen - The priestly garment Exodus 28:6, Exodus 28:8; Leviticus 16:4. This “One Man” (Compare Daniel 10:5; Revelation 1:13) was the “angel of the covenant,” the great high priest, superior to those by whom He was surrounded, receiving direct communication from the Lord, taking the coals of vengeance from between the cherubim Ezekiel 10:2, but coming with mercy to the contrite as well as with vengeance to the impenitent; these are attributes of Jesus Christ John 5:30; Luke 2:34; Matthew 9:13; John 6:39.

A writer‘s inkhorn - Usually a flat case about nine inches long, by an inch and a quarter broad, and half an inch thick, the hollow of which serves to contain the reed pens and penknife. At one end is the ink-vessel which is twice as heavy as the shaft. The latter is passed through the girdle and prevented from slipping through by the projecting ink-vessel. The whole is usually of polished metal, brass, copper or silver. The man with the inkhorn has to write in the Book of Life the names of those who shall be marked. The metaphor is from the custom of registering the names of the Israelites in public rolls. Compare Exodus 32:33; Psalm 69:28; Isaiah 4:3; Philemon 4:3; Revelation 3:5.

Verse 3

Cherub - The singular is put collectively for the "cherubim," which were upon the mercy-seat of the ark in the holy of holies, the proper seat of the glory of the Lord in the midst of Israel. God is represented as "arising" from between the cherubim to scatter His enemies Numbers 10:35.

Verse 4

mercy precedes judgment. So in the case of Sodom Luke 21:18, Luke 21:28; Revelation 7:1. This accords with the eschatological character of the predictions in this chapter (see the introduction of Ezekiel).

A mark - literally, "Tau," the name of the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The old form of the letter was that of a cross. The Jews have interpreted this sign variously, some considering that "Tau," being the last of the Hebrew letters, and so closing the alphabet, denoted completeness, and thus the mark indicated the completeness of the sorrow for sin in those upon whom it was placed. Others again observed that "Tau" was the first letter of Torah ("the Law") and that the foreheads were marked as of men obedient to the Law. Christians, noting the resemblance of this letter in its most ancient form to a cross, have seen herein a reference to the cross with which Christians were signed. The custom for pagan gods and their votaries to bear certain marks furnishes instances, in which God was pleased to employ symbolism, generally in use, to express higher and more divine truth. The sign of the cross in baptism is an outward sign of the designation of God's elect, who at the last day shall be exempted from the destruction of the ungodly Matthew 24:22, Matthew 24:31.

Verse 6

Begin at my sanctuary - The first to be punished were those who had brought idolatry nearest to the holy place. The "ancient men," i. e., the 25 men who had stood with their backs to the altar Ezekiel 8:16 were the first to be slain.

Verse 7

Defile the house - By filling the temple and its courts with the bodies of the slain. See Numbers 19:11.

Verse 8

Left - The prophet was left alone, all who had been around him were slain.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

As in Ezekiel 1, the vision of the glory of the Lord, the particulars given identifying the two visions.

Verse 2

He spake - The person enthroned.

The cherub - The particular cherub who was to hand the coals to destroy Psalm 120:4; Isaiah 10:16; Revelation 15:8.

Verse 3

On the right side - On the south Ezekiel 47:2. The idolatries had been seen on the north side. On the south stood the "cherubim" ready to receive and bear away the glory of the Lord.

Verse 4

A repetition of Ezekiel 9:3. Now the glory of the Lord had gone up from the cherub to the threshold of the house. Ezekiel 10:4-6 describe what had occurred before the "man went in" Ezekiel 10:3.

Verse 5

The Almighty God - El Shaddai; compare the Genesis 17:1 note.

Verse 7

One cherub - The "cherub" who stood next the wheel by the side of which the man stood. The representative of the priestly office now gives up his post of reconciliation, and becomes simply a minister of wrath; another sign that God will turn from Jerusalem.

Verse 8

An explanation following upon the mention of the "hand." It is characteristic of this chapter that the narrative is interrupted by explanatory comments. The "narrative" is contained in Ezekiel 10:1-3, Ezekiel 10:6-7, Ezekiel 10:13, Ezekiel 10:15 (first clause), 18,19; the other verses contain the "interposed explanations."

Verse 11

The head - Either "the leading wheel which the others followed," or more probably, the head of a cherub (one for all), the description passing from the wheels to the cherubim Ezekiel 10:12.

Verse 13

According to the marginal rendering the present verse refers back to Ezekiel 10:2, Ezekiel 10:6, and tells us that the name "galgal, a rolling

thing" (compare Isaiah 17:13), was given to the wheels in the seer's hearing. But taking Ezekiel 10:14 as a description, and reading Ezekiel 10:15 immediately after Ezekiel 10:13, the meaning is clear. In the hearing Of the seer a voice calls upon the wheels, and, obedient to the call, the cherubim are lifted up and the wheels roll on. The word "galgal" would be better rendered "chariot" instead of "wheel;" "chariot" representing very well the collection of "wheels."

Verse 14

The first face … - The face of the first was the face of the cherub, and the face of the second was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion and the fourth the face of an eagle. Of the four faces of each cherub, the seer names only one - the face looking in the direction in which that cherub leads the motion of the chariot. The face of the cherub which presented itself to the seer was that of "an ox." When he looking northward first saw the chariot the "ox-face" was on the left side Ezekiel 1:10. This would make the ox-face look eastward, and it is not unlikely that the man might approach the chariot from the southeastern part of the inner court.

Verse 16-17

are a repetition of the general description of the nature and connection of the various parts of the vision, and this is the more appropriate as showing why they were regarded as "one living creature" Ezekiel 10:15. The attributes here assigned to them show that they were pervaded by one will - "the spirit of the living creature" (others, as in the margin, "the spirit of life") "was in them."

Verse 19

The cherubim (or chariot) had stood first on the threshold of the temple-door, and there received the glory of the Lord. They then lifted their wings, rose, and left the temple by "the east gate" of the outer court at "the entrance" of which they now for a time stood. It was by the east gate of the outer court that the glory of the Lord returned to the new temple Ezekiel 43:4.

And every one stood - Or, "and" they "stood." The Cheruibim and wheels are viewed as "one living creature."

Verse 20

In this departure of the glory of the Lord from the temple, the seer recognizes for the first time the full meaning of the vision which he had seen on the banks of Chebar Ezekiel 1. What he had seen there (did indeed

imply that Yahweh had forsaken His house; but now this is made clear. The Glory has left the holy of holies, has appeared in the court, has been enthroned on the Living Four, and with them has departed from the temple. It is now clear that these Four (in form similar to, yet differing from, the cherubim of the temple) are indeed the cherubim, in the midst of whom the Lord dwelleth.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

The gate - The gate of the templecourt. The gate was the place of judgment.

Five and twenty men - Not the same men as in Ezekiel 8:16. There they were representatives of the "priests," here of the "princes." The number is, no doubt, symbolic, made up, probably, of 24 men and the king. The number 24 points to the tribes of undivided Israel.

Jaazaniah … Pelatiah - We know nothing more of these men. The former name was probably common at that time Ezekiel 8:11. In these two names there is an allusion to the false hopes which they upheld. "Jaazaniah" (Yah (weh) listeneth) "son of Azur" (the Helper); "Pelatiah" (Yah (weh) rescues) "son of Benaiah" (Yah (weh) builds). In the latter case, death Ezekiel 11:13 turned the allusion into bitter irony.

Verse 3

It is not near - In contradiction to Ezekiel 7:2.

Let us build houses - "To build houses" implies a sense of security. Jeremiah bade the exiles "build houses" in a foreign land because they would not soon quit it Jeremiah 29:5; Jeremiah 35:7. These false counselors promised to their countrymen a sure and permanent abode in the city which God had doomed to destruction. No need, they said, to go far for safety; you are perfectly safe at home. The Hebrew, however, is, difficult: literally it means, "It is not near to build houses," which may be explained as spoken in mockery of such counsel as that of Jeremiah: matters have not gone so far as to necessitate "house-building" in a foreign land. The same idea is expressed by the image of the "caldron:" whatever devastation may rage around the city, we are safe within its walls, as flesh within a caldron is unburned by the surrounding fire (compare Ezekiel 24:6).

Verse 7

All that shall remain in the city are the buried dead. Bloodshed and murder were at this time rife in Jerusalem, and these were among the chief crimes that were bringing down judgment upon the city. All the inhabitants that should yet survive were destined to be carried away into exile.

Verse 10

In the border of Israel - Hamath was the northern border of Israel (margin reference). At Riblah in Hamath the king of Babylon judged and

condemned Zedekiah and the princes of Judah Jeremiah 52:9-10.

Verse 13

The death of Pelatiah was communicated in this vision, which represented ideally the idolatry in which Pelatiah had actually been foremost.

Verse 15

Thy kindred - The original word is derived from a root, suggesting the ideas of "redeeming" and "avenging" as connected with the bond of "kindred." The word, therefore, conveys here a special reproach to the proud Jews, who have been so ready to cast off the claims of blood-relationship, and at the same time a hope of restoration to those who have been rudely thrown aside.

Verse 16

As a little sanctuary - Rather, I will be to them for a little while a sanctuary. The blessing was provisional, they were to look forward to a blessing more complete. For a little while they were to be satisfied with God's special presence in a foreign land, but they were to look forward to a renewal of His presence in the restored temple of Jerusalem. "sanctuary" means here strictly the holy place, the tabernacle of the Most High: Yahweh will Himself be to the exiles in the place of the local sanctuary, in which the Jews of Jerusalem so much prided themselves (compare the margin reference). Here is the germ from which is developed Ezekiel 4048, the picture of the kingdom of God in its new form.

Verses 19-21

Compare Ezekiel 11:19

One heart - So long as the Israelites were distracted by the service of many gods, such unity was impossible; but now, when they shall have taken away the "abominations" from the land, they shall be united in heart to serve the true God.

Stony heart … heart of flesh - The heart unnaturally hardened, and the heart reawakened to feelings proper to man.

Verse 23

The mountain which is on the east side of the city - The Mount of Olives. The rabbis commenting on this passage said the Shechinah retired to this Mount, and there for three years called in vain to the people with human voice that they should repent. On that mountain, Christ stood, when He wept over the fair city so soon to be utterly destroyed. From that

mountain he descended, amid loud Hosannas, to enter the city and temple as a Judge.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 2

Compare Deuteronomy 1:26; margin reference; Romans 10:21. The repetition of such words from age to age, shows that the prophet‘s words are intended to reach beyond the generation in which he lived.

Verse 3

Stuff - Raiment, vessels, and the like. The “removing” was to be of the kind that accompanied exile. The whole account of this transaction marks it as a real act. The prophet was to be “a sign” to his countrymen, and the “exiles” as well as those that remained in Judaea had need to be taught this lesson, for though themselves far away, they looked to Jerusalem as their home, and were scarcely less eager for its safety than the inhabitants themselves.

Verse 4

The particulars which Ezekiel here foretold actually occurred (compare 2 Kings 25:4; Jeremiah 39:4); but at this time Zedekiah seemed to be prosperous, and the Jews at Jerusalem expected, it is clear, a long continuance of his prosperity (see Ezekiel 17:1 note).

The prophetic character of the passage is undoubted (the prophet is declared to be “a sign,” Ezekiel 12:6) - the genuineness of the book and of the position of the passage in the book, are beyond dispute; in the historical event we have an exact fulfillment. The only legitimate inference is that the prophet received his knowledge from above.

Verse 6

Thou shalt cover thy face - A sign of mourning (see Ezekiel 24:17); also of Zedekiah‘s blindness Ezekiel 12:12.

Verse 7

In the evening the prophet was to return to the wall, break through it, and transport the goods from the inside to the outside of the city.

Verse 10

Burden - A word used to indicate a prediction of woe to be borne by some individual or people (Isaiah 13:1 note). Ezekiel, bearing his “stuff” on his shoulder was a sign of the weight of calamity coming upon king and people.

Verse 13

Compare Jeremiah 52:9 ff

Verse 16

Few - literally, as in the margin; so few, that they can easily be counted Isaiah 10:19. The few who should escape destruction should make known to all among whom they should dwell how great had been the wickedness of the people, how just their punishment.

Verse 18

Here the sign is the exhibition of such terror as the danger of a siege creates.

Verse 19-20

The people of the land - Chaldaea.

Of the inhabitants - In respect to "the inhabitants."

Desolate from, all that is therein - i. e., stripped of all its inhabitants and of all its wealth.

At one and the same time, Jeremiah was prophesying in Jerusalem, and Ezekiel in Chaldaea; the prophecies of the former were sent to the exiles, and those of Ezekiel to the dwellers at Jerusalem, that the guiding hand of One God in different places might be made clear (Jerome).

Verses 21-28

As in Ezekiel 12:22

The land of Israel - is put generally for the land where the children of Israel dwelt, whether at home, or in exile. There was prevalent a disregard for the true prophets, which is ever followed by a recognition of the false. First, the true prophet is rejected because it is thought that his prophecies fail. Then men persuade themselves that if the prophecy be true it respects some distant time, and that the men of the present generation need not disturb themselves about it. Compare Jeremiah 1:11; Amos 6:3; Matthew 24:43; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:4. Against both these delusions Ezekiel is commissioned to protest, and so to lead the way to his condemnation of his countrymen for their blind reliance on false prophets.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

The identity of phrases and ideas of this chapter with Jeremiah 23 leads to the conclusion that Ezekiel took up a well-known prophecy to enforce and apply it to his companions in exile. They probably had read Jeremiah's words as referring to others than themselves.

Verse 3

That follow … nothing - Better in the margin. A true prophet (like Ezekiel) spoke "the word of the Lord," and declared what he had seen "in the visions of God." These pretenders are stigmatized in scorn "prophets out of their own hearts," "seers of what they have not seen."

Verse 4

In the deserts - Foxes find a home among ruins etc. Lamentations 5:18. So the prophets find their profit in the ruin of their country.

Verse 5

For - Or, before. In a time of siege when there are gaps or breaches in the walls, it is the part of the leaders to go up to defend them, and to throw up works to stop the in-road of the enemy. Yahweh is now assailing His people as an enemy (compare Isaiah 63:10; Job 16:11-13), and where are those who claim to be prophets, leaders of the people?

Verse 6

And they have made others … - Rather, "and they hope for the confirmation of their word." They come to believe their own lies.

Verse 9

Assembly - Here "the congregation of the people." These false prophets were to be struck off from "the writing" or, the rolls, in which the names of all Israelites were registered (compare Psalm 87:6; Exodus 32:32); and therefore when the restoration Ezekiel 11:17 shall take place these men shall not have part in it.

Verse 10

Wall - A partition wall; in Ezekiel 13:12, the word used is the usual word for the outer wall of a house or city. The fall of the partition wall would perhaps involve the fall of the whole house.

Untempered morter - Or, whited plaster, employed to patch up a wall, so as to give it an appearance (without the reality) of strength and beauty.

Compare Matthew 23:27. In the original there is a play upon a word rendered "folly" in Jeremiah 23:13.

Verses 17-23

A rebuke to the false prophetesses, and a declaration that God will confound them, and deliver their victims from their snares. Women were sometimes inspired by the true God, as were Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, and Huldah; but an order of prophetesses was unknown among the people of God, and the existence of such a class in the last days of the kings of Judah was a fresh instance of declension into pagan usages.

Ezekiel 13:18-21. Render thus: "Woe to the women that" put charms on every finger-joint, that set veils upon heads of every height to ensnare souls. "Will ye" ensnare "the souls of my people," and keep your own souls alive, and will ye profane my name "among my people for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to" keep alive "the souls that should not live, by lying to my people" who listen to "a lie? Wherefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold" I will come upon your charms, where ye are ensnaring the souls like birds; "and I will tear them from your arms and will let the souls go" free, "even the souls" which ye are ensnaring like birds. "Your" veils "also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be" ensnared; "and ye shall know that I am the Lord."

Most ancient interpreters and many modern interpreters have understood the "pillows" (or charms) and "kerchiefs" (or veils), as appliances to which the sorcerers had resort in order to attract notice. The veil was a conspicuous ornament in the east - women whatever their "stature" (or, height) putting them on - and it was worn by magicians in order to seem more mysterious and awful.

Ezekiel 13:19

Pollute me - Profane Me by your false words, which ye pretend to be from Me.

Handfuls of barley - Such were the gifts with which men used to approach a seer (compare 1 Samuel 9:7-8; 1 Kings 14:3).

Ezekiel 13:20

To make them fly - If the marginal reading "into gardens" be adopted, it must mean, Ye entice men to the gardens or groves, where magical arts

are practiced. That groves were used for this purpose and for idolatrous rites is notorious.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Introduction

This prophecy Ezekiel 14:1-11 is a reproof of those who consult the false prophets. Some of the chief exiles come to Ezekiel as to one who has authority; but he, endowed with the genuine prophetic spirit, sees deep into their hearts, and finds the idols of self-will and unsubmissiveness set up therein. The prophet warns them that God will not be inquired of in such a spirit as this.

Verse 1

Elders of Israel - Some of the fellow-exiles of Ezekiel, among whom he ministered.

Verse 4

Omit "that cometh."

According to the multitiude of his idols - i. e., I will give him an answer as delusive as the idols which he serves. Compare Micaiah's answer to Ahab 1 Kings 22:15.

Verse 5

That I may take … - i. e., that I may take them, as in a snare, deceived by their own heart.

Verse 7

The stranger - They who sojourned among Israel, though they were not of Israel, were bound to abstain from idol-worship Leviticus 17:10; Leviticus 20:2.

By myself - Or, as in Ezekiel 14:4, "according to" Myself. He who comes to inquire with a heart full of idolatry shall have his answer,

(1) "according to the multitude of his idols" - in delusion,

(2) "according to the holiness of God" - in punishment.

The inquiry was hypocritical and unreal - but God will answer not by the mouth, but by the hand, not by word but by deed, not by speech but by a scourge.

Verse 8

Will make him - Or, I will make him amazed Ezekiel 32:10; or, astonished, so as to be a sign and a proverb.

Verse 9

I the Lord hare deceived that prophet - A deep truth lies beneath these words, namely, that evil as well as good is under God's direction. He turns

it as He will, employing it to test the sincerity of men, and thus making it ultimately contribute to the purification of His people, to the confirmation of the righteous, to the increase of their glory and felicity. The case of the false prophets who deceived Ahab 1 Kings 22 is a striking representation of this principle. The Lord sends forth an evil spirit to persuade Ahab to his ruin. Toward the close of the kingdom of Judah false prophets were especially rife. The thoughts of men‘s hearts were revealed, the good separated from the bad, and the remnant of the people purged from the sins by which of late years the whole nation had been defiled.

Verse 11

"God," it has been said, "punishes sins by means of sins," but the end is the re-establishment of righteousness.

Verses 12-23

Ezekiel 14:12

Or, "When a land" - the case is first put in a general form, and then ism brought with increased force home to Jerusalem - "sinneth against me by trespassing grievously," and I stretch out "mine hand upon it," and break the staff of bread "thereof," and send famine "upon it and" cut off "man and beast: though these three men" etc.

Ezekiel 14:14

Noah, Daniel, and Job - Three striking instances of men who, for their integrity, were delivered from the ruin which fell upon others. Some have thought it strange that Daniel, a contemporary, and still young, should have been classed with the two ancient worthies. But the account of him Ezekiel 28:3), and the introduction of the name of a contemporary gives force and life to the illustration. There is in the order in which the names occur a kind of climax. Noah did not rescue the guilty world, but did carry forth with him his wife, sons, and sons‘ wives. Daniel raised only a few, but he did raise three of his countrymen with him to honor. To Job was spared neither son nor daughter.

Ezekiel 14:22, Ezekiel 14:23

Ye shall be comforted … - By a truer estimate of the dispensations of the Almighty. This visitation will be recognized as inevitable and just.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verse 2

The vine … - The image is grounded on a well-known figure Psalm 80:8; Isaiah 5. The comparison is not between the vine and other trees, but between the wood of the vine and the wood of other trees.

Verse 4

Behold, it is cast into the fire - The wood is in itself useless for any purpose; but what if it have been cast into the fire, and half burned, what of it then?

Verse 7

They shall go out … - Rather, they have gone forth from the fire, and the fire shall devour them. The condition of the people is here depicted. The people of Israel - as a whole and as separate kingdoms - had become worthless. The branch torn from the living stem had truly been cast into the fire, which had devoured both ends of it; what remained was a brand plucked from the burning. Those who had escaped the general calamity were reserved for a like fate. Compare John 15:6.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verse 1

Idolatry is frequently represented by the prophets under the figure of a wife‘s unfaithfulness to her husband. This image is here so portrayed, as to exhibit the aggravation of Israel‘s guilt by reason of her origin and early history. The original abode of the progenitors of the race was the land of Canaan, defiled with idolatry and moral corruption. Israel itself was like a child born in a polluted land, abandoned from its birth, left by its parents in the most utter neglect to the chance regard of any passer-by. Such was the state of the people in Egypt Ezekiel 16:3-5. On such a child the Lord looked with pity, tended, and adopted it. Under His care it grew up to be comely and beautiful, and the Lord joined it to Himself in that close union, which is figured by the bonds of wedlock. The covenants made under Moses and Joshua represent this alliance Ezekiel 16:6-8. In the reigns of David and Solomon, Israel shone with all the glory of temporal prosperity Ezekiel 16:9-14. The remainder of the history of the people when divided is, in the prophet‘s eye, a succession of defection and degradation marked by the erection of high places Ezekiel 16:16-20; by unholy alliances with foreign nations Ezekiel 16:26-33. Such sins were soon to meet their due punishment. As an unfaithful wife was brought before the people, convicted, and stoned, so should the Lord make His people a gazing-stock to all the nations round about, deprive them of all their possessions and of their city, and cast them forth as exiles to be spoiled and destroyed in a foreign land Ezekiel 16:35-43.

Verse 3

Birth - See the margin; the word represents “origin” under the figure of “cutting out stone from a quarry” (compare Isaiah 51:1).

An Amorite - the Amorite, a term denoting the whole people. The Amorites, being a principal branch of the Canaanites, are often taken to represent the whole stock Genesis 15:16; 2 Kings 21:11.

An Hittite - Compare Genesis 26:34. The main idea is that the Israelites by their doings proved themselves to be the very children of the idolatrous nations who once occupied the land of Canaan. Compare Deuteronomy 20:17.

Verse 4

To supple thee - i. e., to cleanse thee.

Verse 5

To the lothing of thy person - Or, "so abhorred was thy person."

Verse 6

Or, Then I passed by thee … and I said.

Polluted - wallowing, "treading upon oneself."

In thy blood - may be connected either with "I said" or with "Live." In the latter case, the state of blood and defilement is made the very cause of life, because it called forth the pity of Him who gave life. Since in the Mosaic Law "blood" was especially defiling, so was it also the special instrument of purification.

Verse 7

I caused "thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou" didst increase "and" wax "great, and thou" didst come "to excellent" beauty; "thy breasts" were "fashioned and thine hair" was grown, yet wast "thou naked and bare." The prophet has arrived at the time at which the child grew up to maturity. God preserved the life of the infant which must without His help have died Ezekiel 16:6; and the child grew up to womanhood, but was still desolate and unprotected. This represents the sojourn in Egypt, during which the people increased, but were not bound, as a nation, to God by a covenant.

Excellent ornaments - literally, as in the margin. Some render it: "ornament of cheeks," i. e., beauty of face.

Verse 8

Now when … - Or, Then I passed by thee … and behold. The espousal of the damsel represents God's entering into covenant with the people in the wilderness at Mt. Sinai Exodus 34:27.

Verse 9

The usual purifications for marriage.

Verse 10

Badgers' skin - Probably the skin of the dolphin or dugong (Exodus 25:5 note).

Silk - For a robe, a turban, or (as gauze) for a transparent veil; the derivation of the word in the original is much disputed.

Verse 12

A jewel on thy forehead - literally, "a nose-ring on thy nostril" (Genesis 24:22 note).

Verse 13

Fine flour, and honey, and oil - These were the choicest kinds of food.

Into a kingdom - This part of the description refers to the reigns of David and Solomon, when the kingdom of Israel (still undivided) attained its highest pitch of grandeur.

Verse 14

Perfect … my comeliness - The comeliness was not natural, but the gift of God.

Verse 15

The prophet now describes the idolatries of the time of the Kings. The earlier offences in the time of the Judges are not noticed, that being an unsettled time. The conduct of the people after they had "prospered into a kingdom" is to be described.

Because of thy renown - The marriages of Solomon with pagan wives, and his consequent idolatries, are a clear instance of such, misuse of glory.

Verse 16

Compare 2 Kings 23:7. Such decoration of idol-temples in the holy land showed how the ungrateful people were devoting the wealth and energies which Yahweh had given them to the service of those false gods, in whose worship He was especially dishonored.

The like things shall not come … - The abominations reached the very utmost - nothing would hereafter be so bad as these had been.

Verse 17

Possibly an allusion to the custom of bearing about shrines. Compare Amos 5:26; Acts 7:43.

Verse 18

Mine oil and mine incense - The oil was the produce of the land, the incense received in exchange for such produce. Both were the gifts of Yahweh and belonged to Him; yet the oil Exodus 25:6; Exodus 29:40 and the incense Exodus 30:34, prepared for the service of God, were used in idol-worship. In nature worship the worshippers were especially lavish in vegetable products like incense.

Verse 19

Allusion is here made to some rite like the Roman "Lectisternia," in which public tables were set forth for feasts in honor of idols.

Verse 20-21

Borne unto me - me is emphatic. The children of Yahweh have been devoted to Moloch. The rites of Moloch were twofold;

(1) The actual sacrifice of men and children as expiatory sacrifices to, false gods.

(2) The passing of them through the fire by way of purification and dedication.

Probably the first is alluded to in Ezekiel 16:20; the two rites together in Ezekiel 16:21.

Verse 23

After all … - Besides these things, there was the introduction of other idolatrous rites from the nations with whom Israel had contact.

Verse 24

That thou … - Render it: after that thou didst build "unto thee an eminent place," and didst make "thee an high place in every street" - after that thou didst build "thy high place at the head of every way and" didst make … "it came to pass, that thou" didst "also" commit "fornication" etc.

An eminent place - literally, "an arched building." Such places were used as brothels, and so the word is used metaphorically for a place of idol-worship.

Verse 26

Egyptian idolatry, a worship of the powers of nature, was eminently sensual. The idolatry here spoken of is not so much that which Israel brought with them from Egypt, as the idolatry introduced in the time of Solomon and Rehoboam.

Verse 27

Have diminished thine ordinary food - As a husband lessens the things which minister to the luxury of an unfaithful wife, so did the Lord cut Israel short in consequence of her unfaithfulness.

Daughters - The small cities. The Philistines have left a permanent record of their supremacy in the name of the holy land - Palestine. It was a special shame to be subjected to so small a power as that of Philistia (see Isaiah 14:29); but the very Philistines were ashamed of Judah's unfaithfulness, and were themselves truer to their false gods than Judah was to Yahweh.

Verse 28

Compare the marginal reference. Idolatry, spiritual adultery, invariably accompanied these unholy alliances, and brought with it disaster and ruin.

Verse 29

In the land … - Probably used in the restricted sense of the low lands on the coast of the western sea; occupied by Phoenician colonies. The children of Israel were brought into contact at first with pagans residing within their own borders. Then they extended their contact to foreign nations, trading and forming alliances with Chaldaea, and in so doing were attracted by the idolatries of those with whom they carried on commerce. Some render it: "with the merchants' land, even with Chaldaea." Compare Ezekiel 17:4.

Verse 31

Rather, didst build - didst make - wast not - scornest. In the marginal rendering, "thy daughters" must mean "thy smaller cities or villages."

Verse 33

The picture is heightened by the contrast between one who as a prostitute receives hire for her shame, and one who as a wife is so utterly abandoned as to bestow her husband's goods to purchase her own dishonor. Compare 2 Kings 16:8.

Verses 35-43

Judah is now represented as undergoing the punishment adjudged to an adulteress and murderess. Only in her utter destruction shall the wrath of the Lord, the jealous God, cease.

Ezekiel 16:36

Filthiness - Or, brass, i. e., money, is lavished. The Hebrews generally speak of money as gold Isaiah 46:6, but brass coins were not unknown in the time of the Maccabees. Compare Matthew 10:9; Mark 12:41. Ezekiel may here have put brass for gold contemptuously. Compare Isaiah 1:22-25; Isaiah 48:10.

Ezekiel 16:38

I will give thee blood in fury - Rather, "I will make thee a bloody sacrifice to fury and jealousy." By the Law of Moses, death was the penalty for murder Exodus 21:12, and for adultery (Leviticus 20:10; e. g., by stoning, Ezekiel 16:40). The circumstances of the siege of Jerusalem corresponded with the punishment of the adulteress; the company gathered around her were the surrounding armies, the fury of the jealous husband was the fury of the attacking army, the stripping off her ornaments was the rapine of the siege, the stoning the battering-rams, the bloody death being the slaughter in the battle.

Ezekiel 16:42

So … rest - Or, "My fury shall not rest until thou art utterly ruined."

Ezekiel 16:43

Thou shalt not … abominations - Others render it: "I will not do wickedly because of all thine etc." i. e., by allowing jerusalem to remain unpunished

Verse 44

The Jews prided themselves on being under the special protection of Yahweh. In the downfall of their neighbors, they found only additional grounds for confidence in their own security. Ezekiel now in severe rebuke places them on an equality with Sodom and Samaria. Alike have been their sins, except that Judah has had the preeminence in guilt. Alike shall be their punishment.

Verse 46

The temple looked to the east. Samaria was on its left, and Sodom on its right hand.

Verse 50

As I saw good - Or, "as soon as I saw it." Omit "good." God saw and punished. Compare Genesis 18:21.

Verse 51

Justified thy sisters - Made them appear just in comparison with thee.

Verse 53

A denunciation of hopeless ruin. When Sodom shall be rebuilt and shall flourish, when Samaria shall be again a mighty people, then, but not until then, shall Jerusalem be restored.

Verse 54

Thou art a comfort unto them - The degradation of Judah would be a kind of consolation to others. Compare Isaiah 14.

Verse 56

Was not mentioned by thy mouth - Was held in utter contempt.

Verse 57

Thy reproach - Rather, the "reproach." In his march toward Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar attacked and overthrew Damascus and other Syrian towns. The Jews exulted, not foreseeing that this was but a precursor of that ruin which should discover their own wickedness.

Verse 60

The promise of restoration must almost have sounded as strangely as the threat of punishment, including as it did those whom Judah hated and

despised Ezekiel 16:61. The covenant of restoration was not to be like the old covenant. Not “by thy covenant,” but “by My covenant.” The people‘s covenant was the pledge of obedience. That had been found ineffectual. But the covenant of God was by “promise” Galatians 3:17.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

Ezekiel, after describing by a figure the circumstances and conditions of the Jews and Zedekiah, the vassal of the Assyrian monarch, warns them of the delusive character of their hopes of help from Egypt, protests against the perfidy which must accompany such alliance, and points out that the restoration of the people of God will be effected by a very different son of David. The close of this chapter is a striking prediction of the kingdom of the Messiah.

Verse 3

A great eagle … - Probably the golden eagle, whose plumage has the variety of color here depicted. The eagle (the king of birds) is a natural representative of monarchs (compare, Jeremiah 48:40), and was an Assyrian emblem.

With great wings, Iongwinged - literally, "great of wing, long of pinion," because he has swept victoriously over widely distant lands - of divers colors, because his subjects are of various races and tongues. Jerusalem is here called "Lebanon" because Lebanon is the proper home of the cedar. The "highest branch" or "topshoot" is Jeconiah, the rightful king of Jerusalem, the "young twigs" are his children and the princes carried by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon.

Verse 4

A land of traffick - The land of Babylon.

Verse 5

He took also of the seed of the land - Zedekiah the king's uncle, not a Babylonian satrap, was made king.

Verse 6

Spreading - On the ground, not trained to a pole, that it might have no other prop but Nebuchadnezzar. As a vine it was less majestic than a cedar Ezekiel 17:3; but compare Psalm 80:10.

Whose branches … - Rather, in order that her branches should turn unto him, and that her roots should be under him.

Verse 7

Another great eagle - This is the king of Egypt, mighty indeed but not like the first.

By the furrows of her plantation - From the beds, where it was planted to bring forth fruit for another, it shot forth its roots to him that he might water it. Zedekiah was courting the favor of Egypt while he owed his very position to the bounty of Assyria.

Verse 9

Her spring - Rather, her growth.

Even without … - Translate; and not with great power or with much people is it to be raised up from its roots again.

Verse 17

To cast up mounts and build forts - was the business not of the relieving but of the besieging army. Translate it: when men cast up mounts and build forts to destroy many persons.

Verse 22

A contrast between the dealings of Nebuchadnezzar and of Yahweh. Nebuchadnezzar "cut off," Yahweh will "set up" the topshoot; Nebuchadnezzar "carried it into a land of traffic," Yahweh will "plant it in the mountain of the height of Israel." Nebuchadnezzar set his favorite as a "vine, lowly" though not poor, in the place where such trees as the humble "willow" grow and thrive. Yahweh's favorite is like the "lofty cedar, eminent upon a high mountain."

The highest branch of the high cedar - The rightful representative of the royal house of David, the Messiah.

Tender one - The Messiah. This prophecy rests upon Isaiah 11:1, Isaiah 11:10.

Verse 23

In the mountain of the height of Israel - The parallel passage Ezekiel 20:40 points to the mountain on which the temple stood. But it is not here the actual Mount Moriah so much as the kingdom of which that mountain was the representative, the seat of the throne of the anointed Son of God (Psalm 2:6; compare Psalm 40:2).

All fowl of every wing - (or, of every kind) are those who flock from all lands to this kingdom. Compare Matthew 13:32.

The prophet brings prominently forward the future exaltation of the king; and he furnishes us thereby with hope, encouragement, and consolation, at such times as we see the Church of Christ in like depression.

Verse 24

The trees fo the field - The kingdoms of the world as contrasted with the kingdom of God. The truth here enunciated is a general one. God gives the promise, God fulfils it.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Verse 1

The last verse of Jeremiah 31:29, and sets forth fully the doctrine of individual responsibility.

Verse 2

Concerning the land of Israel - Rather, "in the land of Israel," i. e., upon Israel's soil, the last place where such a paganish saying should be expected. The saying was general among the people both in Palestine and in exile; and expressed the excuse wherewith they ascribed their miserable condition to anyone's fault but their own - to a blind fate such as the pagan recognized, instead of the discriminating judgment of an All-holy God.

Verse 4

All souls are mine - Man is not simply to ascribe his existence to earthly parents, but to acknowledge as his Father Him who created man in His own image, and who gave and gives him the spirit of life. The relation of father to son is merged in the common relation of all (father and son alike) as sons to their heavenly Father.

Verse 6

Eaten, upon the mountains - At the feast of idols, in contradiction to the command of Deuteronomy 12:17.

Idols of the house of Israel - Idolatry was so popular that certain idols were counted as belonging to the people of Israel, of whom Yahweh was the true God.

Verse 8

Usury - is the profit exacted for the loan of money, "increase" that which is taken for goods; both are forbidden Leviticus 25:36; Deuteronomy 23:19. The placing out of capital at interest for commercial purposes is not taken into consideration. The case is that of money lent to a brother in distress.

Verses 9-13

Live … die - In the writings of Ezekiel there is a development of the meaning of "life" and "death." In the holy land the sanctions of divine government were in great degree temporal; so that the promise of "life" for "obedience," the threatening of "death" for "disobedience," in the Books of Moses, were regarded simply as temporal and national. In their exile this could not continue in its full extent, and the universality of the misfortune

necessarily made men look deeper into the words of God. The word "soul" denotes a "person" viewed as an "individual," possessing the "life" which God breathed into man when he became a "living soul" Genesis 2:7; i. e., it distinguishes "personality" from "nationality," and this introduces that fresh and higher idea of "life" and "death," which is not so much "life" and "death" in a future state, as "life" and "death" as equivalent to communion with or separation from God - that idea of life and death which was explained by our Lord in the Gospel of John John 8, and by Paul in Romans 8.

Verse 19

Why? … - Rather, "Why doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father?"

Verse 25

Equal - literally, "weighed out, balanced." Man's ways are arbitrary, God's ways are governed by a self-imposed law, which makes all consistent and harmonious.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Introduction

Ezekiel regarded Zedekiah as an interloper (Ezekiel 17:1 note), therefore he here (in Ezekiel 19:1-14) passes over Jehoiakim and Zedekiah as mere creatures of Egypt and of Babylon, and recognizes Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin as the only legitimate sovereigns since the time of Josiah. This dirge is for them, while it warns the usurper Zedekiah of an approaching fate similar to that of the two earlier kings.

Verse 1

Princes of Israel - Israel is the whole nation over which the king of Judah was the rightful sovereign. Compare Ezekiel 2:3; Ezekiel 3:1, Ezekiel 3:7.

Verse 2

Thy mother - The people represented by Judah. Compare Genesis 49:9; Numbers 23:24.

Verse 3

Compare the marginal reference. The short reign of Jehoahaz was marked by violence and idolatry, and was closed by Pharaoh-Necho's carrying him captive into Egypt.

Verses 4-9

Chains - See the marginal rendering to Ezekiel 19:9 and Isaiah 27:9, note.

Ezekiel 19:5

Another - Jehoiachin who soon showed himself no less unworthy than Jehoahaz. The "waiting" of the people was during the absence of their rightful lord Jehoahaz, a captive in Egypt while Jehoiakim, whom they deemed an usurper, was on the throne. It was not until Jehoiachin succeeded, that they seemed to themselves to have a monarch of their own 2 Kings 24:6.

Ezekiel 19:7

Their desolate palaces - Rather, his palaces, built upon the ground, from where he had ejected the former owners.

Ezekiel 19:8

The nations - are here the Chaldaeans: see the marginal references.

Verse 10

Thy mother - Judah or Jerusalem. Jehoiachin is still addressed.

In thy blood - Blood is equivalent to "life" Genesis 9:4. The clause is equivalent to "Thy mother is a vine, living in thy blood," i. e., in the life of thee and of thy children. The excellency of a vine is in her fruitful branches; the glory of a mother in her noble children. Jeremiah was to write Jehoiachin childless (see the note at Jeremiah 22:30); Ezekiel here takes a general view of the king and princes of the blood royal.

Verse 11

Sceptres - Genesis 49:10.

The thick branches - Or, the clouds; so Ezekiel 31:3, Ezekiel 31:10, Ezekiel 31:14.

Verse 12

This is a dirge; and therefore that which is foreseen by the prophet, the capture and burning of Jerusalem, is described as already accomplished.

Verse 14

Fire is gone out - Compare the marginal reference. Zedekiah is regarded, like Abimelech, as all usurper and the ruin of his people.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Introduction

The prophecies of this section Ezekiel 8:1. Ezekiel in reply to other inquiries from the chieftains of the people, sets forth their national history, the national judgment, and the hope of divine mercy. This leads up to the prediction of the kingdom of the Messiah.

Verse 1

The elders of Israel - These were as in Ezekiel 14:1, some of Ezekiel's fellow-exiles, designated in general terms by the name of Israel, though more properly belonging to the kingdom of Judah.

Verse 3

Enquire - As to the hope of deliverance from the Babylonians.

Verse 4

Wilt thou judge them? - We should rather say, Wilt thou not judge them? i. e., wilt thou not pronounce sentence upon them? Compare Ezekiel 22:2.

Verses 5-9

The children of Israel in Egypt were warned to abstain from the idolatry of the pagan. This purpose they lost sight of, yet God spared them and brought them into another state of probation.

Ezekiel 20:5

Lifted up mine hand - i. e., sware, because the hand was lifted up in adjuration.

Ezekiel 20:8

Idols of Egypt - These incidental notices show the children of Israel in Egypt to have been addicted to idolatry. Compare Joshua 24:14.

Ezekiel 20:9

I wrought for my name's sake - Lest it should appear to the Egyptians that Yahweh was a God who would, but could not, save.

Verses 10-26

The probation in the wilderness. The promise was forfeited by those to whom it was first conditionally made, but was renewed to their children.

Ezekiel 20:11

The "statutes" were given on Mount Sinai, and repeated by Moses before his death (Exodus 20:1 ff; Deuteronomy 4:8).

In them - Or, through them: and in Ezekiel 20:13.

Ezekiel 20:12

See Exodus 31:13. The Sabbath was a sign of a special people, commemorative of the work of creation, and hallowed to the honor of Yahweh, the covenant-God. As man honored God by keeping the Sabbath holy, so by the Sabbath, God "sanctified" Israel and marked them as a holy people. Therefore to profane the Sabbath was to abjure their Divine Governor.

Ezekiel 20:13

My sabbaths they greatly polluted - Not by actual non-observance of the sabbatical rest in the wilderness, but in failing to make the day holy in deed as well as in name by earnest worship and true heart service.

Ezekiel 20:18

The book of Deuteronomy contains the address to "the children" of those who perished in the wilderness. The whole history of Israel was a repetition of this course. The covenant was made with one generation, broken by them, and then renewed to the next.

Ezekiel 20:25

The "judgments whereby they should not live" are those spoken of in Ezekiel 20:18, and are contrasted with the judgments in Ezekiel 20:13, Ezekiel 20:21, laws other than divine, to which God gives up those whom He afflicts with judicial blindness, because they have willfully closed their eyes, Psalm 81:12; Romans 1:24.

Ezekiel 20:26

To pass through - The word also means to "set apart," as the firstborn to the Lord Exodus 13:12. They were bidden to "set apart" their firstborn males to the Lord. They "caused them to pass through the fire" to Moloch. An instance of their perversion of God's laws.

Verses 27-31

The probation in the land of Canaan from their entry to the day of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 20:27

Yet in this - It was an aggravation of their guilt that they defiled with idolatry the land given them for their glory.

Ezekiel 20:29

Bamah - The Hebrew word for "high place." Another instance of the perversion of God's laws. When the Israelites first entered Canaan they were to set up the "tabernacle" on a "high place," and upon this and upon

no other they were to worship Yahweh (1 Samuel 9:12 ff; 1 Kings 3:4). But the Israelites followed the custom of the country, and set up idol-worship on every high hill, and the word "high place" ("Bannah," plural "Bamoth") became a by-word (compare "Bamoth-Baal," Joshua 13:17). "Bamoth" occurs on the Moabitic stone, which records the erection of high places in honor of Chemosh. The name "Bamah" was thus a brand of the divine displeasure, and a memorial of the people's guilt.

Ezekiel 20:30, Ezekiel 20:31

The present state of the people. Those who came to inquire were the representatives of the whole people though belonging to the exiles.

Verses 32-44

God's future dealings with His people:

(1) in judgment Ezekiel 20:32-38;

(2) in mercy Ezekiel 20:39-44.

Ezekiel 20:32

The inquirers had thought that if Jerusalem were taken, and the whole people became sojourners in a foreign land, they would cease to be a separate nation. In their love for idolatry some may have even desired this. But more probably they thought that this very consequence precluded the possibility of such a catastrophe. God answers that He will not allow them to become as the pagan, but this will only subject them to severer trial and stricter rule.

Ezekiel 20:33

The expressions "a mighty hand, stretched out arm" carry back the thoughts to Egyptian bondage Deuteronomy 4:34; Deuteronomy 5:15; but then it was for deliverance, now for judgment "with fury poured out."

Ezekiel 20:35

The wilderness of the people - A time of probation will follow, as before in the wilderness of Sin, so in the "wilderness of the nations" among whom they will sojourn (not the Babylonians) "after" that captivity. This period of their probation is not over. The dispersion of the Jews did not cease with the return under Zerubbabel; but in our Saviour's time they were living as a distinct people in all the principal places in the civilized world; and so they live now. God is yet pleading with them "face to face," calling them personally to embrace those offers which as a nation they disregarded.

Ezekiel 20:37

To pass under the rod - i. e., to be gathered into the flock Micah 7:14.

The bond - The shepherd collects the flock, and separates the sheep from the goats, which are rejected. Compare Romans 11:7-11.

Ezekiel 20:39

Strong irony. Some prefer another rendering: "Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, yet hereafter ye shall surely hearken unto me, and shall no more pollute My Holy Name etc." In this way, this verse is introductory to what follows.

Ezekiel 20:40

This points to the consummation indicated by the vision of the temple.

In the mountain of the height - Or, Upon a very high mountain Ezekiel 40:2. Compare Isaiah 2:2-3.

The house of Israel, all of them - All the separation between Israel and Judah shall cease. This points to times yet future, when in Messiah's kingdom Jews and Gentiles alike shall be gathered into one kingdom - the kingdom of Christ. Jerusalem is the Church of Christ Galatians 4:26, into which the children of Israel shall at last be gathered, and so the prophecy shall be fulfilled Revelation 21:2.

Verses 45-49

This paragraph is in the Hebrew text, Septuagint and Vulgate the beginning of Ezekiel 20:46

In this verse occur three Hebrew synonyms for "south," denoting:

(1) the region on the right, Teman 1 Samuel 23:24;

(2) the region of dryness, Negeb Joshua 15:4;

(3) the region of brightness, Darom Deuteronomy 33:23.

The variety of terms helps the force of the application. Chebar is in the north of Babylonia; from the north the Chaldaeans came upon Judaea (see the Ezekiel 1:4 note).

Ezekiel 20:47

Forest of the south - The land of Israel. See Ezekiel 21:1-2.

Ezekiel 20:49

Parables - Compare Ezekiel 17:2. The meaning of the prophet was clear enough, if those whom he addressed had chosen to understand.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Verse 1-2

The first word of judgment Ezekiel 21:1-7. Ezekiel speaks first to the people of Israel, shows the universality of the coming destructions, and indicates by a sign (that of sighing) the sadness of the calamity.

The words and order of words are identical with Ezekiel 20:45-46, except that for "south," there are substituted:

(1) "Jerusalem;"

(2) "the holy place," i. e., the temple and its various parts;

(3) "the land of Israel."

No subterfuge is left for the people to pretend misunderstanding.

Verse 4

The righteous and the wicked - take the place of "every green tree and every dry tree" Ezekiel 20:47; "all faces" that of "all flesh:" to show the universality of the destructions. National judgment involves the innocent in the temporal ruin of the guilty. The equity of God is vindicated by the ruin being only temporal.

From the south to the north - From one end of the holy land to the other; the seer is in the north, and looks at once on the whole extent of the ruin.

Verse 6

The prophet was directed to let the people see him sighing and prostrate, as a sign of the sorrow and weakness about to come upon the people.

The breaking of thy loins - The prostration of strength; the loins being the seat of strength.

Verses 8-17

The second word of judgment: the glittering and destroying sword. The passage may be called the "Lay of the Sword;" it is written in the form of Hebrew poetry, with its characteristic parallelism.

Ezekiel 21:10

It contemneth the rod of my son, as every tree - The rod is the scepter of dominion, assigned to Judah Genesis 49:10. The destroying sword of Babylon despises the scepter of Judah; it despises every tree. Others render the verse, "Shall we make mirth" (saying), "the rod of my son," (the rod which corrects my people) "contemneth" (treats with scorn, utterly

confounds) “every tree” (every other nation); or, the scepter of my people “contemneth” (proudly despises) every other nation. Proud as the people are, they shall be brought to sorrow.

Ezekiel 21:12

Terrors - Better as in the margin.

Smite upon thy thigh - A token of mourning (compare the marginal reference note).

Ezekiel 21:13

Or,

For it is put to the proof, and if it contemneth even the rod, What shall not be? saith the Lord

i. e., What horrors will not arise when the sword shall cut down without regard the ruling scepter of Judah!

Ezekiel 21:14

Doubled the third time - i. e., “thrice doubled” to express its violence and force.

The sword of the slain - The sword whereby men are to be slain.

Of the great men … - Or, The sword of the mighty slain, which presseth hard upon them.

Ezekiel 21:15

The point of the sword - The threatening sword or terror; as in Genesis 3:24, “the flaming sword.”

And their ruins be multiplied - literally, “to the multiplication of stumblingblocks,” that is, so that the causes of their fall may be more numerous. Compare Jeremiah 46:16.

Made bright … - Or,

Ah! It is prepared for a lightning-flash, Drawn for slaughter.

Ezekiel 21:16

The prophet addresses the sword,

Gather thyself up, O sword, to the right or to the left.

Another rendering is: “Turn thee backwards! get thee to the right! Set thee forwards (?)!get thee to the left! O whither is thy face appointed?

Ezekiel 21:17

The Lord smites together His hands in anger (marginal reference), man in consternation.

Verses 18-32

The third word of judgment. The king of Babylon‘s march upon Judaea and upon the Ammonites. Destruction is to go forth not on Judah only, but also on such neighboring tribes as the Ammonites (compare Jeremiah 27:2-3).

Ezekiel 21:19

Appoint thee - Set before thee.

Choose thou a place, choose it - Rather, “mark a spot, mark it,” as upon a map, at the head of the two roads, one leading to Jerusalem, the other to Ammon. These were the two roads by one or other of which an invading army must march from Babylon to Egypt.

Ezekiel 21:21

The Chaldaean king is depicted standing at the entrance of the holy land from the north, meditating his campaign, using rites of divination that really belonged to the Akkadians, a primitive race which originally occupied the plains of Mesopotamia. The Accadians and the Etruscans belong through the Finnish family to the Turanian stock; this passage therefore shows a characteristic mode of divination in use among two widely separated nations; and as the Romans acquired their divination from the conquered Etruscans, so the Chaldaeans acquired the same art from the races whose soil they had occupied as conquerors.

He made his arrows briqht - Rather, he shook his arrow; a mode of divination much in practice with the Arabians. It was usual to place in some vessel three arrows, on one of which was written, “My God orders me;” on the other, “My God forbids me;” on the third was no inscription. These three arrows were shaken together until one came out; if it was the first, the thing was to be done; if the second, it was to be avoided; if the third, the arrows were again shaken together, until one of the arrows bearing a decided answer should come forth.

Images - Teraphim (Genesis 31:19 note).

He looked in the liver - It was the practice both of the Greeks and the Romans (derived from the Etruscans) to take omens from the inspection of the entrails (especially the liver) of animals offered in sacrifice.

Ezekiel 21:22

The divination for Jerusalem - The lot fixing the campaign against Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 21:23

It shalt be unto them - The Jews in their vain confidence shall look upon the hopes gathered from the divinations by the Babylonians as false and groundless.

To them that have sworn oaths - According to some, "oaths of oaths are theirs;" i. e., they have the most solemn oaths sworn by God to His people, in these they trust, forgetful of the sin which broke the condition upon which these promises were given. More probably the allusion is to the oaths which the Jews had sworn to Nebuchadnezzar as vassals Ezekiel 17:18-19; therefore they trust he will not attack them, forgetting how imperfectly they had kept their oaths, and that Nebuchadnezzar knew this.

But he will call to remembrance the iniquity - The king of Babylon will by punishment remind them of their perjury 2 Kings 25:6-7; 2 Chronicles 36:17.

Ezekiel 21:25

Profane - Rather, "wounded," - not dead but - having a death-wound. The prophet, turning from the general crowd, addresses Zedekiah.

When iniquity shall have an end - i. e., at the time when iniquity shall be closed with punishment. So in Ezekiel 21:29.

Ezekiel 21:26

The diadem ("the mitre," the unique head-dress of the high priest) shall be removed, and the crown taken off (this shall not be as it is), the low exalted, and the high abased. Glory shall be removed alike from priest and king; the present glory and power attached to the government of God's people shall be quite removed.

Ezekiel 21:27

It shall be no more - Or, "This also shall not be;" the present state of things shall not continue: all shall be confusion "until He come" to whom the dominion belongs of right. Not Zedekiah but Jeconiah and his descendants were the rightful heirs of David's throne. Through the restoration of the true line was there hope for Judah (compare Genesis 49:10), the promised King in whom all power shall rest - the Son of David - Messiah the Prince. Thus the prophecy of destruction ends for Judah in the promise of restoration (as in Ezekiel 20:40 ff).

Ezekiel 21:28

The burden of the Song of the Sword, also in the form of poetry, is again taken up, directed now against the Ammonites, who, exulting in Judah's

destruction, fondly deemed that they were themselves to escape. For Judah there is yet hope, for Ammon irremediable ruin.

Their reproach - The scorn with which they reproach Judah (marginal references).

The sword … the glittering - Or, "the sword is drawn for the slaughter; it is furbished that it may detour, in order that it may glitter." In the Septuagint (and Vulgate) the sword is addressed; e. g., Septuagint, "Arise that thou mayest shine."

Ezekiel 21:29

Whiles … unto thee - A parenthesis. The Ammonites had their false diviners who deluded with vain hopes.

To bring thee upon the necks of them that are slain - To cast thee (Ammon) upon the heap of slaughtered men.

Shall have an end - Shall have its final doom.

Ezekiel 21:30

Shall I cause it to return … - Or, Back to its sheath! The work of the sword is over.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 22

Verse 1

The fourth word of judgment Ezekiel 22:1-16. The sins which have brought ruin upon Jerusalem are the sins which disgraced the pagan inhabitants of Canaan, whom the Israelites were to cast out (compare Leviticus 18). The commission of like sins would insure like judgment.

Verse 4

Thy days, - i. e., of judgment; "thy years," i. e., of visitation (compare Ezekiel 20:25, Ezekiel 20:39).

A reproach … a mocking - Judah shall be like the Ammonites Ezekiel 21:28.

Verse 5

i. e., Countries near and afar oft shall mock thee, saying, "Ah! defiled in name; Ah! full of turbulence!"

Verse 6

Render it: Behold the princes of Israel, each according to his might (literally "arm") have been in thee in order to shed blood. They looked to might not right.

Verse 10

Set apart for pollution - Or, "unclean by reason of impurity" Leviticus 12:2.

Verse 16

Thou shalt take … - Better as in the margin. Thou shalt by thine own fault forfeit the privileges of a holy nation.

Verses 17-22

The fifth word of judgment. The furnace. In the besieged city the people shall be tried and purged.

Ezekiel 22:18

Dross - A frequent metaphor which denotes not only the corruption of the people, who have become like base metal, but also a future purification whereby, the "dross" being burned away, the remnant of good may appear.

Verses 23-31

The sixth word of judgment. The special sins of princes, priests, and people.

Ezekiel 22:26

Violated - Better as in margin; to offer "violence" to the Law is to misinterpret it. It was the special office of the priests to keep up the distinction between "holy" and "unholy," "clean" and "unclean" Leviticus 10:10.

Ezekiel 22:28

See the marginal reference note.

Ezekiel 22:30

The land might be said to perish for the lack of such interpositions as saved their forefathers when Moses "stood in the gap." This was a proof of the general corruption, that there was not in the city sufficient righteousness to save it from utter destruction. Prince, prophet, priest, all fail.

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CHAPTER 23

Verse 1

The seventh word of judgment. The allegory of Aholah and Aholibah.

Verse 2

Of one mother - Israel and Judah were branches of the same stock.

Verse 4

Aholah … and Aholibah - More correctly "Oholah" ("her own tent or tabernacle") and "Oholibah" ("My tent or tabernacle is in her"): names chosen to express that after the division Israel set up her own tabernacle in the place of the temple in which God dwelt 1 Kings 12:32, while with Judah the Temple of God still remained. The presence of God aggravated Judah's sins. In the times of the captivity it was customary among the Jews to give their children names connected with the temple or tabernacle.

Verse 6

The army of the Assyrians is described. War-horses formed an important part in the armies of Assyria and Egypt; Israel was deficient in this respect Isaiah 36:8.

Verse 9

For the cause which at last brought destruction on Israel, see marginal reference.

Verse 10

Famous - Or, "infamous among women;" literally as in the margin, i. e., a byword among women.

Verse 11

The idolatries of Manasseh's reign exceeded all that had gone before either in Israel or in Judah 2 Chronicles 33:1-10.

Verse 14

After Israel's captivity Judah intrigued first with Assyria, then with Babylon, courting their monarchs, imitating their customs, and learning their idolatries.

Pourtrayed upon the wall - The monuments of Nineveh show how the walls of its palaces were adorned with figures precisely answering to this description. There is evidence that these sculptures were highly colored with vermilion, or rather, red ochre.

Verse 16

The sending of "messengers" refers to the act of Ahaz 2 Kings 16:7.

Verse 17

After Josiah's death and the usurpation of dominion by the Egyptians, the Babylonians were no doubt welcomed as friends 2 Kings 24:1. But the Jews were soon tired of their alliance and disgusted with their friends, and this led to the rebellion of Jehoiakim and the first captivity.

Verse 19

Egypt - The kings of Judah played alternately Egypt against Babylon, and Babylon against Egypt. Jehoahaz was displaced by Necho for Jehoiakim, who then turned to the Chaldaeans, and afterward rebelling sought aid from Egypt. So Zedekiah was continually meditating help from Egypt, against which Jeremiah and Ezekiel were continually protesting.

Verse 23

Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa - Possibly words expressive of rank, or names of small Chaldaean tribes, selected for their resemblance to expressive Hebrew words.

Verse 24

With chariots … - Better "with armor, horsemen, and chariot."

Verse 25

Take away thy nose and thine ears - Alluding to the barbarous custom of mutilating prisoners in the east Daniel 2:5. An Egyptian law prescribed this punishment for an adulteress.

Fire - A mode of capital punishment Jeremiah 29:22; Daniel 3.

Verse 37

Blood - One of the chief sins of Manasseh was that he shed innocent blood 2 Kings 21:16; 2 Kings 24:4.

Verse 38

The same day - The day when they made their offerings. See Ezekiel 23:39.

Verse 39

Yahweh was placed as it were in the list of deities, not acknowledged as the One God. Idols and idol-temples were erected close to the House of God, and yet the temple-service went on Jeremiah 32:34.

Verse 40-41

The figure is that of a woman decked in all her beauty, sitting on a couch (not bed) at a banquet prepared for those whom she has invited. This further offence is not one of idolatry, but that of courting alliances with other powers which were not less readily made than broken.

Ezekiel 23:40

That ye have sent - Better, "they (i. e., Israel and Judah) sent."

Verse 42

A voice … - Or, The voice of the tumult was stilled thereby. The tumultuous cries of the invading army were stilled by these gifts. Others render being at ease, "living carelessly."

Of the common sort - See the margin - a multitudinous crowd.

Sabeans - Better as in the margin. The Chaldaeans were noted for their intemperance and revellings.

The wilderness - The desert tract which the Chalaeans had to pass from the north of Mesopotamia to the holy land. This verse describes the temporary effects of the alliance of Israel and Judah with the Assyrians and Babylonians. All became quiet, the allies received gifts (incense and oil) from Israel and Judah, and these in turn brought riches to Palestine, "bracelets upon their" (i. e., Aholah's and Aholibah's) "hands," and crowns "upon their heads."

Verse 43

Will they now commit … - Rather, Now shall there be committed her whoredom, even this; i. e., when Israel and Judah had courted these alliances God said in wrath, "This sin too shall be committed, and so (not "yet) they went in;" the alliances were made according to their desires, and then followed the consequent punishment.

Verses 45-49

The judgment to be executed by the hands of their allies.

Ezekiel 23:45

The righteous men - Or, righteous men. The allies are so called as the instruments of God's righteous judgments.

Ezekiel 23:48

To cease - Because they are stricken and consumed. Compare marginal reference.

All women - i. e., all countries.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Introduction

In Ezekiel 24, Ezekiel is commissioned to announce to his fellow-exiles that the destruction of Jerusalem, so long foretold, was now in course of execution, that the siege had actually begun. This he is to declare:

(1) by a parable - of the boiling pot,

(2) by a symbolic act - the abstaining from the usual outward mourning for his wife‘s death.

Verse 1

The prophecies in this chapter were delivered two years and five months after those of the previous section Ezekiel 20:1. The day mentioned here was the very day on which Nebuchadnezzar completed his arrangements for the siege, and closed in the city (marginal references). After the captivity this day was regularly observed as a fast day Zechariah 8:19.

Verse 3

A pot - Or, the caldron; with reference to Ezekiel 11:3. The prophet indicates by the figure utter destruction. The caldron is the city, the fire is the surrounding army, the flesh and bones are the inhabitants shut in within the walls.

Verse 4

The pieces thereof - Or, that belong to it; i. e., the pieces which are designed for the caldron, and belong to it as the inhabitants belong to the city. The choice pieces are the choice members of the community Ezekiel 11:3.

Verse 5

Burn - Rather, as in margin; the bones would serve for fuel.

Verse 6

Scum - Better, rust (and in Ezekiel 24:11-12).

Bring it out piece by piece - It, the city; bring out the inhabitants, one by one, clear the city of them, whether by death, exile, or captivity.

Let no lot fall upon it - In the captivity of Jehoiakim and in that of Jehoiachin, some were taken, others left. Now all shall be removed.

Verse 7-8

The top of a rock - The blood was poured upon a naked, dry, rock where it could not be absorbed or unnoticed.

Verse 10

Consume … spice it well - i. e., "dress the flesh, and make it froth and bubble, that the bones and the flesh may be all boiled up together."

Verses 16-27

The death of Ezekiel's wife took place in the evening of the same day that he delivered the foregoing prophecy. This event was to signify to the people that the Lord would take from them all that was most dear to them; and - owing to the extraordinary nature of the times - quiet lamentation for the dead, according to the usual forms of mourning, would be impossible.

Ezekiel 24:17

The priest in general was to mourn for his dead (Leviticus 21:1 ff); but Ezekiel was to be an exception to the rule. The "tire" was the priest's mitre.

Eat not the bread of men - Food supplied for the comfort of the mourners.

Ezekiel 24:23

Pine away - Compare Leviticus 26:39. The outward signs of grief were a certain consolation. Their absence would indicate a heart-consuming sorrow.

Ezekiel 24:27

Ezekiel had been employed four years in foretelling the calamities about to come to pass. He had been utterly disregarded by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and received with apparent respect but with real incredulity by those in exile. Now until the city had been actually taken, the voice of prophecy should cease, so far as God's people were concerned. Hence the intervening series of predictions relating to neighboring and foreign nations Ezekiel 2532. After which the prophet's voice was again heard addressing his countrymen in their exile. This accounts for the apparently parenthetical character of the next eight chapters.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 25

Verses 1-7

It was a distinct part of scriptural prophecy to address pagan nations. In Isaiah Ephesians 6:12, but in which she will surely prevail.

It was a distinct part of scriptural prophecy to address pagan nations. In Isaiah Ephesians 6:12, but in which she will surely prevail.

This series of prophecies, with one exception, was delivered at the time of the fall of Jerusalem; some shortly before, and some shortly after, the capture of the city. They were collected together to illustrate their original purpose of warning the nations not to exult in their neighbor‘s fall. Seven nations are addressed, which have had most contact with the children of Israel - on their eastern borders Moab and Ammon, to the south, Edom, on the south-west Philistia, northward Tyre (the merchant city) and the more ancient Sidon, and lastly Egypt, alternately the scourge and the false stay of the chosen people. The number “seven” is symbolic of completeness. “Seven” prophecies against Egypt the chief of “seven” nations, denote the completeness of the overthrow of the pagan power, the antagonist of the kingdom of God. While other prophets hold out to these pagan nations some prospect of future mercy (e. g., Isaiah 16:14; Jeremiah 49:6, Jeremiah 49:11), Ezekiel speaks of their complete ruin. He was contemplating “national” ruin. In the case of Jerusalem there would be national restoration, but in the case of the pagan no such recovery. The “national” ruin was irretrievable; the remnant to whom the other prophets hold out hopes of mercy were to find it as individuals gathered into God‘s Church, not as nations to be again set up. Ezekiel does not, like other prophets, prophesy against Babylon; it was his mission to show that for the moment, Babylon was the righteous instrument of the divine wrath, doing God‘s work in punishing His foes. In prophesying against foreign nations, Ezekiel often adopts the language of those who preceded him.

In Ezekiel 25:5). This prophecy was delivered immediately after the capture of the city by Nebuchadnezzar, and so is later, in point of time, than some of the prophecies that follow it.

The Ammonites were inveterate foes of the descendants of Abraham.

Ezekiel 25:4

Men of the east - The wild wandering Arabs who should come in afterward upon the ruined land. The name was a common term for the nomadic tribes of the desert. Compare Isaiah 13:20.

Palaces - encampments. The tents and folds of nomadic tribes. After subjugation by Nebuchadnezzar Ezekiel 21:28, the land was subjected to various masters. The Graeco-Egyptian kings founded a city on the site of Rabbah Ezekiel 25:5, called Philadelphia, from Ptolemy Philadelphus. In later times, Arabs from the east have completed the doom pronounced against Rabbah.

Ezekiel 25:7

For a spoil - Or, for a portion.

Verse 8

Prophecies against Moab which lay south of Ammon, and shared Ammon‘s implacable hostility to the children of Israel.

Seir was close to Moab. Edom is identified with Mount "Seir" in Ezekiel 35:1-15; and "Seir" is therefore probably coupled with "Moab" here because, being near neighbors closely leagued together, they expressed a common exultation at Jerusalem‘s fall.

Verse 9

I will open the side … - i. e., lay it open to the attack of the enemy from the cities, from his cities, from his frontier (or, in every quarter). There is an ironical stress on "his" cities, because these cities belonged not to Moab but to Israel, having been assigned to the Reubenites Numbers 32:38; Joshua 13:20. They lay to the north of the river Arnon, which was the proper boundary of Moab Numbers 21:13. The Moabites had in the last days of the kingdom of Israel recovered this territory Isaiah 16:1-14. They still occupied this land in the time of Ezekiel (see Numbers 22:39, Numbers 22:41. Baal-meon occurs on the Moabitic stone as a place which Mesa built or fortified. He probably erected a stronghold on the old locality, reviving the ancient name. Beth-jeshimoth is identified with a knoll at the northeasternmost point of the Dead Sea.

Verse 10

Ammon and Moab, of common origin, whose lands had so often been interchanged, shall now share a common ruin. To "the men of the east"

Ezekiel 25:4 shall Moab with Ammon be given, that Ammon may be remembercd no more, and judgment be executed on Moab.

Verse 12

Edom, so named from Esau, consisted of various tribes enumerated in 2 Kings 8:20. Under the name of Idumea the land was conquered by John Hyrcanus (compare Ezekiel 25:14), when many of the people adopted the religion of the Jews. In later times the Idumean Herod became king of Palestine, reckoning himself as a Jew. Mount Seir, deserted by its original inhabitants, was occupied by a tribe of Arabians (the Nabatheans), under whelm Petra rose and continued a flourishing city under Roman dominion, until the tide of Mahometan conquest brought it to that ruin in which Edom at last found the complete fulfillment of the prophecies uttered against it Ezekiel 35:1-15.

Taking vengeance - Referring to the wrong done by Jacob to Esau Genesis 27:36.

Verse 13

From Teman … - Or "from Teman" even unto "Dedan," "shall they fall." Teman and Dedan were districts (not cities), the former in the south (Ezekiel 20:46 note), the latter in the north ("over the whole country").

Verses 15-17

The Philistines occupying lands to the south of Judah were a Hamite race Genesis 10:14, but of a different branch from the Canaanites. They were a powerful people never dispossessed by the Israelites Joshua 13:3. They were a thorn in the side of the chosen people throughout, and joined in attacking Jerusalem in the day of her trouble. They were much reduced by the Assyrians Isaiah 14:31, and Egyptians Jeremiah 47:1-7, before the time of this prophecy, but further destruction came upon them in the general ruin of the inhabitants of Canaan, which commenced with the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

Ezekiel 25:16

Cherethims - The inhabitants of the southern portion of Philistia Zephaniah 2:5.

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CHAPTER 26

Verse 1

Prophecies against Tyre. The siege of Tyre lasted thirteen years beginning 585 b.c., about three years after the capture of Jerusalem. While besieging Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar had driven Pharaoh Hophra back to the borders of Egypt. Tyre being thus relieved from a dangerous enemy, was exulting in her own deliverance, and in her neighbor‘s ruin, when Ezekiel predicted the calamity about to befall her. The name Tyre means rock, and was given to the city in consequence of its position. This island-rock was the heart of Tyre, and the town upon the continent - called “Old Tyre,” possibly as having been the temporary position of the first settlers - was the outgrowth of the island city. The scanty records of ancient history give no, distinct evidence of the capture of insular Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar; but the fact is very probable. Compare especially Ezekiel 26:7-12; Ezekiel 29:18. The present state of Tyre is one of utter desolation, though the end was long delayed (compare Isaiah 23). Tyre was great and wealthy under Persian, Greek, Roman, and even Muslim masters. The final ruin of Tyre was due to the sultan of Egypt (1291 a.d.).

In the first day of the month - The number of the month being omitted, many suppose “the month” to mean the month when Jerusalem was taken (the rebirth month), called “the month,” as being so well known. The capture of the city is known to have taken place on “the ninth day of the fourth month” and its destruction on “the seventh day of the fifth month.” This prophecy therefore preceded by a few days the capture of the city. The condition of Jerusalem in the latter months of its siege was such that the Tyrians may well have exulted as though it had already fallen.

Verse 2

Gates - i. e., one gate of two leaves.

The people - Or, the peoples (and in Ezekiel 27:3), the plural expressing the fact that many peoples passed through Jerusalem, as the central place on the highway of commerce, e. g., in the reign of Solomon. This was viewed with jealousy by Tyre, who owed her greatness to the same cause, and in the true spirit of mercantile competition exulted in the thought that the trade of Jerusalem would be diverted into her markets. Render it: Aha! She is broken - the gate of the peoples! She is turned unto me. I shall be filled. She is laid waste.

Verse 6

Her daughters … - The subject states upon the mainland, on which she at this time relied for supplies.

Verses 7-14

The description of the siege is that of a town invested by land.

Ezekiel 26:7

Nebuchadrezzar - Jeremiah 21:2 note.

Ezekiel 26:8

Lift up the buckler - i. e., set a wall of shields, under cover of which the walls could be approached.

Ezekiel 26:9

Engines of war - Or, his battering ram. "axes" swords. They who would break flown the towers, rush on with their swords to slay the defenders.

Ezekiel 26:11

Garrisons - pillars, on which stood statues of some protecting god. Compare 2 Kings 10:26.

Ezekiel 26:14

The siege had been on land, but the victory was to be completed by the subjection of the island-citadel.

Verses 15-21

The effect of the fall of Tyre.

Ezekiel 26:16

Clothe themselves with trembling - Mourners change their bright robes for sad garments.

Ezekiel 26:17

Of seafaring men - literally, "from the seas," i. e., occupied by men who come from the seas. Tyre was an inhabited city rising from out of the sea.

Ezekiel 26:20

Compare Isaiah 14:9. The image used by Isaiah and Jeremiah of Babylon is by Ezekiel applied to Tyre, as if to show that Tyre and Babylon alike represent the world-power. So, in the Book of Revelation, Babylon is the kingdom of Antichrist.

The land of the living - The land of the true God, as opposed to the land of the dead, to which is gathered the glory of the world. Here then, together with the utter ruin of Tyre, rises the vision of renewed glory to Jerusalem. The coming Messiah is thus propheticly pointed out. The over-

throw of God‘s enemies shall be accompanied by the establishment of His true kingdom.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Verse 1

The dirge of Tyre written in poetical form. Tyre is compared to a fair vessel, to whose equipment the various nations of the world contribute, launching forth in majesty, to be wrecked and to perish. The nations enumerated point out Tyre as the center of commerce between the eastern and western world. This position, occupied for a short time by Jerusalem, was long maintained by Tyre, until the erection of Alexandria supplanted her in this traffic. Compare the dirge of Babylon Isaiah 14:3-23; in each case the city named represents the world-power antagonistic to God.

Verse 3

Entry - literally, "entries." Ancient Tyre had two ports, that called the Sidonian to the north, the Egyptian to the south; the former exists to the present day. The term "entry of the sea" is naturally enough applied to a harbor as a place from which ships enter and return from the sea. The city was known in the earliest times as "Tyre the port."

Verse 5

Fir-trees (or, cypress) of Senir - The name by which the Amorites knew Mount Hermon.

Verse 6

The company … ivory - Rather, "thy benches (or, deck) made they of ivory with boxwood" (or, larch), i. e., boxwood inlaid with ivory.

The isles - (or, coasts) of Chittim is a phrase used constantly for Greece and the Grecian islands. It may probably be extended to other islands in the Mediterranean sea Genesis 10:5, and there ivory may have been brought from the coasts of North Africa.

Verse 7

Or, "Fine linen Genesis 41:42 with embroidery from Egypt was" thy sail that it might be to thee for a banner. Sails from Egypt were worked with various figures upon them which served as a device. Their boats had no separate pennons.

Blue and purple - Tyrian purple was famous. The Tyrians no doubt imported from the neighboring coasts the mollusks from which they dyed the fine linen of Egypt.

Isles of Elishah - See Genesis 10:4. Elishah is considered equivalent to the Greek AEolis on the western coast of Asia Minor. This and the islands

adjacent would very naturally have commerce with the Tyrians. In early days the supply of the murex from the coast of Phoenicia had been insufficient for the Tyrian manufactures. The isles of Greece abounded in the mollusks.

That which covered thee - As an awning.

Verse 8

Arvad - See Genesis 10:18. An island off the coast of Sidon, now called Ruad.

Verse 9

Gebal - i. e., Byblos (modern Gebeil) in Phoenicia, the chief seat of the worship of Adonis, and situated on an eminence over-looking the river Adonis, north of Beirut, not far from the Mediterranean sea. The "ancients" is a term for the council that presided over maritime cities.

Verse 10-11

The prophet here leaves the allegory of the ship to describe the armies of the Tyrians composed of mercenary soldiers.

Ezekiel 27:10

Persia - The name of this people does not occur in the more ancient books of the Old Testament; but in the books of the exile and after the exile it is frequent. This exactly corresponds with the record of history. It was just at the time that Ezekiel wrote that the rude and warlike people of Persia were rising into notice, soon about to seize, under Cyrus, the empire of the Asiatic world.

Lud - See Genesis 10:13. The union here of "Lud with Phut," an undoubtedly African tribe (compare Ezekiel 30:5; Isaiah 66:19) seems to indicate Lud to be of Hamitic race, not the Semitic race. Both names occur repeatedly on Egyptian inscriptions, especially as supplying mercenary soldiers.

Phut - Libyans (see Genesis 10:6).

Ezekiel 27:11

Gammadims - Rendered by Septuagint "watchmen;" by others, "brave warriors;" but more probably the name of some nation of which we have no record. The custom of hanging shields upon the walls of a town by way of ornament seems to have been of purely Phoenician origin, and thence introduced by Solomon into Jerusalem 1 Kings 10:16.

Verses 12-24

The thread broken at Ezekiel 27:8 is taken up, and the various nations are enumerated which traded with Tyre.

Ezekiel 27:12

Tarshish - Tartessus in Spain (marginal references). Spain was rich in the metals named.

Merchant - Especially applied to those who traveled about with caravans to carry on trade (see Genesis 23:16).

Fairs - Or, "wares" Ezekiel 27:33. The word occurs only in this chapter. The foreign merchants gave their wares in return for the products delivered to them by Tyre.

Ezekiel 27:13

Jaran - Greece (Ion), including the Grecian colonies in Sicily and Italy.

Tubal, and Meshech - The Tibareni and Moschi, whose lands were on the Caucasian highlands between the Euxine and Caspian Seas (see the marginal reference), were a fine race of men; from thence slaves have been continually sought. Greece too in ancient times was famous for furnishing slaves.

Ezekiel 27:14

Togarmah - Armenia.

Ezekiel 27:15

Dedan - There were two tribes (Shemite and Hamite), each bearing the name of "Dedan" (see Genesis 10:7). The Hamite (Ethiopian) Dedan may well have supplied for a payment (rather than "for a present") horns, ivory, and ebony; the Shemite (Arabians), "clothes for chariots" (see Ezekiel 27:20).

Ezekiel 27:16

Syria - "Aram" here included Mesopotamia; and Babylon was famous for its precious stones. Many read "Edom."

Emeralds - Rather, carbuncle.

Fine linen - The word (בוּץ *bûts*) was used only in the times of the captivity. It is a Phoenician word, which in Greek assumed the form "byssus," properly "cotton," as distinguished from "linen;" the Phoenicians spinning their threads from cotton wool, the Egyptians from flax.

Ezekiel 27:17

Minnith - A city of the Ammonites, whose country was famous for wheat 2 Chronicles 27:5. The wheat was carried through the land of Israel to Tyre.

Pannag - This word occurs nowhere else, and has been very variously explained. Some take it to be "sweetwares." Others see in it the name of a place, fertile like Minnith, perhaps identical with Pingi on the road from Baalbec to Damascus.

Ezekiel 27:18

Helbon - Chalybon, near Damascus, whose wine was a favorite luxury with Persian kings.

White wool - A product of flocks that grazed in the waste lands of Syria and Arabia.

Ezekiel 27:19

Dan also - Hebrew Vedan, a place in Arabia, not elsewhere mentioned.

Going to and fro - Better as in the margin, a proper name, "Meuzal," or rather, "from Uzal" which was the ancient name of Senaa the capital of Yemen in Arabia. Greek merchants would carry on commerce between Uzal and Tyre.

Bright iron - literally, "wrought iron;" iron worked into plates smooth and polished. Yemen was famous for the manufacture of sword-blades.

Cassia - The inner bark of an aromatic plant.

Calamus - A fragrant reed-like plant (see Exodus 30:23-24). Both are special products of India and Arabia.

Ezekiel 27:20

Dedan - See Ezekiel 27:15. It is remarkable that "Dedan and Sheba" occur both among the descendants of Ham in Genesis 10:7, and among the descendants of Abraham and Keturah in Genesis 25:3. This seems to indicate that there were distinct nomad tribes bearing the same names of Hamite and of Semitic origin; or it may be that whereas some of the nomad Arabs were Hamite, others Semitic, these were of mixed origin, and so traced up their lineage alike to tiara and Shem. Here we have, at any rate, a number of Arabian nomad tribes mentioned together, and these tribes and their caravans were in those days the regular merchant travelers between east and west. By her ships, Tyre spread over Europe the goods which by these caravans she obtained from India and China.

Precious clothes - Or "clothes of covering," cloths of tapestry.

Ezekiel 27:21

Kedar - The representative of the pastoral tribes in the northwest of Arabia.

Ezekiel 27:22

Sheba - Sabaea, the richest country of Arabia, corresponded nearly with what is now called Yemen or Arabia Felix.

Raamah - Closely connected with "Sheba," whose seat is supposed to have been in the neighborhood of the Persian Gulf.

Ezekiel 27:23

Haran - Charrae in Mesopotamia.

Canneh - "Calneh" Genesis 10:10, probably Ctesiphon on the Tigris.

Eden - On the Euphrates Isaiah 37:12. "the merchants of Sheba" Here the towns or tribes that traded with Sheba. Sheba maintained a considerable trade with Mesopotamia.

Chilmad - Possibly Kalwada near Bagdad.

Ezekiel 27:24

All sorts of things - See the margin, "made of cedar" Rather, made fast.

Verse 25

Did sing of thee - Or, were thy bulwarks, i. e., bulwarks of thy traffic. Others render it: "were thy caravans," thy merchandise.

Verse 26

The east wind - Compare the marginal reference

Verse 27

All who have been enumerated as sharing in, and constituting, the glory of Tyre are now recounted as partakers in her wreck.

Verse 28

The suburbs - Or, "precincts." Tyre rose from the midst of the sea; her "precincts" were the surrounding waters and the adjoining coasts.

Verse 29

As Tyre is figured by a large vessel, so are the subject-states by smaller boats which accompany the great ship. These terrified by the storm approach the land. Tyre is hopelessly swallowed up, crew and all, in the midst of the sea. The small crafts escape to shore.

Verse 31

Utterly bald - See Ezekiel 7:18 note.

Verse 35

The news of Tyre's ruin shall reach to distant isles, to merchant cities who trade with her. These in their selfish love of gain shall rejoice over her who was once paramount over them, hissing out against her curses and scorn.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 28

Verses 1-10

The prophecy against the prince of Tyre. Throughout the east the majesty and glory of a people were collected in the person of their monarch, who in some nations was worshipped as a god. The prince is here the embodiment of the community. Their glory is his glory, their pride his pride. The doom of Tyre could not be complete without denunciation of the prince of Tyre. Idolatrous nations and idolatrous kings were, in the eyes of the prophet, antagonists to the true God. In them was embodied the principle of evil opposing itself to the divine government of the world. Hence, some of the fathers saw upon the throne, not simply a hostile monarch, but "the Prince of this world, spiritual wickedness (or wicked spirits) in high places." Whenever evil in any way domineers over good, there is a "prince of Tyrus," against whom God utters His voice. The "mystery of iniquity is ever working, and in that working we recognize the power of Satan whom God condemns and will destroy.

Ezekiel 28:2

Thou hast said, I am a god - Compare Ezekiel 29:3; Daniel 4:30; Acts 12:22; 2 Thessalonians 2:4.

I sit in the seat of God - Words denoting the speaker's pride; but the situation of the island-city, full of beauty, in the midst of the blue water of the Mediterranean, gives force to the expression. Compare the words describing the lot of Tyre as having been in Eden Ezekiel 28:13.

Thou art a man - Rather, thou art man.

Ezekiel 28:3

Thou art wiser than Daniel - The passage is one of strong irony. Compare Ezekiel 14:14; Daniel 6:3.

Ezekiel 28:9

But thou shalt be a man - Rather, yet art thou man.

Ezekiel 28:10

The uncircumcised - The pagan idolaters as opposed to the covenant-people.

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Verses 11-19

The dirge of the prince of Tyre, answering to the dirge of the state. The passage is ironical; its main purpose is to depict all the glory, real or assumed, of "the prince of Tyrus," in order to show how deplorable should be his ruin.

Ezekiel 28:12

To "seal the sum" is to make up the whole measure of perfection. Compare the Septuagint

Ezekiel 28:13

Thou hast been in Eden - "Thou" wast etc. The prince of Tyrus is ironically described as the first of creation; but at the same time the parallel

is to be maintained in his fall from glory. Like Adam in the enjoyment of paradise, he shall be like Adam in his fall.

Every precious stone - All the stones here named are found in the High priest‘s breastplate Exodus 28:17-20, but their order is different, and three stones named in Exodus (the third row) are wanting. The prophet may purposely have varied the description because the number twelve (that of the tribes of Israel) had nothing to do with the prince of Tyrus, and he wished to portray, not a high priest, but a king, having in view a figure which was to a Jew, especially to a priest, the very type of magnificence.

Tabrets - (or, drums) and “pipes” were a common expression for festivity and triumph.

Ezekiel 28:14

Thou art - Better,” Thou” wert. “the anointed cherub that covereth” In the temple the cherubim and all holy things were consecrated and anointed with oil (Exodus 30:26 ff). The prince of Tyre was also anointed as a sovereign priest - covering or protecting the minor states, like the cherubim with outstretched wings covering the mercy-Seat.

Thou wast upon the holy mountain - As the cherub was in the temple on the holy mountain, so the prince of Tyre was presiding over the island-city, rising like a mountain from the deep.

Stones of fire - i. e., bright and shining. Decked with bright jewels, the prince walked among jewels in gorgeous splendor.

Ezekiel 28:15

The “perfection” was false, unsuspected until the “iniquity” which lay beneath was found out.

Verse 21

Prophecy against Zidon. Zidon (mod. Saida) was more ancient than Tyre and was the original metropolis of Phoenicia Genesis 10:19, but in the times of Phoenician greatness it ever played a subordinate part. Only once Judges 10:12 do we find the “Zidonians” in conflict with Israel. The evil which they did was the seducing them to idolatry (compare Ezekiel 28:24), as in the case of Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians 1 Kings 16:31. The capture of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar increased the importance of Zidon, which was a wealthy and flourishing town when Artaxerxes Ochus destroyed it. It has rallied from time to time, but has never attained to any great consequence, though not in such complete ruin as Tyre.

Verse 22

Be glorified … be sanctified - Or, "get Me glory … have shown Myself holy" (and in Ezekiel 28:25).

Verse 25-26

The contrast of the future of Israel with that of the surrounding nations. This prophecy reaches far beyond a mere temporal restoration. It points to times of more permanent security, when from all nations and kingdoms the Church of Christ, the Israel of God, shall be gathered in, when the power of the world shall be forever broken, and the kingdom of Christ shall be established forever.

This transition from the enemies to the people of God closes the portion of the prophecies against the nations in the immediate vicinity of the Israelites, before passing to the more distant Egypt.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 29

Introduction

In Ezekiel 29:17 to the end) in regular succession, predict the downfall of Pharaoh Hophra and the desolation of Egypt.

Ezekiel 26:1), the prophecies against the nations being given, not in their chronological, but in their geographical order, according to their nearness to Jerusalem.

Verse 1

The tenth year - Jerusalem had been besieged, but not taken. Jeremiah delivered his prophecy against Egypt, about the time when the approach of Pharaoh Hophra‘s army caused the Chaldaeans for the time to raise the siege Jeremiah 37:5. This was the solitary instance of Egypt meddling with the affairs of Palestine or Syria after the battle of Carchemish (compare 2 Kings 24:7); it met with speedy punishment.

Verse 3

The king is addressed as the embodiment of the state.

Dragon - Here the crocodile, the great monster of the Nile, which was regarded very differently in different parts of Egypt. By some it was worshipped and embalmed after death, and cities were named after it (e. g., in the Arsinoite nome). Others viewed it with the utmost abhorrence. An animal so terrible, so venerated, or so abhorred, was an apt image of the proud Egyptian monarch - the more so, perhaps, because it was in truth less formidable than it appeared, and often became an easy prey to such as assailed it with skill and courage.

Lieth in the midst of his rivers - Sais, the royal city, during the twenty-sixth dynasty was in the Delta, in the very midst of the various branches and canals of the Nile.

My river is mine own … - It was the common boast of Hophra (Apries), that “not even a god could dispossess him of power.” The river was at all times the source of fertility and wealth to Egypt, but especially so to the Saite kings, who had their royal residence on the river, and encouraged contact with foreigners, by whose commerce the kingdom was greatly enriched.

Verse 4

Hooks in thy jaws - Compare Job 41:2. The crocodile is thus rendered an easy prey.

Fish of thy rivers - i. e., the allies of Egypt shall be involved in her ruin.

Verse 6

Staff of reed - The "reed" was especially appropriate to Egypt as the natural product of its river.

Verse 7

So Egypt was continually proving to Israel, to Jehoiakim and to Zedekiah. The tenses are present not past.

To be at a stand - Others, "to totter."

Verses 10-12

From the tower of Syene - Or, as in the margin, "Migdol" ("tower") was about two miles from Suez. "Syene" was the most southern town in Egypt, on the borders of Ethiopia, in the Thebaid, on the eastern bank of the Nile. The modern Assvan lies a little to the northeast of the ancient Syene.

We have no record of the circumstances of the Chaldsaean invasion of Egypt, but it is possible that it did not take place until after the fall of Tyre. We gather of what nature it must have been by comparing the description of the results of Assyrian conquest (Isaiah 37:25 ff). Minute fulfillment of every detail of prophecy is not to be insisted upon, but only the general fact that Egypt would for a time, described as 40 years, be in a state of collapse. No great stress is to be laid on the exact number of years. The number of years passed in the wilderness became to the Hebrews a significant period of chastisement.

Nebuchadnezzars occupation of Egypt was of no long duration, and his ravages, though severe, must have been partial. Peace with Babylon was favorable to the development of home-works, but since the peace was in truth subjugation, it was hollow and in fact ruinous. Further, it is to be remembered that God fulfils His decree by a gradual rather than an immediate process. The ravages of Nebuchadnezzar were the beginning of the end, and all the desolation which followed may be looked upon as a continuous fulfillment of God's decree. The savage fury with which Cambyses swept over Egypt amply realized all that Ezekiel foretold. Many places recovered some wealth and prosperity, but from the time of Herodotus the kingdom never again became really independent. Egyptian

rulers gave place to Persian, Persian to the successors of Alexander the Great, who gave place in turn to Rome. So thoroughly was the prophecy of Ezekiel fulfilled Ezekiel 29:14-15.

Verse 13

A similar respite was promised to Moab Jeremiah 48:47, to Ammon Jeremiah 49:6, and to Tyre Isaiah 23:15.

Verse 14

Pathros - The Thebaid or Upper Egypt, the original seat of the kingdom.

The land of their habitation - Rather, as margin, i. e., the home of the restored exiles.

Verse 16

The false confidence of the Israelites "brought to remembrance," i. e., discovered in the sight of God and man their "iniquity," i. e., their treachery and perjury to the Chaldaeans; their falsehood being made evident when they "look after" (turn to) the Egyptians and seek their aid in rebellion. The ruin of Egypt shall put an end to all this.

Verses 17-21

The prophet places this prediction out of chronological order, that he may point out what had not been stated in the foregoing prophecy, namely, that the agent who should strike the first blow on Egypt should be the Chaldaean king, Nebuchadnezzar.

Ezekiel 29:18

Yet had he no wages - It is not improbable that the Tyrians before they surrendered their island-citadel managed to remove much of their treasure; but others exlplain the verse; that the siege and capture of Tyre is to be regarded as the "work" appointed, and the possession of Egypt as the "reward or wages" for the work.

Ezekiel 29:21

Egypt being the antagonist of the people of God, her overthrow inaugurated the triumph of good over evil.

The horn … - Or, "an horn to bud forth to the house of Israel."

I will give thee the opening of the mouth - When these things should begin to come to pass the prophet's mouth should be opened to declare their meaning, and to make known the end to which all was tending.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 30

Verse 1

Third prophecy Ezekiel 30:10 with the Ezekiel 29:17-21 note). Some consider it to belong to the earlier part of Ezekiel 29:10, Ezekiel 29:12 with Ezekiel 30:5-6).

Verse 3

The time of the pagan - The time when the pagan (Egyptians) shall be judged.

Verse 5

Libya, and Lydia - Or, as in Ezekiel 27:10, Phut and Lud.

The mingled people - Foreigners, who settled in Egypt. The Saite dynasty of Egyptian kings were especially favorable to foreign immigrants. Hophra employed many of them in his armies, and in this way, according to Herodotus, lost the affections of his Egyptian subjects. See Jeremiah 25:20 note.

Chub - The word occurs here only. It was some tribe in alliance with Egypt, either of African race like Lud and Phut, or settlers like the "mingled people." A not-improbable suggestion connects it with *Coptos* of which the Egyptian form was *Qeb Qebt* or *Qabt* The men of the land that is in league - Rather, the children of the land of the covenant, i. e., of Israel (see Ezekiel 16:8). After the destruction of Jerusalem Jews withdrew into Egypt Jeremiah 43:7. Many of them would naturally enough be found in the Egyptian armies. This is in favor of the later date assigned to this section.

Verse 6

See the marginal reference note.

Verse 9

Careless Ethiopians - The Ethiopians, who were dwelling in fancied security Zephaniah 2:15, shall tremble at Egypt's ruin.

Verse 13

Noph - Memphis Isaiah 19:13.

Verse 14

Zoan - Tanis, a city and nome of Lower Egypt Numbers 13:22. See the marginal reference note.

No - Diospolis. See the marginal reference note.

Verse 17

Aven - The same as "On" Genesis 41:45, or "Heliopolis." The word "Aven" means also "transgression" (compare Hosea 10:8). Some have thought that here too Ezekiel substituted the word "Aven" for "On" to mark the "sin" of idolatry there in full vogue.

Pi-beseth - The Bubastis of Herodotus. The hieroglyphic name is "Pe-bast," the house of Bast (the Egyptian Artemis, the cat-headed goddess). Bubastis was situated on the easternmost, the Pelusian, branch of the Delta. The road from Pelusium to Memphis lay through Bubastis and On. In the days of Herodotus Bubastis was the seat of one of the chief annual festivals of the Egyptians. The Persians took the town and razed the walls. The ruins bear the modern name Tel-Basta.

Verse 18

Tehaphnehes - See the marginal reference note. "break the yokes of Egypt" i. e., break the yokes imposed by Egypt, or break up the tyrannous dominion of Egypt over other lands.

Verses 20-26

Fourth prophecy against Egypt spoken three months before the capture of Jerusalem Ezekiel 26:1, and three months after the prophecy of Ezekiel 29:1. Meantime, Pharaoh-Hophra's attempt on Jerusalem had been foiled, and the Egyptians driven back into their own country (Jeremiah 37:5 note).

Ezekiel 30:21

I have broken - Especially by the defeat at Carchemish.

A roller - Or, a bandage.

Ezekiel 30:22

The strong - Such power as Egypt yet retained at home and abroad.

That which was broken - The power which Egypt aimed at ineffectually, the conquest of Palestine and Syria.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 31

Verse 1

In the third month - More than a month before Jerusalem was taken (compare Jeremiah 39:2).

Verses 3-9

Fifth prophecy against Egypt: a warning to Pharaoh from the fate of the Assyrians. The Assyrian empire, after having been supreme in Asia for four centuries, had been overthrown by the united forces of the Babylonians and Medes, in the year of the battle of Carchemish (605 b.c.), which had broken the power of Egypt. This gives force to the warning to Egypt from Assyria‘s fall.

Ezekiel 31:4

His plants - Rather, her plantation. The water represents the riches and might which flowed into Assyria.

Ezekiel 31:5

When be shot forth - Or, when the deep water sent forth its streams.

Ezekiel 31:8

Garden of God - Paradise.

Verses 10-14

Assyria‘s fall.

Ezekiel 31:11

More accurately: Therefore I will deliver him, etc … he shall surely deal with him. I have driven him out, etc.

Ezekiel 31:14

Their trees - Rather, as in the margin, “standing unto themselves” meaning “standing in their own strength.” The clause will then run thus: “Neither all that drink water stand up” in their own strength. “All that drink water” means mighty princes to whom wealth and prosperity flow in. The Egyptians owed everything to the waters of the Nile. The substance is, that Assyria‘s fall was decreed in order that the mighty ones of the earth might learn not to exalt themselves in pride or to rely on themselves, seeing that they must share the common lot of mortality.

Verses 15-17

Effect of Assyria‘s fall.

Ezekiel 31:15

I covered the deep - To cover with sack-cloth was an expression of mourning Ezekiel 27:31. The deep, the source of Assyria's prosperity Ezekiel 31:4, was made to mourn, being dried up instead of giving forth its waters, its glad abundance.

For him - Upon his account.

Floods … great waters - Or, rivers … the multitude of waters (as in Ezekiel 31:4-5).

Lebanon represents the country which Assyria governed; "the trees," the tributary princes.

Ezekiel 31:16

See the marginal references.

Ezekiel 31:17

His arm … - The subject princes who were his strength and support in war.

Verse 18

Application to Pharaoh.

The uncircumcised - The Egyptians, at least their nobles, were circumcised. Pharaoh should thus be dishonored with those whom the Egyptians themselves deemed unclean.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 32

Verse 1

In the twelfth month - About one year and seven months after the destruction of Jerusalem. In the meantime had occurred the murder of Gedaliah and the flight into Egypt of the Jews left behind by the Chaldaeans Ezekiel 44:2-16.

Verse 2

Thou art like … - Rather, Thou wouldest be like to (others, "wast likened unto") a young lion.

And thou art - In contrast to what thou wouldest be.

A whale - Rather, crocodile (marginal reference note). Pharaoh should have been like the king of beasts, but he is a mere sea-monster. There is strong irony here, because the Egyptian king was proud of the comparison between himself and the mighty crocodile.

Seas - The word is often used of the waters of a great river, like the Nile.

Thou camest forth with thy rivers - Rather, thou didst burst forth in "thy rivers" as the crocodile does from the water into which he has plunged.

Verse 5

The prophet passes from the image of the crocodile to that of dead bodies of the slain heaped up on the land. Some render "height," "foulness."

Verse 9

When I shall bring thy destruction - i. e., the news of thy destruction. The phenomena here mentioned are the accompaniments of "the day of the Lord" Joel 2:10; Luke 21:25 or the day of judgment. The fall of Pharaoh represents the fall of the world-power before the sovereignty of God.

Verse 14

A promise of a return of God‘s favor. This concerns not the restoration of Egypt‘s original power, but the establishment of the Divine Ruler in the place of a pagan God-opposing power.

Verse 16

Daughters of the nations - Pagan kingdoms.

Verse 17

The seventh prophecy against Egypt Ezekiel 31:18. The figure is the same as in Ezekiel 32:1).

Verse 19

whom dost thou pass in beauty? - Thou art not more beautiful than other nations: thou shalt not escape their fate.

Verse 20

She is delivered to the sword - Rather, the sword is put forth. Draw her down as one dragged to execution.

Verse 21

The uncircumcised - throughout this dirge is equivalent to pagan viewed as impure (Ezekiel 31:18 note).

Verse 22

In Jeremiah 25 there is an enumeration of nations destined to be subject to the fury of the Chaldaeans. Here we find those of them who had already fallen not named by Jeremiah. Asshur is the king of Assyria, representing as usual the whole nation. The king is surrounded by the graves of his people.

Verse 24

See the marginal referenc. Elam answers to the country known to the Greeks and Romans as Elymais, near Persia and Media. The Elamites were a fierce and warlike people. In the records of Assurbanipal his final triumph over Elam seems to have been one of his proudest boasts. Elam no doubt in the decline of Assyrian power again asserted its independence and was again crushed by the Chaldaean conqueror.

Verse 27

And they shall not lie - Better, "Shall they not lie?" or, "Are they not laid?" The custom of burying warriors with their swords, shields, or helmets, raider their heads is well known, and common to most warlike nations.

But their iniquities … - They, rested in all the glories of a warrior‘s sepulture, but their sins followed them to the grave.

Verse 30

The princes of the north - i. e., north of Palestine - The Tyrians and the Syrians.

With their terror they are ashamed of their might - i. e., "When their might and power were terrible to all, they were shorn of their power and delivered over to shame and confusion." There are here six nations, Asshur, Elam, Meshech, Tubal, Edom, Zidon, which added to Egypt make up seven (see the Ezekiel 25:1 note). The section which contains the prophecies against the pagan, closing with this description of the kings who had gone down to the grave, accords with the general purport of the whole section,

namely,: the declaration that all the powers of the world shall be annihilated to make way for the kingdom of God.

sa40

Verse 31

Comforted - By the knowledge that his ruin is no more than that of every world-power.

Verse 32

My terror - Better "his terror," the terror caused by him.

The land of the living - The land of God's people. It was Yahweh who caused Pharaoh to be terrible to His people, and now, when the time is come, Pharaoh is fallen, and he is laid etc.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 33

Introduction

Ezekiel newly designated to the prophetic office, undertakes his new duty of encouraging his countrymen to hope for forgiveness and restoration. Ezekiel 33:1-20 are the introduction to this third group of prophecies. This is the beginning of the last section Ezekiel 3348.

Verse 1

Again - And. For Ezekiel 33:1-20, compare Ezekiel 18 notes.

Verse 21

The date shows an interval of 112 years from the taking of Jerusalem Jeremiah 52:12. The general news that the city was taken must have reached them, but it was only when the messenger arrived that the prophet's mouth was opened. It is not improbable that a body of men after the destruction of the city joined their brethren in Chaldaea; if so this would account for the lapse of time, and supply a reason why Ezekiel on their arrival should commence a new series of prophecies.

Verse 22

Was upon me … was opened - For was read "had been." The prophet was under the hand of God in ecstatic trance on the evening preceding the arrival of the messenger, and continued in this state until his arrival.

Verses 23-33

The exhortation to repentance. Ezekiel first addresses the remnant that still linger in their ancient home, and warns them against presumptuous hopes resting on false grounds Ezekiel 33:23-29; then he turns his eyes to those near him, and points out that their apparent attention to his words was illusory.

Ezekiel 33:24

Those wastes - The places in the holy land devastated by the conqueror.

Abraham - The argument is, Abraham was but one man, and he had the promise of the land, though he did not at once possess it; much more shall we, the descendants of Abraham, being many, retain this promise and possess the land, though for a time we are depressed and subject. Compare Matthew 3:9; John 8:33, John 8:39.

Ezekiel 33:25

To eat flesh with the blood was forbidden (see the marginal references). It seems to have been connected with the idolatries of Canaan. The

prohibition was, on account of its connection with idolatry, continued in the enactment of the Council of Jerusalem Acts 15:29.

Ezekiel 33:26

Ye stand upon your sword - Ye put your trust in your swords.

Ezekiel 33:30-33

God warns the prophet against being misled by the compliance of the people.

Ezekiel 33:30

Against thee - Rather, about "thee." "by the walls" Rather, within "the walls."

Ezekiel 33:31

As the people cometh - literally, as in the margin, i. e., in crowds. Render it: they shall come "unto thee" like the coming of a people," and" shall "sit before thee as My people" etc., i. e., they assume the attitude of God's people listening to His prophet. Compare Ezekiel 14:1; Ezekiel 20:1.

Ezekiel 33:33

And when this - But when this.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 34

Verse 1

The prophet has yet to pronounce a judgment upon unfaithful rulers, whose punishment will further the good of those whom they have misguided. He shows what the rulers should have been, what they have been, and what in the coming times they shall be when the True King shall reign in the true kingdom. Hence, follows a description of Messiah‘s reign.

Verse 2

Shepherds - Not priests or prophets, but rulers and kings (see the Jeremiah 2:8 note). The most ancient title for “ruler” is a monogram which occurs on the oldest monuments discovered in the cuneiform character. In the Assyrian language it became riu (compare Hebrew רעה *râʿâh* =shepherd). In the traditions of Berosus we find that Alorus, the first king in the world, received from the Divinity the title of Shepherd. The title, as well as the monogram, was preserved to the latest times of the Assyrian monarchy. While the distress and misery of the people daily in creased, the last kings of Judah exacted more and more from their subjects and lavished more and more on personal luxury and show.

Verse 11

Yahweh is the shepherd of His people. He will do all which the shepherds should have done and did not. These promises - partially fulfilled in the return from Babylon, and in the subsequent prosperity under the Maccabees - point to the ingathering of all nations in the Church of Christ the Good Shepherd. Compare Matthew 18:11: Romans 9:25-33.

Verse 12

The cloudy and dark day - Contrasted with the day in which the Lord will be among them like a shepherd to gather them together again.

Verse 16

With judgment - It is characteristic of Yahweh as a shepherd that He judges between sheep and sheep, rejecting the proud and accepting the penitent and broken-hearted.

Verses 20-31

Yahweh having promised to be a Ruler of His people, the administration of the divine kingdom is now described, as carried on by One King, the representative of David, whose dominion should fulfill all the promises originally made to the man after God‘s own heart. Ezekiel does not so much

add to, as explain and develope, the original promise; and as the complete fulfillment of the spiritual blessings, which the prophets were guided to proclaim, was manifestly never realized in any temporal prosperity of the Jews, and never could and never can be realized in any earthly kingdom, we recognize throughout the Sacred Volume the one subject of all prophecy - the Righteous King, the Anointed Prince, the Son and the Lord of David.

Ezekiel 34:23

One shepherd - One, as ruling over an undivided people, the distinction between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah having been done away.

My servant David - David was a fit type of the True King because he was a true and faithful servant of Yahweh. That which David was partially and imperfectly, Christ is in full perfection (compare Matthew 12:18; John 5:30; Hebrews 10:7.)

Ezekiel 34:26

The blessings here foretold are especially those of the old covenant. The wilderness (or, pasture-country) and the woods, the places most exposed to beasts and birds of prey, become places of security. Under the new covenant Sion and the hills around are representative of God‘s Church; and temporal blessings are typical of the blessings showered down upon Christ‘s Church by Him who has vanquished the powers of evil.

Ezekiel 34:29

A plant - Equivalent to the “Branch,” under which name Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesy of the Messiah. The contrast in this verse to hunger seems to favor the idea that the “plant” was for food, i. e., spiritual food, and in this sense also, applicable to the Messiah (compare John 6:35.)

The shame of the pagan - The shameful reproaches with which the pagan assail them.

Ezekiel 34:31

Translate “Ye are my flock, the flock of my pasture (compare Jeremiah 23:1); ye are men, and I am your God.”

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 35

Verse 1

In Ezekiel 25:12-14. But its fuller doom was reserved for this place, because Edom was one of the surrounding nations that profited at first by Judah‘s fall, and because it helps by way of contrast to bring out in a marked way the better future designed for Israel. Edom is the God-hating, God-opposing power, ever distinguished for its bitter hatred against Israel; and so the ruin of Edom is the triumph of Israel in the power of God.

Verse 5

Shed blood - Omit “blood:” better as in the margin, i. e., and hast given up the children of Israel to the sword; thou hast scattered the children of Israel in confusion like stones poured down a mountain-side Micah 1:6.

That their iniquity had an end - Or, “of the iniquity of the end,” i. e., the time when by the capture of the city the iniquity of Israel came to an end Ezekiel 21:29.

Verse 9

Return - Or, “be inhabited.”

Verse 10

These two nations - Israel and Judah.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 36

Introduction

Ezekiel 36:1-15 is the contrast to the preceding. Now, when the prophet speaks, Judaea is waste. The pagan nations around, and Edom in particular, rejoice in scorn: but the land of Israel is a holy land given by Yahweh to His people, and it shall be theirs. The promises are those of temporal blessings; and although these temporal blessings were typical of Messiah‘s reign, yet we may not doubt that this prophecy had for its first object the return of prosperity to the land and to the people, after their return from Babylon.

Verse 1

The “mountains of Israel” are opposed to “Seir,” the mount of Edom Ezekiel 35:3.

Verse 3

The residue of the pagan - Those of the surrounding nations which had survived Jerusalem‘s fall, and may have profited by it.

Verse 6

The shame of the pagan - The taunts which the pagan heaped upon them.

Verse 7

I have lifted up mine hand - i. e., I have sworn. Compare marginal reference.

Their shame - They shall find their taunts come home to themselves.

Verse 8

They are at hand to come - i. e., under Zerubbabel.

Verse 13

The judgments which God sent upon the land, had so destroyed the inhabitants that men deemed it a fatal land, which brought destruction to all that should occupy it (compare 2 Kings 17:25).

Verse 14

Bereave - Or, as in the margin: i. e., the land shall not prove the ruin of its inhabitants by tempting them (as of old time) to the sin of idolatry.

Verse 15

Hear in thee the shame of the pagan - Hear the pagan putting thee to shame by their contemptuous words.

The reproach of the people - “Thy people” (thy rightful possessors) shall have no cause to reproach thee for want of fertility. Were the blessings

promised here merely temporal they could not be said to be fulfilled. The land is still subject to pagan masters. The words must point to blessings yet future, spiritual blessings.

In the following chapters to the end of Ezekiel 39 the conflict between the world mid God is described in its most general form, and the absolute triumph of the kingdom of God fully depicted. The honor of God is asserted in the gathering together, and the purification of, His people. As the dispersion of the children of Israel was far wider and more lasting than the sojourn in Chaldaea, so the reunion here predicted is far more extensive and complete. The dispersion yet continues, the reunion will be in those days when Israel shall be gathered into the Church of God.

Verses 16-20

The defilement of the people described in order to its removal.

Ezekiel 36:20

They profaned my holy name - Caused it to be dishonored by the pagan who said in scorn, "This is the people of God." The pagan, seeing the miserable state of the exiles, fancied that Yahweh was no more than a national god, powerless to protect his subjects.

Verse 21

I had pity for mine holy name - Render it: I "had" a pitiful regard to "Mine Holy Name."

Verse 25

Ezekiel the priest has in view the purifying rites prescribed by the Law, the symbolic purport of which is exhibited in Hebrews 9:13-14; Hebrews 10:22. As the Levites were consecrated with sprinkling of water, so should the approved rite "sprinkling of water" thus prescribed by the Law and explained by the prophets, give occasion to the use of water at the admission of proselytes in later days, and so to its adoption by John in his baptism unto repentance. It was hallowed by our Lord when in His discourse with Nicodemus, referring, no doubt, to such passages as these, He showed their application to the Church of which He was about to be the Founder; and when He appointed Baptism as the sacrament of admission into that Church. In this sacrament the spiritual import of the legal ordinance is displayed - the second birth by water and the Spirit. As Israel throughout the prophecy of Ezekiel prefigures the visible Church of Christ, needing from time to time trim or purification - so does the renovated Israel

represent Christ‘s mystical Church Ephesians 5:26. The spiritual character of the renovation presumes a personal application of the prophet‘s words, which is more thoroughly brought out under the new covenant (e. g., Hebrews 11:16). Thus the prophecy of Ezekiel furnishes a medium through which we pass from the congregation to the individual, from the letter to the spirit, from the Law to the Gospel, from Moses to Christ.

Verse 28

Ye shall be my people - (Compare 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; Hebrews 8:10. The writers of the New Testament appropriated these and similar phrases of the Old Testament to the Church of Christ. Between the restoration of the Jews (the first step) there are many steps toward the end - the spread of Christ‘s Church throughout the world, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the acknowledgment of the true God - which justify men in looking forward to a time when the Gospel shall be preached in all the world, and the earth become the kingdom of God in a fuller sense than it has ever yet been. But all these are “steps.” Our prophecies look beyond all this to a new heaven to a new earth, and to a new Jerusalem Revelation 21:3.

Verse 36

The pagan that are left - Gathered out of pagandom into the community of God - accepted and redeemed.

Verse 37

Their sin had prevented God‘s hearing them. Now their purification opens God‘s ears to their words.

Verse 38

As the holy flock - A reference to the flocks and herds brought up to Jerusalem to be consecrated and offered unto the Lord 2 Chronicles 35:7. Thus, the idea is brought out:

(1) of the multiplication of the people,

(2) of their dedication to the service of God.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 37

Introduction

In Ezekiel 37:1-14, Ezekiel sees in a vision dead men raised to life; its meaning is given Ezekiel 37:11-14. In it, the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body is at least implied. Such a figure would only have force with those who were familiar with this idea (compare 1 Samuel 2:6; Job 19:25-27; Psalm 16:10-11; Daniel 12:1-13). The vision was intended not only to comfort the despairing children of Israel - prefiguring the reinstatement of Israel now scattered and lifeless, as a community restored to their home, and rein-vigorated with spiritual life - but also to impress upon them the great truth of the Resurrection, which was greatly developed in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, but found its clear and unambiguous enunciation in the New. The prophecy concerns not only the Israel after the flesh but also the Israel of God; it points to a home in heaven and to a life of immortality.

Verse 1

The valley - The same word as "the plain" Ezekiel 3:22; Ezekiel 8:4. The "dry bones" represented the Israelites dispersed abroad, destitute of life national and spiritual.

Verse 4

Prophesy - Not in the sense of predicting what was to come to pass, but simply in that of speaking under the inspiration of God. In Ezekiel 37:5, not "I will cause," but I cause or am causing.

Verse 7

Bone to his bone - i. e., to its proper place in the frame.

Verse 9

The wind - Rather, as in the margin and as in Ezekiel 37:5. The bones are the bones of the "slain," because the scene was one which was likely to occur in the time of the Chaldaean invasion, and the fact of violent death reminded the prophet of the miserable condition of the people.

Verse 11

We are cut off for our parts - That is, "as for us, we are cut off." The people had fallen into despair.

Verses 16-28

A prophecy of the reunion of Israel and Judah, the incorporation of Israel under one Ruler, the kingdom of Messiah upon earth and in heaven.

Ezekiel 37:16

One stick - So in the marginal reference the names of the tribes had been written on rods or sticks.

For Judah … - To the house of David had remained faithful, not only Judah, but also Benjamin, Levi, and part of Simeon, and individual members of various tribes 2 Chronicles 11:12-16. Compare the marginal references.

Joseph … Ephraim - Compare Psalm 78:67; Hosea 5:5 ff "Joseph" is the general name here for the ten tribes, including "Ephraim," the chief tribe, and his companions. Omit "for" before "all." "All the house of Israel" is here the ten tribes.

Ezekiel 37:19

In the hand of Ephraim - Because Ephraim was the ruling tribe; the words are contrasted with "in mine hand."

Ezekiel 37:20

This sign was literally enacted in the presence of the people, not, like some signs, merely in vision (see the Ezekiel 3:1 note).

Ezekiel 37:21

The gathering together of the children of Israel was to take effect in the first place in the return from Babylon, when the distinction of Israel and Judah should cease. The full completion concerns times still future, when all Israel shall come in to acknowledge the rule of Christ.

Ezekiel 37:22

One king - The restoration of Israel to their native soil will lead the way to the coming of the promised King, the Son of David, who will gather into His kingdom the true Israel, all who shall by faith be acknowledged as the Israel of God. The reign of the One King David is the reign of Christ in His kingdom, the Church.

Ezekiel 37:25, Ezekiel 37:26

An enlargement of the promises. The kingdom is to be "forever," the covenant "everlasting." This looks forward to the consummation of all God's promises 1 Corinthians 15:24, 1 Corinthians 15:28.

Ezekiel 37:27

This gives a final blessing reserved for God's accepted servants. The tabernacle and temple were outward symbols of His presence. The re-erection of the temple by Zerubbabel was the first step to a restoration of the presence of God. The second step was the presence of Christ, first in the

flesh, then in His Church, and finally the eternal presence of God and of the Lamb in the New Jerusalem Revelation 21.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 38

Verse 1

The last conflict of the world with God, and the complete overthrow of the former. This section Ezekiel 20:7-10, where John adopts words and phrases of Ezekiel.

There are four main divisions of this prophecy:

(1) Ezekiel 38:1-13, describing Gog‘s march;

(2) Ezekiel 38:14-23, describing his punishment;

(3) Ezekiel 39:17-29, the issue of Gog‘s ruin in Israel‘s redemption and sanctification.

Each division is broken up like a poem into stanzas.

Verse 2

Gog … - Gog of the land of Magog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. “Gog” is here the name of a captain from “the land of Magog” (compare Genesis 10:2) the name of a people of the north, placed between “Gomer” (the Cimmerians) and “Madai” (the Medes). In the History of Assurbanipal from cuneiform inscriptions, a chief of the Saka (Scythians), called *Ga -a -gi* is identified by some with Gog. Rosh, if a proper name, occurs in this connection only.

Verse 4

With all sorts - Or, “gorgeously;” see the marginal reference. Omit “of armor.”

Verse 5

Libya and Ethiopia, mixed with the northern invaders, are tribes from the extreme south, to show that this is a general combination of the foes of God‘s people.

Verse 7

Spoken ironically. Make all thy preparations, they will be in vain.

Verse 8

As Gog was drawn on to his attack upon Israel in order to his ultimate ruin, therefore his preparations were the first step in his visitation from the Almighty.

After many days - For “many days.” Many a long day shall the hand of God be upon thee, drawing thee on to thy ruin, and in the latter days shalt thou come.

The land - literally, a "land" once laid waste by the sword, but now delivered from it, whose inhabitants once scattered have been gathered together from out of many peoples.

Always - Rather, a long time. The mountains were at the time of Gog's advance again cultivated and populous.

And they shall dwell - Rather, and they dwell. It is a description of the actual condition at the time of Gog's invasion (compare Judges 18:7). Such was the condition of the restored Jews in their prosperous days, after which came invasion. Such shall be the condition of the Church previous to the final conflict between good and evil.

Verse 11

Unwalled villages - Compare Zechariah 2:4-5.

Verse 14

God will mark the prosperous security of the people, and rise up against them as an easy prey.

Verse 16

I shall be sanctified in thee - I shall be shown to be holy and just in avenging Myself of Mine enemy.

Verse 17

Gog - is not mentioned by name in any existing prophecy before Ezekiel's time. The reference here shows

(1) that the conflict with Gog does not represent a particular event, but one of which the prophets in general had to speak;

(2) that in the interpretation of Old Testament prophecy we are to look beyond special fulfillments.

Events in the world's history come within a prophet's ken as parts of the divine administration whereby evil struggles against but is overcome by good. As every such conflict is a prelude to the final struggle, so its prediction has reference ultimately to the consummation here foretold.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 39

Verse 1

The present chapter describes the defeat of Evil and the triumph of God and His people. As the prophet predicted the advance of Evil under the figure of the invasion of an actual army; so he declares the overthrow of Evil by the figure of a host routed and slain, and the consequent purification of a land, partially overrun and disturbed. Some forgetting that this is a figure, have searched history to find out some campaign in the land of Israel, some overthrow of invaders, on which to fix this prophecy, and have assigned localities to the burial-place "Hamon-Gog" Ezekiel 39:11.

Verse 2

The chief prince - Or, "prince of Rosh."

And leave but the sixth part of thee - Or, and lead thee along (Septuagint and Vulgate).

Verse 6

The judgment is extended to "the isles" (or, seacoast) to show that it should fall not only on Gog and his land, but on those who share Gog's feelings of hatred and opposition to the kingdom of God.

Verse 9-10

Burn them with fire - Or, "kindle fire with them;" or, as in the margin. The weapons of the army left on the field of battle shall be so numerous as to supply fuel for the people of the land for seven years. Seven was a number connected with cleansing after contact with the dead (Numbers 19:11 ff), and this purification of the land by the clearance of paganish spoils was a holy work (compare Ezekiel 39:12).

Verse 11

The prophet pictures to himself some imaginary valley (compare Zechariah 14:5) at the "east of the sea," the Dead Sea, a place frightful in its physical character, and admonitory of past judgments. He calls it "the valley of the passengers" (or, passers-by), because they who there lie buried were but as a passing cloud. In Ezekiel 39:11-15 there is a play upon words - there were "passengers" to be buried, "passengers" to walk over their graves, "passengers" to bury them; (or, a play upon the treble meaning of passing in (invading), passing by, and passing through.)

Stop the noses - The word thus rendered occurs only once more in Scripture Deuteronomy 25:4 where it is rendered muzzle. See Isaiah 34:3.

Hamon-gog - See the margin, compare Ezekiel 39:16.

Verse 14

Men of continual employment - literally, as margin, i. e., men regularly appointed to this business. As the land of Israel represents figuratively the Church of Christ, the purification of that land is a proper part of the figure to indicate such a sanctification and cleansing of His Church, as Paul describes Ephesians 5:26-27.

Verses 17-29

The purposes of the past dispensation shall be made clear to God's people themselves and to the pagan. His judgments were the consequence of their sins; and these sins once abandoned, the favor of their God will return in yet more abundance.

Ezekiel 39:29

Compare Acts 2:17. Peter distinctly appropriates these prophecies (marginal references) to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and the inauguration of the Church of Christ by that miraculous event. This was the beginning of the fulfillment. They shall find their consummation when time shall be no more.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 40

Introduction

The subject of the closing chapters of Ezekiel Ezekiel 40:1). The temple and city were in ruins, but God was pleased in this way to revive the hopes of His people.

An examination of the vision shows the insufficiency of the explanation, which conceives that Ezekiel was simply guided to leave behind patterns on the basis of which the temple should in after days be rebuilt, and its services restored. Not only was this plan never carried out, but it was incapable of execution. The physical features of the land would not admit of the separation of precincts a mile square, surrounded by a territory sixteen miles by forty-eight Ezekiel 48:10. The river, though connected with the stream brought by conduit pipes into the actual temple (see Ezekiel 48:20), 25,000 reeds, and the city itself 4,500 reeds square with twelve gates, three on each side. The courts commnnicate with each other and with the precincts by six gates (D and G, Plan II) equal to each other and similarly situated. The enclosing wall of the outer court has strange dimensions in order that height, width, and thickness, may all be equal. The minute details are after the same pattern. The guard-chambers, the bases of the columns, are all square. The series of chambers for the Levites and for the priests are in fixed numbers and symmetrically placed. The dimensions of the brasen altar are changed that one part may be the double of another throughout (see Ezekiel 43:13). The number of sacrifices is in certain instances increased and made more uniform.

Most readers, when they have come to Ezekiel 45:25) and even of the Day of Atonement. Now if we were to expect to find in the vision directions for the reenactment of the temple-ritual, this would be quite unaccountable. But if we view these selected rites in relation to the temple-building, and give to that building its true symbolic character, all is found to be just and harmonious. The vision is intended to depict the perpetual worship of the God of heaven in the Kingdom of Christ. To the mind of an Israelite the proper figure to represent this would be the temple and its services, with people, priest, and prince, each doing their fitting part. The most appropriate services to exhibit this worship would be those of continual recurrence, in which day by day, week by week, month by month, prayer

and praise ascended to the throne of heaven; namely, the Morning Sacrifice, the Sabbath and the New moon festival. Here we have the Israelite symbol of perpetual public adoration.

This will also account for the absence of all mention of the high priest and his office. In the old dispensation the chief function of the high priest was the performance of the great Act, which typified the atonement worked by the sacrifice and death of Christ for the sins of the world. This atonement was effected once for all upon the Cross, and in the new dispensation Christ appears in the midst of His people as their Prince and Head, leading and presenting their prayers and praises day by day to His Father in heaven.

The vision represents the coming dispensation as a kingdom (compare Ezekiel 34:24). Solomon took a special part in the temple services as king, and here there are new and remarkable provisions for the prince. Special offerings are to be made by him; there is a particular order for the prince‘s inheritance; and one of the gateways is reserved for him as that by which the Lord, the God of Israel, entered in Ezekiel 44:2; and thus is brought forth, as a leading feature in the vision, the figure of a king reigning in righteousness, the representative of Yahweh upon earth.

Verse 1

In the first and twentieth year - This was the fiftieth year from the 18th of Josiah, the year of his memorable Passover 2 Kings 23:22. See the Ezekiel 1:1 note. If that was a jubilee year, which is highly probable, this vision also falls in a jubilee year, which seems appropriate. The jubilee year began with the month of Tisri, a sufficient reason for speaking of the time as “the beginning of the year.” The tenth day of this month was the day of atonement Leviticus 16:29-30.

Verse 2

By which - Better as in the margin. (compare Ezekiel 43:12).

As the frame of a city - It is not “a city” which is seen, but a building (the temple and its courts) like a city in its construction, surrounded by massive walls.

On the south - southward, i. e., on the southern slope, just as the temple actually stood on Mount Moriah. The temple was at the northeast corner of

the city - part of the western portion of the city being more to the north, but no part directly north of the temple.

Verse 3

The appearance of brass - Brightly shining.

A line of flax - For measuring the ground plan.

A measuring reed - For the walls (compare Jeremiah 31:38-39). To measure implied a separation for sacred purposes. The measurements are:

(1) exact, to show that the promise is certain;

(2) equal, to denote harmony;

(3) vast, to mark majesty and grandeur.

Verse 5

The boundary wall of the temple-courts. See Plan II.

A wall on the outside of the house - The wall enclosing the courts in which were the entrance gates.

By the cubit and an hand breadth - The Jews first used a cubit of fifteen inches, applying it principally to the vessels and furniture of the temple; next a cubit of eighteen inches ("a hand-breadth" longer than the former cubit); and lastly, after the captivity, the Babylonian cubit of twenty-one inches (a "hand-breadth" more). In the temple measurements they used only the cubit of eighteen inches; hence, the "cubit and hand-breadth" is the cubit of eighteen inches.

Verses 6-16

The east gate-building. See Plan III.

Ezekiel 40:6

Stairs - Seven in number Ezekiel 40:22. Each threshold of the gate (was) one reed broad (or 9 ft.). The measurements are being taken from East to west, i. e., in depth.

Ezekiel 40:7

Every little chamber - The guard-chambers (a) for the use of the Levites who kept watch in the temple.

The threshold of the gate by the porch - The second threshold in the easternmost gate-way (c).

Porch - Hebrew אולם *'ûlâm* the Septuagint: αἰλάμ *ailam* Vulgate: *vestibulum*. The word probably means porch or portico, connected with "ail" post or pillar.

Ezekiel 40:9

The porch is now measured from north to south in "wide." "The breadth of the entry of the gate" was "ten cubits," made up of the "eight cubits," with "a cubit" for "a post" or pillar on each side Ezekiel 40:11.

Posts - A projection like a ram's horn; in architecture, a column projecting from the wall with its base, shaft, and capital, or it may be the "base" only Ezekiel 40:16, Ezekiel 40:49. Here "post" represents the lower part of the column. and the dimensions given are those of the section of the base.

Ezekiel 40:10

In front of each guard-chamber were columns, whose "posts" (bases) were each one cubit square.

Ezekiel 40:11

The length of the gate - The length of the gateway (including the porch, E.) from the court to the uncovered space. The threshold was "six cubits," and the porch "six." In addition one cubit was probably allowed in front of the porch, as before the porch of the temple itself Ezekiel 40:49.

Ezekiel 40:13

This measurement is across the gate-building from north to south. The breadth of the gate-building was exactly half its length Ezekiel 40:15.

Ezekiel 40:14

Posts of threescore cubits - Sixty cubits were the length of a series of columns. This gives us another feature of the gate-building. Between the porch (E) and the two most western guard-chambers was a space of five cubits (through which the road passed), forming a kind of hall with columns along the sides. This hall is called the "arches" Ezekiel 40:16. A hall of the same dimensions was between the boundary wall and eastern guard-chambers Ezekiel 40:31. It is probable that in one of these halls (that of the eastern gateway of the inner court) the prince "ate bread" on solemn festivals Ezekiel 44:3.

Unto the post of the court round about the gate - This hall or colonnade extended the whole breadth of the building to the pavement (Ezekiel 40:18, H, Plan II). Outside the building on the pavement was a series of pillars.

Ezekiel 40:15

The whole length of the gate-building was thus made up:

d Thickness of boundary wall

d 6 cubits

d

d Hall of the entrance

d 5 cubits

d

d Three guard-chambers (6 cubits)

d 18 cubits

d

d Spaces between guard-chambers

d 10 cubits

d

d Hall of the porch

d 5 cubits

d

d The porch

d 6 cubits

d

d Total

d 50 cubits

d

d **Ezekiel 40:16**

The "narrow" (closed and (?)latticed "windows" lit up both the guard-chambers and the hall. On the square base of the "post" stood the shaft in the form of a palm-tree, as we see in ancient buildings in the east.

Verses 17-19

The "outward" or outer "court" (o, Plan II) corresponds to what was in Herod's temple the court of Women, into which all Jews, but not Gentiles were admitted.

Ezekiel 40:17

Chambers - (I) See Jeremiah 35:2.

A pavement - (H) Of mosaic work 2 Chronicles 7:3; Esther 1:6 which formed a border of forty-four cubits. On each side of the court in which there were gates, i. e., on east, north, and south. It was called the "lower pavement" to distinguish it from the pavement of the inner court; the outer court being lower than the inner Ezekiel 40:31.

Ezekiel 40:19

There were eastern, northern, and southern gates of entrance from the outer to the inner court (B).

Without - Not as in the margin, but looking outward, i. e., the outward front of the inner gate toward the outer court.

Verses 20-23

The gates both of the outer and of the inner court. Compare Plan II.

Verse 31

Utter court - Translate outward court Ezekiel 40:37; Ezekiel 42:1, Ezekiel 42:7, Ezekiel 42:14; Ezekiel 44:19; Ezekiel 46:20-21.

Arches toward the outward court - See Ezekiel 40:14 note.

Eight steps - So for the east Ezekiel 40:34 and north gates Ezekiel 40:37. From the precincts to the outer court were "seven" steps, from the outer to the inner court "eight," making together the number of the Psalms Psalm 120134, supposed by some to have been called Psalms of Degrees, because they were sung by the choir of Levites upon the steps ("degrees") of the temple-courts. In later times these Psalms were used as pilgrims'

songs by the Jews who went up from their abodes in foreign countries to Jerusalem on the solemn feasts.

Verse 38

The chambers - Render it: and chambers, not yet described. They were north of the altar, by the "posts" or pillars in front and along the sides of the gate-building. There were several gates in the gate-building.

Verse 39

In the porch - Not under the covered portico, which was only ten cubits broad Ezekiel 40:9, but in the angles formed by the porch and gate-front. If the gate-building projected with its porch forward on to the pavement of the inner court, the tables were fitly placed for carrying out the directions of the Law.

Verse 40

On either side of the entrance of the north gate (from the inner court), were two tables on the one side and two tables on the other side of the porch.

Verse 42

Omit "the" and "were." These "four tables" are not the same as those mentioned before. The eight tables (T) were for slaying and preparing the victims, and were probably of wood, these (S) were of "hewn stone." There may be in the number twelve a reference to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Verse 43

Hooks - The alternative renderings given in the margin indicate the doubtfulness of the translation of the original word. The form is dual, and indicates that it is some object usually found in pairs. Some suggest that they were borders or ledges set, on either side of the tables, a handbreadth from the edges, to prevent the instruments placed on them from falling off. If the rendering "hooks" be adopted, it is to be explained thus: that these hooks were set on the wall "within," that each hook was forked (hence, the "dual" form), and projected from the wall one span; and that on these hooks were hung the carcasses of the slain animals.

Verse 44

Without - Outside of the gate in the inner court. See N, Plan II.

Singers - These were Levites of particular families, those of Heman, Asaph, and Merari, whose genealogy is carefully traced up to Levi (see marginal reference). These chambers (N, Plan II) may have been for the "singers and priests" who were for the time being engaged in the services of

the temple. Other chambers (Ezekiel 42:1 ff) were for the use of the "priests" at other times; and the Levites and singers, when "not" on duty, would find accommodation in the thirty chambers of the outer court. If there is a departure here from the symmetry elsewhere observed, it may be accounted for by the fact that as the sacrifices were to be made on the "north" side of the altar, and therefore the "tables" for the sacrifices were on that side only, so those who had charge of the house and its singers might have rooms near. Others correct the Hebrew text by the Septuagint, and read the passage thus: And without the "inner gate" two chambers (i. e., rows of chambers) "in the inner court, one at the side of the north gate, and their prospect toward the south, one at the side of the south gate, and the prospect toward the north."

Verse 45

The priests, whose chambers (L) are here provided, were those whose business it was to exercise this oversight which had devolved upon them as descendants of Aaron Numbers 3:32.

Verse 46

The position of the "chamber" looking to the north commanded a view of the brasen altar and the sacrifices, which were prepared at the north side of the altar.

The sons of Zadok - The priests were all descended from one or other of the two sons of Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar. David distributed the priestly offices between the families of Zadok, the representative of Eleazar, and Ahimelech, the representative of Ithamar 1 Chronicles 24:3. From the time of Solomon not only the high priesthood, but the priesthood itself, so far as concerned its service, that of offering upon the two altars, seems to have been confined to the descendants of Zadok (see 1 Chronicles 6:49-53). Perhaps the other offices, such as those mentioned in Ezekiel 40:45, were performed by the descendants of Abiathar and Ithamar. Compare 1 Samuel 2:36, and below, Ezekiel 43:19; Ezekiel 44:15; Ezekiel 48:11. The priests who had charge of the sacrifices were distinguished from the rest of the Levitical priests, "as they which come near to the Lord, and Ezekiel 42:13 the priests that approach unto the Lord."

Verse 47

The court - The inner court (B) where was the brass altar Ezekiel 43:13.

The new chapter would begin better at Ezekiel 40:48.

Verse 48-49

The Porch of the House. The front of the temple-porch (see G, Plan I) consisted of a central opening with two columns on either side. Two columns with the space between them were called "a post of the gate." "The breadth of the gate" on either side was a side opening, that is, the opening between two columns. The columns having bases of a cubit square, two columns and the "breadth of the gate," which we are told was three cubits, made up the "five cubits" on either side the central entrance, which, like the entrance into the temple itself, was ten cubits. Thus we have twenty cubits for the porch-front.

Ezekiel 40:49

The porch of Solomon's Temple was twenty cubits broad and ten deep 1 Kings 6:3. This corresponds nearly with the dimensions of Ezekiel's porch; the difference in the breadth may be explained by supposing a space of one cubit in front of the porch (as Ezekiel 40:11-12). The circumstance of this porch being approached by stairs of probably ten steps makes this more probable, a small space in front of the porch being naturally required.

Pillars by the posts - literally, to "the posts," meaning that upon the bases (posts) stood shafts (pillars). These shafts were probably in the form of palm-trees Ezekiel 40:16. The porch with its steps must have jutted into the inner court.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 41

Introduction

The temple Ezekiel 41:1-11. See Plan I.

Verse 1

The Temple - Properly the holy place (a), as distinguished from the porch (G) and the holy of holies (B) 1 Kings 6:17; 1 Kings 7:50.

The posts - The outer wall of the temple was six cubits thick Ezekiel 41:5. The eastern posts of this wall forming part of the front of the temple were ornamented with pillars, six cubits on each side.

He measured the breadth - This breadth was twenty cubits Ezekiel 41:2. Omit "which was." "tabernacle" is here the interior (the covered portion) of the temple.

Verse 2

The measurements are internal, the same as in the Temple of Solomon.

Verse 3

Went he inward - Toward the holy of holies. It is not said, "he brought me in," but "he went in," because the holy of holies was not to be entered even by a priest like Ezekiel, but only by the high priest once a year. So the "angel" enters and announces: the measurements.

The post of the door - On either side of the entrance was a pillar, the two together making up two cubits. The first measurement of the door was from "post to post," six cubits; and the second measurement, the "breadth of the door," was the breadth of the actual doors which shut off the holy of holies Ezekiel 41:23, and which may have been so, hung that each of the "posts" projected half a cubit beyond the hinge of the door (which opened inwards), so as to secure the complete closure of the holy of holies.

Verse 4

The Temple - here is the holy place as distinguished from the most holy, "the Oracle," which is "before" the holy place, inwards.

Verse 5

The wall of the house - This was the outer wall of the temple itself. Its thickness of six cubits corresponds with the colossal proportions of the architecture of the east.

Every side chamber - the side-chambers (D). These were a marked feature in Solomon's Temple, and were probably used as storehouses for the furniture and property of the temple. The arrangement of these side-

chambers differed in some respects from that of Solomon‘s Temple, the object of Ezekiel‘s vision being throughout to bring all things to a more exact proportion.

Verse 6

Three, one over another, and thirty in order - i. e., there were three stories, and each story was divided into thirty chambers.

The wall which was of the house for the side chambers - Not the wall of the temple but another wall Ezekiel 41:9 parallel to it, which might be said to be “of the house,” i. e., belonging to it. The side-chambers of Solomon‘s Temple were built against the temple-wall, but in Ezekiel‘s vision the desire to keep the temple still more separate and holy led to a fresh arrangement, namely, that another wall should be built at such a distance from the temple-wall as to allow of chambers being built against it, facing the temple-wall, and opening into a passage or corridor (F), separating them from the temple itself.

That they might have hold, but they had not hold in the wall of the house - that they might have hold but not have hold on the wall of the house, i. e., entirely separating the chambers from the temple-wall proper.

Verse 7

An enlarging - The “wall for the side-chambers” had for the ground story its full thickness of five cubits Ezekiel 41:9 - then it was diminished one cubit, so as to form a ledge whereon to rest the beams of the floor of the second story, and again was further diminished one cubit for the floor of the third story. Thus there was an “enlarging” of the second story of the chambers by one cubit, and of the third story by two cubits beyond the breadth of the chambers on the ground-floor.

A winding about still upward - Winding stairs led “upward” from one story to another.

The winding about of the house - A collective expression for the various winding staircases to the side-chambers which extended on the north, west, and south sides.

And so increased … - Rather, “and the lowest story was such that one went by the middle story up to the highest.” The winding stairs were not visible outside, so that one could not go to the upper story without passing through the middle story.

Verse 8

The foundations of the side chambers - Therefore the height of the side-chambers from the floor was six cubits there being three stories, which corresponds sufficiently with the twenty cubits which was the height of the temple. "A great cubit" is probably an architectural term to denote the line of junction between two stories, which would be that of the ceiling of the lower and the floor of the upper story.

Verse 9

And that which was left - i. e., the passage (F) between the side-chambers and the temple-wall, was five cubits Ezekiel 41:11.

The place of the side chambers that were within - Within the side-chambers which belong to the house. The seer is giving first the height of the side-chambers Ezekiel 41:8, and then the breadth, from the outside of the wall of these chambers to the temple-wall.

Verse 10

See H, Plan I.

Verse 11

The doors of the side-chambers opened on to the passage or corridor, between the chambers and the temple-wall.

Verse 12

The separate place - See F, Plan II. The word occurs only in this chapter. The name, which seems one of discredit, has led to the conjecture that the purpose of this place and its building was to receive the offal of the sacrifices and sweepings of the courts, to be carried thence by a postern gate (compare Ezekiel 43:21). The building itself was, we are told, seventy cubits wide, with walls five cubits thick (eighty cubits in all), leaving ten cubits on each side to make up the 100 cubits from north to south. The length was ninety cubits, which, adding as before the thickness of the walls, gives 100 cubits in length. The whole temple-building was 500 cubits from west to east, and from north to south, 500 cubits.

Verse 14

Toward the east - The separate place was measured on its eastern side, for the western was not approachable for the purpose of measurement.

Verse 15

The description of certain details is introduced by a summary statement of what had been already done.

Galleries - On either side of the eastern front of the building on the separate place was a gallery of ten feet, under which was an approach to the

building, by which the refuse was to be carried in by openings in the north and south, and then carried out by a western postern.

Verse 16

Galleries - The upper story of the side-chambers was probably built in the form of an open gallery.

Over against the door - The rows of the side-chambers extended to the front of the temple, so that they were "over against" the opening, but did not extend so far as the porch.

Cieled - Overlaid. Pillars, galleries, narrow windows were overlaid with wood 1 Kings 6:15-16.

Were covered - With wood.

Verse 17

To that … - Over above the door … "within and without" was "by measure." This verse asserts that all the overlaying was done by careful measurement.

Verse 18

On the symbolism of the "cherubim" see Ezekiel 1:1 note …

Every cherub had two faces - Not as in Exodus 26:1; Exodus 36:8 were no doubt like the cherubim over the ark, of which we have no reason to suppose that each had "two faces." The symbolic character here admitted of the deviation.

Verse 21

The posts - Not the word used before (see Ezekiel 40:9 note). These "posts" are rather pilasters forming part of the inner walls.

The appearance … other - i. e., the appearance in this vision was the same as in the actual temple (compare Ezekiel 43:3); (or, according to others, the front of the sanctuary resembled, the front of the holy place).

Verse 22

The altar of wood - The altar for incense (marginal reference); "altar of gold" (see 1 Kings 7:48).

Walls - The corner pieces of the altar, rising into projections called in Exodus horns, here corners.

Table - "table and altar" were convertible terms Malachi 1:7.

Verses 23-25

See the marginal reference.

Ezekiel 41:25

Thick planks - Others render it: leaves in wood (and in Ezekiel 41:26).

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 42

Verse 1

Utter court - Outward court, so Ezekiel 42:3.

Into the chamber … before the building - to the chambers (See L, Plan II) … over against etc. "The building" is the temple-building, for this row of chambers was built against eighty cubits of the wall bounding "the separate place" and twenty cubits of the wall of the temple-court.

Verse 2

He brought me "before" a row of chambers 100 cubits long, east and west. "The door" of which lay on the north side of the chambers. The priests entered from the outer court (O); the breadth of this block of chambers was fifty cubits, north and south Ezekiel 42:8.

Verse 3

These "chambers" (compare Ezekiel 46:19) did not reach to the western wall; between it and them lay a court for cooking (M), probably forty cubits by thirty; such court with its approaches filled up the corner of fifty cubits square, as in the case of the kitchen-courts for the people. In these chambers were dining-rooms for the priests (see Ezekiel 42:13), and baths, for no priest could enter upon his daily ministry without having first bathed. "The chambers" extended beyond "the separate place" to the wall of the temple-court, on the other side of which wall was the twenty cubits space. The "pavement" (H) was no doubt continued along the temple-wall, so that these priests' chambers, like the thirty chambers, stood upon "a pavement," and were, on the east side, "over against this pavement."

Translate Ezekiel 42:1-3, "Then he brought me forth into the outward court, the way toward the north, and he brought me to the chambers which were over against the separate place, and which were over against the building, toward the north along the front of the length of an hundred cubits, with the door by the north, and the breadth fifty cubits over against the twenty cubits which were in the inner court, and over against the pavement which was in the outward court, gallery upon gallery in three stories."

Verse 4

Or, In the front "of the chambers" was a gangway "of ten cubits" breadth (leading) "inward," a path "of one cubit, and their doors toward the

north." The "gangway" had stairs to the upper stories, while along the north front of the building there was a kerb of one cubit, as before the guard-chambers Ezekiel 40:12, on which kerb the north doors (leading to the basement) opened. Others follow the Septuagint "And opposite the chambers a walk 10 cubits in width to 100 cubits in length."

Verse 5

Render: "And the upper chambers were" shortened, for galleries took off from them, from "the lower" and from "the middle-most, chambers, of the building." The building rose in terraces, as was usual in Babylonian architecture, and so each of the two upper stories receded from the one below it.

Verse 6

The front of the higher stories was not supported on pillars, but there was a narrowing from "the lowest" (chambers) "and" from "the middlemost" (chambers) "from the ground."

Verse 7

The "wall" here must be one from north to south, fencing off from the outer court the passage along the east side of the chambers, and therefore fifty cubits long.

Verse 8

The length - From north to south.

Before the temple - This describes their position in a general way; more precisely they lay over against partly the "separate place" and partly the "temple-court" Ezekiel 42:1.

Verse 9

The entry from these chambers to the temple-court was by a passage lying to the east fenced off by the "wall" Ezekiel 42:7. This passage is described as lying under the chambers, being on the basement, and also having access by steps to the temple-court, which was raised many steps above the outer court.

Verse 10

Render it: Breadth-wise (was) the wall Ezekiel 42:7 toward the east; in front of the separate place and of the building (were) the chambers: i. e., on the east was "the wall" ("geder"); along the boundary wall of "the separate place" and of the "building" (the temple) lay the "chambers."

Verse 11-12

Translate: And along the front of them - like (literally as the appearance of) the chambers which were toward the north, as long as they and as broad as they, and (like) all their goings out, and like their fashions, and like their doors, even so were the doors of the chambers which were toward the south; (with) a door at the head of the way, the way of the wall adjoined eastward as one entereth into them (the chambers).

Verse 13

In Leviticus 10:13 it was prescribed that the priests should eat of the sacrifices in the "holy place." This was originally before the altar in the inner court - now separate chambers are assigned, and these become "the holy place" for this purpose. Of the "trespass-offering" and "meat-offering" what was not consumed was eaten Leviticus 7:6, but the "sin-offering" was burned without the camp Ezekiel 43:21. Probably the carcass was brought from the altar to the chamber before being carried out.

Verse 14

Compare Leviticus 16:23.

Those things which are for the people - namely, the outer court.

Verses 15-19

The Precincts. The temple and its courts were surrounded by an area of exact dimensions 3,000 cubits (1,500 yards) square. See Plan IV.

Ezekiel 42:15

The inner house - The temple and its courts, all that lay within the "wall on the outside of the house Ezekiel 40:5; the gate" is the eastern gate of the outer court.

Measured it round about - The precincts, into which he had brought the seer through the eastern gate of the outer court.

Verse 20

The "sanctuary" proper is probably here the most holy place as distinguished from the rest of the temple Ezekiel 41:23; Ezekiel 45:3; but the term was capable of extension first to the whole temple, then to all the ground that was separated to "holy" as distinguished from "profane," i. e., common uses.

In the vision the courts rose on successive platforms, the outer court being raised seven steps above the precincts, the inner court eight steps above the outer, and the temple itself ten steps above the court of sacrifice.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 43

Introduction

The consecration of the new temple Ezekiel 43:1-11. The glory of the God of Israel must take possession of the new sanctuary, as, in time past, of the tabernacle and of Solomon‘s Temple. But it is in a different form. The glory was of old veiled in a cloud resting on the mercy-Seat of the ark between cherubim of carved wood. Now the glory appears in the form with which Ezekiel is familiar, in all its symbolic significance (see Ezekiel 1:1 note). A personal and living God enters the sanctuary Ezekiel 43:2, condescending to occupy it, not merely as a fixed dwelling-place, but as a center from where His Power and mercy radiate freely to the utmost ends of the earth. Hence, amidst the detailed preparations of the house no mention is made of the ark or mercy-Seat, so important a part in the former sanctuary. The living cherubim, the firmament and the rainbow of mercy, replace the cherubic figures and the golden chest.

The ark, having been in some way destroyed in Nebuchadnezzars siege, was never replaced. In its stead there was within the veil a flat stone on which the high priest poured the blood on the Day of Atonement.

Verse 1

The gate - This was the eastern gate from the precincts to the outer court.

Verse 4

By this gate the glory of the Lord had departed. See the marginal reference.

Verse 5

The glory of the Lord filled the house - Compare the marginal reference; Exodus 40:34-35.

Verse 6

The man - A “man.” Probably an angel different from “the man” who had hitherto accompanied the seer. That angel guided, measured, and explained; this is present only to guide.

Verse 7-8

He said - i. e., God “said.” Both the Septuagint and the Vulgate break this verse into two, so as to make the first half the solemn words of

dedication. place a full stop after "forever;" the words mark the distinction between the new and the former sanctuary.

The palace of Solomon abutted upon the southern side of the embankment of the temple-platform; there was but "a wall between Yahweh and them." When the kings gave themselves up to idolatry, this vicinity was to the temple a pollution and defilement. Thus it has been conjectured that "the garden of Uzza" in which Manasseh and Amon were buried 2 Kings 21:18, 2 Kings 21:26, and on which now stands the mosque of Omar, was on the temple area itself; if so, this would explain the mention of "high places" in connection with the defilement by the "carcases of kings," since the platform of the mosque of Omar at the time of Ezekiel rose to a considerable height above the temple.

Besides this, idolatrous kings of Judah did actually introduce their idolatries into the temple courts themselves (compare 2 Kings 16:11; 2 Kings 21:4).

Verse 10

Deviation from the exact rules of the Mosaic ordinances was connected with the transgression of the people. So the restoration, according to the pattern of the Law, was symbolic of their return to obedience.

Verse 12

See also Ezekiel 47:12. This is the law of the ordinance of the new sanctuary. After the consecration, God pronounces the "law" which is to govern the ordinances of the sanctuary (compare Revelation 21:27), and then proceeding to specific ordinances commencing with the altar.

Verse 13

The altar of sacrifice which stood in the inner court, not the altar of incense described Ezekiel 41:22. In the temple of the vision the dimensions differ from those of the tabernacle Exodus 27:1, and of Solomon's Temple 2 Chronicles 4:1, with a view to introduce definite propositions and symbolic numbers. See Plan L.

The bottom - The base (I) of the altar so called, because it forms with its "border" (K) a kind of socket to receive the "lower settle" (L). It was to be "a cubit" in depth.

The "breadth" is the breadth of that portion of the base which was not covered by the "lower settle."

The higher place - the base, literally back; the base is called the back because the altar rested upon it.

Verse 14

The bottom - The basement just described is now called "the bottom upon the ground." The altar (independently of the bottom) was composed of two stages called "settles," the base of the "upper settle" (M) being less than that of the "lower" (L).

To the lower settle - That is, to the top of "the lower settle," which was to be "two cubits high."

From the lesser settle … to the greater settle - i. e., from the top of the "lower settle" to the top of the "upper settle," called "lesser" and "greater," because the height of the lower is less than that of the "upper; The breadth" here is the part of the lower settle not covered by the upper settle, projecting one cubit on every side.

Verse 15

The altar … the altar - See the margin. The two words may denote, the first a square block (N) placed upon the upper settle, the second a slab (O), the thickness of which is not given, from which rose four horns Exodus 27:2; and to which it seems probable that the victims of sacrifice were at times bound. Psalm 118:27. Why the names Harel and Ariel were used must be conjectural. Mount of God may have been a title naturally given to the place of sacrifice as elsewhere to the place of worship Ezekiel 40:2; Lion of God was a term used for the Holy City itself Isaiah 29:1.

Verse 16

altar - Ariel was to be an exact square on all sides. Compare Exodus 27:1; Revelation 21:16.

Verse 17

The settle - The "lower settle" (L), projecting beyond the "upper settle" (M) one cubit on every side.

His stairs - Jewish tradition says that the approach to the altar was by an inclined plane, because to go up "by steps" was forbidden Exodus 20:26.

The number "twelve" was symbolic of the twelve tribes, "four," of the earth; "sixteen" is the square of "four," and "fourteen" the double of "seven," the number of the covenant, as being composed of "three," the number of God, and of "four," the number of the world. Thus we have in the altar a special instance of Hebrew symbolism.

Verse 18

The rites here described are not those of the regular service, but those to be observed on the day of dedication. (Compare Leviticus 8:10 ff; 1 Kings 8:63 ff; 2 Chronicles 7:4 ff, In the tabernacle the priest killed the victims, but Moses sprinkled the blood. In the vision the seer is addressed as though he were to perform the part of Moses.

Verse 19

The seed of Zadok - See Ezekiel 40:46 note.

Verse 21

In the appointed place of the house - A place within the temple-court, but "without the sanctuary" properly so called, that is to say, without the temple and inner court. This was probably the "separate place" (see Ezekiel 41:12).

Verse 22

They shall cleanse - By sprinkling the blood Ezekiel 43:18. Here "they" marks the act as that of the priests. Moses did his part before the priests were consecrated, and the seer could act through them.

Verses 23-26

There was, on each of the seven days, a burnt-offering of a bullock and a ram, preceded by a "sin-offereng of a bullock" on the first day, and of a "kid of the goats" on the other days.

Ezekiel 43:24

Salt is here added to the "burnt-offering" to express still more the idea of purification. In the second temple no sacrifice was complete without the use of salt, and the rabbis assert that there was a great heap of salt close to the altar, always ready for use, and that the inclined plane to the altar was kept covered with salt. Compare Mark 9:49.

Ezekiel 43:26

Consecrate themselves - literally, as in the margin. Leviticus 8:27. The priests are already consecrated, but the memory of their consecration was thus kept up at the dedication of the altar.

Verse 27

After this inauguration the regular service shall be resumed, and be acceptable unto God (compare Malachi 1:11).

The Epistle to the Hebrews Hebrews 810 helps us to recognize in this vision the symbol of the purification of the Church of God by the cleansing blood of Christ, Victim and priest.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 44

Introduction

The relation of the different classes of people to the temple and its courts.

Ezekiel 44:1-3. The position of the Prince.

Verse 1

Outward sanctuary - The court of the priests, as distinguished from the temple itself. This gate was reserved for the prince, to whom it was opened on certain days. Only a prince of the house of David might sit down in the priests‘ court (compare Ezekiel 46:1-2).

Verse 2

The Lord hath entered in - See Ezekiel 43:2.

Verse 3

The prince - Foretold under the name of David Ezekiel 34:24. The rabbis understood this to be the Messiah.

To eat bread - See Leviticus 2:3; Leviticus 24:9; according to the old Law these feasts belonged only to the priests; none of the rest of the congregation, not even the king, might partake of them. The new system gives to the “prince” a privilege which he did not before possess; the prince, as the representative of the Messiah, standing in a higher position than the kings of old. “To eat bread” may also include participation in the animals sacrificed, portions of which were reserved for those of the people who offered them.

Verses 4-16

Admonition to the ministering priests, grounded upon former neglect.

Ezekiel 44:4

The north gate before the house - The north gate of the inner court. God expostulates with His people in the seat of their former idolatries Ezekiel 8:3.

Ezekiel 44:5

Mark well - The careful arrangements made had all been intended to keep the temple and its surroundings from profanation. Hence, attention to these particulars is enjoined.

Ezekiel 44:7

Strangers - This refers especially to the sin of unauthorized and unfaithful priests ministering in the services of the temple. Compare marginal references.

Ezekiel 44:8

Mine holy things - The altar, its sacrifices, the sacred utensils, and the like.

For yourselves - According to your own pleasure, not My ordinances Numbers 16:40.

Ezekiel 44:10

The Levites as a body had remained true to the temple-service at Jerusalem 2 Chronicles 11:13; but individuals among them deserted to Israel probably from the first (see the marginal references), as in later years some went over to the worship of the Samaritans on Mount Gerizim. These apostate Levites "shall bear their iniquities," they shall not be restored to their former rank and privileges.

Ezekiel 44:11

Ministers - As, according to the new system, the Levites, as a body, were to receive their portion in the "oblation" Ezekiel 45:5; the only manner in which the Levites of Ezekiel 44:10 could live at all, was as part of the whole body, to which they were therefore reunited, but in the lowest grade. It is remarkable that the number of Levites who returned after the captivity was very small, not exceeding 400, of whom only 74 were priests' assistants (Ezra 2:40-42; compare Ezra 8:15-19). The gap in their number was filled up by 220 Nethinim ("given" ones), probably originally strangers and captives, who, although employed in the temple services, were held by the Jews in the lowest repute.

Ezekiel 44:12

Lifted up mine hand - i. e., "The Lord sware" Ezekiel 20:5, that they should bear their iniquities.

Verses 17-31

Regulations as to the priests' services. The garments of the priests are defined and various rules prescribed in the Law are repeated with some additions in order to denote additional care to avoid uncleanness.

Ezekiel 44:18

The material of which the four vestments of the ordinary priest were made was "linen," or, more accurately, "byssus," the cotton stuff of Egypt. The two special qualities of the byssus - white and shining - are

characteristic, and on them part of the symbolic meaning depended. Compare Revelation 19:8.

Ezekiel 44:19

They shall not sanctify the people - They shall not touch the people with their holy garments. The word "sanctify" is used because the effect of touching was to separate as holy the persons or things so touched (Exodus 29:37; Exodus 30:29; compare Leviticus 6:18). The priests wore the distinctive dress, only while performing in the temple strictly sacrificial services.

The holy chambers; see Ezekiel 42:1 ff.

Ezekiel 44:22

Restrictions and exceptions intended to mark the holiness of the office of a priest, imposing on him additional (compare the marginal reference) obligations to purity, and communicating it in some degree to his wife. In the Christian Church all the members are "priests" 1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 1:6; Revelation 20:6. Hence, the directions for maintaining the holiness of the "priesthood" in the new order, represent the necessity for holiness in all Christians, and the exclusion of the "uncircumcised in heart and in flesh" is equivalent to the exclusion of "all that defileth" from the New Jerusalem Revelation 21:27.

Ezekiel 44:24

There was in Herod's Temple a council of priests, whose special duty it was to regulate every thing connected with the sanctuary. They did not ordinarily busy themselves with criminal questions, although they took a leading part in the condemnation of Jesus Mark 15:1.

Ezekiel 44:28

It shall be unto them - The remains of the sacrifices were a chief source of the priests' support. The burnt-offerings being entirely consumed, the priests had the skins, which yielded a considerable revenue; meat-offerings and drink-offerings belonged entirely to them. sin-offerings and trepass-offerings, except in particular cases, also belonged to the priests and were partaken of in the temple. Of the peace-offerings a portion dedicated to the Lord by waving was left for the priests, and the rest eaten by the officers and their friends, either in the courts of the temple, or at least within Jerusalem. The kitchen-courts (K, Plan II Ezek. Ezekiel 46:21-24), were provided in order to prepare these public meals.

Ezekiel 44:30

Oblation - Offering, margin “heave-offering” (see Ezekiel 45:1; Exodus 25:2; Exodus 29:27; Notes and Pref. to Leviticus).

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 45

Introduction

This chapter describes the portion of territory reserved for the priests, in the middle of which is to be the temple with its courts and precincts, for the Levites, for the city, and for the prince.

Verse 1

By lot - Not by casting lots, but by "allotment," the several portions being assigned by rule Joshua 13:6.

Oblation - The oblation (properly "heaveoffering") was regarded as the Lord's portion Leviticus 27:30. This "oblation" is given here as part of the provision made for the priests, and was probably in lieu of tithes Leviticus 27:30; Numbers 18:21, just as the prince had his definite portion of land instead of being supported by the contributions of the people. The priests and Levites had, in addition, the sacrifices (Ezekiel 44:28, note). This provision for them, out of proportion in any actual arrangement, is no doubt intended to symbolize the reverence and honor due to God, and expressed by liberality to His services and His ministers. The Septuagint read "the breadth twenty thousand;" and those who adopt this, read Ezekiel 45:3 "and from this" whole measure is to be deducted the priests' special portion 25,000 from east to west, and 10,000 from north to south. Others, retaining the reading of the text, suppose the term oblation here to denote the portion assigned to the priests alone (as in Ezekiel 48:9), and "of this measure" Ezekiel 45:3 to mean not "deducted from this measure," but "computed by this measure." The King James Version rightly supplies "reeds," since the precincts Ezekiel 42:20 were 500 "reeds" square. 25,000 reeds =about 42 12 statute miles, 36 12 geographic miles.

Verse 2

The "sanctuary" here probably means the whole temple precincts.

Suburbs - literally, as margin. To mark out more distinctly the sacred precincts, a vacant space of fifty cubits was left on all sides.

Verse 5

For a possession for twenty chambers - literally, "For a possession twenty chambers," possibly twenty out of the thirty chambers in the outer court Ezekiel 40:17, and assigned for their use during residence in the sanctuary. The Septuagint reads "for cities to dwell in" (compare Numbers 35:2) which some adopt here.

Verse 6

This portion is to belong to the whole people, not to be subject to the encroachments made by the later kings of Judah Jeremiah 22:13. The Levites‘ portion 10,000 reeds, the priests‘ portion 10,000 reeds, and the city portion 5,000 reeds. make in all 25,000 reeds from north to south. The measure of each of these portions from east to west has been defined to be 25,000 reeds (Ezekiel 45:1 note), and thus we have a square of 25,000 in all.

Verse 7-8

On either side of the 25,000 reeds a strip of land, running westward to the sea, eastward to the Jordan, formed the possession of the prince (see Ezekiel 46:18 note). For the other tribes the limits from west to east are the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan Ezekiel 48:8.

Ezekiel 45:7

And the length shall be over against - Or, “and” in length “over against.”

The definition of the prince‘s territory was to prevent the oppressions foretold (1 Samuel 8:14 ff), described 2 Kings 23:35, and reproved Jeremiah 22.

Verse 9

The princes are exhorted to execute judgment, and abstain from “exaction” (literally “ejection”) such as that of Naboth by Ahab 1 Kings 21:19.

Verse 10

A general exhortation to honesty, expressed by true weights and measures (marginal references). This fitly introduces the strict regulation of quantities in the prescribed offerings.

Verse 11

The ephah was in use for dry measure, the bath for liquid. The homer seems to have contained about 75 gallons (see Exodus 29:40, note; Leviticus 19:36, note).

After the homer - i. e., according to the standard of the homer.

Verse 12

The shekel - See the marginal reference.

The “maneh” shall be of true weight, but it would seem that in Ezekiel‘s time there were “manehs” of different value.

Verses 13-17

The offerings. to be made by the people through the prince for the service of the sanctuary. In the Mosaic Law the offerings for the sacrifices of the ordinary festivals were left to the free will of the people. Here they are reduced to regular order and the amounts ordained. In later days there were often shortcomings in these respects Malachi 3:8. This is obviated, and regularity ensured in the new order of things. No mention is made of wine for the drink-offering, or of bullocks for the burnt-offering, so that the enumeration is not complete.

Ezekiel 45:14

Cor - Translated "measure" in 1 Kings 5:11, … Here it is a synonym of "homer."

Ezekiel 45:17

The people's gifts were to be placed in the hands of the prince, so as to form a common stock, out of which the prince was to provide what was necessary for each sacrifice. Compare 1 Kings 8:62; Ezra 7:17. The prince handed the gifts to the priests, whose part it was to sacrifice and offer. But the prominent part assigned to the prince in "making reconciliation for the sins of the people" seems to typify the union of the kingly and priestly offices in the person of the Mediator of the New covenant.

Verses 18-25

This order of certain solemn services does not follow exactly the order of Moses, of Solomon, or of Ezra. The deviation can scarcely have been accidental, and furnishes a fresh indication that the whole vision is symbolic, representative of the times when, after the oblation of the one Sacrifice, reconciliation and sanctification were effected for man through the presence of God dwelling in the midst of the people.

Ezekiel 45:18

In the first day - If this is only a special Passover for the dedication, the prolongation of the festival may be compared with that under Solomon 2 Chronicles 7:8. But it is more probably a general ordinance, and, in this case, we have an addition to the Mosaic ritual (compare Leviticus 23:5). Here the "first day" is marked by the rites of expiation, which are repeated on the seventh day Ezekiel 45:20, for the purpose of including those who transgressed from ignorance rather than willfulness.

Ezekiel 45:23

Comparing this with the daily sacrifices of the Paschal week Numbers 28:19-24, and those of the daily sacrifices of the week of the Feast of tabernacles (see Numbers 29:12 …), it will be seen that here the covenant number seven is preserved throughout to indicate a perfect, in lieu of an imperfect, covenant with God.

Ezekiel 45:25

The Feast of tabernacles (compare the marginal references). Some think that the other great festival, the Feast of Weeks, is intended.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 46

Verse 1

The prophet beholds in vision people, priest, and prince uniting in most solemn worship before the throne of God. The character of the rites here described is symbolic.

Verse 2

In the time of Solomon, priest, king, and people each took his due part in the temple-service. Of the later kings some forsook Yahweh for false gods, some encroached upon the prerogative of the priest. Now all should be set right. The prince occupies a position analogous to that of Solomon 2 Chronicles 6:12-13, standing in front of the porch of the eastern gate of the inner court, and at the head of his people to lead their worship, while the priests are sacrificing before him.

Verse 3

At the door of this gate - In Herod‘s Temple the place for worshipping “before the Lord” was the court of Israel, west of the court of Women, separated from the inner court by a low parapet. In Ezekiel‘s the worshippers were admitted into the inner court itself. The upper pavement (E. Plan II) on either side of the eastern gate provided room for such worshippers.

Verse 4

The offerings prescribed here Ezekiel 46:4-15 are generally in excess of those enjoined by the Law, to note not only the greater devotion and magnificence under the new state of things, but also the willingness (compare Deuteronomy 16:17) of king and people ready to give of their substance to the utmost of their means.

Verse 5

As he shall be able to give - Rather, “as he shall be willing to give.” So also in Ezekiel 46:7.

Verse 6

Compare with Numbers 10:10).

Verse 8

That gate - The eastern gate of the inner court. See Ezekiel 46:2.

Verse 9

The whole body of the people gathered together in the outer court, and from thence bodies went in turn into the inner court to worship, and then

again out into the outer court.

Verse 13

Compare with marginal references. The evening sacrifice is here omitted, because the seer is selecting a few only of the sacrifices of the Law, with a particular object in view.

Verses 16-18

The prince was robe provided with possessions of his own, in order to prevent exactions from his subjects; further enactments are added to prevent the alienation of the prince‘s land. Any gifts made to his servants must revert to the prince in the “year of liberty,” or jubilee (see the marginal reference note).

Verses 19-24

The careful provision here made to keep separate the offerings of priests and people was to prevent collision, just as the enactments Ezekiel 46:16-18 were intended to secure their respective rights to prince and people.

Ezekiel 46:19

At the side of the gate - The entrance to the inner court at the same side as the northern gate Ezekiel 42:9.

Ezekiel 46:20

See M Plan II.

Boil - It was unique to the Paschal lamb, that it was to be eaten roasted. The flesh of the other sacrifices was to be “sodden” or boiled (see Leviticus 6:28; 1 Samuel 2:13; 2 Chronicles 24:14 margin). The “meat-offering” (flour and honey) was baked Leviticus 2:4.

Ezekiel 46:21

See K. Plan II.

Ezekiel 46:22

courts joined - enclosed courts, and entered by doors in the walls, which shut them out from the great court. The marginal rendering, “made with chimnies,” is based upon another interpretation of the word.

These four corners - Or, “these four corner-courts were of one measure.”

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 47

Verse 1

The vision of the waters; or, the blessings which flow from this source to animate and refresh all the inhabitants of the earth. Compare Isaiah 44:8 … ; Joel 3:18. Ezekiel‘s description is adopted and modifled by Zechariah and in Rev. (compare the marginal references) Hebrew tradition speaks of a spring of water, named Etham, said to be identical with the well-waters of Nephtoah Joshua 18:15, on the west of the temple, whose waters were conducted by pipes into the temple-courts for the uses needed in the ministration of the priests. The waters of Shiloah Psalm 46:4; Isaiah 8:6 flowed from the rocks beneath the temple-hill. It is quite in the manner of Ezekiel‘s vision to start from an existing feature and thence proceed to an ideal picture from where to draw a spiritual lesson. The deepening of the waters in their course shows the continual deepening of spiritual life and multiplication of spiritual blessings in the growth of the kingdom of God. So long as the stream is confined to the temple-courts, it is merely a small rill, for the most part unseen, but when it issues from the courts it begins at once to deepen and to widen. So on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the company of believers, little then but presently to develop into the infant Church in Jerusalem.

Verse 2

Out of the way of the gate northward - Rather, by the way of the northward gate.

Verse 3

The ancles - This may coincide with the step gained in the baptism of Cornelius Acts 11:19, had carried believers into various countries, and so paved the way for the foundation of Gentile Churches.

Verse 4

The knees - The mission of Paul and Barnabas Acts 13:1-4 is another marked epoch in the Church‘s history; and the time of Paul‘s martyrdom denotes an increase in the Gentile Church, which corresponds with the waters reaching the loins.

Verse 5

The rivers in Palestine were for the most part mere watercourses, dry in summer, in winter carrying the water along the wadys to the sea. The river of the vision is to have a continuous flow.

Waters to swim in - When under Constantine the Roman empire had become Christian, the Church may be contemplated as the full river, to flow on through time until the final completion of Isaiah's prophecy Isaiah 11:9.

Verse 7

Trees naturally flourish where there is abundance of water Psalm 1:3.

Verse 8

"The sea" is a term commonly applied to the Dead Sea. Compare Deuteronomy 3:17, "the sea of the plain (Arabah), even the salt sea." The more literal rendering of the verse in this sense would be, "and go into the sea; into the sea go the waters that issue forth, and the waters shall be healed."

Healed - Every living thing (of which there were none before) shall abound in the "healed" waters. The absence of living creatures in the Dead Sea has been remarked by ancient and modern writers. So the water which Jesus should give should bring life to the dead in trespasses and sins. Compare John 4:14; Revelation 22:2-3.

Verse 9

The rivers - literally, as in the margin. Perhaps with reference to the circumstance that this "brook or river" is to come into the Dead Sea through the same plain as the Jordan. The one river (Jordan) always flowed, but now, when another river comes in, and "two rivers" flow into the sea, the waters shall be healed.

Verse 10

"En-gedi" (see 1 Samuel 23:29) was about the middle of the western shore of the Dead Sea.

En-eglaim does not occur elsewhere. Its form indicates that it was one of the double cities of Moab (see Ezekiel 25:9 note). It has been identified with "Ain-el-Feshkah" to the north on the western bank of the Dead Sea. On this supposition, "from En-eglaim to En-gedi" would be the line of coast from the most northern fountain to the principal fountain southward.

Verse 11

The exception, which reserves for sterility places to which the living water does not reach, probably indicates that the life and health are solely due to the stream which proceeds from beneath the throne of God. Compare Isaiah 57:20-21.

Verse 13

The ideal reallotment of the land to the twelve tribes of Israel is found in Ezekiel 47:1348:14.

The special mention of Joseph‘s portions was in order to express that the twelve portions were to be exclusive of Levi‘s land, which was to be provided out of the “oblation.”

Verse 14

As well as - Or, as. Ezekiel is speaking of “tribes,” not “individuals.” Each tribe is to have an equal “breadth” of land assigned to it.

Verse 15

The borders of the land follow closely Amos 6:2, at the foot of Mount Hermon, on the Orontes. was the ancient capital of the Hittites. Its Scripture history may be traced in Genesis 10:18; 2 Samuel 8:9; 2 Kings 18:34. It was never included in the possessions of Israel. The border ran considerably south of the town at the “entrance of Hamath,” the northern opening of Coele-Syria.

Verse 16

“Berothah,” probably the same as “Berothai” (marginal reference), lay between Hamath and Damascus, as did “Sibraim.”

“Hazar-hatticon” is probably, as in the margin, “the middle Hazar,” to distinguish it from Hazar-enan Ezekiel 47:17.

Verse 17

And the north … - Or, “and on the north, the border on the north shall be” etc.

Verse 18

The eastern boundary is to commence by separating off the territory of Damascus and Hauran, and then to follow the line of the Jordan to the Dead Sea. Further, the land occupied by the trans-Jordanic tribes was also to be separated off from the land of Israel. The trans-Jordanic tribes in fact occupied their ground (in Joshua‘s allotment) by sufferance. This did not belong to Canaan proper, the land of promise. Hence, the tribes, formerly on the east of the Jordan, have here allotments in Canaan, though “the oblation” Ezekiel 45:1 extends to a considerable distance beyond the Jordan (see Plan, Ezekiel 47:1 note), departs from the physical features of the land for the purpose of maintaining symbolic numbers.

Verse 19

The south border (compare Numbers 34:4) commences with "Tamar," probably a village near the southern end of the Dead Sea. The word means "palm-tree;" and is given to more than one city in the holy land.

The river to the great sea - literally, "riverward to the great sea." By the "river" is meant the torrent-stream entering the Mediterranean near "Rhinocolura" (El Arish).

Verse 22

And to the strangers - Here is quite a new feature in the distribution of the land. Not only the Israelites by descent, but those who join themselves to Israel by allegiance to the true God, shall have a right of inheritance. Here are opened out the blessings which were to accrue to the Gentiles through the seed of Abraham. Compare Romans 9:24, following. The difference which existed under the old covenant between Jew and Gentile is now at last done away. But while pagandom thus unites itself with God's people, Israel is still as ever the chosen people, the center of this union. No new Church is founded side by side with the old. Pagandom is absorbed in Israel - the standard which God has set up for the nations - i. e., in the One True Church, which has subsisted from the beginning, and will subsist in eternity.

EZEKIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 48

Verse 1

The distribution of the holy land is seen in detail throughout Ezekiel 45:1 note), and seven tribes were between the entrance of Hamath and the oblation, the "breadth of one portion" was about 17 geog. miles. The breadth of the Levites' portion and of the priests' portion was in each case about 15 geog. miles. Ain-el-Weibeh, if Kadesh, ((?),see Numbers 13:26) would be very nearly the southern border.

The general lines of existing features are followed with considerable fidelity, but accommodation is made to give the required symbolic expression. "Dan" had originally an allotment west of Benjamin, but having colonized and given its name to Laish in the north, was regarded as the most northern occupant of Canaan Judges 18:29. "Zebulun and Issachar" are removed to the south to make room for the second half of "Manasseh" brought over from the east of Jordan. "Reuben," brought over from the east, is placed between "Ephraim and Judah." "Benjamin" comes immediately south of the city, and "Gad" is brought over from the east to the extreme south.

See map, The Land of Israel

Verse 8

"Length" is throughout measured from west to east, as breadth is from north to south.

The offering Ezekiel 48:9-22, or, "oblation," here includes all the land given to priests, Levites, city, and prince; the different parts being distinguished. All these together are to extend from west to east in the same way as the portions of the other tribes, the imaginary Jordan being the eastern boundary of all.

Verse 10

Toward the north … toward the east … - i. e., the measurements are "along the north and east sides," etc.

Verse 15

The five thousand … - The remainder of the square of 25,000 reeds from north to south.

Profane - For common use, as distinguished from that which is holy unto the Lord.

Verse 17

The city being 4500 reeds square, 250 reeds are marked off north, south, east, west from the city land.

Verse 18-19

Ezekiel 48:18

Then, that serve - i. e., the cultivators or farmers.

Ezekiel 48:19

Of old the city belonged to Benjamin and Judah, and its inhabitants were mainly from these tribes. Now all the tribes are to have equal part in it, and avoid jealousies (compare 2 Samuel 19:43).

Verse 20

The holy … with … - Or, "a fourth part as the holy oblation, for" etc.

Verse 21

Or, "And the residue shall be for the prince - on the one side and on the other side of the holy oblation and of the possession of the city over against the 25,000 of the oblation toward the east border, and westward over against the 25,000 toward the west border, over against the portions (of Judah and Benjamin, between which the oblation was included), shall be "for the prince; and it shall be that the holy oblation and the sanctuary of the house shall be in the midst thereof." This exactly describes the position of the prince's allotments on the borders of the "oblations."

Verse 30

The goings out of the city - The gates described in Ezekiel 48:31. "Measures" (reeds) concern the sides. Divide the verses thus: Ezekiel 48:30. "And these are the goings out of the city. Ezekiel 48:31. On the north side 4500 measures: and the gates of the city after the names of the tribes of Israel: three gates northward etc."

Verse 35

The circuit of the city walls, a square of 4500 reeds, was 18,000 reeds, not quite 37 English miles. The circuit of Jerusalem in the time of Josephus was reckoned by him to be about four miles.

The name … - The manner of expressing a spiritual meaning by giving a name to a city, a people, or the like, is familiar to the prophets (see Ezekiel 43:15 note). Jerome explains it: "The name of the city shall be no longer Jerusalem ("the vision of peace"), but Adonai-shama ("the Lord is there") (rather, Jehovah-shammah, "Jehovah is there"), because Yahweh will never again withdraw from it, as He once withdrew, but will hold it as

His everlasting possession." The visible presence of God's glory, once represented in the tabernacle and in the temple, had departed, and should not return in the same form. Yet Ezekiel in "visions of God" sees a temple reconstructed to receive the glory of the divine presence, a prophetic vision fulfilled in Emmanuel ("God with us"), who tabernacled among men John 1:14. Compare Romans 9:25; Revelation 21:2-3.

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DANIEL INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Book of Daniel

Section I. The Life of Daniel

Of Daniel little more is known, or can now be ascertained, than is recorded in this book. There are two other persons of this name mentioned in the Bible - a son of David 1 Chronicles 3:1; and a Levite of the race of Ithamar Ezra 8:2; Nehemiah 10:6. The latter has been sometimes confounded with the prophet, as he is in the apocryphal addenda to the Septuagint.

Daniel, supposed commonly to be the same person as the author of this book, is twice mentioned by Ezekiel, once as deserving to be ranked with Noah and Job, and once as eminent for wisdom. "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God" Ezekiel 14:14. "Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee" Ezekiel 28:3. Whether this is the Daniel who is the author of this book, however or whether this was some ancient patriarch whose name had been handed down by tradition, and whose name was assumed" by the author of this book in later times, has been a question among recent critics, and will properly come up for examination under the next section in this Introduction.

Assuming now that the book is genuine, and that it was written by him whose name it bears, all that is known of Daniel is substantially as follows:

He was descended from one of the highest families in Judah, if not one of royal blood (notes at Daniel 1:3; Josephus' Ant. b. x. chapter x. Section 1). His birthplace was probably Jerusalem (compare Daniel 9:24), though it is not absolutely certain that this passage would demonstrate it.

Of his first years nothing is recorded. At an early age we find him in Babylon, among the captive Hebrews whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away at the first deportation of the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. He is mentioned in connection with three other youths, apparently of the same rank, Hananiah, Mishacl, and Azariah, who, with him, were selected for the purpose of being instructed in the language and

literature of the Chaldeans, with a view to their being employed in the service of the court Daniel 1:3-4. His age at that time it is impossible to determine with accuracy, but it is not; improbable that it was somewhere about twelve or fifteen years. In Daniel 1:4, he and his three friends are called "children" (ילדם *yelâdîym*). "This word properly denotes the period from the age of childhood up to manhood, and might be translated boys, lads, or youth" - (Prof. Stuart on Daniel, p. 373).

Ignatius (Ep. ad Magn.) says that Daniel was twelve years of age when he went into exile; Chrysostom says that he was eighteen (Opp, vi., p. 423); Epiphanius says, ἔτι νήπιος ὤν *eti nēpios ōn* Jerome calls him admodum puer. These are, of course, mere conjectures, or traditions, but they are probably not far from the truth. Such was the age at which persons would be most likely to be selected for the training here referred to. The design of this selection and training is not mentioned, but in the circumstances of the case it is perhaps not difficult to conjecture it. The Hebrews were a captive people. It was natural to suppose that they would be restless, and perhaps insubordinate, in their condition, and it was a matter of policy to do all that could be done to conciliate them. Nothing would better tend to this than to select some of their own number who were of their most distinguished families; to place them at court; to provide for them from the royal bounty; to give them the advantages of the best education that the capital afforded; to make an arrangement that contemplated their future employment in the service of the state, and to furnish them every opportunity of promotion. Besides, in the dialog of the government with the captive Hebrews, of which, from the nature of the case, there would be frequent occasion, it would be an advantage to have native-born Hebrews in the confidence of the government, who could be employed to conduct that contact.

In this situation, and with this view, Daniel received that thorough education which Oriental etiquette makes indispensable in a courtier (compare Plato, Alcib. Section 37), and was more especially instructed in the science of the Chaldeans, and in speaking and writing their language. He had before evidently been carefully trained in the Hebrew learning, and in the knowledge of the institutions of his country, and was thoroughly imbued with the principles of the religion of his fathers. An opportunity soon occurred of putting his principles to the test. Trained in strict religious

principles, and in the sternest rules of temperance in cating and drinking, and fearing the effect of the luxurious living provided for him and his companions by the royal bounty, he resolved, with them, to avoid at once the danger of conforming to the habits of idolaters; of "polluting" himself by customs forbidden by his religion, and of jeoparding his own health and life by intemperate indulgence. He aimed, also, to secure the utmost vigour of body, and the utmost clearness of mind, by a course of strict and conscientious temperance. He obtained permission, therefore, to abstain from the food provided for him, and to make an experiment of the most temperate mode of living Daniel 1:8-14. "His prudent proceedings, wise bearing, and absolute refusal to comply with such customs, were crowned with the divine blessing, and had the most splendid results."

After the lapse of three years spent in this course of discipline, Daniel passed the examination which was necessary to admit him to the royal favor, and was received into connection with the government, to be employed in the purposes which had been contemplated in this preparatory training Daniel 1:18-20. One of his first acts was an interpretation of a dream of Nebuchadnezzar, which none of the Chaldeans had been able to interpret, the result of which was that he was raised at once to that important office, the governorship of the province of Babylon, and the head inspectorship of the sacerdotal caste Daniel 4:19-27.

Under the immediate successor of Nebuchadnezzar - Evil-Merodaeh - Daniel appears to have been forgotten, and his talents and his former services seem to have passed away from the recollection of those in power. His situation at court appears to have been confined to an inferior office Daniel 8:27, and it would seem also that this led him occasionally, if not regularly, away from Babylon to some of the provinces to attend to business there. (Compare the notes at Daniel 8:2). This was not strange. On the death of a monarch, it was not unusual to discharge the officers who had been employed in the government, as, at the present time, on the death of a king, or a change of dynasty, the members of the cabinet are changed; or as the same thing happens in our own country when a change occurs in the chief magistracy of the nation. Sir John Chardin, in his Manuscript Notes on Persia, says that, in his time, on the death of a Shah or king, all the soothsayers and physicians attached to the court were at once dismissed

from office; the former because they did not predict his death, and the latter because they did not prevent it.

It is to be remembered also, that Daniel was raised to power by the will of Nebuchadnezzar alone, and that the offices which he held were, in part, in consequence of the service which he had rendered that prince; and it is not strange, therefore, that on a change of the government, he, with perhaps the other favorites of the former sovereign, should be suffered to retire. We find consequently no mention made of Daniel during the reign of Evil-Merodach, or in the short reign of his successor; we lose sight of him until the reign of Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon, and then he is mentioned only in connection with the closing scene of his life Daniel 6:1-3. The reasons of this appointment are not stated, but they were doubtless found in such circumstances as the following: that it was desirable for Darius to employ some one who was familiar with the affairs of the Babylonian empire; that Daniel probably had knowledge on that subject equal or superior to any other one that could be found; that, he had long been employed at court, and was familiar with the laws, usages, and customs that prevailed there; that he knew better than anyone else, perhaps, what would secure the tranquility of that portion of the empire; that, being himself a foreigner, it might be supposed better to employ him than it would be a native Chaldean, for it might be presumed that he would be less inimical to a foreign dominion.

Under these circumstances he was again raised to a high rank among the officers of the government; but his elevation was not beheld without malice and envy. Those who might have expected this office for themselves, or who were dissatisfied that a foreigner should be thus exalted, resolved, if possible, to bring him into such a situation as would ruin him Daniel 6:4. To do this, they determined to take advantage of a principle in the government of the Medes and Persians, that a law having once received the royal sanction could not be changed; and by securing the passing of such a law as they knew Daniel would not obey, they hoped to humble and ruin him. They, therefore, under plausible pretences, secured the passing of a law that no one in the realm should be allowed for a certain time to offer any petition to any God or man, except the king, on penalty of being thrown into a den of lions. Daniel, as they anticipated, was the first to disregard this

law, by continuing his regular habit of worshipping God, praying, as he had been accustomed, three times a-day, with his window open. The consequence was, that the king, there being no way to prevent the execution of the law, allowed it to be executed. Daniel was cast into the den of lions, but was miraculously preserved; and this new proof of his integrity, and of the divine favor, was the means of his being raised to more exalted honor Daniel 12:1-13 of what would occur in the last days of the world‘s history.

Beyond this, nothing certain is known of Daniel. The accounts respecting him are vague, confused, and strange. How long he lived, and when and where he died, are points on which no certain information can now be obtained. Josephus gives no account of his latter days, or of his death, though he says respecting him, “he was so happy as to have strange revelations made to him, and those as to one of the greatest of the prophets, insomuch that while he was alive he had the esteem and applause both of kings and of the multitude; and now he is dead, he retains a remembrance that will never fail.” (Ant. b. x. chapter xi). It is commonly believed that he died in Chaldea, having been detained there by his employments in the Persian empire. Epiphanius says that he died in Babylon, and this has been the commonly received opinion of historians. This opinion, however, has not been universal. Some suppose that he died at Shushan or Susa. Josephus (Ant. b. x. chapter xi.) says that, “on account of the opinion which men had that he was beloved of God, he built a tower at Ecbatana in Media, which was a most elegant building and wonderfully made,” and that it was still remaining in his day.

Benjamin of Tudela says that Iris monument was shown at Chuzestan, which is the ancient Susa. As Benjamin of Tudela professes to record what he saw and heard, and as his Itinerary is a book which has been more frequently transcribed and translated than almost any other book, except the Travels of Maundeville, it may be of some interest to copy what he has said of the tomb of Daniel. It is a record of the traditions of the East - the country where Daniel lived and died, and it is not improbably founded in essential truth. At any rate, it will show what has been the current tradition in the East respecting Daniel, and is all that can now be known respecting the place of his death and burial. Benjamin of Tudela was a Jewish rabbi of Spain, who traveled through Europe, Asia, and Africa, from Spain to China,

between 1160 and 1173 a.d. His Itinerary was first printed in 1543, It was a work in wide circulation in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, and has been translated from the original Hebrew into Latin, English, French, Dutch, and Jewish German, and hi these languages has passed through not less than twenty-two editions.

I quote from the London and Berlin edition of 1840. “Four miles from hence begins Khuzestan, Elam of Scripture, a large province which, however, is but partially inhabited, a portion of it lying in ruins. Among the latter are the remains of Shushan, the metropolis and palace of king Achashverosh, which still contains very large and hand. some buildings of ancient date. Its seven thousand Jewish inhabitants possess fourteen synagogues, in front of one of which is the tomb of Daniel, who rests in peace. The river Ulai divides the parts of the city, which are connected with a bridge; that portion of it which is inhabited by the Jews contains the markets; to it all trade is confined, and there dwell all the rich; on the other side of the river they are poor, because they are deprived of the above-named advantages, and have even no gardens nor orchards. These circumstances gave rise to jealousy, which was fostered by the belief that all honor and riches originated from the possession of the remains of the prophet Daniel, who rests in peace, and who was buried on their side.

A request was made by the poor for permission to remove the sepulchre to the other side, but it was rejected; upon which a war arose, and was carried on between the two parties for a length of time. This strife lasted ‹until their souls became loath‘ Numbers 21:4-5; Judges 16:16, and they came to a mutual agreement, by which it was stipulated that the coffin which contained Daniel‘s bones should be deposited alternately every year on either side. Both parties faithfully adhered to this arrangement, which was, however, interrupted by the interference of Sanjar Shah Ben Shah, who governs all Persia, and holds supreme power over forty-five of its kings.

“When this great emperor Sanjar, king of Persia, came to Shushan, and saw that the coffin of Daniel was removed from side to side, he crossed the bridge with a very numerous retinue, and accompanied by Jews and Mahometans, inquired into the nature of these proceedings. Upon being told

what we have related above, he declared that it was derogatory to the honor of Daniel, and recommended that the distance between the two banks should be exactly measured; that Daniel‘s coffin should be deposited in another coffin, made of glass, and that it should be suspended from the very middle of the bridge, fastened by chains of iron. A place of public worship was erected on the very spot, open to every one who desired to say his prayers, whether he be Jew or Gentile, and the coffin of Daniel is suspended from the bridge unto this very day.” - (Vol. i. pp. 117-120).

This story, trifling as it is in some of its details, may be admitted as evidence of a tradition in the East that Daniel died and was buried at Shushan. This tradition, moreover, is very ancient. In a note on this passage (vol. ii. p. 152), A. Asher, the publisher of the Itinerary of Benjamin, says: “Aasim of Cufah, a venerable historian, who preceded lbn Hankel by two hundred years (for he died 735), mentions the discovery of Daniel‘s coffin at Sus. Ibn Haukel, who traveled in the tenth century, speaks of it, and ascribes to the possession of the bones of Daniel the virtue of dispelling all sorts of distress, particularly that of famine from want of rain.” It has been a matter of much controversy whether the place now known as Chouck, Chouz, or Sous is the ancient Shushan (lat. 31° 55‘, long. 83° 40‘), or the place now called Shuster (lat. 31° 30‘, long. 84° 30‘). The former opinion is maintained by Rennel, Ouseley, Barbie du Bocage, Kinneir, and Hoek; the latter by d‘Herbelot, d‘Anville, Vincent, Mannert, and Hammer. Major Rawlinson, who has furnished the most recent account of this place, maintains that “Shushan the palace” is the present Susan on the Kulan or Eulaeus, the Ulai of Scripture. (See vol. ix. of the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society).

Section II. Genuineness and Authenticity of the Book of Daniel

Consideration of Objections.

Until a comparatively recent period, with some slight exceptions, the genuineness and authenticity of the book of Daniel have been regarded as settled, and its canonical authority was as little doubted as that of any other portion of the Bible. The ancient Hebrews never called its genuineness or authenticity in question (Lengerke, *Das Buch Daniel,* Königsberg, 1835, p. 6; Hengstenberg, *Die Authentie des Daniel,* Berlin, 1831, p. 1). It is true that in the *Talmud (Tract. Baba Bathra,* Fol. 15, Ed. Venet.) it is said that “the men of the Great Synagogue wrote - כתוב the קדנג K. D. N. G. - that is,

portions (eleven chapters) of the book of Ezekiel, the prophet Daniel, and the book of Esther;" but this, as Lengerke has remarked (p. v.), does not mean that they had introduced this book into the canon, as Bertholdt supposes, but that, partly by tradition, and partly by inspiration, they revised it anew. But whatever may be the truth in regard to this, it does not prove that the ancient Jews did not consider it canonical. It is true that much has been said about the fact that the Jews did not class this book among the prophets, but placed it in the *Hagiographa* or *Kethubim*, כתובים *kethûbîym* It has been inferred from this, that they believed that it was composed a considerable time after the other prophetic books, and that they did not deem it worthy of a place among their prophetic books in general. But, even if this were so, it would not prove that they did not regard it as a genuine production of Daniel; and the fact that it was not placed among the prophetic books may be accounted for without the supposition that they did not regard it as genuine. The usual statement on that subject is, that they placed the book there because they say that Daniel lived the life of a courtier in Babylon, rather than the life of a prophet; and the Jews further assert that, though he received Divine communications, they were only by dreams and visions of the night, which they regard as the most imperfect kind of revelations. - (Horne, *Intro.* 4:188). The place which Daniel should occupy in the Sacred Writings probably became a matter of discussion among the Hebrews only after the coming of the Saviour, when Christians urged so zealously his plain prophecies (Daniel 9:24-27) in proof of the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus.

The first open and avowed adversary to the genuineness and authenticity of the book of Daniel was Porphyry, a learned adversary of the Christian faith in the third century. He wrote fifteen books against Christianity, all of which are lost, except some fragments preserved by Eusebius, Jerome, and others. His objections against Daniel were made in his twelfth book, and all that we have of these objections has been preserved by Jerome in his commentary on the book of Daniel. A full account of Porphyry, and of his objections against the Christians and the sacred books of the Old and New Testament, so far as can now be known, may be seen in Lardner, *Jewish and Heathen Testimonies,* vol. vii. pp. 390-470, of his works, Ed. London, 1899. In regard to the book of Daniel, he maintained, according to Jerome (*Pr*. and *Explan.* in Daniel), "that the book was not written by him whose name

it bears, but by another who lived in Judea in the time of Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes; and that the book of Daniel does not foretell things to come, but relates what had already happened. In a word, whatever it contains to the time of Antiochus is true history; if there is anything relating to after-times it is falsehood; forasmuch as the writer could not see things future, but at the most only could make some conjectures about them. To him several of our authors have given answers of great labour and diligence - in particular. Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, in three volumes, the 18th, the 19th, and the 20th; Apollinarius, also, in one large book, that is, the 26th; and before them, in part, Methodius. ‹As it is not my design,‘ says Jerome, ‹to confute the objections of the adversary, which would require a long discourse; but only to explain the prophet to our own people, that is, to Christians, I shall just observe that none of the prophets have spoken so clearly of Christ as Daniel, for he not only foretells his coming, as do others likewise, but he also teaches the time when he will come, and mentions in order the princes of the intermediate space, and the number of the years, and the signs of his appearance. And because Porphyry saw all these things to have been fulfilled, and could not deny that they had actually come to pass, he was compelled to say as he did; and because of some similitude of circumstances, he asserted that the things foretold as to be fulfilled in Antichrist at the end of the world happened in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes: - which kind of opposition is a testimony of truth; for such is the plain interpretation of the words, that to incredulous men the prophet seems not to foretell things to come, but to relate things already past; and though, as before said, it is not my intention to confute all his objections, I shall, as occasion offers, take notice of some of his weak arguments. And it may be proper for us, among other things, to observe now, that Porphyry argued that the book of Daniel was not genuine, because it was written in Greek, and, therefore, was not the work of any Jew, but the forgery of some Greek writer. This he argued from some Greek words which are in the fable of Susanna, to which both Eusebius and Apollinarius returned the same answer, that the fabulous stories of Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon, are not in the Hebrew, but are said to have been composed by a person of the tribe of Levi; whereas the sacred Scriptures assure us that Daniel and the three children, his companions, were of the tribe of Judah. And they said they were not accountable for what was not received by the Jews, nor was a part of the sacred Scriptures.‘” A few of the objections which Porphyry

makes to the credibility of certain parts of Daniel, Jerome has quoted in his commentary on the particular passages referred to. These have been collected by Dr. Lardner, and may Be seen in his works, vol. vii. pp. 402-415. It is not necessary to transcribe them here, as they will come up for consideration in the notes on the particular chapters.

Dr. Lardner (vol. vii. p. 401) remarks respecting Porphyry, "that Porphyry's work against the Christians was much laboured, and that in this argument he displayed all his learning, which was very considerable. Hence we can perceive the difficulty of undertaking an answer to him, for which very few were fully qualified; in which none of the apologists for Christianity seem to have answered expectations." We cannot now form a correct opinion of the argument of Porphyry, for we have only the few fragments of his work which Jerome and others have seen proper to preserve. We are in danger, therefore, of doing injustice to what may have been the real force of his argument, for it *may* have been stronger than would be indicated by those fragments that remain. It is impossible to recover his main objections; and all that can now be said is, that, as far as is known, he did not make any converts to his opinions. and that his objections produced no change in the faith of the Christian world.

No further attack on the genuineness and authenticity of Daniel seems to have been made, and no further doubt entertained, until the time of Spinoza. Spinoza was by birth a Jew; was born at Amsterdam in 1632; became professedly converted to Christianity in consequence of supposing that his life was in danger among the Jews, But was probably indifferent to all religions. He gave himself up to philosophical inquiries, and is commonly understood to have been a pantheist. He maintained (*Tractat. Theol. Politicus*, c. 10, t. i. p. 308, Ed. Paulus), that the last five chapters of Daniel were written by Daniel himself, But that the seven previous chapters were collected about the time of the Maccabees from the chronological writings of the Chaldeans, and that the whole was arranged by some unknown hand. Edward Wells, who lived in the first part of the eighteenth century, maintained that the work was composed by some one soon after the death of Daniel. Antony Collins, one of the British Deists, maintained also that it was not written by Daniel. In more recent times, the genuineness of the book has been doubted or denied, in whole or in part, by Corrodi, Gesenius,

Lüderwald, Dereser, Scholl, Lengerke, Eichhorn, De Wette, Griesenger, Bertholdt, Bleek, Ewald, Hitzig, and Kirms; it has been defended by the English writers generally, and among the Germans by Staudlin, Beekhaus, Jahn, Hävernick Hengstenberg, and others. The general ground taken by those who have denied its genuineness and authenticity is, that the book was written, at or about the time of the Maccabees, By some Jew, who, in order to give greater authority and importance to his work, wrote under the assumed name of Daniel, and laid the scene in Babylon in the time of the captivity.

The various arguments urged against the genuineness of the book may be seen in Bertholdt, Eichhorn, Lengerke, Kirms (*Commentatio Historico Critica*, Jenae, 1825), and De Wette. The best defence of its authenticity, probably, is the work of Hengstenberg (*Die Authentie des Daniel,* Berlin, 1831). The examination of the objections alleged against the particular chapters, and particular portions of chapters, it will be most convenient to examine in the introductions to the respective chapters. I propose, in this general Introduction, merely to examine the objections of a general character which have been made to the work. These have been concisely arranged and stated by De Wette (*Lehrbuch der Historisch-kritischen, Einleitung,* Berlin, 1845, pp. 382-389), and in the examination of the objections I shall consider them in the order in which he has stated them.

The view which De Wette entertains of the book is stated in the following manner: - “That in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, when the spirit of prophecy among the Jews had been a long time extinct, a Jewish friend of his country endeavoured to encourage and strengthen his contemporary sufferers, and those who were contending for their liberty, through these apocalyptic prophecies respecting the future ascendancy of the theocratic principle, which, in order to give the work greater reputation and authority, he ascribed to an ancient Seer of the name of Daniel, of whom probably something had been handed down by tradition. Designedly he suffered the promises to extend to a great length of time, in order to make them appear the more certain. After the manner of the ancient prophets also, he inwove much that was historical, and especially such as would be fitted to excite and arouse the martyr spirit of his own people.” - (*Lehrbuch*, p. 390).

I. The first objection which is urged against the genuineness of the book is derived from what is denominated *the fabulous contents* - Mährchenhaften Inhalte - *of its narrative parts.* This objection, in the words of De Wette, is, that "the book is full of improbabilities (Daniel 2:3, Daniel 2:46; Daniel 3:1, Daniel 3:5, Daniel 3:20, Daniel 3:22, Daniel 3:28,31; Daniel 4:31; Daniel 5:11, Daniel 5:18, Daniel 5:29, Daniel 6:8, Daniel 6:26); of wonders (Daniel 2:28, Daniel 3:23; Daniel 5:5, Daniel 6:23, Daniel 6:25); its historical inaccuracies are such as are found in no prophetic book of the Old Testament, and are founded on the same type (comp. Daniel 2:2-11, with Daniel 4:4; Daniel 5:8; Daniel 3:4-12, Daniel 3:26-30, with Daniel 6:8-18, Daniel 6:21-24).. This seeking after wonders and strange things, and the religious fanaticism nourished through these persecutions, which it breathes, place the book in the same condition as the second book of the Maccabees, as a production of the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the similarity of the former of the two books betrays the fictitious character. (*Dichtung*) of the book." - (*Lehrbuch,* pp. 382,383).

In reference to this objection, which turns on the marvellous character of the book, and the improbable historical statements in it, the following remarks may be made: -

(a) These objections are noticed in detail in the introductions to the respective chapters where the historical events here objected to are stated, and the question whether they are fabulous, or are in accordance with true history, is there fully considered. This will make it needless to notice them here particularly. In the introduction to the respective chapters, I have noticed, and have endeavoured to answer, all the objections which I have found of this character in the works of Eichhorn, Bertholdt, Bleek, and Lengerke. This will make it the less necessary to dwell on this point in this general Introduction.

(b) But as to the alleged contradiction between Daniel and the historical accounts which we have of the affairs to which he refers, it may be proper to observe in general - (1.) That, for anything that appears, Daniel may be as accurate an historian as any of the heathen writers of those times. There is, in the nature of the case, no reason why we should put implicit

confidence in Berosus, Abydenus, Xenophon, and Herodotus, and distrust Daniel; nor why, if a statement is omitted by them, we should conclude at once that, if mentioned by Daniel, it is false. It is an unhappy circumstance, that there are many persons who suppose that the fact that a thing is mentioned by a profane historian is presumptive evidence of its truth; if mentioned by a sacred writer, it is presumptive evidence of its falsehood. Under the influence of the same feeling, it is inferred, that if an event is mentioned by a sacred writer which is omitted by a profane historian, it is regarded as demonstrative that the work in which it is found is fabulous. It is unnecessary to show that this feeling exists in many minds; and yet nothing can be more unjust - for the mere fact that an author writes on sacred subjects, or is the professed friend of a certain religion, *should not* be allowed to cast a suspicion on his testimony. That testimony must depend, in regard to its value, on his credibility as a historian, and not on the subject on which he writes. In the nature of things, there is no more reason why a writer on sacred subjects should be unworthy of belief, than one who is recording the ordinary events of history. (2.) Daniel, according to the account which we have of him, had opportunities of ascertaining the truth of the facts which he narrates, which no profane historian had. He spent the greater part of a long life in Babylon, in the very midst of the scenes which he describes; he was intimately acquainted with the affairs of the government; he enjoyed, in a remarkable degree, the confidence of those in authority, and he was himself deeply concerned in most of these transactions, and could have adopted the language of Aeneas - *et quorum magna pars fui.* (3.) It is to be remembered, also, in regard to these events and times, that we have few fragments of history remaining. We have fragments of the writings of Berosus, a Chaldean, indeed, who wrote in Greece; and of Abydenus, a Greek, who wrote in Chaldea; we have some historical statements in Xenophon, and a few in Herodotus: but the Chaldean history, if ever written, is lost; the public documents are destroyed; the means of an accurate and full knowledge of the Chaldean or Babylonish power in the time when Daniel lived, have disappeared for ever. Under these circumstances, it would not be strange if we should not be able to clear up all the difficulties of a historical nature that may be suggested respecting these fragmentary accounts, or be able to verify the statements which we find in the sacred books by the explicit testimony of contemporary writers.

(c) As a matter of fact, the investigations of history, as far as they can be made, go to confirm the authority of Daniel. Instances of this will occur in the examination of the particular chapters in this book, and all that can now be done is merely to refer to them, particularly to the introductions to ch. 1,4-6. In general, it may be said here, that none of the historical authorities *contradict* what is stated by Daniel, and that the few fragments which we have go to confirm what he has said, or at least to make it probable.

(d) As to the objections of De Wette and others, derived from the miraculous and marvellous character of the book, it may be observed further, that the same objection would lie against most of the books of the Bible, and that it is, therefore, not necessary to notice it particularly in considering the book of Daniel. The Bible is a book full of miracles and marvels; and he who would have any proper understanding of it must regard and treat it as such. It is impossible to understand or explain it without admitting the possibility and the reality of miraculous events; and in a book which *claims* to be founded miracles, it does not prove that it is not authentic or genuine simply to say that it assumes that miracles are possible. To destroy the credibility of the book, it is necessary to show that *all* claims of a miraculous character are unfounded, and *all* miracles impossible and absurd; and this objection would not lie against the book of Daniel peculiarly, but equally against the whole Bible. Two remarks here may be made, however, of a more particular character: (1), that the statements in Daniel are not more marvellous than those which occur in other parts of the Bible, and if they may be believed, those occurring in Daniel may be also; and (2), that it would rather be an argument against the genuineness and authenticity of the book if *no* miraculous and marvellous statements were found in it. It would be *so* unlike the other books of the Bible, where miracles abound, that we should feel that there was wanting in its favour the evidence of this nature, which would show that it had the same origin as the other portions of the volume. The particular objections in regard to the statements in Daniel of this nature are considered in the notes on the book.

II. A second objection to the genuineness of the book of Daniel relates to the *prophecies* which are found in it. This objection is derived from the

peculiar character of these prophecies; from the minuteness of the detail; the exact. designation of the order of events; the fact that they seem to be a summary of history written *after* the events occurred; and that in these respects they are essentially unlike the other prophecies in the Bible. This objection, we have seen, is as old as Porphyry; and this was in fact, with him the *principal* argument against the authenticity of the book. This objection is summed up and stated by De Wette in the following manner (Section 255*b*, pp. 385,385): "The ungenuineness (Unächtheit) appears further from the prophetic contents of the same, which is to a remarkable extent different from that of all the remaining prophetic books, (a) through its apocalyptic character, or through this - that the coming of the kingdom of the Messiah is mentioned and determined according to certain definite periods of time, or specified periods, and that the representation of it occurs so much in the form of visions; (b) that the circumstances of the distant future, and the fortune of the kingdoms which were not yet in existence, even down to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, are described with so much particularity and accuracy (Daniel 8:14, Daniel 9:25; Daniel 12:11) that the account must have been written after the event; (c) and that, if Daniel was a prophet, he must have lived in the times of Ezekiel and Zechariah, and we must suppose that his prophecies would have borne the general character of the prophecies of those times, but that in fact we find in them the spirit of a later age - the spirit that ultimately developed itself in the Sibylline books, to which these prophecies bear a strong resemblance."

In reply to this it may be remarked: -

(1.) That all that is said in Daniel is *possible:* that is, it is possible that prophetic intimations of the future should be given with as much particularity as are found in Daniel. No one can demonstrate, or even affirm, that God could not, if he chose, inspire a prophet to predict in detail the occurrences of the most remote times, and the fall of kingdoms not yet in being. All this knowledge must be with him: and for anything that appears, it would be as easy to inspire a prophet to predict *these* events as any other. The solo inquiry, therefore, is in regard to a fact; and this is to be settled by an examination of the evidence, that the prophet lived and prophesied *before* the events predicted occurred.

(2.) The prophecies in Daniel are not, in their structure and character, so unlike those whose genuineness is undisputed as to make it certain, or even probable, that the latter are genuine and those of Daniel not. Dreams and visions were common methods of communicating the Divine will to the prophets - see Introduction to Isaiah, Section 7, (2), (4) - and who will undertake from any infernal evidence to determine between those of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel?

(3.) As to the allegation respecting the details in Daniel of future events - the particularity with which he describes them - all is to be admitted that is affirmed on the subject. It *is* a fact that there is such particularity and minuteness of detail as could be founded only on truth, and that the delineations of Alexander and his conquests, and the statements of the events that would succeed his reign down to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (ch. 11), are drawn with as much accuracy of detail as they would be by one writing after the events had occurred. No one can doubt this who attentively examines these remarkable prophecies. Porphyry was undoubtedly right in affirming, that in regard to their minuteness and accuracy, these prophecies appeared to be written *after* the events; and if it can be shown, therefore, that they were written *before* the events referred to, the testimony of Porphyry is a strong evidence of the fact that Daniel was inspired; for no one will maintain that man, by any natural sagacity, could describe events before they occur with the exactness of detail and the minute accuracy which is found in this part of Daniel.

But is not what is here said of Daniel as to the accuracy and minuteness of detail true also, in the main, of other prophecies in the Old Testament? Are there not many prophecies that are as accurate, and in some respects as minute, as they would have been if they were written after the events referred to? Is not this true of the predictions respecting the destruction of Tyre and of Babylon, and carrying away of the Jews into captivity? Is not Cyrus expressly mentioned by Isaiah, and is not the work which he would perform in the conquest of Babylon drawn out in exact detail? (See Isaiah 45:1, *seq*.) So in Jeremiah (Jeremiah 50:1, Jeremiah 51:1), there is a prophetic account of the destruction of Babylon, as minute in many respects as the predictions of Daniel, and as exact and minute as it would have been if written after the events had occurred, and the author had been making a

historical record instead of uttering a prediction. But on this point I must content myself with referring to the argument of Hengstenberg, *Authentie des Daniel*, pp. 173-195. It may be added, however, that it is on this accuracy of detail in Daniel that we ground one of the strong arguments for his inspiration. It will be admitted on all hands - it cannot be denied - that no one could foresee those events, and describe them with such accuracy of detail, by any natural sagacity; but no one who believes in the fact of inspiration at all, can doubt that it would be as easy for the Divine Spirit to present future events in this accuracy of detail as in a more general manner. At all events, this accuracy and minuteness of detail removes the prophecies from the region of conjecture, and is an answer to the usual objections that they are obscure and ambiguous. No one can pretend this of the writings of Daniel; and if it can be shown that the book was written before the events occurred, the conclusion cannot be avoided that the author was inspired.

III. A third objection to the genuineness and authenticity of the book of Daniel is thus stated by De Wette (Section 255, b. 3, p. 385): "Grounds of objection lie further in the repeated mention of himself in so honourable a manner (Daniel 1:17, Daniel 1:19; Daniel 5:11; Daniel 6:4; Daniel 9:23; Daniel 10:11, *et al*.)"

This objection cannot be regarded as having any great degree of force, or as contributing much to set aside the direct evidence of the authority of the book: - for (a) it is possible that all these honours were conferred on him. This is, in itself, no more incredible or remarkable than that Joseph should have reached the honours in Egypt, which are attributed to him in Genesis; and no one can show that if the account had been written by another, it would have been unworthy of belief. (b) If it were a fact that he was thus honoured, it was not improper to state it. If Daniel was the historian of those times, and kept the records of the events of his own life, and actually obtained those honours, there was no impropriety in his making a record of those things. He has done no more than what Caesar did in the mention of himself, his plans, his conquests, his triumphs. In the record of Daniel there is no unseemly parading of his wisdom, or the honours conferred on him; there is no praise for the mere sake of praise; there is no language of panegyric on account of his eminent piety. The account is a mere record of facts as they are said to have occurred - that

Daniel was successful in his early studies, and his preparation for the examination through which he and his companions were to pass (ch. 1); that on more than one occasion he succeeded in interpreting a dream or vision which no one of the Chaldeans could do; that in consequence of this he was raised to an exalted rank; that he was enabled to maintain his integrity in the midst of extraordinary temptations; and that he was favoured with the Divine protection when in extraordinary danger. I presume that no one who has read the book of Daniel with an unprejudiced mind ever received an impression that there was any want of modesty in Daniel in these records, or that there was any unseemly or unnecessary parading of his own virtues and honours before the world.

IV. A fourth objection which has been urged against the genuineness of Daniel is derived from the *language* in which it is written. This objection, as stated by De Wette (Section 935, b. 4, p. 385), is founded on "the corrupt Hebrew and Chaldee, and the intermingling of Greek words in the composition." The objection is urged more at length in Bertholdt (p. 24, *seq*.), and by Bleek, Kirms, and others. The objection, as derived from the language of the book, is properly divided into three parts: - (a) that it is written in Hebrew and Chaldee; (b) that in each part of it there is a want of purity of style, indicating a later age than the time of the captivity; and (c) that there is an intermingling of Greek words, such as it cannot be presumed that one who wrote in the time of the exile, and in Babylon, would have employed, and such as were probably introduced into common use only by a later intercourse with the Greeks, and particularly by the Macedonian conquest.

(a) As to the first of these, little stress can be laid on it, and indeed it is rather an argument *for* the genuineness of the work than against it. It is well known that from the fourth verse of the second chapter to the end of the seventh chapter, the work is written in the Chaldee language, while the remainder is pure Hebrew. The only way in which this fact could be regarded as an objection to the genuineness of the book, would be that it is an indication that it is the production of two different authors. But this would be an objection only on the supposition that the author could write and speak only one language, or that, supposing he was acquainted with two, there were no circumstances which could account for the use of both.

But neither of these suppositions applies here. There is every reason to believe that Daniel was acquainted with both the Hebrew and the Chaldee; and there is no improbability in the supposition that he wrote in both with equal ease. And, on the other hand, it may be remarked, that the very circumstance here referred to is a confirmation of the genuineness of the book; for (1.) it accords with all that is known of Daniel. He was a youth when he left his native country, and there is every probability that he familiar with the Hebrew in early life, and that he would never forget it, though it might be true that he would ordinarily use the language of Chaldea. He was still familiar with the Hebrew books, and it is to be presumed that the language used by the Hebrews in exile was their native tongue. In all his intercourse with his own countrymen, therefore, it is every way probable that he would use his native language, and would thus through life retain his knowledge of it. (2.) It is equally clear that he was familiar with the Chaldee language. He was early, in connection with three other Hebrew youths (Daniel 1:3, Daniel 1:4), placed under the best instruction in Babylon, for the express purpose of acquiring, with other branches of learning, a knowledge of the "tongue of the Chaldeans;" and he speedily made such acquisitions as to pass with honour the examination appointed before he was admitted to public employment (Daniel 1:18-20). He was, moreover, employed at court during a considerable part of his long life, and no one, therefore, can doubt that he was entirely familiar with the language used in Babylon, and that he could compose in it with ease. (3.) It is evident that the work must, if it is the production of one author, have been composed by some person who was, in this respect, in the circumstances of Daniel; that is, by one who was familiar with both the languages: and the circumstances bear on their face evidence that the work was written by one in the condition in which Daniel was known to be; that is, one who had been early trained in the Hebrew and who had lived in Chaldea. No native-born Hebrew who had not lived in Chaldea would be likely to be so well acquainted with the two languages that he could use either with equal facility; and it may be presumed that no native-born Chaldean could evince so intimate an acquaintance with the Hebrew. The direct evidence that it is the production of one author will be adduced in another part of this Introduction. (4.) It is by no means probable that one who lived so late as the time of Antiochus Epiphanes could have written the book as it is written; that is, that he would have been so familiar with the

two languages, Hebrew and Chaldee, that he could use them with equal ease. It is an uncommon thing for a man to write in two different languages in the same work, and he never does it without some special design - a design for which there would not be likely to be occasion if one were writing in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. It was perfectly *natural* that Daniel should write in this manner, and perfectly *unnatural* that any one should do it in a later age, and in different circumstances. If the book had been forged by a Hebrew in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, there is every reason to believe that he would have been careful to write it in as pure Hebrew as possible, for that was the language in which the canonical books were written, and if he had endeavoured to gain credit for the book as one of Divine authority, he would not have intermingled so much of a foreign language. If he were a Chaldean, and could write Hebrew at all, as it is certain that the author of this book could, then, for the reason just given, he would have been careful to write the whole book in as pure Hebrew as possible, and would not have jeoparded credit by so large an infusion of a foreign tongue. (5.) This reasoning is conclusive, unless it be supposed that the author *meant* to represent it as a composition of some Hebrew in the time of the exile, and that in order to give it the greater verisimilitude he adopted this device - to make it *appear* as if written by one who was a native Hebrew, but who had become familiar with a foreign language. But this device would be too refined to be likely to occur, and, for the reasons given above, would be difficult of execution if it should occur. Even in such a case, the writer would be much more likely to represent its author as writing in the sacred language of the prophets, in order to procure for himself the credit of employing the language used in all the Divine communications to men. The language in which the book is written, therefore, is just such as it would be on the supposition that it is genuine, and just such as it would *not* be on the supposition that it is a forgery of a later age.

(b) As to the statement that the language is *corrupt* Hebrew and Chaldee - in der Verderbten sowohl Hebräischen als Chaldäishen Sprache (De Wette) - it may be remarked that this position has never been satisfactorily made out, nor has it been shown that it is not such as might be employed, or would be employed, by one who resided in Babylon in the time of the exile. That the language would not be the purest kind of Hebrew, or the purest

Chaldee, might be possible, in the circumstances of the case; but it could be shown that it was not such as might be employed there, in case there are words and forms of speech which did not come into use until a later period of the world. This has not been shown. It is true that there are Persian words; But this is not unnatural in the circumstances of the case - bordering as Chaldea did on Persia, and during a part of the time referred to in the book, being actually subject to Persia. It is true that there are Greek words; but under the next specification I shall endeavor to show that this does not militate against the supposition that the book may have been written in Babylon in the time of the exile. It is true that there are words and forms of speech which were not in use in the earlier periods of Hebrew literature, but which became common in the later periods of their literature; but this does not prove that they may not have been in use as early as the exile. A specimen of the words referred to - indeed all on which the argument is founded - may be seen in De Wette, p. 385, note (*e*). They are few in number, and in respect to none of these can it be *proved* that they were not in existence in the time Daniel. They are of Persian, of Syriac, or of Chaldee origin, and are such words as would be *likely* to come into use in the circumstances of the case. In regard to this objection it may be added, that it has been abandoned by some of the objectors to the genuineness of the book of Daniel themselves. Bleek is candid enough to give it up entirely. He says: "We have, in general, too few remains of the different centuries after the exile to draw any conclusions as to the gradual depreciation of the language, and to determine with any certainty to what particular period any writer belongs." - (*Zeitschr*. p. 213). "Daniel," says Prof. Stuart, "in the judgment of Gesenius (*Geschich. Heb. Sprach.* p. 35), has decidedly a purer diction than Ezekiel; in which opinion," says he, "as far as I am able to judge, after much time spent upon the book, and examining minutely every word and. phrase in it many times over, I should entirely coincide." - (*Com*. p. 465).

(c) A more material objection is derived from the use of *Greek* words in the composition of the book. That there *are* such words is undeniable, though they are by no means numerous. Bertholdt (pp. 24,25) has enumerated *ten* such words; De Wette has referred to *four* (p. 386). The words enumerated by Bertholdt are פרתמים - προτιμοι ; פתגם - φθεγμα ; כרוזא

- κηρυξ ; כרז - κηρυσσειν ; קיתרס - κιθαρις ; סבכא - σαμβυκη ; סומפניא - συμφωνια ; פסנטר - ψαλτηριον ; פטיש - πετασος ; נכזכה - νομισμα .

In regard to this objection, it may be remarked, in general, that it does not assert that the structure of the book of Daniel is fashioned after the Greek manner, or that the Greek style pervades it; it asserts only that a few Greek words have been incorporated into the book. The question then is, whether even all these words are of Greek origin; and whether, if they are, or if only a part of them are, their use in the book can be accounted for on the supposition that it was written in the time of the captivity, or rather, whether their occurrence in the book is a proof that the book could not have been written at that time.

The first point is the question, whether these words are of undoubted Greek origin; and this question will require us to examine them in detail.

(1.) The first word specified is פרתמים *parethemîymrendered princes (Daniel 1:3), which it is alleged is the same as the Greek* προτιμοι *protimoi The word used by Daniel occurs only in two other places in the Old Testament (Esther 1:3, Esther 6:9), where it is rendered nobles, and most noble; and it is obvious to remark, that the fact that, it is found in Esther might be urged in proof that the book of Daniel was written at the time in which it is commonly believed to have been, since the antiquity and genuineness of the book of Esther is not called in question. But apart from this, there is no evidence that the word is of Greek origin. Gesenius, who may be considered as impartial authority on the subject, says, "it is of Persian origin, 1-9. Pehlvi, pardom, the first, see Anquetil du perron Zendavesta, ii. p. 465. Comp. Sanser. prathama the first. In the Zend dialect the form is peoerim. Comp. Sanser. pura prius, antea, purâna, antiquus. From the former comes the Greek prw*

DANIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Section I. - Authenticity of the Chapter

For the general argument in favor of the genuineness and authenticity of the Book of Daniel, see the Introduction, Sections II and III. To the genuineness and authenticity of each particular chapter in detail, however, objections, derived from something peculiar in each chapter, have been urged, which it is proper to meet, and which I propose to consider in a particular introduction to the respective chapters. These objections it is proper to consider, not so much because they have been urged by distinguished German critic - De Wette, Bertholdt, Bleek, Eichhorn, and others - for their writings will probably fall into the hands of few persons who will read these Notes - but

(a) because it may be presumed that men of so much learning, industry, acuteness, and ingenuity, have urged all the objections which can, with any appearance of plausibility, be alleged against the book; and

(b) because the objections which they have urged may be presumed to be felt, to a greater or less degree, by those who read the book, though they might not be able to express them with so much clearness and force. There are numerous objections to various portions of the Scriptures floating in the minds of the readers of the Bible, and many difficulties which occur to such readers which are not expressed, and which it would be desirable to remove, and which it is the duty of an expositor of the Bible, if he can, to remove. Sceptical critics, in general, but collect and embody in a plausible form difficulties which are felt by most readers of the Scriptures. It is for this reason, and with a view to remove what “seems” to furnish plausible arguments against the different portions of this book, that the objections which have been urged, principally by the authors above referred to, will be noticed in special sections preceding the exposition of each chapter.

The only objection to the genuineness and authenticity of the first chapter which it seems necessary to notice is, that the account of Daniel in the chapter is inconsistent with the mention of Daniel by Ezekiel. The objection substantially is, that it is improbable that the Daniel who is mentioned by Ezekiel should be one who was a cotemporary with himself,

and who at that time lived in Babylon. Daniel is three times mentioned in Ezekiel, and in each case as a man of eminent piety and integrity; as one so distinguished by his virtues as to deserve to be classed with the most eminent of the patriarchs. Thus in Ezekiel 14:14, "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God." So again, Ezekiel 14:20, "Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter, they shall deliver but their own souls by their righteousness."

And again, Ezekiel 28:3, speaking of the prince of Tyre, "Behold thou art wiser than Daniel." The objection urged in respect to the mention of Daniel in these passages is substantially this - that if the account in the book of Daniel is true, he must have been a cotemporary with Ezekiel, and must have been, when Ezekiel prophesied, a young man; that it is incredible that he should have gained a degree of reputation which would entitle him to be ranked with Noah and Job; that he could not have been so well known as to make it natural or proper to refer to him in the same connection with those eminent men; and "especially" that he could not have been thus known to the prince of Tyre, as is supposed of those mentioned by Ezekiel in the passages referred to, for it cannot be presumed that a man so young had acquired such a fame abroad as to make it proper to refer to him in this manner in an address to a pagan prince. This objection was urged by Bernstein (uber das Buch Hiob, in den Analekten von Keil und Tzschirner, i. 3, p. 10), and it is found also in Bleek, p. 284, and De Wette, "Einl." p. 380. De Wette says that it is probable that the author of the book of Daniel used the name of "an ancient mythic or poetic person falsely," in order to illustrate his work.

Now, in regard to this objection, it may be remarked

(a) that, according to all the accounts which we have in the Bible, Ezekiel and Daniel "were" cotemporary, and were in Babylon at the same time. As Daniel, however, lived a long time in Babylon after this, it is to be admitted, also, that at the period referred to by Ezekiel, he must have been comparatively a young man. But it does not follow that he might not then have had a well-known character for piety and integrity, which would make

it proper to mention his name in connection with the most eminent saints of ancient times. If the account in the book of Daniel "itself" is a correct account of him, this will not be doubted, for he soon attracted attention in Babylon; he soon evinced that extraordinary piety which made him so eminent as a man of God, and that extraordinary wisdom which raised him to the highest rank as an officer of state in Babylon. It was very soon after he was taken to Babylon that the purpose was formed to tram him, and the three other selected youths, in the learning of the Chaldeans Daniel 1:1-4, and that Daniel showed that he was qualified to pass the examination, preparatory to his occupying an honorable place in the court Daniel 1:18-21; and it was only in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar that the remarkable dream occurred, the interpretation of which gave to Daniel so much celebrity Ezekiel 28:3, it may be remarked, that it is not necessary to suppose that these prophecies were ever known to the king of Tyre, or that they were ever designed to influence him. The prophecies which were directed against the ancient pagan kings were uttered and published among the Hebrew people, primarily for "their" guidance, and were designed to furnish to them, and to others in future times, arguments for the truth of religion, though they assumed the form of direct addresses to the kings themselves. Such an imaginary appeal may have been made in this case by Ezekiel to the king of Tyre; and, in speaking of him, and of his boasted wisdom, Ezekiel may have made the comparison which would then naturally occur to him, by mentioning him in connection with the most eminent man for wisdom of that age.

But it should be said, also, that there can be no certain evidence that the name of Daniel was "not" known to the king of Tyre, and no intrinsic improbability in the supposition that it was. If Daniel had at that time evinced the remarkable wisdom at the court of Babylon which it is said in this book that he had; if he had been raised to that high rank which it is affirmed he had reached, there is no improbability in supposing that so remarkable a circumstance should have been made known to the king of Tyre. Tyre was taken by Nebuchadnezzar, 572 b.c., after a siege of thirteen years, and it is in no way improbable that the king of Tyre would be made acquainted with what occurred at the court of the Chaldeans. The prophecy in Ezekiel, where Daniel is mentioned Ezekiel 28:3, could not have been uttered long before Tyre was taken, and, in referring to what was to occur, it

was not unnatural to mention the man most distinguished for wisdom at the court of Babylon, and in the councils of Nebuchadnezzar, with the presumption that his name and celebrity would not be unknown to the king of Tyre.

(c) As to the objection of Bernstein, that it would be improbable, if Daniel lived there, and if he was comparatively a young man, that his name would be placed "between" that of Noah and Job Ezekiel 14:14, as if he had lived "before" Job, it may be remarked, that there might be a greater similarity between the circumstances of Noah and Daniel than between Noah and Job, and that it was proper to refer to them in this order. But the mere circumstance of the "order" in which the names are mentioned cannot be adduced as a proof that one of the persons named did not exist at that time. They may have occurred in this order to Ezekiel, because in his apprehension, that was the order in Which the degree of their piety was to be estimated.

To this objection thus considered, that the mention of Daniel in connection with Noah and Job, proves that Ezekiel referred to some one of ancient times, it may be further replied, that, if this were so, it is impossible to account for the fact that no such person is mentioned by any of the earlier prophets and writers. How came his name to be known to Ezekiel? And if there had been a patriarch so eminent as to be ranked with Noah and Job, how is it to be accounted for that all the sacred writers, up to the time of Ezekiel, are wholly silent in regard to him? And why is it that, when "he" mentions him, he does it as of one who was well known? The mere mention of his name in this manner by Ezekiel, proves that his character was well known to those for whom he wrote. Noah and Job were thus known by the ancient records; but how was "Daniel" thus known? He is nowhere mentioned in the ancient writings of the Hebrews; and if he was so well known that he could be referred to in the same way as Noah and Job, it must be either because there was some "tradition" in regard to him, or because he was then living, and his character was well understood by those for whom Ezekiel wrote. But there is no evidence that there was any such tradition, and no probability that there was; and the conclusion, then, is inevitable, that he was then so well known to the Hebrews in exile, that it was proper for Ezekiel to mention him just as he did Noah and Job. If so,

this furnishes the highest evidence that he actually lived in the time of Ezekiel; that is, in the time when this book purports to have been written.

Section II. - Analysis of the Chapter

This chapter is entirely historical, the prophetic portions of the book commencing with the second chapter. The "object" of this chapter seems to be to state the way in which Daniel, who subsequently acted so important a part in Babylon, was raised to so distinguished favor with the king and court. It was remarkable that a Jewish captive, and a young man, should be so honored; that he should be admitted as one of the principal counselors of the king, and that he should ultimately become the prime-minister of the realm; and there was a propriety that there should be a preliminary statement of the steps of this extraordinary promotion. This chapter contains a record of the way in which the future premier and prophet was introduced to the notice of the reigning monarch, and by which his wonderful genius and sagacity were discovered. It is a chapter, therefore, that may be full of interest and instruction to all, and especially to young men. The chapter contains the record of the following points, or steps, which led to the promotion of Daniel:

I. The history of the Jewish captivity, as explanatory of the reason why those who are subsequently referred to were in Babylon. They were exiles, having been conveyed as captives to a foreign land, Daniel 1:1-2.

II. The purpose of the king, Nebuchadnezzar, to bring forward the principal talent to be found among the Jewish captives, and to put it under a process of training, that it might be employed at the court, Daniel 1:3-4. In carrying out this purpose, a confidential officer of the court, Ashpenaz, was directed to search out among the captives the most promising youths, whether by birth or talent, and to put them under a process of training, that they might become fully instructed in the science of the Chaldeans. What were the reasons which led to this cannot be known with certainty. They may have been such as these;

(1) The Chaldeans had devoted themselves to science, especially to those sciences which promised any information respecting future events, the secrets of the unseen world, etc. Hence, they either originated or adopted the science of astrology; they practiced the arts of magic; they studied to interpret dreams; and, in general, they made use of all the means

which it was then supposed could be employed to unlock the secrets of the invisible world, and to disclose the future.

(2) They could not have been ignorant of the fact, that the Hebrews claimed to have communications with God. They had doubtless heard of their prophets, and of their being able to foretell what was to occur. This kind of knowledge would fall in with the objects at which the Chaldeans aimed, and if they could avail themselves of it, it would enable them to secure what they so ardently sought. It is probable that they considered this as a sort of "permanent" power which the Hebrew prophets had, and supposed that at all times, and on all subjects, they could interpret dreams, and solve the various questions about which their own magicians were so much engaged. It is not to be presumed that they had any very accurate knowledge of the exact character of the Hebrew prophecies, or the nature of the communication which the prophets had with God; but it was not unnatural for them to suppose that this spirit of prophecy or divination would be possessed by the most noble and the most talented of the land. Hence, Ashpenaz was instructed to select those of the royal family, and those in whom there was no blemish, and who were handsome, and who were distinguished for knowledge, and to prepare them, by a suitable course, for being presented to the king.

(3) It may have been the purpose of the Chaldean monarch to bring forward all the talent of the realm, whether native or foreign, to be employed in the service of the government. There is no reason to suppose that there was any jealousy of foreign talent, or any reluctance to employ it in any proper way, in promoting the interests of the kingdom. As the Chaldean monarch had now in his possession the Hebrew royal family, and all the principal men that had been distinguished in Judea, it was not unnatural to suppose that there might be valuable talent among them of which he might avail himself, and which would add to the splendor of his own court and cabinet. It might have been naturally supposed, also, that it would tend much to conciliate the captives themselves, and repress any existing impatience, or insubordination, to select the most noble and the most gifted of them, and to employ them in the service of the government; and in any questions that might arise between the government and the captive nation, it would be an advantage for the government to be able to

employ native-born Hebrews in making known the wishes and purposes of the government. It was, moreover, in accordance with the proud spirit of Nebuchadnezzar (see Daniel 1:5-7. This was by a course of living in the manner of the royal household, with the presumption that at the end of three years, in personal appearance, and in the knowledge of the language of the Chaldeans Daniel 1:4, they would be prepared to appear at court, and to be employed in the service to which they might be appointed.

IV. The resolution of Daniel not to corrupt himself with the viands which had been appointed for him and his brethren, Daniel 1:8. He had heretofore been strictly temperate; he had avoided all luxurious living; he had abstained from wine; and, though now having all the means of luxurious indulgence at command, and being unexpectedly thrown into the temptations of a splendid Oriental court, he resolved to adhere stedfastly to his principles.

V. The apprehension of the prince of the eunuchs that this would be a ground of offence with his master, the king, and that he would himself be held responsible, Daniel 1:9-10. This was a very natural apprehension, as the command seems to have been positive, and as an Oriental monarch was entirely despotic. It was not unreasonable for him to whom this office was entrusted to suppose that a failure on his part to accomplish what he had been directed to do would be followed by a loss of place or life.

VI. The experiment, and the result, Daniel 1:11-17. Daniel asked that a trial might be made of the effects of temperance in preparing him and his companions for presentation at court. He requested that they might be permitted, even for a brief time, yet long enough to make a fair experiment, to abstain from wine, and the other luxuries of the royal table, and that then it might be determined whether they should be allowed to continue the experiment. The result was as he had anticipated. At the end of ten days, on a fair comparison with those who had indulged in luxurious living, the benefit of their course was apparent, and they were permitted to continue this strict abstinence during the remainder of the time which was deemed necessary for their preparation to appear at court.

VII. The presentation at court, Daniel 1:18-21. At the end of the time appointed for preparation, Daniel and his selected companions were brought into the royal presence, and met with the most favorable reception which could have been hoped for. They were distinguished, it would seem, for beauty and manly vigour, and as much distinguished for wisdom as they were for the beauty and healthfulness of their bodily appearance. They at once took an honorable station, greatly surpassing in true wisdom and knowledge those at the court who were regarded as skilled in the arts of divination and astrology. These years of preparation we are not to suppose were spent in merely cultivating the beauty of their personal appearance, but they were doubtless employed, under all the advantages of instruction which could be afforded them, in the careful cultivation of their mental powers, and in the acquisition of all the knowledge which could be obtained under the best masters at the court of the Chaldeans. Compare Daniel 1:4.

Verse 1

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem - This event occurred, according to Jahn ("History of the Hebrew Commonwealth"), in the year 607 b.c., and in the 368th year after the revolt of the ten tribes. According to Usher, it was in the 369th year of the revolt, and 606 b.c. The computation of Usher is the one generally received, but the difference of a year in the reckoning is not material. Compare Michaelis, Anmerkung, zu 2Kon. xxiv. 1. Jehoiakim was a son of Josiah, a prince who was distinguished for his piety, 2 Kings 22:2; 2 Chronicles 35:1-7. After the death of Josiah, the people raised to the throne of Judah Jehoahaz, the youngest son of Josiah, probably because he appeared better qualified to reign than his elder brother, 2 Kings 23:30; 2 Chronicles 36:1. He was a wicked prince, and after he had been on the throne three months, he was removed by Pharaoh-nechoh, king of Egypt, who returned to Jerusalem from the conquest of Phoenicia, and placed his elder brother, Eliakim, to whom he gave the name of Jehoiakim, on the throne, 2 Kings 23:34; 2 Chronicles 36:4.

Jehoahaz was first imprisoned in Riblah, 2 Kings 23:33, and was afterward removed to Egypt, 2 Chronicles 36:4. Jehoiakim, an unworthy son of Josiah, was, in reality, as he is represented by Jeremiah, one of the worst kings who reigned over Judah. His reign continued eleven years, and as he came to the throne 611 b.c., his reign continued to the year 600 b.c. In

the third year of his reign, after the battle of Megiddo, Pharaoh-nechoh undertook a second expedition against Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, with a numerous army, drawn in part from Western Africa, Lybia and Ethiopia. - Jahn‘s Hist. Heb. “Commonwealth,” p. 134. This Nabopolassar, who is also called Nebuchadnezzar I, was at this time, as Berosus relates, aged and infirm. He therefore gave up a part of his army to his son Nebuchadnezzar, who defeated the Egyptian host at Carchemish (Circesium) on the Euphrates, and drove Nechoh out of Asia. The victorious prince marched directly to Jerusalem, which was then under the sovereignty of Egypt. After a short siege Jehoiakim surrendered, and was again placed on the throne by the Babylonian prince.

Nebuchadnezzar took part of the furniture of the temple as booty, and carried back with him to Babylon several young men, the sons of the principal Hebrew nobles, among whom were Daniel and his three friends referred to in this chapter. It is not improbable that one object in conveying them to Babylon was that they might be hostages for the submission and good order of the Hebrews in their own land. It is at this time that the Babylonian sovereignty over Judah commences, commonly called the Babylonian captivity, which, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, Jeremiah 25:1-14; Jeremiah 29:10, was to continue seventy years. In Jeremiah 25:1; Jeremiah 46:2, it is said that this was in the fourth year of Jehoiakim; in the passage before us it is said that it was the third year. This difference, says Jahn, arises from a different mode of computation: “Jehoiakim came to the throne at the end of the year, which Jeremiah reckons as the first (and such a mode of reckoning is not uncommon), but Daniel, neglecting the incomplete year, numbers one less:” For a more full and complete examination of the objection to the genuineness of Daniel from this passage, I would refer to Prof. Stuart on Daniel, “Excursus” I. (See App. I. to this Vol.)

And besieged it - Jerusalem was a strongly-fortified place, and it was not easy to take it, except as the result of a siege. It was, perhaps, never carried by direct and immediate assault. Compare 2 Kings 25:1-3, for an account of a siege of Jerusalem a second time by Nebuchadnezzar. At that time the city was besieged about a year and a half. How long the siege here referred to continued is not specified.

Verse 2

And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand - Jehoiakim was taken captive, and it would seem that there was an intention to convey him to Babylon 2 Chronicles 36:6, but that for some cause he was not removed there, but died at Jerusalem 2 Kings 24:5-6, though he was not honorably buried there, Jeremiah 22:19; Jeremiah 36:30. In the second book of Chronicles 2 Chronicles 36:6, it is said that "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and bound Jehoiakim in fetters, to take him to Babylon." Jahn supposes that an error has crept into the text in the book of Chronicles, as there is no evidence that Jehoiakim was taken to Babylon, but it appears from 2 Kings 24:1-2, that Jehoiakim was continued in authority at Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar three years, and then rebelled against him, and that then Nebuchadnezzar sent against him "bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it." There is no necessity of supposing an error in the text in the account in the book of Chronicles. It is probable that Jehoiakim was taken, and that the "intention" was to take him to Babylon, according to the account in Chronicles, but that, from some cause not mentioned, the purpose of the Chaldean monarch was changed, and that he was placed again over Judah, under Nebuchadnezzar, according to the account in the book of Kings, and that he remained in this condition for three years until he rebelled, and that then the bands of Chaldeans, etc., were sent against him. It is probable that at this time, perhaps while the siege was going on, he died, and that the Chaldeans dragged his dead body out of the gates of the city, and left it unburied, as Jeremiah had predicted, Jeremiah 22:19; Jeremiah 36:30.

With part of the vessels of the house of God - 2 Chronicles 36:7. Another portion of the vessels of the temple at Jerusalem was taken away by Nebuchadnezzar, in the time of Jehoiachin, the successor of Jehoiakim, 2 Chronicles 36:10. On the third invasion of Palestine, the same thing was repeated on a more extensive scale, 2 Kings 24:13. At the fourth and final invasion, under Zedekiah, when the temple was destroyed, all its treasures were carried away, 2 Kings 25:6-20. A part of these treasures were brought back under Cyrus, Ezra 1:7; the rest under Darius, Ezra 6:5. Why they were not "all" taken away at first does not appear, but perhaps Nebuchadnezzar did not then intend wholly to overthrow the Hebrew nation, but meant to keep them tributary to him as a people. The temple was not at that time destroyed, but probably he allowed the worship of Jehovah to be celebrated

there still, and he would naturally leave such vessels as were absolutely necessary to keep up the services of public worship.

Which he carried into the land of Shinar - The region around Babylon. The exact limits of this country are unknown, but it probably embraced the region known as Mesopotamia - the country between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. The derivation of the name "Shinar" is unknown. It occurs only in Genesis 10:10; Genesis 11:2; Genesis 14:1, Genesis 14:9; Joshua 7:21; Isaiah 11:11; Daniel 1:2; Zechariah 5:11.

To the house of his god - To the temple of Bel, at Babylon. This was a temple of great magnificence, and the worship of Bel was celebrated there with great splendor. For a description of this temple, and of the god which was worshipped there, see the notes at Isaiah 46:1. These vessels were subsequently brought out at the command of Belshazzar, at his celebrated feast, and employed in the conviviality and revelry of that occasion. See Daniel 5:3.

And he brought the vessels into the treasure-house of his god - It would seem rom this that the vessels had been taken to the temple of Bel, or Belus, in Babylon, not to be used in the worship of the idol, but to be laid up among the valuable treasures there. As the temples of the gods were sacred, and were regarded as inviolable, it would be natural to make them the repository of valuable spoils and treasures. Many of the spoils of the Romans were suspended around the walls of the temples of their gods, particularly in the temple of Victory. Compare Eschenberg, "Manual of Class." Literally, pt. iii. Sections 149,150.

Verse 3

And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs - On the general reasons which may have influenced the king to make the selection of the youths here mentioned, see the analysis of the chapter. Of Ashpenaz, nothing more is known than is stated here. Eunuchs were then, as they are now, in constant employ in the harems of the East, and they often rose to great influence and power. A large portion of the slaves employed at the courts in the East, and in the houses of the wealthy, are eunuchs. Compare Burckhardt's "Travels in Nubia," pp. 294,295. They are regarded as the guardians of the female virtue of the harem, but their situation gives them great influence, and they often rise high in the favor of their employers, and often become the principal officers of the court. "The chief of the black eunuchs is yet, at the court of the Sultan, which is

arranged much in accordance with the ancient court of Persia, an officer of the highest dignity. He is called Kislar-Aga, the overseer of the women, and is the chief of the black eunuchs, who guard the harem, or the apartments of the females. The Kislar-Aga enjoys, through his situation, a vast influence, especially in regard to the offices of the court, the principal Agas deriving their situations through him." See Jos. von Hammers "des Osmanischen Reichs Staatsverwalt," Thes i. s. 71, as quoted in Rosenmuller's "Alte und neue Morgenland," ii. 357,358.

That it is common in the East to desire that those employed in public service should have vigorous bodies, and beauty of form, and to train them for this, will be apparent from the following extract: "Curtius says, that in all barbarous or uncivilized countries, the stateliness of the body is held in great veneration; nor do they think him capable of great services or action to whom nature has not vouchsafed to give a beautiful form and aspect. It has always been the custom of eastern nations to choose such for their principal officers, or to wait on princes and great personages. Sir Paul Ricaut observes, ‹That the youths that are designed for the great offices of the Turkish empire must be of admirable features and looks, well shaped in their bodies, and without any defect of nature; for it is conceived that a corrupt and sordid soul can scarcely inhabit in a serene and ingenuous aspect; and I have observed, not only in the seraglio, but also in the courts of great men, their personal attendants have been of comely lusty youths, well habited, deporting themselves with singular modesty and respect in the presence of their masters; so that when a Pascha Aga Spahi travels, he is always attended with a comely equipage, followed by flourishing youths, well clothed, and mounted, in great numbers. ‹" - Burder. This may serve to explain the reason of the arrangement made in respect to these Hebrew youths.

That he should bring certain of the children of Israel - Hebrew, "of the sons of Israel." Nothing can with certainty be determined respecting their "age" by the use of this expression, for the phrase means merely the descendants of Jacob, or Israel, that is, "Jews," and it would be applied to them at any time of life. It would seem, however, from subsequent statements, that those who were selected were young men. It is evident that young men would be better qualified for the object contemplated - to be "trained" in the language and the sciences of the Chaldeans Daniel 1:4 - than those who were at a more advanced period of life.

And of the king's seed, and of the princes - That the most illustrious, and the most promising of them were to be selected; those who would be most adapted to accomplish the object which he had in view. Compare the analysis of the chapter. It is probable that the king presumed that among the royal youths who had been made captive there would be found those of most talent, and of course those best qualified to impart dignity and honor to his government, as well as those who would be most likely to be qualified to make known future events by the interpretation of dreams, and by the prophetic intimations of the Divine will.

Verse 4

Children in whom was no blemish - The word rendered "children" in this place (ילדים *yelâdîym*) is different from that which is rendered "children" in Job 1:3 - בנים *bânnîym*). That word denotes merely that they were "sons," or "descendants," of Israel, without implying anything in regard to their age; the word here used would be appropriate only to those who were at an early period of life, and makes it certain that the king meant that those who were selected should be youths. Compare Genesis 4:23, where the word is rendered "a young man." It is sometimes, indeed, used to denote a son, without reference to age, and is then synonymous with בן *bên* a "son." But it properly means "one born;" that is, "recently born;" a child, Genesis 21:8; Exodus 1:17; Exodus 2:3; and then one in early life. There can be no doubt that the monarch meant to designate youths. So the Vulgate, *pueros*, and the Greek, νεανισκους *neaniskous* and so the Syriac. All these words would be applicable to those who were in early life, or to young men. Compare Introduction to Daniel, Section I. The word "blemish" refers to bodily defect or imperfection. The object was to select those who were most perfect in form, perhaps partly because it was supposed that beautiful youths would most grace the court, and partly because it was supposed that such would be likely to have the brightest intellectual endowments. It was regarded as essential to personal beauty to be without blemish, 2 Samuel 14:25: "But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for beauty; from the sole of Iris foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." Deuteronomy 32:5; Job 11:15; Job 31:7, but that is not the meaning here.

But well-favored - Hebrew, "good of appearance;" that is, beautiful.

And skillful in all wisdom - Intelligent, wise - that is, in all that was esteemed wise in their own country. The object was to bring forward the

most talented and intelligent, as well as the most beautiful, among the Hebrew captives.

And cunning in knowledge - In all that could be known. The distinction between the word here rendered "knowledge" (דעת *daʿath*) and the word rendered "science" (מדע *maddâʿ*) is not apparent. Both come from the word ידע *yâdaʿ* to "know," and would be applicable to any kind of knowledge. The word rendered "cunning" is also derived from the same root, and means "knowing," or "skilled in." We more commonly apply the word to a particular kind of knowledge, meaning artful, shrewd, astute, sly, crafty, designing. But this was not the meaning of the word when the translation of the Bible was made, and it is not employed in that sense in the Scriptures. It is always used in a good sense, meaning intelligent, skillful, experienced, well-instructed. Compare Genesis 25:27; Exodus 26:1; Exodus 28:15; Exodus 38:23; 1 Samuel 16:16; 1 Chronicles 25:7; Psalm 137:5; Isaiah 3:3.

And understanding science - That is, the sciences which prevailed among the Hebrews. They were not a nation distinguished for "science," in the sense in which that term is now commonly understood - embracing astronomy, chemistry, geology, mathematics, electricity, etc.; but their science extended chiefly to music, architecture, natural history, agriculture, morals, theology, war, and the knowledge of future events; in all which they occupied an honorable distinction among the nations. In many of these respects they were, doubtless, far in advance of the Chaldeans; and it was probably the purpose of the Chaldean monarch to avail himself of what they knew.

And such as had ability in them to stand in the king‘s palace - Hebrew, "had strength" - כח *kôach* Properly meaning, who had strength of body for the service which would be required of them in attending on the court. "A firm constitution of body is required for those protracted services of standing in the hall of the royal presence." - Grotius. The word "palace" here (היכל *hêykâl*) is commonly used to denote the temple (2 Kings 24:13; 2 Chronicles 3:17; Jeremiah 50:28; Haggai 2:15. Its proper and primitive signification, however, is a large and magnificent building - a palace - and it was given to the temple as the "palace" of Jehovah, the abode where he dwelt as king of his people.

And whom they might teach - That they might be better qualified for the duties to which they might be called. The purpose was, doubtless (see

analysis), to bring forward their talent, that it might contribute to the splendor of the Chaldean court; but as they were, doubtless, ignorant to a great extent of the language of the Chaldeans, and as there were sciences in which the Chaldeans were supposed to excel, it seemed desirable that they should have all the advantage which could be delayed from a careful training under the best masters.

The learning - - ספר *sêpher* literally, "writing" Isaiah 29:11-12. Gesenius supposes that this means the "writing" of the Chaldeans; or that they might be able to read the language of the Chaldeans. But it, doubtless, included "the knowledge" of what was written, as well as the ability "to read" what was written; that is, the purpose was to instruct them in the sciences which were understood among the Chaldeans. They were distinguished chiefly for such sciences as these:

(1) Astronomy. This science is commonly supposed to have had its orion on the plains of Babylon, and it was early carried there to as high a degree of perfection as it attained in any of the ancient nations. Their mild climate, and their employment as shepherds, leading them to pass much of their time at night under the open heavens, gave them the opportunity of observing the stars, and they amused themselves in marking their positions and their changes, and in mapping out the heavens in a variety of fanciful figures, now called constellations.

(2) Astrology. This was at first a branch of astronomy, or was almost identical with it, for the stars were studied principally to endeavor to ascertain what influence they exerted over the fates of men, and especially what might be predicted from their position, on the birth of an individual, as to his future life. Astrology was then deemed a science whose laws were to be ascertained in the same way as the laws of any other science; and the world has been slow to disabuse itself of the notion that the stars exert an influence over the fates of men. Even Lord Bacon held that it was a science to be "reformed," not wholly rejected.

(3) Magic; soothsaying; divination; or whatever would contribute to lay open the future, or disclose the secrets of the invisible world. Hence, they applied themselves to the interpretation of dreams; they made use of magical arts, probably employing, as magicians do, some of the ascertained results of science in producing optical illusions, impressing the common

with the belief that they were familiar with the secrets of the invisible world; and hence, the name "Chaldean" and "magician" became almost synonymous terms Daniel 2:2; Daniel 4:7; Daniel 5:7.

(4) It is not improbable that they had made advances in other sciences, but of this we have little knowledge. They knew little of the true laws of astronomy, geology, cheministry, electricity, mathematics; and in these, and in kindred departments of science, they may be supposed to have been almost wholly ignorant.

And the tongue of the Chaldeans - In regard to the "Chaldeans," see the notes at Job 1:17; and the notes at Isaiah 23:13. The kingdom of Babylon was composed mainly of Chaldeans, and that kingdom was called "the realm of the Chaldeans" Daniel 9:1. Of that realm, or kingdom, Babylon was the capital. The origin of the Chaldeans has been a subject of great perplexity, on which there is still a considerable variety of opinions. According to Heeren, they came from the North; by Gesenius they are supposed to have come from the mountains of Kurdistan; and by Michaelis, from the steppes of Scythia. They seem to have been an extended race, and probably occupied the whole of the region adjacent to what became Babylonia. Heeren expresses his opinion as to their origin in the following language: "It cannot be doubted that, at some remote period, antecedent to the commencement of historical records. "one mighty race" possessed these vast plains, varying in character according to the country which they inhabited; in the deserts of Arabia, pursuing a nomad life; in Syria, applying themselves to agriculture, and taking up settled abodes; in Babylonia, erecting the most magnificent cities of ancient times; and in Phoenicia, opening the earliest ports, and constructing fleets, which secured to them the commerce of the known world."

There exists at the present time, in the vicinity of the Bahrein Islands, and along the Persian Gulf, in the neighborhood of the Astan River, an Arab tribe, of the name of the "Beni Khaled," who are probably the same people as the "Gens Chaldei" of Pliny, and doubtless the descendants of the ancient race of the Chaldeans. On the question when they became a kingdom, or realm, making Babylon their capital, see the notes at Isaiah 23:13. Compare, for an interesting discussion of the subject, "Forster's Historical Geography of Arabia," vol. i. pp. 49-56. The language of the Chaldeans, in which a considerable part of the book of Daniel is written (see the

Introduction Section IV., III.), differed from the Hebrew, though it was a branch of the same Aramean family of languages. It was, indeed, very closely allied to the Hebrew, but was so different that those who were acquainted with only one of the two languages could not understand the other. Compare Nehemiah 8:8. Both were the offspring of the original Shemitish language. This original language may be properly reduced to three great branches:

(1) The Aramean, which prevailed in Syria, Babylonia, and Mesopotamia; and which may, therefore, be divided into the Syriac or West-Aramean, and the Chaldee or East-Aramean, called after the Babylonian Aramean.

(2) The Hebrew, with which the fragments of the Phoenician coincide.

(3) The Arabic, under which belongs the Ethiopic as a dialect. The Aramean, which, after the return from the Babylonian captivity, was introduced into Palestine, and which prevailed in the time of the Saviour, is commonly called the Syro-Chaldaic, because it was a mixture of the Eastern and Western dialects. The Chaldee, or East Aramean, and the Hebrew, had in general the same stock of original words, but they differed in several respects, such as the following:

(a) Many words of the old primitive language which had remained in one dialect had been lost in the other.

(b) The same word was current in both dialects, but in different significations, because in the one it retained the primitive signification, while in the other it had acquired different meaning.

(c) The Babylonian dialect had borrowed expressions from the Northern Chaldeans, who had made various irruptions into the country. These expressions were foreign to the Shemitish dialects, and belonged to the Japhetian language, which prevailed among the Armenians, the Medes, the Persians, and the Chaldeans, who were probaby related to these. Traces of these foreign words are found in the names of the officers of state, and in expressions having reference to the government.

(d) The Babylonian pronunciation was more easy and more sonorous than the Hebrew. It exchanged the frequent sibilants of the Hebrew, and the other consonants which were hard to pronounce, for others which were less difficult: it dropped the long vowels which were not essential to the forms of words; it preferred the more sonorous "a" to the long "o," and assumed at the end of nouns, in order to lighten the pronunciation, a prolonged auxiliary vowel (the so-called emphatic א (′); it admitted contractions in pronouncing many words) and must have been, as the language of common life, far better adapted to the sluggish Orientals than the harsher Hebrew. See an article "On the Prevalence of the Aramean Language in Palestine in the age of Christ and the Apostles," by Henry F. Pfannkuche, in the "Biblical Repository," vol. i. pp. 318,319. On this verse also, compare the notes at Isaiah 39:7.

Verse 5

And the king appointed them - Calvin supposes that this arrangement was resorted to in order to render them effeminate, and, by a course of luxurious living, to induce them gradually to forget their own country, and that with the same view their names were changed. But there is no evidence that this was the object. The purpose was manifestly to train them in the manner in which it was supposed they would be best fitted, in bodily health, in personal beauty, and in intellectual attainments, to appear at court; and it was presumed that the best style of living which the realm furnished would conduce to this end. That the design was not to make them effeminate, is apparent from Daniel 1:15.

A daily provision - Hebrew, "The thing of a day in his day;" that is, he assigned to them each day a portion of what had been prepared for the royal meal. It was not a permanent provision, but one which was made each day. The word rendered "provision" - פת *path* - means a bit, "crumb," "morsel," Genesis 18:5; Judges 19:5; Psalm 147:17.

Of the king's meat - The word "meat" here means "food," as it does uniformly in the Bible, the Old English word having this signification when the translation was made, and not being limited then, as it is now, to animal food. The word in the original - בג *bag* - is of Persian origin, meaning "food." The two words are frequently compounded - פתבג *pathebag* Daniel 1:5, Daniel 1:8, Daniel 1:13, Daniel 1:15-16; Daniel 11:26; and the

compound means delicate food, dainties; literally, food of the father, i. e., the king; or, according to Lorsbach, in Archiv. f. "Morgenl." Litt. II., 313, food for idols, or the gods; - in either case denoting delicate food; luxurious living. - Gesenius, "Lex."

And of the wine which he drank - Margin, "of his drink." Such wine as the king was accustomed to drink. It may be presumed that this was the best kind of wine. From anything that appears, this was furnished to them in abundance; and with the leisure which they had, they could hardly be thrown into stronger temptation to excessive indulgence.

So nourishing them three years - As long as was supposed to be necessary in order to develop their physical beauty and strength, and to make them well acquainted with the language and learning of the Chaldeans. The object was to prepare them to give as much dignity and ornament to the court as possible.

That at the end thereof they might stand before the king - Notes, Daniel 1:4. On the arrangements made to bring forward these youths, the editor of the "Pictorial Bible" makes the following remarks, showing the correspondence between these arrangements and what usually occurs in the East: "There is not a single intimation which may not be illustrated from the customs of the Turkish seraglio until some alterations were made in this, as in other matters, by the present sultan (Mahmoud). The pages of the seraglio, and officers of the court, as well as the greater part of the public functionaries and governors of provinces, were originally Christian boys, taken captive in war, or bought or stolen in time of peace. The finest and most capable of these were sent to the palace, and, if accepted, were placed under the charge of the chief of the white eunuchs. The lads did not themselves become eunuchs; which we notice, because it has been erroneously inferred, that Daniel and the other Hebrew youths "must" have been made eunuchs, "because" they were committed to the care of the chief eunuch.

The accepted lads were brought up in the religion of their masters; and there were schools in the palace where they received such complete instruction in Turkish learning and science as it was the lot of few others to obtain. Among their accomplishments we find it mentioned, that the greatest pains were taken to teach them to speak the Turkish language (a foreign one to them) with the greatest purity, as spoken at court. Compare this with "Teach them the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans." The lads

were clothed very neatly, and well, but temperately dieted. They slept in large chambers, where there were rows of beds. Every one slept separately; and between every third or fourth bed lay a white eunuch, who served as a sort of guard, and was bound to keep a careful eye upon the lads near him, and report his observations to his superior. When any of them arrived at a proper age, they were instructed in military exercises, and pains taken to make them active, robust, and brave.

Every one, also, according to the custom of the country, was taught some mechanical or liberal art, to serve him as a resource in adversity. When their education was completed in all its branches, those who had displayed the most capacity and valor were employed about the person of the king, and the rest given to the service of the treasury, and the other offices of the extensive establishment to which they belonged. In due time the more talented or successful young men got promoted to the various high court offices which gave them access to the private apartments of the seraglio, so that they at almost any time could see and speak to their great master. This advantage soon paved the way for their promotion to the government of provinces, and to military commands; and it has often happened that favorite court officers have stepped at once into the post of grand vizier, or chief minister, and other high offices of state, without having previously been abroad in the world as pashas and military commanders. How well this agrees to, and illustrates the usage of the Babylonian court, will clearly appear to the reader without particular indication. See Habesci‘s “Ottoman Empire;” Tavernier‘s “Relation de l‘Interieur du Sérail du Grand Seigneur.”

Verse 6

Now among these were of the children of Judah - That is, these were a part of those who were selected. They are mentioned because they became so prominent in the transactions which are subsequently recorded in this book, and because they evinced such extraordinary virtue in the development of the principles in which they had been trained, and in the remarkable trials through which they were called to pass. It does not appear that they are mentioned here particularly on account of any distinction of birth or rank, for though they were among the noble and promising youth of the land, yet it is clear that others of the same rank and promise also were

selected, Daniel 1:3. The phrase "the children of Judah" is only another term to denote that they were Hebrews. They belonged to the tribe, or the kingdom of Judah.

Daniel - This name (דניאל *dânîyê'l*) means properly "judge of God;" that is, one who acts as judge in the name of God. Why this name was given to him is not known. We cannot, however, fail to be struck with its appropriateness, as the events of his life showed. Nor is it known whether he belonged to the royal family, or to the nobles of the land, but as the selection was made from that class it is probable. Those who were at first carried into captivity were selected exclusively from the more elevated classes of society, and there is every reason to believe that Daniel belonged to a family of rank and consequence. The Jews say that he was of the royal family, and was descended from Hezekiah, and cite his history in confirmation of the prophecy addressed by Isaiah to that monarch, "Of thy sons which shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon," Isaiah 39:7. Compare Introduction Section I.

Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah - Of the rank and early history of these young men nothing is known. They became celebrated for their refusal to worship the golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel 3:12, following.

Verse 7

Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names - This practice is common in Oriental courts. "The captive youths referred to in the notes on Daniel 1:5, in the Turkish court also receive new names, that is, Mahometan names, their former names being Christian." - "Pict. Bible." It is "possible" that this changing of their names may have been designed to make them forget their country, and their religion, and to lead them more entirely to identify themselves with the people in whose service they were now to be employed, though nothing of this is intimated in the history. Such a change, it is easy to conceive, might do much to make them feel that they were identified with the people among whom they were adopted, and to make them forget the customs and opinions of their own country. It is a circumstance which may give some additional probability to this supposition, that it is quite a common thing now at missionary stations to give new names to the children who are taken into the boarding-schools, and especially the names of the Christian benefactors at whose expense they

are supported. Compare the same general character, for this change of names may have been, that the name of the true God constituted a part of their own names, and that thus they were constantly reminded of him and his worship. In the new names given them, the appellation of some of the idols worshipped in Babylon was incorporated, and this might serve as remembrancers of the divinities to whose service it was doubtless the intention to win them.

For he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar - The name Belteshazzar (בלטשאצר *bêlṭesha'tstsar*) is compounded of two words, and means according to Gesenius, "Bel's prince;" that is, he whom Bel favors. "Bel" was the principal divinity worshipped at Babylon (notes, Isaiah 46:1), and this name would, therefore, be likely to impress the youthful Daniel with the idea that he was a favorite of this divinity, and to attract him to his service. It was a flattering distinction that he was one of the favorites of the principal god worshipped in Babylon, and this was not improbably designed to turn his attention from the God whose name had been incorporated in his own. The giving of this name seemed to imply, in the apprehension of Nebuchadnezzar, that the spirit of the gods was in him on whom it was conferred. See Daniel 4:8-9.

And to Hananiah, of Shadrach - The name "Hananiah" (חנניה *chănanyâh*) means, "whom Jehovah has graciously given," and is the same with Ananias (Greek, Ανανίας *Ananias*), and would serve to remind its possessor of the name of "Jehovah," and of his mercy. The name Shadrach (שדרך *shadrak*), according to Lorsbach, means "young friend of the king;" according to Bohlen, it means "rejoicing in the way," and this last signification is the one which Gesenius prefers. In either signification it would contribute to a forgetfulness of the interesting significancy of the former name, and tend to obliterate the remembrance of the early training in the service of Jehovah.

And to Mishael, of Meshach - The name "Mishael" (מישאל *mîyshâ'êl*) means, "who is what God is?" - from מי *mîy* "who," ש *sha* "what," and אל *ēl* "God." It would thus be a remembrancer of the greatness of God; of his supremacy over all his creatures, and of his "incomparable" exaltation over the universe. The signification of the name "Meshach" (מישך *mêyshak*) is less known. The Persian word *ovicula* means a little sheep (Gesenius), but why this name was given we are not informed. Might it have been on account of his beauty, his gentleness, his lamb-like disposition? If so,

nothing perhaps would be better fitted to turn away the thoughts from the great God and his service to himself.

And to Azariah, of Abednego - The name "Azaziah" (עזריה ʿăzaryâh) means, "whom Jehovah helps," from עזר ʿâzar "to help," and יה yâh the same as "Jah" (a shortened form of Jehovah, יהוה yehovâh), This name, therefore, had a striking significancy, and would be a constant remembrancer of the true God, and of the value of his favor and protection. The name Abed-nego (עבד נגו ʿăbêd negô) means, "a servant of Nego," or perhaps of "Nebo" - נבו nebô This word "Nebo," among the Chaldeans, probably denoted the planet Mercury. This planet was worshipped by them, and by the Arabs, as the celestial scribe or writer. See the notes at Isaiah 46:1. The Divine worship paid to this planet by the Chaldeans is attested, says Gesenius, by the many compound proper names of which this name forms a part; as Nebuchadnezzar, Nebushasban, and others mentioned in classic writers; as Nabonedus, Nabonassar, Nabonabus, etc. This change of name, therefore, was designed to denote a consecration to the service of this idol-god, and the change was eminently adapted to make him to whom it was given forget the true God, to whom, in earlier days, he had been devoted. It was only extraordinary grace which could have kept these youths in the paths of their early training, and in the faithful service of that God to whom they had been early consecrated, amidst the temptations by which they were now surrounded in a foreign land, and the influences which were employed to alienate them from the God of their fathers.

Verse 8

But Daniel purposed in his heart - Evidently in concurrence with the youths who had been selected with him. See Daniel 1:11-13. Daniel, it seems, formed this as a "decided" purpose, and "meant" to carry it into effect, as a matter of principle, though he designed to secure his object, if possible, by making a request that he might be "allowed" to pursue that course Daniel 1:12, and wished not to give offence, or to provoke opposition. What would have been the result if he had not obtained permission we know not; but the probability is, that he would have thrown himself upon the protection of God, as he afterward did Daniel 1:14. It is always better, even where there is decided principle, and a settled purpose in a matter, to obtain an object by a peaceful request, than to attempt to secure it by violence.

That he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat - Notes, Daniel 1:5. The word which is rendered "defile himself" - יתגאל *yîthegâ'al* from גאל *gā'al* - is commonly used in connection with "redemption," its first and usual meaning being to redeem, to ransom. In later Hebrew, however, it means, to be defiled; to be polluted, to be unclean. The "connection" between these significations of the word is not apparent, unless, as redemption was accomplished with the shedding of blood, rendering the place where it was shed defiled, the idea came to be permanently attached to the word. The defilement here referred to in the case of Daniel probably was, that by partaking of this food he might, in some way, be regarded as countenancing idolatry, or as lending his sanction to a mode of living which was inconsistent with his principles, and which was perilous to his health and morals. The Syriac renders this simply, "that he would not eat," without implying that there would be defilement.

Nor with the wine which he drank - As being contrary to his principles, and perilous to his morals and happiness.

Therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself - That he might be permitted to abstain from the luxuries set before him. It would seem from this, that he represented to the prince of the eunuchs the real danger which he apprehended, or the real cause why he wished to abstain - that he would regard the use of these viands as contrary to the habits which he had formed, as a violation of the principles of his religion; and as, in his circumstances, wrong as well as perilous. This he presented as a "request." He asked it, therefore, as a favor, preferring to use mild and gentle means for securing the object, rather than to put himself in the attitude of open resistance to the wishes of the monarch. What "reasons" influenced him to choose this course, and to ask to be permitted to live on a more temperate and abstemious diet, we are not informed. Assuming, however, what is apparent from the whole narrative, that he had been educated in the doctrines of the true religion, and in the principles of temperance, it is not difficult to conceive what reasons "would" influence a virtuous youth in such circumstances, and we cannot be in much danger of error in suggesting the following:

(1) It is not improbable that the food which was offered him had been, in some way, connected with idolatry, and that his participation in it would be construed as countenancing the worship of idols. - Calvin. It is known that a part of the animals offered in sacrifice was sold in the market; and known,

also, that splendid entertainments were often made in honor of particular idols, and on the sacrifices which had been offered to them. Compare 1 Corinthians 8:1-13. Doubtless, also, a considerable part of the food which was served up at the royal table consisted of articles which, by the Jewish law, were prohibited as unclean. It was represented by the prophets, as one part of the evils of a captivity in a foreign land, that the people would be under a necessity of eating what was regarded as unclean. Thus, in Ezekiel 4:13: "And the Lord said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them." Hosea 9:3: "they shall not dwell in the Lord's land, but Ephraim shall return to Egypt; and shall eat unclean things in Assyria." Rosenmuller remarks on this passage ("Alte u. neue Morgenland," 1076), "It was customary among the ancients to bring a portion of what was eaten and drank as an offering to the gods, as a sign of thankful recognition that all which men enjoy is their gift. Among the Romans these gifts were called "libamina," so that with each meal there was connected an act of offering. Hence Daniel and his friends regarded what was brought from the royal table as food which had been offered to the gods, and therefore as impure."

(2) Daniel and his friends were, doubtless, restrained from partaking of the food and drink offered to them by a regard to the principles of temperance in which they had been educated, and by a fear of the consequences which would follow from indulgence. They had evidently been trained in the ways of strict temperance. But now new scenes opened to them, and new temptations were before them. They were among strangers. They were noticed and flattered. They had an opportunity of indulging in the pleasures of the table, such as captive youth rarely enjoyed. This opportunity, there can be no doubt, they regarded as a temptation to their virtue, and as in the highest degree perilous to their principles, and they, therefore, sought to resist the temptation. They were captives - exiles from their country - in circumstances of great depression and humiliation, and they did not wish to forget that circumstance. - Calvin. Their land was in ruins; the temple where they and their fathers had worshipped had been desecrated and plundered; their kindred and countrymen were pining in exile; everything called them to a mode of life which would be in accordance with these melancholy facts, and they, doubtless, felt that it

would be in every way inappropriate for them to indulge in luxurious living, and revel in the pleasures of a banquet.

But they were also, doubtless, restrained from these indulgences by a reference to the dangers which would follow. It required not great penetration or experience, indeed, to perceive, that in their circumstances - young men as they were, suddenly noticed and honored - compliance would be perilous to their virtue; but it did require uncommon strength of principle to meet the temptation. Rare has been the stern virtue among young men which could resist so strong allurements; seldom, comparatively, have those who have been unexpectedly thrown, in the course of events, into the temptations of a great city in a foreign land, and flattered by the attention of those in the higher walks of life, been sufficiently firm in principle to assert the early principles of temperance and virtue in which they may have been trained. Rare has it been that a youth in such circumstances would form the steady purpose not to "defile himself" by the tempting allurements set before him, and that, at all hazards, he would adhere to the principles in which he had been educated.

Verse 9

Now God had brought Daniel into favor - Compare Genesis 39:21; Proverbs 16:7. By what means this had been done is not mentioned. It may be presumed, however, that it was by the attractiveness of his person and manners, and by the evidence of promising talent which he had evinced. Whatever were the means, however, two things are worthy of notice:

(1) The effect of this on the subsequent fortunes of Daniel. It was to him a great advantage, that by the friendship of this man he was enabled to carry out the purposes of temperance and religion which he had formed, without coming in conflict with those who were in power.

(2) God was the author of the favor which was thus shown to Daniel. It was by a controlling influence which he exerted, that this result had been secured, and Daniel traced it directly to him. We may hence learn that the favor of others toward us is to be traced to the hand of God, and if we are prospered in the world, and are permitted to enjoy the friendship of those who have it in their power to benefit us, though it may be on account of our personal qualifications, we should learn to attribute it all to God. There

would have been great reason to apprehend beforehand, that the refusal of Daniel and his companions to partake of the food prepared for them would have been construed as an affront offered to the king, especially if it was understood to be on the ground that they regarded it as "defilement" or "pollution" to partake of it; but God overruled it all so as to secure the favor of those in power.

Verse 10

And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king - He was apprehensive that if Daniel appeared less healthful, or cheerful, or beautiful, than it was supposed he would under the prescribed mode of life, it would be construed as disobedience of the commands of the king on his part, and that it would be inferred that the wan and emaciated appearance of Daniel was caused by the fact that the food which had been ordered had not been furnished, but had been embezzled by the officer who had it in charge. We have only to remember the strict and arbitrary nature of Oriental monarchies to see that there were just grounds for the apprehensions here expressed.

For why should he see your faces worse liking - Margin, "sadder." The Hebrew word (זעפים *zoʿăpîym*) means, properly, angry; and then morose, gloomy, sad. The primary idea seems to be, that of "any" painful, or unpleasant emotion of the mind which depicts itself on the countenance - whether anger, sorrow, envy, lowness of spirits, etc. Greek, σκυθρωπὰ *skuthrōpa* - stern, gloomy, sad, Matthew 6:16; Luke 24:17. Here the reference is not to the expression of angry feelings in the countenance, but to the countenance as fallen away by fasting, or poor living. "Than the children." The youths, or young men. The same word is here used which occurs in Daniel 1:4. Compare the note at that verse.

Which are of your sort - Margin, "term," or "continuance." The Hebrew word here used (גיל *gîyl*) means, properly, a circle, or circuit; hence an age, and then the men of an age, a generation. - "Gesenius." The word is not used, however, in the Scriptures elsewhere in this sense. Elsewhere it is rendered "joy," or "rejoicing," Job 3:22; Psalm 43:4; Psalm 45:15; Psalm 65:12; Proverbs 23:24; Isaiah 16:10; Isaiah 35:2; Isaiah 65:18; Jeremiah 48:33; Hosea 9:1; Joel 1:16. This meaning it has from the usual sense of the verb (גיל *gîyl*) "to exult," or "rejoice." The verb properly means, to move in a circle; then to "dance" in a circle; and then to exult or rejoice. The word

"circle," as often used now to denote those of a certain class, rank, or character, would accurately express the sense here. Thus we speak of those in the "religious" circles, in the social circles, etc. The reference here is to those of the same class with Daniel; to wit, in the arrangements made for presenting them before the king. Greek, συνήλικα ὑμῶν *sunēlika humōn* of your age.

Then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king - As if he had disregarded the orders given him, or had embezzled what had been provided for these youths, and had furnished them with inferior fare. In the arbitrary courts of the East, nothing would be more natural than that such an apparent failure in the performance of what was enjoined would peril his life. The word used here, and rendered "make me endanger" - חוב *chûb* - occurs nowhere else in the Bible. It means, in Piel, to make guilty; to cause to forfeit. Greek, καταδικάσητε *katadikasēte* - you will condemn, or cause me to be condemned.

Verse 11

Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel … - Margin, or, the "steward." It is not easy to determine whether the word here used (מלצר *meltsâr*) is to be regarded as a proper name, or the name of an office. It occurs nowhere else, except in Daniel 1:16, applied to the same person. Gesenius regards it as denoting the name of an office in the Babylonian court - master of the wine, chief butler. Others regard it as meaning a treasurer. The word is still in use in Persia. The Vulgate renders it as a proper name - Malasar; and so the Syriac - Meshitzar; and so the Greek - Ἀμελσὰδ *Amelsad* The use of the article in the word (המלצר *hameltsâr*) would seem to imply that it denoted the name of an "office," and nothing would be more probable than that the actual furnishing of the daily portion of food would be entrusted to a steward, or to some incumbent of an office inferior to that sustained by Ashpenaz, Daniel 1:3.

Verse 12

Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days - A period which would indicate the probable result of the entire experiment. If during that period there were no indications of diminished health, beauty, or vigour, it would not be unfair to presume that the experiment in behalf of temperance would be successful, and it would not be improper then to ask that it might be continued longer.

And let them give us pulse to eat - Margin, "of pulse that we may eat." Hebrew, "Let them give us of pulse, and we will eat." The word "pulse" with us means leguminous plants with thin seeds; that is, plants with a pericarp, or seed-vessel, of two valves, having the seeds fixed to one suture only. In popular language the "legume" is called a "pod;" as a "pea-pod," or "bean-pod," and the word is commonly applied to peas or beans. The Hebrew word (זרעים *zēroʿîym*) would properly have reference to seeds of any kind - from זרע *zâraʿ* to disperse, to scatter seed, to sow. Then it would refer to plants that bear seed, of all kinds, and would be by no means limited to pulse - as pease or beans. It is rendered by Gesenius, "seed-herbs, greens, vegetables; i. e., vegetable food, such as was eaten in half-fast, opposed to meats and the more delicate kinds of food." The word occurs only here and in Daniel 1:16. It is rendered in the Vulgate, "legumina;" and in the Greek, ἀπὸ τῶν σπερμάτων *apo tōn spermatōn* - "from seeds." It is not a proper construction to limit this to "pulse," or to suppose that Daniel desired to live solely on pease or beans; but the fair interpretation is to apply it to what grows up from "seeds" - such, probably, as would be sown in a garden, or, as we would now express it, "vegetable diet." It was designed as an experiment - and was a very interesting one - to show the legitimate effect of such a diet in promoting beauty and health, and the result is worthy of special notice as contrasted with a more luxurious mode of life.

And water to drink - This, also, was a most interesting and important experiment, to show that wine was not necessary to produce healthfulness of appearance, or manly strength and beauty. It was an experiment to illustrate the effect of "cold water" as a beverage, made by an interesting group of young men, when surrounded by great temptations, and is, therefore, worthy of particular attention.

Verse 13

Then let our countenances be looked upon - One of the "objects" to be secured by this whole trial was to promote their personal beauty, and their healthful appearance Daniel 1:4-5, and Daniel was willing that the trial should be made with reference to that, and that a judgment should be formed from the observed effect of their temperate mode of life. The Hebrew word rendered countenance (מראה *mar'eh*) is not limited to the "face," as the word countenance is with us. It refers to the whole appearance, the form, the "looks;" and the expression here is equivalent to,

"Then look on us, and see what the result has been, and deal with us accordingly" The Greek is, αἱ ἰδέαι ἡμῶν *hai ideai hēmōn* - our appearance.

Of the children - Youths; young men. Notes, Daniel 1:4. The reference is, probably, to the Chaldean youths who were trained up amidst the luxuries of the court. It is possible, however, that the reference is to Hebrew youths who were less scrupulous than Daniel and his companions.

And as thou seest, deal with thy servants - As the result shall be. That is, let us be presented at court, and promoted or not, as the result of our mode of living shall be. What the effect would have been if there had been a failure, we are not informed. Whether it would have endangered their lives, or whether it would have been merely a forfeiture of the proffered honors and advantages, we have no means of determining. It is evident that Daniel had no apprehension as to the issue.

Verse 14

So he consented to them in this matter - Hebrew, "he heard them in this thing." The experiment was such, since it was to be for so short a time, that he ran little risk in the matter, as at the end of the ten days he supposed that it would be easy to change their mode of diet if the trial was unsuccessful.

Verse 15

And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer - Hebrew, "good;" that is, they appeared more beautiful and healthful. The experiment was successful. There was no diminution of beauty, of vigour, or of the usual indications of health. One of the results of a course of temperance appears in the countenance, and it is among the wise appointments of God that it should be so. He has so made us, that while the other parts of the body may be protected from the gaze of men, it is necessary that the "face" should be exposed. Hence, he has made the countenance the principal scat of expression, for the chief muscles which indicate expression have their location there. See the valuable work of Sir Charles Bell on the "Anatomy of Expression," London, 1844. Hence, there are certain marks of guilt and vice which always are indicated in the countenance. God has so made us that the drunkard and the glutton must proclaim their own guilt and shame.

The bloated face, the haggard aspect, the look of folly, the "heaviness of the eye, the disposition to squint, and to see double, and a forcible elevation of the eyebrow to counteract the dropping of the upper eyelid, and preserve

the eyes from closing," are all marks which God has appointed to betray and expose the life of indulgence. "Arrangements are made for these expressions in the very anatomy of the face, and no art of man can prevent it." - Bell on the "Anatomy of Expression," p. 106. God meant that if man "would" be intemperate he should himself proclaim it to the world, and that his fellow-men should be apprised of his guilt. This was intended to be one of the safeguards of virtue. The young man who will be intemperate "knows" what the result must be. He is apprised of it in the loathsome aspect of every drunkard whom he meets. He knows that if he yields himself to indulgence in intoxicating drink, he must soon proclaim it himself to the wide world.

No matter how beautiful, or fresh, or blooming, or healthful, he may now be; no matter how bright the eye, or ruddy the cheek, or eloquent the tongue; the eye, and the cheek, and the tongue will soon become indices of his manner of life, and the loathsomeness and offensiveness of the once beautiful and blooming countenance must pay the penalty of his folly. And in like manner, and for the same reason, the countenance is an indication of temperance and purity. The bright and steady eye, the blooming cheek, the lips that eloquently or gracefully utter the sentiments of virtue, proclaim the purity of the life, and are the natural indices to our fellow-men that we live in accordance with the great and benevolent laws of our nature, and are among the rewards of temperance and virtue.

Verse 16

Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat … - Doubtless permanently. The experiment had been satisfactory, and it was inferred that if the course of temperance could be practiced for ten days without unhappy results, there would be safety in suffering it to be continued. We may remark on this:

I. That the experiment was a most important one, not only for the object then immediately in view, but for furnishing lessons of permanent instruction adapted to future times. It was worth one such trial, and it was desirable to have one such illustration of the effect of temperance recorded. There are so strong propensities in our nature to indulgence; there are so many temptations set before the young; there is so much that allures in a luxurious mode of life, and so much of conviviality and happiness is

supposed to be connected with the social glass, that it was well to have a fair trial made, and that the result should be recorded for the instruction of future times.

II. It was especially desirable that the experiment should be made of the effect of strict abstinence from the use of "wine." Distilled liquors were indeed then unknown; but alcohol, the intoxicating principle in all ardent spirits, then existed, as it does now, in wine, and was then, as it is now, of the same nature as when found in other substances. It was in the use of wine that the principal danger of intemperance then lay; and it may be added, that in reference to a very large class of persons of both sexes, it is in the use of wine that the principal danger always lies. There are multitudes, especially of young men, who are in little or no danger of becoming intemperate from the use of the stronger kinds of intoxicating drinks. They would never "begin" with them. But the use of "wine" is so respectable in the view of the upper classes of society; it is deemed so essential to the banquet; it constitutes so much, apparently, a mark of distinction, from the fact that ordinarily only the rich can afford to indulge in it; its use is regarded extensively as so proper for even refined and delicate females, and is so often sanctioned by their participating in it; it is so difficult to frame an argument against it that will be decisive; there is so much that is plausible that may be said in favor or in justification of its use, and it is so much sanctioned by the ministers of religion, and by those of influence in the churches, that one of the principal dangers of the young arises from the temptation to indulgence in wine, and it was well that there should be a fair trial of the comparative benefit of total abstinence. A trial could scarcely have been made under better circumstances than in the case before us. There was every inducement to indulgence which is ever likely to occur; there was as much to make it a mere matter of "principle" to abstain from it as can be found now in any circumstances, and the experiment was as triumphant and satisfactory as could be desired.

III. The result of the experiment.

(a) It was complete and satisfactory. "More" was accomplished in the matter of the trial by abstinence than by indulgence. Those who abstained were more healthful, more beautiful, more vigorous than the others. And

there was nothing miraculous - nothing that occurred in that case which does not occur in similar cases. Sir John Chardin remarks, respecting those whom he had seen in the East, “that the countenances of the kechicks (monks) are in fact more rosy and smooth than those of others; and that those who fast much, I mean the Armenians and the Greeks, are, notwithstanding, very beautiful, sparkling with health, with a clear and lively countenance.” He also takes notice of the very great abstemiousness of the Brahmins in the Indies, who lodge on the ground, abstain from music, from all sorts of agreeable smells, who go very meanly clothed, are almost always wet, either by going into water, or by rain; “yet,” says he, “I have seen also many of them very handsome and healthful.” Harmer‘s “Observa.” ii. pp. 112,113.

(b) The experiment has often been made, and with equal success, in modern times, and especially since the commencement of the temperance reformation, and an opportunity has been given of furnishing the most decisive proofs of the effects of temperance in contrast with indulgence in the use of wine and of other intoxicating drinks. This experiment has been made on a wide scale, and with the same result. It is demonstrated, as in the case of Daniel, that “more” will be secured of what men are so anxious usually to obtain, and of what it is desirable to obtain, than can be by indulgence.

(1) There will be “more” beauty of personal appearance. Indulgence in intoxicating drinks leaves its traces on the countenance - the skin, the eye, the nose, the whole expression - as God “meant” it should. See the notes at Daniel 1:15. No one can hope to retain beauty of complexion or countenance who indulges freely in the use of intoxicating drinks.

(2) “More” clearness of mind and intellectual vigour can be secured by abstinence than by indulgence. It is true that, as was often the case with Byron and Burns, stimulating drinks may excite the mind to brilliant temporary efforts; but the effect soon ceases, and the mind makes a compensation for its over-worked powers by sinking down below its proper level as it had been excited above. It will demand a penalty in the exhausted energies, and in the incapacity for even its usual efforts, and unless the exhausting stimulus be again applied, it cannot rise even to its usual level,

and when often applied the mind is divested of “all” its elasticity and vigour; the physical frame loses its power to endure the excitement; and the light of genius is put out, and the body sinks to the grave. He who wishes to make the most of his mind “in the long run,” whatever genius he may be endowed with, will be a temperate man. His powers will be retained uniformly at a higher elevation, and they will maintain their balance and their vigour longer.

(3) the same is true in regard to everything which requires vigour of body. The Roman soldier, who carried his eagle around the world, and who braved the dangers of every clime - equally bold and vigorous, and hardy, and daring amidst polar snows, and the burning sands of the equator - was a stranger to intoxicating drinks. He was allowed only vinegar and water, and his extraordinary vigour was the result of the most abstemious fare. The wrestlers in the Olympic and Isthmian games, who did as much to give suppleness, vigour, and beauty to the body, as could be done by the most careful training, abstained from the use of wine and all that would enervate. Since the temperance reformation commenced in this land, the experiment has been made in every way possible, and it has been “settled” that a man will do more work, and do it better; that he can bear more fatigue, can travel farther, can better endure the severity of cold in the winter, and of toil in the heat of summer, by strict temperance, than he can if he indulges in the use of intoxicating drinks. Never was the result of an experiment more uniform than this has been; never has there been a case where the testimony of those who have had an opportunity of witnessing it was more decided and harmonious; never was there a question in regard to the effect of a certain course on health in which the testimony of physicians has been more uniform; and never has there been a question in regard to the amount of labor which a man could do, on which the testimony of respectable farmers, and master mechanics, and overseers of public works, could be more decided.

(4) the full force of these remarks about temperance in general, applies to the use of “wine.” It was in respect to “wine” that the experiment before us was made, and it is this which gives it, in a great degree, its value and importance. Distilled spirits were then unknown, but it was of importance that a fair experiment should be made of the effect of abstinence from wine.

The great danger of intemperance, taking the world at large, has been, and is still, from the use of wine. This danger affects particularly the upper classes in society and young men. It is by the use of wine, in a great majority of instances, that the peril commences, and that the habit of drinking is formed. Let it be remembered, also, that the intoxicating principle is the same in wine as in any other drink that produces intemperance. It is "alcohol" - the same substance precisely, whether it be driven off by heat from wine, beer, or cider, and condensed by distillation, or whether it remain in these liquids without being distilled. It is neither more nor less intoxicating in one form than it is in the other. It is only more condensed and concentrated in one case than in the other, better capable of preservation, and more convenient for purposes of commerce. Every "principle," therefore, which applies to the temperance cause at all, applies to the use of wine; and every consideration derived from health, beauty, vigour, length of days, reputation, property, or salvation, which should induce a young man to abstain from ardent spirits at all should induce him to abstain, as Daniel did, from the use of wine.

Verse 17

As for these four children - On the word "children," see the notes at Daniel 1:4. Compare Daniel 1:6.

God gave them knowledge and skill - See the notes at Daniel 1:9. There is no reason to suppose that in the "knowledge and skill" here referred to, it is meant to be implied that there was anything miraculous, or that there was any direct inspiration. Inspiration was evidently confined to Daniel, and pertained to what is spoken of under the head of "visions and dreams." The fact that "all" this was to be attributed to God as his gift, is in accordance with the common method of speaking in the Scriptures; and it is also in accordance with "fact," that "all" knowledge is to be traced to God. See Exodus 31:2-3. God formed the intellect; he preserves the exercise of reason; he furnishes us instructors; he gives us clearness of perception; he enables us to take advantage of bright thoughts and happy suggestions which occur in our own minds, as much as he sends rain, and dew, and sunshine on the fields of the farmer, and endows him with skill. Compare Isaiah 28:26, "For his God doth instruct him." The knowledge and skill which we may acquire, therefore, should be as much attributed to God as the success of the farmer should. Compare Job 32:8, "For there is a spirit in

man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." In the case before us, there is no reason to doubt that the natural powers of these young men had been diligently applied during the three years of their trial Daniel 1:5, and under the advantages of a strict course of temperance; and that the knowledge here spoken of was the result of such an application to their studies. On the meaning of the words "knowledge" and "skill" here, see the notes at Daniel 1:4.

In all learning and wisdom - See also the notes at Daniel 1:4.

And Daniel had understanding - Showing that in that respect there was a special endowment in his case; a kind of knowledge imparted which could be communicated only by special inspiration. The margin is, "he made Daniel understand." The margin is in accordance with the Hebrew, but the sense is the same.

In all visions - On the word rendered "visions" - חזון *châzôn* - see the notes at Isaiah 1:1, and the introduction to Isaiah, Section 7. (4). It is a term frequently employed in reference to prophecy, and designates the usual method by which future events were made known. The prophet was permitted to see those events "as if" they were made to pass before the eye, and to describe them "as if" they were objects of sight. Here the word seems to be used to denote all supernatural appearances; all that God permitted him to see that in any way shadowed forth the future. It would seem that men who were not inspired were permitted occasionally to behold such supernatural appearances, though they were not able to interpret them. Thus their attention would be particularly called to them, and they would be prepared to admit the truth of what the interpreter communicated to them. Compare Daniel 5:5-6; Genesis 40:5; Genesis 41:1-7. Daniel was so endowed that he could interpret the meaning of these mysterious appearances, and thus convey important messages to men. The same endowment had been conferred on Joseph when in Egypt. See the passages referred to in Genesis.

And dreams - One of the ways by which the will of God was anciently communicated to men. See Introduction to Isaiah, Section 7. (2), and the notes at Job 33:14-18. Daniel, like Joseph before him, was supernaturally endowed to explain these messages which God sent to men, or to unfold these preintimations of coming events. This was a kind of knowledge which the Chaldeans particularly sought, and on which they especially prided themselves; and it was important, in order to "stain the pride of all human

glory," and to make "the wisdom of the wise" in Babylon to be seen to be comparative "folly," to endow one man from the land of the prophets in the most ample manner with this knowledge, as it was important to do the same thing at the court of Pharaoh by the superior endowments of Joseph Genesis 41:8.

Verse 18

Now at the end of the days … - After three years. See Daniel 1:5.

The prince of the eunuchs brought them in - Daniel, his three friends, and the others who had been selected and trained for the same purpose.

Verse 19

And the king communed with them - Hebrew, "spake with them." Probably he conversed with them on the points which had constituted the principal subjects of their studies; or he "examined" them. It is easy to imagine that this must have been to these young men a severe ordeal.

And among them all was found none like Daniel … - Daniel and his three friends had pursued a course of strict temperance; they had come to their daily task with clear heads and pure hearts - free from the oppression and lethargy of surfeit, and the excitement of wine; they had prosecuted their studies in the enjoyment of fine health, and with the buoyousness and elasticity of spirit produced by temperance, and they now showed the result of such a course of training. Young men of temperance, other things being equal, will greatly surpass others in their preparation for the duties of life in any profession or calling.

Therefore stood they before the king - It is not said, indeed, that the others were not permitted also to stand before the monarch, but the object of the historian is to trace the means by which "these youths" rose to such eminence and virtue. It is clear, however, that whatever may have been the result on the others, the historian means to say that these young men rose to higher eminence than they did, and were permitted to stand nearer the throne. The phrase "stood before the king," is one which denotes elevated rank. They were employed in honorable offices at the court, and received peculiar marks of the royal favor.

Verse 20

And in all matters of wisdom and understanding - Margin, "of." The Hebrew is, "Everything of wisdom of understanding." The Greek, "In all things of wisdom "and" knowledge." The meaning is, in everything which required peculiar wisdom to understand and explain it. The points submitted

were such as would appropriately come before the minds of the sages and magicians who were employed as counselors at court.

He found them ten times better - Better counselors, better informed. Hebrew, "ten "hands" above the magicians;" that is, ten "times," or "many" times. In this sense the word "ten" is used in Genesis 31:7, Genesis 31:41; Numbers 14:22; Nehemiah 4:12; Job 19:3. They greatly surpassed them.

Than all the magicians - Greek, τοὺς ἐπαοιδοὺς *tous epaoidous* The Greek word means, "those singing to;" then those who propose to heal the sick by singing; then those who practice magical arts or incantations - particularly with the idea of charming with songs; and then those who accomplish anything surpassing human power by mysterious and supernatural means. - Passow. The Hebrew word (הרטמים *chareṭummîym*), occurs only in the following places in the Scriptures, in all of which it is rendered "magicians:" - Genesis 41:8, Genesis 41:24; Exodus 7:11, Exodus 7:22; Exodus 8:7 (3), 18 (14), 19 (15); Exodus 9:11; Daniel 1:20; Daniel 2:2. From this it appears that it applied only to the magicians in Egypt and in Babylon, and doubtless substantially the same class of persons is referred to. It is found only in the plural number, "perhaps" implying that they formed companies, or that they were always associated together, so that different persons performed different parts in their incantations.

The word is defined by Gesenius to mean, "Sacred scribes, skilled in the sacred writings or hieroglyphics - ἱερογραμματεῖς *hierogrammateis* - a class of Egyptian priests." It is, according to him (Lex.), of Hebrew origin, and is derived from חרט *chereṭ* "stylus" - an instrument of writing, and the formative מ (*m*). It is not improbable, he suggests, that the Hebrews with these letters imitated a similar Egyptian word. Prof. Stuart (*in loc*.) says that the word would be correctly translated "pen-men," and supposes that it originally referred to those who were "busied with books and writing, and skilled in them." It is evident that the word is not of Persian origin, since it was used in Egypt long before it occurs in Daniel. A full and very interesting account of the Magians and their religion may be found in Creuzer, "Mythologie und Symbolik," i. pp. 187-234. Herodotus mentions the "Magi" as a distinct people, i. 101.

The word "Mag" or "Mog" (from the μάγοι *magoi* of the Greeks, and the "magi" of the Romans) means, properly, a "priest;" and at a very early period the names "Chaldeans" and "Magi" were interchangeable, and both

were regarded as of the same class. - Creuzer, i. 187, note. They were doubtless, at first, a class of priests among the Medes and Persians, who were employed, among other things, in the search for wisdom; who were connected with pagan oracles; who claimed acquaintance with the will of the gods, and who professed to have the power, therefore, of making known future events, by explaining dreams, visions, preternatural appearances, etc. The Magi formed one of the six tribes into which the Medes were formerly divided (Herodotus, i. 101), but on the downfall of the Median empire they continued to retain at the court of the conqueror a great degree of power and authority. "The learning of the Magi was connected with astrology and enchantment, in which they were so celebrated that their name was applied to all orders of magicians and enchanters." - Anthon, "Class. Dic." These remarks may explain the reason why the word "magician" comes to be applied to this class of men, though we are not to suppose that the persons referred to in Genesis and Exodus, under the appellation of the Hebrew name there given to them (הרטמים *chareṭummîym*), or those found in Babylon, referred to in the passage before us, to whom the same name is applied, were of that class of priests.

The name "magi," or "magician," was so extended as to embrace "all" who made pretensions to the kind of knowledge for which the magi were distinguished, and hence, came also to be synonymous with the "Chaldeans," who were also celebrated for this. Compare the notes at Daniel 2:2. In the passage before us it cannot be determined with certainty, that the persons were of "Magian" origin, though it is possible, as in Daniel 2:2, they are distinguished from the Chaldeans. All that is certainly meant is, that they were persons who laid claim to the power of diving into future events; of explaining mysteries; of interpreting dreams; of working by enchantments, etc.

And astrologers - - האשׁפים *hâ'ashâpîym* This word is rendered by the Septuagint, μάγους *magous* "magians." So also in the Vulgate, "magos." The English word "astrologer" denotes "one who professes to foretell future events by the aspects and situation of the stars." - Webster. The Hebrew word - אשׁפים *'ashâpîym* - according to Gesenius, means "enchanters, magicians." It is derived, probably, from the obsolete root אשׁף *'âshap* "to cover," "to conceal," and refers to those who were devoted to the practice of occult arts, and to the cultivation of recondite and cabalistic sciences. It is

supposed by some philologists to have given rise, by dropping the initial א to the Greek σοφος *sophos* "wise, wise man," and the Persian *sophi*, an epithet of equivalent import. See Gesenius on the word, and compare Bush on Daniel 2:2. The word is found only in Daniel, Daniel 1:20; Daniel 2:2, Daniel 2:10, Daniel 2:27; Daniel 4:7 (4); Daniel 5:7, Daniel 5:11, Daniel 5:15, in every instance rendered "astrologer" and "astrologers." There is no evidence, however, that the science of astrology enters into the meaning of the word, or that the persons referred to attempted to pracrise divination by the aid of the stars. It is to be regretted that the term "astrologer" should have been employed in our translation, as it conveys an intimation which is not found in the original. It is, indeed, in the highest degree probable, that a part of their pretended wisdom consisted in their ability to cast the fates of men by the conjunctions and opposition of the stars, but this is not necessarily implied in the word. Prof. Stuart renders it "enchanters."

In all his realm - Not only in the capital, but throughout the kingdom. These arts were doubtless practiced extensively elsewhere, but it is probable that the most skillful in them would be assembled at the capital.

Verse 21

And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus - When the proclamation was issued by him to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem, Ezra 1:1. That is, he continued in influence and authority at different times during that period, and, of course, during the whole of the seventy years captivity. It is not necessarily implied that he did not "live" longer, or even that he ceased then to have influence and authority at court, but the object of the writer is to show that, during that long and eventful period, he occupied a station of influence until the captivity was accomplished, and the royal order was issued for rebuilding the temple. He was among the first of the captives that were taken to Babylon, and he lived to see the end of the captivity - "the joyful day of Jewish freedom." - Prof. Stuart. It is commonly believed that, when the captives returned, he remained in Chaldea, probably detained by his high employments in the Persian empire, and that he died either at Babylon or at Shushan. Compare the Introduction Section I.

Practical Remarks

In view of the exposition given of this chapter, the following remarks may be made:

(1) There is in every period of the world, and in every place, much obscure and buried talent that might be cultivated and brought to light, as there are many gems in earth and ocean that are yet undiscovered. See the notes at Daniel 1:1-4. Among these captive youths - prisoners of war - in a foreign land, and as yet unknown, there was most rich and varied talent - talent that was destined yet to shine at the court of the most magnificent monarchy of the ancient world, and to be honored as among the brightest that the world has seen. And so in all places and at all times, there is much rich and varied genius which might shine with great brilliancy, and perform important public services, if it were cultivated and allowed to develope itself on the great theater of human affairs. Thus, in obscure rural retreats there may be bright gems of intellect; in the low haunts of vice there may be talent that would charm the world by the beauty of song or the power of eloquence; among slaves there may be mind which, if emancipated, would take its place in the brightest constellations of genius. The great endowments of Moses as a lawgiver, a prophet, a profound statesman, sprang from an enslaved people, as those of Daniel did; and it is not too much to say that the brightest talent of the earth has been found in places of great obscurity, and where, but for some remarkable dispensation of Providence, it might have remained forever unknown. This thought has been immortalized by Gray:

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.
"Some village Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest.
Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood."

There is at any time on the earth talent enough created for all that there is to be done in any generation; and there is always enough for talent to accomplish if it were employed in the purposes for which it was originally adapted. There need be at no time any wasted or unoccupied mind; and there need be no great and good plan that should fail for the want of talent fitted to accomplish it, if what actually exists on the earth were called into action.

(2) He does a great service to the world who seeks out such talent, and gives it an opportunity to accomplish what it is fitted to, by furnishing it the means of an education, Daniel 1:3. Nebuchadnezzar, unconsciously, and doubtless undesignedly, did a great service to mankind by his purpose to seek out the talent of the Hebrew captives, and giving it an opportunity to expand and to ripen into usefulness. Daniel has taken his place among the prophets and statesmen of the world as a man of rare endowments, and of equally rare integrity of character. He has, under the leading of the Divine Spirit, done more than most other prophets to lift the mysterious veil which shrouds the future; more than "could" have been done by the penetrating sagacity of all the Burkes, the Cannings, and the Metternichs of the world. So far as human appearances go, all this might have remained in obscurity, if it had not been for the purpose of the Chaldean monarch to bring forward into public notice the obscure talent which lay hid among the Hebrew captives. He always does a good service to mankind who seeks out bright and promising genius, and who gives it the opportunity of developing itself with advantage on the great theater of human affairs.

(3) We cannot but admire the arrangements of Providence by which this was done. See the notes at Daniel 1:1-4. This occurred in connection with the remarkable purpose of a pagan monarch - a man who, perhaps more than any other pagan ruler, has furnished an illustration of the truth that "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord." "That purpose was, to raise to eminence and influence the talent that might be found among the Hebrew captives." There can be no doubt that the hand of God was in this; that there was a secret Divine influence on his mind, unknown to him, which secured this result; and that, while he was aiming at one result, God was designing to secure another. There was thus a double influence on his mind:

(a) what arose from the purpose of the monarch himself, originated by considerations of policy, or contemplating the aggrandizement and increased splendor of his court; and

(b) the secret and silent influence of God, shaping the plans of the monarch to the ends which "He" had in view. Compare the notes at Isaiah 10:5 following.

(4) as it is reasonable to suppose that these young men had been trained up in the strict principles of religion and temperance Daniel 1:8-12, the case before us furnishes an interesting illustration of the temptations to which

those who are early trained in the ways of piety are often exposed. Every effort seems to have been made to induce them to abandon the principles in which they had been educated, and there was a strong probability that those efforts would be successful.

(a) They were among strangers, far away from the homes of their youth, and surrounded by the allurements of a great city.

(b) Everything was done which could be done to induce them to "forget" their own land and the religion of their fathers.

(c) They were suddenly brought into distinguished notice; they attracted the attention of the great, and had the prospect of associating with princes and nobles in the most magnificent court on earth. They had been selected on account of their personal beauty and their intellectual promise, and were approached, therefore, in a form of temptation to which youths are commonly most sensitive, and to which they are commonly most liable to yield.

(d) They were far away from the religious institutions of their country; from the public services of the sanctuary; from the temple; and from all those influences which had been made to bear upon them in early life. It was a rare virtue which could, in these circumstances, withstand the power of such temptations.

(5) young men, trained in the ways of religion and in the habits of temperance, are often now exposed to similar temptations. They visit the cities of a foreign country, or the cities in their own land. They are surrounded by strangers. They are far away from the sanctuary to which in early life they were conducted by their parents, and in which they were taught the truths of religion. The eye of that unslumbering vigilance which was upon them in their own land, or in the country neighborhood where their conduct was known to all, is now withdrawn. No one will know it if they visit the theater; no one will see them who will make report if they are found in the gambling room, or the place of dissipation. In those new scenes new temptations are around them. They may be noticed, flattered, caressed. They may be invited to places by the refined and the fashionable, from which, when at home, they would have recoiled. Or, it may be, prospects of honor and affluence may open upon them, and in the whirl of business or pleasure, they may be under the strongest temptations to forget the lessons

of early virtue, and to abandon the principles of the religion in which they were trained. Thousands of young men are ruined in circumstances similar to those in which these youths were placed in Babylon, and amidst temptations much less formidable titan those which encompassed them; and it is a rare virtue which makes a young man safe amidst the temptations to which he is exposed in a great city, or in a distant land.

(6) we have in this chapter an instructive instance of the value of early training in the principles of religion and temperance. There can be no doubt that these young men owed their safety and their future success wholly to this. Parents, therefore, should be encouraged to train their sons in the strictest principles of religion and virtue. Seed thus sown will not be lost. In a distant land, far away from home, from a parent‘s eye, from the sanctuary of God; in the midst of temptations, when surrounded by flatterers, by the gay and by the irreligious, such principles will be a safeguard to them which nothing else can secure, and will save them when otherwise they would be engulphed in the vortex of irreligion and dissipation. The best service which a parent can render to a son, is to imbue his mind thoroughly with the principles of temperance and religion.

(7) we may see the value of a purpose of entire abstinence from the use of “wine,” Daniel 1:8. Daniel resolved that he would not make use of it as a beverage. His purpose, it would seem, was decided, though he meant to accomplish it by mild and persuasive means if possible. There were good reasons for the formation of such a purpose then, and those reasons are not less weighty now. He never had occasion to regret the formation of such a purpose; nor has anyone who has formed a similar resolution ever had occasion to regret it. Among the reasons for the formation of such a resolution, the following may be suggested:

(a) A fixed resolution in regard to the course which one will pursue; to the kind of life which he will live; to the principles on which he will act, is of inestimable value in a young man. Our confidence in a man is just in proportion as we have evidence that he has formed a steady purpose of virtue, and that he has sufficient strength of resolution to keep it.

(b) The same reasons exist for adopting a resolution of abstinence in regard to the use of wine, which exist for adopting it in relation to the use of ardent spirits, for

(1) The intoxicating principle in wine or other fermented liquors is precisely the same as in ardent spirits. It is the result of "fermentation," not of "distillation," and undergoes no change by distillation. The only effect of that chemical process is to drive it off by heat, condense, and collect it in a form better adapted to commerce or to preservation, but the alcoholic principle is precisely the same in wine as in distilled liquors.

(2) Intoxication itself is the same thing, whether produced by fermented liquors or by distilled spirits. It produces the same effect on the body, on the mind, on the affections. A man who becomes intoxicated on wine - as he easily may - is in precisely the same condition, so far as intoxication is produced, as he who becomes intoxicated on distilled liquors.

(3) There is the same kind of "danger" of becoming intemperate in the use of the one as of the other. The man who habitually uses wine is as certainly in danger of becoming a drunkard as he who indulges in the use of distilled liquors. The danger, too, arises from the same source. It arises from the fact that he who indulges once will feel induced to indulge again; that a strong and peculiar craving is produced for stimulating liquors; that the body is left in such a state that it demands a repetition of the stimulus; that it is a law in regard to indulgence in this kind of drinks, that an increased "quantity" is demanded to meet the exhausted state of the system; and that the demand goes on in this increased ratio until there is no power of control, and the man becomes a confirmed inebriate. All these laws operate in regard to the use of wine as really as to the use of any other intoxicating drinks; and, therefore, there is the same reason for the adoption of a resolution to abstain from all alike.

(4) The temptations are often "greater" in relation to wine than to any other kind of intoxicating drinks. There is a large class of persons in the community who are in comparatively little danger of becoming intemperate from any other cause than this. This remark applies particularly to young men of wealth; to those who move in the more elevated circles; to those who are in college, and to those who are preparing for the learned professions. They are in peculiar danger from this quarter, because it is regarded as genteel to drink a glass of wine; because they are allured by the example of professed Christians, of ministers of the gospel, and of ladies;

and because they axe often in circumstances in which it would not be regarded as respectable or respectful to decline it.

(c) Third reason for adopting such a resolution is, that it is the only security that anyone can have that he will not become a drunkard. No one who indulges at all in the use of intoxicating liquors can have any "certainty" that he will not yet become a confirmed inebriate. Of the great multitudes who have been, and who are drunkards, there are almost none who "meant" to sink themselves to that wretched condition. They have become intemperate by indulging in the social glass when they thought themselves safe, and they continued the indulgence until it was too late to recover themselves from ruin. He who is in the habit of drinking at all can have no "security" that he may not yet be all that the poor drunkard now is. But he "will" be certainly safe from this evil if he adopts the purpose of total abstinence, and steadfastly adheres to it. Whatever other dangers await him, he will be secure against this; whatever other calamities he may experience, he is sure that he will escape all those that are caused by intemperance.

(8) We have in this chapter a most interesting illustration of the "value" of temperance in "eating," Daniel 1:9-17. There are laws of our nature relating to the quantity and quality of food which can no more be violated with impunity than any other of the laws of God; and yet those laws are probably more frequently violated than any other. There are more persons intemperate in the use of food than in the use of drink, and probably more diseases engendered, and more lives cut short, by improper indulgence in eating than in drinking. At the same time it is a more base, low, gross, and beastly passion. A drunkard is very often the wreck of a generous and noble-minded nature. He was large-hearted, open, free, liberal, and others took advantage of his generosity of disposition, and led him on to habits of intoxication. But there is nothing noble or generous in the gourmand. He approximates more nearly to the lowest forms of the brutal creation than any other human being; and if there is any man who should be looked on with feelings of unutterable loathing, it is he who wastes his vigour, and destroys his health, by gross indulgence in eating. There is almost no sin that God speaks of in tones of more decided abhorrence than the sin of

"gluttony." Compare Deuteronomy 21:20-21; Psalm 141:4; Proverbs 23:1-3, Proverbs 23:20-21; Luke 16:19; Luke 21:34.

(9) We have, in the close of the chapter before us, a most interesting illustration of the effect of an early course of strict temperance on the future character and success in life, Daniel 1:17-21. The trial in the case of these young men was fairly made. It was continued through three years; a period long enough for a "fair" trial; a period long enough to make it an interesting example to young men who are pursuing a course of literary studies, who are preparing to enter one of the learned professions, or who are qualifying themselves for a life of mechanical or agricultural pursuits. In the case of these young men, they were strictly on "probation," and the result of their probation was seen in the success which attended them when they passed the severe examination before the monarch Daniel 1:19, and in the honors which they reached at his court, Daniel 1:19-21. To make this case applicable to other young men, and useful to them, we may notice two things: the fact that every young man is on probation; and the effect of an early course of temperance in securing the object of that probation.

(a) Every young man is on probation; that is, his future character and success are to be determined by what he is when a youth.

(1) all the great interests of the world are soon to pass into the hands of the young. They who now possess the property, and fill the offices of the land, will pass away. Whatever there is that is valuable in liberty, science, art, or religion, will pass into the hands of those who are now young. They will preside in the seminaries of learning; will sit down on the benches of justice; will take the vacated seats of senators; will occupy the pulpits in the churches; will be entrusted with all the offices of honor and emolument; will be ambassadors to foreign courts; and will dispense the charities of the land, and carry out and complete the designs of Christian benevolence. There is not an interest of liberty, religion, or law, which will not soon be committed to them.

(2) The world is favorably disposed toward young men, and they who are now entrusted with these great interests, and who are soon to leave them, are ready calmly to commit them to the guardianship of the rising

generation, as soon as they have the assurance that they are qualified to receive the trust. They, therefore, watch with intense solicitude the conduct of those to whom so great interests are so soon to be committed

(3) Early virtue is indispensable to a favorable result of the probation of young men. A merchant demands evidence of integrity and industry in a young man before he will admit him to share his business, or will give him credit; and the same thing is true respecting a farmer, mechanic, physician, lawyer, or clergyman. No young man can hope to have the confidence of others, or to succeed in his calling, who does not give evidence that he is qualified for success by a fair probation or trial.

(4) Of no young man is it "presumed" that he is qualified to be entrusted with these great and momentous interests until he has had a fair trial. There is no such confidence in the integrity of young men, or in their tendencies to virtue, or in their native endowments, that the world is "willing" to commit great interests to them without an appropriate probation. No advantage of birth or blood can secure this; and no young man should presume that the world will be ready to confide in him until he has shown that he is qualified for the station to which he aspires.

(5) Into this probation, through which every young man is passing, the question of "temperance" enters perhaps more deeply than anything else respecting character. With reference to his habits on this point, every young man is watched with aft eagle eye, and his character is well understood, when perhaps he least suspects it. The public cannot be deceived on this point, and every young man may be assured that there is an eye of unslumbering vigilance upon him.

(b) The effect of an early course of temperance on the issue of this probation. This is seen in the avoidance of a course of life which would certainly blast every hope; and in its positive influence on the future destiny.

1. The avoidance of certain things which would blast every hope which a young man could cherish. There are certain evils which a young man will

certainly avoid by a course of strict temperance, which would otherwise certainly come upon him. They are such as these:

(a) Poverty, as arising from this source. He may, indeed, be poor if he is temperate. He may lose his health, or may meet with losses, or may be unsuccessful in business; but he is certain that he will never be made poor from intemperance. Nine-tenths of the poverty in the community is caused by this vice; nine-tenths of all who are in almshouses are sent there as the result of it; but from all this he will be certain that "he" will be saved. There is a great difference, if a man is poor, between being such as the result of a loss of health, or other Providential dispensations, and being such as the result of intemperance.

(b) He will be saved from committing "crime" from this cause. About ninetenths of the crimes that are committed are the results of intoxicating drinks, and by a course of temperance a man is certain that he will be saved from the commission of all those crimes. Yet if not temperate, no man has any security that he will not commit any one of them. There is nothing in himself to save him from the very worst of them; and every young man who indulges in the intoxicating cup should reflect that he has no security that he will not be led on to commit the most horrid crimes which ever disgrace humanity.

(c) He will certainly be saved from the drunkard‘s death. He will indeed die. He may die young, for, though temperate, he may be cut down in the vigour of his days. But there is all the difference imaginable between dying as a drunkard, and dying in the ordinary course of nature. It would be a sufficient inducement for anyone to sign a temperance pledge, and to adhere to it, if there were no other, that he might avoid the horrors of a death by "delirium tremens," and be saved from the loathsomeness of a drunkard‘s grave. It is much for a young man to be able to say as he enters on life, and looks out on the future with solicitude as to what is to come, "Whatever may await me in the unknown future, of this one thing I am certain; I shall never be poor, and haggard, and wretched, as the drunkard is. I shall never commit the crimes to which drunkenness prompts. I shall never experience the unutterable horrors of "delirium tremens." I shall never die the death of unequalled wretchedness caused by a "mania a potu." Come what may, I

see, on the threshold of life, that I am to be free from the "worst" evils to which man is ever exposed. If I am poor, I will not be poor as the victim of intemperance is. If I die early, the world will not feel it is benefited by my removal, and my friends will not go forth to my grave with the unutterable anguish which a parent has who follows a drunken son to the tomb."

2. A course of temperance will have a direct and positive effect on the issue of such a probation. So it had in the case of the young men in the chapter before us; and so it will have in every case. Its effect will be seen in the beauty, and healthfulness, and vigour of the bodily frame; in the clearness of the intellect, and the purity of the heart; in habits of industry, in general integrity of life, and in rendering it more probable that the soul will be saved. In no respect whatever will a steadfast adherence to the principles of temperance injure any young man; in every respect, it may be the means of promoting his interests in the present life, and of securing his final happiness in the world to come. Why, then, should any young man hesitate about forming such a resolution as Daniel did Job 1:8, and about expressing, in every proper way, in the most decided manner, his determined purpose to adhere through life to the strictest principles of temperance?

DANIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

Section I. - Authenticity of the Chapter

The objections to the authenticity and credibility of this chapter are not numerous or important.

I. The first that is alleged, by Bertholdt (Com. pp. 192,193), is substantially this: "that if the account here is true, the records of ancient times could not exhibit a more finished tyrant than Nebuchadnezzar was, if he doomed so many persons to death, on so slight and foolish an occasion, Daniel 2:5. This cruelty, it is said, is wholly contrary to the general character of Nebuchadnezzar as it is reported to us, and wholly incredible. It is further said, that, though it was common in the East to trust in dreams, and though the office of interpreting them was an honorable office, yet no one was so unreasonable, or could be, as to require the interpreter to reveal the dream itself when it was forgotten. The proper office of the interpreter, it is said, was to interpret the dream, not to tell what the dream was."

To this objection, which seems to have considerable plausibility, it may be replied:

(1) Much reliance was placed on "dreams" in ancient times, alike among the Hebrews and in the pagan world. The case of Pharaoh will at once occur to the mind; and it need not be said that men everywhere relied on dreams, and inquired earnestly respecting them, whether they "might" not be the appointed means of communication with the spiritual world, and of disclosing what was to occur in the future. There can be no objection, therefore, to the supposition that this pagan monarch, Nebuchadnezzar, felt all the solicitude which he is reported to have done respecting the dream which he had. It may be further added, that in the dream itself there is nothing improbable as a dream, for it has all the characteristics of those mysterious operations of the mind; and, if God ever communicated his will by a dream, or made known future events in this way, there is no absurdity in supposing that he would thus communicate what was to come, to him who was at that time at the head of the empires of the earth, and who was the king over the first of those kingdoms which were to embrace the world's history for so many ages.

(2) There is no improbability in supposing that a dream would vanish from the distinct recollection, or that if it had vanished, the mind would be troubled by some vague recollection or impression in regard to it. This often occurs in our dreams now, as in the indistinct recollection that we have had a pleasant or a frightful dream, when we are wholly unable to recal the dream itself. This often occurs, too, when we would be "glad" to recover the dream if we could, but when no effort that we can make will recal its distinct features to our minds.

(3) There was, really, nothing that was unreasonable, absurd, or tyrannical in the demand which Nebuchadnezzar made on the astrologers, that they should recal the dream itself, and then interpret it. Doubtless he could recollect it if they would suggest it, or at least he could so far recollect it as to prevent their imposing on him: for something like this constantly occurs in the operation of our own minds. When we have forgotten a story, or a piece of history, though we could not ourselves recal it, yet when it is repeated to us, we can then distinctly recollect it, and can perceive that that is the same narrative, for it agrees with all our impressions in regard to it. Furthermore, though it was not understood to be a part of the office of an interpreter of dreams to "recal" the dream if it had vanished from the mind, yet Nebuchadnezzar reasoned correctly, that if they could "interpret" the dream they ought to be presumed to be able to tell what it was. The one required no more sagacity than the other: and if they were, as they pretended to be, under the inspiration of the gods in interpreting a dream, it was fair to presume that, under the same inspiration, they could tell what it was. Compare the notes at Daniel 2:5. No objection, then, can lie against the authenticity of this chapter from any supposed absurdity in the demand of Nebuchadnezzar. It was not only strictly in accordance with all the just principles of reasoning in the case, but was in accordance with what might be expected from an arbitrary monarch who was accustomed to exact obedience in all things.

(4) what is here said of the threatening of Nebuchadnezzar Daniel 2:5, accords with the general traits of his character as history has preserved them. He had in him the elements of cruelty and severity of the highest order, especially when his will was not immediately complied with. In

proof of this, we need only refer to his cruel treatment of the king Zedekiah, when Jerusalem was taken: "So they took the king, and brought him to the king of Babylon to Riblah: and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and brought him to Babylon," 2 Kings 25:6-7: compare also, in 2 Kings 25:18-21, the account of his slaying the large number of persons that were taken by Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, and brought by him to the king in Babylon. These were slain in cold blood by order of Nebuchadnezzar himself. These facts make it every way probable that, in a fit of passion, he would not hesitate to threaten the astrologers with death if they did not comply at once with his will. Compare Jeremiah 39:5, following; Jeremiah 52:9-11. The truth was, that though Nebuchadnezzar had some good qualities, and was religious "in his way," yet he had all the usual characteristics of an Oriental despot. He was a man of strong passions, and was a man who would never hesitate in carrying out the purposes of an arbitrary, a determined, and a stubborn will.

II. A second objection made by Bertholdt, which may demand a moment's notice, is, substantially, that the account bears the mark of a later hand, for the purpose of conferring a higher honor on Daniel, and making what he did appear the more wonderful: pp. 62,63,193-196. The supposition of Bertholdt is, that the original account was merely that Nebuchadnezzar required of the interpreter to explain the sense of the dream, but that, in order to show the greatness of Daniel, the author of this book, long after the affair occurred, added the circumstance that Nebuchadnezzar required of them to make the "dream" known as well as the "interpretation," and that the great superiority of Daniel was shown by his being able at once to do this.

As this objection, however, is not based on any historical grounds, and as it is throughout mere conjecture, it is not necessary to notice it further. Nothing is gained by the conjecture; no difficulty is relieved by it; nor is there any real difficulty "to be" relieved by any such supposition. The narrative, as we have it, has, as we have seen, no intrinsic improbability, nor is there anything in it which is contrary to the well-known character of Nebuchadnezzar.

III. A third objection to the authenticity of the chapter, which deserves to be noticed, is urged by Luderwald, p. 40, following, and Bleek, p. 280, that this whole narrative has a strong resemblance to the account of the dreams of Pharaoh, and the promotion of Joseph at the court of Egypt, and was apparently made up from that, or copied from it.

But to this we may reply,

(a) that, if either happened, there is no more improbability in supposing that it should happen to Daniel in Babylon than to Joseph in Egypt; and, taken as separate and independent histories, neither of them is improbable.

(b) There is so much diversity in the two cases as to show that the one is not copied from the other. They agree, indeed, in several circumstances: - in the fact that the king of Egypt and the king of Babylon had each a dream; in the fact that Joseph and Daniel were enabled to interpret the dream; in the fact that they both ascribed the ability to do this, not to themselves, but to God; and in the fact that they were both raised to honor, as a consequence of their being able to interpret the dream. But in nothing else do they agree. The dreams themselves; the occasion; the explanation; the result; the bearing on future events - in these, and in numerous other things, they differ entirely. It may be added also, that if the one had been copied from the other, it is probable that there would have been some undesigned allusion by which it could be known that the writer of the one had the other before him, and that he was framing his own narrative from that. But, as a matter of fact, there are no two records in history that have more the marks of being independent and original narratives of real transactions, than the account of Joseph in Egypt, and of Daniel in Babylon.

IV. A fourth objection to the account in this chapter arises from an alleged error in "chronology." For a consideration of this, see the notes at Daniel 2:1.

Section II. - Analysis of the Chapter

The subjects of this chapter are the following:

I. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel 2:1. In accordance with the common belief among the ancients, he regarded this as a Divine message.

The dream, too, was of such a character as to make a deep impression on his mind, though its distinct features and details had gone from him.

II. The demand of Nebuchadnezzar that the Chaldeans should recal the dream to his recollection, and expound its meaning, Daniel 2:2-9. He ordered those whose business it was professedly to give such interpretations, to come into his presence, and to make known the dream and its meaning. But it would seem that their pretensions went no further than to explain a dream when it was known, and hence, they asked respectfully that the king would state the dream in order that they might explain it. The king, in angel threatened death, if they did not first recal the dream, and then make known the interpretation, promising at the same time ample rewards if they were able to do this. As all this, under Divine direction, was designed to communicate important information of future events, it was so ordered that the dream should be forgotten, thus entirely confounding the art of the Chaldeans, and giving an opportunity to Daniei to make the dream and its interpretation known, thus exalting a man from the land of the prophets, and showing that it was not by the skill of the pretended interpreters of dreams that future events could be made known, but that it was only by those who were inspired for that purpose by the true God.

III. The acknowledged failure of the power of the astrologers and Chaldeans, Daniel 2:10-11. They admitted that they could not do what was demanded of them. Whatever might be the consequence, they could not even "attempt" to recal a forgotten dream. And as, though we may be unable to recal such a dream distinctly ourselves, we could easily "recognize" it if it were stated to us; and as we could not be imposed on by something else that anyone should undertake to make us believe was the real dream, the magicians saw that it was hopeless to attempt to palm a story of their own invention on him, as if that were the real dream, and they therefore acknowledged their inability to comply with the demand of the king.

IV. The decree that they should die, Daniel 2:12-13. In this decree, Daniel and his three friends who had been trained with him at court Daniel 2:14-16. It would seem that he had the privilege of access to the king at

pleasure. We may presume that he stated that the thing had not in fact been laid before him, though he had become involved in the general sentence, and it is no unreasonable supposition that the king was so much troubled with the dream, that he was so anxious to know its signification, and that he saw so clearly that if the decree was executed, involving Daniel and his friends, "all" hope of recalling and understanding it would be lost, that he was ready to grasp at "any" hope, however slender, of being made acquainted with the meaning of the vision. He was willing, therefore, that Daniel should be spared, and that the execution of the decree should be suspended.

VI. In these interesting and solemn circumstances, Daniel and his friends gave themselves to prayer, Daniel 2:17-18. Their lives were in danger, and the case was such that they could not be rescued but by a direct Divine inter position. There was no power which they had of ascertaining by any human means what was the dream of the monarch, and yet it was indispensable, in order to save their lives, that the dream should be made known. God only, they knew, could communicate it to them, and he only, therefore, could save them from death; and in these circumstances of perplexity they availed themselves of the privilege which all the friends of God have - of carrying their cause at once before his throne.

VII. The secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision, and he gave utterance to an appropriate song of praise, Daniel 2:19-23. The occasion was one which demanded such an expression of thanksgiving, and that which Daniel addressed to God was every way worthy of the occasion.

VIII. The way was now prepared for Daniel to make known to the king the dream and the interpretation. Accordingly he was brought before the king, and he distinctly disclaimed any power of himself to recal the dream, or to make known its signification, Daniel 2:24-30.

IX. The statement of the dream and the interpretation, Daniel 2:31-45.

X. The effect on Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel 2:46-49. He recognized the dream; acknowledged that it was only the true God who could have made it

known; and promoted Daniel to distinguished honor. In his own honors, Daniel did not forget the virtuous companions of his youth Daniel 2:49.

Verse 1

And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar - There is an apparent chronological difficulty in this statement which has given some perplexity to expositors. It arises mainly from two sources.

(1) That in Jeremiah 25:1, it is said that the first year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar corresponded with the fourth year of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and as the captivity was in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim Daniel 1:1, the time here would be the "fourth" year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, instead of the second.

(2) That we learn from Daniel 1:5, Daniel 1:18, that Daniel and his three friends had been in Babylon already three years, under a process of training preparatory to their being presented at court, and as the whole narrative leads us to suppose that it was "after" this that Daniel was regarded as enrolled among the wise men (compare Daniel 2:13-14), on the supposition that the captivity occurred in the first year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, this would bring the time of the dream into the fourth year of his reign. This difficulty is somewhat increased from the fact that when Nebuchadnezzar went up to besiege Jerusalem he is called "king," and it is evident that he did not go as a lieutenant of the reigning monarch; or as a general of the Chaldean forces under the direction of another. See 2 Kings 24:1, 2 Kings 24:11. Various solutions of this difficulty have been proposed, but the true one probably is, that Nebuchadnezzar reigned some time conjointly with his father, Nabopolassar, and, though the title "king" was given to him, yet the reckoning here is dated from the time when he began to reign alone, and that this was the year of his sole occupancy of the throne.

Berosus states that his father, Nabopolassar, was aged and infirm, and that he gave up a part of his army to his son Nebuchadnezzar, who defeated the Egyptian host at Carchemish (Circesium) on the Euphrates, and drove Necho out of Asia. The victorious prince then marched directly to Jerusalem, and Jehoiakim surrendered to him; and this was the beginning of the seventy years, captivity. See "Jahn's History of the Hebrew Commonwealth," p. 134. Nabopolassar probably died about two years after

that, and Nebuchadnezzar succeeded to the throne. The period of their reigning together was two years, and of course the second year of his single reign would be the fourth of his entire reign; and a reckoning from either would be proper, and would not be misunderstood. Other modes of solution have been adopted, but as this meets the whole difficulty, and is founded on truth, it is unnecessary to refer to them. Compare Prof. Stuart, on Daniel, Excursus I. and Excursus II. (See Barnes‘ Appendix I and Appendix II to Daniel)

Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams - The plural is here used, though there is but one dream mentioned, and probably but one is referred to, for Nebuchadnezzar, when speaking of it himself Daniel 2:3, says, “I have dreamed a dream.” In the Latin Vulgate, and in the Greek, it is also in the singular. It is probable that this is a popular use of words, as if one should say, “I had strange dreams last night,” though perhaps but a single dream was intended. - Prof. Bush. Among the methods by which God made known future events in ancient times, that by “dreams” was one of the most common. See the notes at Daniel 1:17; Introduction to Isaiah, Section 7. (2); compare Genesis 20:3, Genesis 20:6; Genesis 31:11; Genesis 37:5-6; Genesis 40:5; Genesis 41:7, Genesis 41:25; 1 Kings 3:5; Numbers 12:6; Joel 2:28; Job 33:14-16. The belief that the will of heaven was communicated to men by means of dreams, was prevalent throughout the world in ancient times. Hence, the striking expression in Homer, Iliad i. 63 - καὶ γάρ τ᾽ ὄναρ ἐκ Διός ἐστιν *kai gar t' onar ek Dios estin* “the dream is of Jove.” So in the commencement of his second Iliad, he represents the will of Jupiter as conveyed to Agamemnon by Ὄνείρος *Oneiros* or “the dream.”

So Diogenes Laertius makes mention of a dream of Socrates, by which he foretold his death as to happen in three days. This method of communicating the Divine will was adopted, not only in reference to the prophets, but also to those who were strangers to religion, and even to wicked men, as in the case of Pharaoh, Abimelech, Nebuchadnezzar, the butler and baker in Egypt, etc. In every such instance, however, it was necessary, as in the case before us, to call in the aid of a true prophet to interpret the dream; and it was only when thus interpreted that it took its place among the certain predictions of the future. One “object” of communicating the Divine will in this manner, seems to have been to fix the attention of the person who had the dream on the subject, and to prepare him to receive the communication which God had chosen to make to him.

Thus it cannot be doubted that by the belief in dreams entertained by Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, as disclosing future events, and by the anxiety of mind which they experienced m regard to the dreams, they were better prepared to receive the communications of Joseph and Daniel in reference to the future than they could have been by any other method of making known the Divine will.

They had no doubt that some important communication had been made to them respecting the future, and they were anxious to know what it was. They were prepared, therefore, to welcome any explanation which commended itself to them as true, and in this way the servants of the true God had a means of access to their hearts which they could have found in no other way. By what laws it was so regulated that a dream should be "known" to be a preintimation of coming events, we have now no means of ascertaining. That it is "possible" for God to have access to the mind in sleep, and to communicate his will in this manner, no one can doubt. That it was, so far as employed for that purpose, a safe and certain way, is demonstrated by the results of the predictions thus made in the case of Abimelech, Genesis 20:3, Genesis 20:6; of Joseph and his brethren, Genesis 37:5-6; of Pharaoh, Genesis 41:7, Genesis 41:25; and of the butler and baker, Genesis 40:5. It is not, however, to be inferred that the same reliance, or that any reliance, is now to be placed on dreams, for were there no other consideration against such reliance, it would be sufficient that there is no authorized interpreter of the wanderings of the mind in sleep. God now communicates his truth to the souls of men in other ways.

Wherewith his spirit was troubled - Alike by the unusual nature of the dream, and by the impression which he undoubtedly had that it referred to some important truths pertaining to his kingdom and to future times. See Daniel 2:31-36 The Hebrew word here rendered "troubled" (פעם *pâʿam*) means, properly, to "strike, to beat, to pound;" then, in Niph., to be moved, or agitated; and also in Hithpa., to be agitated, or troubled. The proper signification of the word is that of striking as on an anvil, and then it refers to any severe stroke, or anything which produces agitation. The "verb" occurs only in the following places: Judges 13:25, where it is rendered "move;" and Psalm 67:4, (5); Genesis 41:8; Daniel 2:1, Daniel 2:3, where it is rendered "troubled." The "noun" is of frequent occurrence. "And his sleep brake from him." Hebrew עליו נהיתה שׁנתו *shenâthô nîheyethâh ʿālâyv*

"His sleep was upon him." The Greek is, "his sleep was from him;" i. e., left him. The Vulgate, "his sleep fled (*fugit*) from him." But it may be doubted whether the Hebrew will bear this construction. Probably the literal construction is the true one, by which the sense of the Hebrew - על *ʿal* "upon" - will be retained. The meaning then would be, that this remarkable representation occurred when he was "in" a profound sleep. It was a "dream," and not "an open vision." It was such a representation as passes before the mind when the senses are locked in repose, and not such as was made to pass before the minds of the prophets when they were permitted to see visions of the future, though awake. Compare Numbers 24:4, Numbers 24:16. There is nothing in the words which conveys the idea that there was anything preternatural in the sleep that had come upon Nebuchadnezzar, but the thought is, that all this occurred when he "was" sound asleep. Prof. Stuart, however, renders this, "his sleep failed him," and so does also Gesenius. Winer renders it, "his sleep went away from him." But it seems to me that the more natural idea is what occurs in the literal translation of the words, that this occurred as a dream, in a state of profound repose.

Verse 2

Then the king commanded - That is, when he awoke. The particle rendered "then," does not imply that this occurred immediately. When he awoke, his mind was agitated; he was impressed with the belief that he had had an important Divine communication; but he could not even recal the dream distinctly, and he resolved to summon to his presence those whose business it was to interpret what were regarded as prognostics of the future.

The magicians, and the astrologers - These are the same words which occur in Daniel 1:20. See the note at that place.

And the sorcerers - Hebrew מכשׁפים *mekashepîym* Vulgate, *malefici* - sorcerers. Greek, φαρμακεύς *pharmakeus* Syriac, "magician." The Hebrew word is derived from כשׁף *kâshaph* - meaning, in Piel, to practice magic; to use magic formulas, or incantations; to mutter; and it refers to the various arts by which those who were addicted to magic practiced their deceptions. The particular idea in this word would seem to be, that on such occasions some forms of prayers were used, for the word in Syriac means to offer prayers, or to worship. Probably the aid of idol gods was invoked by such persons when they practiced incantations. The word is found only in the following places: once as a "verb," 2 Chronicles 33:6, and rendered "used witchcraft;" and as a "participle," rendered "sorcerers," in Exodus 7:11;

Daniel 2:2; Malachi 3:5; and "witch," in Exodus 22:18 (17); Deuteronomy 18:10. The noun (כשׁף *kashâph* and כשׁפים *keshâpîym*) is used in the following places, always with reference to sorcery or witchcraft: Jeremiah 27:9; 2 Kings 9:22; Isaiah 47:9; Micah 5:12 (11); Nahum 3:4. It may not be easy to specify the exact sense in which this word is used as distinguished from the others which relate to the same general subject, but it would seem to be that some form of "prayer" or "invocation" was employed. The persons referred to did not profess to interpret the prognostics of future events by any original skill of their own, but by the aid of the gods.

And the Chaldeans - See the notes at Daniel 1:4. The Chaldeans appear to have been but one of the tribes or nations that made up the community at Babylon (compare the notes at Isaiah 23:13), and it would seem that at this time they were particularly devoted to the practice of occult arts, and secret sciences. It is not probable that the other persons referred to in this enumeration were Chaldeans. The Magians, if any of these were employed, were Medians (see the notes at Daniel 1:20), and it is not improbable that the other classes of diviners might have been from other nations. The purpose of Nebuchadnezzar was to assemble at his court whatever was remarkable throughout the world for skill and knowledge (see analysis of Genesis 41:24; Judges 14:12; 1 Kings 10:3. That it was common for kings to call in the aid of interpreters to explain the import of dreams, appears from Herodotus. When Astyages ascended the throne, he had a daughter whose name was Mandane. She had a dream which seemed to him so remarkable that he called in the "magi," whose interpretation, Herodotus remarks, was of such a nature that it "terrified him exceedingly." He was so much influenced by the dream and the interpretation, that it produced an entire change in his determination respecting the marriage of his daughter. - Book i., 107: So again, after the marriage of his daughter, Herodotus says (book i., cviii.): "Astyages had another vision. A vine appeared to spring from his daughter which overspread all Asia. On this occasion, also, he consulted his interpreters; the result was, that he sent for his daughter from Persia, when the time of her delivery approached. On her arrival, he kept a strict watch over her, intending to destroy her child. The magi had declared the vision to intimate that the child of his daughter should supplant him on the throne." Astyages, to guard against this, as soon as Cyrus was born, sent for Harpagus, a person in whom he had confidence, and commanded him to take the child to his own house, and put him to death. These passages in

Herodotus show that what is here related of the king of Babylon, demanding the aid of magicians and astrologers to interpret his dreams, was by no means an uncommon occurrence.

Verse 3

And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream - That is, clearly, to know all about it; to recollect distinctly what it was, and to understand what it meant. He was agitated by so remarkable a dream; he probably had, as Jerome remarks, a shadowy and floating impression of what the dream was - such as we often have of a dream that has agitated out minds, but of which we cannot recal the distinct and full image; and he desired to recal that distinctly, and to know exactly what it meant. See Daniel 2:1.

Verse 4

Then spake the Chaldeans to the king - The meaning is, either that the Chaldeans spoke in the name of the entire company of the soothsayers and magicians (see the notes, Daniel 1:20; Daniel 2:2), because they were the most prominent among them, or the name is used to denote the collective body of soothsayers, meaning that this request was made by the entire company.

In Syriac - In the original - ארמית *'ărâmîyt* - in "Aramean." Greek, Συριστὶ *Suristi* - "in Syriac." So the Vulgate. The Syriac retains the original word. The word means Aramean, and the reference is to that language which is known as East Aramean - a general term embracing the Chaldee, the Syriac, and the languages which were spoken in Mesopotamia. See the notes at Daniel 1:4. This was the vernacular tongue of the king and of his subjects, and was that in which the Chaldeans would naturally address him. It is referred to here by the author of this book, perhaps to explain the reason why he himself makes use of this language in explaining the dream. The use of this, however, is not confined to the statement of what the magicians said, but is continued to the close of the seventh chapter. Compare the Intro. Section IV. III. The language used is what is commonly called Chaldee. It is written in the same character as the Hebrew, and differs from that as one dialect differs from another. It was, doubtless, well understood by the Jews in their captivity, and was probably spoken by them after their return to their own land.

O king, live for ever - This is a form of speech quite common in addressing monarchs. See 1 Samuel 10:24; 1 Kings 1:25 (margin); Daniel

3:9; Daniel 5:10. The expression is prevalent still, as in the phrases, "Long live the king," "Vive l' empereur," "*Vive le roi*," etc. It is founded on the idea that long life is to be regarded as a blessing, and that we can in no way express our good wishes for anyone better than to wish him length of days. In this place, it was merely the usual expression of respect and homage, showing their earnest wish for the welfare of the monarch. They were willing to do anything to promote his happiness, and the continuance of his life and reign. It was especially proper for them to use this language, as they wore about to make a rather unusual request, which "might" be construed as an act of disrespect, implying that the king had not given them all the means which it was equitable for them to have in explaining the matter, by requiring them to interpret the dream when he had not told them what it was.

Tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation - The claim which they set up in regard to the future was evidently only that of "explaining" what were regarded as the prognostics of future events. It was not that of being able to recal what is forgotten, or even to "originate" what might be regarded preintimations of what is to happen. This was substantially the claim which was asserted by all the astrologers, augurs, and soothsayers of ancient times. Dreams, the flight of birds, the aspect of the entrails of animals slain for sacrifice, the positions of the stars, meteors, and uncommon appearances in the heavens, were supposed to be intimations made by the gods of what was to occur in future times, and the business of those who claimed the power of divining the future was merely to interpret these things. When the king, therefore, required that they should recal the dream itself to his own mind, it was a claim to something which was not involved in their profession, and which they regarded as unjust. To that power they made no pretensions. If it be asked why, as they were mere jugglers and pretenders, they did not "invent" something and state "that" as his dream, since he had forgotten what his dream actually was, we may reply,

(1) that there is no certain evidence that they were not sincere in what they professed themselves able to do - for we are not to suppose that all who claimed to be soothsayers and astrologers were hypocrites and intentional deceivers. It was not at that period of the world certainly determined that nothing could be ascertained respecting the future by dreams, and by the positions of the stars, etc. Dreams "were" among the

methods by which the future was made known; and whether the knowledge of what is to come could be obtained from the positions of the stars, etc., was a question which was at that time unsettled Even Lord Bacon maintained that the science of astrology was not to be "rejected," but to be "reformed."

(2) If the astrologers had been disposed to attempt to deceive the king, there is no probability that they could have succeeded in palming an invention of their own on him as his own dream. We may not be able distinctly to recollect a dream, but we have a sufficient impression of it - of its outlines - or of some striking, though disconnected, things in it, to know what it is "not." We might instantly recognize it if stated to us; we should see at once, if anyone should attempt to deceive us by palming an invented dream on us, that "that" was not what we had dreamed.

Verse 5

The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me - The Vulgate renders this, "Sermo recessit a me" - "The word is departed from me." So the Greek, Ὁ λόγος ἀπ᾽ ἐμοῦ ἀπέστη *Ho logos ap' emou apestē* Luther, "Es ist mir entfallen" - "It has fallen away from me," or has departed from me. Coverdale, "It is gone from me." The Chaldee word rendered "the thing" - מלתה *mîllethâh* - means, properly, "a word, saying, discourse" - something which is "spoken;" then, like דבר *dâbâr* and the Greek ῥῆμα *rēma* a "thing." The reference here is to the matter under consideration, to wit, the dream and its meaning. The fair interpretation is, that he had forgotten the dream, and that if he retained "any" recollection of it, it was only such an imperfect outline as to alarm him. The word rendered "is gone" - אזדא *'azeddâ'* - which occurs only here and in Daniel 2:8, is supposed to be the same as אזל *'ăzal* - "to go away, to depart." Gesenius renders the whole phrase, "The word has gone out from me; i. e., what I have said is ratified, and cannot be recalled;" and Prof. Bush (*in loc*.) contends that this is the true interpretation, and this also is the interpretation preferred by John D. Michaelis, and Dathe. A construction somewhat similar is adopted by Aben Ezra, C. B. Michaelis, Winer, Hengstenberg, and Prof. Stuart, that it means, "My decree is firm, or steadfast;" to wit, that if they did not furnish an interpretation of the dream, they should be cut off. The question as to the true interpretation, then, is between two

constructions: whether it means, as in our version, that the dream had departed from him - that is, that he had forgotten it - or, that a decree or command had gone from him, that if they could not interpret the dream they should be destroyed. That the former is the correct interpretation seems to me to be evident.

(1) It is the natural construction, and accords best with the meaning of the original words. Thus no one can doubt that the word מלה *millâh* and the words דבר *dâbâr* and ῥῆμα *rēma* are used in the sense of "thing," and that the natural and proper meaning of the Chaldee verb אזד *'ăzad* is, to "go away, depart." Compare the Hebrew (אזל *'âzal*) in Deuteronomy 32:36, "He seeth that their power is gone;" 1 Samuel 9:7, "The bread is spent in our vessels;" Job 14:11, "The waters fail from the sea;" and the Chaldee (אזל *'ăzal*) in Ezra 4:23, "They went up in haste to Jerusalem;" Ezra 5:8, "We went into the province of Judea;" and Daniel 2:17, Daniel 2:24; Daniel 6:18 (19), 19(20).

(2) This interpretation is sustained by the Vulgate of Jerome, and by the Greek.

(3) It does not appear that any such command had at that time gone forth from the king, and it was only when they came before him that he promulgated such an order. Even though the word, as Gesenins and Zickler (Chaldaismus Dan. Proph.) maintain, is a feminine participle present, instead of a verb in the preterit, still it would then as well apply to the "dream" departing from him, as the command or edict. We may suppose the king to say, "The thing leaves me; I cannot recal it."

(4) It was so understood by the magicians, and the king did not attempt to correct their apprehension of what he meant. Thus, in Daniel 2:7, they say, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation thereof." This shows that they understood that the dream had gone from him, and that they could not be expected to interpret its meaning until they were apprised what it was.

(5) It is not necessary to suppose that the king retained the memory of the dream himself, and that he meant merely to try them; that is, that he told them a deliberate falsehood, in order to put their ability to the test.

Nebuchadnezzar was a cruel and severe monarch, and such a thing would not have been entirely inconsistent with his character; but we should not needlessly charge cruelty and tyranny on any man, nor should we do it unless the evidence is so clear that we cannot avoid it. Besides, that such a test should be proposed is in the highest degree improbable. There was no need of it; and it was contrary to the established belief in such matters. These men were retained at court, among other reasons, for the very purpose of explaining the prognostics of the future. There was confidence in them; and they were retained "because" there was confidence in them. It does not appear that the Babylonian monarch had had any reason to distrust their ability as to what they professed; and why should he, therefore, on "this" occasion resolve to put them to so unusual, and obviously so unjust a trial?

For these reasons, it seems clear to me that our common version has given the correct sense of this passage, and that the meaning is, that the dream had actually so far departed from him that he could not repeat it, though he retained such an impression of its portentous nature, and of its appalling outline, as to fill his mind with alarm. As to the objection derived from this view of the passage by Bertholdt to the authenticity of this chapter, that it is wholly improbable that any man would be so unreasonable as to doom others to punishment because they could not recal his dream, since it entered not into their profession to be able to do it (Commentary i. p. 192), it may be remarked, that the character of Nebuchadnezzar was such as to make what is stated here by Daniel by no means improbable. Thus it is said respecting him 2 Kings 25:7, "And they slew the sons of Zedekiah ‹before his eyes,‘ and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon." Compare 2 Kings 25:18-21; Jeremiah 39:5, following; Jeremiah 52:9-11. See also Daniel 4:17, where he is called "the basest of men." Compare Hengstenberg, "Die Authentie des Daniel," pp. 79-81. On this objection, see Introduction to the chapter, Section I. I.

If ye will not make known, unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof - Whatever may be thought as to the question whether he had actually forgotten the dream, there can be no doubt that he demanded that they should state what it was, and then explain it. This demand was probably as unusual as it was in one sense unreasonable, since

it did not fall fairly within their profession. Yet it was not unreasonable in this sense, that if they really had communication with the gods, and were qualified to explain future events, it might be supposed that they would be enabled to recal this forgotten dream. If the gods gave them power to explain what was to "come," they could as easily enable them to recal "the past."

Ye shall be cut in pieces - Margin, "made." The Chaldee is, "Ye shall be made into pieces; "referring to a mode of punishment that was common to many ancient nations. Compare 1 Samuel 15:33: "And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal." Thus Orpheus is said to have been torn in pieces by the Thracian women; and Bessus was cut in pieces by order of Alexander the Great.

And your houses shall be made a dunghill - Compare 2 Kings 10:27. This is an expression denoting that their houses, instead of being elegant or comfortable mansions, should be devoted to the vilest of uses, and subjected to all kinds of dishonor and defilement. The language here used is in accordance with what is commonly employed by Orientals. They imprecate all sorts of indignities and abominations on the objects of their dislike, and it is not uncommon for them to smear over with filth what is the object of their contempt or abhorrenee. Thus when the caliph Omar took Jerusalem, at the head of the Saracen army, after ravaging the greater part of the city, he caused dung to be spread over the site of the sanctuary, in token of the abhorrence of all Mussulmans, and of its being henceforth regarded as the refuse and offscouring of all things. - Prof. Bush. The Greek renders this, "And your houses shall be plundered;" the Vulgate, "And your houses shall be confiscated." But these renderings are entirely arbitrary. This may seem to be a harsh punishment which was threatened, and some may, perhaps, be disposed to say that it is improbable that a monarch would allow himself to use such intemperate language, and to make use of so severe a threatening, especially when the magicians had as yet shown no inability to interpret the dream, and had given no reasons to apprehend that they would be unable to do it. But we are to remember

(1) the cruel and arbitrary character of the king (see the references above);

(2) the nature of an Oriental despotism, in which a monarch is acccustomed to require all his commands to be obeyed, and his wishes

gratified promptly, on pain of death;

(3) the fact that his mind was greatly excited by the dream; and

(4) that he was certain that something portentous to his kingdom had been prefigured by the dream, and that this was a case in which all the force of threatening, and all the prospect of splendid reward, should be used, that they might be induced to tax their powers to the utmost, and allay the tumults of his mind.

Verse 6

But if ye show the dream - If you show what the dream was.

And the interpretation thereof - What it signifies. That is, they were so to state the dream that Nebuchadnezzar would recognize it; and they were to give such an explanation of it as would commend itself to his mind as the true one. On this last point he would doubtless rely much on their supposed wisdom in performing this duty, but it would seem clear, also, that it was necessary that the interpretation should be seen to be a "fair" interpretation, or such as would be "fairly" implied in the dream. Thus, when Daniel made known the interpretation, he saw at once that it met all the features of the dream, and he admitted it to be correct. So also when Daniel explained the handwriting on the wall to Belshazzar, he admitted the justness of it, and loaded him with honors, Daniel 5:29. So when Joseph explained the dreams of Pharaoh, he at once saw the appropriateness of the explanation, and admitted it to be correct Genesis 41:39-45; and so in the case above referred to (notes on Daniel 2:2), of Astyages respecting the dreams of his daughter (Herod. 1, cvii.; cviii.), he at once saw that the interpretation of the dreams proposed by the Magi accorded with the dreams, and took his measures accordingly.

Ye shall receive of me gifts, and rewards, and great honor - Intending to appeal to their highest hopes to induce them, if possible, to disclose the meaning of the dream. He specifics no particular rewards, but makes the promise general; and the evident meaning is, that, in such a case, he would bestow what it became a monarch like him to give. That the usual rewards in such a case were such as were adapted to stimulate to the most vigorous exertions of their powers, may be seen from the honor which he conferred on Daniel when he made known the dream Daniel 2:48, and from the

rewards which Belshazzar conferred on Daniel for making known the interpretation of the writing on the wall Daniel 5:29: "Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom." Compare Esther 5:11; Esther 6:7-9.

Verse 7

They answered again, and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation of it - Certainly not an unreasonable request, in any circumstances, and especially in theirs. They did not profess, evidently, to be able to recal a dream that was forgotten, but the extent of their profession on this subject appears to have been, that they were able to "explain" what was commonly regarded as a prognostic of a future event.

Verse 8

The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time - Margin, "buy." The Chaldee word זבנין *zâbenîyn* (from זבן *zeban*) means, to get for oneself, buy, gain, procure. Greek, ἐξαγοράζετε *exagorazete* - "that ye redeem time;" and so the Vulgate - *quod tempus redimitis*. The idea is, that they saw that they could not comply with his requisition, and that their asking him Daniel 2:7 to state the dream was only a pretext for delay, in the hope that in the interval some device might be hit on by them to appease him, or to avert his threatened indignation. It would be natural to suppose that they might hope that on reflection he would become more calm, and that, although they "might" not be able to recal the dream and explain it, yet it would be seen to be unreasonable to expect or demand it. The king seems to have supposed that some such thoughts were passing through their minds, and he charges on them such a project. The argument of the king seems to have been something like this: "They who can explain a dream correctly can as well tell what it is as what its interpretation is, for the one is as much the result of Divine influence as the other; and if men can hope for Divine help in the one case, why not in the other? As you cannot, therefore, recal the dream, it is plain that you cannot interpret it; and your only object in demanding to know it is, that you may ward off as long as possible the execution of the threatened sentence, and, if practicable, escape it altogether." It is not improbable that what they said was more than the simple request recorded in Daniel 2:7. They would naturally enlarge on it, by attempting to show how unreasonable was the

demand of the king in the case, and their arguments would give a fair pretext for what he here charges on them.

Because ye see the thing is gone from me - According to the interpretation proposed in Daniel 2:5, the "dream." The meaning is, "You see that I have forgotten it. I have made a positive statement on that point. There can be no hope, therefore, that it can be recalled, and it is clear that your only object must be to gain time. Nothing can be gained by delay, and the matter may therefore be determined at once, and your conduct be construed as a confession that you cannot perform what is required, and the sentence proceed without delay." This makes better sense, it seems to me, than to suppose that he means that a sentence had gone forth from him that if they could not recal and interpret it they should be put to death.

Verse 9

But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you - That is, you shall share the same fate. You shall all be cut to pieces, and your houses reduced to ruin, Daniel 2:5. There shall be no favor shown to any class of you, or to any individual among you. It seems to have been supposed that the responsibility rested on them individually as well as collectively, and that it would be right to hold each and every one of them bound to explain the matter. As no difference of obligation was recognized, there would be no difference of criminality. It should be said, however, that there is a difference of interpretation here. Gesenius, and some others, render the word translated "decree" - דת *dâth* - "counsel, plan, purpose," and suppose that it means, "this only is your counsel, or plan;" that is, to prepare lying words, and to gain time. So Prof. Stuart renders the verse, "If ye will not make known to me the dream, one thing is your purpose, both a false and deceitful word have ye agreed to utter before me, until the time shall have changed; therefore tell me the dream, and then I shall know that you can show me the interpretation thereof." The original word, however, is most commonly used in the sense of law or decree. See Deuteronomy 33:2; Esther 1:8, Esther 1:13, Esther 1:15, Esther 1:19; Esther 2:8; Esther 3:8, Esther 3:14-15; Esther 4:3, Esther 4:8, Esther 4:11, Esther 4:16; Esther 8:13-14, Esther 8:17; Esther 9:1, Esther 9:13-14; and there seems to be no necessity for departing from the common translation. It contains a sense according to the truth in the case, and is in accordance with the Greek, Latin, and Syriac versions.

For ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me - That is, "You have done this in asking me to state the dream Daniel 2:4, Daniel 2:7, and in the demand that the dream should be made known to you, in order that you may interpret it. I shall know by your inability to recal the dream that you have been acting a false and deceitful part, and that your pretensions were all false. Your wish, therefore, to have me state the dream will be shown to be a mere pretence, an artifice for delay, that you might put off the execution of the sentence with the hope of escaping altogether."

Till the time be changed - That is, until a new state of things shall occur; either until his purpose might change, and his anger should subside or until there should be a change of government: It was natural for such thoughts to pass through the mind of the king, since, as matters could be no "worse" for them if the subject was delayed, there was a possibility that they might be "better" - for any change would be likely to be an advantage. There does not appear to have been any great confidence or affection on either side. The king suspected that they were influenced by bad motives, and they certainly had no strong reasons for attachment to him. Compare the notes at Daniel 2:21, and Daniel 7:25.

Verse 10

The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said - Perhaps the "Chaldeans" answered because they were the highest in favor, and were those in whom most confidence was usually reposed in such matters. See the notes at Daniel 2:2. On such an occasion, those would be likely to be put forward to announce their inability to do this who would be supposed to be able to interpret the dream, if any could, and on whom most reliance was usually placed.

There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter - Chaldee, על־יבשׁתא *ʿal -yabeshethâ'* - "upon the dry ground." Compare Genesis 1:10. The meaning is, that the thing was utterly beyond the power of man. It was what none who practiced the arts of divining laid claim to. They doubtless supposed that as great proficients in that art as the world could produce might be found among the wise men assembled at the court of Babylon, and if they failed, they inferred that all others would fail. This was, therefore, a decided confession of their inability in the matter; but they meant to break the force of that mortifying confession, and perhaps to appease the wrath of the king, by affirming that the thing was wholly

beyond the human powers, and that no one could be expected to do what was demanded.

Therefore" there is "no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things - No one has ever made a similar demand. The matter is so clear, the incompetency of man to make such a disclosure is so manifest, that no potentate of any rank ever made such a request. They designed, undoubtedly, to convince the king that the request was so unreasonable that he would not insist on it. They were urgent, for their life depended on it, and they apprehended that they had justice on their side.

Verse 11

And it is a rare thing that the king requireth - Chaldee, יקירה *yaqqîyrâh* - meaning, "choice, valuable, costly;" then, "heavy, hard, difficult." Greek, βαρύς *barus* Vulgate, "gravis - heavy, weighty." The idea is not so much that the thing demanded by the king was "uncommon" or "rarely made" - though that was true, as that it was so difficult as to be beyond the human powers. They would not have been likely on such an occasion to say that the requirement was absolutely unjust or unreasonable. The term which they used was respectful, and yet it implied that no man could have any hope of solving the question as it was proposed by him.

And there is none other that can show it before the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh - This was clearly true, that a matter of that kind could not be disclosed except by Divine assistance. It would seem from this that these persons did not claim to be inspired, or to have communication with the gods; or, at least, that they did not claim to be inspired by the Supreme God, but that they relied on their own natural sagacity, and their careful and long study of the meaning of those occurrences which prefigured future events, and perhaps on the mystic arts derived from their acquaintance with science as then understood. The word "gods" here - אלהין *'ĕlâhîyn* the same as the Hebrew אלהים *'ĕlohîym* - is in the plural number, but might be applied to the true God, as the Hebrew אלהים *'ĕlohîym* often is. It is by no means certain that they meant to use this in the plural, or to say that it was an admitted truth that the gods worshipped in Babylon did not dwell with people.

It was, undoubtedly, the common opinion that they did; that the temples were their abode; and that they frequently appeared among men, and took part in human affairs. But it was a very early opinion that the Supreme God was withdrawn from human affairs, and had committed the government of

the world to intermediate beings - *internuncii* - demons, or aeons: beings of power far superior to that of men, who constantly mingled in human affairs. Their power, however, though great, was limited; and may not the Chaldeans here by the word אלהין *'ĕlâhîyn* - have meant to refer to the Supreme God, and to say that this was a case which pertained to him alone; that no inferior divinity could be competent to do such a thing as he demanded; and that as the Supreme God did not dwell among men it was hopeless to attempt to explain the matter? Thus understood, the result will convey a higher truth, and will show more impressively the honor put on Daniel. The phrase, "whose dwelling is not with flesh," means "with men - in human bodies."

On the supposition that this refers to the Supreme God, this undoubtedty accords with the prevailing sentiment of those times, that however often the inferior divinities might appear to men, and assume human forms, yet the Supreme God was far removed, and never thus took up his abode on the earth. They could hope, therefore, for no communication from Him who alone would be competent to the solution, of such a secret as this. This may be regarded, therefore, as a frank confession of their entire failure in the matter under consideration. They acknowledged that "they" themselves were not competent to the solution of the question, and they expressed the opinion that the ability to do it could not be obtained from the help which the inferior gods rendered to men, and that it was hopeless to expect the Supreme God - far withdrawn from human affairs - to interpose. It was a public acknowledgment that their art failed on a most important trial, and thus the way was prepared to show that Daniel, under the teaching of the true God, was able to accomplish what was wholly beyond all human power.

The trial had been fairly made. The wisest men of the Chaldean realm had been applied to. They on whom reliance had been placed in such emergencies; they who professed to be able to explain the prognostics of future events; they who had been assembled at the most important and magnificent court of the world - the very center of Pagan power; they who had devoted their lives to investigations of this nature, and who might be supposed to be competent to such a work, if any on earth could, now openly

acknowledged that their art failed them, and expressed the conviction that there was no resource in the case.

Verse 12

For this cause the king was angry - Because they failed in explaining the subject which had been referred to them. It is true that his anger was unjust, for their profession did not imply that they would undertake to explain what he demanded, but his wrath was not unnatural. His mind was alarmed, and he was troubled. He believed that what he had seen in his dream foreboded some important events, and, as an arbitrary sovereign, unaccustomed to restrain his anger or to inquire into the exact jusrice of matters which excited Iris indignation, it was not unnatural that he should resolve to wreak his vengeance on all who made any pretensions to the arts of divining.

And very furious - Wrought up to the highest degree of passion. Chaldee, "Much enraged." It was not a calm and settled purpose to execute his threat, but a purpose attended with a high degree of excitement.

And commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon - That is, all who made pretensions to this kind of wisdom; all who came under the wellknown denomination of "wise men," or "sages." He had called that class before him Daniel 2:2; he had demanded of them an explanation of his dream; he had been assured by the leading men among them, the Chaldeans Daniel 2:10-11, that they could not recall his dream; and, as he supposed that all who could be relied on in such a case had failed, he resolved to cut them off as impostors.

Where Daniel was at this time is not known. It would seem, however, that from some reason he had not been summoned before the king with the others, probably because, although he had shown himself to be eminently endowed with wisdom Daniel 1:20, he had not yet made any pretensions to this kind of knowledge, and was not numbered with the Magi, or Chaldeans. When, however, the decree went forth that "all" the "wise men of Babylon" should be slain, the exhibition of wisdom and knowledge made by him Daniel 1:18-20 was recollected, and the executioners of the sentence supposed that tie and his companions were included in the general instructions. Whether the word "Babylon" here relates to the city of Babylon, or to the whole realm, there is no certain way of determining. Considering, however, the character of Oriental despotisms, and the cruelty

to which absolute sovereigns have usually been transported in their passion, there would be no improbability in supposing that the command included the whole realm, though it is probable that most of this class would be found in the capital.

Verse 13

And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain - The original here will bear a somewhat different translation, meaning, "the decree went forth, "and" the wise men were slain;" that is, the execution of the sentence was actually commenced. So the Vulgate: *Et egressa sententia, sapientes interficiebantur*. So also the Greek version: καὶ οἱ σοφοί ἀπεκτέννοντο *kai hoi sophoi apektennonto* - "and the wise men were slain." This seems to me to be the more probable interpretation, and better to suit the connection. Then it would mean that they had actually begun to execute the decree, and that in the prosecution of their bloody work they sought out Daniel and his companions, and that by his influence with Arioch the execution of the sentence was arrested.

And they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain - His three companions Daniel 1:6, who probably had not been among those who were summoned to court to explain the matter. Had they been consulted at first, the issuing of the decree would have been prevented, but it seems to have been the design of Providence to give the fairest trial of the ability of these sages, and to allow matters to come to a crisis, in order to show that what was done was wholly beyond human power.

Verse 14

Then Daniel answered - Margin, "returned." The original literally is, "returned counsel and wisdom," meaning, that he returned an answer which was replete with wisdom. It would seem probable that Arioch had communicated to Daniel the decree of the king, and had stated to him that he was involved in that decree, and must prepare to die.

Counsel and wisdom - That is, "wise counsel." He evinced great prudence and discretion in what he said. He made such a suggestion to Arioch as, if acted on, would stay the execution of the sentence against all the wise men, and would secure the object which the king had in view. What was the exact nature of this answer is not mentioned. It is probable, however, that it was that he might be enabled to disclose the dream, and that he made this so plausible to Arioch, that he was disposed to allow him to

make the trial. It is evident that Arioch would not have consented to arrest the execution of the sentence, unless it had appeared to him to be in the highest degree probable that he would be able to relieve the anxiety of the king. Knowing that the "main" object of the king was to obtain the interpretation of his dream, and seeing that this object was not any the more likely to be secured by the execution of this stern decree, and knowing the high favor with which Daniel had been received at court Daniel 1:19-21, he seems to have been willing to assume some measure of responsibility, and to allow Daniel to make his own representation to the king.

To Arioch the captain of the king's guard - Margin, "chief of the executioners, or slaughter-men, or chief marshal." Greek, ἀρχιμαγείρῳ τοῦ βασιλέως *archimageirō tou basileōs* - chief cook of the king. The Vulgate renders this," Then Daniel inquired respecting the law and the sentence of Arioch, the commander of the royal army." The Chaldee word rendered "guard" is טבחיא *ṭabâchayâ'* It is derived from טבח *ṭâbach* to slaughter; to kill animals; and then to kill or slay men. The "noun," then, means a slaughterer or slayer; a cook; an executioner, or one who kills men at the will of a sovereign, or by due sentence of law. There can be no doubt that the word here refers to Arioch, as sent out to execute this sentence; yet we are not to regard hint as a mere executioner, or as we would a hangman, for undoubtedly the king would entrust this sentence to one who was of respectable, if not of high rank. It is probable that one of the principal officers of his body-guard would be entrusted with the execution of such a sentence. In 1 Samuel 8:13, the word is rendered "cooks." It does not elsewhere occur. That he was not a "mere" executioner is apparent from the title given him in the next verse, where he is called "the king's captain."

Which was gone forth to slay … - He had gone to execute the decree, and its execution had already commenced.

Verse 15

He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain - The word "captain" - a different word from what occurs in Daniel 2:14, שׁליטא *shallîyṭa'* - denotes one who has rule or dominion; one who is powerful or mighty; and it would be applied only to one who sustained a post of honor and responsibility. See the use of the word שׁלט *shālaṭ* as meaning "to rule," in Nehemiah 5:15; Ecclesiastes 2:19; Ecclesiastes 6:2; Ecclesiastes 8:9; Esther 9:1; Psalm 119:133. The word here used is the same which occurs in Daniel 2:10, where it is rendered "ruler." It doubtless denotes here an

officer of rank, and designates one of more honorable employment than would be denoted by the word "executioner." It should be said on these verses Daniel 2:14-15, however, that the office of executioner in the East was by no means regarded as a dishonorable office. It was entrusted to those high in rank, and even nobles considered it an honor, and often boasted of it as such, that among their ancestors there were those who had in this way been entrusted with executing the commands of their sovereign. Hanway and AbdulKerim both say that this office conferred honor and rank. Tournefort says, that in Georgia "the executioners are very rich, and men of standing undertake this employment; far different from what occurs in other parts of the world, in that country this gives to a family a title of honor. They boast that among their ancestors there were many who were executioners; and this they base on the sentiment, that nothing is more desirable than justice, and that nothing can be more honorable than to be engaged in administering the laws." See Rosenmuller, Morgenland, 1079.

Why is the decree so hasty from the king? - Implying that all the effort had not been made which it was possible to make to solve the mystery. The idea is, that a decree of such a nature, involving so many in ruin, ought not to have proceeded from the king without having taken all possible precautions, and having made all possible efforts to find those who might be able to disclose what the king desired. It was to Daniel a just matter of surprise that, after the favor and honor with which he had been received at court Daniel 1:19-20, and the confidence which had been reposed in him, a command like this should have been issued. so comprehensive as to embrace him and his friends, when they had done nothing to deserve the displeasure of the king.

Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel - The statement respecting the dream; the trouble of the king; the consultation of the magicians; their inability to explain the dream, and the positive command to put all the pretenders to wisdom to death. It is clear that Daniel had not before been informed of these things.

Verse 16

Then Daniel went in … - Either by himself, or through the medium of some friend. Perhaps all that is meant is not that he actually went into the presence of the monarch, but that he went into the palace, and through the interposition of some high officer of court who had access to the sovereign, desired of him that he would give him time, and that he would make it

known. It would rather appear, from Daniel 2:24-25, that the first direct audience which he had with the king was after the thing was made known to him in a night vision, and it would scarcely accord with established Oriental usages that he should go immediately and unceremoniously into the royal presence. A petition, presented through some one who had access to the king, would meet all the circumstances of the case.

That he would give him time - He did not specify "why" he desired time, though the reason why he did it is plain enough. He wished to lay the matter before God, and to engage his friends in earnest prayer that the dream and the interpretation might be made known to him. This request was granted to him. It may seem remarkable, as no time was allowed to the Chaldeans that they might make inquiry Daniel 2:8, that such a favor should have been granted to Daniel, especially after the execution of the sentence had been commenced; but we are to remember

(1) that the king would recollect the favor which he had already shown Daniel on good grounds, and the fact that he regarded him as endowed with great wisdom, Daniel 1:19-20.

(2) Daniel did not ask, as the Chaldeans did, that the king should tell the dream before he undertook to explain it, but he proposed evidently to unfold the whole matter.

(3) It could not but occur to the king that Daniel had not yet been consulted, and that it was but reasonable that he should have a fair trial now, since it appeared that he was involved in the general sentence.

(4) The anxiety of the king to understand the dream was so great that he was willing to grasp at "any" hope in order that his perplexities might be relieved; and

(5) It is not improper to suppose that there may have been a Divine influence on the mind of this monarch, making' him willing to do so simple an act of justice as this, in order that it might be seen and acknowledged that the hand of God was in the whole matter.

Verse 17

Then Daniel went to his house - It is quite evident that he had obtained the object of his request, though this is not expressly mentioned. The king was undoubtedly, for the reasons above stated, willing that he should have a fair opportunity to try his skill in disclosing the mysterious secret.

And made the thing known to Hananiah … - Made the whole matter known - the perplexity respecting the dream; the failure of the Chaldeans to interpret it; the decree; and his own petition to the king. They had a common interest in knowing it, as their lives were all endangered.

Verse 18

That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret - That they would implore of God that he would show his mercy to them in revealing this secret, that their lives might be spared. In the margin, as in the Chaldee, this is "from before the God of heaven." All depended now on God. It was clear that human skill was exhausted, and that no reliance could be placed on any ability which man possessed. The art of the Chaldeans had failed, and Daniel, as well by this failure as by the promptings of his own feelings, must now have perceived that the only hope was in God, and that his favor in the case was to be obtained only by prayer. As his three friends were equally interested in the issue, and as it was an early principle of religion, and one found in all dispensations (compare Matthew 18:19), that "united" prayer has special power with God, it was natural and proper to call on his friends to join with him in asking this favor from Him who alone could grant it. It was the natural and the last resource of piety, furnishing an example of what all may do, and should do, in times of perplexity and danger.

That Daniel and his fellows should not perish - Margin, "or, they should not destroy Daniel." The leading in the margin is most in accordance with the Chaldee, though the sense is substantially the same. The word "fellows" is the same which is before rendered "companions."

With the rest of the wise men of Babylon - It seems to have been certain that the decree would be executed on the Chaldeans, soothsayers, etc. And, indeed, there was no reason "why" the decree should not be executed. They had confessed their inability to comply with the king's command, and whatever Daniel could now do could not be construed in their favor as furnishing any reason why the decree should not be executed on them. It was presumed, therefore, that the law, severe as it seemed to be, would be carried into effect on them, and we may suppose that this was

probably done. The only hope of their escaping from the common lot was in the belief that the God whom they served would now interpose in their behalf.

Verse 19

Then was the secret revealed … - To wit, the dream and the interpretation. The thing which had been "hidden" was disclosed. We may suppose that this occurred after a suitable time had been given to prayer.

In a night vision - A representation made to him at night, but whether when he was asleep or awake does not appear. Compare the notes at Daniel 1:17; Isaiah 1:1; Job 4:13; Job 33:15.

Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven - Nothing would be more natural than that he should burst forth in a song of grateful praise for disclosing a secret by means of which his life, and the lives of his companions, would be preserved, and by which such signal honor would redound to God himself, as alone able to reveal coming events.

Verse 20

Daniel answered and said - The word "answer," in the Scriptures, often occurs substantially in the sense of "speak" or "say." It does not always denote a reply to something that has been said by another, as it does with us, but is often used when a speech is commenced, as if one were replying to something that "might" be said in the case, or as meaning that the circumstances in the case gave rise to the remark. Here the meaning is, that Daniel responded, as it were, to the goodness which God had manifested, and gave utterance to his feelings in appropriate expressions of praise.

Blessed be the name of God forever and ever - That is, blessed be God - the "name," in the Scriptures, being often used to denote the person himself. It is common in the Bible to utter ascriptions of praise to God in view of important revelations, or in view of great mercies. Compare the song of Moses after the passage of the Red Sea, Isaiah 12:1-6.

For wisdom, and might are his - Both these were manifested in a remarkable manner in the circumstances of this case, and therefore these were the beginnings of the song of praise: "wisdom," as now imparted to Daniel, enabling him to disclose this secret, when all human skill had failed; and "might," as about to be evinced in the changes of empire indicated by the dream and the interpretation. Compare Jeremiah 32:19, "Great in counsel, and mighty in work."

Verse 21

And he changeth the times and the seasons - The object of this is to assert the general control of God in reference to all changes which occur. The assertion is made, undoubtedly, in view of the revolutions in empire which Daniel now saw, from the signification of the dream, were to take place under the Divine hand. Foreseeing now these vast changes denoted by different parts of the image Daniel 2:36-45, stretching into far-distant times, Daniel was led to ascribe to God the control over "all" the revolutions which occur on earth. There is no essential difference between the words "times" and "seasons." The words in Chaldee denote stated or appointed seasons; and the idea of times "appointed, set, determined," enters into both. Times and seasons are not under the control of chance, but are bounded by established laws; and yet God, who appointed these laws, has power to change them, and all the changes which occur under those laws are produced by his agency. Thus the changes which occur in regard to day and night, spring and summer, autumn and winter, clouds and sunshine, health and sickness, childhood and youth, manhood and age, are under his control. Such changes, being in accordance with certain laws, may be regarded as "appointed," or "set," and yet the laws and the revolutions consequent on them are all under his control. So in regard to the revolutions of empire. By the arrangements of his providence he secures such revolutions as he shall see it to be best should occur, and in all of them his high hand should be regarded. The words "seasons" and "times" are of frequent occurrence in Daniel, and are sometimes used in a peculiar sense (see the notes at Daniel 7:12, Daniel 7:25), but they seem here to be employed in their usual and general signification, to denote that "all" the revolutions which occur on earth are under his control.

He removeth kings, and setteth up kings - He has absolute control over all the sovereigns of the earth, to place on the throne whom he will, and to remove them when he pleases. This was doubtless suggested to Daniel, and was made the foundation of this portion of his hymn of praise, from what he was permitted to see in the disclosures made to him in the interpretation of the dream. He then saw (compare Daniel 2:37-45) that there would be most important revolutions of kingdoms under the hand of God, and being deeply impressed with these great prospective changes, he makes this general statement, that it was the prerogative of God to do this at pleasure. Nebuchadnezzar was brought to feel this, and to recognize it, when he said Daniel 4:17, "The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men,

and giveth it to whomsoever he will;" "he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

Daniel 4:32, Daniel 4:35. This claim is often asserted for God in the Scriptures as a proof of his supremacy and greatness. "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south: but God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another," Psalm 75:6-7. Compare 1 Samuel 2:7-8. Thus he claimed absolute control over Sennacherib to employ him at his pleasure in executing his purposes of punishment on the Hebrew nation Isaiah 10:5-7, and thus over Cyrus to execute his purposes on Babylon, and to restore his people to their land, Isaiah 45:1, following See also Isaiah 46:10-11. In this manner, all the kings of the earth may be regarded as under his control; and if the Divine plan were fully understood it would be found that each one has received his appointment under the Divine direction, to accomplish some important part in carrying forward the Divine plans to their fulfillment. A history of human affairs, showing the exact purpose of God in regard to each ruler who has occupied a throne, and the exact object which God designed to accomplish by placing "him" on the throne at the time when he did, would be a far more important and valuable history than any which has been written. Of many such rulers, like Cyrus, Sennacherib, Pilate, Henry VIII, Edward VI, and the Elector of Saxony, we can see the reason why they lived and reigned when they did; and doubtless God has had some important end to accomplish in the development of his great plans in the case of every one who has ever occupied a throne.

He giveth wisdom unto the wise … - He is the source of all true wisdom and knowledge. This is often claimed for God in the Scriptures. Compare Proverbs 2:6-7:

"For the Lord giveth wisdom;
Out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.
He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous;
He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly."

See also 1 Kings 3:9-12; Exodus 31:3. God claims to be the source of all wisdom and knowledge. He originally formed each human intellect, and made it what it is; he opens before it the paths of knowledge; he gives to it clearness of perception; he preserves its powers so that they do not become deranged; he has power to make suggestions, to direct the laws of

association, to fix the mind on important thoughts, and to open before it new and interesting views of truth. And as it would be found, if the history could be written, that God has placed each monarch on the throne with a distinct reference to some important purpose in the development of his great plans, so probably it would be seen that each important work of genius which has been written; each invention in the arts; and each discovery in science has been, for a similar purpose, under his control. He has created the great intellect just at the time when it was needful that such a discovery or invention should be made, and having prepared the world for it by the course of events, the discovery or invention has occurred just at the time when, on the whole, it was most desirable that it should.

Verse 22

He revealeth the deep and secret things - Things which are too profound for man to fathom by his own power, and which are concealed or hidden until he makes them known. What is said here is an advance on what was affirmed in the previous verse, and relates to another kind of knowledge. "That" related to such knowledge as was not properly beyond the grasp of the human intellect when unaided in any supernatural manner, and affirmed that even then all discoveries and inventions are to be traced to God; "this" refers to a species of knowledge which lies beyond any natural compass of the human powers, and in which a supernatural influence is needed - such things as the Chaldeans and astrologers claimed the power of disclosing. The assertion here is, that when the highest human wisdom showed itself insufficient for the exigency, God was able to disclose those deep truths which it was desirable for man to understand. Applied generally, this refers to the truths made known by revelation - truths which man could never have discovered by his unaided powers.

He knoweth what is in the darkness - What appears to man to be involved in darkness, and on which no light seems to shine. This may refer not only to what is concealed from man in the literal darkness of night, but to all that is mysterious; all that lies beyond the range of human inquiry; all that pertains to unseen worlds. An immensely large portion of the universe lies wholly beyond the range of human investigation at present, and is, of course, dark to man.

And the light dwelleth with him - The word rendered "dwelleth" (שׁרא *sherēl*) means, properly, to loose, to unbind, to solve, as e. g., hard questions, Daniel 5:16; and is then applied to travelers who unbind the

loads of their beasts to put up for the night, and then it comes to mean to put up for the night, to lodge, to dwell. Hence, the meaning is, that the light abides with God; it is there as in its appropriate dwelling-place; he is in the midst of it: all is light about him; light when it is sent out goes from him; when it is gathered together, its appropriate place is with him. Compare Job 38:19-20:

"Where is the way where light dwelleth?
And as for darkness, where is the place thereof?
That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof,
And that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof?"

See the note at that passage. Compare also 1 Timothy 6:16: "Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto." 1 John 1:5: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

Verse 23

I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers - By his "fathers" here, Daniel refers doubtless to the Jewish people in general, and not to his own particular ancestors. The meaning of the phrase "God of my fathers" is, that he had been their protector; had regarded them as his people; had conferred on them great favors. The particular ground of thanksgiving here is, that the same God who had so often revealed himself to the Hebrew people by the prophets in their own land, had now condescended to do the same thing to one of their nation, though a captive in a strange country. The favor thus bestowed had an increased value, from the fact that it showed that the Hebrew people were not forgotten, though far from the land of their birth, and that, though in captivity, they might still hope for the benign interposition of God.

Who hast given me wisdom and might - The word "wisdom" here undoubtedly refers to the ability which had now been given him to declare the nature and purport of the dream, imparting to him a degree of wisdom far superior to those pretenders to whom the matter had been at first submitted. The word "might" (Chaldee, strength - גבורתא *gebûrethâ'*) does not probably differ materially from "wisdom." It means "ability" to interpret the dream - implying that it was a task beyond natural human ability.

For thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter - That is, it had been made known to him and his friends. He joins himself with them, for, although it was particularly made known to him, yet, as they had united

with him in prayer that the secret might be disclosed, and as they shared common dangers, he regarded it as in fact made known to them all.

Verse 24

Therefore Daniel went in, unto Arioch - In view of the fact that the matter was now disclosed to him, he proposed to lay it before the king. This of course, he did not do directly, but through Arioch, who was entrusted with the execution of the decree to slay the wise men of Babylon. That officer would naturally have access to the king, and it was proper that a proposal to arrest the execution of the sentence should be made through his instrumentality. The Chaldee דנה כל־קבל *kôl -qebēl denâh* is, properly, "on this whole account " - or, "on this whole account because" - in accordance with the usually full and pleonastic mode of writing particles, Similar to the German "alldieweil," or the compound English "forasmuch as." The meaning is, that in view of the whole matter, he sought to lay the case before the king.

Destroy not the wise men of Babylon - That is, "Stay the execution of the sentence on them. Though they have failed to furnish the interpretation demanded, yet, as it can now be given, there is no occasion for the exercise of this severity." The ground of the sentence was that they could not interpret the dream. As the execution of the sentence involved Daniel and his friends, and as the reason why it was passed at all would now cease by his being able to furnish the required explanation, Daniel felt that it was a matter of mere justice that the execution of the sentence should cease altogether.

Bring me in before the king - It would seem from this that Daniel did not regard himself as having free access to the king, and he would not unceremoniously intrude himself into his presence. This verse confirms the interpretation given of Daniel 2:16, and makes it in the highest degree probable that this was the first occasion on which he was personally before the king in reference to this matter.

Verse 25

Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste - The Chaldee word used here implies "in tumultuous haste," as of one who was violently excited, or in a state of trepidation, from בהל *bâhal* - "to tremble, to be in trepidation." The trepidation in this case may have arisen from one or both of two causes:

(1) exultation, or joy, that the great secret was discovered; or

(2) joy that the effusion of blood might be stayed, and that there might be now no necessity to continue the execution of the sentence against the wise men.

I have found a man - Margin, as in Chaldee, "That I have found a man It is not to be supposed that Arioch had known anything of the application which Daniel had made to the king to delay the execution of the sentence Daniel 2:16, and, for anything that appears, he had suspended that execution on his own responsibility. Ignorant as he was, therefore, of any such arrangement, and viewing only his own agency in the matter, it was natural for him to go in and announce this as something entirely new to the king, and without suggesting that the execution of the sentence had been at all delayed. It was a most remarkable circumstance, and one which looks like a Divine interposition, that he should have been disposed to delay the execution of the sentence at all, so that Daniel could have an opportunity of showing whether he could not divulge the secret. All the circumstances of the case seem to imply that Arioch was not a man of a cruel disposition, but was disposed, as far as possible, to prevent the effusion of blood.

Of the captives of Judah - Margin, as in Chaldee, "of the children of the captivity." The word "Judah" here probably refers to the "country" rather than to the "people," and means that he was among those who had been brought from the land of Judah.

That will make known unto the king the interpretation - It is clear, from the whole narrative, that Arioch had great confidence in Daniel. All the "evidence" which he could halve that he would be able to make this known, must have been from the fact that Daniel "professed" to be able to do it; but such was his confidence in him that he had no doubt that he would be able to do it.

Verse 26

The king answered, and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar - See the notes at Daniel 1:7. The "king" may have addressed him by this name, and probably did during this interview. This was the name, it would seem, by which he was known in Babylon - a name which implied honor and respectability, as being conferred on one whom it was supposed the principal Babylonian divinity favored.

Art thou able to make known unto me the dream? - One of the first points in the difficulty was to recal "the dream itself," and hence, this was

the first inquiry which the king presented. If he could not recal that, of course the matter was at an end, and the law would be suffered to take its course.

Verse 27

Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded, cannot the wise men … show unto the king - Daniel regarded it as a settled and indisputable point that the solution could not be hoped for from the Chaldean sages. The highest talent which the realm could furnish had been applied to, and had failed. It was clear, therefore, that there was no hope that the difficulty would be removed by human skill. Besides this, Daniel would seem also to intimate that the thing, from the necessity of the case, was beyond the compass of the human powers. Alike in reference to the question whether a forgotten dream could be recalled, and to the actual "signification" of a dream so remarkable as this, the whole matter was beyond the ability of man.

The wise men, the astrologers … - On these words, see the notes at Daniel 1:20. All these words occur in that verse, except גזרין *gâzerîyn* - rendered "soothsayers." This is derived from גזר *gezar* - "to cut, to cut off;" and then "to decide, to determine;" and it is thus applied to those who decide or determine the fates or destiny of men; that is, those who "by casting nativities from the place of the stars at one's birth, and by various arts of computing and divining, foretold the fortunes and destinies of individuals." See Gesenius, "Com. z. Isa." 2:349-356, Section 4, Von den Chaldern und deren Astrologie. On p. 555, he has given a figure, showing how the heavens were "cut up," or "divided," by astrologers in the practice of their art. Compare the phrase *numeri Babylonii*, in Hor. "Carm." I. xi. 2. The Greek is γαζαρηνῶν *gazarēnōn* - the Chaldee word in Greek letters. This is one of the words - not very few in number - which the authors of the Greek version did not attempt to translate. Such words, however, are not useless, as they serve to throw light on the question how the Hebrew and Chaldee were pronounced before the vowel points were affixed to those languages.

Verse 28

But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets - One of the principal objects contemplated in all that occurred respecting this dream and its interpretation was, to direct the mind of the monarch to the true God, and to secure the acknowledgment of his supremacy. Hence, it was so

ordered that those who were most eminent for wisdom, and who were regarded as the favorites of heaven, were constrained to confess their entire inability to explain the mystery. The way was thus prepared to show that he who "could" do this must be the true God, and must be worthy of adoration and praise. Thus prepared, the mind of the monarch was now directed by this pious Hebrew youth, though a captive, to a truth so momentous and important. His whole training, his modesty and his piety, all were combined to lead him to attribute whatever skill he might evince in so difficult a matter to the true God alone: and we can scarcely conceive of a more sublime object of contemplation than this young man, in the most magnificent court of the world, directing the thoughts of the most mighty monarch that then occupied a throne, to the existence and the perfections of the true God.

And maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar - Margin, "hath made." The translation in the text is more correct, for it was not true that he had as yet actually made these things known to the king. He had furnished intimations of what was to occur, but he had not yet been permitted to understand their signification.

What shall be in the latter days - Greek ἐπ᾽ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν *ep' eschatōn tōn hēmerōn* - "in the last days." Vulgate, *in novissimis temporibus* - "in the last times." Chaldee, יומיא באחרית *be'achărîyth yômayâ'* - "in the after days;" or, as Faber expresses it, "in the afterhood of days." The phrase means what we should express by saying, "hereafter - in future times - in time to come." This phrase often has special reference to the times of the Messiah, as the last dispensation of things on the earth, or as that under which the affairs of the world will be wound up. Compare the notes at Isaiah 2:2. It does not appear, however, to be used in that sense here, but it denotes merely "future" times. The phrase "the latter days," therefore, does not exactly convey the sense of the original. It is "future" days rather than "latter" days.

Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed - The phrase "visions of thy head" means conceptions or notions formed by the brain. It would seem from this, that, even in the time of Daniel, the brain was regarded as, in some sense, the organ of thinking, or that "thought" had its seat in the head. We are not to suppose that by the use of these different expressions Daniel meant to describe two things, or to intimate that

Nebuchadnezzar had had visions which were distinct. What he saw might be described as a dream or a vision; it, in fact, had the nature of both.

Are these - "These which I now proceed to describe."

Verse 29

As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed - Margin, "up;" that is, thy thoughts ascended. The Chaldee is, "thy thoughts ascended" - סלקוּ *selîqû* So the Greek: "Thy thoughts ascended (ἀνέβησαν *anebēsan*) upon thy couch." There is, evidently, some allusion to the thoughts "ascending," or "going up;" and perhaps the idea is, that they were employed on important subjects - an idea which we now express by saying that one's thoughts are "elevated," as contrasted with those which are "low" and "grovelling."

What should come to pass hereafter - It would seem most probable from this, that the thoughts of Nebuchadnezzar were occupied with this subject in his waking moments on his bed, and that the dream was grafted on this train of thought when he fell asleep. Nothing is more probable than that his thoughts might be thus occupied. The question respecting his successor; the changes which might occur; the possibility of revolutions in other kingdoms, or in the provinces of his own vast empire, all were topics on which his mind would probably be employed. As God designed, too, to fix his thoughts particularly on that general subjects the changes which were to occur in his empire - such an occasion, when his attention was greatly engrossed with the subject, would be very suitable to impart the knowledge which he did by this vision. Daniel refers to this, probably, because it would do much to confirm the monarch in the belief of his inspiration, if he referred to the train of thought which had preceded the dream; as it is not improbable that the king would remember his "waking" thoughts on the subject, though his "dream" was forgotten.

Verse 30

But as for me - So far as I am concerned in this matter, or whatever skill or wisdom I may evince in the interpretation, it is not to be traced to myself. The previous verse commences with the expression "as for thee;" and in this verse, by the phrase "as for me," Daniel puts himself in strong contrast with the king. The way in which this was done was not such as to flatter the vanity of the king, and cannot be regarded as the art of the courtier, and yet it was such as would be universally adopted to conciliate his favor, and to give him an elevated idea of the modesty and piety of the

youthful Daniel. In the previous verse he says, that, as to what pertained to the king, God had greatly honored him by giving him important intimations of what was yet to occur. Occupying the position which he did, it might be supposed that it would not be wholly unnatural that he should be thus favored, and Daniel does not say, as in his own case, that it was not on account of anything in the character and rank of the king that this had been communicated to him. But when he comes to speak of himself - a youth; a captive; a stranger in Babylon; a native of another land - nothing was more natural or proper than that he should state distinctly that it was not on account of anything in him that this was done.

This secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living - That is, "it is not "by" any wisdom which I have above others, nor is it "on account of" any previous wisdom which I have possessed or manifested." There is an absolute and total disclaimer of the idea that it was in any sense, or in any way, on account of his own superiority in wisdom. All the knowledge which he had in the case was to be traced entirely to God.

But for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king - Margin, "or, the intent that the interpretation may be made known." The margin is the more correct rendering, and should have been admitted into the text. The literal translation is, "but (להן *lâhēn*) on account of the thing that they might make known the interpretation to the king." The word rendered "make known" is indeed in the plural, but it is evidently used in an impersonal sense, meaning that the interpretation would be made known. "It was to the intent that they might make it known;" that is, that somebody might do it, or that it might be done. Would not modesty and delicacy lead to the choice of such an expression here, inclining Daniel to avoid, as far as possible, all mention of himself? The main thought is, that the grand object to be secured was not to glorify Daniel, or any other human being, but to communicate to this pagan monarch important truths respecting coming events, and through him to the world.

And that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart - In reference to this matter; that is, that he might be able to recal the thoughts which passed through his mind in the dream. This Daniel 2:27-30 is the introduction to the important disclosure which Daniel was about to make to the king. This entire disclaimer of the honor of having originated the interpretation by his own wisdom, and the ascribing of it to God, are worthy

here of special attention. It is probable that the magicians were accustomed to ascribe to their own skill and sagacity the ability to interpret dreams and the other prognostics of the future, and to claim special honor on that account. In opposition to this, Daniel utterly disclaims any such wisdom himself, and attributes the skill which he has entirely to God. This is a beautiful illustration of the nature of modesty and piety. It places before us a young man, having now the prospect of being elevated to great honors; under every temptation to arrogate the possession of extraordinary wisdom to himself; suddenly exalted above all the sages of the most splendid court on earth, disclaiming all merit, and declaring in the most solemn manner that whatever profound wisdom there might be in the communication which he was about to make, it was not in the slightest degree to be traced to himself. See the remarks at the end of the chapter, (6.)

Verse 31

Thou, O king, sawest - Margin, "wast seeing." The margin is in accordance with the Chaldee. The language is properly what denotes a prolonged or attentive observation. He was in an attitude favorable to vision, or was looking with intensity, and there appeared before him this remarkable image. Compare Daniel 7:1-2, Daniel 7:4, Daniel 7:6. It was not a thing which appeared for a moment, and then vanished, but which remained so long that he could contemplate it with accuracy.

And, behold, a great image - Chaldee, "one image that was grand" - צלם חד שׂגיא *tselēm chad s'agîy'* So the Vulgate - *statua una grandis*. So the Greek - εἰκὼν μία *eikōn mia* The object seems to be to fix the attention on the fact that there was but "one" image, though composed of so different materials, and of materials that seemed to be so little fitted to be worked together into the same statue. The idea, by its being represented as "one," is, that it was, in some respects, "the same kingdom" that he saw symbolized: that is, that it would extend over the same countries, and could be, in some sense, regarded as a prolongation of the same empire. There was so much of "identity," though different in many respects, that it could be represented as "one." The word rendered "image" (צלם *tselem*) denotes properly "a shade," or "shadow," and then anything that "shadows forth," or that represents anything.

It is applied to man Genesis 1:27 as shadowing forth, or representing God; that is, there was something in man when he was created which had so far a resemblance to God that he might be regarded as an "image" of him.

The word is often used to denote idols - as supposed to be a "representation" of the gods, either in their forms, or as shadowing forth their character as majestic, stern, mild, severe, merciful, etc. Numbers 33:52; 1 Samuel 6:5; 2 Kings 11:18; 2 Chronicles 23:17; Ezekiel 7:20; Ezekiel 16:17; Ezekiel 23:14; Amos 5:26. This image is not represented as an idol to be worshipped, nor in the use of the word is it to be supposed that there is an allusion, as Prof. Bush supposes, to the fact that these kingdoms would be idolatrous, but the word is used in its proper and primitive sense, to denote something which would "represent," or "shadow forth," the kingdoms which would exist. The exact "size" of the image is not mentioned. It is only suggested that it was great - a proper characteristic to represent the "greatness" of the kingdoms to which it referred.

This great image - The word here rendered "great" (רב *rab*) is different from that used in the previous clause, though it is not easy to determine the exact difference between the words. Both denote that the image was of gigantic dimensions. It is well remarked by Prof. Bush, that "the monuments of antiquity sufficiently evince that the humor prevailed throughout the East, and still more in Egypt, of constructing enormous statues, which were usually dedicated to some of their deities, and connected with their worship. The object, therefore, now presented in the monarch's dream was not, probably, entirely new to his thoughts."

Whose brightness was excellent - "Whose brightness "excelled," or was unusual and remarkable." The word rendered brightness (זיו *zîyv*) is found only in Daniel. It is rendered "brightness" in Daniel 2:31; Daniel 4:36, and in the margin in Daniel 5:6, Daniel 5:9; and "countenance" in Daniel 5:6 (text), and in Daniel 2:9-10; Daniel 7:28. From the places where it is found, particularly Daniel 4:36, it is clear that it is used to denote a certain beauty, or majesty, shining forth in the countenance, which was fitted to impress the beholder with awe. The term here is to be understood not merely of the face of the image, but of its entire aspect, as having something in it signally splendid and imposing. We have only to conceive of a colossal statue whose head was burnished gold, and a large part of whose frame was polished silver, to see the force of this language.

Stood before thee - It stood over against him in full view. He had an opportunity of surveying it clearly and distinctly.

And the form thereof was terrible - Vast, imposing, grand, fearful. The sudden appearance of such an object as this could not but fill the mind with

terror. The design for which this representation was made to Nebuchadnezzar is clearly unfolded in the explanation which Daniel gives. It may be remarked here, in general, that such an appearance of a gigantic image was well adapted to represent successive kingdoms, and that the representation was in accordance with the spirit of ancient times. "In ancient coins and medals," says the editor of the "Pictorial Bible," "nothing is more common than to see cities and nations represented by human figures, male or female. According to the ideas which suggested such symbols, a vast image in the human figure was, therefore, a very fit emblem of sovereign power and dominion; while the materials of which it was composed did most significantly typify the character of the various empires, the succession of which was foreshown by this vision. This last idea, of expressing the condition of things by metallic symbols, was prevalent before the time of Daniel. Hesiod, who lived about two centuries before Daniel, characterizes the succession of ages (four) by the very same metals - gold, silver, brass, and iron."

Verse 32

This image's head was of fine gold - Chaldee, "good gold" - טב דהב *dehab ṭâb* - that is, fine, pure, unalloyed. The whole head of the figure, colossal as it was, appeared to be composed wholly of this. Had the "whole" image been made of gold, it would not have been so striking - for it was not uncommon to construct vast statues of this metal. Compare Daniel 3:1. But the remarkable peculiarity of this image was, that it was composed of different materials, some of which were seldom or never used in such a structure, and all of which had a peculiar significancy. On the significancy of this part of the figure, and the resemblance between this head of gold and Nebuchadnezzar himself, see the notes at Daniel 2:37-38.

His breast and his arms of silver - The word rendered "breast" (חדין *chădîy*) is in the plural number, in accordance with common usage in the Hebrew, by which several members of the human body are often expressed in the plural; as פנים *pânîym* - "faces," etc. There is a foundation for such a usage in nature, in the two-fold form of many of the portions of the human body. The portion of the body which is here represented is obviously the upper portion of the front part - what is prominently visible when we look at the human frame. Next to the head it is the most important part, as it embraces most of the vital organs. Some degree of inferiority, as well as the idea of succession, would be naturally represented by this. "The inferior

value of silver as compared with gold will naturally suggest some degree of decline or degeneracy in the character of the subject represented by the metal; and so in other members, as we proceed downward, as the material becomes continually baser, we naturally infer that the subject deteriorates, in some sense, in the like manner." - Professor Bush, *in loc*. On the kingdom represented by this, and the propriety of this representation, see the notes at Daniel 2:39.

His belly and his thighs of brass - Margin, "sides." It is not necessary to enter minutely into an examination of the words here used. The word "belly" denotes, unquestionably, the regions of the abdomen as externally visible. The word rendered "thighs" in the text is rendered "sides" in the margin. It is, like the word "breast" in the previous verse, in the plural number and for the same reason. The Hebrew word (ירך *yârêk*) is commonly rendered "thigh" in the Scriptures (Genesis 24:2, Genesis 24:9; Genesis 32:25 (26), 31,32(32,33), et al.), though it is also frequently rendered "side," Exodus 32:27; Exodus 40:22, Exodus 40:24; Leviticus 1:11; Numbers 3:29, et al. According to Gesenius, it denotes "the thick and double fleshy member which commences at the bottom of the spine, and extends to the lower legs." It is that part on which the sword was formerly worn, Exodus 32:27; Judges 3:16, Judges 3:21; Psalm 45:3 (4). It is also that part which was smitten, as an expression of mourning or of indignation, Jeremiah 31:19; Ezekiel 21:12 (17). Compare Hom. Iliad xii. 162, xv. 397; Odyssey xiii. 198; Cic. 150: "Orat." 80; "Quinc." xi. 3. It is not improperly here rendered "thighs," and the portion of the figure that was of brass was that between the breast and the lower legs, or extended from the breast to the knees. The word is elsewhere employed to denote the shaft or main trunk of the golden candlestick of the tabernacle, Exodus 25:31; Exodus 37:17; Numbers 8:4.

Of brass - An inferior metal, and denoting a kingdom of inferior power or excellence. On the kingdom represented by this, see the notes at Daniel 2:39.

Verse 33

His legs of iron - The portion of the lower limbs from the knees to the ankles. This is undoubtedly the usual meaning of the English word "legs," and it as clearly appears to be the sense of the original word here. Iron was regarded as inferior to either of the other metals specified, and yet was well adapted to denote a kingdom of a particular kind - less noble in some

respects, and yet hardy, powerful, and adapted to tread down the world by conquest. On the application of this, see the notes at Daniel 2:40.

His feet part of iron and part of clay - As to his feet; or in respect to his feet, they were partly of iron and partly of clay - a mixture denoting great strength, united with what is fragile and weak. The word rendered "clay" in this place (חסף *chăsaph*) is found nowhere else except in this chapter, and is always rendered "clay," Daniel 2:33-35, Daniel 2:41 (twice), 42,43 (twice), 45. In some instances Daniel 2:41, Daniel 2:43, the epithet "miry" is applied to it. This would seem to imply that it was not "burnt or baked clay," or "earthenware," as Professor Bush supposes, but clay in its natural state. The idea would seem to be, that the framework, so to speak, was iron, with clay worked in, or filling up the interstices, so as to furnish an image of strength combined with what is weak. That it would be well adapted represent a kingdom that had many elements of permanency in it, yet that was combined with things that made it weak - a mixture of what was powerful with what was liable to be crushed; capable of putting forth great efforts, and of sustaining great shocks, and yet having such elements of feebleness and decay as to make it liable to be overthrown. For the application of this, see the notes at Daniel 2:41-43.

Verse 34

Thou sawest - Chaldee, "Thou wast seeing;" that is, thou didst continue to behold, implying that the vision was of somewhat long continuance. It did not appear and then suddenly vanish, but it remained so long that he had an opportunity of careful observation.

Till that a stone was cut out without hands - That is, from a mountain or hill, Daniel 2:45. This idea is expressed in the Latin and the Greek version. The vision appears to have been that of a colossal image "standing on a plain" in the vicinity of a mountain, standing firm, until, by some unseen agency, and in an unaccountable manner, a stone became detached from the mountain, and was made to impinge against it. The margin here is, "which was not in his hands." The more correct rendering of the Chaldee, however, is that in the text, literally, "a stone was cut out which was not by hands" - בידין *bîydayîn* or perhaps still more accurately, "a stone was cut out which was not in hands," so that the fact that it was not in or by "hands" refers rather to its not being projected by hands than to the manner of its being detached from the mountain. The essential idea is, that the agency of hands did not appear at all in the case. The stone seemed to be self-moved.

It became detached from the mountain, and, as if instinct with life, struck the image and demolished it. The word rendered "stone" (אבן *'eben*) determines nothing as to the "size" of the stone, but the whole statement would seem to imply that it was not of large dimensions. It struck upon "the feet" of the image, and it "became" itself a great mountain Daniel 2:35 - all which would seem to imply that it was at first not large. What increased the astonishment of the monarch was, that a stone of such dimensions should have been adequate to overthrow so gigantic a statue, and to grind it to powder. The points on which it was clearly intended to fix the attention of the monarch, and which made the vision so significant and remarkable, were these:

(a) the colossal size and firmness of the image;

(b) the fact that a stone, not of large size, should be seen to be selfdetached from the mountain, and to move against the image;

(c) the fact that it should completely demolish and pulverize the colossal figure; and

(d) the fact that then this stone of inconsiderable size should be itself mysteriously augmented until it filled the world.

It should be added, that the vision appears not to have been that of a stone detached from the side of a hill, and rolling down the mountain by the force of gravitation, but that of a stone detached, and then moving off toward the image as if it had been thrown from a hand, though the hand was unseen. This would very strikingly and appropriately express the idea of something, apparently small in its origin, that was impelled by a cause that was unseen, and that bore with mighty force upon an object of colossal magnitude, by an agency that could not be explained by the causes that usually operate. For the application and pertinency of this, see the notes at Daniel 2:44-45.

Which smote the image upon his feet - The word here used (מחא *mechâ'*) means, to "strike," to "smite," without reference to the question whether it is a single blow, or whether the blow is often repeated. The Hebrew word (מחא *mâchâ'*) is uniformly used as refering to "the clapping of the hands;" that is, smiting them together, Psalm 98:8; Isaiah 55:12; Ezekiel 25:6. The Chaldee word is used only here and in Daniel 2:35, referring to the smiting of the image, and in Daniel 4:35 (32), where it is

rendered "stay" - "none can stay his hand." The connection here, and the whole statement, would seem to demand the sense of a continued or prolonged smiting, or of repeated blows, rather than a single concussion. The great image was not only thrown down, but there was a subsequent process of "comminution," independent of what would have been produced by the fall. A fall would only have broken it into large blocks or fragments; but this continued smiting reduced it to powder. This would imply, therefore, not only a single shock, or violent blow, but some cause continuing to operate until what had been overthrown was effectually destroyed, like a vast image reduced to impalpable powder. The "first concussion" on the feet made it certain that the colossal frame would fall; but there was a longer process necessary before the whole effect should be accomplished. Compare the notes at Daniel 2:44-45.

And brake them to pieces - In Daniel 2:35, the idea is, "they became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors." The meaning is not that the image was broken to "fragments," but that it was "beaten fine" - reduced to powder - so that it might be scattered by the wind. This is the sense of the Chaldee word (דקק *deqaq*), and of the Hebrew word also (דקק *dâqaq*). See Exodus 32:20: "And he took the calf which they had made, and burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder." Deuteronomy 9:21: "and I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, and ground it very small, even until it was as small as dust." Isaiah 41:15: "thou shalt thresh the mountains and "beat them small," and shalt make the hills as chaff." 2 Kings 23:15: "he burnt the high place, and "stamped" it "small" to powder." 2 Chronicles 34:4: "and they brake down the altars, etc., and "made dust" of them, and strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them." Compare Exodus 30:36; 2 Chronicles 34:7; 2 Kings 23:6. From these passages it is clear that the general meaning of the word is that of reducing anything to fine dust or powder, so that it may be easily blown about by the wind.

Verse 35

Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor - The word rendered "together" (כצרה *kachădâh*) our translators would seem to have understood as referring to "time;" to its being done simultaneously. The more literal interpretation, however, is, "as one;" that is, "they were beaten small as one," referring to identity of

condition. They were all reduced to one indiscriminate mass; to such a mass that the original materials could no longer be distinguished, and would all be blown away together. The literal meaning of the word (חד *chad* used and חדה *chădâh*) is, "one," or "first." Ezra 4:8, "wrote a letter;" Ezra 5:13, "in the first year of Cyrus;" Ezra 6:2, "a roll;" Daniel 2:9; "there is but one decree for you;" Daniel 3:19, "heat the furnace one seven times hotter," etc. United with the preposition (כ *k*) it means "as one," like the Hebrew כאחד *ke'echâd*) - Ecclesiastes 11:6; 2 Chronicles 5:13; Ezra 2:64; Ezra 3:9; Isaiah 65:25. The phrase "chaff of the summer threshing-floors" refers to the mode of winnowing grain in the East. This was done in the open air, usually on an elevated place, by throwing the grain, when thrashed, into the air with a shovel, and the wind thus drove away the chaff. Such chaff, therefore, naturally became an emblem of anything that was light, and that would be easily dissipated. See the notes at Isaiah 30:24; Matthew 3:12.

And the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them - They were entirely dissipated like chaff. As that seems to have no longer any place, but is carried we know not where, so the figure here would denote an entire annihilation of the power to which it refers.

And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth - The vision which was before the mind of the king as here represented was, that the stone which was cut out of the mountain was at first small, and that while he contemplated it, it swelled to larger dimensions, until it became an immense mountain - a mountain that filled the whole land. It was this which, perhaps more than anything else, excited his wonder, that a stone, at first of so small dimensions, should of itself so increase as to surpass the size of the mountain from which it was cut, until it occupied every place in view. Everything about it was so remarkable and unusual, that it was no wonder that he could not explain it. We have now gone over a description of the literal vision as it appeared to the mind of the monarch. Had it been left here, it is clear that it would have been of difficult interpretation, and possibly the true explanation might never have been suggested. We have, however, an exposition by Daniel, which leaves no doubt as to its design, and which was intended to carry the mind forward into some of the most important and remarkable events of history. A portion of his statement has been fulfilled; a part remains still unaccomplished, and a careful exposition of his account of the meaning of the vision will lead our thoughts to some of the most important historical events which have

occurred in introducing the Christian dispensation, and to events still more important in the statement of what is yet to come.

Verse 36

This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king - Daniel here speaks in his own name, and in the name of his companions. Hence, he says, "we will tell the interpretation." It was in answer to their united supplications Daniel 2:18, that this meaning of the vision had been made known to him; and it would not only have been a violation of the rules of modesty, but an unjust assumption, if Daniel had claimed the whole credit of the revelation to himself. Though he was the only one who addressed the king, yet he seems to have desired that it might be understood that he was not alone in the honor which God had conferred, and that he wished that his companions should be had in just remembrance. Compare Daniel 2:49.

Verse 37

Thou, O King, art a king of kings - The phrase "king of kings" is a Hebraism, to denote a supreme monarch, or one who has other kings under him as tributary, Ezra 7:12; Ezekiel 26:7. As such it is applied by way of eminence to the Son of God, in Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:16. As here used, it means that Nebuchadnezzar ruled over tributary kings and princes, or that he was the most eminent of the kings of the earth. The scepter which he swayed was, in fact, extended over many nations that were once independent kingdoms, and the title here conferred on him was not one that was designed to flatter the monarch, but was a simple statement of what was an undoubted truth. Daniel would not withhold any title that was in accordance with reality, as he did not withhold any communication in accordance with reality that was adapted to humble the monarch.

For the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom … - At the same time that Daniel gave him a title which might in itself have ministered to the pride of the monarch, he is careful to remind him that he held this title in virtue of no wisdom or power of his own. It was the true God who had conferred on him the sovereignty of these extensive realms, and it was one of the designs of this vision to show him that he held his power at his will, and that at his pleasure he could cause it to pass away. It was the forgetfulness of this, and the pride resulting from that forgetfulness, which led to the melancholy calamity which befel this haughty monarch, as recorded in Daniel 4.

Verse 38

And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heavens, hath he given into thy hand - This is evidently general language, and is not to be pressed literally. It is designed to say that he ruled over the whole world; that is, the world as then known. This is common language applied in the Scriptures to the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman kingdoms. Thus in Daniel 2:39, the third of these kingdoms, the Grecian, was to "bear rule over all the earth." Compare Daniel 8:5: "And, as I was considering, behold, an he-goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth." So of the Roman empire, in Daniel 7:23: "The fourth beast shall devour the whole earth." The declaration that his kingdom embraced the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air is a strong expression, meaning that he reigned over the whole world. A somewhat similar description of the extent of the empire of the king of Babylon occurs in Jeremiah 27:4-8: "And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Thus shall ye say unto your masters; I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power, and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field I have given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the Lord, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand."

At the time referred to by Daniel, the scepter of Nebuchadnezzar a extended over all these realms, and the world was, in fact, placed substantially under one head. "All the ancient Eastern histories," says Bishop Newton, "almost are lost; but there are some fragments even of pagan historians yet preserved, which speak of this mighty conqueror and his extended empire. Berosus, in Josephus (Contra Apion, c. i. Section 19), says that he held in subjection Egypt, Syria, Phoenicia, Arabia, and by his exploits surpassed all the Chaldeans and Babylonians who reigned before him. Strabo asserts that this king among the Chaldeans was more celebrated

than Hercules; that he proceeded as far as to the pillars of Hercules, and led his army out of Spain into Thrace and Pontus. But his empire, though of great extent, was not of long duration, for it ended in his grandson Belshazzar, not seventy years after the delivery of this prophecy, nor above twenty-three years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar." - Newton on the "Prophecies," pp. 186,187.

Thou art this head of gold - The head of gold seen in the image represents thee as the sovereign of a vast empire. Compared with the other monarchs who are to succeed thee, thou art like gold compared with silver, and brass, and iron; or, compared with thy kingdom, theirs shall be as silver, brass, and iron compared with gold. It was common, at an early period, to speak of different ages of the world as resembling different metals. Compare the notes at Daniel 2:31. In reference to the expression before us, "Thou art this head of gold," it should be observed, that it is not probably to be confined to the monarch himself, but is rather spoken of him as the head of the empire; as representing the state; as an impersonation of that dynasty. The meaning is, that the Babylonian empire, as it existed under him, in its relation to the kingdoms which should succeed, was like the head of gold seen in the image as compared with the inferior metals that made up the remaining portions of the image. Daniel, as an interpreter, did not state in what the resemblance consisted, nor in what respects his empire could be likened to gold as compared with those which should follow. In the scanty details which we now have of the life of that monarch, and of the events of his reign, it may not be possible to see as clearly as would be desirable in what that resemblance consisted, or the full propriety of the appellation given to him. So far as may now be seen, the resemblance appears to have been in the following things:

(I) In respect to the empire itself of which he was the sovereign, as standing at the head of the others - the first in the line. This was not indeed the first kingdom, but the design here was not to give an account of all the empires on earth, but to take the world "as it was then," and to trace the successive changes which would occur preparatory to the establishment of the kingdom which should finally spread over the earth. Viewed in reference to this design, it was undoubtedly proper to designate the empire of Babylon "as the head." It not only stood before them in the order of time, but in such a relation that the others might be regarded as in some sort its successors; that is, "they would succeed it in swaying a general scepter over

the world." In this respect they would resemble also the Babylonian. At the time here referred to, the dominion over which Nebuchadnezzar swayed his scepter was at the head of the nations; was the central power of the Pagan world; was the only empire that could claim to be universal. For a long period the kingdom of Babylon had been dependent on that of Assyria; and while Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire, Babylon was the head of a kingdom, in general subordinate to that of Assyria, until Nabopolassar, the immediate predecessor of Nebuchadnezzar, rendered the kingdom of Babylon independent of the Assyrians, and transferred the seat of empire to Babylon. This was about the year 626 before the Christian era. See "Universal History," vol. iii. pp. 412-415. Nebuchadnezzar, receiving this mighty kingdom, had carried his own arms to distant lands; had conquered India, Tyre, and Egypt; and, as would appear, all Northern Africa, as far as the pillars of Hercules, and, with quite unimportant exceptions, all the known world was subject to him.

(II) The appellation "head of gold" may have been given him on account of the splendor of his capital, and the magnificence of his court. In Isaiah 14:4, Babylon is called "the golden city." See the note at that place. In Isaiah 13:19, it is called "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency." In Isaiah 47:5, it is called "the lady of kingdoms." In Jeremiah 51:13, it is spoken of as "abundant in treasures," and in Jeremiah 51:41, as "the praise of the whole earth." So in profane writers, Babylon has similar appellations. Thus, in Aesch. Per. 51, mention is made of Βαβυλὼν η᾽ πολύχρυσος *Babulōn hē poluchrusos* - "Babylon abounding in gold." The conquests of Nebuchadnezzar enabled him to bring to his capital the spoils of nations, and to enrich his capital above any other city on the earth. Accordingly, he gave himself to the work of adorning a city that should be worthy to be the head of universal empire, and succeeded in making it so splendid as to be regarded as one of the wonders of the world. His great work in adorning and strengthening his capital consisted, first, of the building of the immense walls of the city; second, of the tower of Belus; and third, of the hanging gardens. For a full description of these, see Prideaux's "Connections," vol. i. p. 232, following.

(III) The appellation may have been given him by comparison with the kingdoms which were to succeed him. In some respects - in extent and

power - some one or more of them, as the Roman, might surpass his; but the appellation which was appropriate to them was not gold, but they would be best denoted by the inferior metals. Thus the Medo-Persian kingdom was less splendid than that of Babylon, and would be better represented by silver; the Macedonian, though more distinguished by its conquests, was less magnificent, and would be better represented by brass; and the Roman, though ultimately still more extensive in its conquests, and still more mighty in power, was less remarkable for splendor than strength, and would be better represented by iron. In magnificence, if not in power, the Babylonian surpassed them all; and hence, the propriety of the appellation, "head of gold."

(IV) It is possible that in this appellation there then may have been some reference to the character of the monarch himself. In Jeremiah 27:6, he is spoken of as the "servant of God," and it is clear that it was designed that a splendid mission was to be accomplished by him as under the Divine control, and in the preparation of the world for the coming of the Messiah. Though he was proud and haughty as a monarch, yet his own personal character would compare favorably with that of many who succeeded him in these advancing kingdoms. Though his conquests were numerous, yet his career as a conqueror was not marked with cruelty, like that of many other warriors. He was not a mere conqueror. He loved also the arts of peace. He sought to embellish his capital, and to make it in outward magnificence and in the talent which he concentrated there, truly the capital of the world. Even Jerusalem he did not utterly destroy; but having secured a conquest over it, and removed from it what he desired should embellish his own capital, he still intended that it should be the subordinate head of an important province of his dominions, and placed on the throne one who was closely allied to the king who reigned there when he took the city.

But the appellation here, and the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, are to be contemplated chiefly, like the kingdoms that succeeded, in their relation to redemption. It is in this aspect that the study of history becomes most interesting to a mind that regards all events as embraced in the eternal counsels of God, and it is undoubtedly with reference to this that the history of these kingdoms becomes in any way introduced into the inspired writings. All history may be contemplated under two aspects: in its secular

bearing; and in its relation to the redemption of the world. In the former aspect, it has great and important uses. As furnishing lessons to statesmen; as showing the progress of society; as illustrating the effects of vice and immorality, and the evils of anarchy, ambition, and war; as recording and preserving the inventions in the arts, and as showing what are the best methods of civil government, and what conduces most to the happiness of a people, its value cannot well be overestimated.

But it is in its relations to the work of redeeming man that it acquires its chief value, and hence, the sacred volume is so much occupied with the histories of early nations. The rise and fall of every nation; the conquests and defeats which have occurred in past times, may all have had, and perhaps may yet be seen to have had, an important connection with the redemption of man - as being designed to put the world in a proper position for the coming of the Prince of Peace, or in some way to prepare the way for the final triumph of the gospel. This view gives a new and important aspect to history. It becomes an object in which all on earth who love the race and desire its redemption, and all in heaven, feel a deep concern. Every monarch; every warrior; every statesman; every man who, by his eloquence, bravery, or virtue, has contributed anything to the progress of the race, or who has in any way played an important part in the progress of the world‘s affairs, becomes a being on whom we can look with intense emotion; and in reference to every man of this character, it would be an interesting inquiry what he has done that has contributed to prepare the way for the introduction of the Mediatorial scheme, or to facilitate its progress through the world. In reference to this point, the monarch whose character is now before us seems to have been raised up, under an overruling Providence, to accomplish the following things:

(1) To inflict “punishment” on the revolted people of God for their numerous idolatries. See the book of Jeremiah, “passim.” Hence, he led his armies to the land of Palestine; he swept away the people, and bore them into captivity; he burned the temple, destroyed the capital, and laid the land waste.

(2) He was the instrument, in the hand of God, of effectually purifying the Jewish nation from the sin of idolatry. It was for that sin eminently that

they were carried away; and never in this world have the ends of punishment been better secured than in this instance. The chastisement was effectual. The Jewish nation has never since sunk into idolatry. If there have been individuals of that nation - of which, however, there is no certain evidence - who have become idolaters, yet as a people they have been preserved from it. More than two thousand five hundred years have since passed away; they have been wanderers and exiles in all lands; they have been persecuted, ridiculed, and oppressed on account of their religion; they have been placed under every possible inducement to conform to the religion around them, and yet, as professed worshippers of Jehovah, the God of their fathers, they have maintained their integrity, and neither promises nor threatenings, neither hopes nor fears, neither life nor death, have been sufficient to constrain the Hebrew people to bow the knee to an idol god.

(3) another object that seems to have been designed to be accomplished by Nebuchadnezzar in relation to Redemption was to gather the nations under one head preparatory to the coming of the Messiah. It will be seen in the remarks which will be made on the relation of the Roman empire to this work (see the notes at Daniel 2:40-43), that there were important reasons why this should be done. Preparatory to that, a succession of such kingdoms each swayed the scepter over the whole world, and when the Messiah came, the way was prepared for the easy and rapid propagation of the new religion to the remotest parts of the earth.

Verse 39

And after thee - This must mean "subsequently" to the reign, but it does not mean that the kingdom here referred to would "immediately" succeed his own reign, for that would not be true. The Medo-Persian empire did not come into the ascendency until many years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar. This occurred during the reign of Belshazzar, a grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, between whose reign and that of his grandfather there had intervened the reigns of Evil-merodach and Neriglissar; besides, as the remainder of the prophecy relating to the image refers to "kingdoms," and not to individual monarchs, it is clear that this also relates not primarily to Nebuchadnezzar as an individual, but as the head of a kingdom. The

meaning is, that a kingdom would succeed that over which he reigned, so far inferior that it might be represented by silver as compared with gold.

Shall arise another kingdom - Chaldee, "shall stand up (תקום *teqûm*) another kingdom." This is language which would denote something different from a succession in the same dynasty, for that would be a mere "continuance of the same kingdom." The reference is evidently to a change of empire; and the language implies that there would be some revolution or conquest by which the existing kingdom would pass away, and another would succeed. Still there would be so much of sameness in respect to its occupying essentially the same territory, that it would be symbolized in the same image that appeared to Nebuchadnezzar. The kingdom here referred to was undoubtedly the Medo-Persian, established by Cyrus in the conquest of Babylon, which continued through the reigns of his successors until it was conquered by Alexander the Great. This kingdom succeeded that of Assyria or Babylon, 538 years b.c., to the overthrow of Darius Codomanus, 333 years b.c. It extended, of course, through the reigns of the Persian kings, who acted so important a part in the invasion of Greece, and whose defeats have given immortality to the names of Leonidas, Aristides, Miltiades, and Themistocles, and made the names of Salamis, Thermopylae, Marathon, and Leuctra so celebrated. For a general account of Cyrus, and the founding of the Medo-Persian empire, the reader is referred to the notes at Isaiah 41:2.

Inferior to thee - And therefore represented by silver as compared with gold. In what respects it would be inferior, Daniel does not specify, and this can only be learned from "the facts" which occurred in relation to that kingdom. All that is necessary to confirm the truth of the prophetic description is, that it was to be so far inferior as to make the appellation "silver" applicable to it in comparison with the kingdom of Babylon, represented by "gold." The expression would denote that there was a general decline or degeneracy in the character of the monarchs, and the general condition of the empire. There have been different opinions as to the inferiority of this kingdom to the Babylonian. Calvin supposes that it refers to degeneracy. Geir supposes that it relates to the duration of the kingdom - this continuing not more than two hundred and forty years; while the other, including the Assyrian, embraced a period of one thousand five hundred years. Polanus supposes that the meaning is, that the Babylonian had more rest and tranquility; while Junius, Willett, and others understand it

of a milder and more humane treatment of the Jews by the Babylonians than the Persians. Perhaps, however, none of these opinions meet the circumstances of the case, for they de not furnish as full an account of the reasons of this inferiority as is desirable. In regard to this, it may be observed,

(a) that it is not to be supposed that this kingdom was to be in "all respects" inferior to the Babylonian, but only that it would have certain characteristics which would make it more appropriate to describe it as "silver" than as "gold." In certain other respects it might be far superior, as the Roman, though in the same general line of succession, was in extent and power superior to either, though there was still a reason why that should be represented by "iron," rather than by gold, by silver, or by brass.

(b) The inferiority did not relate to the power, the riches, or the territorial extent of the Medo-Persian empire, for it embraced, so far as appears, all that was comprehended in the Babylonian empire, and all in addition which was added by the conquests of Cyrus. In his proclamation to rebuild the temple Ezra 1:2, Cyrus speaks of the extent of his empire in language strongly resembling what is applied to the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar. "Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth." Thus also it is said of AhaAhasuerus or Astyages, king of Media - a kingdom that constituted a part of the Medo-Persian empire under Cyrus and his successors, that he "reigned from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and twenty and seven provinces." To the kingdom of Babylon, as he found it when he conquered it, Cyrus of course added the kingdoms of Media and Persia, to the crowns of which he was the heir (see the notes at Isaiah 41:2), and also the various provinces which he had conquered before he came to the throne; that is, Cappadocia, the kingdom of Lydia, and almost the whole of Asia Minor.

(c) Nor can it be supposed that the kingdom was inferior in regard to "wealth," for, in addition to all the wealth that Cyrus found in Babylon, he brought the spoils of his victories; the treasures in the possession of the crowns of Persia and Media, and all the wealth of Croesus, the rich king of Lydia, of which he had become possessor by conquest. In considering the "inferiority" of this kingdom, which made it proper that it should be

represented by silver rather than by gold, it is to be borne in mind that the representation should embrace "the whole kingdom" in all the successive reigns, and not merely the kingdom as it was under the administration of Cyrus. Thus regarded, it will comprehend the succession of Persian monarchs until the time of the invasion and conquest of the East by Alexander the Great. The reign of Cyrus was indeed splendid; and if "he" alone, or if the kingdom during his administration, were contemplated, it would be difficult to assign a reason why an appellation should have been given to it implying any inferiority to that of Nebuchadnezzar. The "inferiority" of the kingdom, or what made it proper to represent it by silver rather than by gold, as compared with the kingdom of Babylon, may have consisted in the following particulars:

(1) In reference to the succession of kings who occupied the Persian throne. It is true that the character of Cyrus is worthy of the highest commendation, and that he was distinguished not only as a brave and successful conqueror, but as a mild, able, and upright civil ruler. Xenophon, who wished to draw the character of a model prince, made choice of Cyrus as the example; and though he has not improbably embellished his character by ascribing to him virtues drawn from his own fancy in some degree, yet there can be no doubt that in the main his description was drawn from the life. "The true reason," says Prideaux ("Connections," vol. i. p. 252, Ed. Charlestown, 1815), "why he chose the life of Cyrus before all others for the purpose above mentioned" (that of giving a description of what a worthy and just prince ought to be) "seemeth to be no other but that he found the true history of that excellent and gallant prince to be, above all others, the fittest for those maxims of right policy and true princely virtue to correspond with, which he grafted upon it." But he was succeeded by a madman, Cambyses, and by a race of kings eminent among princes for folly and crime. "The kings of Persia," says Prideaux, "were the worst race of men that ever governed an empire."

(2) The kingdom was inferior in reference to the remarkable "defeats" in the military campaigns which were undertaken. The Assyrian or Babylonian empire was distinguished for the victories by which it carried its arms around the then known world. The Medo-Persian empire, after the reign of Cyrus, was almost as remarkable for the succession of defeats which have

made the period of the world during which the empire continued, so well known in history. It is probable that no kingdom ever undertook so many foolish projects in reference to the conquests of other nations - projects so unwisely planned, and that resulted in so signal failures. The successor of Cyrus, Cambyses, invaded Egypt, and his conduct there in carrying on the war was such as to make him be regarded as a madman. Enraged against the Ethiopians for an answer which they gave him when, under pretence of friendship, he sent spies to examine their country, he resolved to invade their territory.

Having come to Thebes, in Upper Egypt, he detached from his army fifty thousand men to go against the Hammonians, with orders to destroy their country, and to burn the temple of Jupiter Hammon that stood in it. After marching a few days in the desert, they were overwhelmed in the sands by a strong south wind, and all perished. Meantime Cambyses marched with the rest of his army against the Ethiopians, though he wanted all the means of subsistence for his army, until, having devoured all their beasts of burden, they were constrained to designate every tenth man of the army to be killed and eaten. In these deplorable circumstances, Cambyses returned to Thebes, having lost a great part of his army in this wild expedition. - Prideaux‘s “Con.” i. 328. It was also during the continuance of this kingdom, that the ill-starred expeditions to Greece occurred, when Mardonius and Xerxes poured the million of Asia on the countries of Greece, and met such signal overthrows at Platea, Marathon, and Salamis. Such a series of disasters never before had occurred to invading armies, or made those who repelled invasion so illustrious. In this respect there was an evident propriety in speaking of this as an inferior or degenerate kingdom.

(3) It was inferior in respect to the growing degeneracy and effeminacy of character and morals. From the time of Xerxes (479 b.c.) “symptoms of decay and corruption were manifest in the empire; the national character gradually degenerated; the citizens were corrupted and enfeebled by luxury; and confided more in mercenary troops than in native valor and fidelity. The kings submitted to the control of their wives, or the creatures whom they raised to posts of distinction; and the satraps, from being civil functionaries, began to usurp military authority.” - Lyman, “Hist. Chart.”

(4) The kingdom was inferior by the gradual weakening of its power from internal causes. It was not only defeated in its attempts to invade others, and weakened by the degeneracy of the court and people, but, as a natural consequence, by the gradual lessening of the power of the central government, and the growing independence of the provinces. From the time of Darius Nothus (423 b.c.) - a weak, effeminate, and indolent prince - "the satraps of the distant provinces paid only a nominal obedience to the king. Many of them were, in fact, sovereigns over the countries over which they presided, and carried on wars against each other." - Lyman. It was from causes such as these that the power of the kingdom became gradually weakened, and that the way was prepared for the easy conquests of Alexander the Great. Their successive defeats, and this gradual degeneracy and weakening of the kingdom, show the propriety of the description given of the kingdom in the vision and the interpretation - that it would be an "inferior kingdom," a kingdom which, in comparison with that of Babylon, might be compared with silver as compared with gold.

Still it sustained an important relation to the progress of events in regard to the history of religion in the world, and had an important bearing on the redemption of man. As this is the most important bearing of history, and as it was doubtless with reference to this that the mention of it is introduced into the sacred Scriptures, and as it is, in fact, often alluded to by Isaiah, and in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and some of the minor prophets, it may be proper, in the most summary way, to alude to some of those things which pertain to the bearing of this kingdom on the great events connected with redemption, or to what was done during the continuance of this kingdom for the promotion of the true religion. A full account may be found in Prideaux's "Connections," part 1, books iii-vii. Compare Edwards' "History of Redemption," Period I, part vi. The particular things which occurred in connection with this kingdom bearing on the progress of religion, and favorable to its advancement, were these:

(a) The overthrow of Babylon, so long the formidable enemy of the ancient people of God.

(b) The restoration of the exiles to their own land under the auspices of Cyrus, Ezra 1:1.

(c) The rebuilding of the temple under the same auspices, and with the favor of the successors of Cyrus.

(d) The preparation of the world for the coming of the Messiah, in the agitations that took place during the continuance of the Persian monarchy; the invasion of Greece; the defeats there; the preparation by these defeats for the coming of Him who was so long promised as the "desire of all nations."

Compare Haggai 2:7: "And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house" (the temple erected under the auspices of Cyrus and his successors) "with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." There was a propriety, therefore, that this kingdom should receive a distinct notice in the sacred Scriptures, for some of the most important events connected with the history of true religion in the world occurred under the auspices of Cyrus and his successors, and perhaps at no period has there been more occasion to recognize the hand of God than in the influences exerted on the minds of those pagan princes, disposing them to be favorable to the long-oppressed children of God.

And another third kingdom of brass - See the notes at Daniel 2:32. The parts of the image which were of brass were the belly and thighs, denoting inferiority not only to the head, but to the part which immediately preceded it - the breast and the arms of silver. It is not, indeed, specified, as in the former case, that this kingdom would be inferior to the former, and it is only from the position assigned to it in the image, and the inferior quality of the metal by which it is represented, that it is implied that there would be any inferiority. There can be no reasonable doubt that by this third kingdom is denoted the empire founded by Alexander the Great - the Macedonian empire. It is known to all that he overthrew the Persian empire, and established a kingdom in the East, embracng substantially the same territory which had been occupied by the Medo-Persian and the Babylonian empire. While there can be no doubt that that kingdom is referred to, there can be as little that the reference is not merely to the empire during the reign of Alexander himself, but that it embraced the whole empire as founded and arranged by him, until it was succeeded by another universal empire - here denominated the fourth kingdom. The reasons for supposing that the Macedonian empire is referred to here are almost too obvious to require that they should be specified. They are such as these:

(1) This kingdom actually succeeded that of Mede-Persia, covering the same territory, and, like that, was then understood to be a universal

monarchy.

(2) The empire of Alexander is elsewhere more than once referred to by Daniel in the same order, and in such a manner that the sense cannot be mistaken. Thus, in Daniel 8:21: "And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power." Daniel 10:20: "and now," said the man that appeared in vision to Daniel Daniel 2:5, "will I retram to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come." Daniel 11:2-4: "and now will I show thee the truth. Behold there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all, and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia. And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to the kingdom that he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those." Since this kingdom is thus referred to elsewhere by Daniel in the same order, and as destined to act an important part in the affairs of the world, it is reasonable to suppose that there is a reference to it here.

(3) It is a circumstance of some importance that the emblem here by which this kingdom is represented, "brass," is one that is peculiarly appropriate to the Greeks, and one that could not be applied to any other naion with equal propriety. The Greeks were distinguished for their "brazen armor," and the appellation, the "brazen-coated Greeks" - χαλκοχιτώνες Ἀχαιοὶ *chalkochitōnes Achaioi* - is that by which they were designated most commonly by the ancients. - Iliad i. 371; ii. 47; Odyssey i. 286. In accordance with this, Josephus says ("Ant." b. x. c. 10, Section 4), τὴν δὲ ἐκεὶνων ἕτερος τις ἀπὸ δύσεως καθαιρήσει χαλκὸν ἠμφιεσμένος *tēn de ekeinōn heteros tis apo duseōs kathairēsei chalkon ēmphiesmenos* - "their empire another shall come from the West, clothed with brass, shall destroy." These considerations leave no doubt that the kingdom here referred to was that Grecian or Macedonian, which, under Alexander, obtained dominion over all the East.

Which shall bear rule over all the earth - In a sense similar to that of the Assyrian, the Babylonian, and the Medo-Persian empire. This is the common description of the empire of Alexander. He himself commanded that he should be called "the king of all the world." "*Accepto deinde imperio, regem se terrarum omnium ac mundi appellari jussit* " (Justin. l. 12, c. 16, Section 9) - "Having received the empire, he ordered himself to be called the king of all lands and of the world." Diodorus Siculus says that he received ambassadors from all countries; κατὰ δὲ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον ἐξ ἀπάσης σχεδόν τῆς οἰκουμένης ἧκον πρέσβεις, κ.τ.λ. *kata de touton ton chronon ex apasē schedon tēs oikoumenēs ēkon presbeis etc* - "At which time, legates came to him from almost the whole habitable world." - L. 17, c. 113. So Arrian (Expedi. Alex. l. 7, c. 15) remarks, that "Alexander then appeared to himself, and to those around him, "to be lord of all the earth and of the sea" - γῆς τε ἁπάσης καὶ θαλάσσης κύριον *gēs te hapasēs kai thalassēs kurion* author of the book of Maccabees gives a similar account of the extent of this kingdom: "And it came to pass, after that Alexander, the son of Philip the Macedonian, who first reigned in Greece, had overthrown Darius, the king of the Persian and Medes, he fought many battles, and took the strongholds of all, and slew the kings of the earth; and he went through even to the ends of the earth; and took the spoil of many nations; and the earth was quiet before him," Daniel 8:21, by the rough goat - continued from the overthrow of Darius Codomanus by Alexander (333 b.c.), to the conquest of Syria, and the East, by the Romans under Pompey, about sixty-six years before the birth of the Saviour. The principal events during this period affecting the interests of religion, and preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah, were the following:

I. The extensive diffusion of the knowledge of the Greek language. The army of Alexander was mainly composed of Greeks. The Greek language was, of course, what was spoken by the court, and in the cities which he founded; the despatches were in Greek; that language would be extensively cultivated to gratify those in power; and the successors of Alexander were those who used the Greek tongue. The consequence was, that the Greek language was extensively spread over the countries which were subdued by Alexander, and which were governed by his successors. That language became the popular tongue; a sort of universal language understood by the great mass of the people, in a manner not unlike the French in Europe at the

present day. The effect of this, in preparing for the introduction of the gospel, was seen in two respects:

(a) In facilitating the "preaching" of the gospel. It is true that the apostles had the gift of tongues, and that there was, notwithstanding the prevalence of the Greek language, occasion for this. But there is no evidence that this was conferred on "all" the early preachers of the gospel, nor is it certain that those on whom it "was" conferred were able to make use of it on all occasions. It is not improbable that, in their ordinary labors, the apostles and others were left to rely on their natural endowments, and to use the language to which they had been most accustomed. As there was, therefore, a common language in most of the countries in which the gospel would be proclaimed, it is evident that the propagation of religion would be greatly facilitated by this, and there can be no doubt that it was "one" of the designs of Providence in permitting the Macedonian conquest thus to prepare the way for the more easy and rapid diffusion of the new religion.

(b) In like manner, this conquest prepared the way "for the permanent record" of the history of the Saviour's life, and the doctrines of religion in the writings of the New Testament. It was evidently desirable, on many accounts, that the records should be made in one language rather than in many, and of all the languages then spoken on the earth, the "Greek" was the best adapted to such a purpose. It was not only the most polished and cultivated, but it was the most copious; and it was the best fitted to express abstract ideas, and accurate distinctions. Probably with all the improvements since made in the copious Arabic language, and in the languages of modern times, there never has been one that was so well fitted for the purposes of a Divine revelation as the Greek. It may have been one design of Providence, in the extensive and accurate cultivation of that language in Greece itself, as well as in its diffusion over the world, that there should be at the time of the introduction of the Christian revelation a medium of permanent record that should be as free from imperfection as language could be; a medium also in which there should be so much permanent and valuable literature that, even after it should cease to be a spoken language, it would be cultivated by the whole literary world, thus furnishing the means of an accurate knowledge of the meaning of the sacred writings.

II. The translation of the Old Testament into the same language was another important event, which took place during the continuance of this kingdom, which greatly facilitated the introduction and spread of Christianity. The Hebrew language was understood by comparatively few. It ceased to be spoken in its purity after the time of the captivity. In that language the Scriptures of the Old Testament would have been but little diffused in the world. By their being translated, however, into Greek, they became extensively known, and furnished a ready and an intelligible ground of appeal to the preachers of the new religion when they referred to the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the recorded predictions of the Messiah. For a full account of the history of this version, the reader may consult Prideaux's "Connections," vol. iii. p. 53, following. It was made according to Archbishop Usher, about 277 b.c. The probability is, that it was made at different periods, and by different hands, as it is executed with very various degrees of ability. See Introduction to Isaiah, Section viii. I. (1), for a more extended account of this version and its value. There can be no doubt that it contributed much to the diffusion of the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and was an important instrument in preparing the world for the reception of the revelation that should be made by the Messiah.

III. Events of great importance occurred dating the continuance of this kingdom in preserving the Jewish people in times of persecution, and saving their city and temple from ruin. and their nation from extinction.

(a) The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple was threatened by Alexander himself. After the siege and capture of Tyre, he became enraged at the Jews for refusing to furnish supplies for his army during the siege, under the plea that they were bound to show allegiance to Darius, and he marched to Jerusalem with an intention to take and destroy it. In order to appease him, it is said that Jaddua, the high priest, went out to meet him in his pontifical robes, at the head of a procession of priests, and accompanied by the people in white garments. Alexander was so impressed with the scene that, to the surprise of all, he spared the city and temple; and on being asked by Parmenio the reason of this clemency, said that he had seen this person in vision, who had directed him to lay aside all anxiety about his contemplated expedition to Asia, and that he had promised that God would

give him the empire of the Persians. According to the story, Jaddua showed him the prophecies of Daniel, and confirmed him by those prophecies in the confident expectation of conquering the East; and in view of this, Alexander offered sacrifices in the temple, and granted to the Hebrews the freedom of their country, and the exercise of their laws and religion. See Prideaux, vol. ii. p. 302, following; Josephus, "Ant." b. xi. ch. 8. Whatever of fable there may be in this account, it is certain that this city and temple were not destroyed by Alexander, but that in his ravages in the East, he was led, by some cause, to deal with the capital of the Hebrew nation in a masher different from what he did with others.

(b) A remarkable preservation of the Jewish people, of a somewhat similar character, and evincing the protection of God, occurred during the great persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the successors of Alexander, in the time of the Maccabees. See Prideaux, vol. iii. p. 230, and 2 Maccabees 5:11-27. In the times of that celebrated persecution, multitudes of the Jews were slain by Antiochus himself; the city was taken, and the temple defiled. Three years after it was taken by Antiochus (168 b.c.), Apollonius was directed by him to march against the city to vent his wrath on the Jews; and when the people were assembled in their synagogues for worship, he let loose his forces on them, with a command to slay all the men, and to take all the women and children captives to be sold as slaves. After this, he plundered the city, demolished the houses, and pulled down the walls, and then with the ruins of the demolished city built a strong fortress on the top of an eminence in the city of David, in a place which overlooked the temple, and placed a strong garrison within. From this place attacks were made on all who went up to the temple to worship; and the temple was defiled with all manner of pollutions, until it was deserted, and the daily sacrifices ceased. From these calamities and persecutions, the city and the Jewish nation were delivered by the valor of Judas Maccabeus, in the manner detailed in the first book of Maccabees.

Verse 40

And the fourth kingdom - Represented in the image by the legs of iron, and the feet "part of iron, and part of clay," Daniel 2:33. The first question which arises here is, what kingdom is referred to by this? In regard to this, there have been two leading opinions: one, that it refers to the

Roman empire; the other, that it refers to the kingdoms or dynasties that immediately succeeded the reign of Alexander the Great; embracing the kingdoms of the Seleucidae and Lagidae, Syria, and Egypt - in the language of Prof. Stuart, who adopts this opinion, "that the legs and feet were symbols of that intermingled and confused empire which sprung up under the Grecian chiefs who finally succeeded him," (Alexander the Great). - "Com. on Daniel," p. 173. For the reasoning by which this opinion is supported, see Prof. Stuart, pp. 173-193. The common opinion has been, that the reference is to the Roman empire, and in support of this opinion the following conditions may be suggested:

(1) The obvious design of the image was to symbolize the succession of great monarchies, which would precede the setting up of the kingdom of the Redeemer, and which would have an important agency in preparing the world for that. The Roman empire was in itself too important, and performed too important an agency in preparing the world for that, to be omitted in such an enumeration.

(2) The kingdom here referred to was to be in existence at the time symbolized by the cutting of the stone out of the mountain, for, during the continuance of that kingdom, or under it, "the God of heaven was to set up a kingdom which should never be destroyed," Daniel 2:44. But the kingdoms of the Seleucidae and the Lagidae - the "intermingled and confused empires that sprang up" after Alexander the Great - had ceased before that time, being superseded by the Roman.

(3) unless the Roman power be represented, the symmetry of the image is destroyed, for it would make what was, in fact, one kingdom represented by two different metals - brass and iron. We have seen above that the Babylonian empire was represented appropriately by gold; the Medo-Persian by silver; and the Macedonian by brass. We have seen also, that in fact the empire founded by Alexander, and continued through his successors in Syria and Egypt, was in fact one kingdom, so spoken of by the ancients, and being in fact a "Greek" dynasty. If the appellation of "brass" belonged to that kingdom as a Greek kingdom, there is an obvious incongruity, and a departure from the method of interpreting the other portions of the image, in applying the term "iron" to any portion of that kingdom.

(4) By the application of the term “iron,” it is evidently implied that the kingdom thus referred to would be distinguished for “strength” - strength greater than its predecessors - as iron surpasses brass, and silver, and gold, in that quality. But this was not true of the confused reigns that immediately followed Alexander. They were unitedly weaker than the Babylonian and the Medo-Persian, and weaker than the empire of Alexander. out of which they arose. Compare Daniel 8:21-22. It was true, however, of the Roman power, that it was so much superior to all its predecessors in power, that it might well be represented by iron in comparison with brass, silver, and gold.

(5) The fourth monarchy represented in Nebuchadnezzars dream is evidently the same which is represented by the fourth beast in Daniel 7:7-8, Daniel 7:23, Daniel 7:25. But it will appear, from the exposition of that chapter, that the reference there is to the Roman empire. See the note at these passages. There can be no well-founded objection to this view on the ground that this kingdom was not properly a “succession” of the kingdom of Alexander, and did not occupy precisely the same territory. The same was true of each of the other kingdoms - the Medo-Persian and Macedonian. Yet while they were not, in the usual sense of the term, in the “successions,” they did, in fact, follow one after the other; and with such accessions as were derived from conquest, and from the hereditary dominions of the conquerors, they did occupy the same territory. The design seems to have been to give a representation of a series of great monarchies, which would be, in an important sense, universal monarchies, and which should follow each other before the advent of the Saviour. The Roman, in addition to what it possessed in the West, actually occupied in the East substantially the same territory as the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, and the Macedonian, and, like them, it had all the claims which any ancient sovereignty had to the title of a universal monarchy; indeed no kingdom has ever existed to which this title could with more justice be applied.

Shall be strong as iron - It is scarcely necessary to observe that this description is applicable to the Roman power. In nothing was it more remarkable than its “strength;” for that irresistible power before which all other nations were perfectly weak. This characteristic of the Roman power is thus noticed by Mr. Gibbon: “The arms of the Republic, sometimes vanquished in battle, always victorious in war, advanced with rapid steps to

the Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, and the ocean; and the images of gold, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively broken by the "iron" monarchy of Rome." - "Dec. and Fall," p. 642, Lond. ed. 1830, as quoted by Prof. Bush.

Forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things - Iron is the metal which is used, and always has been used, for the purpose here suggested. In the form of hammers, sledges, and cannon-balls, and, in general, in reference to the accomplishment of any purpose, by beating or battering, this has been found to be the most valuable of the metals. It is heavy, is capable of being easily wrought into desired shapes; is abundant; is susceptible of being made hard so as not to be itself bruised, and has therefore, all the properties which could be desired for purposes like this.

And as iron that breaketh all these - That is, all these things; to wit, everything. Nothing is able to stand before it; there is nothing which it cannot reduce to powder. There is some repetition here, but it is for the sake of emphasis.

Shall it break in pieces and bruise - Nothing could better characterize the Roman power than this. Everything was crushed before it. The nations which they conquered ceased to be kingdoms, and were reduced to provinces, and as kingdoms they were blotted out from the list of nations. This has been well described by Mr. Irving: "The Roman empire did beat down the constitution and establishment of all other kingdoms; abolishing their independence, and bringing them into the most entire subjection; humbling the pride, subjecting the will, using the property, and trampling upon the power and dignity of all other states. For by this was the Roman dominion distinguished from all the rest, that it was the work of almost as many centuries as those were of years; the fruit of a thousand battles in which million of men were slain. It made room for itself, as doth a battering-ram, by continual successive blows; and it ceased not to beat and bruise all nations, so long as they continued to offer any resistance." - "Discourse on Daniel's Visions," p. 180.

Verse 41

And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay and part of iron - Daniel 2:33. The Chaldee is, "of them clay of the potter, and of them iron;" that is, part was composed of one material and part of the other. The sense is, not that the feet were composed entirely of one, and the toes of the other, but that they were intermingled. There was no

homogeneousness of material; nothing in one that would coalesce with the other, or that could be permanently united to it, as two metals might be fused or welded together and form one solid compound. Iron and clay cannot be welded; and the idea here clearly is, that in the empire here referred to there would be two main elements which could never be made to blend.

The kingdom shall be divided - That is, divided as the iron and clay were in the image. It does not necessarily mean that there would be an open rupture - an actual separation into two parts; but that there would be "such a diversity in the internal constitution" that, while there would be the element of great power, there would be also an element of weakness; there would be something which could never be blended with the element of strength, so as to produce one harmonious and homogeneous whole.

But there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay - The principal idea in this part of the description is, that there would be great "power;" that whatever elements of weakness there might be, yet the "power" of the empire would be apparent. No one can fail to perceive how this applies to the Roman empire; a mighty power which, through all its long history, was distinguished for the vigour with which it carried forward its plans, and pressed on to universal dominion. As to the element of "weakness" symbolized too by the clay, it may not be possible to determine, with absolute certainty, what is referred to. Any internal source of weakness; anything in the constitution of the state, whether originally existing and constituting heterogeneous material, or whether springing up in the empire itself, or whether arising from the intermingling of foreign elements that never amalgamated themselves with the state, any one of these suppositions would meet all that is fairly implied in this language.

From Daniel 2:43, "they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men," it would seem, however, that the reference is to some "foreign" admixture - like the intermingling of nations of other languages, laws, and customs, which were never truly amalgamated with the original materials, and which constantly tended to weaken and divide the kingdom. It is to be remarked, in the exposition of the passage, that in the previous three kingdoms there was comparative homogeneousness. In the fourth kingdom, there was to be something of a peculiar character in this respect by which it should be distinguished from the others. As a matter of fact, the other three kingdoms

were comparatively homogeneous in their character. The predominant feature was "Oriental;" and though there were different nations and people intermingled in the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, and the Macedonian kingdoms, yet there was the same general prevailing character in each; there was not such an intermingling of foreign nations as to produce disturbing elements, or to mar the symmetry and strength of the whole. It was not thus with Rome. In that empire there was the intermingling of all nations and tongues, and though the essential element of the empire remained always - "the Roman" - yet there was an intermingling of other influences under the same general government, which could be appropriately compared with clay united with iron, and which ultimately contributed to its fall (see the notes at Daniel 2:43).

Verse 42

And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken - Margin, "brittle." The margin is the more correct rendering of the Chaldee word (תבירה *tebîyrâh*). It means "frail, fragile" - easily broken, but not necessarily that it was actually broken. That did not occur until the stone cut out of the mountain impinged on it. It has been commonly supposed (comp. Newton "on the Prophecies"), that the ten toes on the feet refer to the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was ultimately broken up, corresponding with the ten horns seen in the vision of Daniel, in Daniel 7:7. In regard to the fact that the Roman empire was ultimately broken up into ten such kingdoms, see the extended notes at Daniel 7:24. The thing which struck the monarch in the vision, and Daniel in the interpretation, as remarkable, was that the feet and toes "were composed partly of iron and partly of clay."

In the upper portion of the image there had been uniformity in the different parts, and had been no intermingling of metals. Here a new feature was seen - not only that a new metal was employed, but that there was intermingled with that, in the same portion of the image, a different substance, and one that had no affinity with the iron, and that could never be made to blend with it. In the latter part of this verse, the original word for "partly" is not the same in each clause. In the former it is מן־קצת *min - qetsâth* - properly "from the end," sc., of the kingdom. Compare Daniel 12:13, "At the end of the days;" Daniel 1:15, "At the end of ten days;" and Daniel 2:5, Daniel 2:18. The word "might" be employed to denote the

"end" or "extremity" of anything, e. g., in respect to "time," and some have supposed that there is a reference here to the later periods of the Roman empire. See Poole's "Synopsis."

But the word is also used to denote "the sum," or "the whole number;" and then the phrase is equivalent to "a part - as" e. g., in the phrase מקצת כלי בית האלהים *miqetsât kelēy bēyth hâ'elohîym* - from the sum of the vessels of the house of God" Daniel 1:2; that is, a portion of the whole number, or a part. Compare Nehemiah 7:70, "from the sum of the heads of the fathers;" that is, a part of them. In the latter part of the clause it is מנה *mînnâh* - "from it;" that is, a part of it; partly. The entire phrase means that one part of the whole would be strong, and one part would be fragile. The reference is not to the "time" when this would occur, but to the "fact" that it would be so. The idea in this verse does not vary materially from that in the former, except that in that, the prominent thought is, that there would be "strength" in the kingdom: in this, the idea is, that while there would be strength in the kingdom, there would be also the elements of weakness.

Verse 43

And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men - Various explanations have been given of this verse, and it certainly is not of easy interpretation. The phrase "seed of men," would properly denote something different from the original stock that was represented by iron; some foreign admixture that would be so unlike that, and that would so little amalgamate with it, as to be properly represented by clay as compared with iron. Prof. Stuart interprets this of matrimonial alliances, and supposes that the idea expressed is, that, "while the object of such alliances was union, or at least a design to bring about a peaceable state of things, that object was, in a peculiar manner, defeated." The word rendered "men" (אנשא *'ănâshâ'*) is employed in Hebrew and in Chaldee to denote men of an inferior class - the lower orders, the common herd - in contradistinction from the more elevated and noble classes, represented by the word איש *'îysh* See Isaiah 2:9; Isaiah 5:15; Proverbs 8:4.

The word here used also (from אנש *'ânash*) - to be sick, ill at ease, incurable), would properly denote feebleness or inferiority, and would be aptly represented by clay as contrasted with iron. The expression "seed of men," as here used, would therefore denote some intermingling of an

inferior race with the original stock; some union or alliance under the one sovereignty, which would greatly weaken it as a whole, though the original strength still was great. The language would represent a race of mighty and powerful men, constituting the stamina - the bone and the sinew of the empire - mixed up with another race or other races, with whom, though they were associated in the government, they could never be blended; could never assimilate. This foreign admixture in the empire would be a constant source of weakness, and would constantly tend to division and faction, for such elements could never harmonize.

It is further to be remarked, that this would exist to a degree which would not be found in either of the three previous kingdoms. In fact, in these kingdoms there was no such intermingling with foreign nations as to destroy the homogeneousness of the empire. They were, in the main, Orientals; with the language, the manners, the customs, the habits of Orientals; and in respect to energy and power - the point here under consideration - there was no marked distinction between the subjected provinces and the original materials of the monarchy. By the act of subjection, they became substantially one people, and readily blended together. This remark will certainly apply to the two first of these monarchies - the Babylonian and the Medo-Persian; and though with less force to the Macedonian, yet it was not true of that, that it became so intermingled with foreign people as to constitute heterogeneous elements as it was of the Roman. In that monarchy, the element of "strength" was "infused" by Alexander and his Greeks; all the elements of weakness were in the original materials of the empire.

In the Roman, the element of strength - "the iron" - was in the original material of the empire; the weak, the heterogeneous element - "the clay" - was what was introduced from the foreign nations. This consideration may perhaps do something to show that the opinion of Grotius, Prof. Stuart, and others, that this fourth monarchy was what immediately succeeded Alexander is not well founded. The only question then is, whether, in the constitution of the Roman empire, at the time when it became the successor of the other three as a universal monarchy, there was such an intermingling of a foreign element, as to be properly represented by clay as contrasted with the original and stronger material "iron." I say, "at the time when it

became the successor of the other three as a universal monarchy," because the only point of view in which Daniel contemplated it was that. He looked at this, as he did at the others, as already such a universal dominion, and not at what it was before, or at the steps by which it rose to power.

Now, on looking at the Roman empire at that period, and during the time when it occupied the position of the universal monarchy, and during which the "stone cut out of the mountain" grew and filled the world, there is no difficulty in finding such an intermingling with other nations - "the seed of men" - as to be properly described by "iron and clay" in the same image that could never be blended, The allusion is, probably, to that intermingling with other nations which so remarkably characterized the Roman empire, and which arose partly from its conquests, and partly from the inroads of other people in the latter days of the empire, and in reference to both of which there was no proper amalgamation, leaving the original vigour of the empire substantially in its strength, but introducing other elements which never amalgamated with it, and which were like clay intermingled with iron.

(1) from their conquests. Tacitus says, "*Dominandi cupido cunctis affectibus flagrantior est* " - the lust of ruling is more ardent than all other desires; and this was eminently true of the Romans. They aspired at the dominion of the world; and, in their strides at universal conquest, they brought nations under their subjection, and admitted them to the rights of citizenship, which had no affinity with the original material which composed the Roman power, and which never really amalgamated with it, anymore than clay does with iron.

(2) This was true, also, in respect to the hordes that poured into the empire from other countries, and particularly from the Scandinavian regions, in the latter periods of the empire, and with which the Romans were compelled to form alliances, while, at the same time, they could not amalgamate with them. "In the reign of the emperor Caracalla," says Mr. Gibbon, "an innumerable swarm of Suevi appeared on the banks of the Mein, and in the neighborhood of the Roman provinces, in quest of food, or plunder, or glory. The hasty army of volunteers gradually coalesced into a great and permanent nation, and as it was composed of so many different

tribes, assumed the name of Allemanni, or “allmen,” to denote their various lineage, and their common bravery.” No reader of the Roman history can be ignorant of the invasions of the Goths, the Huns, and the Vandals, or of the effects of these invasions on the empire.

No one can be ignorant of the manner in which they became intermingled with the ancient Roman people, or of the attempts to form alliances with them, by intermarriages and otherwish, which were always like attempts to unite iron and clay. “Placidia, daughter of Theodosius the Great, was given in marriage to Adolphus, king of the Goths; the two daughters of Stilicho, the Vandal, were successively married to Honorius; and Genseric, another Vandal, gave Eudocia, a captive imperial princess, to his son to wife.” The effects of the intermingling of foreign people on the character and destiny of the empire cannot be stated perhaps in a more graphic manner than is done by Mr. Gibbon, in the summary review of the Roman History, with which he concludes his seventh chapter, and at the same time there could scarcely be a more clear or cxpressive commentary on this prophecy of Daniel. “During the four first ages,” says he, “the Romans, in the laborious school of poverty, had acquired the virtues of war and government: by the vigorous exertion of those virtues, and by the assistance of fortune, they had obtained, in the course of the three succeeding centuries, an absolute empire over many countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa. The last three hundred years had been consumed in apparent prosperity and internal decline. The nation of soldiers, magistrates, and legislators, who composed the thirty-five tribes of the Roman people, was dissolved into the common mass of mankind, and confounded with the million of servile provincials who had received the name without adopting the spirit of Romans. A mercenary army, levied among the subjects and barbarians of the frontier, was the only order of men who preserved and abused their independence.

By their tumultuary election, a Syrian, a Goth, or an Arab was exalted to the throne of Rome, and invested with despotic power over the conquests and over the country of the Scipios. The limits of the Roman empire still extended from the Western Ocean to the Tigris, and from Mount Atlas to the Rhine and the Danube. To the undiscerning eye of the common, Philip appeared a monarch no less powerful than Hadrian or Augustus had

formerly been. The form was still the same, but the animating health and rigor were fled. The industry of the people was discouraged and exhausted by a long series of oppression. The discipline of the legions, which alone, after the extinction of every other virtue, had propped the greatness of the state, was corrupted by the ambition, or relaxed by the weakness of the emperors. The strength of the frontiers, which had always consisted in arms rather than in fortifications, was insensibly undermined, and the fairest provinces were left exposed to the rapaciousness or ambition of the barbarians, who soon discovered the decline of the Roman empire." - Vol. i. pp. 110,111; Harper's Edit. (N. Y.) 1829.

Compare the notes at Revelation 6:1-8. The agency of the Roman empire was so important in preparing the world for the advent of the Son of God, and in reference to the establishment of his kingdom, that there was an obvious proriety that it should be made a distinct subject of prophecy. We have seen that each of the other three kingdoms had an important influence in preparing the world for the introduction of Christianity, and was designed to accomplish an important part in the "History of Redemption." The agency of the Roman empire was more direct and important than any one or all of these, for

(a) that was the empire which had the supremacy when the Son of God appeared;

(b) that kingdom had performed a more direct and important work in preparing the world for his coming;

(c) it was under authority derived from that sovereignty that the Son of God was put to death; and

(d) it was by that, that the ancient dispensation was brought to an end; and

(e) it was under that, that the new religion was spread through the world. It may be of use, therefore, in an exposition of this prophecy, to refer, with some particularity, to the things that were accomplished by this "fourth kingdom" in furthering the work of redemption, or in introducing and

establishing the kingdom that was to be “set up, and which was never to be destroyed.” That agency related to the following points:

(1) The establishment of a universal dominion; the fact that the world was brought under one scepter greatly favorcd the propagation of the Christian religion. We have seen, under the previous dynasties - the Babylonian, Persian, and macedonian - that such an universal empire was important in earlier ages to “prepare” the world for the advent of the Messiah. This was still more important when he was about actually to appear, and his religion was to be spread over the world. It greatly favored the diffusion of the new system that there was one empire; that the means of communication from one part of the world to another had been so extended by the Romans; and that one who was entitled to the privileges of citizenship could claim protection in nearly every part of the world.

(2) The prevalence of universal peace. The world had become subject to the Roman power, and conquest was at an end. The world at last, after so long agitations and strifes, was at peace. The distant provinces quietly submitted to the Roman control; the civil dissensions which had reigned so long at the capital were hushed; Augustus, having triumphed over all his rivals, quietly occupied the imperial throne, and, as a symbol of the universal peace, the temple of Janus was closed. Rarely in their history had that temple been closed before; and yet there was an obvious propriety that when the “Prince of Peace” should come, the world should be at rest, and that the clangor of arms should cease. It was a beautiful emblem of the nature of his reign. A world that had been always in conflict before rested on its arms; the tumult of battle had died away; the banners of war were furled; the legions of Rome paused in their career of conquest, and the world tranquilly waited for the coming of the Son of God.

(3) The Roman power accomplished an important agency in the great transaction which the Son of God came to perform in his making an atonement for the sins of the world. It was so arranged, in the Divine counsels, that he should be put to death, not by the hands of his own kindred and countrymen, but by the hands of foreigners, and under their authority. The necessity and the certainty of this was early predicted by the Saviour Matthew 20:19; Mark 10:33; Luke 18:32, and it is clear that there

were important reasons why it should be thus done; and doubtless one design of bringing Judea and the rest of the world under the Roman yoke was, that it might be accomplished in this way. Among the “reasons” for this may be suggested such as the following:

(a) The pagan world, as well as the Jewish community, thus had a part in the great transaction. He died for the whole world - Jews and Gentiles - and it was important that, that fact should be referred to in the manner of his death, and that the two great divisions of the human family should be united in the great transaction. It thus became not a “Jewish” affair only; not an event in which Judea alone was interested, but an affair of the world; a transaction in which the representatives of the world took their part.

(b) It was thus made a matter of publicity. The account of the death of the Saviour would thus, of course, be transmitted to the capital, and would demand the attention of those who were in power. When the gospel was preached at Rome, it would be proper to allege that it was a thing in which Rome itself had had an important agency, from the fact that under the Roman authority the Messiah had been put to death.

(c) The agency of the Romans, therefore, established the certainty of the death of Jesus, and consequently the certainty of his having risen from the dead. In order to demonstrate the latter, it was indispensable that the former should be made certain, and that all questions in regard to the reality of Iris death should be placed beyond a doubt. This was done by the agency of Pilate, a Roman governor. His death was certified to him, and he was satisfied of it. It became a matter of record; a point about which there could be no dispute. Accordingly, in all the questions that came up in reference to the religion of Christ, it was never made a matter of doubt that he had been really put to death under Pilate, the Roman governor, whatever question may have arisen about the fact of his resurrection.

(d) Equally important was the agency of the Romans in establishing establishing the “innocence” of the Saviour. After patient and repeated trials before himself, Pilate was constrained to say that he was innocent of the charges alleged against him, and that no fault could be found in him. In proclaiming the gospel, it was of immense importance to be able to affirm

this throughout the world. It could never be alleged against the gospel that its Author had violated the laws; that he deserved to be put to death as a malefactor, for the records of the Roman governor himself showed the contrary. The agency of the Romans, therefore, in the great work of the atonement, though undesigned on their part, was of inestimable importance in the establishment of the Christian religion; and it may be presumed that it was for this, in part at least, that the world was placed under their control, and that it was so ordered that the Messiah suffered under authority derived from them.

(4) There was another important agency of the Romans in reference to the religion that was to fill the earth. It was in destroying the city of Jerusalem, and bringing to a final end the whole system of Hebrew rites and ceremonies. The ancient sacrifices lost their efficacy really when the atonement was made on the cross. Then there was no need of the temple, and the altar, and the ancient priesthood. It was necessary that the ancient rites should cease, and that, having now lost their efficacy, there should be no possibility of perpetuating them. Accordingly, within the space of about thirty years after the death of the Saviour, when there had been time to perceive the bearing of the atonement on their temple rites; when it was plain that they were no longer efficacious, significant, or necessary, the Romans were suffered to destroy the city, the altar, and the temple, and to bring the whole system to a perpetual end. The place where the ancient worship had been celebrated was tiaade a heap of ruins; the altar was overturned, never to be built again; and the pomp and splendor of the ancient ritual passed away forever. It was the design of God that that system should come to a perpetual end; and hence, by his providence, it was so arranged, that ruin should spread over the city where the Lord was crucified, and that the Jewish people should never build an altar or a temple there again. To this day it has never been in their power to kindle the fire of sacrifice there, or to cause the smoke of incense to ascend in a temple consecrated to the worship of the God of their fathers. The agency of this fourth kingdom, therefore, was exceedingly important in the introduction and establishment of that kingdom which was to be perpetual, and which was to fill the earth, and hence, the reference to it here, and the more extended reference in Daniel 7.

Verse 44

And in the days of these kings - Margin, "their." The reading in the text "these kings" - is the more correct. The Vulgate renders this, "in the days of these kingdoms." The natural and obvious sense of the passage is, that during the continuance of the kingdoms above-mentioned, or before they should finally pass away, that is, before the last one should become extinct, another kingdom would be established on the earth which would be perpetual. Before the succession of universal monarchies should have passed away, the new kingdom would be set up that would never be destroyed. Such language is not uncommon. "Thus, if we were to speak of anything taking place in the days of British kings, we should not of course understand it as running through all their reigns, but merely as occurring in some one of them." - Prof. Bush. So it is said in Rth 1:1 : "It came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land;" that is, the famine occurred sometime under that general administration, or before it had passed away, evidently not meaning that there was a famine in the reign of each one. So it is said of Jephthah, that he was buried "in the cities of Gilead;" that is, some one of them. Josiah was buried in, "the sepulchres of his fathers;" that is, in some one of them.

Shall the God of heaven - The God, who rules in heaven; the true God. This is designed to show the Divine origin of this kingdom, and to distinguish it from all others. Though the others here referred to were under the Divine control, and were designed to act an important part in preparing the world for this, yet they are not represented as deriving their origin directly from heaven. They were founded in the usual manner of earthly monarchies, but this was to have a heavenly origin. In accordance with this, the kingdom which the Messiah came to establish is often called, in the New Testament, "the kingdom of heaven," "the kingdom of God," etc. Compare Micah 4:7; Luke 1:32-33.

Set up a kingdom - "Shall cause to arise or stand up" - יקים *yeqîym* It shall not owe its origin to the usual causes by which empires are constituted on the earth by conquests; by human policy; by powerful alliances; by transmitted hereditary possession - but shall exist because God shall "appoint" and "constitute" it. There can be no reasonable doubt as to what kingdom is here intended, and nearly all expositors have supposed that it refers to the kingdom of the Messiah. Grotius, indeed, who made the fourth kingdom refer to the Seleucidse and Lagidse, was constrained by

consistency to make this refer to the Roman power; but in this interpretation he stands almost, if not entirely, alone. Yet even he supposes it to refer not to "pagan" Rome only, but to Rome as the perpetual seat of power - the permanent kingdom - the seat of the church: "*Imperium Romanum perpetuo mansurum, quod sedes erit ecclesice*." And although he maintains that he refers to Rome primarily, yet he is constrained to acknowledge that what is here said is true in a higher sense of the kingdom of Christ: *Sensus sublimior, Christum finem impositurum omnibus. imperiis terrestribus*. But there can be no real doubt as to what kingdom is intended. Its distinctly declared Divine origin; the declaration that it shall never be destroyed; the assurance that it would absorb all other kingdoms, and that it would stand forever; and the entire accordance of these declarations with the account of the kingdom of the Messiah in the New Testament, show beyond a doubt that the kingdom of the Redeemer is intended.

Which shall never be destroyed - The others would pass away. The Babylonian would be succeeded by the Medo-Persian, that by the Macedonian, that by the Roman, and that in its turn by the one which the God of heaven would set up. This would be perpetual. Nothing would have power to overthrow it. It would live in the revolutions of all other kingdoms, and would survive them all. Compare the notes at Daniel 7:14; and the summary of the doctrines taught here at the close of the notes at Daniel 2:45.

And the kingdom shall not be left to other people - Margin, "thereof. Literally, "Its kingdom shall not be left to other people;" that is, the ruling power appropriate to this kingdom or dominion shall never pass away from its rightful possessor, and be transferred to other hands. In respect to other kingdoms, it often happens that their sovereigns are deposed, and that their power passes into the hands of usurpers. But this can never occur in this kingdom. The government will never change hands. The administration will be perpetual. No foreign power shall sway the scepter of this kingdom. There "may be" an allusion here to the fact that, in respect to each of the other kingdoms mentioned, the power over the same territory "did" pass into the hands of other people. Thus, on the same territory, the dominion passed from the hands of the Babylonian princes to the hands of Cyrus the Persian, and then to the hands of Alexander the Macedonian, and then to the hands of the Romans. But this would never occur in regard to the kingdom which the God of heaven would set up. In the region of empire appropriate

to it, it would never change hands; and this promise of perpetuity made this kingdom wholly unlike all its predecessors.

But it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms - As represented by the stone cut out of the mountains without hands, impinging on the image. See the notes at Daniel 2:34-35.

Two inquiries at once meet us here, of somewhat difficult solution. The first is, How, if this is designed to apply to the kingdom of the Messiah, can the description be true? The language here would seem to imply some violent action; some positive crushing force; something like what occurs in conquests when nations are subdued. Would it not appear from this that the kingdom here represented was to make its way by conquests in the same manner as the other kingdoms, rather than by a silent and peaceful influence? Is this language, in fact, applicable to the method in which the kingdom of Christ is to supplant all others? In reply to these questions, it may be remarked,

(1) That the leading idea, as apparent in the prophecy, is not so much that of "violence" as that the kingdoms referred to would be "uttterly brought to an end;" that there would be, under this new kingdom, ultimately an entire cessation of the others; or that they would be removed or supplanted by this. This is represented Daniel 2:35 by the fact that the materials composing the other kingdoms are represented before this as becoming like "the chaff of the summer threshing-floors;" and as "being carried away, so that no place was found for them." The stone cut out of the mountain, small at first, was mysteriously enlarged, so that it occupied the place which they did, and ultimately filled the earth. A process of gradual demolition, acting on them by constant attrition, removing portions of them, and occupying their place until they should disappear, and until there should be a complete substitution of the new kingdom in their place, would seem to correspond with all that is essential in the prophetic description, See the notes at Daniel 2:34, on the expression, "which smote the image upon his feet." But

(2) This language is in accordance with what is commonly used in the predictions respecting the kingdom of the Messiah - language which is descriptive of the existence of "power" in subduing the nations, and bringing the opposing kingdoms of the world to an end. Thus in Psalm 2:9,

“Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron: thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter‘s vessel.” Isaiah 9:12, “for the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.” So 1 Corinthians 15:24-25, “When he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet.” These expressions denote that there will be an entire subjection of other kingdoms to that of the Messiah, called in the New Testament “the kingdom of God.” They undoubtedly imply that there will be some kind of “force” employed - for this great work cannot be accomplished without the existence of “power;” but it may be remarked

(a) That it does not necessarily mean that there will be “physical” force, or power like that by which kingdoms have been usually overturned. The kingdom of the Redeemer is a kingdom of “principles,” and those principles will subdue the nations, and bring them into subjection.

(b) It does not necessarily mean that the effect here described will be accomplished “at once.” It may be by a gradual process, like a continual beating on the image, reducing it ultimately to powder.

The other question which arises here is, How can it be said that the new kingdom which was to be set up would “break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms?” How could the destruction of the image in the Roman period be in fact the destruction of the “three” previous kingdoms, represented by gold, and silver, and brass? Would they not in fact have passed away before the Roman power came into existence? And yet, is not the representation in Daniel 2:35, that the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold were broken in pieces together, and were all scattered like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor? Is it supposed that these kingdoms would be all in existence at the same time, and that the action of the symbolic “stone” was to be alike on all of them? To these questions, we may answer,

(1) That the meaning is, undoubtedly, that three of these kingdoms would have passed away at the time of the action of the “stone” referred to. They were to be a “succession” of kingdoms, occupying, to a great extent,

the same territory, and not contemporary monarchies occupying distinct territories.

(2) The action of the "stone" was in fact, in a most important sense, to be on them all; that is, it was to be on what "constituted" these successive kingdoms of gold, silver, brass, and iron. Each was in its turn an universal monarchy. The same territory was substantially occupied by them all. The Medo-Persian scepter extended over the region under the Babylonian; the Macedonian over that; the Roman over that. There were indeed "accessions" in each successive monarchy, but still anything which affected the Roman empire affected what had "in fact" been the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, and the Macedonian. A demolition of the image in the time of the Roman empire would be, therefore, in fact, a demolition of the whole.

(3) This interpretation is necessary from the nature of the symbolic representation. The eye of the monarch in the dream was directed to the image as "a splendid whole." It was necessary to the object in view that he should see it "all at a time," that he might have a distinct conception of it. This purpose made it impossible to exhibit the kingdoms "in succession," but they all stood up before him at once. No one can doubt that there "might" have been a different representation, and that the kingdoms might have been made to pass before him in their order, but the representation would have been less grand and imposing. But this design made it necessary that the image should be kept "entire" before the mind until its demolition. It would have been unseemly to have represented the head as removed, and then the shoulders and breast, and then the belly and thighs, until nothing remained but the feet and toes. It was necessary to keep up the representation of "the image of colossal majesty and strength," until a new power should arise which "would demolish it all." Nebuchadnezzar is not represented as seeing the parts of the image successively appear or disappear. He does not at first see the golden head rising above the earth, and then the other parts in succession; nor the golden head disappearing, and then the other parts, until nothing was left but the feet and the toes. Such a representation would have destroyed the decorum and beauty of the whole figure; and as it cannot be argued that because Nebuchadnezzar saw the whole image at the outset standing in its complete form, that therefore,

all these kingdoms must have been simultaneously in existence, so it cannot be argued because he saw the whole image standing when the stone smote upon it, that therefore, all these kingdoms must have had an existence then.

(4) It may be added, that the destruction of the last was in fact the destruction of all the three predecessors. The whole power had become embodied in that, and the demolition affected the whole series.

Verse 45

Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone … - On the meaning of the language employed here, see the notes at Daniel 2:34-35. The word "forasmuch" may be taken either in connection with what precedes, or with what follows. In the former method, there should be a period at the word "gold" in this verse; and then the sense is, "In those days shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, etc., "forasmuch," or "because" thou sawest a stone," etc., that is, that was a certain indication of it. According to the other method, the meaning is, "Forasmuch as thou sawest the stone cut out and demolish the image, the great God has made known the certainty of it;" that is, that is a certain indication that it will be done. The Vulgate is, "According to what thou sawest, that the stone was cut out without hands, and reduced the clay, etc., the great God has shown to the king what will be hereafter." The difference in the interpretation is not very material.

Cut out of the mountain - This is not inserted in the statement in Daniel 2:34. It seems, however, to be implied there, as there is mention of the stone as "cut out." The representation is evidently that of a stone disengaged from its native bed, the side of a mountain, without any human agency, and then rolling down the side of it and impinging on the image.

The great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter - Margin, the same as the Chaldee, "after this." The meaning is simply, in time to come; in some future period. Daniel claims none of the merit of this discovery to himself. but ascribes it all to God.

And the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure - That is, it is no vain and airy phantom; no mere working of the imagination. The dream was all that the monarch had supposed it to be - a representation of coming events, and his solicitude in regard to it was well-founded. Daniel speaks with the utmost assurance also as to its fulfillment. He knew that he had been led to this interpretation by no skill of his own; and his

representation of it was such as to satisfy the monarch of its correctness. Two circumstances probably made it appear certain to the monarch, as we learn from the next verse it did: one, that Daniel had recalled the dream to his own recollection, showing that he was under a Divine guidance; and the other, the plausibility - the verisimilitude - the evident truthfulness of the representation. It was such a manifest "explanation" of the dream that Nebuchadnezzar, in the same manner as Pharaoh had done before him when his dreams were explained by Joseph, at once admitted the correctness of the representation.

Having now gone through with the "exposition" of this important passage respecting the stone cut from the mountain, it seems proper to make a few remarks in regard to the nature of the kingdom that would be set up, as represented by the stone which demolished the image, and which so marvelously increased as to fill the earth. That there is reference to the kingdom of the Messiah cannot be reasonably doubted. The points which are established in respect to that kingdom by the passage now under consideration are the following:

I. Its superhuman origin. This is indicated in the representation of the stone cut out of the mountain "without hands;" that is, clearly not by human agency, or in the ordinary course of events. There was to be a superhuman power exerted in detaching it from the mountain, as well as in its future growth. What appeared so marvelous was, that it was cut from its orginal resting place by some invisible power, and moved forward to the consummation of its work without any human agency. That this was designed to be significant of something there can be no reasonable doubt, for the result is made to turn on this. I do not see that any special significancy is to be attached to the idea of its being cut from "a mountain," nor that it is required of us to attempt to refine on that expression, and to ascertain whether the mountain means the Roman kingdom, out of which the gospel church was taken, as many suppose; or the Jewish nation, as Augustine supposed; or that "the origin of Christ was sublime and superior to the whole world," as Calvin supposes; or to the mountainous country of Judea in which the Messiah was born, as many others have maintained; or to the tomb of Joseph, as a rock from which the Messiah sprang to life and victory, as others have imagined.

All this belongs to a system of interpretatation that is trifling in the extreme. The representation of the mountain here is merely for the sake of verisimilitude, like the circumstances in a parable. If a stone was “cut out without hands,” it would be natural to speak of it as cut from the mountain or parent-rock to which it was attached. The eye is not here directed to the “mountain” as having anything significant or marvelous about it, but to the “stone” that so mysteriously left its bed, and rolled onward toward the image. The point of interest and of marvel, the mysterious thing that attracted the eye, was that there was no human agency employed; that no hands were seen at work; that none of the ordinary instrumentalities were seen by which great effects are accomplished among men. Now this would properly represent the idea that the kingdom of the Messiah would have a supernatural origin. Its beginnings would be unlike what is usually seen among men. How appropriately this applies to the kingdom of the Messiah, as having its origin not in human power, need not here be stated. Nothing is more apparent; nothing is more frequently dwelt on in the New Testament, than that it had a heavenly origin. It did not owe its beginning to human plans, counsels, or power.

II. Its feebleness in its beginning, compared with its ultimate growth and power. At first it was a stone comparatively small, and that seemed utterly inadequate to the work of demolishing and pulverizing a colossal statue of gold, silver, brass, and iron. Ultimately it grew to be itself of mountain-size, and to fill the land. Now this representation would undoubtedly convey the fair impression that this new power, represented by the stone, would at first be comparatively small and feeble; that there would be comparative weakness in its origin as contrasted with what it would ultimately attain to; and that it would seem to be utterly inadequate to the performance of what it finally accomplished. It is hardly necessary to say that this corresponds entirely with the origin of the Messiah‘s kingdom. Everywhere it is represented as of feeble beginnings, and, as a system, to human view, entirely inadequate to so great a work as that of bringing other kingdoms to an end, and subduing it to itself. The complete fulfillment of the prophetic statement would be found in such circumstances as the following:

(1) The humble origin of the head of this new power hlmself - the Messiah - the King of Sion. He was, in fact, of a decayed and dilapidated

family; was ranked among the poor; was without powerful friends or political connections; possessed no uncommon advantages of learning, and was regarded with contempt and scorn by the great mass of his countrymen. No one would have supposed that the religion originated by one of so humble an origin would have power to change the destiny of the kingdoms of the earth.

(2) The feebleness of the beginning of his kingdom. His few followers - the little band of fishermen; the slow progress at first made; these were circumstances strikingly in accordance with the representation in Daniel.

(3) The absence in that band of all that seemed requisite to accomplish so great a work. They had no arms, no wealth, no political power. They had nothing of what has commonly been employed to overthrow kingdoms, and the band of fishermen sent forth to this work seemed as little adequate to the undertaking as the stone cut from the mountain did to demolish the colossal image.

(4) All this feebleness in the beginning was wonderfully contrasted with the ultimate results, like the stone, when cut from the mountain, contrasted with its magnitude when it filled the earth. The Saviour himself often referred to the contrast between the feeble origin of his religion, and what it would grow to be. At first it was like a grain of mustard-seed, smallest among seeds; then it grew to be a tree so large that the fowls of the air lodged in the branches. At first it was like leaven, hidden in meal; ultimately it would diffuse itself through the mass, so that the whole would be leavened, Matthew 13:31-33.

III. It would supplant all other kingdoms. This was clearly indicated by the fact that the "stone" demolished the image, reducing it to powder, and filled the place which that occupied, and all the land. This has been explained (see the notes at Daniel 2:34-35), as meaning that it would not be by sudden violence, but by a continued process of comminution. There would be such an action on the kingdoms of the earth represented by gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, that they would disappear, and the new power represented by the "stone" would finally take their place. As this new power was to be humble in its origin, and feeble to human view; as it had

nothing which, to outward appearance, would seem adequate to the result, the reference would seem to be to the "principles" which would characterize it, and which, as elements of power, would gradually but ultimately secure the changes represented by the demolition of the colossal statue.

The only question then would be, whether the principles in the kingdom of the Messiah had such originality and power as would gradually but certainly change the modes of government that existed in the world, and substitute another kind of reign; or, what is the influence which it will exert on the nations, causing new methods of government, in accordance with its principles, to prevail on the earth. Though apparently feeble, without arms, or wealth, or civil alliances, it has elements of "power" about it which will ultimately subdue all other principles of government, ard take their place. Its work was indeed to be a gradual work, and it is by no means accomplished, yet its effect has been mighty already on the principles that rule among the nations and will still be more mighty until "the laws of the kingdom of the Messiah shall prevail in all the earth." This seems to be the idea which it is designed to express by this prophetic image. If one were asked "in what respects" it is to be anticipated that these changes will be wrought, and "in what respects" we can discern the evidences of such changes already, we might say in such points as the following:

(1) In regard to the methods in which governments are founded. Governments were formerly mostly the result of civil or foreign wars. Nearly all the governments of antiquity were originally founded in the "power" of some military leader, and then held by power. Christianity originated new views about wars and conquests; views that will ultimately prevail. In nothing are the opinions of mankind destined more entirely to be reversed than in regard to "war;" to its glory, its achievements, and the fame of those who have been most celebrated for bloody triumphs.

(2) In regard to the rights of the people. A mighty principle was originated by Christianity in respect to the "rights" of men; the right of conscience; the right to the avails of their own labor; the right to life and liberty.

(3) In regard to oppression. The history of the world has been, to a great extent, a history of oppression. But all this is to be changed by the principles of the true religion; and when the period shall arrive that there shall be no more occasion to use the word "oppression," as descriptive of anything that shall have an actual existenee on earth, this will be a different world. Then the time will have come, appropriately designated by the demolition of the colossal statue - symbolic of all governments of oppression, and the substitution in its place of what was at first insignificant, but which had vital energy to supplant all that went before it.

IV. This kingdom will be perpetual. This is asserted in the unequivocal statements that it "shall never be destroyed," and that "it shall not be left to other people;" that is, shall never pass into other hands. There could not be a more positive declaration that the kingdom here referred to will continue through all coming time. Other kingdoms pass away, but this will not; and amidst all the revolutions of other empires this will remain. The lapse of eighteen hundred years since this kingdom was set up, has done not a little to confirm the truth of this prediction. Many other kingdoms during that time have disappeared from the earth, but this remains in its full vigour, and with extending power. It has, at this day, an extent of dominion which it never had before, and there are clearer indications that it will spread over all the earth than ever existed at any previous time. That this kingdom "will" be perpetual may be argued from the following considerations:

(1) From the promises of God. These are absolute; and they are attested by Him who has all power, and who can, with infinite ease, accomplish all that he has spoken. So in Daniel 7:14, "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." Luke 1:33, "and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Psalm 45:6 (compare the notes at Hebrews 1:8), "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." In Hebrews 1:8, it is, "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." Isaiah 9:7, "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth, even forever."

(2) It may be argued, from the fact that the efforts which have been made to destroy it have shown that this cannot be done by any human power. Eighteen hundred years have now passed away - a period sufficiently long to test the question whether it can be destroyed by force and violence; by argument and ridicule. The experiment has been fairly made, and if it were possible that it should be destroyed by external force, it would have been done. It cannot be imagined that more favorable circumstances for such a purpose will ever occur. The church of Christ has met every form of opposition that we can conceive could be made against it, and has survived them all. Particularly it has survived the trial which has been made in the following respects:

(a) The Roman power, the whole might of the Roman arms, that had subdued and crushed the world, was brought to bear upon the kingdom of Christ to crush and destroy it, but wholly failed. It cannot be supposed that a new power will ever arise that will be more formidable to Christianity than the Roman was.

(b) The power of persecution. That has been tried in every way, and has failed. The most ingenious forms of torture have been devised to extinguish this religion, and have all failed. It has always been found that persecution has only contributed ultimately to the triumph of the cause which it was hoped to crush.

(c) The power of philosophy. The ancient philosophers opposed it, and attempted to destroy it by argument. This was early done by Celsus and Porphyry; but it soon became apparent that the ancient philosophy had nothing that could extinguish the rising religion, and not a few of the prominent philosophers themselves were converted, and became the advocates of the faith.

(d) The power of science. Christianity had its origin in an age when science had made comparatively little progress, and in a country where it was almost unknown. The sciences since have made vast advances; and each one in its turn has been appealed to by the enemies of religion, to furnish an argument against Christianity. Astronomy, history, the discoveries in Egypt, the asserted antiquity of the Hindoos, and geology,

have all been employed to overthrow the claims of the Christian religion, and have all been compelled to abandon the field. See this admirably demonstrated in Dr. Wiseman‘s “Lectures on the Connection between Science and Revealed Religion.”

(e) The power of ridicule. At one time it was held that “ridicule is the test of truth,” and this has been applied unsparingly to the Christian religion. But the religion still lives, and it cannot be supposed that there will be men endued with the power of sarcasm and wit superior to those who, with these weapons, have made war on Christianity, or that infidelity has any hope from that quarter. It may be inferred, therefore, that there is no “external” source of corruption and decay which will prevent its being perpetual. Other kingdoms usually have; and after a few centuries at most the internal corruption - the defect of the organization - developes itself, and the kingdom falls. But nothing of this kind occurs in the kingdom of Christ. It has lived now through eighteen hundred years, through periods of the world in which there have been constant changes in the arts, in the sciences, in manners, in philosophy, in forms of government. During that time many a system of philosophy has been superseded, and many a kingdom has fallen, but Christianity is as fresh and vigorous, as it meets each coming generation, as it ever was; and the past has demonstrated that the enemies of the gospel have no reason to hope that it will become weak by age, and will fall by its own decrepitude.

V. A fifth characteristic of this kingdom is, that it will universally prevail. This was symbolized by the stone that “became a great mountain, and that filled the whole earth,” Daniel 2:35. It is also implied, in the statement in Daniel 2:44, that it “shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms.” They will cease, and this will occupy their places. The “principles” of the kingdom of the Messiah, whatever may be the external forms of government that shall exist on the earth, will everywhere prevail. That this will occur may be argued from the following considerations:

(1) The promises recorded in the Bible. Tlle passage before us is one. Of the same nature are the following: Psalm 2:8, “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the pagan for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” Malachi 1:11, “for from the rising of the sun even unto the

going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered to my name, and a pure offering." Isaiah 11:9, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Compare Habakkuk 2:14; Isaiah 45:22, and Isaiah 60.

(2) The world in its progress "loses" nothing that is of value. Truth is eternal, and when once discovered, society will not let it go. It seizes upon great elements in human nature, and the world will not let it die. Thus it is with discoveries in science, inventions in the arts, and principles in morals. There is no evidence that anything that was known to the ancients which was of permanent value to mankind has been lost; and the few things that "were" lost have been succeeded by that which is better. All that was truly valuable in their science, their philosophy, their arts, their jurisprudence, their literature, we possess still, and the world will always retMn it. And what can ever obliterate from the memory oi man the printing-press, the steamengine, the cotton-gin, the telescope, the blow-pipe, the magnetic telegraph? Society accumulates from age to age all that is truly valuable in inventions, morals, and the arts, and travels with them down to the period when the world shall have reached the highest point of perfectability. This remark is true also of Christianity - the kingdom of Christ. There are "principles" in regard to the happiness and rights of man in that system which cannot be "detached" from society, but which go into its permanent structure, and which "the world will not let die."

(3) Society is thus making constant "advances." A position gained in human progress is never ultimately lost. "The principles thus accumulated and incorporated into society become permanent. Each age adds something in this respect to the treasures accumulated by all preceding ages, and each one is, in some respects, an advance on its predecessors, and makes the final triumph of the principles of truth, and liberty, and pure religion more sure."

(4) Christianity, or the kingdom of Christ, is "aggressive." It makes a steady war on the evil customs, habits, and laws of the world. It is in accordance with its nature to diffuse itself. Nothing can prevent its propagation; and, according to the laws of society, nothing is so certain

philosophically in regard to the future, as the final prevalence of the religion of the Redeemer. It may meet with temporary and formidable obstructions. It may be retarded, or extinguished, in certain places. But its general course is onward - like the current of the mighty river toward the ocean. The only thing certain in the future is, that the Christian religion will yet spread all over the world; and there is enough in this to gratify the highest wishes of philanthropy, and enough to stimulate to the highest effort to secure so desirable an end.

Verse 46

Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face - This was the common method of signifying profound respect among the Orientals. Compare Genesis 17:3; Genesis 50:18; Leviticus 9:24; Numbers 14:5; Joshua 5:14; Judges 13:20; Revelation 11:16.

And worshipped Daniel - The word rendered "worshipped" here (סגד *segid*), in the Chaldee portions of the Bible is uniformly rendered "worship," Daniel 2:26; Daniel 3:5-7, Daniel 3:10-12, Daniel 3:14-15, Daniel 3:18, Daniel 3:28. It occurs nowhere else, and in every instance, except in the one before us, is employed with reference to the homage paid to an idol, all the other cases occurring in the third chapter respecting the image that was set up by Nebuchadnezzar. The corresponding Hebrew word (סגד *sâgad*) occurs only in Isaiah 44:15, Isaiah 44:17, Isaiah 44:19; Isaiah 46:6; and is, in every instance, rendered "fall down," also with reference to idols. The proper idea, therefore, of the word here is, that the monarch meant to render "religious" homage to Daniel, or such adoration as was usually paid to idols. This is confirmed by witat is immediately added, that he commanded that an oblation should be made to him. It is not, however, necessary to suppose that Daniel "received" or "approved" this religious homage of the king, or that he left the impression on his mind that he was "willing" to be honored as a god. The prostration of the king before him, of course, he could not prevent. The views and feelings which the monarch had in doing it he could not prevent. The command to present an "oblation and sweet odors to him" he could not prevent. But it is not a fair inference that Daniel approved this, or that he did anything to countenance it, or even that he did not, in a proper manner, rebuke it: for

(1) We are not to suppose that all that was said was recorded, and no one can prove that Daniel did not express his disapprobation of this religious

honor shown to him.

(2) Daniel had in fact, expressed his views, in the clearest manner, on this very point before the monarch. He had, again and again, disclaimed all power to be able to reveal such secrets. He had directed his mind to the true God, as he who alone could disclose coming events, Daniel 2:28, Daniel 2:30, Daniel 2:45. He had taken all possible precaution to prevent any such result, by declaring, in the most emphatic terms Daniel 2:30, that this secret was not revealed to him "on account of any wisdom which he had more than any living." If now, after all this precaution, and these disclaimers, the king should prostrate himself before him, and, for the moment, feel that he was in the presence of a God, Daniel was not responsible for it, and it should not be inferred that he encouraged or approved it.

(3) It would seem, from the narrative itself, more than probable that Daniel did refuse the homage, and direct the thoughts of the monarch to the true God. In the very next verse it is said, "The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets." "Answered" what? Perhaps something that was said by Daniel. At all events, it is clear from this that whatever were the momentary expressions of wonder, gratitude, and adoration, on the part of the king, his thoughts soon passed to the proper object of worship - the true God. "And commanded, etc." The fact that this was "commanded" does not prove that it was done. The command was probably given under the excitement of his admiration and wonder. But it does not follow that Daniel received it, or that the command was not recalled on reflection, or that the oblation and odors may not have been presented to the true God.

That they should offer an oblation - That is, his attendants, or perhaps the priests to whom pertained the duty of making offerings to the gods. The word rendered "oblation" (מנחה *minchāh*) does not refer to a, "bloody" sacrifice, but means a gift or present of any kind. It is applied in the Scriptures to denote

(1) "a gift," or "present," Genesis 32:13, Genesis 32:18, Genesis 32:20 (Genesis 32:14, Genesis 32:19, Genesis 32:21); Genesis 43:11, Genesis 43:15, Genesis 43:25-26;

(2) "a tribute," such as was exacted from a subject nation, under the notion of a present, 2 Samuel 8:2, 2 Samuel 8:6; 1 Kings 4:21 1 Kings 5:1,

(3) "an offering" or sacrifice to God, especially a bloodless offering, in opposition to (זבח *zebach*) - a bloody sacrifice, Leviticus 2:1, Leviticus 2:4-6; Leviticus 6:14 (7); Leviticus 7:9; Psalm 40:6 (7); Jeremiah 17:26.

See the word fully explained in the notes at Isaiah 1:13. There can be no doubt that Nebuchadnezzar meant that such an offering should be presented as was usually made in idol worship.

And sweet odors - incense was commonly used in worship (see the notes at Isaiah 1:13), and it is not improbable that in the worship of the gods it was accompanied with other fragrant odors. Sweet odors, or "savors," expressed by the same word which is used here, were a part of the prescribed worship in the Hebrew ritual, Leviticus 1:9, Leviticus 1:13, Leviticus 1:17; Leviticus 2:2, Leviticus 2:9; Leviticus 3:5; Leviticus 6:21 (14); Numbers 15:7.

Verse 47

The king answered unto Daniel - Answered either what he had said in the interpretation of the dream, or "possibly" something that he had said in regard to the impropriety of offering this homage to him. Compare the notes at Daniel 2:46. It is certain that, for some cause. whatever might have been the homage which he was disposed to render to Daniel, his thoughts were soon turned from him to the true God, and to an acknowledgment of him as superior to all other beings. He seems, at least, instantly to have reflected on what Daniel had himself said Daniel 2:30, and to have remembered that religious homage was due, not to Daniel, but to the God who had communicated the secret to him.

Of a truth it is - It is truly so. This had been shown by the manner in which this secret was disclosed.

That your God is a God of gods - Is superior to all other gods; is supreme over all. Compare Revelation 17:14; 1 Timothy 6:15. The idea is, that whatever subordinate beings there may be, He is supreme.

And a Lord of kings - Supreme over kings. They are all inferior to him, and subject to his control.

And a revealer of secrets - One of the attributes of divinity. See the notes at Daniel 2:28.

Seeing thou couldest reveal this secret - A secret which the wisest men of the realm had sought in vain to disclose. The fact that a professed servant of God had been able to do this showed that God was himself supreme, and worthy of adoration. We have here, then, an instance in which a proud and haughty pagan monarch was brought to an acknowledgment of the true God, and was constrained to render him homage. This was a result which it was evidently intended to reach in the whole transaction; in the dream itself; in the fact that the wise men of Babylon could not interpret it; and in the fact that an acknowledged servant of the Most High had been enabled to make the disclosure. The instance is instructive, as showing to what extent a mind clearly not under the influence of any genuine piety - for subsequent events showed that no "permanent" effects were produced on him, and that he was still an idolater Daniel 3, and a most proud and haughty man Daniel 4 - may be brought to acknowledge God. See the remarks at the end of the Daniel 7.

Verse 48

There the king made Daniel a great man - That is, he gave him an honorable appointment; he so honored him that he was regarded as a great man. He was really made great by the grace of God, and the extraordinary favor which God had bestowed upon him, but the estimate which the king had of his greatness was shown by the tokens of the royal favor. "And gave him many great gifts." This is a common way of showing esteem in the East. The estimate in which one holds another is evinced by the variety and richness of the presents conferred on him. Hence, all persons of distinction expect gifts of those who approach them as expressive of their regard for them, and of the esteem in which they are held. Compare Daniel 2:6.

And made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon - Chaldee, הַשְׁלְטֵה *hashelet̮ēh* - caused him to preside over, or to rule over, from the verb שְׁלַט *shelat̮* "to rule," and commonly applied to one who rules as a prince, or in an elevated office. From this word the terms "sultan" and "sultana" are derived.

And chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon - This would seem to be an appointment which did not pertain to him as governor of the province of Babylon, or as presiding in the capital, but was a separate appointment, and, therefore, an additional mark of favor. The phrase "chief of the governors" would seem to imply that the magi of Babylon were disposed in certain orders or classes, each of which had its appropriate

head, like the head of a college or university. Daniel was placed over the whole as the president, principal, or chancellor. It had been the policy of Nebuchadnezzar to assemble at the capital the principal talent and learning of the realm. Compare the notes at Daniel 1:18-20; Daniel 2:2. Daniel thus, in both these stations of honor at an early period of life, though recently an unknown stranger, and a captive; was exalted to the highest honors which could be conferred on a subject, and raised to posts of distinction which would usually be regarded as the highest rewards which could be obtained by a long life of devotedness to the welfare of the country.

Verse 49

Then Daniel requested of the king … - In his own remarkable prosperity, and in the extraordinary honors conferred on him, he did not forget the companions of his humbler days. They were his countrymen; they had been captives with him; they had been selected with a view to stand with him before the king Daniel 1:3-4; they had shared with him in his rules of abstinence Daniel 1:11-17; they had all passed an honorable examination before the king Daniel 1:18-19; they had united with him in supplication to God that he would disclose the meaning of the vision Daniel 2:17-18; and now it was proper that they should be remembered by him who had been so signally honored.

Over the affairs of the province of Babylon - In what particular departments of business they were employed is not mentioned; but it would seem that all that especially pertained to this province was entrusted to them. Daniel had the general superintendence, but the subordinate duties growing out of the office were entrusted to them. The fact that the king granted the request shows the influence that Daniel had at the court. The reasons which influenced the king in granting the request may have been, not only the favor with which he regarded Daniel, but the fact that the duties of the office conferred on him now were such as to require assistance, and the remembrance of the virtues ot these youths when they stood before him.

But Daniel sat in the gate of the king - The post of chief honor and dignity as a counselor of the king. The "gate" of a city in the East, being a chief place of concourse, was the place where courts were held, and public business was usually transacted. See the notes at Job 29:7. To say, therefore, that he "sat in the gate of the king," is merely to say that he occupied a place with the chief counselors and dignitaries of the realm. The phrase

“Sublime Porte,” that is, “the Sublime Gate,” is still employed at Constantinople to denote the government of the sultan, for, in the earlier days of Ottoman rule, the reigning sovereign, as is still the case in some parts of the East, held courts of justice and levees at the entrance of his residence. See “Harper‘s Magazine,” vol. iv. p. 333. The office of Daniel was, perhaps, not far different from that of the grand vizier of the Turkish government. See Murray‘s “Ency. Geog.” vol. ii. p. 202.

Remarks

Among the lessons of practical value suggested by this chapter, we may notice the following:

(1) We have an instance Daniel 2:1-3 of the methods which were resorted to in early periods of the world to ascertain what the future would be. This great monarch relied on a dream which greatly disturbed him, and on the power which he supposed was entrusted to men to interpret dreams. In common with the prevailing spirit of his times, and of all ancient times (notes, Daniel 2:1), he believed that dreams might be regarded as prognostics of future events; that they were under Divine direction; and that all that was necessary to make them safe guides in reference to what is to occur, was that they should be properly interpreted. In common, too, with all the people of ancient times, and with most of modern times, the king here referred to had an earnest desire to look into the future. There has been no desire in the human bosom stronger than this. We are so made that we wish to lift the mysterious veil which shrouds the future; to penetrate the deep darkness which rests on the unseen world.

Our great interests are there. The past is fixed, and cannot now affect us, except by the consequences of what we have done, and by teaching us lessons of value derived from our own observation, and that of others. But the future is not yet fixed. Man, so anxious to know what this is to be, finds himself in respect to it peculiarly unendowed. In relation to the past, he is endowed with the faculty of “memory,” but with nothing corresponding to this pertaining to “the future.” He can treasure up what has occurred, but he cannot in like manner make the future pass before his mind, that he may become wise by knowing what will take place in far distant times. There can be no doubt that God could have endowed the mind with one faculty as well as the other - for he has it himself - but there were obvious reasons why it should not be done. Destitute, then, as man was of this power, one

great object of human inquiry has been to see whether the deficiency could be supplied, and whether something might not be found which would be to the future substantially what the memory is to the past. The efforts and results on this subject - one of which we have in the chapter before us - constitute one of the most instructive chapters of the history of our race, and show how effectually God has bounded the limits of human investigation in this respect. Among those methods of attempting to penetrate the future, and of laying open its deep mysteries, may be noticed the following:

(a) Astrology. It was supposed that the stars might exert an influence over the fates of men, and that by observing their positions, conjunctions, and oppositions, it might be ascertained what would be the destiny of individuals and nations. The belief of this has manifested itself more or less in every age; and in such instances as in the word "lunacy," and in the common apprehensions about the influence of the moon on health and on vegetation, may be still seen traces of that belief. Even Lord Bacon held that "astrology was a science not to be "rejected," but reformed;" and in the early periods of the world it was a "fair" subject of investigation whether the heavenly bodies actually exerted such an influence, and whether, if it were so, it was possible to ascertain the laws by which this was done. This was the so-called science of astrology.

(b) Necromancy. The belief of this also prevailed in nearly all ancient nations, and we find frequent reference to it in the Scriptures. This consisted in the belief that the dead must be acquainted with the world where they now dwell, so dark to the living, and that it might be possible to make a covenant or compact with them, by which they would be induced to disclose what they knew. It was extensively, if not universally, believed that they re-appeared to men, and that it was not an uncommon occurrence for them to leave their abodes, and to visit the earth again. It was, therefore, not an unnatural and not an unfair subject of inquiry, whether they would not disclose to the more favored among mortals what they knew of the secrets of the invisible world, and what they knew of events which were to come. Compare the notes at Isaiah 8:19.

(c) The arts of divination. These were founded mainly on the investigations of science. It was at first a fair question whether, amidst the

wonders which science was unfolding to the view, it might not contribute to lift the veil from the future, and reveal what was yet to come. It took long to ascertain what were the legitimate aims of science, and what might be hoped for from it. Hence, it was directed to the inquiry whether some substance might not be found which would transmute all things to gold; whether some elixir might not be discovered which would arrest all disease, and give immortality to man; and whether science would not disclose some means by which the future could be penetrated, and the mysteries of the invisible world be laid open to the view. It required centuries of investigation, a thousand failures, and the results of long and patient thought, to ascertain what were the true objects of science, and to convince the world that it was not its legitimate purpose to reveal the future to man.

(d) Pagan oracles. It was an early inquiry whether God would not, in some way, lift the veil from the future and disclose its secrets to man. The belief that this would be done seems to be natural to the mind of man; and in all ages, and in all countries, he has supposed that; the future would be thus disclosed. Hence, among the pagan, certain persons claimed to be divinely inspired; hence, such shrines as that at Delphi became celebrated; hence, ambiguous responses were uttered, so expressed as to support the credit of the oracle, whatever might be the result; hence, men were appointed to observe the flights of birds, to inspect the entrails of animals offered in sacrifice, to interpret any unusual phenomena in the clouds, to mark the direction of meteors, and, in general, to examine any unusual appearances in the heavens or the earth, which would seem to furnish any clew by which the future might be known. Much of all this undoubtedly became mere imposture, and justified the remark of Cicero, that he wondered that one augur could meet another without laughing; but there can be no doubt that by many these inquiries were honestly pursued, and that at first all this seemed to be a legitimate subject of inquiry. What forbade man to pursue it? And who could tell but that in some such ways the secrets of the mysterious future could be found out? It demanded long and patient inquiry and observation to show that this could not be so, and that whatever might be indicated by any of these things, it was never designed that they should be the means by which man could be made acquainted with the mysteries of the invisible world.

(e) Dreams. We have seen (notes, Daniel 2:1) that it was an early article of belief that through the medium of dreams the Divine will might be made known, and the secrets of the future disclosed. The "theory" on this subject seems to have been, that during sleep the ordinary laws of the mind are suspended; that the soul is abstracted from the visible world; that the thoughts which it has then must be originated by higher beings; and that in this state it has converse with an invisible world, and may be permitted to see much of what is yet to occur. Compare Intro. to Isaiah, Section VII. (2).

(f) Visions. Men supposed that there might be representations made to certain favored persons respecting the future, their senses being closed to surrounding objects, and that while in an ecstasy, or trance, the mind might have a view of future events. Such were the visions of Balaam; such, in a remarkable manner, were the visions of the true prophets; and so deeply was the conviction that this "might" occur engrafted in the human mind, that the belief of it seems to have had a place among the pagan nations. Compare Introduction to Isaiah, Section 7. (4).

Such were some of the ways by which it was supposed that the future might be penetrated by man, and its secrets disclosed. By allowing man to make trial of these methods, and to pursue them through a period of several thousand years, until he himself saw that they were fruitless, God was preparing the race to feel the necessity of direct communications from himself, and to welcome the true reve lations which he would make respecting things to come.

(2) We have in the chapter before us Daniel 2:4-11 an instance of "the acknowledged failure" of a class of the wisest of men, whose lives were devoted to this employment, in their attempts to disclose the future. This is a fair illustration of all the attempts of the pagan, and it was doubtless permitted in order that it might be seen that all such attempts must fail. The magicians, astrologers, and Chaldeans were foiled in a case which fairly came within the province of their art, and when pretenders to this kind of knowledge ought to have been able to solve the difficulties of the monarch. Regarding this as a fair illustration of all the attempts of the pagan to penetrate the future, and to discover the great truths which it is desirable for

man to know, there are three observations which may be made in regard to it:

I. The trial has been a fair one.

(a) There was "time" enough allowed for it. It was about four thousand years from the creation of man to the time when the canon of Scripture was completed, and promulgated to the whole world, and it could not be said that man required a longer time to test the question whether he needed a revelation.

(b) The trial was a fair one, because it was one which men were at liberty to pursue to any extent, and which was conducted under the best advantages. It was confined to no country or favored class of men. In all lands, and with every advantage of climate, government, and laws, man has been engaged in the great inquiry; and if it be remembered what immense "numbers" of minds have been employed in these investigations, it cannot be pretended that the utmost desirable freedom has not been allowed to man to test the question whether "by searching he can find out God," and disclose the future.

(c) The same thing is true in respect to the "talent" which has been employed in this investigation. It is not too much to say, that the "highest" talent that the world has produced has been engaged in these inquiries, and that the rejecters of revelation cannot hope that higher powers can be brought to bear on it, or that the unaided human intellect can hope to accomplish more in this respect than has been done. The profoundest minds in Egypt and Chaldea were engaged in inquiries of this sort. The very highest talent which Greece produced in its best days was employed on questions of religion; in attempts to find out God, to ascertain the relations of man to him, and to determine what man was to be hereafter. What was true, also, of the ancient pagan, and of the modern pagan, that the best talent has been employed on these questions, is true also of the rejecters of revelation in Christian lands. Men of high powers of intellect have refused to acknowledge the Bible as a revelation, and have chosen to fall back on the unaided resources of their own minds. Aided with all that science and learning can do, they have inquired after a system of religion that would

commend itself to man as true, and as adapted to his wants; and it cannot be pretended that man in this respect has not had a fair opportunity to show what the human powers can do.

(d) The trial has been a fair one in regard to the field of investigation. Astrology, necromancy, abstruse natural science, oracles, dreams, visions, the observation of the course of events - all these have been open before man, and in one and all of them he has been allowed to pursue his investigations at pleasure.

II. There has been an entire "failure" in the attempt. The Chaldeans failed in Babylon, as the magicians had done in Egypt, to explain what was regarded as a prognostic of the future, and in both cases it was necessary to call in the aid of one who had a direct communication from heaven. The same has been the case in "all" attempts to explain the future, and to disclose what man was so desirous of knowing about the invisible world.

(a) All reliance on astrology, necromancy, oracles, dreams, and the revelations of the abstruser sciences, has failed. Astrology has ceased to be a science, and the stars are studied for other purposes than to disclose future events; necromancy has ceased to be a science - for no one now hopes to be able to make a compact with the dead, in virtue of which they will disclose the secrets of the invisible world; no one now would consult a pagan oracle with the hope of receiving a response to his inquiries that might be relied on: the abstruser sciences are pursued for other purposes; and no one would repose on dreams to furnish a system of truth which would meet the wants of man.

(b) The same thing has been true in regard to the various "systems of religion" on which men have relied. "It is true of the systems of the pagan." They have been tried in the most ample manner, and have shown that they do not meet the wants of man. The experiment has been fairly made, and the system is becoming worse and worse. It is not adapted to elevate man in the scale of being in regard to the present life; it does not remove the evils which press now upon the race; it does not disclose a certain way by which a sinner may be prepared for the life to come. "It is true in regard to an atonement for sin." The attempt has been made now for nearly six thousand

years, to find some way in which an efficacious sacrifice may be made for sin. Blood has been poured on thousands of altars; animals have been offered, and thousands of human beings have been devoted to the gods, but still there has been no evidence that these bloody offerings have been accepted, or that they have availed to expiate transgression. The experiment has failed. There is no new sacrifice that can be offered now, and it is hopeless for man to attempt to make expiation for his own sins. "The same thing is true of the systems of religion, proposed by infidelity." They are all failures. One system after another is abandoned, and no one is such as the race needs. The best talent that infidelity can hope to produce has been exhausted in this undertaking, for how can it hope to produce men better fitted to propose a system of religion to mankind than Shaftesbury, or Hobbes, or Tindal, or Herbert, or Voltaire, or Hume? Yet, after all that has been done by infidelity in modern times, an intelligent man would prefer trusting his eternal interests to such a system as Socrates would propose, to one proposed by Hume; he would feel safer under the guidance of Cicero or Seneca than under the direction of Voltaire or Gibbon.

III. The "reasons why God has permitted this trial to be made, in such a manner, and with such results, are obvious. In the cases which occurred in the time of Pharaoh in Egypt, and of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, the reason evidently was, that when there was an acknowledged failure of the power of the magicians, God might himself, through Joseph and Daniel, get honor to his own name. So the reasons why he has permitted this trial to be made on a large scale, and has suffered it everywhere to fail, are probably these two:

(1) to show to man, in such a way as to admit of no doubt, his need of revelation; and

(2) to induce him to prize the volume of revealed truth.

We should value it the more, and adhere to it the more firmly, in view of the experiment which has been made in all lands. If that revelation be rejected, man has no resource; he is wholly unable to penetrate the future; he can devise no way of making atonement for sin; he can originate no system that shall alleviate the sorrows under which we groan, or disclose the prospect of happiness beyond the tomb. For if the Bible is taken away, on what shall we fall back to guide us? - on astrology; on necromancy; on pagan oracles and sacrifices; on dreams; on the ravings of priestesses at

pagan shrines, or the speculations of infidelity in Christian lands? All these have been tried in vain. The Bible is the only guide on which man can rely to conduct him to heaven: if that fails, all fails, and man is in the midst of impenetrable night.

(3) We may learn from this chapter Daniel 2:12-19, that in the perplexities and trials which arise in life, a good man may appeal to God for guidance and help. So Daniel felt, when all human power had failed in complying with the demands of a stern and arbitrary monarch. and when he and his friends, though innocent, were about to be involved in the sweeping sentence which had been issued against the wise men of Babylon. Then it was clear that nothing could save them but Divine interposition; nothing could avert the stroke but such a heavenly influence as would disclose the secret, and thus avert the wrath of the king. In this emergency Daniel felt that he "might" call upon God, and to this service he summoned also his three friends, who were equally interested with him in the issue. In view of this we may observe:

I. That "all" good men are liable to meet with similar perplexities and embarrassments; to be placed in circumstances where nothing but the interposition of God can help them. This is true in such respects as the following:

(a) In reference to the knowledge of the truth. The mind is often perplexed on the subject of religion: reason fails to disclose those truths which it is desirable to know; darkness and obscurity seem to envelope the whole subject; the soul, oppressed with a sense of conscious guilt, seeks to find some way of peace; the heart, entangled in the meshes of unbelief, struggles and pants to be free, and there is no human help - nothing this side the eternal throne on which reliance can be placed to impart the light which is needed.

(b) In reference to duty. The mind is often perplexed to know what should be done. Though desirous of doing what is right, yet there may be so many conflicting views; there may be such doubt as to what is best and right, that none but God can direct in such an emergency.

(c) In cases of peril. Daniel and his friends were in danger; and men are often now in such danger that they feel that none but God can save them. On a bed of pain, in a stranded vessel, in a burning house, men often feel that human help is powerless, and that aid can be found in none but God. Thus the church, in the dark days of persecution, has often been so encompassed with dangers, that it could not but feel that none but God could avert the impending destruction.

(d) In times when religion declines, and when iniquity abounds. Then the church often is led to feel that there is need of the aid of God, and that none but he can rouse it from its deathlike slumbers, and put back the swelling waves of iniquity.

II. In such circumstances it is the privilege of a good man to appeal to God, with the hope that he will interpose.

(1) This was felt by Daniel, and it is an undoubted truth, as revealed in the Bible, that in such circumstances, if we will look to God, we may hope for his guidance and help. Compare 2 Kings 19:14-15; Job 16:19-21; Psalm 25:9; Psalm 46:1, following; Psalm 55:22; James 1:5-6. But

(2) what kind of interposition and direction may "we" hope for in such perplexities? I answer:

(a) We may expect the Divine direction by a careful study of the principles laid down in the Scriptures. The Bible indeed does not, for it could not, mention the names of individuals, or specify every case which would occur in which Divine direction would be needed, but it lays down great principles of truth, applicable to all the circumstances which will ever arise. In this respect there is a wonderful richness and fulness in the Word of God. There is many a rich vein of truth which seems never to have been worked until we are placed in some new and untried situation. When one is thrown into perplexing circumstances; when he is called to pass through trials; when he meets some powerful form of temptation, he is surprised to find how much there is in the Bible adapted to such circumstances that he never saw there before. It seems to be a new book, written to meet just such cases; nor in such circumstances does he ever consult its pages in vain.

(b) We may expect direction by his providence. The sparrow falls not to the ground without his direction, and all events are under his control, and as these events occur they may be regarded as so many indications of his will. One of the most interesting and profitable employments in a man‘s life is to study the indications of Providence in regard to himself, and to endeavor to learn, from what is daily occurring to him, what is the will of God in regard to him. A careful and prayerful observer of the intimations of the Divine will is not in serious danger of error.

(c) God guides those who are in perplexity by his Spirit. There is a secret and silent influence on the mind of him who is desirous of being led in the way of duty, suggesting what is true, delivering the mind from prejudice, overcoming opposition to the truth, disposing the heart to charity, peace, and love, prompting to the performance of duty, and gradually elevating the soul to God. If a man would pray when he feels an inward prompting to pray; would read the Bible when some inward voice seems to call him to do it; would do good when the inward monitor urges him to do it; would fix the eye and the heart on heaven when something within seems to lead him toward the skies, he would not be in much danger of error. Such are “spring-times of piety in the soul” - times when the soul may make rapid progress in the knowledge of the truth, and it is not enthusiasm to say that such states of mind are produced by an influence from above.

(4) In view of this chapter Daniel 2:17-18, we may observe that it is a privilege to have praying friends - friends on whom we can call to unite with us in prayer in the time of trouble. So Daniel found it when he called on his friends to pray; so Esther found it when her whole people were in danger, and when all depended on her successful application to the sovereign Esther 4:16, and so the friends of God have found it in all ages. If prayer is heard at all, there are special reasons why it should prevail when many are united in the request. Compare Matthew 18:19. Hence, the propriety of worship in the family; hence, the fitness of prayermeetings; and hence, the appropriateness of prayer offered in the great congregation.

(5) God should be praised and acknowledged as having supremacy over all things, Daniel 2:20-23. Particularly he should be acknowledged

(a) in the changes that occur on earth; in the changes from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood, and to old age; in the beautiful changes of the seasons, and in all the variety which the seasons bring with them; in the changes from sickness to health, from poverty to affluence, from oppression and slavery to freedom, from an humble to an exalted condition; in all the revolutions of empire, and the changes of dynasties.

(b) He should be acknowledged in his supremacy over the kings and rulers of the earth. Every monarch reigns by his permission, and every one is designed to accomplish some great purpose in the development of his plans. If a full and correct history of the world could be written, it would be found that God had some object to accomplish by the instrumentality of everyone whom he has called to a throne, and that as we can now see a distinct design to be accomplished by the reign of Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Cyrus, and Augustus, so we could find some distinct design in reference to every one who has ever reigned.

(c) He should be recognized as the source of all knowledge. Particularly

(1) he originally endowed every mind, and gave it the capacity which it has for acquiring knowledge;

(2) he preserves the faculties of the mind, and gives them their just balance;

(3) he makes the intellect clear and bright, and when it applies itself to the investigation of truth he only can preserve it unclouded;

(4) he makes, under the operation of the regular laws of intellect, important suggestions to the mind - those pregnant hints containing so much “the seeds of things” on which all true progress in knowledge depends - those bright thoughts, those happy conceptions, which come into the soul, and which result in such happy inventions, and such advances in science, art, literature, and law; and

(5) he should be regarded as the original source of those "inventions" which contribute so much to the progress of the race. At the proper time, and the best time, when some new and wonderful discovery is to burst upon the world, he raises up the individual who is to make it, and the discovery takes its place as one of the fixed points of progress, and society, with that as a treasure never to be lost, moves forward on a higher elevation, with greatly accelerated progress. So it was with the invention of alphabetical writing; the art of printing; the application of steam to purposes of manufacture and navigation; the telescope, and the telegraph; and, in general, in respect to all those great inventions which have contributed to the progress of society. If the whole truth were known, it would be seen that the hand of God was in these things as really as in the "revelation of the deep and secret things to Daniel."

(6) We may learn from this chapter, as was remarked in the notes at Daniel 2:30, that for all our attainments in knowledge and wisdom we should ascribe the praise to God alone. In illustration of this we may remark:

I. That there is a strong native tendency in man to ascribe the honor of such attainments to himself. It is one of the most difficult of all things to induce man to attribute the praise of whatever excellence he may have. or whatever attainments he may make, to his Creator. This exists universally in regard to talent, rank, and scientific attainments; and it is even hard for a heart that is endowed with true religion to free itself altogether from self-glorying, as if it were all to be traced to ourselves.

II. Yet in our case, as in the case of Daniel, all the honor should be ascribed to God. For

(1) it is to him we owe all our original endowments of mind and of body, whatever they may be. In this respect we are as he chose to make us. We have no natural endowment - whether of beauty, strength, genius, aptness for learning, or advantages for distinction in science which he did not confer on us, and which he could not as easily have withheld from us as he did from those less favored. And why should we be proud of these things? Shall the oak of Bashan be proud of its far-spreading arms, or its strength?

Shall the cedar of Lebanon be proud of its height, and its vastness, and its beauty? Shall the rose be proud of its beauty or its sweetness, or shall the magnolia boast of its fragrance?

(2) God has conferred on us all the means of education which we have enjoyed, and all to which the development ot our natural powers can be traced. He has preserved our reason; he has furnished us instructors; he has provided the books which we have read; he has continued to us the possession of the health which we have enjoyed. At any moment he could have driven reason from the throne; he could have deprived us of health; he could have summoned us away.

(3) It is equally owing to him that we have been favored with any success in the prosecution of our calling in life. Let the merchant who has accumulated great property, apparently by his own industry, suppose that all Divine agency and influence in his case had been withheld, and whatever labor he may have expended, or with whatever skill he may be endowed, he could have met with no such success. Let him reflect how much he owes to favoring gales on the ocean; to the seasons producing abundant harvests, and to what seems almost to be "chance" or "fortune," and he will see at once that whatever success he may have been favored with is to be traced, in an eminent sense, to God. The same thing is true of all the other successful departments of human effort.

(4) This is equally true of all the knowledge which we have of the way of salvation, and all our hopes of eternal life. It is a great principle of religion that we have nothing which we have not received, and that if we have received it, we should not glory as if we had not received it, for it is God who makes us to differ (see 1 Corinthians 4:7). It is God who originally gave us the volume of revealed truth - making us differ from the whole pagan world. It is God who awakened us to see our guilt and danger, making us to differ from the gay and careless world around us. It is God alone who has pardoned our sins, making us to differ from the multitude who are unpardoned in the world. It is God who has given us every hope that we cherish that is well-founded, and all the peace and joy which we have had in com munion with himself. For these things, therefore, we

should give all the praise to God; and in our case, as in that of Daniel, it is one of the evidences of our piety when we are disposed to do so.

(7) We have in this chapter Daniel 2:46-47 an instructive instance of the extent to which an irreligious man may go in showing respect for God. It can. not be supposed that Nebuchadnezzar was a truly pious man. His characteristics and actions, both before and after this, were those of a pagan, and there is no evidence that he was truly converted to God. Yet he evinced the highest respect for one who was a servant and prophet of the Most High Daniel 2:46, and even for God himself Daniel 2:47. This was evinced in a still more remarkable manner at a subsequent period Daniel 2:49, that when we are favored with prosperity and honor we should not neglect, or be ashamed of, the companions of our earlier days, and the partakers of our fortune when we were poor and unknown. Joseph, when exalted to the premiership of Egypt, was not ashamed of his aged father, but, though he had been an humble shepherd, presented him, with the deepest feelings of respect toward an aged parent, to Pharaoh; nor was he ashamed of his brethren, though they had done him so much wrong. Daniel, when in a similar manner advanced to the most honorable post which one could reach, in the most magnificent monarchy of the world, was not ashamed of the youthful friends with whom he had shared the humble and severe lot of bondage. So we, if we are made rich; if we are raised to honor; if we become distinguished for learning or talent; if our names are known abroad, or we are entrusted with a high and honorable office, should not forget the friends and companions of our earlier years.

DANIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

Section I. - Authenticity of the Chapter

The objections which have been urged against the authenticity of this chapter are much more numerous than those which have been alleged against the two previous chapters.

I. The first which deserves to be noticed is stated by De Wette (p. 383, under the general head of "improbabilities" in the chapter), and Bleek, p. 268, as quoted by Hengstenberg, "die Authentie des Daniel," p. 83. The objection is, substantially, that if the account in this chapter is true, it would prove that the Chaldeans were inclined to persecution on account of religious opinions, which, it is said, is contrary to their whole character as elsewhere shown. So far as we have any information in regard to them, it is alleged, they were far from having this character, and it is not probable, therefore, that Nebuchadnezzar would make a law which would compel the worship of an idol under severe pains and penalties.

To this objection the following reply may be made:

(1) Little is known, on any supposition, of the Chaldeans in general, and little of the character of Nebuchadnezzar in particular, beyond what we find in the book of Daniel. So far, however, as we have any knowledge of either from any source, there is no inconsistency between that and what is said in this chapter to have occurred. It is probable that no one ever perceived any incongruity of this kind in the book itself, nor, if this were all, should we suppose that there was any improbability in the account in this chapter.

(2) There is properly no account of "persecution" in this narrative, nor any reason to suppose that Nebuchadnezzar designed any such thing. This is admitted by Bertholdt himself (p. 261), and is manifest on the face of the whole narrative. It is indeed stated that Nebuchadnezzar demanded, on severe penalties, a recognition of the god that he worshipped, and required that the reverence should be shown to that god which he thought to be his due. It is true, also, that the monarch intended to be obeyed in what seems to us to be a very arbitrary and unreasonable command, that they should assemble and fall down and worship the image which he had set up. But

this does not imply any disposition to persecute on account of religion, or to prevent in others the free exercise of their own religious opinions, or the worship of their own gods. It is well known that it was a doctrine of all ancient idolaters, that respect might be shown to foreign gods - to the gods of other people - without in the least degree implying a want of respect for their own gods, or violating any of their obligations to them.

The universal maxim was, that the gods of all nations were to be respected, and hence, foreign gods might be introduced for worship, and respect paid to them without in any degree detracting from the honor which was due to their own. Nebuchadnezzar, therefore, simply demanded that homage should be shown to the idol that "he" had erected; that the god whom "he" worshipped should be acknowledged as a god; and that respect should thus be shown to himself, and to the laws of his empire, by acknowledging "his" god, and rendering to that god the degree of homage which was his due. But it is nowhere intimated that he regarded his idol as the "only" true god, or that he demanded that he should be recognized as such, or that he was not willing that all other gods, in their place, should be honored. There is no intimation, therefore, that he meant to "persecute" any other men for worshipping their own gods, nor is there any reason to suppose that he apprehended that there would be any scruples on religious grounds about acknowledging the image that he set up to be worthy of adoration and praise.

(3) There is no reason to think that he was so well acquainted with the peculiar character of the Hebrew religion as to suppose that its votaries would have any difficulty on this subject, or would hesitate to unite with others in adoring his image. He knew, indeed, that they were worshippers of Jehovah; that they had reared a magnificent temple to his honor in Jerusalem, and that they professed to keep his laws. But there is no reason to believe that he was very intimately acquainted with the laws and institutions of the Hebrews, or that he supposed that they would have any difficulty in doing what was universally understood to be proper - to show due respect to the gods of other nations. Certainly, if he had intimately known the history of a considerable portion of the Hebrew people, and been acquainted with their proneness to fall into idolatry, he would have seen little to make him doubt that they would readily comply with a command to

show respect to the gods worshipped in other lands. There is no reason, therefore, to suppose that he anticipated that the Hebrew exiles, anymore than any other people, would hesitate to show to his image the homage which he required.

(4) The whole account agrees well with the character of Nebuchadnezzar. He was an arbitrary monarch. He was accustomed to implicit obedience. He was determined in his character, and resolute in his purposes. Having once formed the resolution to erect such a magnificent image of his god - one that would correspond with the greatness of his capital, and, at the same time, show his respect for the god that he worshipped - nothing was more natural than that he should issue such a proclamation that homage should be shown to it by all his subjects, and that, in order to secure this, he should issue this decree, that whoever did "not" do it should be punished in the severest manner. There is no reason to suppose that he had any particular class of persons in his eye, or, indeed, that he anticipated that the order would be disobeyed by "any" class of persons. In fact, we see in this whole transaction just one illustration of what usually occurred under the arbitrary despotisms of the East, where, "whatever" is the order that is issued from the throne, universal and absolute submission is demanded, under the threatening of a speedy and fearful punishment. The order of Nebuchadnezzar was not more arbitrary and unreasonable than those which have been frequently issued by the Turkish sultan.

II. A second objection to the chapter is the account of the musical instruments in Daniel 3:5. The objection is, that to some of these instruments "Grecian" names are given, and that this proves that the transaction must have a later date than is attributed to it, or that the account must have been written by one of later times. The objection is, that the whole statement seems to have been derived from the account of some Greek procession in honor of the gods of Greece. See Bleek, p. 259.

To this objection, it may be replied:

(a) that such processions in honor of the gods, or such assemblages, accompanied with musical instruments, were, and are, common among all

people. They occur constantly in the East, and it cannot, with any propriety, be said that one is borrowed from another.

(b) A large part of these instruments have undoubtedly Chaldee names given to them, and the names are such as we may suppose that one living in the times of Nebuchadnezzar would give them. See the notes at Daniel 3:5.

(c) As to those which are alleged to indicate a Greek origin, it may be observed, that it is quite uncertain whether the origin of the name was Greek or Chaldee. That such names are found given to instruments of music by the Greeks is certain; but it is not certain from where they obtained the name. For anything that can be proved to the contrary, the name may have had an Eastern origin. It is altogether probable that many of the names of things among the Greeks had such an origin; and if the instrument of music itself - as no one can prove it did not - came in from the East, the "name" came also from the East.

(d) It may be further stated, that, even on the supposition that the name had its origin in Greece, there is no absolute certainty that the name and the instrument were unknown to the Chaldeans. Who can prove that some Chaldean may not have been in Greece, and may not have borne back to his own country some instrument of music that he found there different from those which he had been accustomed to at home, or that he may not have constructed an instrument resembling one which he had seen there, and given it the same name? Or who can prove that some strolling Greek musician may not have traveled as far as Babylon - for the Greeks traveled everywhere - and carried with him some instrument of music before unknown to the Chaldeans, and imparted to them at the same time the knowledge of the instrument and the name? But until this is shown the objection has no force.

III. A third objection is, that the statement in Daniel 3:22, that the persons appointed to execute the orders of the king died from the heat of the furnace, or that the king issued an order, to execute which perilled the lives of the innocent who were entrusted with its execution, is improbable.

To this it may be said

(a) that there is no evidence or affirmation that the king contemplated "their" danger, or designed to peril their lives; but it is undoubtedly a fact that he was intent on the execution of his own order, and that he little regarded the peril of those who executed it. And nothing is more probable than this; and, indeed, nothing more common. A general who orders a company of men to silence or take a battery has no malice against them, and no design on their lives; but he is intent on the accomplishment of the object, whatever may be the peril of the men, or however large a portion of them may fall. In fact, the objection which is here made to the credibility of this narrative is an objection which would lie with equal force against most of the orders issued in battle, and not a few of the commands issued by arbitrary monarchs in time of peace. The fact in this case was, the king was intent on the execution of his purpose - the punishment of the refractory and stubborn men who had resisted his commands, and there is no probability that, in the excitements of wrath, he would pause to inquire whether the execution of his purpose would endanger the lives of those who were entrusted with the execution of the order or not.

(b) There is every probability that the heat "would" be so great as to peril the lives of those who should approach it. It is said to have been made seven times hotter than usual Daniel 3:19; that is, as hot as it could be made, and, if this were so, it is by no means an unreasonable supposition that those who were compelled to approach it so near as to cast others in should be in danger.

IV. A fourth objection, urged by Griesinger, p. 41, as quoted by Hengstenberg, "Authentie des Daniel," p. 92, is, that "as Nebuchadnezzar had the furnace already prepared ready to throw these men in, he must have known beforehand that they would not comply with his demand, and so must have designed to punish them; or that this representation is a mere fiction of the writer, to make the delivery of these men appear more marvelous."

To this it may be replied,

(a) that there is not the slightest evidence, from the account in Daniel, that Nebuchadnezzar had the furnace prepared beforehand, as if it were expected that some would disobey, and as if he meant to show his wrath. He indeed Daniel 3:6 threatens this punishment, but it is clear, from Daniel 3:19, that the furnace was not yet heated up, and that the occasion of its being heated in such a manner was the unexpected refusal of these three men to obey him.

(b) But if it should be admitted that there was a furnace thus glowing - heated with a view to punish offbnders - it would not be contrary to what sometimes occurs in the East under a despotism. Sir John Chardin (Voy. en Perse. iv. p. 276) mentions in his time (in the seventeenth century) a case similar to this. He says that during a whole month, in a time of great scarcity, an oven was kept heated to throw in all persons who had failed to comply with the laws in regard to taxation, and had thus defrauded the government. This was, in fact, strictly in accordance with the character of Oriental despotism. We know, moreover, from Jeremiah 29:22, that this mode of punishment was not unknown in Babylon, and it would seem probable that it was not uncommon in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Thus Jeremiah says, "And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire."

V. A fifth objection is stated thus by Bertholdt: "Why did the wonders recorded in this chapter take place? It was only for this purpose that Nebuchadnezzar might be made to appear to give praise to God, that he is represented as giving commandment that no one should reproach him. But this object is too small to justify such an array of means." To this it may be replied,

(a) that it does not appear from the chapter that this was the "object" aimed at.

(b) There were other designs in the narrative beside this. They were to show the firmness of the men who refused to worship an idol-god; to illustrate their conscientious adherence to their religion; to show their confidence in the Divine protection; to prove that God will defend those

who put their trust in him, and that he can deliver them even in the midst of the flames. These things were worthy of record.

VI. It has been objected that "the expression in which Nebuchadnezzar Daniel 3:28 is represented as breaking out, after the rescue of the three men, is altogether contrary to his dignity, and to the respect for the religion of his fathers and of his country, which he was bound to defend." - Bertholdt, p. 253. But to this it may be replied,

(a) that if this scene actually occurred before the eyes of the king - if God had thus miraculously interposed in delivering his servants in this wonderful manner from the heated furnace, nothing would be more natural than this. It was a manifest miracle, a direct interposition of God, a deliverance of the professed friends of Jehovah by a power that was above all that was human, and an expression of surprise and achniration was in every way proper on such an occasion.

(b) It accorded with all the prevailing notions of religion, and of the respect due to the gods, to say this. As above remarked, it was a principle recognized among the pagan to honor the gods of other nations, and if they had interposed to defend their own votaries, it was no more than was admitted in all the nations of idolatry. If, therefore, Jehovah had interposed to save his own friends and worshippers, every principle which Nebuchadnezzar held on the subject would make it proper for him to acknowledge the fact, and to say that honor was due to him for his interposition. In this, moreover, Nebuchadnezzar would be understood as saying nothing derogatory to the gods that he himself worshipped, or to those adored in his own land. All that is "necessary" to be supposed in what he said is, that he now felt that Jehovah, the God whom the Hebrews adored, had shown that he was worthy to be ranked among the gods, and that in common with others, he had power to protect his own friends.

To this it may be added

(c) that, in his way, Nebuchadnezzar everywhere showed that he was a "religious" man: that is, that he recognized the gods, and was ever ready to acknowledge their interference in human affairs, and to render them the

honor which was their due. Indeed, this whole affair grew out of his respect for "religion," and what here occurred was only in accordance with his general principle. that when any God had shown that he had power to deliver his people, he should be acknowledged, and that no words of reproach should be uttered against hhn Daniel 3:29.

VII. A more plausible objection than those which have just been noticed is urged by Luderwald, Jahn, Dereser, in regard to the account which is given of the image which Nebuchadnezzar is said to have erected. This objection has reference to the "size" of the image, to its proportions, and to the material of which it is said to have been composed. This objection, as stated by Bertholdt (p. 256), is substantially the following: "That the image had probably a human form, and yet that the proportions of the human figure are by no means observed - the height being represented to have been sixty cubits, and its breadth six cubits - or its height being to its breadth as ten to one, whereas the proportion of a man is only six to one; that the amount of gold in such an image is incredible, being beyond any means which the king of Babylon could have possessed; and that probably the image here referred to was one that Herodotus says he saw in the temple of Belus at Babylon (I. 183), and which Diodorus Siculus describes (II. 9), and which was only forty feet in height." See the notes at Daniel 3:1. In regard to this objection, we may observe, then -

(a) That there is no certainty that this was the same image which is referred to by Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus. That image was "in" the temple; this was erected on the "plain of Dura." See the notes at Daniel 3:1. But, so far as appears, this may have been erected for a temporary purpose, and the materials may then have been employed for other purposes; that in the temple was permanent.

(b) As to the amount of gold in the image - it is not said or implied that it was of solid gold. It is well known that the images of the gods were made of wood or clay, and overlaid with gold or silver, and this is all that is necessarily implied here. See the notes at Daniel 3:1.

(c) The "height" of the alleged image can be no real objection to the statement. It is not necessary to assume that it had the human form - though

that is probable - but if that be admitted, there can be no objection to the supposition that, either standing by itself, or raised on a pedestal, it may have been as lofty as the statement here implies. The colossal figure at Rhodes was an hundred and five Grecian feet in height, and being made to stride the mouth of the harbor, was a work of much more difficult construction than this figure would have been.

(d) As to the alleged "disproportion" in the figure of the image, see the notes at Daniel 3:1. To what is there said may be added:

(1) It is not necessary to suppose that it had the human form. Nothing of this kind is affirmed, though it may be regarded as probable. But if it had not, of course the objection would have no force.

(2) If it had the human form, it is by no means clear whether it had a sitting or a standing posture. Nothing is said on this point in regard to the image or statue, and until this is determined, nothing can be said properly respecting the proportions.

(3) It is not said whether it stood by itself, or whether it rested on a basis or pediment - and until this is determined, no objections can be valid as to the proportion of the statue. It is every way probable that the image was reared on a lofty pedestal, and for anything that appears, the proportions of the "image itself," whether sitting or standing, may have been well preserved.

(4) But in addition to this it should be said, that if the account here is to be taken literally as stating that the image was ten times as high as it was broad - thus failing to observe the proper human proportions - the account would not be incredible. It is admitted by Gesenius (Ency. vonr Ersch und Gruber, art. Babylon, Thes vii. p. 24), that the Babylonians had no correct taste in these matters. "The ruins," says he, "are imposing by their colossal greatness, not by their beauty; all the ornaments are rough and barbarian." The Babylonians, indeed, possessed a taste for the colossal, the grand, the imposing, but they also had a taste for the monstrous and the prodigious, and a mere want of "proportion" is not a sufficient argument to prove that what is stated here did not occur.

VIII. But one other objection remains to be noticed. It is one which is noticed by Bertholdt (pp. 251,252), that, if this is a true account, it is strange that "Daniel" himself is not referred to; that if he was, according to the representation in the last chapter, a high officer at court, it is unaccountable that he is not mentioned as concerned in these affairs, and especially that he did not interpose in behalf of his three friends to save them. To this objection it is sufficient to reply

(a) that, as Bertholdt himself (p. 287) suggests, Daniel may have been absent from the capital at this time on some business of state, and consequently the question whether "he" would worship the image may not have been tested. It is probable, from the nature of the case, that he would be employed on such embasies or be sent to some other part of the empire from time to time, to arrange the affairs of the provinces, and no one can demonstrate that he was not absent on this occasion. Indeed, the fact that he is not mentioned at all in the transaction would serve to imply this; since, if he were at court, it is to be presumed that he himself would have been implicated as well as his three friends. Compare Daniel 2:49, and being foreigners, the people under them may have gladly seized the occasion to complain of them to the king. But so little is known of the circumstances, that it is not possible to determine the matter with certainty. All that needs to be said is, that the fact that Daniel was not implicated in the affair is no proof that the three persons referred to were not; that it is no evidence that what is said of "them" is not true because nothing is said of Daniel."

Section II. - Analysis of the Chapter

This chapter, which is complete in itself, or which embraces the entire narrative relating to an important transaction, contains the account of a magnificent brazen image erected by Nebuchadnezzr, and the reslilt of attempting to constrain the conscientious Hebrews to worship it. The narrative comprises the following points:

I. The erection of the great image in the plain of Dura, Daniel 3:1.

II. The dedication of the image in the presence of the great princes and governors of the provinces, the high officers of state, and an immense multitude of the people, accompanied with solemn music, Daniel 3:2-7.

III. The complaint of certain Chaldeans respecting the Jews, that they refused to render homage to the image, reminding the king that he had solemnly enjoined this on all persons, on penalty of being cast into a burning furnace in case of disobedience, Daniel 3:8-12. This charge was brought particularly against Shadtach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Daniel escaped the accusation, for reasons which will be stated in the notes at Daniel 3:12. The common people of the Jews also escaped, as the command extended particularly to the rulers.

IV. The manner in which Nebuchadnezzar received this accusation, Daniel 3:13-15. He was filled with rage; he summoned the accused into his presence; he commanded them to prostrate themselves before the image on penalty of being cast at once into the fiery furnace.

V. The noble answer of the accused, Daniel 3:16-18. They stated to the king that his threat did not alarm them, and that they felt no solicitude to answer him in regard to the matter Daniel 3:16; that they were assured that the God whom they served was able to deliver them from the furnace, and from the wrath of the king Daniel 3:17; but that even if he did not, whatever might be the issue, they could not serve the gods of the Chaldeans, nor worship the image which the king had set up.

VI. The infliction of the threatened punishment, Daniel 3:19-23. The furnace was commanded to be heated seven times hotter than usual; they were bound and thrown in with their usual apparel on; and the hot blast of the furnace destroyed the men who were employed to perform this service.

VII. Their protection and preservation, Daniel 3:24-27. The astonished monarch who had commanded three men to be cast in “bound,” saw four men walking in the midst of the flames “loose;” and satisfied now they had a Divine Protector, awed by the miracle, and doubtless dreading the wrath of the Divine Being that had become their protector, he commanded them suddenly to come out. The princes, and governors, and captains were gathered together, and these men, thus remarkably preserved, appeared before them uninjured.

VIII. The effect on the king, Daniel 3:28-30. As in the case when Daniel had interpreted his dream Daniel 3:28. He issued a solemn command that the God who had done this should be honored, for that no other God could deliver in this manner, Daniel 3:29. He again restored them to their honorable command over the provinces, Daniel 3:30.

Verse 1

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold - The time when he did this is not mentioned; nor is it stated in whose honor, or for what design, this colossal image was erected. In the Greek and Arabic translationns, this is said to have occurred in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. This is not, however, in the original text, nor is it known on what authority it is asserted. Dean Prideaux (Consex. I. 222) supposes that it was at first some marginal comment on the Greek version that at last crept into the text, and that there was probably some good authority for it. If this is the correct account of the time, the event here recorded occurred 587 b.c., or, according to the chronology of Prideaux, about nineteen years after the transaction recorded in the previous chapter. Hales makes the chronology somewhat different, though not essentially. According to him, Daniel was carried to Babylon 586 b.c., and the image was set up 569 b.c., making an interval from the time that he was carried to Babylon of seventeen years; and if the dream Daniel 2:46-47, seems to have been entirely effaced. The two chapters, in order that the right impression may be received on this point, should be read with the recollection that such an interval had elapsed. At the time when the event here recorded is supposed by Prideaux to have occurred, Nebuchadnezzar had just returned from finishing the Jewish war.

From the spoils which he had taken in that expedition in Syria and Palestine, he had the means in abundance of rearing such a colossal statue; and at the close of these conquests, nothing would be more natural than that he should wish to rear in his capital some splendid work of art that would signalize his reign, record the memory of his conquests, and add to the magnificence of the city. The word which is here rendered "image" (Chaldee צלם *tselēm* - Greek εἰκόνα *eikona*), in the usual form in the Hebrew, means a shade, shadow; then what shadows forth anything; then an image of anything, and then an "idol," as representing the deity worshipped. It is not necessary to suppose that it was of solid gold, for the amount required for such a structure would have been immense, and probably

beyond the means even of Nebuchadnezzar. The presumption is, that it was merely covered over with plates of gold, for this was the usual manner in which statues erected in honor of the gods were made. See Isaiah 40:19.

It is not known in honor of whom this statue was erected. Grotius supposed that it was reared to the memory of Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, and observes that it was customary to erect statues in this manner in honor of parents. Prideaux, Hales, the editor of the "Pict. Bible," and most others, suppose that it was in honor of Bel, the principal deity worshipped in Babylon. See the notes at Isaiah 46:1. Some have supposed that it was in honor of Nebuchadnezzar himself, and that he purposed by it to be worshipped as a god. But this opinion has little probability in its favor. The opinion that it was in honor of Bel, the principal deity of the place, is every way the most probable, and this derives some confirmation from the well-known fact that a magnificent image of this kind was, at some period of his reign, erected by Nebuchadnezzar in honor of this god, in a style to correspond with the magnificence of the city.

The account of this given by Herodotus is the following: "The temple of Jupiter Belus, whose huge gates of brass may still be seen, is a square building, each side of which is two furlongs. In the midst rises a tower, of the solid depth and height of one furlong; upon which, resting as upon a base, seven other lesser towers are built in regular succession. The ascent is on the outside; which, winding from the ground, is continued to the highest tower; and in the middle of the whole structure there is a convenient resting place. In the last tower is a large chapel, in which is placed a couch, magnificently adorned, and near it a table of solid gold; but there is no statue in the place. In this temple there is also a small chapel, lower in the building, which contains a figure of Jupiter, in a sitting posture, with a large table before him; these, with the base of the table, and the seat of the throne, are all of the purest gold, and are estimated by the Chaldeans to be worth eight hundred talents.

On the outside of this chapel there are two altars; one is gold, the other is of immense size, and appropriated to the sacrifice of full-grown animals; those only which have not yet left their dams may be offered on the golden altar. On the larger altar, at the anniversary festival in honor of their god, the

Chaldeans regularly consume incense to the amount of a thousand talents. There was formerly in this temple a statue of solid gold twelve cubits high; this, however, I mention from the information of the Chaldeans, and not from my own knowledge." - Clio, 183. Diodorus Siculus, a much later writer, speaks to this effect: "Of the tower of Jupiter Belus, the historians who have spoken have given different descriptions; and this temple being now entirely destroyed, we cannot speak accurately respecting it. It was excessively high; constructed throughout with great care; built of brick and bitumen. Semiramis placed on the top of it three statues of massy gold, of Jupiter, Juno, and Rhea. Jupiter was erect, in the attitude of a man walking; he was forty feet in height; and weighed a thousand Babylonian talents: Rhea, who sat in a chariot of gold, was of the same weight. Juno, who stood upright, weighed eight hundred talents." - B. ii.

The temple of Bel or Belus, in Babylon, stood until the time of Xerxes; but on his return from the Grecian expedition, he demolished the whole of it, and laid it in rubbish, having first plundered it of its immense riches. Among the spoils which he took from the temple, are mentioned several images and statues of massive gold, and among them the one mentioned by Diodorus Siculus, as being forty feet high. See Strabo, lib. 16, p. 738; Herodotus, lib. 1; Arrian "de Expe. Alex." lib. 7, quoted by Prideaux I. 240. It is not very probable that the image which Xerxes removed was the same which Nebuchadnezzar reared in the plain of Dura - compare the Introduction to this chapter, Section I. VII. (a); but the fact that such a colossal statue was found in Babylon may be adduced as one incidental corroboration of the probability of the statement here. It is not impossible that Nebuchadnezzar was led, as the editor of Calmet's "Dictionary" has remarked (Taylor, vol. iii. p. 194), to the construction of this image by what he had seen in Egypt. He had conquered and ravaged Egypt but a few years before this, and had doubtless been struck with the wonders of art which he had seen there.

Colossal statues in honor of the gods abounded, and nothing would be more natural than that Nebuchadnezzar should wish to make his capital rival everything which he had seen in Thebes. Nor is it improbable that, while he sought to make his image more magnificent and costly than even those in Egypt were, the views of sculpture would be about the same, and

the “figure” of the statue might be borrowed from what had been seen in Egypt. See the statues of the two celebrated colossal figures of Amunoph III standing in the plains of Goorneh, Thebes, one of which is known as the Vocal Memnon. These colossi, exclusive of the pedestals (partially buried), are forty-seven feet high, and eighteen feet three inches wide across the shoulders, and according to Wilkinson are each of one single block, and contain about 11,500 cubic feet of stone. They are made of a stone not known within several days‘ journey of the place where they are erected. Calmet refers to these statues, quoting from Norden.

Whose height was threescore cubits - Prideaux and others have been greatly perplexed at the “proportions” of the image here represented. Prideaux says on the subject (Connections, I. 240,241), “Nebuchadnezzars golden image is said indeed in Scripture to have been sixty cubits, that is, ninety feet high; but this must be understood of the image and pedestal both together, for that image being said to be but six cubits broad or thick, it is impossible that the image would have been sixty cubits high; for that makes its height to be ten times its breadth or thickness, which exceeds all the proportions of a man, no man‘s height being above six times his thickness, measuring the slenderest man living at the waist. But where the breadth of this image was measured is not said; perchance it was from shoulder to shoulder; and then the proportion of six cubits breadth will bring down the height exactly to the measure which Diodorus has mentioned; for the usual height of a man being four and a half of his breadth between the shoulders, if the image were six cubits broad between the shoulders, it must, according to this proportion, have been twenty-seven cubits high, which is forty and a half feet.”

The statue itself, therefore, according to Prideaux, was forty feet high; the pedestal fifty feet. But this, says Taylor, the editor of Calmet, is a disproportion of parts which, if not absolutely impossible, is utterly contradictory to every principle of art, even of the rudest sort. To meet the difficulty, Taylor himself supposes that the height referred to in the description was rather “proportional” than “actual” height; that is, if it had stood upright it would have been sixty cubits, though the actual elevation in a sitting posture may have been but little more than thirty cubits, or fifty feet. The breadth, he supposes, was rather the depth or thickness measured from the breast to the back, than the breadth measured from shoulder to shoulder. His argument and illustration may be seen in Calmet, vol. iii.

Frag. 156. It is not absolutely certain, however, that the image was in a sitting posture, and the "natural" constructsion of the passage is, that the statue was actually sixty cubits in height.

No one can doubt that an image of that height could be erected; and when we remember the one at Rhodes, which was 105 Grecian feet in height (see art. "Colossus," in Anthon's "Class. Dict."), and the desire of Nebuchadnezzar to adorn his capital in the most magnificent manner, it is not to be regarded as improbable that an image of this height was erected. What was the height of the pedestal, if it stood on any, as it probably did, it is impossible now to tell. The length of the "cubit" was not the same in every place. The length originally was the distance between the elbow and the extremity of the middle finger, about eighteen inches. The Hebrew cubit, according to Bishop Cumberland and M. Pelletier, was twenty-one inches; but others fix it at eighteen. - Calmet. The Talmudists say that the Hebrew cubit was larger by one quarter than the Roman. Herodotus says that the cubit in Babylon was three fingers longer than the usual one. - Clio, 178. Still, there is not absolute certainty on that subject. The usual and probable measurement of the cubit would make the image in Babylon about ninety feet high.

And the breadth thereof six cubits - About nine feet. This would, of course, make the height ten times the breadth, which Prideaux says is entirely contrary to the usual proportions of a man. It is not known on what "part" of the image this measurement was made, or whether it was the thickness from the breast to the back, or the width from shoulder to shoulder. If the "thickness" of the image here is referred to by the word "breadth," the proportion would be well preserved. "The thickness of a well-proportioned man," says Scheuchzer (Knupfer Bibel, *in loc*.), "measured from the breast to the back is one-tenth of his height." This was understood to be the proportion by Augustine, Civi. Dei, 1. xv. c. 26. The word which is here rendered "breadth" (פתי *pethay*) occurs nowhere else in the Chaldean of the Scriptures, except in Ezra 6:3: "Let the house be builded, the height thereof threescore cubits, and the "breadth" thereof threescore cubits." Perhaps this refers rather to the "depth" of the temple from front to rear, as Taylor has remarked, than to the breadth from one side to another. If it does, it would correspond with the measurement of Solomon's temple, and it is not probable that Cyrus would vary from that

plan in his instructions to build a new temple. If that be the true construction, then the meaning here may be, as remarked above, that the image was of that "thickness," and the breadth from shoulder to shoulder may not be referred to.

He set it up in the plain of Dura - It would seem from this that it was set up in an open plain, and not in a temple; perhaps not near a temple. It was not unusual to erect images in this manner, as the colossal figure at Rhodes shows. Where this plain was, it is of course impossible now to determine. The Greek translation of the word is Δεειρᾷ *Deeira* - "Deeira." Jerome says that the translation of Theodotion is "Deira;" of Symmachus, Doraum; and of the Septuagint. περίβολον *peribolon* - which he says may be rendered "vivarium vel conclusum locum." "Interpreters commonly," says Gesenius, "compare Dura, a city mentioned by Ammian. Marcel. 25. 6, situated on the Tigris; and another of like name in Polyb. 5,48, on the Euphrates, near the mouth of the Chaboras." It is not necessary to suppose that this was in the "city" of Babylon; and, indeed, it is probable that it was not, as the "province of Babylon" doubtless embraced more than the city, and an extensive plain seems to have been selected, perhaps near the city, as a place where the monument would be more conspicuous, and where larger numbers could convene for the homage which was proposed to be shown to it.

In the province of Babylon - One of the provinces, or departments, embracing the capital, into which the empire was divided, Daniel 2:48.

Verse 2

Then, Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes - It is difficult now, if not impossible, to determine the exact meaning of the words used here with reference to the various officers designated; and it is not material that it should be done. The general sense is, that he assembled the great officers of the realm to do honor to the image. The object was doubtless to make the occasion as magnificent as possible. Of course, if these high officers were assembled, an immense multitude of the people would congregate also. That this was contemplated, and that it in fact occurred, is apparent from Daniel 3:4, Daniel 3:7. The word rendered "princes" (אחשׁדרפניא *'ăchashedarepenayâ'*) occurs only in Daniel, in Ezra, and in Esther. In Daniel 3:2-3, Daniel 3:27; Daniel 6:1-4, Daniel 6:6-7, it is uniformly rendered "princes;" in Ezra 8:36; Esther 3:12; Esther 8:9; Esther 9:3, it is uniformly rendered "lieutenants." The word means, according to

Gesenius (Lex.), "satraps, the governors or viceroys of the large provinces among the ancient Persians, possessing both civil and military power, and being in the provinces the representatives of the sovereign, whose state and splendor they also rivaled." The etymology of the word is not certainly known. The Persian word "satrap" seems to have been the foundation of this word, with some slight modifications adapting it to the Chaldee mode of pronunciation.

The governors - סגניא *sîgenayâ'* This word is rendered "governors" in Daniel 2:48 (see the note at that place), and in Daniel 3:3, Daniel 3:27; Daniel 6:7. It does not elsewhere occur. The Hebrew word corresponding to this - סגנים *segânîym* - occurs frequently, and is rendered "rulers" in every place except Isaiah 41:25, where it is rendered "princes:" Ezra 9:2; Nehemiah 2:16; Nehemiah 4:14 (7); Nehemiah 5:7, Nehemiah 5:17; Nehemiah 7:5; Jeremiah 51:23, Jeremiah 51:28, Jeremiah 51:57; Ezekiel 23:6, Ezekiel 23:12, Ezekiel 23:23, et al. The office was evidently one that was inferior to that of the "satrap," or governor of a whole province.

And the captains - פחותא *pachăvâtâ'* This word, wherever it occurs in Daniel, is rendered "captains," Daniel 3:2-3, Daniel 3:27; Daniel 6:7; wherever else it occurs it is rendered governor, Ezra 5:3, Ezra 5:6, Ezra 5:14; Ezra 6:6-7, Ezra 6:13. The Hebrew word corresponding to this (פחה *pechâh*) occurs frequently, and is also rendered indifferently, "governor" or "captain:" 1 Kings 10:15; 2 Chronicles 9:14; Ezra 8:36; 1 Kings 20:24; Jeremiah 51:23, Jeremiah 51:28, Jeremiah 51:57, et al. It refers to the governor of a province less than satrapy, and is applied to officers in the Assyrian empire, 2 Kings 18:24; Isaiah 36:9; in the Chaldean, Ezekiel 23:6, Ezekiel 23:23; Jeremiah 51:23; and in the Persian, Esther 8:9; Esther 9:3. The word "captains" does not now very accurately express the sense. The office was not exclusively military, and was of a higher grade than would be denoted by the word "captain," with us.

The judges - אדרגזריא *'ădaregâzerayâ'* This word occurs only here, and in Daniel 3:3. It means properly great or "chief judges" - compounded of two words signifying "greatness," and "judges." See Gesenius, (Lex.)

The treasurers - גדבריא *gedâberayâ'* This word occurs nowhere else. The word גזבר *gizbâr* however, the same word with a slight change in the pronunciation, occurs in Ezra 1:8; Ezra 7:21, and denotes "treasurer." It is derived from a word (גנז *gânaz*) which means to hide, to hoard, to lay up in store.

The counselors - דתבריא *dethâberayâ'* This word occurs nowhere else, except in Daniel 3:3. It means one skilled in the law; a judge. The office was evidently inferior to the one denoted by the word "judges."

The sheriffs - A sheriff with us is a county officer, to whom is entrusted the administration of the laws. In England the office is judicial as well as ministerial. With us it is merely ministerial. The duty of the sheriff is to execute the civil and criminal processes throughout the county. He has charge of the jail and prisoners, and attends courts, and keeps the peace. It is not to be supposed that the officer here referred to in Daniel corresponds precisely with this. The word used (תפתיא *tîptâyē'*) occurs nowhere else. It means, according to Gesenius, persons learned in the law; lawyers. The office had a close relation to that of "Mufti" among the Arabs, the term being derived from the same word, and properly means "a wise man; one whose response is equivalent to law."

And all the rulers of the provinces - The term here used is a general term, and would apply to any kind of officers or rulers, and is probably designed to embrace all which had not been specified. The object was to assemble the chief officers of the realm. Jacchiades has compared the officers here enumerated with the principal officers of the Turkish empire, and supposes that a counterpart to them may be found in that empire. See the comparison in Grotius, *in loc*. He supposes that the officers last denoted under the title of "rulers of the provinces" were similar to the Turkish "Zangiahos" or "viziers." Grotius supposes that the term refers to the rulers of cities and places adjacent to cities - a dominion of less extent and importance than that of the rulers of provinces.

To come to the dedication of the image … - The public setting it apart to the purposes for which it was erected. This was to be done with solemn music, and in the presence of the principal officers of the kingdom. Until it was dedicated to the god in whose honor it was erected, it would not be regarded as an object of worship. It is easy to conceive that such an occasion would bring together an immense concourse of people, and that it would be one of peculiar magnificence.

Verse 3

And they stood before the image - In the presence of the image. They were drawn up, doubtless, so as at the same time to have the best view of the statue, and to make the most imposing appearance.

Verse 4

Then an herald cried aloud - Margin, as in Chaldee, "with might." He made a loud proclamation. A "herald" here means a public crier.

To you it is commanded - Margin, "they commanded." Literally, "to you commanding" (plural); that is, the king has commanded.

O people, nations, and languages - The empire of Babylon was made up of different nations, speaking quite different languages. The representatives of these nations were assembled on this occasion, and the command would extend to all. There was evidently no exception made in favor of the scruples of any, and the order would include the Hebrews as well as others. It should be observed, however, that no others but the Hebrews would have any scruples on the subject. They were all accustomed to worship idols, and the worship of one god did not prevent their doing homage also to another. It accorded with the prevailing views of idolaters that there were many gods; that there were tutelary divinities presiding over particular people; and that it was not im proper to render homage to the god of any people or country. Though, therefore, they might themselves worship other gods in their own countries, they would have no scruples about worshipping also the one that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. In this respect the Jews were an exception. They acknowledged but one God; they believed that all others were false gods, and it was a violation of the fundamental principles of their religion to render homage to any other.

Verse 5

That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet - It would not be practicable to determine with precision what kind of instruments of music are denoted by the words used in this verse. They were, doubtless, in many respects different from those which are in use now, though they may have belonged to the same general class, and may have been constructed on substantially the same principles. A full inquiry into the kinds of musical instruments in use among the Hebrews may be found in the various treatises on the subject in Ugolin's "Thesau Ant. Sacra." tom. xxxii. Compare also the notes at Isaiah 5:12. The Chaldee word rendered "cornet" - קרנא *qarenâ'* - the same as the Hebrew word קרן *qeren* - means a "horn," as e. g., of an ox, stag, ram. Then it means a wind instrument of music resembling a horn, or perhaps horns were at first literally used. Similar instruments are now used, as the "French horn," etc.

Flute - משׁרוקיתא *masherôqîythâ'* Greek, σύριγγός *suringos* Vulgate, *fistula*, pipe. The Chaldee words occurs nowhere else but in this chapter,

Daniel 3:5, Daniel 3:7, Daniel 3:10, Daniel 3:15, and is in each instance rendered "flute." It probably denoted all the instruments of the pipe or flute class in use among the Babylonians. The corresponding Hebrew word is חליל *châlîyl* See this explained in the notes at Isaiah 5:12. The following remarks of the Editor of the "Pictorial Bible" will explain the usual construction of the ancient pipes or flutes: "The ancient flutes were cylindrical tubes, sometimes of equal diameter throughout, but often wider at the off than the near end, and sometimes widened at that end into a funnel shape, resembling a clarionet. They were always blown, like pipes, at one end, never transversely; they had mouthpieces, and sometimes plugs or stopples, but no keys to open or close the holes beyond the reach of the hands. The holes varied in number in the different varieties of the flute. In their origin they were doubtless made of simple reeds or canes, but in the progress of improvement they came to be made of wood, ivory, bone, and even metal. They were sometimes made in joints, but connected by an interior nozzle which was generally of wood. The flutes were sometimes double, that is, a person played on two instruments at once, either connected or detached; and among the Classical ancients the player on the double-flute often had a leather bandage over his mouth to prevent the escape of his breath at the corners. The ancient Egyptians used the double-flute." Illustrations of the flute or pipe may be seen in the notes at Isaiah 5:12. Very full and interesting descriptions of the musical instruments which were used among the Egyptians may be found in Wilkinson's "Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians," vol. ii. pp. 222-327.

Harp - On the form of the "harp," see the notes at Isaiah 5:12. Compare Wilkinson, as above quoted. The harp was one of the earliest instruments of music that was invented, Genesis 4:21. The Chaldee word here used is not the common Hebrew word to denote the harp (כנור *kinnôr*), but is a word which does not occur in Hebrew - קיתרוס *qaytherôs* This occurs nowhere else in the Chaldee, and it is manifestly the same as the Greek κιθάρα *kithara* and the Latin *cithara*, denoting a harp. Whether the Chaldees derived it from the Greeks, or the Greeks from the Chaldees, however, cannot be determined with certainty. It has been made an objection to the genuineness of the book of Daniel, that the instruments here referred to were instruments bearing Greek names. See Intro. to ch. Section II. IV. (c) (5).

Sackbut - Vulgate, *Sambuca*. Greek, like the Vulgate, σαμβύκη *sambukē* These words are merely different forms of writing the Chaldee word סבכא *sabbekâ'* The word occurs nowhere else except in this chapter. It seems to have denoted a stringed instrument similar to the lyre or harp. Strabo affirms that the Greek word σαμβύκη *sambukē* "sambyke," is of barbarian, that is, of Oriental origin. The Hebrew word from which this word is not improperly derived - סבך *sâbak* - means, "to interweave, to entwine, to plait," as e. g., branches; and it is possible that this instrument may have derived its name from the "intertwining" of the strings. Compare Gesenius on the word. Passow defines the Greek word σαμβύκη *sambukē sambuca* (Latin), to mean a triangular-stringed instrument that made the highest notes; or had the highest key; but as an instrument which, on account of the shortness of the strings, was not esteemed as very valuable, and had little power. Porphyry and Suidas describe it as a triangular instrument, furnished with cords of unequal length and thickness. The Classical writers mention it as very ancient, and ascribe its invention to the Syrians. Musonius describes it as having a sharp sound; and we are also told that it was often used to accompany the voice in singing Iambic verses - Pictorial Bible. It seems to have been a species of triangular lyre or harp.

Psaltery - The Chaldee is פסנתרין *pesantērîyn* Greek, ψαλτήριον *psaltērion* Vulgate, psalterium. All these words manifestly have the same origin, and it hat been on the ground that this word, among others, is of Greek origin, that the genuineness of this book has been called in question. The word occurs nowhere else but in this chapter, Daniel 3:5, Daniel 3:7, Daniel 3:10, Daniel 3:15. The Greek translators often use the word ψαλτήριον *psaltērion* psaltery, for נבל *nebel* and כנור *kinnôr* and the instrument here referred to was doubtless of the harp kind. For the kind of instrument denoted by the נבל *nebel* see the notes at Isaiah 5:12. Compare the illustrations in the Pict. Bible on Psalm 92:3. It has been alleged that this word is of Greek origin, and hence, an objection has been urged against the genuineness of the book of Daniel on the presumption that, at the early period when this book is supposed to have been written, Greek musical instruments had not been introduced into Chaldea. For a general reply to this, see the introduction, section I, II, (d). It may be remarked further, in regard to this objection,

(1) that it is not absolutely certain that the word is derived from the Greek. See Pareau, 1. c. p. 424, as quoted in Hengstenberg, "Authentic des

Daniel," p. 16.

(2) It cannot be demonstrated that there were no Greeks in the regions of Chaldea as early as this. Indeed, it is more than probable that there were. See Hengstenberg, p. 16, following.

Nebuchadnezzar summoned to this celebration the principal personages throughout the realm, and it is probable that there would be collected on such an occasion all the forms of music that were known, whether of domestic or foreign origin.

Dulcimer - סומפניה *sûmpôneyâh* This word occurs only here, and in Daniel 3:10, Daniel 3:15. In the margin it is rendered "symphony" or "singing." It is the same as the Greek word συμφωνία *sumphōnia* "symphony," and in Italy the same instrument of music is now called by a name of the same origin, *zampogna*, and in Asia Minor *zambonja*. It answered probably to the Hebrew עוגב *ʿûgâb* rendered "organ," in Genesis 4:21; Job 21:12; Job 30:31; Psalm 150:4. See the notes at Job 21:12. Compare the tracts on Hebrew musical instruments inscribed *schilte haggibborim in Ugolin*, thesau. vol. xxxii. The word seems to have had a Greek origin, and is one of those on which an objection has been founded against the genuineness of the book. Compare the Intro. Section I. II. (c). The word "dulcimer" means "sweet," and would denote some instrument of music that was characterized by the sweetness of its tones.

Johnson (Dict.) describes the instrument as one that is "played by striking brass wires with little sticks." The Greek word would denote properly a concert or harmony of many instruments; but the word here is evidently used to denote a single instrument. Gesenius describes it as a double pipe with a sack; a bagpipe. Servius (on Virg. AEn. xi. 27) describes the "symphonia" as a bagpipe: and the Hebrew writers speak of it as a bagpipe consisting of two pipes thrust through a leather bag, and affording a mournful sound. It may be added, that this is the same name which the bagpipe bore among the Moors in Spain; and all these circumstances concur to show that this was probably the instrument intended here. "The modern Oriental bagpipe is composed of a goatskin, usually with the hair on, and in the natural form, but deprived of the head, the tail, and the feet; being thus of the same shape as that used by the water-carriers. The pipes are usually of reeds, terminating in the tips of cows' horns slightly curved; the whole

instrument being most primitively simple in its materials and construction." - "Pict. Bible."

And all kinds of music - All other kinds. It is not probable that all the instruments employed on that occasionwere actually enumerated. Only the principal instruments are mention ed, and among them those which showed that such as were of foreign origin were employed on the occasion. From the following extract from Chardin, it will be seen that the account here is not an improbable one, and that such things were not uncommon in the East: "At the coronation of Soliman, king of Persia, the general of the musqueteers having whispered some moments in the king's ear, among several other things of lesser importance gave out, that both the loud and soft music should play in the two balconies upon the top of the great building which stands at one end of the palace royal, called "kaisarie," or palace imperial. No nation was dispensed with, whether Persians, Indians, Turks, Muscovites, Europeans, or others; which was immediately done. And this same "tintamarre," or confusion of instruments, which sounded more like the noise of war than music, lasted twenty days together, without intermission, or the interruption of night; which number of twenty days was observed to answer to the number of the young monarch's years, who was then twenty years of age," p. 51; quoted in Taylor's "fragments to Calmet's Dict." No. 485. It may be observed, also, that in such an assemblage of instruments, nothing would be more probable than that there would be some having names of foreign origin, perhaps names whose origin was to be found in nations not represented there. But if this should occur, it would not be proper to set the fact down as an argument against the authenticity of the history of Sir John Chardin, and as little should the similar fact revealed here be regarded as an argument against the genuineness of the book of Daniel.

Ye shall fall down and worship - That is, you shall render "religious homage." See these words explained in the notes at Daniel 2:46. This shows, that whether this image was erected in honor of Belus, or of Nabopolassar, it was designed that he in whose honor it was erected should be worshipped as a god.

Verse 6

And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth - The order in this verse seems to be tyrannical, and it is contrary to all our notions of freedom of religious opinion and worship. But it was much in the spirit of that age,

and indeed of almost every age. It was an act to enforce uniformity in religion by the authority of the civil magistrate, and to secure it by threatened penalties. It should be observed, however, that the command at that time would not be regarded as harsh and oppressive by "pagan" worshippers, and might be complied with consistently with their views, without infringing on their notions of religious liberty. The homage rendered to one god did not, according to their views, conflict with any honor that was due to another, and though they were required to worship this divinity, that would not be a prohibition against worshipping any other. It was also in accordance with all the views of paganism that all proper honor should be rendered to the particular god or gods which any people adored.

The nations assembled here would regard it as no dishonor shown to the particular deity whom they worshipped to render homage to the god worshipped by Nebuchadnezzar, as this command implied no prohibition against worshipping any other god. It was only in respect to those who held that there is but one God, and that all homage rendered to any other is morally wrong, that this command would be oppressive. Accordingly, the contemplated vengeance fell only on the Jews - all, of every other nation, who were assembled, complying with the command without hesitation. It violated "no" principle which they held to render the homage which was claimed, for though they had their own tutelary gods whom they worshipped, they supposed the same was true of every other people, and that "their" gods were equally entitled to respect; but it violated "every" principle on which the Jew acted - for he believed that there was but one God ruling over all nations, and that homage rendered to any other was morally wrong. Compare Hengstenberg, "Authentie des Daniel," pp. 83,84.

Shall the same hour - This accords with the general character of an Oriental despot accustomed to enjoin implicit obedience by the most summary process, and it is entirely conformable to the whole character of Nebuchadnezzar. It would seem from this, that there was an apprehension that some among the multitudes assembled would refuse to obey the command. Whether there was any "design" to make this bear hard on the Jews, it is impossible now to determine. The word which is here rendered "hour" (שׁעתא *shaʿetâ*) is probably from שׁעה *shâʿâh* - "to look;" and properly denotes a look, a glance of the eye, and then the "time" of such a glance - a moment, an instant. It does not refer to "an hour," as understood

by us, but means “instantly, immediately” - as quick as the glance of an eye. The word is not found in Hebrew, and occurs in Chaldee only in Daniel 3:6, Daniel 3:15; Daniel 4:19, Daniel 4:33 (Daniel 4:16, Daniel 4:30); Daniel 5:5, in each case rendered “hour.” Nothing can be inferred from it, however, in regard to the division of time among the Chaldeans into “hours” - though Herodotus says that the Greeks received the division of the day into twelve parts from them. - Lib. ii., c. 109.

Be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace - The word here rendered “furnace” (אתון *'attûn*) is derived from (תנן *tenan*), “to smoke;” and may be applied to any species of furnace, or large oven. It does not denote the use to which the furnace was commonly applied, or the form of its construction. Any furnace for burning lime - if lime was then burned - or for burning bricks, if they were burned, or for smelting ore, would correspond with the meaning of the word. Nor is it said whether the furnace referred to would be one that would be constructed for the occasion, or one in common use for some other purpose. The editor of Calmet (Taylor) supposes that the “furnace” here referred to was rather a fire kindled in the open court of a temple, like a place set apart for burning martyrs, than a closed furnace of brick. See Cal. “Dict.” vol. iv. p. 330, following. The more obvious representation, however, is, that it was a closed place, in which the intensity of the fire could be greatly increased. Such a mode of punishment is not uncommon in the East. Chardin (vi. p. 118), after speaking of the common modes of inflicting the punishment of death in Persia, remarks that “there are other modes of inflicting the punishment of death on those who have violated the police laws, especially those who have contributed to produce scarcity of food, or who have used false weights, or who have disregarded the laws respecting taxes. The cooks,” says he, “were fixed on spits, and roasted over a gentle fire (compare Jeremiah 29:22), and the bakers were cast into a burning oven. In the year 1668, when the famine was raging, I saw in the royal residence in Ispahan one of these ovens burning to terrify the bakers, and to prevent their taking advantage of the scarcity to increase their gains.” See Rosenmuller, “Alte u. neue Morgenland, *in loc*.”

Verse 7

All the people, the nations, and the languages fell down … - All excepting the Jews. An express exception is made in regard to them in the following verses, and it does not appear that any of them were present on

this occasion. It would seem that only the "officers" had been summoned to be present, and it is not improbable that all the rest of the Jewish nation absented themselves.

Verse 8

Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews - It does not appear that they accused the Jews in general, but particularly Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Daniel 3:12. They were present on the occasion, being summoned with the other officers of the realm Daniel 3:2, but they could not unite in the idolatrous worship. It has been frequently said that the whole thing was arranged, either by the king of his own accord, or by the instigation of their enemies, with a view to involve the Jews in difficulty, knowing that they could not conscientiously comply with the command to worship the image. But nothing of this kind appears in the narrative itself, It does not appear that the Jews were unpopular, or that there was any less disposition to show favor to them than to any other foreigners. They had been raised indeed to high offices, but there is no evidence that any office was conferred on them which it was not regarded as proper to confer on foreigners; nor is there any evidence that in the discharge of the duties of the office they had given occasion for a just accusation. The plain account is, that the king set up the image for other purposes, and with no malicious design toward them; that when summoned to be present with the other officers of the realm at the dedication of the image they obeyed the command; but that when the order was issued that they should render "religious homage" to the idol, every principle of their religion revolted at it, and they refused. For the probable reasons why Daniel was not included in the number, see the note at Daniel 3:12.

Verse 9

O king, live for ever - A customary form of address to a monarch, implying that long life was regarded as an eminent blessing. See the notes at Daniel 2:4.

Verse 10-11

Thou, O king, hast made a decree … - See Daniel 3:4-5. As the decree included "every man" who heard the sound of the music, it of course embraced the Jews, whatever religious scruples they might have. Whether their scruples, however, were known at the time is not certain; or whether they would have been regarded if known, is no more certain.

Verse 12

There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego - Daniel 2:49. It is quite remarkable that the name of Daniel does not occur in the record of this transaction, and that he does not appear to have been involved in the difficulty. Why he was not cannot now be certainly known. We may be sure that he would not join in the worship of the idol, and yet it would seem, as Nebuchadnezzar had summoned all the high officers of the realm to be present Daniel 3:2, that he must have been summoned also. The conjecture of Prideaux (Con. I. 222) is not improbable, that he occupied a place of so much influence and authority, and enjoyed in so high degree the favor of the king, that they did not think it prudent to begin with him, but rather preferred at first to bring the accusation against subordinate officers. If they were condemned and punished, consistency might require that he should be punished also. If he had been involved at first in the accusation, his high rank, and his favor with the king, might have screened them all from punishment. It is possible, however, that Daniel was absent on the occasion of the dedication of the image. It should be remembered that perhaps some eighteen years had elapsed since the transaction referred to in Daniel 3:1), and Daniel may have been employed in some remote part of the empire on public business. Compare Introduction to the chapter, Section I. VIII.

These men, O king, have not regarded thee - Margin, "set no regard upon." Literally, "they have not placed toward thee the decree;" that is, they have not made any account of it; they have paid no attention to it.

They serve not thy gods - Perhaps it was inferred from the fact that they would not pay religious homage to "this" idol, that they did not serve the gods at all that were acknowledged by the king; or possibly this may have been known from what had occurred before. It may have been well understood in Babylon, that the Hebrews worshipped Jehovah only. Now, however, a case had occurred which was a "test" case, whether they would on any account render homage to the idols that were worshipped in Babylon. In their refusal to worship the idol, it seemed much to aggravate the offence, and made the charge much more serious, that they did not acknowledge "any" of the gods that were worshipped in Babylon. It was easy, therefore, to persuade the king that they had arrayed themselves against the fundamental laws of the realm.

Verse 13

Then Nebuchadnezzar, in his rage and fury - The word rendered "fury" means "wrath." Everything that we learn of this monarch shows that he was a man of violent passions, and that he was easily excited, though he was susceptible also of deep impressions on religious subjects. There was much here to rouse his rage. His command to worship the image was positive. It extended to all who were summoned to its dedication. Their refusal was an act of positive disobedience, and it seemed necessary that the laws should be vindicated. As a man and a monarch, therefore, it was not unnatural that the anger of the sovereign should be thus enkindled.

Commanded to bring Shadrach … - It is remarkable that he did not order them at once to be slain, as he did the magicians who could not interpret his dream, Daniel 2:12. This shows that he had some respect still for these men, and that he was willing to hear what they could say in their defense. It is proper, also, to recognize the providence of God in inclining him to this course, that their noble reply to his question might be put on record, and that the full power of religious principle might be developed.

Verse 14

Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true - Margin, "of purpose;" that is, have you done this intentionally? Wintle renders this, "Is it insultingly?" Jacchiades says that the word is used to denote admiration or wonder, as if the king could not believe that it was possible that they could disregard so plain a command, when disobedience was accompanied with such a threat. De Dieu renders it, "Is it a joke?" That is, can you possibly be serious or in earnest that you disobey so positive a command? Aben Ezra, Theodotion, and Sandias render it as it is in margin, "Have you done this of set purpose and design?" as if the king had regarded it as possible that there had been a misunderstanding, and as if he was not unwilling to find that they could make an apology for their conduct. The Chaldee word (צדא *tsedâ'*) occurs nowhere else. It is rendered by Gesenius, "purpose, design." That is, "Is it on purpose?" The corresponding Hebrew word (צדה *tsâdâh*) means, "to lie in wait, to waylay," Exodus 21:13; 1 Samuel 24:11, (12). Compare Numbers 35:20, Numbers 35:22. The true meaning seems to be, "Is it your "determined purpose" not to worship my gods? Have you deliberately made up your minds to this, and do you mean to abide by this resolution?" That this is the meaning is apparent from the fact that he immediately proposes to try them on the point, giving them still

an opportunity to comply with his command to worship the image if they would, or to show whether they were finally resolved not to do it.

Do not ye serve my gods? - It was one of the charges against them that they did not do it, Daniel 3:12.

Verse 15

Now, if ye be ready, that at what time … - At the very time; on the very instant. It would seem probable from this that the ceremonies of the consecration of the image were prolonged for a considerable period, so that there was still an opportunity for them to unite in the service if they would. The supposition that such services would be continued through several days is altogether probable, and accords with what was usual on festival occasions. It is remarkable that the king was willing to give them another trial, to see whether they were disposed or not to worship the golden image. To this he might have been led by the apprehension that they had not understood the order, or that they had not duly considered the subject; and possibly by respect for them as faithful officers, and for their countryman Daniel. There seems, moreover, to have been in the bosom of this monarch, with all his pride and passion, a readiness to do justice, and to furnish an opportunity of a fair trial before he proceeded to extremities. See Daniel 2:16, Daniel 2:26, Daniel 2:46-47,

And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? - That is, he either supposed that the God whom they worshipped would not be "able" to deliver them, or that he would not be "disposed" to do it. It was a boast of Sennacherib, when he warred against the Jews, that none of the gods of the nations which he had conquered had been able to rescue the lands over which they presided, and he argued from these premises that the God whom the Hebrews worshipped would not be able to defend their country: "Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arphad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" Isaiah 36:18-20. Nebuchadnezzar seems to have reasoned in a similar manner, and with a degree of vain boasting that strongly resembled this, calling their attention to the certain destruction which awaited them if they did not comply with his demand.

Verse 16

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered and said to the king - They appear to have answered promptly, and without hesitation, showing that they had carefully considered the subject, and that with them it was a matter of settled and intelligent principle. But they did it in a respectful manner, though they were firm. They neither reviled the monarch nor his gods. They used no reproachful words respecting the image which he had set up, or any of the idols which he worshipped. Nor did they complain of his injustice or severity. They calmly looked at their own duty, and resolved to do it, leaving the consequences with the God whom they worshipped.

We are not careful to answer thee in this matter - The word rendered "careful" (חשׁח *chăshach*) means, according to Gesenius, "to be needed" or "necessary;" then, "to have need." The Vulgate renders it, "non oportet nos" - it does not behove us; it is not needful for us. So the Greek, οὐ χρείαν ἔχομεν *ou chreian echomen* - we have no need. So Luther, Es ist Nicht noth- there is no necessity. The meaning therefore is, that it was not "necessary" that they should reply to the king on that point; they would not give themselves trouble or solicitude to do it. They had made up their minds, and, whatever was the result, they could not worship the image which he had set up, or the gods whom he adored. They felt that there was no necessity for stating the reasons why they could not do this. Perhaps they thought that argument in their case was improper. It became them to do their duty, and to leave the event with God. They had no need to go into an extended vindication of their conduct, for it might be presumed that their principles of conduct were well known. The state of mind, therefore, which is indicated by this passage, is that their minds were made up; that their principles were settled and well understood; that they had come to the deliberate determination, as a matter of conscience, not to yield obedience to the command; that the result could not be modified by any statement which they could make, or by any argument in the case; and that, therefore, they were not anxious about the result, but calmly committed the whole cause to God.

Verse 17

If it be so - Chaldee, איתי הן *hên 'îythay* - "so it is." That is, "this is true, that the God whom we serve can save us." The idea is not, as would seem in our translation, "if we are to be cast into the furnace," but the mind is turned on the fact that the God whom they served could save them. Coverdale renders this whole passage, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we ought not to consent

unto thee in this matter, for why? our God whom we serve is able to keep us," etc.

Our God, whom we serve - Greek, "our God in the heavens, whom we serve." This was a distinct avowal that they were the servants of the true God, and they were not ashamed to avow it, whatever might be the consequences.

Is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace - This was evidently said in reply to the question asked by the king Daniel 3:15, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" They were sure that the God whom they worshipped was able, if he should choose to do it, to save them from death. In what way they supposed he could save them is not expressed. Probably it did not occur to them that he would save them in the manner in which he actually did, but they felt that it was entirely within his power to keep them from so horrid a death if he pleased. The state of mind indicated in this verse is that of "entire confidence in God." Their answer showed

(a) that they had no doubt of his "ability" to save them if he pleased;

(b) that they believed he would do what was best in the case; and

(c) that they were entirely willing to commit the whole case into his hands to dispose of it as he chose. Compare Isaiah 43:2.

Verse 18

But if not - That is, "if he should "not" deliver us; if it should "not" occur that he would protect us, and save us from that heated oven: whatever may be the result in regard to us, our determination is settled."

Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods … - This answer is firm and noble. It showed that their minds were made up, and that it was with them a matter of "principle" not to worship false gods. The state of mind which is denoted by this verse is that of a determination to do their duty, whatever might be the consequences. The attention was fixed on what was "right," not on what would be the result. The sole question which was asked was, what "ought" to be done in the case; and they had no concern about what would follow. True religion is a determined purpose to do right, and not to do wrong, whatever may be the consequences in either case. It matters not what follows - wealth or poverty;

honor or dishonor; good report or evil report; life or death; the mind is firmly fixed on doing right, and not on doing wrong. This is "the religion of principle;" and when we consider the circumstances of those who made this reply; when we remember their comparative youth, and the few opportunities which they had for instruction in the nature of religion, and that they were captives in a distant land, and that they stood before the most absolute monarch of the earth, with no powerful friends to support them, and with the most horrid kind of death threatening them, we may well admire the grace of that God who could so amply furnish them for such a trial, and love that religion which enabled them to take a stand so noble and so bold.

Verse 19

Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury - Margin, "filled." He was exceedingly enraged. He evidently was not prepared for a stand so firm and determined on their part, and he did not appreciate their motives, nor was he disposed to yield to them the privilege and right of following their honest convictions. He was deeply excited with anger when the complaint was made that they would not worship his gods Daniel 3:13, but he had hoped that possibly they had not understood his command, and that what they had done had not been by deliberate purpose (the notes at Daniel 3:14); and he had therefore given them an opportunity to reconsider the subject, and, by complying with his will, to save themselves from the threatened punishment. He now saw, however, that what they had done was done deliberately. He saw that they firmly and intelligently refused to obey, and supposing now that they not only rebelled against his "commands," but that they disregarded and despised even his "forbearance" Daniel 3:15, it is not wonderful that he was filled with wrath. What was with them fixed "principle," he probably regarded as mere obstinacy, and he determined to punish them accordingly.

And the form of his visage was changed - As the face usually is when men become excited with anger. We may suppose that up to this point he had evinced self-control; "possibly" he may have shown something like tenderness or compassion. He was indisposed to punish them, and he hoped that they would save him from the necessity of it by complying with his commands. Now he saw that all hope of this was vain, and he gave unrestrained vent to his angry feelings.

He spake and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated - Chaldee, "Than it was sees to be heated;" that is, than it was ever seen. The word "seven" here is a perfect number, and the meaning is, that they should make it as hot as possible. He did not reflect probably that by this command he was contributing to shorten and abridge their sufferings. Wicked men, who are violently opposed to religion, often overdo the matter, and by their haste and impetuosity defeat the very end which they have in view, and even promote the very cause which they wish to destroy.

Verse 20

And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army - Margin, "mighty of strength." Chaldee, "And to mighty men, mighty men of strength who were in his army, he said." He employed the strongest men that could be found for this purpose.

Verse 21

Then these men were bound in their coats - They were seized just as they were. No time was given them for preparation; no change was made in their dress. In "autos-da-fe" of later times, it has been usual to array those who were to suffer in a peculiar dress, indicative of the fact that they were heretics, and that they deserved the flame. Here, however, the anger of the king was so great, that no delay was allowed for any such purpose, and they proceeded to execute the sentence upon them just as they were. The fact that they were thus thrown into the furnace, however, only made the miracle the more conspicuous, since not even their garments were affected by the fire. The word rendered "coats," is in the margin rendered "mantles." The Chaldee word (סרבלין *sarbâlîyn*) means, according to Gesenius, the long and wide pantaloons which are worn by the Orientals, from סרבל *sarbēl* to cover. The Greek word used in the translation is derived from this - σαράβαρα *sarabara* - and the word σαρβαρίδες *sarbarides* is still used in modern Greek. The Chaldee word is used only in this chapter. The Vulgate renders this, *cum braccis suis* - hence, the word "breeches," and "brogues." The garment referred to, therefore, seems rather to be what covered the lower part of their person than either a coat or mantle.

Their hosen - This word was evidently designed by our translators to denote drawers, or trousers - not stockings, for that was the common meaning of the word when the translation was made. It is not probable that the word is designed to denote "stockings," as they are not commonly worn

in the East. Harmer supposes that the word here used means properly "a hammer," and that the reference is to a hammer that was carried as a symbol of office, and he refers in illustration of this to the plates of Sir John Chardin of carvings found in the ruins of Persepolis, among which a man is represented with a hammer or mallet in each hand. He supposes that this was some symbol of office. The more common and just representation, however, is to regard this as referring to an article of dress. The Chaldee word (פטיש *paṭṭîysh*) is from פטש *pâṭash* to break, to hammer (πατάσσω *patassō*); to spread out, to expand; and the noun means

(1) a hammer; Isaiah 41:7; Jeremiah 23:29; Jeremiah 50:23; and

(2) a garment, probably with the idea of its being "spread out," and perhaps referring to a tunic or under-garment.

Compare Gesenius on the word. The Greek is, τιάραις *tiarais* and so the Latin Vulgate, *tiaris*: the *tiara*, or covering for the head, turban. The probable reference, however, is to the under-garment worn by the Orientals; the tunic, not a little resembling a shirt with us.

And their hats - Margin, or "turbans." The Chaldee word (כרבלא *karbelâ'*) is rendered by Gesenius mantle, *pallium*. So the version called the "Breeches" Bible, renders it "clokes." Coverdale renders it "shoes," and so the Vulgate, *calceamentis*, sandals; and the Greek, περικνημίσιν *periknēmisin* greaves, or a garment enclosing the lower limbs; pantaloons. There is certainly no reason for rendering the word "hats" - as hats were then unknown; nor is there any evidence that it refers to a turban. Buxtorf ("Chaldee Lex.") regards it as meaning a garment, particularly an outer garment, a cloak, and this is probably the correct idea. We should then have in these three words the principal articles of dress in which the Orientals appear, as is shown by the preceding engraving, and from the ruins of Persepolis - the large and loose trousers; the tunic, or inner garment; and the outer garment, or cloak, that was commonly thrown over all.

And their other garments - Whatever they had on, whether turban, belt, sandals, etc.

Verse 22

Therefore, because the king's commandment was urgent - Margin, as in Chaldee, "word." The meaning is, that the king would admit of no

delay; he urged on the execution of his will, even at the imminent peril of those who were entrusted with the execution of his command.

And the furnace exceeding hot - Probably so as to send out the flame so far as to render the approach to it dangerous. The urgency of the king would not admit of any arrangements, even if there could have been any, by which the approach to it would be safe.

The flame of the fire slew those men - Margin, as in Chaldee, "spark." The meaning is, what the fire threw out - the blaze, the heat. Nothing can be more probable than this. It was necessary to approach to the very mouth of the furnace in order to cast them in, and it is very conceivable that a heated furnace would belch forth such flames, or throw out such an amount of heat, that this could not be done but at the peril of life. The Chaldee word rendered "slew" here, means "killed." It does not mean merely that they were overcome with the heat, but that they actually died. To expose these men thus to death was an act of great cruelty, but we are to remember how absolute is the character of an Oriental despot, and how much enraged this king was, and how regardless such a man would be of any effects on others in the execution of his own will.

Verse 23

And these three men - fell down bound … - That is, the flame did not loosen the cords by which they had been fastened. The fact that they were seen to fall into the furnace "bound," made the miracle the more remarkable that they should be seen walking loose in the midst of the fire.

In the Septuagint, Syriac, Arabic, and Latin Vulgate, there follow in this place sixty-eight verses, containing "The Song of the Three Holy Children." This is not in the Chaldee, and its origin is unknown. It is with entire propriety placed in the Apocrypha, as being no part of the inspired canon. With some things that are improbable and absurd, the "song" contains many things that are beautiful, and that would be highly appropriate if a song had been uttered at all in the furnace.

Verse 24

Then, Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonied - The word "astonied," which occurs several times in our translation Ezra 9:3; Job 17:8; Job 18:20; Ezekiel 4:17; Daniel 3:24; Daniel 4:19; Daniel 5:9, is but another form for "astonished," and expresses wonder or amazement. The reasons of the wonder here were that the men who were bound when cast into the furnace

were seen alive, and walking unbound; that to them a fourth person was added, walking with them; and that the fourth had the appearance of a Divine personage. It would seem from this, that the furnace was so made that one could conveniently see into it, and also that the king remained near to it to witness the result of the execution of his own order.

And rose up in haste - He would naturally express his surprise to his counselors, and ask an explanation of the remarkable occurrence which he witnessed. "And spake, and said unto his counselors." Margin, "governors." The word used here (הדברין *haddâberîyn*) occurs only here and in Daniel 3:27; Daniel 4:36; Daniel 6:7. It is rendered "counselors" in each case. The Vulgate renders it "optimatibus;" the Septuagint, μεγιστᾶσιν *megistasin* - his nobles, or distinguished men. The word would seem to mean those who were authorized to "speak" (from דבר *dâbar*); that is, those authorized to give counsel; ministers of state, viziers, cabinet counselors.

Did not we cast three men bound … - The emphasis here is on the words "three," and "bound." It was now a matter of astonishment that there were "four," and that they were all "loose." It is not to be supposed that Nebuchadnezzar had any doubt on this subject, or that his recollection had so soon failed him, but this manner of introducing the subject is adopted in order to fix the attention strongly on the fact to which he was about to call their attention, and which was to him so much a matter of surprise.

Verse 25

He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose - From the fact that he saw these men now loose, and that this filled him with so much surprise, it may be presumed that they had been bound with something that was not combustible - with some sort of fetters or chains. In that case it would be a matter of surprise that they should be "loose," even though they could survive the action of the fire. The "fourth" personage now so mysteriously added to their number, it is evident, assumed the appearance of a "man," and not the appearance of a celestial being, though it was the aspect of a man so noble and majestic that he deserved to be called a son of God.

Walking in the midst of the fire - The furnace, therefore, was large, so that those who were in it could walk about. The vision must have been sublime; and it is a beautiful image of the children of God often walking unhurt amidst dangers, safe beneath the Divine protection.

And they have no hurt - Margin, "There is no hurt in them." They walk unharmed amidst the flames. Of course, the king judged in this only from

appearances, but the result Daniel 3:27 showed that it was really so.

And the form of the fourth - Chaldee, (רוה *rēvēh*) - "his appearance" (from ראה *râ'âh* - "to see"); that is, he "seemed" to be a son of God; he "looked" like a son of God. The word does not refer to anything special or peculiar in his "form" or "figure," but it may be supposed to denote something that was noble or majestic in his mien; something in his countenance and demeanour that declared him to be of heavenly origin.

Like the son of God - There are two inquiries which arise in regard to this expression: one is, what was the idea denoted by the phrase as used by the king, or who did he take this personage to be? the other, who he actually was? In regard to the former inquiry, it may be observed, that there is no evidence that the king referred to him to whom this title is so frequently applied in the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is clear

(1) because there is no reason to believe that the king had "any" knowledge whatever that there would be on earth one to whom this title might be appropriately given;

(2) there is no evidence that the title was then commonly given to the Messiah by the Jews, or, if it was, that the king of Babylon was so versed in Jewish theology as to be acquainted with it; and

(3) the language which he uses does not necessarily imply that, even "if" he were acquainted with the fact that there was a prevailing expectation that such a being would appear on the earth, he designed so to use it.

The insertion of the article "the," which is not in the Chaldee, gives a different impression from what the original would if literally interpreted. There is nothing in the Chaldee to limit it to "any" "son of God," or to designate anyone to whom that term could be applied as peculiarly intended. It would seem probable that our translators meant to convey the idea that ""the" Son of God" peculiarly was intended, and doubtless they regarded this as one of his appearances to men before his incarnation; but it is clear that no such conception entered into the mind of the king of Babylon. The Chaldee is simply, לבר־אלחין דמה *dâmēh lebar 'ĕlâhîyn* - "like to A son of God," or to a son of the gods - since the word אלחין *'ĕlâhîyn* (Chaldee), or אלהים *'ĕlohîym* (Hebrew), though often, and indeed usually

applied to the true God, is in the plural number, and in the mouth of a pagan would properly be used to denote the gods that he worshipped.

The article is not prefixed to the word "son," and the language would apply to anyone who might properly be called a son of God. The Vulgate has literally rendered it, "like to A son of God" - *similis filio Dei*; the Greek in the same way - ὁμοία ὑιῷ θεοῦ *homoia huiō theou* the Syriac is like the Chaldee; Castellio renders it, *quartus formam habet Deo nati similem* - "the fourth has a form resembling one born of God;" Coverdale "the fourth is like an angel to look upon;" Luther, more definitely, und der vierte ist gleich, als ware er *ein* Sohn der Gotter- "and the fourth as if he might be "a" son of the gods." It is clear that the authors of none of the other versions had the idea which our translators supposed to be conveyed by the text, and which implies that the Babylonian monarch "supposed" that the person whom he saw was the one who afterward became incarnate for our redemption.

In accordance with the common well-known usage of the word "son" in the Hebrew and Chaldee languages, it would denote anyone who had a "resemblance" to another, and would be applied to any being who was of a majestic or dignified appearance, and who seemed worthy to be ranked among the gods. It was usual among the pagan to suppose that the gods often appeared in a human form, and probably Nebuchadnezzar regarded this as some such celestial appearance. If it be supposed that he regarded it as some manifestation connected with the "Hebrew" form of religion, the most that would probably occur to him would be, that it was some "angelic" being appearing now for the protection of these worshippers of Jehovah. But a second inquiry, and one that is not so easily answered, in regard to this mysterious personage, arises. Who in fact "was" this being that appeared in the furnace for the protection of these three persecuted men?

Was it an angel, or was it the second person of the Trinity, "the" Son of God? That this was the Son of God - the second person of the Trinity, who afterward became incarnate, has been quite a common opinion of expositors. So it was held by Tertullian, by Augustine, and by Hilary, among the fathers; and so it has been held by Gill, Clarius, and others, among the moderns. Of those who have maintained that it was Christ, some

have supposed that Nebuchadnezzar had been made acquainted with the belief of the Hebrews in regard to the Messiah; others, that he spoke under the influence of the Holy Spirit, without being fully aware of what his words imported, as Caiaphas, Saul, Pilate, and others have done. - Poole‘s “Synopsis.” The Jewish writers Jarchi, Saadias, and Jacchiades suppose that it was an angel, called a son of God, in accordance with the usual custom in the Scriptures. That this latter is the correct opinion, will appear evident, though there cannot be exact certainty, from the following considerations:

(1) The language used implies necessarily nothing more. Though it “might” indeed be applicable to the Messiah - the second person of the Trinity, if it could be determined from other sources that it was he, yet there is nothing in the language which necessarily suggests this.

(2) In the explanation of the matter by Nebuchadnezzar himself Daniel 3:28, he understood it to be an angel - “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, etc., “who hath sent his angel,”” etc. This shows that he had had no other view of the subject, and that he had no higher knowledge in the case than to suppose that he was an angel of God. The knowledge of the existence of angels was so common among the ancients, that there is no improbability in supposing that Nebuchadnezzar was sufficiently instructed on this point to know that they were sent for the protection of the good.

(3) The belief that it was an angel accords with what we find elsewhere in this book (compare Daniel 6:22; Daniel 7:10; Daniel 9:21), and in other places in the sacred Scriptures, respecting their being employed to protect and defend the children of God. Compare Psalm 34:7; Psalm 91:11-12; Matthew 18:10; Luke 16:22; Hebrews 1:14.

(4) It may be added, that it should not be supposed that it was the Son of God in the peculiar sense of that term without positive evidence, and such evidence does not exist. Indeed there is scarcely a probability that it was so. If the Redeemer appeared on this occasion, it cannot be explained why, in a case equally important and perilous, he did not appear to Daniel when cast into the lions‘ den Daniel 6:22; and as Daniel then attributed his deliverance to the intervention of an angel, there is every reason why the same explanation should be given of this passage. As to the probability that an

angel would be employed on an occasion like this, it may be observed, that it is in accordance with the uniform representation of the Scriptures, and with what we know to be a great law of the universe. The weak, the feeble, and those who are in danger are protected by those who are strong; and there is, in itself, no more improbability in the supposition that an "angel" would be employed to work a miracle than there is that a "man" would be.

We are not to suppose that the angel was able to prevent the usual effect of fire by any natural strength of his own. The miracle in this case, like all other miracles, was wrought by the power of God. At the same time, the presence of the angel would be a pledge of the Divine protection; would be an assurance that the effect produced was not from any natural cause; would furnish an easy explanation of so remarkable an occurrence; and, perhaps more than all, would impress the Babylonian monarch and his court with some just views of the Divine nature, and with the truth of the religion which was professed by those whom he had cast into the flames. As to the probability that a miracle would be wrought on an occasion like this, it may be remarked that a more appropriate occasion for working a miracle could scarcely be conceived. At a time when the true religion was persecuted; at the court of the most powerful pagan monarch in the world; when the temple at Jerusalem was destroyed, and the fires on the altars had been put out, and the people of God were exiles in a distant land, nothing was more probable than that God would give to his people some manifest tokens of his presence, and some striking confirmation of the truth of his religion.

There has perhaps never been an occasion when we should more certainly expect the evidences of the Divine interposition than during the exile of his people in Babylon; and during their long captivity there it is not easy to conceive of an occasion on which such an interposition would be more likely to occur than when, in the very presence of the monarch and his court, three youths of eminent devotedness to the cause of God were cast into a burning furnace, "because" they steadfastly refused to dishonor him.

Verse 26

Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth … - Margin, "door." The Chaldee word means door, gate, entrance. The "form" of the furnace is

unknown. There was a place, however, through which the fuel was cast into it, and this is doubtless intended by the word "door" or "mouth" here used.

Ye servants of the most high God - They had professed to be his servants; he now saw that they were acknowledged as such. The phrase "most high God" implies that he regarded him as supreme over all other gods, though it is probable that he still retained his belief in the existence of inferior divinities. It was much, however, to secure the acknowledgment of the monarch of the capital of the pagan world, that the God whom they adored was supreme. The phrase "most high God" is not often employed in the Scriptures, but in every instance it is used as an appellation of the true God.

Come forth, and come hither - The "reasons" which seem to have influenced this singular monarch to recal the sentence passed on them, and to attempt to punish them no further, seem to have been, that he had some remains of conscience; that he was accustomed to pay respect to what "he" regarded as God; and that he now saw evidence that a "true" God was there.

Verse 27

And the princes, governors, and captains - Notes, Daniel 3:3.

And the king's counselors - Notes, Daniel 3:24.

Being gathered together, saw these men - There could be no mistake about the reality of the miracle. They came out as they were cast in. There could have been no trick, no art, no legerdemain, by which they could have been preserved and restored. If the facts occurred as they are stated here, then there can be no doubt that this was a real miracle.

Upon whose bodies the fire had no power - That is, the usual power of fire on the human body was prevented.

Nor was a hair of their head singed - That which would be most likely to have burned. The design is to show that the fire had produced absolutely no effect on them.

Neither were their coats changed - On the word "coats," see the notes at Daniel 3:21. The word "changed" means that there was no change caused by the fire either in their color or their texture.

Nor the smell of fire had passed on them - Not the slightest effect had been produced by the fire; not even so much as to occasion the smell caused by fire when cloth is singed or burned. Perhaps, however, sulphur or pitch had been used in heating the furnace; and the idea may be, that their

preservation had been so entire, that not even the smell of the smoke caused by those combustibles could be perceived.

Verse 28

Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach … - On the characteristic of mind thus evinced by this monarch, see the notes and practical remarks at Daniel 2:46-47.

Who hath sent his angel - This proves that the king regarded this mysterious fourth personage as an angel, and that he used the phrase Daniel 3:25 "is like the son of God" only in that sense. That an angel should be employed on an embassage of this kind, we have seen, is in accordance with the current statements of the Scriptures. Compare "Excursus I." to Prof. Stuart "on the Apocalypse." See also Luke 1:11-20, Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:20-21; Matthew 2:13, Matthew 2:19-20; Matthew 4:11; Matthew 18:10; Acts 12:7-15; Genesis 32:1-2; 2 Kings 6:17; Exodus 14:19; Exodus 23:20; Exodus 33:2; Numbers 20:16; Joshua 5:13; Isaiah 63:9; Daniel 10:5-13, Daniel 10:20-21; Daniel 12:1.

And have changed the king's word - That is, his purpose or command. Their conduct, and the Divine protection in consequence of their conduct, had had the effect wholly to change his purpose toward them. He had resolved to destroy them; he now resolved to honor them. This is referred to by the monarch himself as a remarkable result, as indeed it was - that an Eastern despot, who had resolved on the signal punishment of any of his subjects, should be so entirety changed in his purposes toward them.

And yielded their bodies - The Greek adds here εἰς πῦρ *eis pur* - "to the fire." So the Arabic. This is doubtless the sense of the passage. The meaning is, that rather than bow clown to worship gods which they regarded as no gods; rather than violate their consciences, and do wrong, they had preferred to be cast into the flames, committing themselves to the protection of God. It is implied here that they had done this voluntarily, and that they might easily have avoided it if they had chosen to obey the king. He had given them time to deliberate on the subject Daniel 3:14-15, and he knew that they had resolved to pursue the course which they did from principle, no matter what might be the results Daniel 3:16-18. This strength of principle - this obedience to the dictates of conscience - this determination not to do wrong at any hazard - he could not but respect; and this is a remarkable instance to show that a firm and steady course in doing what is right will command the respect of even wicked men. This monarch, with all

his pride, and haughtiness, and tyranny, had not a few generous qualities, and some of the finest illustrations of human nature were furnished by him.

That they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God - They gave up their bodies to the flame rather than do this.

Verse 29

Therefore I make a decree - Margin, "A decree is made by me." Chaldee, "And from me a decree is laid down," or enacted. This Chaldee word (טעם *ṭeʿêm*) means, properly, "taste, flavor;" then "judgment," the power of "discerning" - apparently as of one who can judge of "wine," etc., by the taste; then the sentence, the decree which is consequent on an act of judging - always retaining the idea that the determination or decree is based on a conception of the true merits of the case. The decree in this case was not designed to be regarded as arbitrary, but as being founded on what was right and proper. He had seen evidence that the God whom these three youths worshipped was a true God, and was able to protect those who trusted in him; and regarding him as a real God, he made this proclamation, that respect should be shown to him throughout his extended realm.

That every people, nation, and language - This decree is in accordance with the usual style of an Oriental monarch. It was, however, a fact that the empire of Nebuchadnezzar extended over nearly all of the then known world.

Which speak any thing amiss - Margin, "error." The Chaldee word (שׁלה *shâluh*) means "error, wrong," and it refers here to anything that would be fitted to lead the minds of men astray in regard to the true character of the God whom these persons worshipped. The Vulgate renders it "blasphemy." So also it is rendered in the Greek, βλασφημίαν *blasphēmian* The intention was, that their God was to be acknowledged as a God of eminent power and rank. It does not appear that Nebuchadnezzar meant that he should be regarded as the "only" true God, but he was willing, in accordance with the prevailing notions of idolatry, that he should take his place among the gods, and a most honored place.

Shall be cut in pieces - Margin, "made." This was a species of punishment that was common in many ancient nations. - Gesenius.

And their houses shall be made a dunghill - Compare 2 Kings 10:27. The idea is, that the utmost possible dishonor and contempt should be placed on their houses, by devoting them to the most vile and offensive uses.

Because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort - He does not say that there was no other god at all, for his mind had not yet reached this conclusion, but there was no other one who had equal power with the God of the Hebrews. He had seen a manifestation of his power in the preservation of the three Hebrews such as no other god had ever exhibited, and he was willing to admit that in this respect he surpassed all other divinities.

Verse 30

Then the king promoted Shadrach … - Margin, "made to prosper." The Chaldee means no more than "made to prosper." Whether he restored them to their former places, or to higher honors, does not appear. There would be, however, nothing inconsistent with his usual course in supposing that he raised them to more exalted stations.

In the province of Babylon - See the notes at Daniel 2:49. The Greek and the Arabic add here, "And he counted them worthy to preside over all the Jews that were in his kingdom." But nothing of this is found in the Chaldee, and it is not known by whom this addition was made.

In the Vulgate and the Greek versions, and in some of the critical editions of the Hebrew Scriptures (Walton, Hahn, etc.), the three first verses of the following chapter are subjoined to this. It is well known that the divisions of the chapters are of no authority, but it is clear that these verses belong more appropriately to the following chapter than to this, as the reason there assigned by the monarch for the proclamation is what occurred to himself Daniel 3:2, rather than what he had witnessed in others. The division, therefore, which is made in our common version of the Bible, and in the Syriac and the Arabic, is the correct one.

Practical Remarks

I. The instance recorded in this chapter Daniel 3:1-7 is not improbably the first case which ever occurred in the world of an attempt to produce "conformity" in idolatrous worship by penal statute. It has, however, been abundantly imitated since, alike in the pagan and in the nominally Christian world. There are no portions of history more interesting than those which describe the progress of religious liberty; the various steps which have been taken to reach the result which has now been arrived at, and to settle the principles which are now regarded as the true ones. Between the views which were formerly entertained, and which are still entertained in many countries, and those which constitute the Protestant notions on the subject,

there is a greater difference than there is, in regard to civil rights, between the views which prevail under an Oriental despotism, and the most enlarged and enlightened notions of civil freedom. The views which have prevailed on the subject are the following:

1. The "general" doctrine among the pagan has been, that there were many gods in heaven and earth, and that all were entitled to reverence. One nation was supposed to have as good a right to worship its own gods as another, and it was regarded as at least an act of courtesy to show respect to the gods that any nation adored, in the same way as respect would be shown to the sovereigns who presided over them. Hence, the gods of all nations could be consistently introduced into the Pantheon at Rome; hence, there were few attempts to "proselyte" among the pagan; and hence, it was not common to "persecute" those who worshipped other gods. Persecution of idolaters "by" those who were idolaters was, therefore, rarely known among the pagan, and "toleration" was not contrary to the views which prevailed, provided the gods of the country were recognized. In ancient Chaldea, Assyria, Greece, and Rome, in the earliest ages, persecution was rare, and the toleration of other forms of religion was usual.

2. The views which have prevailed leading to persecution, and which are a violation, as we suppose, of all just notions of liberty on the subject of religion, are the following:

(a) Those among the pagan which, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, require "all" to worship a particular god that should be set up. In such a case, it is clear that while all who were "idolaters," and who supposed that "all" the gods worshipped by others should be respected, could render homage; it is also clear that those who regarded "all" idols as false gods, and believed that "none" of them ought to be worshipped, could "not" comply with the command. Such was the case with the Jews who were in Babylon Daniel 3:8-18, for supposing that there was but one God, it was plain that they could not render homage to any other. While, therefore, every idolater could render homage to "any" idol, the Hebrew could render homage to "none."

(b) The views among the pagan "prohibiting" the exercise of a certain kind of religion. According to the prevailing views, no mode of religion

could be tolerated which would maintain that “all” the gods that were worshipped were false. Religion was supposed to be identified with the best interests of the state, and was recognized by the laws, and protected by the laws. To deny the claim, therefore, of any and of all the gods that were worshipped; to maintain that all were false alike; to call on men to forsake their idols, and to embrace a new religion - all this was regarded as an attack on the state. This was the attitude which Christianity assumed toward the religions of the Roman empire, and it was this which led to the fiery persecutions which prevailed there. While Rome could consistently tolerate any form of idolatry that would recognize the religion established by the state, it could not tolerate a system which maintained that “all” idolatry was wrong. It would allow another god to be placed in the Pantheon, but it could not recognize a system which woud remove every god from that temple. Christianity, then, made war on the system of idolatry that prevailed in the Roman empire in two respects: in proclaiming a “purer” religion, denouncing all the corruptions which idolatry had engendered, and which it countenanced; and in denying altogether that the gods which were worshipped were true gods - thus arraying itself against the laws, the priesthood, the venerable institutions, and all the passions and prejudices of the people. These views may be thus summed up:

(aa) all the gods worshipped by others were to be recognized;

(bb) new ones might be introduced by authority of the state;

(cc) the gods which the state approved and acknowledged were to be honored by all;

(dd) if any persons denied their existence, and their claims to homage, they were to be treated as enemies of the state.

It was on this last principle that persecutions ever arose under the pagan forms of religion. Infidels, indeed, have been accustomed to charge Christianity with all the persecutions on account of religion, and to speak in high terms of “the mild tolerance of the ancient pagans;” of “the universal toleration of polytheism;” of “the Roman princes beholding without concern a thousand forms of religion subsisting in peace under their gentle

sway." - Gibbon. But it should be remembered that pagan nations required of every citizen conformity to their national idolatries. When this was refused, persecution arose as a matter of course. Stilpo was banished from Athens for affirming that the statue of Minerva in the citadel was no divinity, but only the work of the chisel of Phidias. Protagoras received a similar punishment for this sentence: "Whether there be gods or not, I have nothing to offer." Prodicus, and his pupil Socrates, suffered death for opinions at variance with the established idolatry of Athens. Alcibiades and Aeschylus narrowly escaped a like end for a similar cause. Cicero lays it down as a principle of legislation entirely conformable to the laws of the Roman state, that "no man shall have separate gods for himself; and no man shall worship by himself new or foreign gods, unless they have been publicly acknowledged by the laws of the state." - "De Legibus," ii. 8. Julius Paulus, the Roman civilian, gives the following as a leading feature of the Roman law: "Those who introduced new religions, or such as were unknown in their tendency and nature, by which the minds of men might be agitated, were degraded, if they belonged to the higher ranks, and if they were in a lower state, were punished with death." See M‹Ilvaine‘s "Lectures on the Evidences of Christianity," pp. 427-429.

(c) The attempts made to produce conformity in countries where the "Christian" system has prevailed. In such countries, as among the pagan, it has been supposed that religion is an important auxiliary to the purposes of the state, and that it is proper that the state should not only "protect" it, but "regulate" it. It has claimed the right, therefore, to prescribe the form of religion which shall prevail; to require conformity to that, and to punish all who did not conform to the established mode of worship. This attempt to produce conformity has led to most of the persecutions of modern times.

3. The principles which have been settled by the discussions and agitations of past times, and which are recognized in all countries where there are any just views of religious liberty, and which are destined yet to be universally recognized, are the following:

(a) There is to be, on the subject of religion, perfect liberty to worship God in the manner that shall be most in accordance with the views of the individual himself, provided in doing it he does not interfere with the rights

or disturb the worship of others. It is not merely that men are to be "tolerated" in the exercise of their religion - for the word "tolerate" would seem to imply that the state had some right of control in the matter - but the true word to express the idea is "liberty."

(b) The state is to "protect" all in the enjoyment of these equal rights. Its "authority" does not go beyond this; its "duty" demands this. These two principles comprise all that is required on the subject of religious liberty. They have been in our world, however, principles of slow growth. They were unknown in Greece - for Socrates died because they were not understood; they were unknown in Rome - for the state claimed the power to determine what gods should be admitted into the Pantheon; they were unknown even in Judea - for a national or state religion was established there; they were unknown in Babylon - for the monarch there claimed the right of enforcing conformity to the national religion; they were unknown in Europe in the middle ages - for all the horrors of the Inquisition grew out of the fact that they were not understood; they are unknown in Turkey, and China, and Persia - for the state regards religion as under its control. The doctrine of entire freedom in religion, of perfect liberty to worship God according to our own views of right, is "the last point which society is to reach in this direction." It is impossible to conceive that there is to be anything "beyond" this which mankind are to desire in the progress toward the perfection of the social organization; and when this shall be everywhere reached, the affairs of the world will be placed on a permanent footing.

II. In the spirit evinced by the three young men, and the answer which they gave, when accused of not worshipping the image, and when threatened with a horrid death, we have a beautiful illustration of the nature and value of "the religion of principle," Daniel 3:12-18. To enable us to see the force of this example, and to appreciate its value, we are to remember that these were yet comparatively young men; that they were captives in a distant land; that they had no powerful friends at court; that they had had, compared with what we now have, few advantages of instruction; that they were threatened with a most horrid death; and that they had nothing of a worldly nature to hope for by refusing compliance with the king's commands. This instance is of value to us, because it is not only important "to have religion," but "to have the best kind of religion;" and it is doubtless

in order that we “may” have this, that such examples are set before us in the Scriptures. In regard to this kind of religion, there are three inquiries which would present themselves: On what is it founded? what will it lead us to do? and what is its value?

(1) It is founded mainly on two things - an intelligent view of duty, and fixed principle.

(a) An intelligent view of duty; an acquaintance with what is right, and what is wrong. These young men had made up their minds intelligently, that it was right to worship God, and that it was wrong to render homage to an idol. This was not “obstinacy.” Obstinacy exists where a man has made up his mind, and resolves to act, without any good reason, or without an intelligent view of what is right or wrong, and where he adheres to his purpose not because it is right, but from the influence of mere “will.” The religion of principle is always found where there is an intelligent view of what is right, and a man can give a “reason” for what he does.

(b) This religion is founded on a determination to “do” what is right, and “not” to do what is wrong. The question is not what is expedient, or popular, or honorable, or lucrative, or pleasant, but what is right.

(2) What will such a religion lead us to do? This question may be answered by a reference to the case before us, and it will be found that it will lead us to do three things:

(a) To do our “duty” without being solicitous or anxious about the results, Daniel 3:16.

(b) To put confidence in God, feeling that if he pleases he “can” protect us from danger, Daniel 3:17.

(c) To do our duty, “whatever may be the consequences - whether he protects us or not,” Daniel 3:18,

(3) What is the “value” of this kind of religion?

(a) It is the only kind in which there is any fixed and certain standard. If a man regulates his opinions and conduct from expediency, or from respect to the opinions of others, or from feeling, or from popular impulses, there is no standard; there is nothing settled or definite. Now one thing is popular, now another; today the feelings may prompt to one thing, tomorrow to another; at one time expediency will suggest one course, at another a different course.

(b) It is the only kind of religion on which reliance can be placed. In endeavoring to spread the gospel; to meet the evils which are in the world; to promote the cause of temperance, chastity, liberty, truth, and peace, the only thing on which permanent reliance can be placed is the religion of principle. And

(c) It is the only religion which is "certainly" genuine. A man may see much poetic beauty in religion; he may have much of the religion of sentiment; he may admire God in the grandeur of his works; he may have warm feelings; easily enkindled on the subject of religion, and may even weep at the foot of the cross in view of the wrongs and woes that the Saviour endured; he may be impressed with the forms, and pomp, and splendor of gorgeous worship, and still have no genuine repentance for his sins, no saving faith in the Redeemer.

III. We have in this chapter Daniel 3:19-23 an affecting case of an attempt to "punish" men for holding certain opinions, and for acting in conformity with them. When we read of an instance of persecutions like this, it occurs to us to ask the following questions: What is persecution? why has it been permitted by God? and what effects have followed from it?

(1) What is persecution? It is pain inflicted, or some loss, or disadvantage in person, family, or office, on account of holding certain opinions. It has had "two" objects: one to "punish" men for holding certain opinions, as if the persecutor had a right to regard this as an offence against the state; and the other a professed view to reclaim those who are made to suffer, and to save their souls. In regard to the "pain" or "suffering" involved in persecution, it is not material what "kind" of pain is inflicted in order to constitute persecution. "Any" bodily suffering; any deprivation of

comfort; any exclusion from office; any holding up of one to public reproach; or any form of ridicule, constitutes the essence of persecution. It may be added, that not a few of the inventions most distinguished for inflicting pain, and known as refinements of cruelty, have been originated in times of persecution, and would probably have been unknown if it had not been for the purpose of restraining men from the free exercise of religious opinions. The Inquisition has been most eminent in this; and within the walls of that dreaded institution it is probable that human ingenuity has been exhausted in devising the most refined modes of inflicting torture on the human frame.

(2) Why has this been permitted? Among the reasons why it has been permitted may be the following:

(a) To show the power and reality of religion. It seemed desirable to subject it to "all kinds" of trial, in order to show that its existence could not be accounted for except on the supposition that it is from God. If men had never been called on to "suffer" on account of religion, it would have been easy for the enemies of religion to allege that there was little evidence that it was genuine, or was of value, for it had never been tried. Compare Job 1:9-11. As it is, it has been subjected to "every form" of trial which wicked men could devise, and has shown itself to be adapted to meet them all. The work of the martyrs has been well done; and religion in the times of martyrdom has shown itself to be all that it is desirable it should be.

(b) In order to promote its spread in the world. "The blood of the martyrs" has been "the seed of the church;" and it is probable that religion in past times has owed much of its purity, and of its diffusion, to the fact that it has been persecuted.

(c) To fit the sufferers for an exalted place in heaven. They who have suffered persecution needed trials as well as others, for "all" Christians need them - and "theirs" came in this form. Some of the most lovely traits of Christian character have been brought out in connection with persecution, and some of the most triumphant exhibitions of preparation for heaven have been made at the stake.

(3) What have been the effects of persecution?

(a) It has been the "settled" point that the Christian religion cannot be destroyed by persecution. There is no power to be brought against it more mighty than, for example, was that of the Roman empire; and it is impossible to conceive that there should be greater refinements of cruelty than have been employed.

(b) The effect has been to diffuse the religion which has been persecuted. The manner in which the sufferings inflicted have been endured has shown that there is reality and power in it. It is also a law of human nature to "sympathize" with the wronged and the oppressed, and we insensibly learn to transfer the sympathy which we have for these "persons" to their "opinions." When we see one who is "wronged," we soon find our hearts beating in unison with his, and soon find ourselves taking sides with him in everything.

IV. We have in this chapter Daniel 3:24-27 an instructive illustration of the "protection" which God affords his people in times of trial. These men were thrown into the furnace on account of their obedience to God, and their refusal to do what they knew he would not approve. The result showed, by a most manifest miracle, that they were right in the course which they took, and their conduct was the occasion of furnishing a most striking proof of the wisdom of trusting in God in the faithful performance of duty, irrespective of consequences. Similar illustrations were furnished in the case of Daniel in the lions' den Daniel 6:16-22, and of Peter Acts 12:1-10. But a question of much interest arises here, which is, What kind of protection may "we" look for now?

(1) There are numerous "promises" made to the righteous of every age and country. They are not promises indeed of "miraculous" interference, but they are promises of "an" interposition of some kind in their behalf, which will show that "it is not vain thing to serve God." Among them are those recorded in the following places: Isaiah 54:7-8; Matthew 5:4; Job 5:19,

(2) In regard to the "kind" of interposition that we may look for now, or the "nature" of the favors implied in these promises, it may be observed:

(a) That we are not to look for any “miraculous” interpositions in our favor.

(b) We are not to expect that there will he on earth an “exact adjustment” of the Divine dealings according to the deserts of all persons, or according to the principles of a “completed” moral government, when there will be a perfect system of rewards and punishments.

(c) We are not to expect that there will be such manifest and open rewards of obedience, and such direct and constant benefits resulting from religion in this world, as to lead men “merely” from these to serve and worship God. If religion were “always” attended with prosperity; if the righteous were never persecuted, were never poor, or were never bereaved, multitudes would be induced to become religious, as many followed the Saviour, not because they saw the miracles, but because they did eat of the loaves and fishes, and were filled: John 6:26. While, therefore, in the Divine administration here it is proper that there should be so many and so marked interpositions in favor of the good as to show that God is the friend of his people, it is “not” proper that there should be so many that men would be induced to engage in his service for the love of the reward rather than for the sake of the service itself; because they are to be happy, rather than because they love virtue. It may be expected, therefore, that while the general course of the Divine administration will be in favor of virtue, there may be much intermingled with this that will appear to be of a contrary kind; much that will be fitted to “test” the faith of the people of God, and to show that they love his service for its own sake.

V. We have, in Daniel 3:28-30, a striking instance of the effect which an adherence to principle will produce on the minds of worldly and wicked men. Such men have no “love” for religion, but they can see that a certain course accords with the views which are professedly held, and that it indicates high integrity. They can see that firmness and consistency are worthy of commendation and reward. They can see, as Nebuchadnezzar did in this case, that such a course will secure the Divine favor, and they will be disposed to honor it on that account. For a time, a tortuous course may seem to prosper, but in the end, solid fame, high rewards, honorable offices, and a

grateful remembrance after death, follow in the path of strict integrity and unbending virtue.

DANIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

Section I - Authenticity of the Chapter

To the authenticity of this chapter, as to the preceding, objections and difficulties have been urged, sufficient, in the view of the objectors, to destroy its credibility as a historical narrative. Those objections, which may be seen at length in Bertholdt (pp. 70-72,285-309), Bleek ("Theol. Zeitscrift, Drittes Heft," 268, following.), and Eichhorn ("Einlei." iv. 471, following.), relate mainly to two points - those derived from the want of historical proofs to confirm the narrative, and those derived from its alleged intrinsic improbability.

I. The former of these, derived from the want of historic confirmation of the truth of the narrative, are summarily the following:

(1) That the historical books of the Old Testament give no intimation that these remarkable things happened to Nebuchadnezzar, that he was deranged and driven from his throne, and made to dwell under the open heaven with the beasts of the field - an omission which, it is said, we cannot suppose would have occurred if these things had happened, since the Hebrew writers, on account of the wrongs which Nebuchadnezzar had done to their nation, would have certainly seized on such facts as a demonstration of the Divine displeasure against him.

(2) There is no record of these events among the pagan writers of antiquity; no writer among the Greeks, or other nations, ever having mentioned them.

(3) It is equally remarkable that Josephus, in his narrative of the sickness of Nebuchadnezzar, makes no allusion to any knowledge of this among other nations, and shows that he derived his information only from the sacred books of his own people.

(4) It is acknowledged by Origen and Jerome that they could find no historical grounds for the truth of this account.

(5) If these things had occurred, as here related, they would not have been thus concealed, for the king himself took all possible measures, by the edict referred to in this chapter, to make them known, and to make a permanent record of them. How could it have happened that all knowledge would have been lost if they had thus occurred?

(6) if the edict was lost, how was it ever recovered again? When, and where, and by whom, was it found? If actually issued, it was designed to make the case known throughout the empire. Why did it fail of producing that effect so as not to have been forgotten? If it was lost, how was the event known? And if it was lost, how could it have been recovered and recorded by the author of this book? Compare Bertholdt, p. 298.

To these objections, it maybe replied,

(1) That the silence of the historical books of the Old Testament furnishes no well-founded objection to what is said in this chapter, for none of them pretend to bring down the history of Nebuchadnezzar to the close of his life, or to this period of his life. The books of Kings and of Chronicles mention his invasion of the land of Palestine and of Egypt; they record the fact of his carrying away the children of Israel to Babylon, but they do not profess to make any record of what occurred to him after that, nor of the close of his life. The second book of Chronicles closes with an account of the removal of the Jews to Babylon, and the carrying away of the sacred vessels of the temple, and the burning of the temple, and the destruction of the city, but does not relate the history of Nebuchadnezzar any farther, Daniel 4:25. It "may" appear, from the fair interpretation of the whole narrative, that nothing more occurred than was natural in the circumstances.

(b) The supposition that he was left to wander without any kind of oversight or guardianship is entirely gratuitous, and is unauthorized by the account which Nebuchadnezzar gives of what occurred. This opinion has been partly formed from a false interpretation of the phrase in Daniel 4:36 - "and my counselers and my lords sought unto me" - as if they had sought him when he was wandering, with a view to find out where he was; whereas the true meaning of that passage is, that "after" his restoration they sought

unto him, or applied to him as the head of the empire, as they had formerly done.

(c) There is some probability from the passage in Daniel 4:15 - “leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass” - that Nebuchadnezzar was secured in the manner in which maniacs often have been, and that in his rage he was carefully guarded from all danger of injuring himself. See the notes at Daniel 4:15.

(d) On the supposition that he was not, still there might have been all proper “care” taken to guard him. All that may be implied when it is said that he “was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen,” etc., may have been that this was his “propensity” in that state; that he had this roving disposition, and was disposed rather to wander in fields and groves than to dwell in the abodes of men; and that he was driven “by this propensity,” not “by men,” to leave his palace, and to take up his residence in parks or groves - anywhere rather than in human habitations. This has been not an uncommon propensity with maniacs, and there is no improbability in supposing that this was permitted by those who had the care of him, as far as was consistent with his safety, and with what was due to him as a monarch, though his reason was driven from its throne. In the parks attached to the palace; in the large pleasure-grounds, that were not improbably stocked with various kinds of animals, as a sort of royal menagerie, there is no improbability in supposing that he may have been allowed at proper times, and with suitable guards, to roam, nor that the fallen and humbled monarch may have found, in comparatively lucid intervals, a degree of pleasant amusement in such grounds, nor even that it might be supposed that this would contribute to his restoration to health.

Nor, on “any” supposition in regard to these statements, even admitting that there was a great degree of criminal inattention on the part of his friends, would his treatment have been worse than what has usually occurred in respect to the insane. Up to quite a recent period, and even now in many civilized lands, the insane have been treated with the most gross neglect, and with the severest cruelty, even by their friends. Left to wander where they chose without a protector; unshaven and unwashed; the sport of the idle and the vicious; thrown into common jails among felons; bound

with heavy chains to the cold walls of dungeons; confined in cellars or garrets with no fire in the coldest weather; with insufficient clothing, perhaps entirely naked, and in the midst of the most disgusting filth - such treatment, even in Christian lands, and by Christian people, may show that in a pagan land, five hundred years before the light of Christianity dawned upon the world, it is not “wholly” incredible that an insane monarch “might” have been treated in the manner described in this chapter.

If the best friends now may so neglect, or treat with such severity, an insane son or daughter, there is no improbability in supposing that in an age of comparative barbarism there may have been as “little” humanity as is implied in this chapter. The following extracts from the Second Annual Report of the Prison Discipline Society (“Boston”) will show what has occurred in the nineteenth century, in this Christian land, and in the old commonwealth of Massachusetts - a commonwealth distinguished for morals, and for humane feeling - and will demonstrate at the same time that what is here stated about the monarch of pagan Babylon is not unworthy of belief. They refer to the treatment of lunatics in that commonwealth before the establishment of the hospital for the insane at Worcester. “In Massachusetts, by an examination made with care, about thirty lunatics have been found in prison. In one prison were found three; in another five; in another six; and in another ten. It is a source of great complaint with the sheriffs and jailers that they must receive such persons, because they have no suitable accommodations for them. Of those last mentioned, one was found in an apartment in which he had been nine years. He had a wreath of rags around his body, and another around his neck. This was all his clothing. He had no bed, chair, or bench. Two or three: rough planks were strewed around the room; a heap of filthy straw, like the nest of swine, was in the corner. He had built a bird‘s nest of mud in the iron grate of his den. Connected with his wretched apartment was a dark dungeon, having no orifice for the admission of light, heat, or air, except the iron door, about two and a half feet square, opening into it from the prison.

The other lunatics in the same prison were scattered about in different apartments, with thieves and murderers, and persons under arrest, but not yet convicted of guilt. In the prison of five lunatics, they were confined in separate cells, which were almost dark dungeons. It was difficult after the

door was open to see them distinctly. The ventilation was so incomplete that more than one person on entering them has found the air so fetid as to produce nausea, and almost vomiting. The old straw on which they were laid, and their filthy garments, were such as to make their insanity more hopeless; and at one time it was not considered within the province of the physician to examine particularly the condition of the lunatics. In these circumstances any improvement of their minds could hardly be expected. Instead of having three out of four restored to reason, as is the fact in some of the favored lunatic asylums, it is to be feared that in these circumstances some who might otherwise be restored would become incurable, and that others might lose their lives, to say nothing of present suffering.

In the prison in which were six lunatics their condition was less wretched. But they were sometimes an annoyance, and sometimes a sport to the convicts; and even the apartment in which the females were confined opened into the yard of the men; there was an injurious interchange of obscenity and profanity between them, which was not restrained by the presence of the keeper. In the prison, or house of correction, so called, in which were ten lunatics, two were found about seventy years of age, a male and female, in the same apartment of an upper story. The female was lying upon a heap of straw under a broken window. The snow in a severe storm was beating through the window, and lay upon the straw around her withered body, which was partially covered with a few filthy and tattered garments. The man was lying in the corner of the room in a similar situation, except that he was less exposed to the storm.

The former had been in this apartment six, and the latter twenty-one years. Another lunatic in the same prison was found in a plank apartment of the first story, where he had been eight years. During this time he had never left the room but twice. The door of this apartment had not been opened in eighteen months. The food was furnished through a small orifice in the door. The room was warmed by no fire; and still the woman of the house said ‹he had never froze.‘ As he was seen through the orifice of the door, the first question was, ‹Is that a human being?‘ The hair was gone from one side of his head, and his eyes were like balls of fire. In the cellar of the same prison were five lunatics. The windows of this cellar were no defense against the storm, and, as might be supposed, the woman of the house said,

‹We have a sight to do to keep them from freezing.‘ There was no fire in this cellar which could be felt by four of these lunatics.

One of the five had a little fire of turf in an apartment of the cellar by herself. She was, however, infuriate, if any one came near her. The woman was committed to this cellar seventeen years ago. The apartments are about six feet by eight. They are made of coarse plank, and have an orifice in the door for the admission of light and air, about six inches by four. The darkness was such in two of these apartments that nothing could be seen by looking through the orifice in the door. At the same time there was a poor lunatic in each. A man who has grown old was committed to one of them in 1810, and had lived in it seventeen years. An emaciated female was found in a similar apartment, in the dark, without fire, almost without covering, where she had been nearly two years. A colored woman in another, in which she had been six years; and a miserable man in another, in which he had been four years.”

(2) It is asked by Bertholdt, as an objection (p. 301), whether “it is credible that one who had been for so long a time a maniac would be restored again to the throne; and whether the government would be again placed in his hands, without any apprehension that he would relapse into the same state? Or whether it can be believed that the lives and fortunes of so many million would be again entrusted to his will and power?” To these questions it may be replied:

(a) That if he was restored to his reason he had a right to the throne, and it might not have been a doubtful point whether he should be restored to it or not.

(b) It is probable that during that time a regency was appointed, and that there would be a hope entertained that he would be restored. Undoubtedly, during the continuation of this malady, the government would be, as was the case during the somewhat similar malady of George III of Great Britain, placed in the hands of others, and unless there was a revolution, or an usurpation, he would be, of course, restored to his throne on the recovery of his reason.

(c) To this it may be added, that he was a monarch who had been eminently successful in his conquests; who had done much to enlarge the limits of the empire, and to adorn the capital; and that much was to be apprehended from the character of his legal successor, Evil-Merodach (Hengstenberg, p. 113); and that if he were displaced, they who were then the chief officers of the nation had reason to suppose that, in accordance with Oriental usage on the accession of a new sovereign, they would lose their places.

(3) It has been asked also, as an objection, whether "it is not to be presumed that Nebuchadnezzar, on the supposition that he was restored from so fearful a malady, would have employed all the means in his power to suppress the knowledge of it; or whether, if any communication was made in regard to it, pains would not have been taken to give a coloring to the account by suppressing the real truth, and by attributing the affliction to some other cause?" - Bertholdt, p. 301. To this it may be replied:

(a) That if the representation here made of the cause of his malady is correct, that it was a Divine judgment on him for his pride, and that God's design in bringing it on him was that he himself might be made known, it is reasonable to presume that, on his restoration, there would be such a Divine influence on the mind of the monarch, as to lead him to make this proclamation, or this public recognition of the Most High;

(b) that the edict seems to have been made, not as a matter of policy, but under the fresh recollection of a restoration from so terrible a calamity;

(c) that Nebuchadnezzar seems to have been a man who had a conscience that prompted him to a decided acknowledgment of Divine interposition;

(d) that he had a strong religious propensity (compare Daniel 4:2-3, Daniel 4:34-37), and then again as a mere idolater, using the language which an idolater would employ, and still acknowledging the reality of idol gods, Daniel 4:8-9, Daniel 4:18." To this it may be replied, that this very circumstance is rather a confirmation of the truth of the account than otherwise. It is just such an account as we should suppose that a monarch,

trained up in idolatry, and practicing it all his life, and yet suddenly, and in this impressive manner, made acquainted with the true God, would be likely to give. In an edict published by such a monarch, under such circumstances, it would be strange if there should be no betrayal of the fact that he had been a worshipper of pagan gods, nor would it be strange that when he disclosed his dream to Daniel, asking him to interpret it, and professing to believe that he was under the influence of inspiration from above, he should trace it to the gods in general, Daniel 4:8-9, Daniel 4:18.

And, in like manner, if the thing actually occurred, as is related, it would be certain that he would use such language in describing it as an "orthodox Jew" might use. It is to be remembered that he is represented as obtaining his view of what was meant by the vision from Daniel, and nothing is more probable than that he would use such language as Daniel would have suggested. It could not be supposed that one who had been an idolater all his life would soon efface from his mind all the impressions made by the habit of idolatry, so that no traces of it would appear in a proclamation on an occasion like this; nor could it be supposed that there would be no recognition of God as the true God. Nothing would be more natural than such an intermingling of false notions with the true. Indeed, there is in fact scarcely any circumstance in regard to this chapter that has more the air of authenticity, nor could there well be anything more probable in itself, than what is here stated.

It is just such an intermingling of truth with falsehood as we should expect in a mind trained in paganism; and yet this is a circumstance which would not be very likely to occur to one who attempted a forgery, or who endeavored to draw the character of a pagan monarch in such circumstances without authentic materials. If the edict was the work of a Jew, he would have been likely to represent its author without any remains of paganism in his mind: if it were the work of a pagan, there would have been no such recognition of the true God. If it is a mere fiction, the artifice is too refined to have been likely to occur, to attempt to draw him in this state of mind, where there was an intermingling of falsehood with truth; of the remains of all his old habits of thinking, with new and momentous truths that had just begun to dawn on his mind. The supposition that will best suit all the circumstances of the case, and be liable to the fewest objections, is, that the

account is an unvarnished statement of what actually occurred. On the whole subject of the objections to this chapter, the reader may consult Hengstenberg, Die Authentie des Daniel, pp. 100-119. For many of the remarks here made, I am indebted to that work. Compare further see the notes at Daniel 4:25, following.

Section II. - Analysis of the Chapter

The chapter professes to be an edict published by Nebuchadnezzar after his recovery from a long period of insanity, which was brought upon him for his pride. The edict was promulgated with a view to lead men to acknowledge the true God. It states, in general, that the approach of his calamity was made known to him in a dream, which was interpreted by Daniel; that his own heart had been lifted up with pride in view of the splendid city which he had built; that the predicted malady came suddenly upon him, even while he was indulging in these proud reflections; that he was driven away from the abodes of men, a poor neglected maniac; that he again recovered his reason, and then his throne; and that the God who had thus humbled him, and again restored him, was the true God, and was worthy of universal adoration and praise. The edict, therefore, embraces the following parts:

I. The reason why it was promulgated - to show to all people, dwelling in all parts of the earth, the great things which the high God had done toward him, Daniel 4:1-3.

II. The statement of the fact that he had had a dream which greatly alarmed him, and which none of the Chaldean soothsayers had been able to interpret, Daniel 4:4-7.

III. The statement of the dream in full to Daniel, Daniel 4:8-18.

IV. The interpretation of the dream by Daniel - predicting the fact that he would become a maniac, and would be driven from his throne and kingdom, and compelled to take up his abode with the beasts of the field - a poor neglected outcast, Daniel 4:19-26.

V. The solemn and faithful counsel of Daniel to him to break off his sins, and to become a righteous man, if possibly the terrible calamity might be averted, Daniel 4:27.

VI. The fulfillment of the prediction of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar was walking on his palace, and, in the pride of his heart, surveying the great city which he had built, and suddenly a voice from heaven addressed him, announcing that his kingdom had departed, and his reason left him, Daniel 4:28-33.

VII. At the end of the appointed time, his reason was restored, and he gratefully acknowledged the Divine sovereignty, and was again reinstated on his throne, Daniel 4:34-36.

VIII. For all this, he says that he praised the God of heaven, for he had learned that all his works are truth, and his ways judgment, and that those who walk in pride he is able to abase, Daniel 4:37.

Verse 1

Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people … - The Syriac here has, "Nebuchadnezzar the king wrote to all people, etc." Many manuscripts in the Chaldee have שׁלח *shâlach* "sent," and some have כתב *kethab* "wrote;" but neither of these readings are probably genuine, nor are they necessary. The passage is rather a part of the edict of the king than a narrative of the author of the book, and in such an edict the comparatively abrupt style of the present reading would be what would be adopted. The Septuagint has inserted here a historical statement of the fact that Nebuchadnezzar did actually issue such an edict: "And Nebuchadnezzar the king wrote an encyclical epistle - ἐπιστολὴν ἐγκύκλιον *epistolēn egkuklion* - to all those nations in every place, and to the regions, and to all the tongues that dwell in all countries, generations and generations: ‹Nebuchadnezzar the king,'" etc. But nothing of this is in the original.

Unto all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth - That is, people speaking all the languages of the earth. Many nations were under the scepter of the king of Babylon; but it would seem that he designed this as a general proclamation, not only to those who were embraced in his empire, but to all the people of the world. Such a proclamation would be much in accordance with the Oriental style. Compare the note at Daniel 3:4.

Peace be multiplied unto you - This is in accordance with the usual Oriental salutation. Compare Genesis 43:23; Judges 6:23; 1 Samuel 25:6; Psalm 122:7; Luke 10:5; Ephesians 6:23; 1 Peter 1:2. This is the salutation with which one meets another now in the Oriental world - the same word still being retained, "Shalom," or "Salam." The idea seemed to be, that every blessing was found in peace, and every evil in conflict and war. The expression included the wish that they might be preserved from all that would disturb them; that they might be contented, quiet, prosperous, and happy. When it is said "peace be multiplied," the wish is that it might abound, or that they might be blessed with the numberless mercies which peace produces.

Verse 2

I thought it good - Margin, "it was seemly before me." The marginal reading is more in accordance with the original (קדמי שׁפר *shephar qâdâmay*). The proper meaning of the Chaldee word (שׁפר *shephar*) is, to be fair or beautiful; and the sense here is, that it seemed to him to be appropriate or becoming to make this public proclamation. It was fit and right that what God had done to him should be proclaimed to all nations.

To show the signs and wonders - Signs and wonders, as denoting mighty miracles, are not unfrequently connected in the Scriptures. See Exodus 7:3; Deuteronomy 4:34; Deuteronomy 13:1; Deuteronomy 34:11; Isaiah 8:18; Jeremiah 32:20. The word rendered "signs" (Hebrew: אות *'ôth* - Chaldee: את *'âth*) means, properly, "a sign," as something significant, or something that points out or designates anything; as Genesis 1:14, "shall be for "signs" and for seasons;" that is, signs of seasons. Then the word denotes an ensign, a military flag, Numbers 2:2; then a sign of something past, a token or remembrancer, Exodus 13:9, Exodus 13:16; Deuteronomy 6:8; then a sign of something future, a portent, an omen, Isaiah 8:18; then a sign or token of what is visible, as circumcision, Genesis 17:11, or the rainbow in the cloud, as a token of the covenant which God made with man, Genesis 9:12; then anything which serves as a sign or proof of the fulfillment of prophecy, Exodus 3:12; 1 Samuel 2:34; and then it refers to anything which is a sign or proof of Divine power, Deuteronomy 4:34; Deuteronomy 6:22; Deuteronomy 7:19, "et al."

The Hebrew word is commonly rendered "signs," but it is also rendered "token, ensign, miracles." As applied to what God does, it seems to be used in the sense of anything that is significant of his presence and power;

anything that shall manifestly show that, what occurs is done by him; anything that is beyond human ability, and that makes known the being and the perfections of God by a direct and extraordinary manifestation. Here the meaning is, that what was done in so remarkable a manner was significant of the agency of God; it was what demonstrated that he exists, and that showed his greatness. The word rendered "wonders" (תמה *temahh*) means, properly, what is fitted to produce astonishment, or to lead one to wonder, and is applied to miracles as adapted to produce that effect. It refers to that state of mind which exists where anything occurs out of the ordinary course of nature, or which indicates supernatural power. The Hebrew word rendered "wonders" is often used to denote miracles, Exodus 3:20; Exodus 7:3; Exodus 11:9; Deuteronomy 6:22, "et al." The meaning here is, that what had occurred was fitted to excite amazement, and to lead men to wonder at the mighty works of God.

That the high God - The God who is exalted, or lifted up; that is, the God who is above all. See Daniel 3:26. It is an appellation which would be given to God as the Supreme Being. The Greek translation of this verse is, "And now I show unto you the deeds - πράξεις *praxeis* - which the great God has done unto me, for it seemed good to me to show to you and your wise men" - τοῖς σοφισταῖς ὑμῶν *tois sophistais humōn* f0.

Verse 3

How great are his signs! - How great and wonderful are the things by which he makes himself known in this manner! The allusion is doubtless to what had occurred to himself - the event by which a monarch of such state and power had been reduced to a condition so humble. With propriety he would regard this as a signal instance of the Divine interposition, and as adapted to give him an exalted view of the supremacy of the true God.

And how mighty are his wonders! - The wonderful events which he does; the things fitted to produce admiration and astonishment. Compare Psalm 72:18; Psalm 86:10; Isaiah 25:1.

His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom - Nebuchadnezzar was doubtless led to this reflection by what had occurred to him. He, the most mighty monarch then on earth, had seen that his throne had no stability; he had seen that God had power at his will to bring him down from his lofty seat, and to transfer his authority to other hands; and he was naturally led to reflect that the throne of God was the only one that was stable and permanent. He could not but be convinced that God reigned over all, and

that his kingdom was not subject to the vicissitudes which occur in the kingdoms of this world. There have been few occurrences on the earth better adapted to teach this lesson than this.

And his dominion is from generation to generation - That is, it is perpetual. It is not liable to be arrested as that of man is, by death; it does not pass over from one family to another as an earthly scepter often does. The same scepter; the same system of laws; the same providential arrangements; the same methods of reward and punishment, have always existed under his government, and will continue to do so to the end of time. There is, perhaps, no more sublime view that can be taken of the government of God than this. All earthly princes die; all authority lodged in the hands of an earthly monarch is soon withdrawn. No one is so mighty that he can prolong his own reign; and no one can make his own authority extend to the next generation. Earthly governments, therefore, however mighty, are of short duration; and history is made up of the records of a great number of such administrations, many of them exceedingly brief, and of very various character. The scepter falls from the hand of the monarch, never to be resumed by him again; another grasps it to retain it also but a little time, and then he passes away. But the dominion of God is in all generations the same. This generation is under the government of the same Sovereign who reigned when Semiramis or Numa lived; and though the scepter has long since fallen from the hands of Alexander and the Caesars, yet the same God who ruled in their age is still on the throne.

Verse 4

I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest - Some manuscripts in the Greek add here, "In the eighteenth year of his reign Nebuchadnezzar said." These words, however, are not in the Hebrew, and are of no authority. The word rendered "at rest" (שׁלה *shelēh*) means, to be secure; to be free from apprehension or alarm. He designs to describe a state of tranquility and security. Greek, "at peace" - εἰρηνέυων *eirēneuōn* enjoying peace, or in a condition to enjoy peace. His wars were over; his kingdom was tranquil; he had built a magnificent capital; he had gathered around him the wealth and the luxuries of the world, and he was now in a condition to pass away the remainder of his life in ease and happiness.

In mine house - In his royal residence. It is possible that the two words here - house and palace - may refer to somewhat different things: the former - house - more particularly to his own private family - is domestic relations

as a man; and the latter - palace - to those connected with the government who resided in his palace. If this is so, then the passage would mean that all around him was peaceful, and that from no source had he any cause of disquiet. In his own private family - embracing his wife and children; and in the arrangements of the palace - embracing those who had charge of public affairs, he had no cause of uneasiness.

And flourishing in my palace - Greek, εὐθηνῶν ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου μου *euthēnōn epi tou thronou mou* - literally, "abundant upon my throne;" that is, he was tranquil, calm, prosperous on his throne. The Chaldee word (רענן *raʿănan*) means, properly, "green;" as, for example, of leaves or foliage. Compare the Hebrew word in Jeremiah 17:8; "He shall be as a tree planted by the waters - her leaf shall be green." Deuteronomy 12:2, "under every green tree," 2 Kings 16:4. A green and flourishing tree becomes thus the emblem of prosperity. See Psalm 1:3; Psalm 37:35; Psalm 92:12-14. The general meaning here is, that he was enjoying abundant prosperity. His kingdom was at peace, and in his own home he had every means of tranquil enjoyment.

Verse 5

I saw a dream - That is, he saw a representation made to him in a dream. There is something incongruous in our language in saying of one that he saw a dream.

Which made me afraid - The fear evidently arose from the apprehension that it was designed to disclose some important and solemn event. This was in accordance with a prevalent belief then (comp. Daniel 2:1), and it may be added that it is in accordance with a prevalent belief now. There are few persons, whatever may be their abstract belief, who are not more or less disturbed by fearful and solemn representations passing before the mind in the visions of the night. Compare Job 4:12-17; Job 33:14-15. So Virgil (Aen. iv. 9):

"*Anna soror, quae me suspensam insomnia terrent!* "

And the thoughts upon my bed - The thoughts which I had upon my bed; to wit, in my dream.

And the visions of my head - What I seemed to see. The vision seemed to be floating around his head.

Troubled me - Disturbed me; produced apprehension of what was to come; of some great and important event.

Verse 6

Therefore made I a decree - The word here rendered decree (טעם *ṭeʿêm*) means, commonly, "taste, flavor," as of wine; then "judgment, discernment, reason;" and then a judgment of a king, a mandate, edict. Compare Daniel 3:10. The primary notion seems to be that of a delicate "taste" enabling one to determine the qualities of wines, viands, etc.; and then a delicate and nice discrimination in regard to the qualities of actions. The word thus expresses a sound and accurate judgment, and is applied to a decree or edict, as declared by one who had the qualifications to express such a judgment. Here it means, that he issued a royal order to summon into his presence all who could be supposed to be qualified to explain the dream. The Greek (Codex Chisianus) omits Daniel 4:6-9.

To bring in all the wise men … - Particularly such as are enumerated in the following verse. Compare Daniel 2:12. It was in accordance with his habit thus to call in the wise men who were retained at court to give counsel, and to explain those things which seemed to be an intimation of the Divine will. See the note at Daniel 2:2. Compare also Genesis 41:8.

Verse 7

Then came in the magicians … - All the words occurring here are found in Daniel 2:2, and are explained in the note at that verse, except the word rendered "soothsayers." This occurs in Daniel 2:27. See it explained in the note at that verse. All these words refer to the same general class of persons - those who were regarded as endued with eminent wisdom; who were supposed to be qualified to explain remarkable occurrences, to foretell the future, and to declare the will of heaven from portents and wonders. At a time when there was yet a limited revelation; when the boundaries of science were not determined with accuracy; when it was not certain but that some way might be ascertained of lifting the mysterious veil from the future, and when it was an open question whether that might not be by dreams or by communication with departed spirits, or by some undisclosed secrets of nature, it was not unnatural that persons should be found who claimed that this knowledge was under their control. Such claimants to preternatural knowledge are found indeed in every age; and though a large portion of them are undoubted deceivers, yet the existence of such an order of persons should be regarded as merely the exponent of the deep and earnest desire existing in the human bosom to penetrate the mysterious future; to find something that shall disclose to man, all whose great interests

lie in the future, what is yet to be. Compare the remarks at the close of Daniel 2.

And I told the dream before them … - In their presence. In this instance he did not lay on them so hard a requisition as he did on a former occasion, when he required them not only to interpret the dream, but to tell him what it was, Daniel 2. But their pretended power here was equally vain. Whether they attempted an interpretation of this dream does not appear; but if they did, it was wholly unsatisfactory to the king himself. It would seem more probable that they supposed that the dream might have some reference to the proud monarch himself, and that, as it indicated some awful calamity, they did not dare to hazard a conjecture in regard to its meaning.

Verse 8

But at the last - After the others had shown that they could not interpret the dream. Why Daniel was not called with the others does not appear; nor is it said in what manner he was at last summoned into the presence of the king. It is probable that his skill on a former occasion Daniel 1:7.

According to the name of my god - That is, the name of my god Bel, or Belus, is incorporated in the name given to him. This is referred to here, probably, to show the propriety of thus invoking his aid; because he bore the name of the god whom the monarch had adored. There would seem to be a special fitness in summoning him before him, to explain what was supposed to be an intimation of the will of the god whom he worshipped. There is a singular, though not unnatural, mixture of the sentiments of paganism and of the true religion in the expressions which this monarch uses in this chapter. He had been a pagan all his life; yet he had had some knowledge of the true God, and had been made to feel that he was worthy of universal adoration and praise, Daniel 2. That, in this state of mind, he should alternately express such sentiments as were originated by paganism, and those which spring from just views of God, is not unnatural or improbable.

And in whom is the spirit of the holy gods - It is not easy to determine whom he meant by the holy gods. It would seem probable that this was such language as was dictated by the fact that he had been an idolater. He had been brought to feel that the God whom Daniel worshipped, and by whose aid he had been enabled to interpret the dream, was a true God, and was worthy of universal homage; but perhaps his ideas were still much confused, and he only regarded him as superior to all others, though he did

not intend to deny the real existence of others. It might be true, in his apprehension, that there were other gods, though the God of Daniel was supreme, and perhaps he meant to say that the spirit of all the gods was in Daniel; that in an eminent degree he was the favorite of heaven, and that he was able to interpret any communication which came from the invisible world. It is perhaps unnecessary to observe here that the word spirit has no intended reference to the Holy Spirit. It is probably used with reference to the belief that the gods were accustomed to impart wisdom and knowledge to certain men, and may mean that the very spirit of wisdom and knowledge which dwelt in the gods themselves seemed to dwell in the bosom of Daniel.

And before him I told the dream - Not requiring him, as he did before Daniel 2, to state both the dream and its meaning.

Verse 9

O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians - "Master," in the sense that he was first among them, or was superior to them all. Or, perhaps, he still retained office at the head of this class of men - the office to which he had been appointed when he interpreted the former dream, Daniel 2:48. The word rendered "master" (רב *rab*) is that which was applied to a teacher, a chief, or a great man among the Jews - from where came the title "rabbi." Compare Daniel 2:48; Daniel 5:11.

Because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee - This he had learned by the skill which he had shown in interpreting his dream on former occasion, Daniel 2:18-19, Daniel 2:27-30, Daniel 2:47. It is not elsewhere found. It means what is hidden, and has reference here to the concealed truth or intimation of the Divine will couched under a dream. The word rendered "troubleth thee" (אנס *'ânas*) means, to urge, to press, to compel; and the idea here is, than it did not so "press" upon him as to give him anxiety. It was an easy matter for him to disclose its meaning. Greek, "No mystery is beyond your power" - ὀυκ ἀδυνατεῖ σε *ouk adunatei se* Tell me the visions of my dream - The nature of the vision, or the purport of what I have seen. He seems to have desired to know what sort of a vision he should regard this to be, as well as its interpretation - whether as an intimation of the Divine will, or as an ordimary dream. The Greek and Arabic render this, "Hear the vision of my dream, and tell me the interpretation thereof." This accords better with the probable meaning of the passage, though the word "hear" is not in the Chaldee.

Verse 10

Thus were the visions of my head in my bed - These are the things which I saw upon my bed. When he says that they were the "visions of his head," he states a doctrine which was then doubtless regarded as the truth, that the head is the seat of thought.

I saw - Margin, "was seeing." Chaldee, "seeing I saw." The phrase would imply attentive and calm contemplation. It was not a flitting vision; it was an object which he contemplated deliberately so as to retain a distinct remembrance of its form and appearance.

And, behold, a tree in the midst of the earth - Occupying a central position on the earth. It seems to have been by itself - remote from any forest: to have stood alone. Its central position, no less than its size and proportions, attracted his attention. Such a tree, thus towering to the heavens, and sending out its branches afar, and affording a shade to the beasts of the field, and a home to the fowls of heaven Daniel 4:12, was a striking emblem of a great and mighty monarch, and it undoubtedly occurred to Nebuchadnezzar at once that the vision had some reference to himself. Thus in Ezekiel 31:3, the Assyrian king is compared with a magnificent cedar: "Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon, with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of a high stature, and his top was among the thick boughs." Compare also Ezekiel 17:22-24, where "the high tree and the green tree" refer probably to Nebuchadnezzar. See the note at Isaiah 2:13. Compare Isaiah 10:18-19; Jeremiah 22:7, Jeremiah 22:23. Homer often compares his heroes to trees. Hector, felled by a stone, is compared with an oak overthrown by a thunderbolt. The fall of Simoisius is compared by him to that of a poplar, and that of Euphorbus to the fall of a beautiful olive. Nothing is more obvious than the comparison of a hero with a lofty tree of the forest, and hence, it was natural for Nebuchadnezzar to suppose that this vision had a reference to himself.

And the height thereof was great - In the next verse it is said to have reached to heaven.

Verse 11

The tree grew - Or the tree was "great" - רבה *rebâh* It does not mean that the tree grew while he was looking at it so as to reach to the heaven, but that it stood before him in all its glory, its top reaching to the sky, and its branches extending afar.

And was strong - It was well-proportioned, with a trunk adapted to its height, and to the mass of boughs and foliage which it bore. The strength here refers to its trunk, and to the fact that it seemed fixed firmly in the earth.

And the height thereof reached unto heaven - To the sky; to the region of the clouds. The comparison of trees reaching to heaven is common in Greek and Latin authors. - Grotius. Compare Virgil‘s description of Fame.

"*Mox sese attollit in auras*,
Ingrediturque solo, et caput inter nubila condit." -
"AEn. iv. 176

And the sight thereof to the end of all the earth - It could be seen, or was visible in all parts of the earth. The Greek here for "sight" is κῦτος *kutos* "breadth, capaciousness." Herodotus ("Polymnia") describes a vision remarkably similar to this, as indicative of a wide and universal monarchy, respecting Xerxes:

"After these things there was a third vision in his sleep, which the magicians (μάγοι *magoi*) hearing of, said that it pertained to all the earth, and denoted that all men would be subject to him. The vision was this: Xerxes seemed to be crowned with a branch of laurel, and the branches of laurel seemed to extend through all the earth." The vision which Nebuchadnezzar had here, of a tree so conspicuous as to be seen from any part of the world, was one that would be naturally applied to a sovereign having a universal sway.

Verse 12

The leaves thereof were fair - Were beautiful. That is, they were abundant, and green, and there were no signs of decay. Everything indicated a vigorous and healthy growth - a tree in its full beauty and majesty - a striking emblem of a monarch in his glory.

And the fruit thereof much - It was loaded with fruit - showing that the tree was in its full vigour.

And in it was meat for all - Food for all, for so the word meat was formerly used. This would indicate the dependence of the multitudes on him whom the tree represented, and would also denote that he was a liberal dispenser of his favors.

The beasts of the field had shadow under it - Found a grateful shade under it in the burning heat of noon - a striking emblem of the blessings of a monarchy affording protection, and giving peace to all under it.

And the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof - The fowls of the air. They built their nests and reared their young there undisturbed, another striking emblem of the protection afforded under the great monarchy designed to be represented.

And all flesh was fed of it - All animals; all that lived. It furnished protection, a home, and food for all. Bertholdt renders this, "all men." In the Greek Codex Chisianus there is the following version or paraphrase given of this passage: "Its vision was great, its top reached to the heaven, and its breadth (κῦτος *kutos*) to the clouds - they filled the things (τὰ *ta*) under the heaven - there was a sun and moon, they dwelt in it, and enlightened all the earth."

Verse 13

I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed - In the visions that passed before me as I lay upon my bed, Daniel 4:10.

And, behold, a watcher and an holy one - Or rather, perhaps, "even a holy one;" or, "who was a holy one." He evidently does not intend to refer to two beings, a "watcher," and "one who was holy;" but he means to designate the character of the watcher, that he was holy, or that he was one of the class of "watchers" who were ranked as holy - as if there were others to whom the name "watcher" might be applied who were not holy. So Bertholdt, "not two, but only one, who was both a watcher, and was holy; one of those known as watchers and as holy ones." The copulative ו (*v*) and may be so used as to denote not an additional one or thing, but to specify something in addition to, or in explanation of, what the name applied would indicate. Compare 1 Samuel 28:3: "In Ramah, even (ו *v*) in his own city." 1 Samuel 17:40: "and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even (ו *v*) in a scrip."

Compare Psalm 68:9 (10); Amos 3:11; Amos 4:10; Jeremiah 15:13; Isaiah 1:13; Isaiah 13:14; Isaiah 57:11; Ecclesiastes 8:2. - Gesenius, "Lex." The word rendered "watcher" (עיר *ʿîyr*) is rendered in the Vulgate *vigil*; in the Greek of Theodotion the word is retained without an attempt to translate it - εἴρ *eir* the Codex Chisianus has ἄγγελος *angelos* - "an angel was sent in his strength from heaven." The original word (עיר *ʿîyr*) means, properly, "a watcher," from עיר *ʿîyr* to be hot and ardent; then to be lively, or active, and

then to awake, to be awake, to be awake at night, to watch. Compare Malachi 2:12. The word used here is employed to denote one who watches, only in this chapter of Daniel, Daniel 4:13, Daniel 4:17, Daniel 4:23. It is in these places evidently applied to the angels, but "why" this term is used is unknown. Gesenius ("Lex.") supposes that it is given to them as watching over the souls of men.

Jerome (*in loc*.) says that the reason why the name is given is because they always watch, and are prepared to do the will of God. According to Jerome, the Greek ἶρις *iris* as applied to the rainbow, and which seems to be a heavenly being sent down to the earth, is derived from this word. Compare the "Iliad," ii. 27. Theodoret says that the name is given to an angel, to denote that the angel is without a body - ἀσώματον *asōmaton* - "for he that is encompassed with a body is the servant of sleep, but he that is free from a body is superior to the necessity of sleep." The term "watchers," as applied to the celestial beings, is of Eastern origin, and not improbably was derived from Persia. "The seven Amhaspands received their name on account of their great, holy eyes, and so, generally, all the heavenly Izeds watch in the high heaven over the world and the souls of men, and on this account are called the watchers of the world." - Zendavesta, as quoted by Bertholdt, *in loc*. "The Bun-Dehesh, a commentary on the Zendavesta, contains an extract from it, which shows clearly the name and object of the watchers in the ancient system of Zoroaster. It runs thus: "Ormuzd has set four "watchers" in the four parts of the heavens, to keep their eye upon the host of the stars.

They are bound to keep watch over the hosts of the celestial stars. One stands here as the watcher of his circle; the other there. He has placed them at such and such posts, as watchers over such and such a circle of the heavenly regions; and this by his own power and might. Tashter guards the east, Statevis watches the west, Venant the south, and Haftorang the north." - Rhode, Die heilige Sage des Zendvolks, p. 267, as quoted by Prof. Stuart., *in loc*. "The epithet "good" is probably added here to distinguish this class of watchers from the "bad" ones, for Ahriman, the evil genius, had "Archdeves" and "Deves," who corresponded in rank with the Amhaspands and Izeds of the Zendavesta, and who "watched" to do evil as anxiously as the others did to do good." - Prof. Stuart. It is not improbable that these

terms, as applicable to celestial beings, would be known in the kingdom of Babylon, and nothing is more natural than that it should be so used in this book. It is not found in any of the books of pure Hebrew.

Verse 14

He cried aloud - Margin, as in the Chaldee, "with might." That is, he cried with a strong voice.

Hew down the tree - This command does not appear to have been addressed to any particular ones who were to execute the commission, but it is a strong and significant way of saying that it would certainly be done. Or possibly the command may be understood as addressed to his fellow-watchers Daniel 4:17, or to orders of angels over whom this one presided.

And cut off his branches … - The idea here, and in the subsequent part of the verse, is, that the tree was to be utterly cut up, and all its glory and beauty destroyed. It was first to be felled, and then its limbs chopped off, and then these were to be stripped of their foliage, and then the fruit which it bore was to be scattered. All this was strikingly significant, as applied to the monarch, of some awful calamity that was to occur to him after he should have been brought down from his throne. A process of humiliation and desolation was to continue, as if the tree, when cut down, were not suffered to lie quietly in its grandeur upon the earth. "Let the beasts get away," etc. That is, it shall cease to afford a shade to the beasts and a home to the fowls. The purposes which it had answered in the days of its glory will come to an end.

Verse 15

Nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth - As of a tree that is not wholly dead, but which may send up suckers and shoots again. See the note at Isaiah 11:1. In Theodotion this is, τὴν φυήν τῶν ῥιξῶν *tēn phuēn tōn rizōn* - the nature, germ. Schleusner renders the Greek, "the trunk of its roots." The Vulgate is, *germen radicum ejus*, "the germ of his roots." The Codex Chisianus has: ῥίξαν μίαν ἄφετε ἀυτοῦ ἐν τῇ γῇ *rizan mian aphete autou en tē gē* - "leave one of his roots in the earth." The original Chaldee word (עקר *ʿîqqar*) means a "stump, trunk" (Gesenius); the Hebrew - עקר *ʿēqer* - the same word with different pointing, means a shrub, or shoot. It occurs only once in Hebrew Leviticus 25:47, where it is applied to the stock of a family, or to a person sprung from a foreign family resident in the Hebrew territory: "the stock of the stranger's family." The Chaldee form of

the word occurs only in Daniel 4:15, Daniel 4:23, Daniel 4:26, rendered in each place "stump," yet not meaning "stump" in the sense in which that word is now commonly employed. The word "stump" now means the stub of a tree; the part of the tree remaining in the earth, or projecting above it after the tree is cut down, without any reference to the question whether it be alive or dead. The word here used implies that it was still alive, or that there was a germ which would send up a new shoot, so that the tree would live again. The idea is, that though the mighty tree would fall, yet there would remain vitality in the root, or the portion that would remain in the earth after the tree was cut down, and that this would spring up again - a most striking image of what would occur to Nebuchadnezzar after he should be cast down from his lofty throne, and be again restored to his reason and to power.

Even with a band of iron and brass - This expression may be regarded as applicable either to the cut-down tree, or to the humbled monarch. If applied to the former, it would seem that the idea is, that the stump or root of a tree, deemed so valuable, would be carefully secured by an enclosure of iron or brass, either in the form of a hoop placed round the top of the stump, to preserve it from being opened or cracked by the heat of the sun, so as to admit moisture, which would rot it; or around the roots, to bind it together, with the hope that it would grow again; or it may refer to a railing or enclosure of iron or brass, to keep it from being plowed or dug up as worthless. In either case, it would be guarded with the hope that a tree so valuable might spring up again. If applied to the monarch - an explanation not inconsistent with the proper interpretation of the passage - it would seem to refer to some method of securing the royal maniac in bonds of iron and brass, as with the hope that his reason might still be restored, or with a view to keep him from inflicting fatal injury on himself. That the thing here referred to might be practiced in regard to a valuable tree cut down, or broken down, is by no means improbable; that it might be practiced in reference to the monarch is in accordance with the manner in which the insane have been treated in all ages and countries.

In the tender grass of the field - Out of doors; under no shelter; exposed to dews and rains. The stump would remain in the open field where the grass grew, until it should shoot up again; and in a condition strongly resembling that, the monarch would be excluded from his palace and from the abodes of men. For the meaning of this, as applied to Nebuchadnezzar,

see the note at Daniel 4:25. The word which is rendered "tender grass," means simply young grass or herbage. No emphasis should be put on the word tender. It simply means that he would be abroad where the grass springs up and grows.

And let it be wet with the dew of heaven - As applied to the tree, meaning that the dew would fall on it and continually moisten it. The falling of the dew upon it would contribute to preserve it alive and secure its growth again. In a dry soil, or if there were no rain or dew, the germ would die. It cannot be supposed that, in regard to the monarch, it could be meant that his remaining under the dew of heaven would in any way contribute to restore his reason, but all that is implied in regard to him is the fact that he would thus be an outcast. The word rendered "let it be wet" - יצטבע *yîtseṭaba*ʿ from צבע *tseba*ʿ - means, to dip in, to immerse; to tinge; to dye; though the word is not found in the latter senses in the Chaldee. In the Targums it is often used for "to dye, to color." The word occurs only in this chapter of Daniel Daniel 4:15, Daniel 4:23, Daniel 4:33 and is in each place rendered in the same way. It is not used in the Hebrew scripture in the sense of to dye or tinge, except in the form of a noun - צבע *tseba*ʿ - in Judges 5:30: "To Sisera a prey of divers colors, a prey of divers colors of needlework, of divers colors of needlework." In the passage before us, of course, there is no allusion of this kind, but the word means merely that the stump of the tree would be kept moist with the dew; as applicable to the tree that it might be more likely to sprout up again.

And let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth - Here is a change evidently from the tree to something represented by the tree. We could not say of a tree that its "portion was with the beasts in the grass," though in the confused and incongruous images of a dream, nothing would be more natural than such a change from a tree to some object represented by it, or having some resemblance to it. It is probable that it was this circumstance that particularly attracted the attention of the monarch, for though the dream began with a "tree," it ended with reference to "a person," and evidently some one whose station would be well represented by such a magnificent and solitary tree. The sense here is, "let him share the lot of beasts; let him live as they do:" that is, let him live on grass. Compare Daniel 4:25.

Verse 16

Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him - Here the same thing occurs in a more marked form, showing that some man was represented by the vision, and indicating some change which was fitted to attract the deepest attention - as if the person referred to should cease to be a man, and become a beast. The word heart here seems to refer to nature - "let his nature or propensity cease to be that of a man, and become like that of a beast; let him cease to act as a man, and act as the beasts do - evincing as little mind, and living in the same manner."

And let seven times pass over him - In this condition, or until he is restored. It is not indeed said that he would be restored, but this is implied

(a) in the very expression "until seven times shall pass over him," as if he would then be restored in some way, or as if this condition would then terminate; and

(b) in the statement that "the stump of the roots "would be left in the earth as if it might still germinate again.

Everything, however, in the dream was fitted to produce perplexity as to what it could mean. The word rendered "times" (עדנין *ʿîddânîyn* - singular, עדן *ʿiddân*) is an important word in the interpretation of Daniel. It is of the same class of words as the Hebrew יעד *yâʿad* - to point out, to appoint, to fix; and would refer properly to time considered as "appointed" or "designated;" then it may mean any stated or designated period, as a year. The idea is that of time considered as designated or fixed by periods, and the word may refer to any such period, however long or short - a day, a month, a year, or any other measure of duration. What measurement or portion is intended in any particular case must be determined from the connection in which the word is found. The word used here does not occur in the Hebrew scripture, and is found only in the book of Daniel, where it is uniformly rendered "time" and "times."

It is found only in the following places: Daniel 2:8, "that ye would gain the time;" Daniel 2:9, "till the time be changed;" Daniel 2:21, "and he changeth the times;" Daniel 3:5, Daniel 3:15, "at what time ye shall hear;" Daniel 4:16, Daniel 4:23, "and let seven times pass over him," Daniel 4:25, Daniel 4:32, "seven times shall pass over him;" Daniel 7:12, "for a season

and time;" Daniel 7:25, "until a time and times and the dividing of time." In the place before us, so far as the meaning of the word is concerned, it might mean a day, a week, a month, or a year. The more common interpretation is what supposes that it was a year, and this will agree better with all the circumstances of the case than any other period. The Greek of Theodotion here is: καὶ ἑππὰ καιροὶ ἀλλαγήσονται ἐπ᾽ ἀυτόν *kai hepta kairoi allagēsontai ep' auton* - "And seven times shall change upon him;" that is, until seven seasons revolve over him.

The most natural construction of this Greek phrase would be to refer it to years. The Latin Vulgate interprets it in a similar way - *et septem tempora mutentur super eum* - "And let seven times be changed" or revolve "over him." In the Codex Chisianus it is: καὶ ἑππὰ ἔτη βοσκηθῆ σὺν αὐτοῖς *kai hepta etē boskēthē sun autois* - "and let him feed with them seven years." Luther renders it "times." Josephus understands by it "seven years." - "Ant." b. x. ch. 10: Section 6. While the Chaldee word is indeterminate in respect to the length of time, the most natural and obvious construction here and elsewhere, in the use of the word, is to refer it to years. Days or weeks would be obviously too short, and though in this place the word "months" would perhaps embrace all that would be necessary, yet in the other places where the word occurs in Daniel it undoubtedly refers to years, and there is, therefore, a propriety in understanding it in the same manner here.

Verse 17

This matter is by the decree of the watchers - See the notes at Daniel 4:13. They are described here not only as watching over the affairs of men, but as entrusted wth the execution of high and important designs of God. The representation is, that one of these heavenly beings was seen by Nebuchadnezzar in his visions, and that this one stated to him that he had come to execute what had been determined on by his associates, or in counsel with others. The idea would seem to be, that the affairs of the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar had been in important respects placed under the administration of these beings, and that in solemn council they had resolved on this measure. It is not said that this was not in accordance with, and under the direction of, a higher power - that of God; and that is rather implied when it is said that the great design of this was to show to the living that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men." In itself considered,

there is no improbability in supposing that the affairs of this lower world are in some respects placed under the administration of beings superior to man, nor that events may occur as the result of their deliberation, or, as it is here expressed, by their "decree." If, in any respect, the affairs of the world are subject to their jurisdiction, there is every reason to suppose that there would be harmony of counsel and of action, and an event of this kind might be so represented.

And the demand - Or, the matter; the affair; the business. The Chaldee word properly means a question, a petition; then a subject of inquiry, a matter of business. Here it means, that this matter, or this business, was in accordance with the direction of the holy ones.

The holy ones - Synonymous with the watchers, and referring to the same. See the note at Daniel 4:13.

To the intent that the living may know - With the design that those who live on the earth may understand this. That is, the design was to furnish a proof of this, so impressive and striking, that it could not be doubted by any. No more effectual way of doing this could occur than by showing the absolute power of the Most High over such a monarch as Nebuchadnezzar.

That the Most High - He who is exalted above all men; all angels; all that pretend to be gods. The phrase here is designed to refer to the true God, and the object was to show that he was the most exalted of all beings, and had absolute control over all.

Ruleth in the kingdom of men - Whoever reigns, he reigns over them.

And giveth it to whomsoever he will - That is, he gives dominion over men to whomsoever he chooses. It is not by human ordering, or by arrangements among men. It is not by hereditary right; not by succession; not by conquest; not by usurpation; not by election, that this matter is finally determined; it is by the decree and purpose of God. He can remove the hereditary prince by death; he can cause him to be set aside by granting success to a usurper; he can dispose of a crown by conquest; he can cut off the conqueror by death, and transfer the crown to an inferior officer; he can remove one who was the united choice of a people by death, and put another in his place. So the apostle Paul says, "There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" Romans 13:1.

And setteth up over it the basest of men - That is, he appoints over the kingdom of men, at his pleasure, those who are of the humblest or lowest rank. The allusion here is not to Nebuchadnezzar as if he were the "basest"

or the "vilest" of men, but the statement is a general truth, that God, at his pleasure, sets aside those of exalted rank, and elevates those of the lowest rank in their place. There is an idea now attached commonly to the word "basest," which the word used here by no means conveys. It does not denote the mean, the vile, the worthless, the illiberal, but those of humble or lowly rank. This is the proper meaning of the Chaldee word שׁפל *shephal* - and so it is rendered in the Vulgate, *humillimum hominem*. The Greek of Theodotion, however, is, "what is disesteemed among men" - ἐξουδένωμα ἀνθρώπῶν *exoudenōma anthrōpōn* In the latter part of the dream Daniel 4:15-16 we have an illustration of what often occurs in dreams - their singular incongruity. In the early part of the dream, the vision is that of a tree, and the idea is consistently carried out for a considerable part of it - the height of the tree, the branches, the leaves, the fruit, the shade, the stump; then suddenly there is a "change" to something that is living and human - the change of the "heart" to that of a beast; the being exposed to the dew of heaven; the portion with the beasts of the earth, etc. Such changes and incongruities, as every one knows, are common in dreams. So Shakespeare -

"True, I talk of dreams,
Which are the children of an idle brain,
Begot of nothing but vain fantasy;

Which is as thin of substance as the air,

And more inconstant than the wind, who woos

Even now the frozen bosom of the North,

And, being anger'd puffs away from thence

Turning his face to the dew-dropping South."
Romeo and Julieti1.

Verse 18

This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen - This is the dream which I saw. He had detailed it at length as it appeared to him, without pretending to be able to explain it.

Forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom … - Daniel 4:7.

But thou art able … - See the notes at Daniel 4:9.

Verse 19

Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar - Daniel 4:8. It has been objected that the mention in this edict of "both" the names by which Daniel was known is an improbable circumstance; that a pagan monarch would only have referred to him by the name by which he was known in Babylon - the name which he had himself conferred on him in honor of the god ("Belus") after whom he was called. See the note at Daniel 1:7. To this it may be replied, that although in ordinary intercourse with him in Babylon, in addressing him as an officer of state under the Chaldean government, he would undoubtedly be mentioned only by that name; yet, in a proclamation like this, both the names by which he was known would be used - the one to identify him among his own countrymen, the other among the Chaldeans. This proclamation was designed for people of all classes, and ranks, and tongues Daniel 4:1; it was intended to make known the supremacy of the God worshipped by the Hebrews. Nebuchadnezzar had derived the knowledge of the meaning of his dream from one who was a Hebrew, and it was natural, therefore, in order that it might be known by whom the dream had been interpreted, that he should so designate him that it would be understood by all.

Was astonied - Was astonished. The word "astonied," now gone out of use, several times occurs in the common version; Ezra 9:3; Job 17:8; Job 18:20; Ezekiel 4:17; Daniel 3:24; Daniel 4:19; Daniel 5:9. Daniel was "amazed" and "overwhelmed" at what was manifestly the fearful import of the dream.

For one hour - It is not possible to designate the exact time denoted by the word "hour" - שׁעה *shâʿâh* According to Gesenius ("Lex."), it means moment of time; properly, a look, a glance, a wink of the eye - German, "augenblick." In Arabic the word means both a moment and an hour. In Daniel 3:6, Daniel 3:15, it evidently means immediately. Here it would seem to mean a short time. That is, Daniel was fixed in thought, and maintained a profound silence until the king addressed him. We are not to suppose that this continued during the space of time which we call an hour, but he was silent until Nebuchadnezzar addressed him. He would not seem to be willing even to speak of so fearful calamities as he saw were coming upon the king.

And his thoughts troubled him - The thoughts which passed through his mind respecting the fearful import of the dream.

The king spake and said … - Perceiving that the dream had, as he had probably apprehended, a fearful significancy, and that Daniel hesitated about explaining its meaning. Perhaps he supposed that he hesitated because he apprehended danger to himself if he should express his thoughts, and the king therefore assured him of safety, and encouraged him to declare the full meaning of the vision, whatever that might be.

Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee - Let such things as are foreboded by the dream happen to your enemies rather than to you. This merely implies that he did not desire that these things should come upon him. It was the language of courtesy and of respect; it showed that he had no desire that any calamity should befall the monarch, and that he had no wish for the success of his enemies. There is not, in this, anything necessarily implying a hatred of the enemies of the king, or any wish that calamity should come upon them; it is the expression of an earnest desire that such an affliction might not come upon him. If it must come on any, such was his respect for the sovereign, and such his desire for his welfare and prosperitry, that he preferred that it should fall upon those who were his enemies, and who hated him. This language, however, should not be rigidly interpreted. It is the language of an Oriental; language uttered at a court, where only the words of respect were heard. Expressions similar to this occur not unfrequently in ancient writings. Thus Horace, b. iii. ode 27:

"*Hostium uxores puerique caecos*
Sentiant motus orientis Austri."

And Virgil, Georg. iii. 513:

"*Di meliora piis, erroremque liostibus ilium*."

"Such rhetorical embellishments are pointed at no individuals, have nothing in them of malice or ill-will, are used as marks of respect to the ruling powers, and may be presumed to be free from any imputation of a want of charity." - Wintle, *in loc*.

Verse 20-21

The tree that thou sawest … - In these two verses Daniel refers to the leading circumstances respecting the tree as it appeared in the dream, without any allusion as yet to the order to cut it down. He probably designed to show that he had clearly understood what had been said, or that

he had attended to the most minute circumstances as narrated. It was important to do this in order to show clearly that it referred to the king; a fact which probably Nebuchadnezzar himself apprehended, but still it was important that this should be so firmly fixed in his mind that he would not revolt from it when Daniel came to disclose the fearful import of the remainder of the dream.

Verse 22

It is thou, O king - It is a representation of thyself. Compare Daniel 2:38.

That art grown and become strong - Referring to the limited extent of his dominion when he came to the throne, and the increase of his power by a wise administration and by conquest.

For thy greatness is grown - The majesty and glory of the monarch had increased by all his conquests, and by the magnificence which he had thrown around his court.

And reacheth unto heaven - An expression merely denoting the greatness of his authority. The tree is said to have reached unto heaven Daniel 4:11, and the stateliness and grandeur of so great a monarch might be represented by language which seemed to imply that he had control over all things.

And thy dominion to the end of the earth - To the extent of the world as then known. This was almost literally true.

Verse 23

And whereas the king saw a watcher … - See the note at Daniel 4:13. The recapitulation in this verse is slightly varied from the statement in Daniel 4:14-16, still so as not materially to affect the sense. Daniel seems to have designed to recal the principal circumstances in the dream, so as to identify it in the king‘s mind, and so as to prepare him for the statement of the fearful events which were to happen to him.

Verse 24

This is the decree of the Most High - Daniel here designs evidently to direct the attention of the monarch to the one living and true God, and to show him that he presides over all. The purpose of the vision was, in a most impressive way, to convince the king of his existence and sovereignty. Hence, Daniel says that all this was in accordance with his “decree.” It was not a thing of chance; it was not ordered by idol gods; it was not an event that occurred by the mere force of circumstances, or as the result of the

operation of secondary laws: it was a direct Divine interposition - the solemn purpose of the living God that it should be so. Nebuchadnezzar had represented this, in accordance with the prevailing views of religion in his land, as a "decree of the Watchers" Daniel 4:17; Daniel, in accordance with his views of religion, and with truth, represents it as the decree of the true God.

Which is come upon my Lord the king - The decree had been previously formed; its execution had now come upon the king.

Verse 25

That they shall drive thee from men - That is, thou shalt be driven from the habitations of men; from the place which thou hast occupied among men. The prophet does not say "who" would do this, but he says that it "would" be done. The language is such as would be used of one who should become a maniac, and be thrust out of the ordinary society in which he had moved. The Greek of Theodotion here is: καὶ σὲ ἐκδιώξουσιν *kai se ekdiōxousin* The Codex Chisianus has, "And the Most High and his angels shall run upon thee - κατατρέχουσιν *katatrechousin* - leading thee into prison," or into detention - εἰς φυλακὴν *eis phulakēn* - "and shall thrust thee into a desert place." The general sense is, that he would be in such a state as to be treated like a beast rather than a man; that he would be removed from his ordinary abodes, and be a miserable and neglected outcast.

This commences the account of the calamity that was to come upon Nebuchadnezzar, and as there have been many opinions entertained as to the nature of this malady, it may be proper to notice some of them. Compare Bertholdt, pp. 286-292. Some have held that there was a real metamorphosis into some form of an animal, though his rational soul remained, so that he was able to acknowledge God and give praise to him. Cedrenus held that he was transformed into a beast, half lion and half ox. An unknown author, mentioned by Justin, maintained that the transformation was into an animal resembling what was seen in the visions of Ezekiel - the cherubim - composed of an eagle, a lion, an ox, and a man. In support of the opinion that there was a real transformation, an appeal has been made to the common belief among ancient nations, that such metamorphoses had actually occurred, and especially to what Herodotus (iv. 105) says of the "Neuri" (Νευροι *Neuroi*) "It is said by the Scythians, as well as by the Greeks who dwell in Scythia, that once in every year they are

all of them changed into wolves, and that after remaining in that state for the space of a few days, they resume their former shape."

Herodotus adds, however, "This I do not believe, although they swear that it is true." An appeal is also made to an assertion of Apuleius, who says of himself that he was changed into an ass; and also to the "Metamorphoses" of Ovid. This supposed transformation of Nebuchadnezzar some have ascribed to Satan. - John Wier "de Prcestigiis Daemonum," I. 26, John 4:1. Others have attributed it to the arts of magic or incantation, and suppose that it was a change in appearance only. Augustine ("de Civit. Dei." lib. xviii. cap. 17), referring to what is said of Diomed and his followers on their return from Troy, that they were changed into birds, says that Varro, in proof of the truth of this, appeals to the fact that Circe changed Ulysses and his companions into beasts; and to the Arcadians, who, by swimming over a certain lake, were changed into wolves, and that "if they ate no man's flesh, at the end of nine years they swam over the same lake and became men again."

Varro farther mentions the case of a man by the name of Daemonetus, who, tasting of the sacrifices which the Arcadians offered (a child), was turned into a wolf, and became a man again at the end of two years. Augustine himself says, that when he was in Italy, he heard a report that there were women there, who, by giving one a little drug in cheese, had the power of turning him into an ass. See the curious discussion of Augustine how far this could be true, in his work "de Civit. Dei," lib. xviii. cap. 18. He supposes that under the influence of drugs men might be made to suppose they were thus transformed, or to have a recollection of what passed in such a state "as if" it were so. Cornelius a Lapide supposes that the transformation in the case of Nebuchadnezzar went only so far that his knees were bent in the other direction, like those of animals, and that he walked like animals. Origen, and many of those who have coincided with him in his allegorical mode of interpreting the Scriptures, supposed that the whole of this account is an allegory, designed to represent the fall of Satan, and his restoration again to the favor of God - in accordance with his belief of the doctrine of universal salvation.

Others suppose that the statement here means merely that there was a formidable conspiracy against him; that he was dethroned and bound with fetters; that he was then expelled from the court, and driven into exile; and that, as such, he lived a miserable life, finding a precarious subsistence in woods and wilds, among the beasts of the forest, until, by another revolution, he was restored again to the throne. It is not necessary to examine these various opinions, and to show their absurdity, their puerility, or their falsehood. Some of them are simply ridiculous, and none of them are demanded by any fair interpretation of the chapter. It may seem, perhaps, to be undignified even to refer to such opinions now; but this may serve to illustrate the method in which the Bible has been interpreted in former times, and the steps which have been taken before men arrived at a clear and rational interpretation of the sacred volume. It is indeed painful to reflect that such absurdities and puerilities have been in any way connected with the interpretation of the Word of God; sad to reflect that so many persons, in consequence of them, have discarded the Bible and the interpretations together as equally ridiculous and absurd. The true account in regard to the calamity of Nebuchadnezzar is undoubtedly the following:

(1) He was a maniac - made such by a direct Divine judgment on account of his pride, Daniel 4:30-31. The essential thing in the statement is, that he was deprived of his reason, and that he was treated as a maniac. Compare Introduction to the chapter, II. (1).

(2) The particular form of the insanity with which he was afflicted seems to have been that he imagined himself to be a beast; and, this idea having taken possession of his mind, he acted accordingly. It may be remarked in regard to this,

(a) that such a fancy is no uncommon thing among maniacs. Numerous instances of this may be seen in the various works on insanity - or indeed may be seen by merely visiting a lunatic asylum. One imagines that he is a king, and decks himself out with a scepter and a diadem; another that he is glass, and is filled with excessive anxiety lest he should be broken; others have regarded themselves as deprived of their proper nature as human beings; others as having been once dead, and restored to life again; others as having been dead and sent back into life without a heart; others as

existing in a manner unlike any other mortals; others as having no rational soul. See Arnold "on Insanity," I. pp. 176-195. In all these cases, when such a fancy takes possession of the mind, there will be an effort on the part of the patient to act in exact conformity to this view of himself, and his whole conduct will be adapted to it. Nothing can convince him that it is not so; and there is no absurdity in supposing that, if the thought had taken possession of the mind of Nebuchadnezzar that he was a beast, he would live and act as a wild beast - just as it is said that he did.

(b) In itself considered, "if" Nebuchadnezzar was deprived of his reason, and for the cause assigned - his pride, nothing is more probable than that he would be left to imagine himself a beast, and to act like a beast. This would furnish the most striking contrast to his former state; would do most to bring down his pride; and would most effectually show the supremacy of the Most High.

(3) In this state of mind, fancying himself a wild beast, and endeavoring to act in conformity with this view, it is probable that he would be indulged as far as was consistent with his safety. Perhaps the regency would be induced to allow this partly from their long habits of deference to the will of an arbitrary monarch; partly because by this indulgence he would be less troublesome; and partly because a painful spectacle would thus be removed from the palace. We are not to suppose that he was permitted to roam in forests at large without any restraint, and without any supervision whatever. In Babylon, attached to the palace, there were doubtless, as there are all over the East, royal parks or gardens; there is every probability that in these parks there may have been assembled rare and strange animals as a royal menagerie; and it was doubtless in these parks, and among these animals that he was allowed to range. Painful as such a spectacle would be, yet it is not improbable that to such a maniac this would be allowed, as contributing to his gratification, or as a means of restoring him to his right mind.

(4) A king, however wide his empire, or magnifient his court, would be as likely to be subject to mental derangement as any other man. No situation in life can save the human mind from the liability to so overwhelming a calamity, nor should we deem it strange that it should come on a king as well as other men. The condition of Nebuchadnezzar, as

represented by himself in this edict, was scarcely more pitiable than that of George III of England, though it is not surprising that in the eighteenth century of the Christian era, and in a Christian land, the treatment of the sovereign in such circumstances was different from that which a monarch received in pagan Babylon.

(5) it cannot be shown that this did not come upon Nebuchadnezzar, as stated in this chapter Daniel 4:30-31, on account of his pride. That he was a proud and haughty monarch is apparent from all his history; that God would take some effectual means to humble him is in accordance with his dealings with mankind; that this would be a most effectual means of doing it cannot be doubted. No one can prove, in respect to any judgment that comes upon mankind, that it is not on account of some sin reigning in the heart; and when it is affirmed in a book claiming to be inspired, that a particular calamity is brought upon men on account of their transgressions, it cannot be demonstrated that the statement is not true. If these remarks are correct, then no well-founded objection can lie against the account here respecting the calamity that came upon this monarch in Babylon. This opinion in regard to the nature of the affliction which came upon Nebuchadnezzar, is probably what is now generally entertained, and it certainly meets all the circumstances of the case, and frees the narrative from material objection.

As a confirmation of its truth, I will copy here the opinion of Dr. Mead, as it is found in his "Medica Sacra:" "All the circumstances of Nebuchadnezzars cage agree so well with a hypochondriacal madness, that to me it appears evident that Nebuchadnezzar was seized with this distemper, and under its influence ran wild into the fields; and that, fancying himself transformed into an ox, he fed on grass after the manner of cattle. Forevery sort of madness is the result of a disturbed imagination; which this unhappy man labored under for full seven years. And through neglect of taking proper care of himself, his hair and nails grew to an uncommon length; whereby the latter, growing thicker and crooked, resembled the claws of birds. Now the ancients called people affected with this kind of madness, λυκάνθρωποι *lukanthrōpoi* "wolf-men" - or κυνάνθρωποι *kunanthrōpoi* "dog-men" - because they went abroad in the night imitating wolves or dogs; particularly intent upon opening the sepulchres of the dead, and had their legs much ulcerated, either from

frequent falls or the bites of dogs. In like manner are the daughters of Proetus related to have been mad, who, as Virgil says, Ecl. vi. 48,

‹ - *implerunt falsis mugitibus agros*.‘

‹*With mimic howlings filled the fields*.‘

For, as Servius observes, Juno possessed their minds with such a species of fury, that, fancying themselves cows, they ran into the fields, bellowed often, and dreaded the plow. Nor was this disorder unknown to the moderns, for Schneckius records a remarkable instance of a farmer in Padua, who, imagining himself a wolf, attacked and even killed several people in the fields; and when at length he was taken, he persevered in declaring himself a real wolf, and that the only difference consisted in the inversion of his skin and hair." The same opinion as to the nature of the disease is expressed by Dr. John M. Good, in his "Study of Medicine." So also Burton ("Anatomy of Melancholy," Part I. Section I. Memb. i. Subs. 4). Burton refers to several cases which would illustrate the opinion. "Wierus," says he, "tells a story of such a one in Padua, 1541, that would not believe the contrary but that he was a wolf. He hath another instance of a Spaniard, who thought himself a bear. Such, be-like, or little better, were king Proectus‘ daughters, that thought themselves kine" - an instance strikingly resembling this case of Nebuchadnezzar, who seems to have imagined himself some kind of beast. Pliny, perhaps referring to diseases of this kind, says, "Some men were turned into wolves in my time, and from wolves to men again," lib. viii. c. 22. See Burton as above.

And thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field - That is, as above explained, thou wilt imagine thyself to be a beast, and wilt act like a beast. Indulgence will be given to this propensity so as to allow you to range with the beasts in the park, or the royal menagerie.

And they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen - That is, this shall be thy propensity, and thou shalt be indulged in it. Fancying himself a beast of some kind - probably, as appears from this expression, "an ox" - nothing would be more natural than that he should attempt to live as oxen do, on grass, that he should be so far indulged that his food would consist of vegetables. Nothing is more common among maniacs than some such freak about food; and it is just as likely that a king would manifest this as any other man. The word "grass" here (עשׂבא *ʿîs'ebâ'* Hebrew: עשׂב *ʿēs'eb*) means, properly, "herbs; green herbs; vegetables" - represented commonly, as furnishing food for man, Genesis 1:11-12; Genesis 2:5; Genesis 3:18;

Exodus 10:12, Exodus 10:15; Psalm 104:14. The word "grass," in our language, conveys an idea which is not "strictly" in accordance with the original. That word would denote only the vegetable productions which cattle eat; the Hebrew word is of a more general signification, embracing all kinds of vegetables - those which man eats, as well as those which animals eat; and the meaning here is, that he would live on vegetable food - a propensity in which they would doubtless indulge a man in such circumstances, painful and humiliating as it would be. The phrase "they" shall make thee eat grass," rather means, "they shall permit thee to do it," or they shall treat thee so that thou wilt do it. It would be his inclination, and they would allow him to be gratified in it.

And they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven - Or, shall Suffer you to be wet with the dew of heaven; that is, to be out in the open air - no improbable treatment of a maniac, and especially likely to occur in a climate where it was no uncommon thing for all classes of persons to pass the night under the sky.

And seven times shall pass over thee - See the notes at Daniel 4:16.

Till thou know … - Until thou shalt effectually learn that the true God rules; that he gives authority to whom he pleases; and that he takes it away when he pleases. See the notes at Daniel 4:17. Nothing could be better fitted to teach this lesson than to deprive, by a manifest judgment of heaven, such a monarch of the exercise of reason, and reduce him to the pitiable condition here described.

Verse 26

And whereas they commanded - The watchers, Daniel 4:15. Compare Daniel 4:17.

To leave the stump of the tree roots - Or, to leave roots to the stump of the tree; that is, it was not to be dug up, or wholly destroyed, but vitality was to be left in the ground. The Chaldee here is the same as in Daniel 4:15, "leave the stump of his roots."

Thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee - That is, thou shalt not die under this calamity, but after it has passed away shalt be restored to authority. It might have been supposed that this meant that the authority would survive in his family, and that those who were to succeed him would reign - as shoots spring up after the parent tree has fallen; but Daniel was directed to an interpretation which is not less in accordance with the fair meaning of the dream than this would have been.

After that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule - That God rules, This was the great lesson which the event was designed to teach, and when that should have been learned, there would be a propriety that he should be restored to his throne, and should proclaim this to the world.

Verse 27

Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee - Daniel was permitted to see not only the fact that this calamity impended over the king, but the cause of it, and as that cause was his proud and sinful heart, he supposed that the judgment might be averted if the king would reform his life. If the "cause" were removed, he inferred, not unreasonably, that there was a hope that the calamity might be avoided. We cannot but admire here the boldness and fidelity of Daniel, who not only gave a fair interpretation of the dream, in the case submitted to him, but who went beyond that in a faithful representation to the most mighty monarch of the age, that this was in consequence of his wicked life.

And break off thy sins by righteousness - By acts of righteousness or justice; by abandoning a wicked course of life. It is fairly to be inferred from this that the life of the monarch had been wicked - a fact which is confirmed everywhere in his history. He had, indeed, some good qualities as a man, but he was proud; he was ambitious; he was arbitrary in his government; he was passionate and revengeful; and he was, doubtless, addicted to such pleasures of life as were commonly found among those of his station. He had a certain kind of respect for religion, whatever was the object of worship, but this was not inconsistent with a wicked life. The word translated "break off" (פרק *peraq*) is rendered in the Vulgate *redime*, "redeem," and so in the Greek of Theodotion, λύτρωσαι *lutrōsai* and in the Codex Chisianus. From this use of the word in some of the versions, and from the fact that the word rendered "righteousness" is often employed in the later Hebrew to denote almsgiving (compare the margin in Matthew 6:1, and the Greek text in Tittmann and Hahn where the word δικαιοσύνην *dikaiosunēn* is used to denote "alms"), the passage here has been adduced in favor of the doctrine of expiatory merits, and the purchase of absolution by almsgiving - a favorite doctrine in the Roman Catholic communion.

But the ordinary and common meaning of the word is not to redeem, but to break, to break off, to abandon. It is the word from which our English word "break" is derived - Germ., "brechen." Compare Genesis 27:40, "that thou shalt break his yoke;" Exodus 32:2, "Break off the golden ear-rings;"

Exodus 32:3, "And all the people brake off the golden ear-rings;" Exodus 32:24, "Whosoever hath any gold let them break it off;" 1 Kings 19:11, "A great and strong wind rent the mountains;" Zechariah 11:16, "And tear their claws in pieces;" Ezekiel 19:12, "her strong rods were broken." The word is rendered in our common version, "redeem" once Psalm 136:24, "And hath redeemed us from our enemies." It is translated "rending" in Psalm 7:2, and "deliver" in Lamentations 5:8. It does not elsewhere occur in the Scriptures. The fair meaning of the word is, as in our version, to break off, and the idea of redeeming the soul by acts of charity or almsgiving is not in the passage, and cannot be derived from it. This passage, therefore, cannot be adduced to defend the doctrine that the soul may be redeemed, or that sins may be expiated by acts of charity and almsgiving. It means that the king was to break off his sins by acts of righteousness; or, in other words, he was to show by a righteous life that he had abandoned his evil course. The exhortation is, that he would practice those great duties of justice and charity toward mankind in which he had been so deficient, if, perhaps, God might show mercy, and avert the impending calamity.

And thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor - The peculiar "iniquity" of Nebuchadnezzar may have consisted in his oppressing the poor of his realm in the exorbitant exactions imposed on them in carrying on his public works, and building and beautifying his capital. Life, under an Oriental despot, is regarded as of little value. Sixty thousand men were employed by Mohammed Ali in digging the canal from Cairo to Alexandria, in which work almost no tools were furnished them but their hands. A large portion of them died, and were buried by their fellow-laborers in the earth excavated in digging the canal. Who can estimate the number of men that were recklessly employed under the arbitrary monarch of Egypt on the useless work of building the pyramids? Those structures, doubtless, cost million of lives, and there is no improbability in supposing that Nebuchadnezzar had employed hundreds of thousands of persons without any adequate compensation, and in a hard and oppressive service, in rearing the walls and the palaces of Babylon, and in excavating the canals to water the city and the adjacent country.

No counsel, therefore, could be more appropriate than that he should relieve the poor from those burdens, and do justice to them. There is no intimation that he was to attempt to purchase release from the judgments of God by such acts; but the meaning is, that if he would cease from his acts of

oppression, it might be hoped that God would avert the threatened calamity. The duty here enjoined of showing mercy to the poor, is one that is everywhere commanded in the Scriptures, Psalm 41:1; Matthew 19:21; Galatians 2:10, "et saepe." Its influence in obtaining the Divine favor, or in averting calamity, is also stated. Compare Psalm 41:1, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." It is a sentiment which occurs frequently in the books of the Apocrypha, and in these books there can be found the progress of the opinion to the point which it reached in the later periods of the Jewish history, and which it has obtained in the Roman Catholic communion, that almsgiving or charity to the poor would be an expiation for sin, and would commend men to God as a ground of righteousness; or, in other words, the progress of the doctrine toward what teaches that works of supererogation may be performed.

Thus in the book of Jonah 3:10; the case of Hezekiah, when his predicted death was averted by his tears and prayers, Isaiah 38:1-5; and Jeremiah 18:7-8, where this principle of the Divine government is fully asserted.

If it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility - Margin, "or, a healing of thine error. "The Greek of Theodotion here is, "Perhaps God will be long-suffering toward thy offences." The Greek of the Codex Chisianus is, "And thou mayest remain a long time (πολύημερος γένῃ *poluēmeros genē*) upon the throne of thy kingdom." The Vulgate, "Perhaps he will pardon thy faults." The Syriac, "Until he may remove from thee thy follies." The original word rendered "lengthening" (ארכא *'arkâ'*) means, properly, as translated here, a prolongation; a drawing out; a lengthening; and the word is here correctly rendered. It has not the meaning assigned to it in the margin of healing. It would apply properly to a prolongation of anything - as of life, peace, health, prosperity. The word rendered "tranquility" (שׁלוה *shelêvâh*) means, properly, security, safety, quiet; and the reference here is to his calm possession of the throne; to his quietness in his palace, and peace in his kingdom. There is nothing in the text to justify the version in the margin.

Verse 28

All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar - That is, the threatened judgment came upon him in the form in which it was predicted. He did not repent and reform his life as he was exhorted to, and, having given him

sufficient time to show whether he was disposed to follow the counsel of Daniel, God suddenly brought the heavy judgment upon him. Why he did not follow the counsel of Daniel is not stated, and cannot be known. It may have been that he was so addicted to a life of wickedness that he would not break off from it, even while he admitted the fact that he was exposed on account of it to so awful a judgment - as multitudes do who pursue a course of iniquity, even while they admit that it will be followed by poverty, disgrace, disease and death here, and by the wrath of God hereafter; or it may be, that he did not credit the representation which Daniel made, and refused to follow his counsel on that account; or it may be, that though he purposed to repent, yet, as thousands of others do, he suffered the time to pass on until the forbearance of God was exhausted, and the calamity came suddenly upon him. A full year, it would seem Daniel 4:29, was given him to see what the effect of the admonition would be, and then all that had been predicted was fulfilled. His conduct furnishes a remarkable illustration of the conduct of sinners under threatened wrath; of the fact that they continue to live in sin when exposed to certain destruction, and when warned in the plainest manner of what will come upon them.

Verse 29

At the end of twelve months - After the dream, and the interpretation - giving him ample opportunity to repent, and to reform his life, and to avoid the calamity.

He walked in the palace - Margin, "upon." The margin is the more correct rendering. The roofs of houses in the East are made flat, and furnish a common place of promenade, especially in the cool of the evening. See the note at Matthew 9:2. The Codex Chisianus has here, "The king walked upon the walls of the city with all his glory, and went around the towers, and answering, said." The place, however, upon which he walked, appears to have been the roof of his own palace - doubtless reared so high that he could have a good view of the city from it.

Of the kingdom of Babylon - Appertaining to that kingdom; the royal residence. As it is to be supposed that this "palace of the kingdom," on the roof of which the king walked, was what he had himself reared, and as this contributed much to the splendor of the capital of his empire, and doubtless was the occasion, in a considerable degree, of his vainglorious boasting when the judgment of heaven fell upon him Daniel 4:30-31, a brief description of that palace seems to he not inappropriate. The description is

copied from an article on Babylon in Kitto‘s “Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature,” vol. i. pp. 270,271: “The new palace built by Nebuchadnezzar was prodigious in size and superb in embellishments. Its outer wall embraced six miles; within that circumference were two other embattled walls, besides a great tower. Three brazen gates led into the grand area, and every gate of consequence throughout the city was of brass. The palace was splendidly decorated with statues of men and animals, with vessels of gold and silver, and furnished with luxuries of all kinds brought thither from conquests in Egypt, Palestine, and Tyre. Its greatest boast were the hanging gardens, which acquired, even from Grecian writers, the appellation of one of the wonders of the world. They are attributed to the gallantry of Nebuchadnezzar, who constructed them in compliance with a wish of his queen Amytis to possess elevated groves, such as she had enjoyed on the hills around her native Ecbatana. Babylon was all flat, and to accomplish so extravagant a desire, an artificial mountain was reared, four hundred feet on each side, while terraces, one above another, rose to a height that overtopped the walls of the city, that is, above three hundred feet in elevation.

The ascent from terrace to terrace was made by corresponding flights of steps, while the terraces themselves were reared to their various stages on ranges of regular piers, which, forming a kind of vaulting, rose in succession one over the other to the required height of each terrace, the whole being bound together by a wall twenty-two feet in thickness. The level of each terrace or garden was then formed in the following manner: the tops of the piers were first laid over with flat stones, sixteen feet in length, and four in width; on these stones were spread beds of matting, then a thick layer of bitumen, after which came two courses of bricks, which were covered with sheets of solid lead. The earth was heaped on this platform, and in order to admit the roots of large trees, prodigious hollow piers were built and filled with mould. From the Euphrates, which flowed close to the foundation, water was drawn up by machinery. The whole, says Q. Curtius (Daniel 4:5), had, to those who saw it from a distance, the appearance of woods overhanging mountains. The remains of this palace are found in the vast mound or hill called by the natives “Kasr.” It is of irregular form, eight hundred yards in length, and six hundred yards in breadth. Its appearance is constantly undergoing change from the continual digging which takes place in its inexhaustible quarries for brick of the

strongest and finest material. Hence, the mass is furrowed into deep ravines, crossing and recrossing each other in every direction."

Verse 30

The king spake and said - The Chaldee, and the Greek of Theodotion and of the Codex Chisianus here is, "the king answered and said:" perhaps he replied to some remark made by his attendants in regard to the magnitude of the city; or perhaps the word "answered" is used, as it often seems to be in the Scriptures, to denote a reply to something passing in the mind that is not uttered; to some question or inquiry that the mind starts. He might merely have been thinking of the magnitude of this city, and he gave response to those thoughts in the language which follows.

Is not this great Babylon, that I have built - In regard to the situation and the magnitude of Babylon, and the agency of Nebuchadnezzar in beautifying and enlarging it, see the analysis prefixed to the notes at Isaiah 13. He greatly enlarged the city; built a new city on the west side of the river; reared a magnificent palace; and constructed the celebrated hanging gardens; and, in fact, made the city so different from what it was, and so greatly increased its splendor, that he could say without impropriety that he had "built" it.

For the house of the kingdom - To be considered altogether - embracing the whole city - as a sort of palace of the kingdom. He seems to have looked upon the whole city as one vast palace fitted to be an appropriate residence of the sovereign of so vast an empire.

And for the honour of my majesty - To ennoble or glorify my reign; or where one of so much majesty as I am may find an appropriate home.

Verse 31

While the word was in the king's mouth - In the very act of speaking - thus showing that there could be no doubt as to the connection between the crime and the punishment.

There fell a voice from heaven - There came a voice; or, perhaps, it seemed to fall as a thunderbolt. It was uttered above him, and appeared to come from heaven. There was an important sense in which it did fall from heaven, for it was the voice of God.

Saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken - For you it is particularly intended; or what is predicted is now spoken to thee.

The kingdom is departed from thee - Thou art about to cease to reign. Up to this time he retained his reason, that he might distinctly understand the source from where the judgment was to come, and why it was brought upon him, and that he might be prepared, when he should be recovered from his insanity, to testify clearly to the origin and the nature of the judgment. The Codex Chisianus has an important "addition" to what is said here, which, though of no authority, as having nothing corresponding to it in the original text, yet states what is in itself not improbable. It is as follows: "And at the end of what he was saying, he heard a voice from heaven, To thee it is spoken, O king Nebuchadnezzar, the kingdom of Babylon shall be taken away from thee, and shall be given to another, a man despised or of no rank - ἐξουθενημένῳ ἀνθρώπῳ *exouthenēmenō anthrōpō* - in thy house. Behold, I will place him over thy kingdom, and thy power, and thy glory, and thy luxury - τὴν τρυφήν *tēn truphēn* - he shall receive, until thou shalt know that the God of heaven has authority over the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will: but until the rising of the sun another king shall rejoice in thy house, and shall possess thy power, and thy strength, and thine authority, and the angels shall drive thee away for seven years, and thou shalt not be seen, and shalt not speak with any man, but they shall feed thee with grass as oxen, and from the herb of the field shall be thy support."

Verse 32

And they shall drive thee from men … - See the note at Daniel 4:25.

Verse 33

The same hour was the thing fulfilled - On the word hour, see the note at Daniel 4:19. The use of the word here would seem to confirm the suggestion there made that it means a brief period of time. The idea is clearly that it was done instantly. The event came suddenly upon him, without any interval, as he was speaking.

Till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers - By long neglect and inattention. The Greek version of Theodotion has in this place the word lions instead of eagles: "until his hairs were grown long like that of lions;" and the passage is paraphrased by Jackson thus, "until his hair was grown long and shagged like the mane of a lion." This would make good sense, but it is not the reading of the Chaldee. The Codex Chisianus reads it, "and my hairs were like the wings of an eagle, and my nails like those of a lion." The correct idea is, that his hair was neglected until in appearance it resembled the feathers of a bird.

And his nails like birds‘ claws - No unnatural thing, if he was driven out and neglected as the insane have been in much later times, and in much more civilized parts of the world. In regard to the probability of the statement here made respecting the treatment of Nebuchadnezzar, and the objection derived from it against the authenticity of the book of Daniel, see Introduction to the chapter, II. (1). In addition to what is said there, the following cases may be referred to as showing that there is no improbability in supposing that what is here stated actually occurred. The extracts are taken from the Second Annual Report of the Prison Discipline Society, and they describe the condition of some of the patients before they were admitted into the insane asylum at Worcester. If these things occurred in the commonwealth of Massachusetts, and in the nineteenth century of the Christian era, there is nothing incredible in supposing that a similar thing may have occurred in ancient pagan Babylon. “No. 1. Had been in prison twenty-eight years when he was brought to the Institution. During seven years he had not felt the influence of fire, and many nights he had not lain down for fear of freezing. He had not been shaved for twenty-eight years, and had been provoked and excited by the introduction of hundreds to see the exhibition of his raving. No. 2. Had been in one prison fourteen years: he was naked - his hair and beard grown long - and his skin so entirely filled with the dust of charcoal as to render it impossible, from its appearance, to discover what nation he was of. He was in the habit of screaming so loud as to annoy the whole neighborhood, and was considered a most dangerous and desperate man. No. 3. An old man of seventy years of age or more; had been chained for twenty-five years, and had his chain taken off but once in that time.

No. 4. A female: had so long been confined with a short chain as wholly to lose the use of her lower limbs. Her health had been materially impaired by confinement, and she was unable to stand, and had not walked for years. No. 8. Had been ten years without clothes: a most inconceivably filthy and degraded being: exceedingly violent and outrageous. No. 9. Another female, exceedingly filthy in her habits, had not worn clothes for two years, during which time she had been confined in a filthy cell, destitute of everything like comfort, tearing everything in pieces that was given her. No. 10. Had been insane eight years: almost the whole of the time in jail and in a cage.”

Verse 34

And at the end of the days - That is, the time designated; to wit, the "seven times" that were to pass over him.

I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven - Probably the first thing that indicated returning reason. It would not be unnatural, on the supposition that he was deprived of reason at the very instant that a voice seemed to speak to him from heaven, and that he continued wholly insane or idiotic during the long interval of seven years, that the first indication of returning reason would be his looking up to the place from where that voice seemed to come, as if it were still speaking to him. In some forms of mental derangement, when it comes suddenly upon a man, the effect is wholly to annihilate the interval, so that, when reason is restored, the individual connects in his recollection the last thing which occurred when reason ceased with the moment when it is restored. A patient had been long an inmate of an insane apartment in Providence, Rhode Island. He was a seaman, and had been injured on the head when his vessel was in a naval engagement, and it was supposed that his brain had been permanently affected.

For many years he was idiotic, and no hopes were entertained of his recovery. It was at length suggested that the operation of trepanning should be performed, and the very instant that the bone was raised from its pressure on the brain, he exclaimed, "Has she struck?" The whole interval of time was obliterated from his memory. Similar instances are mentioned by Dr. Abercrombie ("Intellectual Powers," pp. 252,253). A man had been employed for a day with a beetle and wedges in splitting pieces of wood for erecting a fence. At night, before going home, he put the beetle and wedges into the hollow of an old tree, and directed his sons, who had been at work in an adjoining field, to accompany him next morning to assist in making the fence. In the night he became maniacal, and continued in a state of insanity for several years, during which time his mind was not occupied with any of the subjects with which he had been conversant when in health.

After several years his reason returned suddenly, and the first question he asked was, whether his sons had brought home the beetle and wedges. A lady had been intensely engaged for some time in a piece of needlework. Before she had completed it she became insane, and continued in that state for seven years; after which her reason returned suddenly. One of the first questions she asked related to her needlework, though she had never

alluded to it, so far as was recollected, during her illness. Another lady was liable to periodical paroxysms of delirium, which often attacked her so suddenly that in conversation she would stop in the middle of a story, or even of a sentence, and branch off into the subject of hallucination. On the return of her reason, she would resume the subject of her conversation on which she was engaged at the time of the attack, beginning exactly where she had left off, though she had never alluded to it during her delirium; and on the next attack of delirium she would resume the subject of hallucination With which she had been occupied at the conclusion of the former paroxysm. A similar thing may have occurred to Nebuchadnezzar. He was deprived of reason by a sudden voice from heaven. Nothing was more natural, or would be more in accordance with the laws respecting insanity, than that at the very instant when reason returned he should look up to the place from where the voice had seemed to come.

And mine understanding returned unto me - This shows that he regarded himself as having been a maniac, though doubtless he was ignorant of the manner in which he had been treated. It would seem from the narrative, and from the probabilities of the case, that he found himself driven out from his palace, herding with cattle, and in the deplorable condition in regard to personal appearance which he here describes. Seeing this in fact, and recollecting the prediction, he could not doubt that this was the way in which he had been treated during the period of his distressing malady.

And I blessed the Most High - For his recovery, and in an humble acknowledgment of his dependence. “The acts of praise here referred to are the suitable returns of a mind truly penitent, and deeply sensible of its faults and of its mercies.” - Winkle.

And I praised and honored him - That is, I honored him by rendering thanks for his restoring mercy, by recognizing him as the true God, and by the acknowledging of the truth that he has a right to reign, and that his kingdom is over all.

That liveth for ever - He is the living God, as he is often styled, in contradistinction from all false gods - who have no life; and he lives forever in contradistinction to his creatures on earth, all of whom are destined to die. He will live when all on earth shall have died; he will live forever in the future, as he has lived forever in the past.

Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion - His empire extends through all time, and will continue while eternal ages roll away.

And his kingdom is from generation to generation - The generations of men change, and monarchs die. No human sovereign can extend his own power over the next generation, nor can he secure his authority in the person of his successors. But the dominion of God is unchanged, while the generations of men pass away; and when one disappears from the earth, he meets the next with the same claim to the right of sovereignty, with the same principles of government - carrying forward, through that and successive ages, the fulfillment of his great and glorious purposes.

Verse 35

And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing - Are regarded as nothing in comparison with him. Compare Isaiah 40:15, note 17, note. Precisely the same sentiment occurs in Isaiah which is expressed here: "All nations before him are as nothing; and they are accounted unto him less than nothing and vanity."

And he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven - In the host of heaven - בחיל *bechēyol* - Greek, "in the power of heaven," ἐν τῇ, δυνάμει *en tē dunamei* The Chaldee word means properly strength, might, valor; and it is then applied to an army as possessing strength, or valor, or force. It is here applied to the inhabitants of heaven, probably considered as an army or host, of which God is the head, and which he leads forth or marshals to execute his puroses. In Daniel 3:20, the word is rendered "army." The sentiment here is, that in respect to the inhabitants of heaven, represented as organized or marshalled, God does his own pleasure. An intimation of his will is all that is needful to control them. This sentiment is in accordance with all the statements in the Scripture, and is a point of theology which must enter into every just view of God. Thus in the Lord's prayer it is implied: "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." So Ephesians 1:11 - "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." In heaven the will of God is accomplished in the most strict and absolute sense, for his will is law, and the only law to all the dwellers there. The obedience is as entire as if the will of each one of the dwellers there were but a form or manifestation of the will of God itself.

And among the inhabitants of the earth - This cannot mean, even as understood by Nebuchadnezzar, that the will of God is actually done among the inhabitants of the earth in the same sense, and to the same extent, as

among those who dwell in heaven. His design was, undoubtedly, to assert the supremacy and absolute control of God; a fact that had been so strikingly illustrated in his own case. The sentiment expressed by Nebuchadnezzar is true in the following respects:

(1) That man has no power to prevent the fulfillment of the Divine purposes.

(2) That God will accomplish his design in all things, whatever opposition man may make.

(3) That he has absolute control over every human being, and over all that pertains to anyone and everyone.

(4) That he will overrule all things so as to make them subservient to his own plans.

(5) That he will make use of men to accomplish his own purposes. Compare the note at Isaiah 10:7.

(6) That there is a great and glorious scheme of administration which God is carrying out by the instrumentality of men.

And none can stay his hand - literally, "none can smite upon his hand" (Gesenius, "Lex."); that is, none can restrain his hand. The language is taken, says Bertholdt, from the custom of striking children upon the hand when about to do anything wrong, in order to restrain them. The phrase is common in the Targums for to restrain, to hinder. The Arabs have a similar expression in common use. See numerous instances of the use of the word מחא *mechâ'* in the sense of restrain or prohibit, in Buxtorf. - "Lex. Chal." The truth taught here is, that no one has power to keep back the hand of God when it is put forth to accomplish the purposes which he intends to execute; that is, he will certainly accomplish his own pleasure.

Or say unto him, What doest thou? - A similar expression occurs in 2 Samuel 16:10: "So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" Also in Job 9:12: "Behold, he taketh away: Who can hinder him? Who will say unto him, What doest thou?" See the note at that passage. The meaning here is plain. God is supreme, and will do his pleasure in heaven and in earth. The

security that all will be done right is founded on the perfection of his nature; and that is ample. Mysterious though his ways may seem to us, yet in that perfection of his nature we have the fullest assurance that no wrong will be done to any of his creatures. Our duty, therefore, is calm submission to his holy will, with the deep conviction that whatever God does will yet be seen to be right.

Verse 36

At the same time my reason returned unto me - Showing that he regarded himself as having been insane.

And for the glory of my kingdom - That is, his restoration to the exercise of his reason contributed to the glory of his kingdom, either by the acts of justice and beneficence which he intended should characterize the remainder of his reign, or by his purpose to reform the abuses which had crept into the government while he was deprived of his reason, or by his determination to complete public works which had been purposed or commenced before his affliction.

Mine honor and brightness returned unto me - Evidently referring to his intellect. He was again restored to that strength and clearness of understanding by which, before his affliction, he had been able to do so much for the glory of his kingdom.

And my counselors and my lords sought unto me - As they had done formerly. During his state of mental alienation, of course, the great lords of the empire would not resort to him for counsel.

And excellent majesty was added unto me - Majesty and honor appropriate to my state, instead of the treatment incident to the condition of a maniac; Theodotion renders this, "and greater majesty was added to me." It is by no means improbable that additional honor would be conferred on the recovered monarch.

Verse 37

Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven - Compare Daniel 2:47, and Daniel 4:1-3. He felt himself called on, in this public manner, to acknowledge the true God, with whose supremacy he had been made acquainted in so affecting a manner; to "praise" him that he had preserved him, and restored him to his reason and his throne; to extol or exalt him, by recognizing his sovereignty over the mighty kings of the earth, and the power to rule over all; and to "honor" him by making his

name and attributes known abroad, and by using all his influence as a monarch to have him reverenced throughout his extended empire.

All whose works are truth - See Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 33:4; Revelation 15:3. The meaning is, that all that he does is done in accordance with the true nature of things, or with justice and propriety. It is not based on a false estimate of things, as what is done by man often is. How often are the plans and acts of man, even where there are the best intentions, based on some false estimate of things; on some views which are shown by the result to have been erroneous! But God sees things precisely as they are, and accurately knows what should be done in every case.

And those that walk in pride he is able to abase - What had occurred to Nebuchadnezzar might occur to others, and as God had shown that he could reduce the most exalted sovereign of the earth to the lowest condition in which a human being can be, he inferred that he could do the same to all, and that there was no one so exalted in rank, so vigorous in health, and so mighty in intellect, that he could not effectually humble and subdue him. This is indeed an affecting truth which is constantly illustrated in the world. The reverses occurring among men, the sick-bed, the loss of reason, the grave, show how easily God can bring down rank, and beauty, and talent and all that the world calls great, to the dust. In the Greek Codex Chisianus there is at the close of this chapter a beautiful ascription of praise to God, which has nothing to correspond with it in the Chaldee, and the origin of which is unknown.

I will translate it, because, although it is not of Divine authority, and is no part of the sacred writings, it contains sentiments not inappropriate to the close of this remarkable chapter. It is as follows: “To the Most High I make confession, and render praise to Him who made the heaven, and the earth, and the seas, and the rivers, and all things in them; I acknowledge him and praise him because he is the God of gods, and Lord of lords, and King of kings, for he does signs and wonders, and changes times and seasons, taking away the kingdoms of kings, and placing others in their stead. From this time I will serve him, and from the fear of him trembling has seized me, and I praise all his saints, for the gods of the pagan have not in themselves power to transfer the kingdom of a king to another king, and to kill and to make alive, and to do signs, and great and fearful wonders, and to change mighty deeds, as the God of heaven has done to me, and has brought upon me great changes. I, during all the days of my reign, on account of my life,

will bring to the Most High sacrifices for an odor of sweet savor to the Lord, and I and my people will do what will be acceptable before him - my nation, and the countries which are under my power.

And whosoever shall speak against the God of heaven, and whosoever shall countenance those who speak anything, I will condemn to death. Praise the Lord God of heaven, and bring sacrifice and offering to him gloriously. I, king of kings, confess Him gloriously, for so he has done with me; in the very day he set me upon my throne, and my power, and my kingdom; among my people I have power, and my majesty has been restored to me. And he sent letters concerning all things that were done unto him in his kingdom; to all the nations that were under him."

Nebuchadnezzar is supposed to have lived but about one year after this (Wintle), but nothing is known of his subsequent deeds. It may be hoped that he continued steadfast in his faith in that God whom he had thus been brought to acknowledge, and that he died in that belief. But of this nothing is known. After so solemn an admonition, however, of his own pride, and after being brought in this public manner to acknowledge the true God, it is to be regarded as not improbable that he looked on the Babylon that he had reared, and over his extended realms, with other feelings than those which he had before this terrible calamity came upon him. "Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded in his kingdom by his son Iloarudam, according to Ptolemy, who is the Evil-Merodach of Jeremiah. After the death of Evil-Merodach, who reigned two years, Niricassolassar, or Neriglissar, who seems to have been the chief of the conspirators against the last king, succeeded him. He had married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, and in the course of his reign made a great stand against the growing power of the Medes and Persians; but at length, after a reign of four years, was killed in a battle with them under the command of Cyrus. His son Laborosoarchod succeeded him, and having reigned only nine months, and not reaching a Thoth, or beginning of an Egyptian year, he is not mentioned by Ptolemy; but he is said to have been quite the reverse of his father, and to have exercised many acts of wanton cruelty, and was murdered by his own subjects, and succeeded by his son Nabonadius, or Belshazzar." - Wintle.

Remarks

(1) The narrative in this chapter furnishes an illustration of the disposition among men to make arrangements for their own ease and comfort, especially in view of advancing years, Daniel 4:4. Nebuchadnezzar had drawn around him all that it is possible, perhaps, for man to accumulate with this view. He was at the head of the pagan world - the mighty monarch of the mightiest kingdom on the earth. He was at peace - having finished his wars, and having been satiated with the glory of battle and conquest. He had enlarged and beautified his capital, so that it was one of the "wonders of the world." He had built for himself a palace, which surpassed in richness, and elegance, and luxury, all the habitations of man in that age. He had accumulated vast wealth, and there was not a production of any clime which he could not command, nor was there anything that is supposed to be necessary to make man happy in this life which he had not in his possession.

All this was the result of arrangement and purpose. He designed evidently to reach the point where he might feel that he was "at ease, and flourishing in his palace." What was true in his case on a large scale is true of others in general, though on a much smaller scale. Most men would be glad to do the same thing; and most men seek to make such an arrangement according to their ability. They look to the time when they may retire from the toils and cares of life, with a competence for their old age, and when they may enjoy life, perhaps, many years, in the tranquility of honorable and happy retirement. The merchant does not expect always to be a merchant; the man in office to be always burdened with the cares of state. The soldier does not expect always to be in the camp, or the mariner on the sea. The warrior hopes to repose on his laurels; the sailor to find a quiet haven; the merchant to have enough to be permitted to sit down in the evening of life free from care; and the lawyer, the physician, the clergyman, the farmer, each one hopes, after the toils and conflicts of life are over, to be permitted to spend the remainder of his days in comfort, if not in affluence.

This seems to be based on some law of our nature; and it is not to be spoken of harshly, or despised as if it had no foundation in what is great and noble in our being. I see in this a high and noble truth. It is that our nature looks forward to rest; that we are so made as to pant for repose - for calm repose when the work of life is over. As our Maker formed us, the law was that we should seek this in the world to come - in that blessed abode where

we may be free from all care, and where there shall be everlasting rest. But man, naturally unwilling to look to that world, has abused this law of his being, and seeks to find the rest for which the soul pants, in that interval, usually very short, and quite unfitted for tranquil enjoyment, between the period when he toils, and lies down in the grave. The true law of his being would lead him to look onward to everlasting happiness; he abuses and perverts the law, and seeks to satisfy it by making provision for a brief and temporary rest at the close of the present life.

(2) There is a process often going on in the case of these individuals to disturb or prevent that state of ease. Thus there was in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, as intimated by the dream. Even then, in his highest state of grandeur, there was a tendency to the sad result which followed when he was driven from his throne, and treated as a poor and neglected maniac. This was intimated to him by the dream; and to one who could see all the future, it would be apparent that things were tending to this result. The very excitements and agitations of his life, the intoxication of his pride, and the circumstances of ease and grandeur in which he was now placed, all tended by a natural course of things to produce what followed. And so, in other cases, there is often process going on, if it could be seen, destined to disappoint all those hopes, and to prevent all that anticipated ease and tranquility. It is not always visible to men, but could we see things as God sees them, we should perceive that there are causes at work which will blast all those hopes of ease, and disappoint all those expectations of tranquility. There may be

(a) the loss of all that we possess: for we hold it by an uncertain tenure, and “riches often take to themselves wings.” There may be

(b) the loss of a wife, or a child and all our anticipated comforts shall be tasteless, for there shall be none with whom to share them. There may be

(c) the loss of reason, as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, for no human precaution can guard against that. There may be

(d) the loss of health - a loss against which no one can defend himself - which shall render all his preparations for comfort of no value. Or

(e) death itself may come - for no one has any basis of calculation in regard to his own life, and no one, therefore, who builds for himself a palace can have any security that he will ever enjoy it.

Men who build splendid houses for themselves may yet experience sad scenes in their dwellings; and if they could foresee all that will occur in them, it would so throw a gloom over all the future as to lead them to abandon the undertaking. Who could engage cheerfully in such an enterprise if he saw that he was constructing a house in which a daughter was to lie down and die, or from which his wife and children were soon to be borne forth to the grave? In this chamber your child may be long sick; in that one you or your wife may lie down on a bed from which you will never rise; from those doors yourself, your wife, your child, will be borne forth to the grave; and if you saw all this now, how could you engage with so much zeal in constructing your magnificent habitation?

(3) Our plans of life should be formed with the feeling that this is possible: I say not with the gloomy apprehension that these calamities will certainly come, or with no anticipation or hope that there will be different scenes - for then life would be nothing else but gloom; but that we should allow the possibility that these things may occur to enter, as an element, into our calculations respecting the future. Such a feeling will give us sober and just views of life; will break the force of trouble and disappointment when they come; and will give us just apprehensions of our dependence on Him in whose hand are all our comforts.

(4) The dealings of God in our world are such as are eminently fitted to keep up the recognition of these truths. What occurred to Nebuchadnezzar, in the humbling of his pride, and the blighting of his anticipated pleasures, is just an illustration of what is constantly occurring on the earth. What house is there into which trouble, disappointment, and sorrow never come? What scheme of pride is there in respect to which something does not occur to produce mortification? What habitation is there into which sickness, bereavement, and death never find their way? And what abode of man on earth can be made secure from the intrusion of these things? The most splendid mansion must soon be left by its owner, and never be visited by

him again. The most magnificent banqueting-hall will be forsaken by its possessor, and never will he return to it again; never go into the chamber where he sought repose; never sit down at the table where he joined with others in revelry.

(5) The counsel given by Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar Daniel 4:27, to break off his sins by righteousness, that there might be a lengthening out of his tranquility, is counsel that may now be given to all sinners, with equal propriety.

(I.) For, as in his case, there are certain consequences of sin to which we must look forward, and on which the eye of a sinner should rest. Those consequences are

(1) such as spring up in the course of nature, or which are the regular results of sin in the course of events. They are such as can be foreseen, and can be made the basis of calculation, or which a man can know beforehand will come upon him if he perseveres in a certain course. Thus he who is intemperate can look upon certain results which will inevitably follow if he perseveres in that course of life. As he looks upon the poverty, and babbling, and woe, and sorrow, and misery, and death of an inebriate, he can see that that lot will be certainly his own if he perseveres in his present course, and this can be made with him a matter of definite calculation or anticipation. Or

(2) there are all these consequences of sin which are made known in the sacred Scriptures as sure to come upon transgressors. This, too, is a large class; but these consequences are as certain as those which occur in the regular course of events. The principal difference between the two is, that revelation has designated more sins that will involve the sinner in calamity than can be ascertained in the ordinary course of events, and that it has carried the mind forward, and discloses what will take place in the future world as well as what will occur in this. But the one is more certain than the other; and alike in reference to what is sure to occur in the present life, and what we are told will occur in the future state, the sinner should allow himself to be influenced by the anticipation of what is to come.

(II.) Repentance, reformation, and a holy life would, in many cases, go far to arrest these calamities - or, in the language of Daniel, "lengthen out tranquility." This is true in the following respects:

(1) That impending temporal calamities may be often partially or wholly turned away by reformation. An illustration of this thought occurred in the case of Nineveh; and the same thing now occurs. A young man who is in danger of becoming intemperate, and who has already contracted some of the habits that lead to intemperance, could avert a large class of impending ills by so simple a thing as signing the temperance pledge, and adhering to it. All the evils of poverty, tears, crime, disease, and an early death, that intemperance produces, he would certainly avert; that is, he would make it certain that the large class of ills that intemperance engenders would never come upon him. He might experience other ills, but he would never suffer those. So it is of the sufferings produced by licentiousness, by gluttony, by the spirit of revenge; and so it is of all the woes that follow the violation of human laws. A man may indeed be poor; he may be sick; he may be bereaved; he may lose his reason, but these ills he will never experience. But what Daniel here affirms is true in another sense in regard to temporal calamities. A man may, by repentance, and by breaking off from his sins, do much to stay the progress of woe, and to avert the results which he has already begun to experience. Thus the drunkard may reform, and may have restored health, rigor, and prosperity; and thus the licentious may turn from the evil of his ways, and enjoy health and happiness still. On this subject, see the notes at Job 33:14-25, particularly the notes at Job 33:25.

(2) But by repentance and holy living a man may turn away all the results of sin in the future world, and may make it certain that he will never experience a pang beyond the grave. All the woe that sin would cause in the future state may be thus averted, and he who has been deeply guilty may enter the eternal world with the assurance that he will never suffer beyond the grave. Whether, then, we look to the future in the present life, or to the future beyond the grave, we have the highest conceivable motives to abandon the ways of sin, and to lead lives of holiness. If a man were to live only on the earth, it would be for his welfare to break off from the ways of transgression; how much higher is this motive when it is remembered that he must exist forever!

(6) We have an illustration in the account in this chapter of the evil of "pride," Daniel 4:29-31. The pride which we may have on account of beauty, or strength, or learning, or accomplishments; which we feel when we look over our lands that we have cultivated, or the houses that we have built, or the reputation which we have acquired, is no less offensive in the sight of a holy God than was the pride of the magnificent monarch who looked out on the towers, and domes, and walls, and palaces of a vast city, and said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have builded?"

(7) And in view of the calamity that came upon Nebuchadnezzar, and the treatment which he received in his malady, we may make the following remarks:

(a) We should be thankful for the continuance of reasons. When we look on such a case as this, or when we go into a lunatic asylum, and see the wretchedness that the loss of reason causes, we should thank God daily that we are not deprived of this inestimable blessing.

(b) We should be thankful for science, and for the Christian religion, and for all that they have done to give comfort to the maniac, or to restore him to a sound mind. When we compare the treatment which the insane now receive in the lunatic asylums with what they everywhere meet with in the pagan world, and with what they have, up to a very recent period, received in Christian lands, there is almost nothing in which we see more marked proof of the interposition of God than in the great change which has been produced. There are few persons who have not, or may not have, some friend or relative who is insane, and there is no one who is not, or may not be, personally interested in the improvement which religion and science have made in the treatment of this class of unfortunate beings. In no one thing, so far as I know, has there been so decided progress in the views and conduct of men; and on no one subject has there been so evident an improvement in modern times, as in the treatment of the insane.

(c) The possibility of the loss of reason should be an element in our calculations about the future. On this point we can have no security. There is no such vigour of intellect, or clearness of mind, or cultivation of the

habits of virtue, and even no such influence of religion, as to make it certain that we may not yet be reckoned among the insane; and the possibility that this may be so should be admitted as an element in our calculations in regard to the future. We should not jeopard any valuable interest by leaving that undone which ought to be done, on the supposition that we may at a future period of life enjoy the exercise of reason. Let us remember that there may be in our case, even in youth or middle life, the loss of this faculty; that there will be, if we reach old age, in all probability, such a weakening of our mental powers as to unfit us for making any preparation for the life to come, and that on the bed of death, whenever that occurs. there is often an entire loss of the mental powers, and commonly so much pain. distress, or prostration, as to unfit the dying man for calm and deliberate thought; and let us, therefore, while we have reason and health, do all that we know we ought to do to make preparation for our eternal state. For what is our reason more certainly given us than to prepare for another world?

DANIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

Section I. - Authenticity of the Chapter

Much fewer objections have been made to the authenticity of this chapter, and much fewer difficulties started, than in regard to Daniel 5:29 may be that an order was made to that effect, with a purpose to carry it into execution on the following day. Bertholdt himself translates the passage Daniel 5:29, "Then Belshazzar gave command that they should clothe Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold around his neck," etc. Hierauf "gab Belschazar den Befehl" dem Daniel den purpurmantel und den goldenen Halsschmuck umzuhangen, etc. On the one hand, nothing forbids the supposition that the execution of this order might have been deferred; or, on the other, that the order was executed at once. But little time would have been necessary to do it. See however, the note at Daniel 5:29.

III. A third objection or difficulty arises from the writing itself. It is, that it is wholly improbable that Daniel could have had sufficient knowledge to enable him to interpret these words when no one of the Chaldean sages could do it. Where, it is asked, could he have obtained this knowledge? His instruction in reading languages he must have received in Babylon itself, and it is wholly improbable that among so many sages and wise men who were accustomed to the languages spoken in Babylon and in other countries, no one should have been found who was as able to interpret the words as he. - Bertholdt, p. 346.

To this it is obvious to reply, that the whole narrative supposes that Daniel owed his ability to interpret these words, not to any natural skill, or to any superior advantages of genius or education, but to the fact that he was directly endowed from on high. In other cases, in the times of Nebuchadnezzar, he always disclaimed any power of his own of revealing the meaning of dreams and visions Daniel 2:27-30, nor did he set up any claim to an ability to do it of himself on this occasion. If he received his knowledge directly from God, all the difficulty in this objection vanishes at once; but the whole book turns on the supposition that he was under Divine teaching.

IV. It has been objected that there was no object to be accomplished worthy of such a miracle as that of writing in this mysterious manner on the wall. It is asked by Bertholdt (p. 347), “Is the miracle credible? What purpose was it designed to serve? What end would it accomplish? Was the design to show to Belshazzar that the city was soon to be destroyed? But of what use could this be but a couple of hours before it should occur? Or was it the design to make Belshazzar acquainted with the power of Jehovah, and to punish him for desecrating the vessels of the temple service? But who could attribute to the all-perfect Being such a weakness that he could be angry, and take this method to express his anger, for an act that could not be regarded as so heinous as to be worthy of such an interposition?”

To this it may be replied,

(1) That the objection here made would lie in some degree against almost any single miracle that is recorded in the Scriptures.

(2) That it may have been the intention to warn the king of the impending danger, not so much with a view that the danger should be averted, as to show that it came from God.

(3) Or it may have been the intention to show him the enormity of his sins, and even then to bring him to repentance.

(4) Or it may have been the intention to connect quite distinctly, in the apprehension of all present, and in the view of all future ages, the destruction of Babylon with the crimes of the monarchs, and especially their crimes in connection with the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, the burning of the temple, and the carrying away of the people into a long captivity. There can be no doubt, from many parts of the prophetic writings, that the overthrow of Babylon, and the subversion of the Chaldean power, was in consequence of their treatment of the Hebrew people; and nothing was better fitted to show this than to make the destruction of the city coincident with the desecration of the sacred vessels of the temple.

(5) Or it may have been the intention to recal Daniel into notice, and to give him authority and influence again preparatory to the restoration of his

countrymen to their own land. It would seem from the whole narrative that, in accordance with a custom which still prevails in Persia (Chardin, as referred to by Hengstenberg, "Authentie des Daniel," p. 123), all the magicians and astrologers had been dismissed from court on the death of Nebuchadnezzar, and that Daniel with the others had retired from his place. Yet it may have been important, in order to the restoration of the Hebrew people to their land at the appointed time, that there should be one of their own nation occupying an influential station at court, and Daniel was thus, in consequence of his ability to interpret this mysterious language, restored to his place, and was permitted to keep it until the time of the return of the Hebrews to their country arrived. See Daniel 6:2-3, Daniel 6:28.

(6) And it may have been the intention to furnish an impressive demonstration that Jehovah is the true God. Other objections it will be more convenient to notice in the course of the exposition of the chapter.

Section II. - Belshazzar

Of Belshazzar, the closing scene of whose reign is described in this chapter, little more is known than is recorded here. He is mentioned by Daniel as the last king of the Chaldees, under whom Babylon was taken by the Medes and Persians. Herodotus (i. 188) calls this king, and also his father, "Labynetus," which is undoubtedly a corruption of Nabonnedus, the name by which he was known to Berosus. - Josephus "against Apion," i. 20. Josephus himself ("Ant." x. ch. xi. Section 2) says that the name of this king, whom he calls Baltasar, among the Babylonians, was Naboandelus. Nabonadius in the canon of Ptolemy, Nabonedus in Eusebius (Chr. Armen. i. p. 60), and Nabonochus in Eusebius ("Prep. Evang." ix. 41), are remarked by Winer as only varieties of his name. Winer conjectures that in the name Belshazzar, the element shazzar means "the principle of fire." See Kitto's "Cyclopaedia."

The accounts which we have of this king are very meagre, and yet, meagre as they are, they are by no means uniform, and it is difficult to reconcile them. That which is given by Josephus as his own account of the successors of Nebuchadnezzar is in the following language: "After the death of Nebuchadnezzar Evil-Merodach, his son, succeeded in the kingdom, who immediately set Jeconiah at liberty, and esteemed him among his most intimate friends. When Evil-Merodach was dead, after a reign of eighteen years, Neglissar, his son, took the government, and

retained it forty years, and then ended his life; and after him the succession came to his son, Labosordacus, who continued it in all but nine months; and when he was dead, it came to Baltasar, who by the Babylonians was called Naboandelus; against him did Cyrus the king of Persia, and Darius the king of Media, make war; and when he was besieged in Babylon there happened a wonderful and prodigious vision. He was sat down at supper in a large room, and there were a great many vessels of silver, such as were made for royal entertainments, and he had with him his concubines and his friends; whereupon he came to a resolution, and commanded that those vessels of God which Nebuchadnezzar had plundered out of Jerusalem, and had not made use of, but had put them into his own temple, should be brought out of that temple." - "Ant." b. x. ch. 11: Section 2. Josephus then proceeds to give an account of the appearance of the hand, and of the writing, and of the result in the taking of Babylon, substantially the same as what is found in this chapter of Daniel.

The account which Berosus gives as preserved by Josephus ("against Apion," b. i. Section 20) varies from this in some important particulars. For an account of Berosus, see the Introduction to Daniel 5:11, Daniel 5:22. Belshazzar, he supposes, must have reigned more than twenty years.

The succession in the Babylonian Chaldean kingdom, according to Dr. Hales, was as follows: "Nabonassar reigned 14 years, from 747 b.c.; Nadius, 2,733; Chinzirus, 5,731; Jugaus, 5,726; Mardok Empad, or Merodach Baladan, 12,721; Arcianus, 5,709; first interregnum, 2,704; Belibus, 3,702; Aphronadius, 6,699; Regibelus, 1,693; Mesessemordach, 4,692; second interregnum, 8,688; Asaradin, or Esar-haddon, 13,680; Saosduchin, 20,667; Chyneladon, 22,647; Nabopolassar, or Labynetus I., 21,625; Nineveh taken by the Babylonians and Medes, 604 b.c. Then follows the Babylonian dynasty, to wit, Nabopolassar, Labynetus I., Boktanser, or, Nebuchadnezzar, who reigned 43 years from 604 b.c.; Ilverodam, or Evil-Merodach, 3,561 b.c.; Nericassolassar, Neriglissar, or Belshazzar, 5,558 b.c.; Nabonadius, or Labynetus II., appointed by Darius the Mede, 17,553 b.c.; Babylon taken by Cyrus, 536 b.c."

Dr. Hales remarks in connection with this, "Nothing can exceed the various and perplexed accounts of the names and reigns of the princes of

this dynasty (the Babylonian) in sacred and profane history."

Jahn, following Ptolemy chiefly, thus enumerates the kings of Babylon from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar: "Nabocholassar, or Nebuchadnezzar, 43,605 b.c.; Iluarodamus, or Evil-Merodach, 2,562 b.c.; Nerichassolassar, or Neriglissar, 4,560 B. C; Laborasoarchad, 9 months, 556 b.c.; Nabounned, 17 years, 556 b.c.; Babylon taken by the Medes and Persians, 540 b.c."

In this confusion and discord respecting the chronology of these princes, the following remarks may be made in regard to the credibility of the statements in the book of Daniel:

(1) It is clear that it was not uncommon for the same prince to have more names than one. This has not been unusual, especially among Oriental princes, who seem to have often prided themselves on the number of epithets which they could use as designating their royal state. Since this was the case, it would not be strange if the names of the same king should be so used by writers, or in tradition, as to leave the impression that there were several; or if one writer should designate a king by one name, and another by another.

(2) It would seem probable, from all the accounts, that Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, but little is known of the king or kings whose reign intervened between that of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar.

(3) The testimony of Daniel in the book before us should not be set aside by the statement of Berosus, or by the other confused accounts which have come down to us. For anything that appears to the contrary, the authority of Daniel is as good as that of Berosus, and he is as worthy of belief. Living in Babylon, and through a great part of the reigns of this dynasty; present at the taking of Babylon, and intimate at court; honored by some of these princes more than any other man in the realm, there is no reason why he should not have had access to the means of information on the subject, and no reason why it should not be supposed that he has given a fair record of what actually occurred. Though the account in regard to the last days of Belshazzar, as given by Berosus, does not agree with that of Daniel, it should not be assumed that that of Berosus is correct, and that of Daniel

false. The account in Daniel is, to say the least, as probable as that of Berosus, and there are no means of proving that it is false except by the testimony of Berosus.

(4) The statement in Daniel of the manner in which Babylon was taken, and of the death of Belshazzar, is confirmed by Xenophon (Cyrop. vii.) - an authority quite equal, at least, to that of Berosus. See the note at Daniel 5:30. In the record in Daniel of the close of the life of Belshazzar, there is nothing that might not have been supposed to occur, for nothing is more probable than that a king might have been celebrating a feast in the manner described, or that the city might be surprised in such a night of revelry, or that, being surprised, the monarch might be slain.

Analysis of the Chapter

The chapter comprises a record of the series of events that occurred in Babylon on the night in which it was taken by the Medes and Persians. The scene may be supposed to open in the early evening, at a time when a festival would probably be celebrated, and to continue through a considerable part of the night. It is not known precisely at what time the city was taken, yet it may be supposed that Cyrus was making his approaches while the revel was going on in the palace, and that even while Daniel was interpreting the handwriting on the wall, he was conducting his armies along the channel of the river, and through the open gate on the banks of the river, toward the palace. The order of the events referred to is as follows:

(1) the feast given by Belshazzar in his palace, Daniel 5:1-4;

(2) the mysterious appearance of the part of the hand on the wall, Daniel 5:5;

(3) the summoning of the soothsayers to interpret the handwriting, and their inability to do it, Daniel 5:6-9;

(4) the entrance of the queen into the banqueting-hall on account of the trouble of the king, and her reference to Daniel as one qualified to interpret the vision, Daniel 5:10-12;

(5) the summoning of Daniel by the king, and his address to him, Daniel 5:13-16;

(6) the answer of Daniel, declining any rewards for his service, and his solemn address to the king, reminding him of what had occurred to Nebuchadnezzar, and of the fact that he had forgotten the lessons which the Divine dealings with Nebuchadnezzar were adapted to teach, and that his own heart had been lifted up with pride, and that his conduct had been eminently wicked, Daniel 5:17-23;

(7) the interpretation of the words by Daniel, Daniel 5:24-28;

(8) the order to clothe Daniel in a manner appropriate to one of high rank, and the appointment to the third office in the kingdom, Daniel 5:29; and

(9) the taking of the city, and the death of Belshazzar, Daniel 5:30-31.

Verse 1

Belshazzar the king - See Introduction to the chapter, Section II. In the Introduction to the chapter here referred to, I have stated what seemed to be necessary in order to illustrate the history of Belshazzar, so far as that can be now known. The statements in regard to this monarch, it is well understood, are exceedingly confused, and the task of reconciling them is now hopeless. Little depends, however, in the interpretation of this book, on the attempt to reconcile them, for the narrative here given is equally credible, whichever of the accounts is taken, unless that of Berosus is followed. But it may not be improper to exhibit here the two principal accounts of the successors of Nebuchadnezzar, that the discrepancy may be distinctly seen. I copy from the Pictorial Bible. “The common account we shall collect from L‘Art de Verifier les Dates, and the other from Hales‘ “Analysis,” disposing them in opposite colums for the sake of comparison:

d **Comparison of Historical Accounts of Nebuchadnezzar**

d

d **From *L‘Art de Verifier* From Hales's *Analysis***

d

d 605Nebuchacnezzar, who was succeeded by his son.604Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by his son.

d

d 562Evil-Merodach, who, having provoked general indignation by his tyranny and atrocities, was, after a short reign of about two years, assassinated by his brother-in-law.561Evil-Merodach, or Ilverodam, who was slain in a battle against the Medes and Persians, and was succeeded by his son.

d

d 560Nerigilassar, or Nericassolassar, who was regarded as a deliverer and succeeded by the choice of the nation. He perished in a battle by Cyrus, and was succeeded by his son.558Neriglissar, Niricassolassar, or Belshazzar, the common accounts of whom seem to combine what is said both of Neriglissar, and his son opposite. He was killed by conspirators on the night of the ‹impious feast,‘ leaving a son (a boy).

d

d 555Laborosoarchod, notorious for his cruelty and oppression, and who was assassinated by two nobles, Gobryas and Gadatas, whose sons he had slain. The vacant throne was then ascended by.553Laborosoarchod, on whose death, nine months after, the dynasty became extinct, and the kingdom came peaceably to ‹Darius the Mede,‘ or Cyaxares who, on the will-known policy of the Medes and Persians, appointed a Babylonian nobleman, named Nabonadius, or Labynetus, to be king, or viceroy. This person revotled against Cyrus, who had succeeded to the united empire of the Medes and Persians. Cyrus could not immediately attend to him, but at last marched to Babylon, took the city, b.c. 536, as foretold by the prophets.

d

d 554Nabonadius, the Labynetus of Herodotus, the Naboandel of Josephus, and the Belshazzar of Daniel, who was the son of Evil-Merodach, and who now succeeded to the throne of his

d

d 538father. After a voluptuous reign, his city was taken by the Persians under Cyrus, on which occasion he lost his life.

d

d

It will be observed that the principal point of difference in these accounts is, that Hales contends that the succession of Darius the Mede to the Babylonian throne was not attended with war; that Belshazzar was not the king in whose time the city was taken by Cyrus; and, consequently, that the events which took place this night were quite distinct from and anterior to that siege and capture of the city by the Persian king which Isaiah and Jeremiah so remarkably foretold.

Made a great feast - On what occasion this feast was made is not stated, but is was not improbably an annual festival in honor of some of the Babylonian deities. This opinion seems to be countenanced by the words of the Codex Chisianus, "Belshazzar the king made a great festival ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐγκαινισμοῦ τῶν βασιλείων *en hēmera engkainismou tōn basileiōn*) on the day of the dedication of his kingdom;" and in Daniel 5:4 it is said that "they praised the gods of gold, of silver, and of brass," etc.

To a thousand of his lords - The word thousand here is doubtless used as a general term to denote a very large number. It is not improbable, however, that this full number was assembled on such an occasion. "Ctesias says, that the king of Persia furnished provisions daily for fifteen thousand men. Quintus Curtius says that ten thousand men were present at a festival of Alexander the Great; and Statius says of Domitian, that he ordered, on a certain occasion, his guests ‹to sit down at a thousand tables.' " - Prof. Stuart, *in loc*.

And drank wine before the thousand - The Latin Vulgate here is, "And each one drank according to his age." The Greek of Theodotion, the Arabic, and the Coptic is, "and wine was before the thousand." The Chaldee, however, is, as in our version, "he drank wine before the thousand." As he was the lord of the feast, and as all that occurred pertained primarily to him, the design is undoubtedly to describe his conduct, and to show the effect which the drinking of wine had on him. He drank it in the most public manner, setting an example to his lords, and evidently drinking it to great excess.

Verse 2-3

Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine - As the effect of tasting the wine - stating a fact which is illustrated in every age and land, that men, under the influence of intoxicating drinks, will do what they would not do when sober. In his sober moments it would seem probable that he would have respected the vessels consecrated to the service of religion, and would not have treated them with dishonor by introducing them for purposes of revelry.

Commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels - These vessels had been carefully deposited in some place as the spoils of victory (see Daniel 1:2), and it would appear that they had not before been desecrated for purposes of feasting. Belshazzar did what other men would have done in the same condition. He wished to make a display; to do something unusually surprising; and, though it had not been contemplated when the festival was appointed to make use of these vessels, yet, under the excitement of wine, nothing was too sacred to be introduced to the scenes of intoxication; nothing too foolish to be done. In regard to the vessels taken from the temple at Jerusalem, see the note at Daniel 1:2.

Which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken - Margin, "grandfather." According to the best account which we have of Belshazzar, he was the son of Evil-Merodach, who was the son of Nebuchadnezzar (see the Introduction to the chapter, Section II.), and therefore the word is used here, as in the margin, to denote grandfather. Compare Jeremiah 27:7. See the note at Isaiah 14:22. The word father is often used in a large signification. See 2 Samuel 9:7; also the notes at Matthew 1:1. There is no improbability in supposing that this word would be used to denote a grandfather, when applied to one of the family or dynasty of Nebuchadnezzar The fact that Belshazzar is here called "the son" of Nebuchadnezzar has been made a

ground of objection to the credibility of the book of Daniel, by Lengerke, p. 204. The objection is, that the "last king of Babylon was "not" the son of Nebuchadnezzar." But, in reply to this, in addition to the remarks above made, it may be observed that it is not necessary, in vindicating the assertion in the text, to suppose that he was the "immediate" descendant of Nebuchadnezzar, in the first degree. "The Semitic use of the word in question goes far beyond the first degree of descent, and extends the appellation of "son" to the designation "grandson," and even of the most remote posterity. In Ezra 6:14, the prophet Zechariah is called "the son of Iddo;" in Zechariah 1:1, Zechariah 1:7, the same person is called "the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo." So Isaiah threatens Hezekiah Isaiah 39:7 that the sons whom he shall beget shall be conducted as exiles to Babylon; in which case, however, four generations intervened before this happened. So in Matthew 1:1, ‹Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.' And so we speak every day: ‹The sons of Adam, the sons of Abraham, the sons of Israel, the sons of the Pilgrims,' and the like." - Prof. Stuart, "Com. on Dan." p. 144.

That the king and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein - Nothing is too sacred to be profaned when men are under the influence of wine. They do not hesitate to desecrate the holiest things, and vessels taken from the altar of God are regarded with as little reverence as any other. It would seem that Nebuchadnezzar had some respect for these vessels, as having been employed in the purposes of religion; at least so much respect as to lay them up as trophies of victory, and that this respect had been shown for them under the reign of his successors, until the exciting scenes of this "impious feast" occurred, when all veneration for them vanished. It was not very common for females in the East to be present at such festivals as this, but it would seem that all the usual restraints of propriety and decency came to be disregarded as the feast advanced. The "wives and concubines" were probably not present when the feast began, for it was made for "his lords" Daniel 5:1; but when the scenes of revelry had advanced so far that it was proposed to introduce the sacred vessels of the temple, it would not be unnatural to propose also to introduce the females of the court.

A similar instance is related in the book of Esther. In the feast which Ahasuerus gave, it is said that "on the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, etc., the

seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to show the people and the princes her beauty," etc. Esther 1:10-11. Compare Joseph. "Ant." b. xi. ch. 6: Section 1. The females that were thus introduced to the banquet were those of the harem, yet it would seem that she who was usually called "the queen" by way of eminence, or the queen-mother (compare the note at Esther 5:10), was not among them at this time. The females in the court of an Oriental monarch were divided into two classes; those who were properly concubines, and who had none of the privileges of a wife; and those of a higher class, and who were spoken of as wives, and to whom pertained the privileges of that relation. Among the latter, also, in the court of a king, it would seem that there was one to whom properly belonged the appellation of "queen;" that is, probably, a favorite wife whose children were heirs to the crown. See Bertholdt, *in loc*. Compare 2 Samuel 5:13; 1 Kings 11:3; Song of Song of Solomon 6:8 .

Verse 4

They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, … - Compare the note at Daniel 5:1. Idols were made among the pagan of all the materials here mentioned. The word praised here means that they spake in praise of these gods; of their history, of their attributes, of what they had done. Nothing can well be conceived more senseless and stupid than what it is said they did at this feast, and yet it is a fair illustration of what occurs in all the festivals of idolatry. And is what occurs in more civilized Christian lands, in the scenes of carousal and festivity, more rational than this? It was not much worse to lavish praises on idol gods in a scene of revelry than it is to lavish praises on idol men now; not much less rational to "toast" gods than it is to "toast" men.

Verse 5

In the same hour - On the word "hour," see the note at Daniel 4:19.

Came forth fingers of a man‘s hand - Not the whole hand, but only the parts usually employed in writing. Not a man writing; not even an arm, but fingers that seemed to move themselves. They appeared to come forth from the walls, and were seen before they began to write. It was this that made it so impressive and alarming. It could not be supposed that it was the work of man, or that it was devised by man for the purpose of producing consternation. It was perfectly manifest to all who were there that this was

the work of some one superior to man; that it was designed as a Divine intimation of some kind in regard to the scene that was then occurring. But whether as a rebuke for the sin of revelry and dissipation, or for sacrilege in drinking out of the consecrated vessels, or whether it was an intimation of some approaching fearful calamity, would not at once be apparent. It is easy to imagine that it would produce a sudden pause in their revelry, and diffuse seriousness over their minds.

The suddenness of the appearance; the fingers, unguided by the hand of man, slowly writing in mysterious characters on the wall; the conviction which must have flashed across the mind that this must be either to rebuke them for their sin, or to announce some fearful calamity, all these things must have combined to produce an overwhelming effect on the revellers. Perhaps, from the prevalent views in the pagan world in regard to the crime of sacrilege, they may have connected this mysterious appearance with the profane act which they were then committing - that of desecrating the vessels of the temple of God. How natural would it be to suppose - recognizing as they did the gods of other nations as real, as truly as those which they worshipped - that the God of the Hebrews, seeing the vessels of his worship profaned, had come forth to express his displeasure, and to intimate that there was impending wrath for such an act.

The crime of sacrilege was regarded among the pagan as one of the most awful which could be committed, and there was no state of mind in which men would be more likely to be alarmed than when they were, even in the midst of scenes of drunken revelry, engaged in such an act. “The pagan,” says Grotius, “thought it a great impiety to convert sacred things to common uses.” Nuerous instances are on record of the sentiments entertained among the pagan on the subject of sacrilege, and of the calamities which were believed to come upon men as a punishment for it. Among them we may refer to the miserable end of the Phocians, who robbed the temple of Delphos, and whose act was the occasion of that war which was called the Holy War; the destruction of the Gauls in their attempt upon the same temple; and of Crassus, who plundered the temple of Jerusalem, and that of the Syrian goddess. - See Lowth, *in loc*. That a conviction of the sin of sacrilege, according to the prevalent belief on the subject, may have contributed to produce consternation when the fingers of the hand appeared at Belshazzar‘s feast, there is no good reason to doubt,

and we may suppose that the minds of the revellers were at once turned to the insult which they had thus offered to the God of the Hebrews.

And wrote over against the candlestick - The candlestick, or lamp-bearer, perhaps, which had been taken from the temple at Jerusalem, and which was, as well as the sacred vessels, introduced into this scene of revelry. It is probable that as they brought out the vessels of the temple to drink in, they would also bring out all that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem. Two objects may have been contemplated in the fact that the writing was "over against the candlestick;" one was that it might be clearly visible, the other that it might be more directly intimated that the writing was a rebuke for the act of sacrilege. On the probable situation where this miracle occurred, the reader may consult Taylor's "Fragments to Calmet's Dictionary," No. 205. He supposes that it was one of the large inner courts of the palace - that part of the palace which was prohibited to persons not sent for. See the note at Daniel 5:10.

Upon the plaster of the wall - The Chaldee word means "lime," not inappropriately rendered here "plaster." The "manner" of the writing is not specified. All that is necessary to suppose is, that the letters were traced along on the wall so as to be distinctly visible. Whether they seemed to be cut into the plaster, or to be traced in black lines, or lines of light, is not mentioned, and is immaterial. They were such as could be seen distinctly by the king and the guests. Compare, however, the remarks of Taylor in the "Fragment" just referred to.

And the king saw the part of the hand that wrote - It is not necessary to suppose that the others did not see it also, but the king was the most important personage there, and the miracle was intended particularly for him. Perhaps his eyes were first attracted to it.

Verse 6

Then the king's countenance was changed - The word rendered "countenance" is, in the margin, as in Daniel 5:9, "brightnesses." The Chaldee word means "brightness, splendor" (זיו *zîyv*), and the meaning here is bright looks, cheerfulness, hilarity. The word rendered was changed, is in the margin changed it; and the meaning is, that it changed itself: probably from a jocund, cheerful, and happy expression, it assumed suddenly a deadly paleness.

And his thoughts troubled him - Whether from the recollection of guilt, or the dread of wrath, is not said. He would, doubtless, regard this as

some supernatural intimation, and his soul would be troubled.

So that the joints of his loins were loosed - Margin, "bindings," or "knots," or "girdles." The Chaldee word rendered "joints" (קטר *qeṭar*) means, properly, "knots;" then joints of the bones, as resembling knots, or apparently answering the purposes of knots in the human frame, as binding it together. The word "loins" in the Scriptures refers to the part of the body around which the girdle was passed, the lower part of the back; and Gesenius supposes that the meaning here is, that the joints of his back, that is, the vertebral are referred to. This part of the body is spoken of as the seat of strength. When this is weak the body has no power to stand, to walk, to labor. The simple idea is, that he was greatly terrified, and that under the influence of fear his strength departed.

And his knees smote one against another - A common effect of fear Nahum 2:10. So Horace, "Et corde et genibus tremit." And so Virgil, "Tarda trementi genua labant." "Belshazzar had as much of power, and of drink withal to lead him to bid defiance to God as any ruffian under heaven; and yet when God, as it were, lifted but up his finger against him, how poorly did he crouch and shiver. How did his joints loose, and his knees knock together!" - South's Sermons, vol. iv. p. 60.

Verse 7

And the king cried aloud - Margin, as in the Chaldee, "with might." This indicates a sudden and an alarming cry. The king was deeply terrified; and, unable himself to divine the meaning of the mysterious appearance of the hand, he naturally turned at once to those whose office it was to explain dreams and supernatural appearances.

To bring in the astrologers … - See the note at Daniel 2:2; Daniel 4:7.

And said to the wise men of Babylon - Those just referred to - the astrologers, etc. Having the power, as was supposed, of interpreting the indications of coming events, they were esteemed as eminently wise.

Whosoever shall read this writing - It would seem from this that even the characters were not familiar to the king and to those who were with him. Evidently the letters were not in the ordinary Chaldee form, but in some form which to them was strange and unknown. Thus there was a double mystery hanging over the writing - a mystery in regard to the language in which the words were written, and to the meaning of the words. Many conjectures have been formed as to the language employed in this writing (compare the note at Daniel 5:24), but such conjectures are useless, since it

is impossible now to ascertain what it was. As the writing, however, had a primary reference to the sacrilege committed in regard to the sacred vessels of the temple, and as Daniel was able to read the letters at once, it would seem not improbable that the words were in the Hebrew character then used - a character such as that found now in the Samaritan Pentateuch - for the Chaldee character now found in the Bible has not improbably been substituted for the more ancient and less elegant character now found in the Samaritan Pentateuch alone. There is no improbability in supposing that even the astrologers and the soothsayers were not familiar with that character, and could not readily read it.

And show me the interpretation thereof - The meaning of the words.

Shall be clothed with scarlet - The color worn usually by princes and by persons of rank. The margin is "purple." So the Greek of Theodotion - πορφύραν *porphuran* So also the Latin Vulgate - "purpura." On the nature and uses of this color, see the note at Isaiah 1:18.

And have a chain of gold about his neck - Also indicative of rank and authority. Compare Genesis 41:42. When Joseph was placed over the land of Egypt, the king honored him in a similar manner, by putting "a gold chain about his neck." This was common in Persia. See Xen. "Cyrop." I. 3,2, II. 4,6, VIII. 5,18; Anab. I. 5,8. Upon most of the figures in the ruins of Persepolis the same ornament is now found. Prof. Stuart renders this, "a collar of gold."

And shall be the third ruler in the kingdom - Of course, the king was first. Who the second was, or why the one who could disclose the meaning of the words should not be raised to the second rank, is not stated. It may be, that the office of prime minister was so fixed, or was held by one whose services were so important to the king, that he could not be at once displaced. Or the meaning may be, that the favored person who could interpret this would be raised to the third "rank" of dignity, or placed in the third class of those who held offices in the realm. The Chaldee is, "and shall rule third in the kingdom," and the idea would seem rather to be that he should be of the third rank or grade in office. So Bertholdt understands it. Grotius understands it as the third person in rank. He says the first was the king; the second, the son of the king; the third, the prince of the Satraps.

Verse 8

Then came in all the king's wise men - The classes above referred to, Daniel 5:7.

But they could not read the writing - The character was an unknown character to them. It may have been a character which was not found in any language, and which made the power of Daniel to read it the more remarkable, or it may have been, as suggested in the notes at Daniel 5:7, a foreign character with which they had no acquaintance, though familiar to Daniel.

Verse 9

Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled - Not doubting that this was a Divine intimation of some fearful event, and yet unable to understand its meaning. We are quite as likely to be troubled by what is merely "mysterious" in regard to the future - by anything that gives us some undefined foreboding - as we are by what is really formidable when we know what it is. In the latter case, we know the worst; we can make some preparation for it; we can feel assured that when that is past, all is past that we fear - but who can guard himself, or prepare himself, when what is dreaded is undefined as well as awful; when we know not how to meet it, or how long it may endure, or how terrific and wide may be the sweep of its desolation?

And his countenance was changed in him - Margin, "brightnesses." See the note at Daniel 5:6.

And his lords were astonied - Amazed. The Chaldee word means to perplex, disturb, trouble. They were doubtless as much perplexed and troubled as the king himself.

Verse 10

Now the queen - "Probably the queen-mother, the Nitocris of Herodotus, as the king‘s wives were at the entertainment." - Wintle. Compare Daniel 5:2-3. So Prof. Stuart. The editor of the "Pictorial Bible" also supposes that this was the queen-mother, and thinks that this circumstance will explain her familiarity with the occurrences in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. He says, "We are informed above, that the ‹wives and concubines‘ of the king were present at the banquet. It therefore seems probable that the ‹queen‘ who now first appears was the queen-mother; and this probability is strengthened by the intimate acquaintance which she exhibits with the affairs of Nebuchadnezzars reign; at the latter end of which she, as the wife of Evil-Merodach, who was regent during his father‘s alienation of mind, took an active part in the internal policy of the kingdom, and in the completion of the great works which Nebuchadnezzar

had begun in Babylon. This she continued during the reigns of her husband and son, the present king Belshazzar. This famous queen, Nitocris, therefore, could not but be well acquainted with the character and services of Daniel." On the place and influence of the queen-mother in the Oriental courts, see Taylor's Fragments to Calmet's Dictionary, No. 16. From the extracts which Taylor has collected, it would seem that she held an exalted place at court, and that it is every way probable that she would be called in or would come in, on such an occasion. See also Knolles' "History of the Turks," as quoted by Taylor, "Fragments," No. 50.

By reason of the words of the king and his lords - Their words of amazement and astonishment. These would doubtless be conveyed to her, as there was so much alarm in the palace, and as there was a summons to bring in the wise men of Babylon. if her residence was in some part of the palace itself, nothing would be more natural than that she should be made acquainted with the unusual occurrence; or if her residence was, as Taylor supposes, detached from the palace, it is every way probable that she would be made acquainted with the consternation that prevailed, and that, recollecting the case of Nebuchadnezzar, and the forgotten services of Daniel, she would feel that the information which was sought respecting the mysterious writing could be obtained from him.

And the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever - A common salutation in addressing a king, expressive of a desire of his happiness and prosperity.

Let not thy thoughts trouble thee … - That is, there is a way by which the mystery may be solved, and you need not, therefore, be alarmed.

Verse 11

There is a man in thy kingdom - To wit, Daniel. As the queen-mother had lived in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and recollected the important service which he had rendered in interpreting the dream of the king, it was natural that her mind should at once recur to him. It would seem, also, that though Daniel was no longer employed at court, yet that she still had an acquaintance with him, so far at least as to know that he was accessible, and might be called in on this occasion. It may be asked, perhaps, how it was Belshazzar was so ignorant of all this as to need this information? For it is clear from the question which the king asks in Daniel 5:13, "Art thou that Daniel?" that he was ignorant of him personally, and probably even of his services as an officer in the court of Nebuchadnezzar. An ingenious and not

improbable solution of this difficulty has been proposed as founded on a remark of Sir John Chardin: "As mentioned by the queen, Daniel had been made by Nebuchadnezzar ‹master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers.' Of this employment Chardin conjectures that he had been deprived on the death of that king, and obtains this conclusion from the fact that when a Persian king dies, both his astrologers and physicians are driven from court - the former for not having predicted, and the latter for not having prevented, his death. If such was the etiquette of the ancient Babylonian, as it is of the modern Persian court, we have certainly a most satisfactory solution of the present difficulty, as Daniel must then be supposed to have relinquished his public employments, and to have lived retired in private life during the eight years occupied by the reigns of Evil-Merodach and Belshazzar." - Harmer, as quoted by Rosenmuller ("Morgenland," on Daniel 5:13).

In whom is the spirit of the holy gods - This is language such as a pagan would be likely to use when speaking of one who had showed extraordinary knowledge of Divine things. See the note at Daniel 4:9.

And, in the days of thy father - Margin, "grandfather." See the note at Daniel 5:1-2.

Light, and understanding, and wisdom - Light is the emblem of knowledge, as it makes all things clear. The meaning here is, that he had showed extraordinary wisdom in interpreting the dream of Nebuchadnezzar.

Like the wisdom of the gods - Such as the gods only could possess.

Whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians … - See Daniel 2:48. This is repeated here, and dwelt on, in order to call the attention of the king to the fact that Daniel was worthy to be consulted. Though now living in obscurity, there was a propriety that one who had been placed at the very head of the wise men of Babylon by a prince so distinguished as Nebuchadnezzar, should be consulted on the present occasion.

Verse 12

Forasmuch as an excellent spirit - Not an excellent spirit in the sense in which that phrase is sometimes used now, as denoting a good and pious spirit, but a spirit or mind that excels; that is, that is "distinguished" for wisdom and knowledge.

Interpreting of dreams - Margin, "or, of an interpreter." This was regarded as a great attainment, and was supposed to prove that one who

could do it was inspired by the gods.

And showing of hard sentences - The meaning of enigmatical or obscure sentences. To be able to do this was supposed to indicate great attainments, and was a knowledge that was much coveted. Compare Proverbs 1:6: "To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings."

And dissolving of doubts - Margin, "or, a dissolver of knots." So the Chaldee. This language is still common in the East, to denote one who has skill in explaining difficult subjects. "In the copy of a patent given to Sir John Chardin in Persia, we find it is addressed ‹to the Lords of lords, who have the presence of a lion, the aspect of Deston; the princes who have the stature of Tahemtenten, who seem to be in the time of Ardevon, the regents who carry the majesty of Ferribours. The conquerors of kingdoms. Superintendents that unloose all manner of knots, and who are under the ascendant of Mercury,'" etc. - Taylor's "Fragments to Calmet's Dict.," No. 174. The language used here would be applicable to the explanation of any difficult and perplexing subject.

Whom the king named Belteshazzar - That is, the name was given to him by his authority (see the note at John 1:7), and it was by this name that he called him when he addressed him, Daniel 4:9.

Verse 13

Then was Daniel brought in before the king - From this it is clear that he lived in Babylon, though in comparative obscurity. It would seem to be not improbable that he was still known to the queen-mother, who, perhaps, kept up an acquaintance with him on account of his former services.

Art thou that Daniel - This is a clear proof that Belshazzar was not acquainted personally with him. See the note at Daniel 5:11.

Which art of the children of the captivity of Judah - Belonging to those of Judah, or those Jews who were made captives, and who reside in Babylon. See the notes at Daniel 1:3. He could not be ignorant that there were Jews in his kingdom, though he was not personally acquainted with Daniel.

Whom the king my father - Margin, as in Daniel 5:2, Daniel 5:1, "grandfather."

Brought out of Jewry? - Out of Judea. See Daniel 1:1-3.

Verse 14

I have even heard of thee … - Daniel 5:11.

Verse 15

And now the wise men … - Daniel 5:7-8.

Verse 16

And I have heard of thee … - Daniel 5:11.

Canst make interpretations - Margin, "interpret." Chaldee, "interpret interpretations." The meaning is, that he was skilled in interpreting or explaining dreams, omens, etc.

And dissolve doubts - See the notes at Daniel 5:12.

Now, if thou canst read the writing … thou shalt be clothed with scarlet … - This was the reward which at the first he had promised to any one that was able to do it, and as all others had failed, he was willing that it should be offered to a Jew.

Verse 17

Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself - That is, "I do not desire them; I do not act from a hope of reward." Daniel means undoubtedly to intimate that what he would do would be done from a higher motive than a desire of office or honor. The answer is one that is eminently dignified. Yet he says he would read the writing, implying that he was ready to do anything that would be gratifying to the monarch. It may seem somewhat strange that Daniel, who here disclaimed all desire of office or reward, should so soon Daniel 5:29 have submitted to be clothed in this manner, and to receive the insignia of office. But, it may be remarked, that when the offer was proposed to him he stated his wishes, and declared that he did not desire to be honored in that way; when he had performed the duty, however, of making known the writing, he could scarcely feel at liberty to resist a command of the king to be clothed in that manner, and to be regarded as an officer in the kingdom. His intention, in the verse before us, was modestly to decline the honors proposed, and to intimate that he was not influenced by a desire of such honors in what he would do; yet to the king's command afterward that he should be clothed in robes of office, he could not with propriety make resistance. There is no evidence that he took these honors voluntarily, or that he would not have continued to decline them if he could have done it with propriety.

And give thy rewards to another - Margin, "or fee, as in Daniel 2:6." Gesenius supposes that the word used here (נבזבה *nebizbâh*) is of Persian origin. It means a gift, and, if of Persian origin, is derived from a verb, meaning to lead with gifts and praises, as a prince does an ambassador. The

sense here seems to be, that Daniel was not disposed to interfere with the will of the monarch if he chose to confer gifts and rewards on others, or to question the propriety of his doing so; but that, so far as he was concerned, he had no desire of them for himself, and could not be influenced by them in what he was about to do.

Yet I will read the writing … - Expressing no doubt that he could do it without difficulty. Probably the language of the writing was familiar to him, and he at once saw that there was no difficulty, in the circumstances, in determining its meaning.

Verse 18

O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom … - This reference to Nebuchadnezzar is evidently designed to show to Belshazzar the wickedness of his own course, and the reason which he had to apprehend the Divine vengeance, because he had not learned to avoid the sins which brought so great calamities upon his predecessor. As he was acquainted with what had occurred to Nebuchadnezzar; as he had doubtless seen the proclamation which he had made on his recovery from the dreadful malady which God had brought upon him for his pride; and as he had not humbled himself, but had pursued the same course which Nebuchadnezzar did, he had the greater reason to apprehend the judgment of heaven. See Daniel 5:22-23. Daniel here traces all the glory which Nebuchadnezzar had to "the most high God," reminding the king that whatever honor and majesty he had he was equally indebted for it to the same source, and that he must expect a similar treatment from him.

Verse 19

And, for the majesty that he gave him - That is, on account of his greatness, referring to the talents which God had conferred on him, and the power which he had put in his hands. It was so great that all people and nations trembled before him.

All people, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him - Stood in awe of him. On the extent of his empire, see the note at Daniel 3:4; Daniel 4:1, Daniel 4:22.

Whom he would he slew … - That is, he was an arbitrary - an absolute sovereign. This is exactly descriptive of the power which Oriental despotic monarchs have.

Whom he would he kept alive - Whether they had, or had not, been guilty of crime. He had the absolute power of life and death over them

There was no such instrument as we call a "constitution" to control the sovereign as well as the people; there was no tribunal to which he was responsible, and no law by which he was bound; there were no judges to determine on the question of life and death in regard to those who were accused of crime, whom he did not appoint, and whom he might not remove, and whose judgments he might not set aside if he pleased; there were no "juries" of "peers" to determine on the question of fact whether an accused man was guilty or not. There were none of those safeguards which have been originated to protect the accused in modern times, and which enter so essentially into the notions of liberty now. In an absolute despotism all power is in the hands of one man, and this was in fact the case in Babylon.

Whom he would he set up - That is, in places of trust, of office, of rank, etc.

And whom he would he put down - No matter what their rank or office.

Verse 20

But when his heart was lifted up - See Daniel 4:30.

And his mind hardened in pride - Margin, "to deal proudly." The state of mind indicated here is that in which there is no sense of dependence, but where one feels that he has all resources in himself, and need only look to himself.

He was deposed from his kingly throne - Margin, "made to come down." That is, he was so deposed by the providence of God, not by the acts of his own subjects.

Verse 21

And he was driven … - See this fully explained in Daniel 4:25-33.

Verse 22

And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart … - As thou shouldst have done in remembrance of these events. The idea is, that we ought to derive valuable lessons from what has taken place in past times; that, from the events which have occurred in history, we should learn what God approves and what he disapproves; that we should avoid the course which has subjected others to his displeasure, and which has brought his judgments upon them. The course, however, which Belshazzar pursued has been that of kings and princes commonly in the world, and indeed of mankind at large. How little do men profit by the record of the calamities

which have come upon others for their crimes! How little are the intemperate of one generation admonished by the calamities which have come upon those of another; how little are the devotees of pleasure; how little are those in places of power!

Verse 23

But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven - The God who had so signally rebuked and humbled Nebuchadnezzar. The monarch had done this, it would seem, during the whole of his reign, and now by a crowning act of impiety he had evinced special disregard of him, and contempt for him, by profaning the sacred vessels of his temple.

And they have brought the vessels of his house before thee … - See the note at Daniel 5:2.

And the God in whose hand thy breath is - Under whose power, and at whose disposal, is thy life. While you have been celebrating the praises of idol gods, who can do you neither good nor evil, you have been showing special contempt for that great Being who keeps you in existence, and who has power to take away your life at any moment. What is here said of Belshazzar is true of all men - high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, princes and people. It is a deeply affecting consideration, that the breath, on which our life depends, and which is itself so frail a thing, is in the "hand" of a Being who is invisible to us, over whom we can have no control; who can arrest it when he pleases; who has given us no intimation when he will do it, and who often does it so suddenly as to defy all previous calculation and hope. Nothing is more absolute than the power which God holds over the breath of men, yet there is nothing which is less recognized than that power, and nothing which men are less disposed to acknowledge than their dependence on him for it.

And whose are all thy ways - That is, he has power to control thee in all thy ways. You can go nowhere without his permission; you can never, when abroad, return to your home without the direction of his providence. What is here said, also, is as true of all others as it was of the Chaldean prince. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps." None of us can take a step without his permission; none can go forth on a journey to a distant land without his constant superintending care; none can return without his favor. And yet how little is this recognized! How few feel it when they go out and

come in; when they go forth to their daily employments; when they start on a voyage or journey; when they propose to return to their homes!

Hast thou not glorified - That is, thou hast not honored him by a suitable acknowledgment of dependence on him.

Verse 24

Then was the part of the hand sent from him - To wit, the fingers. See Daniel 5:5. The sense is, that when it was fully perceived that Belshazzar was not disposed to learn that there was a God in heaven; when he refused to profit by the solemn dispensations which had occurred in respect to his predecessor; when his own heart was lifted up with pride, and when he had gone even farther than his predecessors had done by the sacrilegious use of the vessels of the temple, thus showing special contempt for the God of heaven, then appeared the mysterious handwriting on the wall. It was then an appropriate time for the Most High God, who had been thus contemned and insulted, to come forth and rebuke the proud and impious monarch.

Verse 25

And this is the writing that was written - The Babylonians, it would seem, were unacquainted with the "characters" that were used, and of course unable to understand the meaning. See Daniel 5:8. The first thing, therefore, for Daniel to do was to read the writing, and this he was able to do without difficulty, probably, as already remarked, because it was in the ancient Hebrew character - a character quite familiar to him, though not known to the Babylonians, whom Belshazzar consulted. It is every way probable that that character "would" be used on an occasion like this, for

(a) it is manifest that it was intended that the true God, the God of the Hebrews, should be made known, and this was the character in which his communications had been made to men;

(b) it was clearly the design to honor his own religion, and it is morally certain that there would be something which would show the connection between this occurrence and his own agency, and nothing would do this better than to make use of such a character; and

(c) it was the Divine intention to put honor on Daniel, and this would be well done by making use of a character which he understood.

There have been, indeed, many conjectures respecting the characters which were employed on this occasion, and the reasons of the difficulty of interpreting the words used, but it is most probable that the above is the true statement, and this will relieve all the difficulties in regard to the account. Prideaux supposes that the characters employed were the ancient Phoenician characters, that were used by the Hebrews, and that are found now in the Samaritan Pentateuch; and that, as above suggested, these might be unknown to the Babylonians, though familiar to Daniel. Others have supposed that the characters were those in common use in Babylon, and that the reason why the Babylonians could not read them was, that they were smitten with a sudden blindness, like the inhabitants of Sodom, Genesis 19:11. The Talmudists suppose that the words were written in a cabalistic manner, in which certain letters were used to stand for other letters, on the principle referred to by Buxtorf ("Lex. Chal. Rabb. et Talm." p. 248), and known as אתבש *'âthebbash* - that is, where the alphabet is reversed, and the Hebrew letter א (a) is used for the Hebrew letter ת (T), and the Hebrew letter ב (B) for the Hebrew letter ש (S), etc., and that on account of this cabalistic transmutation the Babylonians could not read it, though Daniel might have been familiar with that mode of writing. rabbi Jochanan supposed that there was a change of the order in which the letters of the words were written; other rabbis, that there was a change merely in the order of the first and second letters; others, that the words were written backward; others that the words were written, not in the usual horizontal manner, but perpendicularly; and others, that the words were not written in full, but that only the first letters of each were written. See Bertholdt, pp. 349,350. All these are mere conjectures, and most of them are childish and improbable suppositions. There is no real difficulty in the case if we suppose that the words were written in a character familiar to Daniel, but not familiar to the Babylonians. Or, if this is not admitted, then we may suppose that some mere marks were employed whose signification was made known to Daniel in a miraculous manner.

Verse 26

This is the interpretation of the thing - It may seem not to have been difficult to interpret the meaning of the communication, when one was able to read the words, or when the sense of the words was understood. But, if the words are placed together, and considered in their abstract form, the

whole communication would be so enigmatical that the interpretation would not be likely to occur to anyone without a Divine guidance. This will appear more clearly by arranging the words together, as has been done by Hales:

d MENE, number,MENE, number,TEKEL, weight,(PERES) (division)UPHARSIN, division.

d

d Or, as it is explained more accurately by Berholdt and Gesenius:

d *Mene, Numbered,Mene, Numbered,Tekel, Weighted,Upharsin. Divided.*

d

d From this arrangement it will be at once seen that the interpretation proposed by Daniel was not one that would have been likely to have occurred to anyone.

Mene - *מנא menê' This word is a passive participle from מנה menâh - "to number, to review." - Gesenius, "Lex." The verb is also written מנא menâ' - Buxtorf, "Lex." It would be literally translated "numbered," and would apply to that of which an estimate was taken by counting. We use now an expression which would convey a similar idea, when we say of one that "his days are numbered;" that is, he has not long to live, or is about to die. The idea seems to be taken from the fact, that the duration of a man's life cannot usually be known, and in the general uncertainty we can form no correct estimate of it, but when he is old, or when he is dangerously sick, we feel that we can with some degree of probability number his days, since he cannot now live long. Such is the idea here, as explained by Daniel. All uncertainty about the duration of the kingdom was now removed, for, since the evil had come, an exact estimate of its whole duration - of the number of the years of its continuance - could be made. In the Greek of Theodotion there is no attempt to translate this word, and it is retained in Greek letters -* Μανὴ *Manē So also in the Codex Chisianus and in the Latin Vulgate.*

God hath numbered thy kingdom - *The word which is used here, and rendered "numbered" - מנה menâh - is the verb of which the previous word*

is the participle. Daniel applies it to the "kingdom" or "reign" of the monarch, as being a thing of more importance than the life of the king himself. It is evident, if, according to the common interpretation of Daniel 5:30, Belshazzar was slain that very night, it "might" have been applied to the king himself, meaning that his days were numbered, and that he was about to die. But this interpretation (see Notes) is not absolutely certain, and perhaps the fact that Daniel did not so apply the word may be properly regarded as one circumstance showing that such an interpretation is not necessary, though probably it is the correct one.

And finished it - *This is not the meaning of the word "Mene," but is the explanation by Daniel of the thing intended. The word in its interpretation fairly implied that; or that might be understood from it. The fact that the "kingdom" in its duration was "numbered," properly expressed the idea that it was now to come to an end. It did actually then come to an end by being merged in that of the Medes and Persians.*

Verse 27

Tekel - *This word (תקל teqēl) is also, according to Gesenius, a passive participle (from תקל teqal - "to poise, to weigh"), and means "weighed." It would be used with reference to anything placed in a balance to ascertain its weight; and hence, like the word "measure," would denote that the extent, dimensions, true worth, or character of anything was ascertained. As by the use of scales the weight of anything is known, so the word is applied to any estimate of character or of actions, and a balance becomes the emblem of justice. Thus God, in his judgments of men, is represented as "weighing" their actions. 1 Samuel 2:3, "the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed." Compare Job 6:2:*

"O that my grief were thoroughly weighed,
And my calamity laid in the balances together."

Job 31:6:

"Let me be weighed in an even balance,
That God may know mine integrity."

The balance thus used to denote judgment in this life became also the emblem of judgment in the future state, when the conduct of men will be accurately estimated, and justice dealt out to them according to the strict rules of equity. To illustrate this, I will insert a copy of an Egyptian "Death Judgment," with the remarks of the editor of the "Pictorial Bible" in regard to it: "The Egyptians entertained the belief that the actions of the dead were

solemnly weighed in balances before Osiris, and that the condition of the departed was determined according to the preponderance of good or evil. Such judgment scenes are very frequently represented in the paintings and papyri of ancient Egypt, and one of them we have copied as a suitable illustration of the present subject. One of these scenes, as represented on the walls of a small temple at Dayr-el-Medeeneh, has been so well explained by Mr. Wilkinson, that we shall avail ourselves of his description, for although that to which it refers is somewhat different from the one which we have engraved, his account affords an adequate elucidation of all that ours contains. ‹Osiris, seated on his throne, awaits the arrival of those souls that are ushered into Amenti. The four genii stand before him on a lotus-blossom (ours has the lotus without the genii), the female Cerberus sits behind them, and Harpocrates on the crook of Osiris. Thoth, the god of letters, arrives in the presence of Osiris, bearing in his hand a tablet, on which the actions of the deceased are noted down, while Horus and Arceris are employed in weighing the good deeds of the judged against the ostrich feather, the symbol of truth and justice. A cynocephalus, the emblem of truth, is seated on the top of the balance. At length arrives the deceased, who appears between two figures of the goddess, and bears in his hand the symbol of truth, indicating his meritorious actions, and his fitness for admission to the presence of Osiris.‘

“If the Babylonians entertained a similar notion, the declaration of the prophet, ‹Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting!‘ must have appeared exceedingly awful to them. But again, there are allusions in this declaration to some such custom of literally weighing the royal person, as is described in the following passage in the account of Sir Thomas Roe‘s embassy to the great Mogul: ‹The first of September (which was the late Mogul‘s birthday), he, retaining an ancient yearly custom, was, in the presence of his chief grandees, weighed in a balance: the ceremony was performed within his house, or tent, in a fair spacious room, whereinto none were admitted but by special leave. The scales in which he was thus weighed were plated with gold: and so was the beam, on which they hung by great chains, made likewise of that most precious metal. The king, sitting in one of them, was weighed first against silver coin, which immediately afterward was distributed among the poor; then was he weighed against gold; after that against jewels (as they say), but I observed (being there present with my ambassador) that he was weighed against three several

things, laid in silken bags in the contrary scale. When I saw him in the balance, I thought on Belshazzar, who was found too light. By his weight (of which his physicians yearly keep an exact account), they presume to guess of the present state of his body, of which they speak flatteringly, however they think it to be. ‹"

Thou art weighed in the balances - *That is, this, in the circumstances, is the proper interpretation of this word. It would apply to anything whose value was ascertained by weighing it; but as the reference here was to the king of Babylon, and as the whole representation was designed for him, Daniel distinctly applies it to him: "thou art weighed." On the use and application of this language, see 1 Samuel 2:3: "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed." Compare also Job 31:6; Proverbs 16:2, Proverbs 16:11.*

And art found wanting - *This is added, like the previous phrase, as an explanation. Even if the word could have been read by the Chaldeans, yet its meaning could not have been understood without a Divine communication, for though it were supposed to be applicable to the monarch, it would still be a question what the result of the weighing or trial would be. That could have been known to Daniel only by a communication from on high.*

Verse 28

Peres - *In Daniel 5:25 this is "Upharsin." These are but different forms of the same word - the word in Daniel 5:25 being in the plural, and here in the singular. The verb (פרס peras) means, to "divide;" and in this form, as in the previous cases, it is, according to Gesenius, participle meaning "divided." As it stands here, it would be applicable to anything that was "divided" or "sundered" - whether a kingdom, a palace, a house, territory, etc. "What" was divided could be known only by Divine revelation. If the "word" had been understood by Belshazzar, undoubtedly it would have suggested the idea that there was to be some sort of division or sundering, but what that was to be would not be indicated by the mere use of the word. Perhaps to an affrighted imagination there might have been conveyed the idea that there would be a revolt in some of the provinces of the empire, and that a part would be rent away, but it would not have occurred that it would be so rent that the whole would pass under the dominion of a foreign power. Josephus ("Ant." b. x. ch. xi. Section 3) says, that the word "Phares in the*

Greek tongue means a "fragment," κλασμα klasma - God will, therefore, break thy kingdom in pieces, and divide it among the Medes and Persians."

Thy kingdom is divided - *That is, the proper interpretation of this communication is, that the kingdom is about to be rent asunder, or broken into fragments. It is to be separated or torn from the dynasty that has ruled over it, and to be given to another.*

And given to the Medes and Persians - *On this united kingdom, see the notes at Isaiah 13:17. It was "given" to the Medes and Persians when it was taken by Cyrus, and when the kingdom of Babylon became extinct, and thenceforward became a part of the Medo-Persian empire. See the notes at Isaiah 13:17, Isaiah 13:19.*

Verse 29

Then commanded Belshazzar - *In compliance with his promise, Daniel 5:16. Though the interpretation had been so fearful in its import, and though Daniel had been so plain and faithful with him, yet he did not hesitate to fulfill his promise. It is a remarkable instance of the result of fidelity, that a proud monarch should have received such a reproof, and such a prediction in this manner, and it is an encouragement to us to do our duty, and to state the truth plainly to wicked men. Their own consciences testify to them that it is the truth, and they will see the truth so clearly that they cannot deny it.*

And they clothed Daniel with scarlet … - *All this, it would seem, was transacted in a single night, and it has been made an objection, as above remarked, to the authenticity of the book, that such events are said to have occurred in so short a space of time, and that Daniel should have been so soon clothed with the robes of office. On this objection, see Introduction to the chapter, Section I. II. In respect to the latter part of the objection, it may be here further remarked, that it was not necessary to "fit" him with a suit of clothes made expressly for the occasion, for the loose, flowing robes of the Orientals were as well adapted to one person as another, and in the palaces of kings such garments were always on hand. See Harmer's "Observations on the East," vol. ii. 392, following. Compare Rosenmuller, "Morgenland, in loc."*

That he should be the third ruler … - *See the notes at Daniel 5:7.*

Verse 30

In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain - *On the taking of Babylon, and the consequences, see the notes at Isaiah 13:17-22;*

Isaiah 45:1-2. The account which Xenophon ("Cyrop." vii. s.) gives of the taking of Babylon. and of the death of the king - though without mentioning his name, agrees so well with the statement here, that it may be regarded as a strong confirmation of its correctness. After describing the preparation made to take the city by draining off the waters of the Euphrates, so as to leave the channel dry beneath the walls for the amy of Cyrus, and after recording the charge which Cyrus gave to his generals Gadatas and Gobryas, he adds, "And indeed those who were with Gobryas said that it would not be wonderful if the gates of the palace should be found open, "as the whole city that night seemed to be given up to revelry" ὥς ἐν κώμῳ γὰρ δοκεῖ ἡ πόλις πᾶσα εἶναι τῇδε τῇ νυκτί *hōs en kōmō gar dokei hē polis pasa einai tēde tē nukti then says that as they passed on, after entering the city, "of those whom they encountered, part being smitten died, part fled again back, and part raised a clamor. But those who were with Gobryas also raised a clamor as if they also joined in the revelry, and going as fast as they could, they came soon to the palace of the king. But those who were with Gobryas and Gadatas being arrayed, found the gates of the palace closed, but those who were appointed to go against the guard of the palace fell upon them when drinking before a great light, and were quickly engaged with them in hostile combat. Then a cry arose, and they who were within having asked the cause of the tumult, the king commanded them to see what the affair was, and some of them rushing out opened the gates. As they who were with Gadatas saw the gates open, they rushed in, and pursuing those who attempted to return, and smiting them, they came to the king, and they found him standing with a drawn sabre -* ἀκινάκην *akinakēn And those who were with Gadatas and Gobryas overpowered him,* ἐχειροῦντο *echeirounto - and those who were with him were slain - one opposing, and one fleeing, and one seeking his safety in the best way he could. And Cyrus sent certain of his horsemen away, and commanded that they should put to death those whom they found out of their dwellings, but that those who were in their houses, and could speak the Syriac language, should be suffered to remain, but that whosoever should be found without should be put to death.*

"These things they did. But Gadatas and Gobryas came up; and first they rendered thanks to the gods because they had taken vengeance on the impious king - ὅτι τετιμωρημένοι ἦσαν τὸν ἀνόσιον βασιλέα *hoti tetimōrēmenoi ēsan ton anosion basilea Then they kissed the hands and feet*

of Cyrus, weeping with joy and rejoicing. When it was day, and they who had the watch over the towers learned that the city was taken, and "that the king was dead" - τὸν βασιλέα τεθνηκότα *ton basilea tethnēkota - they also surrendered the towers." These extracts from Xenophon abundantly confirm what is here said in Daniel respecting the death of the king, and will more than neutralize what is said by Berosus. See Intro. to the chapter, Section II.*

Verse 31

And Darius the Median took the kingdom - *The city and kingdom were actually taken by Cyrus, though acting in the name and by the authority of Darius, or Cyaxares, who was his uncle. For a full explanation of the conquests of Cyrus, and of the reason why the city is said to have been taken by Darius, see the notes at Isaiah 41:2. In regard to the question who Darius the Median was, see the Introduction to Daniel 5:2-3. In all ages, and among all people, this has been regarded as a sin of peculiar enormity, and it is quite evident that God in this solemn scene meant to confirm the general judgment of mankind on the subject. Among all people, where any kind of religion has prevailed, there are places and objects which are regarded as set apart to sacred use, and which are not to be employed for common and profane purposes. Though in themselves - in the gold and silver, the wood and stone of which they are made - there is no essential holiness, yet they derive a sacredness from being set apart to Divine purposes, and it has always been held to be a high crime to treat them with indignity or contempt - to rob altars, or to desecrate holy places. This general impression of mankind it was clearly the design of God to confirm in the case before us, when the sacred vessels of the temple - vessels consecrated in the most solemn manner to the worship of Jehovah - were profanely employed for the purposes of carousal. God had borne it patiently when those vessels had been removed from the temple at Jerusalem, and when they had been laid up among the spoils of victory in the temples of Babylon; but when they were profaned for purposes of revelry - when they were brought forth to grace a pagan festival, and to be employed in the midst of scenes of riot and dissipation, it was time for him to interpose, and to show to these profane revellers that there is a God in heaven.*

(2) We may see the peril of such festivals as that celebrated by Belshazzar and his lords, Daniel 5:1 following. It is by no means probable that when the feast was contemplated and arranged, anything was designed

like what occurred in the progress of the affair. It was not a matter of set purpose to introduce the females of the harem to this scene of carousal, and still less to make use of the sacred vessels dedicated to the worship of Jehovah, to grace the midnight revelry. It is not improbable that they would have been at first shocked at such an outrage on what was regarded as propriety, or what would have been deemed sacred by all people. It was only when the king had "tasted the wine" that these things were proposed; and none who attend on such a banquet as this, none who come together for purposes of drinking and feasting, can foretell what they may be led to do under the influence of wine and strong drink. No man is certain of not doing foolish and wicked things who gives himself up to such indulgences; no man knows what he may do that may be the cause of bitter regret and painful mortification in the recollection.

(3) God has the means of access to the consciences of men Daniel 5:5. In this case it was by writing on the wall with his own fingers certain mysterious words which none could interpret, but which no one doubted were of fearful import. No one present, it would appear, had any doubt that somehow what was written was connected with some awful judgment, and the fearfulness of what they dreaded arose manifestly from the consciousness of their own guilt. It is not often that God comes forth in this way to alarm the guilty; but he has a thousand methods of doing it, and no one can be sure that in an instant he will not summon all the sins of his past life to remembrance. He "could" write our guilt in letters of light before us - in the chamber where we sleep; in the hall where we engage in revelry; on the face of the sky at night; or he can make it as plain to our minds "as if" it were thus written out. To Belshazzar, in his palace, surrounded by his lords, he showed this; to us in society or solitude he can do the same thing. No sinner can have any security that he may not in a moment be overwhelmed with the conviction of his own depravity, and with dreadful apprehension of the wrath to come.

(4) We have in this chapter Daniel 5:6 a striking illustration of the effects of a sudden alarm to the guilty. The countenance of the monarch was changed; his thoughts troubled him; the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote together. Such effects are not uncommon when a sinner is made to feel that he is in the presence of God, and when his thoughts are

led along to the future world. The human frame is so made that these changes occur as indicative of the troubles which the mind experiences, and the fact that it is thus agitated shows the power which God has over us. No guilty man can be secure that he will "not" thus be alarmed when he comes to contemplate the possibility that he may soon be called before his Maker, and the fact that he "may" thus be alarmed should be one of the considerations bearing on his mind to lead him to a course of virtue and religion. Such terror is proof of conscious guilt, for the innocent have nothing to dread; and if a man is sure that he is prepared to appear before God, he is "not" alarmed at the prospect. They who live in sin; they who indulge in revelry; they who are profane and sacrilegious; they who abuse the mercies of God, and live to deride sacred things, can never be certain that in a moment, by the revelation of their guilt to their own souls, and by a sudden message from the eternal world, they may not be overwhelmed with the deepest consternation. Their countenances may become deadly pale, their joints may be loosed, and their limbs tremble. It is only the righteous who can look calmly at the judgment.

(5) We may see from this chapter one of the effects of the terror of a guilty conscience. It is not said, indeed, that the mysterious fingers on the wall recorded the "guilt" of the monarch. But they recorded "something;" they were making some record that manifestly pertained to him. How natural was it to suppose that it was a record of his guilt! And who is there that could bear a record made in that manner of his own thoughts and purposes; of his desires and feelings; of what he is conscious is passing within the chambers of his own soul? There is no one who would not turn pale if he saw a mysterious hand writing all his thoughts and purposes - all the deeds of his past life - on the wall of his chamber at night, and bringing at once all his concealed thoughts and all his forgotten deeds before his mind. And if this is so, how will the sinner bear the disclosures that will be made at the day of judgment?

DANIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Introduction

Section I. - Authenticity of the Chapter

This chapter Esther 3:4, and the conduct of Mordecai in general, who refused, as he supposes, the respect which Haman demanded as the first minister of the king, on religious grounds, and because more was required and expected of him than mere civil respect - or that a degree of homage was required entirely inconsistent with that due to the true God. In proof of the same thing, Hengstenberg appeals to Persian monuments, pp. 129-132. The proof is too long to be inserted here. These monuments show that the Persian kings were regarded and adored as impersonations of Ormuzd. To this may be added many of their inscriptions. In the work by De Sacy, Memoires s. divers. Antiq. de la Perse, Pl. i. p. 27,31, the Persian kings are mentioned as ἔκγονοι θεῶν, ἐκ γένους θεῶν *ekgonoi theōn ek genous theōn* and θεοῖ *theoi* - both as offsprings of the gods, as of the race of the gods, and as gods.

If this is correct, and the Persian kings were regarded as divine - as an impersonation or incarnation of the god that was worshipped - then there is no improbability in the supposition that it might be proposed to the king that for a given space of time he should allow no petition to be presented to anyone else, god or man. It would be easy to persuade a monarch having such pretensions to issue such a decree, and especially when he had subjected a foreign people like the Babylonians to be willing thus to assert his authority over them, and show them what respect and homage he demanded. In judging also of the probability of what is here said, we are to remember the arbitrary character of Oriental monarchs, and of the Persian kings no less than others. Assuredly there were as strange things in the character and conduct of Xerxes, one of the successors of this same Darius, as any that are recorded in this chapter of the book of Daniel; and if the acts of folly which he perpetrated had been written in a book claiming to be Divinely inspired, they would have been liable to much greater objection than anything which is stated here. The mere fact that a thing is in itself foolish and unreasonable, and apparently absurd, is no conclusive evidence that a man clothed with absolute authority would not be guilty of it.

To all that has been said on this point, there should be added a remark made by Bertholdt himself (p. 357) respecting Darius, which will show that what is here said of him is really not at all inconsistent with his character, and not improbable. He says, speaking of Darius or Cyaxares, that "from his character, as given by Xenophon, a man of weak mind (Cyrop. i. 4,22; iv. 1,13); a man passionate and peevish (iii. 3,29; iv. 5,8; v. 5; i. 8); a man given to wine and women (iv. 5,52; v. 5,44), we are not to expect much wisdom." There is nothing stated here by Daniel which is inconsistent with the character of such a man.

II. A second objection made to the probability of this statement is drawn from the character of the edict which Darius is said to have proclaimed, commanding that honor should be rendered to Jehovah, Daniel 6:25-27. It is alleged that if such an edict had been published, it is incredible that no mention is made of it in history; that the thing was so remarkable that it must have been noticed by the writers who have referred to Darius or Cyaxares.

To this it may be replied:

(1) that, for anything that appears to the contrary, Daniel may be as credible an historian as Xenophon or Herodotus. No one can demonstrate that the account here is not as worthy of belief as if it bad appeared in a Greek or Latin classic author. When will the world get over the folly of supposing that what is found in a book claiming to be inspired, should be regarded as suspicious until it is confirmed by the authority of some pagan writer; that what is found in any other book should be regarded as necessarily true, however much it may conflict with the testimony of the sacred writers? Viewed in any light, Daniel is as worthy of confidence as any Greek or Latin historian; what he says is as credible as if it had been found in the works of Sanchoniathon or Berosus.

(2) there are, in fact, few things preserved in any history in regard to Darius the Mede. Compare Section II. The information given of him by Xenophon consists merely of a few detached and fragmentary notices, and it is not at all remarkable that the facts mentioned here, and the proclamation which he made, should be unnoticed by him. A proclamation

respecting a foreign god, when it was customary to recognize so many gods, and indeed to regard all such gods as entitled to respect and honor, would not be likely to arrest the attention of a Greek historian even if he knew of it, and, for the same reason, it would be scarcely probable that he would know of it at all. Nothing would be more likely to pass away from the recollection of a people than such an edict, or less likely to be known to a foreigner. So far as the evidence goes, it would seem that the proclamation made no disturbance in the realm; the injunction appeared to be generally acquiesced in by all except Daniel; and it was soon forgotten. If it was understood, as it was not improbable, that this was designed as a sort of test to see whether the people would receive the commands of Darius as binding on them; that they would honor him, as the Persian monarch was honored in his own proper kingdom, it would seem to have been entirely successful, and there was no occasion to refer to it again.

III. A third objection urged by Bertholdt (p. 361), is derived from the account respecting the lions in this chapter. It is alleged by him that the account is so full of improbabilities that it cannot be received as true; that though the fact that they did not fall on Daniel can be explained from the circumstance that they were not hungry, etc., yet that it is incredible that they should have fallen on the enemies of Daniel as soon as they were thrown into the den; that the king should expect to find Daniel alive after being thrown among them; that he should have called in this manner to Daniel, etc.

To all this it is sufficient to reply, that no one can suppose that the facts stated here can be explained by any natural causes. The whole representation is evidently designed to leave the impression that there was a special Divine interposition - a miracle - in the case, and the only explanation which is admissible here is what would be proper in the case of any other miracle. The only questions which could be asked, or which would be proper, are these two; whether a miracle is possible; and whether this was a suitable occasion for the miraculous exertion of Divine power. As to the first of these questions, it is not necessary to argue that here - for the objection might lie with equal force against any other miracle referred to in the Bible. As to the second, it may be observed, that it is not easy to conceive of a case when a miracle would be more proper. If a miracle was

ever proper to protect the innocent; or to vindicate the claims of the true God against all false gods: or to make a deep and lasting impression on the minds of men that Jehovah is the true God, it is not easy to conceive of a more appropriate occasion than this. No situation could be conceived to be more appropriate than when an impression was designed to be made on the mind of the sovereign of the most mighty empire on the earth; or that when, through a proclamation issued from the throne, the nations subject to his scepter should be summoned to acknowledge him as the true God.

IV. A fourth objection urged by Bleek (Theologische Zeitschrift, pp. 262-264) is, substantially, the following: that it is remarkable that there is in this account no allusion to the three companions of Daniel; to those who had been trained with him at the Chaldean court, and had been admitted also to honor, and who had so abundantly shown that they were worshippers of the true God. The whole story, says Bleek, appears to have been designed to produce a moral effect on the mind of the Jews, by the unknown author, to persuade them in some period of persecution to adhere to the God of their fathers in the midst of all persecution and opposition.

To this objection it may be replied:

(1) That it is wholly probable that there were many other pious Jews in Babylon at this time beside Daniel - Jews who would, like him, adhere to the worship of the true God, regardless of the command of the king. We are not to suppose, by any means, that Daniel was the only conscientious Jew in Babylon. The narrative evidently does not require that we should come to such a conclusion, but that there was something peculiar in regard to Daniel.

(2) as to the three companions and friends of Daniel, it is possible, as Hengstenberg remarks (Authentic, etc. p. 135), that they may either have been dead, or may have been removed from office, and were leading private lives.

(3) this edict was evidently aimed at Daniel. The whole narrative supposes this. For some cause, according to the narrative - and there is no improbability that such an opposition weight exist against a foreigner

advanced to honor at court - there was some ground of jealousy against him, and a purpose formed to remove or disgrace him. There does not appear to have been any jealousy of others, or any purpose to disturb others in the free enjoyment of their religion. The aim was to humble Daniel; to secure his removal from office, and to degrade him; and for this purpose a plan was laid with consummate skill. He was known to be upright, and they who laird the plot felt assured that no charge of guilt, no accusation of crime, or unfaithfulness in his office, could be alleged against him. He was known to be a man who would not shrink from the avowal of his opinions, or from the performance of those duties which he owed to his God. He was known to be a man so much devoted to the worship Jehovah, the God of his people, that no law whatever would prevent him from rendering to him the homage which was his due, and it was believed, therefore, that if a law were made, on any pretence, that no one in the realm should ask anything of either God or man, except the king, for a definite space of time, there would be a moral certainty that Daniel would be found to be a violator of that law, and his degradation and death would be certain. What was here proposed was a scheme worthy of crafty and jealous and wicked men; and the only difficulty, evidently, which would occur to their mind would be to persuade the king to enter into the measure so far as to promulgate such a law. As already observed, plausible pretences might be found for that; and when that was done, they would naturally conclude that their whole scheme was successful.

(4) there is no improbability, therefore, in supposing that, as the whole thing was aimed at Daniel, there might have been many pious Jews who still worshipped God in secret in Babylon, and that no one would give information against them. As the edict was not aimed at them, it is not surprising that we hear of no prosecution against them, and no complaint made of them for disregarding the law. If Daniel was found to violate the statute; if he was ensnared and entrapped by the cunning device; if he was humbled and punished, all the purposes contemplated by its authors would be accomplished, and we need not suppose that they would give themselves any trouble about others.

Section II. - The Question About the Identity of Darius the Mede

Considerable importance is to be attached to the question who was Darius the Mede," as it has been made a ground of objection to the

Scripture narrative, that no person by that name is mentioned in the Greek writers.

There are three Medo-Persian kings of the name of Darius mentioned in the Old Testament. One occurs in the book of Ezra Ezra 4:5; Ezra 6:1, Ezra 6:12, Ezra 6:15, in Haggai Haggai 1:1; Haggai 2:10, and in Zechariah Zechariah 1:7, as the king who, in the second year of his reign, effected the execution of those decrees of Cyrus which granted the Jews the liberty of rebuilding the temple, the fulfillment of which had been obstructed by the malicious representations which their enemies had made to his immediate successors. It is commonly agreed that this king was Darius Hystaspis, who succeeded the usurper Smerdis, 521 b.c., and reigned thirty-six years.

A second is mentioned as "Darius the Persian," in Nehemiah 12:22. All that is said of him is, that the succession of priests was registered up to his reign. This was either Darius Nothus, B. c. 423, or Darius Codomanus, 336 b.c. See Kitto's Cyclop., art. Darius.

The remaining one is that mentioned in Daniel only as Darius the Median. In Daniel 9:1, he is mentioned as Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes. Much difference of opinion has prevailed as to the person here intended; but a strict attention to what is actually expressed in, or fairly deduced from, the terms used in Daniel, tends to narrow the field of conjecture very considerably, if it does not decide the question. It appears from the passage in Daniel 5:30-31; Daniel 6:28, that Darius the Mede obtained the dominion over Babylon on the death of Belshazzar, who was the last Chaldean king, and that he was the immediate predecessor of Koresh (Cyrus) in the sovereignty. The historical juncture here defined belongs, therefore, to the period when the Medo-Persian army led by Cyrus took Babylon (538 b.c.), and Darius the Mede must denote the first king of a foreign dynasty who assumed the dominion over the Babylonian empire before Cyrus. These indications all concur in the person of Cyaxares the Second, the son and successor of Astyages (Ahasuerus), and the immediate predecessor of Cyrus. - Kitto's Cyclop., art. Darius

In reference to the question, who was Darius the Mede, Bertholdt has examined the different opinions which have been entertained in a manner that is satisfactory, and I cannot do better than to present his views on the

subject. They are found in his Vierter Excurs. uber den Darius Medus, in his Commentary on Daniel, pp. 843-858. I will give the substance of the Excursus, in a free translation:

"Who was Darius the Mede, the son of Ahasuerus, of whom mention is made in the sixth chapter of the book of Daniel, and again in Daniel 9:1; Daniel 11:1? It is agreed on all hands that he was the immediate successor of Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans Daniel 5:30. Compare Daniel 6:1. But, notwithstanding this, there is uncertainty as to his person, since history makes no mention of a Median, Darius. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at that various opinions have been entertained by commentators on the Scriptures, and by historical inquirers. Conring (Advers. Chronol. c. 13), whom many have followed, particularly Harenberg (Aufklarung des Buchs Daniels, s. 454, following), has endeavored to show that Darius the Mede was the fourth Chaldean monarch, Neriglissar, and that Belshazzar, his predecessor, was Evil-Merodach. John Scaliger (DeEmendat. Temporum, p. 579, seq.) recognized in Darius the Mede the last Chaldean king in Babylon, Nabonned, and in Belshazzar, the one before the last, Laborosoarchod, which hypothesis also Calvisius, Petavius, and Buddens adopted.

On the other hand, Syncellus (Chronogr. p. 232), Cedrenus (Chr. p. 142), the Alexandrine Chronicle, Marsham (Can. Chr. p. 604, following), the two most recent editors of AEschylus, Schutz (in zweiten Excurs. zu AEschylus' περσαι *persai*), and Bothe (AEsch. dramata, p. 671), held that Darius the Mede was the Median king Astyages, the maternal grandfather of Cyrus. Des Vignolles (Chronologie, t. 2. p. 495), and Schroer (Regnum Babyl. Sect. 6, Section 12, following), held him to be a prince of Media, a younger brother of Astyages, whom Cyrus made king over Babylon. Another opinion, however, deserves more respect than this, which was advanced by Marianus Scotus, a Benedictine monk of the eleventh century, though this hypothesis is not tenable, which opinion has found, in modern times, a warm advocate in Beer (Kings of Israel and Judah, p. 22, following) According to this opinion, it was held that Darius the Mede is the same person as the third Persian king after Cyrus, Darius Hystaspis, and that Belshazzar was indeed the last Chaldean king, Nabonned, but that in the first capture of Babylon under Cyrus, according to the account of

Berosus in (Jos. c. Ap. i. 20) and Megasthenes (in Euseb. Proep. Evag. ix. 44), he was not put to death, but was appointed by Cyrus as a vassal-king; and then in the second taking of Babylon under Darius Hystaspis (Herod. iii. 150, following), from whom he had sought to make himself independent, he was slain.

This opinion has this advantage, that it has in its favor the fact that it has the undoubted name of Darius, but it is not conformable to history to suppose that Darius Hystaspis was a son of Ahasuerus the Mede, for his father, Hystaspis, was a native-born prince of Persia (Xenop. Cyrop. iv. 2,46), of the family of the Achaemenides (Herod. i. 209,210). Darius Hystaspis was indeed remotely related by means of the mother of Cyrus, Mandane, with the royal family; but this relation could not entitle him to be called a Mede, for, since she was the mother of Cyrus, it is altogether inexplicable that since both were thus connected with each other, that Cyrus should be called "the Persian" (פרסיא *pâresâyâ'*), and Darius the Mede (מדיא *mâdây'ā*), Daniel 6:28 (29). The supposition, moreover, that Nabonned, after the taking of Babylon, was appointed as a tributary king by Cyrus, is wholly gratuitous; since Nabonned, according to the express testimony of Xenophon (Cyrop. vii. 5,26, following), was slain at the taking of Babylon.

"There is yet one other opinion respecting Darius the Mede, to which I will first prefix the following remarks:

(1) Darius the Mede is mentioned in Daniel 6:28 (29) as the immediate predecessor of Cyrus in Babylon.

(2) Belshazzar was the last Babylonian Chaldee king.

(3) the account of the violent death of Belshazzar, with which the fifth chapter closes, stands in direct historical connection with the statement in the beginning of the sixth chapter that Darius the Mede had the kingdom.

(4) Darius the Mede must, therefore, be the first foreign prince after the downfall of the Chaldean dynasty, which directly reigned over Babylon.

(5) the chronological point, therefore, where the history of Belshazzar and of Darius the Mede coincide, developes itself: the account falls in the time of the downfall of Babylon through the Medo-Persian army, and this must be the occasion as the connecting fact between the fifth and sixth chapters. According to this, Darius the Mede can be no other person than the Medish king Cyaxares II, the son and successor of Astyages, and the predecessor of Cyrus in the rule over Babylon; and Belshazzar is the last Chaldee monarch, Nabonned, or Labynet. With this agrees the account of Josephus (Ant. x. 11,4); and later, this opinion found an advocate in Jerome.

"The existence of such a person as Cyaxares II has been indeed denied. because, according to Herodotus (i. 109), and Justin (i. 4,7), Astyages had no son. But it should be remarked, that the latter of these writers only copies from the former, and what Herodotus states respecting Astyages has so much the appearance of fable that no reliance is to be placed on it. It has been objected also that Dionysius of Halicarnassus (b. i. Section. 1) says that the Medish kingdom continued only through four reigns, so that if we reckon the names of the reigning kings. Dejoces, Phraortes, Cyaxares (the contemporary of Nebuchadnezzar), and Astyages, there will be no place for a second Cyaxares. But is it not probable that Dionysius meant, by these words, only that the Median kingdom came to an end under the fourth dynasty? Finally, it has been objected that, according to Herodotus (i. 128, following), and Ctesias (Persik 2 and 5) Median prince sat upon the throne in Ecbatana after Astyages, but that with Astyages the kingdom of the Medes came to an end, and with Cyrus, his immediate successor, the Persian kingdom took its beginning.

Therewith agree nearly all the historians of the following times, Diodorus (ii. 34), Justin (i. 6,16,17, vii. 1), Strabo (ix. p. 735; xv. p. 1662), Polyan (vii. 7), and many others. But these writers only copy from Herodotus and Ctesias, and the whole rests only on their authority. But their credibility in this point must be regarded as doubtful, for it is not difficult to understand the reasons why they have omitted to make mention of Cyaxares II. They commenced the history of the reign of Cyrus with the beginning of his world-renowned celebrity, and hence, it was natural to connect the beginning of his reign, and the beginning of the Persian reign, with the reign of his grandfather Astyages, for, so long as his uncle Cyaxares II

reigned, Cyrus alone acted, and he in fact was the regent. But if the silence of Herodotus and Ctesias is not to be regarded as proof that no such person as Cyaxares II lived and reigned, there are in favor of that the following positive arguments:

"(1) The authority of Xenophon, who not only says that a Cyaxares ascended the throne after Astyages, but that he was a son of Astyages (Cyr. i. 5. 2), and besides relates so much of this Cyaxares (i. 4,7; iii. 3,20; viii. 5,19) that his Cyropaedia may be regarded as in a measure a history of him. Yea, Xenophon goes so far (viii. 7,1) that he reckons the years of the reign of Cyrus from the death of Cyaxares II. Can anyone conceive a reason why Xenophon had a motive to weave together such a tissue of falsehood as this, unless Cyaxares II actually lived? If one should object, indeed, that he is so far to be reckoned among fictitious writers that he gives a moral character to the subjects on which he writes, and that he has passed over the difference between Cyrus and his grandfather Astyages, yet there is no reason why he should have brought upon the stage so important a person, wholly from fiction, as Cyaxares. What a degree of boldness it must have required, if he, who lived not much more than a century after the events recorded, had mentioned to his contemporaries so much respecting a prince of whom no one whatever had even heard. But the existence of Cyaxares II may be proved,

"(2) From a passage in Eschylus (Pers. verses 762, following) -
Μῆδος γάρ ἦν ὁ πρῶτος ἡγεμὼν στρατοῦ
Αλλος δ᾽ ἐκείνου παῖς τό δ᾽ ἔργον ἤνυσε;
Τρίτος δ᾽ ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ Κῦρος, εὐδαίμων ἀνήρ,
κ.τ.λ. *gar ēn ho prōtos hēgemōn stratou*
Allos d' ekeinou pais to d' ergon ēnuse Tritos d' ap' autou Kuros eudaimōn anēr etc first who is mentioned here as the Mede (Μῆδος *Mēdos*) is manifestly no other than Astyages, whom, before Cyrus, his son succeeded in the government, and who is the same whom we, after Xenophon, call Cyaxares. This testimony is the more important as Eschylus lived before Xenophon, in the time of Darius Hystaspis, and is free from all suspicions from this circumstance, that, according to the public relations which Eschylus sustained, no accounts of the former Persian history could be expected from any doubtful authorties to have been adduced by him. But

the existence of Cyaxares II does not depend solely on the authority of Xenophon, in his Cyropaedia. For,

"(3) Josephus (Ant. x. 11,4), who speaks of this person under the name of Darius, adds, νῇ Ἀστυάγους ὑιὸς, ἔτερον δέ παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἐκαλεῖτο ονομα *nē* class="translit">Astuagous *huios heteron de para tois Hellēsin ekaleito onoma* - ‹he was the son of Astyages, but had another name among the Greeks.' This name, which he had among the Greeks, can be found only in their own Xenophon.

"(4) To all this should be added, that many other data of history, especially those taken from the Hebrew writings, so set out the continuance of the reign of the Medes over Upper Asia that it is necessary to suppose the existence of such a person as the Medish king, Cyaxares, after the reign of Astyages. Had Cyrus, after the death of Astyages, immediately assumed the government over Upper Asia, how happened it that until the downfall of the Babylonian-Chaldee kingdom mention is made almost always of the Medes, or at least of the Persians, of whom there is special mention? Whence is it that the passage of Abydenus, quoted from Megasthenes, p. 295, speaks of a Mede, who, in connection with a Persian, overthrew the Babylonian kingdom? Is not the Mede so represented as to show that he was a prominent and leading person? Is it not necessary to attribute to this fragment a higher authority, and to suppose that a Medish monarch, in connection with a Persian, brought the kingdom of Babylon to an end?

Whence did Jeremiah, Daniel 6:1-3.

(2) The dissatisfaction or envy of the officers so appointed against Daniel, for causes now unknown, and their conspiracy to remove him from office, or to bring him into disgrace with the king Daniel 6:4.

(3) The plan which they formed to secure this, derived from the known piety and integrity of Daniel, and their conviction that, at any hazard, he would remain firm to his religious principles, and would conscientiously maintain the worship of God. Convinced that they could find no fault in his administration; that he could not be convicted of malversation or infidelity in office; that there was nothing in his private or public character that was contrary to justice and integrity, they resolved to take advantage of his well-

known piety, and to make that the occasion of his downfall and ruin Daniel 6:5.

(4) The plan that was artfully proposed was, to induce the king to sign a decree that if anyone for thirty days should ask any petition for anything of God or man, he should be thrown into a den of lions - that is, should be, as they supposed, certainly put to death. This proposed decree they apprehended they could induce the king to sign, perhaps because it was flattering to the monarch, or perhaps because it would test the disposition of his new subjects to obey him, or perhaps because they knew he was a weak and effeminate prince, and that he was accustomed to sign papers presented to him by his counselors without much reflection or hesitation Daniel 6:6-9.

(5) Daniel, when he was apprised of the contents of the decree, though he saw its bearing, and perhaps its design, yet continued his devotions as usual - praying, as he was known to do, three times a day, with his face toward Jerusalem, with his windows open. The case was one where he felt, undoubtedly, that it was a matter of principle that he should worship God in his usual manner, and not allow himself to be driven from the acknowledgment of his God by the fear of death Daniel 6:10.

(6) they who had laid the plan made report of this to the king, and demanded the execution of the decree. The case was a plain one, for though it had not been intended or expected by the king that Daniel would have been found a violator of the law, yet as the decree was positive, and there had been no concealment on the part of Daniel, the counselors urged that it was necessary that the decree should be executed Daniel 6:11-13.

(7) The king, displeased with himself, and evidently enraged against these crafty counselors, desirous of sparing Daniel, and yet feeling the necessity of maintaining a law positively enacted, sought some way by which Daniel might be saved, and the honor and majesty of the law preserved. No method, however, occurring to him of securing both objects, he was constrained to submit to the execution of the decree, and ordered Daniel to be cast into the den of lions Daniel 6:14-17.

(8) The king returned to his palace, and passed the night fasting, and overwhelmed with sadness Daniel 6:18.

(9) in the morning he came with deep anxiety to the place where Daniel had been thrown, and called to see if he were alive Daniel 6:19-20.

(10) The reply of Daniel, that he had been preserved by the intervention of an angel, who had closed the mouths of the lions, and had kept him alive Daniel 6:21-22.

(11) The release of Daniel from the den, and the command to cast those in who had thus accused Daniel, and who had sought his ruin Daniel 6:23-24.

(12) an appropriate proclamation from the king to all men to honor that God who had thus preserved his servant Daniel 6:25-27.

(13) a statement of the prosperity of Daniel, extending to the reign of Cyrus Daniel 6:28.

Verse 1

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom - Evidently over the kingdom of Babylon, now united to that of Media and Persia. As this was now subject to him, and tributary to him, it would be natural to appoint persons over it in whom he could confide, for the administration of justice, for the collection of revenue, etc. Others however, suppose that this relates to the whole kingdom of Persia, but as the reference here is mainly to what was the kingdom of Babylon, it is rather to be presumed that this is what is particularly alluded to. Besides, it is hardly probable that he would have exalted Daniel, a Jew, and a resident in Babylon, to so important a post as that of the premiership over the whole empire, though from his position and standing in Babylon there is no improbability in supposing that he might have occupied, under the reign of Darius, a place similar to what he had occupied under Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. In dividing the kingdom into provinces, and placing officers over each department, Darius followed the same plan which Xenophon tells us that Cyrus did over the nations conquered by him, Cyrop. viii.: Εδόκει ἀυτῷ σατράπας ἤδη πέμπειν ἐπὶ τά

κατεστραμμένα ἔθνη *Edokei autō satrapas ēdē pempein epi ta katestrammena ethnē* - "It seemed good to him to appoint satraps over the conquered nations." Compare Esther 1:1. Archbishop Usher (Annal.) thinks that the plan was first instituted by Cyrus, and was followed at his suggestion. It was a measure of obvious prudence in order to maintain so extended an empire in subjection.

An hundred and twenty princes - The word here rendered "princes" (אחשׁדרפניא *'ăchashedarepenayā'*) occurs only in Daniel in the Chaldee form, though in the Hebrew form it is found in the book of Esther Esther 3:12; Esther 8:9; Esther 9:3, and in Ezra Ezra 8:36; in Esther and Ezra uniformly rendered lieutenants. In Daniel Daniel 3:2-3, Daniel 3:27; Daniel 6:1-4, Daniel 6:6-7 it is as uniformly rendered princes. It is a word of Persian origin, and is probably the Hebrew mode of pronouncing the Persian word satrap, or, as Gesenius supposes, the Persian word was pronounced ksatrap. For the etymology of the word, see Gesenius, Lexicon The word undoubtedly refers to the Persian satraps, or governors, or viceroys in the large provinces of the empire, possessing both civil and military powers. They were officers high in rank, and being the representatives of the sovereign, they rivaled his state and splendor. Single parts, or subdivisions of these provinces, were under inferior officers; the satraps governed whole provinces. The word is rendered satraps in the Greek, and the Latin Vulgate.

Verse 2

And over these, three presidents - סרכין *sârekîyn* This word is found only in the plural. The etymology is uncertain, but its meaning is not doubtful. The word president expresses it with sufficient accuracy, denoting a high officer that presided over others. It is not improbable that these presided over distinct departments, corresponding somewhat to what are now called "secretaries" - as Secretaries of State, of the Treasury, of Foreign Affairs, etc., though this is not particularly specified.

Of whom Daniel was first - First in rank. This office he probably held from the rank which he was known to have occupied under the kings of Babylon, and on account of his reputation for ability and integrity.

That the princes might give accounts unto them - Be immediately responsible to them; the accounts of their own administration, and of the state of the empire.

And the king should have no damage - Either in the loss of revenue, or in any maladministration of the affairs. Compare Ezra 4:13. "They pay not toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings." The king was regarded as the source of all power, and as in fact the supreme proprietor of the realm, and any malfeasance or malversation in office was regarded as an injury to him.

Verse 3

Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes - That is, he was at their head, or was placed in rank and office over them. "Because an excellent spirit was in him." This may refer alike to his wisdom and his integrity - both of which would be necessary in such an office. It was an office of great difficulty and responsibility to manage the affairs of the empire in a proper manner, and required the talents of an accomplished statesman, and, at the same time, as it was an office where confidence was reposed by the sovereign, it demanded integrity. The word "excellent" (יתירא *yattîyrâ'*) means, properly, what hangs over, or which is abundant, or more than enough, and then anything that is very great, excellent, pre-eminent. Latin Vulgate, *Spiritus Dei amplior* - "the spirit of God more abundantly." Greek πνεῦμα περισσὸν *pneuma perisson* It is not said here to what trial of his abilities and integrity Daniel was subjected before he was thus exalted, but it is not necessary to suppose that any such trial occurred at once, or immediately on the accession of Darius. Probably, as he was found in office as appointed by Belshazzar, he was continued by Darius, and as a result of his tried integrity was in due time exalted to the premiership. "And the king thought to set him over the whole realm."

The whole kingdom over which he presided, embracing Media, Persia, Babylonia, and all the dependent, conquered provinces. This shows that the princes referred to in Daniel 6:1, were those which were appointed over Babylonia, since Daniel Daniel 6:2 was already placed at the head of all these princes. Yet, in consequence of his talents and fidelity the king was meditating the important measure of placing him over the whole united kingdom as premier. That he should form such a purpose in regard to an officer so talented and faithful as Daniel was, is by no means improbable. The Greek of Theodotion renders this as if it were actually done - καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς κατέστησεν ἀυτον, κ.τ.λ. *kai ho basileus katestēsen auton etc* - "And the king placed him over all his kingdom." But the Chaldee (אשׁית *'ăshîyth*) indicates rather a purpose or intention to do it; or rather, perhaps,

that he was actually making arrangements to do this. Probably it was the fact that this design was perceived, and that the arrangements were actually commenced, that aroused the envy and the ill-will of his fellow-officers, and induced them to determine on his ruin.

Verse 4

Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel - The word rendered "occasion" (עלה *ʿillâh*) means a pretext or pretence. "The Arabs use the word of any business or affair which serves as a cause or pretext for neglecting another business." - Gesenius, Lexicon The meaning is, that they sought to find some plausible pretext or reason in respect to Daniel, by which the contemplated appointment might be prevented, and by which he might be effectually humbled. No one who is acquainted with the intrigues of cabinets and courts can have any doubts as to the probability of what is here stated. Nothing has been more common in the world than intrigues of this kind to humble a rival, and to bring down those who are meritorious to a state of degradation. The cause of the plot here laid seems to have been mere envy and jealousy - and perhaps the consideration that Daniel was a foreigner, and was one of a despised people held in captivity. "Concerning the kingdom." In respect to the administration of the kingdom. They sought to find evidence of malversation in office, or abuse of power, or attempts at personal aggrandizement, or inattention to the duties of the office. This is literally "from the side of the kingdom;" and the meaning is, that the accusation was sought in that quarter, or in that respect. No other charge would be likely to be effectual, except one which pertained to maladministration in office.

But they could find none occasion nor fault - This is an honorable testimony to the fidelity of Daniel, and to the uprightness of his character. If there had been any malversation in office, it would have been detected by these men.

Verse 5

We shall not find any occasion … - We shall not find any pretext or any cause by which he may be humbled and degraded. They were satisfied of his integrity, and they saw it was vain to hope to accomplish their purposes by any attack on his moral character, or any charge against him in respect to the manner in which he had discharged the duties of his office.

Except we find it against him concerning the law of his God - Unless it be in respect to his religion; unless we can so construe his known conscientiousness in regard to his religion as to make that a proof of his unwillingness to obey the king. It occurred to them that such was his well-understood faithfulness in his religious duties, and his conscientiousness, that they might expect that, whatever should occur, he would be found true to his God, and that this might be a basis of calculation in any measure they might propose for his downfall. His habits seem to have been well understood, and his character was so fixed that they could proceed on this as a settled matter in their plans against him. The only question was, how to construe his conduct in this respect as criminal, or how to make the king listen to any accusation against him on this account, for his religious views were well known when he was appointed to office; the worship of the God of Daniel was not prohibited by the laws of the realm, and it would not be easy to procure a law directly and avowedly prohibiting that.

It is not probable that the king would have consented to pass such a law directly proposed - a law which would have been so likely to produce disturbance, and when no plausible ground could have been alleged for it. There was another method, however, which suggested itself to these crafty counselors - which was, while they did not seem to aim absolutely and directly to have that worship prohibited, to approach the king with a proposal that would be flattering to his vanity, and that, perhaps, might be suggested as a test question, showing the degree of esteem in which he was held in the empire, and the willingness of his subjects to obey him. By proposing a law that, for a limited period, no one should be allowed to present a petition of any kind to anyone except to the king himself, the object would be accomplished. A vain monarch could be prevailed on to pass such a law, and this could be represented to him as a measure not improper in order to test his subjects as to their willingness to show him respect and obedience; and at the same time it would be certain to effect the purpose against Daniel - for they had no doubt that he would adhere steadfastly to the principles of his religion, and to his well-known habits of worship. This plan was, therefore, crafty in the extreme, and was the highest tribute that could be paid to Daniel. It would be well if the religious character and the fixed habits of all who profess religion were so well understood that it was absolutely certain that no accusation could lie against them on any other ground, but that their adherence to their religious

principles could be calculated on as a basis of action, whatever might be the consequences.

Verse 6

Then these presidents and princes assembled together - Margin, came tumultuously. The margin expresses the proper meaning of the original word - רגשׁ *râgash* - to run together with tumult. Why they came together in that manner is not stated. Bertholdt suggests that it means that they came in a procession, or in a body, to the king; but there is undoubtedly the idea of their doing it with haste, or with an appearance of great earnestness or excitement. Perhaps they imagined that they would be more likely to carry the measure if proposed as something that demanded immediate action, or something wherein it appeared that the very safety of the king was involved, than if it were proposed in a sedate and calm manner. If it were suggested in such a way as to seem to admit of deliberation, perhaps the suspicion of the king might be aroused, or he might have asked questions as to the ground of the necessity of such a law, which it might not have been easy to answer.

King Darius, live for ever - The usual way of saluting a monarch. See the note at Daniel 2:4.

Verse 7

All the presidents of the kingdom, the governor … - Several functionaries are enumerated here who are not in the previous verses, as having entered into the conspiracy. It is possible, indeed, that all these different classes of officers had been consulted, and had concurred in asking the enactment of the proposed law; but it is much more probable that the leaders merely represented or affirmed what is here said in order to be more certain of the enactment of the law. If represented as proposed by all the officers of the realm, they appear to have conceived that there would be no hesitation on the part of Darius in granting the request. They could not but be conscious that it was an unusual request, and that it might appear unreasonable, and hence, they seem to have used every precaution to make the passing of the law certain.

Have consulted together to establish a royal statute - Or, that such a statute might be established. They knew that it could be established only by the king himself, but they were in the habit, doubtless, of recommending such laws as they supposed would be for the good of the realm.

And to make a firm decree - Margin, interdict. The word used (אסר *'ĕsâr* - from אסר *'âsar* - to bind, make fast) means, properly, a binding; then anything which is binding or obligatory - as a prohibition, an interdict, a law.

That whosoever shall ask - Any one of any rank. The real purpose was to involve Daniel in disgrace, but in order to do this it was necessary to make the prohibition universal - as Herod, in order to be sure that he had cut off the infant king of the Jews, was under a necessity of destroying all the children in the place.

Of any god or man - This would include all the gods acknowledged in Babylon, and all foreign divinities.

For thirty days - The object of this limitation of time was perhaps twofold:

(1) they would be sure to accomplish their purpose in regard to Daniel, for they understood his principles and habits so well that they had no doubt that within that three he would be found engaged in the worship of his God; and

(2) it would not do to make the law perpetual, and to make it binding longer than thirty days might expose them to the danger of popular tumults. It was easy enough to see that such a law could not be long enforced, yet they seem to have supposed that the people would acquiesce in it for so brief a period as one month. Unreasonable though it might be regarded, yet for so short a space of time it might be expected that it would be patiently submitted to.

Save of thee, O king - Perhaps either directly, or through some minister of the realm.

He shall be cast into the den of lions - The word "den" (גוב *gôb*) means, properly, a pit, or cistern; and the idea is that the den was underground, probably a cave constructed for that purpose. It was made with so narrow an entrance that it could be covered with a stone, and made perfectly secure, Daniel 6:17. "The enclosures of wild beasts," says Bertholdt, pp. 397,398, "especially of lions," which the kings of Asia and of North-western Africa formerly had, as they have at the present day, were generally constructed underground, but were ordinarily caves which had been excavated for the purpose, wailed up at the sides, enclosed within a wall through which a door led from the outer wall to the space lying

between the walls, within which persons could pass round and contemplate the wild beasts." "The emperor of Morocco says Host (Beschreibung von Marokos und Fess, p. 290, as quoted in Rosenmuller's Morgenland, *in loc*.), "has a cave for lions," - Lowengrube - into which men sometimes, and especially, Jews, are cast; but they commonly came up again uninjured, for the overseers of the lions are commonly Jews, and they have a sharp instrument in their hands, and with this they can pass among them, if they are careful to keep their faces toward the lions, for a lion will not allow one to turn his back to him.

The other Jews will not allow their brethren to remain longer in such a cave than one night, for the lions would be too hungry, but they redeem their brethren out of the cave by the payment of money - which, in fact, is the object of the emperor." In another place (p. 77), he describes one of these caves. "In one end of the enclosure is a place for ostriches and their young ones, and at the other end toward the mountain is a cave for lions, which stands in a large cavern in the earth that has a division wall, in the midst of which is a door, which the Jews who have the charge of the lions can open and close from above, and, by means of food, they entice the lions from one room into another, that they may have the opportunity of cleaning the cage. It is all under the open sky." Under what pretext the crafty counselors induced the king to ratify this statute is not stated. Some one or all of the following things may have induced the monarch to sign the decree:

(1) The law proposed was in a high degree flattering to the king, and he may have been ready at once to sign a decree which for the time gave him a supremacy over gods and men. If Alexander the Great desired to be adored as a god, then it is not improbable that a proud and weak Persian monarch would be willing to receive a similar tribute. Xerxes did things more foolish than what is here attributed to Darius. Instances of this are not wanting. Of Holofernes, in Judith 3:8, it is said that he "had decreed to destroy all the gods of the land, that all nations should worship Nabuchodonosor only, and that all tongues and tribes should call upon him as god."

(2) It may have occurred to him, or may have been suggested, that this was an effectual way to test the readiness of his subjects to obey and honor

him. Some such test, it may have been urged, was not improper, and this would determine what was the spirit of obedience as well as any other.

(3) more probably, however, it may have been represented that there was some danger of insubordination, or some conspiracy among the people, and that it was necessary that the sovereign should issue some mandate which would at once and effectually quell it. It may have been urged that there was danger of a revolt, and that it would be an effectual way of preventing it to order that whoever should solicit any favor of anyone but the king should be punished, for this would bring all matters at once before him, and secure order. The haste and earnestness with which they urged their request would rather seem to imply that there was a representation that some sudden occasion had arisen which made the enactment of such a statute proper.

(4) Or the king may have been in the habit of signing the decrees proposed by his counselors with little hesitation, and, lost in ease and sensuality, and perceiving only that this proposed law was flattering to himself, and not deliberating on what might be its possible result, he may have signed it at once.

Verse 8-9

Now, O king, establish the decree - Ordain, enact, confirm it.

And sign the writing - An act necessary to make it the law of the realm.

That it be not changed - That, having the sign-manual of the sovereign, it might be so confirmed that it could not be changed. With that sign it became so established, it seems, that even the sovereign himself could not change it.

According to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not - Margin, Passeth. Which does not pass away; which is not abrogated. A similar fact in regard to a law of the Medes and Persians is mentioned in Esther viii., in which the king was unable to recall an order which had been given for the massacre of the Jews, and in which he attempted only to counteract it as far as possible by putting the Jews on their guard, and allowing them to defend themselves. Diodorus Siculus (lib. iv.) refers to this custom where he says that Darius, the last king of Persia, would have pardoned Charidemus after he was condemned to death, but could not reverse what the law had passed against him. - Lowth. “When the king of

Persia," says Montesquieu (Spirit of Laws, as quoted by Rosenmuller, Morgenland, *in loc*.), "has condemned any one to death, no one dares speak to him to make intercession for him. Were he even drunk when the crime was committed, or were he insane, the command must nevertheless be executed, for the law cannot be countermanded, and the laws cannot contradict themselves. This sentiment prevails throughout Persia." It may seem singular that such a custom prevailed, and that the king, who was the fountain of law, and whose will was law, could not change a statute at his pleasure.

But this custom grew out of the opinions which prevailed in the East in regard to the monarch. His will was absolute, and it was a part of the system which prevailed then to exalt the monarch, and leave the impression on the mind of the people that he was more than a man - that he was infallible, and could not err. Nothing was better adapted to keep up that impression than an established principle of this kind - that a law once ordained could not be repealed or changed. To do this would be a practical acknowledgment that there was a defect in the law; that there was a want of wisdom in ordaining it; that all the circumstances were not foreseen; and that the king was liable to be deceived and to err. With all the disadvantages attending such a custom, it was judged better to maintain it than to allow that the monarch could err, and hence, when a law was ordained it became fixed and unchanging.

Even the king himself could not alter it, and, whatever might be the consequences, it was to be executed. It is evident, however, that such a custom might have some advantages. It would serve to prevent hasty legislation, and to give stability to the government by its being known what the laws were, thus avoiding the evils which result when they are frequently changed. It is often preferable to have permanent laws, though not the best that could be framed, than those which would be better, if there were no stability. There is only one Being, however, whose laws can be safely unchanging - and that is God, for his laws are formed with a full knowledge of all the relations of things, and of their bearing on all future circumstances and times. It serves to confirm the statement here made respecting the ancient custom in Media and Persia, that the same idea of the inviolability of the royal word has remained, in a mitigated form, to modern times.

A remarkable example of this is related by Sir John Malcolm, of Aga Mohammed Khan, the last but one of the Persian kings. After alluding to the present case, and that in Esther, he observes, "The character of the power of the king of Persia has undergone no change. The late king, Aga Mohammed Khan, when encamped near Shiraz, said that he would not move until the snow was off the mountains in the vicinity of his camp. The season proved severe, and the snow remained longer than was expected; the army began to suffer distress and sickness, but the king said while the snow remained upon the mountain, he would not move; and his word was as law, and could not be broken. A multitude of laborers were collected and sent to remove the snow; their efforts, and a few fine days, cleared the mountains, and Aga Mohammed Khan marched." - History of Persia, i. 268, quoted in the Pict. Bible, *in loc*.

Verse 10

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed - Probably there was some proclamation made in regard to that decree.

He went into his house - That is, he went in in his usual manner. He made no change in his habits on account of the decree.

And his windows being open in his chamber - Open in the usual manner. It does not mean that he took pains to open them for the purpose of ostentation, or to show that he disregarded the decree, but that he took no care to close them with any view to avoid the consequences. In the warm climate of Babylon, the windows probably were commonly open. Houses among the Jews in later times, if not in the time of the exile, were usually constructed with an upper chamber - ὑπερῷον *huperōon* - which was a room not in common use, but employed as a guest chamber, where they received company and held feasts, and where at other times they retired for prayer and meditation. See the note at Matthew 9:2. Those "upper rooms" are often the most pleasant and airy part of the house. Dr. Robinson (Researches, vol. iii. p. 417), describing the house of the American consularagent in Sidon, says, "His house was a large one, built upon the eastern wall of the city; the rooms were spacious, and furnished with more appearance of wealth than any I saw in the country. An upper parlour with many windows, on the roof of the proper house, resembled a summer palace; and commanded a delightful view of the country toward the east,

full of trees and gardens, and country-houses, quite to the foot of the mountains."

Toward Jerusalem - It is not improbable that the windows were open on each side of the chamber, but this is particularly mentioned, because he turned his face toward Jerusalem when he prayed. This was natural to an exile Hebrew in prayer, because the temple of God had stood at Jerusalem, and that was the place where he abode by a visible symbol. It is probable that the Jews in their own country always in their prayers turned the face toward Jerusalem, and it was anticipated when the temple was dedicated, that this would be the case in whatever lands they might be. Thus in the prayer of Solomon, at the dedication, he says, "If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the Lord toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name," etc., 1 Kings 8:44. And again 1 Kings 8:46-49, "If they sin against thee, and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent - and pray unto thee toward their land which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name, then hear thou their prayer," etc.

Compare 1 Kings 8:33, 1 Kings 8:35, 1 Kings 8:38. So in Psalm 5:7: "As for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple." So Jonah it. 4: "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." So in the first book of Esdras (Apocrypha), 4:58: "Now when this young man was gone forth, he lifted up his face to heaven, toward Jerusalem, and praised the King of heaven." Compare Intro. Section II. V. C. Daniel, therefore, in turning his face toward Jerusalem when he prayed, was acting in accordance with what Solomon had anticipated as proper in just such a supposed case, and with the prevailing habit of his people when abroad. This was not, indeed, particularly prescribed as a duty, but it was recognized as proper; and it was not only in accordance with the instinctive feelings of love to his country and the temple, but a foundation was laid for this in the fact that Jerusalem was regarded as the peculiar dwelling-place of God on earth.

In the Koran it is enjoined as a duty on all Mussulmen, in whatever part of the earth they may be, to turn their faces toward the Caaba at Mecca when they pray: “The foolish men will say, What hath turned them from their Keblah toward which they formerly prayed? Say, unto God belongeth the East and the West; he directeth whom he pleaseth in the right way. Thus have we placed you, O Arabians, an intermediate nation, that ye may be witnesses against the rest of mankind, and that the apostle may be a witness against you. We appointed the Keblah, toward which thou didst formerly pray, only that we might know him who followeth the apostle from him that turneth back on his heels: though this change seem a great matter, unless unto those whom God hath directed. But God will not render your faith of none effect, for God is gracious and merciful unto man. We have seen thee turn about thy face toward heaven with uncertainty, but we will cause thee to turn thyself toward a Keblah that will please thee.

Turn, therefore, thy face toward the holy temple of Mecca; and wherever ye be, turn your faces toward that place.” - Sale‘s Koran, chapter ii. Wherever Mussulmen are, therefore, they turn their faces toward the temple at Mecca when they pray. Daniel complied with what was probably the general custom of his countrymen, and what was natural in his case, for there was, in the nature of the case, a reason why he should turn his face toward the place where God had been accustomed to manifest himself. It served to keep up in his mind the remembrance of his beloved country, and in his case could be attended with no evil. As all visible symbols of the Devine Being are now, however, withdrawn from any particular place on the earth, there is no propriety in imitating his example, and when we pray it is wholly immaterial in what direction the face is turned.

He kneeled upon his knees three times a day - In accordance, doubtless, with his usual custom. The amount of the statement is, that he did not vary his habit on account of the command. He evidently neither assumed a posture of ostentation, nor did he abstain from what he was accustomed to do. To have departed from his usual habit in any way would have been a yielding of principle in the case. It is not mentioned at what time in the day Daniel thus kneeled and prayed, but we may presume that it was evening, and morning, and noon. Thus the Psalmist says: “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my

voice" Psalm 55:17. No one can doubt the propriety of thus praying to God; and it would be well for all thus to call upon their God.

As he did aforetime - Without making any change. He neither increased nor diminished the number of times each day in which he called upon God; nor did he make any change in the manner of doing it. He did not seek ostentatiously to show that he was a worshipper of God, nor was he deterred by the fear of punishment from doing as he had been accustomed to do. If it should be said that Daniel's habit of worship was ostentatious; that his praying with his windows open was contrary to the true spirit of retiring devotion, and especially contrary to the spirit required of worshippers in the New Testament, where the Saviour commands us when we pray to "enter into the closet, and to shut the door" Matthew 6:6, it may be replied,

(1) That there is no evidence that Daniel did this for the purpose of ostentation, and the supposition that he did it for that purpose is contrary to all that we know of his character;

(2) As we have seen, this was the customary place for prayer, and the manner of the prayer was what was usual;

(3) The chamber, or upper part of the house, was in fact the most retired part, and was a place where one would be least likely to be heard or seen; and

(4) There is no evidence that it would not have been quite private and unobserved if these men had not gone to his house and listened for the very purpose of detecting him at his devotions. No one could well guard against such a purpose.

Verse 11

Then these men assembled … - Evidently with a design of finding him at his devotions.

Verse 12

Then they came near - That is, they came near to the king. They had detected Daniel, as they expected and desired to do, in a palpable violation of the law, and they lost no time in apprising the king of it, and in

reminding him of the law which he had established. Informers are not apt to lose time.

The king answered and said, The thing is true … - It is undeniable, whatever may be the consequences. There is no reason to suppose that he as yet had any suspicion of their design in asking this question. It is not improbable that he apprehended there had been some violation of the law, but it does not appear that his suspicions rested on Daniel.

Verse 13

Then answered they … That Daniel which is of the children of the captivity of Judah - Who is one of the captive Jews. There was art in thus referring to Daniel, instead of mentioning him as sustaining an exalted office. It would serve to aggravate his guilt to remind the king that one who was in fact a foreigner, and a captive, had thus disregarded his solemn commandment. If he had been mentioned as the prime minister, there was at least a possibility that the king would be less disposed to deal with him according to the letter of the statute than if he were mentioned as a captive Jew.

Regardeth not thee … - Shows open disregard and contempt for the royal authority by making a petition to his God three times a day.

Verse 14

Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself - That is, for having consented to such a decree without deliberation, or with so much haste - or for having consented to it at all. It is remarkable that it is not said that he was displeased with them for having proposed it; but it is clear that he saw that the guilt was his own for having given his assent to it, and that he had acted foolishly. There is no evidence as yet that he saw that the decree had been proposed for the purpose of securing the degradation and ruin of Daniel - though he ultimately perceived it Daniel 6:24; or if he did perceive it, there was no way of preventing the consequences from coming on Daniel - and that was the point that now engrossed his attention. He was doubtless displeased with himself,

(1) because he saw that he had done wrong in confirming such a decree, which interfered with what had been tolerated - the free exercise of religion by his subjects;

(2) because he now saw that it was foolish, and unworthy of a king, thus to assent to a law for which there was no good reason, and the consequences of which he had not foreseen; and

(3) because he now saw that he had involved the first officer of the realm, and a man of unsullied character, in ruin, unless some way could be devised by which the consequences of the statute could be averted.

It is no uncommon thing for men to be displeased with themselves when they experience the unexpected consequences of their follies and their sins. An instance strongly resembling that here stated, in its main features, occurred at a later period in the history of Persia - an instance showing how the innocent may be involved in a general law, and how much perplexity and regret may be caused by the enactment of such a law. It occurred in Persia, in the persecution of Christians, 344 a.d. "An edict appeared, which commanded that all Christians should be thrown into chains and executed. Many belonging to every rank died as martyrs. Among these was an eunuch of the palace, named Azades, a man greatly prized by the king. So much was the latter affected by his death, that he commanded the punishment of death should be inflicted from thenceforth only on the leaders of the Christian sect; that is, only on persons of the clerical order." - Neander's Church History, Torrey's Translation, vol. iii. p. 146.

And set his heart on Daniel to deliver him - In what way he sought to deliver him is not said. It would seem probable from the representation in the following verse, that it was by an inquiry whether the statute might not properly be changed or cancelled, or whether the penalty might not be commuted - for it is said that his counselors urged as a reason for the strict infliction of the punishment the absolute unchangeableness of the statute. Perhaps he inquired whether a precedent might not be found for the abrogation of a law enacted by a king by the same authority that enacted it; or whether it did not come within the king's prerogative to change it; or whether the punishment might not be commuted without injury; or whether the evidence of the guilt was perfectly clear; or whether he might not be pardoned without anything being done to maintain the honor of the law. This is one of the most remarkable instances on record of the case of a monarch seeking to deliver a subject from punishment when the monarch had absolute power, and is a striking illustration of the difficulties which

often arise in the administration of justice, where the law is absolute, and where justice seems to demand the infliction of the penalty, and yet where there are strong reasons why the penalty should not be inflicted; that is, why an offender should be pardoned. And yet there is no improbability in this statement about the perplexity of the king, for

(1) there were strong reasons, easily conceivable, why the penalty should not be inflicted in this case, because

(a) the law had been evidently devised by the crafty enemies of Daniel to secure just such a result;

(b) Daniel had been guilty of no crime - no moral wrong, but had done only what should commend him more to favor and confidence;

(c) his character was every way upright and pure;

(d) the very worship which he had been detected in had been up to that period allowed, and there was no reason why it should now be punished, and

(e) the infliction of the penalty, though strictly according to the letter of the law, would be manifestly a violation of justice and equity; or, in other words, it was every way. desirable that it should not be inflicted.

(2) Yet there was great difficulty in pardoning him who had offended, for

(a) the law was absolute in the case;

(b) the evidence was clear that Daniel had done what the law forbade;

(c) the law of the realm prohibited any change;

(d) the character and government of the king were involved in the matter. If he interposed and saved Daniel, and thus suffered the law to be violated with impunity, the result would be that there would be a want of stability in his administration, and any other subject could hope that he

might violate the law with the same impunity. justice, and the honor of the government, therefore, seemed to demand that the law should be enforced, and the penalty inflicted.

(3) It may be added, that cases of this kind are frequently occurring in the administration of law - cases where there is a conflict between justice and mercy, and where one must be sacrificed to the other. There are numerous instances in which there can be no doubt that the law has been violated, and yet in which strong reasons exist why the offender should be pardoned. Yet there are great difficulties in the whole subject of pardon, and there are more embarrassments in regard to this than anything else pertaining to the administration of the laws. If an offence is never pardoned, then the government is stern and inexorable, and its administration violates some of the finest and most tender feelings of our nature for there are cases when all the benevolent feelings of our nature demand that there should be the remission of a penalty - cases, modified by youth, or age, or sex, or temptation, or previous character, or former service rendered to one‘s country. And yet pardon in any instance always does just so much to weaken the strong arm of the law. It is a proclamation that in some cases crime may be committed with impunity. If often exercised, law loses its force, and men are little deterred from crime by fear of it. If it were always exercised, and a proclamation were sent forth that anyone who committed an offence might be pardoned, the authority of government would be at an end. Those, therefore, who are entrusted with the administration of the laws, are often substantially in the same perplexity in which Darius was in respect to Daniel - all whose feelings incline them to mercy, and who yet see no way in which it can be exercised consistently with the administration of justice and the prevention of crime.

And he labored - He sought to devise some way in which it might be done.

Till the going down of the sun - Houbigant understands this, “Until the sun arose;” but the common rendering is probably the correct one. Why that hour is mentioned is not known. It would seem from the following verse that the king was pressed by his counselors to carry the decree into execution, and it is probable that the king saw that the case was a perfectly clear one, and that nothing could be hoped for from delay. The law was

clear, and it was equally clear that it had been violated. There was no way, then, but to suffer it to take its course.

Verse 15

Then these men assembled unto the king - The Chaldee here is the same as in Daniel 6:6, "they came tumultuously." They were earnest that the law should be executed, and they probably apprehended that if the king were allowed to dwell upon it, the firmness of his own mind would give way, and that he would release Daniel. Perhaps they dreaded the effect of the compunctious visitings which he might have during the silence of the night, and they, therefore, came tumultuously to hasten his decision.

Know, O king, that the law … - That is a settled matter about which there can be no debate or difference of opinion. It would seem that this was a point so well settled that no question could be raised in regard to it, and, to their minds, it was equally clear that if this were so, it was necessary that the sentence should be executed without delay.

Verse 16

Then the king commanded … - See the note at Daniel 6:7. Some recent discoveries among the ruins of Babylon have shown that the mode of punishment by throwing offenders against the laws to lions was actually practiced there, and these discoveries may be classed among the numerous instances in which modern investigations have tended to confirm the statements in the Bible. Three interesting figures illustrating this fact may be seen in the Pictorial Bible, vol. iii. p. 232. The first of those figures, from a block of stone, was found at Babylon near the great mass of ruin that is supposed to mark the site of the grand western palace. It represents a lion standing over the body of a prostrate man, extended on a pedestal which measures nine feet in length by three in breadth. The head has been lately knocked off; but when Mr. Rich saw it, the statue was in a perfect state, and he remarks that "the mouth had a circular aperture into which a man might introduce his fist." The second is from an engraved gem, dug from the ruins of Babylon by Captain Mignan. It exhibits a man standing on two sphinxes, and engaged with two fierce animals, possibly intended for lions. The third is from a block of white marble found near the tomb of Daniel at Susa, and thus described by Sir Robert Ker Porter in his Travels (vol. ii. p. 416): "It does not exceed ten inches in width and depth, measures twenty in length, and is hollow within, as if to receive some deposit. Three of its sides are cut in bass-relief, two of them with similar representations of a man apparently

naked, except a sash round his waist, and a sort of cap on his head. His hands are bound behind him. The corner of the stone forms the neck of the figure, so that its head forms one of its ends. Two lions in sitting postures appear on either side at the top, each having a paw on the head of the man." See Pict. Bible, *in loc*.

Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God … - What is here stated is in accordance with what is said in Daniel 6:14, that the king sought earnestly to deliver Daniel from the punishment. He had entire confidence in him, and he expressed that to the last. As to the question of probability whether Darius, a pagan, would attempt to comfort Daniel with the hope that he would be delivered, and would express the belief that this would be done by that God whom he served, and in whose cause he was about to be exposed to peril, it may be remarked,

(1) That it was a common thing among the pagan to believe in the interposition of the gods in favor of the righteous, and particularly in favor of their worshippers. See Homer, passim. Hence, it was that they called on them; that they committed themselves to them in battle and in peril; that they sought their aid by sacrifices and by prayers. No one can doubt that such a belief prevailed, and that the mind of Darius, in accordance with the prevalent custom, might be under its influence.

(2) Darius, undoubtedly, in accordance with the prevailing belief, regarded the God whom Daniel worshipped as a god, though not as exclusively the true God. He had the same kind of confidence in him that he had in any god worshipped by foreigners - and probably regarded him as the tutelary divinity of the land of Palestine, and of the Hebrew people. As he might consistently express this belief in reference to any foreign divinity, there is no improbability that he would in reference to the God worshipped by Daniel.

(3) He had the utmost confidence both in the integrity and the piety of Daniel; and as he believed that the gods interposed in human affairs, and as he saw in Daniel an eminent instance of devotedness to his God, he did not doubt that in such a case it might be hoped that he would save him.

Verse 17

And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den - Probably a large flat stone sufficient to cover the mouth of the cave, and so heavy that Daniel could not remove it from within and escape. It was usual then, as it is now, to close up the entrance to sepulchres with a large stone. See John 11:38; Matthew 27:60. It would be natural to endeavor to secure this vault or den in the same way - on the one hand so that Daniel could not escape from within, and on the other so that none of his friends could come and rescue him from without.

And the king sealed it with his own signet - With his own seal. That is, he affixed to the stone, probably by means of clay or wax, his seal in such a way that it could not be removed by anyone without breaking it, and consequently without the perpetration of a crime of the highest kind - for no greater offence could be committed against his authority than thus to break his seal, and there could be no greater security that the stone would not be removed. On the manner of sealing a stone in such circumstances, compare the note at Matthew 27:66.

And with the signet of his lords - That it might have all the security which there could be. Perhaps this was at the suggestion of his lords, and the design, on their part, may have been so to guard the den that the king should not release Daniel.

That the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel - By the king. Probably they feared that if there was not this security, the king might release him; but they presumed that he would not violate the seal of the great officers of the realm. It would seem that some sort of concurrence between the king and his nobles was required in making and executing the laws.

Verse 18

Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting - Daniel was probably cast into the den soon after the going down of the sun, Daniel 6:14. It was not unusual to have suppers then late at night, as it is now in many places. The great anxiety of the king, however, on account of what had occurred, prevented him from participating in the usual evening meal. As to the probability of what is here affirmed, no one can have any doubt who credits the previous statements. In the consciousness of wrong done to a worthy officer of the government; in the deep anxiety which he had to deliver him; in the excitement which must have existed against the cunning and wicked authors of the plot to deceive the king and to ruin

Daniel; and in his solicitude and hope that after all Daniel might escape, there is a satisfactory reason for the facts stated that he had no desire for food; that instruments of music were not brought before him; and that he passed a sleepless night.

Neither were instruments of music brought before him - It was usual among the ancients to have music at their meals. This custom prevailed among the Greeks and Romans, and doubtless was common in the Oriental world. It should be observed, however, that there is considerable variety in the interpretation of the word here rendered instruments of music - דחון *dachăvân* The margin is table. The Latin Vulgate, "He slept supperless, neither was food brought before him." The Greek renders it "food," ἐδέσματα *edesmata* So the Syriac. Bertholdt and Gesenius render it concubines, and Saadias dancing girls. Any of these significations would be appropriate; but it is impossible to determine which is the most correct. The word does not occur elsewhere in the Scriptures.

Verse 19

Then the king arose very early in the morning … - No one can doubt the probability of what is here said, if the previous account be true. His deep anxiety; his wakefulnight; the remorse which he endured, and his hope that Daniel would be after all preserved, all would prompt to an early visit to the place of his confinement, and to his earnestness in ascertaining whether he were still alive.

Verse 20

He cried with a lamentable voice - A voice full of anxious solicitude. Literally, "a voice of grief." Such a cry would be natural on such an occasion.

O Daniel, servant of the living God - The God who has life; who imparts life; and who can preserve life. This was the appellation, probably, which he had heard Daniel use in regard to God, and it is one which he would naturally employ on such an occasion as this; feeling that the question of life was entirely in his hands.

Whom thou servest continually - At all times, and in all circumstances: as a captive in a distant land; in places of honor and power; when surrounded by the great who worship other gods; and when threatened with death for your devotion to the service of God. This had been the character of Daniel, and it was natural to refer to it now.

Verse 21

Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live forever - The common form of salutation in addressing the king. See the note at Daniel 2:4. There might be more than mere form in this, for Daniel may have been aware of the true source of the calamities that had come upon him, and of the innocence of the king in the matter; and he doubtless recalled the interest which the king had shown in him when about to be cast into the den of lions, and his expression of confidence that his God would be able to deliver him Daniel 6:16, and he could not but have been favorably impressed by the solicitude which the monarch now showed for his welfare in thus early visiting him, and by his anxiety to know whether he were still alive.

Verse 22

My God hath sent his angel - It was common among the Hebrews to attribute any remarkable preservation from danger to the intervention of an angel sent from God, and no one can demonstrate that it did not occur as they supposed. There is no more absurdity in supposing that God employs an angelic being to defend his people, or to impart blessings to them, than there is in supposing that he employs one human being to render important aid, and to convey important blessings, to another. As a matter of fact, few of the favors which God bestows upon men are conveyed to them directly from himself, but they are mostly imparted by the instrumentality of others. So it is in the blessings of liberty, in deliverance from bondage, in the provision made for our wants, in the favor bestowed on us in infancy and childhood. As this principle prevails everywhere on the earth, it is not absurd to suppose that it may prevail elsewhere, and that on important occasions, and in instances above the rank of human intervention, God may employ the instrumentality of higher beings to defend his people in trouble, and rescue them from danger. Compare Psalm 34:7; Psalm 91:11; Daniel 9:21; Matthew 18:10; Luke 16:22; Hebrews 1:14. Daniel does not say whether the angel was visible or not, but it is rather to be presumed that he was, as in this way it would be more certainly known to him that he owed his deliverance to the intervention of an angel, and as this would be to him a manifest token of the favor and protection of God.

And hath shut the lions‘ mouths - It is clear that Daniel supposed that this was accomplished by a miracle; and this is the only satisfactory solution of what had occurred. There is, moreover, no more objection to the supposition that this was a miracle than there is to any miracle whatever, for

(a) there is no more fitting occasion for the Divine intervention than when a good man is in danger, and

(b) the object to be accomplished on the mind of the king, and through him on the minds of the people at large, was worthy of such an interposition.

The design was evidently to impress the mind of the monarch with the belief of the existence of the true God, and to furnish in the court of Babylon proof that should be convincing that he is the only God.

Forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me -

(1) Absolute innocency in reference to the question of guilt on the point in which he had been condemned - he having done only what God approved; and

(2) general integrity and uprightness of character. We need not suppose that Daniel claimed to be absolutely perfect (compare Daniel 9), but we may suppose that he means to say that God saw that he was what he professed to be, and that his life was such as he approved.

And also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt - That is, he had in no manner violated his duty to the king; he had done nothing that tended to overthrow his government, or to spread disaffection among his subjects.

Verse 23

Then was the king exceeding glad for him - On account of Daniel. That is, he was rejoiced for the sake of Daniel that he had received no hurt, and that he might be restored to his place, and be useful again in the government.

Verse 24

And the king commanded, and they brought those men, which had accused Daniel … - It would seem probable that the king had been aware of their wicked designs against Daniel, and had been satisfied that the whole was the result of a conspiracy, but he felt himself under a necessity of allowing the law to take its course on him whom he believed to be really innocent. That had been done. All that the law could be construed as requiring had been accomplished. It could not be pretended that the law required that any other punishment should be inflicted on Daniel, and the way was now clear to deal with the authors of the malicious plot as they

deserved. No one can reasonably doubt the probability of what is here said in regard to the conspirators against Daniel. The king had arbitrary power. He was convinced of their guilt. His wrath had been with difficulty restrained when he understood the nature of the plot against Daniel. Nothing, therefore, was more natural than that he should subject the guilty to the same punishment which they had sought to bring upon the innocent; nothing more natural than that a proud despot, who saw that, by the force of a law which he could not control, he had been made a tool in subjecting the highest officer of the realm, and the best man in it, to peril of death, should, without any delay, wreak his vengeance on those who had thus made use of him to gratify their own malignant passions.

Them, their children, and their wives - This was in accordance with Oriental notions of justice, and was often done. It is said expressly by Ammianus Marcellinus (23,6, 81), to have been a custom among the Persians: "The laws among them (the Persians) are formidable; among which those which are enacted against the ungrateful and deserters, and similar abominable crimes, surpass others in cruelty, by which, on account of the guilt of one, all the kindred perish" - per quas ob noxam unius omnis propinquitas perit. So Curtius says of the Macedonians: "It is enacted by law that the kindred of those who conspire against the king shall be put to death with them." Instances of this kind of punishment are found among the Hebrews (Joshua 7:24; 2 Samuel 21:5, following), though it was forbidden by the law of Moses, in judicial transactions, Deuteronomy 24:16. Compare also Ezekiel 18; Maurer, *in loc*. In regard to this transaction we may; observe

(a) that nothing is more probable than that this would occur, since, as appears from the above quotations, it was often done, and there was nothing in the character of Darius that would prevent it, though it seems to us to be so unjust

(b) it was the act of a pagan monarch, and it is not necessary, in order to defend the Scripture narrative, to vindicate the justice of the transaction. The record may be true, though the thing itself was evil and wrong.

(c) Yet the same thing substantially occurs in the course of Providence, or the administration of justice now. Nothing is more common than that the wife and children of a guilty man should suffer on account of the sin of the

husband and father. Who can recount the woes that come upon a family through the intemperance of a father? And in cases where a man is condemned for crime, the consequences are not confined to himself. In shame and mortification, and disgrace; in the anguish experienced when he dies on a gibbet; in the sad remembrance of that disgraceful death; in the loss of one who might have provided for their wants, and been their protector and counselor, the wife and children always suffer; and, though this took another form in ancient times, and when adopted as a principle of punishment is not in accordance with our sense of justice in administering laws, yet it is a principle which pervades the world - for the effects of crime cannot and do not terminate on the guilty individual himself.

And the lions had the mastery of them - As the Divine restraint furnished for the protection of Daniel was withdrawn, they acted out their proper nature.

And brake all their bones in pieces or ever … - literally, "they did not come to the bottom of the den until the lions had the master of them, and brake all their bones." They seized upon them as they fell, and destroyed them.

Verse 25

Then king Darius wrote unto all people … - Compare the note at Daniel 2:47; Daniel 3:29; Daniel 4:1. If there is a probability that Nebuchadnezzar would make such a proclamation as he did, there is no less probability that the same thing would be done by Darius. Indeed, it is manifest on the face of the whole narrative that one great design of all that occurred was to proclaim the knowledge of the true God, and to secure his recognition. That object was worthy of the Divine interposition, and the facts in the case show that God has power to induce princes and rulers to recognize his existence and perfections, and his government over the earth.

Verse 26

I make a decree - Compare Daniel 3:29.

That in every dominion of my kingdom - Every department or province. The entire kingdom or empire was made up of several kingdoms, as Media, Persia, Babylonia, etc. The meaning is, that he wished the God of Daniel to be honored and reverenced throughout the whole empire.

Men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel - That they honor and reverence him as God. There is no certain evidence that he meant that he should be honored as the only God; but the probability is, that he meant that

he should be recognized as a God of great power and glory, and as worthy of universal reverence. How far this pagan monarch might still regard the other deities worshipped in the empire as gods, or how far his own heart might be disposed to honor the God of Daniel, there are no means of ascertaining. It was much, however, that so great a monarch should be led to make a proclamation acknowledging the God of Daniel as having a real existence, and as entitled to universal reverence.

For he is the living God - An appellation often given to God in the Scriptures, and probably learned by Darius from Daniel. It is not, however, absolutely certain that Darius would attach all the ideas to these phrases which Daniel did, or which we would. The attributes here ascribed to God are correct, and the views expressed are far beyond any that prevailed among the pagan; but still it would not be proper to suppose that Darius certainly had all the views of God which these words would convey to us now.

And stedfast for ever - That is, he is always the same. He ever lives; he has power overall; his kingdom is on an immovable foundation. He is not, in his government, to cease to exist, and to be succeeded by another who shall occupy his throne.

And his kingdom what shall not be destroyed … - See the Daniel 4:3, note; Daniel 4:34, note. The similarity between the language used here, and that employed by Nebuchadnezzar, shows that it was probably derived from the same source. It is to be presumed that both monarchs expressed the views which they had learned from Daniel.

Verse 27

He delivereth and rescueth - As in the case of Daniel. This attribute would of course be prominent in the view of Darius, since so remarkable an instance of his power had been recently manifested in rescuing Daniel.

And he worketh signs and wonders … - Performs miracles far above all human power. If he had done it on earth in the case of Daniel, it was fair to infer that he did it also in heaven. Compare the notes at Daniel 4:2-3.

The power of the lions - Margin, hand. The hand is the instrument of power. The word paw would express the idea here, and would accord with the meaning, as it is usually with the paw that the lion strikes down his prey before he devours it.

Verse 28

So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius - That is, to the end of his reign. It is fairly implied here that he was restored to his honors.

And in the reign of Cyrus the Persian - Cyrus the Great, the nephew and successor of Darius. For an account of Cyrus, see the note at Isaiah 41:2. How long during the reign of Cyrus Daniel "prospered" or lived is not said. During a part of the reign of Darius or Cyaxares, he was occupied busily in securing by his influence the welfare of his own people, and making arrangements for their return to their land; and his high post in the nation to which, under Divine Providence, he had doubtless been raised for this purpose, enabled him to render essential and invaluable service at the court. In the third year of Cyrus, we are informed Daniel 12:12-13. From that period the accounts respecting him are vague, confused, and even strange, and little or nothing is known of the time or circumstances of his death. Compare Introduction Section I.

From this chapter we may derive the following instructive

Practical Lessons

(1) We have an instance of what often occurs in the world - of envy on account of the excellency of others, and of the hoonours which they obtain by their talent and their worth, Daniel 6:1-4. Nothing is more frequent than such envy, and nothing more common, as a consequence, than a determination to degrade those who are the subjects of it. Envy always seeks in some way to humble and mortify those who are distinguished. It is the pain, mortification, chagrin, and regret which we have at their superior excellence or prosperity, and this prompts us to endeavor to bring them down to our own level, or below it; to calumniate their characters; to hinder their prosperity; to embarrass them in their plans; to take up and circulate rumours to their disadvantage; to magnify their faults, or to fasten upon them the suspicion of crime. In the instance before us, we see the effect in a most guilty conspiracy against a man of incorruptible character; a man full in the confidence of his sovereign; a man eminently the friend of virtue and of God.

"Envy will merit, as its shade, pursue;
But, like a shadow, proves the substance true."
- *Pope's Essay on Criticism.*

"Base envy withers at another's joy,
And hates that excellence it cannot reach."
- *Thomson's Seasons.*

"Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow,
Thou shalt not escape calumny."
- *Shakespeare.*
"That thou art blamed shall not be thy defect,
For slander's mark was ever yet the fair:
So thou be good, slander doth yet approve

Thy worth the greater."
- *Shakespeare.*

(2) We have in this chapter Daniel 6:4-9 a striking illustration of the nature and the evils of a conspiracy to ruin others. The plan here was deliberately formed to ruin Daniel - the best man in the realm - a man against whom no charge of guilt could be alleged, who had done the conspirators no wrong; who had rendered himself in no way amenable to the laws. A "conspiracy" is a combination of men for evil purposes; an agreement between two or more persons to commit some crime in concert, usually treason, or an insurrection against a government or state. In this case, it was a plot growing wholly out of envy or jealousy; a concerted agreement to ruin a good man, where no wrong had been done or could be pretended, and no crime had been committed. The essential things in this conspiracy, as in all other cases of conspiracy, were two:

(a) that the purpose was evil; and

(b) that it was to be accomplished by the combined influences of numbers. The means on which they relied, on the grounds of calculation on the success of their plot, were the following:

(1) that they could calculate on the unwavering integrity of Daniel - on his firm and faithful adherence to the principles of his religion in all circumstances, and in all times of temptation and trial; and

(2) that they could induce the king to pass a law, irrepealable from the nature of the case, which Daniel would be certain to violate, and to the penalty of which, therefore, he would be certainly exposed. Now in this purpose there was every element of iniquity, and the grossest conceivable wrong. There were combined all the evils of envy and malice; of perverting and abusing their influence over the king; of secrecy in taking advantage of

one who did not suspect any such design; and of involving the king himself in the necessity of exposing the best man in his realm, and the highest officer of state, to the certain danger of death. The result however showed, as is often the case, that the evil recoiled on themselves, and that the very calamity overwhelmed them and their families which they had designed for another.

(3) We have here a striking instance of what often occurs, and what should always occur, among the friends of religion, that "no occasion can be found against them except in regard to the law of their God" - on the score of their religion, Daniel 6:5. Daniel was known to be upright. His character for integrity was above suspicion. It was certain that there was no hope of bringing any charge against him that would lie, for any want of uprightness or honesty, for any failure in the discharge of the duties of his office, for any malversation in administering the affairs of the government, for any embezzlement of the public funds, or for any act of injustice toward his fellow-men. It was certain that his character was irreproachable on all these points; and it was equally certain that he did and would maintain unwavering fidelity in the duties of religion. Whatever consequences might follow from it, it was clear that they could calculate on his maintaining with faithfulness the duties of piety.

Whatever plot, therefore, could be formed against him on the basis either of his moral integrity or his piety, it was certain would be successful. But there was no hope in regard to the former, for no law could have been carried prohibiting his doing what was right on the subject of morals. The only hope, therefore, was in respect to his religion; and the main idea in their plot - the thing which constituted the basis of their plan was, "that it was certain that Daniel would maintain his fidelity to his God irrspective of any consequences whatever." This certainty ought to exist in regard to every good man; every man professing religion. His character ought to be so well understood; his piety ought to be so firm, unwavering, and consistent, that it could be calculated on just as certainly as we calculate on the stability of the laws of nature, that he will be found faithful to his religious duties and obligations. There are such men, and the character of every man should be such. Then indeed we should know what to depend on in the world; then religion would be reapected as it should be.

(4) We may learn what is our duty when we are opposed in the exercise of our religion, or when we are in any way threatened with loss of office, or of property, on account of our religion, Daniel 6:10. "We are to persevere in the discharge of our religious duties, whatever may be the consequences." So far as the example of Daniel goes, this would involve two things:

(a) not to swerve from the faithful performance of duty, or not to be deterred from it; and

(b) not to change our course from any desire of display.

These two things were manifested by Daniel. He kept steadily on his way. He did not abridge the number of times of his daily devotion; nor, as far as appears, did he change the form or the length. He did not cease to pray in an audible voice; he did not give up prayer in the daytime, and pray only at night; he did not even close his windows; he did not take any precautions to pray when none were near; he did not withdraw into an inner chamber. At the same time, he made no changes in his devotion for the sake of ostentation. He did not open his windows before closed; he did not go into the street; he did not call around him his friends or foes to witness his devotions; he did not, as far as appears, either elevate his voice, or prolong his prayers, in order to attract attention, or to invite persecution. In all this he manifested the true spirit of religion, and set an example to men to be followed in all ages. Not by the loss of fame or money; by the dread of persecution, or contempt of death; by the threatenings of law or the fear of shame, are we to be deterred from the proper and the usual performance of our religious duties; nor by a desire to provoke persecution, and to win the crown of martyrdom, and to elicit applause, and to have our names blazoned abroad, are we to multiply our religious acts, or make an ostentatious display of them, when we are threatened, or when we know that our conduct will excite opposition. We are to ascertain what is right and proper; and then we are modestly and firmly to do it, no matter what may be the consequences. Compare Matthew 5:16; Acts 4:16-20; Acts 5:29.

(5) We have, in the case of Darius, an instance of what often happens, the regret and anguish which the mind experiences in consequence of a rash act, when it cannot be repaired, Daniel 6:14. The act of Darius in making the decree was eminently a rash one. It was done without deliberation at the suggestion of others, and probably under the influence of some very improper feeling - the desire of being esteemed as a god. But it had

consequences which he did not foresee, consequences which, if he had foreseen them, would doubtless have prevented his giving a sanction to this iniquitous law. The state of mind which he experienced when he saw how the act involved the best officer in his government, and the best man in his realm, was just what might have been expected, and is an illustration of what often occurs. It was too late now to prevent the effects of the act; and his mind was overwhelmed with remorse and sorrow. He blamed himself for his folly; and he sought in vain for some way to turn aside the consequences which he now deplored. Such instances often occur.

(a) Many of our acts are rash. They are performed without deliberation; under the influence of improper passions; at the suggestion of others who would be thought to be our friends; and without any clear view of the consequences, or any concern as to what the result may be.

(b) As an effect, they often have consequences which we did not anticipate, and which would have deterred us in each instance had we foreseen them.

(c) They often produce reset and anguish when too late, and when we cannot prevent the evil. The train of evils which has been commenced it is now too late to retard or prevent, and they now inevitably come upon us. We can only stand and weep over the effects of our rashness and folly; and must now feel that if the evil is averted, it will be by the interposition of God alone.

(6) We have in this chapter an affecting instance of the evils which often arise in a human goovernment from the want of something like an atonement, Daniel 6:14, following As has been remarked in the notes, cases often arise when it is desirable that pardon should be extended to the violators of law See the notes at Daniel 6:14. In such cases, some such arrangement as that of an atonement, by which the honor of the law might be maintained, and at the same time the merciful feelings of an executive might be indulged, and the benevolent wishes of a community gratified, would remove difficulties which are now felt in every administration. The difficulties in the case, and the advantage which would arise from an

atonement, may be seen by a brief reference to the circumstances of the case before us:

(a) the law was inexorable. It demanded punishment, as all law does, for no law in itself makes any provision for pardon. If it did, it would be a burlesque on all legislation. Law denounces penalty it does not pardon or show mercy. It has become necessary indeed to lodge a pardoning power with some man entrusted with the administration of the laws, but the pardon is not extended by the law itself.

(b) The anxiety of the king in the case is an illustration of what often occurs in the administration of law, for, as above observed, there are cases where, on many accounts, it would seem to be desirable that the penalty of the law should not be inflicted. Such a case was that of Dr. Dodd, in London, in which a petition, signed by thirty thousand names, was presented, praying for the remission of the penalty of death. Such a case was that of Major Andre, when Washington shed tears at the necessity of signing the death-warrant of so young and so accomplished an officer. Such cases often occur, in which there is the deepest anxiety in the bosom of an executive to see if there is not some way by which the infliction of the penalty of the law may be avoided.

(c) Yet there was in the case of Darius no possibility of a change, and this too is an illustration of what often occurs. The law was inexorable. It could not be repealed. So now there are instances where the penalty of law cannot be avoided consistently with the welfare of a community. Punishment must be inflicted, or all law become a nullity. An instance of this kind was that of Dr. Dodd. He was convicted of forgery. So important had it been deemed for the welfare of a commercial community that that crime should be prevented, that no one ever had been pardoned for it, and it was felt that no one should be. Such an instance was that of Major Andre. The safety and welfare of the whole army, and the success of the cause, seemed to demand that the offence should not go unpunished.

(d) Yet there are difficulties in extending pardon to the guilty;

(1) if it is done at all, it always does so much to weaken the strong arm of the law, and if often done, it makes law a nullity; and

(2) if it is never done, the law seems stern and inexorable, and the finer feelings of our nature, and the benevolent wishes of the community, are disregarded.

(e) These difficulties are obviated by an atonement. The things which are accomplished in the atonement made under the Divine government, we think, so far as this point is concerned, and which distinguishes pardon in the Divine administration from pardon everywhere else, relieving it from all the embarrassments felt in other governments, are the following:

(1) There is the utmost respect paid to the law. It is honored

(aa) in the personal obedience of the Lord Jesus, and

(bb) in the sacrifice which he made on the cross to maintain its dignity, and to show that it could not be violated with impunity - more honored by far than it would be by the perfect obedience of man himself, or by its penalty being borne by the sinner.

(2) pardon can be offered to any extent, or to any number of offenders. All the feelings of benevolence and mercy can be indulged and gratified in the most free manner, for now that an atonement is made, all proper honor has been shown to the law and to the claims of justice, and no interest will suffer though the most ample proclamation of pardon is issued. There is but one government in the universe that can safely to itself make an unlimited offer of pardon - that is, the government of God. There is not a human government that could safely make the offer which we meet everywhere in the Bible, that all offences may be forgiven: that all violators of law may be pardoned. If such a proclamation were made, there is no earthly administration that could hope to stand; no community which would not soon become the prey of lawless plunder and robbery. The reason, and the sole reason, why it can be done in the Divine administration is, that an atonement has been made by which the honor of the law has been secured, and by which it is shown that, while pardon is extended to all, the law is to be honored, and can never be violated with impunity.

(3) The plan of pardon by the atonement secures the observance of the law on the part of those who are pardoned. This can never be depended on when an offender against human laws is pardoned, and when a convict is discharged from the penitentiary. So far as the effect of punishment, or any influence from the act of pardon is concerned, there is no security that the pardoned convict will not, as his first act, force a dwelling or commit murder. But in the case of all who are pardoned through the atonement, it is

made certain that they will be obedient to the laws of God, and that their lives will be changed from sin to holiness, from disobedience to obedience. This has been secured by incorporating into the plan a provision by which the heart shall be changed before pardon is granted: not as the ground or reason of pardon, but as essential to it. The heart of the sinner is renewed by the Holy Spirit, and he becomes in fact obedient, and is disposed to lead a life of holiness. Thus every hinderance which exists in a human government to pardon is removed in the Divine administration; the honor of law is secured; the feelings of benevolence are gratified, and the sinner becomes obedient and holy.

(7) We have in this chapter Daniel 6:16 an instance of the confidence which wicked men are constrained to express in the true God. Darius had no doubt that the God whom Daniel served was able to protect and deliver him. The same may be said now. Wicked men know that it is safe to trust in God; that he is able to save his friends; that there is more security in the ways of virtue than in the ways of sin; and that when human help fails, it is proper to repose on the Almighty arm. There is a feeling in the human heart that they who confide in God are safe, and that it is proper to rely on his arm; and even a wicked father will not hesitate to exhort a Christian son or daughter to serve their God faithfully, and to confide in him in the trials and temptations of life. Ethan Allen, of Vermont, distinguished in the American revolution, was an infidel. His wife was an eminent Christian. When he was about to die, he was asked which of the two he wished his son to imitate in his religious views - his father or his mother. He replied, “His mother.”

(8) The righteous may look for the Divine protection and favor Daniel 6:22; that is, it is an advantage in this world of danger, and temptation, and trial, to be truly religious; or, in other words, those who are righteous may confidently expect the Divine interposition in their behalf. It is, indeed, a question of some difficulty, but of much importance, to what extent, and in what forms we are authorized now to look for the Divine interposition in our behalf, or what is the real benefit of religion in this world, so far as the Divine protection is concerned; and on this point it seems not inappropriate to lay down a few principles that may be of use, and that may be a proper application of the passage before us to our own circumstances:

(A) There is then a class of Scripture promises that refer to such protection, and that lead us to believe that we may look for the Divine interference in favor of the righteous, or that there is, in this respect, an advantage in true religion. In support of this, reference may be made to the following, among other passages of Scripture: Psalm 34:7, Psalm 34:17-22; Psalm 55:22; Psalm 91:1-8; Isaiah 43:1-2; Luke 12:6-7; Hebrews 1:14; Hebrews 13:5-6.

(B) In regard to the proper interpretation of these passages, or to the nature and extent of the Divine interposition, which we may expect in behalf of the righteous, it may be remarked.

I. That we are not to expect now the following things:

(a) The Divine interposition by miracle. It is the common opinion of the Christian world that the age of miracles is past; and certainly there is nothing in the Bible that authorizes us to expect that God will now interpose for us in that manner. It would be a wholly illogical inference, however, to maintain that there never has been any such interposition in behalf of the righteous; since a reason may have existed for such an interposition in former times which may not exist now.

(b) We are not authorized to expect that God will interpose by sending his angels visibly to protect and deliver us in the day of peril. The fair interpretation of those passages of Scripture which refer to that subject, as Psalm 34:7; Hebrews 1:14, does not require us to believe that there will be such interposition, and there is no evidence that such interposition takes place. This fact, however, should not be regarded as proof, either

(1) that no such visible interposition has ever occurred in former times - since it in no way demonstrates that point; or

(2) that the angels may not interpose in our behalf now, though to us invisible. For anything that can be proved to the contrary, it may still be true that the angels may be, invisibly, “ministering spirits to those who shall be heirs of salvation,” and that they may be sent to accompany the souls of the

righteous on their way to heaven, as they were to conduct Lazarus to Abraham‘s bosom, Luke 16:22.

(c) We are not authorized to expect that God will set aside the regular laws of nature in our behalf - that he will thus interpose for us in regard to diseases, to pestilence, to storms, to mildew, to the ravages of the locust or the caterpillar - for this would be a miracle and all the interposition which we are entitled to expect must be consistent with the belief that the laws of nature will be regarded.

(d) We are not authorized to expect that the righteous will never be overwhelmed with the wicked in calamity - that in an explosion on a steam-boat, in a shipwreck, in fire or flood, in an earthquake or in the pestilence, they will not be cut down together. To suppose that God would directly interpose in behalf of his people in such cases, would be to suppose that there would be miracles still, and there is nothing in the Bible, or in the facts that occur, to justify such an expectation.

II. The Divine interposition which we are authorized to expect, may be referred to under the following particulars:

(a) All events, great and small, are under the control of the God who loves righteousness - the God of the righteous. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice; not an event happens without his permission. If, therefore, calamity comes upon the righteous, it is not because the world is without control; it is not because God could not prevent it; it must be because he sees it best that it should be so.

(b) There is a general course of events that is favorable to virtue and religion; that is, there is a state of things on earth which demonstrates that there is a moral government over men. The essence of such a government, as Bishop Butler (Analogy) has shown, is, that virtue, in the course of things, is rewarded as virtue, and that vice is punished as vice. This course of things is so settled and clear as to show that God is the friend of virtue and religion, and the enemy of vice and irreligion - that is, that under his administration, the one, as a great law, has a tendency to promote

happiness; the other to produce misery. But if so, there is an advantage in being righteous; or there is a Divine interposition in behalf of the righteous.

(c) There are large classes of evils which a man will certainly avoid by virtue and religion, and those evils are among the most severe that afflict mankind. A course of virtue and religion will make it certain that those evils will never come upon him or his family. Thus, for example, by so simple a thing as total abstinence from intoxicating drinks, a man will certainly avoid all the evils that afflict the drunkard - the poverty, disease, disgrace, wretchedness, and ruin of body and soul which are certain to follow from intemperance. By chastity, a man will avoid the woes that come, in the righteous visitation of God, on the debauchee, in the form of the most painful and loathsome of the diseases that afflict our race. By integrity a man will avoid the evils of imprisonment for crime, and the disgrace which attaches to its committal. And by religion - pure religion - by the calmness of mind which it produces - the confidence in God; the cheerful submission to his will; the contentment which it causes, and the hopes of a better world which it inspires, a man will certainly avoid a large class of evils which unsettle the mind, and which fill with wretched victims the asylums for the insane.

Let a man take up the report of an insane asylum, and ask what proportion of its inmates would have been saved from so fearful a malady by true religion; by the calmness which it produces in trouble; by its influence in moderating the passions and restraining the desires; by the acquiescence in the will of God which it produces, and he will be surprised at the number which would have been saved by it from the dreadful evils of insanity. As an illustration of this, I took up the Report of the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane, for the year 1850, which happened to be lying before me, and looked to see what were the causes of insanity in regard to the inmates of the asylum, with a view to the inquiry what proportion of them would probably have been saved from it by the proper influence of religion. Of 1599 patients whose cases were referred to, I found the following, a large part of whom, it may be supposed, would have been saved from insanity if their minds had been under the proper influence of the gospel of Christ, restraining them from sin, moderating their passions, checking their desires, and giving them calmness and submission in the midst of trouble:

d Intemperance

d 95

d

d Loss of property

d 72

d

d Dread of poverty

d 2

d

d Intense study

d 19

d

d Domestic difficulties

d 48

d

d Grief for the loss of friends

d 77

d

d Intense application to business

d 3

d

d Religious excitement

d 61

d

d Want of employment

d 24

d

d Mortified pride

d 3

d

d Use of opium and tobacco

d 10

d

d Mental anxiety

d 77

d

d (d) There are cases where God seems to interpose in behalf of the righteous directly, in answer to prayer, in times of sickness, poverty, and danger - raising them up from the borders of the grave; providing for their wants in a manner which appears to be as providential as when the ravens fed Elijah, and rescuing them from danger. There are numerous such cases which cannot be well accounted for on any other supposition than that God does directly interpose in their behalf, and show them these mercies because they are his friends. These are not miracles. The purpose to do this was a part of the original plan when the world was made, and the prayer and the interposition are only the fulfilling of the eternal decree.

(e) God does interpose in behalf of his children in giving them support and consolation; in sustaining them in the time of trial; in upholding them in bereavement and sorrow, and in granting them peace as they go into the valley of the shadow of death. The evidence here is clear, that there is a degree of comfort and peace given to true Christians in such seasons, and given in consequence of their religion, which is not granted to the wicked, and to which the devotees of the world are strangers. And if these things are so, then it is clear that there is an advantage in this life in being righteous, and that God does now interpose in the course of events, and in the day of trouble, in behalf of his friends.

(9) God often overrules the malice of men to make himself known, and constrains the wicked to acknowledge him, Daniel 6:25-27. Darius, like Nebuchadnezzar, was constrained to acknowledge him as the true God, and to make proclamation of this throughout his vast empire. So often, by his providence, God constrains the wicked to acknowledge him as the true God, and as ruling in the affairs of men. His interpositions are so apparent; his works are so vast; the proofs of his administration are so clear; and he so defeats the counsels of the wicked, that they cannot but feel that he rules, and they cannot but acknowledge and proclaim it. It is in this way that from age to age God is raising up a great number of witnesses even among the wicked to acknowledge his existence, and to proclaim the great truths of his government; and it is in this way, among others, that he is constraining the intellect of the world to bow before him. Ultimately all this will be so clear, that the intellect of the world will acknowledge it, and all kings and people will see, as Darius did, that “he is the living God, and steadfast forever, and his kingdom what shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be unto the end.”

DANIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Introduction

Section I. - Analysis of the Chapter

This chapter contains an account of a remarkable prophetic dream which Daniel had in the first year of the reign of Belshazzar, and of the interpretation of the dream. After a brief statement of the contents of the chapter, it will be proper, in order to its more clear exposition, to state the different methods which have been proposed for interpreting it, or the different views of its application which have been adopted. The chapter comprises the following main points: the vision, Daniel 7:1-14; and the explanation, Daniel 7:15-28.

I. The vision, Daniel 7:1-14. The dream occurred in the first year of the reign of Belshazzar, and was immediately written out. Daniel is represented as standing near the sea, and a violent wind rages upon the sea, tossing the waves in wild commotion. Suddenly he sees four monsters emerge from the agitated waves, each one apparently remaining for a little time, and then disappearing. The first, in its general form, resembled a lion, but had wings like an eagle. On this he attentively gazed, until the wings were plucked away, and the beast was made to stand upright as a man, and the heart of a man was given to it.

Nothing is said as to what became of the beast after this. Then there appeared a second beast, resembling a bear, raising itself up on one side, and having three ribs in its mouth, and a command was given to it to arise and devour much flesh. Nothing is said further of what became of this beast. Then there arose another beast like a leopard, with four wings, and four heads, and to this beast was given wide dominion. Nothing is said as to what became of this animal. Then there arose a fourth beast more remarkable still. Its form is not mentioned, but it was fierce and strong. It had great iron teeth. It trampled down everything before it, and devoured and brake in pieces. This beast had at first ten horns, but soon there sprang up in the midst of them another - a smaller horn at first, but as this increased three of the ten horns were plucked up by the roots - apparently either by this, or in order to give place to it. What was more remarkable still, in this smaller horn there appeared the eyes of a man - emblematic of intelligence and vigilance; and a mouth speaking great things - indicative of pride and

arrogance. Daniel looked on this singular vision until a throne was set up or established, and then the Ancient of days did sit - until the old forms of dominations ceased, and the reign of God was introduced and established. He contemplated it until, on account of the great words which the "horn spake," the beast was slain, and his body was destroyed, and given to the burning flame. In the meantime the dominion was taken away from the other beasts; though their existence was prolonged for a little time. Then appeared in vision one in the form of man, who came to the Ancient of days, and there was given to him universal dominion over all people a kingdom that should never be destroyed.

II. The interpretation of the vision Daniel 7:15-28. Daniel was greatly troubled at the vision which he had seen, and he approached one who stood near, and asked him the meaning of it, Daniel 7:15-16. The explanation with which he was favored was, in general, the following: That those four beasts which he had seen represented four kings or kingdoms which would exist on the earth, and that the great design of the vision was to state the fact that the saints of tho Most High would ultimately possess the kingdom, and would reign forever, Daniel 7:17-18. The grand purpose of the vision was to represent the succession of dynasties, and the particular character of each one, until the government over the world should pass into the hands of the people of God, or until the actual rule on the earth should be in the hands of the righteous. The ultimate object, the thing to which all revolutions tended, and which was designed to be indicated in the vision, was the final reign of the saints on the earth. There was to be a time when the kingdom under the whole heaven was to be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; or, in other words, there would be a state of things on the earth, when "all dominions," or all "rulers" (margin, Daniel 7:27), would obey him. This general announcement in reference to the ultimate thing contemplated, and to the three first kingdoms, represented by the three first beasts, was satisfactory to Daniel, but he was still perplexed in regard to the particular thing designed to be represented by the fourth beast, so remarkable in its structure, so unlike all the others, and undergoing so surprising a transformation, Daniel 7:19-22. The sum of what was stated to him, in regard to the events represented by the fourth beast, is as follows:

(1) That this was designed to represent a fourth kingdom or dynasty which would arise upon the earth, in many respects, different from the three which would precede it. It was to be a kingdom which would be distinguished for oppressive conquests. It would subdue the whole earth, and it would crush, and prostrate, and trample down those whom it invaded. The description would characterize a dominion that would be stern, and mighty, and cruel, and successful; that would keep the nations which it subdued under its control by the terror of arms rather than by the administration of just laws; Daniel 7:23.

(2) The ten horns that Daniel saw spring out of its head denoted ten kings that would arise, or a succession of rulers that would sway the authority of the kingdom, Daniel 7:24.

(3) The other horn that sprang up among the ten, and after them, denoted another dynasty that would arise, and this would have peculiar characteristics. It would so far have connection with the former that it would spring out of them. But in most important respects it would differ from them. Its characteristics may be summed up as follows:

(a) It would spring from their midst, or be somehow attached, or connected with them - as the horn sprang from the head of the beast - and this would properly denote that the new power somehow sprang from the dynasty denoted by the fourth beast - as the horn sprang from the head of that beast;

(b) though springing from that, it would be "diverse" from it, having a character to be determined, not from the mere fact of its origin, but from something else.

(c) It would "subdue three of these kings;" that is, it would evercome and prostrate a certain portion of the power and authority denoted by the ten horns perhaps meaning that it would usurp something like one-third of the power of the kingdom denoted by the fourth beast.

(d) It would be characterized by arrogance and haughtiness - so much so that the fair construction of its claims would be that of "speaking against the

Most High."

(e) It would "wear out the saints of the Most High" - evidently referring to persecution.

(f) It would claim legislative authority so as to "change times and laws" - clearly referring to some claim set up over established laws, or to unusual authority, Daniel 7:24-25.

(4) Into the hand of this new power, all these things would be given for "a time, and times, and half a time:" implying that it would not be permanent, but would come to an end, Daniel 7:25.

(5) After that there would be a judgment - a judicial determination in regard to this new power, and the dominion would be taken away, to be utterly destroyed, Daniel 7:26.

(6) There would come a period when the whole dominion of the earth would pass into the hands of the saints; or, in other words, there would be a universal reign of the principles of truth and righteousness, Daniel 7:27.

In the conclusion of the chapter Daniel 7:28, Daniel says that these communications deeply affected his heart. He had been permitted to look far into futurity, and to contemplate vast changes in the progress of human affairs, and even to look forward to a period when all the nations would be brought under the dominion of the law of God, and the friends of the Most High would be put in possession of all power. Such events were fitted to fill the mind with solemn thought, and it is not wonderful that he contemplated them with deep emotion.

Section II. - Various Methods of Interpreting This Chapter

It is hardly necessary to say that there have been very different methods of interpreting this chapter, and that the views of its proper interpretation are by no means agreed on by expositors. It may be useful to refer to some of those methods before we advance to its exposition, that they may be before the mind in its consideration. We shall be the better able to ascertain what is the true interpretation by inquiring which of them, if any, accords

with the fair exposition of the language employed by the sacred writer. The opinions entertained may be reduced to the following classes:

I. Hardt supposes that the four beasts here denote four particular kings - Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodach, Belshazzar, and Cyrus.

II. Ephraem, who is followed by Eichhorn, supposes that the first beast referred to the Babylonian-Chaldean kingdom; the second, the Medish empire under Cyaxares II, the three "ribs" of which denote the Medish, Persian, and Chaldean portions of that empire; the third, the Persian empire, the four heads and wings of which denote the spread of the Persian empire toward the four regions under heaven, or to all parts of the world; the fourth, to the Grecian empire under Alexander and his successors, the ten horns of which denote ten eminent kings among the successors of Alexander, and the "little horn," that sprang up among them, Antiochus Epiphanes. The succeeding state of things, according to Ephraem and Eichhorn, refers to the kingdom of the Messiah.

III. Grotius, representing another class of interpreters, whom Hetzel follows, supposes that the succession of the kingdoms here referred to is the Babylonian-Chaldean; the Persian; the kingdom of Alexander, and his successors. The fifth is the Roman empire.

IV. The most common interpretation which has prevailed in the church is what supposes that the first beast denotes the Chaldean kingdom; the second, the Medo-Persian; the third, the Greek empire under Alexander and his successors; the fourth, the Roman empire. The dominion of the saints is the reign of the Messiah and his laws. But this opinion, particularly as far as pertains to the fourth and fifth of these kingdoms, has had a great variety of modifications, especially in reference to the signification of the ten horns, and the little horn that sprang up among them. Some who, under the fifth kingdom, suppose that the reign of Christ is referred to, regard the fourth kingdom as relating to Rome under the Caesars, and that the ten horns refer to a succession of ten regents, and the little horn to Julius Caesar. Others, who refer the last empire to the personal reign of Christ on the earth, and the kingdom which he would set up, suppose that the ten horns refer to ten kings or dynasties that sprang out of the Roman power - either a succession of the emperors, or those who came in after the invasion of the northern

hordes, or certain kingdoms of Europe which succeeded the Roman power after it fell; and by the little horn, they suppose that either the Turkish power with its various branches is designated, or Mahomet, or the Papacy, or Anti-christ.

V. The Jews, in general, suppose that the fifth kingdom refers to the reign of the Messiah; but still there has been great diversity of views among them in regard to the application of particular parts of the prophecy. Many of the older interpreters among them supposed that the ten horns denoted ten Roman Caesars, and that the last horn referred to Titus Vespasian. Most of the later Jewish interpreters refer this to their fabulous Gog and Magog.

VI. Another interpretation which has had its advocates is what supposes that the first kingdom was the Chaldean; the second, the Persian; the third, that of Alexander; the fourth, that of his successors; and the fifth, that of the Asmonean princes who rose up to deliver the Jewish nation from the despotism of the Syrian kings.

VII. As a specimen of one mode of interpretation which has prevailed to some extent in the church, the opinion of Cocceius may be referred to. He supposes that the first beast, with the eagle‘s wings, denoted the reign of the Christian emperors in Rome, and the spread of Christianity under them into remote regions of the East and West; the second, with the three ribs in his mouth, the Arian Goths, Vandals, and Lombards; the third, with the four heads and four wings, the Mahometan kingdom with the four Caliphates; the fourth, the kingdom of Charlemagne, and the ten horns in this kingdom, the Carlovingians, Saxons, Salle, Swedish, Hollandish, English, etc., princes and dynasties or people; and the little horn, the Papacy as the actual Anti-christ.

The statement of these various opinions, and methods of interpretation, I have translated from Bertholdt, Daniel, pp. 419-426. To these should be added the opinion which Bertholdt himself maintains, and which has been held by many others, and which Bertholdt has explained and defended at length, pp. 426-446. That opinion is, substantially, that the first kingdom is the Babylonian kingdom under Nebuchadnezzar, and that the wings of the first beast denote the extended spread of that empire. The second beast, with

the three “ribs,” or fangs, denotes the Median, Lydian, and Babylonian kingdoms, which were erected under one scepter, the Persian. The third beast, with the four wings and four heads, denotes the Grecian dynasty under Alexander, and the spread of that kingdom throughout the four parts of the world. The fourth beast denotes the kingdom of the Lagidae and Seleucidae, under which the Hebrews suffered so much. The statement respecting this kingdom Daniel 7:7, that “it was diverse from all that went before it,” refers to the “plurality of the fourth kingdom.” or the fact that it was an aggregate made up of many others - a kingdom in a collective sense. The “ten horns” denote ten successive princes or kings in that kingdom, and Bertholdt enumerates them in the following order:

1. Seleucus Nicator;

2. Antiochus Soter;

3. Antiochus Theos;

4. Seleucus Kallinicus;

5. Seleucus Keraunus;

6. Antiochus the Great;

7. Seleucus Philopater;

8. Heliodorus;

9. Ptolemy Philometer;

10. Demetrius.

The eleventh - denoted by the little horn - was Antiochus Epiphanes, who brought so many calamitities upon the Hebrew people. His reign lasted, according to Bertholdt, “a time, and times, and half a time” - or three years and a half; and then the kingdom was restored to the people of God to

be a permanent reign, and, ultimately, under the Messiah, to fill the world and endure to the end of time.

The interpretation thus stated, supposing that the "little horn" refers to Antiochus Epiphanes, is also maintained by Prof. Stuart. - Hints on Prophecy, 2nd ed., pp. 85-98. Compare also Commentary on Daniel, pp. 173-194, and 205-211.

Amidst such a variety of views, the only hope of arriving at any satisfactory conclusion respecting the meaning of this chapter is by a careful examination of the text, and the fair meaning of the symbols employed by Daniel.

Verse 1

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon - On the character and reign of Belshazzar, see Introduction to Daniel 2:1.

And visions of his head upon his bed - See the notes at Daniel 4:5.

Then he wrote the dream - He made a record of it at the time. He did not commit it to tradition, or wait for its fulfillment before it was recorded, but long before the events referred to occurred he committed the prediction to writing, that when the prophecy was fulfilled they might be compared with it. It was customary among the prophets to record their predictions, whether communicated in a dream, in a vision, or by words to them, that there might be no doubt when the event occurred that there had been an inspired prediction of it, and that there might be an opportunity of a careful comparison of the prediction with the event. Often the prophets were commanded to record their predictions. See Isaiah 8:1, Isaiah 8:16; Isaiah 30:8; Habakkuk 2:2. Compare Revelation 1:19; Revelation 14:13; Revelation 21:5. In many instances, as in the case before us, the record was made hundreds of years before the event occurred, and as there is all the evidence that there could be in a case that the record has not been altered to adapt it to the event, the highest proof is thus furnished of the inspiration of the prophets. The meaning here is, that Daniel wrote out the dream as soon as it occurred.

And told the sum of the matters - Chaldee, "And spake the head of the words." That is, he spake or told them by writing. He made a communication of them in this manner to the world. It is not implied that he

made any oral communication of them to anyone, but that he communicated them - to wit, in the way specified. The word "sum" here - רֹאשׁ *rē'sh* - means "head"; and would properly denote such a record as would be a heading up, or a summary - as stating in a brief way the contents of a book, or the chief points of a thing without going into detail. The meaning here seems to be that he did not go into detail - as by writing names, and dates, and places; or, perhaps, that he did not enter into a minute description of all that he saw in regard to the beasts that came up from the sea, but that he recorded what might be considered as peculiar, and as having special significancy.

The Codex Chisianus renders this, ἔγραψεν ἐις κεφάλαια λόγων *egrapsen eis kephalaia logōn* - "He wrote in heads of words," that is, he reduced it to a summary description. It is well remarked by Lengerke, on this place, that the prophets, when they described what was to occur to tyrants in future times, conveyed their oracles in a comparatively dark and obscure manner, yet so as to be clear when the events should occur. The reason of this is obvious. If the meaning of many of the predictions had been understood by those to whom they referred, that fact would have been a motive to them to induce them to defeat them; and as the fulfillment depended on their voluntary agency, the prophecy would have been void. It was necessary, therefore, in general, to avoid direct predictions, and the mention of names, dates, and places, and to make use of symbols whose meaning would be obscure at the time when the prediction was made, but which would be plain when the event should occur. A comparison of Daniel 7:4, Daniel 7:9, Daniel 7:11, Daniel 7:14, will show that only a sumptuary of what was to occur was recorded.

Matters - Margin, as in Chaldee, words. The term words, however; is often used to denote things.

Verse 2

Daniel spake and said - That is, he spake and said in the manner intimated in the previous verse. It was by a record made at the time, and thus he might be said to speak to his own generation and to all future times.

I saw in my vision by night - I beheld in the vision; that is, he saw represented to him the scene which he proceeds to describe. He seemed to see the sea in a tempest, and these monsters come up from it, and the strange succession of events which followed.

And behold, the four winds of the heaven - The winds that blow under the heaven, or that seem to come from the heaven - or the air. Compare Jeremiah 49:36. The number of the winds is here referred to as four as they are now, as blowing mainly from the four quarters of the earth. Nothing is more common now than to designate them in this manner - as the east, the south, the west, the north wind. So the Latins - Eurus, Auster, Zephyrus, Boreas.

Strove - מגיחן *megîychân* Burst, or rushed forth; seemed to conflict together. The winds burst, rushed from all quarters, and seemed to meet on the sea, throwing it into wild commotion. The Hebrew word (גיח *gîyach*) means to break or burst forth, as a fountain or stream of waters, Job 40:23; an infant breaking forth from the womb, Job 38:8; a warrior rushing forth to battle, Ezekiel 32:2. Hence, the Chaldean to break forth; to rush forth as the winds. The symbol here would naturally denote some wild commotion among the nations, as if the winds of heaven should rush together in confusion.

Upon the great sea - This expression would properly apply to any great sea or ocean, but it is probable that the one that would occur to Daniel would be the Mediterranean Sea, as that was best known to him and his contemporaries. A heaving ocean - or an ocean tossed with storms - would be a natural emblem to denote a nation, or nations, agitated with internal conflicts, or nations in the midst of revolutions. Among the sacred poets and the prophets, hosts of armies invading a land are compared to overflowing waters, and mighty changes among the nations to the heaving billows of the ocean in a storm. Compare Jeremiah 46:7-8; Jeremiah 47:2; Isaiah 8:7-8; Isaiah 17:12; Isaiah 59:19; Daniel 11:40; Revelation 13:1. The classic reader will be reminded in the description here of the words of Virgil, AEn. I. 82, following:

"*Ac venti, velut agmine facto*
Qua data porta ruunt, et terras turbine perflant.
Incubuere mari, totumque a sedibus imis

Una Eurusque, Notusque ruunt, creberquc procellis.
Africus, et vastos volvunt ad littora fluctus."

Compare also Ovid, Trist. I. 2,25, following. It was from this agitated sea that the beasts that Daniel saw, representing successive kingdoms, seemed to rise; and the fair interpretation of this part of the symbol is, that

there was, or would be, as it appeared in vision to Daniel, commotions among the nations resembling the sea driven by storms, and that from these commotions there would arise successive kingdoms having the characteristics specified by the appearance of the four beasts. We naturally look, in the fulfillment of this, to some state of things in which the nations were agitated and convulsed; in which they struggled against each other, as the winds strove upon the sea; a state of things which preceded the rise of these four successive kingdoms. Without now pretending to determine whether that was the time denoted by this, it is certain that all that is here said would find a counterpart in the period which immediately preceded the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, or the kingdom which he founded and adorned. His rapid and extensive conquests; the agitation of the nations in self-defense, and their wars against one another, would be well denoted by the agitation of the ocean as seen in vision by Daniel. It is true that there have been many other periods of the world to which the image would be applicable, but no one can doubt that it was applicable to this period, and that would be all that would be necessary if the design was to represent a series of kingdoms commencing with that of Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 3

And four great beasts came up from the sea - Not at once, but in succession. See the following verses. Their particular form is described in the subsequent verses. The design of mentioning them here, as coming up from, the sea, seems to have been to show that this succession of kingdoms sprang from the agitations and commotions among the nations represented by the heaving ocean. It is not uncommon for the prophets to make use of animals to represent or symbolize kingdoms and nations - usually by some animal which was in a manner peculiar to the land that was symbolized, or which abounded there. Thus in Isaiah 27:1, leviathan, or the dragon, or crocodile, is used to represent Babylon. See the note at that passage. In Ezekiel 29:3-5, the dragon or the crocodile of the Nile is put for Pharaoh; in Ezekiel 32:2, Pharaoh is compared to a young lion, and to a whale in the seas. In Psalm 74:13-14, the kingdom of Egypt is compared to the dragon and the leviathan.

So on ancient coins, animals are often used as emblems of kingdoms, as it may be added, the lion and the unicorn represent Great Britain now, and the eagle the United States. It is well remarked by Lengerke (*in loc*.), that when the prophets design to represent kingdoms that are made up of other

kingdoms, or that are combined by being brought by conquest under the power of others, they do this, not by any single animal as actually found in nature, but by monsters - fabulous beings that are compounded of others, in which the peculiar qualities of different animals are brought together - as in the case of the lion with eagle‘s wings. Thus in Revelation 13:1, the Romish power is represented by a beast coming out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, Compare it. Ezra (Apocry.) 11:1, where an eagle is represented as coming from the sea with twelve feathered wings and three heads. As an illustration of the attempts made in the apocryphal writings to imitate the prophets, the whole of chapter 11 and chapter 12 of the second book of Ezra may be referred to.

Diverse one from another - Though they all came up from the same abyss, yet they differed from each other - denoting, doubtless, that though the successive kingdoms referred to would all rise out of the nations represented by the agitated sea, yet that in important respects they would differ from each other.

Verse 4

The first was like a lion - It is to be assumed, in explaining and applying these symbols, that they are significant - that is, that there was some adaptedness or propriety in using these symbols to denote the kingdoms referred to; or that in each case there was a reason why the particular animal was selected for a symbol rather than one of the others; that is, there was something in the lion that was better fitted to symbolize the kingdom referred to than there was in the bear or the leopard, and this was the reason why this particular symbol was chosen in the case. It is to be further assumed that all the characteristics in the symbol were significant, and we are to expect to find them all in the kingdom which they were designed to represent; nor can the symbol be fairly applied to any kingdom, unless something shall be found in its character or history that shall correspond alike to the particular circumstances referred to in the symbol, and to the grouping or succession. In regard to the first beast, there were five things that entered into the symbol, all of which it is to be presumed were significant: the lion, the eagle‘s wings - the fact that the wings were plucked - the fact that the beast was lifted up so as to stand up as a man - and the fact that the heart of a man was given to it. It is proper to consider these in their order, and then to inquire whether they found a fulfillment in any known state of things.

(a) The animal that was seen: “the lion.” The lion, “the king of beasts,” is the symbol of strength and courage, and becomes the proper emblem of a king - as when the Mussulmans call Ali, Mahomet‘s son-in-law, “The Lion of God, always victorious.” Thus it is often used in the Scriptures. Genesis 49:9, “Judah is a lion‘s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?” The warlike character, the conquest, the supremacy of that tribe are here undoubtedly denoted. So in Ezekiel 19:2-3. “What is thy mother? A lioness: she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions.” Here is an allusion, says Grotius, to Genesis 49:9. Judea was among the nations like a lioness among the beasts of the forest; she had strength and sovereignty. The lion is an emblem of a hero: 2 Samuel 23:20, “He slew two lion-like men of Moab.” Compare Gesenius zu Isa. i. 851. So Hercules and Achilles are called by Homer θυμολέοντα *thumoleonta* or λεοντόθυμον *leontothumon* - lion-hearted - Iliad e 639, ee 228, Odyssey l 766. See the character, the intrepidity, and the habits of the lion fully illustrated in Bochart, Hieroz. lib. iii. c. 2, pp. 723-745 - Credner, der prophet Joel, s. 100. f. Compare also the following places in Scripture: Psalm 7:2; Psalm 22:21; Psalm 57:4; Psalm 58:6; Psalm 74:4; 1 Samuel 17:37; Job 4:10; Jeremiah 4:7; Jeremiah 49:19; Joel 1:6; Isaiah 29:1-2. The proper notion here, so far as the emblem of a lion is concerned, is that of a king or kingdom that would be distinguished for power, conquest, dominion; that would be in relation to other kings and kingdoms as the lion is among the beasts of the forest - keeping them in awe, and maintaining dominion over them - marching where he pleases, with none to cope with him or to resist him.

(b) The eagle‘s wings: “and had eagle‘s wings.” Here appears one peculiarity of the emblem - the union of things which are not found joined together in nature - the representation of things or qualities which no one animal would represent. The lion would denote one thing, or one quality in the kingdom referred to - power, dominion, sovereignty - but there would be some characteristic in that king or kingdom which nothing in the lion would properly represent, and which could be symbolized only by attaching to him qualities to be found in some other animal. The lion, distinguished for his power, his dominion, his keeping other animals in awe - his spring, and the severity of his blow - is not remarkable for his speed, nor for going

forth to conquest. He does not range far to accomplish his purpose, nor are his movements eminent for fleetness. Hence, there were attached to the lion the wings of an eagle. The proper notion, therefore, of this symbol, would be that of a dominion or conquest rapidly secured, as if a lion, the king of beasts, should move, not as he commonly does, with a spring or bound, confining himself to a certain space or range, but should move as the eagle does, with rapid and prolonged flight, extending his conquests afar. The meaning of the symbol may be seen by comparing this passage with Isaiah 46:11, where Cyrus is compared to "a ravenous bird" - "calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsels from a far country." The eagle is an emblem of swiftness: Jeremiah 4:13, "His horses are swifter than eagles;" Jeremiah 48:40, "Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab." See also Jeremiah 49:22; Lamentations 4:19; Habakkuk 1:8.

(c) The clipping of the wings: "I beheld until the wings thereof were plucked" The word used (מרט *meraṭ*) means, to pluck or pull, as to pull out the beard (compare Nehemiah 13:25; Isaiah 50:6), and would here be properly applied to some process of pulling out the feathers or quills from the wings of the eagle. The obvious and proper meaning of this symbol is, that there was some check put to the progress of the conqueror - as there would be to an eagle by plucking off the feathers from his wings; that is, the rapidity of his conquests would cease. The prophet says, that he looked on until this was done, implying that it was not accomplished at once, but leaving the impression that these conquests were extended far. They were, however, checked, and we see the lion again without the wings; the sovereign who has ceased to spread his triumphs over the earth.

(d) The lifting up from the earth: "and it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand upon the feet as a man." That is, the lion, with the wings thus plucked off, was made to stand upright on his hind feet - an unusual position, but the meaning of the symbol is not difficult. It was still the lion - the monarch - but changed as if the lion was changed to a man; that is, as if the ferocity, and the power, and the energy of the lion had given place to the comparative weakness of a man. There would be as much difference in the case referred to as there would be if a lion so fierce and powerful should be made so far to change his nature as to stand upright, and to walk as a man.

This would evidently denote some remarkable change - something that would be unusual - something where there would be a diminution of ferocity, and yet perhaps a change to comparative weakness - as a man is feebler than a lion.

(e) The giving to it of a man‘s heart: “and a man heart was given to it.” The word heart in the Scriptures often has a closer relation to the intellect or the understanding than it new has commonly with us; and here perhaps it is a general term to denote something like human nature - that is, there would be as great a change in the case as if the nature of the lion should be transformed to that of a man; or, the meaning may be, that this mighty empire, carrying its arms with the rapidity of an eagle, and the fierceness of a lion, through the world, would be checked in its career; its ferocity would be tamed, and it would be characterized by comparative moderation and humanity. In Daniel 4:16, it is said of Nebuchadnezzar, “Let his heart be changed from man‘s, and let a beast‘s heart be given unto him;” here, if the symbol refers to him, it does not refer to that scene of humiliation when he was compelled to eat grass like a beast, but to the fact that he was brought to look at things as a man should do; he ceased to act like a ravenous beast, and was led to calm reflection, and to think and speak like a man - a rational being. Or, if it refers to the empire of Babylon, instead of the monarch, it would mean that a change had come over the nation under the succession of princes, so that the fierceness and ferocity of the first princes of the empire had ceased, and the nation had not only closed its conquests, but had actually become, to some extent, moderate and rational.

Now, in regard to the application of this symbol, there can be but little difficulty, and there is almost no difference of opinion among expositors. All, or nearly all, agree that it refers to the kingdom of Babylon, of which Nebuchadnezzar was the head, and to the gradual diminution of the ferocity of conquest under a succession of comparatively weak princes. Whatever view may be taken of the book of Daniel whether it be regarded as inspired prophecy composed by Daniel himself, and written at the time when it professes to have been, or whether it be supposed to have been written long after his time by some one who forged it in his name, there can be no doubt that it relates to the head of the Babylonian empire, or to that which the “head of gold,” in the image referred to in Daniel 7:16-27 this part of it is

not explained - for the perplexity of Daniel related particularly to the fourth beast Daniel 7:19, yet there can be no reasonable doubt as to what was intended. For

(a) the lion - the king of beasts - would accurately symbolize that kingdom in the days of Nebuchadnezzar - a kingdom occupying the same position among other kingdoms which the lion does among other beasts, and well represented in its power and ferocity by the lion. See the character and position of this kingdom fully illustrated in the notes at Daniel 2:37-38.

(b) The eagle‘s wings would accurately denote the rapid conquests of that kingdom - its leaving, as it were, its own native domain, and flying abroad. The lion alone would have represented the character of the kingdom considered as already having spread itself, or as being at the head of other kingdoms; the wings of the eagle, the rapidity with which the arms of the Babylonians were carried into Palestine, Egypt, Assyria, etc. It is true that this symbol alone would not designate Babylon anymore than it would the conquests of Cyrus, or Alexander, or Caesar, but it is to be taken in the connection in which it is here found, and no one can doubt that it has a striking applicability to Babylon.

(c) The clipping or plucking of these wings would denote the cessation of conquest - as if it would extend no farther; that is, we see a nation once distinguished for the invasion of other nations now ceasing its conquests; and remarkable, not for its victories, but as standing at the head of all other nations, as the lion stands among the beasts of the forest. All who are acquainted with history know that, after the conquests of that kingdom under Nebuchadnezzar, it ceased characteristically to be a kingdom distinguished for conquest, but that, though under his successors, it held a pre-eminence or headship among the nations, yet its victories were extended no further. The successors of Nebuchadnezzar were comparatively weak and indolent princes - as if the wings of the monster had been plucked.

(d) The rising up of the lion on the feet, and standing on the feet as a man, would denote, not inappropriately, the change of the kingdom under

the successors of Nebuchadnezzar. See above in the explanation of the symbol.

(e) The giving of a man‘s heart to it would not be inapplicable to the change produced in the empire after the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and under a succession of comparatively weak and inefficient princes. Instead of the heart of the lion - of being “lion-hearted” - it had the heart of a man; that is, the character of wildness and fierceness denoted by an untamed beast was succeeded by what would be better represented by a human being. It is not the character of the lion changed to that of the bear, or the panther, or the leopard; nor is it man considered as a warrior or conqueror, but man as he is distinguished from the wild and ferocious beast of the desert. The change in the character of the empire, until it ceased under the feeble reign of Belshazzar; would be well denoted by this symbol.

Verse 5

And, behold, another beast, a second, like to a bear - That is, after the lion had appeared, and he had watched it until it had undergone these surprising transformations. There are several circumstances, also, in regard to this symbol, all of which, it is to be supposed, were significant, and all of which demand explication before it is attempted to apply them.

(a) The animal seen: the bear. For a full description of the bear, see Bochart, Hieroz. lib. iii. c. 9: The animal is well known, and has properties quite distinct from the lion and other animals. There was doubtless some reason why this symbol was employed to denote a particular kingdom, and there was something in the kingdom that corresponded with these peculiar properties, as there was in the case of the lion. The bear might, in some respects, have been a proper representative of Babylon, but it would not in all nor in the main respects. According to Bochart (Hiefoz, vol. i. p. 812), the bear is distinguished mainly for two things, cunning and ferocity. Aristotle says that the bear is greedy as well as silly and foolhardy. (Wemyss, Key to the Symbolic Language of Scripture.) The name in Hebrew is taken from his grumbling or growling. Compare Isaiah 19:11:

“We roar all like bears.”

Compare Horace, Epod. 16,51:

“*Nec vespertinus circumgemit ursus ovile*.”

Virgil mentions their ferocity:

"*Atque in praesepibus ursi Saevire*."
- *AEn. vii. 17.*

The bear is noted as especially fierce when hungry, or when robbed of its whelps. Jerome (on Hosea 13:8) remarks, "It is said by those who have studied the nature of wild beasts, that none among them is more ferocious than the bear when deprived of its young, or when hungry." Compare 2 Samuel 17:8; Proverbs 17:12; Hosea 13:8. The characteristics of the kingdom, therefore, that would be denoted by the bear would be ferocity, roughness, fierceness in war, especially when provoked; a spirit less manly and noble than that denoted by the lion; severe in its treatment of enemies, with a mixture of fierce and savage cunning.

(b) Its rising up on one of its sides: "and it raised up itself on one side." The Chaldee word used here (שׁטר *sheṭar*) occurs nowhere else. It means side (Gesenius), and would be applied here to the side of an animal, as if he lifted up one side before the other when he rose. The Latin Vulgate renders it, *in parte stetit*. The Greek (Walton), έις μέρος ἕν ἐστάθη *eis meros hen estathē* - "it stood on one part;" or, as Thompson renders it, "he stood half erect." The Codex Chisianus, ἐπὶ τοῦ ἑνὸς πλευροῦ ἐστάθη *epi tou henos pleurou estathē* - "it stood upon one side." Maurer renders this, "on one of its forefeet it was recumbent, and stood on the other," and says that this is the figure exhibited on one of the stones found in Babylon, an engraving of which may be seen in Munter, Religion d. Babyl. p. 112. The animal referred to here, as found in Babylon, says Lengerke, "lies kneeling on the right forefoot, and is in the act of rising on the left foot." Bertholdt and Havernick understand this as meaning that the animal stood on the hindfeet, with the forepart raised, as the bear is said to do; but probably the true position is that referred to by Maurer and Lengerke, that the animal was in the act of raising itself up from a recumbent posture, and rested on one of its forefeet while the other was reached out, and the body on that side was partially raised. This position would naturally denote a kingdom that had been quiet and at rest, but that was now rousing itself deliberately for some purpose, as of conquest or war - as the bear that had been couching down would rise when hungry, or when going forth for prey.

(c) The ribs in its mouth: "and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it." Bertholdt understands this of fangs or tusks - or fangs crooked or bent like ribs, p. 451, But the proper meaning of the

Chaldee עלע ʿ*ala*ʿ is the same as the Hebrew צלע *tsēlâ*ʿ - "a rib." - Gesenius. The Latin Vulgate is, *tres ordines* - three rows; the Syriac and the Greek, three ribs. This would be sufficiently characteristic of a bear, and the attitude of the animal here seems to be that it had killed some other animal, and had, in devouring it, torn out three ribs from its side, and now held them in its mouth. It was slowly rising from a recumbent posture, with these ribs in its mouth, and about to receive a command to go forth and devour much flesh. The number three, in this place, Lengerke supposes to be a round number, without any special significancy; others suppose that it denotes the number of nations or kingdoms which the people here represented by the bear had overcome. Perhaps this latter would be the more obvious idea as suggested by the symbol, but it is not necessary, in order to a proper understanding of a symbol, to press such a point too closely. The natural idea which would be suggested by this part of the symbol would be that of a kingdom or people of a fierce and rough character having already subdued some, and then, after reposing, rising up with the trophies of its former conquests to go forth to new victories, or to overcome others. The symbol would be a very striking one to represent a conquering nation in such a posture.

(d) The command given to this beast: "and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh." That is, it was said to it; or some one having authority said it. A voice was heard commanding it to go forth and devour. This command is wholly in accordance with the nature of the bear. The bear is called by Aristotle σαρκοφαγῶν *sarkofagōn* flesh-eater, and ξῶον πάμφαγον *xōon pamphagon* a beast devouring everything (Hist. Nat. viii. 5), and no better description could be given of it. As a symbol, this would properly be applicable to a nation about receiving, as it were, a command from God to go forth to wider conquests than it had already made; to arouse itself from its repose and to achieve new triumphs.

The application of this symbol was not explained by the angel to Daniel; but if the former pertained to Babylon, there can be little difficulty in understanding to what this is to be applied. It is evidently to what succeeded the Babylonian - the Medo-Persian, the kingdom ruled successively by Cyrus, Cambyses, Smerdis, Darius, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, and Darius Nothus,

until it was overthrown by Alexander the Great. The only inquiry now is as to the pertinency of the symbol here employed to represent this kingdom.

(a) The symbol of the bear. As already seen, the bear would denote any fierce, rough, overbearing, and arbitrary kingdom, and it is clear that while it might have applicability to any such kingdom, it would better represent that of Medo-Persia than the lion would, for while, in some respects, either symbol would be applicable to either nation, the Medo-Persian did not stand so decidedly at the head of nations as the Babylonian. As to its character, however, the bear was not an inappropriate symbol. Taking the whole nation together, it was fierce and rough, and unpolished, little disposed to friendliness with the nations, and dissatisfied while any around it had peace or prosperity. In the image seen in Dan. ii., this kingdom, denoted by the breast and arms of silver Daniel 2:39. No one acquainted with the history of that nation can doubt the propriety and applicability of the emblem.

(b) The rising up on its side, or from a recumbent posture, as if it had been in a state of repose, and was now arousing itself for action. Different interpretations have been adopted of this emblem as applicable to the Medo-Persians. The ancient Hebrew interpreters, as Jerome remarks, explain it as meaning that that kingdom was "on one side" in the sense of separate; that is, that this kingdom kept itself aloof from Judea, or did not inflict injury on it. Thus also Grotius explains it as meaning that it did not injure Judea - Judea nihil nocuit." Ephraern the Syrian, and Theodoret, explain it as meaning that the empire of the Medo-Persians was situated on the side of Judea, or held itself within its proper bounds, in the sense that it never extended its dominion, like Babylon, over the whole earth. Rosenmuller explains it as meaning that in relation to the kingdom represented by the lion, it was at its side, both occupying the regions of the East. John D. Michaelis understands it as denoting that, as the bear was raising itself up, one part being more raised than the other, the Medo-Persian empire was composed of two kingdoms, one of which was more exalted or advanced than the other.

Compare Lengerke. The true meaning however, is that, as seen by Daniel, the nation that had been in a state of repose was now preparing

itself for new conquests - a state descriptive of, and in every way quite applicable to the condition of the Medo-Persian empire, after the conquests by Cyrus, as he overran the kingdom of Lydia, etc., then reposing, and now about arousing to the conquest and subjugation of Babylon. The precise time, therefore, indicated would be about 544 b.c. (Calmer), when, having overcome the Medes, and having secured the conquest of Lydia, and the dethronement of Croesus, he is meditating the destruction of Babylon. This interval of repose lasted about a year, and it is at this time that the united empire is seen, under the image of the bear rising on its side, arousing itself to go forth to new conquests.

(c) The ribs in the mouth of the beast. This, as above remarked, would properly refer to some previous conquest - as a bear appearing in that manner would indicate that some other animal had been overcome and slain by him, and torn in pieces. The emblem would be fulfilled if the power here symbolized had been successful in former wars, and had rent kingdoms or people asunder. That this description would apply to the Medo-Persian power before its attack on Babylon, or before extending its dominion over Babylon, and its establishment as the Medo-Persian kingdoms, no one can doubt. Compare the notes at Daniel 2:39. It has been commonly supposed that Cyrus succeeded to the throne of Media without war. But this is far from being the case - though so represented in what may be regarded as the romance of the Cyropaedia In the Anabasis of Xenophon, however, the fact of his having subdued Media by arms is distinctly admitted, Daniel 3:4, Daniel 3:7, Daniel 3:12. Herodotus, Ctesias, Isocrates, and Strabo, all agree also in the fact that it was so. The Upper Tigris was the seat of one campaign, where the cities of Larissa and Mespila were taken by Cyrus. From Strabo we learn that the decisive battle was fought on the spot where Cyrus afterward built Pasargardae, in Persia, for his capital. See Kitto, Cyclo., art. “Cyrus.” In addition to this, we are to remember the well-known conquests of Cyrus in Lydia and elsewhere, and the propriety of the emblem will be apparent. It may not be certain that the number three is significant in the emblem, but it is possible that there may have been reference to the three kingdoms of Persia, Media, and Lydia, that were actually under the dominion of Cyrus when the aggressive movement was made on Babylon.

(d) The command to "arise and devour much flesh." No one can fail to see the appropriateness of this, considered as addressed to the Medo-Persian power - that power which subdued Babylon; which brought under its dominion a considerable part of the world, and which, under Darius and Xerxes, poured its million on Greece. The emblem used here is, therefore, one of the most striking and appropriate that could be employed, and it cannot be doubted that it had reference to this kingdom, and that, in all the particulars, there was a clear fulfillment.

Verse 6

After this I beheld, and, lo, another, like a leopard - That is, as before, after the bear had appeared - indicating that this was to be a succeeding kingdom or power. The beast which now appeared was a monster, and, as in the former cases, so in regard to this, there are several circumstances which demand explanation in order to understand the symbol. It may assist us, perhaps, in forming a correct idea of the symbol here introduced to have before us a representation of the animal as it appeared to Daniel.

(a) The animal itself: "a leopard." The word used here - נמר *nemar* - or in Hebrew נמר *nâmêr* - denotes a panther or leopard, so called from his spots. This is a well-known beast of prey, distinguished for blood-thirstiness and cruelty, and these characteristics are especially applicable to the female panther. The animal is referred to in the Scriptures as emblematic of the following things, or as having the following characteristics:

(1) As next in dignity to the lion - of the same general nature. Compare Bochart, Hieroz. P. I. lib. iii. c. vii. Thus the lion and the panther, or leopard, are often united in the Scriptures. Compare Jeremiah 5:6; Hosea 13:7. See also in the Apocrypha, Isaiah 11:6, "and the leopard shall lie down with the kid." In Jeremiah 5:6, it is compared with the lion and the wolf: "A lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities." Compare Hosea 13:7.

(3) As distinguished for swiftness or fleetness. Habakkuk 1:8: "their horses are swifter than the leopards." Compare also the quotations from the classics in Bochart as above, p. 788. His fleetness is often referred to - the celerity of his spring or bound especially - by the Greek and Roman writers.

(4) As insidious, or as lying in wait, and springing unexpectedly upon the unwary traveler. Compare Hosea 13:7: "As a leopard by the way will I observe them;" that is, I will "watch" (אשור *'âshûr*) them. So Pliny says of leopards: *Insidunt pardi condensa arborurn, occultatique earurn ramis in prcetereuntia desiliunt.*

(5) They are characterized by their spots. In the general nature of the animal there is a strong resemblance to the lion. Thus, an Arabic writer quoted by Bochart, deflates the leopard to be "an animal resembling the lion, except that it is smaller, and has a skin marked by black spots." The proper idea in this representation, when used as a symbol, would be of a nation or kingdom that would have more nobleness than the one represented by the bear, but a less decisive headship over others than that represented by the lion; a nation that, was addicted to conquest, or that preyed upon others; a nation rapid in its movements, and springing upon others unawares, and perhaps in its spots denoting a nation or people made up, not of homogeneous elements, but of various different people. See below in the application of this.

(b) The four wings: which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl. The first beast was seen with the wings of an eagle, but without any specified number; this appears with wings, but without specifying any particular kind of wings, though the number is mentioned. In both of them celerity of movement is undoubtedly intended - celerity beyond what would be properly denoted by the animal itself the lion or the leopard. If there is a difference in the design of the representation, as there would seem to be by mentioning the kind of wings in the one case, and the number in the other, it is probable that the former would denote a more bold and extended flight; the latter a flight more rapid, denoted by the four wings. We should look for the fulfillment of the former in a nation that extended its conquests over a broader space; in the latter, to a nation that moved with more celerity. But there is some danger of pressing these similitudes too far. Nothing is said in the passage about the arrangement of the wings, except that they were on the back of the animal. It is to be supposed that there were two on each side.

(c) The four heads: “the beast had also four heads.” This representation must have been designed to signify either that the one power or kingdom denoted by the leopard was composed of four separate powers or nations now united in one; or that there were four successive kings or dynasties that made up its history; or that the power or kingdom actually appeared, as seen in its prevailing characteristic, as a distinct dominion, as having four heads, or as being divided into so many separate sovereignties. It seems to me that either one of these would be a proper and natural fulfillment of the design of the image, though the second suggested would be less proper than either of the others, as the heads appeared on the animal not in succession - as the little horn sprung up in the midst of the other ten, as represented in the fourth beast - but existed simultaneously. The general idea would be, that in some way the one particular sovereignty had four sources of power blended into one, or actually exerted the same kind of dominion, and constituted, in fact, the one kingdom as distinguished from the others.

(d) The dominion given to it: “and dominion was given to it.” That is, it was appointed to rule where the former had ruled, and until it should be succeeded by another - the beast with the ten horns.

In regard to the application of this, though the angel did not explain it to Daniel, except in general that a kingdom was represented by it. Daniel 7:17, it would seem that there could be little difficulty, though there has been some variety in the views entertained. Maurer, Lengerke, and some others, refer it to the Medo-Persian empire - supposing that the second symbol referred to the kingdom of Media. But the objections to this are so obvious, and so numerous, that it seems to me the opinion cannot be entertained, for

(1) the kingdom of Media did not, in any proper sense, succeed that of Babylon;

(2) the representation of the bear with three ribs has no proper application to Media;

(3) the whole description, as we have seen above, of the second beast, accords entirely with the history of the Medo-Persian empire.

If this be so, then we naturally look for the fulfillment of this symbol - the third head - in the kingdom or dynasty that followed directly that of Medo-Persia - the Macedonian dynasty or kingdom founded by Alexander the Great, extending over the same countries before occupied by Babylon and the Medo-Persian empire, and continuing until it was swallowed up in the conquests of Rome. We shall find that all the circumstances agree with this supposition:

(a) The animal - the leopard. The comparative nobleness of the animal; a beast of prey; the celerity of its movements; the spring or bound with which it leaps upon its prey - all agree well with the kingdom of which Alexander was the founder. Indeed there was no other kingdom among the ancients to which it could be better applied; and it will be admitted that, on the supposition that it was the design of Daniel to choose a symbol that would represent the Macedonian empire, he could not have selected one that was better adapted to it than the leopard. All the characteristics of the animal that have been noticed -

(1) as next in dignity to the lion:

(2) as distinguished for a fierce nature;

(3) as characterized by fleetness;

(4) as known for lying in wait, and springing suddenly upon its prey; and

(5) in the point to be noticed soon - their spots - all agree with the characteristics of Alexander, and his movements among the nations, and with the kingdom that was founded by him in the East.

(b) The four wings. These represent well the rapidity of the conquests of Alexander, for no more rapid conquests were ever made than were his in the East. It was noticed that the leopard had four wings, as contrasted with the first beast, in reference to which the number is not mentioned: the one denoting a broader flight, and the other a more rapid one; and the one

agrees well with the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar, and the other with those of Alexander.

(c) The four heads united to one body. It is well known that when Alexander died, his empire was left to four of his generals, and that they came to be at the head of as many distinct dominions, yet all springing from the same source, and all, in fact, out of the Macedonian empire. This fact would not be so well represented by four distinct and separate animals, as by one animal with four heads; that is, as the head represents authority or dominion, one empire, in fact, now ruling by four distinct authorities. The one empire, considered as Macedonian, continued its sway until it was swallowed up by the Romans; that is, the Macedonian power or dominion as distinct from that of Babylon or Medo-Persia; as having characteristics unlike these; as introducing a new order of things, continued, though that power was broken up and exercised under distinct manifestations of sovereignty. The fact was, that, at the death of Alexander, to whom the founding of this empire was owing, "Philip Aridaeus, brother of Alexander, and his infant son by Roxana, were appointed by the generals of the army to succeed, and Perdiccas was made regent. The empire was divided into thirty-three governments, distributed among as many general officers. Hence arose a series of bloody, desolating wars, and a period of confusion, anarchy, and crime ensued, that is almost without a parallel in the history of the world. After the battle of Ipsus, 301 b.c., in which Antigonus was defeated, the empire was divided into four kingdoms - Thrace and Bithynia under Lysimachus; Syria and the East under Seleucus; Egypt, under Ptolemy Soter; and Macedonia under Cassander." - Lyman Hist. Chart. It was these four powers, thus springing out of the one empire founded by Alexander, that was clearly represented by. the four heads.

(d) The dominion given to it. No one can doubt that a dominion was given to Alexander and the Macedonian dynasty, which would fully correspond with this. In fact the dominion of the world was practically conceded to that kingdom.

(e) There is only one other circumstance to be noticed, though perhaps we are not to seek an exact accomphshment for that in any specific events. It is the fact tbat the leopard is marked by spots - a circumstance which

many have supposed had a fulfillment in the fact that numerous nations, not homogeneous, were found in the empire of Alexander. So Bochart, Hieroz. P. I. lib. iii. c. vii. p. 789, says: "The spots of the leopard refer to the different customs of the nations over which he ruled. Among these, besides the Macedonians, Greeks, Thracians, and Illyrians, in Europe, there were in Africa the Libyans, Egyptians, and Troglodites; in Asia, almost all the nations to the Ganges." But, without insisting on this, no one can compare the other particulars which were clearly designed to be symbolic, without perceiving that they had a full accomplishment in the Macedonian empire.

Verse 7-8

After this I saw in the night visions - The other beasts were seen also in a dream Daniel 7:1, and this probably in the same night, though as a subsequent part of the dream, for the whole vision evidently passed before the prophet in a single dream. The succession, or the fact that he saw one after the other, indicates a sucession in the kingdoms. They were not to be at the same time upon the earth, but one was to arise after another in the order here indicated, though they were in some respects to occupy the same territory. The singular character of the beast that now appears; the number of the horns; the springing up of a new horn; the might and terror of the beast, and the long duration of its dominion upon the earth, attracted and fixed the attention of Daniel, led him into a more minute description of the appearance of the animal, and induced him particularly to ask an explanation of the angel of the meaning of this part of the vision, Daniel 7:19.

And, behold, a fourth beast - This beast had peculiar characteristics, all of which were regarded as symbolic, and all of which demand explanation in order that we may have a just view of the nature and design of the symbol.

As in reference to the three former beasts, so also in regard to this, it will be proper to explain first the significance of the different parts of the symbol, and then in the exposition (Daniel 7:19, following) to inquire into the application. The particulars of this symbol are more numerous, more striking, and more important than in either of the previous ones. These particulars are the following Daniel 7:7-11:

(a) The animal itself Daniel 5:7: “a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly.” The form or nature of the beast is not given as in the preceding cases - the lion, the bear, and the leopard - but it is left for the imagination to fill up. It was a beast more terrific in its appearance than either of the others, and was evidently a monster such as could not be designated by a single name. The terms which are used here in describing the beast - “dreadful, terrible, exceedingly strong,” are nearly synonymous, and are heaped together in order to give an impressive view of the terror inspired by the beast. There can be no doubt as to the general meaning of this, for it is explained Daniel 7:23 as denoting a kingdom that “should devour the whole earth, and tread it down, and break it in pieces.” As a symbol, it would denote some power much more fearful and much more to be dreaded; having a wider dominion; and more stern, more oppressive in its character, more severe in its exactions, and more entirely destroying the liberty of others; advancing more by power and terror, and less by art and cunning, than either. This characteristic is manifest throughout the symbol.

(b) The teeth Daniel 7:7: “and it had great iron teeth.” Not only teeth or tusks, such as other animals may have, but teeth made of iron. This is characteristic of a monster, and shows that there was to be something very peculiar in the dominion that was here symbolized. The teeth are of use to eat or devour; and the symbol here is that of devouring or rending - as a fierce monster with such teeth might be supposed to rend or devour all that was before it. This, too, would denote a nation exceedingly fierce; a nation of savage ferocity; a nation that would be signally formidable to all others. For illustration, compare Jeremiah 15:12; Micah 4:13. As explained in Daniel 7:23, it is said that the kingdom denoted by this would “devour the whole earth.” Teeth - great teeth, are often used as the symbols of cruelty, or of a devouring enemy. Thus in Proverbs 30:14: “There is a generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth are as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.” So David uses the word to denote the cruelty of tyrants: Psalm 3:7, “Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly;” Psalm 57:4, “whose teeth are spears and arrows;” Psalm 58:6, “break their teeth in their mouth; break out the great teeth of the young lions.”

(c) The stamping with the feet Daniel 7:7: “it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it.” That is, like a fierce monster, whatever it could not devour it stamped down and crushed in the earth. This indicates a disposition or purpose to destroy, for the sake of destroying, or where no other purpose could be gained. It denotes rage, wrath, a determination to crush all in its way, to have universal dominion; and would be applicable to a nation that subdued and crushed others for the mere sake of doing it, or because it was unwilling that any other should exist and enjoy liberty - even where itself could not hope for any advantage.

(d) The fact that it was different from all that went before it Daniel 7:7: “and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it.” The prophet does not specify particularly in what respects it was different, for he does not attempt to give its appearance. It was not a lion, a bear, or a leopard, but he does not say precisely what it was. Probably it was such a monster that there were no animals with which it could be compared. He states some circumstances, however, in which it was different - as in regard to the ten horns, the little horn, the iron teeth, etc., but still the imagination is left to fill up the picture in general. The meaning of this must be, that the fourth kingdom, represented by this beast, would be materially different from those which preceded it, and we must look for the fulfillment in some features that would characterize it by which it would be unlike the others. There must be something marked in the difference - something that would be more than the common difference between nations.

(e) The ten horns Daniel 7:7: “and it had ten horns.” That is, the prophet saw on it ten horns as characterizing the beast. The horn is a symbol of power, and is frequently so used as an emblem or symbol in Daniel Daniel 7:7-8, Daniel 7:20, Daniel 7:24; Daniel 8:3-9, Daniel 8:20-22 and Revelation Revelation 5:6; Revelation 13:1, Revelation 13:11; Revelation 17:3, Revelation 17:12, Revelation 17:16. It is used as a symbol because the great strength of horned animals is found there. Thus in Amos 6:13, it is said:

“Ye that rejoice in a thing of nought,

That say, Have we not taken dominion to ourselves By our own strength?”

(Heb. horns.)

So in Deuteronomy 33:17:
"His beauty shall be that of a young bull,
And his horns shall be the horns of a rhinoceros:
With these he shall push the people to the extremities of the land:

Such are the ten thousands of Ephraim,

Such the thousands of Manasseh."
- *Wemyss.*

So in 1 Kings 22:11, we find horns used in a symbolic action on the part of the false prophet Zedekiah. "He made him horns of iron, and said, Thus saith Jehovah, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them." In Zechariah 1:18, the four horns that are seen by the prophet are said to be the four great powers which had scattered and wasted the Jews. Compare Wemyss on the Symbolic Language of Scripture, art. "Horns." There can be no doubt as to the meaning of the symbol here, for it is explained in a subsequent part of the chapter Daniel 7:24, "the ten horns are the ten kings that shall arise." It would seem also, from that explanation, that they were to be ten kings that would "arise" or spring out of that kingdom at some period of its history. "And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise;" that is, not that the kingdom itself would spring out of ten others that would be amalgamated or consolidated into one, but that out of that one kingdom there would spring up ten that would exercise dominion, or in which the power of the one kingdom would be ultimately lodged. Though Daniel appears to have seen these horns as pertaining to the beast when he first saw him, yet the subsequent explanation is, that these horns were emblems of the manner in which the power of that one kingdom would be finally exerted; or that ten kings or dynasties would spring out of it. We are, then, naturally to look for the fulfillment of this in some one great kingdom of huge power that would crush the nations, and from which, while the same general characteristic would remain, there would spring up ten kings, or dynasties, or kingdoms, in which the power would be concentrated.

(f) The springing up of the little horn Daniel 7:8: "I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn." There are several points to be noticed in regard to this:

(1) The fact that he “considered the horns;” that is, he looked on them until another sprang up among them. This implies that when he first saw the monster, it had no such horn, and that the horn sprang up a considerable time after he first saw it - intimating that it would occur, perhaps, far on in the history of the kingdom that was symbolized. It is implied that it was not an event which would soon occur.

(2) It sprang up “among” the others (ביניהן *bēynēyhēn*) - starting from the same source, and pertaining to the same animal, and therefore a development or putting forth of the same power. The language used here does not designate, with any degree of certainty, the precise place which it occupied, but it would seem that the others stood close together, and that this sprang out of the center, or from the very midst of them - implying that the new dominion symbolized would not be a foreign dominion, but one that would spring out of the kingdom itself, or that would seem to grow up in the kingdom.

(3) It was a little horn; that is, it was small at first, though subsequently it grew so as to be emblematic of great power. This would denote that the power symbolized would be small at first - springing up gradually. The fulfillment of this would be found, neither in conquest nor in revolution, nor in a change of dynasty, nor in a sudden change of a constitution, but in some power that had an obscure origin, and that was feeble and small at the beginning, yet gradually increasing, until, by its own growth, it put aside a portion of the power before exercised and occupied its place. We should naturally look for the fulfillment of this in the increase of some power within the state that had a humble origin, and that slowly developed itself until it absorbed a considerable portion of the authority that essentially resided in the kingdom represented by the monster.

(4) In the growth of that “horn,” three of the others were plucked up by the roots. The proper meaning of the word used to express this (אתעקרו *'ethe'ăqârâv*) is, that they were rooted out - as a tree is overturned by the roots, or the roots are turned out from the earth. The process by which this was done seems to have been by growth. The gradual increase of the horn so crowded on the others that a portion of them was forced out, and fell. What is fairly indicated by this was not any act of violence, or any sudden

convulsion or revolution, but such a gradual growth of power that a portion of the original power was removed, and this new power occupied its place. There was no revolution, properly so-called; no change of the whole dynasty, for a large portion of the horns remained, but the gradual rise of a new power that would wield a portion of that formerly wielded by others, and that would now wield the power in its place. The number three would either indicate that three parts out of the ten were absorbed in this way, or that a considerable, though an indefinite portion, was thus absorbed.

(5) The eyes: "and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man." Eyes denote intelligence, as we see objects by their aid. The rims of the wheels in Ezekiel's vision were full of eyes Ezekiel 1:18, as symbolic of intelligence. This would denote that the power here referred to would be remarkably sagacious. We should naturally look for the fulfillment of this in a power that laid its plans wisely and intelligently; that had large and clear views of policy; that was shrewd and far-seeing in its counsels and purposes; that was skilled in diplomacy; or, that was eminent for statesman-like plans. This part of the symbol, if it stood alone, would find its fulfillment in any wise and shrewd administration; as it stands here, surrounded by others, it would seem that this, as contrasted with them, was characteristically shrewd and far-seeing in its policy. Lengerke, following Jerome, supposes that this means that the object referred to would be a man, "as the eyes of men are keener and sharper than those of other animals." But the more correct interpretation is that above referred to - that it denotes intelligence, shrewdness, sagacity.

(6) The mouth: "and a mouth speaking great things." A mouth indicating pride and arrogance. This is explained in Daniel 7:25, as meaning that he to whom it refers would "speak great words against the Most High;" that is, would be guilty of blasphemy. There would be such arrogance, and such claims set up, and such a spirit evinced, that it would be in fact a speaking against God. We naturally look for the fulfillment of this to some haughty and blaspheming power; some power that would really blaspheme religion, and that would be opposed to its progress and prosperity in the world. The Septuagint, in the Codex Chisianus, adds here, "and shall make war against the saints;" but these words are not found in the original Chaldee. They accord, however, well with the explanation in Daniel 7:25. What has been

here considered embraces all that pertains properly to this symbol - the symbol of the fourth beast - except the fact stated in Daniel 7:11, that the beast was slain, and that his body was given to the burning flame. The inquiry as to the fulfillment will be appropriate when we come to consider the explanation given at the request of Daniel, by the angel, in Daniel 7:19-25.

Verse 9

I beheld - "I continued looking on these strange sights, and contemplating these transformations." This implies that some time elapsed before all these things had occurred. He looked on until he saw a solemn judgment passed on this fourth beast particularly, as if God had come forth in his majesty and glory to pronounce that judgment, and to bring the power and arrogance of the beast to an end.

Till the thrones were cast down - The Chaldee word (כרסון *kâresâvân*) means, properly, thrones - seats on which monarchs sit. So far as the word is concerned, it would apply either to a throne occupied by an earthly monarch, or to the throne of God. The use of the plural here would seem to imply, at least, that the reference is not to the throne of God, but to some other throne. Maurer and Lengerke suppose that the allusion is to the thrones on which the celestial beings sat in the solemn judgment that was to be pronounced - the throne of God, and the thrones or seats of the attending inhabitants of heaven, coming with him to the solemn judgment. Lengerke refers for illustration to 1 Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6:1; Job 1:6, and Revelation 5:11-12. But the word itself might be properly applied to the thrones of earthly monarchs as well as to the throne of God. The phrase "were cast down" (רמיו *remîyv*), in our translation, would seem to suppose that there was some throwing down, or overturning of thrones, at this period, and that the solemn judgment would follow this, or be consequent on this.

The Chaldee word (רמא *remâh*) means, as explained by Gesenius, to cast, to throw Daniel 3:21, Daniel 3:24; Daniel 6:16-17; to set, to place, e. g., thrones; to impose tribute Ezra 7:24. The passage is rendered by the Latin Vulgate, *throni positi sunt* - "thrones were placed;" by the Greek, ἐτέθησαν *etethēsan* - "were placed." So Luther, stuhle gesetzt; and so Lengerke, stuhle aufgestellt- the thrones were placed, or set up. The proper meaning, therefore, of the phrase would seem to be - not, as in our translation, that the "thrones would be cast down" - as if there was to be an

overturning of thrones on the earth to mark this particular period of history - but that there was, in the vision, a setting up, or a placing of thrones for the purpose of administering judgment, etc., on the beast. The use of the plural is, doubtless, in accordance with the language elsewhere employed, to denote the fact that the great Judge would be surrounded with others who would be, as it were, associated in administering justice - either angels or redeemed spirits.

Nothing is more common in the Scripture than to represent others as thus associated with God in pronouncing judgment on men. Compare Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30; 1 Corinthians 6:2-3; 1 Timothy 5:21; Revelation 2:26; Revelation 4:4. The era, or period, therefore, marked here, would be when a solemn Divine judgment was to be passed on the "beast," or when some events were to take place, as if such a judgment were pronounced. The events pertaining to the fourth beast were to be the last in the series preparatory to the reign of the saints, or the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, and therefore it is introduced in this manner, as if a solemn judgment scene were to occur.

And the Ancient of days did sit - Was seated for the purposes of judgment. The phrase "Ancient of days" - יומין עתיק *ʿattîyq yômîyn* - is one that denotes an elderly or old person; meaning, he who is most ancient as to days, and is equivalent to the French L'Eternel, or English, The Eternal. It occurs only in Daniel 7:9, Daniel 7:13, Daniel 7:22, and is a representation of one venerable in years, sitting down for the purposes of judgment. The appellation does not of itself denote eternity, but it is employed, probably, with reference to the fact that God is eternal. God is often represented under some such appellation, as he that is "from everlasting to everlasting" Psalm 90:2, "the first and the last" Isaiah 44:6, etc. There can be no doubt that the reference here is to God as a Judge, or as about to pronounce judgment, though there is no necessity for supposing that it will be in a visible and literal form, anymore than there is for supposing that all that is here represented by symbols will literally take place.

If it should be insisted on that the proper interpretation demands that there will be a literal and visible judgment, such as is here described, it may be replied that the same rigid interpretation would demand that there will be a literal "slaying of the beast, and a giving of his body to the flame" Daniel 7:11, and more generally still, that all that is here referred to by symbols

will literally occur. The fact, however, is, that all these events are referred to by symbols - symbols which have an expressive meaning, but which, by their very nature and design, are not to be literally understood. All that is fairly implied here is, that events would occur in regard to this fourth beast as if God should sit in solemn judgment on it, and should condemn it in the manner here referred to. We are, doubtless, in the fulfillment of this - to look for some event that will be of so decisive and marked a character, that it may be regarded as a Divine judgment in the case, or that will show the strongly marked Divine disapprobation - as really as if the judgment-seat were formally set, and God should appear in majesty to give sentence. Sitting was the usual posture among the ancients, as it is among the moderns, in pronouncing judgment. Among the ancients the judge sat on a throne or bench while the parties stood before him (compare Zechariah 4:13), and with the Greeks and Romans so essential was the sitting posture for a judge, that a sentence pronounced in any other posture was not valid. - Lengerke. It was a maxim, *Animus sedendo magis sapit*; or, as Servius on the AEn. i. 56, remarks, *Est enim curantis et solliciti sedere*.

Whose garment was white as snow - Whose robe. The reference here is to the long flowing robe that was worn by ancient princes, noblemen, or priests. See the notes at Isaiah 6:1. Compare the notes at Revelation 1:13. White was an emblem of purity and honor, and was not an improper symbol of the purity of the judge, and of the justness of the sentence which he would pronounce. So the elder Pitt, in his celebrated speech against employing Indians in the war with the American people, besought the bishops to "interpose the unsullied purity of their lawn." Lengerke supposes, as Prof. Stuart does on Revelation 1:13, that the whiteness here referred to was not the mere color of the material of which the robe was made, but, was a celestial splendor or brightness, as if it were lightning or fire - such as is appropriate to the Divine Majesty. Lengerke refers here to Exodus 19:18-24; Daniel 2:22; Matthew 17:2; 1 Timothy 6:16; Isaiah 8:21-25; Revelation 1:13-14; Revelation 4:2-4. But the more correct interpretation is to suppose that this refers to a pure white robe, such as judges might wear, and which would not be an improper symbol of their office.

And the hair of his head like the pure wool - That is, for whiteness - a characteristic of venerable age. Compare the notes at Revelation 1:14. The image here set before us is that of one venerable by years and wisdom.

His throne was like the fiery flame - The seat on which he sat seemed to be fire. That is, it was brilliant and splendid, as if it were a mass of flame.

And his wheels as burning fire - The wheels of his throne - for, as in Ezekiel 1:16; Ezekiel 10:9, the wheels of the throne appeared to be of the color of beryl; that is, they were like precious stones. Here, perhaps, they had only the appearance of a flame - as such wheels would seem to flash flames. So, Milton, in describing the chariot of the Son of God:

"Forth rush'd with whirlwind sound
The chariot of Paternal Deity,
Flashing thick flames, wheel within wheel undrawn,

Itself instinct with spirit, but convoyed

By four cherubic shapes; four faces each

Had wondrous; as with stars their bodies all,

And wings were set with eyes; with eyes the wheels

Of beryl, and careering fires between."
- Par. Lost, b. vi.

Verse 10

A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him - Streams of fire seemed to burst forth from his throne. Representations of this kind abound in the Scriptures to illustrate the majesty and glory of God. Compare Revelation 4:5, "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunderings, and voices." Exodus 19:16; Habakkuk 3:4; Psalm 18:8.

Thousand thousands ministered unto him - "A thousand of thousands;" that is, thousands multiplied a thousand times. The mind is struck with the fact that there are thousands present - and then the number seems as great as if those thousands were multiplied a thousand times. The idea is that there was an immense - a countless host. The reference here is to the angels, and God is often represented as attended with great numbers of these celestial beings when he comes down to our world. Deuteronomy 33:2, "he came with ten thousands of saints;" that is, of holy ones. Psalm 68:17, "the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels."

Compare Jude 1:14. The word "ministered" means that they attended on him.

And ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him - An innumerable host. These were not to be judged, but were attendants on him as he pronounced sentence. The judgment here referred to was not on the world at large, but on the beast, preparatory to giving the kingdom to the one who was like the Son of man Daniel 7:13-14.

The judgment was set - That is, all the arrangements for a solemn act of judgment were made, and the process of the judgment commenced.

And the books were opened - As containing the record of the deeds of those who were to be judged. Compare Revelation 20:12. The great Judge is represented as having before him the record of all the deeds on which judgment was to be pronounced, and to be about to pronounce sentence according to those deeds. The judgment here referred to seems to have been some solemn act on the part of God transferring the power over the world, from what had long swayed it, to the saints. As already remarked, the necessary interpretation of the passage does not require us to understand this of a literal and visible judgment - of a personal appearing of the "Ancient of days" - of a formal application to him by "one like the Son of man" Daniel 7:13 - or of a public and visible making over to him of a kingdom upon the earth. It is to be remembered that all this passed in vision before the mind of the prophet; that it is a symbolic representation; and that we are to find the fulfillment of this in some event changing the course of empire - putting a period to the power represented by the "beast" and the "horn," and causing that power to pass into other hands - producing a change as great on the earth as if such a solemn act of judgment were passed. The nature of the representation requires that we should look for the fulfillment of this in some great and momentous change in human affairs - some events that would take away the power of the "beast," and that would cause the dominion to pass into other hands. On the fulfillment, see the notes at Daniel 7:26.

Verse 11

I beheld then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake - I was attracted by these words - by their arrogance, and haughtiness, and pride; and I saw that it was on account of these mainly that the solemn judgment proceeded against the beast. The attitude of the seer here is this - he heard arrogant and proud words uttered by the "horn," and

he waited in deep attention, and in earnest expectation, to learn what judgment would be pronounced. He had seen Daniel 7:8 that horn spring up and grow to great power, and utter great things; he had then seen, immediately on this, a solemn and sublime preparation for judgment, and he now waited anxiously to learn what sentence would be pronounced. The result is stated in the subsequent part of the verse.

I beheld - I continued beholding. This would seem to imply that it was not done at once, but that some time intervened.

Even until the beast was slain - The fourth beast: what had the ten horns, and on which the little horn had sprung up. This was the result of the judgment. It is evidently implied here that the beast was slain on account of the words uttered by the horn that sprang up, or that the pride and arrogance denoted by that symbol were the cause of the fact that the beast was put to death. It is not said by whom the beast would be slain; but the fair meaning is, that the procuring cause of that death would be the Divine judgment, on account of the pride and arrogancy of the "horn" that sprang up in the midst of the others. If the "beast" represents a mighty monarchy that would exist on the earth and the "little horn" a new power that would spring out of that, then the fulfillment is to be found in such a fact as this - that this power, so mighty and terrible formerly, and that crushed down the nations, would, under the Divine judgment, be ultimately destroyed, on account of the nature of the authority claimed. We are to look for the accomplishment of this in some such state of things as that of a new power springing out of an existing dominion, that the existing dominion still remains, but was so much controlled by the new power, that it would be necessary to destroy the former on account of the arrogance and pride of what sprang from it. In other words, the destruction of the kingdom represented by the fourth beast would be, as a Divine judgment, on account of the arrogancy of that represented by the little horn.

And his body destroyed - That is, there would be a destruction of the kingdom here represented as much as there would be of the beast if his body was destroyed. The power of that kingdom, as such, is to come to an end.

And given to the burning flame - Consumed. This would represent, in strong terms, that the power here symbolized by the beast would be utterly destroyed. It is not, however, necessary to suppose that this is to be the mode in which it would be done, or that it would be by fire. It is to be

remembered that all this is symbol, and no one part of the symbol should be taken literally more than another, nor is it congruous to suppose there would be a literal consuming fire in the case anymore than that there would be literally a beast, or ten horns, or a little horn, The fair meaning is, that there would be as real a destruction as if it were accomplished by fire; or a destruction of which fire would be the proper emblem. The allusion is here, probably, to the fact that the dead bodies of animals were often consumed by fire.

Verse 12

As concerning the rest of the beasts - They had been superseded, but not destroyed. It would seem that they were still represented in vision to Daniel, as retaining their existence, though their power was taken away, and their fierceness subdued, or that they still seemed to remain alive for a time, or while the vision was passing. They were not cut down, destroyed, and consumed as the fourth beast was.

They had their dominion taken away - They were superseded, or they no longer exercised power. They no more appeared exerting a control over the nations. They still existed, but they were subdued and quiet. It was possible to discern them, but they no longer acted the conspicuous part which they had done in the days of their greatness and grandeur. Their power had passed away. This cannot be difficult of interpretation. We should naturally look for the fulfillment of this in the fact that the nations referred to by these first three beasts were still in being, and could be recognized as nations, in their boundaries, or customs, or languages; but that the power which they had wielded had passed into other hands.

Yet their lives were prolonged - Margin, as in Chaldee, “a prolonging in life was given them.” That is, they were not utterly destroyed and consumed as the power of the fourth beast was after the solemn judgment. The meaning is, that in these kingdoms there would be energy for a time. They had life still; and the difference between them and the kingdom represented by the fourth beast was what would exist between wild animals subdued but still living, and a wild animal killed and burned. We should look for the fulfillment of this in some state of things where the kingdoms referred to by the three beasts were subdued and succeeded by others, though they still retained something of their national character; while the other kingdom had no successor of a civil kind, but where its power wholly

ceased, and the dominion went wholly into other hands - so that it might be said that that kingdom, as such, had wholly ceased to be.

For a season and time - Compare the notes at Daniel 7:25. The time mentioned here is not definite. The phrase used (ועדן עד־זמן *ʿad -zeman veʿîddân*) refers to a definite period, both the words in the original referring to a designated or appointed time, though neither of them indicates anything about the length of the time, anymore than our word time does. Luther renders this, "For there was a time and an hour appointed to them how long each one should continue." Grotius explains this as meaning, "Beyond the time fixed by God they could not continue." The true meaning of the Chaldee is probably this: "For a time, even a definite time." The mind of the prophet is at first fixed upon the fact that they continue to live; then upon the fact, somehow apparent, that it is for a definite period. Perhaps in the vision he saw them one after another die or disappear. In the words used here, however, there is nothing by which we can determine how long they were to continue. The time that the power represented by the little horn is to continue explained in Daniel 7:25, but there is no clue by which we can ascertain how long the existence of the power represented by the first three beasts was to continue. All that is clear is, that it was to be lengthened out for some period, but that that was a definite and fixed period.

Verse 13

I saw in the night visions - Evidently in the same night visions, or on the same occasion, for the visions are connected. See Daniel 7:1, Daniel 7:7. The meaning is, that he continued beholding, or that a new vision passed before him.

And, behold, one like the Son of man … - It is remarkable that Daniel does not attempt to represent this by any symbol. The representation by symbols ceases with the fourth beast; and now the description assumes a literal form - the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah and of the saints. Why this change of form occurs is not stated or known, but the sacred writers seem carefully to have avoided any representation of the Messiah by symbols. The phrase "The Son of Man" - בר אנשׁ *bar 'ĕnâsh* - does not occur elsewhere in the Old Testament in such a connection, and with such a reference as it has here, though it is often found in the New, and is, in fact, the favorite term by which the Saviour designates himself. In Daniel 3:25, we have the phrase "the Son of God" (see the note at that passage), as applicable to one who appeared with the three" children" that were cast into

the burning furnace; and in Ezekiel, the phrase "son of man" often occurs as applicable to himself as a prophet, being found more than eighty times in his prophecies, but the expression here used does not elsewhere occur in the Old Testament as applicable to the personage intended. As occurring here, it is important to explain it, not only in view of the events connected with it in the prophecy, but as having done much to mould the language of the New Testament. There are three questions in regard to its meaning: What does it signify? To whom does it refer? And what would be its proper fulfillment?

(1) The phrase is more than a mere Hebrew or Chaldee expression to denote man, but is always used with some peculiar significancy, and with relation to some peculiar characteristic of the person to whom it is applied, or with some special design. To ascertain this design, regard should be had to the expression of the original. "While the words איש *'îysh* and אישה *'îiyshâh* are used simply as designations of sex, אנוש *'ĕnôsh* which is etymologically akin to איש *'îysh* is employed with constant reference to its original meaning, to be weak, sick; it is the ethical designation of man, but אדם *'âdâm* denotes man as to his, physical, natural condition - whence the use of the word in such passages as Psalm 8:4; Job 25:6, and also its connection with בן *bên* are satisfactorily explained, The emphatic address אדם בן *bên 'âdâm* - Son of man - is therefore (in Ezekiel) a continued admonition to the prophet to remember that he is a man like all the rest." - Havernick, Com. on, Ezekiel 2:1-2, quoted in the Bibliotheca Sacra, v. 718. The expression used here is בר־אנוש *bar -'ĕnôsh* and would properly refer to man as weak and feeble, and as liable to be sick, etc. Applied to anyone as "a Son of man," it would be used to denote that he partook of the weakness and infirmities of the race; and, as the phrase "the Son of man" is used in the New Testament when applied by the Saviour to himself, there is an undoubted reference to this fact - that he sustained a peculiar relation to our race; that he was in all respects a man; that he was one of us; that he had so taken our nature on himself that there was a peculiar propriety that a term which would at once designate this should be given to him. The phrase used here by Daniel would denote some one

(a) in the human form;

(b) some one sustaining a peculiar relation to man - as if human nature were embodied in him.

(2) The next inquiry here is, to whom, this refers? Who, in fact, was the one that was thus seen in vision by the prophet? Or who was designed to be set forth by this? This inquiry is not so much, whom did Daniel suppose or understand this to be? as, who was in fact designed to be represented; or in whom would the fulfillment be found? For, on the supposition that this was a heavenly vision, it is clear that it was intended to designate some one in whom the complete fulfillment was to be found. Now, admitting that this was a heavenly vision, and that it was intended to represent what would occur in future times, there are the clearest reasons for supposing that the Messiah was referred to; and indeed this is so plain, that it may be assumed as one of the indisputable things by which to determine the character and design of the prophecy. Among these reasons are the following:

(a) The name itself, as a name assumed by the Lord Jesus - the favorite name by which he chose to designate himself when on the earth. This name he used technically; he used it as one that would be understood to denote the Messiah; he used it as if it needed no explanation as having a reference to the Messiah. But this usage could have been derived only from this passage in Daniel, for there is no other place in the Old Testament where the name could refer with propriety to the Messiah, or would be understood to be applicable to him.

(b) This interpretation has been given to it by the Jewish writers in general, in all ages. I refer to this, not to say that their explanation is authoritative, but to show that it is the natural and obvious meaning; and because, as we shall see, it is what has given shape and form to the language of the New Testament, and is fully sanctioned there. Thus, in the ancient book of Zohar it is said, “In the times of the Messiah, Israel shall be one people to the Lord, and he shall make them one nation in the earth, and they shall rule above and below; as it is written, “Behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven;” this is the King Messiah, of whom it is written, And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, etc.” So in the Talmud, and so the majority of the ancient Jewish rabbis. See Gill, Com. *in loc*. It is true that this interpretation has not been uniform among the Jewish rabbis, but still it has prevailed among them, as it has among Christian interpreters.

(c) A sanction seems to be given to this interpretation by the adoption of the title “Son of man” by the Lord Jesus, as that by which he chose to designate himself. That title was such as would constantly suggest this place in Daniel as referring to himself, and especially as he connected with it the declaration that “the Son of man would come in the clouds of heaven, etc.” It was hardly possible that he should use the title in such a connection without suggesting this place in Daniel, or without leaving the impression on the minds of his hearers that he meant to be understood as applying this to himself.

(d) It may be added, that it cannot with propriety be applied to any other. Porphyry, indeed, supposed that Judas Maccabeus was intended; Grotius that it referred to the Roman people; Aben Ezra to the people of Israel; and Cocceius to the people of the Most High (Gill); but all these are unnatural interpretations, and are contrary to what one would obtain by allowing the language of the New Testament to influence his mind. The title - so often used by the Saviour himself; the attending circumstances of the clouds of heaven; the place which the vision occupies - so immediately preceding the setting up of the kingdom of the saints; and the fact that that kingdom can be set up only under the Messiah, all point to him as the personage represented in the vision.

(3) But if it refers to the Messiah, the next inquiry is, What is to be regarded as the proper fulfillment of the vision? To what precisely does it relate? Are we to suppose that there will be a literal appearing of the Son of man - the Messiah - in the clouds of heaven, and a passing over of the kingdom in a public and solemn manner into the hands of the saints? In reply to these questions, it may be remarked

(a) that this cannot be understood as relating to the last judgment, for it is not introduced with reference to at all. The “Son of man” is not here represented as coming with a view to judge the world at the winding-up of human affairs, but for the purpose of setting up a kingdom, or procuring a kingdom for his saints. There is no assembling of the people of the world together; no act of judging the righteous and the wicked; no pronouncing of

a sentence on either. It is evident that the world is to continue much longer under the dominion of the saints.

(b) It is not to be taken literally; that is, we are not, from this passage, to expect a literal appearance of the of man in the clouds of heaven, preparatory to the setting up of the kingdom of the saints. For if one portion is to be taken literally, there is no reason why all should not be. Then we are to expect, not merely the appearing of the Son of man in the clouds, but also the following things, as a part of the fulfillment of the vision, to wit: the literal placing of a throne, or seat; the literal streaming forth of flame from his throne; the literal appearing of the "Ancient of days," with a garment of white, and hair as wool; a literal approach of the Son of man to him as seated on his throne to ask of him a kingdom, etc. But no one can believe that all this is to occur; no one does believe that it will.

(c) The proper interpretation is to regard this, as it was seen by Daniel, as a vision - a representation of a state of things in the world as if what is here described would occur. That is, great events were to take place, of which this would be a proper symbolic representation - or as if the Son of man, the Messiah, would thus appear; would approach the "Ancient of days;" would receive a kingdom, and would make it over to the saints. Now, there is no real difficulty in understanding what is here meant to be taught, and what we are to expect; and these points of fact are the following, namely,:

1. That he who is here called the "Ancient of days" is the source of power and dominion.

2. That there would be some severe adjudication of the power here represented by the beast and the horn.

3. That the kingdom or dominion of the world is to be in fact given to him who is here called "the Son of man" - the Messiah - a fact represented here by his approaching the "Ancient of days," who is the source of all power.

4. That there is to be some passing over of the kingdom or power into the hands of the saints; or some setting up of a kingdom on the earth, of which he is to be the head, and in which the dominion over the world shall be in fact in the hands of his people, and the laws of the Messiah everywhere prevail. What will be the essential characteristics of that kingdom we may learn by the exposition of Daniel 7:14, compared with Daniel 7:27.

Came with the clouds of heaven - That is, he seemed to come down from the sky encompassed with clouds. So the Saviour, probably intending to refer to this language, speaks of himself, when he shall come to judge the world, as coming in clouds, or encompassed by clouds, Matthew 24:30; Matthew 26:64; Mark 13:26; Mark 14:62. Compare Revelation 1:7. Clouds are an appropriate symbol of the Divinity. See Psalm 97:2; Psalm 104:3. The same symbol was employed by the pagan, representing their deities as appearing covered with a cloud:

"*Tandem venias, precamur,*
Nube candentes humeros amictus,
Augur Apollo!"
- *Horace, Lyr. I. 2.*

The allusion in the place before us is not to the last judgment, but to the fact that a kingdom on tho earth would be passed over into the hands of the Messiah. He is represented as coming sublimely to the world, and as receiving a kingdom that would succeed those represented by the beasts.

And came to the Ancient of days - Daniel 7:9. This shows that the passage cannot refer to the final judgment. He comes to the "Ancient of days" - to God as the source of power - as if to ask a petition for a kingdom; not to pronounce a judgment on mankind. The act here appropriately denotes that God is the source of all power; that all who reign derive their authority from him, and that even the Messiah, in setting up his kingdom in

the world, receives it at the hand of the Father. This is in accordance with all the representations in the New Testament. We are not to suppose that this will occur literally. There is to be no such literal sitting of one with the appearance of age - denoted by the "Ancient of days" - on a throne; nor is there to be any such literal approaching him by one in the form of a man to receive a kingdom. Such passages show the absurdity of the attcmpts to interpret the language of the Scriptures literally. All that this symbol fairly means must be, that the kingdom that was to be set up under the Messiah on the earth was received from God.

And they brought him near before him - That is, he was brought near before him. Or, it may mean that his attendants brought him near. All that the language necessarily implies is, that he came near to his seat, and received from him a kingdom.

Verse 14

And there was given him dominion - That is, by him who is represented as the "Ancient of days." The fair interpretation of this is, that he received the dominion from him. This is the uniform representation in the New Testament. Compare Matthew 28:18; John 3:35; 1 Corinthians 15:27. The word dominion here means rule or auhority - such as a prince exercises. He was set over a kingdom as a prince or ruler.

And glory - That is the glory or honor appropriate to one at the head of such an empire.

And a kingdom - That is, he would reign. He would have sovereignty. The nature and the extent of this kingdom is immediately designated as one that would be universal and perpetual. What is properly implied in this language as to the question whether it will be literal and visible, will be appropriately considered at the close of the verse. All that is necessary to be noticed here is, that it is everywhere promised in the Old Testament that the Messiah would be a king, and have a kingdom. Compare Psalm 2:1-12; Isaiah 9:6-7.

That all people, nations, and languages should serve him - It would be universal; would embrace all nations. The language here is such as would emphatically denote universality. See the notes at Daniel 3:4; Daniel 4:1. It implies that that kingdom would extend over all the nations of the earth, and we are to look for the fulfillment of this only in such a universal reign of the Messiah.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion … - The others, represented by the four beasts, would all pass away, but this would be permanent and eternal. Nothing would destroy it. It would not have, as most kingdoms of the earth have had, any such internal weakness or source of discord as would be the cause of its destruction, nor would there be any external power that would invade or overthrow it. This declaration affirms nothing as to the form in which the kingdom would exist, but merely asserts the fact that it would do so. Respecting the kingdom of the Messiah, to which this undoubtedly alludes, the same thing is repeatedly and uniformly affirmed in the New Testament. Compare Matthew 16:18; Hebrews 12:28; Revelation 11:15. The form and manner in which this will occur is more fully developed in the New Testament; in the vision seen by Daniel the fact only is stated.

The question now arises, What would be a fulfillment of this prediction respecting the kingdom that will be given to the saints? What, from the language used in the vision, should we be legitimately authorized to expect to take place on the earth? In regard to these questions, there are but two views which can be taken, and the interpretation of the passage must sustain the one or the other.

(a) One is what supposes that this will be literally fulfilled in the sense that the Son of God, the Messiah, will reign personally on earth. According to this, he will come to set up a visible and glorious kingdom, making Jerusalem his capital, and swaying his scepter over the world. All nations and people will be subject to him; all authority will be wielded by his people under him.

(b) According to the other view, there will be a spiritual reign of the Son of God over the earth; that is, the principles of his religion will everywhere prevail, and the righteous will rule, and the laws of the Redeemer will be obeyed everywhere. There will be such a prevalence of his gospel on the hearts of all - rulers and people; the gospel will so modify all laws, and control all customs, and remove all abuses, and all the forms of evil; men will be so generally under the influence of that gospel, that it may be said that He reigns on the earth, or that the government actually administered is his.

In regard to these different views, and to the true interpretation of the passage, it may be remarked,

(1) That we are not to look for the literal fulfillment of this; we are not to expect that what is here described will literally occur. The whole is evidently a symbolic representation, and the fulfillment is to be found in something that the symbol would properly denote. No one can pretend that there is to be an actual sitting on the throne, by one in the form of an old man - "the Ancient of days" - or that there is to be a literal coming to him by one "like the Son of man," to receive a kingdom. But if one part of the representation is not to be literally interpreted, why should the other be? It may be added, that it is nowhere said that this would literally occur.

(2) All that is fairly implied here is found in the latter interpretation. Such a prevalence of the principles of the gospel would meet the force of the language, and every part of the vision would find a real fulfillment in that.

(a) The fact that it proceeds from God - represented as "the Ancient of days."

(b) The fact that it is given by him, or that the kingdom is made over by him to the Messiah.

(c) The fact that the Messiah would have such a kingdom; that is, that he would reign on the earth, in the hearts and lives of men.

(d) The fact that that kingdom would be universal - extending over all people.

(e) And the fact that it would be perpetual; that is, that it would extend down to the end of time, or the consummation of all things here, and that it would be then eternal in the heavens.

For a very full and ample illustration of this passage - so full and ample as to supersede the necessity of any additional illustration here, see the notes at Daniel 2:44-45.

Verse 15

I Daniel was grieved in my spirit - That is, I was troubled; or my heart was made heavy and sad. This was probably in part because he did not fully understand the meaning of the vision, and partly on account of the fearful and momentous nature of what was indicated by it. So the apostle John Revelation 5:4 says, "And I wept much because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book."

In the midst of my body - Margin, as in the Chaldee, sheath. The body is undoubtedly referred to, and is so called as the envelope of the mind - or as that in which the soul is inserted, as the sword is in the sheath, and from which it is drawn out by death. The same metaphor is employed by Pliny: Donec cremato co inimici remeanti animae velut vaginam ademerint. So, too, a certain philosopher, who was slighted by Alexander the Great on account of his ugly face, is said to have replied, Corpus hominis nil est nisi vagina gladii in qua anima reconditur. - Gesenius. Compare Lengerke, *in loc*. See also Job 27:8, "When God taketh away his soul;" or rather draws out his soul, as a sword is drawn out of the sheath. Compare the note at that place. See also Buxtorf's Lexicon Tal. p. 1307. The meaning here is plain - that Daniel felt sad and troubled in mind, and that this produced a sensible effect on his body.

And the visions of my head troubled me - The head is here regarded as the seat of the intellect, and he speaks of these visions as if they were seen by the head. That is, they seemed to pass before his eyes.

Verse 16

I came near unto one of them that stood by - That is, to one of the angels who appeared to stand near the throne. Daniel 7:10. Compare Daniel 8:13; Zechariah 4:4-5; Revelation 7:13. It was natural for Daniel to suppose that the angels who were seen encircling the throne would be able to give him information on the subject, and the answers which Daniel received show that he was not mistaken in his expectation. God has often employed angels to communicate important truths to men, or has made them the medium of communicating his will. Compare Revelation 1:1; Acts 7:53; Hebrews 2:2.

So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things - He explained the meaning of the symbols, so that Daniel understood them. It would seem probable that Daniel has not recorded all that the angel

communicated respecting the vision, but he has preserved so much that we may understand its general signification.

Verse 17

These great beasts, which are four, are four kings - Four kings or four dynasties. There is no reason for supposing that they refer to individual kings, but the obvious meaning is, that they refer to four dominions or empires that would succeed one another on the earth. So the whole representation leads us to suppose, and so the passage has been always interpreted. The Latin Vulgate renders it regna; the Septuagint βασιλεῖαι *basileiai* Luther, Reiche; Lengerke, Konigreiche. This interpretation is confirmed, also, by Daniel 7:23, where it is expressly said that "the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth." See also Daniel 7:24.

Which shall arise out of the earth - In Daniel 7:2 the beasts are represented as coming up from the sea - the emblem of agitated nations. Here the same idea is presented more literally - that they would seem to spring up out of the earth, thus thrown into wild commotion. These dynasties were to be upon the earth, and they were in all things to indicate their earthly origin. Perhaps, also, it is designed by these words to denote a marked contrast between these four dynasties and the one that would follow - which would be of heavenly origin. This was the general intimation which was given to the meaning of the vision, and he was satisfied at once as to the explanation, so far as the first three were concerned; but the fourth seemed to indicate more mysterious and important events, and respecting this he was induced to ask a more particular explanation.

Verse 18

But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom - That is, they shall ultimately take possession of the rule over all the world, and shall control it from that time onward to the end. This is the grand thing which the vision is designed to disclose, and on this it was evidently the intention to fix the mind. Everything before was preparatory and subordinate to this, and to this all things tended. The phrase rendered the Most High - in the margin "high ones, i. e., things or places" - עליונין *ʿeleyônîyn* - is in the plural number, and means literally high ones; but there can be no doubt that it refers here to God, and is given to Him as the word אלהים *'ĕlohîym* is (Genesis 1:1, *et saepe*), to denote majesty or honor - *pluralis excellentice*. The word rendered saints means the holy, and the reference is undoubtedly to the people of God on the earth, meaning here that they would take

possession of the kingdom, or that they would rule. When true religion shall everywhere prevail, and when all offices shall be in the hands of good men - of men that fear God and that keep his commandments - instead of being in the hands of bad men, as they generally have been, then this prediction will be accomplished in respect to all that is fairly implied in it.

And possess the kingdom for ever, even forever and ever - This is a strong and emphatic declaration, affirming that this dominion will be perpetual. It will not pass away, like the other kingdoms, to be succeeded by another one. What is here affirmed, as above remarked, will be true if such a reign should continue on earth to the winding up of all things, and should then be succeeded by an eternal reign of holiness in the heavens. It is not necessary to interpret this as meaning that there would be literally an eternal kingdom on this earth, for it is everywhere taught in the Scriptures that the present order of things will come to a close. But it does seem necessary to understand this as teaching that there will be a state of prevalent righteousness on the earth hereafter, and that when that is introduced it will continue to the end of time.

Verse 19

Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast - I desired to know particularly what was symbolized by that. He appears to have been satisfied with the most general intimations in regard to the first three beasts, for the kingdoms represented by them seemed to have nothing very remarkable. But it was different in regard to the fourth. The beast itself was so remarkable - so fierce and terrific; the number of the horns was so great; the springing up of the little horn was so surprising; the character of that horn was so unusual; the judgment passed on it was so solemn; and the vision of one like the Son of man coming to take possession of the kingdom - all these things were of so fearful and so uncommon a character, that the mind of Daniel was peculiarly affected in view of them, and he sought earnestly for a further explanation. In the description that Daniel here gives of the beast and the horns, he refers in the main to the same cirumstances which he had before described; but he adds a few which he had before omitted, all tending to impress the mind more deeply with the fearful character and the momentous import of the vision; as, for instance, the fact that it had nails of brass, and made war with the saints.

Which was diverse from all the others - Different in its form and character; - so different as to attract particular attention, and to leave the

impression that something very peculiar and remarkable was denoted by it. Notes, Daniel 7:7.

Exceeding dreadful - Notes, Daniel 7:7.

And his nails of brass - This circumstance is not mentioned in the first statement, Daniel 7:7. It accords well with the other part of the description, that his teeth were of iron, and is designed to denote the fearful and terrific character of tho kingdom, symbolized by the beast.

Which devoured … - See the notes at Daniel 7:7.

Verse 20

And of the ten horns … - See the notes at Daniel 7:7-8.

Whose look was more stout than his fellows - literally, "whose aspect was greater than that of its companions." This does not mean that its look or aspect was more fierce or severe than that of the others, but that the appearance of the horn was greater - רב *rab* In Daniel 7:8, this is described as a "little horn;" and to understand this, and reconcile the two, we must suppose that the seer watched this as it grew until it became the largest of the number. Three fell before it, and it outgrew in size all the others until it became the most prominent. This would clearly denote that the kingdom or the authority referred to by this eleventh horn would be more distinct and prominent than either of the others - would become so conspicuous and important as in fact to concentrate and embody all the power of the beast.

Verse 21

I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints - I continued to look on this until I saw war made by this horn with the people of God. This circumstance, also, is not referred to in the first description, and the order of time in the description would seem to imply that the war with the saints would be at a considerable period after the first appearance of the horn, or would be only when it had grown to its great size and power. This "war" might refer to open hostilities, carried on in the usual manner of war; or to persecution, or to any invasion of the rights and privileges of others. As it is a "war with the saints," it would be most natural to refer it to persecution.

And prevailed against them - That is, he overcame and subdued them, he was stronger than they were, and they were not able to resist him. The same events are evidently referred to and in almost similar language - borrowed probably from Daniel - in Revelation 13:5-7: "And there was given him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and power was

given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations."

Verse 22

Until the Ancient of days came - Notes, Daniel 7:9. That is, this was to occur after the horn grew to its full size, and after the war was made with the saints, and they had been overcome. It does not affirm that this would occur immediately, but that at some subsequent period the Ancient of days would come, and would set up a kingdom on the earth, or would make over the kingdom to the saints. There would be as real a transfer and as actual a setting up of a peculiar kingdom, as if God himself should appear on the earth, and should publicly make over the dominion to them.

And judgment was given to the saints of the Most High - That is, there was a solemn act of judgement in the case by which the kingdom was given to their hands. It was as real a transfer as if there had been a judgment pronounced on the beast, and he had been condemned and overthrown, and as if the dominion which he once had should be made over to the servants of the Most High.

And the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom - That they ruled on the earth; that good men made and administered the laws; that the principles of religion prevailed, influencing the hearts of all men, and causing righteousness and justice to be done. The universal prevalence of true religion, in controlling the hearts and lives of men, and disposing them to do what in all circumstances ought to be done, would be a complete fulfillment of all that is here said. Thus far the description of what Daniel saw, of which he was so desirous to obtain an explanation. The explanation follows, and embraces the remainder of the chapter.

Verses 23-27

Thus he said … - That is, in explanation of the fourth symbol which appeared - the fourth beast, and of the events connected with his appearing. This explanation embraces the remainder of the chapter; and as the whole subject appeared difficult and momentous to Daniel before the explanation, so it may be said to be in many respects difficult, and in all respects momentous still. It is a question on which expositors of the Scriptures are by no means agreed, to what it refers, and whether it has been already

accomplished, or whether it extends still into the future; and it is of importance, therefore, to determine, if possible, what is its true meaning. The two points of inquiry which are properly before us are, first, What do the words of explanation as used by the angel fairly imply - that is, what, according to the fair interpretation of these words, would be the course of events referred to, or what should we naturally expect to find as actually occurring on the earth in the fulfillment of this? and, secondly, To what events the prophecy is actually to be applied - whether to what has already occurred, or what is yet to occur; whether we can find anything in what is now past which would be an accomplishment of this, or whether it is to be applied to events a part of which are yet future? This will lead us into a statement of the points which it is affirmed would occur in regard to this kingdom: and then into an inquiry respecting the application.

What is fairly implied in the explanation of the angel? This would embrace the following points:

(1) There was to be a fourth kingdom on the earth: "the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth," Daniel 7:23. This was to succeed the other three, symbolized by the lion, the bear, and the leopard. No further reference is made to them, but the characteristics of this are fully stated. Those characteristics, which have been explained in the notes at Daniel 7:7, are, as here repeated,

(a) that it would be in important respects different from the others;

(b) that it would devour, or subdue the whole earth;

(c) that it would tread it down and break it in pieces; that is, it would be a universal dynasty, of a fierce and warlike character, that would keep the whole world subdued and subject by power.

(2) out of this sovereignty or dominion, ten powers would arise Daniel 7:24: "and the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise." Compare the notes at Daniel 7:7. That is, they would spring out of this one dominion, or it would be broken up into these minor sovereignties, yet all manifestly springing from the one kingdom, and wielding the same power. We should not naturally look for the fulfillment of this in a succession of

kings, for that would have been symbolized by the beast itself representing the entire dominion or dynasty, but rather to a number of contemporaneous powers that had somehow sprung out of the one power, or that now possessed and wielded the power of that one dominion. If the kingdom here referred to should be broken up into such a number of powers, or if in any way these powers became possessed of this authority, and wielded it, such a fact would express what we are to expect to find in this kingdom.

(3) From the midst of these sovereignties or kingdoms there was to spring up another one of peculiar characteristics, Daniel 7:24-25. These characteristics are the following:

(a) That it would spring out of the others, or be, as it were, one form of the administration of the same power - as the eleventh horn sprang from the same source as the ten, and we are, therefore, to look for the exercise of this power somehow in connection with the same kingdom or dynasty.

(b) This would not spring up contemporaneously with the ten, but would arise "after them" - and we are to look for the power as in some sense succeeding them.

(c) It would be small at first - as was the horn Daniel 7:8, and we are to look for the fulfillment in some power that would be feeble at first.

(d) It would grow to be a mighty power for the little horn became so powerful as to pluck up three of the others Daniel 7:8, and it is said in the explanation Daniel 7:24, that he would subdue three of the kings.

(e) It would subdue "three kings;" that is, three of the ten, and we are to look for the fulfillment in some manifestation of that power by which, either literally three of them were overthrown, or by which about one-third of their power was taken away. The mention of the exact number of "three," however, would rather seem to imply that we are to expect some such exact fulfillment, or some prostration of three sovereignties by the new power that would arise.

(f) It would be proud, and ambitious, and particularly arrogant against God: "and he shall speak great words against the Most High," Daniel 7:25. The Chaldee here rendered against - לצד *letsad* - means, literally, at, or against the part of it, and then against. Vulgate *contra*; Greek πρὸς *pros* This would be fulfilled in one who would blaspheme God directly; or who would be rebellious against his government and authority; or who would complain of his administration and laws; or who would give utterance to harsh and reproachful words against his real claims. It would find a fulfillment obviously in an open opposer of the claims and the authority of the true God; or in one the whole spirit and bearing of whose pretensions might be fairly construed as in fact an utterance of great words against him.

(g) This would be a persecuting power: "and shall wear out the saints of the Most High," Daniel 7:25. That is, it would be characterized by a persecution of the real saints - of those who were truly the friends of God, and who served him.

(h) It would claim legislative power, the power of changing established customs and laws: "and think to change times and laws," Daniel 7:25. The word rendered "think" (סבר *sebar*) means, more properly, to hope; and the idea here is, that he hopes and trusts to be able to change times and laws. Vulgate, *Putabit quod possit mutare tempora*, etc. The state of mind here referred to would be that of one who would desire to produce changes in regard to the times and laws referred to, and who would hope that he would be able to effect it. If there was a strong wish to do this, and if there was a belief that in any way he could bring it about, it would meet what is implied in the use of the word here. There would be the exercise of some kind of authority in regard to existing times for festivals, or other occasions, and to existing laws, and there would be a purpose so to change them as to accomplish his own ends.

The word "times" - זמנין *zîmnîyn* - would seem to refer properly to some stated or designated times - as times appointed for festivals, etc. Gesenius, "time, specially an appointed time, season:" Ecclesiastes 3:1; Nehemiah 2:6; Esther 9:27, Esther 9:31. Lengerke renders the word Fest-Zeiten - "festival times," and explains it as meaning the holy times, festival days, Leviticus 23:2, Leviticus 23:4, Leviticus 23:37, Leviticus 23:44. The

allusion is, undoubtedly, to such periods set apart as festivals or fasts - seasons consecrated to the services of religion and the kind of jurisdiction which the power here referred to would hope and desire to set up would be to have control of these periods, and so to change and alter them as to accomplish his own purposes - either by abolishing those in existence, or by substituting others in their place. At all times these seasons have had a direct connection with the state and progress of religion; and he who has power over them, either to abolish existing festivals, or to substitute others in their places, or to appoint new festivals, has an important control over the whole subject of religion, and over a nation.

The word rendered "laws" here - דת *dâth* - while it might refer to any law, would more properly designate laws pertaining to religion. See Daniel 6:5, Daniel 6:7, Daniel 6:12 (Daniel 6:6, Daniel 6:9, Daniel 6:13); Ezra 7:12, Ezra 7:21. So Lengerke explains it as referring to the laws of religion, or to religion. The kind of jurisdiction, therefore, referred to in this place would be what would pertain to the laws and institutions of religion; it would be a purpose to obtain the control of these; it would be a claim of right to abolish such as existed, and to institute new ones; it would be a determination to exert this power in such a way as to promote its own ends.

(i) It would continue for a definite period: "and they shall be given into his hands until a time and times and the dividing of time," Daniel 7:25. They; that is, either those laws, or the people, the powers referred to. Maurer refers this to the "saints of the Most High," as meaning that they would be delivered into his hands. Though this is not designated expressly, yet perhaps it is the most natural construction, as meaning that he would have jurisdiction over the saints during this period; and if so, then the meaning is, that he would have absolute control over them, or set up a dominion over them, for the time specified the time, and times, etc. In regard to this expression "a time and times, etc., it is unnecessary to say that there has been great diversity of opinion among expositors, and that many of the controversies in respect to future events turn on the sense attached to this and to the similar expressions which occur in the book of Revelation. The first and main inquiry pertains, of course, to its literal and proper signification. The word used here rendered "time, times, time" - עדן עדנין

ʿîdânîyn ʿîdân - is a word which in itself would no more designate any definite and fixed period than our word time does.

See Daniel 2:8-9, Daniel 2:21; Daniel 3:5, Daniel 3:15; Daniel 4:16, Daniel 4:23, Daniel 4:25, Daniel 4:32; Daniel 7:12. In some of these instances, the period actually referred to was a year Daniel 4:16, Daniel 4:23, but this is not necessarily implied in the word used, but the limitation is demanded by the circumstances of the case. So far as the word is concerned, it would denote a day, a week, a month, a year, or a larger or smaller division of time, and the period actually intended to be designated must be determined from the connection. The Latin Vulgate is indefinite - ad tempus; so the Greek - ἕως καιροῦ *heōs kairou* so the Syriac, and so Luther - eine Zeit; and so Lengerke - eine Zeit. The phrase "for a time" expresses accurately the meaning of the original word. The word rendered "times" is the same word in the plural, though evidently with a dual signification. - Gesenius, Lexicon; Lengerke, *in loc*. The obvious meaning is two such times as is designated by the former "time."

The phrase "and the dividing of a time" means clearly half of such a period. Thus, if the period denoted by a "time," here be a year, the whole period would be three years and a half. Designations of time like this, or of this same period, occur several times in the prophecies (Daniel and Revelation), and on their meaning much depends in regard to the interpretation of the prophecies pertaining to the future. This period of three years and a half equals forty-two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days - the periods mentioned in Revelation 11:2; Revelation 12:6, and on which so much depends in the interpretation of that book. The only question of importance in regard to the period of time here designated is, whether this is to be taken literally to denote three years and a half, or whether a symbolic method is to be adopted, by making each one of the days represent a year, thus making the time referred to, in fact, twelve hundred and sixty years. On this question expositors are divided, and probably will continue to be, and according as one or the other view is adopted, they refer the events here to Antiochus Epiphanes, or to the Papal power; or perhaps it should be said more accurately, according as they are disposed to refer the events here to Antiochus or to the Papacy, do they embrace one or the other method of interpretation in regard to the meaning of the days. At this point in the

examination of the passage, the only object is to look at it exegetically; to examine it as language apart from the application, or unbiassed by any purpose of application; and though absolute certainty cannot perhaps be obtained, yet the following may be regarded as exegetically probable:

(1) The word time may be viewed as denoting a year: I mean a year rather than a week, a month, or any other period - because a year is a more marked and important portion of time, and because a day, a week, a month, is so short that it cannot be reasonably supposed that it is intended. As there is no larger natural period than a year - no cycle in nature that is so marked and obvious as to be properly suggested by the word time, it cannot be supposed that any such cycle is intended. And as there is so much particularity in the language used here, "a time, and times, and half a time," it is to be presumed that some definite and marked period is intended, and that it is not time in general. It may be presumed, therefore, that in some sense of the term the period of a year is referred to.

(2) The language does not forbid the application to a literal year, and then the actual time designated would be three years and a half. No laws of exegesis, nothing in the language itself, could be regarded as violated, if such an interpretation were given to the language, and so far as this point is concerned, there would be no room for debate.

(3) The same remark may be made as to the symbolic application of the language - taking it for a much longer period than literally three years and a half; that is, regarding each day as standing for a year, and thus considering it as denoting twelve hundred and sixty years. This could not be shown to be a violation of prophetic usage, or to be forbidden by the nature of prophetic language, because nothing is more common than symbols, and because there are actual instances in which such an interpretation must be understood. Thus in Ezekiel 4:6, where the prophet was commanded to lie upon his right side forty days, it is expressly said that it was symbolic or emblematic: "I have appointed thee each day for a year." No one can doubt that it would be strictly consistent with prophetic usage to suppose that the time here might be symbolic, and that a longer time might be referred to than the literal interpretation would require.

(4) It may be added, that there are some circumstances, even considering the passage with reference only to the interpretation of the language, and with no view to the question of its application, which would make this appear probable. Among these circumstances are the following:

(a) the fact that, in the prophecies, it is unusual to designate the time literally. Very few instances can be referred to in which this is done. It is commonly by some symbol; some mark; some peculiarity of the time or age referred to, that the designation is made, or by some symbol that may be understood when the event has occurred.

(b) This designation of time occurs in the midst of symbols - where all is symbol - the beasts, the horns, the little horn, etc.; and it would seem to be much more probable that such method would be adopted as designating the time referred to than a literal method.

(c) It is quite apparent on the mere perusal of the passage here that the events do actually extend far into the future - far beyond what would be denoted by the brief period of three and a half years. This will be considered more fully in another place in the inquiry as to the meaning of these prophecies. (See also Editor‘s Preface to volume on Revelation.)

(4) a fourth point in the explanation given by the interpreter to Daniel is, that there would be a solemn judgment in regard to this power, and that the dominion conceded to it over the saints for a time would be utterly taken away, and the power itself destroyed: “but the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume, and to destroy it unto the end,” Daniel 7:26. That is, it shall be taken away; it shall come entirely to an end. The interpreter does not say by whom this would be done, but he asserts the fact, and that the destruction of the dominion would be final. That is, it would entirely and forever cease. This would be done by an act of Divine judgment, or as if a solemn judgment should be held, and a sentence pronounced. It would be as manifestly an act of God as if he should sit as a judge, and pronounce sentence. See the notes at Daniel 7:9-11.

(5) And, a fifth point in the explanation of the interpreter is, that the dominion under the whole heaven would be given to the saints of the Most

High, and that all nations should serve him; that is, that there would be a universal prevalence of righteousness on the earth, and that God would reign in the hearts and lives of men, Daniel 7:27. See the notes at Daniel 7:13-14.

Verse 28

Hitherto is the end of the matter - That is, the end of what I saw and heard. This is the sum of what was disclosed to the prophet, but he still says that he meditated on it with profound interest, and that he had much solicitude in regard to these great events. The words rendered hitherto, mean, so far, or thus far. The phrase "end of the matter," means "the close of the saying a thing;" that is, this was all the revelation which was made to him, and he was left to his own meditations respecting it.

As for me Daniel - So far as I was concerned; or so far as this had any effect on me. It was not unnatural, at the close of this remarkable vision, to state the effect that it had on himself.

My cogitations much troubled me - My thoughts in regard to it. It was a subject which he could not avoid reflecting on, and which could not but produce deep solicitude in regard to the events which were to occur. Who could look into the future without anxious and agitating thought? These events were such as to engage the profoundest attention; such as to fix the mind in solemn thought. Compare the notes at Revelation 5:4.

And my countenance changed in me - The effect of these revelations depicted themselves on my countenance. The prophet does not say in what way - whether by making him pale, or careworn, or anxious, but merely that it produced a change in his appearance. The Chaldee is "brightness" - זיו *zîyv* - and the meaning would seem to be, that his bright and cheerful countenance was changed; that is, that his bright looks were changed; either by becoming pale (Gesenius, Lengerke), or by becoming serious and thoughtful.

But I kept the matter in my heart - I communicated to no one the cause of my deep and anxious thoughts. He hid the whole subject in his own mind, until he thought proper to make this record of what he had seen and heard. Perhaps there was no one to whom he could communicate the matter who would credit it; perhaps there was no one at court who would sympathize with him; perhaps he thought that it might savor of vanity if it were known; perhaps he felt that as no one could throw any new light on

the subject, there would be no use in making it a subject of conversation; perhaps he felt so overpowered that he could not readily converse on it.

We are prepared now, having gone through with an exposition of this chapter, as to the meaning of the symbols, the words, and the phrases, to endeavor to ascertain what events are referred to in this remarkable prophecy, and to ask what events it was designed should be pourtrayed. And in reference to this there are but two opinions, or two classes of interpretations, that require notice: what refers it primarily and exclusively to Antiochus Epiphanes, and what refers it to the rise and character of the Papal power; what regards the fourth beast as referring to the empire of Alexander, and the little horn to Antiochus, and what regards the fourth beast as referring to the Roman empire, and the little horn to the Papal dominion. In inquiring which of these is the true interpretation, it will be proper, first, to consider whether it is applicable to Antiochus Epiphanes; secondly, whether it in fact finds a fulfillment in the Roman empire and the Papacy; and, thirdly, if such is the proper application, what are we to look for in the future in what remains unfulfilled in regard to the prophecy.

I. The question whether it is applicable to the case of Antiochus Epiphanes. A large class of interpreters, of the most respectable character, among whom are Lengerke, Maurer, Prof. Stuart (Hints on the Interpretation of Prophecy, p. 86, following; also Com. on Daniel, pp. 205-211), Eichhorn, Bertholdt, Bleek, and many others, suppose that the allusion to Antiochus is clear, and that the primary, if not the exclusive, reference to the prophecy is to him. Professor Stuart (Hints, p. 86) says, "The passage in Daniel 7:25 is so clear as to leave no reasonable room for doubt." "In Daniel 7:8, Daniel 7:20, Daniel 7:24, the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes is described; for the fourth beast is, beyond all reasonable doubt, the divided Grecian dominion which succeeded the reign of Alexander the Great. From this dynasty springs Antiochus, Daniel 7:8, Daniel 7:20, who is most graphically described in Daniel 7:25 ‹as one who shall speak great words against the most High,' etc."

The facts in regard to Antiochus, so far as they are necessary to be known in the inquiry, are briefly these: Antiochus Epiphanes (the Illustrios, a name taken on himself, Prideaux, iii. 213), was the son of Antiochus the Great, but succeeded his brother, Seleucus Philopator, who died 176 b.c.

Antiochus reigned over Syria, the capital of which was Antioch, on the Oronres, from 176 b.c. to 164 b.c. His character, as that of a cruel tyrant, and a most bloodthirsty and bitter enemy of the Jews, is fully detailed in the first and second book of Maccabees. Compare also Prideaux, Con. vol. iii. 213-234. The facts in the case of Antiochus, so far as they are supposed to bear on the application of the prophecy before us, are thus stated by Prof. Stuart (Hints on the Interpretation of Prophecy, pp. 89,90): "In the year 168 before Christ, in the month of May, Antiochus Epiphanes was on his way to attack Egypt, and he detached Apollonius, one of his military confidants, with 22,000 soldiers, in order to subdue and plunder Jerusalem. The mission was executed with entire success. A horrible slaughter was made of the men at Jerusalem, and a large portion of the women and children, being made captives, were sold and treated as slaves. The services of the temple were interrupted, and its joyful feasts were turned into mourning, Esther 1:3, Esther 1:18-19; Esther 10:2; Daniel 5:28; Daniel 6:8, Daniel 6:12, Daniel 6:15.

(2) In order to this interpretation, it is necessary to divide the empire founded by Alexander, and instead of regarding it as one, to consider what existed when he reigned as one; and that of Antiochus, one of the successors of Alexander, as another. This opinion is maintained by Bertholdt, who supposes that the first beast represented the Babylonian kingdom; the second, the kingdom of the Medes and Persians; the third, that of Alexander; and the fourth the kingdoms that sprang out of that. In order to this, it is necessary to suppose that the four heads and wings, and the ten horns, equally represent that kingdom, or sprang from it - the four heads, the kingdom when divided at the death of Alexander, and the ten horns, powers that ultimately sprang up from the same dominion. But this is contrary to the whole representation in regard to the Asiatic-Macedonian empire. In Daniel 8:8-9, where there is an undoubted reference to that empire, it is said "the he-goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, etc." Here is an undoubted allusion to Alexander, and to his followers, and particularly to Antiochus, but no mention of any such division as is necessary to be supposed if the fourth beast represents the power that succeeded Alexander in the East. In

no place is the kingdom of the successors of Alexander divided from his in the same sense in which the kingdom of the Medes and Persians is from that of Babylon, or the kingdom of Alexander from that of the Persians. Compare Hengstenberg, as above, pp. 203-205.

(3) The supposition that the fourth beast represents either the kingdom of Alexander, or, according to Bertholdt and others, the successors of Alexander, by no means agrees with the character of that beast as compared with the others. That beast was far more formidable, and more to be dreaded than either of the others. It had iron teeth and brazen claws; it stamped down all before it, and broke all to pieces, and manifestly represented a far more fearful dominion than either of the others. The same is true in regard to the parallel representation in Daniel 2:33, Daniel 2:40, of the fourth kingdom represented by the legs and feet of iron, as more terrific than either of those denoted by the gold, the silver, or the brass. But this representation by no means agrees with the character of the kingdom of either Alexander or his successors, and in fact would not be true of them. It would agree well, as we shall see, with the Roman power, even as contrasted with that of Babylon, Persia, or Macedon; but it is not the representation which would, with propriety, be given of the empire of Alexander, or his successors, as contrasted with those which preceded them. Compare Hengstenberg, as above, pp. 205-207. Moreover, this does not agree with what is expressly said of this power that should succeed that of Alexander, in a passage undoubtedly referring to it, in Daniel 8:22, where it is said, "Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power."

(4) On this supposition it is impossible to determine who are meant by the "ten horns" of the fourth beast Daniel 7:7, and the "ten kings" Daniel 7:24 that are represented by these. All the statements in Daniel that refer to the Macedonian kingdom Daniel 7:6; Daniel 8:8, Daniel 8:22 imply that the Macedonian empire in the East, when the founder died, would be divided into four great powers or monarchies - in accordance with what is well known to have been the fact. But who are the ten kings or sovereignties that were to exist under this general Macedonian power, on the supposition that the fourth beast represents this? Bertholdt supposes that the ten horns are "ten Syrian kings," and that the eleventh little horn is Antiochus Epiphanes.

The names of these kings, according to Bertholdt (pp. 432,433), are Seleucus Nicator, Antiochus Sorer, Antiochus Theos, Seleucus Callinicus, Seleucus Ceraunus, Antiochus the Great, Seleucus Philopator, Heliodorus, Ptolemy Philometor, and Demetrius. So also Prof. Stuart, Com. on Dan. p. 208. But it is impossible to make out this exact number of Syrian kings from history, to say nothing now of the improbability of supposing that their power was represented by the fourth beast. These kings were not of the same dynasty, of Syria, of Macedonia, or of Egypt, but the list is made up of different kingdoms. Grotius (*in loc*.) forms the catalogue of ten kings out of the lists of the kings of Syria and Egypt - five out of one, and five out of the other; but this is manifestly contrary to the intention of the prophecy, which is to represent them as springing out of one and the same power. It is a further objection to this view, that these are lists of successive kings - rising up one after the other; whereas the representation of the ten horns would lead us to suppose that they existed simultaneously; or that somehow there were ten powers that sprang out of the one great power represented by the fourth beast.

(5) equally difficult is it, on this supposition, to know who are intended by the "three horns" that were plucked up by the little horn that sprang up among the ten, Daniel 7:8. Grotius, who regards the "little horn" as representing Antiochus Epiphanes, supposes that the three horns were his elder brothers, Seleucus, Demetrius, the son of Seleucus, and Ptolemy Philopator, king of Egypt. But it is an insuperable objection to this that the three kings mentioned by Grotius are not all in his list of ten kings, neither Ptolemy Philometor (if Philometor he meant), nor Demetrius being of the number. - Newton on the Proph. p. 211. Neither were they plucked up by the roots by Antiochus, or by his order. Seieueus was poisoned by his treasurer, Helioderus, whose aim it was to usurp the crown for himself, before Antiochus came from Rome, where he had been detained as a hostage for several years. Demetrius lived to dethrone and murder the son of Antiochus, and succeeded him in the kingdom of Syria. Ptolemy Philopater died king of Egypt almost thirty years before Antiochus came to the throne of Syria; or if Ptolemy Philometer, as is most probable, was meant by Grotius, though he suffered much in the wars with Antiochus, yet he survived him about eighteen years, and died in possession of the crown of Egypt. - Newton, ut supra. Bertlholdt supposes that the three kings were

Heliodorus, who poisoned Seleucus Philopater, and sought, by the help of a party, to obtain the throne; Ptolemy Philometor, king of Egypt, who, as sister‘s son to the king, laid claim to the throne; and Demetrius, who, as son of the former king, was legitimate heir to the throne. But there are two objections to this view;

(a) that the representation by the prophet is of actual kings - which these were not; and

(b) that Antiochus ascended the throne peaceably; Demetrius, who would have been regarded as the king of Syria, not being able to make his title good, was detained as a hostage at Rome. Hengstenberg, pp. 207,208. Prof Stuart, Com. on Dan., pp. 208,209, supposes that the three kings referred to were Heliodorus, Ptolemy Philometer, and Demetrius I; but in regard to these it should be observed, that they were mere pretenders to the throne, whereas the text in Daniel supposes that they would be actual kings. Compare Hengstenberg, p. 208.

(6) The time mentioned here, on the supposition that literally three years and a half Daniel 7:25 are intended, does not agree with the actual dominion of Antiochus. In an undoubted reference to him in Daniel 8:13-14, it is said that “the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation,” would be “unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed;” that is, one thousand and forty days, or some two years and ten months more than the time mentioned here. I am aware of the difficulty of explaining this (see Prof. Stuart, Hints on the Interpretation of Prophecy, p. 98, following), and the exact menning of the passage in Daniel 8:13-14, will come up for consideration hereafter; but it is an objection of some force to the application of the “time, and times, and dividing of a time” Daniel 7:25 to Antiochus, that it is not the same time which is applied to him elsewhere.

(7) And, one more objection to this application is, that, in the prophecy, it is said that he who was represented by the “little horn” would continue until “the Ancient of days should sit,” and evidently until the kingdom should be taken by the one in the likeness of the Son of man, Daniel 7:9-10, Daniel 7:13-14, Daniel 7:21-22, Daniel 7:26. But if this refers to Antiochus,

then these events must refer to the coming of the Messiah, and to the setting up of his kingdom in the world. Yet, as a matter of fact; Antiochus died about 164 years before the Saviour came, and there is no way of showing that he continued until the Messiah came in the flesh.

These objections to the opinion that this refers to Antiochus Epiphanes seem to me to be insuperable.

II. The question whether it refers to the Roman empire and the Papal power. The fair inquiry is, whether the things referred to in the vision actually find such a correspondence in the Roman empire and the Papacy, that they would fairly represent them if the symbols had been made use of after the events occurred. Are they such as we might properly use now as describing the portions of those events that are past, on the supposition that the reference was to those events? To determine this, it will be proper to refer to the things in the symbol, and to inquire whether events corresponding to them have actually occurred in the Roman empire and the Papacy. Recalling the exposition which has been above given of the explanation furnished by the angel to Daniel, the things there referred to will find an ample and a striking fulfillment in the Roman empire and the Papal power.

(1) The fourth kingdom, symbolized by the fourth beast, is accurately represented by the Roman power. This is true in regard to the place which that power would occupy in the history of the world, on the supposition that the first three referred to the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, and the Macedonian. On this supposition there is no need of regarding the Medo-Persian empire as divided into two, represented by two symbols; or the kingdom founded by Alexander - the Asiatic-Macedonian - as distinct from that of his successors. As the Medo-Persian was in fact one dominion, so was the Macedonian under Alexander, and in the form of the four dynasties into which it was divided on his death, and down to the time when the whole was subverted by the Roman conquests. On this supposition, also, everything in the symbol is fulfilled. The fourth beast - so mighty, so terrific, so powerful, so unlike all the others, armed with iron teeth, and with claws of brass, trampling down and stamping on all the earth - well represents the Roman dominion.

The symbol is such a one as we should now use appropriately to represent that power, and in every respect that empire was well represented by the symbol. It may be added, also, that this supposition corresponds with the obvious interpretation of the parallel place in Daniel 2:33, Daniel 2:40, where the same empire is referred to in the image by the legs and feet of iron. See the note at that passage. It should be added, that this fourth kingdom is to be considered as prolonged through the entire continuance of the Roman power, in the various forms in which that power has been kept up on the earth - alike under the empire, and when broken up into separate sovereignties, and when again concentrated and embodied under the Papacy. That fourth power or dominion was to be continued, according to the prediction here, until the establishment of the kingdom of the saints. Either, then, that kingdom of the saints has come, or has been set up, or the fourth kingdom, in some form, still remains.

The truth is, that in prophecy the entire Roman dominion seems to be contemplated as one - one mighty and formidable power trampling down the liberties of the world; oppressing and persecuting the people of God - the true church; and maintaining an absolute and arbitrary dominion over the souls of men - as a mighty domination standing in the way of the progress of truth, and keeping back the reign of the saints on the earth. In these respects the Papal dominion is, and has been, but a prolongation, in another form, of the influence of pagan Rome, and the entire domination may be represented as one, and might be symbolized by the fourth beast in the vision of Daniel. When that power shall cease, we may, according to the prophecy, look for the time when the "kingdom shall be given to the saints," or when the true kingdom of God shall be set up all over the world.

(2) Out of this one sovereignty, represented by the fourth beast, ten powers or sovereignties, represented by the ten horns, were to arise. It was shown in the exposition, that these would all spring out of that one dominion, and would wield the power that was wielded by that; that is, that the one great power would be broken up and distributed into the number represented by ten. As the horns all appeared at the same time on the beast, and did not spring up after one another, so these powers would be simultaneous, and would not be a mere succession; and as the horns all

sprang from the beast, so these powers would all have the same origin, and be a portion of the same one power now divided into many. The question then is, whether the Roman power was in fact distributed into so many sovereignties at any period such as would be represented by the springing up of the little horn - if that refers to the Papacy. Now, one has only to look into any historical work, to see how in fact the Roman power became distributed and broken up in this way into a large number of kingdoms, or comparatively petty sovereignties, occupying the portions of the world once governed by Rome. In the decline of the empire, and as the new power represented by the "little horn" arose, there was a complete breaking up of the one power that was formerly wielded, and a large number of states and kingdoms sprang out of it.

To see that there is no difficulty in making out the number ten, or that some such distribution and breaking up of the one power is naturally suggested, I cast my eye on the historical chart of Lyman, and found the following kingdoms or sovereignties specified as occupying the same territory which was possessed by the Roman empire, and springing from that - namely, the Vandals, Alans, Suevi, Heruli, Franks, Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Burgundians, Lombards, Britons. The Roman empire as such had ceased, and the power was distributed into a large number of comparatively petty sovereignties - well represented at this period by the ten horns on the head of the beast. Even the Romanists themselves admit that the Roman empire was, by means of the incursions of the northern nations, dismembered into ten kingdoms (Calmet on Revelation 13:1; and he refers likewise to Berengaud, Bossuet, and Dupin. See Newton, p. 209); and Machiaveli (Hist. of Flor. 1. i.), with no design of furnishing an illustration of this prophecy, and probably with no recollection of it, has mentioned these names:

1, the Ostrogoths in Moesia;
2, the Visigoths in Pannonia;
3, the Sueves and Alans in Gascoign and Spain;

4, the Vandals in Africa;

5, the Franks in France;

6, the Burgundians in Burgundy;

7, the Heruli and Turingi in Italy;

8, the Saxons and Angles in Britain;

9, the Huns in Hungary;
10, the Lombards at first upon the Danube, afterward in Italy.
The arrangement proposed by Sir Isaac Newton is the following:
1, The kingdom of the Vandals and Alans in Spain and Africa;
2, the kingdom of the Suevians in Spain;
3, the kingdom of the Visigoths;

4, the kingdom of the Alans in Gallia;

5, the kingdom of the Burgundians;

6, the kingdom of the Franks;

7, the kingdom of the Britons;

8. the kingdom of the Huns;

9, the kingdom of the Lombards;
10, the kingdom of Ravenna.

Compare also Duffield on the Prophecies, pp. 279,280. For other arrangements constituting the number ten, as embracing the ancient power of the Roman empire, see Newton on the Prophecies, pp. 209,210. There is some slight variation in the arrangements proposed by Mr. Mede, Bishop Lloyd, and Sir Isaac Newton; but still it is remarkable that it is easy to make out that number with so good a degree of certainty, and particularly so, that it should have been suggested by a Romanist himself. Even if it is not practicable to make out the number with strict exactness, or if all writers do not agree in regard to the dynasties constituting the number ten, we should bear in remembrance the fact that these powers arose in the midst of great confusion; that one kingdom arose and another fell in rapid succession; and that there was not that entire certainty of location and boundary which there

is in old and established states. One thing is certain, that there never has been a case in which an empire of vast power has been broken up into small sovereignties, to which this description would so well apply as to the rise of the numerous dynasties in the breaking up of the vast Roman power; and another thing is equally certain, that if we were now to seek an appropriate symbol of the mighty Roman power - of its conquests, and of the extent of its dominion, and of the condition of that empire, about the time that the Papacy arose, we could not find a more striking or appropriate symbol than that of the terrible fourth beast with iron teeth and brazen claws - stamping the earth beneath his feet, and with ten horns springing out of his head.

(3) in the midst of these there sprang up a little horn that had remarkable characteristics. The inquiry now is, if this does not represent Antiochus, whether it finds a proper fulfillment in the Papacy. Now, in regard to this inquiry, the slightest acquaintance with the history and claims of the Papal power will show that there was a striking appropriateness in the symbol - such an appropriateness, that if we desired now to find a symbol that would represent this, we could find no one better adapted to it than that employed by Daniel.

(a) The little horn would spring up among the others, and stand among them - as dividing the power with them, or sharing or wielding that power. That is, on the supposition that it refers to the Papacy, the Papal power would spring out of the Roman empire; would be one of the sovereignties among which that vast power would be divided, and share with the other ten in wielding authority. It would be an eleventh power added to the ten. And who can be ignorant that the Papal power at the beginning, when it first asserted civil authority, sustained just such a relation to the crumbled and divided Roman empire as this? It was just one of the powers into which that vast sovereignty passed.

(b) It would not spring up contemporaneously with them, but would arise in their midst, when they already existed. They are seen in vision as actually existing together, and this new power starts up among them. What could be more strikingly descriptive of the Papacy - as a power arising when the great Roman authority was broken to fragments, and distributed into a large number of sovereignties?. Then this new power was seen to rise - small at first, but gradually gaining strength, until it surpassed any one of

them in strength, and assumed a position in the world which no one of them had. The representation is exact. It is not a foreign power that invaded them; it starts up in the midst of them - springing out of the head of the same beast, and constituting a part of the same mighty domination that ruled the world.

(c) It would be small at first, but would soon become so powerful as to pluck up and displace three of the others. And could any symbol have been better chosen to describe the Papal power than this? Could we find any now that would better describe it? Any one needs to have but the slightest acquaintance with the history of the Papal power to know that it was small at its beginnings, and that its ascendency over the world was the consequence of slow but steady growth. Indeed, so feeble was it at its commencement, so undefined were its first appearance and form, that one of the most difficult things in history is to know exactly when it did begin, or to determine the exact date of its origin as a distinct power. Different schemes in the interpretation of prophecy turn wholly on this. We see, indeed, that power subsequently strongly marked in its character, and exerting a mighty influence in the world - having subjugated nations to its control; we see causes for a long time at work tending to this, and can trace their gradual operation in producing it, but the exact period when its dominion began, what was the first characteristic act of the Papacy as such, what constituted its precise beginning as a peculiar power blending and combining a peculiar civil and ecclesiastical authority, no one is able with absolute certainty to determine. Who can fix the exact date? Who can tell precisely when it was? It is true that there were several distinct acts, or the exercise of civil authority, in the early history of the Papacy, but what was the precise beginning of that power no one has been able to determine with so much certainty as to leave no room for doubt. Any one can see with what propriety the commencement of such a power would be designated by a little horn springing up among others.

(d) It would grow to be mighty, for the “little horn” thus grew to be so powerful as to pluck up three of the horns of the beast. Of the growth of the power of the Papacy no one can be ignorant who has any acquaintance with history. It held nations in subjection, and claimed and exercised the right of displacing and distributing crowns as it pleased.

(e) It would subdue “three kings;” that is, three of the ten represented by the ten horns. The prophet saw this at some point in its progress when three fell before it, or were overthrown by it. There might have been also other points in its history when it might have been seen as having overthrown more of them - perhaps the whole ten, but the attention was arrested by the fact that, soon after its rise, three of the ten were seen to fall before it. Now, in regard to the application of this, it may be remarked,

(1) That it does not apply, as already shown, to Antiochus Epiphanes - there being no sense in which he overthrew three of the princes that occupied the throne in the succession from Alexander, to say nothing of the fact that these were contemporaneous kings or kingdoms.

(2) there is no other period in history, and there are no other events to which it could be applied except either to Antiochus or the Papacy.

(3) in the confusion that existed on the breaking up of the Roman empire, and the imperfect accounts of the transactions which occurred in the rise of the Papal power, it would not be wonderful if it should be difficult to find events distinctly recorded that would be in all respects an accurate and absolute fulfillment of the vision.

(4) yet it is possible to make out the fulfillment of this with a good degree of certainty in the history of the Papacy. If applicable to the Papal power, what seems to be demanded is, that three of these ten kingdoms, or sovereignties should be rooted up by that power; that they should cease to exist as separate sovereignties; that they should be added to the sovereignty that should spring up; and that, as distinct kingdoms, they should cease to play a part in the history of the world. The three sovereignties thus transplanted, or rooted up, are supposed by Mr. Mede to have been the Greeks, the Longobards, and the Franks. Sir Isaac Newton supposes they were the Exarchate of Ravenna, the Lombards, and the senate and dukedom of Rome. The objections which may be made to these suppositions may be seen in Newton on the Prophecies, pp. 216,217. The kingdoms which he supposes are to be referred to were the following:

First. The Exarchate of Ravenna. This of right belonged to the Greek emperors. This was the capital of their dominions in Italy. It revolted at the instigation of the Pope, and was seized by Astolphus, king of the Lombards, who thought to make himself master of Italy. The Pope in his exigency applied for aid to Pepin, king of France, who marched into Italy, besieged the Lombards in Pavia, and forced them to surrender the Exarchate and other territories in Italy. These were not restored to the Greek emperor, as they in justice should have been, but, at the solicitation of the Pope, were given to Peter and his successors for perpetual possession. "And so," says Platina, "the name of the Exarchate, which had continued from the time of Narses to the taking of Ravenna, one hundred and seventy years, was extinguished." - Lives of the Popes. This, according to Sigonius, was effected in the year 755. See Gibbon, Dec. and Fall, vol. ii. 224; iii. 332,334,338. From this period, says Bp. Newton, the Popes being now become temporal princes, no longer date their epistles and bulls by the years of the emperor's reign, but by the years of their own advancement to the Papal chair.

Secondly. The kingdom of the Lombards. This kingdom was troublesome to the Popes. The dominions of the Pope were invaded by Desiderius, in the time of Pope Adrian I. Application was again made to the king of France, and Charles the Great, the son and successor of Pepin, invaded the Lombards; and desirous of enlarging his own dominions, conquered the Lombards, put an end to their kingdom, and gave a great part of their territory to the Pope. This was the end of the kingdom of the Lombards, in the 206th year after their obtaining possessions in Italy, and in the year of our Lord 774. See Gibbon, Dec. and Fall, vol. iii. 335.

Thirdly. The Roman States subjected to the Popes in a civil sense. Though subjected to the Pope spiritually, yet for a long time the Roman people were governed by a senate, and retained many of their old privileges, and elected both the Western Emperors and the Popes. This power, however, as is well known, passed into the hands of the Popes, and has been retained by them to the present time, the Pope having continued to be the civil as well as the ecclesiastical head. See Bp. Newton, pp. 319,320. All semblance of the freedom of ancient Rome passed away, and this Roman dominion, as such, ceased to be, being completely absorbed in the

Papacy. The Saxons, the Franks, etc., continued their independence as civil powers; these states passed entirely into the dominion of the Pope, and as independent kingdoms or sovereignties ceased to be. This is the solution in regard to the "three horns" that were to be plucked up, as given by Bp. Newton. Absolute certainly in a case of this kind is not to be expected in the confusion and indefiniteness of that portion of history, nor can it be reasonably demanded.

If there were three of these powers planted in regions that became subject to the Papal power, and that disappeared or were absorbed in that one dominion constituting the peculiarity of the Papal dominion, or which entered into the Roman Papal state, considered as a sovereignty by itself among the nations of the earth, this is all that is required. Mr. Faber supposes the three to have been these; the Herulo-Turingic, the Ostrogothic, and the Lombardie, and says of them, that they "were necessarily eradicated in the immediate presence of the Papacy, before which they were geographically standing - and that the temporal principality which bears the name of Peter's patrimony, was carved out of the mass of their subjugated dominions." - Sacred Calendar, vol. ii. p. 102. Prof. Gaussen (Discourse on Popery: Geneva, 1844) supposes that the three kings or kingdoms here referred to were the Heruli, the Ostrogoths, and the Lombards. According to Bower (Lives of the Popes, vol. ii. 108, Dr. Cox's edition, note), the temporal dominions granted by Pepin to the Pope, or of which the Pope became possessed in consequence of the intervention of the kings of France, were the following:

(1) The Exarchate of Ravenna, which comprised, according to Sigonius, the following cities: Ravenna, Bologna, Imola, Fienza, Forlimpoli, Forli, Cesena, Bobbio, Ferrara, Commachio. Adria, Servia, and Secchia

(2) The Pentapolis, comprehending Rimini, Pesaro, Coneha, Fano, Sinigalia, Ancono, Osimo, Umono, Jesi, Fossombrone, Monteferetro, Urbino, Cagli, Lucoli, and Eugubio.

(3) the city and dukedom of Rome, containing several cities of note, which had withdrawn themselves from all subjection to the emperor, had submitted to Peter ever since the time of Pope Gregory II. See also Bower,

ii. 134, where he says, “The Pope had, by Charlemagne, been put in possession of the Exarchate, the Pentapolis, and the dukedom of Spoleti” (embracing the city and dukedom of Rome). And again, on the same page (note): “The Pope possessed the Exarchate, the Pentapolis, and the dukedom of Spoleti, with the city and dukedom of Rome.” It should be remembered that these statements are made by historians with no reference to any supposed fulfillment of this prophecy, and no allusion to it, but as matters of simple historical fact, occurring in the regular course of history. The material fact to be made out in order to show that this description of the “little horn” is applicable to the Papacy is, that at the - commencement of what was properly the Papacy - that is, as I suppose, the union of the spiritual and temporal power, or the assumption, of temporal authority by him who was Bishop of Rome, and who had been before regarded as a mere spiritual or ecclesiastical ruler, there was a triple jurisdiction assumed or conceded, a threefold domination; or a union under himself of what had been three sovereignties, that now disappeared as independent administrations, and whose distinct governments were now merged in the one single sovereignty of the Pope. Now, that there was, just at this time, or at the beginning of the Papacy, or when it had so increased that it could be recognized as having a place among the temporal sovereignties of the earth, such a united domination, or such a union of three separate powers under one, will be apparent from an extract from Mr. Gibbon. He is speaking of the rewards conferred on the Pope by the Carlovingian race of kings, on account of the favor shown to them in his conferring the crown of France on Pepin, the mayor of the palace - directing in his favor over Childeric, the descendant of Clovis. Of this transaction, Mr. Gibbon observes, in general (iii. 336), that “the mutual obligations of the Popes and the Carlovingian family form the important link of ancient and modern, of civil and ecclesiastical history.” He then proceeds

(1) to specify the gifts or favors which the Popes conferred on the Carlovingian race; and

(2) those which, in return, Pepin and Charlemagne bestowed on the Popes. In reference to the latter, he makes the following statement (iii. 338): “The gratitude of the Carlovingians was adequate to these obligations, and their names are consecrated as the saviours and benefactors of the Roman

church. Her ancient patrimony of farms and houses was transformed by their bounty into the temporal dominion of cities and provinces, and the donation of the Exarchate was the first-fruits of the conquests of Pepin. Astolphus (king of the Lombards) with a sigh relinquished his prey; the keys and the hostages of the principal cities were delivered to the French ambassador; and in his master‘s name he presented them before the tomb of Peter. The ample measure of the Exarchate might comprise all the provinces of Italy which had obeyed the emperor or his vicegerent; but its strict and proper limits were included in the territories of Ravenna, Bologna, and Ferrara; its inseparable dependency was the Pentapolis, which stretched along the Adriatic from Rimini to Ancona, and advanced into the midland country as far as the ridge of the Apennines. In this transaction, the ambition and avarice of the Popes have been severely condemned.

Perhaps the humility of a Christian priest should have rejected an earthly kingdom, which it was not easy for him to govern without renouncing the virtues of his profession. Perhaps a faithful subject, or even a generous enemy, would have been less impatient to divide the spoils of the barbarian; and if the emperor had entrusted Stephen to solicit in his name the restitution of the Exarchate, I will not absolve the Pope from the reproach of treachery and falsehood. But, in the rigid interpretation of the laws, every one may accept, without inquiry, whatever his benefactor may bestow without injustice. The Greek emperor had abdicated or forfeited his right to the Exarctiate; and the sword of Astolphus was broken by the stronger sword of the Carlovingian. It was not in the cause of the Iconoclast that Pepin had exposed his person and army in a double expedition beyond the Alps; he possessed, and he might lawfully alienate his conquests: and to the importunities of the Greeks he piously replied, that no human consideration should tempt him to resume the gift which he had conferred on the Roman pontiff for the remission of his sins and the salvation of his soul.

The splendid donation was granted in supreme and absolute dominion, and the world beheld for the first time a Cristian bishop invested with the prerogatives of a temporal prince, the choice of magistrates, the exercise of justice, the imposition of taxes, and the wealth of the palace of Ravenna. In the dissolution of the Lombard kingdom, the inhabitants of the duchy of Spoleti sought a refuge from the storm, shaved their heads after the

Ravenna fashion, declared themselves the servants and subjects of Peter, and completed, by this voluntary surrender, the present circle of the Ecclesiastical State." The following things are apparent from this extract:

(a) That here, according to Mr. Gibbon, was the beginning of the temporal power of the Pope.

(b) That this was properly, in the view above taken, the commencement of the Papacy as a distinct and peculiar dominion.

(c) That in this there was a threefold government, or three temporal sovereignties united under him, and constituting at that time, in the language of Mr. Gibbon, "the present circle of the ecclesiastical state." There was, first, the Exarchate of Ravenna; secondly, the Pentapolis, "which," he says, was its inseparable dependency; and, thirdly, the "duchy of Spoleti," which, he says, "completed the present circle of the ecclesiastical state." This was afterward, Mr. Gibbon goes on to say, greatly "enlarged;" but this was the form in which the Papal power first made its appearance among the temporal sovereignties of Europe. I do not find, indeed, that the kingdom of the Lombards was, as is commonly stated, among the number of the temporal sovereignties that became subject to the authority of the Popes, but I do find that there were three distinct temporal sovereignties that lost their independent existence, and that were united under that one temporal authority - constituting by the union of the spiritual and temporal power that one peculiar kingdom. In Lombardy the power remained in the possession of the kings of the Lombards themselves, until that kingdom was subdued by the arms of Pepin and Charlemagne, and then it became subject to the crown of France, though for a time under the nominal reign of its own kings. See Gibbon, iii. 334,335,338. If it should be said, that in the interpretation of this passage respecting the "three horns" that were plucked up, or the three kingdoms that were thus destroyed, it would be proper to look for them among the ten, into which the one great kingdom was divided, and that the three above referred to - the Exarchate of Ravenna, the Pentapolis, and the dukedom of Spoleti and Rome - were not properly of that number, according to the list above given, it is necessary, in reply to this, to advert only to the two main facts in the case:

(1) that the great Roman power was actually divided into a large number of sovereignties that sprang up on its ruins - usually, but not in fact exactly, represented by ten; and

(2) that the Papacy began its career with a conceded dominion over the three territories above referred to - a part, in fact, of the one great dominion constituting the Roman power, and in the same territory. It is a remarkable fact that the popes to this day wear a triple crown - a fact that exists in regard to no other monarchs - as if they had absorbed under themselves three separate and distinct sovereignties; or as if they represented three separate forms of dominion. The sum of what is said in the exposition of these verses may be thus expressed:

(1) That there was originally one great sovereignty represented here by the "fourth beast" - the Roman empire.

(2) that, in fact, as is abundantly confirmed by history, this one great and united power was broken up into a large number of separate and independent sovereignties - most naturally and obviously described by ten, or such as would appear in a prophetic vision to be ten, and such as is actually so represented by historians having no interest in the fulfillment of the prophecy, and no designed reference to what may be symbolized by the "ten horns."

(3) that there was another peculiar and distinct power that sprang out of them, and that grew to be mighty - a power unlike the others, and unlike anything that had before appeared in the world - combining qualities to be found in no other sovereignty - having a peculiar relation at the same time to the one original sovereignty, and to the ten into which that was divided - the prolongation, in an important sense, of the power of the one, and springing up in a peculiar manner among the others - that peculiar ecclesiastical and civil power - the Papacy - well represented by the "little horn."

(4) that, in fact, this one power absorbed into itself three of these sovereignties - annihilating them as independent powers, and combining

them into one most peculiar dominion - properly represented by “plucking them up.”

(5) that as a proper symbol, or emblem of some such domination, a crown or diadem is still worn, most naturally and obviously suggesting such a threefold absorption of dominion.

(6) that all this is actually prefigured by the symbols employed by the prophet, or that the symbols are such as would be naturally employed on the supposition that these events were designed to be referred to.

(7) and that there have been no other historical events to which these remarkable symbols could be naturally and obviously applied. And if these things are so, how are they to be explained except on the supposition that Daniel was inspired? Has man any natural sagacity by which such symbols representing the future could be suggested?

(d) It would be arrogant and proud, “speaking great words against the Most High.” No Protestant will doubt that this is true of the Papacy; no one acquainted with history will presume to call it in question. The arrogant pretensions of the Papacy have been manifested in all the history of that power, and no one can doubt that its assumptions have been, in fact, by fair construction, “a speaking of great words against God.” The Pope has claimed, or allowed to be conferred on him, names and prerogatives which can belong only to God. See this fully shown in the notes at 2 Thessalonians 2:4. The facts there referred to are all that is necessary to illustrate this passage, on the supposition that it refers to the Papacy. Compare also the Literalist, vol. i. pp. 24-27.

(e) This would be a persecuting power - “making war with the saints,” and “wearing out the saints of the Most High.” Can anyone doubt that this is true of the Papacy? The Inquisition; the “persecutions of the Waldenses;” the ravages of the Duke of Alva; the fires of Smithfield; the tortures at Goa - indeed, the whole history of the Papacy may be appealed to in proof that this is applicable to that power. If anything could have “worn out the saints of the Most High” - could have cut them off from the earth so that evangelical religion would have become extinct, it would have been the

persecutions of the Papal power. In the year 1208, a crusade was proclaimed by Pope Innocent III against the Waldenses and Albigenses, in which a million of men perished. From the beginning of the order of the Jesuits, in the year 1540 to 1580, nine hundred thousand were destroyed. One hundred and fifty thousand perished by the Inquisition in thirty years. In the Low Countries fifty thousand persons were hanged, beheaded, burned, or buried alive, for the crime of heresy, within the space of thirty-eight years from the edict of Charles V, against the Protestants, to the peace of Chateau Cambresis in 1559. Eighteen thousand suffered by the hands of the executioner, in the space of five years and a half, during the administration of the Duke of Alva. Indeed, the slightest acquaintance with the history of the Papacy, will convince anyone that what is here said of "making war with the saints" Daniel 7:21, and "wearing out the saints of the Most High" Daniel 7:25, is strictly applicable to that power, and will accurately describe its history. There have been, indeed, other persecuting powers, but none to which this language would be so applicable, and none which it would so naturally suggest. In proof of this, it is only necessary to refer to the history of the Papacy, and to what it has done to extirpate those who have professed a different faith. Let anyone recall:

(1) the persecution of the Waldenses;

(2) the acts of the Duke of Alva in the Low Countries;

(3) the persecution in England under Mary;

(4) the Inquisition;

(5) the attempts, too successful, to extinguish all the efforts at reformation in Italy and Spain in the time of Luther and Calvin (see McCrie), and

(6) the attempts to put down the Reformation in Germany and Switzerland - all which were either directly originated or sanctioned by the Papacy, and all for the same end, and he will see no reason to doubt that the language here is strictly applicable to that power, and that there has been no government on earth which would be so naturally suggested by it. -

Cunninghame, in the Literalist, i. 27,28. Indeed, who can number up all that have perished in the Inquisition alone?

(h) It would claim legislative power - “thinking to change times and laws.” The original Chaldee here may be rendered, as is done by Gesenius and DeWette, set times, stated times, or festival seasons. The word here, says Gesenius (Lexicon), is “spoken of sacred seasons, festivals,” and there can be no doubt that in this place it refers to religious institutions. The meaning is, that he would claim control over such institutions or festivals, and that he would appoint or change them at his pleasure. He would abolish or modify existing institutions of that kind, or he would institute new ones, as should seem good to him. This would be applicable, then, to some power that should claim authority to prescribe religious institutions, and to change the laws of God. No one, also, can fail to see a fulfillment of this in the claims of the Papacy, in setting up a jurisdiction over seasons of festival and fast; and in demanding that the laws of kingdoms should be so modelled as to sustain its claims, and modifying the laws of God as revealed in the Bible. The right of deposing and setting up kings; of fixing the boundaries of nations; of giving away crowns and scepters; and of exercising dominion over the sacred seasons, the customs, the amusements of nations - all these, as illustrated under the Papacy, will leave no doubt that all this would find an ample fulfillment in the history of that power. The Pope has claimed to be the head of the church, and has asserted and exercised the right of appointing sacred seasons; of abolishing ancient institutions; of introducing numberless new festival occasions, practically abrogating the laws of God on a great variety of subjects. We need only refer, in illustration of this,

(a) to the claim of infallibility, by which an absolute jurisdiction is asserted that covers the whole ground;

(b) to all the laws pertaining to image-worship, so directly in the face of the laws of God;

(c) to the celibacy of the clergy, rendering void one of the laws of heaven in relation to marriage;

(d) to the whole doctrine respecting purgatory;

(e) to the doctrine of transubstantiation;

(f) to the practical abolition of the Christian Sabbath by appointing numerous saints‘ days to be observed as equally sacred;

(g) to the law withholding the cup from the laity - contrary to the commandment of the Saviour; and

(h) in general to the absolute control claimed by the Papacy over the whole subject of religion.

Indeed, nothing would better characterize this power than to say that it asserted the right to “change times and laws.” And to all this should be added another characteristic Daniel 7:8, that “it would have the eyes of a man;” that is, would be distinguished for a far-seeing sagacity. Could this be so appropriately applied to anything else as to the deep, the artful, and the far-reaching diplomacy of the court of Rome; to the sagacity of the Jesuit; to the skillful policy which subdued the world to itself?

These illustrations will leave no doubt, it seems to me, that all that is here said will find an ample fulfillment in the Papacy, and that it is to be regarded as having a reference to that power. If so, it only remains,

III. To inquire what, according to his interpretation, we are to expect will yet occur, or what light this passage throws on events that are yet future. The origin, the growth, the general character and influence of this power up to a distant period are illustrated by this interpretation. What remains is the inquiry, from the passage before us, how long this is to continue, and what we are to anticipate in regard to its fall. The following points, then, would seem to be clear, on the supposition that this refers to the Papal power:

It is to continue a definite period from its establishment, Daniel 7:25. This duration is mentioned as “a time, and times, and the dividing of a time” - three years and a half - twelve hundred and sixty days - twelve hundred and sixty years. See the note at that verse. The only difficulty in regard to this, if that interpretation is correct, is to determine the time when

the Papacy actually began - the *terminus a quo* - and this has given rise to all the diversity of explanation among Protestants. Assuming any one time as the period when the Papal power arose, as a date from which to calculate, it is easy to compute from that date, and to fix some period - *terminus ad quem* - to which this refers, and which may be looked to as the time of the overthrow of that power. But there is nothing more difficult in history than the determination of the exact time when the Papacy properly began: that is, when the peculiar domination which is fairly understood by that system commenced in the world; or what were its first distinguishing acts. History has not so marked that period that there is no room for doubt. It has not affixed definite dates to it; and to this day it is not easy to make out the time when that power commenced, or to designate any one event at a certain period that will surely mark it. It seems to have been a gradual growth, and its commencement has not been so definitely characterized as to enable us to demonstrate with absolute certainty the time to which the twelve hundred and sixty years will extend.

Different writers have assigned different periods for the rise of the Papacy, and different acts as the first act of that power; and all the prophecies as to its termination depend on the period which is fixed on as the time of its rise. It is this which has led to so much that is conjectural, and which has been the occasion of so much disappointment, and which throws so much obscurity now over all calculations as to the termination of that power.

DANIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Introduction

Analysis of the Chapter

This chapter contains an account of a vision seen by the prophet in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar. The prophet either was, or appeared to be, in the city of - afterward the capital of the Persian empire, in the province of Elam. To that place - then an important town - there is no improbability in supposing that he had gone, as he was then unconnected with the government, or not employed by the government Daniel 8:2.

While there, he saw a ram with two horns, one higher than the other, pushing westward, and northward, and southward, so powerful that nothing could oppose him. As he was looking on this, he saw a he-goat come from the west, bounding along, and scarcely touching the ground, with a single remarkable horn between his eyes. This he-goat attacked the ram, broke his two horns, and overcame him entirely. The he-goat became very strong, but at length the horn was broken, and there came up four in its place. From one of these there sprang up a little horn that became exceeding great and mighty, extending itself toward the south, and the east, and the pleasant land - the land of Palestine. This horn became so mighty that it seemed to attack "the host of heaven" - the stars; it cast some of them down to the ground; it magnified itself against the Prince of the host; it caused the daily sacrifice in the temple to cease, and the sanctuary of the Prince of the host was cast down.

An earnest inquiry was made by one saint to another how long this was to continue, and the answer was, unto two thousand and three hundred days, and that then the sanctuary would be cleansed. Gabriel is then sent to explain the vision to the prophet, and he announces that the ram with the two horns represented the kings of Media and Persia; the goat, the king of Greece; the great horn between his eyes, the first king; the four horns that sprang up after that was broken, the four dynasties into which the kingdom would be divided; and the little horn, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, and that would stand up against the Prince of princes, and that would ultimately be destroyed. The effect of this was, that Daniel was overcome by the vision for a certain time; afterward he revived, and attended to the business of the king, but none understood the vision.

This is one of the few prophecies in the Scriptures that are explained to the prophets themselves, and it becomes, therefore, important as a key to explain other prophecies of a similar character. Of the reference to the kingdom of Media and Persia, and to the kingdom of Greece, there is an express statement. The application of a portion of the prophecy to Alexander the Great, and to the four monarchies into which his kingdom was divided at his death, is equally certain. And there can be as little doubt of the application of the remainder to Antiochus Epiptianes, and in this, nearly all expositors are agreed. Indeed, so striking and clear is the application to this series of historical events, that Porphyry maintained that this, as well as other portions of Daniel, were written after the events occurred. One of two things, indeed, is certain - either that this was written after the events here referred to occurred, or that Daniel was inspired. No man by any natural sagacity could have predicted these events with so much accuracy and particularity.

The portion of Daniel which follows is in pure Hebrew. The portion of the book from the fourth verse of the second chapter to the end of the seventh chapter was written in Chaldee. On this point, see Intro. Section IV. III. (1).

Verse 1

In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar - In regard to Belshazzar, see Intro. to Daniel 7:1. Compare Daniel 8:17-18, where the prophet represents himself as overpowered, and as falling down to the earth on account of the vision. The representation would seem to have been made to pass before his mind in open day, and when he was fully awake. Compare the case of Balaam, Numbers 24:4: "Which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open."

After what appeared unto me at the first - That occurred in the first year of Belshazzar, Daniel 7:1.

Verse 2

And I saw in a vision - I looked as the vision appeared to me; or I saw certain things represented to me in a vision. On the word vision, see the notes at Daniel 1:17. The meaning here would seem to be that a vision

appeared to Daniel, and that he contemplated it with earnestness, to understand what it meant.

That I was at Shushan - As remarked in the introduction to this chapter, this might mean that he seemed to be there, or that the vision was represented to him as being there; but the most natural construction is to suppose that Daniel was actually there himself. Why he was there he has not informed us directly - whether he was on public business, or on his own. From Daniel 8:27, however - "Afterward I rose up, and did the king's business" - it would seem most probable that he was then in the service of the king. This supposition will not conflict with the statement in Daniel 5:10-11, in which the queen-mother, when the handwriting appeared on the wall of the palace informs Belshazzar that there was "a man in his kingdom in whom was the spirit of the holy gods, etc." - from which it might be objected that Daniel was at that time unknown to the king, and could not have been in his employ, for it might have been a fact that he was in the employ of the king as an officer of the government, and yet it may have been forgotten that he had this power of disclosing the meaning of visions.

He may have been employed in the public service, but his services to the father of the king, and his extraordinary skill in interpreting dreams and visions may not at once have occurred to the affrighted monarch and his courtiers. Shushan, or Susa, the chief town of Susiana, was the capital of Persia after the time of Cyrus, in which the kings of Persia had their principal residence, Nehemiah 1:1; Esther 1:2-5. It was situated on the Eulaeus or Choaspes, probably on the spot now occupied by the village Shus. - Rennel, Geog. of Herodotus; Kinneir, Mem. Pers. Emp.; K. Porter's Travels, ii. 4,11; Ritter, Erdkunde, Asien, 9: 294; Pict. Bib. *in loc*. At Shus there are extensive ruins, stretching perhaps twelve miles from one extremity to the other, and consisting, like the other ruins in that country, of hillocks of earth, and rubbish, covered with broken, pieces of brick and colored tile. At the foot of these mounds is the so-called tomb of Daniel, a small building erected on the spot where the remains of Daniel are believed in that region to rest.

It is apparently modern, but nothing but the belief that this was the site of the prophet's sepulchre could have led to its being built in the place where it stands - Malcolm, Hist. of Persia, i. 255,256. The city of Shus is now a gloomy wilderness, inhabited by lions, hyenas, and other beasts of

prey. - Kitto‘s Cyclo., art. “Shushan.” Sir John Kinneir says that the dread of these animals compelled Mr. Monteith and himself to take shelter for the night within the walls that encompass Daniel‘s tomb. Of that tomb Sir John Malcolm says, “It is a small building, but sufficient to shelter some dervishes who watch the remains of the prophet, and are supported by the alms of pious pilgrims, who visit the holy sepulchre. The dervishes are now the only inhabitants of Susa; and every species of wild beast roams at large over the spot on which some of the proudest palaces ever raised by human art once stood.” - Vol. i. pp. 255,256. For a description of the ruins of Susa, see Pict. Bib. *in loc*. This city was about 450 Roman miles from Seleucia, and was built, according to Pliny, 6; 27, in a square of about 120 stadia. It was the summer residence of the Persian kings (Cyrop. 8,6,10), as they passed the spring in Ecbatana, and the autumn and winter in Babylon. See Lengerke, *in loc*. It was in this city that Alexander the Great married Stateira, daughter of Darius Codomanus. The name means a lily, and was probably given to it on account of its beauty - Lengerke. Rosenmuller supposes that the vision here is represented to have appeared to Daniel in this city because it would be the future capital of Persia, and because so much of the vision pertained to Persia. See Maurer, *in loc*.

In the palace - This word (בירה *bîyrâh*) means a fortress, a castle, a fortified palace. - Gesenius. See Nehemiah 1:1; Esther 1:5; Esther 2:5; Esther 8:14; Esther 9:6, Esther 9:11-12. It would seem to have been given to the city because it was a fortified place. The word applied not only to the palace proper, a royal residence, but to the whole adjacent city. It is not necessary to suppose that Daniel was in the palace proper, but only that he was in the city to which the name was given.

Which is in the province of Elam - See the notes at Isaiah 11:11. This province was bounded on the east by Persia Proper, on the west by Babylonia, on the north by Media, and on the south by the Persian Gulf. It was about half as large as Persia, and not quite as large as England. - Kitto‘s Cyclo. It was probably conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, and in the time of Belshazzar was subject to the Babylonian dominion, Shushan had been doubtless the capital of the kingdom of Elam while it continued a separate kingdom, and remained the capital of the province while it was under the Babylonian yoke, and until it was subdued as a part of the empire by Cyrus. It was then made one of the capitals of the united Medo-Persian empire. It was when it was the capital of a province that it was visited by Daniel, and

that he saw the vision there. Possibly he may have dwelt there subsequently, and died there.

And I was by the river of Ulai - This river flowed by the city of Shushan, or Susa, and fell into the united stream of the Tigris and the Euphrates. It is called by Pliny (Nat. Hist. vi. 81) Eulaeus; but it is described by Greek writers generally under the name of Choaspes. - Herod. v. 49; Strabo, xv. p. 728. It is now known by the name Kerah, called by the Turks Karasu. It passes on the west of the ruins of Shus (Susa), and enters the Shat-ul-Arab about twenty miles below Korna. - Kinneir, Geog. Mem. of the Persian Empire, pp. 96,97. See Kitto's Cyclo., art. "Ulai"

Verse 3

Then I lifted up mine eyes and saw - And saw in vision, or there seemed to be before me.

There stood before the river - On the bank of the river.

A ram which had two horns - There can be no error in explaining the design of this symbol, for in Daniel 8:20 it is expressly said that it denoted the two kings of Media and Persia. The united power of the kingdom was denoted by the ram itself; the fact that there were two powers or kingdoms combined, by the two horns of the ram.

And the two horns were high - Both indicating great power.

But one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last - The higher horn springing up last denotes Persia, that became the more mighty power of the two, so that the name Media became finally almost dropped, and the united kingdom was known in Grecian history as the Persian The Median or Assyrian power was the older, but the Persian became the most mighty.

Verse 4

I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward - Denoting the conquests of the united kingdom. The east is not mentioned, for none of the conquests of the Medo-Persian empire extended in that direction: Yet nothing could better express the conquests actually made by the Medo-Persian empire than this representation. On the west the conquests embraced Babylonia, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Asia Minor; on the north, Colchis, Armenia, Iberia, and the regions around the Caspian Sea; and on the south, Palestine, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Lybia. - Lengerke. This Medo-Persian power is represented as coming from the east. Isaiah 41:2:

“who raised up the righteous man from the east, etc.” Isaiah 46:11: “calling a ravenous bird from the east, etc.”

He did according to his will, and became great - This expresses well also the character of the Medo-Persian empire. It extended over a great part of the known world, subduing to itself a large portion of the earth. In its early conquests it met with no successful opposition, nor was it stayed until it was subdued by Greece - as at Leuctra and Marathon, and then as it was finally overthrown by Alexander the Great.

Verse 5

And as I was considering - As I was looking on this vision. It was a vison which would naturally attract attention, and one which would not be readily understood. It evidently denoted some combined power that was attempting conquest, but we are not to suppose that Daniel would readily understand what was meant by it. The whole scene was future - for the Medo-Persian power was not yet consolidated in the time of Belshazzar, and the conquests represented by the ram continued through many years, and those denoted by the he-goat extended still much further into futurity.

Behold, an he-goat came from the west - In Daniel 8:21, this is called the “rough-goat,” There can be no doubt as to the application of this, for in Daniel 8:21 it is expressly said that it was “the king of Grecia.” The power represented is that of Greece when it was consolidated under Alexander the Great, and when he went forth to the subjugation of this vast Persian empire. It may serve to illustrate this, and to show the propriety of representing the Macedonian power by the symbol of a goat, to remark that this symbol is often found, in various ways, in connection with Macedon, and that, for some reason, the goat was used as emblematic of that power. A few facts, furnished to the editor of Calmet‘s Dictionary, by Taylor Combe, Esq., will show the propriety of this allusion to Macedonia under the emblem of a goat, and that the allusion would be readily understood in after-times. They are condensed here from his account in Taylor‘s Calmet, v. 410-412.

(1) Caranus, the first king of the Macedonians, commenced his reign 814 years before the Christian era. The circumstance of his being led by goats to the city of Edessa, the name of which, when he established there the seat of his kingdom, he converted into AEgae, is well worthy of remark: Urbem Edessam, ob memoriam muneris AEgas populam AEgeadas. -

Justin, lib. vii. c. 1. The adoption of the goat as an emblem of Macedon would have been early suggested by an important event in their history.

(2) bronze figures of a goat have been found as the symbol of Macedon. Mr. Combe says, “I have lately had an opportunity of procuring an ancient bronze figure of a goat with one horn, which was the old symbol of Macedon. As figures representing the types of ancient countries are extremely rare, and as neither a bronze nor marble symbol of Macedon has been hitherto noticed, I beg leave to trouble you with the few following observations, etc.” He then says, “The goat which is sent for your inspection was dug up in Asia Minor, and was brought, together with other antiquities, into this country by a poor Turk.” The annexed engraving is a representation of this figure. The slightest inspection of this figure will show the propriety of the representation before us. Mr. Combe then says, “Not only many of the individual towns in Macedon and Thrace employed this type, but the kingdom itself of Macedon, which is the oldest in Europe of which we have any regular and connected history, was represented also by a goat, with this peculiarity, that it had but one horn.”

(3) In the reign of Amyntas the First, nearly 300 years after Caranus, and about 547 years before Christ, the Macedonians, upon being threatened with an invasion, became tributary to the Persians. In one of the pilasters of Persepolis, this very event seems to be recorded in a manner that throws considerable light on this subject. A goat is represented with an immense horn growing out of the middle of his forehead, and a man in a Persian dress is seen by his side, holding the horn with his left hand, by which is signified the subjection of Macedon. The subjoined is the figure referred to, and it strikingly shows how early this symbol was used.

(4) In the reign of Archelaus of Macedon, 413 b.c., there occurs on the reverse of a coin of that king the head of a goat having only one horn. Of this coin, so remarkable for the single horn, there are two varieties, one (No. 1) engraved by Pellerin, and the oth. er (No. 2) preserved in the cabinet of the late Dr. W. Hunter.

(5) “there is a gem,” says Mr. Combe, “engraved in the Florentine collection, which, as it confirms what has been already said, and has not

hitherto been understood, I think worthy of mention. It will be seen by the drawing of this gem that nothing more or less is meant by the ram‘s head with two horns, and the goat‘s head with one, than the kingdoms of Persia and Macedon, represented under their appropriate symbols. From the circumstance, however; of these characteristic types being united, it is extremely probable that the gem was engraved after the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great.” These remarks and illustrations will show the propriety of the symbol used here, and show also how readily it would be understood in after-times. There is no evidence that Daniel understood that this ever had been a symbol of Mace-donia, or that, if he had, he could have conjectured, by any natural sagacity, that a power represented by that symbol would have become the conqueror of Media and Persia, and every circumstance, therefore, connected with this only shows the more clearly that he was under the influence of inspiration. It is affirmed by Josephus (Ant. b. xi. ch. viii.) that when Alexander was at Jerusalem, the prophecies of Daniel respecting him were shown to him by the high priest, and that this fact was the means of his conferring important favors on the Jews. If such an event occurred, the circumstances here alluded to show how readily Alexander would recognize the reference to his own country, and to himself, and how probable the account of Josephus is, that this was the means of conciliating him toward the Jewish people. The credibilty of the account, which has been called in question, is examined in Newton on the Prophecies, pp. 241-246.

On the face of the whole earth - He seemed to move over the whole world - well representing the movements of Alexander, who conquered the known world, and who is said to have wept because there were no other worlds to conquer.

And touched not the ground - Margin, none touched him in the earth. The translation in the text, however, is more correct than that in the margin. He seemed to bound along as if he did not touch the ground - denoting the rapidity of his movements and conquests. A similar description of great beauty occurs in Virgil, AEn. vii. 806, following of Camillia:

“*Cursu pedum pravertere ventos.*
Illa vel intactae segetis per summa volaret
Gramina, nec teneras cursu laesisset aristas,

Vel mare per medium fluctu suspensa tumenti

Ferretiter, celeres nec tingeret aequore plantas ”

Nothing would better express the rapid conquests of Alexander the Great than the language employed by Daniel. He died at the early age of thirty-three, and having been chosen generalissimo of the Greeks against the Persians at the age of twenty-one, the whole period occupied by him in his conquests, and in his public life, was but twelve years; yet in that time he brought the world in subjection to his arms. A single glance at his rapid movements will show the propriety of the description here. In the year 334 b.c., he invaded Persia, and defeated the Persians in the battle of the Granicus; in the year 333, he again defeated them at the battle of Issus, and conquered Parthia, Bactria, Hyrcania, Sogdiana, and Asia Minor. In the year 332, he conquered Tyre and Egypt, and built Alexandria. In the year 331, he defeated Darius Codomanus, and in 330 completed the conquest of the Persian empire. In the year 328, he defeated Porus, king of India, and pursued his march to the Ganges. In these few years, therefore, he had overrun nearly all the then known world, in conquests more rapid and more decisive than had ever before been made.

And the goat had a notable horn between his eyes - The goat represented the Macedonian power, and all this power was concentrated in the person of Alexander - undoubtedly denoted by the single horn - as if all the power of Greece was concentrated in him. The margin is, a horn of sight. This corresponds with the Hebrew - the word rendered “notable” (חזות *châzût*) meaning, properly, look, appearance, and then something conspicuous or remarkable. The literal translation would be, a horn of appearance; that is, conspicuous, large - Gesenius, Lexicon

Verse 6

And he came to the ram … - Representing the Medo-Persian power.

And ran unto him in the fury of his power - Representing the fierceness and fury with which Alexander attacked the Persians at the Granicus, at Issus, and at Arbela, with which he invaded and overthrew them in their own country. Nothing would better express this than to say that it was done in “the fury of power.”

Verse 7

And I saw him, come close unto the ram - The ram standing on the banks of the Ulai, and in the very heart of the empire. This representation is designed undoubtedly to denote that the Grecian power would attack the

Persian in its own dominions. Perhaps the vision was represented at the place which would be the capital of the empire in order to denote this.

And he was moved with choler against him - (i. e., the ram)." With wrath or anger. That is, he acted as if he were furiously enraged. This is not an improper representation. Alexander, though spurred on by ambition as his ruling motive, yet might be supposed without impropriety to represent the concentrated wrath of all Greece on account of the repeated Persian invasions. It is true the Persians had been defeated at Leuctra, at Marathon, and at Salamis, that their hosts had been held in check at Thermopylae, that they had never succeeded in subduing Greece, and that the Grecians in defending their country had covered themselves with glory. But it is true, also, that the wrongs inflicted or attempted on the Greeks had never been forgotten, and it cannot be doubted that the remembrance of these wrongs was a motive that influenced many a Greek at the battle of the Granicus and Issus, and at Arbela. It would be one of most powerful motives to which Alexander could appeal in stimulating his army.

And brake his two horns - Completely prostrated his power - as Alexander did when he overthrew Darius Codemenus, and subjugated to himself the Medo-Persian empire. That empire ceased at that time, and was merged in that of the son of Philp.

And there was no power in the ram to stand before him - To resist him.

But he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him - An act strikingly expressive of the conduct of Alexander. The empire was crushed beneath his power, and, as it were, trampled to the earth.

And there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand - No auxiliaries that the Persian empire could call to its aid that could save it from the Grecian conqueror.

Verse 8

Therefore the he-goat waxed very great - The Macedonian power, especially under the reign of Alexander.

And when he was strong, the great horn was broken - In the time, or at the period of its greatest strength. Then an event occurred which broke the horn in which was concentrated its power. It is easy to see the application of this to the Macedonian power. At no time was the empire so strong as at the death of Alexander. Its power did not pine away; it was not enfeebled, as monarchies are often, by age, and luxury, and corruption; it

was most flourishing and prosperous just at the period when broken by the death of Alexander. Never afterward did it recover its vigour; never was it consolidated again. From that time this mighty empire, broken into separate kingdoms, lost its influence in the world.

And for it came up four notable ones - In the place of this one horn in which all the power was concentrated, there sprang up four others that were distinguished and remarkable. On the word notable, see the notes at Daniel 8:5. This representation would lead us to suppose that the power which had thus been concentrated in one monarchy would be divided and distributed into four, and that instead of that one power there would be four kingdoms that would fill up about the same space in the world, occupy about the same territory, and have about the same characteristics - so that they might be regarded as the succession to the one dynasty. The same representation we have of this one power in Daniel 7:6: "The beast had also four heads." See also Daniel 11:4: "His kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven." This accords with the accounts in history of the effect of Alexander's death, for though the kingdom was not by him divided into four parts, yet, from the confusion and conflicts that arose, the power was ultimately concentrated into four dynasties.

At his death, his brother Aridaeus was declared king in his stead, and Perdiccas regent. But the unity of the Macedonian power was gone, and disorder and confusion, and a struggle for empire, immediately succeeded. The author of the books of Maccabees (1 Maccabees 1:7-9) says: "So Alexander reigned twelve years, and then died. And his servants bare rule every one in his place. And after his death, they all put crowns upon themselves; so did their sons after them many years; and evils were multiplied in the earth." Alexander died 323 b.c.; Antipater succeeded Perdiccas, 321 b.c.; Ptolemy Lagus the same year took possession of Egypt; Cassander assumed the government of Macedon, 317 b.c.; Seleucus Nicator took possession of Syria, 311 b.c.; in 305 b.c. the successors of Alexander took the title of kings, and in 301 b.c. there occurred the battle of Ipsus, in which Antigonus, who reigned in Asia Minor, was killed, and then followed in that year a formal division of Alexander's empire between the four victorious princes, Ptolemy, Seleucus, Cassander, and Lysimachus. This great battle of Ipsus, a city of Phrygia, was fought between Antigonus and his son Demetrius on the one side, and the combined forces of these princes on the other.

Antigonus had aimed at universal sovereignty; he had taken and plundered the island of Cyprus; had destroyed the fieet of Ptolemy Lagus, and had assumed the crown. Against him and his usurpations, Ptolemy, Cassander, and Lysimachus, combined their forces, and the result was his complete overthrow at the battle of Ipsus. - Lengerke, *in loc*. In this battle, Antigonus lost all his conquests and his life. In the division of the empire, Seleucus Nicator obtained Syria, Babylonia, Media, and Susiana, Armenia, a part of Cappadocia, Cilicia, and his kingdom, in name at least, extended from the Hellespont to the Indies. The kingdom of Lysimachus extended over a part of Thrace, Asia Minor, part of Cappadocia, and the countries within the limits of Mount Taurus. Cassander possessed Macedonia, Thessaly, and a part of Greece. Ptolemy obtained Egypt, Cyprus, and Cyrene, and ultimately Ccelo-Syria, Phoenicia, Judea, and a part of Asia Minor and Thrace - Lengerke, *in loc*.

Toward the four winds of heaven - Toward the four quarters of the world. Thus the dominions of Seleucus were in the east; these of Cassander in the west; those of Ptolemy in the south, and those of Lysimachus in the north.

Verse 9

And out of one of them, came forth a little horn - Emblematic of new power that should spring up. Compare the notes at Daniel 7:8. This little horn sprang, up out of one of the others; it did not spring up in the midst of the others as the little horn, in Daniel 7:8, did among the ten others. This seemed to grow out of one of the four, and the meaning cannot be misunderstood. From one of the four powers or kingdoms into which the empire of Alexander would be divided, there would spring up this ambitions and persecuting power.

Which waxed exceeding great - Which became exceedingly powerful. It was comparatively small at first, but ultimately became mighty. There can be no doubt that Antiochus Epiphanes is denoted here. All the circumstances of the prediction find a fulfillment in him; and if it were supposed that this was written after he had lived, and that it was the design of the writer to describe him by this symbol, he could not have found a symbol that would have been more striking or appropriate than this. The Syriac version has inserted here, in the Syriae text, the words “Antiochus Epiphanes,” and almost without exception expositors have been agreed in

the opinion that he is referred to. For a general account of him, see the notes at Daniel 7:24, following The author of the book of Maccabees, after noticing, in the passage above quoted, the death of Alexander, and the distractions that followed his death, says, "And there came out of them a wicked root, Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes, son of Antiochus the king, who had been a hostage at Rome, and he reigned in the hundred and thirty and seventh year of the kingdom of the Greeks," Daniel 8:8), and whose capital was Antioch. The succession of princes who reigned in Antioch, from Seleucus to Antiochus Epiphanes, were as follows:

(1) Seleucus Nicator, 312-280 b.c.
(2) Antiochus Soter, his son, 280-261.
(3) Antiochus Theos, his son, 261-247.

(4) Seleucus Callinicus, his son, 247-226.

(5) (Alexander), or Seleucus Ceraunus, his son, 226-223.

(6) Antiochus the Great, his brother, 223-187.

(7) Seleucus Philopater, his son, 187-176.

(8) Antiochus Epiphanes, his brother, 176-164.
- *Clinton's Fasti Hellenici, vol. iii. Appendix, ch. iii.*

The succession of the Syrian kings reigning in Antioch was continued until Syria was reduced to the form of a Roman province by Pompey, 63 b.c. Seleucus Philopater, the immediate predecessor of Antiochus, having been assassinated by one of his courtiers, his brother Antiochus hastened to occupy the vacant throne, although the natural heir, Demetrius, son of Seleucus, was yet alive, but a hostage at Rome. Antiochus assumed the name of Epiphanes, or Illustrious. In Daniel 11:21, it is intimated that he gained the kingdom by flatteries; and there can be no doubt that bribery, and the promise of reward to others, was made use of to secure his power. See Kitto's Cyclo., i. 168-170. Of the acts of this prince there will be occasion for a fuller detail in the notes on the remainder of this chapter, and Isaiah 4:2; Isaiah 24:16; Isaiah 28:1, Isaiah 28:4-5. It is applied, in Isaiah 13:19, to Babylon - "the glory of kingdoms." Here it evidently denotes the land of the Israelites, or Palestine - so often described as a land of beauty, as

flowing with milk and honey, etc. This is such language as a pious Hebrew would naturally use of his own country, and especially if he was an exile from it, as Daniel was. Nothing more would be necessary to designate the land so as to be understood than such an appellation - as nothing more would be necessary to designate his country to an exile from China than to speak of "the flowery land." Antiochus, on his return from Egypt, turned aside and invaded Judea, and ultimately robbed the temple, destroyed Jerusalem, and spread desolation through the land. See 1 Maccabees 1.

Verse 10

And it waxed great - It became very powerful. This was eminently true of Antiochus, after having subdued Egypt, etc.

Even to the host of heaven - Margin, against. The Hebrew word (עַד *ʿad*) means "to" or "unto," and the natural idea would seem to be that he wished to place himself among the stars, or to exalt himself above all that was earthly. Compare the notes at Isaiah 14:13: "For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." Lengerke supposes that the meaning here is, that he not only carried his conquests to Egypt and to the East, and to the holy land in general, but that he made war on the holy army of God - the priests and worshippers of Jehovah, here spoken of as the host of heaven. So Maurer understands it. In Isaiah 24:21, they are called "the host of the high ones that are on high." See the note at that passage. This language is by no means uncommon in the Scriptures. It is usual to compare princes and rulers, and especially ecclesiastical rulers, with the sun, moon, and stars. Undoubtedly it is the design here to describe the pride and ambition of Antiochus, and to show that he did not think anything too exalted for his aspiration. None were too high or too sacred to be secure from his attempts to overthrow them, and even those who, by their position and character, seemed to deserve to be spoken of as suns and stars, as "the host of heaven," were not secure.

And it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground - The horn seemed to grow up to the stars, and to wrest them from their places, and to cast them to the earth. Antiochus, in the fulfillment of this, east down and trampled on the princes, and rulers, and people, of the holy host or army of God. All that is implied in this was abundantly fulfilled in what he did to the Jewish people. Compare 1 Maccabees 1, and 2 Maccabees 8:2.

And stamped upon them - With indignation and contempt. Nothing could better express the conduct of Antiochus toward the Jews.

Verse 11

Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host - Grotius, Ephraem the Syrian, and others, understand this of Onias the high priest, as the chief officer of the holy people. Lengerke supposes that it means God himself. This interpretation is the more probable; and the idea in the phrase "prince of the host" is, that as God is the ruler of the host of heaven - leading on the constellations, and marshalling the stars, so he may be regarded as the ruler of the holy army here below - the ministers of religion, and his people. Against him as the Ruler and Leader of his people Antiochus exalted himself, particularly by attempting to change his laws, and to cause his worship to cease.

And by him - Margin, "from him." The meaning is, that the command or authority to do this proceeded from him.

The daily sacrifice was taken away - The sacrifice that was offered daily in the temple, morning and evening, was suspended. A full account of this may be found in 1 Maccabees 1:20-24,29-32,44-50. In the execution of the purposes of Antiochus, he "entered the sanctuary, and took away the golden altar, and the candlestick, and all the vessels thereof; and the table of showbread, the pouring vessels, etc., and stripped the temple of all the ornaments of gold." After two years he again visited the city, and "smote it very sore, and destroyed much people of Israel, and when he had taken the spoils of the city he set it on fire, and pulled down the walls thereof on every side." Everything in Jerusalem was made desolate. Her sanctuary was laid waste like a wilderness, her feasts were turned into mourning, her sabbaths into reproach, her honor into contempt." Subsequently, by a solemn edict, and by more decisive acts, he put a period to the worship of God in the temple, and polluted and defiled every part of it. "For the king had sent letters by messengers unto Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, that they should follow the strange laws of the land, and forbid burnt-offerings, and sacrifices, and drink-offerings in the temple; and that they should profane the sabbaths and festival days, and pollute the sanctuary and holy people; set up altars, and groves, and chapels of idols, and sacrifice swine's flesh, and unclean beasts; that they should also leave their children uncir. cumcised, and make their souls abominable with all manner of uncleanness

and profanation; to the end they might forget the laws, and change all the ordinances," 1 Maccabees 1:44-49.

It was undoubtedly to these acts of Antiochus that the passage before us refers, and the event accords with the words of the prediction as clearly as if what is a prediction had been written afterward, and had been designed to represent what actually occurred as a matter of historical record. The word which is rendered "daily sacrifice" - the word "sacrifice" being supplied by the translators - תמיד *tâmîyd* - means, properly, continuance, prepetuity, and then what is continuous or constant - as a sacrifice or service daily occurring. The word sacrifice is properly inserted here. - Gesenius, Lexicon The meaning of the word rendered "was taken away" - הרם *huram* (Hophal from רום *rûm* - to exalt, to lift up) - here is, that it was lifted up, and then was taken away; that is, it was made to cease - as if it had been carried away. - Gesenius.

And the place of his sanctuary - Of the sanctuary or holy place of the, "Prince of the host," that is, of God. The reference is to the temple.

Was cast down - The temple was not entirely destroyed by Antiochus, but it was robbed and rifled, and its holy vessels were carried away. The walls indeed remained, but it was desolate, and the whole service then was abandoned. See the passages quoted above from 1Macc.

Verse 12

And a host was given him - The Vulgate renders this, "and strength - *robur* - was given him, etc." Theodotion, "and sin was permitted - ἐδόθη *edothē* - against the sacrifice; and this righteousness was cast on the ground; so he acted and was prospered." Luther renders it, "and such might (or power, macht) was given him." The Syriac renders it, "and strength was given him, etc." Bertholdt renders it, Statt jenes stellte man den Greuel auf, "instead of this (the temple) there was set up an abomination." Dathe, "and the stars were delivered to him" - *tradita ei fuerunt astra, seu populus Judaicus*. Maurer understands it also of the Jewish people, and interprets it, "and an army - exercitus - the people of the Jews was delivered to destruction, at the same time with the perpetual sacrifice, on account of wickedness, that is, for a wicked thing, or for impure sacrifices." Lengerke renders it, as in our translation, "an host - ein Heer - was Wen up to him at the same time with the daily offering, on account of evil." The word "host" (צבא *tsâbâ'*) is doubtless to be taken here in the same sense as in Daniel 8:10, where it is connected with heaven - "the host of heaven." If it refers

there to the Jewish people, it doubtless does here, and the appellation is such a one as would not unnaturally be used. It is equivalent to saying "the army of the Lord," or "the people of the Lord," and it should have been rendered here "and the host was given up to him;" that is, the people of God, or the holy people were given into his hands.

Against the daily sacrifice - This does not convey any clear idea. Lengerke renders it, sammt den bestandigen opfer - "at the same time with the permanent sacrifice." He remarks that the preposition על *ʿal* (rendered in our version against), like the Greek ἐπὶ *epi* may denote a connection with anything, or a being with a thing - *Zusammenseyn* - and thus it would denote a union of time, or that the things occurred together, Genesis 32:11 (12); Hosea 10:14; Amos 3:15. Compare Gesenius (Lexicon) on the word על *ʿal* 3. According to this, the meaning is, that the "host," or the Jewish people, were given to him at the same time, or in connection with the daily sacrifice. The conquest over the people, and the command respecting the daily sacrifice, were simultaneous. Both passed into his hands, and he exercised jurisdiction over them both.

By reason of transgression - - בפשע *beppâshaʿ* That is, all this was on account of the transgression of the people, or on account of abounding iniquity. God gave up the people, and their temple, and their sacrifices, into the hands of Antiochus, on account of the prevailing impiety. Compare Isaiah 59:14, it is said: "Truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter." The meaning here is, that the institutions of the true religion would be utterly prostrate. This was fully accomplished by Antiochus. See Psalm 1:3, where the same expression occurs: "And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." This was fully accomplished in Antiochus, who was entirely successful in all his enterprises against Jerusalem. See 1 Maccabees 1.

Verse 13

Then I heard one saint speaking - One holy one. The vision was now ended, and the prophet represents himself now as hearing earnest inquiries as to the length of time during which this desolation was to continue. This conversation, or these inquiries, he represents himself as hearing among those whom he calls "saints" - or holy ones - קדש *qâdôsh* This word might refer to a saint on earth, or to an angel - to any holy being. As one of these, however, was able to explain the vision, and to tell how long the desolation was to continue, it is more natural to refer it to angels. So Lengerke understands it. The representation is, that one holy one, or angel, was heard

by Daniel speaking on this subject, but nothing is recorded of what he said. It is implied only that he was conversing about the desolations that were to come upon the holy city and the people of God. To him thus speaking, and who is introduced as having power to explain it, another holy one approaches, and asks how long this state of things was to continue. The answer to this question Daniel 8:14 is made, not to the one who made the inquiry, but to Daniel, evidently that it might be recorded. Daniel does not say where this vision occurred - whether in heaven or on earth. It was so near to him, however, that he could hear what was said.

And another saint - Another holy one - probably an angel. If so, we may conclude, what is in itself every way probable, that one angel has more knowledge than another, or that things are communicated to some which are not to others.

Unto that certain saint which spake - Margin, Palmoni, or, the numberer of secrets, or, the wondeful numberer. The Hebrew word, פלמוני *palemônîy* occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. The similar form, פלני *pelonîy* occurs in Rth 4:1 , "Ho, such a one, turn aside;" in 1 Samuel 21:2, "appointed my servants to such and such a place;" and 2 Kings 6:8, "In such and such a place." The Italic words denote the corresponding Hebrew word. The word, according to Gesenius, means some one, a certain one; in Arabic, one who is distinct or definite, whom one points out as with the finger, and not by name. It is derived from an obsolete noun, פלון *pâlôn* from the verb פלה *pâlâh* to distinguish, and is united commonly with the word אלמני *'alemonîy* - meaning, properly, one concealed or unknown. It is language, therefore, which would be properly addressed to an unknown person with whom we would desire to speak, or whom we would designate by the finger, or in some such way, without being able to call the name. Thus applied in the passage here, it means that Daniel did not know the names of the persons thus speaking, but simply saw that one was speaking to another. He had no other way of designating or distinguishing them than by applying a term which was commonly used of a stranger when one wished to address him, or to point him out, or to call him to him. There is no foundation in the word for the meaning suggested in the margin. Theodotion does not attempt to translate the word, but retains it - φελμουνὶ *phelmouni* - Phelmouni. The Latin Vulgate well expresses the meaning, *dixit unus sanctus alteri nescio loquenti*. The full sense is undoubtedly conveyed by the two ideas,

(a) that the one referred to was unknown by name, and

(b) that he wished to designate him in some way, or to point him out.

How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice? - How long is what is designed to be represented by the vision to continue; that is, how long in fact will the offering of the daily sacrifice in the temple be suspended?

And the transgression of desolation - Margin, making desolate. That is, the act of iniquity on the part of Antiochus producing such desolation in the holy city and the temple - show long is that to continue?

To give both the sanctuary - The temple; the holy place where God dwelt by a visible symbol, and where he was worshipped.

And the host - The people of God - the Jewish people.

To be trodden under foot - To be utterly despised and prostrated - as anything which is trodden under our feet.

Verse 14

And he said unto me - Instead of answering the one who made the inquiry, the answer is made to Daniel, doubtless that he might make a record of it, or communicate it to others. If it had been made to the inquirer, the answer would have remained with him, and could have been of no use to the world. For the encouragement, however, of the Hebrew people, when their sanctuary and city would be thus desolate, and in order to furnish an instance of the clear fulfillment of a prediction, it was important that it should be recorded, and hence, it was made to Daniel.

Unto two thousand and three hundred days - Margin, evening, morning. So the Hebrew, בקר ערב *ʿereb boqer* So the Latin Vulgate, *ad vesperam et mane*. And so Theodotion - ἕως ἑσπέρας καὶ πρωΐ *heōs hesperas kai prōi* - "to the evening and morning." The language here is evidently what was derived from Gen. i., or which was common among the Hebrews, to speak of the "evening and the morning" as constituting a day. There can be no doubt, however, that a day is intended by this, for this is the fair and obvious interpretation. The Greeks were accustomed to denote the period of a day in the same manner by the word νυχθήμερον *nuchthēmeron* (see 2 Corinthians 11:25), in order more emphatically to designate one complete day. See Prof. Stuart's Hints on Prophecy, pp. 99,100. The time then specified by this would be six years and a hundred and ten days.

Much difficulty has been felt by expositors in reconciling this statement with the other designations of time in the book of Daniel, supposed to refer to the same event, and with the account furnished by Josephus in regard to the period which elapsed during which the sanctuary was desolate, and the daily sacrifice suspended. The other designations of time which have been supposed to refer to the same event in Daniel, are Daniel 7:25, where the time mentioned is three years and a half, or twelve hundred and sixty days; and Daniel 12:7, where the same time is mentioned, "a time, times, and an half," or three years and an half, or, as before, twelve hundred and sixty days; and Daniel 12:11, where the period mentioned is "a thousand two hundred and ninety days;" and Daniel 12:12, where the time mentioned is "a thousand three hundred and thirty-five days." The time mentioned by Josephus is three years exactly from the time when "their Divine worship was fallen off, and was reduced to a profane and common use," until the time when the lamps were lighted again, and the worship restored, for he says that the one event happened precisely three years after the other, on the same day of the month - Ant. b. xii. ch. vii. Section 6. In his Jewish Wars, however, b. i. ch. i. Section 1, he says that Antiochus "spoiled the temple, and put a stop to the constant practice of offering a daily sacrifice of expiation for three years and six months." Now, in order to explain the passage before us, and to reconcile the accounts, or to show that there is no contradiction between them, the following remarks may be made:

(1) We may lay out of view the passage in Daniel 7:25. See the note at that passage. If the reasoning there be sound, then that passage had no reference to Antiochus, and though, according to Josephus, there is a remarkable coincidence between the time mentioned there and the time during which the daily sacrifice was suspended, yet that does not demonstrate that the reference there is to Antiochus.

(2) We may lay out of view, also, for the present, the passages in Daniel 12:11-12. Those will be the subject of consideration hereafter, and for the present ought not to be allowed to embarrass us in ascertaining the meaning of the passage before us.

(3) On the assumption, however, that those passages refer to Antiochus, and that the accounts in Josephus above referred to are correct - though he

mentions different times, and though different periods are referred to by Daniel, the variety may be accounted for by the supposition that separate epochs are referred to at the starting point in the calculation - the *terminus a quo*. The truth was, there were several decisive acts in the history of Antiochus that led to the ultimate desolation of Jerusalem, and at one time a writer may have contemplated one, and at another time another. Thus, there was the act by which Jason, made high priest by Antiochus, was permitted to set up a gymnasium in Jerusalem after the manner of the pagan (Prideaux, iii. 216; Daniel 8:9, and the things which attracted the attention of Daniel were, that he "waxed great," and made war on "the host of heaven," and "cast some of the host and of the stars to the ground" Daniel 8:10, and "magnified himself against the prince of the host" Daniel 8:11 - acts which refer manifestly to his attack on the people of God, and the priests or ministers of religion, and on God him. self as the "prince of the host" - unless this phrase should be understood as referring rather to the high priest. We are then rather to look to the whole series of events as included within the two thousand and three hundred days, than the period in which literally the daily sacrifice was forbidden by a solemn statute. It was practically suspended, and the worship of God interrupted during all that time.

(5) The *terminus ad quem* - the conclusion of the period is marked and settled. This was the "cleansing of the sanctuary." This took place, under Judas Maccabeus, Dec. 25,165 b.c. - Prideaux, iii. 265-268. Now, reckoning back from this period, two thousand and three hundred days, we come to August 5,171 b.c. The question is, whether there were in this year, and at about this time, any events in the series of sufficient importance to constitute a period from which to reckon; events answering to what Daniel saw as the commencement of the vision, when "some of the host and the stars were cast down and stamped upon." Now, as a matter of fact, there commenced in the year 171 b.c. a series of aggressions upon the priesthood, and temple, and city of the Jews on the part of Antiochus, which terminated only with his death. Up to this year, the relations of Antiochus and the Jewish people were peaceful and cordial.

In the year 175 b.c. he granted to the Jewish people, who desired it, permission to erect a gymnasium in Jerusalem, as above stated. In the year

173 b.c. demand was made of Antiochus of the provinces of Ccelo-Syria and Palestine by the young Philometor of Egypt, who had just come to the throne, and by his mother - a demand which was the origin of the war between Antiochus and the king of Egypt, and the beginning of all the disturbances. - Prideaux, iii. 218. In the year 172 b.c., Antiochus bestowed the office of high priest on Menelaus, who was the brother of Jason the high priest. Jason had sent Menelaus to Antioch to pay the king his tribute-money, and while there Menelaus conceived the design of supplanting his brother, and by offering for it more than Jason had, he procured the appointment and returned to Jerusalem. - Prideaux, iii. 220-222. Up to this time all the intercourse of Antiochus with the Jews had been of a peaceful character, and nothing of a hostile nature had occurred.

In 171 b.c. began the series of events which finally resulted in the invasion and destruction of the city, and in the cessation of the public worship of God. Menelaus, having procured the high priesthood, refused to pay the tribute-money which he had promised for it, and was summoned to Antioch. Antioclius being then absent, Menelaus took advantage of his absence, and having, by means of Lysimachus, whom he had left at Jerusalem, procured the vessels out of the temple, He sold them at Tyre, and thus raised money to pay the king. In the meantime, Onias III, the lawful high priest, who had fled to Antioch, sternly rebuked Menelaus for his sacrilege, and soon after, at the instigation of Menelaus, was allured from his retreat at Daphne, where he had sought an asylum, and was murdered by Andronicus, the vicegerent of Antiochus. At the same time, the Jews in Jerusalem, highly indignant at the profanation by Menelaus, and the sacrilege in robbing the temple, rose in rebellion against Lysimachus and the Syrian forces who defended him, and both cut off this “sacrilegious robber” (Prideaux), and the guards by whom he was surrounded.

This assault on the officer of Antiochus, and rebellion against him, was the commencement of the hostilities which resulted in the ruin of the city, and the closing of the worship of God. - Prideaux, iii. 224-226; Stuart‘s Hints on Prophecy, p. 102. Here commenced a series of aggressions upon the priesthood, and the temple, and the city of the Jews, which, with occasional interruption, continued to the death of Antiochus, and which led to all that was done in profaning the temple, and in suspending the public worship of God, and it is doubtless to this time that the prophet here refers.

This is the natural period in describing the series of events which were so disastrous to the Jewish people; this is the period at which one who should now describe them as history, would begin. It may not, indeed, be practicable to make out the precise number of days, for the exact dates are not preserved in history, but the calculation brings it into the year 171 b.c., the year which is necessary to be supposed in order that the two thousand and three hundred days should be completed. Compare Lengerke, *in loc*., p. 388. Various attempts have been made to determine the exact number of the days by historic records. Bertholdt, whom Lengerke follows, determines it in this manner. He regards the time referred to as that from the command to set up pagan altars to the victory over Nicanor, and the solemn celebration of that victory, as referred to in John 10:22, and which our Saviour honored with his presence. See 1 Maccabees 4:41-58; 2 Maccabees 10:1-7; Josephus, Ant. b. xii. ch. vii. Section 6,7.

Verse 15

And it came to pass … - Daniel saw the vision, but was unable to explain it.

And sought for the meaning - Evidently by meditating on it, or endeavoring in his own mind to make it out.

There stood before me as the appearance of a man - One having the appearance of a man. This was evidently Gabriel Daniel 8:16, who now assumed a human form, and who was addressed by the voice from between the banks of the Ulai, and commenced to make known the meaning of the vision.

Verse 16

And I heard a man‘s voice between the banks of Ulai - See the notes at Daniel 8:2. The voice seemed to come from the river, as if it were that of the Genius of the river, and to address Gabriel, who stood near to Daniel on the shore. This was doubtless the voice of God. The speaker was invisible, and this method of explaining the vision was adopted, probably to make the whole scene more impressive.

Which called, and said, Gabriel - Gabriel is mentioned in the Scriptures only in Daniel 8:16; Daniel 9:21; Luke 1:19, Luke 1:26. In Luke 1:19, he is mentioned as saying of himself, “I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God.” The word means, properly, “man of God.” Nothing more is known of him, and he is mentioned only as bearing messages to Daniel, to Zacharias the father of John the Baptist, and to Mary.

Make this man to understand the vision - Explain it to him so that he will under stand its meaning.

Verse 17

So he came near where I stood - He had seen him, evidently, at first in the distance. He now drew near to Daniel, that he might communicate with him the more readily.

And when, he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face - Doubtless perceiving that he was a celestial being. See the notes at Revelation 1:17. Compare Ezekiel 1:28, and Daniel 10:8-9. He was completely overpowered by the presence of the celestial stranger, and sank to the ground.

But he said unto me, Understand, O son of man - Give attention, that you may understand the vision. On the phrase "son of man," see the notes at Daniel 7:13. It is here simply an address to him as a man.

For at the time of the end shall be the vision - The design of this expression is undoubtedly to cheer and comfort the prophet with some assurance of what was to occur in future times. In what way this was done, or what was the precise idea indicated by these words, interpreters have not been agreed. Maurer explains it, "for this vision looks to the last time; that is, the time which would immediately precede the coming of the Messiah, which would be a time of calamity, in which the guilt of the wicked would be punished, and the virtue of the saints would be tried, to wit, the time of Antiochus Epiphanes." Lengerke supposes that the end of the existing calamities - the sufferings of the Jews - is referred to; and that the meaning is, that in the time of the Messiah, to which the vision is extended, there would be an end of their sufferings and trials. The design of the angel, says he, is to support and comfort the troubled seer, as if he should not be anxious that these troubles were to occur, since they would have an end, or, as Michaelis observes, that the seer should not suppose that the calamities indicated by the vision would have no end.

Perhaps the meaning may be this: "The vision is for the time of the end;" that is, it has respect to the closing period of the world, under which the Messiah is to come, and necessarily precedes that, and leads on to that. It pertains to a series of events which are to introduce the latter times, when the kingdom of God shall be set up on the earth. In justification of this view of the passage, it may be remarked that this is not only the most obvious view, but is sustained by all those passages which speak of the coming of the Messiah as "the end," the "last days," etc. Thus 1 Corinthians 10:11:

"upon whom the ends of the world are come." Compare the notes at Isaiah 2:2. According to this interpretation, the meaning is, "the vision pertains to the end, or the closing dispensation of things;" that is, it has a bearing on the period when the end will come, or will introduce that period. It looks on to future times, even to those times, though now remote (compare Daniel 8:26), when a new order of things will exist, under which the affairs of the world will be wound up. Compare the notes at Hebrews 1:2.

Verse 18

Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground - Overcome and prostrate with the vision. That is, he had sunk down stupified or senseless. See Daniel 10:9. His strength had been entirely taken away by the vision. There is nothing improbable in this, that the sudden appearance of a celestial vision, or a heavenly being, should take away the strength. Compare Genesis 15:12; Job 4:13, following; Judges 6:22; Judges 13:20, Judges 13:22; Isaiah 6:5; Luke 1:12, Luke 1:29; Luke 2:9; Acts 9:3, Acts 9:8. "But he touched me, and set me upright." Margin, as in Hebrew, "made me stand upon my standing." He raised me up on my feet. So the Saviour addressed Saul of Tarsus, when he had been suddenly smitten to the earth, by his appearing to him on the way to Damascus: "Rise, and stand upon thy feet," etc., Acts 26:16.

Verse 19

And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation - In the future time when the Divine indignation shall be manifest toward the Hebrew people; to wit, by suffering the evils to come upon them which Antiochus would inflict. It is everywhere represented that these calamities would occur as a proof of the Divine displeasure on account of their sins. Compare Daniel 9:24; Daniel 11:35; Daniel 8:17.

Verse 20

The ram which thou sawest … - See the notes at Daniel 8:3. This is one of the instances in the Scriptures in which symbols are explained. There can be no doubt, therefore, as to the meaning.

Verse 21

And the rough goat - See the notes at Daniel 8:5. In Daniel 8:5 he is called a he-goat. Here the word rough or hairy - שׂעיר *s'âʿîyr* - is applied to it. This appellation is often given to a goat Leviticus 4:24; Leviticus 16:9;

Genesis 37:31. It would seem that either term - a he-goat, or a hairy-goat - would serve to designate the animal, and it is probable that the terms were used indiscriminately.

Is the king of Grecia - Represents the king of Greece. The word here rendered Grecia (יון *yâvân*) denotes usually and properly *Ionia*, the western part of Asia Minor; but this name was extended so as to embrace the whole of Greece. See Aristoph. Acharn. 504, ibique Schol.; AEschyl. Pers. 176,561; Gesenius, Lexicon Latin Vulgate and Theodotion, here render it "the king of the Grecians," and there can be no doubt that the royal power among the Greeks is here referred to. See the notes at Daniel 8:5.

And the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king - Alexander the Great. The first that consolidated the whole power, and that was known in the East as the king of Greece. So he is expressly called in 1 Maccabees 1:1: "The first over Greece." Philip, his father, was opposed in his attempts to conquer Greece, and was defeated. Alexander invaded Greece, burned Thebes, compelled the Athenians to submit, and was declared generalissimo of the Grecian forces against the Persians.

Verse 22

Now that being broken - By the death of Alexander.

Whereas four stood up for it - Stood up in its place.

Four kingdoms shall stand up - Ultimately. It is not necessary to suppose that this would be immediately. If four such should in fact spring out of this one kingdom, all that implied in the prophecy would be fulfilled. On the fulfillment of this, see the notes at Daniel 8:8.

But not in his power - No one of these four dynasties had at any time the power which was wielded by Alexander the Great.

Verse 23

And in the latter time of their kingdom - When it shall be drawing to an end. All these powers were ultimately absorbed in the Roman power; and the meaning here is, that taking the time from the period of their formation - the division of the empire after the battle of Ipsus (see the notes at Daniel 8:8), until the time when all would be swallowed up in the Roman dominion, what is here stated - to wit, the rise of Antiochus - would be in the latter portion of that period. The battle of Ipsus was fought 301 b.c., and the Roman power was extended over all those regions gradually from 168 b.c. - the battle of Pydna, when Perseus was defeated, and Macedonia was reduced to a Roman province, to 30 b.c., when Egypt was subjected - the

last of these kingdoms that submitted to the Roman arms. Antiochus began to reign, 175 b.c. - so that it was in the latter part of this period.

When the transgressors are come to the full - Margin, accomplished. That is, when the state of things - the prevalence of wickedness and irreligion in Judea - shall have been allowed to continue as long as it can be - or so that the cup shall be full - then shall appear this formidable power to inflict deserved punishment on the guilty nation. The sacred writers often speak of iniquity as being full - of the cup of iniquity as being full - as if there was a certain limit or capacity beyond which it could not be allowed to go. When that arrives, God interposes, and cuts off the guilty by some heavy judgment. Compare Genesis 15:16: "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Matthew 23:32: "fill ye up then the measure of your fathers." 1 Thessalonians 2:16: "to fill up their sins alway." The idea is, that there is a certain measure or amount of sin which can be tolerated, but beyond that the Divine compassion cannot go with safety to the universe, or consistently with the honor of God, and then the punishment may be expected; then punishment must come. This is true, doubtless, of individuals and nations, and this period had arrived in regard to the Jews when Antiochus was permitted to lay their temple, city, and country waste.

A king of fierce countenance - Stern and severe. This expression would be applicable to many who have held the kingly office, and no one can doubt that it may be applied with strict propriety to Antiochus.

And understanding dark sentences - Gesenius (Lexicon) explains the word here rendered "dark sentences" to mean artifice, trick, stratagem. This will better agree with the character of Antiochus, who was more distinguished for craft and policy than he was for wisdom, or for explaining enigmas. The meaning seems to be that he would be politic and crafty, seeking to make his way, and to accomplish his purpose, not only by the terror that he inspired, but by deceit and cunning. That this was his character is well known. Compare the notes at Daniel 8:25.

Shall stand up - Shall succeed, or there shall be such a king.

Verse 24

And his power shall be mighty - He shall be a powerful monarch. Though not as mighty as Alexander, yet his conquests of Egypt and other places show that he deserved to be numbered among the mighty kings of the earth.

But not by his own power - That is, it shall not be by any strength of his own, but by the power which God gives him. This is true of all kings and princes (compare John 19:11; Isaiah 10:5, following), but it seems to be referred to here particularly to show that the calamities which he was about to bring upon the Hebrew people were by Divine direction and appointment. This great power was given him in order that he might be an instrument in the Divine hand of inflicting deserved punishment on them for their sins.

And he shall destroy wonderfully - In a wonderful or extraordinary manner shall he spread desolation. This refers particularly to the manner in which he would lay waste the holy city, and the land of Judea. The history in the books of Maccabees shows that this was literally fulfilled.

And shall prosper - Antiochus was among the most successful kings in his various expeditions. Particularly was he successful in his enterprises against the holy land.

And practice - Hebrew, "do." That is, he shall be distinguished not only for "forming" plans, but for "executing" them; not merely for "purposing," but for "doing."

And shall destroy the mighty and the holy people - The people of God - the Jewish nation. See the notes at Daniel 8:9-12.

Verse 25

And through his policy - The word rendered "policy" here (שׂכל *s'êkel*) means, properly, intelligence, understanding, wisdom; and then, in a bad sense, craft, cunning. So it is rendered here by Gesenius, and the meaning is, that he would owe his success in a great measure to craft and subtilty.

He shall cause craft to prosper in his hand - He shall owe his success in a great measure to a crafty policy, to intrigue, and to cunning. This was true in an eminent sense, of Antiochus. See his history in Prideaux, above referred to, and the books of Maccabees. Compare the notes at Daniel 11:21. The same character is given of him by Polybius, "Relig." lib. xxi. c. 5, tom. iv. p. 501, ed. Schweighauser; Appian, "de reb. Syr." xlv. t. 1, p. 604, ed. Schweigh. Compare Daniel 11:21, Daniel 11:24. It would seem to mean that he would endeavor to produce the impression that he was coming in peace; that he pretended friendship, and designed to keep those whom he meant to invade and destroy in a state of false security, so that he might descend upon them unawares. This was his policy rather than to declare war openly, and so give his enemies fair warning of what he intended to do. This

description agrees every way with the character of Antiochus, a leading part of whose policy always was to preserve the appearance of friendship, that he might accomplish his purpose while his enemies were off their guard.

He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes - Notes, Daniel 8:11. Against God, the ruler over the kings of the earth.

But he shall be broken without hand - That is, without the hand of man, or by no visible cause. He shall be overcome by Divine, invisible power. According to the author of the first book of Maccabees (1 Maccabees 6:8-16), he died of grief and remorse in Babylon. He was on an expedition to Persia, and there laid siege to Elymais, and was defeated, and fled to Babylon, when, learning that his forces in Palestine had been repulsed, penetrated with grief and remorse, he sickened and died. According to the account in the second book of Maccabees (2 Maccabees 9), his death was most distressing and horrible. Compare Prideaux, iii. 272-275. All the statements given of his death, by the authors of the books of Maccabees, by Josephus, by Polybius, by Q. Curtius, and by Arrian (see the quotations in Prideaux), agree in representing it as attended with every circumstance of horror that can be well supposed to accompany a departure from this world, and as having every mark of the just judgment of God. The Divine prediction in Daniel was fully accomplished, that his death would be "without hand," in the sense that it would not be by human instrumentality; but that it would be by a direct Divine infliction. When Antiochus died, the opposition to the Jews ceased, and their land again had peace and rest.

Verse 26

And the vision of the evening and the morning - That is, of the two thousand three hundred days. See Daniel 8:14, and the margin on that verse. The meaning here is, "the vision pertaining to that succession of evenings and mornings." Perhaps this appellation was given to it particularly because it pertained so much to the evening and morning sacrifice.

Is true - Shall be certainly accomplished. This was said by the angel, giving thus to Daniel the assurance that what he had seen Daniel 8:9-14 was no illusion, but would certainly come to pass.

Wherefore shut thou up the visions - Seal it up. Make a record of it, that it may be preserved, and that its fulfillment may be marked. See the notes at Isaiah 8:16.

For it shall be for many days - That is, many days will elapse before it will be accomplished. Let a fair record, therefore, be made of it, and let it be

sealed up, that it may be preserved to prepare the people for these events. "When" these things would come thus fearfully upon the people of Judea, they would be the better able to bear these trials, knowing the period when they would terminate.

Verse 27

And I Daniel fainted - Hebrew, "I was " - נהייתי *nîheyēythîy* Compare Daniel 2:1. The meaning, according to Gesenius ("Lexicon"), is, "I was done up, and was sick:" - I was done over, etc. Perhaps the "reason" of his using this verb here is, that he represents himself as "having been sick," and then as fainting away, as if his life had departed. The Latin Vulgate renders it *langui*. Theodotion, ἐκοιμήθην *ekoimēthēn* - " was laid in my bed." The general idea is plain, that he was overcome and prostrate at the effect of the vision. He had been permitted to look into the future, and the scenes were so appalling - the changes that were to occur were so great - the calamities were so fearful in their character - and, above all, his mind was so affected that the daily sacrifice was to cease, and the worship of God be suspended, that he was entirely overcome. And who of us, probably, could "bear" a revelation of what is to occur hereafter? Where is there strength that could endure the disclosure of what may happen even in a few years?

And was sick certain days - The exact time is not specified. The natural interpretation is, that it was for a considerable period.

Afterward I rose up, and did the king's business - Compare the notes at Daniel 8:2. From this it would appear that he had been sent to Shushan on some business pertaining to the government. What it was we are not informed. As a matter of fact, he was sent there for a more important purpose than any which pertained to the government at Babylon - to receive disclosure of most momentous events that were to occur in distant times. Yet this did not prevent him from attending faithfully to the business entrusted to him - as no views which we take of heavenly things, and no disclosures made to our souls, and no absorption in the duties and enjoyments of religion, should prevent us from attending with fidelity to whatever secular duties may be entrusted to us. Sickness justifies us, of course, in not attending to them; the highest views which we may have of God and of religious truth should only make us more faithful in the discharge of our duties to our fellow-men, to our country, and in all the relations of life. He who has been favored with the clearest views of Divine things will be none the less prepared to discharge with faithfulness the

duties of this life; he who is permitted and enabled to look far into the future will be none the less likely to be diligent, faithful, and laborious in meeting the responsibilites of the present moment. If a man could see all that there is in heaven, it would only serve to impress him with a deeper conviction of his obligations in every relation; if he could see all that there is to come in the vast eternity before him, it would only impress him with a profounder sense of the consequences which may follow from the discharge of the present duty.

And I was astonished at the vision - He was stupified - he was overcome - at the splendid appearance, and the momentous nature of the disclosures. Compare the notes at Daniel 4:19.

But none understood it - It would seem probable from this, that he communicated it to others, but no one was able to explain it. Its general features were plain, but no one could follow out the details, and tell "precisely" what would occur, before the vision was fulfilled. This is the general nature of prophecy; and if neither Daniel nor any of his friends could explain this vision in detail, are we to hope that we shall be successful in disclosing the full meaning of those which are not yet fulfilled? The truth is, that in all such revelations of the future, there must be much in detail which is not now fully understood. The general features may be plain - as, in this case, it was clear that a mighty king would rise; that he would be a tyrant; that he would oppress the people of God; that he would invade the holy land; that he would for a time put a period to the offering of the daily sacrifice; and that this would continue for a definite period; and that then he would be cut off without human instrumentality: but who from this would have been able to draw out, in detail, all the events which in fact occurred? Who could have told precisely how these things would come to pass? Who could have ventured on a biography of Antiochus Epiphanes? Yet these three things are true in regard to this:

(1) That no one by human sagacity could have foreseen these events so as to have been able to furnish these sketches of what was to be;

(2) That these were sufficient to apprise those who were interested particularly of what would occur; and

(3) That when these events occurred, it was plain to all persons that the prophecy had reference to them.

So plain is this - so clear is the application of the predictions in this book, that Porphyry maintained that it was written after the events had occurred, and that the book must have been forged.

DANIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Introduction

Analysis of the Chapter

This chapter is properly divided into three parts, or comprises three things:

I. The inquiry of Daniel into the time that the desolations of Jerusalem were to continue, and his determination to seek the Lord, to pray that his purpose in regard to the restoration of the city and temple might be speedily accomplished, Daniel 9:1-3. Daniel says Daniel 9:1, that this occurred in the first year of Darius of the seed of the Medes. He was engaged in the study of the books of Jeremiah. He learned from these books that seventy years were to elapse during which the temple, the city, and the land were to be desolate. By a calculation as to the time when this commenced, he was enabled to ascertain the period when it would close, and he found that that period was near, and that, according to the prediction, it might be expected that the time of the restoration was at hand. His mind was, of course, filled with the deepest solicitude. It would seem not improbable that he did not perceive any preparation for this, or any tendency to it, and it could not but be that he would be filled with anxiety in regard to it.

He does not appear to have entertained any doubt that the predictions would be fulfilled, and the fact that they were so clear and so positive was a strong reason why he should pray, and was the reason why he prayed so earnestly at this time. The prayer which he offered is an illustration of the truth that men will pray more earnestly when they have reason to suppose that God intends to impart a blessing, and that an assurance that an event is to occur is one of the strongest encouragements and incitements to prayer. So men will pray with more faith when they see that God is blessing the means of restoration to health, or when they see indications of an abundant harvest; so they will pray with the more fervour for God to bless his Word when they see evidences of a revival of religion, or that the time has come when God is about to display his power in the conversion of sinners; and so undoubtedly they will pray with the more earnestness as the proofs shall be multiplied that God is about to fulfill all his ancient predictions in the conversion of the whole world to himself. A belief that God intends to do a thing is never any hinderance to real prayer; a belief that he is in fact about

to do it does more than anything else can do to arouse the soul to call with earnestness on his name.

II. The prayer of Daniel, Daniel 9:20-27. The principal difficulty in the exposition of the chapter is in this portion; and indeed there is perhaps no part of the prophecies of the Old Testament that is, on some accounts, more difficult of exposition, as there is, in some respects, none more clear, and none more important. It is remarkable, among other things, as not being a direct answer to the prayer, and as seeming to have no bearing on the subject of the petition - that the city of Jerusalem might be rebuilt, and the temple restored; but it directs the mind onward to another and more important event - the coming of the Messiah, and the final closing of sacrifice and oblation, and a more entire and enduring destruction of the temple and city, after it should have been rebuilt, than had yet occurred. To give this information, an angel - the same one whom Daniel had seen before - was sent forth from heaven, and came near to him and touched him, and said that he was commissioned to impart to him skill and understanding, Daniel 9:20-23. "The speediness of his coming indicates a joyful messenger. The substance of that message is as follows: As a compensation for the seventy years in which the people, the city, and the temple had been entirely prostrate, seventy weeks of years, seven times seventy years of a renewed existence would be secured to them by the Lord; and the end of this period, far from bringing the mercies of God to a close, would for the first time bestow them on the theocracy in their complete and full measure." - Hengstenberg, "Christology," it. 293. The "points" of information which the angel gives in regard to the future condition of the city are these:

(a) That the whole period determined in respect to the holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for the people, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy, was seventy weeks - evidently seventy prophetic weeks, that is, regarding each day as a year, four hundred and ninety years, Daniel 9:24. The time when this period would "commence" - the "*terminus a quo* " - is not indeed distinctly specified, but the fair interpretation is, from that time when the vision appeared to Daniel, the first year of Darius, Daniel 9:1. The literal meaning of the phrase "seventy weeks," according to Prof. Stuart ("Hints on the Interpretation of

Prophecy," p. 82), is seventy sevens, that is, seventy sevens of years, or four hundred and ninety years. "Daniel," says he, "had been meditating on the accomplishment of the seventy years of exile for the Jews, which Jeremiah had predicted. At the close of the fervent supplication for the people which he makes, in connection with his meditation, Gabriel appears, and announces to him that'" seventy sevens" are appointed for his people,' as it respects the time then future, in which very serious and very important events are to take place. Daniel had been meditating on the close of the seventy years of Hebrew exile, and the angel now discloses to him a new period of seventy times seven, in which still more important events are to take place."

(b) This period of seventy sevens, or four hundred and ninety years, is divided by the angel into smaller portions, each of them determining some important event in the future. He says, therefore Daniel 9:25, that from the going forth of the command to rebuild the temple, until the time when the Messiah should appear, the whole period might be divided into two portions - one of "seven sevens," or forty-nine years, and the other of "threescore and two sevens" - sixty-two sevens, or four hundred and thirty-four years, making together four hundred and eighty-three years. This statement is accompanied with the assurance that the "street would be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times." Of these periods of seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week, the close of the first is distinguished by the completion of the rebuilding of the city; that of the second by the appearing of the Anointed One, or the Messiah, the Prince; that of the third by the finished confirmation of the covenant with the many for whom the saving blessings designated in Daniel 9:24, as belonging to the end of the whole period, are designed. The last period of one week is again divided into two halves. While the confirmation of the covenant extends through it, from beginning to end, the cessation of the sacrifice and meat-offering, and the death of the Anointed One, on which this depends, take place in the middle of it.

(c) The Messiah would appear after the seven weeks - reaching to the time of completing the rebuilding of the city - and the sixty-two weeks following that (that is, sixty-nine weeks altogether) would have been finished. Throughout half of the other week, after his appearing, he would

labor to confirm the covenant with many, and then die a violent death, by which the sacrifices would be made to cease, while the confirmation of the covenant would continue even after his death.

(d) A people of a foreign prince would come and destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of all would be a "flood" - an overflowing calamity, until the end of the desolations should be determined, Daniel 9:26-27. This fearful desolation is all that the prophet sees in the end, except that there is an obscure intimation that there would be a termination of that. But the design of the vision evidently did not reach thus far. It was to show the series of events after the rebuilding of the city and temple up to the time when the Messiah would come; when the great atonement would be made for sin, and when the oblations and sacrifices of the temple would finally cease; cease in fact and naturally, for the one great sacrifice, superseding them all, would have been offered and because the people of a foreign prince would come and sweep the temple and the altar away.

The design of the whole annunciation is, evidently, to produce consolation in the mind of the prophet. He was engaged in profound meditation on the present state, and the long-continued desolations of the city and temple. He gave his mind to the study of the prophecies to learn whether these desolations were not soon to end. He ascertained beyond a doubt that the period drew near. He devoted himself to earnest prayer that the desolation might not longer continue; that God, provoked by the sins of the nation, would no longer execute his fearful judgments, but would graciously interpose, and restore the city and temple. He confessed ingenuously and humbly the sins of his people; acknowledged that the judgments of God were just but pleaded earnestly, in view of his former mercies to the same people, that he would now have compassion, and fulfill his promises that the city and temple should be restored.

An answer is not given "directly," and in the exact form in which it might have been hoped for; but an answer is given, in which it is "implied" that these blessings so earnestly sought would be bestowed, and in which it is "promised" that there would be far greater blessings. It is "assumed" in the answer Daniel 9:25 that the city would be rebuilt, and then the mind is directed onward to the assurance that it would stand through seven times

seventy years - seven times as long as it had now been desolate, and that "then" what had been the object of the desire of the people of God would be accomplished; that for which the city and temple had been built would be fulfilled - the Messiah would come, the great sacrifice for sin would be made, and all the typical arrangements of the temple would come to an end. Thus, in fact, though not in form, the communication of the angel was an answer to prayer, and that occurred to Daniel which often occurs to those who pray - that the direct prayer which is offered receives a gracious answer, and that; there accompanies the answer numberless other mercies which are drawn along in the train; or, in other words, that God gives us manymore blessings than we ask of him.

Verse 1

In the first year of Darius - See the notes at Daniel 5:31, and Introuction to Ezra 1:1, this occurred before the close of the seventy years of the captivity.

The son of Ahasuerus - Or the son of Astyages. See Introduction to Daniel 6 Section II. It was no unusual thing for the kings of the East to have several names, and one writer might refer to them under one name, and another under another.

Of the seed of the Medes - Of the race of the Medes. See as above.

Which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans - By conquest. He succeeded Belshazzar, and was the immediate predecessor of Cyrus. Cyaxares II ascended the throne of Media, according to the common chronology, 561 b.c. Babylon was taken by Cyrus, acting under the authority of Cyaxares, 538 b.c., and, of course, the reign of Cyaxares, or Darius, over Babylon commenced at that point, and that would be reckoned as the "first year" of his reign. He died 536 b.c., and Cyrus succeeded him; and as the order to rebuild the temple was in the first year of Cyrus, the time referred to in this chapter, when Daniel represents himself as meditating on the close of the captivity, and offering this prayer, cannot long have preceded that order. He had ascertained that the period of the captivity was near its close, and he naturally inquired in what way the restoration of the Jews to their own land was to be effected, and by what means the temple was to be rebuilt.

Verse 2

I Daniel understood by books - By the sacred books, and especially by the writings of Jeremiah. It has been made a ground of objection to the genuineness of Daniel that he mentions "books" in this place (ספרים *sephârîym*) as if there were at that time a collection of the sacred books, or as if they had been enrolled together in a volume. The objection is, that the writer speaks as if the canon of the Scriptures was completed, or that he uses such language as the Hebrews did when the canon of the Scriptures was finished, and thus betrays himself. See Bertholdt, "Commentary" p. 78. Compare DeWette, "Einl." Section 13. This objection has been examined by Hengstenberg, "Beitrag." pp. 32-35. It is sufficient to reply to it, that there is every probability that the Jews in Babylon would be in possession of the sacred books of their nation, and that, though the canon of the Scriptures was not yet completed, there would exist private collections of those writings. The word used here by Daniel is just such as he would employ on the supposition that he referred to a private collection of the writings of the prophets. Compare Lengerke, *in loc*. See the Introduction, where the objection is examined.

The number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah - The number of the years in respect to which the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah; that is, which he had revealed to Jeremiah. The "books" referred to, therefore, were evidently a collection of the writings of Jeremiah, or a collection which embraced his writings.

That he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem - That Jerusalem would so long lie waste. This was expressly declared by Jeremiah Jeremiah 25:11-12: "And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity," etc. So also Jeremiah 29:10: "For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place." The time of the desolation and of the captivity, therefore, was fixed and positive, and the only difficulty in determining when it would "close," was in ascertaining the exact year when it "commenced." There were several occurrences which might, perhaps, be regarded as the beginning of the desolations and the captivity - the "*terminus a quo* " - and, according as

one or another of them was fixed on, the close would be regarded as nearer or more remote.

Daniel, it seems, by close study, had satisfied his own mind on that subject, and had been able to fix upon some period that was undoubtedly the proper beginning, and hence, compute the time when it would close. The result showed that his calculation was correct, for, at the time he expected, the order was given by Cyrus to rebuild the city and temple. When he instituted this inquiry, and engaged in this solemn act of prayer, it would have been impossible to have conjectured in what way this could be brought about. The reigning monarch was Cyaxares II, or, as he is here called, Darius, and there was nothing in "his" character, or in anything that he had done, that could have been a basis of calculation that he would favor the return of the Jews and the rebuilding of the city, and there was then no probability that Cyrus would so soon come to the throne, and nothing in his character, as known, that could be a ground of hope that he would voluntarily interpose, and accomplish the Divine purposes and promises in regard to the holy city. It was probably such circumstances as these which produced the anxiety in the mind of Daniel, and which led him to offer this fervent prayer; and his fervent supplications should lead us to trust in God that he will accomplish his purposes, and should induce us to pray with fervour and with faith when we see no way in which he will do it. In all cases he can as easily devise a way in answer to prayer, as he could remove Cyaxares from the throne, and incline the heart of Cyrus to undertake the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple.

Verse 3

And I set my face unto the Lord God - Probably the meaning is, that he turned his face toward Jerusalem, the place where God had dwelt; the place of his holy abode on earth. See the notes at Daniel 6:10. The language, however, would not be inappropriate to denote prayer without such a supposition. We turn to one whom we address, and so prayer may be described by "setting the face toward God." The essential idea here is, that he engaged in a set and formal prayer; he engaged in earnest devotion. He evidently set apart a time for this, for he prepared himself by fasting, and by putting on sackcloth and ashes.

To seek by prayer and supplications - To seek his favor; to pray that he would accomplish his purposes. The words "prayer and supplications,"

which are often found united, would seem to denote "earnest" prayer, or prayer when mercy was implored - the notion of "mercy" or "favor" implored entering into the meaning of the Hebrew word rendered "supplications."

With fasting - In view of the desolations of the city and temple; the calamities that had come upon the people; their sins, etc.; and in order also that the mind might be prepared for earnest and fervent prayer. The occasion was one of great importance, and it was proper that the mind should be prepared for it by fasting. It was the purpose of Daniel to humble himself before God, and to recal the sins of the nation for which they now suffered, and fasting was an appropriate means of doing that.

And sackcloth - Sackcloth was a coarse kind of cloth, usually made of hair, and employed for the purpose of making sacks, bags, etc. As it was dark, and coarse, and rough, it was regarded as a proper badge of mourning and humiliation, and was worn as such usually by passing or girding it around the loins. See the notes at Isaiah 3:24; Job 16:15.

And ashes - It was customary to cast ashes on the head in a time of great grief and sorrow. The principles on which this was done seem to have been,

(a) that the external appearance should correspond with the state of the mind and the heart, and

(b) that such external circumstances would have a tendency to produce a state of heart corresponding to them - or would produce true humiliation and repentance for sin.

Compare the notes at Job 2:8. The practical truth taught in this verse, in connection with the preceding, is, that the fact that a thing is certainly predicted, and that God means to accomplish it, is an encouragement to prayer, and will lead to prayer. We could have no encouragement to pray except in the purposes and promises of God, for we have no power ourselves to accomplish the things for which we pray, and all must depend on his will. When that will is known it is the very thing to encourage us in our approaches to him, and is all the assurance that we need to induce us to pray.

Verse 4

And I prayed unto the Lord my God - Evidently a set and formal prayer. It would seem probable that; he offered this prayer, and then re corded the substance of it afterward. We have no reason to suppose that we have the whole of it, but we have doubtless its principal topics.

And made my confession - Not as an individual, or not of his own sins only, but a confession in behalf of the people, and in their name. There is no reason to suppose that what he here says did "not" express their feelings. They had been long in captivity - far away from their desolate city and temple. They could not but be sensible that these calamities had come upon them on account of their sins; and they could not but feel that the calamities could not be expected to be removed but by confession of their sins, and by acknowledging the justice of the Divine dealings toward them. When we have been afflicted - when we are called to pass through severe trials - and when, borne down by trial, we go to God, and pray that the evil may be removed, the first thing that is demanded is, that we should confess our sins, and acknowledge the justice of God in the judgments that have come upon us. If we attempt to vindicate and justify ourselves, we can have no hope that the judgment will be averted. Daniel, therefore, in the name of the people, began his prayer with the humble and penitent acknowledgment that all that they had suffered was deserved.

O Lord, the great and dreadful God - A God great, and to be feared or venerated - הנורא *hanôrâ'* This does not mean "dreadful" in the sense that there is anything stern or unamiable in his character, but mainly that he is to be regarded with veneration.

Keeping the covenant and mercy - Keeping his covenant and showing mercy. This is often ascribed to God, that he is faithful to his covenant; that is, that he is faithful to his promises to his people, or to those who sustain a certain relation to him, and who are faithful to "their" covenant vows. If there is alienation and estrangement, and want of faithfulness on either side, it does not begin with him. He is faithful to all his promises, and his fidelity may always be assumed as a basis of calculation in all our intercourse with him. See the word "covenant," in Cruden's "Concordance." The word mercy seems to be added here to denote that mercy enters into his dealings with us even in keeping the covenant. We are so sinful and so unfaithful ourselves, that if "he" is faithful to his covenant, it must be by showing mercy to us.

To them that love him … - The conditions of the covenant extend no farther than this, since, in a compact of any kind, one is bound to be faithful only while the terms are maintained by the other party. So God binds himself to show favor only while we are obedient, and we can plead his covenant only when we are obedient, when we confess our sins and plead his promises in this sense - that he has assured us that he will restore and receive us if we are penitent. It was this which Daniel pleaded on this occasion. He could not plead that his people had been obedient, and had thus any claims to the Divine favor; but he could cast himself and them on the mercy of a covenant-keeping God, who would remember his covenant with them if they were penitent, and who would graciously pardon.

Verse 5

We have sinned - Though Daniel was alone, he spake in the name of the people in general - doubtless recounting the long series of crimes in the nation which had preceded the captivity, and which were the cause of the ruin of the city and temple.

And have committed iniquity … - These varied forms of expression are designed to give "intensity" to what he says. It is equivalent to saying that they had sinned in every way possible. The mind, in a state of true repentance, dwells on its sins, and recounts the various forms in which iniquity has been done, and multiplies expressions of regret and sorrow on account of transgression.

From thy precepts - Thy commands; thy laws.

Thy judgments - Thy laws - the word "judgments" in the Scripture denoting what God judges to be right for us to do, as well as what it is right for him to inflict.

Verse 6

Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets - Who called upon us to turn from our sins; who made known the will of God, and who proclaimed that these judgments would come upon us if we did not repent.

Which spake in thy name to our kings … - To all classes of the people, calling on kings and rulers to turn from their idolatry, and the people to forsake their sins, and to seek the Lord. It was a characteristic of the prophets that they spared no classes of the nation, but faithfully uttered all the word of God. Their admonitions had been unheeded, and the people

wow saw clearly that these calamities had come upon them because they had "not" hearkened to their voice.

Verse 7

O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee - Margin, "or, thou hast." The Hebrew is, "to thee is righteousness, to us shame, etc." The state of mind in him who makes the prayer is that of ascribing righteousness or justice to God. Daniel feels and admits that God has been right in his dealings. He is not disposed to blame him, but to take all the shame and blame to the people. There is no murmuring or complaining on his part as if God had done wrong in any way, but there is the utmost confidence in him, and ia his government. This is the true feeling with which to come before God when we are afflicted, and when we plead for his mercy and favor. God should be regarded as righteous in all that he has done, and holy in all his judgments and claims, and there should be a willingness to address him as holy, and just, and true, and to take shame and confusion of face to ourselves. Compare Psalm 51:4.

But unto us confusion of faces - Hebrew, "shame of faces;" that is, that kind of shame which we have when we feel that we are guilty, and which commonly shows itself in the countenance.

As at this day - As we actually are at this time. That is, he felt that at that time they were a down-trodden, an humbled, a condemned people. Their country was in ruins; they were captives in a far distant land, and all on which they had prided themselves was laid waste. All these judgments and humiliating things he says they had deserved, for they had grievously sinned against God.

To the men of Judah - Not merely to the tribe of Judah, but to the kingdom of that name. After the revolt of the ten tribes - which became known as the kingdom of Ephraim, because Ephraim was the largest tribe, or as the kingdom of Israel - the other portion of the people, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were known as the kingdom of Judah, since Judah was by far the larger tribe of the two. This kingdom is referred to here, because Daniel belonged to it, and because the ten tribes had been carried away long before and scattered in the countries of the East. The ten tribes had been carried to Assyria. Jerusalem always remained as the capital of the kingdom of Judah, and it is to this portion of the Hebrew people that the prayer of Daniel more especially pertains.

And to the inhabitants of Jerusalem - Particularly to them, as the heaviest calamities had come upon them, and as they had been prominent in the sins for which these judgments had come upon the people.

And unto all Israel - All the people who are descendants of Israel or Jacob, wherever they may be, embracing not only those of the kingdom of Judah properly so called, but all who pertain to the nation. They were all of one blood. They had had a common country. They had all revolted, and a succession of heavy judgments had come upon the nation as such, and all had occasion for shame and confusion of face.

That are near, and that are far off - Whether in Babylon, in Assyria, or in more remote countries. The ten tribes had been carried away some two hundred years before this prayer was offered by Daniel, and they were scattered in far distant lands.

Through all the countries whither thou hast driven them … - In Babylonia, in Assyria, in Egypt, or in other lands. They were scattered everywhere, and wherever they were they had common cause for humiliation and shame.

Verse 8

O Lord, to us belongeth confusion … - To all of us; to the whole people, high and low, rich and poor, the rulers and the ruled. All had been partakers of the guilt; all were involved in the calamities consequent on the guilt. As all had sinned, the judgments had come upon all, and it was proper that the confession should be made in the name of all.

Verse 9

To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses - Not only does righteousness belong to him in the sense that he has done right, and that he cannot be blamed for what he has done, but mercy and forgiveness belong to him in the sense that he only can pardon, and that these are attributes of his nature.

Though we have rebelled against him - The word used here and rendered "though" (כי *kîy*) may mean either "though" or "for." That is, the passage may mean that mercy belongs to God, and we may hope that he will show it, "although" we have been so evil and rebellious; or it may mean that it belongs to him, and he only can show it, "for" we have rebelled against him; that is, our only hope now is in his mercy, "for" we have sinned, and forfeited all claims to his favor. Either of these interpretations makes good sense, but the latter would seem to be most in accordance with

the general strain of this part of the prayer, which is to make humble and penitent confession. So the Latin Vulgate "quia." So Theodotion, ὅτι *hoti* So Luther and Lengerke, "denn." In the same way, the passage in Psalm 25:11 is rendered, "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for (כִּי *kîy*) it is great" - though this passage will admit of the other interpretation, "although it is great."

Verse 10

Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord - The commands of God as made known by the prophets, Daniel 9:6.

Verse 11

Yea, all Israel have transgressed … - Embracing not only the tribe and the kingdom of Judah, but the whole nation. The calamity, therefore, had come upon them all.

Even by departing - By departing from thy commandments; or by rebellion against thee.

That they might not obey thy voice - By refusing to obey thy voice, or thy commands.

Therefore the curse is poured upon us - As rain descends, or as water is poured out. The "curse" here refers to what was so solemnly threatened by Moses in case the nation did not obey God. See Deuteronomy 28:15-68.

And the oath that is written in the law of Moses … - The word here rendered "oath" (שְׁבוּעָה *shebûʿâh*) means, properly, a "swearing," or "an oath;" and hence, either an oath of promise as in a covenant, or an oath of cursing or imprecation - that is, a curse. It is evidently used in the latter sense here. See Gesenius, "Lexicon" Daniel saw clearly that the evils which had been threatened by Moses Deuteronomy 28 had actually come upon the nation, and he as clearly saw that the cause of all these calamities was thai which Moses had specified. He, therefore, frankly and penitently confessed these sins in the name of the whole people, and earnestly supplicated for mercy.

Verse 12

And he hath confirmed his words … - By bringing upon the people all that he had threatened in case of their disobedience. Daniel saw that there was a complete fulfillment of all that he had said would come upon them. As all this had been threatened, he could not complain; and as he had confirmed his words in regard to the threatening, he had the same reason to think that he would in regard to his promises. What Daniel here says was

true in his time, and in reference to his people will be found to be true at all times, and in reference to all people. Nothing is more certain than that God will "confirm" all the words that he has over spoken, and that no sinner can hope to escape on the ground that God will be found to be false to his threatenings, or that he has forgotten them, or that he is indifferent to them.

Against our judges that judged us - Our magistrates or rulers.

For under the whole heaven - In all the world.

Hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem - In respect to the slaughter, and the captivity, and the complete desolation. No one can show that at that time this was not literally true. The city was in a state of complete desolation; its temple was in ruins; its people had been slain or borne into captivity.

Verse 13

As it is written in the law of Moses - The word law was given to all the writings of Moses. See the notes at Luke 24:44.

Yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God - Margin, "entreated we not the face of." The Hebrew word used here (חלה *châlâh*) means, properly, "to be polished;" then to be worn down in strength, to be weak; then to be sick, or diseased; then in Piel (the form used here), to rub or stroke the face of anyone, to soothe or caress, and hence, to beseech, or supplicate. See Gesenius, "Lexicon" Here it means, that, as a people, they had failed, when they had sinned, to call upon God for pardon; to confess their sins; to implore his mercy; to deprecate his wrath. It would have been easy to turn aside his threatened judgments if they had been penitent, and had sought his mercy, but they had not done it. What is here said of them can and will be said of all sinners when the Divine judgment comes upon them.

That we might turn from, our iniquities - That we might seek grace to turn from our transgressions. "And understand thy truth." The truth which God had revealed; equivalent to saying that they might be righteous.

Verse 14

Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil - The word here used and rendered watched - שׁקד *shâqad* - means, properly, "to wake; to be sleepless; to watch." Then it means to watch over anything, or to be attentive to it. Jeremiah 1:12; Jeremiah 31:28; Jeremiah 44:27. - Gesenius, "Lexicon" The meaning here is, that the Lord had not been inattentive to the progress of things, nor unmindful of his threatening. He had never

slumbered, but had carefully observed the course of events, and had been attentive to all that they had done, and to all that he had threatened to do. The practical "truth" taught here - and it is one of great importance to sinners - is, that God is not inattentive to their conduct, though he may seem to be, and that in due time he will show that he has kept an unslumbering eye upon them. See the notes at Isaiah 18:4.

For the Lord our God is righteous in all his works … - This is the language of a true penitent; language which is always used by one who has right feelings when he reflects on the Divine dealings toward him. God is seen to be righteous in his law and in his dealings, and the only reason why we suffer is that we have sinned. This will be found to be true always; and whatever calamities we suffer, it should he a fixed principle with us to "ascribe righteousness to our Maker," Job 36:3.

Verse 15

And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt - In former days. The reference to this shows that it is proper to use "arguments" before God when we plead with him (compare the notes at Job 23:4); that is, to suggest considerations or reasons why the prayer should be granted. Those reasons must be, of course, such as will occur to our own minds as sufficient to make it proper for God to bestow the blessing, and when they are presented before him, it must be with submission to his higher view of the subject. The arguments which it is proper to urge are those derived from the Divine mercy and faithfulness; from the promises of God; from his former dealings with his people; from our sins and misery; from the great sacrifice made for sin; from the desirableness that his name should be glorified. Here Daniel properly refers to the former Divine interposition in favor of the Hebrew people, and he pleads the fact that God had delivered them from Egypt as a reason why he should now interpose and save them. The strength of this argument may be supposed to consist in such things as the following:

(a) in the fact that there was as much reason for interposing now as there was then;

(b) in the fact that his interposing then might be considered as a proof that he intended to be regarded as their protector, and to defend them as his people;

(c) in the fact that he who had evinced such mighty power at that time must be able to interpose and save them now, etc.

And hast gotten thee renown - Margin, "made thee a name." So the Hebrew. The idea is, that that great event had been the means of making him known as a faithful God, and a God able to deliver. As he was thus known, Daniel prayed that he would again interpose, and would now show that he was as able to deliver his people as in former times.

As at this day - That is, as God was then regarded. The remembrance of his interposition had been diffused abroad, and had been transmitted from age to age.

We have sinned … - This turn in the thought shows how deeply the idea of their sinfulness pressed upon the mind of Daniel. The natural and obvious course of thought would have been, that, as God had interposed when his people were delivered from Egyptian bondage, he would now again interpose; but instead of that, the mind of Daniel is overwhelmed with the thought that they had sinned grievously against one who had shown that he was a God so great and glorious, and who had laid them under such obligations to love and serve him.

Verse 16

O Lord, according to all thy righteousness - The word righteousness here seems to refer to all that was excellent and glorious in the character of God. The eye of Daniel is fixed upon what he had formerly done; upon his character of justice, and mercy, and goodness; upon the faithfulness of God to his people, and, in view of all that was excellent and lovely in his character, he pleaded that he would interpose and turn away his anger from his people now. It is the character of God that is the ground of his plea - and what else is there that can give us encouragement when we come before him in prayer.

Let thine anger and thy fury be turned away … - The anger which had come upon the city, and which appeared to rest, upon it. Jerusalem was in ruins, and it seemed still to be lying under the wrath of God. The word rendered fury is the common one to denote wrath or indignation. It implies no more than anger or indignation, and refers here to the Divine displeasure against their sins, manifested in the destruction of their city.

Thy holy mountain - Jerusalem was built on hills, and the city in general might be designated by this phrase. Or, more probably, there is allusion either to Mount Zion, or to Mount Moriah.

Because for our sins … - There is, on the part of Daniel, no disposition to blame God for what he had done. There is no murmuring or complaining, as if he had been unjust or severe in his dealings with his people. Jerusalem was indeed in ruins, and the people were captives in a distant land, but he felt and admitted that God was just in all that he had done. It was too manifest to be denied that all these calamities had come upon them on account of their sins, and this Daniel, in the name of the people, humbly and penitently acknowledged.

A reproach to all that are about us - All the surrounding nations. They reproach us with our sins, and with the judgments that have come upon us, as if we were peculiarly wicked, and were forsaken of heaven.

Verse 17

Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant - In behalf of the people. He pleaded for his people and country, and earnestly entreated the Lord to be merciful. His argument is based on the confession of sin; on the character of God; on the condition of the city and temple; on the former Divine interpositions in behalf of the people; and by all these considerations, he pleads with God to have mercy upon his people and land.

And cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary - Upon the temple. That is, that he would look upon it benignly and favorably. The language is common in the Scriptures, when favor and kindness are denoted by lifting up the light of the countenance, and by similar phrases. The allusion is originally, perhaps, to the sun, which, when it shines brightly, is an emblem of favor and mercy; when it is overclouded, is an emblem of wrath.

For the Lord‘s sake - That is, that he would be propitious for his own sake; to wit, that his glory might be promoted; that his excellent character might be displayed; that his mercy and compassion might be shown. All true prayer has its seat in a desire that the glory of God may be promoted, and the excellence of his character displayed. That is of more consequence than “our” welfare, and the gratification of “our” wishes, and that should be uppermost in our hearts when we approach the throne of grace.

Verse 18

O my God, incline thine ear, and hear - Pleading earnestly for his attention and his favor, as one does to a man.

Open thine eyes - As if his eyes had been closed upon the condition of the city, and he did not see it. Of course, all this is figurative, and is the language of strong and earnest pleading when the heart is greatly interested.

And the city which is called by thy name - Margin, "whereupon thy name is called." The margin expresses the sense more literally; but the meaning is, that the city had been consecrated to God, and was called his - the city of Jehovah. It was known as the place of his sanctuary - the city where his worship was celebrated, and which was regarded as his peculiar dwelling place on the earth. Compare Psalm 48:1-3; Psalm 87:3. This is a new ground of entreaty, that the city belonged to God, and that he would remember the close connection between the prosperity of that city and the glory of his own name.

Verse 19

O Lord, hear … - The language in this verse does not require any particular explanation. The repetition - the varied forms of expression - indicate a mind intent on the object; a heart greatly interested; an earnestness that cannot be denied. It is language that is respectful, solemn, devout, but deeply earnest. It is not vain repetition, for its force is not in the "words" employed, but in the manifest fervour, earnestness, and sincerity of spirit which pervade the pleading. It is earnest intercession and supplication that God would hear - that he would forgive, that he would hearken and do, that he would not defer his gracious interposition. The sins of the people; the desolation of the city; the promises of God; the reproach that the nation was suffering - all these come rushing over the soul, and prompt to the most earnest pleading that perhaps ever proceeded from human lips.

And these things justified that earnest pleading - for the prayer was that of a prophet, a man of God, a man that loved his country, a man that was intent on the promotion of the Divine glory as the supreme object of his life. Such earnest intercession; such confession of sin; such a dwelling on arguments why a prayer should be heard, is at all times acceptable to God; and though it cannot be supposed that the Divine Mind needs to be instructed, or that our arguments will convince God or influence him as arguments do men, yet it is undoubtedly proper to urge them as if they would, for it may be only in this way that our own minds can be brought into a proper state. The great argument which we are to urge why our prayers should be heard is the sacrifice which has been made for sin by the Redeemer, and the fact that he has purchased for us the blessings which we need; but in connection with that it is proper to urge our own sins and necessities; the wants of our friends or our country; our own danger and that of others; the interposition of God in times past in behalf of his people, and

his own gracious promises and purposes. If we have the spirit, the faith, the penitence, the earnestness of Daniel, we may be sure that our prayers will be heard as his was.

Verse 20

And whiles I was speaking … - In the very time when I was thus pleading.

For the holy mountain of my God - See the notes at Daniel 9:16.

Verse 21

Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer - How "long" the prayer continued we are not informed. It is probable that we have only the substance of it, and that Daniel has recorded only the topics on which he dwelt more at length. The subject was of great importance, and it is reasonable to suppose that a day had been devoted to an examination of the prophecies, and to solemn prayer.

Even the man Gabriel - Who had the appearance of a man, and hence, so called.

Whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning - That is, in a "former" vision. See the notes at Daniel 8:16. It cannot refer to what is mentioned in this (the ninth) chapter, for

(a) he had as yet had no vision, but all that is recorded is a prayer;

(b) there is no intimation that Gabriel had appeared to him at the beginning of the prayer; and

(c) it is declared that at the beginning of the prayer, Gabriel, then evidently in heaven, had received commandment to go to Daniel, and to communicate the message to him, Daniel 9:23.

The meaning undoubtedly is, that the personage who now appeared to him he recognized to be the same who had appeared in a former vision on the banks of the Ulai. The proper meaning of the Hebrew here is, "in a vision at the beginning," as in our translation. So the Vulgate, "a principio;" and so Theodotion - ἐν τῇ ἀρχῇ *en tē archē* The Hebrew word תחלה *techîllâh* means, properly, "beginning," Hosea 1:2; Proverbs 9:10; but, in connection with the preposition, as here - בתחלה *battechîllâh* - it means also,

"before, formerly," Genesis 13:3; Genesis 41:21; Genesis 43:18, Genesis 43:20; Isaiah 1:26.

Being caused to fly swiftly - Margin, "with weariness," or "flight." On the difficult Hebrew expression here - מעף ביעף *muʿâp bîyʿâp* - Lengerke may be consulted, *in loc*. The words, according to Gesenius, are derived from יעף *yâʿap* to go swiftly, and then, to be wearied, to faint, either with running, Jeremiah 2:24, or with severe labor, Isaiah 40:28, or with sorrows, Isaiah 50:4. If derived from this word, the meaning in Hophal, the form used here, would be, "wearied with swift running," and the sense is, that Gabriel had borne the message swiftly to him, and appeared before him as one does who is wearied with a rapid course. If this be the idea, there is no direct allusion to his "flying," but the reference is to the rapidity with which he had come on the long journey, as if exhausted by his journey. The Latin Vulgate renders it *cito volans* - quickly flying; Theodotion, πετόμενος *petomenos* - flying; the Codex Chisianus, τάχει φερόμενος *tachei pheromenos* - "borne swiftly." The Syriac, "with a swift flying he flew and came from heaven." It cannot be determined with certainty, from the words used here, that the coming of Gabriel was by an act of "flying" as with wings. The common representation of the angels in the Old Testament is not with wings, though the cherubim and Seraphim (Isaiah 6:2, following.) are represented with wings; and in Revelation 14:6, we have a representation of an angel flying. Probably the more exact idea here is that of a rapid course, so as to produce weariness, or such as would naturally produce fatigue.

Touched me - Daniel was doubtless at this time engaged in prayer.

About the time of the evening oblation - The evening sacrifice. This was at the ninth hour of the day, or about three o'clock in the afternoon.

Verse 22

And he informed me - Hebrew, Gave me intelligence or understanding. That is, about the design of his visit, and about what would be hereafter.

And talked with me - Spake unto me.

O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill - Margin, "make thee skillful of." The Hebrew is, literally, "to make thee skillful, or wise, in understanding." The design was to give him information as to what was to occur.

Verse 23

At the beginning of thy supplications - We are not informed at what time Daniel began to pray, but as remarked above, it is most natural to

suppose that he devoted the day to prayer, and had commenced these solemn acts of devotion in the morning.

The commandment came forth - Margin, "word." That is, the word of God. This evidently means, in heaven; and the idea is, that as soon as he began to pray a command was issued from God to Gabriel that he should visit Daniel, and convey to him the important message respecting future events. It is fair to conclude that he had at once left heaven in obedience to the order, and on this high embassage, and that he had passed over the amazing distance between heaven and earth in the short time during which Daniel was engaged in prayer. If so, and if heaven - the peculiar seat of God, the dwelling-place of angels and of the just - is beyond the region of the fixed stars, some central place in this vast universe, then this may give us some idea of the amazing rapidity with which celestial beings may move. It is calculated that there are stars so remote from our earth, that their light would not travel down to us for many thousand years. If so, how much more rapid may be the movements of celestial beings than even light; perhaps more than that of the lightning's flash - than the electric fluid on telegraphic wires - though "that" moves at the rate of more than 200,000 miles in a second. Compare Dick's "Philosophy of a Future State," p. 220. "During the few minutes employed in uttering this prayer," says Dr. Dick, "this angelic messenger descended from the celestial regions to the country of Babylonia. This was a rapidity of motion surpassing the comprehension of the most vigorous imagination, and far exceeding even the amazing velocity of light." With such a rapidity it may be our privilege yet to pass from world to world on errands of mercy and love, or to survey in distant parts of the universe the wonderful works of God.

And I am come to show thee - To make thee acquainted with what will yet be.

For thou" art "greatly beloved - Margin, as in Hebrew, "a man of desires." That is, he was one whose happiness was greatly desired by God; or, a man of God's delight; that is, as in our version, greatly beloved. It was on this account that his prayer was heard, and that God sent to him this important message respecting what was to come.

Therefore understand the matter - The matter respecting what was yet to occur in regard to his people.

And consider the vision - This vision - the vision of future things which he was now about to present to his view. From this passage,

describing the appearance of Gabriel to Daniel, we may learn,

(a) That our prayers, if sincere, are heard in heaven "as soon" as they are offered. They enter at once into the ears of God, and he regards them at the instant.

(b) A command, as it were, may be at once issued to answer them - "as if" he directed an angel to bear the answer at once.

(c) The angels are ready to hasten down to men, to communicate the will of God. Gabriel came evidently with pleasure on his embassage, and to a benevolent being anywhere there is nothing more grateful than to be commissioned to bear glad tidings to others. Possibly that may be a part of the employment of the righteous forever.

(d) The thought is an interesting one, if we are permitted to entertain it, that good angels may be constantly employed as Gabriel was; that whenever prayer is offered on earth they may be commissioned to bring answers of peace and mercy, or despatched to render aid, and that thus the universe may be constantly traversed by these holy beings ministering to those who are "heirs of salvation," Hebrews 1:1, Hebrews 1:4.

Verse 24

Seventy weeks are determined - Here commences the celebrated prophecy of the seventy weeks - a portion of Scripture Which has excited as much attention, and led to as great a variety of interpretation, as perhaps any other. Of this passage, Professor Stuart ("Hints on the Interpretation of Prophecy," p. 104) remarks, "It would require a volume of considerable magnitude even to give a history of the ever-varying and contradictory opinions of critics respecting this "locus vexatissimus; "and perhaps a still larger one to establish an exegesis which would stand. I am fully of opinion, that no interpretation as yet published will stand the test of thorough grammatico-historical criticism; and that a candid, and searching, and thorough "critique" here is still a "desideratum." May some expositor, fully adequate to the task, speedily appear!" After these remarks of this eminent Biblical scholar, it is with no great confidence of success that I enter on the exposition of the passage.

Yet, perhaps, though “all” difficulties may not be removed, and though I cannot hope to contribute anything “new” in the exposition of the passage, something may be written which may relieve it of some of the perplexities attending it, and which may tend to show that its author was under the influence of Divine inspiration. The passage may be properly divided into two parts. The first, in Daniel 9:24, contains a “general” statement of what would occur in the time specified - the seventy weeks; the second, Daniel 9:25-27, contains a “particular” statement of the manner in which that would be accomplished. In this statement, the whole time of the seventy weeks is broken up into three smaller portions of seven, sixty-two, and one - designating evidently some important epochs or periods Daniel 9:25, and the last one week is again subdivided in such a way, that, while it is said that the whole work of the Messiah in confirming the covenant would occupy the entire week, yet that he would be cut off in the middle of the week, Daniel 9:27.

In the “general” statement Daniel 9:24 it is said that there was a definite time - seventy weeks - during which the subject of the prediction would be accomplished; that is, during which all that was to be done in reference to the holy city, or in the holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, etc., would be effected. The things specified in this verse are “what was to be done,” as detailed more particularly in the subsequent verses. The design in this verse seems to have been to furnish a “general” statement of what was to occur in regard to the holy city - of that city which had been selected for the peculiar purpose of being a place where an atonement was to be made for human transgression. It is quite clear that when Daniel set apart this period for prayer, and engaged in this solemn act of devotion, his design was not to inquire into the ultimate events which would occur in Jerusalem, but merely to pray that the purpose of God, as predicted by Jeremiah, respecting the captivity of the nation, and the rebuilding of the city and temple, might be accomplished. God took occasion from this, however, not only to give an implied assurance about the accomplishment of these purposes, but also to state in a remarkable manner the “whole” ultimate design respecting the holy city, and the great event which was ever onward to characterize it among the cities of the world. In the consideration of the whole passage Daniel 9:24-27, it will be proper, first, to examine into

the literal meaning of the words and phrases, and then to inquire into the fulfillment.

Seventy weeks - שׁבעים שׁבעים *shâbuʿîym shîbʿîym* Vulgate, *Septuaginta hebdomades*. So Theodotion, Ἑβδομήκοντα ἑβδομάδες *Hebdomēkonta hebdomades* Prof. Stuart ("Hints," p. 82) renders this "seventy sevens;" that is, seventy times seven years: on the ground that the word denoting "weeks" in the Hebrew is not שׁבעים *shâbuʿîym* but שׁבעות *shâbuʿôth* "The form which is used here," says he, "which is a regular masculine plural, is no doubt purposely chosen to designate the plural of seven; and with great propriety here, inasmuch as there are many sevens which are to be joined together in one common sum. Daniel had been meditating on the close of the seventy "years" of Hebrew exile, and the angel now discloses to him a new period of "seventy times seven," in which still more important events are to take place. Seventy sevens, or (to use the Greek phraseology), "seventy heptades," are determined upon thy people.

Heptades of what? Of days, or of years? No one can doubt what the answer is. Daniel had been making diligent search respecting the seventy "years;" and, in such a connection, nothing but seventy heptades of years could be reasonably supposed to be meant by the angel." The inquiry about the "gender" of the word, of which so much has been said (Hengstenberg, "Chris." ii. 297), does not seem to be very important, since the same result is reached whether it be rendered "seventy sevens," or "seventy weeks." In the former ease, as proposed by Prof. Stuart, it means seventy sevens of "years," or 490 years; in the other, seventy "weeks" of years; that is, as a "week of years" is seven years, seventy such weeks, or as before, 490 years. The usual and proper meaning of the word used here, however - שׁבוּע *shâbûaʿa* is a "seven," ἑβδομάς *hebdomas* i. e., a week. - Gesenius, "Lexicon" From the "examples" where the word occurs it would seem that the masculine or the feminine forms were used indiscriminately.

The word occurs only in the following passages, in all of which it is rendered "week," or "weeks," except in Ezekiel 45:21, where it is rendered "seven," to wit, days. In the following passages the word occurs in the masculine form plural, Daniel 9:24-26; Daniel 10:2-3; in the following in the feminine form plural, Exodus 34:22; Numbers 28:26; Deuteronomy 16:9-10, Deuteronomy 16:16; 2 Chronicles 8:13; Jeremiah 5:24; Ezekiel 45:21; and in the following in the singular number, common gender,

rendered “week,” Genesis 29:27-28, and in the dual masculine in Leviticus 12:5, rendered “two weeks.” From these passages it is evident that nothing certain can be determined about the meaning of the word from its gender. It would seem to denote “weeks,” periods of seven days - “hebdomads” - in either form, and is doubtless so used here. The fair translation would be, weeks seventy are determined; that is, seventy times seven days, or four hundred and ninety “days.” But it may be asked here, whether this is to be taken literally, as denoting four hundred and ninety days? If not, in what sense is it to be understood? and why do we understand it in a different sense? It is clear that it must be explained literally as denoting four hundred and ninety “days,” or that these days must stand for years, and that the period is four hundred and ninety “years.” That this latter is the true interpretation, as it has been held by all commentators, is apparent from the following considerations:

(a) This is not uncommon in the prophetic writings. See the notes at Daniel 7:24-28. (See also Editor‘s Preface to volume on Revelation.)

(b) Daniel had been making inquiry respecting the seventy “years,” and it is natural to suppose that the answer of the angel would have respect to “years” also; and, thus understood, the answer would have met the inquiry pertinently - “ not seventy years, but a week of years - seven times seventy years.” Compare Matthew 18:21-22. “In such a connection, nothing but seventy heptades of years could be reasonably supposed to be meant by the angel.” - Prof. Stuart‘s “Hints,” etc., p. 82.

(c) Years, as Prof. Stuart remarks, are the measure of all considerable periods of time. When the angel speaks, then, in reference to certain events, and declares that they are to take place during “seventy heptades,” it is a matter of course to suppose that he means years.

(d) The circumstances of the case demand this interpretation. Daniel was seeking comfort in view of the fact that the city and temple had been desolate now for a period of seventy years. The angel comes to bring him consolation, and to give him assurances about the rebuilding of the city, and the great events that were to occur there. But what consolation would it be to be told that the city would indeed be rebuilt, and that it would continue

seventy ordinary weeks - that is, a little more than a year, before a new destruction would come upon it? It cannot well be doubted, then, that by the time here designated, the angel meant to refer to a period of four hundred and ninety years; and if it be asked why this number was not literally and exactly specified in so many words, instead of choosing a mode of designation comparatively so obscure, it may be replied,

(1) that the number "seventy" was employed by Daniel as the time respecting which he was making inquiry, and that there was a propriety that there should be a reference to that fact in the reply of the angel - "one" number seventy had been fulfilled in the desolations of the city, there would be "another" number seventy in the events yet to occur;

(2) this is in the usual prophetic style, where there is, as Hengstenberg remarks ("Chris." ii. 299), often a "concealed definiteness." It is usual to designate numbers in this way.

(3) The term was sufficiently clear to be understood, or is, at all events, made clear by the result. There is no reason to doubt that Daniel would so understand it, or that it would be so interpreted, as fixing in the minds of the Jewish people the period when the Messiah was about to appear. The meaning then is, that there would be a period of four hundred and ninety years, during which the city, after the order of the rebuilding should go forth Daniel 9:25, until the entire consummation of the great object for which it should be rebuilt: and that then the purpose would be accomplished, and it would be given up to a greater ruin. There was to be this long period in which most important transactions were to occur in the city.

Are determined - The word used here (נחתך *nechettak* from חתך *châtak*) occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. It properly means, according to Gesenius, to cut off, to divide; and hence, to deterinine, to destine, to appoint. Theodotion renders it, sunetmeetheesan - are cut off, decided, defined. The Vulgate renders it, "abbreviate sunt." Luther, "Sind bestimmet" - are determined. The meaning would seem to be, that this portion of time - the seventy weeks - was "cut off" from the whole of duration, or cut out of it, as it were, and set by itself for a definite purpose. It does not mean that it was cut off from the time which the city would naturally stand, or that this time was "abbreviated," but that a portion of

time - to wit, four hundred and ninety years - was designated or appointed with reference to the city, to accomplish the great and important object which is immediately specified. A certain, definite period was fixed on, and when this was past, the promised Messiah would come. In regard to the construction here - the singular verb with a plural noun, see Hengstenberg, "Christ. in, loc." The true meaning seems to be, that the seventy weeks are spoken of "collectively," as denoting a period of time; that is, a period of seventy weeks is determined. The prophet, in the use of the singular verb, seems to have contemplated the time, not as separate weeks, or as particular portions, but as one period.

Upon thy people - The Jewish people; the nation to which Daniel belonged. This allusion is made because he was inquiring about the close of their exile, and their restoration to their own land.

And upon thy holy city - Jerusalem, usually called the holy city, because it was the place where the worship of God was celebrated, Isaiah 52:1; Nehemiah 11:1, Nehemiah 11:18; Matthew 27:53. It is called "thy holy city" - the city of Daniel, because he was here making special inquiry respecting it, and because he was one of the Hebrew people, and the city was the capital of their nation. As one of that nation, it could be called "his." It was then, indeed, in ruins, but it was to be rebuilt, and it was proper to speak of it as if it were then a city. The meaning of "upon thy people and city" (על *ʿal*) is, "respecting" or "concerning." The purpose respecting the seventy weeks "pertains" to thy people and city; or there is an important period of four hundred and seventy years determined on, or designated, respecting that people and city.

To finish the transgression - The angel proceeds to state what was the object to be accomplished in this purpose, or what would occur during that period. The first thing, "to finish the transgression." The margin is, "restrain." The Vulgate renders it, *ut consummetur proevaricatio*. Theodotion, τοῦ συντελεσθῆναι ἁμαρτίαν *tou suntelesthēnai hamartian* - to finish sin. Thompson renders this, "to finish sin-offerings." The difference between the marginal reading ("restrain") and the text ("finish") arises from a doubt as to the meaning of the original word. The common reading of the text is כלא *kallē'* but in 39 Codices examined by Kennicott, it is כלה . The reading in the text is undoubtedly the correct one, but still there is not absolute certainty as to the signification of the word, whether it means to "finish" or to "restrain." The proper meaning of the word in the common

reading of the text (כלא *kâlâ'*) is, to shut up, confine, restrain - as it is rendered in the margin.

The meaning of the other word found in many manuscripts (כלה *kâlâh*) is, to be completed, finished, closed - and in Piel, the form used here, to complete, to finish - as it is translated in the common version. Gesenius ("Lexicon") supposes that the word here is "for" - כלה *kallēh* - meaning to finish or complete. Hengstenberg, who is followed in this view by Lengerke, supposes that the meaning is to "shut up transgression," and that the true reading is that in the text - כלא - though as that word is not used in Piel, and as the Masoretes had some doubts as to the derivation of the word, they gave to it not its appropriate "pointing" in this place - which would have been כלא *keloh* - but the pointing of the other word (כלה *kalēh*) in the margin. According to Hengstenberg, the sense here of "shutting up" is derived from the general notion of "restraining" or "hindering," belonging to the word; and he supposes that this will best accord with the other words in this member of the verse - "to cover," and "to seal up."

The idea according to him is, that "sin, which hitherto lay naked and open before the eyes of a righteous God, is now by his mercy shut up, sealed, and covered, so that it can no more be regarded as existing - a figurative description of the forgiveness of sin." So Lengerke renders it, "Ura einzuschliessen (den) Abfall." Bertholdt, "Bis der Frevel vollbracht." It seems most probable that the true idea here is that denoted in the margin, and that the sense is not that of "finishing," but that of "restraining, closing, shutting up," etc. So it is rendered by Prof. Stuart - "to restrain transgression." - "Com. on Daniel, *in loc*." The word is used in this sense of "shutting up," or "restraining," in several places in the Bible: 1 Samuel 6:10, "and shut up their calves at home;" Jeremiah 32:3, "Zedekiah had shut him up;" Psalm 88:8, "I am shut up, and I cannot come forth;" Jeremiah 32:2, "Jeremiah the prophet was shut up."

The sense of "shutting up," or "restraining," accords better with the connection than that of "finishing." The reference of the whole passage is undoubtedly to the Messiah, and to what would be done sometime during the "seventy weeks;" and the meaning here is, not that he would "finish transgression" - which would not be true in any proper sense, but that he would do a work which would "restrain" iniquity in the world, or, more

strictly, which would "shut it up" - enclose it - as in a prison, so that it would no more go forth and prevail. The effect would be that which occurs when one is shut up in prison, and no longer goes at large. There would be a restraining power and influence which would check the progress of sin. This does not, I apprehend, refer to the particular transgressions for which the Jewish people had suffered in their long captivity, but sin (הפשע *hapesha*ʿ) in general - the sin of the world.

There would be an influence which would restrain and curb it, or which would shut it up so that it would no longer reign and roam at large over the earth. It is true that this might not have been so understood by Daniel at the time, for the "language" is so general that it "might" have suggested the idea that it referred to the sins of the Jewish people. This language, if there had been no farther explanation of it, might have suggested the idea that in the time specified - seventy weeks - there would be some process - some punishment - some Divine discipline - by which the iniquities of that people, or their propensity to sin, for which this long captivity had come upon them, would be cohibited, or restrained. But the language is not such as necessarily to confine the interpretation to that, and the subsequent statements, and the actual fulfillment in the work of the Messiah, lead us to understand this in a much higher sense, as having reference to sin in general, and as designed to refer to some work that would ultimately be an effectual check on sin, and which would tend to cohibit, or restrain it altogether in the world. Thus understood, the language will well describe the work of the Redeemer - that work which, through the sacrifice made on the cross, is adapted and designed to restrain sin altogether.

And to make an end of sins - Margin, "to seal up." The difference here in the text and the margin arises from a difference in the readings in the Hebrew. The common reading in the text is חתם *châthēm* - from חתם *châtham* - "to seal, to seal up." But the Hebrew marginal reading is a different word - התם *hâthēm* from תמם *tâmam* - "to complete, to perfect, to finish." The "pointing" in the text in the word חתם *châtēm* is not the proper pointing of that word, which would have been חתם *chetom* but the Masoretes, as is not unfrequently the case, gave to the word in the text the pointing of another word which they placed in the margin. The marginal reading is found in fifty-five manuscripts (Lengerke), but the weight of

authority is decidedly in favor of the common reading in the Hebrew text - "to seal," and not to "finish," as it is in our translation.

The marginal reading, "to finish," was doubtless substituted by some transcribers, or rather "suggested" by the Masoretes, because it seemed to convey a better signification to say that "sin would be finished," than to say that it would be "sealed." The Vulgate has followed the reading in the margin - *et finem accipiat peccatum*; Theodotion has followed the other reading, σφραγίας ἁμαρτίας *sphragisai hamartias* Luther also has it, "to seal." Coverdale, "that sin may have an end." The true rendering is, doubtless, "to seal sin;" and the idea is that of removing it from sight; to remove it from view. "The expression is taken," says Lengerke, "from the custom of sealing up those things which one lays aside and conceals." Thus in Job 9:7, "And sealeth up the stars;" that is, he so shuts them up in the heavens as to prevent their shining - so as to hide them from the view. They are concealed, hidden, made close - as the contents of a letter or package are sealed, indicating that no one is to examine them.

See the note at that passage. So also in Job 37:7, referring to winter, it is said, "He sealeth up the hand of every man, that all men may know his work." That is, in the winter, when the snow is on the ground, when the streams are frozen, the labors of the farmer must cease. The hands can no more be used in ordinary toil. Every man is prevented from going abroad to his accustomed labor, and is, as it were, "sealed up" in his dwelling. Compare Jeremiah 32:11, Jeremiah 32:14; Isaiah 29:11; Genesis 6:14; and hence, to cover over sin; that is, to atone for it, pardon it, forgive it. It is the word which is commonly used with reference to atonement or expiation, and seems to have been so understood by our translators. It does not necessarily refer to the means by which sin is covered over, etc., by an atonement, but is often used in the general sense of "to pardon or forgive." Compare the notes at Isaiah 6:7, and more fully. See the notes at Isaiah 43:3. Here there is no necessary allusion to the atonement which the Messiah would make in order to cover over sin; that is, the word is of so general a character in its signification that it does not necessarily imply this, but it is the word which would naturally be used on the supposition that it had such a reference. As a matter of fact, undoubtedly, the means by which this was to be done was by the atonement, and that was referred to by the Spirit of inspiration, but this is not essentially implied in the meaning of the

word. In whatever way that should be done, this word would be properly used as expressing it. The Latin Vulgate renders thus, *et deleatur iniquitas*. Theodotion, ἀπαλεῖψαι τὰς ἀδικίας *apaleipsai tas adikias* - "to wipe out iniquities." Luther, "to reconcile for transgression." Here are three things specified, therefore, in regard to sin, which would be done. Sin would be

Restrained,

Sealed up,

Covered over.

These expressions, though not of the nature of a climax, are intensive, and show that the great work referred to pertained to sin, and would be designed to remove it. Its bearing would be on human transgression; on the way by which it might be pardoned; on the methods by which it would be removed from the view, and be kept from rising up to condemn and destroy. Such expressions would undoubtedly lead the mind to look forward to some method which was to be disclosed by which sin could be consistently pardoned and removed. In the remainder of the verse, there are three additional things which would be done as necessary to complete the work: -

To bring in everlasting righteousness;

To seal up the vision and prophecy; and

To anoint the Most Holy.

And to bring in everlasting righteousness - The phrase "to bring in" - literally, "to cause to come" - refers to some direct agency by which that righteousness would be introduced into the world. It would be such an agency as would cause it to exist; or as would establish it in the world. The "mode" of doing this is not indeed here specified, and, so far as the "word" used here is concerned, it would be applicable to any method by which this would be done - whether by making an atonement; or by setting an example; or by persuasion; or by placing the subject of morals on a better foundation; or by the administration of a just government; or in any other way. The term is of the most general character, and its exact force here can be learned only by the subsequently revealed facts as to the way by which this would be accomplished. The essential idea in the language is, that this would be "introduced" by the Messiah; that is, that he would be its author.

The word "righteousness" here also (צדק *tsedeq*) is of a general character. The fair meaning would be, that some method would be introduced by which men would become "righteous." In the former part of the verse, the reference was to "sin" - to the fact of its existence - to the

manner in which it would be disposed of - to the truth that it would be coerced, sealed up, covered over. Here the statement is, that, in contradistinction from that, a method would be introduced by which man would become, in fact, righteous and holy. But the "word" implies nothing as to the method by which this would be done. Whether it would be by a new mode of justification, or by an influence that would make men personally holy - whether this was to be as the result of example, or instruction, or an atoning sacrifice - is not necessarily implied in the use of this word. That, as in the cases already referred to, could be learned only by subsequent develop. ments.

It would be, doubtless, understood that there was a reference to the Messiah - for that is specified in the next verse; and it would be inferred from this word that, under him, righteousness would reign, or that men would be righteous, but nothing could be argued from it as to the methods by which it would be done. It is hardly necessary to add, that, in the prophets, it is constantly said that righteousness would characterize the Messiah and his times; that he would come to make men righteous, and to set up a kingdom of righteousness in the earth. Yet the exact mode in which it was to be done would be, of course, more fully explained when the Messiah should himself actually appear. The word "everlasting" is used here to denote that the righteousness would be permanent and perpetual. In reference to the method of becoming righteous, it would be unchanging - the standing method ever onward by which men would become holy; in reference to the individuals who should become righteous under this system, it would be a righteousness which would continue forever.

This is the characteristic which is everywhere given of the righteousness which would be introduced by the Messiah. Thus in Isaiah 51:6-8: "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be forever, and my salvation from generation to

generation." So Isaiah 45:17: "But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end."

Compare Jeremiah 31:3. The language used in the passage before us, moreover, is such as could not properly be applied to anything but that righteousness which the Messiah would introduce. It could not be used in reference to the temporal prosperity of the Jews on their return to the holy land, nor to such righteousness as the nation had in former times. The fair and proper meaning of the term is, that it would be "eternal" - what would "endure forever" - צדק עלמים *tsedeq ʿolâmîym* It would place righteousness on a permanent and enduring foundation; introduce that which would endure through all changes, and exist when the heavens would be no more. In the plan itself there would be no change; in the righteousness which anyone would possess under that system there would be perpetual duration - it would exist forever and ever. This is the nature of that righteousness by which men are now justified; this is what all who are interested in the scheme of redemption actually possess. The "way" in which this "everlasting righteousness" would be introduced is not stated here, but is reserved for future revelations. Probably all that the words would convey to Daniel would be, that there would be some method disclosed by which men would become righteous, and that this would not be temporary or changing, but would be permanent and eternal. It is not improper that "we" should understand it, as it is explained by the subsequent revelations in the New Testament, as to the method by which sinners are justified before God.

And to seal up the vision and prophecy - Margin, as in the Hebrew, "prophet." The evident meaning, however, here is "prophecy." The word seal is found, as already explained, in the former part of the verse - "to seal up sins." The word "vision" (for its meaning, see the notes at Isaiah 1:1) need not be understood as referring particularly to the visions seen by Daniel, but should be understood, like the word "prophecy" or "prophet" here, in a general sense - as denoting all the visions seen by the prophets - the series of visions relating to the future, which had been made known to the prophets. The idea seems to be that they would at that time be all "sealed," in the sense that they would be closed or shut up - no longer open matters - but that the fulfillment would, as it were, close them up forever. Till that time they would be open for penusal and study; then they would be

closed up as a sealed volume which one does not read, but which contains matter hidden from the view.

Compare the notes at Isaiah 8:16: "Bind up the testimony; seal the law among my disciples." See also Daniel 8:26; Daniel 12:4. In Isaiah Isaiah 8:16 the meaning is, that the prophecy was complete, and the direction was given to bind it up, or roll it up like a volume, and to seal it. In Daniel 8:26, the meaning is, seal up the prophecy, or make a permanent record of it, that when it is fulfilled, the event may be compared with the prophecy, and it may be seen that the one corresponds with the other. In the passage before us, Gesenius ("Lexicon") renders it, "to complete, to finish" - meaning that the prophecies would be fulfilled. Hengstenberg supposes that it means, that "as soon as the fulfillment takes place, the prophecy, although it retains, in other respects, its great importance, reaches the end of its destination, in so far as the view of believers, who stand in need of consolation and encouragement, is no longer directed to it, to the future prosperity, but to what has appeared."

Lengerke supposes that it means to confirm, corroborate, ratify - bekraftigen, bestatigen; that is, "the eternal righteousness will be given to the pious, and the predictions of the prophets will be confirmed and fulfilled." To seal, says he, has also the idea of confirming, since the contents of a writing are secured or made fast by a seal. After all, perhaps, the very idea here is, that of "making fast," as a lock or seal does - for, as is well known, a seal was often used by the ancients where a lock is with us; and the sense may be, that, as a seal or lock made fast and secure the contents of a writing or a book, so the event, when the prophecy was fulfilled, would make it "fast" and "secure." It would be, as it were, locking it up, or sealing it, forever. It would determine all that seemed to be undetermined about it; settle all that seemed to be indefinite, and leave it no longer uncertain what was meant. According to this interpretation the meaning would be, that the prophecies would be sealed up or settled by the coming of the Messiah. The prophecies terminated on him (compare Revelation 19:10); they would find their fulfillment in him; they would be completed in him - and might then be regarded as closed and consummated - as a book that is fully written and is sealed up. All the prophecies, and all the visions, had a reference more or less direct to the coming of the Messiah, and when he should appear they might be regarded as complete.

The spirit of prophecy would cease, and the facts would confirm and seal all that had been written.

And to anoint the Most Holy - There has been great variety in the interpretation of this expression. The word rendered "anoint" - משח *meshocha* - infinitive from משח *mâshach* (from the word Messiah, Daniel 9:25), means, properly, to strike or draw the hand over anything; to spread over with anything, to smear, to paint, to anoint. It is commonly used with reference to a sacred rite, to anoint, or consecrate by unction, or anointing to any office or use; as, e. g., a priest, Exodus 28:41; Exodus 40:15; a prophet, 1 Kings 19:16; Isaiah 61:1; a king, 1 Samuel 10:1; 1 Samuel 15:1; 2 Samuel 2:4; 1 Kings 1:34. So it is used to denote the consecration of a stone or column as a future sacred place, Genesis 31:13; or vases and vessels as consecrated to God, Exodus 40:9, Exodus 40:11; Leviticus 8:11; Numbers 7:1. The word would then denote a setting apart to a sacred use, or consecrating a person or place as holy. Oil, or an unguent, prepared according to a specified rule, was commonly employed for this purpose, but the word may be used in a figurative sense - as denoting to set apart or consecrate in any way "without" the use of oil - as in the case of the Messiah. So far as this word, therefore, is concerned, what is here referred to may have occurred without the literal use of oil, by any act of consecration or dedication to a holy use.

The phrase, "the Most Holy" (קדשים קדש *qôdesh qādāshîym*) has been very variously interpreted. By some it has been understood to apply literally to the most holy place - the holy of holies, in the temple; by others to the whole temple, regarded as holy; by others to Jerusalem at large as a holy place; and by others, as Hengstenberg, to the Christian church as "a" holy place. By some the thing here referred to is supposed to have been the consecration of the most holy place after the rebuilding of the temple; by others the consecration of the whole temple; by others the consecration of the temple and city by the presence of the Messiah, and by others the consecration of the Christian church, by his presence. The phrase properly means "holy of holies," or most holy. It is applied often in the Scriptures to the "inner sanctuary," or the portion of the tabernacle and temple containing the ark of the covenant, the two tables of stone, etc.

See the notes at Matthew 21:12. The phrase occurs in the following places in the Scripture: Exodus 26:33-34; Exodus 29:37; Exodus 30:29,

Exodus 30:36; Exodus 40:10; Leviticus 2:3, Leviticus 2:10, "et al." - in all, in about twenty-eight places. See the "Englishman's Hebrew Concordance." It is not necessarily limited to the inner sanctuary of the temple, but may be applied to the whole house, or to anything that was consecrated to God in a manner peculiarly sacred. In a large sense, possibly it might apply to Jerusalem, though I am not aware that it ever occurs in this sense in the Scriptures, and in a figurative sense it might be applied undoubtedly, as Hengstenberg supposes, to the Christian church, though it is certain that it is not elsewhere thus used. In regard to the meaning of the expression - an important and difficult one, as is admitted by all - there are five principal opinions which it may be well to notice. The truth will be found in one of them.

(1) That it refers to the consecration by oil or anointing of the temple, that would be rebuilt after the captivity, by Zerubbabel and Joshua. This was the opinion of Michaelis and Jahn. But to this opinion there are insuperable objections:

(a) That, according to the uniform tradition of the Jews, the holy oil was wanting in the second temple. In the case of the first temple there might have been a literal anointing, though there is no evidence of that, as there was of the anointing of the vessels of the tabernacle, Exodus 30:22, etc. But in the second temple there is every evidence that there can be, that there was no literal anointing.

(b) The "time" here referred to is a fatal objection to this opinion. The period is seventy weeks of years, or four hundred and ninety years. This cannot be doubted (see the notes at the first part of the verse) to be the period referred to; but it is absurd to suppose that the consecration of the new temple would be deferred for so long a time, and there is not the slightest evidence that it was. This opinion, therefore, cannot be entertained.

(2) The second opinion is, that it refers to the re-consecration and cleansing of the temple after the abominations of Antiochus Epiphanes. See the notes at Daniel 8:14. But this opinion is liable substantially to the same objections as the other. The cleansing of the temple, or of the sanctuary, as it is said in Daniel 8:14, did "not" occur four hundred and ninety years after

the order to rebuild the temple Daniel 9:25, but at a much earlier period. By no art of construction, if the period here referred to is four hundred and ninety years, can it be made to apply to the re-dedication of the temple after Antiochus had defiled it.

(3) Others have supposed that this refers to the Messiah himself, and that the meaning is, that he, who was most holy, would then be consecrated or anointed as the Messiah. It is probable, as Hengstenberg ("Christ." ii. 321,322) has shown, that the Greek translators thus understood it, but it is a sufficient objection to this that the phrase, though occurring many times in the Scriptures, is never applied to "persons," unless this be an instance. Its uniform and proper application is to "things," or "places," and it is undoubtedly so to be understood in this place.

(4) Hengstenberg supposes (pp. 325-328) that it refers to the Christian church as "a" holy place, or "the New Temple of the Lord," "the Church of the New covenant," as consecrated and supplied with the gifts of the Spirit. But it is a sufficient refutation of this opinion that the phrase is nowhere else so used; that it has in the Old Testament a settled meaning as referring to the tabernacle or the temple; that it is nowhere employed to denote a collection of "people," anymore than an individual person - an idea which Hengstenberg himself expressly rejects (p. 322); and that there is no proper sense in which it can be said that the Christian church is "anointed." The language is undoubtedly to be understood as referring to some "place" that was to be thus consecrated, and the uniform Hebrew usage would lead to the supposition that there is reference, in some sense, to the temple at Jerusalem.

(5) It seems to me, therefore, that the obvious and fair interpretation is, to refer it to the temple - as the holy place of God; his peculiar abode on earth. Strictly and properly speaking, the phrase would apply to the inner room of the temple - the sanctuary properly so called (see the notes at Hebrews 9:2); but it might he applied to the whole temple as consecrated to the service of God. If it be asked, then, what anointing or consecration is referred to here, the reply, as it seems to me, is, not that it was then to be set apart anew, or to be dedicated; not that it was literally to be anointed with the consecrating oil, but that it was to be consecrated in the highest and best

sense by the presence of the Messiah - that by his coming there was to be a higher and more solemn consecration of the temple to the real purpose for which it was erected than had occurred at any time. It was reared as a holy place; it would become eminently holy by the presence of him who would come as the anointed of God, and his coming to it would accomplish the purpose for which it was erected, and with reference to which all the rites observed there had been ordained, and then, this work having been accomplished, the temple, and all the rites pertaining to it, would pass away.

In confirmation of this view, it may be remarked, that there are repeated allusions to the coming of the Messiah to the second temple, reared after the return from the captivity - as that which would give a peculiar sacredness to the temple, and which would cause it to surpass in glory all its ancient splendor. So in Haggai 2:7, Haggai 2:9: "And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. - The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." So Malachi 3:1-2: "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap," etc.

Compare Matthew 12:6: "But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple." Using the word "anoint," therefore, as denoting to consecrate, to render holy, to set apart to a sacred use, and the phrase "holy of holies" to designate the temple as such, it seems to me most probable that the reference here is to the highest consecration which could be made of the temple in the estimation of a Hebrew, or, in fact, the presence of the Messiah, as giving a sacredness to that edifice which nothing else did give or could give, and, therefore, as meeting all the proper force of the language used here. On the supposition that it was designed that there should be a reference to this event, this would be such language as would have been not unnaturally employed by a Hebrew prophet. And if it be so, this may be regarded as the probable meaning of the passage. In this sense, the temple which was to be reared again, and about which Daniel felt so solicitous, would receive its highest, its truest consecration, as connected with an event

which was to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and the prophecy.

(D) Simultaneously with this event, as the result of this, we are to anticipate such a spread of truth and righteousness, and such a reign of the saints on the earth, as would be properly symbolized by the coming of the Son of man to the ancient of days to receive the kingdom, Daniel 7:13-14. As shown in the interpretation of those verses, this does not necessarily imply that there would be any visible appearing of the Son of man, or any personal reign (see the note at these verses), but there would be such a making over of the kingdom to the Son of man and to the saints as would be properly symbolized by such a representation. That is, there would be great changes; there would be a rapid progress of the truth; there would be a spread of the gospel; there would be a change in the governments of the world, so that the power would pass into the hands of the righteous, and they would in fact rule. From that time the "saints" would receive the kingdom, and the affairs of the world would be put on a new footing. From that period it might be said that the reign of the saints would commence; that is, there would be such changes in this respect that that would constitute an epoch in the history of the world - the proper beginning of the reign of the saints on the earth - the setting up of the new and final dominion in the world. If there should be such changes - such marked progress - such facilities for the spread of truth - such new methods of propagating it - and such certain success attending it, all opposition giving way, and persecution ceasing, as would properly constitute an epoch or era in the world's history, which would be connected with the conversion of the world to God, this would fairly meet the interpretation of this prophecy; this occurring, all would have taken place which could be fairly shown to be implied in the vision.

(E) We are to expect a reign of righteousness on the earth. On the character of what we are fairly to expect from the words of the prophecy, see the notes at Daniel 7:14. The prophecy authorizes us to anticipate a time when there shall be a general prevalence of true religion; when the power in the world shall be in the hands of good men - of men fearing God; when the Divine laws shall be obeyed - being acknowledged as the laws that are to control men; when the civil institutions of the world shall be pervaded by

religion, and moulded by it; when there shall be no hinderance to the free exercise of religion, and when in fact the reigning power on the earth shall be the kingdom which the Messiah shall set up. There is nothing more certain in the future than such a period, and to that all things are tending. Such a period would fulfill all that is fairly implied in this wonderful prophecy, and to that faith and hope should calmly and confidently look forward. For that they who love their God and their race should labor and pray; and by the certain assurance that such a period will come, we should be cheered amidst all the moral darkness that exists in the world, and in all that now discourages us in our endeavors to do good.

Verse 25

Know, therefore, and understand - Hengstenberg renders this, "and thou wilt know and understand;" and supposes that the design of Gabriel is to awaken the attention and interest of Daniel by the assurance that, if he would give attention, he would understand the subject by the explanation which he was about to give. So also Theodotion renders it in the future tense. The Hebrew is in the future tense, and would probably convey the idea that he might, or would know and understand the matter. So Lengerke renders it, "Und so mogest du wissen," etc. The object is doubtless to call the attention of Daniel to the subject, with the assurance that he might comprehend the great points of the communication which he was about to make respecting the seventy weeks. In the previous verse, the statement was a general one; in this, the angel states the time when the period of the seventy weeks was to commence, and then that the whole period was to be broken up or divided into three smaller portions or epochs, each evidently marking some important event, or constituting an important era. The first period of seven weeks was evidently to be characterized by something in which it would be different from what would follow, or it would reach to some important epoch, and then would follow a continuous period of sixty-two weeks, after which, during the remaining one week, to complete the whole number of seventy, the Messiah would come and would be cut off, and the series of desolations would commence which would result in the entire destruction of the city.

That from the going forth of the commandment - Hebrew, "of the word" - דבר *dâbâr* It is used, however, as in Daniel 9:23, in the sense of commandment or order. The expression "gone forth" (מצא *môtsâ'*) would

properly apply to the "issuing" of an order or decree. So in Daniel 9:23 - דבר יצא *yâtsâ' dâbâr* - "the commandment went forth." The word properly means a going forth, and is applied to the rising sun, that goes forth from the east, Psalm 19:6 (7); then a "place" of going forth, as a gate, a fountain of waters, the east, etc., Ezekiel 42:11; Isaiah 41:18; Psalm 75:6 (7). The word here has undoubted reference to the promulgation of a decree or command, but there is nothing in the words to determine "by whom" the command was to be issued. So far as the "language" is concerned, it would apply equally well to a command issued by God, or by the Persian king, and nothing but the circumstances can determine which is referred to. Hengstenberg supposes that it is the former, and that the reference is to the Divine purpose, or the command issued from the "heavenly council" to rebuild Jerusalem. But the more natural and obvious meaning is, to understand it of the command' actually issued by the Persian monarch to restore and build the city of Jerusalem. This has been the interpretation given by the great body of expositors, and the reasons for it seem to be perfectly clear:

(a) This would be the interpretation affixed to it naturally, if there were no theory to support, or if it did not open a chronological difficulty not easy to settle.

(b) This is the only interpretation which can give anything like definiteness to the passage. Its purpose is to designate some fixed and certain period from which a reckoning could be made as to the time when the Messiah would come. But, so far as appears, there was no such definite and marked command on the part of God; no period which can be fixed upon when he gave commandment to restore and build Jerusalem; no exact and settled point from which one could reckon as to the period when the Messiah would come. It seems to me, therefore, to be clear, that the allusion is to some order to rebuild the city, and as this order could come only from one who had at that time jurisdiction over Jerusalem, and Judea, and who could command the resources necessary to rebuild the ruined city, that order must be one that would emanate from the reigning power; that is, in fact, the Persian power - for that was the power that had jurisdiction at the close of the seventy years' exile. But, as there were several orders or commands in regard to the restoration of the city and the temple, and as there has been much difficulty in ascertaining the exact chronology of the events of that

remote period, it has not been easy to determine the precise order referred to, or to relieve the whole subject from perplexity and difficulty. Lengerke supposes that the reference here is the same as in Daniel 9:2, to the promise made to Jeremiah, and that this is the true point from which the reckoning is to be made. The exact edict referred to will be more properly considered at the close of the verse. All that is necessarily implied here is, that the time from which the reckoning is to be commenced is some command or order issued to restore and build Jerusalem.

To restore - Margin, "build again." The Hebrew is, properly, "to cause to return" - להשיב *lehâshîyb* The word might be applied to the return of the captives to their own land, but it is evidently used here with reference to the city of Jerusalem, and the meaning must be, "to restore it to its former condition." It was evidently the purpose to cause it to return, as it were, to its former spendour; to reinstate it in its former condition as a holy city - the city where the worship of God would be celebrated, and it is this purpose which is referred to here. The word, in Hiphil, is used in this sense of restoring to a former state, or to renew, in the following places: Psalm 80:3, "Turn us again - השיבנו *hăshîybēnû* - and cause thy face to shine." So Psalm 80:7, Psalm 80:19. Isaiah 1:26, "And I will "restore" thy judges as at the first," etc. The meaning here would be met by the supposition that Jerusalem was to be put into its former condition.

And to build Jerusalem - It was then in ruins. The command, which is referred to here, must be one to build it up again - its houses, temple, walls; and the fair sense is, that some such order would be issued, and the reckoning of the seventy weeks must "begin" at the issuing of this command. The proper interpretation of the prophecy demands that "that" time shall be assumed in endeavoring to ascertain when the seventy weeks would terminate. In doing this, it is evidently required in all fairness that we should not take the time when the Messiah "did" appear - or the birth of the Lord Jesus, assuming that to be the "*terminus ad quem* " - the point to which the seventy weeks were to extend - and then reckon "backward" for a space of four hundred and ninety years, to see whether we cannot find some event which by a possible construction would bear to be applied as the "*terminus a quo*," the point from which we are to begin to reckon; but we are to ascertain when, in fact, the order was given to rebuild Jerusalem, and to make "that" the "*terminus a quo* " - the starting point in the reckoning.

The consideration of the fulfillment of this may with propriety be reserved to the close of the verse.

Unto the Messiah - The word Messiah occurs but four times in the common version of the Scriptures: Daniel 9:25-26: John 1:41; John 4:25. It is synonymous in meaning with the word "Christ," the Anointed. See the notes at Matthew 1:1. Messiah is the Hebrew word; Christ the Greek. The Hebrew word (משיח *mâshîyach*) occurs frequently in the Old Testament, and, with the exception of these two places in Daniel, it is uniformly translated "anointed," and is applied to priests, to prophets, and to kings, as being originally set apart to their offices by solemn acts of anointing. So far as the "language" is concerned here, it might be applied to anyone who sustained these offices, and the proper application is to be determined from the connection. Our translators have introduced the article - "unto the Messiah." This is wanting in the Hebrew, and should not have been introduced, as it gives a definiteness to the prophecy which the original language does not necessarily demand.

Our translators undoubtedly understood it as referring to him who is known as the Messiah, but this is not necessarily implied in the original. All that the language fairly conveys is, "until an anointed one." Who "that" was to be is to be determined from other circumstances than the mere use of the language, and in the interpretation of the language it should not be assumed that the reference is to any particular individual. That some eminent personage is designated; some one who by way of eminence would be properly regarded as anointed of God; some one who would act so important a part as to characterize the age, or determine the epoch in which he should live; some one so prominent that he could be referred to as "anointed," with no more definite appellation; some one who would be understood to be referred to by the mere use of this language, may be fairly concluded from the expression used - for the angel clearly meant to imply this, and to direct the mind forward to some one who would have such a prominence in the history of the world.

The object now is merely to ascertain the meaning of the "language." All that is fairly implied is, that it refers to some one who would have such a prominence as anointed, or set apart to the office of prophet, priest, or king, that it could be understood that he was referred to by the use of this language. The reference is not to the anointed one, as of one who was

already known or looked forward to as such - for then the article would have been used; but to some one who, when he appeared, would have such marked characteristics that there would be no difficulty in determining that he was the one intended. Hengstenberg well remarks, "We must, therefore, translate "an anointed one, a prince," and assume that the prophet, in accordance with the uniform character of his prophecy, chose the more indefinite, instead of the more definite designation, and spoke only of AN anointed one, a prince, instead of the anointed one, the prince - κατ᾽ ἐξοχήν *kat' exochēn* - and left his hearers to draw a deeper knowledge respecting him, from the prevailing expectations, grounded on earlier prophecies of a future great King, from the remaining declarations of the context, and from the fulfillment, the coincidence of which with the prophecy must here be the more obvious, since an accurate date had been given." - Christol. ii. 334,335.

The Vulgate renders this, *Usque ad Christum ducem* - "even to Christ the leader," or ruler. The Syriac, "to the advent of Christ the king." Theodotion, ἕως Χριστοῦ ἡγουμένου *heōs Christou hēgoumenou* - "Christ the leader," or ruler. The question whether this refers to Christ will be more appropriately considered at the close of the verse. The inquiry will then occur, also, whether this refers to his birth, or to his appearance as the anointed one - his taking upon himself publicly the office. The language would apply to either, though it would perhaps more properly refer to the latter - to the time when he should appear as such - or should be anointed, crowned, or set apart to the office, and be fully instituted in it. It could not be demonstrated that either of these applications would be a departure from the fair interpretation of the words, and the application must be determined by some other circumstances, if any are expressed. What those are in the case will be considered at the close of the verse.

The Prince - נגיד *nāgîyd* This word properly means a leader, a prefect, a prince. It is a word of very general character, and might be applied to any leader or ruler. It is applied to an overseer, or, as we should say, a "secretary" of the treasury, 1 Chronicles 26:24; 2 Chronicles 31:12; an overseer of the temple, 1 Chronicles 9:11; 2 Chronicles 31:13; of the palace, 2 Chronicles 28:7; and of military affairs, 1 Chronicles 13:1; 2 Chronicles 32:21. It is also used absolutely to denote a prince of a people, any one of royal dignity, 1 Samuel 9:16; 1 Samuel 10:1; 1 Samuel 13:14. - Gesenius.

So far as this word, therefore, is concerned, it would apply to any prince or leader, civil or military; any one of royal dignity, or who should distinguish himself, or make himself a leader in civil, ecclesiastical, or military affairs, or who should receive an appointment to any such station. It is a word which would be as applicable to the Messiah as to any other leader, but which has nothing in itself to make it necessary to apply it to him. All that can be fairly deduced from its use here is, that it would be some prominent leader; some one that would be known without anymore definite designation; someone on whom the mind would naturally rest, and someone to whom when he appeared it would be applied without hesitation and without difficulty. There can be no doubt that a Hebrew, in the circumstances of Daniel, and with the known views and expectations of the Hebrew people, would apply such a phrase to the Messiah.

Shall be seven weeks - See the notes at Daniel 9:24. The reason for dividing the whole period into seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week, is not formally stated, and will be considered at the close of the verse. All that is necessary here in order to an explanation of the language, and of what is to be anticipated in the fulfillment, is this:

(a) That, according to the above interpretation Daniel 9:24, the period would be forty-nine years.

(b) That this was to be the "first" portion of the whole time, not time that would be properly taken out of any part of the whole period.

(c) That there was to be some event at the end of the forty-nine years which would designate a period, or a natural division of the time, or that the portion which was designated by the forty-nine years was to be distinctly characterized from the next period referred to as sixty-two weeks, and the next period as one week.

(d) No intimation is given in the words as to the nature of this period, or as to what would distinguish one portion from the others, and what that was to be is to be learned from subsequent explanations, or from the actual course of events. If one period was characterized by war, and another by peace; one in building the city and the walls, and the other by quiet prosperity; one by abundance, and the other by famine; one by sickness, and the other by health - all that is fairly implied by the words would be

met. It is foretold only that there would be something that would designate these periods, and serve to distinguish the one from the other.

And threescore and two weeks - Sixty-two weeks; that is, as above explained Daniel 9:24, four hundred and thirty-four years. The fair meaning is, that there would be something which would characterize that long period, and serve to distinguish it from what preceded it. It is not indeed intimated what that would be, and the nature of the case seems to require that we should look to the events - to the facts in the course of the history to determine what that was. Whether it was peace, prosperity, quiet, order, or the prevalence of religion as contrasted with the former period, all that the words fairly imply would be fulfilled in either of them.

The street shall be built again - This is a general assertion or prediction, which does not seem to have any special reference to the "time" when it would be done. The fair interpretation of the expression does not require us to understand that it should be after the united period of the seven weeks and the sixty-two weeks, nor during either one of those periods; that is, the language is not such that we are necessarily required to affix it to any one period. It seems to be a general assurance designed to comfort Daniel with the promise that the walls and streets of Jerusalem, now desolate, would be built again, and that this would occur some time during this period. His mind was particularly anxious respecting the desolate condition of the city, and the declaration is here made that it would be restored. So far as the languages - the grammatical construction is concerned, it seems to me that this would be fulfilled if it were done either at the time of the going forth of the commandment, or during either of the periods designated, or even after these periods.

It is, however, most natural, in the connection, to understand it of the "first" period - the seven weeks, or the forty-nine years - since it is said that "the commandment would go forth to restore, and to build Jerusalem;" and since, as the whole subsequent period is divided into three portions, it may be presumed that the thing that would characterize the first portion, or what would first be done, would be to execute the commandment - that is, to restore and build the city. These considerations would lead us, therefore, to suppose that the thing which would characterize the first period - the forty-nine years - would be the rebuilding of the city; and "the time" - a time which, considering the extent and entireness of the ruins, the nature of the opposition that might be encountered, the difficulty of collecting enough

from among the exiles to return and do it, the want of means, and the embarrassments which such an undertaking might be supposed to involve, cannot, probably, be regarded as too long.

The word rendered "street" - רחוב *rechôb* - means a "street," so called from its "breadth," and would properly, therefore, be applied to a wide street. Then it denotes a market-place, or a forum - the broad open place at the gates of Oriental cities where public trials were held, and things exposed for sale, 2 Chronicles 32:6. In Ezra 10:9, the word refers to the area or court before the temple: "And all the people sat in the street (ברחוב *bîrechôb*) of the house of God," etc. Compare Nehemiah 8:1, Nehemiah 8:3, Nehemiah 8:16. The reference in this place, therefore, may be to that area or court; or it may be to any place of concourse, or any thoroughfare. It is such language as would be naturally used to denote that the city would be restored to its former condition. The phrase "shall be built again" is, in the margin, "return and be builded." This is in accordance with the Hebrew. That is, it would be restored to its former state; it would, as it were, come back and be built up again. Hengstenberg renders it "a street is restored and built." The phrase properly implies that it would assume its former condition, the word "built" here being used in the sense of "made," as we speak of "making a road." Lengerke renders it, wird wieder hergestellt- "shall be again restored." Theodotion renders it, ἐπιστρέψει *epistrepsei* - "it shall return," understanding it as meaning that there would be a return, to wit, from the exile. But the more correct meaning undoubtedly is, that the street would return to its former state, and be rebuilt.

And the wall - Margin, "ditch." Hengstenberg renders this, "and firmly is it determined;" maintaining that the word חרוץ *chârûts* here means fixed, determined, resolved on, and that the idea is, the purpose that the city should be rebuilt was firmly resolved on in the Divine mind, and that the design of what is here said was to comfort and animate the returned Hebrews in their efforts to rebuild the city, in all the discouragements and troubles which would attend such an undertaking. The common interpretation, however, has been that it refers to a ditch, trench, or wall, that would be constructed at the time of the rebuilding of the city. So the Vulgate, "muri, walls." So Theodotion, τεῖχος *teichos* - wall. The Syriac renders it, "Jerusalem, and the villages, and the streets." Luther, Mauren, walls. Lengerke renders it, as Hengstenberg does, "and it is determined."

Maurer understands the two expressions, "street and wall," to be equivalent to "within and without" - meaning that the city would be thoroughly and entirely rebuilt.

The Hebrew word חרוּץ *châr̂ûts* means, properly, what is cut in, or dug out, from חרץ *châr̂ats* - to cut in. The word is translated "sharp-pointed things" in Job 41:30; "gold, fine gold, choice gold," in Psalm 68:13; Proverbs 3:14; Proverbs 8:10, Proverbs 8:19; Proverbs 16:16; Zechariah 9:3; a threshing instrument, Isaiah 28:27; Amos 1:3; sharp (referring to a threshing instrument), Isaiah 41:15; "wall," Daniel 9:25; and "decision," Joel 3:14. It does not elsewhere occur in the Scriptures. The notion of "gold" as connected with the word is probably derived from the fact of its being dug for, or eagerly sought by men. That idea is, of course, not applicable here. Gesenius supposes that it here means a "ditch or trench" of a fortified city. This seems to me to be the probable signification. At all events, this has the concurrence of the great body of interpreters; and this accords well with the connection. The word does not properly mean "wall," and it is never elsewhere so used. It need not be said that it was common, if not universal, in wailed cities to make a deep ditch or trench around them to prevent the approach of an enemy, and such language would naturally be employed in speaking of the rebuilding of a city. Prof. Stuart renders it, "with broad spaces, and narrow limits."

Even in troublous times - Margin, "strait of." Hengstenberg, "in a time of distress." Lengerke, Im Druck der Zeiten- in a pressure of times. Vulgate, *In angustia temporum*. Theodotion, in the Septuagint, renders it, "And these times shall be emptied out" (Thompson) - καὶ ἐκκενωθήσονται οἱ καιροί *kai ekkenōthēsontai hoi kairoi* The proper meaning of the Hebrew word (צוק *tsôq*) is, distress, trouble, anguish; and the reference is, doubtless. to times that would be characterized by trouble, perplexity, and distress. The allusion is clearly to the rebuilding of the city, and the use of this language would lead us to anticipate that such an enterprise would meet with opposition or embarrasment; that there would be difficulty in accomplishing it; that the work would not be carried on easily, and that a considerable time would be necessary to finish it.

Having gone through with an investigation of the meaning of the words and phrases of this verse, we are now prepared to inquire more particularly what things are referred to, and whether the predictions have been fulfilled. The points which it is necessary to examine are the following: - To whom

reference is made by the Messiah the Prince; the time designated by the going forth of the commandment - or the "*terminus a quo*;" the question whether the whole period extends to the "birth" of him here referred to as the Messiah the Prince, or to his assuming the office or appearing as such; the time embraced in the first seven weeks - and the fulfillment - or the question whether, from the time of the going forth of the commandment to the appearing of the Messiah, the period of the four hundred and ninety years can be fairly made out. These are evidently important points, and it need not be said that a great variety of opinions has prevailed in regard to them, and that they are attended with no little difficulty.

I. To whom reference is made as the Messiah the Prince. In the exposition of the meaning of the words, we have seen that there is nothing in the language itself to determine this. It is applicable to anyone who should be set apart as a ruler or prince, and might be applied to Cyrus, to any anointed king, or to him who is properly designated now as the Messiah - the Lord Jesus. Compare the notes at Isaiah 45:1. It is unnecessary to show that a great variety of opinions has been entertained, both among the Jewish rabbis and among Christian commentators, respecting the question to whom this refers. Among the Jews, Jarchi and Jacchiades supposed that it referred to Cyrus; Ben Gersom, and others, to Zerubbabel; Aben Ezra to Nehemiah; rabbi Azariah to Artaxerxes. Bertholdt, Lengerke, Maurer, and this class of expositors generally, suppose that the reference is to Cyrus, who is called the Messiah, or the "Anointed," in Isaiah 45:1.

According to this interpretation, it is supposed that the reference is to the seventy years of Jeremiah, and that the meaning is, that "seven weeks," or forty-nine years, would elapse from the desolation of the city until the time of Cyrus. See Maurer, *in loc*. Compare also Lengerke, pp. 444,445. As specimens of the views entertained by those who deny the reference of the passage to the Messiah, and of the difculties and absurdities of those views, we may notice those of Etchhorn and Bertholdt. Eichhorn maintains that the numbers referred to are round numbers, and that we are not to expect to be able to make out an exact conformity between those numbers and the events. The "commandment" mentioned in Daniel 9:25 he supposes refers to the order of Cyrus to restore and rebuild the city, which order was given, according to Usher, A.M. 3468. From this point of time must the "sevenweeks," or the forty-nine years, be reckoned; but, according to his view, the reckoning must be "backward and forward;" that is, it is seven

weeks, or forty-nine years, backward to Nebuchadnezzar, who is here called "Messiah the Prince," who destroyed the temple and city, A.M. 3416 - or about fifty-two years before the going forth of the edict of Cyrus. From that time, the reckoning of the sixty-two weeks must be commenced.

But again, this is not to be computed literally from the time of Nebuchadnezzar; but since the Jews, in accordance with Jeremiah 25:11-12, reckoned seventy years, instead of the true time, the point from which the estimate is to begin is the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, and this occurred, according to Usher, A.M. 3397. Reckoning from this point onward, the sixty-two weeks, or 434 years, would bring us to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (A.M. 3829). At the end of the sixty-two weeks, in the first year of Antiochus Epiphanes, the high priest, Onias III (the Messiah of Daniel 9:26), was displaced - "cut off" - יכרת *yîkârēth* - and Jason was appointed in his place, and Menelaus the year after removed him. Titus Onias had properly no successor, etc. This absurd opinion Bertholdt (p. 605, following) attempts to set aside - a task which is very easily performed, and then proposes his own - a hypothesis not less absurd and improbable. According to his theory (p. 613, following), the seventy years have indeed a historical basis, and the time embraced in them extends from the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar to the death of Antiochus Epiphanes. It is divided into three periods:

(a) The seven first hebdomads extend from the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar to king, Cyrus, who gave the exiles permission to return to their land. This is the period during which Jerusalem must lie waste Daniel 9:2; and after the close of this, by the favor of Cyrus Daniel 9:25, the promise of Jeremiah (Daniel 9:25 - דבר *dâbâr* - "commandment"), that Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, goes forth.

(b) The following sixty-two weeks extend from the return of the exiles to the beginning of the troubles and persecutions under Antiochus. This is the period of the rebuilding of Jerusalem Daniel 9:25.

(c) The last period of one week extends from the time of the oppressions and wrongs commenced under Antiochus, to the death of Antiochus. See this view fully explained and illustrated in Bertholdt, "ut supra." The great mass of Christian interpreters, however, have supposed that the reference is to the Messiah properly so called - the promised Saviour of the world - the Lord Jesus. In support of this opinion, the following considerations may be suggested, which seem to me to be conclusive:

(1) The language itself is such as is properly applicable to him, and such as would naturally suggest him. It is true, as we see in Isaiah 45:1, that the term Messiah may be applied to another, as it is there to Cyrus (see the note at the meaning of the word in that place, and in the exposition of this verse), but it is also true that if the term stands by itself, and with no explanation, it would naturally suggest him who, by way of eminence, is known as the Messiah. In Isaiah 45:1, it is expressly limited to Cyrus, and there can be no danger of mistake. Here there is no such limitation, and it is natural, therefore, to apply it in the sense in which among the Hebrews it would be obviously understood. Even Bertholdt admits the force of this. Thus (p. 563) he says: "That at the words נגיד משיח *mâshîyach nāgîyd* (Messiah the Prince) we should be led to think of the Messiah, Jesus, and at those, Daniel 9:26, יכרת משיח ואין לו *yîkârēth mâshîyach ve'ēyn lô* (shall be cut off but not for himself), of his crucifixion, though not absolutely necessary, is still very natural."

(2) This would be the interpretation which would be given to the words by the Jews. They were so much accustomed to look forward to a great prince and deliverer, who would be by way of eminence the Anointed of the Lord, that, unless there was some special limitation or designation in the language, they would naturally apply it to the Messiah, properly so called. Compare Isaiah 9:6-7. Early in the history of the Jews, the nation had become accustomed to the expectation that such a deliverer would come, and its hopes were centerd on him. In all times of national trouble and calamity; in all their brightest visions of the future, they were accustomed to look to him as one who would deliver them from their troubles, and who would exalt their people to a pitch of glory and of honor, such as they had never known before. Unless, therefore, there was something in the connection which would demand a different interpretation, the language would be of course applied to the Messiah. But it cannot be pretended that there is anything in the connection that demands such a limitation, nor which forbids such an application.

(3) So far as the ancient versions throw any light on the subject, they show that this is the correct interpretation. So the Latin Vulgate, *usque ad Christum ducem*. So the Syriac, "unto Messiah, the most holy" - literally, "holy of holies." So Theodotion - ἕως Χριστοῦ *heōs Christou* - where there

can be little doubt that the Messiah was understood to be referred to. The same is found in the Arabic. The Codex Chisianus is in utter confusion on this whole passage, and nothing can be made of it.

(4) All the circumstances referred to in connection with him who is here called "Messiah the Prince" are such as to be properly applicable to the work which the Lord Jesus came to do, and not to Cyrus, or Antiochus, or any other leader or ruler. See the notes at Daniel 9:24. To no other one, according to the interpretation which the passage in that verse seems to demand, can the expressions there used be applied. In that exposition it was shown that the verse is designed to give a general view of what would be accomplished, or of what is expressed more in detail in the remaining verses of the vision, and that the language there used can be applied properly to the work which the Lord Jesus came to accomplish. Assuredly to no one else can the phrases "to restrain transgression," "to seal up sins," "to cover over iniquity," "to bring in everlasting righteousness," "to seal up the vision and prophecy," and "to consecrate the most holy place," be so well applied. The same is true of the language in the subsequent part of the prophecy, "Messiah shall be cut off," "not for himself … shall confirm the covenant … cause the oblation to cease." Any one may see the perplexities in which they are involved by adopting another interpretation, by consulting Bertholdt, or Lengerke on the passage.

(5) The expression used here ("prince" - נגיד *nāgîyd* - is applied to the Messiah beyond all question in Isaiah 4:4: "I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader - נגיד *nāgîyd* - and a commander to the people."

(6) The perplexity attending any other interpretation is an additional proof of this point. In full illustration of this, it is necessary only to refer to the views of Bertholdt and Eichhorn as above exhibited. Whatever may be said about the difficulties on the supposition that it refers to the Lord Jesus - the true Messiah - no one can undertake to reconcile the applications which they have proposed with any belief of the inspiration of the passage. These considerations seem to me to make it clear that the prophecy had reference to the Messiah properly so called - the hope and the expectation of the Jewish people. There can be no doubt that Daniel would so understand it; there can be no doubt that it would be so applied by the Jews.

II. The next question is, From what point are we to reckon in computing the time when the Messiah would appear - the "*terminus a quo*?" It is important to fix this, for the whole question of the fulfillment depends on it, and "honesty" requires that it should be determined without reference to the time to which four hundred and ninety years would reach - or the "*terminus ad quem*." It is clearly not proper to do as Prideaux does, to assume that it refers to the birth of Christ, and then to reckon backward to a time which may be made to mean the "going forth of the commandment." The true method, undoubtedly, would be to fix on a time which would accord with the expression here, with no reference to the question of the fulfillment for in that way only can it be determined to be a true "prophecy," and in that way only would it be of any use to Daniel, or to those who succeeded him. It need hardly be said, that a great variety of opinions have been maintained in regard to the time designated by the "going forth of the commandment." Bertholdt (pp. 567,568) mentions no less than thirteen opinions which have been entertained on this point, and in such a variety of sentiment, it seems almost hopeless to be able to ascertain the truth with certainty. Now, in determining this, there are a few points which may be regarded as certain. They are such as these:

(a) That the commandment referred to is one that is issued by some prince or king having authority, and not the purpose of God. See the notes above on the first part of the verse.

(b) That the distinct command would be to "restore and build Jerusalem." This is specified, and therefore would seem to be distinguished from a command to build the temple, or to restore that from its state of ruin. It is true that the one might appear to be implied in the other, and yet this does not necessarily follow. For various causes it might be permitted to the Jews to rebuild their temple, and there might be a royal ordinance commanding that, while there was no purpose to restore the city to its former power and splendor, and even while there might be strong objections to it. For the use of the Jews who still resided in Palestine, and for those who were about to return, it might be a matter of policy to permit them to rebuild their temple, and even to aid them in it, while yet it might be

regarded as perilous to allow them to rebuild the city, and to place it in its former condition of strength and power.

It was a place easily fortified; it had cost the Babylonian monarch much time, and had occasioned him many losses, before he had been able to conquer and subdue it, and, even to Cyrus, it might be a matter of very questionable policy to allow it to be built and fortified again. Accordingly we find that, as a matter of fact, the permission to rebuild the temple, and the permission to rebuild the city, were quite different things, and were separately granted by different sovereigns, and that the work was executed by different persons. The former might, without impropriety, be regarded as the close of the captivity - or the end of the "seventy years" of Jeremiah - for a permission to rebuild the temple was, in fact, a permission to return to their own country, and an implied purpose to aid them in it, while a considerable interval might, and probably would elapse, before a distinct command was issued to restore and rebuild the city itself, and even then a long period might intervene before it would be completed.

Accordingly, in the edict published by Cyrus, the permission to rebuild the temple is the one that is carefully specified: "Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to "build him an house" at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and "build the house of the Lord God of Israel" (he is the God), which is in Jerusalem," Ezra 1:2-3. In this order there is nothing said of the restoration of the city, and that in fact occurred at a different time, and under the direction of different leaders. The first enterprise was to rebuild the temple; it was still a question whether it would be a matter of policy to allow the city to be rebuilt, and that was in fact accomplished at a different time. These considerations seem to make it certain that the edict referred to here was not what was issued by "Cyrus," but must have been a subsequent decree bearing particularly on the rebuilding of the city itself. It is true that the command to rebuild the temple would imply that either there were persons residing amidst the ruins of Jerusalem, or in the land of Palestine, who were to worship there, and that there would be inhabitants in Jerusalem, probably those who would go from Babylon - for otherwise the temple would be of no service, but still this

might be, and there be no permission to rebuild the city with any degree of its ancient strength and splendor, and none to surround it with walls - a very material thing in the structure of an ancient city.

(c) This interpretation is confirmed by the latter part of the verse: “the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.” If the word rendered “wall” means “trench or ditch,” as I have supposed, still it was a trench or ditch which was designed as a “defense” of a city, or which was excavated for making a wall, for the purpose of fortifying a walled city in order to make it stronger, and the expression is one which would not be applied to the mere purpose of rebuilding the temple, nor would it be used except in a command to restore the city itself. We are, then, in the fair interpretation of the passage, required now to show that such a command went forth from the Persian king to “restore and rebuild” the city itself - that is, a permission to put it into such a condition of strength as it was before.

In order to see how this interpretation accords with the facts in the case, and to determine whether such a period can be found as shall properly correspond with this interpretation, and enable us to ascertain the point of time here referred to - the “*terminus a quo* ” - it is proper to inquire what are the facts which history has preserved. For this purpose, I looked at this point of the investigation into Jahn‘s “Hebrew Commonwealth,” (pp. 160-177), a work not written with any reference to the fulfillment of this prophecy, and which, indeed, in the portion relating to this period of the world, makes no allusion whatever to Daniel. The inquiry which it was necessary to settle was, whether under any of the Persian kings there was any order or command which would properly correspond with what we have ascertained to be the fair meaning of the passage. A very brief synopsis of the principal events recorded by Jahn as bearing on the restoration of the Jews to their own country, will be all that is needful to add to determine the question before us.

The kings of the Persian universal monarchy, according to Ptolemy, were ten, and the whole sum of their reign two hundred and seven years - from the time of Cyaxares II to the time of Alexander the Great. But Ptolemy‘s specific object being chronology, he omitted those who continued not on the throne a full year, and referred the months of their reign, partly to the preceding, and partly to the succeeding monarch. The

whole number of sovereigns was in reality fourteen, as appears by the following table:

d **b.c.YearsMonths**

d

d 538Cyaxares II reigned

d 20

d

d 536Cyrus

d 70

d

d 529Cambyses

d 75

d

d 522Smerdis

d 07

d

d 521Darius Hystaspis

d 360

d

d 485Xerxes I

d 210

d

d 464Artaxerxes Longimanus

d 403

d

d 424Xerxes II

d 02

d

d 424Sogdianus

d 07

d

d 423Darius Nothus

d 190

d

d 404Artaxerxes Mnemon

d 460

d

d 358Darius Ochus

d 210

d

d 337Arses

d 02

d

d 335Darius Codomanus

d 04

d

d Under the reign of this last prince, 331 b.c., the kingdom was entirely subdued by Alexander the Great.

In respect to the question whether any order or command was issued pertaining to the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem that corresponds with the meaning of the prediction as above explained, the following facts will probably furnish all the knowledge which can be obtained:

(a) Cyaxares II Of course there was nothing in the time of Cyaxares II, the Darius of Daniel Daniel 6:1; Daniel 9:1, as it was under him that Babylon was conquered, and there was no movement toward a restoration of the Jews to their own land commenced by him, the first movement of that kind being under Cyrus.

(b) Cyrus. What was the nature of the order issued by him we have seen above. It was a command to build the temple, and was limited to that, and involved no reference to the city. The command, as we have seen above, did not extend to that, and there were probably good reasons why it was not contemplated that it should be rebuilt in its former strength, and fortified as it was before. The purpose to fortify the city, or to encompass it by a wall or ditch, or even to build it at all, could not have been brought within the order of Cyrus, as recorded in Ezra, and that is the only form of the order which

we have. The language of Daniel, therefore, seems to have been chosen of design when he says that the command would be issued to rebuild the city, not the temple. At any rate, such is the language, and such was not the order of Cyrus.

(c) Cambyses. After the death of Cyrus the Samaritans wrote to Cambyses (called, by Ezra, Ahasuerus) against the Jews. We are not informed what effect this letter produced, but we can easily judge from the character of this degenerate son of Cyrus, as it is represented in history. He was a "thoughtless, gluttonous, furious warrior, who was considered as raving mad even by his own subjects." - Jahn. He madly invaded Egypt, and on his return learned that Smerdis, his brother, had usurped the throne in his absence; and died of a wound received from the falling of his sword from its sheath, as he was mounting his horse. No order is mentioned during his reign pertaining to the rebuilding either of the city or the temple.

(d) Smerdis. He retained the throne about seven months. In the Bible the has the name of Artaxerxes. Compare, respecting him, Ctesias, x.; Justin, i. 9; Herod. iii. 61-67. "To this monarch the Samaritans again addressed themselves, complaining that the Jews were building (that is, fortifying) the city of Jerusalem, which they had never thought of doing; and in consequence of this false accusation, Smerdis issued a positive prohibition of their work." - Jahn. Two things, therefore, may be remarked respecting this reign:

(1) the order or commandment referred to by Daniel could not have been issued during this reign, since there was an express "prohibition" against the work of building and fortifying the city; and

(2) this confirms what is said above about the improbability that any order would have been issued by Cyrus to rebuild and fortify the city itself.

It could not but have been foreseen that such an order would be likely to excite opposition from the Samaritans, and to cause internal dissensions and difficulties in Palestine, and it is not probable that the Persian govenment would allow the rebuilding of a city that would lead to such collisions.

(e) Darius Hystaspis. He reigned thirty-six years. He was a mild and benevolent ruler. “As Smerdis was a mere usurper, his prohibition of rebuilding the temple was of no authority.” - Jahn. In the second year of his reign, Haggai and Zechariah appeared, who plied the governor Zerubbabel, the high priest Joshua, and the whole people, with such powerful appeals to the Divine commands, that the building of the house of God was once more resumed. Upon this, Tatnai, the Persian governor on the west side of the Euphrates, came with his officers to call the Jews to an account, who referred him to the permission of Cyrus, and the Jews were suffered to proceed. The whole matter was, however, made known to Darius, and he caused search to be made among the archives of the state in reference to the alleged decree of Cyrus. The edict of Cyrus was found, which directed that a temple should be built at Jerusalem at the royal expense, and of much larger dimensions than the former. A copy of this was sent to Tatnai, and he was commanded to see that the work should be forwarded, and that the expenses should be defrayed from the royal treasury, and that the priests should be supplied with whatever was necessary to keep up the daily sacrifice. The work was, therefore, pressed on with renewed vigour, and in the sixth year of his reign the temple was completed and consecrated. The remainder of his reign was spent in unnecessary wars with Scythia, Thrace, India, and Greece. He suffered an overthrow at Marathon, and was preparing for a more energetic campaign in Greece when he died, and left his dominion and his wars to Xerxes. No order was issued during his reign for the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. All his edicts pertain to the original grant of Cyrus - the permission to build the temple.

(f) Xerxes I. The career of Xerxes is well known. He was distinguished for gluttony, voluptuousness, and cruelty. He is celebrated for his invasion of Greece, for the check which he met at Thermopylae, and for the overthrow of his naval forces at Salamis by Themistocles. In the twenty-first year of his reign he was murdered by Artabanus, commander of his life-guard. He died in the year 464 b.c. According to Jalm, it is probable that “the Artaxerxes of Ezra, who is mentioned next after Darius Hystaspis, and the Ahasuerus of Esther, are names of Xerxes I.” If so, it was under him that the second caravan of Jews went to Judea, under the direction of Ezra Ezra 7:13-26. This decree, however, relates wholly to the temple - the “house of God.” There was no order for rebuilding the city, and there is no

evidence that anything material was done in building the city, or the walls. Respecting this reign, John remarks, “The Hebrew colony in Judea seems never to have been in a very flourishing condition. The administration of justice was particularly defective, and neither civil nor religious institutions were firmly established. Accordingly, the king gave permission anew for all Hebrews to emigrate to Judea,” p. 172. Ezra made the journey with the caravan in three months; deposited the precious gifts in the temple, caused the Scriptures to be read and explained; commenced a moral reformation, but did nothing, so far as appears, in reconstructing the city - for his commission did not extend to that.

(g) Artaxerxes Longimanus. According to Jahn, he began to reign 464 b.c., and reigned forty years and three months. It was during his reign that Nehemiah lived, and that he acted as governor of Judea. The colony in Judea, says Jahn, which had been so flourishing in the time of Ezra, had greatly declined, in consequence of the fact that Syria and Phoenicia had been the rendezvous of the armies of Artaxerxes. “Nehemiah, the cup-bearer of Artaxerxes, learned the unhappy state of the Hebrews, b.c. 444, from a certain Jew named Hanani, who had come from Judea to Shushan with a caravan. Of the regulations introduced by Esra b.c. 478 there was little remaining, and, amid the confusions of war, the condition of the Jews continually grew worse. This information so affected Nehemiah that the king observed his melancholy, and inquiring its cause, he appointed him governor of Judea, “with full power to fortify Jerusalem,” and thus to secure it from the disasters to which unprotected places are always exposed in time of war.

Orders were sent to the royal officers west of the Euphrates to “assist in the fortification of the city,” and to furnish the requisite timber from the king‘s forest; probably on Mount Libanus, near the sources of the river Kadisha, as that was the place celebrated for its cedars. Thus commissioned, Nehemiah journeyed to Judea, accompanied by military officers and cavalry,” pp. 175,176. Jahn further adds, “as soon as Nehemiah, on his arrival in Palestine, had been acknowledged governor of Judea by the royal officers, he made known his preparations for fortifying Jerusalem to the elders who composed the Jewish council. All the heads of houses, and the high priest Eliashib, engaged zealously in the work. The chiefs of the

Samaritans, Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, endeavored to thwart their undertaking by insults, by malicious insinuations that it was a preparation for revolt, by plots, and by threats of a hostile attack. The Jews, notwithstanding, proceeded earnestly in their business, armed the laborers, protected them still further by a guard of armed citizens, and at length happily completed the walls of their city."

We have reached a point, then, in the history of the kings of Persia, when there was a distinct order to restore and fortify Jerusalem, and when there was an express expedition undertaken to accomplish this result. In the history of these kings, as reported by Jahn, this is the first order that would seem to correspond with the language of Daniel - "the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem," and the assertion that "the street should be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times." It may be well, therefore, to pause here, and to look more distinctly at this order of Artaxerxes Longimanus, and inquire into its conformity with the language of Daniel. The circumstances, then, as stated in the book of Nehemiah, are these:

(a) Nehemiah learned from Hanani the state of his brethren in Judea, and the fact that the "walls of the city were broken down, and that the gates were burned with fire," and that the people who were at Jerusalem were in a state of "great affliction and reproach," and gave himself to weeping, and fasting, and prayer, on that account, Nehemiah 1:1-11.

(b) On coming into the presence of Artaxerxes, to perform the usual duty of presenting the wine to the king, the king saw the sadness and distress of Nehemiah, and inquired the cause, Nehemiah 2:1-2. This, Nehemiah Nehemiah 2:1 is careful to remark occurred in the twentieth year of his reign.

(c) He states distinctly, that it was because Jerusalem was still in ruins: "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" Nehemiah 2:3.

(d) The request of Nehemiah, in accordance with the language in Daniel, was, that he might be permitted to go to Jerusalem and "rebuild the city:" "And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldst send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it," Nehemiah 2:5.

(e) The edict of Artaxerxes contemplated the same thing which is foretold by the angel to Daniel "And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which pertained to the house, and for the wall of the city," etc., Nehemiah 2:8.

(f) The work which Nehemiah did, under this edict, was what is supposed in the prediction in Daniel. His first work was to go forth by night to survey the state of the city: "And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, etc., and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire," Nehemiah 2:13. His next work was to propose to rebuild these walls again: "Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach," Nehemiah 2:17. The next work was to rebuild those walls, a full description of which we have in Nehemiah 3:1-32; 4:1-23. The city was thus fortified. It was built again according to the purpose of Nehemiah, and according to the decree of Artaxerxes. It took its place again as a fortified city, and the promised work of restoring and rebuilding it was; complete.

(g) The building of the city and the walls under Nehemiah occurred in just such circumstances as are predicted by Daniel. The angel says, "The wall shall be built again, even in troublous times." Let anyone read the account of the rebuilding in Nehemiah - the description of the "troubles "which were produced by the opposition of Sanballat and those associated with him Nehemiah 4, and he will see the striking accuracy of this expression - an accuracy as entire as if it had been employed after the event in describing it, instead of having been used before in predicting it.

It may confirm this interpretation to make three remarks:

(1) After this decree of Artaxerxes there was no order issued by Persian kings pertaining to the restoration and rebuilding of the city. Neither Xerxes II, nor Sogdianus, nor Darius Nothus, nor Artaxerxes Mnemon, nor Darius Ochus, nor Arses, nor Darius Codomanus, issued any decree that corresponded at all with this prediction, or any that related to the rebuilding of Jerusalem. There was no occasion for any, for the work was done.

(2) asecond remark is, that, in the language of Hengstenberg, "Until the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, the new city of Jerusalem was an open, thinly inhabited village, exposed to all aggressions from its neighbors, sustaining the same relation to the former and the latter city as the huts erected after the burning of a city for the first protection front rain and wind do to those which are still uninjured, or which have been rebuilt." - Christ. ii. 381. This is quite apparent from the remarks which have been already made respecting the state of the city. The want of any permission to rebuild the city and the walls; the fact that the permission to return extended only to a right-to rebuild the temple; the improbabilities above stated, that the rebuilding of the city in its strength would be allowed when they first returned, and the account which Nehemiah gives of the condition of Jerusalem at the time when he asked leave to go and "build" it, all tend to confirm this supposition. See Hengstenberg, as above, pp. 381-386.

(3) A third remark is, that a confirmation of this may be found in the book of Ecclesiasticus, showing how Nehemiah was regarded in respect to the rebuilding of the city: "And among the elect was Neemias, whose renown is great, who raised up for us the walls that were fallen, and set up the gates and the bars, and raised up our ruins again," Sirach 49:13. On the other hand, Joshua and Zerubbabel are extolled only as rebuilders of the temple: "How shall we magnify Zorobabel? even he was as a signet on the right hand:" "so was Jesus the son of Josedec: who in their time builded "the house" and set up a "holy temple" to the Lord," Sirach 49:11,12. These considerations make the case clear, it seems to me, that the time referred to - the "*terminus a quo* " - according to the fair interpretation, was the twentieth year of Artaxerxes. To this we are conducted by the proper and necessary exposition of the language, and by the orders actually issued from the Persian court in regard to the temple and city.

If it should be objected - the only objection of importance that has been alleged against it - that this would not meet the inquiry of Daniel; that he was seeking for the time when the captivity would cease, and looking for its te

Verse 26

And after threescore and two weeks - After the completion of the last period of four hundred and thirty-four years. The angel had shown in the previous verse what would be the characteristic of the first period of "seven weeks" - that during that time the wall and the street would be built in circumstances of general distress and anxiety, and he now proceeds to state what would occur in relation to the remaining sixty-two weeks. The particular thing which would characterize that period would be, that the Messiah would be cut off, and that the series of events would commence which would terminate in the destruction of the city and the temple. He does not say that this would be immediately on the termination of the sixty-two weeks, but he says that it would be "after" אחרי *'achărēy* - "subsequent" to the close of that period. The word does not mean necessarily immediately, but it denotes what is to succeed - to follow - and would be well expressed by the word "afterward:" Genesis 15:14; Genesis 23:19; Genesis 25:26, et al. See Gesenius, Lexicon The natural meaning here would be, that this would be the "next event" in the order of events to be reckoned; it would be that on which the prophetic eye would rest subsequent to the close of the period of sixty-two weeks. There are two circumstances in the prophecy itself which go to show that it is not meant that this would immediately follow:

(a) One is, that in the previous verse it is said that the "sixty-two weeks" would extend "unto the Messiah;" that is, either to his birth or to his manifestation as such; and it is not implied anywhere that he would be "cut off" at once on his appearing, nor is such a supposition reasonable, or one that would have been embraced by an ancient student of the prophecies;

(b) the other is, that, in the subsequent verse, it is expressly said that what he would accomplish in causing the oblation to cease would occur "in the midst of the week;" that is, of the remaining one week that would complete the seventy. This could not occur if he were to be "cut off" immediately at the close of the sixty-two weeks.

The careful student of this prophecy, therefore, would anticipate that the Messiah would appear at the close of the sixty-two weeks, and that he would continue during a part, at least, of the remaining one week before he would be cut off. This point could have been clearly made out from the prophecy before the Messiah came.

Shall Messiah - Notes, Daniel 9:25.

Be cut off - The word used here (כרת *kârath*) means, properly, to cut, to cut off, as a part of a garment, 1 Samuel 24:5 (6), 11 (12); a branch of a tree, Numbers 13:23; the prepuce, Exodus 4:25; the head, 1 Samuel 17:51; 1 Samuel 5:4; to cut down trees, Deuteronomy 19:5; Isaiah 14:8; Isaiah 44:14; Jeremiah 10:3; Jeremiah 22:7. Then it means to cut off persons, to destroy, Deuteronomy 20:20; Jeremiah 11:19; Genesis 9:11; Psalm 37:9; Proverbs 2:22; Proverbs 10:31, et al. scepe. The phrase, "that soul shall be cut off from his people," "from the midst of the people," "from Israel," "from the congregation," etc., occurs frequently in the Scriptures (compare Genesis 17:14; Leviticus 7:20-21; Numbers 15:30; Numbers 19:13, Numbers 19:20; Exodus 12:19, et al.), and denotes the punishment of death in general, without defining the manner. "It is never the punishment of exile." - Gesenius, Lexicon The proper notion or meaning here is, undoubtedly, that of being cut off by death, and would suggest the idea of a "violent" death, or a death by the agency of others.

It would apply to one who was assassinated, or murdered by a mob, or who was appointed to death by a judicial decree; or it might be applied to one who was cut down in battle, or by the pestilence, or by lightning, or by shipwreck, but it would not naturally or properly be applied to one who had lived out his days, and died a peaceful death. We always now connect with the word the idea of some unusual interposition, as when we speak of one who is cut down in middle life. The ancient translators understood it of a violent death. So the Latin "Vulgate, *occidetur Christus*;" Syriac, "the Messiah shall be slain," or put to death. It need not be here said that this phrase would find a complete fulfillment in the manner in which the Lord Jesus was put to death, nor that this is the very language in which it is proper now to describe the manner in which he was removed. He was cut off by violence; by a judicial decree: by a mob; in the midst of his way, etc. If it should be admitted that the angel meant to describe the manner of his

death, he could not have found a single word that would have better expressed it.

But not for himself - Margin, "and shall have nothing." This phrase has given rise to not a little discussion, and not a little diversity of opinion. The Latin Vulgate is, "et non erit ejus populus, qui eum negaturus est" - "and they shall not be his people who shall deny him." Theodotion (in the Septuagint), καὶ κρίμα οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἀυτῷ *kai krima ouk estin en autō* - "and there is no crime in him." Syriac, "And it is not with him." The Hebrew is ואין לו *ve'ēyn lô* - and the interpretation turns on the meaning of the word אין *'ēyn* Hengstenberg maintains that it is never used in the sense of לא *lo'* (not), but that it always conveys the idea of "nothing," or "non-existence," and that the meaning here is, that, then, "there was nothing to him;" that is, that he ceased to have authority and power, as in the cutting off of a prince or ruler whose power comes to an end.

Accordingly he renders it, "and is not to him;" that is, his dominion, authority, or power over the covenant people as an anointed prince, would cease when he was cut off, and another one would come and desolate the sanctuary, and take possession. Bertholdt renders it, Ohne Nachfolger von den Seinigen zu haben- "without any successors of his own " - meaning that his family, or that the dynasty would be cut off, or would end with him. He maintains that the whole phrase denotes "a sudden and an unexpected death," and that it here means that he would have no successor of his own family. He applies it to Alexander the Great. Lengerke renders it, Und nicht ist vorhanden, der ihm, angehoret- and explains the whole to mean, "The anointed one (as the lawful king) shall be cut off, but it shall not then be one who belongs to his family (to wit, upon the throne), but a Prince shall come to whom the crown did not belong, to whom the name anointed could not properly belong."

Maurer explains it, "There shall be to him no successor or lawful heir." Prof. Stuart renders it, "One shall be cut off, and there shall be none for it" (the people). C. B. Michaelis, "and not to be will be his lot." Jacch. and Hitzig, "and no one remained to him." Rosch, "and no one was present for him." Our translation - "but not for himself" - was undoubtedly adopted from the common view of the atonement - that the Messiah did not die for himself, but that his life was given as a ransom for others. There can be no doubt of that fact to those who hold the common doctrine of the atonement,

and yet it maybe doubted whether the translators did not undesignedly allow their views of the atonement to shape the interpretation of this passage, and whether it can be fairly made out from the Hebrew. The ordinary meaning of the Hebrew word אין *'ēyn* is, undoubtedly, "nothing, emptiness" - in the sense of there being nothing (see Gesenius, Lexicon); and, thus applied, the sense here would be, that after he was cut off, or in consequence of his being cut off, what he before possessed would cease, or there would be "nothing" to him; that is, either his life would cease, or his dominion would cease, or he would be cut off as the Prince - the Messiah. This interpretation appears to be confirmed by what is immediately said, that another would come and would destroy the city and the sanctuary, or that the possession would pass into his bands.

It seems probable to me that this is the fair interpretation. The Messiah would come as a "Prince." It might be expected that he would come to rule - to set up a kingdom. But he would be suddenly cut off by a violent death. The anticipated dominion over the people as a prince would not be set up. It would not pertain to him. Thus suddenly cut off, the expectations of such a rule would be disappointed and blasted. He would in fact set up no such dominion as might naturally be expected of an anointed prince; he would have no successor; the dynasty would not remain in his hands or his family, and soon the people of a foreign prince would come and would sweep all away. This interpretation does not suppose that the real object of his coming would be thwarted, or that he would not set up a kingdom in accordance with the prediction properly explained, but that such a kingdom as would be expected by the people would not be set up.

He would be cut off soon after he came, and the anticipated dominion would not pertain to him, or there would be "nothing" of it found in him, and soon after a foreign prince would come and destroy the city and the sanctuary. This interpretation, indeed, will take this passage away as a proof-text of the doctrine of the atonement, or as affirming the design of the death of the Messiah, but it furnishes a meaning as much in accordance with the general strain of the prophecy, and with the facts in the work of the Messiah. For it was a natural expectation that when he came he would set up a kingdom - a temporal reign - and this expectation was extensively cherished among the people. He was, however, soon cut off, and all such

hopes at once perished in the minds of his true followers (compare Luke 24:21), and in the minds of the multitudes who, though not his true followers, began to inquire whether he might not be the predicted Messiah - the Prince to sit on the throne of David. But of such an anticipated dominion or rule, there was "nothing" to him.

All these expectations were blighted by his sudden death, and soon, instead of his delivering the nation from bondage and setting up a visible kingdom, a foreign prince would come with his forces and would sweep away everything. Whether this would be the interpretation affixed to these words before the advent of the Messiah cannot now be determined. We have few remains of the methods in which the Hebrews interpreted the ancient prophecies, and we may readily suppose that they would not be disposed to embrace an exposition which would show them that the reign of the Messiah, as they anticipated it, would not occur, but that almost as soon as he appeared, he would be put to death, and the dominion pass away, and the nation be subjected to the ravages of a foreign power. "And the people of the prince that shall come." Margin, "And they (the Jews) shall be no more his people; or, the Prince's (Messiah's) future people." This seems to be rather an explanation of the meaning, than a translation of the Hebrew. The literal rendering would be, "and the city, and the sanctuary, the people of a prince that comes, shall lay waste." On the general supposition that this whole passage refers to the Messiah and his time, the language used here is not difficult of interpretation, and denotes with undoubted accuracy the events that soon followed the "cutting off" of the Messiah. The word "people" (עם *ʿam*) is a word that may well be applied to subjects or armies - such a people as an invading prince or warrior would lead with him for purposes of conquest. It denotes properly

(a) a people, or tribe, or race in general; and then

(b) the people as opposed to kings, princes, rulers (compare λαός *laos* the people as opposed to chiefs in Homer, Iliad ii. 365, xiii. 108, xxiv. 28): and then as soldiers, Judges 5:2. Hence, it may be applied, as it would be understood to be here, to the soldiers of the prince that should come.

Of the prince that shall come - The word "prince" here (נגיד *nāgîyd*) is the same which occurs in Daniel 9:25, "Messiah the prince." It is clear,

however, that another prince is meant here, for

(a) it is just said that that prince - the Messiah - would be "cut off," and this clearly refers to one that was to follow;

(b) the phrase "that is to come" (הבא *habbâ'*) would also imply this.

It would naturally suggest the idea that he would come from abroad, or that he would be a foreign prince - for he would "come" for the purposes of destruction. No one can fail to see the applicability of this to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman power, after the Lord Jesus was put to death. If that was the design of the prophecy, or if it be admitted that the prophecy contemplated that, the language could not have been better chosen, or the prediction more exact. No one can reasonably doubt that, if the ancient Hebrews had understood the former part of the prophecy, as meaning that the true Messiah would be put to death soon after his appearing, they could not fail to anticipate that a foreign prince would soon come and lay waste their city and sanctuary.

Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary - The "holy place" - the temple. This is the termination of the prophecy. It begins with the command to "rebuild and restore" the city, and ends with its destruction. The time is not fixed, nor is there in the prophecy any direct intimation when it would occur, unless it be found in the general declaration in Daniel 9:24, that "seventy weeks were determined upon the people and the city." The whole scope of the prophecy, however, would lead to the supposition that this was soon to occur after the Messiah should be "cut off." The series of events under the Romans which led to the destruction of the city and temple, in fact, began very soon after the death of the Lord Jesus, and ceased only when the temple was wholly demolished, and the city was rased to its foundations.

And the end thereof - Hebrew, "its end," or "his end" - קצו *qîtsô* It is not certain as to what the word "it" (ו *ô*) here refers. It may be either the end of the city, or of the prince, or of the prophecy, so far as the grammatical construction is concerned. As the principal and immediate subject of the prophecy, however, is the city, it is more natural to refer it to that. Hengstenberg renders it, "it will end," supposing, with Vitringa, that it refers to the subject of the discourse: "the thing - the whole affair - all that

is here predicted in this series of events - will end with a flood." This accords well with the whole design of the prophecy.

With a flood - בשטף *basheṭeph* That is, it shall be like an overflowing flood. The word used here means a "gushing, outpouring," as of rain, Job 38:25; of a torrent, Proverbs 27:4; an overflowing, inundation, flood, Psalm 32:6; Nahum 1:8. Hence, it would appropriately denote the ravages of an army, sweeping everything away. It would be like a sudden inundation, carrying everything before it. No one can doubt that this language is applicable in every respect to the desolations brought upon Jerusalem by the Roman armies.

And unto the end of the war desolations are determined - Margin, "it shall be cut off by desolations." Hengstenberg renders this, "and unto the end is war, a decree of ruins." So Lengerke - and his aufs Ende Krieg und Beschluss der Wusten. Bertholdt renders it, "and the great desolations shall continue unto the end of the war." The Latin Vulgate renders it, *et post finem belli statuta desolatio* - "and after the end of the war desolation is determined." Prof. Stuart translates it, "and unto the end shall be war, a decreed measure of desolations." The literal meaning of the passage is, "and unto the end of the war desolations are decreed," or determined. The word rendered "determined" (חרץ *châratz*) means, properly, to cut, cut in, engrave; then to decide, to determine, to decree, to pass sentence. See the notes at Daniel 9:24. Here the meaning naturally is, that such desolations were settled or determined as by a decree or purpose. There was something which made them certain; that is, it was a part of the great plan here referred to in the vision of the seventy weeks, that there should be such desolations extending through the war. The things which would, therefore, be anticipated from this passage would be,

(a) that there would be war. This is implied also in the assurance that the people of a foreign prince would come and take the city.

(b) That this war would be of a "desolating" character, or that it would in a remarkable manner extend and spread ruin over the land. All wars are thus characterized; but it would seem that this would do it in a remarkable manner.

(c) That these desolations would extend through the war, or to its close. There would be no intermission; no cessation. It is hardly necessary to say

that this was, in fact, precisely the character of the war which the Romans waged with the Jews after the death of the Saviour, and which ended in the destruction of the city and temple; the overthrow of the whole Hebrew polity; and the removal of great numbers of the people to a distant and perpetual captivity. No war, perhaps, has been in its progress more marked by desolation; in none has the purpose of destruction been more perseveringly manifested to its very close. The "language" here, indeed, might apply to many wars - in a certain sense to all wars; to none, however, would it be more appropriate than to the wars of the Romans with the Jews.

Verse 27

And he shall confirm the covenant - literally, "he shall make strong" - והגביר *vehîgebîyr* The idea is that of giving strength, or stability; of making firm and sure. The Hebrew word here evidently refers to the "covenant" which God is said to establish with his people - so often referred to in the Scriptures as expressing the relation between Him and them, and hence used, in general, to denote the laws and institutions of the true religion - the laws which God has made for his church; his promises to be their protector, etc., and the institutions which grow out of that relation. The margin reads it, more in accordance with the Hebrew, "a," meaning that he would confirm or establish "a covenant" with the many. According to this, it is not necessary to suppose that it was any existing covenant that it referred to, but that he would ratify what was understood by the word "covenant;" that is, that he would lead many to enter into a true and real covenant with God. This would be fulfilled if he should perform such a work as would bring the "many" into a relation to God corresponding to what was sustained to him by his ancient people; that is, bring them to be his true friends and worshippers.

The meaning of the expression here cannot be mistaken, that during the time specified, "he" (whoever may be referred to) would, for "one week" - pursue such a course as would tend to establish the true religion; to render it more stable and firm; to give it higher sanctions in the approbation of the "many," and to bring it to bear more decidedly and powerfully on the heart. Whether this would be by some law enacted in its favor; or by protection extended over the nation; or by present example; or by instruction; or by some work of a new kind, and new influences which he would set forth, is not mentioned, and beforehand perhaps it could not have been well

anticipated in what way this would be. There has been a difference of opinion, however, as to the proper nominative to the verb "confirm" - הגביר *hîgebîyr* - whether it is the Messiah, or the foreign prince, or the "one week." Hengstenberg prefers the latter, and renders it, "And one week shall confirm the covenant; with many."

So also Lengerke renders it. Bertholdt renders it "he," that is, "he shall unite himself firmly with many for one week" - or, a period of seven years, ein Jahrsiebend lang. It seems to me that it is an unnatural construction to make the word "week" the nominative to the verb, and that the more obvious interpretation is to refer it to some person to whom the whole subject relates. It is not usual to represent time as an agent in accomplishing a work. In poetic and metaphorical language, indeed, we personate time as cutting down men, as a destroyer, &e., but this usage would not justify the expression that "time would confirm a covenant with many." That is, evidently, the work of conscious, intelligent agent; and it is most natural, therefore, to understand this as of one of the two agents who are spoken of in the passage. These two agents are the "Messiah," and the "prince that should come."

But it is not reasonable to suppose that the latter is referred to, because it is said Daniel 9:26 that the effect and the purpose of his coming would be to "destroy the city and the sanctuary." He was to come "with a flood," and the effect of his coming would be only desolation. The more correct interpretation, therefore, is to refer it to the Messiah, who is the principal subject of the prophecy; and the work which, according to this, he was to perform was, during that "one week," to exert such an influence as would tend to establish a covenant between the people and God. The effect of his work during that one week would be to secure their adhesion to the "true religion;" to confirm to them the Divine promises, and to establish the principles of that religion which would lead them to God. Nothing is said of the mode by which that would be done; and anything, therefore, which would secure this would be a fulfillment of the prophecy. As a matter of fact, if it refers to the Lord Jesus, this was done by his personal instructions, his example, his sufferings and death, and the arrangements which he made to secure the proper effect of his work on the minds of the people - all

designed to procure for them the friendship and favor of God, and to unite them to him in the bonds of an enduring covenant.

With many - לרבים *lârabîym* Or, for many; or, unto many. He would perform a work which would pertain to many, or which would bear on many, leading them to God. There is nothing in the word here which would indicate who they were, whether his own immediate followers, or those who already were in the covenant. The simple idea is, that this would pertain to "many" persons, and it would be fulfilled if the effect of his work were to confirm "many" who were already in the covenant, or if he should bring "many" others into a covenant relation with God. Nothing could be determined from the meaning of the word used here as to which of these things was designed, and consequently a fair fulfillment would be found if either of them occurred. If it refers to the Messiah, it would be fulfilled if in fact the effect of his coming should be either by statute or by instructions to confirm and establish those who already sustained this relation to God, or if he gathered other followers, and confirmed them in their allegiance to God.

For one week - The fair interpretation of this, according to the principles adopted throughout this exposition, is, that this includes the space of seven years. See the notes at Daniel 9:24. This is the one week that makes up the seventy - seven of them, or forty-nine years, embracing the period from the command to rebuild the city and temple to its completion under Nehemiah; sixty-two, or four hundred and thirty-four years, to the public appearing of the Messiah, and this one week to complete the whole seventy, or four hundred and ninety years "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness," etc., Daniel 9:24. It is essential, therefore, to find something done, occupying these seven years, that would go to "confirm the covenant" in the sense above explained. In the consideration of this, the attention is arrested by the announcement of an important event which was to occur "in the midst of the week," to wit, in causing the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, showing that there was to be an important change occurring during the "week," or that while he would be, in fact, confirming the covenant through the week in some proper sense, the sacrifice and oblation would cease, and therefore the confirming of the many in the covenant must depend on something else than the continuation of the sacrifice and oblation. In regard to this language, as in respect to all the rest of the prophecy, there are, in fact, just two questions: one is, what is

fairly to be understood by the words, or what is the proper interpretation, independent of anything in the result; the other is, whether anything occurred in what is regarded as the fulfillment which corresponds with the language so interpreted.

(1) The first inquiry then, is, What is the fair meaning of the language? Or what would one who had a correct knowledge of the proper principles of interpretation understand by this? Now, in regard to this, while it may be admitted, perhaps, that there would be some liability to a difference of view in interpreting it with no reference to the event, or no shaping of its meaning by the event, the following things seem to be clear:

(a) that the "one week," would comprise seven years, immediately succeeding the appearance of the Messiah, or the sixty-two weeks, and that there was something which he would do in "confirming the covenant," or in establishing the principles of religion, which would extend through that period of seven years, or that that would be, in some proper sense, "a period" of time, having a beginning - to wit, his appearing, and some proper close or termination at the end of the seven years: that is, that there would be some reason why that should be a marked period, or why the whole should terminate there, and not at some other time.

(b) That in the middle of that period of seven years, another important event would occur, serving to divide that time into two portions, and especially to be known as causing the sacrifice and oblation to cease; in some way affecting the public offering of sacrifice, so that from that time there would be in fact a cessation.

(c) And that this would be succeeded by the consummation of the whole matter expressed in the words, "and for the overspreading of abomination he shall make it desolate," etc. It is not said, however, that this latter would immediately occur, but this would be one of the events that would pertain to the fulfillment of the prophecy. There is nothing, indeed, in the prediction to forbid the expectation that this would occur at once, nor is there anything in the words which makes it imperative that we should so understand it. It may be admitted that this would be the most natural interpretation, but it cannot be shown that that is required. It may be added, also, that this may not have pertained to the direct design of the prophecy - which was to foretell the

coming of the Messiah, but that this was appended to show the end of the whole thing. When the Messiah should have come, and should have made an atonement for sin, the great design of rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple would have been accomplished, and both might pass away. Whether that would occur immediately or not might be in itself a matter of indifference; but it was important to state here that it would occur, for that was properly a completion of the design of rebuilding the city, and of the purpose for which it had ever been set apart as a holy city.

(2) The other inquiry is whether there was that in what is regarded as the fulfillment of this, which fairly corresponds with the prediction. I have attempted above (on Daniel 9:25) to show that this refers to the Messiah properly so called - the Lord Jesus Christ. The inquiry now is, therefore, whether we can find in his life and death what is a fair fulfillment of these reasonable expectations. In order to see this, it is proper to review these points in their order:

(a) The period, then, which is embraced in the prophecy, is seven years, and it is necessary to find in his life and work something which would be accomplished during these seven years which could be properly referred to as "confirming the covenant with many." The main difficulty in the case is on this point, and I acknowledge that this seems to me to be the most embarrassing portion of the prophecy, and that the solutions which can be given of this are less satisfactory than those that pertain to any other part. Were it not that the remarkable clause "in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease," were added, I admit that the natural interpretation would be, that he would do this personally, and that we might look for something which he would himself accomplish during the whole period of seven years. That clause, however, looks as if some remarkable event were to occur in the middle of that period, for the fact that he would tense the sacrifice and oblation to cease - that is, would bring the rites of the temple to a close - shows that what is meant by "confirming the covenant" is different from the ordinary worship under the ancient economy. No Jew would think of expressing himself thus, or would see how it was practicable to "confirm the covenant" at the same time that all his sacrifices were to cease. The confirming of the covenant, therefore,

during that “one week,” must be consistent with some work or event that would cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease in the middle of that period.

(b) The true fulfillment, it seems to me, is to be found in the bearing of the work of the Saviour on the Hebrew people - the ancient covenant people of God - for about the period of seven years after he entered on his work. Then the particular relation of his work to the Jewish people ceased. It may not be practicable to make out the exact time of “seven years” in reference to this, and it may be admitted that this would not be understood from the prophecy before the things occurred; but still there are a number of circumstances which will show that this interpretation is not only plausibIe, but that it has in its very nature strong probability in its favor. They are such as these:

(1) The ministry of the Saviour himself was wholly among the Jews, and his work was what would, in their common language, be spoken of as “confirming the covenant; “that is, it would be strengthening the principles of religion, bringing the Divine promises to bear on the mind, and leading men to God, etc.

(2) This same work was continued by the apostles as they labored among the Jews. They endeavored to do the same thing that their Lord and Master had done, with all the additional sanctions, now derived from his life and death. The whole tendency of their ministry would have been properly expressed in this language: that they endeavored to “confirm the covenant” with the Hebrew people; that is, to bring them to just views of the character of their natural covenant with God; to show them how it was confirmed in the Messiah; to establish the ancient promises; and to bring to bear upon them the sanctions of their law as it was now fulfilled, and ratified, and enlarged through the Messiah. Had the Saviour himself succeeded in this, or had his apostles, it would have been, in fact, only “confirming the ancient covenant” - the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the covenant established under Moses, and ratified by so many laws and customs among the people. The whole bearing of the Saviour‘s instructions, and of his followers, was to carry out and fulfill the real design of that ancient institution - to show its true nature and meaning, and to impress it on the hearts of men

(3) This was continued for about the period here referred to; at least for a period so long that it could properly be represented in round numbers as "one week," or seven years. The Saviour's own ministry continued about half that time; and then the apostles prosecuted the same work, laboring with the Jews for about the other portion, before they turned their attention to the Gentiles, and before the purpose to endearour to bring in the Jewish people was abandoned. They remained in Jerusalem; they preached in the synagogues; they observed the rites of the temple service; they directed their first attention everywhere to the Hebrew people; they had not yet learned that they were to turn away from the "covenant people," and to go to the Gentiles. It was a slow process by which they were led to this. It required a miracle to convince Peter of it, and to show him that it was right to go to Cornelius Daniel 9:25.

(4) When this occurred; when the apostles turned away from the Hebrew people, and gave themselves to their labors among the Gentiles, the work of "confirming the covenant" with those to whom the promises had been made, and to whom the law was given, ceased. They were regarded as "broken off" and left, and the hope of success was in the Gentile world. See the reasoning of the apostle Paul in Exodus 24:6; Numbers 12:12; then the middle, or the midst, Judges 16:3. The Vulgate renders it, *in dimidio*; the Greek, ἐν τῳ ἡμίσει *en tō hēmisei* Hengstenberg, "the half." So Lengerke, die Halfte; Luther, mitten. The natural and obvious interpretation is what is expressed in our translation, and that will convey the essential idea in the original. It refers to something which was to occur at about the middle portion of this time, or when about half of this period was elapsed, or to something which it would require half of the "one week," or seven years, to accomplish. The meaning of the passage is fully met by the supposition that it refers to the Lord Jesus and his work, and that the exact thing that was intended by the prophecy was his death, or his being "cut off," and thus causing the sacrifice and oblation to cease.

Whatever difficulties there may be about the "precise" time of our Lord's ministry, and whether he celebrated three passovers or four after he entered on his public work, it is agreed on all hands that it lasted about three years and a half - the time referred to here. Though a few have supposed

that a longer period was occupied, yet the general belief of the church has coincided in that, and there are few points in history better settled. On the supposition that this pertains to the death of the Lord Jesus, and that it was the design of the prophecy here to refer to the effects of that death, this is the very language which would have been used. If the period of "a week" were for any purpose mentioned, then it would be indispensable to suppose that there would be an allusion to the important event - in fact, the great event which was to occur in the middle of that period, when the ends of the types and ceremonies of the Hebrew people would be accomplished, and a sacrifice made for the sins of the whole world.

He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease - The word "he," in this place, refers to the Messiah, if the interpretation of the former part of the verse is correct, for there can be no doubt that it is the same person who is mentioned in the phrase "he shall confirm the covenant with many." The words "sacrifice" and "oblation" refer to the offerings made in the temple. The former word more properly denotes "bloody" offerings; the latter "offerings" of any kind - whether of flour, fruits, grain, etc. See these words explained in the notes at Isaiah 1:11, Isaiah 1:13. The word rendered "cease" (יִשְׁבִּית *yashebîyt*) means, properly, to rest (from the word Sabbath), and then in Hiphil, to cause to rest, or to cause to cease. It conveys the idea of "putting an end to" - as, for example, "war," Psalm 46:9; "contention," Proverbs 18:18; "exultation," Isaiah 16:10. - Gesenius. The literal signification here would be met by the supposition that an end would be made of these sacrifices, and this would occur either by their being made wholly to cease to be offered at that time, or by the fact that the object of their appointment was accomplished, and that henceforward they would be useless and would die away.

As a matter of fact, so far as the Divine intention in the appointment of these sacrifices and offerings was concerned, they "ceased" at the death of Christ - in the middle of the "week." Then the great sacrifice which they had adumbrated was offered. Then they ceased to have any significancy, no reason existing for their longer continuance. Then, as they never had had any efficacy in themselves, they ceased also to have any propriety as types - for the thing which they had prefigured had been accomplished. Then, too, began a series of events and influences which led to their abolition, for soon they were interrupted by the Romans, and the temple and the altars were swept away to be rebuilt no more. The death of Christ was, in fact, the thing

which made them to cease, and the fact that the great atonement has been made, and that there is now no further need of those offerings, is the only philosophical reason which can be given why the Jews have never been able again to rebuild the temple, and why for eighteen hundred years they have found no place where they could again offer a bloody sacrifice. The "sacrifice and the oblation" were made, as the result of the coming of the Messiah, to "cease" for ever, and no power of man will be able to restore them again in Jerusalem. Compare Gibbon's account of the attempt of Julian to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem: Dec. and Fall, ii. 35-37.

And for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate - The marginal reading here is very different, showing clearly the perplexity of the translators: "Upon the battlements shall be the idols of the desolator." There is great variety, also, in the ancient versions in rendering this passage. The Latin Vulgate is, "And there shall be in the temple the abomination of desolation." The Greek, "And upon the temple shall be an abomination of desolations." The Syriac. "And upon the extremities of the abomination shall rest desolation." The Arabic, "And over the sanctuary shall there be the abomination of ruin." Luther renders it, "And upon the wings shall stand the abomination of desolation." Lengerke and Hengstenberg render it, "And upon the summit of abomination comes the destroyer." Prof. Stuart, "And the water shall be over a winged fowl of abominations." These different translations show that there is great obscurity in the original, and perhaps exclude the hope of being able entirely to free the passage from all difficulties. An examination of the words, however, may perhaps enable us to form a judgment of its meaning. The "literal" and "obvious" sense of the original, as I understand it, is, "And upon the wing of the abominations one causing desolation" - ועל כנף שקיצים משמם *ve'al kenap shîqqytsîym meshomēm* The word rendered "overspreading" (כנף *kânâp*) means, properly, a "wing;" so called as "covering," or because it "covers" - from כנף *kânap*), to cover, to hide. Then it denotes anything having a resemblance to a wing, as an extremity, a corner, as

(a) of a garment, the skirt, or flap, 1 Samuel 24:4 (5), 11 (12); Numbers 15:38, and hence, as the outer garment was used by the Orientals to wrap themselves in at night, the word is used for the extremity or border of a bed-covering, Deuteronomy 22:30 Deuteronomy 23:1; Rth 3:9 .

(b) It is applied to land, or to the earth - as the earth is compared with a garment spread out, Isaiah 24:16; Job 37:3; Job 38:13.

(c) It is used to denote the highest point, or a battlement, a pinnacle - as having a resemblance to a wing spread out.

So the word πτερύγιον *pterugion* is used in Matthew 4:5. See the notes at that passage. It would seem most probable that the allusion by the word as applied to a building would not be, as supposed by Gesenius (Lexicon), and by Hengstenberg and Lengerke, to the "pinnacle or summit," but to some roof, porch, or piazza that had a resemblance to the wings of a bird as spread out - a use of the word that would be very natural and obvious. The extended porch that Solomon built on the eastern side of the temple would, not improbably, have, to one standing on the opposite Mount of Olives, much the appearance of the wings of a bird spread out. Nothing certain can be determined about the allusion here from the use of this word, but the connection would lead us to suppose that the reference was to something pertaining to the city or temple, for the whole prophecy has a reference to the city and temple, and it is natural to suppose that in its close there would be an allusion to it.

The use of the word "wing" here would lead to the supposition that what is said would pertain to something in connection with the temple having a resemblance to the wings of a bird, and the word "upon" (על *ʿal*) would lead us to suppose that what was to occur would be somehow upon that. The word rendered "abominations" (שִׁקּוּצִים *shîqqûtsîym*) means "abominable" things, things to be held in detestation, as things unclean, filthy garments, etc., and then idols, as things that are to be held in abhorrence. The word שִׁקּוּץ *shîqûts* is rendered abomination in Deuteronomy 29:17; 1 Kings 11:5, 1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 23:13, 2 Kings 23:24; Isaiah 66:3; Jeremiah 4:1; Jeremiah 7:30; Jeremiah 13:27; Jeremiah 32:34; Ezekiel 5:11; Ezekiel 7:20; Ezekiel 20:7-8, Ezekiel 20:30; Daniel 9:27; Daniel 11:31; Daniel 12:11; Hosea 9:10; Zechariah 9:7; abominable idols in 2 Chronicles 15:8 (in the margin abominations); "detestable" in Jeremiah 16:18; Ezekiel 11:18, Ezekiel 11:21; Ezekiel 37:23; and "abominable filth" in Nahum 3:6. It does not occur elsewhere.

In most of these places it is applied to “idols,” and the current usage would lead us so to apply it, if there were nothing in the connection to demand a different interpretation. It might refer to anything that was held in abomination, or that was detestable and offensive. The word is one that might be used of an idol god, or of anything that would pollute or defile, or that was from any cause offensive. It is not used in the Old Testament with reference to a “banner or military standard,” but there can be no doubt that it might be so applied as denoting the standard of a foe - of a pagan - planted on any part of the temple - a thing which would be particularly detestable and abominable in the sight of the Jews. The word rendered “he shall make IT desolate” - מׇשֵׁמֵם *meshomēm* - is “he making desolate;” that is, “a desolator.” It is a Poel participle from שָׁמֵם *shâmēm* - to be astonished, to be laid waste; and then, in an active sense, to lay waste, to make desolate. - Gesenius. The same word, and the same phrase, occur in Daniel 11:31: “And they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate,” or, as it is in the margin, “astonisheth.”

There, also, the expression is used in connection with “taking away the daily sacrifices.” The word would be more properly rendered in this place “desolator,” referring to some one who would produce desolation. There is great abruptness in the entire expression, and it is evident that it was not the intention to give so clear a prediction in this that it could be fully understood beforehand. The other portions of the prophecy respecting the building of the city, and the coming of the Messiah, and the work that he would accomplish, are much more clear, and their meaning could have been made out with much more certainty. But, in reference to this, it would seem, perhaps, that all that was designed was to throw out suggestions - fragments of thought, that would rather hint at the subject than give any continuous idea. Perhaps a much more “abrupt” method of translation than what attempts to express it in a continuous grammatical construction capable of being parsed easily, would better express the state of the mind of the speaker, and the language which he uses, than the ordinary versions.

The Masoretic pointing, also, may be disregarded, and then the real idea would be better expressed by some such translation as the following: “He shall cause the sacrifice and the offering to cease. And - upon the wing - the porch of the temple - abominations! And a desolator!” That is, after the

ceasing of the sacrifice and the oblation, the mind is fixed upon the temple where they had been offered. The first thing that arrests the eye is some portion of the temple, here denoted by the word "wing." The next is something abominable or detestable - an object to be hated and loathed in the very temple itself. The next is a desolator - one who had come to carry desolation to that very temple. Whether the "abomination" is connected with the "desolator" or not is not intimated by the language. It might or might not be. The angel uses language as these objects strike the eye, and he expresses himself in this abrupt manner as the eye rests on one or the other. The question then arises, What does this mean? Or what is to be regarded as the proper fulfillment? It seems to me that there can be no doubt that there is a reference to the Roman standard or banners planted on some part of the temple, or to the Roman army, or to some idols set up by the Romans - objects of abomination to the Jews - as attracting the eye of the angel in the distant future, and as indicating the close of the series of events here referred to in the prophecy. The reasons for this opinion are, summarily, the following:

(a) The "place or order" in which the passage stands in the prophecy. It is "after" the coming of the Messiah; "after" the proper cessation of the sacrifice and oblation, and at the close of the whole series of events - the termination of the whole design about rebuilding the city and the temple.

(b) The "language" is such as would properly represent that. Nothing could be more appropriate, in the common estimation of the Jews, than to speak of such an object as a Roman military standard planted in any part of the temple, as an "abomination,;" and no word would better denote the character of the Roman conqueror than the word "desolator" - for the effect of his coming, was to lay the whole city and temple in ruins.

(c) The language of the Saviour in his reference to this would seem to demand such an interpretation, Matthew 24:15: "When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the holy place," etc. There can be no reasonable doubt. that the Saviour refers to this passage in Daniel (see the notes at Matthew 24:15), or that events occurred in the attack on Jerusalem and the temple that would fully correspond with the language used here. Josephus, for instance, says, that

when the city was taken, the Romans brought their ensigns into the temple, and placed them over the eastern gate, and sacrificed to them there. "And now the Romans," says he, "upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and all the buildings round about it, brought their ensigns into the temple, and set them over against its eastern gate; and there they did offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus "Imperator" with the greatest acclamations of joy." - "Jewish Wars," b. vi. ch. vi. Section 1. This fact fully accords with the meaning of the language as above explained, and the reference to it was demanded in order that the purpose of the prophecy should be complete. Its proper termination is the destruction of the city and temple - as its beginning is the order to rebuild them.

Even until the consummation - Until the completion - ועד־כלה *yeʿad - kâlâh* That is, the series of events in the prophecy shall in fact reach to the completion of everything pertaining to the city and temple. The whole purpose in regard to that shall be completed. The design for which it is robe rebuilt shall be consummated; the sacrifices to be offered there shall be finished, and they shall be no longer efficacious or proper; the whole civil and religious polity connected with the city and temple shall pass away.

And that determined - ונחרצה *venechĕrâtsâh* See this word explained in the notes at Daniel 9:24, Daniel 9:26. See also the notes at Isaiah 10:23. There seems to be an allusion in the word here to its former use, as denoting that this is the fulfillment of the determination in regard to the city and temple. The idea is, that what was determined, or decided on, to wit, with reference to the closing scenes of the city and temple, would be accomplished.

Shall be poured - תתך *tîttak* The word used here means to pour, to pour out, to overflow - as rain, water, curses, anger, etc. It may be properly applied to calamity or desolation, as these things may be represented as "poured down" upon a people, in the manner of a storm. Compare 2 Samuel 21:10; Exodus 9:33; Psalm 11:6; Ezekiel 38:22; 2 Chronicles 34:21; 2 Chronicles 12:7; Jeremiah 7:20; Jeremiah 42:18; Jeremiah 44:6.

Upon the desolate - Margin, desolator. The Hebrew word (שׁומם *shômēm*) is the same, though in another form (כל *kal* instead of פל *pēl*) which is used in the previous part of the verse, and rendered "he shall make it desolate," but which is proposed above to be rendered "desolator." The verb שׁמם *shâmēm* is an intransitive verb, and means, in "Kal," the form

used here, to be astonished or amazed; then “to be laid waste, to be made desolate” (Gesenius); and the meaning in this place, therefore, is that which is desolate or laid waste - the wasted, the perishing, the solitary. The reference is to Jerusalem viewed as desolate or reduced to ruins. The angel perhaps contemplates it, as he is speaking, in ruins or as desolate, and he sees this also as the termination of the entire series of predictions, and, in view of the whole, speaks of Jerusalem appropriately as “the desolate.”

Though it would be rebuilt, yet it would be again reduced to desolation, for the purpose of the rebuilding - the coming of the Messiah - would be accomplished. As the prophecy finds Jerusalem a scene of ruins, so it leaves it, and the last word in the prophecy, therefore, is appropriately the word “desolate.” The intermediate state indeed between the condition of the city as seen at first and at the close is glorious - for it embraces the whole work of the Messiah; but the beginning is a scene of ruins, and so is the close. The sum of the whole in the latter part of the verse may be expressed in a free paraphrase: “He, the Messiah, shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease,” by having fulfilled in his own dcath the design of the ancient offerings, thus rendering them now useless, and upon the outspreading - upon the temple regarded as spread out, or some wing or portico, there are seen abominable things - idolatrous ensigns, and the worship of foreigners. A desolator is there, also, come to spread destruction - a foreign army or leader. And this shall continue even to the end of the whole matter - the end of the events contemplated by the prophecy - the end of the city and the temple. And what is determined on - the destruction decreed - shall be poured out like a tempest on the city doomed to desolation - desolate as surveyed at the beginning of the prophecy - desolate at the close, and therefore appropriately called “the desolate.”

After this protracted examination of the meaning of this prophecy, all the remark which it seems proper to make is, that this prediction could have been the result only of inspiration. There is the clearest evidence that the prophecy was recorded long before the time of the Messiah, and it is manifest that it could not have been the result of any natural sagacity. There is not the slightest proof that it was uttered as late as the coming of Christ, and there is nothing better determined in relation to any ancient matter than that it was recorded long before the birth of the Lord Jesus. But it is equally clear that it could have been the result of no mere natural sagacity. How

could such events have been foreseen except by Him who knows all things? How could the order have been determined? How could the time have been fixed? How could it have been anticipated that the Messiah, the Prince, would be cut off? How could it have been known that he would cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease? How could it have been ascertained that the period during which he would be engaged in this would be one week - or about seven years? How could it be predicted that a remarkable event would occur in the middle of that period that would in fact cause the sacrifice and oblation ultimately to cease? And how could it be conjectured that a foreign prince would come, and plant the standard of abomination in the holy city, and sweep all away - laying the city and the temple in ruins, and bringing the whole polity to an end? These things lie beyond the range of natural sagacity, and if they are fairly implied in this prophecy, they demonstrate that this portion of the book is from God.

DANIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Introduction

Analysis of the Chapter

This chapter introduces the last revelation made to Daniel, and is "merely" introductory to the disclosures made in the two following chapters. The whole extends to the time of the coming of the Messiah, embracing a detail of the principal historical events that would occur, and closes with some fearful allusions to the ultimate results of human conduct in the day of judgment, and to the great principles on which God governs the world. The contents of this introductory chapter are as follows:

(a) The statement of the time when the revelation occurred, Daniel 10:1. This was in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, subsequently, therefore, to the visions in the previous chapters, and after the order had been given by Cyrus for the restoration of the Jews, Ezra 1:1.

(b) The particular period when this occurred was when Daniel was observing a fast that continued through three weeks, Daniel 10:2-3. This was at the passover, the first month in their ecclesiastical year, and the fast was observed by Daniel, evidently, on account of the sins and the calamities of his people.

(c) The place where this occurred, Daniel 10:4. He was by the side of the river Hiddekel or Tigris. Why he was there he does not say. But it is to be remembered that he seems to have been employed on some occasions in other parts of the empire than Babylon; and one of his former visions occurred on the banks of a river that flowed into the Tigris - the river Ulai. See the notes at Daniel 8:2. Indeed, it would appear that the banks of rivers were not unfrequently the places to which the prophets resorted, or where they were favored with their visions. They were retired places, and were on many accounts favorable for devotion. Compare Ezekiel 1:1; Acts 16:13. See also Revelation 22:1-2.

(d) While there, engaged in his devotions, Daniel saw a man, who suddenly appeared to him, clothed in linen, and girded with a belt of gold. Those who were with him fled astonished, and left him alone to contemplate the vision, and to receive the communication which this

glorious stranger had to make to him. The effect of this vision on himself, however, was wholly to overcome him, to prostrate him to the earth, and to render him insensible, until the angel touched him, and raised him up, Daniel 10:4-10. In all this there is nothing unnatural. The effect is such as would be produced in any case in similar circumstances, and it has a striking resemblance to what occurred to Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus (Acts 9:3-4; Acts 22:7-9; and to John in the visions of Patmos, Revelation 1:10-17.)

(e) He who had thus appeared to Daniel proceeded to state to him the design for which he had come, Daniel 10:11-14. The prayer of Daniel, he said, had been heard the first day in which he had given himself to these solemn acts of devotion. He had himself been commissioned at that time to come to Daniel, and to disclose the events which were to occur. During a period of twenty-one days, however, in which Daniel had been engaged in this season of devotion, he had been withstood by "the prince of the kingdom of Persia," and had been detained until Michael, one of the chief princes, had interposed to release him, and he had now come, at last, to make known to Daniel what would occur to his people in the latter days. The nature of this detention will, of course, be considered in the notes at Daniel 10:13.

(f) Daniel then Daniel 10:15-17 describes the effect which this vision had on him, rendering him unable to converse with him who had thus appeared to him.

(g) The heavenly messenger then touched him, and bade him be of good courage and be strong Daniel 10:18-19, and then said that he would return and fight with the prince of Persia, after having stated what was "noted in the Scripture of truth," Daniel 10:20-21.

Verse 1

In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia - In regard to Cyrus, see the notes at Isaiah 41:2. In Daniel 1:21, it is said that "Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus." But it is not necessarily implied in that passage that he "died" then. It may mean only that he continued in authority, and was employed, in various ways, as a public officer, until that

time. See the note at that passage. For anything that appears, he may have lived several years after, though, for causes now unknown, he may have retired from the court after the accession of Cyrus. This vision may have occurred when he was no longer a public officer, though the whole narrative leads us to suppose that he had not lost his interest in the affairs of the Jewish people. He may have retired on account of age, though his declining years would be naturally devoted to the welfare of his people, and he would embrace any opportunity which he might have of doing them good.

A thing was revealed unto Daniel - A revelation was made to him. The occasion on which it was done is stated in the next verse. It was when he was earnestly engaged in prayer for his people, and when his mind was deeply anxious in regard to their condition.

Whose name was called Belteshazzar - See the notes at Daniel 1:7. The name Belteshazzar was probably that by which he was known in Babylon, and as this prophecy was perhaps published in his own time, the use of this name would serve to identify the author. The name "Daniel" would have been sufficient to give it currency and authority among his own countrymen.

And the thing was true - That is, it would be certainly accomplished. This expresses the deep conviction of the writer that what was revealed in this vision would certainly come to pass. In his own mind there was no doubt that it would be so, though the time extended through many years, and though it could not be expected that it would be complete until long after his own death. Perhaps the declaration here is designed to bring the weight of his own authority and his well-known character to pledge his own word, that what is here said would be accomplished; or, as we should say, to stake his veracity as a prophet and a man, on the fulfillment of what he had affirmed. Such an assertion might be of great use in consoling the minds of the Jews in the troubles that were to come upon their nation.

But the time appointed was long - Margin, "great." There is considerable variety in the translation and interpretation of this passage. The Latin Vulgate renders it, "*fortitudo magna*." The Greek, "And the power was great." The Syriac, "And the discourse was apprehended with great effort, but he understood the vision." Luther, "And it was of great matters." Lengerke, "And the misery (Elend) is great;" that is, the distress of the people. Bertholdt renders it, "Whose contents pertained to great wars." This variety of interpretation arises from the word rendered in our

version “the time appointed” - צבא *tsâbâ'* This word properly means an army, host, as going forth to war; then the host of angels, of the stars, and hence, God is so often called “Jehovah of hosts.” Then the word means warfare, military service, a hard service, a season of affliction or calamity. See the notes at Job 7:1. It seems to me that this is the meaning here, and that Gesenius (Lexicon) has correctly expressed the idea: “And true is the edict, and “relates to long warfare;” that is, to many calamities to be endured.” It was not a thing to be soon accomplished, nor did it pertain to peaceful and easy times, but it had reference to the calamities, the evils, and the hardships of wars - wars attended with the evils to which they are usually incident, and which were to be conducted on a great scale. This interpretation will accord with the details in the following chapters.

And he understood the thing … - This seems to be said in contradistinction to what had occurred on some other occasions when the meaning of the vision which he saw was concealed from him. Of this he says he had full understanding. The prophecy was, in fact, more clearly expressed than had been usual in the revelations made to Daniel, for this is almost entirely a historical narrative, and there could be little doubt as to its meaning.

Verse 2

In those days I Daniel was mourning - I was afflicting myself; that is, he had set apart this time as an extraordinary fast. He was sad and troubled. He does not say on what account he was thus troubled, but there can be little doubt that it was on account of his people. This was two years after the order had been given by Cyrus for the restoration of the Hebrew people to their country, but it is not improbable that they met with many embarrassments in their efforts to return, and possibly there may have sprung up in Babylon some difficulties on the subject that greatly affected the mind of Daniel. The difficulties attending such an enterprise as that of restoring a captured people to their country, when the march lay across a vast desert, would at any time have been such as to have made an extraordinary season of prayer and fasting proper.

Three full weeks - Margin, “weeks of days.” Hebrew, “Three sevens of days.” He does not say whether he had designedly set apart that time to be occupied as a season of fasting, or whether he had, under the influence of deep feeling, continued his fast from day to day until it reached that period. Either supposition will accord with the circumstances of the case, and either

would have justified such an act at anytime, for it would be undoubtedly proper to designate a time of extraordinary devotion, or, under the influence of deep feeling, of domestic trouble, of national affliction, to continue such religious exercises from day to day.

Verse 3

I ate no pleasant bread - Margin, "bread of desires." So the Hebrew. The meaning is, that he abstained from ordinary food, and partook of that only which was coarse and disagreeable.

Neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth - That is, he lived on bread or vegetables. It is not to be inferred from this that Daniel ordinarily made use of wine, for it would seem from Matthew 6:17), and Daniel here says that he abstained during these three weeks from what he ordinarily observed as promoting his personal comfort. He gave himself up to a course of life which would be expressive of deep grief. Nature prompts to this when the mind is overwhelmed with sorrow. Not only do we become indifferent to our food, but it requires an effort not to be indifferent to our dress, and to our personal appearance.

Verse 4

And in the four and twentieth day of the first month - At the close of his season of fasting. Though he had not set apart this season of fasting with any view or expectation that it would be followed by such a result, yet there was a propriety that an occasion like this should be selected as that on which the communication which follows should be made to his mind, for

(a) his mind was in a prepared state by this extraordinary season of devotion for such a communication; and

(b) his attention during that period had been turned toward the condition of his people, and it was a fit opportunity to impart to him these extraordinary views of what would occur to them in future days.

It may be added, that we shall be more likely to receive Divine communications to our souls at the close of seasons of sincere and prolonged devotion than at other times, and that, though we may set apart such seasons for different purposes, the Spirit of God may take occasion from them to impart to us clear and elevated views of Divine truth, and of the Divine government. A man is in a better state to obtain such views, and is more likely to obtain them, in such circumstances than he is in others,

and he who desires to understand God and his ways should wait upon him with intense and prolonged devotion. The "time" here specified is the "first month" - the month Nisan, answering to a part of our month April. This was the month in which the Passover was celebrated, and was a time, therefore, which a Jew would be likely to select as a season of extraordinary devotion. It was, for some reason, very common for the prophets to record "the very day" on which the visions which they saw appeared to them, or on which Divine communications were made to them. This was often of importance, because it served to determine the time when a prophecy was fulfilled.

I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel - That is, the Tigris. The Syriac renders it the Euphrates. The name in the Scriptures, however, denotes the Tigris. Why Daniel was there he does not say. He was often away from Babylon (compare the notes at Daniel 8:2), and he may have been now among some of his people who resided near the Tigris. Possibly he may at that time have ceased to reside at the court in Babylon, and have taken up his residence in some place on the Tigris. See the notes at Daniel 10:1.

Verse 5

Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked … - While he was engaged in devotion. What is here said would lead us to suppose that he had been occupied in deep thought and meditation, perhaps with his eyes fixed on the ground.

Behold, a certain man clothed in linen - One who had the form and appearance of a man.

The subsequent disclosures showed that he was an angel, but when angels have appeared on earth they have commonly assumed the human form. The margin is, "one." So also is the Hebrew "one man." From Daniel 12:6, it would seem that two other such beings appeared in the course of the vision, but either one only was manifest now to Daniel, or his attention was particularly directed to him. The name of this celestial messenger is not given, but all the circumstances of the case lead us to suppose that it was the same who had appeared to him on the banks of the Ulai Daniel 8:16, and the same who had made the revelation of the seventy weeks, Daniel 9:21, following. Linen was the common raiment of priests, because it was supposed to be more pure than wool, Exodus 28:42; Leviticus 6:10; Leviticus 16:4, Leviticus 16:23; 1 Samuel 2:18. It was also worn by prophets, Jeremiah 13:1, and is represented as the raiment of angels,

Revelation 15:6. The nature of the raiment would suggest the idea at once that this person thus appearing was one sustaining a saintly character.

Whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz - With a girdle made of fine gold; that is, probably, it was made of something in which fine gold was interwoven, so as to give it the appearance of pure gold. It was customary in the East, as it is now, to wear a girdle around the loins. See the notes at Matthew 5:38-41. These girdles are often made of rich material, and are highly ornamented. Compare the notes at Revelation 1:13. Nothing is known of Uphaz, unless, as Gesenius supposes, the word is a corruption of Ophir, made by a change of a single letter - ז (*z*) for ר (*r*). Ophir was celebrated for its gold, but its situation is unknown. See the notes at Job 22:24.

Verse 6

His body also was like the beryl - There is a very striking resemblance between the description here given and that of the Saviour as he appeared to John in Patmos, Revelation 1:13-16. See the notes at that passage. It contains, however, no description of the appearance of the body. "Beryl" is "a mineral of great hardness, occurring in green and bluish-green six-sided prisms. It is identical with the emerald, except that the latter has a purer and richer color. " - Dana, in Webster's Dictionary. The Hebrew word used here is תרשׁיׁש *tarshîysh* "Tarshish, Tartessus," and properly refers to a country supposed to be on the south of Spain, a place where this mineral was probably found. This was situated between the mouths of the river Baetis, or Guadalquivir, and was a flourishing mart of the Phoenicians, Genesis 10:4; Psalm 72:10; Isaiah 23:1, Isaiah 23:6, Isaiah 23:10, … - Gesenius. The name was given to this gem because it was brought from that place. The true meaning of the word, as applied to a gem, is supposed to be the chrysolite, that is, the topaz of the moderns. "Tarshish, the chrysolite," says Rosenmuller ("Mineralogy and Botany of the Bible," pp. 38,39), "is a crystal-line precious stone of the quartz kind, of a glassy fracture. The prevailing color is yellowish-green, and pistachio-green of every variety and degree of shade, but always with a yellow and gold luster. It is completely diaphanous, and has a strong double refraction. Most commonly the chrysolite is found solid and in grains, or in angular pieces. The Hebrew word "Tarshish" denotes the south of Spain, the Tartessus of the Greeks and Romans, a place to which the Phoenicians traded even in the earliest ages.

Probably the Phoenicians first brought the chrysolite from Spain to Syria, and it was on that account called Tarshish stone."

And his face as the appearance of lightning - Bright, shining. In Revelation 1:16 it is, "And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." See the notes at that passage.

And his eyes as lamps of fire - Keen, penetrating. So in Revelation 1:14: "His eyes were as a flame of fire."

And his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass - So in Revelation 1:15: "And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." See the notes at that passage. The meaning is, that they were bright - like burnished metal. The Hebrew here is, "like the eye of brass;" then, as the word eye comes to denote the "face or countenance," the meaning is, "like the face or appearance of brass." Complete Exodus 10:5, Exodus 10:15; Numbers 22:5, Numbers 22:11. It is easy to conceive of the appearance which one would make whose arms and feet resembled burnished brass.

And the voice of his words like the voice a multitude - A multitude of people - loud and strong. So in Revelation 1:15: "And his voice as the sound of many waters."

Verse 7

And I Daniel alone saw the vision - That is, he only saw it distinctly. The others who were with him appear to have seen or heard something which alarmed them, and they fled. Who those men were, or why they were with him, he does not say. They may have been his own countrymen, engaged with him in the act of devotion, or they may have been Babylonians occupied in the public service; but whoever they were, or whatever was the reason why they were there, they became alarmed and fled. The case was somewhat different with the companions of Saul of Tarsus when the Saviour appeared to him on his way to Damascus. These saw the light; they all fell to the earth together, but Saul only heard the voice of him that spake. Acts 22:9.

Verse 8

Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision - That is, I distinctly saw it, or contemplated it. He perceived, doubtless, that it was a heavenly vision; and as he had often been favored with similar manifestations, he remained to receive the communication which probably he understood was to be made.

And there remained no strength in me - He was completely overcome. A similar effect was produced on John when he was in Patmos: "And when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead," Revelation 1:17. That he should be overcome, and his strength taken away, was not an unnatural effect; and what occurred to Daniel and John may demonstrate that there may be such views of the Divine character and glory now as to prostrate our physical powers. It is certain that such visions as those which appeared to Daniel and John would have this effect; and, though we are not to expect that they will now be vouchsafed to men, no one can doubt that there may be such views of God, and heaven, and eternal realities presented to the eye of faith and hope; such joy in the evidence of pardoned sin; such a change from a sense of condemnation to the peace resulting from forgiveness, that the powers of the body may be prostrated, and sink from exhaustion. Indeed, it is not much of the revelation of the Divine character that in our present state we can bear.

For my comeliness - Margin, "vigour." Hebrew, הוד *hôd* The word means, properly, majesty or splendor; then beauty or brightness, as of the complexion. The meaning here is, that his "bright complexion" (Gesenius, Lexicon) was changed upon him; that is, that he turned pale.

Into corruption - The phrase used here means literally "into destruction." The sense is, that by the change that came over him. his beauty - his bright or florid complexion was completely "destroyed." He became deadly pale.

Verse 9

Yet heard I the voice of his words - What the angel said when he appeared to him Daniel has not recorded. He says Daniel 10:6 that the voice of his words was "like the voice of a multitude." It is probable that those who were with him had heard that voice, and hearing it, and being struck with the remarkable character of the vision, they had suddenly fled in alarm. Daniel heard more distinctly what he said, though it does not yet appear that he had heard anything more than the sound of his voice.

And when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face - Compare the notes at Daniel 8:18. Lengerke renders this, "I sank into a deep sleep," etc. This is undoubtedly the meaning, that when he heard this voice he was overcome, and sank prostrate and senseless upon the earth. The sense of the Hebrew may be thus expressed: "I became (הייתי *hâyîytîy*) oppressed with sleep," etc.

Verse 10

And, behold, an hand touched me - The hand of the angel. Compare Daniel 8:18.

Which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands - Not "upright," as in Daniel 8:18. That is, he had not strength given him at once to stand erect, but he was partially raised up and enabled to move, though in a feeble and tottering manner. The word used here (נוע *nôaʿ*) means to move to and fro; to waver; to vacillate; and the sense here, as expressed by Gesenius (Lexicon) is, "lo, a hand touched me, and caused me to reel (i. e., to stand reeling and trembling) upon my knees and hands." He was gradually restored to strength.

Verse 11

And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved - That is, in heaven. Margin, as in Hebrew, "of desires." See the notes at Daniel 9:23.

Understand the words that I speak unto thee - That is, attend to them, implying that he would be able to understand them.

And stand upright - Margin, as in Hebrew, upon thy standing. That is, stand erect. See the notes at Daniel 8:18.

Verse 12

Then said he unto me, Fear not - Be not alarmed at my presence; do not fear that your devotions are not accepted, and that your prayers are not heard.

For from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand - That is, by a season of extraordinary devotion. Daniel had devoted three full weeks to such a service Daniel 10:2-3, and it would seem from this that one object which he had in view was to make inquiry about the future condition of his people, or to learn what was his own duty in the present circumstances, or what methods he might use to secure the return of his countrymen to their own land. The circumstances of the case were such as to make either of these inquiries proper; and the angel now affirms that, from the first day when he entered on these investigations, he was despatched to come to him, and to assure him that his prayer was heard. The reason why he had not sooner arrived, and why Daniel was left to continue his prayers so long without any answer being returned, is stated in the following verses. Compare the notes at Daniel 9:23.

And to chasten thyself before thy God - That is, by fasting and humiliation. Literally, to afflict thyself.

Thy words were heard - In heaven. Another proof that prayer is at once heard, though the answer may be long delayed. The instance before us shows that the answer to prayer may seem, to be delayed, from causes unknown to us, though the prayer ascends at once to heaven, and God designs to answer it. In this case, it was deferred by the detention of the messenger on the way Daniel 10:13; in other cases it may be from a different cause; but it should never be set down as a proof that prayer is not heard, and that it will not be answered, because the answer is not granted at once. Weeks, or months, or years may elapse before the Divine purpose shall be made known, though, so to speak, the messenger may be on his way to us. Something may prevent the answer being borne to us; some "prince of the kingdom of Persia" may withstand the messenger; some cause which we may not know may hinder the immediate answer of our prayer, either in our own hearts, or in outward events which cannot at once be controlled without a miracle, or in the feelings and views of our friends whom we seek to have converted and saved; but the purpose to answer the prayer may have been simultaneous with its being offered, and a train of measures may have been commenced at once to bring about the result, though many weeks or months of delay, of anxiety, of tears, may elapse before we attain the object we desired.

Daniel would have been cheered in his days of fasting and service if he had known that an angel was on his way to him to comfort him, and to communicate to him an answer from God; often - if not always - in our days of deepest anxiety and trouble; when our prayers seem not to penetrate the skies; when we meet with no response; when the thing for which we pray seems to be withheld; when our friends remain unconverted; when irreligion abounds and prevails; when we seem to be doing no good, and when calamity presses upon us, if we saw the arrangement which God was already making to answer the prayer, and could see the messenger on the way, our hearts would exult, and our tears would cease to flow. And why, in our days of trouble and anxiety, should we not believe that it is so; and that God, even though the delay may seem to be long, will yet show himself to be a hearer and an answerer of prayer?

Verse 13

But the prince of the kingdom of Persia - In explaining this very difficult verse it may be proper

(1) to consider the literal sense of the words;

(2) to deduce the fair meaning of the passage as thus explained; and

(3) to notice the practical truths taught.

The word rendered "prince" - שׂר *s'ar* - means, properly, a leader, commander, chief, as of troops, Genesis 21:22; of a king's body-guard, Genesis 37:36; of cup-bearers, Genesis 41:9; of a prison, Genesis 39:21-22; of a flock, Genesis 47:6. Then it means a prince, a noble, a chief in the state, Genesis 12:15. In Daniel 8:25, in the phrase "Prince of princes," it refers to God. So far as the word is concerned in the phrase "prince of the kingdom of Persia," it might refer to a prince ruling over that kingdom, or to a prime minister of the state; but the language also is such that it is applicable to an angelic being supposed to preside over a state, or to influence its counsels. If this idea is admitted; if it is believed that angels do thus preside over particular states, this language would properly express that fact. Gesenius (Lexicon) explains it in this passage as denoting the "chiefs, princes, and angels; i. e., the archangels acting as patrons and advocates of particular nations before God." That this is the proper meaning here as deduced from the words is apparent, for

(a) it is an angel that is speaking, and it would seem most natural to suppose that he had encountered one of his own rank;

(b) the mention of Michael who came to his aid - a name which, as we shall see, properly denotes an angel, leads to the same conclusion;

(c) it accords, also, with the prevailing belief on the subject.

Undoubtedly, one who takes into view all the circumstances referred to in this passage would most naturally understand this of an angelic being, having some kind of jurisdiction over the kingdom of Persia. What was the character of this "prince," however, whether he was a good or bad angel, is not intimated by the language. It is only implied that he had a chieftainship, or some species of guardian care over that kingdom - watching over its interests and directing its affairs. As he offered resistance, however, to this

heavenly messenger on his way to Daniel, as it was necessary to counteract his plans, and as the aid of Michael was required to overcome his opposition, the fair construction is, that he belonged to the class of evil angels.

Withstood me - Hebrew, "stood over against me." Vulgate, "*restitit mihi*." The fair meaning is, that he resisted or opposed him; that he stood over against him, and delayed him on his way to Daniel. In what manner he did this is not stated. The most obvious interpretation is, that, in order to answer the prayers of Daniel in respect to his people, it was necessary that some arrangement should be made in reference to the kingdom of Persia - influencing the government to be favorable to the restoration of the Jews to their own land; or removing some obstacles to such return - obstacles which had given Daniel such disquietude, and which had been thrown in his way by the presiding angel of that kingdom.

One and twenty days - During the whole time in which Daniel was engaged in fasting and prayer Daniel 10:2-3. The angel had been sent forth to make arrangements to secure the answer to his prayer when he began to pray, but had been delayed during all that time by the opposition which he had met with in Persia. That is, it required all that time to overcome the obstacles existing there to the accomplishment of these purposes, and to make those arrangements which were necessary to secure the result. Meantime, Daniel, not knowing that these arrangements were in a process of completion, or that an angel was employed to secure the answer to his prayers, yet strong in faith, was suffered to continue his supplications with no intimation that his prayers were heard, or that he would be answered. How many arrangements may there be in progress designed to answer our prayers of which we know nothing! How many agents may be employed to bring about an answer! What mighty obstacles may be in a process of removal, and what changes may be made, and what influences exerted, while we are suffered to pray, and fast, and weep, amidst many discouragements, and many trials of our faith and patience! For a much longer period than Daniel was engaged in his devotions, may we be required often now to pray before the arrangements in the course of Providence shall be so far complete that we shall receive an answer to our supplications, for the things to be done may extend far into future months or years.

But, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes - Margin, "the first." That is, the first in rank of the "princes," or the angels. In other words, Michael, the archangel." The proper meaning of this name (מיכאל *mîykâ'êl*) is, "Who as God," and is a name given, undoubtedly, from some resemblance to God. The exact reason why it is given is not anywhere stated; but may it not be this - that one looking on the majesty and glory of the chief of the angels would instinctively ask, "Who, after all, is like God? Even this lofty angel, with all his glory, cannot be compared to the high and lofty One." Whatever may have been the reason of the appellation, however, the name in the Scriptures has a definite application, and is given to the chief one of the angels. Compare the notes at Jude 1:9. The word "Michael," as a proper name, occurs several times in the Scriptures, Numbers 13:13; 1 Chronicles 5:13; 1 Chronicles 6:40; 1 Chronicles 7:3; 1 Chronicles 8:16; 1 Chronicles 12:20; 1 Chronicles 27:18; 2 Chronicles 21:2; Ezra 8:8. It is used as applicable to an angel or archangel in the following places: Daniel 10:13, Daniel 10:21; Daniel 12:1; Jude 1:9; Revelation 12:7. Little more is known of him than

(a) that he occupied the rank which entitled him to be called an archangel; and

(b) that he sustained, in the time of Daniel, the relation of patron of Israel before God Daniel 10:21.

That an "angel" is referred to here is manifest, for,

(1) It occurs in the account of transactions conducted by an angel.

(2) The use of the word elsewhere leads to this supposition.

(3) What is said to have been done is the appropriate work of an angel. This is apparent, because Gabriel, the speaker, says that what was done was beyond his power to accomplish. He was effectually resisted and thwarted by the counsels of Persia, until one of higher wisdom and rank than himself came to his aid. He could, therefore, have been no less than an angel, and was clearly a being of a higher rank than Gabriel himself.

(4) The phrase "one of the chief princes" sustains this interpretation. It implies that he was one of those who held an exalted rank among those who are called "princes," and if this word in this connection denotes angels, then Michael was an angel, and one of the most exalted of the angels. This accords with the appellation given to him by Jude - "the archangel."

Came to help me - He does not state in what way this was done, but it is fairly implied that it was by securing better counsels at the court of Persia - counsels more favorable to the Hebrews, and different from those which would have been carried out under the auspices of him who is called "the prince of Persia." There is nothing in the passage to forbid the supposition that it was by so influencing the mind of the king and his ministers as to dispose them to favor the return of the Jews, or to afford them facilities to rebuild their temple, or to remove some of the obstacles which would tend to prevent their restoration.

And I remained there with the kings of Persia - The kings of Persia here, in the plural, must mean the rulers. There was properly but one king of that nation, though the name may have been given to subordinate rulers, or perhaps to those who had been kings in their own country, and whose countries had been subdued by the Persian arms, and who now resided, with more or less authority, at the Persian court. The phrase "I remained there" has been variously translated. The Vulgate renders it as in our version. The Greek, "And I left him (to wit, Michael) there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia." The Syriac, "And I was hindered there against the prince of the Persians." Luther, "Then obtained I the victory with the kings in Persia." Lengerke, "Then obtained I the ascendency (Vorrang) among the kings of Persia." That is, as he explains it, "I obtained the victory; I secured this result that my counsel in behalf of the Jewish people prevailed," p. 503.

The same explanation is given by Geier, Gesenius, DeWette, Havernick. The word יתר *yâthar* properly means, to hang out and over; to be redundant; to remain or be left; to be over and above; to excel, etc. Hence, the notion in Niphal, of excelling others, of getting the ascendency, of obtaining a victory. This is, undoubtedly, the meaning here, for he was not left with the kings of Persia; he did not remain there. The true idea is, that by the help of Michael, who came to his aid, he was enabled so far to influence the Persian counsels against the purposes of him who is called the "prince of Persia," as to secure the favors for the Hebrew people which Daniel sought by prayer; and having done this, he came at once to him. The only delay in

the case was what was caused by the purposes of the Persian court, and by the difficulty of securing such arrangements there as to favor the Hebrew people, and to facilitate their return to their own country. Having done this, he came at once to Daniel to announce the long series of events which would follow pertaining to his people, and in reference to which his mind had been so much affected during his protracted period of devotion.

Such is the explanation of the literal meaning of this difficult passage. Now, in reference to the second point suggested as necessary to its proper interpretation its real meaning - the exact truth taught in it, the following remarks may be made:

(1) There was early a prevailing opinion that special angels had the charge of individuals, as their guardians; and the same idea existed respecting nations, that their affairs were assigned to particular celestial beings. This notion among the Hebrews was found in this form - that they were “angels, or created” beings of exalted rank who thus presided over the affairs of men. Among the Greeks, and other pagan nations, the form which it took was, that they were gods or tutelary divinities, and hence, each people, each class, each family, each house, had its own god. The Hebrews never approximated to this opinion so far as to suppose that these beings were divine, or that they occupied the place of the supreme God - Jehovah - who was peculiarly their covenant God, and who was the only true God. They did admit the supposition, however, that there might be guardian angels of their own nation, and the same idea seems to have prevailed among them in regard to other nations. This is clearly the idea in the passage before us, that while Michael was, in a peculiar sense, entrusted with the affairs of the Hebrew people, there were intelligent invisible beings of angelic rank who presided over other nations, and who influenced their counsels. It does not appear by any means that it was supposed that in all cases these were good beings, for the counsels of the nations were too often malignant and evil to admit of this supposition. In the ease before us, it is evidently supposed that the influence of the presiding angel of Persia was adverse to what was right, and such as should be counteracted by one who came from heaven. Compare the notes at Ephesians 2:2.

(2) No one can demonstrate that this is not so. The existence of wicked angels is no more incredible in itself than the existence of wicked men, and that they should influence nations and rulers is in itself no more improbable than that distinguished statesmen should. There may be, indeed, no foundation for the opinion that particular angels axe assigned to particular individuals or nations, as peculiar guardians; but it may be true, notwithstanding, that some one of these fallen spirits for if there are any such beings at all, they are numerous - may have special influence over a particular individual or nation. If it be said that we know too little about this to enable us to make any positive statements in favor of this opinion, it should also be said that we know too little to enable us to make any positive statements against it; and for aught anyone can prove, it may be so. No one has a right to assume that it is not so; no one can demonstrate that it is not so.

It may be said further, that things look as if this were so. There are many influences on nations and individuals; many things that occur that can be most easily accounted for on the supposition that there is such an agency from some invisible quarter. If we admit the reality of such influence, and such interpositions, the things which occur are more easily explained than if we deny it. There are measures taken; plans proposed; influences exerted; schemes adopted - there are things from an unseen quarter to give prosperity, or to thwart the best laid plans, that cannot be well explained without the supposition of such an interference; things which perplex all philosophers and all historians in accounting for them; things which cannot be anticipated or explained on any known principles of human nature. If we admit the reality of the influence of invisible beings, as in the case before us, the solution becomes comparatively easy; at least we find phenomena just such as we should expect on such a supposition.

(3) It may be added, also, in regard to the particular case before us

(a) that the counsels against the Jews to prevent their return to their own land, and to embarrass them, were such as we should anticipate on the supposition that an evil angel - an enemy of God and his people - had influenced the Persian rulers; and

(b) that the changes wrought in those counsels in favor of the Jews, facilitating their return to their own land, were such as we should expect to find on the supposition that those counsels and plans were overruled and changed by the interposition say of Gabriel and Michael.

And similar events often happen. There are such changes in the counsels of nations, and in the minds of rulers, as would occur on the supposition that superior beings were engaged in thwarting evil plans, and influencing those who have the power to do right. In reference to the Jews in their exile, there had been a long series of acts of opposition and oppression pursued by the governments of the East, as if under the direction of some malignant spirit; then a series of acts in their favor followed, as if the change had been brought about by the interposition of some benignant angel. These facts are the historical basis on which the representation is here made.

In reference to the third point suggested pertaining to this passage - the practical truths taught that may be of use to us - it may be remarked that the great truth is, that the answer to prayer is often delayed, not by any indisposition on the part of God to answer it, and not by any purpose not to answer it, and not by the mere intention of trying our faith, but "by the necessary arrangements to bring it about." It is of such a nature that it cannot be answered at once. It requires time to make important changes; to influence the minds of men; to remove obstacles; to raise up friends; to put in operation agencies that shall secure the thing desired. There is some obstacle to be overcome. There is some plan of evil to be checked and stayed. There is some agency to be used which is not now in existence, and which is to be created. The opposition of the "prince of Persia" could not be overcome at once, and it was necessary to bring in the agency of a higher power - that of Michael - to effect the change.

This could not be done in a moment, a day, or a week, and hence, the long delay of three "full weeks" before Daniel had an assurance that his prayers would be answered. So it often happens now. We pray for the conversion of a child; yet there may be obstacles to his conversion, unseen by us, which are to be patiently removed, and perhaps by a foreign influence, before it can be done. Satan may have already secured a control over his heart, which, is to be broken gradually, before the prayer shall be

answered. We pray for the removal of the evils of intemperance, of slavery, of superstition, of idolatry; yet these may be so interlocked with the customs of a country, with the interests of men, and with the laws, that they cannot be at once eradicated except by miracle, and the answer to the prayer seems to be long delayed. We pray for the universal spread of the gospel of Christ; yet how many obstacles are to be overcome, and how many arrangements made, before this prayer can be fully answered; and how many tears are to be shed, and perils encountered, and lives sacrificed, before the prayer of the church shall be fully answered, and the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. The duty, then, which is taught, is that of patience, of perseverance, of faith in God, of a firm belief that he is true to all his promises, and that he is a hearer of prayer - though the blessing seems long delayed.

Verse 14

Now I am come to make thee understand … - After these long delays, and after the arrangements have been made necessary to bring about the objects sought by your prayers.

In the latter days - In future times - extending down to the last period of the world. See the notes at Isaiah 2:2.

For yet the vision is for many days - Extends far into future time. It is probable that the prayer of Daniel referred more particularly to what he desired should soon occur - the restoration of the people to their own land; the angel informs him that the disclosures which he was to make covered a much more extended period, and embraced more important events. So it is often. The answer to prayer often includes much more than we asked for, and the abundant blessings that are conferred, beyond what we supplicate, are vastly beyond a compensation for the delay.

Verse 15

And when he had spoken such words … - Daniel was naturally overcome by the communication which had been made to him. The manner in which the prayer was answered seems to have been entirely different from what he had expected. The presence of a heavenly being; the majesty of his appearance; the assurance that he gave that he had come to answer his prayer; and the fact that he had important revelations to make respecting the future, overcame him, and he laid his face upon the ground in silence. Is there any one of us who would not be awed into profound silence if a

heavenly messenger should stand before us to disclose what was to occur to us, to our families, to our friends, to our country, in far-distant years?

Verse 16

And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips - In the form of a man. The reference here is undoubtedly to Gabriel appearing to Daniel in human form. Why he does not name him is unknown; nor is there any intimation whether he changed his form as he now approached the prophet. It would seem not improbable that, seeing the effect of his presence and his words on Daniel, he laid aside some of the manifestations of awe and majesty in which he had at first appeared to him, and approached him as a man, and placed his hands on his lips - as a sign that he should speak, or as imparting power to him to speak. See the notes at Isaiah 6:6-7.

I opened my mouth, and spake - His fear was removed, and he was now able to address the heavenly messenger.

O my lord - A title of respectful address, but without indicating the rank of him to whom it is applied.

By the vision my sorrows are turned upon me - The word rendered "sorrows" (צירים *tsîyrîym*) means, properly, "writhings, throes, pains," as of a woman in travail, Isaiah 13:8; Isaiah 21:3; 1 Samuel 4:19; and then any deep pain or anguish. Here it refers to "terror or fright," as so great as to prostrate the strength of Daniel. The word rendered "are turned" (נהפכו *nehepekû* - from הפך *hâphak*) means, in Niphal. to turn one's self about, to turn back. The same phrase which is used here occurs also in 1 Samuel 4:19, "her pains turned upon her;" that is, came upon her. Perhaps we should express the idea by saying that they rolled upon us, or over us - like the surges of the ocean.

Verse 17

For how card the servant of this my lord - Acknowledging his humble and lowly condition and rank in the presence of an angel - a messenger now sent from heaven.

Neither is there breath left in me - That is, he was utterly overcome and prostrate. He felt that he was incapable of speaking in the presence of one who tied descended from God.

Verse 18

Then there came again, and touched me … - The same one is here referred to doubtless who is mentioned in Daniel 10:16 - the angel. He

came to him again in this condescending and familiar manner in order to allay his fears, and to prepare him to receive his communications with entire calmness.

Verse 19

And said, O man greatly beloved - See the notes at Daniel 9:23.

Fear not - Neither at my presence, nor at what I have to say. There was nothing in the visitation of an angel that could be a ground of dread to a good man; there was nothing in what he had to communicate that could be a reasonable cause of alarm.

Be strong, yea, be strong - These are words of encouragement such as we address to those who are timid and fearful. We exhort them not to yield; to make a vigorous effort to meet danger, difficulty, or trial.

Let my lord speak - That is, I am now prepared to receive what you have to communicate.

For thou hast strengthened me - By your encouraging words, and by the kindness of your manner.

Verse 20

Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? - This was known by what the angel had said in Daniel 10:14. He seems to have called his attention to it, and to have proposed the question, because Daniel had been so overcome by his fright that it might be doubtful whether he had understood him distinctly when he had told him the object of his coming. He therefore proposes the question here; and as the silence of Daniel seems to have been construed as a declaration that he did understand the purpose of the visit, he proceeds to unfold frilly the purport of his message.

And now will I return - That is, evidently, after he had made known to him the message which he came to deliver. He cannot mean that he would then leave Daniel, and return immediately to Persia, for he proceeds at length Daniel 10:13, he says that he had had a contest with that "prince," and that in consequence of that he had been delayed on his journey to Daniel. By the interposition of Michael, the affairs of Persia had been so arranged that the opposition to what was desired by Daniel had been in part removed - so far, at least, as to make it certain that Iris prayers would be answered. See the note at that verse. But still it would seem that the difficulty was not entirely overcome, and that it would be desirable for him to return, and to complete the arrangements which had been commenced. There were still causes in existence in Persia which might tend to frustrate

all these plans unless they were counteracted, and his presence might still be necessary there to secure the safe return of the exiles to their own land, and the means required to rebuild the city and temple. The simple meaning of this is, that it would be necessary to exert a farther influence at the Persian court in order to bring about the object desired; and this fact is expressed in language derived from the belief that angelic beings, good and bad, have much to do in controlling the minds of men.

And when I am gone forth - literally, "and I go forth." The meaning seems to be, that he would return to Persia, and would so direct affairs there that the welfare of the Jews would be promoted, and that protection would be extended to them. This, he says, he would continue as long as it was necessary, for when he should have gone forth, the king of Greece would come, and the affairs of Persia would be put on a new footing, but on such a footing as not to require his presence - for the government would be of itself favorable to the Jews. The sense is, that up to the time when this "king of Grecia" should come, there would be a state of things in the Persian court that would demand the presence of some being from heaven - exerting some constant influence to prevent an outbreak against the Jews, and to secure their peace and prosperity; but that when the "king of Grecia" should come, he would himself favor their cause, and render the presence of the angel unnecessary. No one can prove that this is not a correct representation, or that the favor shown to the Jews at the Persian court during all the time of the rebuilding of the city and the temple, was not to be traced to some presiding influence from above, or that that was not put forth in connection with the ministration of an angelic being. Indeed, it is in accordance with all the teachings of the Bible that the disposition of kings and princes to show favor to the people of God, like all else that is good in this world, is to be traced to an influence from above; and it is not contrary to any of the laws of analogy, or anything with which we are acquainted pertaining to the spiritual world, to suppose that angelic interposition may be employed in any case in bringing about what is good.

Lo, the prince of Grecia shall come - Hebrew - יון *yâvân* There can be no doubt that Greece is intended. The word properly denotes Ionia (derived from this word), "the name of which province," says Gesenius, "as being adjacent to the East, and better known, was extended so as to comprehend the whole of Greece, as is expressly said by Greek writers themselves." - Lexicon By the "prince of Greece" here, there can be no doubt that there is

reference to Alexander the Great, who conquered Persia. See Daniel 11:1-4. The meaning here is, that when he should come, and conquer Persia, the opposition which the Hebrews had encountered from that country would cease, and there would then be no need of the interposition of the angel at the Persian court. The matter of fact was, that the Hebrews were favored by Alexander the Great, and that whatever there was in the Persian or Chaldean power which they had had reason to dread was then brought to an end, for all those Eastern governments were absorbed in the empire of Alexander - the Macedonian monarchy.

Verse 21

But I will show thee what is noted in, the scripture of truth - The word noted here means "written, or recorded." The scripture of truth means the true writing, and the reference is doubtless to the Divine purposes or decrees in this matter - for

(a) there is no other writing where these things were then found;

(b) the angel came to make known what could be known in no other way, and therefore what was not yet found in any book to which man had access;

(c) this language accords with common representations in the Scriptures respecting future events.

They are described as written down in a book that is in the hands of God, in which are recorded all future events - the names of those that shall be saved - and all the deeds of men. Compare Deuteronomy 32:34; Malachi 3:16; Psalm 139:16; Revelation 5:1. The representation is figurative, of course; and the meaning is, that, in the view of the Divine mind, all future events are as certain as if they were actually recorded as history, or as if they were now all written down. The angel came that he might unfold a portion of that volume, and disclose the contents of its secret pages; that is, describe an important series of events of great interest to the Jewish people and to the world at large.

And there is none that holdeth with me in, these things - Margin, "strengtheneth himself." So the Hebrew. The idea is, that there was none that rendered aid in this matter, or that stood by him, and would accomplish the designs which he was meditating in their behalf pertaining to Persia.

The angel saw that there were powerful influences against the interests of the Hebrew people at work in the court of Persia; that it was necessary that they should be counteracted; that unless this were done, fearful calamities would come upon the Jewish people, and they would be subjected to great embarrassments in their efforts to rebuild their city and temple, and he says that there was no one whose aid could be permanently and certainly relied on but that of Michael. He himself was to return to the court of Persia to endeavor to counteract the influence of the "prince of Persia," but, as in the former case when on his way to Daniel Daniel 10:13, he would not have been able to counteract the machinations of that prince if it had not been for the interposition of Michael, so he felt now that reliance was still to be placed on his assistance in the matter.

But Michael your prince - See the notes at Daniel 10:13. The patron, or guardian of your people, and of their interests. The idea intended to be conveyed here undoubtedly is, that Michael was a guardian angel for the Jewish people; that he had special charge of their affairs; that his interposition might be depended on in the time of trouble and danger, and that, under him, their interests would be safe. No one can prove that this is not so; and as on earth some of the most important favors that we enjoy are conferred by the instrumentality of others; as we are often defended when in danger by them; as we are counseled and directed by them; as God raises up for the orphan, and the widow, and the insane, and the sorrowful, and the feeble, those of wealth, and power, and learning, who can better guard their interests than they could themselves, and as these relations are often sustained, and these favors conferred by those who are invisible to the recipients, so it gives, in a higher sense, a new beauty to the arrangements of the universe to suppose that this benevolent office is often undertaken and discharged by angelic beings.

Thus they may defend us from danger; ward off the designs of our enemies; defeat their machinations, and save us from numberless evils that would otherwise come upon us. This view receives additional confirmation, if it be admitted that there are evil angels, and that that seek the ruin of mankind. They are malignant; they tempt the race of man; they have power far superior to our own; they can set in operation a train of evil influences which we can neither foresee nor counteract; and they can excite the minds of wicked men to do us injury in a way which we cannot anticipate, and against which we cannot defend ourselves. In these circumstances, anyone

can perceive that there is concinnity and propriety in the supposition that there are good beings of a higher order who feel an interest in the welfare of man, and who come to us, on their benevolent errand, to defend us from danger, and to aid us in our efforts to escape from the perils of our fallen condition, and to reach the kingdom of heaven.

DANIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Introduction

Analysis of the Chapter

This chapter contains a portion of those things which the angel said were written in "the scripture of truth," and which he came to disclose to Daniel. The revelation also embraces the twelfth chapter, and the two comprise the last recorded communication that was made to Daniel. The revelation which is made in these chapters not only embraces a large portion of history of interest to the Jewish people of ancient times, and designed to give instruction as to the important events that would pertain to their nation, but also, in its progress, alludes to important periods in the future as marking decisive eras in the world's history, and contains hints as to what would occur down to the end of all things.

The chapter before us embraces the following definitely marked periods:

I. The succession of kings in Persia to the time of a mighty king who should arouse all the strength of his kingdom to make war on Greece - referring doubtless to Xerxes, Daniel 11:1-2. Of those kings in Persia there would be three - three so prominent as to deserve notice in the rapid glance at future events - Cambyses, Smerdis, and Darius Hystaspis.

II. After this succession of kings, one would stand up or appear who would be characterized as ruling "with great dominion," and "‹according to his will," Daniel 11:3. The dominion evidently would pass into his hand, and he would be distinguished from all that went before him. There can be no doubt, from the connection, and from what is said in Daniel 11:4, that the reference here is to Alexander the Great.

III. The state of the empire after the death of this mighty king, Daniel 11:4. His kingdom would be broken, and would be divided into four parts - referring doubtless to the division of the empire of Alexander after his death.

IV. The history then proceeds to notice the events that would pertain to two of these portions of the empire - the conflicts between the king of the south, and the king of the north - or between Egypt and Syria, Daniel 11:5-

19. This portion of the history embraces, in detail, an account of the policy, the negotiations, and the wars of Antiochus the Great, until the time of his death. These kingdoms are particularly referred to, probably because their conflicts would affect the holy land, and pertain ultimately to the history of religion, and its establishment and triumph in the world. In the notice of these two sovereignties, there is considerable detail - so much so that the principal events could have been readily anticipated by those who were in possession of the writings of Daniel. The destiny of the other two portions of the empire of Alexander did not particularly affect the history of religion, or pertain to the holy land, and therefore they are not introduced. In a particular manner, the history of Antiochus the Great is traced with great minuteness in this portion of the prophecy, because his doings had a special bearing on the Jewish nation, and were connected with the progress of religion. The commentary on this portion of the chapter will show that the leading events are traced as accurately as would be a summary of the history made out after the transactions had occurred.

V. A brief reference to the successor of Antiochus the Great, Seleucus IV, Daniel 11:20. As he occupied the throne, however, but for a short period, and as his doings did not particularly affect the condition of the Hebrew people, or the interests of religion, and his reign was, in every respect, unimportant, it is passed over with only a slight notice.

VI. The life and acts of Antiochus Epiphanes, Daniel 11:21-45. There can be no doubt that this portion of the chapter refers to Antiochus, and it contains a full detail of his character and of his doings. The account here, though without naming him, is just such as would have been given by one who should have written after the events had occurred, and there is no more difficulty in applying the description in this chapter to him now than there would have been in such a historical narrative. The revelation is made, evidently, to prepare the Jewish people for these fearful events, and these heavy trials, in their history; and also to assure them that more glorious results would follow, and that deliverance would succeed these calamities. In the troubles which Antiochus would bring upon the Hebrew people, it was important that they should have before them a record containing the great outlines of what would occur, and the assurance of ultimate triumph - just as it is important for us now in the trials which we have reason to

anticipate in this life, to have before us in the Bible the permanent record that we shall yet find deliverance. In the twelfth chapter, therefore, the angel directs the mind onward to brighter times, and assures Daniel that there would be a day of rejoicing.

Verse 1

Also I - I the angel. He alludes here to what he had done on a former occasion to promote the interests of the Hebrew people, and to secure those arrangements which were necessary for their welfare - particularly in the favorable disposition of Darius the Mede toward them.

In the first year of Darius the Mede - See the notes at Daniel 5:31. He does not here state the things contemplated or done by Darius in which he had confirmed or strengthened him, but there can be no reasonable doubt that it was the purpose which he had conceived to restore the Jews to their own land, and to give them permission to rebuild their city and temple. Compare Daniel 9:1. It was in that year that Daniel offered his solemn prayer, as recorded in Daniel 9:2), the captivity would terminate; and in that year that an influence from above led the mind of the Persian king to contemplate the restoration of the captive people. Cyrus was, indeed, the one through whom the edict for their return was promulgated; but as he reigned under his uncle Cyaxares or Darius, and as Cyaxares was the source of authority, it is evident that his mind must have been influenced to grant this favor, and it is to this that the angel here refers.

I stood to confirm and to strengthen him - Compare the notes at Daniel 10:13. It would seem that the mind of Darius was not wholly decided; that there were adverse influences bearing on it: that there were probably counselors of his realm who advised against the proposed measures, and the angel here says that he stood by him, and confirmed him in his purpose, and secured the execution of his benevolent plan. Who can prove that an angel may not exert an influence on the heart of kings? And what class of men is there who, when they intend to do good and right, are more likely to have their purposes changed by evil counselors than kings; and who are there that more need a heavenly influence to confirm their design to do right?

Verse 2

And now will I show thee the truth - That is, the truth about events that are to occur in the future, and which will accord with what is written in

"the scripture of truth," Daniel 10:21.

Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia - The phrase "stand up means that there would be so many kings in Persia; that is, there would be three before the fourth which he mentions. The same Hebrew word here rendered "stand up" (עמד *ʿâmad*) occurs in Daniel 11:3-4, Daniel 11:6-8, Daniel 11:14-16 (twice), Daniel 11:17, Daniel 11:20, Daniel 11:21, Daniel 11:25, Daniel 11:31; also in Daniel 12:1, Daniel 12:13. In Daniel 11:8 it is rendered "continue;" in Daniel 11:15, "withstand;" in the other cases, "stand up," or simply stand. Gesenius says it is a word used particularly of a new prince, as in Daniel 8:23; Daniel 11:2-3, Daniel 11:20. He does not say that there would be none afterward, but he evidently designs to touch on the great and leading events respecting the Persian empire, so far as they would affect the Hebrew people, and so far as they would constitute prominent points in the history of the world. He does not, therefore, go into all the details respecting the history, nor does he mention all the kings that would reign. The prominent, the material points, would be the reign of those three kings; then the reign of the fourth, or Xerxes, as his mad expedition to Greece would lay the real foundation for the invasion of Persia by Alexander, and the overthrow of the Persian empire; then the life and conquests of Alexander, and then the wars consequent on the division of his empire at his death. The "three kings" here referred to were Cambyses, Smerdis, and Darius Hystaspis. As this communication was made in the third year of Cyrus Daniel 10:1, these would be the next in order; and by the fourth is undoubtedly meant Xerxes. There were several kings of Persia after Xerxes, as Artaxerxes Longimanus, Darius Nothus, Artaxerxes Mnemon, Ochus, and Darius Codomanus, but these are not enumerated because the real ground of the invasion of Alexander, the thing which connected him with the affairs of Pcrsia, did not occur in their reign, but it was the invasion of Greece by Xerxes.

And the fourth shall be far richer than they all - That is, Xerxes - for he was the fourth in order, and the description here agrees entirely with him. He would of course inherit the wealth accumulated by these kings, and it is here implied that he would increase that wealth, or that, in some way, he would possess more than they all combined. The wealth of this king is mentioned here probably because the magnificence and glory of an Oriental monarch was estimated in a considerable degree by his possessions, and

because his riches enabled him to accomplish his expedition into Greece. Some idea of the treasures of Xerxes may be obtained by considering,

(a) That Cyrus had collected a vast amount of wealth by the conquest of Lydia, and the subjugation of Croesus, its rich king, by the conquest of Asia Miner, of Armenia, and of Babylon - for it is said respecting him, "I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places," Isaiah 45:3: see the note at that passage.

(b) That Cambyses increased that wealth which he inherited from Cyrus by his victories, and by his plundering the temples wherever he came. A single case occurring in his conquests may illustrate the amount of wealth which was accumulated. On his return from Thebes, in Egypt, he caused all the temples in that city to be pillaged and burned to the ground. But he saved from the flames gold to the amount of three hundred talents, and silver to the amount of two thousand and five hundred talents. He is also said to have carried away the famous circle of gold that encompassed the tomb of king Ozymandias, being three hundred and sixty-five cubits in circumference, on which were represented all the motions of the several constellations. - Universal History, iv. 140.

(c) This was further increased by the conquests of Darius Hystaspis, and by his heavy taxes on the people. So burdensome were these taxes, that he was called by the Persians, ὁ κάπηλος *ho kapēlos* - the "merchant," or "hoarder." One of the first acts of Darius was to divide his kingdom into provinces for the purpose of raising tribute. "During the reign of Cyrus, and indeed of Cambyses, there were no specific tributes; but presents were made to the sovereign. On account of these and similar innovations, the Persians call Darius a merchant, Cambyses a despot, but Cyrus a parent." - Herodotus, b. iii. lxxxix. A full account of the taxation of the kingdom, and the amount of the revenue under Darius, may be seen in Herodotus, b. iii. xc. - xcvi. The sum of the tribute under Darius, according to Herodotus, was fourteen thousand five hundred and sixty talents. Besides this sum received from regular taxation, Herodotus enumerates a great amount of gold and silver, and other valuable things, which Darius was accustomed to receive annually from the Ethiopians, from the people of Colchis, from the Arabians, and from India. All this vast wealth was inherited by Xerxes, the son and successor of Darius, and the "fourth king" here referred to.

Xerxes was full four years in making provision for his celebrated expedition into Greece. Of the amount of his forces, and his preparation, a full account may be seen in Herodotus, b. vii. Of his wealth Justin makes this remark: "*Si regem, spectes, divitias, non ducem, laudes: quarum tanta copia in regno ejus fuit, ut cum flumina multgtudine consumerentur, opes tamen regioe superessent*." - Hist. ii. 10. Compare Diod. Sic. x. c. 3; Pliny, Hist. Nat. xxiii. 10; AEl. xiii. 3; Herod. iii. 96; vii. 27-29. In the city of Celaenae, Herodotus says, there lived a man named Pythius, son of Atys, a native of Lydia, who entertained Xerxes and all his army with great magnificence, and who farther engaged to supply the king with money for the war. Xerxes on this was induced to inquire of his Persian attendants who this Pythius was, and what were the resources which enabled him to make these offers. "It is the same," they replied, "who presented your father Darius with a plane-tree and a vine of gold, and who, next to yourself, is the richest of mankind." - Herod. vii. 27.

And by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia - That is, all his kingdom. He was enabled to do this by his great wealth - collecting and equipping, probably, the largest army that was ever assembled. The expedition of Xerxes against Greece is too well known to need to be detailed here, and no one can fail to see the applicability of this description to that invasion. Four years were spent in preparing for this expedition, and the forces that constituted the army were gathered out of all parts of the vast empire of Xerxes, embracing, as was then supposed, all the habitable world except Greece. According to Justin, the army was composed of seven hundred thousand of his own, and three hundred thousand auxiliaries. Diodorus Siculus makes it to be about three hundred thousand men; Prideaux, from Herodotus and others, computes it to have amounted, putting all his forces by sea and land together, to two million six hundred and forty-one thousand six hundred and ten men; and he adds that the servants, eunuchs, suttlers, and such persons as followed the camp, made as manymore, so that the whole number that followed Xerxes could not have been less than five million. - Connexions, pt. i. b. iv. vol. i. p. 410. Grotius reckons his forces at five million two hundred and eighty-two thousand. These immense numbers justify the expression here, and show with what propriety it is applied to the hosts of Xerxes. On the supposition

that this was written after the event, and that it was history instead of prophecy, this would be the very language which would be employed.

Verse 3

And a mighty king shall stand up - So far as the language here is concerned, it is not said whether this would be in Persia, as a successor of the "fourth king" Daniel 11:2, or whether it would be in some other part of the world. The next verse, however, shows that the reference is to Alexander the Great - for to no other one is it applicable. There were several monarchs of Persia, indeed, that succeeded Xerxes before the kingdom was invaded and subdued by Alexander (see the notes at Daniel 11:2), and these are here entirely passed over without being alluded to. It must be admitted, that one who should have read this prophecy before the events had occurred would have inferred naturally that this "mighty king that should stand up" would appeal immediately after the "fourth, "and probably that he would be his successor in the realm; but it may be remarked,

(a) that the language here is not inconsistent with the facts in the case - it being literally true that such a "mighty king" did "stand up" who "ruled with great dominion, and according to his will;"

(b) that there was no necessity in the prophetic history of referring to the acts of these intermediate kings of Persia, since they did not contribute at all to the result - it being well known that the reason alleged by Alexander for his invasion of the Persian empire was not anything which they had done, but the wrongs sustained by Greece in consequence of the invasion by Xerxes and his predecessor. The real succession of events in the case was that last invasion of Greece by Xerxes, and the consequent invasion of the Persian empire by Alexander. It was these transactions which the angel evidently meant to connect together, and hence, all that was intermediate was omitted. Thus Alexander, in his letter to Darius, says: "Your ancestors entered into Macedonia, and the other parts of Greece, and did us damage, when they had received no affront from us as the cause of it; and now I, created general of the Grecians, provoked by you, and desirous of avenging the injury done by the Persians, have passed over into Asia." - Arrian, Exped. Alex. i. 2.

That shall rule with great dominion - That shall have a wide and extended empire. The language here would apply to any of the monarchs of

Persia that succeeded Xerxes, but it would be more strictly applicable to Alexander the Great than to any prince of ancient or modern times. The whole world, except Greece, was supposed to be subject to the power of Persia; and it was one of the leading and avowed purposes of Darius and Xerxes in invading Greece, by adding that to their empire, to have the earth under their control. When, therefore, Alexander had conquered Persia, it was supposed that he had subdued the world; nor was it an unnatural feeling that, having done this, he, whose sole principle of action was ambition, should sit down and weep because there were no more worlds to conquer. In fact, he then swayed a scepter more extended and mighty than any before him had done, and it is with peculiar propriety that the language here is used in regard to him.

And do according to his will - Would be an arbitrary prince. This also was true of the Persian kings, and of Oriental despots generally; but it was eminently so of Alexander - who, in subduing kingdoms, conquering mighty armies, controlling the million under his sway, laying the foundations of cities, and newly arranging the boundaries of empires, seemed to consult only his own will, and felt that everything was to be subordinate to it. It is said that this passage was shown to Alexander by the high priest of the Jews, and that these prophecies did much to conciliate his favor toward the Hebrew people.

Verse 4

And when he shall stand up - In the might and power of his kingdom. When his power shall be fully established. I understand this, with Rosenmuller and Havernick, as meaning, when he shall be at the height of his authority and power, then his kingdom would be broken up. The reference is, undoubtedly, to the sudden death of Alexander; and the sense is, that his empire would not "gradually" diminish and decay, but that some event would occur, the effect of which would be to rend it into four parts.

His kingdom shall be broken - To wit, by his death. The language is such as is properly applicable to this, and indeed implies this, for it is said that it would not be "to his posterity" - an event which might be naturally expected to occur; or, in other words, the allusion to his posterity is such language as would be employed on the supposition that the reference here is to his death.

And shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven - Into four parts. For the remarkable fulfillment of this prediction, see the notes at

Daniel 8:8.

And not to his posterity - See also the notes at Daniel 8:8.

Nor according to his dominion which he ruled - This was literally true of the division of the empire. No one of his successors ever obtained as wide a dominion as he did himself.

For his kingdom shall be plucked up - By his death. This does not naturally mean that it would be by "conquest," for it is said that it would be "divided toward the four winds of heaven" - language which is not properly expressive of conquest. All that is implied is met by the supposition, that at his decease the kingdom which had been founded by him, and which had been sustained by his valor and political wisdom, would fall to pieces.

Even for others beside those - That is, to others beside those to whom it should be at first divided. Literally, "exclusively, or to the exclusion of" - מלבד *mîllebad* The word "those" refers to his posterity; and the meaning is, that the process of division would not stop with them, or that the four portions of the empire, as thus divided, would not remain in their hands, or pass to their posterity. There would be other changes and other divisions; and it was not to be expected that just four, and no more, empires would grow out of the one which had been founded, or that when that one should be divided into four parts, that partition would always continue. There would be other divisions, and other princes besides those who first obtained the empire would come in, and the process of division would ultimately be carried much farther. It is unnecessary to say that this occurred in the empire founded by Alexander. It was, soon after his death, separated into four parts, but at no distant period this arrangement was broken up, and all traces of the empire, as established by him, or as divided among his four successors, wholly disappeared.

Verse 5

And the king of the south - The angel here leaves the general history of the empire, and confines himself, in his predictions, to two parts of it - the kingdom of the south, and the kingdom of the north; or the kingdoms to the north and the south of Palestine - that of Syria and that of Egypt; or that of the Seleucidae, and that of the Ptolemies. The reason why he does this is not stated, but it is, doubtless, because the events pertaining to these kingdoms would particularly affect the Jewish people, and be properly connected with sacred history. Compare the notes at Daniel 8:7-8. The "king of the south" here is, undoubtedly, the king of Egypt. This part of the empire was

obtained by Ptolemy, and was in the hands of his successors until Egypt was subdued by the Romans. Between the kingdoms of Egypt and Syria long and bloody wars prevailed, and the prospective history of these wars it is the design of the angel here to trace. As the remainder of the chapter refers to these two dynasties, until the death of the great persecutor, Antiochus Epiphanes, and as the events referred to were very important in history, and as introductory to what was to follow in the world, it may be useful here, in order to a clear exposition of the whole chapter, to present a list of these two lines of princes. It is necessary only to premise, that the death of Alexander the Great occurred 323 b.c.; that of his brother, Philip Aridaeus, b.c. 316; that of his son, Alexander AEgus, by Roxana, 309 b.c.; and that a short time after this (about 306 b.c.), the chief Macedonian governors and princes assumed the royal title. The following list of the succession of the Seleucidae and the Ptolemies - or the kings of the north and the south - of Syria and Egypt, is copied from Elliott "on the Apocalypse," iv. 123: -

d **Lines of Princes of Ptolemy and Seleucidae**

d

d B.C.The PtolemiesB.C.The Seleucidae

d

d 323

d Ptolemy Soter, son of Ptolemy Lagus, governor of Egypt.

d 323

d Seleucus Nicator, governor of Babylon

d

d

d

d 312

d Seleucus Nicator recovers Babylon, and the Era of the Seleucidae begins

d

d 306

d Ptolemy Soter takes the title of king of Egypt

d

d

d

d 284

d Ptolemy Philadelphus.
(It wasunder him that the Septuagint Greek translation of the Old Testament was made.)

d

d

d

d

d

d 280

d Antiochus Soter

d

d

d

d 261

d Antiochus Theus

d

d 246

d Ptolemy Euergetes

d 246

d Seleucus Callinicus

d

d

d

d 226

d Seleucus Ceraunus

d

d

d

d 225

d Antiochus the Great

d

d 221

d Ptolemy Philopator

d

d

d

d 204

d Ptolemy Epiphanes

d

d

d

d

d

d 187

d Seleucus Philopator

d

d 180

d Ptolemy Philometor

d

d

d

d

d

d 175

d Antiochus Epiphanes

d

d

d

d 164

d Antiochus Eupator, of the the Romans assume guardianship

d

d “After this, fourteen mere Syrian kings reigned, in reigns of short and uncertain power, until Syria was occupied and formed into a Roman province under Pompey, at which time the era of the Seleucidae properly ends; and six more Egyptian princes, to the death of Ptolemy Auletes, who dying b.c. 51, left his kingdom and children to Roman guardianship - one of these children being the ‹Cleopatra‘ so famous in the histories of Caesar and Anthony.” - Elliott, “ut supra.”

Shall be strong - This is in accordance with the wellknown fact. One of the most powerful of those monarchies, if not "the" most powerful, was Egypt.

And one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him - The meaning of this passage is, that there would be "one of his princes," that is, of the princes of Alexander, who would be more mighty than the one who obtained Egypt, or the south, and that he would have a more extended dominion. The reference is, doubtless, to Seleucus Nicator, or the conqueror. In the division of the empire he obtained Syria, Babylonia, Media, Susiana, Armenia, a part of Cappadocia, and Cilicia, and his kingdom stretched from the Hellespont to the Indus. See the notes at Daniel 8:8. Compare Arrian, "Exp. Alex." vii. 22; Appian, p. 618; and Lengerke, *in loc*. The proper translation of this passage probably would be, "And the king of the south shall be mighty. But from among his princes (the princes of Alexander) also there shall be (one) who shall be mightier than he, and he shall reign, and his dominion shall be a great dominion." It was of these two dominions that the angel spake, and hence follows, through the remainder of the chapter, the history pertaining to them and their successors. Seleucus Nicator reigned from 312 b.c. to 280 b.c. - or thirty-two years. In his time lived Berosus and Megasthenes, referred to in the Introduction to Daniel 4.

Verse 6

And in the end of years - In the future periods of the history of these two kingdoms. The event here referred to did not occur during the lives of these two kings, Seleucus Nicator and Ptolemy Soter, but in the reign of their successors, Ptolemy Philadelphus and Antiochus Theos or Theus. The phrase "the end of years" would well denote such a future period. The Vulgate renders it, "after the end of years;" that is, after many years have elapsed. The meaning is "after a certain course or lapse of years." The word "end" in Daniel (קץ *qêts*) often seems to refer to a time when a predicted event would be fulfilled, whether near or remote; whether it would be really the "end" or "termination" of an empire or of the world, or whether it would be succeeded by other events. It would be the end of that matter - of the thing predicted; and in this sense the word seems to be employed here. Compare Daniel 8:17; Daniel 11:13 (margin), and Daniel 12:13. "They shall join themselves together." Margin, "associate." The meaning is, that there would be an alliance formed, or an attempt made, to unite the two

kingdoms more closely by a marriage between different persons of the royal families. The word "they" refers to the two sovereigns of Egypt and Syria - the south and the north.

For the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement - Margin, "rights." The Hebrew word properly means rectitudes or rights (in the plural מישרים *mēyshârîym*); but here it seems to be used in the sense of "peace," or an alliance. The act of making peace was regarded as an act of "justice," or doing "right," and hence, the word came to be used in the sense of making an alliance or compact. This idea we should now express by saying that the design was "to make things right or straight" - as if they were wrong and crooked before, giving occasion to discord, and misunderstanding, and wars. The intention, now was to establish peace on a permanent basis. The compact here referred to was one formed between Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, and Antiochus Theos, king of Syria. Ptolemy, in order to bring a war in which he was engaged to an end, and to restore peace, gave his daughter in marriage to Antiochus, in hopes of establishing a permanent peace and alliance between the two kingdoms. One of the conditions of this alliance was, that Antiochus should divorce his former wife Laodice, and that the children of that former wife should be excluded from the succession to the throne. In this way Ptolemy hoped that the kingdom of Syria might become ultimately attached to that of Egypt, if there should be children by the marriage of Berenice with Antiochus. Ptolemy, however, died two years after this marriage was consummated, and Antiochus restored again his former wife Laodice, and put away Berenice, but was himself murdered by Laodice, who feared the fickleness of her husband. The officers of the court of Syria then planned the death of Berenice and her children, but she fled with them to Daphne, and was there put to death, with her children. - Appian, c. lxv.; Lengerke, *in loc*. She was put to death by poison. See Gill, *in loc*.

But she shall not retain the power of the arm - The word "retain" here is the same as in Daniel 10:8, "I retained no strength." The word "arm" is a word of frequent use in the Old Testament, both in the singular and plural, to denote "strength, power," whether of an individual or an army. So Job 22:8, "A man of arm," that is, "strength;" Genesis 49:24, "The arms (power) of his hands were made strong by the God of Jacob." Compare Isaiah 51:9; Isaiah 62:8. It is frequently used in this chapter in the sense of

"strength," or "power." See Daniel 11:15, Daniel 11:22, Daniel 11:31. This alliance was formed with the hope that the succession might be in her. She was, however, as stated above, with her children, put to death. While queen of Syria, she, of course, had power, and had the prospect of succeeding to the supreme authority.

Neither shall he stand - The king of the south; to wit, Egypt. That is, he would not prosper in his ambitious purpose of bringing Syria, by this marriage alliance, under his control.

Nor his arm - What he regarded as his strength, and in which he placed reliance, as one does on his arm in accomplishing any design. The word "arm" here is used in the sense of "help," or "alliance;" that is, that on which he depended for the stability of his empire.

But she shall be given up - That is, she shall be given up to death, to wit, by the command of Laodice.

And they that brought her - That is, those who conducted her to Daphne; or these who came with her into Syria, and who were her attendants and friends. Of course they would be surrendered or delivered up when she was put to death.

And he that begat her - Margin, "or, whom she brought forth." The margin expresses the sense more correctly. The Latin Vulgate is, "*adolescentes ejus*." The Greek, ἡ νεάνις *hē neanis* So the Syriac. The Hebrew (והילרה *vehayoledâh*) will admit of this construction. The article in the word has the force of a relative, and is connected with the suffix, giving it a relative signification. See Ewald, as quoted by Lengerke, *in loc*. According to the present pointing, indeed, the literal meaning would be, "and he who begat her;" but this pointing is not authoritative. Dathe, Bertholdt, Dereser, DeWette, and Rosenmuller suppose that the reading should be והילדה *vehayaledâh* Then the sense would be, "her child," or "her offspring." Lengerke and Ewald, however, suppose that this idea is implied in the present reading of the text, and that no change is necessary. The obvious meaning is, that she and her child, or her offspring, would be thus surrendered. The matter of fact was, that her little son was slain with her. See Prideaux's "Connexions," iii. 120.

And he that stregnthened her in these times - It is not known who is here referred to. Doubtless, on such an occasion, she would have some one who would be a confidential counselor or adviser, and, whoever that was, he would be likely to be cut off with her.

Verse 7

But out of a branch of her roots - Compare the notes at Isaiah 11:1. The meaning is, that as a branch or shoot springs up from a tree that is decayed and fallen, so there would spring up some one of her family who would come to avenge her. That is, a person is indicated who would be of a common stock with her; or, in other words, if taken strictly, a brother. The phrase "branch of her roots" is somewhat peculiar. The words "her roots" must refer to her family; that from which she sprang. We speak thus of the root or "stem" of a family or house; and the meaning here is, not that one of her "descendants," or one that should "spring from her," would thus come, but a branch of the same family; a branch springing from the same root or stem. The fact in the case - a fact to which there is undoubted reference here - is, that her revenge was undertaken by Ptolemy Euergetes, her brother. As soon as he heard of the calamities that had come upon her, he hastened with a great force out of Egypt to defend and rescue her. But it was in vain. She and her son were cut off before he could arrive for her help, but, in connection with an army which had come from Asia Minor for the same purpose, he undertook to avenge her death. He made himself master not only of Syria and Cilicia, but passed over the Euphrates, and brought all under subjection to him as far as the river Tigris. Having done this, he marched back to Egypt, taking with him vast treasures. See Prideaux, "Con." iii. 120,121.

Shall one stand up - Shall one arise. See the notes at Daniel 11:2. That is, there shall "be" one who shall appear for that purpose.

In his estate - Margin, "place," or "office." The word כן *kên* means, properly, stand, station, place; then base, pedestal. Compare Daniel 11:20-21, Daniel 11:38. See also Genesis 40:13: "Within three days shall Pharaoh restore thee to thy p ace." And again, Genesis 41:13, "to my office." Here it means, in his place or stead. That is, he would take the place which his father would naturally occupy - the place of protector, or defender, or avenger. Ptolemy Philadelphus, her father, in fact died before she was put to death; and his death was the cause of the calamities that came upon her, for as long as he lived his power would be dreaded. But when he was dead, Ptolemy Euergetes stood up in his place as her defender and avenger.

Which shall come with an an army - As Ptolemy Euergetes did. See above. He came out of Egypt as soon as he heard of these calamities, to defend her.

And shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north - His strongholds. In fact, he overran Syria and Cilicia, and extended his ravages to the Euphrates and the Tigris. Polybius (Hist. l. 5) says that he entered into the fortified cities of Syria, and took them. In the passage before us, the singular - "fortress" - is put for the plural.

And shall deal against them - Shall "act" against them. Literally, "shall do against them."

And shall prevail - Shall overcome, or subdue them. As seen above, he took possession of no small part of the kingdom of Syria. He was recalled home by a sedition in Egypt; and had it not been for this (Justin says), he would have made himself master of the whole kingdom of Seleucus.

Verse 8

And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods … - That is, their idols. Jerome (*in loc*.) says that Ptolemy took with him, on his return, forty thousand talents of silver, a vast number of precious vessels of gold, and images to the number of two thousand four hundred, among which were many of the Egyptian idols, which Cambyses, on his conquering Egypt, had carried into Persia. These Ptolemy restored to the temple to which they belonged, and by this much endeared himself to his people. It was on account of the service which he thus rendered to his country that he was called Euergetes, that is, the Benefactor. - Prideaux, iii. 121. In 1631, an inscription on an ancient marble in honor of this action of Euergetes was published by Allatius: "*Sacris quoe ab Egypto Persoe abstulerant receptis, ac cum reliqua congesta gaza in Egyptum relatis*." - Wintle.

And he shall continue more years than the king of the north - Ptolemy Euergetes survived Seleucus about four years. - Prideaux, iii. 122. He reigned twenty-five years.

Verse 9

So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom - That is, into the kingdom of the north, or the kingdom of Syria. This verse seems to be a summary of what had been said about his invading Syria. He would come, on account of the wrongs done to his sister, into the kingdom of the north, and would then return again to his own land.

Verse 10

But his sons shall be stirred up - Margin, "or, war." The Hebrew word (יתגרו *yîtheggârû* - from גרה *gârâh*) means, to be rough; then, in Piel, to excite, stir up; and then, in Hithpa, to excite one's self, to be stirred up to

anger, to make war upon … . Here it means, according to Gesenius (Lexicon), that they would be excited or angry. The reference here, according to Lengerke, Maurer, Gill, and others, is to the son of the king of the north, Seleucus Callinicus. He was killed, according to Justin (lib. xxvii. c. 3), by a fall from his horse. The war with Egypt was continued by his two sons, Seleucus Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great, until the death of the former, when it was prosecuted by Antiochus alone. See Prideaux, iii. 136. Seleueus Ceraunus succeeded his father - assuming the name of Ceraunus, or the Thunderer; but, dying soon, he left the crown to his brother, Antiochus the Great, then only fifteen years of age, by whom the war with Egypt was successfully prosecuted.

And shall assemble a multitude of great forces - Against Egypt. In such a war they would naturally summon to their aid all the forces which they could command.

And one shall certainly come - There is a change here in the Hebrew from the plural to the singular number, as is indicated in our translation by the insertion of the word "one." The fact was, that the war was prosecuted by Antiochus the Great alone. Seleucus died in the third year of his reign, in Phrygia; being slain, according to one report (Jerome), through the treachery of Nicanor and Apaturius, or, according to another, was poisoned. See Prideaux, iii. 137. Antiochus succeeded to the empire, and prosecuted the war. This was done for the purpose of recovering Syria from the dominion of Ptolemy of Egypt, and was conducted with various degrees of success, until the whole was brought under the control of Antiochus. See Prideaux, "Con." iii. 138, following.

And overflow - Like a torrent.

And pass through - Through the land - not the land of Egypt, but every part of Syria.

Then shall he return - Margin, "be stirred up again." The margin is the more correct rendering - the Hebrew word being the same as what is used in the first part of the verse. The idea would seem to be, that he would be aroused or stirred up after a defeat, and would on the second expedition enter into the strongholds or fortresses of the land. This was literally true. Ptolemy marched into Syria with an army of seventy thousand foot, five thousand horse, and seventy-three elephants, and was met by Antiochus with an army of sixty-two thousand foot, six thousand horse, and one hundred and two elephants. In a great battle, Antiochus was defeated, and

returned to Antioch (Prideaux, Con. iii. 151-153); but the following year he again rallied his forces, and invaded Syria, took Gaza and the other strongholds, and subdued the whole country of Syria (including Palestine) to himself. - Prideaux, "Con." iii. 176,177.

Even to his fortress - The singular for the plural; perhaps using the word "fortress" by way of eminence, as denoting his "strongest" fortress, and, therefore, including all the others.

Verse 11

And the king of the south shall be moved with choler - With anger. That is, that his provinces were invaded, and his strongholds taken - referring particularly to the invasion of Syria and Palestine as mentioned in the previous verse, and the attempt to wrest them out of the hands of the king of Egypt. Nothing would be more natural than that this should occur.

And shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north - There were frequent and almost constant wars between these two kingdoms. Yet the reference here is to Ptolemy Philopator, who succeeded Ptolemy Euergetes in Egypt, and who was exasperated at the conduct of Antiochus in invading Syria and Palestine. He assembled an army, and marched with it to Raphia, where he met Antiochus, and a battle was fought.

And he shall set forth a great multitude - This army of Ptolemy, according to Polybius, chapter 86, was led through Arabia Petraea, and consisted of seventy thousand infantry, and five thousand cavalry, and seventy-three elephants. The army of Antiochus consisted of sixty-two thousand foot, six thousand horse, and a hundred and two elephants. - Prideaux, Con. iii. 151.

But the multitude shall be given into his hand - That is, the multitude of the army of Antiochus. In the battle that was fought at Raphia, Ptolemy gained the victory. Ten thousand of the army of Antiochus were slain, four thousand taken prisoners, and with the remainder of his forces Antiochus retreated to Antioch. - Prideaux, iii. 152,153. Perhaps also the expression "the multitude shall be given into his hand" may refer not only to the army, and his victory over it, but to the fact that the inhabitants of Coelo-Syria and Palestine would hasten to submit themselves to him. After this great battle at Raphia, and the retreat of Antiochus, we are told that the cities of Coelo-Syria and Palestine vied with each other in submitting themselves to Ptolemy. They had been long under the government of Egypt, and preferred

that to the government of Antiochus. They had submitted to Antiochus only by force, and that force now being removed, they returned readily to the authority of their old masters. Had Ptolemy possessed energy and capacity for government, it would have been easy to have retained the control over these countries.

Verse 12

And when he hath takcn away the multitude - When he has subdued them. Lengerke, however, renders this, "And the multitude shall lift themselves up," supposing it to refer to the fact that the people as well as the king would be excited. But the more natural interpretation is that in our common version, and the same sense of the word (נשׂא *nâss'â'*) occurs in Ames Daniel 4:2.

His heart shall be lifted up - That is, he will be proud and self-confident. The reference is to the effect which would be produced on him after his defeat of Antiochus. He was a man naturally indolent and effeminate - a most profligate and vicious prince. - Prideaux, Con. iii. 146. The effect of such a victory would be to lift him up with pride.

And he shall cast down many ten thousands - Or, rather, the meaning is, "he has cast down many myriads." The object seems to be to give a reason why his heart was lifted up. The fact that he had been thus successful is the reason which is assigned, and this effect of a great victory has not been uncommon in the world.

But he shall not be strengthened by it - He was wholly given up to luxury, sloth, and voluptuousness, and returned immediately after his victory into Egypt, and surrendered himself up to the enjoyment of his pleasures. The consequence was, that he, by his conduct, excited some of his people to rebellion, and greatly weakened himself in the affections and confidence of the rest. After the victory, he concluded a truce with Antiochus; and the result was, that his people, who expected much more from him, and supposed that he would have prosecuted the war, became dissatisfied with his conduct, and broke out into rebellion. As a matter of fact, he was less strong in the confidence and affections of his people, and would have been less able to wage a war, after his triumph over Antiochus than he was before. See Prideaux, Con. iii. 155, following.

Verse 13

For the king of the north shall return - That is, he shall come again into the regions of Coelo-Syria and Palestine, to recover them if possible

from the power of the Egyptian king.

And shall set forth a multitude greater than the former - Than he had in the former war when he was defeated. The fact was, that Antiochus, in this expedition, brought with him the forces with which he had successfully invaded the East, and the army had been raised for that purpose, and was much larger than that with which he had formerly attacked Ptolemy. See Prideaux, iii. 163-165.

And shall certainly come after certain years with a great army - This occurred 203 b.c., fourteen years after the former war. - Prideaux, iii. 19.

With much riches - Obtained in his conquests in Parthia and other portions of the East. See Prideaux, "ut supra." The "history" of Antiochus corresponds precisely with the statement here.

Verse 14

And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south - Against the king of Egypt. That is, not only Antiochus the Great, who was always opposed to him, and who was constantly waging war with him, but also others with whom he would be particularly involved, or who would be opposed to him. The reference is especially to Philip, king of Macedon, and to Agathocles, who excited a rebellion against him in Egypt. See Jerome on Isaiah 35:9; and then "violent, rapacious; an opressor, robber." - Gesenius, Lexicon The reference here seems to be to the mighty ones of the nation; the chiefs, or rulers - but a name is given them that would properly denote their character for oppression and rapacity.

It would seem - what is indeed probable from the circumstances of the case - that the nation was not only subject to this foreign authority, but that those who were placed over it, under that foreign authority, and who were probably mainly of their own people, were also themselves tyrannical and oppressive in their character. These subordinate rulers, however, preferred the authority of Antiochus to that of Ptolemy, and on the occasion of his return from the conquests of Coelo-Syria and Samaria, they met him, and professed submission to him. - Josephus, "Ant." b. xii. ch. iii. Section 3. "The Jews," says Josephus, "of their own accord, went over to him, and received him into the city (Jerusalem), and gave plentiful provision to his army, and to his elephants, and readily assisted him when he besieged the garrison which was in the citadel of Jerusalem." On this occasion, Josephus says that Antiochus bestowed many favors on the Jews; wrote letters to the generals of his armies commending their conduct; published a decree

respecting the piety of the Jewish people, and sent an epistle to Ptolemy, stating what he had done for them, and what he desired should be further done. See these statments and letters in Josephus, "ut supra."

To establish the vision - That is, to bring to pass what is seen in the vision, and what had been predicted in regard to the Hebrew people. Their conduct in this matter shall have an important bearing on the fulfillment of the prophecy pertaining to that people - shall be one of the links in the chain of events securing its accomplishment. The angel does not say that it was a part of their "design" to "establish the vision," but that that would be the "result" of what they did. No doubt their conduct in this matter had a great influence on the series of events that contributed to the accomplishment of that prediction. Lengerke supposes that the "vision" here refers to that spoken of in Daniel 9:24.

But they shall fall - They shall not succeed in the object which they have in view. Their conduct in the affair will indeed promote the fulfillment of the "vision," but it will not secure the ends which "they" have in view - perhaps their own aggrandizement; or the favor of Antiochus toward themselves; or the permanent separation of the nation from the Egyptian rule, or the hope that their country might become independent altogether. As a matter of fact, Antiochus subsequently, on his return from Egypt (198 b.c.), took Jerusalem, and killed many of the party of Ptolemy, who had given themselves up to him, though he showed particular favor to those who had adhered to the observance of their own law, and could not be prevailed on by the king of Egypt to apostatize from it. - Prideaux, iii. 198; Jos. "Ant." b. xii. ch. v. Section 3.

Verse 15

So the king of the north - Antiochus the Great.

Shall come - Shall come again into these provinces. This occurred after he had vanquished the army of the Egyptians at Paneas. He then took Sidon and Patara, and made himself master of the whole country. - Prideaux, iii. 198. This happened 198 b.c. Scopas, a general of Ptolemy, had been sent by him into Coelo-Syria and Palestine, with a view of subjecting those countries again to Egyptian rule. He was met by Antiochus at Paneas, near the sources of the Jordan, and defeated, and fled with ten thousand men to Sidon, where he fortified himself, but from where he was expelled by Antiochus.

And cast up a mount - A fortification. That is, he shall so entrench himself that he cannot be dislodged. The reference does not seem to be to any particular fortification, but to the general fact that he would so entrench or fortify himself that he would make his conquests secure.

And take the most fenced cities - Margin, "city of munitions" Hebrew, "city of fortifications." The singular is used here in a collective sense; or perhaps there is allusion particularly to Sidon, where Scopas entrenched himself, making it as strong as possible.

And the arms of the south shall not withstand - Shall not be able to resist him, or to dislodge him. The power of the Egyptian forces shall not be sufficient to remove him from his entrenchments. The Hebrew is, "shall not stand;" that is, shall not stand against him, or maintain their position in his advances. The word "arms" (זרעות *zeroʿôth*) is used here in the sense of "heroes, warriors, commanders," as in Ezekiel 30:22, Ezekiel 30:24-25.

Neither his chosen people - Margin, "the people of his choices." Those whom he had selected or chosen to carry on the war - referring, perhaps, to the fact that he would deem it necessary to employ picked men, or to send the choicest of his forces in order to withstand Antiochus. Such an occurrence is in every way probable. To illustrate this, it is only necessary to say that the Egyptians sent three of their most distin. guished generals, with a select army, to deliver Sidon - Eropus, Menocles, and Damoxenus. - Lengerke, *in loc*.

Neither shall there be any stregnth to withstand - No forces which the Egyptians can employ. In other words, Antiochus would carry all before him. This is in strict accordance with the history. When Scopas was defeated by Antiochus at Paneas, near the sources of the Jordan, he fled and entrenched himself in Sidon. There he was followed and besieged by Antiochus. The king of Egypt sent the three generals above named, with a choice army, to endeavor to deliver Scopas, but they were unable. Scopas was obliged to surrender, in consequence of famine, and the chosen forces returned to Egypt.

Verse 16

But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will - That is, Antiochus, who "came against" Scopas, the Egyptian general, sent out by Ptolemy. The idea is, that Antiochus would be entirely successful in the countries of Coelo-Syria and Palestine. As a matter of fact, as stated

above, he drove Scopas out of those regions, and compelled him to take refuge in Sidon, and then besieged him, and compelled him to surrender.

And none shall stand before him - That is, neither the forces that Scopas had under his command, nor the choice and select armies sent out from Egypt for his rescue, under Eropus, Menocles, and Damoxenus.

And he shall stand in the glorious land - Margin, "the land of ornament," or, "goodly land." The Hebrew word צבי *tsebîy* means, properly, "splendor, beauty," and was given to the holy land, or Palestine, on account of its beauty, as being a land of beauty or fertility. Compare Ezekiel 20:6, Ezekiel 20:15; Ezekiel 26:12; Jeremiah 3:19, and Daniel 11:45. The meaning here is, that he would obtain possession of the land of Israel, and that no one would be able to stand against him. By the defeat of Scopas, and of the forces sent to aid him when entrenched in Sidon, this was accomplished.

Which by his hand shall be consumed - As would be natural when his invading army should pass through it. The angel does not seem to refer to any "wanton." destruction of the land, but only to what would necessarily occur in its invasion, and in securing provision for the wants of an army. As a matter of fact, Antiochus did many things to conciliate the favor of the Jews, and granted to them many privileges. See Josephus, "Ant." b. xii. ch. iii. Section 3. But, according to Josephus, these favors were granted subsequently to the wars with Scopas, and as a compensation for the injuries which their country had suffered in the wars which had been waged between him and Scopas within their borders. The following language of Josephus respecting the effect of these wars will justify and explain what is here said by the angel: "Now it happened that, in the reign of Antiochus the Great, who ruled over all Asia, the Jews, as well as the inhabitants of Coelo-Syria, suffered greatly, and their land was sorely harassed, for while he was at war with Ptolemy Philopater, and with his son who was called "Epiphanes," it fell out that these nations were equally sufferers, both when he was beaten, and when he beat the others; so that they were like to a ship in a storm, which is tossed by the waves on both sides; and just thus were they in their situation in the middle between Antiochus' prosperity and its change to adversity." - "Ant." b. xii. ch. iii. Section 3.

When Antiochus was successful against Scopas, however, the Jews "went over to him," says Josephus, "of their own accord," and received him into Jerusalem; and as a consequence of the aid which they rendered him,

he granted them the favors and privileges mentioned by Josephus. The immediate consequence of the wars, however, was extended desolation; and it is this to which the passage before us refers. Lengerke, however, supposes that the meaning of the passage is, that the whole land would be subdued under him. The Hebrew word rendered "shall be consumed" - כלה *kâlâh* - means, properly, "to be completed, finished, closed;" then to be "consumed, wasted, spent, destroyed;" Genesis 21:15; 1 Kings 17:16; Jeremiah 16:4; Ezekiel 5:13. The destruction caused by invading and conflicting armies in a land would answer to all that is properly implied in the use of the word.

Verse 17

He shall also set his face - Antiochus. That is, he shall resolve or determine. To set one's face in any direction is to determine to go there. The meaning here is, that Antiochus, flushed with success, and resolved to push his conquests to the utmost, would make use of all the forces at his disposal to overcome the Egyptians, and to bring them into subjection to his sway. He had driven Scopas from Coelo-Syria, and from Sidon; had subjected the land of Palestine to his control; and now nothing seemed to prevent his extending his conquests to the utmost limits of his ambition. The reference here is to a "purpose" of Antiochus to wage war with Egypt, and to invade it. From that purpose, however, he was turned, as we shall see, by his wars in Asia Minor; and he endeavored, as stated in the subsequent part of the verse, if not to subdue Egypt and to bring it under his control, at least to neutralize it so that it would not interfere with his wars with the Romans. If his attention had not been diverted, however, by more promising or more brilliant prospects in another direction, he would undoubtedly have made an immediate descent on Egypt itself.

With the strength of his whole kingdom - Summoning all the forces of his empire. This would seem to be necessary in invading Egypt, and in the purpose to dethrone and humble his great rival. The armies which he had employed had been sufficient to drive Scopas out of Palestine, and to subdue that country; but obviously stronger forces would be necessary in carrying the war into Egypt, and attempting a foreign conquest.

And upright ones with him - Margin, "or, much uprightness, or, equal conditions." The Hebrew word used here (ישר *yâshâr*) means, properly, "straight, right;" then what is straight or upright - applied to persons, denoting their righteousness or integrity, Job 1:1, Job 1:8; Psalm 11:7. By

way of eminence it is applied to the Jewish people, as being a righteous or upright people - the people of God - and is language which a Hebrew would naturally apply to his own nation. In this sense it is undoubtedly used here, to denote not the "pious" portion, but the nation as such; and the meaning is, that, in addition to those whom he could muster from his own kingdom, Antiochus would expect to be accompanied with large numbers of the Hebrews - the "upright" people - in his invasion of Egypt. This he might anticipate from two causes,

(a) the fact that they had already rendered him so much aid, and showed themselves so friendly, as stated by Josephus in the passage referred to above; and

(b) from the benefits which he had granted to them, which furnished a reasonable presumption that they would not withhold their aid in his further attempts to subdue Egypt.

The Jews might hope at least that if Egypt were subjected to the Syrian scepter, their own country, lying between the two, would be at peace, and that they would no more be harassed by its being made the seat of wars - the battlefield of two great contending powers. It was not without reason, therefore, that Antiochus anticipated that in his invasion of Egypt he would be accompanied and assisted by not a few of the Hebrew people. As this is the natural and obvious meaning of the passage, and accords entirely with the sense of the Hebrew word, it is unnecessary to attempt to prove that the marginal reading is not correct. "Thus shall he do." That is, in the manner which is immediately specified. He shall adopt the policy there stated - by giving his daughter in marriage with an Egyptian prince - to accomplish the ends which he has in view. The reference here is to another stroke of policy, made necessary by his new wars with the Romans, and by the diversion of his forces, in consequence, in a new direction. The "natural" step after the defeat of the Egyptian armies in Palestine, would have been to carly his conquests at once into Egypt, and this he appears to have contemplated. But, in the meantime, he became engaged in wars in another quarter - with the Romans; and, as Ptolemy in such circumstances would be likely to unite with the Romans against Antiochus, in order to bind the Egyptians to himself, and to neutralize them in these wars, this alliance was proposed

and formed by which he connected his own family with the royal family in Egypt by marriage.

And he shall give him - Give to Ptolemy. Antiochus would seek to form a matrimonial alliance that would, for the time at least, secure the neutrality or the friendship of the Egyptians.

The daughter of women - The reference here is undoubtedly to his own daughter, Cleopatra. The historical facts in the case, as stated by Lengerke (*in loc*.), are these: After Antiochus had subdued Coelo-Syria and Palestine, he became involved in wars with the Romans in Asia Minor, in order to extend the kingdom of Syria to the limits which it had in the time of Seleucus Nicator. In order to carry on his designs in that quarter, however, it became necessary to secure the neutrality or the cooperation of Egypt, for Ptolemy would naturally, in such circumstances, favor the Romans in their wars with Antiochus. Antiochus, therefore, negotiated a marriage between his daughter Cleopatra and Ptolemy Epiphanes, the son of Ptolemy Philopater, then thirteen years of age. The valuable consideration in the view of Ptolemy in this marriage was, that, as a dowry, Coelo-Syria, Samaria, Judea, and Phoenicia were given to her. - Josephus, "Ant." b. xii. ch. 4, Section 1. This agreement or contract of marriage was entered into immediately after the defeat of Scopas, 197 b.c. The contract was, that the marriage should take place as soon as the parties were of suitable age, and that Coelo-Syria and Palestine should be given as a dowry. The marriage took place 193 b.c., when Antiochus was making preparation for his wars with the Romans. - Jahn, "Heb. Commonwealth," ch. ix. Section 89, p. 246. In this way the neutrality of the king of Egypt was secured, while Antiochus prosecuted his work against the Romans. The appellation here bestowed on Cleopatra - "daughter of women" - seems to have been given to her by way of eminence, as an heiress to the crown, or a princess, or as the principal one among the women of the land. There can be no doubt of its reference to her.

Corrupting her - Margin, as in Hebrew, "to corrupt." There has been some doubt, however, in regard to the word "her," in this place, whether it refers to Cleopatra or to the kingdom of Egypt. Rosenmuller, Prideaux, J. D. Michaelis, Bertholdt, Dereser, and others, refer it to Cleopatra, and suppose that it means that Antiochus had instilled into her mind evil principles, in order that she might betray her husband, and that thus, by the aid of her arts, he might obtain possession of Egypt. On the other hand,

Lengerke, Maurer, DeWette, Havernick, Elliott ("Apocalypse," iv. 130), and others, suppose that the reference is to Egypt, and that the meaning is, that Antiochus was disposed to enter into this alliance with a view of influencing the Egyptian government not to unite with the Romans and oppose him; that is, that it was on his part an artful device to turn away the Egyptian government from its true interest, and to accomplish his own purposes.

The latter agrees best with the connection, though the Hebrew will admit of either construction. As a matter of fact, "both" these objects seem to have been aimed at - for it was equally true that in this way he sought to turn away the Egyptian government and kingdom from its true interests, and that in making use of his daughter to carry out this project, it was expected that she would employ artifice to influence her future husband. This arrangement was the more necessary, as, in consequence of the fame which the Romans had acquired in overcoming Hannibal, the Egyptians had applied to them for protection and aid in their wars with Antiochus, and offered them, as a consideration, the guardianship of young Ptolemy. This offer the Romans accepted with joy, and sent M. Aemilius Lepidus to Alexandria as guardian of the young king of Egypt. - Polybius, xv. 20; Appian, "Syriac." i. 1; Livy, xxxi. 14; xxx. 19; Justin, xxx. 2,3; xxxi. 1. The whole was, on the part of Antiochus, a stroke of policy; and it could not be accomplished without what has been found necessary in political devices - the employment of bribery or corruption. It accords well with the character of Antiochus to suppose that he would not hesitate to instil into the mind of his daughter all his own views of policy.

But she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him - That is, she would become attached to her husband, and would favor his interests rather than the crafty designs of her father. On this passage, Jerome remarks: "Antiochus, desirous not only of possessing Syria, Cilicia, and Lycia, and the other provinces which belonged to Ptolemy, but of extending also his own scepter over Egypt itself, betrothed his own daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy, and promised to give as a dowry Coelo-Syria and Judea. But he could not obtain possession of Egypt in this way, because Ptolemy Epiphanes, perceiving his design, acted with caution, and because Cleopatra favored the purposes of her husband rather than those of her father." So Jahn ("Heb. Commonwealth," p. 246) says: "He indulged the hope that when his daughter became queen of Egypt, she would bring the kingdom

under his influence; but she proved more faithful to her husband than to her father."

Verse 18

After this shall he turn his face unto the isles - The islands of the Mediterranean, particularly those in the neighborhood of and constituting a part of Greece. This he did in his wars with the Romans, for the Roman power then comprehended that part of the world, and it was the design of Antiochus, as already remarked, to extend the limits of his empire as far as it was at the time of Seleucus Nicator. This occurred after the defeat of Scopas, for, having given his daughter in marriage to Ptolemy, he supposed that he had guarded himself from any interference in his wars with the Romans from the Egyptians, and sent two of his sons with an army by land to Sardis, and he himself with a great fleet sailed at the same time into the AEgean Sea, and took many of the islands in that sea. The war which was waged between Antiochus and the Romans lasted for three years, and ended in the defeat of Antiochus, and in the subjugation of the Syrian kingdom to the Roman power, though, when it became a Roman province, it continued to be governed by its own kings. In this war, Hannibal, general of the Carthaginians, was desirous that Antiochus should unite with him in carrying his arms into Italy, with the hope that together they would be able to overcome the Romans; but Antiochus preferred to confine his operations to Asia Minor and the maritime parts of Greece; and the consequence of this, and of the luxury and indolence into which he sank, was his ultimate overthrow. Compare Jahn's "Heb. Commonwealth," pp. 246-249.

And shall take many - Many of those islands; many portions of the maritime country of Asia Minor and Greece. As a matter of fact, during this war which he waged, he became possessed of Ephesus, AEtolia, the island of Euboea, where, in the year 191 b.c. he married Eubia, a young lady of great beauty, and gave himself up for a long time to festivity and amusements - and then entrenched himself strongly at the pass of Thermopyloe. Afterward, when driven from that stronghold, he sailed to the Thracian Chersonesus, and fortified Sestos, Abydos, and other places, and, in fact, during these military expeditions, obtained the mastery of no inconsiderable part of the maritime portions of Greece. The prophecy was strictly fulfilled, that he should "take many" of those places.

But a prince for his own behalf - A Roman prince, or a leader of the Roman armies. The reference is to Lucius Cornelius Scipio, called Scipio

Asiaticus, in contradistinction from Publius Cornelius Scipio, called "Africanus, from his conquest over Hannibal and the Carthaginians. The Scipio here referred to received the name "Asiaticus," on account of his victories in the East, and particularly in this war with Antiochus. He was a brother of Scipio Africanus, and had accompanied him in his expedition into Spain and Africa. After his return he was rewarded with the consulship for his services to the state, and was empowered to attack Antiochus, who had declared war against the Romans. In this war he was prosperous, and succeeded in retrieving the honor of the Roman name, and in wiping off the reproach which the Roman armies had suffered from the conquests of Antiochus. When it is said that he would do this "for his own, behalf," the meaning is, doubtless, that he would engage in the enterprise for his own glory, or to secure fame for himself. It was not the love of justice, or the love of country, but it was to secure for himself a public triumph - perhaps hoping, by subduing Antiochus, to obtain one equal to what his brother had received after his wars with Hannibal. The motive here ascribed to this "prince" was so common in the leaders of the Roman armies, and has been so generally prevalent among mankind, that there can be no hesitation in supposing that it was accurately ascribed to this conqueror, Seipio, and that the enterprise in which he embarked in opposing Antiochus was primarily "on his own behalf."

Shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease - The reproach offered by Antiochus to the Roman power. The margin is, "his reproach." The reference is to the disagrace brought on the Roman armies by the conquests of Antiochus. Antiochus had seemed to mock that power; he had engaged in war with the conquerors of nations; he had gained victories, and thus appeared to insult the majesty of the Roman name. All this was turned back again, or caused to cease, by the victories of Scipio.

Without his own reproach - Without any reproach to himself - any discomfiture - any imputation of want of skill or valor. That is, he would so conduct the war as to secure an untarnished reputation. This was in all respects true of Scipio.

He shall cause it to turn upon him - The reproach or shame which he seemed to cast upon the Romans would return upon himself. This occurred in the successive defeats of Antiochus in several engagements by water and by land, and in his final and complete overthrow at the battle of Magnesia (190 b.c.) by Scipio. After being several times overcome by the Romans,

and vainly sueing for peace, "Antiochus lost all presence of mind, and withdrew his garrisons from all the cities on the Hellespont, and, in his precipitate flight, left all his military stores behind him. He renewed his attempts to enter into negotiations for peace, but when he was required to relinquish all his possessions west of the Taurus, and defray the expenses of the war, he resolved to try his fortune once more in a battle by land. Antiochus brought into the field seventy thousand infantry, twelve thousand cavalry, and a great number of camels, elephants, and chariots armed with scythes. To these the Romans could oppose but thirty thousand men, and yet they gained a decisive victory. The Romans lost only three hundred and twenty-five men; while, of the forces of Antiochus, fifty thousand infantry, four thousand cavalry, and fifteen elephants were left dead on the field, fifteen hundred men were made prisoners, and the king himself with great difficulty made his escape to Sardis. He now humbly sued for peace, and it was granted on the terms with which he had formerly refused compliance - that he should surrender all his possessions west of the Taurus, and that he should defray the expenses of the war. He further obligated himself to keep no elephants, and not more than twelve ships. To secure the performance of these conditions, the Romans required him to deliver up twelve hostages of their own selection, among whom was his son Antiochus, afterward surnamed Epiphanes." - Jahn's "Hebrew Commonwealth," pp. 248,249.

Verse 19

Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land - The strong fortifications of his own land - for the Hebrew word is in the plural. This he would do, of course, for protection. He would cease his attempts at conquest, and endeavor to find security in his own fortresses. As a matter of fact, after this defeat, Antiochus, in order to replenish his exhausted coffers, and to find the means of meeting the claims of the Romans, went into certain provinces of his empire. He attempted no other foreign wars, but sought security in his own dominions.

But he shall stumble and fall, and not be found - He died in an attempt to plunder the temple of Elymais. In this he provoked the people to an insurrection, and was slain, together with the soldiers who were with him. What was his "motive" for plundering that temple is uncertain, whether it was to meet the demands of the Romans, or whether it was avarice (Justin, xxxii. 2); but it was in this way that he "stumbled and fell," and passed away. - Jerome, "Com. *in loc*.;" Diod. Sic., "Fragmenta," xxvi.

30,49; Justin, xxxii. 2; Strabo, p. 744. The prophecy respecting him terminates here, and the particulars specified are as minute and accurate as if it had been written "after" the event. Indeed, the whole account is just such as one would prepare now who should undertake to express in a brief compass the principal events in the life of Antiochus the Great.

Verse 20

Then shall stand up in his estate - Margin, "or, place." The word used - כן *kên* - means, properly, "a stand, station, place" (see the notes at Daniel 11:7), and the idea here is simply that he would be succeeded in the kingdom by such an one. His successor would have the character and destiny which the prophecy proceeds to specify.

A raiser of taxes - One who shall be mainly characterized for this; that is, whose government would be distinguished eminently by his efforts to wring money out of the people. The Hebrew word נגשׁ *nâgas'* means, properly, to urge, to drive, to impel, and it is then applied to one who urges or presses a debtor, or who exacts tribute of a people. The word is used with reference to "money" exactions in Deuteronomy 15:2-3: "Every creditor that lendeth aught unto his neighbor, he shall not exact it of his neighbor or of his brother. Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again." So in 2 Kings 23:35, Jehoiakim taxed the land "to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land." In Zechariah 9:8 - "And no oppressor shall pass through them anymore" - the same word is used. Here it denotes one who would be mainly characterized by his extorting tribute of his people, or using means to obtain money.

In the glory of the kingdom - The word "in" here is supplied by our translators. Lengerke renders it, "who shall suffer the tax-gatherer (eintreiber) to go through the glory of the kingdom." This is evidently the meaning. He would lay the richest and most productive parts of his kingdom under contribution. This might be either to pay a debt contracted by a former monarch; or to carry on war; or to obtain the means of luxurious indulgence; or for purposes of magnificence and display.

But within few days - A comparatively brief period. Compare Genesis 27:44; Genesis 29:20. It is impossible from this to determine the precise period which he would live, but the language would leave the impression that his would be a short reign.

He shall be destroyed - Hebrew, "shall be broken. That is, his power shall be broken." he shall cease to reign. It would not be certainly inferred from this that he would be put to death, or would die at that time, but that his reign then would come to an end, though it might be in some peaceful way.

Neither in anger - Hebrew, "angers." Not in any tumult or excitement, or by any rage of his subjects. This would certainly imply that his death would be a peaceful death.

Nor in battle - As many kings fell. The description would indicate a reign of peace, and one whose end would be peace, but who would have but a brief reign. The reference here is, undoubtedly, to Seleucus Philopator, the oldest son of Antiochus the Great, and his immediate successor. The fulfillment of the prediction is seen in the following facts in regard to him:

(a) As an exactor of tribute. He was bound to pay the tribute which his father had agreed to pay to the Romans. This tribute amounted to a thousand talents annually, and consequently made it necessary for him to apply his energies to the raising of that sum. The Jewish talent of silver was equal to (in the 1850's) about 1,505 of American money (about 339 British pounds), and, consequently, this thousand talents, of the Jewish talent of silver here referred to, was equal to (in 1850's) about a million and a half dollars. The Greek talent of silver was worth (in 1850's) 1,055 of American money (about 238 British pounds), and, if this was the talent, the sum would be about one million dollars. To raise this, in addition to the ordinary expenses of the government, would require an effort, and, as this was continued from year to year, and as Seleucus was known for little else, it was not unnatural that the should be characterized as the "raiser of taxes."

(b) Especially would this be true in the estimation of the Jews, for no small part of these taxes, or this revenue, was derived from Palestine. Seleucus, taking advantage of the disturbances in Egypt, had reunited to the Syrian crown the provinces of Coelo-Syria and Palestine, which his father Antiochus the Great had given in dowry to his daughter Cleopatra, who was married to Ptolemy Epiphanes. - Jahn, "Heb. Commonwealth," p. 255. In the year 176 b.c., Simon, a Benjamite, who became governor of the temple at Jerusalem, the farmer of the revenues of the Egyptian kings, attempted to make some innovations, which were steadily resisted by the high priest Onias III Simon, in anger, went to Apollonius, governor of Coelo-Syria

under Seleucus, and informed him of the great treasures contained in the temple. “The king,” says Jahn (“Heb. Commonwealth,” p. 255), “through a friend to the Jews, and though he had regularly made disbursements, according to the directions of his father, toward sustaining the expenses of the sacrifices at Jerusalem, determined to apply to his own use the treasures of the temple, for the annual payment of one thousand talents to the Romans had reduced his finances to a very low ebb. With the design, therefore, of replenishing his exhausted treasury, he sent Heliodorus to Jerusalem to plunder the temple.” Compare Appian, “Syriac.” xlv. 60-65. See also Prideaux, “Con.” iii. 208; Daniel 11:16.

(d) His reign continued but a short time - answering to what is here said, that it would be for a “few days.” In fact, he reigned but eleven or twelve years, and that, compared with the long reign of Antiochus his father - thirty-seven years - was a brief period.

(e) The manner of his death. He did not fall in battle, nor was he cut off in a popular tumult. He was, in fact, poisoned. In the eleventh year of his reign, he sent his only son Demetrius as hostage to Rome, and released his brother Antiochus, who had resided twelve years in that city. As the heir to the crown was now out of the way, Heliodorus sought to raise himself to the royal dignity, and for this purpose he destroyed the king by poison. He attached a large party to his interests, and finally gained over those who were in favor of submitting to the king of Egypt. Antiochus Epiphanes received notice of these transactions while he was at Athens on his return from Rome. He applied himself to Eumenes, king of Pergamos, whom, with his brother Attalus, he easily induced to espouse his cause, and they, with the help of a part of the Syrians, deprived Heliodorus of his usurped authority. Thus, in the year 175 b.c., Antiochus Epiphanes quietly ascended the throne, while the lawful heir, Demetrius, was absent at Rome. Appian, “Syriac.” lxv. 60-65; Jahn, “Heb. Commonwealth,” ch. ix. Section 91. The remainder of this chapter is occupied with a detail of the crimes, the cruelties, and the oppressions of Antiochus Epiphanes, or Antiochus IV.

Verse 21

And in his estate - In his place. See the notes at Daniel 11:7, Daniel 11:20.

Shall stand up a vile person - There shall succeed to the throne. The reference here is to Antiochus Epiphanes, who reigned from 175 b.c. to 163 b.c. The epithet "vile" here given him was one which his subsequent history showed was eminently appropriate to him in all respects, as a man and as a prince. The Hebrew word rendered "vile" - נבזה *nîbezeh* - properly means one despised or held in contempt, Isaiah 49:7; Psalm 22:6 (7). The meaning here is, that he was one who deserved to be despised, and who would be held in contempt - a man of a low, base, contemptible character. Vulgate, "*despectus*;" Greek ἐξουδενώθη *exoudenōthē* Luther, "ein ungeachteter." Never were terms better applied to a man than these to Antiochus Epiphanes - both before and after his ascension to the throne. The manner of his seizing upon the crown is stated above. He was surnamed Epiphanes (Ἐπιφανής *Epiphanēs*), "the Illustrious," because, if we believe Appian, he vindicated the claims of the royal family against the usurpations of the foreigner Heliodorus. He also bore the name Θεός *Theos* "God," which is still seen upon his coins.

But by his subjects he was called Epimanes (Ἐπιμανής *Epimanēs*) "the Insane," instead of "Epiphanes" - a name which he much more richly deserved. The following statement from Jahn (Heb. Commonwealth, ch. x. Section 92) will show with what propriety the term "vile" was applied to him: "He often lounged like a mere idler about the streets of Antioch, attended by two or three servants, and not deigning to look at the nobles; would talk with goldsmiths and other mechanics in their workshops, engage in idle and trifling conversation with the lowest of the people, and mingle in the society of foreigners and men of the vilest character. He was not ashamed to go into the dissipated circles of the young, to drink and carouse with them, and to assist their merriment by singing songs and playing on his flute. He often appeared in the public baths among the common people, engaging in every kind of foolish jest, without the least regard to the dignity of his station and character. Not unfrequently he was seen drunk in the streets, when he would throw his money. about, and practice various other fooleries equally extravagant. He would parade the streets of his capital in a long robe, and with a garland of roses upon his head: and if any attempted to pass by or to follow him, he would pelt them with stones, which he carried concealed under his garments," etc. See also Appian in "Syriacis," 45:70-75; Eusebius in "Chronicon;" Athenaeus, lib. v. p. 193; x. p. 438; Livy, xli. 20; Diod. Sic. "Frag." xxvi. 65; xxxi. 7,8; Prideaux, "Con." iii.

212-214; Psalm 35:6, “Let their way be dark and slippery;” in the latter, its originating verb, Proverbs 2:16; Proverbs 7:5, “The stranger that flattereth or dissembleth with his words;” and Proverbs 29:5, “A man that flattereth (or dissembleth to) his neighbor.” In this latter sense the verbal seems to be used both here and in the verses Daniel 11:32, Daniel 11:34 below: “arts of dissimulation.” - Gesenius. The probable meaning here is, that he would obtain the throne by acts of dissembling, and by promises of rewards and offices. Such promises he would probably make to Eumenes, king of Pergamos, and to the Syrian nobles and people who espoused his cause. It would not be difficult to secure the aid of multitudes in this way, and the character of Antiochus was just such as to permit him to use any of these arts to accomplish his ends. Perhaps, also, he might hold out the hope of aid from the Romans, with whom he had long lived. It was no uncommon thing for an usurper to make his way by flattering certain classes of a people, and by promises of largesses, of offices, and of the removal of oppressive burdens. Compare Prideaux, “Con.” iii. 212. See also the case of Absalom in 2 Samuel 15:1-6.

Verse 22

And with the arms of a flood - The refercnce here is to some mighty invasion of some country by Antiochus, which would sweep everything before him. There seems to be some confusion of metaphor in the phrase, “the arms of a flood.” The idea in the mind of the writer appears to have been this: He saw an invasion of some country by hosts of men under the command of Antiochus. This it was not unnatural to compare with an “inundation of waters” spreading over a land. See Isaiah 8:8. Nor was it altogether unnatural to speak of an inundation as having “arms” extending far and near; sweeping everything to itself, or carrying it away. Thus we speak of an arm of the sea, an arm of a river, etc. In this manner the inundation - the invasion - seemed to spread itself out like waters, sweeping all away.

Shall they be overflown, from before him - The prophet does not specify “who” they would be that would thus be overthrown. Some have supposed that the reference is to the Hebrews, but the more correct interpretation is what refers it to Egypt, See the notes at Daniel 11:25. As a matter of fact, the forces of Heliodorus, the forces of the Hebrews, and the forces of the Egyptians, were alike broken and scattered before him. The

eye of the prophet, however, seems rather here to be on the invasion of Egypt, which was one of the earliest and most prominent acts of Antiochus, and into the history of which the prophet goes most into detail.

Yea, also the prince of the covenant - He also shall be broken and overcome. There has been some diversity of opinion as to who is meant by "the prince of the covenant" here. Many suppose that it is the high priest of the Jews, as being the chief prince or ruler under the "covenant" which God made with them, or among the "covenant" people. But this appellation is not elsewhere given to the Jewish high priest, nor is it such as could with much propriety be applied to him. The reference is rather to the king of Egypt, with whom a covenant or compact had been made by Antiochus the Great, and who was supposed to be united, therefore, to the Syrians by a solemn treaty. See Lengerke, *in loc*. So Elliott, "Rev." iv. 133.

Verse 23

And after the league made with him - A treaty of peace and concord. The great subject of contention between the kings of Syria and Egypt was the possession of Coelo-Syria and Palestine. This they often endeavored to settle by conquest as each of them claimed that in the original partition of the empire of Alexander this portion of the empire fell to himself; and often they endeavored to settle it by treaty. Consequently this region was constantly passing from one to the other, and was also the seat of frequent wars. The "league" here referred to seems to have been that respecting this country - file successive promises which had been made to the king of Egypt that Coelo-Syria and Palestine should be made over to him. These provinces had been secured to Ptolemy Lagus by the treaty made 301 b.c., and they had been again pledged by Antiochus the Great, in dowry, when his daughter Cleopatra should be made queen of Egypt. - Jahn, "Heb. Commonwealth," p. 260. Antiochus Epiphanes, however, was by no means disposed to confirm this grant, and hence, the wars in which he was involved with the Egyptians.

He shall work deceitfully - In reference to the covenant or treaty above referred to. He shall endeavor to evade its claims; he shall refuse to comply with its conditions; he shall not deliver up the provinces according to the terms of the compact. The history accords exactly with this, for he did not intend to comply with the terms of the treaty, but sought every means to evade it, and finally waged a succession of bloody wars with Egypt. In reference to the terms of this treaty, and to secure their respective interests,

both parties sent ambassadors to Rome to urge their claims before the Roman Senate. - Polybius, "Legat." Sections 78,82; Jerome, "Com. *in loc*." As soon as Ptolemy Philometor had reached his fourteenth year, he was solemnly invested with the government; and ambassadors from all surrounding countries came to congatulate him on His accession to the throne. "On this occasion Antiochus sent to Egypt Apollonius, the son of Mnestheus, apparently to congratulate the king on his coronation, but with the real intention of sounding the purposes of the Egyptian court. When Apollonius, on has return, informed Antiochus that he was viewed as an enemy by the Egyptians, he immediately sailed to Joppa to survey his frontiers toward Egypt, and to put them in a state of defense." - Jahn, "Heb. Commonwealth" p. 260; 2 Maccabees 4:21.

The purpose of Antiochus was undoubtedly not to surrender Coelo-Syria and Palestine according to the treaties which had been made; and yet he designed to secure them if possible without an open rupture, and hence, his arts of diplomacy, or his efforts to evade compliance with the terms of the compact. Even when he had invaded Egypt, and had obtained possession of the king, Ptolemy Philometor, he still "pretended that he had come to Egypt solely for the good of king Ptolemy, to set the affairs of his kingdom in order for him; and Ptolemy found it expedient to act as though he really thought him his friend. But he must have seen," says Jahn, "that Antiochus, with all his professions of friendship, was not unmindful of spoil, for he plundered Egypt in every quarter." - "Heb. Commonwealth," p. 263.

For he shall come up - Come upon Egypt. The result would be war. Rather than surrender the provinces according to the treaty, he would ultimately invade Egypt, and carry war into its borders.

And shall become strong with a small people - The meaning of this seems to be, that at first his own forces would be small; that he would go up in such a way as not to excite suspicion, but that, either by an increase of his forces there, by uniting himself to confederates, by alluring the people by the promise of rewards, or by gradually taking one town after another and adding them to his dominions, he would become strong. Jahn (Heb. Commonwealth, p. 263) says, "with a small body of troops he made himself master of Memphis, and of all Egypt as far as Alexandria, almost without striking a blow." Compare Diod. Sic. xxvi. 75,77; Jos. "Ant." xii. 5,2. The fact in the case was, that Antiochus pretended in his invasion of Egypt to be the friend of the Egyptian king, and that he came to aid him, and to settle

him finaly on the throne. By degrees, however, he became possessed of one town after another, and subdued one place after another, until he finally became possessed of the king himself, and had him entirely in his powcr.

Verse 24

He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province - The margin is, "or, into the peaceable and fat." The version in the text, however, is the more correct, and the sense is, that he would do this "unexpectedly" (Lengerke, uvermuthet); he would make gradual and artful approaches until he had seized upon the best portions of the land. Compare Genesis 27:28, Genesis 27:39. The history is, that he went there with different professions than those of conquest, and one after another he took possession of the principal towns of Egypt. In his first invasion of that country, Diodorus Siculus and Josephus both say that Antiochus "availed himself of a mean artifice," without specifying what it was. Jahn says that probably it was that he pretended to come as the friend of Ptolemy. It was to this that the allusion is here, when it is said that he would "enter peaceably" - that is, with some pretence of peace or friendship, or with some false and flattering art. Josephus (Ant. xii. ch. v. Section 2) says of Antiochus, that "he came with great forces to Pelusium, and circumvented Ptolemy Philorector "by treachery," and seized upon Egypt." The fact stated by Diodorus and Josephus, that he took possession of Memphis and of all Egypt, as far as Alexandria, fully illustrates what is said here, that he would "enter upon the fattest places of the province." These were the most choice and fertile portions of Egypt."

And he shall do what his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers - Which none of his predecessors have been able to do; to wit, in the conquest of Egypt. No one of them had it so completely in his possession; no one obtained from it so much spoil. There can be no doubt that such was the fact. The wars of his predecessors with the Egyptians had been mostly waged in Coelo-Syria and Palestine, for the possession of these provinces. Antiochus Epiphanes, however, at first took Pelusium, the key of Egypt, and then invaded Egypt itself, seized upon its strongest places, and made the king a captive. - Jahn, "Heb. Commonwealth," p. 263. Compare 1 Maccabees 1:16.

He shall scatter among them the prey … - Among his followers. He shall reward them with the spoils of Egypt. Compare 1 Maccabees 1:19:

“Thus they got the strong cities in the land of Egypt, and he took the spoils thereof.

And he shall forecast his devices - Margin, “think his thoughts.” The margin is in accordance with the Hebrew. The meaning is, that he would form plans, or that this would be his aim. He would direct the war against the strongly-fortified places of Egypt.

Against the strongholds - Antiochus took possession of Pelusium, the key of Egypt; he seized upon Memphis, and he then laid siege to Alexandria, supposing that if that were reduced, the whole country would be his. - Jos. “Ant.” b. xii. ch. v. Section 2.

Even for a time - Josephus (ut sup.) says that he was driven from Alexandria, and out of all Egypt, by the threatenings of the Romans, commanding him to let that country alone. There were other reasons also which, combined with this, induced him to retire from that country. He was greatly enraged by the effect which a report of his death had produced in Judea. It was said that all the Jews rejoiced at that report, and rose in rebellion; and he therefore resolved to inflict revenge on them, and left Egypt, and went to Jerusalem, and subdued it either by storm or by stratagem.

Verse 25

And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army - This must refer to a subsequent invasion of Egypt by Antiochus. In the course of his reign he four times invaded that conntry with various degrees of success. In the first, he took Pelusium, and having placed a garrison there, retired into winter-quarters to Tyre. In the second, above referred to, he took Memphis and laid siege to Alexandria. The third invasion here referred to was after he had taken Jerusalem, and was caused by the fact that, as Ptolemy Philometor for was in the hands of Antiochus, the Egyptians had raised Ptolemy Physcon (the Gross) to the throne. This prince assumed the name of Euergetes II. The pretended object of Antiochus in this invasion (168 b.c.) was to support the claims of Ptolemy Philometor against the usurpation of his brother, but his real purpose was to subject the whole country to his own power. He defeated the Alexandrians by sea near Pelusium, and then drew up his land forces before the city of Alexandria. Ptolemy Physcon sent an embassy to Rome to solicit the protection of the Senate, and at the same time entered into negotiations of peace with Antiochus. The proposals were rejected; but when Antiochus

perceived that the conquest of Alexandria would be difficult, he retired to Memphis, and pre tended to deliver up the kingdom to Ptolemy Philometor, and having left a strong garrison at Pelusium, he returned to Antioch. This invasion is thus de scribed by the author of the book of Maccabees (Daniel 11:24); that is, they shall form plans against him to defeat him. The reference here is to the invading forces, that they would form sagacious plans for the overthrow of the king of Egypt.

Verse 26

Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him - They of his own family; they who are nourished at his table; they who are his cabinet counselors, and professed and confidential friends. The meaning is, that they would prove treacherous and unfaithful. This is by no means improbable. Antiochus was powerful, and had seized upon Pelusium, and upon Memphis, and upon the fairest portions of Egypt. He was also in possession of the person of the lawful king, and had a fair prospect of subduing the whole country. In these circumstances, nothing would be more natural than that the very inmates of the palace - the persons around the reigning king - should begin to doubt whether he could hold out, and should be disposed to make terms with the invader.

And his army shall overflow - The connection here requires us to understand this of the army of the king of Egypt. The meaning seems to be, that his forces would be great, and would spread themselves out like overflowing waters, but that not withstanding this many of them would be slain.

And many shall fall down slain - In battle. Not withstanding the army would be numerous, and would, as it were, spread over the land, still it would not be sufficient to keep out the invaders, but many of them would fall in the field. The account in 1 Maccabees 1:18 is, that "Ptolemy was afraid of him (Antiochus) and fled; and many were wounded to death."

Verse 27

And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief - Margin, "their hearts." The meaning is, that their hearts were set on some evil or unjust purpose. The reference here is, evidently, to Antiochus and Ptolemy Philometor, and the time alluded to is when Ptolemy was in the possession of Antiochus, and when they were together forming their plans. Antiochus invaded the country under pretenee of aiding Ptolemy and establishing him in the government, and for the same reason, under pretence of protecting

him, he had him now in his possession. At first. also, it would seem that Ptolemy coincided with his plans, or was so far deceived by the acts of Antiochus as to believe in his friendship, and to unite with him in his schemes, for it is expressly said by the historians, as quoted above, that when Antiochus left Egypt, leaving Ptolemy at Memphis, and a strong garrison in Pelusium, Ptolemy began to see through his crafty designs, and to act accordingly. Until that time, however, he seems to have re garded the professions of Antiochus as sincere, and to have entered fully into his plans. To that fact there is allusion here; and the meaning is, that they were forming united schemes of evil - of conquests, and robbery, and oppression. The guiding spirit in this was undoubtedly Antiochus, but Ptolemy seems to have concurred in it.

And they shall speak lies at one table - At the same table. Ptolemy was a captive, and was entirely in the possession of Antiochus, but it was a matter of policy with the latter to hide from him as far as poossible the fact that he was a prisoner, and to treat him as a king. It is to be presumed, therefore, that he would do so, and that they would be seated at the same table; that is, that Ptolemy would be treated outwardly with the respect due to a king. In this familiar condition - in this state of apparently respectful and confidential intercourse - they would form their plans. Yet the devices of both would be “false” - or would be, in fact, “speak ing lies.” Antiochus would be acting perfidiously throughout, endeavoring to impose on Ptolemy, and making promises, and giving assurances, which he knew to be false; and Ptolemy would be equally acting a deceitful part - entering into engagements which, perhaps, he did not intend to keep, and which would, at any rate, be soon violated. It is impossible now to know “how” he came into the hands of Antiochus - whether he surrendered himself in war; or whether he was persuaded to do it by the arts of his courtiers; or whether he was really deceived by Antiochus and supposed that he was his friend, and that his protection was necessary. On any of these suppositions it cannot be supposed that he would be very likely to be sincere in his transactions with Antiochus.

But it shall not prosper - The scheme con cocted, whatever it was, would not be successful. The plan of Antiochus was to obtain possession of the whole of Egypt, but in this he failed; and so far as Ptolemy entered into the scheme proposed by Antiochus, on pretence for the good of his country,

it also failed. Whatever the purpose was, it was soon broken up by the fact that Antiochus left Egypt, and made war on Jerusalem.

For yet the end shall be at the time appointed - See Daniel 11:29. The end - the result - shall not be now, and in the manner contemplated by these two kings. It shall be at the time "appointed," to wit, by God, and in another manner. The whole case shall issue differently from what they design, and at the time which an over ruling Providence has designated. The "reason" implied here why they could not carry out their design was, that there was an "appointed time" when these affairs were to be determined, and that no purposes of theirs could be allowed to frustrate the higher counsels of the Most High.

Verse 28

Then shall he return into his land with great riches - Enriched with the spoils of Egypt. Having taken Memphis, and the fairest portions of Egypt, he would, of course, carry great wealth to his own country on his return. Thus it is said in 1 Maccabees 1:19: "Thus they got the strong cities in the land of Egypt, and he took the spoils thereof." The meaning here is, that he would "set out" to return to his own land. As a matter of fact, on his way he would pause to bring desolation on Jerusalem, as is intimated in the subsequent part of the verse.

And his heart shall be against the holy covenant - The words "holy covenant" are a technical expression to denote the Jewish institutions. The Hebrew people were called the "covenant people," as being a people with whom God had entered into covenant. All their privileges were regarded as the result of that covenant, and hence, the word came to be applied to all the institutions of the nation. When it is said that his heart Was against that covenant, the meaning is, that he was enraged against it; and determined to bring calamity upon the place and people connected with it. The reason of this was the following: When he was in Egypt, a report was spread abroad that he was dead. In consequence of this rumour, Jason took the opportunity of recovering the office of high priest from his brother Menelaus, and with a thousand men took Jerusalem, drove Menelaus into the castle, and killed many whom he took for his enemies. Antiochus, hearing of this, supposed that all the Jews had revolted, and determined to inflict summary chastisement on them on his way to his own land. See Jahn, "Hebrew Commonwealth," p. 263.

And he shall do exploits, and return to his own land - The word "exploits" is supplied by the translators. The Hebrew is, simply, "he shall do;" that is, he shall accomplish the purpose of his heart on the covenant people. In this expedition he took Jerusalem, whether by storm or by stratagem is not quite certain. Diodorus Siculus, and the author of the second book of Maccabees, and Josephus (Jeweish Wars, i. 1,2, and vi. 10,1), say that it was by storm. The account which he gives in his "Antiquities" (b. xii. ch. v. Section 3) is, that he took it by stratagem, but the statement in the "Jewish Wars" is much more probable, for Antiochus plundered the city, killed eighty thousand persons, men, women, and children, took forty thousand prisoners, and sold as many into slavery, 2 Maccabees 5:5,6, 11-14. As if this were not enough, under the guidance of the high priest Menelaus, he went into the sanctuary, uttering blasphemous language, took away all the gold and silver vessels he could find there, the golden table, altar, and candlestick, and all the great vessels, and that he might leave nothing behind, searched the subterranean vaults, and in this manner collected eighteen hundred talents of gold. He then sacrificed swine on the altar, boiled a piece of the flesh, and sprinkled the whole temple with the broth, 2 Maccabees 5:15-21; 1 Maccabees 1:21-28; Diodorus Sic. xxxiv. 1; Jahn, "Hebrew Commonwealth," p. 264.

Verse 29

At the time appointed - In the purposes of God. See the notes at Daniel 11:27. That is, at the time when God shall design to accomplish his own purposes in regard to him. The idea is, that there was a definite period in the Divine Mind in which all this was to be done, and that when this should occur Antiochus would return again to invade Egypt.

He shall return, and come toward the south - With an intention of invading Egypt. The occasion of this invasion was, that after the departure of Antiochus, leaving Ptolemy in possession of Egypt, or having professedly given up the kingdom to him, Ptolemy suspected the designs of Antiochus, and came to an agreement with his brother Physcon, that they should share the government between them, and resist Antiochus with their united power. To do this, they hired mercenary troops from Greece. Antiochus, learning this, openly threw off the mask, and prepared to invade Egypt again, 167 b.c. He sent his fleet to Cyprus to secure possession of that island, and led his army toward Egypt to subdue the two brothers, designing to annex the whole country to his dominions.

But it shall not be as the former, or as the latter - At the first invasion or the second. In these he was successful; in this he would not be. The reason of his want of success is stated in the following verse - that by the aid which the two brothers had obtained from abroad, as expressed in the next verse, they would be able to oppose him.

Verse 30

For the ships of Chittim shall come against him - The word rendered Chittim - כתים *kîttîym* - according to Gesenius, properly means "Cyprians," so called from a celebrated Phoenician colony in the island of Cyprus. In a wider acceptation the name came to comprehend the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean Sea, especially the northern parts, and therefore stands for the islands and coasts of Greece and the AEgean Sea. See Gesenius, Lexicon, and compare Josephus, "Ant." b. i. ch. vi. 1. The Egyptian government had called in the aid of the Romans, and Antiochus, therefore, was threatened with a war with the Romans if he did not abandon his enterprise against Egypt. The reference in the passage before us is to the embassage which the Romans sent to Antiochus in Egypt, requiring him to desist from his enterprise against Egypt. "When he had arrived at Leusine, about four miles from Alexandria, he met Caius Popilins Laenas, Caius Decimius, and Caius Hostilius, ambassadors, whom the Roman Senate had sent to him at the earnest request of Ptolemy Physcon. They were instructed to assure Antiochus that he must leave the kingdom of Egypt and the island of Cyprus in peace, or expect a war with the Romans. When Antiochus said that he would lay the affair before his council, Popilius, the head of the legation, with his staff drew a circle about the king in the sand on which they stood, and exclaimed, ‹Before you leave that circle, you must give me an answer which I can report to the Senate.' Antiochius was confounded, but on a little reflection, he said he would do whatever the Senate required." - Jahn, "Heb. Commonwealth," pp. 265,266; Polyb. "Legat." Sections 90,92; Livy, xliv. 14,29, 41-46; xlv. 10,12. These ambassadors came by the way of Greece, and in Grecian vessels, and their coming might properly be described as "ships from Chittim." They went from Rome to Brundusium, and then passed over to the Grecian shore, and from thence by the way of Chialcis, Delos, and Rhodes, to Alexandria. - Prideaux, iii. 237.

Therefore he shall be grieved - The word used here - כאה *kâ'âh* - means, properly, to become faint-hearted; to be frightened; to be dejected, sad, humbled, Job 30:8; Ezekiel 13:22; Psalm 109:16. The meaning here is,

that he became dispirited, dejected, cast down, and abandoned his purpose. He saw that it would be vain to attempt to contend with the Romans, and he was constrained reluctantly to relinquish his enterprise.

And return - Set out to return to his own land.

And have indignation against the holy covenant - See the notes at Daniel 11:28. That is, he would be filled with wrath against Jerusalem and the Jews. Polybius says that he left Egypt in great anger, because he was compelled by the Romans to abandon his designs. In this condition he was, of course, in a state of mind to become irritated against any other people, and, if an occassion should be given, would seek to vent Iris wrath in sonic other direction. This habitual state of feeling toward Jerusalem and the Jews would make him ready to seize upon the slightest pretext to wreak his vengeance on the holy land. What was the immediate occasion of his taking this opportunity to attack Jerusalem is not certainly known, but in his marching back through Palestine, he detached from his army twenty-two thousand men, under the command of Apollonius, and sent them to Jerusalem to destroy it. - Prideaux, iii. 239; Jahn, "Heb. Commononwealth," p. 266. Apollonius arrived before Jerusalem 167 b.c., just two years after the city had been taken by Antiochus himself.

So shall he do - That is, in the manner described in this and the following verses.

He shall even return - On his way to his own land.

And have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant - Have an understanding with them; that is, with a portion of the nation - with those who were disposed to cast off the religion of their fathers. There was a coonsiderable part of the nation that was inclined to do this, and to introduce the customs of the Greeks (compare Jahn," Heb. Commonwealth, pp. 258-260); and it was natural that Antiochus should seek to have an understanding with them, and to make use of them in accomplishing his designs. It was very probably at the solicitation of this infidel and disaffected party of the Hebrew people that Antiochus had interfered in their affairs at all. Compare 1 Maccabees 1:11-15.

Verse 31

And arms shall stand on his part - Up to this verse there is a general agreement among commentators, that the reference is to Antiochus Epiphanes. From this verse, however, to the end of the chapter, there is no little diversity of opinion. One portion suppose that the description of

Antiochus and his deeds continues still to be the design of the prophet; another, that the Romans are here introduced, and that a part of the predictions in the remainder of this chapter are yet to be fulfilled; another, as Jerome, and most of the Christian fathers, suppose that the reference is to Antiochus as the type of Antichrist, and that the description passes from the type to the antitype. In this last class are found Bishop Newton, Gill, Calvin, Prideaux, Wintle, Elliott (Apocalyapse, iv. 137, following), and others; in the former, Grotius, Lengerke, Bertholdt, Maurer … . In this same class is found the name of Porphyry - who maintained that the whole referred to Antiochus, and that the allusion was so clear as to prove that this portion of the book was written "after" the events had occurred.

The reason suggested for the change in the supposed reference, as alleged by Bishop Newton "on the Prophecies," p. 296, is, substantially, that what follows can be applied only in part to Antiochus. Whether this portion of the chapter can be shown to refer to him, we shall be able to determine as we proceed. Nothing can be clearer than the allusion up to this point. The word rendered "arms," in the verse before us (זרעים *zeroʿîym* - singular זרוע *zerôaʿ*), means, properly, the arm - especially the lower arm below the elbow; and then comes to denote strength, might, power; and thence, is applied to a military force, or an army. See Daniel 11:15. Such is undoubtedly the meaning here, and the reference is to the military force which Antiochus would employ to wreak his vengeance on the Jews - particularly by the instrumentality of Apollonius. Others would apply this to the Romans, and suppose that they are introduced here; but this construction is forced and unnatural, for

(a) the reference in the previous verses was, undoubtedly, to Antiochus, and the narrative seems to proceed as if there were no change.

(b) There is nothing in the statement which does not agree with what was done by Antiochus.

As a matter of fact, as attested by all history, he detached Apollonius with twenty-two thousand men, on his mortified return to his own land, to attack and lay waste Jerusalem, and Apollonius did all that is here said would be done. Bishop Newton concedes (p. 294) that "this interpretation might be admitted, if the other parts were equally applicable to Antiochus;

but," says he, "the difficulty, or rather impossibility of applying them to Antiochus, or any of the Syrian kings, his successors, obliges us to look out for another interpretation." Accordingly, he says that Jerome and the Christians of his time contend that these things apply to Antichrist; and he himself adopts the view proposed by Sir Isaac Newton, that it refers to the Romans, and that the allusion is to the fact that, at the very time when Antiochus retreated out of Egypt, the Romans conquered Macedonia, "putting an end to the reign of Daniel's third beast," and that the prophet here leaves off the description of the actions of the Greeks, and commences a description of those of the Romans in Greece. As, however, all that is "here" said is strictly applicable to what was done by Antiochus, such an interpretation is unnecessary.

And they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength - The "sanctuary of strength" seems to refer to the fortifications or defenses that had been set up to protect Jerusalem, or the temple. At various points the temple was defended in this manner, not only by the walls of the city, but by fortifications erected within, and so as to prevent an army from approaching the temple, even if they should penetrate the outer wall. Compare Daniel 9:27. The reference here is, undoubtedly, to something that Antiochus set up in the temple that was an indication of desolation, or the result of his having laid the temple in ruins.

The very expression occurs in Daniel 9:27, and in the New Testament, with great propriety to what the Romans set up in the temple as an indication of its conquest and profanation; but that fact does not make it certain that it is so to be understood "here," for it is as applicable to what Antiochus did as it is to what was done by the Romans. See the notes at Daniel 9:27.

Verse 32

And such as do wickedly against the covenant - That is, among the Jews. They who apostatized, and who became willing to receive the religion of foreigners. There "was" such a party in Jerusalem, and it was numerous. See Jahn, "Heb. Commonwealth," pp. 258,259. Compare Daniel 11:21. The margin is, "or, cause to dissemble." The meaning of the Hebrew word חנף *chânêph* is, rather, "to profane, to pollute, to defile;" and the idea here is, that he would cause them to become defiled; that is, that he would seduce them to impiety and apostasy.

But the people that do know their God - They who adhere to the service and worship of the true God, and who are incapable of being seduced to apostasy and sin. The reference here is, undoubtedly, to Judas Maccabeus and his followers - a full account of whose doings is to be found in the books of the Maccabees. See also Prideaux, "Con." iii. 245, following, and Jahn, "Heb. Commonwealth," pp. 268, following.

Shall be, strong - Shall evince great valor, and shall show great vigour in opposing him.

And do exploits - The word "exploits," as in Daniel 11:28, is supplied by the translators, but not improperly. The meaning is, that they would show great prowess, and perform illustrious deeds in battle. See Prideaux, "Con." iii. pp. 262,263.

Verse 33

And they that under stand among the people - Among the Hebrew people. The allusion is to such as, in those times of so general corruption and apostasy, should have a proper understanding of the law of God and the nature of religion. There were such in the days of Judas Maccabeus, and it is reasonable to suppose that they would endeavor to inculcate just views among the people.

Shall instruct many - In the nature of religion; in their duty to their country and to God. See Prideaux, "Con." iii. 265.

Yet they shall fall by the sword - They shall not be immediately nor always successful. Their final triumph would be only after many of them had fallen in battle, or been made captives. Matrathins, the father of Judas Maccabeus, who began the opposition to Antiochus (1 Maccabees 2:1), having summoned to his standard as many as he could induce to follow him, retired for security to the mountains. He was pursued, and refusing to fight on the Sabbath, his enemies came upon him, and killed many of his followers, 1 Maccabees 2:14-37. The author of the book of Maccabees (1 Maccabees 2:38) says of this: "So they rose up against them in battle on the sabbath, and they slew them, with their wives and children, and their cattle, to the number of a thousand people."

And by flame - By fire. That is, probably, their dwellings would be fired, and they would perish in the flames, or in caves where they fled for shelter, or by being cast into heated caldrons of brass. See 2 Maccabees 6:11: "And others that had run together into caves near by" (when Antiochus endeavored to enforce on them the observance of pagan laws and

customs), "to keep the sabbath-day secretly, being discovered to Philip, were all burnt together, because they made a conscience to help themselves for the honor of the most sacred day." 2 Maccabees 7:3-5: "Then the king, being in a rage, commanded pans and caldrons to be made hot: which immediately being heated, he commanded to cut out the tongue of him that spake first, and to cut off the utmost parts of his body, the rest of his brethren and his mother looking on. Now when he was thus maimed in all his members, he commanded him, being yet alive, to be brought to the fire, and to be fried in the pan," etc.

By captivity - 1 Maccabees 1:32: "But the women and children took they captive." See also 2 Maccabees 5:24.

And by spoil - By plunder, to wit, of the temple and city. See 1 Maccabees 1:20-24.

Many days - Hebrew, "days." The time is not specified, but the idea is that it would be for a considerable period. Josephus says it was three years. - "Ant." b. xii. ch. vii. Sections 6,7; 1 Maccabees 1:59; 4:54; 2 Maccabees 10:1-7.

Verse 34

Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help - By small accessions to their forces. The armies of the Maccabees were never "very" numerous; but the idea here is, that when they should be persecuted, there would be accessions to their forces, so that they would be able to prosecute the war. At first the numbers were very few who took up arms, and undertook to defend the institutions of religion, but their numbers increased until they were finally victorious. Those who first banded together, when the calamities came upon the nation, were Mattathias and his few followers, and this is the little help that is here referred to. See Daniel 11:21. The sense here is not that Judas would flatter them, or would secure their cooperation by flatteries, but that this would be what they would propose to their own minds, and what would influence them. Compare 1 Maccabees 5:55-57: "Now what time as Judas and Jonathan were in the land of Galaad, and Simon his brother in Galilee before Ptolemais, Joseph the son of Zacharias, and Azarias, captains of the garrisons, heard of the valiant acts and warlike deeds which they had done. Wherefore they said, Let us also get us a name, and go fight against the pagan round about us." Compare 2 Maccabees 12:40; 13:21. There can be no doubt that many might join them from these motives. Such an event would be likely to occur

anywhere, when one was successful, and where there was a prospect of spoils or of fame in uniting with a victorious leader of an amy.

Verse 35

And some of them understanding shall fall - Some of those who have a correct understanding of religion, and who have joined the army from pure motives. The idea seems to be that on some occasion they would meet with a temporary defeat, in order that the sincerity of the others might be tested, or that it might be seen who adhered to the cause from principle, and who from selfish purposes. If they should not always be successful; if they should be temporarily defeated; if some of the most eminent among them should fall among the slain; and if the cause should at any time look dark, this would serve to try the sin cerity of the remainder of the army, and would be likely to "thin it off" of those who had joined it only from mercenary motives.

To try them - Margin, "or, by them." So the Hebrew - בהם *bâhem* The meaning perhaps is, that it would be "by" them, as it were, that the army would be tried. As they would fall in battle, and as the cause would seem to be doubtful, this would test the fidelity of others. The word "try" here (צרף *tsâraph*) means, properly, "to melt, to smelt" - as metals; then to prove anyone; and then to purify.

And to purge - To purify; to test the army and to make it pure.

And to make them white - To wit, by thus allowing those who had joined the army from mercenary motives to withdraw. Compare Daniel 11:27. This seems to be designed for an assurance that the calamity would come to an end, or that there was a limit beyond which it could not pass. Thus it would be an encouragement to those who were engaged in the struggle, for they would see that success must ultimately crown their labors.

Verse 36

And the king shall do according to his will - Shall be absolute and supreme, and shall accomplish his purposes. This refers, it seems to me, beyond question, to Antiochus Epiphanes, and was exactly fulfilled in him. He accomplished his purposes in regard to the city and temple in the most arbitrary manner, and was, in every respect, an absolute despot. It should be said, however, here, that most Christian interpreters suppose that the allusion here to Antiochus ceases, and that henceforward, it refers to Antichrist. So Jerome, Gill, Bp. Newton, and others; and so Jerome says many of the Jews understood it. The only reason alleged for this is, that

there are things affirmed here of the "king" which could not be true of Antiochus. But, in opposition to this, it may be observed

(a) that the allusion in the previous verses is undoubtedly to Antiochus Epiphanes.

(b) There is no indication of any "change," for the prophetic narrative seems to proceed as if the allusion to the same person continued.

(c) The word "king" is not a word to be applied to Antichrist, it being nowhere used of him.

(d) Such a transition, without anymore decided marks of it, would not be in accordance with the usual method in the prophetic writings, leaving a plain prediction in the very midst of the description, and passing on at once to a representation of one who would arise after many hundreds of years, and of whom the former could be considered as in no way the type. The most obvious and honest way, therefore, of interpreting this is, to refer it to Antiochus, and perhaps we shall find that the difficulty of applying it to him is not insuperable.

And he shall exalt himself - No one can doubt that this will agree with Antiochus Epiphanes - a proud, haughty, absolute, and stern monarch, the purpose of whose reign was to exalt himself, and to extend the limits of his empire.

And magnify himself above every god - That is, by directing what gods should or should not be worshipped; attempting to displace the claim of all those who were worshipped as gods at his pleasure, and establishing the worship of other gods in their place. Thus he assumed the right to determine what god should be worshipped in Jerusalem, abolishing the worship of Jehovah, and setting up that of Jupiter Olympius in the stead; and so throughout his whole dominion, by a proclamation, he forbade the worship of any god but his, Daniel 10:21. The angel here states a general truth - that all that God has ordained will come to pass. The application of this truth here is, that the series of events must be suffered to run on, and that it could not be expected that they would be arrested until all that had been determined in the Divine mind should be effected. They who would suffer, therefore, in those times must wait with patience until the Divine

purposes should be brought about, and when the period should arrive, the calamities would cease.

Verse 37

Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers - The God that his fathers or ancestors had worshipped: That is, he would not be bound or restrained by the religion of his own land, or by any of the usual laws of religion. He would worship any God that he pleased, or none as he pleased. The usual restraints that bind men - the restraints derived from the religion of their ancestors - would in this case be of no avail. See the notes at Daniel 11:36. This was in all respects true of Antiochus. At his pleasure he worshipped the gods commonly adored in his country, or the gods worshipped by the Greeks and Romans, or no gods. And, in a special manner, instead of honoring the god of his fathers, and causing the image of that god to be placed in the temple at Jerusalem, as it might have been supposed he would, he caused the altar of Jupiter Olympius to be set up there, and his worship to be celebrated there. In fact, as Antiochus had been educated abroad, and had passed his early life in foreign countries, he had never paid much respect to the religion of his own land. The attempt to introduce a foreign religion into Judea was an attempt to introduce the religion of the Greeks (Jahn, Heb. Commonwealth, p. 267); and in no instance did he endeavor to force upon them the peculiar religion of his own nation. In his private feelings, therefore, and in his public acts, it might be said of Antiochus, that he was characterized in an eminent degree by a want of regard for the faith of his ancestors. The language used here by the angel is what would properly denote great infidelity and impiety.

Nor the desire of women - The phrase "the desire of women" is in itself ambiguous, and may either mean what they desire, that is, what is agreeable to them, or what they commonly seek, and for which they would plead; or it may mean his own desire - that is, that he would not be restrained by the desire of women, by any regard for women, for honorable matrimony, or by irregular passion. The phrase here is probably to be taken in the former sense, as this best suits the connection. There has been great variety in the interpretation of this expression. Some have maintained that it cannot be applicable to Antiochus at all, since he was a man eminently licentious and under the influence of abandoned women. Jerome, *in loc*., John D. Michaelis, Dereser, Gesenius, and Lengerke suppose that this means that he

would not regard the beautiful statue of the goddess Venus whose temple was in Elymais, which he plundered.

Staudlin and Dathe, that he would not regard the weeping or tears of women - that is, that he would be cruel. Bertholdt, that he would not spare little children, the object of a mother‘s love - that is, that he would be a cruel tyrant. Jerome renders it, Et erit in concupiscentiis faminarum, and explains it of unbridled lust, and applies it principally to Antiochus. Elliott, strangely it seems to me (Apocalypse, iv. 152), interprets it as referring to what was so much the object of desire among the Hebrew women - the Messiah, the promised seed of the woman; and he says that he had found this opinion hinted at by Faber on the Prophecies (Ed. 5), i. 380-385. Others expound it as signifying that he would not regard honorable matrimony, but would be given to unlawful pleasures. It may not be practicable to determine with certainty the meaning of the expression, but it seems to me that the design of the whole is to set forth the impiety and hard-heartedness of Antiochus. He would not regard the gods of his fathers; that is, he would not be controlled by any of the principles of the religion in which he had been educated, but would set them all at defiance, and would do as he pleased; and, in like manner, he would be unaffected by the influences derived from the female character - would disregard the objects that were nearest to their hearts, their sentiments of kindness and compassion; their pleadings and their tears; he would be a cruel tyrant, alike regardless of all the restraints derived from heaven and earth - the best influences from above and from below.

It is not necessary to say that this agrees exactly with the character of Antiochus. He was sensual and corrupt, and given to licentious indulgence, and was incapable of honorable and pure love, and was a stranger to all those bland and pure affections produced by intercourse with refined and enlightened females. If one wishes to describe a high state of tyranny and depravity in a man, it cannot be done better than by saying that he disregards whatever is attractive and interesting to a virtuous female mind.

Nor regard any god - Any religious restraints whatever - the laws of any god worshipped in his own land or elsewhere - in heaven or on earth. That is, he would be utterly irreligious in heart, and where it conflicted with his purposes would set at nought every consideration derived from reverence to God. This harmonizes well with the previous declaration about

women. The two commonly go together. He that is unrestrained by the attractive virtues of the female mind and character; he that has no regard for the sympathies and kindnesses that interest virtuous females; he that sees nothing lovely in what commonly engages their thoughts; and he that throws himself beyond the restraints of their society, and the effects of their conversation, is commonly a man who cuts himself loose from all religion, and is at the same time a despiser of virtuous females and of God. No one will expect piety toward God to be found in a bosom that sees nothing to interest him in the sympathies and virtues of the femme mind; and the character of a woman-hater and a hater of God will uniformly be found united in the same person. Such a person was Antiochus Epiphanes; and such men have often been found in the world.

For he shall magnify himself above all - Above all the restraints of religion, and all those derived from the intercourse of virtuous social life - setting at nought all the restraints that usually bind men. Compare the notes at Daniel 8:10-11.

Verse 38

But in his estate - The marginal reading here is, "As for the Almighty God, in his seat he shall honor, yea, he shall honor a god," etc. The more correct rendering, however, is that in the text, and the reference is to some god which he would honor, or for which he would show respect. The rendering proposed by Lengerke is the true rendering, "But the god of forces (firm places, fastnesses - der Vesten) he shall honor in their foundation" (auf seinem Gestelle). The Vulgate renders this, "But the god Maozim shall he honor in his place." So also the Greek. The phrase "in his estate" - על־כנו *'al -kanô* - means, properly, "upon his base," or foundation. It occurs in Daniel 11:20-21, where it is applied to a monarch who would succeed another - occupying the same place, or the same seat or throne. See the notes at Daniel 11:2. Here it seems to mean that he would honor the god referred to in the place which he occupied, or, as it were, on his own throne, or in his own temple. The margin is, "or stead;" but the idea is not that he would honor this god instead of another, but that he would do it in his own place. If, however, as Gesenius and De Wette suppose, the sense is, "in his place, or stead," the correct interpretation is, that he would honor this "god of forces," in the stead of honoring the god of his fathers, or any other god. The general idea is clear, that he would show disrespect or contempt for all other gods, and pay his devotions to this god alone.

Shall he honor - Pay respect to; worship; obey. This would be his god. He would show no respect to the god of his fathers, nor to any of the idols usually worshipped, but would honor this god exclusively.

The God of forces - Margin, Mauzzim, or gods protectors; or, munitions. Hebrew, מעזים *mâʿuzym* Latin Vulgate, *Maozim*; Greek, Μαωξεὶμ *Maōxeim* Syriac, "the strong God;" Luther, Mausim; Lengerke, der Vesten- fastnesses, fortresses. The Hebrew word מעוז *mâʿôz* means, properly, a strong or fortified place, a fortress; and Gesenius (Lexicon) supposes that the reference here is to "the god of fortresses, a deity of the Syrians obtruded upon the Jews, perhaps Mars." So also Grotius, C. B. Michaelis, Staudlin, Bertholdt, and Winer. Dereser, Havernick, and Lengerke explain it as referring to the Jupiter Capitolinus that Antiochus had learned to worship by his long residence in Rome, and whose worship he transferred to his own country. There has been no little speculation as to the meaning of this passage, and as to the god here referred to; but it would seem that the general idea is plain.

It is, that the only god which he would acknowledge would be force, or power, or dominion. He would set at nought the worship of the god of his fathers, and all the usual obligations and restraints of religion; he would discard and despise all the pleadings of humanity and kindness, as if they were the weaknesses of women, and he would depend solely on force. He would, as it were, adore only the "god of force," and carry his purposes, not by right, or by the claims of religion, but by arms. The meaning is not, I apprehend, that he would formally set up this "god of forces," and adore him, but that this would be, in fact, the only god that he would practically acknowledge. In selecting such a god as would properly represent his feelings he would choose such an one as would denote force or dominion. Such a god would be the god of war, or the Roman Jupiter, who, as being supreme, and ruling the world by his mere power, would be a fit representative of the prevailing purpose of the monarch.

The general sentiment is, that all obligations of religion, and justice, and compassion, would be disregarded, and he would carry his purposes by mere power, with the idea, perhaps, included, as seems to be implied in the remainder of the verse, that he would set up and adore such a foreign god as would be a suitable representation of this purpose. It is hardly necessary to say that this was eminently true of Antiochus Epiphanes; and it may be

equally said to be true of all the great heroes and conquerors of the world. Mars, the god of war, was thus adored openly in ancient times, and the devotion of heroes and conquerors to that idol god, though less open and formal, has not been less real by the heroes and conquerors of modern times; and, as we say now of an avaricious or covetous man that he is a worshipper of mammon, though he in fact formally worships no god, and has no altar, so it might be affirmed of Antiochus, and may be of heroes and conquerors in general, that the only god that is honored is the god of war, of power, of force; and that setting at nought all the obligations of religion, and of worship of the true God, they pay their devotions to this god alone.

Next to mammon, the god that is most adored in this world is the "god of force" - this Mauzzim that Antiochus so faithfully served. In illustration of the fact that seems here to be implied, that he would introduce such a god as would be a fit representative of this purpose of his life, it may be remarked that, when in Rome, where Antiochus spent his early years, he had learned to worship the Jupiter of the Capitol, and that he endeavored to introduce the worship of that foreign god into Syria. Of this fact there can be no doubt. It was one of the characteristics of Antiochus that he imitated the manners and customs of the Romans to a ridiculous extent (Diod. Sic. Frag, xxvi. 65); and it was a fact that he sent rich gifts to Rome in honor of the Jupiter worshipped there (Livy, lxii. 6), and that he purposed to erect a magnificent temple in honor of Jupiter Capitolinus in Antioch - Livy, xli. 20.

This temple, however, was not completed. It will be remembered, also, that he caused an altar to Jupiter to be erected over the altar of burnt-sacrifice in Jerusalem. It should be added, that they who apply this to Anti-christ, or the Pope, refer it to idol or image worship. Elliott (Apocalypse, iv. 153) supposes that it relates to the homage paid to the saints and martyrs under the Papacy, and says that an appellation answering to the word Mahuzzim was actually given to the departed martyrs and saints under the Papal apostasy. Thus he remarks: "As to what is said of the willful king's honoring the god Mahuzzim (a god whom his fathers knew not) in place of his ancestors' god, and the true God, it seems to me to have been well and consistently explained, by a reference to those saints, and their relics and images, which the apostasy from its first development regarded and

worshipped as the Mahuzzim, or fortresses of the places where they were deposited." - Apoc. iv. 157. But all this appears forced and unnatural; and if it be not supposed that it was designed to refer to Antichrist or the Papacy, no application of the language can be found so obvious and appropriate as that which supposes that it refers to Antiochus, and to his reliance on force rather than on justice and right.

And a god whom his fathers knew not - This foreign god, Jupiter, whom he had learned to worship at Rome.

Shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones … - That is, he shall lavish these things on building a temple for him, or on his image. This accords with the account which Livy gives (xli. 20) of the temple which he commenced at Antioch in honor of Jupiter. Livy says that, although in his conduct he was profligate, and although in many things it was supposed that he was deranged - "*Quidam hand dubie insanire aiebunt* " - yet that in two respects he was distinguished for having a noble mind - for his worship of the gods, and for his favor toward cities in adorning them: "*In duabus tamen magnis honestisque rebus vere regius erat animus, in urbium donis, et deorum cultu*." He then adds, in words that are all the commentary which we need on the passage before us: "*Magnificentiae vero in deos vel Jovis Olympii ternplum Athenis, unum in terris inchoatum pro magnitudine dei, potest testis esse. Sed et Delon aris insignibus statuarumque copia exornavit; et Antiochiae Joyis capitolini magnificum templum, non laqueatum auro tantum, sed parietibus totis lamina inauratum, et alia multa in aliis locis pollicita, quia perbreve tempus regni ejus fuit, non perfecited*."

And pleasant things - Margin, "things desired." That is, with ornaments, or statuary, or perhaps pictures. Compare the notes at Isaiah 2:16. e meant that the temple should be beautified and adorned in the highest degree. This temple, Livy says, he did not live to finish.

Verse 39

Thus shall he do in, the most strong holds - Margin, "fortresses of munitions." The reference is to strongly fortified places; to those places which bad been made strong for purposes of defense. The idea is, that he would carry on his purposes against these places, as it were, under the auspices of this strange god. It was a fact, that in his wars Antiochus came into possession of the strong places, or the fortified towns of the nations

which he attacked - Jerusalem, Sidon, Peluslum, Memphis - then among the strongest places in the world.

With a strange god - A foreign god whom his fathers did not acknowledge; that is, according to the supposition above, and according to the fact, with the god whom he had adored at Rome, and whose worship he was ambitious to transfer to his own empire - the Jupiter of the Capitol. He seemed to be acting under the auspices of this foreign god.

Whom he shall acknowledge - By building temples and altars to him. "And increase with glory." That is, with honor. He would seem to increase or extend his dominion in the world, by introducing his worship in his own county and in the lands which he would conquer. Before, his dominion appeared to be only at Rome; Antiochus sought that it might be extended farther, over his own kingdom, and over the countries that he would conquer.

And he shall cause them to rule over many - That is, the foreign gods. Mention had been made before of only one god; but the introduction of the worship of Jupiter would be naturally connected with that of the other gods of Rome, and they are, therefore, referred to in this manner. The conquests of Antiochus would seem to be a setting up of the dominion of these gods over the lands which he subdued.

And shall divide the land for gain - Margin, "a price." The reference here is, probably, to the holy land, and the idea is that it would be partitioned out among his followers for a price, or with a view to gain; that is, perhaps, that it would be "farmed out" for the purpose of raising revenue, and that with this view, as often occurred, it would be set up for sale to the highest bidder. This was a common way of raising revenue, by "farming out" a conquered province; that is, by disposing of the privilege of raising a revenue in it to the one who would offer most for it, and the consequence was, that it gave rise to vast rapacity in extorting funds from the people. Compare 1 Maccabees 3:35,36, where, speaking of Lysias, whom Antiochus had "set to oversee the affairs of the king from the river Euphrates unto the borders of Egypt," it is said of Antiochus that he "gave him (Lysias) charge of all things that he would have done, as also concerning them that dwelt in Judea and Jerusalem: to wit, that he should send an army against them, to destroy and root out the strength of Israel, and the remnant of Jerusalem, and to take away their memorial from that

place; and that he should place strangers in all their quarters, ‹and divide their land by lot. ‹“

Verse 40

And at the time of the end - See Daniel 11:35. The “time of the end” must properly denote the end or consummation of the series of events under consideration, or the matter in hand, and properly and obviously means here the end or consummation of the transactions which had been referred to in the previous part of the vision. It is equivalent to what we should say by expressing it thus: “at the winding up of the affair.” In Daniel 12:4, Daniel 12:9, Daniel 12:13, the word “end,” however, obviously refers to another close or consummation - the end or consummation of the affairs that reach far into the future - the final dispensation of things in this world. It has been held by many that this could not be understood as referring to Antiochus, because what is here stated did not occur in the close of his reign. Perhaps at first sight the most obvious interpretation of what is said in this and the subsequent verses to the end of the chapter would be, that, after the series of events referred to in the previous verses; after Antiochus had invaded Egypt, and had been driven thence by the fear of the Romans, he would, in the close of his reign, again attack that country, and bring it, and Libya, and AEthiopia into subjection Daniel 11:43; and that when there, tidings out of the north should compel him to abandon the expedition and return again to his own land.

Porphyry (see Jerome, *in loc*.) says that this was so, and that Antiochus actually invaded Egypt in the “eleventh year of his reign,” which was the year before he died; and he maintains, therefore, that all this had a literal application to Antiochus, and that being so literally true, it must have been written after the events had occurred. Unfortunately the fifteen books of Porphyry are lost, and we have only the fragments of his works preserved which are to be found in the Commentary of Jerome on the book of Daniel. The statement of Porphyry, referred to by Jerome, is contrary to the otherwise universal testimony of history about the last days of Antiochus, and there are such improbabilities in the statement as to leave the general impression that Porphyry in this respect falsified history in order to make it appear that this must have been written after the events referred to. If the statement of Porphyry were correct, there would be no difficulty in applying this to Antiochus. The common belief, however, in regard to Antiochus is, that he did not invade Egypt after the series of events referred to above, and

after he had been required to retire by the authority of the Roman ambassadors, as stated in the notes at Daniel 11:30.

This belief accords also with all the probabilities of the case. Under these circumstances, many commentators have supposed that this portion of the chapter Daniel 11:40-45 could not refer to Antiochus, and they have applied it to Anti-christ, or to the Roman power. Yet how forced and unnatural such an application must be, anyone can perceive by examining Newton on the Prophecies, pp. 308-315. The obvious, and perhaps it may be added the honest, application of the passage must be to Antiochus. This is that which would occur to any reader of the prophecy; this is what he would obviously hold to be the true application; and this is that only which would occur to anyone, unless it were deemed necessary to bend the prophecy to accommodate it to the history. Honesty and fairness, it seems to me, require that we should understand this as referring to the series of events which had been described in the previous portion of the chapter, and as designed to state the ultimate issue or close of the whole.

There will be no difficulty in this if we may regard these verses Daniel 11:40-45 as containing a recapitulation, or a summing up of the series of events, with a statement of the manner in which they would close. If so interpreted all will be clear. It will then be a general statement of what would occur in regard to this remarkable transaction that would so materially affect the interests of religion in Judea, and be such an important chapter in the history of the world. This summing up, moreover, would give occasion to mention some circumstances in regard to the conquests of Antiochus which could not so well be introduced in the narrative itself, and to present, in few words, a summary of all that would occur, and to state the manner in which all would be terminated. Such a summing up, or recapitulation, is not uncommon, and in this way the impression of the whole would be more distinct.

With this view, the phrase “and at the time of the end” Daniel 11:40 would refer, not so much to the “time of the end” of the reign of Antiochus, but to the “time of the end” of the whole series of the transactions referred to by the angel as recorded “in the scripture of truth” Daniel 10:21, from the time of Darius the Mede Daniel 11:1 to the close of the reign of Antiochus -

a series of events embracing a period of some three hundred and fifty years. Viewed in reference to this long period, the whole reign of Antiochus, which was only eleven years, might be regarded as "the time of the end." It was, indeed, the most disastrous portion of the whole period, and in this chapter it occupies more space than all that went before it - for it was to be the time of the peculiar and dreadful trial of the Hebrew people, but it was "the end" of the matter - the winding up of the series - the closing of the events on which the eye of the angel was fixed, and which were so important to be known beforehand. In these verses, therefore Daniel 11:40-45, he sums up what would occur in what he here calls appropriately "the time of the end" - the period when the predicted termination of this series of important events should arrive - to wit, in the brief and eventful reign of Antiochus.

Shall the king of the south - The king of Egypt. See Daniel 11:5-6, Daniel 11:9.

Push at him - As in the wars referred to in the previous verse - in endeavoring to expel him from Coelo-Syria and Palestine, and from Egypt itself, Daniel 11:25, Daniel 11:29-30. See the note at those verses.

And the king of the north shall come against him - The king of Syria - Antiochus. Against the king of Egypt. He shall repeatedly invade his lands. See the notes above.

Like a whirlwind - As if he would sweep everything before him. This he did when he invaded Egypt; when he seized on Memphis, and the best portion of the land of Egypt, and when he obtained possession of the person of Ptolemy. See the notes at Daniel 11:25-27.

With chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships - All this literally occurred in the successive invasions of Egypt by Antiochus. See the notes above.

And he shall enter into the countries - Into Coelo-Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and the adjacent lands.

And shall overflow and pass over - Like a flood he shall spread his armies over these countries. See the notes at Daniel 11:22.

Verse 41

He shall enter also into the glorious land - Margin, "land of delight," or ornament, or goodly land. The Hebrew is, "land of ornament;" that is, of beauty, to wit, Palestine, or the holy land. The same word is used in Daniel

11:16. See the note at that place. As to the fact that he would invade that land, see the notes at Daniel 11:28, Daniel 11:31-33.

And many countries shall be overthrown - The word countries here is supplied by the translators. The Hebrew word רבות *rabôth* may denote "many things," and might refer to cities, dwellings, institutions, etc. The meaning is, that he would produce wide devastation, which was true of Antiochus, when, either personally or by his generals, he invaded the land of Palestine. See the notes above.

But these shall escape out of his hand … - Intent on his work in Palestine, and having enough there to occupy his attention, the neighboring lands of Edom, Moab, and Ammon shall not be molested by him. The wrath of Antiochus was particularly against the Jews, and it is not a little remarkable that no mention is made of his invading these adjacent countries. The route which he pursued was to Egypt, along the shores of the Mediterranean, and though he turned from his course to wreak his vengeance on the Jews, yet it does not appear that he carried his arms farther from the main line of his march. Antiochus was principally engaged with the Egyptians and the Romans; he was also engaged with the Jews, for Palestine had been the battlefield - the main place and object of contention between the king of Syria and the king of Egypt. Moab, and Edom, and Ammon were comparatively remote from the scene of conflict, and were left unmolested. It would seem most probable, also, that these nations were friendly to Antiochus, and were in alliance with him, or at least it is certain that they were hostile to the Jews, which, for the purposes of Antiochus, amounted to the same thing. Judas Maccabeus is represented as engaged with them in war, and consequently they must have either been in alliance with Antiochus, or in some other way promoting his interests. See 1 Maccabees 4:61; 5:3,6-9. These countries were, therefore, in fact, secure from the invasions of Antiochus, and so far the prophecy was literally fulfilled. It may be added

(a), that no occurrence since that time has taken place to which the prophecy can with propriety be applied; and

(b), that no natural sagacity could have foreseen this, and that, therefore, if the prediction was uttered before the days of Antiochus, it must have been the result of Divine inspiration.

As to the former of these remarks (a), if anyone is desirous of seeing how forced and unnatural must be any attempt to apply this to any other times than those of Antiochus, he has only to consult Bishop Newton on the Prophecies (pp. 311-313), who explains it as referring to the Ottoman empire, and to the fact that though the Turks have been able to take Jerusalem, they have never been able to subdue the Arabians, the Moabites, or the Ammonites. Aleppo, Damascus, and Gaza, says he, were forced to submit, but these other places "escaped out of the hands" of the Turks. As to the other remark (b), if one, writing after the events, had intended to give a brief and striking view of what Antiochus did, he could not find better language to express it than to say in the words of the passage before us, "He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon." But it is clear that there is no natural sagacity by which this could be foreseen. There was nothing in the character of those nations, or in the nature of the case, which would lead one to anticipate it - for the presumption would be, that if a desolating war were waged on Palestine by a cruel conqueror, his ravages would be extended to the neighboring countries also.

Verse 42

He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries - Margin, send forth. Significant of war and conquest. The idea is, that he would be an invader of foreign lands - a characteristic which it is not necessary to show pertained to Antiochus.

And the land of Egypt shall not escape - Moab and Edom, and the land of Ammon would escape, but Egypt would not. We have seen in the exposition of this chapter (see the notes at Daniel 11:25-28) that he, in fact, subdued Memphis and the best portions of Egypt, and even obtained possession of the person of the king.

Verse 43

But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver - See the notes at Daniel 11:28. Having seized upon the most important places in Egypt, and having possession of the person of the king, he would, of course, have the wealth of Egypt at his disposal, and would return to his land laden with spoils.

And over all the precious things of Egypt - The rich lands, the public buildings, the contents of the royal palace, the works of art, and the monuments, and books, and implements of war. All these would, of course, be at the disposal of the conqueror.

And the Libyans - The word Libyans, in the Hebrew Scriptures, is everywhere joined with the Egyptians and Ethiopians. They are supposed to have been a people of Egyptian origin, and their country bordered on Egypt in the west. See Tanner‘s Ancient Atlas. A conquest of Egypt was almost in itself a conquest of Libya.

And the Ethiopians - Hebrew, Cushites - כּשׁים *kushîym* On the general meaning of the word Cush or Ethiopia in the Scriptures, see the note at Isaiah 11:11. The reference here, undoubtedly, is to the African Cush or Ethiopia, which bounded Egypt on the south. This country comprehended not only Ethiopia above Syene and the Cataracts, but likewise Thebais or Upper Egypt. A subjugation of Egypt would be, in fact, almost a conquest of this land.

Shall be at his steps - Gesenius renders this, “in his company.” The word means properly step, or walk. Compare Psalm 37:23; Proverbs 20:24. The Vulgate renders this, “And he shall pass also through Libya and Ethiopia.” The Greek, “and he shall have power over all the secret treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the desirable things of Egypt, and of the Libyans, and of the Ethiopians, in their strongholds.” Lengerke renders it, “And the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow his steps.” The proper sense of the Hebrew would be, that they accompanied him; that they marched with him or followed him; and the phrase would be applicable either to those who were allies, or who were led captive. The more probable idea would be that they were allies, or were associated with him, than that they were captives. I do not know that there are any distinct historical facts which show the truth of what is here predicted respecting Antiochus, but it cannot be considered as improbable that the prophecy was fulfilled, for

(a), as already observed, these nations, naturally allied to Egypt as being a part of the same people, bounded Egypt on the west and on the south;

(b) in the days of Ezekiel Ezekiel 30:4-5, we find that they were actually confederated with Egypt in a “league,” and that the calamity which fell upon Egypt, also fell directly upon Ethiopia and Libya; and

(c) the possession of Egypt, therefore, would be naturally followed with the subjugation of these places, or it might be presumed that they would seek the alliance and friendship of one who had subdued it.

Verse 44

But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him - Shall disturb him, or alarm him. That is, he will hear something from those quarters that will disarrange all his other plans, or that will summon him forth in his last and final expedition - on that expedition in which "he will come to his end" Daniel 11:45, or which will be the end of this series of historical events. The reference here is to the winding up of this series of transactions, and, according to the view taken on Daniel 11:40 (see the note at that place), it is not necessary to suppose that this would happen immediately after what is stated in Daniel 11:43, but it is rather to be regarded as a statement of what would occur in the end, or of the manner in which the person here referred to would finally come to an end, or in which these events would be closed. As a matter of fact, Antiochus, as will be seen in the notes at Daniel 11:45, was called forth in a warlike expedition by tidings or reports from Parthia and Armenia - regions lying to the east and the north, and it was in this expedition that he lost his life, and that this series of historical events was closed. Lengerke says, Antiochus assembled an army to take vengeance on the Jews, who, after the close of the unfortunate campaign in Egypt, rose up, under the Maccabees, against Antiochus, 1 Maccabees 3:10, following Then the intelligence that the Parthians in the east, and the Armenians in the north, had armed themselves for war against him, alarmed him. So Tacitus (Hist. v. 8) says (Antiochus Judaeis), *Demere superstitionem et mores Groecorum dare adnixus, quominus teterrimain gentem in melius mutaret, Parthorum bello prohibitus est, nam ea tempestate Arsaces defecerat*. In the year 147 b.c., Antiochus went on the expedition to Persia and Armenia, on the return from which he died. The occasions for this were these:

(a) Artaxias, the king of Armenia, who was his vassal, had revolted from him, and

(b) he sought to replenish his exhausted treasury, that he might wage the war with Judas Maccabeus.

See 1 Maccabees 3:27-37; Jos. Ant. b. xii. ch. vii. Section 2; Appian, Syriac. xlvi. 80; Porphyry, in Jerome, *in loc*.

Therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy … - Great fury at the revolt of Artaxias, and especially at this juncture when he was waging war with the Jews; and great fury at the Jews, with a determination to obtain the means utterly to destroy them. 1 Maccabees 3:27: "Now when king Antiochus heard these things (the successes of Judas Maceabeus), he was full of indignation." In every way his wrath was kindled. He was enraged against the Jews on account of their success; he was enraged against Artaxias for revolting from him; he was enraged because his treasury was exhausted, and he had not the means of prosecuting the war. In this mood of mind he crossed the Euphrates (1 Maccabees 3:37) to prosecute the war in the East, and, as it is said here, "utterly to make away many." Everything conspired to kindle his fury, and in this state of mind, he went forth on his last expedition to the East. Nothing, in fact, could better describe the state of mind of Antiochus than the language used here by the angel to Daniel.

Verse 45

And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace - The loyal tents; the military tents of himself and his court. Oriental princes, when they went forth even in war, marched in great state, with a large retinue of the officers of their court, and often with their wives and concubines, and with all the appliances of luxury. Compare the account of the invasion of Greece by Xerxes, or of the camp of Darius, as taken by Alexander the Great. The military stations of Antiochus, therefore, in this march, would be, for a time, the residence of the court, and would be distinguished for as great a degree of royal luxury as the circumstances would allow. At the same time, they would consist of tabernacles or tents, as those stations were not designed to be permanent. The meaning is, that the royal temporary residence in this expedition, and previous to the close - the end of the whole matter, that is, the death of Antiochus - would be in the mountain here referred to.

Between the seas - That is, between some seas in the "east," or "north" - for it was by tidings from the east and north that he would be disturbed and summoned forth, Daniel 11:44. We are, therefore, most naturally to look for this place in one of those quarters. The fact was, that he had two objects in view - the one was to put down the revolt in Armenia, and the other to replenish his exhausted treasury from Persia. The former would be naturally what he would first endeavor to accomplish, for if he suffered the

revolt to proceed, it might increase to such an extent that it would be impossible to subdue it. Besides, he would not be likely to go to Persia when there was a formidable insurrection in his rear, by which he might be harassed either in Persia, or on his return. It is most probable, therefore, that he would first quell the rebellion in Armenia on his way to Persia, and that the place here referred to where he would pitch his royal tent, and where he would end his days, would be some mountain where he would encamp before he reached the confines of Persia. There have been various conjectures as to the place here denoted by the phrase "between the seas," and much speculation has been employed to determine the precise location.

Jerome renders it, "And he shall pitch his tent in Apadno between the seas" - regarding the word which our translators have rendered "his palaces" (אפדנו *'apadenô*) as a proper name denoting a place. So the Greek, ἐφαδανῷ *ephadanō* The Syriac renders it, "in a plain, between the sea and the mountain." Theodoret takes it for a place near Jerusalem; Jerome says it was near Nicopolis, which was formerly called Emmaus, where the mountainous parts of Judea began to rise, and that it lay between the Dead Sea on the east, and the Mediterranean on the west, where he supposes that Anti-christ will pitch his tent; Porphyry and Calmer place it between the two rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates - the latter supposing it means "Padan of two rivers," that is, some place in Mesopotamia; and Dr. Goodwin supposes that the British Isles are intended, "which so eminently stand ‹between the seas.'" Prof. Stuart understands this of the Mediterranean Sea, and that the idea is, that the encampment of Antiochus was in some situation between this sea and Jerusalem, mentioned here as "the holy and beautiful mountain."

So far as the phrase used here - "between the seas" - is concerned, there can be no difficulty. It might be applied to any place lying between two sheets of water, as the country between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean, or the Dead Sea, and Persian Gulf; or the Caspian and Euxine Seas; or the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf, for there is nothing in the language to determine the exact locality. There is no reason for taking the word אפדנו *'apadenô* as a proper name - the literal meaning of it being tent or tabernacle; and the simple idea in the passage is, that the transaction here referred to - the event which would close this series, and which would constitute the "end" of these affairs - would occur in some mountainous

region situated between two seas or bodies of water. Any such place, so far as the meaning of the word is concerned, would correspond with this prophecy.

In the glorious holy mountain - That is, this would occur

(a) in a mountain, or in a mountainous region; and

(b) it would be a mountain to which the appellation used here - "glorious holy" - would be properly given.

The most obvious application of this phrase, it cannot be doubted, would be Jerusalem, as being the "holy mountain," or "the mountain of holiness," and as the place which the word "glorious" (צבי *tsîby*) would most naturally suggest. Compare Daniel 11:16, Daniel 11:41. Bertholdt and Dereser propose a change in the text here, and understand it as signifying that "he would pitch his tent between a sea and a mountain, and would seize upon a temple (קדֹשׁ *qôdesh*) there." But there is no authority for so changing the text. Rosenmuller, whom Lengerke follows, renders it, "between some sea and the glorious holy mountain;" Lengerke supposes that the meaning is, that Antiochus, on his return from Egypt, and before he went to Persia, "pitched his tents in that region, somewhere along the coasts of the Mediterranean, for the purpose of chastising the Jews," and that this is the reference here. But this, as well as the proposed reading of Dereser and Bertholdt, is a forced interpretation. Gesenius (Lexicon) supposes that the phrase means, "mount of holy beauty," i. e., Mount Sion. There are some things which are clear, and which the honest principles of interpretation demand in this passage, such as the following:

(a) What is here stated was to occur after the rumour from the east and the north Daniel 11:44 should call forth the person here referred to on this expedition.

(b) It would not be long before his "end," - before the close of the series, and would be connected with that; or would be the place where that would occur.

(c) It would be on some mountainous region, to which the appellation "glorious holy" might with propriety be applied.

The only question of difficulty is, whether it is necessary to interpret this of Jerusalem, or whether it may be applied to some other mountainous region where it may be supposed Antiochus "pitched his tents" on his last expedition to the East; and near the close of his life. Jerome renders this, Supermontem inclytum, et sanctum; the Greek, "on the holy mountain Sabaein" - σαβαεὶν *sabaein* The Syriac, "in a plain, between a sea and a mountain, and shall preserve his sanctuary." The literal meaning of the passage may be thus expressed, "on a mountain of beauty that is holy or sacred." The essential things are,

(a) that it would be on a mountain, or in a mountainous region;

(b) that this mountain would be celebrated or distinguished for "beauty" - צבי *tsebîy* - that is, for the beauty of its situation, or the beauty of its scenery, or the beauty of its structures - or that it should be regarded as beautiful;

(c) that it would be held as sacred or holy - קדֹשׁ *qôdesh* - that is, as sacred to religion, or regarded as a holy place, or a place of worship.

Now it is true that this language might be applied to Mount Sion, for that was a mountain; it was distinguished for beauty, or was so regarded by those who dwelt there (compare Psalm 48:2); and it was holy, as being the place where the worship of God was celebrated. But it is also true, that, so far as the language is concerned, it might be applied to any other mountain or mountainous region that was distinguished for beauty, and that was regarded as sacred, or in any way consecrated to religion. I see no objection, therefore, to the supposition, that this may be understood of some mountain or elevated spot which was held as sacred to religion, or where a temple was reared for worship, and hence, it may have referred to some mountain, in the vicinity of some temple dedicated to idol worship, where Antiochus would pitch his tent for the purpose of rapine and plunder.

Yet he shall come to his end - Evidently in the expedition referred to, and in the vicinity referred to. Though he had gone full of wrath; and though he was preparing to wreak his vengeance on the people of God; and though he had every prospect of success in the enterprise, yet he would

come to an end there, or would die. This would be the end of his career, and would be at the same time the end of that series of calamities that the angel predicted. The assurance is more than once given Daniel 11:27, Daniel 11:35; that there was an "appointed" time during which these troubles would continue, or that there would be an "end" of them at the appointed time, and the design was, that when these inflictions came upon the Jews they should be permitted to comfort themselves with the assurance that they would have a termination - that is, that the institutions of religion in their land would not be utterly overthrown.

And none shall help him - None shall save his life; none shall rescue him out of his danger. That is, he would certainly die, and his plans of evil would thus be brought to a close.

The question now is, whether this can be applied to the closing scenes in the life of Antiochus Epiphanes. The materials for writing the life of Antiochus are indeed scanty, but there is little doubt as to the place and manner of his death. According to all the accounts, he received intelligence of the success of the Jewish arms under Judas Maccabeus, and the overthrow of the Syrians, at Elymais or Persepolis (2 Maccabees 9:2), in Persia; and as he was detained there by an insurrection of the people, occasioned by his robbing the celebrated Temple of Diana (Jos. Ant. b. xii. ch. 9: Section 1), in which his father, Antiochus the Great, lost his life; his vexation was almost beyond endurance. He set out on his return with a determination to make every possible effort to exterminate the Jews; but during his journey he was attacked by a disease, in which he suffered excessive pain, and was tormented by the bitterest anguish of conscience, on account of his sacrilege and other crimes. He finally died at Tabae in Paratacene, on the frontiers of Persia and Babylon, in the year 163 B. C, after a reign of eleven years. See the account of his wretched death in 2 Maccabees 9; Jos. Antiq. b. xii. ch. ix.; Section 1; Prideaux, Con. iii. pp. 272,273; Polybius in Excerpta Valesii de Virtutibus et Vitiis, xxxi., and Appian, Syriac. xlvi. 80. Now this account agrees substantially with the prediction in the passage before us in the following respects:

(a) The circumstances which called him forth. It was on account of "tidings" or rumours out of the east and north that he went on this last expedition.

(b) The place specified where the last scenes would occur, “between the seas.” Any one has only to look on a map of the Eastern hemisphere to see that the ancient Persepolis, the capital of Persia, where the rumour of the success of the Jews reached him which induced him to return, is “between the seas” - the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf - lying not far from midway between the two.

(c) The “glorious holy mountain,” or, as the interpretation above proposed would render it, “the mountain of beauty,” sacred to religion or to worship.

(1) the whole region was mountainous.

(2) it is not unlikely that a temple would be raised on a mountain or elevated place, for this was the almost universal custom among the ancients, and it may be assumed as not improbable, that the temple of Diana, at Elymais, or Persepolis, which Antiochus robbed, and where he “pitched his tent,” was on such a place. Such a place would be regarded as “holy,” and would be spoken of as “an ornament,” or as beautiful, for this was the language which the Hebrews were accustomed to apply to a place of worship.

I suppose, therefore, that the reference is here to the closing scene in the life of Antiochus, and that the account in the prophecy agrees in the most striking manner with the facts of history, and consequently that it is not necessary to look to any other events for a fulfillment, or to suppose that it has any secondary and ultimate reference to what would occur in far-distant years.

In view of this exposition, we may see the force of the opinion maintained by Porphyry, that this portion of the book of Daniel must have been written after the events occurred. He could not but see, as anyone can now, the surprising accuracy of the statements of the chapter, and their applicability to the events of history as they had actually occurred; and seeing this, there was but one of two courses to be taken - either to admit the inspiration of the book, or to maintain that it was written after the events. He chose the latter alternative; and, so far as can be judged from the

few fragments which we have of his work in the commentary of Jerome on this book, he did it solely on the ground of the accuracy of the description. He referred to no external evidence; he adduced no historical proofs that the book was written subsequent to the events; but he maintained simply that an account so minute and exact could not have been written before the events, and that the very accuracy of the alleged predictions, and their entire agreement with history, was full demonstration that they were written after. The testimony of Porphyry, therefore, may be allowed to be a sufficient proof of the correspondence of this portion of the book of Daniel with the facts of history; and if the book was written before the age of Antiochus Epiphanes, the evidence is clear of its inspiration, for no man will seriously maintain that these historic events could be drawn out, with so much particularity of detail, by any natural skill, three hundred and seventy years before they occurred, as must have been the case if written by Daniel. Human sagacity does not extend its vision thus far into the future with the power of foretelling the fates of kingdoms, and giving in detail the lives and fortunes of individual men. Either the infidel must dispose of the testimony that Daniel lived and wrote at the time alleged, or, as an honest man, he should admit that he was inspired.

DANIEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Introduction

analysis of the chapter

There are several general remarks which may be made respecting this, the closing chapter of the book of Daniel.

I. It is a part, or a continuation of the general prophecy or vision which was commenced in Daniel 12:4; and then commences a colloquy between two angels who appear in the vision, designed to cast further light on what had been said. It will contribute to a right understanding of this chapter to remember, that it is a part of the one vision or prophecy which was commenced in Daniel 12:1-13 should be read together. If Daniel 12:2-3: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they thai turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever." This language is appropriate to express such doctrines as the following:

(a) that of the resurrection of the dead - or a being raised up out of the dust of the earth;

(b) that of retribution after the resurrection: a part being raised to everlasting life, and a part to everlasting shame;

(c) that of the eternity of future retribution, or the eternity of rewards and punishments: awaking to everlasting life, and to everlasting shame;

(d) that of the high honors and rewards of those who would be engaged in doing good, or of that portion of mankind who would be instrumental in turning the wicked from the paths of sin: "they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever."

It is impossible to conceive that this language would have been used unless these doctrines were known and believed, and unless it be supposed that they were so familiar that it would be readily understood. Whatever may have been the particular thing to which it was applied by the angel, it is such language as could have been intelligible only where there was a belief

of these doctrines, and it may, therefore, be set down as an indication of a prevalent belief in the time of Daniel on these subjects. Such would be understood now if the same language were used by us, to whatever we might apply it, for it would not be employed unless there was a belief of the truth of the doctrines which it is naturally adapted to convey.

III. If the angel intended, therefore, primarily to refer to events that would occur in the time of Antiochus - to the arousing of many to defend their country, as if called from the dust of the earth, or to their being summoned by Judas Maccabeus from caves and fastnesses, and to the honor to which many of them might be raised, and the shame and contempt which would await others, it seems difficult to doubt that the mind of the speaker, at the same time, glanced onward to higher doctrines, and that it was the intention of the angel to bring into view far-distant events, of which these occurrences might be regarded as an emblem, and that he meant to advert to what would literally occur in the time of the Maccabees as a beautiful and striking illustration of more momentous and glorious scenes when the earth should give up its dead, and when the final judgment should occur. On these scenes, perhaps, the mind of the angel ultimately rested, and a prominent. part of the design of the entire vision may have been to bring them into view, and to direct the thoughts of the pious onward, far beyond the troubles and the triumphs in the days of the Maccabees, to the time when the dead should arise, and when the retributions of eternity should occur. It was no uncommon thing among the prophets to allow the eye to glance from one object to another lying in the same range of vision, or having such points of resemblance that the one would suggest the other; and it often happened, that a description which commenced with some natural event terminated in some more important spiritual truth, to which that event had a resemblance, and which it was adapted to suggest. Compare Introduction to Isaiah, Section 7. Three things occur often in such a case:

(1) language is employed in speaking of what is to take place, which is derived from the secondary and remote event, and which naturally suggests that;

(2) ideas are intermingled in the description which are appropriate to the secondary event only, and which should be understood as applicable to that;

and

(3) the description which was commenced with reference to one event or class of events, often passes over entirely, and terminates on the secondary and ultimate events. This point will be more particularly examined on the note at the chapter.

IV. The contents of the chapter are as follows:

(1) The concluding statement of what would occur at the time referred to Daniel 11:1-3. This statement embraces many particulars: that Michael, the guardian angel, would stand up in behalf of the people; that there would be great trouble, such as there had not been since the time when the nation began to exist; that there would be deliverance for all whose names were recorded in the book; that there would be an awakening of those who slept in the dust - some coming to life and honor, and some to shame and dishonor; and that distinguished glory would await those who turned many to righteousness.

(2) At this stage of the matter, all having been disclosed that the angel purposed to reveal, Daniel is commanded to shut and seal the book; yet with the encouragement held out that more would yet be known on the subject, Daniel 12:4. The matter was evidently involved still in mystery, and there were many points on which it could not but be desired that there should be fuller information - points relating to the time when these things would happen, and a more particular account of the full meaning of what had been predicted, etc. On these points it is clear that many questions might be asked, and it is probable that the mind of Daniel would be left still in perplexity in regard to them. To meet this state of mind, the angel says to Daniel that “many would run to and fro, and that knowledge would be increased;” that is, that by intercourse with one another in future times; by spreading abroad the knowledge already obtained; by diffusing information, and by careful inquiry, those of coming ages would obtain much clearer views on these points; or, in other words, that time, and the intercourse of individuals and nations, would clear up the obscurities of prophecy.

(3) In this state of perplexity, Daniel looked and saw two other personages standing on the two sides of the river, and between them and the angel who had conversed with Daniel a colloquy or conversation ensues, respecting the time necessary to accomplish these things, Daniel 12:5-7. They are introduced as interested in the inquiry as to the time of the continuance of these things - that is, how long it would be to the end of these wonders. These were evidently angels also, and they are represented

(a) as ignorant of the future - a circumstance which we must suppose to exist among the angels; and

(b) as feeling a deep interest in the transactions which were to occur, and the period when it might be expected they would have their completion.

To this natural inquiry, the angel who had conversed withe Daniel gives a solemn answer Daniel 12:7, that the period would be "a time, and times, and an half;" and that all these things would be accomplished, when he to whom reference was made had finished his purpose of scattering the holy people.

(4) Daniel, perplexed and overwhelmed with these strange predictions, hearing what was said about the time, but not understanding it, asks with intense interest when the end of these things should be, Daniel 12:8. He had heard the reply of the angel, but it conveyed no idea to his mind. He was deeply solicitous to look into the future, and to ascertain when these events would end, and what would be their termination. The answer to his anxious, earnest inquiry, is contained in Daniel 12:9-13, and embraces several points - giving sonic further information, but still evidently designed to leave the matter obscure in many respects.

(a) The matter was sealed up, and his question could not be definitely answered, Daniel 12:9. When the time of the end should come, it is implied the matter would be clearer, and might be understood, but that all had been communicated substantially that could be.

(b) A statement is made Daniel 12:10 of the general result of the trials on two classes of persons: the things that would occur would tend to make

the righteous more holy, but the wicked would continue to do wickedly, notwithstanding all these heavy judgments. The latter too would, when these events took place, fail to understand their design; but the former would obtain a just view of them, and would be made wiser by them. Time, to the one class, would disclose the meaning of the Divine dealings, and they would comprehend them; to the other they would still be dark and unintelligible.

(c) A statement is, however, made as to the time when these things would be accomplished, but still so obscure as to induce the angel himself to say to Daniel that he must go his way until the end should be, Daniel 12:11-13. Two periods of time are mentioned, both different from the one in Daniel 12:7. In one of them Daniel 12:11 it is said that from the time when the daily sacrifice should be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate should be set up, would be thousand two hundred and ninety days. In the other Daniel 12:12 it is said that he would be blessed or happy who should reach a certain period mentioned - a thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. What these different periods of time refer to will of course be the subject of inquiry in the note at the chapter.

(d) The whole closes, therefore Daniel 12:13, with a direction to Daniel that, for the present, he should go his way. Nothing additional would be disclosed. Time would reveal more; time would explain all. Meanwhile there is an assurance given that, as for himself, he would have "rest," and would "stand in his lot at the end of the days." This seems to be a gracious assurance to him that he had nothing to fear from these troubles personally, and that whatever should come, he would have peace, and would occupy the position in future times which was due to him. His lot would be happy and peaceful; his name would be honored; his salvation would be secured. It seems to be implied that, with this pledge, he ought to allow his mind to be calm, and not suffer himself to be distressed because he could not penetrate the future, and foresee all that was to occur; and the truth, therefore, with which the book closes is, that, having security about our own personal salvation - or having no ground of solicitude respecting that - or having that matter made safe - we should calmly commit all events to God, with the firm conviction that in his own time his purposes will be

accomplished, and that being then understood, he will be seen to be worthy of confidence and praise.

Verse 1

And at that time - At the period referred to in the preceding chapter. The fair construction of the passage demands this interpretation, and if that refers to Antiochus Epiphanes, then what is here said must also; and we are to look for the direct and immediate fulfillment of this prediction in something that occurred under him, however, it may be supposed to have an ultimate reference to other and more remote events. The phrase "at that time," however, does not limit what is here said to any one part of his life, or to his death, but to the general period referred to in the time of his reign. That reign was but eleven years, and the fulfillment must be found somewhere during that period.

Shall Michael - On the meaning of this word, and the being here referred to, see the notes at Daniel 10:13.

Stand up - That is, he shall interpose; he shall come forth to render aid. This does not mean necessarily that he would visibly appear, but that he would in fact interpose. In the time of great distress and trouble, there would be supernatural or angelic aid rendered to the people of God. No man can prove that this would not be so, nor is there any inherent improbability in the supposition that good angels may be employed to render assistance in the time of trouble. Compare the notes at Daniel 10:13.

The great prince which standeth for the children of thy people - See the notes as above at Daniel 10:13. The meaning is, that he had the affairs of the Hebrew people, or the people of God, especially under his protection, or he was appointed to watch over them. This doctrine is in accordance with the notions that prevailed at that time; and no one can demonstrate that it is not true. There is no authority for applying this to the Messiah, as many have done, for the term Michael is not elsewhere given to him, and all that the language fairly conveys is met by the other supposition. The simple meaning is, that he who was the guardian angel of that nation, or who was appointed to watch over its interests, would at that time of great trouble interpose and render aid.

And there shall be a time of trouble - Under Antiochus Epiphanes. See the notes at Matthew 24:21, but he does not say that as used in Daniel it had

reference originally to that event. It was language appropriate to express the thought which he wished to convey, and he, therefore, so employed it.

And at that time - When these troubles are at their height.

Thy people shall be delivered - To wit, by the valor and virtues of the Maccabees. See the accounts in the books of the Maccabees. Compare Prideaux, Con. iii. 257, following.

Every one that shall be found written in the book - Whose names are enrolled; that is, enrolled as among the living. The idea is, that a register was made of the names of those who were to be spared, to wit, by God, or by the angel, and that all whose names were so recorded would be preserved. Those not so enrolled would be cut off under the persecutions of Antiochus. The language here does not refer to the book of eternal life or salvation, nor is it implied that they who would thus be preserved would necessarily be saved, but to their preservation from death and persecution, as if their names were recorded in a book, or were enrolled. We frequently meet with similar ideas in the Scriptures. The idea is, of course, poetical, but it expresses with sufficient clearness the thought that there was a Divine purpose in regard to them, and that there was a definite number whom God designed to keep alive, and that these would be delivered from those troubles, while many others would be cut off. Compare the notes at Daniel 10:21.

Verse 2

And many of them - The natural and obvious meaning of the word "many" (רבים *rabîym*) here is, that a large portion of the persons referred to would thus awake, but not all. So we should understand it if applied to other things, as in such expressions as these - "many of the people," "many of the houses in a city," "many of the trees in a forest," "many of the rivers in a country," etc. In the Scriptures, however, it is undeniable that the word is sometimes used to denote the whole considered as constituted of many, as in Romans 5:15-16, Romans 5:19. In these passages no one can well doubt that the word many is used to denote all, considered as composed of the "many" that make up the human race, or the "many" offences that man has committed. So if it were to be used respecting those who were to come forth from the caves and fastnesses where they had been driven by persecution, or those who sleep in their graves, and who will come forth in a general resurrection, it might be used of them considered as the many, and it might be said "the many" or "the multitude" comes forth.

Not a few interpreters, therefore, have understood this in the sense of all, considered as referring to a multitude, or as suggesting the idea of a multitude, or keeping up the idea that there would be great numbers. If this is the proper interpretation, the word "many" was used instead of the word "all" to suggest to the mind the idea that there would be a multitude, or that there would be a great number. Some, as Lengerke, apply it to all the Israelites who "were not written in the book" Daniel 12:1, that is, to a resurrection of all the Israelites who had died; some, as Porphyry, a coining forth of the multitudes out of the caves and fastnesses who had been driven there by persecution; and some, as Rosenmuller and Havernick, understand it as meaning all, as in Romans 5:15, Romans 5:19. The sum of all that can be said in regard to the meaning of the word, it seems to me, is, that it is so far ambiguous that it might be applied

(a) to "many" considered as a large portion of a number of persons or things;

(b) or, in an absolute sense, to the whole of any number of persons or things considered as a multitude or great number.

As used here in the visions of the future, it would seem to denote that the eye of the angel was fixed on a great multitude rising from the dust of the earth, without any particular or distinct reference to the question whether all arose. There would be a vast or general resurrection from the dust; so much so that the mind would be interested mainly in the contemplation of the great hosts who would thus come forth. Thus understood, the language might, of itself, apply either to a general arousing of the Hebrew people in the time of the Maccabees, or to a general resurrection of the dead in the last day.

That sleep - This expression is one that denotes either natural sleep, or anything that resembles sleep. In the latter sense it is often used to denote death, and especially the death of the pious - who calmly slumber in their graves in the hope of awaking in the morning of the resurrection. See the notes at 1 Thessalonians 4:14. It cannot be denied that it might be applied to those who, for any cause, were inactive, or whose energies were not aroused - as we often employ the word sleep or slumber - and that it might be tints used of those who seemed to slumber in the midst of the

persecutions which raged, and the wrongs that were committed by Antiochus; but it would be most natural to understand it of those who were dead, and this idea would be particularly suggested in the connection in which it stands here.

In the dust of the earth - Hebrew, "In the ground, or earth of dust" - אדמת־עפר *'ademath ʿâphâr* The language denotes the ground or earth considered as composed of dust, and would naturally refer to those who are dead and buried - considered as sleeping there with the hope of awaking in the resurrection.

Shall awake - This is language appropriate to those who are asleep, and to the dead considered as being asleep. It might, indeed, be applied to an arousing from a state of lethargy and inaction, but its most obvious, and its full meaning, would be to apply it to the resurrection of the dead, considered as an awaking to life of those who were slumbering in their graves.

Some - One portion of them. The relative number is not designated, but it is implied that there would be two classes. They would not all rise to the same destiny, or the same lot.

To everlasting life - So that they would live forever. This stands in contrast with their" sleeping in the dust of the earth," or their being dead, and it implies that that state would not occur in regard to them again. Once they slept in the dust of the earth; now they would live for ever, or would die no more. Whether in this world or in another is not here said, and there is nothing in the passage which would enable one to determine this. The single idea is that of living forever, or never dying again. This is language which must have been derived from the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and of the future state, and which must imply the belief of that doctrine in whatever sense it may be used here. It is such as in subsequent times was employed by the sacred writers to denote the future state, and the rewards of the righteous. The most common term employed in the New Testament, perhaps, to describe true religion, is life, and the usual phrase to denote the condition of the righteous after the resurrection is eternal or everlasting life. Compare Matthew 25:46. This language, then, would most naturally be referred to that state, and covers all the subsequent revelations respecting the condition of the blessed.

And some to shame - Another portion in such a way that they shall have only shame or dishonor. The Hebrew word means reproach, scorn,

contumely; and it may be applied to the reproach which one casts on another, Job 16:10; Psalm 39:8 (9); Psalm 79:12; or to the reproach which rests on anyone, Joshua 5:9; Isaiah 54:4. Here the word means the reproach or dishonor which would rest on them for their sins, their misconduct, their evil deeds. The word itself would apply to any persons who were subjected to disgrace for their former misconduct. If it be understood here as having a reference to those who would be aroused from their apathy, and summoned from their retreats in the times of the Maccabees, the meaning is, that they would be called forth to public shame on account of their apostasy, and their conformity to pagan customs; if it be interpreted as applying to the resurrection of the dead, it means that the wicked would rise to reproach and shame before the universe for their folly and vileness. As a matter of fact, one of the bitterest ingredients in the doom of the wicked will be the shame and confusion with which they will be overwhelmed in the great day on account of the sins and follies of their course in this world.

And everlasting contempt - The word "everlasting" in this place is the same which in the former part of the verse is applied to the other portion that would awake, and like that properly denotes eternal; as in Matthew 25:46, the word translated "everlasting" (punishment) is the same which is rendered "eternal" (life), and means what is to endure forever. So the Greek here, where the same word occurs, as in Matthew 25:46 - "some to everlasting life," εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον *eis zōēn aiōnion* "and some to everlasting contempt," εἰς αἰσχύνην αἰώνιον *eis aischunēn aiōnion* - is one which would denote a strict and proper eternity. The word "contempt" (דראון *derâ'ôn*) means, properly, a repulse; and then aversion, abhorrence. The meaning here is aversion or abhorrence - the feeling with which we turn away from what is loathsome, disgusting, or hateful. Then it denotes the state of mind with which we contemplate the vile and the abandoned; and in this respect expresses the emotion with which the wicked will be viewed on the final trial. The word everlasting completes the image, meaning that this feeling of loathing and abhorrence would continue forever. In a subordinate sense this language might be used to denote the feelings with which cowards, ingrates, and apostates are regarded on earth; but it cannot be doubted that it will receive its most perfect fulfillment in the future world - in that aversion with which the lost will be viewed by all holy beings in the world to come.

Verse 3

And they that be wise - This is the language which, in the Scriptures, is employed to denote the pious, or those who serve God and keep his commandments. See the book of Proverbs, passim. True religion is wisdom, and sin is folly, and they who live for God and for heaven are the truly wise. The meaning is, that they have chosen the path which true wisdom suggests as that in which man should walk, while all the ways of sin are ways of folly. The language used here is expressive of a general truth, applicable in itself to all the righteous at all times, and nothing can be inferred from the term employed as to what was designed by the angel.

Shall shine as the brightness of the firmament - As the sky above us. The image is that of the sky at night, thick set with bright and beautiful stars. No comparison could be more striking. The meaning would seem to be, that each one of the righteous will be like a bright and beautiful star, and that, in their numbers, and order, and harmony, they would resemble the heavenly constellations at night. Nothing can be more sublime than to look on the heavens in a clear night, and to think of the number and the order of the stars above us as an emblem of the righteous in the heavenly world. The word rendered firmament means, properly, expanse, or what is spread out, and it is applied to the sky as it appears to be spread out above us.

And they that turn many to righteousness - Referring to those who would be instrumental in converting men to the worship of the true God, and to the ways of religion. This is very general language, and might be applied to any persons who have been the means of bringing sinners to the knowledge of the truth. It would apply in an eminent degree to ministers of the gospel who were successful in their work, and to missionaries among the pagan. From the mere language, however, nothing certain can be argued as to the original reference as used by the angel, and it seems to have been his intention to employ language so general that it might be applied to all, of all ages and countries, who would be instrumental in turning men to God.

As the stars - As the stars that are distinguished by their size and luster in the firmament. In the former part of the verse, when speaking of those who were "wise," the design seems to be to compare them to the sky as it appears, set over with innumerable stars, and in their numbers and groupings constituting great beauty; in this member of the sentence the design seems to be to compare these who are eminent in converting men, to the particular beautiful and bright stars that strike us as we look on the heavens - those more distinguished in size and splendor, and that seem to

lead on the others. The meaning is, that amidst the hosts of the saved they will be conspicuous, or they will be honored in proportion to their toils, their sacrifices, and their success.

Forever and ever - To all eternity. This refers to those who shall turn many to righteousness; and the meaning is, that they shall continue thus to be distinguished and honored to all eternity.

Verse 4

But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words - To wit, by sealing them up, or by closing the book, and writing no more in it. The meaning is, that all has been communicated which it was intended to communicate. The angel had no more to say, and the volume might be sealed up.

And seal the book - This would seem to have been not an unusual custom in closing a prophecy, either by affixing a seal to it that should be designed to confirm it as the prophet‘s work - as we seal a deed, a will, or a contract; or to secure the volume, as we seal a letter. Compare the notes at Daniel 8:26; Isaiah 8:16.

Even to the time of the end - That is, the period when all these things shall be accomplished. Then

(a) the truth of the prediction now carefully sealed up will be seen and acknowledged;

(b) and then, also, it may be expected that there will be clearer knowledge on all these subjects, for the facts will throw increased light on the meaning and the bearing of the predictions.

Many shall run to and fro - Shall pass up and down in the world, or shall go from place to place. The reference is clearly to those who should thus go to impart knowledge; to give information; to call the attention of men to great and important matters. The language is applicable to any methods of imparting important knowledge, and it refers to a time when this would be the characteristic of the age. There is nothing else to which it can be so well applied as to the labors of Christian missionaries, and ministers of the gospel, and others who, in the cause of Christian truth, go about to rouse the attention of men to the great subjects of religion; and the natural application of the language is to refer it to the times when the gospel would be preached to the world at large.

And knowledge shall be increased - To wit, by this method. The angel seems to mean that in this way there would be an advance in knowledge on

all the subjects of religion, and particularly on the points to which he had referred. This would be one of the characteristics of these times, and this would be the means by which it would be accomplished. Our own age has furnished a good illustration of the meaning of this language, and it will be still more fully and strikingly illustrated as the time approaches when the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole world.

Having thus gone through with an exposition of these, the closing words of the vision Daniel 12:1-4, it seems proper that we should endeavor to ascertain the meaning of the angel in what is here said, and the bearing of this more particularly on what he had said before. With this view, therefore, several remarks may be made here.

(1) it seems clear that there was in some respects, and for some purpose, a primary reference to Antiochus, and to the fact that in his times there would be a great rousing up of the friends of God and of religion, as if from their graves.

(a) The connection demands it. If the close of the last chapter refers to Antiochus, then it cannot be denied that this does also, for it is introduced in immediate connection with that, and as referring to that time: "And at that time."

(b) The facts referred to would require the same interpretation. Thus it is said that it would be a time of trouble, such as there had never been since the nation existed - a state of things which clearly refers to the calamities which would be brought upon them by the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes.

(c) This interpretation seems to be in accordance with the purpose of the angel to give the assurance that these troubles would come to an end, and that in the time of the greatest calamity, when everything seemed tending to ruin, God would interpose, and would secure the people, and would cause his own worship to be restored. Porphyry then, it appears to me, was so far right as to apply this to the times of Antiochus, and to the events that occurred under the Maccabees. "Then," says he, "those who, as it were, sleep in the dust of the earth, and are pressed down with the weight of evils, and, as it were, hid in sepulchres of misery, shall rise from the dust of the

earth to unexpected victory, and shall raise their heads from the ground the observers of the law rising to everlasting life, and the violators of it to eternal shame." He also refers to the history, in which it is said that, in the times of the persecutions, many of the Jews fled to the desert, and hid themselves in caves and caverns, and that after the victories of the Maccabees they came forth, and that this was metaphorically (μεταφορικῶς *metaphorikōs*) called a resurrection of the dead. - Jerome, *in loc*. According to this interpretation, the meaning would be, that there would be a general uprising of the people; a general arousing of them from their lethargy, or summoning them from their retreats and hiding-places, as if the dead, good and bad, should arise from their dust.

(2) This language, however, is derived from the doctrine of the literal resurrection of the dead. It implies the belief of that doctrine. It is such language as would be used only where that doctrine was known and believed. It would convey no proper idea unless it were known and believed. The passage, then, may be adduced as full proof that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust, was understood and believed in the time of Daniel. No one can reasonably doubt this. Such language is met used in countries where the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is not believed, and where used, as it is in Christian lands, is full proof, even when employed for illustration, that the doctrine of the resurrection is a common article of belief. Compare the notes at Isaiah 26:19. This language is not found in the Greek and Latin classic writers; nor in pagan writings in modern times; nor is it found in the earlier Hebrew Scriptures; nor is it used by infidels even for illustration; and the proof, therefore, is clear that as employed in the time of Daniel the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was known and believed. If so, it marks an important fact in the progress of theological opinion and knowledge in his times. How it came to be known is not intimated here, nor explained elsewhere, but of the fact no one can have any reasonable doubt. Even now, so clear and accurate is the language, that if we wish to express the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, we cannot do it better than by employing the language of the angel in addressing Daniel. (See Editor's Preface to volume on Job.)

(3) The full meaning of the language is not met by the events that occurred in the times of the Maccabees. As figurative, or, as Porphyry says, metaphorical, it might be used to describe those events. But what then occurred would not come up to the proper and complete meaning of the prediction. That is, if nothing more was intended, we should feel that the event fell far short of the full import of the language; of the ideas which it was fitted to convey; and of the hopes which it was adapted to inspire. If that was all, then this lofty language would not have been used. There was nothing in the facts that adequately corresponded with it. In the obvious and literal sense, there was nothing which could be called a resurrection to "everlasting life;" nothing that could be called an awaking to "everlasting shame and contempt." There was nothing which would justify literally the language "they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever." The language naturally has a higher signification than this, and even when employed for illustration, that higher signification should be recognized and would be suggested to the mind.

(4) The passage looks onward to a higher and more important event than any that occurred in the times of the Maccabees - to the general resurrection of the dead, of the just and the unjust, and to the final glory of the righteous. The order of thought in the mind of the angel would seem to have been this: he designed primarily to furnish to Daniel an assurance that deliverance would come ill the time of the severe troubles which were to overwhelm the nation, and that the nation would ultimately be safe. In doing this his mind almost unconsciously glanced forward to a final deliverance from death and the grave, and he expressed the thought which he designed to convey in the well-known and familiar language used to describe the resurrection. Commencing the description in this manner, by the laws of prophetic suggestion (compare the Introduction to Isaiah, Section 7.), the mind finally rested on the ultimate event, and what began with the deliverance in the times of the Maccabees, ended in the full contemplation of the resurrection of the dead, and the scenes beyond the last judgment.

(5) If it be asked what would be the pertinency or the propriety of this language, if this be the correct interpretation, or what would be its bearing on the design of the angel, it may be replied:

(a) that the assurance was in this way conveyed that these troubles under Antiochus would cease - an assurance as definite and distinct as though all that was said had been confined to that;

(b) that a much more important, and more cheering general truth was thus brought to view, that ultimately the people of God would emerge from all trouble, and would stand before God in glory - a truth of great value then, and at all times;

(c) that this truth was of so universal a nature that it might be applied in all times of trouble - that when the church was assailed; when the people of God were persecuted; when they were driven away from their temples of worship, and when the rites of religion were suspended; when the zeal of many should grow cold, and the pious should be disheartened, they might look on to brighter times. There was to be an end of all these troubles. There was to be a winding up of these affairs. All the dead were to be raised from their graves, the good and the bad, and thus the righteous would triumph, and would shine like the brightness of the firmament, and the wicked would be overwhelmed with shame and contempt.

(6) from all this it follows that this passage may be used to prove the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and the doctrine of eternal retribution. Not, indeed, the primary thing in the use of the language as applied by the angel, it is, nevertheless, based on the truth and the belief of these doctrines, and the mind of the angel ultimately rested on these great truths as adapted to awe the wicked, and to give consolation to the people of God in times of trouble. Thus Daniel was directed to some of the most glorious truths that would be established and inculcated by the coming of the Messiah, and long before he appeared had a glimpse of the great doctrine which he came to teach respecting the ultimate destiny of man.

Verse 5

Then I Daniel looked - My attention was attracted in a new direction. Hitherto, it would seem, it had been fixed on the angel, and on what he was saying. The angel now informed him that he had closed his communication, and Daniel was now attracted by a new heavenly vision.

And, behold, there stood other two - Two other angels. The connection requires us to understand this of angels, though they are not expressly called so.

The one on this side of the bank of the river - Margin, as in Hebrew, "lip." The word is used to denote the bank of the river from its resemblance to a lip. The river referred to here is the Hiddekel or Tigris, the notes at Daniel 10:4. These angels stood on each side of the river, though it does not appear that there was any special significancy in that fact. It perhaps contributed merely to the majesty and solemnity of the vision. The names of these angels are not mentioned, and their appearing is merely an indication of the interest which they take in the affairs of men, and in the Divine purposes and doings. They came heine as if they had been deeply interested listeners to what the angel had been saying, and for the purpose of making inquiry as to the final result of all these wonderful events. The angel which had been addressing Daniel stood over the river, Daniel 12:6.

Verse 6

And one said - One of these angels. It would seem that, though before unseen by Daniel, they had been present, and had listened with deep interest to the communication respecting the future which the angel had made to him. Feeling a deep concern in the issue of these wonderful events - thus evincing the interest which we are taught to believe the heavenly beings take in human affairs (see the notes at 1 Peter 1:12) - one of them now addressed him who had been endowed with so much ability to disclose the future, as to the termination of these events. Such an inquiry was natural, and accords with what we should suppose an angel would make on an occasion like this.

To the man clothed in linen - The angel. See the notes at Daniel 10:5.

Which was upon the waters of the river - Margin, from above. So the Hebrew. The meaning is, the man seemed to stand over the river. Compare Daniel 8:16. Lengerke supposes that by this was intimated the fact that the Divine control was over the waters as well as over the land - in other words, over the whole earth.

How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? - Nothing had been said on this point that could determine it. The angel had detailed a succession of remarkable events which must, from the nature of the case, extend far into future years; he had repeatedly spoken of an end, and had declared that that series of events would terminate, and had thus given the

assurance to Daniel that these troubles would be succeeded by brighter and happier times, but he had said nothing by which it could be determined when this would be. It was natural to start this inquiry, and as well for the sake of Daniel as himself, the angel here puts the question when this would be.

Verse 7

And I heard the man … - That is, he replied to the question at once, and in a most solemn manner, as if he were communicating a great and momentous truth respecting the future.

When he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven - Toward heaven; as if appealing to heaven for the sincerity and truth of what he was about to utter. The act of swearing or taking an oath was often accompanied with the lifting up of the hand to heaven, usually the right hand (compare Genesis 14:22; Exodus 6:8; Deuteronomy 32:40; Ezekiel 20:5; Revelation 10:5); but here the angel stretched both hands toward heaven, as if he were about to make the affirmation in the most solemn manner conceivable.

And sware by him that liveth for ever - By the eternal God. That is, he appealed to him: he made the solemn asseveration in his presence; he called him to witness to the truth of what he said. The occasion; the manner; the posture of the angel; the appeal to the Eternal One - all give great sublimity to this transaction, and all imply that the answer was to be one of great consequence in regard to future times.

That it shall be for a time, times, and an half - Margin, or, a part. The word חצי *chătsîy* means, properly, half, the half part, that which is divided (חצץ *châtsats*) - to divide), s. c., in the middle. The word "times" means two times, for it is dual in its form, and the expression means three times, or periods, and a half. See the meaning of the language fully considered and explained in the notes at Daniel 7:24-28. (See Editor's Essay on Year-day Principle, prefixed to the vol. on Revelation.)

And when he shall have accomplished - When he shall have finished his purpose in the matter; when he shall have done all that he could do.

To scatter the power - All that constituted the power - their armies, means of defense, etc. The word rendered "power" (יד *yâd*) means, properly, hand, but it is sometimes used to denote a part of a thing - as a portion that we take up by the hand - a handful; that is, a part of a thing taken up at once in dividing - Gesenius, Lexicon See Jeremiah 6:3; 2 Kings

11:7; Genesis 47:24. In accordance with this, Gesenius, Lengerke, and De Wette suppose that the reference here is to the scattering of a portion or part of the Hebrew people in other lands, and to the hope that they would be restored again to their own country; and that the meaning of the angel is, that when these dispersions were ended, all this would have been accomplished. The word has also the sense of power, might, strength (Gesenius, Lexicon), the hand being regarded as the seat of strength, Isaiah 28:2; Job 27:11; Psalm 76:5 (6).

Thus employed, it may denote whatever constituted their strength; and then the idea in the passage before us is, that all this would be scattered. When that should have been done; when that dispersion should have been ended; when these scattered forces and people should have been again restored, then all this that was predicted would be accomplished, and these troubles cease. This would be in the period designated by the "time, and times, and an half." If it refers to Antiochus, it means that the scattered forces and people of the Hebrews would be rallied under the Maccabees, and that on their return victory would crown their efforts, and the land would be again at peace. If it has a higher and an ultimate signification, it would seem to imply that when the scattered Hebrew people should be gathered into the Christian church - when their dispersions and their wanderings should come to an end by their returning to the Messiah, and, under him, to the true God, then the series of predictions will have received their complete fulfillment - for then religion will triumph in the world, and the kingdom of God be set up over all the nations, agreeably to Romans 11:15-25. In reference, then, to the meaning of the passage as used by the angel here, the following remarks may be made:

(1) It had an applicability to the times of Antiochus, and to the duration of the calamities that would come upon the Hebrew people under his reign. If there had been nothing further intended than this, the mere language employed would have found a literal fulfillment in these events, and there can be no reasonable doubt that the primary reference of the angel was to them. See this point fully considered and illustrated in the notes at Daniel 7:24-28.

(2) Yet there are circumstances which lead us to suppose that, at the same time, and by the laws of prophetic suggestion (see Introduction to

Isaiah, Section 7.), more important events were also referred to, and were designed to be connected with this statement. Those circumstances are

(a) the manner in which the angel introduces the subject - by a solemn appeal, with out-stretched arms, to heaven. This would look as if he regarded the answer as of momentous importance, and as if he were contemplating vast movements in the future.

(b) The fact that the language here had a settled meaning - referring, as used, elsewhere, to future events deeply affecting the welfare of the world. The language is so couched, indeed, that it would express the fact in regard to the duration of the troubles under Antiochus; but it was also of such a nature that in its higher signification it would describe the duration of more momentous transactions, and would designate a period when the true religion would begin its universal reign; when the evils of a vast Anti-christian power would come to an end, and when the kingdom of the saints would be set up in the world. See the notes at Daniel 7:24-28.

(3) The full meaning of the language would then seem to be, that the angel designed to include all in the future to which those words, as intended by the Divine Spirit, would be applicable. The period designated by the phrase, "a time, and times, and an half," was most momentous. In that time the troubles introduced by Antiochus would end, and a state of peace and prosperity would succeed; and in that time, also, far greater troubles and woes - those connected with a most fearful apostasy from the true religion, and the setting up of a kingdom of oppression and wrong over the people of God, of which the oppressions and wrongs under Antiochus would be but an emblem, would also come to an end, and there would be a state of peace - a reign of righteousness - a prevalence of religion - and a far-diffused happiness in the world, at which the joy at the dedication of the temple, and the triumphs over Antiochus, would be but a symbol. The ultimate reference, therefore, I suppose, is to the downfall of that great Anti-christian power, the Papacy, and the spread and triumphs of the true religion subsequent to that, and consequent on that in the world. These were events that justified the solemn asseveration of the angel, and that made it proper for him, in referring to them, to stretch out both his hands in this sublime manner to heaven.

Verse 8

And I heard, but I understood not - He understood not the full significance of the language employed - "a time, and times, and an half." This would make it probable that there was something more intended than merely three years and a half as the period of the continuation of these troubles. Daniel saw, apparently from the manner of the angel, as well as from the terms which he used, that there was something mystical and unusual in those terms, and he says, therefore, that he could not understand their full import.

Then said I, O my Lord - A term of civil address. The language is such as would be used by an inferior when respectfully addressing one of superior rank. It is not a term that is peculiarly appropriate to God, or that implies a Divine nature, but is here given to the angel as an appellation of respect, or as denoting one of superior rank.

What shall be the end of these things? - Indicating great anxiety to know what was to be the termination of these wonders. The "end" had been often referred to in the communication of the angel, and now he had used an enigmatical expression as referring to it, and Daniel asks, with great emphasis, when the end was to be.

Verse 9

And he said, Go thy way, Daniel - That is, make no further inquiries. All has been disclosed that is to be. At the close of his communication Daniel 12:4, he had told Daniel to shut up, and seal the book, for his revelations were ended. He here repeats substantially the same thing, and he assures him that no more could be imparted on the subject.

For the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end - He had finished his communication, and had directed Daniel to close up the record which he made of it, and to affix a seal to the volume, Daniel 12:4. He regarded the whole, therefore, as closed and sealed, until the "end" should come. The events themselves would unfold the meaning of the prediction more fully, and would confirm its truth by their exact correspondence with it. Yet, though the revelation was closed, and all that the angel had designed to say had been said, he does, in the subsequent verses, throw out some suggestions as to the time, or as to some important events which were to mark the termination of the wonders referred to. They are bare hints, however, the meaning of which was to be reserved until the

time when the predictions would be accomplished, and they are not of such a nature that they can be supposed to have furnished any additional light to Daniel, or to have done anything to relieve the perplexity of his mind in the case.

Verse 10

Many shall be purified - In future times. That is, as the connection would seem to require, there will be a system introduced by which many will become purified, and made holy. Daniel might hope and expect that under the arrangements which God would make, many of the human race would be cleansed from sin. To what he would apply this we cannot determine, but it is a great truth of immense importance in regard to the human family, that, before the "end," or the consummation, "many" will be made holy.

And made white - White is the emblem of innocence or purity, and hence, the term is so often applied to the righteous. "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," "they shall walk before me in white," etc. Hence, the angels are represented as appearing in white raiment. The meaning here is, that many on the earth would be made holy before the end would come. The mind of Daniel was thus directed onward to one of the most glorious truths pertaining to future times - that multitudes of the human race would be redeemed, and would be prepared for a holy heaven.

And tried - Tried as in a furnace; that is, they will be subjected to persecutions, and to various other forms of suffering, that will test the strength of their faith, and the nature of their religion. This language, also, is of a general character, and would in itself apply to the times of Antiochus, but it is also fitted to describe what would occur in other ages. Perhaps the meaning is, that it would be a prominent thing in the future, in introducing the triumphs of religion; and in preparing the people of God for heaven, that they would be subjected to various forms of trial. There have been facts enough of this kind in the history of the church to justify this description, and to show that it would be a marked feature in spreading religion on the earth, that its friends would be persecuted. "But the wicked shall do wickedly." They will continue to do wickedly. Notwithstanding all the judgments that will come upon men; notwithstanding all that will be done to purify the people of God, and, notwithstanding the fact that "many" will be of a different character - will be "purified and made white, and tried," yet

it will be a truth still, that there will be wicked men upon the earth, and that they will act out their nature.

This remark seems to have been thrown in by the angel to prevent the impression which Daniel might possibly get from what was said, not only that the true religion would generally prevail, but that wickedness would wholly cease in the earth. Such a time, perhaps, we are not authorized to look for; while we may hope and believe that there will be a period when the worship of God will pervade the world, and will supersede all other forms of worship, yet we have no reason to expect that every individual of the human family at any one time will be converted, and that none of the remains of the apostasy will be seen on the earth. There will be wicked men still, and they will act out their nature, despite all that is done to save them, and despite the fact that religion will have the ascendency in the hearts and lives of the great mass of mankind. For an illustration of this, see the notes at Revelation 9:20-21; notes at Revelation 20:7.

And none of the wicked shall understand - This, also, is a general declaration. It means, that none of the wicked would understand the import of these prophecies, or the true nature of religion. Their depravity of heart would prevent it; their purpose to lead a wicked life would so cloud their understandings, and pervert their moral judgments, that they would have no correct appreciation of the government of God, and the nature of the Divine plans and dispensations. Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 2:14. The fact here asserted has been always true, and always will be, that sin prevents a clear perception of Divine truth, and that wicked men have no appropriate views of the plans and purposes of God. To comprehend religion aright a man needs a pure heart; and no one under the influence of depraved feelings, and corrupt propensities and appetites, can expect to have a just appreciation of what is good. Doubtless it will be found to be true in the days of millennial glory, when the true religion shall spread over the world, and when the earth shall be filled with light, that there will be wicked men who will have no correct understanding of the nature of religion, and whose minds will be blind to all the evidences of the truth of revelation which shall be diffused around them. No man, unless he is converted, has any proper conception of the beauty of religion.

But the wise shall understand - They who serve God and love him, and who, therefore, come under the denomination of the truly wise. See the notes at Daniel 12:3. The meaning is, that religion - the love of God and a

pure heart - will qualify them to perceive the import of Divine truth; to appreciate what is revealed, and to obtain a just view of passing events - or to "understand the signs of the times." Humble and sincere piety - a heart and mind made pure and clear by the influence of Divine truth - is the best preparation for understanding the works and ways of God. Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 2:9-12, 1 Corinthians 2:14-15.

Verse 11

And from the time - Though the angel had said Daniel 12:4, Daniel 12:9 that his communication was closed, and that he imparted all that he was commissioned to communicate to Daniel, yet, as it would seem, in reply to the earnest request of Daniel, he volunteers an additional statement, in regard to certain important periods that were to occur in the future. The language, however, is very obscure; and it would appear, from Daniel 12:13, that the angel scarcely expected that Daniel would understand it. The statement relates to certain periods that would succeed the time when the daily sacrifice would be taken away. Two such periods are mentioned as marking important epochs in the future.

That the daily sacrifice shall be taken away - This is the point of reckoning - the *terminus a quo*. The "taking away of the daily sacrifice" refers, undoubtedly, to some act, or some state of things, by which it would be made to cease; by which the daily offerings at Jerusalem would be either temporarily suspended or totally abolished. See the notes at Daniel 8:11; Daniel 9:27; Daniel 11:31. The language here is applicable to either of two events: to the act of Antiochus, causing the daily sacrifice to cease in Jerusalem Daniel 8:11; Daniel 11:31, or to the final closing of those sacrifices by the death of the Messiah as the great offering to whom they referred, and the destruction of the temple and the altar by the Romans, Daniel 9:27. The view taken in the interpretation of this passage will depend on the question to which of these there is allusion here by the angel, or whether there is an allusion to both. The language evidently is applicable to both, and might be employed with reference to either.

And the abomination that maketh desolate set up - See these words explained in the notes at Daniel 8:13; Daniel 9:27; Daniel 11:31. The same remark may be made here which was made respecting the previous expression - that the language is applicable to two quite distinct events, and events which were separated by a long interval of time: to the act of Antiochus in setting up an image of Jupiter in the temple, and to a similar

act on the part of the Romans when the temple was finally destroyed. The view which is taken of the time referred to here will depend on the question which of these is to be regarded as the stand-point or the *terminus a quo*, or whether the language is designedly so used that an important epoch was to occur in both cases within a specified period after these events. On these points there has been great diversity of opinion.

There shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days - If this is to be taken literally, it would be three years and two hundred and ten days, reckoning the year at 360 days, and is thirty days more than the three years and a half referred to in Daniel 12:7. Prof. Stuart, who supposes that the time is to be taken literally, and that the passage refers exclusively to Antiochus Epiphanes, explains the application of the language in the following manner: "Antiochus took away the daily sacrifice as is here declared. This was in the latter part of May, 168 b.c. Profane history does not indeed give us the day, but it designates the year and the season. As we have already seen (compare the extract copied from Prof. Stuart on Daniel 7:24-28), about three and a half years elapsed, after the temple worship was entirely broken up, before Judas Maccabeus expurgated the temple and restored its rites. The *terminus ad quem* is not mentioned in the verse now before us; but still it is plainly implied. The end of the 1290 days must, of course, be marked by some signal event, just as the commencement of them is so marked. And as the suppression of the temple rites constitutes the definitive mark of the commencement, so it would seem plain that the restoration of the same rites must mark the conclusion of the period which is designated.

The ‹time of the end,' i. e., the period at the close of which the persecutions of Antiochus would cease, is distinctly adverted to in Daniel 7:25; Daniel 11:30-35; Daniel 12:7. The nature of the case, in the verse before us, shows that the same period is tacitly referred to in the words of the speaker. No doubt remains that his march (the march of Antiochus) from Antioch to Egypt, for hostile purposes, was in the spring of the year 168 b.c. He was delayed for some time on this march by ambassadors from Egypt, who met him in Coelo-Syria. Very naturally, therefore, we may conclude that he arrived opposite Jerusalem in the latter part of May, and that there and then he commissioned Apollonius to rifle and profane the temple. The exact time from the period when this was done, down to the time of the expurgation, seems to have been, and is designated as being,

1290 days." - Hints on Prophecy, pp. 94,95. It is evident, however, that there is here no clear making out of the exact time by any historical records, though it is in itself not improbable. Still the great difficulty is, that in the supposition that the "time, and times, and an half" refers to Antiochus, as denoting the period of his persecutions, thus limiting it to three years and a half - a period which can be made out without material difficulty (compare the notes at Daniel 7:24-28) - that another time or period should be mentioned here of thirty days more, concerning which there is no corresponding event in the historical facts, or at least none that can now be demonstrated to have occurred. See the remarks at the close of the next verses.

Verse 12

Blessed is he that waiteth - This indicates a patient expectation of an event that was to occur, and the happy state of him who would reach it. The angel refers to another period different from the "time, and times, and an half," and different also from the twelve hundred and ninety days. He speaks of this as the consummation - as the desirable time; and pronounces him blessed who shall be permitted to see it. The idea here is, that of one looking out for this as a happy period, and that he would be regarded as a happy man who should live in that age.

And cometh to - literally, "touches." That is, whose life would reach to that time; or who would not be cut off before that period.

The thousand three hundred and five and thirty days - The article is not used in the original, and its insertion here seems to make the period more distinct and definite than it is necessarily in the Hebrew. There is much apparent abruptness in all these expressions; and what the angel says in these closing and additional communications has much the appearance of a fragmentary character - of hints, or detached and unexplained thoughts thrown out on which he was not disposed to enlarge, and which, for some reason, he was not inclined to explain. In respect to this period of 1335 days, it seems to stand by itself. Nothing is said of the time when it would occur; no intimation is given of its commencement, as in the former cases - the *terminus a quo*; and nothing is said of its characteristics further than that he would be blessed who should be permitted to see it - implying that it would be, on some accounts, a happy period.

Verse 13

But go thou thy way until the end be - See Daniel 12:4, Daniel 12:9. The meaning is, that nothing more would be communicated, and that he must wait for the disclosures of future times. When that should occur which is here called "the end," he would understand this more fully and perfectly. The language implies, also, that he would be present at the development which is here called "the end;" and that then he would comprehend clearly what was meant by these revelations. This is such language as would be used on the supposition that the reference was to far-distant times, and to the scenes of the resurrection and the final judgment, when Daniel would be present. Compare the notes at Daniel 12:2-3.

For thou shalt rest - Rest now; and perhaps the meaning is, shalt enjoy a long season of repose before the consummation shall occur. In Daniel 12:2, he had spoken of those who "sleep in the dust of the earth;" and the allusion here would seem to be the same as applied to Daniel. The period referred to was far distant. Important events were to intervene. The affairs of the world were to move on for ages before the "end"' should come. There would be scenes of revolution, commotion, and tumult - momentous changes before that consummation would be reached. But during that long interval Daniel would "rest." He would quietly and calmly "sleep in the dust of the earth" - in the grave. He would be agitated by none of these troubles - disturbed by none of these changes, for he would peacefully slumber in the hope of being awaked in the resurrection. This also is such language as would be employed by one who believed in the doctrine of the resurrection, and who meant to say that he with whom he was conversing would repose in the tomb while the affairs of the world would move on in the long period that would intervene between the time when he was then speaking and the "end" or consummation of all things - the final resurrection. I do not see that it is possible to explain the language on any other supposition than this. The word rendered "shalt rest" - תנוח *tânûach* - would be well applied to the rest in the grave. So it is used in Job 3:13, "Then had I been at rest;" Job 3:17, "There the weary be at rest."

And stand in thy lot - In thy place. The language is derived from the lot or portion which falls to one - as when a lot is cast, or anything is determined by lot. Compare Judges 1:3; Isaiah 57:6; Psalm 125:3; Psalm 16:5. Gesenius (Lexicon) renders this, "And arise to thy lot in the end of days; i. e., in the Messiah's kingdom." Compare Revelation 20:6. The meaning is, that he need have no apprehension for himself as to the future.

That was not now indeed disclosed to him; and the subject was left in designed obscurity. He would "rest," perhaps a long time, in the grave. But in the far-distant future he would occupy ills appropriate place; he would rise from his rest; he would appear again on the stage of action; he would have the lot and rank which properly belonged to him. What idea this would convey to the mind of Daniel it is impossible now to determine, for he gives no statement on that point; but it is clear that it is such language as would be appropriately used by one who believed in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and who meant to direct the mind onward to those far-distant and glorious scenes when the dead would all arise, and when each one of the righteous would stand up in his appropriate place or lot.

At the end of the days - After the close of the periods referred to, when the consummation of all things should take place. It is impossible not to regard this as applicable to a resurrection from the dead; and there is every reason to suppose that Daniel would so understand it, for

(a) if it be interpreted as referring to the close of the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes, it must be so understood. This prophecy was uttered about 534 years b.c. The death of Antiochus occurred 164 b.c. The interval between the prophecy and that event was, therefore, 370 years. It is impossible to believe that it was meant by the angel that Daniel would continue to live during all that time, so that he should then "stand in his lot," not having died; or that he did continue to live during all that period, and that at the end of it he "stood in his lot," or occupied the post of distinction and honor which is referred to in this language. But if this had been the meaning, it would have implied that he would, at that time, rise from the dead.

(b) If it be referred, as Gesenius explains it, to the times of the Messiah, the same thing would follow - for that time was still more remote; and, if it be supposed that Daniel understood it as relating to those times, it must also be admitted that he believed that there would be a resurrection, and that he would then appear in his proper place.

(c) There is only one other supposition, and that directly involves the idea that the allusion is to the general resurrection, as referred to in Daniel 12:3, and that Daniel would have part in that. This is admitted by Lengerke, by Maurer, and even by Bertholdt, to be the meaning, though he applies it

to the reign of the Messiah. No other interpretation, therefore, can be affixed to this than that it implies the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and that the mind of Daniel was directed onward to that. With this great and glorious doctrine the book appropriately closes. The hope of such a resurrection was fitted to soothe the mind of Daniel in view of all the troubles which he then experienced, and of all the darkness which rested on the future, for what we most want in the troubles and in the darkness of the present life is the assurance that, after having "rested" in the grave - in the calm sleep of the righteous - we shall "awake" in the morning of the resurrection, and shall "stand in our lot" - or in our appropriate place, as the acknowledged children of God, "at the end of days" - when time shall be no more, and when the consummation of all things shall have arrived.

In reference to the application of this prophecy, the following general remarks may be made:

I. One class of interpreters explain it literally as applicable to Antiochus Epiphanes. Of this class is Prof. Stuart, who supposes that its reference to Antiochus can be shown in the following manner: "The place which this passage occupies shows that the *terminus a quo*, or period from which the days designated are to be reckoned, is the same as that to which reference is made in the previous verse. This, as we have already seen, is the period when Antiochus, by his military agent Apollonius, took possession of Jerusalem, and put a stop to the temple worship there. The author of the first book of Maccabees, who is allowed by all to deserve credit as an historian, after describing the capture of Jerusalem by the agent of Antiochus (in the year 145 of the Seleucidae - 168 b.c.), and setting before the reader the widespread devastation which ensued, adds, respecting the invaders: ‹They shed innocent blood around the sanctuary, and defiled the holy place; and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fled away: the sanctuary thereof was made desolate; her feasts were turned into mourning, her sabbaths into reproach, and her honor into disgrace;' Daniel 7:24-28. But in determining even this, it was necessary to wait until the time and course of events should disclose its meaning; and in reference to the other two periods, doubtless still future, it may be necessary now to wait until events, still to occur, shall disclose what was intended by the angel. The first has been made clear by history: there can be no doubt that the others in the same manner will be made

equally clear. That this is the true interpretation, and that this is the view which the angel desired to convey to the mind of Daniel, seems to be clear from such expressions as these occurring in the prophecy: “Seal the book to the time of the end,” Daniel 12:4; “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased,” Daniel 12:4; “the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end,” Daniel 12:9; “many shall be made white,” Daniel 12:1-13: 10; “the wise shall understand,” Daniel 12:10; “go thou thy way until the end be,” Daniel 12:13. This language seems to imply that these things could not then be understood, but that when the events to which they refer should take place they would be plain to all.

(4) Two of those events or periods - the 1290 days and the 1335 days - seem to lie still in the future, and the full understanding of the prediction is to be reserved for developments yet to be made in the history of the world. Whether it be by the conversion of the Jews and the Gentiles, respectively, as Bishop Newton supposes, it would be vain to conjecture, and time must determine. That such periods - marked and important periods - are to occur in the future, or in some era now commenced but not yet completed, I am constrained to believe; and that it will be possible, in time to come, to determine what they are, seems to me to be as undoubted. But where there is nothing certain to be the basis of calculation, it is idle to add other conjectures to those already made, and it is wiser to leave the matter, as much of the predictions respecting the future must of necessity be left to time and to events to make them clear.

Let me add, in the conclusion of the exposition of this remarkable book: -

(a) That the mind of Daniel is left at the close of all the Divine communications to him looking into the far-distant future, Daniel 12:13. His attention is directed onward. Fragments of great truths had been thrown out, with little apparent connection, by the angel; hints of momentous import had been suggested respecting great doctrines to be made clearer in future ages. A time was to occur, perhaps in the far-distant future, when the dead were to be raised; when all that slept in the dust of the earth should awake; when the righteous should shin e as the brightness of the firmament, and when he himself should “stand in his lot” - sharing the joys of the

blessed, and occupying the position which would be appropriate to him. With this cheering prospect the communications of the angel to him are closed. Nothing could be better fitted to comfort his heart in a land of exile: nothing better fitted to elevate his thoughts.

(b) In the same manner it is proper that we should look onward. All the revelations of God terminate in this manner; all are designed and adapted to direct the mind to far-distant and most glorious scenes in the future. We have all that Daniel had; and we have what Daniel had not - the clear revelation of the gospel. In that gospel are stated in a still more clear manner those glorious truths respecting the future which are fitted to cheer us in time of trouble, to elevate our minds amidst the low scenes of earth, and to comfort and sustain us on the bed of death. With much more distinctness than Daniel saw them, we are permitted to contemplate the truths respecting the resurrection of the dead, the scenes of the final judgment, and the future happiness of the righteous. We have now knowledge of the resurrection of the Redeemer, and, through him, the assurance that all his people will be raised up to honor and glory; and though, in reference to the resurrection of the dead, and the future glory of the righteous, there is much that is still obscure, yet there is all that is necessary to inspire us with hope, and to stimulate us to endcavour to obtain the crown of life.

(c) It is not improper, therefore, to close the exposition of this book with the expression of a wish that what was promised to Daniel may occur to us who read his words - that “we may stand in our lot at the end of days;” that when all the scenes of earth shall have passed away in regard to us, and the end of the world itself shall have come, it may be our happy portion to occupy a place among the redeemed and to stand accepted before God. To ourselves, if we are truly righteous through our Redeemer, we may apply the promise made to Daniel; and for his readers the author can express no higher wish than that this lot may be theirs. If the exposition of this book shall be so blessed as to confirm any in the belief of the great truths of revelation, and lead their minds to a more confirmed hope in regard to these future glorious scenes; if by dwelling on the firm piety, the consummate wisdom, and the steady confidence in God evinced by this remarkable man, their souls shall be more established in the pursuit of the same piety,

wisdom, and confidence in God; and if it shall lead the minds of any to contemplate with a more steady and enlightened faith the scenes which are yet to occur on our earth, when the saints shall reign, or in heaven, when all the children of God shall be gathered there from all lands, the great object of these studies will have been accomplished, and the labor which has been bestowed upon it will not have been in vain.

To these high and holy purposes I now consecrate these reflections on the book of Daniel, with an earnest prayer that He, from whom all blessings come, may be pleased so to accept this exposition of one of the portions of his revealed truth, as to make it the means of promoting the interests of truth and piety in the world; with a grateful sense of his goodness in allowing me to complete it, and with thankfulness that I have been permitted for so many hours, in the preparation of this work, to contemplate the lofty integrity, the profound wisdom, the stern and unyielding virtue, and the humble piety of this distinguished saint and eminent statesman of ancient time. He is under a good influence, and he is likely to have his own piety quickened, and his own purposes of unflinching integrity and faithfulness, and of humble devotion to God strengthened, who studies the writings and the character of the prophet Daniel.

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HOSEA INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Minor Prophets, And Chiefly To Hosea

The twelve prophets, at the head of whom Hosea has been placed, were called of old "the lesser, or minor prophets," by reason of the smaller compass of their prophecies, not as though their prophecies were less important than those of the four greater prophets. Hosea, at least, must have exercised the prophetic office longer than any besides; he must have spoken as much and as often, in the Name of God. A prophecy of Micah and words of Joel are adopted by Isaiah; Jeremiah employs verses of Obadiah to denounce anew the punishment of Edom; a prophecy of Joel is expanded by Ezekiel. The "twelve" were the organs of important prophecy, as to their own people, or foreign nations, or as to Him whom they looked for, our Lord. Now, since the first five were earlier than Isaiah, and next, in order of time, to the prophetic Psalms of David, Solomon, Asaph and the sons of Korah, the revelations made to these lesser prophets even ante-date those given through the four greater.

The general outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh and the Day of the Lord were first spoken of by Joel. Our resurrection in Christ on the 3rd day; the inward graces which Christ should bestow on His Church in its perpetual union with Him; the entire victory over death and the grave; and the final conversion of Judah and Israel, were first prophesied by Hosea. When James wished to show that the conversion of the Gentiles had been foretold by a prophet, he quoted a passage of Amos. "The twelve," as they begun, so they closed the cycle of those whom God employed to leave written prophecies. Yet God, who willed that of all the earlier prophets, who prophesied from the time of Samuel to Elisha, no prophecy should remain, except the few words in the books of Kings, willed also, that little, in comparison, should be preserved, of what these later prophets spoke in His Name. Their writings altogether are not equal in compass to those of the one prophet, Isaiah. And so, like the twelve Apostles, they were enrolled in one prophetic band; their writings, both in the Jewish and Christian Church (see Cosin. Section 47ff), have been counted as one book; and, like the Apostles, they were called "the twelve" (see Carpzov iii. 270, and Cosin).

The earliest of this band followed very closely upon the ministry of Elijah and Elisha. Elisha, in his parting words 2 Kings 13:14, 2 Kings

13:25. foretold to Joash the three victories whereby he recovered from Syria the cities of Israel which Hazael had taken from his father Jehoahaz. In the next reign, namely, that of Jeroboam II, there arose the first of that brilliant constellation of prophets, whose light gleamed over the fall of Israel and Judah, shone in their captivity, and set at last, with the prediction of him, who should precede the rising of the Sun of Righteousness.

In the reign of Jeroboam II, Hosea, Amos, Jonah, prophesied in the kingdom of Israel. Joel was probably called at the same time to prophesy in Judah, and Obadiah to deliver his prophecy as to Edom; Isaiah, a few years later. Micah, we know, began his office in the following reign of Jotham, and then prophesied, together with Isaiah, to and in the reign of Hezekiah.

The order, then, of "the twelve" was probably, for the most part, an order of time. We know that the greater prophets are placed in that order, as also the three last of the twelve, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Of the five first, Hosea, Amos and Jonah were nearly contemporary; Joel was prior to Amos; and of the four remaining, Micah and Nahum were later than Jonah, whom they succeed in order; Nahum refers to Jonah; Zephaniah quotes Habakkuk. It may be from an old Jewish tradition, that Jerome says, "know that those prophets, whose time is not prefixed in the title, prophesied under the same kings, as those other prophets, who are placed before them, and who have titles."

Hosea, the first of the twelve, must have prophesied during a period, as long as the ordinary life of man. For he prophesied (the title tells us) while Uzziah king of Judah and Jeroboam II, king of Israel, were both reigning, as also during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. But Uzziah survived Jeroboam, 26 years. Jotham and Ahaz reigned, each, 16 years. Thus, we have already 58 years complete, without counting the years of Jeroboam, during which Hosea prophesied at the beginning of his office, or those of Hezekiah which elapsed before its close. But since the prophecy of Hosea is directed almost exclusively to Israel, it is not probable that the name of Jeroboam would alone have been selected for mention, unless Hosea had prophesied for some time during his reign. The house of Jehu, which sunk after the death of Jeroboam, was yet Joshua 1:4-5 standing, and in its full strength, when Hosea first prophesied.

Its might apparently is contrasted with the comparative weakness of Judah Hosea 1:7. On the other hand, the office of Hosea probably closed before the end of the 4th year of Hezekiah 2 Kings 18:9. For in that year, 721 b.c., the judgment denounced by Hosea upon Samaria was fulfilled, and all his prophecy looks on to this event as yet to come: the 13th chapter closes with the prophecy of the utter destruction of Samaria; and of the horrible cruelties which would befall her helpless ones. The last chapter alone winds up the long series of denunciations by a prediction of the future conversion of Israel. This chapter, however, is too closely connected with the preceding, to admit of its being a consolation after the captivity had begun. If then we suppose that Hosea prophesied during 2 years only of the reign of Hezekiah, and 10 of those in which the reigns of Jeroboam II and Uzziah coincided, his ministry will have lasted 70 years.

A long and heavy service for a soul full of love like his, mitigated only by his hope of the coming of Christ, the final conversion of his people, and the victory over the grave! But the length is nothing incredible, since, about this time, Jehoiada 2 Chronicles 24:15 "did good in Israel both toward God and toward His House;" until he "was 130 years." The shortest duration of Hosea's office must have been some 65 years. But if God called him quite young to his office, he need but have lived about 95 years, whereas Anna the prophetess served God in the temple with fasting and prayer night and day, after a widowhood probably of 84 years; and John the Evangelist lived probably until 104 years; and Polycarp became a martyr when he was about 104 years old, having served Christ for 86 years, and having, when 95, sailed from Asia to Italy. Almost in our own days, we have heard of 100 centenarians, deputed by a religious order who ate no animal food, to bear witness that their rule of life was not unhealthy. Not then the length of Hosea's life but his endurance was superhuman. So long did God will that His prophets should toil; so little fruit were they content to leave behind them. For these few chapters alone remain of a labor beyond the ordinary life of man. But they were content to have God for their exceeding great reward.

The time, during which Hosea prophesied, was the darkest period in the history of the kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam II was almost the last king who

ruled in it by the appointment of God. The promise of God to Jehu 2 Kings 10:30 in reward of his partial obedience, that his 2 Kings 15:8 "children of the fourth generation should sit on the throne of Israel," expired with Jeroboam's son, who reigned but for 6 months (see 2 Kings 15:10, 2 Kings 15:14, 2 Kings 15:25, 2 Kings 15:30) after an anarchy of 11 years. The rest of Hosea's life was passed amid the decline of the kingdom of Israel. Politically all was anarchy or misrule; kings made their way to the throne through the murder of their predecessors, and made way for their successors through their own 2 Kings 15:8. Shallum killed Zechariah; Menahem killed Shallum; Pekah killed the son of Menahem; Hoshea killed Pekah. The whole kingdom of Israel was a military despotism, and, as in the Roman empire, those in command came to the throne. Baasha, Zimri, Omri, Jehu, Menahem, Pekah, held military office before they became kings 2 Kings 16:14. Pekah was a captain of Romaliah 1 Kings 15:19; Ahab marrying Jezebel, daughter of a king of Tyre and Zidon 1 Kings 16:31; Menahem giving Pul king of Assyria tribute, that he might "confirm the kingdom in his hand" 2 Kings 15:19; Pekah confederate with Rezin Isaiah 7:1, Isaiah 7:9, Isaiah 7:16; 2 Chronicles 28:5-6. These alliances brought with them the corruptions of the Phoenician and Syrian idolatry, wherein murder and lust became acts of religion. Jehu also probably sent tribute to the king of Assyria, to secure to himself the throne which God had given him. The fact appears in the cuneiform inscriptions; it falls in with the character of Jehu and his half belief, using all means, human or divine, to establish his own end. In one and the same spirit, he destroyed the Baal-worshippers, as adherents of Ahab, retained the calf-worship, courted the ascetic Jonadab, son of Rechab, spoke of the death of Jehoram as the fulfillment of prophecy, and sought help from the king of Assyria.

These irreligions had the more deadly sway, because they were countenanced by the corrupt worship, which Jeroboam I had set up as the state religion, over against the worship at Jerusalem. To allow the people to go up to Jerusalem, as the center of the worship of God, would have risked their owning the line of David as the kings of God's appointment. To prevent this, Jeroboam set up a great system of rival worship. Himself a refugee in Egypt 1 Kings 11:40; 1 Kings 12:2, he had there seen nature (i. e., what are God's workings in nature) worshiped under the form of the calf. He adopted it, in the words in which Aaron had been overborne to

sanction it, as the worship of the One True God under a visible form: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" Exodus 32:4; 1 Kings 12:28.

With great human subtlety, he laid hold of Israel's love for idol-worship, and their reverence for their ancestors, and words which even Aaron had used, and sought to replace, by this symbol of God's working. His actual presence over the mercy-seat. Around this he gathered as much of the Mosaic ritual as he could. The priests and Levites remaining faithful to God 2 Chronicles 11:13-15, he made others priests, not of the line of Aaron. Then, while he gratified the love of idolatry, he decked it out with all the rest of the worship which God had appointed for Himself. He retained the feasts which God had appointed, the three great festivals, their solemn assemblies, Amos 5:21 the new moons and sabbaths Hosea 2:11; and these last feasts were observed even by those, to whose covetousness the rest on the festival was a hindrance Amos 8:5.

Every kind of sacrifice was retained, the daily sacrifice, Amos 4:4 the burnt-offering, Amos 5:22 the meal-offering Hosea 9:4; Amos 5:22, the drink-offering Hosea 9:4, thank-offerings (Hosea 5:6; Hosea 6:6, perhaps Hosea 4:8), peace-offerings Amos 5:22, free-will offerings (Hosea 5:6; Hosea 6:6, perhaps Hosea 4:8), sin-offerings (Amos 4:5, and of this class generally, Hosea 8:13). They had hymns and instrumental music Amos 5:23; Amos 8:3. They paid the tithes of the third year Amos 4:4; probably they gave the first fruits; they had priests 1 Kings 12:32; Hosea 4:6, Hosea 4:9; Hosea 5:1; Hosea 6:9; Hosea 10:5 and prophets Hosea 4:5; Hosea 9:7-8 and temples 1 Kings 12:31-32; Hosea 8:14; the temple at Bethel was the king's chapel, the temple of the state Amos 7:13.

The worship was maintained by the civil authority Hosea 5:11; Hosea 13:2. But all this outward show was rotten at the core. God had forbidden man so to worship Him, nor was it He who was worshiped at Bethel and Dan, though Jeroboam probably meant it. People, when they alter God's truth, alter more than they think for. Such is the lot of all heresy. Jeroboam probably meant that God should be worshiped under a symbol, and he brought in a worship, which was not, in truth, a worship of God at all. The calf was the symbol, not of the personal God, but of ever-renewed life, His

continued vivifying of all which lives, and renewing of what decays. And so what was worshiped was not God, but much what people now call "nature." The calf was a symbol of "nature;" much as people say, "nature does this or that;" "nature makes man so and so;" "nature useth simplicity of means;" "nature provides," etc.; as if "nature were a sort of semi-deity," or creation were its own Creator. As men now profess to own God, and do own Him in the abstract, but talk of "nature," until they forget Him, or because they forget Him, so Jeroboam, who was a shrewd, practical, irreligious man, slipped into a worship of nature, while he thought, doubtless, he was doing honor to the Creator, and professing a belief in Him.

But they were those same workings in creation, which were worshiped by the neighboring pagan, in Baal and Ashtaroth; only there the name of the Creator was altogether dropped. Yet it was but a step from one to the other. The calf was the immediate and often the sole object of worship. They "sacrificed to the calves" 1 Kings 12:32; "kissed the calves" Hosea 13:2, in token of worship; swore by them as living gods Amos 8:4. They had literally Psalm 106:20 "changed their Glory (i. e., God) into the similitude of a bull which eateth hay." Calf-worship paved the way for those coarser and more cruel worships of nature, under the names of Baal and Ashtaroth, with all their abominations of consecrated child-sacrifices, and degrading or horrible sensuality. The worship of the calves led to sin. The pagan festival was one of unbridled licentiousness. The account of the calf-festival in the wilderness agrees too well with the pagan descriptions. The very least which can be inferred from the words "Aaron had made them naked to their shame before their enemies" Exodus 32:25, is an extreme relaxedness, on the borders of further sin.

And now in Hosea's time, these idolatries had yielded their full bitter fruits. The course of iniquity had been run. The stream had become darker and darker in its downward flow. Creature worship (as Paul points out, Hosea 4:1; Hosea 7:1, Hosea 7:3, adultery Hosea 4:11; Hosea 5:3-4; Hosea 7:4; Hosea 9:10; Amos 2:7, bloodshedding Hosea 5:2; Hosea 6:8; deceit to God Hosea 4:2; Hosea 10:13; Hosea 11:12 produced faithlessness to man; excess Hosea 4:11; Hosea 7:5; Amos 4:1 and luxury Hosea 4:15; Hosea 6:4-6 were supplied by secret Hosea 4:2; Hosea 7:1 or open robbery Hosea 7:1, oppression Hosea 12:7; Amos 3:9-10; Amos 4:1; Amos 5:11, false dealing

Hosea 12:7; Amos 8:5, perversion of justice Hosea 10:4; Amos 2:6-7; Amos 5:7, Amos 5:12; Amos 6:3, Amos 6:12, grinding of the poor Amos 2:7; Amos 8:6.

Blood was shed like water, until one stream met another Hosea 4:2, and overspread the land with one defiling deluge. Adultery was consecrated as an act of religion (see the note at Hosea 4:14). Those who were first in rank were first in excess. People and king vied in debauchery Hosea 7:5, and the Scottish king joined and encouraged the free-thinkers and blasphemers of his court Hosea 7:5. The idolatrous priests loved and shared in the sins of the people Hosea 4:8-9; nay, they seem to have set themselves to intercept those on either side of Jordan, who would go to worship at Jerusalem, laying wait to murder them Hosea 5:1; Hosea 6:9. Corruption had spread throughout the whole land Hosea 5:1; even the places once sacred through God‘s revelations or other mercies to their forefathers, Bethel Hosea 4:15; Hosea 10:5, Hosea 10:8, Hosea 10:15; Hosea 12:4; Amos 3:14; Amos 5:5; Amos 7:10, Amos 7:13, Gilgal Hosea 4:15; Hosea 9:15; Hosea 12:11, Gilead Hosea 6:8; Hosea 12:11, Mizpah Hosea 5:1, Shechem (see the note at Hosea 6:9), were special scenes of corruption or of sin. Every holy memory was effaced by present corruption. Could things be worse? There was one aggravation more. Remonstrance was useless Hosea 4:4; the knowledge of God was willfully rejected Hosea 4:6; the people hated rebuke Amos 5:10; the more they were called, the more they refused (Hosea 11:2, add 7); they forbade their prophets to prophesy Amos 2:12; and their false prophets hated God greatly Hosea 9:7, Hosea 9:9. All attempts to heal all this disease only showed its incurableness Hosea 7:1.

Such was the condition of the people among whom Hosea had to prophesy for some 70 years. They themselves were not sensible of their decay Hosea 7:9, moral or political. They set themselves, in despite of the prophet‘s warning, to prop up their strength by aid of the two pagan nations, Egypt or Assyria. In Assyria they chiefly trusted (Hosea 5:13; Hosea 8:9-10; Hosea 14:3; and with Egypt, Hosea 7:11; Hosea 12:1), and Assyria, he had to denounce to them, should carry them captive (Hosea 10:6; Hosea 11:9, denying it of Egypt); stragglers at least, from them fled to Egypt Hosea 9:3, and in Egypt they should be a derision Hosea 7:16, and should find their grave Hosea 9:6. This captivity he had to foretell as imminent

Hosea 1:4; Hosea 5:7, certain Hosea 5:9; Hosea 9:7, and irreversible Hosea 1:6; Hosea 5:6. Once only, in the commencement of his prophecy, does he give any hope, that the temporal punishment might be averted through repentance.

This too he follows up by renewing the declaration of God expressed in the name of his daughter, "I will not have mercy" Hosea 1:2-4. He gives them in God's Name, a distant promise of a spiritual restoration in Christ, and forewarns them that it is distant Hosea 3:4-5. But, that they might not look for any temporal restoration, he tells them, on the one hand, in peremptory terms, of their dispersion; on the other, he tells them of their spiritual restoration without any intervening shadows of temporal deliverance. God tells them absolutely (Hosea 1:4, Hosea 1:6; Hosea 9:17; Hosea 9:3; Hosea 8:8, and of distant captivity, Hosea 4:19, Hosea 4:16), "I will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease;" "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel;" "they shall be wanderers among the nations;" "they shall not dwell in the Lord's land;" "Israel is swallowed up; she shall be among the nations like a vessel in which is no pleasure." On the other hand, the promises are markedly spiritual (Hosea 1:10; Hosea 2:19 ff; Hosea 3:5; Hosea 6:1-3; Hosea 10:12; Hosea 13:14); "Ye are the sons of the living God;" "I will betroth her to Me for ever;" "they shall fear the Lord and His goodness;" "He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight;" "till He come and rain righteousness upon you." "I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death." Again, God contrasts Hosea 1:7; Hosea 6:11 with this His sentence, on Israel, His future dealings with Judah, and His mercies to her, of which Israel should not partake, while of Judah's spiritual mercies, He says, that Israel should partake by being united with Judah Hosea 1:11; Hosea 3:5.

The ground of this difference was, that Israel's separate existence was bound up with that sin of Jeroboam, which clave to them throughout their history, and which none of their least bad kings ventured to give up. God tried them for two centuries and a half; and not one king was found, who would risk his throne for God. In merciful severity then, the separate kingdom of Israel was to be destroyed, and the separate existence of the ten tribes was to be lost.

This message of woe gives a unique character to the prophecies of Hosea. He, like Paul, was of the people, whose temporary excision he had to declare. He calls the wretched king of Israel "our king" Hosea 7:5; and God calls the rebellious people "thy people" Hosea 4:4. Of that people, he was specially the prophet. Judah he mentions incidentally, when he does mention them, not in his warnings only, but in his prophecies of good also. His main commission lay among the ten tribes. Like Elijah and Elisha whom he succeeded, he was raised up out of them, for them. His love could not be tied down to them; and so he could not but warn Judah against sharing Israel's sin. But it is, for the most part, incidentally and parenthetically. He does not speak of them equally, except as to that which was the common sin of both, the seeking to Assyria for help, and unfulfilled promise of amendment Hosea 5:13-14; Hosea 6:4. And so, on the other hand, mercies, which belong to all as God's everlasting betrothal of His Church Hosea 2:19-20, and our redemption from death Hosea 13:14 and the grave, he foretells with special reference to Ephraim, and in one place only expressly includes Judah (Hosea 1:11; Judah is included virtually in Hosea 3:5).

The prophecies of Hosea (as he himself collected them) form one whole, so that they cannot be distinctly separated, In one way, as the second chapter is the expansion and application of the first, so the remainder of the book after the third is an expansion and application of the third, The first and third chapters illustrate, summarily, Ephraim's ingratitude and desertion of God and His dealings with her, by likening them to the wife which Hosea was commanded to take, and to her children. The second chapter expands and applies the picture of Israel's unfaithfulness, touched upon in the first, but it dwells more on the side of mercy; the remaining chapters enlarge the picture of the third, although, until the last, they dwell chiefly on the side of judgment. Yet while the remainder of the book is an expansion of the third chapter, the three first chapters, (as every reader has felt) are united together, not by their narrative form only, but by the prominence given to the history of Hosea which furnishes the theme of the book, the shameful unfaithfulness of Israel, and the exceeding tenderness of the love of God, who, "in wrath, remembers mercy."

The narrative leads us deep into the prophet‘s personal sorrows. There is no ground to justify our taking as a parable, what Holy Scripture relates as a fact. There is no instance in which it can be shown, that Holy Scripture relates that a thing was done, and that, with the names of persons, and yet that God did not intend it to be taken as literally true. There would then be no test left of what was real, what imaginary; and the histories of Holy Scripture would be left to be a prey to individual caprice, to be explained away as parables, when people disliked them. Hosea, then, at God‘s command, united to himself in marriage, one who, amid the widespread corruption of those times, had fallen manifoldly into fleshly sin. With her he was commanded to live holily, as his wife, as Isaac lived with Rebecca whom he loved. Such an one he took, in obedience to God‘s command, one Gomer. At some time after she bore the prophet‘s children, she fell into adultery, and forsook him. Perhaps she fell into the condition of a slave (see the note at Hosea 3:2). God anew commanded him to show mercy to her, to redeem her from her fallen condition, and, without restoring to her the rights of marriage (see the note at Hosea 3:3), to guard and protect her from her sins. Thus, by the love of God and the patient forbearance which He instructed the prophet to show, a soul was rescued from sin unto death, and was won to God; to the children of Israel there was set forth continually before their eyes a picture and a prophecy of the punishment upon sin, and of the close union with Himself which He vouchsafes to sinners who repent and return to Him.

“Not only in visions which were seen,” says Irenaeus (iv. 20. 12. p. 374Old Testament), “and in words which were preached, but in acts also was He (the Word) seen by the prophets, so as to prefigure and foreshew things future, through them. For which cause also, the prophet Hosea took ‹a wife of whoredoms,‘ prophesying by his act, that the earth, i. e., the people who are on the earth, shall commit whoredoms, departing from the Lord; and that of such people God will be pleased to take to Himself a Church, to be sanctified by the communication of His Son, as she too was sanctified by the communion of the prophet. Wherefore Paul also saith, that 1 Corinthians 7:14 the unbelieving woman is sanctified in her believing husband.” “What,” asks Augustine of the scoffers of his day, “is there opposed to the clemency of truth, what contrary to the Christian faith, that one unchaste, leaving her fornication, should be converted to a chaste

marriage? And what so incongruous and alien from the faith of the prophet, as it would have been, not to believe that all the sins of the unchaste were forgiven, when she was converted and amended? So then, when the prophet made the unchaste one his wife, a kind provision was made for the woman to amend her life, and the mystery (of the union of Christ Himself with the Church of Jews and Gentiles) was expressed" (Augustine, ib. 89). "Since the Lord, through the same Scripture, lays clearly open what is figured by this command and deed, and since the apostolic Epistles attest that this prophecy was fulfilled in the preaching of the New Testament, who would venture to say that it was not commanded and done for that end, for which He who commanded it, explains in the holy Scripture that He commanded, and that the prophet did it?"

The names which Hosea, by God's command gave to the children who were born, expressed the temporal punishment, which was to come upon the nation. The prophet himself, in his relation to his restored yet separated wife, was, so long as she lived, one continued, living prophecy of the tenderness of God to sinners. Fretful, wayward, jealous, ungovernable, as are mostly the tempers of those who are recovered from such sins as her's, the prophet, in his anxious, watchful charge, was a striking picture of the forebearing loving-kindness of God to us amid our provocations and infirmities. Nay, the love which the prophet bare her, grew the more out of his compassion and tenderness for her whom God had commanded him to take as his own. Certain it is, that Holy Scripture first speaks of her as the object of his love, when God commanded him a second time to take charge of her who had betrayed and abandoned him. God bids him show active love to her, whom, amid her unfaithfulness, he loved already. "Go yet, love a woman, beloved of her husband, yet an adulteress." Wonderful picture of God's love for us, for whom He gave His Only-begotten Son, loving us, while alien from Him, and with nothing in us to love!

Such was the tenderness of the prophet, whom God employed to deliver such a message of woe; and such the people must have known to be his personal tenderness, who had to speak so sternly to them.

The three first prophecies, contained severally in the three first chapters, form each, a brief circle of mercy and judgment. They do not enter into any

detail of Israel‘s sin, but sum up all in the one, which is both center and circumference of all sin, the all-comprehending sin, departure from God, choosing the creature rather than the Creator. On this, the first prophecy foretells the entire irrevocable destruction of the kingdom; God‘s temporary rejection of His people, but their acceptance, together with Judah, in One Head, Christ. The second follows the same outline, rebuke, chastisement, the cessation of visible worship, banishment, and then the betrothal forever. The third speaks of offence against deeper love, and more prolonged punishment. It too ends in the promise of entire restoration; yet only in the latter days, after many days of separation, both from idolatry and from the true worship of God, such as is Israel‘s condition now.

The rest is one continuous prophecy, in which the prophet has probably gathered into one the substance of what he had delivered in the course of his ministry. Here and there, yet very seldom in it Hosea 4:5; Hosea 5:3, Hosea 5:7; Hosea 9:1, the prophet refers to the image of the earlier chapters. For the most part he exhibits his people to themselves, in their varied ingratitude, folly, and sin. The prophecy has many pauses, which with one exception coincide with our chapters. It rises and falls, and then bursts out in fresh tones of upbraiding (see the beginnings of Hosea 5:1-15; Hosea 8:1-14; Hosea 10:1-15; Hosea 11:1-12; Hosea 12:1-14; Amos 2:14, Amos 2:16; Amos 6:13 also, at the same time, describes them. The fourth chapter is addressed to the “house of Israel” Hosea 4:1 only, without any allusion to the king, and accords with that time of convulsive anarchy, which followed the death of Jeroboam II. The omission of the king is the more remarkable, inasmuch as the “house of the king” is included in the corresponding address in Hosea 5:1. The “rulers” Hosea 4:18 of Israel are also spoken of in the plural; and the bloodshed Hosea 4:2 described seems to be more than individual insulated murders.

In this case, the king upbraided in Hosea 5:1-15 would, naturally, be the next king, Zechariah, in whom God‘s promise to the house of Jehu expired. In Hosea 7:5, it is said. This is not likely to have been the character of successful usurpers, as Menahem, or Pekah, or Hoshea. It is far more likely to have been that of Zechariah, who was placed on the throne for 6 months, “did evil in the sight of the Lord,” and then was “slain publicly before the being people” 2 Kings 15:10, no one resisting. Him, as the last of the line of

Jehu, and sanctioned by God, Hosea may the rather have called "our king" Hosea 7:5, owning in him, evil as he was, God's appointment.

The words, "they have devoured their judges, all their kings have fallen" Hosea 7:7, had anew their fulfillment in the murder of Zechariah and Shallum (772 B. C) as soon as the promise to the house of Jehu had expired. The blame of Judah for "multiplying fenced cities" Hosea 8:14, instead of trusting in God, probably relates to the temper in which they were built in the days of Jotham 2 Chronicles 27:2-4, between 758, and 741 b.c. Although Jotham was a religious king, the corruption of the people at this time is especially recorded; "the people did corruptly." Later yet, we have mention of the dreadful battle, when Shalman, or Shalmanezer, took and massacred women and children at Betharbel Hosea 10:14 in the valley of Jezreel, about 729 b.c. Hosea, thus, lived to see the fulfillment of his earlier prophecy, "I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel" (Hosea 1:4, see the note at Hosea 10:14). It has been thought that the question "where is thy king?" relates to the captivity of Hoshea, three years before the destruction of Samaria. This sort of question, however, relates not to the actual place where the king was, but to his ability or inability to help.

It belongs to the mournful solemnity of Hosea's prophecy, that he scarcely speaks to the people in his own person. The ten chapters, which form the center of the prophecy, are almost wholly one long dirge of woe, in which the prophet rehearses the guilt and the punishment of his people. If the people are addressed, it is, with very few exceptions, God Himself, not the prophet, who speaks to them; and God speaks to them as their judge. Once only does the prophet use the form, so common in the other prophets, "saith the Lord" Hosea 11:11. As in the three first chapters, the prophet, in his relation to his wife, represented that of God to His people, so, in these ten chapters, after the first words of the fourth and fifth chapters, "Hear the word of the Lord, for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land," "Hear ye this, O priests" Hosea 4:1; Hosea 5:1, whenever the prophet uses the first person, he uses it not of himself, but of God. "I" "My" are not Hosea, and the things of Hosea, but God and what belongs to God. God addresses the prophet himself in the second person Hosea 4:4, Hosea 4:17; Hosea 8:1.

In four verses only of these chapters does the prophet himself apparently address his own people Israel, in two Hosea 9:1, Hosea 9:5 expostulating with them; in two, (Hosea 10:12; (but followed by a declaration of the fruitlessness of his call Hosea 10:13, Hosea 10:15) Hosea 12:6) calling them to repentance. In two other verses he addresses Judah Hosea 4:13, or foretells to him judgment mingled with mercy (see the note at Hosea 6:11). The last chapter alone is one of almost unmingled brightness; the prophet calls to repentance Hosea 14:1, Hosea 14:3, and God in His own Person Hosea 14:4, Hosea 14:8 accepts it, and promises large supply of grace. But this too closes the prophecy with the warning, that righteous as are the ways of God, the transgressors should stumble in them.

It is this same solemn pathos, which has chiefly occasioned the obscurity, complained of in Hosea. The expression of Jerome has often been repeated; "Hosea is concise, and speaketh, as it were, in detached sayings." The words of upbraiding, of judgment, of woe, burst out, as it were, one by one, slowly, heavily, condensed, abrupt, from the prophet's heavy and shrinking soul, as God commanded and constrained him, and put His words, like fire, in the prophet's mouth. An image of Him Who said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" Matthew 23:37, he delivers his message, as though each sentence burst with a groan from his soul, and he had anew to take breath, before he uttered each renewed woe.

Each verse forms a whole for itself, like one heavy toll in a funeral knell. The prophet has not been careful about order and symmetry, so that each sentence went home to the soul. And yet the unity of the prophecy is so evident in the main, that we cannot doubt that it is not broken, even when the connection is not apparent on the surface. The great difficulty consequently in Hosea is to ascertain that connection in places where it evidently exists, yet where the prophet has not explained it. The easiest and simplest sentences (for example, Hosea 12:9, Hosea 12:12-13) are sometimes, in this respect, the most difficult. It is in remarkable contrast with this abruptness in the more mournful parts, that when Hosea has a message of mercy to deliver, his style becomes easy and flowing. Then no

sign of present sin or impending misery disturbs his brightness. He lives wholly in the future bliss which he was allowed to foretell.

Yet, meanwhile, no prophet had a darker future to declare. The prophets of Judah could mingle with their present denunciations a prospect of an early restoration. The ten tribes, as a whole, had no future. The temporal part of their punishment was irreversible. Hosea lived almost to see its fulfillment. Yet not the less confidently does he foretell the spiritual mercies in store for his people. He promises them as absolutely as if he saw them. It is not a matter of hope, but of certainty. And this certainty Hosea announces, in words expressive of the closest union with God; an union shadowed by the closest union which we know, that, whereby a man and his wife are "no more twain, but one flesh." Here, as filled and overfilled with joy, instead of abrupt sentences, he gladly lingers on his subject, adding in every word something to the fullness of the blessing contained in the preceding" Hosea 2:14-20; Hosea 14:1-7. He is, indeed, (if one may venture so to speak) eminently a prophet of the tenderness of the love of God. In foretelling God's judgments, he ventures to picture Him to us, as overcome (so to speak) by mercy, so that He would not execute His full sentence Hosea 11:8-9. God's mercies he predicts in the inmost relation of love, that those whom He had rejected, He would own, as "sons of the living God;" that He would betroth them to Himself in righteousness, in judgment, loving-kindness, mercies, faithfulness, and that, forever; that He would raise us up on the third day, and that we should live in His sight, ransoming us, Himself, and redeeming us, as our Kinsman, from death and the grave (see the notes at Hosea 1:10; notes at Hosea 2:19 ff; notes at Hosea 6:2; notes at Hosea 13:14).

In this prophecy of the betrothal of the Church to God, he both applies and supplies the teaching of Exodus 34:15-16. The relation itself of betrothal Moses does not mention; yet it must have been suggested to the mind of Israel by his describing this special sin of choosing other gods, under the title of married faithlessness Leviticus 17:7; Leviticus 20:5-6; Numbers 14:33 and of desertion of God Deuteronomy 31:16, and by his attributing to God the title of "Jealous" Exodus 20:5; Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:24; Deuteronomy 5:9; Deuteronomy 6:15; Numbers 25:2. It was reserved to Hosea, to exhibit at once to Israel under this image, God's

tender love for them and their ingratitude, to dwell on their relation to God whom they forsook, and explicitly to foretell to them that new betrothal in Christ which should abide forever.

The image, however, presupposes an acquaintance with the language of the Pentateuch; and it has been noticed that Hosea incidentally asserts that the written Pentateuch was still used in the kingdom of Israel. For God does not say, "I have given to him," but "I have written," or "I write Hosea 8:12 to him the great" or "manifold" things of the law. The "ten thousand things" which God says that He had written, cannot be the decalogue only, nor would the word "written" be used of an unwritten tradition. God says moreover, "I write," in order to express that the law, although written once for all, still came from the ever-present authority of Him Who wrote it.

The language of Hosea is, for the most part, too concise and broken, to admit of his employing actual sentences from the Pentateuch. This he does sometimes (see Hosea 3:1; Hosea 4:8, Hosea 4:10; Hosea 5:6, Hosea 5:10-11, Hosea 5:14; Hosea 6:2-3; Hosea 10:14; Hosea 11:7-8; Hosea 12:4, Hosea 12:6; Hosea 13:6, Hosea 13:9; Hosea 14:2), as has been pointed out. On the other hand, his concise allusions would scarcely be understood by those who were not familiar with the history and laws of the Pentateuch (see Hosea 1:10-11; Hosea 3:2; Hosea 4:4, Hosea 4:8; Hosea 8:6, Hosea 8:11, Hosea 8:13; Hosea 9:3, Hosea 9:10; Hosea 10:4, Hosea 10:11; Hosea 11:8; Hosea 12:4-6, Hosea 12:10-12; Hosea 14:3-4). Since then plainly a prophet spoke so as to be understood by the people, this is an evidence of the continual use of the Pentateuch in Israel, after the great schism from Judah. The schools of the prophets, doubtless, maintained the teaching of the law, as they did the public worship. The people went to Elisha on new-moons and sabbaths, and so to other prophets also 2 Kings 4:23. Even after the great massacre of the prophets by Jezebel 1 Kings 18:13, we have incidental notices of schools of the prophets at Bethel 2 Kings 2:3, Jericho 2 Kings 2:5, Gilgal 2 Kings 4:38, Mount Ephraim 2 Kings 5:22, Samaria, from which other schools were formed 2 Kings 6:1. The selection of Gilgal, Bethel, and Samaria, shows that the spots were chosen, in order to confront idolatry and corruption in their chief abodes. The contradiction of people's lives to the law, thus extant and taught among them, could scarcely have

been greater than that of Christians now to the Bible which they have in their houses and their hands and their ears, but not in their hearts.

HOSEA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The word of the Lord, that came unto Hosea - Hosea, at the very beginning of his prophecy, declares that all this, which he delivered, came, not from his own mind but from God. As Paul says, "Paul an Apostle, not of men neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father." He refers all to God, and claims all obedience to Him. That word came to him; it existed then before, in the mind of God. It was first God's, then it became the prophet's, receiving it from God. So it is said, "the word of God came to John" Luke 3:2.

Hosea - i. e., "Salvation, or, the Lord saveth." The prophet bare the name of our Lord Jesus, whom he foretold and of whom he was a type. "Son of Beeri, i. e., my well or welling-forth." God ordained that the name of his father too should signify truth. From God, as from the fountain of life, Hosea drew the living waters, which he poured out to the people. "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" Isaiah 12:3.

In the days of Uzziah … - Hosea, although a prophet of Israel, marks his prophecy by the names of the kings of Judah, because the kingdom of Judah was the kingdom of the theocracy, the line of David to which the promises of God were made. As Elisha, to whose office he succeeded, turned away from Jehoram 2 Kings 3:13-14, saying, "get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother," and owned Jehoshaphat king of Judah only, so, in the title of his prophecy, Hosea at once expresses that the kingdom of Judah alone was legitimate. He adds the name of Jeroboam, partly as the last king of Israel whom, by virtue of His promise to Jehu, God helped; partly to show that God never left Israel unwarned. Jeroboam I was warned first by the prophet 2 Kings 13:14.

So, in the days of Jeroboam II, God raised up Hosea, Amos and Jonah. "The kings and people of Israel then were without excuse, since God never ceased to send His prophets among them; in no reign did the voice of the prophets fail, warning of the coming wrath of God, until it came." While Jeroboam was recovering to Israel a larger rule than it had ever had since it separated from Judah, annexing to it Damascus 2 Kings 14:28 which had been lost to Judah even in the days of Solomon, and from which Israel had of late so greatly suffered, Hosea was sent to forewarn it of its destruction. God alone could utter "such a voice of thunder out of the midst of such a

cloudless sky." Jeroboam doubtless thought that his house would, through its own strength, survive the period which God had pledged to it. "But temporal prosperity is no proof either of stability or of the favor of God. Where the law of God is observed, there, even amid the pressure of outward calamity, is the assurance of ultimate prosperity. Where God is disobeyed, there is the pledge of coming destruction. The seasons when men feel most secure against future chastisement, are often the preludes of the most signal revolutions."

Verse 2

The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea or in Hosea - God first revealed Himself and His mysteries to the prophet's soul, by His secret inspiration, and then declared, through him, to others, what He had deposited in him. God enlightened him, and then others through the light in him.

And the Lord said unto Hosea - For this thing was to be done by Hosea alone, because God had commanded it, not by others of their own mind. To Isaiah God first revealed Himself, as sitting in the temple, adored by the Seraphim: to Ezekiel God first appeared, as enthroned above the cherubim in the holy of holies; to Jeremiah God announced that, ere yet he was born, He had sanctified him for this office: to Hosea He enjoined, as the beginning of his prophetic office, an act contrary to man's natural feelings, yet one, by which he became an image of the Redeemer, uniting to Himself what was unholy, in order to make it holy.

Go take unto thee - Since Hosea prophesied some eighty years, he must now have been in early youth, holy, pure, as became a prophet of God. Being called thus early, he had doubtless been formed by God as a chosen instrument of His will, and had, like Samuel, from his first childhood, been trained in true piety and holiness. Yet he was to unite unto him, so long as she lived, one greatly defiled, in order to win her thereby to purity and holiness; herein, a little likeness of our Blessed Lord, who, in the Virgin's womb, to save us, espoused our flesh, in us sinful, in Him all-holy, without motion to sin; and, further, espoused the Church, formed of us who, "whether Jews or Gentiles," were all under sin, aliens from God and gone away from Him, "serving divers lusts and passions Ephesians 5:27, to make it a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle."

A wife of whoredoms - i. e., take as a wife, one who up to that time had again and again been guilty of that sin. So "men of bloods" Psalm 5:6 are "men given up to bloodshedding;" and our Lord was "a Man of Sorrows Isaiah 53:3, not occasional only, but manifold and continual, throughout His whole life. She must, then, amid the manifold corruption of Israel, have been repeatedly guilty of that sin, perhaps as an idolatress, thinking of it to be in honor of their foul gods (see the Hosea 4:13, note; Hosea 4:14, note). She was not like those degraded ones, who cease to bear children; still she must have manifoldly sinned. So much the greater was the obedience of the prophet. Nor could any other woman so shadow forth the manifold defilements of the human race, whose nature our incarnate Lord vouchsafed to unite in His own person to the perfect holiness of the divine nature.

And children of whoredoms - For they shared the disgrace of their mother, although born in lawful marriage. The sins of parents descend also, in a mysterious way, on their children, Sin is contagious, and, unless the entail is cut off by grace, hereditary. The mother thus far portrays man's revolts, before his union with God; the children, our forsaking of God, after we have been made His children. The forefathers of Israel, God tells them, "served other gods, on the other side of the flood" Joshua 24:14, (i. e., in Ur of the Chaldees, from where God called Abraham) "and in Egypt." It was out of such defilement, that God took her Ezekiel 23:3, Ezekiel 23:8, and He says, "Thou becamest Mine" Ezekiel 16:8. whom He maketh His, He maketh pure; and of her, not such as she was in herself by nature, but as such as He made her, He says, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals when thou wentest after Me, in the wilderness" Jeremiah 2:2. But she soon fell away; and thenceforth there were among them (as there are now among Christians,) "the children of God, the children of the promise, and the children of whoredoms, or of the devil."

For the land … - This is the reason why God commands Hosea to do this thing, in order to shadow out their foulness and God's mercy. What no man would dare to do Jeremiah 3:1, except at God's bidding, God in a manner doth, restoring to union with Himself those who had gone away from Him. "The land," i. e., Israel, and indirectly, Judah also, and, more widely yet, the whole earth.

Departing from - Literally, "from after the Lord." Our whole life should be Philemon 3:13, forgetting the things which are behind, to follow after Him, whom here we can never fully attain unto, God in His Infinite

Perfection, yet so as, with our whole heart, "fully to follow after Him." To depart from the Creator and to serve the creature, is adultery; as the Psalmist says, "Thou hast destroyed all them, that go a whoring from Thee" Psalm 73:27. He who seeks anything out of God, turns from following Him, and takes to him something else as his god, is unfaithful, and spiritually an adulterer and idolater. For he is an adulterer, who becomes another's than God's.

Verse 3

So he went - He did not demur, nor excuse himself, as did even Moses Exodus 4:18, or Jeremiah Jeremiah 1:6, or Peter Acts 10:4, and were rebuked for it, although mercifully by the All-Merciful. Hosea, accustomed from childhood to obey God and every indication of the will of God, did at once, what he was bidden, however repulsive to natural feeling, and became, thereby, the more an image of the obedience of Christ Jesus, and a pattern to us, at once to believe and obey God's commands, however little to our minds.

Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim - "Gomer" is completion; "Diblaim," a double lump of figs; which are a figure of sweetness. These names may mean, that "the sweetness of sins is the parent of destruction;" or that Israel, or mankind had completely forsaken God, and were children of corrupting pleasure.

Holy Scripture relates that all this was done, and tells us the births and names of the children, as real history. As such then, must we receive it. We must not imagine things to be unworthy of God, because they do not commend themselves to us. God does not dispense with the moral law, because the moral law has its source in the mind of God Himself. To dispense with it would be to contradict Himself. But God, who is the absolute Lord of all things which he made, may, at His Sovereign will, dispose of the lives or things which He created. Thus, as Sovereign Judge, He commanded the lives of the Canaanites to be taken away by Israel, as, in His ordinary providence, He has ordained that the magistrate should not bear the sword in vain, but has made him His "minister, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" Romans 13:4. So, again, He, whose are all things, willed to repay to the Israelites their hard and unjust servitude, by commanding them "to spoil the Egyptian" Exodus 3:22.

He, who created marriage, commanded to Hosea, whom he should marry. The prophet was not defiled, by taking as his lawful wife, at God‘s bidding, one defiled, however hard a thing this was. “He who remains good, is not defiled by coming in contact with one evil; but the evil, following his example, is turned into good.” But through his simple obedience, he foreshadowed Him, God the Word, who was called “the friend of publicans and sinners” Matthew 11:19; who warned the Pharisees, that “the publicans and harlots should (enter unto the kingdom of God before them” Matthew 21:31; and who now vouchsafes to espouse, dwell in, and unite Himself with, and so to hallow, our sinful souls. The acts which God enjoined to the prophets, and which to us seem strange, must have had an impressiveness to the people, in proportion to their strangeness. The life of the prophet became a sermon to the people. Sight impresses more than words. The prophet, being in his own person a mirror of obedience, did moreover, by his way of life, reflect to the people some likeness of the future and of things unseen. The expectation of the people was wound up, when they saw their prophets do things at God‘s command, which they themselves could not have done. When Ezekiel was bidden to show no sign of mourning, on the sudden death of “the desire of his eyes” Ezekiel 24:16-18, his wife; or when he dug through the wall of his house, and carried forth his household stuff in the twilight, with his face covered Ezekiel 12:3-7; the people asked, “Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so?” (Ezekiel 24:19, add Ezekiel 12:10). No words could so express a grief beyond all power of grieving, as Ezekiel‘s mute grief for one who was known to be “the desire of his eyes,” yet for whom he was forbidden to show the natural expressions of grief, or to use the received tokens of mourning. God Himself declares the ground of such acts to have been, that, rebellious as the house of Israel was Ezekiel 12:2, “with eyes which saw not, and ears which heard not,” they might yet consider such acts as these.

Verse 4

Call his name Jezreel - that is, in its first sense here, “God will scatter.” The life of the prophet, and his union with one so unworthy of him, were a continued prophecy of God‘s mercy. The names of the children were a life-long admonition of His intervening judgments. Since Israel refused to hear God‘s words, He made the prophet‘s sons, through the mere fact of their presence among them, their going out and coming in, and the names which

He gave them, to be preachers to the people. He depicted in them and in their names what was to be, in order that, whenever they saw or heard of them, His warnings might be forced upon them, and those who would take warning, might be saved. If, with their mother‘s disgrace, these sons inherited and copied their mother‘s sins, then their names became even more expressive, that, being such as they were, they would be scattered by God, would not be owned by God as His people, or be pitied by Him.

I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu - Yet Jehu shed this blood, the blood of the house of Ahab, of Joram and Jezebel and the seventy sons of Ahab, at God‘s command and in fulfillment of His will. How was it then sin? Because, if we do what is the will of God for any end of our own, for anything except God, we do, in fact, our own will, not God‘s. It was not lawful for Jehu to depose and slay the king his master, except at the command of God, who, as the Supreme King, sets up and puts down earthly rulers as He wills. For any other end, and done otherwise than at God‘s express command, such an act is sin. Jehu was rewarded for the measure in which he fulfilled God‘s commands, as Ahab who had “sold himself to work wickedness,” had yet a temporal reward for humbling himself publicly, when rebuked by God for his sin, and so honoring God, amid an apostate people. But Jehu, by cleaving, against the will of God, to Jeroboam‘s sin, which served his own political ends, showed that, in the slaughter of his master, he acted not, as he pretended, out of zeal 2 Kings 10:16 for the will of God, but served his own will and his own ambition only.

By his disobedience to the one command of God, he showed that he would have equally disobeyed the other, had it been contrary to his own will of interest. He had no principle of obedience. And so the blood, which was shed according to the righteous judgment of God, became sin to him who shed it in order to fulfill, not the will of God, but his own. Thus God said to Baasha, “I exalted thee out of the dust, and made the prince over My people Israel” 1 Kings 16:2, which he became by slaying his master, the son of Jeroboam, and all the house of Jeroboam. Yet, because he followed the sins of Jeroboam, “the word of the Lord came against Baasha, for all the evil that he did in the sight of the Lord, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he killed him” 1 Kings 16:7. The two courses of action were inconsistent; to destroy the son and the house of Jeroboam, and to do those things, for which God condemned him to be destroyed. Further yet. Not

only was such execution of God‘s judgments itself an offence against Almighty God, but it was sin, whereby he condemned himself, and made his other sins to be sins against the light. In executing the judgment of God against another, he pronounced His judgment against himself, in that he that “judged,” in God‘s stead, “did the same things” Romans 2:1. So awful a thing is it, to be the instrument of God in punishing or reproving others, if we do not, by His grace, keep our own hearts and hands pure from sin.

And will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel - Not the kingdom of the house of Jehu, but all Israel. God had promised that the family of Jehu should sit on the throne to the fourth generation. Jeroboam II, the third of these, was now reigning over Israel, in the fulness of his might. He “restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath” 2 Kings 14:25, i. e., from the Northern extremity, near Mount Hermon, where Palestine joins on to Syria, and, which Solomon only in all his glory had won for Israel, “unto the sea of the plain” 2 Chronicles 8:3-4, the Dead sea, regaining all which Hazael had conquered 2 Kings 10:32-33, and even subduing Moab also (see the note at Amos 6:14), “according to the word of the Lord by Jonah the son of Amittan.” He had recovered to Israel, Damascus, which had been lost to Judah, ever since the close of the reign of Solomon 1 Kings 11:24. He was a warlike prince, like that first Jeroboam, who had formed the strength and the sin of the ten tribes. Yet both his house and his kingdom fell with him. The whole history of that kingdom afterward is little more than that of the murder of one family by another, such as is spoken of in the later chapters of Hosea; and Israel, i. e., the ten tribes, were finally carried captive, fifty years after the death of Zechariah, Jeroboam‘s son. Of so little account is any seeming prosperity or strength.

Verse 5

I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel - The valley of Jezreel is a beautiful and a broad valley or plain, stretching, from West to East, from Mount Carmel and the sea to the Jordan, which it reaches through two arms, between the Mountains of Gilboa, little Hermon, and Tabor; and from South to North from the Mountains of Ephraim to those of Galilee. Nazareth lay on its northern side. It is called “the great plain” (Judges 4:4 ff), and of Midian, with the children of the East. Judges 6:33. There also He ended the life and kingdom of Saul 1 Samuel 29:1; 1 Samuel 31:1, 1 Samuel 31:7, 1 Samuel 31:10, visiting upon him, when his measure of iniquity was full, his years of contumacy, and his persecution of David,

whom God had chosen. Jezreel became a royal residence of the house of Ahab 1 Kings 18:46; 1 Kings 21:1-3; 2 Kings 9:10, 2 Kings 9:25, 2 Kings 9:30; 2 Kings 10:1, 2 Kings 10:11. There, in the scenes of Ahab‘s wickedness and of Jehu‘s hypocritical zeal; there, where he drave furiously, to avenge, as he alleged, on the house of Ahab, the innocent blood which Ahab had shed in Jezreel, Hosea foretells that the kingdom of Israel should be broken In the same plain, at the battle with Shalmaneser, near Betharbel (see the note at Hosea 10:14), Hosea lived to see his prophecy fulfilled. The strength of the kingdom was there finally broken; the sufferings there endured were one last warning before the capture of Samaria (see the note at Hosea 10:15).

The name of Jezreel blends the sins with the punishment. It resembles, in form and in sound, the name of Israel, and contains a reversal of the promise contained in the name of Israel, in which they trusted. “Yisrael” (as their name was originally pronounced) signifies, “he is a prince with God; Yidsreel, God shall scatter.” They who, while they followed the faith, for which their forefather Jacob received from God the name of Israel, had been truly Israel, i. e., “princes with God,” should now be “Yidsreel,” “scattered by God.”

Verse 6

Call her name Lo-ruhamah - The name is rendered in Paul “not beloved” Romans 9:25, in Peter, “hath not obtained mercy” 1 Peter 2:10. Love and mercy are both contained in the full meaning of the intensive form of the Hebrew word, which expresses the deep tender yearnings of the inmost soul over one loved; as in the words Psalm 103:13, “As a father pitieth (yearneth over) his own children, so the Lord pitieth (yearneth over) them that fear Him.” It is “tender love” in Him who pitieth; “mercy,” as shown to him who needeth mercy. The punishment, foretold under the name of the daughter, “Unpitied,” is a great enlargement of that conveyed under the name of the first son, “God shall scatter.” Judah too was carried captive, and scattered; but after the 70 years, she was restored. The 10 tribes, it is now foretold, when scattered, should, as a whole, be cut off from the tender mercy of God, scattered by Him, and as a whole, never be restored. Those only were restored, who, when Judah returned from captivity, clave to her, or subsequently, one by one, were united to her.

But I will utterly take them away - Literally, "for, taking away, I will take away from them, or with regard to them," namely, everything. He specifies nothing; He excepts nothing; only, with that awful emphasis, He dwells on the taking away, as that which He had determined to do to the utmost. This is the thought, which He wills to dwell on the As a little while after, God says, that He would be nothing to them, so here, where He in fact repeats this one thought, "take away, take away, from them," the guilty conscience of Israel would at once, supply, "all." When God threatens, the sinful or awakened soul sees instinctively what draws down the lightning of God's wrath, and where it will fall.

Verse 7

I will have mercy on the house of Judah - For to them the promises were made in David, and of them, according to the flesh, Christ was to come. Israel, moreover, as being founded in rebellion and apostasy, had gone on from bad to worse. All their kings clave to the sin of Jeroboam; not one did right in the sight of God; not one repented or hearkened to God. Whereas Judah, having the true Worship of God, and the reading of the law, and the typical sacrifices, through which it looked on to the great Sacrifice for sin, was on the whole, a witness to the truth of God (see the note at Hosea 11:12).

And will save them by the Lord their God, not by bow … - Shortly after this, God did, in the reign of Hezekiah, save them by Himself from Sennacherib, when the Angel of the Lord smote in one night 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. "Neither in that night, nor when they were freed from the captivity at Babylon, did they bend bow or draw sword against their enemies or their captors. While they slept, the Angel of the Lord smote the camp of the Assyrians. At the prayers of David and the prophets and holy men, yea, and of the angels Zechariah 1:12 too, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, to set them free "to go up to Jerusalem, and build the temple of the Lord God of Israel" Ezra 1:3. But much more, this is the special promise of the Gospel, that God would deliver, not outwardly, but inwardly; not by human wars, but in peace; not by man, but by Himself. "By the Lord their God," by Himself who is speaking, or, The Father by the Son, (in like way as it is said, "The Lord rained upon Sodom fire from the Lord" Genesis 19:24).

They were saved in Christ, the Lord and God of all, not by carnal weapons of warfare, but by the might of Him who saved them, and shook

thrones and dominions, and who by His own Cross triumpheth over the hosts of the adversaries, and overthroweth the powers of evil, and giveth to those who love Him, "to tread on serpents and scorpions and all the power of the enemy." They were saved, not for any merits of their own, nor for anything in themselves. But when human means, and man's works, such as he could do of his own free-will, and the power of his understanding, and the natural impulses of his affections, had proved unavailing, then he redeemed them by His Blood, and bestowed on them gifts and graces above nature, and filled them with His Spirit, and gave them "to will and to do of His good pleasure." But this promise also was, and is, to the true Judah, i. e., to those who, as the name means, "confess and praise" God, and who, receiving Christ, who, as Man, was of the tribe of Judah, became His children, being re-born by His Spirit."

Verse 8

Now when she had weaned … - Eastern women very commonly nursed their children two, or even three (2 Maccabees 7:27) years. The weaning then of the child portrays a certain interval of time between these two degrees of chastisement; but after this reprieve, the last and final judgment pictured here was to set in irreversibly.

Verse 9

Call his name Lo-ammi - that is, "not My people." The name of this third child expresses the last final degree of chastisement. As the "scattering by God" did not involve the being wholly "unpitied;" so neither did the being wholly "unpitied" for the time involve the being wholly rejected, so as to be no more His people. There were corresponding degrees in the actual history of the kingdom of Israel. God withdrew his protection by degrees. Under Jeroboam, in whose reign was this beginning of Hosea's prophecy, the people was yet outwardly strong. This strength has been thought to be expressed by the sex of the oldest child, that he was a son. On this, followed extreme weakness, full of mutual massacre and horrible cruelty, first, in a long anarchy, then under Zechariah, Shallurn, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, Hosea, within, and through the invasions of Pul, Tiglathpileser, Shalmaneser, kings of Assyria, from without. The sex of the daughter, "Lo Ruhamah, Unpitied," corresponds with this increasing weakness, and breaking of the spirit. When she was weaned, i. e., when the people were deprived of all consolation and all the spiritual food whereby

they had here to been supported, prophecy, teaching, promises, sacrifices, grace, favor, consolation, it became wholly "Lo-ammi, not My people." As a distinct part of God's people, it was cast off forever; and yet it became outwardly strong, as the Jews became powerful, and often were the persecutors of the Christians. The same is seen in individuals. God often first chastens them lightly, then more heavily, and brings them down in their iniquities; but if they still harden themselves, He withdraws both His chastisements and His grace, so that the sinner even prospers in this world, but, remaining finally impenitent, is cast off forever.

I will not be your God - Literally "I will not be to you," or, "for you;" "for you," by providence; "to you," by love. The words say the more through their silence. They do not say what God will not be to those who had been His people. They do not say that He will not be their Defender, Nourisher, Saviour, Deliverer, Father, Hope, Refuge; and so they say that He will be none of these, which are all included in the English, "I will not be your God." For, as God, He is these, and all things, to us. "I will not be to you." God, by His love, vouchsafes to give all and to take all. He gives Himself wholly to His own, in order to make them wholly His. He makes an exchange with them. As God the Son, by His Incarnation, took the Manhood into God, so, by His Spirit dwelling in them, He makes men gods, "partakers of the Divine Nature" 2 Peter 1:4. They, by His adoption, belong to Him; He, by His promise and gift, belongs to them.

He makes them His; He becomes their's. This mutual exchange is so often expressed in Holy Scripture, to show how God loveth to give Himself to us, and to make us His; and that where the one is, there is the other; nor can the one be without the other. This was the original covenant with Israel: "I will be your God, and you shall be My people" Leviticus 26:12; Exodus 6:7; and as such, it is often repeated in Jeremiah Jeremiah 11:4-5; Jeremiah 24:7; Jeremiah 30:22; Jeremiah 31:1, Jeremiah 31:33; Jeremiah 32:38 and Ezekiel Ezekiel 11:20; Ezekiel 14:11; Ezekiel 36:28; Ezekiel 37:23, Ezekiel 37:27. Afterward, this is expressed still more affectionately. "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters" 2 Corinthians 6:18. And in Christ the Son, God saith, "I will be his Father, and he shall be My son" 2 Samuel 7:14. God, who saith not this to any out of Christ, nor even to the holy Angels, (as it is written, "Unto which of the Angels said He at any time, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to Me a son?" Hebrews 1:5), saith it to us in Christ. And so, in turn, the Church and each

single soul which is His, saith, or rather He saith it in them Song of Song of Solomon 2:16 , "My beloved is mine, and I am His," and more boldly yet, I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine" Song of Song of Solomon 6:3 . Whence also at the holy communion we say, "then we dwell in Christ and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us;" and we pray that "we may evermore dwell in Him, and He in us."

Verse 10

Yet - (literally, and) the number of the children of Israel … Light springeth out of darkness; joy out of sorrow; mercy out of chastisement; life out of death. And so Holy Scripture commonly, upon the threat of punishment, promises blessings to the penitent "Very nigh to the severest displeasure is the dispersion of sorrows and the promised close of darkness." What God takes away, He replaces with usury; things of time by things eternal; outward goods and gifts and privileges by inward; an earthly kingdom by heaven. Both Peter 1 Peter 2:10 and Paul Romans 9:25-26 tell us that this prophecy is already, in Christ, fulfilled in those of Israel, who were the true Israel, or of the Gentiles, to whom the promise was made Genesis 22:18, "In thy Seed shall all the nations be blessed," and who, whether Jews or Gentiles, believed in Him. The Gentiles were adopted into the Church, which, at the Day of Pentecost, was formed of the Jews, and in which Jews and Gentiles became one in Christ Galatians 3:28. Yet of the Jews alone, not only did "many tens of thousands in Jerusalem believe" Acts 21:20, but Peter and James both write "to the dispersed of the ten tribes" James 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1; and the Apostles themselves were Jews. Although, then, those Jews who believed in Christ were few in comparison of those who rejected Him, yet they were, in themselves, many, and, through those who, in Christ Jesus, were "begotten by them through the Gospel" 1 Corinthians 4:15, they were numberless. Yet this prophecy, although accomplished in part, will, according to Paul Romans 11:25-26, be yet more completely fulfilled in the end.

In the place where it was said - (or where it shall be said, i. e., at the first) unto them, ye are not My people, there it shall, in after-time, be said unto them, ye are the sons of the living God Both the times here spoken of by the prophet were yet future, for Israel, although they had apostatised from God, had not yet been disowned by God, who was still sending to them prophets, to reclaim them. They ceased to be owned as God's people,

when, being dispersed abroad, they had no share in the sacrifices, no temple-worship, no prophets, no typical reconciliation for sin. God took no more notice of them than the pagan. The prophet then speaks of two futures; one, when it shall be said to them, "ye are not My people;" and a yet further future, in which it should he said, "ye are the sons of the living God." The place of both was to be the same. The place of their rejection, the dispersion, was to be the place of their restoration. And so Peter says that this Scripture was fulfilled in them, while still "scattered abroad through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." The place, then, where they shall be called the "sons of the living God," is, wheresoever they should believe in Christ. Although separated in body, they were united by faith. And so it shall be unto the end. "Nothing now constraineth to go up to Jerusalem, and still to seek for the temple of stones, for neither will they worship God, as aforetime, by sacrifices of sheep or oxen; but their worship will be faith in Christ and in His commandments, and the sanctification in the Spirit, and the regeneration through Holy Baptism, making the glory of sonship their's, who are worthy thereof and are called thereto by the Lord".

It shall be said, ye are the sons of the living God - It was the special sin of Israel, the source of all his other sins, that he had left the "living God," to serve dead idols. In the times of the Gospel, not only should he own God as his God, but he should have the greatest of all gifts, that the living God, the fountain of all life, of the life of nature, of grace, of glory, should be his Father, and as being his Father, should communicate to him that life, which he has and is. For He who is life, imparts life. God doth not only pour into the souls of His elect, grace and faith, hope and love, or all the manifold gifts of His Spirit, but He, the living God, maketh them to he His living sons, by His Spirit dwelling in them, by whom He adopteth them as His sons, through whom He giveth them grace. For by His Spirit He adopteth them as sons. "We have received the spirit of adoption of sows, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. And if sons, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ" Romans 8:15.

God not only giveth us grace, but adopteth us as sons. He not only accounteth us, but He maketh us sons; He maketh us sons, not outwardly, but inwardly; not by inward grace only, but by His Spirit: not only by the birth from the Spirit, but in the Only-Begotten Son; sons of God, because members of Christ, the Son of God; sons of God, by adoption, as Christ is by Nature; but actual sons of God, as Christ is actually and eternally the

Son of God. God is our Father, not by nature, but by grace; yet He is really our Father, since we are born of Him, "sons of the living God," born of the Spirit. He giveth us of His Substance, His Nature, although not by nature; not united with us, (as it is, personally, with His Son,) but dwelling in us, and making us "partakers of the Divine Nature." "Sons of the living God" must be living by Him and to Him, by His life, yea, through Himself living in them, as our Saviour saith, "If any man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" John 14:23.

Verse 11

Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together - A little image of this union was seen after the captivity in Babylon, when some of the children of Israel, i. e., of the ten tribes, were united to Judah on his return, and the great schism of the two kingdoms came to an end. More fully, both literal Judah and Israel were gathered into one in the one Church of Christ, and all the spiritual Judah and Israel; i. e., as many of the Gentiles as, by following the faith, became the sons of faithful Abraham, and heirs of the promise to him.

And shall make themselves one Head - The act of God is named first, "they shall be gathered;" for without God we can do nothing. Then follows the act of their own consent, "they shall make themselves one Head;" for without us God doth nothing in us. God gathereth, by the call of His grace; they make to themselves one Head, by obeying His call, and submitting themselves to Christ, the one Head of the mystical body, the Church, who are His members. In like way, Ezekiel foretells of Christ, of the seed of David, under the name of David; "I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My servant David; and I the Lord will be their God, and My servant David a Prince among them" Ezekiel 34:23-24; and again; "I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms anymore at all" Ezekiel 37:22. But this was not wholly fulfilled, until Christ came, for after the captivity they were under Zorobabel as chief, and Joshua as high priest.

And shall come up out of the land - To "come up" or "go up" is a title of dignity; from where, in our time, people are said to go up to the metropolis, or the University; and in Holy Scripture, to "come up," or "go

up," out of Egypt (Genesis 13:1; Genesis 45:25, etc.), or Assyria 2 Kings 17:3; 2 Kings 18:9, 2 Kings 18:13; Isaiah 36:1, Isaiah 36:10, or Babylon 2 Kings 24:1; Ezra 2:1; Ezra 7:6; Nehemiah 7:6; Nehemiah 12:1, to the land of promise, or from the rest of the land to the place which God chose Exodus 34:24 to place His name there, Shiloh, 1 Samuel 1:22, or, afterward, Jerusalem; (2 Samuel 19:34; 1 Kings 12:27-28; Psalm 122:4, etc.) and it is foretold that "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be exalted above the hills; and many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord" Isaiah 2:2-3; Micah 4:1-2. The land from which they should go up is, primarily and in image, Babylon, from where God restored the two tribes; but, in truth and fully, it is the whole aggregate of lands, the earth, the great "city of confusion," which Babel designates. Out of which they shall go up, "not with their feet but with their affections," to the "city set upon a hill" Matthew 5:14, "the heavenly Jerusalem" Hebrews 12:22, and heaven itself, where we are "made to sit together with Christ" Ephesians 2:6, and where "our conversation is" Philemon 3:20, that where He is, there may we "His servants be" John 12:26. They ascend in mind above the earth and the things of earth, and the lowness of carnal desires, that so they may, in the end, come up out of the earth, "to meet the Lord in the air, and forever be with the Lord" 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

For great is the day of Jezreel - God had denounced woe on Israel, under the names of the three children of the prophet, Jezreel, Lo-Ammi, Lo-Ruhamah; and now, under those three names, He promises the reversal of that sentence, in Christ. He begins with the name, under which he had begun to pronounce the woe, the first son, Jezreel. "Jezreel" means "God shall sow," either for increase, or to scatter. When God threatened, "Jezreel" necessarily meant, "God shall scatter;" here, when God reverses His threatening, it means, "God shall sow." But the issue of the seed is either single, as in human birth, or manifold, as in the seed-corn. Hence, it is used either of Him who was eminently, "the Seed of Abraham, the Seed of the woman," or the manifold harvest, which He, the seed-corn John 12:24, should bring forth, when sown in the earth, by His vicarious Death. It means, then, Christ or His Church. Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God before all worlds, was, in time, also "conceived by the Holy Spirit, of the Virgin Mary," the Son of God Alone, in a way in which no other man was born of God. Great then should be the day, when "God should sow," or give the increase in mercy, as before He scattered them, in His displeasure.

The Great Day wherein "God should sow, was, first, the day which the Lord hath made" Psalm 118:24, the Incarnation, in which God the Son became Man, "the seed of the woman;" then, it was the Passion, in which, like a seed-corn, He was sown in the earth; then, the Resurrection, when He rose, "the Firstborn among many brethren;" then, all the days in which "He bare much fruit." It is the one day of salvation, in which, generation after generation, a new seed hath been or "shall be born" unto Him, and "shall serve Him" Psalm 22:30-31. Even unto the end, every time of any special growth of the Church every conversion of Pagan tribe or people, is "a day of Jezereel," a day in which "the Lord soweth." Great, wonderful, glorious, thrice-blessed is the day of Christ, for in it He hath done great things for us, gathering together under Himself, the Head, those scattered abroad, "without hope and without God in the world;" making "not My people" into "My people" and those not beloved into His "beloved," the objects of His tender, yearning compassion, full of His grace and mercy. For so it follows,

HOSEA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi - that is, "My people, and to your sisters, Ruhamah," i. e., "beloved or tenderly pitied." The words form a climax of the love of God. First, the people scattered, unpitied, and disowned by God, is re-born of God; then it is declared to be in continued relation to God, "My people;" then to be the object of his yearning love. The words, "My people," may be alike filled up, "ye are My people," and "be ye My people." They are words of hope in prophecy, "ye shall be again My people;" they become words of joy in each stage of fulfillment. They are words of mutual joy and gratulation, when obeyed; they are words of encouragement, until obeyed. God is reconciled to us, and willeth that we be reconciled to Him. Among those who already are God's people, they are the voice of the joy of mutual love in the oneness of the Spirit of adoption; "we are His people;" to those without (whether the ten tribes, or the Jews of heretics,) they are the voice of those who know in whom they have believed, "Be ye also His people." Despair of the salvation of none, but, with brotherly love, call them to repentance and salvation."

This verse closes what went before, as God's reversal of His own sentence, and anticipates what is to come (Hosea 5:14 ff). God commands the prophets and all those who love Him, to appeal to those who forget Him, holding out to them the mercy in store for them also, if they will return to Him. He bids them not to despise those yet alien from Him, "but to treat as brethren and sisters, those whom God willeth to introduce into His house, and to call to the riches of His inheritance."

Verse 2

Plead with your mother, plead - The prophets close the threats of coming judgments with the dawn of after-hopes; and from hopes they go back to God's judgments against sin, pouring in wine and oil into the wounds of sinners. The "mother" is the Church or nation; the "sons," are its members, one by one. These, when turned to God, must plead with their mother, that she turn also. When involved in her judgments, they must plead with her, and not accuse God. God "had not forgotten to be gracious;" but she "kept not His love, and refused His friendship, and despised the purity of spiritual communion with Him, and would not travail with the fruit of

His will.": "The sons differ from the mother, as the inventor of evil from those who imitate it. For as, in good, the soul which, from the Spirit of God, conceiveth the word of truth, is the mother, and whoso profiteth by hearing the word of doctrine from her mouth, is the child, so, in evil, whatsoever soul inventeth evil is the mother, and whoso is deceived by her is the son. So in Israel, the adulterous mother was the synagogue, and the individuals deceived by her were the sons."

"Ye who believe in Christ, and are both of Jews and Gentiles, say ye to the broken branches and to the former people which is cast off, "My people," for it is your brother; and "Beloved," for it is "your sister." For when Romans 11:25-26 the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in, then shall all Israel be saved. In like way we are bidden not to despair of heretics, but to incite them to repentance, and with brotherly love to long for their salvation".

For she is not My wife - God speaketh of the spiritual union between Himself and His people whom He had chosen, under the terms of the closest human oneness, of husband and wife. She was no longer united to Him by faith and love, nor would He any longer own her. Plead therefore with her earnestly as orphans, who, for her sins, have lost the protection of their Father.

Let her therefore put away her whoredoms - So great is the tender mercy of God. He says, let her but put away her defilements, and she shall again be restored, as if she had never fallen; let her but put away all objects of attachment, which withdrew her from God, and God will again be All to her.

Adulteries, whoredores - God made the soul for Himself; He betrothed her to Himself through the gift of the Holy Spirit; He united her to Himself. All love, then, out of God, is to take another, instead of God. "whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee." "Adultery" is to become another's than His, the Only Lord and Husband of the soul. Whoredom is to have many other objects of sinful love. Love is one, for One. The soul which has forsaken the One, is drawn here and there, has manifold objects of desire, which displace one another, because none satisfies. Hence, the prophet speaks of "fornications, adulteries;" because the soul, which will not rest in God, seeks to distract herself from her unrest and unsatisfiedness, by heaping to herself manifold lawless pleasures, out of, and contrary to the will of, God.

From before her - Literally "from her face." The face is the seat of modesty, shame, or shamelessness. Hence, in Jeremiah God says to Judah, "Thou hadst a harlot's forehead; thou refusedst to be ashamed" Jeremiah 3:3; and "they were not at all ashamed, neither will they blush" Jeremiah 6:15. The eyes, also, are the "windows" Jeremiah 9:21, through which "death," i. e., lawless desire, "enters into" the soul, and takes it captive.

From her breasts - These are exposed, adorned, degraded in disorderly love, which they are employed to allure. Beneath too lies the heart, the seat of the affections. It may mean then, that she should no more gaze with pleasure on the objects of her sin, nor allow her heart to dwell on tilings which she loved sinfully. Whence it is said of the love of Christ, which should keep the soul free from all unruly passions which might offend him Song of Song of Solomon 1:13 , "My Well-beloved shall lie all night between my breasts Song of Song of Solomon 8:6 , as a seal upon the heart" beneath.

Verse 3

Lest I strip her naked - "There is an outward visible nakedness and an inward, which is invisible. The invisible nakedness is, when the soul within is bared of the glory and the grace of God." The visible nakedness is the privation of God's temporal and visible gifts, the goods of this world, or outward distinction. God's inward gifts the sinful soul or nation despises, while those outward gifts she prizes. And therefore, when the soul parts with the inward ornaments of God's grace, He strips her of the outward, His gifts of nature, of His providence and of His protection, if so be, through her outward misery and shame and poverty, she may come to feel that deeper misery and emptiness and disgrace within, which she had had no heart to feel. So, when our first parents lost the robe of innocence, "they knew that they were naked" Genesis 3:7.

And set her - (Literally "I will fix her," so that she shall have no power to free herself, but must remain as a gazing stock,) "as in the day that she was born," i. e., helpless, defiled, uncleansed, uncared for, unformed, cast out and loathsome. Such she was in Egypt, which is in Holy Scripture spoken of, as her birthplace Ezekiel 16:4; for there she first became a people; thence the God of her fathers called her to be His people. There she was naked of the grace and of the love of God, and of the wisdom of the law; indwelt by an evil spirit, as being an idolatress; without God; and under hard bondage, in works of mire and clay, to Pharaoh, the type of

Satan, and her little ones a prey. For when a soul casts off the defense of heavenly grace, it is an easy prey to Satan.

And make her as a wilderness, and set her as a dry land, and slay her with thirst - The outward desolation, which God inflicts, is a picture of the inward. Drought and famine are among the four sore judgments, with which God threatened the land, and our Lord forewarned them, "Your house is left unto you desolate" Matthew 23:38; and Isaiah says, "Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee" Isaiah 60:15. But the prophet does not say, make her a wilderness, but make "her as a wilderness." The soul of the sinner is solitary and desolate, for it has not the presence of God; unfruitful, bearing briars and thorns only, for it is unbedewed by God‘s grace, unwatered by the Fountain of living waters; athirst, "not with thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord," yet also, burning with desire, which the foul streams of this world‘s pleasure never slake. In contrast with such thirst, Jesus says of the Holy Spirit which He would give to them that believe in Him, "Whosoever drinketh of the water, that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water, that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life" John 4:14; John 7:38-39.

: "But was not that certain, which God had said, ‹I will no more have mercy on the house of Israel?‘ How then does God recall it, saying, ‹Let her put away her fornications, etc. lest I do to her this or that which I have spoken?‘ This is not unlike to that, when sentence had been passed on Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel saying, ‹This is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my Lord the king; they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling; the same Daniel says, Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and redeem thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy on the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility‘ Daniel 4:24-25, Daniel 4:27. What should we learn hereby, but that it hangs upon our own will, whether God suspend the judgment or no? For we ought not to impute our own evil to God, or impiously think that fate rules us. In other words, this or that evil comes, not because God foreknew or foreordained it; but, because this evil was to be, or would be done, therefore God both foreknew it, and prefixed His sentence upon it. Why then does God predetermine an irrevocable sentence? Because He foresaw incorrigible malice. Why, again, after pronouncing sentence, doth God counsel amendment? That we may know by experience, that they are

incorrigible. Therefore, He waits for them, although they will not return, and with much patience invites them to repentance." Individuals also repented, although the nation was incorrigible.

Verse 4

I will not have mercy upon her children - God visits the sins of the parents upon the children, until the entailed curse be cut off by repentance. God enforces His own word "lo-ruhamah, Unpitied," by repeating it here, "lo-arahem," "I will not pity." Reproaches, which fall upon the mother, are ever felt with special keenness. Whence Saul called Jonathan 1 Samuel 20:30, "Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman." Therefore, the more to arouse them, he says, "for they are the children of whoredoms," evil children of an evil parent, as John the Immerser calls the hypocritical Jews, "ye generation of vipers" Matthew 3:7. "This they were, from their very birth and swaddling-clothes, never touching any work of piety, nor cultivating any grace." As of Christ, and of those who, in Him, are nourished up in deeds of righteousness, it is said, "I was cast upon Thee from the womb; Thou art my God from my mother‘s belly;" so, contrariwise, of the ungodly it is said, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

And as they who "live honestly, as in the day and in the light," are called "children of the day and of the light," so they who live a defiled life are called the "children of whoredores.": "To call them ‹children of whoredoms‘ is all one with saying, that they too are incorrigible or unchangeable. For of such, Wisdom, after saying, ‹executing Thy judgments upon them by little and little,‘ added immediately (Wisd. 12:10,11), ‹not being ignorant that thy were a naughty generation, and that their malice was bred in them, and that their cogitation would never be changed, for it was a cursed seed from the beginning." All this is here expressed briefly by this word, "that they are the children of whoredoms," meaning that their "malice" too was inbred, and that they, as much as the Ammorite and Hittite, were a "cursed seed." Nor yet, in so speaking, did he blame the nature which God created, but he vehemently reproves the abuse of nature, that malice, which cleaves to nature but was no part of it, was by custom changed into nature."

Verse 5

She that conceived them hath done shamefully, literally, hath made shameful - The silence as to "what" she "made shameful" is more emphatic than any words. She "made shameful" everything which she could "make shameful," her acts, her children, and herself.

I will go after my lovers - (:iterally let me go, I would go). The Hebrew word "Meahabim" denotes intense passionate love; the plural form implies that they were sinful loves. Every word aggravates the shamelessness. Amid God's chastisements, she encourages herself, "Come, let me go," as people harden and embolden, and, as it were, lash themselves into further sin, lest they should shrink back, or stop short in it. "Let me go after." She waits not, as it were, to be enticed, allured, seduced. She herself, uninvited, unbidden, unsought, contrary to the accustomed and natural feeling of woman, follows after those by whom she is not drawn, and refuses to follow God who would draw her (see Ezekiel 16:31-34). The "lovers" are, whatever a man loves and courts, out of God. They were the idols and false gods, whom the Jews, like the pagan, took to themselves, besides God. But in truth they were devils. Devils she sought; the will of devils she followed; their pleasure she fulfilled, abandoning herself to sin, shamefully filled with all wickedness, and travailing with all manner of impurity. These she professed that she loved, and that they, not God, loved her. For whoever receives the gifts of God, except from God and in God's way, receives them from devils. Whoso seeks what God forbids, seeks it from Satan, and holds that Satan, not God, loves him; since God refuses it, Satan encourages him to possess himself of it. Satan, then, is his lover.

That gave me my bread and my water - The sense of human weakness abides, even when divine love is gone. The whole history of man's superstitions is an evidence of this, whether they have been the mere instincts of nature, or whether they have attached themselves to religion or irreligion, Jewish or Pagan or Muslim, or have been practiced by half-Christians. "She is conscious that she hath not these things by her own power, but is beholden to some other for them; but not remembering Him (as was commanded) who had "given her power to get wealth, and richly all things to enjoy," she professes them to be the gifts of her lovers." "Bread and water, wool and flax," express the necessaries of life, food and clothing; "mine oil and my drink" (Hebrew, drinks), its luxuries. Oil includes also ointments, and so served both for health, food and medicine, for anointing the body, and for perfume. In perfumes and choice drinks, the rich people of

Israel were guilty of great profusion; from where it is said, "He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich" Proverbs 21:17. For such things alone, the things of the body, did Israel care. Ascribing them to her false gods, she loved these gods, and held that they loved her. In like way, the Jewish women shamelessly told Jeremiah, "we will certainly do whatsoever thing goes out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine" Jeremiah 44:17-18.

Verse 6

Therefore - that is, because she said, "I will go after my lovers," "behold I will hedge up thy ways;" literally, "behold, I hedging." It expresses an immediate future, or something which, as being fixed in the mind of God, is as certain as if it were actually taking place. So swift and certain should be her judgments.

Thy way - God had before spoken of Israel; now He turns to her, pronouncing judgment upon her; then again He turneth away from her, as not deigning to regard her. "If the sinner's way were plain, and the soul still had temporal prosperity, after it had turned away from its Creator, scarcely or never could it be recalled, nor would it "hear the voice behind it," warning it. But when adversity befalls it, and tribulation or temporal difficulties overtake it in its course, then it remembers the Lord its God." So it was with Israel in Egypt. When "they sat by the flesh pots, and did eat bread to the full, amid the fish, which they did eat freely, the cucumbers and the melons," they forgat the God of their fathers, and served the idols of Egypt. Then He raised up "a new king, who made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick and in all the service of the field;" then "they groaned by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of their bondage, and God heard their groaning" Exodus 16:3; Numbers 11:5; Exodus 1:8, Exodus 1:14; Exodus 2:23, Exodus 2:4.

So in the book of Judges the ever-recurring history is, they forsook God; He delivered them into the hands of their enemies; they cried unto Him; He sent them a deliverer. A way may be found through a "hedge of thorns,"

although with pain and suffering; through a stone "wall" even a strong man cannot burst a way. "Thorns" then may be the pains to the flesh, with which God visits sinful pleasures, so that the soul, if it would break through to them, is held back and torn; the wall may mean, that all such sinful joys shall be cut off altogether, as by bereavement, poverty, sickness, failure of plans, etc. In sorrows, we cannot find our idols, which, although so near, vanish from us; but we may find our God, though we are so far from Him, and He so often seems so far from us. "God hedgeth with thorns the ways of the elect, when they find prickles in the things of time, which they desire. They attain not the pleasures of this world which they crave." They cannot "find their paths," when, in the special love of God, they are hindered from obtaining what they seek amiss. "I escaped not Thy scourges," says Augustine, as to his pagan state, "for what mortal can? For Thou wert ever with me, mercifully rigorous, and with most bitter alloy all my unlawful pleasures, that I might seek pleasure without alloy. But where to find such, I could not discover, save in Thee, O Lord, who teachest by sorrow, and woundest us, to heal, and killest us, lest we die from Thee" (Conf. ii. 4).

Verse 7

And she shall follow after - The words rendered "follow after and seek" (רדף, בקשׁ) are intensive and express "eager, vehement pursuit," and "diligent search." They express, together, a pursuit, whose minuteness is not hindered by its vehemence, nor its extent and wideness by its exactness. She shall seek far and wide, minutely and carefully, everywhere and in all things, and shall fail in all. For eighteen hundred years the Jews have chased after a phantom, a Christ, triumphing, after the manner of the kings of the earth, and it has ever escaped them. The sinful soul will too often struggle on, in pursuit of what God is withdrawing, and will not give over, until, through God's persevering mercy, the fruitless pursuit exhausts her, and she finds it hopeless. Oh the willfulness of man, and the unwearied patience of God!

Then shall she say, I will go and return - She encourages herself tremblingly to return to God. The words express a mixture of purpose and wish. Before, she said, "Come, let me go after my lovers;" now, she says, "Come let me go and return," as the progical in the Gospel, "I will arise and go to my Father."

To my first husband - "God is the ‹first Husband‘ of the soul, which, while yet pure, He, through the love of the Holy Spirit, united with Himself. Him the soul longeth for, when it findeth manifold bitternesses, as thorns, in those delights of time and sense which it coveted. For when the soul begins to be gnawed by the sorrows of the world which she loveth, then she understandeth more fully, how it was better with her, with her former husband. Those whom a perverse will led astray, distress mostly converts." "Mostly, when we cannot obtain in this world what we wish, when we have been wearied with the impossibility of our search of earthly desires, then the thought of God returns to the soul; then, what was before distasteful, becomes pleasant to us; He whose commands had been bitter to the soul, suddenly in memory grows sweet to her, and the sinful soul determines to be a faithful wife." And God still vouchsafes to be, on her return, the Husband even of the adulterous soul, however far she had strayed from Him.

For then it was better with me than now - It is the voice of the prodigal son in the Gospel, which the Father hears, "How many hired servants of my Father have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" "I will serve," Israel would say, "the living and true God, not the pride of people, or of evil spirits, for even in this life it is much sweeter to bear the yoke of the Lord, than to be the servant of men." In regard to the ten tribes, the "then" must mean the time before the apostasy under Jeroboam. God, in these words, softens the severity of His upbraiding and of His sentences of coming woe, by the sweetness of promised mercy. Israel was so impatient of God‘s threats, that their kings and princes killed those whom He sent unto them. God wins her attention to His accusations by this brief tempering of sweetness.

Verse 8

For she did not know - The prophet having, in summary Hosea 2:5-7, related her fall, her chastisement, and her recovery, begins anew, enlarging both on the impending inflictions, and the future mercy. She "did not know," because she would not; she "would not retain God in her knowledge" Romans 1:28. "Knowledge," in Holy Scripture, is not of the understanding, but of the heart and the will.

That I gave her corn … - The I is emphatic (אנכי(ci). "She did not know, that it was I who gave her." God gave them the "corn, and wine, and oil," first, because He gave them the land itself. They held it of Him as their

Lord. As He says, "The land is Mine, and ye are strangers and sojourners with Me" Leviticus 25:23. He gave them also in the course of His ordinary providence, wherein He also gave them "the gold and silver," which they gained by trading. Silver He had so multiplied to her in the days of Solomon, that it was in "Jerusalem as stones, nothing accounted of" 1 Kings 10:27, 1 Kings 10:21, and gold, through the favor which He gave him 1 Kings 9:14; 1 Kings 10:10, 1 Kings 10:14, was in abundance above measure.

Which they prepared for Baal - Rather, as in the English Margin, "which they made into Baal" (see Hosea 8:4; Ezekiel 16:17-19). "Of that gold and silver, which God had so multiplied, Israel, revolting from the house of David and Solomon, made, first the calves of gold, and then Baal." Of God's own gifts they made their gods. They took God's gifts as from their gods, and made them into gods to them. "Baal," Lord, the same as Bel, was an object of idolatry among the Phoenicians and Tyrians. Its worship was brought into Israel by Jezebel, daughter of a king of Sidon. Jehu destroyed it for a time, because its adherents were adherents of the house of Ahab. The worship was partly cruel, like that of Moloch, partly abominable. It had this aggravation beyond that of the calves, that Jezebel aimed at the extirpation of the worship of God, setting up a rival temple, with its 450 prophets and 400 of the kindred idolatry of Ashtaroth, and slaying all the prophets of God.

It seems to us strange folly. They attributed to gods, who represented the functions of nature, the power to give what God alone gives. How is it different, when people now say, "nature does this, or that," or speak of "the operations of nature," or the laws of "nature," and ignore God who appoints those laws, and "worketh hitherto" John 5:17 "those operations?" They attributed to planets (as have astrologers at all times) influence over the affairs of people, and worshiped a god, Baal-Gad, or Jupiter, who presided over them. Wherein do those otherwise, who displace God's providence by fortune or fate or destiny, and say "fortune willed," "fortune denied him," "it was his fate, his destiny," and, even when God most signally interposes, shrink from naming Him, as if to speak of God's providence were something superstitious? What is this, but to ascribe to Baal, under a new name, the works and gifts of God? And more widely yet. Since "men have as many strange gods as they have sins," what do they, who seek pleasure or gain or greatness or praise in forbidden ways or from forbidden sources,

than make their pleasure or gain or ambition their god, and offer their time and understanding and ingenuity and intellect, yea, their whole lives and their whole selves, their souls and bodies, all the gifts of God, in sacrifice to the idol which they have made? Nay, since whosoever believes of God otherwise than He has revealed Himself, does, in fact, believe in another god, not in the One True God, what else does all heresy, but form to itself an idol out of God‘s choicest gift of nature, man‘s own mind, and worship, not indeed the works of man‘s own hands, but the creature of his own understanding?

Verse 9

Therefore I will return - God is, as it were, absent from men, when He lets them go on in their abuse of His gifts. “His judgments are far above out of their sight.” He returns to them, and His presence is felt in chastisements, as it might have been in mercies. He is not out of sight or out of mind, then. Others render it, “I will turn, i. e. I will do other than before; I will turn” from love to displeasure, from pouring out benefits to the infliction of chastisements, from giving abundance of all things to punishing them with the want of all things.

I will take away My corn in the time thereof - God shows us that His gifts come from Him, either by giving them when we almost despair of them, or taking them away, when they are all but our‘s. It can seem no chance, when He so doeth. The chastisement is severer also, when the good things, long looked-for, are, at the last, taken out of our very hands, and that, when there is no remedy. If in harvest-time there be dearth, what afterward! “God taketh away all, that they who knew not the Giver through abundance, might know Him through want.”

And will recover My wool - God “recovers,” and, as it were, “delivers” the works of His Hands from serving the ungodly. While He leaves His creatures in the possession of the wicked, they are holden, as it were, in captivity, being kept back from their proper uses, and made the handmaidens and instruments and tempters to sin. God made His creatures on earth to serve man, that man, on occasion of them, might glorify Him. It is against the order of nature, to use God‘s gifts to any other end, short of God‘s glory much more, to turn God‘s gifts against Himself, and make them serve to pride or luxury or sensual sin. It is a bondage, as it were, to them. Whence of them also Paul saith, “The creature was made subject to

vanity, not willingly; and, all creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" Romans 8:20, Romans 8:22. Penitents have felt this. They have felt that they deserve no more that the sun should shine on them, or the earth sustain them, or the air support them, or wine refresh them, or food nourish them, since all these are the creatures and servants of the God whom themselves have offended, and they themselves deserve no more to be served by God's servants, since they have rebelled against their common Master, or to use even rightly what they have abused against the will of their Creator.

My flax - Given "to cover her nakedness, i. e. which God had given to that end. Shame was it, that, covered with the raiment which God had given her to hide her shame, she did deeds of shame. The white linen garments of her priests also were symbols of that purity, which the Great high priest should have and give. Now, withdrawing those gifts, He gave them up to the greatest visible shame, such as insolent conquerors, in leading a people into captivity, often inflicted upon them. Thereby, in act, was figured that loss of the robe of righteousness, heavenly grace, wherewith God beautifies the soul, whereof when it is stripped, it is indeed foul.

Verse 10

Her lewdness - The word originally means "folly," and so "foulness." For sin is the only real folly, as holiness is the only true wisdom. But the folly of sin is veiled amid outward prosperity, and people think themselves, and are thought, wise and honorable and in good repute, and are centers of attraction and leaders of society, so long as they prosper; as it is said, "so long as thou doest well unto thyself, men will speak of thee" Psalm 49:18. But as soon as God withdraws those outward gifts, the mask drops off, and people, being no longer dazzled, despise the sinner, while they go on to hug the sin. God says, "I will discover," as just before He had said, that His gifts had been given to "cover her." He would then lay her bare outwardly and inwardly; her folly, foulness, wickedness, and her outward shame; and that, "in the sight of her lovers," i. e. of those whom she had chosen instead of God, her idols, the heavenly bodies, the false gods, and real devils. Satan must jeer at the wretched folly of the souls whom he deceives.

And none shall deliver her out of My hand - Neither rebel spirits nor rebel people. The evil spirits would prolong the prosperity of the wicked, that so they might sin the more deeply, and might not repent, (which they

see people to do amid God‘s chastisements,) and so might incur the deeper danmation.

Verse 11

I will also cause her mirth to cease, her feast days … - Israel had forsaken the temple of God; despised His priests; received from Jeroboam others whom God had not chosen; altered, at least, one of the festivals; celebrated all, where God had forbidden; and worshiped the Creator under the form of a brute creature (see Introduction). Yet they kept the great “feast-days,” whereby they commemorated His mercies to their forefathers; the “new moons,” whereby the first of every month was given to God; “the sabbaths,” whereby they owned God as the Creator of all things; and all the other “solemn feasts,” whereby they thanked God for acts of His special providence, or for His annual gifts of nature, and condemned themselves for trusting in false gods for those same gifts, and for associating His creatures with Himself. But man, even while he disobeys God, does not like to part with Him altogether, but would serve Him enough to soothe his own conscience, or as far as he can without parting with his sin which he loves better. Jeroboam retained all of God‘s worship, which he could combine with his own political ends; and even in Ahab‘s time Israel “halted between two opinions,” and Judah “sware both by the Lord and by Malcham” Zephaniah 1:5, the true God and the false. All this their worship was vain, because contrary to the will of God. Yet since God says, “I will take away all her mirth,” they had, what they supposed to be, religious “mirth” in their “feasts,” fulfilling as they thought, the commandment of God, “Thou shalt rejoice in thy feasts” Deuteronomy 16:14. She could have no real joy, since true joy is “in the Lord” Philemon 4:4. So, in order that she might not deceive herself anymore, God says that he will take away that feigned formal service of Himself, which they blended with the real service of idols, and will remove the hollow outward joy, that, through repentance, they might come to the true joy in Him.

Verse 12

And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees - Before, God had threatened to take away the fruits in their seasons; now He says, that he will take away all hope for the future; not the fruit only, but the trees which bare it. “The vine is a symbol of joy, the fig of sweetness” (see Judges 9:11, Judges 9:13). It was the plague, which God in former times laid upon those, out of the midst of whom He took them to be His people (Psalm 105:33; see

Jeremiah 5:17). "He smote their vines also and their fig trees, and brake the trees of their coasts." Now that they had become like the pagan, He dealt with them as with the pagan.

Of which she said, these are my rewards - Literally "my hire." It is the special word, used of the payment to the adulteress, or degraded woman, and so continues the likeness, by which he had set forth the foulness of her desertion of God.

And I will make them a forest - The vines and fig-trees which had aforetime been their wealth, and full of beauty, should, when neglected, run wild, and become the harbor of the wild beasts Which should prey upon them. So to the wicked God causes, "that the things which should have been for their wealth should be an occasion of falling" Psalm 69:22. They contain in themselves the sources of their own decay.

Verse 13

I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, or Baals - When men leave the one true God, they make to themselves many idols. They act, as if they could make up a god piece-meal out of the many attributes of the One God, and create their Creator. His power of production becomes one God; His power of destroying, another; His providence, a third; and so on, down to the very least acts. So they had many Baals or Lords; a "Baal-berith Judges 8:33, Lord of covenants," who was to guard the sanctity of oaths; "Baal-zebub 2 Kings 1:2, Lord of flies," who was to keep off the plague of flies, and "Baal-Peor" Numbers 25:3, who presided over sin. All these their various idolatries, and all the time of their idolatries, God threatens to visit upon them at once. "The days of punishment shall equal the days of the wanderings, in which she burnt incense to Baal." God spares long. But when persevering impenitence draws down His anger, He punishes not for the last sin only, but for all. Even to the penitent, God mostly makes the chastisement bear some proportion to the length and greatness of the sin.

Wherein she burnt incence unto them - Incense was that part of sacrifice, which especially denoted thanksgiving and prayer ascending to God.

And she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels - Christ says to the bride, "Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold" Jeremiah 23:27; add Judges 3:7; 1 Samuel 12:9-10; Jeremiah 2:32; Jeremiah 3:20; Jeremiah 13:25; Jeremiah 18:15; Ezekiel

22:12; Ezekiel 23:35; Isaiah 17:10; Psalm 9:17; Psalm 50:22; Psalm 78:11; Psalm 106:13, Psalm 106:21).

Verse 14

Therefore - The inference is not what we should have expected. Sin and forgetfulness of God are not the natural causes of, and inducements to mercy. But God deals not with us, as we act one to another. Extreme misery and degradation revolt man; man‘s miseries invite God‘s mercies. God therefore has mercy, not because we deserve it, but because we need it. He therefore draws us, because we are so deeply sunken. He prepareth the soul by those harder means, and then the depths of her misery cry to the depths of His compassion, and because chastisement alone would stupify her, not melt her, He changes His wrath into mercy, and speaks to the heart which, for her salvation, He has broken.

I will allure her - The original word is used of one readily enticed, as a simple one, whether to good or ill. God uses, as it were, Satan‘s weapons against himself. As Satan had enticed the soul to sin, so would God, by holy enticements and persuasiveness, allure her to Himself. God too hath sweetnesses for the penitent soul, far above all the sweetnesses of present earthly joys; much more, above the bitter sweetnesses of sin.

I Myself will allure her - (Such is the emphasis). God would show her something of His Beauty, and make her taste of His Love, and give her some such glimpse of the joy of His good-pleasure, as should thrill her and make her, all her life long, follow after what had, as through the clouds, opened upon her.

And will bring her into the wilderness - God, when he brought Israel out of Egypt, led her apart from the pressure of her hard bondage, the sinful self-indulgences of Egypt and the abominations of their idolatries, into the wilderness, and there, away from the evil examples of the nation from which he drew her and of those whom she was to dispossess, He gave her His law, and taught her His worship, and brought her into covenant with Himself (see Ezekiel 20:34-36). So in the beginning of the Gospel, Christ allured souls by His goodness in His miracles, and the tenderness of His words, and the sweetness of His preaching and His promises, and the attractiveness of His sufferings, and the mighty manifestations of His Spirit. So is it with each penitent soul. God, by privation or suffering, turns her from her idols, from the turmoil of the world and its distractions, and speaks, Alone to her alone.

And speak to her heart - Literally, on her heart, making an impression on it, soothing it, in words which will dwell in it, and rest there. Thus within, not without, "He putteth His laws in the mind, and writeth them in the heart, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God" Hebrews 8:10; 2 Corinthians 3:3. God speaks to the heart, so as to reach it, soften it, comfort it, tranquilize it, and, at the last, assure it. He shall speak to her, not as in Sinai, amid "blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more Hebrews 12:18-19, but to the heart." But it is in solitude that he so speaks to the soul and is heard by her, warning, reproving, piercing, penetrating through every fold, until he reaches the very inmost heart and dwells there. And then he infuseth hope of pardon, kindleth love, enlighteneth faith, giveth feelings of child-like trust, lifteth the soul tremblingly to cleave to Him whose voice she has heard within her. Then His infinite Beauty touches the heart; His Holiness, Truth, mercy, penetrate the soul; in silence and stillness the soul learns to know itself and God, to repent of its sins, to conquer self; to meditate on God. "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you" 2 Corinthians 6:17.

: "Search we the Scriptures, and we shall find, that seldom or never hath God spoken in a multitude; but so often as he would have anything known to man, He shewed Himself, not to nations or people, but to individuals, or to very few, and those severed from the common concourse of people, or in the silence of the night, in fields or solitudes, in mountains or vallies. Thus He spake with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, and all the prophets. Why is it, God always speaketh in secret, except that He would call us apart? Why speaketh He with a few, except to collect and gather us into one? In this solitude doth God speak to the soul, from the beginning of its conversion to the loneliness of death. Here the soul, which, overspread with darkness, knew neither God nor itself, learns with a pure heart to know God. Here, placed aloft, she sees all earthly things flee away beneath her, yea, herself also passing away in the sweeping tide of all passing things." Here she learns, and so unlearns her sins, sees and hates herself, sees and loves God.: Only "the solitude of the body availeth not, unless there be the solitude of the heart." And if God so speak to the penitent, much more to souls, who consecrate themselves wholly, cleave wholly to Him, meditate on Him. By His presence, "the soul is renewed,

and cleaving, as it were, to Him, feels the sweetness of an inward taste, spiritual understanding, enlightening of faith, increase of hope, feeling of compassion, zeal for righteousness, delight in virtue. She hath in orison familiar converse with God, feeling that she is heard, and mostly answered: speaking face to face with God, and bearing what God speaketh in her, constraining God in prayer and sometimes prevailing."

Verse 15

And I will give her her vineyards from thence - God's mercies are not only in word, but in deed. He not only speaks to her heart, but he restores to her what He had taken from her. He promises, not only to reverse His sentence, but that He would make the sorrow itself the source of the joy. He says, I will give her back her vineyards "thence," i. e., from the wilderness itself; as elsewhere, He says, "The wilderness shall be a fruitful field" Isaiah 32:15. Desolation shall be the means of her restored inheritance and joy in God. Through fire and drought are the new flagons dried and prepared, into which the new wine of the Gospel is poured.

And the valley of Achor for a door of hope - (Literally, "troubling"). As, at the first taking possession of the promised land, Israel learned through the transgression and punishment of Achan, to stand in awe of God, and thenceforth, all went well with them, when they had wholly freed themselves from the accursed thing, so to them shall "sorrow be turned into joy, and hope dawn there, where there had been despair." "Therefore, only had they to endure chastisements, that through them they might attain blessings." It was through the punishment of those who "troubled" the true "Israel," the destruction of Jerusalem, that to the Apostles and the rest who believed, the hope of victory over the whole world was opened." "Hope." The word more fully means, a "patient, enduring longing." To each returning soul, "the valley of trouble," or the lowliness of repentance, becometh a door of patient longing, not in itself, but because "God giveth" it to be so; a longing which "reacheth on, awaiteth on," entering within the veil, and bound first to the Throne of God. But then only, when none of the "accursed thing" Joshua 7:11-15 cleaveth to it, when it has no reserves with God, and retains nothing for itself, which God hath condemned.

And she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth - The song is a responsive song, choir answering choir, each stirring up the other to praise, and praise echoing praise, as Israel did after the deliverance at the Red Sea.

"Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord. I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously. And Miriam the prophetess the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel, and all the women went out after her. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously" Exodus 15:1, Exodus 15:20-21. So the Seraphim sing one to another, holy, holy, holy Isaiah 6:3; so Paul exhorts Christians "to admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord" Colossians 3:16; so the Jewish psalmody passed into the Christian Church, and the blessed in heaven, having on the Cross passed the troublesome sea of this world, "sing the new song of Moses and of the Lamb" Revelation 15:3.

She shall sing there - Where? There, where he "allureth" her, where He leadeth her, where He "speaketh to her heart," where He in worketh in her that hope. There, shall she sing, there, give praise and thanks.

As in the days of her youth - Her "youth" is explained, in what follows, to be "the days when she came up out of the land of Egypt," when she was first born to the knowledge of her God, when the past idolatries had been forgiven and cut off; and she had all the freshness of new life, and had not yet wasted it by rebellion and sin. Then God first called "Israel, My firstborn son. My son, My firstborn" Exodus 4:22. "She came up" into the land which God chose, out of Egypt, since we "go up" to God and to things above; as, on the other hand, the prophet says, "Woe to those who go down to Egypt" Isaiah 31:1, for the aids of this world; and the man who was wounded, the picture of the human race, was "going down from Jerusalem to Jericho" (Luke 10:30; see the note above at Hosea 1:11).

Verse 16

And it shall be … thou shall call Me Ishi - (my Husband) and shalt call Me no more Baali (my Baal, Lord). "Baal," originally Lord, was a title sometimes given to the husband. "The lord of the woman," "her lord," "the heart of her lord," stand for "the husband," "her husband" (Exodus 21:22; 2 Samuel 11:26; Proverbs 31:11, …). God says, "so wholly do I hate the name of idols, that on account of the likeness of the word Baal, "my Lord," I will not be so called even in a right meaning, lest, while she utter the one, she should think on the other, and calling Me her Husband, think on the idol." Yet, withal, God says that He will put into her mouth the tenderer name of love, אישׁ *'îysh* literally, "my man." In Christ, the returning soul, which would give herself wholly to God, however far she had wandered,

should not call God so much her Lord, as her Husband.: "Every soul, although laden with sins, meshed in vices, snarcd by a captive in exile, imprisoned in the body, sticking fast in the mud, fixed in the mire, affixed to its earthly members, nailed down by cares, distracted by turmoils, narrowed by fears, prostrated by grief, wandering in errors, tossed by anxieties, restless through suspicions, in fine, a captive "in the land of the enemy, defiled with the dead, accounted with them who go down in the grave" (Baruch 3:10,11), although she be thus condemned, in state thus desperate, yet she may perceive that in herself, from where she may not only respire to hope of pardon and of mercy, but from where she may dare to aspire to the nuptials of the Word, tremble not to enter into alliance with God, be not abashed to take on her the sweet yoke of love with the Lord of Angels. For what may she not safely dare with Him, with whose image she seeth herself stamped, and glorious with His likeness?

To this end God Himself, the Author of our being, willed that the ensign of our divine nobleness of birth should ever be maintained in the soul, that she may ever have that in herself from the Word, whereby she may ever be admonished, either to stand with the Word, or to return to Him, if she have been moved. Moved, not as though removing in space, or walking on foot, but moved (as a spiritual substance is moved) with its affections, yea, its defections, it goes away from itself, as it were, to a worse state, making itself unlike itself and degenerate from itself, through pravity of life and morals; which unlikeness, however, is the fault, not the destruction, of nature. Contrariwise, the return of the soul is its conversion to the Word, to be re-formed by Him, conformed to Him. Wherein? In love. For He saith, "be ye followers of me, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." Such conformity marries the soul to the Word, when she, having a likeness to Him by nature, also maketh herself like to Him in will, loving as she is loved. Wherefore, if she loveth perfectly, she is married. What sweeter than this conformity? What more desirable than this love? For by it, not content with human guidance, thou approachest, by thyself, O soul, confidentially to the Word; to the Word thou constantly cleavest; of the Word thou familiarly inquirest, and consultest as to all things, as capacious in understanding as emboldened in longing. This is contract of marriage, truly spiritual and holy. Contract! I have said too little. It is embrace. For embrace it is, when to will the same and nill the same, maketh of twain, one spirit."

Verse 17

For I will take array the names of Baalim out of her mouth - It is, then, of grace. He does not only promise the ceasing of idolatry, but that it shall be the fruit of His converting grace, the gift of Him from whom "is both to will and to do. I will take away, as God saith elsewhere, "I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall be no more remembered Zechariah 13:1-9; and, "the idols He shall utterly abolish" Isaiah 2:18. In like way God foretells of Judah that the fruit of her captivity should be, that her idols should cease, that He would cleanse them from their idols, and renew them by His grace. "In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished" Ezekiel 6:6. And, "Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. Neither shall they defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions" Ezekiel 36:25-26; Ezekiel 37:23.

And they shall be no more remembered, or, made mention of - The names of Baal and the idols, through which Israel sinned, are remembered now, only in the history of their sin.

Verse 18

And in that day - o"Truly and properly is the time of the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten called "the Day," wherein darkness was dispelled in the world, and the mist dispersed, and bright rays shed into the minds of believers, and the Sun of Righteousness shone upon us, pouring in the light of the true knowledge of God, to those who could open wide the eye of the mind."

And I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field … - God promises to do away the whole of the former curse. Before, He had said that their vineyards should be laid waste "by the beasts of the field;" now, He would make an entire and lasting peace with them. He, whose creatures they are, would renew for them in Christ the peace of Paradise, which was broken through Adam's rebellion against God, and would command none to hurt them. The blessings of God do not correspond only,

they go beyond the punishment. The protection is complete. Every kind of evil animal, beast, bird and reptile, is named. So Peter "saw all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air." All were to be slain to their former selves, and pass into the Church. Together the words express, that God would withhold the power of all enemies, visible or invisible; worldly or spiritual. Each also may denote some separate form or character of the enemy. Thus "wild beasts" picture savageness or bloodthirstiness, the ceasing whereof Isaiah prophesies under the same symbols of beasts of prey, as the leopard, lion, wolf, and bear, or of venomous reptiles, as the asp or the basilisk. The "fowls of heaven" denote stealthy enemies, which, unperceived and unawares, take the word of God out of the heart; "creeping things," such as entice to degrading, debasing sins, love of money or pleasure or appetite, "whose god is their belly, who mind earthly things" Philemon 3:19. All shall be subdued to Christ or by Him; as He says, "I give you power over serpents and scorpions, and all the power of the enemy: and Thou shalt go upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the adder shalt thou trample underfoot" Luke 10:19; Psalm 91:13.

I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth - God foretells much more the greatness of what He would do for man, than the little which man receives. The Gospel brings peace within, and, since "wars and fightings come from" James 4:1 evil passions and lusts, it brings "peace," as far it prevails, without also; peace, as the "borders of" the Church Psalm 147:14; peace in the world, as far as it is won to Christ by the Church; peace to the soul of the believer, so far as he loves God and obeys the Gospel.

And will make them to lie down safely - that is, in confidence. God gives not outward peace only, but fearlessness. Fearless, the Christian lies down during life, at peace with God, his neighbor, and his own conscience; fearless, because "perfect love casteth out fear 1 John 4:18; and fearless in death also, because resting in Jesus, in everlasting, unfailing, unfading peace.

Verse 19

And I will betroth her unto Me forever - God does not say here, "I will forgive her;" "I will restore her;" "I will receive her back again;" "I will again shew her love and tenderness." Much as these would have been, He says here much more. He so blots out, forgets, abolishes all memory of

the past, that He speaks only of the future, of the new betrothal, as if it were the first espousal of a virgin. Hereafter God would make her wholly His, and become wholly her's, by an union nearer and closer than the closest bond of parent and child, that, whereby they are "no more twain, but one flesh;" and through this oneness, formed by His own indwelling in her, giving her Himself, and taking her into Himself, and so bestowing on her a title to all which is His. And this, forever. The betrothal and union of grace in this life passeth over into the union of glory, of which it is said, "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb" Revelation 19:9.

He, by His Spirit, shall be with His Church "unto the end of the world," and so bind her unto Himself that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against her." The whole Church shall never fail. This "betrothal" implies and involves a new covenant, as God says, "Behold the days come, that I will make a new covenant with the hoarse of Israel and the house of Judah, not according to My covenant which I made with their fathers, which My covenant they brake" Jeremiah 31:31-32, and which vanisheth away. To those who had broken His covenant and been unfaithful to Him, it was great tenderness, that He reproached them not with the past; as neither doth He penitents now. But beyond this, in that He speaks of "espousing" her who was already espoused to Him, God shows that He means something new, and beyond that former espousal. What God here promised He fulfilled, not as God the Father, but in Christ. What God promised of Himself, He only could perform. God said to the Church, "I will betroth thee unto Me." He who became the "Bridegroom" John 3:29 of the Church was Christ Jesus; she became "the wife of the Lamb" Revelation 21:9; to Him the Church was "espoused, as a chaste Virgin" 2 Corinthians 11:2. He then who fulfilled what God promised that He would Himself fulfill, was Almighty God.

I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness - Or rather, (which is more tender yet and more merciful,) by, with, righteousness, etc. These are the marriage-dowry, the bridal gifts, "with" which He purchaseth and espouseth the bride unto Himself. Righteousness then and Judgment, loving-kindness and mercies, and faithfulness or truth, are attributes of God, wherewith, as by gifts of espousal, He maketh her His own. "Righteousness" is that in God, whereby He is Himself righteous and just; "Judgment," that whereby He puts in act what is right against these who do

wrong, and so judges Satan; as when the hour of His Passion was at hand, He said, "when the Comforter is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" John 16:8, John 16:11. "Loving-kindness" is that tender affection, wherewith He cherisheth His children, the works of His hands; Mercies, His tender yearnings over us (see the note above at Hosea 1:6), wherewith He hath compassion on our weakness; "Faithfulness," that whereby He "keepeth covenant forever" Psalm 111:9, and "loveth His own unto the end" John 13:1.

And these qualities, as they are His, whereby He saved us, so doth He impart them to the Church in her measure, and to faithful souls. These are her dowry, her jewels, her treasure, her inheritance. He giveth to her and to each soul, as it can receive it, and in a secondary way, His Righteousness, Judgment, Loving-kindness, Mercies, Faithfulness. His "Righteousness," contrary to her former unholiness, He poureth into her, and giveth her, with it, grace and love and all the fruits of the Spirit. By His Judgment, He giveth her a right judgment in all things, as contrary to her former blindness. "Know ye not, says the Apostle 1 Corinthians 6:3, that we shall judge angels? how much more, things that pertain to this life?" "Loving-kindness" is tender love, wherewith we "love one another, as Christ loved us" John 15:12. "Mercies" are that same love to those who need mercy, whereby we are "merciful, as our Father is merciful" Luke 6:36. "Faithfulness" is that constancy, whereby the elect shall "persevere unto the end, as He saith, Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" Revelation 2:10.

The threefold repetition of the word betroth is also, doubtless mysterious, alluding chiefly to the Mystery of the All-Holy Trinity, so often and so manifoldly, in Holy Srcipture, foreshadowed by this sacred number. To them is the Church betrothed, by the pronouncing of whose names each of her members is, in Holy Baptism, "espoused as a chaste virgin unto Christ." At three times especially did our Lord espouse the Church unto Himself.: "First in His Incarnation, when He willed to unite His own Deity with our humanity," and "in the Virgin's womb, the nature of the woman, our nature, human nature, was joined to the nature of God," and that "forever." "He will be forever the Word and Flesh, i. e., God and Man." Secondly, in His Passion, when he washed her with His Blood, and bought

her for His own by His Death. Thirdly, in the Day of Pentecost, when He poured out the Holy Spirit upon her, whereby He dwelleth in her and she in Him. And He who thus espoused the Church is God; she whom He espoused, an adulteress, and He united her to Himself, making her a pure virgin without spot or blemish.: "Human marriage makes those who were virgins to cease to be so; the divine espousal makes her who was defiled, a pure virgin." "I have espoused you," says Paul to those whom he had won back from all manner of pagan sins, "to one Husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin unto Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2; see Jeremiah 3:1-2). O the boundless clemency of God!: "How can it be possible, that so mighty a King should become a Bridegroom, that the Church should be advanced into a Bride? That alone hath power for this, which is All-powerful; ‹love, strong as death' Song of Song of Solomon 8:6 . How should it not easily lift her up, which hath already made Him stoop? If He hath not acted as a Spouse, if He hath not loved as a Spouse, been jealous as a Spouse, then hesitate thou to think thyself espoused."

Verse 20

And thou shalt know the Lord - This knowledge of God follows on God's act of betrothal and of love. "We love God, because God first loved us." And the true knowledge of God includes the love of God. "To love man, we must know him: to know God, we must love Him." To "acknowledge" God, is not yet to "know" Him. They who love not God, will not even acknowledge Him as He Is, "Supreme Wisdom and Goodness and Power, the Creator and Preserver; the Author of all which is good, the Governor of the world, Redeemer of man, the most bounteous Rewarder of those who serve Him, the most just retributor of those who persevere in rebellion against Him." They who will not love God, cannot even "know" aright of God. But to "know God," is something beyond this. It is to know by experience that God is good; and this God makes known to the soul which he loves, while it meditates on Him, reads of Him; speaks of Him, adores Him, obeys Him. "This knowledge cometh from the revelation of God the Father, and in it is true bliss. Whence, when Peter confessed Him to be the Son of man and Son of God, He said, "Blessed art thou, for Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." Yea, this knowledge is life eternal, as He said, "This is life eternal, that they

might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" John 17:3.

Verse 21-22

I will hear the heavens … - As all nature is closed, and would refuse her office to those who rebel against her God, so, when He hath withdrawn His curse and is reconciled to man all shall combine together for man's good, and, by a kind of harmony, all parts thereof join their ministries for the service of those who are at unity with Him. And, as an image of love, all, from lowest to highest, are bound together, each depending on the ministry of that beyond it, and the highest on God. At each link, the chain might have been broken; but God who knit their services together, and had before withheld the rain, and made the earth barren, and laid waste the trees, now made each to supply the other, and led the thoughts of people through the course of causes and effects up to Himself, whoever causes all which comes to pass.

The immediate desire of His people was the grain, wine and oil; they needed the fruitfulness of the earth; the earth, by its parched surface and gaping clefts, seemed to crave the rain from heaven; the rain could not fall without the will of God. So all are pictured as in a state of expectancy, until God gave the word, and His will ran through the whole course of secondary causes, and accomplished what man prayed Him for. Such is the picture. But, although God's gifts of nature were gladdening tokens of His restored favor, and now too, under the Gospel, we rightly thank Him for the removal of any of His natural chastisements, and look upon it as an earnest of His favor toward us, the prophet who had just spoken of the highest things, the union of man with God in Christ, does not here speak only of the lowest. What God gives, by virtue of an espousal "forever," are not gifts in time only. His gifts of nature are, in themselves, pictures of His gifts of grace, and as such the prophets employ them. So then God promiseth, and this in order, a manifold abundance of all spiritual gifts. Of these, "corn and wine," as they are the visible parts, so are they often, in the Old Testament, the symbols of His highest gift, the holy eucharist; and "oil," of God's Holy Spirit, through whom they are sanctified.

God here calls "Israel" by the name of "Jezreel," repealing, once more in the close of this prophecy, His sentence, conveyed through the names of the three children of the prophet. The name "Jezreel" combines in one, the

memory of the former punishment and the future mercy. God did not altogether do away the temporal part of His sentence. he had said, “I will scatter;” and, although some were brought back with Judah, Israel remained scattered in all lands, in Egypt and Greece and Italy, Asia Minor, and the far East and West. But God turned His chastisement into mercy to those who believed in Him. Now he changes the meaning of the word into, “God shall sow.” Israel, in its dispersion, when converted to God, became every where the preacher of Him whom they had persecuted; and in Him - the true Seed. whom God sowed in the earth and it “brought forth much fruit,” converted Israel also bore, “some a hundred-fold; some sixty; some thirty.”

Verse 23

And I will sow her unto Me in the earth - She whom God sows, is the Church, of whom God speaks as her, because she is the Mother of the faithful. After the example of her Lord, and by virtue of His Death, every suffering is to increase her. “The blood of Christians was their harvest-seed”. “The Church was not diminished by persecutions, but increased and the field of the Lord was even clothed with the richer harvest, in that the seeds, which fell singly, arose multiplied”.

In the earth - “oHe does not say “in their own land,” i. e., Judea, but “the earth.” The whole earth was to be the seed-plot of the Church, where God would sow her to Himself, plant, establish, cause her to increase, and multiply her mightily.” As he said, “Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the pagan for Thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession” Psalm 2:8. Of this sowing, Jews were the instruments. Of them according to the flesh, Christ came; of them were the Apostles and Evangelists and all writers of Holy Scripture; of them was the Church first formed, into which the Gentiles were received, being, with them; knit into one in Christ.

I will … have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy - This which was true of Israel in its dispersion, was much more true of the Gentiles. These too, the descendants of righteous Noah, God had cast off for the time, that they should be no more His people, when he chose Israel out of them, to make known to them His Being, and His will, and His laws, and, (although in shadow and in mystery,) Christ who was to come. So God‘s mercies again overflow His threatenings. He had threatened to Israel, that he should be “unpitied,” and no more His people; in reversing His

sentence, He embraces in the arms of His mercy all who were not His people, and says of them all, that they should be "My people and beloved." At one and the same time, was Israel to be thus multiplied, and "pity" was to be shown to those not pitied, and those who were "not God's people," were to become "His people." At one and the same time were those promises fulfilled in Christ; the one through the other; Israel was not multiplied by itself; but through the bringing in of the Gentiles. Nor was Israel alone, or chiefly, brought into a new relation with God. The same words promised the same mercy to both, Jew and Gentile, that all should be "one in Christ," all one Jezreel, one Spouse to Himself, one Israel of God, one Beloved; and that all, with one voice of jubilee. should cry unto Him, "my Lord and my God."

And they shall say, Thou art my God, - (or rather, shall say, my God) There seems to be more affectionateness in the brief answer, which sums up the whole relation of the creature to the Creator in that one word, "Elohai, my God." The prophet declares, as before, that, when God thus anew called them His people, they by His grace would obey His call, and surrender themselves wholly to Him. For to say, "my God," is to own an exelusive relation to God alone. It is to say, my beginning and my end, my hope and my salvation, my whole and only good, in whom Alone I will hope, whom alone I will fear, love, worship, trust in, obey and serve, with all my heart, mind, soul and strength; my God and my all.

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CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

Go yet, love a woman, beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress - This woman is the same Gomer, whom the prophet had before been bidden to take, and whom, (it appears from this verse) had forsaken him, and was living in adultery with another man. The "friend" is the husband himself, the prophet. The word "friend" expresses, that the husband of Gomer treated her, not harshly, but mildly and tenderly so that her faithlessness was the more aggravated sin. "Friend or neighbor" too is the word chosen by our Lord to express His own love, the love of the good Samaritan, who, not being akin, became "neighbor to Him who fell among thieves," and had mercy upon him. Gomer is called "a woman," in order to describe the state of separation, in which she was living. Yet God bids the prophet to "love her," i. e., show active love to her, not, as before, to "take" her, for she was already and still his with, although unfaithful. He is now bidden to buy her back, with the price and allowance of food, as of a worthless slave, and so to keep her apart, on coarse food, abstaining from her former sins, but without the privileges of marriage, yet with the hope of being, in the end, restored to be altogether his wife. This prophecy is a sequel to the former, and so relates to Israel, after the coming of Christ, in which the former prophecy ends.

According to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel - The prophet is directed to frame his life, so as to depict at once the ingratitude of Israel or the sinful soul, and the abiding, persevering, love of God. The woman, whom God commands him to love, he had loved before her fall; he was now to love her after her fall, and amid her fall, in order to rescue her from abiding in it. His love was to outlive her's, that he might win her at last to him. Such, God says, "is the love of the Lord for Israel." He loved her, before she fell, for the woman was "beloved of her friend, and yet an adulteress." He loved her after she fell, and while persevering in her adultery. For God explains His command to the prophet still to love her, by the words, "according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, while they look to other gods, literally, and they are looking." The words express a contemporary circumstance. God was loving them and looking upon them; and they, all the while, were looking to other gods.

Love flagons of wine - Literally, "of grapes," or perhaps, more probably, "cakes of grapes," i. e., dried raisins. Cakes were used in idolatry Jeremiah 7:18; Jeremiah 44:19. The "wine" would betoken the excess common in idolatry, and the bereavement of understanding: the cakes denote the sweetness and lusciousness, yet still the dryness, of any gratification out of God, which is preferred to Him. Israel despised and rejected the true Vine, Jesus Christ, the source of all the works of grace and righteousness, and "loved the dried cakes," the observances of the law, which, apart from Him, were dry and worthless.

Verse 2

So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver - The fifteen shekels were half the price of a common slave Exodus 21:32, and so may denote her worthlessness. The homer and half-homer of barley, or forty-five bushels, are nearly the allowance of food for a slave among the Romans, four bushels a month. Barley was the offering of one accused of adultery, and, being the food of animals, betokens that she was "like horse and mule which have no understanding." The Jews gave dowries for their wives; but she was the prophet‘s wife already. It was then perhaps an allowance, whereby he bought her back from her evil freedom, not to live as his wife, but to be honestly maintained, until it should be fit, completely to restore her.

Verse 3

Thou shalt abide for me many days - Literally, "thou shalt sit," solitary and as a widow Deuteronomy 21:13, quiet and sequestered; not going after others, as heretofore, but waiting for him; Exodus 24:14; Jeremiah 3:2); and "that," for an undefined, but long season, until he should come and take her to himself.

And thou shalt not be for another man - Literally, "and thou shalt not be to a man," i. e., not even to thine own man or husband. She was to remain without following sin, yet without restoration to conjugal rights. Her husband would be her guardian; but as yet, no more. So will "I also be for thee or toward thee." He does not say "to thee," so as to belong to her, but "toward thee;" i. e., he would have regard, respect to her; he would watch over her, be kindly disposed toward her; he, his affections, interests, thoughts, would be directed "toward" her. The word toward expresses regard, yet distance also. Just so would God, in those times, withhold all special tokens of His favor, covenant, providence; yet would he secretly

uphold and maintain them as a people, and withhold them from falling wholly from Him into the gulf of irreligion and infidelity.

Verse 4

For the children of Israel shall abide many days - The condition described is one in which there should be no civil polity, none of the special temple-service, nor yet the idolatry, which they had hitherto combined with it or substituted for it. "King and prince" include both higher and lower governors. Judah had "kings" before the captivity, and a sort of "prince" in her governors after it. Judah remained still a polity, although without the glory of her kings, until she rejected Christ. Israel ceased to have any civil government at all. "Sacrifice" was the center of worship before Christ. It was that part of their service, which, above all, foreshadowed His love, His atonement and sacrifice, and the reconciliation of God by His blood, whose merits it pleaded. "Images," were, "contrariwise," the center of idolatry, the visible form of the beings, whom they worshipped instead of God. The "ephod" was the holy garment which the high priest wore, with the names of the twelve tribes and the Urim and Thummim, over his heart, and by which he inquired of God. The "Teraphim" were idolatrous means of divination.

So then, "for many days," a long, long period, "the children of Israel" should "abide," in a manner waiting for God, as the wife waited for her husband, kept apart under His care, yet not acknowledged by Him; not following after idolatries, yet cut off from the sacrificial worship which He had appointed for forgiveness of sins, through faith in the Sacrifice yet to be offered, cut off also from the appointed means of consulting Him and knowing His will. Into this state the ten tribes were brought upon their captivity, and (those only excepted who joined the two tribes or have been converted to the Gospel,) they have ever since remained in it.' Into that same condition the two tribes were brought, after that, by "killing the Son, they had filled up the measure of their father's" sins; and the second temple, which His presence had hallowed, was destroyed by the Romans, in that condition they have ever since remained; free from idolatry, and in a state of waiting for God, yet looking in vain for a Messiah, since they had not and would not receive Him who came unto them; praying to God; yet without sacrifice for sin; not owned by God, yet kept distinct and apart by His providence, for a future yet to be revealed. "No one of their own nation has been able to gather them together or to become their king."

Julian the Apostate attempted in vain to rebuild their temple, God interposing by miracles to hinder the effort which challenged His Omnipotence. David‘s temporal kingdom has perished and his line is lost, because Shiloh, the peace-maker, is come. The typical priesthood ceased, in presence of the true “priest after the order of Melchisedek.” The line of Aaron is forgotten, unknown, and cannot be recovered. So hopelessly are their genealogies confused, that they themselves conceive it to be one of the offices of their Messiah to disentangle them. Sacrifice, the center of their religion, has ceased and become unlawful. Still their characteristic has been to wait. Their prayer as to the Christ has been, “may He soon be revealed.” Eighteen centuries have flowed by. “Their eyes have failed with looking” for God‘s promise, from where it is not to be found. Nothing has changed this character, in the mass of the people.

Oppressed, released, favored; despised, or aggrandised; in East or West; hating Christians, loving to blaspheme Christ, forced (as they would remain Jews,) to explain away the prophecies which speak of Him, deprived of the sacrifices which, to their forefathers, spoke of Him and His atonement; still, as a mass, they blindly wait for Him, the true knowledge of whom, His offices, His priesthood, and His kingdom, they have laid aside. Anti God has been “toward them.” He has preserved them from mingling with idolaters or Muslims. Oppression has not extinguished them, favor has not bribed them. He has kept them from abandoning their mangled worship, or the Scriptures which they understand not, and whose true meaning they believe not; they have fed on the raisinhusks of a barren ritual and unspiritual legalism since the Holy Spirit they have grieved away. Yet they exist still, a monument to “us,” of God‘s abiding wrath on sin, as Lot‘s wife was to them, encrusted, stiff, lifeless, only that we know that “the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.”

True it is, that idolatry was not the immediate cause of the final punishment of the two, as it was of the ten tribes. But the words of the prophecy go beyond the first and immediate occasion of it. The sin, which God condemned by Hosea, was alienation from Himself. He loved them, and “They turned to other gods.” The outward idolatry was but a fruit and a symbol of the inward. The temptation to idolatry was not simply, nor

chiefly, to have a visible symbol to worship, but the hope to obtain from the beings so symbolized, or from their worship, what God refused or forbade. It was a rejection of God, choosing His rival. "The adulteress soul is whoever, forsaking the Creator, loveth the creature." The rejection of our Lord was moreover the crowning act of apostasy, which set the seal on all former rejection of God. And when the sinful soul or nation is punished at last, God punishes not only the last act, which draws down the stroke, but all the former accumulated sins, which culminated in it. So then they who "despised the Bridegroom, who came from heaven to seek the love of His own in faith, and, forsaking Him, gave themselves over to the Scribes and Pharisees who slew Him, that the inheritance, i. e., God's people, "might be" theirs," having the same principle of sin as the ten tribes, were included in their sentence.

Verse 5

Afterward shall the children of Israel return - Elsewhere it is said more fully, "return to the Lord." It expresses more than "turning" or even conversion to God. It is not conversion only, but reversion too, a turning "back from" the unbelief and sins, for which they had left God, and a return to Him whom they had forsaken.

And shall seek the Lord - This word, "seek," expresses in Hebrew, from its intensive form, a diligent search; as used with regard to God, it signifies a religious search. It is not such seeking as our Lord speaks of, "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled" John 6:26, or, "many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able" Luke 13:24, but that earnest seeking, to which He has promised, "Seek and ye shall find." Before, she had diligently sought her false gods. Now, in the end she shall as diligently seek God and His grace, as she had heretofore sought her idols and her sins.

And David their King - David himself, after the flesh, this could not be. For he had long since been gathered to his fathers; nor was he to return to this earth. "David" then must be "the Son of David," the same, of whom God says, "I will set up One Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My servant David, and He shall be their Shepherd, and I the Lord will be their God, and My servant David a Prince among them" Ezekiel 34:23-24. The same was to be a "witness, leader, commander to the people Isaiah 55:4; He who was to be "raised up to David Jeremiah 23:5-6, a righteous

Branch," and who was to "be called the Lord our Righteousness; David's Lord" Psalm 110:1, as well as "David's Son." Whence the older Jews, of every school, Talmudic, mystical, Biblical, grammatical, explained this prophecy, of Christ. Thus their received paraphrase is: "Afterward the children of Israel shall repent, or turn by repentance, and shall seek the service of the Lord their God, and shall obey Messiah the Son of David, their King".

And shall fear the Lord - Literally, "shall fear toward the Lord and toward His goodness." It is not then a servile fear, not even, as elsewhere, a fear, which makes them shrink back from His awful Majesty. It is a fear, the most opposed to this; a fear, whereby "they shall flee to Him for help, from all that is to be feared;" a reverent holy awe, which should even impel them to Him; a fear of losing Him, which should make them hasten to Him.: "They shall fear, and wonder exceedingly, astonied at the greatness of God's dealing, or of their own joy." Yet they should "hasten tremblingly," as bearing in memory their past unfathfulness and ill deserts, and fearing to approach, but for the greater fear on turning away. Nor do they hasten with this reverent awe and awful joy to God only, but "to His Goodness also." His Goodness draws them, and to it they betake themselves, away from all cause of fear, their sins, themselves, the Evil one. Yet even His Goodness is a source of awe. "His Goodness!" How much it contains. All whereby God is good in Himself, all whereby he is good to us. That whereby he is essentially good, or rather Goodness; that whereby He is good to us, as His creatures, its yet more as His sinfill, ungrateful, redeemed creatures, re-born to bear the Image of His Son. So then His Goodness overflows into beneficence, and condescension, and graciousness and mercy and forgiving love, and joy in imparting Himself, and complacence in the creatures which he has formed, and re-formed, redeemed and sanctified for His glory. Well may His creatures "tremble toward" it, with admiring wonder that all this can be made their's!

This was to take place "in the latter days." These words, which are adopted in the New Testament, where Apostles say, "in the last days, in these last days" Acts 2:17; Hebrews 1:2, mean this, the last dispensation of God, in contrast with all which went before, the times of the Gospel. The prophecy has all along been fulfilled during this period to those, whether of the ten or of the two tribes, who have been converted to Christ, since God ended their temple-worship. It is fulfilled in every soul from among them,

who now is “converted and lives.” There will be a more full fulfillment, of which Paul speaks, when the eyes of all Israel shall be opened to the deceivableness of the last antichrist; and Enoch and Elias, the two witnesses Revelation 11:3, shall have come to prepare our Lord‘s second Coming, and shall have keen slain, and, by God‘s converting grace, “all Israel shall be saved” Romans 11:26.

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CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel - The prophet begins here, in a series of pictures as it were, to exhibit the people of Israel to themselves, that they might know that God did not do without cause all this which He denounced against them. Here, at the outset, He summons, the whole people, their prophets and priests, before the judgment seat of God, where God would condescend, Himself to implead them, and hear, if they had ought in their defense. The title "children of Israel" is, in itself, an appeal to their gratitude and their conscience, as the title "Christian" among us is an appeal to us, by Him whose name we bear. Our Lord says, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the work's of Abraham" John 8:39; and Paul, "let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity" 2 Timothy 2:19.

For the Lord hath a controversy - God wills, in all His dealings with us His creatures, to prove even to our own consciences, the righteousness of His judgments, so as to leave us without excuse. Now, through His servants, He shows people their unrighteousness and His justice; hereafter our Lord, the righteous Judge, will show it through the book of people's own consciences.

With the inhabitants of the land - God had given the land to the children of Israel, on account of the wickedness of these whom He drave out before them. He gave it to them "that they might observe His statutes and keep His laws" (Deuteronomy 11:12. This land, the scene of those former judgments, given to them on those conditions (see Deuteronomy 4:1, Deuteronomy 4:40; Deuteronomy 6:21-25, etc.), the land which God had given to them as their God, they had filled with iniquity.

Because there is no truth, nor mercy - "Truth and mercy" are often spoken of, as to Almighty God. Truth takes in all which is right, and to which God has bound Himself; mercy, all beyond, which God does out of His boundless love. When God says of Israel, "there is no truth nor mercy," He says that there is absolutely none of those two great qualities, under which He comprises all His own Goodness. "There is no truth," none whatever, "no regard for known truth; no conscience, no sincerity, no uprightness; no truth of words; no truth of promises; no truth in witnessing; no making good in deeds what they said in words."

Nor mercy - The word has a wide meaning; it includes all love of one to another, a love issuing in acts. It includes loving-kindness, piety to parents, natural affection, forgiveness, tenderness, beneficence, mercy, goodness. The prophet, in declaring the absence of this grace, declares the absence of all included under it. Whatever could be comprised under love, whatever feelings are influenced by love, of that there was nothing.

Nor knowledge of God - The union of right knowledge and wrong practice is hideous in itself; and it must be especially offensive to Almighty God, that His creatures should know whom they offend, how they offend Him, and yet, amid and against their knowledge, choose that which displeases Him. And, on that ground, perhaps, He has so created us, that when our acts are wrong, our knowledge becomes darkened Romans 1:21. The "knowledge of God" is not merely to know some things of God, as that He is the Creator and Preserver of the world and of ourselves. To know things of God is not to know God Himself. We cannot know God in any respect, unless we are so far made like unto Him. "Hereby do we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him. Every one that loveth is born of' God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love" 1 John 2:3-4; 1 John 4:7-8.

Knowledge of God being the gift of the Holy Spirit, he who hath not grace, cannot have that knowledge. A certain degree of speculative knowledge of God, a bad man may have, as Balaam had by inspiration, and the Pagan who, "when they knew God, glorified Him not as God." But even this knowledge is not retained without love. Those who "held the truth in unrighteousness" ended (Paul says Romans 1:21, Romans 1:18, Romans 1:28) by corrupting it. "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and so God gave them over to a reprobate," or undistinguishing mind, that they could not. Certainly, the speculative and practical knowledge are bound up together, through the oneness of the relation of the soul to God, whether in its thoughts of Him, or its acts toward Him. Wrong practice corrupts belief, as misbelief corrupts practice. The prophet then probably denies that there was any true knowledge of God, of any sort, whether of life or faith or understanding or love. Ignorance of God, then, is a great evil, a source of all other evils.

Verse 2

By swearing, and lying … - Literally, "swearing or cursing", "and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery!" The words in Hebrew are nouns of action. The Hebrew form is very vivid and solemn. It is far more forcible than if he had said, "They swear, lie, kill, and steal." It expresses that these sins were continual, that nothing else (so to speak) was going on; that it was all one scene of such sins, one course of them, and of nothing besides; as we say more familiarly, "It was all, swearing, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery." It is as if the prophet, seeing with a sight above nature, a vision from God, saw, as in a picture, what was going on, all around, within and without, and summed up in this brief picture, all which he saw. This it was and nothing but this, which met his eyes, wherever he looked, whatever he heard, "swearing, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery." The prophet had before said, that the ten tribes were utterly lacking in all truth, all love, all knowledge of God. But where there are none of these, "there," in all activity, will be the contrary vices. When the land or the soul is empty of the good, it will be full of the evil. "They break out," i. e., burst through all bounds, set to restrain them, as a river bursts its banks and overspreads all things or sweeps all before it. "And blood toucheth blood," literally, "bloods touch bloods". The blood was poured so continuously and in such torrents, that it flowed on, until stream met stream and formed one wide inundation of blood.

Verse 3

Therefore shall the land mourn - Dumb inanimate nature seems to rejoice and to be in unison with our sense of joy, when bedewed and fresh through rain and radiant with light; and, again, to mourn, when smitten with drought or blight or disease, or devoured by the creatures which God employs to lay it waste for man‘s sins. Dumb nature is, as it were, in sympathy with man, cursed in Adam, smitten amid man‘s offences, its outward show responding to man‘s inward heart, wasted, parched, desolate, when man himself was marred and wasted by his sins.

With the beasts of the field - Literally, "in the beasts," etc. God included "the fowl and the cattle and every beast of the field" in His covenant with man. So here, in this sentence of woe, He includes them in the inhabitants of the land, and orders that, since man would not serve God, the creatures made to serve him, should be withdrawn from him. "General iniquity is punished by general desolation."

Yea, the fishes of the sea also - Inland seas or lakes are called by this same name, as the Sea of Tiberias and the Dead Sea. Yet here the prophet probably alludes to the history of man‘s creation, when God gave him dominion “over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the heaven, and over every living thing (chaiah)” Genesis 1:28, in just the inverse order, in which he here declares that they shall be taken away. There God gives dominion over all, from lowest to highest; here God denounces that He will take away all, down to those which are least affected by any changes. Yet from time to time God has, in chastisement, directed that the shoals of fishes should not come to their usual haunts. This is well known in the history of seacoasts; and conscience has acknowledged the hand of God and seen the ground of His visitation. Of the fulfillment Jerome writes: “Whose believeth not that this befell the people of Israel, let him survey Illyricum, let him survey the Thraces, Macedonia, the Pannonias, and the whole land which stretches from the Propontis and Bosphorus to the Julian Alps, and he will experience that, together with man, all the creatures also fail, which afore were nourished by the Creator for the service of man.”

Verse 4

Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another - Literally, “Only man let him, not strive, and let not man reprove.” God had taken the controversy with His people into His own hands; the Lord, He said, “hath a controversy (rib) with the inhabitants of the land” Hosea 4:1. Here He forbids man to intermeddle; man let him not strive. He again uses the same word. The people were obstinate and would not hear; warning and reproof, being neglected, only aggravated their guilt: so God bids man to cease to speak in His Name. He Himself alone will implead them, whose pleading none could evade or contradict. Subordinately, God, teaches us, amid His judgments, not to strive or throw the blame on each other, but each to look to his own sins, not to the sins of others.

For thy people are as they that strive with the priest - God had made it a part of the office of the priest, to “keep knowledge” Malachi 2:7. He had bidden, that all hard causes should be taken “to Deuteronomy 17:8-12 the priest who stood to minister there before the Lord their God;” and whose refused the priest‘s sentence was to be put to death. The priest was then to judge in God‘s Name. As speaking in His Name, in His stead, with His authority, taught by Himself, they were called by that Name, in Which they spoke, אלהים *'elohîym* Exodus 21:6; Exodus 22:8-9, “God,” not in

regard to themselves but as representing Him. To "strive" then "with the priest" was the highest contumacy; and such was their whole life and conduct. It was the character of the whole kingdom of "Israel." For they had thrown off the authority of the family of Aaron, which God had appointed. Their political existence was based upon the rejection of that authority. The national character influences the individual. When the whole polity is formed on disobedience and revolt, individuals will not tolerate interference. As they had rejected the priest, so would and did they reject the prophets. He says not, they were "priest-strivers," (for they had no lawful priests, against whom to strive,) but they were like priest-strivers, persons whose habit it was to strive with those who spoke in God's Name. He says in fact, let not man strive with those who strive with God. The uselessness of such reproof is often repeated. He "that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame, and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot" Proverbs 9:7-8. "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee" Proverbs 23:9. Speak not in the ears of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of thy words." Stephen gives it as a characteristic of the Jews, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do ye" Acts 7:51.

Verse 5

Therefore shalt thou fall - The two parts of the verse fill up each other. "By day and by night shall they fall, people and prophets together." Their calamities should come upon them successively, day and night. They should stumble by day, when there is least fear of stumbling John 11:9-10; and night should not by its darkness protect them. Evil should come "at noon-day" Jeremiah 15:8 upon them, seeing it, but unable to repel it; as Isaiah speaks of it as an aggravation of trouble, "thy land strangers devour it in thy presence" Isaiah 1:7; and the false prophets, who saw their visions in the night, should themselves be overwhelmed in the darkness, blinded by moral, perishing in actual, darkness.

And I will destroy thy mother - Individuals are spoken of as the children; the whole nation, as the mother. He denounces then the destruction of all, collectively and individually. They were to be cut off, root and branch. They were to lose their collective existence as a nation; and, lest private persons should flatter themselves with hope of escape, it is said to them, as if one by one, "thou shalt fall."

Verse 6

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge - "My people are," not, "is." This accurately represents the Hebrew. The word "people" speaks of them as a whole; are, relates to the individuals of whom that whole is composed. Together, the words express the utter destruction of the whole, one and all. They are destroyed "for lack of knowledge," literally, "of the knowledge," i. e., the only knowledge, which in the creature is real knowledge, that knowledge, of the want of which he had before complained, the knowledge of the Creator. So Isaiah mourns in the same words, "therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge" Isaiah 6:13. They are destroyed for lack of it, for the true knowledge of God is the life of the soul, true life, eternal life, as our Saviour saith, "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent." The source of this lack of knowledge, so fatal to the people, was the willful rejection of that knowledge by the priest;

Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to Me - God marks the relation between the sin and the punishment, by retorting on them, as it were, their own acts; and that with great emphasis, "I will utterly reject thee. Those, thus addressed, must have been true priests, scattered up and down in Israel, who, in an irregular way, offered sacrifices for them, and connived at their sins. For God's sentence on them is, "thou shalt be no priest to me." But the priests whom Jeroboam consecrated out of other tribes than Levi, were priests not to God, but to the calves. Those then, originally true priests to God, had probably a precarious livelihood, when the true worship of God was deformed by the mixture of the calf-worship, and the people "halted between two opinions;" and so were tempted by poverty also, to withhold from the people unpalatable truth. They shared, then, in the rejection of God's truth which they dissembled, and made themselves partakers in its suppression. And now, they "despised, were disgusted" with the knowledge of God, as all do in fact despise and dislike it, who prefer ought besides to it. So God repaid their contempt to them, and took away the office, which, by their sinful connivances, they had hoped to retain.

Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God - This seems to have been the sin of the people. For the same persons could not, at least in the same stage of sin, despise and forget. They who despise or "reject," must have before their mind that which they "reject." To reject is willful,

conscious, deliberate sin, with a high hand; to "forget," an act of negligence. The rejection of God's law was the act of the understanding and will, forgetfulness of it comes from the neglect to look into it; and this, from the distaste of the natural mind for spiritual things, from being absorbed in things of this world, from inattention to the duties prescribed by it, or shrinking from seeing "that" condemned, which is agreeable to the flesh. The priests knew God's law and "despised" it; the people "forgat" it. In an advanced stage of sin, however, man may come to forget what he once despised; and this is the condition of the hardened sinner.

I will also forget thy children - Literally, "I will forget thy children, I too." God would mark the more, that His act followed on their's; they, first; then, He saith, "I too." He would requite them, and do what it belonged not to His Goodness to do first. Parents who are careless as to themselves, as to their own lives, even as to their own shame, still long that their children should not be as themselves. God tries to touch their hearts, where they are least steeled against Him. He says not, "I will forget thee," but I will forget those nearest thy heart, "thy children." God is said to forget, when He acts, as if His creatures were no longer in His mind, no more. the objects of His providence and love.

Verse 7

As they were increased, so they sinned against Me - The "increase" may be, either in actual number or in wealth, power or dignity. The text includes both. In both kinds of increase, the bad abuse God's gifts against Himself, and take occasion of them to offend Him. The more they were increased in number, the more there were to sin, the more they were who sinned. God promised to make Abraham's seed, "as the stars of heaven." They were to shine in the world through the light of the law, and the glory which God gave them while obeying Him. "Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the Lord thy God hath made thee like the stars of heaven for multitude. Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep His charge, and His statutes, and his judgments and His commandments alway" Deuteronomy 10:22; Deuteronomy 10:1. God multiplied them, that there might be the more to adore Him. But instead of multiplying subjects, He multiplied apostates. "As many men as Israel had, so many altars did it build to daemons, in the sacrifices to whom it sinned against Me." "The more sons God gave to Israel, the more enemies He made to Himself, for Israel brought them up in hatred to God, and in the

love and worship of idols." "As too among the devout, one provokes another, by word and deed, to good works, so, in the congregation of evil doers, one incites another to sins." Again, worldlings make all God's gifts minister to pride, and so to all the sins, which are the daughters of pride. "Jeshurun, God says, waxed fat and kicked; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation" Deuteronomy 32:15. In this way too, the increase of wealth which God gives to those who forget Him, increases the occasions of ingratitude and sins.

I will turn their glory into shame - Such is the course of sin and chastisement. God bestows on man, gifts, which may be to him matter of praise and glory, if only ordered aright to their highest and only true end, the glory of God; man perverts them to vain-glory and thereby to sin; God turns the gifts, so abused, to shame. He not only gives them shame instead of their glory; He makes the glory itself the means and occasion of their shame. Beauty becomes the occasion of degradation; pride is proverbially near a fall; "vaulting ambition overleaps itself, and falls on th'other side;" riches and abundance of population tempt nations to wars, which become their destruction, or they invite other and stronger nations to prey upon them. "Thou hast indeed smitten Edom," was the message of Jehoash to Amaziah, "and thine heart hath lifted thee up; glory of this, and tarry at home, for why shouldest thou to thy hurt, that thou shouldest fall, even thou and Judah with thee? But Amaziah would not hear" 2 Kings 14:10-11. He lost his own wealth, wasted the treasures in God's house; and the walls of Jerusalem were broken down.

Verse 8

They eat up the sin of My people - The priests made a gain of the sins of the people, lived upon them and by them, conniving at or upholding the idolatries of the people, partaking in their idol-sacrifices and idolatrous rites, which, as involving the desertion of God, were "the sin of the people," and the root of all their other sins. This the priests did knowingly. True or false, apostate or irregularly appointed, they knew that there was no truth in the golden calves; but they withheld the truth, they held it down in unrighteousness, and preached Jeroboam's false-hood, "these be thy gods, O Israel." The reputation, station, maintenance of the false priests depended upon it. Not being of the line of Aaron, they could be no priests except to the calves, and so they upheld the sin whereby they lived, and, that they

might themselves be accounted priests of God, taught them to worship the calves, as representatives of God.

The word, "sin," may include indirectly the sin-offerings of the people, as if they loved the sin or encouraged it, in order that they might partake of the outward expiations for it.

And they set their heart on their iniquity - , as the source of temporal profit to themselves. "Benefited by the people, they reproved them not in their sinful doings, but charged themselves with their souls, saying, on us be the judgment, as those who said to Pilate, His blood be upon us." That which was, above all, "their iniquity," the source of all the rest, was their departure from God and from His ordained worship. On this they "set their hearts;" in this they kept them secure by their lies; they feared any misgivings, which might rend the people from them, and restore them to the true worship of God. But what else is it, to extenuate or flatter sin now, to dissemble it, not to see it, not openly to denounce it, lest we lose our popularity, or alienate those who commit it? What else is it to speak smooth words to the great and wealthy, not to warn them, even in general terms, of the danger of making Mammon their god; of the peril of riches, of parade, of luxury, of immoral dressing, and, amid boundless extravagance, neglect of the poor; encouraging the rich, not only in the neglect of Lazarus, but in pampering the dogs, while they neglect him? hat is the praise of some petty dole to the poor, but connivance at the withholding from God His due in them? "We see now," says an old writer, "how many prelates live on the oblations and revenues of the laity, and yet, whereas they are bound, by words, by prayers, by exemplary life, to turn them away from sin, and to lead them to amendment, they, in various ways, scandalize, corrupt, infect them, by ungodly conversation, flattery, connivance, cooperation, and neglect of due pastoral care. Whence Jeremiah says, "My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray." O how horrible and exceeding great will be their damnation, who shall be tormented for each of those under their care, who perish through their negligence" Jeremiah 50:6.

Verse 9

And there shall be like people, like priest - Priest and people were alike in sin. Yea they are wont, if bad, to foment each other's sin. The bad priest copies the sins which he should reprove, and excuses himself by the frailty of our common nature. The people, acutely enough, detect the

worldliness or self-indulgence of the priest, and shelter themselves under his example. Their defense stands good before people; but what before God? Alike in sin, priest and people should be alike in punishment. “Neither secular greatness should exempt the laity, nor the dignity of his order, the priest.” Both shall be swept away in one common heap, in one disgrace, into one damnation. “They shall bind them in bundles to burn them.”

And I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings - Literally, “I will visit upon him his ways, and his doings I will make to return to him.” People and priests are spoken of as one man. None should escape. The judgment comes down “upon” them, overwhelming them. Man‘s deeds are called his “ways,” because the soul holds on the tenor of its life along them, and those ways lead him on to his last end, heaven or hell. The word rendered “doings ” signifies “great doings,” when used of God; “bold doings,” on the part of man. Those bold presumptuous doings against the law and will of God, God will bring back to the sinner‘s bosom.

Verse 10

For they shall eat, and not have enough - This is almost a proverbial saying of Holy Scripture, and, as such, has manifold applications. In the way of nature, it comes true in those, who, under God‘s affictive Hand in famine or siege, “eat” what they have, but have “not enough,” and perish with hunger. It comes true in those, who, through bodily disease, are not nourished by their food. Yet not less true is it of those who, through their own insatiate desires, are never satisfied, but crave the more greedily, the more they have. Their sin of covetousness becomes their torment.

They shall commit whoredom and not increase - Literally, “they have committed whoredom.” The time spoken of is perhaps changed, because God would not speak of their future sin, as certain. There is naturally too a long interval between this sin and its possible fruit, which may be marked by this change of time. The sin was past, the effect was to be seen hereafter. They used all means, lawful and unlawful, to increase their offspring, but they failed, even because they used forbidden means. God‘s curse rested upon those means. Single marriage, according to God‘s law, “they twain shall be one flesh,” yields in a nation larger increase than polygamy. God turns illicit sexual intercourse to decay. His curse is upon it.

Because they have left off to take heed to the Lord - Literally, "to watch, observe, the Lord." The eye of the soul should be upon God, watching and waiting to know all indications of His will, all guidings of His Eye. So the Psalmist says, "As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hands of her mistress, even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until He have mercy upon us" Psalm 123:2. The Angels of God, great and glorious as they are, "do alway behold the Face of the Father" Matthew 18:10, at once filled with His love, and wrapped in contemplation, and reading therein His will, to do it. The lawless and hopeless ways of Israel sprang from their neglecting to watch and observe God. For as soon as man ceases to watch God, he falls, of himself, into sin. The eye which is not fixed on God, is soon astray amid the vanities and pomps and lusts of the world. So it follows;

Verse 11

Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart - (Literally, "takes away"). Wine and fleshly sin are pictured as blended in one, to deprive man of his affections and reason and understanding, and to leave him brutish and irrational. In all the relations of life toward God and man, reason and will are guided by the affections. And so, in God's language, the "heart" stands for the "understanding" as well as the "affections," because it directs the understanding, and the understanding, bereft of true affections, and under the rule of passion, becomes senseless. Besides the perversion of the understanding, each of these sins blunts and dulls the fineness of the intellect; much more, both combined. The stupid sottishness of the confirmed voluptuary is a whole, of which each act of sensual sin worked its part. The Pagan saw this clearly, although, without the grace of God, they did not act on what they saw to be true and right. This, the sottishness of Israel, destroying their understanding, was the ground of their next folly, that they ascribed to "their stock" the office of God. "Corruption of manners and superstition" (it has often been observed) "go hand in hand."

Verse 12

My people ask counsel at - (literally, "on") their stocks They ask habitually; and that, in dependence "on their stocks." The word "wood" is used of the idol made of it, to bring before them the senselessness of their doings, in that they asked counsel of the senseless wood. Thus Jeremiah reproaches them for "saying to a stock, my father" Jeremiah 2:27; and Habakkuk, "Woe unto him that saith to the wood, awake" Habakkuk 2:19.

And their staff declareth unto them - Many sorts of this superstition existed among the Arabs and Chaldees. They were different ways of drawing lots, without any dependence upon the true God to direct it. This was a part of their senselessness, of which the prophet had just said, that their sins took away their hearts. The tenderness of the word, "My people," aggravates both the stupidity and the ingratitude of Israel. They whom the Living God owned as His own people, they who might have asked of Him, asked of a stock or a staff.

For the spirit of whoredoms - It has been thought of old, that the evil spirits assault mankind in a sort of order and method, different spirits bending all their energies to tempt him to different sins. And this has been founded on the words of Holy Scripture, "a lying spirit," "an unclean spirit," "a spirit of jealousy," and our Lord said of the evil spirit whom the disciples could not cast out; "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" Matthew 17:21. Hence, it has been thought that "some spirits take delight in uncleanness and defilement of sins; others urge on to blasphemies; others, to anger and fury; others take delight in gloom; others are soothed with vainglory and pride; and that each instills into man‘s heart that vice in which he takes pleasure himself; yet that all do not urge their own perversenesses at once, but in turn, as opportunity of time or place, or man‘s own susceptibility, invites them". Or the word, "spirit of whoredoms," may mean the vehemence with which people were whirled along by their evil passions, whether by their passionate love of idolatry, or by the fleshly sin which was so often bound up with their idolatry.

They have gone a whoring from under their God - The words "from under" continue the image of the adulteress wife, by which God had pictured the faithlessness of His people. The wife was spoken of as "under her husband Numbers 5:19, Numbers 5:29; Ezekiel 23:5, i. e., under his authority; she withdrew herself "from under" him, when she withdrew herself from his authority, and gave herself to another. So Israel, being wedded to God, estranged herself from Him, withdrew herself from His obedience, cast off all reverence to Him, and prostituted herself to her idols.

Verse 13

They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains - The tops of hills or mountains seemed nearer heaven, the air was purer, the place more removed from the world. To worship the Unseen God upon them, was then the suggestion of natural feeling and of simple devotion. God Himself directed

the typical sacrifice of Isaac to take place on a mountain; on that same mountain He commanded that the temple should be built; on a mountain, God gave the law; on a mountain was our Saviour transfigured; on a mountain was He crucified; from a mountain He ascended into heaven. Mountains and hills have accordingly often been chosen for Christian churches and monasteries. But the same natural feeling, misdirected, made them the places of pagan idolatry and pagan sins. The Pagan probably also chose for their star and planet-worship, mountains or large plains, as being the places from where the heavenly bodies might be seen most widely.

Being thus connected with idolatry and sin, God strictly forbade the worship on the high places, and (as is the case with so many of God‘s commandments) man practiced it as diligently as if He had commanded it. God had said, “Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations, which ye shall possess, served their gods upon the high mountains, and upon the hills and under every green tree” Deuteronomy 12:2. But “they set them up images and groves (rather images of Ashtaroth) in every high hill and under every green tree, and there they burnt incense in all the high place, as did the pagan whom the Lord carried away before them” 2 Kings 17:10-11. The words express, that this which God forbade they did diligently; “they sacrificed much and diligently; they burned incense much and diligently”; and that, not here and there, but generally, “on the tops of the mountains,” and, as it were, in the open face of heaven. So also Ezekiel complains, “They saw every high hill and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering; there also they made their sweet savor, and poured out there their drink-offerings” Ezekiel 20:28.

Under oaks - (white) poplars and elms (probably the terebinth or turpentine tree) because the shadow thereof is good The darkness of the shadow suited alike the cruel and the profligate deeds which were done in honor of their false gods. In the open face of day, and in secret they carried on their sin.

Therefore their daughters shall commit whoredoms, and their spouses - (or more probably, daughters-in-law) shall commit adultery Or (in the present) commit adultery. The fathers and husbands gave themselves to the abominable rites of Baal-peor and Ashtaroth, and so the daughters and daughters-in-law followed their example. This was by the permission of God, who, since they “glorified not” God as they ought, “gave them up,”

abandoned them, “to vile affections.” So, through their own disgrace and bitter griefs, in the persons of those whose honor they most cherished, they should learn how ill they themselves had done, in departing from Him who is the Father and Husband of every soul. The sins of the fathers descend very often to the children, both in the way of nature, that the children inherit strong temptations to their parents‘ sin, and by way of example, that they greedily imitate, often exaggerate, them. Wouldest thou not have children, which thou wouldest wish unborn, reform thyself. The saying may include too sufferings at the hands of the enemy. “What thou dost willingly, that shall your daughters and your daughters-in-law suffer against thine and their will.”

Verse 14

I will not punish your daughters - God threatens, as the severest woe, that He will not punish their sins with the correction of a Father in this present life, but will leave the sinners, unheeded, to follow all iniquity. It is the last punishment of persevering stoners, that God leaves them to prosper in their sins and in those things which help them to sin. Hence, we are taught to pray, “O Lord, correct me, but in judgment, not in Thine anger” Jeremiah 10:24. For since God chastiseth those whom He loveth, it follows, “if we be without chasetisement, whereof all are partakers, then are we bastards, and not sons” Hebrews 12:8. To be chastened severely for lesser sins, is a token of great love of God toward us; to sin on without punishment is a token of God‘s extremest displeasure, and a sign of reprobation.: “Great is the offence, if, when thou hast sinned, thou art undeserving of the wrath of God.”

For themselves are separated with whores - God turns from them as unworthy to be spoken to anymore, and speaks of them, They “separate themselves,” from whom? and with whom? They separate themselves “from” God, and with the degraded ones and “with” devils. Yet so do all those who choose willful sin.

And they sacrifice - (continually, as before) with (the) harlots The unhappy women here spoken of were such as were “consecrated” (as their name imports) to their vile gods and goddesses, and to prostitution. This dreadful consecration, yea desecration, whereby they were taught to seek honor in their disgrace, was spread in different forms over Phoenicia, Syria, Phrygia, Assyria, Babylonia. Ashtaroth, (the Greek Astarte) was its chief object. This horrible worship prevailed in Midian, when Israel was entering

the promised land, and it suggested the devilish device of Balaam Numbers 31:8, Numbers 31:16 to entangle Israel in sin whereby they might forfeit the favor of God. The like is said to subsist to this day in pagan India. The sin was both the cause and effect of the superstition. Man‘s corrupt heart gave rise to the worship: and the worship in turn fostered the corruption. He first sanctioned the sin by aid of a degrading worship of nature, and then committed it under plea of that worship. He made his sin a law to him. Women, who never relapsed into the sin, sinned in obedience to the dreadful law. Blinded as they were, individual pagan had the excuse of their hereditary blindness; the Jews had imperfect grace. The sins of Christians are self sought, against light and grace.

Therefore the people that doth not understand shall fall - The word comprises both, “that doth not understand,” and, “that will not understand.” They might have understood, if they would. God had revealed Himself to them, and had given to them His law, and was still sending to them His prophets, so that they could not have known and understood God‘s will, had they willed. Ignorance, which we might avoid or cure, if we would, is itself a sin. It cannot excuse sin. They shall, he says, fall, “or be cast headlong.” Those who blind their eyes, so as not to see or understand God‘s will, bring themselves to sudden ruin, which hide from themselves, until they fall headlong in it.

Verse 15

Let not Judah offend - The sentence of Israel had been pronounced; she had been declared incorrigible. The prophet turns from her now to Judah. Israel had abandoned God‘s worship, rejected or corrupted His priests, given herself to the worship of the calves; no marvel what further excess of riot she run into! But Judah, who had the law and the temple and the service of God, let not her, (he would say,) involve herself in Israel‘s sin. If Israel, in willful blindness, had plunged herself in ruin, let not Judah involve herself in her sin and her ruin. He turns (as elsewhere) incidentally to Judah.

Come ye not unto Gilgal - Gilgal lay between Jericho and the Jordan. There, ten furlongs from the Jordan, first in all the promised land, the people encamped; there Joshua placed the monument of the miraculous passage of the Jordan; there he renewed the circumcision of the people which had been intermitted in the wilderness, and the feast of the passover; there the people returned, after all the victories by which God gave them

possession of the land of promise Joshua 4:19-20; Joshua 5:9-10; Joshua 9:6; Joshua 10:6-9, Joshua 10:43; Joshua 14:6. There Samuel habitually sacrificed, and there, "before the Lord," i. e., in His special covenanted presence, he publicly made Saul king 1 Samuel 10:8; 1 Samuel 11:14-15; 1 Samuel 13:4-9; 1 Samuel 15:21, 1 Samuel 15:33. It was part of the policy of Jeroboam to take hold of all these associations, as a sort of set-off against Jerusalem and the temple, from which he had separated his people. In opposition to this idolatry, Elisha for a time, established there one of the schools of the prophets 2 Kings 4:38.

Neither go ye up to Bethaven - "Bethaven," literally, "house of vanity," was a city East of "Bethel" Joshua 7:2, "the house of God." But since Jeroboam had set up the worship of the calves at Bethel, Bethel had ceased to be "the house of God," and had become "a house or temple of vanity;" and so the prophet gave it no more its own name which was associated with the history of the faith of the patriarchs, but called it what it had become. In Bethel God had twice appeared to Jacob, when he left the land of promise Genesis 28:10, Genesis 28:19 a to go to Laban, and when he returned Genesis 35:1, Genesis 35:9. There also the ark of God was for a time in the days of the judges removed from Shiloh Judges 20:26-27, near to which on the south Judges 21:19 Bethel lay. It too Jeroboam profaned by setting up the calf there. To these places then, as being now places of the idolatry of Israel, Judah is forbidden to go, and then to "swear, the Lord liveth." For to swear by the Lord in a place of idolatry would be to associate the living God with idols Zephaniah 1:5, which God expressly forbade.

Verse 16

For Israel slideth back, as a backsliding heifer - The calves which Israel worshiped were pictures of itself. They represented natural, untamed, strength, which, when put to service, started back and shrank from the yoke. "Untractable, petulant, unruly, wanton, it withdrew from the yoke, when it could; if it could not, it drew aside or backward, instead of forward." So is it rare, exceeding rare, for man to walk straight on in God's ways; he jerks, writhes, twists, darts aside here and there, hating nothing so much as one straight, even, narrow tenor of his ways.

Now the Lord will feed them as a lamb in a large place - The punishment of Israel was close at hand, "now." It would not have the straitness of God's commandments; it should have the wideness of a desert. God would withdraw His protecting providence from them: He would rule

them, although unfelt in His mercy. At "large," they wished to be; at large they should be; but it should be the largeness of a "wilderness where is no way." There, like a lamb, they should go astray, wandering up and down, unprotected, a prey to wild beasts. Woe is it to that man, whom, when he withdraws from Christ's easy yoke, God permits to take unhindered the broad road which leadeth to destruction. To Israel, this "wide place" was the wide realms of the Medes, where they were withdrawn from God's worship and deprived of His protection.

Verse 17

Ephraim is joined to idols - that is, banded, bound up with them, "associated," as the word means, with them so as to cleave to them, willing neither to part with nor to be parted from, them. The idols are called by a name, denoting toils; with toil they were fashioned, and, when fashioned, they were a toil and grief.

Let him alone - Literally, give him rest, i. e., from all further expostulations, which he will not hear. It is an abandonment of Israel for the time, as in the prophet Ezekiel, "As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God, go ye, serve ye every one his idols" Ezekiel 20:39. Sinners often long not to be tormented by conscience or by God's warnings. To be left so, is to be abandoned by God, as one whose case is desperate. God will not, while there is hope, leave a man to sleep in sin; for so the numbness of the soul increases, until, like those who fall asleep amid extreme cold of the body, it never awakes.

Verse 18

Their drink is sour - Literally, "turned," as we say of milk. So Isaiah says, "Thy silver is become dross; thy wine is mingled," i. e., adulterated, "with water" Isaiah 1:22; and our lord speaks of "salt which had lost its savor." The wine or the salt, when once turned or become insipid, is spoiled, irrecoverably, as we speak of "dead wine." They had lost all their life, and taste of goodness.

Her rulers with shame do love, give ye - Avarice and luxury are continually banded together according to the saying, "covetous of another's, prodigal of his own." Yet it were perhaps more correct to render, "her rulers do love, do love, shame." They love that which brings shame, which is bound up with shame, and ends in it; and so the prophet says that they "love the shame" itself. They act, as if they were in love with the shame, which, all their lives long, they are unceasingly and, as it were, by system, drawing

upon themselves. They chase diligently after all the occasions of sins and sinful pleasures which end in shame; they omit nothing which brings it, do nothing which can avoid it. What else or what more could they do, if they "loved the shame" for its own sake?

Verse 19

The wind hath bound her up in her wings - When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He "bare them on eagle's wings, and brought them unto Himself" Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:11. Now they had abandoned God, and God abandoned them as chaff to the wind. The certainty of Israel's doom is denoted by its being spoken of in the past. It was certain in the divine judgment. Sudden, resistless, irreversible are God's judgments, when they come. As if "imprisoned in the viewless winds," and "borne with resistless violence," as it were on the wings of the whirlwind, Israel should be hurried by the mighty wrath of God into captivity in a distant land, bound up so that none should escape, but, when arrived there, dispersed here and there, as the chaff before the wind.

And they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices - They had sacrificed to the calves, to Baal, or to the sun, moon, stars, hoping aid from them rather than from God. When then they should see, in deed, that from those their sacrifices no good came to them, but evil only, they should be healthfully ashamed. So, in fact, in her captivity, did Israel learn to be ashamed of her idols; and so does GOd by healthful disappointment, make us ashamed of seeking out of Him, the good things, which He alone hath, and hath in store for them who love Him.

HOSEA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

Hear ye this, O ye priests - God, with the solemn threefold summons, arraigns anew all classes in Israel before Him, not now to repentance but to judgment. Neither the religious privileges of the priests, nor the multitude of the people, nor the civil dignity of the king, should exempt any from God‘s judgment. The priests are, probably, the true but corrupted priests of God, who had fallen away to the idolatries with which they were surrounded, and, by their apostasy, had strengthened them. The king, here first mentioned by Hosea, was probably the unhappy Zechariah, a weak, pliant, self-indulgent, drunken scoffer, who, after eleven years of anarchy, succeeded his father, only to be murdered.

For judgment is toward you - Literally, “the judgment.” The kings and the priests had hitherto been the judges; now they were summoned before Him, who is the Judge of judges, and the King of kings. To teach the law was part of the priest‘s office; to enforce it, belonged to the king. The guilt of both was enhanced, in that they, being so entrusted with it, had corrupted it. They had the greatest sin, as being the seducers of the people, and therefore have the severest sentence. The prophet, dropping for the time the mention of the people, pronounces the judgment on the seducers.

Because ye have been a snare on Mizpah - Mizpah, the scene of the solemn covenant of Jacob with Laban, and of his signal protection by God, lay in the mountainous part of Gilead on the East of Jordan. Tabor was the well-known Mountain of the Transfiguration, which rises out of the midst of the plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon, one thousand feet high, in the form of a sugar-loaf. Of Mount Tabor it is related by Jerome, that birds were still snared upon it. But something more seems intended than the mere likeness of birds, taken in the snare of a fowler. This was to be seen everywhere; and so, had this been all, there hath no ground to mention these two historical spots. The prophets has selected places on both sides of Jordan, which were probably centers of corruption, or special scenes of wickedness. Mizpah, being a sacred place in the history of the patriarch Jacob Ezekiel 13:18, Ezekiel 13:20. There is an old Jewish tradition, that lyers-in-wait were set in these two places, to intercept and murder those Israelites, who would go up to worship at Jerusalem. And this tradition gains countenance from the mention of slaughter in the next verse.

Verse 2

And the revolters are profound to make slaughter - Literally, "They made the slaughter deep," as Isaiah says, "they deeply corupted themselves" Isaiah 31:6; and our old writers say "He smote deep." They willed also doubtless to "make it deep," hide it so deep, that God should never know it, as the Psalmist says of the ungodly, "that the inward self and heart of the worker's of iniquity is deep," whereon it follows, that God should "suddenly wound them," as here the prophet subjoins that God rebuked them. Actual and profuse murder has been already Hosea 4:2 mentioned as one of the common sins of Israel, and it is afterward Hosea 6:9 also charged upon the priests.

Though I have been a rebuker - Literally, "a rebuke," as the Psalmist says, "I am prayer" Psalm 109:4, i. e., "I am all prayer." The Psalmist's whole being was turned into prayer. So here, all the attributes of God, His mercies, love, justice, were concentrated into one, and that one, rebuke. Rebuke was the one form, in which they were all seen. It is an aggravation of crime to do it in the place of judgment or in the presence of the judge. Israel was immersed in his sin and heeded not, although God rebuked him continually by His voice in the law, forbidding all idolatry, and was now all the while, both in word and deed, rebuking him.

Verse 3

I know Ephraim - There is much emphasis on the "I." It is like our, "I have known," or "I, I, have known." God had known him all along, if we may so speak. However deep they may have laid their plans of blood, however they would or do hide them from man, and think that no eye seeth them, and say, "Who seeth me? and who knoweth me? I, to whose eyes all things are naked and opened Hebrews 4:13, have all along known them, and nothing of them has been hid from Me. For, He adds, even now, now when, under a fair outward show, they are veiling the depth of their sin, now, when they think that their way is hid in darkness, I know their doings, that they are defiling themselves. Sin never wanted specious excuse. Now too unbelievers are mostly fond of precisely those characters in Holy Scripture, whom God condemns. Jeroboam doubtless was accounted a patriot, vindicating his country from oppressive taxation, which Rehoboam insolently threatened. Jerusalem, as lying in the Southernmost tribe, was represented, as ill-selected for the place of the assemblage of the tribes.

Bethel, on the contrary, was hallowed by visions; it had been the abode, for a time, of the ark.

It lay in the tribe of Ephraim, which they might think to have been unjustly deprived of its privilege. Dan was a provision for the Northern tribes. Such was the exterior. God says in answer, "I know Ephraim." "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" Acts 15:18. Although (in some way unknown to us) not interfering with our free-will, known unto God are our thoughts and words and deeds, before they are framed, while they are framed, while they are being spoken and done; known to Him is all which we do, and all which, under any circumstances, we should do. This he knows with a knowledge, before the things were.: "All His creatures, corporeal or spiritual, He doth not therefore know, because they are; but they therefore are, because He knoweth them. For He was not ignorant, what He was about to create; nor did He know them, after He had created them, in any other way than before. For no accession to His knowledge came from them; but, they existing when and as was meet, that knowledge remained as it was." How strange then to think of hiding from God a secret sin, when He knew, before He created thee, that He created thee liable to this very temptation, and to be assisted amidst it with just that grace which thou art resisting! God had known Israel, but it was not with the knowledge of love, of which He says, "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous" Psalm 1:6, and, "if any man love God, the same is known of Him, but with the knowledge of condemnation, whereby He, the Searcher of hearts, knows the sin which He judges" 1 Corinthians 8:3.

Verse 4

They will not frame their doings … - They were possessed by an evil spirit, impelling and driving them to sin; "the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them," i. e., in their very inward self, their center, so to speak; in their souls, where reside the will, the reason, the judgment; and so long as they did not, by the strength of God, dislodge him, they would and could not frame their acts, so as to repent and turn to God. For a mightier impulse mastered them and drove them into sin, as the evil spirit drove the swine into the deep.

The rendering of the margin, although less agreeable to the Hebrew, also gives a striking sense. "Their doings will not suffer them to turn unto their God." Not so much that their habits of sin had got an absolute mastery over

them, so as to render repentance impossible; but rather, that it was impossible that they should turn inwardly, while they did not turn outwardly. Their evil doings, so long as they persevered in doing them, took away all heart, whereby to turn to God with a solid conversion.

And yet He was "their God;" this made their sin the more grievous. He, whom they would not turn to, still owned them, was still ready to receive them as "their God." For the prophet continues, "and they have not known the Lord." Him, "their God," they knew not. For the spirit which possessed them hindered them from thought, from memory, from conception of spiritual things. They did not turn to God,

(1) because the evil spirit held them, and so long as they allowed his hold, they were filled with carnal thoughts which kept them back from God.

(2) they did not know God; so that, not knowing how good and how great a good He is in Himself, and how good to us, they had not even the desire to turn to Him, for love of Himself, yea even for love of themselves. They saw not, that they lost a loving God.

Verse 5

And the pride of Israel - Pride was from the first the leading sin of Ephraim. Together with Manasseh, (with whom they made, in some respects, one whole, as "the children of Joseph, Joshua 16:4; Joshua 17:14), they were nearly equal in number to Judah. When numbered in the wilderness, Judah had 74,600 fighting men, Ephraim and Manasseh together 72,700. They speak of themselves as a "great people, forasmuch as the Lord has blessed me hitherto" Joshua 17:14. God having chosen, out of them, the leader under whom He brought Israel into the land of promise, they resented, in the following time of the Judges, any deliverance of the land, in which they were not called to take a part. They rebuked Gideon (Judges 8:1 ff), and suffered very severely for insolence (Judges 12:1 ff) to Jephthah and the Gileadites. When Gideon, who had refused to be king, was dead, Abimelech, his son by a concubine out of Ephraim, induced the Ephraimites to make Him king over Israel, as being their "bone and their flesh" Judges 8:31; Judges 9:1-3, Judges 9:22.

Lying in the midst of the tribes to the North of Judah, they appear, in antagonism to Judah, to have gathered round them the other tribes, and to have taken, with them, the name of Israel, in contrast with Judah 2 Samuel 2:9-10; 2 Samuel 3:17. Shiloh, where the ark was, until taken by the Philistines, belonged to them. Samuel, the last judge, was raised up out of them 1 Samuel 1:1. Their political dignity was not aggrieved, when God gave Saul, out of "little Benjamin," as king over His people. They could afford to own a king out of the least tribe. Their present political eminence was endangered, when God chose David out of their great rival, the tribe of Judah; their hope for the future was cut off by His promise to the posterity of David. They accordingly upheld, for seven years 2 Samuel 5:5, the house of Saul, knowing that they were acting against the will of God 2 Samuel 3:9. Their religious importance was aggrieved by the removal of the ark to Zion, instead of its being restored to Shiloh Psalm 78:60, Psalm 78:67-69.

Absalom won them by flattery 2 Samuel 15:2, 2 Samuel 15:5, 2 Samuel 15:10, 2 Samuel 15:12-13; and the rebellion against David was a struggle of Israel against Judah 2 Samuel 16:15; 2 Samuel 17:15; 2 Samuel 18:6. When Absalom was dead, they had scarcely aided in bringing David back, when they fell away again, because their advice had not been first had in bringing him back 2 Samuel 19:41-43; 2 Samuel 20:1-2. Rehoboam was already king over Judah 1 Kings 11:43, when he came to Shechem to be made king over Israel 1 Kings 12:1. Then the ten tribes sent for Jeroboam of Ephraim 1 Kings 11:26, to make him their spokesman, and, in the end, their king. The rival worship of Bethel provided, not only for the indolence, but for the pride of his tribe. He made a state-worship at Bethel, over-against the worship ordained by God at Jerusalem. Just before the time of Hosea, the political strength of Ephraim was so much superior to that of Judah, that Jehoash, in his pride, compared himself to the cedar of Lebanon, Amaziah king of Judah to the thistle 2 Kings 14:9. Isaiah speaks of "jealousy" Isaiah 11:13 or "envy," as the characteristic sin of Israel, which perpetuated that division, which, he foretold, should be healed in Christ. Yet although such was the power and pride of Israel, God foretold that he should first go into captivity, and so it was.

This pride, as it was the origin of the schism of the ten tribes, so it was the means of its continuance. In whatever degree any one of the kings of

Israel was better than the rest, still "he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin." The giving up of any other sin only showed, how deeply rooted this sin was, which even then they would not give up. As is the way of unregenerate man, they would not give themselves up without reserve to God, to do all His will. They could not give up this sin of Jeroboam, without endangering their separate existence as Israel, and owning the superiority of Judah. From this complete self-surrender to God, their pride shrank and held them back.

The pride, which Israel thus showed in refusing to turn to God, and in preferring their sin to "their God," itself, he says, witnessed against them, and condemned them. In the presence of God, there needeth no other witness against the sinner than his own conscience. "it shall witness to his face," "openly, publicly, themselves and all others seeing, acknowledging, and approving the just judgment of God and the recompense of their sin." Pride and carnal sin are here remarkably united.

: "The prophet having said, the spirit of fornication is in the midst of them, assigns as its ground, the pride of Israel will testify to his face, i. e., the sin which, through pride of mind, lurked in secret, bore open witness through sin of the flesh. Wherefore the cleanness of chastity is to be preserved by guarding humility. For if the spirit is piously humbled before God, the flesh is not raised unlawfully above the spirit. For the spirit holds the dominion over the flesh, committed to it, if it acknowledges the claims of lawful servitude to the Lord. For if, through pride, it despises its Author, it justly incurs a contest with its subject, the flesh."

Therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in - (or by) their iniquity Ephraim, the chief of the ten tribes, is distinguished from the whole, of which it was a part, because it was the rival of Judah, the royal tribe, out of which Jeroboam had sprung, who had formed the kingdom of Israel by the schism from Judah. All Israel, even its royal tribe, where was Samaria, its capital and strength, should fall, their iniquity being the stumbling-block, on which they should fall.

Judah also shall fall with them - "Judah also, being partaker with them in their idolatry and their wickedness, shall partake with them in the like punishment. Sin shall have the like effect in both." Literally, he saith, "Judah hath fallen," denoting, as do other prophets, the certainty of the

future event, by speaking of it, as having taken place already; as it had, in the Mind of God.

Verse 6

They shall go with their flocks - "They had let slip the day of grace, wherein God had called them to repentance, and promised to be found of them and to accept them. When then the decree was gone forth and judgment determined against them, all their outward shew of worship and late repentance shall not prevail to gain admittance for them to Him. He will not be found of them, hear them, nor accept them. They stopped their ears obstinately against Him calling on them, and proffering mercy in the day of mercy: He will now stop His ear against them, crying for it in the Day of Judgment." Repenting thus late, (as is the case with most who repent, or think that they repent, at the close of life) they did not repent out of the love of God, but out of slavish fear, on account of the calamity which was coming upon them. But the main truth, contained in this and other passages of Holy Scripture which speak of a time when it is too late to turn to God, is this: that "it shall be too late to knock when the door shall be shut, and too late to cry for mercy when it is the time of justice."

God waits long for sinners; He threatens long before He strikes; He strikes and pierces in lesser degrees, and with increasing severity, before the final blow comes. In this life, He places man in a new state of trial, even after His first judgments have fallen on the sinner. But the general rule of His dealings is this; that, when the time of each judgment is actually come, then, as to "that" judgment, it is too late to pray. It is "not" too late for other mercy, or for final forgiveness, so long as man's state of probation lasts; but it is too late as to this one. And thus, each judgment in time is a picture of the eternal judgment, when the day of mercy is past forever, to those who have finally, in this life, hardened themselves against it. But temporal mercies correspond with temporal judgments; eternal mercy with eternal judgment. In time, it may be too late to turn away temporal judgments; it is not too late, while God continues grace, to flee from eternal; and the desire not to lose God, is a proof to the soul that it is not forsaken by God, by whom alone the longing for Himself is kept alive or re-awakened in His creature.

They shall not find Him - This befell the Jews in the time of Josiah. Josiah himself "turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses" 2 Kings 23:25-27.

He put away idolatry thoroughly; and the people so tier followed his example. He held such a Passover, as had not been held since the time of the judges. "Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of this great wrath, wherewith His anger was kindled against Judah because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked Him withal. And the Lord said, I will remove Judah out of My sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem, which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there."

The prophet describes the people, as complying with God's commands; "they shall go," i. e., to the place which God had chosen and commanded, "with their flocks and their herds," i. e., with the most costly sacrifices, "the flocks" supplying the sheep and goats prescribed by the law; the "herds" supplying the bullocks, calves and heifers offered. They seem to have come, so far, sincerely. Yet perhaps it is not without further meaning, that the prophet speaks of those outward sacrifices only, not of the heart; and the reformation under Josiah may therefore have failed, because the people were too ingrained with sin under Manasseh, and returned outwardly only under Josiah, as they fell back again after his death. And so God speaketh here, as He does by David, "I will take no bullock out of thine house, nor he-goat out of thy fold. Thinkest thou, that I will eat bulls' flesh, or drink the blood of goats?" Psalm 50:9, Psalm 50:13, and by Isaiah, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts" Isaiah 1:11.

He hath withdrawn Himself from them - Perhaps he would say, that God, as it were "freed Himself" from them, as He saith in Isaiah, "I am weary to bear them" Isaiah 1:14, the union of sacrifices and of sin.

Verse 7

They have dealt treacherously - Literally, "have cloaked," and so, acted deceitfully. The word is used of treachery of friend toward his friend, of the husband to his wife, or the wife husband. "Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord" Jeremiah 3:20. God, even in His upbraiding, speaks very tenderly to them, as having been in the closest, dearest relation to Himself.

For they have begotten strange children - God had made it a ground of the future blessing of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the

Lord, to do justice and judgment" Genesis 18:19. But these, contrariwise, themselves being idolaters and estranged from God, had children, who fell away like themselves, strangers to God, and looked upon as strangers by Him. The children too of the forbidden marriages with the pagan were, by their birth, strange or foreign children, even before they became so in act; and they became so the more in act, because they were so by birth. The next generation then growing up more estranged from God than themselves, what hope of amendment was there?

Now shall a month devour - The word now denotes the nearness and suddenness of God's judgments; the term "month," their rapidity. A "month" is not only a brief time, but is almost visibly passing away; the moon, which measures it, is never at one stay, waxing until it is full, then waning until it disappears. Night by night bears witness to the month's decay. The iniquity was full; the harvest was ripe; "now," suddenly, rapidly, completely, the end should come. One month should "devour them with their portions." God willed to be the Portion of His people; He had said, "the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance" Deuteronomy 32:9. To Himself He had given the title, "the protion of Jacob" Jeremiah 10:16. Israel had chosen to himself "other portions" out of God, for these, he had forsaken his God; therefore he should be consumed with them. "All that they had, all that they possessed, enjoyed, trusted in, all, at once, shall that short space, suddenly and certainly to come; devour, deprive and bereave them of; none of them shall remain with them or profit them in the day of wrath."

Verse 8

Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah - The evil day and destruction, denounced, is now vividly pictured, as actually come. All is in confusion, hurry, alarm, because the enemy was in the midst of them. The "cornet," an instrument made of horn, was to be blown as the alarm, when the enemy was at hand. The "trumpet" was especially used for the worship of God. "Gibeah and Ramah" were cities of Benjamin, on the borders of Ephraim, where the enemy, who had possessed himself of Israel, would burst in upon Judah. From Bethaven or Bethel, the seat of Ephraim's idolatry, on the border of Benjamin, was to break forth the outcry of destruction, "after thee, O Benjamin;" the enemy is upon thee, just behind thee, pursuing thee. God had promised His people, if they would serve Him, "I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee" Exodus 23:27, and had threatened

the contrary, if they should "walk contrary to Him." Now that threat was to be fulfilled to the uttermost. The ten tribes are spoken of, as already in possession of the enemy, and he was "upon Benjamin" fleeing before them.

Verse 9

Ephraim shall be desolate - It shall not be lightly rebuked, nor even more grievously chastened; it shall not simply be wasted by famine, pestilence, and the sword; it shall be not simply desolate, but a desolation, one waste, in the day of rebuke, when God brings home to it its sin and punishment. Ephraim was not taken away for a time; it was never restored.

I have made known that which shall surely be - o"Doubt not that this which I say shall come upon thee, for it is a sure saying which I have made known;" literally, one well-grounded, as it was, in the mind, the justice, the holiness, the truth of God. All God's threatenings or promises are grounded in past experience. So it may also be, as though God said, "Whatever I have hitherto promised or threatened to Israel, has come to pass. In all I have proved Myself true. Let no one then flatter himself, as though this were uncertain, for in this, as in the rest, I shall be found to be God, faithful and true."

Verse 10

The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound - All avaricious encroachment on the paternal inheritance of others, was strictly forbidden by God in the law, under the penalty of His curse. "Cursed is he that removeth his neighbor's landmark" Deuteronomy 27:17. "The princes of Judah," i. e., those who were the king's counselors and chief in the civil polity, had committed sin, like to this. Since the prophet had just pronounced the desolation of Israel, perhaps that sin was, that instead of taking warning from the threatened destruction, and turning to God, they thought only how the removal of Ephraim would benefit them, by the enlargement of their borders. They might hope also to increase their private estates out of the desolate lands of Ephraim, their brother. The unregenerate heart, instead of being awed by God's judgment on others, looks out to see, what advantages it may gain from them. Times of calamity are also times of greediness. Israel had been a continual sore to Judah. The princes of Judah rejoiced in the prospect of their removal, instead of mourning their sin and fearing for themselves. More widely yet, the words may mean, that the "princes of Judah" "burst all bounds, set to them by the law of God, to which nothing was to be added, from which nothing was to be diminished,"

transferring to idols or devils, to sun, moon and stars, or to the beings supposed to preside over them, the love, honor, and worship, due to God Alone.

I will pour out My wrath like water - So long as those bounds were not broken through, the justice of God, although manifoldly provoked, was yet stayed. When Judah should break them, they would, as it were, make a way for the chastisement of God, which should burst in like a flood upon them, over-spreading the whole land, yet bringing, not renewed life, but death. Like a flood, it overwhelmed the land; but it was a flood, not of water, but of the wrath of God. They had burst the bounds which divided them from Israel, and had let in upon themselves its chastisements.

Verse 11

Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment - Literally, "crushed in judgment." Holy Scripture, elsewhere also, "combines" these same two words, rendered "oppressed" and "crushed," in speaking of man‘s oppression by man. Ephraim preferred man‘s commands and laws to God‘s; they obeyed man and set God at nought; therefore they should suffer at man‘s hands, who, while he equally neglected God‘s will, enforced his own. The "commandment," which "Ephraim willingly went after," was doubtless that of Jeroboam; "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought you out of the land of Egypt; and Jeroboam ordained a feast unto the children of Israel" 1 Kings 12:28, 1 Kings 12:32-33. Through this "commandment," Jeroboam earned the dreadful title, "who made Israel to sin." And Israel "went willingly after it," for it is said; "This thing became a sin; and the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan:" i. e., while they readily accepted Jeroboam‘s plea. It "is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem," they "went willingly" to the Northernmost point of Palestine, "even to Dan." For this sin, God judged them justly, even through the unjust judgment of man. God mostly punishes, through their own choice, those who choose against His. The Jews said, "we have no king but Caesar," and Caesar destroyed them.

Verse 12

Therefore I will be unto Ephraim a moth - Literally, "and I as a moth." This form of speaking expresses what God was doing, while Ephraim was "willingly following" sin. "And I" was all the while "as a moth." The moth in a garment, and the decay in wood, corrode and prey upon the substance, in which they lie hid, slowly, imperceptibly, but, at the

last, effectually. Such were God‘s first judgments on Israel and Judah; such are they now commonly upon sinners. He tried, and now too tries at first, gentle measures and mild chastisements, uneasy indeed and troublesome and painful; yet slow in their working; each stage of loss and decay, a little beyond that which preceded it; but leaving long respite and time for repentance, before they finally wear out and destroy the impenitent. The two images, which He uses, may describe different kinds of decay, both slow, yet the one slower than the other, as Judah was, in fact, destroyed more slowly than Ephraim. For the “rottenness,” or caries in wood, preys more slowly upon wood, which is hard, than the moth on the wool.

So God visits the soul with different distresses, bodily or spiritual. He impairs, little by little, health of body, or fineness of understanding; or He withdraws grace or spiritual strength; or allows lukewarmness and distaste for the things of God to creep over the soul. These are the gnawing of the moth, overlooked by the sinner, if he persevere in carelessness as to his conscience, yet in the end, bringing entire decay of health, of understanding, of heart, of mind, unless God interfere by the mightier mercy of some heavy chastisement, to awaken him.: “A moth does mischief, and makes no sound. So the minds of the wicked, in that they neglect to take account of their losses, lose their soundness, as it were, without knowing it. For they lose innocency from the heart, truth from the lips, continency from the flesh, and, as time holds on, life from their age.” To Israel and Judah the moth and rottenness denoted the slow decay, by which they were gradually weakened, until they were carried away captive.

Verse 13

When Ephraim saw his sickness - Literally, “And Ephraim saw,” i. e., perceived it. God proceeds to tell them, how they acted when they felt those lighter afflictions, the decline and wasting of their power. The “sickness” may further mean the gradual inward decay; the “wound,” blows received from without.

And sent to king Jareb - Or, as in the English margin “a king who should plead, or, an avenging king.” The “hostile king” is, probably, the same Assyrian Monarch, whom both Israel and Judah courted, who was the destruction of Israel and who weakened Judah. Ahaz king of Judah did send to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria to come and save him, when “the Lord brought Judah low; and Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came unto him and

distressed him, but strengthened him not" 2 Chronicles 28:19-20. He who held his throne from God sent to a pagan king, "I am thy servant and thy son; come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me" 2 Kings 16:7-8. He emptied his own treasures, and pillaged the house of God, in order to buy the help of the Assyrian, and he taught him an evil lesson against himself, of his wealth and his weakness. God had said that, if they were faithful, "five shall chase an hundred, and an hundred put ten thousand to flight" Leviticus 26:8. He had pronounced him cursed, who trusted in man, and made flesh his arm, and whose heart departed from the Lord" Jeremiah 17:5. But Judah sought man's help, not only apart from God, but against God. God was bringing them down, and they, by man's aid, would lift themselves up. "The king" became an "avenger," for, "whoso, when God is angry, striveth to gain man as his helper, findeth him God's avenger, who leadeth into captivity God's deserters, as though he were sworn to avenge God."

Verse 14

For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion - He who would thus strengthen himself by Outward help against God's chastisements, challenges, as it were, the Almighty to a trial of strength. So then God, unwilling to abandon him to himself, changes His dealings, and, "He who had heretofore, in His judgments, seemed but as a tender moth or a weak worm," now shows forth His resistless power, imaged by His creatures in whom the quality of power is most seen. It may again be, that the fiercer animal (literally, the roaring) is associated with the name of Ephraim; that of the younger lion, fierce and eager for prey, yet not full-grown, with that of Judah.

I, I will tear - "It is a fearful thing, to fall into the Hands of the Living God" Hebrews 10:31. The Assyrian was but the rod of God's anger, and the staff, He says, in thine hand is His indignation" Isaiah 10:5. Whatever is done, is done or overruled by God, who gives to the evil his power to do, in an evil way, what He Himself overrules to the end of His wisdom or justice. God, Himself would tear them asunder, by giving the Assyrians power to carry them away. And since it was God who did it, there was no hope of escape. He who was faithful to His word would do it. There is great emphasis on the I, I. God and not man; He, the author of all good, would Himself be the cause of their evil. What hope then is there, when He, who is mercy, becomes the avenger?

Verse 15

I will go and return to My place - As the wild beast, when he has taken his prey, returns to his covert, so God, when He had fulfilled His will, would, for the time, withdraw all tokens of his presence. God, who is wholly everywhere, is said to dwell "there," relatively to us, where he manifests Himself, as of old, in the tabernacle, the temple, Zion, Jerusalem. He is said to "go and return," when He withdraws all tokens of His presence, His help, care, and providence. This is worse than any affliction on God's part, "a state like theirs who, in the lowest part of hell, are "delivered into chains of darkness," shut out from His presence, and so from all hope of comfort; and this must needs be their condition, so long as He shall be absent from them; and so perpetually, except there be a way for obtaining again His favorable presence."

Till they acknowledge their offence - o"He who "hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live," withdraws Himself from them, not to cast them off altogether, but that they might know and acknowledge their folly and wickedness, and, seeing there is no comfort out of Him, prefer His presence to those vain things." which they had preferred to Him To say, that God would hide His Face from them, "until they should acknowledge their offence," holds out in itself a gleam of hope, that hereafter they would turn to Him, and would find Him.

And seek My Face - The first step in repentance is confession of sin; the second, turning to God. For to own sin without turning to God is the despair of Judas.

In their affliction they shall seek Me early - God does not only leave them hopes, that He would show forth his presence, when they sought him, but He promises that they shah seek Him, i. e. He would give them His grace whereby alone they could seek Him, and that grace should be effectual. Of itself affliction drives to despair and more obdurate rebellion and final impenitence. Through the grace of God, "evil brings forth good; fear, love; chastisement, repentance." "They shall seek Me early," originally, "in the morning," i. e., with all diligence and earnestness, as a man riseth early to do what he is very much set upon. So these shall "shake off the sleep of sin and the torpor of listlessness, when the light of repentance shall shine upon them."

This was fulfilled in the two tribes, toward the end of the seventy years, when many doubtless, together with Daniel, "set their face unto the Lord

God to seek by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes" Daniel 9:2-3; and again in, those "who waited for redemption in Jerusalem" Luke 2:25, Luke 2:38, when our Lord came; and it will be fulfillment in all at the end of the world. "The first flash of thought on the power and goodness of the true Deliverer, is like the morning streaks of a new day. At the sight of that light, Israel shall arise early to seek his God; he shall rise quickly like the Prodigal, out of his wanderings and his indigence."

HOSEA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

Come and let us return unto the Lord - These words depend closely on the foregoing. They are words put into their mouth by God Himself, with which or with the like, they should exhort one another to return to God. Before, when God smote them, they had gone to Assyria; now they should turn to Him, owning, not only that He who "tore" has the power and the will to "heal" them, but that He tore, "in order to" heal them; He smote them, "in order to" bind them up. This closeness of connection is expressed in the last words; literally, "smite He and He will bind us up." "He smiteth the putrefaction of the misdeed; He healeth the pain of the wound. Physicians do this; they cut; they smite; they heal; they arm themselves in order to strike; they carry steel, and come to cure."

They are not content to return singly or to be saved alone. Each encourageth another to repentance, as before to evil. The dry bones, scattered on the face of the earth, reunite. There is a general movement among those "who sat in darkness and the shadow of death," to return together to Him, who is the source of life.

Verse 2

After two days will He revive us (or quicken us, give us life,) in the third day He will raise us up - The Resurrection of Christ, and our resurrection in Him and in His Resurrection, could not be more plainly foretold. The prophet expressly mentions "two days," after which life should be given, and a "third day, on" which the resurrection should take place. What else can this be than the two days in which the Body of Christ lay in the tomb, and the third day, on which He rose again, as "the Resurrection and the life" John 11:25, "the first fruits of them that slept" 1 Corinthians 15:20, the source and earnest and pledge of our resurrection and of life eternal? The Apostle, in speaking of our resurrection in Christ, uses these self-same words of the prophet; "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us - hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" Ephesians 2:4-6.

The Apostle, like the prophet, speaks of that which took place in Christ our Head, as having already taken place in us, His members.: "If we

unhesitatingly believe in our heart," says a father, "what we profess with our mouth, we were crucified in Christ, "we" died, "we" were buried, "we" also were raised again on that very third day. Whence the Apostle saith, "If ye rose again with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God" Colossians 3:1. "As Christ died for us, so He also rose for us. "Our old man was nailed to the wood, in the flesh of our Head, and the new man was formed in that same Head, rising glorious from the tomb." What Christ, our Head, did, He did, not for Himself, but for His redeemed, that the benefits of His Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, might redound to all. life did it for them; they partook of what He did.

In no other way, could our participation of Christ be foretold. It was not the prophet's object here, nor was it so direct a comfort to Israel, to speak of Christ's Resurrection in itself. He took a nearer way to their hearts. He told them, "all we who turn to the Lord, putting our whole trust in Him, and committing ourselves wholly to Him, to be healed of our wounds and to have our griefs bound up, shall receive life from Him, shall be raised up by Him." They could not understand "then," how He would do this. The "after two days" and, "in the third day," remained a mystery, to be explained by the event. But the promise itself was not the less distinct, nor the less full of hope, nor did it less fulfill all cravings for life eternal and the sight of God, because they did not understand, "how shall these things be." Faith is unconcerned about the "how." Faith believes what God says, because He says it, and leaves Him to fulfill it, "how" He wills and knows. The words of the promise which faith had to believe, were plain. The life of which the prophet spoke, could only be life from death, whether of the body or the soul or both. For God is said to "give life," only in contrast with such death. Whence the Jews too have ever looked and do look, that this should be fulfilled in the Christ, though they know not that it has been fulfilled in Him. They too explain it; "He will quicken us in the days of consolation which shall come; in the day of the quickening of the dead; he will raise us up, and we shall live before Him."

In shadow, the prophecy was never fulfilled to Israel at all. The ten tribes were never restored; they never, as a whole, received any favor from God, after He gave them up to captivity. And unto the two tribes, (of whom, apart from the ten, no mention is made here) what a mere shadow was the

restoration from Babylon, that it should be spoken of as the gift of life or of resurrection, whereby we should live before Him! The strictest explanation is the truest. The "two days" and "the third day" have nothing in history to correspond with them, except that in which they were fulfilled, when Christ, "rising on the third day from the grave, raised with Him the whole human race".

And we shall live in His sight - Literally, "before His Face." In the face, we see the will, and mind, the love, the pleasure or displeasure of a human being whom we love. In the holy or loving face of man, there may be read fresh depths of devotion or of love. The face is turned away in sorrowful displeasure; it is turned full upon the face it loves. Hence, it is so very expressive an image of the relation of the soul to God, and the Psalmists so often pray, "Lord lift up the light of Thy countenance upon us; make Thy Face to shine upon Thy servant; God bless us, and cause His Face to shine upon us; cast me not away from Thy presence or Face; look Thou upon me and be merciful unto me; look upon the Face of thine anointed; how long wilt Thou hide Thy Face from me? hide not Thy Face from Thy servant" (Psalm 4:6; Psalm 31:16 (from Numbers 6:25); Psalm 67:1; Psalm 80:7; Psalm 119:135; Psalm 51:11; Psalm 119:132; Psalm 84:9; Psalm 13:1; Psalm 69:17, etc.); or they profess, "Thy Face, Lord, will I seek" (Psalm 27:8; see Psalm 24:6; Psalm 105:4); or they declare that the bliss of eternity is in "the Face of God" Psalm 11:7; Psalm 16:11; Psalm 17:15.

God had just said, that He would withdraw His presence, until they should "seek" His "Face;" now He says, they should "live before His Face." To Abraham He had said, "Walk before Me" Genesis 17:1, literally, "before My Face, and be thou perfect." Bliss from the Creator, and duty from the creature, answer to one another. We "live in His sight," in the way of duty, when we refer ourselves and our whole being, our courses of action, our thoughts, our love, to Him, remembering that we are ever in His presence, and ever seeking to please Him. "We live in His sight," in the bliss of His presence, when we enjoy the sense of His favor, and know that His Eye rests on us in love, that He cares for us, guides us, guards us; and have some sweetness in contemplating Him. Much more fully shall we live in His sight, when, in Him, we shall be partakers of His Eternal Life and Bliss, and shall behold Him "face to face," and "see Him as He is," and the sight of Him shall be our bliss, "and in His light we shall see light" Psalm 36:9.

Verse 3

Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord - Rather, "Then shall we know, shall follow on to know the Lord," i. e., we shall not only know Him, but we shall grow continually in that knowledge. Then, in Israel, God says, "there was no knowledge of Him;" His "people was destroyed for lack of it" Hosea 4:1, Hosea 4:6. In Christ He promises, that they should have that inward knowledge of Him, ever growing, because the grace, through which it is given, ever grows, and "the depth of the riches of His wisdom and knowledge is unsearchable, passing knowledge." We "follow on," confessing that it is He who maketh us to follow Him, and draweth us to Him. We know, in order to follow; we follow, in order to know. Light prepares the way for love. Love opens the mind for new love. The gifts of God are interwoven. They multiply and reproduce each other, until we come to the perfect state of eternity. For here "we know in part" only; then "shall we know, even as we are known. We shall follow on." Where shall we "follow on?" To the fountains of the water of life, as another prophet saith; "For He that hath mercy upon them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them" Isaiah 49:10. And in the Revelations we read, that "the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters" Revelation 7:17. The bliss of eternity is fixed; the nearness of each to the throne of God, the "mansion" in which he shall dwell, admits of no change; but, through eternity, it may be, that we shall "follow on to know" more of God, as more shall be revealed to us of that which is infinite, the Infinity of His Wisdom and His Love.

His going forth - that is, the going forth of God, "is prepared," firm, fixed, certain, established, (so the word means) "as the morning." Before, God had said, He would withdraw Himself from them; now, contrariwise, He says, that He would "go forth." He had said, "in their affliction they shall seek Me early or in the morning;" now, "He shall go forth as the morning.": "They shall seek for Him, as they that long for the morning; and He will come to them as the morning," full of joy and comfort, of light and warmth and glorious radiance which shall diffuse over the whole compass of the world, so that "nothing shall be hid from its light" and "heat." He who should so go forth, is the same as He who was to "revive them" and "raise them up," i. e., Christ. Of Him it is said most strictly, that "He went

forth," when from the Bosom of the Father He came among us; as of Him holy Zacharias saith, (in the like language,) "The Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." Christ goeth forth continually from the Father, by an eternal, continual, generation. In He "came forth" from the Father in His Incarnation; He "came forth" to us from the Virgin's womb; He "came forth," from the grave in His Resurrection. His "coming forth, as the morning," images the secrecy of His Birth, the light and glow of love which He diffuseth throughout the whole new creation of His redeemed.: "As the dawn is seen by all and cannot be hid, and appeareth, that it may be seen, yea, that it may illuminate, so His going forth, whereby He proceeded from His own invisible to our visible became known to all," tempered to our eyes, dissipating our darkness, awakening our nature as from a grave, unveiling to man the works of God, making His ways plain before his face, that he should no longer "walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth - So of Christ it is foretold, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth" Psalm 72:6. Palestine was especially dependent upon rain, on account of the cultivation of the sides of the hills in terraces, which were parched and dry, when the rains were withheld. The "former," or autumnal "rain," fell in October, at the seed-time; the "latter" or spring "rain," in March and April, and filled the ears before harvest. Both together stand as the beginning and the end. If either were withheld, the harvest failed. Wonderful likeness of Him who is the Beginning and the End of our spiritual life; from whom we receive it, by whom it is preserved unto the end; through whom the soul, enriched by Him, hath abundance of all spiritual blessings, graces, and consolations, and yieldeth all manner of fruit, each after its kind, to the praise of Him who hath given it life and fruitfulness.

Verse 4

O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? - It is common with the prophets, first to set forth the fullness of the riches of God's mercies in Christ, and then to turn to their own generation, and upbraid them for the sins which withheld the mercies of God from "them," and were hurrying them to their destruction. In like way Isaiah, Romans 13:10, Romans 13:8. And, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one

that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" 1 John 4:7. Of this their goodness, he says the character was, that it never lasted. The "morning cloud" is full of brilliancy with the rays of the rising sun, yet quickly disappears through the heat of that sun, which gave it its rich hues. The "morning dew" glitters in that same sun, yet vanishes almost as soon as it appears. Generated by the cold of the night, it appears with the dawn; yet appears, only to disappear. So it was with the whole Jewish people; so it ever is with the most hopeless class of sinners; ever beginning anew, ever relapsing; ever making a show of leaves, good feelings, good aspirations, but yielding no fruit. "There was nothing of sound, sincere, real, lasting goodness in them;" no reality, but all show; quickly assumed, quickly disused.

Verse 5

Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets - Since they despised God's gentler warnings and measures, He used severer. "He hewed" them, He says, as men hew stones out of the quarry, and with hard blows and sharp instruments overcome the hardness of the stone which they have to work. Their piety and goodness were light and unsubstantial as a summer cloud; their stony hearts were harder than the material stone. The stone takes the shape which man would give it; God hews man in vain; he will not receive the image of God, for which and in which he was framed.

God, elsewhere also, likens the force and vehemence of His word to "a hammer which breaketh the rocks in pieces" Jeremiah 23:29; "a sword which pierceth even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" Hebrews 4:12.: He "continually hammered, beat upon, disquieted them, and so vexed them (as they thought) even unto death, not allowing them to rest in their sins, not suffering them to enjoy themselves in them, but forcing them (as it were) to part with things which they loved as their lives, and would as soon part with their souls as with them."

And thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth - The "judgments" here are the acts of justice executed upon a man; the "judgment upon him," as we say. God had done all which could be done, to lay aside the severity of His own judgments. All had failed. Then His judgments, when they came, would be manifestly just; their justice clear "as the light which goeth forth" out of the darkness of night, or out of the thick clouds. God's past loving-kindness, His pains, (so to speak,) His solicitations, the drawings of His grace, the tender mercies of His austere

chastisements, will, in the Day of Judgment, stand out clear as the light, and leave the sinner confounded, without excuse. In this life, also, God‘s final “judgments are as a light which goeth forth,” enlightening, not the sinner who perishes, but others, heretofore in the darkness of ignorance, on whom they burst with a sudden blaze of light, and who reverence them, owning that “the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether” Psalm 19:9.

And so, since they would not be reformed, what should have been for their wealth, was for their destruction. “I slew them by the words of My mouth.” God spake yet more terribly to them. He slew them in word, that He might not slay them in deed; He threatened them with death; since they repented not, it came. The stone, which will not take the form which should have been imparted to it, is destroyed by the strokes which should have moulded it. By a like image Jeremiah compared the Jews to ore which is consumed in the fire which should refine it; since there was no good in it. “They are brass and iron; they are all corrupted; the bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain, for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them” Jeremiah 6:28-30.

Verse 6

For I desired mercy and not sacrifice - God had said before, that they should “seek” Him “with their flocks and herds, and not find” Him. So here He anticipates their excuses with the same answer wherewith He met those of Saul, when he would compensate for disobedience by burnt-offerings. The answer is, that all which they did to win His favor, or turn aside His wrath, was of no avail, while they willfully withheld what He required of them. Their mercy and goodness were but a brief, passing, show; in vain He had tried to awaken them by His prophets; therefore judgment was coming upon them, for, to turn it aside, they had offered Him what He desired not, sacrifices without love, and had not offered Him, what He did desire, love of man out of love for God. God had Himself, after the fall, enjoined sacrifice, to foreshow and plead to Himself the meritorious Sacrifice of Christ. “He” had not contrasted “mercy” and “sacrifice,” who enjoined them both.

When then they were contrasted, it was through man‘s severing what God united. If we were to say, “Charity is better than Church-going,” we

should be understood to mean that it is better than such Church-going as is severed from charity. For, if they were united, they would not be contrasted. The soul is of more value than the body. But it is not contrasted, unless they come in competition with one another, and their interests (although they cannot in trust "be,") "seem" to be separated. in itself, "Sacrifice" represented all the direct duties to God, all the duties of the first table. For Sacrifice owned Him as the One God, to whom, as His creatures, we owe and offer all; as His guilty creatures, it owned that we owed to Him our lives also. "mercy" represented all duties of the second table. In saying then, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," he says, in effect, the same as John, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" 1 John 4:20.

As the love, which a man pretended to have for God, was not real love, if a man loved not his brother, so "sacrifice" was not an offering, to God at all, while man withheld from God that offering, which God most required of him, the oblation of man's own self. They were, rather, offerings to satisfy and bribe a man's own conscience. Yet the Jews were profuse in making these sacrifices, which cost them little hoping thereby to secure to themselves impunity the wrongful gains, oppressions, and fulnesses which they would not part with. It is with this contrast, that God so often rejects the sacrifices of the Jews, "To what purpose is the multitude of your oblations unto Me? Bring no more vain oblations unto Me; new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; iniquity and the solemn meeting" Isaiah 1:11-13. "I spake not to your fathers, nor commanded them, in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people" Jeremiah 7:22-23. And the Psalmist; "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings, to have been continually before Me. Offer unto God thanksgiving, etc. But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do, to declare My statutes, etc." Psalm 1:1-6, Psalm 8:1-9, Psalm 14:1-7, Psalm 16:1-11.

But, further, the prophet adds, "and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." The two parts of the verse fill out one another, and the

latter explains the former. “The knowledge of God” is, as before, no inactive head-knowledge, but that knowledge, of which John speaks, “Hereby we do know that we knew Him, if we keep His commandments” Ephesians 2:3. It is a knowledge, such as they alone can have, who love God and do His will. God says then, that He prefers the inward, loving, knowledge of Himself, and lovingkindness toward man, above the outward means of acceptableness with Himself, which He had appointed. He does not lower those His own appointments; but only when, emptied of the spirit of devotion, they were lifeless bodies, unensouled by His grace.

Yet the words of God go beyond the immediate occasion and bearing, in which they were first spoken. And so these words, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice” Matthew 9:13, are a sort of sacred proverb, contrasting “mercy,” which overflows the bounds of strict justice, with “sacrifice,” which represents that stern justice. Thus, when the Pharisees complained at our Lord for eating with Publicans and sinners, He bade them, “Go and learn what that meaneth. I will have mercy and not sacrifice.” He bade them learn that deeper meaning of the words, that God valued mercy for the souls for which Christ died, above that outward propriety, that He, the All-Holy, should not feast familiarly with those who profaned God‘s law and themselves. Again, when they found fault with the hungry disciples for breaking the sabbath by rubbing the ears of grain, He, in the same way, tells them, that they did not know the real meaning of that saying. “If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless” Matthew 12:7. For as, before, they were envious as to mercy to the souls of sinners, so how they were reckless as to others‘ bodily needs. Without that love then, which shows itself in acts of mercy to the souls and bodies of people, all sacrifice is useless.

“Mercy” is also more comprehensive than “sacrifice.” For sacrifice was referred to God only, as its end; “mercy,” or love of man for the love of God, obeys God who commands it; imitates God, “Whose property it is always to have mercy;” seeks God who rewards it; promotes the glory of God, through the thanksgiving to God, from those whom it benefits. “mercy leads man up to God, for mercy brought down God to man; mercy humbled God, exalts man.” mercy takes Christ as its pattern, who, from His Holy Incarnation to His Precious Death on the Cross, “bare our griefs, and

carried our sorrows" Isaiah 53:4. Yet neither does mercy itself avail without true knowledge of God. For as mercy or love is the soul of all our acts, so true knowledge of God and faith in God are the source and soul of love. "Vain were it to boast that we have the other members, if faith, the head, were cut off".

Verse 7

But they like men - Or (better as in the E. M) "like Adam, have transgressed the covenant." As Adam our first parent, in Paradise, not out of any pressure, but wantonly, through self-will and pride, broke the covenant of God, eating the forbidden fruit, and then defended himself in his sin against God, casting the blame upon the woman: so these, in the good land which God had given them, "that they should" therein "keep His covenant and observe His laws" Psalm 105:44, wantonly and petulantly broke that covenant; and then obstinately defended their sin. Wherefore, as Adam was cast out of Paradise, so shall these be cast out of the land of promise.

There have they dealt treacherously against Me - There! He does not say, "where." But Israel and every sinner in Israel knew full well, where. "There," to Israel, was not only Bethel or Dan, or Gilgal, or Mizpah, or Gilead, or any or all of the places, which God had hallowed by His mercies, and they had defiled. It was every high hill, each idol-chapel, each field-altar, which they had multiplied to their idols. To the sinners of Israel, it was every spot of the Lord's land which they had defiled by their sin. God points out to the conscience of sinners the place and time, the very spot where they offended Him. Wheresoever and whensoever they broke God's commands, "there they dealt treacherously against" God Himself. There is much emphasis upon the "against" Me. The sinner, while breaking the laws of God, contrives to forget God. God recalls him to himself, and says, "there," where and when thou didst those and those things, thou didst deal falsely with, and against, "Me." The sinner's conscience and memory fills up the word "there." It sees the whole landscape of its sins around; each black dark spot stands out before it, and it cries with David, "there," in this and this and this, "against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight" Psalm 51:4.

Verse 8

Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity - If we regard "Gilead," (as it elsewhere is,) as the country beyond Jordan, where the two tribes and a

half dwelt, this will mean that the whole land was banded in one, as one city of evil-doers. It had an unity, but of evil. As the whole world has been pictured as divided between "the city of God" and the city of the devil, consisting respectively of the children of God and the children of the devil; so the whole of Gilead may be represented as one city, whose inhabitants had one occupation in common, to work evil. Some think that there was a city so called, although not mentioned elsewhere in Holy Scripture, near that Mount Gilead, dear to the memory of Israel, because God there protected their forefather Jacob. Some think that it was Ramoth in Gilead, which God appointed as "a city of refuge," and which, consequently, became a city of Levites and priests Joshua 21:38.

Here, where God had preserved the life of their forefather, and, in him, had preserved them; here, where He had commanded the innocent shedder of blood to be saved; here, where he had appointed those to dwell, whom He had hallowed to Himself, all was turned to the exact contrary. It, which God had hallowed, was become "a city of workers of iniquity," i. e., of people, whose habits and custom was to work iniquity. It, where God had appointed life to be preserved, was "polluted" or "tracked with blood." Everywhere it was marked and stained with the bloody footsteps of those, who (as David said) "put" innocent "blood in their shoes which were on their feet" 1 Kings 2:5, staining their shoes with blood which they shed, so that, wherever they went, they left marks and signs of it." "Tracked with blood" it was, through the sins of its inhabitants; "tracked with blood" it was again, when it first was taken captive 2 Kings 15:29, and "it, which had swum with the innocent blood of others, swam with the guilty blood of its own people." It is a special sin, and especially avenged of God, when what God had hallowed, is made the scene of sin.

Verse 9

And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent - Or (more probably) "in the way to Shechem." Shechem too was a "city of refuge" John 20:7, and so also a city of Levites and priests John 21:21. It was an important city. For there Joshua assembled all Israel for his last address to them, and made a covenant with them 1 Kings 12:1, and was rejected by them. There Jeroboam after the schism, for a time, made his residence 1 Kings 12:25. The priests were banded together; their counsel was one; they formed one company; but they

were bound together as a band of robbers, not to save people‘s lives but to destroy them. Whereas the way to the cities of refuge was, by God‘s law, to be “prepared” Deuteronomy 19:3, clear, open, without let or hindrance to the guiltless fugitive, to save his life, the priests, the guardians of God‘s law, obstructed the way, to roll and destroy. They, whom God appointed to teach the truth that people might live, were banded together against His law.

Shechem, besides that it was a city of refuge, was also hallowed by the memory of histories of the patriarchs who walked with God. There, was Jacob‘s well John 4:5-6; there Joseph‘s bones were buried Joshua 24:32; and the memory of the patriarch Jacob was cherished there, even to the time of our Lord John 4:5-6. Lying in a narrow valley between Mount Ebal and Gerizim, it was a witness, as it were, of the blessing and curse pronounced from them, and had, in the times of Joshua, an ancient sanctuary of God Joshua 24:26. It was a halting-place for the pilgrims of the northern tribes, in their way to the feasts at Jerusalem; so that these murders by the priests coincide with the tradition of the Jews, that they who would go up to Jerusalem were murdered in the way.

For they commit lewdness - Literally, “For they have done deliberate sin”. The word literally means “a thing thought of,” especially an evil, and so, deliberate, contrived, bethought-of, wickedness. They did deliberate wickedness, gave themselves to do it, and did nothing else.

Verse 10

I have seen a horrible thing - Literally, “what would make one shudder.” God had seen it; therefore man could not deny it. In the sight of God, and amid the sense of His presence, all excuses fail.

In the house of Israel - o“For what more horrible, more amazing than that this happened, not in any ordinary nation but “in the house of Israel,” in the people of God, in the portion of the Lord, as Moses said, “the Lord‘s portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance?” In another nation, idolatry was error. In Israel, which had the knowledge of the one true God and had received the law, it was horror.” “There is the whoredom of Ephraim,” widespread, over the whole land, wherever the house of Ephraim was, through the whole kingdom of the ten tribes, “there” was its spiritual adultery and defilement.

Verse 11

Also, O Judah, He hath set a harvest for thee, when I returned - (rather, when I return) the captivity of My people.

The “harvest” may be either for good or for bad. If the harvest is spoken of, as bestowed upon the people, then, as being of chief moment for preserving the life of the body, it is a symbol of all manner of good, temporal or spiritual, bestowed by God. If the people is spoken of, as themselves being the harvest which is ripe and ready to be cut down, then it is a symbol of their being ripe in sin, ready for punishment, to be cut off by God‘s judgments. In this sense, it is said of Babylon, “Yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come” Jeremiah 51:33; and of the pagan, “put ye in the sickle, for their harvest is ripe, for their wickedness is great” Joel 3:13; and of the whole earth, “the harvest of the earth is ripe” Revelation 14:15. Here God must be speaking of a “harvest,” which he willed hereafter to give “to” Judah. For the time of the harvest was to be, when He should “return the captivity of His people,” restoring them out of their captivity, a time of His favor and of manifold blessings.

A “harvest” then God “appointed for Judah.” But when? Not at that time, not for a long, long period, not for any time during the life of man, but at the end of the captivity of 70 years. God promises relief, but after suffering. Yet He casts a ray of light, even while threatening the intermediate darkness. He foreshows to them a future harvest, even while their coming lot was captivity and privation. “Now” Judah, His people, was entangled in the sins of Ephraim, and, like them, was to be punished. Suffering and chastisement were the condition of healing and restoration. But whereas the destruction of the kingdom of Israel was final, and they were no more to be restored as a whole, God who loveth mercy, conveys the threat of impending punishment under the promise of future mercy. He had rich mercies in store for Judah, yet not until after the captivity, when He should again own them as “My people.” Meantime, there was withdrawal of the favor of God, distress, and want.

The distinction between Judah and Israel lay in the promise of God to David. “The Lord hath sworn in truth to David, He will not turn from it; of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne” Psalm 132:11. It lay in the counsels of God, but it was executed through those who knew not of those counsels. The ten tribes were carried away by the Assyrians into Media; Judah, by Nebuchadnezzar, into Babylon. The Babylonian empire, which, under Nebuchadnezzar, was the terror of Asia, was but a continuation of the

Assyrian, being founded by a revolted Assyrian general.. The seat of empire was removed, the policy was unchanged. In man‘s sight there was no hope that Babylon would give back her captives, anymore than Assyria, or than the grave would give back her dead. To restore the Jews, was to reverse the human policy, which had removed them; it was to re-create an enemy; strong in his natural position, lying between themselves and Egypt, who could strengthen, if he willed, their great rival.

The mixed multitude of Babylonians and others, whom the king of Assyria had settled in Samaria, in their letter to a successor of Cyrus, appealed to these fears, and induced the impostor Smerdis to interrupt the restoration of Jerusalem. They say; “We have sent and certified the king, that search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers. So shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time, for which cause was this city destroyed” Ezra 4:14-15. The king did find in his records, that Judah had been of old powerful, and had refused the yoke of Babylon. “I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition hath been made therein. There have been mighty kings over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all countries beyond the river, and toll, tribute, and custom, hath been given to them” Ezra 4:19-20.

Conquerors do not think of restoring their slaves, nor of reversing their policy, even when there is no constraining motive to persevere in it. What is done, remains. This policy of transplanting nations, when once begun, was adopted, as a regular part of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian policy. Yet no case is known, in which the people once removed were permitted to return, save the Jews. But God first foretold, that Cyrus should restore His people and build His temple; then, through people‘s wills He ordered the overthrow of empires. Cyrus overcame the league against him, and destroyed first the Lydian, then the Babylonian, empire. God then brought to his knowledge the prophecy concerning him, given by Ezra 1:3. The proclamation must have reached “the cities of the Medes,” where the ten tribes were. But they only, “whose spirit God had raised,” returned to their land. Israel remained, of his own free will, behind; and fulfilled unwittingly

the prophecy that they should be “wanderers among the nations,” while in Judah “the Lord brought again the captivity of His people,” and gave them “the harvest” which He had “appointed” for them. A Psalmist of that day speaks of the strangeness of the deliverance to them. “When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream” Psalm 126:1, Psalm 126:5. And primarily of that “bringing” back “the captivity of His people,” he uses Hosea‘s image of the “harvest.” “They which sow in tears shall reap in joy.” To the eye of the politician, it was an overthrow of empires and convulsion of the world, the herald of further convulsions, by which the new-established empire was in its turn overthrown. In the real, the religious, history of mankind, of far greater moment were those fifty thousand souls, to whom, with Zorobabel of the line of David, Cyrus gave leave to return. In them he fulfilled prophecy, and prepared for that further fulfillment, after his own empire had been long dissolved, and when, from the line of Zorobabel, was that Birth which was promised in Bethlehem of Judah.

HOSEA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

When I would have healed Israel - God begins anew by appealing to Israel, that all which He had done to heal them, had but served to make their sin more evident, and "that," from highest to lowest, as to all manners and ways of sin. When the flash of God‘s light on the sinner‘s conscience enlightens it not, it only discloses its darkness. The name "Israel" includes the whole people; the names, Ephraim and Samaria, probably are meant to designate the chief among them, Ephraim having been their royal tribe, and being the chief tribe among them; Samaria being their royal city. The sins, which Hoses denounces in this chapter, are chiefly the sins of the great, which, from them, had spread among the people. Whatever healing methods God had used, whether through the teaching of the prophets or through His own fatherly chastisements, they "would not hearken nor be amended, but ran on still more obstinately in their evil courses. The disease prevailed against the remedy, and was irritated by it, so that the remedy served only to "lay open" the extent of its malignity, and to shew that there was worse in it, than did at first appear". Paul says of all human nature. "When the commandment came, sin revived" Romans 7:9.

Apart from grace, the knowledge of good only enhances evil.: "So, when God, made Man, present and visible, willed to "heal Israel," then that iniquity of the Jews and wickedness of the Scribes and Pharisees was discovered, whereof this iniquity of Ephraim and wickedness of Samaria was a type. For an evil spirit goaded them to mock, persecute, blaspheme the Teacher of repentance who, together with the word of preaching, did works, such as none other man did. For Christ pleased them not, a Teacher of repentance, persuading to poverty, a Pattern of humility, a Guide to meekness, a Monitor to mourn for sins, a Proclaimer of righteousness, a Requirer of mercy, a Praiser of purity of heart, a Rewarder of peace, a Consoler of those who suffered persecution for righteousness‘ sake. Why did they reject, hate, persecute, Him who taught thus? Because they loved all contrary thereto, and wished for a Messiah, who should exalt them in this world, and disturb the peace of nations, until he should by war subdue to their empire all the rest of the world, build for them on earth a Jerusalem of gold and gems, and fulfill their covetousness in all things of this sort.

This their mind He once briefly expressed; “How can ye believe which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?” John 5:24. They persecuted Him then who willed to heal them, as madmen strike the physician offering them medicine, nor did they cease, until they required Him their King to be crucified. Thus was the “iniquity of Ephraim and wickedness of Samaria discovered,” yet filled up by them; and so they filled up the measure of their fathers, and discovered and testified, that they were of the same mind with their fathers. In all these things they “committed falsehood,” lying against, their King whom they denied, and accused as seditious.”

For they - (i. e. all of them) commit falsehood Falsehood was the whole habit and tissue of their lives.: “They dealt falsely in all their doings both with God and man, being hypocritical and false in all their words and doings, given to fraud and deceit, from the highest to the lowest.” Night and day; in silence and in open violence; “within,” where all seemed guarded and secure, and “without,” in open defiance of law and public justice; these deeds of wrong went on in an unceasing round. In the night, “the thief cometh in,” breaking into people‘s houses and pillaging secretly; “a troop of robbers spoileth without,” spreading their ravages far and wide, and desolating without resistance. It was all one state of anarchy, violence, and disorganization.

Verse 2

And they consider not in their hearts - Literally, (as in the E. M) “they say not to their hearts.” The conscience is God‘s voice to the heart from within; man‘s knowledge of the law of God, and his memory of it, is man‘s voice, reminding his heart and rebellious affections to abide in their obedience to God. God speaks through the heart, when by His secret inspirations he recalls it to its duty. Man speaks to his own heart, when he checks its sinful or passionate impulses by the rule of God‘s law, “Thou shalt not.” “At first, people feel the deformity of certain sorts of wickedness. When accustomed to them, people think that God is indifferent to what no longer shocks themselves.” “They say not to their heart” anymore, that “God remembers them.”

I remember all their wickedness - This was the root of “all their wickedness,” want of thought. They would not stop to say to themselves, that God not only saw, but “remembered their wickedness,” and not only this, but that He remembered it all. Many will acknowledge that God sees

them. He sees all things, and so them also. This is a part of His natural attribute of omniscience. It costs them nothing to own it. But what God "remembers, that" He will repay. This belongs to God's attributes, as the moral Governor of the world; and this, man would gladly forget. But in vain. God does "remember," and remembers in order to punish. "Now," at the very moment when man would not recall this to his own heart, "their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face." Unless or until man repent, God sees man continually, encompassed by all his past evil deeds; they surround him, accompany him, whithersoever he goeth; they attend him, like a band of followers; they lie down with him, they await him at his awakening; they live with him, but they do not die with him; they encircle him, that he should in no wise escape them, until he come attended by them, as witnesses against him, at the judgmentseat of God. "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. God remembers all their wickedness" Proverbs 5:22.

Then He will requite "all;" not the last sins only, but all. So when Moses interceded for his people after the sin of the calf, God says to him, "go lead the people unto the place, of which I have spoken unto thee; behold My Angel shall go before thee; nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them" Exodus 32:34; and of the sins of Israel and their enemies; "Is not this laid up in store with Me, and sealed up among My treasures? to Me belongeth "vengeance and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time" Deuteronomy 32:34-35. The sins, forgotten by man, are remembered by God, and are requited all together in the end. A slight image of the Day of Judgment, "the Day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, against" which the hard and impenitent heart "treasures up unto itself wrath!"

They are before My face - All things, past, present, and to come, are present before God. He sees all things which have been, or which are, or which shall be, or which could be, although He shall never will that they should be, in one eternal, unvarying, present. To what end then for man to cherish an idle hope, that God will not remember, what He is ever seeing? In vain wouldest thou think, that the manifold ways of man are too small, too intricate, too countless, to be remembered by God. God says, "They are before My Face."

Verse 3

They make the king glad with their wickedness - Wicked sovereigns and a wicked people are a curse to each other, each encouraging the other in sin. Their king, being wicked, had pleasure in their wickedness; and they, seeing him to be pleased by it, set themselves the more, to do what was evil, and to amuse him with accounts of their sins. Sin is in itself so shameful, that even the great cannot, by themselves, sustain themselves in it, without others to flatter them. A good and serious man is a reproach to them. And so, the sinful great corrupt others, both as aiding them in their debaucheries, and in order not to be reproached by their virtues, and because the sinner has a corrupt pleasure and excitement in hearing of tales of sin, as the good joy to hear of good. Whence Paul says, "who, knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" Romans 1:32.

But whereas, they all, kings, princes, and people, thus agreed and conspired in sin, and the sin of the great is the rarest destructive, the prophet here upbraids the people most for this common sin, apparently because they were free from the greater temptations of the great, and so their sin was the more willful. "An unhappy complaisance was the ruling character of Israel. It preferred its kings to God. Conscience was versatile, accommodating. Whatever was authorized by those in power, was approved." Ahab added the worship of Baal to that of the calves; Jehu confined himself to the sin of Jeroboam. The people acquiesced in the legalized sin. Much as if now, marriages, which by God's law are incest, or remarriages of the divorced, which our Lord pronounces adultery, were to be held allowable, because man's law ceases to annex any penalty to them.

Verse 4

They are all adulterers - The prophet continues to picture the corruption of all kinds and degrees of people. "All of them," king, princes, people; all were given to adultery, both spiritual, in departing from God, and actual, (for both sorts of sins went together,) in defiling themselves and others. "All of them" were, (so the word means,) habitual "adulterers." One only pause there was in their sin, the preparation to complete it. He likens their hearts, inflamed with lawless lusts, to the heat of "an oven" which "the baker" had already "heated." The unusual construction "burning from the baker" instead of "heated "by" the baker" may have been chosen, in order to express, how the fire continued to burn of itself, as it were, (although at

first kindled by the baker,) and was ever-ready to burn whatever was brought to it, and even now was all red-hot, burning on continually; and Satan, who had stirred it, gave it just this respite, "from the time when he had kneaded the dough", until the leaven, which he had put into it, had fully worked, and the whole was ready for the operation of the fire.

The world is full of such people now, ever on fire, and pausing only from sin, until the flatteries, whereby they seduce the unstable, have worked and penetrated the whole mind, and victim after victim is gradually leavened and prepared for sin.

Verse 5

In the day of our king, the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine - (Or, "with heat from wine.") Their holydays, like those of so many Englishmen now, were days of excess. "The day of their king" was probably some civil festival; his birthday, or his coronation-day. The prophet owns the king, in that he calls him "our king;" he does not blame them for keeping the day, but for the way in which they kept it. Their festival they turned into an irreligious and anti-religious carousal; making themselves like "the brutes which perish," and tempting their king first to forget his royal dignity, and then to blaspheme the majesty of God.

He stretched out his hand with scorners - as it is said, "Wine is a mocker" (or "scoffer"). Drunkenness, by taking off all power of self restraint, brings out the evil which is in the man. The "scorner" or "scoffer" is one who "neither fears God nor regards man" Luke 18:4, but makes a jest of all things, true and good, human or divine. Such were these corrupt princes of the king of Israel; with these "he stretched out the hand," in token of his good fellowship with them, and that he was one with them. He withdrew his hand or his society from good and sober people, and "stretched" it "out," not to punish these, but to join with them, as people in drink reach out their hands to any whom they meet, in token of their sottish would-be friendliness. With these the king drank, jested, played the buffoon, praised his idols, scoffed at God. The flattery of the bad is a man's worst foe.

Verse 6

For they have made ready their heart like an oven - He gives the reason old their bursting out into open mischief; it was ever stored up within. They "made ready," (literally, "brought near") "their heart." Their

heart was ever brought near to sin, even while the occasion was removed at a distance from it. “The “oven” is their heart; the fuel, their corrupt affections, and inclinations, and evil concupiscence, with which it is filled; “their baker,” their own evil will and imagination, which stirs up whatever is evil in them.” The prophet then pictures how, while they seem for a while to rest from sin, it is but “while they lie in wait;” still, all the while, they made and kept their hearts ready, full of fire for sin and passion; any breathing-time from actual sin was no real rest; the heart was still all on fire; “in the morning,” right early, as soon as the occasion came, it burst forth.

The same truth is seen where the tempter is without. Such, whether Satan or his agents, having lodged the evil thought or desire in the soul, often feign themselves asleep, as it were, “letting the fire and the fuel which they had inserted, work together,” that so the fire pent-in might kindle more thoroughly and fatally, and, the heart being filled and penetrated with it, might burst out of itself, as soon as the occasion should come.

Verse 7

They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges - Plans of sin, sooner or later, through God‘s overruling providence, bound back upon their authors. The wisdom of God‘s justice and of His government shows itself the more, in that, without any apparent agency of His own, the sin is guided by Him through all the intricate mazes of human passion, malice, and cunning, back to the sinner‘s bosom. Jeroboam, and the kings who followed him, had corrupted the people, in order to establish their own kingdom. They had heated and inflamed the people, and had done their work completely, for the prophet says, “They are all hot as an oven;” none had escaped the contagion; and they, thus heated, burst forth and, like the furnace of Nebchadnezzar, devoured not only what was cast into it, but those who kindled it. The pagan observed, that the “artificers of death perished by their own art.”

Probably the prophet is describing a scene of revelry, debauchery, and scoffing, which preceded the murder of the unhappy Zechariah; and so fills up the brief history of the Book of Kings. He describes a profligate court and a debauched king; and him doubtless, Zechariah; those around him, delighting him with their wickedness; all of them habitual adulterers; but one secret agent stirring them up, firing them with sin, and resting only,

until the evil leaven had worked through and through. Then follows the revel, and the ground wily they intoxicated the king, namely, their lying-in-wait. "For," he adds, "they prepared their hearts like a furnace, "when they lie in wait."" The mention of dates, of facts, and of the connection of these together; "the day of our king;" his behavior: their lying in wait; the secret working of one individual; the bursting out of the fire in the morning; the falling of their kings; looks, as if he were relating an actual history. We know that Zechariah, of whom he is speaking, was slain through conspiracy publicly in the open face of day, "before all the people," no one heeding, no one resisting. Hosea seems to supply the moral aspect of the history, how Zechariah fell into this general contempt; how, in him, all which was good in the house of Jehu expired.

All their kings are fallen - The kingdom of Israel, having been set up in sin, was, throughout its whole course, unstable and unsettled. Jeroboam's house ended in his son; that of Baasha, who killed Jeroboam's son, Nadab, ended in his own son, Elah; Omri's ended in his son's son, God having delayed the punishment on Ahab's sins for one generation, on account of his partial repentance; then followed Jehu's, to whose house God, for his obedience in some things, continued the kingdom to "the fourth generation." With these two exceptions, in the houses of Omri and Jehu, the kings of Israel either left no sons, or left them to be slain. Nadab, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, Jehoram, Zechariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, Pekah, were put to death by those who succeeded them. Of all the kings of Israel, Jeroboam, Baasha, Omri, Menahem, alone, in addition to Jehu and the three next of his house, died natural deaths. So was it written by God's hand on the house of Israel, "all their kings have fallen." The captivity was the tenth change after they had deserted the house of David. Yet such was the stupidity and obstinacy both of kings and people, that, amid all these chastisements, none, either people or king, turned to God and prayed Him to deliver them. Not even distress, amid which almost all betake themselves to God, awakened any sense of religion in them. "There is none among them, that calleth unto Me."

Verse 8

Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people - i. e., with the pagan; he "mixed" or "mingled" himself among or with them, so as to corrupt himself, as it is said, "they were mingled among the pagan and learned their works" Psalm 106:35. God had forbidden all intermarriage

with the pagan Exodus 34:12-16, lest His people should corrupt themselves: they thought themselves wiser than He, intermarried, and were corrupted. Such are the ways of those who put themselves amid occasions of sin.

Ephraim is - (literally, "is become") a cake (literally, "on the coals") not turned The prophet continues the image. "Ephraim" had been "mingled," steeped, kneaded up into one, as it were, "with the pagan," their ways, their idolatries, their vices. God would amend them, and they, withholding themselves from His discipline, and not yielding themselves wholly to it, were but spoiled. The sort of cake, to which Ephraim is here likened, "uggah" literally, "circular," was a thin pancake, to which a scorching heat was applied on one side; sometimes by means of hot charcoal heaped upon it; sometimes, (it is thought,) the fire was within the earthen jar, around which the thin dough was fitted. If it remained long "unturned," it was burned on the one side; while it continued unbaked, doughy, recking, on the other; the fire spoiling, not penetrating it through. Such were the people; such are too many so-called Christians; they united in themselves hypocrisy and ungodliness, outward performance and inward lukewarmness; the one overdone, but without any wholesome effect on the other. The one was scorched and black; the other, steamed, damp, and lukewarm; the whole worthless, spoiled irremediably, fit only to be cast away. The fire of God's judgment, with which the people should have been amended, made but an outward impression upon them, and reached not within, nor to any thorough change, so that they were the more hopelessly spoiled through the means which God used for their amendment.

Verse 9

Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not - Like Samson, when, for sensual pleasure, he had betrayed the source of his strength and God had departed from him, lsrael knew not how or wherein his alliancs with the pagan had impaired his strength. He thought his losses at the hand of the enemy, passing wounds, which time would heal; he thought not of them, as tokens of God's separation from him, that his time of trial was coming to its close, his strength decaying, his end at hand. Israel was not only incorrigible, but "past feeling" Ephesians 4:19, as the Apostle says of the pagan. The marks of wasting and decay were visible to sight and touch; yet he himself perceived not what all saw except himself. Israel had sought to strangers for help, and it "had turned to his decay." Pul and Tiglath-pileser had "devoured his strength," despoiling him of his wealth

and treasure, the flower of his men, and the produce of his land, draining him of his riches, and hardly oppressing him through the tribute imposed upon him. But "like men quite stupified, they, though thus continually gnawed upon, yet suffered themselves willingly to be devoured, and seemed insensible of it." Yet not only so, but the present evils were the forerunners of worse. Grey hairs, themselves the effects of declining age and tokens of decay, are the forerunners of death. "Thy grey hairs are thy passing-bell," says the proverb.

The prophet repeats, after each clause, "he knoweth not." He knoweth nothing; be knoweth not the tokens of decay in himself, but hides them from himself; he knoweth not God, who is the author of them;. he knoweth not the cause of them, his sins; he knoweth not the end and object of them, his conversion; he knoweth not, what, since he knoweth not any of these things, will be the issue of them, his destruction. People hide from themselves the tokens of decay, whether of body or soul. And so death, whether of body or soul or both, comes upon them unawares.: "Looking on the surface, he imagines that all things are right with him, not feeling the secret worm which gnaws within. The outward garb remains; the rules of fasting are observed; the stated times of prayer are kept; but the heart is far from Me, saith the Lord. Consider diligently what thou lovest, what thou fearest, whereat thou rejoicest or art saddened, and thou will find, under the habit of religion, a worldly mind; under the rags of conversion, a heart of perversion."

Verse 10

And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face - His pride convicted him. All the afflictions of God humbled him not; yea, they but brought out his pride, which "kept him from acknowledging and repenting of the sins which had brought those evils upon him, and from "turning to God and seeking to Him" for remedy". People complain of their "fortune" or "fate" or "stars," and go on the more obstinately, to build up what God destroys, to prop up by human means or human aid what, by God's providence, is failing; they venture more desperately, in order to recover past losses, until the crash at last becomes hopeless and final.

Nor seek Him for all this - God had exhausted all the treasures of His severity, as, before, of His love. He Himself marvels at His incorrigible and contumacious servant, as He says in Isaiah, "Why should ye be stricken

anymore? Ye will revolt more and more" Isaiah 1:5. How is this? It follows, because they have "no heart."

Verse 11

Ephraim is - (become) like a silly dove "There is nothing more simple than a dove," says the Eastern proverb. Simplicity is good or bad, not in itself, but according to some other qualities of the soul, good or evil, with which it is united, to which it opens the mind, and which lead it to good or mislead it to evil. The word describes one, easily persuaded, open, and so, one who takes God's word simply, obeys His will, without refinement or subtlety or explaining it away; in which way it is said, "The Lord preserveth the simple;" or, on the other hand, one who lets himself easily be led to evil, as the pagan said of youth, that they were "like wax to be bent to evil" Psalm 116:6. In this way, it is said, "How long, ye simple one, will ye love simplicity?" Proverbs 1:22. Our Lord uses this likeness of the dove, for good, "be wise as serpents, simple, or harmless as doves" Matthew 10:16. Hosea speaks of simplicity without wisdom, for he adds, "a silly dove without understanding," (literally, "without a heart,") whereby they should love God's will, and so should understand it. Ephraim "became," he says, like a silly dove. Neglecting God's calls, unmoved by calamity or sufferings, and not "seeking" to God "for all this" which He has done to recall them, they grew in folly. Man is ever "growing in wisdom" or in folly, in grace or in gracelessness. This new stage of folly lay in their flying to Assyria, to help them, in fact, against God; as it follows,

They call to Egypt - Instead of "calling to" God who could and would help, they "called to Egypt" who could not, and "went to Assyria" who would not. So God complains by Isaiah, "To Me, thou hast not called, O Jacob" Isaiah 43:22. This was their folly; they called not to God, who had delivered them out of Egypt, but, alternately, to their two powerful neighbors, of whom Egypt was a delusive promiser, not failing only, but piercing, those who leant on it; Assyria was a powerful oppressor. Yet what else is almost the whole history of Christian states? The "balance of power," which has been the pride of the later policy of Europe, which has been idolized as a god, to which statesmen have looked, as a deliverance out of all their troubles; as if it were a sort of divine providence, regulating the affairs of human beings, and dispensing with the interference of God; what is it but the self-same wisdom, which balanced Egypt against Assyria?

Verse 12

When they go - (Literally, "according as" they go, in all circumstances of time or place or manner, when whithersoever or howsoever they shall go,) I "will spread My net upon them," so as to surround and envelop them on all sides and hold them down. The "dove" soaring aloft, with speed like the storm-wind Psalm 55:6-8, is a picture of freedom, independence, impetuous, unhindered, following on its own course; weak and timid, it trusts in the skillfulness with which it guides its flight, to escape pursuit; the "net," with its thin slight meshes, betokens how weak instruments become all-sufficient in the hands of the Almighty; the same dove, brought down from its almost viewless height, fluttering weakly, helplessly and hopelessly, under those same meshes, is a picture of that same self-dependent spirit humiliated, overwhelmed by inevitable evils, against which it impotently struggles, from which it seems to see its escape, but by which it is held as fast, as if it lay motionless in iron.

As their congregation hath heard - Manifoldly had the message of reward on obedience, and of punishment on disobedience, come to Israel. It was spread throughout the law; it fills the book of Deuteronomy; it was concentrated in the blessing and the curse on mount Ebal and Gerizim; it was put into their mouths in the song of Moses; it was inculcated by all the prophets who had already prophesied to them, and now it was being enforced on that generation by Hosea himself. Other kingdoms have fallen; but their fall, apart from Scripture, has not been the subject of prophecy. Their ruin has come mostly unexpected, either by themselves or others.

Verse 13

Woe unto them, for they have fled from Me - The threatening rises in severity, as did the measure of their sin. Whereas "Salvation belonged to God" Psalm 3:8 alone, and they only "abide under His shadow" Psalm 91:1-2, who make Him their "refuge, woe" must needs come on them, who leave Him. "They forsake their own mercy" Jonah 2:8. "Woe" they draw upon themselves, who forget God; how much more then they, who willfully and with a high hand transgress against Him! "Destruction unto them, for they have transgressed against Me." To be separated from God is the source of all evils; it is the "pain of loss" of God‘s presence, in hell; but "destruction" is more than this; it is everlasting death.

And I have redeemed them and they have spoken lies against Me - The "I" and "they" are both emphatic in Hebrew; "I redeemed;" "they spoke lies." Such is man‘s requital of His God. Oft as He redeemed, so

often did they traduce Him. Such was the history of the passage through the wilderness; such, of the period under the Judges; such had it been recently, when God delivered Israel by the hand of Jereboam II 2 Kings 14:25-27. The word, "I have redeemed," denotes "habitual oft-renewed deliverance," "that He was their constant Redeemer, from whom they had found help, did still find it, and might yet look to find it, if they did not, by their ill behavior, stop the course of His favor toward them". God's mercy overflowed their ingratitude. "They" had Spoken lies against Him, often as He had delivered them; He was still their abiding Redeemer. "I do redeem them."

They have spoken lies against Me - People "speak lies" against God, in their hearts, their words, their deeds; whenever they harbor thoughts, speak words, or act, so as to deny that God is what He is, or as to imply that He is not what He has declared Himself to be. Whoever seeks anything out of God or against His will; whoever seeks from man, or from idols, or from fortune, or from his own powers, what God alone bestows; whoever acts as if God was not a good God, ready to receive the penitent, or a just God who will avenge the holiness of His laws and "not clear the guilty," does in fact, "speak lies against God." People, day by day, "speak lies against God," against His Wisdom, His providence, His justice, His Goodness, His Omniscience, when they are thinking of nothing less. Jeroboam spake lies against God, when he said, "these be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt," whereas God had so often enforced upon them Exodus 20:2; Leviticus 19:36; Leviticus 23:43; Numbers 15:41; Deuteronomy 5:6, Deuteronomy 5:15, "the Lord redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt (Deuteronomy 7:8; add. Deuteronomy 13:5; Deuteronomy 15:15; Deuteronomy 24:18); the Lord thy God brought thee out thence with a mighty hand and stretched out arm."

Israel "spake lies against God," when he said, "these are my rewards which my lovers have given me" Hosea 2:12, or when, "they returned not to Him" but "called on Egypt," as though God would not help them, who said that He would, or as though Egypt could help them, of whom God said that it should not. Sometimes, they "spoke" out "lies" boldly, telling God's true prophets that He had not sent them, or forbidding them to speak in His Name; sometimes covertly, as when they turned to God, not sincerely but feignedly; but always perversely. And when God the Son came on earth to

“redeem them,” then still more, they spoke lies against Him, all His life long, saying, “He deceiveth the people,” and all their other blasphemies, and, “when He, forgave them the sin of His death, saying, “Father, forgave them for they know not what they do,” they persevered in “speaking lies” against Him, and bribed the soldiers to speak lies against Him,” and themselves do so to this day.

Verse 14

And they have not cried unto him with their heart, when they howled upon their beds - Or, in the present time, “they cry not unto Me when they howl.” They did “cry,” and, it may be, they “cried” even “unto God.” At least, the prophet does not deny that they cried to God at all; only, he says, that they did “not cry to” Him “with their heart.” Their cries were wrung from them by their temporal distresses, and ended in them, not in God. There was no sincerity in their hearts, no change in their doings. Their cry was a mere howling. The secret complaint of the heart is a loud cry in the ears of God. The impetuous “cry” of impatient and unconverted suffering is a mere brutish “howling.” Their heart was set wholly on their earthly needs; it did not thank God for giving them good things, nor cry to Him truly when He withheld them.

But, it may be, that the prophet means also to contrast the acts of the ungodly, private and public, amid distress, with those of the godly. The godly man implores God in public and in private. The prayer on the “bed,” expresses the private prayer of the soul to God, when, the world being shut out, it is alone with Him. In place of this, there was the “howling,” as people toss fretfully and angrily on their beds, roar for pain; but, instead of complaining “to” God, complain “of” Him, and are angry, not with themselves, but with God. In place of the public prayer and humiliation, there was a mere tumultuous assembly, in which they clamored “for grain and wine,” and “rebelled against God. They assemble themselves;” (literally, “they gather themselves tumultuously together). They rebel against Me;” (literally, “they turn aside against Me”). They did not only (as it is expressed elsewhere) “turn aside “from” God.” “They turn aside against Me,” He says, flying, as it were, in the very face of God. This “tumultuous assembly” was either some stormy civil debate, how to obtain the grain and wine which God withheld, or a tumultuous clamoring to their idols and false gods, like that of the priests of Baal, when arrayed against

Elijah on Mount Carmel; whereby they removed the further from God‘s law, and rebelled with a high hand against Him.

: What is to “cry to the Lord,” but to long for the Lord? But if anyone multiply prayers, crying and weeping as he may, yet not with any intent to gain God Himself, but to obtain some earthly or passing thing, he cannot truly be said to “cry unto the Lord,” i. e., so to cry that his cry should come to the hearing of the Lord. This is a cry like Esau‘s, who sought no other fruit from his father‘s blessing, save to be rich and powerful in this world. When then He saith, “They cried not to Me in their heart, etc.,” He means, they were not devoted to Me, their heart was not right with Me; they sought not Myself, but things of Mine. They howled, desiring only things for the belly, and seeking not to have Me. Thus they belong not to “the generation of those who seek the Lord, who seek the face of the God of Jacob” Psalm 24:6, but to the generation of Esau.”

Verse 15

Though I have bound - Rather, (as in the E. M) “And I have chastened, I have strenghened their arms, and they imagine mischief against Me.” God had tried all ways with them, but it was all one. He chastened them in love, and in love He strengthened them; He brought the enemy upon them, (as aforetime in the days of the Judges,) and He gave them strength to repel the enemy; as He raised up judges of old, and lately had fulfilled His promise which He had made to Joash through Elisha. But it was all in vain. Whatever God did, Israel was still the same. All only issued in further evil. The prophet sums up in four words all God‘s varied methods for their recovery, and then sets over against them the one result, fresh rebellion on the part of His creatures and His people.

They imagine - Or “devise mischief against Me.” The order in the Hebrew is emphatic, “and against Me they devise evil;” i. e., “against Me,” who had thus tried all the resources and methods of divine wisdom to reclaim them, “they devise evil.” These are words of great condescension. For the creature can neither hurt nor profit the Creator. But since God vouchsafed to be their King, He deigned to look upon their rebellions, as so many efforts to injure Him. All God‘s creatures are made for His glory, and on earth, chiefly man; and among men, chiefly those whom He had chosen as His people. In that, then, they set themselves to diminish that glory,

giving to idols (see Isaiah 42:8), they, as far as in them lay, "devised evil against" Him. Man would dethrone God, if he could.

Verse 16

They return, but not to the most High - God exhorts by Jeremiah, "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto Me" Jeremiah 4:1. They changed, whenever they did change, with a feigned, hypocritical conversion, but not to God, nor acknowledging His Majesty. Man, until truly converted, turns to and fro, unstably, hither and thither, changing from one evil to another, from the sins of youth to the sins of age, from the sins of prosperity to the sin of adversity; but he remains himself unchanged. He "turns, not to the most High." The prophet says this in three, as it were, broken words, "They turn, not most High." The hearer readily filled up the broken sentence, which fell, drop by drop, from the prophet's choked heart.

They are like a deceitful bow - Which, "howsoever the archer directs it, will not carry the arrow right home to the mark," but to other objects clean contrary to his will.: "God had, as it were, bent Israel, as His own bow, against the tyranny of the devil and the deceit of idolatry. For Israel alone in the whole world cast aside the worship of idols, and was attached to the true and natural Lord of all things. But they turned themselves to the contrary. For, being bound to this, they fought against God for the glory of idols. They became then as a warped bow, shooting their arrows contrariwise." In like way doth every sinner act, using against God, in the service of Satan, God's gifts of nature or of outward means, talents, or wealth, or strength, or beauty, or power of speech. God gave all for His own glory; and man turns all aside to do honor and service to Satan.

Their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue - The word, rendered "rage," is everywhere else used of the wrath of God; here, of the "wrath" and "foaming" of man against God. Jeremiah relates how, the nearer their destruction came upon Judah, the more madly the politicians and false prophets cantradicted what God revealed. Their tongue was a "sharp sword." They sharpened their tongue like a sword; and the sword pierced their own bosom. The phrensy of their speech not only drew down God's anger, but was the instrument of their destruction. They misled the people; taught them to trust in Egypt, not in God; persuaded them to believe themselves, and to disbelieve God; to believe, that the enemy should depart from them and not carry them away captive. They worked up the people to their will, and so they secured their own destruction. The

princes of Judah were especially judged and put to death by Nebuchadnezzar Jeremiah 52:10. The like probably took place in Israel. In any case, those chief in power are chief objects of destruction. Still more did these words come true before the final destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. They were maddened by their own curse, "the rage of their tongue" against their Redeemer, "His blood be on us and on our children." Frenzy became their characteristic. It was the amazement of the Romans, and their own destruction.

This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt - This, i. e., all this, their boasting of Egypt, their failure, their destruction, shall become their "derision." In Egypt had they trusted; to Egypt had they gone for succor; in Egypt should they be derided. Such is the way of man. The world derides those who trusted in it, sued it, courted it, served it, preferred it to their God. Such are the wages, which it gives. So Isaiah prophesied of Judah, "the strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be an help nor profit, but a shame and also a reproach" Isaiah 30:3, Isaiah 30:5.

HOSEA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

The trumpet to thy mouth! - So God bids the prophet Isaiah, "Cry aloud, spare not, llft up thy voice like a trumpet" Isaiah 58:1. The prophets, as watchmen, were set by God to give notice of His coming judgments Ezekiel 33:3; Amos 3:6. As the sound of a war-trumpet would startle a sleeping people, so would God have the prophet's warning burst upon their sleep of sin. The ministers of the Church are called to be "watchmen". "They too are forbidden to keep a cowardly silence, when "the house of the Lord" is imperilled by the breach of the covenant or violation of the law. If fear of the wicked or false respect for the great silences the voice of those whose office it is to "cry aloud," how shall such cowardice be excused?"

He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord - The words "he shall come" are inserted for clearness. The prophet beholds the enemy speeding with the swiftness of an eagle, as it darts down upon its prey. "The house of the Lord" is, most strictly, the temple, as being "the place which God had chosen to place His name there." Next, it is used, of the kingdom of Judah and Jerusalem, among whom the temple was; from where God says, "I have forsaken My house, I have left Mine heritage; I have given the dearly-beloved of My soul into the hands of her enemies" Jeremiah 12:7, and, "What hath My beloved to do in Mine house, seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many?" Jeremiah 11:15. Yet the title of "God's house" is older than the temple, for God Himself uses it of His whole people, saying of Moses, "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house" Numbers 12:7. And even the ten tribes, separated as they were from the Temple-worship, and apostates from the true faith of God, were not, as yet, counted by Him as wholly excluded from the "house of God." For God, below, threatens that removal, as something still to come; "for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of My house" Hosea 9:15. The eagle, then coming down "against or upon" the house of the Lord, is primarily Shalmaneser, who came down and carried off the ten tribes. Yet since Hosea, in these prophecies, includes Judah, also, "the house of the Lord" is most probably to be taken in its fullest sense, as including the whole people of God, among whom He dwelt, and the temple where His Name was placed. The "eagle" includes then Nebuchadnezzar also, whom other prophets so call Ezekiel 17:3, Ezekiel 17:12; Jeremiah 48:40;

Habakkuk 1:8; and (since, all through, the principle of sin is the same and the punishment the same) it includes the Roman eagle, the ensign of their armies.

Because they have transgressed My covenant - "God, whose justice is always unquestionable, useth to make clear to people its reasonableness." Israel had broken the covenant which God had made with their fathers, that He would be to them a God, and they to Him a people. The "covenant" they had broken chiefly by idolatry and apostasy; the "law," by sins against their neighbor. In both ways they had rejected God; therefore God rejected them.

Verse 2

Israel shall cry unto Me, My God, we know Thee - Or, according to the order in the Hebrew, "To Me shall they cry, we know Thee, Israel," i. e., "we, Israel," Thy people, "know Thee." It is the same plea which our Lord says that He shall reject in the Day of Judgment. "Many shall say unto Me, in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name, and in Thy Name cast out devils, and in Thy Name done many wonderful works" Matthew 7:22. In like way, when our Lord came in the flesh, they said of God the Father, He is our God. But our Lord appealed to their own consciences; "It is My Father who honoreth Me, of whom ye say, He is our God, but ye have not known Him" John 8:54. So Isaiah, when speaking of his own times, prophesied of those of our Lord also; "This people draweth nigh unto Me, with their mouth and honoreth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me" Matthew 15:8; Isaiah 29:13. "God says, that they shall urge this as a proof, that they know God, and as an argument to move God to have respect unto them, namely, that they are the seed of Jacob, who was called Israel, because he prevailed with God, and they were called by his name." As though they said, "we, Thy Israel, know thee." It was all hypocrisy, the cry of mere fear, not of love; from where God, using their own name of Israel which they had pleaded, answers the plea, declaring what "Israel" had become.

Verse 3

Israel has cast off the thing that is good - Or (since the word means "to cast off with abhorrence" "Israel hath east off and abhorred Good," both "Him who is Good" and "that which is good." The word "tob" includes both. They rejected good in rejecting God, "Who is simply, supremely, wholly, universally good, and good to all, the Author and Fountain of all good, so that there is nothing simply good but God; nothing worthy of that

title, except in respect of its relation to Him who is "good and doining good" Psalm 119:68. So then whatsoever any man hath or enjoys of good, is from his relation to Him, his nearness to Him, his congruity with Him. "The drawing near to God is good to me" Psalm 73:28. All that any man hath of good, is from his being near to God, and his being, as far as human condition is capable of, like unto Him. So that they who are far from Him, and put Him far from them, necessarily "cast off" all that is "good."

The enemy shall pursue him - "Forsaking God, and forsaken by Him, they must needs be laid open to all evils." The "enemy," i. e., the Assyrian, "shall pursue him." This is according to the curse, denounced against them in the law, if they should forsake the Lord, and break His covenant, and "not hearken to His voice to observe to do His commandments" Deuteronomy 28:15-25.

Verse 4

They have set up kings, but not by ME - God Himself foretold to Jeroboam by Ahijah the prophet, that He would "rend the kingdom out of the hands of Solomon, and give ten tribes" to him, "and" would "take" him, "and" he "should reign according to all that" his soul desired and" should "be king over Israel" 1 Kings 11:31, 1 Kings 11:37; and, after the ten tribes had made Jeroboam king, God said by Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam and the two tribes, "Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel; return every man to his house, for this thing is from Me" 1 Kings 12:22-24.

Yet although here, as everywhere, man's self-will was overruled by God's will, and fulfilled it, it was not the less self-will, both in the ten tribes and in Jeroboam. It was so in the ten tribes. For they cast off Rehoboam, simply of their own mind, because he would not lessen the taxes, as they prescribed. If he would have consented to their demands, they would have remained his subjects 1 Kings 12:4. "They set up kings, but not by or through" God, whom they never consulted, nor asked His will about the rules of the kingdom, or about its relation to the kingdom of Judah, or the house of David. They referred these matters no more to God, than if there had been no God, or than if He interfered not in the affairs of man. It was self-will in Jeroboam himself, for he received the kingdom (which Ahijah told him, he "desired") not from God, not requiring of him, how he should undertake it, nor anointed by Him, nor in any way acknowledging Him, but from the people. And as soon as he had received it, he set up rebellion

against God, in order to establish his kingdom, which he founded in sin, whereby he made Israel to sin.

In like way, the Apostle says, "against Thy holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done" Acts 4:27, Acts 4:8. Yet not the less did they sin in this Deicide; and the Blood of Jesus has ever since, as they imprecated on themselves, been on the Jews and on their children, as many as did not repent.

As was the beginning of the kingdom of Israel, such was its course. "They made kings, but not from God." Such were all their kings, except Jehu and his house. During 253 years, for which the kingdom of Israel lasted eighteen kings reigned over it, out of ten different families, and no family came to a close, save by a violent death. The like self-will and independence closed the existence of the Jewish people. The Roman Emperor being afar off, the Scribes and Pharisees hoped, under him, without any great control, to maintain their own authority over the people. They themselves, by their "God forbid!" Luke 20:16, owned that our Lord truly saw their thoughts and purpose, "This is the heir; come let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours." They willed to reign without Christ, feared the Pagan Emperor less than the holiness of Jesus, and in the words, "We have no king but Caesar," they deposed God, and shut themselves out from His kingdom.

And I knew it not - "As far as in them lay, they did it without His knowledge" John 8:54. They did not take Him into their counsels, nor desire His cognizance of it, or His approbation of it. If they could, they would have had Him ignorant of it, knowing it to be against His will. And so in His turn, God knew it not, owned it not, as He shall say to the ungodly, "I know you not" Matthew 25:12.

Of their silver and their gold have they made them idols - God had multiplied them, (as He said before Hosea 2:8), and they ungratefully abused to the dishonor of the Giver, what He gave them to be used to His glory.

That they may be cut off - Literally, "that he may be cut off." The whole people is spoken of as one man, "one and all," as we say. It is a

fearful description of obstinate sin, that their very object in it seemed to be their own destruction. They acted with one will as one man, who had, in all he did, this one end - to perish.: "As if on set purpose they would provoke destruction, and obstinately run themselves into it, although forewarned thereof." Holy Scripture speaks of that as people's end, at which all their acts aim. "They see, not, nor know, that they may be ashamed" Isaiah 44:9; i. e., they blind themselves, as though their whole object were, what they will bring upon themselves, their own shame. "They prophesy a lie in My Name, that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you" Jeremiah 27:15. This was the ultimate end of those false prophecies. The false prophets of Judah filled them with false hopes; the real and true end of those prophecies, that in which they ended, was the ruin of those who uttered, and of those who listened to them. We ourselves say almost proverbially, "he goes the way to ruin himself;" not that such is the man's own object, but that he obstinately chooses a course of conduct, which, others see, must end in utter ruin. So a man chooses destruction or hell, if he chooses those tilings which, according to God's known law and word, end in it. Man bides from his own eyes the distant future, and fixes them on the nearer objects which he has at heart. God lifts the veil, and discovers to him the further end, at which he is driving, which he is, in fact, compassing, and which is in truth the end, for his own fleeting obiects perish in the using; this and this alone abides.

Verse 5

Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off - Israel had cast off God, his good. In turn, the prophet says, the "calf," which he had chosen to be his god instead of the Lord his God, "has cast" him "off." He repeats the word, by which he had described Israel's sin, "Israel hath cast off and abhorred good" in order to show the connection of his sin and its punishment. "Thy calf," whom thou madest for thyself, whom thou worshipest, whom thou lovest, of whom thou saidst, "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" 1 Kings 12:28-31; "thy" calf, in whom thou didst trust instead of thy God, it has requited thee the dishonor thou didst put on thy God; it hath "cast thee off" as a thing "abhorred." So it is with all people's idols, which they make to themselves, instead of God. First or last, they all fail a man, and leave him poor indeed. Beauty fades; wealth fails; honor is transferred to another; nothing abides, save God. Whence our own great poet of nature makes a fallen favorite say, "had I but serv'd my God

with half the zeal I served my king, He would not in mine age have left me naked to mine-enemies."

Mine anger is kindled against them - Our passions are but some distorted likeness of what exists in God without passion; our anger, of His displeasure against sin. And so God speaks to us after the manner of people, and pictures His divine displeasure under the likeness of our human passions of anger and fury, in order to bring home to us, what we wish to hide from ourselves, the severe and awful side of His Being, His Infinite Holiness, and the truth, that He will indeed avenge. He tells us, that He will surely punish; as people, who are extremely incensed, execute their displeasure if they can.

How long will it be ere they attain to innocency? - Literally, "how long will they not be able innocency?" So again it is said, "him that hath an high look and a proud heart, I cannot" Psalm 101:5; we supply, "suffer." "New moons and sabbaths I cannot" Isaiah 1:13; our version adds, "away with," i. e., endure. So here probably. As they had with abhorrence cast off God their good, so God says, "they cannot endure innocency;" but He speaks as wondering and aggrieved at their hardness of heart and their obdurate holding out against the goodness, which He desired for them. "How long will they not be able to endure innocency?" "What madness this, that when I give them place for repentence, they will not endure to return to health of soul!"

Verse 6

For - This verse may assign the reasons of God's displeasure, "mine anger is kindled;" or of Israel's impenitency, "How long will it be?" This indeed is only going a little further back, for Israel's incorrigibleness was the ground of God's displeasure. And they were incorrigible; because they had themselves devised it; "for from Israel was it also." Those are especially incorrigible, who do not fall into error through ignorance, but who through malice devise it out of their own heart. Such persons act and speak, not as seduced by others, but seducing themselves, and condemned by their own judgment. Such were Israel and Jeroboam his king, who were not induced or seduced by others to deem the golden calf to be God, but devised it, of malicious intent, knowing that it was not God. Hence, Israel could be cured of the worship of Baal, for this was brought from without by Jezebel; and "Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel." But of the sin of the calf they could not be healed. In this sin all the kings of Israel were impenitent.

From Israel was it also - Their boast, that they were of Israel, aggravated their sin. They said to God, we, Israel, know thee. So then their offence, too, their brutishness also, was from those who boasted themselves of bearing the name of their forefather, Israel, who were the chosen people of God, so distinguished by His favor. The name of Israel, suggesting their near relation to God, and the great things which He had done for them, and their solemn covenant with Him to be His people as He was their God, should, in itself, have made them ashamed of such brutishness. So Paul appealeth to us by our name of Christians, "Let every one who nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity" 2 Timothy 2:19.

The workman made it, therefore it is not God - The workman was rather a god to his idol, than it to him, for "he" made it; "it" was a thing made. To say that it was made, was to deny that it was God. Hence, the prophets so often urge this special proof of the vanity of idols. No creature can be God. Nor can there be anything, between God and a creature.: "Every substance which is not God is a creature; and that which is not a creature, is God." God Himself could not make a creature who should be God. The Arian heresy, which imagined that God the Son could be a creature and yet an object of our worship, or that there could be a secondary god, was folly as well as blasphemy. They did not conceive what God is. They had low, debased notions of the Godhead. They knew not that the Creator must be removed as infinitely above His most exalted creature, as above the lowest.

Nor do the prophets need any subtleties (such as the pagan alleged) that their idol might be indwelt by some influence. Since God dwelt not in it, any such influence could only come from a creature, and that, an evil one.

The calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces - The calves were set up at Bethel and at Dan, but they were the sort of tutelar deity of the ten tribes; therefore they are called "the calf of Samaria." They represented one and the same thing; from where they are called as one, the calf, not "calves." A thing of nought it was in its origin, for it had its form and shape from man; a thing of nought it should be in its end, for it should be "broken in pieces," or become "chips, fragments," for fire.

Verse 7

For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind - "They shall reap," not merely as "they have sown," but with an awful increase. They sowed folly and vanity, and shall reap, not merely emptiness

and disappointment, but sudden, irresistible destruction. “They sowed the wind,” and, as one seed bringeth forth many, so the wind, “penn‘d up,” as it were, in this destructive tillage, should “burst forth again, reinforced in strength, in mightier store and with great violence.” Thus they “reaped the whirlwind,” yea, (as the word means) “a mighty whirlwind”. But the whirlwind which they reap doth not belong to “them;” rather they belong to it, blown away by it, like chaff, the sport and mockery of its restless violence.

It hath no stalk - If their design should for the time seem to prosper, all should be but empty show, disappointing the more, the more it should seem to promise. He speaks of three stages of progress. First, the seed should not send forth the grain with the ear; “it hath no stalk or standing corn;” even if it advanced thus far, still the ear should yield no meat; or should it perchance yield this, the enemy should devour it. Since the yielding fruit denotes doing works, the fruit of God‘s grace, the absence of the “standing corn” represents the absence of good works altogether; the absence of the “meal,” that nothing is brought to ripeness; the “devouring” by “the enemy,” that what would otherwise be good, is, through faulty intentions or want of purity of purpose, given to Satan and the world, not to God.: “When hypocrites make a shew of good works, they gratify therewith the longings of the evil spirits. For they who do not seek to please God therewith, minister not to the Lord of the field, but to “strangers.” The hypocrite, then, like a fruitful but neglected “ear,” cannot retain his fruit, because the “ear” of good works lieth on the ground. And yet he is fed by this very folly, because for his good works he is honored by all, eminent above the rest; people‘s minds are subject to him; he is raised to high places; nurtured by favors. But “then” will he understand that he has done foolishly, when, for the delight of praise, he shall receive the sentence of the rebuke of God.”

Verse 8

Israel is swallowed up - Not only shall all which they have, be swallowed up by the enemy, but themselves also; and this, not at any distant time, but “now.” “Now,” at a time all but present, “they shall be among the Gentiles, as a vessel wherein is no pleasure,” or, quite strictly, “Now they have become, among the Gentiles.” He speaks of what should certainly be, as though it already were. “A vessel wherein is no pleasure,” is what Paul calls “a vessel to dishonor” 2 Timothy 2:20, as opposed to “vessels to honor” or honorable uses. It is then some vessel put to vile uses, such as

people turn away from with disgust. Such has been the history of the ten tribes ever since: “swallowed up,” not destroyed; “among” the nations, yet not of them; despised and mingled among them, yet not united with them; having an existence, yet among that large whole, “the nations,” in whom their national existence has been at once preserved and lost; everywhere had in dishonor; the Pagan and the Muslim have alike despised, outraged, insulted them; avenging upon them, unconsciously, the dishonor which they did to God. The Jews were treated by the Romans of old as offensive to the smell, and are so by the Muslims of North Africa still. “Never,” says a writer of the fifth century, “has Israel been put to any honorable office, so as, after losing the marks of freedom and power, at least to have the rank of honorable servitude; but, like a vessel made for dishonorable offices, so they have been filled with revolting contumelies.” “The most despised of those in servitude” was the title given by the Roman historian to the Jews, while yet in their own land.

Wealth, otherwise so coveted, for the most part has not exempted them from dishonor, but exposed them to outrage. individuals have risen to eminence in philosophy, medicine, finance; but the race has not gained through the credit of its members; rather, these have, for the most part, risen to reputation for intellect, amid the wreck of their own faith. When Hosea wrote this, two centuries had passed, since the fame of Solomon‘s wisdom (which still is venerated in the East) spread far and wide; Israel was hated and envied by its neighbors, not despised; no token of contempt yet attached to them; yet Hosea foretold that it should shortly be; and, for two thousand years, it has, in the main, been the characteristic of their nation.

Verse 9

For they are gone up to Assyria - The ground of this their captivity is that wherein they placed their hope of safety. They shall be presently swallowed up; “for” they went to Asshur. The holy land being then honored by the spectral presence of God, all nations are said to “go up” to it. Now, since Israel forgetting God, their strength and their glory, went to the Assyrian for help, he is said to “go up” there, where he went as a suppliant.

A wild donkey alone by himself - As “the ox” which “knoweth its owner, and the donkey its Master‘s crib,” represents each believer, of Jew or Gentile; Israel, who would not know Him, is called the “wild ass.” The “pere,” or “wild ass” of the East, is “heady, unruly, undisciplinable”,

“obstinate, running with swiftness far outstripping the swiftest horse”, whither his lust, hunger, thirst, draw him without rule or direction, hardly to be turned aside from his intended course.” Although often found in bands, one often breaks away by himself, exposing itself for a prey to lions, from where it is said, “the wild donkey is the lion‘s prey in the wilderness” (Job 11:12; such, it was foretold to Abraham, Ishmael would be Genesis 16:12; such Israel again became; “stuborn, heady, selfwilled, refusing to be ruled by God‘s law and His counsel, in which he might find safety, and, of his own mind, running to the Assyrian,” there to perish.

Ephraim hath hired lovers or loves - The plural, in itself, shows that they were sinful loves, since God had said, “a man shall cleave unto his wife and they twain shall be one flesh.” These sinful “loves” or “lovers” she was not tempted by, but she herself invited them (see Ezekiel 16:33-34). It is a special and unwonted sin, when woman, forsaking the modesty which God gives her as a defense, becomes the temptress. “Like such a bad woman, luring others to love her, they, forsaking God, to whom, as by covenant of marriage, they ought to have cleaved, and on Him alone to have depended, sought to make friends of the Assyrian, to help them in their rebellions against Him, and so put themselves to that charge (as sinners usually do) in the service of sin, which in God‘s service they need not to have been at.”

And yet that which God pictures under colors so offensive, what was it in human eyes? The “hire” was presents of gold to powerful nations, whose aid, humanly speaking, Israel needed. But wherever it abandoned its trust in God, it adopted their idols. “Whoever has recourse to human means, without consulting God, or consulting whether He will, or will not bless them, is guilty of unfaithfulness which often leads to many others. He becomes accustomed to the tone of mind of those whose protection he seeks, comes insensibly to approve even their errors, loses purity of heart and conscience, sacrifices his light and talents to the service of the powers, under whose shadow he wishes to live under repose.”

Verse 10

Yea, though they have hired - Or better, “because or when they hinge among the pagan, now will I gather them;” i. e., I will gather the nations together. The sin of Israel should bring its own punishment. He sent presents to the king of Assyria, in order to strengthen himself against the

will of God; "he thought himself secured by his league made with them; but he should find himself much deceived in his policy;" he had "hired among them" only; "now," ere long, very speedily, God Himself would "gather them," i. e., those very nations, not in part, but altogether; not for the help of Israel, but for its destruction. As though a man would let out some water from a deep lake ponded up, the water, as it oozed out, loosened more and more the barriers which withheld it, until, at length, all gave way, and the water of the lake was poured out in one wide wild waste, desolating all, over which it swept. It may be, that Assyria would not have known of, or noticed Israel, had not Israel first invited him.

And they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes - So great shall be the burden of the captivity hereafter, that they shall then sorrow but little for any burdens put upon them now, and which they now feel so heavy. "The king of princes" is the king of Assyria, who said, "Are not my princes altogether kings?" Isaiah 10:8. The burden of plained will then be the thousand talents of silver which Menahem gave to Pul, king of Assyria, to support him in his usurpation, and in order to pay which, he "exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver" 2 Kings 15:19-20.

If we adopt the English margin, "begin," we must render, "and they shall begin to be minished through the burden of the king of the princes," i. e., they shall be gradually reduced and brought low through the exactions of the Assyrians, until in the end they shall be carried away. This describes the gradual decay of Israel, first through the exactions of Pul, then through the captivity of Gilead by Tiglathpileser.

Verse 11

Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall indeed be unto him to sin - that is, they shall be proved to him to be so, by the punishment which they shall draw upon him. The prophet had first shown them their folly in forsaking God for the help of man; now he shows them the folly of attempting to "secure themselves by their great shew and pretences of religion and devotion in a false way." God had appointed "one" altar at Jerusalem. There He willed the sacrifices to be offered, which He would accept. To multiply altars, much more to set up altars against the one altar, was to multiply sin. Hosea charges Israel elsewhere with this multiplying of altars, as a grievous sin. "According to the multitude of his

fruit, he hath increased altars. Their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the field" Hosea 10:1; Hosea 12:11. They pretended doubtless, that they did it for a religious end, that they might thereon offer sacrifices for the expiation of their sins and appeasing of God. They endeavored to unite their own selfwill and the outward service of God. Therein they might deceive themselves; but they could not deceive God. He calls their act by its true name. To make altars at their own pleasure and to offer sacrifices upon them, under any pretence whatever, was to sin. So then, as many altars as they reared, so often did they repeat their sin; and this sin should be their only fruit. They should be, but only for sin. So God says of the two calves, "This thing became a sin" 1 Kings 12:30, and of the indiscriminate consecration of priests (not of the family of Aaron), "This thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off and to destroy it from the face of the earth" 1 Kings 13:33-34.

Verse 12

I have written to him the great things of My law - Literally, "I write." Their sin then had no excuse of ignorance. God had written their duties for them in the ten commandments with His own hand; He had written them of old and "manifoldly", often repeated and in divers manners. He wrote those manifold things "to them" (or "for them") by Moses, not for that time only, but that they might be continually before their eyes, as if He were still writing. He had written to them since, in their histories, in the Psalms. His words were still sounding in their ears through the teaching of the prophets. God did not only give His law or revelation once for all, and so leave it. By His providence and by His ministers He continually renewed the knowledge of it, so that those who ignored it, should have no excuse. This ever-renewed agency of God He expresses by the word, "I write," what in substance was long ago written. What God then wrote, were "the great things of His law" (as the converted Jews, on the day of Pentecost speak of "the great" or "wonderful things of God") or "the manifold things of His law," as the Apostle speaks of "the manifold wisdom of God" Ephesians 3:10, and says, that "God at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" Hebrews 1:1.

They were counted as a strange thing by them - These "great," or "manifold things of God's law," which ought to have been continually before their eyes, in their mind and in their mouth Deuteronomy 6:7-9, they, although God had written them for them, "counted as a strange thing," a

thing quite foreign and alien to them, with which they had no concern. Perhaps this was their excuse to themselves, that it Was "foreign" to "them." As Christians say now, that one is not to take God's law so precisely; that the Gospel is not so strict as the law; that people, before the grace of the Gospel, had to be stricter than with it; that "the liberty of the Gospel" is freedom, not from sin, but from duty; that such and such things belonged to the early Christians, while they were surrounded by pagan, or to the first times of the Gospel, or to the days when it was persecuted; that riches were dangerous, when people could scarcely have them, not now, when every one has them; that "vice lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness"; that the world was perilous, when it was the Christian's open foe, not now, when it would be friends with us, and have us friends with it; that, "love not the world" was a precept for times when the world hated us, not now, when it is all around us, and steals our hearts, So Jeroboam and Israel too doubtless said, that those prohibitions of idolatry were necessary, when the pagan were still in the land, or while their forefathers were just fresh out of Egypt; that it was, after all, God, who, was worshiped under the calves; that state-policy required it; that Jeroboam was appointed by God, and must needs carry out that appointment, as he best could. With these or the like excuses, he must doubtless have excused himself, as though God's law were good, but "foreign" to "them." God counts such excuses, not as a plea, but as a sin.

Verse 13

They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of Mine offerings, and eat it; but the Lord accepteth them not - As they rejected God's law, so God rejected their "sacrifices," which were not offered according to His law. They, doubtless, thought much of their sacrifices; and this the prophet perhaps expresses by an intensive form; "the sacrifices of My gifts, gifts," as though they thought, that they were ever giving. God accounted such sacrifices, not being hallowed by the end for which He instituted them, as mere "flesh." They "offered flesh" and "ate" it. Such was the beginning, and such the only end. "He" would "not accept them." Nay, contrariwise, "now," now while they were offering the sacrifices, God would show in deed that He "remembered" the sins, for which they were intended to atone. God seems to man to forget his sins, when He forbears to punish them; to "remember" them, when He punishes.

They shall return to Egypt - God had commanded them to return no more to Egypt Deuteronomy 17:16 of their own mind. But He had threatened that, on their disobedience, "the Lord would bring them back to Egypt by the way, whereof He spake unto them, Thou shalt see it no more again" Deuteronomy 28:68. Hosea also foretells to them, that they (i. e., many of them) should go to Egypt and perish there Hosea 9:3, Hosea 9:6. Thence also, as from Assyria, they were to be restored Hosea 12:11. Most probably then, Hosea means to threaten an actual return to Egypt, as we are told, that some of the two tribes did go therefor refuse, against the express command of God 2 Kings 17:4, such as could, (it is likely) took refuge there. Else, as future deliverance, temporal or spiritual, is foretold under the image of the deliverance out of Egypt, so, contrariwise, the threat, "they shall return to Egypt," may be, in figure, a cancelling of the covenant, whereby God had promised, that His people should not return: a threat of renewed bondage, "like" the Egyptian; an abandonment of them to the state, from which God once had freed them and had made them His people.

Verse 14

For Israel hath forgotten his Maker - God was his Maker, not only as the Creator of all things, but as the Author of his existence as a people, as He saith, "hath he not made thee, and established thee?" Deuteronomy 32:6.

And buildeth temples - as for the two calves, at Bethel and at Dan. Since God had commanded to build one temple only, that at Jerusalem, to "build temples" was in itself sin. The sin charged on Ephraim is idolatry; that of Judah is self-confidence; from where Isaiah blames them, that they were busy in repairing the breaches of the city, and cutting off the supplies of water from the enemy; "but ye have not looked unto the Maker thereof, neither had respect unto Him, that fashioned it long ago Isaiah 22:11. Jeremiah also says, "that they shall impoverish (or, crush) the fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword" Jeremiah 5:17.

But I will send a fire upon his cities - In the letter, the words relate to Judah; but in substance, the whole relates to both. Both had forgotten God; both had offended Him. In the doom of others, each sinner may read his own. Of the cities of Judah, Isaiah says, "your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire Isaiah 1:7 and in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah," (some twelve years probably after the death of Hosea) "Sennacherib came up against all the cities of Judah and took them" 2 Kings 18:13; and of Jerusalem it is related, that Nebuchadnezzar "burnt the

house of the Lord, and the king‘s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man‘s house he burnt with fire” 2 Kings 25:8-9. Man set them on fire; God brought it to pass; and, in order to teach us that He doeth all things, giving all good, overruling all evil, saith that He was the doer of it.

HOSEA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people - Literally, "rejoice not to exultation," so as to bound and leap for joy (as in Job 3:22). The prophet seems to come across the people in the midst of their festivity and mirth, and arrests them abruptly stopping it, telling them, that had no cause for joy. Hosea witnessed of Israel's prosperity under Jeroboam II; the land had peace under Menahem the departure of Pul; Pekah was even strong, so as, in his alliance with Rezin, to be an object of terror to Judah Psalm 16:11. How then could Israel joy, "who had gone a whoring from his God?" Other nations might joy, for they had no imminent judgment to fear.

Their sins had been sins of ignorance; none had sinned like Israel. They had not even Jeremiah 2:11 "changed their gods, which were no gods. If" other "people" did not thank God for His gifts, and thanked their idols, they had not been taught otherwise. Israel had been taught. and so his sin was sin against light. Whence God says by Amos, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" Amos 3:2.: "It was ever the sin of Israel to wish to joy as other nations. So they said to Samuel, "make us a king to judge us, like all the nations." And when Samuel "told the people the word of God, they have rejected Me that I should not reign over them," they still said, "Nay, but we will have a king over us, that we may be like all the nations" 1 Samuel 8:5, 1 Samuel 8:10, 1 Samuel 8:7, 1 Samuel 8:19-20. This was the joy of the nations, to have another king than God, and with this joy Israel wished to exult, when it asked for Saul as king; when it followed Jeroboam; when it "denied" Christ "before the presence of Pilate, saying, we have no king but Caesar." But the people who received the law, and professed the worship of God, might not exult as other people who had not the knowledge of God, that, like them, it should, after forsaking God, be allowed to enjoy temporal prosperity, like theirs.

He says, "rejoice not like the nations," namely, for it is not allowed thee. Why? "for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God." The punishment of the adulteress, who departs by unfaithfulness from her husband, is other than that of the harlot, who had never plighted her faith, nor had ever been bound by the bond of marriage. Thou obtainedst God for thy Husband, and

didst forsake Him for another, yea, for many others, in the desert, in Samaria, even in Jerusalem, for the golden calves, for Baal, and the other monstrous gods, and lastly, when, denying Christ, thou didst prefer Barabbas. "Rejoice not" then, with the "joy" of the "nations;" for the curses of the law, written against thee, allow thee not. "Cursed shalt thou be in the city, cursed in the field; cursed thy basket and thy store; cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land; the increase of thy kine and the flocks of thy sheep; cursed thou in thy coming in, and cursed thou in thy going out" Deuteronomy 28:16-19. Other nations enjoyed the fruit of their own labors; thou "tookest the labors" of others as a hire, "to observe His laws" Psalm 105:45.

Thou hast loved a reward - (Literally, "the hire" Hosea 2:12; Hosea 8:9; Ezekiel 21:31,34; Micah 1:7 of a harlot) "on every grain-floor." Israel had no heart, except for temporal prosperity. This he loved, wheresoever he found it; and so, "on every grain-floor," whereon the fruits of the earth were gathered for the threshing, he received it from his idols, as the "hire," for which he praised them "for the good tilings which he had received from a better Giver.": "Perverse love! Thou oughtest to "love" God to use His rewards. "Thou" lovedst "the reward," despisedst God. So then thou "wentest whoring from thy God," because thou didst turn away the love, wherewith thou oughtest to love God, to love the hire: and this not sparingly, nor any how, but "on every barnfloor," with avarice so boundless and so deep, that all the barn-floors could not satisfy thee." The first-fruits, and the free-willoffering, they retained, turned them away from the service of God, and offered them to their idols.

Verse 2

The floor and winepress shall not feed them - God turneth away wholly from the adulterous people, and telleth others, how justly they shall be dealt with first for this. "Because she loved My reward, and despised Myself, the reward itself shall be taken away from her." When the blessings of God have been abused to sin, He, in mercy and judgment, takes them away. He cut them off, in order to show that He alone, who now withheld them, had before given them. When they thought themselves most secure, when the grain was stored on the floor, and the grapes were in the press, then God would deprive them of them.

And the new wine shall fail in her, or shall fail her - Literally, "shall lie to her." It may be, he would say, that as Israel had lied to his God, and

had "spoken lies against Him" Hosea 7:13, so, in requital, the fruits of the earth should disappoint her, and holding out hopes which never came to pass, should, as it were, lie to her, and in the bitterness of her disappointment, represent to her her own failure to her God. The prophet teaches through the workings of nature, and gives, as it were, a tongue to them.

Verse 3

They shall not dwell in the Lord's land. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof - Yet He had chosen the land of Canaan, there to place His people; there, above others, to work His miracles; there to reveal Himself; there to send His Son to take our flesh. He had put Israel in possession of it, to hold it under Him on condition of obedience. Contrariwise, God had denounced to them again and again; "if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to possess it" Deuteronomy 30:17-18. The fifth commandment, "the first commandment with promise" Ephesians 5:2, still implies the same condition, "that thy days may be logit in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." God makes the express reserve that the land is His. "The land shall not be sold forever, for the land is Mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with Me." Leviticus 25:23. It was then an aggravation of their sin, that they had sinned in God's land. It was to sin in His special presence. To offer its first-fruits to idols, was to disown God as its Lord, and to own His adversary. In removing them, then, from His land, God removed them from occasions of sin.

But Ephraim shall return to Egypt - He had broken the covenant, whereon God had promised, that they should not return there (see above the note at Hosea 8:13). They had recourse to Egypt against the will of God. Against their own will, they should be sent back there, in banishment and distress, as of old, and in separation from their God.

And they shall eat unclean things in Assyria - So in Ezekiel, "The children of Israel shall eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them" Ezekiel 4:13. "Not to eat things common or unclean" was one of the marks which God had given them. whereby he distinguished them as His people. While God owned them as His people, He would protect them against such necessity. The histories of Daniel, of Eleazar and the Maccabees (Daniel 1:8; 2 Maccabees 6; 7), show how sorely pious Jews

felt the compulsion to eat things unclean. Yet this doubtless Israel had done in his own land, if not in other ways, at least in eating things offered to idols. Now then, through necessity or they were to be forced, for their sustenance to eat tilings unclean, such as were, to them, all things killed with the blood in them, i. e., as almost all things are killed now. They who had willfully transgressed God‘s law, should now be forced to live in the habitual breach of that law, in a matter which placed them on a level with the pagan. People, who have no scruple about breaking God‘s moral law, feel keenly the removal of any distinction, which places them above others. They had been as pagan; they should be in the condition of pagan.

Verse 4

They shall not offer wine-offerings to the Lord - The “wine” or “drink-offering” was annexed to all their burnt-offerings, and so to all their public sacrifices. The burnt-offering (and with it the meal and the wine-offering,) was “the” daily morning and evening sacrifice Exodus 29:38-41; Numbers 28:3-8, and the sacrifice of the Sabbath Numbers 28:9. It was offered, together with the sin-offering, on the first of the month, the Passover, the feast of the first-fruits, of trumpets, of tabernacles, and the Day of Atonement, besides the special sacrifices of that day Numbers 28:11, Numbers 28:15-16, Numbers 28:19, Numbers 28:22, Numbers 28:26, Numbers 28:7, Numbers 28:30; Numbers 29:11, Numbers 29:1-2, Numbers 29:5, Numbers 29:7-8, 12-38. It entered also into private life Numbers 15:3, Numbers 15:10. The drink-offering accompanied also the peace-offering Numbers 15:8, Numbers 15:10. As the burnt-offering, on which the offerer laid his hand Leviticus 1:4, and which was wholly consumed by the sacred fire which at first fell from heaven, expressed the entire self-devotion of the offerer, that he owed himself wholly to his God; and as the peace-offering was the expression of thankfulness, which was at peace with God; so the outpouring of the wine betokened the joy, which accompanies that entire self oblation, that thankfulness in self-oblation of a soul accepted by God. In denying, then, that Israel should “offer wine-offerings,” the prophet says, that all the joy of their service of God, nay all their public service should cease. As he had before said, that they should be “for many days without sacrifice” Leviticus 3:4, so now, he says, in fact, that they should live without the prescribed means of pleading to God the atonement to come. Whence he adds,

Neither shall they be pleasing to the Lord - For they should no longer have the means prescribed for reconciliation with God. Such is the state of Israel now. God appointed one way of reconciliation with Himself, the Sacrifice of Christ. Sacrifice pictured this, and pleaded it to Him, from the fall until Christ Himself "appeared, once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" Hebrews 9:26. Soon after, when time had been given to the Jews to learn to acknowledge Him, all bloody sacrifices ceased. Since then the Jews have lived without that means of reconciliation, which God appointed. It availed, not in itself, but as being appointed lay God to foreshadow and plead that one sacrifice. So He who, by our poverty and void, awakens in us the longing for Himself, would through the anomalous condition, to which He has, by the orderings of His divine providence, brought His former people, call forth in them that sense of need, which would bring them to Christ. In their half-obedience, they remain under the ceremonial law which He gave them, although He called them, and still calls them, to exchange the shadow for the substance in Christ. But in that they cannot fulfill the requirements of the law, even in its outward form, the law, which they acknowledge, bears witness to them, that they are not living according to the mind of God.

Their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners - He had said that they should not sacrifice to God, when no longer in the Lord's land. He adds that, if they should attempt it, their sacrifices, so far from being a means of acceptance, should be defiled, and a source of defilement to them. "All" which was "in" the same "tent" or house with a dead body, was "unclean for seven days" Numbers 19:14. The bread, which they ate then, was defiled. If "one unclean by a dead body touched bread or pottage or any meat, it was unclean" Haggai 2:12-13. In offering the tithes, a man was commanded to declare, "I have not eaten of it in my mourning" Deuteronomy 26:15. So would God impress on the soul the awfulness of death, and man's sinfulness, of which death is the punishment. He does not say, that they would offer sacrifices, but that their sacrifices, if offered as God did not command, would defile, not atone. It is in truman nature, to neglect to serve God, when He wills it, and then to attempt to serve Him when he forbids it. Thus Israel, affrighted by the report of the spies Numbers 14, would not go up to the promised land, when God commanded it. When God had sentenced them, not to go up, but to die in the wilderness,

“then” they attempted it. Sacrifice, according to God‘s law, could only be offered in the promised land. In their captivity, then, it would be a fresh sin.

For their bread for their soul - Or “is for their soul,” i. e., “for themselves;” it is for whatever use they can make of it for this life‘s needs, to support life. Nothing of it would be admitted “into the house of the Lord,” as offered to Him or accepted by Him.

Verse 5

What will ye do in the solemn day? - Man is content to remain far from God, so that God do not show him, that He has withdrawn Himself from him. Man would fain have the power of drawing near to God in time of calamity, or when he himself likes. He would fain have God at his command, as it were, not be at the command of God. God cuts off this hope altogether. he singles out the great festivals, which commemorated His great doings for His people, as though they had no more share in those mercies. The more solemn the day, the more total man‘s exclusion, the more manifest God‘s withdrawal. To one shut out from His service, the days of deepest religious joy became the days of deepest sorrow. Mirth is turned into heaviness. To be deprived of the ordinary daily sacrifice was a source of continual sorrow; how much more, “in the days of” their “gladness” Numbers 10:10, in which they were bidden to rejoice before the Lord, and “in which they seemed to have a nearer and more familiar access to God.” True, that having separated themselves from the temple, they had no right to celebrate these feasts, which were to be held in the place “which God had chosen to place His name there.” Man, however, clings to the shadow of God‘s service, when he has parted with the substance. And so God foretold them before, that He would “make all their mirth to cease” Hosea 2:11.

Verse 6

For lo, they are gone because of destruction - They had fled, for fear of destruction, to destruction. For fear of the destruction from Assyria, they were fled away and gone to Egypt, hoping, doubtless, to find there some temporary refuge, until the Assyrian invasion should have swept by. But, as befalls those who flee from God, they fell into more certain destruction.

Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them - They had fled singly, in making their escape from the Assyrian. Egypt shall receive them, and shall gather them together, but only to one common burial, so that none should escape. So Jeremiah says, “They shall not be gathered nor

buried" Jeremiah 8:2; and Ezekiel, "Thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered" Ezekiel 29:5. "Memphis" is the Greek name for the Egyptian "Mamphta," whence the Hebrew "Moph"; or "Manuph," whence the Hebrew "Noph" (Isaiah 19:13; Jeremiah 2:16; Jeremiah 44:1; Jeremiah 46:14; Ezekiel 30:13 ff). It was at this time the capital of Egypt, whose idols God threatens. Its name, "the dwelling of Phta," the Greek Vulcan, marked it, as a seat of idolatry; and in it was the celebrated court of Apis, the original of Jeroboam's calf. There in the home of the idol for whom they forsook their God, they should be gathered to burial. It was reputed to be the burial-place of Osiris, and hence, was a favorite burial-place of the Egyptians. It once embraced a circuit of almost 19 miles, with magnificent buildings; it declined after the building of Alexandria; its very ruins gradually perished, after Cairo rose in its neighborhood.

The pleasant places for their silver, nettles shall possess them - The English margin gives the same sense in different words; "their silver shall be desired; (as Obadiah saith, "his hidden treasures were searched out) nettles shall inherit them" Obadiah 1:6. In either way, it is a picture of utter desolation. The long rank grass or the nettle, waving amid man's habitations, looks all the sadder, as betokening that man once was there, and is gone. The desolate house looks like the grave of the departed. According to either rendering, the silver which they once had treasured, was gone. As they had "inherited" and "driven" out (the word is one) the nations, whose land God had given them, so now nettles and thorns should "inherit them." These should be the only tenants of their treasure-houses and their dwellings.

Verse 7

The days of visitation are come - The false prophets had continually hood-winked the people, promising them that those days would never come. "They had put far away the evil day" Amos 6:3. Now it was not at hand only. In God's purpose, those "days" were "come," irresistible, inevitable, inextricable; days in which God would visit, what in His long-suffering, He seemed to overlook, and would "recompense each according to his works."

Israel shall know it - Israel would not know by believing it; now it should "know," by feeling it.

The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad - The true prophet gives to the false the title which they claimed for themselves, "the prophet"

and “the man of the spirit.” Only the event showed what spirit was in them, not the spirit of God but a lying spirit. The people of the world called the true prophets, “mad,” literally, maddened, “driven mad,”, as Festus thought of Paul; “Thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad” Acts 26:24. Jehu‘s captains called by the same name the young prophet whom Elisha sent to anoint him. “Wherefore came this mad fellow unto thee?” 2 Kings 9:11. Shemaiah, the false prophet, who deposed God‘s priest, set false priests to “be officers in the house of the Lord,” to have an oversight as to “every man who is mad and maketh himself a prophet,” calling Jeremiah both a false prophet and a “madman” (Jeremiah 29:25-26. The word is the same).

The event was the test. Of our Lord Himself, the Jews blaspbemed, “He hath a devil and is mad” John 10:20. And long afterward, “madness,” “phrensy” were among the names which the pagan gave to the faith in Christ. As Paul says, that “Christ crucified” was “to the Greeks” and to “them that perish, foolishness,” and that the “things of the Spirit of God, are foolishness to the natural man, neither can he know” them, “because they are spiritually discerned” 1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 1:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14. The man of the world and the Christian judge of the same things by clean contrary rules, use them for quite contrary ends. The slave of pleasure counts him mad, who foregoes it; the wealthy trader counts him mad, who gives away profusely. In these days, profusion for the love of Christ has been counted a ground for depriving a man of the care of his property. One or the other is mad. And worldlings must count the Christian mad; else they must own themselves to be so most fearfully. In the Day of Judgment, Wisdom says, “They, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves, This was he whom we had sometimes in derision and a proverb of reproach. We fools counted his life madness, and his end to be without honor. How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!” (Wisd. 5:3-6).

For the multitude of thine iniquity and the great hatred - The words stand at the close of the verse, as the reason of all which had gone before. Their “manifold iniquity” and their “great hatred” of God were the ground why the “days of visitation” and “recompense” should “come.” They were the ground also, why God allowed such prophets to delude them. The words, “the great hatred,” stand quite undefined, so that they may signify alike the hatred of Ephraim against God and good people and His true

prophets, or God‘s hatred of them. Yet it, most likely, means, “their” great hatred, since of them the prophet uses it again in the next verse. The sinner first neglects God; then, as the will of God is brought before him, he willfully disobeys Him; then, when, he finds God‘s will irreconcilably at variance with his own, or when God chastens him, he hates Him, and (the prophet speaks out plainly) “hates” Him “greatly.”

Verse 8

The watchman of Ephraim was with my God - These words may well contrast the office of the true prophet with the false. For Israel had had many true prophets, and such was Hosea himself now. The true prophet was at all times with “God.” He was “with God,” as holpen by God, “watching” or looking out and on into the future by the help of God. He was “with God,” as walking with God in a constant sense of His presence, and in continual communion with Him. He was “with God,” as associated by God with Himself, in teaching, warning, correcting, exhorting His people, as the Apostle says, “we then as workers together with Him” 2 Corinthians 6:1.

It might also be rendered in nearly the same sense, “Ephraim was a watchman with my God,” and this is more according to the Hebrew words. As though the whole people of Israel had an office from God, “and God addressed it as a whole, ‹I made thee, as it were, a watchman and prophet of God to the neighboring nations, that through My providence concerning thee, and thy living according to the law, they too might receive the knowledge of Me. But thou hast acted altogether contrary to this, for thou hast become a snare to them. ‹“

Yet perhaps, if so construed, it would rather mean, “Ephraim is a watchman, beside my God,” as it is said, “There is none upon earth, that I desire with Thee” Psalm 73:25, i. e., beside Thee. In God the Psalmist had all, and desired to have nothing “with,” i. e., beside God. Ephraim was not content with God‘s revelations, but would himself be “a seer, an espier” of future events, the prophet says with indignation, “together with my God.” God, in fact, sufficed. Ephraim not. Ahab hated God‘s prophet, “because he did not speak good concerning him but evil” 1 Kings 22:8, 1 Kings 22:18. And so the kings of Israel had court-prophets of their own, an establishment, as it would seem, of four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and four hundred prophets of Ashtaroth 1 Kings 18:19, which was filled up again by new impostors 2 Kings 3:13; 2 Kings 10:19, when after the

miracle of Mount Carmel, Elijah, according to the law Deuteronomy 13:5; Deuteronomy 17:5, put to death the prophets of Baal. These false prophets, as well as those of Judah in her evil days, flattered the kings who supported them, misled them, encouraged them in disbelieving the threatenings of God, and so led to their destruction. By these means, the bad priests maintained their hold over the people. They were the antichrists of the Old Testament, disputing the authority of God, in whose name they prophesied. Ephraim encouraged their sins, as God says of Judah by Jeremiah, "My people love to have it so" Jeremiah 5:31. It willed to be deceived, and was so.

"On searching diligently ancient histories," says Jerome, "I could not find that any divided the Church, or seduced people from the house of the Lord, except those who have been set by God as priests and prophets, i. e. watchmen. These then are turned into a snare, setting a stumbling-block everywhere, so that whosoever entereth on their ways, falls, and cannot stand in Christ, and is led away by various errors and crooked paths to a precipice.": "No one," says another great father, "doth wider injury than one who acteth perversely, while he hath a name or an order of holiness." "God endureth no greater prejudice from any than from priests, when He seeth those whom He has set for the correction of others, give from themselves examples of perverseness, when "we" sin, who ought to restrain sin. What shall become of the flock, when the pastors become wolves?"

The false prophet is the snare of a fowler in - (literally, "upon") all his ways i. e., whatever Ephraim would do, wherever the people, as a whole or any of them, would go, there the false prophet beset them, endeavoring to make each and everything a means of holding them back from their God. This they did, "being hatred in the house of his God." As one says, "I am (all) prayer" Psalm 109:4, because he was so given up to prayer that he seemed turned into prayer; his whole soul was concentrated in prayer; so of these it is said, "they" were "hatred." They hated so intensely, that their whole soul was turned into hatred; they were as we say, hatred personified; hatred was embodied in them, and they ensouled with hate. They were also the source of hatred against God and man. And this each false prophet was "in the house of his God!" for God was still his God, although not owned by him as God. God is the sinners God to avenge, if he will not allow Him to be his God, to convert and pardon.

Verse 9

They have deeply corrupted themselves - Literally, "they have gone deep, they are corrupted." They have deeply immersed themselves in wickedness; have gone to the greatest depth they could, in it; they are sunk in it, so that they could hardly be extricated from it; and this, of their own deliberate intent; they contrived it deeply, hiding themselves, as they hoped, from God.

As in, the days of Gibeah - When Benjamin espoused the cause of "the children of Belial" who had worked such horrible brutishness in Gibeah toward the concubine of the Levite. This they maintained with such obstinacy, that, through God's judgment, the whole tribe perished, except six hundred men. Deeply they must have already corrupted themselves, who supported such guilt. Such corruption and such obstinacy was their's still.

Therefore "he will remember their iniquity." God seemed for a time, as if He overlooked the guilt of Benjamin in the days of Gibeah, for at first He allowed them to be even victorious over Israel, yet in the end, they were punished, almost to extermination, and Gibeah was destroyed. So now, although He bore long with Ephraim, He would, in the end show that He remembered all by visiting all.

Verse 10

I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness - God is not said to find anything, as though "He" had lost it, or knew not where it was, or came suddenly upon it, not expecting it. "They" were lost, as relates to Him, when they were found by Him. As our Lord says of the returned prodigal, "This my son was lost and is found" Luke 15:32. He "found" them and made them pleasant in His own sight, "as grapes which a man finds unexpectedly, in "a great terrible wilderness of fiery serpents and drought" Deuteronomy 8:15, where commonly nothing pleasant or refreshing grows; or "as the first ripe in the fig-tree at her fresh time," whose sweetness passed into a proverb, both from its own freshness and from the long abstinence (see Isaiah 28:4). God gave to Israel both richness and pleasantness in His own sight; but Israel, from the first, corrupted God's good gifts in them. This generation only did as their fathers. So Stephen, setting forth to the Jews how their fathers had rebelled against Moses, and persecuted the prophets, sums up; "as your fathers did, so do ye" Acts 7:51.

Each generation was filling up the measure of their fathers, until it was full; as the whole world is doing now Revelation 14:15.

But they went to Baal-Peor - "They," the word is emphatic; these same persons to whom God showed such love, to whom He gave such gifts, "went." They left God who called them, and "went" to the idol, which could not call them. Baal-Peor, as his name probably implies, was "the filthiest and foulest of the pagan gods." It appears from the history of the daughters of Midian, that his worship consisted in deeds of shame Psalm 115:8.: "The object which the will desires and loves, transfuses its own goodness or badness into it." Man first makes his god like his own corrupt self, or to some corruption in himself, and then, worshiping this ideal of his own, he becomes the more corrupt through copying that corruption. He makes his god "in his" own "image and likeness," the essence and concentration of his own bad passions, and then conforms himself to the likeness, not of God, but of what was most evil in himself. Thus the Pagan made gods of lust, cruelty, thirst for war; and the worship of corrupt gods reacted on themselves. They forgot that they were "the work of their own hands," the conception of their own minds, and professed to "do gladly" "what so great gods" had done.

And more widely, says a father, "what a man's love is, that he is. Lovest thou earth? thou art earth. Lovest thou God? What shall I say? thou shalt be god.": "Naught else maketh good or evil actions, save good or evil affections." Love has a transforming power over the soul, which the intellect has not. "He who serveth an abomination is himself an abomination", is a thoughtful Jewish saying. "The intellect brings home to the soul the knowledge on which it worketh, impresses it on itself, incorporates it with itself. Love is an impulse whereby he who loves is borne forth toward that which he loves, is united with it, and is transformed into it." Thus in explaining the words, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His Mouth," Song of Song of Solomon 1:2 , the fathers say, "Then the Word of God kisseth us, when He enlighteneth our heart with the Spirit of divine knowledge, and the soul cleaveth to Him and His Spirit is transfused into him."

Verse 11

As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away, like a bird - Ephraim had parted with God, his true Glory. In turn, God would quickly take from him

all created glory, all which he counted glory, or in which he gloried. When man parts with the substance, his true honor, God takes away the shadow, lest he should content himself therewith, and not see his shame, and, boasting himself to be something, abide in his nothingness and poverty and shame to which he had reduced himself. "Fruitfulness," and consequent strength, had been God's special promise to Ephraim. His name, Ephraim, contained in itself the promise of his future fruitfulness. Genesis 41:52. With this Jacob had blessed him. He was to be greater than Manasseh, his older brother, "and his seed shall become a multitude of nations" Genesis 48:19. Moses had assigned to him "tens of thousands" Deuteronomy 33:17, while to Manasseh he had promised "thousands" only. On this blessing Ephraim had presumed, and had made it to feed his pride; so now God, in his justice and mercy, would withdraw it from him. It should "make" itself "wings, and fly away" Proverbs 23:5, with the swiftness of a bird, and "like a bird," not to return again to the place, from where it has been scared.

From the birth - Their children were to perish at every stage in which they received life. This sentence pursued them back to the very beginning of life. First, when their parents should have joy in "their birth," they were to come into the world only to go out of it; then, their mothers womb was to be itself their grave; then, stricken with barrenness, the womb itself was to refuse to conceive them.

: "The glory of Ephraim passes away, from the birth, the womb, the conception, when the mind which before was, for glory, half-deified, receives, through the just judgment of God, ill report for good report, misery for glory, hatred for favor, contempt for reverence, loss for gain, famine for abundance. Act is the "birth;" intention the "womb;" thought the "conception." "The glory of Ephraim then flies away from the birth, the womb, the conception," when, in those who before did outwardly live nobly, and gloried in themselves for the outward propriety of their life, the acts are disgraced, the intention corrupted, the thoughts defiled."

Verse 12

Though they bring up children - God had threatened to deprive them of children, in every stage before or at their birth. Now, beyond this, he tells them, as to those who should escape this sentence, he would bereave them of them, or make them childless.

That there shall not be a man left - Literally, "from man." The brief word may be filled up, as the English Version has done (by not infrequent an idiom):

(1) "from there being a man;" or

(2) "from" among "men;" as Samuel said to Agag (1 Samuel 15:33; add Proverbs 30:14), "as thy sword has made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women;" or

(3) "from" becoming "men," i. e., from reaching man's estate.

The prophet, in any case, does not mean absolute excision, for he says, "they shall be wanderers among the nations," and had foretold, that they should abide, as they now are, and be converted in the end. But since their pride was in their numbers, he says, that these should be reduced in every stage from conception to ripened manhood. So God had forewarned Israel in the law, "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law - ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude" Deuteronomy 28:58, Deuteronomy 28:62. A sentence, felt the more by Ephraim, as being the head of the most powerful division of the people, and himself the largest portion of it.

Yea - (literally, "for") woe also unto them, when I depart from them This is, at once, the ground and the completion of their misery, its beginning and its end. God's departure was the source of all evil to them; as He foretold them, "I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they shall say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?" Deuteronomy 31:17. But His departure was itself above all. For the prophet says also; "for woe also unto them." This was the last step in the scale of misery. Beyond the loss of the children, whom they hoped or longed for, beyond the loss of their present might, and all their hope to come, there is a further undefined, unlimited, evil, "woe to them also," when God should "withdraw," not His care and providence only, but Himself also from them; "when I depart from them." They had "departed" and turned away, from or "against" God (see the note at Hosea 7:13). It had been their characteristic Hosea 4:16. Now God Himself would requite them, as they had requited Him. He would depart from them. This is

the last state of privation, which forms the "punishment of loss" in Hell. When the soul has lost God, what has it?

Verse 13

Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place - Or (better) "as I saw (her) toward Tyre," or "as I saw as to Tyre." Ephraim stretched out, in her dependent tribes, "toward" or "to" Tyre itself. Like to Tyrus she was, "in her riches, her glory, her pleasantness, her strength, her pride," and in the end, her fall. The picture is that of a fair tree, not chance-sown, but "planted" carefully by hand in a pleasant place. Beauty and strength were blended in her. On the tribe of Joseph especially, Moses had pronounced the blessing; "Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep which coucheth beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moons (i. e., month by month) and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills and for the precious things of the earth and the fulness thereof, and for the good pleasure of Him who dwelt in the bush" Deuteronomy 33:13-16. Beautiful are the mountains of Ephraim, and the rich valleys or plains which break them. And chief in beauty and in strength was the valley, whose central hill its capital, Samaria, crowned; "the crown of pride to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower which is on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine" Isaiah 28:1. The blessing of Moses pointed perhaps to the time when Shiloh was the tabernacle of Him, who once dwelt and revealed Himself in the bush. Now that it had exchanged its God for the calves, the blessings which it still retained, stood but in the more awful contrast with its future.

But Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer - Literally, "and Ephraim is to bring forth etc." i. e., proud though her wealth, and high her state, pleasantly situated and firmly rooted, one thing lay before her, one destiny, she "was to bring forth children only for the murderer." Childlessness in God's providence is the appropriate and frequent punishment of sins of the flesh. Pride too brought Peninnah, the adversary of Hannah, low, even as to that which was the ground of her pride, her children. "The barren hath born seven, and she that hath many children is waxed feeble" 1 Samuel 2:5. So as to the soul, "pride deprives of grace."

Verse 14

Give them a miscarrying womb - The prophet prays for Israel, and debates with himself what he can ask for, amid this their determined wickedness, and God‘s judgments. Since “Ephraim” was “to bring forth children to the murderer,” then it was mercy to ask for them, that they might have no children. Since such are the evils which await their children, grant them, O Lord, as a blessing, the sorrows of barrenness. What God had before pronounced as a punishment, should, as compared to other evils, be a mercy, and an object of prayer. So our Lord pronounces as to the destruction of Jerusalem. “Behold the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck” Luke 23:29. “O unhappy fruitfulness and fruitful unhappiness, compared with which, barrenness, which among them was accounted a curse, became blessedness.”

Verse 15

All their wickedness is in Gilgal - “Gilgal,” having been the scene of so many of God‘s mercies, had been, on that very ground, chosen as a popular scene for idol-worship (see the note above at Hosea 4:15). And doubtless, Ephraim still deceived himself, and thought that his idolatrous worship, in a place once so hallowed, would still be acceptable with God. “There, where God of old was propitious, He would be so still, and whatever they did, should, even for the place‘s sake, be accepted; the hallowed place would necessarily sanctify it.” In answer to such thoughts, God says, “all their wickedness,” the very chief and sum, the head from which the rest flowed, their desertion of God Himself, whatever they hoped or imagined, all their “wickedness is” there.

For there I hated them - “There, in the very place where heretofore I shewed such great tokens of love to, and by My gracious presence with, them, “even there I have hated them” and now hate them.” “He saith not, there was I angry, or displeased with them, but in a word betokening the greatest indignation, “I hated them.” Great must needs be that wickedness which provoked the Father of mercies to so great displeasure as to say, that He “hated them;” and severe must needs be those judgments which are as effects of hatred and utter aversation of them, in Him.”

For the wickedness of their doings - The sin of Israel was no common sin, not a sin of ignorance, but against the full light. Each word betokens evil. The word “doings” expresses “great bold doings.” It was “the wickedness of their wicked works,” a deeper depth of wickedness in their

wickedness, an essence of wickedness, for which, God saith, "I will drive them out of My house," i. e., as before, out of His whole land (see the note above at Hosea 8:1).

I will love them no more - So He saith, in the beginning; "I will have no more mercy upon the house of Israel, but I will utterly take them away" Hosea 1:6.: "This was a national judgment, and so involved the whole of them, as to their outward condition, which they enjoyed as members of that nation, and making up one beady politic. It did not respect the spiritual condition of single persons, and their relation, in this respect, to God." As individuals, they were, "not cut off from God's favor and tokens of His love, nor from the power of becoming members of Christ, whenever any of them should come to Him. It only struck them forever out of that "house of the Lord" from which they were then driven," or from hopes that that kingdom should be restored, which God said, He would cause to cease.

All their princes are revolters - Their case then was utterly hopeless. No one of their kings "departed from the sin of Jeroboam who made Israel to sin." The political power which should protect goodness, became the fountain of corruption.: "None is there, to rebuke them that offend, to recall, those that err; no one who, by his own goodness, and virtue, pacifying God, can turn away His wrath, as there was in the time of Moses.": "Askest thou, why God cast them out of His house, why they were not received in the Church or the house of God? He saith to them, because they "are all revolters, departers," i. e., because, before they were cast out visibly in the body, they departed in mind, were far away in heart, and therefore were cast out in the body also, and lost, what alone they loved, the temporal advantages of the house of God."

Verse 16

Ephraim is smitten - The prophet, under the image of a tree, repeats the same sentence of God upon Israel. The word "smitten" is used of the smiting of the tree from above, especially by the visitation of God, as by "blasting" and "mildew" Amos 4:9. Yet such smiting, although it falls heavily for the time, leaves hope for the future. He adds then, "their root is" also "withered," so that "they should bear no fruit;" or if, perchance, while the root was still drying up and not quite dead, any fruit he yet found, "yet will I slay," God says, "the beloved," fruit "of their womb," the desired fruit of their bodies, that which their souls longed for.: "So long as they have children, and multiply the fruit of the womb, they think that they bear fruit,

they deem not that "their root is dried," or that they have been severed by the axe of excision, and "rooted out of the land of the living;" but, in the anguish at the "slaying" of those they most loved, they shall say, better had it been to have had no children."

Verse 17

My God hath cast them away - "My God" (he saith) as if God were his God only who clave to him, not their's who had, by their disobedience, departed from Him. "My God." "He had then authority from Him," whom he owned and who owned "him," and who bade him so Speak, as though God were "his" God, and no longer their's. God "casts them away," lit. "despises them," and so rejects them as an object of aversion to Him, "because they did not hearken to Him." "God never forsakes unless He be first forsaken." When they would not hearken, neither doing what God commanded, nor abstaining from what He forbade, God at last rejected them, as worthless, lacking altogether to that end for which He created them.

And they shall be wanderers among the nations - This was the sentence of Cain Genesis 4:12; "a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." So God had forewarned them. "The Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth - and among these nations shalt there find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest" Deuteronomy 28:64-65.

The words of the prophet imply an abiding condition. He does not say, "they shall wander, but, they shall be wanderers." Such was to be their lot; such has been their lot ever since; and such was not the ordinary lot of those large populations whom Eastern conquerors transported from their own land. Those conquerors took away with them into their own land, portions of the people whom they conquered, for two ends. When a people often rebelled, they were placed where they could rebel no more, among tribes more powerful than they, and obedient to the rule of the conqueror. Or they were carried off; as slaves to work in bricks, like Israel in Egypt.

Their workmen, smiths, artificers, were especially taken to labor on those gigantic works, the palaces and temples of Nineveh or Babylon. But, for both these purposes, the transported population had a settled abode allotted to it, whether in the capital or the provinces. Sometimes new cities or villages were built for the settlers. Israel at first was so located. Perhaps

on account of the frequent rebellions of their kings, the ten tribes were placed amid a wild, warlike, population, "in the cities of the Medes." 2 Kings 17:6. When the interior of Asia was less known, people thought that they were still to be found there.

The Jews fabled, that the ten tribes lay behind some mighty and fabulous river, Sambatyon, or were fenced in by mountains. Christians thought that they might be found in some yet unexplored part of Asia. Undeceived as to this, they still asked whether the Afghans, or the Yezides, or the natives of North America were the ten tribes, or whether they were the Nestorians of Kurdistan. So natural did it seem, that they, like other nations so transported, should remain as a body, near or at the places, where they had been located by their conquerors. The prophet says otherwise. He says their abiding condition shall be, "they shall be wanderers among the nations," wanderers among them, but no part of them. Before the final dispersion of the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem, "the Jewish race," Josephus says," was in great numbers through the whole world, interspersed with the nations."

Those assembled at the day of Pentecost had come from all parts of Asia Minor but also from Parthia, Media, Persia, Mesopotamia, Arabia, Egypt, maritime Lybia, Crete, and Italy Acts 2:9-11. Wherever the Apostles went, in Asia or Greece, they found Jews, in numbers sufficient to raise persecution against them. James writes to those whom, with a word corresponding to that of Hosea, he calls, "the dispersion." "James … to the twelve in the dispersion". The Jews, scoffing, asked, whether our Lord would go to "the dispersion among the Greeks". They speak of it, as a body, over against themselves, to whom they supposed that He meant to go, to teach them, when He said, "Ye shall seek Me and shall not find Me." The Jews of Egypt were probably the descendants of those who went there, after the murder of Gedaliah. The Jews of the North, as well as those of China, India, Russia, were probably descendants of the ten tribes.

From one end of Asia to the other and onward through the Crimea, Greece and Italy, the Jews by their presence, bare witness to the fulfillment of the prophecy. Not like the wandering Indian tribe, who spread over Europe, living apart in their native wildness, but settled, among the

inhabitants of each city, they were still distinct, although with no polity of their own; a distinct, settled, yet foreign and subordinate race.: "Still remains unreversed this irrevocable sentence, as to their temporal state and face of an earthly kingdom, that they remain still "wanderers" or dispersed among other nations, and have never been restored, nor are in likelihood of ever being restored to their own land, so as to call it their own. If ever any of them hath returned thither, it hath been but as strangers, and all, as to any propriety that they should challenge in it, to hear the ruins and waste heaps of their ancient cities to echo in their ears the prophet's words, "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest;" your ancestors polluted it, and ye shall never return as a people thither, to inhabit it, as in your former condition" Micah 2:10.

"Meanwhile Ephraim here is an example, not only to particular persons, that as they will avoid personal judgments, so they take care faithfully to serve God and hearken unto Him; but to nations and kingdoms also, that as they will prevent national judgments, so they take care that God be truly served, and the true religion maintained in purity and sincerity among them. Ephraim, or lsrael, held their land by as good and firm tenure as any people in the world can theirs, having it settled on them by immediate gift from Him who is the Lord of the whole earth, who promised it to their forefathers, Abraham and his seed forever Genesis 13:14-15; Deuteronomy 34:4, called therefore the land which the Lord sware unto them Deuteronomy 9:28, the land of promise Hebrews 11:9. Who could have greater right to a place, better and firmer right, than they had to the Lord's land, by "His" promise which never fails, and "His" oath who will not repent, confirmed to them?

Certainly, if they had observed conditions and kept covenant with Him, all the people in the world could never have driven them out, or dispossessed them of it. But, seeing they revolted and brake His covenant, and did not hearken to Him, He would not suffer them longer to dwell in it, but drave and cast them out of it, so that they could never recover it again, but continue to this day "wandering among the nation," having no settled place of their own, nowhere where they can be called a people, or are for such owned. If God so dealt with Israel on their disobedience and departing from His service, to whom He had so particularly engaged himself to make

good to them the firm possession of that land; how shall any presume on any right or title to any other, or think to preserve it to themselves by any force or strength of their own, if they revolt from Him, and cast off thankful obedience to Him? The Apostle cautioneth and teacheth us so to argue, "if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee," and therefore warneth, "be not high-minded," and presumptuous, "but fear" Romans 11:20-21.

HOSEA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

Israel is an empty vine - Or, in the same sense, "a luxuriant vine;" literally, "one which poureth out," poureth itself out into leaves, abundant in switches, (as most old versions explain it,) luxuriant in leaves, emptying itself in them, and empty of fruit; like the fig-tree, which our Lord cursed. For the more a fruit tree putteth out its strength in leaves and branches, the less and the worst fruit it beareth.: "The juices which it ought to transmute into wine, it disperseth in the ambitious idle shew of leaves and branches." The sap in the vine is an emblem of His Holy Spirit, through whom alone we can bear fruit. "His grace which was in me," says Paul, "was not in vain." It is in vain to us, when we waste the stirrings of God's Spirit in feelings, aspirations, longings, transports, "which bloom their hour and fade". Like the leaves, these feelings aid in maturing fruit; when there are leaves only, the tree is barren and "nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned" Hebrews 6:8.

It bringeth forth fruit for itself - Literally, "setteth fruit to, or on itself." Luxuriant in leaves, its fruit becomes worthless, and is from itself to itself. It is uncultured; (for Israel refused culture,) pouring itself out, as it willed, in what it willed. It had a rich show of leaves, a show also of fruit, but not for the Lord of the vineyard, since they came to no size or ripeness. Yet to the superficial glance, it was rich, prosperous, healthy, abundant in all things, as was the outward state of Israel under Jehoash and Jeroboam II.

According to the multitude of his fruit - Or more strictly, "as his fruit was multiplied, he multiplied altars; as his land was made good, they made goodly their images." The more of outward prosperity God bestowed upon them, the more they abused His gifts, referring them to their idols; the more God lavished His mercies on them, the more profuse they were in adoring their idols. The superabundance of God's goodness became the occasion of the superabundance of their wickedness. They rivaled and competed with and outdid the goodness of God, so that He could bestow upon them no good, which they did not turn to evil. People think this strange. Strange it is, as is all perversion of God's goodness; yet so it is now. People's sins are either the abuse of what God gives, or rebellion, because He withholds. In the sins of prosperity, wealth, health, strength, powers of mind, wit, people sin in a way in which they could not sin, unless God continually supplied

them with those gifts which they turn to sin. The more God gives, the more opportunity and ability they have to sin, and the more they sin. They are "evil," not only in despite of God's goodness, but "because" He is good.

Verse 2

Their heart is divided - Between God and their idols, in that they would not wholly part with either, as Elijah upbraided them, "How long halt ye between the two opinions?" 1 Kings 18:21. When the pagan, by whom the king of Assyria replaced them, had been taught by one of the priests whom the king sent back, in order to avert God's judgments, they still propagated this division. Like Jeroboam 2 Kings 17:32-33, 2 Kings 17:41, they became fearers of the Lord," His worshipers, "and made to themselves out of their whole number (i. e., indiscriminately) priests of the high places. They were fearers of the Lord, and they were servers of their gods, according to the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence. These nations were fearers of the Lord, and they were servers of their idols, both their children and their children's children. As did their fathers, so do they unto this day."

This divided allegiance was their hereditary worship. These pagan, as taught by one of the priests of Israel, added the service of God to that of their idols, as Israel had added the service of the idols to that of God. But God rejecteth such half service; from where he adds, "now," in a brief time, all but come, "they shall be found faulty," literally, "they shall be guilty," shall be convicted of guilt and shall bear it. They thought to "serve at once God and Mammon;" but, in truth, they served their idols only, whom they would not part with for God. God Himself then would turn away all their worship, bad, and, as they thought, good. "He," from whom their heart was divided, He Himself, by His mighty power which no man can gain-say, "shall break down their altars," literally, shall "behead" them. As they out of His gifts multiplied their altars and killed their sacrifices upon them against His will, so now should the altars themselves, be demolished; and "the images" which they had decked with the gold which He had given, should, on account of that very gold, tempt the spoiler, through whom God would spoil them.

He shall break down - He Himself. The word is emphatic.: "God willeth not that, when the merited vengeance of God is inflicted through man, it should be ascribed to man. Yea, if anyone ascribeth to himself what, by permission of God, he hath power to do against the people of God, he

draweth down on him the displeasure of God, and, at times, on that very ground, can hurt the less" (see Deuteronomy 32:26, Deuteronomy 32:7; Isaiah 10:5 ff). The prophet then says very earnestly, "He Himself shall break," meaning us to understand, not the lofty hand of the enemy, but that the Lord Himself did all these things.

Verse 3

For now they shall say, we have no king - These are the words of despair, not of repentance; of people terrified by the consciousness of guilt, but not coming forth out of its darkness; describing their condition, not confessing the iniquity which brought it on them. In sin, all Israel had asked for a king, when the Lord was their king; in sin, Ephraim had made Jeroboam king; in sin, their subsequent kings were made, without the counsel and advice of God; and now as the close of all, they reflect how fruitless it all was. They had a king, and yet, as it were, they had no king, since, God being angry with them, he had no strength to deliver them. And now, without love, the memory of their evil deeds crushes them beyond hope of remedy. They groan for their losses, their sufferings, their fears, but do not repent. Such is the remorse of the damned. All which they had is lost; and what availed it now, since, when they had it, they feared not God?

Verse 4

They have spoken words - The words which they spoke were eminently "words;" they were mere "words," which had no substance; "swearing falsely in making a covenant, literally, swearing falsely, making a covenant, and judgments springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.": "There is no truth in words, no sanctity in oaths, no faithfulness in keeping covenants, no justice in giving judgments." Such is the result of all their oaths and covenants, that "judgment springeth up," yea, flourisheth; but, what judgment? Judgment, bitter and poisonous as hemlock, flourishes, as hemlock would flourish on ground broken up and prepared for it. They break up the ground, make the "furrows." They will not have any chance self-sown seed; they prepare the soil for harvest, full, abundant, regular, cleared of all besides. And what harvest? Not any wholesome plant, but poison. They cultivate injustice and wickedness, as if these were to be the fruits to be rendered to God from His own land. So Amos says, "Ye have turned judgment into gall or wormwood" Amos 6:12; Amos 5:7, and Habakkuk, "Judgment went forth perverted" Habakkuk 1:4.

Verse 5

The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of - (i. e., for) the calves of Beth-aven He calls them in this place "cow-calves," perhaps to denote their weakness and helplessness. So far from their idol being able to help "them, they" shall be anxious and troubled for their idols, lest these should be taken captive from them. The "Bethel (House of God)" of the patriarch Jacob, was now turned into "Bethaven, the house of vanity." This, from its old sacred memories, was a more celebrated place of the calf-worship than Dan. Hosea then gives to the calf of Bethel its precedence, and ranks both idols under its one name, as "calves of the house of vanity."

For the people thereof shall mourn over it - They had set up the idols, instead of God; so God calls them no longer His people, but "the people of the calf" whom they had chosen for their god; as Moab was called "the people of Chemosh" Numbers 21:29, its idol. They had joyed in it, not in God; now they, "its people" and its priests, should "mourn over" it, when unable to help itself, much less, them. Both their joy and their sorrow showed that they were without excuse, that they had "gone willingly after the" king's "commandment," serving it of their own free-will out of love, not out of fear of the king, and, neither out of love or fear, serving God purely.

For the glory thereof, because it is departed from it - The true glory of Israel was God; the Glory of God is in Himself. "The glory of the calves," for whom Ephraim had exchanged their God, was something quite outward to them, the gold of which they were made, and the rich offerings made to them. Both together became an occasion of their being carried captive. They mourned, not because they had offended God by their sin, but for the loss of that dumb idol, whose worship had beetn their sin, and which had brought these heavy woes upon them. Impenitent even under chastisement! The prophet does not mention any grief for "the despoiling of their country, the burning of their cities, the slaughter of their people, their shame". One only thing he names as moving them. Even then their one chief anxiety was, not that God was departed from them, but that their calf in which they had set their "glory," whereupon they so franticly relied, on which they had lavished their substance, their national distinction and disgrace, was gone. Without the grace of God people mourn, not their sins, but their idols.

Verse 6

It shall be also carried - (that is, "Itself also shall be carried"). Not Israel only shall be carried into captivity, but its god also. The victory over a nation was accounted of old a victory over its gods, as indeed it showed their impotence. Hence, the excuse made by the captains of Benhadad, that the gods of "Israel were gods of the hills, and not gods of the valleys" 1 Kings 20:23, 1 Kings 20:28, and God's vindication of His own Almightiness, which was thus denied. Hence, also the boast of Sennacherib by Rabshakeh, "have any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?" (2 Kings 18:33-35, add, 2 Kings 19:10-13; Numbers 21:29).

When God then, for the sin of His people, gave them into the hand of their enemies, He vindicated His own glory, first by avenging any insult offered to His worship, as in the capture of the ark by the Philistines, or Belshazzar's insolent and drunken abuse of the vessels of the temple; or by vindicating His servants, as in the case of Daniel and the three children, or by chastening pride, as in Nebuchadnezzar, and explaining and pointing His chastisement through His servant Daniel, or by prophecy, as of Cyrus by Isaiah and Daniel. To His own people, His chastisements were the vindication of His glory which they had dishonored, and the close of the long strife between the true prophets and the false. The captivity of the calf ended its worship, and was its final disgrace. The destruction of the temple and the captivity of its vessels and of God's people ended, not the worship, but the idolatries of Judah, and extended among their captors, and their captors' captors, the Medes and Persians, the knowledge of the One true God.

Unto Assyria, for a present to king Jareb - (or to a hostile or strifeful king. See the note above at Hosea 5:13.) Perhaps the name "Jareb" designates the Assyrian by that which was a characteristic of their empire, love of "strife." The history of their kings, as given by themselves in the newly-found inscriptions, is one warfare. To that same king, to whom they sent for aid in their weakness, from whom they hoped for help, and whom God named as what He knew and willed him to be to them, "hostile, strifeful," and "an avenger," should the object of their idolatry be carried in

triumph. They had trusted in the calf and in the Assyrians. The Assyrian, to whom they looked as the protector of their liberties, was to carry away their other trust, their god.

Ephraim shall receive shame - This shall be all his gain; this his purchase; this he had obtained for himself by his pride and willfulness and idolatry and ambition and wars: this is the end of all, as it is of all pursuits apart from God; this he "shall receive" from the Giver of all good, "shame." "And Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel." Ephraim's special "counsel" was that which Jeroboam "took" with the most worldly-wise of his people, a counsel which admirably served their immediate end, the establishment of a kingdom, separate from that of Judah. It was acutely devised; it seemed to answer its end for 230 years, so that Israel, until the latter part of the reign of Pekah, was strong, Judah, in comparison, weak. But it was "the sin wherewith he made Israel to sin," and for which God scattered him among the pagan. His wisdom became his destruction and his shame. The policy which was to establish his family and his kingdom, destroyed his own family in the next generation, and ultimately, his people, not by its failure, but by its success.

Verse 7

Her king is cut off like foam - (Or, more probably, "a straw) on the" (literally, "face of the) water." A bubble, or one of those little shreds which float in countless numbers on the surface of the water, give the same image of lightness, emptiness, worthlessness, a thing too light to sink, but driven impetuously, and unresistingly, here and there, at the impulse of the torrent which hurries it along. Such was the king, whom Israel had set in the highest place, in whom it had trusted, instead of God. So easily was Hoshea, their last king, swept away by the flood, which broke in on Ephraim, from Assyria. Piety is the only solidity; apart from piety all is emptiness.

Verse 8

The high places of Aven - that is, of vanity or iniquity. He had before called "Bethel, house of God," by the name of "Bethaven, house of vanity;" now he calls it "Aven, vanity" or "iniquity," as being the concentration of those qualities. Bethel was situated on a "hill," the "mount of Bethel," and, from different sides, people were said to "go up" (Joshua 16:1; 1 Samuel 13:2; above Hosea 4:13; Genesis 35:1; Judges 1:22; 1 Samuel 10:3; 2 Kings 2:23) to it. "The high place" often means the shrine, or "the house of the

high places." Jeroboam had built such at Bethel 1 Kings 12:31; many such already existed in his time, so that, "whoever would, he consecrated" as their "priests" 1 Kings 13:32-33. The high place or shrine, is accordingly said to be "built" 1 Kings 11:7, "broken down and burnt" 2 Kings 23:15. At times, they were tents, and so said to be "woven 2 Kings 23:7, made of garments of divers colors" Ezekiel 16:16. The calf then, probably, became a center of idolatry; many such "idol-shrines" were formed around it, on its mount, until Bethel became a metropolis of idolatry. This was "the sin of Israel," as being the source of all its sins.

The thorn and the thistle shall come up upon their altars - This pictures, not only the desolation of the place, as before Hosea 9:6, but the forced cessation of idolatry. Fire destroys, down to the root, all vegetable life which it has once touched. The thorn, once blackened by fire, puts out no fresh shoot. But now, these idol fires having been put out forever, from amid the crevices of the broken altars, "thorn and thistle" should grow freely as in a fallow soil. Where the victims aforetime "went up" is also a sacrificial term), or were offered, now the wild briars and thistles alone should "go up," and wave freely in undisputed possession. Ephraim had "multiplied altars," as God multiplied their "goods;" now their altars should be but monunments of the defeat of idolatry. They remained, but only as the grave-stones of the idols, once worshiped there.

They shall say to the mountains, cover us - Samaria and Bethel, the seats of the idolatry and of the kingdom of Israel, themselves both on heights, had both, near them, mountains higher than themselves. Such was to Bethel, the mountain on the East, where Abraham built an altar to the Lord Genesis 12:8; Samaria was encircled by them. Both were probably scenes of their idolatries; from both, the miseries of the dwellers of Bethel and Samaria could be seen. Samaria especially was in the center of a sort of amphitheater; itself, the spectacle. No help should those high places now bring to them in their need. The high hills round Samaria, when the tide of war had filled the valley around it, hemmed them in, the more hopelessly. There was no way, either to break through or to escape. The narrow passes, which might have been held, as flood gates against the enemy, would then be held against them. One only service could it seem, that their mountains could then render, to destroy them. So should they be freed from evils worse than the death of the body, and escape the gaze of people upon their misery. "They shall wish rather to die, than to see what will bring death."

“They shall say to the mountains on which they worshiped idols, fall on us, and anticipate the cruelty of the Assyrians and the extreme misery of captivity.” Nature abhors annihilation; man shrinks from the violent marring of his outward form; he clings, however debased, to the form which God gave him. What misery, then, when people long for, what their inmost being shrinks from!

The words of the prophet become a sort of proverbial saying for misery, which longs for death rather than life. The destruction of Samaria was the type of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and of every other final excision, when the measure of iniquity was filled, and there was neither hope nor remedy. This was the characteristic of the destruction of Samaria. They had been God‘s people; they were to be so no more. This was the characteristic of the destruction of Jerusalem, not by the Babylonians, after which it was restored, but by the Romans, when they had rejected Christ, and prayed, “His Blood be on us and on our children.” So will it be in the end of the world. Hence, our Lord uses the words Luke 23:30, to forewarns of the miseries of the destruction of Jerusalem, when the Jews hid themselves in caves for fear of the Romans; and John uses them to picture man‘s despair at the end of the world Revelation 6:16. “I dread” says Bernard, “the gnawing worm, and the living death. I dread to fall into the hands of a living death, and a dying life. This is “the second death,” which never out-killeth, yet which ever killeth. How would they long to die once, that they may not die forever! “They who say to the mountains, fall on us, and to the hills, cover us,” what do they will, but, by the aid of death, either to escape or to end death? “They shall seek death, but shall not find it, and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them,” saith John” Revelation 1:6.

Verse 9

O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah - There must have been great sin, on both sides, of Israel as well as Benjamin, when Israel punished the atrocity of Gibeah, since God caused Israel so to be smitten before Benjamin. Such sin had continued ever since, so that, although God, in His longsuffering, had hitherto spared them, “it was not of late only that they had deserved those judgments, although now at last only, God inflicted them.” “There” in Gibeah, “they stood.” Although smitten twice at Gibeah, and heavily chastened, there they were avengers of the sacredness of God‘s

law, and, in the end, "they stood; chastened but not killed." But now, none of the ten tribes took the side of God. Neither zeal for God, nor the greatness of the guilt, nor fear of judgment, nor the peril of utter ruin, induced any to set themselves against sin so great. The sin devised by one, diffused among the many, was burnt and branded into them, so that they never parted with it.: "The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them," i. e., it did not overtake them then, but it shall overtake them now. Or if we render, (as is more probable,) "shall not overtake them," it will mean, not a battle like that in Gibeah, terrible as that was, "shall" now "overtake them;" but one far worse. For, although the tribe of Benjamin was then reduced to six hundred men, yet the tribe still survived and flourished again; now the kingdom of the ten tribes, and the name of Ephraim, should be utterly blotted out.

Verse 10

It is in My desire that I should chastise them - God "doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men" Lamentations 3:33. Grievous then must be the cause of punishment, when God not only chastens people, but, so to speak, longs to chasten them, when He chastens them without any let or hindrance from His mercy. Yet so God had said; "It shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good and to multiply you, so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you and to bring you to nought" Deuteronomy 28:63. God willed to enforce His justice, with no reserve whatever from His mercy. His whole mind, so to speak, is to punish them. God is "without passions." Yet, in order to impress on us the truth, that one day there will, to some, be "judgment without mercy" James 2:13, He speaks as one, whose longing could not be satisfied, until the punishment were executed. So He says, "I will ease Me of Mine adversaries" Isaiah 1:24; "Mine anger shall be accomplished and I will cause My fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted" Ezekiel 5:13.

And the people shall be gathered against him - "As all the other tribes were gathered against Benjamin at Gibeah to destroy it, so, although that war did not overtake them, now "against him," i. e., against Ephraim or the ten tribes, "shall be gathered" divers "peoples" and nations, to destroy them." The number gathered against them shall be as overwhelming, as that of all the tribes of Israel against the one small tribe of Benjamin.: "As of old, they ought to have bound themselves to extinguish this apostasy in its birth, as they bound themselves to avenge the horrible wickedness at

Gibeah. But since they bound themselves not against sin, but to it, God says that He would gather Pagan nations against them, to punish their obstinate rebellion against Himself. They who will neither be drawn by piety, nor corrected by moderate chastisements, must needs be visited by sharper punishments, that some, who will not strive to the uttermost against the mercy of God, may be saved."

When they shall bind themselves in their two furrows - They "bind themselves" and Satan "binds them" to their sin. In harmony and unity in nothing else, they will bind themselves, and plow like two oxen together, adding furrow to furrow, joining on line to line of sin. They who had thrown off the light and easy yoke of God, who were ever like a restive, untamed, heifer, starting aside from the yoke, would "bind" and band themselves steadily in their own ways of sin, cultivating sin, and in that sin should destruction overtake them. People who are unsteady and uneven in everything besides, will be steadfast in preening sin; they who will submit to no constraint, human or divine, will, in their slavery to their passions, submit to anything. No slavery is so heavy as that which is selfimposed.

This translation has followed an old Jewish tradition, expressed by the vowels of the text, and old Jewish authorities. With other vowels, it may be rendered, literally, "in their binding to their two transgressions," which gives the same sense, "because they bound themselves to their two transgressions," or, passively, "when they are bound, on account of their two transgressions." The "two transgressions," may designate the two calves, "the sin of Israel," or the twofold guilt of fornication, spiritual, and in the body; the breach of both tables of God's law; or as Jeremiah says, "My people hath committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water" Jeremiah 2:13.: "This could not be said of any other nation, which knew not God. For if any such worshiped false gods, they committed only one transgression; but this nation, in which God was known, by declining to idolatry, is truly blamed as guilty of "two transgressions;" they left the true God, and for, or against, Him they worshiped other gods. For he hath twofold guilt, who, knowing good, rather chooseth evil; but "he" single, who, knowing no good, taketh evil for good. That nation then, both when, after seeing many wonderful works of God, it made and worshiped one calf in the wilderness; and when, forsaking the house of David and the temple of the Lord, it made itself two calves; yea, and so often as it

worshiped those gods of the beathen; and yet more, when it asked that Barabbas should be released but that Christ should be crucified, committed two transgressions, rejecting the good, electing the evil; "setting sweet for bitter, and bitter for sweet; setting darkness as light, and light as darkness" Isaiah 5:20.

Verse 11

Ephraim is an heifer that is taught and that loveth to tread out the corn - The object of the metaphor in these three verses seems to be, to picture, under operations of husbandry, what God willed and trained His people to do, how they took as much pains in evil, as He willed them to do for good. One thing only they did "which" He willed, but not because He willed it - what pleased themselves. Corn was threshed in the East chiefly by means of oxen, who were either driven round and round, so as to trample it out with their feet, or drew a cylinder armed with iron, or harrow-shaped planks, set with sharp stones which at the same time cut up the straw for provender. The treading out the grain was an easy and luxurious service, since God had forbidden to "muzzle the ox" Deuteronomy 25:4, while doing it. It pictures then the sweet gentle ways by which God wins us to His service. Israel would serve thus far, for she liked the service, "she was accustomed" to it, and "she loved it," but she would do no more. "She waxed fat and kicked" Deuteronomy 32:15.

: "The heifer when accustomed to the labor of treading out the corn, mostly, even unconstrained, returns to the same labor. So the mind of the ungodly, devoted to the slaveries of this world, and accustomed to the fatigues of temporal things, even if it may have leisure for itself, hastens to subject itself to earthly toils, and, inured to its miserable conversation, seeks the renewal of toil, and will not, though it may, cease from the yoke of this world's slavery. This yoke our Lord would remove from the necks of His disciples, saying, "Take heed, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with cares of this life, and that day come upon you unawares" Luke 21:34. And again, "Come unto Me, all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take My yoke upon you.": "Some, in order to appear somewhat in this world, overload themselves with earthly toils, and although, amid their labors, they feel their strength fail, yet, overcome by love of earthly things, they delight in their fatigue. To these it is said by the prophet, "Ephraim is a heifer taught and loving to tread out the corn." They

ask that they may be oppressed; in rest, they deem that they have lighted unto a great peril."

And I passed over her fair neck - handling her gently and tenderly, as men put the yoke gently on a young untamed animal, and inure it softly to take the yoke upon it. Yet "to pass over", especially when it is said of God, always signifies inflictions and troubles." To pass over sins, is to remit them; to pass over the sinner, is to punish him. "I will make Ephraim to ride or I will make it," i. e., the yoke, "to ride on Ephraim's" neck, as the same word is used for "place the hand on the bow;" or, perhaps better, "I will set a rider on Ephraim," who should tame and subdue him. Since he would not submit himself freely to the easy yoke of God, God would set a ruler upon him, who should be his master. Thus, the Psalmist complains, "Thou hast made men to ride on our head" Psalm 66:12, directing us at their pleasure.

: "‹The beauty of the neck' designates those who sin and take pleasure in their sins. That passing over or ascending, said both in the past and the future, ‹I passed, I will make to ride,' signifies that what He purposes is most certain. It expresses that same vengeance as, ‹Ye are a stiffnecked people; I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and cosume thee' Exodus 33:5. The ‹beauty' of the ‹neck' here is the same as the ornament there, when the Lord says, ‹therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.' As long as the sinner goes adorned, i. e., is proud in his sins, as long as he stiffens his fair neck, self-complacent, taking pleasure in the ills which he has done, God, in a measure, knows not what to do to him; mercy knows not how, apart from the severity of judgment, to approach him; and so after the sentence of the judge, ‹thou art a stiffnecked people, etc.' He gives the counsel ‹put off thine ornaments etc.' i. e., humble thyself in penitence, that I may have mercy upon thee."

Judah shall plow, Jacob shall break his clods - In the will of God, Judah and Israel were to unite in His service, Judah first, Jacob, after him, breaking the clods, which would hinder the seed from shooting up. Judah being mentioned in the same incidental way, as elsewhere by Hosea, it may be, that he would speak of what should follow on Ephraim's chastisement.: "When they shall see this, the two tribes shall no longer employ themselves in treading out the grain, but shall plow. To "tread out the corn" is to act "in hope of present gain; to "plow," is to labor in that, which has no instant fruit, but promiseth it hereafter, i. e., the fulfillment of God's commands."

“Jacob” will then be the remnant of the ten tribes, who, at Hezekiah‘s invitation, out of Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, Asher, and Zebulun, joined in celebrating the passover at Jerusalem, and subsequently in destroying idolatry Hosea 1:11. Here, again, he unites them in one, preparing His way first in themselves, then, in others. Judah is placed first, for to him was the promise in his forefather, the patriarch, and then in David. Ephraim was to be partaker of his blessings, by being united to him. The image of the heifer has been dropped. He had spoken of them as farmers; as such he addresses them.

Verse 12

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy - Literally, “in the proportion of mercy,” not in proportion to what you have sown, nor what justice would give, but beyond all deserts, “in the proportion of mercy;” i. e., “according to the capacity and fullness of the mercy of God; what becometh the mercy of God, which is boundless,” which overlooketh man‘s failings, and giveth an infinite reward for poor imperfect labor. As our Lord says, “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together and running over, shall men give into your bosom” Luke 6:38.: “If the earth giveth thee larger fruits than it has received, how much more shall the requiting of mercy repay thee manifold more than thou gavest!” Sowing and reaping always stand over against each other, as labor and reward. “He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” 2 Corinthians 9:6.

And, “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. In due season we shall reap, if we faint not” Galatians 6:7-9. We are bidden “to sow to ourselves,” for, “our goodness reacheth not to God” Psalm 16:2; our‘s is the gain, if we love God, the Fountain of all good. This reward, “according to mercy,” is in both worlds. it is in this world also. For “grace well used draws more grace.” God giveth “grace upon grace” John 1:16; so that each good deed, the fruit of grace, is the seed-corn of larger grace. “If thou humble thyself, it stimulates thee to humble thyself more. If thou prayest, thou longest to pray more. If thou givest alms, thou wishest to give more.” It is in the world to come. For, says a holy man, “our works do not pass away as it seems, but each thing done in time, is sown as the Seed of eternity. The simple will be amazed, when from this slight seed he shall see the copious harvest arise,

good or evil, according as the seed was." "Thou seekest two sheaves, rest and glory. They shall reap glory and rest, who have sown toil and self-abasement".

Break up your fallow ground - This is not the order of husbandry. The ground was already plowed, harrowed, sown. Now he bids her anew, "Break up your fallow ground." The Church breaks up her own fallow ground, when she stirs up anew the decaying piety of her own members; she breaks up fallow ground, when, by preaching the Gospel of Christ, she brings new people into His fold. And for us too, one sowing sufficeth not. It must be no surface-sowing. And "the soil of our hearts must ever be anew cleansed; for no one in this mortal life is so perfect, in piety, that noxious desires will not spring up again in the heart, us tares in the well-tilled field."

For it is time to seek the Lord, until He come and rain righteousness upon you - Or better, "until he shall come and teach you righteousness." To "rain righteousness" is the same image as Solomon uses of Christ; "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth" Psalm 72:6, and Isaiah, "drop down ye heavens from above and let the skies pour down righteousness" Isaiah 45:8. It expresses in picture-language how He, who is "our Righteousness," came down from heaven, to give life to us, who were dried and parched up and withered, when the whole face of our mortal nature was as dead. Yet there is nothing to indicate that the prophet is here using imagery. The Hebrew word is used very rarely in the meaning, to "rain;" in that of teaching, continually, and that, in exactly the same idiom as here. One office of our Lord was to teach. Nicodemus owned Him, "as a teacher sent from" God John 3:2. The Samaritans looked to the Messiah, as one who should "teach all things" John 4:25. The prophets foretold that He should "teach us His ways" Isaiah 2:3, that He should be a "witness unto the people" Isaiah 55:4.

The prophet bids them "seek diligently," and perseveringly, "not leaving off or desisting," if they should not at once find, but continuing the search, quite "up to" the time when they should find. His words imply the need of perseverance and patience, which should stop short of nothing but God's own time for finding. The prophet, as is the way of the prophets, goes on to Christ, who was ever in the prophets' hearts and hopes. The words could only be understood improperly of God the Father. God does not "come," who is everywhere. He ever was among His people, nor did He will to be among them otherwise than heretofore. No coming of God, as God, was

looked for, to "teach righteousness." Rather, the time was coming, when He would be less visibly among them than before. Among the ten tribes, as a distinct people, He would shortly be no more, either by prophecy, or in worship, or by any perceptible token of His providence. From Judah also He was about, although at a later period, to withdraw the kingdom of David, and the Urim and Thummira, and the Shechinah, or visible presence. Soon after the captivity, prophecy itself was to cease. But "the coming of Christ the patriarchs and holy men all along desired to see: Abraham saw it and was glad John 8:56. Jacob longed for it Genesis 49:18. The law and the prophets directed to it, so that there were always in Israel such as waited for it, as appears by the example of old Simeon and Joseph of Arimathaea, and those many prophets and righteous men whom our Saviour speaks of Luke 2:25; Mark 15:43; Matthew 13:17. "He that should come" seems to have been a known title for Him; since John Baptist sent two of his disciples, to say unto Him, "Art thou He that shall come, or do we look for another?" Matthew 11:3.

The prophet saith then, "Now is the time to seek the Lord, and prepare for the coming of Christ, for He, when He cometh, will teach you, yea, will give you true righteousness, whereby ye shall be righteous before God, and heirs of His kingdom.": "So God speaketh through Isaiah, "keep ye judgment and do justice, for My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed." In both places, people are warned, "to prepare the way" to receive Christ, which was the office assigned to the law. As Paul saith, "Whereunto was the law? It was added because of transgressions." It was given to restrain the passions of people by fear of punishment, lest they should so defile themselves by sin, as to despise the mercy and office of Christ. It was given to prepare our souls by love of righteousness and mercy to receive Christ, that he might enrich them with the divine wealth of righteousness.": "If Israel of old were so to order their ways in expectation of Him, and that they might be prepared for His coming; and if their neglecting to do this made them liable to such heavy judgments, how much severer judgments shall they be worthy of, who, after His Coming and raining upon them the plentiful showers of heavenly doctrine, and abundant measure of His grace and gifts of His Holy Spirit, do, for want of breaking up the fallow ground of their hearts, suffer His

holy word to be lost on them. The fearful doom of such unfruitful Christians is set down by Paul" Hebrews 6:4-8.

The present is ever the time to seek the Lord. "Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the Day of Salvation" 2 Corinthians 6:2. As Hosea says, "it is time to seek the Lord until He come," so Paul saith, "unto them that look for Him, shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation" Hebrews 9:28.

Verse 13

Ye have plowed wickedness - They not only did not that which God commanded, but they did the exact contrary. They cultivated wickedness. They broke up their fallow ground, yet to sow, not wheat, but tares. They did not leave it even to grow of itself, although even thus, on the natural soil of the human heart, it yields a plenteous harvest; but they bestowed their labor on it, plowed it, sowed, and as they sowed, so they reaped, an abundant increase of it. "They brought their ill doings to a harvest, and laid up as in provision the fruits thereof." Iniquity and the results of iniquity, were the gain of all their labor. Of all their toil, they shall have no fruits, except the iniquity itself.: "By the plowing, sowing, eating the fruits, he marks the obstinacy of incorrigible sinners, who begin ill, go on to worse, and in the worst come to an end. Then too, when the corrupted soul labors with the purpose of a deed of sin, and resolves in its inmost thoughts, how it may bring the ungodly will into effect in deed, it is like one plowing or sowing. But when, having completed the work of iniquity, it exults that it has done ill, it is like one reaping. When further it has broken out so far as, in pride of heart to defend its sins against the law of God prohibiting them, and goes on unconcerned in impenitence, he is like one who, after harvest, eats the fruits stored up."

Ye have eaten the fruit of lies - They had been full of "lies" Hosea 4:1-2; Hosea 7:3; they had "lied" against God by hypocrisy Hosea 5:7; Hosea 6:7; Hosea 7:16; Hosea 10:4 and idolatry; they had "spoken lies against Him" Hosea 7:13; by denying that He gave them what He bestowed upon them, and ascribing it to their idols Hosea 2:5, Hosea 2:12. All iniquity is a lie. Such then should be "the fruit" which they tasted, on which they fed. It should not profit, nor satisfy them. It should not merely be empty, as in the case of those who are said to "feed on ashes" Isaiah 44:20, but hurtful. As

Isaiah saith, “they conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity. They hatch cockatrice‘ eggs, and weave the spider‘s web; he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed, breaketh out into a viper” Isaiah 59:4-5. “Gain deceives, lust deceives, gluttony deceives; they yield no true delight; they satisfy not, they disgust; and they end in misery of body and soul.” “Bodily delights,” says a father, “when absent, kindle a vehement longing; when had and eaten, they satiate and disgust the eater. Spiritual delights are distasteful, when unknown; when possessed, they are longed for; and the more those who hunger after them feed upon them, the more they are hungered for. Bodily delights please, untasted; when tasted, they displease; spiritual, when untasted, are held cheap; when experienced, they please. In bodily delights, appetite generates satiety; satiety, disgust. In spiritual, appetite produceth satiety; satiety appetite. For spiritual delights increase longing in the soul, while they satisfy. For the more their sweetness is perceived, so much the more is “that” known which is loved more eagerly. Unpossessed, they cannot be loved, because their sweetness is unknown.”

Because thou didst trust in thy way - “Thy way,” i. e., not God‘s. They forsook God‘s way, followed “ways of wickedness and misbelief.” While displeasing God, they trusted in the worship of the calves and in the help of Egypt and Assyria, “making flesh their arm, and departing from the living God.” So long as a man mistrusts his ways of sin, there is hope of his conversion amid any depths of sin. When “he trusts in his ways,” all entrance is closed against the grace of God. He is as one dead; he not only justifies himself, but is self-justified. There is nothing in him, neither love nor fear, which can be awakened.

Verse 14

Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people - Literally, “peoples.” Such was the immediate fruit of departing from God and trusting in human beings and idols. They trusted in their own might, and the multitude of their people. That might should, through intestine division and anarchy, become their destruction. As in the dislocated state of the Roman empire under the first emperors, so in lsrael, the successive usurpers arose out of their armies, armies, “the multitude of their mighty ones,” in whom they trusted. The “confused noise” of “war” should first “arise in” the midst of their own “peoples.” They are spoken of not as one, but as many; “peoples,” not, as God willed them to be, one people, for they had no principle of oneness or stability, who had no legitimate succession, either of

kings or of priests; who had "made kings, but not through" God. Each successor had the same right as his predecessor, the right of might, and furnished an example and precedent and sanction to the murderer of himself or of his son.

All thy fortresses shall be spoiled - Literally, "the whole of thy fortresses shall be wasted." He speaks of the whole as one. Their fenced cities, which cut off all approach, should be one waste. They had forsaken God, their "fortress and deliverer," and so He gave up their fortresses to the enemy, so that all and each of them were laid waste. The confusion, begun among themselves, prepared for destruction by the enemy. Of this he gives one awful type.

As Shalman spoiled - (or wasted) Beth-Arbel in the day of battle "Shalman" is, no doubt, "Shalmaneser king of Assyria," who came up against Hoshea, early in his reign, "and he became a servant to him and brought him a present 2 Kings 17:3. Shalman" being the characteristic part of the name, the prophet probably omitted the rest, on the ground of the rhythm. "Beth-Arbel" is a city, which the Greeks, retaining, in like way, only the latter and characteristic half of the name, called Arbela.

Of the several cities called Arbela, that celebrated in Grecian history, was part of the Assyrian empire. Two others, one "in the mountain-district of Pella", and so on the East side of Jordan, the other between Sepphoris and Tiberias, (and so in Naphthali) must, together with the countries in which they lay, have fallen into the bands of the Assyrians in the reign of "Tiglath-pileser," who "took - Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali" 2 Kings 15:29, in the reign of Pekah. The whole country, East of Jordan, being now in the hands of Shalmaneser, his natural approach to Samaria was over the Jordan, through the valley or plain of Jezreel. Here was the chief wealth of Israel, and the fittest field for the Assyrian horse. Over the Jordan then, from where Israel itself came when obedient to God, from where came the earlier instruments of God's chastisements, came doubtless the host of Shalmaneser, along the "great plain" of Esdraelon. "In that plain" also lay an "Arbela," "nine miles from Legion". Legion itself was at the Western extremity of the plain, as Scythopolis or Bethshean lay at the East.

It was about fifteen miles West of Nazareth, and ten miles from Jezreel. Beth-Arbel must accordingly have lain somewhere in the middle of the

valley of Jezreel. Near this Arbela, then, Israel must have sustained a decisive defeat from Shalmaneser. For the prophet does not say only, that he "spoiled Beth-Arbel," but that he did this "in a day of battle." Here Hosea, probably in the last years of his life, saw the fulfillment of his own earlier prophecy; and "God brake the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel" Hosea 1:5.

The mother was dashed to pieces on the children - It was an aggravation of this barbarity, that, first the infants were dashed against the stones before their mother's eyes, then the mothers themselves were dashed upon them. Syrians 2 Kings 8:12, Assyrians, Medes Isaiah 13:16, Babylonians Psalm 137:8-9, used this barbarity. India has borne witness to us of late, how pagan nature remains the same.

It may be that, in the name "Betharbel," the prophet alludes to the name "Bethel.": As "Betharbel," i. e., "the house," or it may be the idolatrous "temple of Arbel," rescued it not, but was rather the cause of its destruction, so shall Bethel. The holy places of Israel, the memorials of the free love of God to their forefathers, were pledges to "them," the children of those forefathers, that, so long as they continued in the faith of their fathers, God the Unchangeable, would continue those same mercies to them. When they "turned" Bethel, "the house of God," into Bethaven, "house of vanity," then it became, like Betharbel, literally, "house of ambush of God," the scene and occasion of their desolation.

Verse 15

So shall Bethel do unto you - God was the judge, who condemned them so to suffer from the enemy. The Assyrian was the instrument of the wrath of God. But, in order to point out the moral government of God, the prophet says, neither that God did it, nor that the Assyrian did it, but Bethel, once "the house of God," now the place where they dishonored God, "because of your great wickedness," literally, "the wickedness of your wickedness." In their wickedness itself, there was an essence of wickedness, malice within malice.

In a morning shall the king of Israel be cut off - Hoshea was cut off finally, leaving neither root nor branch. His kingdom perished; he left no memorial. Like the morning, he seemed to dawn on the troubles of his people: he sinned against God: and "in a morning," the kingdom, in "the multitude of" whose "mighty men" he trusted, "was cut off" forever.

HOSEA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

When Israel was a child, then I loved him - God loved Israel, as He Himself formed it, ere it corrupted itself. He loved it for the sake of the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as he saith, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" Malachi 1:2. Then, when it was weak, helpless, oppressed by the Egyptians, afflicted, destitute, God loved him, cared for him, delivered him from oppression, and called him out of Egypt.: "When did He love Israel? When, by His guidance, Israel regained freedom, his enemies were destroyed, he was fed with "food from heaven," he heard the voice of God, and received the law from Him. He was unformed in Egypt; then he was informed by the rules of the law, so as to be matured there. He was a child in that vast waste. For he was nourished, not by solid food, but by milk, i. e., by the rudiments of piety and righteousness, that he might gradually attain the strength of a man. So that law was a schoolmaster, to retain Israel as a child, by the discipline of a child, until the time should come when all, who despised not the heavenly gifts, should receive the Spirit of adoption. The prophet then, in order to show the exceeding guilt of Israel, says, "When Israel was a child," (in the wilderness, for then he was born when he bound himself to conform to the divine law, and was not yet matured) "I loved him," i. e., I gave him the law, priesthood, judgments, precepts, instructions; I loaded him with most ample benefits; I preferred him to all nations, expending on him, as on My chief heritage and special possession, much watchful care and pains."

I called My son out of Egypt - As He said to Pharaoh, "Israel is My son, even My firstborn; let My son go, that he may serve Me" Exodus 4:22-23. God chose him out of all nations, to be His special people. Yet also God chose him, not for himself, but because He willed that Christ, His only Son, should "after the flesh" be born of him, and for, and in, the Son, God called His people, "My son.": "The people of Israel was called a son, as regards the elect, yet only for the sake of Him, the only begotten Son, begotten, not adopted, who, "after the flesh," was to be born of that people, that, through His Passion, He might bring many sons to glory, disdaining not to have them as brethren and co-heirs. For, had He not come, who was to come, the Well Beloved Son of God, Israel too could never, anymore than the other nations, have been called the son of so great a Father, as the Apostle,

himself of that people, saith, “For we were, by nature, children of wrath, even as others” Ephesians 2:3.

Since, however, these words relate to literal Israel, the people whom God brought out by Moses, how were they fulfilled in the infant Jesus, when He was brought back out of Egypt, as Matthew teaches us, they were?” Matthew 2:15.

Because Israel himself was a type of Christ, and for the sake of Him who was to be born of the seed of Israel, did God call Israel, “My son;” for His sake only did he deliver him. The two deliverances, of the whole Jewish people, and of Christ the Head, occupied the same position in God‘s dispensations. He rescued Israel, whom He called His son, in its childish and infantine condition, at the very commencement of its being, as a people. His true Son by Nature, Christ our Lord, He brought up in His Infancy, when He began to show forth His mercies to us in Him. Both had, by His appointment, taken refuge in Egypt; both were, by His miraculous call to Moses in the bush, to Joseph in the dream, recalled from it. Matthew apparently quotes these words, not to prove anything, but in order to point out the relation of God‘s former dealings with the latter, the beginning and the close, what relates to the body, and what relates to the Head. He tells us that the former deliverance had its completion in Christ, that in His deliverance was the full solid completion of that of Israel; and that then indeed it might, in its completest fullness, be said, “Out of Egypt have I called My Son.”

When Israel was brought out of Egypt, the figure took place; when Christ was called, the reality was fulfilled. The act itself, on the part of God, was prophetic. When He delivered Israel, and called him His firstborn, He willed, in the course of time, to bring up from Egypt His Only-Begotten Son. The words are prophetic, because the event which they speak of, was prophetic. “They speak of Israel as one collective body, and, as it were, one person, called by God “My son,” namely, by adoption, still in the years of innocency, and beloved by God, called of God out of Egypt by Moses, as Jesus, His true Son, was by the Angel.” The following verses are not prophetic, because in them the prophet no longer speaks of Israel as one, but as composed of the many sinful individuals in it. Israel was a prophetic

people, in regard to this dispensation of God toward him; not in regard to his rebellions and sins.

Verse 2

As they called them, so they went from them - The prophet changes his tone, no longer speaking of that one first call of God to Israel as a whole, whereby He brought out Israel as one man, His one son; which one call he obeyed. Here he speaks of God‘s manifold calls to the people, throughout their whole history, which they as often disobeyed, and not disobeyed only, but went contrariwise. “They called them.” Whether God employed Moses, or the judges, or priests, or kings, or prophets, to call them, it was all one. Whenever or by whomsoever they were called, they turned away in the opposite direction, to serve their idols. They proportioned and fitted, as it were, their disobedience to God‘s long-suffering.: “Then chiefly they threw off obedience, despised their admonitions, and worked themselves up the more franticly to a zeal for the sin which they had begun.” “They,” God‘s messengers, “called; so,” in like manner, “they went away from them. They sacrificed unto Baalim,” i. e., their many Baals, in which they cherished idolatry, cruelty, and fleshly sin.: So “when Christ came and called them manifoldly, as in the great day of the feast, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink,” the more diligently He called them, the more diligently they went away from Him, and returned to their idols, to the love and possession of riches and houses and pleasures, for whose sake they despised the truth.”

Verse 3

I taught Ephraim also to go - Literally, “and I set Ephraim on his feet;” i. e., while they were rebelling, I was helping and supporting them, as a nurse doth her child, teaching it to go with little steps, step by step, “accustoming it to go by little and little without weariness;” and not only so, but “taking them by their arms;” or it may be equally translated, “He took them in His arms,” i. e., God not only gently “taught” them “to walk,” but when they were wearied, “He took them up in His arms,” as a nurse doth a child when tired with its little attempts to walk. Such was the love and tender care of God, guiding and upholding Israel in His ways which He taught him, guarding him from weariness, or, if wearied, taking him in the arms of His mercy and refreshing him. So Moses says, “In the wilderness thou hast seen, how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his

son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came unto this place" Deuteronomy 1:31; and he expostulates with God, "Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that Thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth his sucking child, unto the land which Thou swarest unto their father's?" Numbers 11:12.: "Briefly yet magnificently doth this place hint at the wondrous patience of God, whereof Paul too speaks, "for forty years suffered He their manner's in the wilderness" Acts 13:18.

For as a nursing father beareth patiently with a child, who hath not yet come to years of discretion, and, although at times he be moved to strike it in return, yet mostly he sootheth its childish follies with blandishments, and, ungrateful though it be, carries it in his arms, so the Lord God, whose are these words, patiently bore with the unformed people, ignorant of the spiritual mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and although He killed the bodies of many of them in the wilderness yet the rest He soothed with many and great miracles, "leading them about, and instructing them, (as Moses says) keeping them as the apple of His eye" Deuteronomy 32:10.

But they knew not that I healed them - They laid it not to heart, and therefore what they knew with their understanding was worse than ignorance.: "I who was a Father, became a nurse, and Myself carried My little one in My arms, that he should not be hurt in the wilderness, or scared by heat or darkness. By day I was a cloud; by night, a column of fire, that I might by My light illumine, and heal those whom I had protected. And when they had sinned and had made the calf, I gave them place for repentance, and they knew not that I healed them, so as, for forty years, to close the wound of idolatry, restore them to their former health."

: "The Son of God carried us in His arms to the Father, when He went forth carrying His Cross, and on the wood of the Cross stretched out His arms for our redemption. Those too doth Christ carry daily in His arms, whom He continually entreateth, comforteth, preserveth, so gently, that with much alacrity and without any grievous hindrance they perform every work of God, and with heart enlarged run, rather than walk, the way of God's commandments. Yet do these need great caution, that they be clothed with great circumspection and humility, and despise not others. Else Christ would say of them, "They knew not that I healed them."

Verse 4

I drew them with the cords of a man - o“Wanton heifers such as was Israel, are drawn with ropes; but although Ephraim struggled against Me, I would not draw him as a beast, but I drew him as a man, (not a servant, but a son) with cords of love.” “Love is the magnet of love.”: “The first and chief commandment of the law, is not of fear, but of love, because He willeth those whom He commandeth, to be sons rather than servants.”: “Our Lord saith, ‹No man cometh unto Me, except the father who hath sent me, draw him.‘ He did not say, lead ‹him,‘ but ‹draw him.‘ This violence is done to the heart, not to the body. Why marvel? Believe and thou comest; love and thou art drawn. Think it not a rough and uneasy violence: it is sweet, alluring; the sweetness draws thee. Is not a hungry sheep drawn, when the grass is shewn it? It is not, I ween, driven on in body, but is bound tight by longing. So do thou too come to Christ. Do not conceive of long journeyings. When thou believest, then thou comest. For to Him who is everywhere, people come by loving, not by traveling.” So the Bride saith, “draw me and I will run after Thee” John 12:32; and Paul, “I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” Galatians 2:20. This most loving drawing, our dullness and weakness needoth, who ever, without grace, grovel amidst vile and earthly things.”

“All the methods and parts of God‘s government are twined together, as so many twisted cords of love from Him, so ordered, that they ought to draw man with all his heart to love Him again.”: “Man, the image of the Mind of God, is impelled to zeal for the service of God, not by fear, but by love. No band is mightier, nor constrains more firmly all the feelings of the mind. For it holdeth not the body enchained, while the mind revolteth and longeth to break away, but it so bindeth to itself the mind and will, that it should will, long for, compass, nought beside, save how, even amid threats of death, to obey the commands of God. Bands they are, but bands so gentle and so passing sweet, that we must account them perfect freedom and the highest dignity.”

And I was to them as they that take off - (literally, “that lift up”) the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them Thus explained, the words carry on the description of God‘s goodness, that He allowed not the yoke of slavery to weigh heavy upon them, as He saith, “I am the Lord your God, Which brought you out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondmen, and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go

upright" Leviticus 26:13; and God appealeth to them, "Wherein have I wearied thee? testify against Me" Micah 6:3.

But the words seem more naturally to mean, "I was to them," in their sight, I was regarded by them, "as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws," i. e., that raise the yoke, (not being already upon them) to place it "over their jaws." "For plainly the yoke never rests on the jaws, but only passed over them, either when put on the neck, or taken off." This, God seemed to them to be doing, ever placing some new yoke or constraint upon them. "And I, God" adds, all the while "was placing meat before them;" i. e., while God was taking all manner of care of them, and providing for them "all things richly to enjoy," He was regarded by them as one who, instead of "laying food before them, was lifting the yoke over their jaws." God did them all good, and they thought it all hardship.

Verse 5

He shall not return to Egypt - Some had probably returned already to Egypt; the rest were looking to Egypt for help, and rebelling against the Assyrian, (whose servant their king Hoshea had become), and making alliance with So king of Egypt. The prophet tells them, as a whole, that they shall not return to Egypt to which they looked, but should have the Assyrian for their king, whom they would not. "They refused to return" to God, who lovingly called them; therefore, what they desired, they should not have; and what they feared, that they should have. They would not have God for their king; therefore "the Assyrian" should "be their king," and a worse captivity than that of Egypt should befall them. For, from "that" they were delivered; from this, now hanging over them, never should they be restored.

Verse 6

And the sword shall abide on his cities - Literally, "shall light, shall whirl" down upon. It shall come with violence upon them as a thing whirled with force, and then it shall alight and abide, to their destruction; as Jeremiah says, "a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, a grievous whirlwind; it shall fall grievously (literally, whirl down) on the head of the wicked" Jeremiah 23:19. As God said to David, after the murder of Uriah, "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house" 2 Samuel 12:10, so as to Israel, whose kings were inaugurated by bloodshed. By God's appointment, "blood will have blood." Their own sword first came down and rested upon them; then the sword of the Assyrian. So after they

“had killed the Holy One and the Just,” the sword of the Zealots came down and rested upon them, before the destruction by the Romans.

And shall consume his branches - that is, his mighty men. It is all one, whether the mighty men are so called, by metaphor, from the “branches of” a tree, or from the “bars” of a city, made out of those branches. Their mighty men, so far from escaping for their might, should be the first to perish.

And devour them, because of their own counsels - Their counsels, wise after this world‘s wisdom, were without God, against the counsels of God. Their destruction then should come from their own wisdom, as it is said, “Let them fall by their own counsels” Psalm 5:10, and Job saith, “He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and the counsel of the cunning is carried headlong” Job 5:13, i. e., it is the clean contrary of what they intend or plan; they purpose, as they think, warily; an unseen power whirls their scheme on and precipitates it. “And his own counsel shall cast him down” Job 18:7; and above; “Israel shall be ashamed through his own counsels” Job 10:6. Hoshea‘s conspiracy with So, which was to have been his support against Assyria, brought Assyria against him, and his people into captivity.

Verse 7

And My people are bent to backsliding from Me - Literally, “are hung to it!” as we say, “a man‘s whole being “hangs” on a thing.” A thing “hung to” or “on” another, sways to and fro within certain limits, but its relation to that on which it is hung, remains immovable. Its power of motion is restrained within those limits. So Israel, so the sinner, however he veer to and fro in the details and circumstances of his sin, is fixed and immovable in his adherence to his sin itself. Whatever else Israel did, on one thing his whole being, as a nation, depended, on “backsliding” or aversion from God. The political existence of Israel, as a separate kingdom, depended on his worship of the calves, “the sin wherewith” Jeroboam “made Israel to sin.” This was the ground of their “refusing to return” Hosea 11:5, that, through habitual sin, they were no longer in their own power: they were fixed in evil.

Though they called them to the most High - Literally, “called him.” As one man, the prophets called Israel; as one man, Israel refused to return; “none at all would exalt” Him, literally, “together he exalteth Him not.”

Verse 8

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? - o"God is infinitely just and infinitely merciful. The two attributes are so united in Him, yea, so one in Him who is always one, and in whose counsels "there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning," that the one doth not ever thwart the proceeding of the other. Yet, in order to shew that our ills are from our own ill-deserts, not from any pleasure of His in inflicting ill, and that what mercy He sheweth, is from His own goodness, not from any in us, God is represented in this empassioned expression as in doubt, and (so to say) divided between justice and mercy, the one pleading against the other. At the last, God so determines, that both should have their share in the issue, and that Israel should be both justly punished and mercifully spared and relieved."

God pronounces on the evil deserts of Israel, even while He mitigates His sentence. The depth of the sinner's guilt reflects the more vividly the depth of God's mercy. In saying, "how shall I make thee as Admah?" how "shall I set thee as Zeboim?" He says, in fact, that they were, for their sins, worthy to be utterly destroyed, with no trace, no memorial, save that eternal desolation like the five "cities of the plain," of which were Sodom and Gomorrah, which God "hath set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" Jude 1:7. Such was their desert. But God says, with inexpressible tenderness, "Mine heart is turned within Me" literally, "upon Me or against Me," so as to be a burden to Him; as we say of the heart, that it is "heavy." God deigneth to speak as if His love was heavy, or a weight upon Him, while He thought of the punishment which their sins deserved.

My heart is turned - o"As soon as I had spoken evil against thee, mercy prevailed, tenderness touched Me; the tenderness of the Father overcame the austerity of the Judge."

My repentings are kindled together, - or My strong compassions are kindled. i. e., with the heat and glow of love; as the disciples say, "Did not our hearts burn within us?" Luke 24:32, and as it is said of Joseph "his bowels did yearn Genesis 43:30 (literally, were hot) toward his brother;" and of the true mother before Solomon, "her bowels yearned 1 Kings 3:26 (English margin, were hot) upon her son."

"Admah" and "Zeboim" were cities in the same plain with Sodom and Gomorrah, and each had their petty king Genesis 14:2. In the history of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, they are not named, but are included in the general title "those cities and all the plain" (Genesis 19:25). The more

then would Hosea‘s hearers think of that place in Moses where he does mention them, and where he threatens them with the like end; “when the stranger shall see, that the whole land thereof is brimstone and salt and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in His anger and His wrath” Deuteronomy 29:22-23. Such was the end, at which all their sins aimed; such the end, which God had held out to them; but His “strong compassions were kindled.”

Verse 9

I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger - It is the voice of “mercy, rejoicing over judgment.” mercy prevails in God over the rigor of His justice, that though He will not suffer them to go utterly unpunished, yet He will abate of it, and not utterly consume them.

I will not return to destroy Ephraim - God saith that He will not, as it were, glean Ephraim, going over it again, as man doth, in order to leave nothing over. As it is in Jeremiah, “They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel, as a vine. Turn back thine hand, as a grapegatherer into the baskets” Jeremiah 6:9; and, “If grapegatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleaning-grapes? but I have made Esau bare” Jeremiah 49:9-10.

For I am God and not man - o“not swayed by human passions, but so tempering His wrath, as, in the midst of it, to remember mercy; so punishing the iniquity of the sinful children, as at once to make good His gracious promises which He made to their forefathers.”: “Man punishes, to destroy; God smites, to amend.”

The Holy One in the midst of thee - The holiness of God is at once a ground why He punishes iniquity, and yet does not punish to the full extent of the sin. Truth and faithfulness are part of the holiness of God. He, the Holy One who was “in the midst” of them, by virtue of His covenant with their fathers, would keep the covenant which He had made, and for their father‘s sakes would not wholly cut them off. Yet the holiness of God hath another aspect too, in virtue of which the unholy cannot profit by the promises of the All-Holy. “I will not,” paraphrases Cyril, “use unmingled wrath. I will not “give” over Ephraim, wicked as he has become, to entire destruction. Why? Do they not deserve it? Yes, He saith, but “I am God and not man,” i. e., Good, and not suffering the motions of anger to overcome Me. For that is a human passion. Why then dost Thou yet punish, seeing

Thou art God, not overcome with anger, but rather following Thine essential gentleness? I punish, He saith, because I am not only Good, as God, but holy also, hating iniquity, rejecting the polluted, turning away from God-haters, converting the sinner, purifying the impure, that he may again be joined to Me. We, then, if we prize the being with God, must, with all our might, fly from sin, and remember what He said. "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

And I will not enter the city - God, who is everywhere, speaks of Himself, as present to us, when He shows that presence in acts of judgment or of mercy. He visited His people in Egypt, to deliver them; He visited Sodom and Gomorrah as a Judge, making known to us that He took cognizance of their extreme wickedness. God says, that He would "not enter the city," as He did "the cities of the plain," when He overthrew them, because He willed to save them. As a Judge, He acts as though He looked away from their sin, lest, seeing their city to be full of wickedness, He should be compelled to punish it.: "I will not smite indiscriminately, as man doth, who when wroth, bursts into an offending city, and destroys all. In this sense, the Apostle says, "Hath God cast away His people? God forbid! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not east away His people, whom He foreknew. What saith the answer of God to Elias! I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Bard. Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace" Romans 11:1-2, Romans 11:4-5. God then was wroth, not with His people, but with unbelief. For He was not angered in such wise, as not to receive the remnant of His people, if they were converted. No Jew is therefore repelled, because the Jewish nation denied Christ; but whoso, whether Jew or Gentile, denieth Christ, he himself, in his own person, repels himself."

Verse 10

They shall walk after the Lord - Not only would God not destroy them all, but a remnant of them should "walk after the Lord," i. e., they shall believe in Christ. The Jews of old understood this of Christ. One of them saith, "this pointeth to the time of their redemption." And another, "Although I will withdraw from the midst of them My divine presence for their iniquity, and remove them out of their own land, yet shall there be a long time in which they shall seek after the Lord and find Him." This is what Hosea has said before, that they should "abide many days without a

king and without a prince, and without a sacrifice; afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king" Hosea 3:4-5.: "Whereas now they "fled from" God, and "walked after other gods after the imagination of their evil hearts, after their own devices" Hosea 7:13; Jeremiah 7:9; Jeremiah 3:17; Jeremiah 18:12, then he promises, they shall "walk after God the Lord," following the will, the mind, the commandments, the example of Almighty God. As God says of David, He "kept My commandments, and walked after Me with all his heart" 1 Kings 14:8; and Micah foretells that "many nations shall say, we will walk in His paths" Micah 4:2. They shall "follow after" Him, whose infinite perfections none can reach; yet they shall "follow after," never standing still, but reaching on to that which is unattainable by His grace, attaining the more by imitating what is inimitable, and stopping short of no perfection, until, in His presence, they be perfected in Him.

He shall roar like a lion - Christ is called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" Revelation 5:5. His "roaring" is His loud call to repentance, by Himself and by His Apostles. The voice of God to sinners, although full of love, must be full of awe too. He calls them, not only to flee to His mercy, but to "flee from the wrath to come." He shall call to them with a voice of Majesty command.

When He shall roar, the children shall tremble from the West - that is, they shall come in haste and fear to God. "His word is powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow" Hebrews 4:12. Whence those whose hearts were pricked at the preaching of Peter, said to him with trembling, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" Acts 2:37. So did the preaching of judgment to come terrify the world, that from all places some did come out of the captivity of the world and did fly to Christ". He says, "from the West;" for "from the West" have most come in to the Gospel. Yet the Jews were then about to be carried to the East, not to the West; and of the West the prophets had no human knowledge. But the ten tribes, although carried to the East into Assyria, did not all remain there, since before the final dispersion, we find Jews in Italy, Greece, Asia Minor; where those who had been restored to their own land, would not have anew exiled themselves. In these, whenever they were converted, this prophecy was fulfilled.

Verse 11

They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt - The West denoted Europe; Egypt and Assyria stand, each for all the lands beyond them, and so for Africa and Asia; all together comprise the three quarters of the world, from where converts have chiefly come to Christ. These are likened to birds, chiefly for the swiftness with which they shall then haste to the call of God, who now turned away the more, the more they were called. The dove, especially, was a bird of Palestine, proverbial for the swiftness of its flight, easily aftrighted, and flying the more rapidly, the more it was frightened, and returning to its cot from any distance where it might be carried; from where Isaiah also says of the converts, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" Isaiah 60:8. "The Hebrews," says Jerome, "refer this to the coming of the Christ, who, they hope, will come; we shew that it hath taken place already. For both from Egypt and Aasyria, i. e., from East and West, from North and South, have they come, and daily do they come, who sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

And I will place them in their houses - "Their houses" may be their own particular Churches, in the one Church or "House of God" 1 Timothy 3:15. In this house, God says, that He will make them to dwell, not again to be removed from it, nor shaken in it, but in a secure dwelling-place here until they be suited to be removed to everlasting habitations.: "In their houses, i. e., in the mansions prepared for them. For from the beginning of the world, when He created our first parents, and blessed them and said, "Increase and multiply and replenish the earth," He prepared for them everlasting houses or mansions. Whereof He said, just before His Death, "In My father's house are many mansions," and in the Last Day, He will say, "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Verse 12

Ephraim compasseth Me about with lies - Having spoken of future repentance, conversion, restoration, he turns back to those around him, and declares why they can have no share in that restoration. Nothing about them was true. If ever they approached God, it was "with lies.": "God, being infinite, cannot really be "compassed about." The prophet so speaks, to describe the "great multitude of those who thus lied to God, and the multitude and manifoldness of their lies. Wherever God looked, in all parts of their kingdom, in all their doings, all which He could see was lying to Himself." All was, as it were, one throng of lies, heaped on one another,

jostling with one another. Such is the world now. "Their sin was especially a lie, because they sinned, not through ignorance, but through malice." Their chief lie was the setting up of the worship of the calves, with a worldly end, yet with pretence of religion toward God; denying Him, the One true God, in that they joined idols with Him, yet professing to serve Him. And so all their worship of God, their repentance, their prayers, their sacrifices were all one lie. For one lie underlay all, penetrated all, corrupted all. All half-belief is unbelief; all half-repentance is unrepentance, all half-worship is unworship; and, in that each and all give themselves out for that divine whole, whereof they are but the counterfeit, each and all are "lies," wherewith men, on all sides, encompass God. From these wrong thoughts of God all their other deceits flowed, while yet, "they deceived, not Him but themselves, in that they thought that they could deceive Him, who cannot be deceived." When Christ came, the house of Israel surrounded Him with lies, the scribes and lawyers, the Pharisees and Sadducees and Herodians, vying with one another, "how they might entangle Him in His talk" Matthew 22:15.

But Judah yet ruleth with God - Ephraim had cast off the rule of God, the kings and priests whom He had appointed, so that his whole kingdom and polity was without God and against Him. In contrast with this, Judah, amid all His sins, was outwardly faithful. He adhered to the line of kings, from whom was to spring the Christ, David's Son but David's Lord. He worshiped with the priests whom God had appointed to offer the typical sacrifices, until "He" should come, "the high priest forever, after the order of Melchisedek," who should end those sacrifices by the Sacrifice of Himself. Thus far Judah "ruled with God;" he was on the side of God, maintained the worship of God, was upheld by God. So Abijah said to Jeroboam, "The Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken Him, and the priests which minister unto the Lord are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business. For we keep the charge of the Lord our God, but ye have forsaken Him, and behold God is with us for our Captain, … " 2 Chronicles 13:10-12.

And is faithful with the saints - Or (better perhaps, with the E. M) "with the All-Holy." The same plural is used of God elsewhere (Joshua 24:19; and in Proverbs 30:3); and its use, like that of the ordinary name of God, is founded on the mystery of the Trinity. It does not teach it, but neither can it be accounted for in any other way. This faithfulness of Judah

was outward only, (as the upbraiding of the prophet to Judah testifies,) yet did it much favor inward holiness. “The body without the soul is dead;” yet the life, even when seeming to be dying out, might be brought back, when the body was there; not, when it too was dissolved. Hence, Judah had many good kings, Israel none. Yet, in that he says, “yet ruleth with God,” he shows that a time was coming when Judah too would be, not “with God” but against Him, and also would be cast off.

HOSEA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind - The East wind in Palestine, coming from Arabia and the far East, over large tracts of sandy waste, is parching, scorching, destructive to vegetation, oppressive to man, violent and destructive on the sea Psalm 48:7, and, by land also, having the force of the whirlwind (Job 27:21; see Jeremiah 18:17). "The East wind carrieth him away and he departeth, and as a whirlwind hurleth him out of his place." In leaving God and following idols, Ephraim "fed on" what is unsatisfying, and chased after what is destructive. If a hungry man were to "feed on wind," it would be light food. If a man could overtake the East wind, it were his destruction.: Israel "fed on wind," when he sought by gifts to win one who could aid him no more than the wind; "he chased the East wind," when, in place of the gain which he sought, he received from the patron whom he had adopted, no slight loss." Israel sought for the scorching wind, when it could betake itself under the shadow of God.: "The scorching wind is the burning of calamities, and the consuming fire of affliction."

He increaseth lies and desolation - Unrepented sins and their punishment are, in God's govermnent, linked together; so that to multiply sin is, in fact, to multiply desolation. Sin and punishment are bound together, as cause and effect. Man overlooks what he does not see. Yet not the less does he "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous Judgment of God" Romans 2:5.: "Lying" will signify false speaking, false dealing, false belief, false opinions, false worship, false pretences for color thereof, false hopes, or relying on things that will deceive. In all these kinds, was Ephraim at that time guilty, adding one sort of lying to another."

They do make a covenant with the Assyrians and oil is carried into Egypt - Oil was a chief product of Palestine, from where it is called "a land of oil olive" Deuteronomy 8:8; and "oil" with balm was among its chief exports to Tyre (Ezekiel 27:17; see the note above at Hosea 2:8). It may also include precious ointments, of which it was the basis. As an export of great value, it stands for all other presents, which Hoshea sent to So, King of Egypt. Ephraim, threatened by God, looked first to the Assyrian, then to Egypt, to strengthen itself. Having dealt falsely with God, he dealt falsely

with man. First, he "made covenant with" Shalmaneser, king of "Assyria;" then, finding the tribute, the price of his help, burdensome to him, he broke that covenant, by sending to Egypt. Seeking to make friends out of God, Ephraim made the more powerful, the Assyrian, the more his enemy, by seeking the friendship of Egypt; and God executed His judgments through those, by whose help they had hoped to escape them.

Verse 2

The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob - The guilt of Judah was not open apostasy, nor had he filled up the measure of his sins. Of him, then, God saith only, that He "had a controversy with" him, as our Lord says to the "Angel of the Church of Pergamos, I have a few things against thee. Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and fight against thee with the sword of My mouth" Revelation 2:12, Revelation 2:16. Of Ephraim, whose sin was complete, He says, that the Lord "is to punish." God had set His mind, as we say, on punishing him; He had (so to speak) set Himself to do it. Jacob, like Israel, is here the name for the chief part of Israel, i. e., the ten tribes. Our Lord uses the same gradation in speaking of different degrees of evil-speaking; "Whosoever of you is angry without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire" Matthew 5:22.: "The justice of God falls more severely on those who degenerate from a holy parent, than on those who have no incitement to good from the piety of their home." To amplify this, "The prophet explains what good things Jacob received, to show both the mercy of God to Jacob, and the hardness of Ephraim toward God. While Jacob was yet in his mother's womb, he took his brother by the heel, not by any strength of his own, but by the mercy of God, who knows and loves those whom he hath predestinated."

Verse 3

He took his brother by the heel in the womb - Whether or no the act of Jacob was beyond the strength, ordinarily given to infants in the womb, the meaning of the act was beyond man's wisdom to declare. Whence the Jews paraphrased, "Was it not predicted of your lather Jacob, before he was born, that he should become greater than his brother?" Yet this was not fulfilled until more than 500 years afterward, nor completely until the time of David. These gifts were promised to Jacob out of the free mercy of God, antecedent to all deserts. But Jacob, thus chosen without desert, showed

forth the power of faith; "By his strength he had power with God.": "The strength by which he did this, was God's strength, as well as that by which God contended with him; yet it is well called his, as being by God given to him. "Yet he had power with God," God so ordering it, that the strength which was in Jacob, should put itself forth with greater force, than that in the assumed body, whereby He so dealt with Jacob. God, as it were, bore the office of two persons, showing in Jacob more strength than He put forth in the Angel." "By virtue of that faith in Jacob, it is related that God "could" not prevail against him. He could not because he would not overthrow his faith and constancy. By the touch in the hollow of his thigh, He but added strength to his faith, showing him who it was who wrestled with him, and that He willed to bless him." For thereon Jacob said those words which have become a proverb of earnest supplication, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me, and, I have seen God, face to face, and my life is preserved" Genesis 32:26, Genesis 32:30.: "He was strengthened by the blessing of Him whom he overcame."

Verse 4

He wept and made supplication unto Him - Jacob's weeping is not mentioned by Moses. Hosea then knew more than Moses related. He could not have gathered it out of Moses, for Moses relates the words of earnest supplication; yet the tone is that of one, by force of earnest energy, wresting, as it were, the blessing from God, not of one weeping. Yet Hosea adds this, in harmony with Moses. For "vehement desires and earnest petitions frequently issue in tears." "To implore means to ask with tears". "Jacob, learning, that God Himself thus deigned to deal with him, might well out of amazement and wonder, out of awful respect to Him, and in earnest desire of a blessing, pour out his supplication with tears." Herein he became an image of Him, "Who, in the days of His flesh, offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared" Hebrews 5:7.

: "This which he saith, ‹he prevailed,' subjoining, ‹he wept and made supplication,' describes the strength of penitents, for in truth they are strong by weeping earnestly and praying perseveringly for the forgiveness of sins, according to that, "From the days of John the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Whosoever so imitates the patriarch Jacob, who wrestled with the Angel, and, as a conqueror, extorted a blessing from him, he, of whatever nation he be, is truly Jacob, and

deserveth to be called Israel.": "Yea, herein is the unconquerable might of the righteous, this his wondrous wrestling, herein his glorious victories, in glowing longings, assiduous prayers, joyous weeping. Girt with the might of holy orison, they strive with God, they wrestle with His judgment, and will not be overcome, until they obtain from His goodness all they desire, and extort it, as it were, by force, from His hands."

He found him in Bethel - This may mean either that "God found Jacob," or that "Jacob found God;" which are indeed one and the same thing, since we find God, when He has first found us. God "found," i. e., made Himself known to Jacob twice in this place; first, when he was going toward Haran, when he saw the vision of the ladder and the angels of God ascending and descending, "and the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham and the God of Isaac;" and Jacob first called the place "Bethel;" secondly, on his return, when God spake with him, giving him the name of Israel. Both revelations of God to Jacob are probably included in the words, "He found him in Bethel," since, on both occasions, God did "find him," and come to him, and he "found" God. In Bethel, where God found Jacob, Israel deserted Him, setting up the worship of the calves; yea, he deserted God the more there, because of God's mercy to his forefather, desecrating to false worship the place which had been consecrated by the revelation of the true God; and choosing it the rather, because it had been so consecrated.

And there He spake with us - For what He said to Jacob, He said not to Jacob only, nor for Jacob's sake alone, but, in him, He spake to all his posterity, both the children of his body and the children of his faith. Thus it is said, "There did we rejoice in Him" Psalm 66:6, i. e., we, their posterity, rejoiced in God there, where He so delivered our forefathers, and, "Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham, for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him" Hebrews 7:9-10. And Paul saith, that what was said to Abraham, "therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness, was not written for his sake alone, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" Romans 4:23, Romans 4:4. There He spake with us, how, in our needs, we should seek and find Him. In loneliness, apart from distractions, in faith, rising in proportion to our tears, in persevering prayer, in earnestness, which "clings so fast to God, that if God would cast us into

Hell, He should, as one said Himself go with us, so should Hell not be Hell to us," God is sought and found.

Verse 5

Even the Lord God of Hosts, the Lord is His memorial - The word, here as translated and written Lord, is the special and, so to say, the proper Name of God, that which He gave to Himself, and which declares His Being. God Himself authoritatively explained its meaning. When Moses inquired of Him, what he should say to Israel, when they should ask him, "what is the Name of the God of their fathers," who, he was to tell them, had sent him to them, "God said … I Am That I Am … thus shalt thou say, I Am" (Ehyeh) "hath sent me unto you; and God said again unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord" (literally, He is, YeHeWeH, "God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you; This is My Name forever, and this is My memorial unto all generations" Exodus 3:13-15.

I am, expresses self-existence; He who alone is. I am that I am, expresses His unchangeableness, the necessary attribute of the Self-existent, who, since He is, ever is all which He is. "To Be," says Augustine, "is a name of unchangeableness. For all things which are changed, cease to be what they were, and begin to be what they were not. True Being, pure Being, genuine Being, no one hath, save He who changeth not. He hath Being to whom it is said, "Thou shalt change them and they shall be changed, but Thou art the Same." What is, I am that I am, but, I am Eternal? What is, I am that I am, save, I cannot be changed? No creature, no heaven, no earth, no angel, "nor Power, nor Throne, nor Dominion, nor Principality." This then being the name of eternity, it is somewhat more, than He vouchsafed to him a name of mercy, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. That," He is in Himself, "this," to us.

If he willed only to be That which he is in Himself, what should we be? Since Moses understood, when it was said to him, I am that I am, He who is hath sent me unto you, he believed that this was much to people, he saw that this was far removed from people. For whose hath understood, as he ought, That which is, and which truly is, and, in whatever degree, hath even transiently, as by a lightning flash, been irradiated by the light of the One True Essence, sees himself far below, in the utmost farness of removal and unlikeness." This, the Self-existent, the Unchangeable, was the meaning of

God‘s ancient Name, by which He was known to the patriarchs, although they had not in act seen His unchangeableness, for theirs was a life of faith, hoping for what they saw not. The word, He is, when used of Him by His creatures, expresses the same which He says of Himself, I AM. This He willed to be “His memorial forever.” This the way in which He willed that we should believe in Him and think of Him as He who is, the Self-existing, the Self-Same.

The way of pronouncing that Name is lost. The belief has continued, wherever the Lord is named. For by the Lord we mean the Unchangeable God. That belief is contradicted, whenever people use the name “Jehovah,” to speak of God, as though the belief in Him under the Old Testament differed from that of the New Testament. Perhaps God allowed it to be lost, that people might not make so familiar with it, as they do with the word “Jehovah,” or use it irreverently and in an anti-Christian manner, as some now employ other ways of pronouncing it. The Jews, even before the time of our Lord, ordinarily ceased to pronounce it. In the translations of the Old Testament, and in the Apocrypha, the words, “the Lord,” were substituted for it. Jewish tradition states, that in later times the Name was pronounced in the temple only, by the priests, on pronouncing the blessing commanded by God in the law. On the great Day of Atonement, it was said that the high priest pronounced it ten times, and that when the people heard it, they fell on their faces, saying, “Blessed be the glorious name of His kingdom forever and ever”. They say, however, that in the time of Simeon the Just (i. e.,), Jaddua, who died about 322 b.c., the high priests themselves disused it, for fear of its being pronounced by some irreverent person.

Our Lord Himself sanctioned I the disuse of it, (as did the inspired Apostles yet more frequently,) since, in quoting places of the Old Testament in which it occurs, He uses instead of it the Name, “the Lord”. It stands, throughout the Old Testament, as the Name which speaks of God in relation to His people, that He ever is; and, since He ever is, then He is unchangeably to us, all which He ever was, “The Same, yesterday and today and forever” Hebrews 13:8.

He then who appeared to Jacob, and who, in Jacob, spake to all the posterity of Jacob, was God; whether it was (as almost all the early fathers

thought), God the Son, who thus appeared in human form to the patriarchs, Moses, Joshua, and in the time of the Judges, under the name of "the Angel of the Lord," or whether it was the Father. God Almighty thus accustomed man to see the form of Man, and to know and believe that it was God. He it was, the prophet explains, "the Lord," i. e., the Self existent, the Unchangeable, "Who was, and is and is to come" Revelation 1:4, Revelation 1:8, who alone is, and from whom are all things, "the Fullness of Being, both of His own, and of all His creatures, the boundless Ocean of all which is, of wisdom, of glory, of love, of all good."

The Lord of Hosts - that is, of all things visible and invisible, of the angels and heavenly spirits, and of all things animate and inanimate, which, in the history of the Creation, are called "the host of heaven and earth" Genesis 2:1, the one host of God. This was the way in which He willed to be had in mind, thought of, remembered. On the one hand then, as relates to Ephraim's sin, not by the calves, nor by any other created thing, did He will to be represented to people's minds or thoughts. On the other hand, as relates to God's mercies, since He, who revealed Himself to Jacob, was the unchangeable God, Israel had no cause to fear, if he returned to the faith of Jacob, whom God there accepted. Whence it follows;

Verse 6

Therefore turn thou to thy God - (Literally, "And thou, thou shalt turn" so as to lean "on thy God.") "And thou" unlike, he would say, as thou art to thy great forefather, now at least, "turn to thy God;" hope in Him, as Jacob hoped; and thou too shalt be accepted. God was the Same. They then had only to turn to Him in truth, and they too would find Him, such as Jacob their father had found Him, and then "trust in him continually. mercy and judgment" include all our duty to our neighbor, love and justice. The prophet. selects the duties of the second table, as Micah also places them first, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?" Micah 6:8, and our Lord chooses those same commandments, in answer to the rich young man, who asked him, "What shall I do, in order to enter into life?" Matthew 19:17. For people cannot deceive themselves so easily about their duties to their neighbor, as about their duty to God. It was in love to his neighbor that the rich young man failed.

Thou shalt turn - that is, it is commonly said, thou oughtest to turn; as our's has it, "turn." But it may also include the promise that, at one time,

“Israel shall turn to the Lord,” as Paul says, “so shall all Israel be saved.”

And wait on thy God continually - If they did so, they should not wait in vain.: “This word, “continually,” hath no small weight in it, shewing with what circumstances or properties their waiting or hope on God ought to be attended; that it ought to be on Him alone, on Him always, without doubting, fainting, failing, intermission or ceasing, in all occasions and conditions which may befall them, without exception of time, even in their adversity.” “Turn to ‹thy‘ God,” he saith, “wait on ‹thy‘ God,” as the great ground of repentance and of trust. “God had avouched them for His peculiar people” Deuteronomy 26:17-18, and they had “avouched Him for” their only “God.” He then was still their God, ready to receive them, if they would return to Him.

Verse 7

He is a merchant - Or, indignantly, “a merchant in whose hands are the balances of deceit!” How could they love “mercy and justice,” whose trade was “deceit,” who weighed out deceit with their goods? False in their dealings, in their weights and measures, and, by taking advantage of the necessities of others, oppressive also. Deceit is the sin of weakness oppression is the abuse of power. Wealth does not give the power to use naked violence but wealthy covetousness manifoldly grinds the poor. When for instance, wages are paid in necessaries priced exorbitantly, or when artisans are required to buy at a loss at their masters‘ shops, what is it but the union of deceit and oppression? The trading world is full of oppression, scarcely veiled by deceit. “He loveth to oppress.” Deceit and oppression have, each, a devilish attractiveness to those practiced in them; deceit, as exercising cleverness, cunning, skill in overreaching, outwitting; oppression, as indulging self will, caprice, love of power, insolence, and the like vices. The word “merchant,” as the prophet spoke it, was “Canaan;” merchants being so called, because the Canaanites or Phoenicians were the then great merchant-people, as astrologers were called Chaldeans. The Phoenicians were, in Homer‘s time, infamous for their griping in traffic. They are called “gnawers” and “money-lovers”. To call Israel, “Canaan,” was to deny to him any title to the name of Israel, “reversing the blessing of Jacob, so that, as it had been said of Jacob, “thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel,” he would in fact say, ‹Thy name shall be called no more Israel, but Canaan‘; as being, through their deeds, heirs, not to the

blessings of Israel but to the curse of Canaan." So Ezekiel saith, "Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite" Ezekiel 16:3.

Verse 8

And Ephraim said, Yet am I become rich - Literally, "I am simply rich." As if he said, "the only result of all this, with which the prophets charge me, is that ‹I am become rich:' and since God thus prospers me, it is a sure proof that he is not displeased with me, that ‹no iniquity' can be ‹found in me;'" the ordinary practical argument of men, as long as God withholds His punishments, that their ways cannot be so displeasing to Him. With the people of this world, with its politicians, in trade, it is the one decisive argument: "I was in the right, for I succeeded." "It was a good speculation, for he gained thousands." "it was good policy, for, see its fruits. An answer, at which the pagan laughed, "the people hisses me, but I, I, safe at home, applaud myself, when the coin jingles in my chest". The pagan ridiculed it; Christians enact it. But in truth, the fact that God does not punish, is often the evidence of His extremest displeasure.

They shall find none iniquity in me, that were sin - The merchants of Ephraim continue their protest; "in all the toil of my hands, all my buying and selling, my bargains, contracts, they can bring no iniquity home to me," and then, in a tone of simple innocence, they add, ‹that' were ‹sin,' as though they ‹could' not do, what to do were sin. None suspect themselves less, than those intent on gain. The evil customs of other traders, the habits of trade, the seeming necessity for some frauds, the conventional nature of others, the minuteness of others, with their frequent repetition, blind the soul, until it sees no sin, while, with every smallest sale, "they sell their own souls into the bargain".

Verse 9

And I, the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt - God, in few words, comprises whole centuries of blessings, all, from the going out of Egypt to that very day, all the miracles in Egypt, in the wilderness, under Joshua, the Judges; one stream of benefits it had been, which God had poured out upon them from first to last. The penitent sees in one glance, how God had been "his" God, from his birth until that hour, and how he had all along offended God.

Will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles - The feast of tabernacles was the yearly remembrance of God's miraculous guidance and support of Israel through the wilderness. It was the link, which bound on their

deliverance from Egypt to the close of their pilgrim-life and their entrance into their rest. The passage of the Red Sea, like Baptism, was the beginning of God‘s promises. By it israel was saved from Egypt and from bondage, and was born to be a people of God. Yet, being the beginning, it was plainly not the completion; nor could they themselves complete it. Enemies, more powerful than they, had to be dispossessed; “the great and terrible wilderness, the fiery serpents and scorpions, and the land of exceeding drought, where was no water” Deuteronomy 8:15, had to be surmounted; no food was there, no water, for so vast a multitude. It was a time of the visible presence of God. He promised; “I send an Angel before thee to keep thee in the way and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared” Exodus 23:20. “He brought them forth water out of the rock of flint, and fed them with manna which,” He says, “thy fathers knew not” Deuteronomy 8:15-16. “Thy raiment,” He appeals to them, “waxed not old, nor did thy foot swell these forty years” Deuteronomy 8:4; “thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot; ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God” Deuteronomy 29:5-6.

It was a long trial-time, in which they were taught entire dependence upon God; a time of sifting, in which God proved His faithfulness to those who persevered. Standing there between the beginning and the end of the accomplishment of God‘s promise to Abraham and to them, it was a type of His whole guidance of His people at all times. It was a pledge that God would lead His own, if often “by a way which they knew not” Isaiah 42:16, yet to rest, with Him. The yearly commemoration of it was not only a thanksgiving for God‘s past mercies; it was a confession also of their present relation to God, that “here we have no continuing city” (Hebrews 13:14; compare Hosea 11:9-10); that they still needed the guidance and support of God; and that their trust was not in themselves, nor in man, but in Him. This they themselves saw.: “When they said, ‹Leave a fixed habitation, and dwell in a chance abode,‘ they meant, that the command to dwell in tabernacles was given, to teach us, that no man must rely on the height or strength of his house, or on its good arrangements though it abound in all good; nor may he rely on the help of any man, not though he were lord and king of the whole earth, but must trust in Him by whose word the worlds were made. For with Him alone is power and faithfulness, so that, whereinsoever any man may place his trust, he shall receive no consolation from it, since in God alone is refuge and trust, as it is said,

‹Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, mercy embraceth him on every side, and I will say unto the Lord, my Refuge and my Fortress, my God, in Him will I trust. ‹“

The feast of tabernacles was also a yearly thanksgiving for the mercies with which God had “crowned the year.” The joy must have been even the greater, since it followed, by five days only, after the mournful day of atonement, its rigid fast from evening to evening, and its confession of sin. Joy is greater when ushered in by sorrow; sorrow for sin is the condition of joy in God. The Feast of tabernacles was, as far it could be, a sort of Easter after Lent. At the time when Israel rejoiced in the good gifts of the year, God bade them express, in act, their fleeting condition in this life. It must have been a striking confession of the slight tenure of all earthly things, when their kings and great men, their rich men and those who lived at ease, had all, at the command of God, to leave their ceiled houses, and dwell for seven days in rude booths, constructed for the season, pervious in some measure to the sun and wind, with no fixed foundation, to be removed when the festival was passed. “Because,” says a Jewish writer, “at the time of the gathering of the increase from the field, man wishes to go from the field to his house to make a fixed abode there, the law was anxious, lest on account of this fixed abode, his heart should be lifted up at having found a sort of palace, and he should ‹wax fat and kick.‘ Therefore it is written, ‹all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths.‘ Whoso begins to think himself a citizen in this world, and not a foreigner, him God biddeth, leaving his ordinary dwelling, to remove into a temporary lodging, in order that, leaving these thoughts, he may learn to acknowledge that he is only a stranger in this world and not a citizen, in that he dwells as in a stranger‘s hut, and so should not attribute too much to the shadow of his beams, but ‹dwell under the shadow of the Almighty. ‹“

Every year, the law was publicly read in the feast. Ephraim was living clean contrary to all this. He boasted in his wealth, justified himself on the ground of it, ascribed it and his deliverance from Egypt to his idols. He would not keep the feast, as alone God willed it to be kept. While he existed in his separate kingdom, it could not be. Their political existence had to be broken, that they might be restored.

God then conveys the notice of the impending punishment in words which promised the future mercy. He did not, "then, make" them "to dwell in tabernacles." For all their service of Him was out of their own mind, contrary to His will, displeasing to Him. This, then, "I will "yet" make thee dwell in tabernacles," implies a distant mercy, beyond and distinct from their present condition. Looking on beyond the time of the captivity, He says that they shall yet have a time of joy, "as in the days of the solemn feast." God would give them a new deliverance, but out of a new captivity.

The feast of tabernacles typifies this our pilgrim-state, the life of simple faith in God, for which God provides; poor in this world's goods, but rich in God. The Church militant dwells, as it were, in tabernacles; hereafter, we hope to be "received into everlasting habitations," in the Church triumphant.

Verse 10

I have also spoken by the prophets - Literally, "upon the prophets," the revelation coming down from heaven upon them. Somewhat like this, is what Ezekiel says, "the hand of the Lord was strong upon me" (Ezekiel 3:14, …). God declares, in what way He had been their God "from the land of Egypt." Their ignorance of Him was without excuse, for He had always taught them, although they ever sought the false prophets, and persecuted the true. He taught them continually and in divers ways, if so be any impression might be made upon them. He taught them, either in plain words, or in the "visions" which He "multiplied" to the prophets; or in the "similitudes" or parables, which He taught through their ministry. In the "vision," God is understood to have represented the things to come, as a picture, to the prophet's mind,, "whether the picture were presented to his bodily eyes, or impressed on his imagination, and that, either in a dream, or without a dream."

The "similitude," which God says that He repeatedly, continually, used, seems to have been the parable, as when God compared His people to a vine, Himself to the Lord of the vineyard, or when He directed His prophets to do acts which should shadow forth some truth, as in the marriage of Hosea himself. God had said to Aaron, that He would thus make Himself known by the prophets. "If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a

dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all My house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches" Numbers 12:6-8. "The dark speech" in Moses answers to the "similitude" of Hosea; the "vision" and "dream" in Moses are comprehended in "visions," as used by Hosea. The prophet Joel also says, "your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions" Joel 2:28. So little ground then have they, who speak of the visions of Daniel and Zechariah, as if they belonged to a later age.: "I have instructed," God saith, "men of God, to form thee to piety, enlightening their minds with manifold knowledge of the things of God. And because the light of divine wisdom could not otherwise shine on people placed here below in the prison-house of the body, I had them taught through figures and corporeal images, that, through them, they might rise to the incorporeal, and receive some knowledge of divine and heavenly things. And thou, how didst thou requite me? How didst thou shew thy teachableness? It follows;"

Verse 11

Is there iniquity in Gilead? - The prophet asks the question, in order to answer it the more peremptorily. He raises the doubt, in order to crush it the more impressively. Is there "iniquity" in "Gilead?" Alas, there was nothing else. "Surely they are vanity," or, strictly, "they have become merely vanity." As he said before, "they become abominations like their love." "For such as men make their idols, or conceive their God to be, such they become themselves. As then he who worships God with a pure heart, is made like unto God, so they who worship stocks and stones, or who make passions and lusts their idols, lose the mind of men and become ‹like the beasts which perish.'" "In Gilgal they have sacrificed oxen. Gilead" represents all the country on its side, the East of Jordan; "Gilgal," all on its side, the West of Jordan. In both, God had signally shown forth His mercies; in both, they dishonored God, sacrificing to idols, and offering His creatures, as a gift to devils.

Yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the field - Their altars are like the heaps of stones, from which men clear the plowed land, in order to fit it for cultivation, as numerous as profuse, as worthless, as desolate. "Their" altars they were, not God's. They did, (as sinners do,) in the service of devils, what, had they done it to God, would have been accepted, rewarded, service. Full often they sacrificed oxen; they threw great state

into their religion; they omitted nothing which should shed around it an empty show of worship. They multiplied their altars, their sins, their ruins; many altars over against His one altar;: "rude heaps of stones, in His sight; and such they should become, no one stone being left in order upon another." In contrast with their sins and ingratitude, the prophet exhibits two pictures, the one, of the virtues of the patriarch whose name they bore, from whom was the beginning of their race; the other, of God's love to them, in that beginning of their national existence, when God brought those who had been a body of slaves in Egypt, to be His own people.

Verse 12

And Jacob fled into the country of Syria - Jacob chose poverty and servitude rather than marry an idotatress of Canaan. He knew not from where, except from God's bounty and providence, he should have "bread to eat, or raiment to put on" Genesis 28:20; "with his staff alone he passed over Jordan" Genesis 32:10. His voluntary poverty, bearing even unjust losses Genesis 31:39, and "repaying the things which he never took," reproved their dishonest traffic; his trustfulness in God, their mistrust; his devotedness to God, their alienation from Him, and their devotion to idols. And as the conduct was opposite, so was the result. Ill-gotten riches end in poverty; stable wealth is gained, not by the cupidity of man, but by the good pleasure of God. Jacob, having "become two bands," trusting in God and enriched by God, returned from Syria to the land promised to him by God; Israel, distrusting God and enriching himself, was to return out of the land which the Lord his God had given him, to Assyria, amid the loss of all things.

Verse 13

By a prophet was he preserved - Or "kept." Jacob "kept sheep" out of love of God, sooner than unite himself with one, alien from God; his posterity "was kept" like a sheep by God, as the Psalmist said, "He led His people like sheep by the hand of Moses and Aaron" Psalm 77:20. They were "kept" from all evil and want and danger, by the direct power of God; "kept" from all the might of Pharaoh in Egypt and the Red Sea, "not through any power of their own, but by the ministry of a single prophet; "kept, in that great and terrible wilderness" Deuteronomy 8:15, wherein were "fiery serpents and scorpions and drought, where" was "no water," but what God brought out of the rock of flint; no bread, but what he sent them from heaven." All this, God did for them "by "a single "prophet; they" had

many prophets, early and late, calling upon them in the name of God, but they would not hearken unto them."

Verse 14

Ephraim provoked - the Lord most bitterly Literally, "with bitternesses," i. e., with most heinous sins, such as are most grievously displeasing to God, and were a most bitter requital of all His goodness. "Wherefore He shall leave" (or, "cast") "his blood" (literally, "bloods") "upon him." The plural "bloods" expresses the manifoldness of the bloodshed. It is not used in Holy Scripture of mere guilt. Ephraim had shed blood profusely, so that it ran like water in the land (see the notes above at Hosea 4:2; Hosea 5:2). He had sinned with a high hand against God, in destroying man made in the image of God. Amid that bloodshed, had been the blood not of the innocent only, but of those whom God sent to rebuke them for their idolatry, their rapine, their bloodshed. "Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord" 1 Kings 18:4, as far as in her lay, with a complete excision. Ephraim thought his sins past; they were out of his sight; he thought that they were out of God's also; but they were laid up with God; and God, the prophet says, would cast them down upon him, so that they would crush him.

And his reproach shall his Lord return unto him - For the blood which he had shed, should his own blood be shed, for the reproaches which he had in divers ways cast against God or brought upon Him, he should inherit reproach. Those who rebel against God, bring reproach on Him by their sins, reproach Him by their excuses for their sins reproach Him in those whom He sends to recall them from their sins, reproach Him for chastening them for their sins. All who sin against the knowledge of God, bring reproach upon Him by acting sinfully against that knowledge. So Nathan says to David, "Thou hast given much occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme" 2 Samuel 12:14. The reproachful words of the enemies of God are but the echo of the opprobrious deeds of His unfaithful servants. The reproach is therefore, in an special manner, "their reproach" who caused it. All Israel's idolatries had this aggravation.

Their worship of the calves or of Baal or of any other gods of the nations, was a triumph of the false gods over God. Then, all sin must find some plea for itself, by impugning the wisdom or goodness of God who forbad it. Jeroboam, and Ephraim by adhering to Jeroboam's sin reproached God, as though the going up to Jerusalem was a hard service. "It is too

much for you to go up to Jerusalem; Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.": "It was an open injury and reproach to God, to attribute to dead lifeless things those great and wonderful things done by Him for them." All the reproach, which they, in these ways, brought, or cast upon God, he says, "his Lord shall return" or "restore" to them. Their's it was; He would give it back to them, as He says, "Them that honor Me, I will honor; and they that despise Me, shall be lightly esteemed" 1 Samuel 2:30.

Truly shame and reproach have been for centuries the portion of God's unfaithful people. To those who are lost, He gives back their reproach, in that they "rise to reproaches Daniel 12:2 and everlasting abhorrence. It is an aggravation of this misery, that He who shall "give back to him" his reproach, had been "his God." Since "his God" was against him, who could be for him? "For whither should we go for refuge, save to Him? If we find wrath with Him, with whom should we find ruth?" Ephraim did not, the sinner will not, allow God to be "his God" in worship and service and love: but whether he willed or no, God would remain his Lord. He was, and might still have been their Lord for good; they would not have Him so, and so they should find Him still their Lord, as an Avenger, returning their own evil to them.

HOSEA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

When Ephraim spake trembling - that is, probably "there was ‹trembling.‘": "Ephraim was once very awful, so as, while he spake, the rest of the tribes were ready to tremble." The prophet contrasts two conditions of Ephraim, of prosperity, and destruction. His prosperity he owed to the undeserved mercy of God, who blessed him for Joseph‘s sake; his destruction, to his own sin. There is no period recorded, "when Ephraim spake trembling," i. e., in humility. Pride was his characteristic, almost as soon as he had a separate existence as a tribe (see the note at Hosea 5:5). Under Joshua, it could not be called out, for Ephraim gained honor, when Joshua, one of themselves, became the captain of the Lord‘s people. Under the Judges, their pride appeared. Yet God tried them, by giving them their hearts‘ desire. They longed to be exalted, and He satisfied them, if so be they would thus serve Him. They had the chief power, and were a "terror" to Judah. "He exalted himself," (or perhaps "he was exalted,) in Israel; but when he offended in Baal he died;" literally, "and he offended in Baal and died."

He abused the goodness of God; his sin followed as a consequence of God‘s goodness to him. God raised him, and he offended. The alliance with a king of Tyre and Sidon, which brought in the worship of Baal, was a part of the worldly policy of the kings of Israel (1 Kings 16:31, see Introduction). "As if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took to wife the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him." The twenty-two years of Ahab‘s reign established the worship. The prophets of Baal became 450; the prophets of the kindred idolatry of Ashtoreth, or Astarte, became 400; Baal had his one central temple, large and magnificent 2 Kings 10:21-22, 2 Kings 10:25, a rival of that of God. The prophet Elijah thought the apostasy almost universal; God revealed to him that He had "reserved" to Himself "seven thousand in Israel." Yet these were "all the knees which had not bowed to Baal, and every mouth which had not kissed him" 1 Kings 19:18.

And died - Death is the penalty of sin. Ephraim "died" spiritually. For sin takes away the life of grace, and separates from God, the true life of the soul, the source of all life. He "died more truly, than he who is dead and at

rest." Of this death, our Lord says, "Let the dead bury their dead" Matthew 8:22; and Paul, "She who liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" 1 Timothy 5:6. He "died" also as a nation and kingdom, being sentenced by God to cease to be.

Verse 2

And now they sin more and more - Sin draws on sin. This seems to be a third stage in sin. First, under Jeroboam, was the worship of the calves. Then, under Ahab, the worship of Baal. Thirdly, the multiplying of other idols (see 2 Kings 17:9-10), penetrating and pervading the private life, even of their less wealthy people. The calves were of gold; now they "made them molten images of their silver," perhaps plated with silver. In Egypt, the mother of idolatry, it was common to gild idols, made of wood, stone, and bronze. The idolatry, then, had become more habitual, daily, universal. These idols were made of "their silver;" they themselves had had them "molten" out of it. Avaricious as they were (see the note above 2 Kings 12:7-8), they lavished "their silver," to make them their gods. "According to their own understanding," they had had them formed. They employed ingenuity and invention to multiply their idols. They despised the wisdom and commands of God who forbad it. The rules for making and coloring the idols were as minute as those, which God gave for His own worship. Idolatry had its own vast system, making the visible world its god and picturing its operations, over against the worship of God its Creator. But it was all, "their own understanding:" The conception of the idol lay in its maker's mind. It was his own creation. He devised, what his idol should represent; how it should represent what his mind imagined; he debated with himself, rejected, chose, changed his choice, modified what he had fixed upon; all "according to his own understanding." Their own understanding devised it; the labor of the craftsmen completed it.

All of it the work of the craftsmen - What man could do for it, he did. But man could not breathe into his idols the breath of life; there was then no spirit, nor life, nor any effluence from any higher nature, nor any deity residing in them. From first to last it was "all" man's "work;" and man's own wisdom was its condemnation. The thing made must be inferior to its maker. made man, inferior to Himself, but lord of the earth, and all things therein; man made his idol of the things of earth, which God gave him. It too then was inferior to "its" maker, man. He then worshiped in it, the conception of his own mind, the work of his own hands.

They say of them - Strictly, Of them, (i. e., of these things, such things, as these,) "they, say, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves." The prophet gives the substance or the words of Jeroboam's edict, when he said, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem, behold thy gods, O Israel." "Whoever would sacrifice, let him do homage to the calves." He would have calf-worship to be the only worship of God. Error, if it is strong enough, ever persecutes the truth, unless it can corrupt it. Idol-worship was striving to extirpate the worship of God, which condemned it. Under Ahab and Jezebel, it seemed to have succeeded. Elijah complains to God in His own immediate presence; "the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I, only am left, and they seek my life, to take it away 1 Kings 19:10, 1 Kings 19:14. Kissing was an act of homage in the East, done upon the hand or the foot, the knees or shoulder. It was a token of divine honor, whether to an idol (1 Kings 19:18 and here,) or to God Psalm 2:12. It was performed, either by actually kissing the image, or when the object could not be approached, (as the moon) kissing the hand Job 31:26-27, and so sending, as it were, the kiss to it. In the Psalm, it stands as a symbol of worship, to be shown toward "the" Incarnate "Son," when God should make Him "King upon His holy hill of Sion."

Verse 3

Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud - There is often a fair show of prosperity, out of God; but it is short-lived. "The third generation," says the pagan proverb, "never enjoys the ill-gotten gain." The highest prosperity of an ungodly state is often the next to its fall. Israel never so flourished, as under Jeroboam II. Bright and glistening with light is "the early dew;" in an hour it is gone, as if it had never been. Glowing and gilded by the sun is "the morning cloud;" while you admire its beauty, its hues have vanished. "The chaff" lay in one heap "on the floor" with the wheat. Its owner casts the mingled chaff and wheat against the strong wind; in a moment, it is "driven by the wind out of the floor." While every gram falls to the ground, the chaff, light, dry, worthless, unsubstantial, is hurried along, unresisting, the sport of the viewless wind, and itself is soon seen no more. The "smoke," one, seemingly solid, full, lofty, column, ascendeth, swelleth, welleth, vanisheth. In form, it is as solid, when about to be dispersed and seen no more, as when it first issued "out of the chimney.": "It is raised aloft, and by that very uplifting swells into a vast globe; but the

larger that globe is, the emptier, for from that unsolid, unbased, inflated greatness it vanisheth in air, so that its very greatness injures it. For the more it is uplifted, extended, diffused on all sides into a larger compass, so much the poorer it becometh, and faileth, and disappeareth." Such was the prosperity of Ephraim, a mere show, to vanish forever. In the image of "the chaff," the prophet substitutes the "whirlwind" for the wind by which the Easterns used to winnow, in order to picture the violence with which they should be whirled away from their own land.

While these four emblems, in common, picture what is fleeting, two, the "early dew" and the "morning cloud," are emblems of what is in itself good, but passing; the two others, the chaff and the smoke, are emblems of what is worthless. The dew and the cloud were temporary mercies on the part of God which should cease from them, "good in themselves, but to their evil, soon to pass away." If the dew have not, in its brief space, refreshed the vegetation, no trace of it is left. It gives way to the burning sun. If grace have not done its work in the soul, its day is gone. Such dew were the many prophets vouchsafed to Israel; such was Hosea himself, most brilliant, but soon to pass away. The chaff was the people itself, to be carried out of the Lord‘s land; the smoke, "its pride and its errors, whose disappearance was to leave the air pure for the household of God.": "So it is written; ‹As the smoke is driven away, so shalt thou drive‘ them ‹away; as wax melteth before the fire, so shall the ungodly perish before the presence of God‘ Psalm 68:2; and in Proverbs; ‹As the whirlwind passeth‘ Proverbs 10:25, so is ‹the wicked no‘ more; ‹but the righteous is an everlasting foundation.‘ Who although they live and flourish, as to the life of the body; yet spiritually they die, yea, and are brought to nothing, for by sin man became a nothing. Virtue makes man upright and stable; vice, empty and unstable. Whence Isaiah says, ‹the wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest‘ Isaiah 57:20; and Job; ‹If iniquity be in thy hand, put it far away; then shalt thou be steadfast.‘ Job 11:14-15."

Verse 4

Yet - , (literally, and) I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt God was still the same God who had sheltered them with His providence, ever since He had delivered them from Egypt. He had the same power and will to help them. Therefore their duty was the same, and their destruction arose,

not from any change in Him, but from themselves. "God is the God of the ungodly, by creation and general providence."

And thou shalt - (i. e., oughtest to) know no God but Me, for (literally, and) there is not a Saviour but me "To be God and Lord and Saviour are incommunicable properties of God. Wherefore God often claimed these titles to Himself, from the time He revealed Himself to Israel. In the song of Moses, which they were commanded to rehearse, He says, "See now that I, I am He, and there is no God with Me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand" Deuteronomy 32:39. Isaiah repeats this same, "Is there a God besides Me? yea there is no God; I know not any" Isaiah 44:8; and "There is no God else besides Me, a just God and a Saviour; there is none else. Look unto Me and be ye saved, for I am God and there is none else" Isaiah 45:21, Isaiah 45:2; and, "I am the Lord, that is My Name; and My glory will I not give to another; neither My praise to graven images" Isaiah 42:8.: "That God and Saviour is Christ; God, because He created; Saviour, because, being made Man, He saved. Whence He willed to be called Jesus, i. e., Saviour. Truly "beside" Him, "there is no Saviour; neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved" Acts 4:12. "It is not enough to recognize in God this quality of a Saviour. It must not be shared with "any other." Whoso associates with God any power whatever to decide on man's salvation makes an idol, and introduces a new God."

Verse 5

I did know thee in the wilderness - "God so knew them, as to deserve to be known by them. By "knowing" them, He shewed how He ought to be acknowledged by them." "As we love God, because He first loved us," so we come to know and own God, having first been owned and known of Him. God showed His knowledge of them, by knowing and providing for their needs; He knew them "in the wilderness, in the land of great drought," where the land yielded neither food nor water. He supplied them with the "bread from heaven" and with "water from the flinty rock." He knew and owned them all by His providence; He knew in approbation and love, and fed in body and soul those who, having been known by Him, knew and owned Him.: "No slight thing is it, that He, who knoweth all things and men, should, by grace, know us with that knowledge according to which He says to that one true Israelite, Moses, "thou hast found grace in My sight,

and I know thee by name" Exodus 33:17. This we read to have been said to that one; but what He says to one, He says to all, whom now, before or since that time, He has chosen, being foreknown and predestinate, for He wrote the names of all in the book of life. All these elect are "known in the wilderness," in the land of loneliness, in the wilderness of this world, where no one ever saw God, in the solitude of the heart and the secret of hidden knowledge, where God alone, beholding the soul tried by temptations, exercises and proves it, and accounting it, when "running lawfully," worthy of His knowledge, professes that He "knew it." To those so known, or named, He Himself saith in the Gospel, "rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" Luke 10:20.

Verse 6

According to their pasture, so were they filled - o"He implies that their way of being ‹filled' was neither good nor praiseworthy, in that he says, ‹they were filled according to their pastures.' What or of what kind were these "their pastures?" What they longed for, what they murmured for, and spoke evil of God. For instance, when they said, ‹who wil give us flesh to eat? We remember the flesh which we did eat in Egypt freely. Our soul is dried up, because our eyes see nothing but this manna' Numbers 11:4-6. Since they desired such things in such wise, and, desiring, were filled with them to loathing, well are they called ‹their pastures.' For they sought God, not for Himself, but for them. They who follow God for Himself, things of this sort are not called ‹their' pastures, but the word of God is their pasture, according to that, ‹Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word, which proceedeth out of the mouth of God' Deuteronomy 8:3.

These words, ‹according to their pastures,' convey strong blame. It is as if he said, ‹in their eating and drinking, they received their whole reward for leaving the land of Egypt and receiving for a time the law of God.' It is sin, to follow God for such ‹pastures.' Blaming such in the Gospel, Jesus saith, ‹Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life' John 6:26-27. In like way, let all think themselves blamed, who attend the altar of Christ, not for the love of the sacraments which they celebrate, but only to ‹live of the altar.' This fullness is like that of which the Psalmist says, ‹The Lord gave them their desire and sent leanness withal into their bones' Psalm 106:15. For such fullness of the belly generates elation of spirit; such satiety

produces forgetfulness of God." It is more difficult to bear prosperity than adversity. They who, in the waste howling wilderness, had been retained in a certain degree of duty, forgat God altogether in the good land which he had given them. Whence it follows;

They were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me - For they owned not that they had all from Him, therefore they were puffed up with pride, and forgot Him in and by reason of His gifts. This was the aggravation of their sin, with which Hosea often reproaches them Hosea 2:5; Hosea 4:7; Hosea 10:1. They abused God's gifts, (as Christians do now) against Himself, and did the more evil, the more good God was to them. God had forewarned them of this peril, "When thou shalt have eaten and be full, beware lest thou forget the Lord which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Deuteronomy 6:11-12; add Deuteronomy 8:11, …). He pictured it to them with the song of Moses; "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked; thou art waxen fat; thou art grown thick; thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him; thou hast forgotten God that formed thee" Deuteronomy 32:15, Deuteronomy 32:18.

They acted (as in one way or other do most Christians now,) as though God had commanded what he foretold of their evil deeds, or what he warned them against. "As their fathers did, so did they" Acts 7:51. "They walked in the statutes of the pagan, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel which they made. They did wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger. And the Lord testified against Israel and against Judah by all the prophets and by all the seers, saying, turn ye from your evil ways. And they hearkened not, and hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God" 2 Kings 17:8, 2 Kings 17:11, 2 Kings 17:13-14.: "The words are true also of those rich and ungrateful, whom God hath filled with spiritual or temporal goods. But they, ‹being in honor, and having no understanding,' abuse the gifts of God, and, becoming unworthy of the benefits which they have received, have their hearts uplifted and swollen with pride, despising others, ‹glorying as though they had not received,' and not obeying the commands of God. Of such the Lord saith in Isaiah, ‹I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me. ‹"

Verse 7

I will be unto them as a lion - They had waxen fat, were full; yet it was, to become themselves a prey. Their wealth which they were proud of, which they abused, allured their enemies. To cut off all hopes of God‘s mercy, He says that he will be to them, as those creatures of His, which never spare. The fierceness of the lion, and the swiftness of the leopard, together portray a speedy inexorable chastisement. But what a contrast I He who bare Israel in the wilderness like a Father, who bare them on eagle‘s wings, who drew them with the cords of a man, with bands of love, He, the God of mercy and of love, their Father, Protector, Defender, Avenger, He it is who will be their destroyer.

Verse 8

As a bear bereaved of her whelps - The Syrian bear is fiercer than the brown bears to which we are accustomed. It attacks flocks 1 Samuel 17:34, and even oxen. The fierceness of the she-bear, “bereaved of her whelps,” became a proverb (2 Samuel 17:8; Proverbs 17:12; and here).: “They who have written on the nature of wild beasts, say that none is more savage than the she-bear, when she has lost her whelps or lacks food.” It blends wonderfully most touching love and fierceness. It tenderly protects its wounded whelps, reckless of its life, so that it may bring them off, and it turns fiercely on their destroyer. Its love for them becomes fury against their injurer. Much more shall God avenge those who destroy His sons and daughters, leading and enticing them into sin and destruction of body and soul.

Rend the caul of - (what encloses) their heart that is, the pericardium. They had closed their hearts against God. Their punishment is pictured by the rending open of the closed heart, by the lion which is said to go instinctively straight to the heart, tears it out, and sucks the blood. Fearful will it be in the Day of Judgment, when the sinner‘s heart is laid open, with all the foul, cruel, malicious, defiled, thoughts which it harbored and concealed, against the will of God. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” Hebrews 10:31.

And there will I devour them - “There,” where they sinned, shall they be punished. “The wild beast shall tear them.” What God does, He does mostly through instruments, and what His instruments do, they do fulfilling His will through their own blind will or appetite. Hitherto, He had spoken, as being Himself their punisher, although laying aside, as it were, all His tenderness; now, lest the thought, that still it was He, the God of love who

punished, should give them hope, He says, “the wild beast shall devour them.” He gives them up, as it were, out of His own hands to the destroyer.

Verse 9

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help - This is one of the concise sayings of Hosea, which is capable of many shades of meaning. The five words, one by one, are literally, “Israel, thy destruction, for” or “that, in” or “against Me, in” or “against thy help.” Something must be supplied any way; the simplest seems; “O Israel, thy destruction” is, “that” thou hast been, hast rebelled “against Me, against thy help”. Yet, in whatever way the words are filled up, the general sense is the same, that God alone is our help, we are the sources of our own destruction; and “that,” in separating ourselves from God, or rebelling against Him who is our help until we depart from Him, who alone could be, and who if we return, will be, our help. The sum of the meaning is, all our destruction is from ourselves; all our salvation is from God.: “Perdition, reprobation, obduration, damnation, are not, properly and in themselves, from God, dooming to perdition, reprobating, obdurating, damning, but from man sinning, and obduring or hardening himself in sin to the end of life. Contrariwise, predestination, calling, grace, are not from the foreseen merits of the predestinate, but from God, predestinating, calling, and, by His grace, forecoming the predestinate. Wherefore although the cause or ground, why they are predestinated, does not lie in the predestinate, yet in the not-predestinated does lie the ground or cause why they are not predestinated.”

“This saying then, ‹O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help,‘ may be thus unfolded;

Thy captivity, Israel, is from thee; thy redemption from Me.

Thy perishing is from thee; thy salvation from Me.

Thy death from thee; thy life from Me.

Thy evil from thee; thy good from Me.

Thy reprobation from thee; thy predestination from Me, who ever stand at the door of thy heart and in mercy knock.

Thy dereliction from thee; thy calling from Me.

Thy misery from thee; thy bliss from Me.

Thy damnation from thee, thy salvation and beatifying from Me."

For " many good things doeth God in man, which man doeth not, but none doeth man, which God endueth not man to do.": "The first cause of the defect of grace is from us; but the first cause of the gift of grace is from God.": "Rightly is God called, not the Father of judgments or of vengence, but the "Father of mercies," because from Himself is the cause and origin of His mercy, from us the cause of His judging or avenging."

"Blessed the soul which comprehendeth this, not with the understanding only, but with the heart. Nothing can destroy us before God, but sin, the only real evil; and sin is wholly from us, God can have no part in it. But every aid to withdraw us from sin, or to hinder us from falling into it, comes from God alone, the sole Source of our salvation. The soul then must ever bless God, in its ills and its good; in its ills, by confessing that itself is the only cause of its suffering; in its good, owning that, when altogether unworthy of it, God prevented it by His grace, and preserves it each instant by His Almighty goodness."

: "No power, then, of the enemy could harm thee, unless, by thy sins, thou calledst forth the anger of God against thee to thy destruction. Ascribe it to thyself, not to the enemy. So let each sinful city or sinful soul say, which by its guilt draws on it the vengeance of God."

This truth, that in Him alone is help, He confirms by what follows:

Verse 10

I will be thy King - (literally, "I would be" thy King) Where is any other that, etc. A better translation would be: "Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities; and thy judges, of whom thou saidst, give me a king and princes."

As Israel was under Samuel, such it remained. "Then" it mistrusted God, and looked to man for help, saying, "Nay, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like other nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles" 1 Samuel 8:19. In choosing man they rejected God. The like they did, when they chose Jeroboam. In order to rid themselves of the temporary pressure of Rehoboam's taxes, they demanded anew "king and princes." First they rejected God as their king; then they rejected the king whom God appointed, and Him in His

appointment. “In all thy cities.” It was then to be one universal need of help. They had chosen a king “to fight their battles,” and had rejected God. Now was the test, whether their choice had been good or evil. One cry for help went up from “all their cities.” God would have heard it; could man?

: “This question is like that other, ‹Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drink the wine of their drink offerings?‘ Deuteronomy 32:37-39. As there, when no answer could be made, He adds, ‹See now that I, I am He, and that there is no god with Me,‘ so here He subjoins;”

Verse 11

I gave thee a king in Mine anger - o“God, when He is asked for ought amiss, sheweth displeasure, when He giveth, hath mercy, when He giveth not.” “The devil was heard,” (in asking to enter into the swine) “the Apostle was not heard,” (when he prayed that the messenger of Satan might depart from him), “God heard him whom He purposed to condemn; and He heard not him whom He willed to heal.”: “God, when propitious, denieth what we love, when we love amiss; when wroth, He giveth to the lover, what he loveth amiss. The Apostle saith plainly, “God gave them over to their own hearts‘ desire.” He gave them then what they loved, but, in giving, condemned them.” God did appoint Jeroboam, although not in the way in which Israel took him. Jeroboam and Israel took, as from themselves, what God appointed; and, so taking it, marred God‘s gift.

Taking it to themselves from themselves, they maintained it for themselves by human policy and sin. As was the beginning, such was the whole course of their kings. The beginning was rebellion; murder, intestine commotion, anarchy, was the oft-repeated issue. God was against them and their kings; but he let them have their way. In His displeasure with them He allowed them their choice; in displeasure with their evil kings He took them away. Some He smote in their own persons, some in their posterity. So often as He gave them, so often He removed them, until, in Hoshea, He took them away forever. This too explains, how what God “gave in anger,” could be “taken away” also “in anger.” The civil authority was not a thing wrong in itself, the ceasing whereof must be a mercy. Israel was in a worse condition through its separate monarchy; but, apart from the calf-worship, it was not sin. The changing of one king for another did not mend it.

Individual kings were taken away in anger against themselves; their removal brought fresh misery and bloodshed. Nations and Churches and individuals may put themselves in an evil position, and God may have allowed it in His anger, and yet, it may be their wisdom and humility to remain in it, until God change it, lest He should "take" it away, not in forgiveness, but in "anger.": "David they neither asked for, nor did the Lord give him in His anger; but the Lord first chose him in mercy, gave him in grace, in His supreme good-pleasure He strengthened and preserved him.": "Let no one who suffereth from a wicked ruler, accuse "him" from whom he suffereth, for it was from his own ill deserts, that he became subject to such a ruler. Let him accuse then his own deeds, rather than the injustice of the ruler, for it is written, "I gave thee a king in Mine anger." Why then disdain to have as rulers, those whose rule we receive from the anger of God?": "When a reprobate people is allowed to have a reprobate pastor, that pastor is given, neither for his own sake, nor for that of the people; inasmuch as he so governeth, and they so obey, that neither the teacher nor the taught are found meet to attain to eternal bliss. Of whom the Lord saith by Hosea, "I gave thee a king in Mine anger." For in the anger of God is a king given, when the bad have a worse appointed as their ruler. Such a pastor is then given, when he undertakes the rule of such a people, both being condemned alike to everlasting punishment."

Verse 12

The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up - (As in a bag or purse, and so, "treasured up"), as Job saith, using the same word, "My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and Thou sewest up mine iniquity." Job 14:17. "His sin" is "hid" i. e., as people lay up hidden treasure, to be brought out in its season. What Job feared for himself; was to be the portion of Ephraim. All his sins should be counted, laid by, heaped up. No one of them should escape His eye who sees all things as they pass, and with whom, when past, they are present still. One by one, sins enter into the treasure-house of wrath; silently they are stored up, until the measure is full; to be brought out and unfolded in the Great Day. Ephraim thought, as do all sinners, that because God does not punish at once, He never will. They think, either that God will bear with them always, because He bears with them so long; or that He does not see, does not regard it, is not so precise about His laws

being broken. “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” Ecclesiastes 8:11.

But God had forewarned them; “Is not this laid up in store with Me, and sealed up among My treasures? To Me belongeth vengeance and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time” Deuteronomy 32:34, Deuteronomy 32:5; and, “These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; and thou thoughtest wickedly that I was altogether such an one as thyself; I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes” Psalm 50:21. Unrepented sin is an evergrowing store of the wrath of God, hid out of sight in the depths of the divine judgments, but of which nothing will be lost, nothing missing. Man treasures it up, lays it up in store for himself, as the Apostle saith; “Despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; but after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds?” Romans 2:4-6.: “‹Sin is hidden,‘ when it is laid open by no voice of confession; yea, when it is covered with a shield of proud self-defense. Then iniquity is bound up, so that it cannot be loosed or forgiven. Contrariwise a holy man saith, “I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” Psalm 32:5.

But these hide their sin in the sight of people, and since they cannot hide it in the sight of God, they defend it with impenitent hearts, but “the pangs of a travailing woman,” he saith, “shall come upon him.” For as a woman can conceal her conception for a time, but, at last, the travail-pangs betraying her, she discloses what was concealed, so these can dissemble and conceal for a time their sin, but in their time all the hidden things of their hearts shall, with anguish, be revealed, according to that, ‹There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed, and hid, that shall not be known.‘ Matthew 10:26.”

Verse 13

The sorrows of a travailing woman are come upon him - The travail-pangs are violent, sudden, irresistible. A moment before they come, all is

seemingly perfect health; they come, increase in vehemence, and, if they accomplish not that for which they are sent, end in death, both to the mother and the child. Such are God‘s chastisements. If they end not in the repentance of the sinner, they continue on in his destruction. But never is man more secure, than just before the last and final throe comes upon him. “The false security of Israel, when Samaria was on the point of falling into the hands of its enemies, was a picture of that of the synagogue, when greater evils were coming upon it. Never did the Jews less think that the axe was laid to the root of the trees.” This blind presumption is ever found in a people whom God casts off. At the end of the world, amid the awful signs, the fore-runners of the Day of Judgment, people will be able to reassure themselves, and say, “Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape” 1 Thessalonians 5:3.

The prophet first compares Israel to the mother, in regard to the sufferings which are a picture of the sudden overwhelming visitations of God; then to the child, on whose staying or not staying in the womb, the welfare of both depends.

He is an unwise son, for he should not stay long - Senseless would be the child, which, if it had the power, lingered, hesitated, whether to come forth or no. While it lingers, at one time all but coming forth, then returning, the mother‘s strength is wasted, and both perish. Wonderful picture of the vacillating sinner, acted upon by the grace of God, but resisting it; at one time all but ready to pour out before his God the hidden burden which oppresses him, at the next, withholding it; impelled by his sufferings, yet presenting a passive resistance; almost constrained at times by some mightier pang, yet still with-held; until, at the last, the impulses become weaker, the pangs less felt, and he perishes with his unrepented sin.

: “He had said, that the unwise cannot bring forth, that the wise can. He had mentioned ‹children,‘ i. e., such as are not still-born; who come forth perfect into the world. These, God saith, shall by His help be redeemed from everlasting destruction, and, at the same time, having predicted the destruction of that nation, He gives the deepest comfort to those who will to retain firm faith in Him, not allowing them to be utterly cast down.”

Verse 14

I will ransom them from the power of the grave - Literally, "from the hand," i. e., the "grasp of the grave," or "of hell." God, by His prophets, mingles promises of mercy in the midst of His threats of punishment. His mercy overflows the bounds of the occasion upon which He makes it known. He had sentenced Ephraim to temporal destruction. This was unchangeable. He points to that which turns all temporal less into gain, their eternal redemption. The words are the fullest which could have been chosen. The word rendered "ransom," signifies, rescued them by the payment of a price, the word rendered "redeem," relates to one, who, as the nearest of kin, had the right to acquire anything as his own, by paying that price. Both words, in their exactest sense, describe what Jesus did, buying us "with a price," a full and dear price, "not of corruptible things, as of silver and gold, but with His precious blood" 1 Peter 1:18-19; and that, becoming our near kinsman, by His Incarnation, "for which cause He is not ashamed to call us brethren Hebrews 2:11, and "little children" John 13:33.

This was never done by God at any other time, than when, out of love for our lost world, "He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" John 3:16; and He "came to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28, add 1 Timothy 2:6). Then only was man really delivered from the "grasp" of the "grave;" so that "the first death" should only be a freedom from corruption, an earnest, and, to fallen man, a necessary condition of immortality; man "the second death" should "have no power over" them Revelation 20:6.: Thenceforward "death, the parent of sorrow, ministers to joy; death, our dishonor, is employed to our glory; the "gate of hell" is the portal to the kingdom of heaven; the "pit of destruction" is the entrance to salvation; and that to man, a sinner." At no other time, "were men freed from death and the grave, so as to make any distinction between them and others subject to mortality." The words refuse to be tied down to a temporal deliverance. A little longer continuance in Canaan is not a redemption from the power of the grave; nor was Ephraim so delivered. Words of God, "cannot mean so little, while they express so much." Then and then alone were they, in their literal meaning, fulfilled when God the Son "took" our flesh, "that, through death, He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage" Hebrews 2:14-15.

The Jews have a tradition wrapped up in their way, that this was to be accomplished in Christ.: “I went with the angel Kippod, and Messiah son of David went with me, until I came to the gates of hell. When the prisoners of hell saw the light of the Messiah, they wished to receive him, saying, this is he who will bring us out of this darkness, as it is written, ‹I will redeem them from the hand of hell. ‹“

: “Not without reason is the vouchsafed mercy thus once and again outspoken to us, “I will ranson them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death.” It is said in regard to that twofold death whereby we all died in Adam, of the body and of the soul.” “O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.” So full is God‘s word, that the sense remains the same, amid much difference of rendering. Christ was the death of death, when He became subject to it; the destruction of the grave when He lay in the tomb. Yet to render it in the form of a question is most agreeable to the language. “O death, where are thy plagues? O grave, where is thy destruction?” It is a burst of triumph at the promised redemption, then fulfilled to us in earnest and in hope, when “Christ,” being “risen from the dead, became the First-fruits of them that slept” 1 Corinthians 15:20, and we rose in Him. But the Apostle teaches us, that then it shall be altogether fulfilled, when, at the Last Day, “this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality” 1 Corinthians 15:54. “Then shall death and hell deliver up the dead which shall be in them, and themselves be cast into the lake of fire” Revelation 20:13-14. “Then shall there be no sting of death; sorrow and sighing shall flee away; fear and anxiety shall depart; tears shall be no more, and in place thereof shall be boundless pleasure, everlasting joy, praise of the glory of God in most sweet harmony.” But now too, through death, the good man “ceases to die, and begins to live;” he “dies wholly to the world, that he may live perfectly with God; the soul returns to the Author of its being, and is hidden in the hidden presence of God”.

Death and hell had no power to resist, and God says that He will not alter His sentence; “Repentance shall be hid from Mine eyes;” as the Apostle says, “the gifts and calling of God are with out repentance” Romans 11:29.

Verse 15

Though - (literally, "when") he (shall) be fruitful among his brethren Fruitfulness was God‘s promise to Ephraim, and was expressed in his name. It was fulfilled, abused, and, in the height of its fulfillment, was taken away. Ephraim is pictured as a fair and fruitful tree. An "East wind," so desolating in the East, and that, no chance wind, but "the wind of the Lord," a wind, sent by God and endued by God with the power to destroy, "shall come up from the wilderness," parching, scorching, fiery, from the burning sands of "Arabia the desert," from which it came, "and shall dry up the fountain" of his being. Deep were the roots of this fair and flourishing tree, great its vigor, ample and perpetual the fountain of its waters, over which it grew and by which it was sustained. He calls it "‹his‘ spring, ‹his‘ fountain," as though this source of its life were made over to it, and made its own. It "was planted by the water side;" but it was not of God‘s planting. "The East wind from the Lord" should dry up the deepest well-spring of its waters, and the tree should wither. Such are ungodly greatness and prosperity. While they are fairest in show, their life-fountains are drying up.

He shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels - He, emphatically, the enemy whom the prophet had ever in his mind, as the instrument of God‘s chastisement on His people, and who was represented by the East wind; the Assyrian, who came from the East, to whom, as to the East Wind, the whole country between lay open, for the whirlwinds of his armies to sweep over in one straight course from the seat of his dominion.

Verse 16

Samaria shall become desolate - Or "shall bear her iniquity." Her iniquity should now find her out, and rest upon her. Of this, "desolation" was, in God‘s judgments, the consequence. Samaria, "the nursery of idolatry and rebellion against God," the chief in pride should be chief in punishment. "For she hath rebelled against her God." It aggravated her sin, that He "against" whom "she rebelled," was "her" own "God." He who had chosen her to be His, and made Himself her God; who had showed Himself "her" God in the abundance of His loving-kindness, from the deliverance out of Egypt to that day. This her desolation, it is again said, should be Complete. Hope remains, if the people of a generation are cut off; yet not only should these fall by the sword; those already born were to be dashed in pieces; those as yet unborn were to be sought out for destruction, even in their mother‘s womb. Such atrocities were common then. Elisha foretold to

Hazael that he would perpetrate both cruelties 2 Kings 8:12, Shalmaneser clashed the young children in pieces 2 Kings 10:14, as did the conqueror of NoAmmon Nahum 3:10, and the Babylonians Psalm 137:9 afterward. The children of Ammon ripped up the women with child in Gilead Amos 1:13, and the usurper Menahem in Tiphsah and its coasts 2 Kings 15:16. Isaiah prophesies that Babylon should undergo, in its turn, the same as to its children Isaiah 13:16, and the Psalmist pronounces God‘s blessing on its destroyer who should so requite him Psalm 137:9.

Such was to be the end of the pride, the ambition, the able policy, the wars, the oppressions, the luxury, the self-enjoyment, and, in all, the rebellion of Samaria against “her” God. She has stood the more in opposition to God, the nearer she might have been to Him, and “bare her iniquity.” As a city of God‘s people, it was never restored. The spot, in its pagan colonists, with which Assyrian policy repopulated it 2 Kings 17:24, was still the abode of a mingled religion. Corruption clung, by inheritance, to its site. This too was destroyed by John Hyrcanus. “He effaced thee marks that it had ever been a city”. It was rebuilt by the Romans, after Pompey had taken Jerusalem. Herod reenclosed a circuit of two miles and a half of the ancient site, fortified it strongly, as a check on the Jews; repopulated it, partly with some who had served in his wars, partly with the people around; gave them lands, revived their idolatry by replacing their poor temple by one remarkable for size and beauty, in an area of a furlong and a half; and called the place Sebaste in honor of his pagan patron, Augustus.

A coin of Nero, struck there, bears the figure (it is thought) of its old idol, Ashtaroth. Jerome says, that John the Baptist was buried there. The pagan, who were encouraged in such desecrations by Julian the Apostate, opened the tomb, burned the bones, and scattered the dust. The city became a Christian See, and its Bishops were present at the four first General Councils. It is now but a poor village, connected with the strongly-fortified town of Herod by its pagan name Sebastieh, a long avenue of broken pillars, and the tomb of the great Forerunner. Of the ancient capital of Ephraim, not even a ruin speaks.

The prophet closes this portion of his prophecy, as other prophets so often do, with the opposite end of the righteous and the wicked. He had

spoken of the victory over death, the irrevocable purpose of God for good to his own; then he speaks of utter final destruction. Then when the mercy of God shall be shown to the uttermost, and the victory over sin and death shall be accomplished, then shall all the pomp of the its riches, joys, luxuries, elegance, glory, dignity; perish and not a wreck be left behind of all which once dazzled the eyes of people, for which they forsook their God, and sold themselves to evil and the evil one.

HOSEA CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verse 1

O Israel, return - (now, quite) unto the Lord your God The heavy and scarcely interrupted tide of denunciation is now past. Billow upon billow have rolled over Ephraim and the last wave discharged itself in the overwhelming, indiscriminating destruction of the seat of its strength. As a nation, it was to cease to be. its separate existence was a curse, not a blessing; the offspring of rivalry, matured by apostasy; the parent, in its turn, of jealousy, hatred, and mutual vexation.

But while the kingdom was past and gone, the children still remained heirs of the promises made to their fathers. As then, before, Hosea declared that Israel, after having long remained solitary, should in the end "seek the Lord and David their king" Hosea 3:5, so now, after these manifold denunciations of their temporal destruction, God not only invites them to repentance, but foretells that they should be wholly converted.

Every word is full of mercy. God calls them by the name of acceptance, which he had given to their forefather, Jacob; "O Israel." He deigns to beseech them to return; "return now;" and that not "toward" but "quite up to" Himself, the unchangeable God, whose mercies and promises were as immutable as His Being. To Himself, the Unchangeable, God invites them to return; trod that, as being still their God. They had cast off their God; God had "not cast off His people whom He foreknew" Romans 11:2.

: "He entreats them not only to turn back and look toward the Lord with a partial and imperfect repentance, but not to leave off until they were come quite home to Him by a total and sincere repentance and amendment." He bids them "return quite to" Himself, the Unchangeable God, and their God. "Great is repentance," is a Jewish saying, "which maketh men to reach quite up to the Throne of glory."

For thou hast fallen by thine iniquity - "This is the first ray of divine light on the sinner. God begins by discovering to him the abyss into which he has fallen," and the way by which he fell. Their own iniquity it was, on which they had stumbled and so had fallen, powerless to rise, except through "His" call, whose "voice is with power" Psalm 29:4, and "Who giveth what He commandeth.": "Ascribe not thy calamity," He would say,

“to thine own weakness, to civil dissension, to the disuse of miltary discipline, to want of wisdom in thy rulers, to the ambition and cruelty of the enemy, to reverse of fortune. These things had not gone against thee, hadst not thou gone to war with the law of thy God. Thou inflictest the deadly wound on thyself; thou destroyedst thyself. Not as fools vaunt, by fate, or fortune of war, but ‹by thine iniquity hast thou fallen.‘ Thy remedy then is in thine own hand. ‹Return to thy God. ‹“

: “In these words, ‹by thine iniquity,” he briefly conveys, that each is to ascribe to himself the iniquity of all sin, of whatsoever he has been guilty, not defending himself, as Adam did, in whom we all, Jews and Gentiles, have sinned and fallen, as the Apostle says, ‹For we were by nature the children of wrath, even as others‘ Ephesians 2:3. By adding actual, to that original, sin, Israel and every other nation falleth. He would say then, O Israel, be thou first converted, for thou hast need of conversion; ‹for thou hast fallen;” and confess this very thing, that ‹thou hast fallen by thine iniquity;‘ for such confession is the beginning of conversion.”

But wherewith should he return?

Verse 2

Take with you words - He bills them not bring costly offerings, that they might regain His favor; not whole burnt-offerings of bullocks, goats or rams; with which, and with which alone, they had before gone to seek Him (see the note above at Hosea 5:6); not the silver and gold which they had lavished on their idols; but what seems the cheapest of all, which any may have, without cost to their substance; “words;” worthless, as mere words; precious when from the heart; words of confession and prayer, blending humility, repentance, confession, entreaty and praise of God. God seems to assign to them a form, with which they should approach Him. But with these words, they were also to turn inwardly “and turn unto the Lord,” with your whole heart, and not your lips alone. “After ye shall be converted, confess before Him.”

Take away all iniquity - (Literally and pleadingly, “Thou will take away all iniquity”.) They had “fallen by their iniquities;” before they can rise again, the stumbling-blocks must be taken out of their way. They then, unable themselves to do it, must turn to God, with whom alone is power and mercy to do it, and say to Him, “Take away all iniquity,”

acknowledging that they had manifold iniquities, and praying Him to forgive all, "take away all. All iniquities!" "not only then the past, but what we tear for the future. Cleanse us from the past, keep us from the future. Give us righteousness, and preserve it to the end."

And receive us graciously - (Literally, "and receive good"). When God has forgiven and taken away iniquity, He has removed all hindrance to the influx of His grace. There is no vacuum in His spiritual, anymore than in His natural, creation. When God's good Spirit is chased away, the evil spirits enter the house, which is "empty, swept, and garnished" Matthew 12:44, for them. When God has forgiven and taken away man's evil, He pours into him grace and all good. When then Israel and, in him, the penitent soul, is taught to say, "receive good," it can mean only, the good which Thou Thyself hast given; as David says, "of Thine own we have given Thee" 1 Chronicles 29:14. As God is said to "crown in us His own gifts;" ("His own gifts," but "in us";) so these pray to God to receive from them His own good, which they had from Him. For even the good, which God giveth to be in us, He accepteth in condescension and forgiving mercy, "Who crowneth thee in mercy and lovingkindness" Psalm 103:4.

They pray God to accept their service, forgiving their imperfection, and mercifully considering their frailty. For since "our righteousnesses are filthy rags," we ought ever humbly to entreat God, not to despise our dutifulness, for the imperfections, wanderings, and negligences mingled therewith. For exceedingly imperfect is it, especially if we consider the majesty of the Divine Nature, which should be served, were it possible, with infinite reverence." They plead to God, then, to accept what, although from Him they have it, yet through their imperfection, were, but for His goodness, unworthy of His acceptance. Still, since the glory of God is the end of all creation, by asking Him to accept it, they plead to Him, that this is the end for which He made and remade them, and placed the good in them, that it might redound to His glory. As, on the other hand, the Psalmist says, "What profit is there in my blood, if I go down into the pit" Psalm 30:9, as though his own perishing were a loss to God, his Creator, since thus there were one creature the less to praise Him.: "‹Take from us all iniquity,' leave in us no weakness, none of our former decay, lest the evil root should send forth a new growth of evil; ‹and receive good;' for unless Thou take away our evil, we can have no good to offer Thee, according to that, ‹depart from evil, and do good.' Psalm 37:27."

So will we render the calves of our lips - Literally, "and we would fain repay, calves, our lips;" i. e., when God shall have "forgiven us all our iniquity," and "received" at our hands what, through His gift, we have to offer, the "good" which through His good Spirit we can do, then would we "offer" a perpetual thankoffering, "our lips." This should be the substitute for the thank-offerings of the law. As the Psalmist says, "I will praise the Name of God with a song, and magnify Him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord, better than a bullock that hath horns and hoofs" Psalm 69:30-31. They are to bind themselves to perpetual thanksgiving. As the morning and evening sacrifice were continual so was their new offering to be continual. But more. The material sacrifice, "the bullock," was offered, consumed, and passed away. Their "lips" were offered, and remained; a perpetual thank-offering, even a "living sacrifice," living on like the mercies for which they thanked; giving forth their "endless song" for never-ending mercies.

This too looks on to the Gospel, in which, here on earth, our unending thanksgiving is beginning, in which also it was the purpose of God to restore those of Ephraim who would return to Him.: "Here we see law extinguished, the Gospel established. For we see other rites, other gifts. So then the priesthood is also changed. For three sorts of sacrifices Were of old ordained by the law, with great state. Some signified the expiation of sin; some expressed the ardor of piety; some, thanksgiving. To those ancient signs and images, the truth of the Gospel, without figure corresponds. Prayer to God, ‹to take away all iniquity,' contains a confession of sin, and expresses our faith, that we place our whole hope of recovering our lost purity and of obtaining salvation in the mercy of Christ. ‹Receive good.' What other good can we offer, than detestation of our past sin, with burning desire of holiness? This is the burnt-offering. Lastly, ‹we will repay the calves of our lips,' is the promise of that solemn vow, most acceptable to God, whereby we bind ourselves to keep in continual remembrance all the benefits of God, and to render ceaseless praise to the Lord who has bestowed on us such priceless gifts. For ‹the calves of' the ‹lips' are orisons well-pleasing unto God. Of which David says, ‹Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt-offerings and whole burnt-offerings; then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar.' (Psalm 51 ult.)."

Verse 3

Asshur shall not save us - After prayer for pardon and for acceptance of themselves, and thanksgiving for acceptance, comes the promise not to fall back into their former sins. Trust in man, in their own strength, in their idols, had been their besetting sins. Now, one by one, they disavow them.

First, they disclaim trust in man, and making "flesh their arm" Jeremiah 17:5. Their disclaimer of the help of the Assyrian, to whom they had so often betaken themselves against the will of God, contains, at once, that best earnest of true repentance, the renewal of the confession of past sins, and the promise to rely no more on any princes of this world, of whom he was then chief. The horse, in like way, is the symbol of any warlike strength of their own. As the Psalmist says, "Some put their trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God" Psalm 20:7; and, "a horse is a vain thing for safety, neither shall he deliver any by his great strength" Psalm 33:17; and Solomon, "The horse is prepared for the day of battle but salvation is of the Lord" Proverbs 21:31. War was almost the only end for which the horse was used among the Jews. If otherwise, it was a matter of great and royal pomp. It was part of a standing army. Their kings were especially forbidden to "multiply horses" Deuteronomy 17:16 to themselves. Solomon, indeed, in his prosperity, broke this, as well as other commands of God. The pious king Hezekiah, although possessed at one time of large treasure, so kept that command as to furnish matter of mockery to Rabshakeh, the blaspheming envoy of Assyria, that he had neither horses nor horsemen 2 Kings 18:23. The horses being procured from Egypt 1 Kings 10:28, the commerce gave fresh occasion for idolatry.

Neither will we say anymore to the work of our hands, ye are our gods - This is the third disavowal. Since it was folly and sin to trust in the creatures which God had made, apart from God, how much more, to trust in things which they themselves had made, instead of God, and offensive to God!

For in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy - (or, O Thou, in whom). He is indeed fatherless who hath not God for his Father. They confess then, that they were and deserved to be thus "fatherless" and helpless, a prey to every oppressor; but they appeal to God by the title which He had taken, "the Father of the fatherless" Psalm 68:5, that He would have mercy on them, who had no help but in Him.: "We promise this, they say, hoping in the help of Thy mercy, since it belongeth to Thee and is for Thy Glory to have

mercy on the people which believeth in Thee, and to stretch forth Thine Hand, that they may be able to leave their wonted ills and amend their former ways."

Verse 4

I will heal their backsliding - God, in answer, promises to "heal" that wound of their souls, from where every other evil came, their fickleness and unsteadfastness. Hitherto, this had been the characteristic of Israel. "Within a while they forgat His works, and would not abide His counsels" Psalm 106:13. "They forgat what He had done. Their heart was not whole with Him; neither continued they steadfast in His covenant. They turned back and tempted God. They kept not His testimonies, but turned back and fell way like their forefathers, starting aside like a broken bow" Psalm 78:12, Psalm 78:37, Psalm 78:42, Psalm 78:57-58. Steadfastness to the end is the special gift of the Gospel. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" Matthew 28:20; Matthew 16:18. And to individuals, "Jesus, having loved His own, loved them unto the end" John 13:1. In healing that disease of unsteadfastness, God healed all besides. This He did to all, wheresoever or howsoever dispersed, who received the Gospel; this He doth still; and this He will do completely in the end, when "all Israel shall be saved."

I will love them freely - that is, as the word means, "impelled" thereto by Himself alone, and so, (as used of God) moved by His own Essential Bountifulness, the exceedling greatness of His Goodness, largely, bountifully. God "loves" us "freely" in loving us against our deserts, because He "is love;" He "loves" us "freely" in that He freely became Man, and, having become Man freely shed His Blood for the remission of our sins, freely forgave our sins; He "loves" us "freely," in "giving us grace, according to the good pleasure of His will" Ephesians 1:5, to become pleasing to Him, and causing all good in us; He "loves" us "freely," in rewarding infinitely the good which we have from "Him.": "More manifestly here speaketh the Person of the Saviour Himself, promising His own Coming to the salvation of penitents, with sweetly sounding promise, with sweetness full of grace."

For Mine anger is turned away from him - As He says, "In My wrath I smote thee; but in My favor have I had mercy on thee" Isaiah 60:10. He doth not withhold only, or suspend His anger, but He taketh it away wholly. So the Psalmist saith, "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people; Thou

hast covered all their sin; Thou hast taken away all Thy wrath; Thou hast turned from the fierceness of Thine anger" Psalm 85:2-3.

Verse 5

I will be as the dew unto Israel - Before, He had said, "his spring shall become dry and his fountain shall be dried up" Hosea 13:15. Now again He enlarges the blessing; their supply shall be unfailing, for it shall be from God; yea, God Himself shall be that blessing; "I will be the dew; descending on the mown grass" Psalm 72:6, to quicken and refresh it; descending, Himself, into the dried and parched and sere hearts of men, as He saith, "We will come unto him and make Our abode in him" John 14:23. The grace of God, like the dew, is not given once for all, but is, day by day, waited for, and, day by day, renewed. Yet doth it not pass away, like the fitful goodness John 6:4 of God's former people, but turns into the growth and spiritual substance of those on whom it descends.

He shall grow as the lily - No one image can exhibit the manifold grace of God in those who are His own, or the fruits of that grace. So the prophet adds one image to another, each supplying a distinct likeness of a distinct grace or excellence. The "lily" is the emblem of the beauty and purity of the soul in grace; the "cedar" of Lebanon, of its strength and deep-rootedness, its immovableness and uprightness; the evergreen "olive tree" which "remaineth in its beauty both winter and summer," of the unvarying presence of Divine Grace, continually, supplying an eversustained freshness, and issuing in fruit; and the fragrance of the aromatic plants with which the lower parts of Mount Lebanon are decked, of its loveliness and sweetness; as a native explains this, "he takes a second comparison from Mount Lebanon for the abundance of aromatic things and odoriferous flowers."

Such are the myrtles and lavender and the odoriferous reed; from which "as you enter the valley" (between Lebanon and Anti-lebanon) "straightway the scent meets you." All these natural things are established and well-known symbols of things spiritual. The lily, so called in Hebrew from its dazzling whiteness, is, in the Canticles Matthew 13:6, as contrariwise, Paul speaks of these, who are "rooted and grounded in love" Ephesians 3:17, and of being "rooted and built up in Christ" Colossians 2:7. The widespreading branches are an emblem of the gradual growth and enlargement of the Church, as our Lord says, "It becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof" Matthew 13:32.

The symmetry of the tree and its outstretched arms express, at once, grace and protection. Of the "olive" the Psalmist says, "I am like a green olive tree in the house Of God" Psalm 52:8; and Jeremiah says, "The Lord called thy name a green olive tree, fair and of goodly fruit" Jeremiah 11:16; and of "fragrance" the spouse says in the Canticles, "because of the savor of Thy good ointments, Thy name is as ointment poured forth" 2 Corinthians 2:14. Deeds of charity also are "an odor of good smell" Philemon 4:18; the prayers of the saints also are "sweet odors" Revelation 5:8. All these are the fruits of the Spirit of God who says, "I will be as the dew unto Israel." Such reunion of qualities, being beyond nature, suggests the more, that, that, wherein they are all combined, the future Israel, the Church, shall flourish with graces beyond nature, in their manifoldness, completeness, unfadingness.

Verse 7

They that dwell under his shadow - that is, the shadow of the restored Israel, who had just been described under the image of a magnificent tree uniting in itself all perfections.: "They that are under the shadow of the Church are together under the shadow of Christ the Head thereof, and also of God the Father." The Jews, of old, explained it, "they shall dwell under the shadow of their Messias." These, he says, "shall return," i. e., they shall turn to be quite other than they had been, even back to Him, to whom they belonged, whose creatures they were, God. "They shall revive as the corn." The words may be differently rendered, in the same general meaning. The simple words, "They shall revive" (literally, "give life" to, or "preserve in life,") "corn," have been filled up differently. Some of old, (from where ours has been taken) understood it, "they shall revive" themselves, and so, "shall live", and that either "as corn," (as it is said, "shall grow as the vine"); or "by corn" which is also very natural, since "bread is the staff of life," and our spiritual Bread is the support of our spiritual life.

Or lastly, (of which the grammar is easier, yet the idiom less natural) it as been rendered "they shall give life to corn," make corn to live, by cultivating it. In all ways the sense is perfect. If we render, "shall revive" as "corn," it means, being, as it were, dead, they shall net only live again with renewed life, but shall even increase. Corn first dies in its outward form, and so is multiplied; the fruit-bearing branches of the vine are pruned and

cut, and so they bear richer fruit. So through suffering, chastisement, or the heavy hand of God or man, the Church, being purified, yields more abundant fruits of grace. Or if rendered, "shall make corn to grow," since the prophet, all around, is under figures of God's workings in nature, speaking of His workings of grace, then it is the same image, as when our Lord speaks of those "who receive the seed in an honest and true heart and bring forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" Matthew 13:23. Or if we were to render, "shall produce life through wheat," what were this, but that seed-corn, which, for us and for our salvation, was sown in the earth, and died, and "brought forth much fruit;" the Bread of life, of which our Lord says, "I am the Bread of life, whoso eateth of this bread shall live forever, and the bread which I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world?" John 6:48, John 6:51.

The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon - The grapes of Lebanon have been of the size of plums; its wine has been spoken of as the best in the East or even in the world. Formerly Israel was as a luxuriant, but empty, vine, bringing forth no fruit to God Hosea 10:1. God "looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes" Isaiah 5:2. Now its glory and luxuriance should not hinder its bearing fruit, and "that," the noblest of its kind. Rich and fragrant is the odor of graces, the inspiration of the Spirit of God, and not fleeting, but abiding.

Verse 8

Ephraim shall say, what have I to do anymore with idols? - So Isaiah fortells, "The idols He shall utterly abolish" Isaiah 2:18. Aforetime Ephraim said obstinately, in the midst of God's chastisements; "I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink" Hosea 2:5. Now she shall renounce them wholly and forever. This is entire conversion, to part wholly with everything which would dispute the allegiance with God, to cease to look to any created thing or being, for what is the gift of the Creator alone. So the Apostle says, "what concord hath Christ with Belial?" 2 Corinthians 6:15. This verse exhibits in few, vivid, words, converted Ephraim speaking with God, and God answering; Ephraim renouncing his sins, and God accepting him; Ephraim glorying in God's goodness, and God reminding him that he holds all from Himself.

I have heard and observed him - God answers the profession and accepts it. I, (emphatic) "I Myself have heard and have answered," as He

says, “Before they call I will answer” Isaiah 65:24. Whereas God, before, had hid His face from them, or had “observed” Hosea 13:7 them, only as the object of His displeasure, and as ripe for destruction, now He reverses this, and “observes” them, in order to forecome the wishes of their hearts before they are expressed, to watch over them and survey and provide for all their needs. To this, Ephraim exulting in God‘s goodness, answers, “I” am “like a green fir tree,” i. e., ever-green, ever-fresh. The “berosh,” (as Jerome, living in Palestine, thought) one of the large genus of the “pine” or “fir,” or (as others translated) the cypress, was a tall stately tree Isaiah 55:13; in whose branches the stork could make its nest Psalm 104:17; its wood precious enough to be employed in the temple (1 Kings 5:8, 1 Kings 5:10, English); 6:15,34); fine enough to be used in all sorts of musical instruments 2 Samuel 6:5; strong and pliant enough to be used for spears Nahum 2:3.

It was part of the glory of Lebanon Isaiah 37:24; Isaiah 60:13. A Greek historian says that Lebanon “was full of cedars and pines and cypresses, of wonderful beauty and size”. A modern traveler says, of “the cypress groves of Lebanon”; “Each tree is in itself a study for the landscape painter - some, on account of their enormous stems and branches. Would you see trees in all their splendor and beauty, then enter these wild groves, that have never been touched by the pruning knife of art.” This tree, in its majestic beauty, tenacity of life, and undying verdure, winter and summer, through the perpetual supply of sap, pictures the continual life of the soul through the unbroken supply of the grace of God. Created beauty must, at best, be but a faint image of the beauty of the soul in grace, for this is from the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit.

From Me is thy fruit found - Neither the pine nor the cypress bear any fruit, useful for food. It is probable then that here too the prophet fills out one image by another and says that restored Israel, the Church of God, or the soul in grace, should not only have beauty and majesty, but what is not, in the way of nature, found united therewith, fruitfulness also. From Me is thy fruit found; as our Lord says, “I am the vine, ye are the branches” John 15:5. Human nature, by itself, can as little bear fruit well-pleasing to God, as the pine or cypress can bear fruit for human use. As it were a miracle in nature, were these trees to bring forth such fruit, so, for man to bring forth fruits of grace, is a miracle of grace. The presence of works of grace attests

the immediate working of God the Holy Spirit, as much as any miracle in nature.

Verse 9

Who is wise and he shall understand these things? - The prophet says this, not of the words in which he had spoken, but of the substance. He does not mean that his style was obscure, or that he had delivered the message of God in a way difficult to be understood. This would have been to fail of his object. Nor does he mean that human acuteness is the key to the things of God. He means that those only of a certain character, those "wise," through God, unto God, will understand the things of God. So the Psalmist, having related some of God's varied chastenings, mercies and judgments, sums up, "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord" Psalm 107:43. So Asaph says that God's dealings with the good and bad in this life were "too hard" for him to "understand, until" he "went into the sanctuary of God;" then "understood" he "their end" Psalm 73:16-17.

In like way Daniel, at the close of his prophecy, sums up the account of a sifting-time, "Many shall be purified and made white and tried, and the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand" Daniel 12:10. As these say that the wise alone understand the actual dealings of God with man, so Hosea says, that the wise alone would understand what he had set forth of the mercy and severity of God, of His love for man, His desire to pardon, His unwillingness that any should perish, His longing for our repentance, His store of mercies in Christ, His gifts of grace and His free eternal love, and yet His rejection of all half-service and His final rejection of the impenitent. "Who is wise?" "The word "who" is always taken, not for what is impossible, but for what is difficult." So Isaiah saith, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed?" Isaiah 53:1.

Few are wise with "the wisdom which is from above;" few understand, because few wish to understand, or seek wisdom from Him who "giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not" James 1:5. The question implies also, that God longs that people should understand to their salvation. He inquires for them, calls to them that they would meditate on His mercies and judgments. As Paul says, "Behold the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His

goodness. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out" Romans 11:22, Romans 11:33. Unsearchable to intellect and theory; intelligible to faith and for acting on.

And he shall understand these things - (that is, that he may understand). The worldly-wise of that generation, too, doubtless, thought themselves too wise to need to understand them; as the wise after this world counted the Cross of Christ foolishness.

Prudent - Properly "gifted with understanding," the form of the word expressing, that he was "endowed with" this "understanding," as a gift from God. And He shall know them. While the wise of this world disbelieve, jeer, scoff at them, in the name of human reason, he who has not the natural quickness of man only, but who is endued with the true wisdom, shall "know" them. So our Lord says, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it is of God" John 7:17. The word, "wise," may especially mean him who contemplates these truths and understands them in themselves, yet plainly so as to act upon them; and the word "endued with prudence," may especially describe such as are gifted with readiness to apply that knowledge to practice, in judgment, discrimination, act. By uniting both, the prophet joins contemplative and practical wisdom, and intensifies the expression of God‘s desire that we should be endowed with them.

For the ways of the Lord are right - If in the word, "ways," the figure is still preserved, the prophet speaks of the "ways," as "direct and straight;" without a figure, as "just and upright."

The ways of the Lord - Are, what we, by a like figure, call "the ‹course‘ of His providence;" of which Scripture says, "His ways are judgment" Deuteronomy 32:4; Daniel 4:37; "God, His ways are perfect" Psalm 18:30; "the Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works" Psalm 145:17; "Thy way is in the sea, and Thy paths in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known" Psalm 77:19; "lo, these are parts of His ways, but how little a portion is heard of Him, and the thunder of His power who can understand?" Job 26:14; "who hath enjoined Him His way, and who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?" Job 36:23. These "ways of God" include His ordering for us, in His eternal wisdom, that course of life, which leads most directly to Himself. They include, then, all God‘s commandments, precepts, counsels, His whole moral law, as well as His

separate purpose for each of us. In the one way, they are God‘s ways toward us; in the other they are God‘s ways for us.

The just shall walk in them - God reveals His ways to us, not that we may know them only, but that we may do them. “The end of moral science is not knowledge, but practice,” said the Pagan philosopher. But the life of grace is a life of progress. The word, “way,” implies not continuance only, but advance. He does not say,” they shall “stand” in God‘s ways,” but “they shall walk in them.” They shall go on in them “upright, safe, and secure, in “great peace” and with “nothing whereat to stumble”. In God‘s ways there is no stumbling block, and they who walk in them, are free from those of which other ways are full. Whereas, out of God‘s ways, all paths are tangled, uneven, slippery, devious, full of snares and pitfalls, God maketh His “way straight,” a royal highway, smooth, even, direct unto Himself.

But - (and)

d **the transgressors shall fall therein -** Literally, “shall stumble thereon” Psalm 119:165. Transgressors, i. e., those who rebel against the law of God, “stumble” in divers manners, not “in,” but “at” the ways of God. They stumble at God Himself, at His All-Holy Being, Three and One; they stumble at His attributes; they stumble at His providence, they stumble at His acts; they stumble at His interference with them; they stumble at His requirements. They rebel against His commandments, as requiring what they like not; at His prohibitions, as refusing what they like. They stumble at His Wisdom, in ordering His own creation; at His Holiness, in punishing sin; but most of all, they stumble at His Goodness and condescension. They have a greater quarrel with His condescension than with all His other attributes. They have stumbled, and still stumble at God the Son, becoming Man, and taking our flesh in the Virgin‘s womb; they stumble at the humility of the Crucifixion; they stumble at His placing His Manhood at the Right Hand of God; they stumble at the simplicity, power and condescension, which He uses in the sacraments; they stumble at His giving us His Flesh to eat; they stumble at His forgiving sins freely, and again and again; they stumble at His making us members of Himself, without waiting for our own wills; they stumble at His condescension in using our own acts, to the attainment of our degree of everlasting glory.

Every attribute, or gift, or revelation of God, which is full of comfort to the believer, becomes in turn an occasion of stumbling to the rebellious.

“The things which should have been for his wealth, become to him an occasion of falling. “They cannot attemper their own wishes and ways to the divine law, because, obeying what they themselves affect, “the law of their members,” they stumble at that other law, which leadeth unto life” Psalm 69:22.: With this the prophet sums up all the teaching of the seventy years of his ministry. This is the end of all which he had said of the severity and mercy of God, of the Coming of Christ, and of our resurrection in Him. This is to us the end of all; this is thy choice, Christian soul, to walk in God‘s ways, or to stumble at them. As in the days when Christ came in the Flesh, so it is now; so it will be to the end. So holy Simeon prophesied, “‹This Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel‘ Luke 2:34; and our Lord said of Himself, ‹For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind‘ John 9:39. And Peter; ‹Unto you which believe He is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling and rock of offence, to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient‘ 1 Peter 2:7-8. ‹Christ crucified was unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God‘ 1 Corinthians 1:23-24. The commandment, which‘ was ordained ‹to life,‘ Paul, when yet unregenerate, ‹found‘ to be ‹unto death‘ Romans 7:10.: “Pray we then the Eternal Wisdom, that we may be truly wise and understanding, and receive not in vain those many good things which Christ has brought to the race of man. Let us cleave to Him by that ‹faith, which worketh by love;‘ let us seek the Good, seek the Just, ‹seek the Lord while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near.‘ Whatever God doeth toward ourselves or others, let us account right; ‹for the ways of the Lord are right,‘ and ‹that‘ cannot be unjust, which pleaseth the Just. Whatever He teacheth, whatever He commandeth, let us believe without discussion, and embrace most firmly for “that” cannot be false, which the Truth hath taught. Let us walk in His ways;” for Christ Himself is “the Way” unto Himself, “the Life.”: “Look up to heaven; look down to Hell; live for Eternity.” “Weigh a thousand, yea thousands of years against eternity what dost thou, weighing a finite, how vast soever, against Infinity.”

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JOEL INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Joel

The prophet Joel relates nothing of himself. He gives no hints as to himself, except the one fact which was necessary to authenticate his prophecy, that the word of the Lord came to him, and that the book to which that statement is prefixed is that "word of the Lord." "The word of the Lord, which came to Joel, son of Pethuel." Like Hosea, he distinguished himself from others of the same name, by the mention of the name of his unknown father. But his whole book bears evidence, that he was a prophet of Jerusalem. He was living in the center of the public worship of God: he speaks to the priests as though present, "Come ye, lie all night in sackcloth" Joel 1:13-14; he was, where the "solemn assembly Joel 2:15-17, which he bids them "proclaim," would be held; "the house of the Lord Joel 1:9, from which "meat-offering and drink-offering" were "cut off," was before his eyes. Whether for alarm Joel 2:1, or for prayer Joel 2:15, he bids, "blow ye the trumpet in Zion. The city Joel 2:9, which he sees the enemy approaching to beleaguer and enter, is Jerusalem. He adresses the "children of Zion" Joel 2:23; he reproaches Tyre, Zidon, and Philistia, with selling to the Greeks the "children of Zion and Jerusalem" Joel 3:4, Joel 3:6.

God promises by him to "bring back the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem Joel 3:1. Of Israel, in its separated existence, he takes no more notice, than if it were not. They may be included in the three places in which he uses the name; "Ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel; I will plead for My people and My heritage, Israel; the Lord will be the strength of Israel Joel 2:27; Joel 3:2, Joel 3:16; but, (as the context shows) only as included, together with Judah, in the one people of God. The promises to Judah, Jerusalem, Zion, with which he closes his book, being simply prophetic, must, so far, remain the same, whomsoever he addressed. He foretells that those blessings were to issue from Zion, and that the Church was to be founded there. Yet the absence of any direct promise of the extension of those blessings to the ten tribes, (such as occur in Hosea and Amos) implies that he had no office in regard to them.

Although a prophet of Jerusalem, and calling, in the name of God, to a solemn and strict fast and supplication, he was no priest. He mentions the priests as a class to which he did not belong Joel 1:9, Joel 1:12; Joel 2:17,

the priests, the Lord‘s ministers; ye priests; ye ministers of the altar; ye ministers of my God; let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, the place where they officiated. He calls upon them to proclaim the fast, which he enjoined in the name of God. “Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly Joel 1:14, he says to those, whom be had just called to mourn, “ye priests, ye ministers of the altar.” As entrusted with a revelation from God, he had an authority superior to that of the priests. While using this, he interfered not with their own special office.

Joel must have completed his prophecy in its present form, before Amos collected his prophecies into one whole. For Amos takes as the key-note of his prophecy, words with which Joel almost closes his; “The Lord shall roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem” Joel 3:16. Nor only so, but Amos inserts at the end of his own prophecy some of Joel‘s closing words of promise. Amos thus identified his own prophecy with that of Joel. In the threatening with which he opens it, he retains each word of Joel, in the self-same order, although the words admit equally of several different collocations, each of which would have had an emphasis of its own. The symbolic blessing, which Amos takes from Joel at the close of his prophecy “the mountains shall drop with new wine, is found in these two prophets alone; and the language is the bolder and more peculiar, because the word “drop” is used of dropping from above, not of flowing down.

It seems as if the picture were, that the mountains of Judaea, “the” mountains, instead of mist or vapor, should “distill” that which is the symbol of joy, “wine which maketh glad the heart of man” Psalm 104:15. The reason why Amos, in this marked way, joined on his own book of prophecy to the book of Joel, must remain uncertain, since he did not explain it. It may have been, that, being called in an unusual way to the prophetic office, he would in this way identify himself with the rest of those whom God called to it. A prophet, out of Judah but for Israel, Amos identified himself with the one prophet of Judah, whose prophecy was committed to writing. Certainly those first words of Amos, “The Lord shall roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem,” pointed out to the ten tribes, that Zion and Jerusalem were the place “which God had chosen to place His Name there,” the visible center of His government, whence proceeded His judgments and His revelation. Others have supposed that bad

men thought that the evil which Joel had foretold would not come, and that the good may have looked anxiously for the fulfillment of God‘s promises; and that on that ground, Amos renewed, by way of allusion, both God‘s threats and promises, thereby impressing on men‘s minds, what Habakkuk says in plain terms, Habakkuk 2:3, “The vision is for the appointed time, and it hasteth to the end: though it tarry, wait for it, for it will come, it will not tarry, or be behindhand.

However this may have been, such marked renewal of threatenings and promises of Joel by Amos, attests two things:

(1) that Joel‘s prophecy must, at the time when Amos wrote, have become part of Holy Scripture, and its authority must have been acknowledged;

(2) that its authority must have been acknowledged by, and it must have been in circulation among, those to whom Amos prophesied; otherwise he would not have prefixed to his book those words of Joel.

For the whole force of the words, as employed by Amos, depends upon their being recognized by his hearers, as a renewal of the prophecy of Joel. Certainly bad men jeered at Amos, as though his threatenings would not be fulfilled Amos 5:18; Amos 6:3; Amos 9:10.

Since, then, Amos prophesied during the time, when Azariah and Jeroboam II reigned together, the book of Joel must have been at that time written, and known in Israel also. Beyond this, the brief, although full, prophecy of Joel affords no clue as to its own date. Yet probably it was not far removed from that of Amos. For Amos, as well as Joel, speaks of the sin of Tyre and Zidon and of the Philistines in selling the children of Judah into captivity Joel 3:4-6; Amos 1:6, Amos 1:9. And since Amos speaks of this, as the crowning sin of both, it is perhaps likely that some signal instance of it had taken place, to which both prophets refer. To this, the fact that both prophets speak of the scourge of locusts and drought, (if this were so) would not add any further evidence. For Joel was prophesying to Judah; Amos, to Israel. The prophecy of Joel may indeed subordinately, although very subordinately at the most, “include” real locusts; and such locusts, if

he meant to include them, could have been no local plague, and so could hardly have passed over Israel. But Amos does not speak of the ravages of the locusts, by which, in addition to drought, mildew, pestilence, God had, when he prophesied, recently chastened Israel, as distinguished above others which God had sent upon this land. There is nothing therefore to identify the locusts spoken of by Amos with those which Joel speaks of as an image of the terrible, successive, judgments of God. Rather Amos enumerates, one after the other, God‘s ordinary plagues in those countries, and says that all had failed in the object for which God sent them, the turning of His people to Himself.

Nor, again, does anything in Joel‘s own prophecy suggest any particular date, beyond what is already assigned through the relation which the book of Amos bears to his book. On the contrary, in correspondence, perhaps, with the wide extent of his prophecy, Joel says next to nothing of what was temporary or local. He mentions, incidentally, in one place the “drunkards” Joel 1:5 of his people; yet in this case too, he speaks of the sin as especially affected and touched by the chastisement, not of the chastisement, as brought upon the sinner or upon the sinful people by that sin. Beyond this one case, the prophet names neither sins nor sinners among his own people. He foretells chastisement, and exhorts to repentance as the means of averting it, but does not specify any sins. His prophecy is one declaration of the displeasure of God against all sin, and of His judgments consequent thereon, one promise of pardon upon earnest repentance; and so, perhaps, what is individual has, for the most part been purposely suppressed.

The notices in the book of Joel, which have been employed to fix more precisely the date of the prophet, relate:

(1) to the proclamation of the solemn assembly, which, it is supposed, would be enjoined thus authoritatively in a time when that injunction would be obeyed;

(2) to the mention of certain nations, and the supposed omission of certain other nations, as enemies of Judah.

Both arguments have been overstated and misstated.

(1) the call to public humiliation implies, so far, times in which the king would not interfere to prevent it. But ordinarily, in Judah, even bad and irreligious kings did not interfere with extraordinary fasts in times of public distress. Jehoiakim did not; the king, who hesitated not to cut in shreds the roll of Jeremiah‘s prophecies when three or four columns or chapters Jeremiah 36:23 had been read before him, and burned it on the hearth by which he was sitting. The fast-day, upon which that roll had been read in the ears of all the people, was an extraordinary “fast before the Lord, proclaimed to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem” Jeremiah 36:9. This fasting day was not their annual fast, the day of atonement. For the day of atonement was in the seventh month; this Jeremiah tells us, “was in the ninth month” Jeremiah 36:9.

When such a king as Jehoiakim tolerated the appointment of an extraordinary fast, not for Jerusalem only, but for “all the people who came from the cities of Judah,” we may well think that no king of ordinary impiety would, in a time of such distress as Joel foretells, have interfered to hinder it. There were at most, after Athaliah‘s death, two periods only of decided antagonism to God. The first was at the close of the reign of Joash, after the death of Johoiada, when Joash with the princes gave himself to the idolatry of Ashtaroth and put to death Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, upon whom “the Spirit of God came” and he foretold their destruction; “Because ye have forsaken the Lord, He had also forsaken you” 2 Chronicles 24:17-21. The period after the murder of Zechariah was very short. “As the year came round,” the Syrians came against them; and “when they departed, his own servants slew him” 2 Chronicles 24:23, 2 Chronicles 24:25. The only space, left uncertain, is the length of time, during which the idolatry lasted, before the murder of Zechariah. The second period, that in which Amaziah fell away to the idolatry of the Edomites, silenced the prophet of God, and was abandoned by him to his destruction 2 Chronicles 25:14-16, 2 Chronicles 25:23, was also brief, lasting probably some 16 years.

(2) the argument from the prophet‘s of some enemies of God‘s people and the supposed omission of other later enemies, rests partly on a wrong conception of prophecy, partly on wrong interpretation of the prophet. On

the assumption that the prophets did not speak of nations, as instruments of God‘s chastisements on His people, until they had risen above the political horizon of Judah, it has been inferred that Joel lived before the time when Assyria became an object of dread, because, mentioning other enemies of God‘s people, he does not mention Assyria. The assumption, which originated in unbelief, is untrue in fact. Balaam prophesied the captivity through Assyria Numbers 24:22, when Israel was entering on the promised land; he foretold also the destruction of Assyria or the great empire of the East through a power who should come from Europe Numbers 24:24. The prophet Ahijah foretold to Jeroboam I that the Lord would “root up Israel out of the good land which He gave to their fathers, and would scatter them beyond the river 1 Kings 14:15. Neither in temporal nor spiritual prophecy can we discern the rules, by which, “at sundry times and in diver‘s manners, God” revealed Himself “through the prophets,” so that we should be able to reduce to one strict method “the manifold wisdom” of God, and infer the age of a prophet from the tenor of the prophecy which God put into his mouth.

It is plain, moreover, from the text of Joel himself, that God had revealed to him, that other more formidable enemies than had yet invaded Judah would hereafter come against it, and that those enemies whom he speaks of, he mentions only, as specimens of hatred against God‘s people and of its punishment. There can really be no question, that by “the Northern Joel 2:20 army, he means the Assyrian. God foretells also by him the capture of Jerusalem, and the punishment of those who “scattered Israel, My heritage, among the pagan, and divided My land” Joel 3:2. Such words can only be understood of an entire removal of Judah, whereby others could come and take possession of his land. In connection with these great powers occurs the mention of Tyre, Sidon and Philistia, petty yet vexatious enemies, contrasted with the more powerful. The very formula with which that mention is introduced, shows that they are named only incidentally and as instances of a class. “And also, what are ye to Me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Philistia?” The mighty nations were to come as lions, to lay waste; these, like jackals, made their own petty merchants gain. The mighty divided the land; these were plunderers and men-stealers. In both together, he declares that nothing, either great or small, should escape the righteous judgments of God. Neither shall might save the mighty, nor shall

the petty malice of the lesser enemies of God be too small to be requited. But not only is there no proof that Joel means to enumerate all the nations who had hitherto infested Judah, but there is proof that he did not.

One only has been found to place Joel so early as the reign of Jehoshaphat. But in his reign, after the death of Ahab, (897 b.c.) "Moab and Ammon and with them others, a great multitude 2 Chronicles 20:1-2, invaded Judah. Since then it is tacitly admitted, that the absence of the mention of Moab and Ammon does not imply that Joel prophesied before their invasion (897 b.c.) neither is the non-mention of the invasion of the Syrians any argument that he lived before the end of the reign of Jehoash (840 b.c.). Further, not the mere invasion of Judah, but the motives of the invasion or cruelty evinced in it, drew down the judgments of God. The invasion of Hazael was directed not against Judah, but "against Gath." 2 Kings 12:17. But "a small company of men" 2 Chronicles 24:24 went up against Jerusalem; "and the Lord delivered a very great company into their hand, because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers. They executed," we are told, "judgment against Joash." Nor does it appear, that they, like the Assyrians, exceeded the commission for which God employed them (2 Chronicles 24:23; add 17,18). "They destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people," the princes who had seduced Joash to idolatry and were the authors of the murder of Zechariah 2 Chronicles 24:21. "They conspired against him, and stoned him (Zechariah) with stones at the commandment of the king." Amos mentions, as the last ground of God's sentence against Damascus, not this incursion, but the cruelty of Hazael to Gilead Joel 1:3. The religious aspect of the single invasion of Judah by this band of Syrians was very different from the perpetual hostility of the Philistines, or the malicious cupidity of the Phoenicians.

Still less intelligible is the assertion, that Joel would not have foretold any punishment of Edom, had he lived after the time when Amaziah smote 20,000 of them "in the valley of salt, and took Selah 2 Kings 14:7; 2 Chronicles 25:11, or Petra 838 b.c. For Amos confessedly prophesied in the reign of Azariah, the son of Amaziah. Azariah recovered Elath also from Edom; 2 Kings 14:22; 2 Chronicles 26:2 yet Amos, in his time, foretells the utter destruction of Bozra and Teman Joel 1:12. The victory of Amaziah did not humble Edom. They remained the same embittered foe. In the time of

Ahaz, they again invaded Judah and "smote" it and "carried away a captivity" 2 Chronicles 28:17. Prophecy does not regard these little variations of conquest or defeat. They do not exhaust its meaning. It pronounces God‘s judgment against the abiding character of the nation; and while that continues unchanged, the sentence remains. Its fulfillment seems often to linger, but in the end, it does not fail nor remain behind God‘s appointed time. Egypt and Edom moreover, in Joel, stand also as symbols of nations or people like themselves. They stand for the people themselves, but they represent also others of the same character, as long as the struggle between "the city of God" and "the city of the devil" shall last, i. e., to the end of time.

There being then no internal indication of the date of Joel, we cannot do better than acquiesce in the tradition, by which his book is placed next to that of Hosea, and regard Joel as the prophet of Judah, during the earlier part of Hosea‘s office toward Israel, and rather earlier than Isaiah. At least, Isaiah, although he too was called to the prophetic office in the days of Uzziah, appears to have embodied in his prophecy, words of Joel, as well of Micah, bearing witness to the unity of prophecy, and, amid the richness and fullness of his own prophetic store, purposely borrowing from those, of whose ministry God did not will that such large fruit should remain. The remarkable words Isaiah 13:6, "Near is the Day of the Lord, like destruction from the Almighty shall it come," Isaiah inserted, word for word from Joel, Joel 1:15, including the remarkable alliteration, מִשֹּׁשַׁדִּי שֹׁד *seshod mishshadday* "like a ‹mighty‘ destruction from the ‹Almighty. ‹"

The prophecy of Joel is altogether one. It extends from his own day to the end of time. He gives the key to it in a saying, which he casts into the form of a proverb, that judgment shall follow after judgment Joel 1:4. Then he describes that first desolation, as if present, and calls to repentance Joel 1:5,ff.; yet withal he says expressly, that the day of the Lord is not come, but is at hand Joel 1:15. This he repeats at the beginning of the second chapter Joel 2:1, in which he describes the coming judgment more fully, speaks of it, as coming Joel 2:2-10, and, when, he has pictured it as just ready to break upon them, and God, as giving the command to the great camp assembled to fulfill His word Joel 2:11, he calls them, in God‘s name, yet more earnestly to repentance Joel 2:12-17, and promises, upon that

repentance, plenary forgiveness and the restoration of everything which God had withdrawn from them Joel 2:18-27. These promises culminate in the first Coming of Christ, the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh, and the enlarged gift of prophecy at the same time among the sons and daughters of Judah Joel 2:28-29. Upon these mercies to His own people, follow the judgments upon His and their enemies, reaching on to the second Coming of our Lord.

An attempt has been made to sever the prophecy into two discourses, of which the first is to end at Joel 2:17, the second is to comprise the remainder of the book. That scheme severs what is closely united, God‘s call to prayer and His promise that He will answer it. According to this severance of the prophecy, the first portion is to contain the exhortation on the part of God, without any promise; the second is to contain an historical relation that God answered, without saying what He answered. The notion was grounded on unbelief, that God absolutely foretold, that He would, beyond the way of nature, bring, what He would, upon repentance, as certainly remove. It is rested upon a mere error in grammar. The grammatical form was probably chosen, in order to express how instantaneously God would hearken to real repentance, “that the Lord is jealous for His land.” The words of prayer should not yet have escaped their lips, when God answered. As He says, “And it shall be, before they shall call, I will answer; while they are yet speaking, I will hear” Isaiah 65:24. Man has to make up his mind on a petition; with God, hearing and answering are one.

The judgments upon God‘s people, described in the two first chapters of Joel, cannot be limited to a season of drought and a visitation of locusts, whether one or more.

I. The prophet includes all which he foretells, in one statement, which, both from its form and its preternatural character, has the appearance of a proverbial saying Joel 1:4. It does stand, as a summary. For he draws the attention of all to “this” Joel 1:2; “Hear” this, “ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days? etc.” He appeals to the aged, whether they had heard the like, and bids all transmit it to their posterity Joel 1:3. The summary is given in a very measured form, in three divisions, each consisting of four words, and the four words standing, in

each, in the same order. The first and third words of the four are the same in each; and the fourth of the first and second four become the second of the second and third four, respectively. Next to Hebrew, its force can best be seen in Latin:

d *Residuum erucae comedit loeusta*;

d

d *Residuumque locustae comedit bruchus*;

d

d *Residuumque bruchi comedit exesor*.

d

d The structure of the words resembles God‘s words to Elijah 1 Kings 19:17, whose measured rhythm and precise order of words may again be best, because most concisely, exhibited in Latin. Each division contains five words in the same order; and here, the first, second, and fourth words of each five remain the same, and the proper name which is the fifth in the first five becomes the third in the second five.

d *ProfugumgladiiHazaelisoccidetJehu;*

d

d ProfugumquegladiiJehuoccidetElisha.

d

d In this case, we see that the form is proverbial, because the slaying by Elisha is different in kind from the slaying by Jehu and Hazael, and is the same of which God speaks by Hosea, “I hewed them by the prophets; I slew them by the words of my mouth” Hosea 6:5. But so also is it with regard to

the locust. Except by miracle, what the prophet here describes, would not happen. He foretells, not only that a scourge should come, unknown in degree and number, before or afterward, in Palestine, but that four sorts of locusts should come successively, the latter destroying what the former left. Now this is not God's ordinary way in bringing this scourge. In His ordinary Providence different sorts of locusts do not succeed one another. Nor would it be any increase of the infliction, anything to record or forewarn of. At times, by a very rare chastisement, God has brought successive flights of the same insect from the same common birthplace; and generally, where the female locusts deposit their eggs and die, unless a moist winter or man's forethought destroy the eggs, the brood which issues from them in the next spring, being as voracious as the full grown locusts, but crawling through the land, does, in that immediate neighborhood, destroy the produce of the second year, more fatally than the parent had that of the preceding. This however is, at most, the ravage of two stages of the same insect, not four successive scourges, the three last destroying what the former had spared. What the prophet predicted, if taken literally, was altogether out of the order of nature, and yet its literal fulfillment has not the character of a miracle, for it adds nothing to the intensity of what is predicted. The form of his prediction is proverbial; and this coincides with the other indications that the prophet did not intend to speak of mere locusts.

(1) In order to bring down this summary of the prophet to the level of an ordinary event in God's ordinary Providence, a theory has been invented, that he is not here speaking of different sorts of locusts, but of the same locust in different stages of its growth, from the time when it leaves the egg, until it attains its full development and its wings. According to the inventor of this theory, the first, the גזם *gâzâm (the "palmer-worm" of our version) was to be the migratory locust, which visits Palestine (it was said) chiefly in Autumn; the second,* ארבה *'arbeh (the ordinary name of the locust) was to stand for the young locust, as it first creeps out of the shell; the* ילק *yeleq (translated "cankerworm") was to be the locust, in what was supposed to be the third stage of development; the* חסיל *châsîyl (translated "caterpillar") was to be the full-grown locust.*

According to this form of the theory, the גזם *gâzâm was to be the same as the* חסיל *châsîyl the first as the last; and two of the most special names of the locust,* גזם *gâzâm and* חסיל *châsîyl were, without any distinction, to be*

ascribed to the full-grown locust, of one and the same species. For, according to the theory, the גזם *gâzâm was to be the full-grown locust which arrived by flight and deposited its eggs; the* ארבה *'arbeh* ילק *yeleq* חסיל *châsîyl were to be three chief stages of development of the locusts which left those eggs. So that the* חסיל *châsîyl although not the same individual, was to be exactly the same insect as the* גזם *gâzâm and at the same stage of existence, the full-grown locust, the gryllus migratorius with wings. But while these two, more special, names were appropriated to the self-same species of locust, in the same, its full-grown stage (which in itself is unlikely, when they are thus distinguished from each other) one of the two names which remained to describe (as was supposed) the earlier, (so to speak) infantine or childish stages of its development,* ארבה *'arbeh is the most general name of locust. This was much as if, when we wished to speak of a "colt" as such, we were to call it "horse," or were to use the word "cow" to designate a "calf." For, according to this theory, Joel, wishing to mark that he was speaking of the pupa, just emerged from the egg, called it* ארבה *'arbeh the most common name of the locust tribe.*

This theory then was tacitly modified tacitly corrects Credner. Maurer, Ewald, Umbreit, follow Gesenius; yet Ewald thinks that the גזם *gâzâm* ילק *yeleq* חסיל *châsîyl need" not belong to the proper locust tribe* ארבה *'arbeh (which is in fact an abandonment of the theory)). In the second form of the theory, which is more likely to be introduced among us,* גזם *gâzâm was to be the locust in its first stage;* ארבה *'arbeh was to be the second, instead of the first;* ילק *yeleq was to be the last but one;* חסיל *châsîyl was, as before, to be the full-grown locust. This theory escaped one difficulty, that of making the* גזם *gâzâm and* חסיל *châsîyl full-grown locusts of the same species. It added another. The three moultings which it assumes to be represented by the* ארבה *'arbeh* ילק *yeleq and* גזם *gâzâm correspond neither with the actual moults of the locust, nor with those which strike the eye. Some observers have noticed four moultings of the locust, after it had left the egg. Some write, as if there were yet more. But of marked changes which the eye of the observer can discern, there are two only, that by which it passes from the larva state into the pupa; and that by which it passes from the pupa to the full-grown locust. The "three" names, arbitrarily adapted to the natural history of the locust, correspond neither with the "four" actual, nor with the "two" noticeable changes.*

But even these terms larva and pupa, if taken in their popular sense, would give a wrong idea of the moults of the locust. The changes with which we are familiar under these names, take place in the locust, before it leaves the egg.: "The pupae are equally capable of eating and moving with the larvae, which they resemble except in having rudiments of wings or of wings and elytra:" having in fact "complete wings, only folded up longitudinally and transversely, and enclosed in membranous cases." "The pupae of the orthoptera" (to which the locust belongs) "resemble the perfect insect, both as to shape and the organs for taking their food, except in not having their wings and elytra fully developed."

These changes regard only its outward form, not its habits. Its voracity begins almost as soon as it has left the egg. The first change takes place "a few days" after they are first in motion. "They fast, ‹for a short time,‘" before each change. But the creature continues, throughout, the same living, devouring, thing. From the first, "creeping and jumping in the same general direction, they begin their destructive march.". The change, when it is made, takes place "in seven or eight minutes" by the creature disengaging itself from its former outward skin. All the changes are often completed in six weeks. In the Ukraine, six weeks after it has left the egg, it has wings and flies away. In the warmer climate of Palestine, the change would be yet more rapid. "They attain their natural size," Niebuhr says of those in Mosul, "with astonishing rapidity." "Tis three weeks," says Le Bruyn, "before they can use their wings."

(2) But the prophet is not writing on "natural history," nor noticing distinctions observable only on minute inspection. He is foretelling God‘s judgments. But, as all relate, who have described the ravages of locusts, there are not three, four or five, but two stages only, in which its ravages are at all distinct, the unwinged and the winged state.

(3) Probably, only in a country which was the birthplace of locusts, and where consequently they would, in all the stages of their existence, be, year by year, before the eyes of the people, would those stages be marked by different names. Arabia was one such birthplace, and the Arabs, living a wild life of nature, have invented, probably beyond any other nation, words

with very special physical meanings. The Arabs, who have above 50 names for different locusts, or locusts under different circumstances, as they distinguished the sexes of the locust by different names, so they did three of its ages.: "When it came forth out of its egg, it was called "doba;" when its wings appeared and grew, it was called "ghaugha;" and this, when they jostled one another; and when their colors appeared, the males becoming yellow, the females black, then they were called ‹jerad.'" This is no scientific description; for the wings of the locust are not visible, until after the last moult.

But in the language of other countries, where this plague was not domestic, these different stages of the existence of the locust are not marked by a special name. The Syrians added an epithet "the flying," "the creeping," but designated by the "creeping" the חסיל *châsîyl as well as the* ילק *yeleq creeping." In Psalm 78:46, it renders* חסיל *châsîyl by kamtso locust," and* ארבה *'arbeh by dsochelo creeper." In Psalm 105:34, it renders* ארבה *'arbeh by kamtso only (as also in Deuteronomy 28:42. In Greek the* Βροῦχος *Brouchos and* Ἀττέλαβος *Attelabos have been thought to be two stages of the unwinged, and so, unperfected, locusts. But Cyril and Theodoret speak of the* Βροῦχος *Brouchos as having wings; Aristotle and Plutarch speak of the eggs of the* Ἀττέλαβος *Attelabos The prophet is speaking of successive ravagers, each devouring what the former left. If the theory of these writers was correct, the order in which he names them, would be the order of their development. But in the order of their development, they never destroy what they left in their former stages. From the time when they begin to move, they march right onward "creeping and jumping, all in the same general direction". This march never stops. They creep on, eating as they creep, in the same tract of country, not in the same spot. You could not say of creatures (were we afflicted with such,) who crawled for six weeks, devouring, over two counties of England, that in their later stage they devoured what in their former they left. We should speak of the plague "spreading" over two counties. We could not use the prophet's description, for it would not be true.*

This mere march, however destructive in its course, does not correspond with the prophet's words. The prophet then must mean something else. When the locust becomes winged it flies away, to ravage other countries. So

far from destroying what, in its former condition, it left, its ravages in that country are at an end. Had it been ever so true, that these four names, גזם *gâzâm* ארבה *'arbeh* ילק *yeleq* חסיל *châsîyl designated four stages of being of the one locust, of which stages* גזם *gâzâm was the first,* חסיל *châsîyl* חסיל *châsîyl the last, then to suit this theory, it should have been said, that* גזם *gâzâm the young locust, devoured what the* חסיל *châsîyl by the hypothesis the full-grown locust, left, not the reverse, as it stands in the prophet. For the young, when hatched, do destroy in the same place which their parents visited, when they deposited their eggs; but the grown locust does not devastate the country which he wasted before he had wings. So then, in truth, had the prophet meant this, he would have spoken of two creatures, not of four; and of those two he would have spoken in a different order from that of this hypothesis.*

(5) Palestine not being an ordinary breeding place of the locusts, the locust arrives there by flight. Accordingly, on this ground also, the first mentioned would be the winged, not the crawling, locust.

(6) The use of these names of the locust, elsewhere in Holy Scripture, contradicts the theory, that they designate different stages of growth, of the same creature.

(a) The ארבה *'arbeh is itself one of the four kinds of locust, allowed to be eaten, having subordinate species. "The locust" (*ארבה *'arbeh) "after his kind, and the bald locust" (*סלעם *solʿâm "the devourer") "after his kind, and the beetle" (*חרגל *châргôl literally, "the springer") "after his kind, and the grasshopper" (*חגב *châgâb), perhaps, "the overshadower) after his kind" Leviticus 11:22. It is to the last degree unlikely, that the name* ארבה *'arbeh which is the generic name of the most common sort of the "winged" locust, should be given to one imperfect, unwinged, stage of one species of locust.*

(b) The creeping, unwinged, insect, which has just come forth from the ground, would more probably be called by yet another name for "locust," גוב *gôb* גובי *gôbay "the creeper," than by that of* גזם *gâzâm But though such is probably the etymology of* גוב *gôb probably it too is winged Nahum 3:17.*

(c) Some of these creatures here mentioned by Joel are named together in Holy Scripture as distinct and winged. The ארבה 'arbeh and חסיל châsîyl are mentioned together 1 Kings 8:37; 2 Chronicles 6:28; Psalm 78:46; as are also the ארבה 'arbeh and the ילק yeleq " Nahum 3:16-17; Psalm 105:34. The ארבה 'arbeh the ילק yeleq and the חסיל châsîyl are all together mentioned in regard to the plague of Egypt, and all consequently, as winged, since they were brought by the wind. The prophet Nahum also speaks of the ילק yeleq a "spoiling and fleeing away" Nahum 3:16. According to the theory, the ילק yeleq as well as the ארבה 'arbeh ought to be unwinged.

Nor, again, can it be said, that the names are merely poetic names of the locust. It is true that ארבה 'arbeh the common name of the locust, is taken from its number; the rest, גזם gâzâm ילק yeleq חסיל châsîyl are descriptive of the voracity of that tribe. But both the ארבה 'arbeh and the חסיל châsîyl occur together in the historical and so in prose books. We know of ninety sorts of locusts, and they are distinguished from one another by some epithet. It would plainly be gratuitous to assume that the Hebrew names, although epithets, describe only the genus in its largest sense, and are not names of species. If, moreover, these names were used of the same identical race, not of different species in it, the saying would the more have the character of a proverb. We could not say, for instance, "what the horse left, the steed devoured," except in some proverbial meaning.

This furnishes a certain probability that the prophet means something more under the locust, than the creature itself, although this in itself too is a great scourge of God.

II. In the course of the description itself, the prophet gives hints, that he means, under the locust, a judgment far greater, an enemy far mightier, than the locust. These hints have been put together most fully, and supported in detail by Hengstenberg, so that here they are but re-arranged.

(1) Joel calls the scourge, whom he describes, "the Northern" or Northman. But whereas the Assyrian invaders of Palestine did pour into it from the north, the locust, almost always, by a sort of law of their being,

make their inroads there from their birth-place in the south (see the note at Joel 2:20).

(2) The prophet directs the priests to pray, "O Lord give not Thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them" Joel 2:17. But there is plainly no connection between the desolation caused by locusts, and the people being given over to a pagan conqueror.

(3) The prophet speaks of, or alludes to, the agent, as one responsible. It is not likely that, of an irrational scourge of God, the prophet would have assigned as a ground of its destruction, "he hath magnified to do" (see the note at Joel 2:20); words used of human pride which exceeds the measure appointed to it by God. On the other hand, when God says, "a nation is come up upon My land Joel 1:6 then will the Lord be jealous for His land Joel 2:18, the words belong rather to a pagan invader of God's land, who disputed with His people the possession of the land which He had given them, than to an insect, which was simply carried, without volition of its own, by the wind. With this, falls in the use of the title "people, גוי gôy Joel 1:6, used often of pagan, not (as is עם ʿam) of irrational creatures.

(4) After the summary which mentions simply different kinds of locusts, the prophet speaks of "fire, flame, drought Joel 1:19-20, which show that he means something beyond that plague.

(5) The imagery, even where it has some correspondence with what is known of locusts, goes beyond any mere plague of locusts.

(a) People are terrified at their approach; but Joel says not "people," but "peoples Joel 2:6, nations. It was a scourge then, like those great conquering Empires, whom God made "the hammer of the whole earth" Jeremiah 50:23.

(b) The locusts darken the air as they come; but the darkening of the sun and moon, the withdrawing of the shining of the stars Joel 2:10 (which together are incompatible) are far beyond this, and are symbols elsewhere of the trembling of all things before the revelation of the wrath of God Isaiah 13:10.

(c) Locusts enter towns and are troublesome to their inhabitants (see the note at Joel 2:9, p. 117): but the fields are the scenes of their desolation, in towns they are destroyed.

These in Joel are represented as taking "the city," Jerusalem Joel 2:10, symbols of countless trusts, but as mere locusts, harmless.

(6) The effects of the scourge are such as do not result from mere locusts.

(a) The quantity used for the "meat-offering and drink-offering" Joel 1:9 was so small, that even a famine could not occasion their disuse. They were continued even in the last dreadful siege of Jerusalem. Not materials for sacrifice, but sacrificers were wanting.

(b) God says, I "will restore the years which the locust hath eaten" Joel 2:25. But the locust, being a passing scourge, did not destroy the fruits of several "years," only of that one year.

(c) The "beasts of the field" are bidden to rejoice, "because the tree beareth her fruit Joel 2:22. This must be a metaphor, for the trees are not food for cattle.

(d) The scourge is spoken of as greater than any which they or their fathers knew of, and as one to be ever remembered Joel 1:2-3; Joel 2:2; but Israel had many worse scourges than any plague of locusts, however severe. God had taught them by David, It is better to fall into the hands of God, than into the hands of men.

(7) The destruction of this scourge of God is described in a way, taken doubtless in its details from the destruction of locusts, yet, as a whole, physically impossible in a literal sense (see the note at Joel 2:20).

(8) The Day of the Lord, of which he speaks, is identical with the scourge which he describes, but is far beyond any plague of locusts. It includes the captivity of Judah Joel 3:1, the division of their land Joel 3:2,

its possession by strangers, since it is promised that these are "no more to pass through her" Joel 3:17. It is a day of utter destruction, such as the Almighty alone can inflict. "It shall come like a mighty destruction from the Almighty" Joel 1:15.

I. Attempts have been made to meet some of these arguments; but these attempts for the most part only illustrate the strength of the arguments, which they try to remove.

(1) Northern has been taken in its natural sense, and it has been asserted, contrary to the fact, that locusts did come from the North into Palestine; or it has been said, that the locusts were first driven from their birthplace in Arabia Deserta through Palestine "to" the North, and then brought back again into Palestine "from" the North; or that "Northern" meant that part of the whole body of locusts which occupied the Northern parts of Palestine, Judea lying to the extreme south.

But an incidental flight of locusts, which should have entered Palestine from the North, (which they are not recorded to have done) would not have been called "the Northern." The object of such a name would be to describe the locale of those spoken of, not a mere accident or anomaly. Still less, if this ever happened, (of which there is no proof) would a swarm of locusts be so called, which had first come from the South. The regularity, with which the winds blow in Palestine, makes such a bringing back of the locusts altogether improbable. The South wind blows chiefly in March; the East wind in Summer, the North wind mostly about the Autumnal equinox. But neither would a body so blown to and fro, be the fearful scourge predicted by the prophet, nor would it have been called "the Northern." The "iy" of the word צפוני tsephônîy like our "-ern" in Northern, designates that which is spoken of, not as coming incidentally from the North, but as having an habitual relation to the North. A flight of locusts driven back, contrary to continual experience, from the North, would not have been designated as "the Northern," anymore than a Lowlander who passes some time in the Highlands would be called a Highlander, or a Highlander, passing into the South, would be called a "Southron." With regard to the third explanation, Joel was especially a prophet of Judah. The supposition that, in predicting the destruction of the locusts, he spoke of the Northern

not of the Southern portion of them, implies that he promised on the part of God, as the reward of the humiliation of Judah, that God would remove this scourge from the separated kingdom of the ten tribes, without any promise as to that part which immediately concerned themselves. Manifestly also, "the Northern" does not, by itself, express the Northern part of a whole.

It is almost incredible that some have understood by "the Northern," those driven toward the North, and so those actually in the South; and "I will remove far from you the Northern," "I will remove far from "you" who are in the South, the locusts who have come to you from the South, whom I will drive to the North."

(2) Instances have been brought "from other lands," to which locusts have come from the North. This answer wholly misstates the point at issue. The question is not as to the direction which locusts take, "in other countries," where God sends them, but as to the quarter from which they enter Judea. The direction which they take, varies in different countries, but is on one and the same principle. It is said by one observer, that they have power to fly against the wind. Yet this probably is said only of light airs, when they are circling round in preparation for their flight. For the most part, they are carried by the prevailing wind, sometimes, if God so wills, to their own destruction, but, mostly, to other counties as a scourge. "When they can fly, they go," relates Beauplan of those bred in the Ukraine, "wherever the wind carries them. If the Northeast wind prevails, when they first take flight, it carries them all into the Black Sea; but if the wind blows from any other quarter, they go into some other country, to do mischief."

Lichtenstein writes, "They never deviate from the straight line, so long as the same wind blows." Niebuhr says,: "I saw in Cairo a yet more terrible cloud of locusts, which came by a southwest wind and so from the desert of Libya". "In the night of Nov. 10,1762, a great cloud passed over Jidda with a West wind, consequently over the Arabian gulf which is very broad here." Of two flights in India which Forbes witnessed, he relates, "Each of these flights were brought by an East wind; they took a Westerly direction, and, without settling in the country, probably perished in the gulf of Cambay." Dr. Thomson who had spent 25 years in the holy land, says in illustration of David's words, "I am tossed up and down like the locust"

Psalm 109:23.: "This refers to the flying locust. I have had frequent opportunities to notice, how these squadrons are tossed up and down, and whirled round and round by the evervarying currents of the mountain winds."

Morier says, "The Southeast wind constantly brought with it innumerable flights of locusts," but also "a fresh wind from the Southwest which had brought them, so completely drove them forward that not a vestige of them was to be seen two hours afterward." These were different kinds of locusts, the first "at Bushire," having "legs and body of a light yellow and wings spotted brown"; the second at Shiraz (which "the Persians said came from the Germesir,") being "larger and red."

The breeding country for the locust in Southwestern Asia, is the great desert of Arabia reaching to the Persian gulf. From this, at God's command, "the East wind brought the locust" Exodus 10:13 to Egypt. They are often carried by a west or southwest wind into Persia. "I have often in spring," relates Joseph de S. Angelo, "seen the sun darkened by very thick clouds (so to say) of locusts, which cross the sea from the deserts of Arabia far into Persia." In Western Arabia, Burckhard writes, "the locusts are known to come invariably from the East," i. e., from the same deserts. The South wind carries them to the different countries Northward. This is so general, that Hasselquist wrote; "The locusts appear to be directed - in a direct meridian line by keeping nearly from South to North, turning very little either to the East or West. They come from the deserts of Arabia, take their course on through Palestine, Syria, Carmania, Natolia, go sometimes through Bithynia. They never turn from their course, for example, to the West, wherefore Egypt is not visited by them, though so near their usual tract.

Neither do they turn to the East, for I never heard that Mesopotamia or the confines of the Euphrates are ravaged by them." And Volney reports, as the common observation of the natives; "The inhabitants, of Syria remarked that the locusts only came after overmild winters, and that they always came from the deserts of Arabia." Whence Jerome, himself an inhabitant of Palestine, regarded this mention of the North as an indication that the prophet intended us to understand under the name of locusts, the great

Conquerors who did invade Palestine from the North (in Joel 2:20). "According to the letter, the South wind, rather than the North, hath been wont to bring the flocks of locusts, i. e., they come not from the cold but from the heat. But since he was speaking of the Assyrians, under the image of locusts, therefore he inserted the mention of the North, that we may understand, not the actual locust, which hath been wont to come from the South, but under the locust, the Assyrians and Chaldees."

On the same ground, that the locusts came to Palestine from the South they were brought from Tartary, (the breeding-place of the locust thence called the Tartarian locust) by an East or Southeast wind to the Ukraine.: "They generally come (to the Ukraine) from toward Tartary, which happens in a dry spring, for Tartary and the countries East of it, as Circassia, Bazza and Mingrelia, are seldom free from them. The vermin being driven by an East or Southeast wind come into the Ukraine." To the coasts of Barbary or to Italy for the same reason they come from the South; to Upper Egypt from Arabia; and to Nubia from the North, namely, from Upper Egypt. "In the summer of 1778," Chenier says of Mauritania, there "were seen, coming from the South, clouds of locusts which darkened the sun. Strabo states, that, "the strong Southwest or West winds of the vernal equinox drive them together into the country of Acridophagi." To the Cape of Good Hope they come from the North, from where alone they could come; to Senegal they come with the wind from the East. "They infest Italy," Pliny says, "chiefly from Africa;" from where of course, they come to Spain also. Shaw writes of those in Barbary; "Their first appearance was toward the latter end of March, the wind having been for some time Southerly." "As the direction of the marches and flight of them both," (i. e. both of the young brood and their parents, their "marches" before they had wings, and their "flight" afterward) "was always to the Northward, it is probable that they perished in the sea."

JOEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The word of the Lord that came to Joel - Joel, like Hosea, mentions the name of his father only, and then is silent about his extraction, his tribe, his family. He leaves even the time when he lived, to be guessed at. He would be known only, as the instrument of God. "The word of the Lord came to" him (see the note at Hosea 1:1), and he willed simply to be the voice which uttered it. He was "content to live under the eyes of God, and, as to people, to be known only in what concerned their salvation." But this he declares absolutely, that the Word of God came to him; in order that we may give faith to his prophecy, being well assured that what he predicted, would come to pass. So the Saviour Himself says, ""My words shall not pass away" Matthew 24:35. For truth admits of nothing false, and what God saith, will certainly be. For "He confirmeth the word of His servant, and performeth the counsel of His messengers" Isaiah 44:26. The prophet claimeth belief then, as speaking not out of his own heart, but out of the mouth of the Lord speaking in the Spirit." Joel signifies, "The Lord is God." It owns that God who had revealed Himself, is alone the God. The prophet's name itself, embodied the truth, which, after the miraculous answer to Elijah's prayer, all the people confessed, "The Lord He is the God, The Lord He is the God." Pethuel signifies, "persuaded of God." The addition of his father's name distinguished the prophet from others of that name, as the son of Samuel, of king Uzziah, and others.

Verse 2

Hear this, ye old men - By reason of their age they had known and heard much; they had heard from their fathers, and their father's fathers, much which they had not known themselves. Among the people of the east, memories of past times were handed down from generation to generation, for periods, which to us would seem incredible. Israel was commanded, so to transmit the vivid memories of the miracles of God. The prophet appeals "to the old men, to hear," and, (lest, anything should seem to have escaped them) to the whole people of the land, to give their whole attention to this thing, which he was about to tell them, and then, reviewing all the evils which each had ever heard to have been inflicted by God upon their forefathers, to say whether this thing had happened in their days or in the days of their fathers.

Verse 3

Tell ye your children of it - In the order of God‘s goodness, generation was to declare to generation the wonders of His love. “He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children that they might … not forget the works of God” Psalm 78:5-7. This tradition of thankful memories God, as the Psalmist says, enforced in the law; “Take heed to thyself, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, but teach them thy sons and thy sons‘ sons” (Deuteronomy 4:9; add Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Deuteronomy 11:19). This was the end of the memorial acts of the ritual, that their sons might inquire the meaning of them, the fathers tell them God‘s wonders Deuteronomy 6:20-24. Now contrariwise, they are, generation to generation, to tell concerning it, this message of unheard-of woe and judgment. The memory of God‘s deeds of love should have stirred them to gratitude; now He transmits to them memories of woe, that they might entreat God against them, and break off the sins which entail them.

Verse 4

That which the palmerworm hath left, hath the locust eaten - The creatures here spoken of are different kinds of locusts, so named from their number or voracity. We, who are free from this scourge of God, know them only by the generic name of locusts. But the law mentions several sorts of locusts, each after its kind, which might be eaten. In fact, above eighty different kinds of locusts have been observed, some of which are twice as large as that which is the ordinary scourge of God. Slight as they are in themselves, they are mighty in God‘s Hand; beautiful and gorgeous as they are, floating in the sun‘s rays, they are a scourge, including other plagues, famine, and often, pestilence.

Of the four kinds, here named by the prophet, that rendered “locust” is so called from its multitude, (from where Jeremiah says “they are more numerous than the locust” See Judges 6:5; Judges 7:12; Psalm 105:34; Nahum 3:15. It is a proverb in Arabic also)), and is, probably, the creature which desolates whole regions of Asia and Africa. The rest are named from their voracity, the “gnawer,” “licker,” “consumer,” but they are, beyond doubt, distinct kinds of that destroyer. And this is the characteristic of the prophet‘s threatening, that he foretells a succession of destroyers, each

more fatal than the preceding; and that, not according to the order of nature. For in all the observations which have been made of the locusts, even when successive flights have desolated the same land, they have always been successive clouds of the same creature.

Over and above the fact, then, that locusts are a heavy chastisement from God, these words of Joel form a sort of sacred proverb. They are the epitome of his whole prophecy. It is "this" which he had called the old men to hear, and to say whether they had known anything like "this;" that scourge came after scourge, judgment after judgment, until man yielded or perished. The visitation of locusts was one of the punishments threatened in the law, "Thou shall carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in, for the locust shall consume it" Deuteronomy 28:38. It was one of God's ordinary punishments for sin, in that country, like famine, or pestilence, or blight, or mildew, or murrain, or (in this) potato disease. Solomon, accordingly, at the dedication of the temple mentions the locust among the other plagues, which he then solemnly entreated God to remove, when individuals or the whole people should spread forth their hands in penitence toward that house 1 Kings 8:37-38.

But the characteristic of "this" prophecy is the successiveness of the judgments, each in itself, desolating, and the later following quick upon the earlier, and completing their destructiveness. The judgments of God are linked together by an invisible chain, each drawing on the other; yet, at each link of the lengthening chain, allowing space and time for repentance to break it through. So in the plagues of Egypt, God, "executing His judgments upon them by little and little, gave them time for repentance" (Wisd. 12:10); yet, when Pharaoh hardened his heart, each followed on the other, until he perished in the Red Sea. In like way God said, "him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay" 1 Kings 19:17. So, in the Revelation, the "trumpets" are sounded Revelation 8:1-13; Revelation 11:15, and "the vials of the wrath of God are poured out upon the earth, one after the other" Revelation 16. Actual locusts were very likely one of the scourges intended by the prophet. They certainly were not the whole; but pictured others fiercer, more desolating, more overwhelming. The proverbial dress gained and fixed people's attention on the truth, which, if it had been presented to

the people nakedly, they might have turned from. Yet as, in God‘s wisdom, what is said generally, is often fulfilled specially, so here there were four great invaders which in succession wasted Judah; the Assyrian, Chaldaean, Macedonian and Roman.

Morally, also, four chief passions desolate successively the human heart.: “For what is designated by the “palmerworm,” which creeps with all its body on the ground, except it be lust, which so pollutes the heart which it possesses, that it cannot rise up to the love of heavenly purity? What is expressed by the “locust,” which flies by leaps, except vain glory which exalts itself with empty presumptions? What is typified by the “cankerworm,” almost the whole of whose body is gathered into its belly, except gluttony in eating? What but anger is indicated by mildew, which burns as it touches? What the “palmerworm” then “hath left the locust heath eaten,” because, when the sin of lust has retired from the mind, vain glory often succeeds. For since it is not now subdued by the love of the flesh, it boasts of itself, as if it were holy through its chastity. “And that which the locust hath left, the cankerworm hath eaten,” because when vain glory, which came, as it were, from holiness, is resisted, either the appetite, or some ambitious desires are indulged in too immoderately. For the mind which knows not God, is led the more fiercely to any object of ambition, in proportion as it is not restrained by any love of human praise. “That which the cankerworm hath left,” the mildew consumes, because when the gluttony of the belly is restrained by abstinence, the impatience of anger holds fiercer sway, which, like mildew, eats up the harvest by burning it, because the flame of impatience withers the fruit of virtue. When then some vices succeed to others, one plague devours the field of the mind, while another leaves it.”

Verse 5

Awake, ye drunkards, and weep - All sin stupefies the sinner. All intoxicate the mind, bribe and pervert the judgment, dull the conscience, blind the soul and make it insensible to its own ills. All the passions, anger, vain glory, ambition, avarice and the rest are a spiritual drunkenness, inebriating the soul, as strong drink doth the body.: “They are called drunkards, who, confused with the love of this world, feel not the ills which they suffer. What then is meant by, “Awake, ye drunkards and weep,” but,

‹shake off the sleep of your insensibility, and oppose by watchful lamentations the many plagues of sins, which succeed one to the other in the devastation of your hearts?‘” God arouse those who will be aroused, by withdrawing from them the pleasures wherein they offended Him. Awake, the prophet cries, from the sottish slumber of your drunkenness; awake to weep and howl, at least when your feverish enjoyments are dashed from your lips. Weeping for things temporal may awaken to the fear of losing things eternal.

Verse 6

For a nation is come up upon my land - He calls this scourge of God a “nation,” giving them the title most used in Holy Scripture, of pagan nations. The like term, “people, folk,” is used of the “ants” and the “conies” Proverbs 30:25-26, for the wisdom with which God teaches them to act. Here it is used, in order to include at once, the irrational invader, guided by a Reason above its own, and the pagan conqueror. This enemy, he says, is “come up” (for the land as being God‘s land, was exalted in dignity, above other lands,) “upon My land,” i. e. “the Lord‘s land” Hosea 9:3, hitherto owned protected as God‘s land, a land which, Moses said to them, “the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year” Deuteronomy 11:12. Now it was to be bared of God‘s protection, and to be trampled upon by a pagan foe.

Strong and without number - The figure is still from the locust, whose numbers are wholly countless by man. Travelers sometimes use likenesses to express their number, as clouds darkening the sun (see the note at Joel 2:10) or discharging flakes of snow; some grave writers give it up, as hopeless.: “Their multitude is incredible, whereby they cover the earth and fill the air; they take away the brightness of the sun. I say again, the thing is incredible to one who has not seen them.” “It would not be a thing to be believed, if one had not seen it.” “On another day, it was beyond belief: they occupied a space of eight leagues (about 24English miles). I do not mention the multitude of those without wings, because it is incredible.”: “When we were in the Seignory of Abrigima, in a place called Aquate, there came such a multitude of locusts, as cannot be said. They began to arrive one day about terce (nine) and until night they cease not to arrive; and when they arrived, they bestowed themselves. On the next day at the hour of prime they began to depart, and at mid-day there was not one, and there

remained not a leaf on the trees. At this instant others began to come, and staved like the others to the next day at the same hour; and these left not a stick with its bark, nor a green herb, and thus did they five days one after another; and the people said that they were the sons, who went to seek their fathers, and they took the road toward the others which had no wings. After they were gone, we knew the breadth which they had occupied, and saw the destruction which they had made, it exceeded three leagues (nine miles) wherein there remained no bark on the trees."

Another writes of South Africa; "Of the innumerable multitudes of the incomplete insect or larva of the locusts, which at this time infested this part of Africa, no adequate idea could be conceived without having witnessed them. For the space of ten miles on each side of the Sea-Cow river, and eighty or ninety miles in length, an area of 16, or 1800 square miles, the whole surface might literally be said to be covered with them. The water of the river was scarcely visible on account of the dead carcasses which floated on the surface, drowned in the attempt to come at the weeds which grew in it.": "The present year is the third of their continuance, and their increase has far exceeded that of a geometrical progression whose whole ratio is a million." A writer of reputation says of a "column of locusts" in India; "It extended, we were informed, 500 miles, and so compact was it when on the wing, that, like an eclipse, it completely hid the sun; so that no shadow was cast by any object, and some lofty tombs, not more than 200 yards distant, were rendered quite invisible."

In one single neighborhood, even in Germany, it was once calculated that near 17,000,000 of their eggs were collected and destroyed. Even Volney writes of those in Syria, "the quantity of these insects is a thing incredible to anyone who has not seen it himself; the ground is covered with them for several leagues." "The steppes," says Clarke, an incredulous traveler, "were entirely covered by their bodies, and their numbers falling resembled flakes of snow, carried obliquely by the wind, and spreading thick mists over the sun. Myriads fell over the carriage, the horses, the drivers. The Tartars told us, that persons had been suffocated by a fall of locusts on the "steppes." It was now the season, they added, in which they began to diminish.": "It was incredible, that their breadth was eight leagues."

Strong - The locust is remarkable for its long flights. “Its strength of limbs is amazing; when pressed down by the hand on the table, it has almost power to move the fingers”.

Whose teeth are the teeth of a lion - The teeth of the locust are said to be “harder than stone.”: “They appear to be created for a scourge; since to strength incredible for so small a creature, they add saw-like teeth admirably calculated to “eat up all the herbs in the land.”” Some near the Senegal, are described as “quite brown, of the thickness and length of a finger, and armed with two jaws, toothed like a saw, and very powerful.” The prophet ascribes to them the sharp or prominent eye-teeth of the lion and lioness, combining strength with number. The ideal of this scourge of God is completed by blending numbers, in which creatures so small only could exist together, with the strength of the fiercest.: “Weak and short-lived is man, yet when God is angered against a sinful people, what mighty power does He allow to man against it!” “And what more cruel than those who endeavor to slay souls, turning them from the Infinite and Eternal Good, and so dragging them to the everlasting torments of Hell?”

Verse 7

He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree - This describes an extremity of desolation. The locusts at first attack all which is green and succulent; when this has been consumed, then they attack the bark of trees.: “When they have devoured all other vegetables, they attack the trees, consuming first the leaves, then the bark.”: “A day or two after one of these bodies were in motion, others were already hatched to glean after them, gnawing off the young branches and the very bark of such trees as had escaped before with the loss only of their fruit and foliage.”: “They carried desolation wherever they passed. After having consumed herbage, fruit, leaves of trees, they attacked even their young shoots and their bark. Even the reeds, wherewith the huts were thatched, though quite dry, were not spared.”: “Everything in the country was devoured; the bark of figs, pomegranates, and oranges, bitter hard and corrosive, escaped not their voracity.” The effects of this wasting last on for many years.

He hath made it clean bare - o“It is sufficient, if these terrible columns stop half an hour on a spot, for everything growing on it, vines, olive trees, and grain, to be entirely destroyed. After they have passed, nothing remains but the large branches, and the roots which, being under ground, have escaped their voracity.”: “After eating up the corn, they fell upon the vines,

the pulse, the willows and even the hemp, notwithstanding its great bitterness.": "They are particularly injurious to the palm trees; these they strip of every leaf and green particle, the trees remaining like skeletons with bare branches.": "The bushes were eaten quite bare, though the animals could not have been long on the spot. They sat by hundreds on a bush gnawing the rind and the woody fibres."

The branches thereof are made white - o"The country did not seem to be burnt, but to be much covered with snow, through the whiteness of the trees and the dryness of the herbs. It pleased God that the fresh crops were already gathered in."

The "vine" is the well-known symbol of God's people Psalm 80:8, Psalm 80:14; Hosea 10:1; Isaiah 5:1-7; Isaiah 27:2; the fig too, by reason of its sweetness, is an emblem of His Church and of each soul in her, bringing forth the fruit of grace Hosea 9:10; Matthew 21:19; Luke 13:6-7. When then God says, "he hath laid My vine waste," He suggests to us, that He is not speaking chiefly of the visible tree, but of that which it represents. The locusts, accordingly, are not chiefly the insects, which bark the actual trees, but every enemy which wastes the heritage of God, which He calls by those names. His vineyard, the Jewish people, was outwardly and repeatedly desolated by the Chaldaens, Antiochus Epiphanes, and afterward by the Romans. The vineyard, which the Jews had, was, (as Jesus foretold,) let out to other farmers when they had killed Him; and, thenceforth, is the Christian Church, and, subordinately each soul in her.: "Pagan and heretical Emperors and heresiarchs wasted often the Church of Christ. antichrist shall waste it. They who have wasted her are countless. For the Psalmist says, "They who hate me without a cause are more than the hair's of my head" Psalm 69:4.

: "The nation which cometh up against the soul, are the princes of this world and of darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, of whom the Apostle Peter saith, "Our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour" 1 Peter 5:8. If we give way to this nation, so that they should come up in us, immediately they will make our vineyard where we were accustomed to make "wine to gladden the heart of man" Psalm 104:15, a desert, and bark or break our fig tree, that we should no more have in us those most sweet gifts of the Holy Spirit. Nor is it enough for that nation to destroy the

vineyard and break the fig tree, unless it also destroy whatever there is of life in it, so that, its whole freshness being consumed. the switches remain white and dead, and that be fulfilled in us, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Luke 23:31.: "The Church, at least apart of it, is turned into a desert, deprived of spiritual goods, when the faithful are led, by consent to sin, to forsake God. "The fig tree is barked," when the soul which once abounded with sweetest goods and fruits of the Holy Spirit, hath those goods lessened or cut off. Such are they who, having "begun in the Spirit" Galatians 3:3, are perfected by the flesh."

" By spirits lying in wait, the vineyard of God is made a desert, when the soul, replenished with fruits, is wasted with longing for the praise of people. That "people barks" the "fig tree" of God, in that, carrying away the misguided soul to a thirst for applause, in proportion as it draws her on to ostentation, it strips her of the covering of humility. "Making it clean bare, it despoils it," in that, so long as it lies hidden in its goodness, it is, as it were, clothed with a covering of its own, which protects it. But when the mind longs that which it has done should be seen by others, it is as though "the fig tree despoiled" had lost the bark that covered it. And so, as it follows, "The branches thereof are made white;" in that his works, displayed to the eyes of people, have a bright show; a name for sanctity is gotten, when good actions are published. But as, upon the bark being removed, the branches of the fig tree wither, so observe that the deeds of the arrogant, paraded before human eyes, wither through the very act of socking to please. Therefore the mind which is betrayed through boastfulness is rightly called a fig tree barked, in that it is at once fair to the eye, as being seen, and within a little of withering, as being bared of the covering of the bark. Within, then, must our deeds be laid up, if we look to a reward of our deeds from Him who seeth within."

Verse 8

Lament like a virgin - The prophet addresses the congregation of Israel, as one espoused to God; "‹Lament thou,' daughter of Zion," or the like. He bids her lament, with the bitterest of sorrows, as one who, in her virgin years, was just knit into one with the husband of her youth, and then at once was, by God's judgment, on the very day of her espousal, ere yet she ceased to be a virgin, parted by death. The mourning which God

commands is not one of conventional or becoming mourning, but that of one who has put away all joy from her, and takes the rough garment of penitence, girding the haircloth upon her, enveloping and embracing, and therewith, wearing the whole frame. The haircloth was a coarse, rough, formless, garment, girt close round the waist, afflictive to the flesh, while it expressed the sorrow of the soul. God regarded as a virgin, the people which He had made holy to Himself Jeremiah 2:2.

He so regards the soul which He has regenerated and sanctified. The people, by their idolatry, lost Him who was a Husband to them; the soul, by inordinate affections, is parted from its God.: "God Almighty was the Husband of the synagogue, having espoused it to Himself in the patriarchs and at the giving of the law. So long as she did not, through idolatry and other heavy sins, depart from God, she was a spouse in the integrity of mind, in knowledge, in love and worship of the true God.": "The Church is a Virgin; Christ her Husband. By prevailing sins, the order, condition, splendor, worship of the Church, are, through negligence, concupiscence, avarice, irreverence, worsened, deformed, obscured." "The soul is a virgin by its creation in nature; a virgin by privilege of grace; a virgin also by hope of glory. Inordinate desire maketh the soul a harlot; manly penitence restoreth to her chastity; wise innocence, virginity. For the soul recovereth a sort of chastity, when through thirst for righteousness, she undertakes the pain and fear of penitence; still she is not as yet raised to the eminence of innocence. - In the first state she is exposed to concupiscence; in the second, she doth works of repentance; in the third, bewailing her Husband, she is filled with the longing for righteousness; in the fourth, she is gladdened by virgin embraces and the kiss of Wisdom. For Christ is the Husband of her youth, the Betrother of her virginity. But since she parted from Him to evil concupiscence, she is monished to return to Him by sorrow and the works and garb of repentance.": "So should every Christian weep who has lost Baptismal grace, or has fallen back after repentance, and, deprived of the pure embrace of the heavenly Bridegroom, embraced instead these earthly things which are as dunghills Lamentations 4:5, having been brought up in scarlet, and being in honor, had no understanding Psalm 49:12, Psalm 49:20. Whence it is written, "let tears run down like a river day and night; give thyself no rest" Lamentations 2:18. Such was he who said; rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law" Psalm 119:136.

Verse 9

The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off - The meat offering and drink offering were part of every sacrifice. If the materials for these, the grain and wine, ceased, through locusts or drought or the wastings of war, the sacrifice must become mangled and imperfect. The priests were to mourn for the defects of the sacrifice; they lost also their own subsistence, since the altar was, to them, in place of all other inheritance. The meat and drink offerings were emblems of the materials of the holy eucharist, by which Malachi foretold that, when God had rejected the offering of the Jews, there should be a "pure offering" among the pagan Joel 1:11. When then holy communions become rare, the meat and drink offering are literally cut off from the house of the Lord, and those who are indeed priests, the ministers of the Lord, should mourn. Joel foretells that, however love should wax cold, there should ever be such. He forsees and foretells at once, the failure, and the grief of the priests. Nor is it an idle regret which he foretells, but a mourning unto their God.: "Both meat offering and drink offering hath perished from the house of God, not in actual substance but as to reverence, because, amid the prevailing iniquity there is scarcely found in the Church, who should duly celebrate, or receive the sacraments."

Verse 10

The field is wasted, the land mourneth - As, when God pours out His blessings of nature, all nature seems to smile and be glad, and as the Psalmist says, "to shout for joy and sing" Psalm 65:13, so when He withholds them, it seems to mourn, and, by its mourning, to reproach the insensibility of man. Oil is the emblem of the abundant graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit, and of the light and devotion of soul given by Him, and spiritual gladness, and overflowing, all-mantling charity.

Verse 11

Be ye ashamed, O ye farmers - The prophet dwells on and expands the description of the troubles which he had foretold, setting before their eyes the picture of one universal dessolation. For the details of sorrow most touch the heart, and he wished to move them to repentance. He pictures them to themselves; some standing aghast and ashamed of the fruitlessness of their toil others giving way to bursts of sorrow, and all things around waste and dried. Nothing was exempt. Wheat and barley, widespread as

they were (and the barley in those countries, “more fertile” than the wheat,) perished utterly. The rich juice of the vine, the luscious sweetness of the fig the succulence of the ever-green pomegranate, the majesty of the palm tree, the fragrance of the eastern apple, exempted them not. All, fruitbearing or barren, were dried up, for joy itself, and every source of joy was dried up from the sons of men.

All these suggest a spiritual meaning. For we know of a spiritual harvest, souls born to God, and a spiritual vineyard, the Church of God; and spiritual farmers and vinedressers, those whom God sends. The trees, with their various fruits were emblems of the faithful, adorned with the various gifts and graces of the Spirit. All well-nigh were dried up. Wasted without, in act and deed, the sap of the Spirit ceased within; the true laborers, those who were jealous for the vineyard of the Lord of hosts were ashamed and grieved.: “Husbandmen” and “vinedressers,” are priests and preachers; “farmers” as instructors in morals, “vinedressers” for that joy in things eternal, which they infuse into the minds of the bearers. “Husbandmen,” as instructing the soul to deeds of righteousness; vinedressers, as exciting the minds of hearers to the love of wisdom. Or, “farmers,” in that by their doctrine they uproot earthly deeds and desires; “vinedressers,” as holding forth spiritual gifts.” “The vine is the richness of divine knowledge; the fig the sweetness of contemplation and the joyousness in things eternal.” The pomegranate, with its manifold grains contained under its one bark, may designate the variety and harmony of graces, disposed in their beautiful order. “The palm, rising above the world.”: “Well is the life of the righteous likened to a palm, in that the palm below is rough to the touch, and in a manner enveloped in dry bark, but above it is adorned with fruit, fair even to the eye; below it is compressed by the enfoldings of its bark; above, it is spread nut in amplitude of beautiful greenness. For so is the life of the elect, despised below, beautiful above. Down below, it is, as it were, enfolded in many barks, in that it is straitened by innumerable afflictions. But on high it is expanded into a foliage, as it were, of beautiful greenness by the amplitude of the rewarding.”

Verse 12

Because joy is withered away - o“There are four sorts of joy, a joy in iniquity, a joy in vanity, a joy of charity, a joy of felicity. Of the first we read, “Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the forwardness of the wicked

Proverbs 2:14. Of the second, "They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ" Job 21:12. Of the third, "Let the saints be joyful in glory" Psalm 149:5. Of the fourth, "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be still praising Thee" Psalm 84:4. The joy of charity and the joy of felicity "wither from the sons of men," when the virtues aforesaid failing, there being neither knowledge of the truth nor love of virtue, no reward succeedeth, either in this life or that to come."

Having thus pictured the coming woe, he calls all to repentance and mourning, and those first, who were to call others. God Himself appointed these afflictive means, and here He "gives to the priest a model for penitence and a way of entreating mercy.": "He invites the priests first to repentance through whose negligence chiefly the practice of holiness, the strictness of discipline, the form of doctrine, the whole aspect of the Church was sunk in irreverence. Whence the people also perished, hurrying along the various haunts of sin. Whence Jeremiah says, "The kings of the earth and all the inhabitants of the world would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem. For the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her, they have wandered as blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood Lamentations 4:13-14.

Verse 13

Gird yourselves - that is, with haircloth, as is elsewhere expressed Isaiah 22:12; Jeremiah 4:8; Jeremiah 6:26. The outward affliction is an expression of the inward grief, and itself excites to further grief. This their garment of affliction and penitence, they were not to put off day and night. Their wonted duty was to "offer up sacrifice for their own sins and the sins of the people" Hebrews 7:27, and to entreat God for them. This their office the prophet calls them to discharge day and night; to "come" into the court of the temple, and there, where God showed Himself in majesty and mercy, "lie all night" prostrate before God, not at ease, but in sackcloth. He calls to them in the Name of his God, "Ye ministers of my God;" of Him, to whom, whosoever forsook Him, he himself was faithful.: "The prophets called the God of all, their own God, being united to Him by singular love and reverential obedience, so that they could say, "God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" Psalm 73:26. He calls Him, further, "their"

God, (your God) in order to remind them of His special favor to them, and their duty to Him who allowed them to call Him "their" God.

Verse 14

Sanctify ye a fast - He does not say only, "proclaim," or "appoint a fast," but "sanctify it." Hallow the act of abstinence, seasoning it with devotion and with acts meet for repentance. For fasting is not accepted by God, unless done in charity and obedience to His commands.: "Sanctify" it, i. e., make it an offering to God, and as it were a sacrifice, a holy and blameless fast.": "To sanctify a fast is to exhibit abstinence of the flesh, meet toward God, with other good. Let anger cease, strife be lulled. For in vain is the flesh worn, if the mind is not held in from evil passions, inasmuch as the Lord saith by the prophet, "Lo! in the day of your fast you find your pleasures" Isaiah 58:3. The fast which the Lord approveth, is that which lifteth up to Him hands full of almsdeeds, which is passed with brotherly love, which is seasoned by piety. What thou substractest from thyself, bestow on another, that thy needy neighbor's flesh may be recruited by means of that which thou deniest to thine own."

Call a solemn assembly - Fasting without devotion is an image of famine. At other times "the solemn assembly" was for festival-joy. Such was the last day of the feast of the Passover Deuteronomy 16:8 and of tabernacles Leviticus 23:36; Numbers 29:35; 2 Chronicles 7:9; Nehemiah 8:18. No servile work was to be done thereon. It was then to be consecrated to thanksgving, but now to sorrow and supplication.: "The prophet commands that all should be called and gathered into the Temple, that so the prayer might be the rather heard, the more they were who offered it. Wherefore the Apostle besought his disciples to pray for him, that so what was asked might be obtained the more readily through the intercession of many."

Gather the elders - Age was, by God's appointment Leviticus 19:32, held in great reverence among the Hebrews. When first God sent Moses and Aaron to His people in Egypt, He bade them collect the elders of the people (Exodus 3:16; Exodus 4:29, compare Deuteronomy 31:28) to declare to them their own mission from God; through them He conveyed the ordinance of the Passover to the whole congregation Exodus 12:3, Exodus 12:21; in their presence was the first miracle of bringing water from the rock performed (Exodus 17:5, add Exodus 18:12); then He commanded Moses to choose seventy of them, to appear before Him before He gave the

law Exodus 24:1, Exodus 24:9; then to bear Moses‘ own burden in hearing the causes of the people, bestowing His spirit upon them (Numbers 11:16 ff). The elders of each city were clothed with judicial authority Deuteronomy 19:12; Deuteronomy 22:15; Deuteronomy 25:7. In the expiation of an uncertain murder, the elders of the city represented the whole city Deuteronomy 21:3-6; in the offerings for the congregation, the elders of the congregation represented the whole Leviticus 4:15; Leviticus 9:1.

So then, here also, they are summoned, chief of all, that “the authority and example of their grey hairs might move the young to repentance.”: “Their age, near to death and ripened in grace, makes them more apt for the fear and worship of God.” All however, “priests, elders,” and the “inhabitants,” or “people of the land” Jeremiah 1:18, were to form one band, and were, with one heart and voice, to cry unto God; and that “in the house of God.” For so Solomon had prayed, that God would “in heaven His dwelling place, hear whatever prayer and supplication” might there be “made by any man or by all His people Israel” 1 Kings 8:39; and God had promised in turn, “I have hallowed this house which thou hast built, to put My name there for ever, and Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually” 1 Kings 9:3. God has given to united prayer a power over Himself, and “prayer overcometh God”. The prophet calls God “your” God, showing how ready He was to hear; but he adds, “cry unto the Lord;” for it is not a listless prayer, but a loud earnest cry, which reacheth to the throne of God.

Verse 15

Alas for the day! for the Day of the Lord is at hand - The judgment of God, then, which they were to deprecate, was still to come.: “All times and all days are God‘s. Yet they are said to be our days, in which God leaves us to our own freedom, to do as we will,” and which we may use to repent and turn to Him. “Whence Christ saith, ‹O Jerusalem - if thou hadst known in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace‘ Luke 19:42. That time, on the contrary, is said to be God‘s Day, in which He doth any new, rare, or special thing, such as is the Day of Judgment or vengeance.” All judgment in time is an image of the Judgment for eternity. “The Day of the Lord” is, then, each “day of vengeance in which God doth to man according to His will and just judgment, inflicting the punishment which he

deserves, as man did to Him in his day, manifoldly dishonoring Him, according to his own perverse will." That Day "is at hand;" suddenly to come. Speed then must be used to prevent it. Prevented it may be by speedy repentance before it comes; but when it does come, there will be no avoiding it, for

As a destruction from the Almighty shall it come - The name "the Almighty" or "God Almighty" is but seldom used in Holy Scripture. God revealed Himself by this Name to Abraham, when renewing to him the promise which was beyond nature, that he should be a father of many nations, when he and Sarah were old and well stricken in age. He said, I am God Almighty; walk before Me and be thou perfect Genesis 17:1-6, Genesis 17:16-21; Genesis 18:10-14; Romans 4:17-21. God Almighty uses it again of Himself in renewing the blessing to Jacob Genesis 35:11; and Isaac and Jacob use it in blessing in His Name Genesis 28:3; Genesis 43:14; Genesis 48:3; Genesis 49:25. It is not used as a mere name of God, but always in reference to His might, as in the book of Job which treats chiefly of His power. In His days of judgment God manifests Himself as the All-mighty and All-just. Hence, in the New Testament, it occurs almost exclusively in the Revelations, which reveal His judgments to come. Here the words form a sort of terrible proverb, from where they are adopted from Joel by the prophet Isaiah Isaiah 13:6. The word "destruction, שׁד *shôd* is formed from the same root as "Almighty, שׁדי *shadday* It shall come as might from the Mighty." Only, the word "might" is always used of "might" put forth to destroy, a "mighty destruction." He says then, in fact, that that Day shall come, like might put forth by the Almighty Himself; to destroy His enemies, irresistible, inevitable, unendurable, overwhelming the sinner.

Verse 16

Is not the meat cut off before our eyes? - The prophet exhibits the immediate judgment, as if it were already fullilled in act. He sets it in detail before their eyes. "When the fruits of the earth were now ripe, the grain now calling for the reaper, and the grapes fully ripe and desiring to be pressed out, they were taken away, when set before their eyes for them to enjoy." Yea, "joy and gladness from the house of our God." The joy in the abundance of the harvest was expressed in one universal thanksgiving to God, by fathers of families, sons, daughters, menservants, maidservants, with the priest and Levite. All this was to be cut off together. The courts of

God‘s house were to be desolate and silent, or joy and gladness were to be turned into sorrow and wailing.

: “So it befell those who rejected and insulted Christ. “The Bread of life Which came down from heaven and gave life to the world John 6:48, John 6:51, the grain of wheat, which fell into the ground and died, and brought forth much fruit” John 12:24, that spiritual “wine” which knoweth how to “gladden the heart of man,” was already in a manner before their eyes. But when they ceased not to insult Him in unbelief, He, as it were, disappeared from their eyes, and they lost all spiritual sustenance. All share in all good is gone from them. “Joy and gladness” have also gone “from the House” which they had. For they are given up to desolation, and “abide without king or prince or sacrifice” Hosea 3:4. Again, the Lord said, “Man, shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which cometh forth out of the Mouth of God” Matthew 4:4. The word of God then is food. This hath been taken away from the Jews, for they understood not the writings of Moses, but “to this day the veil is upon their heart” 2 Corinthians 3:15. For they hate the oracles of Christ. All spiritual food is perished, not in itself but to “them.” To them, it is as though it were not. But the Lord Himself imparts to these who believe in Him a right to all exuberance of joy in the good tilings from above. For it is written, “The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish; but He thrusts away the desire of the wicked” Proverbs 10:3.

Verse 17

The seed is rotten under the clods - Not only was all to be cut off for the present, but, with it, all hope for the future. The scattered seed, as it lay, each under its clod known to God, was dried up, and so decayed. The garners lay desolate, nay, were allowed to go to ruin, in hopelessness of any future harvest.

Verse 18

How do the beasts groan! - There is something very pitiable in the cry of the brute creation, even because they are innocent, yet bear man‘s guilt. Their groaning seems to the prophet to be beyond expression. How vehemently do they “groan! The herds of cattle are perplexed,” as though, like man, they were endued with reason, to debate where to find their food. Yea, not these only, but the flocks of sheep, which might find pasture where the herds could not, these too shall bear the punishment of guilt. They suffered by the guilt of man; and yet so stupid was man, that he was not so

sensible of his own win for which they suffered, as they of its effect. The beasts cried to God, but even their cries did not awaken His own people. The prophet cries for them;

Verse 19

O Lord, to Thee will I cry - This is the only hope left, and contains all hopes. From the Lord was the infliction; in Him is the healing. The prophet appeals to God by His own Name, the faithful Fulfiller of His promises, Him who Is, and who had promised to hear all who call upon Him. Let others call to their idols, if they would, or remain stupid and forgetful, the prophet would cry unto God, and that earnestly.

For the fire hath devoured the pastures - The gnawing of locusts leaves things, as though scorched by fire (see the note at Joel 2:3); the sun and the east wind scorch up all green things, as though it had been the actual contact of fire. Spontaneous combustion frequently follows. The Chaldees wasted all before them with fire and sword. All these and the like calamities are included under "the fire," whose desolating is without remedy. What has been scorched by fire never recovers. "The famine," it is said of Mosul, "was generally caused by fire spreading in dry weather over pastures, grass lands, and grain lands, many miles in extent. It burnt night and day often for a week and sometimes embraced the whole horizon."

Verse 20

The beasts of the field cry also unto Thee - o"There is an order in these distresses. First he points out the insensate things wasted; then those afflicted, which have sense only; then those endowed with reason; so that to the order of calamity there may be consorted an order of pity, sparing first the creature, then the things sentient, then things rational. The Creator spares the creature; the Ordainer, things sentient; the Saviour, the rational." Irrational creatures joined with the prophet in his cry. The beasts of the field cry to God, though they know it not; it is a cry to God, who compassionates all which suffers. God makes them, in act, a picture of dependence upon His Providence, "seeking to It for a removal of their sufferings, and supply of their needs." So He saith, "the young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God" Psalm 104:21, and, "He giveth to the beast his food and to the young ravens that cry" Psalm 147:9, and, "Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God" Job 38:41. If the people would not take instruction from him, he "bids them learn from the beasts of

the field how to behave amid these calamities, that they should cry aloud to God to remove them."

JOEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

The prophet begins anew in this chapter, first delineating in greater detail the judgments of God; then calling to repentance. The image reaches its height in the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, itself an image only of worse judgments, first on the Jews by the Romans; then on particular Churches; then of the infliction through antichrist; lastly on the whole world.: "The prophet sets before them the greatness of the coming woe, of the approaching captivity, of the destruction imminent, in order to move the people to terror at the judgment of God, to compunction, to love of obedience. This he does from the manifoldness of the destruction, the quality of the enemy, the nature of the victory, the weight of the misery, the ease of the triumph, the eagerness for ill, the fear of the besieged princes, the sluggishness of the besieged people. He exhorts all in common to prostrate themselves at the feet of the divine judgment, if so be God would look down from His dwelling place, turn the storm into a calm, and at length out of the shipwreck of captivity bring them back to the haven of consolation.": "It is no mere prediction. Everything stands before them, as in actual experience, and before their eyes." Future things affect people less; so he makes them, as it were, present to their souls.: "He will not let them vacillate about repentance, but bids them, laying aside all listlessness, set themselves courageously to ward off the peril, by running to God, and effacing the charges against them from their old sins by everrenewed amendment."

Verse 1

Blow ye the trumpet - The trumpet was accustomed to sound in Zion, only for religious uses; to call together the congregations for holy meetings, to usher in the beginnings of their months and their solemn days with festival gladness. Now in Zion itself, the stronghold of the kingdom, the Holy City, the place which God chose to put His Name there, which He had promised to establish, the trumpet was to be used, only for sounds of alarm and fear. Alarm could not penetrate there, without having pervaded the whole land. With it, the whole human hope of Judah was gone.

Sound an alarm in My holy mountain - He repeats the warning in varied expressions, in order the more to impress people‘s hearts and to stir them to repentance. Even "the holy mountain" of God was to echo with

alarms; the holiness, once bestowed upon it, was to be no security against the judgments of God; yea, in it rather were those judgments to begin. So Peter saith, "The time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God" 1 Peter 4:17. The alarm being blown in Zion, terror was to spread to all the inhabitants of the land, who were, in fear, to repent. The Church of Christ is foretold in prophecy under the names of "Zion" and of the holy "mountain." It is the "stone cut out without hands, which became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" Daniel 2:34-35. Of it, it is said, "Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob!" Isaiah 2:3. And Paul says, "ye are come unto mount Zion and unto the city of the living God" Hebrews 12:22. The words then are a rule for all times. The judgments predicted by Joel represent all judgments unto the end; the conduct, prescribed on their approach, is a pattern to the Church at all times.: "In this mountain we must wail, considering the failure of the faithful, in which, "iniquity abounding, charity waxeth cold." For now (1450 a.d.) the state of the Church is so sunken, and you may see so great misery in her from the most evil conversation of many, that one who burns with zeal for God, and truly loveth his brethren, must say with Jeremiah, "Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease, for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach" Jeremiah 14:17.

Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble - o"We should be troubled when we hear the words of God, rebuking, threatening, avenging, as Jeremiah saith, ‹my heart within me is broken, all my bones shake, because of the Lord and because of the words of His holiness' Jeremiah 23:9. Good is the trouble which people, weighing their sins, are shaken with fear and trembling, and repent."

For the Day of the Lord is at hand - "The Day of the Lord" is any day in which He avengeth sin, any day of Judgment, in the course of His Providence or at the end; the day of Jerusalem from the Chaldees or Romans, the day of antichrist, the day of general or particular judgment, of which James says, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Behold the Judge standeth before the door" James 5:8-9.: "Well is that called "the day of the Lord," in that, by the divine appointment, it avengeth the wrongs done to the Lord through the disobedience of His people."

Verse 2

A day of darkness and of gloominess - o“A day full of miseries; wherefore he accumulates so many names of terrors. There was inner darkness in the heart, and the darkness of tribulation without. They hid themselves in dark places. There was the cloud between God and them; so that they were not protected nor heard by Him, of which Jeremiah saith, “Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud, that our prayers should not pass through” Lamentations 3:44. There was the whirlwind of tempest within and without, taking away all rest, tranquility and peace. Whence Jeremiah hath, “A whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth injury, it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the Lord shall not return, until He have executed it” Jeremiah 23:19. “The Day of the Lord too shall come as a thief in the night” 1 Thessalonians 5:2. “Clouds and darkness are round about Him” Psalm 97:2.

A day of clouds and of thick darkness - The locusts are but the faint shadow of the coming evils, yet as the first harbingers of God‘s successive judgments, the imagery, even in tills picture is probably taken from them. At least there is nothing in which writers, of every character, are so agreed, as in speaking of locusts as clouds darkening the sun.: “These creatures do not come in legions, but in whole clouds, 5 or 6 leagues in length and 2 or 3 in breadth. All the air is full and darkened when they fly. Though the sun shine ever so bright, it is no brighter than when most clouded.”: “In Senegal we have seen a vast multitude of locusts shadowing the air, for they come almost every three years, and darken the sky.”: “About 8 o‘clock there arose above us a thick cloud, which darkened the air, depriving us of the rays of the sun. Every one was astonished at so sudden a change in the air, which is so seldom clouded at this season; but we soon saw that it was owing to a cloud of locusts. It was about 20 or 30 toises from the ground (120-180 feet) and covered several leagues of the country, when it discharged a shower of locusts, who fed there while they rested, and then resumed their flight. This cloud was brought by a pretty strong wind, it was all the morning passing the neighborhood, and the same wind, it was thought, precipitated it in the sea.”: “They take off from the place the light of day, and a sort of eclipse is formed.”: “In the middle of April their numbers were so vastly increased, that in the heat of the day they formed themselves into large bodies, appeared like a succession of clouds and darkened the sun.”: “On looking up we perceived an immense cloud, here and there semi-

transparent, in other parts quite black, that spread itself all over the sky, and at intervals shadowed the sun."

The most unimaginative writers have said the same; "When they first appear, a thick dark cloud is seen very high in the air, which, as it passes, obscures the sun. Their swarms were so astonishing in all the steppes over which we passed in this part of our journey (the Crimea,) that the whole face of nature might have been described as concealed by a living veil.": "When these clouds of locusts take their flight to surmount some obstacle, or traverse more rapidly a desert soil, one may say, to the letter, that the heaven is darkened by them."

As the morning spread upon the mountains - Some have thought this too to allude to the appearance which the inhabitants of Abyssinia too well knew, as preceding the coming of the locusts (see the note at Joel 2:6). A sombre yellow light is cast on the ground, from the reflection, it was thought, of their yellow wings. But that appearance itself seems to be unique to that country, or perhaps to certain flights of locusts. The image naturally describes, the suddenness, universality of the darkness, when people looked for light. As the mountain-tops first catch the gladdening rays of the sun, ere yet it riseth on the plains, and the light spreads from height to height, until the whole earth is arrayed in light, so wide and universal shall the outspreading be, but it shall be of darkness, not of light; the light itself shall be turned into darkness.

A great people and a strong - The imagery throughout these verses is taken from the flight and inroad of locusts. The allegory is so complete, that the prophet compares them to those things which are, in part, intended under them, warriors, horses and instruments of war; and this, the more, because neither locusts, nor armies are exclusively intended. The object of the allegory is to describe the order and course of the divine judgments; how they are terrific, irresistible, universal, overwhelming, penetrating everywhere, overspreading all things, excluded by nothing. The locusts are the more striking symbol of this, through their minuteness and their number. They are little miniatures of a wellordered army, unhindered by what would be physical obstacles to larger creatures, moving in order inimitable even by man, and, from their number, desolating to the uttermost. "What more countless or mightier than the locusts," asks Jerome, who had seen their inroads, "which human industry cannot resist?" "It is a thing invincible," says Cyril, "their invasion is altogether irresistible, and suffices utterly to

destroy all in the fields." Yet each of these creatures is small, so that they would be powerless and contemptible, except in the Hands of Him, who brings them in numbers which can be wielded only by the Creator. Wonderful image of the judgments of God, who marshals and combines in one, causes each unavailing in itself but working together the full completion of His inscrutable Will.

There hath not been ever the like - The courses of sin and of punishment are ever recommencing anew in some part of the world and of the Church. The whole order of each, sin and punishment, will culminate once only, in the Day of Judgment. Then only will these words have their complete fulfillment. The Day of Judgment alone is that Day of terror and of woe, such as never has been before, and shall never be again. For there will be no new day or time of terror. Eternal punishment will only be the continuation of the sentence adjudged then. But, in time and in the course of God's Providential government, the sins of each soul or people or Church draw down visitations, which are God's final judgments there. Such to the Jewish people, before the captivity, was the destruction of the temple, the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and that captivity itself. The Jewish polity was never again restored as before.

Such, to the new polity after the captivity, was the destruction by the Romans. Eighteen hundred years have seen nothing like it. The Vandals and then the Muslims swept over the Churches of North Africa, each destructive in its own way. twelve centuries have witnessed one unbroken desolation of the Church in Africa. In Constantinople, and Asia Minor, Palestine, Persia, Churches of the Redeemer became the mosques of the false prophet. Centuries have flowed by, "yet we see not our signs, neither is there any among us, that knoweth how long" Psalm 74:9. Wealthy, busy, restless, intellectual, degraded, London, sender forth of missionaries, but, save in China, the largest pagan city in the world; converter of the isles of the sea, but thyself unconverted; fullest of riches and of misery, of civilization and of savage life, of refinements and debasement; heart, whose pulses are felt in every continent, but thyself diseased and feeble, wilt thou, in this thy day, anticipate by thy conversion the Day of the Lord, or will It come upon thee, "as hath never been the like, nor shall be, for the years of many generations?" Shalt thou win thy lost ones to Christ, or be thyself the birthplace or abode of antichrist? "O Lord God, Thou knowest."

Yet the words have fulfillments short of the end. Even of successive chastisements upon the same people, each may have some aggravation unique to itself, so that of each, in turn, it may be said, in that respect, that no former visitation had been like it, none afterward should resemble it. Thus the Chaldaeans were chief in fierceness, Antiochus Epiphanes in his madness against God, the Romans in the completeness of the desolation. The fourth beast which Daniel saw "was dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly, and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it" Daniel 7:7-19. The persecutions of the Roman Emperors were in extent and cruelty far beyond any before them. They shall be as nothing, in comparison to the deceivableness and oppression of antichrist. The prophet, however, does not say that there should be absolutely none like it, but only not "for the years of many genertions." The words "unto generation and generation" elsewhere mean "forever;" here the word "years" may limit them to length of time. God, after some signal visitation, leaves a soul or a people to the silent workings of His grace or of His Providence. The marked interpositions of His Providence, are like His extraordinary miracles, rare; else, like the ordinary miracles of His daily operations, they would cease to be interpositions.

Verse 3

A fire devoureth before them … - Travelers, of different nations and characters, and in different lands, some unacquainted with the Bible words, have agreed to describe under this image the ravages of locusts.: "They scorch many things with their touch.": "Whatever of herb or leaf they gnaw, is, as it were, scorched by fire.": "Wherever they come, the ground seems burned, as it were with fire.": "Wherever they pass, they burn and spoil everything, and that irremediably.": "I have myself observed that the places where they had browsed were as scorched, as if the fire had passed there.": "They covered a square mile so completely, that it appeared, at a little distance, to have been burned and strewn over with brown ashes. Not a shrub, nor a blade of grass was visible.": "A few months afterward, a much larger army alighted and gave the whole country the appearance of having been burned." "Wherever they settled, it looks as if fire had devoured and burnt up everything.": "It is better to have to do with the Tartars, than with these little destructive animals; you would think that fire follows their track," are the descriptions of their ravages in Italy, Aethiopia, the Levant,

India, South Africa. The locust, itself the image of God‘s judgments, is described as an enemy, invading, as they say, “with fire and sword,” “breathing fire,” wasting all, as he advances, and leaving behind him the blackness of ashes, and burning villages.: “Whatsoever he seizeth on, he shall consume as a devouring flame and shall leave nothing whole behind him.”

The land is as the garden of Eden before them - In outward beauty the land was like that Paradise of God, where He placed our first parents; as were Sodom and Gomorrah, before God overthrew them Genesis 13:10. It was like a garden enclosed and protected from all inroad of evil. They sinned, and like our first parents forfeited its bliss. “A fruitful land God maketh barren, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein” Psalm 107:34. Ezekiel fortells the removal of the punishment, in connection with the Gospel promise of “a new heart and a new spirit. They shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden” Ezekiel 36:26, Ezekiel 36:35.

And behind them a desolate wilderness - The desolation caused by the locust is even more inconceivable to us, than their numbers. We have seen fields blighted; we have known of crops, of most moment to man‘s support, devoured; and in one year we heard of terrific famine, as its result. We do not readily set before our eyes a whole tract, embracing in extent several of our counties, in which not the one or other crop was smitten, but every green thing was gone. Yet such was the scourge of locusts, the image of other and worse scourges in the treasure-house of God‘s displeasure. A Syrian writer relates, “1004 a.d., a large swarm of locusts appeared in the land of Mosul and Bagdad, and it was very grievous in Shiraz. It left no herb nor even leaf on the trees, and even gnawed the pieces of linen which the fullers were bleaching; of each piece the fuller gave a scrap to its owner: and time was a famine, and a cor (about two quarters) of wheat was sold in Bagdad for 120 gold dinars (about 54British pounds):” and again, “when it (the locust of 784 a.d.,) had consumed the whole tract of Edessa and Sarug, it passed to the west and for three years after this heavy chastisement there was a famine in the land.”: “We traveled five days through lands wholly despoiled; and for the canes of maize, as large as the largest canes used to prop vines, it cannot be said how they were broken and trampled, as if donkeys had trampled them; and all this from the locusts. The wheat, barley, tafos, were as if they had never been sown; the trees without a single

leaf; the tender wood all eaten; there was no memory of herb of any sort. If we had not been advised to take mules laden with harley and provisions for ourselves, we should have perished of hunger, we and our mules. This land was all covered with locusts without wings, and they said that they were the seed of those who had all gone, who had destroyed the land.”: “Everywhere, where their legions march, verdure disappears from the country, like a curtain which is folded up; trees and plants stripped of leaves, and reduced to their branches and stalks, substitute, in the twinkling of an eye, the dreary spectacle of winter for the rich scenes of spring.” “Happily this plague is not very often repeated, for there is none which brings so surely famine and the diseases which follow it.”: “Desolation and famine mark their progress; all the expectations of the farmer vanish; his fields, which the rising sun beheld covered with luxuriance, are before evening a desert; the produce of his garden and orchard are alike destroyed, for where these destructive swarms alight, not a leaf is left upon the trees, a blade of grass in the pastures, nor an ear of corn in the field.”: “In 1654 a great multitude of locusts came from the northwest to the Islands Tayyovvan and Formosa, which consumed all that grew in the fields, so that above eight thousand men perished by famine.”: “They come sometimes in such prodigious swarms, that they darken the sky as they pass by and devour all in those parts where they settle, so that the inhabitants are often obliged to change their habitations for want of sustenance, as it has happened frequently in China and the Isle of Tajowak.”: “The lands, ravaged throughout the west, produced no harvest. The year 1780 was still more wretched. A dry winter produced a new race of locusts which ravaged what had escaped the inclemency of the season. The farmer reaped not what he had sown, and was reduced to have neither nourishment, seed, nor cattle. The people experienced all the horrors of famine. You might see them wandering over the country to devour the roots; and, seeking in the bowels of the earth for means to lengthen their days, perhaps they rather abridged them. A countless number died of misery and bad nourishment. I have seen countrymen on the roads and in the streets dead of starvation, whom others were laying across asses, to go bury them. fathers sold their children. A husband, in concert with his wife, went to marry her in some other province as if she were his sister, and went to redeem her, when better off. I have seen women and children run after the camels, seek in their dung for some grain of indigested barley and devour it with avidity.”

Yea, and nothing shall escape them - Or (which the words also include) "none shall escape him," literally, "and also there shall be no escaping as to him or from him." The word, being used elsewhere of the persons who escape, suggests, in itself, that we should not linger by the type of the locusts only, but think of enemies more terrible, who destroy not harvests only, but people, bodies or souls also. Yet the picture of devastation is complete. No creature of God so destroys the whole face of nature, as does the locust. A traveler in the Crimea uses unconsciously the words of the prophet;; "On whatever spot they fall, the whole vegetable produce disappears. Nothing escapes them, from the leaves of the forest to the herbs on the plain. Fields, vineyards, gardens, pastures, everything is laid waste; and sometimes the only appearance left is a disgusting superficies caused by their putrefying bodies, the stench of which is sufficient to breed a pestilence." Another in South Africa says, "When they make their appearance, not a single field of grain remains unconsumed by them. This year the whole of the Sneuwberg will not, I suppose, produce a single bushel.": "They had (for a space 80 or 90 miles in length) devoured every green herb and every blade of grass; and had it not been for the reeds on which our cattle entirely subsisted while we skirted the banks of the river, the journey must have been discontinued, at least in the line that had been proposed.": "Not a shrub nor blade of grass was visible." The rapidity with which they complete the destruction is also observed.: "In two hours, they destroyed all the herbs around Rama."

All this which is a strong, but true, image of the locusts is a shadow of God's other judgments. It is often said of God, "A fire goeth before Him and burneth up His enemies on every side" Psalm 97:3. "The Lord will come with fire; by fire will the Lord plead with all flesh" Isaiah 66:15-16. This is said of the Judgment Day, as in Paul, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8. That awful lurid stream of fire shall burn up "the earth and all the works that are therein" 2 Peter 3:10. All this whole circuit of the globe shall be enveloped in one burning deluge of fire; all gold and jewels, gardens, fields, pictures, books, "the cloud-capt towers and gorgeous palaces, shall dissolve, and leave not a rack behind." The good shall be removed beyond its reach, for they shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

But all which is in the earth and those who are of the earth shall be swept away by it. It shall go before the army of the Lord, the Angels whom "the Son of man shall send forth, to gather out of His kingdom all things that shall offend and them that do iniquity. It shall burn after them" Matthew 13:41. For it shall burn on during the Day of Judgment until it have consumed all for which it is sent. "The land will be a garden of Eden before it." For they will, our Lord says, be eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building, marrying and giving in marriage Luke 17:27-28, Luke 17:30; the world will be "glorifying itself and living deliciously," full of riches and delights, when it "shall be utterly burned with fire," and "in one hour so great riches shall come to nought" Revelation 18:7-8, Revelation 18:17. "And after it a desolate wilderness," for there shall be none left. "And none shall escape." For our Lord says, "they shall gather all things that offend; the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire" Matthew 13:41, Matthew 13:49-50.

Verse 4

The appearance of them, is as the appearance of horses - "If you carefully consider the head of the locust," says Theodoret, a Bishop in Syria, "you will find it exceedingly like that of a horse." Whence the Arabs, of old and to this day, say; "In the locust, slight as it is, is the nature of ten of the larger animals, the face of a horse, the eyes of an elephant, the neck of abull, the horns of a deer, the chest of a lion, the belly of a scorpion, the wings of an eagle, the thighs of a camel, the feet of an ostrich, the tail of a serpent."

Verse 5

Like the noise of chariots on the tops of the mountains shall they leap - The amazing noise of the flight of locusts is likened by those who have heard them, to all sorts of deep sharp rushing sounds. One says, "their noise may be heard six miles off." Others, "within a hundred paces I heard the rushing noise occasioned by the flight of so many million of insects. When I was in the midst of them, it was as loud as the dashing of the waters occasioned by the mill-wheel.": "While passing over our heads, their sound was as of a great cataract.": "We heard a noise as of the rushing of a great wind at a distance.": "In flying they make a rushing rustling noise, as when

a strong wind blows through trees.": "They cause a noise, like the rushing of a torrent." To add another vivid description, "When a swarm is advancing, it seems as though brown clouds were rising from the horizon, which, as they approach, spread more and more. They cast a veil over the sun and a shadow on the earth. Soon you see little dots, and observe a whizzing and life. Nearer yet, the sun is darkened; you hear a roaring and rushing like gushing water. On a sudden you find yourself surrounded with locusts."

Like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble - The sharp noise caused by these myriads of insects, while feeding, has also been noticed.: "You hear afar the noise which they make in browsing on the herbs and trees, as of an army which is foraging without restraint.": "When they alight upon the ground to feed, the plains are all covered, and they make a murmuring noise as they eat, when in two hours they devour all close to the ground.": "The noise which they make in devouring, ever announces their approach at some distance.": "They say, that not without a noise is their descent on the fields effected, and that there is a certain sharp sound, as they chew the grain as when the wind strongly fanneth a flame."

Their noise, Joel says, is like the "noise of chariots." Whence John says Revelation 9:9, the sound of their wings was as the sound of many horses rushing to battle. Their sound should be like the sound of war-chariots, hounding in their speed; but their inroad should be, where chariots could not go and man's foot could rarely reach, "on the tops of the mountains". A mountain range is, next to the sea, the strongest natural protection. Mountains have been a limit to the mightiest powers. The Caucasus of old held in the Persian power; on the one side, all was enslaved, on the other, all was fearlessly free. Of late it enabled a few mountaineers to hold at bay the power of Russia. The pass of Thermopylae, until betrayed, enabled a handful of men to check the invasion of nearly two million.

The mountain-ridges of Spain were, from times before our Lord, the last home and rallying-place of the conquered or the birth-place of deliverance. God had assigned to His people a spot, central hereafter for the conversion of the world, yet where, meantime, they lay enveloped and sheltered "amid the mountains" which "His Right Hand purchased" Psalm 78:54. The Syrians owned that "their God" was "the God of the hills" 1 Kings 20:23; and the people confessed, "as the hills are round about Jerusalem, so the

Lord is round about His people" Psalm 125:2. Their protection was a symbol of His. But His protection withdrawn, nothing should be a hindrance to those whom He should send as a scourge. The prophet combines purposely things incompatible, the terrible heavy bounding of the scythed chariot, and the light speed with which these countless hosts should in their flight bound over the tops of the mountains, where God had made no path for man. Countless in number, boundless in might, are the instruments of God. The strongest national defenses give no security. Where then is safety, save in fleeing from God displeased to God appeased?

Verse 6

Before their face the people shall be much pained - The locust being such a scourge of God, good reason have men to be terrified at their approach; and those are most terrified who have most felt the affliction. In Abyssinia, some province of which was desolated every year, one relates, "When the locusts travel, the people know of it a day before, not because they see them, but they see the sun yellow and the ground yellow, through the shadow which they cast on it (their wings being yellow) and immediately the people become as dead, saying, ‹we are lost, for the Ambadas (so they call them) are coming.' I will say what I have seen three times; the first was at Barva. During three years that we were in this land, we often heard them say, ‹such a realm, such a land, is destroyed by locusts:' and when it was so, we saw this sign, the sun was yellow, and the shadow on the earth the same, and the whole people became as dead." "The Captain of the place called Coiberia came to me with men, Clerks, and Brothers (Monks) to ask me, for the love God, to help them, that they were all lost through the locusts.": "There were men, women, children, sitting among these locusts, the young brood, as stupefied. I said to them ‹why do you stay there, dying? Why do you not kill these animals, and avenge you of the evil which their parents have done you? and at least when dead, they will do you no more evil.' They answered, that they had no courage to resist a plague which God gave them for their sins. We found the roads full of men, women, and children, (some of these on foot, some in arms) their bundles of clothes on their heads, removing to some land where they might find provisions. It was pitiful to see them."

Burkhardt relates of South Arabia, "The Bedouins who occupy the peninsula of Sinai are frequently driven to despair by the multitudes of

locusts, which constitute a land-plague. They remain there generally for forty or fifty days, and then disappear for the rest of the year." Pliny describes their approach, "they overshadow the sun, the nations looking up with anxiety, lest they should cover their lands. For their strength suffices, and as if it were too little to have passed seas, they traverse immense tracts, and overspread them with a cloud, fatal to the harvest."

All faces shall gather blackness - Others, of high-authority, have rendered, shall "withdraw (their) beauty". But the word signifies to collect together, in order that what is so collected should be present, not absent; and so is very different from another saying, the stars shall withdraw their shining Joel 2:10; Joel 3:15. The "their" had also needed to be expressed.) He expresses how the faces contract a livid color from anxiety and fear, as Jeremiah says of the Nazarites, "Their visage is darker than blackness" (Lamentations 4:8, see Margin).: "The faces are clothed with lurid hue of coming death; hence they not only grow pale, but are blackened." A slight fear drives the fresh hue from the cheek: the livid hue comes only with the deepest terror. So Isaiah says; "they look amazed one to the other; faces of flame are their faces" Isaiah 13:8.

Verse 7

They shall run like mighty men - They are on God's message, and they linger not, "but rejoice to run their course" Psalm 19:5. "The height of walls cannot hinder the charge of the mighty; they enter not by the gates but over the walls", as of a city taken by assault. People can mount a wall few at a time; the locusts scale much more steadily, more compactly, more determinately, and irresistibly. The picture unites the countless multitude, condensed march, and entire security of the locust with the might of warriors.

They shall march every one on his ways - There is something awful and majestic in the well-ordered flight of the winged locusts, or their march while yet unwinged. "This," says Jerome, "we have seen lately in this province (Palestine). For when the hosts of locusts came, and filled the air between heaven and earth, they flew, by the disposal of God ordaining, in such order, as to hold each his place, like the minute pieces of mosaic, fixed in the pavement by the artist's hands, so as not to incline to one another a hair's breadth." "You may see the locust," says Theodoret, "like enemies, both mounting the walls, and marching on the roads, and not allowing itself to be dispersed by any violence, but making the assault by a sort of

concert." "It is said," says Cyril, "that they go in rank, and fly as in array, and are not severed from each other, but attend one on the other, like sisters, nature infusing into them this mutual love.": "They seemed to be impelled by one common instinct, and moved in one body, which had the appearance of being organized by a leader.": "There is something frightful in the appearance of these locusts proceeding in divisions, some of which are a league in length and 200 paces in breadth.": "They continued their journey, as if a signal had been actually given them to march."

So, of the young brood it is related;: "In June, their young broods begin gradually to make their appearance; no sooner were any of them hatched than they immediately collected themselves together, each of them forming a compact body of several hundred yards square, which, marching afterward directly forward, climbed over trees, walls and houses, ate up every plant in their way, "and let nothing escape them.": "They seemed to march in regular battalions, crawling over everything that lay in their passage, in one straight front." So the judgments of God hold on their course, each going straight to that person for whom God in the awful wisdom of His justice ordains it. No one judgment or chastisement comes by chance. Each is directed and adapted, weighed and measured, by Infinite Wisdom, and reaches just that soul, for which God appointed it, and no other, and strikes upon it with just that force which God ordains it. As we look on, God's judgments are like a heavy sleet of arrows; yet as each arrow, shot truly, found the mark at which it was aimed, so, and much more, does each lesser or greater judgment, sent by God, reach the heart for which He sends it and pierces it just as deeply as He wills.

Verse 8

When they fall upon the sword - (literally, "among the darts") they shall not be wounded It may be that the prophet would describe how the locust seems armed as in a suit of armor. As one says, "Their form was wondrous; they had a sort of gorget round their neck like a lancer, and a helm on their head, such as soldiers wear." But, more, he exhibits their indomitableness and impenetrableness, how nothing checks, nothing retards, nothing makes any impression upon them.: "They do not suffer themselves to be impeded by any obstacles, but fly boldly on, and are drowned in the sea when they come to it.": "When on a march during the day, it is utterly impossible to turn the direction of a troop, which is

generally with the wind.”: “The guard of the Red Town attempted to stop their irruption into Transylvania by firing at them; and indeed when the balls and shot swept through the swarm, they gave way and divided; but having filled up their ranks in a moment, they proceeded on their journey.”

And in like way of the young swarms; “The inhabitants, to stop their progress, made trenches all over their fields and gardens and filled them with water; or else, placing in a row great quantities of heath, stubble, and such like combustible matter, they set them on fire on the approach of the locusts. But all this was to no purpose, for the trenches were quickly filled up, and the fires put out by infinite swarms, succeeding one another; while the front seemed regardless of danger, and the van pressed on so close, that a retreat was impossible.”: “Like waves, they roll over one another on and on, and let themselves be stopped by nothing. Russians and Germans try many means with more or less success against them, when they come from the waste against the grainlands. Bundles of straw are laid in rows and set on fire before them; they march in thick heaps into the fire, but this is often put out thro‘ the great mass of the animals and those advancing from behind march away over the corpses of their companions, and continue the march.”: “Their number was astounding; the whole face of the mountain was black with them. On they came like a living deluge. We dug trenches, and kindled fires, and beat and burned to death heaps upon heaps, but the effort was utterly useless. wave after wave rolled up the mountain side, and poured over rocks, walls, ditches and hedges, those behind covering up and bridging over the masses already killed. After a long and fatiguing contest, I descended the mountain to examine the depth of the column, but I could not see to the end of it.” “It was perfectly appalling to watch this animated river, as it flowed up the road and ascended the hill.”

Both in ancient and modern times, armies have been marched against them; but in vain, unless they destroyed them, before they were full-grown.

Since the very smallest of God‘s judgments are thus irreversible, since creatures so small cannot be turned aside, since we cannot turn away the time of one of the least of our Master‘s servants, since they are each as a “man of might”, (so he calls them, it is the force of the word rendered “each”) what of the greater? what of the whole?

Verse 9

They shall run to and fro in the city - "The city" is questionless Jerusalem. So to the Romans, "the city" meant Rome; to the Athenians, Athens; among ourselves, "town" or "the city" are idiomatic names for the whole of London or "the city of London." In Wales "town" is, with the country people, the neighboring town with which alone they are familiar. There is no ambiguity in the living language. In Guernsey, one who should call Port Pierre by any other name than "the town," would betray himself to be a stranger. In Hosea, and Amos, prophets for Israel, "the city" is Samaria Hosea 11:9; Amos 3:6. In Solomon Psalm 72:16; Proverbs 1:21; Proverbs 8:3 and the prophets of Judah (Micah 6:9; Lamentations 1:1, etc.; Ezekiel 7:23; Ezekiel 33:21), "the city" is Jerusalem; and that the more, because it was not only the capital, but the center of the worship of the One True God. Hence, it is called "the city of God Psalm 46:4; Psalm 48:1, Psalm 48:8; Psalm 87:3, the city of the Lord" Psalm 101:8; Isaiah 60:14, then "the city of the Great King Psalm 48:2; Matthew 5:35, the holy city" Isaiah 48:2; Isaiah 52:1; Nehemiah 11:1, Nehemiah 11:18; Daniel 9:24; and God calls it "the city I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel 1 Kings 11:32, the city of righteousness" Isaiah 1:26. So our Lord spake, "go ye into the city" Matthew 26:18; Mark 14:13; Luke 22:10, and perhaps,, "tarry ye in the city." So do His Evangelists Matthew 21:17-18; Matthew 28:11; Mark 11:1, Mark 11:19; Luke 19:41; Acts 7:58; John 19:20), and so does Josephus.

All around corresponds with this. Joel had described their approach; they had come over "the tops of the mountains," those which protected Jerusalem; and now he describes them scaling "the wall," "mounting the houses," "entering the windows," "running to and fro in the city." Here the description has reached its height. The city is given over to those who assault it. There remaineth nothing more, save the shaking of the heaven and the earth.

They shall enter in at the windows - So in that first great judgment, in which God employed the locust, He said, "They shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth; and they shall fill thy houses, and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians" Exodus 10:5-6.: "For nothing denies a way to the locusts, inasmuch as they penetrate fields, cornlands, trees, cities, houses, yea, the retirement of the bed-chambers." "Not that they who are victors, have the fear which thieves have, but as thieves are accustomed to enter through windows, and plunder

secretly, so shall these, if the doors be closed, to cut short delay, burst with all boldness through the windows.”: “We have seen this done, not by enemies only, but often by locusts also. For not only flying, but creeping up the walls also, they enter the houses through the openings for light.”: “a.d. 784, there came the flying locust, and wasted the corn and left its offspring; and this came forth and crawled, and scaled walls and entered houses by windows and doors; and if it entered the house on the south side, it went out on the north; together with herbs and trees it devoured also woolen clothing, and men‘s dresses.”

Modern travelers relate the same.: “They entered the inmost recesses of the houses, were found in every corner, stuck to our clothes and infested our food.”: “They overwhelm the province of Nedjd sometimes to such a degree, that having destroyed the harvest, they penetrate by thousands into the private dwellings, and devour whatsoever they can find, even the leather of the water-vessels.”: “In June 1646, at Novogorod it was prodigious to behold them, because they were hatched there that spring, and being as yet scarce able to fly, the ground was all covered, and the air so full of them, that I could not eat in my chamber without a candle, all the houses being full of them, even the stables, barns, chambers, garrets, and cellars. I caused cannon-powder and sulphur to be burnt, to expel them, but all to no purpose. For when the door was opened, an infinite number came in, and the others went fluttering about; and it was a troublesome thing when a man went abroad, to be hit on the face by those creatures, on the nose, eyes, or cheeks, so that there was no opening one‘s mouth, but some would get in. Yet all this was nothing, for when we were to eat, they gave us no respite; and when we went to cut a piece of meat, we cut a locust with it, and when a man opened his mouth to put in a morsel, he was sure to chew one of them.” The eastern windows, not being glazed but having at most a lattice-work, presented no obstacle to this continuous inroad. All was one stream of infesting, harassing foes.

As the windows are to the house, so are the senses and especially the sight to the soul. As the strongest walls and battlements and towers avail not to keep out an enemy, if there be an opening or chink through which he can make his way, so, in vain is the protection of God‘s Providence or His Grace, if the soul leaves the senses unguarded to admit unchallenged sights, sounds, touches, which may take the soul prisoner.: “Death,” says Jeremiah,

“entereth through the window” Jeremiah 9:21. Thy window is thy eye. If thou seest, to lust, death hath entered in; if thou hearest enticing words, death hath entered in: if softness gain possession of thy senses, death has made his way in.” The arrow of sin is shot through them.: “When the tongue of one introduces the virus of perdition, and the ears of others gladly drink it in, “death enters in;” while with itching ears and mouth men minister eagerly to one another the deadly draught of detraction, “death enters in at the windows.”: “Eve had not touched the forbidden tree, except she had first looked on it heedlessly. With what control must we in this dying life restrain our sight, when the mother of the living came to death through the eyes! The mind of the prophet, which had been often lifted up to see hidden mysteries, seeing heedlessly another‘s wife, was darkened,” and fell. “To keep purity of heart, thou must guard the outward senses.” An enemy is easily kept out by the barred door or window, who, having entered in unawares, can only by strong effort and grace be forced out. “It is easier,” said the pagan philosopher, “to forbid the beginnings of feelings than to control their might.”

Like a thief - that is, they should come unawares, so as to take people by surprise, that there should be no guarding against them. As this is the close at this wonderful description, it may be that he would, in the end, describe the suddenness and inevitableness of God‘s judgments when they do come, and of the final judgment. It is remarkable that our Lord, and His Apostles from Him adopt this image of the prophet, in speaking of the coming of the Day of Judgment and His own. “Behold I come as a thief. This know that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched. Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Yourselves know perfectly that the Day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. Ye are not in darkness, that that Day should overtake you as a thief” (Revelation 16:15 (add Revelation 3:3.); Matthew 24:43-44; Luke 12:39; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10).

Verse 10

The earth shall quake before them - “Not,” says Jerome, “as though locusts or enemies had power to move the heavens or to shake the earth; but because, to those under trouble, for their exceeding terror, the heaven seems to fall and the earth to reel. But indeed, for the multitude of the locusts which cover the heavens, sun and moon shall be turned into darkness, and

the stars shall withdraw their shining, while the cloud of locusts interrupts the light, and allows it not to reach the earth." Yet the mention of moon and stars rather suggests that something more is meant than the locusts, who, not flying by night except when they cross the sea, do not obscure either. Rather, as the next verse speaks of God's immediate, sensible, presence, this verse seems to pass from the image of the locusts to the full reality, and to say that heaven and earth should shake at the judgments of God, before He appeareth. Our Lord gives the same description of the forerunners of the Day of Judgment; "there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring, people's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" Luke 21:25-26.

Verse 11

And the Lord shall utter His voice - The prophet had described at length the coming of God's judgments, as a mighty army. But lest amid the judgments, people should, (as they often do) forget the Judge, he represents God, as commanding this His army, gathering, ordering, marshalling, directing them, giving them the word, when and upon whom they should pour themselves. Their presence was a token of His. They should neither anticipate that command, nor linger. But as an army awaits the command to move, and then, the word being given, rolls on instantly, so God's judgments await the precise moment of His Will, and then fall. "The voice of the Lord" is elsewhere used for the thunder; because in it He seems to speak in majesty and terror to the guilty soul. But here the voice refers, not to us, but to the army, which He is imaged as marshalling; as Isaiah, referring perhaps to this place, says "The Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle" Isaiah 13:4.

God had spoken, and His people had not obeyed; now He speaks not to them anymore, but to their enemies. He calls the Medes and Persians, "My sanctified ones, My mighty ones" Isaiah 13:3, when they were to exercise His judgments on Babylon; and our Lord calls the Romans His armies. "He sent forth His armies and destroyed those murderers and burned up their city" Matthew 22:7. Then follow as threefold ground of terror. "For His camp is very great." All the instruments wherewith God punishes sin, are pictured as His one camp, each going, as He commands, "Who bringeth forth the host of heaven by number: He calleth them all by names, by the

greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth" Isaiah 40:26. For he is "strong, that executeth His word," or, "for" it (His camp) is "strong, executing His word." Weak though His instruments be in themselves, they are mighty when they do His commands, for He empowers them, as Paul saith, "I can do all things through Christ instrengthening me" Philemon 4:13. "For the Day of the Lord is great," great, on account of the great things done in it. As those are called evil days, "an evil time," in which evil comes; as it is called "an acceptable time;" in which we may be accepted; so the Day of God's judgment is "great and very terrible," on account of the great and terrible acts of His justice done in it. who can abide it? The answer is implied in the question. "No one, unless God enable him."

This is the close of the threatened woe. The close, so much beyond any passing scourge of any created destroyer, locusts or armies, suggests the more what has been said already, that the prophet is speaking of the whole aggregate of God's judgments unto the Day of Judgment.

: "The Lord saith, that He will send an Angel with the sound of a trumpet, and the Apostle declares that the resurrection of the dead shall take place amid the sound of a trumpet. In the Revelation of John too, we read that the seven Angels received seven trumpets, and as they sounded in order, that was done which Scripture describes. The priests and teachers accordingly are here bidden to lift up their voice like a trumpet in Zion, that is, the Church, that so all the inhabitants of the earth may be troubled or confounded, and this confusion may draw them to Salvation. "By the Day of the Lord," understand the Day of judgment, or the day when each departeth out of the body. For what will be to all in the Day of judgment, this is fulfilled in each in the day of death. It is a "day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness," because everything will be full of punishment and torment.

The great and strong people of the angels will come, to render to each according to his works; and as the rising morn first seizes the mountains, so judgment shall begin with the great and mighty, so that "mighty men shall be mightily tormented" (Wisd. 6:6). "There hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it." For all evils, contained in ancient histories and which have happened to people, by inundation of the sea, or

overflow of rivers, or by pestilence, disease, famines wild beasts, ravages of enemies, cannot be compared to the Day of judgment. "A fire devoureth, or consumeth before" this people, to consume in us "hay, wood, stubble." Whence it is said of God, "thy God is a consuming fire" Deuteronomy 4:24. And "after" him "a flame burneth," so as to leave nothing unpunished. whomsoever this people toucheth not, nor findeth in him what is to be burned, shall be likened to the garden of God, and the paradise of pleasure, i. e., of Eden. If it burn any, it will reduce this (as it were) wilderness to dust and ashes, nor can any escape its fury.

For they shall run to and fro to torture those over whom they shall receive power, like horsemen flying hither and thither. Their sound shall be terrible, as "chariots" hurrying along level places, and upon the tops of the mountains they shall leap," longing to torment all who are lofty and set on high in the Church. And since "before them there is a devouring fire," they will destroy everything, "as the fire devoureth the stubble." They shall come to punish, "as a strong people in battle array." Such will be the fear, of all, such the conscience of sinners, that none shall shine or have any brightness of joy, but his face shall be turned into darkness. They shall not turn aside, in fulfilling the office enjoined them, but each shall carry on the punishments on sinners entrusted to him. At the presence of that people, "the earth shall quake and the heavens tremble. For heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of the Lord shall endure forever." The sun and moon also shall not endure to see the punishments of the miserable, and shall remove and, for bright light, shall be shrouded in terrible darkness. "The stars also shall withdraw their shining," in that the holy also shall not without fear behold the presence of the Lord. Amid all this, "The Lord shall utter His voice" before His army. For as the Babylonians, in punishing Jerusalem, are called the army of God, so the evil angels (of whom it is written, "He cast upon them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them" Psalm 78:49) are called the army of God and His camp, in that they do the Will of God."

The Day of the Lord, is great and terrible - Of which it is written, elsewhere, "to what end do ye desire the Day of the Lord? it is darkness and not light and very terrible" (from Amos 5:18), and few or none can abide it, but will furnish some ground of severity against himself.

Verse 12

Therefore - (And) now also All this being so, one way of escape there is, true repentance. As if God said, "All this I have therefore spoken, in order to terrify you by My threats. Wherefore "turn unto Me with all your hearts," and show the penitence of your minds "by fasting and weeping and mourning," that, fasting now, ye may "be filled" hereafter "weeping now," ye may laugh hereafter; mourning now, ye may hereafter "be comforted" Luke 6:21; Matthew 5:4. And since it is your custom "to rend your garments" in sorrow, I command you to rend, not them but your hearts which are full of sin, which, like bladders, unless they be opened, will burst of themselves. And when ye have done this, return unto the Lord your God, whom your former sins aleinated from you; and despair not of pardon for the greatness of your guilt, for mighty mercy will blot out mighty sins."

: "The strict Judge cannot be overcome, for He is Omnipotent; cannot be deceived, for He is Wisdom; cannot be corrupted, for He is justice; cannot be sustained, for He is Eternal; cannot be avoided, for He is everywhere. Yet He can be entreated, because He is mercy; He can be appeased, because He is Goodness; He can cleanse, because He is the Fountain of grace; He can satisfy, because He is the Bread of life; He can soothe, because He is the Unction from above; He can beautify, because He is Fullness; He can beatify because He is Bliss. Turned from Him, then, and fearing His justice, turn ye to Him, and flee to His mercy. Flee from Himself to Himself, from the rigor of justice to the Bosom of mercy. The Lord who is to be feared saith it. He who is Truth enjoins what is just, profitable, good, "turn ye to Me," etc."

Turn ye - even "to Me," i. e., so as to return "quite to" (see the note at Hosea 14:2) God, not halting, not turning half way, not in some things only, but from all the lusts and pleasures to which they had turned from God.: "Turn quite to Me," He saith, "with all your heart," with your whole mind, whole soul, whole spirit, whole affections. For I am the Creator and Lord of the heart and mind, and therefore will, that that whole should be given, yea, given back, to Me, and endure not that any part of it be secretly stolen from Me to be given to idols, lusts or appetites." "It often happens with some people," says Gregory, "that they stoutly gird themselves up to encounter mine vices, but neglect to overcome others, and while they never rouse themselves up against these, they are re-establishing against themselves, even those which they had subdued."

Others, “in resolve, aim at right courses, but are ever doubling back to their wonted evil ones, and being, as it were, drawn out without themselves, they return back to themselves in a round, desiring good ways, but never forsaking evil ways.” In contrast to these half conversions, he bids us turn to God with our whole inmost soul, so that all our affections should be fixed on God, and all within us, by a strong union, cleave to Him, for “in whatever degree our affections are scattered among created things, so far is the conversion of the heart to God impaired.” “Look diligently,” says Bernard, “what thou lovest, what thou fearest, wherein thou rejoicest or art saddened, and under the rags of conversion thou wilt find a heart pervered. The whole heart is in these four affections; and of these I think we must understand that saying, “turn to” the Lord “with all thy heart.”

Let then thy love be converted to Him, so that thou love nothing whatever save Himself, or at least for Him. Let thy fear also be converted unto Him, for all fear is perverted, whereby thou fearest anything besides Him or not for Him. So too let thy joy and sorrow equally be converted unto Him. This will be, if thou only grieve or joy according to Him.”: “There is a conversion with the whole heart, and another with a part. The conversion with the whole heart God seeketh, for it suffices to salvation. That which is partial he rejecteth, for it is feigned and far from salvation. In the heart, there are three powers, reason, will, memory; reason, of things future; will, of things present; memory, of things past. For reason seeks things to come; the will loves things present; memory retains things past. Reason illumines; will loves; memory retains. When then the reason seeks that Highest Good and finds, the will receives and loves, the memory anxiously keeps and closely embraces, then the soul turns with the whole heart to God. But when the reason slumbers and neglects to seek heavenly things, or the will is tepid and cares not to love them, or the memory is torpid and is careless to retain them, then the soul acts false, falling first into the vice of ignorance, secondly into the guilt of negligence, thirdly into the sin of malice.

In each, the soul acts false; else ignorance would be expelled by the light of reason, and negligence be excluded by zeal of will, and malice be quenched by diligence of memory (of divine things). Reason then seeking begetteth knowledge; will embracing produceth love; memory holding fast,

edification. The first produceth the light of knowledge, the second, the love of righteousness; the third preserveth the treasure of grace. This is that conversion of heart, which God requireth; this is that, which sufficeth to salvation."

And with fasting - o"In their returning to Him, it is required in the first place, that it be with the heart in the inward man, yet so that the outward man is not left unconcerned, but hath his part also, in performance of such things whereby he may express, how the inward man is really affected; and so by the concurrence of both is true conversion made up. "With fasting," which shall make for the humbling of the heart, which pampering of the flesh is apt to puff up and make insensible of its own condition, and forgetful of God and His service, as Jeshurun who, being "waxed fat, kicked, and forsook the God which made him and lightly esteemed the God of his salvation Deuteronomy 32:15. To waiting then on God's service and prayer, it is usually joined in Scripture, as almost a necessary accompaniment, called for by God, and by holy men practiced."

And with weeping and with mourning - that is, by "beating" on the breast, (as the word originally denoted,) "as the publican smote upon his breast" Luke 18:13, and "all the people that came together to that sight" (of Jesus on the Cross), "beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts" Luke 23:48.: "These also, in themselves signs of grief, stir up in the heart more grief, and so have their effects on the person himself, for the increase of his repentance, as well as for shewing it." It also stirs up in others like passions, and provokes them also to repentance.": "These things, done purely and holily, are not conversion itself, but are excellent signs of conversion.": "We ought "to turn in fasting," whereby vices are repressed, and the mind is raised. We ought to "turn in weeping," out of longing for our home, out of displeasure at our faults, out of love to the sufferings of Christ, and for the manifold transgressions and errors of the world." "What avails it," says Gregory, "to confess iniquities, if the affliction of penitence follow not the confession of the lips? For three things are to be considered in every true penitent, conversion of the mind, confession of the mouth, and revenge for the sin. This third sort is as a necessary medicine, that so the imposthume of guilt, pricked by confession, be purified by conversion, and healed by the medicine of affliction. The sign of true conversion is not in the confession of the mouth, but in the affliction of penitence. For then do we see that a sinner is well converted, when by a worthy austerity of

affliction he strives to efface what in speech he confesses. Wherefore John Baptist, rebuking the ill-converted Jews who flock to him says, "O generation of vipers - bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance."

Verse 13

And rend your hearts and not your garments - that is, "not your garments only" (see the note at Hosea 6:6). The rending of the clothes was an expression of extraordinary uncontrollable emotion, chiefly of grief, of terror, or of horror. At least, in Holy Scripture it is not mentioned as a part of ordinary mourning, but only upon some sudden overpowering grief, whether public or private. It was not used on occasion of death, unless there were something very grievous about its circumstances. At times it was used as an outward expression, one of deep grief, as when the leper was commanded to keep his clothes rent Leviticus 13:45, or when David, to express his abhorrence at the murder of Abner, commanded "all the people with him, rend your clothes;" Ahab used it, with fasting and haircloth, on God's sentence by Elijah and obtained a mitigation of the temporal punishment of his sin; Jeremiah marvels that neither "the king," Jehoiakim, "nor any of his servants, rent their garments" Jeremiah 36:24, on reading the roll containing the woes which God had by him pronounced against Judah. The holy garments of the priests were on no occasion to be rent Leviticus 10:6; Leviticus 21:10; (probably because the wholeness was a symbol of perfection, from where care was to be taken that the ephod should not accidentally be torn Exodus 28:32; Exodus 39:23) so that the act of Caiaphas was the greater hypocrisy Matthew 26:65; Mark 14:63.

He used it probably to impress his own blasphemous accusation on the people, as for a good end, the Apostles Paul and Barnabas rent their Acts 14:14 clothes, when they heard that, after the cure of the impotent man, the priest of Jupiter with the people would have done sacrifice unto them. Since then apostles used this act, Joel plainly doth not forbid the use of such outward behavior, by which their repentance might be expressed, but only requires that it be done not in outward show only, but accompanied with the inward affections.: "The Jews are bidden then to rend their hearts rather than their garments, and to set the truth of repentance in what is inward, rather than in what is outward." But since the rending of the garments was the outward sign of very vehement grief, it was no commonplace superficial sorrow, which the prophet enjoined, but one which should pierce and rend

the inmost soul, and empty it of its sins and its love for sin.: Any very grieving thing is said to cut one‘s heart, to “cut him to the heart.”

A truly penitent heart is called a “broken and a contrite heart.” Such a penitent rends and “rips up by a narrow search the recesses of the heart, to discover the abominations thereof,” and pours out before God “the diseased and perilous stuff” pent up and festering there, “expels the evil thoughts lodged in it, and opens it in all things to the reception of divine grace. This rending is no other than the spiritual circumcision to which Moses exhorts. Whence of the Jews, not thus rent in heart, it is written in Jeremiah, ‹All the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart‘ Jeremiah 9:26. This rending then is the casting out of the sins and passions.”

And turn unto the Lord your God - God owns Himself as still their God, although they had turned and were gone from Him in sin and were alienated from Him. To Him, the true, Unchangeable God, if they returned, they would find Him still “their God.” “Return, ye backsliding children, I will heal your backsliding,” God saith by Jeremiah; “Behold, Israel answers, we come unto Thee, for Thou art the Lord our God” Jeremiah 3:22.

For He is very gracious and very merciful - Both these words are intensive. All the words, “very gracious, very merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness,” are the same and in the same order as in that revelation to Moses, when, on the renewal of the two tables of the law, “the Lord descended in the cloud and proclaimed the name of the Lord” Exodus 34:5-6). The words are frequently repeated, showing how deeply that revelation sunk in the pious minds of Israel. They are, in part, pleaded to God by Moses himself Numbers 14:18; David, at one time, pleaded them all to God Psalm 85:1-13:15; elsewhere he repeats them of God, as in this place Psalm 103:8; Psalm 145:8. Nehemiah, in praising God for His forgiving mercies, prefixes the title, “God of pardons” Nehemiah 9:17, and adds, “and Thou forsakedst them not;” as Joel, for the special object here, adds, “and repenteth Him of the evil.” A Psalmist, and Hezekiah in his message to Isaiah, and Nehemiah in the course of that same prayer, repeat the two words of intense mercy, “very gracious and very merciful” Psalm 111:4; 2 Chronicles 30:9; Nehemiah 9:31, which are used of God only, except once by that same Psalmist Psalm 112:4, with the express object of showing how

the good man conformeth himself to God. The word "very gracious" expresses God's free love, whereby He sheweth Himself good to us; "very merciful" expresses the tender yearning of His love over our miseries (see the note at Hosea 2:19); "great kindness," expresses God's tender love, as love.

He first says, that God is "slow to anger" or "long-suffering," enduring long the wickedness and rebellion of man, and waiting patiently for the conversion and repentance of sinners. Then he adds, that God is "abundant in kindness," having manifold resources and expedients of His tender love, whereby to win them to repentance. Lastly He is "repentant of the evil." The evil which lie foretells, and at last inflicts, is (so to speak) against His Will, "Who willeth not that any should perish," and, therefore, on the first tokens of repentance "He repenteth Him of the evil," and doeth it not.

The words rendered, "of great kindness," are better rendered elsewhere, "abundant, plenteous in goodness, mercy" Exodus 34:6; Psalm 86:15; Psalm 103:8. Although the mercy of God is in itself one and simple, yet it is called abundant on account of its divers effects. For God knoweth how in a thousand ways to succor His own. Whence the Psalmist prays, "According to the multitude of Thy mercies, turn Thou unto me" Psalm 25:7, Psalm 25:16. "According to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, do away mine offences" Psalm 51:1.

Verse 14

Who knoweth if He will return - God has promised forgiveness of sins and of eternal punishment to those who turn to Him with their whole heart. Of this, then, there could be no doubt. But He has not promised either to individuals or to Churches, that He will remit the temporal punishment which He had threatened. He forgave David the sin. Nathan says, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin." But he said at the same time, "the sword shall never depart from thy house 2 Samuel 12:13, 2 Samuel 12:10; and the temporal punishment of his sin pursued him, even on the bed of death. David thought that the temporal punishment of his sin, in the death of the child, might be remitted to him. He used the same form of words as Joel, "I said, who can tell whether God will be gracious unto me, that the child may live?" 2 Samuel 12:22. But the child died. The king of Nineveh used the

like words, “Who can tell if God will return and repent and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?” Jonah 3:9.

And he was heard. God retained or remitted the temporal punishment, as He saw good for each. This of the prophet Joel is of a mixed character. The “blessing” which they crave, he explains to be “the meat offering and the drink offering,” which had been “cut off or withholden” from the house of their God. For “if He gave them wherewith to serve Him,” after withdrawing it, it was clear that “He would accept of them and be pleased with their service.” Yet this does not imply that He would restore all to them. A Jewish writer notes that after the captivity, “the service of sacrifices alone returned to them,” but that “prophecy, (soon after), the ark, the Urim and Thummim, and the other things (the fire from heaven) were missing there.” As a pattern, however, to all times, God teaches them to ask first what belongs to His kingdom and His righteousness, and to leave the rest to Him. So long as the means of serving Him were left, there was hope of all. Where the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ (whereof “the meat offering and the drink offering” were symbols) remains, there are “the pledges of His love,” the earnest of all other blessing.

He says, “leave a blessing behind Him,” speaking of God as one estranged, who had been long absent and who returns, giving tokens of His forgiveness and renewed good-pleasure. God often visits the penitent soul and, by some sweetness with which the soul is bathed, leaves a token of His renewed presence. God is said to repent, not as though He varied in Himself, but because He deals variously with us, as we receive His inspirations and follow His drawings, or no.

Verse 15

Before, he had, in these same words Joel 2:1; Joel 1:14, called to repentance, because the Day of the Lord was coming, was near, “a day of darkness,” etc. Now, because God is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger and plenteous in goodness,” he agains exhorts, “Blow ye the trumpet;” only the call is more detailed, that every sex and age should form one band of suppliants to the mercy of God.: “Most full abolition of sins is then obtained, when one prayer and one confession issueth from the whole Church. For since the Lord promiseth to the pious agreement of two or three, that He will grant whatever is so asked, what shall be denied to a

people of many thousands, fulfilling together one observance, and supplicating in harmony through One Spirit?" "We come together," says Tertullian of Christian worship, "in a meeting and congregation as before God, as though we would in one body sue Him by our prayers. This violence is pleasing to God."

Verse 16

Sanctify the congregation - o"Do what in you lies, by monishing, exhorting, threatening, giving the example of a holy life, that the whole people present itself holy before its God", "lest your prayers be hindered, and a little leaven corrupt the whole lump."

Assemble the elders - o"The judgment concerned all; all then were to join in seeking mercy from God. None were on any pretence to be exempted; not the oldest, whose strength was decayed, or the youngest, who might seem not yet of strength." The old also are commonly freer from sin and more given to prayer.

Gather the children - o"He Who feedeth the young ravens when they cry, will not neglect the cry of poor children. He assigns as a reason, why it were fitting to spare Nineveh, the "six-score thousand persons that could not discern between their right hand and their left" Jonah 4:11. The sight of them who were involved in their parents' punishment could not but move the parents to greater earnestness. So when Moab and Ammon 2 Chronicles 20:1-4, 2 Chronicles 20:13, a great multitude, came against Jehoshaphat, he proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah, and Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord; even out of all the cities of Judah, they came to seek the Lord. And all Judah was standing before the Lord, their little ones also, their wives, and their children." So it is described in the book of Judith, how "with great vehemency did they humble their souls, both they and their wives and their children - and every man and woman and the little children - fell before the temple, and cast ashes upon their heads and spread out their sackcloth before the Face of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 24:5. But nothing was to free from this common affliction of sorrow. Even the just newly married, although it were the very day of the bridal, were to leave the marriage-chamber and join in the common austerity of repentance. It was mockery of God to spend in delights time consecrated by Him to sorrow. He says, "In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth. And behold joy and gladness - surely this iniquity shall not be

purged from you until ye die, saith the Lord God of Hosts" Isaiah 22:12-14. Whence, in times of fasting or prayer, the Apostle suggests the giving up of pure pleasures, "that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer" 1 Corinthians 7:5.

: "He then who, by chastisement in food and by fasting and alms, says that he is doing acts of repentance, in vain doth he promise this in words, unless he "go forth out of his chamber" and fulfill a holy and pure fast by a chaste penitence."

Verse 17

Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar - The porch in this, Solomon's temple, was in fact a tower, in front of the holy of holies, of the same breadth with the temple, namely, 20 cubits, and its depth half its breadth, namely, 10 cubits 1 Kings 6:3, and its height 120 cubits, the whole "overlaid within with pure gold" 2 Chronicles 3:4. The brass altar for burnt-offerings stood in front of it 2 Chronicles 8:12. The altar was of brass, twenty cubits square; and so, equal in breadth to the temple itself, and ten cubits high 2 Chronicles 4:1. The space then between the porch and the altar was enclosed on those two sides 2 Chronicles 7:7; it became an inner part of the court of the priests. Through it the priests or the high priest passed, whenever they went to sprinkle the blood, typifying the atonement, before the veil of the tabernacle, or for any other office of the tabernacle. It seems to have been a place of prayer for the priests. It is spoken of as an aggravation of the sins of those 25 idolatrous priests, that here, where they ought to worship God, they turned their backs toward the Temple of the Lord, to worship the sun Ezekiel 8:16. Here, in the exercise of his office, Zechariah was standing 2 Chronicles 24:20-21; Matthew 23:35, when the Spirit of God came upon him and he rebuked the people and they stoned him. Here the priests, with their faces toward the holy of holies and the temple which He had filled with His Glory, were to weep. Tears are a gift of God. In holier times, so did the priests weep at the holy eucharist in thought of the Passion and Precious Death of our Lord Jesus, which we then plead to God, that they bore with them, as part of their dress, linen wherewith to dry their tears.

And let them say - A form of prayer is provided for them. From this the words, "spare us good Lord, spare thy people," enter into the litanies of the Christian Church.

And give not thine heritage to reproach - The enmity of the pagan against the Jews was an enmity against God. God had avouched them as His people and His property. Their land was an heritage from God. God, in that He had separated them from the pagan, and revealed Himself to them, had made them His special heritage. Moses Exodus 32:12; Numbers 14:13-16; Deuteronomy 9:28, Deuteronomy 9:9, then Joshua Joshua 7:9, the Psalmists Psalm 79:1-13; 115, plead with God, that His own power or will to save His people would be called in question, if he should destroy them, or give them up. God, on the other hand, tells them, that not for any deserts of theirs, but for His own Name‘s sake, He delivered them, lest the Pagan should be the more confirmed in their errors as to Himself Ezekiel 20:5; Ezekiel 36:21-23. It is part of true penitence to plead to God to pardon us, not for anything in ourselves, (for we have nothing of our own but our sins) but because we are the work of His hands, created in His image, the prince of the Blood of Jesus, called by His Name.

That the pagan should rule over them - This, and not the rendering in the margin, use a byword against them, is the uniform meaning of the Hebrew phrase. It is not to be supposed that the prophet Joel would use it in a sense contrary to the uniform usage of all the writers before him. Nor is there any instance of any other usage of the idiom in any later writer. “The enigma which was closed,” says Jerome, “is now opened. For who that people is, manifold and strong, described above under the name of the “palmerworm, the locust, the canker-worm” and “the catterpillar,” is now explained more clearly, “lest the pagan rule over them.” For the heritage of the Lord is given to reproach, when they serve their enemies, and the nations say, “Where is their God,” whom they boasted to be their Sovereign and their Protector?” Such is the reproach ever made against God‘s people, when He does not visibly protect them, which the Psalmist says was as a sword in his bones (Psalm 42:3, Psalm 42:10; add Psalm 79:10; Psalm 115:2: Micah 7:16); his tears were his meat day and night while they said it. The Chief priests and scribes and elders fulfilled a prophecy by venturing so to blaspheme our Lord, “He trusted in God; let Him, deliver Him now, if He will have Him” (Matthew 27:43, from Psalm 22:8).

Verse 18

Then will the Lord be jealous for His land - Upon repentance, all is changed. Before, God seemed set upon their destruction. It was His great army which was ready to destroy them; He was at its head, giving the word.

Now He is full of tender love for them, which resents injury done to them, as done to Himself. The word might more strictly perhaps be rendered, "And the Lord is jealous". He would show how instantaneous the mercy and love of God for His people is, restrained while they are impenitent, flowing forth upon the first tokens of repentance. The word, "jealous for," when used of God, jealous for My holy Name Ezekiel 39:25, jealous for Jerusalem, Zechariah 1:14; Zechariah 8:2, is used, when God resents evil which had been actually inflicted.

Verse 19

I will send you corn … - This is the beginning of the reversal of the threatened judgments. It is clear from this, and still more from what follows, that the chastisements actually came, so that the repentance described, was the consequence, not of the exhortations to repentance, but of the chastisement. What was removed was the chastisement which had burst upon them, not when it was ready to burst. What was given, was what before had been taken away. So it ever was with the Jews; so it is mostly with the portions of the Christian Church or with individuals now. Seldom do they take warning of coming woe; when it has begun to burst, or has burst, then they repent and God gives them back upon repentance what He had withdrawn or a portion of it. So the prophet seems here to exhibit to us a law and a course of God's judgments and mercies upon man's sin. He takes away both temporal and spiritual blessings symbolized here by the grain and wine and oil; upon repentance He restores them.: "Over and against the wasting of the land, he sets its richness; against hunger, fullness; against reproach, unperiled glory; against the cruelty and incursion of enemies, their destruction and putrefaction; against barrenness of fruits and aridity of trees, their fresh shoots and richness; against the hunger of the word and thirst for doctrine, he brings in the fountain of life, and the Teacher of righteousness; against sadness, joy; against confusion, solace; against reproaches, glory; against death, life; against ashes, a crown."

O fruitful and manly penitence! O noble maiden, most faithful intercessor for sins! A plank after shipwreck! Refuge of the poor, help of the miserable, hope of exiles, cherisher of the weak, light of the blind, solace of the fatherless, scourge of the petulant, axe of vices, garner of virtues. Thou who alone bindest the Judge, pleadest with the Creator, conquerest the Almighty. While overcome, thou overcomest; while tortured, thou torturest; while wounding, thou healest; while healthfully succumbing, thou

triumphest gloriously. Thou alone, while others keep silence, mountest boldly the throne of grace. David thou leadest by the hand and reconcilest; Peter thou restorest; Paul thou enlightenest; the Publican, taken from the receipt of custom, thou boldly insertest in the choir of the Apostles; Mary, from a harlot, thou bearest aloft and joinest to Christ; the robber nailed to the cross, yet fresh from blood, thou introducest into Paradise. What more? At thy disposal is the court of heaven."

And I will no more make you a reproach - All the promises of God are conditional. They presuppose man's faithfulness. God's pardon is complete. He will not, He says, for these offences, or for any like offences, give them over to the pagan. So after the captivity He no more made them a reproach unto the pagan, until they finally apostatized, and leaving their Redeemer, owned no king but Caesar. They first gave themselves up; they chose Caesar rather than Christ, and to be servants of Caesar, rather than that He should not be crucified; and so God left them in his hands, whom they had chosen.

Verse 20

And I will remove far off from you the northern army - God speaks of the human agent under the figure of the locusts, which perish in the sea; yet so as to show at once, that He did not intend the locust itself, nor to describe the mode in which He should overthrow the human oppressor. He is not speaking of the locust itself, for the Northern is no name for the locust which infested Palestine, since it came from the south; nor would the destruction of the locust be in two opposite seas, since they are uniformly driven by the wind into the sea, upon whose waves they alight and perish, but the wind would not carry them into two opposite seas; nor would the locust perish in a "barren and desolate" land, but would fly further; nor would it be said of the locust that he was destroyed, Because he had done great things. But He represents to us, how this enemy should be driven quite out of the bounds of His people, so that he should not vex them more, but perish.

The imagery is from the holy land. The "East sea" is the Dead Sea, once the fertile "vale of Siddim" Genesis 14:3,, "in which sea were formerly Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, until God overthrew them." This, in the Pentateuch, is called "the salt sea" Genesis 14:3; Numbers 34:3, Numbers 34:12, or "the sea of the plain," or "desert" (Deuteronomy 3:17; Deuteronomy 4:49; Joshua 3:16; Joshua 12:3; Joshua 15:25; Joshua 18:19;

also in 2 Kings 14:25), explained in Deuteronomy and Joshua to be "the salt sea" Ezekiel 47:18, and in Numbers it is said of it, "your south border shall be the salt sea eastward" Numbers 34:3. The utmost, or rather, the "hinder sea" Deuteronomy 11:24; Deuteronomy 34:2 (i. e., that which is behind one who is looking toward the east whose Hebrew name is from "fronting" you) is the Mediterranean, "on whose shores are Gaza and Ascalon, Azotus and Joppa and Caesarea." The "land barren and desolate," lying between, is the desert of Arabia, the southern boundary of the holy land.

The picture then seems to be, that the "Northern" foes filled the whole of Judaea, in numbers like the locust, and that God drove them violently forth, all along the bounds of the holy land, into the desert, the Dead Sea, the Mediterranean. Jerome relates a mercy of God in his own time which illustrates the image; but he writes so much in the language of Holy Scripture, that perhaps he only means that the locusts were driven into the sea, not into both seas. "In our times too we have seen hosts of locusts cover Judaea, which afterward, by the mercy of the Lord, when the priests and people, ‹between the porch and the altar,' i. e., between the place of the Cross and the Resurrection prayed the Lord and said, ‹spare Thy people,' a wind arising, were carried headlong ‹into the Eastern sea, and the utmost sea.'" Alvarez relates how, priests and people joining in litanies to God, He delivered them from an exceeding plague of locusts, which covered 24English miles, as He delivered Egypt of old at the prayer of Moses. "When we knew of this plague being so near, most of the clerks of the place came to me, that I should tell them some remedy against it. I answered them, that I knew of no remedy except to commend themselves to God and to pray Him to drive the plague out of the land. I went to the Embassador and told him that to me it seemed good that we should make a procession with the people of the land and that it might please our Lord God to hear us; it seemed good to the Embassador; and, in the morning of the next day, we collected the people of the place and all the Clergy; and we took our altar-stone, and those of the place theirs, and our Cross and theirs, singing our litany, we went forth from the Church, all the Portuguese and the greater part of the people of the place. I said to them that they should not keep silence, but should, as we, cry aloud saying in their tongue Zio marinos, i. e., in our's, Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.

And with this cry and litany, we went through an open wheat-country for the space of one third of a league. It pleased our Lord to hear the sinners, and while we were turning to the place, because their (the locusts‘) road was toward the sea whence they had come, there were so many after us, that it seemed no otherwise than that they sought to break our ribs and heads with blows of stones, such were the blows they dealt us. At this time a great thunderstorm arose from toward the sea, which came in their face with rain and hail, which lasted three good hours; the river and brooks filled greatly; and when they had ceased to drive, it was matter of amazement, that the dead locusts on the bank of the great river measured two cubits high; and so for the rivulets, there was a great multitude of dead on their banks. On the next day in the morning there was not in the whole land even one live locust.”

And his stink shall come up - The image is still from the locust. It, being such a fearful scourge of God, every individual full of activity and life repeated countlessly in the innumerable host, is, at God‘s will and in His time, cast by His word into the sea, and when thrown up by the waves on the shore, becomes in a few hours one undistinguishable, putrefying, heaving mass. Such does human malice and ambition and pride become, as soon as God casts aside the sinful instrument of His chastisement. Just now, a world to conquer could not satisfy it; superior to man, independent, it deems, of God. He takes away its breath, it is a putrid carcass. Such was Sennacherib‘s army; in the evening inspiring terror; “before the morning, he is not” Isaiah 17:14. “They were all dead corpses.” Isaiah 37:36.

The likeness stops here. For the punishment is at an end. The wicked and the persecutors of God‘s people are cut off; the severance has taken place. On the one side, there is the putrefying mass; on the other, the jubilee of thanksgiving. The gulf is fixed between them. The offensive smell of the corruption ascends; as Isaiah closes his prophecy, “the carcases” of the wicked, the perpetual prey of the “worm and the fire, shall be an abhorring to all flesh.” The righteous behold it, but it reaches them not, to hurt them. In actual life, the putrid exhalations at times have, among those on the sea-shore, produced a pestilence, a second visitation of God, more destructive than the first. This, however, has been but seldom. Yet what must have been the mass of decay of creatures so slight, which could produce a wide-wasting pestilence! What an image of the numbers of those who perish, and of the fetidness of sin! Augustine, in answer to the pagan who imputed all

the calamities of the later Roman Empire to the displeasure of the gods, because the world had become Christian, says, “They themselves have recorded that the multitude of locusts was, even in Africa, a sort of prodigy, while it was a Roman province. They say that, after the locusts had consumed the fruits and leaves of trees, they were cast into the sea, in a vast incalculable cloud, which having died and being cast back on the shores, and the air being infected thereby, such a pestilence arose, that in the realm of Masinissa alone 800,000 men perished, and manymore in the lands on the coasts. Then at Utica, out of 30,000 men in the prime of life who were there, they assert that 10 only remained.”

Jerome says of the locusts of Palestine; “when the shores of both seas were filled with heaps of dead locusts which the waters had cast up, their stench and putrefaction was so noxious as to corrupt the air, so that a pestilence was produced among both beasts and men.” Modern writers say, “The locusts not only produce a famine, but in districts near the sea where they had been drowned, they have occasioned a pestilence from the putrid effluvia of the immense numbers blown upon the coast or thrown up by the tides.”: “We observed, in May and June, a number of these insects coming from the south directing their course to the northern shore; they darken the sky like a thick cloud, but scarcely have they quitted the shore before they who, a moment before, ravaged and ruined the country, cover the surface of the sea with their dead bodies, to the great distress of the Franks near the harbor, on account of the stench from such a number of dead insects, driven by the winds close to the very houses.”: “All the full-grown insects were driven into the sea by a tempestuous northwest wind, and were afterward cast upon the beach, where, it is said, they formed a bank of 3 or 4 feet high, extending - a distance of near 50 English miles. It is asserted that when this mass became putrid and the wind was southeast the stench was sensibly felt in several parts of Sneuwberg. The column passed the houses of two of our party, who asserted that it continued without any interruption for more than a month.”: “The south and east winds drive the clouds of locusts with violence into the Mediterranean, and drown them in such quantities that when their dead are cast on the shore, they infect the air to a great distance.” Wonderful image of the instantaneous, ease, completeness, of the destruction of God‘s enemies; a mass of active life exchanged, in a moment, into a mass of death.

Because he hath done great things - Literally, (as in the English margin) ""because he hath magnified to do," i. e., as used of man, "hath done proudly." To do greatly Joel 2:21; Psalm 126:2-3; 1 Samuel 12:24, or to magnify Himself, Ezekiel 38:23, when used of God, is to display His essential greatness, in goodness to His people, or in vengeance on their enemies. Man's great deeds are mostly deeds of great ambition, great violence, great pride, great iniquity; and so of him, the words "he magnified himself, Isaiah 10:15; Daniel 11:36-37, he did greatly" Lamentations 1:9; Zephaniah 2:8; Daniel 8:4, Daniel 8:8, Daniel 8:11, Daniel 8:25, mean, he did ambitiously, proudly, and so offended God. In like way "great doings," when used of God, are His great works of good; of man, his great works of evil.: "Man has great deserts, but evil." "To speak great things" Psalm 12:3; Daniel 7:8, Daniel 7:11, Daniel 7:20, is to speak proud things: "greatness of heart" Isaiah 9:9; Isaiah 10:12 is pride of heart. He is speaking then of man who was God's instrument in chastening His people; since of irrational, irresponsible creatures, a term which involves moral fault, would not have been used, nor would a moral fault have been set down as the ground why God destroyed them. The destruction of Sennacherib or Holofernes have been assigned as the fulfillment of this prophecy. They were part of its fulfillment, and of the great law of God which it declares, that instruments, which He employs, and who exceed or accomplish for their own ends, the office which He assigns them, He casts away and destroys.

Verse 21

Fear not, O land - Before, they were bidden to tremble Joel 2:1, now they are bidden, "fear not;" before, "to turn in weeping, fasting and mourning;" now, "to bound for joy and rejoice;" before, "the land mourned;" now, "the land is bidden to rejoice." The enemy had "done great things;" now the cause of joy is that God had "done great things;" the Almightiness of God overwhelming and sweeping over the might put forth to destroy. It is better rendered, "the Lord hath done great things." If Joel includes herein God's great doings yet to come, he speaks of them as, in the purpose of God, already in being; or he may, in this verse, presuppose that this new order of God's mercies has begun, in the destruction of the Pagan foe.

Verse 22

The reversal of the whole former sentence is continued up to man. The beasts of the field "groaned, were perplexed, cried" unto God; now they are

bidden, "be not afraid;" before, "the pastures of the wilderness were devoured by fire;" now, they "spring" with fresh tender life; before, "the fig tree" was "withered, the vine languished;" now, they should "yield their strength, put out their full" vigor. For God was reconciled to His people; and all things served them, serving Him.

Verse 23

Be glad then and rejoice in the Lord your God - All things had been restored for their sakes; they were to rejoice, not chiefly in these things, but in God; nor only in God, but in the Lord their God. "For He hath given you the former rain moderately." The word rendered "moderately" should be rendered "unto righteosness;" the word often as it occurs never having any sense but that of "righteousness;" whether of God or man. The other word מורה *môwreh* rendered "the former rain," confessedly has that meaning in the latter part of the verse, although "yoreh" יורה *yôwreh* is the distinctive term for "latter rain" Deuteronomy 11:14; Jeremiah 5:24. "Moreh" mostly signifies "a teacher" (2 Kings 17:28; Job 36:22; Proverbs 5:13; Isaiah 9:15; Isaiah 30:20, (twice); Habakkuk 2:18), which is connected with the other ordinary meanings of the root, "torah, law, etc." The older translators then agreed in rendering, "of righteousness," or, "unto righteousness", in which case the question as to "moreh," is only, whether it is to be taken literally of "a teacher," or figuratively of spiritual blessings, as we say, "the dew of His grace." Even a Jew paraphrases, "But ye, O children of Zion, above all other nations, be glad and rejoice in the Lord your God. For in Him ye shall have perfect joy, in the time of your captivity. "For He will give you an instructor to righteosness;" and He is the king Messias, which shall teach them the way in which they shall walk, and the doings which they shall do." The grounds for so rendering the word are:

(1) Such is almost its uniform meaning.

(2) The righteousness spoken of is most naturally understood of righteousness in man; it is a condition which is the result and object of God's gifts, not the Righteousness of God. But "He hath given you the early rain unto righteousness," i. e., that ye may be righteous, is an unaccustomed expression.

(3) There is a great emphasis on the word, which is not used in the later part of the verse, where rain, (whether actual, or symbolic of spiritual

blessings) is spoken of.

(4) The following words, “and He maketh the rain to descend for you,” according to the established Hebrew idiom relates to a separate action, later, in order of time or of thought, than the former. But if the former word “moreh” signified “early rain,” both would mean one and the same thing. We should not say, “He giveth you the former rain to righteousness, and then He maketh the rain, the former rain and the latter rain to descend;” nor doth the Hebrew.

It seems then most probable, that the prophet prefixes to all the other promises, that first all-containing promise of the Coming of Christ. Such is the custom of the prophets, to go on from past judgments and deliverances, to Him who is the center of all this cycle of God‘s dispensations, the Son manifest in the Flesh. He had been promised as a Teacher when that intermediate dispensation of Israel began, the prophet like unto Moses. His Coming old Jacob looked to, “I have longed for Thy salvation, O Lord.” Him, well known and longed for by the righteous of old, Joel speaks of as the subject of rejoicing, as Zechariah did afterward, “Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion; behold thy King cometh unto thee.” So Joel here, “Exult and joy in the Lord thy God, for He giveth,” or “will give thee, the Teacher unto righteousness,” i. e., the result and object of whose Coming is righteousness; or, as Daniel says, “to bring in everlasting righteousness;” and Isaiah, “By His knowledge,” i. e., by the knowledge of Him, “shall My righteous Servant justify many,” i. e., make many righteous. How His coming should issue in righteousness, is not here said. It is presupposed. But Joel speaks of His Coming, as a gift, “He shall give you;” as Isaiah says, “unto us a Son is given;” and that, as the Teacher, as Isaiah says, “I have given Him a witness to the peoples, a Prince and a Commander unto the people” Isaiah 55:4; and that, “for righteousness.”

“It is the custom of the holy prophets,” says Cyril, “on occasion of good things promised to a part or a few, to introduce what is more general or universal. And these are the things of Christ. To this then the discourse again proceeds. For when was ground given to the earth to rejoice? When did the Lord do mighty things, but when the Word, being God, became Man, that, flooding all below with the goods from above, He might be

found to those who believe in Him, as a river of peace, a torrent of pleasure, as the former and latter rain, and the giver of all spiritual fruitfulness?"

The early rain and the latter rain - o"He multiplies words, expresssive of the richness of the fruits of the earth, that so we may understand how wondrous is the plenteousness of spiritual goods." Being about to speak of the large gift of God the Holy Spirit as an "out-pouring," he says here that "the largeness of the spiritual gifts thereafter should be as abundant as the riches temporal blessings" hitherto, when God disposed all things to bring about the fruitfulness which He had promised. "The early and latter rain," coming respectively at the seed-time and the harvest, represent the beginning and the completion; and so, by the analogy of earthly and spiritual sowing, growth and ripeness, they represent preventing and perfecting grace; the inspiration of good purposes and the gift of final perseverance, which brings the just to glory consummated; "the principles of the doctrine of Christ" and "the going on unto perfection Hebrews 6:1.

In the first month - This would belong only to the latter rain, which falls about the first month, Nisan, or our April, "the former rain" falling about 6 months earlier, at their seed time. Or, since this meaning is uncertain, it may be, "at the first", i. e., as soon as ever it is needed, or in contrast to the more extensive gifts afterward; or, "as at first" i. e., all shall, upon their penitence, be restored as at first. These lesser variations leave the sense of the whole the same, and all are supported by good authorities. It is still a reversal of the former sentence, that, whereas afore the rivers of water were dried up, now the rains should come, each in its season. "In the first month," and "at the beginning," express the same thought, the one with, the other without a figure.

For no one then needed to be told that the latter rain, if it fell, should fall "in the first month," which was its appointed season for falling. If then the words had this meaning, there must have been this emphasis in it, that God would give them good gifts punctually, instantly, at man's first and earliest needs, at the first moment when it would be good for him to have them. ‹As at the beginning,' would express the same which he goes on to say, that God would bestow the same largeness of gifts as He did, before they forfeited His blessings by forsaking Him. So He says, "I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning"; and, "She shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she come up out of the land of Egypt" Hosea 2:15; and, "then shall the offering of

Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old and as in the former years" Malachi 3:4.

Likeness does not necessarily imply equality as in the words, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet like unto me" Deuteronomy 18:15; and, "that they may be one, even as We are One" John 17:22. The good things of the Old Testament had a likeness to those of the New, else "the law" would not have been even the shadow of good things to come Hebrews 10:1; they had not equality, else they would have been the very things themselves.: "Christ is the whole delight of the soul, from When and through whom there cometh to those who love Him, all fullness of good and supply of heavenly gifts, represented in "the early and latter rain," and "the full floor of wheat," and "the fats overflowing with wine and oil." It is true also as to the fullness of the mysteries. For the living water of Holy Baptism is given us as in rain; and as in grain, the Bread of Life, and as in wine the Blood." Before, "the barns were broken down," since there was nothing to store therein.

As other parts of the natural and spiritual husbandry correspond, and our Lord Himself compares His gracious trials of those who bear fruit, with the pruning of the vine John 15:2; it may be that the "vat" wherein the grape or the olive, through pressure, yield their rich juice, is a symbol of the "tribulations," through which we "must enter the kingdom of God" Acts 14:22.: "The holy mind, placed as if in a winefat, is pressed, refined, drawn out pure. It is pressed by calamity; refined from iniquity, purified from vanity. Hence are elicited the groans of pure confession; hence, stream the tears of anxious compunction; hence flow the sighs of pleasurable devotion; hence melt the longings of sweetest love; hence are drawn the drops of purest contemplation. Wheat is the perfecting of righteousness; wine, the clearness of spiritual understanding; oil, the sweetness of a most pure conscience."

Verse 25

And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten - The order in which these destroyers are named not being the same as before, it is plain that the stress is not on the order, but on the successiveness of the inroads, scourge after scourge. It is plain too that they did not come in the

same year, or two years, but year after year, for he says, not "year," but in the plural, "years." The locusts, although not the whole plague, intended, are not excluded.: "As the power of God was shewn in the plagues of Egypt by small animals, such as the cyniphes, gnats so small as scarce to be seen, so also now," in creatures so small "is shown the power of God and weakness of man. If a creature so small is stronger than man, "why are earth and ashes proud?" The locusts, small as they are, are in God's hands "a great army," (and from this place probably, Muhammed taught his followers so to call them) and mighty empires are but "the forces of God and messengers of His Providence for the punishing of" His people "by them," "the rod of His Anger;" and when they have done their commission and are cast away by Him, they are as the vilest worms.

: "Since then after repentance God promises such richness, what will Novatus say, who denies repentance or that sinners can be reformed into their former state, if they but do works meet for repentance? For God in such wise receives penitents, as to call them His people, and to say, that they "shall never be confounded," and to promise, that He will dwell in the midst of them, and that they shall have no other God, but shall, with their whole mind, trust in Him who abides in them forever."

Through repentance all which had been lost by sin, is restored. In itself deadly sin is an irreparable evil. It deprives the soul of grace, of its hope of glory; it forfeits heaven, it merits hell. God, through Christ, restores the sinner, blots out sin, and does away with its eternal consequences. He replaces the sinner where he was before he fell. So God says by Ezekiel; "If the wicked will turn from all the sins which he hath committed and keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die; all his transgressions that he hath committed shall not be mentioned unto him" Ezekiel 18:21-22; and, "as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness" Ezekiel 33:12. God forgives that wickedness, as though it had never been. If it had never been, man would have all the grace, which he had before his fall.

So then also, after he has been forgiven, none of his former grace, no store of future glory, will be taken from him. The time which the sinner lost, in which he might have gained increase of grace and glory, is lost forever.

But all which he had gained before, returns. All his lost love returns through penitence; all his past attainments, which were before accepted by God, are accepted still for the same glory. “Former works which were deadened by sins following, revive through repentance”. The penitent begins anew God‘s service, but he is not at the beginning of that service, nor of his preparation for life eternal. If the grace which he had before, and the glory corresponding to that grace, and to his former attainments through that grace, were lost to him, then, although eternally blessed, he would be punished eternally for forgiven sin, which, God has promised, should “not be remembered.”

God has also promised to reward all which is “done in the body 2 Corinthians 5:10. What is evil, is effaced by the Blood of Jesus. What, through His Grace, was good, and done for love of Himself, He rewards, whether it was before anyone fell, or after his restoration. Else He would not, as He says He will, reward all. And who would not believe, that, after David‘s great fall and great repentance, God still rewarded all that great early simple faith and patience, which He gave him? Whence writers of old say, “It is pious to believe that the recovered grace of God which destroys a man‘s former evils, also reintegrates his good, and that God, when He hath destroyed in a man what is not His, loves the good which He implanted even in the sinner.”: “God is pleased alike with the virtue of the just, and the meet repentance of sinners, which restored to their former estate David and Peter.” “Penitence is an excellent thing which recalleth to perfection every defect.”: “God letteth His sun arise on sinners, nor doth He less than before, give them, most large gifts of life and salvation.”

Whence, since the cankerworm, etc. are images of spiritual enemies, this place has been paraphrased; “I will not allow the richness of spiritual things to perish which ye lost through the passions of the mind.” Nay, since none can recover without the grace of God and using that grace, the penitent, who really rises again by the grace of God, rises with larger grace than before, since he has both the former grace, and; in addition, this new grace, whereby he rises.

Verse 26

And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied - It is of the punishment of God, when people eat and are not satisfied (see Hosea 4:10); it is man‘s sin, that they are satisfied, and do not to praise God, but the more forget Him Hosea 13:6. And so God‘s blessings become a curse to him. God promises to restore His gifts, and to give grace withal, that they should own and thank Him.

Who hath dealt wondrously with you - "First, wonderfully He afflicted and chastened them, and then gave them wonderful abundance of all things, and very great and miraculous consolation after vehement tribulution, so that they might truly say, This is the change of the Right Hand of the Most High."

And My people shall never be ashamed - o"So that they persevere in His service. Although he incur temporal confusion, yet this shall not last for ever, but the people of the predestinate, penitent, and patient in adversity, will be saved forever."

Verse 27

And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel - God had foretold their rebellion His forsaking them, "the troubles" which should "find" them, and that they should say, "Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?" Deuteronomy 31:17. It had been the mockery of the Pagan in their distress, "Where is their God?" Joel 2:17. "Now, by the fulfillment of His promises and by all God‘s benefits, they should know that He was among them by special grace as His own peculiar people." Still more was this to be fulfilled to Christians, in whose heart He dwells by love and grace, and of whom He says, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there will I be in the midst of them." In the highest sense, "God was in the midst of them," in that "God the Son, equal to God the Father as touching His Godhead, did, in the truth of human nature, take our flesh. This to see and know, is glory and bliss ineffable. Therefore He repeats, and by repeating, confirms, what he had said, "And My people shall never be ashamed." Yea, glorious, magnified, honored, shall be the people, to whom such a Son was promised, and of whom He was born. Glorious to them is that which the Apostle saith, that "He took not on Him the nature of Angels, but He took the seed of Abraham," and this glory shall be eternal."

Verse 28

And it shall come to pass afterward - After the punishment of the Jews through the Pagan, and their deliverance; after the Coming of the Teacher of righteousness, was to follow the outpouring of the Spirit of God.

I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh - o"This which He says, "on all flesh," admits of no exception of nations or persons. For before Jesus was glorified, He had poured His Spirit only on the sons of Zion, and out of that nation only were there prophets and wise men. But after He was glorified by His Resurrection and Ascension, He made no difference of Jews and Gentiles, but willed that remission of sins should be preached to all alike."

All flesh - is the name of all mankind. So in the time of the flood, it is said "all flesh had corrupted his way: the end of all flesh is come before Me." Moses asks, "who of all flesh hath heard the voice of the Lord God, as we have, and lived?" So in Job; "in whose Hand is the breath of all flesh of man." If He set His heart upon man, if He gather to Himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh shall perish together. And David; "Thou that hearest prayer, to Thee shall all flesh come; let all flesh bless His Holy Name forever and ever" Genesis 6:12-13; Deuteronomy 5:26; Job 12:10; Job 34:14-15; Psalm 65:2; Psalm 145:21. In like way speak Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah Isaiah 40:5-6; Isaiah 49:26; Isaiah 66:16, Isaiah 66:23-24; Jeremiah 25:31; Jeremiah 32:27; Jeremiah 45:5; Ezekiel 20:48; Ezekiel 21:4-5; Zechariah 2:13. The words "all flesh" are in the Pentateuch, and in one place in Daniel, used, in a yet wider sense, of everything which has life (Genesis 6:17, Genesis 6:19; Genesis 7:15-16, Genesis 7:21; Genesis 8:17; Genesis 9:11, Genesis 9:15-17; Leviticus 17:14; Numbers 18:15; Daniel 4:12; probably Psalm 136:25); but, in no one case, in any narrower sense.

It does not include every individual in the race, but it includes the whole race, and individuals throughout it, in every nation, sex, condition, "Jew or Gentile, Greek or Barbarian," i. e., educated or uneducated, rich or poor, bond or free, male or female. As "all" were to be "one in Christ Jesus" Galatians 3:28, so on all was to be poured the Holy Spirit, the Bond who was to bind all in one. He names our nature from that which is the lowest in it, "the flesh," with the same condescension with which it is said, "The Word was made flesh", from where we speak of the "Incarnation" of our Blessed Lord, i. e., "His taking on Him our Flesh." He humbled Himself to take our flesh; He came, as our Physician, to heal our flesh, the seat of our concupisceuce. So also God the Holy Spirit vouchsafes to dwell in our flesh, to sanctify it and to heal it. He, whom God saith He will pour out on

all flesh, is the Spirit of God, and God. He does not say that He will pour out graces, or gifts, ordinary or extraordinary, influences, communications, or the like.

He says, "I will pour out My Spirit;" as Paul says, "know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Corinthians 3:16. "Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" Romans 8:9-10. It is said indeed, "on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit," but the gift of the Holy Spirit was the Holy Spirit Himself, as it had been just said, "the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word" Acts 10:44-45. It is said, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given us" Romans 5:5; but the "Holy Spirit" is first "given," and He poureth out into the soul "the love of God." As God the Word, when He took human nature, came into it personally, so that "the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily in it" Colossians 2:9; so, really, although not personally, "doth the Holy Spirit, and so the whole Trinity, enter into our mind by sanctification, and dwelleth in it as in His throne."

No created being, no Angel, nor Archangel could dwell in the soul.: "God Alone can be poured out into the soul, so as to possess it, enlighten it, teach, kindle, bend, move it as He wills," sanctify, satiate, fill it. And "as God is really present with the blessed, when He sheweth to them His Essence by the beatific vision and light of glory, and communicates it to them, to enjoy and possess; so He, the Same, is also in the holy soul, and thus diffuseth it in His grace, love, and other divine gifts." At the moment of justification, "the Holy Spirit and so the whole Holy Trinity entereth the soul at His temple, sanctifying and as it were dedicating and consecrating it to Himself, and at the same moment of time, although in the order of nature subsequently, He communicates to it His love and grace. Such is the meaning of, "We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." This is the highest union of God with the holy soul; and greater than this can none be given to any creature, for by it we become "partakers of the divine Nature," as Peter saith 2 Peter 1:4. See here, O Christian, the dignity of the holiness whereunto thou art called and with all zeal follow after, preserve, enlarge it.

This His Spirit, God says, "I will pour," i. e., give largely, as though He would empty out Him who is Infinite, so that there should be no measure of His giving, save our capacity of receiving. So He says of converted Israel, "I have poured out My Spirit upon the house of Israel" Ezekiel 39:29, and, "I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication" Zechariah 12:10.

And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy - This cannot limit what he has said, that God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. He gives instances of that out-pouring, in those miraculous gifts, which were at the first to be the tokens and evidence of His inward presence. These gifts were at the first bestowed on the Jews only. The highest were reserved altogether for them. Jews only were employed as Apostles and Evangelists; Jews only wrote, by inspiration of God, the "oracles of God," as the source of the faith of the whole world.: "The Apostles were sons of Israel; the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the other women who abode at the same time and prayed with the Apostles, were daughters. Luke mentions, "All these were persevering with one accord in prayer with the women and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and His brethren." These sons and daughters of the Sons of Zion, having received the Spirit, prophesied, i. e., in divers tongues they spoke of the heavenly mysteries."

In the narrower sense of "foretelling the future, the Apostles, the Blessed Virgin Luke 1:48, Zacharias (Luke 1:67 ff), and Anna Luke 2:36, Luke 2:38, Elizabeth Luke 1:42-45, the virgin daughters of Philip Acts 21:9, Agabus Acts 11:28; Acts 21:10-11, John in the Apocalypse," Simeon Luke 2:27-35, and Paul also oftentimes Acts 20:29-30; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 2 Timothy 3:1, 2 Timothy 3:4; 1 Timothy 4:1 prophesied. At Antioch, there were certain "prophets" Acts 13:1; and "the Holy Spirit in every city witnessed, saying, that bonds and afflictions awaited him in Jerusalem" Acts 20:23. "But it is superfluous," adds Theodoret after giving some instances, "to set myself to prove the truth of the prophecy. For down to our times also hath this gift been preserved, and there are among the saints, people who have the eye of the mind clear, who foreknow and foretell many of the things which are about to be." So the death of Julian the Apostate, who fell, as it seemed, by a chance wound in war with the Persians was foreseen and foretold; and Cyprian foretold the day of his own martyrdom and the close of Decian persecution, which ended through the death of the

Emperor in a rash advance over a morass, when victory was gained. The stream of prophecy has been traced down through more than four centuries from the Birth of the Redeemer. One of the Bishops of the Council of Nice was gifted with a prophetic spirit.

Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions - "God often attempers Himself and His oracles to the condition of people, and appears to each, as suits his state" Acts 11:28; Acts 21:10-11. It may then be, that to old men while sleeping by reason of age, He appeared most commonly in dreams; to young men, while watching, in visions. But it is so common in Hebrew, that each part of the verse should be filled up from the other, that perhaps the prophet only means, that their old and young should have dreams and see visions, and both from God. Nor are these the highest of God's revelations; as He says, that to the prophet He would "make" Himself known in a vision and would "speak in a dream," but to Moses "mouth to mouth; even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold Numbers 12:6, Numbers 12:8.

The Apostles also saw waking visions, as Peter at Joppa (Acts 10:10 ff; Acts 11:5 ff); (and that so frequently, that when the Angel delivered him, he thought that it was one of his accustomed visions Acts 12:9,) and Paul after his conversion, and calling him to Macedonia; and the Lord appeared unto him in vision at Corinth, revealing to him the conversions which should be worked there, and at Jerusalem foretelling to him the witness he should bear to Him at Rome. In the ship, the Angel of the Lord foretold to him his own safety, and that God had given him all who sailed with him Acts 9:12; Acts 16:6-7, Acts 16:9; Acts 18:9; Acts 19:21; Acts 23:11; Acts 27:24. Ananias Acts 9:10 and Cornelius Acts 10:3 also received revelations through visions. But all these were only revelations of single truths or facts. Of a higher sort seems to be that revelation, whereby our Lord revealed to Paul Himself and His Gospel which Paul was to preach, and "the wisdom of God," and the glories of the world to come, and the conversion of the Gentiles; and when he was "caught up to the third heaven, and abundance of revelations were vouchsafed to him" Galatians 1:12, Galatians 1:16; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 3:3; 2 Corinthians 12:1-7.

Verse 29

And also upon the servants - God tells beforehand that he would be no respecter of persons. He had said, that He would endow every age and sex. He adds here, and every condition, even that of slaves, both male and female. He does not add here, that they shall prophesy. Under the law, God had provided for slaves, that, even if aliens, they should by circumcision be enrolled in His family and people; that they should have the rest and the devotion of the sabbath; and share the joy of their great festivals, going up with their masters and mistresses to the place which God appointed. They were included in one common ordinance of joy; "Ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God, ye and your sons and your daughters, and (literally) your men slaves and your women slaves, and the Levite which is within your gates" Genesis 17:23, Genesis 17:27; Exodus 20:10; Deuteronomy 12:12, Deuteronomy 12:18; Deuteronomy 16:11, Deuteronomy 16:14. In the times before the Gospel, they doubtless fell under the contempt in which the Pharisees held all the less educated class; "These people who knoweth not the law" (i. e., according to the explanation of their schools) "is cursed."

Whence it was a saying of theirs, "Prophecy doth not reside except on one wise and mighty and rich." As then elsewhere it was given as a mark of the Gospel, "the poor have the Gospel preached unto them," so here. It was not what the Jews of his day expected, for he says, "And on the servants too." But he tells beforehand, what was against the pride both of his own times and of the time of its fulfillment, that "God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence" 1 Corinthians 1:27-30. The prophetic word circles round to that wherewith it began, the all-containing promise of the large out-pouring of the Spirit of God; and that, upon those whom the carnal Jews at all times would least expect to receive it. It began with including the pagan; "I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;" it instances individual gifts; and then it ends by resting on the slaves; "and on these too in those days will I pour out My Spirit." The order of the words is significant. He begins, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh," and then, in order to leave the mind resting on these same great words, he inverts the order, and ends, "and upon the servants and upon the handmaidens I will pour out My Spirit." It leaves the thoughts resting on the great words, "I will pour out My Spirit."

The Church at Rome, whose "faith was spoken of throughout the whole world" Romans 1:8, was, as far as it consisted of converted Jews, made up of slaves, who had been set free by their masters. For such were most of the Roman Jews, "who occupied that large section of Rome beyond the Tiber." Most of these, Philo says, "having been made freemen, were Roman citizens. For having been brought as captives to Italy, set free by their purchasers, without being compelled to change any of their country's rites, they had their synagogues and assembled in them, especially on the sabbath."

Peter, in declaring that these words began to be fulfilled in the Day of Pentecost, quotes them with two lesser differences. "I will pour out of My Spirit, and upon My servants and My handmaidens." The words declare something in addition, but do not alter the meaning, and so Peter quotes them as they lay in the Greek, which probably was the language known by most of the mixed multitude, to whom he spake on the day of Pentecost. The words, "I will pour out My Spirit," express the largeness and the fullness of the gift of Him, "Who is Very God, Unchangeable and Infinite, who is given or poured out, not by change of place but by the largeness of His presence." The words, "I will pour out of My Spirit," express in part, that He who is Infinite cannot be contained by us who are finite; in part, they indicate, that there should be a distribution of gifts, although "worked by One and the Same Spirit," as the prophet also implies in what follows.

Again, the words, "the servants and the handmaidens," mark the outward condition; the words "My servants and My handmaidens," declare that there should be no difference between "bond and free." The servants and handmaidens should have that highest title of honor, that they should be the servants of God. For what more can the creature desire? The Psalmist says to God, "Lo I am Thy servant and the son of Thine handmaid" Psalm 116:16; and God gives it as a title of honor to Abraham and Moses and Job and David and Isaiah (Genesis 26:24; Numbers 12:7; Joshua 1:2; 2 Kings 21:8; Job 1:8; Job 2:3; Job 42:7-8; 2 Samuel 7:5, etc.; Isaiah 20:3), and Abraham and David call themselves the servants of God, Genesis 19:19; Psalm 86:2, Psalm 86:4, and Paul, Peter, and Jude, "servants of Jesus Christ" Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:10; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1:1, and James, "the

servant of God" (James 1:1; also Titus 1:1); and the blessed Virgin, "the handmaid of the Lord Luke 1:38, Luke 1:48; yea, and our Lord Himself, in His Human Nature is spoken of in prophecy as (Isaiah 42:1; Isaiah 49:6; Isaiah 52:13; Zechariah 12:8; Ezekiel 34:23-24; Ezekiel 37:24-25) "the Servant of the Lord."

Verse 30

And I will shew wonders - Each revelation of God prepares the way for another, until that last revelation of His love and of His wrath in the Great Day. In delivering His people from Egypt, "the Lord shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt Deuteronomy 6:22. Here, in allusion to it, He says, in the same words, of the new revelation, "I will shew," or "give, wonders, or wondrous signs," (as the word includes both) wonders beyond the course and order of nature, and portending other dispensations of God, of joy to His faithful, terror to His enemies. As when Israel came out of Egypt, "the pillar of the cloud was a cloud and darkness to the camp of the Egyptians," but "gave light by night" to the "camp of Israel" Exodus 14:19-20, so all God's workings are light and darkness at once, according as people are, who see them or to whom they come. These wonders in heaven and earth "began in" the First Coming and "Passion of Christ, grew in the destruction of Jerusalem, but shall be perfectly fulfilled toward the end of the world, before the final Judgment, and the destruction of the Universe." At the birth of Christ, there was "the star" which appeared unto the wise men, "and the multitude of the heavenly host," whom the shepherds saw. At His Atoning Death, "the sun was darkened," there was the three hours' darkness over the whole land; and on earth "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened" Luke 23:44-45; Matthew 27:45, Matthew 27:51-52: and the Blood and water issued from the Saviour's side. After His Resurrection, there was the vision of Angels, terrible to the soldiers who watched the sepulchre, comforting to the women who sought to honor Jesus. His Resurrection was a sign on earth, His Ascension in earth and heaven. But our Lord speaks of signs both in earth and heaven, as well before the destruction of Jerusalem, as before His second Coming.

With regard to the details, it seems probable that this is an instance of what we may call an inverted parallelism, that having mentioned generally

that God would give “signs in (1) heaven and (2) earth,” the prophet first instances the “signs in earth,” and then those “in heaven.” A very intellectual Jewish expositor has suggested this, and certainly it is frequent enough to be, in conciser forms, one of the idioms of the sacred language. In such case, “the blood and fire and pillars of smoke, will be signs in earth; the turning of the sun into darkness and the moon into blood will be signs in heaven.” When fortelling the destruction of Jerusalem, the Day of vengeance, which fell with such accumulated horror on the devoted city, and has for these 1800 years dispersed the people of Israel to the four winds, our Lord mentions first the signs on earth, then those in heaven. “Nation shall arise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. Luke 21:10-11. Before the Day of Judgment our Lord also speaks of both Luke 21:25-26;

(1) “there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars;

(2) and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; people‘s hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.”

The Jewish historian relates signs both in heaven and in earth, before the destruction of Jerusalem.: “A star stood like a sword over Jerusalem;” “a light which, when the people were assembled at the Passover at 9 at night, shone so brightly around the altar and the temple, that it seemed like bright day, and this for half an hour; the eastern door of the temple, which 20 men scarcely shut at eventide, stayed with iron-bound bars and very deep bolts let down into the threshhold of one solid stone, was seen at 6 o‘clock at night to open of its own accord; chariots and armed troops were seen along the whole country, coursing through the clouds, encircling the cities; at the feast of Pentecost, the priests entering the temple by night, as their wont was for worship, first perceived a great movement and sound, and then a multitudinous voice, ‹Let us depart hence.‘” These signs were authenticated by the multitude or character of those who witnessed them.

Verse 31

Before the great and terrible Day of the Lord come - o“The days of our life are our days wherein we do what we please; that will be the “Day of the Lord,” when He, our Judge, shall require the account of all our doings. It will be “great,” because it is the horizon of time and eternity; the last day of time, the beginning of eternity. It will put an end to the world, guilt, deserts, good or evil. It will be “great,” because in it great things will be done. Christ with all His Angels will come down and sit on His Throne; all who have ever lived or shall live, shall be placed before Him to be judged; all thoughts, words, and deeds shall be weighed most exactly; on all a sentence will be passed, absolute, irrevocable throughout eternity; the saints shall be assigned to heaven, the ungodly to hell; a great gulf shall be placed between, which shall sever them forever, so that the ungodly shall never see the godly nor heaven nor God; but shall be shut up in a prison forever, and shall burn as long as heaven shall be heaven, or God shall be God.”: “That day shall be great to the faithful, terrible to the unbelieving; great to those who said, ‹Truly this is the Son of God;‘ terrible to those who said, ‹His blood be upon us and upon our children.‘”: “When then thou art hurried to any sin, think on that terrible and unendurable judgment-seat of Christ, where the Judge sits on His lofty Throne, and all creation shall stand in awe at His glorious Appearing and we shall be brought, one by one, to give account of what we have done in life. Then by him who hath done much evil in life, there will stand terrible angels. “There” will be the deep gulf, the impassable darkness, the lightless fire, retaining in darkness the power to burn, but reft of its rays. There is the empoisoned and ravenous worm insatiably devouring and never satisfied, inflicting by its gnawing pangs unbearable. There that sharpest punishment of all, that shame and everlasting reproach. Fear these things; and, instructed by this fear, hold in thy soul as with a bridle from the lust of evil.”

Verse 32

Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord - To call upon the name of the Lord, is to worship Him, as He is, depending “upon” Him. “The name of the Lord,” expresses His True Being, That which He is. Hence, so often in Holy Scripture, people are said to “call on the Name of the Lord,” to bless the Name of the Lord, to praise the Name of the Lord, to sing praises to His Name, to make mention of His Name, to tell of His Name, to know His Name” but it is very rarely said “I will praise the Name of God” (Psalm 69:31; Hebrew), for the Name rendered “the Lord,”

expresses that He is, and that He Alone is, the Self-Same, the Unchangeable; the name rendered "God" is not the special Name of God. Hence, as soon as people were multiplied and the corrupt race of Cain increased, people "began," after the birth of Enos, the son of Seth, "to call upon the Name of the Lord" Genesis 4:26, i. e., in public worship. Abraham's worship, in the presence of the idolatries of Canaan, is spoken of, under the same words, "he called upon the Name of the Lord" Genesis 12:8; Genesis 13:4; Genesis 21:33; Genesis 26:25. Elijah says to the prophets of Baal, "call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the Name of the Lord" 1 Kings 18:24. Naaman the Pagan says of Elisha, "I thought that he would come out to me, and stand and call on the Name of the Lord his God" 2 Kings 5:11. Asaph and Jeremiah pray God; "Pour out Thy wrath upon the pagan that have not known Thee, and upon the kingdom (families Jerome) which have not called upon Thy Name" Psalm 79:6; Jeremiah 10:25; and Zephaniah fortells the conversion of the Pagan, "that they may all call upon the Name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent" Zephaniah 3:9.

To "call" then "upon the Name of the Lord" implies right faith to call upon Him as He is; right trust in Him, leaning upon Him; right devotion, calling upon Him as He has appointed; right life, ourselves who call upon Him being, or becoming by His Grace, what lie wills. They "call" not "upon the Lord," but upon some idol of their own imagining, who call upon Him, as other than He has revealed Himself, or remaining themselves other than those whom He has declared that He will hear. For such deny the very primary attribute of God, His truth. "Their" God is not a God of truth. But whosoever shall in true faith and hope and charity have in this life worshiped God, "shall be delivered," i. e., out of the midst of all the horrors of that Day, and the horrible damnation of the ungodly. The "deliverance" is by way of "escape" (for such is the meaning of the word, "he shall be made to escape, slip through" (as it were) perils as imminent as they shall be terrible. Our Lord uses the like word of the same Day, "Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" Luke 21:36. Those who so call upon Him in truth shall be heard in that day, as He says, "Ask and it shall be given you; Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you" Matthew 7:7; John 16:23.

: “That calling on God whereon salvation depends, is not in words only, but in heart and in deed. For what the heart believeth, the mouth confesseth, the hand in deed fulfilleth, The Apostle saith, “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit” 1 Corinthians 12:3; yet this very “saying” must be weighed not by words, but by the afflictions. Whence, we read of Samuel, “And Samuel among those who call upon His Name,” and of Moses and Aaron, “These called upon the Lord, and He heard them” Psalm 99:6.

For in Mount Zion … shall be deliverance - Repentance and remission of sins” were to “be preached in the Name” of Jesus, “in all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” Luke 24:47. “There” was, under the Old Testament, the center of the worship of God; there was the Church founded; thence it spread over the whole world. “The place,” “whither the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the Name of the Lord” Psalm 122:4, where God had set His Name, where alone sacrifice could lawfully be offered, stands, as elsewhere, for the whole Church. Of that Church, we are in Baptism all made members, when we are made members of Christ, children of God, and heirs of heaven. Of that Church all remain members, who do not, by viciousness of life, or rejecting the truth of God, cast themselves out of it. They then are members of the soul of the Church, who, not being members of the visible communion and society, know not, that in not becoming members of it, they are rejecting the command of Christ, to whom by faith and love and in obedience they cleave. And they, being members of the “body” or visible commumion of the Church, are not members of the “soul” of the Church, who, amid outward profession of the faith, do, in heart or deeds, deny Him whom in words they confess. The deliverance promised in that Day, is to those who, being in the body of the Church, shall by true faith in Christ and fervent love to Him belong to the soul of the Church also, or who, although not in the body of the Church shall not, through their own fault, have ceased to be in the body, and shall belong to its soul, in that through faith and love they cleave to Christ its Head.

As the Lord hath said - By the prophet Joel himself. This which he had said, is not man‘s word, but God‘s; and what God had said, shall certainly be. They then who have teared and loved God in this their day, shall not need to fear him in that Day, for He is the Unchangeable God; as our Blessed Saviour says; “heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words

shall not pass away" Mark 13:31. God had said of both Jews and Gentiles, united in one; "Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His adversaries, and will be merciful to His land and unto His people" Deuteronomy 32:43.

And in the remnant - While foretelling His mercies in Christ, God foretells also, that "few they be that find them" Matthew 7:14. It is evermore "a remnant, a residue, a body which escapes;" and so here, the mercies should be fulfilled, literally, "in the fugitives," in those who flee from the wrath to come. All prophecy echoes the words of Joel; all history exemplifies them. Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, all foretell with one voice, that a remnant, and a "remnant" only, shall be left. In those earlier dispensations of God, in the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; in His dealings with Israel himself at the entrance into the promised land, the return from the captivity, the first preaching of the Gospel, the destruction of Jerusalem, "a remnant" only was saved. It is said in tones of compassion and mercy, that "a remnant should be saved. The remnant should return, the remnant of Jacob, to the Mighty God" (Isaiah 10:20; add Isaiah 10:21-22; Isaiah 6:9-13, etc.). "The Lord of hosts shall be for a crown of glory to the residue of His people" Isaiah 28:5. "The Lord shall set His Hand to recover the remnant of His people which shall be left" (Isaiah 11:11, add 16). "I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries whither I have driven them" Jeremiah 23:3. "Publish ye, praise ye, and say, O Lord, save Thy people, the remnant of Israel" Jeremiah 31:7. "Yet I will leave a remnant, that ye may have some that escape the sword among the nations" Ezekiel 6:8. "Therein shall be left a remnant which shall be brought forth" Ezekiel 14:22. "I will surely gather the remnant of Israel" (Micah 2:12; add Micah 4:7: Micah 5:3, Micah 5:7-8). "Who is a God like Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?" Micah 7:18. "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity" (Zephaniah 3:13; add Zephaniah 2:9). "The residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city" Zechariah 14:2. It is then a summary of the declarations of the prophets, when Paul says, "Even so, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" Romans 11:5, Romans 11:7. And so the prophet says here;

Whom the Lord shall call - He had said before, "whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be delivered." Here he says, that they who should "so call on God," shall themselves have been first "called by God." So Paul, "to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord" 1 Corinthians 1:2. It is all of grace. God must first call by His grace; then we obey His call, and call upon Him; and He has said, "call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" Psalm 50:15. God accounts our salvation His own glory.

JOEL CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

For, behold - The prophet by the word, "for," shows that he is about to explain in detail, what he had before spoken of, in sum. By the word, "behold," he stirs up our minds for something great, which he is to set before our eyes, and which we should not be prepared to expect or believe, unless he solemnly told us, "Behold." As the detail, then, of what goes before, the prophecy contains all times of future judgment on those who should oppose God, oppress His Church and people, and sin against Him in them and all times of His blessing upon His own people, until the Last Day. And this it gives in imagery, partly describing nearer events of the same sort, as in the punishments of Tyre and Sidon, such as they endured from the kings of Assyria, from Nebuchadnezzar, from Alexander; partly using these, His earlier judgments, as representatives of the like punishments against the like sins unto the end.

In those days and in that time - The whole period of which the prophet had been speaking, was the time from which God called His people to repentance, to the Day of Judgment. The last division of that time was from the beginning of the Gospel unto that Day. He fixes the occasion of which he speaks by the words, "when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem." This form was used, before there was any general dispersion of the nation. For all captivity of single members of the Jewish people had this sore calamity, that it severed them from the public worship of God, and exposed them to idolatry. So David complains, "they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, go serve other gods" 1 Samuel 26:19. The restoration then of single members, or of smaller bodies of captives, was, at that time, an unspeakable mercy. It was the restoration of those shut out from the worship of God; and so was an image "of the deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God" Romans 8:21, or of any "return" of those who had gone astray, "to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls 1 Peter 2:25. The grievous captivity of the Jews, now, is to Satan, whose servants they made themselves, when they said, "we have no king but Caesar; His Blood be upon us and upon our children." Their blessed deliverance will be "from the power of Satan unto God" Acts 26:18. It is certain from Paul Romans 11:26, that there shall be a complete conversion of the Jews, before the end

of the world, as indeed has always been believed. This shall probably be shortly before the end of the world, and God would here say, "when I shall have brought to an end the "captivity of Judah and Jerusalem," i. e., of that people "to whom were the promises" Romans 9:4, and shall have delivered them from the bondage of sin and from blindness to light and freedom in Christ, then will I gather all nations to judgment."

Verse 2

I will gather all nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat - It may be that the imagery is furnished by that great deliverance which God gave to Jehoshaphat, when "Ammon and Moab and Edom come against" him, "to cast God's people out of" His "possession," which "He gave" them "to inherit" 2 Chronicles 20:11, and Jehoshaphat appealed to God, "O our God, wilt Thou not judge them?" and God said, "the battle is not yours but God's," and God turned their swords everyone against the other, "and none escaped. And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah" (blessing); "for there they blesed the Lord" 1 Kings 15:13; 2 Chronicles 30:14; 2 Kings 23:6, 2 Kings 23:12. The valley was the common burying-place for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. "There" was the garden where Jesus oftentimes resorted with His disciples; "there" was His Agony and Bloody Sweat; there Judas betrayed Him; thence He was dragged by the rude officers of the high priest. The temple, the token of God's presence among them, the pledge of His accepting their sacrifices which could only be offered there, overhung it on the one side. There, under the rock on which that temple stood, they dragged Jesus, "as a lamb to the slaughter" Isaiah 53:7. On the other side, it was overhung by the Mount of "Olives," from where, "He beheld the city and wept over it," because it "knew" not "in" that its "day, the things which belong to its peace;" whence, after His precious Death and Resurrection, Jesus ascended into, heaven.

There the Angels foretold His return, "This heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" Acts 1:11. It has been a current opinion, that our Lord should descend to judgment, not only in like manner, and in the like Form of Man, but in the same place, over this valley of Jehoshaphat. Certainly, if so it be, it were appropriate, that He should appear in His Majesty, where, for us, He bore the extremest shame; that He should judge "there," where for us, He submitted to be judged. "He sheweth," says Hilary (in Romans 9:6; and again, "As many as walk

according to this rule" of the Apostle‘s teaching, "peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" Galatians 6:16, i. e., not among the Galatians only, but in the whole Church throughout the world. Since the whole people and Church of God is one, He lays down one law, which shall be fulfilled to the end; that those who, for their own ends, even although therein the instruments of God, shall in any way injure the people of God, shall be themselves punished by God. God makes Himself one with His people. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of My eye" Zechariah 2:8. So our Lord said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Acts 9:4 and in the Day of Judgment He will say, "I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat. Forasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these My brethern, ye did it not to Me" Matthew 25:34-35.: "By calling them "My heritage," He shows that He will not on any terms part with them or suffer them to be lost, but will vindicate them to Himself forever."

Whom they have scattered among the nations - Such was the offence of the Assyrians and Babylonians, the first ""army," which God sent against His people. And for it, Nineveh and Babylon perished.: "Yet he does not speak of that ancient people, or of its enemies only, but of all the elect both in that people and in the Church of the Gentiles, and of all persecutors of the elect. For that people were a figure of the Church, and its enemies were a type of those who persecute the saints." The dispersion of God‘s former people by the pagan was renewed in those who persecuted Christ‘s disciples from "city to city," banished them, and confiscated their goods. Banishment to mines or islands were the slightest punishments of the early Christians.

Verse 3

And they have cast lots - They treated God‘s people as of no account, and delighted in showing their contempt toward them. They chose no one above another, as though all alike were worthless. "They cast lots," it is said elsewhere, "upon their honorable men" Nahum 3:10, as a special indignity, above captivity or slavery. A "girl" they sold for an evening‘s revelry, and a "boy" they exchanged for a night‘s debauch.

Verse 4

Yea, and what have ye to do with Me? - Literally, "and also, what are ye to Me?" The words, "And also," show that this is something additional to the deeds of those before spoken of. Those, instanced before, were great oppressors, such as dispersed the former people of God and "divided their land." In addition to these, God condemns here another class, those who,

without having power to destroy, harass and vex His heritage. The words, "what are ye to Me?" are like that other phrase, "what is there to thee and me?" (Joshua 22:24, etc; Matthew 8:29, …), i. e., what have we in common? These words, "what are ye to Me?" also declare, that those nations had no part in God. God accounts them as aliens, "what are ye to Me?" Nothing. But the words convey, besides, that they would, unprovoked, have to do with God, harassing His people without cause. They obtruded themselves, as it were, upon God and His judgments; they challenged God; they thrust themselves in, to their destruction, where they had no great temptation to meddle, noticing, but inbred malice, to impel them.

This was, especially, the character of the relations of Tyre and Zidon and Philistia with Israel. They were allotted to Israel by Joshua, but were not assailed. On the contrary, "the Zidonians" are counted among those who "oppressed" Israel, and "out of" whose "hand" God "delivered" him, when he "cried" to God Judges 10:12. The Philistines were the unwearied assailants of Israel in the days of the Judges, and Saul, and David Judges 13:1; 1 Samuel 23:1; 1 Samuel 31:1-13; during 40 years Israel was given into the hands of the Philistines, until God delivered them by Samuel at Mizpeh. When David was king of all Israel, the Philistines still acted on the offensive, and lost Gath and her towns to David in an offensive war 2 Samuel 5:17-25; 2 Samuel 8:1; 1 Chronicles 18:1; 2 Samuel 21:18; 2 Samuel 13:9-16. To Jehoshaphat some of them voluntarily paid tribute 2 Chronicles 17:11; but in the reign of Jehoram his son, they, with some Arabians, marauded in Judah, plundering the king's house and slaying all his sons, save the youngest 2 Chronicles 21:16-17; 2 Chronicles 22:1. This is the last event before the time of Joel. They stand among the most inveterate and unprovoked enemies of God's people, and probably as enemies of God also hating the claim of Judah that their God was the One God.

Will ye render Me a recompense? - People never want pleas for themselves. The Philistines, although the aggressors, had been signally defeated by David. People forget their own wrong-doings and remember their sufferings. It may be then, that the Philistines thought that they had been aggrieved when their assaults were defeated, and looked upon their own fresh aggressions as a requital. If moreover, as is probable, they heard that the signal victories won over them were ascribed by Israel to God, and

themselves also suspected, that these "mighty Gods" 1 Samuel 4:7-8 were the cause of their defeat, they doubtless turned their hatred against God. People, when they submit not to God chastening them, hate Him. This belief that they were retaliating against God, (not, of course, knowing Him as God,) fully corresponds with the strong words, "will ye render Me "a recompense?" Julian's dying blasphemy, "Galilean, thou hast conquered," corresponds with the efforts of his life against the gospel, and implies a secret consciousness that He whose religion he was straining to overthrow "might" be, What he denied Him to be, God. The phrase "swiftly," literally "lightly, and speedily, denotes" the union of easiness with speed. The recompense is returned "upon" their head, coming down upon them from God.

Verse 5

Ye have taken My silver and My gold - Not the silver and gold of the temple, (as some have thought.) At least, up to the prophet's time, they had not done this. For the inroad of the Philistines in the reign of Jehoram was, apparently, a mere marauding expedition, in which they killed and plundered, but are not said to have besieged or taken any city, much less Jerusalem. God calls "the silver and gold" which He, through His Providence, had bestowed on Judah, "My" gold and silver; as He said by Hosea Hosea 2:8.

"She knew not that I multiplied her silver and gold, whereof she made Baal;" and by Haggai, "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts" Haggai 2:8. For they were His people, and what they had, they held of Him; and the Philistines too so accounted it, and dedicated a part of it to their idols, as they had the ark formerly, accounting the victory over God's people to be the triumph of their idols over God.

Verse 6

The children also - Literally, "And the sons of Judah and the sons of Jerusalem have ye sold to the sons of the Greeks." This sin of the Tyrians was probably old and inveterate. The Tyrians, as they were the great carriers of the world's traffic, so they were slave-dealers, and, in the earliest times, men-stealers. The Greek ante-historic tradition exhibits them, as trading and selling women, from both Greece and Egypt. As their trade became more fixed, they themselves stole no more, but, like Christian nations, sold those whom others stole or made captive. Ezekiel speaks of their trade in "the

souls of men" Ezekiel 27:13 with "Greece" on the one side, and "Tubal and Mesech" near the Black Sea on the other. The beautiful youth of Greece of both sexes were sold even into Persia.

In regard to the Moschi and Tibareni, it remains uncertain, whether they sold those whom they took in war (and, like the tribes of Africa in modern times, warred the more, because they had a market for their prisoners,) or whether, like the modern Cireassians, they sold their daughters. Ezekiel however, says "men," so that he cannot mean, exclusively, women. From the times of the Judges, Israel was exposed in part both to the violence and fraud of Tyre and Sidon. The tribe of Asher seems to have lived in the open country among fortified towns of the Zidonians. For whereas of Benjamin, Manasseh, Ephraim, Zabulon, it is said that the old inhabitants of the land dwelt among them Judges 1:21, Judges 1:27, Judges 1:29-30, of Asher it is said, that they "dwelt among the Canaanites," the "inhabitants of the land" Judges 1:31-32, as though these were the more numerous. And not only so, but since they did "not drive out the inhabitants" of seven cities, "Accho, Zidon, Ahlab, Achzib, Helbah, Aphek, Rehob," they must have been liable to incursions from them.

The Zidonians were among those who "oppressed Israel" (Judges 5:30; see Judges 4:3, Judges 4:7, Judges 4:13, Judges 4:15-16). Sisera's army came from their territory, (for Jabin was king of Hazor,) and Deborah speaks of "a damsel or two," as the expected prey of each man in the whole multitude of his host. An old proverb, mentioned 427 b.c., implies that the Phoenicians sent circumcised slaves into the fields to reap their harvest. But there were no other circumcised there besides Israel.

But the Phoenician slave-trade was also probably, even in the time of the Judges, exercised against Israel. In Joel and Amos, the Philistines and Tyrians appear as combined in the traffic. In Amos, the Philistines are the robbers of men; the Phoenicians are the receivers and the sellers Amos 1:6, Amos 1:9. Pagan nations retain for centuries the same inherited character, the same natural nobleness, or, still more, the same natural vices. The Phoenicians, at the date of the Judges, are known as dishonest traders, and that, in slaves. The Philistines were then also inveterate oppressors. On one occasion "the captivity of the land" coincided with the great victory of the Philistines, when Eli died and the ark of God was taken. For these two dates

are given in the same place as the close of the idolatry of Micah‘s graven image. It endured “unto the captivity of the land” Judges 18:30-31 and, “and all the time that the house of God was at Shiloh,” from where the ark was removed, never to return, in that battle when it was taken.

But “the captivity of the land” is not merely a subdual, whereby the inhabitants would remain tributary or even enslaved, yet still remain. A captivity implies a removal of the inhabitants; and such a removal could not have been the direct act of the Philistines. For dwelling themselves in the land only, they had no means of removing the inhabitants from it, except by selling them; and the only nation, who could export them in such numbers as would be expressed by the words “a captivity of the land,” were the Zidonians. Probably such acts were expressly prohibited “by the brotherly covenant” (see the note at Amos 1:9) or treaty between Solomon and Hiram King of Tyre. For Amos says that Tyre forgot that treaty, when she sold wholesale the captive Israelites whom the Philistines had carried off. Soon after Joel, Obadiah speaks of a captivity at “Sepharad,” or “Sardis” (see the note at Obadiah 1:20), the capital of the Lydian empire.

The Tyrian merchants were “the” connecting link between Palestine and the coasts of Asia Minor. The Israelites must have been sold there as slaves, and that by the Phoenicians. In yet later times the Tyrian merchants followed, like vultures, on the rear of armies to make a prey of the living, as the vultures of the dead. They hung on the march of Alexander as far as India. In the wars of the Maccabees, at Nicanor‘s proclamation, a thousand (2 Kings 5:2, was that of a favorite slave, as Greek tradition represented Grecian maidens to have been an object of coveting to the wife of the Persian Monarch. The “damsel or two” for the wives of each man in Jabin‘s host appear as a valuable part of the spoil. The wholesale price at which Nicanor set the Jews his expected prisoners, and at which he hoped to sell some 180,000, shows the extent of the then traffic and their relative value. 2British pounds. 14 shillings, 9d. as the average price of each of 90 slaves in Judea, implies a retail-price at the place of sale, above the then ordinary price of man.

This wholesale price for what was expected to be a mixed multitude of nearly 200,000, (for “Nicanor undertook to make so much money of the

captive Jews as should defray the tribute of 2000 talents which the king was to pay to the Romans" (Exodus 21:30. The facility of transport increased the value. For, although Pontus supplied both the best and the most of the Roman slaves, yet in the war with Mithridates, amid a great abundance of all things, slaves were sold at 3 shillings 3d..

The special favors also shown to the Jewish captives at Rome and Alexandria show the estimation in which they were held. At Rome, in the reign of Augustus, "the large section of Rome beyond the Tiber was possessed and inhabited by Jews, most of them Roman citizens, having been brought as captives into Italy and made freedmen by their owners." On whatever ground Ptolemy Philadelphus redeemed 100,000 Jews whom his father had taken and sold, the fact can hardly be without foundation, or his enrolling them in his armies, or his employing them in public offices or about his own person.

Joel lived before the historic times of Greece. But there are early traces of slavetrade carried on by Greeks. According to Theopompus, the Chians, first among the Greeks, acquired barbarian slaves in the way of trade. The Ionian migration had tilled the islands and part of the coasts of Asia Minor with Greek traders about two centuries before Joel, 1069 b.c.. Greeks inhabited both the coasts and islands between Tyre and Sardis, where we know them to have been carried. Cyprus and Crete, both inhabited by Greeks and both in near contact with Phoenicia, were close at hand.

The demand for slaves must have been enormous. For wives were but seldom allowed them; and Athens, Aegina, Corinth alone had in the days of their prosperity 1,330,000 slaves. At the great slave-mart at Delos, 10,000 were brought, sold, removed in a single day.

That ye might remove them far from their border - The Philistines hoped thus to weaken the Jews, by selling their fighting men afar, from where they could no more return. There was doubtless also in this removal an anti-religious malice, in that the Jews clung to their land, as ""the Lord's land," the land given by Him to their fathers; so that they, at once, weakened their rivals, aggravated and enjoyed their distress, and seemed again to triumph over God. Tyre and Sidon took no active share in making the Jews prisoners, yet, partaking in the profit and aiding in the disposal of

the captives, they became, according to that true proverb "the receiver is as bad as the thief," equally guilty of the sin, in the sight of God.

Verse 7

Behold I will raise them - If this promise relates to the same individuals who had been sold, it must have been fulfilled silently; as indeed the return of captives to their own land, unless brought about by some historical event, belongs not to history, but to private life. The prophet, however, is probably predicting God's dealings with the nations, not with those individuals. The enslaving of these Hebrews in the time of Joram was but one instance out of a whole system of covetous misdeeds. The Philistines carried away captives from them again in the time of Ahaz 2 Chronicles 28:18, and yet again subsequently Ezekiel 16:27, Ezekiel 16:57; and still more at the capture of Jerusalem Ezekiel 25:15.

Verse 8

I will sell your sons - God Himself would reverse the injustice of people. The sons of Zion should be restored, the sons of the Phoenicians and of the Philistines sold into distant captivity. Tyre was taken by Nebuchadnezzar, and then by Alexander, who sold "more than 13,000" of the inhabitants into slavery; Sidon was taken and destroyed by Artaxerxes Ochus, and it is said, above 40,000 of its inhabitants perished in the flames. The like befell the Philistines (see the notes at Zephaniah 2:4-7). The Sabaeans are probably instanced, as being the remotest nation in the opposite direction, a nation, probably, the partner of Tyre's traffic in people, as well as in their other merchandise, and who (as is the way of unregenerate nature) would as soon trade in Tyrians, as with Tyrians. The Sabaeans were like the Phoenicians, a wealthy merchant people, and, of old, united with them in the trade of the world, the Sabaeans sending forth their fleets across the Indian Ocean, as the Tyrians along the Mediterranean. Three fathers of distinct races bore the name Sheba; one, a descendant of Ham, the other two, descended from Shem. The Hamite Sheba was the son of Raamah, the son of Cush Genesis 10:7, and doubtless dwelt of old in the country on the Persian gulf called by the name Raamah. Traces of the name Sheba occur there, and some even after our era. The Shemite Sabaeans, were, some descendants of Sheba, the tenth son of Joktan Genesis 10:28; the others from Sheba, the son of Abraham and Keturah Genesis 25:3. The Sabaeans, descended from Joktan, dwelt in the southwest extremity of Arabia, extending from the Red Sea to the Sea of Babel-mandeb. The

country is still called “ard-es-Seba”, “land of Saba;” and Saba is often mentioned by Arabic writers.

To the Greeks and Latins they were known by the name of one division of the race (Himyar) Homeritae. Their descendants still speak an Arabic, acknowledged by the learned Arabs to be a distinct language from that which, through Muhammed, prevailed and was diffused; a “species” of Arabic which they attribute “to the times of (the prophet) Hud (perhaps Eber) and those before him.”

It belonged to them as descendants of Joktan. Sabaeans are mentioned, distinct from both of these, as “dwelling in Arabia Felix, next beyond Syria, which they frequently invaded, before it belonged to the Romans.” These Sabaeans probably are those spoken of as marauders by Job; and may have been descendants of Keturah. Those best known to the Greeks and Romans were, naturally, those in the south western corner of Arabia. The account of their riches and luxuries is detailed, and, although from different authorities consistent; else, almost fabulous.

One metropolis is said to have had 65 temples, private individuals had more than kingly magnificence. Arabic historians expanded into fable the extent and prerogatives of their Paradise lands, before the breaking of the artificial dike, made for the irrigation of their country. They traded with India, availing themselves doubtless of the Monsoon, and perhaps brought thence their gold, if not also the best and most costly frankincense. The Sheba of the prophet appears to have been the wealthy Sheba near the Red Sea. Indeed, in absence of evidence to the contrary, it is natural to understand the name of those best known.

Solomon unites it with Seba Psalm 72:10, (the Aethiopian Sabae.) The known frankincense-districts are on the southwest corner of Arabia. The tree has diminished, perhaps has degenerated through the neglect consequent on Muslim oppression, diminished consumption, change of the line of commerce; but it still survives in those districts; a relic of what is passed away. Ezekiel indeed unites “the merchants of Sheba and Raamah” Ezekiel 27:22, as trading with Tyre. “The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they were thy merchants; with the chief of all spices and with all precious stones and gold they occupied in thy fairs.” It may be that he joins them

together as kindred tribes yet it is as probable that he unites the two great channels of merchandise, east and west, Raamah on the Persian Gulf, and Sheba near the Red Sea. Having just mentioned the produce of Northern Arabia as poured into Tyre, he would, in this case, enumerate north, east, and west of Arabia as combined to enrich her.

Agatharcides unites the Sabaeans of southwest Arabia with the Gerrhaeans, who were certainly on the Persian Gulf. "No people," he says, "is apparently richer than the Sabaeans and Gerrhaeans, who dispense forth everything worth speaking of from Asia and Europe. These made the Syria of Ptolemy full of gold. These supplied the industry of the Phoenicians with profitable imports, not to mention countless other proofs of wealth." Their caravans went to Elymais, Carmania; Charrae was their emporium; they returned to Gabala and Phoenicia. Wealth is the parent of luxury and effeminacy. At the time of our Lord's Coming, the softness and effeminacy of the Sabaeans became proverbial. The "soft Sabaeans" is their characteristic in the Roman poets. Commerce, navigation, goldmines, being then carried on by means of slaves, and wealth and luxury at that time always demanding domestic slaves, the Sabaeans had need of slaves for both. They too had distant colonies, where the Tyrians could be transported, as far from Phoenicia, as the shores of the Aegean are from Palestine. The great law of divine justice, "as I have done, so God hath requited me" Judges 1:7, was again fulfilled. It is a sacred proverb of God's overruling Providence, written in the history of the world and in people's consciences.

Verse 9

Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles - God having before said that He would "gather all nations," now, by a solemn irony, bids them prepare, if, by any means, they can fight against Him. So in Isaiah; "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand, for God is with us" (Isaiah 8:9-10; see also Jeremiah 51:27; and the enemies of Judah encourage themselves, "sanctify ye war against her" Jeremiah 6:4; and Micah says, that whosover bribed not the false prophets, "they sanctify war against him" Micah 3:5, i. e., proclaim war against him in the Name of God.

The enemies of God, of His people, of His truth, declare war against all, in the Name of God. The Jews would have stoned our Lord for blasphemy, and, at the last, they condemned Him as guilty of it. "He hath spoken blasphemy. What further need have we of witttesses? behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy" Matthew 26:65. And He foretold to His disciples, "Whosoever killeth you, will think he doeth God service" John 16:2.

Stephen was persecuted for speaking "blasphemous words against Moses and against God, this holy place and the law" Acts 6:11, Acts 6:13. Paul was persecuted for "persuading people to worship God contrary to the law and polluting this holy place" Acts 18:13; Acts 21:28; Acts 24:6. Antichrist shall set himself up as God, "so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God shewing himself that he is God" 2 Thessalonians 2:4. Heretics and unbelievers declaim against the Gospel, as though it, and not themselves, were opposed to the holiness and Majesty and love of God. The Gnostics of old spake against the Creator in the Name of God. Arians affected reverence for the glory of God, being, on their own mis-belief, idolaters or polytheists. The Apollinarians charged the Church with ascribing to our Lord a sinful soul, as though the soul must needs be such, find themselves held the Godhead to have been united to a soulless, and so a brute, nature.

Manichaeans accused her of making God the author of evil, and themselves, as do Pantheists now, invented a god who sinned. Novatians and Donatists accused the Church of laxity. Pelagians charged her with denying the perfectibility of man's nature, themselves denying the grace whereby it is perfected. Muhammed arrayed the truth of the Unity of God against His Being in Three Persons, and fought against the truth as idolatry. Some now array "Theism," i. e., truths as to God which they have stolen from Holy Scripture, against the belief in God as He has revealed Himself. Indeed, no imposture ever long held its ground against truth, unless it masked itself under some truth of God which it perverted, and so "hallowed" its "war" against God in the Name of God.

Wake up the mighty men - Arouse them, as if their former state had been a state of sleep; arouse all their dormant powers, all within them, that they may put forth all their strength, if so be they may prevail against God.

Let all the men of war draw near - , as if to contend, and close, as it were, with God and His people (see 1 Samuel 17:41. 2 Samuel 10:13), as,

on the other hand, God says, "I will come near to you to judgment" (Malachi 3:5; see Isaiah 41:1; Isaiah 50:8). "Let them come up" into His very presence. Even while calling them to fulfill this their vain purpose of striving with God, the prophet keeps in mind, into whose presence they are summoned, and so calls them to "come up," as to a place of dignity.

Verse 10

Beat your plowshares into swords - Peace had been already promised, as a blessing of the gospel. "In His days," foretold Solomon, "shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth" Psalm 72:7. And another, "He maketh thy borders peace" Psalm 147:14. Peace within with God flows forth in peace with man. "Righteousness and peace kissed each other" Psalm 85:10. Where there is not rest in God, all is unrest. And so, all which was needful for life, the means of subsistence, care of health, were to be forgotten for war.

Let the weak say, I am strong - It is one last gathering of the powers of the world against their Maker; the closing scene of man's rebellion against God. It is their one universal gathering. None, however seemingly unfit, was to be spared from this conflict; no one was to remain behind. The farmer was to forge for war the instruments of his peaceful toil; the sick was to forget his weakness and to put on a strength which he had not, and that to the uttermost. But as weakness is, in and through God, strength, so all strength out of God is weakness. Man may say, I am strong; but, against God, he remains weak as, it is said, that weak man Psalm 10:18) from the earth may no more oppress.

Verse 11

Once more all the enemies of God are summoned together. "Assemble yourselves," (Others in the same sense render, "Haste ye,) and come, all ye pagan, round about," literally "from round about," i. e., from every side, so as to compass and hem in the people of God, and then, when the net had been, as it were, drawn closer and closer round them, and no way of escape is left, the prophet prays God to send His aid; "thither cause Thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord." Against "the mighty ones" of the earth, or "the weak" who "say" they are "mighty," (the same word is used throughout,) there "come down the mighty ones of God." The "mighty ones of God," whom He is prayed to "cause to come down," i. e., from heaven, can be no other than the mighty angels, of whom it is said, they "are mighty in strength" Psalm 103:20 (still the same word,) to whom God gives

“charge over” Psalm 91:11. His own, “to keep” them “in all” their “ways,” and one of whom, in this place, killed “one hundred and fourscore and five thousand” 2 Kings 19:35 of the Assyrians. So our Lord saith, “The Son of man shall send forth His Angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity” Matthew 13:41.

Verse 12

Let the pagan be awakened - This emphatic repetition of the word, “awaken,” seems intended to hint at the great awakening, to Judgment, when they “who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, being awakened” from the sleep of death. Another word is used of “awakening”. On the destruction of antichrist it is thought that the general Judgment will follow, and “all who are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man and shall come forth” John 5:27-29: They are bidden to “come up” into the valley of Jehoshaphat, “for to come into the presence of the most High God, may well be called “a coming up.” For there will I sit to judge all the pagan round about,” (again literally “from round about,) from every side,” all nations from all the four quarters of the world. The words are the same as before. There “all nations from every side” were summoned to come, as they thought, to destroy God‘s people and heritage. Here the real end is assigned, for which they were brought together, for God would sit to judge them. In their own blind will and passion they came to destroy; in God‘s secret overruling Providence, they were dragged along by their passions - to be judged and to be destroyed. So our Lord says, “When the Son of Man shall come in His Glory, and all the Holy Angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His Glory and before Him shall be gathered all nations” Matthew 25:31-32. Our Lord, in that He uses words of Joel, seems to intend to direct our minds to the prophet‘s meaning. What follows are nearly His own words;

Verse 13

Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe - So Jesus saith, “let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them;” and this He explains, “The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the Angels” Matthew 13:30, Matthew 13:39. He then who saith, “put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe,” is the Son of Man, who, before He became the Son of Man, was, as He is now, the Son of God, and spake this and the other things by the Prohets; they to whom He speaketh are His

reapers, the Angels; and the ripeness of the harvest is the maturity of all things here, good and evil, to be brought to their last end.

In itself, the harvest, as well as the vintage, might describe the end of this world, as to both the good and the bad, in that the wheat is severed from the chaff and the tares, and the treading of the winepress separates the wine which is stored up from the husks which are cast away. Yet nothing is said, here of storing up aught, either the wheat or the wine, but only of the ripeness of the harvest, and that "the fats overflow, because their wickedness is great." The harvest is sometimes, although more rarely, used of destruction Isaiah 17:5; Jeremiah 51:33; the treading of the winepress is always used as an image of God's anger Lamentations 1:15; Isaiah 63:3; Revelation 19:15; the vintage of destruction Isaiah 17:6; Judges 8:2; Micah 7:1; the plucking off the grapes, of the rending away of single lives or souls Psalm 80:12. It seems probable then, that the ripeness of the harvests and the fullness of the vats are alike used of the ripeness for destruction, that "they were ripe in their sins, fit for a harvest, and as full of wickedness as ripe grapes, which fill and overflow the vats, through the abundance of the juice with which they swell." Their ripeness in iniquity calls, as it were, for the sickle of the reaper, the trampling of the presser.

For great is their wickedness - The whole world is flooded and overflowed by it, so that it can no longer contain it, but, as it were, cries to God to end it. The long suffering of God no longer availed, but would rather increase their wickedness and their damnation. So also, in that first Judgment of the whole world by water, when "all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth, God said, the end of all flesh is before Me" Genesis 6:12-13; and when the hundred and twenty years of the preaching of Noah were ended without fruit, "the flood came." So Sodom was "then" destroyed, when not ten righteous could be found in it; and the seven nations of Canaan were spared above four hundred years, because the "iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full" Genesis 15:16; and our Lord says, "fill ye up the measure of your fathers - that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth" Matthew 23:32, Matthew 23:35. So, "God condemneth each of the damned, when he hath filled up the measure of his iniquity."

Verse 14

The prophet continues, as in amazement at the great throng assembling upon one another, "multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision," as

though, whichever way he looked, there were yet more of these "tumultuous masses," so that there was nothing beside them. It was one living, surging, boiling, sea: throngs upon throngs, mere throngs!. The word rendered "multitudes" suggests, besides, the thought of the hum and din of these masses thronging onward, blindly, to their own destruction. They all "tumultuously rage together, and imagine a vain thing, against the Lord and against His Christ" Psalm 2:1-2; but the place where they are gathered, (although they know it not,) is the "valley of decision," i. e., of "sharp, severe judgment." The valley is the same as that before called "the valley of Jehoshaphat;" but whereas that name only signifies "God judgeth," this further name denotes the strictness of God‘s judgment. The word signifies "cut," then "decided;" then is used of severe punishment, or destruction decided and decreed, by God.

For the Day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision - Their gathering against God shall be a token of His coming to judge them. They come to fulfill their own ends; but His shall be fulfilled on them. They are left to bring about their own doom; and being abandoned by Him, rush on the more blindly because it is at hand. When their last sin is committed, their last defiance of God spoken or acted against Him, it is come. At all times, indeed, "the Lord is at hand" Philemon 4:5. It may be, that we are told, that the whole future revealed to us "must shortly come to pass" Revelation 1:1, in order to show that all time is a mere nothing, a moment, a dream, when it is gone. Yet here it is said, relatively, not to us, but to the things foretold, that it "is near" to come.

Verse 15

The sun and the moon shall be darkened - This may be, either that they shall be outshone by the brightness of the glory of Christ, or that they themselves shall undergo a change, whereof the darkness at the Crucifixion was an image. An ancient writer says; "As in the dispensation of the Cross the sun failing, there was darkness over all the earth, so when the ‹sign of the Son of man‘ appeareth in heaven in the Day of Judgment, the light of the sun and moon and stars shall fail, consumed, as it were by the great might of that sign." And as the failure of the light of the sun at our Lord‘s Passion betokened the shame of nature at the great sin of man, so, at the Day of Judgment, it sets before us the awfulness of God‘s judgments, as though "it dared not behold the severity of Him who judgeth and returneth

every man‘s work upon his own head;” as though “every creature, in the sufferings of others, feared the judgment on itself.”

Verse 16

The Lord shall roar out of Zion - As in the destruction of Sennacherib, when he was now close upon his prey, and “shook his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem, the Lord of hosts lopped the bough with terror, and the high ones of stature were hewn down, and the haughty were humbled Isaiah 10:32-33, so at the end. It is foretold of antichrist, that his destruction shall be sudden, “Then shall that Wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His Coming” 2 Thessalonians 2:8. And Isaiah saith of our Lord, “He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked” Isaiah 11:4. When the multitudes of God‘s enemies were thronged together, then would He speak with His Voice of terror. The terrible voice of God‘s warnings is compared to the roaring of a lion. “The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord hath spoken, who can but prophesy?” Amos 3:8. Much more, when those words of awe are fulfilled. Our Lord then, “The Lion of the tribe of Judah” Revelation 5:5. Who is here entitled by the incommunicable Name of God, I am, shall utter His awful Voice, as it is said; “The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and with the Trump of God” 1 Thessalonians 4:16; and He Himself says, “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the Resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation” John 5:28-29.

And shall utter His voice from Jerusalem - that is, either from His Throne aloft “in the air” above the holy city, or from the heavenly Jerusalem, out of the midst of the tens of thousands of His holy angels Matthew 16:27; Matthew 25:31; Mark 8:38; 2 Thessalonians 1:7, and saints Zechariah 14:5; Jude 1:14, who shall “come with Him.” So terrible shall that voice be, that “the heavens and the earth shall shake,” as it is said, “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” 2 Peter 3:10; and “heaven shall open for the coming of the saints,” and ‹hell shall be moved at the coming‘ Isaiah 14:9 of the evil.: “Nor shall it be a slight shaking of the earth at His Coming, but such that all the dead shall

be roused, as it were from their sleep, yea, the very elect shall fear and tremble, but, even in their fear and trembling, shall retain a strong hope. This is what he saith immediately, ‹The Lord will be the hope (or place of refuge)‘ of His ‹people, and the strength (or stronghold) of the children of Israel,‘ i. e., of the true Israel, the whole people of the elect of God. All these He will then by that His Majesty at once wonderfully terrify and strengthen, because they ever hoped in God, not in themselves, and ever trusted in the strength of the Lord, never presumed on their own. Whereas contrariwise the false Israelites hope in themselves, while, ‹going about to establish their own righteousness, they submitted themselves not to the righteousness of God.‘ Romans 10:3. The true Israel shall trust much more than ever before; yet none can trust then, who in life, had not trusted in Him Alone.

Verse 17

God Himself wondrously joins on His own words to those of the prophet, and speaks to His own people; "so (literally, and) ye shall know," by experience, by sight, face to face, what ye now believe, "that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain." So He saith in the second Psalm, "Then shall he speak unto them" Psalm 2:5-6 (the enemies of His Christ) "in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure; And I have set My king on My holy hill of Zion;" and, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God" Revelation 21:3, dwelling with them and in them, by an unvarying, blissful, hallowing presence, never withdrawn, never hidden, never shadowed, but ever shining upon them. "Your God," your own, as much as if possessed by none besides, filling all with gladness, yet fully possessed by each, as though there were none besides, so that each may say, "Thou art my Portion, O Lord" Psalm 119:57; Lamentations 3:24; my "Lord, and my God" John 20:28, as He saith, "I am thy exceeding great Reward" Genesis 15:1.

And Jerusalem shall be holy - Literally, "holiness" as John saith, "He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" Revelation 21:10-11.

And there shall no stranger pass through her anymore - "Without," says John, "are dogs and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" Revelation 22:15. None

alien from her shall pass through her, so as to have dominion over her, defile or oppress her.

This special promise is often repeated. "It shall be called the way of holiness, the unclean shall not pass over it" Isaiah 35:8. "Henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean" Isaiah 52:1. "The wicked shall no more pass through thee" Nahum 1:15. "In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts". "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth" Revelation 21:27. These promises are, in their degree and in the image and beginning, made good to the Church here, to be fully fulfilled when it shall be "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish" Ephesians 5:27. Here they do not pass through her, so as to overcome; "the gates of hell shall not prevail against her." However near, as hypocrites, they come to her, they feel in themselves that they "are not of her" 1 John 2:19. There they shall be severed from her forever.: "Heretics came, armed with fantastic reasons and deceitful arguments; but they could not pass through her, repelled by the truth of the word, overcome by reason, cast down by the testimonies of Scripture and by the glow of faith." They fell backward to the ground before her. They "go out from her, because they are not of her" 1 John 2:19. They who are not of her can mingle with her, touch her sacraments, but their power and virtue they partake not. They are inwardly repelled.

Verse 18

And it shall come to pass in that Day - After the destruction of antichrist, there will, it seems, still be a period of probation, in which the grace of God will abound and extend more and more widely. The prophet Zechariah, who continues on the image, of the "living waters going out from Jerusalem" Zechariah 14:8, places this gift after God had gathered all nations against Jerusalem, and had visibly and miraculously overthrown them Zechariah 14:2-4. But in that the blessings which he speaks of, are regenerating, they belong to time; the fullness of the blessing is completed only in eternity; the dawn is on earth, the everlasting brightness is in heaven. But though the prophecy belongs eminently to one time, the imagery describes the fulness of spiritual blessings which God at all times diffuses in and through the Church; and these blessings, he says, shall continue on in her for ever; her enemies shall be cut off for ever. It may be,

that Joel would mark a fresh beginning and summary by his words, "It shall be in that Day." The prophets do often begin, again and again, their descriptions. Union with God, which is their theme, is one. Every gift of God to His elect, except the beatific vision, is begun in time, union with Himself, indwelling, His Spirit flowing forth from Him into His creatures, His love, knowledge of Him, although here through a glass darkly.

The promise cannot relate to exuberance of temporal blessings, even as tokens of God's favor. For he says, "a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim." But "the valley of Shittim" is on the other side Jordan, beyond the Dead Sea, so that by nature the waters could not flow there. The valley of Shittim or acacia trees is a dry valley, for in such the Easten Acacia, i. e., the sant or sandal wood grows. "It is," says Jerome (on Isaiah 12:1-6:19), "a tree which grows in the desert, like a white thorn in color and leaves, not in size. For they are of such size, that very large planks, are cut out of them. The wood is very strong, and of incredible lightness and beauty. They do not grow in cultivated places, or in the Roman soil, save only in the desert of Arabia." It does not decay; and when old becomes like ebony. Of it the ark of God was made, its staves, the table of showbread, the tabernacle and its pillars, the altar for burnt-offerings, and of incense Exodus 25:5, Exodus 25:10, Exodus 25:13, Exodus 25:23, Exodus 25:28; Exodus 26:15, Exodus 26:26, Exodus 26:32, Exodus 26:37; Exodus 27:1, Exodus 27:6; Exodus 30:1; Exodus 35:7, Exodus 35:24; Exodus 36:20, Exodus 36:31, Exodus 36:36; Exodus 37:1, Exodus 37:4, Exodus 37:10, Exodus 37:15, Exodus 37:25, Exodus 37:28; Exodus 38:1, Exodus 38:6; Deuteronomy 10:3. The valley is about six miles from Livias, seven and a half beyond the Dead Sea. It was the last station of Israel, before entering the land of promise Numbers 33:49, from where Joshua sent out the spies Joshua 2:1; where God turned the curse of Balaam into a blessling Micah 6:5; and he prophesied of the Star which should arise out of Israel, even Christ Numbers 24:17; where Israel sinned in Baal Peor, and Phineas turned aside His displeasure Numbers 25:1, Numbers 25:7, Numbers 25:11.

The existence of a large supply of water under the temple is beyond all question. While the temple was still standing, mention is made up of "a fountain of ever-flowing water under the temple," as well as pools and cisterns for preserving rain-water. One evidently well acquainted with the

localities says, “The pavement has slopes at befitting places, for the sake of a flush of water which takes place in order to cleanse away the blood from the victims. For on festivals many myriads of animals are sacrificed. But of water there is an unfailing supply, a copious and natural fountain within gushing over, and there being moreover wonderful underground-receptacles in a circuit of five furlongs, in the substructure of the temple, and each of these having numerous pipes, the several streams inter-communicating, and all these closed up below and on the sides - There are also many mouths toward the base, invisible to all except those to whom the service of the temple belongs. So that the manifold blood of the sacrifices being brought together are cleansed by the gush (of water down) the slope.”

This same writer relates that, more than half a mile from the city, he was told to stoop down and heard the sound of gushing waters underground. The natural fountain, then, beneath the temple was doubtless augmented by waters brought from a distance, as required for the “divers washings” both of the priests and other things, and to carry off the blood of the victims. Pools near the temple are mentioned by writers of the third and fourth century; and Omar, on the surrender of Jerusalem, 634 a.d., was guided to the site of the ancient temple (whereon he built his Mosk) by the stream of water which issued through a water-channel from it. Whencesoever this water was derived, whether from a perennial spring beneath the temple itself, or whether brought there from some unfailing source without, it afforded Jerusalem an abundant supply of water.

Much as Jerusalem suffered in sieges by famine, and its besiegers by thirst, thirst was never any part of the sufferings of those within. The superfluous water was and still is carried off underground, to what is now “the fountain of the Virgin”, and thence again, through the rock, to the pool of Siloam. Thence it carried fertility to the gardens of Siloam, in Joel‘s time doubtless “the king‘s gardens”, still “a verdant spot, refreshing to the eye in the heat of summer, while all around is parched and dun.” The blood of the victims flowed into the same brook Kidron, and was a known source of fertility, before the land was given to desolation. The waters of Kidron, as well as all the waters of Palestine, must have been more abundant formerly.

Isaiah speaks of it as “flowing softly” Isaiah 8:6; Josephus, of the “abundant fountain;” an official report, of the “fountain gushing forth with abundance of water.” Still its fertilizing powers formed but one little oasis, where all around was arid. It fertilized those gardens live miles from the city, but the mid-space was waterless, thirsty, mournful. Lower down, the rivulet threaded its way to the Dead Sea, through a narrow ravine which became more and more wild, where Saba planted his monastery. “A howling wilderness, stern desolation. stupendous perpendicular cliffs, terrific chasms, oppressive solitude” are the terms by which one endeavors to characterize “the heart of this stern desert of Judaea”.

Such continues to be its character, in the remaining half of its course, until it is lost in the Dead Sea, and is transmuted into its saltness. Its valley bears the name of desolation, Wady en Nar, “valley of fire.” No human path lies along it. The Kidron flows along “a deep and almost impenetrable ravine” Psalm 46:4, “in a narrow channel between perpendicular walls of rock, as if worn away by the rushing waters between those desolate chalky hills.” That little oasis of verdure was fit emblem of the Jewish people, itself bedewed by the stream which issued from the Temple of God, but, like Gideon‘s fleece, leaving all around dry. It made no sensible impression out of, or beyond itself. Hereafter, “the stream”, the Siloah, whose “streamlets,” i. e., the artificial fertilizing divisions, “made glad the city of God” Ezekiel 47:1-12, should make the wildest, driest spots of our mortality “like the garden of the Lord.” Desolation should become bright and happy; the parched earth should shoot up fresh with life; what was by nature barren and unfruitful should bring forth good fruit; places heretofore stained by sin should be purified; nature should be renewed by grace; and that, beyond the borders of the promised land, in that world which they had left, when Joshua brought them in there.

This, which it needs many words to explain, was vivid to those to whom Joel spoke. They had that spot of emerald green before their eyes, over which the stream which they then knew to issue from the temple trickled in transparent brightness, conducted by those channels formed by man‘s diligence. The eyes of the citizens of Jerusalem must have rested with pleasure on it amid the parched surface around. Fresher than the gladliest freshness of nature, brighter than its most kindled glow, is the renewing

freshness of grace; and this, issuing from mount Zion, was to be the portion not of Judea only, but of the world.

The vision of Ezekiel Ezekiel 47:1-12, which is a comment on the prophecy of Joel, clearly belongs primarily to this life. For in this life only is there need for healing; in this life only is there a desert land to be made fruitful; death to be changed into life; death and life, the healed and unhealed, side by side; life, where the stream of God‘s grace reacheth, and death and barrenness, where it reacheth not. The fishers who spread their nests amid “the fish, exceeding many,” are an emblem which waited for and received its explanation from the parables of our Lord.

In the Revelation, above all, the peace, glory, holiness, vision of God, can only be fulfilled in the sight of God. Yet here too the increase of the Church, and the healing of the nations Revelation 21:24-26; Revelation 22:21, belong to time and to a state of probation, not of full fruition.

But then neither can those other symbols relate to earthly things.

The mountains shall drop down new wine - Literally, “trodden” out. What is ordinarily obtained by toil, shall be poured forth spontaneously. “And the hills shall flow with milk,” literally, “flow milk,” as though they themselves, of their own accord, gushed forth into the good gifts which they yield. “Wine” ever new, and ever renewing, sweet and gladdening the heart; “milk,” the emblem of the spiritual food of childlike souls, of purest knowledge, holy devotion, angelic purity, heavenly pleasure. And these shall never cease. These gifts are spoken of, as the spontaneous, perpetual flow of the mountains and hills; and as the fountain gushes forth from the hill or mountain-side in one ceaseless flow, day and night, streaming out from the hidden recesses to which the waters are supplied by God from His treasure-house of the rain, so day and night, in sorrow or in joy, in prosperity or adversity, God pours out, in the Church and in the souls of His elect, the riches of His grace. “All the rivers,” literally “channels, of Judah shall flow with water.” Every “channel,” however narrow and easily drying up, shall “flow with water,” gushing forth unto everlasting life; the love of God shall stream through every heart; each shall he full according to its capacity and none the less full, because a larger tide pours through others. How much more, “in those everlasting hills of heaven, “the heavenly

Jerusalem," resting on the eternity and Godhead of the Holy Trinity, shall that long promise be fulfilled of the land flowing with milk and honey, where God, through the beatific vision of Himself, shall pour into the blessed "the torrent of pleasure," the unutterable sweetness of joy and gladness unspeakable in Himself; and "all the rivers of Judah," i. e., all the powers, capacities, senses, speech of the saints who "confess" God, shall flow with a perennial stream of joy, thanksgiving, and jubilee, as of all pleasure and bliss."

Verse 19

Egypt shall be a desolation - "Egypt" and "Edom" represent each a different class of enemies of the people of God, and both together exhibit the lot of all. Egypt was the powerful oppressor, who kept Israel long time in hard bondage, and tried, by the murder of their male children, to extirpate them. Edom was, by birth, the nearest allied to them, but had, from the time of their approach to the promised land, been hostile to them, and showed a malicious joy in all their calamities (Obadiah 1:10-14; Ezekiel 25:12; Ezekiel 35:15; Ezekiel 36:5; Lamentations 4:22; Psalm 137:7; see the note at Amos 1:11). "Their land," in which Egypt and Edom shed the "innocent blood of the children of Judah," may either be Edom, Egypt, or Judaea. If the land was Judaea, the sin is aggravated by its being God‘s land, the possession of which they were disputing with God. If it was Egypt and Edom, then it was probably the blood of those who took refuge there, or, as to Edom, of prisoners delivered up to them (see the note at Amos 1:9).

This is the first prophecy of the humiliation of Egypt. Hosea had threatened, that Egypt should be the grave of those of Israel who should flee there Hosea 9:6. He speaks of it as the vain trust, and a real evil to Israel Hosea 7:11-12, Hosea 7:16; Hosea 8:13; Hosea 9:3; Hosea 11:5; of its own future he says nothing. Brief as Joel‘s words are, they express distinctly an abiding condition of Egypt. They are expanded by Ezekiel Ezekiel 29:9-12, Ezekiel 29:15; particular chastisements are foretold by Isaiah Isaiah 20:1-6, Jeremiah Zechariah 10:11. But the three words of Joel, "Egypt shall become desolation," are more comprehensive than any prophecy, except those by Ezekiel. They foretell that abiding condition, not only by the force of the words, but by the contrast with an abiding condition of bliss. The words say, not only "it shall be desolated," as by a passing scourge sweeping over it, but "it shall itself ‹pass over into‘ that state;" it shall become what it had not been; and this, in contrast with the abiding condition of God‘s people. The

contrast is like that of the Psalmist, “He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs” Psalm 107:33-35. Judah should overflow with blessing, and the streams of God‘s grace should pass beyond its bounds, and carry fruitfulness to what now was dry and barren. But what should reject His grace should be itself rejected.

Yet when Joel thus threatened Egypt, there were no human symptoms of its decay; the instruments of its successive overthrows were as yet wild hordes, (as the Chaldees, Persians, and Macedonians,) to be consolidated thereafter into powerful empires, or (as Rome) had not the beginnings of being.: “The continuous monumental history of Egypt” went back seven centuries before this, to about 1520 b.c. They had had a line of conquerors among their kings, who subdued much of Asia, and disputed with Assyria the country which lay between there. Even after the time of Joel, they had great conquerors, as Tirhaka; Psammetichus won Ashdod back from Assyria, Neco was probably successful against it, as well as against Syria and king Josiah, for he took Cadytis on his return from his expedition against Carchemish 2 Kings 23:29; Pharaoh Hophra, or Apries, until he fell by his pride Ezekiel 29:3, renewed for a time the prosperity of Psammetichus; the reign of Amasis, even after Nebuchadnezzars conquest, was said to be “the most prosperous time which Egypt ever saw”; it was still a period of foreign conquest, and its cities could be magnified into 20,000.

The Persian invasion was drawn upon it by an alliance with Lydia, where Amasis sent 120,000 men; its, at times, successful struggles against the gigantic armies of its Persian conquerors betoken great inherent strength; yet it sank for ever, a perpetual desolation. “Rent, twenty-three centuries ago, from her natural proprietors,” says an unbelieving writer, “she has seen Persians, Macedonians, Romans, Greeks, Arabs, Georgians, and at length, the race of Tartars, distinguished by the name of Ottoman Turks, establish themselves in her bosom.” “The system of oppression is methodical;” “an universal air of misery is manifest in all which the traveler meets.”: “Mud-walled cottages are now the only habitations, where the ruins of temples and palaces abound. The desert covers many extensive

regions, which once raised Egypt among the chief of the kingdoms." The desolation of Egypt is the stranger, because exceeding misrule alone could have effected it.

Egypt in its largest dimensions, has been calculated to contain 123,527 square miless or 79,057,339 acres, and to be three fourths of the size of France Memoire sur le lae de Moeris. (1843). The mountains which hem in Upper Egypt, diverge at Cairo, parting, the one range, due east, the other northwest. The mountains on the west sink into the plains; those on the east retain their height as far as Suez. About 10 miles below Cairo, the Nile parted, enclosing within the outside of its seven branches, that triangle of wondrous fertility, the Delta. A network of canals, formed by the stupendous industry of the ancient Egyptians, enclosed this triangle in another yet larger, whose base, along the coast, was 235 miles, in direct distance about 181. East of the eastern-most branch of the Nile, lay the "land of Goshen," formerly, at least for cattle, "the good of the land" Genesis 47:6, Genesis 47:11, a part, at least, of the present esh-Sharkiyyeh, second in size of the provinces of Egypt, but which, 1375 a.d., yielded the highest revenue of the state.

On the western side of the Nile, and about a degree south of the apex of the Delta, a stupendous work, the artificial lake of Moeris, enclosing within masonry 64 34 square miles of water, received the superfluous waters of the river, and thus at once prevented the injury incidental on any too great rise of the Nile, and supplied water during six months for the irrigation of 1724 square miles, or 1,103,375, acres.

The Nile which, when it overflowed, spread like a sea over Egypt, encircling its cities like islands, carried with it a fertilizing power, attested by all, but which, unless so attested, would seem fabulous. Beneath a glowing heat, greater than its latitude will account for, the earth, supplied with continual moisture and an ever renewed alluvial deposit which supersedes all need of "dressing" the soil, yields, within the year, three harvests of varied produce. This system of canalising Egypt must have been of very early antiquity. That giant conception of the water system of lake Moeris is supposed to have been the work of Ammenemhes, perhaps about 1673, b.c.. But such a giant plan presupposes the existence of an artificial

system of irrigation which it expanded. In the time of Moses, we hear incidentally of "the streams" of Egypt, "the canals" (that is, those used for irrigation), and "the ponds" Exodus 7:19; Exodus 8:1, the receptacles of the water which was left when the Nile retired.

Besides these, an artificial mode of irrigation "by the foot" Genesis 27:39: it had Numbers 20:17 "cornfields" and "vineyards" in abundance, and "wells" of water; its vegetation, its trees, and its vineyards, attracted the dew by which they were supported. "Petra," says Strabo, (xvi. 4,21), "lies in a spot precipitous and abrupt without, but within possessed of abundant fountains for watering and horticulture." The terrace-cultivation, through which each shower which falls is stored to the uttermost, clothing with fertility the mountain-sides, leaves those steep sides the more bare, when disused. "We saw," says a traveler, "many ruined terraces, the evidences and remains of a flourishing agriculture, which, in the prosperous days of Edom and Petra, clothed many of these now sterile mountains with fertility and beauty. Fields of wheat and some agricultural villages still exist in the eastern portion of Edom; but, with very slight exceptions, the country is blighted with cheerless desolations and hopeless sterility. The hill-sides and mountains, once covered with earth and clothed with vineyards, are now bare rocks. The soil no longer supported by terraces and sheltered by trees, has been swept away by the rains. The various contrivances for irrigation, which even now might restore fertility to many considerable tracts, have all disappeared. Sand from the desert, and the debris of the soft rock of the mountains, cover the valleys which formerly smiled with plenty."

Now "the springs have been dried up to such an extent, as to render the renewal of the general fertility of Edom (well nigh) impossible. In places along the course of the stream, reeds and shrubs grow luxuriantly, oleanders and wild figs abound, and give proof that a little cultivation would again cover the rock, and fill the cliffs with the numberless gardens which once adorned them. The traces of former fertility are innumerable; every spot capable of sustaining vegetable life was carefully watered and cultivated. There are numerous grooves in the rocks to carry rainwater to the little clefts in which even now figs are found. Every spot capable of being so protected has been walled up, however small the space gained, or however difficult the means of securing it. The ancient inhabitants seem to have left

no accessible place untouched. They have exhibited equal art and industry in eliciting from the grand walls of their marvelous capital whatever the combination of climate, irrigation and botanical skill could foster in the scanty soil afforded them. The hanging gardens must have had a wondrous effect among the noble buildings of the town when it was in all its glory." This desolation began soon after the captivity of Judah and Edom's malicious joy in it. For Malachi appeals to Judah, that whereas God had restored him, He had "laid the mountains and the heritage" of Esau "waste for the jackals of the wilderness" Malachi 1:3.

Yet Edom was the center of the conversation of nations. Occupying, as it did in its narrowest dimensions, the mountains between the south end of the Dead Sea and the Aelanitic gulf, it lay on the direct line between Egypt and Babylonia. A known route lay from Heroopolis to Petra its capital, and thence to Babylon. Elath and Ezion-geber discharged through its vally, the Arabah, the wealth which they received by sea from India or Africa. Petra was the natural halting-place of the caravans. "The Nabataeans," says Pliny, "enclose Petra, in a valley of rather more than two miles in extent, surrounded by inaccessible mountains, through which a stream flows. Here the two roads meet of those who go to Palmyra of Syria, and of those who come from Gaza." Eastward again, he says, "they went from Petra to Fora, and thence to Charax" on the banks of the Tigris, near the Persian gulf.

Yet further the wealth of Arabia Felix poured by a land-route through Petra.: "To Petra and Palestine, Gerraens and Minaeans and all the neighboring Arabs brought down from the upper country the frankincense, it is said, and all other fragrant merchandise." Even after the foundation of Alexandria had diverted much of the stream of commerce from Leuce Come, the Aelanitic gulf, and Petra to Myos Hormus on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea, the Romans still connected Elath and Petra with Jerusalem by a great road, of which portions are still extant, and guarded the contact by military stations. Of these routes, that from Arabia Felix and from Egypt to Babylonia had probably been used for above 1000 years before the time of Joel. Elath and Eziongeber were well-known towns at the time of the Exodus Deuteronomy 2:8.

The contact was itself complex and manifold. The land exports of Arabia Felix and the commerce of Elath necessarily passed through Edom, and thence radiated to Egypt, Palestine, Syria. The withdrawal of the commerce of Egypt would not alone have destroyed that of Petra, while Tyre, Jerusalem, Damascus, still received merchandise through her. To them she was the natural channel; the pilgrim-route from Damascus to Mecca lies still by Petra. In Joel‘s time, not the slightest shadow was cast on her future. Then Babylon destroyed her for a time; but she recovered. The Babylonian and Persian Empires perished; Alexander rose and fell; Rome, the master alike of Alexandria and Petra, meant Petra still to survive. No human eye could even then tell that it would be finally desolate; much less could any human knowledge have foreseen it in that of Joel. But God said by him, “Edom shall be a desolate wilderness,” and it is so!

As, however, Egypt and Edom are only instances of the enemies of God‘s people and Church, so their desolation is only one instance of a great principle of God‘s Government, that “the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the ungodly for a moment” Job 20:5; that, after their short-lived office of fulfilling God‘s judgment on His people, the judgment rolls round on themselves, “and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate” Psalm 34:21.

Verse 20

Judah shall dwell for ever - Not earthly Judah, nor earthly Jerusalem, for these must come to an end, together with the earth itself, of whose end the prophets well knew. It is then the one people of God, the true Judah, the people who praise God, the Israel, which is indeed Israel. Egypt and Edom and all the enemies of God should come to an end; but His people shall never come to an end. “The gates of hell shall not prevail against her.” The enemy shall not destroy her; time shall not consume her; she shall never decay. The people of God shall abide before Him and through Him here, and shall dwell with Him forever.

Verse 21

For I will cleanse her blood that I have not cleansed - The word rendered “cleansed” is not used of natural cleansing, nor is the image taken from the cleansing of the body. The word signifies only to pronounce innocent, or to free from guilt. Nor is “blood” used of sinfulness generally,

but only of the actual guilt of shedding blood. The whole then cannot be an image taken from the cleansing of physical defilement, like the words in the prophet Ezekiel, "then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee" Ezekiel 16:9. Nor again can it mean the forgiveness of sins generally, but only the pronouncing innocent the blood which had been shed. This, the only meaning of the words, fall in with the mention of the "innocent blood," for shedding which, Egypt and Edom had been condemned. The words are the same. There it was said, "because they have shed innocent blood; dam naki;" here, "I will pronounce innocent their blood, nikkethi damam." "How," it is not said. But the sentence on Egypt and Edom explains how God would do it, by punishing those who shed it. For in that He punishes the shedding of it, He declared the "blood" innocent, whose shedding He punished. So in the Revelation it is said, "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Revelation 6:10-11.: "Then, at the last judgment, when the truth in all things shall be made manifest, He shall "declare the blood" of His people, who clave to Him and His truth, which blood their enemies thought they had shed justly and deservedly as the blood of guilty persons, to have indeed been innocent, by absorbing them from eternal destruction to which He shall then adjudge their enemies for shedding of it."

For - (literally and) the Lord dwelleth in Zion He closes with the promise of God's abiding dwelling. He speaks, not simply of a future, but of an ever-abiding present. He who is, the unchangeable God, "the Lord, infinite in power and of eternal Being, who gives necessary being to all His purposes and promises," dwelleth now in "Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12:22; add Galatians 4:26; Revelation 3:12; Revelation 14:1; Revelation 21:2, Revelation 21:10), now by grace and the presence of His Holy Spirit, hereafter in glory. Both of the Church militant on earth and that triumphant in heaven, it is truly to be said, that the Lord dwelleth in them, and that, perpetually. Of the Church on earth will be verified what our Saviour Christ saith, "lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" Matthew 28:20; and of its members Paul saith, that "they" are "of the household of God, an holy temple in the Lord, in whom they are builded together for an habitation of God through the

Spirit" Ephesians 2:19, Ephesians 2:21-22. Of the Church triumphant, there is no doubt, that "He" doth and will there dwell, and manifest His glorious presence forever, "in" whose "presence is the fullness of joy, and at His Right Hand" there are "pleasures for evermore" Psalm 16:1-11:12. It is an eternal dwelling of the Eternal, varied as to the way and degree of His presence by our condition, now imperfect, there perfected in Him; but He Himself dwelleth on for ever. He, the Unchangeable, dwelleth unchangeably; the Eternal, eternally.

: "Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God" Psalm 87:3 Jerusalem, our mother, we thy children now groan and weep in this valley of tears, hanging between hope and fear, and, amid toil and conflicts, "lifting up our eyes" to thee and greeting thee from far. Truly "glorious things are spoken of thee." But whatever can be said, since it is said to people and in the words of people, is too little for the "good things" in thee, which "neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man" 1 Corinthians 2:9. Great to us seem the things which we suffer; but one of thy most illustrious citizens, placed amid those sufferings, who knew something of thee, hesitated not to say, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" 2 Corinthians 4:17. We will then "rejoice in hope," and "by the waters of Babylon," even while "we sit and weep," we will "remember thee, O Zion. If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget" her cunning. "Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, I do not remember thee, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" Psalm 137:1-9.

O blessed longed-for day, when we shall enter into the city of the saints, ‹whose light is the Lamb,‘ where ‹the King is seen in His beauty,‘ where ‹all tears are wiped off from the eyes‘ of the saints, ‹and there shall be no more death neither sorrow nor pain, for the former things have passed away Revelation 21:23; Isaiah 33:17; Revelation 21:4. "How amiable are Thy tabernacle, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God" Psalm 84:1-2. "When shall I come and appear before God?" Psalm 42:2, when shall I see that Father, whom I ever long for and never see, to whom out of this exile, I cry out, "Our Father, which art in heaven?" O true Father, "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:6, …), "Father of mercies and God of

all comfort!" 2 Corinthians 1:3. When shall ‹I see the Word, who was in the beginning with God,‘ and who ‹is God?‘ John 1:1. When may I kiss His sacred Feet, pierced for me, put my mouth to His sacred Side, sit at His Feet, never to depart from them? O Face, more Glorious than the sun! Blessed is he, who beholdeth Thee, who hath never ceased to say, ‹I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh‘ Numbers 24:17. When will the day come, when, cleansed from the defilement of my sins, I shall, ‹with unveiled face, behold the glory of the Lord‘ 2 Corinthians 3:18, and see the sanctifying Spirit, the Author of all good, through whose sanctifying we are cleansed, that ‹we may be like Him, and see Him as He is?‘ 1 John 3:2. ‹Blessed are all they that dwell in Thy house,‘ O Lord, ‹they shall ever praise Thee‘ Psalm 84:4; forever shall they behold Thee and love Thee."

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AMOS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Amos

Theodoret: "He who made, one by one, the hearts of men, and understands all their works, knowing the hardness and contrariousness of the heart of Israel, reasons with them not through one prophet only, but, employing as His ministers many prophets and wondrous men, admonishes them and foretells the things to come, evidencing through the harmony of many the truthfulness of their predictions."

As the contradiction of false teachers gave occasion to Paul to speak of himself, so the persecution of the priest of Bethel has brought out such knowledge as we have of the life of Amos, before God called him to be a prophet. "I," he says, "was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son" Amos 7:14. He had not received any of the training in those schools of the prophets which had been founded by Samuel, and through which, amid the general apostasy and corruption, both religious knowledge and religious life were maintained in the remnant of Israel. He was a "herdsman," whether (as this word, בקר *bâqâr* would naturally mean being used always of the "ox" or "herd" in contrast with the "flocks" of sheep or goats, and the name being derived from "plowing") "a cowherd" or (less obviously) "a shepherd." He was "among the herdsmen of Tekoah"; among them, and, outwardly, as they, in nothing distinguished from them.

The sheep which he tended (because he also kept sheep) may have been his own. There is nothing to prove or to disprove it. Anyhow, he was not like the king of Moab, "a sheep-master", as the Jews, following out their principle, that "prophecy was only bestowed by God upon the rich and noble" (see the note at Joel 2:29), wish to make him. Like David, he was following the sheep, as their shepherd. But his employment as "a gatherer" (or, more probably, "a cultivator") "of sycamore fruit" designates him instead as one living by a rural employment for hire. Probably, the word designates the artificial means by which the sycamore fruit was ripened, irritating, scraping, puncturing, wounding it.

Amos does not say that these were his food, but that one of his jobs was to perform a gardener's function in maturing the figs. So he was something of a gardener and a shepherd among other shepherds. The sheep which he

fed were also probably a matter of trade. The breed of sheep and goats, נקד *naqad* in keeping with his special name of shepherd נקד *nôqêd* was derived, is still known by the same name in Arabia; a race, small, thin, short-legged, ugly, and stunted. It furnished a proverb, "viler than a naqad"; yet the wool of the sheep was accounted the very best. The goats were found especially in Bahrein. Among the Arabs also, the shepherd of these sheep was known by a name derived from them. They were called "naqad;" and their shepherd was called a "noqad".

The prophet's birthplace, Tekoah, was a town which, in the time of Josephus and of Jerome, had dwindled into a "village", "a little village", on a high hill, twelve miles from Jerusalem, "which," Jerome adds, "we see daily." "It lay" Jerome says, "six miles southward from holy Bethlehem where the Saviour of the world was born, and beyond it is no village except some rude huts and movable tents. Such is the wide waste of the desert which stretches to the Red Sea, and the bounds of the Persians, Ethiopians, and Indians. And no grain whatever being grown upon this dry and sandy soil, it is all full of shepherds, in order, by the multitude of the flocks, to make amends for the barrenness of the land." From Tekoah Joab brought the "wise woman" 1 Samuel 14:2 to intercede for Absalom; Rehoboam built it 2 Chronicles 11:6; i. e., whereas it had been before (what it afterward again became) a village, and so was not mentioned in the Book of Joshua, he made it a fortified town toward his southeastern border.

The neighboring wilderness was called after it (2 Chronicles 20:20; Amos 7:13 sanctuary, the temple of the state, to denounce the idolatry sanctioned by the state, to foretell the extinction of the Royal family, and the captivity of the people. This, like Hosea, he had to do in the reign of the mightiest of the sovereigns of Israel, in the midst of her unclouded prosperity. Bethel was only twelve miles north of Jerusalem, since Tekoah was twelve miles toward the southeast. Six or seven hours would suffice to transport the shepherd from his sheep and the wilderness to that fountain of Israel's corruption, the high places of Bethel, and for the inspired peasant to confront the priests and the prophets of the state-idolatry.

There doubtless he said, "the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste" Amos 7:9; and there, like the former "man of God," while standing opposite

“the altar,” he renewed the prophecy against it, and prophesied that in its destruction it should involve its idolatrous worshipers Amos 9:1. Yet although he did deliver a part of his prophecy at Bethel, still, like his great predecessors Elijah and Elisha, doubtless he did not confine his ministry there. His summons to the luxurious ladies of Samaria, whose expenses were supported by the oppressions of the poor Amos 4:1, was without question delivered in Samaria itself. The call to the pagan to look down into Samaria from the heights which girt in the valley out of which it rose (see the notes at Amos 3:9), thence to behold its din and its oppressions, to listen to the sound of its revelries and the wailings of its oppressed, and so to judge between God and His people, would also be most effectively given within Samaria. The consciences of the guilty inhabitants to whom he preached would populate the heights around them, their wall of safety, as they deemed, between them and the world, with pagan witnesses of their sins, and pagan avengers.

The prophet could only know the coming destruction of the house of Jeroboam and the captivity of Israel by inspiration. The sins which he rebuked, he probably knew from being among them. As Paul‘s “spirit was stirred in him” at Athens, “when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry” Acts 17:16, so the spirit of Amos must have been stirred to its depths by that grievous contrast of luxury and penury side by side, which he describes in such vividness of detail. The sins which he rebukes are those of the outward prosperity especially of a capital, the extreme luxury Amos 3:12, Amos 3:15; Amos 4:1; Amos 5:11; Amos 6:4-6, revelries Amos 2:8; Amos 3:9, debauchery Amos 2:7, of the rich, who supported their own reckless expenditure by oppression of the poor Amos 2:7-8; Amos 3:9; Amos 4:1; Amos 5:11; Amos 6:3; Amos 8:4-6, extortion Amos 3:10, hard bargains with their necessities Amos 2:8, perversion of justice Amos 2:7; Amos 5:7, Amos 5:12, with bribing, Amos 2:6; Amos 5:12, false measures Amos 8:5, a griping, hard-fisted, and probably usurious sale of grain Amos 8:5-6. In grappling with sin, Amos deals more with the details and circumstances of it than Hosea. Hosea touches the center of the offence; Amos shows the hideousness of it in the details into which it branches out. As he is everywhere graphic, so here he points out the events of daily life in which the sin showed itself, as the vile price or, it may be, the article of luxury, “the pair of sandals” Amos 2:6; Amos 8:6, for which the poor was sold, or

the “refuse of wheat” (he coins the term) which they sold, at high prices and with short measure to the poor Amos 8:6.

According to the title which Amos prefixes to his prophecy, his office fell within the 25 years, during which Uzziah and Jeroboam II were contemporaries (809-784 B. C). This falls in with the opinion already expressed that the bloodshed mentioned by Hosea in the list of their sins, was instead political bloodshed in their revolutions after the death of Jeroboam II, than individual murder. For Amos, while upbraiding Israel for the sins incidental to political prosperity and wealth (such as was the time of Jeroboam II) does not mention bloodshed.

It has been thought that the mention of the earthquake, two years before which Amos began his prophecy, furnishes us with a more definite date. That earthquake must have been a terrible visitation, since it was remembered after the captivity, two and a half centuries afterward. “Ye shall flee,” says Zechariah Zechariah 14:5, as of a thing which his hearers well knew by report, “as ye fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah.” Josephus connects the earthquake with Uzziah‘s act of pride in offering the incense, for which God struck him with leprosy. He relates it as a fact (Antiquities ix. 10): “Meanwhile a great earthquake shook the ground, and, the temple parting, a bright ray of the sun shone forth, and fell upon the king‘s face, so that immediately the leprosy came over him. And before the city, at the place called Eroge, the Western half of the hill was broken off and rolled half a mile to the mountain Eastward, and there stayed, blocking up the ways and the king‘s gardens.” This account of Josephus, however, is altogether unhistorical. Not to argue from the improbability, that such an event as the rending of the temple itself should not have been mentioned, Josephus has confused Zechariah‘s description of an event yet future with the past earthquake under Uzziah. Nor can the date be reconciled with the history. For when Uzziah was stricken with leprosy, “Jotham, his son, was over the king‘s house, judging the people of the land” 2 Chronicles 26:21. But Jotham was only 25 years old at his father‘s death, “when he himself began to reign” 2 Chronicles 27:1. And, Uzziah survived Jeroboam by 26 years. So Jotham, who judged for his father after his leprosy, was not born when Jeroboam died. Uzziah then must have been stricken with leprosy some years after Jeroboam‘s death; and consequently,

after the earthquake also, since Amos, who prophesied in the days of Jeroboam, prophesied "two years before the earthquake."

An ancient Hebrew interpretation of the prophecy of Isaiah, "within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken that it is no more a people" Isaiah 7:8, assumed that Isaiah was foretelling the commencement of the captivity under Tiglath-Pileser or Sargon, and since the period of Isaiah's own prophecy to that captivity was not 65 years, supposed that Isaiah counted from a prophecy of Amos, "Israel shall surely be led captive out of his own land" Amos 7:11, Amos 7:17. They placed this prophecy of Amosin the 25th year of Uzziah. Then his remaining 27 years, Jotham's 16 years, Ahaz' 16 years, and the first 6 years of Hezekiah would have made up the 65 years. This calculation was not necessarily connected with the error as to the supposed connection of the earthquake and the leprosy of Uzziah. However, it is plain from the words of Isaiah, "in yet threescore and five years," that he is dating from the time when he uttered the prophecy; and so the prophecy relates, not to the imperfect captivity which ended the "kingdom" of Israel, but to that more complete deportation under Esarhaddon Ezra 4:2; 2 Chronicles 33:11; 2 Kings 17:24, when the ten tribes ceased to be "anymore a people" (Ahaz-14 years + Hezekiah-29 years + Manasseh-22 years =65 years total). Neither then does this fix the date of Amos.

Nor does the comparison, which Amos bids Israel make between his own borders, and those of Calneh, Hamath and Gath, determine the date of the prophecy. Since Uzziah broke down the walls of Gath 2 Chronicles 26:6, and Hamath was recovered by Jeroboam II to Israel 2 Kings 14:28, it is probable that the point of comparison lay between the present disasters of these nations, and those with which Amos threatened Israel, and which the rich men of Israel practically did not believe. For it follows, "ye that put far away the evil day" Amos 6:3. It is probable then that Calneh (the very ancient city Genesis 10:10 which subsequently became Ctesiphon,) on the other side of the Euphrates, had lately suffered from Assyria, as Gath and Hamath from Judah and Israel. But we know none of these dates. Isaiah speaks of the Assyrian as boasting that "Calno" was "as Carchemish Isaiah 10:9, Hamath as Arpad, Samaria as Damascus." But this relates to times long subsequent, when Hamath, Damascus, and Samaria, had fallen into the

hands of Assyria. Our present knowledge of Assyrian history gives us no clue to the event, which was well known to those to whom Amos spoke.

Although, however, the precise time of the prophetic office of Amos cannot thus be fixed, it must have fallen within the reign of Jeroboam, to whom Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, accused him Amos 7:10-11. For this whole prophecy implies that Israel was in a state of prosperity, ease, and security, whereas it fell to a state of anarchy immediately upon Jeroboam‘s death. “The mention of the entering in of Hamath” Amos 6:14 as belonging to Israel implies that this prophecy was after Jeroboam had recovered it to Israel 2 Kings 14:25; and the ease, pride, luxury, which he upbraids, evince that the foreign oppressions 2 Kings 14:26 had ceased for some time. This agrees with the title of the prophecy, but does not limit it further. Since he prophesied while Uzziah and Jeroboam II reigned together, Amos‘ prophetic office must have fallen between 809 b.c. and 784 b.c. - in the last 25 years of the reign of Jeroboam II. His office, then, began probably after that of Hosea, and closed long before its close. He is, in a manner then, both later and earlier than Hosea, later than the earliest period of Hosea‘s prophetic office, and far earlier than the latest.

Within this period, there is nothing to limit the activity of Amos to a very short time. The message of Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, implies that Amos‘ words of woe had shaken Israel through and through. “Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words” Amos 7:10. It may be that God sent him to the midst of some great festival at Bethel, as, at Jeroboam‘s dedication-feast, He sent the prophet who afterward disobeyed Him, to foretell the desecration of the altar, which Jeroboam was consecrating, in God‘s Name, against God. In this case, Amos might, at once, like Elijah, have been confronted with a great. concourse of the idol-worshipers. Yet the words of Amaziah seem, in their obvious meaning, to imply that Amos had had a more pervading influence than would be produced by the delivery of God‘s messsage in one place. He says of “the land,” that is, of all the ten tribes generally, it “is not able to bear all his words.” The accusation also of a “conspiracy” probably implies, that some had not been only shaken, but they had been converted by the words of Amos, and were known by their adherence to him and his belief.

Amos seems also to speak of the prohibition to God‘s prophets to prophesy, as something habitual, beyond the one opposition of Amaziah, which he rebuked on the spot. “I raised up of your sons for prophets; but ye commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not” Amos 2:11-12. Nor, strictly speaking, was Amos a son of Ephraim. The series of images in Amos 4:1-13 seem to be an answer to the objection as to why he prophesied among them. People, he would say, were not, in the things of nature, surprised that the effect followed the cause. God‘s command was the cause; Amos‘ prophesying was the effect Amos 3:3-8. “Then they put away from them the evil day” Amos 6:3, forgetting future evil in present luxury; or they professed that God was with them; “the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken” Amos 5:14; or trusting in their half-service of God and His imagined presence among them, they jeered at Amos‘ prophecies of ill, and professed to desire the Day of the Lord, with which he threatened them; they said that evil would not reach them; “Woe unto you that desire the Day of the Lord! To what end is it to you?” Amos 5:18. “All the sinners of My people shall die by the sword, which say, the evil shall not overtake nor prevent us” Amos 9:10. They showed also in deed that they hated those who publicly reproved them Amos 5:10; and Amos, like Hosea, declares that they are hardened, so that wisdom itself must leave them to themselves Amos 5:13. All this implies a continued contact between the prophet and the people, so that his function was not discharged in a few sermons, so to say, or inspired declarations of God‘s purpose, but must have been that of a pastor among them over the course of several years. His present book (like Hosea‘s book) is a summary of his prophecies.

That book (since Amos himself subsequently gathered his prophetic teaching into a whole) is one well-ordered whole. He himself (in the title) states that it had been spoken before it was written. For in that he says, these are “the words” which in prophetic vision he “saw, two years before the earthquake,” this portion of his prophecies must have preceded his writings by those two years at least. That terrible earthquake was probably the occasion of his collecting those prophecies. But that earthquake doubtless was no mere note of time. If he had intended only a date, he would probably have named (as other prophets do) the year of the king of Judah. He himself mentions earthquakes Amos 4:11, as one of the warnings

of God‘s displeasure. This more destructive earthquake was probably the first great token of God‘s displeasure during the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II, the first herald of those heavier judgments which Amos had predicted, and which broke upon Israel, wave after wave, until the last, carried him away captive. For two years, Israel had been forewarned; now “the beginning of sorrows” Matthew 24:8 had set in.

Amos, at the beginning of his book (as has been already noticed) joins on his book with the book of the prophet Joel. Joel had foretold, as instances of God‘s judgments on sin, how He would recompense the wrong, which Tyre, Zidon, Philistia and Edom had done to Judah, and that He would make Egypt desolate. Amos, omitting Egypt, adds Damascus, Amman and Moab, and Judah itself. It may be, that he selects seven nations in all, as a sort of whole (since that number is so often used), or that he includes all the special enemies of the theocracy, the nations who hated Israel and Judah, because they were the people of God, and God‘s people itself, as far as it too was alienated from its God. Certainly, the sins denounced are sins against the theocracy or government of God. It may be, that Amos would exhibit to them the truth, that “God is no respecter of persons;” that He, the Judge of the whole earth, punishes every sinful nation; and that he would, by this declaration of God‘s judgments, prepare them for the truth, from which sinful man so shrinks; - that God punishes most, where He had most shown His light and love Amos 3:2. The thunder-cloud of God‘s judgments, having passed over all the nations round about, Syria and Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and even discharged the fire from heaven on Judah and Jerusalem, settles finally upon Israel. The summary which closes this circle of judgments on Israel, is fuller in regard to their sins, since they were the chief objects of his mission. In that summary Amos gathers into one the sins with which he elsewhere upbraids them, and sets before them their ingratitude and their endeavors to extinguish the light which God gave them.

Our chapters follow a natural division, in that each (like those of Hosea) ends in woe. Amos 3:1-15, Amos 4:1-13, and Amos 3:11; Amos 4:12; Amos 5:16, as before, Amos 2:14). On this follows a twofold woe, “Woe unto you that desire” Amos 5:18; “Woe to them that are at ease” Amos 6:1; both which sections alike end in renewed sentences of God‘s judgment; the first,

of the final captivity of Israel "beyond Damascus;" the second, of their nearer afflictions through the first invasion of Tiglath-pileser (see the note at Amos 6:14). In Amos 7:3, Amos 7:6.

In the third vision God interprets that He would no longer forgive Amos 7:8. Upon this followed the prohibition from Amaziah to prophesy, and God's sentence against him. In Amos 8:1-14, Amos resumes (as though nothing had intervened), the series of visions, upon which Amaziah had broken in. He resumes them exactly where he had been stopped. Amaziah interrupted when Amos declared that God would not "pass by" the house of Israel "anymore," but would desolate the idol-sanctuaries of israel and bring a sword against the house of Jeroboam. The vision (in which Amos resumes) renews the words, "I will not again pass by them anymore" Amos 8:2, and foretells that the songs of the idol-temple should be turned into howlings. Amos heads the last chapter with a vision, that not only should the idol-altar and temple be destroyed, but that it should be the destruction of its worshipers Amos 9:1. Amos makes each of these visions a theme which he expands, both ending in woe; the first, with the utter destruction of the idolaters of Israel Amos 8:14; the second, with that of the sinful "kingdom" of Israel Amos 9:8. With this he unites the promise to the "house" of Israel, that, "sifted" as they would be "among the nations, not one grain would fall to the earth" Amos 9:9. To this he, like Hosea, adds a closing promise (the first in his whole book) that God would raise the fallen tabernacle of David, convert the pagan, and therewith restore the captivity of Israel, amid promises, which had already (in Joel) symbolized spiritual blessings Amos 9:13.

Amos, like Hosea, was a prophet for Israel. After the second chapter in which he includes Judah in the circle of God's visitations, because he had "despised the law of the Lord" Amos 2:4-5, Amos only notices him incidentally. He there foretells that Jerusalem should (as it was) be burned with fire. Judah also must be included in the words, "against the whole family which God brought up out of the land of Egypt" Amos 3:1, and "woe" is pronounced against those who are "at ease in Zion Amos 6:1. Elsewhere, "Israel," "the house of Israel," "the virgin of Israel," "the sanctuaries of Israel," "Jacob," "the house of Jacob," and (in the same sense) "the high places of Isaac," "the house of Isaac"; "the house of

Joseph," "the remnant of Joseph," "the affliction of Joseph," "the mountain," or "the mountains of Samaria," "Samaria" itself, "Bethel" Amos 3:9, Amos 3:12-14; Amos 4:1, Amos 4:4-5, Amos 4:12; Amos 5:1, Amos 5:4, Amos 5:6, Amos 5:15, Amos 5:25; Amos 6:1, Amos 6:6, Amos 6:8, Amos 6:14; Amos 7:2, Amos 7:5, Amos 7:8-9, Amos 7:16-17; Amos 8:2, Amos 8:14; Amos 9:7-8, occur interchangeably as the object of his prophecy. Amaziah's taunt, that his words, as being directed against Israel and Bethel, would be acceptable in the kingdom of Judah, implies the same; and Amos himself declares that this was his commission, "go, prophesy unto My people Israel." In speaking of the idolatry of Beersheba, Amos uses the word, "pass not over to Beersheba" Amos 5:5, adding the idolatries of Judah to their own. The word, "pass not over," could only be used by one prophesying in Israel. Therefore, it must have been the more impressive to the faithful in Israel, that Amos closed his prophecy by the promise, not to them primarily, but to the house of David, and to Israel through its restoration. Amos, like Hosea, foretells the utter destruction of "the kingdom of Israel," even while pronouncing that God would not utterly destroy "the house of Jacob" Amos 9:8-10, but would save the elect within it.

The opposition of Amaziah stands out, as one signal instance of the manifold cry, "Prophesy not," with which people to drown the Voice of God. Jeroboam left the complaint unheeded. His great victories had been foretold to him by the prophet Jonah; and he would not interfere with the prophet of God, although he predicted, not as Amaziah distorted his words, that "Jeroboam" should "die by the sword," but that "the house of Jeroboam" Amos 7:9 would so perish. But his book is all comprised within the reign of Jeroboam and the kingdom of Israel. He was called by God to be a prophet there; nor is there even the slightest trace of his having exercised his function in Judah, or having retired there in life.

A somewhat late tradition places Amos among the many prophets whom our Lord says His people killed. The tradition bore, "that after he (Amos) had been beaten often (the writer uses the same word which occurs in Hebrews 11:35) by Amaziah the priest of Bethel, the son of that priest, Osee, pierced his temples with a stake. He was carried half-dead to his own land, and, after some days, died of the wound, and was buried with his

fathers." But the anonymous Greek writer who relates it, (although it is in itself probable) has not, in other cases, trustworthy information, and Jerome and Cyril of Alexandria knew nothing of it. Jerome relates only that the tomb of Amos was still shown at Tekoa, his birthplace.

The influence of the shepherd-life of Amos appears most in the sublimest part of his prophecy, his descriptions of the mighty workings of Almighty God Amos 4:13; Amos 5:8; Amos 9:5-6. With those awful and sudden changes in nature, whereby what to the idolaters was an object of worship, was suddenly overcast, and "the day made dark with night," his shepherd-life had made him familiar. The starry heavens had often witnessed the silent conversation of his soul with God. In the calf, the idolaters of Ephraim worshiped "nature." Amos then delights in exhibiting to them His God, whom they too believed that they worshiped, as the Creator of "nature," wielding and changing it at His Will. All nature too should be obedient to its Maker in the punishment of the ungodly Amos 8:8, nor should anything hide from Him Amos 9:2-3, Amos 9:5. The shepherd-life would also make the prophet familiar with the perils from wild beasts which we know of as facts in David's youth. The images drawn from them were probably reminiscences of what he had seen or encountered Amos 3:4-5, Amos 3:12; Amos 5:19. But Amos, a shepherd in a barren and for the most part treeless wild, lived not as a farmer. His was not a country of grain, nor of cedars and oaks; so that images from stately trees Amos 2:9, a heavy-laden wain Amos 2:13, or the sifting of corn Amos 9:9, were not the direct results of his life amid sights of nature. The diseases of grain, locusts, drought, which, the prophet says, God had sent among them, were inflictions which would be felt in the grain-countries of Israel, rather than in the wilderness of Tekoah. The insensibility for which he upbraids Israel was, of course, their hardness of heart amid their own sufferings Amos 4:7-9; the judgments, with which he threatens them in God's Name Amos 7:1-3, can have no bearing on his shepherd-life in his own land.

Even Jerome, while laying down a true principle, inadvertently gives as an instance of the images resulting from that shepherd-life, the opening words of his book, which are in part words of the prophet Joel. "It is natural," he says, "that all who exercise an art, should speak in terms of their art, and that each should bring likenesses from that wherein he hath

spent his life. Why say this? In order to show, that Amos the prophet too, who was a shepherd among shepherds, and that, not in cultivated places, or amid vineyards, or woods, or green meadows, but in the wide waste of the desert, where were witnessed the fierceness of lions and the destruction of cattle, used the language of his art, and called the awful and terrible Voice of the Lord, the roaring of lions, and compared the overthrow of the cities of Israel to the lonely places of shepherds or the drought of mountains."

The truth may be, that the religious life of Amos, amid scenes of nature, accustomed him, as well as David, to express his thoughts in words taken from the great picture-book of nature, which, as being also written by the Hand of God, so wonderfully expresses the things of God. When his prophet's life brought him among other scenes of cultivated nature, his soul, so practiced in reading the relations of the physical to the moral world, took the language of his parables alike from what he saw, or from what he remembered. He was what we should call "a child of nature," endued with power and wisdom by his God. Still more mistaken has it been, to attribute to the prophet any inferiority even of outward style, in consequence of his shepherd-life. Even a pagan has said, "words readily follow thought;" much more, when thoughts and words are poured into the soul together by God the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, scarcely any prophet is more glowing in his style, or combines more wonderfully the natural and moral world, the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God Amos 4:13.

Visions, if related, are most effectively related in prose. Their efficacy depends, in part, on their simplicity. Their meaning might be overlaid and hidden by ornament of words. Thus, much of the Book of Amos, then, is naturally in prose. The poetry, so to speak, of the visions of Amos or of Zechariah is in the thoughts, not in the words. Amos has also chosen the form of prose for his upbraidings of the wealthy sinners of Israel. Yet, in the midst of this, what more poetic than the summons to the pagan enemies of Israel, to populate the heights around Samaria, and behold its sins Amos 3:9? What is more graphic than that picture of utter despair which did not dare to name the Name of God Amos 6:9-10? What is bolder than the summons to Israel to come, if they desired, at once to sin and to atone for their sin Amos 4:4? What is more striking in power than the sudden turn, "You only have I known. Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities"

Amos 3:2? Or the sudden summons "because I will do this unto thee" Amos 4:12 (the silence (what the "this" is) is more thrilling than words) "prepare to meet thy God, O Israel?" Or what is more pathetic than the close of the picture of the luxurious rich, when, having said, how they heaped luxuries one upon another, he ends with what they did not do; "they are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph" Amos 6:6?

Augustine selects Amos, as an instance of unadorned eloquence. Having given instances from Paul, he says, "These things, when they are taught by professors, are accounted great, bought at a great price, sold amid great boasting. I fear these discussions of mine may savor of the like boasting. But I have to do with men of a spurious learning, who think meanly of our writers, not because they have not, but because they make no show of the eloquence which these prize too highly.

"I see that I must say something of the eloquence of the prophets. And this I will do, chiefly out of the book of that prophet, who says that he was a shepherd or a cowherd, and was taken thence by God and sent to prophesy to His people.

"When then this peasant, or peasant-prophet, reproved the ungodly, proud, luxurious, and therefore most careless of brotherly love, he cries aloud, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, etc." Would they who, as being learned and eloquent, despise our prophets as unlearned and ignorant of elocution, had they had aught of this sort to say, or had they to speak against such, would they, as many of them as would fain not be senseless, wish to speak otherwise? For what would any sober ear desire more than is there said? First, the inveighing itself, with what a crash is it hurled as it were, to awaken their stupefied senses!"

Therefore, having analyzed these verses, he says, "How beautiful this is, and how it affects those who, reading, understand, there is no use in saying to one who does not himself feel it. More illustrations of the rules of rhetoric may be found in this one place, which I have selected. But a good hearer will not be so much instructed by a diligent discussion of them, as he will be kindled by their glowing reading. For these things were not composed by human industry, but were poured forth in eloquent wisdom

from the Divine Mind, wisdom not aiming at eloquence, but eloquence not departing from wisdom." "For if, as some most eloquent and acute men could see and tell, those things which are learned as by an art of rhetoric, would not be observed and noted and reduced to this system, unless they were first found in the genius of orators, what wonder if they be found in those also, whom "He" sends, who creates genius? Wherefore we may well confess that our canonical writers and teachers are not wise only but eloquent, with that eloquence which beseems their character."

Jerome, in applying to Amos words which Paul spoke of himself, "rude in speech but not in knowledge" 2 Corinthians 11:6, doubtless was thinking mostly of the latter words, for he adds, "For the same Spirit who spoke through all the prophets, spake in him." Dr. Lowth says happily (de Poesi Hebr. Prael. xxi.), "Jerome calls Amos, rude in speech but not in knowledge, implying of him what Paul modestly professed as to himself, on whose authority many have spoken of this prophet, as though he were altogether rude, ineloquent, unadorned. Far otherwise! Let any fair judge read his writings, thinking not who wrote them, but what he wrote, he will think that our shepherd was "in no wise behind the very chiefest" prophets; in the loftiness of his thoughts and the magnificence of his spirit, nearly equal to the highest, and in the splendor of his diction and the elegance of the composition scarcely inferior to any. For the same Divine Spirit moved by His inspiration Isaiah and Daniel in the court, David and Amos by the sheepfold; always choosing fitting interpreters of God's Will and sometimes perfecting praise out of the mouth of babes. Of some He uses the eloquence; others He makes eloquent."

It has indeed been noticed that in regularity of structure he has an elegance unique to himself. The strophaic form, into which he has cast the heavy prophecies of the two first chapters adds much to their solemnity; the recurring "burden" of the fourth chapter, "Yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord" Amos 4:6, Amos 4:8-11, gives it a deep pathos of its own. Indeed no other prophet has bound his prophecies into one, with so much care as to their outward form, as this inspired shepherd. Amos (to use human terms) was not so much the poet as the sacred orator. One of those energetic turns which have been already instanced, would suffice to stamp the human orator. Far more, they have shaken through and through souls

steeped in sin from the prophet‘s time until now. It has been said of human eloquence, “he lightened, thundered, he commingled Greece.” The shepherd has shaken not one country, but the world; not by a passing earthquake, but by the awe of God which, with electric force, streamed through his words.

Some variation of dialect, or some influence of his shepherd-life upon his pronunciation, has been imagined in Amos. But it relates to five words only. In three, his orthography differs by a single letter from that found elsewhere in Hebrew. In two cases, the variation consists in the use of a different sibilant; the third in the use of a weaker guttural. Besides these, he uses a softer sound of the name Isaac, which also occurs in Jeremiah and a Psalm; and in another word, he, in common with two Psalms, employs a root with a guttural, instead of that common in Hebrew which has a strong sibilant. In four of these cases, Amos uses the softer form; in the fifth, we only know that the two sibilants were pronounced differently once, but cannot guess what the distinction was. The two sibilants are interchanged in several Hebrew words, and on no rule, that we can discover. In another of the sibilants, the change made by Amos is just the reverse of that of the Ephrainmites who had only the pronunciation of “s” for “sh”; “sibboleth” for “shibboleth.” But the Ephraimites could not pronounce the “sh” at all; the variation in Amos is limited to a single word. The like variations to these instances in Amos are also found in other words in the Bible. On the whole, we may suspect the existence of a softer pronunciation in the South of Judaea, where Amos lived; but the only safe inference is, the extreme care with which the words have been handed down to us, just as the prophet spoke and wrote them.

It has been noticed already that Amos and Hosea together show, that all the Mosaic festivals and sacrifices, priests, prophets, a temple, were retained in Israel, only distorted to calf-worship Even the third-year‘s tithes they had not ventured to get rid of Amos supplies some yet more minute traits of ritual; that they had the same rules in regard to leaven Amos 4:5; that their altar too had horns (as prescribed in the law), on which the blood of the sacrifices was to be sprinkled (Amos 3:14, see Exodus 27:2; Exodus 29:12; Leviticus 4:25), they had the altar-bowls Amos 6:6 from where the blood of the victim was sprinkled, such as the princes of the congregation

offered in the time of Moses Numbers 7:13, and their rich men, at times at least, plundered to drink wine from.

They had also true Nazarites, raised up among them, as well as true prophets; and they felt the weight of the influence of these religious people against them, since they tried by fraud or violence to make them break their vow Amos 2:12. Amos, while upbraiding their rich men for breaking the law between man and man, presupposes that the Law of Moses was, in this respect also, acknowledged among them. For in his words, "they turn aside the way of the meek" (Amos 2:7; Amos 5:12, see Exodus 23:6; Deuteronomy 16:19; Deuteronomy 24:17; Deuteronomy 27:19) "they turn aside the poor in the gate" (Amos 2:8, see Exodus 22:26-27) "they take a ransom" Amos 5:12 (from the rich for their misdeeds), he retains the unique term of the Pentateuch; as also in that, "on clothes laid to pledge (Amos 2:8, see Exodus 22:26-27) they lie down by every altar;" "who make the Ephah small" (Amos 8:5, see Deuteronomy 25:14-15). "Balances of deceit" Amos 8:5 are the contrary of what are enjoined in the law, "balances of right" Leviticus 19:36.

In upbraiding them for a special impurity, forbidden in principle by the law Deuteronomy 23:1 he uses the sanction often repeated in the law "to profane My Holy Name" Amos 2:7; Leviticus 20:3. In the punishments which he mentions, he uses terms in which God threatens those punishments. The two remarkable words, rendered "blasting and mildew" Amos 4:9; Deuteronomy 28:22, occur only in Deuteronomy, and in Solomon's prayer founded upon it 1 Kings 8:37, and in Haggai Haggai 2:17 where he is referring to Amos. In the words, "as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah" Amos 4:11; Deuteronomy 29:23, the special term and form of Deuteronomy, as well as the threat, are retained. The threat, "Ye have built houses of hewn stone, and ye shall not dwell therein; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink the wine thereof;" but blends and enlarges those in Deuteronomy Amos 5:11; Deuteronomy 28:30, Deuteronomy 28:39. The remarkable term describing their unrepentance is taken from the same (Amos 4:6, Amos 4:8-10, see Deuteronomy 4:29).

So also the image of "gall and wormwood" (Amos 6:12, from Deuteronomy 29:18), two bitter plants, into which they turned judgment

and righteousness. There are other verbal reminiscences of the Pentateuch, interwoven with the words of Amos, which presuppose that it was in the memory of both the prophet and his hearers in Israel (see Amos 2:2, Amos 2:10-11; Amos 3:2; Amos 6:1; Amos 7:16; Amos 9:8, Amos 9:12). Indeed, after that long slavery of 400 years in Egypt, the traditions of the spots, hallowed by God‘s intercourse with the patriarchs, probably even their relations to “Edom their brother” Amos 1:11, must have been lost. The book of Genesis did not embody popular existing traditions of this sort, but must have revived them. The idolatry of Beersheba, as well as that of Gilead, alluded to by Hosea, as also Jeroboam‘s choice of Bethel itself for the calf-worship, imply on the part of the idolaters a knowledge and belief of the history, which they must have learned from the Pentateuch. Doubtless, it had been a part of Jeroboam‘s policy to set up, opposite the exclusive claim for the temple at Jerusalem, rival places of traditionary holiness from the mercies of God to their forefathers, much as Muhammed availed himself of the memory of Abraham, to found his claim for an interest in Jerusalem. But these traditions too must have been received BY the people, not derived from them. They were not brought with them from Egypt. The people, enslaved, degraded, sensualized, and idolatry-loving, had no hearts to cherish the memories of the pure religion of their great forefathers, who worshiped the unimaged Self-existing God.

As Amos employed the language of the Pentateuch and cited the Book of Joel, so it seems more probable, that in the burden of his first prophecies, “I will send a fire upon … and it shall devour the palaces of … ” he took the well-known words of Hosea Hosea 7:14, and, by their use, gave a unity to their prophecies, than that Hosea, who uses no language except that of the Pentateuch, should, in the one place where he employs this form, have limited the “burden” of Amos to the one case of Judah. Besides, in Hosea, the words, declaring the destruction of the cities and palaces of Judah, stand in immediate connection with Judah‘s wrong temper in building them whereas in Amos they are insulated. Beside this, the language of the two prophets does not bear upon each other, except that both have the term “balances of deceit” (Hosea 12:8 (Hosea 12:7 in English); Amos 8:5), which was originally formed in contrast with what God had enjoined in the law, “balances of right,” and which stands first in the Proverbs of Solomon Proverbs 11:1; Proverbs 20:23.

Of later prophets, Jeremiah renewed against Damascus the prophecy of Amos in his own words; only, the memory of Hazael having been obliterated perhaps in the destruction under Tiglath-Pileser, Jeremiah calls it not after Hazael, but by its own name and that of Benhadad Jeremiah 49:27. The words of Amos had once been fulfilled, and its people had been transported to Kir. Probably fugitives had again repopulated it, and Jeremiah intended to point out, that the sentence pronounced through Amos was not yet exhausted. On the similar ground probably, when upbraiding Ammon for the similar sins and for that for which Amos had denounced woe upon it, its endeavor to displace Israel Amos 1:13; Jeremiah 49:1, Jeremiah used the words of Amos, "their king shall qo into captivity - and his princes together" Amos 1:15; Jeremiah 49:3. In a similar manner, Haggai upbraids the Jews of his day for their impenitence under God's chastisements, in words varied in no essential from those of Amos Amos 4:9; Haggai 2:19. The words of Amos, so repeated to the Jews upon their restoration, sounded, as it were, from the desolate heritage of Israel, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee."

Other reminiscences of the words of Amos are only a part of the harmony of Scripture, the prophets in this way too indicating their unity with one another, that they use the words, the one of the other.

The might of Amos' teaching at the time, the state-priest Amaziah impressed on Jeroboam. Contemptuous toward Amos himself, Amaziah admitted the truth to Jeroboam. "The land is not able to bear all his (Amos') words." Doubtless, as the Jews were mad against Stephen, "not" being "able to resist the wisdom and Spirit by which he spake" Acts 6:10, so God accompanied with power His servant's words to His people. They had already seen God's words fulfilled against the houses of Jeroboam I, of Baasha, of Ahab. That same doom was now renewed against "the house of Jeroboam," and with it the prophecy of the dispersion of the ten tribes Amos 5:27; Amos 7:8-9, Amos 7:17, which Hosea contemporaneously foretold Hosea 1:6; Hosea 9:17. The two prophets of Israel confirmed one another, but also left themselves no escape. They staked the whole reputation of their prophecy on this definite issue. We know it to have been

fulfilled on the house of Jeroboam; yet the house of Jeroboam was firmer than any before or after it.

We know of the unaccustomed captivity of the ten tribes. Had they not been carried captive, prophecy would have come to shame; and such in proportion is its victory. Each step was an installment, a pledge, of what followed. The death of Zechariah, Jeroboam‘s son, was the first step in the fulfillment of the whole; then probably, in the invasion of Pul against Menahem 2 Kings 15:19, followed the doom of Amaziah. God is not anxious to vindicate His word. He does not, as to Shebna Isaiah 22:17-18, or Amaziah, or the false prophets Ahab, Zedekiah Jeremiah 29:20-22, or Shemaiah Jeremiah 29:32, or Pashur Jeremiah 20:6, or other false prophets Jeremiah 14:15. At times, as in the case of Hananiah Jeremiah 28:17, Scripture records the individual fulfillment of God‘s judgments. Mostly, it passes by unnoticed the execution of God‘s sentence. The sentence of the criminal, unless reprieved, in itself implies the execution. The fact impressed those who witnessed it; the record of the judgment suffices for us.

Then followed, under Tiglath-pileser, the fulfillment of the prophecy as to Damascus Amos 1:5, and Gilead Amos 6:14. Under Sargon was fulfilled the prophecy on the ten tribes Amos 5:27; Amos 7:8-9, Amos 7:17; Amos 9:8. That on Judah Amos 2:5 yet waited 133 years, and then was fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar. A few years later, and he executed God‘s judgments foretold by Amos on their enemies, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Tyre Amos 1:9; Amos 2:3. Amos 1:6-8: kings of Egypt, Assyria, and the Macedonian Alexander the Great fulfilled in succession the prophecy as to Philistia. So various were the human wills, so multitudinous the events, which were to bring about the simple words of the shepherd-prophet. Amos foretells the events; he does say, why the judgments should come. Amos does not foretell when, or through whom the judgments would come. Nevertheless, he foretells the events themselves absolutely, and they came. Like Joel, he foretells the conversion of the pagan and anticipates so far the prophecies of Isaiah, that God would work this through the restoration of the house of David, when fallen. It is a strange comment upon human greatness that the royal line was not to be employed in the salvation of the world until it was fallen! The royal palace had to become the hut of Nazareth before the

Redeemer of the world could be born, whose glory and kingdom were not of this world, who came, to take nothing from us but our nature, that He might sanctify it, our misery, that He might bear it for us. Yet flesh and blood could not foresee it before it came, as flesh and blood could not believe it, after He came.

AMOS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen - "Amos begins by setting forth his own nothingness, and withal the great grace of his Teacher and Instructor, the Holy Spirit, referring all to His glory." He, like David, Peter, Paul, Matthew, was one of "the weak things of the world, whom God chose to confound the mighty." He was himself a herdsman only "among herdsmen;" but the words which he spake were not his own. They were words which he saw, not with eyes of flesh, but "with that vision wherewith words can be seen, the seer's vision in the mind." They were "words concerning," or rather "upon Israel," heavy words coming upon the heavy transgressions of Israel. The Hebrew word "saw" is not of mere sight, but of a vision given by God. Amos only says that they were "his" words, in order immediately to add, that they came to him from God, that he himself was but the human organ through which God spake.

Two years before the earthquake - This earthquake must plainly have been one of the greatest, since it was vividly in people's memories in the time of Zechariah, and Amos speaks of it as "the earthquake." The earthquakes of the east, like that of Lisbon, destroy whole cities. In one, a little before the birth of our Lord, "some ten thousand were buried under the ruined houses." This terrific earthquake (for as such Zechariah describes it) was one of the preludes of that displeasure of God, which Amos foretold. A warning of two years, and time for repentance, were given, "before the earthquake" should come, the token and beginning of a further shaking of both kingdoms, unless they should repent. In effect, it was the first flash of the lightning which consumed them.

Verse 2

The Lord will roar - Amos joins on his prophecy to the end of Joel's, in order at once in its very opening to attest the oneness of their mission, and to prepare people's minds to see, that his own prophecy was an expansion of those words, declaring the nearer and coming judgments of God. Those nearer judgments, however, of which he spake, were but the preludes of the judgments of the Great Day which Joel foretold, and of that last terrible voice of Christ, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," of whom Jacob prophesies; "He couched, He lay down as a lion, and as a young lion; who shall raise Him up?" Genesis 49:9. God is said to "utter His" awful "voice

from Zion and Jerusalem," because there He had set His Name, there He was present in His Church. It was, as it were, His own place, which He had hallowed by tokens of His presence, although "the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him." In the outset of his prophecy, Amos warned Israel, that there, not among themselves in their separated state, God dwelt. Jeremiah, in using these same words toward Judah, speaks not of Jerusalem, but of heaven; "The Lord shall roar from on high, and utter His voice from His holy habitation" Jeremiah 25:30. The prophecy is to the ten tribes or to the pagan: God speaks out of the Church. He uttereth His Voice out of Jerusalem, as He saith, "Out of Zion shall go forth, the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" Isaiah 2:3, "where was the Temple and the worship of God, to shew that God was not in the cities of Israel, that is, in Dan and Bethel, where were the golden calves, nor in the royal cities of Samaria and Jezreel, but in the true religion which was then in Zion and Jerusalem."

And the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn - Perhaps, with a feeling for the home which he had loved and left, the prophet's first thought amid the desolation which he predicts, was toward his own shepherd-haunts. The well-known Mount Carmel was far in the opposite direction in the tribe of Asher. Its name is derived from its richness and fertility, perhaps "a land of vine and olive yards." In Jerome's time, it was "thickly studded with olives, shrubs and vineyards." "Its very summit of glad pasturcs."

It is one of the most striking natural features of Palestine. It ends a line of hills, 18 miles long, by a long bold headland reaching out far into the Mediterranean, and forming the south side of the Bay of Acco or Acre. Rising 1,200 feet above the sea, it stands out "like some guardian of its native strand;" yet withal, it was rich with every variety of beauty, flower, fruit, and tree. It is almost always called "the Carmel," "the rich garden-ground." From its neighborhood to the sea, heavy dews nightly supply it with an ever-renewed freshness, so that in mid-summer it is green and flowery. Travelers describe it, as "quite green, its top covered with firs and oaks, lower down with olives and laurels, and everywhere excellently watered." "There is not a flower," says Van de Velde, "that I have seen in Galilee or on the plains along the coasts, that I do not find here again on Carmel. It is still the same fragrant lovely mountain as of old.": "Its varied world of flowers attracts such a number of the rarer vari-colored insects that

a collector might for a whole year be richly employed." "It is a natural garden and repository of herbs."

Its pastures were rich, so as to equal those of Bashan. "It gives rise to a number of crystal streams, the largest of which gushes from the spring of Elijah" Jeremiah 50:19; Nahum 1:4. It had abundant supplies in itself. If it too became a desert, what else would be spared? "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Luke 23:31. All, high and low, shall be stricken in one common desolation; all the whole land, fromm "the pastures of the shepherds" in the south to Mount Carmel in the North. And this, as soon as God had spoken. "He spake, and it was made." So now, contrariwise, He uttercth His Voice, and Carmel hath languished. Its glory hath passed away, as in the twinkling of an eye. God hath spoken the word, and it is gone.

What depended on God's gifts, abides; what depended on man, is gone. There remains a wild beauty still; but it is the beauty of natural luxuriance. "All," says one who explored its depths, "lies waste; all is a wilderness. The utmost fertility is here lost for man, useless to man. The vineyards of Carmel, where are they now? Behold the long rows of stones on the ground, the remains of the walls; they will tell you that here, where now with difficulty you force your way through the thick entangled copse, lay, in days of old, those incomparable vineyards to which Carmel owes its name."

Verse 3

The order of God's threatenings seems to have been addressed to gain the hearing of the people. The punishment is first denounced upon their enemies, and that, for their sins, directly or indirectly, against themselves, and God in them. Then, as to those enemies themselves, the order is not of place or time, but of their relation to God's people. It begins with their most oppressive enemy, Syria; then Philistia, the old and ceaseless, although less powerful, enemy; then Tyre, not an oppressor, as these, yet violating a relation which they had not, the bonds of a former friendship and covenant; malicious also and hardhearted through covetousness. Then follow Edom, Ammon, Moab, who burst the bonds of blood also. Lastly and nearest of all, it falls on Judah, who had the true worship of the true God among them, but despised it. Every infliction on those like ourselves finds an echo in our

own consciences. Israel heard and readily believed God‘s judgments upon others. It was not tempted to set itself against believing them. How then could it refuse to believe of itself, what it believed of others like itself? “Change but the name, the tale is told of thee,” was a pagan saying which has almost passed into a proverb. The course of the prophecy convicted “them,” as the things written in Holy Scripture “for our ensamples” convict Christians. “If they” who “sinned without law, perished without law” Romans 2:12, how much more should they who “have sinned in the law, be judged by the law.” God‘s judgments rolled round like a thunder-cloud, passing from land to land, giving warning of their approach, at last to gather and center on Israel itself, except it repent. In the visitations of others, it was to read its own; and that, the more, the nearer God was to them. “Israel” is placed the last, because on it the destruction was to fall to the uttermost, and rest there.

For three transgressions and for four - These words express, not four transgressions added to the three, but an additional transgression beyond the former, the last sin, whereby the measure of sin, which before was full, overflows, and God‘s wrath comes. So in other places, where the like form of words occurs, the added number is one beyond, and mostly relates to something greater than all the rest. So, “He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee” Job 5:19. The word, “yea,” denotes, that the seventh is some heavier trouble, beyond all the rest, which would seem likely to break endurance. Again, “give a portion to seven, and also to eight” Ecclesiastes 11:2. Seven is used as a symbol of a whole, since “on the seventh day God rested from all which He had made,” and therefore the number seven entered so largely into the whole Jewish ritual. All time was measured by seven.

The rule then is; “give without bounds; when that whole is fulfilled, still give.” Again in that series of sayings in the book of Proverbs Proverbs 30:15-16. The other things cannot be satisfied; the fourth, fire, grows fiercer by being fed. Again, “There be three” things “which go well; yea, four are comely in going” Proverbs 30:29-31. The moral majesty of a king is obviously greater than the rest. So “the handmaid which displaceth her mistress” Proverbs 30:21-23 is more intolerable and overbearing than the others. The art and concealment of man in approaching a maiden is of a subtler kind than things in nature which leave no trace of themselves, the eagle in the air, the serpent on the rock, the ship in its pathway through the

waves Proverbs 30:18-19. Again, "Sowing discord among brethren" Proverbs 6:16-19, has a special hatefulness, as not only being sin, but causing widewasting sin, and destroying in others the chief grace, love. Soul-murder is worse than physical murder, and requires more devilish art.

These things - Job says, "worketh God twice and thrice with man, to bring back his soul from the pit" Job 33:29. The last grace of God, whether sealing up the former graces of those who use them, or vouchsafed to those who have wasted them, is the crowning act of His love or forbearance.

In pagan poetry also, as a trace of a mystery which they had forgotten, three is a sacred whole; from where "thrice and fourfold blessed" stands among them for something exceeding even a full and perfect blessing, a super-abundance of blessings.

The fourth transgression of these pagan nations is alone mentioned. For the prophet had no mission to "them;" he only declares to Israel the ground of the visitation which was to come upon them. The three transgressions stand for a whole sum of sin, which had not yet brought down extreme punishment; the fourth was the crowning sin, after which God would no longer spare. But although the fourth drew down His judgment, God, at the last, punishes not the last sin only, but all which went before. In that the prophet says, not, "for the fourth," but "for three transgressions and for four," he expresses at once, that God did not punish until the last sin, by which "the iniquity" of the sinful nation became "full" Genesis 15:16, and that, "then," He punished for all, for the whole mass of sin described by the three, and for the fourth also. God is longsuffering and ready to forgive; but when the sinner finally becomes a "vessel of wrath" Romans 9:22, He punishes all the earlier sins, which, for the time, He passed by.

Sin adds to sin, out of which it grows; it does not overshadow the former sins, it does not obliterate them, but increases the mass of guilt, which God punishes. When the Jews killed the Son, there, "came on" them "all the righteous bloodshed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias" Matthew 23:35-36; Luke 11:50-51. All the blood of all the prophets and servants of God under the Old Testament came upon that generation. So each individual sinner, who dies impenitent, will be punished for all which, in his whole life, he did or became, contrary to the law of God. Deeper sins bring deeper damnation at

the last. So Paul speaks of those who "treasure up to" themselves "wrath against the Day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" Romans 2:5. As good people, by the grace of God, do, through each act done by aid of that grace, gain an addition to their everlasting reward, so the wicked, by each added sin, add to their damnation.

Of Damascus - Damascus was one of the oldest cities in the world, and one of the links of its contact. It lay in the midst of its plain, a high table-land of rich cultivation, whose breadth, from Anti-libanus eastward, was about half a degree. On the west and north its plain lay sheltered under the range of Anti-libanus; on the east, it was protected by the great desert which intervened between its oasis-territory and the Euphrates. Immediately, it was bounded by the three lakes which receive the surplus of the waters which enrich it. The Barada (the "cold") having joined the Fijeh, (the traditional Pharpar", a name which well designates its tumultuous course), runs on the north of, and through the city, and then chiefly into the central of the three lakes, the Bahret-el-kibliyeh, (the "south" lake;) thence, it is supposed, but in part also directly, into the Bahret-esh-Shurkiyeh (the "east" lake). The ‹Awaj (the "crooked") (perhaps the old Amana, "the never-failing," in contrast with the streams which are exhausted in irrigation) runs near the old south boundary of Damascus, separating it probably from the northern possessions of Israel beyond Jordan, Bashan (in its widest sense), and Jetur or Ituraea. The area has been calculated at 236 square geographical miles.

This space rather became the center of its dominions, than measured their extent. But it supported a population far beyond what that space would maintain in Europe. Taught by the face of creation around them, where the course of every tiny rivulet, as it burst from the rocks, was marked by a rich luxuriance, the Damascenes of old availed themselves of the continual supply from the snows of Hermon or the heights of Anti-libanus, with a systematic diligence, of which, in our northern clime, as we have no need, so we have no idea. "Without the Barada," says Porter, "the city could not exist, and the plain would be a parched desert; but now aqueducts intersect every quarter, and fountains sparkle in almost every dwelling, while innumerable canals extend their ramifications over the vast plain, clothing it with verdure and beauty. Five of these canals are led off from the river at different elevations, before it enters the plain. They are carried along the precipitous banks of the ravine, being in some places tunnelled in the solid

rock. The two on the northern side water Salahiyeh at the foot of the hills about a mile from the city, and then irrigate the higher portions of the plain to the distance of nearly twenty miles. Of the three on the south side, one is led to the populous village Daraya, five miles distant; the other two supply the city, its suburbs, and gardens."

The like use was made of every fountain in every larger or lesser plain. Of old it was said, "the Chrysorrhoas (the Barada) "is nearly expended in artificial channels.": "Damascus is fertile through drinking up the Chrysorrhoas by irrigation." Fourteen names of its canals are still given; and while it has been common to select 7 or 8 chief canals, the whole have been counted up even to 70. No art or labor was thought too great. The waters of the Fijeh were carried by a great aqueduct tunnelled through the side of the perpendicular cliff. Yet this was as nothing. Its whole plain was intersected with canals, and tunneled below.: "The waters of the river were spread over the surface of the soil in the fields and gardens; underneath, other canals were tunnelled to collect the superfluous water which percolates the soil, or from little fountains and springs below. The stream thus collected is led off to a lower level, where it comes to the surface.: "The whole plain is filled with these singular aqueducts, some of them running for 2 or 3 miles underground. Where the water of one is diffusing life and verdure over the surface, another branch is collecting a new supply." "In former days these extended over the whole plain to the lakes, thus irrigating the fields and gardens in every part of it."

Damascus then was, of old, famed for its beauty. Its white buildings, embedded in the deep green of its engirdling orchards, were like diamonds encircled by emeralds. They reach nearly to Anti-libanus westward, "and extend on both sides of the Barada some miles eastward. They cover an area at last 25 (or 30) miles in circuit, and make the environs an earthly Paradise." Whence the Arabs said, "If there is a garden of Eden on earth, it is Damascus; and if in heaven, Damascus is like it on earth." But this its beauty was also its strength. "The river," says William of Tyre, "having abundant water, supplies orchards on both banks, thick-set with fruit-trees, and flows eastward by the city wall. On the west and north the city was far and wide fenced by orchards, like thick dense woods, which stretched four or live miles toward Libanus. These orchards are a most exceeding defense;

for from the density of the trees and the narrowness of the ways, it seemed difficult and almost impossible to approach the city on that side." Even to this day it is said, "The true defense of Damascus consists in its gardens, which, forming a forest of fruit-trees and a labyrinth of hedges, walls and ditches, for more than 7 leagues in circumference, would present no small impediment to a Mussulman enemy."

The advantage of its site doubtless occastoned its early choice. It lay on the best route from the interior of Asia to the Mediterranean, to Tyre, and even to Egypt. Chedorlaomer and the four kings with him, doubtless, came that way, since the first whom they smote were at Ashteroth Karnaim Genesis 14:5-6 in Jaulan or Gaulonitis, and thence they swept on southward, along the west side of Jordan, smiting, as they went, first the "Zuzim," (probably the same as the Zamzummim Deuteronomy 2:2 O) in Ammonitis; then "the Emim in the plain of Kiriathaim" in Moab Genesis 14:15. Damascus was already the chief city, through its relation to which alone Hobah was known. It was on the route by which Abraham himself came at God's command from Haran (Charrae of the Greeks) whether over Tiphsaeh ("the passage," Thapsacus) or anymore northern passage over the Euphrates. The fact that his chief and confidential servant whom he entrusted to seek a wife for Isaac, and who was, at one time, his heir, was a Damascene Genesis 15:2-3, implies some intimate connection of Abraham with Damascus. At the time of our era, the name of Abraham was still held in honor in the country of Damascus; a village was named from him "Abraham's dwelling;" and a native historian Nicolas said, that he reigned in Damascus on his way from the country beyond Babylon to Canaan. The name of his servant "Eliezer" "my God is help," implies that at this time too the servant was a worshiper of the One God. The name Damascus probably betokened the strenuous, energetic character of its founder.

Like the other names connected with Aram in the Old Testament, it is, in conformity with the common descent from Aram, Aramaic. It was no part of the territory assigned to Israel, nor was it molested by them. Judging, probably, of David's defensive conquests by its own policy, it joined the other Syrians who attacked David, was subdued, garrisoned, and became tributary 2 Samuel 8:5-6. It was at that time probably a subordinate power, whether on the ground of the personal eminence of Hadadezer king of

Zobah, or any other. Certainly Hadadezer stands cut conspicuously; the Damascenes are mentioned only subordinately.

Consistently with this, the first mention of the kingdom of Damascus in Scripture is the dynasty of Rezon son of Eliada‘s, a fugitive servant of Hadadezer, who formed a marauding band, then settled and reigned in Damascus 1 Kings 11:23-24. Before this, Scripture speaks of the people only of Damascus, not of their kings. Its native historian admits that the Damascenes were, in the time of David, and continued to be, the aggressors, while he veils over their repeated defeats, and represents their kings, as having reigned successively from father to son, for ten generations, a thing unknown probably in any monarchy.: “A native, Adad, having gained great power, became king of Damascus and the rest of Syria, except Phoenicia. He, having carried war against David, king of Judaea, and disputed with him in many battles, and that finally at the Euaphrates where he was defeated, had the character of a most eminent king for prowess and valor. After his death, his descendants reigned for ten generations, each receiving from his father the name (Hadad) together with the kingdom, like the Ptolemies of Egypt. The third, having gained the greatest power of all, seeking to repair the defeat of his grandfather, warring against the Jews, wasted what is now callcd Samaritis.” They could not brook a defeat, which they had brought upon themselves.

Rezon renewed, throughout the later part of Solomon‘s reign, the aggression of Hadad. On the schism of the ten tribes, the hostility of Damascus was concentrated against Israel who lay next to them. Abijam was in league with the father of Benhadad 1 Kings 15:19. Benhadad at once broke his league with Baasha at the request of Asa in his later mistrustful days 1 Chronicles 16:2-7, and turned against Baasha (1 Chronicles 16:2-7 and 1 Kings 15:20). From Omri also Benhadad I took cities and extorted “streets,” probably a Damascus quarter, in Samaria itself 1 Kings 20:34. Benhadad II had “thirty-two” vassal “kings” 1 Kings 20:1, 1 Kings 20:24, (dependent kings like those of Canaan, each of his own city and little territory,) and led them against Samaria, intending to plunder it 1 Kings 20:6-7, and, on occasion of the plundering, probably to make it his own or to destroy it. By God‘s help they were twice defeated; the second time, when they directly challenged the power of God 1 Kings 20:22-25, 1 Kings

20:28, so signally that, had not Ahab been flattered by the appeal to his mercy 1 Kings 20:31-32, Syria would no more have been in a condition to oppress Israel. Benhadad promised to restore the cities which his father had taken from Israel, and to make an Israel-quarter in Damascus 1 Kings 20:34.

If this promise was fulfilled, Ramoth-Gilead must have been lost to Syria at an earlier period, since, three years afterward, Ahab perished in an attempt, by aid of Jehoshaphat, against the counsels of God, to recover it 2 Kings 7:6. Benhadad and Hazael encouraged only marauding expeditions against Israel during the 14 years of Ahaziah and Jehoram. Benhadad was, according to Assyrian inscriptions defeated thrice, Hazael twice, by Shalmanubar king of Assyria. Benhadad appears to have acted on the offensive, in alliance with the kings of the Hittites, the Hamathites and Phoenicians; Hazael was attacked alone, driven to take refuge in Anti-libanus, and probably became tributary.

Assyrian chronicles relate only Assyrian victories. The brief notice, that through Naaman "the Lord gave deliverance to Syria" 2 Kings 5:1, probably refers to some signal check which Assyria received through him. For there was no other enemy, from whom Syria had to be "delivered." Subsequently to that retreat from Samaria, he even lost Ramoth 2 Kings 9:14-15 to Jehoram after a battle before it 2 Kings 8:29, in which Jehoram was wounded. It is a probable conjecture that Jehu, by his political submission to Assyria, drew on himself the calamities which Elisha foretold. Hazael probably became the instrument of God in chastening Israel, while he was avenging Jehu's submission to a power whom he dreaded and from whom he had suffered. Israel, having lost the help of Judah, became the easier prey. Hazael not only took from Israel all east of Jordan 2 Kings 10:32-33, but made the whole open country unsafe for the Israelites to dwell in.

Not until God "gave Israel a saviour," could they "dwell in their tents as beforetime" 2 Kings 13:5. Hazael extended his conquests to Gath 2 Kings 12:17, intending probably to open a connecting line with Egypt. "With a small company of men" he defeated a large army of Judah 2 Chronicles 24:23-24. Joash, king of Judah, bought him off, when advancing against

Jerusalem, with everything of gold, consecrated or civil, in the temple or in his own treasures 2 Kings 12:18. Jehoash recovered from Benhadad III the cities this side Jordan 2 Kings 13:25; Jeroboam II, all their lost territories and even Damascus and Hamath 2 Kings 14:28. Yet after this, it was to recover its power under Rezin, to become formidable to Judah, and, through its aggressions on Judah, to bring destruction on itself. At this time, Damascus was probably, like ourselves, a rich, commercial, as well as warlike, but not as yet a manufacturing (see the note at Amos 3:12) nation. Its wealth, as a great emporium of transit-commerce, (as it is now) furnished it with sinews for war. The "white wool" Ezekiel 27:18, in which it traded with Tyre, implies the possession of a large outlying tract in the desert, where the sheep yield the whitest wool. It had then doubtless, beside the population of its plain, large nomadic hordes dependent upon it.

I will not turn away the punishment thereof - Literally, "I will not turn it back." What was this, which God would not turn back? Amos does not express it. Silence is often more emphatic than words. Not naming it, he leaves it the rather to be conceived of by the mind, as something which had been of old coming upon them to overwhelm them, which God had long stayed back, but which, since He would now stay it no longer, would burst in, with the more terrific and overwhelming might, because it had been restrained before. Sin and punishment are by a great law of God bound together. God's mercy holds back the punishment long, allowing only some slight tokens of His displeasure to show themselves, that the sinful soul or people may not be unwarned. When He no longer withholds it, the law of His moral government holds its course. "Seldom," said pagan experience, "hath punishment with lingering foot parted with the miscreant, advancing before."

Because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron - The instrument, Jerome relates here, was "a sort of wain, rolling on iron wheels beneath, set with teeth; so that it both threshed out the grain and bruised the straw and cut it in pieces, as food for the cattle, for lack of hay." A similar instrument, called by nearly the same name, is still in use in Syria and Egypt. Elisha had foretold to Hazael his cruelty to Israel; "Their strong holds thou wilt set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child" 2 Kings 8:12. Hazael, like others gradually steeped in sin, thought it impossible, but did it. In the days of Jehu, "Hazael smote them in all the

coasts of Israel from Jordan eastward; all the land of Gilead, the Gadites and the Reubenites and the Manassites, from Arorer which is by the River Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan" 2 Kings 10:32-33; in those of Jehoahaz, Jehu's son, "he oppressed them, neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen, for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing" 2 Kings 13:7. The death here spoken of, although more ghastly, was probably not more severe than many others; not nearly so severe as some which have been used by Christian Judicatures. It is mentioned in the Proverbs, as a capital punishment Proverbs 20:26; and is alluded to as such by Isaiah Isaiah 28:28. David had had, for some cause unexplained by Holy Scripture, to inflict it on the Ammonites 2 Samuel 12:31; 1 Chronicles 20:3. Probably not the punishment in itself alone, but the attempt so to extirpate the people of God brought down this judgment on Damascus.

Theodoret supposes the horrible aggravation, that it was thus that the women with child were destroyed with their children, "casting the aforesaid women, as into a sort of threshing-floor, they savagely threshed them out like ears of grain with saw-armed wheels."

Gilead is here doubtless to be taken in its widest sense, including all the possessions of Israel, east of Jordan, as, in the account of Hazael's conquests, "all the land of Gilead" 2 Kings 10:32-33 is explained to mean, all which was ever given to the two tribes and a half, and to include Gilead proper, as distinct from Basan. In like way Joshua relates, that "the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the ha! f tribe of Manasseh returned to go into the country of Gilead, to the land of their possessions" Joshua 22:9. Throughout that whole beautiful tract, including 2 12 degrees of latitude, Hazael had carried on his war of extermination into every peaceful village and home, sparing neither the living nor the unborn.

Verse 4

And I will send a fire on the house of Hazael - The fire is probably at once material fire, whereby cities are burned in war, since he adds, "it shall devour the palaces of Benhadad," and also stands as a symbol of all other severity in war as in the ancient proverb, "a fire is gone out from Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon; it hath consumed Ar of Moab, the lords of the high places of Arnon" Numbers 21:28; and again of the displeasure of

Almighty God, as when He says, “a fire is kindled in Mine anger, and it shall burn unto the lowest hell” Deuteronomy 32:22. For the fire destroys not the natural buildings only, but “the house of Hazael,” that is, his whole family. In these prophecies, a sevenfold vengeance by fire is denounced against the seven people, an image of the eternal fire into which all iniquity shall be cast.

The palaces of Benhadad - Hazael, having murdered Benhadad his master and ascended his throne, called Iris son after his murdered master, probably in order to connect his own house with the ancient dynasty. Benhadad, that is, son or worshiper of the idol “Hadad,” or “the sun,” had been the name of two of the kings of the old dynasty. Benhadad III was at this time reigning. The prophet foretells the entire destruction of the dynasty founded in blood. The prophecy may have had a fulfillment in the destruction of the house of Hazael, with whose family Rezin, the king of Syria in the time of Ahaz, stands in no known relation. Defeats, such as those of Benhadad III by Jeroboam II who took Damascus itself, are often the close of an usurping dynasty. Having no claim to regard except success, failure vitiates its only title. The name Hazael, “whom God looked upon,” implies a sort of owning of the One God, like Tab-el, “God is good,” El-iada‘, “whom God knoweth,” even amid the idolatry in the names, Tab-Rimmon, “good is Rimmon;” Hadad-ezer, “Hadad is help;” and Hadad, or Benhadad. Bad men abuse every creature, or ordinance, or appointment of God. It may be then that, as Sennacherib boasted, “am I now come up without the Lord against this land” to destroy it? the Lord said unto me, Go up against this land and destroy it” Isaiah 36:10; so Hazael made use of the prophecy of Elisha, to give himself out as the scourge of God, and thought of himself as one “on whom God looked.”

Knowledge of futurity is an awful gift. As “Omniscience alone can wield Omnipotence,” so superhuman knowledge needs superhuman gifts of wisdom and holiness. Hazael seemingly hardened himself in sin by aid of the knowledge which should have been his warning. Probably he came to Elisha, with the intent to murder his master already formed, in case he should not die a natural death; and Elisha read him to himself. But he very probably justified himself to himself in what he had already purposed to do, on the ground that Elisha had foretold to him that he should be king over 2 Kings 8:13, and, in his massacres of God‘s people, gave himself out as being, what he was, the instrument of God. “Scourges of God” have known

themselves to be what they were, although they themselves were not the less sinful, in sinfully accomplishing the Will of God (see the note at Hosea 1:4). We have heard of a Christian Emperor, who has often spoken of his "mission," although his "mission" has already cost the shedding of much Christian blood.

Verse 5

I will also break the bar of Damascus - In the East, every city was fortified; the gates of the stronger cities were cased in iron, that they might not be set on fire by the enemy; they were fastened within with bars of brass 1 Kings 4:13 or iron (Psalm 107:16; Isaiah 45:2; compare Isaiah 48:14; Jeremiah 51:3 O). They were flanked with towers, and built over, so that what was naturally the weakest point and the readiest access to an enemy became the strongest defense. In Hauran the huge doors and gates of a single stone 9 and 10 feet high, and 1 12 foot thick, are still extant, and "the place for the ponderous bars," proportioned to such gates, "may yet be seen." The walls were loosened with the battering-ram, or scaled by mounds: the strong gate was seldom attacked; but, when a breach was made, was thrown open from within. The "breaking of the bar" laid open the city to the enemy, to go in and come out at his will. The whole strength of the kingdom of Damascus lay in the capital. It was itself the seat of the empire and was the empire itself. God says then, that He Himself would shiver all their means of resistance, whatever could hinder the inroad of the enemy.

And cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven - Literally, "from the vale of vanity," the "Bik'ah" being a broad vale between hills. Here it is doubtless the rich and beautiful valley, still called el-bukaa by the Arabs, La Boquea by William of Tyre, lying between Lebanon and Anti-libanus, the old Coele-Syria in its narrowest sense. It is, on high ground, the continuation of that long deep valley which, along the Jordan, the Dead sea, and the Arabah, reaches to the Red Sea. lts extreme length, from its southern close at Kal'at-esh-shakif to Hums (Emesa) has been counted at 7 days journey; it narrows toward its southern extremity, expands at its northern, yet it cannot any how be said to lose its character of a valley until 10 miles north of Riblah.

Midway, on its," was Baalbek, or Heliopolis, where the Egyptian worship is said to have been brought of old times from their "city of the

sun." Baalbek, as the ruins still attest, was full of the worship of the sun. But the whole of that beautiful range, "a magnificent vista", it has been said, "carpeted with verdure and beauty", "a gem lying deep in its valley of mountains," was a citadel of idolatry. The name Baal-Hermon connects Mount Hermon itself, the snow-capped height which so towers over its southeast extremity, with the worship of Baal or the sun, and that, from the time of the Judges Judges 3:3. The name Baal-gad connects "the valley of Lebanon," that is, most probably the south end of the great valley, with the same worship, anterior to Joshua Joshua 11:17; Joshua 12:7; Joshua 13:5.

The name Baalbek is probably an abbreviation of the old name, Baal-bik'ah, "Baal of the valley," in contrast with the neighboring Baalhermon.: "The whole of Hermon was girded with temples.": "Some eight or ten of them cluster round it," and, which is more remarkable, one is built" to catch the first beams of the sun rising over Hermon;" and temples on its opposite sides face toward it, as a sort of center.

In Jerome's time, the pagan still reverenced a celebrated temple on its summit. On the crest of its central peak, 3,000 feet above the glen below, in winter inaccessible, beholding far asunder the rising and the setting sun on the eastern desert and in the western sea, are still seen the foundations of a circular wall or ring of large stones, a rude temple, within which another of Grecian art was subsequently built. "On three other peaks of the Anti-libanus range are ruins of great antiquity".: "The Bukaa and its borders are full of the like buildings."

"Lebanon, Anti-lebanon and the valleys between are thronged with ancient temples". Some indeed were Grecian, but others Syro-Phoenician. The Grecian temples were probably the revival of Syro-Phoenician. The "massive substructions of Baalbek are conjectured to have been those of an earlier temple." The new name "Heliopolis" only substituted the name of the object of worship (the sun) for its title Lord. The pagan emperors would not have lavished so much and such wondrous cost and gorgeous art on a temple in Coele-Syria, had not its pagan celebrity recommended it to their superstition or their policy. On the west side of Lebanon at Afca, (Apheca) was the temple of Venus at the source of the River Adonis, a center of the most hateful Syrian idolatry, "a school of misdoing for all profligates."

At Heliopolis too, men "shamelessly gave their wives and daughters to shame." The outburst of paganism there in the reign of Julian the Apostate shows how deeply rooted was its idolatry. Probably then, Amos pronounces the sentence of the people of that whole beautiful vale, as "valley of vanity" or "iniquity", being wholly given to that worst idolatry which degraded Syria. Here, as the seat of idolatry, the chief judgments of God were to fall. Its inhabitants were to be cut off, that is, utterly destroyed; on the rest, captivity is the only sentence pronounced. The Assyrian monarchs not unfrequently put to death those who despised their religion, and so may herein have executed blindly the sentence of God.

From the house of Eden - A Proper, but significant, name, "Beth-Eden," that is, "house of pleasure." The name, like the Eden of Assyria 2 Kings 19:12; Isaiah 37:12; Ezekiel 27:23, is, in distinction from man's first home, pronounced "EH-den," not "EE-den". Two places near, and one in, the Bik'ah have, from similarity of name, been thought to be this "house of delight."

1. Most beautiful now for situation and climate, is what is probably mispronounced Ehden; a Maronite Village "of 4 or 500 families, on the side of a rich highly-cultivated valley" near Beshirrai on the road from Tripolis to the Cedars. Its climate is described as a ten months spring; "the hills are terraced up to their summits;" and every place full of the richest, most beautiful, vegetation; "grain is poured out into the lap of man, and wine into his cup without measure." "The slopes of the valleys, one mass of verdure, are yet more productive than the hills; the springs of Lebanon gushing down, fresh, cool and melodious in every direction." The wealthier families of Tripoli still resort there for summer, "the climate being tempered by the proximity of the snow-mountains, the most luxuriant vegetation favored by the soft airs from the sea. "It is still counted" the Paradise of Lebanon."

2. Beit-el-Janne, literally, "house of Paradise," is an Arabic translation of Beth-Eden. It "lies under the root of Libanus, (Hermon) gushing forth clear water, whence," says WilIiam of Tyre, "it is called ‹house of pleasure.'" It lies in a narrow valley, where it widens a little, about 34 of an hour from the plain of Damascus, and about 27 miles from that city on the way from Banias.: "Numerous rock-tombs, above and around, bear testimony to the antiquity of the site." It gives its name to the Jennani (Paradise River), one

of two streams which form the second great river near Damascus, the Awadj.

3. The third, the Paradisus of the Greeks, one of the three towns of Laodicene, agrees only accidentally with the Scripture name, since their Paradisus signifies not an earthly Paradise, but a "hunting-park." For this the site is well suited; but in that country so abounding in water, and of soil so rich that the earth seems ready, on even slight pains of man, to don itself in luxuriant beauty, what probably is the site of the old Paradisus, is hopelessly barren Beth-Eden may have been the residence of one of the subordinate kings under the king of Damascus, who was to be involved in the ruin of his suzerain; or it may have been a summer-residence of the king of Damascus himself, where, in the midst of his trust in his false gods, and in a Paradise, as it were, of delight, God would cut him off altogether. Neither wealth nor any of a man's idols protect against God. As Adam, for sin, was expelled from Paradise, so the rulers of Damascus from the place of their pleasure and their sin.

And the people of Syria shall go into captivity - Syria or Aram perhaps already included, under the rule of Damascus, all the little kingdoms on this side of the Euphrates, into which it had been formerly sub-divided. At least, it is spoken of as a whole, without any of the additions which occur in the earlier history, Aram-beth-rehob, Aramzobah, Aram-Maachah. Before its captivity Damascus is spoken of as "the head of Syria" Isaiah 7:8.

Into Kir - Kir has been identified:

(1) with the part of Iberia near the River Kur which unites with the Araxes, not far from the Caspian, to the north of Armenia;

(2) a city called by the Greeks Kourena or Kourna on the River Mardus in southern Media;

(3) a city, Karine, the modern Kerend.

The first is the most likely, as the most known; the Kur is part probably of the present name Kurgistan, our "Georgia." Armenia at least which lay on the south of the River Kur, is frequently mentioned in the cuneiform inscriptions, as a country where the kings of Assyria warred and conquered.

The two parricide sons of Sennacherib are as likely to have fled Isaiah 37:38 to a distant portion of their father‘s empire, as beyond it. Their flight there may have been the ground of Esarhaddon‘s war against it. It has at all times afforded a shelter to those expelled from others‘ lands. The domestic, though late, traditions of the Armenians count as their first inhabitants some who had fled out of Mesopotamia to escape the yoke of Bel, king of Babylon. Whatever be the value of particular traditions, its mountain-valleys form a natural refuge to fugitives.

On occasion of some such oppression, as that from which Asshur fled before Nimrod, Aram may have been the first of those who took shelter in the mountains of Armenia and Georgia, and thence spread themselves, where we afterward find them, in the lowlands of Mesopotamia. The name Aram, however, is in no way connected with Armenia, which is itself no indigenous name of that country, but was probably formed by the Greeks, from a name which they heard. The name Aram, “lofty,” obviously describes some quality of the son of Shem, as of others who bore the name. Contrariwise, Canaan, (whether or no anticipating his future degraded character as partaking in the sin of Ham) may signify “crouching.” But neither has Aram any meaning of “highland,” nor Canaan of “lowland,” as has of late been imagined..

From Kir the forefathers of the Syrians had, of their own will, been brought by the good all-disposing Providence of God; to Kir should the Syrians, against their will, be carried back. Aram of Damascus had been led to a land which, for its fertility and beauty, has been and is still praised as a sort of Paradise. Now, softened as they were by luxury, they were to be transported back to the austere though healthy climate, from where they had come. They had abused the might given to them by God, in the endeavor to uproot Israel; now they were themselves to be utterly uprooted. The captivity which Amos foretells is complete; a captivity by which (as the word means) the land should be bared of its inhabitants. Such a captivity he foretells of no other, except the ten tribes. He foretells it absolutely of these two nations alone, of the king and princes of Ammon Amos 1:15, not of Tyre, or the cities of Philistia, or Edom, or Ammon, or Moab. The punishment did not reach Syria in those days, but in those of Rezin who

also oppressed Judah. The sin not being cut off; the punishment too was handed down.

Tiglath-pileser carried them away, about 50 years after this, and killed Rezin 2 Kings 16:9. In regard to these two nations, Amos foretells the captivity absolutely. Yet at this time, there was no human likelihood, no ground, except of a divine knowledge, to predict it of these two nations especially. They went into captivity too long after this for human foresight to predict it; yet long enough before the captivity of Judah for the fulfillment to have impressed Judah if they would. The transportation of whole populations, which subsequently became part of the standing policy of the Persian and of the later Assyrian Empires, was not, as far as we know, any part of Eastern policy at the time of the prophet. Sesostris, the Egyptian conqueror, some centuries before Amos, is related to have brought together "many men," "a crowd," from the nations whom he had subdued, and to have employed them on his buildings and canals.

Even this account has received no support from the Egyptian monuments, and the deeds ascribed by the Greeks to Sesostris have been supposed to be a blending of those of two monarchs of the xix. Dynasty, Sethos I and Raamses II, interwoven with those of Ousartesen III (Dynasty xii.) and Tothmosis III (Dyn. xviii). But the carrying away of tiny number of prisoners from fields of battle is something altogether different from the political removal of a nation. It had in it nothing systematic or designed. It was but the employment of those whom war had thrown into their hands, as slaves. The Egyptian monarchs availed themselves of this resource, to spare the labor of their native subjects in their great works of utility or of vanity. But the prisoners so employed were but a slave population, analogous to those who, in other nations, labored in the mines or in agriculture.

They employed in the like way the Israelites, whom they had received peacefully. Their earlier works were carried on by native labor. After Tothmosis III, in whose reign is the first representation of prisoners employed in forced labor, they could, during their greatness, spare their subjects. They imported labor, not by slave trade, but through war. Nubia was incorporated with Egypt, and Nubian prisoners were, of course, employed, not in their own country but in the north of Egypt; Asiatic

prisoners in Nubia. But they were prisoners made in a campaign, not a population; a foreign element in Egyptian soil, not an interchange of subject-populations. Doubtless, "the mixed multitude" Exodus 12:38, which "went up with" Israel from Egypt, were in part these Asiatic captives, who had been subjected to the same hard bondage.

The object and extent of those forced transportations by the later Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians were altogether different. Here the intention was to remove the people from their original seat, or at most to leave those only who, from their fewness or poverty, would be in no condition to rebel. The cuneiform inscriptions have brought before us, to a great extent, the records of the Assyrian conquests, as given by their kings. But whereas the later inscriptions of Sargon, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, mention repeatedly the deportation of populations, the earlier annals of Asshurdanipal or Asshurakhbal relate the carrying off of soldiers only as prisoners, and women as captives. They mention also receiving slaves as tributes, the number of oxen and sheep, the goods and possessions and the gods of the people which they carry off.

Else the king relates, how he crucified or impaled or put to death men at arms or the people generally, but in no one of his expeditions does he mention any deportation. Often as modern writers assume, that the transportation of nations was part of the hereditary policy of the Monarchs of Asia, no instances before this period have been found. It appears to have been a later policy, first adopted by Tiglath-pileser toward Damascus and east and north Palestine, but foretold by the prophet long before it was adopted. It was the result probably of experience, that they could not keep these nations in dependence upon themselves while they left them in their old abodes. As far as our knowledge reaches, the prophet foretold the removal of these people, at a time when no instance of any such removal had occurred.

Verse 6

Gaza - Was the southernmost city of the Philistines, as it was indeed of Canaan Genesis 10:19 of old, the last inhabited place at the beginning of the desert, on the way from Phoenicia to Egypt. Its situation was wonderfully chosen, so that, often as a Gaza has been destroyed, a new city has, if even

after long intervals, risen up again in the same immediate neighborhood. The fragments of the earlier city became materials for the later. It was first Canaanite Genesis 10:19; then Philistine; then, at least after Alexander, Edomite; after Alexander Janneus, Greek; conquered by Abubekr the first Khalif, it became Arabian; it was desolated in their civil wars, until the Crusaders rebuilt its fort; then again, Muslim. In the earliest times, before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Gaza was the south angle of the border of the Canaanites, from where it turned to the south of the Dead Sea. Even then it was known by its name of strength, ‹Azzah "the strong," like our "Fort."

For a time, it stood as an island-fort, while the gigantic race of the Avvim wandered, wilder probably than the modern Bedaween, up to its very gates. For since it is said, "the Avvim dwelt in open villages as far as Gaza" Deuteronomy 2:23; plainly they did not dwell in Gaza itself, a fortified town. The description assigns the bound of their habitations, up to the furthest town on the southeast, Gaza. They prowled around it, infested it doubtless, but did not conquer it, and were themselves expelled by the Caphtorim. The fortress of the prince of Gaza is mentioned in the great expedition of Tothmosis III, as the conquest of Ashkelon was counted worthy of mention in the monuments of Raamses II. It was strengthened doubtless by giving refuge to the Anakim, who, after Joshua had expelled them "from Hebron" and neighboring cities, "and the mountains of Judah and Israel, remained in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod" Joshua 11:21-23.

Its situation, as the first station for land-commerce to and from Egypt, whether toward Tyre and Sidon, or Damascus and the upper Euphrates, or toward Petra, probably aggrandized it early. Even when the tide of commerce has been diverted into other channels, its situation has been a source of great profit. A fertile spot, touching upon a track through a desert, it became a mart for caravans, even those which passed, on the pilgrim-route to Mekka, uniting traffic with their religion. Where the five cities are named together as unconquered, Gaza is mentioned first, then Ashdod Joshua 13:3. Samson, after he had betrayed his strength, was "brought down to Gaza" Judges 16:21, probably as being their strongest fortress, although the furthest from "the valley of Sorek," where he was ensnared.

There too was the vast temple of Dagon, which became the burying-place of so many of his worshipers. In Solomon‘s reign it was subject to Israel 1 Kings 4:21. After the Philistine inroad in the time of Ahaz 2 Chronicles 28:18, and their capture of towns of Judah in the south and the low country, Shephelah, Hezekiah drove them back as far as Gaza 2 Kings 18:8, without apparently taking it. Its prince was defeated by Sargon, whose victory over Philistia Isaiah foretold Isaiah 14:29. Sennacherib gave to its king, together with those of Ascalon and Ekron, “fortified and other towns which” he “had spoiled,” avowedly to weaken Judah; “so as to make his (Hezekiah‘s) country small;” probably also as a reward for hostility to Judah. Greek authors spcak of it, as “a very large city of Syria”, “a great city”. Like other cities of old, it was, for fear of pirates, built at some distance from the sea (Arrian says “2 12 miles”), but had a port called, like that of Asealea, Maiuma, which itself too in Christian times became a place of importance.

Because they carried away the whole captivity - Literally, “a complete captivity;” complete, but for evil; a captivity in which none were spared, none left behind; old or young, woman or child; but a whole population (whatever its extent) was swept away. Such an inroad of the Philistines is related in the time of Jehoram 2 Chronicles 21:16.

To deliver them up to Edom - Literally, “to shut them up to Edom,” in the power of Edom, their bitter enemy, so that they should not be able to escape, nor be restored. The hands, even if not the land, of Edom were already dyed in the blood of Jacob “their brother” Joel 3:19. “Any whither but there,” probably would cry the crowd of helpless captives. It was like driving the shrinking flock of sheep to the butcher‘s shambles, reeking with the gore of their companions. Yet therefore were they driven there to the slaughter. Open markets there were for Jewish slaves in abundance. “Sell us, only not to slaughter.” “Spare the greyheaded;” “spare my child,” would go up in the ears of those, who, though enemies, understood their speech. But no! Such was the compact of Tyre and Philistia and Edom against the people of God. Not one was to be spared; it was to be “a complete captivity;” and that, to Edom. The bond was fulfilled. “Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he too shall cry and shall not be heard” Proverbs 21:13. Joel mentions the like sin of the Philistines and Phoenicians, and foretold its punishment Joel 3:4-6. That in the reign of Jehoram is the last which Scripture mentions, but was not therefore, of necessity or probably,

the last. Holy Scripture probably relates only the more notable of those border-raids. Unrepented sin is commonly renewed. Those strong Philistine fortresses must have given frequent, abundant opportunity for such inroads; as now too it is said in Arabia, "the harvest is to the stronger;" and while small protected patches of soil in Lebanon, Hauran, etc. are cultivated, the open fertile country often lies uncultivated, since it would be cultivated only for the marauder. Amos renews the sentence of Joel, forewarning them that, though it seemed to tarry, it would come.

Verse 7

But - Literally, "and." Thus had Gaza done, and thus would God do; "I will send a fire upon Gaza." The sentence on Gaza stands out, probably in that it was first in power and in sin. It was the merchant-city of the five; the caravans parted from it or passed through it; and so this sale of the Jewish captives was ultimately effected through them. First in sin, first in punishment. Gaza was strong by nature and by art. "The access to it also," Arrian notices, "lay through deep sand." We do not hear of its being taken, except in the first times of Israel under the special protection of God Judges 1:1-2, Judges 1:18, or by great conquerors. All Philistia, probably, submitted to David; we hear of no special conquest of its towns 2 Samuel 8:1. Its siege cost Alexander 2 months, with all the aid of the engines with which he had taken Tyre, and the experience which he had there gained. The Egyptian accounts state, that when besieged by Tothmosis III it capitulated. Thenceforth, it had submitted neither to Egypt nor Assyria. Yet Amos declared absolutely, that Gaza should be destroyed by fire, and it was so. Sennacherib first, then, after Jeremiah had foretold anew the destruction of Gaza, Ashkelon, and the Philistines, Pharaoh Necho "smote Gaza" Jeremiah 47:1. Yet who, with human foresight only, would undertake to pronounce the destruction of a city so strong?

Verse 8

And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod - Ashdod, as well as Ekron, have their names from their strength; Ashdod, "the mighty," like Valentia; Ekron, "the firm-rooted." The title of Ashdod implied that it was powerful to inflict as to resist. It may have meant, "the waster." It too was eminent in its idolatry. The ark, when taken, was first placed in its Dagon-temple 1 Samuel 5:1-7; and, perhaps, in consequence, its lord is placed first of the five, in recounting the trespass-offerings which they sent to the Lord 1 Samuel 6:17. Ashdod (Azotus in the New Testament now a village, Esdud

or Shdood), lay 34 or 36 miles from Gaza, on the great route from Egypt northward, on that which now too is most used even to Jerusalem. Ashkelon lay to the left of the road, near the sea, rather more than halfway.

Ekron (Akir, now a village of 50 mud-houses), lay a little to the right of the road northward from Gaza to Lydda (in the same latitude as Jamnia, Jabneel) on the road from Ramleh to Belt Jibrin (Eleutheropolis). Ekron, the furthest from the sea, lay only 15 miles from it. They were then a succession of fortresses, strong from their situation, which could molest any army, which should come along their coast. Transversely, in regard to Judah, they enclosed a space parallel to most of Judah and Benjamin. Ekron, which by God‘s gift was the northern line of Judah Joshua 15:11, is about the same latitude as Ramah in Benjamin; Gaza, the same as Carmel (Kurmul). From Gaza lay a straight road to Jerusalem; but Ashkelon too, Ashdod, and Ekron lay near the heads of valleys, which ran up to the hill-country near Jerusalem.

This system of rich valleys, in which, either by artificial irrigation or natural absorption, the streams which ran from the mountains of Judah westward fertilized the grainfields of Philistia, aforded equally a ready approach to Philistine marauders into the very heart of Judah. The Crusaders had to crown with castles the heights in a distant circle around Ashkelon, in order to restrain the incursions of the Muslims. (In such occasions doubtless, the same man-stealing was often practiced on lesser scales, which here, on a larger scale, draws down the sentence of God. Gath, much further inland, probably formed a center to which these maritime towns converged, and united their system of inroads on Judah.

These five cities of Philistia had each its own petty king (Seren, our “axle”). But all formed one whole; all debated and acted together on any great occasion; as in the plot against Samson Judges 16:5, Judges 16:8, Judges 16:18, the sacrifice to Dagon in triumph over him, where they perished Judges 16:23, Judges 16:27, Judges 16:30; the inflictions on account of the ark 1 Samuel 5:8, 1 Samuel 5:11; 1 Samuel 6:4, 1 Samuel 6:12, 1 Samuel 6:16, 1 Samuel 6:18; the great attack on Israel 1 Samuel 7:7, which God defeated the Mizpeh; the battle when Saul fell, and the dismissal of David 1 Samuel 31:2, 1 Samuel 31:6-7; 1 Chronicles 12:19. The cities divided their idolatry also, in a manner, between them, Ashdod being the

chief seat of the worship of Dagon, Ashkelon, of the corresponding worship of Derceto, the fish-goddess, the symbol of the passive principle in reproduction. Ekron was the seat of the worship of Baalzebub and his oracle, from where he is called "the god of Ekron" 2 Kings 1:2-3, 2 Kings 1:16.

Gaza, even after it had become an abode of Greek idolatry and had seven temples of Greek gods, still retained its worship of its god Marna ("our Lord") as the chief. It too was probably "nature" and to its worship they were devoted. All these cities were as one; all formed one state; all were one in their sin; all were to be one in their punishment. So then for greater vividness, one part of the common infliction is related of each, while in fact, according to the custom of prophetic diction, what is said of each is said of all. King and people were to be cut off from all; all were to be consumed with fire in war; on all God would, as it were, "turn" (literally, "bring back") His Hand, visiting them anew, and bringing again the same punishment upon them. In truth these destructions came upon them, again and again, through Sargon, Hezekiah, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, the Maccabees.

Ashdod - Uzziah about this time "brake down its walls and built cities about" 2 Chronicles 26:6 it, to protect his people from its inroads. It recovered, and was subsequently besieged and taken by Tartan, the Assyrian General under Sargon Isaiah 20:1 (about 716 b.c.). Somewhat later, it sustained the longest siege in man's knowlege, for 29 years, from Psammetichus king of Egypt (about 635 b.c.). Whence, probably Jeremiah, while he speaks of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, mentions "the remnant of Ashdod" Jeremiah 25:20 only. Yet, after the captivity, it seems to have been the first Philistine city, so that the Philistines were called Ashdodites Nehemiah 4:7, and their dialect Ashdodite Nehemiah 13:24. They were still hostile to the Jews Nehemiah 4:7. The war, in which Judas Maccabaeus spoiled Ashdod and other Philistine cities (Zephaniah 2:4). Its name occurs in the wars of the Maccabees, but rather as submitting readily (Jeremiah 39:3; Nehemiah 7:72) that is, Gath, (not mentioned by name anymore as having ceased to be of any account (see the note at Amos 6:3)) and the towns, dependent on those chief cities. The common (and, with a proper name, universal) meaning of the idiom is, "the remnant," those who remain over after a first destruction. The words then, like those just before, "I will bring again my hand against Ekron," foretell a renewal of those first

judgments. The political strength which should survive one desolation should be destroyed in those which should succeed it. In tacit contrast with the promises of mercy to the remnant of Judah (see above the note at Joel 2:32), Amos foretells that judgment after judgment should fall upon Philistia, until the Philistines ceased to be anymore a people; as they did.

Verse 9

The last crowning sin, for which judgment is pronounced on Tyre, is the same as that of Philistia, and probably was enacted in concert with it. In Tyre, there was this aggravation, that it was a violation of a previous treaty and friendship. It was not a covenant only, nor previous friendliness only; but a specific covenant, founded on friendship which they forgat and brake. If they retained the memory of Hiram‘s contact with David and Solomon, it was a sin against light too. After David had expelled the Jebusites from Jerusalem, “Hiram King of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees and carpenters and masons; and they built David a house” 2 Samuel 5:11. The Philistines contrariwise invaded him 2 Samuel 5:17. This recognition of him by Hiram was to David a proof, “that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that He had exalted his kingdom for His people, Israel‘s sake” 2 Samuel 5:12.

Hiram seems, then, to have recognized something super-human in the exaltation of David. “Hiram was ever a lover of David” 1 Kings 5:1. This friendship he continued to Solomon, and recognized his God as “the” God. Scripture embodies the letter of Hiram; “Because the Lord hath loved his people, He hath made thee king over them. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, that made heaven and earth, who hath given to David a wise son - that he might build are house for the Lord”. He must have known then the value which the pious Israelites attached to the going up to that temple. A later treaty, offered by Demetrius Nicator to Jonathan, makes detailed provision that the Jews should have “the feasts and sabbaths and new moons and the solemn days and the three days before the feast and the three days after the feast, as days of immunity and freedom.”

The three days before the feast were given, that they might go up to the feast. Other treaties guarantee to the Jews religious privileges. A treaty between Solomon and Hiram, which should not secure any religious privileges needed by Jews in Hiram‘s dominion, is inconceivable. But Jews were living among the Zidonians (see the note at Joel 3:6). The treaty also,

made between Hiram and Solomon, was subsequent to the arrangement by which Hiram was to supply cedars to Solomon, and Solomon to furnish the grain of which Hiram stood in need 1 Kings 5:7-11. "The Lord gave Solomon wisdom, as He promised him" 1 Kings 5:12; and, as a fruit of that wisdom, "there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a covenant." The terms of that covenant are not there mentioned; but a covenant involves conditions. it was not a mere peace; but a distinct covenant, sanctioned by religious rites and by sacrifice.

"This brotherly covenant Tyre remembered not," when they delivered up to Edom "a complete captivity," all the Jews who came into their hands. It seems then, that that covenant had an special provision against selling them away from their own land. This same provision other people made for love of their country or their homes; the Jews, for love of their religion. This covenant Tyre remembered not, but brake. They knew doubtless why Edom sought to possess the Israelites; but the covetousness of Tyre fed the cruelty of Edom, and God punished the broken appeal to Himself.

Verse 10

I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyre - Tyre had long ere this become tributary to Assyria. Asshur-ban-ipal (about 930 b.c.,) records his "taking tribute from the kings of all the chief Phoenician cities as Tyre, Sidon, Biblus and Aradus". His son Shalmanubar records his taking tribute from them in his 21st year about 880, b.c.), as did Ivalush III, and after this time Tiglath-pileser II, the same who took Damascus and carried off its people, as also the east and north of Israel. The Phoenicians had aided Benhadad, in his unsuccessful war or rebellion against Shalmanubar, but their city had received no hurt. There was nothing, in the time of Amos, to indicate any change of policy in the Assyrian conquerors.

They had been content hitherto with tribute from their distant dependencies; they had spared them, even when in arms against them. Yet Amos says absolutely in the name of God, "I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyre," and the fire did fall, first from Shalamaneser or Sargon his successor, and then from Nebuchadnezzar. The Tyrians (as is men's custom) inserted in their annals their successes, or the successful resistance which they made for a time. They relate that, "Elulaeus, king of Tyre, reduced the Kittiaeans (Cypriotes) who had revolted. The king of Assyria invaded all

Phoenicia, and returned, having made peace with all. Sidon and Ace and old Tyre, and many other cities revolted from the Tyrians, and surrendered to the king of Assyria. Tyre then not obeying, the king returned against them, the Phoenicians manning 60 ships for him." These, he says, were dispersed, 500 prisoners taken; the honor of Tyre intensified. "The king of Assyria, removing, set guards at the river and aqueducts, to hinder the Tyrians from drawing water. This they endured for 5 years, drinking from the wells sunk."

The Tyrian annalist does not relate the sequel. He does not venture to say that the Assyrian King gave up the siege, but, having made the most of their resistance, breaks off the account. The Assyrian inscriptions say, that Sargon took Tyre, and received tribute from Cyprus, where a monument has been found, bearing the name of Sargon. It is not probable that a monarch who took Samaria and Ashdod, received tribute from Egypt, the "Chief of Saba," and "Queen of the Arabs," overran Hamath, Tubal, Cilicia, Armenia, reduced Media, should have returned baffled, because Tyre stood out a blockade for 5 years. Since Sargon wrested from Tyre its newly-recovered Cyprus, its insular situation would not have protected itself. Nebuchadnezzar took it after a 13 years' siege (Ezekiel 26:7-12, see the notes at Isaiah 23).

Verse 11

Edom - God had impressed on Israel its relation of brotherhood to Edom. Moses expressed it to Edom himself, and, after the suspicious refusal of Edom to allow Israel to march on the highway through his territory, he speaks as kindly of him, as before; "And when we passed by from our brethren, the children of Esau" Deuteronomy 2:8. It was the unkindness of worldly politics, and was forgiven. The religious love of the Egyptian and the Edomite was, on distinct grounds, made part of the law. "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land" Deuteronomy 23:7. The grandchild of an Egyptian or of an Edomite was religiously to become as an Israelite Deuteronomy 23:8. Not a foot of Edomite territory was Israel to appropriate, however provoked. It was God's gift to Edom, as much as Canaan to Israel. "They shall be afraid of you, and ye shall take exceeding heed to yourselves. Quarrel not with them, for I will give you, of their land,

no, not so much as the treading of the sole of the foot, for I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession" Deuteronomy 2:4-5.

From this time until that of Saul, there is no mention of Edom; only that the Maonites and the Amalekites, who oppressed Israel Judges 6:3; Judges 10:12, were kindred tribes with Edom. The increasing strength of Israel in the early days of Saul seems to have occasioned a conspiracy against him, such as Asaph afterward complains of; "They have said, come and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they have consulted together with one consent, they are confederate against Thee; the tabernacles of Edom and the Ishmaelites; of Moab and the Hagarenes; Gebal and Ammon and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assur also is joined with them; they have been an arm to the children of Lot" Psalm 83:4-8. Such a combination began probably in the time of Saul. "He fought against all his enemies on every side; against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against the king of Edom, and against the Philistines" 1 Samuel 14:47.

They were "his enemies," and that, round about, encircling Israel, as hunters did their prey. "Edom," on the south and southeast; "Moab" and "Ammon" on the east; the Syrians of "Zobah" on the north; the Philistines on the west enclosed him as in a net, and he repulsed them one by one. "Whichever why he turned, he worsted" them. It follows "he delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them" 1 Samuel 14:48. The aggression was from Edom, and that in combination with old oppressors of Israel, not from Saul. The wars of Saul and of David were defensive wars. Israel was recovering from a state of depression, not oppressing. "The valley of salt" 2 Samuel 8:13, where David defeated the Edomites, was also doubtless within the borders of Judah, since "the city of salt" was Joshua 15:62; and the valley of salt was probably near the remarkable "mountain of salt," 5 56 miles long, near the end of the Dead Sea, which, as being Canaanite, belonged to Israel. It was also far north of Kadesh, which was "the utmost boundary" of Edom Numbers 20:16.

From that Psalm too of mingled thanksgiving and prayer which David composed after the victory, "in the valley of salt" (Psalm 60:1-12 title), it appears that, even after that victory, David's army had not yet entered Edom. "Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into

Edom?" Psalm 60:9. That same Psalm speaks of grievous suffering before, "in" which God had "cast" them "off" and "scattered" them; "made the earth tremble and cleft it;" so that "it reeled" Psalm 60:1-3, Psalm 60:10. Joab too had "returned" from the war in the north against the Syrians of Mesopotamia, to meet the Edomites. Whether in alliance with the Syrians, or taking advantage of the absence of the main army there, the Edomites had inflicted some heavy blow on Israel; a battle in which Abishai killed 18,000 men 1 Chronicles 18:12 had been indecisive. The Edomites were relpalsed by the rapid counter-march of Joab. The victory, according to the Psalm, was still incomplete 1 Chronicles 18:1, 1 Chronicles 18:5, 1 Chronicles 18:9-12. David put "garrisons in Edom" 2 Samuel 8:14, to restrain them from further outbreaks. Joab avenged the wrong of the Edomites, conformably to his character 1 Kings 11:16; but the fact that "the captain of the host" had "to go up to bury the slain" (1 Kings 11:15. It should be rendered, not, after he had slain, but, and he killed, etc.), shows the extent of the deadly blow, which he so fearfully avenged.

The store set by the king of Egypt on Hadad, the Edomite prince who fled to him 1 Kings 11:14-20, shows how gladly Egypt employed Edom as an enemy to Israel. It has been said that he rebelled and failed. Else it remained under a dependent king appointed by Judah, for 1 12 century (1 Kings 22:47; 2 Kings 3:9 ff). One attempt against Judah is recorded 2 Chronicles 20:10, when those of Mount Seir combined with Moab and Ammon against Jehoshaphat after his defeat at Ramoth-gilead. They had penetrated beyond Engedi 2 Chronicles 20:2, 2 Chronicles 20:16, 2 Chronicles 20:20, on the road which Arab marauders take now, toward the wilderness of Tekoa, when God set them against one another, and they fell by each other‘s hands 2 Chronicles 20:22-24. But Jehoshaphat‘s prayer at this time evinces that Israel‘s had been a defensive warfare. Otherwise, he could not have appealed to God, "the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom Thou wouldest not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not, behold, they reward us, to come to cast us out of Thy possession, which Thou hast given us to inherit" 2 Chronicles 20:10-11.

Judah held Edom by aid of garrisons, as a wild beast is held in a cage, that they might not injure them, but had taken no land from them, nor

expelled them. Edom sought to cast Israel out of God‘s land. Revolts cannot be without bloodshed; and so it is perhaps the more probable, that the words of Joel, “for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land” Joel 3:19, relate to a massacre of the Jews, when Esau revolted from Jehoram 2 Kings 8:20-22. We have seen, in the Indian Massacres, how every living being of the ruling power may, on such occasions, be sought out for destruction. Edom gained its independence, and Jehoram, who sought to recover his authority, escaped with his life by cutting through the Edomite army by night 2 Kings 8:21. Yet in Amaziha‘s time they were still on the offensive, since the battle wherein he defeated them, was again “in the valley of salt” 2 Kings 14:7; 2 Chronicles 25:11, 2 Chronicles 25:14.

Azariah, in whose reign Amos prophesied, regained Elath from them, the port for the Indian trade 2 Chronicles 26:2. Of the origin of that war, we know nothing; only the brief words as to the Edomite invasion against Ahaz, “and yet again had the Edomites come, and smitten in Judah, and carried captive a captivity” 2 Chronicles 28:17, attest previous and, it may be, habitual invasions. For no one such invasion had been named. It may probably mean, “they did yet again, what they had been in the habit of doing.” But in matter of history, the prophets, in declaring the grounds of God‘s judgments, supply much which it was not the object of the historical books to relate. “They” are histories of God‘s dealings with His people, His chastisements of them or of His sinful instruments in chastising them. Rarely, except when His supremacy was directly challenged, do they record the ground of the chastisements of pagan nations. Hence, to those who look on the surface only, the wars of the neighboring nations against Israel look but like the alternations of peace and war, victory and defeat, in modern times. The prophets draw up the veil, and show us the secret grounds of man‘s misdeeds and God‘s judgments.

Because he did pursue his brother - The characteristic sin of Edom, and its punishment are one main subject of the prophecy of Obadiah, inveterate malice contrary to the law of kindred. Eleven hundred years had passed since the birth of their forefathers, Jacob and Esan. But, with God, eleven hundred years had not worn out kindred. He who willed to knit together all creation, human beings and angels, in one in Christ Ephesians 1:10, and, as a means of union, “made of one blood all nations of people for

to dwell on all the face of the earth" Acts 17:26, used all sorts of ways to impress this idea of brotherhood. "We" forget relationship mostly in the third generation, often sooner; and we think it strange when a nation long retains the memories of those relationships. God, in His law, stamped on His people's minds those wider meanings. To slay a man was to slay a "brother" Genesis 9:5.

Even the outcast Canaan was a brother Genesis 9:25 to Shem and Ham. Lot speaks to the men of Sodom amidst their iniquities, "my brethren" Genesis 19:7; Jacob so salutes those unknown to him Genesis 29:4. The descendants of Ishmael and Isaac were to be brethren; so were those of Esau and Jacob Genesis 16:12; Genesis 25:18. The brotherhood of blood was not to wear out, and there was to be a brotherhood of love also Genesis 27:29, Genesis 27:37. Every Israelite was a brother; each tribe was a brother to every other Deuteronomy 10:9; Deuteronomy 18:2; Judges 20:23, Judges 20:28; the force of the appeal was remembered, even when passion ran high 2 Samuel 2:26. It enters habitually into the divine legislation. "Thou shall open thy hand wide unto thy brother Deuteronomy 15:11; if thy brother, a" Hebrew, sell himself to thee Deuteronomy 15:12; thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray and hide thyself from them Deuteronomy 22:1-4; if thy brother be waxen poor, then shalt thou relieve him, though a stranger and a sojourner, that he may live with thee" (Leviticus 25:35-39; add Leviticus 19:17; Deuteronomy 24:7, Deuteronomy 24:10, Deuteronomy 24:14).

In that same law, Edom's relationship as a brother was acknowledged. It was an abiding law that Israel was not to take land, nor to refuse to admit him into the congregation of the Lord. Edom too remembered the relation, but to hate him. The nations around Israel seem to have been little at war with one another, bound together by common hatred against God's people. Of their wars indeed we should not hear, for they had no religious interest. They would be but the natural results of the passions of unregenerate nature. Feuds there doubtless were and forays, but no attempts at permanent conquest or subdual. Their towns remain in their own possession. Tyre does not invade Philistia; nor Philistia, Tyre or Edom. But all combine against Israel. The words, "did pursue his brother with the sword," express more than is mentioned in the historical books.

To “pursue” is more than to fight. They followed after, in order to destroy a remnant, “and cast off all pity:” literally, and more strongly, “corrupted his compassions, tendernesses.” Edom did violence to his natural feelings, as Ezekiel, using the same word, says of Tyre, “corrupting Ezekiel 28:17 his wisdom,” that is, perverting it from the end for which God gave it, and so destroying it. Edom “steeled himself,” as we say, against his better feelings,” his better nature,” “deadened” them. But so they do not live again. Man is not master of the life and death of his feelings, anymore than of his natural existence. He can destroy; he cannot re-create. And he does, so far, “corrupt,” decay, do to death, his own feelings, whenever, in any signal instance, he acts against them. Edom was not simply unfeeling. He destroyed all “his tender yearnings” over suffering, such as God has put into every human heart, until it destroys them. Ordinary anger is satisfied and slaked by its indulgence; malice is fomented and fed and invigorated by it. Edom ever, as occasion gratified his anger; “his anger did tear continually;” yet, though raging as some wild ravening animal, without control, “he kept his wrath for ever,” not within bounds, but to let it loose anew. He retained it when he ought to have parted with it, and let it loose when he ought to have restrained it.

“What is best, when spoiled, becomes the worst,” is proverbial truth.: “As no love wellnigh is more faithful than that of brothers, so no hatred, when it hath once begun, is more unjust, no odium fiercer. Equality stirs up and inflames the mind; the shame of giving way and the love of preeminence is the more inflamed, in that the memory of infancy and whatever else would seem to gender good will, when once they are turned aside from the right path, produce hatred and contempt.” They were proverbial sayings of paganism, “fierce are the wars of brethren”, and “they who have loved exceedingly, they too hate exceedingly.”: “The Antiochi, the Seleuci, the Gryphi, the Cyziceni, when they learned not to be all but brothers, but craved the purple and diadems, overwhelmed themselves and Asia too with many calamities.”

Verse 12

But - (And I, in My turn and as a consequence of these sins) will send a fire upon Teman “Teman,” say Eusebius and Jerome, “was a country of the princes of Edom, which had its name from Teman son of Eliphaz, son of

Esau Genesis 36:11, Genesis 36:15. But even to this day there is a village, called Teman, about 5 (Eusebius says 15) miles from Petra, where there is also a Roman garrison, from which place was Eliphaz, king of the Themanites." It is, however, probably the district which is meant, of which Bozra was then the capital. For Amos when speaking of cities, uses some word to express this, as "the palaces of Benhadad, the wall of Gaza, of Tyrus, of Rabbah;" here he simply uses the name Teman, as he does those of Moab and Judah. Amos does not mention Petra, or Selah, for Amaziah had taken it, and called it Joktheel, "which God subdued," which name it for some time retained 2 Kings 14:7.

Bozrah - (Literally, which cuts off approach) is mentioned, as early as Genesis Genesis 36:33, as the seat of one of the elective kings who, in times before Moses, reigned over Edom. It lay then doubtless in Idumea itself, and is quite distinct from the Bozrah of Hauran or Auranitis, from which Jerome also distinguishes it.: "There is another Bosor also, a city of Esau, in the mountains of Idumea, of which Isaiah speaks." There is yet a small village of the like name (Busaira "the little Bozrah") which "appears," it is said, "to have been in ancient times a considerable city, if we may judge from the ruins which surround the village." It has now "some 50 houses, and stands on an elevation, on the summit of which a small castle has been built." The name however, "little Bozrah," indicates the existence of a "great Bozrah," with which its name is contrasted, and is not likely to have been the place itself. Probably the name was a common one, "the strong place" of its neighborhood. The Bozrah of Edom is either that little vilage, or is wholly blotted out.

Verse 13

Ammon - These who receive their existence under circumstances, in any way like those of the first forefathers of Moab and Ammon, are known to be under physical as well as intellectual and moral disadvantages. Apart from the worst horrors, on the one side reason was stupefied, on the other it was active in sin. He who imprinted His laws on nature, has annexed the penalty to the infraction of those laws. It is known also how, even under the Gospel, the main character of a nation remains unchanged. The basis of natural character, upon which grace has to act, remains, under certain limits, the same. Still more in the unchanging east. Slave-dealers know of certain hereditary good or evil qualities in non-Christian nations in whom they traffic. What marvel then that Ammon and Moab retained the stamp of their

origin, in a sensual or passionate nature? Their choice of their idols grew out of this original character and aggravated it.

They chose them gods like themselves, and worsened themselves by copying these idols of their sinful nature. The chief god of the fierce Ammon was Milehem or Molech, the principle of destruction, who was appeased with sacrifices of living children, given to the fire to devour. Moab, beside its idol Chemosh, had the degrading worship of Baal Peor Numbers 25:1-3, reproductiveness the counterpart of destruction. And, so. in fierce or degrading rites, they worshiped the power which belongs to God, to create, or to destroy. Moab was the seducer of Israel at Shittim Numbers 25:1-3. Ammon, it has been noticed, showed at different times a special wanton ferocity. Such was the proposal of Nahash to the men of Jabesh-Gilead, when offering to surrender, "that I may thrust out all your right eyes and lay it for a reproach unto all Israel" 1 Samuel 11:1-3.

Such was the insult to David's messengers of peace, and the hiring of the Syrians in an aggressive war against David 2 Samuel 10:1-6. Such, again, was this war of extermination against the Gileadites. On Israel's side, the relation to Moab and Ammon had been altogether friendly. God recalled to Israel the memory of their common descent, and forbade them to war against either. He speaks of them by the name of kindness, "the children of Lot," the companion and friend of Abraham. "I will not give thee of their land for a possession, because I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession" Deuteronomy 2:9, Deuteronomy 2:19. Akin by descent, their history had been alike. Each had driven out a giant tribe; Moab, the Emim; Ammon, the Zamzummim Deuteronomy 2:10-11, Deuteronomy 2:20-21. They had thus possessed themselves of the tract from the Arnon, not quite half way down the Dead Sea on its east side, to the Jabbok, about half-way between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. Both had been expelled by the Amorites, and had been driven, Moab, behind the Arnon, Ammon, behind the "strong border" Numbers 21:24 of the upper part of the Jabbok, what is now the Nahr Amman, "the river of Ammon," eastward.

The whole of what became the inheritance of the 2 12 tribes, was in the hands of the Amorites, and threatened very nearly their remaining possessions; since, at "Aroer that is before Rabbah" Joshua 13:25, the Amorites were already over against the capital of Ammon; at the Arnon

they were but 2 12 hours from Ar-Moab, the remaining capital of Moab. Israel then, in destroying the Amorites, had been at once avenging and rescuing Moab and Ammon; and it is so far a token of friendliness at this time, that, after the victory at Edrei, the great "iron bedstead" of Og was placed in "Rabbah of the children of Ammon" Deuteronomy 3:11. Envy, jealousy, and fear, united them to "hire Balaam to curse Israel" Deuteronomy 23:4, although the king of Moab was the chief actor in this Numbers 25:1-3. Probably Moab was then, and continued to be, the more influential or the more powerful, since in their first invasion of Israel, the Ammonites came as the allies of Eglon king of Moab. "He gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek Judges 3:13. And" they "served Eglon." Yet Ammon's subsequent oppression must have been yet more grievous, since God reminds Israel of His delivering them from the Ammonites Judges 10:11, not from Moab. There we find Ammon under a king, and in league with the Philistines Judges 10:7, "crashing and crushing for 18 years all the children of Israel in Gilead." The Ammonites carried a wide invasion across the Jordan against Judah, Benjamin and Ephraim Judges 10:9, until they were subdued by Jephthah. Moab is not named; but the king of Ammon claims as my land Judges 11:13, the whole which Moab and Ammon had lost to the Amorites and they to Israel, "from Arnon unto Jabbok and unto Jordan" Judges 11:13.

The range also of Jephthah's victories included probably all that same country from the Arnon to the neighborhood of Rabbah of Ammon. The Ammonites, subdued then, were again on the offensive in the fierce siege of Jabesh-Gilead and against Saul (see above the note at Amos 1:11). Yet it seems that they had already taken from Israel what they had lost to the Amorites, for Jabesh-Gilead was beyond the Jabbok; and "Mizpeh of Moab," where David went to seek the king of Moab 1 Samuel 22:3, was probably no other than the Ramoth-Mizpeh Joshua 13:26 of Gad, the Mizpeh Judges 11:29 from where Jephthah went over to fight the Ammonites. With Hanan, king of Ammon, David sought to remain at peace, on account of some kindness, interested as it probably was, which his father Nahash had shown him, when persecuted by Saul 2 Samuel 10:2.

It was only after repeated attempts to bring an overwhelming force of the Syriains against David, that Rabbah was besieged and taken, and that

awful punishment inflicted. The severity of the punishment inflicted on Moab and Ammon, in that two-thirds of the fighting men of Moab were put to death 2 Samuel 8:2, and fighting men of "the cities of Ammon" 2 Samuel 12:31 were destroyed by a ghastly death, so different from David's treatment of the Philistines or the various Syrians, implies some extreme hostility on their part, from which there was no safety except in their destruction. Moab and Ammon were still united against Jehoshaphat 2 Kings 24:2, whom they had before sought to stir up against the king of Babylon Jeremiah 27:3. Both profited for a time by the distresses of Israel, "magnifying" themselves "against her border" Zephaniah 2:8, and taking possession of her cities after the 2 12 tribes has been carried away by Tiglath-pileser. Both united in insulting Judah, and (as it appears from Ezekiel Ezekiel 25:2-8), out of jealousy against its religious distinction.

When some of the scattered Jews were reunited under Gedaliah, after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, it was a king of Ammon, Baalis, who instigated Johanan to murder him Jeremiah 40:11-14; Jeremiah 41:10. When Jerusalem was to be rebuilt after the return from the captivity, Ammonites and Moabites Nehemiah 2:10, Nehemiah 2:19; Nehemiah 4:1-3, "Sanballat the Horonite" (that is, out of Horonaim, which Moab had taken to itself Isaiah 15:5; Jeremiah 48:3, Jeremiah 48:5, Jeremiah 48:34.) "and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite," were chief in the opposition to it. They helped on the persecution by Antiochus (Deuteronomy 23:3. The seduction of Solomon by his Ammonite and Moabite wives illustrates the infectiousness of their idolatry. While he made private chapels "for all his strange wives, to burn incense and sacrifice to their gods" 1 Kings 11:8, the most stately idolatry was that of Chemosh and Molech, the abomination of Moab and Ammon. For Ashtoreth alone, besides these, did Solomon build high places in sight of the temple of God, on a lower part of the Mount of Olives 2 Kings 23:13.

They have ripped up the women with child in Gilead - Since Elisha prophesied that Hazael would be guilty of this same atrocity, and since Gilead was the scene of his chief atrocities, probably Syria and Ammon were, as of old, united against Israel in a war of extermination. It was a conspiracy to displace God's people from the land which He had given them, and themselves to replace them. The plan was effective; it was, Amos says, executed. They expelled and "inherited Gad" Jeremiah 49:1. Gilead

was desolated for the sins for which Hosea rebuked it; "blood had blood." It had been "tracked with blood" (see the note at Hosea 6:8); now life was sought out for destruction, even in the mother's womb. But, in the end, Israel, whose extermination Ammon devised and in part effected, survived. Ammon perished and left no memorial.

That they might enlarge their border - It was a horror, then, exercised, not incidentally here and there, or upon a few, or in sudden stress of passion, but upon system and in cold blood. We have seen lately, in the massacres near Lebanon, where male children were murdered on system, how methodically such savageness goes to work. A massacre, here and there, would not have "enlarged their border." They must haw carried on these horrors then, throughout all the lands which they wished to possess, making place for themselves by annihilating Israel, that there might be none to rise up and thrust them from their conquests, and claim their old inheritance. Such was the fruit of habitually indulged covetousness. Yet who beforehand would have thought it possible?

Verse 14

I will kindle afire in the wall of Rabbah - Rabbah, literally, "the great," called by Moses "Rabbah of the children of Ammon" Deuteronomy 3:11, and by later Greeks, "Rabathammana", was a strong city with a yet stronger citadel. Ruins still exist, some of which probably date back to these times. The lower city "lay in a valley bordered on both sides by barren hills of flint," at 12 an hour from its entrance. It lay on a stream, still called by its name Moyet or Nahr Amman, "waters" or "river of Ammon," which ultimately falls into the Zurka (the Jabbok). "On the top of the highest of the northern hills," where at the divergence of two valleys it abuts upon the ruins of the town, "stands the castle of Ammon, a very extensive rectangular building," following the shape of the hill and wholly occupying its crest. "Its walls are thick, and denote a remote antiquity; large blocks of stone are piled up without cement, and still hold together as well as if they had been recently placed; the greater part of the wall is entire. Within the castle are several deep cisterns."

There are remains of foundations of a wall of the lower city at its eastern extremity. This lower city, as lying on a river in a waterless district, was called the "city of waters" 2 Samuel 12:27, which Joab had taken when he sent to David to come and besiege the Upper City. In later times, that Upper City was resolutely defended against Antiochus the Great, and taken, not by

force but by thirst. On a conspicuous place on this castle-hill, stood a large temple, some of its broken columns 3 12 feet in diameter, probably the Grecian successor of the temple of its idol Milchom. Rabbah, the capital of Ammon, cannot have escaped, when Nebuchadnezzar, "in the 5th year of his reign, led an army against Coele-Syria, and, having possessed himself of it, warred against the Ammonites and Moabites, and having made all these nations subject to him, invaded Egypt, to subdue it."

Afterward, it was tossed to and fro in the desolating wars between Syria and Egypt. Ptolemy II called it from his own surname Philadelphia, and so probably had had to restore it. It brought upon itself the attack of Antiochus III and its own capture, by its old habit of marauding against the Arabs in alliance with him. At the time of our Lord, it, with "Samaria, Galilee and Jericho," is said by a pagan to be "inhabited by a mingled race of Egyptians, Arabians and Phoenicians." It had probably already been given over to "the children of the East," the Arabs, as Ezekiel had foretold Ezekiel 25:4. In early Christian times Milchom was still worshiped there under its Greek name of Hercules. Trajan recovered it to the Roman empire, and in the 4th century it, with Bostra, was still accounted a "vast town most secured by strong walls," as a frontier fortress "to repel the incursions of neighboring nations." It was counted to belong to Arabia. An Arabic writer says that it perished before the times of Muhammed, and covered a large tract with its ruins. It became a station of pilgrims to Mecca, and then, until now, as Ezekiel foretold, a stable for camels and a couching place.

I will kindle a fire in the wall - It may be that the prophet means to speak of some conflagration from within, in that he says not, as elsewhere, "I will send afire upon," but, "I will kindle a fire in" Amos 1:4, Amos 1:7, Amos 1:10, Amos 1:12; Amos 2:2, Amos 2:5. But "the shouting" is the battle-cry (Job 39:25; Jeremiah 20:16; Zephaniah 1:16, etc.) of the victorious enemy, the cheer of exultation, anticipating its capture. That onslaught was to be resistless, sweeping, like a whirlwind, all before it. The fortress and walls of Rabbah were to yield before the onset of the enemy, as the tents of their caravans were whirled flat on the ground before the eddying of the whirlwinds from the desert, burying all beneath them.

Verse 15

And their king - The king was commonly, in those nations, the center of their energy. When "he and his princes" were "gone into captivity," there

was no one to make head against the conqueror, and renew revolts. Hence, as a first step in the subdual, the reigning head and those who shared his counsels were removed. Ammon then, savage as it was in act, was no ill-organized horde. On the contrary, barren and waste as all that country now is, it must once have been highly cultivated by a settled and laborious people. The abundance of its ruins attests the industry and habits of the population. "The whole of the country," says Burckhardt, "must have been extremely well cultivated, to have afforded subsistence to the inhabitants of so many towns." "The low hills are, for the most part, crowned with ruins." Of the "thirty ruined or deserted places, which including Amman," have been even lately "counted east of Assalt" (the village which probably represents Ramoth-Gilead, "about 16 miles west of Philadelphia that is, Amman) several are in Ammonitis. Little as the country has been explored, ruins of large and important towns have been found south-southeast. and south of Amman.

Two hours southeast of Amman, Buckingham relates, "an elevation opened a new view before us, in the same direction. On a little lower level, was a still more extensive track of cultivated plain than that even which we had already passed - Throughout its whole extent were seen ruined towns in every direction, both before, behind, and on each side of us; generally seated on small eminences; all at a short distance from each other; and all, as far as we had yet seen, bearing evident marks of former opulency and consideration. There was not a tree in sight as far as the eye could reach; but my guide, who had been over every part of it, assured me that the whole of the plain was covered with the finest soil, and capable of being made the most productive grain-land in the world - For a space of more than thirty miles there did not appear to me a single interruption of hill, rock or wood, to impede immediate tillage.

The great plain of Esdraelon, so justly celebrated for its extent and fertility, is inferior in both to this plain of Belkah. Like Esdraelon, it appears to have been once the seat of an active and numerous population; but in the former the monuments of the dead only remain, while here the habitations of the living are equally mingled with the tombs of the departed, all thickly strewn over every part of the soil from which they drew their sustenance." Nor does the crown, of a "talent of gold weight, with precious stones" 2 Samuel 12:30, belong to an uncivilized people. Such hordes too depend on

the will and guidance of their single Skeikh or head. This was a hereditary kingdom 2 Samuel 10:1. The kings of Ammon had their constitutional advisers. These were they who gave the evil and destructive counsel to insult the ambassadors of David. Evil kings have evermore evil counselors. It is ever the curse of such kings to have their own evil, reflected, anticipated, fomented, enacted by bad advisers around them. "Hand in hand the wicked shall not be unpunished" Proverbs 11:21. They link together, but to drag one another into a common destruction. Together they had counseled against God; "king and princes together," they should go into captivity.

There is also doubtless, in the word Malcham, a subordinate allusion to the god whom they worshiped under the title Molech or Malchom. Certainly Jeremiah "seems" so to have understood it. For, having said of Moab, "Chemosh shall go into captivity, his priests and his princes together" Jeremiah 48:7, he says as to Ammon, in the self-same formula and almost in the words of Amos; "Malcham shall go into captivity, his priests and his princes together." Zephaniah Zephaniah 1:5 also speaks of the idol under the same name Malcham, "their king." Yet since Ammon had kings before this time, and just before their subdual by Nebuchadnezzar, and king Baalis Jeremiah 40:14 was a murderer, it is hardly likely that Jeremiah too should not have included him in the sentence of his people, of whose sins he was a mainspring. Probably, then, Amos and Jeremiah foretell, in a comprehensive way, the powerlessness of all their stays, human and idolatrous. All in which they trusted should not only fail them, but should be carried captive from them.

AMOS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

Moab - The relation of Moab to Israel is only accidentally different from that of Ammon. One spirit actuated both, venting itself in one and the same way, as occasion served, and mostly together (see the note at Amos 1:13). Beside those more formal invasions, the history of Elisha mentions one probably of many in-roads of "bands of the Moabites." It seems as though, when "the year entered in," and with it the harvest, "the bands of the Moabites entered in" too, like "the Midianites and Amalekites and the children of the east" Judges 6:3-4, Judges 6:11 in the time of Gideon, or their successors the Bedouins, now. This their continual hostility is related in the few words of a parenthesis. There was no occasion to relate at length an uniform hostility, which was as regular as the seasons of the year, and the year's produce, and the temptation to the cupidity of Moab, when Israel was weakened by Hazael.

Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom - The deed here condemned, is unknown. Doubtless it was connected with that same hatred of Edom, which the king of Moab showed, when besieged by Israel. People are often more enraged against a friend or ally who has made terms with one whom they hate or fear, than with the enemy himself. Certainly, "when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him" 2 Kings 3:26-27, his fury was directed personally against the king of Edom. He "took with him" 700 chosen men "to cut through to the king of Edom, and they could not." Escape was not their object. They sought not "to cut through" the Edomite contingent into the desert, but "to the king of Edom." Then "he took his oldest son," that is, probably the oldest son of the king of Edom whom he captured, "and offered him up as a burnt offering on the wall."

Such is the simplest structure of the words; He "strove to cut through to the king of Edom, and they could not, and he took his oldest son, etc., and there was great indignation against Israel." That "indignation" too on the part of Edom (for there was no other to be indignant "against Israel") is best accounted for, if this expedition, undertaken because Moab had rebelled against Israel, had occasioned the sacrifice of the son of the king of Edom, who took part in it only as a tributary of Judah. Edom would have had no special occasion to be indignant with Israel, if on occasion of an ordinary siege, the king of Moab had, in a shocking way, performed the national

idolatry of child-sacrifice. That hatred the king of Moab carried beyond the grave, hatred which the pagan too held to be unnatural in its implacableness and unsatiableness. The soul being, after death, beyond man‘s reach, the hatred, vented upon his remains, is a sort of impotent grasping at eternal vengeance.

It wreaks on what it knows to be insensible, the hatred with which it would pursue, if it could, the living being who is beyond it. Its impotence evinces its fierceness, since, having no power to wreak any real revenge, it has no object but to show its hatred. Hatred, which death cannot extinguish, is the beginning of the eternal hate in hell. With this hatred Moab hated the king of Edom, seemingly because he had been, though probably against this will, on the side of the people of God. It was then sin against the love of God, and directed against God Himself. The single instance, which we know, of any feud between Moab and Edom was, when Edom was engaged in a constrained service of God. At least there are no indications of any conquest of each other. The Bozrah of Moab, being in the Mishor, “the plain” Jeremiah 48:21, Jeremiah 48:24, is certainly distinct from the Bozrah of Edom, which Jeremiah speaks of at the same time, as belonging to Edom Jeremiah 49:13. Each kingdom, Edom and Moab, had its own strong city, Bozrah, at one and the same time. And if “the rock,” which Isaiah speaks of as the strong hold of Moab Isaiah 16:1, was indeed the Petra of Edom, (and the mere name, in that country of rock-fortresses is not strong, yet is the only, proof,) they won it from Judah who had taken it from Edom, and in whose hands it remained in the time of Amos (2 Kings 14:7; see above the note at Amos 1:12), not from Edom itself. Or, again, the tribute “may” have been only sent through Petra, as the great center of commerce. Edom‘s half-service gained it no good, but evil; Moab‘s malice was its destruction.

The proverb, “speak good only of the dead,” shows what reverence human nature dictates, not to condemn those who have been before their Judge, unless He have already openly condemned them. “Death,” says Athanasius in relating the death of Arius on his perjury, “is the common end of all people, and we ought not to insult the dead, though he be an enemy, for it is uncertain whether the same event may not happen to ourselves before evening.”

Verse 2

It shall devour the palaces of Kerioth - Literally, "the cities," that is, a collection of cities. It may have received a plural form upon some enlargement, as Jerusalem received a dual form, as a double city. The name is, in different forms, very common. In the plain or high downs of Moab itself, there were both Kiriathaim, "double city" and Kerloth Jeremiah 48:23-24; in Naphthali, a Kiriathaim, (1 Chronicles 6:76, (1 Chronicles 6:61 in Hebrew)) or Kartan Joshua 21:32; in Judah, the Kerioth Joshua 15:25 from where the wretched Judas has his name Iscariot; in Zebulon, Kartah Joshua 21:34 also, which reappears as the Numidian Cirta. Moab had also a Kiriath-huzoth, "city of streets" Numbers 22:39, within the Arnon. This alone was within the proper border of Moab, such as the Armorites had left it.

Kerioth and Kiriathaim were in the plain country which Israel had won from the Amorites, and its possession would imply an aggression of Moab. Jeroboam II had probably at this time brought Moab to a temporary submission (see the note at Amos 6:14); but Israel only required fealty and tribute of Moab; Moab appears even before the captivity of the 2 12 tribes, to have invaded the possessions of Israel. Kerioth was probably a new capital, beyond the Arnon, now adorned with "palaces" and enlarged, as "Paris, Prague, Cracow, "London, are composed of different towns. In Jerome's time, it had probably ceased to be.

Shall die with tumult - Jeremiah, when prophesying the destruction of Moab, designates it by this same name "sons of tumult Jeremiah 48:45. A flame shall devour the corner of Moab and the crown of the sons of tumult." And probably herein he explains the original prophecy of Balaam, "shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of tumult" Numbers 24:17. As they had done, so should it be done to them; tumults they caused, "in tumult" they should perish.

After the subdual of Moab by Nebuchadnezzar, it disappears as a nation, unless indeed Daniel in his Prophecy, "Edom and Moab and the chief of the children of Ammon shall escape out of his hand" Ezra 9:1 is mentioned only as that with women of other pagan nations which had ceased to be. The old name, Moabitis, is still mentioned; but the Arabs had possessed themselves of it, and bore the old name. Alexander Jannaeus "subdued" we are told, "of the Arabians, the Moabites and Gileadires," and then, again, when in difficulty, made it over with its fortified places, to the king of the

Arabians. Among the cities which Alexander took from the king of the Arabians, are cities throughout Moab, both in that part in which they had succeeded to Israel, and their proper territory south of the Arnon.

Verse 3

And I will cut off the judge - The title "judge" (shophet) is nowhere used absolutely of a king. Holy Scripture speaks in several places of "all the judges of the earth" Job 9:24; Psalm 2:10; Psalm 148:11; Proverbs 8:16; Isaiah 40:23. Hosea Hosea 13:10, under "judges," includes "kings and princes," as judging the people. The word "judge" is always used as one invested with the highest, but not regal authority, as of all the judges from the death of Joshua to Samuel. In like way it (Sufetes) was the title of the chief magistrates of Carthage, with much the same authority as the Roman Consuls. The Phoenician histories, although they would not own that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Tyre, still own that, after his 13 years' siege, Baal reigned 10 years, and after him judges were set up, one for two months, a second for ten, a third, a high priest, for three, two more for six, and between these one reigned for a year. After his death, they sent for Merbaal from Babylon, who reigned for four years, and on his death, they sent for Hiram his brother who reigned for twenty. The judges then exercised the supreme authority, the king's sons having been carried away captive. Probably, then, when Jeroboam II recovered the old territory of Israel, Moab lost its kings. It agrees with this, that Amos says, "the princes thereof," literally, "her princes," the princes of Moab, not as of Ammon, "his princes," that is, the princes of the king.

Verse 4

For three transgressions of Judah etc. - Rup.: "Here too there is no difference of Jew and Gentile. The word of God, a just judge, spareth no man's person. whom sin joins in one, the sentence of the Judge disjoins not in punishment" Romans 2:12. "As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law, and as many as have signed in the law, shall be judged by the law." Jerome: "Those other nations, Damascus and the rest, he upbraids not for having cast away the law of God, and despised His commandments, for they had not the written law, but that of nature only. So then of them he says, that "they corrupted all their compassions" - and the like. But Judah, who, at that time, had the worship of God and the temple and its rites, and had received the law and commandments and judgments

and precepts and testimonies, is rebuked and convicted by the Lord, for that it had "cast aside His law and not kept His commandments;" wherefore it should be punished as it deserved.

And since they rejected and despised these, then, in course, "their lies deceived them," that is, their idols; "lies" on their part who made them and worshiped them for the true God, and "lies" and lying to them, as deceiving their hopes. "For an idol is nothing in the world" 1 Corinthians 8:4, as neither are all the vanities in the world whereof people make idols, but they deceive by a vain show, as though they were something. Jerome: "They would not have been deceived by their idols, unless they had first rejected the law of the Lord and not done His commandments." They had sinned with a high hand: "despising" and so rejecting the law of God; and so He despised and rejected them, leaving them to be deceived by the lies which they themselves had chosen. So it ever is with man. Man must either "love God's law and hate and abhor lies" Psalm 119:163, or he will despise God's law and cleave to lies.

He first in act "despises" God's law, (and whoso does not keep it, despises it,) and then he must needs be deceived by some idol of his own, which becomes his God. He first chooses willfully his own "lie," that is, whatever he chooses out of God, and then his own "lie" deceives him. So, morally, liars at last believe themselves. So, whatever false maxim anyone has adopted against his conscience, whether in belief or practice, to justify what he wills against the will of God, or to explain away what God reveals and he mislikes, stifling and lying to his conscience, in the end deceives his conscience, and at the last, a man believes that to be true, which, before he had lied to his conscience, he knew to be false. The prophet uses a bold word in speaking of man's dealings with his God, "despises." Man carries on the serpent's first fraud, "Hath God indeed said?" Man would not willingly own, that he is directly at variance with the Mind of God. Man, in his powerlessness, at war with Omnipotence, and, in his limited knowledge, with Omniscience! It were too silly, as well as too terrible.

So he smoothes it over to himself, "lying" to himself. "God's word must not be taken so precisely;" "God cannot have meant;" "the Author of nature would not have created us so, if He had meant;" and all the other excuses, by which he would evade owning to himself that he is directly rejecting the

Mind of God and trampling it under foot. Scripture draws off the veil. Judah had the law of God, and did not keep it; then, he "despised" it. On the one side was God's will, His Eternal Wisdom, His counsel for man for good; on the other, what debasements! On the one side were God's awful threats, on the other, His exceeding promises. Yet man chose whatever he willed, lying to himself, and acting as though God had never threatened or promised or spoken. This ignoring of God's known Will and law and revelation is to despise them, "as effectually as to curse God to His face" Job 2:5. This rejection of God was hereeditary.

Their lies were those "after which their fathers walked," in Egypt and from Egypt onward, in the wilderness (see the note at Amos 5:25-26), "making the image of the calf of Egypt and worshiping Baalpeor and Ashtoreth and Baalim." Evil acquires a sort of authority by time. People become inured to evils, to which they have been used. False maxims, undisputed, are thought indisputable. They are in possession; and "possession" is held a good title. The popular error of one generation becomes the axiom of the next. The descent "of the image of the great goddess Diana from Jupiter" or of the Coran, becomes a "thing" which cannot be spoken against" Acts 19:35-36. The "lies after which the fathers walked" deceive the children. The children canonize the errors of their fathers." Human opinon is as dogmatic as revelation. The second generation of error demands as implicit submission as God's truth.

The transmission of error against himself, God says, aggravates its evil, does not excuse it Nehemiah 5:5. "Judah is the Church. In her the prophet reproves whosoever, worshiping his own vices and sins, cometh to have that as a god by which he is overcome; as Peter saith, "Whereby a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" 2 Peter 2:19. The covetous worshipeth mammon; the glutton, his belly Philemon 3:19; the impure, Baalpeor; she who, "living in pleasure, is dead while she liveth" 1 Timothy 5:6, the pleasure in which she liveth." Of such idols the world is full. Every fair form, every idle imagination, everything which gratifies self-love, passion, pride, vanity, intellect, sense, each the most refined or the most debased, is such a "lie," so soon as man loves and regards it more than his God.

Verse 5

I will send a fire upon Judah - All know now, how Jerusalem, its temple, and its palaces perished by fire, first by Nebuchadnezzar, then by the Romans. Yet some two centuries passed, before that first destruction came. The ungodly Jews flattered themselves that it would never come. So we know that a "fiery stream" Daniel 7:10 will issue and come forth from Him; "a fire" that "consumeth to destruction" Job 31:12, all who, whether or no they are in the body of the Church, are not of the heavenly Jerusalem; dead members in the body which belongs to the Living Head. And it will not the less come, because it is not regarded. Rather, the very condition of all God's judgments is, to be disregarded and to come, and then most to come, when they are most disregarded.

Verse 6

For three transgressions of Israel, and for four - In Israel, on whom the divine sentence henceforth rests, the prophet numbers four classes of sins, running into one another, as all sins do, since all grievous sins contain many in one, yet in some degree distinct:

(1) Perversion of justice;

(2) oppression of the poor;

(3) uncleanness;

(4) luxury with idolatry.

They sold the righteous for silver - It is clear from the opposite statement, "that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes," that the prophet is not speaking of judicial iniquity, but of actual buying and selling. The law allowed a Hebrew who was poor to sell himself, and a Hebrew to buy him until the year of release; yet this too with the express reserve, that the purchaser was forbidden to "serve himself with him with the service of a slave, but as a hired servant and a sojourner stroll he be with thee" Leviticus 25:39-40. The thief who could not repay what he stole, was to "be sold for his theft" Exodus 22:2-3. But the law gave no power to sell an insolvent debtor. It grew up in practice. The sons and daughters of the debtor Nehemiah 5:5, or "his wife and children" Matthew 18:25, nay even the sons of a deceased debtor 2 Kings 4:1, were sold. Nehemiah rebuked this sharply. In that case, the hardness was aggravated

by the fact that the distress had been fomented by usury. But the aggravation did not constitute the sin. It seems to be this merciless selling by the creditor, with Amos rebukes. The "righteous" is probably one who, without any blame, became insolvent. The "pair of shoes," that is, sandals, express the trivial price, or the luxury for which he was sold. They had him sold "for the sake of a pair of sandals," that is, in order to procure them. Trivial in themselves, as being a mere sole, the sandals of the Hebrew women were, at times, costly and beautiful (Song of Song of Solomon 7:1 ; Ezra 10; Judith 16:9). Such a sale expressed contempt for man, made in the image of God, that he was sold either for some worthless price, or for some needless adornment.

Verse 7

That pant after the dust of the earth - Literally, "the panters!" with indignation. Not content with having rent from him the little hereditary property which belonged to each Israelite, these creditors grudged him even the "dust," which, as a mourner, he strewed on his head Job 2:12, since it too was "earth." Covetousness, when it has nothing to feed it, craves for what is absurd or impossible. What was Naboth's vineyard to a king of Israel with his "ivory palace?" What was Mordecai's refusal to bow to one in honor like Haman? What a trivial gain to a millionaire? The sarcasm of the prophet was the more piercing, because it was so true. People covet things in proportion, not to their worth, but to their worthlessness. No one covets what he much needs. Covetousness is the sin, mostly not of those who have not, but of those who have. It grows with its gains, is the less satisfied, the more it has to satisify it, and attests its own unreasonableness, by the uselessness of the things it craves for.

And turn aside the way of the meek - So Solomon said, "A wicked" man "taketh a bribe out of the bosom, to pervert the ways of judgment." (Proverbs 17:23. God had laid down the equality of man, made in His own image, and had forbidden to favor either poor Exodus 23:3 or rich Exodus 23:6. Amos calls these by different names, which entitled them to human sympathy; "poor, depressed, lowly; poor," in their absolute condition; "depressed," as having been brought low; "lowly," as having the special grace of their state, the wonderful meekness and lowliness off the godly poor. But all these qualities are so many incentives to injury to the ungodly. They hate the godly, as a reproach to them; because "he is clean contrary to their doings, his life is not like other people's; his ways are of another

fashion" (Wisdom Amos 2:12, Amos 2:15). Wolves destroy not wolves but sheep. Bad people circumvent not the bad but the good. Besides the easiness of the gain, there is a devilish fascinating pleasure to the bad, to overreach the simple and meek, because they are such.

They love also to "turn aside the way of the meek," by, "turning them from what is truly right and good; "or from the truth; or again to thwart them in all their ways and endeavors, by open injustice or by perverting justice. Every act of wrong prepares the way for the crowning act; and so "the turning aside the way of the meek" foreshadowed and prepared for the unjust judgment of Him who was "the Meek and Lowly" One Matthew 11:29, the selling the righteous for a trilling sum prepared for the selling "the Holy One and the Just" Acts 3:14 for "the thirty pieces of silver.": "Contrariwise, whoso is truly wise, cordially venerates the humble and abject, the poor and simple, and prefers them in his own heart to himself, knowing that God has ‹chosen the poor, and the weak things of the world, and things despised, and things which are not' 1 Corinthians 1:27-28; and that Christ hath likened Himself to such, saying in the Psalm, ‹I am poor and sorrowful' Psalm 69:29."

The same damsel - This is not expressly forbidden by the law, except in the case of marriage, the father being forbidden to marry his son's widow, and the son to take his father's widow to wife Leviticus 18:8, Leviticus 18:15. Abominations, unless they had become known to Israel in Egypt, were not expressly forbidden, but were included in the one large prohibition, which, as our Lord explains, forbade every offence, bearing upon it. Israel must have so understood the law, since Amos could upbraid them with this, which is not forbidden by the letter of the law, as a willful insult to the Majesty of God. Reverence was due from the son to the father, example from the father to the son. But now the father was an example of evil to the son; and the son sinned in a way which had no temptation except its irreverence. People, sated with ordinary sin seek incitement to sin, in its very horrors. Probably this sin was committed in connection with their idol worship (see the note at Hosea 4:14). The sin of marrying the father's widow was "fornication not so much as named among the Gentiles" 1 Corinthians 5:1; it was unknown, as seemingly legalizing what was so unnatural. Oppression of the poor, wronging the righteous, perverting the way of the meek, laid the soul open for any abomination.

To profane My Holy Name - that is, as called upon them, as the people of God. God had said, "ye shall keep My commandments and do them (Leviticus 22:31-32; add Leviticus 20:3; Leviticus 18:21; Leviticus 21:6). "I" am "the Lord, and ye shall not defile My Holy Name. For I will be sanctified among the children of Israel. I am the Lord who sanctifies you." The sins of God's people are a reproach upon Himself. They bring Him, so to say, in contact with sin. They defeat the object of His creation and revelation. He created man in His Image, to bear His likeness, to have one will with Himself. In effect, through sin, He has created rebels, deformed, unlike. So long as He bears with them, it seems as if He were indifferent to them. Those to whom He has not revealed Himself, must needs think that He takes no account of what He permits unnoticed. Israel, whom God had separated from the pagan, did, by "mingling with the pagan and learning their works" Psalm 106:35, all which in them lay, to "profane" His "Holy Name." They acted as if they had no other purpose than to defile it (see the note at Hosea 8:4).

Had such been their object, they could not have done it more effectually, they could not have done otherwise. In deliberate sin, people act, at last, in defiance of God, in set purpose to dishonor Him. The Name of God has ever since been blasphemed, on account of the sins of the Jews, as though it were impossible that God should have chosen for His own, a people so "laden with iniquities" Isaiah 1:4. Nathan's words to David, "Thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme" 2 Samuel 12:14, have been fulfilled until this day. How much more, Christians, who not only are called "the people of God" but bear the name of Christ incorporated in their own. Yet have we not known Muslims flee from our Christian capital, in horror at its sins? "He lives like a Christian," is a proverb of the Polish Jews, drawn from the debased state of morals in Socinian Poland. The religion of Christ has no such enemies as Christians. Dionysius: "As the devout by honoring God, shew that He is Holy, Great, Most High, who is obeyed in holiness, fear and reverence, so the ungodly, by dishonoring God, exhibit God as far as in them lies, as if lie were not holy. For they act so as if evil were well-pleasing to Him, and induce others to dishonor Him. Wherefore the Apostle saith; "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you" Romans 2:24; and by Ezekiel the Lord saith oftentimes, "Ye have profaned My Holy Name. And I will sanctify My great Name which wets profaned among the pagan, which ye

hare profaned in the midst of them" Ezekiel 36:23. The devout then are said to "magnify," sanctify, "exalt God;" the unrighteous to "profane Ezekiel 13:19, despise, God."

Verse 8

They lay themselves down - They condensed sin. By a sort of economy in the toil of sinning, they blended many sins in one; idolatry, sensuality, cruelty, and, in all, the express breach of God's commandments. The "clothes" here are doubtless the same as the "raiment" in the law, the large enfolding cloak, which by day was wrapped over the long loose shirt, the poor man's only dress besides, and by night was his only bedding Exodus 22:26-27. God had expressly commanded, "If the man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge" Deuteronomy 24:12-13; in any case "thou shalt deliver him the pledge again, when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee; and it shall be righteousness to thee before the Lord thy God." Here the "garments laid to pledge" are treated as the entire property of the creditors.

They "stretch" their listless length along upon them in their idol-feasts "by every altar." Ezekiel speaks of a "stately bed," upon which they "sat, and a table prepared before it" Ezekiel 23:41. Isaiah; "Upon a lofty and high mountain, hast thou set up thy bed; even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice; thou hast enlarged thy bed; thou hast loved their bed; thou providedst room" Isaiah 57:7-8. In luxury and state then, and withal in a shameless publicity, they "lay on the garments" of the despoiled "by every altar." The multiplication of altars Hosea 8:11; Hosea 10:1; Hosea 12:11 was, in itself, sin. By each of these multiplied places of sin they committed fresh sins of luxury and hard-heartedness, (perhaps, from the character of the worship of nature, yet grosser sins,) "and drink the wine of the condemned," or (as the English margin more exactly) "the amerced," those whom, unjustly, persons in any petty judicial authority had "amerced," expending in revelry and debanchery in the idol's temple what they had unjustly extorted from the oppressed.

There is no mask too transparent to serve to hide from himself one who does not wish to see himself. Nothing serves so well as religion for that self-deceit, and the less there is of it, or the more one-sided it is, the better it serves. For the narrower it is, the less risk of impinging on the awful reality

of God‘s truth; and half a truth as to God is mostly, a lie which its half-truth makes plausible. So this dreadful assemblage of cruelty, avarice, malice, mockery of justice, unnatural debauchery, hard-heartedness, was doubtless smoothed over to the conscience of the ten tribes by that most hideous ingredient of all, that “the house of their god” was the place of their ill-purchased revelry. People do not serve their idols for nothing; this costly service at Bethel was not for nought. They did all these things; but they did something for “the Deity” or “Nature” or “Ashtoreth;” and so “the Deity” was to be at peace with them. Amos, with wonderful irony, marks the ghastly mixture of sin and worship, “they drank the wine of the amerced” - where? “in the house of their God,” condemning in five words their luxury, oppression, perversion of justice, cruelty, profaneness, unreal service and real apostasy. What hard-heartedness to the willfully-forgotten poor is compensated by a little Church-going!

Verse 9

Yet - (and I) I (Emphatic) destroyed Such were “their” doings; such their worship of “their God.” And what had “God” done? what was it, which they thus requited?

The Amorite - These, as one of the mightiest of the Canaanite tribes, stand in Moses for all. Moses, in rehearsing to them the goodness of God and their backsliding, reminds them, how he had said, “Ye have come to the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord your God giveth you” Deuteronomy 1:20; and that they, using this same word, said, “Because the Lord hateth us, He hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to give us into the hand of the Amorite to destroy us” Deuteronomy 1:27. The aged Joshua, in rehearsing God‘s great deeds for Israel, places first by itself the destruction of the Amorite before them, with the use of this same idiom, “I brought you into the land of the Amorites which dwelt on the other side of Jordan - and I destroyed them before you.” The Amorites were descended from the 4th son of Canaan Genesis 10:16.

At the invasion of Chedorlaomer, a portion of them dwelt at Hazezon-Tamar or Engedi, half way on the west side of the Dead Sea, and at Hebron near it (Genesis 14:7, Genesis 14:13; compare Genesis 13:18; 2 Chronicles 20:2). Their corruption had not yet reached its height, and the return of Israel was delayed to the four hundredth year, “because the iniquity of the Amorite was not yet full” Genesis 15:16. When Israel returned, the

Amorites, (together with the Hittites and the Jebusites) held the hill country Numbers 13:29; Deuteronomy 1:7, Deuteronomy 1:44, Jerusalem, Hebron, Gibeon 2 Samuel 21:2, and, on the skirts of the mountains westward Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon Joshua 10:3, Joshua 10:5. They dwelt on the side of the Jordan westward Joshua 5:1, besides the two kingdoms which they had formed east of Jordan, reaching to Mount Hermon Deuteronomy 3:8 and Bashan up to the territory of Damascus. Afterward a small remnant remained only in the portion of Dan, and in the outskirts of Judah, from the south of the Dead Sea, Maaleh Akrabbim (Scorpion-pass) and Petra Judges 1:35-36. Those near Idumea were probably absorbed in Edom; and the remnant in Dan, after becoming tributary to Ephraim Judges 1:35-36, lost their national existence perhaps among the Philistines, since we have thenceforth only the single notice in the days of Samuel after the defeat of the Philistines, "there was peace between Israel and the Amorites" 1 Samuel 7:14.

Whose height was like the height of the cedars - The giant sons of Anak were among the Amorites at "Hebron" Numbers 13:22 (called for a time Kiriath Arba Joshua 14:15; Joshua 15:13-14 from their giant father) "Debir, Ahab, and the mountains of Judah and Israel Joshua 11:21. The valley of Rephaim" 2 Samuel 5:18, southwest of Jerusalem, connects this giant race with the Amorites, as does the fact that Og, king of the Amorites in Basan, was "of the remnant of the Rephaim" Deuteronomy 3:11; Joshua 12:4; Joshua 13:19. Basan and Argob were, in Moses' time, still called "the land of Rephaim" Deuteronomy 3:13. The Rephaim, with the Perizzites, dwelt still in woody mountains near Ephraim; from where, on the complaint that the lot of the sons of Joseph was too narrow, Joshua bade his tribe to expel them Joshua 17:15, Joshua 17:18. The Rephaim are mentioned between the Perizzites and the Amorites Genesis 15:20-21, in God's first promise of the land to Abraham's seed, and perhaps some intermixture of race gave the giant stature to the Amorites. It is clear from Amos that the report of the spies, "all the people that we saw in it were men of stature" Numbers 13:32, was no exaggeration, nor did Joshua and Caleb deny "this." The name of the Amorite is probably connected with "commanding," describing some quality of their forefather, which descended to his race.

Whose height was like the height of cedars - Giant height is sometimes a cause of weakness. Amos, in a degree like Hosea combines distinct images to make up the idea of stateliness and strength. The cedar is

the ideal of eastern trees for height Isaiah 2:13; Ezekiel 17:22; Ezekiel 31:3; 1 Kings 4:33; 2 Kings 14:9, stretching forth its arms as for protection, "It groweth to an exceeding height, and with increasing time ever riseth higher." The oak has its Hebrew name from strength. The more majestic the tall strength of the Amorite, the more manifest that Israel "got not the land in possession by their own sword" Psalm 44:3, who had counted themselves, in sight of the Amorite, "as grasshoppers" Numbers 13:33. God, who gave him that strength, took it away, as we say, "root and branch," leaving him no show above, no hope of recovered life below (see Hosea 9:16; Job 18:16; Ezekiel 17:9). Having compared each Amorite to a majestic tree, he compares the excision of the whole nation to the cutting down of that one tree, so swift, so entire, so irrecoverable. Yet the destruction of the Amorite, a mercy to Israel in the purpose of God, was a warning to israel when it became as they. God‘s terrors are mercies to the repentant; God‘s mercies are terrors to the impenitent. "Ye shall keep My statutes and My judgments and shall not commit any of these abominations," was the tenure upon which they held the Lord‘s land, "that the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you" Leviticus 18:26,38.

Verse 10

Also I - (Literally, "And I," I, emphatic; thus and thus did ye to Me; and thus and thus, with all the mercy from the first, did I to you,) I brought you up from the land of Egypt It is this language in which God, in the law, reminded them of that great benefit, as a motive to obedience; "I brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:6; Deuteronomy 6:12; only there, since God has not as yet "brought them up" into the land which He promised them, but they were yet in the wilderness, He says, "brought them forth;" here, "brought them up," as to a place of dignity, His own land.

And led you forty years through the wilderness - These are the very words of the law (Deuteronomy 29:4, (5 English), and reminded them of so many benefits during the course of those "forty years," which the law rehearsed; the daily supply of manna, the water from the rock, the deliverance from the serpents and other perils, the manifold forgivenesses. To be "led forty years through the wilderness," alone, had been no kindness, but a punishment. It was a blending of both. The abiding in the wilderness was punishment or austere mercy, keeping them back from the land which

they had shown themselves unqualified to enter: God‘s “leading” them was, His condescending mercy. The words, taken from the law, must have re-awakened in the souls of Israelites the memory of mercies which they did not mention, how that same book relates “He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about; He instructed him; He kept him as the apple of His eye. The Lord alone did lead him” Deuteronomy 32:10, Deuteronomy 32:12. In the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went until ye came to this place” Deuteronomy 1:31; or that minute tender care, mentioned in the same place (Deuteronomy 29:4, (5, English)), “your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot.” But unless Israel had known the law well, the words would only have been very distantly suggestive of mercy, that it must have been well with them even in the wilderness, since God “led them.” They had then the law in their memories, in Israel also, but distorted it or neglected it.

Verse 11

And I raised up of your sons for prophets - Amos turns from outward mercies to inward, front past to present, from miracles of power to miracles of grace. God‘s past mercies live on in those of today; the mercies of today are the assurance to us that we have a share in the past; His miracles of grace are a token that the miracles of His power are not our condemnation. God had, from the time of Moses, “raised up” prophets. Eldad and Medad Numbers 11:26-29 were images Of those, whom God would raise up beyond the bounds of His promise. Samuel was an Ephrathite 1 Samuel 1:1; Ahijah the Shilonite, that is, of Shiloh in Ephraim, lived on to old age in the kingdom of the ten tribes after their schism, the witness against the apostasy of Jeroboam 1 Kings 14:7-14; 1 Kings 15:29, yet acknowledged by the king whose rise and of the destruction of whose house he prophesied 1 Kings 14:2, 1 Kings 14:4.

Jehu, son of Hanani, was the prophet of both kingdoms 1 Kings 16:1, 1 Kings 16:7, 1 Kings 16:12; 2 Chronicles 19:2; 2 Chronicles 20:34; Micaiah, son of Imlah, was well known to Ahab, as “prophesying evil concerning him” 1 Kings 22:8, 1 Kings 22:18 continually; unknown to Jehoshaphat 1 Kings 22:7. That wondrous pair, marvelous for superhuman sanctity and power among the marvelous miracles of God, Elijalh and Elisha, were both “sons” of Israel, whom God “raised up; Elijjah the Tishbite” 1 Kings 17:1,

born doubtless at Thisbe, a village of Naphthali, and one of the sojourners in Gilead; Elisha of Abelmeholah 1 Kings 19:16, on the west side of the valley of the Jordan. And even now He had raised up to them of their own "sons," Hosea and Jonah. Their presence was the presence of God among them, who, out of the ordinary way of His Providence, "raised" them "up" and filled them with His Spirit; and where the presence of God is, if there is fear, yet there is also hope.

And of your young men for Nazarites - The Nazarite was a fruit of the grace of God in its moral and religions workings, superhuman in holiness and self-denial, as the prophets were of that same grace, conferring superhuman wisdom and knowledge also. Of both, God says, "I raised up," teaching that both alike, holiness of life and superhman wisdom, were His own special gift to each individual, His own creation. God survived His people, called, and "raised up," by His grace, out of the crowd, those souls which responded to His call. The life of the Nazarites was a continual protest against the self-indulgence and worldliness of the people. It was a life above nature. Unless any prophet like Samuel 1 Samuel 1:11, was also a Nazarite, they had no special office except to live that life. Their life taught. Nay, it taught in one way the more, because they had no special gifts of wisdom or knowledge, nothing to distinguish them from ordinary people, except extraordinary grace.

They were an evidence, what all might do and be, if they used the grace of God. The power of the grace of God shows itself the more wondrously in these who have nought beside. The essence of the Nazarite life, as expressed by its name, was "separation," separation from things of the world, with a view to God. The separation was not, necessarily, for more than a limited time. In such case, it answered to the strictness of the Christian Lent. It was a considerable discipline for a time. In those simpler days, when luxury had not been so busy, the absolute prohibition of anything fermented Numbers 6:3-4, whether from the grape or any other substance or vinegar made of either, or any liquor or refreshing food or drink, made in any way from the grape, fresh or dry, its husks or its kernels, while it cut off every evasion, involved the giving up not only every drink, in any way exciting or stimulating, but very much also, which was refreshing. Water, which in the east has seldom the freshness of ours, was their only drink. This, which to individuals may be an easy rule, would not be so in the main.

Those only think an undeviating rule slight, who have never tried one, nor set themselves on system to conquer self-will. Such a rule would not be acted upon, except for God. The long never-shorn hair was probably intended to involve the neglect of personal appearance. Yet this was the body only of the vow; its soul was the dedication to God. The Nazarite not only "separated himself from" Numbers 6:3 those earthly things; he "separated himself to" the Lord Numbers 6:2, Numbers 6:5-6: he "consecrated to the Lord the days of his separation Numbers 6:12: all the days of his separation he was holy to the Lord Numbers 6:8: the separation of his God was upon his head." Numbers 6:7. The vow was a great and singular thing. "When man or woman shall vow a special vow of a Nazarite" Numbers 6:2. The ritual of the Nazarite likened him to the priest. Giving him no priestly office, it yet even intensified some of the rules of the priesthood.

The priest was to abstain from wine and strong drink, only "when" he "went into the tabernacle of the congregations," that he might "put difference between holy and unholy, and teach Israel the statutes" of the Lord Leviticus 10:9-11: the Nazarite, so long as he remained such. The priest might defile himself for certain very near dead Leviticus 21:1-3; the high priest alone and the Nazarite, "neither for father nor mother" Leviticus 21:11-12; Numbers 6:7: and that for the kindred reason; the high priest, "because the crown of the anointing oil of his God" was "upon him;" the Nazarite, "because the consecration of his God was upon his head!" His consecrated hair was called by the self-same name Numbers 6:19 as the mitre of the priest. It appears to have been woven into "seven locks" Judges 16:13, itself a number of consecration. If his consecration came to an end, that hair was mingled with the sacrifice Numbers 6:18, and on "his" hands alone, besides the priest's at his consecration, was part of the offering laid Numbers 6:19.

All Israel was, in God's purpose, "a kingdom of priests" Exodus 19:6; and, among them, the Nazarite was brought yet nearer, not to the priest's office, but to his character. This must have diffused itself indefinitely through the outward and inward life. Further strictness probably lay in the spirit of the vow. The outward appearance of the Nazarites appears to have

been changed by their abstemiousness. “Her Nazarites were purer than snow; they were whiter than milk” Lamentations 4:7. Their countenance had that transparent purity, which sometimes results from a pure abstemious life; as Athanasius is said to have been “bloodless.” John the Immerser, the counterpart of Elijah, ate only of the food of the wilderness, “locusts and wild honey;” his clothing was the hair cloth Luke 1:15; Luke 7:33; Matthew 3:4.

Of James the Just it is related with reference to the Nazarite vow; “He was holy from his mother‘s womb; wine and strong drink he drank not, nor ate any living thing; the razor came not up upon his head; he anointed him not with oil, and he used not a bath.” Nazarites there had been in the most disorganized times of Israel. The histories of Samson and Samuel stand over against one another, as Nazarites who, the one forfeited, the other persevered in, his vocation. Elijah‘s ascetic character is as if he had been one of them, or deepened the lines of their rule. Ahaziah‘s ungodly messengers described him contemptously as “a man, lord of hair,” as though he had nothing but his prophet‘s broad mantle of hair, and “the leather girdle about his loins”.

The Rechabites, although Kenites by origin 1 Chronicles 2:55, had been enrolled in the people of God, and had received a rule from their father, uniting with the abstinence of the Nazarites, a mode of life which kept them aloof from the corruptions of cities Jeremiah 35:7, Jeremiah 35:9. The rules of their Nomadic life were consecrated to God, for He says, “There shall not be cut off from Jonadub, the son of Rechab, a man standing before Me for ever” Jeremiah 35:19, that is, as the servant of God. God uses as to them the term which marks the service of the Levites Deuteronomy 10:8, priests Judges 20:28, and prophets 1 Kings 17:1. Jonadab, the author of their rule, was plainly an ascetic, through whose presence Jehu hoped to cast a religious character over his ambitious execution of God‘s command.

But the value which the artful, though impetuous 2 Kings 9:20, bloodstained, captain attached to the presence of the ascetic shows the weight which they had with the people. Strange sight it must have been, the energetic warrior in his coat of mail, and the ascetic, as energetic, in his hair-cloth. Deeper far the cotrast within. But the more marvelous the

contrast, the more it attests the influence which the unworldly ascetic had over the world. Like the garb of the prophets, their appearance was a standing rebuke to a life of sense. Like the patriarchs, it professed that they were "strangers and pilgrims upon the earth." They who sought nothing of the world or of time, were a witness to the belief in their eternal home. The Nazarites must now have been a numerous body, since Amos speaks of them, as a known class, like the prophets, of whose numbers we hear incidentally.

Yet the memory of these, who, amid the general corruption, were, each in his own sphere, centers of pure faith and life, is embalmed in these few words only. So little reason is there to think that God's commands were neglected by all, because their observance is not related. Amos appeals publicly to the people that the fact was so, that God had raised up Nazarites as well as prophets among them. He had His "little flock" Luke 12:32, His "seven thousand" 1 Kings 19:18, who escaped the eye even of Elijah. The gift of the Nazarites was a special favor to Israel, as a memorial what the grace of God could do for man, what man could do, with the grace of God. His "raising up Nazarites, out of their young men," men in their first bloom of unmarried, virgin (Deuteronomy 32:25; 2 Chronicles 36:17; Jeremiah 51:22; and in the plur. Psalm 78:63; Psalm 148:12; Isaiah 23:4;. Jeremiah 31:13; Lamentations 1:18; Lamentations 2:21; Zechariah 9:17; and by Amos himself, Amos 8:13), life their picked "very chosen men," such as furnished the prime of their warriors, stengthened that teaching.

Even now, one devoted to God in his youth is a witness for God, leaven of the world around him. But the Nazarite had also to bear an outward mark for good, to be singular. His appearance bespoke that he had chosen God. His vow was not only a living up to the law; it lay beyond the law, the free-will offering of those whom God called. At an age, when so many do things unlawful, to gratitfy passion, these abstained even from things lawful. "Canst thou not do what these youths and these maidens can? or can they either in themselves, and not rather in the Lord their God?" was Augustine's upbraiding of himself, on the eve of his conversion, in thought of those who were living a devoted virgin life.

Is it not even thus? - It were enough that God, the Truth, said it. But He condemns not, without giving space for excuse or defense. So he describes

the Day of Judgment Matthew 25:24-30, Matthew 25:41-45; Matthew 22:11. "The books were opened - and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" Revelation 20:12. Now, in the time of grace, the question asks, what, written under the picture of Christ crucified, once converted a sinner; "This have I done for thee: What doest thou for Me?" What did they? What had they done? What would they do?

Verse 12

But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink - Literally, "and," (this, on their part, was the consequence of what God did for them) "ye caused the Nazarites to drink wine." God appointed; Israel strove to undo His appointment. God "raised up Nazarites," as a testimony to them; they sought to make His servants break their vow, in order to rid themselves of that testimony. Their pains to destroy it, is a strong proof of its power. The world is mad against true religion, because it feels itself condemned by it. People set themselves against religion and the religious, the Church or the priesthood, only when and because they feel their power on God's side against them. What people despise, they do not oppose. "They kill us, they do not despise us," were true words of a French priest, as to the "reign of reason" in the first French revolution. If the people in power had not respected the Nazarites, or felt that the people respected them, they would not have attempted to corrupt or to force them to break their vow. The word, "cause" them "to drink," does not express whether they used constraint or seduction. Israel's consciences supplied it. Yet since they "persecuted the prophets" and put them to death, it seems likely that Amos means that they used violence, either by forcing the wine into their mouths, as the swine-flesh was forced into the mouth of Eleazar (Amos 7:13. Jeroboam I was prevented only by miracle 1 Kings 13:4 from seizing the prophet who denounced the altar at Bethel. Ahab, during the famine foretold by Elijah, sought him everywhere to destroy him 1 Kings 18:10-12, and Jezebel, after the miracle at Carmel and the death of her prophets, swore by her gods to do so 1 Kings 19:2-3. Ahab's last act was to imprison Micaiah 1 Kings 22:26-27, the son of Imlath, for prophesying his death, when adjured by himself to speak truly.

Ahaziah, his son, undeterred by the fire from heaven which destroyed two captains, each with his fifty, sent yet a 3d to take Elijah, when he prophesied that the king would not recover from his sickness 2 Kings 1:9-

13. Jehoram, his second son, swore by God to destroy Elisha, 2 Kings 6:31, laying the evils of the siege to the prophet, as the Romans did the evils of their decaying empire to the Christian. Micah and Isaiah, a little later, speak of such opposition, in Judah, as habitual Micah 2:6; Isaiah 30:10-11; much more in Israel, where the opposition to God‘s law was more fundamental, and where God‘s prophet‘s had been all but exterminated. Even Asa, in his degenerate days, imprisoned Hanani for prophesying that he would “have wars” 2 Chronicles 16:7, 2 Chronicles 16:10; Joash killed Zechariah son of Jehoiada 2 Chronicles 24:20-21; Amaziah silenced the prophet who rebuked him, “Art thou made of the king‘s council? forbear. Why shouldest thou be smitten?” 2 Chronicles 25:15-16.

Jehoiakim sent even into Egypt to fetch Uriah and killed him Jeremiah 26:20-23. Jeremiah‘s life was one continuous encounter with false accusations Jeremiah 20:10; Jeremiah 37:13; Jeremiah 38:4, contradictions by false prophets (Jeremiah 23:17 ff; Jeremiah 27:9-10, Jeremiah 27:14-16; Jeremiah 15:10, mockery Jeremiah 17:15; Jeremiah 20:7-8; Jeremiah 23:33, persecution Jeremiah 17:18, imprisonment Jeremiah 20:2; Jeremiah 32:3; Jeremiah 33:1; Jeremiah 37:15-21; Jeremiah 38:6-13, attempts to destroy him (Jeremiah 11:18-21; Jeremiah 18:18, Jeremiah 18:20-23; Jeremiah 26:8 ff; Jeremiah 36:26). The complaint was, as here, “wherefore dost thou prophesy?” Jeremiah 32:3. What, when our Lord gives it as the characteristic of Jerusalem, that she was “the slayer of the prophets, the stoner of those sent unto her?” They would not have slain the prophets, if they could have silenced them.

People are loath to go to extremities with God; they will make an armistice with Him; their awe of holiness makes them inwardly shrink from laying hands on it. Like the wolf in the fable, they must have a plea against it; and that plea against those who have the truth is obstinacy. If the Christians would have abstained from converting the world, they would not have been persecuted. The Chief-priests at first sought simply to silence the Apostles Acts 4:18, Acts 4:21; then they enforced their command with scourges Acts 5:40; then persecuted them and the Christians to death Acts 7:57-59; Acts 8:1-4; Acts 9:1-2; Acts 12:1-3; Acts 22:4-5. Direct contumacy to God‘s known voice and silencing His messenger, is a last stage of obduracy and malice, which leaves God no further avenue to the soul or the

people. His means of grace are exhausted when the soul or people not only deaden His voice within, but obstruct it without. One who, through vehemence of his passions, refuses to hear, is within the reach of the grace of God, afterward. He who stifles God‘s word to others has mostly hardened his heart deliberately and maliciously in unlove to man, as well as contempt of God. Hence, God speaks, as though this brought the day of grace to a close.

Verse 13

Behold, I am pressed under you - God bore His people, as the wain bears the sheaves. “Ye yourselves have seen,” He said to them by Moses, “how I bare you on eagle‘s wings, and brought you unto Myself” Exodus 19:4. “Thou hast seen how the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place” Deuteronomy 1:31. And by Isaiah, “He bare them and carried them all the days of old” Isaiah 63:9; and, “which are born” by Me “from the belly, which are carried from the womb” Isaiah 46:3. Now, He speaks of Himself as wearied by them, as by Isaiah, “thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities” Isaiah 43:24; and by Malachi, “ye have wearied the Lord: yet ye say, where with have we wearied Him?” Malachi 2:17. His long-suffering was, as it were, worn out by them. He was straitened under them, as the wain groans under the sheaves with which it is over-full. The words are literally, “Behold I, I” (emphatic I, your God, of whom it would seem impossible) “straiten myself” (that is, of My own Will allow Myself to be straitened“under you”,

“As the wain full for itself,” that is, as full as ever it can contain, is “straitened, groans,” as we say. God says, (the word in Hebrew is half active) that He allows Himself to be straitened, as in Isaiah, He says, “I am weary to bear,” literally, “I let Myself be wearied.” We are simply passive under weariness or oppressiveness: God endures us, out of His own free condescension in enduring us. But it follows, that when He shall cease to endure our many and grievous sins, He will cast them and the sinner forth from Him.

Verses 14-16

Israel relied, against God, on his own strength. “Have we not,” they said, “taken to us horns by our own strength?” Amos 6:13. Amos tells them

then, that every means of strength, resistance, flight, swiftness of foot, of horse, place of refuge, should fail them. Three times he repeats, as a sort of dirge, "he shall not deliver himself."

Therefore the flight shall perish - (Probably place of flight Job 11:20; Psalm 142:5; Jeremiah 25:35). They had despised God, as their "place of refuge", so "the place of refuge, should perish from the swift," as though it were not. He should flee amain, but there would be no "place to flee unto." God alone "renews strength;" therefore "the strong" man should not "strengthen his force or might," should not be able to gather or "collect his strength" as we say. Fear should disable him. "The handler of the bow" (as in Jeremiah 46:9), and who by habit is a skilled archer, although himself out of the immediate reach of the enemy, and able, unharmed, to annoy him and protect the fugitives, "shall not stand" (as in Jeremiah 46:21; Nahum 2:8). Panic should overtake him. The "mighty" man, the "fleet of foot" should "not deliver," yea, "the horseman" should not "deliver himself;" yea, he who, "among the mighty," was "strongest of his heart," firm-souled among those of mightiest prowess, "shall flee away naked," that is, bared of all, armor or dress, which might encumber his flight "in that day" which the Lord made a day of terror His own day.

Saith the Lord - Probably literally, "the secret utterance of the Lord." Amos, more than Hosea, uses this special authentication of his words, which is so common in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. He claims a knowledge, which those around him had not, and ratifies it by the express appeal to the direct, though secret, revelation of God; what those who were not of God, would deny; what they who were of God, would believe.

AMOS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

Amos, like Hosea, rebukes Israel directly, Judah indirectly. He had warned each nation separately. Now, ere he concentrates himself on Israel, he sums up what he had before said to Judah and in the Person of God. "Ye have been alike in My gifts to you, alike in your waste of them and your sins; alike ye shall be in your punishment." What was said to Israel was said also to Judah: what was directed first to the former people, belongs to us, the later. What Jesus said to the Apostles, He said also to the Church, and to single souls, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch" Mark 13:37.

Hear ye this word - With that solemn threefold call, so frequent in the Old Testament, he summons them thrice Amos 3:1; Amos 4:1; Amos 5:1, as in the Name of the Holy Trinity, to hear God's words.: "The prophet, at the outset of the chapter, rouses the hearers to anxious consideration. For the words of the most High God are to be heard, not with a superficial, unawed, wandering mind, but with reverence, fear, and love."

That the Lord hath spoken against - (and upon) you, (coming down from heaven Hebrews 12:25, both "upon" and "against" them) the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt To Abraham God had said, "in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" Genesis 12:3. So now, in withdrawing that blessing from them. He takes it away from them, family by family Zechariah 12:12. He includes them, one and all, and Judah also, since all had been "brought out of Egypt."

Verse 2

You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities - Such is the one law of God. The nearer anyone is brought unto God, the worse is his fall, and, his trial over, the more heavily is he punished. Nearness to God is a priceless, but an awesome gift. The most intense blessing becomes, by the abuse of free will, the most dreadful woe. For the nearer God places anyone to His own light, the more malignant is the choice of darkness instead of light. The more clearly anyone knows the relation to God, in which God has placed him, the more terrible is his rejection of God. The more God reveals to any, what He is, His essential perfections, His holiness and love, the more utter, tearful malignity it is, to have been brought face to face with God, and to have in deed said to Him, "On Thy terms I will have none of Thee." The angels

who sinned against fullest light, had no redemption or repentance; but became devils. “He took not on Him the nature of angels” Hebrews 2:16. “The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitations, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great Day” Jude 1:6.

Of the former people, when their first day of grace was past, Daniel says; “under the whole heaven hath not been done, as hath been done upon Jerusalem” Daniel 9:12. Begin,” God saith in Ezekiel‘s “at My sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house” Ezekiel 9:6. So our Lord lays down the rule of judgment and punishment hereafter” Luke 12:47-48 “the servant which knew his Lord‘s will, and prepared not” himself, “neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many” stripes. “But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much has been given, of him shall much be required, and to whom people have committed much, of him they will ask the more. The time is come,” says Peter, “that judgment must begin at the house of God” 1 Peter 4:17.

You only I have known - Such care had God had of Israel, so had He known them, and made Himself known to them, as if He had, in comparison, disregarded all besides, as He remained unknown by them. Knowledge, among people, is mutual, and so it seemed as if God knew not those, of whom He was not known. Knowledge, with God, is love, and so He seemed not to have known those, to whom, although “He left not Himself without witness” Acts 14:17, He had shown no such love (see the note at Hosea 13:5). Whence our Lord shall say to the wicked, “I never knew you” Matthew 7:23; and contrariwise, He says, “I am the good Shepherd and know My sheep, and am known of Mine” (John 10:14; see 2 Timothy 2:19).: “Myriads of cities and lands are there under the whole heaven, and in them countless multitudes; but you alone have I chosen out of all, made Myself known and visible among you by many miracles, chosen you out of a bitter unbearable bondage, trained you by My law to be well-pleasing to Me, fenced you with protection, brought you into the land promised to your fathers, enlightened you with prophecies.”: “Not, I deem, as though in the time of Israel and of the Old Testament, there were not, in the whole world, some good people and predestinated; but because God did not then choose any nation or whole people, save the children of Israel. For

it was meet that that people, of which God willed to be Incarnate, should be distinguished by some special grace."

Therefore I will punish you - o"To depise God and to neglect the Lord's Will procureth destruction to those who have known Him or been known of Him, and been spiritually made His own." "I made you My own people, friends, sons. As a Father, I cherished, protected, exalted, you. Ye would not have Me as a Father, ye shall have Me as a Judge." Rup.: "As Israel has, in its elect, been glorious above all, so, in the reprobate, has it been made viler than all, both before God and before people." How much more Christians, and, among Christians, priests! It has of old been believed, that the deepest damnation will be that of ungodly priests.

Yet since almost all punishment in this life is remedial, the saying admits another meaning that God would leave no sin unchastened in those whom He had made His own. Both are true meanings, fulfilled at different times. God chastens in proportion to His love, in the Day of grace. He punishes, in proportion to the grace and love despised and trampled upon without repentance in eternity. Here, "the most merciful Physician, cutting away the cancrous flesh, spareth not, that He may spare; He pitieth not, that He may the more pity. For ‹whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.'" Hence, the prayer, "Burn, cut, here; and spare forever." Contrariwise, "we should esteem any sinner the more miserable, when we see him left in his sin, unscourged. Whence it is said, "The turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them" Proverbs 1:32. For whoso "turneth away" from God and is "prosperous," is the nearer to perdition, the more he is removed from the severity of discipline.": "This is the terrible, this the extreme case, when we are no longer chastened for sins, when we are no more corrected for offending. For when we have exceeded the measure of sinning, God, in displeasure, turneth away from us His displeasure.": "When you see a sinner, affluent, powerful, enjoying heath, with wife and circle of children, and that saying is fulfilled, ‹They are not in trouble' Psalm 73:5 as other ‹men, neither are they plagued like' other ‹men,' in him is the threat of the prophet fulfilled, ‹I will not visit. ‹"

Verse 3

Sacred parables or enigmas must have many meanings. They are cast on the mind, to quicken it and rouse it by their very mystery. They are taken

from objects which in different lights, represent different things, and so suggest them. This series of brief parables have, all of them, this in common, that each thing spoken of is alternately cause and effect, and where the one is found, ‹there‘ must be the other. From the effect you can certainly infer the cause, without which it could not be, and from the cause you may be sure of the effect. Then, further, all the images are of terror and peril to the objects spoken of. The prophet impresses upon their minds both aspects of these things; "evil will not befall, unless it has been prepared;" "signs of evil will not shew themselves, unless the evil be at hand." "The bird will not fall without the snare; if the snare rises and so shews itself, the bird is as good as taken. As surely then (the prophet would say) as the roaring of the lion, the rising of the snare, the alarm of the trumpet, betokens imminent peril, so surely does the warning Voice of God. ‹The lion hath roared; who will not fear?‘ Again, as surely as these are the effects of their causes, so surely is all infliction sent by Him who alone has power over all things, and is the cause of all. ‹Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? Again, as these tokens are given before the evil comes, and the God of nature and of grace has made it a law in nature, that what is fearful should give signs of coming evil, so has He made it a law of His own dealing, not to inflict evil, without having fore-announced it.

‹Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He reveleth His secret unto His servants the prophets.‘ As nothing else is by chance, nor happens without cause, much less the acts of God. The lion or young lion when they roar, the bird when it falls to the ground, the snare when it rises, the trumpet‘s sound, all have their cause and ground: shall not then much more the acts and works of God? Shall evil happen in the city, and have no ground in the Cause of all causes, God in His righteous judgments? As there is fear, whenever there are tokens and causes of fear, so fear ye now and watch, lest the fear overtake you and it be too late. The first words then,

Can (will) two walk together, except they be agreed? - are at once a general rule for all which follows, and have different bearings according to those its several aspects. And, before all these, it is an appeal at once to the conscience which feels itself parted from its God; "so neither will God be with thee, unless thou art agreed and of one mind with God. Think not to have God with thee, unless thou art with God;" as He saith, ‹I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee in the way‘ Exodus 33:3; and, ‹if ye walk contrary unto Me, then will I also

walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins‘ Leviticus 26:23, Leviticus 26:4. And on the other hand, ‹They shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy‘ Revelation 3:4. Lap.: “God cannot be agreed with the sinner who justifies himself. Rup.: “God who rebuketh, and Israel who is rebuked, are two. God saith, We are not agreed, in that Israel, when rebuked, heareth not Me, God, rebuking. Herein we are not agreed, that I rebuke, Israel justifieth himself. Lo, for so many years since Jeroboam made the golden calves, have I sent prophets, and none agreeth, for no one king departed from the sin of Jeroboam. So then I came Myself, God made man, rebuking and reproving: but ‹ye are they which justify yourselves before men‘ Luke 16:15, and, being sick, ye say to the Physician, we need Thee not.” Augustine in Psalm 75:1-10 Lap.: “So long as thou confessest not thy sins, thou art in a manner litigating with God. For what displeaseth Him, thou praisest. Be at one with God. Let what displeaseth Him, displease thee. Thy past evil life displeaseth Him. If it please thee, thou art disjoined from Him; if it displease thee, by confessing thy sins, thou art joined to Him.” So He awakens and prepares the soul for the following words of awe.

In connection with what follows, the words are also the prophet‘s defense of his Mission. Israel “said to the prophets, prophesy not” (see the notes on Amos 2:12), or, “The Lord our God hath not sent thee” Jeremiah 43:2, because, while it disobeyed God, the prophets must “speak concernig it not good, but evil.” Amos prepares the way for his answer; ye yourselves admit, that “two will” not “walk together, unless they be agreed.” The seen and the unseen, the words of the prophets and the dealings of God, would not meet together, unless the prophets were of one mind with God, unless God had admitted them into His counsels, and “were agreed” with them, so that their words should precede His deeds, His deeds confirm His words by them.

Verse 4

Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? - Then, further, each question by itself suggests its own thought. Amos had already, in repeating Joel‘s words, spoken of God‘s Voice, under the image of a lion roaring (Amos 1:2; Hosea 11:10 (add Hosea 5:14; Hosea 6:1; Hosea 13:7); Jeremiah 25:30). Hosea had likened Israel to “a silly dove without heat Hosea 7:11; on the other hand, he had likened God‘s loud call to repentance

to the roaring of the lion, the conversion of Israel to the return of the dove to its home Hosea 11:10-11. As the roaring of the lion causeth terror, for he sendeth forth his terrible roar when he is about to spring on his prey, so God threatens by His prophets, only when He is about to punish. Yet the lion‘s roar is a warning to escape. God‘s threatening is a warning to betake them to repentance, and so to escape from all fear, by fleeing from their sins. If the season is neglected, wilt thou rescue the prey from the lion‘s grasp, or thyself from the wrath of God?

Verse 5

Can a bird fall in a snare - Again, the bird taken in the snare is the image of those drawn down from heaven, where ‹our conversation is Philemon 3:20 and the soul may rise free toward its God, “drawn up by the Spirit to high and heavenly things.” Such souls being allured by the things of earth, are entangled and taken by Satan; as, on the other hand, “the soul, escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler Psalm 124:7, is a soul, set free by Christ and restored to heaven.

In the last likeness, the prophet comes nearer to the people themselves, and the trumpet is, at once, the well-known token of alarm among people, and of the loud voice of God, wakening them to repentance Isaiah 58:1; Joel 2:15 and still oftener, warning them of the approach of judgment Isaiah 18:3; Jeremiah 4:5; Jeremiah 6:1; Ezekiel 33:2-6; Hosea 5:8; Hosea 8:1; Revelation 8:1-13, or summoning man before Him 1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16. Rup.: “God‘s Voice will not always be ‹a still small voice,‘ or whispered only among the Angels, or heard as from the ground. It will be heard terribly in the whole world.” Jerome: “Whatever is said in Holy Scripture is a trumpet threatening, and with loud voice sinking into the hearts of believers. If we are righteous, we are called by the trumpet of Christ to bliss. If we are sinners, we know that we are to suffer torment.”

Verse 6

Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it? - Evil is of two sorts, evil of sin, and evil of punishment. There is no other; for evil of nature, or evil of fortune, are evils, by God‘s Providence, punishing the evil of sin. Augustine, c. Adim. 26: “Evil, which is sin, the Lord hath not done; evil, which is punishment for sin, the Lord bringeth.” The Providence of God governing and controlling all things, man doth ill which he wills, so as to suffer ill which he wills not. Only, evil which is by God‘s Providence the

punishment of sin is in this life remedial and through final impenitence alone becomes purely judicial.

Rib.: "Refer not, the prophet would say, the ills which ye suffer and will suffer, to any other causes, as people are accustomed to do. God, in His displeasure, sends them upon you. And that ye may know this the more certainly, whatever He shall send He will first reveal to the prophets and by them ye shall be forewarned. See then that ye despise not my words, or the words of the other prophets. People ascribe their sufferings to fortune, accident, any cause, rather than the displeasure of God. The intemperate will think anything the cause of their illness rather than their intemperance. People love the things of the world and cannot and will not be persuaded that so many evils are brought on them by the things which they love. So then God explains through the prophets the punishment which He purposes to bring on people."

Verse 7

Surely the Lord God will do - For the Lord God "doeth"

Nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets - So our Lord saith, "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe" (John 14:29; compare John 13:19). While it is yet a "secret" counsel within Himself, He admitteth to it His servants the prophets. The same word signifies "secret" and "secret counsel with a friend." So, "God revealed to Noah that tie would bring the deluge, and to Abraham and Lot, that He would destroy the cities of the plain, and to Joseph the 7 years' famine in Egypt, and to Moses its plagues, and to Moses and Joshua all the chastisements of His people, and to Jonah the destruction of Nineveh, that they who heard of the coming punishment, might eithcr avoid it by repentance, or, if they should despise it, might be more justly punished. And so now the Lord is about to reveal through Amos, His servant and prophet, what He willeth to do to the 10 tribes, that forsaking their idols and turning to Him, they might be freed from the impending peril; which is of the great mercy of God. He foretelleth evil to come, that He may not be compelled to inflict it. For He who forewarneth, willeth not to punish sinners."

Lap.: "So He inflicted not on Egypt any plagues by the hand of Moses, but He first forewarned Pharaoh and the Egyptians by him; nor the sufferings by the Ammonites, Midianites and Philistines, related in the

Book of Judges, but He foremonished Israel by Joshua Joshua 23:12-16; Joshua 24:19-20; nor did He inflict on the Jews that destruction by Titus and the Romans, but He foremonished them by Christ Luke 19:42-44 and the Apostles. So neither will He bring that last destruction on the world, without having first sent the prophets and Angels, who, sounding with the seven trumpets, shall proclaim it throughout the world" Revelation 8:2.

Verse 8

The Lion hath roared: who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken: who can but prophesy? - that is, there is cause for you to fear, when the Lord "roareth from Zion;" but if ye fear not, God's prophets dare not but fear. So Paul saith, "necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation" of the Gospel "is committed unto me" 1 Corinthians 9:16-17; and Peter and John, "whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye! For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" Acts 4:19-20; Moses was not excused, though slow of speech; nor Isaiah, though of polluted lips; nor Jeremiah, because he was a child; but God said, "Say not, I am child, for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak" Jeremiah 1:7. And Ezekiel was bidden, "be not rebellious, like that rebellious house" Ezekiel 2:8. And when Jeremiah would keep silence, he saith, "His Word was in mine heart as a burning fire, shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing and I could not stay" Jeremiah 20:9.

Verse 9

Publish - "ye," they are the words of God, commissioning His prophets

In (on) the palaces of Ashdod - , that is, on the flat roofs of their high buidings, from where all can hear

And in (on) the palaces in the land of Egypt - Theodoret: "Since ye disbelieve, I will manifest to Ashdodites and Egyptians the transgressions of which ye are guilty." Amos had already pronounced God's sentence on "the palaces of Ashdod" and all Philistia, for their sins against Himself in His people (see the notes at Amos 1:6-8). Israel now, or a little later, courted Egypt Hosea 7:11; Hosea 12:1. To friend then and to foe, to those whom they dreaded and those whom they courted, God would lay open their sins. Contempt and contumely from an enemy aggravate suffering: man does not

help whom he despiseth. “They were all ashamed of a people who could not profit them,” saith Isaiah Isaiah 30:5 subsequently, of Egypt in regard to Judah. From those palaces, already doomed to destruction for their sins, the summons was to go, to visit Samaria, and see her sins, amid grace which those people had not. As our Lord says, “It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment, than for that city” Matthew 10:15. Shame toward man survives shame toward God. What people are not ashamed to do, they are, apart from any consequences, ashamed to confess that they have done. Nay, to avoid a little passing shame, they rush upon “everlasting shame.” So God employs all inferior motives, shame, fear, hope of things present, if by any means He can win people, not to offend Him.

Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria - that is, those surrounding it. Samaria was chosen with much human wisdom for the strong capital of a small people. Imbedded in mountains, and out of any of the usual routes, it lay, a mountain-fastness in a rich valley. Armies might surge to and fro in the valley of Jezreel, and be unconscious of its existence. The way from that great valley to Samaria lay, every way, through deep and often narrowing valleys, down which the armies of Samaria might readily pour, but which, like Thermopylae, might be held by a handful of men against a large host.

The broad vale near the hill of Dothan, along which the blinded Syrian army followed Elisha to Samaria, contracts into “a narrow valley”, before it reaches Samaria. The author of the book of Judith, who knew well the country, speaks of “the passages of the hill-country” near Dothaim, “by” which “there was an entrance into Judaea, and it was easy to stop them that would come up, because the passage was strait for two men at the most”.: “A series of long winding ravines open from the mountains to the plain; these were the passes so often defended by the ‹horns of Joseph, the ten thousands of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh‘ against the invaders from the north.”

Within these lay “the wide rocky rampart” which fenced in Samaria from the north. “The fine round swelling hill of Samaria, now cultivated to the top, (about 1,100 feet above the sea, and 300 from its own valley,) stands alone in the midst of a great basin of some two hours (or 5 miles) in diameter surrounded by higher mountains on every side.”: “The view from

its summit presents a splendid panorama of the fertile basin and the mountains around, teeming with large villages, and includes not less than 25 degrees of the Mediterranean." Such a place, out of reach, in those days, from the neighboring heights, was well-near impregnable, except by famine. But its inhabitants must have had handed down to them the memory, how those heights had once been populated, while their valleys were thronged with "all the hosts" 2 Kings 6:24 of Benhadad, his chariots and his horsemen; and the mountains, in which they had trusted to shut out the enemy, were the prison-walls of their famished people.

From those heights, "the Syrians could plainly distinguish the famishing inhabitants of the city. The adjacent circle of hills were so densely occupied, that not a man could push through to bring provisions to the beleaguered city." The city, being built on the summit and terraced sides of the hill, unfenced and unconcealed by walls which, except at its base, were unneeded, lay open, unsheltered in every part from the gaze of the besiegers. The surrounding hills were one large amphitheater, from where to behold the tragedy of Israel, and enemies were invited to be the spectators. They could see its faminestricken inhabitants totter along those open terraces. Sin had brought this chastisement upon them. God had forgiven them then. When God who had, by His prophet, foretold their relief then 2 Kings 7:1-2, now by His prophet called anew those enemies of Samaria to those same heights to behold her sins, what could this mean but that He summoned them to avenge what He summoned them to behold?

It was no figure of speech. God avenges, as He comforts, not in word, but in deed. The triumph of those enemies David had especially deprecated, "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumised triumph" 2 Samuel 1:20. To these Israel was to be a gazingstock. They were like "the woman set in the midst John 8:3, amid one encircling sea of accusing insulting faces, with none to pity, none to intercede, none to show mercy to them who "had shewed no mercy." Faint image of the shame of that Day, when not people's deeds only, but "the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed" Romans 2:16, and "they shall begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us" Luke 23:30; and of that "shame" there will be no end, for it is "everlasting" Daniel 12:2.

And behold the great tumults - I. e, the alarms, restlessness, disorders and confusion of a people intent on gain; turning all law upside down, the tumultuous noise of the oppressors and oppressed. It is the word which Solomon uses, "Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and tumult therewith," the tumults and restlessness of continual gaining. "And the oppressed," or better (as in the English margin) the oppressions, the manifold ever-repeated acts by which people were crushed and trampled on.

In the midst thereof - Admitted within her, domiciled, reigning there in her very center, and never departing out of her, as the Psalmist says, "Wickedness is in the midst thereof; deciet and guile depart not from her streets" Psalm 55:11. Aforetime, God spared His people, that "His Name Ezekiel 20:9 should not be polluted before the pagan, among whom they were, in whose sight I made Myself known unto them in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt." Now He summons those same pagan as witnesses that Israel was justly condemned. These sins, being sins against the moral law, the pagan would condemn. People condemn in others, what they do themselves. But so they would see that God hated sin, for which He spared not His own people, and could the less triumph over God, when they saw the people whom God had established and protected, given up to the king of Assyria.

Verse 10

For - (and) they know not to do right They "have not known," they have least all sense and knowledge, how "to do right" (literally, what is "straight-forward") because they had so long ceased to do it. It is part of the miserable blindness of sin, that, while the soul acquires a quick insight into evil, it becomes, at last, not paralyzed only to "do" good, but unable to perceive it. So Jeremiah says, "they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" Jeremiah 4:22. Whence of the Christian Paul says, "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil" Romans 16:19. People, step by step, lose the power of understanding either good or evil, the love of the world or the love of God. Either becomes "a strange language" to ears accustomed to the "songs of Zion" or the din of the world. When our Lord and God came to His own, they said, "we know that God spake unto Moses: as for this man we know not whence He is" John 9:29. And this blindness was brought about by covetousness which "blindeth the eyes" even of "the wise" Exodus 23:8, as he adds;

Who store - (Literally, with indignation, "the storers"

With violence and robbery - They could not understand what was right, while they habitually did what was wrong. They "stored up," as they deemed, the gains and fruits; the robbery and injustice they saw not, because they turned away from seeing. But what is "stored" up, is not what wastes away, but what abides. Who doubts it? Then, what they treasured, were not the perishing things of earth, but, in truth, the sins themselves, as "a treasure of wrath against the Day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" Romans 2:5. Strange treasure, to be so diligently accumulated, guarded, multiplied! Yet it is, in fact, all which remains. "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God" Luke 12:21. He adds, as an aggravation, "in their palaces." Deformed as in all oppression, yet to "oppress the poor, to increase his riches" Proverbs 22:16, has an unnatural hideousness of its own. What was wrung from the poor, laid up "in places!" Yet what else is it to cheapen luxuries at the cost of the wages of the poor?

Verse 11

Therefore thus saith the Lord God - There was no human redress. The oppressor was mighty, but mightier the Avenger of the poor. Man would not help; therefore God would. "An adversary" there shall be, "even round about the land;" literally, "An enemy, and around the land!" The prophets speaks, as seeing him. The abruptness tells how suddenly that enemy should come, and hem in the whole land on all sides. What an unity in their destruction! He sees one "enemy, and" him everywhere, all "around," encircling, encompassing, as with a net, their whole land, narrowing in, as he advanced, until it closed around and upon them. The corruption was universal, so should be the requital.

And he shall bring down thy strength from - (that is, away from) thee The word "bring down" implies a loftiness of pride which was to be brought low, as in Obadiah, "thence will I bring thee down" Obadiah 1:4; and in Isaiah, "I will bring down their strength to the earth" Isaiah 63:6. But further, their strength was not only, as in former oppressions, to be "brought down," but "forth from thee. Thy palaces shall be spoiled;" those palaces, in which they had heaped up the spoils of the oppressed. Man's sins are, in God's Providence, the means of their punishment. "Woe to thee that spoilest and" Isaiah 33:1 (that is, whereas) thou wert "not spoiled, and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherowsly with thee! when

thou perfectest, spoiling, thou shalt be spoiled; when thou accomplihest dealing treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee." Their spoiling should invite the spoiler, their oppressions should attract the oppressor and they, with all which they held to be their strength, should go "forth" into captivity.

Rib.: "The Lord will be justified in His sayings, and in His works, when He executeth judgment on ‹us and shall be cleared,‘ even by the most unjust judges, ‹when He is judged.‘ Psalm 51:4. He cites the Ashdodites and Egyptians as judges, who were witnesses of His benefits to this people, that they might see how justly He punished them. And now the hardened Jews themselves, Turks and all Hagarenes, might be called to behold at once our iniquities, and ‹the mercies of the Lord, that we are not consumed‘ Lamentations 3:22. If these were gathered on the mountains of Samaria, and surveyed from aloft our sins, who worship Mammon and Vain-glory and Venus for God, doubtless the Name of God would through us be blasphemed among the pagan. ‹Imagine yourselves withdrawn for a while to the summit of some lofty mountain,‘ says the blessed martyr Cyprian, ‹view thence the face of things, as they lie beneath you, yourself free from contact of earth, cast your eyes hither and thither, and mark the turmoils of this billowy world.

You too, recalled to self-remembrance, will pity the world; and, made more thankful to God, will congratulate yourself with deeper joy that you have escaped it. See thou the ways obstructed by bandits, the seas infested by pirates, war diffused everywhere by the camp‘s bloodstained fierceness: a world reeking with mutual slaughter; and homicide, a crime in individuals, called virtue when worked by nations. Not innocence but the scale of its ferocity gains impunity for guilt. Turn thy eyes to the cities, thou wilt see a populated concourse more melancholy than any solitude.‘ This and much more which he says of the life of the Gentiles, how it fits in with our‘s, any can judge. What greater madness than that people, called to heavenly thrones, should cling to trifles of earth? immortal man glued to passing, perishable things people, redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ, for lucre wrong their brethren, redeemed by the same Price, the same Blood! No marvel then, that the Church is afflicted, and encompassed by unseen enemies, and her strength drawn down from her spoiled houses."

"Samaria is also every soul, which willeth to please man by whom it thinketh it may be holpen, rather than God, and, boasting itself to be Israel, yet worshipeth the golden calves, that is, gold, silver, honors, and pleasures. Let people alien from the light of the Gospel survey ‹its tumults,‘ with what ardor of mind riches, pleasures are sought, how ambition is served, how restless and disturbed the soul is in catching at nothings, how forgetful of God the Creator and of heavenly things and of itself, how minded, as if it were to perish with the body! What tumults, when ambition bids one thing, lust another, avarice another, wrath another, and, like strong winds on the sea, strong, unbridled passions strive together! They ‹know not to do right,‘ bad ends spoiling acts in themselves good. They ‹treasure up violence,‘ whereas they ought to treasure up grace and charity against that Day when God shall judge the secrets of people. And when they ascribe to themselves any benefits of the divine mercy, and any works pleasing to God, which they may have done or do, what else do they than ‹store up robbery?‘ So then the powers of the soul are "spoiled," when truths as to right action, once known and understood by the soul, fade and are obscure, when the memory retaineth nothing usefill, when the will is spoiled of virtues and yields to vicious affections."

Verse 12

As the shepherd taketh - (Rather, rescueth) out of the mouth of the lion two legs (Properly, the shank, the lower part of the leg below the knee, which in animals is dry, and bone only and worthless) "or apiece" (the tip) "of an ear, so" (that is, so few and weak, so bared and spoiled, a mere remnant,) "shall the children of Israel be taken out" (rather, "rescued") "that" now "dwell" at ease "in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus", in "a couch," or rather "in Damascus, a couch." Now, that soft, rounded, oblong, hill of Samaria, was one large luxurious couch, in which its rich and great rested securely, propped and cushioned up on both sides, in, what is still the place of dignity, "the corner of a bed," or "Divan," that is, the inner corner where the two sides meet. Damascus also, which Jeroboam had won for Israel, was a canopied couch to them, in which they stayed themselves. It is an image of listless ease and security, like that of these whom the false prophetesses lulled into careless stupidity as to their souls; "sewing pillows to all armholes," or "wrists" Ezekiel 13:18, whereon to lean in a dull inertness.

In vain! Of all those who then dwelt at ease and in luxury, the Good Shepherd Himself should rescue from "the lion," (the enemy, in the first instance the Assyrian,) a small remnant, in the sight of the enemy and of man of little account, but precious in the sight of God. The enemy would leave them perhaps, as not worth removing, just as, when the lion has devoured the fat and the strong, the shepherd may recover from him some slight piece of skin or extremity of the bones. Amos then, as well as Joel (see the note at Joel 2:32), preaches that same solemn sentence, so repeated throughout the prophets, "a reimnant" only "shall be saved." So doubtless it was in the captivity of the ten tribes, as in the rest. So it was in Judah, when certain "of the poor of the land" only were "left behind vinedessers and for farmers" 2 Kings 25:12; Jeremiah 52:16. In the Gospel, "not many wise men after the flesh not many mighty, not many noble were called" 1 Corinthians 1:26, but "God chose the poor of this world, rich in faith James 2:5, and the Good Shepherd rescued from the mouth of the lion those whom man despised, yet who "had ears to hear."

After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, a poor remnant only escaped. Rup.: "The spirit of prophecy foresaw both captivities, the end whereof was to confirm the faith, not in one place only but in all the earth, and so a slight remnant was "rescued from the mouth of the lion," that is, from the slaughter of the destroyers, and permitted to live, that through them, as a witness and monument, the justice of God might be known from age to age, and the truth of the Scriptures might be everywhere, borne about by them, still witnessing to Christ the Son of God, who is known by the law and the prophets. Hapness remnants, so "taken out" for the good of others, not their own!" As these remnants of the animal show what it was which the lion destroyed, yet are of no further profit, so are they now a memorial of what they once were, what grace through their sins they have lost.

Rib.: "Many souls will perish because they trust in their own strength, and no more call on God to have mercy on them than if they could rise of themselves and enter the way of salvation without God. They trust in the power of their friends, or the friendship of princes, or the doctrines of philophers, and repose in them as in a couch of Damascus. But Christ, the Good Shepherd, will rescue out of the mouth of "the lion," who "goeth about seeking, whom he may devour," what is last and of least esteem in

this world, who have anything whereby the Good Shepherd can hold them. The "legs" signify the desire to go to hear the Word of God; the extremity of the ear, that obedience was not wholly lost. For if any begin even in part to obey the word of God which he hath heard, God, of His fatherly mercy, will help him and lead him on to perfect obedience. The legs also denote desire, whereby, as by certain steps, the soul approacheth to God or departeth from Him. Yet if a soul would be saved, desires suffice not; but if to these obedience to the heavenly commands be added, it shall be rescued from the mouth of the lion."

Verse 13

Hear ye and testify ye in - (Rather unto or against) the house of Israel; first "hear" yourselves, then "testify," that is, solemnly "protest," in the Name of God; and "bear witness unto" and "against" them, so that the solemn words may sink into them. It is of little avail to "testfy," unless we first "hear;" nor can man "bear witness" to what he doth not know; nor will words make an "impression," that is, leave a trace of themselves, be stamped in or on people's souls, unless the soul which utters them have first hearkened unto them.

Saith the Lord God of hosts - "So thundereth, as it were, the authority of the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of the shepherd. Foretelling and protesting the destruction of the altar of Bethel, he sets his God against the god whom Israel had chosen as theirs and worshiped there, "the Lord God of hosts," against "the similitude of a calf that eateth hay" Psalm 106:20. Not I, a shepherd, but so speaketh my God against your god."

Verse 14

In the day that I shall visit the transgression of Israel upon, him, I will also visit (upon) the altars of Bethel - Israel then hoped that its false worship of "nature" would avail it. God says, contrariwise, that when He should punish, all their false worship, so far from helping them, should itself be the manifest object of His displeasure. Again God attests, at once, His long-suffering and His final retribution. Still had He foreborne to punish, "being slow to anger and of great goodness;" but when that day, fixed by the divine Wisdom, should come, wherein He should vindicate His own holiness, by enduring the sin no longer, then He would "visit their transgressions," that is, all of them, old and new, forgotten by man or remembered, "upon them." Scripture speaks of "visiting offences upon"

because, in God‘s Providence, the sin returns upon a man‘s own head. It is not only the cause of his being punished, but it becomes part of his punishment.

The memory of a man‘s sins will be part of his eternal suffering. Even in this life, “remorse,” as distinct from repentance, is the “gnawing” of a man‘s own conscience for the folly of his sin. Then also God would visit upon the false worship. It is thought that God visits less speedily even grave sins against Himself, (so that man does not appeal falsely to Him and make Him, in a way, a partner of his offence,) than sins against His own creature, man. It may be that, All-Merciful as He is, He bears the rather with sins, involving corruption of the truth as to Himself, so long as they are done in ignorance, on account of the ignorant worship Acts 17:23, Acts 17:30; Acts 14:16 of Himself, or the fragments of truth which they contain, until the evil in them have its full sway in moral guilt Genesis 4:10-11.

If then upon that very grave guilt against God Himself there be accumulated these other sins, this so increases the load, that God casts it out. However long then Israel with impunity, given itself to that vain, alien worship, this evinced the patience, not the approval, of God. Now, when they are to be punished for the fourth transgresston, they will be punished for the first, second and third, and so, most grievously; when brought to punishment for their other sins, they should suffer for their other guilt of impiety and superstition.”

And the horns of the altar - This was the one great “altar” 1 Kings 12:32-33; 1 Kings 13:1-5 for burnt-offerings, set up by Jeroboam, in imitation of that of God at Jerusalem, whose doom was pronounccd in the act of its would-be consecration. He had copied faithfully outward form. At each corner, where the two sides met in one, rose the “horn,” or pillar, a cubit high, there to sacrifice victims, Psalm 118:27, there to place the blood of atonement Exodus 29:12. So far from atoning, they themselves were “the” unatoned “sin” of “Jeroboam whereby 2 Kings 17:21 he drove Israel from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin. These were to be cut off; hewn down, with violence. A century and a half had passed, since the man of God had pronounced its sentence. They still stood. The day was not yet come; Josiah was still unborn; yet Amos, as peremptorily, renews the sentence. In rejecting these, whereon the atonement was made, God pronounced them out of covenant with Himself. Heresy makes itself as like

as it can to the truth, but is thereby the more deceiving, not the less deadly. Amos mentions the altars of Bethel, as well as the altar. Jeroboam made but one altar, keeping as close as he could to the divine ritual. But false worship and heresy ever hold their course, developing themselves. They never stand still where they began, but spread, like a cancer 2 Timothy 2:17. It is a test of heresy, like leprosy, that it spreads abroad John 4:22, not God, but some portion of His manifold operations. The many altars, forbidden as they were, were more in harmony with the religion of Jeroboam, even because they were against God‘s law. Heresy develops, becoming more consistent, by having less of truth.

Verse 15

And I will smite the winter house with the summer house - Upon idolatry, there follow luxury and pride. “So wealthy were they,” says Jerome, “as to possess two sorts of houses, “the winter house” being turned to the south, the “summer house” to the north, so that, according to the variety of the seasons, they might temper to them the heat and cold.” Yet of these luxuries, (so much more natural in the East where summer-heat is so intense, and there is so little provision against cold) the only instance expressly recorded, besides this place, is “the winter house” of Jehoiakim. In Greece and Rome, the end was attained, as with us, by north and south rooms in the same house. These, which Amos rebukes, were like our town and country houses, separate residences, since they were to be destroyed, one on the other. “Ivory houses” were houses, paneled, or inlaid, with ivory. Such a palace Ahab built 1 Kings 22:39. Even Solomon “in all his glory” had but an ivory throne 1 Kings 10:18. Else “ivory palaces” Psalm 45:8 are only mentioned, as part of the symbolic glory of the King of glory, the Christ. He adds, “and the great (or many) houses shall have an end, saith the Lord.” So prosperous were they in outward show, when Amos foretold their destruction. The desolation should be wide as well as mighty. All besides should pass away, and the Lord alone abide in that Day.: “What then shall we, if we would be right-minded, learn hence? How utterly nothing will all earthly brightness avail, all wealth, glory, or ought besides of luxury, if the love of God is lacking, and righteousness be not prized by us! For “treasures of wickedness profit nothing; but righteousness delivereth from death” Proverbs 10:2.

AMOS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

Hear ye this, ye kine of Bashan - The pastures of Bashan were very rich, and it had its name probably from its richness of soil. The Batanea of later times was a province only of the kingdom of Bashan, which, with half of Gilead, was given to the half tribe of Manasseh. For the Bashan of Og included Golan Deuteronomy 4:43, (the capital of the subsequent Gaulonitis, now Jaulan) Beeshterah Joshua 21:27, (or Ashtaroth) 1 Chronicles 6:71, very probably Bostra (see ab. on 1 Chronicles 1:12), and Elrei Deuteronomy 1:4, in Hauran or Auranitis; the one on its southern border, the other perhaps on its northern boundary toward Trachonitis. Its eastern extremity at Salkah Deuteronomy 3:10; Joshua 13:11, (Sulkhad) is the southern point of Batanea (now Bathaniyyeh); Argob, or Trachonitis, (the Lejah) was its north eastern fence.

Westward it reached to Mount Hermon Deuteronomy 3:8; Joshua 12:5; Joshua 13:11; 1 Chronicles 5:23. It included the subsequent divisions, Gaulonitis, Auranitis, Batanea, and Trachonitis. Of these the mountain range on the northwest of Jaulan is still "everywhere clothed with oak-forests." The Ard-el-Bathanyeh, "the country of Batanea or Bashan, is not surpassed in that land for beauty of its scenery, the richness of its pastures, and the extent of its oak forests." "The Arabs of the desert still pasture their flocks on the luxuriant herbage of the Jaulan". Its pastures are spoken of by Micah Micah 7:14 and Jeremiah Jeremiah 50:19. The animals fed there were among the strongest and fattest Deuteronomy 32:14. Hence, the male animals became a proverb for the mighty on the earth Exodus 39:18, the bulls furnished a type for fierce, unfeeling, enemies Psalm 22:12. Amos however, speaks of "kine;" not, as David, of "bulls." He upbraids them not for fierceness, but for a more delicate and wanton unfeelingness, the fruit of luxury, fullness of bread, a life of sense, which destroy all tenderness, dull the mind, "banker out the wits," deaden the spiritual sense.

The female name, "kine," may equally brand the luxury and effeminacy of the rich men, or the cruelty of the rich women, of Samaria. He addresses these "kine" in both sexes, both male and female. The reproachful name was then probably intended to shame both; men, who laid aside their manliness in the delicacy of luxury; or ladies, who put off the tenderness of

womanhood by oppression. The character of the oppression was the same in both cases. It was done, not directly by those who revelled in its fruits, but through the seduction of one who had authority over them. To the ladies of Samaria, "their lord" was their husband, as the husband is so called; to the nobles of Samaria, he was their king, who supplied their extravagances and debaucheries by grants, extorted from the poor.

Which oppress - Literally, "the oppressing!" The word expresses that they habitually oppressed and crushed the poor. They did it not directly; perhaps they did not know that it was done; they sought only, that their own thirst for luxury and self-indulgence should be gratified, and knew not, (as those at ease often know not now,) that their luxuries are continually watered by the tears of the poor, tears shed, almost unknown except by the Maker of both. But He counts willful ignorance no excuse. "He who doth through another, doth it himself," said the pagan proverb. God says, they did "oppress," were "continually oppressing, those in low estate," and "crushing the poor" (a word is used expressing the vehemence with which they "crushed" them.) They "crushed" them, only through the continual demand of pleasures of sense, reckless how they were procured; "bring and let us drink." They invite their husband or lord to joint self-indulgence.

Verse 2

The Lord God hath sworn by His holiness - They had sinned to profane His "Holy Name" (see the note at Amos 2:7). God swears by that holiness which they had profaned in themselves on whom it was called, and which they had caused to be profaned by others. He pledges His own holiness, that He will avenge their unholiness.: "In swearing "by His holiness," God sware by Himself. For He is the supreme uncreated justice and Holiness. This justice each, in his degree, should imitate and maintain on earth, and these had sacrilegiously violated and overthrown."

Days shall come (literally, are among) upon you - God's Day and eternity are ever coming. He reminds them of their continual approach. He says not only that they will certainly come, but they are ever coming. They are holding on their steady course. Each day which passes, they advance a day closer upon the sinner. People put out of their minds what "will come;" they "put far the evil day." Therefore, God so often in His notices of woe to come, (1 Samuel 2:31; Isaiah 39:6; Jeremiah 7:32; Jeremiah 9:25; Jeremiah 17:14; Jeremiah 19:6; Jeremiah 23:5, Jeremiah 23:7; Jeremiah 30:3; Jeremiah 31:27-31, Jeremiah 31:38; Jeremiah 33:14; Jeremiah 48:12;

Jeremiah 49:2; Jeremiah 51:47, Jeremiah 51:52. (Ges.); Amos 8:11), brings to mind, that those "days are" ever "coming"; they are not a thing which shall be only; in God's purpose, they already "are;" and with one uniform steady noiseless tread "are coming upon" the sinner. Those "days shall come upon you," heavily charged with the displeasure of God, crushing you, as ye have crushed the poor. They come doubtless, too, unexpectedly upon them, as our Lords says, "and so that day come upon you unwares."

He (that is one) will take you away - In the midst of their security, they should on a sudden be taken away violently from the abode of their luxury, as the fish, when hooked, is lifted out of the water. The image pictures (see Habakkuk 1:15; Ezekiel 29:4-5,) their utter helplessness, the contempt in which they would be had, the ease with which they would be lifted out of the flood of pleasures in which they had immersed themselves. People can be reckless, at last, about themselves, so that their posterity escape, and they themselves survive in their offspring. Amos foretells, then, that these also should be swept away.

Verse 3

Ye shall go out through the breaches - Samaria, the place of their ease and confidence, being broken through, they should go forth one by one, "each straight before her," looking neither to the right nor to the left, as a herd of cows go one after the other through a gap in a fence. Help and hope have vanished, and they hurry pell-mell after one another, reckless and desperate, as the animals whose life of sense they had chosen.

And ye shall cast them into the palace - Or, better, (since nothing has been named which they could cast) "cast yourselves." The word may describe the headlong motion of the animal, and the desperate gestures of the hopeless. They should cast themselves from palace to palace, from the palace of their luxuries to the palace of their enemies, from a self-chosen life of sensuousness to he concubines in the harem. If the rulers are still included, it was reserved for the rich and noble to become eunuchs in the palace of their Assyrian or Babylonian conquerors, as Isaiah foretold to Hezekiah Isaiah 39:7. It is another instance of that great law of God, "wherewithal a man sinneth, by the same shall he be tormented" (Wisdom Isaiah 11:16). They had lived in luxury and wantonness; in luxury and wantonness they should live, but amid the jealousies of an Eastern harem, and at the caprice of their sensual conquerors.

The word however rendered, "to the palace," occurring only here, is obscure. The other most probable conjecture is, that it is a name of a country, "the mountains of Monah," that is, perhaps Armenia. This would describe accurately enough the country to which they were to be carried; "beyond Damascus; the cities of the Medes." The main sense is the same. They should be cast forth from the scene of their pleasures and oppression, to be themselves oppressed. The whole image is one, which an inspired prophet alone could use. The reproof was not from man, but from God, unveiling their sins to them in their true hideousness. Man thinks nothing of being more degraded than the brutes, so that he can hide from himself, that he is so.

Verse 4

Come to Beth-el and transgress - Having foretold their captivity, the prophet tries irony. But his irony is in bidding them go on to do, what they were doing earnestly, what they were set upon doing, and would not be withdrawn from. As Micaiah in irony, until adjured in the name of God, joined Ahab's court-priests, bidding, him "go to Ramoth-Gilead" 1 Kings 22:15, where he was to perish; or Elijah said to the priests of Baal, "Cry aloud, for he is a god" 1 Kings 18:27; or our Lord, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers" Matthew 23:32; so Amos bids them do all they did, in their divided service of God, but tells them that to multiply all such service was to multiply transgression. Yet they were diligent in their way. Their offerings were daily, as at Jerusalem; the tithes of the third year for the poor was paid, as God had ordained Deuteronomy 14:28; Deuteronomy 26:12. They were punctual in these parts of the ritual, and thought much of their punctuality.

So well did they count themselves to stand with God, that there is no mention of sin offering or trespass offering. Their sacrifices were "sacrifics of thanksgiving" and "free will offerings," as if out of exuberance of devotion, such as David said that Zion would "offer," when God had been "favorable and gracious unto" her Psalm 51:18-19. These things they did; they "proclaimed" and "published" them, like the hypocrites whom our Lord reproves, "sounding a trumpet before them" Matthew 6:2 when they did alms; proclaiming these private offerings, as God bade proclaim the solemn assemblies. "For so ye love." They did it, because they liked it, and it cost them nothing, for which they cared. It was more than most Christians

will sacrifice, two fifteenths of their yearly income, if they gave the yearly tithes, which were to be shared with the poor also. But they would not sacrifice what God, above all, required, the fundamental breach of God‘s law, on which their kingdom rested, “the sin which Jeroboam made Israel to sin.” They did what they liked; they were pleased with it, and they had that pleasure for their only reward, as it is of all which is not done for God.

Verse 5

And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven - But amid this boastful service, all was self-will. In little or great, the calf-worship at Bethel, or the use of leaven in the sacrifice, they did as they willed. The prophet seems to have joined purposely the fundamental change, by which Jeroboam substituted the worship of nature for its God, and a minute alteration of the ritual, to show that one and the same temper, self-will, reigned in all, dictated all they did. The use of leaven in the things sacrificed was forbidden, out of a symbolic reason, that is, not in itself, but as representing something else. The Eastern leaven, like that used in France, consisting of what is sour, had the idea of decay and corruption connected with it. Hence, it was unfit to be offered to God. For whatever was the object of any sacrifice, whether of atonement or thanksgiving, perfection in its kind was essential to the idea of offering. Hence, it was expressly forbidden. “No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the Lord, shall be made with leaven, for ye shall burn no leaven in an offering of the Lord made by fire” (Leviticus 2:11; add. Leviticus 6:17). At other times it is expressly commanded, that “unleavened bread” should be used. In two cases only, in which the offering was not to be burned, were offerings to be made of leavened bread:

(1) the two loaves of first-fruits at Pentecost Leviticus 23:17, and

(2) an offering with which the thank offering was accompanied, and which was to be the priest‘s Leviticus 7:13-14.

The special meat offering of the thank offering was to be without leaven Leviticus 7:12. To “offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven” was a direct infringement of God‘s appointment. It proceeded from the same frame of mind, as the breach of the greatest. Self-will was their only rule. What they willed, they kept; and what they willed, they brake. Amos bids

them then go on, as they did in their willfulness, breaking God‘s commands of set purpose, and keeping them by accident.

Rup.: “This is a most grave mode of speaking, whereby He now saith, ‹Come and do so and so, and He Himself who saith this, hateth those same deeds of theirs. He so speaketh, not as willing, but as abandoning not as inviting, but as expelling; not in exhortation but in indignation. He subjoins then, (as the case required,) ‹for so ye loved.‘ As if He said, ‹I therefore say, ‹come to Bethel‘ where is your god, your calf, because ‹so ye loved,‘ and hitherto ye have come. I therefore say, ‹transgress,‘ because ye do transgress, and ye will to transgress. I say, ‹come to Gilgal,‘ where were idols (Judges 3:19, English margin) long before Jeroboam‘s calves, because ye come and ye will to come. I say, ‹multiply transgressions,‘ because ye do multiply it, and yet will to multiply it. I say, ‹bring your sacrifices,‘ because ye offer them and ye will to offer them, to whom ye ought not. I say, ‹offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven,‘ because ye so do, and ye will do it, leavened as ye are with ‹the old leaven of malice and wickedness,‘ against the whole authority of the holy and spiritual law, which forbiddeth to offer in sacrifice anything leavened.

This pleaseth your gods, that ye be leavened, and without ‹the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth‘ 1 Corinthians 5:8. To them then ‹sacrifice the sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven,‘ because to Me ye, being sinners, cannot offer a seemly sacrifice of praise. And so doing, ‹proclaim and publish the free offerings,‘ for so ye do, and so ye will to do, honoring the sacrifices which ye offer to your calves with the same names, whereby the authority of the law nameth those which are offered unto Me; ‹burnt offerings,‘ and ‹peace offerings;‘ and ‹proclaim‘ them ‹with the sound of trumpet and harp, with timbrel and dancing, with strings and organ, upon the well turned cymbals and the loud cymbals‘ Psalm 150:1-6, that so ye may be thought to have sung louder and stronger than the tribe of Judah or the house of David in the temple of the Lord, because ye are more.‘ All these things are said, not with the intention of one willing, but with the indignation of one forsaking, as in many other instances. As that which the same Lord said to His betrayer; ‹what thou doest, do quickly‘ John 13:27. And in the Revelations we read, ‹He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still‘ Revelation 22:11.

These things, and the rest of the like sort, are not the words of one commanding, or, of His own Will, conceding, but permitting and forsaking. ‹For He was not ignorant, (Wisdom saith) (Wisdom Revelation 12:10) that they were a naughty generation, and their malice was inbred, and that their cogitation never would be changed. ‹“

Proclaim and publish the free offerings - o“Account much of what ye offer to God, and think that ye do great things, as though ye honored God condignly, and were under no obligation to offer such gifts. The whole is said in irony. For some there are, who appreciate magnificently the gifts and services which they offer to God, and think they have attained to great perfection, as though they made an adequate return to the divine benefits, not weighing the infinite dignity of the Divine Majesty, the incomparable greatness of the divine benefits, the frailty of their own condition and the imperfection of their service. Against whom is that which the Saviour saith, ‹When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do‘ Luke 17:10. Hence, David saith ‹all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee.‘ 1 Chronicles 19:14.”

Verse 6

And I, I too have given you - Such had been their gifts to God, worthless, because destitute of that which alone God requires of His creatures, a loving, simple, single-hearted, loyal obedience. So then God had but one gift which He could bestow, one only out of the rich storehouse of His mercies, since all besides were abused - chastisement. Yet this too is a great gift of God, a pledge of His love, who willed not that they should perish; an earnest of greater favors, had they used it. It is a great gift of God, that He should care for us, so as to chasten us. The chastisements too were no ordinary chastisements, but those which God forewarned in the law, that He would send, and, if they repented, He would, amid the chastisements, forgive. This famine God had sent everywhere, “in all their cities,” and “in all their places,” great and small. Israel thought that its calves, that is, nature, gave them these things. “She did not know,” God saith, “that I gave her corn and wine and oil;” but said, “These are my rewards that my lovers have given me” Hosea 2:8, Hosea 2:12. In the powers and operations of “nature,” they forgat the God and Author of nature. It was then the direct corrective of this delusion, that God withheld those powers and functions of nature. So might israel learn, if it would, the

vanity of its worship, from its fruitlessness. Some such great famines in the time of Elijah and Elisha 2 Kings 8:1-6 Scripture records; but it relates them, only when God visibly interposed to bring, or to remove, or to mitigate them. Amos here speaks of other famines, which God sent, as He foretold in the law, but which produced no genuine fruits of repentance.

And ye returned not unto Me - He says not, that they "returned not at all," but that they "returned not wholly, quite back to God". Nay the emphatic saying, "ye did not return quite to Me," so as to reach Me, implies that they did, after a fashion, return. Israel's worship was a half, halting 1 Kings 18:21, worship. But a half-worship is no worship; a half-repentance is no repentance; repentance for one sin or one set of sins is no repentance, unless the soul repent of all which it can recall wherein it displeased its God. God does not half-forgive; so neither must man half-repent. Yet of its one fundamental sin, the worship of nature for God, Israel would not repent. And so, whatever they did was not that entire repentance, upon which God, in the law, had promised forgiveness; repentance which stopped short of nothing but God.

Verse 7

And I, I too have withholden the rain - Jerome, dwelling in Palestine, says, that "this rain, when "three months yet remained until harvest," was the "latter rain," of the very greatest necessity for the fields of Palestine and the thirsty ground, lest, when the blade is swelling into the crop, and gendering the wheat, it should dry up through lack of moisture. The time intended is the spring, at the end of April, whence, to the wheat-harvest, there remain three months, May, June, July." "God withheld the rain that they might endure, not only lack of bread, but burning thirst and penury of drink also. For in these places, where we now live, all the water, except small fountains, is of cisterns; and if the wrath of God should withhold the rain, there is greater peril of thirst than of hunger, such its Scripture relates to have endured for three years and six months in the days of the prophet Elijah. And lest they should think that this had befallen their cities and people, by a law of nature, or the influence of the stars, or the variety of the seasons, He says, that He rained upon one city and its fields, and from another withheld the rain."

This was a second visitation of God. First, a general famine, "in all their cities;" secondly, a discriminating visitation. "Nature" possesses no discrimination or power over her supplies. Seeming waste is one of the

mysteries of God in nature, "to cause it to rain on the earth" Job 38:26 where "no man" is; on "the wilderness wherein" there, "is no man." Ordinarily too, God "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" Matthew 5:45. But God does not enslave Himself, (as people would have it) to His own laws. Amos appeals to them, that God had dealt with them, not according to His ordinary laws; that not only God had given to one city the rain which he had withheld from another, but that He had made the same difference as to smaller "pieces" of ground, the inherited "portions" of individuals. Some such variations have been observed in Palestine now. But this would have been no indication of God's Providence, had not the consciences of people responded to the prophet's appeal, and recognized that the rain had been given or withheld according to the penitence or impenitence, the deeper or more mitigated idolatry, the greater or less sinfulness of the people. We have. then, in these few words a law of God's dealing with Israel. God, in His word, reveals to us the meaning of His daily variations in the workings of nature; yet, hardly even in such instances, as people can scarcely elude, do they think of God the Creator, rather than of nature, His creation.

Verse 8

Two or three cities wandered into one city - Those then who were punished, were more than those who were reprieved. The word "wandered" literally, "trembled," expresses the unsteady reeling gate of those exhausted, in quest of food. They staggered through weakness, and uncertain, amid the general drought, whither to betake themselves. This was done, not in punishment but to heal. God paused, in order to give them opportunity to repent; in deed, His long-suffering only showed to themselves and to others, that they would not; "and ye returned not not Me; saith the Lord."

Verse 9

I have smitten you with blasting - Literally, "an exceeding scorching," such as the hot east wind produced, and "an exceeding mildew," a blight, in which the ears turn untimely a pale yellow, and have no grain. Both words are doubly intensive. They stand together in the prophecy of Moses Deuteronomy 28:22, among the other scourges of disobedience; and the mention of these would awaken, in those who would hear, the memory of a long train of other warnings and other judgments.

When your gardens … increased - Better, as English margin. "the multitude of your gardens." The garden of the east united the orchard Job 8:16; Deuteronomy 11:10; Amos 9:14; Jeremiah 29:5, Jeremiah 29:28. Its trees Ecclesiastes 2:6, as well as the garden (Psalm 1:3; Jeremiah 17:8; add Isaiah 58:11; Jeremiah 31:12, contrariwise Isaiah 1:30), was an image of abiding freshness and fertility, Yet neither would these escape God's sentence. On these He sent the locusts, which, in a few hours - all leaves - flower, herb or tree, are as dead (see the note at Joel 1:7).

Verse 10

I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt - that is, after the way in which God had dealt with Egypt. God had twice promised, when the memory of the plagues which He sent on Egypt was still fresh "if thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God - I will put none of the diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians" Exodus 15:26; Deuteronomy 7:15. Contrariwise, God had forewarned them in that same prophecy of Moses, that, if they disobeyed Him, "He will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt which thou was afraid of, and they shall cleave unto thee" (Deuteronomy 28:60, add Deuteronomy 28:27). Egypt was, at times, subject to great visitations of the plague; it is said to be its birthplace. Palestine was by nature healthy. Hence, and on account of the terribleness of the scourge, God so often speaks of it, as of His own special sending. He had threatened in the law; "I will sold a pestilence upon you" Leviticus 26:25; "the Lord thy God will make the pestilence cleave unto you" Deuteronomy 28:21. Jeremiah says to the false prophet Hananiah; "The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries and against great kingdoms, of war and of evil and of pestilence" Jeremiah 28:8. Amos bears witness that those visitations came. Jeremiah Jeremiah 14:12; Jeremiah 29:17-18; Jeremiah 34:17 and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 5:12; Ezekiel 6:11, etc.) prophesied them anew, together with the sword and with famine. Israel, having sinned like Egypt, was to be punished like Egypt.

And have taken away your horses - Literally, as English margin. "with the captivity of your horses." After famine, drought, locust, pestilence, followed that worst scourge of all, that through man. The possessions of the plain of Jezreel, so well suited for cavalry, probably induced israel to break in this respect the law of Moses. Hazael "left to Jehoahaz but 50 horsemen and 10 chariots and 10,000 footmen, for the king of Syria had destroyed

them, and had made them like the dust by threshing." Their armies, instead of being a defense, lay unburied on the ground, a fresh source of pestilence.

Verse 11

I have overthrown some of you - The earthquake is probably reserved to the last, as being the rarest, and so the most special, visitation. Frequent as earthquakes have been on the borders of Palestine, the greater part of Palestine was not on the line, which was especially shaken by them. The line, chiefly visited by earthquakes, was along the coast of the Mediterranean or parallel to it, chiefly from Tyre to Antioch and Aleppo. Here were the great historical earthquakes, which were the scourges of Tyre, Sidon, Beirut, Botrys, Tripolis, Laodicea on the sea; which shattered Litho-prosopon, prostrated Baalbek and Hamath, and so often afflicted Antioch and Aleppo, while Damascus was mostly spared.

Eastward it may have reached to Safed, Tiberias, and the Hauran. Ar-Moab perished by an earthquake in the childhood of Jerome. But, at least, the evidence of earthquakes, except perhaps in the ruins of the Hauran, is slighter. Earthquakes there have been (although fewer) at Jerusalem. Yet on the whole, it seems truer to say that the skirts of Palestine were subject to destructive earthquakes, than to affirm this of central Palestine.

The earthquake must have been all the more terrible, because it was unprecedented. One or more terrible earthquakes, overthrowing cities, must have been sent, before that, on occasion of which Amos collected his prophecies. For his prophecies were uttered "two years before" that "earthquake;" and this earthquake had preceded his prophecy. "I overthrew," God says, "among you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah." He uses the word, especially used by Moses and the prophets of that dread overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, when they were turned, as it were, upside down. The earthquake is at all times the more mysterious, because unseen, unannounced, unlooked for, instantaneous, complete. The ground under a man's feet seems no longer secure: his shelter is his destruction; men's houses become their graves. Whole cities must have been utterly overthrown, for He compares the overthrow worked among them, to the overthrow of "the cities of the plain." Other visitations have heralds sent before them. War, pestilence, famine, seldom break in at once. The earthquake at once, buries, it may be, thousands or tens of thousands, each stiffened (if it were so) in that his last deed of evil; each household

with its own form of misery; each in its separate vault, dead, dying, crushed, imprisoned; the remnant indeed "surviving," for most whom they loved were gone. So he says;

And ye, who escaped, were as a firebrand, plucked out of the burning - Once it had been green, fresh, fragrant, with leaf or flower; now scorched, charred, blackened, all but consumed. In itself, it was fit for nothing, but to be cast back into the fire from where it had been rescued. Man would so deal with it. A re-creation alone could restore it. Slight emblem of a soul, whose freshness sin had withered, then God‘s severe judgment had half-consumed; in itself, meet only for the everlasting fire, from which yet God withdraws it.

Verse 12

Therefore thus will I do unto thee - God says more by His silence. He had enumerated successive scourges. Now, with His hand uplifted to strike, He mentions none, but says, "thus." Rib.: "So men too, loth to name evils, which they fear and detest, say, "God do so to me, and more also." God using the language of people" Jerome, "having said, ‹thus will I do unto thee,‘ is silent as to what He will do; that so, Israel hanging in suspense, as having before him each sort of punishment (which are the more terrible, because he imagines them one by one), may indeed repent, that God inflict not what He threatens."

Prepare to meet thy God - In judgment, face to face, final to them. All the judgments which had been sent hitherto were but heralds, forerunners of the judgment to come. He Himself was not in them. In them, He passed no sentence upon Israel. They were medicinal, corrective; they were not His final sentence. Now, having tried all ways of recovering them in vain, God summons them before His tribunal. But although the judgment of the ten tribes, as a whole, was final, to individuals there was place for repentance. God never, in this life, bids people or individuals "prepare to meet Him," without a purpose of good to those who do prepare to receive His sentence aright. He saith not then, "come and hear your doom," but "prepare to meet thy God." It has hope in it, to be bidden to "prepare;" yet more, that He whom they were to prepare to meet, was "their God." It must have recurred full often to the mind of the ten tribes during their unrestored captivity of above seven centuries before the Coming of our Lord; a period as long as the whole existence of Rome from its foundation to its decay; as long as our history from our king Stephen until now.

Full oft must they have thought, “we have not met Him yet,” and the thought must have dawned upon them; “It is because He willed to “do thus” with us, that He bid us “prepare to meet” Him. He met us not, when He did it. It was then something further on; it is in the Messiah that we arc to meet and to see Him.” Jerome: “Prepare to meet thy God,” receiving with all eagerness the Lord coming unto thee.” So then, is this further sense which lay in a the words, “he (as did Hosea at the end) exhorts the ten tribes, after they had been led captive by the Assyrians, not to despond, but to “prepare to meet their God,” that is, to acknowledge and receive Christ their God, when the Gospel should be preached to them by the Apostles.” Rib.: “God punisheth, not in cruelty, but in love. He warns then those whom He strikes, to understand what He means by these punishments, not thinking themselves abandoned by God, but, even when they seem most cast away and reprobate, rousing themselves, in the hope of God‘s mercy through Christ, to call upon God, and “prepare to meet their God.” For no one‘s salvation is so desperate, no one is so stained with every kind of sin, but that God cometh to him by holy inspirations, to bring back the wanderer to Himself. Thou therefore, O Israel, whoever thou art, who didst once serve God, and now servest vilest pleasures, when thou feelest God coming to thee, prepare to meet Him. Open the door of thy heart to that most kind and benevolent Guest, and, when thou hearest His Voice, deafen not thyself: flee not, like Adam. For He seeketh thee, not to judge, but to save thee.”

Verse 13

For lo, He that formeth the mountains - Their God whom they worshiped was but nature. Amos tells them, who “their God” is, whom they were to prepare to meet. He describes Him as the Creator of that, which to man seems most solid, to go furthest back in times past. Before the everlasting mountains were, God is, for He made them. Yet God is not a Creator in the past alone. He is a continual Worker. “And formeth the wind,” that finest subtlest creature, alone invisible in this visible world; the most immaterial of things material, the breath of our life, the image of man‘s created immaterial spirit, or even of God‘s uncreated presence, the mildest and the most terrific of the agents around us. But the thought of God, as a Creator or Preserver without, affects man but little. To man, a sinner, far more impressive than all majesty of Creative power, is the thought that God knows his inmost soul. So he adds; “and declareth unto

man what is his thought," that is, his meditation, before he puts it into words. God knows our thoughts more truly than we ourselves. We disguise them to ourselves, know not our own hearts, wish not to know them. God reveals us to ourselves. As He says, "The heart is deceitful above all things; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart; I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings" Jeremiah 17:9-10. Man's own conscience tells him that God's knowledge of His inmost self is no idle knowledge. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things" 1 John 3:20.

That maketh the morning darkness - If the light become darkness, how great that darkness! From the knowledge of man's heart, the prophet goes on to retribution. Morning is the symbol of all which is beautiful, cheering, radiant, joyous to man; darkness effaces all these. Their God, he tells them, can do all this. He can quench in gloom all the magnificent beauty of His own creation and make all which gladdened the eyes of man, "one universal blot." "And treadeth upon the high places of the earth." He "treadeth" them, to tread them under. He humbleth all which exalteth itself. "God walketh, when He worketh. He is without all, within all, containeth all, worketh all in all. Hence, it is said, "He walketh on the wings of the wind Psalm 104:3; He walketh on the heights of the sea Job 9:8; He walketh on the circuit of heaven" Job 22:14.

Such was He, who made Himself "their God," The Author of all, the Upholder of all, the Subduer of all which exalted itself, who stood in a special relation to man's thoughts, and who punished. At His command stand all the hosts of heaven. Would they have Him for them, or against them? Would they be at peace with Him, before they met Him, face to face?

AMOS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

In order to impress Israel the more, Amos begins this his third appeal by a "dirge" over its destruction, mourning over those who were full of joy, and thought themselves safe and enviable. As if a living man, in the midst of his pride and luxury and buoyant recklessness of heart, could see his own funeral procession, and hear, as it were, over himself the "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." It would give solemn thoughts, even though he should impatiently put them from him. So must it to Israel, when after the tide of victories of Jeroboam II, Amos said, "Hear this word which I am lifting up," as a heavy weight, to cast it down "against" or "upon you," a funeral "dirge," O house of Israel. Human greatness is so unstable, human strength so fleeting, that the prophet of decay finds a response in man's own conscience, however he may silence or resent it. He would not resent it, unless he felt its force.

Dionysius: "Amos, an Israelite, mourneth over Israel, as Samuel did over Saul 1 Samuel 15:35, or as Isaiah says, "I will weep bitterly; labor not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people" Isaiah 22:4; images of Him who wept over Jerusalem." "So are they bewailed, who know not why they are bewailed, the more miserable, because they know not their own misery."

Verse 2

She hath fallen, she shall rise no more, the virgin of Israel; she hath been dashed down upon her land, there is none to raise her up - Such is the dirge, a dirge like that of David over Saul and Jonathan, over what once was lovely and mighty, but which had perished. He speaks of all as past, and that, irremediably. Israel is one of the things which had been, and which would never again be. He calls her tenderly, "the virgin of Israel," not as having retained her purity or her fealty to God; still less, with human boastfulness, as though she had as yet been unsubdued by man. For she had been faithless to God, and had been many times conquered by man. Nor does it even seem that God so calls her, because He once espoused her to Himself For isaiah so calls Babylon. But Scripture seems to speak of cities, as women, because in women tenderness is most seen; they are most

tenderly guarded; they, when pure, are most lovely; they, when corrupted, are most debased.

Hence, "God says on the one hand, "I remember thee, the love of thine espousals" Jeremiah 2:2; on the other, "Hear, thou harlot, the word of the Lord" Ezekiel 16:35. When He claims her faithfulness He calls her, betrothed." Again, "when He willeth to signify that a city or nation has been as tenderly loved and anxiously guarded, whether by Himsclf or by others, He calleth it "virgin," or when lie would indicate its beauty and lovely array. Isaiah saith, ‹come down and sit in the dust, virgin daughter of Babylon' Isaiah 47:1, that is, thou who livedest before in all delicacies, like a virgin under the shelter of her home. For it follows, ‹for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.'" More pitiable, for their tenderness and delicacy, is the distress of women. And so he pictures her as already fallen, "dashed" (the word imitates the sound) to the earth "upon her own ground." An army may be lost, and the nation recover. She was "dashed down upon her own ground." In the abode of her strength, in the midst of her resources, in her innermost retreat, she should fall. In herself, she fell powerless. And he adds, she has "no one to raise her up;" none to have ruth upon her; image of the judgment on a lost soul, when the terrible sentence is spoken and none can intercede! "She shall not rise again." As she fell, she did not again rise. The prophet beholds beyond the eighty-five years which separated the prosperity under Jeroboam II from her captivity. As a people, he says, she should be restored no more; nor was she.

Verse 3

The city that went out by a thousand - (that is, probably that sent out a thousand fighting men, as the word "went out" is often used for, "went out" to fight,) "shall have" literally, "shall retain, an hundred." She was to be decimated. Only, the tenth alone was to be reserved alive; the nine-tenths were to be destroyed. And this, alike in larger places and in the small. The city "that went forth an hundred shall retain ten." Smaller places escape for their obscurity, the larger from their strength and situation. One common doom was to befall all. Out of all that multitude, one tithe alone was to he preserved, "dedicated to God," that remnant which God always promised to reserve.

Verse 4

Seek ye Me and ye shall live - Literally, "seek Me; and live." Wonderful conciseness of the word of God, which, in two words, comprises the whole of the creature's duty and his hopes, his time and his eternity. The prophet users the two imperatives, inoneing both, man's duty and his reward. He does not speak of them, as cause and effect, but as one. Where the one is, there is the other. To seek God is to live. For to seek God is to find Him, and God is Life and the Source of life. Forgiveness, grace, life, enter the soul at once. But the seeking is diligent seeking.: "It is not to seek God anyhow, but as it is right and meet that He should be sought, longed for, prayed for, who is so great, a Good, constantly, fervently, yea, to our power, the more constantly and fervently, as an Infinite Good is more to be longed for, more loved than all created good." The object of the search is God Himself. "Seek Me," that is, seek God for Himself, not for anything out of Him, not for His gifts, not for anything to be loved with Him. This is not to seek Him purely. All is found in Him, but by seeking Him first, and then loving Him in all, and all in Him. "And ye shall live," first by the life of the body, escaping the enemy; then by the life of grace now, and the life of glory hereafter, as in that of the Psalmist, "your heart shall live who seek God" Psalm 69:32.

Verse 5

But (and) seek not Bethel - Israel pretended to seek God in Bethel. Amos sets the two seeking, as incompatible. The god, worshiped at Bethel, was not the One God. To seek God there was to lose Him. "Seek not God," he would say, "and a phantom, which will lead from God."

And pass not to Beersheba - Jeroboam I pretended that it was too much for Israel to go up to Jerusalem. And Yet Israel thought it not too much to go to the extremest point of Judah toward Idumaea, perhaps, four times as far south of Jerusalem, as Jerusalem lay from Bethel. For Beersheba is thought to have lain some thirty miles south of Hebron, which is twenty-two miles south of Jerusalem; while Bethel is but twelve to the north. So much pains will people take in self-willed service, and yet not see that it takes away the excuse for neglecting the true. At Beersheba, Abraham "called upon the name of the Lord, the everlasting God" Genesis 21:33. There God revealed Himself to Isaac and Jacob Genesis 26:23-24; Genesis 46:1. There, because He had so revealed Himself, Judah made a place of idolatry, which Israel, seeking nought besides from Judah, sought. Beersheba was still a town or large village in the time of Jerome. Now all is

swept away, except "some foundations of ruins," spread over 34 of a mile, "with scarcely one stone upon another". The wells alone remain, with the ancient names.

Gilgal shall surely go into captivity - The verbal allusions in the prophets are sometimes artificial; sometimes, they develop the meaning of the word itself, as when Zephaniah says, "Ekron (probably the "firm-rooting") "shall be uprooted" Zephaniah 2:4; sometimes, as here, the words are connected, although not the same. In all cases, the likeness of sound was calculated to fix them in men's memories. It would be so, if one with authority could say, "Paris perira", "Paris shall perish" or "London is undone." Still more would the words, Hag-gilgal galo yigleh, because the name Gilgal still retained its first meaning, "the great rolling, and the word joined with it had a kindred meaning. Originally it probably means, "swept clear away." God first "rolled away the reproaeh of Egypt" Joshua 5:9 from His people there. Then, when it made itself like the pagan, it should itself be rolled clear away Jeremiah 51:25. Gilgal was originally in Benjamin, but Israel had probably annexed it to itself, as it had Bethel and Jericho 1 Kings 16:34, both of which had been assigned by Joshua to Benjamin Joshua 18:21-22.

And Bethel shall come to nought - Hosea had called "Bethel, God's house," by the name of "Bethaven Hosea 4:15; Hosea 10:5, Vanity-house." Amos, in allusion to this probably, drops the first half of the name, and says that it shall not merely be "house of vanity," but "Aven, vanity" itself. "By sin the soul, which was the house or temple of God, becomes the temple of vanity and of devils."

Verse 6

Seek ye the Lord and ye shall live - Literally, "seek the Lord and live;" being united to Him, the Fountain of life. He reimpresses on them the one simple need of the creature, "seek God," the one true God as He revealed Himself, not as worldly people, or the politicians of Jeroboam's court, or the calf-priests, fabled of Him. "Seek Him." For in Him is all; without Him, nothing.

Lest He break out like fire in Bethel - Formerly the Spirit of God came vehemently down upon Sansom Judges 14:6, Judges 14:19; Judges 15:14 and Saul 1 Samuel 10:6; 1 Samuel 11:6 and David 1 Samuel 16:13, to fit them as instruments for God; as did the Evil spirit, when God departed from Saul 1 Samuel 18:10. So now, unless they repented, God Himself

would suddenly show His powerful presence among them, but, as He had revealed Himself to be, "the, Lord thy God is a consuming Fire" Deuteronomy 4:24. "And devour" it, literally, "and it" (the fire) "shall devor, and" there be "none to quench" it "in" (better, "for") Bethel." Bethel, the center of their idol-hopes, so far from aiding them then, shall not be able to help itself, nor shall there be any to help it. The fire of God kindles around it, and there is none to quench it for her (as in Jeremiah 4:4).

Montanus: "The whole place treateth of mercy and justice. The whole ground of people's punishment, calamities, condemnation is ascribed to their own fault and negligence, who neglect the deliverance often promised and offered them by God, and ‹love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil' John 3:19. Whoever is not saved, the whole blame lies in their own will and negligence and malice. God, who ‹willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance' 2 Peter 3:9, Himself unsought, seeks, entreats, ceases not to monish, exhort, set before them their guilt, that they may cease to prepare such evil for themselves. But they neither give Him entrance, nor hear His entreaties, nor admit the warnings of the divine mercy, which if they neglect, they must needs be made over to His justice. The goodness of God is lacking to no one, save those who are wanting to themselves. Wherefore, having often besought them before, He invites them yet again to salvation, putting forth that His Name, so full of mysteries of mercy; ‹Seek the Lord and live,'" seek Him who is, the Unchangeable. He who had willed their salvation, still willed it, for He "changes not" Malachi 3:6. "He adds threatenings, that those whom He calls to life, He might either allure by promises, or scare from death through fear of the impending evil."

Verse 7

Ye who turn - Those whom he calls to seek God, were people filled with all injustice, who turned the sweetness of justice into the bitterness of wormwood. Moses had used "gall" and "wormwood" as a proverb; "lest there be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and His jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him" Deuteronomy 29:18, Deuteronomy 29:20. The word of Amos would remind them of the word of Moses.

And leave off righteousness in the earth - Better, "and set righteousness to rest on the ground". They dethroned righteousness, the representative and vice-gerent of God, and made it rest on the ground. The "little horn," Daniel says, should "cast truth to the ground" Daniel 8:12. These seem to have blended outrage with insult, as when "the Lord our Righteousness" Jeremiah 23:6 took our flesh, "they put on Him" the "scarlet robe, and the crown of thorns" upon His Head, and bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him," and then "crucified Him." They "deposed" her, "set her down," it may be, with a mock make-believe deference, as people now-a-days, in civil terms, depose God, ignoring Him and His right over them. They set her on the ground and so left her, the image of God. This they did, not in one way only, but in all the ways in which they could. He does not limit it to the "righteousness" shown in doing justice. It includes all transactions between man and man, in which right enters, all buying and selling, all equity, all giving to another his due. All the bands of society were dissolved, and righteousness was placed on the ground, to be trampled on by all in all things.

Verse 8

Seek Him that maketh the seven stars - Misbelief effaces the thought of God as He Is. It retains the name God, but means something quite different from the One True God. So people spoke of "the Deity," as a sort of First Cause of all things, and did not perceive that they only meant to own that this fair harmony of things created was not (at least as it now exists,) self-existent, and that they had lost sight of the Personal God who had made known to them His Will, whom they were to believe in, obey, fear, love. "The Deity" was no object of fear or love. It was but a bold confession that they did not mean to be Atheists, or that they meant intellectually to admire the creation. Such confessions, even when not consciously atheistic, become at least the parents of Atheism or Panotheism, and slide insensibly into either. For a First Cause, who is conceived of as no more, is an abstraction, not God. God is the Cause of all causes.

All things are, and have their relations to each other, as cause and effect, because He so created them. A "Great First Cause," who is only thought of as a Cause, is a mere fiction of a man's imagining, an attempt to appear to account for the mysteries of being, without owning that, since our being is from God, we are responsible creatures whom He created for Himself, and who are to yield to Him an account of the use of our being which He gave

us. In like way, Israel had probably so mixed up the thought of God with Nature, that it had lost sight of God, as distinct from the creation. And so Amos, after appealing to their consciences, sets forth God to them as the Creator, Disposer of all things, and the Just God, who redresseth man‘s violence and injustice. The “seven stars,” literally, “the heap,” are the striking cluster of stars, called by Greeks and Latins the Pleiades,, which consist of seven larger stars, and in all of above forty.

Orion, a constellation in one line with the Pleiades, was conceived by the Arabs and Syrians also, as a gigantic figure. The Chaldee also renders, the “violent” or “the rebel.” The Hebrew title “כסיל *Keciyl* fool,” adds the idea of an irreligious man, which is also the meaning of Nimrod, “rebel,” literally, “let us rebel.” Job, in that he speaks of “the bands of Orion Job 38:31, pictures him as “bound,” the “belt” being the “band.” This falls in with the later tradition, that Nimrod, who, as the founder of Babel, was the first rebel against God, was represented by the easterns in their grouping of the stars, as a giant chained, the same constellation which we call Orion.

And turneth the shadow of death into the morning - This is no mere alternation of night and day, no “kindling” of “each day out of night.” The “shadow of death” is strictly the darkness of death, or of the grave Job 3:5; Job 10:21-22; Job 34:22; Job 38:17; Psalm 23:4; Jeremiah 13:16. It is used of darkness intense as the darkness of the grave Job 28:3, of gloom Job 24:17, or moral benightening (Isaiah 9:2, (1Hebrew)) which seems to cast “the shadow of death” over the soul, of distress which is as the forerunner of death Job 16:16; Psalm 44:19; Psalm 107:10, Psalm 107:14; Jeremiah 2:6; Jeremiah 13:16, or of things, hidden as the grave, which God alone can bring to light Job 12:22. The word is united with darkness, physical, moral, mental, but always as intensifying it, beyond any mere darkness. Amos first sets forth the power of God, then His goodness. Out of every extremity of ill, God can, will, does, deliver. He who said, “let there be light and there was light,” at once changeth any depth of darkness into light, the death-darkness of sin into the dawn of grace, the hopeless night of ignorance into “the day-star from on high,” the night of the grave into the eternal morn of the Resurrection which knoweth no setting. But then on impenitence the contrary follows;

And maketh the day dark with night - Literally, “and darkeneth day into night.” As God withdraws “the shadow of death,” so that there should

be no trace of it left, but all is filled with His light, so, again, when His light is abused or neglected, He so withdraws it, as at times, to leave no trace or gleam of it. Conscience becomes benighted, so as to sin undoubtingly: faith is darkened, so that the soul no more even suspects the truth. Hell has no light.

That calleth for the waters of the sea - This can be no other than a memory of the flood, "when the waters prevailed over the earth Genesis 7:24. The prophet speaks of nothing partial. He speaks of "sea" and "earth," each, as a whole, standing against the other. "God calleth the waters of the sea and poureth them over the face of the earth." They seem ever threatening the land, but for Him "which hath placed the sand for the bound of the sea, that it cannot pass it" Jeremiah 5:22. Now God calls them, and "pours them over the face," that is, the whole surface. The flood, He promised, should not again be. But it is the image of that universal destruction, which shall end man's thousands of years of rebellion against God. The words then of Amos, in their simplest sense, speak of a future universal judgment of the inhabitants of the earth, like, in extent, to that former judgment, when God "brought in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" 2 Peter 2:5.

The words have been thought also to describe that daily marvel of God's Providence, how, from the salt briny sea, which could bring but barrenness, He, by the heat of the Sun, draws up the moisture, and discharges it anew in life-giving showers on the surface of the earth. God's daily care of us, in the workings of His creatures is a witness Acts 14:17 of His relation to us as our Father; it is an earnest also of our relation, and so of our accountableness, to Him.

The Lord is His name - He, the One Self-existent Unchangeable God, who revealed Himself to their forefathers, and forbade them to worship Him under any form of their own device.

Verse 9

That strengtheneth the spoiled - (Literally, "spoil" English margin) probably That "maketh devastation to smile on the strong.". The "smile," in anger, attests both the extremity of anger, and the consciousness of the ease, wherewith the offence can be punished. They were strong in their own strength; strong, as they deemed, in their "fortress"; "strong with an evil strength, like one phrensied against his physician." But their strength would be weakness. "Desolation" when God willed, would "smile at" all which

they accounted "might," and would "come against the fortress," which, as they deemed, "cut off" all approach.

Verse 10

They hate him that rebuketh - "The gate" is the well-known place of concourse, where just or, in Israel now, unjust judgment was given Deuteronomy 25:7; Job 5:4; Job 31:21; 2 Samuel 15:2; Proverbs 22:22; Isaiah 29:21, where all was done which was to be done publicly Rth 4:1 , Rth 4:11 . Samaria had a large area by its chief gate, where two kings could hold court, and the 400 false prophets and the people, in great numbers, could gather 1 Kings 22:10; 2 Chronicles 18:9, and a market could be held 2 Kings 7:1. Josiah brake down an idol-shrine, which was in one of the gates of Jerusalem 2 Kings 23:8. The prophets seized the opportunity of finding the people together, and preached to them there. So it was even in the days of Solomon. "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates, in the city she uttereth her words, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? … " Proverbs 1:20-22, and again, "She standeth in the top of high places, by the way, in the meeting of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors; Unto you, O men, I call, " Proverbs 8:2-4. Jeremiah mentions two occasions, upon which God bade him reprove the king and people in the gates of Jerusalem Jeremiah 17:19; Jeremiah 19:2. There doubtless Amos and Hosea reproved them, and, for reproving, were "hated." As Isaiah says, "they lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate" Isaiah 29:21. They sinned publicly, and therefore they were to be rebuked publicly. They sinned "in the gate" by injustice and oppression, and therefore were to be "rebuked before all, that others also might fear" 1 Timothy 5:20.

And they abhor him that speaketh uprightly - Literally, "perfectly." The prophets spoke "perfectly", "for they spoke the all-perfect word of God, of which David says, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" Psalm 19:7. "Carnal eyes hate the light of truth, which they cast aside for execrable lies, closing to themselves the fountain of the divine mercy". Rup.: "This is the sin which hath no remission; this is the sin of the strong and mighty, who sin not out of ignorance or weakness, but with impenitent heart proudly defend their sin, and ‹hate him that rebuketh arid abhor him who‘ dareth to ‹speak perfectly,‘ that is, not things which please them, but resisting their evil." This, like all other good of God and evil of man, met

most in and against Christ. Rup.: "Who is he who ‹rebuked in the gate‘ or who ‹spake perfectly?‘ David rebuked them, and spake much perfectly, and so they hated him and said, ‹what portion have we in David, or what inheritance have we in the son of Jesse?‘ 1 Kings 12:16, Him also who spake these very words, and the other prophets they hated and abhorred. But as the rest, so this too, is truly and indubitably fulfilled in Christ, rebuking justly and speaking perfectly. He Himself saith in a Psalm, ‹They that sat in the gate spake against Me‘ Psalm 69:12, wherefore, when He had said, ‹he that hateth Me hateth My Father also‘ John 15:23-25, and, ‹now they have. both seen and hated both Me and My Father,‘ He subjoined, ‹that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, they hated Me without a cause.‘ Above all then, we understand Christ, whom they hated, ‹rebuking in the gate,‘ that is, openly and in public; as He said, ‹I spake openly to the world, and in secret have I said nothing‘ John 18:20. He alone spake perfectly, ‹Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.‘ 1 Peter 2:22. In wisdom also and doctrine, He alone spake perfectly, perfectly. and so wonderfully, that ‹the officers of the chief priests and Pharisees‘ who were ‹sent to take, Him, said, Never man spake like this Man.‘ John 7:45-46.

Jerome: "it is a great sin to hate him who rebuketh, especially if he rebuke thee, not out of dislike, but out of love, if he doth it ‹between thee and him alone Matthew 18:15-17, if, taking with‘ him a brother, if afterward, in the presence of the Church, so that it may be evident that he does not blame thee out of any love of detraction, but out of zeal for thine amendment."

Verse 11

Forasmuch therefore - (Since they rejected reproof, he pronounces the sentence of God upon them,) "as your treading is upon the poor." This expresses more habitual trampling on the poor, than if he had said, "ye tread upon the poor." They were ever trampling on those who were already of low and depressed condition. "And ye take from him burdens of wheat, presents of wheat." The word always signifies presents, voluntary, or involuntary, what was carried, offered to anyone. They received "wheat" from the poor, cleansed, winnowed, and "sold the refuse Amos 8:6, requiring what it was wrong to receive, and selling what at the least it was disgraceful not to give. God had expressly forbidden to "lend food for

interest" Leviticus 25:37; Deuteronomy 23:19. It may be that, in order to evade the law, the interest was called "a present."

Ye have built house of hewn stone - The houses of Israel were, perhaps most commonly, built of brick dried in the sun only. As least, houses built of hewn stone, like most of our's, are proverbially contrasted with them, as the more solid with the more ordinary building. "The white bricks are fallen down, and we will build with hewn, stones" Isaiah 9:10. And Ezekiel is bidden to dig through the wall of his house Ezekiel 12:5, Ezekiel 12:7. Houses of stone there were, as appears from the directions as to the unhealthy accretions, called the leprosy of the house Leviticus 14:34-48. It may be, however, that their houses of "hewn stone," had a smoothed surface, like our "ashlar." Anyhow, the sin of luxury is not simply measured by the things themselves, but by their relation to ourselves and our condition also; and wrong is not estimated by the extent of the gain and loss of the two parties only, but by the injury inflicted.

These men, who built houses, luxurious for them, had wrung from the poor their living, as those do, who beat down the wages of the poor. Therefore they were not to take possession of what was their own; as Ahab, who by murder possessed himself of Naboth's vineyard, forfeited his throne and his life. God, in the law, consulted for the feeling which desires to enter into the fruit of a man's toil. When they should go to war they were to proclaim, "what man" is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it. And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard and hath not eaten of it? let him go. and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle and another man eat of it" Deuteronomy 20:5-6. Now God reversed all this, and withdrew the tender love, whereby He had provided it. The words, from their proverbial character, express a principle of God's judgments, that wrong dealing, whereby a man would secure himself or enlarge his inheritance, destroys both. Who poorer than our Lord, bared of all upon the Cross, of whom it had been written, "They persecuted the poor helpless man, that they might slay him who was vexed at the heart" Psalm 109:15, and of whom the Jews said, "Come let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours?" Matthew 21:38. They killed Him, they said, "lest the Romans take away our place and nation" John 11:48. "The vineyard was taken from them;" their "place" destroyed, their "nation" dispersed.

Verse 12

For I know - Literally, "I have known." They thought that God did not know, because He did not avenge; as the Psalmist says, "Thy judgments are far above out of his sight" Psalm 10:5. People who do not act with the thought of God, cease to know Him, and forget that He knows them. "Your manifold transgressions;" literally, "many are your transgressions and mighty your sins." Their deeds, they knew, were mighty, strong, vigorous, decided. God says, that their "sins" were so, not many and great only, but "mighty, strong", "issuing not out of ignorance and infirmity, but out of proud strength", "‹strong‘ in the oppression of the poor and in provoking God," and bringing down His wrath. So Asaph says of the prosperous; "Pride encompasseth them, as a chain; they are corrupt, they speak oppression wickedly; they speak from on high" Psalm 73:6, Psalm 73:8.

They afflict the just - Literally, "afflicters of the just," that is, such as habitually afflicted him; whose habit and quality it was to afflict him. Our version mostly renders the word "enemies." Originally, it signifies "afflicting, persecuting" enemies. Yet it is used also of the enemies of God, perhaps such as persecute Him in His people, or in His Son when in the flesh. The unjust hate the just, as is said in the book of Wisdom; "The ungodly said, Therefore let us lie in wait for the righteous, because he is not for our turn, and is clean contrary to our doings: he upbraideth us with our offending the law. He profeseth to have the knowledge of God, and he calleth himself the child of the Lord. He was made to reprove our thoughts. He is grievous unto us even to behold, for his life is not as other people‘s, his ways are of another fashion" (Wisdom Psalm 2:1, Psalm 2:12-15). So when the Truth and Righteousness came into the world, the Scribes and Pharisees hated Him because He reproved them, "denied" Acts 3:14 and crucified "the Holy one and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto" them, haters and "enemies of the Just," and preferring to Him the unjust.

That take a bribe - Literally, "a ransom." It may be that, contrary to the law, which forbade, in these same words Numbers 35:22, "to take any ransom for the life of a murderer," they took some ransom to set free rich murderers, and so, (as we have seen for many years to be the effect of unjust acquittals,) blood was shed with impunity, and was shed the more, because it was disregarded. The word, however, is used in one place

apparently of any bribe, through which a man connives at injustice 1 Samuel 12:3.

Verse 13

Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time - The "time" may be either the time of the obduracy of the wicked, or that of the common punishment. For a time may be called "evil," whether evil is done, or is suffered in it, as Jacob says, "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been" Genesis 47:9. Of the first, he would perhaps say, that the oppressed poor would, if wise, be silent, not complaining or accusing, for, injustice having the mastery, complaint would only bring on them fresh sufferings. And again also he may mean that, on account of the incorrigibleness of the people, the wise and the prophets would be silent, because the more the people were rebuked, the more impatient and worse they became. So our Lord was silent before His judges, as had been foretold of Him, for since they would not hear, His speaking would only increase their condemnation. "If I tell you, ye will not believe; and if I also ask you, ye will not answer Me, nor let Me go" Luke 22:67-68. So God said by Solomon: "He that reproveth a scorner getteth himself shame, and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot" Proverbs 9:7. And our Lord bids, "Give not that which is holy unto dogs, and cast not your pearls before swine" Matthew 7:6. They hated and rejected those who rebuked them. Matthew 7:10. Since then rebuke profited not, the prophets should hold their peace. It is a fearful judgment, when God withholds His warnings. In times of punishment also the prudent keep silence. Intense affliction is "dumb and openeth not its month," owning the hand of God. It may be too, that Amos, like Hosea Hosea 4:4, Hosea 4:17, expresses the uselessness of all reproof, in regard to the most of those whom be called to repentance, even while he continued earnestly to rebuke them.

Verse 14

Seek good and not evil - that is, and "seek not evil." Amos again takes up his warning, "seek not Bethel; seek the Lord." Now they not only "did evil," but they "sought" it diligently; they were diligent in doing it, and so, in bringing it on themselves; they sought it out and the occasions of it. People "cannot seek good without first putting away evil, as it is written, ‹cease to do evil, learn to do well‘ Isaiah 1:16-17." "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." He bids them use the same diligence in seeking good which they now used for evil. Seek it also wholly, not seeking at one while good,

at another, evil, but wholly good, and Him who is Good. "He seeketh good, who believeth in Him who saith, ‹I am the Good Shepherd' John 10:11."

That ye may live - In Him who "is the Life; and so the Lord, the God of hosts shall be with you," by His holy presence, grace and protection, "as ye have spoken." Israel looked away from the sins whereby he displeased God, and looked to his half-worship of God as entitling him to all which God had promised to full obedience.: "They gloried in the nobleness of their birth after the flesh, not in imitating the faith and lives of the patriarchs. So then, because they were descended from Abraham, they thought that God must defend them. Such were those Jews, to whom the Saveour said, "If ye were Abraham's seed, ye would do the works of Abraham" John 8:39; and His forerunner, ‹think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for our father' Matthew 3:9." They wished that God should abide with them, that they might "abide in the land" Psalm 37:3, but they cared not to abide with God.

Verse 15

Hate the evil and love the good - Man will not cease wholly to "seek evil," unless he "hate" it; nor will he "seek good," unless he "love" it. Jerome: "He ‹hateth evil,' who not only is not overcome by pleasure, but hates its deeds; and he ‹loveth good,' who, not unwillingly or of necessity or from fear, doth what is good, but because it is good." Dionysius: "Evil of sin must be hated, in and for itself; the sinner must not be hated in himself, but only the evil in him." They hated him, who reproved them; he bids them hate sin. They "set down righteousness on the ground;" he bids them, "establish," literally, "set up firmly, judgment in the gate." To undo, as far as anyone can, the effects of past sin, is among the first-fruits of repentance.

It may be that the Lord God of Hosts will be gracious - o"He speaks so, in regard of the changeableness and uncertainty, not in God, but in man. There is no question but that God is gracious to all who "hate evil and love good;" but He doth not always deliver them from temporal calamity or captivity, because it is not for their salvation. Yet had Israel "hated evil and loved good," perchance He would have delivered them from captivity, although He frequently said, they should be carried captive. For so He said to the two tribes in Jeremiah, "Amend your ways, and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place" Jeremiah 7:3. But since God knew that most of them would not repent, He saith not, "will be gracious unto Israel," but, "unto the remnant of Joseph, that is, "the remnant, according to

the election of grace" Romans 11:4-5; such as had been "the seven thousand who bowed not the knee unto Baal;" those who repented, while "the rest were hardened." He says, "Joseph," not Ephraim, in order to recall to them the deeds of their father. Jacob's blessing on Joseph descended upon Ephraim, but was forfeited by Jeroboam's "sin wherewith he made Israel to sin." Rup.: "Joseph in his deeds and sufferings was a type of Jesus Christ, in whom the remnant is saved." "A remnant," however, only, "should be saved;" so the prophet says;

Verse 16

Therefore the Lord, the God of Hosts, the Lord - For the third time in these three last verses Amos again reminds them, by whose authority he speaks, His who had revealed Himself as "I am," the self-existent God, God by nature and of nature, the Creator and Ruler and Lord of all, visible or invisible, against their false gods, or fictitious substitutes for the true God. Here, over and above those titles, "He is," that is, He alone is, the "God of Hosts, God of all things, in heaven and earth," the heavenly bodies from whose influences the idolaters hoped for good, and the unseen evil beings Isaiah 24:21, who seduced them, he adds the title, which people most shrink from, "Lord." He who so threatened, was the Same who had absolute power over His creatures, to dispose of them, as He willed. It costs people nothing to own God, as a Creator, the Cause of causes, the Orderer of all things by certain fixed laws. It satisfies certain intellects, so to own Him. What man, a sinner, shrinks from, is that the God is Lord, the absolute disposer and Master of his sinful self.

Wailing in all streets - Literally, "broad places," that is, market-places. "There," where judgments were held, where were the markets, where consequently had been all the manifold oppressions through injustice in judgments and in dealings, and the wailings of the oppressed; "wailing" should come on them.

They shall say in all-the highways - that is, "streets, alas! alas!" our, "woe, woe." It is the word so often used by our Lord; "woe unto you." This is no imagery. Truth has a more awful, sterner, reality than any imagery. The terribleness of the prophecy lies in its truth. When war pressed without on the walls of Samaria, and within was famine and pestilence, woe, woe, woe, must have echoed in every street, for in every street was death and fear of worse. Yet imagine every sound of joy or din or hum of people, or mirth of children, hushed in the streets, and woe, woe, going up from every

street of a metropolis, in one unmitigated, unchanging, ever-repeated monotony of grief. Such were the present fruits of sin. Yet what a mere shadow of the inward grief is its outward utterance!

And they shall call the farmer to mourning - To cultivate the fields would then only be to provide food for the enemy. His occupation would be gone. One universal sorrow would give one universal employment. To this, they would call those unskilled, with their deep strong voices; they would, by a public act, "proclaim wailing to those skillful in lamentation." It was, as it were, a dirge over the funeral of their country. As, at funerals, they employed minstrels, both men and women, who, by mournful anthems and the touching plaintiveness of the human voice, should stir up deeper depths of sorrow, so here, over the whole of Israel. And as at the funeral of one respected or beloved, they used exclamations of woe, "ah my brother!" and "ah sister, ah lord, ah his glory," so Jeremiah bids them, "call and make haste and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears: for a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion. How are we spoiled!" Jeremiah 9:17-19.: "In joy, men long to impart their joys to others, and exhort them to joy with them. Our Lord sanctions this, in speaking of the Good Shepherd, who called His friends and neighbors together, "rejoice with Me, for I have found the sheep which I had lost."

Nor is it anything new, that, when we have received any great benefit from God, we call even the inanimate creation to thank and praise God. So did David ofttimes and the three children. So too in sorrow. When anything adverse has befallen us, we invite even senseless things to grieve with us, as though our own tears sufficed not for so great a sorrow." The same feeling makes the rich now clothe those of their household in mourning, which made those of old hire mourners, that all might be in harmony with their grief.

Verse 17

And in all vineyards shall be wailing - All joy should be turned into sorrow. Where aforetime was the vintage-shout in thankfulness for the ingathering, and anticipating gladness to come, there, in the source of their luxury, should be wailing, the forerunner of sorrow to come. it was a vintage, not of wine, but of woe.

For I will pass through thee - In the destruction of the firstborn in Egypt, God did not "pass through" but "passed over" them, and they kept,

in memory thereof the feast of the Passover. Now God would no longer "pass over" them and their sins. He says, "I will pass through thee," as He then said, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn of the land of Egypt - and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment" Exodus 12:12. As God says by Hosea, "I will not enter the city" Hosea 11:9, that is, He would not make His presence felt, or take cognizance, when to take cognizance would be to punish, so here, contrariwise, He says, "I will pass through," taking exact and severe account, in judgment. Jerome further says, "so often as this word is used in Holy Scripture, in the person of God, it denotes punishment, that He would not abide among them, but would pass through and leave them. Surely, it is an image of this, that, when the Jews would have cast our Lord headlong from the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, "He passed through the midst of them Luke 4:30, so that they could not see Him nor know Him, "and so went His way." And this, when He had just told them, that none of the widows of Israel were fed by Elias, or the lepers cleansed by Elisha, save the widow of Sarepta, and Naaman the Syrian. So should their leprosy cleave to them, and the famine of the word of God and of the oil of the Holy Spirit abide among them, while the Gentiles were washed by His laver and fed with the bread of life."

Verse 18

Woe unto you that desire - for yourselves.

The Day of the Lord - There were "mockers in those days" 2 Peter 3:3-4; Jude 1:18, as there are now, and as there shall be in the last. And as the "scoffers in the last days" 2 Peter 3:3-4; Jude 1:18 shall say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" so these said, "let Him make speed and hasten His work, that we way see it, and let the council of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it" Isaiah 5:19. Jeremiah complained; "they say unto me, where is the word of the Lord? let it come now!" Jeremiah 17:15. And God says to Ezekiel, "Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, the days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? The vision that he seeth is for many days, and he prophesieth of the times far off" Ezekiel 12:22, Ezekiel 12:27. "They would shew their courage and strength of mind, by longing for the Day of the Lord, which the prophets foretold, in which God was to shew forth His power on the disobedient."

Lap.: “Let it come, what these prophets threaten until they are hoarse, let it come, let it come. It is ever held out to us, and never comes. We do not believe that it will come at all, or if it do come, it will not be so dreadful after all; it will go as it came.” It may be, however, that they who scoffed at Amos, cloked their unbelief under the form of desiring the good days, which God had promised by Joel afterward. Jerome: “There is not,” they would say, “so much of evil in the captivity, as there is of good in what the Lord has promised afterward.” Amos meets the hypocrisy or the scoff, by the appeal to their consciences, “to what end is it to you?” They had nothing in common with it or with God. Whatever it had of good, was not for such as them. “The Day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.” Like the pillar of the cloud between Israel and the Egyptians, which betokened God‘s presence, every day in which He shows forth His presence, is a day of light and darkness to those of different characters.

The prophets foretold both, but not to all. These scoffers either denied the Coming of that day altogether, or denied its terrors. Either way, they disbelieved God, and, disbelieving Him, would have no share in His promises. To them, the Day of the Lord would be unmixed darkness, distress, desolation, destruction, without one ray of gladness. The tempers of people, their belief or disbelief, are the same, as to the Great Day of the Lord, the Day of Judgment. It is all one, whether people deny it altogether or deny its terrors. In either case, they deny it, such as God has ordained it. The words of Amos condemn them too. “The Day of the Lord” had already become the name for every day of judgment, leading on to the Last Day. The principle of all God‘s judgments is one and the same. One and the same are the characters of those who are to be judged. In one and the same way, is each judgment looked forward to, neglected, prepared for, believed, disbelieved. In one and the same way, our Lord has taught us, will the Great Day come, as the judgments of the flood or upon Sodom, and will find people prepared or unprepared, as they were then. Words then, which describe the character of any day of Judgment, do, according to the Mind of God the Holy Spirit, describe all, and the last also. Of this too, and that chiefly, because it is the greatest, are the words spoken, “Woe unto you, who desire,” amiss or rashly or scornfully or in misbelief, “the Day of the Lord, to what end is it for you? The Day of the Lord is darkness and not light.”

Rup.: “This sounds a strange woe. It had not seemed strange, had he said, ‹Woe to you, who fear not the Day of the Lord.‘ For, ‹not to fear,‘ belongs to bad, ungodly people. But the good may desire it, so that the Apostle says, ‹I desire to depart and to be with Christ‘ Philemon 1:23. Yet even their desire is not without a sort of fear. For ‹who can say, I have made my heart clean?‘ Proverbs 20:9. Yet that is the fear, not of slaves, but of sons; ‹nor hath it torment,‘ 1 John 4:18, for it hath ‹strong consolation through hope‘ Hebrews 6:18; Romans 5:2. When then he says, ‹Woe unto you that desire the Day of the Lord,‘ he rebuketh their boldness, ‹who trust in themselves, that they are righteous‘ Luke 18:9.” “At one and the same time,” says Jerome, “the confidence of the proud is shaken off, who, in order to appear righteous before people, are accustomed to long for the Day of Judgment and to say, ‹Would that the Lord would come, would that we might be dissolved and be with Christ,‘ imitating the Pharisee, who spake in the Gospel, “God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are” Luke 18:11-12.

For the very fact, that they “desire,” and do not fear, “the Day of the Lord,” shows, that they are worthy of punishment, since no man is without sin 2 Chronicles 6:36, and the “stars are not pure in His sight” Job 25:5. And He “concluded all under sin, that he might have mercy upon all” Galatians 3:22; Romans 11:32. Since, then, no one can judge concerning the Judgment of God, and we are to “give account of every idle word” Matthew 12:36, and Job “offered sacrifices” Job 1:5 daily for his sons, lest they should have thought something perversely against the Lord, what rashness it is, to long to reign alone! 1 Corinthians 4:8. In troubles and distresses we are accustomed to say, ‹would that we might depart out of the body and be freed from the miseries of this world,‘ not knowing that, while we are in this flesh, we have place for repentance; but if we depart, we shall hear that of the prophet, “in hell who will give Thee thanks?” Psalm 6:5. That is “the sorrow of this world” 2 Corinthians 7:10, which worketh “death,” wherewith the Apostle would not have him sorrow who had sinned with his father‘s wife; the sorrow whereby the wretched Judas too perished, who, “swallowed up with overmuch sorrow” 2 Corinthians 2:7, joined murder Matthew 27:3-5 to his betrayal, a murder the worst of murders, so that where he thought to find a remedy, and that death by hanging was the end

of ills, there he found the lion and the bear, and the serpent, under which names I think that different punishments are intended, or else the devil himself, who is rightly called a lion or bear or serpent."

Verse 19

As if a man, did flee from a lion - The Day of the Lord is a day of terror on every side. Before and behind, without and within, abroad under the roof of heaven, or under the shelter of his own, everywhere is terror and death. The Syrian bear is said to have been more fierce and savage than the lion. For its fierceness and voracity Daniel 7:5, God made it, in Daniel's vision, a symbol of the empire of the Medes. From both lion and bear there might be escape by flight. When the man had "leaned his hand" trustfully "on the wall" of his own house, "and the serpent bit him," there was no escape. He had fled from death to death, from peril to destruction.

Verse 20

Shall not the Day of the Lord be darkness? - He had described that Day as a day of inevitable destruction, such its man's own conscience and guilty fears anticipate, and then appeals to their own consciences, "is it not so, as I have said?" People's consciences are truer than their intellect. However, they may employ the subtlety of their intellect to dull their conscience, they feel, in their heart of hearts, that there is a Judge, that guilt is punished, that they are guilty. The soul is a witness to its own deathlessness, its own accountableness, its own punishableness. Intellect carries the question out of itself into the region of surmising and disputings. Conscience is compelled to receive it back into its own court, and to give the sentence, which it would fain withhold. Like the god of the pagan fable, who changed himself into all sorts of forms, but when he was still held fast, gave at the last, the true answer, conscience shrinks back, twists, writhes, evades, turns away, but, in the end, it will answer truly, when it must. The prophet then, turns quick round upon the conscience, and says, "tell me, for you know."

Verse 21

I hate, I despise your feasts - Israel clave to its heart's sin, the worship of the true God, under the idol-form of the calf; else, it would fain be conscientious and scrupulous. It had its "feasts" of solemn "joy" and the "restraint" of its "solemn assemblies", which all were constrained to keep, abstaining from all servile work. They offered "whole burnt offerings," the

token of self-sacrifice, in which the sacrificer retained nothing to himself, but gave the whole freely to God. They offered also "peace offerings," as tokens of the willing thankfulness of souls at peace with God. What they offered, was the best of its kind, "fatted beasts." Hymns of praise, full-toned chorus, instrumental music! What was missing, Israel thought, to secure them the favor of God? Love and obedience. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." And so those things, whereby they hoped to propitiate God, were the object of His displeasure. "I hate, I despise, I will not accept" with good pleasure; "I will not regard," look toward, "I will not hear, will not smell." The words, "I will not smell," reminded them of that threat in the law" Leviticus 26:31, "I will make your cities waste and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savor of your sweet odors." In so many ways does God declare that He would not accept or endure, what they all the while were building upon, as grounds of their acceptance. And yet so secure were they, that the only sacrifice which they did not offer, was the sin or trespass offering. Worshiping "nature," not a holy, Personal, God, they had no sense of unholiness, for which to plead the Atoning Sacrifice to come. Truly each Day of Judgment unveils much self-deceit. How much more the Last!

Verse 23

Take thou away from Me - Literally, "from upon Me," that is, from being a burden to Me, a weight on Me. So God says by Isaiah, "your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth; they are a burden upon Me; I am weary to bear them" Isaiah 1:14. Their "songs" and hymns were but a confused, tumultuous, "noise," since they had not the harmony of love.

For - (And)

d **the melody of thy viols I will not hear -** Yet the "nebel," probably a sort of harp, was almost exclusively consecrated to the service of God, and the Psalms were God's own writing. Doubtless they sounded harmoniously in their own ears; but it reached no further. Their melody, like much Church-music, was for itself, and ended in itself.: "Let Christian chanters learn hence, not to set the whole devotion of Psalmody in a good voice, subtlety of modulation and rapid intonation, etc., quavering like birds, to tickle the ears of the curious, take them off to themselves and away from prayer, lest they hear from God, ‹I will not hear the melody of thy viols.' Let them learn that of the Apostle, ‹I will sing with the Spirit, and I will

sing with the understanding also‘ 1 Corinthians 14:15.” Augustine, in Psalm 30:1-12; Enarr. iv. (p. 203. Oxford Translation) L.: “If the Psalm prays, pray; if it sorrows, sorrow; if it is glad, rejoice; if full of hope, hope; if of fear, fear. For whatever is therein written, is our mirror.”

Augustine in Psalm 50:16, and, ‹he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination‘ Proverbs 28:9. It is not meant hereby that the wicked ought wholly to abstain from the praise of God and from prayers, but that they should be diligent to amend, and know that through such imperfect services they cannot be saved.” The prophet urges upon them the terribleness of the Day of Judgment, that they might feel and flee its terribleness, before it comes. He impresses on them the fruitlessness of their prayers, that, amending, they might so pray, that God would hear them.

Verse 24

But - (And) let judgment run down (Literally, “roll” English margin) “like water.” The duties of either table include both; since there is no true love for man without the love of God, nor any real love or duty to God without the love of man. People will exchange their sins for other sins. They will not break them off unless they be converted to God. But the first outward step in conversion, is to break off sin. He bids them then “let judgment,” which had hitherto ever been perverted in its course, “roll on like” a mighty tide of “waters,” sweeping before it all hindrances, obstructed by no power, turned aside by no bribery, but pouring on in one perpetual flow, reaching all, refreshing all, and “righteousness like a mighty (or ceaseless) stream.” The word “ethan” may signify “strong or perennial.” Whence the seventh month, just before the early rain, was called “the month Ethanim 1 Kings 8:2, that is, the month of the “perennial streams,” when they alone flowed. In the meaning “perennial,” it would stand tacitly contrasted with “streams which fail or lie.” True righteousness is not fitful, like an intermitting stream, vehement at one time, then disappearing, but continuous, unfailing.

Verse 25

Have ye offered - (better, “Did ye offer”) unto Me sacrifices and offerings? Israel justified himself to himself by his half-service. This had been his way from the first. “Their heart was not whole with God, neither

abode they in His covenant" Psalm 78:37. He thought to be accepted by God, because he did a certain homage to Him. He acknowledged God in his own way. God sets before him another instance of this half-service and what it issued in; the service of that generation which He brought out of Egypt, and which left their bones in the wilderness. The idolatry of the ten tribes was the revival of the idolatry of the wilderness. The ten tribes owned as the forefathers of their worship those first idolaters. They identified themselves with sin which they did not commit. By approving it and copying it, they made that sin their own. As the Church of God in all times is one and the same, and Hosea says of God's vision to Jacob, "there He spake with us", so that great opposite camp, the city of the devil, has a continuous existence through all time. These idolaters were "filling up the measure of" their forefathers, and in the end of those forefathers, who perished in the wilderness where they sinned, they might behold their own. As God rejected the divided service of their forefathers, so He would their's.

God does not say that they did not offer sacrifice at all, but that they did not offer unto "Him." The "unto Me" is emphatic. If God is not served wholly and alone, He is not served at all.: "He regardeth not the offering, but the will of the offerer." Some sacrifices were offered during the 38 years and a half, after God had rejected that generation, and left them to die in the wilderness. For the rebellion of Korah and his company was a claim to exercise the priesthood, as Aaron was exercising it Numbers 16:5, Numbers 16:9-10. When atonement was to be made, the "live coals" were already on the altar Numbers 16:46. These, however, were not the free-will offerings of the people, but the ordinance of God, performed by the priests. The people, in that they went after their idols, had no share in nor benefit from what was offered in their name. So Moses says, "they sacrificed to devils, not to God" Deuteronomy 32:17; and Ezekiel, "Their heart went after their idols" Ezekiel 20:16.

Those were the gods of their affections, whom they chose. God had taken them for His people, and had become their God, on the condition that they should not associate other gods with Him Exodus 20:2-5. Had they loved God who made them, they would have loved none beside Him. Since they chose other gods, these were the objects of their love. God was, at most, an object of their fear. As He said by Hosea, "their bread is for

themselves, it shall not enter into the house of the Lord" Hosea 9:4, so here He asks, and by asking denies it, "Did ye offer unto Me?" Idolatry and heresy feign a god of their own. They do not own God as He has revealed Himself; and since they own not God as He is, the god whom they worship, is not the true God, but some creature of their own imaginings, such as they conceive God to be. Anti-Trinitarianism denies to God His essential Being, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Other heresies refuse to own His awful holiness and justice; others, the depth of His love and condescension. Plainly, their god is not the one true God. So these idolaters, while they associated with God gods of cruelty and lust, and looked to them for things which God in His holiness and love refused them, did not own God, as the One Holy Creator, the Sole Disposer of all things.

Verse 26

But ye have borne - Literally, "And ye bare the tabernacle of your Moloch" (literally, "your king," from where the idol Moloch had its name.) He assigns the reason, why he had denied that they sacririced to God in the wilderness. "Did ye offer sacrifices unto Me, and ye bare?" that is, seeing that ye bare. The two were incompatible. Since they did "carry about the tabernacle of their king," they did not really worship God. He whom they chose as "their king," was their god. The "tabernacle" or "tent" was probably a little portable shrine, such as Demetrius the silversmith and those of his craft made for the little statues of their goddess Diana Acts 19:24. Such are mentioned in Egyptian idolatry. "They carry forth" we are told, "the image in a small shrine of gilt wood."

Of your Moloch and Chiun - The two clauses must be read separately, the "tabernacles of Moloch" (strictly, "of your king,") "and Chiun your images." The two clauses, "the tabernacle of your king, and Chiun your images," are altogether distinct. They correspond to one another, but they must not be read as one whole, in the sense, "the tabernacle of your king and of Chiun your images." The rendering of the last clause is uncertain. God has so "utterly abolished the idols" Isaiah 2:18, through whom Satan contested with Him the allegiance of His people, that we have no certain knowledge, what they were. There may be some connection between the god whom the Israelites in the wilderness worshiped as "their king," and him whose worship Solomon, in his decay, brought into Jerusalem, the god whom the Ammonites worshiped as "the king, Hammolech," or, as he is

once called, “Molech, and three times “Milchom” 1 Kings 11:5, 1 Kings 11:33; 2 Kings 23:13 (perhaps an abstract, as some used to speak of “the Deity”). He is mostly called “Hammolech,” the Ammonite way of pronouncing what the Hebrews called “Hammelech, the king.”

But since the name designates the god only as “the king,” it may have been given to different gods, whom the pagan worshiped as their chief god. In Jewish idolatry, it became equivalent to Baal Jeremiah 19:5; Jeremiah 32:35, “lord;” and to avert his displeasure, the Hebrews (as did the Carthaginians, a Phoenician people, down to the time of our Lord), burned their own children, “their sons and their daughters,” alive to him. Yet, even in these dreadful rites, the Carthaginian worship was more cold-blooded and artificial than that of Phoenicia. But whether “the king,” whom the Israelites worshiped in the wilderness, was the same as the Ammonite Molech or no, those dreadful sacrifices were then no part of his worship; else Amos would not have spoken of the idolatry, “as the carrying about his tabernacle” only.

He would have described it by its greatest offensiveness. “The king” was a title also of the Egyptian Deity, Osiris, who was identified with the sun, and whose worship Israel may probably have brought with them, as well as that of the calf, his symbol. Again most of the old translators have retained the Hebrew word Chiyyan, either regarding it as a proper name, or unable to translate it. Some later tradition identities it with tire planet Saturn, which under a different name, the Arabs propitiated as a malevolent being. In Ephrem‘s time, the pagan Syrians worshiped “the child-devouring Chivan”.

Israel however, did not learn the idolatry from the neighboring Arabs, since it is not the Arab name of that planet. In Egyptian, the name of Chunsu, one of the 12 gods who severally were thought to preside over the 12 months, appears in an abridged form Chuns or Chon. He was, in their mythology, held to be “the oldest son of Ammon”; “his name is said to signify, “power, might;” and he to be that ideal of might, worshiped as the Egyptian Hercules.”

Etymology M. See Sir G. Wilk. in Rawlinson, Herodotus, ii. 78. note. “The Egyptians called Hercules Chon.” L. Girald (Opp. ii. 327) from

Xenophon. Antioch. Drus. but the authority given is wrong). The name Chun extended into Phoenician and Assyrian proper names. Still Chon is not Chiyyun; and the fact that the name was retained as Chon or Chun in Phoenicia (where the worship was borrowed) as well as in Assyria, is a ground for hesitating to identify with it the word of Chiyyun, which has a certain likeness only to the abridged name. Jerome‘s Hebrew teacher on the other hand knew of no such tradition, and Jerome renders it “image. And certainly it is most natural to render it not as a name, but as a common noun. It may probably mean, “the pedestal,” the “basis of your images.” The prophet had spoken of their images, as covered over with their little “shrines, the shrines of your king.” Here he may, not improbably, speak of them, its fastened to a pedestal. Such were the gods, whom they chose for the One true God, gods, “carried about,” covered over, fixed to their place, lest they should fall.

The worship was certainly some form of star-worship, since there follows, “the star of your god.” It took place after the worship of the calf. For Stephen, after having spoken of that idolatry says, “Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets” Acts 7:42. Upon their rebellions, God at last gave them up to themselves. Stephen calls the god whom they worshiped, “Rephan,” quoting the then existing Greek translation, “having regard,” Jerome says, “to the meaning rather than the words. This is to be observed in all Holy Scripture, that Apostles and apostolic men, in citing testimonies from the Old Testament, regard, not the words, but the meaning, nor do they follow the words, step by step, provided they do not depart from the meaning.”

Of the special idolatry there is no mention in Moses, in like way as the mention of the worship of the “goat, a second symbol of the Pantheistic worship of Egypt, is contained only incidentally in the prohibition of that worship. After the final rebellion, upon which God rejected that generation, Holy Scripture takes no account of them. They had failed God; they had forfeited the distinction, for which God had created, preserved, taught them, revealed Himself to them, and had, by great miracles, rescued them from Egypt. Thenceforth, that generation was cast aside unnoticed.

Which ye made to yourselves - This was the fundamental fault, that they “made it for themselves.” Instead of the tabernacle, which God, their

king, appointed, they "bare about the tabernacle" of him whom they took for their king; and for the service which He gave, they "chose new gods" Judges 5:8 for themselves. Whereas God made them for Himself, they made for themselves gods out of their own mind. All idolatry is self will, first choosing a god, and then enslaved to it.

Verse 27

Therefore - (And) this being so, such having been their way from the beginning until now, will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus Syria was the most powerful enemy by whom God had heretofore chastened them 2 Kings 13:7. From Syria He had recently, for the time, delivered them, and had given Damascus into their hands 2 Kings 14:25, 2 Kings 14:28. That day of grace had been wasted, and they were still rebellious. Now God would bring against them a mightier enemy. Damascus, the scene of their triumph, should be their pathway to captivity. God would "cause" them "to go into captivity," not to "Damascus," from where they might have easily returned, but "beyond" it, as He did, "into the cities of the Medes." But Israel had, up to the time of Amos and beyond it, no enemy, no war, "beyond Damascus." Jehu had probably paid tribute to Shalmanubar king of Assyria, to strengthen himself. The Assyrian monarch had warred against Israel's enemies, and seemingly received some check from them (see the note above at Amos 1:3).

Against Israel he had shown no hostility. But for the conspiracy of one yet to be born in private life, one of the captains of Israel who by murder, became its sovereign, it might have continued on in its own land. The Assyrian monarchs needed tribute, not slaves; nor did they employ Israel as slaves. Exile was but a wholesale imprisonment of the nation in a large but safe prison-house. Had they been still, they were more profitable to Assyria, as tributaries in their own land. There was no temptation to remove them, when Amos prophesied. The temptation came with political intrigues which had not then commenced. The then Assyrian monarch, Shamasiva, defeated their enemies the Syrians, united with and aiding the Babylonians; "they" had then had no share in the opposition to Assyria, but lay safe in their mountain-fastness.

It has been said, "Although the kingdom of Israel had, through Jeroboam, recovercd its old borders, yet careless insolence, luxury, unrighteousness, "must" bring the destruction of the kingdom which the

prophet foretells. The prophet does but dimly forebode the superior power of Assyria." Solomon had declared the truth, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" Proverbs 14:34. But there are many sorts of decay. Decay does not involve the transportation of a people. Nay, decay would not bring it, but the contrary. A mere luxurious people rots on its own soil, and would be left to rot there. It was the little remnant of energy, political cabaling, warlike spirit, in Israel, which brought its ruin from man. Idolatry, "insolence, luxury, unrighteousness," bring down the displeasure of God, not of man. Yet Amos foretold, that God would bring the destruction through man.

They were, too, no worse than their neighbors, nor so bad; not so bad as the Assyrians themselves, except that, God having revealed Himself to them, they had more light. The sin then, the punishment the mode of punishment, belong to the divine revelation. Such sins and worse have existed in Christian nations. They were in part sins directly against God. God reserves to Himself, how and when He will punish. He has annexed no such visible laws of punishment to a nation's sins that man could, of his own wisdom or observation of God's ways, foresee it. They through whom Itc willed to inflict it, and whom Amos pointed out, were not provoked by "those" sins. There was no connection between Israel's present sins, and Assyria's future vengeance. No Eastern despot cares for the oppressions of his subjects, so that his own tribute is collected. See the whole range of Muslim rule now. As far too as we know, neither Assyria nor any other power had hitherto punished rebellious nations by transporting them; and certainly Israel had not yet rebelled, or meditated rebellion. He only who controls the rebellious wills of people, and through their self-will works out His own all-wise Will and man's punishment, could know the future of Israel and Assyria, and how through the pride of Assyria He would bring down the pride of Samaria.

It has been well said by a thoughtful observer of the world's history, "Whosoever attempts to prophesy, not being inspired, is a fool." We English know our own sins, many and grievous; we know of a vast reign of violence, murder, blasphemy, theft, uncleanness, covetousness, dishonest dealing, unrighteousness, and of the breach of every commandment of God: we know well now of an instrument in God's Hands, not far off; like the

Assyrian, but within two hours of our coast; armaments have been collected; a harbor is being formed; our own coast openly examined; iron-sheeted vessels prepared; night-signals provided; some of our own alienated population organized; with a view to our invasion. We recognize the likelihood of the invasion, fortify our coast, arm, not as a profession, but for security. Our preparations testify, how widespread is our expectation. No one scarcely doubts that it will be.

Yet who dare predict the issue? Will God permit that scourge to come? Will he prevail? What would be the extent of our sufferings or loss? How would our commerce or our Empire be impaired? Would it be dismembered? Since no man can affirm anything as to this which is close at hand, since none of us would dare to affirm in God‘s Name, in regard to any one stage of all this future, that this or that would or would not happen, then let people have at least the modesty of the magicians of Egypt, and seeing in God‘s prophets those absolute predictions of a future, such as their own wisdom, under circumstances far more favorable, could not dare to make, own; “This is the finger of God” Exodus 8:19. Not we alone. We see all Europe shaken; we see powers of all sorts, heaving to and fro; we see the Turkish power ready to dissolve, stayed up, like a dead man, only by un-Christian jealousies of Christians. Some things we may partially guess at.

But with all our means of knowing what passes everywhere, with all our knowledge of the internal impulses of nations, hearing, as we do, almost every pulse which beats in the great European system, knowing the diseases which, here and there, threaten convulsion or dissolution, no one dare stake his human wisdom on any absolute prediction, like these of the shepherd of Tekoa as to Damascus (see the note above at Amos 1:5. pp. 160,161) and Israel. To say the like in God‘s Name, unless inspired, we should know to be blasphemy. God Himself set the alternative before men. “Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled; who among them that can declare this, and show former things? Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear, and say,” It is “truth” Isaiah 43:9.

Stephen, in quoting this prophecy, substitutes, Babylon for Damascus, as indeed “the cities of the Medes” were further than Babylon. Perhaps he set

the name, in order to remind them, that as God had brought Abraham "out of the land of the Chaldeans" Acts 7:4, leaving the idols which his "fathers" had "served" Joshua 24:14, to serve God only, so they, serving idols, were carried back, from where Abraham had come, forfeiting, with the faith of Abraham, the promises made to Abraham; aliens and outcasts.

Saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts - The Lord of the heavenly hosts for whose worship they forsook God; the Lord of the hosts on earth, whose ministry He employs to punish those who rebel against Him, "For He hath many hosts to execute His judgments, the hosts of the Assyrians, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks and Romans." All creatures in heaven and in earth are, as He says of the holy Angels, "ministers of His, that do His pleasure" Psalm 103:21.

AMOS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

Woe to them that are at ease - The word always means such as are recklessly at their ease, "the careless ones," such as those whom Isaiah bids Isaiah 32:9-11, "rise up, tremble, be troubled, for many days and years shall ye be troubled." It is that luxury and ease, which sensualize the soul, and make it dull, stupid, hard-hearted. By one earnest, passing word, the prophet warns his own land, that present sinful ease ends in future woe. "Woe unto them that laugh now: for they shall mourn and weep" Luke 6:25. Rup.: "He foretells the destruction and captivity of both Judah and Israel at once; and not only that captivity at Babylon, but that whereby they are dispersed unto this day." Luxury and deepest sins of the flesh were rife in that generation (see John 8:9; Romans 2:21-24; Luke 11:39, Luke 11:42; Matthew 23:14, Matthew 23:23, Matthew 23:26), which killed Him who for our sakes became poor.

And trust in the mountain of Samaria - Not in God. Samaria was strong (see the note above at Amos 3:9), resisted for three years, and was the last city of Israel which was taken. "The king of Assyria came up throughout all the land and went up to Samaria, and besieged it 2 Kings 17:5. Benhadad, in that former siege, when God delivered them 2 Kings 7:6, attempted no assault, but famine only.

Which are named the chief of the nations - Literally, "the named of the chief of the nations," that is, those who, in Israel, which by the distinguishing favor of God were "chief of the nations," were themselves, marked, distinguished, "named." The prophet, by one word, refers them back to those first princes of the congregation, of whom Moses used that same word Numbers 1:17. They were "heads of the houses of their fathers Numbers 1:4, renowned of the congregation, heads of thousands in Israel Numbers 1:16. As, if anyone were to call the Peers, "Barons of England," he would carry us back to the days of Magna Charta, although six centuries and a half ago, so this word, occurring at that time, here only in any Scripture since Moses, carried back the thoughts of the degenerate aristocracy of Israel to the faith and zeal of their forefathers, "what" they ought to have been, and "what" they were. As Amalek of old was "first of the nations" Numbers 24:20 in its enmity against the people of God, having, first of all, shown that implacable hatred, which Ammon, Moab, Edom,

evinced afterward, so was Israel "first of nations," as by God. It became, in an evil way, "first of nations," that is, distinguished above the heat by rejecting Him.

To whom the house of Israel came, or have come - They were, like those princes of old, raised above others. Israel "came" to them for judgment; and they, regardless of duty, lived only for self-indulgence, effeminacy, and pride. Jerome renders in the same sense, "that enter pompously the house of Israel," literally, "enter for themselves," as if they were lords of it, and it was made for them.

Verse 2

Pass over to Calneh - He bids them behold, east, north, and west, survey three neighboring kingdoms, and see whether God had not, even in the gifts of this world, dealt better with Israel. Why then so requite Him? "Calneh" (which Isaiah calls "Calno" Isaiah 10:9, Ezekiel, "Canneh Ezekiel 27:23), was one of the four cities, built by Nimrod "in the land of Shinar Genesis 10:10, the beginning of his kingdom." From that time, until this of Amos, no mention of it occurs. It, probably, was more than once conquered by the Assyrians, lying, as it did, on the Tigris, some 40 miles perhaps from Babylon. Hence, it was said, under its new name Ctesiphon, to have been built, that is, rebuilt, by the Macedonians, and again by the Parthians,, whose "kings made it their winter residence on account of its good air."

It was anew destroyed by Severus, rebuilt by Sapor II in the 4th Century. Julian's generals held it impregnable, being built on a peninsula, surrounded on three sides by the Tigris. It became the scene of repeated persecutions of Christianity; Nestorianism was favored. A center of Persian luxury, it tell at once and forever before Omar, and the Persian empire perished with it. It was replaced by the neighboring Bagdad. The history illustrates the tenacity of life in those well-chosen sites, and the character of the place, of whose conquest Sennacherib boasted, with which Amos compared the land of Israel.

Go thence to Hamath the great - Originally, a Canaanite kingdom Genesis 10:18. "The entrance to" it was assigned as the northern border of Israel Numbers 34:7-8; Joshua 13:5. In David's time its king was at war with the king of Zobah 2 Samuel 8:9-10, and made presents to David on his subdual. In Solomon's time it had fallen under the power of the king of Zobah, from where it was called Hamath-zobah. Solomon won it from him, incorporated it with Israel, and built towns in its territory 2 Chronicles 8:3-

4. The "Hamathites" were, under their own king, united with Benhadad, the Hittites, and the Phoenicians in their war with Shalmanubar, and defeated by him. Ezekiel speaks of the "border of Damascus" and "the coast of Hamath" Ezekiel 47:16; Ezekiel 48:1, as of places of like importance, and Zechariah Zechariah 9:1-2, of their joint subdual by Alexander. To judge from the present site, it in some respects resembled Samaria. It lay in a narrow oval valley of the Orontes; its citadel on a round hill in the center.

The city rises up the steep sides of the hills which enclose it. Vast water-wheels, some of a diameter of 67,80,90 feet, raise the water of the Orontes to supply, by aid of aqueducts, the upper city, or to water the neighboring gardens.: "The western part of its territory is the granary of northern Syria." Even when Antiochus Epiphanes called it after himself Epiphania, its inhabitants called it after its old name. Mention occurs of it in the crusades. In the 13th century it had its own well-known prince; and has still a population of some 30,000.

Gath - (Winepress) must, from its name have been situated in a rich country. It lay on the confines of Judea and Philistia, for Rehoboam fortified it as a border-fortress 2 Chronicles 11:8. It had been contrariwise fortified by the Philistines against Judah, since, when David took it "out of the hand of the Philistines," it had the title (2 Samuel 8:1, compare 1 Chronicles 18:1) "methegammah," "bridle of the mother city," or metropolis. It had at that time "daughter towns" 1 Chronicles 18:1 dependent upon it. It must also have been near Micah's birthplace, "Moresheth Gath," that is, Moresheth of Gath, which in Jerome's time was "a small village near Eleutheropolis," (Bethgabrin). Of Gath itself Jerome says, "It is one of the five cities of Philistia, near the confines of Judea, and now too a very large village on the way from Eleuthcropolis to Gaza." Eusebius says, "about the 5th milestone from Eleutheropolis to Diospolis" (Lydda).

Since the Philistines carried the ark of God from Ashdod to Gath, and thence to Ekron 1 Samuel 5:8, 1 Samuel 5:10, it seems likely that Gath lay nearer to Ashdod than Ekron, although necessarily more inland than either, since it was a border-city to Judah. The Tel-es-Safiyeh corresponds with these conditions, lying at the entrance of the Shephelah, about 5 miles from Beit-Jibrin on the road to Lydda, (Ludd). It "rises about 100 feet above the eastern ridge which it terminates, and perhaps 200 over the plain which terminates its western base. The ruins and subterranean reservoirs shew that

it is a site of high antiquity, great strength, and importance." Gath had at this time probably been taken by Uzziah who "broke down" its "wall" 2 Chronicles 26:6; and since it is not mentioned with the other four Philistine cities, whose sentence is pronounced by Amos Amos 1:7-8 himself, Zephaniah Zephaniah 2:4, and Zechariah Zechariah 9:5, it is probable that it never recovered.

Be they better than these kingdoms? - The prophet seems purposely to say less than he might, in order that his hearers might have to supply the more. Calneh, Hamath, Gath, had not been more guilty against God than Ephraim, yet probably they had all been conquered: Gath by Judah; Hamath by Israel (see the note below at Amos 6:14) himself; Calneh by Assyria. Both Shalmanubar and Shamasiva conquered in Babylonia; and Shamasiva "declares that he took above 200 towns" in Babylonia. Amos, then, upbraids Israel for their ingratitude, both as to the original gift of their good land, and its continuance. The pagan had suffered; they, the guiltier, had been spared; yet still they acted no otherwise than these pagan.

Rib.: "What spacious, what wide border have we, boundless as the life of God and eternity!" Lap.: "Our hopes and the bounds of our bliss are measured, not like those of the worldly and ungodly, by the limits of a petty time or by this dot of earth, but by the boundless space of eternity and of heaven; so that we may say confidently to the ungodly, ‹Is not our border wider than your border? ‹"

Verse 3

Ye that put far away - Probably "with aversion." They bade that day as it were, be gone. The Hebrew idiom expresses, how they would put it off, if they could; as far as in them lay, they "assigned a distance to it,, although they could not remove the day itself. The "evil day" is that same "day of the Lord," which the scoffers or misbelievers professed to long for Amos 5:18. The thought that the Lord has a Day, in which to judge man, frets or frightens the irreligious, and they use different ways to get rid of it. The strong harden themselves against it, distort the belief in it, or disbelieve it. The weak and voluptuous shut their eyes to it, like the bird in the fable, as if what they dread would cease to be there, because they cease to see it.

And cause the seat - (literally, the session, sitting) of violence to come near They dismissed the thought of the Day of account, in order that they might sin with less fear. They put from them the judgment of God, that they

might exercise violence over His creatures. People do not put away the thought of God, except to invite His Enemy into their souls. But therewith, they "brought near" another "seat of violence," not their own, but upon them. They brought near what they wished to put away, the day, in which, through the violence of the Assyrians, God would avenge their own.

Rib.: "Let them consider this, who put no bound to their sins. For the more they obey their own will, the more they hasten to destruction; and while they think they draw near to pleasures, they draw near to everlasting woes."

Verse 4

That lie upon beds (that is, sofas) of ivory - that is, probably inlaid with ivory. The word might, in itself, express either the bed, in which they slept by night, or the divan, on which the Easterns lay at their meals; "and stretch themselves," literally, "are poured" out, stretching their listless length, dissolved, unnerved, in luxury and sloth, "upon their couches," perhaps under an awning: "and eat the lambs," probably "fatted lambs (as in Deuteronomy 32:14; Psalm 37:20; 1 Samuel 15:9; Jeremiah 51:40), out of the flock," chosen, selected out of it as the best, and "calves out of the midst of the stall;" that is, the place where they were tied up (as the word means) to be fatted. They were stall-fed, as we say, and these people had the best chosen for them.

: "He shews how they ‹draw nigh the seat of violence.' They lay on beds or couches of ivory, and expended thereon the money wherewith their poor brethren were to be fed. Go now, I say not into the houses of nobles, but into any house of any rich man, see the gilded and worked couches, curtains woven of silk and gold, and walls covered with gold, while the poor of Christ are naked, shivering, shriveled with hunger. Yet stranger is it, that while this is everywhere, scarce anywhere is there who now blames it. Now I say, for there were formerly. ‹Ye array,' Ambrose says, ‹walls with gold, men ye bare. The naked cries before your door and you neglect him; and are careful with what marbles you clothe your pavement. The poor seeketh money, and hath it not; man asketh for bread, and thy horse champeth gold. Thou delightest in costly ornaments, while others have not meal. What judgment thou heapest on thyself, thou man of wealth! Miserable, who hast power to keep so many souls from death, and hast not the will! The jewel of

thy ring could maintain in life a whole population.‘ If such things are not to be blamed now, then neither were they formerly.”

Verse 5

That chant to the voice of the lyre - Accompanying “the voice of the lyre” with the human voice; giving vocal expression and utterance to what the instrumental music spoke without words. The word, which Amos alone uses in this one place, describes probably a hurried flow of unmeaning, unconsidered words, in which the rhythm of words and music was everything, the sense, nothing; much like most glees.

The English margin “quaver” has also some foundation in the root, but does not suit the idiom so well, which expresses that the act was something done “to the voice of the lyre,” accompanying the music, not altering the music itself. In fact, they would go together. An artificial, effeminate music which should relax the soul, frittering the melody, and displacing the power and majesty of divine harmony by tricks of art, and giddy, thoughtless, heartless, soulless versifying would be meet company. Debased music is a mark of a nation‘s decay, and promotes it. The Hebrew music seems to have been very simple; and singing appears to have been reserved almost exclusively for solemn occasions, the temple-service, or the greeting of victory 1 Samuel 18:7. “Singing men and singing women” were part of the state of David and Solomon 2 Samuel 19:35; Ecclesiastes 2:8. Else the music at the feasts of the rich appears rather to be mentioned with blame Isaiah 5:12; Isaiah 24:9. Songs they had Proverbs 25:20; but the songs, for which the Hebrew exiles were celebrated, and which their Babylonian masters required them to sing, “the songs of Zion” Psalm 137:3-4, were the hymns of the temple, “the Lord‘s song.”

And invent to themselves instruments of music - The same pains, which David employed on music to the honor of God, they employed on their light, enervating unmeaningful music, and, if they were in earnest enough, justified their inventions by the example of David. Much as people have justified our degraded, sensualizing, immodest dancing, by the religious dancing of Holy Scripture! The word can mean no other than devised. David then did “devise” and “invent” instruments of music for the service of God. He introduced into the temple-service the use of the stringed instruments, the “kinnor,” (the “lyre”) and the “nebel” (the “harp”) in addition to the cymbals. Whence these, in contrast with the trumpets, are

called "the instruments of David" (2 Chronicles 29:26, compare 2 Chronicles 29:25, and 1 Chronicles 15:16, 1 Chronicles 15:19-21, 1 Chronicles 15:24). Probably, in adapting them to the temple-service, he, in some way, improved the existing instrument; having been, in early youth, remarkable for his skill upon the harp 1 Samuel 16:16, 1 Samuel 16:18, 1 Samuel 16:23. As he elevated the character and powers of the, perhaps rude, instrument which he found, and suited it to the service of God, so these people refined it doubtless, as they thought, and suited it for the service of luxury and sensuality. But what harm, they thought, in amending the music of their day, since so did David?

Verse 6

That drink wine in bowls - (Literally, as the English margin, "drink in bowls," literally, "sprinkling vessels, of wine"). The word is elsewhere used only of the "bowls," out of which the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled. Probably Amos was referring to the first offering of the Princes in the wilderness, with whom he had already tacitly contrasted these Princes. They had shown zeal for God in offering the massive bowls for the service of the tabernacle: the like zeal had these princes for the service of their own "god Philemon 3:19, their belly." It may be too, (since misbelief and sensuality are necessarily irreverent) that they used for their revels vessels which had at one time been employed in sprinkling the blood of their idol-sacrifices. There was no additional desecration in it. The gold and silver vessels of the temple were consecrated by being offered to God, by His hallowing of the temple through His presence, by being used in the typical sacrifices. The gold and silver, creatures of God, were desecrated by being employed in idol-worship, of which indeed sensuality was a part. Their employment in this luxury was only a continuance of their desecration, which it did but illustrate. It is nothing incredible, since among Christians, the fonts of the Church have been turned into horsetroughs by sects who disbelieved in Baptism. The vessels were, probably, large, since those offered for the tabernacle weighed 70 shekels. Private luxury vied with the fictitious sanctuary, which aped the sanctuary of God. Perhaps Amos would express the capacity of these vessels by saying, "that drink in bowls of wine." Like swine in the trough, they immersed themselves in their drink, "swimming in mutual swill."

All this they did, he expresses, habitually. He speaks of these their acts in a form expressing an ever-renewed present, "the putters off, the liers on

couches of ivory, the out-stretched, the eating, the drinking," men whose lives were spent in nothing else; the voluptuaries, sensualists, "good-fellows" of Israel.

Anoint themselves with the chief ointments - Anointing the body was a sort of necessary 2 Chronicles 28:15 in the hot climate of the East, for bodily health. "Not" to anoint the body was the exception, as in mourning 2 Samuel 14:2. But necessaries become a vehicle for luxury. For health, olive-oil sufficed Deuteronomy 28:40. For the service of God, a rich ointment was appointed, to which odorous substances, myrrh, cinnamon, the odoriferous reed, and cassia Exodus 30:23-25. gave a scent emblematic of the fragrance of holiness. In order to separate what was sacred from ordinary uses, God forbade, on pain of death, to imitate this ointment, or "pour it on the flesh of man" Exodus 30:32-33. Luxury vied with religion, and took to itself either the same, or ointment more costly. "They anointed themselves with the chief" (kind) "of ointments;" those which held the first, highest rank among them. Nothing better or so good was left for what they thought to be the service of God, as, in times a little past, anything was thought good enough for a Church, nothing too good for a dwelling-house. Gorgeous adornments of man's house were thought splendor and good taste and fit employment of wealth; slight adornment of the house of God was thought superstition.

But - (And)

d **they are not grieved -** (Literally, "grieve not themselves,") admit no grief, shut out all grief, "for the affliction" (literally, "breach") of "Joseph." The name of the patriarch, Ephraim's father, recalled his suffering from his brethren. His brethren cast him into a "pit without water" Genesis 37:24, probalby an empty leaking well, (much as was that into which Jeremiah Jeremiah 38:6 was cast,) damp, fetid, and full of loathsome creatures. They "saw the anguish of his soul when he besought them, and would not hear" Genesis 42:21. But what did they? "They sat down to eat bread" Genesis 37:25. So did these rich men deal with all their brethren, all Ephraim. They suffered not in, or with, any sufferings, present or future, of individuals or the whole. "Cast off thought," "cast off care," is the motto of sensualists and of the worldly; "seize joyous the present hour, and leave the future," said the pagan. This was the effect of their luxury and life of sense.

The prophet recounts, they stretched themselves listlessly, ate choice food, sang glees, drank deep, anointed themselves with the very best ointment, "and grieved" not themselves for any sufferings of their own flesh and blood. It followed, of necessity, from the rest. Luxury shuts out suffering, because any vivid knowledge of or dwelling upon sufferings must needs disturb its ease. Selfish wealth persuades itself that there is no suffering, lest it should be forced to think of it; it "will" think distress either too little, so that it can relieve itself, or so great that it cannot be relieved; or it will philosophise upon distress and misery, as though it were best relieved by its own luxuries. Any how it will not know or hear of its details, it will not admit grief. Lap.: "Mercilessness is the own daughter of pleasure." "This was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom; pride, fullness of bread, and careless ease had she and her daughters; and the hand of the poor and needy she strengthened not" Ezekiel 16:49. "Seest thou," says Chrysostom, "how he blames a delicate life? For in these words he accuses not covetousness, but prodigality only. And thou eatest to excess, Christ not even for need; thou various cakes, He not so much as dry bread; thou drinkest choice wine, but on Him thou hast not bestowed so much as a cup of cold water in His thirst. Thou art on a soft, embroidered bed; He is perishing with the cold. Be then the banquets clear from covetousness, yet they are accursed because, while thou doest all beyond thy need, to Him thou givest not even His need; and that, living in luxury on what is His!"

And yet what was this luxury, which the prophet so condemns? What, in us, were simplicity. What scarce anyone thought of diminishing, while two million, close by, were wasting away by famine's horrors; chairs or sofas inlaid, fat lamb or veal; wine; perfumes; light music. The most delicate ingredient of those perfumes, cinnamon, enters into our food. "Looking at our times," says a writer at the close of the 16th century, "I marvel at the spareness of the ancients, and think that it would be well with us, if any above the poor were content with what were, of old, delicacies to kings and nobles. Happy were these times, if they could imitate even what the prophets blame in nobles. In the Gospel, "the King" who "made a marriage feast for His Son said, I have prepared My dinner, My oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage" Matthew 22:2, Matthew 22:4.

When a “fatted calf” was killed for a feast, it was thought the best cheer, as when Abraham entertained Angels, or in that feast of the Father who, when He had received back His son, said, “bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry: for this My son was dead and is alive again” Luke 15:23-24. So then the prophet accuses the nobles of luxury, because they ate fat oxen and lambs. For the table of Solomon, the wealthiest of monarchs, there were brought “fat oxen, and oxen, out of the pastures, sheep, besides hart and roebuck and fallow deer and fatted fowls” 1 Kings 4:23. “Now” whatever is produced in sea or earth or sky, people think to be born to satisfy their appetites. Who could recount the manifold forms of food and condiments, which all-inventing gluttony has devised? Books had to be written; no memory sufficed. In this ocean, wealthiest patrimonies have discharged themselves and disappeared.

Among the Romans, Fabius, for devouring his patrimony, was called Gurges (whirlpool). Were this the practice now, he would have many great people surnamed from him, who, poor through gluttony, prey on the patrimonies of the poor, retain the property of the rich against their wills, and live on what is another‘s. It were little to consume whole patrimonies in luxury, were it not that the virtues and nerves of the mind were also consumed and vices of all sorts crept in. Shame to copy the luxury of pagan, and despise their care for maintaining temperance. We need not old examples. Such was the frugality of our Spaniards, 70 years ago, before they adopted foreign manners, that the rich had but mutton, roast and boiled, at their tables, nobles alone had poultry. Well were it then, if, in matter of food, we did only, what the prophet in his time blamed.” Spain has sunk under its luxury to a third-rate power. What can await England? What can await it, when the prophet‘s blame were praise, and Dives is the pattern and ideal of the charity of most of us, and luxury, vanity, and selfindulgence are held to be the best way of ministering to the poor? Marvelous “imitation of Christ!” Once, to “forsake all” was to “follow” Christ. Now, to possess all, heap up all, to expend nothing save on self, and to “shew mercy on the poor” by allowing them to minister to our luxuries, is, according to the new philosophy of wealth, to be the counterfeit of Christian charity.

Verse 7

Therefore now (that is, shortly) shall they go captive with the first (at the head) of those who go captive - They had sought eminence; they should have it. Jerome: "Ye who are first in riches, shall, the first, endure the yoke of captivity, as it is in Ezekiel, ‹begin from My sanctuary' Ezekiel 9:6, that is, from the destruction of the Temple which is holy. For ‹mighty men shall be mightily tormented' (Wisdom Ezekiel 6:6); and, ‹to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more' Luke 12:48."

And the banquet - Probably, "the screech." The root, רדסח *radsach* whose consonants contain most of those of our screech, signifies the loud sharp cry, which the mind cannot control, either in revelry or distress. Here it is probably, the drunken scream, or reckless cry of revelry, whose senseless shrillness is more piercing, in its way, than the scream of distress, of which Jeremiah Jeremiah 16:5 uses it. For it is the scream of the death of the soul. Amos seems to have purposely joined together similar harsh sibilants or guttural sounds in order the more to express the harshness of that scream of luxurious self-indulgence. מרזח סרוחים *mîrezach seruchîym* the screech of the outstretched." Of this he says, "it shall depart," and forever. "In that very day all his thoughts perish" Psalm 146:4. It shall "depart;" but by what should it be replaced to those to whom it was their god and their all? On earth, by siege, pestilence, death or captivity: after death, by hell to the unrepentant.

Verse 8

The Lord God - He who alone is and who alone hath power, "hath sworn by Himself," literally, "by His soul;" as our "self" comes from the same root as "soul." Jerome: "So God saith in Isaiah, "Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth" Isaiah 1:14; not that God hath a soul, but that He speaks after the way of human feelings. Nor is it any marvel that He condescends to speak of Himself, as having a soul, seeing He speaks of Himself as having the other members, feet, hands, bowels, which are less precious than the soul. In God the Father, the head, hands, and the rest are not members, but by these words a diversity of powers is expressed. So also by the soul is intended not a substance, but the inward affections, and the seat of thought whereby God indicates His Will." In truth, it is one and the same condescension in Almighty God, to use of Himself any words taken from our nature, our thoughts, acts, feelings, as those taken from the members of the body.

It is a yet greater condescension that God should confirm the truth of His word by an oath. For we call God to witness, lest, by reason of the vast reign of falsehood among people, we should be thought not to speak true. But for God to act as though He needed the assurance of an oath in order to be believed, is more condescending, than for Him to speak as though He had a soul or limbs, such as He gave to man. Yet God, "willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of His promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath. He swore by Himself saying, surely blessing I will bless thee" Hebrews 6:17, Hebrews 6:13-14. "Now," when Israel had, by apostasy, forfeited that blessing, and a portion of it was to be withdrawn from him, God, affirms by an oath that rejection of Israel. If the words, "by His soul," are emphatic, they relate to those attributes in God of which man's holy affections are an image. God's love, justice, righteousness, holiness, were concerned, to vindicate the oppressed and punish the oppressor. To these He appeals. Our oaths mean, "As God is true, and as He avenges untruth, this which I say is true." So God says, "As I am God, this is true." God then must cease to be God, if He did not hate oppression.

I abhor the excellency of Jacob - The word "excellency" is used of the Majesty of God Himself; then, since man's relation to God is his only real greatness, God speaks of Himself as "the Excellency of Jacob" Amos 8:7; then of that "excellency" which God had given to "Jacob" Psalm 47:4. That "excellency of their strength," He had forwarned them in the law, that He would break Leviticus 26:19. Now that Israel took as his own what he held from God, his "excellency" became pride, and God says, "I abhor" it, as a thing loathsome and abominable, and "hate his palaces." For they had been built, adorned, inhabited, filled with luxury, in the midst of, and out of, oppression and hard-hearted exaction. He calls them Jacob, perhaps as Hosea does Hosea 12:12, to remind them of the poverty and low estate of their forefather, out of which God had raised them, and the faithfulness of their forefather in it, in contrast with their luxury and unfaithfulness.

Therefore (And) I will deliver up - Originally, "shut up" (Leviticus 14:23; Leviticus 13:4-5, …), then, "shut up in the hands of," so that he should have no escape. Here, where the enemy is not spoken of, it may mean, that God "shut up the city," so that there should be no going out or coming in, in the straithess of the siege, whereupon follows the fearful description of the ravages of the pestilence. "The city" is, what was to them,

above others, “the” city, the place of their luxury pride and boast, where lay their strength, Samaria.

Verse 9

If there shall remain ten men - He probably still denounces the punishment of the rich inhabitants of the palaces, since in these only, of old, would there be found “ten men.” They died, it seems, at once, and so probably through the plague, the common companion. of the siege. The prophet had before compared them to Sodom. It may be, that, in this mention of “ten men,” he tacitly refers to the history of that destruction. Then God promised, not to destroy the city, if there were ten righteous in it Genesis 18:32. Here were “ten left,” not in one city, but in one house. Had God forgotten His loving-kindness? No! but, in Samaria, not even ten who “remained over,” and so had survived after the chastisement had begun, turned to God. All then were to be taken or destroyed. The miseries of its three years‘ siege by Shalmanezer may be filled up from those of its earlier siege by Benhadad 2 Kings 6:24-29, or from those of Jerusalem. The sufferings of a siege are in proportion to the obstinacy of the defense; and Samaria resisted for twice the time in which Jerusalem was reduced by famine at its first captivity.

Verse 10

And a man‘s uncle … and he that burneth him - Literally, “and there shall take him up his uncle and his burner,” that is, his uncle who, as his next of kin, had the care of his interment, was himself the burner. Burial is the natural following out of the words, “dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return.” The common burying-places (such as we find in the history of the patriarchs) were the natural expression of the belief in the Resurrection. The bodies rested together, to be raised together. The pagan burned the bodies of Christian martyrs, and scattered their ashes in mockery of the Resurrection. The pagan noticed that it was matter of piety with the Jews “to bury rather than to burn bodies.” The only exceptions are the history of Saul, and this place. Both were cases of emergency. The men of Jabesh-Gilead doubtless burned the bodies of Saul and his sons, for fear the Philistines might disinter them, if buried, and renew their insults upon them. The Israelites still buried what would not be disturbed or could be concealed - the bones. David solemnly buried their remains in the sepulchre of Kish, Saul‘s father 2 Samuel 21:12-14. So probably here also, it is mentioned as an aggravation, that one who loved them, had to burn their

bodies. He does not say, why: but mentions it, as one feature of the common suffering. Parents, brothers - all gone; a man‘s uncle was his “burner.” There was no other interment than this, the most alien from their affections and religion. It may have been on account of the extreme infection (the opening of a forgotten burying place of those who died of the plague of London produced a virulent disease, though 1 12 century had elapsed), or from the delay of burial, when, death reigning all round, there had been none to bury the dead.

He who is “by the sides,” that is, the furthest part “of the house.” He was the one survivor of the ten, and he too, sick. The question, Is there “yet” any “with thee?” inquires whether there was anyone, alive, to succor, or dead, to burn? There was none. All, even the bodies, had now been removed; one only remained, of all the hum, din, and throng, in that abode of luxury, one only “in the extremity” of its untenanted chambers. Probably the sick man was going to speak of God. The uncle breaks in upon his “No!” with “Hush! for we may not make mention of the Name of the Lord.” Times of plague are, with the most, times of religious despair. They who had not feared God in their prosperity, do nothing but fear Him then. Fear, without love, turns man more away from God. He feels then the presence and power of God whom he had forgotten. He owns Him as the Author of his miseries; but, not having known Him before, he knows Him now in no other relation.

The words then, “for not to be mentioned is the Name of the Lord,” are very probably the voice of despair. “It is useless to name Him now. We did not name His Name in life. It is not for “us” to name it now, in death.” It might be the voice of impatient aversion, which would not bear to hear of God, the Author of its woe; or it might be the voice of superstition, which would not name God‘s Name, for fear of bringing fresh evil upon itself. All these grounds for not naming the Name of God and others yet worse, recur, again and again, under the pressure of a general sudden destruction. Such times being out the soul to light, as it is. Souls, which have sinned away the grace of God and are beyond its reach, pass unobserved amid the thronging activity of ordinary life. They are arrested then. They must choose then or never. Their unchanged aversion from God, then, unveils what they had been before. They choose once more, deliberately, in the face of God‘s judgments, what they had habitually chosen before, and, by the dreadful

nakedness of their choice of evil, become now unmitigatedly evil. The prophet gives one instance of this utter misery of body and soul, because detail of misery sets the whole calamity more before people‘s eyes. In one picture, they see all. The words, or what the words imply, that, in extreme calamity, people do not mention the Name of God, come true in different minds out of different characters of irreligion.

It has also been thought, that the brief answer, “Hush!” closes the dialogue. The uncle asks, “is there yet with thee?” He answers, “None.” The other rejoins “Hush!” and the prophet assigns the ground; “for the Name of the Lord is not to be named.” If people have not sought God earlier, they have, when his hand is heavy upon them, no heart, nor time, nor thought, nor faith to seek Him.

Verse 11

The Lord commandeth and He will smite - Jerome: “If He commandeth, how doth He smite? If He smiteth, how doth He command? In that thing which He “commands” and enjoins His ministers, He Himself is seen to “smite.” In Egypt the Lord declares that He killed the first-born, who, we read, were slain by “the destroyer” Exodus 12:23. The “breaches” denote probably the larger, “the cleft” the smaller ruin. The greater pile was the more greatly destroyed.

Verse 12

The two images both represent a toil, which people would condemn as absurd, destructive, as well as fruitless. The horse‘s hoofs or his limbs would be broken; the plowing-gear would be destroyed. The prophet gains the attention by the question. What then? they ask. The answer is implied by the for, which follows. Ye are they, who are so doing. As absurd is it to seek gain from injustice and oppression, to which God had annexed loss and woe, temporal and eternal. More easy to change the course of nature or the use of things of nature, than the course of God‘s Providence or the laws of His just retribution. They had changed the sweet laws of “justice” and equity “into” the “gall” of oppression, and the healthful “fruit of righteousness,” whereof they had received the seed from God, into the life-destroying poison of sin. Better to have “plowed” the rock “with oxen” for food! For now, where they looked for prosperity, they found not barrenness, but death.

Others understand the question as the taunt of unbelievers, trusting in the strength of Samaria, that when horses should run on their rocky eminence, or the oxen plow there, then might an enemy look for gain from investing the hill of Samaria. “Shall things which are against nature be done?” “Yes,” the prophet then would answer, “for ye have done against nature yourselves. Ye, have “changed justice,” the solace of the oppressed, “into wormwood,” the bitterness of oppression. Well may what ye think above the laws of physical nature be done, when ye have violated the laws of moral nature. Well may the less thing be done, your destruction, secure as by nature ye seem, when ye have done the greater, violating the laws of the God of nature.” Amos, however, when he refers to the sayings of the unbelievers, distinguishes them from his own.

Verse 13

Who rejoice - (Literally, “the rejoicers!” Amos, as is his wont, speaks of them with contempt and wonder at their folly, “the rejoicers!” much as we say, the cowards! the renegades!) “in a thing of nought,” literally, “a non-thing,” (“no-whit, nought”) not merely in a thing valueless, but in a “non-thing,” that has no existence at all, as nothing has any substantial existence out of God. This “non-thing” was their power, strength, empire, which they thought they had, but which was soon to shrivel away as a scroll.

Which say - , (as before, “the sayers!” they who have this saying habitually in their month) have we not taken to ourselves horn? The horn is the well-known symbol of strength which repels and tosses away what opposes it, as the bull doth its assailant. Moses, in his blessing, had used this symbol, of the strength of the tribe of Joseph, and as being a blessing, he spoke of it, as the gift of God. “His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of buffalos; with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth; and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh” Deuteronomy 33:17. To this blessing, doubtless, Zedekiah the false prophet referred, when he “made him horns of iron, and said” to Ahab, “Thus saith the Lord, with these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou hast consumed them.” The Psalmist said, “through Thee will we push down our enemies,” as with a horn Psalm 44:5-7; and adds, “For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. For Thou hast saved us from our enemies.” Israel ascribed God‘s gift to himself. He had been repeatedly and greatly

victorious; he had conquered every enemy, with whom he had of old been at strife; he ascribed it to himself, and forfeited it. “By our own strength,” he said, instead of, “by the help of God;” as if we were to ascribe our Indian victories to our generals or our armies, and to substitute self-praise for Te Deums on days of thanksgiving.

Lap.: “The sinner rejoiceth in a non-thing. Sin is a ‹non-thing‘:

(1) as being a thing of nought, that is, vain and valueless.

(2) Its pleasure is fleeting; from where the Psalmist says, “all the men, whose hands are mighty, have found nothing” Psalm 76:5.

(3) Sin brings the sinner to nothing, that is, destruction and death, temporal and eternal.

(4) Sin is the privation of good; but privation is a mere negative; that is, nothing.

(5) Sin deprives of God who is All and the Creator of all.

(6) Sin is nothing, because it cleaves to and joys in creatures and opposes them and prefers them to the Creator.

For creatures, compared to the Creator, are shadows of things, not the very things, and so are nothing. For the Being and Name of God is, I am that I am, that is, I am He who alone have true, full, solid, eternal, infinite, Being; but creatures participate from Me a shadow of their true being, for their being is so poor, brief, fleeting, unstable, perishing, that, compared to Mine, they may rather be said, not to be, than to be. So then as creatures have no true being, so neither have they true good, but only a shadow of good. So also as to truth, wisdom, power, justice, holiness and other attributes. These have in God their real being; in creatures a shadow of being only. Whence God is called in Scripture alone wise Romans 16:27, alone mighty 1 Timothy 6:15, alone immortal 1 Timothy 6:16, alone Lord Isaiah 37:20, alone holy Revelation 15:4, alone good Luke 18:19; because He alone has true, full, uncreated and infinite wisdom, power, goodness, etc. But the sinner, in that he delights in creatures not in the Creator,

delights in a shadow, a nothing, not in the true Being. But, because these shadows of creatures amid the dimness of this life appear great to man in his blindness, (as the mountains, at sunset, cast broad and deep shadows,) he admires and pursues these shadows, like the dog in the fable, who, seeing the shadow of the meat in the water, magnified in the water, snatched at it, and so lost the meat and did not attain the shadow. O Lord, dispel our darkness, lighten our eyes, that we may love and seek, not the shadows of honors, riches, and pleasures, which, like meteors, (dazzle here on earth our mind‘s eye, but may with fixed gaze, behold, love, and compass the real honors, riches, pleasures themselves, which Thou hast from eternity laid up and prepared in heaven for those who love Thee."

Verse 14

But - (For,) - it was a non-thing, a nonexistent thing, a phantom, whereat they rejoiced; "for behold I raise up a nation." God is said to "raise up," when, by His Providence or His grace, He calls forth those who had not been called before, for the office for which He designs them. Thus, He raised up judges Judges 2:16-18, delivers Judges 3:9-15, prophets, Nazarites Amos 2:11, priests 1 Samuel 2:35, kings 2 Samuel 7:8, calling each separately to perform what He gave them in charge. So He is said to "raise up" even the evil ministers of His good Will, whom, in the course of His Providence, He allows to raise themselves up aloft to that eminence, so often as, in fulfilling their own bad will, they bring about, or are examples of, His righteous judgment. Thus God "raised up Hadad" as "an adversary" 1 Kings 11:14 to Solomon, and again Rezon 1 Kings 11:23; and the Chaldees Habakkuk 1:6.

So again God says to Pharaoh, "For this have I raised thee up Exodus 9:16, to show in thee My power." So here He says, "I will raise up against you a nation, and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hamath." Israel, under Jeroboam II, had recovered a wider extent of territory, than had, in her northern portion, belonged to her since the better days of Solomon. Jeroboam "recovered Damascus and Hamath" 2 Kings 14:28, 2 Kings 14:25, which belonged to "Judah, unto Israel. He restored," as God promised him by Jonah, "the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain. The entering of Hamath" expresses the utmost northern boundary promised to Israel Numbers 34:8. But this does not in itself express whether Hamath itself was included. Hamath however, and

even Damascus itself, were incorporated in the bounds of Israel. The then great scourge of Israel had become part of its strength. Southward, Ammon and even Moab, had been taken into its borders. All the country on the other side of Jordan was theirs from Hamath and Damascus to the south of the Dead Sea, a space including four degrees of Latitude, as much as from Portsmouth to Durham. Amos describes the extension of the kingdom of Israel in the self-same terms as the Book of Kings; only he names as the southern extremity, "the river of the wilderness," instead of "the sea of the wilderness." The sea of the wilderness, that is, the Dead Sea, might in itself be either its northern or its southern extremity. The word used by Amos, defines it to be the southern. For his use of the name, "river of the wilderness," implies:

(1) That it was a well-known boundary, a boundary as well-known to Israel on the south, "as the entering in of Hamath" was on the north.

(2) As a boundary-river, it must have been a river on the east of the Jordan, since Benjamin formed their boundary on the west of Jordan, and mountain passes, not rivers, separated them from it.

(3) From its name, ‹river of the wilderness, or the Arabah," it must, in some important part of its course, have flowed in the ‹Arabah.

The ‹Arabah, (it is now well known,) is no other than that deep and remarkable depression, now called the Ghor, which extends from the lake of Gennesareth to the Red Sea. The Dead Sea itself is called by Moses too "the sea of the Arabah" Deuteronomy 3:17; Deuteronomy 4:49, lying, as it does, in the middle of that depression, and dividing it into two, the valley of the Jordan above the Dead Sea, and the southern portion which extends uninterrupted from the Dead to the Red Sea; and which also (although Scripture has less occasion to speak of it) Moses calls the ‹Arabah. A river, which fell from Moab into the Dead Sea without passing through the Arabah, would not be called "a river of the Arabah," but, at the most "a river of the sea of the Arabah." Now, besides the improbability that the name, "the river of the Arabah," should have been substituted for the familiar names, the Arnon or the Jabbok, the Arnon does not flow into the Arabah at all, the Jabbok is no way connected with the Dead Sea, the

corresponding boundary in the Book of Kings. These were both boundary-rivers, the Jabbok having keen the northern limit of what Moab and Ammon lost to the Amorite; the Arnon being the northern border of Moab. But there is a third boundary-river which answers all the conditions.

Moab was bounded on the south by a river, which Isaiah calls "the brook of the willows," ערבים נחל *nachal ʿârâbîym* Isaiah 15:7, across which he foretells that they should transport for safety all which they had of value. A river, now called in its upper part the Wadi-el-Ahsa, and then the Wadi-es-Safieh, which now too "has more water than any south of the Yerka" (Jabbok), "divides the district of Kerek from that of Jebal, the ancient Gebalene" (that is, Moab from Idumaea). This river, after flowing from east to west and so forming a southern boundary to Moab, turns to the north in the Ghor or Arabah, and flows into the south extremity of the Dead Sea. This river then, answering to all the conditions, is doubtless that of which Amos spoke, and the boundary, which Jeroboam restored, included Moab also, (as in the most prosperous times of Israel,) since Moab's southern border was now his border.

Israel, then, had no enemy, west of the Euphrates. Their strength had also, of late, been increasing steadily. Jehoash had, at the promise of Elisha, thrice defeated the Syrians, and recovered cities which had been lost, probably on the west also of Jordan, in the heart of the kingdom of Israel. What Jehoash had begun, Jeroboam II, during a reign of 41 years, continued. prophets had foretold and defined the successes of both kings, and so had marked them out the more to be the gift of God. Israel ascribed it to himself; and now that the enemies, whom Israel had feared, were subdued, God says, "I will raise up an enemy, and they shall afflict thee from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of the wilderness." The whole scene of their triumphs should be one scene of affliction and woe. This was fulfilled after some 45 years, at the invasion of Tiglath-pileser.

AMOS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Introduction

The visions of this chapter Amos 7 continue the direct prophecy of the last. That closed in the prophecy of the affliction of Israel through the Assyrian: this foretells three gradations, in which it took place. That spoke of a recovery of Israel after its extreme depression under Hazael; the first of these visions exhibit it as a field shorn to the ground, shooting out anew, but threatened with a fresh destruction. The chastisements are three-fold. Two, at the intercession of Amos, stop short of utter destruction; the third was final. Each also increased in severity. Such were the three invasions of the Assyrians. Pul, invited by Menahem, amid civil war, to establish him on his throne, exacted only a heavy fine. Tiglath-pileser, called in by Ahaz against Pekah, carried off the inhabitants of the east and north of Israel; the invasion of Shalmaneser ended the empire and its idolatry.

Verse 1

And behold He formed - (that is, He was forming.) The very least things then are as much in His infinite Mind, as what we count the greatest. He has not simply made "laws of nature," as people speak, to do His work, and continue the generations of the world. He Himself was still framing them, giving them being, as our Lord saith, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" John 5:17. The same power of God is seen in creating the locust, as the universe. The creature could as little do the one as the other. But further, God was "framing" them for a special end, not of nature, but of His moral government, in the correction of man. He was "framimg the locust," that it might, at His appointed time, lay waste just those tracts which He had appointed to them. God, in this vision, opens our eyes, and lets us see Himself, framing the punishment for the deserts of the sinners, that so when hail, mildew, blight, caterpillars, or some other hitherto unknown disease, (which, because we know it not, we call by the name of the crop which it annihilates), waste our crops, we may think, not of secondary causes, but of our Judge. Lap.: "Fire and hail, snow and vapors, stormy wind, fulfill His word, Psalm 148:8, in striking sinners as He wills. To be indignant with these, were like a dog who bit the stone wherewith it was hit, instead of the man who threw it." Gregory on Job L. xxxii. c. 4. L.: "He who denies that he was stricken for his own fault, what does he but accuse the justice of Him who smiteth?"

Grasshoppers - that is, locusts. The name may very possibly be derived from their "creeping" simultaneously, in vast multitudes, from the ground, which is the more observable in these creatures, which, when the warmth of spring hatches the eggs, creep forth at once in myriads. This first meaning of their name must, however, have been obliterated by use (as mostly happens), since the word is also used by Nahum of a flying locust.

The king's mowings - must have been some regalia, to meet the state-expenses. The like custom still lingers on, here and there, among us, the "first mowth" or "first vesture," that with which the fields are first clad, belonging to one person; the pasturage afterward, or "after-grass," to others. The hay-harvest probably took place some time before the grain-harvest, and the "latter grass," "after-grass," (לקשׁ *leqesh*) probably began to spring up at the time of the "latter rain" (מלקוֹשׁ *malqôsh*). Had the grass been mourn after this rain, it would not, under the burning sun of their rainless summer, have sprung up at all. At this time, then, upon which the hope of the year depended, "in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter grass," Amos saw, in a vision, God form the locust, and "the green herb of the land" (the word includes all, that which is "for the service of man" as well as for beasts,) destroyed. Striking emblem of a state, recovering after it had been mown down, and anew overrun by a numerous enemy! Yet this need but be a passing desolation. Would they abide, or would they carry their ravages elsewhere? Amos intercedes with God, in words of that first intercession of Moses, "forgive now" Numbers 14:19. "By whom," he adds, "shall Jacob arise?" literally, "Who shall Jacob arise?" that is, who is he that he should arise, so weakened, so half-destroyed? Plainly, the destruction is more than one invasion of locusts in one year. The locusts are a symbol (as in Joel) in like way as the following visions are symbols.

Verse 3

The Lord repented for this - God is said to "repent, to have strong compassion upon" or "over" evil, which He has either inflicted Deuteronomy 32:36; 1 Chronicles 21:15, or has said that He would inflict Exodus 32:12; Joel 2:13; Jonah 3:10; Jeremiah 18:8, and which, upon repentance or prayer, He suspends or checks. Here, Amos does not intercede until after the judgment had been, in part, inflicted. He prayed, when in vision the locust "had made an end of eating the grass of the land," and when "the fire had eaten up a part." Nor, until Israel had suffered what these visions foretold, was he "small," either in his own or in human sight,

or in relation to his general condition. The "this" then, "of which God repented" and said, "it shall not be," is that further undefined evil, which His first infliction threatened. Evil and decay do not die out, but destroy. Oppression does not weary itself out, but increases. Visitations of God are tokens of His displeasure, and, in the order of His justice, rest on the sinner. Pul and Tiglath-pileser, when they came with their armies on Israel, were instruments of God's chastening. According to the ways of God's justice, or of man's ambition, the evil now begun, would have continued, but that God, at the prayer of the prophet, said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further" Job 38:11.

Verse 4

God called to contend by fire - that is, He "called" His people to maintain their cause with Him "by fire," as He says, "I will plead" in judgment "with him" (Gog) "with" (that is," by") pestilence and blood" Ezekiel 38:22; and, "by fire and by His sword will the Lord plead with all flesh" Isaiah 66:16; and, "The Lord standeth up to plead and standeth to judge the people" Isaiah 3:13. Man, by rebellion, challenges God's Omnipotence. He will have none of Him; he will find his own happiness for himself, apart from God and in defiance of Him and His laws; he plumes himself on his success, and accounts his strength or wealth or prosperity the test of the wisdom of his policy. God, sooner or later, accepts the challenge. He brings things to the issue, which man had chosen. He "enters into judgment" (Isaiah 3:14, etc.) with him. If man escapes with impunity, then he had chosen well, in rejecting God and choosing his own ways. If not, what folly and misery was his short-sighted choice; short-lived in its gain; its loss, eternal! "Fire" stands as the symbol and summary of God's most terrible judgments. It spares nothing, leaves nothing, not even the outward form of what it destroys. Here it is plainly a symbol, since it destroys "the sea" also, which shall be destroyed only by the fire of the Day of Judgment, when "the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" 2 Peter 3:10. The sea is called the "great deep," only in the most solemn language, as the history of the creation or the flood, the Psalms and poetical books. Here it is used, in order to mark the extent of the desolation represented in the vision.

And did eat up a part - Rather literally, "The portion," that is, probably the definite "portion" foreappointed by God to captivity and desolation. This probably our English Version meant by "a part." For although God

calls Himself "the Portion" of Israel Deuteronomy 32:9; Jeremiah 10:16; Zechariah 2:12, and of those who are His (Psalm 16:5; Psalm 73:26, etc; Jeremiah 10:16), and reciprocally He calls the people "the Lord's portion Jeremiah 12:10, and the land, the portion Micah 2:4 of God's people; yet the land is nowhere called absolutely "the portion," nor was the country of the ten tribes specially "the portion," given by God. Rather God exhibits in vision to the prophet, the ocean burned up, and "the portion" of Israel, upon which His judgments were first to fall. To this Amos points, as "the portion." God knew "the portion," which Tiglath-Pileser would destroy, and when he came and had carried captive the east and north of Israel, the pious in Israel would recognize the second, more desolating scourge, foretold by Amos; they would own that it was at the prayer of the prophet that it was stayed and went no further, and would await what remained.

Verse 5-6

As our Lord repeated the same words in the Garden, so Amos interceded with God with words, all but one, the same, and with the same plea, that, if God did not help, Israel was indeed helpless. Yet a second time God spared Israel. To human sight, what so strange and unexpected, as that the Assyrian and his army, having utterly destroyed the kingdom of Damascus, and carried away its people, and having devoured, like fire, more than half of Israel, rolled back like an ebb-tide, swept away to ravage other countries, and spared the capital? And who, looking at the mere outside of things, would have thought that that tide of fire was rolled back, not by anything in that day, but by the prophet's prayer some 47 years before? Man would look doubtless for motives of human policy, which led Tiglath-pileser to accept tribute from Pekah, while he killed Rezin; and while he carried off all the Syrians of Damascus, to leave half of Israel to be removed by his successor.

Humanly speaking, it was a mistake. He "scotched" his enemy only, and left him to make alliance with Egypt, his rival, who disputed with him the possession of the countries which lay between them. If we knew the details of Assyrian policy, we might know what induced him to turn aside in his conquest. There were, and always are, human motives. They do not interfere with the ground in the mind of God, who directs and controls them. Even in human contrivances, the wheels, interlacing one another, and acting one on the other, do but transmit, the one to the other, the motion and impulse which they have received from the central force. The revolution of

the earth around its own center does not interfere with, rather it is a condition of its revolving round the center of our system, and, amidst the alternations of night and day, brings each several portion within the influence of the sun around which it revolves. The affairs of human kingdoms have their own subordinate centers of human policy, yet even thereby they the more revolve in the circuit of God‘s appointment. In the history of His former people God gives us a glimpse into a hidden order of things, the secret spring and power of His wisdom, which sets in motion that intricate and complex machinery which alone we see, and in the sight of which people lose the consciousness of the unseen agency. While man strives with man, prayer, suggested by God, moves God, the Ruler of all.

Verse 7

Stood upon - (Rather “over” “a wall” made by “a plumbline;” lit. “a wall of a plumbline,” that is, (as our‘s has it) “made” straight, perpendicular, “by” it. The wall had been “made by a lead” or “plumbline;” by it, that is, according to it, it should e destroyed. God had made it upright, He had given to it an undeviating rule of right, He had watched over it, to keep it, as He made it. Now “He stood over it,” fixed in His purpose, to destroy it. He marked its inequalities. Yet this too in judgment. He destroys it by that same rule of right wherewith He had built it. By that law, that right, those providential leadings, that grace, which we have received, by the same we are judged.

Verse 8

Amos, what seest thou? - o“He calls the prophet by name, as a familiar friend, known and approved by Him, as He said to Moses, “I know thee by name” Exodus 33:12, Exodus 33:17. For “the Lord knoweth them that are His. What seest thou?” 2 Timothy 2:19. God had twice heard the prophet. Two judgments upon His people He had mitigated, not upon their repentance, but on the single intercession of the prophet. After that, He willed to be no more entreated. And so He exhibits to Amos a symbol, whose meaning He does not explain until He had pronounced their doom. “The plumbline” was used in pulling down, as well as in building up. Whence Jeremiah says, “The Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion; He hath stretched out a line; He hath not withdrawn His hand from destroying; therefore He made the rampart and wall to lament” Lamentations 2:8: and Isaiah; “He shall stretch out upon it the line of

wasteness" (as in Genesis 1:2) "and the stone of emptiness" Isaiah 34:11 (as in Genesis 1:2): and God said of Judah, "I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab" 2 Kings 21:13.

Accordingly God explains the vision, "Behold I will set," that is, shortly, (literally, "am setting") "a plumbline in the midst of My people Israel." The wall, then, is not the emblem of Samaria or of any one city. It is the strength and defense of the whole people, whatever held it together, and held out the enemy. As in the vision to Belshazzar, the word "Tekel," He "weighed," was explained, "Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting" Daniel 5:27, so God here applies the plumbline, at once to convict and to destroy upon conviction. In this Judgment, as at the Last Day, God would not condemn, without having first made clear the justice of His condemnation. He sets it "in the midst of" His "people," showing that He would make trial of all, one by one, and condemn in proportion to the guilt of each. But the day of grace being past, the sentence was to be final. "I will not pass by them," literally, "I will not pass over" (that is, their transgressions) "to them (as in Amos 8:2) anymore," that is, I will no more forgive them.

Verse 9

The high places of Isaac - He probably calls the ten tribes by the name of Isaac, as well as of Israel, in order to contrast their deeds with the blameless, gentle piety of Isaac, as well as the much-tried faithfulness of Israel. It has been thought too that he alludes to the first meaning of the name of Isaac. His name was given from the joyous laughter at the unheard-of promise of God, to give children to those past age; their high places should be a laughter, but the laughter of mockery. The "sanctuaries" were perhaps the two great idol-temples at Bethel and Dan, over against the one "sanctuary" of God at Jerusalem; the "high places" were the shrines of idolatry, especially where God had shown mercy to the patriarchs and Israel, but also all over the land. All were to be wasted, because all were idolatrous.

I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword - God speaks after the manner of people, who, having been still, arise against the object of their enmity. He makes Himself so far one with the instruments of His sentence, that, what they do, He ascribes to Himself. Jeroboam II must, from his military success, have been popular among his people. Successful

valor is doubly prized, and he had both valor and success. God had "saved Israel by" His "hand" 2 Kings 14:27. A weak successor is often borne with for the merits of his father. There were no wars from without which called for strong military energy or talent, and which might furnish an excuse for superseding a faineant king. Ephraim had no ambition of foreign glory, to gratify. Zechariah, Jeroboam's son, was a sensualist; but many sensualists have, at all times, reigned undisturbed. Shallum who murdered Zechariah was simply a "conspirator" 2 Kings 15:10; he represented no popular impulse, and was slain himself a month 2 Kings 15:13-14 after. Yet Amos foretells absolutely that the house of Jeroboam should perish by the sword, and in the next generation his name was clean put out.

Verse 10

Amaziah, the priest of Bethel - Was probably the high priest, in imitation of the high priest of the order of Aaron and of God's appointment. For the many high places around Bethel required many idol-priests; and a splendid counterfeit of the ritual at Jerusalem, which should rival it in the eyes of Israel, was part of the policy of the first Jeroboam. Amaziah was at the head of this imposture, in a position probably of wealth and dignity among his people. Like "Demetriers the silversmith" Jeremiah 37:13.

And the princes; "Let this man be put to death, for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt" Jeremiah 38:4. And of our Lord they said to Pilate, "If thou let this Man go, thou art not Caesar's friend. Whosoever maketh himself a king, is an enemy to Caesar" John 19:12. And of the Apostles; "these men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans" Acts 16:20-21; and, "these that have turned the world upside down are come hither also - and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus" Acts 17:6-7. And so the pagan, who were ever conspiring against the Roman Emperors, went on accusing the early Christians as disloyal to the Emperors, factious, impious, because they did not offer sacrifices for them to false gods, but prayed for them to the True God. Some doubtless, moved by the words of Amos, had forsaken the state-idolatry, reformed their lives, worshiped God with the prophet; perhaps they were called in contempt by his name, "Amosites" or "Judaizers," and were counted as "his" adherents, not as the worshipers of

the one true God, "the God of their fathers." Whence Amaziah gained the plea of a "conspiracy," of which Amos was the head. For a "conspiracy" cannot be of one man. The word, by its force, signifies "banded;" the idiom, that he "banded" others "together against" 1 Samuel 22:8, 1 Samuel 22:13; 1 Kings 15:27; 1 Kings 16:9, 1 Kings 16:16; 2 Kings 10:9; 2 Kings 14:19; 2 Kings 15:10, 2 Kings 15:15, 2 Kings 15:25; 2 Kings 21:23 the king. To us Amaziah attests the power of God's word by His prophet; "the land," that is, the whole people, "is not able to bear his words," being shaken through and through.

Verse 11

For thus Amos saith - Amos had said, "Thus saith the Lord;" he never fails to impress on them, whose words he is speaking. Amaziah, himself bound up in a system of falsehood and imposture, which, being a creature-worship, gave itself out as the worship of the true God, believed all besides to be fraud. Fraud always suspects fraud; the irreligious think devotion, holiness, saintliness to be hypocrisy: vice imagines virtue to be well-masked vice. The false priest, by a sort of law of corrupt nature, supposed that Amos also was false, and treats his words as the produce of his own mind.

Jeroboam shall die by the sword - Amos had not said this. The false prophet distorts the last words of Amos, which were yet in his ears, and reports to Jeroboam, as said of himself, what Amos had just said of his "house." Amos "was" opposed to the popular religion or irreligion of which Jeroboam was the head, to the headship over which he had succeeded. Jeroboam, like the Roman Emperors, was high priest, Pontifex Maximus, in order to get the popular worship under his control. The first Jeroboam had himself consecrated the calf-priests 1 Samuel 22:8, 1 Samuel 22:13; 1 Kings 15:27; 1 Kings 16:9, 1 Kings 16:16; 2 Kings 10:9; 2 Kings 14:19; 2 Kings 15:10, 2 Kings 15:15, 2 Kings 15:25; 2 Kings 21:23. Amos bore also the message from God, that the reprieve, given to the house of Jehu, would not be extended, but would end. Amaziah would act on the personal fears of the king, as though there had been some present active conspiracy against him. A lie, mixed with truth, is the most deadly form of falsehood, the truth serving to gain admittance for the lie, and color it, and seeming to require explanation, and being something to full back upon. Since thus much is certainly true, why should not the rest be so? In slander, and heresy which is

slander against God, truth is used to commend the falsehood; and falsehood, to destroy the truth. The poison is received the more fearlessly because wrapt up in truth, but loses none of its deadliness.

And Israel shall surely be led away captive - This was a suppression of truth, as the other was a falsification of it. Amaziah omits both the ground of the threat, and the hope of escape urged and impressed upon them. On the one side he omits all mention of what even such a king as Jeroboam would respect, the denunciation of oppression of the poor, injustice, violence, robbery, and all their other sins against man. On the other hand, he omits the call to repentance and promises on it, "seek ye the Lord and live." He omits too the prophet's intercession for his people, and selects the one prophecy, which could give a mere political character to the whole. Suppression of truth is a yet subtler character of falsehood. Hence, witnesses on oath are required to tell, not the truth only., but the whole truth. Yet in daily life, or in accusation of others, in detraction, or evil-speaking, people daily act, as though, suppression were no lie.

Verse 12

Jeroboam apparently took no account of the false priest's message. Perhaps the memory of the true prophecies of Elisha as to the successes of his father, and of Jonah as to his own, fulfilled in his own person and still recent, inspired him with a reverence for God's prophets. To know his motive or motives, we must know his whole character, which we do not. Amaziah, failing of his purpose, uses his name as far as he dares. "Seer, go flee thee." He probably uses the old title for a prophet, in reference to the visions which he had just related. Perhaps, he used it in irony also. "Thou who seest, as thou deemest, what others see not, "visionary! visionist!" flee thee," that is, for thy good; (he acts the patron and the counselor;) "to the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and there prophesy." Worldly people always think that those whose profession is religious make "a gain of godliness." "He is paid for it," they say. "Whose bread I eat, his song I sing." Interested people cannot conceive of one disinterested; nor the worldly, of one unworldly; nor the insincere, of one sincere. Amaziah thought then that Amos, coming out of Judah, must he speaking in the interests of Judah; perhaps, that he was in the pay of her king. Anyhow, prophecies, such as his against Israel, would be acceptable there and be well paid. The words are courteous, like so much patronizing language now, as to God or His revelation, His prophets or His Apostles, or His divine word.

The words are measured: the meaning blasphemy. Perhaps, like the Scribes and Pharisees afterward, "he feared the people" Matthew 21:26; Acts 5:26.: "Seeing that there were many among the people who beard him gladly, he dared not do him any open wrong, lest he should offend them."

Verse 13

It is the king's chapel - Better, as in the English margin, "sanctuary." It is the name for "the sanctuary" of God. "Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" Exodus 25:8. "Ye shall reverence My sanctuary: I am the Lord" Leviticus 19:30; Leviticus 26:2. It is most often spoken of as, "The sanctuary"; elsewhere, but always with emphasis, of reverence, sanctity, devotion, protection, it is called "His sanctuary; My sanctuary; Thy sanctuary; the sanctuary of the Lord of God, of his God; whence God Himself is called "a sanctuary" Isaiah 8:14; Ezekiel 11:16, as a place of refuge. In three places only, is it called the sanctuary of Israel; "her sanctuary." God, in His threat to cast them off, says, "I will bring your sanctuaries to desolation" Leviticus 26:31; Jeremiah laments, "the pagan have entered into her sanctuary" Lamentations 1:10; he says, "the place of our sanctuary is a glorious high throne from the beginning" Jeremiah 17:12, inasmuch as God was enthroned there.

In this case too it is "the sanctuary for" Israel, not a mere property of Israel. "The sanctuary of God" could not he called the sanctuary of any man. One man could not so appropriate "the sanctuary." God had ordained it for Himself. His presence had sanctified it. Heresy, in unconsciousness, lets out more truth than it means. A high priest at Jerusalem could not have said this. He knew that "the temple" was the "sanctuary" of God, and could not have called it the "king's sanctuary." The sanctuary at Bethel had no other sanction, than what it had from the king. Jeroboam I consecrated it and its priests 1 Kings 12:31-33; and from him it and they had their authority. Amaziah wished to use a popular plea to rid himself of Amos. Bethel was "the king's sanctuary and the house," not of God, but "of the kingdom," that is, "the house," which had the whole royal sanction, which with its Worship was the creature of royal authority, bound up in one with the kingdom, and belonging to it.

Or it may be, "a royal house," (not a palace, or court, for the king's palace was at Samaria, but) "a royal temple," the state-Church. So the Arians betrayed their worldliness by dating one of their Creeds from the

Roman Consuls of the year, its month and day", thereby to show all thinking people, that their faith dates, not of old but now." Their faith was of yesterday. "They are accustomed to say," says Jerome, "the Emperor communicates with us, and, if anyone resists them, immediately they calumniate. ‹Actest thou against the Emperor? Despisest thou the Emperor‘s mandate?‘ And yet we may think, that many Christian kings who have persecuted the Church of God, and essayed to establish the Arian impiety in the whole world, surpass in guilt Jeroboam king of Israel. He despised the message of a false priest, nor would he make any answer to his suggestions. But these, with their many Amaziahpriests, have slain Amos the prophet and the priest of the Lord by hunger and penury, dungeons and exile."

Verse 14

I was no prophet - The order of the words is emphatic. "No prophet I, and no prophet‘s son I, for a herdsman I, and dresser of sycamores." It may be, Amos would meet, for the people‘s sake, Amaziah‘s taunt. He had a living, simple indeed, yet that of the prophets was as simple. But chiefly he tells them of the unusual character of his mission. He did not belong to the order of the prophets, nor had he been educated in the schools of the prophets, nor had he any human training. He was thinking of nothing less; he was doing the works of his calling, until "God took him from following the flock," and gave him his commission. Rup.: "He promises humbly what he had been, what he had been made, not by merits, but by grace, that he had not assumed the prophetic office by hereditary right, nor had he begun to prophesy out of his own mind, but, being under the necessity of obeying, he had fulfilled the grace and the command of God who inspired and sent Him." Twice he repeats, "The Lord took me; the Lord said unto me;" inculcating that, what Amaziah forbade, God bade. All was of God. "He" had but obeyed. Jerome: "As then the Apostles, when the Scribes and Pharisees forbade them to teach in the Name of Jesus, answered, ‹We must obey God rather than man‘ Acts 5:29, so Amos, when forbidden by the idol-priests to prophesy, not only prophesies, shewing that he feared God bidding, more than their forbidding, but he boldly and freely denounces the punishment of him who endeavored to forbid and hinder the word of God." Rup.: "heaven thundered and commanded him to prophesy; the frog croaked in answer out of his marsh, ‹prophesy no more. ‹"

Verse 16

Amaziah then was in direct rebellion and contradiction against God. He was in an office forbidden by God. God‘s word came to him. He had his choice; and, as people do, when entangled in evil courses, he chose the more consciously amiss. He had to resign his lucrative office and to submit to God speaking to him through a shepherd, or to stand in direct opposition to God, and to confront God; and in silencing Amos, he would silence God. But, like one who would arrest the lightning, he draws it on his own head. Amos contrasts the word of Amaziah, and the word of God; Rup.: “Hear thou the word of the Lord; Thou sayest; prophesy not against Israel. Therefore thus saith the Lord.” Not only will I not cease to prophesy against Israel, but I will also prophesy to thee. Hear now thine own part of the prophecy.”

Drop not - The form of expression, (not the word) is probably taken from Moses. “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass” Deuteronomy 32:2. Micah speaks of the word as used by those who forbade to prophesy, as though the prophecy were a continual wearisome “dropping.” God‘s word comes as a gentle dew or soft rain, not beating down but refreshing; not sweeping away, like a storm, but sinking in and softening even hard ground, all but the rock; gentle, so as they can bear it. God‘s word was to people, such as they were toward it; dropping like the dew on those who received it; wearing, to those who hardened themselves against it. It drops in measure upon the hearts which it fertilizes, being adapted to their capacity to receive it. And so contrariwise as to the judgments with which God‘s prophets are charged.: “The prophets do not discharge at once the whole wrath of God, but, in their threatenings, denounce little drops of it.”

Verse 17

Thy wife shall be a harlot - These were, and still are, among the horrors of war. His own sentence comes last, when he had seen the rest, unable to hinder it. Against his and her own will, she should suffer this. Jerome: “Great is the grief, and incredible the disgrace, when the husband, in the midst of the city and in the presence of all, cannot hinder the wrong done to his wife, for the husband had rather hear that his wife had been slain, than defiled.” What he adds “thy daughters” (as well as his “sons”) “shall fall by the sword,” is an unwonted barbarity, and not part of the

Assyrian customs, who carried off women in great numbers, as wives for their soldiery.

Perhaps Amos mentions the unwonted cruelty, that the event might bring home the more to the minds of the people the prophecies which relate to themselves. When this had been fulfilled before his eyes, "Amaziah himself, who now gloried in the authority of the priesthood, was to be led into captivity, die in a land polluted by idols, yet not before be saw the people whom he had deceived, enslaved and captive." Amos closes by repeating emphatically the exact words, which Amaziah had alleged in his message to Jeroboam; "and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land." He had not said it before in these precise words. Now he says it, without reserve of their repentance, as though he would say, "Thou hast pronounced thine own sentence; thou hast hardened thyself against the word of God; thou hardenest thy people against the word of God; it remains then that it should fall on thee and thy people." Rup.: "How and when the prophecy against Amaziah was fulfilled, Scripture does not relate. He lies hid amid the mass of miseries". Scripture hath no leisure to relate all which befalls those of the viler sort "The majesty of Holy Scripture does not lower itself to linger on baser persons, whom God had rejected.

AMOS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1-2

Thus hath the Lord God showed me - The sentence of Amaziah pronounced, Amos resumes just where he left off, before Amaziah broke in upon him. His vehement interruption is like a stone cast into the deep waters. They close over it, and it leaves no trace. Amos had authenticated the third vision; "Thus hath the Lord God shewed me." He resumes in the self-same calm words. The last vision declared that the end was certain; this, that it was at hand.

A basket of summer fruit - The fruit was the latest harvest in Palestine. When it was gathered, the circle of husbandry was come to its close. The sight gives an idea of completeness. The symbol, and the word expressing it, coincide. The fruit-gathering קיץ *qayits* like our "crop," was called from "cutting." So was the word, "end," "cutting off," in (קץ *qêts*). At harvest-time there is no more to be done for that crop. Good or bad, it has reached its end, and is cut down. So the harvest of Israel was come. The whole course of God's providences, mercies, chastenings, visitations, instructions, warnings, in spirations, were completed. "What could have been done more to My vineyard, God asks Isaiah 5:4, that I have not done in it?" "To the works of sin, as of holiness, there is a beginning, progress, completion;" a "sowing of wild oats," as people speak, and a ripening in wickedness; a maturity of people's plans, as they deem; a maturity for destruction, in the sight of God. There was no more to be done. heavenly influences can but injure the ripened sinner, as dew, rain, sun, but injure the ripened fruit Israel was ripe, but for destruction.

Verse 3

The songs of the temple shall be howlings - Literally, "shall howl." It shall be, as when mirthful music is suddenly broken in upon, and, through the sudden agony of the singer, ends in a shriek or yell of misery. When sounds of joy are turned into wailing, all must be complete sorrow. They are not hushed only, but are turned into their opposite. Since Amos is speaking to, and of, Israel, "the temple" is, doubtless, here the great idol-temple at Bethel, and "the songs" were the choral music, with which they counterfeited the temple-music, as arranged by David, praising (they could not make up their minds which,) Nature or "the God of nature," but, in truth, worshiping the creature. The temple was often strongly built and on a

height, and, whether from a vague hope of help from God, (as in the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans,) or from some human trust, that the temple might be respected, or from confidence in its strength, or from all together, was the last refuge of the all-but-captive people. Their last retreat was often the scene of the last reeling strife, the battle-cry of the assailants, the shrieks of the defenseless, the groans of the wounded, the agonized cry of unyielding despair. Some such scene the prophet probably had before his mind‘s eye, for he adds;

There shall be “many dead bodies,” literally, “Many the corpse in every place.” He sees it, not as future, but before him. The whole city, now so thronged with life, “the oppressor‘s wrong, the proud man‘s contumely,” lies before him as one scene of death; every place thronged with corpses; none exempt; at home, abroad, or, which he had just spoken of, the temple; no time, no place for honorable burial. “They,” literally, “he casts forth, hush!” Each casts forth those dear to him, as “dung on the face of the earth” (Jeremiah 8:2, etc.). Grief is too strong for words. Living and dead are hushed as the grave. “Large cities are large solitudes,” for want of mutual love; in God‘s retribution, all their din and hum becomes anew a solitude.

Verse 4

Here ye this, ye that swallow - Or, better in the same sense, “that pant for the needy;” as Job says, “the hireling panteth for the evening” Job 7:2. They “panted for the poor,” as the wild beast for its prey; and “that to make the poor” or (better, as the Hebrew text,) “the meek”, those not poor only, but who, through poverty and affliction, are “poor in spirit” also, “to fail.” The land being divided among all the inhabitants, they, in order “to lay field to field” Isaiah 5:8, had to rid themselves of the poor. They did rid themselves of them by oppression of all sorts.

Verse 5

When will the new moon be gone? - They kept their festivals, though weary and impatient for their close. They kept sabbath and festival with their bodies, not with their minds. The Psalmist said, “When shall I come to appear before the presencc of God?” Psalm 42:2. These said, perhaps in their hearts only which God reads to them, “when will this service be over, that we may be our own masters again?” They loathed the rest of the sabbath, because they had, thereon, to rest from their frauds. He instances

“the new moons” and “sabbaths,” because these, recurring weekly or monthly, were a regular hindrance to their covetousness.

The “ephah” was a measure containing 72Roman pints or nearly 1 1/10 of an English bushel; the shekel was a fixed weight, by which, up to the time of the captivity 2 Samuel 18:12; 1 Kings 20:39; Jeremiah 32:9, money was still weighed; and that, for the price of bread also Isaiah 55:2. They increased the price both ways, dishonestly and in hypocrisy, paring down the quantity which they sold, and obtaining more silver by fictitious weights; and weighing in uneven balances. All such dealings had been expressly forbidden by God; and that, as the condition of their remaining in the land which God had given them. “Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thy house divers measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight; a perfect and just measure shalt thou have, that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee” Deuteronomy 25:13-15.

Sin in wrong measures, once begun is unbroken. All sin perpetuates itself. It is done again, because it has been done before. But sins of a man‘s daily occupation are continued of necessity, beyond the simple force of habit and the ever-increasing dropsy of covetousness. To interrupt sin is to risk detection. But then how countless the sins, which their poor slaves must needs commit hourly, whenever the occasion comes! And yet, although among us human law recognizes the divine law and annexes punishment to its breach, covetousness sets both at nought. When human law was enforced in a city after a time of negligence, scarcely a weight was found to be honest. Prayer went up to God on “the sabbath,” and fraud on the poor went up to God in every transaction on the other six days. We admire the denunciations of Amos, and condemn the makebelieve service of God. Amos denounces us, and we condemn ourselves. Righteous dealing in weights and measures was one of the conditions of the existence of God‘s former people. What must then be our national condition before God, when, from this one sin, so many thousand, thousand sins go up daily to plead against us to God?

sa40

Verse 6

That we may buy - Or, indignantly, “To buy the poor!” literally, “the afflicted,” those in “low” estate. First, by dishonesty and oppression they

gained their lands and goods. Then the poor were obliged to sell themselves. The slight price, for which a man was sold, showed the more contempt for "the image of God." Before, he said, "the needy" were "sold for a pair of sandals" Amos 2:6; here, that they were bought for them. It seems then the more likely that such was a real price for man.

And sell the refuse - Literally, the "falling of wheat," that is, what fell through the sieve, either the bran, or the thin, unfilled, grains which had no meal in them. This they mixed up largely with the meal, making a gain of that which they had once sifted out as worthless; or else, in a time of dearth, they sold to people what was the food of animals, and made a profit on it. Infancy and inexperience of cupidity, which adulterated its bread only with bran, or sold to the poor only what, although unnourishing, was wholesome! But then, with the multiplied hard-dealing, what manifoldness of the woe!

Verse 7

By the excellency of Jacob - that is, by Himself who was its Glory, as Samuel calls Him "the Strength" 1 Samuel 15:29 or the Glory of Israel. Amos had before said, "God sware by His Holiness" and "by Himself" or "His soul." Now, in like way, He pledges that Glory wherewith He was become the Glory of His people. He reminds them, who was the sole Source of their glory; not their calves, but Himself, their Creator; and that He would not forget their deeds. "I will not forget any," literally, "all;" as David and Paul say, "all flesh," all living men, "shall not be justified," that is, none, no one, neither the whole nor any of its parts. Amos brings before the mind all their actions, and then says of all and each, the Lord will not forget them. God must cease to be God, if He did not do what He sware to do, punish the oppressors and defrauders of the poor.

Verse 8

Shall not the land tremble for this? - o"For the greater impressiveness, he ascribes to the insensate earth sense, indignation, horror, trembling. For all creation feels the will of its Creator." "It shall rise up wholly as a flood," literally, "like the river." It is the Egyptian name for "river, which Israel brought with it out of Egypt, and is used either for the Nile, or for one of the artificial "trenches," derived from it. "And it shall be cast out and drowned," literally, "shall toss to and fro" as the sea, "and sink as the river of Egypt." The prophet represents the land as heaving like the troubled sea. As the Nile rose, and its currents met and drove one against the other,

covered and drowned the whole land like one vast sea, and then sank again, so the earth should rise, lift up itself, and heave and quake, shaking off the burden of man‘s oppressions, and sink again. It may be, he would describe the heaving, the rising and falling, of an earthquake. Perhaps, he means that as a man forgat all the moral laws of nature, so inanimate nature should be freed from its wonted laws, and shake out its inhabitants or overwhelm them by an earthquake, as in one grave.

Verse 9

I will cause the sun to go down - Darkness is heaviest and blackest in contrast with the brightest light; sorrow is saddest, when it comes upon fearless joy. God commonly, in His mercy, sends heralds of coming sorrow; very few burst suddenly on man. Now, in the meridian brightness of the day of Israel, the blackness of night should fall at once upon him. Not only was light to be displaced by darkness, but “then,” when it was most opposite to the course of nature. Not by gradual decay, but by a sudden unlooked-for crash, was Israel to perish. Pekah was a military chief; he had reigned more than seventeen years over Israel in peace, when, together with Rezin king of Damascus, he attempted to extirpate the line of David, and to set a Syrian, one “on of Tabea” Isaiah 7:6, on his throne. Ahaz was weak, with no human power to resist; his “heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest are moved with the wind” Isaiah 7:2. Tiglath-pileser came upon Pekah and carried off the tribes beyond Jordan 2 Kings 15:29. Pekah‘s sun set, and all was night with no dawn. Shortly after, Pekah himself was murdered by Hoshea 2 Kings 15:30, as he had himself murdered Pekahiah. After an anarchy of nine years, Hoshea established himself on the throne; the nine remaining years were spent in the last convulsive efforts of an expiring monarchy, subdual to Shalmaneser, rebellious alliance with So, king of Egypt, a three years‘ siege, and the lamp went out 2 Kings 17:1-9.

And I will darken the earth at noon-day - To the mourner “all nature seems to mourn.” “Not the ground only,” says Chrysostom in the troubles at Antioch, “but the very substance of the air, and the orb of the solar rays itself seems to me now in a manner to mourn and to shew a duller light. Not that the elements change their nature, but that our eyes, confused by a cloud of sorrow, cannot receive the light from it‘s rays purely, nor are they alike impressible. This is what the prophet of old said mourning, ‹Their sun shall set to them at noon, and the day shall be darkened.‘ Not that the sun was hidden, or the day disappeared, but that tile mourners could see no light

even in mid-day, for the darkness of their grief." No eclipse of the sun, in which the sun might seem to be shrouded in darkness at mid-day, has been calculated which should have suggested this image to the prophet's mind.

It had been thought, however, that there might be reference to an eclipse of the sun which took place a few years after this prophecy, namely, Feb. 9. 784, b.c. the year of the death of Jeroboam II. This eclipse did reach its height at Jerusalem a little before mid-day, at 11:24 a.m..

An accurate calculation, however, shows that, although total in southern latitudes, the line of totality was, at the longitude of Jerusalem or Samaria, about 11 degrees south Latitude, and so above 43 degrees south of Samaria, and that it did not reach the same latitude as Samaria until near the close of the eclipse, about 64 degrees west of Samaria in the easternmost part of Thibet.: "The central eclipse commenced in the southern Atlantic Ocean, passed nearly exactly over Helena, reached the continent of Africa in Lower Guinea, traversed the interior of Africa, and left it near Zanzibar, went through the Indian Ocean and entered India in the Gulf of Gambay, passed between Agra and Allahabad into Tibet and reached its end on the frontiers of China." The eclipse then would hardly have been noticeable at Samaria, certainly very far indeed from being an eclipse of such magnitude, as could in any degree correspond with the expression, "I will cause the sun to go down at noon."

Ussher suggests, if true, a different coincidence. "There was an eclipse of the sun of about 10 digits in the Julian year 3923 (791 b.c.,) June 24, in the Feast of Pentecost; another, of about 12 digits, 20 years afterward, 3943,771 b.c., Nov. 8, on the Day of the Feast of Tabernacles; and a third of more than 11 digits, on the following year 3944, May 5, on the Feast of the Passover. Consider whether that prophecy of Amos does not relate to it, "I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day, and I will turn your feasts into mourning."

Which, as the Christian fathers have adapted in an allegorical sense to the darkness at the time of our Lord's Passion in the Feast of the Passover, so it may have been fulfilled, in the letter, in these three great eclipses, which darkened the day of the three festivals in which all the males were bound to appear before the Lord. So that as, among the Greeks, Thales,

first, by astronomical science, predicted eclipses of the sun, so, among the Hebrews, Amos first seems to have foretold them by inspiration of the Holy Spirit." The eclipses, pointed out by Ussher, must have been the one total, the others very considerable. Beforehand, one should not have expected that an eclipsc of the sun, being itself a regular natural phaenomenon, and having no connection with the moral government of God, should have been the subject of the prophet's prediction.

Still it had a religious impressiveness then, above what it has now, on account of that wide-prevailing idolatry of the sun. It exhibited the object of their false worship, shorn of its light and passive. If Ussher is right as to the magnitude of those eclipses in the latitude of Jerusalem, and as to the correspondence of the days of the solar year, June 24, Nov. 8, May 5, in those years, with the days of the lunar year upon which the respective feasts fell, it would be a remarkable correspondence. Still the years are somewhat arbitrarily chosen, the second only 771 b.c., (on which the house of Jehu came to an end through the murder of the weak and sottish Zechariah,) corresponding with any marked event in the kingdom of Israel. On the other hand, it is the more likely that the words, "I will cause the sun to go down at noon," are an image of a sudden reverse, in that Micah also uses the words as an image, "the sun shall go down upon the prophets and the day shall be dark upon" (or, "over") "them" Micah 2:6.

Verse 10

I will turn your feasts into mourning - He recurs to the sentence which he had pronounced Amos 8:3, before he described the avarice and oppression which brought it down. Hosea too had foretold, "I will cause all her mirth to cease, her feast-days, etc" Hosea 2:11. So Jeremiah describes, "the joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning" Lamentations 5:15. The Book of Tobit bears witness how these sayings of Amos lived in the hearts of the captive Israelites. The word of God seems oftentimes to fail, yet it finds those who are His. "I remembered," he said, "that prophecy of Amos, your feasts shall be turned into mourning" (Joel 1:8, Joel 1:13, pp. 107,109), was wearing to the frame) "and baldness upon every head." The mourning of the Jews was no half-mourning, no painless change of one color of becoming dress for another. For the time, they were dead to the world or to enjoyment. As the clothing was coarse, uncomely,

distressing, so they laid aside every ornament, the ornament of their hair also (as English widows used, on the same principle, to cover it). They shore it off; each sex, what was the pride of their sex; the men, their beards; the women, their long hair. The strong words, "baldness, is balded Jeremiah 16:6, shear Micah 1:16; Jeremiah 7:29, hew off, enlarge thy baldness", are used to show the completeness of this expression of sorrow. None exempted themselves in the universal sorrow; "on every head" came up "baldness."

And I will make it - (probably, the whole state and condition of things, everything, as we use our "it") as the mourning of an only son As, when God delivered Israel from Egypt, "there was not," among the Egyptians: "a house where there was not one dead Exodus 12:30, and one universal cry arose from end to end of the land, so now too in apostate Israel. The whole mourning should be the one most grievous mourning of parents, over the one child in whom they themselves seemed anew to live.

And the end thereof as a bitter day - Most griefs have a rest or pause, or wear themselves out. "The end" of this should be like the beginning, nay, one concentrated grief, a whole day of bitter grief summed up in its close. It was to be no passing trouble, but one which should end in bitterness, an unending sorrow and destruction; image of the undying death in hell.

Verse 11

Not a famine for bread - He does not deny that there should be bodily famine too; but this, grievous as it is, would be less grievous than the famine of which he speaks, "the famine of the word of the Lord." In distress we all go to God. Rib.: "They who now cast out and despise the prophets, when they shall see themselves besieged by the enemy, shall be tormented with a great hunger of hearing the word of the Lord from the mouths of the prophets, and shall find no one to lighten their distresses. This was most sad to the people of God; ‹we see not our tokens; there is not one prophet more; there is not one with us who understandeth, how long!' Psalm 74:9." Even the profane, when they see no help, will have recourse to God. Saul, in his extremity, "inquired of the Lord and He answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" 1 Samuel 28:6. Jeroboam sent his wife to inquire of the prophet Ahijah about his son's health 1 Kings 14:2-3. They sought for temporal relief only, and therefore found it not.

Verse 12

They shall wander - Literally, "reel." The word is used of the reeling of drunkards, of the swaying to and fro of trees in the wind, of the quivering of

the lips of one agitated, and then of the unsteady seeking of persons bewildered, looking for what they know not where to find. “From sea to sea,” from the sea of Galilee to the Mediterranean, that is, from east to west, “and from the north even to the sunrising,” round again to the east, from where their search had begun, where light should be, and was not. It may be, that Amos refers to the description of the land by Moses, adapting it to the then separate condition of Ephraim, “your south border shall be from the extremity of the Salt Sea (Dead Sea) eastward - and the goings out of it shall be at the sea, and for the western border ye shall have the great sea for a border. And this shall be your north border - and the border shall descend and shall reach to the side of the sea of Chinnereth eastward” Numbers 34:3-12. Amos does not mention “the south,” because “there” alone, where they might have found, where the true worship of God was, they did not seek. Had they sought God in Judah, instead of seeking to aggrandize themselves by its subdual, Tiglath-pileser would probably never have come against them. One expedition only in the seventeen years of his reign was directed westward, and that was at the petition of Ahaz.

The principle of God‘s dealings, that, in certain conditions of a sinful people, He will withdraw His word, is instanced in Israel, not limited to it. God says to Ezekiel, “I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, and thou shalt be dumb; and shalt not be to them a reprover, for it is a rebellious house” Ezekiel 3:26; and Ezekiel says, “Destruction shall come upon destruction, and rumor shall be upon rumor, and they shall seek a vision from the prophet, and the law shall perish from the priest and counsel from the ancients” Ezekiel 7:26.: “God turns away from them, and checks the grace of prophecy. For since they neglected His law, He on His side, stays the prophetic gift. “And the word was precious in those days, there was no open vision,” that is, God did not speak to them through the prophets; He breathed not upon them the Spirit through which they spake. He did not appear to them, but is silent and hidden. There was silence, enmity between God and man.”

Verse 13

In this hopelessness as to all relief, those too shall fail and sink under their sufferings, in whom life is freshest and strongest and hope most buoyant. Hope mitigates any sufferings. When hope is gone, the powers of life, which it sustains, give way. “They shall faint for thirst,” literally, “shall

be mantled over, covered", as, in fact, one fainting seems to feel as if a veil came over his brow and eyes. "Thirst," as it is an intenser suffering than bodily hunger, includes sufferings of body and mind. If even over those, whose life was firmest, a veil came, and they fainted for thirst, what of the rest?

Verse 14

Who swear - Literally, "the swearing," they who habitually swear. He assigns, at the end, the ground of all this misery, the forsaking of God. God had commanded that all appeals by oath should be made to Himself, who alone governs the world, to whom alone His creatures owe obedience, who alone revenges. "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God and serve Him and swear by His Name" Deuteronomy 6:13; Deuteronomy 10:20. On the other hand Joshua warned them, "Neither make mention of the name of their gods nor cause to swear by them nor serve them" Joshua 23:7. But these "sware by the sin of Samaria," probably "the calf at Bethel," which was near Samaria and the center of their idolatry, from where Hosea calls it "thy calf." "Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off. The calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces" Hosea 8:5-6. He calls it "the guilt of Samaria," as the source of all their guilt, as it is said of the princes of Judah using this same word, "they left the house of the Lord God of their fathers, and served idols, and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass" 2 Chronicles 24:18. "And say, thy god, O Dan! liveth," that is, as surely as thy god liveth! by the life of thy god! as they who worshiped God said, "as the Lord liveth!" It was a direct substitution of the creature for the Creator, an ascribing to it the attribute of God; "as the Father hath life in Himself" John 5:26. It was an appeal to it, as the Avenger of false-swearing, as though it were the moral Governor of the world.

The manner of Beersheba liveth! - Literally, "the way." This may be, either the religion and worship of the idol there, as Paul says, "I persecuted this way unto the death" (Acts 22:4, add Acts 9:2; Acts 19:9, Acts 19:23), from where Muhammed learned to speak of his imposture, as "the way of God." Or it might mean the actual "way to Beersheba," and may signify all the idolatrous places of worship in the way there. They seem to have made the way there one long avenue of idols, culminating in it. For Josiah, in his great destruction of idolatry, "gathered all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places, where the priests sacrificed from Gebah to Beersheba" 2 Kings 23:8; only, this may perhaps simply describe the

whole territory of Judah from north to south. Anyhow, Beersheba stands for the god worshiped there, as, “whoso sware by the Temple, sware,” our Lord tells us, “by it and by Him that dwelleth therein” Matthew 23:21.

AMOS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

I saw the Lord - He saw God in vision; yet God no more, as before, asked him what he saw. God no longer shows him emblems of the destruction, but the destruction itself. Since Amos had just been speaking of the idolatry of Samaria, as the ground of its utter destruction, doubtless this vision of such utter destruction of the place of worship, with and upon the worshipers, relates to those same idolaters and idoltries. True, the condenmation of Israel would become the condemnation of Judah, when Judah‘s sins, like Israel‘s, should become complete. But directly, it can hardly relate to any other than those spoken of before and after, Israel. “The altar,” then, “over” which Amos sees God “stand,” is doubtless the altar on which Jeroboam sacrificed, “the altar” which he set up over-against the altar at Jerusalem, the center of the calf-worship, whose destruction the man of God foretold on the day of its dedication.

There where, in counterfeit of the sacrifices which God had appointed, they offered would-be-atoning sacrifices and sinned in them, God appeared, standing, to behold, to judge, to condemn. “And He said, smite the lintel,” literally, “the chapter,” or “capital,” probably so called from “crowning” the pillar with a globular form, like a pomegranate. This, the spurious outward imitation of the true sanctuary, God commands to be stricken, “that the posts,” or probably “the thresholds, may shake.” The building was struck from above, and reeled to its base. It does not matter, whether any blow on the capital of a pillar would make the whole fabric to shake. For the blow was no blow of man. God gives the command probably to the Angel of the Lord, as, in Ezekiel‘s vision of the destruction of Jerusalem, the charge to destroy was given to six men Ezekiel 9:2. So the first-born of Egypt, the army of Sennacherib, were destroyed by an Angel Exodus 12:23; 2 Kings 19:34-35. An Angel stood with his sword over Jerusalem 2 Samuel 24:1, 2 Samuel 24:15-16, when God punished David‘s presumption in numbering the people. At one blow of the heavenly Agent the whole building shook, staggered, fell.

And cut them in the head, all of them - oThis may be either by the direct agency of the Angel, or the temple itself may be represented as falling on the heads of the worshipers. As God, through Jehu, destroyed all the worshipers of Baal in the house of Baal, so here He foretells, under a

like image, the destruction of all the idolaters of Israel. He had said, "they that swear by the sin of Samaria - shall fall and never rise up again." Here he represents the place of that worship the idolaters, as it seems, crowded there, and the command given to destroy them all. All Israel was not to be destroyed. "Not the least grain" was to "fall upon the earth Amos 9:9. Those then here represented as destroyed to the last man, must be a distinct class. Those destroyed in the temple must be the worshipers in the temple. In the Temple of God at Jerusalem, none entered except the priests. Even the space "between the porch and the altar" was set apart for the priests. But heresy is necessarily irreverent, because, not worshiping the One God, it had no Object of reverence. Hence, the temple of Baal was full "from end to end 2 Kings 10:21, and the worshipers of the sun at Jerusalem turned "their backs toward the Temple," and "worshiped the sun toward the east, at the door of the Temple, between the porch and the altar" Ezekiel 8:16; Ezekiel 11:1. The worshipers of the calves were commanded to "kiss" Hosea 13:2 them, and so must have filled the temple, where they were.

And I will slay the last of them - The Angel is bidden to destroy those gatered in open idolatry in one place. God, by His Omniscience, reserved the rest for His own judgment. All creatures, animate or inanimate, rational or irrational, stand at His command to fulfill His will. The mass of idolaters having perished in their idolatry, the rest, not crushed in the fall of the temple, would fain flee away, but "he that fleeth shall not flee," God says, to any good "to themselves;" yea, although they should do what for man is impossible, they should not escape God.

Verse 2

Height or depth are alike open to the Omnipresent God. The grave is not so awful as God. The sinner would gladly "dig through" into hell, bury himself, the living among the dead, if so he could escape the sight of God. But thence, God says, "My hand shall take them," to place them in His presence, to receive their sentence. Or if, like the rebel angels, they could "place" their "throne amid the stars Isaiah 14:12-14 of God thence will I bring them down," humbling, judging, condemning.

Verse 3

He had contrasted heaven and hell, as places impossible for man to reach; as I David says, "If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there: If l make my bed in hell, behold Thee" Psalm 139:8. Now, of places in a manner accessible, he contrasts Mount Carmel, which rises abruptly out of the sea,

with depths of that ocean which it overhangs. Carmel was in two ways a hiding place.

1) Through its caves (some say 1,000, some 2,000) with which it is perforated, whose entrance sometimes scarcely admits a single man; so close to each other, that a pursuer would not discern into which the fugitive had vanished; so serpentine within, that, "10 steps apart," says a traveler, "we could hear each others' voices, but could not see each other.": "Carmel is perforated by a hundredfold greater or lesser clefts. Even in the garb of loveliness and richness, the majestic Mount, by its clefts, caves, and rocky battlements, excites in the wanderer who sees them for the first time, a feeling of mingled wonder and fear. A whole army of enemies, as of nature's terrors, could hide themselves in these rock-clefts."

2) Its summit, about 1800 feet above the sea, "is covered with pines and oaks, and lower down with olive and laurel trees". These forests furnished hiding places to robberhordes at the time of our Lord. In those caves, Elijah probably at times was hidden from the persecution of Ahab and Jezebel. It seems to be spoken of as his abode 1 Kings 18:19, as also one resort of Elishas 2 Kings 2:25; 2 Kings 4:25. Carmel, as the western extremity of the land, projecting into the sea, was the last place which a fugitive would reach. If he found no safety there, there was none in his whole land. Nor was there by sea;

And though they be hid - (rather, "hide themselves") from My sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent The sea too has its deadly serpents. Their classes are few; the individuals in those classes are much more numerous than those of the land-serpents. Their shoals have furnished to sailors tokens of approaching land. Their chief abode, as traced in modern times, is between the Tropics.

The ancients knew of them perhaps in the Persian gulf or perhaps the Red Sea. All are "highly venomous" and "very ferocious.": "The virulence of their venom is equal to that of the "most" pernicious land-serpents." All things, with their will or without it through animal instinct, as the serpent, or their savage passions, as the Assyrian, fulfill the will of God. As, at His command, the fish whom He had prepared, swallowed Jonah, for his preservation, so, at His "command, the serpent" should come forth from the recesses of the sea to the sinner's greater suffering.

Verse 4

Captivity - , at least, seemed safe. The horrors of war are over. Men enslave, but do not commonly destroy those whom they have once been at the pains to carry captive. Amos describes them in their misery, as "going" willingly, gladly, "into captivity before their enemies," like a flock of sheep. Yet "thence" too, out of "the captivity," God would command the sword, and it should slay them. So God had forewarned them by Moses, that captivity should be an occasion, not an end, of slaughter. "I will scatter you among the pagan, and will draw out a sword after you" Leviticus 26:33. "And among these nations shalt thou find no ease - and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life" Deuteronomy 28:65-66. The book of Esther shows how cheaply the life of a whole nation was held by Eastern conquerors; and the book of Tobit records, how habitually Jews were slain and cast out unburied (Psalm 34:15-16. The Eye of God rests on each creature which He hath made, as entirely as if He had created it alone. Every moment is passed in His unvarying sight. But, as man "sets his eye" on man, watching him and with purpose of evil, so God's Eye is felt to be on man in displeasure, when sorrow and calamity track him and overtake him, coming he knows not how in unlooked-for ways and strange events. The Eye of God upon us is our whole hope and stay and life. It is on the Confessor in prison, the Martyr on the rack, the poor in their sufferings, the mourner in the chamber of death, for good. What when everywhere that Eye, the Source of all good, rests on His creature only for evil! "and not for good," he adds; "not," as is the wont and the Nature of God; "not," as He had promised, if they were faithful; "not," as perhaps they thought, "for good." He utterly shuts out all hope of good. It shall be all evil, and no good, such as is hell.

Verse 5

And who is He who should do this? God, at whose command are all creatures. This is the hope of His servants; from where Hezekiah begins his prayer, "Lord of hosts, God of Israel" Isaiah 37:16. This is the hopelessness of His enemies. "That toucheth the land" or "earth, and it shall melt," rather, "hath melted." His Will and its fulfillment are one. "He spake, and it was; He commanded and it stood fast" Psalm 33:9. His Will is first, as the cause of what is done; in time they co-exist. He hath no need to put forth His strength; a touch, the slightest indication of His Will, sufficeth. If the solid earth, how much more its inhabitants! So the Psalmist says, "The pagan

raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted" Psalm 46:6. The hearts of men melt when they are afraid of His presence; human armies melt away, dispersed; the great globe itself shall dissolve into its ancient chaos at His Will.

Verse 6

He that buildeth His stories - The word commonly means "steps," nor is there any reason to alter it. We read of "the third heavens 2 Corinthians 12:2, the heavens of heavens Deuteronomy 10:14; 1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 148:4; that is, heavens to which this heaven is as earth. They are different ways of expressing the vast unseen space which God has created, divided, as we know, through the distance of the fixed stars, into countless portions, of which the lower, or further removed, are but as "steps" to the presence of the Great King, where, "above all heavens" Ephesians 4:10, Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of God. It comes to the same, if we suppose the word to mean "upper chambers." The metaphor would still signify heavens above our heavens.

And hath founded His troop - (literally, band in the earth Probably, "founded His arch upon the earth," that is, His visible heaven, which seems, like an arch, to span the earth. The whole then describes" all things visible and invisible;" all of this our solar system, and all beyond it, the many gradations to the Throne of God.: "He daily "buildeth His stories in the heavens," when He raiseth up His saints from things below to heavenly places, presiding over them, ascending in them. In devout wayfarers too, whose "conversation is in heaven Philemon 3:20, He ascendeth, sublimely and mercifully indwelling their hearts. In those who have the fruition of Himself in those heavens, He ascendeth by the glory of beatitude and the loftiest contemplation, as He walketh in those who walk, and resteth in those who rest in Him."

To this description of His power, Amos, as before Amos 5:8, adds that signal instance of its exercise on the ungodly, the flood, the pattern and type of judgments which no sinner escapes. God then hath the power to do this. Why should He not?

Verse 7

Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto Me, O children of Israel! - Their boast and confidence was that they were children of the patriarch, to whom God made the promises. But they, not following the

faith nor doing the deeds of Israel, who was a "prince with God," or of Abraham, the father of the faithful, had, for "Bene Israel," children of Israel, become as "Bene Cushiim, children of the Ethiopians," descendants of Ham, furthest off from the knowledge and grace of God, the unchangeableness of whose color was an emblem of unchangeableness in evil. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" Jeremiah 13:23.

Have I not brought up - (Did I not bring up) Israel out of the land of Egypt? Amos blends in one their plea and God's answer. God by bringing them up out of Egypt, pledged His truth to them to be their to protect and preserve them. True! so long as they. retained God as their God, and kept His laws. God chose them, that they might choose Him. By casting Him off, as their Lord and God, they cast themselves off and out of God's protection. By estranging themselves from God, they became as strangers in His sight. His act in bringing them up from Egypt had lost its meaning for them. It became no more than any Other event in His Providence, by which He brought up "the Philistines from Caphtor," who yet were aliens from Him, and "the Syrians from Kir," who, He had foretold, should be carried back there.

This immigration of the Philistines from Caphtor must have taken place before the return of Israel from Egypt. For Moses says, "The Caphtorim, who came forth from Caphtor" had at this time "destroyed the Avvim who dwelt in villages unto Gazah, and dwelt in their stead" Deuteronomy 2:23 An entire change in their affairs had also taken place in the four centuries and a half since the days of Isaac. In the time of Abraham and Isaac, Philistia was a kingdom; its capital, Gerar. Its king had a standing army, Phichol being "the captain of the host" Genesis 21:22; Genesis 26:26: he had also a privy councillor, Ahuzzath Genesis 26:26. From the time after the Exodus, Philistia had ceased to be a kingdom, Gerar disappears from history; the power of Philistia is concentrated in five new towns, Gaza, Ashdod, Askelon, Gath, Ekron, with five heads, who consult and act as one (see above, the note at Amos 1:6-8).

The Caphtorim are in some sense also distinct from the old Philistines. They occupy a district not co-extensive with either the old or the new land of the Philistines. In the time of Saul, another Philistine clan is mentioned, the Cherethite. The Amalekites made a marauding inroad into the south

country of the Cherethites; 1 Samuel 30:14; which immediately afterward is called "the land of the Philistines" 1 Samuel 30:16. Probably then, there were different immigrations of the same tribe into Palestine, as there were different immigrations of Danes or Saxons into England, or as there have been and are from the old world into the new, America and Australia. They, were then all merged in one common name, as English, Scotch, Irish, are in the United States. The first immigration may have been that from the Casluhim, "out of whom came Philistim" Genesis 10:14; a second, from the Caphtorim, a kindred people, since they are named next to the Casluhim Genesis 10:14, as descendants of Mizraim. Yet a third were doubtless the Cherethim. But all were united under the one name of Philistines, as Britons, Danes, Saxons, Normans, are united under the one name of English. Of these immigrations, that from Caphtor, even if (as seems probable) second in time, was the chief; which agrees with the great accession of strength, which the Philistines had received at the time of the Exodus; from where the Mediterranean had come to be called by their name, "the sea of the Philistines" Exodus 23:31: and, in Moses' song of thanksgiving, "the inhabitants of Philistia" are named on a level with "all the inhabitants of Canaan" Exodus 15:14-15; and God led His people by the way of Mount Sinai, in order not to expose them at once to so powerful an enemy Exodus 13:17.

A third immigration of Cherethim, in the latter part of the period of the Judges, would account for the sudden increase of strength, which they seem then to have received. For whereas heretofore those whom God employed to chasten Israel in their idolatries, were Kings of Mesopotamia, Moab, Hazor, Midian, Amalek, and the children of the East Judges 1:18, to Israel, and was repulsed by Shamgar, thenceforth, to the time of David, they became the great scourge of Israel on the west of Jordan, as Ammon was on the east.

The Jewish traditions in the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and three Targums, agree that Caphtor was Cappadocia, which, in that it extended to the Black Sea, might be callad "I, seacoast," literally, "habitable land, as contrasted with the sea which washed it, whether it surrounded it or no. The Cherethites may have come from Crete, as an intermediate resting place in their migrations.

Verse 8

Behold the eyes of the Lord are upon the sinful kingdom - The sinful kingdom may mean each "sinful kingdom," as Paul says, God "will render unto every man according to his deeds - unto them who do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile" Romans 2:6-9. His "Eyes" are "on the sinful kingdom," whatsoever or wheresoever it be, and so on Israel also: "and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth." In this case, the emphasis would be on the, "I will not "utterly" destroy." God would destroy sinful kingdoms, yet Israel, although sinful, He would not "utterly" destroy, but would leave a remnant, as He had so often promised. Yet perhaps, and more probably, the contrast is between "the kingdom" and "the house of Israel. The kingdom," being founded in sin, bound up inseparably with sin, God says, "I will destroy from off the face of the earth," and it ceased forever. Only, with the kingdom, He says, "I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," to whom were the promises, and to whose seed, whosoever were the true Israel, those promises should be kept. So He explains;

Verse 9

For lo! I will command! - Literally, "lo! see, I am commanding." He draws their attention to it, as something which shall shortly be; and inculcates that He is the secret disposer of all which shall befall them. "And I will sift the house of Israel among all nations." Amos enlarges the prophecy of Hosea, "they shall be wanderers among the nations." He adds two thoughts; the violence with which they shall be shaken, and that this their unsettled life, to and fro, shall be not "among the nations" only, but "in all" nations. In every quarter of the world, and in well-nigh every nation in every quarter, Jews have been found. The whole earth is, as it were, one vast sieve in the Hands of God, in which Israel is shaken from one end to the other. There has been one ceaseless tossing to and fro, as the grain in the sieve is tossed from side to side, and rests nowhere, until all is sifted.

Each nation in whom they have been found has been an instrument of their being shaken, sifted, severed, the grain from the dirt and chaff; And yet in their whole compass, "not the least grain," no solid grain, not one grain, should "fall to the earth." The chaff and dust would be blown away by the air; the dirt which clave to it would fall through; but "no one grain."

God, in all these centuries, has had an eye on each soul of His people in their dispersion throughout all lands. The righteous too have been shaken up and down, through and through; yet not one soul has been lost, which, by the help of God‘s Holy Spirit, willed truly and earnestly to be saved. Before Christ came, they who were His, believed in Him who should come; when He came, they who were His were converted to Him; as Paul saith, “Hath God cast away His people? God forbid! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin - God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew - At this present time also there is a remnant, according to the election of grace” Romans 11:1-2, Romans 11:5.

Rib.: “What is here said of all, God doth daily in each of the elect. For they are ‹the wheat” of God, which, in order to be “laid up in” the heavenly “garner,” must be pure from chaff and dust. To this end He sifts them by afflictions and troubles, in youth, manhood, old age, wheresoever they are, in whatsoever occupied, and proves them again and again. At one time the elect enjoyeth tranquility of mind, is bedewed by heavenly refreshments, prayeth as he wills, loveth, gloweth, hath no taste for ought except God. Then again he is dry, experienceth the heaven to be as brass, his prayer is hindered by distracting thoughts, his feet are as lead to deeds of virtue, his “hands bang down,” his “knees” are “feeble” Hebrews 12:12, he dreads death; he sticks fast, languishes. He is shaken in a sieve, that he may mistrust self, place his hope in God, and the dust of vain-glory may be shaken off. He is proved, that it may appear whether he cleave to God for the reward of present enjoyment, or for the hope of future, for longing for the glory of God and for love of Himself. God suffereth him also to be sifted by the devil through various temptations to sin, as he said to the Apostle, “Simon, lo! Satan hath desired you, to sift you as wheat” Luke 22:31. But this is the power of God, this His grace to the elect, this the devil attaineth by his sifting, that the dust of immoderate self love, of vain confidence, of love of the world, should fall off: this Satan effecteth not, that the least deed which pertaineth to the inward house and the dwelling which they prepare in their souls for God, should perish. Rather, as we see in holy Job, virtues will increase, grow, be strengthened.”

Verse 10

All the sinners of My people shall perish - At the last, when the longsuffering of God has been despised to the uttermost, His Providence is exact in His justice, as in His love. As not "one grain should fall to the earth," so not one sinner should escape. Jerome: "Not because they sinned aforetime, but because they persevered in sin until death. The Aethiopians are changed into sons of God, if they repent; and the sons of God pass away into Aethiopians, if they fall into the depth of sin."

Which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us - Their security was the cause of their destruction. They perished the more miserably, being buoyed up by the false confidence that they should not perish. So it was in both destructions of Jerusalem. Of the first, Jeremiah says to the false prophet Hananiah, "Thus saith the Lord, Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron" Jeremiah 28:13; and to Zedekiah, "Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord, which I speak unto thee; so shall it be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live. But if thou refuse to go forth - thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon, and thou shalt burn this city with fire" (Jeremiah 38:20, Jeremiah 38:23; add Jeremiah 27:9-10, Jeremiah 27:19). At the second, while thee Christians (mindful of our Lord‘s words) fled to Pella, the Jews were, to the last, encouraged by their false prophets to resist. "The cause of this destruction," at the burning of the temple, says their own historian, "was a false prophet, who on that day proclaimed to those in the city, ‹God commands to go up to the temple, to receive the signs of deliverance.‘ There were too, at that time, among the people many prophets suborned by the tyrants, bidding them await the help from God, that they might not desert, and that hope might prevail with those, who were above fear and restraint. Man is soon persuaded in calamity. And when the deceiver promises release from the evils which are upon him, the sufferer gives himself wholly up to hope. These dcceivers then and liars against God at this time mispersuaded the wretched people, so that they neither regarded, nor believed, the plain evident prodigies, which foretokened the coming desolation, but, like men stupefied, who had neither eyes nor mind, disobeyed the warnings of God." Then, having related some of the prodigies which occurred, he adds; "But of these signs‘ some they interpreted after their own will, some they despised, until they were convicted of folly by the capture of their country and their own destruction."

So too now, none are so likely to perish forever, as they "who say, The evil shall not overtake us." "I will repent hereafter." "I will make my peace with God before I die." "There is time enough yet." "Youth is for pleasure, age for repentance." "God will forgive the errors of youth, and the heat of our passions." "Any time will do for repentance; health and strength promise long life;" "I cannot do without this or that now." "I will turn to God, only not yet." "God is merciful and full of compassion." Because Satan thus deludes thousands upon thousands to their destruction, God cuts away all such vain hopes with His word, "All the sinners of My people shall die which say, the evil shall not overtake nor come upon us."

Verse 11

In that day I will raise up - Amos, as the prophets were taught to do, sums up his prophecy of woe with this one full promise of overflowing good. For the ten tribes, in their separate condition, there was no hope, no future. He had pronounced the entire destruction of "the kingdom" of Israel. The ten tribes were, thenceforth, only an aggregate of individuals, good or bad. They had no separate corporate existence. In their spiritual existence, they still belonged to the one family of Israel; and, belonging to it, were heirs of the promises made to it. When no longer separate, individuals out of its tribes were to become Apostles to their whole people and to the Gentiles. Of individuals in it, God had declared His judgment, anticipating the complete exactness of the Judgment of the Great Day. "All the sinners of" His "people" should "die" an untimely death "by the sword;" not one of those who were the true grain should perish with the chaff.

He now foretells, how that salvation, of those indeed His own, should be effected through the house of David, in whose line Christ was to come. He speaks of the house of David, not in any terms of royal greatness; he tells, not of its palaces, but of its ruins. Under the word "tabernacle," he probably blends the ideas, that it should be in a poor condition, and yet that it should be the means whereby God should protect His people. The "succah, tabernacle" (translated "booth" in Jonah) Jonah 4:5; Genesis 33:17, was originally a rude hut, formed of "intertwined" branches. It is used of the cattle-shed Genesis 33:17, and of the rough tents used by soldiers in war 2 Samuel 11:11, or by the watchman in the vineyard Isaiah 1:8; Job 27:18, and of those wherein God "made the children of Israel to dwell, when" He "brought them out of the land of Egypt Leviticus 23:43. The name of the

feast of "tabernacles, Succoth," as well as the rude temporary huts in which they were commanded to dwell, associated the name with a state of outward poverty under God's protection.

Hence, perhaps, the word is employed also of the secret place of the presence of God Psalm 18:11; Job 36:29. Isaiah, as well as Amos, seems, in the use of the same word Isaiah 4:6, to hint that what is poor and mean in man's sight would be, in the Hands of God, an effectual protection. This "hut of David" was also at that time to be "fallen." When Amos prophesied, it had been weakened by the schism of the ten tribes, but Azariah, its king, was mighty 2 Chronicles 26:6-15. Amos had already foretold the destruction of the "palaces of Jerusalem by fire" Amos 2:5. Now he adds, that the abiding condition of the house of David should be a state of decay and weakness, and that from that state, not human strength, but God Himself should "raise" it. "I will raise up the hut of David, the fallen." He does not say, of "that" time, "the hut that is fallen," as if it were already fallen, but "the hut, the fallen," that is, the hut of which the character should then be its falling, its caducity.

So, under a different figure, Isaiah prophesied, "There shall come forth a rod out of the stump Isaiah 11:1 of Jesse, and a Branch shall put forth from its roots." When the trunk was hewn down even with the ground, and the rank grass had covered the "stump," that "rod" and "Branch" should come forth which should rule the earth, and "to" which "the Gentiles should seek" Isaiah 11:10. From these words of Amos, "the Son of the fallen," became, among the Jews, one of the titles of the Christ. Both in the legal and mystical schools the words of Amos are alleged, in proof of the fallen condition of the house of David, when the Christ should come. "Who would expect," asks one, "that God would raise up the fallen tabernacle of David? and yet it is said, "I will raise up the tabernacle of David which is fallen down." And who would hope that the whole world should become one band? as it is written, "Then I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one shoulder" Zephaniah 3:9. This is no other than the king Messiah." And in the Talmud; "R. Nachman said to R. Isaac; Hast thou heard when ‹the Son of the fallen' shall come? He answered, Who is he? R. Nachman; The

Messiah. R. Isaac; Is the Messiah so called? R. Nachman; Yes; ‹In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David which is fallen down. ‹“

And close up - Literally, “wall up, the breaches thereof.” The house of David had at this time sustained breaches. It had yet more serious breaches to sustain thereafter. The first great breach was the rending off of the ten tribes. It sustained breaches, through the Assyrians; and yet more when itself was carried away captive to Babylon, and so many of its residue fled into Egypt. Breaches are repaired by new stones; the losses of the house of David were to be filled up by accessions from the Gentiles. God Himself should “close up the breaches;” so should they remain closed; and “the gates of hell should not prevail against” the Church which He builded. Amos heaps upon one another the words implying destruction. A “hut” and that “falling; breaches; ruins;” (literally, “his ruinated, his destructions”). But he also speaks of it in a way which excludes the idea of “the hut of David,” being “the royal Dynasty” or “the kingdom of Judah.” For he speaks of it, not as an abstract thing, such as a kingdom is, but as a whole, consisting of individuals.

He speaks not only of “the hut of David,” but of “‹their (fem.)‘ breaches,” “‹his‘ ruins,” that God would “build ‹her‘ up,” “that ‹they‘ (masc.) may inherit;” using apparently this variety of numbers and genders, in order to show that he is speaking of one living whole, the Jewish Church, now rent in two by the great schism of Jeroboam, but which should be reunited into one body, members of which should win the pagan to the true faith in God. “I will raise up,” he says, “the tabernacle of David, the fallen, and will wall up ‹their‘ breaches,” (the breaches of the two portions into which it had been rent) and I will raise up “his” ruins (the “ruinated places” of David) and I will build “her” (as one whole) as in the days of old, (before the rent of the ten tribes, when all worshiped as one), that “they,” (masculine) that is, individuals who should go forth out of her, “may inherit, etc.”

Verse 12

That they may possess - rather, “inherit

The remnant of Edom - The restoration was not to be for themselves alone. No gifts of God end in the immediate object of His bounty and love. They were restored, in order that they, the first objects of God‘s mercies, might win others to God; not Edom only, “but all nations, upon whom,”

God says, “My Name is called.” Plainly then, it is no temporal subjugation, nor any earthly kingdom. The words, “upon whom the name is called,” involve, in any case, belonging to, and being owned by, him whose name is called upon them. It is said of the wife bearing the name of the husband and becoming his, “let thy name be called upon us Isaiah 4:1. When Jacob especially adopts Ephraim and Manasseh as his he says, “let my name be named upon them, and the name of My fathers, Abraham and Isaac” Genesis 48:16. In relation to God, the words are used of persons and of places especially appropriated to God; as the whole Jewish Church and people, His Temple 1 Kings 8:43; Jeremiah 7:10-11, Jeremiah 7:14, Jeremiah 7:30; Jeremiah 34:15, His prophets Jeremiah 15:16, the city of Jerusalem Daniel 9:18-19 by virtue of the temple built there. Contrariwise, Isaiah pleads to God, that the pagan “were never called by Thy Name” Isaiah 63:19. This relation of being “called” by the “Name” of God, was not outward only, nor was it ineffective. Its characteristics were holiness imparted by God to man, and protection by God. Thus Moses, in his blessing on Israel if obedient, says, “The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto Himself, as He hath sworn to thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in His ways; and all the people of the earth shall see that the Name of the Lord thy God is called upon thee, and they shall fear thee” Deuteronomy 28:9-10. And Jeremiah says to God, “Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, for Thy name was called upon me, O Lord God of Hosts.”

Israel then, or the Jewish Church, was to inherit, or take into itself, not Edom only, but all nations, and that, by their belonging to God. Edom, as the brother of Israel and yet his implacable enemy, stands as a symbol of all who were alien from God, over against His people. He says, the “residue of Edom,” because he had foretold the destruction which was first to come upon Edom; and Holy Scripture everywhere speaks of those who should be converted, as a “remnant” only. The Jews themselves are the keepers and witnesses of these words. Was it not foretold? It stands written. Is it not fulfilled? The whole world from this country to China, and from China round again to us, as far as it is Christian, and as, year by year, more are gathered into the fold of Christ, are the inheritance of those who were the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

James quoted these words in the Council of Jerusalem, to show how the words of the prophet were in harmony with what Peter had related, how "God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His Name" Acts 15:14. He quotes the words as they stood in the version which was understood by the Gentiles who came from Antioch. In it the words are paraphrased, but the meaning remains the same. The Greek translators took away the metaphor, in order, probably, to make the meaning more intelligible to Greeks, and paraphrased the Hebrew words, imagining other words, as like as might be to the Hebrew. They render, "that the residue of men may seek, and all the nations upon whom My name is called." The force of the prophecy lies in these last words, that "the Name of God should be called upon all nations." James, then, quoted the words as they were familiar to his hearers, not correcting those which did not impair the meaning. The so doing, he shows us incidentally, that even imperfection of translation does not empty the fullness of God's word. The words, "shall seek the Lord," although not representing anything expressed here in the original, occur in the corresponding prophecy of Isaiah as to the root of Jesse, "In that day there shall be a root" (that is, a sucker from the root) "of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people, and to it shall the Gentiles seek" Isaiah 11:10. It may be, that James purposely uses the plural, "the words of the prophets," in order to include, together with the prophet Amos, other prophets who had foretold the same thing. The statements, that the Jewish Church should inherit the Gentiles, that the Name of God should be called upon the Gentiles, and that the Gentiles should seek the Lord, are parts of one whole; that they should be called, that they should obey the call, and, obeying, he enrolled in the one family of God.

Verse 13

Behold the days are coming - The Day of the Lord is ever coming on: every act, good or bad, is drawing it on: everything which fills up the measure of iniquity or which "hastens the accomplishment of the number of the elect;" all time hastens it by. "The plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed." The image is taken from God's promise in the law; "Your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time" Leviticus 26:5; which is the order of agriculture. The harvest should be so copious that it should not be threshed out until the vintage: the vintage so large, that, instead of ending,

as usual, in the middle of the 7th month, it should continue on to the seed-time in November. Amos appears purposely to have altered this. He describes what is wholly beyond nature, in order that it might the more appear that he was speaking of no mere gifts of nature, but, under natural emblems, of the abundance of gifts of grace. "The plowman," who breaks up the fallow ground, "shall overtake," or "throng, the reaper. The "plowman" might "throng," or "join on to the reaper," either following upon him, or being followed by him; either preparing the soil for the harvest which the reaper gathers in, or breaking it up anew for fresh harvest after the in-gathering.

But the vintage falls between the harvest and the seed-time. If then by the "plowmen thronging on the reaper," we understand that the harvest should, for its abundance, not be over before the fresh seed-time, then, since the vintage is much nearer to the seed-time than the harvest had been, the words, "he that treadeth out the grapes, him that soweth the seed," would only say the same less forcibly. In the other way, it is one continuous whole. So vast would be the soil to be cultivated, so beyond all the powers of the cultivator, and yet so rapid and unceasing the growth, that seed-time and harvest would be but one. So our Lord says, "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest" John 4:35. "Four months" ordinarily intervened between seed-time and harvest. Among these Samaritans, seed-time and harvest were one.

They had not, like the Jews, had teachers from God; yet, as soon as our Lord taught them, they believed. But, as seed time and harvest should be one, so should the vintage be continuous with the following seed-time. "The treader of grapes," the last crowning act of the year of cultivation, should join on to "him that soweth" (literally, "draweth" forth, soweth broadcast, scattereth far and wide the) "seed." All this is beyond nature, and so, the more in harmony with what went before, the establishment of a kingdom of grace, in which "the pagan" should have "the Name of God called upon" them. He had foretold to them, how God would "send famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" Amos 8:11. Now, under the same image, he declares the repeal of that sentence. He foretells, not the fullness only of God's gifts, but their unbroken continuance.

Jerome: “All shall succeed one another, so that no day should be void of grain, wine, and gladness.” And they shall not follow only on one another, but shall all go on together in one perpetual round of toil and fruitfulness. There shall be one unceasing inpouring of riches; no break in the heavenly husbandry; labor shall at once yield fruit; the harvest shall but encourage fresh labor. The end shall come swiftly on the beginning; the end shall not close the past only, but issue forth anew. Such is the character of the toils of the Gospel. All the works of grace go on in harmony together; each helps on the other; in one, the fallow-ground of the heart is broken up; in another, seed is sown, the beginning of a holy conversation; in another, is the full richness of the ripened fruit, in advanced holiness or the blood of martyrs. And so, also, of the ministers of Christ, some are adapted especially to one office, some to another; yet all together carry on His one work. All, too, patriarchs, prophets, Apostles, shall meet together in one; they who, before Christ‘s coming, “sowed the seed, the promises of the Blessed Seed to come,” and they who “entered into their labors,” not to displace, but to complete them; all shall rejoice together in that Seed which is Christ.

And the mountains shall drop sweet wine and all the hills shall melt - Amos takes the words of Joel, in order to identify their prophecies, yet strengthens the image. For instead of saying, “the hills shall flow with milk,” he says, “they shall melt, dissolve themselves. Such shall be the abundance and super-abundance of blessing, that it shall be as though the hills dissolved themselves in the rich streams which they poured down. The mountains and hills may be symbols, in regard either to their height, or their natural barrenness or their difficulty of cultivation. In past times they were scenes of idolatry. In the time of the Gospel, all should be changed; all should be above nature. All should be obedient to God: all, full of the graces and gifts of God. What was exalted, like the Apostles should be exalted not for itself, but in order to pour out the streams of life-giving doctrine and truth, which would refresh and gladden the faithful. And the lesser heights, “the hills,” should, in their degree, pour out the same streams. Everything, heretofore barren and unfruitful, should overflow with spiritual blessing. The mountains and hills of Judaea, with their terraced sides clad with the vine were a natural symbol fruitfulness to the Jews, but they themselves could not think that natural fruitfulness was meant under this imagery. It would have been a hyperbole as to things of nature; but

what, in naturl things, is a hyperbole, is but a faint shadow of the joys and rich delights and glad fruitfulness of grace.

Verse 14

And I will bring again the captivity of My people - Where all around is spiritual, there is no reason to take this alone as earthly. An earthly restoration to Canaan had no value, except as introductory to the spiritual. The two tribes were, in a great measure, restored to their own land, when Zachariah, being "filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied," as then about to accomplished, that "God hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation to us in the house of His servant David, as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets - that we, being delivered from the hands of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him" Luke 1:68-70, Luke 1:74-75. So our Lord said; "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin. If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" John 8:32, John 8:34, John 8:36. And Paul, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" Romans 8:2.

And they shall build the waste - (Rather "shall build waste") "cities." "As they who are freed from captivity and are no longer in fear of the enemy, "build cities and plant vineyards" and gardens," so shall these unto God. "This," says one of old, "needs no exposition, since, throughout the world, amid the desert of pagandom, which was before deserted by God, Churches of Christ have arisen, which, for the firmness of faith may be called "cities," and, for the gladness of "hope which maketh not ashamed, vineyards," and for the sweetness of charity, gardens; wherein they dwell, who have builded them through the word; whence they drink the wine of gladness, who formed them by precepts; whence they eat fruits, who advanced them by counsels, because, as "he who reapeth," so he too who "buildeth" such "cities," and he who "planteth" such "vineyards," and he who "maketh" such "gardens, receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life eternal" John 4:36.

Verse 15

And I will plant them upon their own land - The promises and threatenings of God are, to individuals, conditional upon their continuing to be of that character, to which God annexes those promises or threats. Theodoret: "The God of all often promises, when those who receive the

promises, by joying in iniquity hinder those promises from taking effect. At times also he threatens heavy things, and they who for their offences were the objects of those threats, being, through fear of them, converted, do not in act experience them." The two tribes received some little shadow of fulfillment of these promises on the return from Babylon. "They were planted in their own land." The non-fulfillment of the rest, as well as the evident symbolic character of part of it, must have shown them that such fulfillment was the beginning, not the end. Their land was "the Lord's land;" banishment from it was banishment from the special presence of God, from the place where He manifested Himself, where alone the typical sacrifices, the appointed means of reconciliation, could be offered.

Restoration to their own land was the outward symbol of restoration to God's favor, of which it was the fruit. it was a condition of the fulfillment of those other promises, the coming of Him in whom the promises were laid up, the Christ. He was not simply to be of David's seed, according to the flesh. Prophecy, as time went on, declared His birth at Bethlehem, His revelation in Galilee, His coming to His Temple, His sending forth His law from Jerusalem. Without some restoration to their own land, these things could not be. Israel was restored in the flesh, that, after the flesh, the Christ might be born of them, where God foretold that He should be born. But the temporal fulfillment ended with that event in time in which they were to issue, for whose sake they were; His coming. They were but the vestibule to the spiritual. As shadows, they ceased when the Sun arose. As means, they ended, when the end, whereto they served, came.

There was no need of a temporal Zion, when He who was to send forth His law thence, had come and sent it forth. No need of a temple when He who was to be its glory, had come, illumined it, and was gone. No need of one of royal birth in Bethlehem, when "the Virgin" had "conceived and borne a Son," and "God" had been "with us." And so as to other prophecies. All which were bound to the land of Judah, were accomplished. As the true Israel expanded and embraced all nations, the whole earth became "the land" of God's people. Palestine had had its prerogatives, because God manifested Himself there, was worshiped there. When God's people was enlarged, so as "to inherit the pagan," and God was worshiped everywhere, His land too was everywhere. His promises accompanied His people, and these were in all lands. His words then, "I will plant them upon their own

land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them," expanded with their expansion. It is a promise of perpetuity, like that of our Lord; "Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world. The gates of hell shall not prevail against" the Church, the people of God. The world may gnash its teeth; kings may oppress; persecutors may harass; popular rage may trample on her; philosophy may scoff at her; unbelief may deny the promises made to her; the powers of darkness may rage around her; her own children may turn against her. In vain! Jerome: "She may be shaken by persecutions, she cannot be uprooted; she may be tempted, she cannot be overcome. For the Lord God Almighty, the Lord her God, hath promised that He will do it, whose promise is the law to nature."

Saith the Lord thy God - Rib.: "O Israel of God, O Catholic Church, to be gathered out of Jews and Gentiles, doubt not, he would say, thy promised happiness. For thy God who loveth thee and who from eternity hath chosen thee, hath commanded me to say this to thee in His Name." Rup.: "He turneth too to the ear of each of us, giving us joy, in His word, ‹saith the Lord thy God.'" "They too who are plants which God hath planted, and who have so profited, that through them many daily profit, "shall be planted upon their own ground," that is, each, in his order and in that kind of life which he has chosen, shall strike deep roots in true piety, and they shall be so preserved by God, that by no force of temptations shall they be uprooted, but each shall say with the holy prophet, "I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever" Psalm 52:9. Not that every tree, planted in the ground of the Church militant, is so firm that it cannot be plucked up, but many there are, which are not plucked up, being protected by the Hand of Almighty God. O blessed that land, where no tree is plucked up, none is injured by any worm, or decays through any age. How many great, fruit-bearing, trees do we see plucked up in this land of calamity and misery! Blessed day, when we shall be there, where we need fear no storm!" Yet this too abideth true; "none shall be plucked up." Without our own will, neither passions within, nor temptations without, nor the malice or wiles of Satan, can "pluck" us "up." None can "be plucked up," who doth not himself loose his hold, whose root is twisted round the Rock, which is Thou, O Blessed Jesus. For Thou hast said, "they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My Hand" John 10:28.

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Introduction to Obadiah

The silence of Holy Scripture as to the prophet Obadiah stands in remarkable contrast with the anxiety of people to know something of him. It would even waste labor to examine the combinations, by which, of old, the human mind tried to justify its longing to know more of him, than God had willed to be preserved. People go over them with the view of triumphing in the superior sagacity of later days, and slaying the slain. It was a good and pious feeling which longed to know more of the men of God, whose prophecies He has preserved to us, and, with this view, looked about whether they could not identify their benefactor (such as each prophet is) with someone of whom more details are recorded. Hence, they hoped that Obadiah might prove to have been the faithful protector of the prophets under Ahab, or the son of the Shunamite, whom Elijah recalled to life, or the Obadiah whom Jehoshaphat sent to teach in the cities of Judah or the Levite who was selected, with one other, to be the overseer set over the repair of the temple in the reign of Josiah. Fruitless guesses at what God has hidden! God has willed that his name alone and this brief prophecy should be known in this world. Here, he is known only as Obadiah, "worshiper of God".

Yet, these guesses of pious minds illustrate this point, that the arranger of the canon had some other ground upon which he assigned to Obadiah his place in it, than any identification of the prophet with any other person mentioned in Holy Scripture. For whereas, of the Obadiahs, of whom holy Scripture mentions more than the name, two lived in the reign of Ahab, one after the captivity of the ten tribes, the prophet is, by the framer of the canon, placed in the time of Uzziah and Jeroboam II, in which those placed before and after him, flourished. Moderns, having slighted these pious longings, are still more at fault in their way. German critics have assigned to the prophet dates, removed from each other by more than 600 years; just as if men doubted, "from internal evidence," whether a work were written in the time of William the Conqueror, or in that of Cromwell; of S. Louis, or Louis XVIII; or whether Hesiod was a contemporary of Callimachus, and Ennius of Claudian; or the author of the Nibelungen Lied lived with Schiller. Such difference, which seems grotesque, as soon as it is applied to any other case, was the fruit of unbelief.

Two, or rather, three great facts are spoken of in the prophecy, the capture of Jerusalem, and a two-fold punishment of Edom consequent on his malicious triumph over his brother‘s fall; the one through pagan, the other through the restored Jews. The punishment of Edom the prophet clearly foretells, as yet to come; the destruction of Jerusalem, which, according to our version is spoken of as past, is in reality foretold also. Unbelief denies all prophecy. Strange, that unbelief, denying the existence of the jewel - God‘s authentic and authenticated voice to man - should trouble itself about the age of the casket. Yet, so it was. The prophets of Israel used a fascinating power over those who denied their inspiration. They denied prophecy, but employed themselves about the prophets. Unbelief, denying prophecy, had to find out two events in history, which should correspond with these events in the prophet, a capture of Jerusalem, and a subsequent (“it” could not say) consequent - suffering on the part of Edom. And since Jerusalem was first taken under Shishak king of Egypt, in the 5th year of Rehoboam, 970 b.c., and Josephus relates that in 301 b.c., Ptolemy Lagus treacherously got possession of it under plea of offering sacrifice, treated it harshly, took many captive from the mountainous part of Judaea and the places around Jerusalem, from Samaritis, Gerizim, and settled them all in Egypt; unbelieving criticism had a wide range, in which to vacillate.

And so it reeled to and fro between the first and last of these periods, agreeing that Obadiah did not prophesy, and disagreeing as to all besides. Eichhorn, avowedly on his principle of unbelief, that God‘s prophets, when they spoke of detailed events, as future, were really describing the past, assumed that the last five verses were written in the time of Alexander Janneus, two centuries LATER than the latest, about 82 b.c.. As though a Hebrew prophet would speak of one, detestable for Alexander Janneus‘ wanton cruelty as a Saviour!

The real question as to the age of Obadiah turns upon two points - one is external, the other internal. The external is, whether in regard to those verses which he has in common with Jeremiah, Obadiah gathered into one, verses which he scattered in Jeremiah, or whether Jeremiah, in renewing the prophecies against Edom, incorporated verses of Obadiah. The question, the

one which is internal to Obadiah, is, whether he speaks of the capture of Jerusalem in the prophetic or the real past, and (as determining this), whether he reproves Edom for past malice at the capture of Jerusalem, or warns him against it in the future.

The English version in the text supposes that Obadiah reproves for past sin. For it renders; "Thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother, in the day when he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of their distress". The English margin gives the other, as a probable rendering, "do not behold, etc." But it is absolutely certain that אל *'al* with the future forbids or deprecates a future thing. In all the passages, in which אל *'al* occurs in the Hebrew Bible, it signifies "do not." We might as well say that "do not steal" means "thou shouldest not have stolen," as say that תרה ואל *ve'al tēreh* and "do not look," means "thou shouldest not have looked."

It is true that in a vivid form of question, belonging to strong feeling, the soul going back in thought to the time before a thing which has happened, can speak of the past as yet future. Thus, David says,. "The death of fools shall Abner die?" while mourning over his bier; or Job, having said to God, "Why didst Thou bring me forth from the womb?" places himself as at that time and says (literally), "I shall expire, and eye shall not see me; as if I had not been, I shall be; from the womb to the grave I shall be carried." He contemplates the future, as it would have been, had he died in the birth. It was a relative future. We could almost, under strong emotion, use our "is to" in the same way. We could render, "Is Abner to die the death of fools?" But these cases have nothing to do with the uniform idiom; "do not." We must not, on any principle of interpretation, in a single instance, ascribe to a common idiom, a meaning which it has not, because the meaning which it has, does not suit us. There "is" an idiom to express this. It is the future with לא *lo'* not with אל *'al* agrees with this, that just before, where our version renders, "thou wert as one of them," the Hebrew (as, in our Bibles, is marked by the italics) has only, "thou as one of them!" not expressing any time. The whole verse expresses no time as to Edom. "In the day of thy standing on the other side, in the day of strangers carrying captive his

might, and strangers entered his gates and cast lots on Jerusalem, thou too as one of them."

This too is a question not of rhetoric, but of morals. We cannot imagine that Almighty God, who warns that He may not strike, would eight times repeat the exhortation - a repetition which in itself has so much earnestness, "do not," "do not," "do not," in regard to sin which had been already ended. As to past sin, God exhorts to repent, to break it off; not to renew it. He does not exhort to that which would be a contradiction even to His own omnipotence, not to do what had been already done.

According to the only meaning, then, which the words bear, Edom had not yet committed the sin against which Obadiah warns him, and so Jerusalem was not yet destroyed, when the prophet wrote. For the sevenfold "the day of thy brother," (which is explained to be "the day of his calamity), the day of their destruction, the day of distress," the mention whereof had just preceded, can be no other than "the day when strangers carried away his strength, and foreigners entered his gates, and cast lots on Jerusalem." But no day was the day of utter destruction to Jerusalem, except that of its capture by Nebuchadnezzar. Its capture by Shishak, or by the Chaldees under Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin, left it uninjured; Jehoash, when he had defeated Amaziah, broke down a part of its walls only.

The relation of Obadiah to Jeremiah agrees with this. This argument in proof of that relation has been so carefully drawn out by Caspari, that little is needed except clearly to exhibit it. Few indeed, I should think (unless under some strong contrary bias), could read the five first verses of Obadiah in the book of the prophet himself, and, as they occur, scattered in Obadiah 1:1 God had commanded nations to come against Edom, Obadiah 1:2 determining to lower it; Obadiah 1:3 it had trusted proudly in its strong position; Obadiah 1:4 yet, God would bring it down; and that, Obadiah 1:5 through no ordinary spoiler, but Obadiah 1:6 by one who should search out its most hidden treasures; Obadiah 1:7 its friends should be its destroyers; Obadiah 1:8 its wisdom, and Obadiah 1:9 might should fail it, and Obadiah 1:10 it should perish, for its malice to its brother Jacob; the crowning act of which would be at the capture of Jerusalem; Obadiah 1:11-14 but God's day was at hand, the pagan should be requited; Obadiah 1:15-16 the remnant of

Zion, being delivered, would dispossess their dispossessors, would spread far and wide; Obadiah 1:17-20 a Saviour should arise out of Zion, and the kingdom should be the Lord‘s. Obadiah 1:21)

Thus, not only the eight verses from Obadiah, five of which recur in Jeremiah, and three others, to which he alludes, stand in close connection in Obadiah, but they form a part of one well-arranged whole. The connection is sometimes very close indeed; as when, to the proud question of Esau, ארץ יורדני מי *mîy yôrîdēnîy 'erets* Obadiah 1:3, “Who will bring me down to the ground?” God answers, “though thou place thy nest among the stars, אורידך משם *mîshâm 'ôrîydekâ* Obadiah 1:4, thence, will I bring thee down.”

Jeremiah, on the contrary, the mourner among the prophets, is plaintive, even in his prophecies against the enemies of God‘s people. Even in this prophecy he mingles words of tenderness; “Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in Me.” Accordingly, Jeremiah has a succession of striking pictures; but the connection in him is rather one of oratory than of thought. His object is to impress; he does impress, by an accumulation of images of terror or desolation. Closeness of thought would not aid his object, and he neglects it, except when he retains the order of Obadiah. But plainly it is most probable, that “that” is the original form of the prophecy, where the order is the sequence of thought. That sequence is a characteristic, not of these verses only of Obadiah, but of the whole. The whole 21 verses of the prophet pursue one connected train of thought, from the beginning to the end. No one verse could be displaced, without injuring that order. Thoughts flow on, the one out of the other. But nothing is more improbable than to suppose that this connected train of thought was produced by putting together thoughts, which originally stood unconnected.

The slight variations also in these verses, as they stand in the two prophets, are characteristic. Wherever the two prophets in any degree vary, Obadiah is the more concise, or abrupt; Jeremiah, as belongs to his pathetic character, the more flowing. Thus, Obadiah begins: “Thus saith the Lord God, concerning Edom: A report we have heard from the Lord, and a messenger among the pagan is sent; Arise and let us arise against her to battle.” The words, “Thus saith the Lord God, of Edom,” declare that the

whole prophecy which follows came from God; then Obadiah bursts forth with what he had heard from God, “A report we have heard from the Lord.” The words are joined in meaning; the grammatical connection, if regarded, would be incorrect. Again, in the words, “we have heard,” the prophet joins his people with himself. Jeremiah substitutes the more precise, “I have heard,” transposes the words to a later part of the prophecy, and so obviates the difficulty of the connection: then he substitutes the regular form, שׁלח *shâlach* for the irregular, שׁלח *shullach* and for the one abrupt sentence, “Arise, and arise we against her to battle,” he substitutes the Hebrew parallelism, “Gather ye yourselves and come against her; and arise to battle.”

Next, Obadiah has: “Behold! small have I made thee among the nations; despised art thou exceedingly.” Jeremiah connects the verse with the preceding by the addition of the particle “for,” and makes the whole flow on, depending on the word, “I have made. For behold! small have I made thee among the pagan, despised among men.” Obadiah, disregarding rules of parallelism, says; “The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, dweller in rock-clefts, his lofty seat; who says in his heart, who will bring me down to the earth?” Jeremiah with a softer flow; “Thy alarmingness hath deceived thee, the pride of thy heart; dweller in the clefts of the rock, holding the height of a hill.” Obadiah has very boldly; “Though thou exalt as the eagle, and though amid stars set thy nest, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord.” Jeremiah contracts this, omits an idiom, for boldness, almost alone in Hebrew, ואם בין כוכבים שים *ve'im bēyn kôkâbîym sîym* “and though amid stars set,” and has only, “when thou exaltest, as an eagle, thy nest, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord,” where also, through the omission of the words “amid stars,” the word “thence” has, in Jeremiah, no exact antecedent.

In a similar way, Jeremiah smooths down the abrupt appeal, “If thieves had come to thee, if spoilers of the night (how art thou cut off!) will they not steal their enough? If grape-gatherers had come to thee, will they not leave gleanings?” Jeremiah changes it into two even half-verses; If grape-gatherers had come to thee, will they not leave gleanings? If thieves by night, they had spoiled their enough.” Again, for the 5 bold words of Obadiah, איך נחפשׂו עשׂו נבעו מצפניו *'êyk nechâphas'û ʿês'âv nîbʿû*

matsepunâyv literally, “how are Esau outsearched, sought out his hidden places,” Jeremiah substitutes, “For I have laid bare Esau; I have discovered his hidden places, and he cannot be hid.”

Again, even an English reader of Jeremiah will have noticed that Jeremiah has many idioms or phrases or images, which he has pleasure in repeating. They are characteristic of his style. Now, in these verses which Obadiah and Jeremiah have in common, there is no one idiom which occurs elsewhere in Jeremiah; whereas, in the other verses of the prophecy of Jeremiah against Edom, in which they are, as it were, inlaid, there are several such, so to say, favorite turns of expressions. As such, there have been noticed, the short abrupt questions with which Jeremiah opens his prophecy against Edom; “Is wisdom no more in Teman?” the hurried imperatives accumulated upon one another, “Flee, turn, dwell deep;” the accumulation of words expressive of desolation; “Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste and a curse; and all her cities, perpetual wastes;” the combination of the two strong words, “shall be stupefied, shall hiss,” in amazement at her overthrow; “Everyone who goeth by her shall be stupefied” (we say “struck dumb”) “and shall hiss at all her plagues.”

Such again are the comparisons to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah; the image of “the lion coming up from the pride of Jordan”; the burden of these prophecies; “the day of the destruction of Edom and the time of his visitation. “Wherefore hear ye the counsel of the Lord against Edom and His purposes which He has purposed toward Teman.” Then also, whole verses are repeated in these prophecies.

Out of 16 verses of which the prophecy of Jeremiah against Edom consists, four are identical with those of Obadiah; a fifth embodies a verse of Obadiah‘s; of the 11 which remain, 10 have some turns of expression or idioms, more or fewer, which recur in Jeremiah, either in these prophecies against foreign nations, or in his prophecies generally. Now it would be wholly improbable that a prophet, selecting verses out of the prophecy of Jeremiah, should have selected precisely those which contain none of Jeremiah‘s characteristic expressions; whereas it perfectly fits in with the supposition that Jeremiah interwove verses of Obadiah with his own

prophecy, that in verses so interwoven there is not one expression which occurs elsewhere in Jeremiah.

One expression, which has been cited as an exception, if it is more than an accidental coincidence, the rather confirms this. Obadiah, in one of the earlier verses which Jeremiah has not here employed, says: "To the border have sent thee forth the men of thy covenant; the men of thy peace have deceived thee, have prevailed against thee; thy bread" (i. e., the men of thy bread, they who ate bread with thee) "have laid a snare under thee." In the middle of this threefold retribution for their misdealing to their brother Judah, there occur the words, "the men of thy peace," which are probably taken from a Psalm of David. But the word השיאך, "have deceived thee," corresponds to the word השיאוך in Obadiah 1:3. "deceived thee" hath the pride of thy heart." The deceit on the part of their allies was the fruit and consequence of their self-deceit through the pride of their own heart. The verse in Obadiah then stands in connection with the preceding, and it is characteristic of Obadiah to make one part of his prophecy bear upon another, to show the connection of thoughts and events by the connection of words. The taunting words against Zedekiah, which Jeremiah puts into the mouth of the women left in the house, when they should be brought before the king of Babylon‘s princes, "Thy friends," literally, "the men of thy peace, have set thee on, המיתוך, Jeremiah 38:22, and have prevailed against thee," may very probably be a reminiscence of the words of Obadiah (although only the words, "men of thy peace," are the same): but they stand in no connection with any other words in Jeremiah, as those of Obadiah do with the previous words.

The prophecy of Jeremiah in which he incorporated these words of Obadiah, itself also speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem as still future. For he says to Edom, "Lo! they whose judgment was not to drink the cup, shall indeed drink it; and shalt thou be unpunished? Thou shalt not be unpunished, for thou shalt indeed drink it." It is plainly wrong (as even our own version has done) to render the self-same expression ישתו שׁתו as past, in the first place, "have assuredly drunken," and as future in the second, תשתה שתו כי, for thou shalt surely drink of it." Since they must be future in the second place, so must they also in the first. Jeremiah too elsewhere contrasts, as future, God‘s dealings with His own people and with the

nations, in this self-same form of words. “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Ye shall certainly drink, for lo! I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by My Name, and shall ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished, for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord of hosts.” The form of words, להתע מחל בעיר־אנכי הנה, in itself requires, at least a proximate future, (for הנה with a participle always denotes a future, nearer or further) and the words themselves were spoken in the fourth year of Jehoiakim.

In that same fourth year of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah received from God the command to write in that scroll which Jehoiakim burned when a little of it had been read to him, “all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel and against Judah and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah even unto this day.” After Jehoiakim had burned the scroll, that same collection was renewed, at God‘s command, “with many like words”. Now immediately upon this, follows, in the Book of Jeremiah, the collection of prophecies against the foreign nations, and in this collection three contain some notice that they were written in that 4th year of Jehoiakim, and only the two last, those against Elam and Babylon, which may have been added to the collection, bear any later date. The prophecy against Babylon is at its close marked as wholly by itself, For Seraiah is bidden, when he had come to Babylon, and had “made an end of reading the book,” to “bind a stone” upon it, and “cast it into the Euphrates,” and say, “Thus shall Babylon sink, anew shall not rise again from the evil which I bring upon her.”

These chapters then as to Babylon although connected with the preceding in that they are prophecies against enemies of God‘s people, are marked as in one way detached from them, a book by themselves. And in conformity with this, they are stated, in the beginning, to have been written in the 4th year of Zedekiah. In like way, the prophecy against Elam, which was uttered in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, was occasioned probably by misdeeds of that then savage people, serving, as they did, in the army of the Chaldees against Jerusalem, when Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiakim captive to Babylon. It is distinguished from the earlier prophecies, in that Elam was no inveterate enemy of God‘s people, and the instrument of his chastisement was not to be Babylon.

Those earlier prophecies Obadiah 1:7. closes; מהם אחד אתה גם *gam 'attâh' echâd mēhem* "thou too as one of them," Obadiah 1:11; עשׂה אשׁר *'ăsher ʿâs'âh* יעשׂה לך *yēʿâs'âh lâk* after the long exhortation in Obadiah 1:12-14. or the 3 words היו כלו והיו *vehâyâh kelô'* לו *lô hâyû* which close the description in Obadiah 1:16-17. or those three which so wonderfully sum up the whole prophecy, המלוכה אדני והיתה *vehâyethâh 'ădonāy hammelûkâh* and the kingdom shall be the Lord's." Even the repetition which occurs in the prophet, adds to the same effect, as in the two brief words, נכרי ביום *beyôm nokrîy* אבד ביום *beyôm 'âbad* זרה ביום *beyôm zârâh* אידם ביום *beyôm 'ēydâm* אידו ביום *beyôm 'ēydô* Obadiah 1:12-13, with which he closes each clause of the exhortation against malicious joy in the calamity of their brother. The characteristic, vivid detail in description, and, in the midst of it, great conciseness without sameness, occurs throughout Obadiah.

It would then be the more strange, that a prophecy so brief and so connected as that of Obadiah should have been severed into two (one part of which is to belong to some earlier prophet, the other is to have been written after the destruction of Jerusalem), but that the motive of this disruption of the prophecy is apparent. "The oracle on Edom preserved under the name of Obadiah can," says one, "in its present form, be of no earlier date than the Babylonian captivity. The destruction and entire desolation of Jerusalem is here described; the prophet himself wrote among the exiles." It cannot be of any earlier date, according to this writer, because, in his belief, there cannot be any certain prediction of details of the future, or any knowledge of that future, beyond those dim anticipations which man's own conscience and the survey of God's ordinary providence may suggest; a cannot, which presupposes another cannot, that God cannot reveal Himself to His creatures.

But then this writer also could not altogether escape the impression, that great part of this prophecy must belong to a period long before the captivity. The only way of reconciling these contradictions, this must of external evidence, and this cannot of antidoctrinal prejudice, was to divide in two this living whole, and to assign to the earlier period such portions relating to Edom, as contained no allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem. This then is done. "Further investigation," the writer proceeds, "shows, that the later

prophet employed a fragment of an earlier prophet as to Edom. More than half of what is now extant, i. e., Obadiah 1:1-10, half of Obadiah 1:17, and Obadiah 1:18, by their contents, language, and coloring, indicate very clearly such an earlier prophet; and moreover, about the same time Jeremiah employed the earlier fragment, in that very much out of Obadiah 1:1-9 recurs in Jeremiah, but nothing of the words which belong most visibly to the later prophet, Obadiah 1:11-16, Obadiah 1:19-21."

1. Now, plainly, since Jeremiah is not here to tell us, why he did incorporate in his prophecy certain verses, and did not refer to certain other verses of Obabiah, it is, in the last degree, rash to make a positive inference from the mere fact of his not employing those verses, that he had them not to employ. He does embody in his prophecy the five first verses of Obadiah, and there the correspondence between the two prophets almost ceases. The "thought" of Obadiah 1:6, but not one word of it recurs in Jeremiah to Obadiah 1:7; there is no allusion whatever; of Obadiah 1:8, again, the thought is retained, but only "one word," and that, in a form altogether different. This eighth verse is the last in Obadiah, to which Jeremiah refers. Ewald then has to manufacture his "earlier prophet" out of those five first verses, which Jeremiah does embody; of other two, of which the thought only recurs in Jeremiah; and five more, to which there is, in Jeremiah, no allusion whatever; and having culled these ad libitum out of the whole chapter, he argues against the non-existence of the rest on the ground that Jeremiah does not employ them, whereas Jeremiah equally does not employ five of those, the existence of which at that same time Ewald acknowledges, and to two others Jeremiah alludes but very distantly. Since Jeremiah's not alluding to five of these verses, does not prove, according to Ewald, that they did not then exist, neither does his not employing the remainder prove it as to them.

2. Jeremiah assigns no ground for the punishment of Edom, except his pride; nor does he, in any of those prophecies as to those lesser nations, foretell anything as to the future of Judah. This was not assigned to him, as his subject here. He does in the prophecies against Egypt and Babylon; for those were the great dynasties, on whom, in human eyes, the existence of Judah depended. There he fortells, that God would "make a full end of all the nations whither" He had "driven" them, but not "of Jacob" His

“servant”. The future lot of Judah, as a whole, did not depend on those little nations. It may be on this ground, that Jeremiah foretells “their” destruction and the restoration of Moab and Ammon, and is silent as to Judah. Again, the immediate punishment of all these petty nations through Nebuchadnezzar was the subject of Jeremiah‘s prophecy, not ulterior suffering at the hands of Judah. Now these subjects, the “violence” of Esau against his “brother Jacob,” as the ground of Edom‘s punishment. In Obadiah 1:15-16 Obadiah, having rehearsed the offence, repeats the sentence), the future enlargement of Jacob, and an ulterior retribution on Edom through Judah, occupy most of those verses of Obadiah, to which there is no allusion in Jeremiah. This accounts (if there were any need to account for it) for the absence of allusion to almost all of Obadiah to which Jeremiah does not allude, both as to the part which Ewald accounts for in “his” way, and as to most of that part which he leaves unaccounted for.

But altogether, it must be said, that God‘s prophets employ freely, as God taught them, what they do employ of the former prophets. They do not copy them in a mechanical way, as if they were simply re-writing a work which lay before them, so that we should have to account for anything which they did not think good to repeat. In making the similar use of Isaiah‘s prophecy as to Moab, Jeremiah makes no reference to the five first verses.

3. So, far from “writing among the exiles,” Obadiah implies that the captivity had not yet commenced. He speaks of Judah and Benjamin, as in their own land, and foretells that they shall enlarge themselves on all sides. Hosea and Amos had, at that time, prophesied the final destruction of the “kingdom” of Israel and the dispersion of the ten tribes. In conformity with this, Obadiah foretells to the two tribes, that they should occupy the vacated places of the land of promise. In contrast with this enlargement of Judah and Benjamin, he speaks of those already in captivity, and prophesies their restoration. He speaks of two bodies of present exiles, “the captivity of “this” host of the children of Israel,” “the captivity of Jerusalem which is at Sepharad.” Of these he probably says, “The captivity of this host of the children of Israel which are among the Canaanites as far as Zarephath, and the captivity of Jerusalem which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the South.” Both these sets of captives must have been limited in number.

Those of “Jerusalem at Sepharad” or Sardis the capital of the Lydian empire, could only have been such as were exported by means of the slave trade.

The only public settlement of Jews there, was in times long subsequent, about 200 b.c., when Antiochus the Great, in order to check the seditions in Lydia and Phrygia, “removed thither at much cost 2,000 Jewish families out of Mesopotamia and Babylonia, with their goods,” on account of their tried faithfulness and zealous service to his forefathers. This removal, accompanied with grants of land, exemption from tribute for 10 years, personal and religious protection, “was” a continuation of the commenced “dispersion;” it was not a “captivity.” They were the descendants of those who might have returned to their country, if they would. They were in the enjoyment of all the temporal benefits, for which their forefathers had bartered their portion in their own land. There was nothing special as to why they should be singled out as the objects of God‘s promise. Jews were then dispersing everywhere, to be the future disciples or persecutors of the Gospel in all lands. Seleucus Nicator, a century before, had found Jews in Asia and Lower Syria, and had given them like privileges with the Macedonians and Greeks whom he settled there. Jews had shared his wars. Alexander had, at Alexandria, bestowed like privileges on the Egyptian Jews In such times, then, there was no “captivity at Sepharad;” no Lydian empire; nothing to distinguish the Jews there, from any others who remained willingly expatriated.

On the other side, the place which the prophet assigns to those captives on their return is but a portion of Judah, “the cities of the South,” which he does not represent as unpopulated. In like way, whether the words as to Israel are rendered, “which are” among “the Canaanites as far as Zarephath,” or, “shall” possess “the Canaanites as far as Zarephath,” in either case the prophet must be speaking of a very limited number. Had he been speaking in reference to the ten tribes or their restoration, he would not have assigned their territory, “Ephraim, Samaria, Gilead,” to the two tribes, nor would he have assigned to them so small a tract. This limited number of captives exactly agrees with the state of things, supposing Obadiah to have lived, when, according to his place in the Canon, he did

live, near the time of Joel. For Joel denounces God‘s judgments on Tyre, Zidon and Philistia for selling unto the Grecians the children of Judah and Jerusalem. These captives, of whom Obadiah speaks, were some probably yet unsold, at Sarepta, and some at Sepharad or Sardis among the Grecians. On the other hand, it is inconceivable that Obadiah would have contrasted the present captivity, “this captivity of the children of Israel,” “the captivity of Jerusalem which is in Sepharad,” with Judah and Benjamin in their ancient possessions, had Judah and Benjamin been, when he wrote, themselves in captivity in Babylon, or that he would have prophesied concerning some little fragment of Israel, that it should he restored, and would have passed over the whole body of the ten tribes, if, when he prophesied, it had been in captivity. Nor is there again any likelihood, that by “this captivity of Jerusalem in Sepharad,” Obadiah means any captives, among whom he himself was (which is the whole ground-work of this theory of Ewald), for, in that case, he would probably have addressed the consolation and the promise of return TO them (as do the other prophets) and not have spoken OF them only.

A few years hence, and this theory will be among the things which have been. The connection of thought in Obadiah is too close, the characteristics of his style occur too uniformly throughout his brief prophecy, to admit of its being thus dislocated. Nowhere, throughout his prophecy, can one word or form be alleged, of which it can even be said, that it was used more frequently in later Hebrew. All is one original, uniform, united whole.

“Obadiah,” says Hugh of S. Victor, “is simple in language, manifold in meaning; few in words, abundant in thoughts, according to that, ‹the wise man is known by the fewness of his words.‘ He directeth his prophecy, according to the letter, against Edom; allegorically, he inveighs against the world; morally, against the flesh. Bearing an image of the Saviour, he hinteth at his coming through whom the world is destroyed, through whom the flesh is subdued, through whom freedom is restored.” “Among all the prophets,” says another, “he is the briefest in number of words; in the grace of mysteries he is their equal.”

OBADIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The vision of Obadiah - , i. e., of "the worshiper of God." The prophet would be known only by that which his name imports, that he worshiped God. He tells us in this double title, through whom the prophecy came, and from whom it came. His name authenticated the prophecy to the Jewish Church. Thenceforth, he chose to remain wholly hidden. He entitles it "a vision," as the prophets were called "seers" 1 Samuel 9:9, although he relates, not the vision which he saw, but its substance and meaning. Probably the future was unfolded to him in the form of sights spread out before his mind, of which he spoke in words given to him by God. His language consists of a succession of pictures, which he may have seen, and, in his picture language, described. "As prophecy is called "the word," because God spoke to the prophets within, so it is called "vision," because the prophet saw, with the eyes of the mind and by the light wherewith they are illumined, what God willeth to be known to them." The name expresses also the certainty of their knowledge. "Among the organs of our senses, sight has the most evident knowledge of those things which are the object of our senses. Hence, the contemplation of the things which are true is called "vision," on account of the evidence and assured certainty. On that ground the prophet was called "seer."

Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom - This second title states, that the whole which follows is from God. What immediately follows is said in Obadiah's own person; but all, whether so spoken or directly in the Person of God, was alike the word of God. God spake in or by the prophets, in both ways, since 2 Peter 1:21 "prophecy came not by the will of man, but holy men of God spake" as they were "moved by the Holy Spirit." Obadiah, in that he uses, in regard to his whole prophecy, words which other prophets use in delivering a direct message from God, ascribes the whole of his prophecy to God, as immediately as other prophets did any words which God commanded them to speak. The words are a rule for all prophecy, that all comes directly from God.

We have heard a rumor - , rather, "a report;" literally "a hearing, a thing heard," as Isaiah says Isaiah 53:1, "Who hath believed our report? A "report" is certain or uncertain, according to the authority from whom it comes. This "report" was certainly true, since it was "from the Lord." By

the plural, we, Obadiah may have associated with himself, either other prophets of his own day as Joel and Amos, who, with those yet earlier, as Balaam and David, had prophesied against Edom, or the people, for whose sakes God made it known to him. In either case, the prophet does not stand alone for himself. He hears with "the goodly company of the prophets;" and the people of God hear in him, as Isaiah says again Isaiah 21:10, "that which I have heard from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you."

And an ambassador is sent among the pagan - The "ambassador" is any agent, visible or invisible, sent by God. Human powers, who wish to stir up war, send human messengers. All things stand at God's command, and whatever or whomsoever He employs, is a messenger from Him. He uses our language to us. He may have employed an angel, as He says Psalm 78:49, "He sent evil angels among them," and as, through the permission given to a lying spirit 1 Kings 22:21-23. He executed His judgments upon Ahab, of his own free will believing the evil spirit, and disbelieving Himself. So Judges 9:23 "God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem," allowing His rebellious spirit to bring about the punishment of evil men, by inflaming yet more the evil passions, of which they were slaves. Evil spirits, in their malice and rebellion, while stirring up the lust of conquest, are still God's messengers, in that He overrules them; as, to Paul 2 Corinthians 12:7, "the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him," was still the gift of God. "It was given me," he says.

Arise ye and let us rise - He who rouseth them, says, "Arise ye," and they quickly echo the words, "and let us arise." The will of God is fulfilled at once. While eager to accomplish their own ends, they fulfill, the more, the purpose of God. Whether, the first agent is man's own passions, or the evil spirit who stirs them, the impulse spreads from the one or the few to the many. But all catch the spark, cast in among them. The summons finds a ready response. "Arise," is the commend of God, however given; "let us arise," is the eager response of man's avarice or pride or ambition, fulfilling impetuously the secret will of God; as a tiger, let loose upon man by man, fulfills the will of its owner, while sating its own thirst for blood. So Isaiah hears Isaiah 13:4 "the noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people, a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together." The Medes and Persians thought at that time of nothing less, than that they were instruments of the One God, whom they knew not. But Isaiah

continues; “The Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle;” and, when it was fulfilled, Cyrus saw and owned it Ezra 1:1-2.

Verse 2

Behold, I have made thee small - God, having declared His future judgments upon Edom, assigns the first ground of those judgments. Pride was the root of Edom‘s sin, then envy; then followed exultation at his brother‘s fall, hard-heartedness and bloodshed. All this was against the disposition of God‘s Providence for him. God had made him small, in numbers, in honor, in territory. Edom was a wild mountain people. It was strongly guarded in the rock-girt dwelling, which God had assigned it. Like the Swiss or the Tyrolese of old, or the inhabitants of Mount Caucasus now, it had strength for resistance through the advantages of its situation, not for aggression, unless it were that of a robber-horde. But lowness, as people use it, is the mother either of lowliness or pride. A low estate, acquiesced in by the grace of God, is the parent of lowliness; when rebelled against, it generates a greater intensity of pride than greatness, because that pride is against nature itself and God‘s appointment. The pride of human greatness, sinful as it is, is allied to a natural nobility of character. Copying pervertedly the greatness of God, the soul, when it receives the Spirit of God, casts off the slough, and retains its nobility transfigured by grace. The conceit of littleness has the hideousness of those monstrous combinations, the more hideous, because unnatural, not a corruption only but a distortion of nature. Edom never attempted anything of moment by itself. “Thou art greatly despised.” Weakness, in itself, is neither despicable nor “despised.” It is despised only, when it vaunts itself to be, what it is not. God tells Edom what, amid its pride, it was in itself, “despicable;” what it would thereafter be, “despised”.

Verse 3

The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee - Not the strength of its mountain-fastnesses, strong though they were, deceived Edom, but “the pride of his heart.” That strength was but the occasion which called forth the “pride.” Yet, it was strong in its abode. God, as it were, admits it to them. “Dweller in the clefts of the rocks, the loftiness of his habitation.” “The whole southern country of the Edomites,” says Jerome, “from Eleutheropolis to Petra and Selah (which are the possessions of Esau), hath minute dwellings in caves; and on account of the oppressive heat of the sun, as being a southern province, hath under ground cottages.” Its inhabitants,

whom Edom expelled Deuteronomy 2:12, were hence called Horites, i. e., dwellers in caves. Its chief city was called Selah or Petra, "rock." It was a city single of its kind amid the works of man. "The eagles" placed their nests in the rocky caves at a height of several hundred feet above the level of the valley … . The power of the conception which would frame a range of mountain-rocks into a memorial of the human name, which, once of noble name and high bepraised, sought, through might of its own, to clothe itself with the imperishablness of the eternal Word, is here the same as in the contemporary monuments of the temple-rocks of Elephantine or at least those of the Egyptian Thebes." The ornamental buildings, so often admired by travelers, belong to a later date.

Those nests in the rocks, piled over one another, meeting you in every recess, lining each fresh winding of the valleys, as each opened on the discoverer, often at heights, where (now that the face of the rock and its approach, probably hewn in it, have crumbled away) you can scarcely imagine how human foot ever climbed, must have been the work of the first hardy mountaineers, whose feet were like the chamois.

Such habitations imply, not an uncivilized, only a hardy, active, people. In those narrow valleys, so scorched by a southern sun, they were at once the coolest summer dwellings, and, amid the dearth of fire-wood, the warmest in winter. The dwellings of the living and the sepulchres of the dead were, apparently, hewn out in the same soft red sandstone-rock, and perhaps some of the dwellings of the earlier rock-dwellers were converted into graves by the Nabataeans and their successors who lived in the valley. The central space has traces of other human habitations. "The ground is covered with heaps of hewn stones, foundations of buildings and vestiges of paved streets, all clearly indicating that a large city once existed here". "They occupy two miles in circumference, affording room in an oriental city for 30,000 or 40,000 inhabitants."

Its theater held "above 3,000." Probably this city belonged altogether to the later, Nabataean, Roman, or Christian times. Its existence illustrates the extent of the ancient city of the rock. The whole space, rocks and valleys, imbedded in the mountains which girt it in, lay invisible even from the summit of Mount Hor. So nestled was it in its rocks, that an enemy could

only know of its existence, an army could only approach it, through treachery. Two known approaches only, from the east and west, enter into it.

The least remarkable is described as lying amid “wild fantastic mountains,” “rocks in towering masses,” “over steep and slippery passes,” or “winding in recesses below.” Six hours of such passes led to the western side of Petra. The Greeks spoke of it as two days‘ journey from their “world” Approach how you would, the road lay through defiles.

The Greeks knew but of “one ascent to it, and that,” (as they deemed) “made by hand;” (that from the east) The Muslims now think the Sik or chasm, the two miles of ravine by which it is approached, to be supernatural, made by the rod of Moses when he struck the rock. Demetrius, “the Besieger”, at the head of 8,000 men, (the 4,000 infantry selected for their swiftness of foot from the whole army) made repeated assaults on the place, but “those within had an easy victory from its commanding height”. “A few hundred men might defend the entrance against a large army.”

Its width is described as from 10 to 30 feet, “a rent in a mountain-wall, a magnificent gorge, a mile and a half long, winding like the most flexible of rivers, between rocks almost precipitous, but that they overlap and crumble and crack, as if they would crash over you. The blue sky only just visible above. The valley opens, but contracts again. Then it is honey-combed with cavities of all shapes and sizes. Closing once more, it opens in the area of Petra itself, the torrent-bed passing now through absolute desolation and silence, though strewn with the fragments which shew that you once entered on a splendid and busy city, gathered along in the rocky banks, as along the quays of some great northern river.”

Beyond this immediate rampart of rocks, there lay between it and the Eastern Empires that vast plateau, almost unapproachable by an enemy who knew not its hidden artificial reservoirs of waters. But even the entrance gained, what gain beside, unless the people and its wealth were betrayed to a surprise? Striking as the rock-girt Petra was, a gem in its mountain-setting, far more marvelous was it, when, as in the prophet‘s time, the rock itself was Petra. Inside the defile, an invader would be outside the city yet.

He might himself become the besieged, rather than the besieger. In which of these eyries along all those ravines were the eagles to be found? From which of those lairs might not Edom‘s lion-sons burst out upon them? Multitudes gave the invaders no advantage in scaling those mountain-sides, where, observed themselves by an unseen enemy, they would at last have to fight man to man. What a bivouac were it, in that narrow spot, themselves encircled by an enemy everywhere, anywhere, and visibly nowhere, among those thousand caves, each larger cave, may be, an ambuscade! In man‘s sight Edom‘s boast was well-founded; but what before God?

That saith in his heart - The heart has its own language, as distinct and as definite as that formed by the lips, mostly deeper, often truer. It needeth not the language of the lips, to offend God. Since He answers the heart which seeks Him, so also He replies in displeasure to the heart which despises Him. “Who shall bring me down to the earth?” Such is the language of all self-sufficient security. “Can Alexander fly?” answered the Bactrian chief from another Petra. On the second night he was prisoner or slain. Edom probably, under his who? included God Himself, who to him was the God of the Jews only. Yet, men now, too, include God in their defiance, and scarcely veil it from themselves by speaking of “fortune” rather than God; or, if of a coarser sort, they do not even veil it, as in that common terrible saying, “He fears neither God nor devil.” God answers his thought;

Verse 4

Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle - (or, thy nest) The eagle builds its nest in places nearly inaccessible to man. The Edomites were a race of eagles. It is not the language of poetry or exaggeration; but is poetic, because so true. “And though thou set thy nest in the stars.” This is men‘s language, strange as it is. “I shall touch the stars with my crown;” “I shall strike the stars with my lofty crown;” “since I have touched heaven with my lance.” As Job says Job 20:6-7, “Though his excellency mount up to the heavens and his head reacheth unto the clouds,” yet,” he shall perish forever, like his own dung.” And Isaiah to the king of Babylon, the type of Anti Christ and of the Evil one Isaiah 14:13, Isaiah 14:11, “Thou hast said in thy heart, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; thy pomp is brought down to the grave, the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee”. “The pagan saw this. AEsop, when asked, what doeth God?

said, ‹He humbles the proud and exalts the humble.‘ And another, ‹whom morning‘s dawn beholdeth proud, The setting sun beholdeth bowed. ‹“

“They who boast of being Christians, and are on that ground self-satisfied, promising themselves eternal life, and thinking that they need not fear Hell, because they are Christians and hold the faith of the Apostles, while their lives are altogether alien from Christianity, are such Edomites, priding themselves because they dwell in clefts of the rocks. For it sufficeth not to believe what Christ and the apostles taught, unless thou do what they commanded. These spiritual Edomites, from a certain love or some fear of future torments, are moved by grief for sin, and give themselves to repentance, fastings, almsgiving, which is no other than to enter the clefts of the rocks; because they imitate the works of Christ and the Italy apostles who are called rocks, like those to whom John said, Matthew 3:7. “O ye generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

But, since they have no humility, they become thereby the more inflated with pride, and the more of such works they do, the more pleasures they allow themselves, and become daily the prouder and the wickeder. “The pride” then “of” their “heart deceiveth” them, because they seem in many things to follow the deeds of the holy, and they fear no enemies, as though they “dwelt in clefts of the rocks.” They exalt their throne, in that, through the shadow of lofty deeds, they seem to have many below them, mount as high as they can, and place themselves, where they think they need fear no peril. But to them the Lord saith, “Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle - thence will I bring thee down.” For, however exalted they be, and however they seem good and great, they are “brought down to the ground” and out from the caverns of the rocks, wherein they deemed that they dwelt securely, in that they lapse into overt shameful sin; from where all perceive, what they were then too, when they were thought to be righteous.

And striking is it, that they are compared to “eagles.” For although the eagle fly aloft, yet thence, it looks to the earth and the carcasses and animals which it would devour, as Job writes of it Job 39:28-30, “She dwelleth and abideth upon the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey; her eyes behold afar off; her young ones also suck up blood, and where the slain are, there is she.” So these, while they pretend perfection, never turn their eyes away from

earthly goods, always casting them on honors, or wealth, or pleasure, without which they count life to be no life. Well, too, is it called their nest. For, toil how they may, in seeking an assured, restful, security of life, yet, what they build, is a nest made of hay and stubble, constructed with great toil, but lightly destroyed. This security of rest they lose, when they are permitted, by the just judgment of God, to fall into uncleanness, ambition or foulest sins, and are deprived of the glory which they unjustly gained, and their folly becomes manifest to all. Of such, among the apostles, was the traitor Judas. But the rich too and the mighty of this world, although they think that their possessions and what, with great toil, they have gained, when they have raised themselves above others, are most firm, it is but that nest which they have placed among the stars, soon to be dissipated by wind and rain."

Verse 5

If thieves came to thee - The prophet describes their future punishment, by contrast with that which, as a marauding people, they well knew. Thieves and robbers spoil only for their petty end. They take what comes to hand; what they can, they carry off shortness of time, difficulty of transport, necessity of providing for a retreat, limit their plunder. When they have gorged themselves, they depart. "Their" plunder is limited. The "grape-gatherer" leaves gleanings. God promises to His own people, under the same image, that they should have a remnant left Isaiah 17:6; Isaiah 24:13. "Gleaning grapes shall be left in it." It shall be, "as gleaning grapes, when the vintage is done." The prophet anticipates the contrast by a burst of sympathy. In the name of God, he mourns over the destruction which he fore-announces. He laments over the destruction, even of the deadly enemy of his people. "How art thou destroyed!" So the men of God are accustomed to express their amazement at the greatness of the destruction of the ungodly Psalm 73:19. "How are they brought into desolation as in a moment!" Isaiah 14:4, Isaiah 14:12. "How hath the oppressor ceased! How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" Jeremiah 50:23. "How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken! how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations!" Jeremiah 51:41. "How is Sheshach taken! How is the praise of the whole earth surprised."

Verse 6

How are the things of Esau searched out! - literally, "How are Esau, out searched!" i. e., Esau, as a whole and in all its parts and in all its belongings, all its people and all its property, one and all. The name "Esau" speaks of them as a whole; the plural verb, "are outsearched," represents all its parts. The word signifies a diligent search and tracking out, as in Zephaniah Zephaniah 1:12, "I will search out Jerusalem with candles," as a man holdeth a light in every dark corner, in seeking diligently some small thing which has been lost. "The hidden things," i. e., his hidden treasures, "are sought up." The enemy who should come upon him, should make no passing foray, but should abide there, seeking out of their holes in the rocks, themselves and their treasures. Petra, through its rocky ramparts, was well suited, as Nineveh in the huge circuit of its massive walls was well built, to be the receptacle of rapine.

And now it was gathered, as rapine is, first or last, for the spoiler. It was safe stored up there, to be had for the seeking. No exit, no way of escape. Edom, lately so full of malicious energy, so proud, should lie at the proud foot of its conqueror, passive as the sheep in this large shamble, or as the inanimate hoards which they had laid up and which were now "tracked out." Soon after Obadiah's prophecy, Judah, under Ahaz, lost again to Syria, Elath 2 Kings 14:6, which it had now under Uzziah recovered 2 Kings 14:22. The Jews were replaced, it is uncertain whether by Edomites or by some tribe of Syrians. If Syrians, they were then friendly; if Edomites, Elath itself must, on the nearby captivity of Syria, have become the absolute possession of Edom. Either way, commerce again poured its wealth into Edom. To what end? To be possessed and to aggrandize Edom, thought her wealthy and her wise men; to be searched out and plundered, said the word of God. And it was so.

Verse 7

All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border - Destruction is more bitter, when friends aid in it. Edom had all along with unnatural hatred persecuted his brother, Jacob. So, in God's just judgment, its friends should be among its destroyers. Those confederates were probably Moab and Ammon, Tyre and Zidon, with whom they united to resist Nebuchadnezzar Jeremiah 27:3, and seduced Zedekiah to rebel, although Moab, Ammon, and Edom turned against him Zephaniah 2:8; Psalm 41:9, "mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who did eat of

my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." As they had done, so should it be done to them. "They that take the sword," our Lord says Matthew 26:52, "shall perish by the sword;" so they who show bad faith, are the objects of bad faith, as Isaiah says. The proverb which says, "there is honor among thieves," attests how limited such mutual faith is. It lasts, while it seems useful. Obadiah's description relates to one and the same class, the allies of Edom; but it heightens as it goes on; not confederates only, but those confederates, friends; not friends only, but friends indebted to them, familiar friends; those joined to them through that tie, so respected in the East, in that they had eaten of their bread. Those banded with them should, with signs of friendship, conduct them to their border, in order to expel them; those at peace should prevail against them in war; those who ate their bread should requite them with a snare.

There is none understanding in him - The brief words comprise both cause and effect. Had Edom not been without understanding, he had not been thus betrayed; and when betrayed in his security, be was as one stupefied. Pride and self-confidence betray man to his fall; when he is fallen, self-confidence betrayed passes readily into despair. In the sudden shock, the mind collapses. People do not use the resources which they yet have, because what they had overvalued, fails them. Undue confidence is the parent of undue fear. The Jewish historian relates, how, in the last dreadful siege, when the outer wall began to give way, "fear fell on the tyrants, more vehement than the occasion called for. For, before the enemy had mounted, they were paralyzed, and ready to flee. You might see men, aforetime stouthearted and insolent in their impiety, crouching and trembling, so that, wicked as they were, the change was pitiable in the extreme. Here, especially, one might learn the power of God upon the ungodly. For the tyrants bared themselves of all security, and, of their own accord, came down from the towers, where no force, but famine alone, could have taken them: For those three towers were stronger than any engines."

Verse 8

Shall I not in that day even destroy the wise out of Edom? - It was then no common, no recoverable, loss of wisdom, for God, the Author of wisdom, had destroyed it. The pagan had a proverb, "whom God willeth to destroy, he first dements." So Isaiah foretells of Judah Isaiah 29:14, "The wisdom of their wise shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent

shall be hid." Edom was celebrated of old for its wisdom. Eliphaz, the chief of Job's friends, the representative of human wisdom, was a Temanite Job 4:1. A vestige of the name of the Shuhites, from where came another of his friends, probably still lingers among the mountains of Edom. Edom is doubtless included among the "sons of the East" 1 Kings 4:30 whose wisdom is set as a counterpart to that of Egypt, the highest human wisdom of that period, by which that of Solomon would be measured. "Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East country and all the wisdom of Egypt." In Baruch, they are still mentioned among the chief types of human wisdom (Jeremiah 49:7, in using, these words of Obadiah, says: "Is wisdom no more in Teman? Is counsel perished from the prudent? Is their wisdom vanished?" He speaks, as though Edom were a known abode of human wisdom, so that it was strange that it was found there no more. He speaks of the Edomites "as prudent," discriminating, full of judgment, and wonders that counsel should have "perished" from them. They had it eminently then, before it perished. They thought themselves wise; they were thought so; but God took it away at their utmost need. So He says of Egypt Isaiah 19:3, Isaiah 19:11-12. "I will destroy the counsel thereof. The counsel of the wise counselors of Pharaoh is become brutish. How say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings? Where are they? Who are thy wise? And let them tell thee now, and let them know, what the Lord of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt." And of Judah Jeremiah 19:7. "I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place."

The people of the world think that they hold their wisdom and all God's natural gifts, independently of the Giver (God). God, by the events of His natural Providence, as here by His word, shows, through some sudden withdrawal of their wisdom, that it is His, not their's! People wonder at the sudden failure, the flaw in the well-arranged plan, the one over-confident act which ruins the whole scheme, the over-shrewdness which betrays itself, or the unaccountable oversight. They are amazed that one so shrewd should overlook this or that, and think not that He, in whose hands are our powers of thought, supplied not just that insight, Whereon the whole depended.

Verse 9

And thy mighty, O Teman, shall be dismayed - The pagan, more religiously than we, ascribed panic to the immediate action of one of their

gods, or to Nature deified, Pan, i. e., the Universe: wrong as to the being whom they "ignorantly worshiped;" right, in ascribing it to what they thought a divine agency. Holy Scripture at times discovers the hidden agency, that we may acknowledge God‘s Hand in those terrors which we cannot account for. So it relates, on occasion of Jonathan‘s slaughter of the Philistine garrison 1 Samuel 14:15, "there was a trembling in the host and in the field, and among all the people: the garrison and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked, so it became a trembling from God," or (in our common word,) a panic from God. All then failed Edom. Their allies and friends betrayed them; God took away their wisdom. Wisdom was turned into witlessness, and courage into cowardice; "to the end that every one from mount Esau may be cut off by slaughter." The prophet sums up briefly God‘s end in all this. The immediate means were man‘s treachery, man‘s violence, the failure of wisdom in the wise, and of courage in the brave. The end of all, in God‘s will, was their destruction Romans 8:28.

By slaughter - , literally "from slaughter," may mean either the immediate or the distant cause of their being "cut off," either the means which God employed, "All things work together for good to those who love God," and for evil to those who hate Him, that Edom was cut off by one great slaughter by the enemy; or that which moved God to give them over to destruction, their own "slaughter" of their brethren, the Jews, as it follows;

Verse 10

For thy violence against thy brother Jacob - To Israel God had commanded: (Deuteronomy 23:7-8 (Deuteronomy 23:8, Deuteronomy 23:9 in the Hebrew text)), "Thou shalt not abbor an Edomite, for he is thy brother. The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of the Lord in their third generation." Edom did the contrary to all this. "Violence" includes all sorts of ill treatment, from one with whom "might is right," "because it is in the power of their hand" Micah 2:2. to do it. This they had done to the descendants of their brother, and him, their twin brother, Jacob. They helped the Chaldaeans in his overthrow, rejoiced in his calamity, thought that, by this cooperation, they had secured themselves. What, when from those same Chaldees, those same calamities, which they had aided to inflict on their brother, came on themselves, when, as they had betrayed him, they were themselves betrayed; as they had exulted in his overthrow, so their allies exulted in their‘s! The "shame" of

which the prophet spoke, is not the healthful distress at the evil of sin, but at its evils and disappointments. Shame at the evil which sin is, works repentance and turns aside the anger of God. Shame at the evils which sin brings, in itself leads to further sins, and endless, fruitless, shame. Edom had laid his plans, had succeeded; the wheel, in God‘s Providence, turned around and he was crushed.

So Hosea said Hosea 10:6, “they shall be ashamed through their own counsels;” and Jeremiah Jeremiah 3:25, “we lie down in our shame and our confusion covereth us;” and David Psalm 109:29, “let mine adversaries be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own confusion as with a mantle.” As one, covered and involved in a cloak, can find no way to emerge; as one, whom the waters cover Exodus 15:10, is buried under them inextricably, so, wherever they went, whatever they did, shame covered them. So the lost shall “rise to shame and everlasting contempt” Daniel 12:2.

Thou shalt be cut off forever - One word expressed the sin, “violence;” four words, over against it, express the sentence; shame encompassing, everlasting excision. God‘s sentences are not completed at once in this life. The branches are lopped off; the tree decays; the axe is laid to the root; at last it is cut down. As the sentence on Adam, “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” was fulfilled, although Adam did not die, until he had completed 930 years Genesis 5:5, so was this on Edom, although fulfilled in stages and by degrees. Adam bore the sentence of death about him. The 930 years wore out at last that frame, which, but for sin, had been immortal. So Edom received this sentence of excision, which was, on his final impenitence, completed, although centuries witnessed the first earnest only of its execution. Judah and Edom stood over against each other, Edom ever bent on the extirpation of Judah. At that first destruction of Jerusalem, Edom triumphed, “Raze her! Raze her, even to the ground!” Yet, though it tarried long, the sentence was fulfilled. Judah, the banished, survived; Edom, the triumphant, was, in God‘s time and after repeated trials, “cut off forever.” Do we marvel at the slowness of God‘s sentence? Rather, marvel we, with wondering thankfulness, that His sentences, on nations or individuals, are slow, yet, stand we in awe, because, if unrepealed, they are sure. Centuries, to Edom, abated not their force or certainty; length of life changes not the sinner‘s doom.

Verse 11

In the day that thou stoodest on the other side - The time when they so stood, is not defined in itself, as a past or future. It is literally; "In the day of thy standing over against," i. e., to gaze on the calamities of God's people; "in the day of strangers carrying away his strength," i. e., "the strength of thy brother Jacob," of whom he had just spoken, "and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots on Jerusalem, thou too as one of them. One of them" they were not. Edom was no stranger, no alien, no part of the invading army; he whose strength they carried away, was, he had just said, his "brother Jacob." Edom burst the bonds of nature, to become what he was not, "as one of them." He purposely does not say, "thou too wast (היתה *hayîtha*) as of them;" as he would have said, had he wished to express what was past. Obadiah seeing, in prophetic vision, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the share which the Edomites took there at, describes it as it is before his eyes, as past.

We see before us, the enemy carrying off all in which the human strength of Judah lay, his forces and his substance, and casting lots on Jerusalem its people and its possessions. He describes it as past, yet, not more so, than the visitation itself which was to follow, some centuries afterward. Of both, he speaks alike as past; of both, as future. He speaks of them as past, as being so beheld in "His" mind in whose name he speaks. God's certain knowledge does not interfere with our free agency. "God compelleth no one to sin; yet, foreseeth all who shall sin of their own will. How then should He not justly avenge what, foreknowing, He does not compel them to do? For as no one, by his memory, compelleth to be done things which pass, so God, by His foreknowledge, doth not compel to be done things which will be. And as man remembereth some things which he hath done, and yet, hath not done all which he remembereth; so God foreknoweth all things whereof He is Himself the Author, and yet, is not Himself the Author of all which He foreknoweth. Of those things then, of which He is no evil Author, He is the just Avenger.

Verses 12-14

But thou shouldest not - , rather it means, and can only mean, "And look not (i. e., gaze not with pleasure) on the day of thy brother in the day of his becoming a stranger; and rejoice not over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; and enlarge not thy mouth in the day of distress. Enter not into the gate of My people in the day of their calamity; look not,

thou too, on his affliction in the day of his calamity; and lay not hands on his substance in the day of his calamity; And stand not on the crossway, to cut off his fugitives; and shut not up his remnants in the day of distress."

Throughout these three verses, Obadiah uses the future only. It is the voice of earnest, emphatic, dehortation and entreaty, not to do what would displease God, and what, if done, would be punished. He dehorts them from malicious rejoicing at their brother‘s fall, first in look, then in word, then in act, in covetous participation of the spoil, and lastly in murder. Malicious gazing on human calamity, forgetful of man‘s common origin and common liability to ill, is the worst form of human hate. It was one of the contumelies of the Cross, "they gaze, they look" with joy "upon Me." Psalm 22:17. The rejoicing over them was doubtless, as among savages, accompanied with grimaces (as in Psalm 35:19; Psalm 38:16). Then follow words of insult. The enlarging of the mouth is uttering a tide of large words, here against the people of God; in Ezekiel, against Himself Ezekiel 35:13: "Thus with your mouth ye have enlarged against Me and have multiplied your words against Me. I have heard."

Thereon, follows Edom‘s coming yet closer, "entering the gate of God‘s people" to share the conqueror‘s triumphant gaze on his calamity. Then, the violent, busy, laying the hands on the spoil, while others of them stood in cold blood, taking the "fork" where the ways parted, in order to intercept the fugitives before they were dispersed, or to shut them up with the enemy, driving them back on their pursuers. The prophet beholds the whole course of sin and persecution, and warns them against it, in the order, in which, if committed, they would commit it. Who would keep clear from the worst, must stop at the beginning. Still God‘s warnings accompany him step by step. At each step, some might stop. The warning, although thrown away on the most part, might arrest the few. At the worst, when the guilt had been contracted and the punishment had ensued, it was a warning for their posterity and for all thereafter.

Some of these things Edom certainly did, as the Psalmist prays Psalm 137:7, "Remember, O Lord, to the children of Edom the day of Jerusalem, who said, Lay bare, lay bare, even to the foundation in her." And Ezekiel Ezekiel 35:5-6 alluding to this language of Obadiah, "because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the

force of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time that their iniquity had an end, therefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee; sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee." Violence, bloodshed, unrelenting, deadly hatred against the whole people, a longing for their extermination, had been inveterate characteristics of Esau. Joel and Amos had already denounced God‘s judgments against them for two forms of this hatred, the murder of settlers in their own land or of those who were sold to them Joel 3:19; Amos 1:6, Amos 1:9, Amos 1:11.

Obadiah warns them against yet a third, intercepting their fugitives in their escape from the more powerful enemy. "Stand not in the crossway." Whoso puts himself in the situation to commit an old sin, does, in fact, will to renew it, and will, unless hindered from without, certainly do it. Probably he will, through sin‘s inherent power of growth, do worse. Having anew tasted blood, Ezekiel says, that they sought to displace God‘s people and remove God Himself Ezekiel 35:10-11. "Because thou hast said, these two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess it, whereas the Lord was there, therefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy, which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them."

Verse 15

For the day of the Lord is near upon all the pagan - The prophet once more enforces his warning by preaching judgment to come. "The day of the Lord" was already known Joel 1:15; Joel 2:1, Joel 2:31, as a day of judgment upon "all nations," in which God would "judge all the pagan," especially for their outrages against His people. Edom might hope to escape, were it alone threatened. The prophet announces one great law of God‘s retribution, one rule of His righteous judgment. "As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee." Pagan justice owned this to be just, and placed it in the mouth of their ideal of justice. "Blessed he," says the Psalmist Psalm 137:8, "that recompenses unto thee the deed which thou didst to us." "Blessed," because he was the instrument of God. Having laid down the rule of God‘s‘ judgment, he resumes his sentence to Edom, and speaks to all in him. In the day of Judahs calamity Edom made itself as "one of them." It, Jacob‘s brother, had ranked itself among the enemies of God‘s

people. It then too should be swept away in one universal destruction. It takes its place with them, undistinguished in its doom as in its guilt, or it stands out as their representa tive, having the greater guilt, because it had the greater light. Obadiah, in adopting Joel‘s words Joel 3:7, “thy reward shall return upon thine own head,” pronounces therewith on Edom all those terrible judgments contained in the sentence of retribution as they had been expanded by Joel.

Verse 16

For as ye have drunk - Revelry always followed pagan victory; often, desecration. The Romans bore in triumph the vessels of the second temple, Nebuchadnezzar carried away the sacred vessels of the first. Edom, in its hatred of God‘s people, doubtless regarded the destruction of Jerusalem, as a victory of polytheism (the gods of the Babylonians, and their own god Coze), over God, as Hyrcanus, in his turn, required them, when conquered, to be circumcised. God‘s “holy mountain is the hill of Zion,” including mount Moriah on which the temple stood. This they desecrated by idolatrous revelry, as, in contrast, it is said that, when the pagan enemy had been destroyed, “mount Zion” should “be holiness” Obadiah 1:17. Brutal, unfeeling, excess had been one of the sins on which Joel had declared God‘s sentence Joel 3:3, “they cast lots on My people; they sold a girl for wine, that they might drink.”

Pagan tempers remain the same; under like circumstances, they repeat the same circle of sins, ambition, jealousy, cruelty, bloodshed, and, when their work is done, excess, ribaldry, profaneness. The completion of sin is the commencement of punishment. “As ye,” he says, pagan yourselves and “as one of” the pagan “have drunk” in profane revelry, on the day of your brother‘s calamity, “upon My holy mountain,” defiling it, “so shall all the pagan drink” continually. But what draught? a draught which shall never cease, “continually; yea, they shall drink on, and shall swallow down,” a full, large, maddening draught, whereby they shall reel and perish, “and they shall be as though they had never been”. “For whoso cleaveth not to Him Who saith, I AM, is not.” The two cups of excess and of God‘s wrath are not altogether distinct. They are joined, as cause and effect, as beginning and end.

Whoso drinketh the draught of sinful pleasure, whether excess or other, drinketh there with the cup of God‘s anger, consuming him. It is said of the

Babylon of the world, in words very like to these Revelation 18:3, Revelation 18:6; “All nations have drank of the wine of her fornications - reward her as she has rewarded you; in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double.” “All nations” are in the first instance, all who had been leagued against God‘s people; but the wide term, “all nations,” comprehends all, who, in thee, become like them. It is a rule of God‘s justice for all times. At each and at all times, God requites them to the uttermost. The continuous drinking is filfilled in each. Each drinketh the cup of God‘s anger, until death and in death. God employs each nation in turn to give that cup to the other. So Edom drank it at the hand of Babylon, and Babylon from the Medes, and the Medes find Persians from the Macedonians, and the Macedonians from the Romans, and they from the Barbarians. But each in turn drank continuously, until it became as though it had never been. To swallow up, and be swallowed up in turn, is the world‘s history.

The details of the first stage of the excision of Edom are not given. Jeremiah distinctly says that Edom should be subjected to Nebuchadnezzar Jeremiah 27:2-4, Jeremiah 27:6. “Thus saith the Lord; make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck, and send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hands of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah, and command them to say to their masters - I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant.” Holy Scripture gives us both prophecy and history; but God is at no pains to clear, either the likelihood of His history, or the fulfillment of His prophecies. The sending of messengers from these petty kings to Zedekiah looks as if there had been, at that time, a plan to free themselves jointly, probably by aid of Egypt, from the tribute to Nebuchadnezzar. It may be that Nebuchadnezzar knew of this league, and punished it afterward.

Of these six kings, we know that he subdued Zedekiah, the kings of Tyre, Moab and Ammon. Zion doubtless submitted to him, as it had aforetime to Shalmaneser. But since Nebuchadnezzar certainly punished four out of these six kings, it is probable that they were punished for some common cause, in which Edom also was implicated. In any case, we know that Edom was desolated at that time. Malachi, after the captivity, when

upbraiding Israel for his unthankfulness to God, bears witness that Edom had been made utterly desolate Malachi 1:2-3. "I have loved Jacob, and Esau I have hated, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the jackals of the wilderness." The occasion of this desolation was doubtless the march of Nebuchadnezzar against Egypt, when, Josephus relates, he subdued Moab and Ammon (Josephus, Ant. x. 9,7). Edom lay in his way from Moab to Egypt. It is probable, anyhow, that he then found occasion (if he had it not) against the petty state, whose submission was needed to give him free passage between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Akaba, the important access which Edom had refused to Israel, as he came out of Egypt. There Edom was "sent forth to its borders," i. e., misled to abandon its strong fastnesses, and so, falling into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, it met with the usual lot of the conquered, plunder, death, captivity.

Malachi does not verbally allude to the prophecy of Obadiah, for his office related to the restored people of God, not to Edom. But whereas Obadiah had prophesied the slaughter of Edom and the searching out of his treasures, Malachi appeals to all the Jews, their immediate neighbors, that, whereas Jacob was in great degree restored through the love of God, Edom lay under His enduring displeasure; his mountains were, and were to continue to be Malachi 1:4, a waste; he was "impoverished;" his places were desolate. Malachi, prophesying toward (See the introduction to Malachi) 415 b.c., foretold a further desolation. A century later, we find the Nabathaeans in tranquil and established possession of Petra, having there deposited the wealth of their merchandise, attending fairs at a distance, avenging themselves on the General of Antigonus, who took advantage of their absence to surprise their retreat, holding their own against the conqueror of Ptolemy who had recovered Syria and Palestine; in possession of all the mountains around them, from where, when Antigonus, despairing of violence, tried by falsehood to lull them into security, they transmitted to Petra by fiery beacons the tidings of the approach of his army.

How they came to replace Edom, we know not. They were of a race, wholly distinct; active friends of the Maccabees (See 1 Maccabees 5:24-27; 9:35. Josephus, Ant. xii. 8,3; xiii. 1. 2. Aretas of Petra aided the Romans 3, b.c. against Jews and Idumaeans. Ant. xvii. 10. 9), while the Idumaeans were their deadly enemies. Strabo relates, that the Edomites "were expelled

from the country of the Nabathaeans in a sedition, and so joined themselves to the Jews and shared their customs." Since the alleged incorporation among the Jews is true, although at a later period, so may also the expulsion by the Nabathaeans be, although not the cause of their incorporation.

It would be another instance of requital by God, that "the men" of their "confederacy brought" them "to" their "border, the men of" their "peace prevailed against" them." A mass of very varied evidence establishes as an historical certainty, that the Nabathaeans were of Aramaic contends that the Nabathaeans of Petra were Arabs, on the following grounds:

(1) The statements of Diodorus (xix. 94), Strabo (xvi. 2. 34. Ibid. 4. 2 & 21), Josephus (Ant. i. 12,4.), S. Jerome and some latter writers.

(2) The statement of Suidas (980 a.d.) that Dusares, an Arab idol, was worshiped there.

(3) The Arabic name of Aretes, king of Petra.

are alleged; Arindela (if the same as this Ghurundel) 18 hours from Petra (Porter, Handb. p. 58); Negla, (site unknown): Auara, a degree North, (Ptol. in Reland, 463); Elji, close to Petra. But as to:

(1) Diodorus, who calls the Nabathaeans Arabs, says that they wrote "Syriac;" Strabo calls the "Edomites" Nabathaeans, and the inhabitants of Galilee, Jericho, Philadelphia and Samaria, "a mixed race of Egyptians, Arabians, and Phoenicians" (Section 34). Also Diodorus speaks of "Nabathaean Arabia" as a distinct country (xvii. 1. 21) Josephus, and Jerome (Qu. in Genesis 25. 13) following him, include the whole country from the Euphrates to Egypt, and so some whose language was Aramaic. As to

(2) Dusares, though at first an Arab idol, was worshiped far and wide, in Galatia, Bostra, even Italy (See coins in Eckhel, Tanini, in Zoega de Obelisc. pp. 205-7, and Zoega himself, p. 205). As to:

(3) The kings named by Josephus, (see the list in Vincent‘s Commerce, ii. 273-6) Arethas, Malchus, Obodas, may be equally Aramaic, and Obodas has a more Aramaic sound. Anyhow, the Nabathaeans, if placed in Petra by Nebuchadnezzar, were not conquerors, and may have received an Arab king in the four centuries between Nebuchadnezzar and the first Aretas known at Petra. What changes those settled in Samaria underwent! As to

(4) the names of places are not altered by a garrison in a capital. Our English names were not changed even by the Norman conquest; nor those of Samaria by the Assyrian. How many live on until now! Then of the four names, norm occurs until after the Christian era. There is nothing to connect them with the Nabathaeans. They may have been given before or long after them.) not of Arabic, origin. They were inhabitants of Southern Mesopotamia, and, according to the oldest evidence short of Holy Scripture, were the earliest inhabitants, before the invasion of the Chaldaeans. Their country, Irak, “extended lengthways from Mosul or Nineveh to Aba dan, and in breadth from Cadesia to Hulvan.” Syrian writers claimed that their‘s was the primaeval language; Muslim writers, who deny this, admit that their language was Syriac. A learned Syriac writer calls the three Chaldee names in Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Nabathaean. The surviving words of their language are mostly Syriac. Muslim writers suppose them to be descended from Aram son of Shem. Once they were a powerful nation, with a highly cultivated language. One of their books, written before the destruction of Nineveh and Babylon, itself mentions an ancient literature, specifically on agriculture, medicine, botany, and, that favorite study of the Chaldaeans, astrology, “the mysteries,” star-worship and a very extensive, elaborate, system of symbolic representation. But the Chaldees conquered them; they were subjects of Nebuchadnezzar, and it is in harmony with the later policy of the Eastern Monarchies, to suppose that Nebuchadnezzar placed them in Petra, to hold in check the revolted Idumaeans. 60 geographical miles from Petra. Anyhow, 312 b.c., Edom had long been expelled from his native mountains. He was not there about 420 b.c., the age of Malachi. Probably then, after the expulsion foretold by Obadiah, he never recovered his former possessions, but continued his robber-life along the Southern borders of Judah, unchanged by God‘s punishment, the same deadly enemy of Judah.

Verse 17

But (And) upon (in) Mount Zion, shall be deliverance, or, an escaped remnant, and there (and it) shall be holiness - The sifting times of the Church are the triumph of the world; the judgment of the world is the restoration of the Church. In the triumph of the world, the lot was cast on Jerusalem, her sons were carried captive and slain, her holy places were desecrated. On the destruction of the nations, Mount Zion rises in calm majesty, as before; "a remnant" is replaced there, after its sifting; it is again "holiness;" not holy only, but a channel of holiness; "and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions (literally inherit their inheritances)"; either their own former possessions, receiving and "inheriting" from the enemy, what they had lost; or the "inheritances" of the nations. For the whole world is the inheritance of the Church, as Jesus said to the apostles, sons of Zion Matthew 28:19, "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." and Mark 16:15, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Holiness is its title-deeds to the inheritance of the world, that holiness, which was in the "upper chamber" in "Mount Zion," the presence of God the Holy Spirit, issuing in holy teaching, holy Scriptures, holy institutions, holy sacraments, holy lives.

Verse 18

Having given, in summary, the restoration and expansion of Judah, Obadiah, in more detail, first mentions a further chastisement of Edom, quite distinct from the former. In the first, for which God summoned the pagan, there is no mention of Judah, the desolation of whose holy City, Jerusalem, for the time, and their own captivity is presupposed. In the second, which follows on the restoration of its remnant, there is no mention of pagan. Obadiah, whose mission was to Judah, gives to it the name of the whole, "the house of Jacob." It alone had the true worship of God, and His promises. Apart from it, there was no oneness with the faith of the fathers, no foreshadowing sacrifice for sin. Does the "house of Joseph" express the same in other words? or does it mean, that, after that first destruction of Jerusalem, Ephraim should be again united with Judah? Asaph unites, as one, "the sons of Jacob and Joseph" Psalm 77:15, Israel and Joseph Psalm 80:1; Israel, Jacob, Joseph Psalm 81:4-5.

Zechariah Zechariah 10:6 after the captivity, speaks of "the house of Judah" and "the house of Joseph," as together forming one whole. Amos,

about this same time, twice speaks of Ephraim Amos 5:15; Amos 6:6 under the name of Joseph. And although Asaph uses the name of Joseph, as Obadiah does, to designate Israel, including Ephraim, it does not seem likely that it should be used of Israel, excluding those whose special name it was. While then Hosea and Amos foretold the entire destruction of the "kingdom" of Israel, Obadiah foretells that some should be there, after the destruction of Jerusalem also, united with them. And after the destruction of Samaria, there did remain in Israel, of the poor people, many who returned to the worship of God. Hezekiah invited Ephraim and Manasseh to the Passover 2 Chronicles 30:1 from Beersheba to Dan 2 Chronicles 30:5 addressing them as "the remnant, that are escaped out of the hands of the kings of Assyria" 2 Chronicles 30:6.

The more part mocked 2 Chronicles 30:10; yet, "divers of Asher, Manasseh and Zabulon 2 Chronicles 30:11 came from the first, and afterward many of "Ephraim and Issachar" as well as "Manasseh and Zabulon" 2 Chronicles 30:18. Josiah destroyed all the places of idolatry in Bethel 2 Kings 23:15 and "the cities of Samaria" 2 Kings 23:19, "of Manasseh and Ephraim and Simeon even unto Naphtali" 2 Chronicles 34:6, "Manasseh, Ephraim, and all the remnant of Israel" gave money for the repair of the temple, and this was "gathered" by "the Levites who kept the doors" 2 Chronicles 34:9. After the renewal of the covenant to keep the law, "Josiah removed all the abominations out of all the countries, that" pertained "to the children of Israel and made all found in Israel to serve the Lord their God" 2 Chronicles 34:33.

The pagan colonists were placed "by the king of Assyria in Samaria and the cities thereof" 2 Kings 17:24, probably to hold the people in the country in check. The remnant of "the house of Joseph" dwelt in the open country and the villages.

And the house of Esau for stubble - At some time after the first desolation by Nebuchadnezzar, Esau fulfilled the boast which Malachi records, "we will return and build up the desolate places" Malachi 1:4. Probably during the oppression of Judah by Antiochus Epiphanes, they possessed themselves of the South of Judah, bordering on their own country, and of Hebron (Nehemiah 11:25. Judas Maccabaeus was reduced to (1 Maccabees 4:61) "fortify Bethzur," literally "house of the rock," (20

miles only from Jerusalem) (Eusebius), "that the people might have a defense against Idumaea." Maresha and Adoraim, 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem, near the road to Gaza, were cities of Idumaea. (Josephus, Ant. xiii. 15. 4.) The whole of Simeon was absorbed in it. (Josephus, Ant. v. 1. 22.) Edom was still on the aggressive, when Judas Maccabaeus smote them at Arrabatene. It was (1 Maccabees 5:3) "because they beset Israel round about," that "Judas fought against the children of Esau in Idumea at Arrabatene and gave them a great overthow."

His second battle against them was in Judaea itself. He (1 Maccabees 5:65.) "fought against the children of Esau in the land toward the South, where he smote Hebron and her daughters, and pulled down its fortress and burned the towns thereof round about." About 20 years afterward, Simon had again to recover Bethzur (1 Maccabees 11:65,66), and again to fortify it, as still lying on the borders of Judah. (1 Maccabees 14:33). Twenty years later, John Hyrcanus, son of Simon, (1 Maccabees 13:53). (Josephus, Ant. xiii. 9,1) "subdued all the Edomites, and permitted them to remain in the country, on condition that they would receive circumcision, and adopt the laws of the Jews." This they did, continues Josephus; "and henceforth became Jews." Outwardly they appear to have given up their idolatry. For although Josephus says, "the Edomites "account" (not, accounted) Koze a god," he relates that, after this forced adoption of Jewish customs, Herod made Costobar, of the sacerdotal family, prefect of Idumaea and Gaza. Their character remained unchanged.

The Jewish historian, who knew them well, describes them as "a tumultuous disorderly race, ever alive to commotions, delighting in change, who went to engagements as to a feast": "by nature most savage for slaughter." 3, b.c. they took part in the sedition against the Romans, using, as a pretext probably, the Feast of Pentecost, to which they went up with those of Galilee, Jericho, the country beyond Jordan, and "the Jews themselves." Just before the last siege of Jerusalem, the Zealots sent for them, on pretext that the city was betrayed to the Romans. "All took arms, as if in defense of their metropolis, and, 20,000 in number, went to Jerusalem". After massacres, of which, when told that they had been deceived, they themselves repented, they returned; and were, in turn, wasted by Simon the Gerasene. Simon took it. "He not only destroyed cities and villages, but wasted the whole country. For as you may see wood

wholly bared by locusts, so the army of Simon left the country behind them, a desert. Some things they burnt, others they razed."

After a short space, "he returned to the remnant of Edom, and, chasing the people on all sides, constrained the many to flee to Jerusalem". There they took part against the Zealots, "were a great part of the war" against the Romans, and perished, "rivals in phrensy" with the worst Jews in the thee of that extreme, superhuman, wickedness. Thenceforth, their name disappears from history. The "greater part" of the remmant of the nation had perished in that dreadful exterminating siege; if any still survived, they retained no known national existence. Arabian tradition preserves the memory of three Jewish Arab tribes, none of the Edomites.

Verse 19

And they of the South shall possess the mount of Esau - The Church was now hemmed in within Judah and Benjamin. They too were to go into captivity. The prophet looks beyond the captivity and the return, and tells how that original promise to Jacob Genesis 28:14 should be fulfilled; "Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt break North to the West, and to the East, and to the North, and to the South; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Hosea and Amos had, at this time, prophesied the final destruction of the kingdom of Israel. Obadiah describes Judah, as expanded to its former bounds including Edom and Philistia, and occupying the territory of the ten tribes. "The South", i. e., they of the "hot" and "dry" country to the South of Judah bordering on Edom, "shall possess the mountains of Esau," i. e., his mountain country, on which they bordered. And "the plain," they on the West, in the great maritime plain, the "shephelah," should spread over the country of the Philistines, so that the sea should be their boundary; and on the North, over the country of the ten tribes, "the fields of Ephraim and the fields of Samaria." The territory of "Benjamin" being thus included in Judah, to it is assigned the country on the other side Jordan; "and Benjamin, Gilead."

Verse 20

And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel - , (it must, I believe, be rendered,) "which are among the Canaanites, as far as Zarephath, and the captivity of Jerusalem which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the South." Obadiah had described how the two tribes,

whose were the promises to the house of David, should spread abroad on all sides. Here he represents how Judah should, in its turn, receive into its bosom those now carried away from them; so should all again be one fold.

Zarephath - (probably "smelting-house," and so a place of slave-labor, pronounced Sarepta in Luke) Luke 4:26. belonged to Sidon 1 Kings 17:9, lying on the sea about halfway between it and Tyre.. These were then, probably, captives, placed by Tyrians for the time in safe keeping in the narrow plain between Lebanon and the sea, intercepted by Tyre itself from their home, and awaiting to be transported to a more distant slavery. These, with those already sold to the Grecians and in slavery at Sardis, formed one whole. They stand as representatives of all who, whatever their lot, had been rent off from the Lord's land, and had been outwardly severed from His heritage.

Verse 21

And saviors shall ascend on Mount Zion - The body should not be without its head; saviours there should be, and those, successively. The title was familiar to them of old Judges 3:9, Judges 3:15. "The children of Israel cried unto the Lord, Who raised them up a savior, and he saved them. And the Lord gave unto Israel a savior" 2 Kings 13:5, in the time of Jehoahaz. Nehemiah says to God, Nehemiah 9:27. "According to Thy manifold mercies, Thou gavest them saviours, who should save them from the hands of their enemies." So there should be thereafter. Such were Judas Maccabeus and his brothers, and Hyrcanus, Alexander, Aristobulus. They are said to "ascend" as to a place of dignity, to "ascend on Mount Zion;" not to go up thither "ward," but to dwell and abide "in" it, which aforetime was defiled, which now was to be holy.

He ends, as he began, with Mount Zion, the "holy hill," where God was pleased to dwell Psalm 2:6; Psalm 68:16, to reveal Himself. In both, is the judgment of Esau. Mount Zion stands over against Mount Esau, God's holy mount against the mountains of human pride, the Church against the world. And with this agrees the office assigned, which is almost more than that of man. He began his prophecy of the deliverance of God's people, "In Mount Zion shall be an escaped remnant;" he ends, "saviors shall ascend on Mount Zion:" he began, "it shall be" holiness;" he closes, "and the kingdom shall be the Lord's. To judge the mount of Esau." Judges, appointed by God, judge His people; saviours, raised up by God, deliver them. But once only does Ezekiel speak of man's judging another nation, as the instrument of

God Ezekiel 24:14. “I, the Lord, have spoken it - and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways and according to thy doings shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God.” But it is the prerogative of God. And so, while the word “saviours” includes those who, before and afterward, were the instruments of God in saving His Church and people, yet, all saviours shadowed forth or back the one Saviour, who alone has the office of Judge, in whose kingdom, and associated by Him with Him 1 Corinthians 6:2, “the saints shall judge the world,” as He said to His Apostles Matthew 19:28, “ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” And the last words must at all times have recalled that great prophecy of the Passion, and of its fruits in the conversion of the Pagan, from which it is taken - 1 Corinthians 15:28. The strife is ended; not that ancient strife only between the evil and the good, the oppressor and the oppressed, the subduer and the subdued; but the whole strife and disobedience of the creature toward the Creator, man against his God. Outward prosperity had passed away, since David had said the great words Psalm 22:28, “the kingdom is the Lord‘s.” Dark days had come. Obadiah saw on and beyond to darker yet, but knits up all his prophecy in this; “the kingdom shall be the Lord‘s.” Daniel saw what Obadiah foresaw, the kingdom of Judah also broken; yet, as a captive, he repeated the same to the then monarch of the world Jeremiah 50:28, “the hammer of the whole earth,” which had broken in pieces the petty kingdom of Judah, and carried captive its people (Daniel 2:44, add Daniel 7:14, Daniel 7:27); “the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed.”

Zechariah saw the poor fragments which returned from the captivity and their poor estate, yet said the same;” Zechariah 14:9, “The Lord shall be king over all the earth.” All at once that kingdom came; the fishermen, the tax gatherer and the tentmaker were its captains; the scourge, the claw, thongs, rack, hooks, sword, fire, torture, the red-hot iron seat, the cross, the wild-beast, not employed, but endured, were its arms; the dungeon and the mine, its palaces; fiery words of truth, its Psalm 45:5, “sharp arrows in the hearts of the King‘s enemies;” for One spake by them, whose word “is with power.” The strong sense of the Roman, the acuteness of the Greek, and the simplicity of the Barbarian, cast away their unbelief or their misbelief, and

joined in the one song Revelation 19:6, “The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.” The imposture of Mohammed, however awfully it rent off countless numbers from the faith of Christ, still was forced to spread the worship of the One God, who, when the prophets spake, seemed to be the God of the Jews only.

Who could foretell such a kingdom, but He who alone could found it, who alone has for these 18 centuries preserved, and now is anew enlarging it, God Omnipotent and Omniscient, who waked the hearts which He had made, to believe in Him and to love Him? Blessed peaceful kingdom even here, in this valley of tears and of strife, where God rules the soul, freeing it from the tyranny of the world and Satan and its own passions, inspiring it to know Himself, the Highest Truth, and to love Him who is love, and to adore Him who is infinite majesty! Blessed kingdom, in which God reigns in us by grace, that He may bring us to His heavenly kingdom, where is the manifest vision of Himself, and perfect love of Him, blissful society, eternal fruition of Himself; “where is supreme and certain security, secure tranquility, tranquil security, joyous happiness, happy eternity, eternal blessedness, blessed vision of God forever, where is perfect love, fear none, eternal day and One Spirit in all!”

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JONAH INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Jonah

The prophet Jonah, who was at once the author and in part the subject of the book which bears his name, is, beyond question, the same who is related in the Book of Kings 2 Kings 14:25 to have been God‘s messenger of comfort to Israel, in the reign of Jeroboam II. For his own name, in English “Dove,” as well as that of his father, Amittai, “The Truth of Yah,” occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament; and it is wholly improbable that there should have been two prophets of the same name, sons of fathers of the same name, when the names of both son and father were so rare as not to occur elsewhere in the Old Testament. The place which the prophet occupies among the twelve agrees therewith. For Hosea and Amos, prophets who are known to have prophesied in the time of Jeroboam, and Joel, who prophesied before Amos, are placed before him; Micah, who prophesied after the death of Jeroboam and Uzziah, is placed after him.

A remarkable and much-misunderstood expression of the prophet shows that this mission fell in the later part of his life, at least after he had already exercised the prophetic office. Our translation has: “Jonah rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord.” It has been asked, “How could a “prophet” imagine that he could flee from the presence of God?” Plainly he could not. Jonah, so conversant with the Psalms, doubtless knew well the Psalm of David Psalm 139:7, “Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, and whither shall I flee from thy presence?” He could not but know, what every instructed Israelite knew. And so critics should have known that such could not be the meaning. The words are used, as we say, “he went out of the king‘s presence,” or the like. It is literally “he rose to flee from being in the presence of the Lord,” i. e., from standing in His presence as His Servant and Minister.

Then he must have so stood before; he must have had the office, which he sought to abandon.

He was then a prophet of Israel, born at Gath-hepher, “a small village” of Zebulon Joshua 19:13, which lies, Jerome says, “two miles from Sepphorim which is now called Diocaesarea, in the way to Tiberius, where his tomb also is pointed out.” His tomb was still shown in the hills near

Sipphorim in the 12th century, as Benjamin of Tudela relates; at the same place "on a rocky hill 2 miles East of Sepphuriah," is still pointed out the tomb of the prophet, and "Muslims and the Christians of Nazareth alike regard the village (el-Meshhad) as his native village." The tomb is even now venerated by the Muslim inhabitants.

But although a prophet of Israel, he, like Daniel afterward or his great predecessor Elisha, had his mission also beyond the bounds of Israel. Whenever God brought His people into any relation with other people, He made Himself known to them. The mode of His manifestation varied; the fact remained uniform. So He made Himself known to Egypt through Joseph and Moses; to the Philistines at the capture of the ark; to the Syrians by Elisha; to Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar by Daniel, as again to Darius and Cyrus. The hindrances interposed to the edict of Darius perpetuated that knowledge among his successors. Yet further on, the high priest Jaddua showed to Alexander the prophecy of Daniel "that a Greek should destroy the Persian Empire." For there is no ground to question the account of Josephus. The mission then of Jonah to Nineveh is in harmony with God's other dealings with pagan nations, although, in God's manifold wisdom, not identical with any.

To Israel the history of that mission revealed that same fact which was more fully declared by Peter Acts 10:34-35; "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him." This righteous judgment of God stands out the more, alike in the history of the mariners and of the Ninevites, in that the character of both is exhibited advantageously, in comparison with that of the prophet. The prophet brings out the awe, the humanity, the earnestness of the natural religion, and the final conversion of the sailors, and the zealous repentance of the Ninevites, while he neglects to explain his own character, or, in the least, to soften its hard angles. Rather, with a holy indifference, he has left his character to be hardly and unjustly judged by those who, themselves sharing his infirmities, share not his excellences. Disobedient once, he cares only to teach us what God taught him for us. The mariners were spared, the Hebrew prophet was cast forth as guilty. The Ninevites were forgiven: the prophet, rebuked.

That other moral, which our Lord inculcated, that the pagan believed and repented with less light, the Jews, amid so much greater light, repented not, also lay there, to be drawn out by men‘s own consciences. “To the condemnation of Israel,” says Jerome, “Jonah is sent to the Gentiles, because, whereas Nineveh repented, Israel persevered in his iniquity.” But this is only a secondary result of his prophecy, as all divine history must be full of teaching, because the facts themselves are instructive. Its instructiveness in this respect depends wholly upon the truth of the facts. It is the real repentance of the Ninevites, which becomes the reproach of the impenitent Jew or Christian.

Even among the Jews, a large school, the Cabbalists (although amid other error), interpreted the history of Jonah as teaching the resurrection of the dead, and (with that remarkable correctness of combination of different passages of Holy Scripture which we often find) in union with the prophecy of Hosea. “The fish‘s belly, where Jonah was enclosed, signifies the tomb, where the body is covered and laid up. But as Jonah was given back on the third day, so shall we also on the third day rise again and be restored to life. As Hosea says, ‹On the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight.‘” Talmudic Jews identified Jonah with their Messiah ben Joseph, whom they expected to die and rise again. The deeper meaning then of the history was not, at least in later times, unknown to them, a meaning which entirely depended on its truth.

The history of his mission, Jonah doubtless himself wrote. Such has been the uniform tradition of the Jews, and on this principle alone was his book placed among the prophets. For no books were admitted among the prophets but those which the arranger of the canon believed (if this was the work of the great synagogue) or (if it was the work of Ezra) knew, to have been written by persons called to the prophetic office. Hence, the Psalms of David (although many are prophetic, and our Lord declares him to have been inspired by the Holy Spirit Matthew 22:43; Mark 12:36.,) and the book of Daniel, were placed in a separate class, because their authors, although eminently endowed with prophetic gifts, did not exercise the pastoral office of the prophet. Histories of the prophets, as Elijah and Elisha, stand, not under their own names, but in the books of the prophets who wrote them. Nor is the Book of Jonah a history of the prophet, but of

that one mission to Nineveh. Every notice of the prophet is omitted, except what bears on that mission.

The book also begins with just that same authentication, with which all other prophetic books begin. As Hoses and Joel and Micah and Zephaniah open, "The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, Joel, Micah, Zephaniah," and other prophets in other ways ascribe their books not to themselves, but to God, so Jonah opens, "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying." This inscription is an integral part of the book; as is marked by the word, saying. As the historical books are joined on the sacred writings before them, so as to form one continuous stream of history, by the and, with which they begin, so the Book of Jonah is tacitly joined onto other books of other prophets by the word, "and," with which it commences. The words, "The word of the Lord came to," are the acknowledged form in which the commission of God to prophesy is recorded. It is used of the commission to deliver a single prophecy, or it describes the whole collection of prophecies, with which any prophet was entrusted; Micah 1:1; Zephaniah 1:1. "The word of the Lord which come to Micah or Zephaniah." But the whole history of the prophecy is bound up with, and a sequel of those words.

Nor is there anything in the style of the prophet at variance with this.

It is strange that, at any time beyond the babyhood of criticism, any argument should be drawn from the fact that the prophet writes of himself in the third person. Manly criticism has been ashamed to use the argument, as to the commentaries of Caesar or the Anabasis of Xenophon. However the genuineness of those works may have been at times questioned, here we were on the ground of genuine criticism, and no one ventured to use an argument so palpably idle. It has been pointed out that minds so different, as Barhebraeus, the great Jacobite historian of the East, and Frederick the Great wrote of themselves in the third person; as did also Thucydides and Josephus, even after they had attested that the history, in which they so speak, was written by themselves.

But the real ground lies much deeper. It is the exception, when any sacred writer speaks of himself in the first person. Ezra and Nehemiah do

so, for they are giving an account, not of God‘s dealings with His people, but of their own discharge of a definite office, allotted to them by man. Solomon does so in Ecclesiastes, because he is giving the history of his own experience; and the vanity of all human things, in themselves, could be attested so impressively by no one, as by one, who had all which man‘s mind could imagine.

On the contrary, the prophets, unless they speak of God‘s revelations to them, speak of themselves in the third person. Thus, Amos relates in the first person, what God showed him in vision Amos 7:1-8; Amos 8:1-2; Amos 9:1; for God spoke to him, and he answered and pleaded with God. In relating his persecution by Amaziah, he passes at once to the third Amos 7:12, Amos 7:14; “Amaziah said to Amos; Then answered Amos and said to Amaziah.” In a similar manner, Isaiah speaks of himself in the third person, when relating how God sent him to meet Ahaz Isaiah 7:3; God commanded him to walk three years, naked and barefoot Isaiah 20:2-3, Hezekiah‘s message to him, to pray for his people, and his own prophetic answer; his visit to Hezekiah in the king‘s sickness, his warning to him, his prophecy of his recovery, the sign which at God‘s command Isaiah gave him, and the means of healing he appointed Isaiah 37:2, Isaiah 37:5-6, Isaiah 37:21; Isaiah 38:1, Isaiah 38:4, Isaiah 38:21.

Jeremiah, the mourner over his people, more than any other prophet, speaks and complains to his God in the midst of his prophecy. In no other prophet do we see so much the workings of his inmost soul. Such souls would most use the first person, for it is in the use of the first person that the soul pours itself forth. In the relating of himself in the third person, the prophet restrains himself, speaking only of the event. Yet it is thus that Jeremiah relates almost all which befell him - Pashur‘s smiting him and putting him in the stocks Jeremiah 20:1, Jeremiah 20:3; the gathering of the people against him to put him to death, his hearing before the princes of Judah and his deliverance Jeremiah 26:7-8, Jeremiah 26:12, Jeremiah 26:24; the contest with Hananiah, when Hananiah broke off the symbolic yoke from his neck and prophesied lies in the name of God, and Jeremiah foretold his death Jeremiah 28:5-6, Jeremiah 28:10, Jeremiah 28:12, Jeremiah 28:15, which followed; the letters of Shemaiah against him, and his own prophecy against Shemaiah Jeremiah 29:27, Jeremiah 29:29-30; his

trial of the Rechabites and his prophecy to them Jeremiah 36:1, Jeremiah 36:4-5, Jeremiah 36:26-27, Jeremiah 36:32; his purpose to leave Jerusalem when the interval of the last siege gave him liberty Jeremiah 37:2-6, Jeremiah 37:12-21; the false accusations against him, the designs of the princes to put him to death, their plunging him in the still deeper pit, where there was no water only mud, the milder treatment through the intercession of Ebedmelech; Zedekiah‘s contact with him Jeremiah 38:1, Jeremiah 38:6,12-28; Jeremiah 32:2-5, his liberation by Nebuzaradan, his choice to abide in the land, his residence with Gedaliah Jeremiah 40:2-6; Johanan‘s hypocritical inquiring of God by him and disobedience Jeremiah 43:1-13, the insolent answer of the Jews in Egypt to him and his denunciation upon them Jeremiah 44:15, Jeremiah 44:20, Jeremiah 44:24.

All this, the account of which occupies a space, many times larger than the book of Jonah, Jeremiah relates as if it were the history of some other man. So did God teach His prophets to forget themselves. Haggai, whose prophecy consists of exhortations which God directed him to address to the people, speaks of himself, solely in the third person. He even relates the questions which he puts to the priests and their answers still in the third person Haggai 1:1, Haggai 1:3, Haggai 1:12-13; Haggai 2:1, Haggai 2:10, Haggai 2:13-14, Haggai 2:20; “then said Haggai;” “then answered Haggai.” Daniel relates in the third person, the whole which he does give of his history; how when young he obtained exemption from the use of the royal luxuries and from food unlawful to him; the favor and wisdom which God gave him Daniel 2:13-27, Daniel 2:46-47, Daniel 2:49; how he was brought into Belshazzar‘s great impious feast, and interpreted the writing on the wall; and was honored Daniel 5:12-13, Daniel 5:17, Daniel 5:29; how, under Darius, he persevered in his accustomed prayer against the king‘s command, was cast into the den of lions, was delivered, and prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian Daniel 7:15, Daniel 7:28; Daniel 8:1, Daniel 8:15, Daniel 8:27; Daniel 9:2; Daniel 10:2, Daniel 10:7; Daniel 12:5. It is no longer his own history. It is the revelation of God by him. In a similar manner, John, when referring to himself in the history of His Lord, calls himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” In Revelation, he authenticates his visions by his own name Revelation 1:9; Revelation 21:2; Revelation 22:8; “I, John.” Moses relates how God commanded him to write things which he wrote, in the third person. Paul, when he has to

speak of his overpowering revelations, says 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, "I knew a man in Christ." It seems as if he could not speak of them as vouchsafed to himself. He lets us see that it was himself, when he speaks of the humiliations 2 Corinthians 12:7, which God saw to be necessary for him. To ordinary people it would be conceit or hypocrisy to write of themselves in the third person.

They would have the appearance of writing impartially of themselves, of abstracting themselves from themselves, when, in reality, they were ever present to themselves. The men of God were writing of the things of God. They had a God-given indifference how they themselves would be thought of by man. They related, with the same holy unconcern, their praise or their blame. Jonah has exhibited himself in his infirmities, such as no other but himself would have drawn a prophet of God. He has left his character, unexplained, unsoftened; he has left himself lying under God's reproof; and told us nothing of all that which God loved in him, and which made him a chosen instrument of God also. People, while they measure divine things, or characters formed by God, by what would be natural to themselves, measure by a crooked rule 1 Corinthians 4:3. "It is a very small thing," says Paul, "that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment." Nature does not measure grace; nor the human spirit measure the Divine Spirit.

As for the few words, which persons who disbelieved in miracles selected out of the Book of Jonah as a plea for removing it far down beyond the period when those miracles took place, they rather indicate the contrary. They are all genuine Hebrew words or forms, except the one Aramaic name for the decree of the king of Nineveh, which Jonah naturally heard in Nineveh itself.

A writer, equally unbelieving, who got rid of the miracles by assuming that the Book of Jonah was meant only for a moralizing fiction, found no counter-evidence in the language, but ascribed it unhesitatingly to the Jonah, son of Amittai, who prophesied in the reign of Jeroboam II. He saw the nothingness of the so-called proof, which he had no longer any interest in maintaining.

The examination of these words will require a little detail, yet it may serve as a specimen (it is no worse than its neighbors) of the way in which the disbelieving school picked out a few words of a Hebrew prophet or section of a prophet, in order to disparage the genuineness of what they did not believe.

The words are these:

(1) The word ספינה *sephîynâh* literally "a decked vessel." is a genuine Hebrew word from ספן *sâphan* "covered, ceiled". The word was borrowed from the Hebrew, not by Syrians or Chaldees only but by the Arabians, in none of which dialects is it an original word. A word plainly is original in that language in which it stands connected with other meanings of the same root, and not in that in which it stands isolated. Naturally too, the term for a decked vessel would be borrowed by inland people, as the Syrians, from a notion living on the seashore, not conversely. This is the first occasion for mentioning "a decked vessel." It is related that Jonah went in fact "below deck," "was gone down into the sides of the decked vessel." Three times in those verses Jonah 1:3-5, when Jonah did not wish to express that the vessel was decked, he uses the common Hebrew word, אניה *'onîyâh* It was then of set purpose that he, in the same verse, used the two words, אניה *'onîyâh* and ספינה *sephîynâh* מלח *mallâch* is also a genuine Hebrew word from מלח *melach* salt sea, as ἁλιεύς *halieus* from ἅλς *hals* "salt," then (masculine) in poetry "brine." It is formed strictly, as other Hebrew words denoting an occupation.. It does not occur in earlier books, because "seamen" are not mentioned earlier.

rab hachôbêl "chief of the sailors," "captain." "Rab" is רב החבל (3) Phoenician also, and this was a Phoenician vessel. It does not occur earlier, because "the captain of a vessel" is not mentioned earlier. One says, "it is *s'ar* chiefly in later Hebrew." It occurs, in all, only four שׂר the same as טבחים ,times, and in all cases, as here, of persons not Hebrew; Nebuzaradan *rab* רב סריסים ",*rab ṭabbâchîym* 2 Kings 25:8, "captain of the guard רב *kôl rab bayithô* כל רב ביתו ";*sârîysîym* Daniel 1:3, "chief of the eunuchs *s'ar* on the other hand, is never שׂר ".Esther 1:8, "every officer of his house used except of an office of authority, of one who had a place of authority given by one higher. It occurs as much in the later as in the earlier books,

but is not used in the singular of an inferior office. It is used of military, but not of any interior secular command. It would probably have been a *s'ar hachôbêl* as much as if we were to say שׂר החבל solecism to have said *chôbêl* which is joined with it, is a Hebrew word not חבל ”.“prince of sailors .Aramaic word

(4) רבו *ribbô* “ten thousand,” they say, “is a word of later Hebrew.” Certainly neither it, nor any inflection of it occurs in the Pentateuch, Judges, *rebâbâh* It is true רבבה Samuel, Canticles, in until which we have the word *ribbô* or derivative forms occur in books of the date of רבו also that the form the captivity, as Daniel, Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. (In 1 Chronicles 29:7, twice, Daniel once, Ezra twice; Nehemiah thrice.) But it also occurs in a Psalm of David, and in Hosea (Hosea 8:12 Ch.) who is acknowledged to have prophesied in the days of Jeroboam, and so was a contemporary of Jonah. It might have been, accordingly, a form used in Northern Palestine, .but that its use by David does not justify such limitation

(5) עשׂת ית *yîth ʿâshath* “thought, purposed,” is also an old Hebrew word, as appears from its use in the number eleven, as the first number which is conceived in thought, the ten being numbered on the fingers. The root occurs also in Job, a Psalm Psalm 146:4, and the Canticles. in the Syriac, it does not occur; nor, in the extant Aramaic, in the sense in which it is used in Jonah. For in Jonah it is used of the merciful thoughts of God; in Aramaic, of the evil thoughts of man. Besides, it is used in Jonah not by the prophet .himself but by the shipmaster, whose words he relates

(6) The use of the abridged forms of the relative pronoun שׁ *she* for אשׁר *'ăsher* twice in composite words בשׁלמי *beshelmîy* Jonah 1:7, בשׁלי *beshelîy* Jonah 1:12, (the fuller form, למי באשׁר *ba'ăsher lemîy* Jonah 1:8, also occurring) and once in union with a noun שׁבן *shebbên* (Jonah 4:10. (2)).

There is absolutely no plea whatever for making this an indication of a later style, and yet it occurs in every string of words, which have been assumed to be indications of such style. It is not Aramaic at all, but Phoenician and old Hebrew. In Phoenician, “esh” is the relative, which corresponds the more with the Hebrew in that the phollowing letter was doubled, as in the Punic words in Plautus, “syllohom, siddoberim,” it enters into two proper names, both of which occur in the Pentateuch, and one, only there, מתושׁאל *methûshâ'êl* Genesis 4:18, “a man of God,” and מישׁאל

mîyshâ'êl (Exodus 6:22; Leviticus 10:4; also in Daniel and Nehemiah), the same as Michael, “who is like God?” literally, “Who is what God is?”

Probably, it occurs also in the Pentateuch in the ordinary language Genesis 6:3. Perhaps it was used more in the dialect of North Palestine. Probably it was also the spoken language Judges 6:17; 2 Kings 6:11. Two of the instances in the Lamentations are words in the mouth of the pagan, Lamentations 2:15-16), in which abridged forms are used in all languages. Hence, perhaps its frequent use in the Song of Solomon (Ecclesiastes 1:3, Ecclesiastes 1:7, Ecclesiastes 1:9 (4), 10,11(2), 14,17; Ecclesiastes 2:9, Ecclesiastes 2:11 (2), 2,13,14,15,16,17,18(3), 19(2), 20,21(2), 22,24,26; Ecclesiastes 3:13-15, Ecclesiastes 3:18, Ecclesiastes 3:22; Ecclesiastes 4:2, Ecclesiastes 4:10; Ecclesiastes 5:4, Ecclesiastes 5:14 (2), 15 (2), 17; Ecclesiastes 6:3, Ecclesiastes 6:10 (2); Ecclesiastes 7:10, Ecclesiastes 7:14, Ecclesiastes 7:24; Ecclesiastes 8:7, Ecclesiastes 8:14, Ecclesiastes 8:17; Ecclesiastes 9:5, Ecclesiastes 9:12 (2); Ecclesiastes 10:3, Ecclesiastes 10:5, Ecclesiastes 10:14, Ecclesiastes 10:16-17; Ecclesiastes 11:3, Ecclesiastes 11:8; Ecclesiastes 12:3, Ecclesiastes 12:7, Ecclesiastes 12:9).

This, in itself, requires some ground for its use, beyond that of mere date. Of books which are really later, it does not occur in Jeremiah‘s prophecies, Ezekiel, Daniel, or any of the 6 later of the Minor prophets, nor in Nehemiah or Esther. It occurs once only in Ezra Ezra 8:20, and twice in the First Book of Chronicles (1 Chronicles 5:20 1 ; שעמהם Chronicles 27:27 שבכרמים), whereas it occurs four times in the Judges Judges 5:7; Judges 6:17; Judges 7:12; Judges 8:26, and once in the Kings (2 Kings 6:11 משלנו .), and once probably in Job (Job 19:29, ending with שדין .). Its use belongs to that wide principle of condensation in Hebrew, blending in one, in different ways, what we express by separate words. The relative pronoun is confessedly, on this ground, very often omitted in Hebrew poetry, when it would be used in prose. In the Canticles, Solomon does not once use the ordinary separate relative, אשר *'ăsher* the 19 instances in the Psalms, almost half, 9, occur in those Psalms of unique rhythm - the gradual Psalms Psalm 122:3-4; Psalm 123:2; Psalm 124:1, Psalm 124:6; Psalm 129:6-7; Psalm 133:2-3; four more occur in two other Psalms Psalm 125:2,8,10; Psalm 136:23, which belong to one another, the latter of which has that remarkable burden, for His mercy endureth forever. Three are condensed into a solemn

denunciation of Babylon in another Psalm. (Psalm 137:8 (2), 9. The remaining ones are Psalm 144:15, שככה and Psalm 146:3, Psalm 146:5). Of the ten Psalms, in which it occurs, four are ascribed to David, and only one, Psalm 137:1-9, has any token of belonging to a later date. In the two passages in the Chronicles, it occurs in words doubly compounded (1 Chronicles 5:20 1 ; שעמהם Chronicles 27:27 שבכרמים). The principle of rhythm would account for its occurring four times in the five chapters of the Lamentations Lamentations 2:15-16; Lamentations 4:19; Lamentations 5:18 of Jeremiah, while in the 52 chapters of his prophecies it does not occur even once. In Job also, it is in a solemn pause. Altogether, there is no proof whatever that the use of שׁ *she* for אשר *'ăsher* is any test of the date of any Hebrew book, since:

(1) It is not Aramaic.

(2) It occurs in the earliest books, and

(3) not in the latest books.

(4) Its use is idiomatic, and nowhere except in the Canticles and Ecclesiastes does it pervade any book.

If it had belonged to the ordinary idiom at the date of Ezra, it would not have been so entirely insulated as it is, in the three instances in the Chronicles and Ezra. It would not have occurred in the earlier books in which it does occur, and would have occurred in later books in which it does not. In Jonah, its use in two places is unique to himself, occurring nowhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures. In the first, its Phoenician form is used by the Phoenician mariners; in the second it is an instance of the spoken language in the mouth of the prophet, a native of North Palestine, and in answer to Phoenicians. In the third instance, (where it is the simple relative pronoun) its use is evidently for condensation. Its use, in any case, would agree with the exact circumstances of Jonah, as a native of North Palestine, conversing with the Phoenician mariners. The only plea of argument has been gained by arguing in a circle, assuming without any even plausible ground that the Song of Solomon or Psalms of David were late, because they had this form, and then using it as a test of another book

being late; ignoring alike the earlier books which have it and the later books which have it not, and its exceptional use (except in the Canticles and Ecclesiastes), in the books which have it.

(7) It is difficult to know to what end the use of מנה *mânâh* "appoint " or "prepare," is alleged, since it occurs in a Psalm of David Psalm 61:8. Jonah uses it in a special way as to acts of God‘s Providence, "preparing" before, what He wills to employ. Jonah uses the word of the "preparing" of the fish, the palm-christ, the worm which should destroy it, the East wind. He evidently used it with a set purpose, to express what no other word expressed equally to his mind, how God prepared by His Providence the instruments which He willed to employ.

(8) There remains only the word used for the decree of the king of Nineveh, טעם ṭa*ʿam* This is a Syriac word; and accordingly, since it has now been ascertained beyond all question, that the language of Nineveh was a dialect of Syriac, it was, with a Hebrew pronunciation, the very word used of this decree at Nineveh. The employment of the special word is a part of the same accuracy with which Jonah relates that the decree used was issued not from the king only, but from the king and his nobles, one of those minute touches, which occur in the writings of those who describe what they have seen, but supplying a fact as to the Assyrian polity, which we should not otherwise have known, that the nobles were in some way associated in the decrees of the king.

Out of these eight words or forms, three are naval terms, and, since Israel was no seafaring people, it is in harmony with the history, that these terms should first occur in the first prophet who left the land of his mission by sea. So it is also, that an Assyrian technical term should first occur in a prophet who had been sent to Nineveh. A fifth word occurs in Hosea, a contemporary of Jonah, and in a Psalm of David. The abridged grammatical form was Phoenician, not Aramaic, was used in conversation, occurs in the oldest proper names, and in the Northern tribes. The 7th and 8th do not occur in Aramaic in the meaning in which they are used by Jonah.

In truth, often as these false criticisms have been repeated from one to the other, they would not have been thought of at all, except for the miracles

related by Jonah, which the devisers of these criticisms did not believe. A history of miracles, such as those in Jonah, would not be published at the time, unless they were true! Those then who did not believe that God worked any miracles, were forced to have some plea for saying that the book was not written in the time of Jonah. Prejudices against faith have, sometimes openly, sometimes tacitly, been the ruling principle (on which earlier portions of Holy Scripture have been classed among the latter by critics who disbelieved what those books or passages related. Obviously no weight can be given to the opinions of critics, whose criticisms are founded, not on the study of the language, but upon unbelief. It has recently been said, "the joint decision of Gesenius, DeWette and Hitzig ought to be final." A joint decision certainly it is not. For DeWette places the book of Jonah before the captivity; Gesenius and Ewald, when prophecy had long ceased; Ewald, partly on account of its miracles, in the 5th century, b.c.; and Hitzig, with his accustomed willfulness and insulatedness of criticism, built a theory that the book is of Egyptian origin on his own mistake that the קיקיון *qîyqâyôn* grew only in Egypt, and placed it in the second century, b.c., the times of the Maccabees. The interval is also filled up. Every sort of date and contradictory grounds for those dates have been assigned. So then one places the book of Jonah in the time of Sennacherib, i. e., of Hezekiah; another under Josiah; another before the captivity; another toward the end of the captivity, after the destruction of Nineveh by Cyaxares; a fifth lays chief stress on the argument that the destruction of Nineveh is not mentioned in it; a sixth prefers the time after the return from the captivity to its close; a seventh doubted not, "from its argument and purpose, that it was written before the order of prophets ceded", others of the same school are as positive from. its arguments and contents, that it must have been written after that order was closed.

The style of the Book of Jonah is, in fact pure and simple Hebrew, corresponding to the simplicity of the narrative, and of the prophet's character. Although written in prose, it has poetic language, not in the thanksgiving only, but whenever it suits the subject. These expressions are unique to Jonah. Such are, in the account of the storm, "the Lord cast a strong wind," "the vessel thought to be broken," "the sea shall be silent" (hushed, as we say) i. e., calm; "the wind was advancing and storming", as with a whirlwind; (the word is used as to the sea by Jonah only), "the men

plowed" or "dug" (in rowing) "the sea stood from its raging." Also "let man and beast ‹clothe themselves‘ with sackcloth," and that touching expression, "son of a night, it (the *palma-Christi*) came to being, and son of a night (i. e., in a night) it perished." It is in harmony with his simplicity of character, that he is fond of the old idiom, by which the thought of the verb is carried on by a noun formed from it. "The men feared a great fear," (Jonah 1:10, Jonah 1:16. יראה ייראו) "It displeased Jonah a great displeasure," (Jonah 4:1. רעה ירע) "Jonah joyed a great joy." (Jonah 4:6, שמחה ישמח) Another idiom has been observed, which occurs in no writer later than the judges.

But, in the history, every phrase is vivid and graphic. There is not a word which does not advance the history. There is no reflection. All hastens on to the completion, and when God has given the key to the whole, the book closes with His words of exceeding tenderness lingering in our ears. The prophet, with the same simplicity and beginning with the same words, says he did not, and he did, obey God. The book opens, after the first authenticating words, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it, for the wickedness is come up before Me." God had commanded him to arise; the narrative simply repeats the word, "And Jonah arose " - but for what? to flee in the very opposite direction "from being before the Lord", i. e., from standing in His presence, as His servant and minister. He lost no time, to do the contrary. After the miracles, by which he had been both punished and delivered, the history is resumed with the same simple dignity as before, in the same words; the disobedience being noticed only in the word, a second time. "And the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry unto it that cry which I say unto thee." This time it follows, "And Jonah arose and went to Nineveh."

Then, in the history itself, we follow the prophet step by step. He arose to flee to Tarshish, went down to Joppa, a perilous, yet the only sea-port for Judaea (1 Kings 5:9; 2 Chronicles 2:16; and after the captivity, Ezra 3:7). He finds the ship, "pays its fare" (one of those little touches of a true narrative); God sends the storm, man does all he can; and all in vain. The character of the pagan is brought out in contrast with the then sleeping conscience and despondency of the prophet. But it is all in act. They are all activity; he is simply passive. They pray, (as they can) each man to his

gods; he is asleep: they do all they can, lighten the ship, the ship-master rouses him, to pray to his God, since their own prayers avail not; they propose the lots, cast them; the lot falls upon Jonah. Then follow their brief accumulated inquiries; Jonah‘s calm answer, increasing their fear; their inquiry of the prophet himself, what they are to do to him; his knowledge that he must be cast over; the unwillingness of the pagan; one more fruitless effort to save both themselves and the prophet; the increasing violence of the storm; the prayer to the prophet‘s God, not to lay innocent blood to them, who obeyed His prophet; the casting him forth; the instant hush and silence of the sea; their conversion and sacrifice to the true God - the whole stands before us, as if we saw it with our own eyes.

And yet, amid, or perhaps as a part of, that vividness, there is that characteristic of Scripture-narratives, that some things even seem improbable, until, on thought, we discover the reason. It is not on a first reading, that most perceive the naturalness either of Jonah‘s deep sleep, or of the increase of the mariner‘s fear, on his account of himself. Yet that deep sleep harmonizes at least with his long hurried flight to Joppa, and that mood with which men who have taken a wrong step, try to forget themselves. He relates that he “was gone down” Jonah 1:5, i. e., before the storm began. The sailors‘ increased tear surprises us the more, since it is added, “they knew that he had fled from before the presence of God, ‹because he had told them.‘” One word explained it. He had told them, from whose service he had fled, but not that He, against whom he had sinned, and who, they would think, was pursuing His fugitive, was “the Maker of the sea,” whose raging was threatening their lives.

Again, the history mentions only that Jonah was cast over; that God prepared a fish to swallow him; that he was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights; that he, at the end of that time, prayed to God out of the fish‘s belly, and at the close of the prayer was delivered. The word “prayed” obviously includes “thanksgiving” as the act of adoring love from the creature to the Creator. It is said that Hannah prayed 1 Samuel 2:1, but her hymn, as well as Jonah‘s does not contain one petition. Both are the outpouring of thanksgiving from the soul, to which God had given what it had prayed for. As, before, it was not said, whether he prayed because of the shipmaster‘s rebuke or not, so here nothing is said in the history, except as

to the last moment, upon which he was cast out on the dry ground. The prayer incidentally supplies the rest. It is a simple thanksgiving of one who had prayed and who had been delivered Jonah 2:3. “I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me.” In the first mercy, he saw the earnest of the rest. He asks for nothing, he only thanks. But that for which he thanks is the deliverance from the perils of the sea. The thanksgiving corresponds with the plain words, “that he prayed out of the fish‘s belly.” They are suited to one so praying, who looked on in full faith to the future completion of his deliverance, although our minds might rather have been fixed on the actual peril. It is a thanksgiving of faith, but of stronger faith than many moderns have been able to conceive.

The hymn itself is a remarkable blending of old and new, as our Lord says Matthew 13:52: “Therefore is the kingdom of heaven like a householder, who bringeth out of his treasure new and old.” The prophet teaches us to use the Psalms, as well as how the holy men of old used them. In that great moment of religious life, the wellremembered Psalms, such as he had often used them, were brought to his mind. What had been figures to David or the sons of Korah, as Jonah 2:5; Psalm 69:2, “the waters are come in even unto my soul” Jonah 2:3; Psalm 42:8; “all Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me,” were strict realities to him. Yet only in this last sentence and in one other sentence which doubtless had become a proverb of accepted prayer Jonah 2:2; Psalm 120:1, “I cried out of my trouble unto the Lord and He heard me,” does Jonah use exactly the words of earlier Psalms. Elsewhere he varies or amplifies them according to his own special circumstances.

Thus, where David said, “the waters are ‹come in,‘ even unto my soul,” Jonah substitutes the word which best described the condition from which God had delivered him, “The water compassed me about, even to the soul.” Where David said (Psalm 31:22, נגזרתי), “I am cut off from before Thine eyes,” expressing an abiding condition, Jonah, who had for disobedience been cast into the sea, uses the strong word (Jonah 2:4 (5), נגרשתי), “I am cast out from before Thine eyes.” David says, “I said in my haste;” Jonah simply,” I said;” for he had deserved it. David said Jonah 2:7 (8)); for when he rebelled, he forgot Him. David said Psalm 31:7, “I hate them that observe lying vanities;” Jonah, who had himself disobeyed God, says

mournfully Jonah 2:9, “They that observe lying vanities, ‹forsake their own mercy,‘” i. e., their God, Who is mercy.

Altogether, Jonah‘s thanksgiving is that of one whose mind was stored with the Psalms which were part of the public worship, but it is the language of one who uses and re-casts them freely, as he was taught of God, not of one who copies. No one verse is taken entirely from any Psalm. There are original expressions everywhere The words, “I went down to the cuttings-off of the mountains,” “the seaweed bound around my head;” “the earth, its bars around me forever:” perhaps the coral reefs which run along all that shore vividly exhibit him, sinking, entangled, imprisoned, as it seems, inextricably; he goes on; we should expect some further description of his state; but he adds, in five simple words, “Thou broughtest up my life from corruption, O Lord My God.” Words, somewhat like these last, occur elsewhere Psalm 30:3. “thou hast brought up my soul from hell,” agreeing in the one word “brought up.” But the majesty of the prophet‘s conception is in the connection of the thought; the seaweed was bound around his head as his grave-clothes; the solid bars of the deep-rooted earth, were around him, and … God brought him up. At the close of the thanksgiving, “Salvation is the Lord‘s,” deliverance is completed, as though God had only waited for this act of complete faith.

So could no one have written, who had not himself been delivered from such an extreme peril of drowning, as man could not, of himself, escape from. True, that no image so well expresses the overwhelmedness under affliction or temptation, as the pressure of storm by land, or being overflooded by the waves of the sea. Human poetry knows of “a sea of troubles,” or “the triple wave of evils.” It expresses how we are simply pas sive and powerless under a trouble, which leaves us neither breath nor power of motion; under which we can be but still, until, by God‘s mercy it passes. “We are sunk, overhead, deep down in temptations, and the masterful current is sweeping in eddies over us.” Of this sort are those images which Jonah took from the Psalms. But a description so minute as the whole of Jonah‘s would be allegory, not metaphor. What, in it, is most descriptive of Jonah‘s situation, as “binding of the seaweed around the head, the sinking down to the roots of the mountains, the bars of the earth around him,” are special to this thanksgiving of Jonah; they do not occur

elsewhere, for, except through miracle, they would be images not of peril but of death.

The same vividness, and the same steady directions to its end, characterizes the rest of the book. Critics have wondered why Jonah does not say, on what shore he was east forth, why he does not describe his long journey to Nineveh, or tell us the name of the Assyrian king, or what he himself did, when his mission was closed. Jonah speaks of himself, only as relates to his mission, and God‘s teaching through him; the tells us not the king‘s name, but his deeds.

The description of the size of Nineveh remarkably corresponds alike with the ancient accounts and modern investigations. Jonah describes it as “a city of three days‘journey.” This obviously means its circumference, for, unless the city were a circle, (as no cities are,) it would have no one diameter. A person might describe the average length and breadth of a city, but no one who gave any one measure, by days or miles or any other measure, would mean anything else than its circumference. Diodorus (probably on the authority of Ctesias) states that (Jonah 2:3. So too Q. Curtius v. 4.) “it was well-walled, of unequal lengths. Each of the longer sides was 150 furlongs; each of the shorter, 90. The whole circuit then being 480 furlongs (60 miles) the hope of the founder was not disappointed. For no one afterward built a city of such compass, and with walls so magnificent.” To Babylon “Clitarehus and the companions of Alexander in their writings, assigned a circuit of 365 furlongs, adding that the number of furlongs was conformed to the number of days in the year”.

Ctesias, in round numbers, calls them 360; Strabo, 385. All these accounts agree with the statement of Strabo, “Nineveh was much larger than Babylon.” The 60 miles of Diodorus exactly correspond with the three days‘ journey of Jonah. A traveler of our own at the beginning of the 17th century, John Cartwright, states that with his own eyes he traced out the ruinous foundations, and gives their dimensions. “It seems by the ruinous foundation (which I thoroughly viewed) that it was built with four sides, but not equal or square. For the two longer sides had each of them (as we guess) 150 furlongs, the two shorter sides ninety furlongs, which amounteth

to four hundred and eighty furlongs of ground, which makes the threescore miles, accounting eight furlongs to an Italian mile."

No one of the four great mounds, which lie around the site of ancient Nineveh, Nimrud, Kouyunjik, Khorsabad, Karamless, is of sufficient moment or extent to be identified with the old Nineveh. But they are connected together by the sameness of their remains. Together they form a parallelogram, and this of exactly the dimensions assigned by Jonah. "From the northern extremity of Kouyunjik to Nimrud, is about 18 miles, the distance from Nimrud to Karamless, about 12; the opposite sides, the same." "A recent trigonometrical survey of the country by Captain Jones proves, I am informed," says Layard, "that the great ruins of Kouyunjik, Nimrud, Karamless, and Khorsabad form very nearly a perfect parallelogram."

This is perhaps also the explanation, how, seeing its circumference was three days' journey, Jonah entered a day's journey in the city and, at the close of the period, we find him at the East side of the city, the opposite to that at which he had entered.

His preaching seems to have lasted only this one day. He went, we are told, "one day's journey in the city." The 150 stadia are nearly 19 miles, a day's journey, so that Jonah walked through it from end to end, repeating that one cry, which God had commanded him to cry out. We seem to see the solitary figure of the prophet, clothed (as was the prophet's dress) in that one rough garment of hair cloth, uttering the cry which we almost hear, echoing in street after street, Jonah 3:4, "עוד ארבעים יום נינוה נהפחת *ʿôd' arbâʿîym yôm nîynevêh nêhpâcheth* "yet forty days and Nineveh overthrown!" The words which he says he cried and said, belong to that one day only. For on that one day only, was there still a respite of forty days. In one day, the grace of God prevailed. The conversion of a whole people upon one day's preaching of a single stranger, stands in contrast with the many years during which, God says (Jeremiah 7:25, add 13; Jeremiah 11:7; Jeremiah 25:3-4; Jeremiah 26:5; Jeremiah 29:19; Jeremiah 32:33; Jeremiah 35:14-15; Jeremiah 44:4), "since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have sent unto you all My servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them, yet they hearkened not

unto Me." Many of us have wondered what the prophet did on the other thirty-nine days; people have imagined the prophet preaching as moderns would, or telling them his own wondrous story of his desertion of God, his miraculous punishment, and, on his repentance, his miraculous deliverance. Jonah says nothing of this. The one point he brought out was the conversion of the Ninevites. This he dwells on in circumstantial details. His own part he suppresses; he would be, like John the Immerser, but the voice of one crying in the wild waste of a city of violence.

This simple message of Jonah bears an analogy to what we find elsewhere in Holy Scripture. Doubtless, the great preacher of repentance, John the Immerser, repeated oftentimes that one cry Matthew 3:2, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Our Lord vouchsafed to begin His own office with those self-same words Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:15. And probably, among the civilized but savage inhabitants of Nineveh, that one cry was more impressive than any other would have been. Simplicity is always impressive. They were four words which God caused to be written on the wall amid Belshazzar's impious revelry Daniel 5:25 - פרסין תקל מנא מנא *menê' menê' teqal perasîyn* (*Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin*). We all remember the touching history of Jesus, the son of Anan, an unlettered rustic, who, "four years before the war, when Jerusalem was in complete peace and affluence," burst in on the people at the Feast of Tabernacles with one oft-repeated cry, "A voice from the East, a voice from the West, a voice from the four winds, a voice on Jerusalem and the temple, a voice on the bridegrooms and the brides, a voice on the whole people;" how he went about through all the lanes of the city, repeating, day and night, this one cry; and when scourged until his bones were laid bare, echoed every lash with "woe, woe, to Jerusalem," and continued as his daily dirge and his one response to daily good or ill-treatment, "woe, woe, to Jerusalem." The magistrates and even the cold Josephus thought that there was something in it above nature.

In Jerusalem, no effect was produced, because they had filled up the measure of their sins and God had abandoned them. All conversion is the work of the grace of God.

JONAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

Now the word of the Lord - , literally, "And, … " This is the way in which the several inspired writers of the Old Testament mark that what it was given them to write was united onto those sacred books which God had given to others to write, and it formed with them one continuous whole. The word, "And," implies this. It would do so in any language, and it does so in Hebrew as much as in any other. As neither we, nor any other people, would, without any meaning, use the word, And, so neither did the Hebrews. It joins the four first books of Moses together; it carries on the history through Joshua, Judges, the Books of Samuel and of the Kings. After the captivity, Ezra and Nehemiah begin again where the histories before left off; the break of the captivity is bridged over; and Ezra, going back in mind to the history of God‘s people before the captivity, resumes the history, as if it had been of yesterday, "And in the first year of Cyrus." It joins in the story of the Book of Ruth before the captivity, and that of Esther afterward. At times, even prophets employ it, in using the narrative form of themselves, as Ezekiel, "and it was in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, and I was in the captivity by the river of Chebar, the heavens opened and I saw." If a prophet or historian wishes to detach his prophecy or his history, he does so; as Ezra probably began the Book of Chronicles anew from Adam, or as Daniel makes his prophecy a whole by itself. But then it is the more obvious that a Hebrew prophet or historian, when he does begin with the word, "And," has an object in so beginning; he uses an universal word of all languages in its uniform meaning in all language, to join things together.

And yet more precisely; this form, "and the word of the Lord came to - saying," occurs over and over again, stringing together the pearls of great price of God‘s revelations, and uniting this new revelation to all those which had preceded it. The word, "And," then joins on histories with histories, revelations with revelations, uniting in one the histories of God‘s works and words, and blending the books of Holy Scripture into one divine book.

But the form of words must have suggested to the Jews another thought, which is part of our thankfulness and of our being Acts 11:18, "then to the

Gentiles also hath God given repentance unto life." The words are the self-same familiar words with which some fresh revelation of God's will to His people had so often been announced. Now they are prefixed to God's message to the pagan, and so as to join on that message to all the other messages to Israel. Would then God deal thenceforth with the pagan as with the Jews? Would they have their prophets? Would they be included in the one family of God? The mission of Jonah in itself was an earnest that they would, for God. Who does nothing fitfully or capriciously, in that He had begun, gave an earnest that He would carry on what He had begun. And so thereafter, the great prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, were prophets to the nations also; Daniel was a prophet among them, to them as well as to their captives.

But the mission of Jonah might, so far, have been something exceptional. The enrolling his book, as an integral part of the Scriptures, joining on that prophecy to the other prophecies to Israel, was an earnest that they were to be parts of one system. But then it would be significant also, that the records of God's prophecies to the Jews, all embodied the accounts of their impenitence. Here is inserted among them an account of God's revelation to the pagan, and their repentance. "So many prophets had been sent, so many miracles performed, so often had captivity been foreannounced to them for the multitude of their sins. and they never repented. Not for the reign of one king did they cease from the worship of the calves; not one of the kings of the ten tribes departed from the sins of Jeroboam? Elijah, sent in the Word and Spirit of the Lord, had done many miracles, yet obtained no abandonment of the calves. His miracles effected this only, that the people knew that Baal was no god, and cried out, "the Lord He is the God." Elisha his disciple followed him, who asked for a double portion of the Spirit of Elijah, that he might work more miracles, to bring back the people.

He died, and, after his death as before it, the worship of the calves continued in Israel. The Lord marveled and was weary of Israel, knowing that if He sent to the pagan they would bear, as he saith to Ezekiel. To make trial of this, Jonah was chosen, of whom it is recorded in the Book of Kings that he prophesied the restoration of the border of Israel. When then he begins by saying, "And the word of the Lord came to Jonah," prefixing the

word "And," he refers us back to those former things, in this meaning. The children have not hearkened to what the Lord commanded, sending to them by His servants the prophets, but have hardened their necks and given themselves up to do evil before the Lord and provoke Him to anger; "and" therefore "the word of the Lord came to Jonah, saying, Arise and go to Nineveh that great city, and preach unto her," that so Israel may be shewn, in comparison with the pagan, to be the more guilty, when the Ninevites should repent, the children of Israel persevered in unrepentance."

Jonah the son of Amittai - Both names occur here only in the Old Testament, Jonah signifies "Dove," Amittai, "the truth of God." Some of the names of the Hebrew prophets so suit in with their times, that they must either have been given them propheticly, or assumed by themselves, as a sort of watchword, analogous to the prophetic names, given to the sons of Hosea and Isaiah. Such were the names of Elijah and Elisha, "The Lord is my God," "my God is salvation." Such too seems to be that of Jonah. The "dove" is everywhere the symbol of "mourning love." The side of his character which Jonah records is that of his defect, his want of trust in God, and so his unloving zeal against those, who were to be the instruments of God against his people. His name perhaps preserves that character by which he willed to be known among his people, one who moaned or mourned over them.

Verse 2

Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city - The Assyrian history, as far as it has yet been discovered, is very bare of events in regard to this period. We have as yet the names of three kings only for 150 years. But Assyria, as far as we know its history, was in its meridian. Just before the time of Jonah, perhaps ending in it, were the victorious reigns of Shalmanubar and Shamasiva; after him was that of Ivalush or Pul, the first aggressor upon Israel. It is clear that this was a time Of Assyrian greatness: since God calls it "that great city," not in relation to its extent only, but its power. A large weak city would not have been called a "great city unto God" Jonah 3:3.

And cry against it - The substance of that cry is recorded afterward, but God told to Jonah now, what message he was to cry aloud to it. For Jonah relates afterward, how he expostulated now with God, and that his expostulation was founded on this, that God was so merciful that He would not fulfill the judgment which He threatened. Faith was strong in Jonah, while, like Apostles "the sons of thunder," before the Day of Pentecost, he

knew not" what spirit he was of." Zeal for the people and, as he doubtless thought, for the glory of God, narrowed love in him. He did not, like Moses, pray Exodus 32:32, "or else blot me also out of Thy book," or like Paul, desire even to be "an anathema from Christ" Romans 9:3 for his people's sake, so that there might be more to love his Lord. His zeal was directed, like that of the rebuked Apostles, against others, and so it too was rebuked. But his faith was strong. He shrank back from the office, as believing, not as doubting, the might of God. He thought nothing of preaching, amid that multitude of wild warriors, the stern message of God. He was willing, alone, to confront the violence of a city of 600,000, whose characteristic was violence. He was ready, at God's bidding, to enter what Nahum speaks of as a den of lions Nahum 2:11-12; "The dwelling of the lions and the feeding-place of the young lions, where the lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses." He feared not the fierceness of their lion-nature, but God's tenderness, and lest that tenderness should be the destruction of his own people.

Their wickedness is come up before Me - So God said to Cain, Genesis 4:10. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground:" and of Sodom Genesis 18:20:21, "The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, because their sin is very grievous; the cry of it is come up unto Me." The "wickedness" is not the mere mass of human sin, of which it is said 1 John 5:19, "the whole world lieth in wickedness," but evil-doing toward others. This was the cause of the final sentence on Nineveh, with which Nahum closes his prophecy, "upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" It bad been assigned as the ground of the judgment on Israel through Nineveh Hosea 10:14-15. "So shall Bethel do unto you, on account of the wickedness of your wickedness." It was the ground of the destruction by the flood Genesis 6:5. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth." God represents Himself, the Great Judge, as sitting on His Throne in heaven, Unseen but All-seeing, to whom the wickedness and oppressiveness of man against man "goes up," appealing for His sentence against the oppressor. The cause seems ofttimes long in pleading. God is long-suffering with the oppressor too, that if so be, he may repent. So would a greater good come to the oppressed also, if the wolf became a lamb. But meanwhile, " every iniquity has its own voice at the hidden judgment seat of God." Mercy itself calls for vengeance on the unmerciful.

Verse 3

But (And) Jonah rose up to flee … from the presence of the Lord - literally "from being before the Lord." Jonah knew well, that man could not escape from the presence of God, whom he knew as the Self-existing One, He who alone is, the Maker of heaven, earth and sea. He did not "flee" then "from His presence," knowing well what David said Psalm 139:7, Psalm 139:9-10, "whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me." Jonah fled, not from God's presence, but from standing before him, as His servant and minister. He refused God's service, because, as he himself tells God afterward Jonah 4:2, he knew what it would end in, and he misliked it.

So he acted, as people often do, who dislike God's commands. He set about removing himself as far as possible from being under the influence of God, and from the place where he "could" fulfill them. God commanded him to go to Nineveh, which lay northeast from his home; and he instantly set himself to flee to the then furthermost west. Holy Scripture sets the rebellion before us in its full nakedness. "The word of the Lord came unto Jonah, go to Nineveh, and Jonah rose up;" he did something instantly, as the consequence of God's command. He "rose up," not as other prophets, to obey, but to disobey; and that, not slowly nor irresolutely, but "to flee, from" standing "before the Lord." He renounced his office. So when our Lord came in the flesh, those who found what He said to be "hard sayings," went away from Him, "and walked no more with Him" John 6:66. So the rich "young man went away sorrowful Matthew 19:22, for he had great possessions."

They were perhaps afraid of trusting themselves in His presence; or they were ashamed of staying there, and not doing what He said. So men, when God secretly calls them to prayer, go and immerse themselves in business; when, in solitude, He says to their souls something which they do not like, they escape His Voice in a throng. If He calls them to make sacrifices for His poor, they order themselves a new dress or some fresh sumptuousness or self-indulgence; if to celibacy, they engage themselves to marry immediately; or, contrariwise, if He calls them not to do a thing, they do it at once, to make an end of their struggle and their obedience; to put

obedience out of their power; to enter themselves on a course of disobedience. Jonah, then, in this part of his history, is the image of those who, when God calls them, disobey His call, and how He deals with them, when he does not abandon them. He lets them have their way for a time, encompasses them with difficulties, so that they shall "flee back from God displeased to God appeased."

"The whole wisdom, the whole bliss, the whole of man lies in this, to learn what God wills him to do, in what state of life, calling, duties, profession, employment, He wills him to serve Him." God sent each one of us into the world, to fulfill his own definite duties, and, through His grace, to attain to our own perfection in and through fulfilling them. He did not create us at random, to pass through the world, doing whatever self-will or our own pleasure leads us to, but to fulfill His will. This will of His, if we obey His earlier calls, and seek Him by prayer, in obedience, self-subdual, humility, thoughtfulness, He makes known to each by His own secret drawings, and, in absence of these, at times by His Providence or human means. And then, "to follow Him is a token of predestination." It is to place ourselves in that order of things, that pathway to our eternal mansion, for which God created us, and which God created for us.

So Jesus says John 10:27-28, "My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My Hand." In these ways, God has foreordained for us all the graces which we need; in these, we shall be free from all temptations which might be too hard for us, in which our own special weakness would be most exposed. Those ways, which people choose out of mere natural taste or fancy, are mostly those which expose them to the greatest peril of sin and damnation. For they choose them, just because such pursuits flatter most their own inclinations, and give scope to their natural strength and their moral weakness. So Jonah, disliking a duty, which God gave him to fulfill, separated himself from His service, forfeited his past calling, lost, as far as in him lay, his place among "the goodly fellowship of the prophets," and, but for God's overtaking grace, would have ended his days among the disobedient. As in Holy Scripture, David stands alone of saints, who had been after their calling, bloodstained; as the penitent robber stands alone converted in death; as

Peter stands singly, recalled after denying his Lord; so Jonah stands, the one prophet, who, having obeyed and then rebelled, was constrained by the overpowering providence and love of God, to return and serve Him.

"Being a prophet, Jonah could not be ignorant of the mind of God, that, according to His great Wisdom and His unsearchable judgments and His untraceable and incomprehensible ways, He, through the threat, was providing for the Ninevites that they should not suffer the things threatened. To think that Jonah hoped to hide himself in the sea and elude by flight the great Eye of God, were altogether absurd and ignorant, which should not be believed, I say not of a prophet, but of no other sensible person who had any moderate knowledge of God and His supreme power. Jonah knew all this better than anyone, that, planning his flight, he changed his place, but did not flee God. For this could no man do, either by hiding himself in the bosom of the earth or depths of the sea or ascending (if possible) with wings into the air, or entering the lowest hell, or encircled with thick clouds, or taking any other counsel to secure his flight.

This, above all things and alone, can neither be escaped nor resisted, God. When He willeth to hold and grasp in His Hand, He overtaketh the swift, baffleth the intelligent, overthroweth the strong, boweth the lofty, tameth rashness, subdueth might. He who threatened to others the mighty Hand of God, was not himself ignorant of nor thought to flee, God. Let us not believe this. But since he saw the fall of Israel and perceived that the prophetic grace would pass over to the Gentiles, he withdrew himself from the office of preaching, and put off the command." "The prophet knoweth, the Holy Spirit teaching him, that the repentance of the Gentiles is the ruin of the Jews. A lover then of his country, he does not so much envy the deliverance of Nineveh, as will that his own country should not perish. - Seeing too that his fellow-prophets are sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to excite the people to repentance, and that Balaam the soothsayer too prophesied of the salvation of Israel, he grieveth that he alone is chosen to be sent to the Assyrians, the enemies of Israel, and to that greatest city of the enemies where was idolatry and ignorance of God. Yet more he feared lest they, on occasion of his preaching, being converted to repentance, Israel should be wholly forsaken. For he knew by the same Spirit whereby the preaching to the Gentiles was entrusted to him, that the house of Israel

would then perish; and he feared that what was at one time to be, should take place in his own time." "The flight of the prophet may also be referred to that of man in general who, despising the commands of God, departed from Him and gave himself to the world, where subsequently, through the storms of ill and the wreck of the whole world raging against him, he was compelled to feel the presence of God, and to return to Him whom he had fled. Whence we understand, that those things also which men think for their good, when against the will of God, are turned to destruction; and help not only does not benefit those to whom it is given, but those too who give it, are alike crushed. As we read that Egypt was conquered by the Assyrians, because it helped Israel against the will of God. The ship is emperiled which had received the emperiled; a tempest arises in a calm; nothing is secure, when God is against us."

Tarshish - , named after one of the sons of Javan, Genesis 10:4. was an ancient merchant city of Spain, once proverbial for its wealth (Psalm 72:10. Strabo iii. 2. 14), which supplied Judaea with silver Jeremiah 10:9, Tyre with "all manner of riches," with iron also, tin, lead. Ezekiel 27:12, Ezekiel 27:25. It was known to the Greeks and Romans, as (with a harder pronunciation) Tartessus; but in our first century, it had either ceased to be, or was known under some other name. Ships destined for a voyage, at that time, so long, and built for carrying merchandise, were naturally among the largest then constructed. "Ships of Tarshish" corresponded to the "East-Indiamen" which some of us remember. The breaking of "ships of Tarshish by the East Wind" Psalm 48:7 is, on account of their size and general safety, instanced as a special token of the interposition of God.

And went down to Joppa - Joppa, now Jaffa (Haifa), was the one well-known port of Israel on the Mediterranean. There the cedars were brought from Lebanon for both the first and second temple 2 Chronicles 3:16; Ezra 2:7. Simon the Maccabee (Luke 10:30. He "went down" from the place which God honored by His presence and protection.

And he paid the fare thereof - Jonah describes circumstantially, how he took every step to his end. He went down, found a strongly built ship going where he wished, paid his fare, embarked. He seemed now to have done all. He had severed himself from the country where his office lay. He had no further step to take. Winds and waves would do the rest. He had but to be still. He went, only to be brought back again.

“Sin brings our soul into much senselessness. For as those overtaken by heaviness of head and drunkenness, are borne on simply and at random, and, be there pit or precipice or whatever else below them, they fall into it unawares; so too, they who fall into sin, intoxicated by their desire of the object, know not what they do, see nothing before them, present or future. Tell me, Fleest thou the Lord? Wait then a little, and thou shalt learn from the event, that thou canst not escape the hands of His servant, the sea. For as soon as he embarked, it too roused its waves and raised them up on high; and as a faithful servant, finding her fellow-slave stealing some of his master‘s property, ceases not from giving endless trouble to those who take him in, until she recover him, so too the sea, finding and recognizing her fellow-servant, harasses the sailors unceasingly, raging, roaring, not dragging them to a tribunal but threatening to sink the vessel with all its unless they restore to her, her fellow-servant.”

“The sinner “arises,” because, will he, nill he, toil he must. If he shrinks from the way of God, because it is hard, he may not yet be idle. There is the way of ambition, of covetousness, of pleasure, to be trodden, which certainly are far harder. ‹We wearied ourselves (Psalm 107:23-27. “They who go down to the sea of this world, and do business in mighty waters - their soul melteth away because of trouble; they reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, and all their wisdom is swallowed up.”

Verse 4

But (And) the Lord sent out - (literally ‹cast along‘). Jonah had done his all. Now God‘s part began. This He expresses by the word, “And.” Jonah took “his” measures, “and” now God takes “His.” He had let him have his way, as He often deals with those who rebel against Him. He lets them have their way up to a certain point. He waits, in the tranquility of His Almightiness, until they have completed their preparations; and then, when man has ended, He begins, that man may see the more that it is His doing. “He takes those who flee from Him in their flight, the wise in their counsels, sinners in their conceits and sins, and draws them back to Himself and compels them to return. Jonah thought to find rest in the sea, and lo! a tempest.” Probably, God summoned back Jonah, as soon as he had completed all on his part, and sent the tempest, soon after he left the shore.

At least, such tempests often swept along that shore, and were known by their own special name, like the Euroclydon off Crete. Jonah too alone had gone down below deck to sleep, and, when the storm came, the mariners thought it possible to put back. Josephus says of that shore, "Joppa having by nature no haven, for it ends in a rough shore, mostly abrupt, but for a short space having projections, i. e., deep rocks and cliffs advancing into the sea, inclining on either side toward each other (where the traces of the chains of Andromeda yet shown accredit the antiquity of the fable,) and the north wind beating right on the shore, and dashing the high waves against the rocks which receive them, makes the station there a harborless sea. As those from Joppa were tossing here, a strong wind (called by those who sail here, the black north wind) falls upon them at daybreak, dashing straightway some of the ships against each other, some against the rocks, and some, forcing their way against the waves to the open sea, (for they fear the rocky shore …) the breakers towering above them, sank."

The ship was like - (literally ‹thought‘) To be broken Perhaps Jonah means by this very vivid image to exhibit the more his own dullness. He ascribes, as it were, to the ship a sense of its own danger, as she heaved and rolled and creaked and quivered under the weight of the storm which lay on her, and her masts groaned, and her yard-arms shivered. To the awakened conscience everything seems to have been alive to God‘s displeasure, except itself.

Verse 5

And cried, every man unto his God - They did what they could. "Not knowing the truth, they yet know of a Providence, and, amid religious error, know that there is an Object of reverence." In ignorance they had received one who offended God. And now God, "whom they ignorantly worshiped" Acts 17:23, while they cried to the gods, who, they thought, disposed of them, heard them. They escaped with the loss of their wares, but God saved their lives and revealed Himself to them. God hears ignorant prayer, when ignorance is not willful and sin.

To lighten it of them - , literally "to lighten from against them, to lighten" what was so much "against them," what so oppressed them. "They thought that the ship was weighed down by its wonted lading, and they knew not that the whole weight was that of the fugitive prophet." "The sailors cast forth their wares," but the ship was not lightened. For the whole weight still remained, the body of the prophet, that heavy burden, not from

the nature of the body, but from the burden of sin. For nothing is so onerous and heavy as sin and disobedience. Whence also Zechariah Zechariah 5:7 represented it under the image of lead. And David, describing its nature, said Psalm 38:4, "my wickednesses are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me." And Christ cried aloud to those who lived in many sins, Matthew 11:28. "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you."

Jonah was gone down - , probably before the beginning of the storm, not simply before the lightening of the vessel. He could hardly have fallen asleep "then." A pagan ship was a strange place for a prophet of God, not as a prophet, but as a fugitive; and so, probably, ashamed of what he had completed, he had withdrawn from sight and notice. He did not embolden himself in his sin, but shrank into himself. The conscience most commonly awakes, when the sin is done. It stands aghast as itself; but Satan, if he can, cuts off its retreat. Jonah had no retreat now, unless God had made one.

And was fast asleep - The journey to Joppa had been long and hurried; he had "fled." Sorrow and remorse completed what fatigue began. Perhaps he had given himself up to sleep, to dull his conscience. For it is said, "he lay down and was fast asleep." Grief produces sleep; from where it is said of the apostles in the night before the Lord's Passion, when Jesus "rose up from prayer and was come to His disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow" Luke 22:45. "Jonah slept heavily. Deep was the sleep, but it was not of pleasure but of grief; not of heartlessness, but of heavy-heartedness. For well-disposed servants soon feel their sins, as did he. For when the sin has been done, then he knows its frightfulness. For such is sin. When born, it awakens pangs in the soul which bare it, contrary to the law of our nature. For so soon as we are born, we end the travail-pangs; but sin, so soon as born, rends with pangs the thoughts which conceived it." Jonah was in a deep sleep, a sleep by which he was fast held and bound; a sleep as deep as that from which Sisera never woke. Had God allowed the ship to sink, the memory of Jonah would have been that of the fugitive prophet. As it is, his deep sleep stands as an image of the lethargy of sin. "This most deep sleep of Jonah signifies a man torpid and slumbering in error, to whom it sufficed not to flee from the face of God, but his mind, drowned in a stupor and not knowing the displeasure of God, lies asleep, steeped in security."

Verse 6

What meanest thou? - or rather, "what aileth thee?" (literally "what is to thee?") The shipmaster speaks of it (as it was) as a sort of disease, that he should be thus asleep in the common peril. "The shipmaster," charged, as he by office was, with the common weal of those on board, would, in the common peril, have one common prayer. It was the prophet's office to call the pagan to prayers and to calling upon God. God reproved the Scribes and Pharisees by the mouth of the children who "cried Hosanna" Matthew 21:15; Jonah by the shipmaster; David by Abigail; 1 Samuel 25:32-34; Naaman by his servants. Now too he reproves worldly priests by the devotion of laymen, sceptic intellect by the simplicity of faith.

If so be that God will think upon us - , (literally "for us") i. e., for good; as David says, Psalm 40:17. "I am poor and needy, the Lord thinketh upon" (literally "for") "me." Their calling upon their own gods had failed them. Perhaps the shipmaster had seen something special about Jonah, his manner, or his prophet's garb. He does not only call Jonah's God, "thy" God, as Darius says to Daniel "thy God" Daniel 6:20, but also "the God," acknowledging the God whom Jonah worshiped, to be "the God." It is not any pagan prayer which he asks Jonah to offer. It is the prayer of the creature in its need to God who can help; but knowing its own ill-desert, and the separation between itself and God, it knows not whether He will help it. So David says Psalm 25:7, "Remember not the sins of my youth nor my transgressions; according to Thy mercy remember Thou me for Thy goodness' sake, O Lord."

"The shipmaster knew from experience, that it was no common storm, that the surges were an infliction borne down from God, and above human skill, and that there was no good in the master's skill. For the state of things needed another Master who ordereth the heavens, and craved the guidance from on high. So then they too left oars, sails, cables, gave their hands rest from rowing, and stretched them to heaven and called on God."

Verse 7

Come, and let us cast lots - Jonah too had probably prayed, and his prayers too were not heard. Probably, too, the storm had some unusual character about it, the suddenness with which it burst upon them, its violence, the quarter from where it came, its whirlwind force. "They knew the nature of the sea, and, as experienced sailors, were acquainted with the character of wind and storm, and had these waves been such as they had

known before, they would never have sought by lot for the author of the threatened wreck, or, by a thing uncertain, sought to escape certain peril." God, who sent the storm to arrest Jonah and to cause him to be cast into the sea, provided that its character should set the mariners on divining, why it came. Even when working great miracles, God brings about, through man, all the forerunning events, all but the last act, in which He puts forth His might. As, in His people, he directed the lot to fall upon Achan or upon Jonathan, so here He overruled the lots of the pagan sailors to accomplish His end. " We must not, on this precedent, immediately trust in lots, or unite with this testimony that from the Acts of the Apostles, when Matthias was by lot elected to the apostolate, since the privileges of individuals cannot form a common law." "Lots," according to the ends for which they were cast, were for:

i) dividing;

ii) consulting;

iii) divining.

i) The lot for dividing is not wrong if not used,

1) "without any necessity, for this would be to tempt God:"

2) "if in case of necessity, not without reverence of God, as if Holy Scripture were used for an earthly end," as in determining any secular matter by opening the Bible:

3) for objects which ought to be decided otherwise, (as, an office ought to be given to the fittest:)

4) in dependence upon any other than God Proverbs 16:33. "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing of it is the Lord's." So then they are lawful "in secular things which cannot otherwise be conveniently distributed," or when there is no apparent reason why, in any advantage or disadvantage, one should be preferred to another." Augustine even allows that, in a time of plague or persecution, the lot might be cast to decide who

should remain to administer the sacraments to the people, lest, on the one side, all should be taken away, or, on the other, the Church be deserted.

ii.) The lot for consulting, i. e., to decide what one should do, is wrong, unless in a matter of mere indifference, or under inspiration of God, or in some extreme necessity where all human means fail.

iii.) The lot for divining, i. e., to learn truth, whether of things present or future, of which we can have no human knowledge, is wrong, except by direct inspiration of God. For it is either to tempt God who has not promised so to reveal things, or, against God, to seek superhuman knowledge by ways unsanctioned by Him. Satan may readily mix himself unknown in such inquiries, as in mesmerism. Forbidden ground is his own province.

God overruled the lot in the case of Jonah, as He did the sign which the Philistines sought. “He made the heifers take the way to Bethshemesh, that the Philistines might know that the plague came to them, not by chance, but from Hilmself”. “The fugitive (Jonah) was taken by lot, not by any virtue of the lots, especially the lots of pagan, but by the will of Him who guided the uncertain lots” “The lot betrayed the culprit. Yet not even thus did they cast him over; but, even while such a tumult and storm lay on them, they held, as it were, a court in the vessel, as though in entire peace, and allowed him a hearing and defense, and sifted everything accurately, as men who were to give account of their judgment. Hear them sifting all as in a court - The roaring sea accused him; the lot convicted and witnessed against him, yet not even thus did they pronounce against him - until the accused should be the accuser of his own sin. The sailors, uneducated, untaught, imitated the good order of courts. When the sea scarcely allowed them to breathe, whence such forethought about the prophet? By the disposal of God. For God by all this instructed the prophet to be humane and mild, all but saying aloud to him; ‹Imitate these uninstructed sailors. They think not lightly of one soul, nor are unsparing as to one body, thine own. But thou, for thy part, gavest up a whole city with so many myriads. They, discovering thee to be the cause of the evils which befell them, did not even thus hurry to condemn thee. Thou, having nothing whereof to accuse the Ninevites, didst sink and destroy them. Thou, when I bade thee go and by thy preaching call

them to repentance, obeyedst not; these, untaught, do all, compass all, in order to recover thee, already condemned, from punishment.'"

Verse 8

Tell us, for whose cause - Literally "for what to whom." It may be that they thought that Jonah had been guilty toward some other. The lot had pointed him out. The mariners, still fearing to do wrong, ask him thronged questions, to know why the anger of God followed him; "what" hast thou done "to whom?" "what thine occupation?" i. e., either his ordinary occupation, whether it was displeasing to God? or this particular business in which he was engaged, and for which he had come on board. Questions so thronged have been admired in human poetry, Jerome says. For it is true to nature. They think that some one of them will draw forth the answer which they wish. It may be that they thought that his country, or people, or parents, were under the displeasure of God. But perhaps, more naturally, they wished to "know all about him," as people say. These questions must have gone home to Jonah's conscience. "What is thy business?" The office of prophet which he had left. "Whence comest thou?" From standing before God, as His minister. "What thy country? of what people art thou?" The people of God, whom he had quitted for pagan; not to win them to God, as He commanded; but, not knowing what they did, to abet him in his flight.

What is thine occupation? - They should ask themselves, who have Jonah's office to speak in the name of God, and preach repentance. "What should be thy business, who hast consecrated thyself wholly to God, whom God has loaded with daily benefits? who approachest to Him as to a Friend? "What is thy business?" To live for God, to despise the things of earth, to behold the things of heaven," to lead others heavenward.

Jonah answers simply the central point to which all these questions tended:

Verse 9

I am an Hebrew - This was the name by which Israel was known to foreigners. It is used in the Old Testament, only when they are spoken of by foreigners, or speak of themselves to foreigners, or when the sacred writers mention them in contrast with foreigners. So Joseph spoke of his land Genesis 40:15, and the Hebrew midwives Exodus 1:19, and Moses' sister Exodus 2:7, and God in His commission to Moses Exodus 3:18; Exodus

7:16; Exodus 9:1 as to Pharaoh, and Moses in fulfilling it Exodus 5:3. They had the name, as having passed the River Euphrates, "emigrants." The title might serve to remind themselves, that they were "strangers" and "pilgrims," Hebrews 11:13. whose fathers had left their home at God's command and for God, "passers by, through this world to death, and through death to immortality."

And I fear the Lord - , i. e., I am a worshiper of Him, most commonly, one who habitually stands in awe of Him, and so one who stands in awe of sin too. For none really fear God, none fear Him as sons, who do not fear Him in act. To be afraid of God is not to fear Him. To be afraid of God keeps men away from God; to fear God draws them to Him. Here, however, Jonah probably meant to tell them, that the Object of his fear and worship was the One Self-existing God, He who alone is, who made all things, in whose hands are all things. He had told them before, that he had fled "from being before Yahweh." They had not thought anything of this, for they thought of Yahweh, only as the God of the Jews. Now he adds, that He, Whose service he had thus forsaken, was "the God of heaven, Who made the sea and dry land," that sea, whose raging terrified them and threatened their lives. The title, "the God of heaven," asserts the doctrine of the creation of the heavens by God, and His supremacy.

Hence, Abraham uses it to his servant Genesis 24:7, and Jonah to the pagan mariners, and Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar Daniel 2:37, Daniel 2:44; and Cyrus in acknowledging God in his proclamation 2 Chronicles 36:23; Ezra 1:2. After his example, it is used in the decrees of Darius Ezra 6:9-10 and Artaxerxes Ezra 7:12, Ezra 7:21, Ezra 7:23, and the returned exiles use it in giving account of their building the temple to the Governor Ezra 5:11-12. Perhaps, from the habit of contact with the pagan, it is used once by Daniel Daniel 2:18 and by Nehemiah Nehemiah 1:4-5; Nehemiah 2:4, Nehemiah 2:20. Melchizedek, not perhaps being acquainted with the special name, Yahweh, blessed Abraham in the name of "God, the Possessor" or "Creator of heaven and earth" Genesis 14:19, i. e., of all that is. Jonah, by using it, at once taught the sailors that there is One Lord of all, and why this evil had fallen on them, because they had himself with them, the renegade servant of God. "When Jonah said this, he indeed feared God and repented of his sin. If he lost filial fear by fleeing and disobeying, he recovered it by repentance."

Verse 10

Then were the men exceedingly afraid - Before, they had feared the tempest and the loss of their lives. Now they feared God. They feared, not the creature but the Creator. They knew that what they had feared was the doing of His Almightiness. They felt how awesome a thing it was to be in His Hands. Such fear is the beginning of conversion, when people turn from dwelling on the distresses which surround them, to God who sent them.

Why hast thou done this? - They are words of amazement and wonder. Why hast thou not obeyed so great a God, and how thoughtest thou to escape the hand of the Creator? "What is the mystery of thy flight? Why did one, who feared God and had revelations from God, flee, sooner than go to fulfill them? Why did the worshiper of the One true God depart from his God?" "A servant flee from his Lord, a son from his father, man from his God!" The inconsistency of believers is the marvel of the young Christian, the repulsion of those without, the hardening of the unbeliever. If people really believed in eternity, how could they be thus immersed in things of time? If they believed in hell, how could they so hurry there? If they believed that God died for them, how could they so requite Him? Faith without love, knowledge without obedience, conscious dependence and rebellion, to be favored by God yet to despise His favor, are the strangest marvels of this mysterious world.

All nature seems to cry out to and against the unfaithful Christian, "why hast thou done this?" And what a why it is! A scoffer has recently said so truthfully: "Avowed scepticism cannot do a tenth part of the injury to practical faith, that the constant spectacle of the huge mass of worldly unreal belief does." It is nothing strange, that the world or unsanctified intellect should reject the Gospel. It is a thing of course, unless it be converted. But, to know, to believe, and to DISOBEY! To disobey God, in the name of God. To propose to halve the living Gospel, as the woman who had killed her child 1 Kings 3:26, and to think that the poor quivering remnants would be the living Gospel anymore! As though the will of God might, like those lower forms of His animal creation, be divided endlessly, and, keep what fragments we will, it would still be a living whole, a vessel of His Spirit! Such unrealities and inconsistencies would be a sore trial of faith, had not Jesus, who (cf. John 2:25), "knew what is in man," forewarned us that it should be so. The scandals against the Gospel, so

contrary to all human opinion, are only all the more a testimony to the divine knowledge of the Redeemer.

Verse 11

What shall we do unto thee? - They knew him to be a prophet; they ask him the mind of his God. The lots had marked out Jonah as the cause of the storm; Jonah had himself admitted it, and that the storm was for "his" cause, and came from "his" God. "Great was he who fled, greater He who required him. They dare not give him up; they cannot conceal him. They blame the fault; they confess their fear; they ask "him" the remedy, who was the author of the sin. If it was faulty to receive thee, what can we do, that God should not be angered? It is thine to direct; ours, to obey."

The sea wrought and was tempestuous - , literally "was going and whirling." It was not only increasingly tempestuous, but, like a thing alive and obeying its Master's will, it was holding on its course, its wild waves tossing themselves, and marching on like battalions, marshalled, arrayed for the end for which they were sent, pursuing and demanding the runaway slave of God. "It was going, as it was bidden; it was going to avenge its Lord; it was going, pursuing the fugitive prophet. It was swelling every moment, and, as though the sailors were too tardy, was rising in yet greater surges, shewing that the vengeance of the Creator admitted not of delay."

Verse 12

Take me up, and cast me into the sea - Neither might Jonah have said this, nor might the sailors have obeyed it, without the command of God. Jonah might will alone to perish, who had alone offended; but, without the command of God, the Giver of life, neither Jonah nor the sailors might dispose of the life of Jonah. But God willed that Jonah should be cast into the sea - where he had gone for refuge - that (Wisdom of Solomon 11:16) wherewithal he had "sinned, by the same also he might be punished" as a man; and, as a prophet, that he might, in his three days' burial, prefigure Him who, after His Resurrection, should convert, not Nineveh, but the world, the cry of whose wickedness went up to God.

For I know that for my sake - o"In that he says, "I know," he marks that he had a revelation; in that he says, "this great storm," he marks the need which lay on those who cast him into the sea."

Verse 13

The men rowed hard - , literally "dug." The word, like our "plowed the main," describes the great efforts which they made. Amid the violence of the storm, they had furled their sails. These were worse than useless. The wind was off shore, since by rowing alpine they hoped to get back to it. They put their oars well and firmly in the sea, and turned up the water, as men turn up earth by digging. But in vain! God willed it not. The sea went on its way, as before. In the description of the deluge, it is repeated Genesis 7:17-18, "the waters increased and bare up the ark, and it was lifted up above the earth; the waters increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters." The waters raged and swelled, drowned the whole world, yet only bore up the ark, as a steed bears its rider: man was still, the waters obeyed. In this tempest, on the contrary, man strove, but, instead of the peace of the ark, the burden is, the violence of the tempest; "the sea wrought and was tempestuous against them". "The prophet had pronounced sentence against himself, but they would not lay hands upon him, striving hard to get back to land, and escape the risk of bloodshed, willing to lose life rather than cause its loss. O what a change was there. The people who had served God, said, Crucify Him, Crucify Him! These are bidden to put to death; the sea rageth; the tempest commandeth; and they are careless its to their own safety, while anxious about another's."

Verse 14

Wherefore (And) they cried unto the Lord - "They cried" no more "each man to his god," but to the one God, whom Jonah had made known to them; and to Him they cried with an earnest submissive, cry, repeating the words of beseeching, as men, do in great earnestness; "we beseech Thee, O Lord, let us not, we beseech Thee, perish for the life of this man" (i. e., as a penalty for taking it, as it is said, 2 Samuel 14:7. "we will slay him for the life of his brother," and, Deuteronomy 19:21. "life for life.") They seem to have known what is said, Genesis 9:5-6. "your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made He man", "Do not these words of the sailors seem to us to be the confession of Pilate, who washed his hands, and said, ‹I am clean from the blood of this Man?' The Gentiles would not that Christ should perish; they protest that His Blood is innocent."

And lay not upon us innocent blood - innocent as to them, although, as to this thing, guilty before God, and yet, as to God also, more innocent, they would think, than they. For, strange as this was, one disobedience, their whole life, they now knew, was disobedience to God; His life was but one act in a life of obedience. If God so punishes one sin of the holy 1 Peter 4:18, "where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" Terrible to the awakened conscience are God‘s chastenings on some (as it seems) single offence of those whom He loves.

For Thou, Lord, (Who knowest the hearts of all men,) hast done, as it pleased Thee - Wonderful, concise, confession of faith in these new converts! Psalmists said it, Psalm 135:6; Psalm 115:3. "Whatsoever God willeth, that doeth He in heaven and in earth, in the sea and in all deep places." But these had but just known God, and they resolve the whole mystery of man‘s agency and God‘s Providence into the three simple words, as (Thou) "willedst" (Thou) "didst." "That we took him aboard, that the storm ariseth, that the winds rage, that the billows lift themselves, that the fugitive is betrayed by the lot, that he points out what is to be done, it is of Thy will, O Lord". "The tempest itself speaketh, that ‹Thou, Lord, hast done as Thou willedst.‘ Thy will is fulfilled by our hands." "Observe the counsel of God, that, of his own will, not by violence or by necessity, should he be cast into the sea. For the casting of Jonah into the sea signified the entrance of Christ into the bitterness of the Passion, which He took upon Himself of His own will, not of necessity. Isaiah 53:7. "He was offered up, and He willingly submitted Himself." And as those who sailed with Jonah were delivered, so the faithful in the Passion of Christ. John 18:8-9. "If ye seek Me, let these go their way, that the saying might be fulfilled which" Jesus spake, ‹Of them which Thou gavest Me, I have lost none. ‹"

Verse 15

They took up Jonah - o"He does not say, ‹laid hold on him‘, nor ‹came upon him‘ but ‹lifted‘ him; as it were, bearing him with respect and honor, they cast him into the sea, not resisting, but yielding himself to their will."

The sea ceased (literally "stood") from his raging - Ordinarily, the waves still swell, when the wind has ceased. The sea, when it had received Jonah, was hushed at once, to show that God alone raised and quelled it. It "stood" still, like a servant, when it had accomplished its mission. God, who at all times saith to it Job 38:11, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed," now unseen, as

afterward in the flesh Matthew 8:26, "rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm". "If we consider the errors of the world before the Passion of Christ, and the conflicting blasts of diverse doctrines, and the vessel, and the whole race of man, i. e., the creature of the Lord, imperiled, and, after His Passion, the tranquility of faith and the peace of the world and the security of all things and the conversion to God, we shall see how, after Jonah was cast in, the sea stood from its raging". "Jonah, in the sea, a fugitive, shipwrecked, dead, sayeth the tempest-tossed vessel; he sayeth the pagan, aforetime tossed to and fro by the error of the world into divers opinions. And Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, Joel, who prophesied at the same time, could not amend the people in Judaea; whence it appeared that the breakers could not be calmed, save by the death of (Him typified by) the fugitive."

Verse 16

And the men feared the Lord with a great fear - because, from the tranquility of the sea and the ceasing of the tempest, they saw that the prophet's words were true. This great miracle completed the conversion of the mariners. God had removed all human cause of fear; and yet, in the same words as before, he says, "they feared a great fear;" but he adds, "the Lord." It was the great fear, with which even the disciples of Jesus feared, when they saw the miracles which He did, which made even Peter say, Luke 5:8. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Events full of wonder had thronged upon them; things beyond nature, and contrary to nature; tidings which betokened His presence, Who had all things in His hands. They had seen "wind and storm fulfilling His word" Psalm 148:8, and, forerunners of the fishermen of Galilee, knowing full well from their own experience that this was above nature, they felt a great awe of God. So He commanded His people, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God Deuteronomy 6:13, for thy good always" Deuteronomy 6:24.

And offered a sacrifice - Doubtless, as it was a large decked vessel and bound on a long voyage, they had live creatures on board, which they could offer in sacrifice. But this was not enough for their thankfulness; "they vowed vows." They promised that they would do thereafter what they could not do then; "that they would never depart from Him whom they had begun to worship." This was true love, not to be content with aught which they could do, but to stretch forward in thought to an abiding and enlarged obedience, as God should enable them. And so they were doubtless enrolled among the people of God, firstfruits from among the pagan, won to God

Who overrules all things, through the disobedience and repentance of His prophet. Perhaps, they were the first preachers among the pagan, and their account of their own wonderful deliverance prepared the way for Jonah‘s mission to Nineveh.

Verse 17

Now the Lord had (literally “And the Lord”) prepared - Jonah (as appears from his thanksgiving) was not swallowed at once, but sank to the bottom of the sea, God preserving him in life there by miracle, as he did in the fish‘s belly. Then, when the seaweed was twined around his head, and he seemed to be already buried until the sea should give up her dead, “God prepared the fish to swallow Jonah”. “God could as easily have kept Jonah alive in the sea as in the fish‘s belly, but, in order to prefigure the burial of the Lord, He willed him to be within the fish whose belly was as a grave.” Jonah, does not say what fish it was; and our Lord too used a name, signifying only one of the very largest fish. Yet it was no greater miracle to create a fish which should swallow Jonah, than to preserve him alive when swallowed. “The infant is buried, as it were, in the womb of its mother; it cannot breathe, and yet, thus too, it liveth and is preserved, wonderfully nurtured by the will of God.” He who preserves the embryo in its living grave can maintain the life of man as easily without the outward air as with it.

The same Divine Will preserves in being the whole creation, or creates it. The same will of God keeps us in life by breathing this outward air, which preserved Jonah without it. How long will men think of God, as if He were man, of the Creator as if He were a creature, as though creation were but one intricate piece of machinery, which is to go on, ringing its regular changes until it shall be worn out, and God were shut up, as a sort of mainspring within it, who might be allowed to be a primal Force, to set it in motion, but must not be allowed to vary what He has once made? “We must admit of the agency of God,” say these men when they would not in name be atheists, “once in the beginning of things, but must allow of His interference as sparingly as may be.” Most wise arrangement of the creature, if it were indeed the god of its God! Most considerate provision for the non-interference of its Maker, if it could but secure that He would not interfere with it for ever! Acute physical philosophy, which, by its omnipotent word, would undo the acts of God! Heartless, senseless, sightless world, which exists in God, is upheld by God, whose every breath

is an effluence of God‘s love, and which yet sees Him not, thanks Him not, thinks it a greater thing to hold its own frail existence from some imagined law, than to be the object of the tender personal care of the Infinite God who is Love! Poor hoodwinked souls, which would extinguish for themselves the Light of the world, in order that it may not eclipse the rushlight of their own theory!

And Jonah was in the belly of the fish - The time that Jonah was in the fish‘s belly was a hidden prophecy. Jonah does not explain nor point it. He tells the fact, as Scripture is accustomed to do so. Then he singles out one, the turning point in it. Doubtless in those three days and nights of darkness, Jonah (like him who after his conversion became Paul), meditated much, repented much, sorrowed much, for the love of God, that he had ever offended God, purposed future obedience, adored God with wondering awe for His judgment and mercy. It was a narrow home, in which Jonah, by miracle, was not consumed; by miracle, breathed; by miracle, retained his senses in that fetid place. Jonah doubtless, repented, marveled, adored, loved God. But, of all, God has singled out this one point, how, out of such a place, Jonah thanked God. As He delivered Paul and Silas from the prison, when they prayed with a loud voice to Him, so when Jonah, by inspiration of His Spirit, thanked Him, He delivered him.

To thank God, only in order to obtain fresh gifts from Him, would be but a refined, hypocritical form of selfishness. Such a formal act would not be thanks at all. We thank God, because we love Him, because He is so infinitely good, and so good to us, unworthy. Thanklessness shuts the door to His personal mercies to us, because it makes them the occasion of fresh sins of our‘s. Thankfulness sets God‘s essential goodness free (so to speak) to be good to us. He can do what He delights in doing, be good to us, without our making His Goodness a source of harm to us. Thanking Him through His grace, we become fit vessels for larger graces. “Blessed he who, at every gift of grace, returns to Him in whom is all fullness of graces; to whom when we show ourselves not ungrateful for gifts received, we make room in ourselves for grace, and become meet for receiving yet more.” But Jonah‘s was that special character of thankfulness, which thanks God in the midst of calamities from which there was no human exit; and God set His seal on this sort of thankfulness, by annexing this deliverance, which has consecrated Jonah as an image of our Lord, to his wonderful act of thanksgiving.

JONAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

Then - ("And") Jonah prayed, i. e., when the three days and nights were passed, he uttered this devotion. The word "prayed" includes thanksgiving, not petition only. It is said of Hannah that she "prayed" 1 Samuel 2:1; but her canticle is all one thanksgiving without a single petition. In this thanksgiving Jonah says how his prayers had been heard, but prays no more. God had delivered him from the sea, and be thanks God, in the fish's belly, as undisturbed as in a Church or an oratory, secure that God, who had done so much, would fulfill the rest. He called God, "his" God, who had in so many ways shown Himself to be His, by His revelations, by His inspirations, by His chastisements, and now by His mercy. "From these words, ‹Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly,' we perceive that, after he felt himself safe in the fish's belly, he despaired not of God's mercy."

Verse 2

I cried by reason of mine affliction - , or, "out of affliction" which came "to me." So the Psalmist thanked God in the same words, though in a different order; "To the Lord in trouble to me I called, and He heard me." He "called," and God heard and answered, "He does not say, I "call," but I "called"; he does not pray for the future, but gives thanks for the past." Strange cause of thankfulness this would seem to most faith, to be alive in such a grave; to abide there hour after hour, and day after day, in one unchanging darkness, carried to and fro helplessly, with no known escape from his fetid prison, except to death! Yet spiritual light shone on that depth of darkness. The voracious creature, which never opened his mouth save to destroy life, had swallowed him, to save it. "What looked like death, became safe-keeping," and so the prophet who had fled to avoid doing the will of God and to do his own, now willed to be carried about, he knew not where, at the will; as it seemed, of the huge animal in which he lay, but in truth, where God directed it, and he gave thanks. God had heard him. The first token of God's mercy was the earnest of the whole. God was dealing with him, was looking on him. It was enough.

Out of the belly of hell cried I. - The deep waters were as a grave, and he was counted "among the dead" Psalm 88:4. Death seemed so certain that it was all one as if he were in the womb of hell, not to be reborn to life until

the last Day. So David said Psalm 18:5, "The bands of death compassed me round about;" and Psalm 30:3, "Thou hast drawn my life out of hell." The waters choked his speech; but he cried with a loud cry to God Who knew the heart. "I cried; Thou heardest." The words vary only by a kindred letter. The real heart's cry to God according to the mind of God and His hearing are one, whether, for man's good, He seem at the time to hear or no.

"Not of the voice but of the heart is God the Hearer, as He is the Seer. Do the ears of God wait for sound? How then could the prayer of Jonah from the inmost belly of the whale, through the bowels of so great a creature, out of the very bottomless depths, through so great a mass of waters, make its way to heaven?" "Loud crying to God is not with the voice but with the heart. Many, silent with their lips, have cried aloud with their heart; many, noisy with their lips, could, with heart turned away, obtain nothing. If then thou criest, cry within, where God heareth." "Jonah cried aloud to God out of the fish's belly, out of the deep of the sea, out of the depths of disobedience; and his prayer reached to God, Who rescued him from the waves, brought him forth out of the vast creature, absolved him from the guilt. Let the sinner too cry aloud, whom, departing from God, the storm of desires overwhelmed, the malignant Enemy devoured, the waves of this present world sucked under! Let him own that he is in the depth, that so his prayer may reach to God."

Verse 3

For Thou hadst ("didst") cast me into the deep - Jonah continues to describe the extremity of peril, from which God had already delivered him. Sweet is the memory of perils past. For they speak of God's Fatherly care. Sweet is it, to the prophet to tell God of His mercies; but this is sweet only to the holy, for God's mercy convicts the careless of ingratitude. Jonah then tells God, how He had cast him vehemently forth into the "eddying depth," where, when Pharaoh's army "sank like a stone" (Exodus 15:5, add Exodus 15:10), they never rose, and that, "in the heart" or center "of the seas," from where no strong swimmer could escape to shore. "The floods" or "flood," (literally "river,") the sea with its currents, "surrounded" him, encompassing him on all sides; and, above, tossed its multitudinous waves, passing over him, like an army trampling one prostrate underfoot. Jonah remembered well the temple psalms, and, using their words, united himself with those other worshipers who sang them, and taught us how to speak

them to God. The sons of Korah Psalm 42:7. had poured out to God in these self-same words the sorrows which oppressed them. The rolling billows and the breakers, which, as they burst upon the rocks, shiver the vessel and crush man, are, he says to God, "Thine," fulfilling Thy will on me.

Verse 4

I am cast out of Thy sight - , literally, "from before Thine eyes." Jonah had willfully withdrawn from standing in God's presence. Now God had taken him at his word, and, as it seemed, cast him out of it. David had said in his haste, "I am cut off." Jonah substitutes the stronger word, "I am cast forth," driven forth, expelled, like the "mire and dirt" Isaiah 57:20 which the waves drive along, or like the waves themselves in their restless motion Isaiah 57:20, or the pagan (the word is the same) whom God had driven out before Israel (Exodus 34:11, and the Piel often), or as Adam from Paradise Genesis 3:24.

Yet (Only) I will look again - He was, as it were, a castaway, cast out of God's sight, unheeded by Him, his prayers unheard; the storm unabated, until he was cast forth. He could no longer look with the physical eye even toward the land where God showed the marvels of His mercy, and the temple where God was worshiped continually. Yet what he could not do in the body, he would do in his soul. This was his only resource. "If I am cast away, this one thing will I do, I will still look to God." Magnificent faith! Humanly speaking, all hope was gone, for, when that huge vessel could scarcely live in the sea, how should a man? When God had given it no rest, while it contained Jonah, how should tie will that Jonah should escape? Nay, God had hidden His Face from him; yet he did this one, this only thing only this, "once more, still I will add to look to God." Thitherward would he look, so long as his mind yet remained in him.

If his soul parted from him, it should go forth from him in that gaze. God gave him no hope, save that He preserved him alive. For he seemed to himself forsaken of God. Wonderful pattern of faith which gains strength even from God's seeming desertion! "I am cast vehemently forth from before Thine eyes; yet this one thing will I do; mine eyes shrill be unto Thee, O Lord." The Israelites, as we see from Solomon's dedication prayer, "prayed toward the temple," (1 Kings 8:29-30, 1 Kings 8:35 ff) where God had set His Name and shown His glory, where were the sacrifices which foreshadowed the great atonement. Thitherward they looked in prayer, as Christians, of old, prayed toward the East, the seat of our ancient Paradise.

where our Lord "shall appear unto them that look for Him, a second time unto salvation." Hebrews 9:28. Toward that temple then he would yet look with fixed eye for help, where God, Who fills heaven and earth, showed Himself to sinners reconciled.

Verse 5

The waters compassed me about even to the soul - Words which to others were figures of distress (Psalm 69:2. See the introduction to Jonah), "the waters have come even to the soul," were to Jonah realities. Sunk in the deep seas, the water strove to penetrate at every opening. To draw breath, which sustains life, to him would have been death. There was but a breath between him and death. "The deep encompassed me," encircling, meeting him wherever he turned, holding him imprisoned on every side, so that there was no escape, and, if there otherwise had been, he was bound motionless, "the weed was wrapped around my head, like a grave-band." "The weed" was the well known seaweed, which, even near the surface of the sea where man can struggle, twines round him, a peril even to the strong swimmer, entangling him often the more, the more he struggles to extricate himself from it. But to one below, powerless to struggle, it was as his winding sheet.

Verse 6

I went down to the bottoms, (literally "the cuttings off") of the mountains - , the "roots" as the Chaldee and we call them, the hidden rocks, which the mountains push out, as it were, into the sea, and in which they end. Such hidden rocks extend along the whole length of that coast. These were his dungeon walls; "the earth, her bars," those long submarine reefs of rock, his prison bars, "were around" him "forever:" the seaweeds were his chains: and, even thus, when things were at their uttermost, "Thou hast brought up my life from corruption," to which his body would have fallen a prey, had not God sent the fish to deliver him. The deliverance for which be thanks God is altogether past: "Thou broughtest me up." He calls "the" Lord, "my" God, because, being the God of all, He was especially his God, for whom He had done things of such marvelous love. God loves each soul which He has made with the same infinite love with which He loves all. Whence Paul says of Jesus Galatians 2:20, "Who loved me and gave Himself for me." He loves each, with the same undivided love, as if he had created none besides; and He allows each to say, "My God," as if the

Infinite God belonged wholly to each. So would He teach us the oneness of Union between the soul which God loves and which admits His love, and Himself.

Verse 7

When my sold fainted - , literally "was covered, within me," was dizzied, overwhelmed. The word is used of actual faintness from heat, Jonah 4:8. thirst, Amos 8:13. exhaustion, Isaiah 51:20. when a film comes over the eyes, and the brain is, as it were, mantled over. The soul of the pious never is so full of God, as when all things else fade from him. Jonah could not but have remembered God in the tempest; when the lots were east; when he adjudged himself to be east forth. But when it came to the utmost, then he says, "I remembered the Lord," as though, in the intense thought of God then, all his former thought of God had been forgetfulness. So it is in every strong act of faith, of love, of prayer; its former state seems unworthy of the name of faith, love, prayer. It believes, loves, prays, as though all before had been forgetfulness.

And my prayer came in unto Thee - No sooner had he so prayed, than God heard. Jonah had thought himself cast out of His sight; but his prayer entered in there. "His holy temple" is doubtless His actual temple, toward which he prayed. God, Who is wholly everywhere but the whole of Him nowhere, was as much in the temple as in heaven; and He had manifested Himself to Israel in their degree in the temple, as to the blessed saints and angels in heaven.

Verse 8

They that observe lying vanities - , i. e., (by the force of the Hebrew form, that diligently watch, pay deference to, court, sue, "vanities of vanities," vain things, which prove themselves vain at last, failing the hopes which trust in them. Such were actual idols, in which men openly professed that they trusted Such are all things in which men trust, out of God. One is not more vain than another. All have this common principle of vanity, that people look, out of God, to that which has its only existence or permanence from God. It is then one general maxim, including all people's idols, idols of the flesh, idols of intellect, idols of ambition, idols of pride, idols of self and self-will. People "observe" them, as gods, watch them, hang upon them, never lose sight of them, guard them as though they could keep them. But what are they? "lying vanities," breath and wind, which none can grasp or detain, vanishing like air into air.

And what do they who so "observe" them? All alike "forsake their own mercy;" i. e., God, "Whose property is, always to have mercy," and who would be mercy to them, if they would. So David calls God, "my mercy." Psalm 144:2. Abraham's servant and Naomi praise God, that He "hath not forsaken His mercy" Genesis 24:27; Rth 2:20 . Jonah does not, in this, exclude himself. His own idol had been his false love for his country, that he would not have his people go into captivity, when God would; would not have Nineveh preserved, the enemy of his country; and by leaving his office, he left his God, "forsook" his "own mercy." See how God speaks of Himself, as wholly belonging to them, who are His. He calls Himself "their own mercy". He saith not, "they who" do "vanities," (for Ecclesiastes 1:2. ‹vanity of vanities, and all things are vanity') lest he should seem to condemn all, and to deny mercy to the whole human race; but "they who observe, guard vanities," or lies; "they," into the affections of whose hearts those "vanities" have entered; who not only "do vanities," but who "guard" them, as loving them, deeming that they have found a treasure - These "forsake their own mercy." Although mercy be offended (and under mercy we may understand God Himself, for God is Psalm 145:8, "gracious and full of compassion; slow to anger and of great mercy,") yet he doth not "forsake," doth not abhor, "those who guard vanities," but awaiteth that they should return: these contrariwise, of their own will, "forsake mercy" standing and offering itself."

Verse 9

But (And) with the voice of thanksgiving will I (would I fain) sacrifice unto Thee; what I have vowed, I would pay - He does not say, I will, for it did not depend upon him. Without a further miracle of God, he could do nothing. But he says, that he would nevermore forsake God. The law appointed sacrifices of thanksgiving; Leviticus 7:12-15. these he would offer, not in act only, but with words of praise. He would "pay what he had vowed," and chiefly himself, his life which God had given back to him, the obedience of his remaining life, in all things. For (Sirach 35:1) "he that keepeth the law bringeth offerings enough; he that taketh heed to the commandments offereth a peace-offering." Jonah neglects neither the outward nor the inward part, neither the body nor the soul of the commandment.

Salvation is of (literally to) the Lord - It is wholly His; all belongs to Him, so that none can share in bestowing it; none can have any hope, save from Him. He uses an intensive form, as though he would say, strong "mighty salvation". God seems often to wait for the full resignation of the soul, all its powers and will to Him. Then He can show mercy healthfully, when the soul is wholly surrendered to Him. So, on this full confession, Jonah is restored, The prophet's prayer ends almost in promising the same as the mariners. They "made vows;" Jonah says, "I will pay that I have vowed." Devoted service in the creature is one and the same, although diverse in degree; and so, that Israel might not despise the pagan, he tacitly likens the act of the new pagan converts and that of the prophet.

Verse 10

And the Lord spake unto the fish - Psalm 148:8. Wind and storm fulfill His word. The irrational creatures have wills. God had commanded the prophet, and he disobeyed. God, in some way, commanded the fish. He laid His will upon it, and the fish immediately obeyed; a pattern to the prophet when He released him. "God's will, that anything should be completed, is law and fulfillment and hath the power of law. Not that Almighty God commanded the fish, as He does us or the holy angels, uttering in its mind what is to be done, or inserting into the heart the knowledge of what He chooseth. But if He be said to command irrational animals or elements or any part of the creation, this signifieth the law and command of His will. For all things yield to His will, and the mode of their obedience is to us altogether ineffable, but known to Him." "Jonah," says Chrysostom, "fled the land, and fled not the displeasure of God. He fled the land, and brought a tempest on the sea: and not only himself gained no good from flight, but brought into extreme peril those also who took him on board. When he sailed, seated in the vessel, with sailors and pilot and all the tackling, he was in the most extreme peril: when, sunk in the sea, the sin punished and laid aside, he entered that vast vessel, the fish's belly, he enjoyed great fearlessness; that thou mayest learn that, as no ship availeth to one living in sin, so when freed from sin, neither sea destroyeth, nor beasts consume. The waves received him, and choked him not; the vast fish received him and destroyed him not; but both the huge animal and the clement gave back their deposit safe to God, and by all things the prophet learned to be mild and tender, not to be more cruel than the untaught mariners or wild waves or animals.

For the sailors did not give him up at first, but after manifold constraint; and the sea and the wild animal guarded him with much benevolence, God disposing all these things. He returned then, preached, threatened, persuaded, saved, awed, amended, stablished, through that one first preaching. For he needed not many days, nor continuous exhortation; but, speaking these words he brought all to repentance. Wherefore God did not lead him straight from the vessel to the city; but the sailors gave him over to the sea, the sea to the vast fish, the fish to God, God to the Ninevites, and through this long circuit brought back the fugitive; that He might instruct all, that it is impossible to escape the hands of God. For come where a man may, dragging sin after him, he will undergo countless troubles. Though man be not there, nature itself on all sides will oppose him with great vehemence."

"Since the elect too at times strive to be sharp-witted, it is well to bring forward another wise man, and show how the craft of mortal man is comprehended in the Inward Counsels. For Jonah wished to exercise a prudent sharpness of wit, when, being sent to preach repentance to the Ninevites, in that he feared that, if the Gentiles were chosen, Judaea would be forsaken, he refused to discharge the office of preaching. He sought a ship, chose to flee to Tarshish; but immediately a tempest arises, the lot is cast, to know for whose fault the sea was troubled. Jonah is taken in his fault, plunged in the deep, swallowed by the fish, and carried by the vast beast thither whither he set at naught the command to go. See how the tempest found God‘s runaway, the lot binds him, the sea receives him, the beast encloses him, and, because he sets himself against obeying his Maker, he is carried a culprit by his prison house to the place whither he had been sent.

When God commanded, man would not minister the prophecy; when God enjoined, the beast cast forth the prophet. The Lord then "taketh the wise in their own craftiness," when He bringeth back to the service of His own will, that whereby man‘s will contradicts Him." "Jonah, fleeing from the perils of preaching and salvation of souls, fell into peril of his own life. When, in the ship, he took on himself the peril of all, he saved both himself and the ship. He fled as a man; he exposed himself to peril, as a prophet". "Let them think so, who are sent by God or by a superior to preach to

heretics or to pagan. When God calleth to an office or condition whose object it is to live for the salvation of others, He gives grace and means necessary or expedient to this end. For so the sweet and careful ordering of His Providence requireth. Greater peril awaiteth us from God our Judge, if we flee His calling as did Jonah, if we use not the talents entrusted to us to do His will and to His glory. We know the parable of the servant who buried the talent, and was condemned by the Lord."

And it vomited out Jonah - Unwilling, but constrained, it cast him forth as a burden to it. "From the lowest depths of death, Life came forth victorious." "He is swallowed by the fish, but is not consumed; and then calls upon God, and (marvel!) on the third day is given back with Christ." "What it prefigured, that that vast animal on the third day gave back alive the prophet which it had swallowed, no need to ask of us, since Christ explained it. As then Jonah passed from the ship into the fish‘s belly, so Christ from the wood into the tomb or the depth of death. And as he for those imperiled in the tempest, so Christ for those tempest-tossed in this world. And as Jonah was first enjoined to preach to the Ninevites, but the preaching of Jonah did not reach them before the fish cast him forth, so prophecy was sent beforehand to the Gentiles, but did not reach them until after the resurrection of Christ". "Jonah prophesied of Christ, not so much in words as by a suffering of his own; yet more openly than if he had proclaimed by speech His Death and Resurrection. For why was he received into the fish‘s belly, and given back the third day, except to signify that Christ would on the third day return from the deep of hell?"

Irenaeus looks upon the history of Jonah as the imaging of man‘s own history. "As He allowed Jonah to be swallowed by the whale, not that he should perish altogether, but that, being vomited forth, he might the more be subdued to God, and the more glorify God Who had given him such unlooked for deliverance, and bring those Ninevites to solid repentance, converting them to the Lord Who would free them from death, terrified by that sign which befell Jonah (as Scripture says of them, ‹They turned every man from his evil way, etc. … ‘) so from the beginning, God allowed man to be swallowed up by that vast Cetos who was the author of the transgression, not that he should altogether perish but preparing a way of salvation, which, as foresignified by the word in Jonah, was formed for those who had the like faith as to the Lord as Jonah, and with him confessed, "I fear the Lord, etc." that so man, receiving from God unlooked

for salvation, might rise from the dead and glorify God, etc. … This was the longsuffering of God, that man might pass through all, and acknowledge his ways; then, coming to the resurrection and knowing by trial from what he had been delivered, might be forever thankful to God, and, having received from Him the gift of incorruption, might love Him more (for he to whom much is forgiven, loveth much) and know himself, that he is mortal and weak, and understand the Lord, that He is in such wise Mighty and Immortal, that to the mortal He can give immortality and to the things of time eternity."

JONAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

And the word of the Lord came a second time to Jonah - o"Jonah, delivered from the whale, doubtless went up to Jerusalem to pay his vows and thank God there. Perhaps he hoped that God would be content with this his punishment and repentance, and that He would not again send him to Nineveh." Anyway, he was in some settled home, perhaps again at Gath-hepher. For God bids him, "Arise, go". "But one who is on his way, is not bidden to arise and go." God may have allowed an interval to elapse, in order that the tidings of so great a miracle might spread far and wide. But Jonah does not supply any of these incidents. He does not speak of himself, but only of his mission, as God taught him.

Verse 2

Arise, go to Nineveh that great city, and preach (or cry) unto it - God says to Jonah the self-same words which He had said before; only perhaps He gives him an intimation of His purpose of mercy, in that he says no more, "cry against her," but "cry unto her." He might "cry against" one doomed to destruction; to "cry unto her," seems to imply that she had some interest in, and so some hope from, this cry. "The preaching that I bid thee." This is the only notice which Jonah relates that God took of his disobedience, in that He charged him to obey exactly what He commanded. "He does not say to him, why didst thou not what I commanded?" He had rebuked him in deed; He amended him and upbraided him not. "The rebuke of that shipwreck and the swallowing by the fish sufficed, so that he who had not felt the Lord commanding, might understand Him, delivering."

Jonah might have seemed unworthy to be again inspired by God. But "whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth;" whom He chasteneth, He loveth. "The hard discipline, the severity and length of the scourge, were the earnests of a great trust and a high destination." He knew him to be changed into another man, and, by one of His most special favors, gives him that same trust which he had before deserted. "As Christ, when risen, commended His sheep to Peter, wiser now and more fervent, so to Jonah risen He commends the conversion of Nineveh. For so did Christ risen bring about the conversion of the pagan, by sending His Apostles, each into large provinces, as Jonah was sent alone to a large city". "He bids him declare not only the sentence of God, but in the same words; not to consider

his own estimation or the ears of his hearers, nor to mingle soothing with severe words, and convey the message ingeniously, but with all freedom and severity to declare openly what was commanded him. This plainness, though, may be less acceptable to people or princes, is ofttimes more useful, always more approved by God. Nothing should be more sacred to the preacher of God‘s word, than truth and simplicity and inviolable sanctity in delivering it. Now alas, all this is changed into vain show at the will of the multitude and the breath of popular favor.”

Verse 3

And Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh - , ready to obey, as before to disobey. Before, when God said those same words, “he arose and fled;” now, “he arose and went.” True conversion shows the same energy in serving God, as the unconverted had before shown in serving self or error. Saul‘s spirit of fire, which persecuted Christ, gleamed in Paul like lightning through the world, to win souls to Him.

Nineveh was an exceeding great city - literally “great to God,” i. e., what would not only appear great to man who admires things of no account, but what, being really great, is so in the judgment of God who cannot be deceived. God did account it great, Who says to Jonah, “Should not I spare Nineveh that great city, which hath more than six score thousand that cannot discern between their right hand and their left?” It is a different idiom from that, when Scripture speaks of “the mountains of God, the cedars of God.” For of these it speaks, as having their firmness or their beauty from God as their Author.

Of three days‘ journey - , i. e., 60 miles in circumference. It was a great city. Jonah speaks of its greatness, under a name which he would only have used of real greatness. Varied accounts agree in ascribing this size to Nineveh. An Eastern city enclosing often, as did Babylon, ground under tillage, the only marvel is, that such a space was enclosed by walls. Yet this too is no marvel, when we know from inscriptions, what masses of human strength the great empires of old had at their command, or of the more than threescore pyramids of Egypt. In population it was far inferior to our metropolis, of which, as of the suburbs of Rome of old, “one would hesitate to say, where the city ended, where it began. The suburban parts are so joined on to the city itself and give the spectator the idea of boundless length.”

An Eastern would the more naturally think of the circumference of a city, because of the broad places, similar to the boulevards of Paris, which encircles it, so that people could walk around it, within it. “The buildings,” it is related of Babylon, “are not brought close to the walls, but are at about the distance of an acre from them. And not even the whole city did they occupy with houses; 80 furlongs are inhabited, and not even all these continuously, I suppose because it seemed safer to live scattered in several places. The rest they sow and till, that, if any foreign force threaten them, the besieged may be supplied with food from the soil of the city itself.” Not Babylon alone was spoken of, of old, as “having the circumference of a nation rather than of a city.”

Verse 4

And Jonah began to enter the city a day‘s journey - Perhaps the day‘s journey enabled him to traverse the city from end to end, with his one brief, deep cry of woe; “Yet forty days and Nineveh overthrown.” He prophesied an utter overthrow, a turning it upside down. He does not speak of it as to happen at a time beyond those days. The close of the forty days and the destruction were to be one. He does not say strictly, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown,” but, “Yet forty days and Nineveh overthrown.” The last of those forty days was, ere its sun was set, to see Nineveh as a “thing overthrown.” Jonah knew from the first God‘s purpose of mercy to Nineveh; he had a further hint of it in the altered commission which he had received. It is perhaps hinted in the word “Yet”. “If God had meant unconditionally to overthrow them, He would have overthrown them without notice. ‹Yet,‘ always denotes some long-suffering of God.” But, taught by that severe discipline, he discharges his office strictly.

He cries, what God had commanded him to cry out, without reserve or exception. The sentence, as are all God‘s threatenings until the last, was conditional. But God does not say this. That sentence was now within forty days of its completion; yet even thus it was remitted. Wonderful encouragement, when one Lent sufficed to save some 600,000 souls from perishing! Yet the first visitation of the cholera was checked in its progress in England, upon one day‘s national fast and humiliation; and we have seen how general prayer has often-times at once opened or closed the heavens as we needed. “A few years ago,” relates Augustine, “when Arcadias was Emperor at Constantinople (what I say, some have heard, some of our

people were present there,) did not God, willing to terrify the city, and, by terrifying, to amend, convert, cleanse, change it, reveal to a faithful servant of His (a soldier, it is said), that the city should perish by fire from heaven, and warned him to tell the Bishop! It was told. The Bishop despised it not, but addressed the people. The city turned to the mourning of penitence, as that Nineveh of old. Yet lest men should think that he who said this, deceived or was deceived, the day which God had threatened, came. When all were intently expecting the issue with great fears, at the beginning of night as the world was being darkened, a fiery cloud was seen from the East, small at first then, as it approached the city, gradually enlarging, until it hung terribly over the whole city.

All fled to the Church; the place did not hold the people. But after that great tribulation, when God had accredited His word, the cloud began to diminish and at last disappeared. The people, freed from fear for a while, again heard that they must migrate, because the whole city should be destroyed on the next sabbath. The whole people left the city with the Emperor; no one remained in his house. That multitude, having one some miles, when gathered in one spot to pour forth prayer to God, suddenly saw a great smoke, and sent forth a loud cry to God." The city was saved. "What shall we say?" adds Augustine. "Was this the anger of God, or rather His mercy? Who doubts that the most merciful Father willed by terrifying to convert, not to punish by destroying? As the hand is lifted up to strike, and is recalled in pity, when he who was to be struck is terrified, so was it done to that city." Will any of God's warnings "now" move our great Babylon to repentance, that it be not ruined?

Verse 5

And the people of Nineveh believed God; - strictly, "believed in God." To "believe in God" expresses more heart-belief, than to "believe God" in itself need convey. To believe God is to believe what God says, to be true; "to believe in" or "on God" expresses not belief only, but that belief resting in God, trusting itself and all its concerns with Him. It combines hope and trust with faith, and love too, since, without love, there cannot be trust. They believed then the preaching of Jonah, and that He, in Whose Name Jonah spake, had all power in heaven and earth. But they believed further in His unknown mercies; they cast themselves upon the goodness of the

hitherto "unknown God." Yet they believed in Him, as the Supreme God, "the" object of awe, the God אלהים *'ĕlohîym* Jonah 3:5, Jonah 3:8, האלהים *ha'ĕlohîym* Jonah 3:9, although they knew Him not, as He Is, the Self-Existent One. Jonah does not say how they were thus persuaded.

God the Holy Spirit relates the wonders of God's Omnipotence as common everyday things. They are no marvels to Him Who performed them. "He commanded and they were done." He spake with power to the hearts which He had made, and they were turned to Him. Any human means are secondary, utterly powerless, except in "His" hands Who Alone doth all things through whomsoever He doth them. Our Lord tells us that "Jonah" himself "was a sign unto the Ninevites". Whether then the mariners spread the history, or howsoever the Ninevites knew the personal history of Jonah, he, in his own person and in what befell him, was a sign to them. They believed that God, Who avenged "his" disobedience, would avenge their's. They believed perhaps, that God must have some great mercy in store for them, Who not only sent His prophet so far from his own land to "them" who had never owned, never worshiped Him, but had done such mighty wonders to subdue His prophet's resistance and to make him go to them.

And proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth - It was not then a repentance in word only, but in deed. A fast was at that time entire abstinence from all food until evening; the haircloth was a harsh garment, irritating and afflictive to the body. They who did so, were (as we may still see from the Assyrian sculptures) men of pampered and luxurious habits, uniting sensuality and fierceness. Yet this they did at once, and as it seems, for the 40 days. They "proclaimed a fast." They did not wait for the supreme authority. Time was urgent, and they would lose none of it. In this imminent peril of God's displeasure, they acted as men would in a conflagration. People do not wait for orders to put out a fire, if they can, or to prevent it from spreading. Whoever they were who proclaimed it, whether those in inferior authority, each in his neighborhood, or whether it spread from man to man, as the tidings spread, it was done at once. It seems to have been done by acclamation, as it were, one common cry out of the one common terror. For it is said of them, as one succession of acts, "the men of Nineveh believed in God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from their great to their little," every age, sex, condition. "Worthy of admiration is that exceeding celerity and diligence in taking counsel, which, although in the same city with the king, perceived that they must

provide for the common and imminent calamity, not waiting to ascertain laboriously the king‘s pleasure.” In a city, 60 miles in circumference, some time must needs be lost, before the king could be approached; and we know, in some measure, the forms required in approaching Eastern monarchs of old.

Verse 6

For word came - , rather, “And the matter came,” i. e., the “whole account,” as we say. “The word, word,” throughout Holy Scripture, as in so many languages stands for that which is reported of. “The whole account,” namely, how this stranger, in strange austere attire, had come, what had happened to him before he came, how he preached, how the people had believed him, what they had done, as had just been related, “came to the king.” The form of words implies that what Jonah relates in this verse took place after what had been mentioned before. People are slow to carry to sovereigns matters of distress, in which they cannot help. This was no matter of peril from man, in which the counsel or energy of the king could be of use. Anyhow it came to him last. But when it came to him, he disdained not to follow the example of those below him. He was not jealous of his prerogative, or that his advice had not been had; but, in the common peril, acted as his subjects had, and humbled himself as they did. Yet this king was the king of Nineveh, the king, whose name was dreaded far and wide, whose will none who disputed, prospered. “He who was accounted and was the greatest of the kings of the earth, was not held back by any thought of his own splendor, greatness or dignity, from fleeing as a suppliant to the mercy of God, and inciting others by his example to the same earnesthess.” The kings of Assyria were religious, according to their light. They ascribed all their victories to their god, Asshur. When the king came to hear of One who had a might such as he had not seen, he believed in Him.

And he arose from his throne - He lost no time; he heard, “and he arose”. “It denotes great earnestness, haste, diligence.” “And he laid his robe from him.” This was the large costly upper garment, so called from its amplitude It is the name of the goodly Babylonian garment Joshua 7:21 which Achan coveted. As worn by kings, it was the most magnificent part of their dress, and a special part of their state. Kings were buried as they lived, in splendid apparel; and rich adornments were buried with them. The king of Nineveh dreads no charge of precipitancy nor man‘s judgment. “He

exchanges purple, gold, gems for the simple rough and sordid sackcloth, and his throne for the most abject ashes, the humblest thing he could do, fulfilling a deeper degree of humility than is related of the people."

Strange credulity, had Jonah's message not been true; strange madness of unbelief which does not repent when a Greater than Jonah cries Matthew 4:17, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Strange garb for the king, in the eyes of a luxurious age; acceptable in His who said Matthew 11:21, "if the mighty works which have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes". "Many wish to repent, yet so as not to part with their luxuries or the vanity of their dress, like the Greek who said he would ‹like to be a philosopher, yet in a few things, not altogether.' To whom we may answer, ‹delicate food and costly dress agree not with penitence; and that is no great grief which never comes to light'". "It was a marvelous thing, that purple was outvied by sackcloth. Sackcloth availed, what the purple robe availed not. What the diadem accomplished not, the ashes accomplished. Seest thou, I said not groundlessly that we should fear, not fasting but drunkenness and satiety? For drunkenness and satiety shook the city through and through, and were about to overthrow it; when it was reeling and about to fall, fasting stablished it". "The king had conquered enemies by valor; he conquered God by humility. Wise king, who, for the saving of his people, owns himself a sinner rather than a king. He forgets that he is a king, fearing God, the King of all; he remembereth not his own power, coming to own the power of the Godhead. Marvelous! While he remembereth not that he is a king of men, he beginneth to be a king of righteousness. The prince, becoming religious, lost not his empire but changed it. Before, he held the princedom of military discipline; now, he obtained the princedom in heavenly disciplines."

Verse 7

And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh; - literally, "And he cried and said, etc." The cry or proclamation of the king corresponded with the cry of Jonah. Where the prophet's cry, calling to repentance, had reached, the proclamation of the king followed, obeying. "By the decree of the king and his nobles." This is a hint of the political state of Nineveh, beyond what we have elsewhere. It was not then an absolute monarchy. At least, the king strengthened his command by that of

his nobles, as Darius the Mede sealed the den of lions, into which Daniel was cast, with the signet of his lords as well as his own Daniel 6:17, "that the purpose might not be changed concerning him."

Let neither man nor beast … - o"Are brutes too then to fast, horses and mules to be clothed with sackcloth? Yes, he says. For as, when a rich man dies, his relatives clothe not only the men and maidservants, but the horses too with sackcloth, and, giving them to the grooms, bid that they should follow to the tomb, in token of the greatness of the calamity and inviting all to sympathy, so also when that city was about to perish, they clad the brute natures in sackcloth, and put them under the yoke of fasting. The irrational animals cannot, through words, learn the anger of God; let them learn through hunger, that the infliction is from God: for if, he says, the city should be overthrown, it would be one grave of us the inhabitants and of them also." It was no arbitrary nor wanton nor careless act of the king of Nineveh to make the mute animals share in the common fast. It proceeded probably from an indistinct consciousness that God cared for them also, and, that "they" were not guilty. So the Psalmist looked on God's care of His creatures as a fresh ground for man's trust in Him Psalm 36:6-7, "O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast: How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings." As our Lord teaches that God's care of the sparrows is a pledge to man of God's minute unceasing care for him, so the Ninevites felt truly that the cry of the poor brutes would be heard by God. And God confirmed that judgment, when He told Jonah of the "much cattle," as a ground for having pity on Nineveh. The moanings and lowings of the animals, their voices of distress, pierce man's heart too, and must have added to his sense of the common misery. Ignorance or pride of human nature alone could think that man's sorrow is not aided by these objects of sense. Nature was truer in the king of Nineveh.

Verse 8

Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth - The gorgeous caparisons of horses, mules and camels was part of Eastern magnificence. Who knows not how man's pride is fed by the sleekness of his stud, their "well-appointed" trappings? Man, in his luxury and pride, would have everything reflect his glory, and minister to pomp. Self-humiliation would have everything reflect its lowliness. Sorrow would have everything answer to its sorrow. People think it strange that the horses at Nineveh were

covered with sackcloth, and forget how, at the funerals of the rich, black horses are chosen and are clothed with black velvet.

And cry unto God mightily - , "with might which conquereth judgment." A faint prayer does not express a strong desire, nor obtain what it does not strongly ask for, as having only half a heart.

And let them turn, every man from his evil way - Isaiah 59:6. "See what removed that inevitable wrath. Did fasting and sackcloth alone? No, but the change of the whole life. How does this appear? From the prophet's word itself. For he who spake of the wrath of God and of their fast, himself mentions the reconciliation and its cause. "And God saw their works." What works? that they fasted? that they put on sackcloth? He passes by these, and says, "that every one turned from his evil ways, and God repented of the evil which He had said that He would do unto them." Seest thou, that not the fast plucked them from the peril, but the change of life made God propitious to these pagan. I say this, not that we should dishonor, but that we may honor fasting. For the honor of a fast is not in abstinence from food, but in avoidance of sin. So that tie who limiteth fasting to the abstinence from food only, he it is, who above all dishonoreth it. Fastest thou? Show it me by its works. ‹What works?' askest thou? if you see a poor man, have mercy; if an enemy, be reconciled; if a friend doing well, envy him not; if a beautiful woman, pass on. Let not the mouth alone fast; let eyes too, and hearing and feet, and hands, and all the members of our bodies. Let the hands fast, clean from rapine and avarice! let the feet fast, holding back from going to unlawful sights! let the eyes fast, learning never to thrust themselves on beautiful objects, nor to look curiously on others' beauty, for the food of the eye is gazing. Let the ear too fast, for the fast of the ears is not to hear detractions and calumnies. Let the mouth too fast from foul words and reproaches. For what boots it, to abstain from birds and fish, while we bite and devour our brethren? The detractor preys on his brother's flesh."

He says, *each from his evil way*, because, in the general mass of corruption, each man has his own special heart's sin. All were to return, but by forsaking, each, one by one, his own habitual, favorite sin.

And from the violence - "Violence" is singled out as the special sin of Nineveh, out "of all their evil way;" as the angel saith, Mark 16:7. "tell His diciples and Peter." This was the giant, Goliath-sin. When this should be effaced, the rest would give way, as the Philistines fled, when their

champion was fallen to the earth dead. “That is in their hands,” literally “in their palms”, the hollow of their hand. The hands being the instruments alike of using violence and of grasping its fruits, the violence cleaves to them in both ways, in its guilt and in its gains. So Job and David say, Job 16:17; 1 Chronicles 12:17. “while there was no violence in my hands;” and Isaiah, “the work of wickedness is in their hands.” Repentance and restitution clear the hands from the guilt of the violence: restitution, which gives back what was wronged; repentance, which, for love of God, hates and quits the sins, of which it repents. “Keep the winning, keep the sinning. The fruits of sin are temporal gain, eternal loss. We cannot keep the gain and escape the loss. Whoever keeps the gain of sin, loves it in its fruits, and will have them, all of them. The Hebrews had a saying, “Whoso hath stolen a beam, and used it in building a great tower, must pull down the whole tower and restore the beam to its owner,” i. e., restitution must be made at any cost. “He,” they say, “who confesses a sin and does not restore the thing stolen, is like one who holds a reptile in his hands, who, if he were washed with all the water in the world, would never be purified, until he cast it out of his hands; when he has done this, the first sprinkling cleanses him.”

Verse 9

Who can tell if God will turn and repent? - The Ninevites use the same form of words, which God suggested by Joel to Judah. Perhaps He would thereby indicate that He had Himself put it into their mouths. “In uncertainty they repented, and obtained certain mercy”. “It is therefore left uncertain, that men, being doubtful of their salvation, may repent the more vehemently and the more draw down on themselves the mercy of God”. “Most certain are the promises of God, whereby He has promised pardon to the penitent. And yet the sinner may well be uncertain whether he have obtained that penitence which makes him the object of those promises, not a servile repentance for fear of punishment, but true contrition out of the love of God.” And so by this uncertainty, while, with the fear of hell, there is mingled the fear of the loss of God, the fear of that loss, which in itself involves some love, is, by His grace, turned into a contrite love, as the terrified soul thinks “Who” He is, whom it had all but lost, whom, it knows not whether it may not lose. In the case of the Ninevites, the remission of the temporal and eternal punishment was bound up in one, since the only punishment which God had threatened was temporal, and if this was forgiven, that forgiveness was a token that His displeasure had ceased.

“They know not the issue, yet they neglect not repentance. They are unacquainted with the method of the lovingkindness of God, and they are changed amid uncertainty. They had no other Ninevites to look to, who had repented and been saved. They had not read the prophets nor heard the patriarchs, nor benefited by counsel, nor partaken of instruction, nor had they persuaded themselves that they should altogether propitiate God by repentance. For the threat did not contain this. But they doubted and hesitated about this, and yet repented with all carefulness. What account then shall we give, when these, who had no good hopes held out to them as to the issue, gave evidence of such a change, and thou, who mayest be of good cheer as to God‘s love for men, and hast many times received many pledges of His care, and hast heard the prophets and Apostles, and hast been instructed by the events themselves, strivest not to attain the same measure of virtue as they?

Great then was the virtue too of these people, but much greater the lovingkindness of God; and this you may see from the very greatness of the threat. For on this ground did He not add to the sentence, ‹but if ye repent, I will spare,‘ that, casting among them the sentence unconditioned, He might increase the fear, and, increasing the fear, might impel them the more speedily to repentance.” “That fear was the parent of salvation; the threat removed the peril; the sentence of overthrow stayed the overthrow. New and marvelous issue! The sentence threatening death was the parent of life. Contrary to secular judgment, the sentence lost its force, when passed. In secular courts, the passing of the sentence gives it validity. Contrariwise with God, the pronouncing of the sentence made it invalid. For had it not been pronounced, the sinners had not heard it: had they not heard it, they would not have repented, would not have averted the chastisement, would not have enjoyed that marvelous deliverance. They fled not the city, as we do now (from the earthquake), but, remaining, established it. It was a snare, and they made it a wall; a quicksand and precipice, and they made it a tower of safety.”

“Was Nineveh destroyed? Quite the contrary. It arose and became more glorious, and all this intervening time has not effaced its glory, and we all yet celebrate it and marvel at it, that thenceforth it has become a most safe harbor to all who sin, not allowing them to sink into despair, but calling all

to repentance, both by what it did and by what it gained from the Providence of God, persuading us never to despair of our salvation, but living the best we can, and setting before us a good hope, to be of good cheer that the end will anyhow be good". "What was Nineveh? "They ate, they drank; they bought, they sold; they planted, they builded;" they gave themselves up to perjuries, lies, drunkenness, enormities, corruptions. This was Nineveh. Look at Nineveh now. They mourn, they grieve, are saddened, in sackcloth and ashes, in fastings and prayers. Where is that Nineveh? It is overthrown."

Verse 10

And God saw their works - o"He did not then first see them; He did not then first see their sackcloth when they covered themselves with it. He had seen them long before He sent the prophet there, while Israel was slaying the prophets who announced to them the captivity which hung over them. He knew certainly, that if He were to send the prophets far off to the Gentiles with such an announcement, they would hear and repent." God saw them, looked upon them, approved them, accepted the Ninevites not for time only, but, as many as persevered, for eternity. It was no common repentance. It was the penitence, which our Lord sets forth as the pattern of true repentance before His coming Matthew 12:41. "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold a greater than Jonah is here."

They believed in the one God, before unknown to them; they humbled themselves; they were not ashamed to repent publicly; they used great strictness with themselves; but, what Scripture chiefly dwells upon, their repentance was not only in profession, in belief, in outward act, but in the fruit of genuine works of repentance, a changed life out of a changed heart. "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way." Their whole way and course of life was evil; they broke off, not the one or other sin only, but all "their" whole "evil way". "The Ninevites, when about to perish, appoint them a first; in their bodies they chasten their souls with the scourge of humility; they put on hair-cloth for raiment, for ointment they sprinkle themselves with ashes; and, prostrate on the ground, they lick the dust. They publish their guilt with groans and lay open their secret misdeeds. Every age and sex alike applies itself to offices of mourning; all

ornament was laid aside; food was refused to the suckling, and the age, as yet unstained by sins of its own, bare the weight of those of others; the mute animals lacked their own food. One cry of unlike natures was heard along the city walls; along all the houses echoed the piteous lament of the mourners; the earth bore the groans of the penitents; heaven itself echoed with their voice. That was fulfilled (Matthew 10:22. God said afterward by Jeremiah, Jeremiah 18:7-8. At what "instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concern ing a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it, if that nation, against whom I had pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."

"As God is unchangeable in nature, so is He unchangeable in will. For no one can turn back His thoughts. For though some seem to have turned back His thoughts by their deprecations, yet this was His inward thought, that they should be able by their deprecations to turn back His sentence, and that they should receive from Him whereby to avail with Him. When then outwardly His sentence seemeth to be changed, inwardly His counsel is unchanged, because He inwardly ordereth each thing unchangeably, whatsoever is done outwardly with change." "It is said that He repented, because He changed that which He seemed about to do, to destroy them. In God all things are disposed and fixed, nor doth He anything out of any sudden counsel, which He knew not in all eternity that He should do; but, amid the movements of His creature in time, which He governeth marvelously, He, not moved in time, as by a sudden will, is said to do what He disposed by well-ordered causes in the immutability of His most secret counsel whereby things which come to knowledge, each in its time, He both doth when they are present, and already did when they were future." "God is subject to no dolor of repentance, nor is He deceived in anything, so as to wish to correct wherein He erred. But as man, when he repenteth willeth to change what he has done, so when thou hearest that God repenteth, look for the change. God, although He calleth it ‹repenting,' doth it otherwise than thou. Thou doest it, because thou hast erred; He, because He avengeth or freeth. He changed the kingdom of Saul when He "repented."

And in the very place, where Scripture saith, "He repenteth," it is said a little after, "He is not a man that He should repent." When then He changes His works through His unchangeable counsels, He is said to repent, on

account of the change, not of the counsel, but of the act." Augustine thinks that God, by using this language of Himself, which all would feel to be inadequate to His Majesty, meant to teach us that all language is inadequate to His Excellences. "We say these things of God, because we do not find anything better to say. I say, ‹God is just,‘ because in man‘s words I find nothing‘ better, for He is beyond justice. It is said in Scripture, "God is just and loveth justice." But in Scripture it is said, that "God repenteth," ‹God is ignorant.‘ Who would not start back at this? Yet to that end Scripture condescendeth healthfully to those words from which thou shrinkest, that thou shouldest not think that what thou deemest great is said worthily of Him. If thou ask, ‹what then is said worthily of God? one may perhaps answer, that ‹He is just.‘ Another more gifted would say, that this word too is surpassed by His Excellence, and that this too is said, not worthily of Him, although suitably according to man‘s capacity: so that, when he would prove out of Scripture that it is written, "God is just," he may be answered rightly, that the same Scriptures say that "God repenteth;" so, that, as he does not take that in its ordinary meaning, as men are accustomed to repent, so also when He is said to be just, this does not correspond to His supereminence, although Scripture said this also well, that, through these words such as they are, we may be brought to that which is unutterable." "Why predictest Thou," asks Chrysostom, "the terrible things which Thou art about to do? That I may not do what I predict. Wherefore also He threatened hell, that He may not bring to hell. Let words terrify you that ye may be freed from the auguish of deeds." "Men threaten punishment and inflict it. Not so God; but contrariwise, He both predicts and delays, and terrifies with words, and leaves nothing undone, that He may not bring what He threatens. So He did with the Ninevites. He bends His bow, and brandishes His sword, and prepares His spear, and inflicts not the blow. Were not the prophet‘s words bow and spear and sharp sword, when he said, "yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed?" But He discharged not the shaft, for it was prepared, not to be shot, but to be laid up."

"When we read in the Scriptures or hear in Churches the word of God, what do we hear but Christ? "And behold a greater than Jonas is here." If they repented at the cry of one unknown servant, of what punishment shall not we be worthy, if, when the Lord preacheth, whom we have known through so many benefits heaped upon us, we repent not? To them one day

sufficed; to us shall so many months and years not suffice? To them the overthrow of the city was preached, and 40 days were granted for repentance: to us eternal torments are threatened, and we have not half an hour‘s life certain.”

And He did it not - God willed rather that His prophecy should seem to fail, than that repentance should fail of its fruit. But it did not indeed fail, for the condition lay expressed in the threat. “Prophecy,” says Aquinas in reference to these cases, “cannot contain anything untrue.” For “prophecy is a certain knowledge impressed on the understanding of the prophets by revelation of God, by means of certain teaching. But truth of knowledge is the same in the Teacher and the taught, because the knowledge of the learner is a likeness of the knowledge of the Teacher. And in this way, Jerome saith that ‹prophecy is a sort of sign of divine foreknowledge.‘ The truth then of the prophetic knowledge and utterance must be the same as that of the divine knowledge, in which there can be no error. But although in the Divine Intellect, the two-fold knowledge (of things as they are in themselves, and as they are in their causes,) is always united, it is not always united in the prophetic revelation, because the impression made by the Agent is not always adequate to His power. Whence, sometimes, the prophetic revelation is a sort of impressed likeness of the Divine Foreknowledge, as it beholds the future contingent things in themselves, and these always take place as they are prophesied: as, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive.”

But sometimes the prophetic revelation is an impressed likeness of Divine Foreknowledge, as it knows the order of causes to effects; and then at times the event is other than is foretold, and yet there is nothing untrue in the prophecy. For the meaning of the prophecy is, that the disposition of the inferior causes, whether in nature or in human acts, is such, that such an effect would follow” (as in regard to Hezekiah and Nineveh), “which order of the cause to the effect is sometimes hindered by other things supervening. “The will of God,” he says again, “being the first, universal Cause, does not exclude intermediate causes, by virtue of which certain effects are produced. And since all intermediate causes are not adequate to the power of the First Cause, there are many things in the power, knowledge, and will of God, which are not contained in the order of the inferior causes, as the resurrection of Lazarus. Whence one, looking to the inferior causes, might say, ‹Lazarus will not rise again:‘ whereas, looking to

the First Divine Cause, he could say, ‹Lazarus will rise again.‘ And each of these God willeth, namely, that a thing should take place according to the inferior cause: which shall not take place, according to the superior cause, and conversely. So that God sometimes pronounces that a thing shall be, as far as it is contained in the order of inferior causes (as according to the disposition of nature or deserts), which yet doth not take place, because it is otherwise in the superior Divine Cause. As when He foretold Hezekiah Isaiah 38:1, “Set thy house in order, for thou, shalt die and not live;” which yet did not take place, because from eternity it was otherwise in the knowledge and will of God which is unchangeable. Whence Gregory saith, ‹though God changeth the thing, His counsel He doth not change.‘ When then He saith, “I will repent,” Jeremiah 18:8. it is understood as said metaphorically, for men, when they fulfill not what they threatened, seem to repent.”

JONAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

And Jonah was displeased exceedingly - It was an untempered zeal. The prophet himself records it as such, and how he was reproved for it. He would, like many of us, govern God‘s world better than God Himself. Short-sighted and presumptuous! Yet not more short-sighted than those who, in fact, quarrel with God‘s Providence, the existence of evil, the baffling of good, “the prison walls of obstacles and trials,” in what we would do for God‘s glory. What is all discontent, but anger with God? The marvel is that the rebel was a prophet! “What he desired was not unjust in itself, that the Ninevites should be punished for their past sins, and that the sentence of God pronounced against them should not be recalled, although they repented. For so the judge hangs the robber for theft, however he repent.” He sinned, in that he disputed with God. Let him cast the first stone, who never rejoiced at any overthrow of the enemies of his country, nor was glad, in a common warfare, that they lost as many soldiers as we. As if God had not instruments enough at His will! Or as if He needed the Assyrians to punish Israel, or the one nation, whose armies are the terror of Europe, to punish us, so that if they should perish, Israel should therefore have escaped, though it persevered in sin, or we!

And he was very angry - , or, may be, “very grieved.” The word expresses also the emotion of burning grief, as when Samuel was grieved at the rejection of Saul, or David at “the breach upon Uzzah” 2 Samuel 6:8; 1 Chronicles 13:11. Either way, he was displeased with what God did. Yet so Samuel and David took God‘s doings to heart; but Samuel and David were grieved at God‘s judgments; Jonah, at what to the Ninevites was mercy, only in regard to his own people it seemed to involve judgment. Scripture says that he was displeased, because the Ninevites were spared; but not, why this displeased him. It has been thought, that it was jealousy for God‘s glory among the pagan, as though the Ninevites would think that God in whose Name he spake had no certain knowledge of things to come; and so that his fault was mistrust in God‘s wisdom or power to vindicate His own honor. But it seems more likely, that it was a mistaken patriotism, which idolized the well being of his own and God‘s people, and desired that its enemy, the appointed instrument of its chastisement, should be itself destroyed. Scripture being silent about it, we cannot know certainly. Jonah,

under God‘s inspiration, relates that God pronounced him wrong. Having incurred God‘s reproof, he was careless about men‘s judgment, and left his own character open to the harsh judgments of people; teaching us a holy indifference to man‘s opinion, and, in our ignorance, carefulness not to judge unkindly.

Verse 2

And he prayed unto the Lord - Jonah, at least, did not murmur or complain of God. He complained to God of Himself. He expostulates with Him. Shortsighted indeed and too wedded to his own will! Yet his will was the well-being of the people whose prophet God had made him. He tells God, that this it was, which he had all along dreaded. He softens it, as well as he can, by his word, “I pray Thee,” which expresses deprecation anti-submissiveness. Still he does not hesitate to tell God that this was the cause of his first rebellion! Perilous to the soul, to speak without penitence of former sin; yet it is to God that he speaks and so God, in His wonderful condescension, makes him teach himself.

I knew that Thou art a gracious God - He repeats to God to the letter His own words by Joel Joel 2:13. God had so revealed Himself anew to Judah. He had, doubtless, on some repentance which Judah had shown, turned away the evil from them. And now by sending him as a preacher of repentance, He implied that He would do the same to the enemies of his country. God confirms this by the whole sequel. Thenceforth then Israel knew, that to the pagan also God was intensely, infinitely full of gracious and yearning love nay (as the form rather implies.) mastered (so to speak) by the might and intensity of His gracious love, “slow to anger” and delaying it, “great in loving tenderness,” and abounding in it; and that toward them also, when the evil is about to be inflicted, or has been partially or wholly inflicted, He will repent of it and replace it with good, on the first turning of the soul or the nation to God.

Verse 3

Therefore now, O Lord, take I beseech Thee my life from me - He had rather die, than see the evil which was to come upon his country. Impatient though he was, he still cast himself upon God. By asking of God to end his life, he, at least, committed himself to the sovereign disposal of God. “Seeing that the Gentiles are, in a manner, entering in, and that those words are being fulfilled, Deuteronomy 32:21. “They have moved Me to jealousy with” that which is “not God, and I will move them to jealousy

with" those which are "not a people, I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation," he despairs of the salvation of Israel, and is convulsed with great sorrow, which bursts out into words and sets forth the causes of grief, saying in a manner, ‹Am I alone chosen out of so many prophets, to announce destruction to my people through the salvation of others?' He grieved not, as some think, that the multitude of nations is saved, but that Israel perishes. Whence our Lord also wept over Jerusalem. The Apostles first preached to Israel. Paul wishes to become an anathema for his Romans 9:3-5. brethren who are Israelites, whose is the adoption and the glory and the covenant, and the giving of the law and the service of God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came." Jonah had discharged his office faithfully now. He had done what God commanded; God had done by him what He willed. Now, then, he prayed to be discharged. So Augustine in his last illness prayed that he might die, before the Vandals brought suffering and devastation on his country.

Verse 4

And the Lord said, Doest thou well to be angry? - oGod, being appealed to, answers the appeal. So does He often in prayer, by some secret voice, answer the inquirer. There is right anger against the sin. Moses' anger was right, when he broke the tables. Exodus 32:19. God secretly suggests to Jonah that his anger was not right, as our Lord instructed Luke 9:55. James and John that "theirs" was not. The question relates to the quality, not to the greatness of his anger. It was not the vehemence of his passionate desire for Israel, which God reproves, but that it was turned against the Ninevites. "What the Lord says to Jonah, he says to all, who in their office of the cure of souls are angry. They must, as to this same anger, be recalled into themselves, to regard the cause or object of their anger, and weigh warily and attentively whether they "do well to be angry." For if they are angry, not with men but with the sins of men, if they hate and persecute, not men, but the vices of men, they are rightly angry, their zeal is good. But if they are angry, not with sins but with men, if they hate, not vices but men, they are angered amiss, their zeal is bad. This then which was said to one, is to be watchfully looked to and decided by all, ‹Doest thou well to be angry? ‹"

Verse 5

So Jonah went out of the city - oThe form of the words implies (as in the English Version), that this took place after Jonah was convinced that God would spare Nineveh; and since there is no intimation that he knew it by revelation, then it was probably after the 40 days. "The days being now past, after which it was time that the things foretold should be accomplished, and His anger as yet taking no effect, Jonah understood that God had pity on Nineveh. Still he does not give up all hope, and thinks that a respite of the evil has been granted them on their willingness to repent, but that some effect of His displeasure would come, since the pains of their repentance bad not equalled their offences. So thinking in himself apparently, he departs from the city, and waits to see what will become of them." "He expected" apparently "that it would either fall by an earthquake, or be burned with fire, like Sodom". "Jonah, in that he built him a tabernale and sat over against Nineveh, awaiting what should happen to it, wore a different, foresignifying character. For he prefigured the carnal people of Israel. For these too were sad at the salvation of the Ninevites, i. e., the redemption and deliverance of the Gentiles. Whence Christ came to call, not the righteous but sinners to repentance. But the over-shadowing gourd over his head was the promises of the Old Testament or those offices in which, as the apostle says, there was a shadow of good things to come, protecting them in the land of promise from temporal evils; all which are now emptied and faded. And now that people, having lost the temple at Jerusalem and the priesthood and sacrifice (all which was a shadow of that which was to come) in its captive dispersion, is scorched by a vehement heat of tribulation, as Jonah by the heat of the sun, and grieves greatly; and yet the salvation of the pagan and the penitent is accounted of more moment than its grief, and the shadow which it loved."

Verse 6

And the Lord God prepared a gourd - , (a palm-christ, English margin, rightly.). "God again commanded the gourd, as he did the whale, willing only that this should be. Forthwith it springs up beautiful and full of flower, and straightway was a roof to the whole booth, and anoints him so to speak with joy, with its deep shade. The prophet rejoices at it exceedingly, as being a great and thankworthy thing. See now herein too the simplicity of his mind. For he was grieved exceedingly, because what he had prophesied came not to pass; he rejoiced exceedingly for a plant. A blameless mind is lightly moved to gladness or sorrow. You will see this in

children. For as people who are not strong, easily fall, if someone gives them no very strong push, but touches them as it were with a lighter hand, so too the guileless mind is easily carried away by anything which delights or grieves it." Little as the shelter of the palm-christ was in itself, Jonah must have looked upon its sudden growth, as a fruit of God‘s goodness toward him, (as it was) and then perhaps went on to think (as people do) that this favor of God showed that He meant, in the end, to grant him what his heart was set upon. Those of impulsive temperaments are ever interpreting the acts of God‘s Providence, as bearing on what they strongly desire. Or again, they argue, ‹God throws this or that in our way; therefore He means us not to relinquish it for His sake, but to have it.‘ By this sudden miraculous shelter against the burning Assyrian sun, which God provided for Jonah, He favored his waiting on there. So Jonah may have thought, interpreting rightly that God willed him to stay; wrongly, why He so willed. Jonah was to wait, not to see what he desired, but to receive, and be the channel of the instruction which God meant to convey to him and through him.

Verse 7

When the morning rose - , i. e., in the earliest dawn, before the actual sunrise. For one day Jonah enjoyed the refreshment of the palm-christ. In early dawn, it still promised the shadow; just ere it was most needed, at God‘s command, it withered.

Verse 8

God prepared a vehement - o(The English margin following the Chaldee, "silent," i. e., "sultry").

East wind - The winds in the East, blowing over the sand-deserts, intensely increase the distress of the heat. A sojourner describes on two occasions an Assyrian summer. "The change to summer had been as rapid as that which ushered in the spring. The verdure of the plain had perished almost in a day. Hot winds, coming from the desert, had burned up and carried away the shrubs. The heat was now almost intolerable. Violent whirl-winds occasionally swept over the face of the country." "The spring was now fast passing away; the heat became daily greater; the grain was cut; and the plains and hills put on their summer clothing of dull parched yellow. "The pasture is withered, the herbage faileth; the green grass is not." It was the season too of the Sherghis, or burning winds from the south,

which occasionally swept over the face of the country, driving in their short-lived fury everything before them.

We all went below (ground) soon after the sun had risen, and remained there (in the tunnels) without again seeking the open air until it was far down in the Western horizon." The "Sherghi" must be rather the East wind, Sherki, whence Sirocco. At Sulimania in Kurdistan (about 2 12 degrees east of Nineveh, and 34 of a degree south) "the so much dreaded Sherki seems to blow from any quarter, from east to northeast. It is greatly feared for its violence and relaxing qualities," "hot, stormy and singularly relaxing and dispiriting." Suffocating heat is a characteristic of these vehement winds. Morier relates at Bushire; He continues, "Again from the 23rd to the 25th, the wind blew violently from the southeast accompanied by a most suffocating heat, and continued to blow with the same strength until the next day at noon, when it suddenly veered round to the northwest with a violence equal to what it had blown from the opposite point." And again (p. 97) "When there was a perfect calm, partial and strong currents of air would arise and form whirlwinds which produced high columns of sand all over the plain. They are looked upon as the sign of great heat. Their strength was very various. Frequently they threw down our tents."

Burckhardt, when professedly lessening the general impression as to these winds says, "The worst effect (of the Semoum "a violent southest wind") is that it dries up the water in the skins, and so far endangers the traveler's safety. In one morning 13 of the contents of a full water skin was evaporated. I always observed the whole atmosphere appear as it in a state of combustion; the dust and sand are carried high into the air, which assumes a reddish or blueish or yellowish tint, according to the nature and color of the ground from which the dust arises. The Semoum is not always accompanied by whirlwinds: in its less violent degree it will blow for hours with little force, although with oppressive heat; when the whirlwind raises the dust, it then increases several degrees in heat. In the Semoum at Esne, the thermometer mounted to 121 degrees in the shade, but the air seldom remains longer than a quarter of an hour in that state or longer than the whirlwind lasts.

The most disagreeable effect of the Semoum upon man is, that it stops perspiration, dries up the palate, and produces great restlessness." Travels in

Nubia, pp. 204-205.) “A gale of wind blew from the Southward and Eastward with such violence, that three of our largest tents were leveled with the ground. The wind brought with it such hot currents of air, that we thought it might be the precursor of the “Samoun” described by Chardin, but upon inquiry, we found that the autumn was generally the season for that wind. The “Sam” wind commits great ravages in this district. It blows at night from about midnight to sunrise, comes in a hot blast, and is afterward succeeded by a cold one. About 6 years ago, there was a “sam” during the summer months which so totally burned up all the grain, then near its maturity, that no animal would eat a blade of it, nor touch any of its grain.”

The sun beat upon the head of Jonah - o“Few European travelers can brave the perpendicular rays of an Assyrian sun. Even the well-seasoned Arab seeks the shade during the day, and journeys by night, unless driven forth at noontide by necessity, or the love of war.”

He wished in himself to die - (literally he asked as to his soul, to die). He prayed for death. It was still the same dependence upon God, even in his self-will. He did not complain, but prayed God to end his life here. When men are already vexed in soul by deep inward griefs, a little thing often oversets patience. Jonah‘s hopes had been revived by the mercy of the palm-christ; they perished with it. Perhaps he had before him the thought of his great predecessor, Elijah, how he too wished to die, when it seemed that his mission was fruitless. They differed in love. Elijah‘s preaching, miracles, toil, sufferings, seemed to him, not only to be in vain, but (as they must, if in vain), to add to the guilt of his people. God corrected him too, by showing him his own short-sightedness, that he knew not of “the seven thousand who had not bowed their knees unto Baal,” who were, in part, doubtless, “the travail of his soul.” Jonah‘s mission to his people seemed also to be fruitless; his hopes for their well-being were at an end; the temporal mercies of which he had been the prophet, were exhausted; Nineveh was spared; his last hope was gone; the future scourge of his people was maintained in might. The soul shrinks into itself at the sight of the impending visitation of its country. But Elijah‘s zeal was “for” his people only and the glory of God in it, and so it was pure love. Jonah‘s was directed “against” the Ninevites, and so had to be purified.

Verse 9

Doest thou well to be angry? - o“See again how Almighty God, out of His boundless lovingkindness, with the yearning tenderness of a father, almost disporteth with the guileless souls of the saints! The palm-christ shades him: the prophet rejoices in it exceedingly. Then, in God‘s Providence, the caterpillar attacks it, the burning East wind smites it, showing at the same time how very necessary the relief of its shade, that the prophet might be the more grieved, when deprived of such a good. He asketh him skillfully, was he very grieved? and that for a shrub? He confesseth, and this becometh the defense for God, the Lover of mankind.”

I do well to be angry, unto death - o“Vehement anger leadeth men to long and love to die, especially if thwarted and unable to remove the hindrance which angers them. For then vehement anger begetteth vehement sorrow, grief, despondency.” We have each, his own palm-christ; and our palm-christ has its own worm. “In Jonah, who mourned when he had discharged his office, we see those who, in what they seem to do for God, either do not seek the glory of God, but some end of their own, or at least, think that glory to lie where it does not. For he who seeketh the glory of God, and not his own Philemon 2:21. things, but those of Jesus Christ, ought to will what God hath willed and done. If he wills aught else, he declares plainly that he sought himself, not God, or himself more than God. Jonah sought the glory of God wherein it was not, in the fulfillment of a prophecy of woe. And choosing to be led by his own judgment, not by God‘s, whereas he ought to have joyed exceedingly, that so many thousands, being “dead, were alive again,” being “lost, were found,” he, when “there was joy in heaven among the angels of God over” so many repenting sinners, was “afflicted with a great affliction” and was angry.

This ever befalls those who wish “that” to take place, not what is best and most pleasing to God, but what they think most useful to themselves. Whence we see our very great and common error, who think our peace and tranquility to lie in the fulfillment of our own will, whereas this will and judgment of our own is the cause of all our trouble. So then Jonah prays and tacitly blames God, and would not so much excuse as approve that, his former flight, to “Him Whose eyes are too pure to behold iniquity.” And since all inordinate affection is a punishment to itself, and he who departeth from the order of God hath no stability, he is in such anguish, because what he wills, will not be, that he longs to die. For it cannot but be that “his” life, who measures everything by his own will and mind, and who followeth not

God as his Guide but rather willeth to be the guide of the Divine Will, should be from time to time troubled with great sorrow.

But since "the merciful and gracious Lord" hath pity on our infirmity and gently admonisheth us within, when He sees us at variance with Him, He forsakes not Jonah in that hot grief, but lovingly blames him. How restless such men are, we see from Jonah. The "palm-christ" grows over his head, and "he was exceeding glad of the palm-christ." Any labor or discomfort they bear very ill, and being accustomed to endure nothing and follow their own will, they are tormented and cannot bear it, as Jonah did not the sun. If anything, however slight, happen to lighten their grief, they are immoderately glad. Soon gladdened, soon grieved, like children. They have not learned to bear anything moderately. What marvel then that their joy is soon turned into sorrow? They are joyed over a palm-christ, which soon greeneth, soon drieth, quickly falls to the ground and is trampled upon. Such are the things of this world, which, while possessed, seem great and lasting; when suddenly lost, men see how vain and passing they are, and that hope is to be placed, not in them but in their Creator, who is Unchangeable. It is then a great dispensation of God toward us, when those things in which we took special pleasure are taken away. Nothing can man have so pleasing, green, and, in appearance, so lasting, which has not its own worm prepared by God, whereby, in the dawn, it may be smitten and die. The change of human will or envy disturbs court favor; manifold accidents, wealth; the varying opinion of the people or of the great, honors; disease, danger, poverty, infamy, pleasure. Jonah's palm-christ had one worm; our's have many; if others were lacking, there is the restlessness of man's own thoughts, whose food is restlessness."

Verse 10

Thou hadst pity on the palm-christ - In the feeling of our common mortality, the soul cannot but yearn over decay. Even a drooping flower is sad to look on, so beautiful, so frail. It belongs to this passing world, where nothing lovely abides, all things beautiful hasten to cease to be. The natural God-implanted feeling is the germ of the spiritual.

Verse 11

Should I not spare? - literally "have pity" and so "spare." God waives for the time the fact of the repentance of Nineveh, and speaks of those on

whom man must have pity, those who never had any share in its guilt, the 120,000 children of Nineveh, “I who, in the weakness of infancy, knew not which hand, “the right” or “the left,” is the stronger and fitter for every use.” He who would have spared Sodom “for ten‘s sake,” might well be thought to spare Nineveh for the 120,000‘s sake, in whom the inborn corruption had not developed into the malice of willful sin. If these 120,000 were the children under three years old, they were 15 (as is calculated) of the whole population of Nineveh. If of the 600,000 of Nineveh all were guilty, who by reason of age could be, above 15 were innocent of actual sin.

To Jonah, whose eye was evil to Nineveh for his people‘s sake, God says, as it were, “Let the “spirit” which “is willing” say to the “flesh” which “is weak,” Thou grievest for the palm-christ, that is, thine own kindred, the Jewish people; and shall not I spare Nineveh that great city, shall not I provide for the salvation of the Gentiles in the whole world, who are in ignorance and error? For there are many thousands among the Gentiles, who go after 1 Corinthians 12:2. mute idols even as they are led: not out of malice but out of ignorance, who would without doubt correct their ways, if they had the knowledge of the truth, if they were shewn the difference “between their right hand and their left,” i. e., between the truth of God and the lie of men.” But, beyond the immediate teaching to Jonah, God lays down a principle of His dealings at all times, that, in His visitations of nations, He Psalm 68:5, “the Father of the fatherless and judge of the widows,” takes special account of those who are of no account in man‘s sight, and defers the impending judgment, not for the sake of the wisdom of the wise or the courage of the brave, but for the helpless, weak, and, as yet, innocent as to actual sin. How much more may we think that He regards those with pity who have on them not only the recent uneffaced traces of their Maker‘s Hands, but have been reborn in the Image of Christ His Only Begotten Son! The infants clothed with Christ Galatians 3:27 must be a special treasure of the Church in the Eyes of God.

“How much greater the mercy of God than that even of a holy man; how far better to flee to the judgment-seat of God than to the tribunal of man. Had Jonah been judge in the cause of the Ninevites, he would have passed on them all, although penitent, the sentence of death for their past guilt, because God had passed it before their repentance. So David said to God 2 Samuel 24:14; “Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies

are great; and let me not fall into the hand of man." Whence the Church professes to God, that mercy is the characteristic of His power; ‹O God, who shewest Thy Almighty power most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity, mercifully grant unto us such a measure of Thy grace, that we, running the way of Thy commandments, may obtain Thy gracious promises, and be made partakers of Thy heavenly treasure. ‹"

"Again, God here teaches Jonah and us all to conform ourselves in all things to the Divine Will, that, when He commandeth any work, we should immediately begin and continue it with alacrity and courage; when He bids us cease from it, or deprives it of its fruit and effect, we should immediately tranquilly cease, and patiently allow our work and toil to lack its end and fruit. For what is our aim, save to do the will of God, and in all things to confirm ourselves to it? But now the will of God is, that thou shouldest resign, yea destroy, the work thou hast begun. Acquiesce then in it. Else thou servest not the will of God, but thine own fancy and cupidity. And herein consists the perfection of the holy soul, that, in all acts and events, adverse or prosperous, it should with full resignation resign itself most humbly and entirely to God, and acquiesce, happen what will, yea, and rejoice that the will of God is fulfilled in this thing, and say with holy Job, "The Lord gave, The Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord" Ignatius had so transferred his own will into the will of God, that the said, ‹If perchance the society, which I have begun and furthered with such toil, should be dissolved or perish, after passing half an hour in prayer, I should, by God‘s help, have no trouble from this thing, than which none sadder could befall me.‘ The saints let themselves be turned this way and that, round and round, by the will of God, as a horse by its rider."

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MICAH INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Micah

"Micah," or "Micaiah," this Morasthite, was so called, probably, in order to distinguish him from his great predecessor, Micaiah, son of Imlah, in the reign of Ahab. His name was spoken in its fuller form, by the elders of the land whose words Jeremiah has preserved. And in that fuller form his name is known, where the Greek and Latin translations of the Scriptures are used. By the Syrians, and by the Jews he is still called "Micah," as by us. The fullest and original form is "Micaiahu," "who is like the Lord?" In this fullest form, it is the name of one of the Levites sent by Jehoshaphat to teach the people 2 Chronicles 17:7, as also of the mother of King Asa 2 Chronicles 13:2 (the same name serving sometimes both for men and women). Then, according to the habit of abridging names, in all countries, and especially those of which the proper name of the Lord is a part, it is diversely abridged into "Micaihu," "Micahu", whence Micah is readily formed, on the same rule as "Micaiah" itself from "Micaiahu." The forms are all found indifferently. The idolatrous Levite in the time of the Judges, are both called in the same chapter "Micaihu" and "Micah"; the father of one of Josiah's officers is called "Micaiah" in the Book of Kings 2 Kings 22:12, and "Micah" in the Book of Chronicles 2 Chronicles 34:20.

The prophet's name, like those of Joshua, Elijah, Elisha, Hosea, Joel, Obadiah, was significant. We know that Joshua's name was changed for a set purpose Numbers 13:16. The rest seem to have been given in God's Providence, or taken by the prophets, in order to enunciate truths concerning God, opposed to the idolatries or self-dependence of the people. But the name of "Micah" or "Micaiah," (as "the elders of the land" Jeremiah 26:17-18 called him on a solemn occasion, some 120 years afterward) contained more than teaching. It was cast into the form of a challenge. "Who is like the Lord?" The form of words had been impressed upon Israel by the song of Moses after the deliverance at the Red Sea Exodus 15:11. In the days of Elijah and that first Micaiah, the strife between God and man, the true prophet and the false prophet, had been ended at the battle of Ramoth-Gilead; it ceased for a time, in the reigns of Jehu and his successors, because, in consequence of his partial obedience, God, by Elisha and Jonah, promised them good: it was again resumed, as the promise to Jehu was expiring, and God's prophets had anew to proclaim

a message of woe. “Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?” 1 Kings 21:20, and “I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil” 1 Kings 22:8, 1 Kings 22:18, Ahab‘s words as to Elijah and Micaiah, were the types of the subsequent contradiction of the false prophets to Hosea and Amos, which closed only with the destruction of Samaria. Now, in the time of the later Micaiah, were the first dawnings of the same strife in Judah, which hastened and brought about the destruction of Jerusalem under Zedekiah, which re-appeared after the Captivity Nehemiah 6:14, and was the immediate cause of the second destruction under the Romans. Micah, as he dwells on the meaning of names generally, so, doubtless, it is in allusion to his own name, that, at the close of his prophecy, he ushers in his announcement of God‘s incomparable mercy with the words Micah 7:18, “Who is a God like unto Thee?” Before him, whatever disobedience there was to God‘s law in Judah, there was no systematic, organized, opposition to His prophets.

There is no token of it in Joel. From the times of Micah it is never missing. We find it in each prophet (however brief the remains of some are), who prophesied directly to Judah, not in Isaiah only, but in Habakkuk Habakkuk 1:5; Habakkuk 2:1 and Zephaniah Zephaniah 1:12. It deepened, as it hastened toward its decision. The nearer God‘s judgments were at hand, the more obstinately the false prophets denied that they would come. The system of false prophecy, which rose to its height in the time of Jeremiah, which met and thwarted him at every step (see Jeremiah 5:13, Jeremiah 5:31; Jeremiah 6:13-17; Jeremiah 8:10-12; Jeremiah 14:13-16; Jeremiah 20:1-6; Jeremiah 23:9 ff; Jeremiah 26:7-8, Jeremiah 26:11; Jeremiah 27:14-18; 28; Jeremiah 29:8-9, Jeremiah 29:21-32), and deceived those who wished to be deceived, was dawning in the time of Micah. False prophecy arose in Judah from the selfsame cause whence it had arisen in Israel, because Judah‘s deepening corruption drew down the prophecies of God‘s displeasure, which it was popular to disbelieve. False prophecy was a gainful occupation. The false prophets had men‘s wishes on their side. They had the people with them. “My people love to have it so” Jeremiah 5:31, said God. They forbade Micah to prophesy Micah 2:6; prophesied peace Micah 3:5, when God foretold evil; prophesied for gain Micah 3:11, and proclaimed war in the Name of God (see the note at Micah 3:5) against those who fed them not.

Micah was called at such a time. His name which he himself explains, was no chance name. To the Hebrews, to whom names were so much more significant, parts of the living language, it recalled the name of his great predecessor - his standing alone against all the prophets of Ahab, his prophecy, his suffering, his evidenced truth. The truth of prophecy was set upon the issue of the battle before Ramoth-Gilead. In the presence of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, as well as of Ahab, the 400 prophets of Ashtaroth had promised to Ahab the prize he longed for. One solitary, discriminating voice was heard amid that clamorous multitude, forewarning Ahab that he would perish, his people would be scattered. On the one side, was that loud triumphant chorus of "all the prophets, Go up to Ramoth-Gilead, and prosper; for the Lord shall deliver it into the king's hand" 1 Kings 22:12. On the other, one solemn voice, exhibiting before them that sad spectacle which the morrow's sun should witness, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd, and the Lord said, these have no master, let them return every man to his house in peace" 1 Kings 22:17.

Micaiah was struck, imprisoned, and, apparently, ended his ministry, appealing from that small audience of the armies of Israel and Judah to the whole world, which has ever since looked back upon that strife with interest and awe; "Hear ye peoples, each one of them 1 Kings 22:28. God, who guided the archer shooting at a venture 1 Kings 22:34, fulfilled the words which He had put into the prophet's mouth. God's words had found Ahab, although disguised. Jehoshaphat, the imperiled 1 Kings 22:30-33, returned home, to relate the issue. The conflict between God's truth and idol falsehood was doubtless long remembered in Judah. And now when the strife had penetrated into Judah, to be ended some 170 years afterward in the destruction of Jerusalem, another Micaiah arose, his name the old watchword, "Who is like the Lord?" He prefixed to his prophecy that same summons to the whole world to behold the issue of the conflict, which God had once accredited and, in that issue, had given an earnest of the victory of His truth, there thenceforth and forever.

The prophet was born a villager, in Moresheth Gath, "a village", Jerome says; ("a little village", in Jerome's own days), "East of Eleutheropolis,"

where what was " formerly his grave," was "now a church." Since it was his birthplace and his burial-place, it was probably his home also. In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, "the elders of the land" Jeremiah 26:17-18 speak of him with this same title, "the Morasthite." He lingers, in his prophecy, among the towns of the maritime plain (the Shephelah) where his birthplace lay. Among the ten places in that neighborhood Micah 1:11-15, which he selects for warning and for example of the universal captivity, is his native village, "the home he loved." But the chief scene of his ministry was Jerusalem. He names it in the beginning of his prophecy, as the place where the idolatries, and, with the idolatries, all the other sins of Judah were concentrated.

The two capitals, Samaria and Jerusalem, were the chief objects of the word of God to him, because the corruption of each kingdom streamed forth from them. The sins which he rebukes are chiefly those of the capital. Extreme oppression Micah 3:2-3; Micah 2:2, violence among the rich Micah 6:12, bribing among judges, priests, prophets (Micah 3:11; judges and priests, Micah 7:3); building up the capital even by cost of life, or actual bloodshed (Micah 3:10; bloodshed also, Micah 7:2); spoilation Micah 2:8; expulsion of the powerless, women and children from their homes Micah 2:9; covetousness Micah 2:2; cheating in dealings Micah 6:10-11; pride Micah 2:3. These, of course, may be manifoldly repeated in lesser places of resort and of judgment. But it is "Zion and Jerusalem" which are so built up with blood (Micah 3:10; bloodshed also, Micah 7:2); Zion and Jerusalem, which are, on that ground, to be "plowed as a field" Micah 3:12; it is "the city" to which "the Lord's voice crieth" Micah 6:9; whose "rich men are full of violence" Micah 6:12; it is the "daughter of Zion" Micah 4:10, which is to "go forth out of the city and go to Babylon." Especially, they are the heads and princes of the people Micah 3:1, Micah 3:9, Micah 3:11; Micah 6:12; Micah 7:3, whom he upbraids for perversion of justice and for oppression. Even the good kings of Judah seem to have been powerless to restrain the general corruption.

Micah, according to the title which he prefixed to his prophecy, was called to his prophetic function somewhat later than Isaiah. His ministry began later, and ended earlier. For Uzziah, in whose reign Isaiah began to prophesy, was dead before Micah was called to his office; and Micah

probably was called away early in the reign of Hezekiah, whereas some of the chief public acts of Isaiah‘s ministry fell in the 17th and 18th years of the reign of Hezekiah. Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, had doubtless been withdrawn to their rest. Hosea alone, in “grey-haired might,” was still protesting in vain against the deepening corruptions of Israel (to the north).

The contents of Micah‘s prophecy and his relation to Isaiah agree with the inscription. His prophecy has indications of the times of Jotham, perhaps also of those of Ahaz. We know historically that one signal prophecy, was uttered in the reign of Hezekiah.

It is now accepted by almost everyone that the great prophecy (three verses of which Isaiah prefixed to Micah 3:12; he subjoins instantly God‘s reversal of that sentence, “in the latter days.” “And in the last days it shall be that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established on the top of the mountains, and peoples shall flow unto it” Micah 4:1. He had said, “Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps;” he adds immediately, in reversal of this, “the law shall go forth frown Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” Micah 4:2. The two sentences are joined as closely as they can be; “Zion, shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house shall become high places of a forest; and it shall be, in the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be (abidingly) established on the top of the mountains.” Every reader would understand, that the elevation intended, was spiritual, not physical. They could not fail to understand the metaphor; or imagine that the Mount Zion, on part of which, (Mount Moriah,) “the house of the Lord” stood, should be physically placed on other hills. But the contrast is marked. The premise is the sequel of the woe; the abiding condition is the reversal of the sentence of its desolation. Even the words allude, the one to the other.

In Isaiah, there is no such connection. After the first chapter and its summary of rebuke, warning, threatening, and final weal or woe resting on each class, Isaiah begins his prophecy anew with a fresh title; “The word that Isaiah the son of Amos saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem” Isaiah 2:1; and to this he prefixes three verses from Micah‘s prophecy. He separates it in a marked way from the preceding summary, and yet connects

it with some other prophecy by the word, “And” Isaiah 2:2. He himself marks that it is not in its original place here. So then, in the prophet Micah, the close connection with the foregoing marks that it is in its original place; Isaiah marked purposely that in his prophecy it is not.

But Isaiah‘s prophecy belongs to a time of prosperity; such as Judah had not, after the reign of Jotham. It was a time of great war-like strength, diffused through the whole land. The land was full Isaiah 2:7, Isaiah 2:11, without end, of gold, silver, chariots, horses, of lofty looks and haughtiness. The images which follow Isaiah 2:12-21 are shadows of the Day of Judgment, and extend beyond Judah; but the sins rebuked are the sins of strength and might, self-confidence, oppression, manifold female luxury and bravery Isaiah 3:16, Isaiah 3:23. Isaiah prophesies that God would take away their strength Isaiah 3:1-3. They still had it then. At that time, Judah did not trust in God or in foreign alliances, but only in themselves. Yet, from the time of Ahaz, trust in foreign help infected them to the end. Even Hezekiah, when he received the messengers of Merodach-baladan Isaiah 39:1-8, fell into the snare; and Josiah probably lost his life as a vassal of Assyria 2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chronicles 35:20-22. This union of inherent strength and unconcernedness about foreign aid is an adequate test of days prior to Ahaz.

But since Isaiah prefixed to a prophecy in the days of Jotham this great prophecy of Micah, then Micah‘s prophecy must have been already current. To those same days of strength it belongs, that Micah could prophesy as a gift, the cutting off Micah 5:10-11, Micah 5:14 of “horses and chariots,” the destruction “of cities” and “strong towers,” all, in which Judah trusted instead of God. The prophecy is a counterpart of Isaiah‘s. Isaiah prophesied a day of Judgment, in which all these things would be removed; Micah foretold that their removal would be a mercy to those who trust in Christ.

On the other hand, the utter dislocation of society, the bursting of all the most sacred bands which bind man to man together, described in his last chapter Isaiah 7:5-6, perhaps belong most to the miserable decay in the reign of Ahaz. The idolatry spoken of also belongs probably to the time of Ahaz. In Jotham‘s time 2 Kings 15:35, “the people sacrificed and burned incense still in the high places;” yet, under a king so highly praised 2 Kings

15:34; 2 Chronicles 27:2, 2 Chronicles 27:6, these are not likely to have been in Jerusalem. But Micah, in the very head of his prophecy, speaks of Jerusalem Micah 1:5 as the center of the idolatries of Judah. The allusion also to child-sacrifices belongs to the time of Ahaz, who sacrificed sons of his own 2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chronicles 28:3, and whose sacrifice others probably imitated. The mention of the special idolatry of the time, "the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab" Micah 6:16, belong to the same reign, it being recorded of Ahaz especially, "he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and made also molten images for Baalim" 2 Chronicles 28:2; the special sin of the house of Ahab. That charactor too which he describes, that, amid all that idolatry, practical irreligion, and wickedness, they "leant upon the Lord, and said, Is not the Lord among us? None evil can come upon us" Micah 3:11; Micah 6:6; was just the character of Ahaz. Not until the end of his reign was he so embittered by God‘s chastisements, that he closed His temple 2 Chronicles 28:22-24.

Up to that time, even after he had copied the Brazen Altar at Damascus, he still kept up a divided allegiance to God. Urijah, the high Priest, at the king‘s command, offered the sacrifices for the king and the people, while Ahaz used "the brazen altar, to enquire by" 2 Kings 16:15. This was just the half-service which God by Micah rejects. It is the old history of man‘s half-service, faith without love, which provides that what it believes but loves not should be done for it, and itself enacts what it prefers. Urijah was to offer the lawful sacrifices for the king and the people; Ahaz was to obtain knowledge of the future, such as he wished in his own way, a lying future, by lying acts.

Micah renewed under Hezekiah the prophecy of the utter destruction of Jerusalem, which he had pronounced under Jotham. The prophets did not heed repeating themselves. Eloquent as they were, they are the more eloquent because eloquence was not their object. Even our Lord Jesus, with divine wisdom, and the more, probably, because He had divine wisdom, repeated in His teaching the same words. Those words sank the deeper, because they were repeated so often. So Micah repeated doubtless oftentimes those words, which he first uttered in the days of Jotham; "Zion shall be plowed like a field and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the

mountain of the house as the high places of the forest." Often, perhaps during those 30 years or so, he repeated them in vain. At the last, they brought about a great repentance, and delayed, it may be for 136 years, the destruction which he was constrained to foretell. Early in the days of Jehoiakim, about 120 years afterward, in the public assembly when Jeremiah was on trial for his life, "the elder's of the land said explicitly, that the great conversion at the beginning of the reign of Hezekiah, nay, of that king himself, was wrought by the teaching of Micah." "Then rose up, says Jeremiah, certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house, as the high places of the forest. Did Hezekiah king of Judah, and all Judah, put him at all to death? Did he not fear the Lord, and besought the Lord, and the Lord repented Him of the evil which He had pronounced against them?" Jeremiah 26:17-19.

It may have been that single prophecy which Micah so delivered; some have thought that it was his whole book. Jeremiah, at God's command, at one time uttered single prophecies; at another, the summary of all his prophecies. This only is certain, that the prophecy, whether these words alone or the book containing them, was delivered to all Judah, and that God moved the people through them to repentance.

The words, as they occur in Jeremiah, are the same, and in the same order, as they stand in Micah. Only in Jeremiah the common plural termination is substituted for the rarer and poetic form used by Micah. The elders, then, who quoted them, probably knew them, not from tradition, but from the written book of the prophet Micah. But those elders speak of Micah, as exercising his prophetic function in the days of Hezekiah. They do not say, "he prophesied," which might have been a single act; but "he was prophesying,"נבא היה *hâyâh nâbâ'* a form of speaking which is only used of an abiding, habitual, action. They say also, "he was habitually prophesying, and he said," i. e., as we should say, "in the course of his prophesying in the days of Hezekiah, he said." Still it was "to all the people of Judah" that he said it. The elders say so, and lay stress upon it by repeating it. "Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to

death?" It must have been then on some of the great festivals, when "all Judah" was gathered together, that Micah so spoke to them.

Probably, shortly afterward, in those first years of Hezekiah, Micah's function on earth closed. For, at the outset and in the summary of his prophecy, not incidentally, he speaks of the destruction of Samaria, which took place in the 4th year of Hezekiah, as still to come; and however practical or partial idolatry continued, such idolatry as he throughout describes, did not exist after the reformation by Hezekiah. This conversion, then, of the king and of some considerable part of Judah was probably the closing harvest of his life, after a long seed-time of tears. So God allowed His servant Micah to "depart in peace." The reformation itself, at least in its fullness, took place after the kingdom of Samaria had come to an end, since Hezekiah's messengers could, unhindered, invite all Israel to join in his great Passover. Probably, then, Micah lived to see the first dawnings only of the first reformation which God wrought by his words.

At the commencement, then, of Hezekiah's reign he collected the substance of what God had taught by him, re-casting it, so to speak, and retaining of his spoken prophecy so much as God willed to remain for us. As it stands, it belongs to that early time of Hezekiah's reign, in which the sins of Ahaz still lived on. Corruption of manners had been hereditary. In Jotham's reign too, it is said expressly, in contrast with himself, "the people were still doing corruptly" 2 Chronicles 27:2. Idolatry had, under Ahaz, received a fanatic impulse from the king, who, at last, set himself to close the worship of God 2 Chronicles 28:22-25; 2 Chronicles 29:7. The strength of Jotham's reign was gone; the yearning for its restoration led to the wrong and destructive policy, against which Isaiah had to contend. Of this Micah says, such should not be the strength of the future kingdom of God. Idolatry and oppression lived on; against these, the inheritance of those former reigns, the sole remainder of Jotham's might or Ahaz' policy, the breach of the law of love of God and man, Micah concentrated his written prophecy.

This book also has remarkable symmetry. Each of its three divisions is a whole, beginning with upbraiding for sin, threatening God's judgments, and ending with promises of future mercy Christ. The two later divisions begin again with that same characteristic, "Hear ye" Micah 2:12, he turns

abruptly, “And I said, Hear, I pray you, Is it not for you to know judgement?” Micah 3:1. The promise had been to “Jacob and the remnant of Israel” Micah 2:12. He renews his summons to the “heads of Jacob” Micah 3:1 and the “princes of the house of Israel.” In like way, the last section, opening with that wonderful pleading of God with His people, follows upon that unbroken declaration of God‘s mercies, which itself issues out of the promised Birth at Bethlehem.

There is also a sort of progress in the promises of the three parts. In the first, it is of deliverance generally, in language taken from that first deliverance from Egypt. The second is objective, the Birth of the Redeemer, the conversion of the Gentiles, the restoration of the Jews, the establishment and nature of His kingdom. The third is mainly subjective man‘s repentance, waiting upon God, and God‘s forgiveness of his sins.

Throughout, the metropolis is chiefly addressed, as the main seat of present evil and as the center of the future blessings; where the reign of the long-promised Ruler should be Micah 4:2, Micah 4:7-8; whence the revelation of God should go forth to the heathen Micah 4:1-2; whither the scattered and dispersed people should be gathered Micah 4:6-7; Micah 7:11-12.

Throughout the prophecy also, Micah upbraids the same class of sins, wrong dealing of man to man, oppression of the poor by the rich. Throughout, their future captivity and dispersion are either predicted, or assumed as the basis of the prediction of good Micah 2:12-13; Micah 4:6-7, Micah 4:10; Micah 7:11-12, Micah 7:15. Throughout, we see the contemporary of the prophet Isaiah. Beside that great prediction, which Isaiah inserted verbally from Micah, we see them, as it were, side by side, in that city of God‘s visitation and of His mercy, prophesying the same respite, the same place of captivity and deliverance from it, the same ulterior mercies in Christ.: “The more to establish the faith, God willed that Isaiah and Micah should speak together, as with one mouth, and use such agreement as might the more convict all rebels.”

Assyria was then the monarchy of the world; yet both prophets promise deliverance from it Isaiah 10:24-34; Isaiah 14:25; Isaiah 30:31; Isaiah 31:8-

9; Isaiah 37:6-7, Isaiah 37:21-35; Micah 5:5-6; both foretell the captivity in the then subordinate Babylon Isaiah 39:6; Micah 4:10; both, the deliverance from it Isaiah 48:20; Micah 4:10. Both speak in the like way of the gathering together of God‘s people from lands (Isaiah 11:11 following; Micah 7:12), to some of which they were not yet dispersed. Isaiah prophesied the Virgin-Birth of Immanuel Isaiah 7:14; Micah, the Birth at Bethlehem of Him “Whose goings fourth have been of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2 English (Micah 5:1 in Hebrew)). Both speak in the like way of the reverence for the Gentiles thereafter for her, by reason of the presence of her God. Even, in outward manner, Micah, representing himself, as one who “went mourning and wailing, stripped and naked” (Micah 1:8, see note), is a sort of forerunner of the symbolic acts of Isaiah (Isaiah 20:2-3).

Micah had this also common with Isaiah, that he has a predominance of comfort. He is brief in upbraiding Micah 1:5; Micah 2:1-2, Micah 2:9-11, indignant in casting back the pleas of the false prophets Micah 2:7, Micah 2:11; Micah 3:5-7, concise in his threatenings of woe Micah 2:3, Micah 2:10; Micah 3:4, Micah 3:12; Micah 6:13-16; Micah 7:4, Micah 7:13, save where he lingers mournfully over the desolation Micah 1:10-16; Micah 2:4-5, large and flowing in his descriptions of mercy to come Micah 4:1-13; Micah 5:1-15; Micah 7:7-20. He sees and pronounces the coming punishment, as absolutely certain; he does not call to repentance to avert it; he knows that ultimately it will not be averted; he sees it irrespectively of time, and says that it will be. Time is an accident to the link of cause and effect. Sin consummated would be the cause; punishment, the effect. He spoke to those who knew that God pardoned on repentance, who had lately had before them that marvelous instance in Nineveh. He dashes to the ground their false security, by reason of their descent from Jacob Micah 2:7, of God‘s Presence among them in the Temple Micah 3:11; the multitude of their offerings amid the multitude of their sins Micah 6:6-7.

He rejects in God‘s name, their false, outward, impenitent, penitence; and thereby the more implies that He would accept a true repentance. They knew this, and were, for a time, scared into penitence. But in his book, as God willed it to remain, he is rather the prophet of God‘s dealings, than the direct preacher of repentance to individuals. Yet he is the more an evangelic

preacher, in that he speaks of repentance, only as the gift of God. He does not ignore that man must accept the grace of God; but, as Isaiah foretells of the days of the Gospel, "the idols He shall utterly abolish" Isaiah 2:18, so Micah first foretells that God would abolish all wherein man relied out of God, all wherein he prided himself Micah 5:9-10, every form of idolatry Micah 5:11-13, and subsequently describes the future evangelic repentance, submission to, and waiting upon God and His righteousness Micah 7:8-9; and God's free plenary forgiveness Micah 7:18-19.

Micah's rapid unprepared transitions from each of his main themes to another, from upbraiding to threatening, from threatening to mercy and then back again to upbraiding, is probably a part of that same vivid perception of the connection of sin, chastisement, forgiveness, in the will and mind of God. He sees them and speaks of them in the natural sequence in which they were exhibited to him. He connects most commonly the sin with the punishment by the one word, therefore (not Micah 1:6; Micah 6:13; but Micah 1:14; Micah 2:3, Micah 2:5; Micah 3:6, Micah 3:12), because it was an object with him to shew the connection. The mercies to come he subjoins either suddenly without any conjunction Micah 2:12; Micah 4:13, or with the simple and. An English reader loses some of the force of this simplicity by the paraphrase, which, for the simple copula, substitutes the inference or contrast, "therefore, then, but, notwithstanding", which lie in the subjects themselves.

An English reader might have been puzzled, at first sight, by the monotonous simplicity of the, and, and, joining together the mention of events, which stand, either as the contrast or the consequence of those which precede them. The English version accordingly has consulted for the reader or hearer, by drawing out for him the contrast or consequence which lay beneath the surface. But this gain of clearness involved giving up so far the majestic simplicity of the Prophet, who at times speaks of things as they lay in the Divine Mind, and as, one by one, they would be unfolded to man, without explaining the relation in which they stood to one another. Micah knew that surfferings were, in God's purpose, travail-pains. And so, immediately after the denunciation of punishment, he adds so calmly, "And in the last days it shall be;" "And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah" (Micah 4:1; Micah 5:2 (Micah 5:1 in Hebrew); add Micah 7:7). Or in the midst of his

descriptions of mercies, he speaks of the intervening troubles, as the way to them. “Now why dost thou cry aloud? - pangs have taken thee, as a woman in travail - be in pain - thou shalt go even unto Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered” Micah 4:9: or, “Therefore will He give thee up until the time, … ” (Micah 5:3 (Micah 5:2 in Hebrew)), i. e., because He has these good things in store for thee, “He will give thee up, until the time” comes.

With this great simplicity Micah unites great vividness and energy. Thus in predicting punishment, he uses the form of command, bidding them, as it were, execute it on themselves; “Arise, depart” (Micah 2:10; add Micah 1:11, Micah 1:13; Micah 4:10): as, in the Great Day, our Lord shall say, “Depart, ye cursed.” And since God does in us or by us what He commands to be done, he uses the imperative to Zion, alike as to her victories over God‘s enemies Micah 4:13, or her state of anxious fear (Micah 5:1 (4:14 in Hebrew)).

To that same vividness belong his rapid changes of person or gender; his sudden questions Micah 1:5; Micah 2:7; Micah 3:1; Micah 4:9; Micah 6:3, Micah 6:6, Micah 6:10-11; Micah 7:18; his unmarked dialogues. The changes of person and gender occur in all Hebrew poetry; all have their emphasis. He addresses the people or place as a whole (feminine), then all the individuals in her (Micah 1:11, twice); or turns away and speaks of it; or contrariwise, having spoken of the whole in the third person, he turns round and drives the warning home to individuals Micah 2:3. The variations in the last verse of Micah 3:10 ((5 words); Micah 6:11 (6 words)), or an energetic announcement of judgment (Micah 5:8; and Micah 7:13 (7 words)) or of mercy (Micah 7:11 (7 words); Micah 7:15 (5 words)), or in that remarkable prophecy of both (Micah 5:13 Hebrew (5 Words); Micah 5:10 (6 words); Micah 5:11 (7 words)), how God would, in mercy, cut off all grounds of human trust. Else, whereas in Nahum and Habakkuk, not quite 13, and in the eleven last Chapters of Hosea much less than 13, of the verses contain more than 13 words, in Micah above 37 (as, in Joel, nearly 37) exceed that number.

His description of the destruction of the cities or villages of Judah corresponds in vividness to Isaiah‘s ideal march of Sennacherib Isaiah 10:28-32. The flame of war spreads from place to place; but Micah relieves

the sameness of the description of misery by every variety which language allows. He speaks of them in his own person (see Micah 1:8, note; Micah 1:10, note), or to them; he describes the calamity in past Micah 1:9-12 or in future Micah 1:8, or by use of the imperative Micah 1:11, Micah 1:13, Micah 1:16. The verbal allusions are crowded together in a way unexampled elsewhere. Moderns have spoken of them, as not after their taste, or have apologized for them. The mighty prophet, who wrought a repentance greater than his great contemporary Isaiah, knew well what would impress the people to whom he spoke. The Hebrew names had definite meanings. We can well imagine how, as name after name passed from the prophet‘s mouth, connected with some note of woe, all around awaited anxiously, to know upon what place the fire of the Prophet‘s word would next fall; and as at last it had fallen upon little and mighty round about Jerusalem, the names of the places would ring in their ears as heralds of the coming woe; they would be like so many monuments, inscribed beforehand with the titles of departed greatness, reminding Jerusalem itself of its portion of the prophecy, that “evil should come from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem” Isaiah 1:12.

Wonderful must have been his lightning-flash of indignation, as, when the false prophet or the people had forbidden God‘s word to be spoken, he burst upon them, “Thou, called house of Jacob, shortened is God‘s Spirit?” Micah 2:7. “Or these His doings?” And then follow the plaintive descriptions of the wrongs done to the poor, the peaceful Micah 2:8-9, the mothers of his people and their little ones. And then again the instantaneous dismissal, “Arise and depart.” Micah 2:10. But, therewith, wonderful also is his tenderness. Burning as are his denunciations against the oppressions of the rich Micah 2:1-2; Micah 3:1-3, Micah 3:9-11; Micah 6:10-12; Micah 7:2-3, (words less vehement will not pierce hearts of stone) there is an under-current of tenderness. His rebukes evince not indignation only against sin, but a tender sympathy with the sufferers Micah 1:8-9; Micah 2:1-2; Micah 7:5-6. He is afflicted in the afflictions which he has to denounce. He yearns for his people Micah 1:8-10, Micah 1:16; Micah 4:9-10; nay, until our Lord‘s coming, there is scarcely an expression of such yearning longing: he hungers and thirsts for their good Micah 7:1.

God‘s individual care of His people, and of each soul in it, had, since David‘s time Psalm 23:1-6 and even since Jacob Genesis 49:24, been likened to the care of the shepherd for each single sheep. The Psalm of Asaph Psalm 74:1; Psalm 78:52; Psalm 79:13; Psalm 80:1 must have familiarized the people to the image, as relating to themselves as a whole, and David‘s deep Psalm had united it with God‘s tender care of His own in, and over, death. Yet the predominance of this image in Micah is a part of the tenderness of the prophet. He adopts it, as expressing, more than any other natural image, the helplessness of the creature, the tender individual care of the Creator. He forestalls our Lord‘s words, “I am the good shepherd,” in his description of the Messiah, gathering “the remnant of Israel together, as the sheep of Bozrah” Micah 2:12; His people are as a flock, “lame and despised” Micah 4:6, whom God would assemble; His royal seat, “the tower of the flock” Micah 4:8; the Ruler of Israel should “stand” unresting, “and feed them” (Micah 5:4. (English 3Hebrew)); those whom He should employ against the enemies of His people, are shepherds” (Micah 5:5, (Micah 5:4 in Hebrew)), under Him, the true shepherd. He sums up his prayer for his people to God as their Shepherd; “Feed Thy people with Thy rod, the flock of Thine heritage” Micah 7:14.

Directly, he was a Prophet for Judah only. At the beginning of his book, he condemns the idolatries of both capitals, as the central sin of the two kingdoms. The destruction of Samaria he pronounces at once, as future, absolutely certain, abiding Micah 1:6-7. There he leaves her, declares her “wound incurable,” and passes immediately to Judah, to whom, he says, that wound should pass, whom that same enemy should reach. Micah 1:9. Thereafter, he mentions incidentally the infection of Israel‘s sin spreading to Judah Micah 1:13. Elsewhere, after that first sentence on Samaria, the names of Jacob (which he had given to the ten tribes Micah 1:5) and Israel are appropriated to the kingdom of Judah: Judah is mentioned no more, only her capital; even her kings are called “the kings of Israel” Micah 1:14. The ten tribes are only included in the general restoration of the whole. The future remnant of the two tribes, to be restored after the captivity of Babylon, are called by themselves “the remnant of Jacob” (Micah 5:7-8, (Micah 5:8-9 in Hebrew)): the Messiah to be born at Bethlehem is foretold as “the ruler in Israel” (Micah 5:2 (Micah 5:1 in Hebrew)): the ten tribes are

called “the remnant of His brethren,” who were to “return to the children of Israel” (Micah 5:3 (Micah 5:2 in Hebrew)), i. e., Judah.

This the more illustrates the genuineness of the inscription. A later hand would have been unlikely to have mentioned either Samaria or those earlier kings of Judah. Each part of the title corresponds to something in the prophecy; the name “Micah” is alluded to at its close; his birthplace, “the Morasthite,” at its beginning; the indications of those earlier reigns lie there, although not on its surface. The mention of the two capitals, followed by the immediate sentence on Samaria, and then by the fuller expansion of the sins and punishment of Jerusalem, culminating in its sentence Micah 3:12, in Micah, corresponds to the brief mention of the punishment of Judah in Amos the prophet of Israel, and then the fuller expansion of the sins and punishments of Israel. Further, the capitals, as the fountains of idolatry, are the primary object of God‘s displeasure. They are both specially denounced in the course of the prophecy; their special overthrow is foretold Micah 1:6, Micah 1:9, Micah 1:12; Micah 3:10-12; Micah 4:10. The title corresponds with the contents of the prophecy, yet the objections of modern critics shew that the correspondence does not lie on the surface.

The taunt of the false priest Amaziah to Amos may in itself suggest that; prophets at Jerusalem did prophesy against Samaria. Amaziah, anyhow, thought it natural that they should. Both Isaiah and Micah, while exercising their office at Jerusalem, had regard also to Samaria. Divided as Israel and Judah were, Israel was not yet cut off. Israel and Judah were still, together, the one people of God. The prophets in each had a care for the other.

Micah joins himself on to the men of God before him, as Isaiah at the time, and Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Ezekiel, subsequently, employed words or thoughts of Micah. Micah alludes to the history, the laws, the promises, the threatenings of the Pentateuch; and that in such wise, that it is plain that he had, not traditional laws or traditional history, but the Pentateuch itself before him. Nor were those books before himself only. His book implies not an acquaintance only, but a familiar acquaintance with it on the part of the people. The title, “the land of Nimrod” (Micah 5:6, (Micah 5:5 in Hebrew) from Genesis 10:8-12), “the house of bondage”, for Egypt, the allusions to the miraculous deliverance from Egypt (see the note

at Micah 2:13; Micah 6:4; Micah 7:15), the history of Balaam; the whole summary of the mercies of God from the Exodus to Gilgal (see the note at Micah 6:4-5) the faithfulness pledged to Abraham and Jacob (see the note at Micah 7:20), would be unintelligible without the knowledge of the Pentateuch. Even single expressions are taken from the Pentateuch.

Especially, the whole sixth chapter is grounded upon it. Thence is the appeal to inanimate nature to hear the controversy; thence the mercies alleged on God‘s part; the offerings on man‘s part to atone to God (except the one dreadful superstition of Ahaz) are from the law; the answer on God‘s part is almost verbally from the law; the sins upbraided are sins forbidden in the law; the penalties pronounced are also those of the law. There are two allusions also to the history of Joshua (see the note at Micah 2:4; Micah 6:5), to David‘s elegy over Saul and Jonathan Micah 1:10, and, as before said, to the history of Micaiah son of Imlah in the Book of Kings. Single expressions are also taken from the Psalms, and the Proverbs. In the descriptions of the peace of the kingdom of Christ Micah 4:3; Joel 3:10, he appears purposely to have reversed God‘s description of the animosity of the nations against God‘s people. He has also two characteristic expressions of Amos. Perhaps, in the image of the darkness which should come on the false prophets Micah 3:6; Amos 8:9, he applied anew the image of Amos, adding the ideas of spiritual darkness and perplexity to that of calamity.

The light and shadows of the prophetic life fell deeply on the soul of Micah. The captivity of Judah too had been foretold before him. Moses had foretold the end from the beginning, had set before them the captivity and the dispersion, as a punishment which the sins of the people would certainly bring upon them. Hosea presupposed it; Amos foretold that Jerusalem, like the cities of its heathen enemies, should be burned with fire Micah 2:5. Micah had to declare its lasting desolation Micah 3:12. Even when God wrought repentance through him, he knew that it was but for a time; for he foresaw and foretold that the deliverance would be, not in Jerusalem, but at Babylon Micah 4:10, in captivity. His prophecy sank so deep, that, above a century afterward, just when it was about to have its fulfillment, it was the prophecy which was remembered. But the sufferings of time disappeared in the light of eternal truth. Above seven centuries rolled by, and Micah re-appears as the herald, not now of sorrow but of salvation. Wise men from

afar, in the nobility of their simple belief, asked, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” A king, jealous for his temporal empire, gathered all those learned in Holy Scripture, and echoed the question. The answer was given, unhesitatingly, as a well-known truth of God, in the words of Micah. “For thus it is written in the Prophet.” Glorious peerage of the two contemporary prophets of Judah. Ere Jesus was born, the Angel announced the birth of the Virgin‘s Son, “God with us,” in the words of Isaiah. When He was born, He was pointed out as the Object of worship to the first converts from the heathen, on the authority of God, through Micah.

MICAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The word of the Lord that came to Micah … which he saw - No two of the prophets authenticate their prophecy in exactly the same way. They, one and all, have the same simple statement to make, that this which they say is from God, and through them. A later hand, had it added the titles, would have formed all upon one model. The title was an essential part of the prophetic book, as indicating to the people afterward, that it was not written after the event. It was a witness, not to the prophet whose name it bears, but to God. The prophet bare witness to God, that what he delivered came from Him. The event bare witness to the prophet, that he said this truly, in that he knew what God alone could know - futurity. Micah blends in one the facts, that he related in words given him by God, what he had seen spread before him in prophetic vision. His prophecy was, in one, "the word of the Lord which came to him," and "a sight which he saw."

Micah omits all mention of his father. His great predecessor was known as Micaiah son of Imlah. Micah, a villager, would be known only by the name of his native village. So Nahum names himself "the Elkoshite;" Jonah is related to be a native "of Gath-hepher;" Elijah, the Tishbite, a sojourner in the despised Gilead 1 Kings 17:1; Elisha, of Abelmeholah; Jeremiah, of Anathoth; forerunners of Him, and taught by His Spirit who willed to be born at Bethlehem, and, since this, although too little to be counted "among the thousands of Judah," was yet a royal city and was to be the birthplace of the Christ, was known only as Jesus of Nazareth, "the Nazarene." No prophet speaks of himself, or is spoken of, as born at Jerusalem, "the holy city." They speak of themselves with titles of lowliness, not of greatness.

Micah dates his prophetic office from kings of Judah only, as the only kings of the line appointed by God. Kings of Israel are mentioned in addition, only by prophets of Israel. He names Samaria first, because, its iniquity being most nearly full, its punishment was the nearest.

Verse 2

Hear, all ye people - Literally, "hear, ye peoples, all of them." Some 140, or 150 years had flowed by, since Micaiah, son of Imlah, had closed his prophecy in these words. And now they burst out anew. From age to age

the word of God holds its course, ever receiving new fulfillments, never dying out, until the end shall come. The signal fulfillment of the prophecy, to which the former Micalah had called attention in these words, was an earnest of the fulfillment of this present message of God.

Hearken, O earth, and all that therein is - The "peoples" or "nations" are never Judah and Israel only: the earth and the fullness thereof is the well-known title of the whole earth and all its inhabitants. Moses Deuteronomy 32:1, Asaph Psalm 50:7, Isaiah Isaiah 1:2, call heaven and earth as witnesses against God's people. Jeremiah, Jeremiah 6:19 as Micah here, summons the nations and the earth. The contest between good and evil, sin and holiness, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, everwhere, but most chiefly where God's Presence is nearest, is "a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men" 1 Corinthians 4:9. The nations are witnesses of God against His own people, so that these should not say, that it was for want of faithfulness or justice or power Exodus 32:12; Numbers 14:16; Joshua 7:8-9, but in His righteous judgment, that He cast off whom He had chosen. So shall the Day of Judgment "reveal His righteousness" Romans 2:5. "Hearken, O earth." The lifeless earth Psalm 114:7; Psalm 97:5 trembles "at the Presence of God," and so reproaches the dullness of man. By it he summons man to listen with great reverence to the Voice of God.

And let the Lord God be witness against you - Not in words, but in deeds ye shall know, that I speak not of myself but God in me, when, what I declare, He shall by His Presence fulfill. But the nations are appealed to, not merely because the judgments of God on Israel should be made known to them by the prophets. He had not yet spoken of Israel or Judah, whereas he had spoken to the nations; "hear, ye peoples." It seems then most likely that here too he is speaking to them. Every judgment is an earnest, a forerunner, a part, of the final judgment and an example of its principles. It is but "the last great link in the chain," which unites God's dealings in time with eternity. God's judgments on one imply a judgment on all. His judgments in time imply a Judgment beyond time. Each sinner feels in his own heart response to God's visible judgments on another. Each sinful nation may read its own doom in the sentence on each other nation.

God judges each according to his own measure of light and grace, accepted or refused. The pagan shall be judged by "the law written in their heart" Romans 2:12-15; the Jew, by the law of Moses and the light of the

prophets; Christians, by the law of Christ. "The word," Christ saith, "that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last Day" John 12:48. God Himself foretold, that the pagan should know the ground of His judgments against His people. "All nations shall say, wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers which He made with them, when He brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, … " Deuteronomy 29:24-25. But in that the pagan knew why God so punished His people, they came so far to know the mind of God; and God, who at no time "left Himself without witness" Acts 14:17, bore fresh "witness" to them, and, so far us they neglected it, against them. A Jew, wherever he is seen throughout the world, is a witness to the world of God's judgments against sin.

Dionysius: "Christ, the faithful Witness, shall witness against those who do ill, for those who do well."

The Lord from His holy temple - Either that at Jerusalem, where God shewed and revealed Himself, or Heaven of which it was the image. As David says, "The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven" Psalm 11:4; and contrasts His dwelling in heaven and His coming down upon earth. "He bowed the heavens also and came down" Psalm 18:9; and Isaiah, in like words, "Behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity" Isaiah 26:21.

Verse 3

For, behold, the Lord comth forth - that is, (as we now say,) "is coming forth." Each day of judgment, and the last also, are ever drawing nigh, noiselessly as the nightfall, but unceasingly. "Out of His Place." Dionysius: "God is hidden from us, except when He sheweth Himself by His Wisdom or Power of Justice or Grace, as Isaiah saith, ‹Verily, Thou art a God who hidest Thyself' Isaiah 45:15." He seemeth to be absent, when He doth not visibly work either in the heart within, or in judgments without; to the ungodly and unbelieving He is absent, "far above out of their sight" Psalm 10:5, when He does not avenge their scoffs, their sins, their irreverence. Again He seemeth to go forth, when His Power is felt. Dionysius: "Whence it is said, ‹Bow Thy heavens, O Lord, and come down' Psalm 144:5; Isaiah 64:1; and the Lord saith of Sodom, ‹I will go down now and see, whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which

is come unto Me‘ Genesis 18:21. Or, the Place of the Infinite God is God Himself. For the Infinite sustaineth Itself, nor doth anything out of Itself contain It. God dwelleth also in light unapproachable 1 Timothy 6:16. When then Almighty God doth not manifest Himself, He abideth, as it were, in ‹His own Place.‘ When He manifests His Power or Wisdom or Justice by their effects, He is said ‹to go forth out of His Place,‘ that is, out of His hiddenness. Again, since the Nature of God is Goodness, it is proper and co-natural to Him, to be propitious, have mercy and spare. In this way, the Place of God is His mercy. When then He passeth from the sweetness of pity to the rigor of equity, and, on account of our sins, sheweth Himself severe (which is, as it were, alien from Him) He goeth forth out of His Place.” Jerome: “For He who is gentle and gracious, and whose Nature it is to have mercy, is constrained, on your account, to take the seeming of hardness, which is not His.”

He comes invisibly now, in that it is He who punisheth, through whatever power or will of man He useth; He shews forth His Holiness through the punishment of unholiness. But the words, which are image-language now, shall be most exactly fulfilled in the end, when, in the Person of our Lord, He shall come visibly to judge the world. Jerome, Theoph.: “In the Day of Judgment, Christ ‹shall come down,‘ according to that Nature which He took, ‹from His Place,‘ the highest heavens, and shall cast down the proud things of this world.”

And will come down - Not by change of place, or in Himself, but as felt in the punishment of sin; and tread upon the high places of the earth; to bring down the pride of those (see Amos 4:13; Job 9:8) who “being lifted up in their own conceit and lofty, sinning through pride and proud through sin, were yet created out of earth. For why is earth and ashes proud?” (2 Corinthians 6:16; Revelation 3:20. But He treadeth upon the proud and the evil, in that He casteth them down, despiseth, condemneth them.”

Verse 4

And the mountains shall be molten under Him - It has been thought that this is imagery, taken from volcanic eruptions; but, although there is a very remarkable volcanic district just outside of Gilead, it is not thought to have been active at times so late as these; nor were the people to whom the words were said, familiar with it. Fire, the real agent at the end of the world, is, meanwhile, the symbol of God‘s anger, as being the most terrible of His instruments of destruction: whence God revealed Himself as a consuming

fire Deuteronomy 4:24, and at this same time said by Isaiah; "For behold, the Lord will come with fire … to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire" Isaiah 66:15.

And the valleys shall be cleft as wax before the fire - It seems natural that the mountains should be cleft; but the valleys, so low already! This speaks of a yet deeper dissolution; of lower depths beyond our sight or knowledge, into the very heart of the earth. Sanch.: "This should they fear, who will to be so low; who, so far from lifting themselves to heavenly things, pour out their affections on things of earth, meditate on and love earthly things, and forgetful of the heavenly, choose to fix their eyes on earth. These the wide gaping of the earth which they loved, shall swallow: to them the cleft valleys shall open an everlasting sepulchre, and, having received them, shall never part with them."

Highest and lowest, first and last, shall perish before Him. The pride of the highest, kings and princes, priests and judges, shall sink and melt away beneath the weight and Majesty of His glory; the hardness of the lowest, which would not open itself to Him, shall be cleft in twain before Him.

As wax before the fire - (See Psalm 97:5), melting away before Him by whom they were not softened, vanishing into nothingness. Metals melt, changing their form only; wax, so as to cease to be.

As the waters poured down - (As a stream or cataract, so the word means.)

A steep place - Down to the very edge, it is borne along, one strong, smooth, unbroken current; then, at once, it seems to gather its strength, for one great effort. But to what end? To fall, with the greater force, headlong, scattered in spray, foam and froth; dissipated, at times, into vapor, or reeling in giddy eddies, never to return. In Judea, where the autumn rains set in with great vehemence, the waters must have been often seen pouring in their little tumultuous brooklets down the mountain side, hastening to disappear, and disappearing the faster, the more vehemently they rolled along. Both images exhibit the inward emptiness of sinners, man's utter helplessness before God. They need no outward impulse to their destruction. Jerome: "Wax endureth not the nearness of the fire, and the waters are carried headlong. So all of the ungodly, when the Lord cometh, shall be dissolved and disappear." At the end of the world, they shall be gathered into bundles, and cast away.

Verse 5

For the transgression of Jacob is all this - Not for any change of purpose in God; nor, again, as the effect of man‘s lust of conquest. None could have any power against God‘s people, unless it had been given him by God. Those mighty monarchies of old existed but as God‘s instruments, especially toward His own people. God said at this time of Assyria Isaiah 10:5, Asshur rod of Mine anger, and the staff in his hand is Mine indignation; and Isaiah 37:26, Now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defensed cities into ruinous heaps. Each scourge of God chastised just those nations, which God willed him to chasten; but the especial object for which each was raised up was his mission against that people, in whom God most showed His mercies and His judgments Isaiah 10:6. I will send him against an ungodly nation and against the people of My wrath will I give him a charge.

Jacob and Israel, in this place, comprise alike the ten tribes and the two. They still bare the name of their father, who, wrestling with the Angel, became a prince with God, whom they forgat. The name of Jacob then, as of Christian now, stamped as deserters, those who did not the deeds of their father. “What, (rather who) is the transgression of Jacob?” Who is its cause? In whom does it lie? Is it not Samaria? The metropolis must, in its own nature, be the source of good or evil to the land. It is the heart whose pulses beat throughout the whole system. As the seat of power, the residence of justice or injustice, the place of counsel, the concentration of wealth, which all the most influential of the land visit for their several occasions, its manners penetrate in a degree the utmost corners of the land. Corrupted, it becomes a focus of corruption. The blood passes through it, not to be purified, but to be diseased. Samaria, being founded on apostasy, owing its being to rebellion against God, the home of that policy which set up a rival system of worship to His forbidden by Him, became a fountain of evil, whence the stream of ungodliness overflowed the land. It became the impersonation of the people‘s sin, “the heart and the head of the body of sin.”

And what - Literally, who (מי) always relates to a personal object, and apparent exceptions may be reduced to this. So Ae. Kim. Tanch. Pococke.

Are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem? - Jerusalem God had formed to be a center of unity in holiness; the tribes of the Lord were to go up there to the testimony of Israel; there was the unceasing worship of God, the morning and evening sacrifice; the Feasts, the

memorials of past miraculous mercies, the foreshadowings of redemption. But there too Satan placed his throne. Ahaz brought thither that most hateful idolatry, the burning children to Moloch in the valley of the son of Hinnom 2 Chronicles 28:3. There 2 Chronicles 28:24, he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. Thence, he extended the idolatry to all Judah 2 Chronicles 28:25. And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the Lord God of his fathers. Hezekiah, in his reformation, with all Israel 2 Chronicles 31:1, went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces and bowed down the statues of Asherah, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, as much as out of Ephraim and Manasseh. Nay, by a perverse interchange, Ahaz took the Brazen Altar, consecrated to God, for his own divinations, and assigned to the worship of God the altar copied from the idol-altar at Damascus, whose fashion pleased his taste 2 Kings 16:10-16.

Since God and mammon cannot be served together, Jerusalem was become one great idol-temple, in which Judah brought its sin into the very face of God and of His worship. The Holy City had itself become sin, and the fountain of unholiness. The one temple of God was the single protest against the idolatries which encompased and besieged it; the incense went up to God, morning and evening, from it; from every head of every street of the city Ezekiel 16:31; 2 Chronicles 28:24, and (since Ahaz had brought in the worship of Baalim 2 Chronicles 28:2, and the rites of idolatry continued the same,) from the roofs of all their houses Jeremiah 32:29, went up the incense to Baal; a worship which, denying the Unity, denied the Being of God.

Verse 6

Therefore - (literally, "And") I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard Jerome: "The order of the sin was the order or the punishment." Samaria's sins were the earliest, the most obstinate, the most unbroken, bound up with its being as a state. On it then God's judgments should first fall. It was a crown of pride Isaiah 28:1, resting on the head of the rich valleys, out of which it rose. Its soil is still rich. "The whole is now cultivated in terraces", "to the summits". Probably, since the sides of hills, open to the sun, were chosen for vineyards, it had been a vineyard, before Shemer sold it to Omri 1 Kings 16:24. What it had

been, that it was again to be. Its inhabitants cast forth, its houses and gorgeous palaces were to become heaps of stones, gathered out Isaiah 5:2 to make way for cultivation, or to become the fences of the vegetation, which should succeed to man.

There is scarce a sadder natural sight than the fragments of human habitation, tokens of man‘s labor or his luxury, amid the rich beauty of nature when man himself is gone. For they are tracks of sin and punishment, man‘s rebellion and God‘s judgment, man‘s unworthiness of the good natural gifts of God. A century or two ago, travelers “speak of the ground (the site of Samaria) as strewed with masses of ruins.” Now these too are gone.: “The stones of the temples and palaces of Samaria have been carefully removed from the rich soil, thrown together in heaps, built up in the rude walls of terraces, and rolled down into the valley below.”: “About midway of the ascent, the hill is surrounded by a narrow terrace of woodland like a belt. Higher up too are the marks of slighter terraces, once occupied perhaps by the streets of the ancient city.” Terrace-cultivation has succeeded to the terraced streets once thronged by the busy, luxurious, sinful, population.

And I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley - Of which it was the crest, and which it now proudly surveyed. God Himself would cause it to be poured down (he uses the word which he had just used of the vehemence of the cataract Micah 1:4).: “The whole face of this part of the hill suggests the idea that the, buildings of the ancient city had been thrown down from the brow of the hill. Ascending to the top, we went round the whole summit, and found marks of the same process everywhere.”

And I will discover the foundations thereof - The desolation is entire; not one stone left upon another. Yet the very words of threatening contain hope. It was to be not a heap only, but the plantings of a vineyard. The heaps betoken ruin; the vineyard, fruitfulness cared for by God. Destroyed, as what it was, and turned upside down, as a vineyard by the share, it should become again what God made it and willed it to be. It should again become a rich valley, but in outward desolation. Its splendid palaces, its idol temples, its houses of joy, should be but heaps and ruins, which are cleared away out of a vineyard, as only choking it. It was built in rebellion and schism, loose and not held together, like a heap of stones, having no cement of love, rent and torn in itself, having been torn both from God and His worship. It could be remade only by being wholly unmade. Then should

they who believed be branches grafted in Him who said, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches" John 15:5.

Verse 7

And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces - Its idols in whom she trusts, so far from protecting her, shall themselves go into captivity, broken up for the gold and silver whereof they were made. The wars of the Assyrians being religious wars, the idolatry of Assyria destroyed the idolatry and idols of Israel.

And all the hires thereof shall be burned with fire - All forsaking of God being spiritual fornication from Him who made His creatures for Himself, the hires are all which man would gain by that desertion of his God, employed in man's contact with his idols, whether as bribing his idols to give him what are the gifts of God, or as himself bribed by them. For there is no pure service, save that of the love of God. God alone can be loved purely, for Himself; offerings to Him alone are the creature's pure homage to the Creator, going out of itself, not looking back to itself, not seeking itself, but stretching forth to Him and seeking Him for Himself. Whatever man gives to or hopes from his idols, man himself is alike his object in both. The hire then is, alike what he gives to his idols, the gold whereof he makes his Baal, the offerings which the pagan used to lay up in their temples, and what, as he thought, he himself received back. For he gave only earthly things, in order to receive back things of earth. He hired their service to him, and his earthly gains were his hire. It is a strong mockery in the mouth of God, that they had these things from their idols. He speaks to them after their thoughts. Yet it is true that, although God overrules all, man does receive from Satan Matthew 4:9, the god of this world 2 Corinthians 4:4, all which he gains amiss. It is the price for which he sells his soul and profanes himself. Yet herein were the pagan more religious than the Christian worldling. The pagan did offer an ignorant service to they knew not what. Our idolatry of mammon, as being less abstract, is more evident self-worship, a more visible ignoring and so a more open dethroning of God, a worship of a material prosperity, of which we seem ourselves to be the authors, and to which we habitually immolate the souls of men, so habitually that we have ceased to be conscious of it.

And all the idols thereof will I lay desolate - Literally, "make a desolation." They, now thronged by their worshipers, should be deserted; their place and temple, a waste. He thrice repeats all; all her graven images,

all her hires, all her idols; all should be destroyed. He subjoins a threefold destruction which should overtake them; so that, while the Assyrian broke and carried off the more precious, or burned what could be burned, and, what could not be burned, nor was worth transporting, should be left desolate, all should come to an end. He sets the whole the more vividly before the mind; exhibiting to us so many separate pictures of the mode of destruction.

For from the hire of a harlot she gathered them, and to the hire of a harlot they shall return - Jerome: "The wealth and manifold provision which (as she thought) were gained by fornication with her idols, shall go to another harlot, Nineveh; so that, as they went a whoring in their own land, they should go to another land of idols and fornication, the Assyrians." They Romans 1:23 turned their glory into shame, changing the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man; and so it should turn to them into shame. It sprung out of their shame, and should turn to it again. "Ill got, ill spent." Evil gain, cursed in its origin, has the curse of God upon it, and makes its gainer a curse, and ends accursedly. "Make not ill gains," says even a pagan. (H. 354. L), "ill gains are equal to losses;" and another, "Unlawful sweetness a most bitter end awaiteth."

Probably, the most literal sense is not to be excluded. The degrading idolatrous custom, related of Babylon and Cyprus, still continued among the Babylonians at the date of the book of Baruch (Deuteronomy 23:18; and, in the time of Hosea self-desecration was an idolatrous rite in Israel. In the day of Judgment, when the foundation of those who build their house upon the sand, shall be laid bare, the riches which they gained unlawfully shall be burned up; all the idols, which they set up instead of God, "the vain thoughts, and useless fancies, and hurtful forms and images which they picture in their mind, defiling it, and hindering it from the steadfast contemplation of divine things, will be punished. They were the hire of the soul which went astray from God, and they who conceived them will, with them, become the prey again of that infernal host which is unceasingly turned from God."

Verse 8

Therefore I will - Therefore I would

Wail - (properly, beat, that is, on the breast).

And howl - "Let me alone," he would say, "that I may vent my sorrow in all ways of expressing sorrow, beating on the breast and wailing, using all acts and sounds of grief." It is as we would say, "Let me mourn on," a mourning inexhaustible, because the woe too and the cause of grief was unceasing. The prophet becomes in words, probably in acts too, an image of his people, doing as they should do hereafter. He mourns, because and as they would have to mourn, bearing chastisement, bereft of all outward comeliness, an example also of repentance, since what he did were the chief outward tokens of mourning.

I will (would) go stripped - despoiled.

And naked - He explains the acts, that they represented no mere voluntary mourning. Not only would he, representing them, go bared of all garments of beauty, as we say "half-naked" but despoiled also, the proper term of those plundered and stripped by an enemy. He speaks of his doing, what we know that Isaiah did, by God's command, representing in act what his people should thereafter do.: "Wouldest thou that I should weep, thou must thyself grieve the first." Micah doubtless went about, not speaking only of grief, but grieving, in the habit of one mourning and bereft of all. He prolongs in these words the voice of wailing, choosing unaccustomed forms of words, to carry on the sound of grief.

I will make a wailing like the dragons - (jackals).

And mourning as the owls - (ostriches). The cry of both, as heard at night, is very piteous. Both are doleful creatures, dwelling in desert and lonely places. "The jackals make a lamentable howling noise, so that travelers unacquainted with them would think that a company of people, women or children, were howling, one to another."

"Its howl," says an Arabic natural historian, "is like the crying of an infant." "We heard them," says another, "through the night, wandering around the villages, with a continual, prolonged, mournful cry." The ostrich, forsaking its young Job 39:16, is an image of bereavement. Jerome: "As the ostrich forgets her eggs and leaves them as though they were not her's, to be trampled by the feet of wild beasts, so too shall I go childless, spoiled and naked." Its screech is spoken of by travelers as "fearful, aftrighting.": "During the lonesome part of the night they often make a doleful and piteous noise. I have often heard them groan, as if they were in the greatest agonies."

Dionysius: "I will grieve from the heart over those who perish, mourning for the hardness of the ungodly, as the Apostle had Romans 9:1 great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart for his brethren, the impenitent and unbelieving Jews. Again he saith, "who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" 2 Corinthians 11:29. For by how much the soul is nobler than the body, and by how much eternal damnation is heavier than any temporal punishment, so much more vehemently should we grieve and weep for the peril and perpetual damnation of souls, than for bodily sickness or any temporal evil."

Verse 9

For her - Samaria's

Wound - o(literally, her wounds, or strokes, (the word is used especially of those inflicted by God, (Leviticus 26:21; Numbers 11:33; Deuteronomy 28:59, Deuteronomy 28:61, etc.) each, one by one,) is incurable The idiom is used of inflictions on the body politic (Jeremiah 30:12, Jeremiah 30:15) or the mind, for which there is no remedy. The wounds were very sick, or incurable, not in themselves or on God's part, but on Israel's. The day of grace passes away at last, when man has so steeled himself against grace, as to be morally dead, having deadened himself to all capacity of repentance.

For it is come unto - (quite up to) Judah; he, (the enemy,) is come (literally, hath reached, touched,) to (quite up to) the gate of my people, even to (quite up to) Jerusalem Jerome: "The same sin, yea, the same punishment for sin, which overthrew Samaria, shall even come unto, quite up to Judah. Then the prophet suddenly changes the gender, and, as Scripture so often does, speaks of the one agent, the center and impersonation of the coming evil, as sweeping on over Judah, quite up to the gate of his people, quite up to Jerusalem. He does not say here, whether Jerusalem would be taken; and so, it seems likely that he speaks of a calamity short of excision. Of Israel's wounds only he here says, that they are incurable; he describes the wasting of even lesser places near or beyond Jerusalem, the flight of their inhabitants. Of the capital itself he is silent, except that the enemy reached, touched, struck against it, quite up to it. Probably, then, he is here describing the first visitation of God, when 2 Kings 18:13 Sennacherib came up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them, but Jerusalem was spared. God's judgments come step by step, leaving time for repentance. The same enemy, although not the same king,

came against Jerusalem who had wasted Samaria. Samaria was probably as strong as Jerusalem. Hezekiah prayed; God heard, the Assyrian army perished by miracle; Jerusalem was respited for 124 years.

Verse 10

Tell it not in Gath - Gath had probably now ceased to be; at least, to be of any account. It shows how David‘s elegy lived in the hearts of Judah, that his words are used as a proverb, (just as we do now, in whose ears it is yearly read), when, as with us, its original application was probably lost. True, Gath, reduced itself, might rejoice the more maliciously over the sufferings of Judah. But David mentions it as a chief seat of Philistine strength; now its strength was gone.

The blaspheming of the enemies of God is the sorest part of His chastisements. Whence David prays “let not mine enemies exult over me” Psalm 25:2; and the sons of Korah, “With a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me, while they say daily unto me, where is thy God?” Psalm 42:10; and Ethan; “Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice. Remember, Lord, the reproach of Thy servant” Psalm 89:42, Psalm 89:50 - wherewith Thine enemies have reproached, O Lord, wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of Thine anointed. It is hard to part with home, with country, to see all desolate, which one ever loved. But far, far above all, is it, if, in the disgrace and desolation, God‘s honor seems to be injured. The Jewish people was then God‘s only home on earth. If it could be extinguished, who remained to honor Him? Victories over them seemed to their pagan neighbors to be victories over Him. He seemed to be dishonored without, because they had first dishonored Him within. Sore is it to the Christian, to see God‘s cause hindered, His kingdom narrowed, the empire of infidelity advanced. Sorer in one way, because he knows the price of souls, for whom Jesus died. But the world is now the Church‘s home. “The holy church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee!” Then, it was girt in within a few miles of territory, and sad indeed it must have been to the prophet, to see this too hemmed in. Tell it not in Gath, to the sons of those who, of old, defied God.

Weep not at all - (Literally, weeping, weep not). Weeping is the stillest expression of grief. We speak of “weeping in silence.” Yet this also was too visible a token of grief. Their weeping would be the joy and laughter of God‘s enemies.

In the house of Aphrah - (probably, In Beth-leaphrah) roll thyself in the dust (Better, as the text, I roll myself in dust). The prophet chose unusual names, such as would associate themselves with the meanings which he wished to convey, so that thence forth the name itself might recall the prophecy. As if we were to say, "In Ashe I roll myself in ashes." - There was an Aphrah near Jerusalem. It is more likely that Micah should refer to this, than to the Ophrah in Benjamin Joshua 18:23; 1 Samuel 13:17. He showed them, in his own person, how they should mourn, retired out of sight and hidden, as it were, in the dust. Jer. Rup.: "Whatever grief your heart may have, let your face have no tears; go not forth, but, in the house of dust, sprinkle thyself with the ashes of its ruins."

All the places thenceforth spoken of were in Judah, whose sorrow and desolation are repeated in all. It is one varied history of sorrow: The names of her cities, whether in themselves called from some gifts of God, as Shaphir, (beautiful; we have Fairford, Fairfield, Fairburn, Fairlight,) or contrariwise from some defect, Maroth, Bitterness (probably from brackish water) Achzib, lying, (doubtless from a winter-torrent which in summer failed) suggest, either in contrast or by themselves, some note of evil and woe. It is Judah's history in all, given in different traits; her "beauty" turned into shame; herself free neither to go forth nor to "abide;" looking for good and finding evil; the strong (Lachish) strong only to flee; like a brook that fails and deceives; her inheritance (Mareshah) inherited; herself, taking refuge in dens and caves of the earth, yet even there found, and bereft of her glory. Whence, in the end, without naming Judah, the prophet sums up her sorrows with one call to mourning.

Verse 11

Pass ye away - (literally, Pass thou (fem.) away to or for yourselves), disregarded by God and despised by man) pass the bounds of your land into captivity.

Thou inhabitant of Shaphir, having thy shame naked - better, in nakedness, and shame. Shaphir (fair) was a village in Judah, between Eleutheropolis and Ashkelon (Onomasticon). There are still, in the Shephelah, two villages called Sawafir. It, once fair, should now go forth in the disgrace and dishonor with which captives were led away.

The inhabitants of Zaanan came not forth - Zaanan (abounding in flocks) was probably the same as Zenan of Judah, which lay in the

Shephelah. It, which formerly went forth in pastoral gladness with the multitude of its flocks, shall now shrink into itself for fear.

The mourning of Beth-Ezel - (literally, house of root, firmly rooted) shall take from you its standings It too cannot help itself, much less be a stay to others. They who have been accustomed to go forth in fullness, shall not go forth then, and they who abide, strong though they be, shall not furnish an abiding place. Neither in going out nor in remaining, shall anything be secure then.

Verse 12

For the inhabitant of Maroth - (bitterness) waited carefully for good She waited carefully for the good which God gives, not for the Good which God is. She looked, longed for, good, as men do; but therewith her longing ended. She longed for it, amid her own evil, which brought God‘s judgments upon her. Maroth is mentioned here only in Holy Scripture, and has not been identified. It too was probably selected for its meaning. The inhabitant of bitternesses, she, to whom bitternesses, or, it may be, rebellions, were as the home in which she dwelt, which ever encircled her, in which she reposed, wherein she spent her life, waited for good! Strange contradiction! yet a contradiction, which the whole un-Christian world is continually en acting; nay, from which Christians have often to be awakened, to look for good to themselves, nay, to pray for temporal good, while living in bitternesses, bitter ways, displeasing to God. The words are calculated to be a religious proverb. “Living in sin,” as we say, dwelling in bitternesses, she looked for good! Bitternesses! for it is Jeremiah 2:19 an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that My fear is not in thee.

But evil came down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem - It came, like the sulphur and fire which God rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah, but as yet to the gate of Jerusalem, not upon itself.: “Evil came down upon them from the Lord, that is, I was grieved, I chastened, I brought the Assyrian upon them, and from My anger came this affliction upon them. But it was removed, My Hand prevailing and marvelously rescuing those who worshiped My Majesty. For the trouble shall come to the gate. But we know that Rabshakeh, with many horsemen, came to Jerusalem and all-but touched the gates. But he took it not. For in one night the Assyrian was consumed.” The two for‘s are seemingly coordinate, and assign the reasons of the foreannounced evils, Micah 1:3-11 on man‘s part

and on God‘s part. On man‘s part, in that he looked for what could not so come, good: on God‘s part, in that evil, which alone could be looked for, which, amid man‘s evil, could alone be good for man, came from Him. Losing the true Good, man lost all other good, and dwelling in the bitterness of sin and provocation, he dwelt indeed in bitterness of trouble.

Verse 13

O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the swift beast - (steed.) Lachish was always a strong city, as its name probably denoted, (probably “compact.” It was one of the royal cities of the Amorites, and its king one of the five, who went out to battle with Joshua Joshua 10:3. It lay in the low country, Shephelah, of Judah Joshua 15:33, Joshua 15:39, between Adoraim and Azekah 2 Chronicles 11:9, 2 Chronicles 11:7 Roman miles south of Eleutheropolis (Onomasticon), and so, probably, close to the hill-country, although on the plain; partaking perhaps of the advantages of both. Rehoboam fortified it. Amaziah fled to it from the conspiracy at Jerusalem 2 Kings 14:19, as a place of strength. It, with Azekah, alone remained, when Nebuchadnezzar had taken the rest, just before the capture of Jerusalem Jeremiah 34:7. When Sennacherib took all the defensed cities of Judah, it seems to have been his last and proudest conquest, for from it he sent his contemptuous message to Hezekiah Isaiah 36:1-2.

The whole power of the great king seems to have been called forth to take this stronghold. The Assyrian bas-reliefs, the record of the conquests of Sennacherib, if (as the accompanying inscription is deciphered), they represent the taking of Lachish, exhibit it as “a city of great extent and importance, defended by double walls with battlements and towers, and by fortified riggings. In no other sculptures were so many armed warriors drawn up in array against a besieged city. Against the fortifications had been thrown up as many as ten banks or mounts compactly built - and seven battering-rams had already been rolled up against the walls.” Its situation, on the extremity probably of the plain, fitted it for a depot of cavalry. The swift steeds, to which it was bidden to bind the chariot, are mentioned as part of the magnificence of Solomon, as distinct from his ordinary horses (1 Kings 4:28, English (1 Kings 5:8 in Hebrew)). They were used by the posts of the king of Persia Esther 8:10, Esther 8:14.

They were doubtless part of the strength of the kings of Judah, the cavalry in which their statesmen trusted, instead of God. Now, its swift

horses in which it prided itself should avail but to flee. Probably, it is an ideal picture. Lachish is bidden to bind its chariots to horses of the utmost speed, which should carry them far away, if their strength were equal to their swiftness. It had great need; for it was subjected under Sennacherib to the consequences of Assyrian conquest. If the Assyrian accounts relate to its capture, impalement and flaying alive were among the tortures of the captive-people; and awfully did Sennacherib, in his pride, avenge the sins against God whom he disbelieved.

She is the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion - Jerome: "She was at the gate through which the transgressions of Israel flooded Judah." How she came first to apostatise and to be the infectress of Judah, Scripture does not tell us. She scarcely bordered on Philistia; Jerusalem lay between her and Israel. But the course of sin follows no geographical lines. It was the greater sin to Lachish that she, locally so far removed from Israel‘s sin, was the first to import into Judah the idolatries of Israel. Scripture does not say, what seduced Lachish herself, whether the pride of military strength, or her importance, or commercial intercourse, for her swift steeds; with Egypt, the common parent of Israel‘s and her sin. Scripture does not give the genealogy of her sin, but stamps her as the heresiarch of Judah. We know the fact from this place only, that she, apparently so removed from the occasion of sin, became, like the propagators of heresy, the authoress of evil, the cause of countless loss of souls. Beginning of sin to -, what a world of evil lies in the three words!

Verse 14

Therefore shalt thou give - (bridal) presents to Moresheth Gath Therefore! since Judah had so become a partaker of Israel‘s sins, she had broken the covenant, whereby God had given her the land of the pagan, and she should part with it to aliens. The bridal presents, literally the dismissals, were the dowry 1 Kings 9:16 with which the father sent away Judges 12:9 his daughter, to belong to another, her lord or husband, never more to return. Moresheth, (literally, inheritance,) the inheritance which God gave her, was to be parted with; she was to be laden with gifts to the enemy. Judah should part with her, and her own treasure also.

The houses of Achzib shall be a lie - Achzib, so called probably from a winter brook, achzab, was to become what its name imported, a resource which should fail just in the time of need, as the winter brooks in the drought of summer. "Wilt Thou be unto me as a failing brook, waters which

are not sure?" Jeremiah 15:18. This Achzib, which is recounted between Keilah and Mareshah Joshua 15:44, was probably one of, the oldest towns of Palestine being mentioned in the history of the Patriarch Judah. After having survived about 1,000 years, it should, in time of need, fail. The kings of Israel are here the kings of Judah. When this prophecy was to be accomplished, the ten tribes would have ceased to have any political existence, the remnant in their own lanai would have no head to look to, except the line of David, whose good kings had a care for them. Micah then, having prophesied the utter destruction of Samaria, speaks in accordance with the state of things which he foresaw and foretold.

Verse 15

Yet will I bring an heir - (the heir, him whom God had appointed to be the heir, Sennacherib) unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah Mareshah, (as the original form of its name denotes, lay on the summit of a hill. "Its ruins only were still seen," in the time of Eusebius and Jerome, "in the second mile from Eleutheropolis" (Onomasticon).: "Foundations still remain on the south-eastern part of the remarkable Tell, south of Beth-Jibrin." Rehoboam fortified it also 2 Chronicles 11:8. Zerah the Aethiopian had come to (2 Chronicles 14:9 ff) it, probably to besiege it, when Asa met him, and God smote the AEthiopians before him, in the valley of Zephathah thereat. In the wars of the Maccabees, it was in the hands of the Edomites. Its capture and that of Adora are mentioned as the last act of the war, before the Edomites submitted to John Hyrcanus, and were incorporated in Israel. It was a powerful city, when the Parthians took it. As Micah writes the name, it looked nearer to the word "inheritance." Mareshah (inheritance) shall yet have the heir of God's appointment, the enemy. It shall not inherit the land, as promised to the faithful, but shall itself be inherited, its people dispossessed. While it, (and so also the soul now) held fast to God, they were the heritage of the Lord, by His gifts and grace; when, of their own free-will, those, once God's heritage, become slaves of sin, they passed and still pass, against their will, into the possession of another master, the Assyrian or Satan.

He (that is, the heir, the enemy) shall come unto Adullam, the glory of Israel - . that is, he who shall dispossess Mareshah, shall come quite unto Adullam, where, as in a place of safety, the glory of Israel, all in which she gloried, should be laid up. Adullum was a very ancient city, being mentioned in the history of the patriarch Judah Genesis 38:1, Genesis

38:12, Genesis 38:20, a royal city Joshua 12:15. It too lay in the Shephelah Joshua 15:35; it was said to be 10 (Eusebius) or 12 (Jerome) miles East of Eleutheropolis; but for this, there seems to be scarcely place in the Shephelah. It was one of the 15 cities fortified by Rehoboam 2 Chronicles 11:7; one of the 16 towns, in which (with their dependent villages) Judah settled after the captivity Nehemiah 11:30. It contained the whole army of Judas Maccabaeus (1 Maccabees 12:38).

Like Lachish, it had probably the double advantages of the neighborhood of the hills and of the plain, seated perhaps at the roots of the hills, since near it doubtless was the large cave of Adullam named from it. The line of caves, fit for human habitation, which extended from Eleutheropolis to Petra, began westward of it.: "The valley which runs up from Eleutheropolis Eastward, is full of large caves; some would hold thousands of men. They are very extensive, and some of them had evidently been inhabited.": "The outer chamber of one cavern was 270 feet long by 126 wide; and behind this were recesses and galleries, probably leading to other chambers which we could not explore. The massive roof was supported by misshaped pieces of the native limestone left for that purpose, and at some places was domed quite through to the surface, admitting both light and air by the roof." The name of Adullam suggested the memory of that cave, the refuge of the Patriarch David, the first of their line of kings, in extreme isolation and peril of his life. There, the refuge now of the remaining glory of Israel, its wealth, its trust, its boast - the foe should come. And so there only remained one common dirge for all.

sa40

Verse 16

Make thee bald, poll - (literally, shear thee for thy delicate children Some special ways of cutting the hair were forbidden to the Israelites, as being idolatrous customs, such as the rounding the hair in front, cutting it away from the temples, or between the eyes Deuteronomy 14:1. All shearing of the hair was not forbidden; indeed to the Nazarite it was commanded, at the close of his vow. The removal of that chief ornament of the countenance wasa natural expression of grief, which revolts at all personal appearance. It belonged, not to idolatry, but to nature. "Thy delicate children." The change was the more bitter for those tended and brought up delicately. Moses from the first spoke of special miseries which should fall on the tender and very delicate. "Enlarge thy baldness;" outdo in

grief what others do; for the cause of thy grief is more than that of others. The point of comparison in the Eagle might either be the actual baldness of the head, or its moulting. If it were the baldness of the head, the word translated eagle Unless *nesher* be the golden Eagle there is no Hebrew name for it, whereas it is still a bird of Palestine, and smaller eagles are mentioned in the same verse, Leviticus 11:13; namely, the ossifrage, פרס, and the black eagle, עזניה, so called from its strength, like the valeria, of which Pliny says, "the melanaetos or valeria, least in size, remarkable for strength, blackish in color." x. 3. The same lint of unclean birds contains also the vulture, דיה, Deuteronomy 14:13, (as it must be, being a gregarious bird, Isaiah 34:15) in its different species Deuteronomy 14:13 the *gier-eagle*, (that is, Geyer) (vulture) eagle *gypaetos*, or *vultur percnopterus*, (Hasselquist, Forskal, Shaw, Bruce in Savigny p. 77.) partaking of the character of both, (רהם Leviticus 11:18; Deuteronomy 14:17 together with the *falcon* (דאה Leviticus 11:14 and *hawk*, with its subordinate species, (למינהו נץ) Leviticus 11:18; Deuteronomy 14:15.), although mostly used of the Eagle itself, might here comprehend the Vulture. For entire baldness is so marked a feature in the vulture, whereas the "bald-headed Eagle" was probably not a bird of Palestine. On the other hand, David, who lived so long among the rocks of Palestine, and Isaiah seem to have known of effects of moulting upon the Eagle in producing, (although in a less degree than in other birds,) a temporary diminution of strength, which have not in modern times been commonly observed.

For David says, "Thou shalt renew, like the eagle, thy youth, which speaks of fresh strength after temporary weakness" Psalm 103:5; and Isaiah, "They that trust in the Lord shall put forth fresh strength; they shall put forth pinion-feathers like eagles" Isaiah 40:31, comparing the fresh strength which should succeed to that which was gone, to the eagle‘s recovering its strong pinion-feathers. Bochart however says unhesitatingly, "At the beginning of spring, the rapacious birds are subject to shedding of their feathers which we call moulting." If this be so, the comparison is yet more vivid, For the baldness of the vulture belongs to its matured strength, and could only be an external likeness. The moulting of the eagle involves some degree of weakness, with which he compares Judah‘s mournful and weak condition amid the loss of their children, gone into captivity.

Thus closes the first general portion of the prophecy. The people had east aside its own Glory, God; now its sons, its pride and its trust, shall go away from it.

Lap.: “The eagle, laying aside its old feathers and taking new, is a symbol of penitence and of the penitents who lay aside their former evil habits, and become other and new men. True, but rare form of penitence!” Gregory the Great thus applies this to the siege of Rome by the Lombards.: “That happened to her which we know to have been foretold of Judea by the prophet, enlarge thy baldness like the eagle. For baldness befalls man in the head only, but the eagle in its whole body; for, when it is very old, its feathers and pinions fall from all its body. She lost her feathers, who lost her people. Her pinions too fell out, with which she was accustomed to fly to the prey; for all her mighty men, through whom she plundered others, perished. But this which we speak of, the breaking to pieces of the city of Rome, we know has been done in all the cities of the world. Some were desolated by pestilence, others devoured by the sword, others racked by famine, others swallowed by earthquakes. Despise we them with our whole heart, at least, when brought to nought; at least with the end of the world, let us end our eagerness after the world. Follow we, wherein we can, the deeds of the good.” One whose commentaries Jerome had read, thus applies this verse to the whole human race. “O soul of man! O city, once the mother of saints, which wast formerly in Paradise, and didst enjoy the delights of different trees, and wast adorned most beautifully, now being east down from thy place aloft, and brought down unto Babylon, and come into a place of captivity, and having lost thy glory, make thee bald and take the habit of a penitent; and thou who didst fly aloft like an eagle, mourn thy sons, thy offspring, which from thee is led captive.”

MICAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

The prophet had declared that evil should come down on Samaria and Jerusalem for their sins. He had pronounced them sinners against God; he now speaks of their hard unlovingness toward man, as our Blessed Lord in the Gospel speaks of sins against Himself in His members, as the ground of the condemnation of the wicked. The time of warning is past. He speaks as in the person of the Judge, declaring the righteous judgments of God, pronouncing sentence on the hardened, but blessing on those who follow Christ. The sins thus visited were done with a high hand; first, with forethought:

Woe - All woe, woe from God; "the woe of temporal captivity; and, unless ye repent, the woe of eternal damnation, hangeth over you." Woe to them that devise iniquity. They devise it, "they are not led into it by others, but invent it out of their own hearts." They plot and forecast and fulfill it even in thought, before it comes to act. And work evil upon their beds. Thoughts and imaginations of evil are works of the soul Psalm 58:2. "Upon their beds" (see Psalm 36:4), which ought to be the place of holy thought, and of communing with their own hearts and with God Psalm 4:4. Stillness must be filled with thought, good or bad; if not with good, then with bad. The chamber, if not the sanctuary of holy thoughts, is filled with unholy purposes and imaginations. Man's last and first thoughts, if not of good, are especially of vanity and evil. The Psalmist says, "Lord, have I not remembered Thee in my bed, and thought upon Thee when I was waking?" Psalm 63:6. These men thought of sin on their bed, and did it on waking. When the morning is light, literally in the light of the morning, that is, instantly, shamelessly, not shrinking from the light of day, not ignorantly, but knowingly, deliberately, in full light. Nor again through infirmity, but in the wantonness of might, because it is in the power of their hand, as, of old, God said, "This they begin to do, and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do" Genesis 11:6. Rup.: "Impiously mighty, and mighty in impiety."

Lap.: See the need of the daily prayer, "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin;" and "Almighty God, who hast brought us to the beginning of this day, defend us in the same by Thy mighty power, that we

may fall into no sin, etc." The illusions of the night, if such be permitted, have no power against the prayer of the morning.

Verse 2

And they covet fields and take them by violence - (rend them away) and houses, and take them away Still, first they sin in heart, then in act. And yet, with them, to covet and to rob, to desire and to take, are the same. They were prompt, instantaneous, without a scruple, in violence. So soon as they coveted, they took. Desired, acquired! Coveted, robbed! "They saw, they coveted, they took," had been their past history. They did violence, not to one only, but, touched with no mercy, to whole families, their little ones also; they oppressed a man and his house. They spoiled pot goods only, but life, a man and his inheritance; destroying him by false accusations or violence and seizing upon his inheritance. Thus, Ahab first coveted Naboth's vineyard, then, through Jezebel, slew him; and, "they who devoured widow's houses, did at the last plot by night against Him of whom they said, Come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be our's; and in the morning, they practiced it, leading Him away to Pilate.": "Who of us desires not the villas of this world, forgetful of the possessions of Paradise? You see men join field to field, and fence to fence. Whole places suffice not to the tiny frame of one man.": "Such is the fire of concupiscence, raging within, that, as those seized by burning fevers cannot rest, no bed suffices them, so no houses or fields content these. Yet no more than seven feet of earth will suffice them soon. Death only owns, how small the frame of man."

Verse 3

Such had been their habitual doings. They had done all this, he says, as one continuous act, up to that time. They were habitually devisers of iniquity, doers of evil. It was ever-renewed. By night they sinned in heart and thought; by day, in act. And so he speaks of it in the present. They do it. But, although renewed in fresh acts, it was one unbroken course of acting. And so he also uses the form, in which the Hebrews spoke of uninterrupted habits, They have coveted, they have robbed, they have taken. Now came God's part.

Therefore, thus saith the Lord - Since they oppress whole families, behold I will set Myself against this whole family; since they devise iniquity, behold I too, Myself, by Myself, in My own Person, am devising.

Very awful is it, that Almighty God sets His own Infinite Wisdom against the devices of man and employs it fittingly to punish. "I am devising no common punishment, but one to bow them down without escape; "an evil from which" - He turns suddenly to them, "ye shall not remove your necks, neither shall ye go haughtily." Ribera: "Pride then was the source of that boundless covetousness," since it was pride which was to be bowed down in punishment. The punishment is proportioned to the sin. They had done all this in pride; they should have the liberty and self-will wherein they had wantoned, tamed or taken from them. Like animals with a heavy yoke upon them, they should live in disgraced slavery.

The ten tribes were never able to withdraw their necks from the yoke. From the two tribes God removed it after the 70 years. But the same sins against the love of God and man brought on the same punishment. Our Lord again spake the woe against their covetousness Luke 16:13-14; Luke 11:39; Matthew 23:14, Matthew 23:23, Matthew 23:25; Mark 12:40. It still shut them out from the service of God, or from receiving Him, their Redeemer. They still spoiled the goods Hebrews 10:34 of their brethren. In the last dreadful siege, "there were insatiable longings for plunder, searching-out of the houses of the rich; murder of men and insults of women were enacted as sports; they drank down what they had spoiled, with blood." And so the prophecy was for the third time fulfilled. They who withdraw from Christ's easy yoke of obedience shall not remove from the yoke of punishment; they who, through pride, will not bow down their necks, but make them stiff, shall be bent low, that they go not upright or haughtily anymore Isaiah 2:11. The Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day. For it is an evil time. Perhaps he gives a more special meaning to the words of Amos Amos 5:13, that a time of moral evil will be, or will end in, a time, full of evil, that is, of sorest calamity.

Verse 4

In that day shall one take up a parable against you - The mashal or likeness may, in itself, be any speech in which one thing is likened to another:

1) "figured speech,"

2) "proverb," and, since such proverbs were often sharp sayings against others,

3) “taunting figurative speech.”

But of the person himself it is always said, he “is made, becomes a proverb” Deuteronomy 28:37; 1 Kings 9:7; 2 Chronicles 7:20; Psalm 44:15; Psalm 69:12; Jeremiah 24:9; Ezekiel 14:8. To take up or utter such a speech against one, is, elsewhere, followed by the speech itself; “Thou shalt take up this parable against the king of Babylon, and say, … ” Isaiah 14:4. “Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and say, … ” Habakkuk 2:6. Although then the name of the Jews has passed into a proverb of reproach (Jerome, loc. cit.), this is not contained here. The parable here must be the same as the doleful lamentation, or dirge, which follows. No mockery is more cutting or fiendish, than to repeat in jest words by which one bemoans himself. The dirge which Israel should use of themselves in sorrow, the enemy shall take up in derision, as Satan does doubtless the self-condemnation of the damned. Ribera: “Men do any evil, undergo any peril, to avoid shame. God brings before us that deepest and eternal shame,” the shame and everlasting contempt, in presence of Himself and angels and devils and the good Psalm 52:6-7; Isaiah 66:24, that we may avoid shame by avoiding evil.

And lament with a doleful lamentation - The words in Hebrew are varied inflections of a word imitating the sounds of woe. It is the voice of woe in all languages, because the voice of nature. Shall wail a wail of woe, It is the funeral dirge over the dead Jeremiah 31:15, or of the living doomed to die Ezekiel 32:18; it is sometimes the measured mourning of those employed to call forth sorrow Amos 5:16; Jeremiah 9:17, Jeremiah 9:19, or mourning generally 1 Samuel 7:2; Jeremiah 9:18. Among such elegies, are still Zion-songs, (elegies over the ruin of Zion,) and mournings for the dead. The word woe is thrice repeated in Hebrew, in different forms, according to that solemn way, in which the extremest good or evil is spoken of; the threefold blessing, morning and evening, with the thrice-repeated name of God Numbers 6:24-26, impressing upon them the mystery which developed itself, as the divinity of the Messiah and the personal agency of the Holy Spirit were unfolded to them. The dirge which follows is purposely in abrupt brief words, as those in trouble speak, with scarce breath for utterance. First, in two words, with perhaps a softened inflection, they express the utterness of their desolation. Then, in a threefold sentence, each

clause consisting of three short words, they say what God had done, but name Him not, because they are angry with Him. God‘s chastisements irritate those whom they do not subdue.

The portion of my people He changeth;
How removeth He (it) as to me!
To a rebel our fields He divideth.

They act the patriot. They, the rich, mourn over “the portion of my people” (they say) which they had themselves despoiled: they speak, (as men do,) as if things were what they ought to be: they hold to the theory and ignore the facts. As if, because God had divided it to His people, therefore it so remained! as if, because the poor were in theory and by God‘s law provided for, they were so in fact! Then they are enraged at God‘s dealings. He removeth the portion as to me; and to whom giveth He our fields?

“To a rebel!” the Assyrian, or the Chaldee. They had deprived the poor of their portion of “the Lord‘s land”. And now they marvel that God resumes the possession of His own, and requires from them, not the fourfold Exodus 22:1; 2 Samuel 12:6; Luke 19:8 only of their spoil, but His whole heritage. Well might Assyrian or Chaldee, as they did, jeer at the word, renegade. They had not forsaken their gods; - but Israel, what was its whole history but a turning back? “Hath a nation changed their gods, which yet are no gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit” Jeremiah 2:11.

Such was the meaning in their lips. The word “divideth” had the more bitterness, because it was the reversal of that first “division” at the entrance into Canaan. Then, with the use of this same word Numbers 26:53, Numbers 26:55-56; Joshua 13:7; Joshua 14:5; Joshua 18:2, Joshua 18:5, Joshua 18:10; Joshua 19:51, the division of the land of the pagan was appointed to them. Ezekiel, in his great symbolic vision, afterward prophesied the restoration of Israel, with the use of this same term Ezekiel 47:21. Joel spoke of the parting of their land, under this same term, as a sin of the pagan (Joel 3:3 in English)). Now, they say, God “divideth our fields,” not to us, but to the pagan, whose lands He gave us. It was a change of act: in impenitence, they think it a change of purpose or will. But what lies in that, we be “utterly despoiled?” Despoiled of everything; of what they felt, temporal things; and of what they did not feel, spiritual things.

Despoiled of the land of promise, the good things of this life, but also of the Presence of God in His Temple, the grace of the Lord, the image of God and everlasting glory. "Their portion" was changed, as to themselves and with others. As to themselvcs, riches, honor, pleasure, their own land, were changed into want, disgrace, suffering, captivity; and yet more bitter was it to see others gain what they by their own fault had forfeited. As time went on, and their transgression deepened, the exchange of the portion of that former people of God became more complete. The casting-off of the Jews was the grafting-in of the Gentiles Acts 13:46. Seeing ye judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo! we turn to the Gentiles. And so they who were "no people" Romans 10:19, became the people of God, and they who were His people, became, for the time, "not My people" Hosea 1:9: and "the adoption of sons, and the glory, and the covenants, and the lawgiving, and the service of God, and the promises" Romans 9:4-5, came to us Gentiles, since to us Christ Himself our God blessed forever came, and made us His.

How hath He removed - The words do not say what He removed. They thought of His gifts, the words include Himself. They say "How?" in amazement. The change is so great and bitter, it cannot be said. Time, yea eternity cannot utter it. "He hath divided our fields." The land was but the outward symbol of the inward heritage. Unjust gain, kept back, is restored with usury Proverbs 1:19; it taketh away the life of the owners thereof. The vineyard whereof the Jews said, the inheritance shall be ours, was taken from them and given to others, even to Christians. So now is that awful change begun, when Christians, leaving God, their only unchanging Good, turn to earthly vanities, and, for the grace of God which He withdraws, have these only for their fleeting portion, until it shall be finally exchanged in the Day of Judgment Luke 16:25. Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented.

Israel defended himself in impenitence and self-righteousness. He was already the Pharisee. The doom of such was hopeless. The prophet breaks in with a renewed, "Therefore." He had already prophesied that they should lose the lands which they had unjustly gotten, the land which they had profaned. He had described it in their own impenitent words. Now on the

impenitence he pronounces the judgment which impenitence entails, that they should not be restored

Verse 5

Therefore thou shalt have none that shall east a cord by lot in the congregation of the Lord - Thou, in the first instance, is the impenitent Jew of that day. God had promised by Hosea to restore Judah; shortly after, the prophet himself foretells it Micah 2:12. Now he forewarns these and such as these, that they would have no portion in it. They had "neither part nor lot in this matter" Acts 8:21. They, the not-Israel then, were the images and ensamples of the not-Israel afterward, those who seem to be God's people and are not; members of the body, not of the soul of the Church; who have a sort of faith, but have not love. Such was afterward the Israel after the flesh, which was broken off, while the true Israel was restored, passing out of themselves into Christ. Such, at the end, shall be those, who, being admitted by Christ into "their portion," renounce the world in word not in deed. Such shall have "no portion forever "in the congregation of the Lord." For "nothing defiled shall enter there, nor whatsoever worketh abomination or a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" Revelation 21:27.

The ground of their condemnation is their resistance to light and known truth. These not only "entered not in" Luke 11:52, themselves, but, being hinderers of God's word, them that were entering in, they hindered.

Verse 6

Prophesy ye not, say they to them that prophesy; they shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame - The words are very emphatic in Hebrew, from their briefness, "Prophesy not; they shall indeed prophesy; they shall not prophesy to these; shame shall not depart." The people, the false prophets, the politicians, forbade God and Micah to prophesy; "Prophesy not." God, by Micah recites their prohibition to themselves, and forewarns them of the consequences.

Prophesy ye not - , literally drop not. Amaziah and the God-opposing party had already given an ungodly meaning to the word. "Drop not," "distill not," thus unceasingly, these same words, ever warning, ever telling of "lamentation and mourning and woe Ezekiel 2:10; prophesying not good concerning us, but evil" 1 Kings 22:18. So their descendants commanded

the Apostles Acts 4:18; Acts 5:40 not to speak at all or to teach in the Name of Jesus Acts 5:28. Did we not straitly command you, that ye should not teach in this Name? Acts 6:13. This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law. God answers; They shall certainly prophesy. The Hebrew word is emphatic. The prophets had their commission from God, and Him they must obey, whether Israel Ezekiel 2:5, Ezekiel 2:7 would hear or whether they would forbear. So must Micah and Isaiah Isaiah 28:9-14, Isaiah 28:22 now, or Jeremiah Jeremiah 1:7, Jeremiah 1:17; Jeremiah 26:10-15, Ezekiel, and the rest afterward. "They shall not prophesy to these."

He does not say only, "They shall not prophesy to them," but, to these; that is, they shall prophesy to others who would receive their words: God's word would not be stayed; they who would hearken shall never be deprived of their portion; but to these who despise, "they shall not prophesy." It shall be all one, as though they did not prophesy; the soft rain shall not bedew them. The barn-floor shall be dry, while the fleece is moist Judges 6:37. So God says by Isaiah; "I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it" Isaiah 5:6. The dew of God's word shall be transferred to others. But so shame (literally shames manifold shame,) shall not depart, but shall rest upon them forever. God would have turned away the shame from them; but they, despising His warnings, drew it to themselves. It was the natural fruit of their doings; it was in its natural home with them. God spoke to them, that they might be freed from it. They silenced His prophets; deafened themselves to His words; so it departed not. So our Lord says John 9:41, Now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth; and John the Immerser John 3:36, The wrath of God abideth on him. It hath not now first to come. It is not some new thing to be avoided, turned aside. The sinner has but to remain as he is; the shame encompasseth him already; and only departeth not. The wrath of God is already upon him, and abideth on him.

Verse 7

O thou that art named the house of Jacob - As Isaiah says, "Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel - which make mention of the God of Israel, not in truth, nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel" Isaiah 48:1. They boasted of what convicted them of faithlessness. They relied on being what in spirit they had ceased to be, what in deeds they

denied, children of a believing forefather. It is the same temper which we see more at large in their descendants; "We be Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest Thou, ye shall be made free?" John 8:33 "Abraham is our Father" John 8:39. It is the same which John the Immerser and our Lord and Paul reproved. "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father" Matthew 3:9. "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" John 8:39-40. "Now ye seek to kill Me, a Man that hath told you the truth - This did not Abraham" Romans 2:17-28.

He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. - Behold thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law and makest thy boast of God, and knowest His Will and approvest the things that are more excellent" - etc. The prophet answers the unexpressed objections of those who forbade to prophesy evil. "Such could not be of God," these said; "for God was pledged by His promises to the house of Jacob. It would imply change in God, if He were to cast off those whom He had chosen." Micah answers; "not God is changed, but you." God's promise was to Jacob, not to those who were but named Jacob, who called themselves after the name of their father, but did not his deeds. "The Spirit of the Lord was not straitened", so that He was less longsuffering than heretofore. These, which He threatened and of which they complained, were not His doings, not what He of His own Nature did, not what He loved to do, not His, as the Author or Cause of them, but theirs.

God is Good, but to those who can receive good, "the upright in heart" Psalm 73:1. God is only Loving unto Israel. He is all Love; nothing but Love: all His ways are Love; but it follows, unto what Israel, the true Israel, the pure of heart Psalm 25:10. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth; but to whom? unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies Psalm 103:17; Luke 1:50. The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting; but hate them that fear Him. they becoming evil, His good became to them evil. Light, wholesome and gladdening to the healthful, hurts weak eyes. That which is straight cannot suit or fit with the crooked. Amend your crookedness, and God's ways will be straight to you. Do not My words do good? He doth speak good words and comfortable words Zechariah 1:13. They are not only good, but do good Luke 4:32. His Word is with power. Still it is with those who "walk uprightly;" whether those

who forsake not, or those who return the way of righteousness. God flattereth deceiveth not, promiseth not what He not do. He cannot "speak peace where there is no peace" Jeremiah 6:14. As He saith, "Behold the and severity of God; on them which but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness" Romans 11:22. God Himself could not make a heaven for the proud or envious. Heaven would be to them a hell.

Verse 8

Even of late - (Literally, yesterday.) Jerome: "He imputeth not past sins, but those recent and, as it were, of yesterday." "My people is risen up vehemently". God upbraideth them tenderly by the title, "Mine own people," as John complaineth, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" John 1:11. God became not their enemy, but they arose as one man, - "is risen up," the whole of it, as His. In Him they might have had peace and joy and assured gladness, but they arose in rebellion against Him, requiting Him evil for good, (as bad Christians do to Christ,) and brought war upon their own heads. This they did by their sins against their brethren. Casting off the love of man, they alienated themselves from the love of God.

Ye pull off (strip off violently) the robe with the garment - Literally, "over against the cloak." The שׂלמה *s'almâh* is the large enveloping cloak, which was worn loosely over the other dress, and served by night for a covering Deuteronomy 22:17. Eder, translated "robe," is probably not any one garment, but the remaining dress, the comely, becoming, array of the person. These they stripped violently off from persons, peaceable, unoffending, off their guard, "passing by securely, men averse from war" and strife. These they stripped of their raiment by day, leaving them half-naked, and of their covering for the night. So making war against God's peaceful people, they, as it were, made war against God.

Verse 9

The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses - (literally, from her pleasant house,) each from her home. These were probably the widows of those whom they had stripped. Since the houses were their's, they were widows; and so their spoilers were at war with those whom God had committed to their special love, whom He had declared the objects of His own tender care, "the widows and the fatherless." The widows they "drove vehemently forth", as having no

portion in the inheritance which God had given them, as God had driven out their enemies before them, each "from her pleasant house," the home where she had lived with her husband and children in delight and joy.

From (off) their (young) children have ye taken away My glory - Primarily, the glory, comeliness, was the fitting apparel which God had given them (as Hosea 2:11), and laid upon them, and which these oppressors stripped off from them. But it includes all the gifts of God, wherewith God would array them. Instead of the holy home of parental care, the children grew up in want and neglect, away from all the ordinances of God, it may be, in a strange land. "For ever." They never repented, never made restitution; but so they incurred the special woe of those who ill-used the unprotected, the widow, and the fatherless. The words "forever" anticipate the punishment. The punishment is according to the sin. They never ceased their oppression. They, with the generation who should come after them, should be deprived of God's "glory," and cast out of His land forever.

Verse 10

Arise ye and depart - Go your way, as being cast out of God's care and land. It matters not where they went. "For this is not your rest." As ye have done, so shall it be done unto you. As ye cast out the widow and the fatherless, so shall ye be cast out; as ye gave no rest to those "averse from war," so shall ye have none Revelation 13:10. "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity; he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword." The land was given to them as a temporary rest, a symbol and earnest of the everlasting rest to the obedient. So Moses spake, "ye are not as yet come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you. But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when He giveth you rest from your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety … " (Deuteronomy 12:9-10, add 1 Kings 8:56). And Joshua, "Remember the word which Moses commanded you, saying, The Lord your God giveth you rest" Joshua 1:13. But the Psalmist had warned them, that, if they hardened their hearts like their forefathers, they too would "not enter into His rest" Psalm 95:11.

Because it is polluted - (Literally, because of its pollution) by idolatry, by violence, by uncleanness. So Moses (using the same word) says, "the land is defiled" by the abominations of the pagan; and warns them, "that the land spue you not out, when you defile it, as it spued out the nations which

were before you." Ezekiel speaks of that "defilement" Ezekiel 36:17, as the ground why God expelled Israel. "It shall destroy you, even with a sore (literally sharp) destruction" (Ezekiel 36:18, add Jeremiah 2:7).. It is a sore thing to abuse the creatures of God to sin, and it is unfit that we should use what we have abused. Hence, Holy Scripture speaks, as though even the inanimate creation took part with God, "made subject to vanity, not willingly," and could not endure those who employed it against His Will.

The words, "Arise, depart, ye, for this is not your rest," became a sort of sacred proverb, spoken anew to the soul, whenever it would find rest out of God.: "We are bidden to think of no rest for ourselves in any things of the world; but, as it were, arising from the dead, to stretch upwards, and walk after the Lord our God, and say, ‹My soul cleaveth hard after Thee.' This if we neglect, and will not hear Him who saith, ‹Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light,' we shall indeed slumber, but shall be deceived and shall not find rest; for where Christ enlighteneth not the risen soul, what seemeth to be rest, is trouble." All rest is wearisome which is not in Thee, O our God.

Verse 11

If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood - Literally, "in spirit" (not My Spirit) "and falsehood," that is, in a lying spirit; such as they, whose woe Ezekiel pronounces Ezekiel 13:3, "Woe unto the foolish prophets who walk after their own spirit and what they have not seen Ezekiel 13:2, Ezekiel 13:17; prophets out of their own hearts, who prophesied a vision of falsehood, and a destruction and nothingness; prophesied falsehood; yea, prophets of the deceit of their hearts." These, like the true prophets, "walked in spirit;" as Isaiah speaks of "walking in righteousness" Isaiah 33:15. Their habitual converse was m a spirit, but of falsehood. If such an one do lie, saying, "I will prophesy unto thee of wine and strong drink." Man's conscience must needs have some plea in speaking falsely of God. The false prophets had to please the rich men, to embolden them in their self-indulgence, to tell them that God would not punish. They doubtless spoke of God's temporal promises to His people, the land "flowing with milk and honey." His promises of abundant harvest and vintage, and assured them, that God would not withdraw these, that He was not so precise about His law. Micah tells them in plain words, what it all came to; it was a prophesying of "wine and strong drink."

He shall even be the prophet of this people - Literally "and shall be bedewing this people." He uses the same words, which scorners of Israel and Judah employed in forbidding to prophesy. They said, "drop not;" forbidding God's word as a wearisome dropping. It wore away their patience, not their hearts of stone. He tells them, who might speak to them without wearying, of whose words they would never tire, who might do habitually what they forbade to God, - one who, in the Name of God, set them at ease in their sensual indulgences. This is the secret of the success of everything opposed to God and Christ. Man wants a God. God has made it a necessity of our nature to crave after Him. Spiritual, like natural, hunger, debarred from or loathing wholesome food, must be stilled, stifled, with what will appease its gnawings. Our natural intellect longs for Him; for it cannot understand itself without Him. Our restlessness longs for Him; to rest upon.

Our helplessness longs for Him, to escape from the unbearable pressure of our unknown futurity. Our imagination craves for Him; for, being made for the Infinite, it cannot be content with the finite. Aching affections long for Him; for no creature can soothe them. Our dissatisfied conscience longs for Him, to teach it and make it one with itself. But man does not want to be responsible, nor to owe duty; still less to be liable to penalties for disobeying. The Christian, not the natural man, longs that his whole being should tend to God. The natural man wishes to be well-rid of what sets him ill at ease, not to belong to God. And the horrible subtlety of false teaching, in each age or country, is to meet its own favorite requirements, without calling for self-sacrifice or self-oblation, to give it a god such as it would have, such as might content it.: "The people willeth to be deceived, be it deceived," is a true proverb. "Men turn away their ears from the truth" 2 Timothy 4:4 which they dislike; and so are turned unto fables which they like. They who "receive not the love of the truth, - believe a lie" 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12. If men "will not retain God in their knowledge, God giveth them over to an undistinguishing mind" Romans 1:28. They who would not receive our Lord, coming in His Father's Name, have ever since, as He said, "received them who came in their own" John 5:43. Men teach their teachers how they wish to be mistaught, and receive the echo of their wishes as the Voice of God.

Verse 12

I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel - God‘s mercy on the penitent and believing being the end of all His threatenings, the mention of it often bursts in abruptly. Christ is ever the Hope as the End of prophecy, ever before the prophets‘ mind. The earthquake and fire precede the still small voice of peace in Him. What seems then sudden to us, is connected in truth. The prophet had said Micah 2:10, where was not their rest and how they should be cast forth; he saith at once how they should be gathered to their everlasting rest. He had said, what promises of the false prophets would not be fulfille Micah 2:11. But, despair being the most deadly enemy of the soul, he does not take away their false hopes, without shewing them the true mercies in store for them. Jerome: “Think not,” he would say, “that I am only a prophet of ill. The captivity foretold will indeed now come, and God‘s mercies will also come, although not in the way, which these speak of.”

The false prophets spoke of worldly abundance ministering to sensuality, and of unbroken security. He tells of God‘s mercies, but after chastisement, to “the remnant of Israel.” But the restoration is complete, far beyond their then condition. He had foretold the desolation of Samaria Micah 1:6, the captivity of Judah Micah 1:16; Micah 2:4; he foretells the restoration of all Jacob, as one. The images are partly taken (as is the prophet‘s custom) from that first deliverance from Egypt. Then, as the image of the future growth under persecution, God multiplied His people exceedingly Exodus 1:12; then “the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud to lead them the way” Exodus 13:21; then God “brought them up” “out of the house of bondage” (see below, Micah 6:4).

But their future prison-house was to be no land of Goshen. It was to be a captivity and a dispersion at once, as Hosea had already foretold. So he speaks of them emphatically, as a great throng, “assembling I will assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; gathering I will gather the remnant of Israel.” The word, which is used of the gathering of a flock or its lambs Isaiah 40:11; Isaiah 13:14, became, from Moses‘ prophecy (Deuteronomy 30:3-4, see Nehemiah 1:9), a received word of the gathering of Israel from the dispersion of the captivity (see below, Micah 4:6; Psalm 106:47; Psalm 107:3; Isaiah 11:12; Isaiah 43:5; Isaiah 54:7; Isaiah 56:8; Zephaniah 3:19-20; Jeremiah 23:3; Jeremiah 29:14; Jeremiah 31:8, Jeremiah 31:10; Jeremiah 32:37; Ezekiel 11:17; Ezekiel 20:34, Ezekiel 20:41; Ezekiel

28:25; Ezekiel 34:13; Ezekiel 37:21; Ezekiel 38:8; Ezekiel 39:27; Zechariah 10:10). The return of the Jews from Babylon was but a faint shadow of the fulfillment. For, ample as were the terms of the decrees of Cyrus Ezra 1:2-4 and Artaxerxes Ezra 7:13, and widely as that of Cyrus was diffused Ezra 1:1, the restoration was essentially that of Judah, that is, Judah, Benjamin and Levi: the towns, whose inhabitants returned, were those of Judah and Benjamin Acts 21:20 tens of thousands" who believed at our Lord's first Coming; and "all Jacob," that is, all who were Israelites indeed, "the remnant" according to the election of grace Romans 11:5, were gathered within the one fold of the Church, under One Shepherd. It shall be fully fulfilled, when, in the end, "the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in and all Israel shall be saved" Romans 11:25-26. "All Jacob" is the same as "the remnant of Israel," the true Israel which remains when the false severed itself off; all the seed-corn, when the chaff was winnowed away. So then, whereas they were now scattered, then, God saith, "I will put them together (in one fold) as the sheep of Bozrah," which abounded in sheep Isaiah 34:6, and was also a strong city of Edom; denoting how believers should be fenced within the Church, as by a strong wall, against which the powers of darkness should not prevail, and the wolf should howl around the fold, yet be unable to enter it, and Edom and the pagan should become part of the inheritance of Christ. "As a flock in the midst of their fold," at rest, "like sheep, still and subject to their shepherd's voice. So shall these, having one faith and One Spirit, in meekness and simplicity, obey the one rule of truth. Nor shall it be a small number;" for the place where they shall be gathered shall be too narrow to contain them, as is said in Isaiah; "Give place to me, that I may dwell" Isaiah 49:20.

They shall make great noise - (it is the same word as our hum, "the hum of men,") by reason of the multitude of men He explains his image, as does Ezekiel Ezekiel 34:31, "And ye are My flock, the flock of My pasture; men are ye; I, your God, saith the Lord God: and Ezekiel 36:38, As a flock of holy things, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be full of a flock of men and they shall know that I am the Lord." So many shall they be, that throughout the whole world they shall make a great and public sound in praising God, filling Heaven and the green pastures of Paradise with a mighty hum of praise;" as John saw "a great multitude which no man could number" Revelation 7:9, "with one united voice praising the Good Shepherd, who smoothed for them all

rugged places, and evened them by His Own Steps, Himself the Guide of their way and the Gate of Paradise, as He saith, ‹I am the Door;‘ through whom bursting through and going before, being also the Door of the way, the flock of believers shall break through It. But this Shepherd is their Lord and King". Not their King only, but the Lord God; so that this, too, bears witness that Christ is God.

Verse 13

The Breaker is come up - (gone up) before them; they have broken up (Broken through) and have passed the gate, and have gone forth The image is not of conquest, but of deliverance. They "break through," not to enter in but to "pass through the gate and go forth." The wall of the city is ordinarily broken through, in order to make an entrance Psalm 80:13; Psalm 89:41; Isaiah 5:5; Nehemiah 2:13, or to secure to a conqueror the power of entering in Proverbs 25:28; 2 Kings 14:13; 2 Chronicles 25:23; 2 Chronicles 26:6 at any time, or by age and decay 2 Chronicles 32:5. But here the object is expressed, to go forth. Plainly then, they were confined before, as in a prison; and the gate of the prison was burst open, to set them free. It is then the same image as when God says by Isaiah; "I will say to the North, give up; and to the South, Hold not back" Isaiah 43:6, or, "Go ye forth of Babylon, Say ye, the Lord hath redeemed His servant Jacob" Isaiah 48:20; or, with the same reminiscence of God‘s visible leading of His people out of Egypt "Depart ye, depart ye; for ye shall not go out with haste, nor yet by flight, for the Lord God shall go before you, and the God of Israel will be your reward;" or as Hosea describes their restoration (Hosea 1:11, (Hosea 2:2, Hebrew)); "Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together and appoint themselves one Head, and they shall go up out of the land". Elsewhere, in Isaiah, the spiritual meaning of the deliverance from the prison is more distinctly brought out, as the work of our Redeemer. "I will give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house" Isaiah 42:6-7; and, "the Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" Isaiah 61:1.

From this passage, the "Breaker-through" was one of the titles of the Christ, known to the Jews, as One who should be "from below and from above" also; and from it they believed that "captives should come up from

Gehenna, and the Sheehinah," or the Presence of God, "at their head.": "He then, who shall break the way, the King and Lord who shall go up before them, shall be the Good Shepherd, who puts them together in the fold. And this He doth when, as He saith, ‹He putieth forth His own sheep, and He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His Voice' John 10:4. How doth He go befree them but by suffering for them, leaving them an example of suffering, and opening the entrance of Paradise? The Good Shepherd goeth up to time Cross John 10:15; John 12:32, and is lifted up from the earth, laying down His Life for His sheep, to draw all men unto Him. He goeth up, trampling on death by His resurrection; He goeth up above the heaven of heavens, and sitteth on the Right Hand of the Father, opening the way before them, so that the flock, in their lowliness, may arrive where the Shepherd went before in His Majesty. And when He thus breaketh through and openeth the road, they also ‹break through and pass through the gate and go out by it,' by that Gate, namely, whereof the Psalmist saith, ‹This is the Gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter into It' Psalm 118:20.

What other is this Gate than that same Passion of Christ, beside which there is no gate, no way whereby any can enter into life? Through that open portal, which the lance of the soldier made in His Side when crucified, and ‹there came thereout Blood and Water, they shall pass and go through,' even as the children of Israel passed through the Red Sea, which divided before them, when Pharaoh, his chariots and horsemen, were drowned.'" Dionysius: "He will be in their hearts, and will teach and lead them; He will shew them the way of Salvation, ‹guiding their feet into the way of peace' Luke 1:79, and they shall pass through the strait and narrow gate which leadeth unto life; of which it is written, ‹Enter ye in at the strait gate; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. And their King shall pass before them' Matthew 7:13-14, as He did, of old, in the figure of the cloud, of which Moses said, ‹If Thy Presence go not, carry us not up hence; and wherein shall it be known that I have found grace in Thy sight, I and Thy people, is it not in that Thou goest up with us?' Exodus 33:15-16, and as He then did when He passed out of this world to the Father." "And the Lord on (that is, at) the head of them," as of His army.

Rup.: “For the Lord is His Name, and He is the Head, they the members; He the King, they the people; He the Shepherd, they the sheep of His pasture. And of this passing through He spake, ‹By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture‘ John 10:9. For a man entereth in, when, receiving the faith, he becomes a sheep of this Shepherd, and goeth out, when he closeth this present life, and then findeth the pastures of unfading, everlasting life”; “passing from this pilgrimage to his home, from faith to sight, from labor to reward.” Again, as describing the Christian‘s life here, it speaks of progress. Jerome: “Whoso shall have entered in, must not remain in the state wherein he entered, but must go forth into the pasture; so that, in entering in should be the beginning, in going forth and finding pasture, the perfecting of graces. He who entereth in, is contained within the bounds of the world; he who goeth forth, goes, as it were, beyond all created things, and, counting as nothing all things seen, shall find pasture above the Heavens, and shall feed upon the Word of God, and say, “The Lord is my Shepherd” Psalm 23:1, (and feedeth me,) I can lack nothing.

But this going forth can only be through Christ; as it followeth, ‹and the Lord at the head of them.‘” Nor, again, is this in itself easy, or done for us without any effort of our own. All is of Christ. The words express the closeness of the relation between the Head and the members; and what He, our King and Lord, doth, they do, because He who did it for them, doth it in them. The same words are used of both, shewing that what they do, they do by virtue of His Might, treading in His steps, walking where He has made the way plain, and by His Spirit. What they do, they do, as belonging to Him. He “breaketh through,” or, rather, in all is “the Breaker-through.” They, having broken through, pass on, because He “passeth before them.” He will Isaiah 45:2 break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. He “breaketh through” whatever would hold us back or oppose us, all might of sin and death and Satan, as Moses opened the Red Sea, for “a way for the ransomed to pass over” Isaiah 51:10; and so He saith, “I will go before thee, I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron, and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places” Isaiah 45:2-3.

So then Christians, following Him, the Captain of their salvation, strengthened by His grace, must burst the bars of the flesh and of the world, the chains and bonds of evil passions and habits, force themselves through the narrow way and narrow gate, do violence to themselves 2 Timothy 2:3, endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. The title of our Lord, the Breaker-through, and the saying, "they break through," together express the same as the New Testament doth in regard to our being partakers of the sufferings of Christ Romans 8:17. Joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together 2 Timothy 2:11-12. If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him 1 Peter 4:1. Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh - arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.

The words may include also the removal of the souls of the just, who had believed in Christ before His Coming, into Heaven after His Resurrection, and will be fully completed when, in the end, He shall cause His faithful servants, in body and soul, to enter into the joy of their Lord.

MICAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

And I said - God‘s love for us is the great incitement, constrainer, vivifier of His creature‘s love. Micah had just spoken of God‘s love of Israel; how He would gather them into one fold under One Shepherd, guard them, lead them, remove all difficulties before them, be Himself their Head and enable them to follow Him. He turns then to them. These are God‘s doings; this, God has in store for you hereafter. Even when mercy itself shall require chastisement, He doth not cast off forever. The desolation is but the forerunner of future mercy. What then do ye? The prophet appeals to them, class by class. There was one general corruption of every order of men, through whom Judah could be preserved, princes Micah 3:1-4, prophets Micah 3:5-7, priests Micah 3:11. The salt had lost its savor; wherewith could it be seasoned? whereby could the decaying mass of the people be kept from entire corruption?

Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel - He arraigns them by the same name, under which He had first promised mercy. He had first promised mercy to all Jacob and the remnant of Israel. So now he upraids the “heads of Jacob, and the princes of the house of Israel,” lest they should deceive themselves. At the same time he recalls them to the deeds of their father. Judah had succeeded to the birthright, forfeited by Reuben, Simeon and Levi; and in Judah all the promises of the Messiah were laid up. But he was not like the three great patriarchs, the father of the faithful (Abraham), or the meek Isaac, or the much-tried Jacob. The name then had not the reminiscences, or force of appeal, contained in the titles, seed of Abraham, or Isaac, or Israel.

Is it not for you to know judgment? - It is a great increase of guilt, when persons neglect or pervert what it is their special duty and office to guard; as when teachers corrupt doctrine, or preachers give in to a low standard of morals, or judges pervert judgment. The “princes” here spoken or are so named from judging, “deciding” causes. They are the same its the “rulers,” whom Isaiah at the same time upbraids, as being, from their sins, rulers of Sodom, whose hands were full of blood Isaiah 1:15. They who do not right, in time cease, in great measure, to know it. As God withdraws His grace, the mind is darkened and can no longer see it. So it is said of Eli‘s sons, they were sons of Belial, they knew not the Lord 1 Samuel 2:12; and,

Into a malicious soul Wisdom shall not enter, nor dwell in a body that is subject unto sin (Wisd. 1:4). Such, "attain not to know the judgments of God which are a great deep: and the depth of His justice the evil mind findeth not." But if men will not "know judgment" by doing it, they shall by suffering it.

Verse 2

Who hate the good and love the evil - that is, they hate, for its own sake, that which is good, and love that which is evil. The prophet is not here speaking of their "hating good" men, or "loving evil" men, but of their hating goodness and loving wickedness.: "It is sin not to love good; what guilt to hate it! it is faulty, not to flee from evil, what ungodliness to love it!" Man, at first, loves and admires the good, even while he cloth it not; he hates the evil, even while he does it, or as soon as he has done it. But man cannot bear to he at strife with his conscience, and so he ends it, by excusing himself and telling lies to himself. And then, he hates the truth or good with a bitter hatred, because it disturbs the darkness of the false peace with which he would envelop himself. At first, men love only the pleasure connected with the evil; then they make whom they can, evil, because goodness is a reproach to them: in the end, they love evil for its own sake Romans 1:32. pagan morality too distinguished between the incontinent and the unprincipled, the man who sinned under force of temptation, and the man who had lost the sense of right and wrong John 3:20. "Everyone that doeth evil, hateth the light. Whoso longeth for things unlawful, hateth the righteousness which rebuketh and punisheth".

Who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones - He had described the Good Shepherd; now, in contrast, he describes those who ought to be "shepherds of the people," to feed, guard, direct them, but who were their butchers; who did not shear them, but flayed them; who fed on them, not fed them. He heaps up their guilt, act by act. First they flay, that is, take away their outer goods; then they break their bones in pieces, the most solid parts, on which the whole frame of their body depends, to get at the very marrow of their life, and so feed themselves upon them. And not unlike, though still more fearfully, do they sin, who first remove the skin, as it were, or outward tender fences of God's graces; (such as is modesty, in regard to inward purity; outward demeanor, of inward virtue; outward forms, of inward devotion;) and so break the strong bones of the sterner virtues, which hold the whole soul together; and

with them the whole flesh, or softer graces, becomes one shapeless mass, shred to pieces and consumed. So Ezekiel says; "Woe to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves; should not the shepherds feed the flock? Ye eat the fat and ye clothe you, with the wool, ye kill them that are fed, ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened … " (Ezekiel 34:2-4, add Ezekiel 34:5-10).

Verse 4

Then shall they cry unto the Lord - "Then." The prophet looks on to the Day of the Lord, which is always before his mind. So the Psalmist, speaking of a time or place not expressed, says, "There were they in great fear" Psalm 53:5. He sees it, points to it, as seeing what those to whom he spoke, saw not, and the more awfully, because he saw, with superhuman (certain) vision, what was "hidden from their eyes." The then was not then, "in the time of grace," but when the Day of grace should be over, and the Day of Judgment should be come. So of that day, when judgment should set in, God says in Jeremiah, "Behold I will bring evil upon them which they shall not be able to go forth of, and they will cry unto Me, and I will not hearken unto them" Jeremiah 11:11. And David, "They cried and there was none to save; unto the Lord, and He answered them not" Psalm 18:41. And Solomon; "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall cry himself and shall not be heard" Proverbs 21:13. And James, "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy" James 2:13. The prayer is never too late, until judgment comes; the day of grace is over, when the time of judgment has arrived. "They shall cry unto the Lord, and shall not be heard, because they too did not hear those who asked them, and the Lord shall turn His Face from them, because they too turned their face from those who prayed them."

He will even hide His Face - He will not look in mercy on those who would not receive His look of grace. Your sins, He says by Isaiah, "have hid His face from you, that He heareth not." O what will that turning away of the Face be, on which hangs eternity!

As - There is a proportion between the sin and the punishment. As I have done, so God hath requited me. "They have behaved themselves ill in their doings. literally have made their deeds evil." The word rendered doings is almost always used in a bad sense, mighty deeds, and so deeds with a high hand. Not ignorantly or negligently, nor through human frailty, but with set purpose they applied themselves, not to amend but to corrupt

their doings, and make them worse. God called to them by all His prophets, make good your doings Jeremiah 35:15; and they, reversing it, used diligence to make their doings evil. Jerome: "All this they shall suffer, because they were not rulers, but tyrants; not Prefects, but lions; not masters of disciples, but wolves of sheep; and they sated themselves with flesh and were fattened, and, as sacrifices for the slaughter, were made ready for the punishment of the Lord. Thus far against evil rulers; then he turns to the false prophets and evil teachers, who by flatteries subvert the people of God, promising them the knowledge of His word."

Verse 5

The prophets that make My people err - Flattering them in their sins and rebellions, promising that they shall go unpunished, that God is not so strict, will not put in force the judgments tie threatens. So Isaiah saith Isaiah 3:12; O my? people, they which lead thee, mislead thee; and (Isaiah 9:16, (Isaiah 9:15 in Hebrew)), the leaders of this people are its misleaders, and they that are led of them are destroyed. And Jeremiah, "The prophets have seen for thee vanity and folly; and they have not discovered thine iniquity to turn away thy captivity, and have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment" Lamentations 2:14. No error is hopeless, save what is taught in the Name of God.

That bite with their mouths - The word is used of no other biting than the biting of serpents. They were doing real, secret evil "while they cry, that is, proclaim peace;" they bit, as serpents, treacherously, deadlily. They fed, not so much on the gifts, for which they hired themselves to Ezekiel 13:10 speak peace when there was no peace, as on the souls of the givers. So God says by Ezekiel, "Will ye pollute Me among My people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls live that should not live, by your lying to My people that hear your lies? Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life - therefore ye shall see no more vanity nor divine divinations" Ezekiel 19:1-14,22-23. It was with a show of peace that Joab slew Abner and Amasa, and with a kiss of peace Judas betrayed our Lord.

And he that putteth not into their mouths, they prepare war against him - Literally, and (that is, immediately; it was all one; bribes refused, war proclaimed,) "they sanctify war against him." Like those of whom Joel

prophesied, they proclaim war against him in the Name of God, by the authority of God which they had taken to themselves, speaking in His Name who had not sent them. So when our Lord fed the multitude, they would take Him by force and make Him a king; when their hopes were gone and they saw that His Kingdom was not of this world, they said, Crucify him, crucify Him. Much more the Pharisees, who, because He rebuked their covetousness, their devouring widows‘ houses, their extortion and excess, their making their proselytes more children of hell than themselves, said, Thou blasphemest. So, when the masters of the possessed damsel whom Paul freed Acts 16:19-21, saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they accused him, that he exceedingly troubled their city, teaching customs not lawful to be received.

So Christians were persecuted by the pagan as “hating the human race,” because they would not partake of their sins; as “atheists,” because they worshiped not their gods; as “disloyal” and “public enemies,” because they joined not in unholy festivals; as “unprofitable,” because they neglected things not profitable but harmful. So men are now called “illiberal,” who will not make free with the truth of God; “intolerant,” who will not allow that all faith is matter of opinion, and that there is no certain truth; “precise,” “censorious,” who will not connive at sin, or allow the levity which plays, mothlike, around it and jests at it. The Church and the Gospel are against the world, and so the world which they condemn must be against them; and such is the force of truth and holiness, that it must carry on the war against them in their own name.

Verse 6

Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision - In the presence of God‘s extreme judgments, even deceivers are at length still; silenced at last by the common misery, if not by awe. The false prophets had promised peace, light, brightness, prosperity; the night of trouble, anguish, darkness, fear, shall Come upon them. So shall they no more dare to speak in the Name of God, while He was by His judgments speaking the contrary in a way which all must hear. They abused God‘s gifts and long-suffering against Himself: they could misinterpret His long-suffering into favor, and they did it: their visions of the future were but the reflections of the present and its continuance; they thought that because God was enduring, He was indifferent, and they took His government out of His

Hands, and said, that what He appeared to be now, He would ever be. They had no other light, no other foresight. When then the darkness of temporal calamity enveloped them, it shrouded in one common darkness of night all present brightness and all sight of the future.

Rup.: "After Caiaphas had in heart spoken falsehood and a prophecy of blood, although God overruled it to truth which he meant not, all grace of prophecy departed Matthew 11:13. The law and the prophets prophesied until John. "The Sun of Righteousness went down over them," inwardly and outwardly, withdrawing the brightness of His Providence and the inward light of grace." So Christ Himself forewarned; "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you" John 12:35. And so it has remained ever since 2 Corinthians 3:15. The veil has been on their hearts. The light is in all the world, but they see it not; it arose to lighten the Gentiles, but they walk on still in darkness. As opposed to holiness, truth, knowledge, divine enlightening of the mind, bright gladness, contrariwise darkness is falsehood, sin, error, blindness of soul, ignorance of divine things, and sorrow. In all these ways, did the Sun go down "over them," so that the darkness weighed heavily upon them. So too the inventors of heresies pretend to see and to enter into the mysteries of Christ, yet find darkness instead of light, lose even what they think they see, fail even of what truth they seem most to hold; and they shall be in night and darkness, being cast into outer darkness 1 Corinthians 8:12; sinning against the brethren, and wounding the weak conscience of those for whom Christ died.

Verse 7

They shall cover their lips - Literally, the hair of the upper lip. This was an action enjoined on lepers Leviticus 13:45, and a token of mourning Ezekiel 24:17, Ezekiel 24:22; a token then of sorrow and uncleanness. With their lips they had lied, and now they should cover their lips, as men dumb and ashamed. "For there is no answer of God," as these deceivers had pretended to have. When all things shall come contrary to what they had promised, it shall be clear that God did not send them. And having plainly no answer of God, they shall not dare to feign one then. Jerome: "Then not even the devils shall receive power to deceive them by their craft. The oracles shall be dumb; the unclean spirit shall not dare to delude." Dionysius: "All this is spoken against those who, in the Church of Christ, flatter the rich, or speak as menpleasers, out of avarice, ambition, or any

like longing for temporal good, to whom that of Isaiah Isaiah 3:12 fitteth; the leaders of this people (they who profess to lead them aright) mislead them, and they that are led of them are destroyed."

Verse 8

And truly I - (Literally, contrariwise I,) that is, whereas they shall be void and no word in them, "I am full of (or filled with) power by the Spirit of the Lord and of judgment and might." The false prophets, walked after their own spirit, Ezekiel 13:3. Their only power or influence was from without, from favoring circumstances, from adapting themselves to the great or to the people, going along with the tide, and impelling persons whither they wished to go. The power of the true prophet was inherent, and that by gift of "the Spirit of the Lord". And so, while adverse circumstances silenced the false prophets, they called forth the more the energy of the true, whose power was from Him in whose Hands the world is. The adverse circumstances to the false prophets were God's judgments; to the true, they were man's refractoriness, rebellion, oppressiveness. Now was the time of the false prophets; now, at a distance, they could foretell hardily, because they could not yet be convicted of untruth. When trouble came, they went into the inner chamber to hide 1 Kings 22:25 themselves. Micah, amid the wild tumult of the people Psalm 65:7, was fearless, upborne by Him who controls, stills, or looses it, to do His Sovereign Will.

I am filled with power - So our Lord bade His Apostles, "Tarry ye, until ye be endued with power from on high" Luke 24:49: "ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" Acts 1:8; and "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" Acts 2:4. The three gifts, "power, judgment, might," are the fruits of the One Spirit of God, through whom the prophet was filled with them. Of these, "power" is always strength residing in the person, whether it be the "power" (Exodus 15:6; Exodus 32:11; Numbers 14:17, etc.) or "might of wisdom" Job 36:5 of Almighty God Himself, or "power" which He imparts Deuteronomy 8:18; Judges 16:5, Judges 16:9, Judges 16:19 or implants. But it is always power lodged in the person, to be put forth by him. Here, as in John the Immerser Luke 1:17 or the Apostles Luke 24:49, it is divine power, given through God the Holy Spirit, to accomplish that for which he was sent, as Paul was endued with might 2 Corinthians 10:5, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. It is just that, which is so

wanting to human words, which is so characteristic of the word of God, "power."

"Judgment" is, from its form, not so much discernment in the human being, as "the thing judged," pronounced by God, the righteous judgment of God, and righteous judgment in man conformably therewith (as in Proverbs 1:3; Isaiah 1:21; Isaiah 5:7). It was what, he goes on to say, the great men of his people abhorred Micah 3:9, equity. With this he was filled. This was the substance of his message, right judgment to be enacted by them, to which he was to exhort them, or which, on their refusal, was to be pronounced upon them in the Name of God the Judge of all, and to be executed upon them. "Might" is courage or boldness to deliver the message of God, not awed or hindered by any adversaries. It is that holy courage, of which Paul speaks, "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds, that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" Ephesians 6:19-20. So too, after the Apostles had been "straitly threatened that they should speak no more in the Name of Jesus, all, having prayed, were filled with the Holy Spirit, and spake the word of God with boldness" Acts 4:18, Acts 4:31. Dionysius: "Whoso is so strengthened and arrayed, uttereth fiery words, Whereby hearers' hearts are moved and changed. But whoso speaketh of his own mind, doth good neither to himself nor others."

So then, of the three gifts, "power" expresses the divine might lodged in him; "judgment," the substance of what he had to deliver; "might or courage," the strength to deliver it in face of human power, persecution, ridicule, death.

Lap.: "These gifts the prophets know are not their own, but are from the Spirit of God, and are by Him inspired into them. Such was the spirit of Elijah, unconquered, energetic, fiery, of whom it is said, ‹Then stood up Elias as fire, and his word burned like a lamp' (Isaiah 58:1. Such was Jeremiah; ‹Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary of holding in. I have set thee for a trier among My people, a strong fort; and thou shalt know and try their ways' Jeremiah 6:11, Jeremiah 6:27. Such was John Baptist, who said, ‹O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' Matthew 3:7. Such was Paul, who, when he Acts 24:25 reasoned of temperance, righteousness and judgment to come,

made Felix tremble, though unbelieving and ungodly. Such were the Apostles, who, when they had received the Holy Spirit Psalm 48:8, broke, with a mighty breath, ships and kings of Tarshish. Such will be Elias and Enoch at the end of the world, striving against antichrist, of whom it is said Revelation 11:5, if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies."

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Verse 9

Hear this, I pray you - The prophet discharges upon them that "judgment" whereof, by the Spirit of God, he was full, and which they "abhorred; judgment" against their perversion of judgment. He rebukes the same classes as before "the heads and judges" Micah 3:1, yet still more sternly. They abhorred judgment, he says, as a thing loathsome and abominable, such as men cannot bear even to look upon; they not only dealt wrongly, but they "perverted, distorted, all equity:" "that so there should not remain even some slight justice in the city". "All equity;" all of every sort, right, rectitude, uprightness, straight-forwardness, whatever was right by natural conscience or by God‘s law, they distorted, like the sophists making the worse appear the better cause. Naked violence crushes the individual; perversion of equity destroys the fountain-head of justice. The prophet turns from them in these words, as one who could not bear to look upon their misdeeds, and who would not speak to them; "they pervert;" building; "her heads, her priests, her prophets;" as Elisha, but for the presence of Jehoshaphat, would not look on Jehoram, nor see him 2 Kings 3:14. He first turns and speaks of them, as one man, as if they were all one in evil;

Verse 10

They build up - (literally, building, sing.) Zion with blood This may be taken literally on both sides, that, the rich built their palaces, "with wealth gotten by bloodshed, by rapine of the poor, by slaughter of the saints," as Ezekiel says, ‹her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves, to shed blood, to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain‘ Ezekiel 22:27. Or by blood he may mean that they indirectly took away life, in that, through wrong judgments, extortion, usury, fraud, oppression, reducing wages or detaining them, they took away what was necessary to support life. So it is said; ‹The bread of the needy is their life, he that defraudeth him thereof is a man of blood. He that taketh away his neighbor‘s living slayeth him, and he that defraudeth the laborer of his hire is a bloodshedder‘ (Psalm 51:18, so these

men thought to promote the temporal prosperity of Jerusalem by doings which were unjust, oppressive, crushing to their inferiors.

So Solomon, in His degenerate days, made the yoke upon his people and his service grievious 1 Kings 12:4. So ambitious monarchs by large standing-armies or filling their exchequers drain the life-blood of their people. The physical condition and stature of the poorer population in much of France was lowered permanently by the conscriptions under the first Emperor. In our wealthy nation, the term poverty describes a condition of other days. We have had to coin a new name to designate the misery, offspring of our material prosperity. From our wealthy towns, (as from those of Flanders,) ascends to heaven against us, "the cry of ‹pauperism‘ that is, the cry of distress, arrived at a condition of system and of power, and, by an unexpected curse, issuing from the very development of wealth. The political economy of unbelief has been crushed by facts on all the theaters of human activity and industry."

Truly we "build up Zion with blood," when we cheapen luxuries and comforts at the price of souls, use Christian toil like brute strength, tempt men to dishonesty and women to other sin, to eke out the scanty wages which alone our selfish thirst for cheapness allows, heedless of every thing save of our individual gratification, or the commercial prosperity, which we have made our god. Most awfully was "Zion built with blood," when the Jews shed the innocent Blood, that John 11:48 the Romans might not take away their place and nation. But since He has said, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it not unto Me" Matthew 25:45, and, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Acts 9:4, when Saul was persecuting Christ‘s members, then, in this waste of lives and of souls, we are not only wasting the Price of His Blood in ourselves and others, but are slaying Christ anew, and that, from the same motives as those who crucified Him 1 Corinthians 8:12. When ye sin (against the members, ye sin against Christ. Our commercial greatness is the Price of His Blood Matthew 27:6. In the judgments on the Jews, we may read our own national future; in the woe on those through whom the weak brother perishes for whom Christ died 1 Corinthians 8:11, we, if we partake or connive at it, may read our own.

Verse 11

The heads thereof judge for reward - Every class was corrupted. One sin, the root of all evil 1 Timothy 6:10, covetousness, entered into all they did. It, not God, was their one end, and so their God. Her heads, the secular authority who Acts 23:3 sat to judge according to the law, judged, contrary to the law, "for rewards." They sat as the representatives of the Majesty of God, in whose Name they judged, whose righteous Judgment and correcting Providence law exhibits and executes, and they profaned it. "To judge for rewards" was in itself sin, forbidden by the law Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19. To refuse justice, unless paid for it, was unjust, degrading to justice. The second sin followed hard upon it, to judge unjustly, absolving the guilty, condemning the innocent, justifying the oppressor, legalizing wrong.

And her priests teach for hire - The Lord was the portion and inheritance Numbers 18:20; Deuteronomy 18:2 of the priest. He had his sustenance assigned him by God, and, therewith, the duty to (Leviticus 10:10-11, add Deuteronomy 17:10-11; Deuteronomy 33:10; Haggai 2:11 ff) put difference between holy and unholy, and between clean and unclean, and to teach all the statutes, which God had commanded. Their lips were to keep knowledge Malachi 2:7. This then, which they were bound to give, they sold. But "whereas it is said to the holy, "Freely ye have received, freely give" Matthew 10:8, these, producing the answer of God upon the receipt of money, sold the grace of the Lord for a covetous price." Probably too, their sin co-operated with and strengthened the sin of the judges. Authorized interpreters of the law, they, to please the wealthy, probably misinterpreted the law. For wicked judges would not have given a price for a righteous interpretation of the law.

The civil authorities were entrusted by God with power to execute the law; the priests were entrusted by Him with the knowledge to expound it. Both employed in its perversion that which God gave them for its maintenance. The princes obtained by bribery the misjudgment of the priests and enforced it; the priests justified the injustice of the Princes. So Arian Bishops, themselves hirelings, by false expositions of Scripture, countenanced Arian Emperors in the oppression of the faithful. "They propped up the heresy by human patronage;" the Emperors "bestowed on" them their "reign of irreligion." The Arian Emperors tried to efface the Council of Nice by councils of Arian Bishops. Emperors perverted their power, the Bishops their knowledge.

Not publicly only but privately doubtless also, these priests taught falsely for hire, lulling the consciences of those who wished to deceive themselves as to what God forbade, and to obtain from His priests answers in His Name, which might explain away His law in favor of laxity or sin. So people now try to get ill-advised to do against God‘s will what they are bent on doing; only they get ill-advised for nothing. One who receives money for giving an irresponsible opinion, places himself in proximate peril of giving the answer which will please those who pay him. “It is Simony to teach and preach the doctrine of Christ and His Gospel, or to give answers to quiet the conscience, for money. For the immediate object of these two acts, is the calling forth of faith, hope, charity, penitence, and other supernatural acts, and the reception of the consolation of the Holy Spirit; and this is, among Christians, their only value. Whence they are accounted things sacred and supernatural; for their immediate end is to things supernatural; and they are done by man, as he is an instrument of the Holy Spirit.”

Jerome: “Thou art permitted, O Priest, to live 1 Corinthians 9:13, not to luxuriate, from the altar 1 Corinthians 9:9. The mouth of the ox which treadeth out the corn is not muzzled. Yet the Apostle 1 Corinthians 9:18 abused not the liberty, but 1 Timothy 6:8 having food and raiment, was therewith content 1 Thessalonians 2:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:8; laboring night and clay, that he might not be chargeable to anybody. And in his Epistles he calls God to witness that he 1 Thessalonians 2:10 lived holily and without avarice in the Gospel of Christ. He asserts this too, not of himself alone but of his disciples, that he had sent no one who would either ask or receive anything from the Churches 2 Corinthians 12:17-18. But if in the gifts of those who sent, the grace 2 Corinthians 8:6-7 of God, he gathers not for himself but for the Romans 15:26 poor saints at Jerusalem. But these poor saints were they who of the Jews first believed in Christ, and, being cast out by parents, kinsmen, connections, had lost their possessions and all their goods, the priests of the temple and the people destroying them.

Let such poor receive. But if on plea of the poor, a few houses are enriched, and we eat in gold, glass and china, let us either with our wealth change our habit, or let not the habit of poverty seek the riches of Senators. What avails the habit of poverty, while a whole crowd of poor longs for the

contents of our purse? Wherefore, for our sake who are such, "who build up Zion with blood and Jerusalem by iniquity, who judge for gifts, give answers for rewards, divine for money," and thereon, claiming to ourselves a fictitious sanctity, say, Evil will not come upon us, hear we the sentence of the Lord which follows. Sion and Jerusalem and the mountain of the temple, that is, the temple of Christ, shall, in the consummation and the end, when "love shall wax cold" Matthew 24:12 and the faith shall be rare, "be plowed as a field and became heaps as the high places of a forest" Luke 18:8; so that, where once were ample houses and countless heaps of corn, there should only be a poor cottage, keeping up the show of fruit which has no refreshment for the soul."

The three places, Zion, Jerusalem, the Temple, describe the whole city in its political and religious aspects. Locally, Mount Zion, which occupies the southwest, "had upon it the Upper city," and "was by much the loftier, and length-ways the straighter." Jerusalem, as contrasted with Zion, represented the lower city, "supported" on the East by Mount Acra, and including the valley of Tyropoeon. South of Mount Acra and lower than it, at the South Eastern corner of the city, lay Mount Moriah or the Mount of the Lord's House, separated at this time from Mount Acra by a deep ravine, which was filled up by the Asmonaean princes, who lowered Mount Acra. It was joined to the northeast corner of Mount Zion by the causeway of Solomon across the Tyropoeon. The whole city then in all its parts was to be desolated.

And her prophets divine for money - The word rendered, "divine," is always used in a bad sense. These prophets then were false prophets, "her prophets" and not God's, which "divined," in reality or appearance, giving the answer which their employers, the rich men, wanted, as if it were an answer from God. Yet they also "judge for rewards," who look rather to the earthly than to the spiritual good; "they teach for hire," who seek in the first place the things of this world, instead of teaching for the glory of God and the good of souls, and regarding earthly things in the second place only, as the support of life.

And say, Is not the Lord among us? - And after all this, not understanding their sin, as though by their guilt they purchased the love of God, they said in their impenitence, that they were judges, prophets, priests, of God. They do all this, and yet "lean on the Lord;" they stay and trust, not

in themselves, but in God; good in itself, had not they been evil! "And say, Is not the Lord among us? none evil can (shall) come upon us." So Jeremiah says, "Trust ye not in lying words saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord are these" Jeremiah 7:4. Sanch.: "He called them lying words, as being ofttimes repeated by the false prophets, to entice the credulous people to a false security" against the threatenings of God. As though God could not forsake His own people, nor cast away Zion which He had chosen for an habitation for Himself, nor profane His own holy place! Yet it was true that God "was among them," in the midst of them, as our Lord was among the Jews, though they knew Him not.

Yet if not in the midst of His people so as to hallow, God is in the midst of them to punish. But what else do we than these Jews did, if we lean on the Apostolic line, the possession of Holy Scripture, Sacraments, pure doctrine, without setting ourselves to gain to God the souls of our pagan population? or what else is it for a soul to trust in having been made a member of Christ, or in any gifts of God, unless it be bringing forth fruit with patience?: "Learn we too hence, that all trust in the Merits of Christ is vain, so long as any willfully persist in sin." John H. Mich: "Know we, that God will be in us also, if we have not faith alone, nor on this account rest, as it were, on Him, but if to faith there be added also the excelling in good works. For faith without works is dead. But when with the riches of faith works concur, then will God indeed be with us, and will strengthen us mightily, and account us friends, and gladden us as His true sons, and free us from all evil."

Verse 12

Therefore shall Zion for your sake - for your sake shall Zion

Be plowed as a field - They thought to be its builders; they were its destroyers. They imagined to advance or secure its temporal prosperity by bloods; they (as men ever do first or last,) ruined it. Zion might have stood, but for these its acute, far-sighted politicians, who scorned the warnings of the prophets, as well-meant ignorance of the world or of the necessities of the state. They taught, perhaps they thought, that "for Zion's sake" they, (act as they might,) were secure. Practical Antinomians! God says, that, "for their sake," Zion, defiled by their deeds, should be destroyed. The fulfillment of the prophecy was delayed by the repentance under Hezekiah.

Did he not, the elders ask Jeremiah 26:19, fear the Lord and besought the Lord, and the Lord repented Him of the evil which He had pronounced against them? But the prophecy remained, like that of Jonah against Nineveh, and, when man undid and in act repented of his repentanee, it found its fulfillment.

Jerusalem shall become heaps - (Literally, of ruins) and "the mountain of the house," Mount Moriah, on which the house of God stood, "as the high places of the forest," literally "as high places of a forest." It should return wholly to what it had been, before Abraham offered up the typical sacrifice of his son, a wild and desolate place covered with tangled thickets Genesis 22:13.

The prophecy had a first fulfillment at its first capture by Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah mourns over it; "Because of the mountain of Zion which is desolate, foxes walk" Lamentations 5:18 (habitually upon it. Nehemiah said, "Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste" Nehemiah 2:17; and Sanballat mocked at the attempts to rebuild it, as a thing impossible; "Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of dust, and these too, burned?" (Nehemiah 4:2, (3:34, Hebrew)), and the builders complained; "The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed (literally, sinketh under them), and there is much dust, and we are not able to build the wall" (Nehemiah 4:10, (Nehemiah 4:4, Hebrew)). In the desolation under Antiochus again it is related; "they saw the sanctuary desolate, and the altar profaned, and the gates burned up, and shrubs growing in the courts, as in a forest or in one of the mountains" (Matthew 23:32, and called the curse upon themselves, "His Blood be upon us and upon our children" Matthew 27:25, destruction came upon them to the uttermost.

With the exception of three towers, left to exhibit the greatness of Roman prowess in destroying such and so strong a city, they, "so levelled to the ground the whole circuit of the city, that to a stranger it presented no token of ever having been inhabited." He "effaced the rest of the city," says the Jewish historian, himself an eyewitness. The elder Pliny soon after, 77 a.d., speaks of it, as a city which had been and was not. "Where was Jerusalem, far the most renowned city, not of Judaea only, but of the East", a funeral pile."

With this corresponds Jerome‘s statement, “relics of the city remained for fifty years until the Emperor Hadrian.” Still it was in utter ruins. The toleration of the Jewish school at Jamnia the more illustrates the desolation of Jerusalem where there was none. The Talmud relates how R. Akiba smiled when others wept at seeing a fox coming out of the Holy of holies. This prophecy of Micah being fulfilled, he looked the more for the prophecy of good things to come, connected therewith. Not Jerusalem only, but well-nigh all Judaea was desolated by that war, in which a million and a half perished, beside all who were sold as slaves. “Their country to which you would expell them, is destroyed, and there is no place to receive them,” was Titus‘ expostulation to the Antiochenes, who desired to be rid of the Jews their fellow-citizens.

A pagan historian relates how, before the destruction by Hadrian, “many wolves and hyenas entered their cities howling.” Titus however having left above 6,000 Roman soldiers on the spot, a civil population was required to minister to their needs. The Christians who, following our Lord‘s warning, had fled to Pella, returned to Jerusalem, and continued there until the second destruction by Hadrian, under fifteen successive Bishops. Some few Jews had been left there; some very probably returned, since we hear of no prohibition from the Romans, until after the fanatic revolt under Barcocheba. But the fact that when toward the close of Trajan‘s reign they burst out simultaneously, in one wild frenzy, upon the surrounding pagan, all along the coast of Africa, Libya, Cyrene, Egypt, the Thebais, Mesopotamia, Cyprus, there was no insurrection in Judaea, implies that there were no great numbers of Jews there.

Judaea, aforetime the center of rebellion, contributed nothing to that wide national insurrection, in which the carnage was so terrible, as though it had been one convulsive effort of the Jews to root out their enemies. Even in the subsequent war under Hadrian, Orosius speaks of them, as “laying waste the province of Palestine, once their own,” as though they had gained possession of it from without, not by insurrection within it. The Jews assert that in the time of Joshua Ben Chananiah (under Trajan) “the kingdom of wickedness decreed that the temple should be rebuilt”. If this was so, the massacres toward the end of Trajan‘s reign altered the policy of the Empire. Apparently the Emperors attempted to extinguish the Jewish, as, at other

times, the Christian faith. A pagan Author mentions the prohibition of circumcision.

The Jerusalem Talmud speaks of many who for fear became uncircumcised, and renewed the symbol of their faith "when Bar Cozibah got the better, so as to reign 2 12 years among them." The Jews add, that the prohibition extended to the keeping of the sabbath and the reading of the law. Hadrian's city, Aelia, was doubtless intended, not only for a strong position, but also to efface the memory of Jerusalem by the Roman and pagan city which was to replace it. Christians, when persecuted, suffered; Jews rebelled. The recognition of Barcocheba, who gave himself out as the Messiah, by Akibah and "all the wise (Jews) of his generation", made the war national.

Palestine was the chief seat of the war, but not its source. The Jews throughout the Roman world were in arms against their conquerors; and the number of fortresses and villages which they got possession of, and which were destroyed by the Romans, shows that their successes were far beyond Judaea. Their measures in Judaea attest the desolate condition of the country. They fortified, not towns, but "the advantageous positions of the country, strengthened them with mines and walls, that, if defeated, they might have places of refuge, and communication among themselves underground unperceived."

For two years, (as appears from the coins struck by Barcocheba They had possession of Jerusalem. It was essential to his claim to be a temporal Messiah. They proposed, at least, to "rebuild their temple" and restore their polity." But they could not fortify Jerusalem. Its siege is just named; but the one place which obstinately resisted the Romans was a strong city near Jerusalem, known before only as a deeply indented mountain tract, Bether. Probably, it was one of the strong positions, fortified in haste, at the beginning of the war.

The Jews fulfilled our Lord's words, "I am come in My Father's Name and ye receive Me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" John 5:43. Their first destruction was the punishment of their Deicide, the crucifixion of Jesus, the Christ; their second they brought upon

themselves by accepting a false Christ, a robber and juggler. “580,000 are said to have perished in battle”, besides “an incalculable number by famine and fire, so that all Judaea was made well-nigh a desert.” The Jews say that “no olives remained in Palestine.” Hadrian “destroyed it,” making it “an utter desolation” and “effacing all remains of it.” “We read”, says Jerome (in Joel 1:4), “the expedition of Aelius Hadrianus against the Jews, who so destroyed Jerusalem and its walls, as, from the fragments and ashes of the city to build a city, named from himself, Aelia.” At this time there appears to have been a formal act, whereby the Romans marked the legal annihilation of cities; an act esteemed, at this time, one of most extreme severity. When a city was to be built, its compass was marked with a plow; the Romans, where they willed to unmake a city, did, on rare occasions, turn up its soil with the plow. Hence, the saying, “A city with a plow is built, with a plow overthrown.” The city so plowed forfeited all civil rights; it was counted to have ceased to be.

The symbolical act under Hadrian appears to have been directed against both the civil and religious existence of their city, since the revolts of the Jews were mixed up with their religious hopes. The Jews relate that both the city generally, and the Temple, were plowed. The plowing of the city was the last of those mournful memories, which made the month Ab a time of sorrow. But the plowing of the temple is also especially recorded. Jerome says, “In this (the 5th Month) was the Temple at Jerusalem burnt and destroyed, both by Nebuchadnezzar, and many years afterward by Titus and Vespasian; the city Bether, whither thousands of Jews had fled, was taken; the Temple was plowed, as an insult to the conquered race, by Titus Annius Rufus.” The Gemara says, “When Turnus, (or it may be “when Tyrant) Rutus plowed the porch,” (of the temple) Perhaps Hadrian meant thus to declare the desecration of the site of the Temple, and so to make way for the further desecration by his temple of Jupiter. He would declare the worship of God at an end.

The horrible desecration of placing the temple of Ashtaroth over the Holy Sepulchre was probably a part of the same policy, to make the Holy City utterly pagan. The “Capitoline” was part of its new name in honor of the Jupiter of the Roman Capitol. Hadrian intended, not to rebuild Jerusalem, but to build a new city under his own name. “The city being thus

bared of the Jewish nation, and its old inhabitants having been utterly destroyed, and an alien race settled there, the Roman city which afterward arose, having changed its name, is called Aelia in honor of the Emperor Aelius Hadrianus." It was a Roman colony, with Roman temples, Roman amphitheaters.

Idolatry was stamped on its coins. Hadrian excluded from it, on the North, almost the whole of Bezetha or the new city, which Agrippa had enclosed by his wall, and, on the South, more than half of Mount Zion, which was left, as Micah foretold, to be plowed as a field. The Jews themselves were prohibited from entering the Holy Land, so that the pagan Celsus says, "they have neither a clod nor a hearth left." Aelia, then, being a new city, Jerusalem was spoken of, as having ceased to be. The Roman magistrates, even in Palestine, did not know the name. Christians too used the name Aelia and that, in solemn documents, as the Dr. of Nice.

In the 4th century the city was still called Aelia by the Christians, and, on the first Mohammedan coin in the 7th century, it still bore that name. A series of writers speak of the desolation of Jerusalem. In the next century Origen addresses a Jew, "If going to the earthly city, Jerusalem, thou shalt find it overthrown, reduced to dust and ashes, weep not, as ye now do.": "From that (Hadrian's) time until now, the extremest desolation having taken possession of the place, their once renowned hill of Zion - now no wise differing from the rest of the country, is cultivated by Romans, so that we ourselves have with our own eyes observed the place plowed by oxen and sown all over. And Jerusalem, being inhabited by aliens, has to this day the stones gathered out of it, all the inhabitants, in our own times too, gathering up the stones out of its ruins for their private or public and common buildings. You may observe with your own eyes the mournful sight, how the stones from the Temple itself and from the Holy of holies have been taken for the idol-temples and to build amphitheaters.": "Their once holy place has now come to such a state, as in no way to fall short of the overthrow of Sodom." Hilary, who had been banished into the East, says, "The Royal city of David, taken by the Babylonians and overthrown, held not its queenly dignity under the rule of its lords; but, taken afterward and burnt by the Romans, it now is not."

Cyril of Jerusalem, Bishop of the new town, and delivering his catechetical lectures in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, pointed out to his hearers the fulfillment of prophecy; “The place (Zion) is now filled with gardens of cucumbers.” “If they (the Jews) plead the captivity,” says Athanasius, “and say that on that ground Jerusalem is not.” “The whole world, over which they are scattered,” says Gregory of Nazianzum, “is one monument of their calamity, their worship closed, and the soil of Jerusalem itself scarcely known.”

It is apparently part of the gradual and increasing fulfillment of God‘s word, that the plowing of the city and of the site of the Temple, and the continued cultivation of so large a portion of Zion, are recorded in the last visitation when its iniquity was full. It still remains plowed as a field.: “At the time I visited this sacred ground, one part of it supported a crop of barley, another was undergoing the labor of the plow, and the soil, turned up, consisted of stone and lime filled with earth, such as is usually met with in the foundations of ruined cities. It is nearly a mile in circumference.”: “On the southeast Zion slopes down, in a series of cultivated terraces, sharply though not abruptly, to the sites of the Kings‘ gardens. Here and around to the south the whole declivities are sprinkled with olive trees, which grow luxuriantly among the narrow slips of corn.” Not Christians only, but Jews also have seen herein the fulfillment upon themselves of Micah‘s words, spoken now “26 centuries ago.”

MICAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

But (And) in the last days it shall come to pass - God‘s promises, goodness, truth, fail not. He withdraws His Presence from those who receive Him not, only to give Himself to those who will receive Him. Mercy is the sequel and end of chastisement. Micah then joins on this great prophecy of future mercy to the preceding woe, as its issue in the order of God‘s Will. “And it shall be.” He fixes the mind to some great thing which shall come to pass; “it shall be.” Then follows, in marked reference to the preceding privations, a superabundance of mercy. For “the mountain of the house,” which should be as a forest and which was left unto them desolate, there is “the mountain of the Lord‘s house established;” for the heap of dust and the plowed field, there is the flowing-in of the Gentiles; for the night and darkness, that there shall be no vision, there is the fullness of revelation; for corrupt judgment, teaching, divining, a law from God Himself going forth through the world; for the building of Jerusalem with blood, one universal peace.

In the last days - Literally, the end of the days, that is, of those days which are in the thoughts of the speaker. Politically, there are many beginnings and many endings; as many endings as there are beginnings, since all human polity begins, only to end, and to be displaced in its turn by some new beginning, which too runs its course, only to end. Religiously, there are but two consummations. All time, since man fell, is divided into two halves, the looking forward to Christ to come in humility; the looking forward to His coming in glory. These are the two events on which man‘s history turns. To that former people the whole period of Christ‘s kingdom was one future, the fullness of all their own shadows, types, sacrifices, services, prophecies, longing, being. The “end of their days” was the beginning of the new Day of Christ: the coming of His Day was necessarily the close of the former days, the period of the dispensation which prepared for it.

The prophets then by the words, “the end of the days,” always mean the times of the Gospel. “The end of the days” is the close of all which went before, the last dispensation, after which there shall be no other. Yet this too hast “last days” of its own, which shall close God‘s kingdom of grace and shall issue in the Second Coming of Christ; as the end of those former days,

which closed the times of "the law," issued in His First Coming. We are then at once living in the last times, and looking on to a last time still to come. In the one way Peter speaks Ephesians 1:20 of the last times, or the end of the times, in which Christ was manifested for us, in contrast with the foundations of the world, before which He was foreordained.

And Paul contrasts God's Hebrews 1:1 speaking to the fathers in the prophets, and at the end of these days speaking to us in the Son; and of our Lord coming Hebrews 9:26 at the end, consummation, of the times, to put away sins by the sacrifice of Himself; and says that the things which befell the Jews 1 Corinthians 10:11 were written for our admonition, unto whom the ends of the times (that is, of those of the former people of whom he had been speaking) are come; and John speaks of this as 1 John 2:18 the last time. In the other way, they contrast the last days, not with the times before them but with their own, and then plainly they are a last and distant part of this their own last time.

The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith; In the last days perilous times shall come: There shall come at the end of the days scoffers: They told you that there should be mockers in the last time. The Jews distributed all time between "this world" and "the coming world", including under "the coming world" the time of grace under the Messiah's reign, and the future glory. To us the names have shifted, since this present world Matthew 13:40; Ephesians 1:21; Titus 2:12 is to us the kingdom of Christ, and there remains nothing further on this earth to look to, beyond what God has already given us. Our future then, placed as we are between the two Comings of our Lord, is, of necessity, beyond this world.

The mountain of the house of the Lord shall be - abidingly

Established - He does not say merely, "it shall be established." Kingdoms may be established at one time, and then come to an end. He says, "it shall be a thing established". His saying is expanded by Daniel; "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall not be destroyed forever, and it shall abide forever" Daniel 2:44. The house of the Lord was the center of His worship, the token of His Presence, the pledge of His revelations and of His abiding acceptance, protection, favor. All these were to be increased and continuous. The image is one

familiar to us in the Hebrew Scriptures. People were said to go up to it, as to a place of dignity.

In the Psalm on the carrying of the Ark thither, the hill of God is compared to the many-topped mountains of Basan Psalm 68:16-17, (the Hermon-peaks which bound Basan,) and so declared to be greater than they, as being the object of God‘s choice. The mountain where God was worshiped rose above the mountains of idolatry. Ezekiel, varying the image, speaks of the Gospel as an overshadowing cedar Ezekiel 17:22-23, planted by God upon an high mountain and an eminent, in the mountain of the height of Israel, under which should dwell all fowl of every wing; and, in his vision of the Temple, he sees this, the image of the Christian Church Ezekiel 40:2, upon a very high mountain. Our Lord speaks of His Apostles and the Church in them, as Matthew 5:14 a city set upon a hill which cannot be hid. The seat of God‘s worship was to be seen far and wide; nothing was to obscure it. It, now lower than the surrounding hills, was then to be as on the summit of them. Human elevation, the more exalted it is, the more unstable is it. Divine greatness alone is at once solid and exalted. The new kingdom of God was at once to be “exalted above the hills,” and “established on the top of the mountains;” “exalted,” at once, above everything human, and yet “established,” strong as the mountains on which it rested, and unassailable, unconquerable, seated secure aloft, between heaven, whence it came and to which it tends, and earth, on which it just tests in the sublime serenity of its majesty.

The image sets forth the supereminence of the Lord‘s House above all things earthly. It does not define wherein that greatness consists. The flowing in of the nations is a fruit of it Micah 4:1-2. The immediate object of their coming is explained to be, to learn to know and to do the will of God Micah 4:2. But the new revelation does not form all its greatness. That greatness is from the Presence of God, revealing and evermore teaching His Will, ruling, judging, rebuking, peacemaking Micah 4:3-4. Dionysius: “The ‹mountain of the Lord‘s House‘ was then ‹exalted above the hills‘ by the bodily Presence of Christ, when He, in the Temple built on that mountain, spake, preached, worked so many miracles; as, on the same ground, Haggai says, ‹the glory of this latter house shall be greater than the glory of the former‘ Haggai 2:9.” Lap.: “This ‹mountain,‘ the church of Christ, transcends all laws, schools, doctrines, religions, Synagogues of Jews and

Philosophers, which seemed to rise aloft among men, like mountain-tops, yea, whatever under the sun is sublime and lofty, it will overpass, trample on, subdue to itself."

Even Jews have seen the meaning of this figure. Their oldest mystical book explains it. Zohar, f. 93: "‹And it shall be in the last days,' when namely the Lord shall visit the daughter of Jacob, then shall ‹the mountain of the house of the Lord be firmly established, that is, the Jerusalem which is above, which shall stand firmly in its place, that it may shine by the light which is above. (For no light can retain its existence, except through the light from above.) For in that time shall the light from above shine sevenfold more than before; according to that, Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun; and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of His people and healeth the stroke of their wound" Isaiah 30:26. Another, of the dry literal school, says (Aben Ezra), "It is well known that the house of the Temple is not high. The meaning then is, that its fame shall go forth far, and there shall return to it from all quarters persons with offerings, so that it shall be, as if it were on the top of all hills, so that all the inhabitants of the earth should see it."

Some interpret "the mountain" to be Christ, who is called the Rock 1 Corinthians 10:4-6, on the confession of whom, God-Man, "the house of the Lord," that is, the Church is built, the precious Cornerstone Isaiah 28:16; 1 Peter 2:6; Ephesians 2:20, which is laid, beside which no foundation can be laid 1 Corinthians 3:11; "the great mountain," of which Daniel Daniel 2:35 prophesied. It is "firmly established," so that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against the Church, being built thereon; "exalted above hills and mountains", that is above all beside, greater or smaller, which has any eminence; for He in truth is Philemon 2:9 highly exalted and hath a Name above every name, being Ephesians 1:20-23 at the Right Hand of God in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come; and all things are under His Feet. And this for us, in that He, the Same, is the Head over all things to the Church which is His Body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. Rup.: "He is God and Man, King and Priest, King of kings, and a Priest abiding forever. Since

then His Majesty reacheth to the Right Hand of God, neither mountains nor hills, Angels nor holy men, reach thereto; for "to which of the Angels said God at any time, Sit thou on My Right Hand?" Hebrews 1:13.

Cyril: "Aloft then is the Church of God raised, both in that its Head is in heaven and the Lord of all, and that, on earth, it is not like the Temple, in one small people, but "set on a hill that it cannot be hid" Matthew 5:14, or remain unseen even to those tar from it. Its doctrine too and life are far above the wisdom of this world, showing in them nothing of earth, but are above; its wisdom is the knowledge and love of God and of His Son Jesus Christ, and its life is bid with Christ in God, in those who are justified in Him and hallowed by His Spirit." In Him, it is lifted above all things, and with the eyes of the mind beholdeth (as far as may be) the glory of God, soaring on high toward Him who is the Author of all being, and, filled with divine light, it owneth Him the Maker of all.

And people (peoples, nations) shall flow unto (literally upon) it - A mighty tide should set in to the Gospel. The word is used only figuratively) is appropriated to the streaming in of multitudes, such as of old poured into Babylon, the merchant-empress of the world Jeremiah 51:44. It is used of the distant nations who should throng in one continuous stream into the Gospel, or of Israel streaming together from the four corners of the world. So, Isaiah foretells, "Thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that they may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought" (Isaiah 60:11, add Revelation 21:25-26). These were to flow upon it, perhaps so as to cover it, expressing both the multitude and density of the throng of nations, how full the Church should be, as the swollen river spreads itself over the whole champaign country, and the surging flood-tide climbs up the face of the rock which hounds it. The flood once covered the highest mountains to destroy life; this flood should pour in for the saving of life. Lap.: "It is a miracle, if waters ascend from a valley and flow to a mountain. So is it a miracle that earthly nations should ascend to the church, whose doctrine and life are lofty, arduous, sublime. This the grace of Christ effecteth, mighty and lofty, as being sent from heaven. As then waters, conducted from the fountains by pipes into a valley, in that valley bound up and rise nearly to their original height, so these waters of heavenly grace, brought down into valleys, that

is, the hearts of men, make them to bound up with them into heaven and enter upon and embrace a heavenly life."

Verse 2

And many nations shall come - Isaiah Isaiah 2:2 added the world all to Micah's prophecy. So our Lord said, "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations" Matthew 24:14; and the elect are to be gathered out "of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues" Revelation 7:9. All nations shall flow into it. The all might be many or few. Both prophets say that those all should be many. Judah probably knew already of many. The history of Genesis gave them a wide-expanding knowledge of the enlargement of mankind alter the flood, in Europe, Asia, Africa, as they then existed in their nations. The sons of Japhet had already spread over the whole coast of our Western sea, and far North; the Cimmerians, or Cwmry, Scandinavians, Carpathians, (probably Celts,) Armenians; (including the kindred Phrygians,) Scythians, Medes, Ionians, Aeolians, Iberians, Cypriotes, Dardani, Tybarenes, Moschi, and the Turseni, or perhaps the Thracians. On the East, the sons of Shem had spread in Elam, Asshur, Arrapachitis; they occupied the intervening tract of Aram; in the northwest they reached to Lydia. Southward the sons of Joktan were in Arabia. Micah's hearers knew how, of the sons of Ham, Cush had spread far to the southeast and south from Babylonia to Aethiopia; Egypt they remembered too well, and, beyond it, they knew of the far-scattered tribes of the Libyans, who extended along the coast of Africa. Phoenician trade filled up this great outline.

They themselves had, in Solomon's time, traded with India; about this time, we know that they were acquainted with the furthest East, China. Such was the sight before the human mind of the prophet; such the extent of the nations whom his people knew of.

Some were the deadly enemies of his people; some were to be its conquerors. He knew that the the ten tribes were to be abidingly wanderers among the nations, despised by them; "a people, the strangers and sojourners of the whole world". He knew many of those nations to be sunk in idolatry, viciousness; proud, contemptuous, lawless; he saw them fixed in their idolatries. "All people will walk every one in the name of his god." But he saw what eye of man could not see, what the will of man could not accomplish, that He, whom now Judah alone partially worshiped, would

turn the hearts of His creatures to Himself, to seek Him, not in their own ways, but as He should reveal Himself at Jerusalem. Micah tells them distinctly, that those who should believe would be a great multitude from many nations. In like way Isaiah expresses the great multitude of those for whom Christ should atone Isaiah 53:12. He bare the sin of many Isaiah 53:11. By knowledge of Him shall My righteous Servant make many righteous. And our Lord Himself says Matthew 20:28; The Son of man came to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 26:28, add Romans 5:15). This is my Blood - which is shed for many for the remission of sins. In Micah‘s time not one people, scarcely some poor fragments of the Jewish people, went up to worship God at Zion, to call to remembrance His benefits, to learn of Him. Those who should thereafter worship Him, should be many nations.

And say - Exhorting one another, in fervor and mutual love, as Andrew exhorted his brother Simon, and Philip Nathanael, and the woman of Samaria those of her city, to come to Christ: and so all since, who have been won by Him, by word or example, by preaching or by deed, in public or in private, bear along with them others to seek Him whom they themselves have found.

Let us go up - leaving the lowness and earthliness of their former conversation, and mounting upward on high where Christ is, desiring righteousness, and athirst to know His ways.

To the house of the God of Jacob - They shall seek Him as Jacob sought Him,, “who left his father‘s house and removed into another land, was a man of heavy toils and served for hire, but obtained special help from God, and, undistinguished as he was, became most glorious. So too the Church, leaving all pagan wisdom, and having its conversation in Heaven, and therefore persecuted and enduring many hardships, enjoys now glory with God.”

And He - , that is, the God of Jacob of whom he had just spoken, shall teach us of His ways They do not go to God, because they know Him, but that they may know Him. They are drawn by a mighty impulse toward Him. Howsoever attracted, they come, not making bargains with God, (as some now would,) what they should be taught, that He should reveal to them nothing transcending reason, nothing exceeding or contradicting their notions of God; they do not come with reserves, that God should not take away this or that error, or should not disclose anything of His

incomprehensibleness. They come in holy simplicity, to learn whatever He will condescend to tell them; in holy confidence, that He, the Infallible Truth, will teach them infallibly. They say, "of His ways." For all learning is by degrees, and all which all creatures could learn in all eternity falls infinitely short of His truth and Holiness. Nay, in all eternity the highest creature which He has made and which He has admitted most deeply into the secrets of His Wisdom will be as infinitely removed as ever from the full knowledge of His Wisdom and His Love. For what is finite, enlarged, expanded, accumulated to the utmost degree possible, remains finite still.

It has no proportion to the Infinite. But even here, all growth in grace implies growth in knowledge. The more we love God, the more we know of Him; and with increased knowledge of Him come higher perceptions of worship, praise, thanksgiving, of the character of faith, hope, charity, of our outward and inward acts and relations to God, the unboundedness of God's love to us and the manifoldness of the ways of pleasing Him, which, in His love, He has given us. Since then the whole Christian life is a growth in grace, and even Paul Philemon 3:13-14, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth to those which are before, pressed toward the mark for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, then Paul too was ever learning, in intensity, what he knew certainly by revelation, of His ways. Again, as each blade of grass is said to differ from another, so, and much more, each soul of man which God has created for Himself. No one ever saw or could imagine two human beings, in whom the grace of God had unfolded itself in exactly the same way.

Each saint will have his distinct beauty around the throne. But then each will have learnt "of His ways," in a different proportion or degree. His greatest saints, yea His Apostles, have been pre-eminent, the one in one grace, another in another. John the Immerser came as a pattern of repentance and contempt of self; John the Evangelist stood out pre-eminent in deep tender burning personal love; Paul was known for his zeal to spread the knowledge of Christ Crucified; Mary Magdelene was famous for her loving penitence. Even the Blessed Virgin herself, under inspiration, seems, in part, to speak of her lowly lowness, as that which God specially regarded in her, when He made her the Mother of God. Eternity only will set forth the fullness of the two words "He will teach us of His ways." For eternity will shew, how in all 1 Corinthians 12:11 worketh that one and the self-

same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will; and how the countless multitude of the redeemed have corresponded to His gifts and drawings.: "The way of the life to God-ward is one, in that it looketh to one end, to please God; but there are many tracks along it, as there are many modes of life;" and each several grace is a part of the way to God.

And we will walk in His paths - o"By believing, hoping, loving, well-doing, and bearing patiently all trouble." Rup.: "For it sufficeth not to believe, unless we act as He commandeth, and strive to enter on His ways, the strait and narrow path which leadeth unto life. He Himself then, when He had said, "Go, teach all nations," baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, added, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" Matthew 28:19-20. They say too, "we will walk," that is, go on from strength to strength, not stand still after having labored for a while to do His Will, but hold on to all His ways and to Himself who is the Way, until they appear before the Lord in Zion.

For the law - (literally, law,) shall go forth from Zion These are the prophet's words, declaring why the nations should so flock to Zion. For he says, "shall go forth," but the nations were not gathered to Zion, until the Gospel was already gone forth. He speaks of it as law simply, not the Jewish law as such, but a rule of life Man's better nature is ill at ease, being out of harmony with God. It cannot be otherwise. Having been made in His likeness, it must be distressed by its unlikeness; having been made by Him for Himself, it must be restless without Him. What they indistinctly longed for, what drew them, was the hope to be conformed by Him to Him. The sight of superhuman holiness, life, love, endurance, ever won and wins those without to the Gospel or the church. Our Lord Himself gives it, as the substance of prophecy Luke 24:47, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem. The image may be that of a stream, issuing forth from Jerusalem and watering the whole world. Theodoret: "The law of the Gospel and the word of the Apostles, beginning from Jerusalem, as from a fountain, ran through the whole world, watering those who approached with faith." But in that it "went forth," it may be meant, that it left those from among whom it "went forth," and Cyril, "Zion was indeed desolate of the law and Jerusalem bared of the divine word." Jerome: "The word of God passed from Jerusalem to the Gentiles." Rup.: "For the shadow was done away, and the types ceased,

and sacrifices were abolished, and everything of Moses was, in the letter, brought to a close."

He does not say here, through whom God would so teach, but he does speak of a direct teaching of God. He does not say only, "God will give us a law," or "will make a revelation of Himself." He speaks of a Personal, direct, continuous act of teaching by God, carried on upon earth, whether the teacher be our Lord's word spoken once on earth, which does "not pass away" Matthew 24:35, or God the Holy Spirit, as teaching in the Church and in the hearts which receive Him. The words which follow speak of a personal reign, as these speak of personal teaching.

Verse 3

And He shall judge among many people and rebuke strong nations afar off - Hitherto, they had walked each in their own ways Isaiah 53:6; now, they sought to be taught in the ways of God. Before, they had been lords of the world; now they should own a Judge higher than themselves. They were no common, but mighty nations, such as had heretofore been the oppressors of Israel. They were to be many, and those mighty, nations. He should, "not only command, but "rebuke," not weak or petty nations only, but mighty, and those not only near but afar." Mohammed had moral strength through what he stole from the law and the Gospel, and by his owning Christ as the Word of God. He was a heretic, rather than a pagan. Fearful scourge as he was, and as his successors have been, all is now decayed, and no mighty nation is left upon earth, which does not profess the Name of Christ.

He shall rebuke them - For it was an office of the Holy Ghost "to reprove the world as to its sin, the righteousness of Christ, the judgment of the prince of this world" John 16:8-11. The Gospel conquered the world, not by compromises or concordants, but by convicting it. It alone could "rebuke" with power; for it was, like its Author, all-holy. It could rebuke with efficacy; for it was the word of Him who knew what is in man. It could rebuke with awe; for it knew the secrets of eternal Judgment. It could rebuke winningly; for it knew "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" Ephesians 3:19. Its martyrs suffered and rebuked their judges; and the world was amazed at the impotence of power and the might of suffering. It rebuked the enthroned idolatry of centuries; it set in rebellion by its rebukes every sinful passion of man, and it subdued them. Tyrants,

whom no human power could reach, trembled before its censures. Then only is it powerless, if its corrupted or timid or paralyzed ministers forfeit in themselves the power of rebuke.

And they shall beat their spears into plowshares - "All things are made new in Christ." As the inward disquiet of evil men makes them restless, and vents itself toward others in envy, hatred, maliciousness, wrong, so the inward peace whereof He saith, My peace I give unto you, shall, wherever it reacheth, spread out abroad and, by the power of grace, bring to "all nations unity, peace, and concord." All, being brought under the one empire of Christ, shall be in harmony, one with the other. As far as in it lies, the Gospel is a Gospel of peace, and makes peace. Christians, as far as they obey Christ, are at peace, both in themselves and with one another. And this is what is here prophesied. The peace follows from His rule. Where He judges and rebukes, there even the mighty "beat their swords into plowshares." The universal peace, amid which our Lord was born in the flesh, the first which there had been since the foundation of the Roman empire, was, in God's Providence, a fruit of His kingdom.

It was no chance coincidence, since nothing is by chance. God willed that they should be contemporaneous. It was fitting that the world should be still, when its Lord, the Prince of peace, was born in it. That outward cessation of public strife, though but for a brief time, was an image how His peace spread backward as well as forward, and of the peace which through Him, our Peace, was dawning on the world.: "First, according to the letter, before That Child was born to us, "on whose shoulder the government is" Psalm 126:6. Now no one fighteth; for we read "Blessed are the peacemakers" Matthew 5:9; no one learneth to "strive, to the subverting of the hearers" 2 Timothy 2:14. And every one shall rest under his vine, so as to press out that "Wine which gladdeneth the heart of man" Psalm 104:15, under that "Vine," whereof the "Father is the Husbandman" John 15:1; and under his fig tree, gathering the sweet "fruits of the Holy Spirit love, joy, peace, and the rest" Galatians 5:22.

The fathers had indeed a joy, which we have not, that wars were not between Christians; for although "just wars are lawful," war cannot be on both sides just; very few wars have not, on both sides, what is against the spirit of the Gospel. For, except where there is exceeding wickedness on

one side, or peril of further evil, the words of our Lord would hold good, in public as in private, "I say unto you, that ye resist not evil" Matthew 5:39.

This prophecy then is fulfilled:

(1) in the character of the Gospel. Ribera: "The law of the Gospel worketh and preserveth peace. For it plucketh up altogether the roots of all war, avarice, ambition, injustice, wrath. Then, it teacheth to bear injuries, and, so far from requiting them, willeth that we be prepared to receive fresh wrongs. He saith, "If anyone smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also … " Matthew 5:39-42. "I say unto you, Love your enemies … " Matthew 5:44-48. For neither did the old law give these counsels, nor did it explain so clearly the precept implied in them, nor had it that wonderful and most efficacious example of the and love of Christ, nor did it supply whereby peace could be preserved; whereas now the first fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness."

(2) The prophecy has been fulfilled within and without, among individuals or bodies of men, in body or mind, in temper or in deed, as far as the Gospel has prevailed. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one mind" Acts 4:32; one, through One indwelling Spirit; one, though a great multitude, through one bond of love.: "See how these Christians love one another;" "see how ready they are to die for one another," was, in the third century, a pagan proverb as to Christian love.: "They love one another, almost before they know one another.": "Their first lawgiver has persuaded them that they are all brethren." "We (which grieves you,)" the Christian answered, "so love one another, because we know not how to hate. We call ourselves ‹brethren‘ which you take ill, as men who have one Father, God, and are sharers in one faith, in one hope, coheirs."

For centuries too, there was, for the most part, public peace of Christians among themselves. Christian soldiers fought only, as constrained by the civil law, or against Barbarian invaders, to defend life, wife, children, not for ambition, anger, or pride. Christians could then appeal, in fulfillment of the prophecy, to this outward, the fruit of the inward, peace. "We," says an early martyr,, "who formerly stained ourselves with mutual slaughter, not only do not wage war with foes, but even, in order not to lie and deceive

those who consume us, willingly professing Christ, meet death." "From the coming of the Lord," says another martyr,. "the New Testament, reconciling unto peace, and a life-giving law, went forth into all lands. If then another law and word, going forth from Jerusalem, produced such peace among the nations which received it, and thereby reproved much people of want of wisdom, then it would follow that the prophets spake of some other. But if the law of liberty, that is, the law of God preached by the Apostles, which went forth out of Jerusalem to all the world, worked such a transformation, that swords and spears of war He wrought into plow-shares and pruning-hooks, instruments of peace, and now men know not how to fight, but, when smitten, yield the other cheek, then the prophets spake of no other, but of Him who brought it to pass." "Even from this," says Tertullian, "you may know that Christ was promised, not as one mighty in war, but as a peace-bringer. Either deny that these things were prophesied, since they are plain to see; or, since they are written, deny that they are fulfilled. But if thou mayest deny neither, thou must own that they are fulfilled in Him, of whom they are prophesied." "Of old", says Athanasius, "Greeks and Barbarians, being idolaters, warred with one another, and were fierce toward those akin. For through their implacable warfare no one might pass land or sea, unarmed. Their whole life was passed in arms; the sword was to them for staff and stay. They worshiped idols, sacrificed to demons, and yet from their reverence for idols they could gain no help to correct their minds. But when they passed into the school of Christ, then, of a truth, pricked in mind, they wondrously laid aside their savage slaughters, and now think no more of things of war; for now all peace and friendship are alone their mind's delight. who then did this, who blended in peace those who hated one another, save the Beloved Son of the Father, the common Saviour of all, Christ Jesus, who, through His love, endured all things for our salvation?

For of old too, the peace which should hold sway from Him was prophesied, "they shall beat their swords into plowshares." Nor is this incredible, since now too, the Barbarians with innate savageness, while they yet sacrifice to their idols, are mad with one another, and cannot for one hour part with their swords. But when they have received the teaching of Christ, immediately forever they turn to husbandry; and, in lieu of arming their hands with swords, stretch them out to prayer. And altogether, instead of warring with one another, they arm themselves against the devil and

demons, warring against them with modesty and virtue of soul. This is a token of the Godhead of the Saviour. For what men could not learn among idols, this they have learned from Him. Christ‘s disciples, having no war with one another, array themselves against demons by their life and deeds of virtue, chase them and mock their captain the devil, chaste in youth, enduring in temptation, strong in toils, tranquil when insulted, unconcerned when despoiled.”

And yet later, Chrysostom says, “Before the Coming of Christ, all men armed themselves and no one was exempt from this service, and cities fought with cities, and everywhere were men trained to war. But now most of the world is in peace; all engage in mechanical art or agriculture or commerce, and few are employed in military service for all. And of this too the occasion would cease, if we acted as we ought and did not need to be reminded by afflictions.”: “After the Sun of righteousness dawned, so far are all cities and nations from living in such perils, that they know not even how to take in hand any affairs of war. - Or if there be still any war, it is far off at the extremity of the Roman Empire, not in each city and country, as heretofore. For then, in any one nation, there were countless seditions and multiform wars. But now the whole earth which the sun surveys from the Tigris to the British isles, and therewith Lybia too and Egypt and Palestine, yea, all beneath the Roman rule, - ye know how all enjoy complete security, and learn of war only by hearsay.”

Cyril (on Isaiah 59:1-2. The Lord‘s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save: neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but our iniquities have separated between us, and our God, and our sins have hid His Face from us, that He will not hear. Those first Christians could urge against the Jews the fulfillment of their prophecies herein, where the Jews can now urge upon us their seeming non-fulfillment;: “In the time of King Messiah, after the wars of Gog and Magog, there shall be peace and tranquillity in all the world, and the sons of men shall have no need of weapons, but these promises were not fulfilled.”

The prophecy is fulfilled, in that the Gospel is a Gospel of peace and makes peace. Christians, as far as they obey Christ, are at peace both in themselves and with one another. The promises of God are perfect on His

part: He is faithful to them. But He so wills to be freely loved by His intelligent creatures whom He formed for His love, that He does not force our free-agency. We can fall short of His promises, if we will. To those only who will it, the Gospel brings peace, stilling the passions, quelling disputes, banishing contentions, removing errors, calming concupiscence, soothing and repressing anger, in individuals, nations, the Church; giving oneness of belief, harmony of soul, contentment with our own, love of others as ourselves; so that whatever is contrary to this has its origin in something which is not of Christ nor of His Gospel.

Verse 4

But - And

They shall sit every man, under his vine and under his fig-tree - Palestine was a home of the vine and the fig-tree. Vineyards were a common property, possessed by all but the very poor, or even by them Nehemiah 5:4; Jeremiah 39:10. The land was "a land of bread and vineyards" 2 Kings 18:32. The vine was the emblem of the people, in Psalmists and prophets (Psalm 80:8 ff; Isaiah 3:14; Isaiah 5:1 ff; Isaiah 27:2; Jeremiah 2:21; Jeremiah 12:10; Ezekiel 15:1-8; Ezekiel 17:5-10; Ezekiel 19:10; Hosea 10:1). The bunch of grapes or the vine-leaf appear as characteristic emblems on Jewish coins, chiefly in the times of their revolts under Vespasian and Hadrian. The fig is also mentioned as part of the characteristic fruitfulness of Palestine Deuteronomy 8:8.

It too was an universal property 2 Kings 18:32. Both formed natural arbors; the fig had its name probably from its length, the vine from the arch made by its drooping boughs. Both formed, in those hot countries, a grateful shade. The vine, rising with its single stem, was spread over trellis-work or by props, so as to enclose a considerable space. Even in Italy, a single vine shaded a portico. In Palestine it grew by the walls of the house Psalm 128:3.

Rabbis relate how their forefathers sat and studied under the fig-tree, as Nathanael was doubtless meditating or praying under one, when Jesus, being God, saw him John 1:48. It exhibits a picture of domestic peace, each family gathered in harmony and rest under the protection of God, each content with what they have, neither coveting another's, nor disturbed in their own. Wine is explained in Holy Scripture to be an emblem of

gladness, and the fig of sweetness. Cyril: "For exceeding sweet is the word of the Saviour, and it knoweth how to gladden man's heart; sweet also and full of joy is the hope of the future, wherewith we are enriched in Christ.

Such had been Israel's lot in the peaceful days of Solomon 1 Kings 4:25, the peace of whose times had already been made the image of the Gospel Matthew 12:42, had made her kingdom to be selected as an emblem of those who should fall down before Christ and serve Him Psalm 60:12:10-11. Lap.: "Such is that most quiet fearlessness which the law of Christ bringeth, as being the law of charity, peace, and concord."

And none shall make them afraid - o"Neither man, nor devil; for the Lord hath given us power to "tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and said, nothing shall by any means hurt you" Luke 10:19, and bade us, "fear not them which kill the body" Matthew 10:28. Witness the might which He gave to His Apostles and Martyrs.

For the mouth of the Lord of Host hath spoken it - The prophets often add this, when what they say, seems, for its greatness, past belief Yet it will be, because He hath spoken it, "the Lord" who changeth not, "the Lord of Hosts," to whose commands all creatures are subject, whose word is truth with whom to speak is to do.

Verse 5

For all people well walk, every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God - Hitherto unsteadfastness had been the very characteristic sin of Israel. It was, "constant only in its inconstancy," ever "falling away like their forefathers, starting aside like a broken bow" Psalm 78:57. The pagan persevered in their worship, because it was evil or had evil in it, not checking but feeding their passions. Israel did not persevere in his, because it required him to deny himself things unlawful. "Hath a nation changed their gods which are yet no gods? But My people have changed their glow for that which doth not profit" Jeremiah 2:11. Henceforth, the prophet professeth for his people, the true Israel, that he will be as steadfast in good, as the pagan in evil; so our Lord sets forth "the children of this world in their generation" Luke 16:8, as an example of wisdom to the children of light.

Cyril: "They who are eager to go up into the mountain of the Lord, and wish to learn thoroughly His ways, promise a ready obedience, and receive in themselves the glories of the life in Christ, and undertake with their

whole strength to be earnest in all holiness. ‹For let every one,‘ he saith, ‹in every country and city go the way himself chooseth, and pass his life, as to him seemeth good; but our care is Christ, and His laws we will make our straight path; we will walk along with Him; and that not for this life only, present or past, but yet more for what is beyond‘ 2 Timothy 2:11-12; Romans 8:17; Revelation 3:4. It is a faithful saying. For they who now suffer with Him, shall walk with Him forever, and with Him be glorified, and with Him reign. But they make Christ their care, who prefer nothing to His love, who cease from the vain distractions of the world, and seek rather righteousness and what is pleasing unto Him, and to excell in virtue. Such an one was the divine Paul; for he writeth, "I am crucified with Christ; and now no longer I live, but Christ liveth in me" Galatians 2:20; and again, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" 1 Corinthians 2:2.

To "walk" is so uniformly in Holy Scripture used of a person‘s moral or religious "ways". p. 378, and above on Micah 2:11, p. 35. So again to walk with God, Genesis 5:22 or before God, Genesis 17:1 or contrary to God, Leviticus 26:21.) (as we say), that the prophet here too is doubtless speaking of the opposite religious ways of the pagan and of the future people of God. The "name" was often, in Hebrew, expressive of the character; and, in regard to God Himself, that Name which He vouchsafed to give to Himself, expressed His Self-existence, and, as a result, His Unchangeableness and His Faithfulness. The names, by which it was foretold that Christ should be called, express both His Deity and attributes; the human Name, which He bare and vouchsafes to bear yet, was significant of His office for us, Saviour Matthew 1:21.

To praise "the Name of the Lord" then, is to praise Him in that character or relation which He has revealed to us.: "He ‹walketh in the Name of the Lord,‘ who ordereth every act and motion worthily of the vocation wherewith he is called, and, "whether he eateth or drinketh, doth all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31" this promise hath its own reward; for it is "forever and ever." They who "walk in the Name of the Lord," shall "walk before Him in, the land of the living, forever and ever" Psalm 116:9. Such walk on, with quickened steps, lingering not, "in the Name of the Lord our God," that is, doing all things in His Name, as His great Name

requires, conformed to the holiness and all other qualities which His Name expresseth. “For ever and ever, literally forever and yet, or, more strictly still, for that which is hidden and yet,” which is the utmost thought of eternity we can come to. Time indeed has no relation to eternity; for time, being God‘s creature, is infinite. Still, practically to us, our nearest conception of eternity, is existence, on and on and on, an endless, unchanging, ever-prolonged future, lost in distance and hidden from us, and then, and yet, an ever-to-come yet, which shalt never come to an end. Well then may we not faint, as tho‘ it were long to toil or to do without this or that, since the part of our way which lies amid toils and weariness is so short, and will soon be at an end; what lies beyond, in joy, is infinite in infinite joy, ever full and still ever a yet to come.

The prophet says, “we will walk;”, “uniting himself in longing, hope, faith, to the sons of the New Testament, that is, Christians, as his brethren, re-born by the grace of the same Christ;”, “ministers of the Old, heirs of the New Testament, because they loved through that same faith whereby we love; believing in the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection of Christ yet to be, as we believe in it, having been.”

Verse 6

In that day - that is, in that day of Christ and of His Gospel, of grace and salvation, the last days of which he had been speaking. Hitherto he had prophesied the glory of Zion, chiefly through the coming-in of the Gentiles. Now he adds, how the Jews should, with them, be gathered by grace into the one fold, in that long last day of the Gospel, at the beginning, in the course of it, and completely at the end Romans 11:26.

Her that halteth - The prophet resumes the image of the scattered flock, under which he had before Micah 2:12-13 foretold their restoration. This was no hope of his own, but His word who cannot fail. The course of events, upon which he is entering, would be, at times, for their greatness and their difficulty, past human belief. So he adds straightway, at the outset, “saith the Lord.” To “halt” is used of bodily lameness Genesis 32:32, and that, of a flock, worn out by its wanderings Zephaniah 3:19. It is used also of moral halting Psalm 35:15; Psalm 38:18, such as had been a chief sin of Israel, serving partly God, partly Baal; God, with a service of fear, Baal

with a service of that counterfeit of love, sensuality. So it was sick, both in body and soul, and driven out also, and afflicted.

Verse 7

And her that was cast off a strong nation - The prophecy, that there should be a remnant, was depressing. Yet what a remnant should it be! A remnant, which should multiply like the stars of heaven or the sand on the sea-shore. Israel had never been "a strong nation," as a kingdom of this world. At its best estate, under David, it had subdued the petty nations around it, who were confederated to destroy it. It had never competed with the powers of this world, East or West, Egypt or Nineveh, although God had at times marvelously saved it from being swallowed up by them. Now, the remnant of Judah, which itself was but a remnant of the undivided people, was to become "a strong nation." So Isaiah prophesied, "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation" Isaiah 60:22. Plainly not in temporal greatness, both because human strength was not, and could not be, its characteristic, and because the prophet had been speaking of spiritual restoration.

: "‹Strong‘ are they, whom neither torture nor allurements can separate from the love of Christ." "Strong are they, who are strong against themselves." Strong were they who said,

"We ought to obey God rather than men Acts 5:29, and, "who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" Romans 8:35, Romans 8:37. God does not only restore in the Gospel; He multiplies exceedingly. Rup.: "I will so clothe her with the spirit of might, that, as she shall be fruitful in number, so shall she be glorious in victories, so that of her it shall be said, "who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners?" Revelation 5:9-10; that same Lord, of whom it is here said,

The Lord shall reign over them in Zion from henceforth even forever - The visible kingdom of God in Judah was often obscured, kings, princes, priests, and false prophets combining to encourage one another in rebellion against God. In the captivity it even underwent an almost total eclipse by the over-shadowing of earthly power, save when the divine light flashed forth for an instant in the deeds or words of power and wisdom,

related by Daniel. “Henceforth,” that is, from the time, when the law should go forth out of Zion, God should indeed reign, and that kingdom should have no end.

Verse 8

And thou, O tower of the flock - “‹Tower of Ader,‘ which is interpreted ‹tower of the flock,‘ about 1000 paces (a mile) from Bethlehem,” says Jerome who lived there, “and foresignifying (in its very name) by a sort of prophecy the shepherds at the Birth of the Lord.” There Jacob fed his sheep Genesis 35:21, and there (since it was hard by Bethlehem) the shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks by night, saw and heard the Angels singing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” The Jews inferred from this place that the Messiah should be revealed there.

Stronghold - (Ophel) of the daughter of Zion Ophel was a strong place in the South of Jerusalem, the last which the wall, enclosing Zion, reached, before, or as, it touched on the Eastern porch of the temple, with whose service it was connected.

We know that, after the captivity, the Nethinim, who did the laborious service of the temple, dwelt there Nehemiah 3:26; Nehemiah 11:21. It lay very near to the priests‘ district Nehemiah 3:28. It was probably, a lower acclivity, “swelling out,” (as its name seems to mean,) from the mountain of the temple. In the last war, it was held together with “the temple, and the adjoining parts to no slight extent, and the valley of Kedron.” It was burnt before the upper city was taken. It had been encircled by a wall of old; for Jotham “built greatly upon its wall” 2 Chronicles 27:3, Manasseh “encircled it” 2 Chronicles 33:14, (probably with an outer wall) “and raised it exceedingly,” that is, apparently raised artificially the whole level.

Yet, as a symbol of all Jerusalem, Ophel is as remarkable, as the “tower of the flock” is as to Bethlehem. For Ophel, although fortified, is no where spoken of, as of any account. It is not even mentioned in the circuit of the walls, at their dedication, under Nehemiah Nehemiah 12:31-40, probably as an outlying, spot. It was probably of moment chiefly, as giving, an advantage to an enemy who might occupy it.

Both then are images of lowliness. The lonely Shepherd tower, for Bethlehem, the birthplace of David; Ophel for Jerusalem, of which it was

yet but an outlying part, and deriving its value probably as an outwork of the temple. Both symbols anticipate the fuller prophecy of the littleness, which shall become great in God. Before the mention of the greatness of the "dominion to come," is set forth the future poverty to which it should come. In lowliness Christ came, yet is indeed a Tower protecting and defending the sheep of His pasture, founded on earth in His Human Nature, reaching to Heaven in His divine; "a strong Tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" Proverbs 18:10.

Unto thee shall it come - (Literally, "unto thee shall it come, and there shall arrive etc.") He saith not at first what shall come, and so raises the soul to think of the greatness of that which should come. The soul is left to fill up what is more than thought can utter. "Unto thee," (literally, quite up to thee) No hindrances should withhold it from coming. Seemingly it was a great way off, and they in a very hopeless state. He suggests the difficulty even by his strength of assurance. One could not say, "it shall come quite up to thee," of that which in the way of nature would readily come to any one. But amid all hindrances God's Might makes its way, and brings His gifts and promises to their end. "And there shall arrive." He twice repeats the assurance, in equivalent words, for their fuller assurance, "to make the good tidings the gladder by repeating and enforcing them."

The "first or former, dominion." The word often stands, as our "former", in contrast with the "later." It is not necessarily "the first," strictly; and so here, not the "dominion" of David and Solomon exclusively. Rather the prophet is placed in spirit in the later times when the kingdom should be suspended, and foretells that "the former dominion," that is, that of the line of David, should come to her, not in its temporal greatness, but the line itself. So the Angel said, "He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever" Luke 1:32-33.

The (A) kingdom to the daughter of Jerusalem - that is, a kingdom, which should not be of her, but which should come to her; not her's by right, but by His right, who should merit it for her, and, being King of kings, makes His own, "kings and priests unto God and His Father" Revelation 1:6.

The Jews themselves seem to have taken these words into their own mouths, just before they rejected Him, when they hoped that He would be a king, such as they wished for. "Blessed be the kingdom of our father David

that cometh in the Name of the Lord" Mark 11:10. And in a distorted form, they held it even afterward.

Verse 9

Now - The prophet places himself in the midst of their deepest sorrows, and out of them he promises comfort. "Why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no King in thee? is thy Counsellor perished?". Is then all lost, because thou hast no visible king, none to counsel thee or consult for thee?. Very remarkably he speaks of their "King and Counsellor" as one, as if to say, "When all beside is gone, there is One who abides. Though thou be a captive, God will not forsake thee. When thou hadst no earthly king, "the Lord thy God was thy King" 1 Samuel 12:12. He is the First, and He is the Last. When thou shalt have no other, He, thy King, ceaseth not to be." Montanus: "Thou shouldest not fear, so long as He, who counselleth for thee, liveth; but He liveth forever." Thy "Counsellor," He, who is called "Counsellor" Isaiah 9:6, who counselleth for thee, who counselleth thee, will, if thou obey His counsel, make birth-pangs to end in joy.

For pangs have taken thee, as a woman in travail - Resistless, remediless, doubling the whole frame, redoubled until the end, for which God sends them, is accomplished, and then ceasing in joy. The truest comfort, amid all sorrow, is in owning that the travail-pains must be, but that the reward shall be afterward. Montanus: "It is meet to look for deliverance from God's mercy, as certainly as for punishment from our guilt; and that the more, since He who foretold both, willingly saves, punishes unwillingly." So the prophets adds.

Verse 10

Be in pain, and labor to bring forth - (Literally, Writhe and burst forth,) as if to say, "thou must suffer, but thy suffering and thy joy shall be one. Thou canst not have the joy without the suffering. As surely as thou sufferest, thou shalt have joy. In all sorrow, lose not faith and hope, and "thou shalt be sorrowful, but thy sorrow shall be turned into joy" John 16:20. Cyril: "Good daughter, be very patient in the pangs, bear up against your sorrows," so shall the birth be nigh. Yet for the time she must "go forth out of the city" into captivity. "And thou shalt dwell in the field," houseless, under tents, as captives were accustomed to be kept, until all were gathered together to be led away; a sore exchange for her former luxury, and in requital of their oppression Amos 6:1-14; Micah 2:8-9.

And thou shalt go even to Babylon - Not Babylon, but Assyria was the scourge of God in Micah‘s time. Babylon was scarcely known, a far country 2 Kings 20:14. Yet Micah is taught of God to declare that thither shall the two tribes be carried captive, although the ten were carried captive by Assyria. “There (see the note at Hosea 2:15) shalt thou be delivered, there the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.” God‘s judgments, or purifying trials, or visitation of His saints, hold their way, until their end be reached. They who suffer them cannot turn them aside; they who inflict them cannot add to them or detain them. The prison house is the place of deliverance to Joseph and Peter; the Red Sea to Israel; the judges were raised up, when Israel was mightily oppressed; Jabesh-Gilead was delivered when the seventh day was come 1 Samuel 11:3, 1 Samuel 11:10-11; the walls of Jerusalem were the end of Sennacherib; Judah should have long been in the very hand and grasp of Babylon, yet must its clenched hand be opened.

Verse 11

Now also - (And now.) The prophet had already spoken of the future before them, with this word Now. Then, he distinctly prophesied the captivity to Babylon. Twice more he begins anew; as Holy Scripture, so often, in a mystery, whether speaking of evil or of good, of deliverance or of punishment, uses a threefold form. In these two, no mention is made of the enemy, and so there is some uncertainty. But the course must apparently be either backward or forward. They must either be two nearer futures before the Captivity, or two more distant after it. This second gathering might, in itself, either be that of the Assyrian hosts under Sennacherib out of all the nations subject to him; or that of the many petty nations in the time of the Maccabees, who took advantage of the Syrians‘ oppression, to combine to eradicate the Jews (Isaiah 10:24-34; Isaiah 14:24, Isaiah 14:5; Isaiah 17:12-14; Isaiah 29:7-8; Nahum 1:10-13. Then also, if the course of the description was backward:

1) the captivity in Babylon

2) the destruction of Sennacherib

There is no earlier event to correspond with “the smiting of the judge of Israel on the cheek” (Micah 5:1-4 in Hebrew). The malice also of the nations gathered against Zion suits better with the abiding character of the

petty nations, and of their hereditary envy against Israel and its high claims. To Nineveh and Babylon, Israel was but one little corner of ground, which rounded their territory and connected them with Egypt. They disdained them, even while they sought to subdue them. Micah describes the exultation of petty gratified rivalry.

That say, let her be defiled - The bad have a keen eye for the haltings and inconsistencies and falls of God‘s people, for which they are ever on the watch. Like Satan, they are first tempters, then the accusers; first desecrators, then sanctimonious justiciaries. God, in His judgment, leaves what has been inwardly defiled to be outwardly profaned. “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple are ye” 1 Corinthians 3:17. “The faithful city had become a harlot” Isaiah 1:21. “The land had become polluted by its inhabitants” Jeremiah 3:9; Psalm 106:38; Isaiah 24:5. Now it was to be polluted by the enemy. Its seducers ask for the judgment of God. “It has become like us in its deeds; let it no more be distinguished from us by the name of the people of God.”

And let our eye look upon Zion - With pleasure upon its desolation, and feed itself with its misery.: “Where the eye, there love; where the hand, there pain.” “They opened their mouth wide against me: they said, Aha, Aha, our eye hath seen” Psalm 35:21. The world hates the Church; Edom, Israel; it cannot be satisfied with beholding its chastisements Micah 7:10; Obadiah 1:12. The sufferings of the Martyrs were the choice spectacle of the pagan.

Verse 12

But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they His counsel - The pagan did, for their own ends, what God willed for His. The first step was the same; God willed that His people should be punished; they willed to punish them. But all which lay beyond, they saw not; that God willed (on their repentance) to pardon His own people, but to punish themselves for their pride Isaiah 10:7, Isaiah 10:12 and cruelty Zechariah 1:15, Zechariah 1:19.: “Almighty God corrects the elect through the reprobate, as with a rod; after which He condemns the reprobate eternally, as when the son has been disciplined, the rod is cast into the fire.”

For He shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor - The multitude of the sheaves hinders not the threshing; the multitude of God‘s enemies hinders not their destruction. They think that they strengthen themselves, as

they gather together; God sees them but as ripened and fitted for destruction, gathered into one bundle together, to perish together. God gathers them, not by constraint or force, but by giving free scope to their own wayward wills, and overruling these to His ends.

Verse 13

Arise - (It may be,) from the dust in which they were lying, "I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass." Threshing in the East is partly with oxen, partly with wheels of iron, or with planks set with sharp flints on an open place made hard to this end. The prophet joins another image, with this and represents Judah as being by God endued with strength, first as with a "horn of iron" 1 Kings 22:11 to cast the enemy to the ground, and then with "hoofs of brass," wherewith to trample them to dust, as the stubble and chaff. "And I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord," that is, to Myself; the Lord gathered them into the floor by His Providence; the Lord gave His people strength to subdue them; and now, in His own Person, He says, I will complete My own work.

The very image of the "threshing" implies that this is no mere destruction. While the stubble is "beaten" or bruised to small pieces, and the chaff is far more than the wheat, and is carried out of the floor, there yet remains the seed-corn. So in the great judgments of God, while most is refuse, there yet remains over, what is severed from the lost heap and wholly "consecrated" to Him. Whatever things were the object of the חרם *chêrem* Leviticus 27:28 or "thing devoted to the Lord," could not be redeemed, but must remain wholly the Lord‘s. If it had life, it was to be put to death 1 Corinthians 10:11. And so the whole section fits wonderfully with the condition of the single soul. "She who halteth" (Rib.) "the soul, who would serve God, yet not so as wholly to give up the service of the world, which it had in Baptism renounced, who, after it had gone astray like a lost sheep, and been scattered amid the manifoldness of earthly things, was gathered again into the fold, to love One only, long for One only, give itself to One," its Good Shepherd, and over it the Lord reigneth forever, if, taught by experience the deceitfulness of Satan‘s promises, and stung by the sense of its own thanklessness and vileness, and conscious of the peril of self confidence, it abideth more closely than others with God. He shall gather her that is driven out, that is,, "He shall restore her, from whom He had, for the time, withdrawn His grace," and her that was afflicted, trouble

being God‘s most effectual instrument, in recalling the soul to Himself. “For the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down” Psalm 146:8.

And will make her that halteth, a remnant, placing her among the elect and holy, and her that was cast off strong; for Christ giveth oft to such souls great richness of divine graces, so that “where sin abounded, grace” should “much more abound” Romans 5:20. Rib.: “To it, when enlightened and purified by affliction and by repentance, it is promised, that its Lord, the Great King, shall come to it, and again reign in it, which is the great bliss of souls in grace. For then doth the soul really reign, when it submits wholly to Christ, whom to serve is to reign, and so, under Him, receives power to command its wrong desires, and rule itself;” that great and wonderful power which the Evangelist expresses in words so brief, “To them gave He power to become the sons of God” John 1:12. Thus He maketh it strong, so that “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, can separate it from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” Romans 8:38-39.

Then, “he describes the condition of the soul fluctuating between good and evil, called one way by God through inward inspirations, and another way by the enticements and habits of sin. And, wishing to follow God, yet not to be without its sinful pleasures, and knowing this to be impossible, it is in anguish and hesitates. Her the prophet justly rebukes, ‹why thus cry aloud, as though thou must be led captive by the Devil, not knowing or unable to extricate thyself? Hast thou no King, aided by whose power, thou mayest fight against all enticements, habit, the flesh?‘ Paul felt this and cried aloud, “I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Romans 7:23-24. You see his grief. But he despairs not. He knows that he has a King. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Or why grievest thou, as if thou hadst no “counsellor,” by whose counsels to free thee from these snares? “Thy Counsellor” indeed “perished” on the Cross, but for thy sake, that thou mayest live.

He died, to destroy him who hath the power of death. But He rose the third day and is still with thee; at the Right Hand of the Father He still

reigns Immortal forever. See how many counsels He has left thee in the Gospel, how many admonitions, whereby thou mayest lead a happy and tranquil life. Now "pain seizes thee like a woman in travail." For such a soul travails, having conceived inspirations from God, which it wishes to obey, but that the flesh, overcome by concupiscence, resists, and so it never brings forth, nor experiences that joy, whereof the Lord speaketh, "When she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world" John 16:21. Wherefore he adds; be in pain, for thou art indeed in travail; thou wilt not cease to be in pain, until thou bring forth. Thou wilt go forth, etc. "God, by a provision of His great mercy, allows lukewarm souls, who will be at no pains to gain grace, to fall into foulest sins, in order that, owning at last their misery, they may cease to be lukewarm, and with great ardor of soul may embrace virtue. For, warned by the result, they understand that they themselves emboldened the tempter, (for he chiefly attacks the lukewarm and remiss,) and they become ardent in the conflict and in well-doing."

Wherefore he says, thou shalt go forth out of the city, that City of God, whereof He is the Builder and Maker Hebrews 11:10, which is gladdened by the river of His spirit; "and it dwells in the open field, unprotected, ready to be a prey, in the broad way of its own concupiscences, out of the narrow road which leadeth to life, and goeth even to Babylon, the city of ‹confusion,‘ in tumult and din and unrest, and the distractions of this life." Yet even there shall it be delivered, like the poor Prodigal, who came to himself in a far country, when worn out by its hard service. Even there it must not despair, but remember, with him, its Father‘s house, its former home, the Heavenly Jerusalem. Its pains within or without, whereby it is brought back, are travail-pains. Though all is dark, it must not say, I have no Counsellor. For its Redeemer‘s Name is "Counsellor" Isaiah 9:6, "one Counsellor of a thousand" (Psalm 35:25, and hosts of devils seek thy utter destruction, and thou seem to be "delivered over" 1 Corinthians 5:5 to them to the destruction of the flesh; yet is it only that the spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord. Even Satan, when he is tormenting souls, knows not the thoughts of the Lord, nor understands His counsels, how, by the very pain which he inflicts, God is bidding: them, Rise and (Rib.) "look up to heaven and long for heavenly things and trample on all which they had hitherto foully served, honor or vain glory or covetousness or lust;" how He

will exalt their horn in the Lord, make it strong as iron that they should do all things through Christ in strengthening them, and conquer all through the might of Christ; how He should bruise Satan under their feet shortly, and they consecrate wholly to God their whole strength, every power of soul and body which hitherto had been the adversary‘s.

MICAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops - The "daughter of troops" is still the same who was before addressed, Judah. The word is almost always. used of "bands of men employed in irregular, marauding, in-roads." Judah is entitled "daughter of troops," on account of her violence, the robbery and bloodshed within her (Micah 2:8; Micah 3:2; etc. Hosea 5:10), as Jeremiah says, "Is this house which is called by My Name become a den of robbers in your eyes?" (Jeremiah 7:11, compare Matthew 21:13). She then who had spoiled Isaiah 33:1 should now be spoiled; she who had formed herself in bands to lay waste, shall now be gathered thick together, in small bands, unable to resist in the open field; yet in vain should she so gather herself; for the enemy was upon her, in her last retreat.

This description has obviously no fulfillment, except in the infliction by the Romans. For there was no event, before the invasion by Sennacherib and accordingly in the prophet's own time, in which there is any seeming fulfillment of it. But then, the second deliverance must be that by the Maccabees; and this siege, which lies, in order of time, beyond it, must be a siege by the Romans. With this it agrees, that whereas, in the two former visitations, God promised, in the first, deliverance, in the second, victory, here the prophet dwells on the Person of the Redeemer, and foretells that the strength of the Church should not lie in any human means Micah 5:8-15. Here too Israel had no king, but a judge only. Then the "gathering in robber-bands" strikingly describes their internal state in the siege of Jerusalem; and although this was subsequent to and consequent upon the rejection of our Lord, yet there is no reason why the end should be separated from the beginning since the capture by Titus was but the sequel of the capture by Pompey, the result of that same temper, in which they crucified Jesus, because He would not be their earthly king. It was the close of the organic existence of the former people; after which the remnant from among them with the Gentiles, not Israel after the flesh, were the true people of God.

He hath laid siege against us - The prophet, being born of them, and for the great love he bore them, counts himself among them, as Paul mourns over his brethren after the flesh. "They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek." So Paul said to him who had made himself high priest,

"God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law" Acts 23:3. It is no longer "the king" (for they had said, "We have no King but Caesar John 19:15) but the "judge of Israel," they who against Christ and His Apostles gave wrong judgment. As they had smitten contrary to the law, so were the chief men smitten by Titus, when the city was taken. As they had done it, was done unto them. To be smitten on the thee, betokens shame; to smite with the red, betokens destruction. Now both shall meet in one; as, in the Great Day, the wicked "shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt, and shall perish forever" Daniel 12:2.

Verse 2

But - (And) thou, Bethlehem Ephratah With us, the chequered events of time stand in strong contrast, painful or gladdening. Good seems to efface evil, or evil blots out the memory of the good. God orders all in the continuous course of His Wisdom. All lies in perfect harmony in the Divine Mind. Each event is the sequel of what went before. So here the prophet joins on, what to us stands in such contrast, with that simple, And. Yet he describes the two conditions bearing on one another. He had just spoken of the "judge of Israel" smitten on the cheek, and, before Micah 4:9, that Israel had neither king nor "counsellor;" he now speaks of the Ruler in Israel, the Everlasting. He had said, how Judah was to become mere bands of men; he now says, how the "little Bethlehem" was to be exalted. He had said before, that the rule of old was to come to "the tower of the flock, the daughter of Jerusalem;" now, retaining the word, he speaks of the Ruler, in whom it was to be established.

Before he had addressed "the tower of the flock;" now, Bethlehem. But he has greater things to say now, so he pauses, And thou! People have admired the brief appeal of the murdered Caesar, "Thou too, Brutus." The like energetic conciseness lies in the words, "And thou! Bethlehem Ephratah." The name Ephratah is not seemingly added, in order to distinguish Bethlehem from the Bethlehem of Zabulon, since that is only named once Joshua 19:15, and Bethlehem here is marked to be "the Bethlehem Judah", by the addition, "too little to be among the thousands of Judah." He joins apparently the usual name, "Bethlehem," with the old Patriarchal, and perhaps poetic Psalm 132:6 name "Ephratah," either in reference and contrast to that former birth of sorrow near Ephratah Genesis

35:19; Genesis 48:7, or, (as is Micah‘s custom) regarding the meaning of both names.

Both its names were derived from “fruitfulness;” “House of Bread” and “fruitfulness;” and, despite of centuries of Mohammedan oppression, it is fertile still..

It had been rich in the fruitfulness of this world; rich, thrice rich, should it be in spiritual fruitfulness.: “Truly is Bethlehem, ‹house of bread,‘ where was born “the Bread of life, which came down from heaven” John 6:48, John 6:51.: “who with inward sweetness refreshes the minds of the elect,” “Angel‘s Bread” Psalm 78:25, and “Ephratah, fruitfulness, whose fruitfulness is God,” the Seed-corn, stored wherein, died and brought forth much fruit, all which ever was brought forth to God in the whole world.

Though thou be little among the thousands of Judah - Literally, “small to be,” that is, “too small to be among” etc. Each tribe was divided into its thousands, probably of fighting men, each thousand having its own separate head Numbers 1:16; Numbers 10:4. But the thousand continued to be a division of the tribe, after Israel was settled in Canaan Joshua 22:21, Joshua 22:30; 1 Samuel 10:19; 1 Samuel 23:23. The “thousand” of Gideon was the meanest in Manasseh. Judges 6:15. Places too small to form a thousand by themselves were united with others, to make up the number. So lowly was Bethlehem that it was not counted among the possessions of Judah. In the division under Joshua, it was wholly omitted. From its situation, Bethlehem can never have been a considerable place.

It lay and lies, East of the road from Jerusalem to Hebron, at six miles from the capital. “6 miles,” Arculf, (Early Travels in Palestine, p. 6) Bernard (Ibid. 29) Sae, wulf, (Ibid. 44) “2 hours.” Maundrell, (Ibid. 455) Robinson (i. 470)). It was “seated on the summit-level of the hill country of Judaea with deep gorges descending East to the Dead Sea and West to the plains of Philistia,” “2704 feet above the sea”. It lay “on a narrow ridge”, whose whole length was not above a mile, swelling at each extremity into a somewhat higher eminence, with a slight depression between.: “The ridge projects Eastward from the central mountain range, and breaks down in abrupt terraced slopes to deep valleys on the N. E. and S.” The West end too “shelves gradually down to the valley”. It was then rather calculated to be

an outlying fortress, guarding the approach to Jerusalem, than for a considerable city.

As a garrison, it was fortified and held by the Philistines 2 Samuel 23:14 in the time of Saul, recovered from them by David, and was one of the 15 cities fortified by Rehoboam. Yet it remained an unimportant place. Its inhabitants are counted with those of the neighboring Netophah, both before 1 Chronicles 2:54 and after Nehemiah 7:26 the captivity, but both together amounted after the captivity to 179 Ezra 2:21, Ezra 2:2, or 188 Nehemiah 7:26 only. It still does not appear among the possessions of Judah Nehemiah 11:25-30. It was called a city (Rth 1:19 ; Ezra 2:1, with 21; Nehemiah 7:6, with 26), but the name included even places which had only 100 fighting men Amos 5:3. In our Lord‘s time it is called a village John 7:42, a city, Luke 2:4, or a strong. The royal city would become a den of thieves. Christ should be born in a lowly village.: “He who had taken the form of a servant, chose Bethlehem for His Birth, Jerusalem for His Passion.”

Matthew relates how the Chief Priest and Scribes in their answer to Herod‘s enquiries, where Christ should be born, Matthew 2:4-6, alleged this prophecy. They gave the substance rather than the exact words, and with one remarkable variation, art not the least among the princes of Judah. Matthew did not correct their paraphrase, because it does not affect the object for which they alleged the prophecy, the birth of the Redeemer in Bethlehem. The sacred writers often do not correct the translations, existing in their time, when the variations do not affect the truth.

Both words are true here. Micah speaks of Bethlehem, as it was in the sight of men; the chief priests, whose words Matthew approves, speak of it as it was in the sight of God, and as, by the Birth of Christ, it should become.: “Nothing hindered that Bethlehem should be at once a small village and the Mother-city of the whole earth, as being the mother and nurse of Christ who made the world and conquered it.”: “That is not the least, which is the house of blessing, and the receptacle of divine grace.”: “He saith that the spot, although mean and small, shall be glorious. And in truth,” adds Chrysostom, “the whole world came together to see Bethlehem, where, being born, He was laid, on no other ground than this only.”: “O Bethlehem, little, but now made great by the Lord, He hath made thee great,

who, being great, was in thee made little. What city, if it heard thereof, would not envy thee that most precious Stable and the glory of that Crib? Thy name is great in all the earth, and all generations call thee blessed. "Glorious things are everywhere spoken of thee, thou city of God" Psalm 87:3. Everywhere it is sung, that this Man is born in her, and the Most High Himself shall establish her.

Out of thee shall He come forth to Me that is to be Ruler in Israel - (Literally, shall (one) come forth to Me "to be Ruler.") Bethlehem was too small to be any part of the polity of Judah; out of her was to come forth One, who, in God's Will, was to be its Ruler. The words to Me include both of Me and to Me. Of Me, that is,, by My Power and Spirit," as Gabriel said, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God" Luke 1:35. To Me, as God said to Samuel, "I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite; for I have provided Me a king among his sons" 1 Samuel 16:1. So now, "one shall go forth thence to Me," to do My Will, to My praise and glory, to reconcile the world unto Me, to rule and be Head over the true Israel, the Church. He was to "go forth out of Bethlehem," as his native-place; as Jeremiah says, "His noble shall be from him, and his ruler shall go forth out of the midst of him" Jeremiah 30:21; and Zechariah, "Out of him shall come forth the cornerstone; out of him the nail, out of him the battle-bow, out of him every ruler together" Zechariah 10:4. Before, Micah had said "to the tower of Edar, Ophel of the daughter of Zion, the first rule shall come to thee;" now, retaining the word, he says to Bethlehem, "out of thee shall come one to be a ruler." "The judge of Israel had been smitten;" now there should "go forth out of" the little Bethlehem, One, not to be a judge only, but a Ruler.

Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting - Literally, "from the days of eternity." "Going forth" is opposed to "going forth;" a "going forth" out of Bethlehem, to a "going forth from eternity;" a "going forth," which then was still to come, (the prophet says, "shall go forth,") to a "going forth" which had been long ago (Rup.), "not from the world but from the beginning, not in the days of time, but "from the days of eternity." For "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Same was in the beginning with God." John 1:1-2. In the end of the days, He was to go forth from Bethlehem; but, lest he should be thought then to have had His Being, the prophet adds, His

‹goings forth are from everlasting.‘” Here words, denoting eternity and used of the eternity of God, are united together to impress the belief of the Eternity of God the Son. We have neither thought nor words to conceive eternity; we can only conceive of time lengthened out without end.: “True eternity is boundless life, all existing at once,” or, “to duration without beginning and without end and without change.”

The Hebrew names, here used, express as much as our thoughts can conceive or our words utter. They mean literally, from afore, (that is, look back as far as we can, that from which we begin is still “before,”) “from the days of that which is hidden.” True, that in eternity there are no divisions, no succession, but one everlasting “now;” one, as God, in whom it is, is One. But man can only conceive of Infinity of space as space without bounds, although God contains space, and is not contained by it; nor can we conceive of Eternity, save as filled out by time. And so God speaks after the manner of men, and calls Himself “the Ancient of Days” Daniel 7:9,, “being Himself the age and time of all things; before days and age and time,” “the Beginning and measure of ages and of time.” The word, translated “from of old,” is used elsewhere of the eternity of God Habakkuk 1:12. “The God of before” is a title chosen to express, that He is before all things which He made. “Dweller of afore” Psalm 55:20 is a title, formed to shadow out His ever-present existence.

Conceive any existence afore all which else you can conceive, go back afore and afore that; stretch out backward yet before and before all which you have conceived, ages afore ages, and yet afore, without end, - then and there God was. That afore was the property of God. Eternity belongs to God, not God to eternity. Any words must be inadequate to convey the idea of the Infinite to our finite minds. Probably the sight of God, as He is, will give us the only possible conception of eternity. Still the idea of time prolonged infinitely, although we cannot follow it to infinity, shadows our eternal being. And as we look along that long vista, our sight is prolonged and stretched out by those millions upon millions of years, along which we can look, although even if each grain of sand or dust on this earth, which are countless, represented countless millions, we should be, at the end, as far from reaching to eternity as at the beginning. “The days of eternity” are only an inadequate expression, because every conception of the human mind must be so.

Equally so is every other, “From everlasting to everlasting” Psalm 90:2; Psalm 103:17; “from everlasting” (Psalm 93:2, and of Divine Wisdom, or God the Son, Proverbs 8:23); “to everlasting” Psalm 9:8; Psalm 29:10; “from the day” Isaiah 43:13, that is, since the day was. For the word, from, to our minds implies time, and time is no measure of eternity. Only it expresses pre-existence, an eternal Existence backward as well as forward, the incommunicable attribute of God. But words of Holy Scripture have their full meaning, unless it appear from the passage itself that they have not. In the passages where the words, forever, from afore, do not mean eternity, the subject itself restrains them. Thus forever, looking onward, is used of time, equal in duration with the being of whom it is written, as, “he shall be thy servant forever” Exodus 21:6, that is, so long as he lives in the body. So when it is said to the Son, “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever” Psalm 45:6, it speaks of a kingdom which shall have no end. In like way, looking backward, “I will remember Thy wonders from old” Psalm 77:12, must needs relate to time, because they are marvelous dealings of God in time. So again, “the heavens of old, stand simply contrasted with the changes of man” Psalm 68:34. But “God of old is the Eternal God” Deuteronomy 33:27. “He that abideth of old” Psalm 55:20 is God enthroned from everlasting In like manner the “goings forth” here, opposed to a “going forth” in time, (emphatic words being moreover united together,) are a going forth in eternity.

The word, “from of old,” as used of being, is only used as to the Being of God. Here too then there is no ground to stop short of that meaning; and so it declares the eternal “going-forth,” or Generation of the Son. The plural, “goings forth,” may here be used, either as words of great majesty, “God,” “Lord,” “Wisdom,” (that is, divine Proverbs 1:20; Proverbs 9:1) are plural; or because the Generation of the Son from the Father is an Eternal Generation, before all time, and now, though not in time, yet in eternity still. As then the prophet saith, “from the days of eternity,” although eternity has no parts, nor beginning, nor “from,” so he may say “goings forth,” to convey, as we can receive it, a continual going-forth. We think of Eternity as unending, continual, time; and so he may have set forth to us the Eternal Act of the “Going Forth” of the Son, as continual acts.

The Jews understood, as we do now, that Micah foretold that the Christ was to be born at Bethlehem, until they rejected Him, and were pressed by the argument. Not only did the chief priests formally give the answer, but, supposing our Lord to be of Nazareth, some who rejected Him, employed the argument against Him. "Some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said, that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" John 7:41-42. They knew of two distinct things: that Christ was:

(1) to be of the seed of David; and

(2) out of the town of Bethlehem.

Christians urged them with the fact, that the prophecy could be fulfilled in no other than in Christ.: "If He is not yet born, who is to go forth as a Ruler out of the tribe of Judah, from Bethlehem, (for He must needs come forth out of the tribe of Judah, and from Bethlehem, but we see that now no one of the race of Israel has remained in the city of of Bethlehem, and thenceforth it has been interdicted that any Jew should remain in the confines of that country) - how then shall a Ruler be born from Judaea, and how shall he come forth out of Bethlehem, as the divine volumes of the prophets announce, when to this day there is no one whatever left there of Israel, from whose race Christ could be born?"

The Jews at first met the argument, by affirming that the Messiah was born at Bethlehem on the day of the destruction of the temple; but was hidden for the sins of the people. This being a transparent fable, the Jews had either to receive Christ, or to give up the belief that He was to be born at Bethlehem. So they explained it, "The Messiah shall go forth thence, because he shall be of the seed of David who was out of Bethlehem." But this would have been misleading language. Never did man so speak, that one should be born in a place, when only a remote ancestor had been born there. Micah does not say merely, that His family came out of Bethlehem, but that He Himself should thereafter come forth thence. No one could have said of Solomon or of any of the subsequent kings of Judah, that they should thereafter come forth from Bethlehem, any more than they could now say, ‹one shall come forth from Corsic,‘ of any future sovereign of the

line of Napoleon III., because the first Napoleon was a Corsican; or to us, ‹one shall come out of Hanover,‘ of a successor to the present dynasty, born in England, because George I. came from Hanover in 1714.

Verse 3

Therefore - Since God has so appointed both to punish and to redeem, He, God, or the Ruler "whose goings forth have been from of old from everlasting," who is God with God, "shall give them up, that is, withdraw His protection and the nearness of His Presence, "giving them up:"

(1) into the hands of their enemies. And indeed the far greater part never returned from the captivity, but remained, although willingly, in the enemy‘s land, outwardly shut out from the land of the promise and the hope of their fathers (as in 2 Chronicles 36:17).

(2) But also, all were, more than before, "given up" Acts 7:42; Romans 1:24, Romans 1:26, Romans 1:28, to follow their own ways.

God was less visibly present among them. Prophecy ceased soon after the return from the captivity, and many tokens of the nearness of God and means of His communications with them, the Ark and the Urim and Thummim were gone. It was a time of pause and waiting, wherein the fullness of God‘s gifts was withdrawn, that they might look on to Him who was to come. "Until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth," that is, until the Virgin who should conceive and bear a Son and call His Name Emmanuel, God with us, shall give birth to Him who shall save them. And then shall be redemption and joy and assured peace. God provides against the fainting of hearts in the long time before our Lord should come.

Then - (And). There is no precise mark of time such as our word then expresses. He speaks generally of what should be after the Birth of the Redeemer. "The remnant of His brethren shall return unto the children of Israel." "The children of Israel" are the true Israel, "Israelites indeed" John 1:47; they who are such, not in name (Romans 9:6, etc.) only, but indeed and in truth. His brethren are plainly the brethren of the Christ; either because Jesus vouchsafed to be born "of the seed of David according to the flesh" Romans 1:3, and of them "as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever" Romans 9:5; or as such as He makes and

accounts and "is not ashamed to call, brethren" Hebrews 2:11, being sons of God by grace, as He is the Son of God by nature. As He says, "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in Heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother" Matthew 12:50; and, "My brethren are these who hear the word of God and do it" Luke 8:21.

The residue of these, the prophet says, shall return to, so as to be joined with, the children of Israel; as Malachi prophesies, "He shall bring back the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers" (Hosea 1:11; Isaiah 11:10, etc.). This has been fulfilled in each generation since our Lord came, and shall be yet further in the end, when they shall haste and pour into the Church, and so "all Israel shall be saved" Romans 11:26.

But "the promise of God was not only to Israel after the flesh, but to all" also that were afar off, even as many as the Lord our God should call Acts 2:39. All these may be called the remnant of His brethren, even those that were, before, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and afar off Ephesians 2:12-14, but now, in Christ Jesus, made one with them; all, brethren among themselves and to Christ their ruler.: "Having taken on Him their nature in the flesh, He is not ashamed to call them so, as the Apostle speaketh, confirming it out of the Psalm, where in the Person of Christ he saith, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren" Psalm 22:22. There is no reason to take the name, brethren, here in a narrower sense than so to comprehend all "the remnant whom the Lord shall call" Joel 2:32, whether Jews or Gentiles. The word "brethren" in its literal sense includes both, and, as to both, the words were fulfilled.

Verse 4

And He shall stand - The prophet continues to speak of personal acts of this Ruler who was to be born. He was not to pass away, not to rule only by others, but by Himself. To stand is the attitude of a servant, as Jesus, although God and Lord of all, said of Himself, "He shall come forth and serve them" Luke 12:37; "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" Matthew 20:28. "He shall stand" as a Shepherd Isaiah 61:5, to watch, feed, guard them, day and night; "He shall stand," as Stephen saw Christ "standing on the Right Hand of God" Acts 7:55, "to succor all those who suffer for Him.": "For to sit belongs to one judging; to stand, to one

fighting or helping." "He shall stand," as abiding, not to pass from them, as Himself saith, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" Matthew 28:20: and He shall feed His flock by His Spirit, His Word, His Wisdom and doctrine, His example and life; yea, by His own Body and Blood Psalm 23:1.

In the strength of the Lord - He, who feedeth them with divine tenderness, shall also have divine might, His Father's and His own, to protect them; as He saith, "My sheep hear My Voice, and I know them and they follow Me, neither shall any man pluck them out of My Hand. My Father Which gave them Me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's Hand. I and My Father are One" John 10:27-30. With authority, it is said, "He commandeth even the unclean spirits and they come out" Luke 4:36. His feeding or teaching also was "with authority, and not as the scribes" Matthew 7:29.

In the majesty of the name of the Lord His God - As John says, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of His Father" John 1:14; and He saith, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" Matthew 28:18; so that the divine glory should shine through the majesty of His teaching, the power of His Grace, upholding His own, and the splendor of the miracles wrought by Him and in His Name. "Of the Name of the Lord;" as He saith again, "Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy Name" John 17:11-12.: "Whoever then is sent to feed His flock must stand, that is, be firm and unshaken; feed, not sell, nor slay; and feed in might, that is, in Christ." His God, as our Lord Himself, as Man, saith, "Unto My Father, and your Father, and to My God and your God".

But that Majesty He Himself wields, as no mere man can; He Himself is invested with it.: "To ordinary kings God is strength Psalm 28:7; Psalm 140:7, or gives strength 1 Samuel 2:10; men have strength in God; this Ruler is clad in the strength of the Lord, that same strength, which the Lord hath, whose is strength. Of Him, as Israel's King, the same is said as of the Lord, as King of the whole earth Psalm 93:1; only that the strength of the Messiah is not His own, but the Lord's. He is invested with the strength of the Lord, because He is Man; as Man, He can be invested with the whole strength of the Lord, only because He is also God."

And they shall abide - (Literally, sit, dwell) in rest and security and unbroken peace under Christ their Shepherd and their King; they shall not wander to and fro as heretofore "He, their Shepherd, shall stand; they shall sit." "The word is the more emphatic, because it stands so absolutely. This will be a sitting or dwelling, which will indeed deserve the name. The original promise, so often forfeited by their disobedience should be perfectly fulfilled; "and ye shall dwell in your land safely, and I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid". So Amos and Micah had before promised. And this is the result of the greatness of the promised Ruler, as the like promise of the Psalm is rested on the immutability of God; "Thou art the Same, and Thy years shall have no end. The children of Thy servants shall dwell, and their seed shall be established before Thee." Psalm 102:27-28. For it follows,"

For now - (In the time which Micah saw as did Abraham with the eye of faith,) "now," in contrast to that former time of lowliness. His life shall be divided between a life of obscurity, and a life of never-ending greatness.

Shall He be great unto the (very) ends of the earth - embracing them in His rule, (as David and Solomon had foretold,) and so none shall harm those whom He, the King of all the earth, shall protect. The universality of protection is derived from an universality of power. To David God says, "I have made thee a great name, like the name of the great that are in the earth" 2 Samuel 7:9. Of Uzziah it is said, "His name went forth far; for he was marvelously helped, until he was strong" (2 Chronicles 26:15, add 2 Chronicles 26:8); but of the Messiah alone it is said, that His power should reach to the ends of the earth; as God prophesies of Himself, that His "Name should be great among the pagan" Malachi 1:11, Malachi 1:14. So Gabriel said to His Mother, "This," whom she should bear, "shall be great".

Verse 5

And this Man shall be the Peace - This, emphatically, that is, "This Same," as is said of Noah, "This same shall comfort us" Genesis 5:29, or, in the song of Moses, of the Lord, "This Same is my God" Exodus 15:2. Of Him he saith, not only that He brings peace, but that He Himself is that Peace; as Paul saith, "He is our Peace" Ephesians 2:14, and Isaiah calls Him "the Prince of peace" Isaiah 9:6, and at His Birth the heavenly host proclaimed "peace on earth" Luke 2:14; and He "preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh" Ephesians 2:17; and on leaving the world He saith, "Peace I leave with you, My Peace I give unto

you" John 14:27. "He shall be our Peace," within by His Grace, without by His Protection. Lap.: "Wouldest thou have peace with God, thine own soul, thy neighbor? Go to Christ who is our Peace," and follow the footsteps of Christ. "Ask peace of Him who is Peace. Place Christ in thy heart and thou hast placed Peace there."

When the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces - Assur stands for the most powerful and deadliest foe, "ghostly and bodily," as the Assyrian then was of the people of God. For since this plainly relates to the time after Christ's coming, and, (to say the least,) after the captivity in Babylon and deliverance Micah 4:10 from it, which itself followed the dissolution of the Assyrian Empire, the Assyrians cannot be the literal people, who had long since ceased to be In Isaiah too the Assyrian is the type of antichrist and of Satan.

As Christ is our Peace, so one enemy is chosen to represent all enemies who Acts 12:1 vex the Church, whether the human agents or Satan who stirs them up and uses them. "By the Assyrian," says Cyril, "he here means no longer a man out of Babylon, but rather marks out the inventor of sin, Satan. Or rather, to speak fully, the implacable multitude of devils, which spiritually ariseth against all which is holy, and fights against the holy city, the spiritual Zion, whereof the divine Psalmist saith, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God." For Christ dwelleth in the Church, and maketh it, as it were, His own city, although by His Godhead filling all things. This city of God then is a sort of land and country of the sanctified and of those enriched in spirit, in unity with God. When then the Assyrian shall come against our city, that is, when barbarous and hostile powers fight against the saints, they shall not find it unguarded."

The enemy may tread on the land and on its palaces, that is, lay low outward glory, vex the body which is of earth and the visible temple of the Holy Spirit, as he did Paul by the thorn in the flesh, the minister of Satan to buffet him, or Job in mind body or estate, but Luke 12:4 after that he has no more than he can do; he cannot hurt the soul, because nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, and (Rup.) Christ who is our Peace is in us; and of the saint too it may be said, "The enemy cannot hurt him" Psalm 89:22. Rib.: Much as the Church has been vexed at all times by persecutions of devils and of tyrants, Christ has ever consoled her and given her peace in the persecutions themselves: "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that

we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" 2 Corinthians 1:4-5. The Apostles Acts 5:41 departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name. And Paul writeth to the Hebrews, "ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing that ye have in heaven a better and more enduring substance" Hebrews 10:34.

Then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men - (Literally, anointed, although elsewhere used of pagan princes.)

The "shepherds" are manifestly inferior, spiritual, shepherds, acting under the One Shepherd, by His authority, and He in them. The princes of men are most naturally a civil power, according to its usage elsewhere Joshua 13:21; Psalm 83:12; Ezekiel 32:30. The "seven" is throughout the Old Testament a symbol of a sacred whole, probably of the union of God with the world, reconciled with it; eight, when united with it, is something beyond it. Since then "seven" denotes a great, complete, and sacred multitude, by the eight he would designate "an incredible and almost countless multitude." Rib.: "So in defense of the Church, there shall be raised up very many shepherds and teachers (for at no time will it be forsaken by Christ;) yea by more and more, countlessly, so that, however persecutions may increase, there shall never be lacking more to teach, and exhort to, the faith."

Verse 6

And they shall waste - Literally, feed on, and so eat up. They who were shepherds of their own people, should consume their enemies. Jeremiah uses the same image. "The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her; they shall pitch tents against her round about; they shall feed, each his space" Jeremiah 6:3. So Joshua and Caleb say, "They, (the inhabitants of Canaan,) are bread for us" Numbers 14:9. So it was said to Peter, "arise, Peter, kill and eat" Acts 10:13; and what once was common, defiled and unclean, shall turn to the nourishment and growth of the Church, and be incorporated into Christ, being made part of His Body.

And the land of Nimrod - Babylon, which should displace Assyria, but should carry on its work of chastising God's people, is joined by Micah, as by Isaiah Isaiah 10:12-15 and Babylon Isaiah 14:13-15 whose destruction is

foretold, yet so as to shadow out rebellion against God in its intensest form, making itself independent of, or measuring itself against, God. Hence, probably, here alone in holy Scripture, Babylon is called "the land of Nimrod," as indeed he founded it Genesis 10:10, but therewith was the author of the tower of Babel also, which was built in rebellion against God, whence his own name was derived. Assyria then, and the world-empire which should succeed it, stand as representing the God-opposed world.

In the entrances thereof - (Literally, in the gates thereof.) The shepherds of Israel shall not act on the defensive only, but shall have victory over the world and Satan, carrying back the battle into his own dominions, and overthrowing him there. Satan's malice, so far from hurting the Church, shall turn to its good. Wherein he hoped to waste it, he shall be wasted; wherein he seemed to triumph, he shall be foiled. So it has been ever seen, how, under every persecution, the Church grew.: "The more it was pressed down, the more it rose up and flourished;", "Shivering the assault of the Pagans, and strengthened more and more, not by resisting, but by enduring." Yet all, by whomsoever done, shall be the work of Christ alone, enduring in martyrs, teaching in pastors, converting through the Apostles of pagan nations. Wherefore he adds:

Thus (And) He shall deliver us from the Assyrian - Not they, the subordinate shepherds, but He, the Chief Shepherd until the last enemy shall be destroyed and death shall be swallowed up in victory, shall deliver, whether by them or by Himself as He often so doth, - not us only (the saying is the larger because unlimited) but - He shall deliver, absolutely. Whosoever shall be delivered, He shall be their deliverer; all, whom He alone knoweth, who alone "knoweth them that are His" 2 Timothy 2:19. "Neither is there salvation in any other" Acts 4:12. "Whoso glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" 2 Corinthians 10:17. Every member of Christ has part in this, who, through the grace of God, "has power and strength to have victory and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh" - not he, but the grace of God which is with him; and much more, all, whether Apostles or Apostolic men, or Pastors, or Bishops and Overseers, who, by preaching or teaching or prayer, bring those to the knowledge of the truth, who "sat in darkness and the shadow of death" Psalm 107:10, and by whom "God translates us into the kingdom of His dear Son" Colossians 1:13.

Verse 7

And the remnant of Jacob - Micah (Micah 4:7), as well as Isaiah (Isaiah 10:21), had prophesied, that a remnant only should return unto the Mighty God. These, though very many in themselves, are yet but a remnant only of the unconverted mass; yet this, "the remnant, who shall be saved" Romans 9:27, who believe in Christ, "the little flock" Luke 12:32, of whom were the Apostles and their disciples, "shall be, in the midst of many people," whom they won to the faith, as John in Asia, Thomas in India, Peter in Babylon and Rome, Paul well-nigh in the whole world, what? something to be readily swallowed up by their multitude? No, but "as a dew from the Lord, as the showers from the grass, which tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men," quickening to life that, which, like soon-withered (see Psalm 102:5, Psalm 102:12; 2 Kings 19:26; Isaiah 37:27) grass, no human cultivation, no human help, could reach.

In the Gospel and the grace of Christ there are both, gentleness and might; softness, as the dew, might as of a lion. For "Wisdom reacheth from one end to another mightily; and sweetly doth she order all things". The dew is, in Holy Scripture, a symbol of divine doctrine. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass" Deuteronomy 32:2. The dew comes down from heaven, is of heavenly not of earthly birth, transparent, glistening with light, reflecting the hues of heaven, gentle, slight, weak in itself, refreshing, cooling the strong heats of the day (2 Corinthians 4:12, quenching the fiery heat of passions, and watering the dry and barren soil, that it might bring forth fruits unto Christ. Yet, they say, "the excellency of the power was of God and not of us" 2 Corinthians 4:7. and "God gave the increase" 1 Corinthians 3:6-7. For neither was their doctrine "of man nor by man" Galatians 1:12; but it came from heaven, the Holy Spirit teaching them invisibly and making unlearned and ignorant men mighty inward and deed. Rup.: "Whence these and these alone the Church of Christ looks up to, as furnishing the rule of truth." Rib.: "The herb, upon which this dew falleth, groweth to God without any aid of man, and flourisheth, and needeth neither doctrines of philosophers, nor the rewards or praises of men."

Verse 8

And the remnant of Jacob shall be as a young lion - o"What more unlike than the sweetness of the dew and the fierceness of the lion? What so

different as the gentle shower distilling on the herb, and the savageness or vehemence of a lion roaring among "the flocks of sheeps?" Yet both are ascribed to "the remnant of Jacob." Why? Because the Apostles of Christ are both tender and severe, tender in teaching and exhorting, severe in rebuking and avenging. How does Paul teach, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation; now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God!" 2 Corinthians 1:3.

Yet the same Apostle after a little writes, "This is the third time I am coming to you. I told you before and foretell you, and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned and to all others, that if I come again, I will not spare, since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me" 2 Corinthians 13:1-3. See the severity of a master, like the roaring of "a lion among the beasts of the forest." For such surely are they whom he rebukes for the 2 Corinthians 12:21 uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they had committed. Was he not to such as a lion? 1 Corinthians 5:2-5? Was not Peter such, when he rebuked Ananias first and then Sapphira his wife, and they fell down and gave up the ghost? They tread down or "cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" 2 Corinthians 10:5; as Christ Himself, who spake in them, is both a lamb and the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" Revelation 5:5, and nothing is so terrible as "the wrath of the Lamb" Revelation 6:16.

And none can deliver - Dionysius: "For as the Apostles past from nation to nation, and trod down paganism, subduing it to Christ, and taking within their net the many converted nations, none could withdraw from the Apostles' doctrine those whom they had converted." The pagan world "cried out that the state is beset, that the Christians are in their fields, their forts, their islands.": "We are a people of yesterday, and yet we have filled every place belonging to you, cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camp, your tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum! We leave you your temples only. We can count your armies, our numbers in a single province will be greater."

Verse 9

Their hand shall be lifted up upon their adversaries - The might of the Church is the Might of Christ in her, and the glory of the Church is His from whom it comes and to whom it returns. It is all one, whether this be

said to Christ or to the "remnant of Jacob, that is, His Church. Her "enemies" are His, and her's only because they are His, and hate her as belonging to Him. They "shall be cut off," either ceasing to be His enemies, or ceasing to be, as Julian or Arius or antichrist, "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His Mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His Coming" 2 Thessalonians 2:8. And in the end, Satan also, over whom Christ gave the Apostles "power to tread on all the power of the Enemy" Luke 10:19, shall be "bruised under our feet" Romans 16:20.

Verse 10

And it shall come to pass in that day - Of grace in the kingdom of Christ and of His Presence in the Apostles and with the Church; "I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee." The greater the glory and purity of the church, the less it needs or hangs upon human aid. The more it is reft of human aid, the more it hangs upon God. So God promises, as a blessing, that He will remove from her all mere human resources, both what was in itself evil, and what, although good, had been abused. Most of these things, whose removal is here promised, are spoken of at the same time by Isaiah, as sin, or the occasion of sin, and of God's judgments to Judah. "Soothsayers," (the same word) "horses, chariots, idols the work of their hands; high towers, fenced walls" Isaiah 2:6-8, Isaiah 2:15. Rib. Lap.: "I will take, from thee all arms wherewith, while unconverted, thou opposedst the faith," all which thou settest up as idols in place of God. (Such are witchcrafts, soothsayers, graven images, images of Ashtaroth.) "I will take from thee all outward means and instruments of defense which aforetime were turned into pride and sin;" as horses and chariots. Not such shall be the arms of the Church, not such her strongholds. A horse is a vain thing to save a man. Her arms shall be the despised Cross of shame; her warriors, they who bear it; their courage, to endure in holy patience and meekness; their might, the Holy Spirit within them; their victories, through death, not of others, but their Master's and, in His, their own. They shall overcome the world, as He overcame it, and through Him alone and His Merits who overcame it by suffering.

Verses 11-15

I will cut off the cities of thy land - So God promised by Zechariah, "Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls; for I will be unto her a wall of fire round about" Zechariah 2:4-5. The Church shall not need the temptation of human defense; for God shall fence her in on every side.

Great cities too, as the abode of luxury and sin, of power and pride, and, mostly, of cruelty, are chiefly denounced as the objects of God‘s anger. Babylon stands as the emblem of the whole city of the world or of the devil, as opposed to God. Rup.: “The first city was built by Cain; Abel and the other saints heed no continuing city” Hebrews 13:14 here. Cities then will include (Rup.) “all the tumults and evil passions and ambition and strife and bloodshed, which Cain brought in among men. Cities are collectively called and are Babylon, with whom, (as in the Revelations we hear a voice from heaven saying), “the kings of the earth committed fornication and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies” Revelation 18:3; and of which it is written, “And a mighty Angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city, Babylon, be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.” Revelation 18:21. “Great rest then is promised to holy Zion that is, the Church, when the cities or strongholds of the land (strongholds, as they are, of earthliness) shall be destroyed. For together with them are included all objects of desire in them, with the sight whereof the citizens of the kingdom of God, while pilgrims here, are tempted; whereof the wise man saith, Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”

The fulfillment reaches on to the Day of Judgment, when the Church shall finally receive glory from the Lord, and be “without spot and wrinkle” Ephesians 5:27. All looks on to that Day. The very largeness of the promise, which speaks, in its fullest sense, of the destruction of things, without which we can hardly do in this life, (as cities or things very useful to the needs of man, (as horses,) carries us on yet more to that Day when there will be no more need of any outward things; Rup.: “when the heavy body shall be changed, and shall have the swiftness of angels, and shall be transported whither it willeth, without chariots and horses; and all things which tempt the eye shall cease; and no evil shall enter; and there shall be no need of divining, amid the presence and full knowledge of God, and where the ever-present Face of God, who is Truth, shall shine on all, and nothing be uncertain or unknown; nor shall they need to form in their souls images of Him whom His own shall see as He Is; nor shall they esteem anything of self, or the work of their own hands; but God shall be All in all.” In like way, the woe on those who obey not the truth, also looks on to the end. It too is final. There is nothing to soften it. Punishments in the course of life are medicinal. Here no mention is made of Mercy, but only of executing

vengeance; and that, with wrath and fury; and that, such as they have not heard. For as eye hath not seen, nor heart conceived the good things laid up in store for those who love God, so neither the evil things prepared for those who, in act, shew that they hate Him.

MICAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Introduction

The foregoing prophecy closed with the final cleansing of the Church and the wrath of God resting on the wicked, when, as Paul saith, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10. The prophet here begins his third and last summons to judgment, in the Name, as it were, of the All-Holy Trinity, against whom they had sinned.

Verse 1

Hear ye now what the Lord saith - If ye will not hear the rebuke of man, hear now at last the word of God. "Arise thou, Micah." The prophet was not willing to be the herald of woe to his people; but had to arise at the bidding of God, that he might not "be rebellious like that rebellious house" Ezekiel 2:8. Stand up; as one having all authority to rebuke, and daunted by none. He muses the hearer, as shewing it to be a very grave urgent matter, to be done promptly, urgently, without delay. "Contend thou before (better, as in the English margin with) the mountains." Since man, who had reason, would not use his reason, God calls the mountains and hills, who Romans 8:20 unwillingly, as it were, had been the scenes of their idolatry, as if he would say (Lap.), "Insensate though ye be, ye are more sensible than Israel, whom I endowed with sense; for ye feel the voice and command of God your Creator and obey Him; they do not. I cite you, to represent your guilty inhabitants, that, through you, they may hear My complaint to be just, and own themselves guilty, repent, and ask forgiveness." "The altars and idols, the blood of the sacrifices, the bones and ashes upon them, with unuttered yet clear voice, spoke of the idolatry and guilt of the Jews, and so pronounced God's charge and expostulation to be just. Ezekiel is bidden, in like way, to prophesy against "the mountains of Israel Ezekiel 6:2-5, "I will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places, and your altars shall be desolate.": "Lifeless nature without voice tells the glory of God; without ears it hears what the Lord speaks." Psalm 19:3; Luke 19:40.

Verse 2

Hear, ye strong (or, it may be, ye enduring,) foundations of the earth - Mountains and rocks carry the soul to times far away, before and after. They change net, like the habitable, cultivated, surface of the earth. There they were, before the existence of our short-lived generations; there they will be, until time shall cease to be. They have witnessed so many vicissitudes of human things, themselves unchanging. The prophet is directed to seize this feeling of simple nature. "They have seen so much before me," Yes! "then they have seen all which befell my forefathers; all God's benefits, all along, to them and to us, all their and our unthankfulness."

He will plead with Israel - God hath a strict severe judgment with His people, and yet vouchsafes to clear Himself before His creatures, to come down from His throne of glory and place Himself on equal terms with them. He does not plead only, but mutually (such is the force of the word) impleads with His people, hears if they would say aught against Himself, and then gives His own judgment. But this willingness to hear, only makes us condemn ourselves, so that we should be without excuse before Him. We do owe ourselves wholly to Him who made us and hath given us all things richly to enjoy.

If we have withdrawn ourselves from His Service, unless He dealt hardly with us, we dealt rebelliously and ungratefully with Him. God brings all pleas into a narrow space. The fault is with Him or with us. He offers to clear Himself. He sets before us His good deeds, His Loving kindness, Providence, Grace, Long-suffering, Bounty, Truth, and contrasts with them our evil deeds, our unthankfulness, despitefulness, our breach of His laws, and disorderings of His creation. And then, in the face of His Goodness, He asks, "What evil have I done, what good have I left undone?" so that our evil and negligences should be but a requital of His. For if it is evil to return evil for evil, or not to return good for good, what evil is it to return evil for His exceeding good! As He says by Isaiah, "What could have been done more to My vineyard and I have not done in it. Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Isaiah 5:4.

And our Blessed Lord asks; "Many good works have I shewed you from My Father. For which of those works do ye stone Me?" John 10:32. "Which of you convinceth Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?" John 8:46. Away from the light of God, we may plead excuses, and

cast the blame of our sins upon our temptations, or passions, or nature, that is, on Almighty God Himself, who made us. When His light streams in upon our conscience, we are silent. Blessed if we be silenced and confess to Him then, that we be not first silenced in the Day of Judgment Job 1:8; Job 2:3; Ezekiel 14:20. Righteous Job said, "I desire to reason with God" Job 13:3; but when his eye saw Him, he said, "wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" Job 42:5-6.

Verse 3

O My people - This one tender word, twice repeated, contains in one a whole volume of reproof. It sets before the eyes God's choice of them of His free grace, and the whole history of His loving-kindness, if so they could be ashamed of their thanklessness and turn to Him. "Mine," He says, "ye are by creation, by Providence, by great deliverances and by hourly love and guardianship, by gifts of nature, the world, and grace; such things have I done for thee; what against thee? ‹what evil have I done unto thee?'" "Thy foot did not swell these forty years" Deuteronomy 8:4, for He upbears in all ways where He leads. Wherein have I wearied thee? for "His commandments are not grievious" 1 John 5:3. Thou hast been weary of Me, O Israel, God says by Isaiah, "I have not wearied thee with incense; thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities" Isaiah 43:22-24.

Verse 4

For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the hoarse of servants - What wert thou? What art thou? Who made thee what thou art? God reminds them. They were slaves; they are His people in the heritage of the pagan, and that by His outstretched arm. God mentions some heads of the mercies which tie had shown them, when He had made them His people, His redemption of them from Egypt, His guidance through the wilderness, His leading them over the last difficulty to the proraised land. The use of the familiar language of the Pentateuch is like the touching of so many key-notes, recalling the whole harmony of His love. Moses, Aaron, and Miriam together, are Lawgiver, to deliver and instruct; Priest, to atone; and prophetess Exodus 15:20 to praise God; and the name of Miriam at once recalled the mighty works at the Red Sea and how they then thanked God.

Verse 5

Remember now - The word translated now is a very tender one, like our "do now remember" or "do remember," beseeching instead of commanding. Dionysius: "I might command, but I speak tenderly, that I may lead thee to own the truth." "What Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him." God did not only raise up Moses, Aaron, Miriam, out of their brethren, but He turned the curse of the alien Balaam into a blessing; and that, not for their righteousness, (for even then they were rebellious,) but against their deserts, out of His own truth and righteousness. Not that the curse of Balaam could in itself have hurt them; but, in proportion to his reputation, it would have infused great energy into their enemies: and its reversal must have struck a great panic into them and into others. Human might having failed in Sihon and Og, Balak sought superhuman. God showed them by their own diviner, that it was against them. Even after they had seduced Israel, through Balaam's devilish counsel, Midian seems to have been stricken by God with panic, and not to have struck a blow Numbers 31:49.

From Shittim unto Gilgal - The words are separated by the Hebrew accent from what went before. It is then probably said in concise energy for, "Remember too front Shittim to Gilgal," that is, all the great works of God "from Shittim", the last encampment of Israel out of the promised land, where they so sinned in Baal-peor, "unto Gilgal," the first in the promised land, which they entered by miracle, where the Ark rested amid the victories given them, where the Covenant was renewed, and "the reproach of Egypt was rolled away" Joshua 5:9. Remember all, from your own deep sin and rebellion to the deep mercy of God.

That ye may know the righteousness - (righteousnesses) of the Lord His Faithfulness in performing His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God speaketh of His promises, not as what they were in themselves, mere mercy, but as what they became, through that gracious and free promise, righteousness, in that He had bound Himself to fulfill what He had, out of mere grace, promised. So in the New Testament He saith, "God is not unrighteous that He should forget your works and labor which proeeedeth of love" Hebrews 6:10; and, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" 1 John 1:9. Micah speaks, by a rare idiom, of the righteousnesses of the Lord, each act of mercy being a separate effluence of His Righteousness. The very names of the places suggest the righteous acts of God, the unrighteous of Israel.: "But we too, who desire with unveiled face to behold the glory of

the Lord, and have Abraham really for our father, let us, when we have sinned, hear God pleading against us, and reproving us for the multitude of His benefits. For we too once served Pharaoh and the people of Egypt, laboring in works of mire and clay; and He redeemed us who gave Himself a Redemption for all; that we, the redeemed of the Lord, "whom He redeemed out of the hand of the enemy and gathered from the lands, might say, His mercy endureth forever" Psalm 107:1-3. He sent also before our face Moses, the spiritual Law, and Aaron the High Priest, not bearing the typical Ephod and Urim, but having in His Forehead the seal of holiness which God the Father sealed; and Miriam, the foreshewing of prophets. Recollect we too what he thought against us who willed to devour us, the true Balak, Satan, who laid snares for us through Balaam, the destroyer of the people, fearing lest we should cover his land and occupy it, withdrawing the earthly-minded from his empire."

Verse 6-7

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? - The people, thus arraigned, bursts in, as men do, with professions that they would be no more ungrateful; that they will do anything, everything - but what they ought. With them it shall be but "Ask and have." They wish only to know, with what they shall come? They would be beforehand with Him, anticipating His wishes; they would, with all the submission of a creature, bow, prostrate themselves before God; they acknowledge His High Majesty, who dwelleth on high, the most High God, and would abase themselves before His lofty greatness, if they but knew, "how" or "wherewith."

They would give of their best; sacrifices the choicest of their kind, which should be wholly His, whole-burnt-offerings, offered exactly according to the law, "bullocks of a year old" Leviticus 9:2-3; then too, the next choice offering, the rams; and these, as they were offered for the whole people on very solemn occasions, in vast multitudes, thousands or ten thousands; the oil which accompanied the burnt sacrifice, should flow in rivers; nay, more still; they would not withhold their sons, their first born sons, from God, part, as they were, of themselves, or any fruit of their own body.

They enhance the offering by naming the tender relation to themselves Deuteronomy 28:53. They would offer everything, (even what God forbade) excepting only what alone He asked for, their heart, its love and its

obedience. The form of their offer contains this; they ask zealously, “with what shall I come.” It is an outward offering only, a thing which they would bring. Hypocritical eagerness! a sin against light. For to enquire further, when God has already revealed anything, is to deny that He has revealed it. It comes from the wish that He had not revealed what lie has revealed.: “whose, after he hath found the truth, discusseth anything further, seeketh a lie.” God had told them, long before, from the time that He made them His people, what he desired of them; So Micah answers,

Verse 8

He hath shewed thee - Micah does not tell them now, as for the first time; which would have excused them. He says, â€œHe hath shewed thee;â€ He, about whose mind and will and pleasure they were pretending to enquire, the Lord their God. He had shewn it to them. The law was full of it. He shewed it to them, when He said, â€œAnd now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him and to serve the Lord, thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command thee this day for thy good?â€ Deuteronomy 10:12-13. They had asked, â€œwith what outward thing shall I come before the Lord;â€ the prophet tells them, â€œwhat thing is good,â€ the inward man of the heart, righteousness, love, humility.

And what doth the Lord require (search, seek) of thee? - The very word implies an earnest search within. He would say (Rup.), â€œTrouble not thyself as to any of these things, burnt-offerings, rams, calves, without thee. For God seeketh not thine, but thee; not thy substance, but thy spirit; not ram or goat, but thy heart.â€ : â€œThou askest, what thou shouldest offer for thee? Other thyself. For what else doth the Lord seek of thee, but thee? Because, of all earthly creatures, He hath made nothing better than thee, He seeketh thyself from thyself, because thou hadst lost thyself.â€

To do judgment - are chiefly all acts of equity; â€œto love mercy,â€ all deeds of love. Judgment, is what right requires; mercy, what love. Yet, secondarily, â€œto do judgmentâ€ is to pass righteous judgments in all cases; and so, as to others, â€œjudge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgmentâ€ John 7:24; and as to oneâ€˜s self also. Judge equitably and kindly of others, humbly of thyself.: â€œJudge of thyself in thyself without acceptance of thine own person, so as not to spare thy sins,

nor take pleasure in them, because thou hast done them. Neither praise thyself in what is good in thee, nor accuse God in what is evil in thee. For this is wrong judgment, and so, not judgment at all. This thou didst, being evil; reverse it, and it will be right. Praise God in what is good in thee; accuse thyself in what is evil. So shalt thou anticipate the judgment of God, as He saith, â€œIf we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged of the Lordâ€ 1Â Corinthians 11:31. He addeth, love mercy; being merciful, out of love, â€œnot of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giverâ€ 2Â Corinthians 9:7. These acts together contain the whole duty to man, corresponding with and formed upon the mercy and justice of God Psalm 101:1; Psalm 61:7. All which is due, anyhow or in any way, is of judgment; all which is free toward man, although not free toward God, is of mercy. There remains, walk humbly with thy God; not, bow thyself only before Him, as they had offered Micah 6:6, nor again walk with Him only, as did Enoch, Noah Abraham, Job; but walk humbly (literally, bow down the going) yet still with thy God; never lifting up thyself, never sleeping, never standing still, but ever walking on, yet ever casting thyself down; and the more thou goest on in grace, the more cast thyself down; as our Lord saith, â€œWhen ye have done all these things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to doâ€ Luke 17:10.

It is not a â€œcrouching before Godâ€ displeased, (such as they had thought of,) but the humble love of the forgiven; â€œwalk humbly,â€ as the creature with the Creator, but in love, with thine own God. Humble thyself with God, who humbled himself in the flesh: walk on with Him, who is thy Way. Neither humility nor obedience alone would be true graces; but to cleave fast to God, because He is thine All, and to bow thyself down, because thou art nothing, and thine All is He and of Him. It is altogether a Gospel-precept; bidding us, â€œBe ye perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfectâ€ Matthew 5:48; â€œBe merciful, as your Father also is merciful;â€ Luke 6:36; and yet, in the end, have â€œthat same mind which was also in Christ Jesus, who made Himself of no reputationâ€ Philemon 2:5, Philemon 2:7, Philemon 2:9.

The offers of the people, stated in the bare nakedness in which Micah exhibits them, have a character of irony. But it is the irony of the truth and of the fact itself. The creature has nothing of its own to offer; â€œthe blood

of bulls and goats cannot take away sinâ€ Hebrews 10:4; and the offerings, as they rise in value, become, not useless only but, sinful. Such offerings would bring down anger, not mercy. Micahâ€˜s words then are, for their vividness, an almost proverbial expression of the nothingness of all which we sinners could offer to God.: â€œWe, who are of the people of God, knowing that â€œin His sight shall no man living be justifiedâ€ Psalm 143:2, and saying, â€œI am a beast with Theeâ€ Psalm 73:22, trust in no pleas before His judgment-seat, but pray; yet we put no trust in our very prayers. For there is nothing worthy to be offered to God for sin, and no humility can wash away the stains of offences.

In penitence for our sins, we hesitate and say, Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? how shall I come, so as to be admitted into familiar intercourse with my God? One and the same spirit revolveth these things in each of us or of those before us, who have been pricked to repentance, â€¹what worthy offering can I make to the Lord?â€˜ This and the like we revolve, as the Apostle saith; â€œWe know not what to pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be utteredâ€ Romans 8:20. â€œShould I offer myself wholly as a burnt-offering to Him?â€˜ If, understanding spiritually all the Levitical sacrifices, I should present them in myself, and offer my first-born, that is, what is chief in me, my soul, I should find nothing worthy of His greatness. Neither in ourselves, nor in ought earthtly, can we find anything worthy to be offered to reconcile us with God. For the sin of the soul, blood alone is worthy to be offered; not the blood of calves, or rams, or goats, but our own; yet our own too is not offered, but given back, being due already Psalm 116:8. The Blood of Christ alone sufficeth to do away all sin.â€ Dionysius: â€œThe whole is said, in order to instruct us, that, without the shedding of the Blood of Christ and its Virtue and Merits, we cannot please God, though we offered ourselves and all that we have, within and without; and also, that so great are the benefits bestowed upon us by the love of Christ, that we can repay nothing of them.â€

But then it is clear that there is no teaching in this passage in Micah which there is not in the law. The developments in the prophets relate to the Person and character of the Redeemer. The law too contained both elements:

(1) the ritual of sacrifice, impressing on the Jew the need of an Atoner;

(2) the moral law, and the graces inculcated in it, obedience, love of God and man, justice, mercy, humility, and the rest.

There was no hint in the law, that half was acceptable to God instead of the whole; that sacrifice of animals would supersede self-sacrifice or obedience. There was nothing on which the Pharisee could base his heresy. What Micah said, Moses had said. The corrupt of the people offered a half-service, what cost them least, as faith without love always does. Micah, in this, reveals to them nothing new; but tells them that this half-service is contrary to the first principles of their law. â€œHe bath shewed thee, O man, what is good.â€ Sacrifice, without love of God and man, was not even so much as the body without the soul. It was an abortion, a monster. For one end of sacrifice was to inculcate the insufficiency of all our good, apart from the Blood of Christ; that, do what we would, â€œall came short of the glory of Godâ€ Romans 3:23. But to substitute sacrifice, which was a confession that at best we were miserable sinners, unable, of ourselves, to please God, for any efforts to please Him or to avoid displeasing Him, would be a direct contradiction of the law, antinomianism under the dispensation of the law itself.

Micah changes the words of Moses, in order to adapt them to the crying sins of Israel at that time. He then upbraids them in detail, and that, with those sins which were patent, which, when brought home to them, they could not deny, the sins against their neighbor.

Verse 9

The voice of the Lord crieth unto the city - that is, Jerusalem, as the metropolis of their wealth and their sin, the head and heart of their offending. "Crieth," aloud, earnestly, intently, so that all might hear. So God says, "Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding pat forth her voice? She crieth at the gates, - unto you, O men, I cry, and my voice is to the sons of men" Proverbs 8:1, Proverbs 8:3-4; and Isaiah prophesied of John the Immerser, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness" Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:3; and our Lord saith, "He that heareth you, heareth Me. And the man of

wisdom shall see Thy Name" Luke 10:16. The voice of God is in the hearing of all, but the wise only seeth the Name of God. The word rendered "wisdom" means, "that which is," "See ye the word of the Lord.") They shall see His power and majesty and all which His Name expresses, as they are displayed severally in each work of His: He shall speak to them by all things wherein He is; and so seeing Him now in a glass darkly, they shall hereafter see all, His Glory, His Goodness, His Love, Himself, "face to face."

Hear ye the rod - that is, the scourge of the wrath of God. The name and the image recall the like propecies of Isaiah, so that Micah in one word epitomises the prophecies of Isaiah, or Isaiah expands the word of Micah. "The rod in thine hand is My indignation" Isaiah 10:5; "As if the rod lifted up Him, who is not wood" Isaiah 10:15; "He lifteth up his rod against thee" Isaiah 10:24; "Thou hast broken the rod (which is) on his shoulder" (Isaiah 9:3, Hebrew); "The Lord hath broken the rod of the wicked" Isaiah 14:5; "wheron the grounded (that is, fixed by the decree of God) staff shall pass" Isaiah 30:32.

And who hath appointed it - that is, beforehand, fixing the time and place, when and where it should come. So Jeremiah says, "How canst thou (sword of the Lord) be quiet, and the Lord hath given it a charge to Ashkelon and to the seashore? there hath He appointed it" Jeremiah 47:7. He who has "appointed it," changeth not His decree, unless man changeth; nor is He lacking in power to fulfill it. He will surely bring it to pass. All which can be thought of, of fear, terror, motives to repentance, awe, hope, trust, is in that word "who." It is God; hopes and fears may be infinite.

Verse 10

Are there yet - Still after all the warnings and long-suffering of God, "the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked?" "Treasures of wickedness" are treasures gotten by wickedness; yet it means too that he wicked shall have no treasure, no fruit, but his wickedness. He treasureth up treasures, but of wickedness; as James saith, "Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days" James 5:3, that is, of the miseries that shall come upon them Micah 6:14); as He says, "He gave them their desire, and sent leanness withal into their soul" Psalm 106:15; and James, "it shall eat your flesh as it were fire" James 5:3. Even a pagan said,, "Gain gotten by wickedness is loss;" and that, as being "abominable" or "accursed" or, one might say, "bewrathed," lying under the wrath and curse of God. Rib.:

"What they minish from the measure, that they add to the wrath of God and the vengeance which shall come upon them; what is lacking to the measure shall be supplied out of the wrath of God." The Ephah was a corn-measure Amos 8:5, containing about six bushels; the rich, in whose house it was, were the sellers; they were the necessaries of life then, which the rich retailers of corn were selling dishonestly, at the price of the lives of the poor. Our subtler ways of sin cheat ourselves, not God. In what ways do not competitive employers use the scant measure which is accursed? What else is all our competitive trade, our cheapness, our wealth, but scant measure to the poor, making their wages lean, full and overflowing with the wrath of God?

Verse 11

Shall I count them pure? - Rather, (as the English margin) "Shall I be pure?" The prophet takes for the time their person and bids them judge themselves in him. If it would defile me, how are ye, with all your other sins, not defiled? All these things were expressly forbidden in the law. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in mete-yard, in weight or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah and a just him, shall ye have" Leviticus 19:35-36; and, "Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteousness are an abomination unto the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 25:13, Deuteronomy 25:15-16, add Proverbs 11:1; Proverbs 16:11; Proverbs 20:10). Yet are not these things common even now?

Verse 12

For the rich men thereof - that is, "of the city, Micah 6:9 are full of violence." It bad been little, had thieves and robbers lived by violence, but now, (as Isaiah at the same time upbraids them,) "her princes were become companions of thieves" Isaiah 1:23. Not the poor out of distress, but the rich, out of wantonness and exceeding covetousness and love of luxury, not only did wrong but were filled, not so much with riches, as with violence. Violence is the very meat and drink wherewith they are filled, yea, and wherewith they shall be filled, when it is returned upon their heads.

And the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies - Fraud is itself lying, and lying is its inseparable companion. Jerome: "Lying followeth the gathering together of riches, and the hard custom to lay up riches hath a deceitful tongue." The sin, he saith, is spread throughout all her inhabitants;

that is, all of them, as their custom, have spoken lies, and, even when they speak not, the lie is ready; "their tongue is deceitful (literally, deceit) in their mouth." It is deceit, nothing but deceit, and that, deceit which should "overthrow" and ruin others. One intent on gain has the lie ever ready to be uttered, even when he speaks not. It lurks concealed, until it is needed.

Verse 13

Therefore also will I - (Literally, And I too,) that is, this dost thou, and thus will I too do. Pococke: "As thou madest sick the heart of the poor oppressed, so will I, by My grievous and severe punishments, make thee sick," or make thy wound incurable, as in Nahum, "thy wound is grievous," (Nahum 3:19 literally, made sick. In making thee desolate because of thy sins. The heaping up riches shall itself be the cause of thy being waste, deserted, desolate.

Verse 14

Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied - The correspondence of the punishment with the sin shall shew that it is not by chance, but from the just judgment of God. The curse of God shall go with what they eat, and it shall not nourish them. The word, thou, is thrice repeated. As God had just said, I too, so here, Thou. Thou, the same who hast plundered others, shalt thyself eat, and not be satisfied; "thou shalt sow, and not reap; thou shalt tread the olive, and thou shalt not anoint thee with oil." "Upon extreme but ill-gotten abundance, there followeth extreme want. And whose," adds one,, "seeth not this in our ways and our times is absolutely blind. For in no period have we ever read that there was so much gold and silver, or so much discomfort and indigence, so that those most true words of Christ Jesus seem to have been especially spoken of us, "Take heed, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" Luke 12:15. And is not this true of us now?

Thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee - Where thou hast laid up thy treasures, or rather thy wickedness, there thou shalt sink down, or give way, from inward decay, in the very center of thy wealth and thy sin. They had said, "Is not the Lord in the midst of us? None evil can come upon us" Micah 3:11. Micah tells them of a different indweller. God had departed from them, and left them to their inherent nothingness. God had been their stay; without God, human strength collapses. Scarcely any destruction is altogether hopeless save that which cometh from within. Most storms pass over, tear off boughs and leaves, but the stem remains. inward

decay or excision alone are humanly irrecoverable. The political death of the people was, in God‘s hands, to be the instrument of their regeneration.

Morally too, and at all times, inward emptiness is the fruit of unrighteous fullness. It is disease, not strength; as even pagan proverbs said; “the love of money is a dropsy; to drink increaseth the thirst,” and “amid mighty wealth, poor;” and Holy Scripture, “The rich He sendeth empty away” (Luke 1:53, compare 1 Samuel 2:5). “And truly they must be empty. For what can fill the soul, save God?” Rib.: “This is true too of such as, like the Bishop of Sardis, ‹have a name that they live and are dead‘ Revelation 3:1,” Dionysius, “such as do some things good, feed on the word of God, but attain to no fruit of righteousness;” “who corrupt natural and seeming good by inward decay; who appear righteous before men, are active and zealous for good ends, but spoil all by some secret sin or wrong end, as vain-glory or praise of men, whereby they lose the praise of God. Their casting down shall be in the midst of them. The meaning of the whole is the same, whether the word be rendered casting down, that is, downfall (literally, sinking down) or emptiness, especially of the stomach, perhaps from the feeling of “sinking.”

Thou shalt take hold - To rescue or remove to a safe place from the enemy, those whom he would take from thee, “but shalt not” wholly deliver; “and that which thou deliverest for a time, will I give up to the sword,” that is, the children for whose sake they pleaded that they got together this wealth; as, now too, the idols, for whose sake men toil wrongly all their life, are often suddenly taken away. Their goods too may be said to be given to the sword, that is, to the enemy.

Verse 15

Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap - Micah renews the threatenings of the law Leviticus 26:16; Deuteronomy 28:30, Deuteronomy 28:38-41, which they had been habitually breaking. Those prophecies had been fulfilled before, throughout their history; they have been fulfilled lately in Israel for the like oppression of the poor Amos 5:11. Their frequent fulfillment spoke as much of a law of God‘s righteousness, punishing sin, as the yearly supply in the ordinary course of nature spoke of His loving Providence. It is the bitterest punishment to the covetous to have the things which they coveted, taken away before their eyes; it was a token of God‘s Hand, that He took them away, when just within their grasp. The prophet brings it before their eyes, that they might feel beforehand the bitterness of

forgetting them. Montanus: "They should lose, not only what they gained unjustly, but the produce of their labor, care, industry, as, in agriculture, it is said that there is mostly much labor, little fraud, much benefit."

Harvest is a proverb for joy; "they joy before Thee according to the joy in, harvest" Isaiah 9:3; "wine maketh glad the heart of man, and oil is to make him a cheerful countenance" Psalm 104:15. But the harvest shall be turned into sorrow, the oil and wine shall be taken away, when all the labor had been employed (Compare Isaiah 16:9-10; Jeremiah 5:17; Jeremiah 48:37). Yet, since all these operations in nature are adapted to be, and are used as, symbols of things spiritual, then the words which describe them are adapted to be spiritual proverbs. Spiritually,, "he soweth and reapeth not, who soweth to the flesh, and of the flesh reapeth corruption" Galatians 6:8, things corruptible, and inward decay and condemnation. He treadeth the olive, who, by shameful deeds contrary to the law, "grieveth the Holy Spirit of God" Ephesians 4:30, and therefore obtaineth not gladness of spirit; "he maketh wine, yet drinketh not wine, who teacheth others, not himself." They too take hold but do not deliver, who for awhile believe and in time of temptation fall away, who repent for a while and then fall back into old sins, or in other ways bring no fruit to perfection; taking up the Cross for awhile and then wearying; using religious practices, as, more frequent prayer or fasting, and then tiring; cultivating some graces and then despairing because they see not the fruits. These tread the olive, but are not anointed with the oil of the Holy Spirit of grace, who (Rib.), "end by doing for the sake of man, what they had thought to do out of the love for God, and abandon, for some fear of man, the good which they had begun."

Verse 16

For the statutes of Omri are kept - Rather, (like the English margin he doth much keep,) And he doth keep diligently for himself. Both ways express much diligence in evil. To "keep God's commandments" was the familiar phrase, in which Israel was exhorted, by every motive of hope and fear, to obedience to God. "I know him," God says of Abraham, "that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do judgment and justice" Genesis 18:19. This was the fundamental commandment immediately after the deliverance from Eyypt upon their first murmuring. "The Lord made there" (at Marah) "for them a statute and ordinance, and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the

voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians" Exodus 15:25-26.

In this character Ha revealed Himself on Mount Sinai, as "shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments" Exodus 20:6. This was their covenant, "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God and to walk in His ways, and to keep His statutes and His commandments and His judgments and to hearken unto His voice" Deuteronomy 26:17. This was so often enforced upon them in the law, as the condition upon which they should hold their land, if they kept the covenant (Exodus 19:5; the words of this covenant, Deuteronomy 29:9), the commmandments Leviticus 22:31; Leviticus 26:3; Deuteronomy 4:2; Deuteronomy 6:17; Deuteronomy 7:11; Deuteronomy 8:6, Deuteronomy 8:11; Deuteronomy 10:13; Deuteronomy 11:1, Deuteronomy 11:8, Deuteronomy 11:22; Deuteronomy 13:5; Deuteronomy 15:5; Deuteronomy 19:9; Deuteronomy 27:1; Deuteronomy 28:9; Deuteronomy 30:10, the judgments Leviticus 18:5, Leviticus 18:26; Leviticus 20:22; Deuteronomy 7:11; Deuteronomy 8:11; Deuteronomy 11:1, the statutes (Leviticus 18:5, Leviticus 18:26; Leviticus 20:8, Leviticus 20:22; Deuteronomy 4:40; Deuteronomy 6:17; Deuteronomy 7:11; Deuteronomy 10:13; Deuteronomy 11:1; Deuteronomy 30:10), the testimonies Deuteronomy 6:17, the charge Leviticus 18:30; Deuteronomy 11:1 of the Lord. Under this term all the curses of the law were threatened, if they "hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord their God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded them" Deuteronomy 28:15.

Under this again the future of good and evil was, in Solomon, set before the house of David; of unbroken succession on his throne, if "thou wilt keep My commandments; but contrariwise, if ye or your children will not keep My commandments and My statutes" 1 Kings 9:4-6, banishment, destruction of the temple, and themselves to be "a proverb and a byword among all people" This was the object of their existence, 1 Kings 9:7. "that they might keep His statutes and observe His laws" Psalm 105:45. This was the summary of their disobedience, "they kept not the covenant of God" Psalm 78:11. And now was come the contrary to all this. They had not kept the commandments of God; and those commandments of man which were

the most contrary to the commandments of God, they had kept and did keep diligently. Alas! that the Christian world should be so like them! What iron habit or custom of man, what fashion, is not kept, if it is against the law of God? How few are not more afraid of man than God? Had God‘s command run, Speak evil one of another, brethren, would it not have been the best kept of all His commandments? God says, speak not evil; custom, the conversation around, fear of man, say, speak evil; man‘s commandment is kept; God‘s is not kept. And no one repents or makes restitution; few even cease from the sin.

Scripture does not record, what was the special aggravation of the sin of Omri, since the accursed worship of Baal was brought in by Ahab, his son. But, as usual, “like father, like son.” The son developed the sins of the father. Some special sinfulness of Omri is implied, in that Athaliah, the murderess of her children, is called after her grandfather, Omri, not after her father, Ahab 2 Kings 8:26; 2 Chronicles 22:2. Heresiarchs have a deeper guilt than their followers, although the heresy itself is commonly developed later. Omri settled for a while the kingdom of Israel, after the anarchy which followed on the murder of Elah, and slew Zimri, his murderer.

Yet before God, he did worse than all before him, and be walked in all the way of Jeroboam 1 Kings 16:25-26. Yet this too did not suffice Judah; for it follows, And all the doings of the house of Ahab, who again “did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him and served Baal” 1 Kings 21:25. These were they, whose statutes Judah now kept, as diligently and accurately as if it had been a religious act. They kept, not the statutes of the Lord, “but the statutes of Omri;” they kept, as their pattern before their eyes, all the doings of the house of Ahab, his luxury, oppression, the bloodshedding of Naboth; and they walked onward, not, as God bade them, humbly with Him, but in their counsels. And what must be the end of all this? that I should make thee a desolation. They acted, as though the very end and object of all their acts were that, wherein they ended, their own destruction and reproach.

Therefore ye shall bear the reproach of My people - The title of the people of God must be a glory or a reproach. Judah had gloried in being God‘s people, outwardly, by His covenant and protection; they Were envied for the outward distinction. They refused to be so inwardly, and gave

themselves to the hideous, desecrating, worship of Baal. Now then what had been their pride, should be the aggravation of their punishment. Now too we hear of people everywhere zealous for a system, which their deeds belie. Faith, without love, (such as their character had been,) feels any insult to the relation to God, which by its deeds it disgraces. Though they had themselves neglected God, yet it was a heavy burden to them to bear the triumph of the pagan over them, that God was unable to help them, or had cast them off "These are the people of the Lord and are gone forth, out of His land" Ezekiel 36:20. "Wherefore should they say among the pagan, where is their God?" (see the notes at Joel 2:17). "We are confounded, because we have heard reproach, shame hath covered our faces, for strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the Lord's house" Jeremiah 51:51. "We are become a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us" Psalm 79:4. "Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. Thou makest us a byword among the pagan, a shaking of the head among the people. My confusion is daily before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me, for the voice of him that slandereth and blasphemeth, by reason of the enemy and the avenger" Psalm 44:13-16.

The words, "the reproach of My people," may also include "the reproach wherewith God in the law Deuteronomy 28:36 threatened His people if they should forsake Him," which indeed comes to the same thing, the one being the prophecy, the other the fulfillment. The word hissing in itself recalled the threat to David's house in Solomon; "At this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished and hiss" 1 Kings 9:8. Micah's phrase became a favorite expression of Jeremiah. So only do God's prophets denounce. It is a marvelous glimpse into man's religious history, that faith, although it had been inoperative and was trampled upon without, should still survive; nay, that God, whom in prosperity they had forsaken and forgotten, should be remembered, when He seemed to forget and to forsake them. Had the captive Jews abandoned their faith, the reproach would have ceased. The words, "ye shall bear the reproach" of My people are," at once, a prediction of their deserved suffering for the profanation of God's Name by their misdeeds, and of their persverance in that faith which, up to that Time, they had mostly neglected.

MICAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Introduction

The prophet‘s office of threatening woe is now over. Here, out of love, he himself crieth woe unto himself. He hath “continual sorrow in heart” Romans 9:2 for his people. He bewails what he cannot amend, and, by bewailing, shews them how much more they should bewail it, over whose sins he sorrows; how certain the destruction is, since there is none to stand in the gap and turn away the wrath of God, no “ten righteous,” for whose sake the city may be spared. Rup.: “These words flow out of the fount of pity, because the good zeal, wherewith the Holy seem to speak severely, is never without pity. They are wroth with the sins, they sympathize with the sinner.” So Isaiah mourned for the judgment, which he prophesied against the world, “Woe is me!” Isaiah 24:16 he sorrowed even for Moab Isaiah 15:5; Isaiah 16:11; and Joel, “Alas for the day!” Joel 1:15. and Jeremiah in that exclamation of impassioned sorrow; “Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole world!” Jeremiah 15:10.

Verse 1

Woe - ois me! for I am, as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage “The vineyard of the Lord of hosts,” Isaiah said at the same time, “is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plants” Isaiah 5:7. Isaiah said, brought forth wild grapes; Micah, that there are but gleanings, few and poor.

It is as though Satan pressed the vineyard of the Lord, and made the most his prey, and few were left to those who glean for Christ; “the foxes have eaten the grapes” Isaiah 17:6, which were not touched; or those unripe, which are but imperfect and poor; or those who had fallen, yet were not wholly carried away. These too are all sought with difficulty; they had escaped the gatherer‘s eye, they are few and rare; it might seem at first sight, us though there were none. There is no cluster to eat; for the vintage is past, the best is but as a sour grape which sets the teeth on edge.

My soul desired the first-ripe fig. These are they which, having survived the sharpness of winter, ripen early, about the end of June; they are the sweetest; but he longed for them in vain. He addressed a carnal people, who could understand only carnal things, on the side which they could

understand. Our longings, though we pervert them, are God‘s gift. As they desired those things which refresh or recruit the thirsty body, as their whole self was gathered into the craving for that which was to restore them, so was it with him. Such is the longing of God for man‘s conversion and salvation; such is the thirst of His ministers; such their pains in seeking, their sorrow in not finding. Dionysius: “There were none, through whose goodness the soul of the prophet might spiritually be refreshed, in joy at his growth in grace, as Paul saith to Philemon, “refresh my bowels in the Lord” Philemon 1:20. So our Lord saith in Isaiah, “I said, I have labored in vain, I hate spent my strength for nought and in vain” Isaiah 49:4. “Jesus was grieved at the hardness of their hearts” Mark 3:5.

Rib.: “The first-ripe fig may be the image of the righteous of old, as the Patriarchs or the Fathers, such as in the later days we fain would see.”

Verse 2

The, good - or godly, or merciful, the English margin

Man - The Hebrew word contains all. It is “he who loveth tenderly and piously” God, for His own sake, and man, for the sake of God. Mercy was probably chiefly intended, since it wits to this that the prophet had exhorted, and the sins which he proceeds to speak of, are against this. But imaginary love of God without love of man, or love of man without the love of God, is mere self-deceit. “Is perished out of the earth,” that is, by an untimely death. The good had either been withdrawn by God from the evil to come Isaiah 57:1, or had Leon cut off by those who laid wait for blood; in which case their death brought a double evil, through the guilt which such sin contracted, and then, through the loss of those who might be an example to others, and whose prayers God would hear. The loving and upright, all, who were men of mercy and truth, had ceased. They who were left, “all lie in wait for blood,” literally, bloods, that is, bloodshedding; all, as far as man can see; as Elijah complains that he was left alone.

Amid the vast number of the wicked, the righteous were as though they were not. Isaiah, at the same time, complains of the like sins, and that it was as though there were none righteous; “Your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips hate spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth” Isaiah 59:2-3. Indirectly, or directly, they destroyed life. To violence they

add treachery. The good and loving had perished, and all is now violence; the upright had ceased, and all now is deceit. "They hunt every man his brother with a net." Every man is the brother of every man, because he is man, born of the same first parent, children of the same Father: yet they lay wait for one another, as hunters for wild beasts (Compare Psalm 35:7; Psalm 57:7; Psalm 140:6; Jeremiah 5:26).

Verse 3

That they may do evil with both hands earnestly - (Literally, upon evil both hands to do well,) that is, "both their hands are upon evil to do it well," or "earnestly", as our translation gives the meaning; only the Hebrew expresses more, that evil is their good, and their good or excellence is in evil. Bad men gain a dreadful skill and wisdom in evil, as Satan has; and cleverness in evil is their delight. Jerome: "They call the evil of their hands good." "The prince asketh, and the judge asketh (or, it may more readily be supplied, judgeth, doth that which is his office,) against right "for a reward", (which was strictly forbidden,) "and the great man he uttereth his mischievos desire" (Deuteronomy 16:19. See above Micah 3:11), (or the "desire of his soul".) Even the shew of good is laid aside; whatever the heart conceives and covets, it utters; - mischief to others and in the end to itself.

The mischief comes forth from the soul, and returns upon it. "The elders and nobles in the city" 1 Kings 21:8, 1 Kings 21:11, as well as Ahab, took part, (as one instance,) in the murder of Naboth. The great man, however, here, is rather the source of the evil, which he induces others to effect; so that as many as there were great, so many sources were there of oppression. All, prince, judges, the great, unite in the ill, and this not once only, but they are ever doing it and "so they wrap it up", (literally, twist, intertwine it.) Things are twisted, either to strengthen, or to pervert or intricate them. It might mean, they "strengthen" it, that which their soul covets against; the poor, or they "pervert" it, the cause of the poor.

Verse 4

The best of them is as a brier - The gentlest of them is a thorn, strong, hard, piercing, which letteth nothing unresisting pass by but it taketh from it, "robbing the fleece, and wounding the sheep." "The most upright", those who, in comparison of others still worse, seem so, "is sharper than a thorn

hedge", (literally, the upright, them a thorn hedge.) They are not like it only, but worse, and that in all ways; none is specified, and so none excepted; they were more crooked, more tangled, sharper. Both, as hedges, were set for protection; both, turned to injury. Jerome: "So that, where you would look for help, thence comes suffering." And if such be the best, what the rest?

The day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh - When all, even the good, are thus corrupted, the iniquity is full. Nothing now hinders the "visitation", which "the watchmen", or prophets, had so long foreseen and forewarned of. "Now shall be their perplexity"; "now", without delay; for the day of destruction ever breakcth suddenly upon the sinner. "When they say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them" 1 Thessalonians 5:3.: "whose destruction cometh suddenly at an instant". They had perplexed the cause of the oppressed; they themselves were tangled together, intertwined in mischief, as a thorn-hedge. They should be caught in their own snare; they had perplexed their paths and should find no outlet.

Verse 5-6

Trust ye not in a friend - It is part of the perplexity of crooked ways, that all relationships are put out of joint. Selfishness rends each from the other, and disjoints the whole frame of society. Passions and sin break every band of friendship, kindred, gratitude, nature. "Everyone ‹seeketh his own‘." Times of trial and of outward harass increase this; so that God‘s visitations are seasons of the most frightful recklessness as to everything but sell: So had God foretold Deuteronomy 28:53; so it was in the siege of Samaria 2 Kings 6:28, and in that of Jerusalem both by the Chaldeans Lamentations 4:3-16 and by the Romans. When the soul has lost the love of God, all other is but sceming love, since "natural affection" is from Him, and it too dies out, as God gives the soul over to itself Romans 1:28. The words describe partly the inward corruption, partly the outward causes which shall call it forth.

There is no real trust in any, where all are eorrupt. The outward straitness and perplexity, in which they shall be, makes that to crumble and fall to pieces, which was inwardly decayed and severed before. The words deepen, as they go on. First, "the friend", or neighbor, the common band of man and man; then "the guide", (or, as the word also means, one "familiar", united by intimacy, to whom, by continual intercourse, the soul was

“used”;) then the wife who lay in the bosom, nearest to the secrets of the heart; then those to whom all reverence is due, “father” and “mother”. Our Lord said that this should be fulfilled in the hatred of His Gospel. He begins His warning as to it, with a caution like that of the prophet; “Be ye wise as serpents” Matthew 10:16-17, and “beware of men”. Then He says, how these words should still be true Matthew 10:21, Matthew 10:35-36. There never were wanting pleas of earthly interest against the truth.

He Himself was “cut off” lest “the Romans should take away their place and nation” John 11:48. The Apostles were accused, that they meant to “bring this Man‘s Blood upon” the chief priests Acts 5:28; or as “ringleaders of the sect of the Nazarenes, pestilant fallows and movers of sedition, turning the world upside down, setters up of another king; troublers of the city; comanding things unlawful for Romans to practice; setters forth of strange gods; turning away much people” Acts 24:5; Acts 16:20-21; Acts 17:6-7, Acts 17:18; 1 Peter 2:12; endangering not men‘s craft only, but the honor of their gods; “evil doers”. Truth is against the world‘s ways, so the world is against it. Holy zeal hates sin, so sinners hate it. It troubles them, so they count it, “one which troubleth Israel” 1 Kings 18:17. Tertullian, in a public defense of Christians in the second century, writes,, “Truth set out with being herself hated; as soon as she appeared, she is an enemy. As many as are strangers to it, so many are its foes; and the Jews indeed appropriately from their rivalry, the soldiers from their violence, even they of our own household from nature. Each flay are we beset, each day betrayed; in our very meetings and assemblies are we mostly surprised.”

There was no lack of pleas.: “A Christian thou deemest a man guilty of every crime, an encmy of the goals, of the Emperors, of law, of morals, of all nature;” “factious,” “authors of all public calamities through the anger of the pagan gods,” “impious,” “atheists,” “disloyal,” “public enemies.” The Jews, in the largest sense of the word “they of their own household”, were ever the deadliest enemies of Christians, the inventors of calumnies, the authors of persecutions. “What other race,” says, Tertullian, “is the seed-plot of our calumnies?”

Then the Acts of the Martyrs tell, how Christians were betrayed by near kinsfolk for private interest, or for revenge, because they would not join in things unlawful. Jerome: "So many are the instances in daily life, (of the daughter rising against the mother) that we should rather mourn that they are so many, than seek them out." - "I seek no examples, (of those of a man's own househould being his foes) they are too many, that we should have any need of witness." Dionysius: "Yet ought we not, on account of these and like words of Holy Scripture, to be mistrustful or suspicious, or always to presume the worst, but to be cautious and prudent. For Holy Scripture speaketh with reference to times, causes, persons, places." So John saith, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God" 1 John 4:1.

Verse 7

Therefore - (And,) when all these things come to pass and all human help fails, "I", for my part, "will look unto", (literally, "on") "the Lord" God, the Unchangeable. The prophet sets himself, I, with emphasis, against the multitude of the ungodly. When all forsake, betray, fail, when "love is waxed cold" Matthew 24:12, and men, in the last days, shall be "lovers of their ownselves" 2 Timothy 3:2, 2 Timothy 3:4, "not lovers of God", I, - he does not say, "will trust," but -, "will" (Jerome), "with the eye of the heart contemplating, loving, venerating God most High, and weighing His mercy and justice," "gaze intently" with the devotion of faith toward Him, though I see Him not: yet so too I will rest "in" Him (compare Psalm 25:15; Psalm 123:1; Psalm 141:8) and "on" Him, as the eyes are accustomed to rest in trust and love and dependence, and as, on the other hand, the eyes of God "espy into" Psalm 66:7 man and dwell on him, never leaving him unbeheld.

I will "espy" Him, although from afar, with the eyes of the soul, as a watchman, (the word is the same,) looking for His coming and announcing it to others; and until He comes, "I will wait (I would wait") with trust unbroken by any troubles or delay, as Job saith, "Though He slay me, yet will I put my trust in Him" Job 13:15. The word is almost appropriated to a longing waiting for God. "For the God of my salvation". This too became a customary title of God, a title, speaking of past deliverances, as well as of confidence and of hope. Deliverance and salvation are bound up with God, and that, in man's personal experience. It is not only, "Saviour God," but "God, my Saviour," Thou who hast been, art, and wilt be, my God, my

saving God. It is a prelude to the name of Jesus, our Redeeming God. “The Lord will hear me”.

His purpose of waiting on God he had expressed wistfully. “I would wait;” for man‘s longing trust must be upheld by God. Of God‘s mercy he speaks confidently, “the Lord will hear me”, He, who is ever “more ready to hear than we to pray.” He has no doubts, but, as Abraham said, “the Lord will provide” Genesis 22:8, Genesis 22:14, so he, “The Lord will hear me”. So, when Jehoshaphat prayed, “We have no might against this great company that cometh, against us, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon Thee” 2 Chronicles 20:12, 2 Chronicles 20:15; God answered by the prophet, “Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God‘s”. Micah unites with himself all the faithful as one, “in the unity of the spirit,” where in all are one band, looking, waiting, praying for His Coming in His kingdom. Lap.: “God is our only refuge and asylum in things desperate, and rejoices to help in them, in order to shew His supreme Power and Goodness especially to those who believe, hope, and ask it. Therefore all mistrust and despondency is then to be supremely avoided, and a certain hope and confidence in God is to be elicited. This will call forth the help of God assuredly, yea though it were by miracle, as to Lot in Sodom, to Moses and the people from Pharaoh, to David from Saul, to Hezekiah from Sennacherib, to the Maccabees from Antiochus. This our proverbs express, how God aids, when there is least sign of it.”

Verse 8

Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy - The prophet still more makes himself one with the people, not only as looking for God, but in penitence, as Daniel bewails “his own sins and the sins of his people” Daniel 9:10. The “enemy” is Babylon and “Edom” Obadiah 1:10, Obadiah 1:12; Psalm 137:7; and then, in all times, (since this was written for all times, and the relations of the people of God and of its enemies are the same,) whosoever, whether devils or evil men, rejoice over the falls of God‘s people. “Rejoice not”; for thou hast no real cause; “the triumphing of the ungodly”, and the fall of the godly, “is but for a moment. When I fall, I shall arise” Psalm 30:5; (literally, “when I have fallen, I have arisen”;) expressing both the certainty and speed of the recovery. To fall and to arise is one.: “The fall of

infirmity is not grave, if free from the desire of the will. Have the will to rise, He is at hand who will cause thee to rise." (Ibid. 5:47): "Though I have sinned, Thou forgivest the sin; though I have fallen, thou raisest up; lest they, who rejoice in the sins of others, should have occasion to exult. For we who have sinned more, have gained more; for Thy grace maketh more blessed than our own innocence."

When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me - Montanus: "He does not say ‹lie,‘ but sit; she was not as one dead, without hope of life, but she sat solitary as a widow, helpless, unable to restore herself, yet waiting for God‘s time. The darkness of the captivity was lightened by the light of the prophetic grace which shone through Daniel and Ezekiel, and by the faithfulness of the three children, and the brightness of divine glory shed abroad through them, when Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed to all people that their God was "God of gods and Lord of kings" Daniel 2:47, and that none should "speak anything amiss against Him" Daniel 3:29. Still more when, at the close of the captivity, they were delivered from sorrow, trouble, bondage, death, to joy, rest, freedom, life. Yet how much more in Christ, (for whom this deliverance prepared,) when "the people that walked in darkness have seern a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" Isaiah 9:2. "God is not only our light", as (Lap.) "restoring us" outwardly "to gladness, freedom, happiness, whereof light is a symbol, as darkness is of sorrow, captivity, adversity, death." Scripture speaks of God, in a directer way, as being Himself our light. "The Lord is my light" Psalm 27:1. "The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light" Isaiah 60:19. He calls Himself, "The light of Israel" Isaiah 10:17. He is our light, by infusing knowledge, joy, heavenly brightness, in any outward lot. He does not say, "after darkness, comes light," but "when I shall sit in darkness", then, "the Lord is light unto me". The "sitting in darkness" is the occasion of the light, in that the soul or the people in sorrow turns to Him who is their light. in their sin, which was so punished, they were turned away from the light.

Verse 9

I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him - This is the temper of all penitents, when stricken by God, or under chastisement from Him. "It is the Lord, let Him, do what seemeth Him good" 1 Samuel 3:18. "So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?"

2 Samuel 16:10. “He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope” Lamentations 3:29. The penitent owns the just sentence of God, and, knowing that he deserves far more than God inflicts, is thankful to endure it, “until He remove it, until He plead my cause rend execute judgment for me”, that is, until God Himself think the punishments inflicted, enough, and judge between me and those through whose hands they come. The judgments which God righteously sends, and which man suffers righteously from Him, are unrighteously inflicted by those whose malice He overrules, whether it be that of evil men (as the Assyrian or the Chaldaean or the Edomite) or of Satan. The close of the chastisements of His people is the beginning of the visible punishment of their misdecds, who used amiss the power which God gave them over it.

Whence it is said, “Daughter of Babylon, the wasted! blessed he that rewardth thee as thou hast served us” Psalm 137:8. But all is of the mercy of God. So He saith, “He shall bring me forth to the light” of His Countenance and His favor and His truth. Micah speaks in the name of those who were penitent, and so were forgiven, and yet, in that they were under punishment, seemed to lie under the wrath of God. For, although God remits at once the eternal penalty of sin, yet we see daily, how punishment pursues the for given sinner, even to the end of life. The light of God‘s love may not, on grounds which He knoweth, shine unchequered upon him. We should not know the blackness of the offence of sin, and should never know the depth of God‘s mercy, but for our punishment. The indignation of God toward the penitcnt is an austere form of His love. So then penitents may well say, in every grief or sickness or visitation or disappointment, I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him. He says, “I shall behold His righteousness”, because they had a righteous cause against man, although not toward God, and God in His just judgment on their enemies shewed Himself as the righteous Judge of the world.

Verse 10

Then - (And) she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is He, He of whom thou boastest, the Lord thy God? The cause of her gladness then is, that the blasphemies of the enemy of God were to cease. This was the bitterest portion of her cup, that they said daily, “Where is now thy God? let Him come and save thee;” as though He could not, or as though He loved her not, and she vainly

presumed on His help. Even when fallen, it was for His sake that she was hated, who seemed to be overcome in her: as He was hated in His Martyrs, and they asked,, "Where is the God of the Christians?" Now the taunt was closed, and turned back on those who used it. The wheel, which they had turned against her, rolled round on themselves. They who had said, Let our eye look on Zion, now were ashamed that their hope had failed. They had longed to feed their sight on her miseries; Zion had her reverent gladness in gazing on the righteous hess of God. Babylon was trodden down by the Medes and Persians, and they whom she had let captive beheld it. Daniel was in the palace, when Belshazzar was slain.

The soul of one, who has known the chastening of God, cannot but read its own history here. The sinful soul is at once the object of the love of God and hath that about it which God hates. God hates the evil in us, even while lie loves us, being, or having been, evil. He forgives, but chastens. His displeasure is the channel of His goodpleasure. Nathan said to David, "The Lord hath put away thy sin" 2 Samuel 12:10, 2 Samuel 12:13, but also, "the sword shall never depart from thy house". It is part of His forgiveness to cleanse the soul with a "spirit of burning" Isaiah 4:4. "It seemeth to me," says Jerome, "that Jerusalem is every soul, which had been the temple of the Lord, and had had the vision of peace and the knowledge of Scripture, and which afterward, overcome by sins, hath fallen captive by its own consent, parting from that which is right in the sight of God, and allowing itself' to sink among the pleasures of the world."

So then "captive, and tortured, she saith to Babylon, that is, the confusion of this world and the power of the enemy which ruleth over the world, and sin who lordeth it over her, Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise;" Dionysius: "from sin by repentance, and from tribulation by the consolation of the Holy Spirit, who, after weeping, poureth in joy. "For the Lord helpeth them that are fallen" Psalm 146:8, and saith by the prophet, "Shall they fall and not arise"? Jeremiah 8:4. and, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. If I walk in darkness, the Lord is my light"! Ezekiel 33:11. For although "the rulers of the darkness of this world" Ephesians 6:12 have deceived me, and I "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" Psalm 107:10, and "my feet stumble upon the dark mountains" Jeremiah 13:16, yet "to them who sit in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up"

Isaiah 9:2, and "light shineth in darkness" John 1:5, and "the Lord is my light, and my salvation; whom then shall I fear"? Psalm 27:1. and I will speak to Him and will say, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" Psalm 119:105 "He draweth me from the darkness of ignorance and from the black night of sin, and giveth a clear view of future bliss, and brighteneth the very inmost soul within."

Dionysius: "Even if a mist have come upon me and I have been in darkness, I too shall find the light, that is, Christ; and the Sun of Righteousness arising on my mind shall make it white." I will betty patiently, yet gladly, the indignation of the Lord, (Dionysius): "all adversity, trial, tribulation, persecution, which can happen in this life;" because I have sinned against Him, "and such is the enormity of sin, offered to the Majesty and dishonoring the Holiness of God, and such punishment doth it deserve in the world to come, that if we weigh it well, we shall bear with joy whatever adversity can befall us." Cyril: "For although for a short time I be out of His Presence, and be; "given to an undistinguishing mind" Romans 1:28, yet, seeing I suffer this rejection justly, I will bear the judgment, for I am not chastened in vain." "All chastening for the present seemeth not to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousncss unto them who are exercised thereby" Hebrews 12:11.

Jerome: "The soul, feeling that it hath sinned, and hath the wounds of sins and is living in dead flesh and needs the cautery, says firmly to the Physician, ‹Burn my flesh, cut open my wounds, all my imposthumes. It was my fault, that I was wounded; be it my pain, to endure such sufferings and to regain health.' And the true Physician shews to her, when whole, the cause of His treatment, and that He did rightly what He did. Then after these sufferings, the soul, being brought out of outer darkness, saith, I shall behold His Righteousness, and say, "Thou, O Lord, art upright; Rightous are Thy judgments, O God" Psalm 119:137. But if Christ is "made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" 1 Corinthians 1:30, he who, after the indignation of God, saith that He shall see His Righteousness, promiseth to himself the sight of Christ." Cyril: "Then, having considered in her mind the grace of the righteousness in Christ and the overthrow of sin, the soul, in full possession of herself, crieth out, Mine enemy shall see it, etc. For, after that Christ came unto us, justifying sinners

through faith, the mouth of the ungodly One is stopped, and the Author of sin is put to shame. He hath lost his rule over us, and sin is trodden down, "like mire in the streets", being subjected to the feet of the saints. But the blotting-out of sin is the Day of Christ." Jerome: "And, because the end of all punishment is the beginning of good," God saith to the poor, penitent, tossed, soul, "the walls of virtues shall be built up in thee, and thou shalt be guarded on all sides, and the rule of thine oppressors shall be far removed, and thy King and God shall come unto thee, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God." Dionysius: "All this shall be most fully seen in the Day of Judgment."

Verse 11-12

On this confession of unworthiness and trust the message of joy bursts in, with the abruptness and conciseness of Hosea or Nahum:

A day to build thy fences; (that is, cometh;)

That day, far shall be the degree;

That day, and he shall come quite to thee;

And there follows, in a longer but still remarkably measured and interrupted cadence,

the statement of the length and breadth from which the people shall come to her;

Up to and from Assyria and the cities of strong-land (Egypt;)

Up to and from strong-land and even to river (the Euphrates;)

And sea from sea, and mountain to mountain.

It is not human might or strength which God promises to restore. He had before predicted, that the kingdom of the Messiah should stand, not through earthly strength Micah 5:9-13. He promises the restoration, not of city walls, but of the fence of the vineyard of God, which God foretold by Isaiah that He would "break down" Isaiah 5:5. It is a peaceful renewal of her estate under God's protection, like that, with the promise whereof Amos closed his prophecy; "In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof" Amos 9:11. This decree, which he says shall be far away, might in itself be the decree either of God or of the enemy. The sense is the same, since the enemy was but the instrument of God. Yet it seems more in accordance with the language of the prophets, that it should be the decree of man. For the decree of God for the

destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of His people was accomplished, held its course, was fulfilled.

The destruction, captivity, restoration, were parts of one and the same decree of God, of which the restoration was the last accomplished in time. The restoration was not the removal, but the complete fulfillment, of the decree. He means then probably, that the decree of the enemy, whereby he held her captive, was to remove and be far off, not by any agency of her‘s. The people were to stream to her of themselves. One by one, shall all thy banished, captive, scattered, children be brought quite home unto thee from all parts of the earth, whither they have been driven, “from Assyria, and from strong-land”. The name Matsor, which he gives to Egypt, modifying its ordinary dual name Mitsraim, is meant, at once to signify “Egypt”, and to mark the strength of the country; as, in fact,, “Egypt was on all sides by nature strongly guarded.”

A country, which was still strong relatively to Judah, would not, of itself, yield up its prey, but held it straitly; yet it should have to disgorge it. Isaiah and Hosea prophesied, in like way, the return of Israel and Judah from Assyria and from Egypt. “And from strong-land even to the river” Isaiah 11:11; Isaiah 27:13; Hosea 11:11 (Euphrates); the ancient, widest, boundary of the promised land; “and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain” Genesis 15:18; Exodus 23:31; Deuteronomy 1:7; Deuteronomy 11:24, Joshua 1:4; 1 Kings 4:21, 1 Kings 4:24. These last are too large to be the real boundaries of the land. If understood geographically, it would by narrowig those which had just been spoken of, from Egypt to the Euphratcs. Joel likens the destruction of the Northern army to the perishing of locusts in the two opposite seas, the Dead sea and the Mediterranean Joel 2:20; but the Dead sea was not the entire Eastern boundary of all Israel. Nor are there any mountains on the South, answering to Mount Libanus on the North. Not the mountains of Edom which lay to the South-East, but the desert Exodus 23:31; Numbers 34:3; Deuteronomy 11:24 was the Southern boundary of Judah. In the times too of their greatest prosperity, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Syria, had been subject to them.

The rule of the Messiah “from sea to sea” had already been predicted by Solomon, enlarging the boundaries of the promised land to the whole compass of the world, from the sea, their bound westward, to the further

encircling sea beyond all habitable land, in which, in fact, our continents are large islands. To this, Micah adds a new description, “from mountain to mountain”, including, probably, all subdivisions in our habitable earth, as the words, “sea to sea”, had embraced it as a whole. For, physically and to sight, mountains are the great natural divisions of our earth. Rivers are but a means of transit. The Euphrates and the Nile were the centers of the kingdoms which lay upon them. Each range of mountains, as it rises on the horizon, seems to present an insuperable barrier. No barrier should avail to hinder the inflow to the Gospel. As Isaiah foretold that all obstacles should be removed, “every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low” Isaiah 40:4, so Micah prophesies, “from mountain to mountain they shall come”.

The words are addressed as a promise and consolation to the Jews, and so, doubtless, the restoration of the Jews to their own land after the captivity is foretold here, as Micah had already foretold it Micah 4:10. But is the whole limited to this? He says, with remarkable indefiniteness, there shall come. He does not say, who “shall come.” But he twice sets two opposite boundaries, from which men should come; and, since these boundaries, not being coincident, cannot be predicted of one and the same subject, there must be two distinct incomings. The Jews were to come from those two countries, whither its people were then to be carried captive or would flee. From the boundaries of the world, the world was to come.

Thus, Micah embraces in one the prophecies, which are distinct in Isaiah, that not only God‘s former people should come from Egypt and A ssyria, but that Egypt and Assyria themselves should be counted as one with Israel Isaiah 19:23-25; and while, in the first place, the restoration of Israel itself is foretold, there follows that conversion of the world, which Micah had before promised Micah 4:1-3, and which was the object of the restoration of Israel. This was fulfilled to Jews and pagan together, when the dispersed of the Jews were gathered into one in Christ, the Son of David according to the flesh, and the Gospel, beginning at Jerusalem, was spread abroad among all nations. The promise is thrice repeated, It is the day, assuring the truth thereof, as it were, in the Name of the All-Holy Trinity.

Verse 13

Notwithstanding - (And) the land (that is that spoken of, the land of Judah) shall be desolate not through any arbitrary law or the might of her enemies, but through the sins of the people, because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings Truly "the fruit of their doings," what they did to please themselves, of their own minds against God. As they sow, so shall they reap. This sounds almost as a riddle and contradiction beforehand; "the walls built up," "the people gathered in," and "the land desolate." Yet it was all fulfilled in the letter as well as in spirit. Jerusalem was restored; the people was gathered, first from the captivity, then to Christ; and yet the land was again desolate through the fruit of their doings who rejected Christ, and is so until this day.

The prophet now closes with one earnest prayer Micah 7:14; to which he receives a brief answer, that God would shew forth His power anew, as when He first made them His people Micah 7:15. On this, he describes vividly the awed submission of the world to their God Micah 7:16-17, and closes with a thanksgiving of marveling amazement at the greatness and completeness of the forgiving mercy of God Micah 7:18-19, ascribing all to His free goodness Micah 7:5:20.

Verse 14

Feed Thy people with Thy rod - The day of final deliverance was still a great way off. There was a weary interval before them of chastisement, suffering, captivity. So Micah lays down his pastoral office by committing his people to Him who was their true and abiding Shepherd. who that has had the pastoral office, has not thought, as the night drew near in which no man can work, "what will be after him?" Micah knew and foretold the outline. It was for his people a passing through the valley of the shadow of death. Micah then commits them to Him, who had Himself committed them to him, who alone could guide them through it. It is a touching parting with his people; a last guidance of those whom he had taught, reproved, rebuked, in vain, to Him the Good Shepherd who led Israel like a flock. The rod is at times the shepherd's staff Leviticus 27:32; Psalm 23:4, although more frequently the symbol of chastisement. God's chastisement of His people is an austere form of His love. So He says, "If his children forsake My law, I will visit their offences with a rod and their sin with scourges: nevertheless My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from them" Psalm 89:31, Psalm 89:33.

The flock of Thine inheritance - So Moses had appealed to God, "Destroy not Thy people and Thine inheritance which Thou hast redeemed through Thy greatness - They are Thy people and Thine inheritance" Deuteronomy 9:26, Deuteronomy 9:29; and Solomon, in his dedication-prayer, that, on their repentance in their captivity, God would forgive His people, "for they be Thy people and Thine inheritance which Thou broughtest forth out of Egypt" 1 Kings 8:51; and Asaph, "O Lord, the pagan are come into Thine inheritance" Psalm 79:1; and again, "Why doth Thine anger smoke against the sheep of Thy pasture? Remember the tribe of Thine inheritance which Thou hast redeemed" Psalm 74:1-2; and Joel, "Spare Thy people and give not Thine heritage to reproach" Joel 2:17; and a Psalmist, "They break in pieces Thy people, O Lord, and afflict Thine heritage" Psalm 94:5; and Isaiah, "Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of Thine inheritance" Isaiah 63:17.

The appeal excludes all merits. Not for any deserts of their's, (for these were but evil,) did the prophets teach them to pray; but because they were God's property. It was His Name, which would be dishonored in them; it was His work, which would seemingly come to nothing; it was He, who would be thought powerless to save. Again, it is not God's way, to leave half-done what He has begun. "Jesus, having loved His own which were in the world, loved them unto the end" John 13:1. God's love in creating us and making us His, is the earnest, if we will, of His everlasting love. We have been the objects of His everlasting thought, of His everlasting love. Though we have forfeited all claim to Ills love, He has not forfeited the work of His Hands; Jesus has nor forfeited the price of His Blood. So holy men have prayed;, "I believe that Thou hast redeemed me by Thy Blood: permit not the price of the Ransom to perish." "O Jesus Christ, my only Saviour, let not Thy most bitter Passion and Death be lost or wasted in me, miserable sinner!".

Which dwell solitarily, or alone - Micah uses the words of Balaam, when he had been constrained by God to bless Israel. "The people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations" Numbers 23:9. Moses had repeated them, "Israel shall dwell in safety alone" Deuteronomy 33:28. This aloneness among other nations, then, was a blessing, springing from God's being in the midst of them Exodus 33:16, Deuteronomy 4:7, the deeds which He did for them Exodus 34:10; Deuteronomy 4:3, the law which He gave Deuteronomy 4:8, Deuteronomy 4:33. So Moses prayed,

“Wherein shall it be known here, that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight?” Exodus 33:16, is it “not in that Thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are on the face of the earth”. It was, then, a separate appeal to God by all His former loving-kindness, whereby He had severed and elected His people for Himself.

In the wood, in the midst of Carmel - God “turneth a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. He turneth the wilderness into a standing water and dry ground into watersprings” Psalm 107:34, Psalm 107:5. Isaiah at the same time used the like image, that “Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field (Carmel), and the fruitful field (Carmel) shall be esteemed as a forest” Isaiah 29:17. The wild forest was to be like the rich domestic exuberance of Carmel (see the note at Amos 1:2). He would say, “Feed Thy people in Babylon, which is to them a wild homeless tract, that it may be to them as their own peaceful Carmel.” Without God, all the world is a wilderness; with God, the wilderness is Paradise.

Let them feed in Basha and Gilead - The former words were a prayer for their restoration. Gilead and Bashan were the great pasture-countries of Palestine (see the note at Amos 1:3, vol. i. p. 234; iv. L p 280),, “a wide tableland, with undulating downs clothed with rich grass throughout,” where the cattle ranged freely.

They were the first possessions, which God had bestowed upon Israel; the first, which they forfeited. Micah prays that God, who protected them in their desolation, would restore and protect them in the green pasture where He placed them. They are a prayer still to the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep John 10:11, John 10:15, our Lord Jesus Christ, that He would feed His flock whom He has redeemed, who have been given to Him as an inheritance Psalm 2:8, the little flock Luke 12:32, to which it is the Fathers good pleasure to give the kingdom, which cleaveth to Him and shall be heirs with Him Romans 8:17. Cyril: “Christ feedeth His own with a rod, guiding them gently, and repressing by gentle fears the tendency of believers to listlessness. He bruiseth as with a rod of Iron, not them, but the rebellious disobedient and proud, who receive not the faith; believers He instructs and forms tenderly, feeds them among the lilies Ephesians 4:15, with minds well-fed and nourished and gladdened with all spiritual delights.

But the chosen and elect dwell solitarily, being apart from the rest who think only of the things of earth, and give themselves to the pleasures of sense. So then these, having the mind at rest, freed from the vain and abominable tumults, are placed apart as in a wood and in a mountain. By the wood you may understand, the rich and varied and solid instruction (as it were trees and flowers) both in doctrine and life; by the mountain, what is high and lofty. For none of the wisdom, accounted of in the Church, is low. They are "fed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old", rich pastures; for the mind of the holy is beautified, delighting itself in the contemplation of the inspired Scriptures, and filled, as it were, with a certain richness, and shares without stint all excellence in though or in deed; and that, not for a brief and narrow season, but forever. For what gladdeneth the flesh falleth therewith and fadeth and hasteth away like a shadow; but the participation of the good things from above and of the Spirit, stretcheth out along endless ages."

Verse 15

According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt - God answers the prayer, beginning with its closing words. Micah had prayed, "Turn Thy people like the days of old; "God answers, "like the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt." Micah had said, in the name of his people, "I shall behold His Righteousness; God answers, I will make him to behold marvelous things". The word marvelous things was used of God's great marvels in the physical world Job 5:9; Job 37:5, Job 37:14, or the marvelous mercies of His Providence toward individuals or nations (Psalm 9:2; Psalm 26:7; Psalm 71:17; Psalm 72:18, etc.), and especially of those great miracles, which were accumulated at the deliverance from Egypt Exodus 3:20; Judges 6:13; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 78:4, Psalm 78:11, Psalm 78:32; Psalm 105:2, Psalm 105:5; Psalm 106:7, Psalm 106:22, and the entrance of the promised land which was its completion.

The reference to the Exodus must have led them to think of actual miracles; since, in regard to the Exodus, it is used of nothing else. But there were no miracles at the return from the captivity. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion" Psalm 126:1, Psalm 126:3, said a Psalmist of the returned people, we were like them that dream. The Lord hath done great things for us; we are glad. Great things, but not miraculous. The promise then kept the people looking onward, until He came, "a prophet

mighty in word and deed" Luke 24:19, as to whom Peter appealed to the people, that He was "approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know" Acts 2:22; who gave also to them who believed on Him power to do "greater works than He did" John 14:12, through His own power, because He went to His Father; and when they believed, He shewed to him, namely, to the whole people gathered into the One Church, Jew and Gentile, yet more marvelous things, things, every way more marvelous and beyond nature than those of old, "the unsearchable riches of Christ, the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God" Ephesians 3:8-9.

Verse 16

The nations shall see - God had answered, what He would give to His own people, to see. Micah takes up the word, and says, what effect this sight should have upon the enemies of God and of His people. The world should still continue to be divided between the people of God and their adversaries. Those who are converted pass from the one to the other; but the contrast remains. Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, pass away or become subject to other powers; but the antagonism continues. The nations are they, who, at each time, waste, oppress, are arrayed against, the people of God. When the Gospel came into the world, the whole world was arrayed against it. These then, he says, "shall see", that is, the marvelous works of God, which God should shew His people, and be ashamed at, that is, "because of all their might", their own might. They put forth their whole might, and it failed them against the marvelous might of God. They should array might against might, and be ashamed at the failure of "all their might".

The word all is very emphatic; it implies that they had put forth all, and that all had failed them, and proved to be weakness. So the pagan might was often put to shame and gnashed its teeth, when it could avail nothing against the strength to endure which God gave to His martyrs. Its strength to inflict and to crush was baffled before the hidden might of God's Spirit. "They shall lay their hand upon their mouth", in token that they were reduced to silence, having no more to say; for He promised, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist" (Luke 21:15, compare Acts 5:29); and they had to own, "indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them, and we cannot deny it. Their ears

shall be deaf" Acts 4:16; they shall be silent, as though they had heard nothing, as if they were both dumb and deaf.

Yet it seems too that they are willfully deaf, shutting their ears out of envy and hatred, that they might not hear what great things God had done for His people, nor hear the voice of truth and be converted and healed. Rup.: "The nations and the Emperors of the nations saw, Jews and Gentiles saw, and were ashamed at all their might, because their might, great as it was accounted, upheld by laws and arms, could not overcome the mighty works, which the Good Shepherd did among His people or flock by His rod, that is, by His power, through weak and despised persons, the aged, or oftentimes even by boys and girls. They were then ashamed at all their might which could only touch the "earthen vessels" 2 Corinthians 4:7, but could not take away the treasure which was in them. What shall I say of the wisdom of those same nations? Of this too they were ashamed, as he adds, "They shall put their hands upon their mouths". For, in comparison with the heavenly wisdom, which spake by them and made their tongues eloquent, dumb was all secular eloquence, owning by its silence that it was convicted and confounded."

Verse 17

They shall lick the dust like a (the) serpent - To lick the dust, by itself, pictures the extreme humility of persons who east themselves down to the very earth (as in Psalm 72:9; Isaiah 49:23). To lick it "like the serpent" seems rather to represent the condition of those who share the serpent's doom Genesis 3:14; Isaiah 65:25, whose lot, viz. earth and things of earth, they had chosen (Rup.): "They shall move out of their holes", or, better, shall tremble, (that is, "come tremblingly,") out of their close places, whether these be strong places or prisons, as the word, varied in one vowel means. If it be strong places, it means, that "the enemies of God's people should, in confusion and tumltuously with fear, leave their strongholds, wherein they thought to be secure, not able to lift themselves up against God and those by Him sent against them." "Like worms of the earth", literally, creeping things, or, as we say, reptiles, contemptuously. "They shall be afraid of", or rather come trembling to, the Lord our God; it is uot said their, but our God, who hath done so great things for us. And shall fear

because of (literally, from) Thee, O Lord, of whom they had before said, Where is the Lord thy God?

It is doubtful, whether these last words express a "servile tear," whereby a man turns away and flees from the person or thing which he fears, or whether they simply describe fear of God, the first step toward repentance. In Hosea's words, "they shall fear toward the Lord and His goodness" Hosea 3:5, the addition, and His goodness, determines the character of the fear. In Micah, it is not said that the fear brings them into any relation to God. lie is not spoken of; as becoming, any how, their God, and Micah closes by a thanksgiving, for God's pardoning mercy, not to them but to His people.

And so the prophet ends, as he began, with the judgments of God; to those who would repent, chastisement, to the impenitent, punishment: "sentencing Samaria, guilty and not repenting" (Rup.), to perpetual captivity; to Jerusalem, guilty but repenting, promising restoration. So from the beginning of the world did God; so doth He; so shall He unto the end. So did He show Himself to Cain and Abel, who both, as we all, sinned in Adam. Cain, being impenitent, lie wholly cast away; Abel, being penitent," and through faith offering a better sacrifice than Cain, and "bringing forth fruits worthy of repentance, He accepted." So He hath foreshown as to the end John 5:25, but who, in the end, shall be forced to hear it out of their close places or prisons, that is, the grave, and come forth in fear, when they shall "say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us" Luke 23:30; Revelation 6:16. Thus the prophet brings us to the close of all things, the gladness and joy of God's people, the terror of His enemies, and adds only the song of thanksgiving of all the redeemed.

Verse 18

Who is a God - (and, as the word means, A Mighty God,) like unto Thee? He saith not, "Who hast made heaven and earth, the sea and all that therein is" Exodus 20:11; nor, "Who telleth the number of the stars; and calleth them all by their names" Psalm 147:4; nor, "Who by His strength setteth fast the mountains and is girded about with power" Psalm 65:6; but who forgivest! For greater is the work of Redemption than the work of Creation. "That pardoneth", and beareth and taketh away also, "and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage", that is, His heritage,

which is a remnant still when "the rest are blinded" Romans 11:7; and this, not of its merits but of His mercy; since it is not His nature to "retain His anger forever"; not for anything in them, but "because He delighteth in mercy", as He saith, "I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever" Jeremiah 3:12. "I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine oum sake, and will not remember thy sins" Isaiah 43:25.: "For although God for a time is angry with His elect, chastening them mercifully in this life, yet in the end He hath compassion on them, giving them everlasting consolations."

Moses, after the completion of his people's deliverance at the Red Sea, used the like appeal to God, in unmingled joy. Then the thanksgiving ran, "glorious in holiness, awful in praises, doing wonders" Exodus 15:11. Now, it ran in a more subdued, yet even deeper, tone, taken from God's revelation of Himself after that great transgression on Mount Sinai "forgiving iniquity and trasgression and sin". With this, Micah identified his own name. This was the one message which he loved above all to proclaim; of this, his own name was the herald to his people in his day. who is like the Lord, the Pardoner of sin, the Redeemer from its guilt, the Subduer of its power? For no false god was ever such a claim made. The pagan gods were symbols of God's workings in nature; they were, at best, representatives of His government and of His displeasure at sin. But, being the creatures of man's mind, they could hot freely pardon, for man dared not ascribe to them the attribute of a freely-pardoning mercy, for which be dared not hope. Who is a God like to Thee, mighty, not only to destroy but to pardon? is the wondering thanksgiving of time, the yet greater amazement of eternity, as eternity shall unveil the deep blackness of sin over-against the light of God, and we, seeing God, as He Is, shall see what that Holiness is, against Which we sinners sinned, The soul, which is truly penitent, never wearies of the wondering love, who is a God like unto Thee?

Verse 19

He will turn again - who seemed to be turned away from us when we were turned away from Him. "He will subdue, or trample under foot" Joel 2:14, our worst enemy, "our iniquities", as He saith, "He shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" Romans 16:20. Hitherto, sinful passions had not rebelled only, but had had the mastery over us. Sin subdued man; it was his lord, a fierce tyrant over him; he could not subdue it. Holy Scripture says

emphatically of man under the law, that he was sold under sin Romans 7:14, a slave under a hard master, oppressed, weighed down, and unable to throw off the bondage. "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin" Romans 3:9; "the Scripture hath concluded all under sin" Galatians 3:22. Under the Gospel, God, he says, would subdue sin "under us," and make it, as it were, our "footstool." It is a Gospel before the Gospel. God would pardon; and He, not we, would subdue sin to us. He would bestow, "of sin the double cure, Save us from its guilt and power". "Not I, but the grace of God, which was with me" 1 Corinthians 15:10.

And Thou wilt cast - - Not, some ("for it is impious to look for a half-pardon from God") but - "all their sins into the depths of the sea", so that as in the passage of the Red Sea there was not one Egyptian left of those who pursued His people, so neither shall there be one sin, which, through Baptism and on Repentance, shall not through His free mercy be pardoned. As they, which "sank as lead in the mighty waters" Exodus 15:10, never again rose, so shall the sins, unless revived by us, not rise against us to condemnation, but shall in the Day of Judgment be sunk in the abyss of hell, as if they had never been.

Verse 20

Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob and the mercy to Abraham - What was free mercy to Abraham, became, when God had once promised it, His truth. Abraham also stands for all those, who in him and his Seed should be blessed, those who were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" Ephesians 2:12, in no covenant or relation with God, as well as those who were the children of the faith; pagan, as well as Jews. Jacob represents these who were immediately his children, such of the children of Israel, as were also the true Israel and children of faithful Abraham. In both ways the gift to Abraham was mercy, to Jacob, truth. So also Paul saith, "Jesus Christ was a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy." Romans 15:8-9 yet mercy and truth Psalm 25:10, together, are all the paths of the Lord; they "met together" Psalm 85:10 in Christ; yea Christ Himself is full of Mercy as well as "Truth" John 1:14: and woe were it to that soul to whom He were Truth without mercy. Rup.: "For to be saved, we look not so much to the truth of the Judge as to the mercy of the Redeemer." And mercy, in the counsel of

God, reacheth wider than truth; for truth is given to Jacob, the father of one nation, Israel; but mercy to Abraham, "the father of many nations" Genesis 17:5; Romans 4:17. Isaac, it may be, is not here mentioned, because all to whom the blessing should come are already spoken of in Jacob and Abraham; in Jacob, all to whom the promise was first made; in Abraham, all nations of the world who should be blessed in his Seed, through the mercy of God overflowing the bounds of that covenant. Isaac is, in his sacrifice, chiefly a type of our Lord Himself.

Which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers - "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation" Hebrews 6:18.

From the days of old - Alb.: From eternity, in the counsel of God; in promise, from the foundation of the world, as is said in the hymn of Zacharias, "As He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began" Luke 1:70. Pococke: The inspired hymns of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of Zachariah take up the words of the prophet, and shew that they are already fulfilled in Christ, although they shall be more and more fulfilled unto the world's end, as Jew and Gentile are brought into His fold; "He remembering His mercy, as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever" Luke 1:54-55. "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remnember His holy covenant, the oath which He sware to our father Abraham that He would grant unto us" Luke 1:72-74.

"I too," Jerome subjoins, "sealing the labor of my little work by calling upon the Lord, will say at the close of this tract, O God, who is like unto Thee? Take away the iniquity of Thy servant, pass by the sin of my decayed soul, and send not Thine anger upon me, nor rebuke me in Thy indignation; for Thou art full of pity and great are Thy mercies. Rcturn and have mercy upon me; drown mine iniquities, and cast them into the depth of the sea, that the bitterness of sin may perish in the bitter waters. Grant the truth which Thou didst promise to Thy servant Jacob, and the mercy which Thou didst pledge to Abraham Thy friend, and free my soul, as Thou didst sware to my fathers in the days of old; "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Then shall mine enemy see and be crowned with confusion, who now saith unto me, where is now thy God?" Ezekiel 33:11. Amen, Amen, O Good Lord Jesus.

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Nahum

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NAHUM INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Nahum

The prophecy of Nahum is both the complement and the counterpart of the Book of Jonah. When Moses had asked God to show him His glory, and God had promised to let him see the outskirts of that glory, and to proclaim the Name of the Lord before him, "the Lord," we are told, "passed by before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty" Exodus 34:6-7. God proclaimed at once His mercy and His justice. Those wondrous words echo along the whole patch of the Old Testament. Moses himself Numbers 14:17-18, David Psalm 86:15; Psalm 103:8; Psalm 145:8, other Psalmists Psalm 111:4; Psalm 112:4; Psalm 116:5, Jeremiah Jeremiah 32:18-19, Daniel Daniel 9:4, Nehemiah Nehemiah 9:17 all pled to God or recounted some words in thanksgiving. Joel repeated such words as a motive for repentance Joel 2:13. Upon the repentance of Nineveh, Jonah had recited to God the bright side of His declaration of Himself, "I knew that Thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great goodness" Jonah 4:2, repeating to God His words to Moses, and adding a change of heart concerning the harm. Nineveh, as appears from Nahum, had fallen back into the violence of which it had repented. Nahum then, in reference to that declaration of Jonah, begins by setting forth the awful side of the attributes of God. First, in a stately rhythm, which, in the original, reminds us of the gradual Psalms, he enunciates the solemn threefold declaration of the severity of God to those who will be His enemies.

A jealous God and Avenger is the Lord:
An Avenger is the Lord, and lord of wrath;
An Avenger is the Lord to His adversaries:

And a Reserver of wrath to His enemies.
Nahum 1:2

Then, Naham too recites that character of mercy recorded by Moses, "The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power" Nahum 1:3. But anger, although slow, comes, he adds, not the less certainly on the guilty; "and will not at all clear the guilty" Nahum 1:3. The iniquity is full. As a whole, there

is no more room for repentance. Nineveh had had its prophet, and had been spared, and had sunk back into its old sins. The office of Nahum is to pronounce its sentence. That sentence is fixed. "There is no healing of thy bruise" Nahum 3:19. Nothing is said of its ulterior conversion or restoration. On the contrary, Nahum says, "He will make the place thereof an utter desolation" Nahum 1:8.

The sins of Nineveh spoken of by Nahum are the same as those from which they had turned at the preaching of Jonah. In Jonah, it is, "the violence of their hands" Jonah 3:8. Nahum describes Nineveh as "a dwelling of lions, filled with prey and with ravin, the feeding-place of young lions, where the lion tore enough for his whelps" Nahum 2:11-12; "a city of bloods, full of lies and robbery, from which the prey departeth not" Nahum 3:1.

But, amid this mass of evil, one thing was eminent, in direct antagonism to God. The character is very special. It is not simply of rebellion against God, or neglect of Him. It is a direct disputation of His Sovereignty. Twice the prophet repeats the characteristic expression, "What will ye devise against the Lord?" "devising evil against the Lord;" and adds, "counselor of evil" Nahum 1:11. This was exactly the character of Sennacherib, whose wars, like those of his forefathers, (as appears from the cuneiform inscriptions. There were religious wars, and Sennacherib blasphemously compared God to the local deities of the countries, which his forefathers or himself had destroyed Isaiah 36:18-20; Isaiah 37:10-13. Of this enemy Nahum speaks, as having "gone forth;" out of thee (Nineveh) hath gone forth Nahum 1:11 one, devising evil against the Lord, a counselor of Belial. This was past.

Their purpose was inchoate, yet incomplete. God challenges them, "What will ye devise so vehemently against the Lord?" Nahum 1:9. The destruction too is proximate. The prophet answers for God, "He Himself, by Himself is already making an utter end" Nahum 1:9. To Jerusalem he turns, "And now I will break his yoke from off thee, and will break his bonds asunder" Nahum 1:13. Twice the prophet mentions the device against God; each time he answers it by the prediction of the sudden utter destruction of the enemy, while in the most perfect security. "While they are intertwined as thorns, and swallowed up as their drink, they are devoured as stubble

fully dry" Nahum 1:10; and, "If they are perfect" Nahum 1:12, unimpaired in their strength, "and thus many, even thus shall they be mown down." Their destruction was to be, their numbers, complete. With no previous loss, secure and at ease, a mighty host, in consequence of their prosperity, all were, at one blow, mown down; "and he (their king, who counseled against the Lord) shall pass away and perish."

"The abundance of the wool in the fleece is no hindrance to the shears," nor of the grass to the sythe, nor of the Assyrian host to the will of the Lord, After he, the chief, had thus passed away, Nahum foretells that remarkable death, in connection with the house of his gods; "Out of the house of thy gods I will cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave" Nahum 1:14. There is no natural construction of these words, except, "I will make it thy grave". Judah too was, by the presence of the Assyrian, hindered from going up to worship at Jerusalem. The prophet bids to proclaim peace to Jerusalem; "keep thy feasts - for the wicked shall no more pass through thee." It was then by the presence of the wicked, that they were now hindered from keeping their feasts, which could be kept only at Jerusalem.

The prophecy of Nahum coincides then with that of Isaiah, when Hezekiah prayed against Sennacherib. In the history 2 Kings 19:4, 2 Kings 19:22-28, and in the prophecy of Isaiah, the reproach and blasphemy and rage against God are prominent, as an evil design against God is in Nahum. In Isaiah we have the messengers sent to blaspheme Isaiah 37:4, Isaiah 37:23-29; in Nahum, the promise, that "the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard." Isaiah prophesies the fruitlessness of his attempt against Jerusalem Isaiah 37:33-34; his disgraced return; his violent death in his own land Isaiah 37:7; Nahum prophesies the entire destruction of his army, his own passing away, his grave. Isaiah, in Jerusalem, foretells how the spontaneous fruits of the earth shall be restored to them 2 Kings 19:29; Isaiah 37:30, and so, that they shall have possession of the open corn-country; Nahum, living probably in the country, foretells the free access to Jerusalem, and bids them to (Nahum 1:15; Nahum 2:1 (Nahum 2:2 in Hebrew)) keep their feasts, and perform the vows, which, in their trouble, they had promised to God. He does not only foretell that they may, but he enjoins them to do it.

The words (Nahum 2:2 (verse 3 in Hebrew)), "the emptiers have emptied them out and marred their vine branches," may relate to the first expedition of Sennacherib, when, Holy Scripture says, he "came up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them," and Hezekiah gave him "thirty talents of gold and 300 talents of silver" 2 Kings 18:13-14; Isaiah 36:1. Sennacherib himself says, "Hezekiah, king of Judah, who had not submitted to my authority, forty-six of his principal cities, and fortresses and villages depending upon them of which I took no account, I captured, and carried away their spoil. And from these places I captured and carried off as spoil 200,150 people," etc. This must relate to the first expedition, on account of the exact correspondence of the tribute in gold, with a variation in the number of the talents of silver, easily accounted for.

In the first invasion Sennacherib relates that he besieged Jerusalem.: "Hezekiah himself I shut up in Jerusalem his capital city, like a bird in a cage, building towers round the city to fence him in, and raising banks of earth against the gates, so as to prevent escape." It is perhaps in reference to this, that, in the second invasion, God promises by Isaiah; "He shall not come into this city, and shall not shoot an arrow there; and shall not present shield before it, and shall not cast up bank against it" Isaiah 37:33. Still, in this second invasion also, Holy Scripture relates, that "the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army" Isaiah 36:2; 2 Kings 18:17. Perhaps it is in regard to this second expedition, that God says, "Though I have afflicted thee, I will affict thee no more" Nahum 1:12; i. e., this second invasion should not desolate her, like that first. Not that God absolutely would not again afflict her, but not now. The yoke of the Assyrian was then broken, until the fresh sins of Manasseh drew down their own punishment.

Nahum then was a prophet for Judah, or for that remnant of Israel, which, after the ten tribes were carried captive, became one with Judah, not in temporal sovereignty, but in the one worship of God. His mention of Basan, Carmel and Lebanon alone, as places lying under the rebuke of God, perhaps implies a special interest in Northern Palestine. Judah may have already become the name for the whole people of God who were left in their own land, since those of the ten tribes who remained had now no

separate religious or political existence. The idol-center of their worship was gone into captivity.

The old tradition agrees with this as to the name of the birthplace of Nahum, "the Elkoshite." "Some think," says Jerome, "that Elcesaeus was the father of Nahum, and, according to the Hebrew tradition, was also a prophet; whereas Elcesi is even to this day a little village in Galilee, small indeed, and scarcely indicating by its ruins the traces of ancient buildings, yet known to the Jews, and pointed out to me too by my guide." The name is a genuine Hebrew name, the "El," with which it begins, being the name of God, which appears in the names of other towns also as El'ale, Eltolad, Elteke Eltolem. The author of the short-lived Gnostic heresy of the Elcesaites, called Elkesai, elkasai, elxai, elxaios, Elkasaios, probably had his name from that same village. Eusebius mentions Elkese, as the place "whence was Nahum the Elkesaean." Cyril of Alexandria says, that Elkese was a village somewhere in Judaea.

On the other hand "Alcush," a town in Mosul, is probably a name of Arabic origin, and is not connected with Nahum by any extant or known writer, earlier than Masius toward the end of the 16th century, and an Arabic scribe in 1713. Neither of these mention the tomb. "The tomb," says Layard, "is a simple plaster box, covered with green cloth, and standing at the upper end of a large chamber. The house containing the tomb is a modern building. There are no inscriptions, nor fragments of any antiquity near the place." The place is now reverenced by the Jews, but in the 12th century Benjamin of Tudela supposed his tomb to be at Ain Japhata, South of Babylon. Were anything needed to invalidate statements more than 2000 years after the time of Nahum, it might suffice that the Jews, who are the authors of this story, maintain that not Jonah only but Obadiah and Jephthah the Gileadite are also buried at Mosul.

Nor were the ten tribes placed there, but "in the cities of the Medes" 2 Kings 17:6. The name Capernaum, "the village of Nahum," is probably an indication of his residence in Galilee. There is nothing in his language unique to the Northern tribes. One very poetic word Nahum 3:2; Judges 5:22, common to him with the song of Deborah, is not therefore a "provincialism," because it only happens to occur in the rich, varied,

language of two prophets of North Palestine. Nor does the occurrence of a foreign title interfere with "purity of diction". It rather belongs to the vividness of his description.

The conquest of No-Ammon or Thebes and the captivity of its inhabitants, of which Nahum speaks, must have been by Assyria itself. Certainly it was not from domestic disturbances; for Nahum says, that the people were carried away captive Nahum 3:10. Nor was it from the Ethiopians; for Nahum speaks of them, as her allies Nahum 3:9. Nor from the Carthaginians; for the account of Ammianus, that "when first Carthage was beginning to expand itself far and wide, the Punic generals, by an unexpected inroad, subdued the hundred-gated Thebes," is merely a mistaken gloss on a statement of Diodorus, that "Hanno took Hekatompylos by siege;" a city, according to Diodorus himself, "in the desert of Libya." Nor was it from the Scythians; for Herodotus, who alone speaks of their maraudings and who manifestly exaggerates them, expressly says, that Psammetichus induced the Scythians by presents not to enter Egypt; and a wandering predatory horde does not besiege or take strongly-fortified towns.

There remain then only the Assyrians. Four successive Assyrian Monarchs Sargon, his son, grandson and great grandson, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Asshur-bani-pal, from 718 b.c. to about 657 b.c., conquered in Egypt. The hostility was first provoked by the encouragement given by Sabacho the Ethiopian (Sab'e in the cuneiform inscriptions, S b k, in Egyptian), the So of Holy Scripture, to Hoshea to rebel against Shalmaneser 2 Kings 17:4. Sargon, who, according to his own statement, was the king who actually took Samaria, led three expeditions of his own against Egypt. In the first, Sargon defeated the Egyptian king in the battle of Raphia; in the second, in his seventh year, he boasts that Pharaoh became his tributary; in a third, which is placed three years later, Ethiopia submitted to him.

A seal of Sabaco has been found at Koyunjik, which, as has been conjectured, was probably annexed to a treaty. The capture of Ashdod by the Tartan of Sargon, recorded by Isaiah Isaiah 20:1, was probably in the second expedition, when Sargon deposed its king Azuri, substituting his brother Akhimit: the rebellion of Ashdod probably occasioned the third

expedition, in which as it seems, Isaiah‘s prophecy was fulfilled, that Egyptians and Ethiopians, young and old, should be carried captive by the king of Assyria. The king of Ashdod, Yaman, is related to have fled to Egypt, which was subject to Merukha or Meroe; and to have been delivered up by the king of Meroe who himself fled to some unnamed desert afar, a march of (it is conjectured) months. The king of Meroe, first, from times the most distant, became tributary.: “His forefathers had not” in all that period “sent to the kings my ancestors to ask for peace and to acknowledge the power of Merodach.” The fact, that his magnificent palace, “one of the few remains of external decoration,” Layard says, “with which we are acquainted in Assyrian architecture,” “seems” according to Mr. Fergusson,, “at first sight almost purely Egyptian,” implies some lengthened residence in Egypt or some capture of Egyptian artists.

Of Sennacherib, the son of Sargon, Josephus writes, “Berosus, the historian of the Chaldee affairs, mentions the king Sennacherib, and that he reigned over the Assyrians, and that he warred against all Asia and Egypt, saying as follows.” The passage of Berosus itself is missing, witether Josephus neglected to fill it in, or whether it has been subsequently lost; but neither Chaldee nor Egyptian writers record expeditions which were reverses; and although Beresus was a Babylonian, not an Assyrian, yet the document, which he used, must have been Assyrian. In the second expedition of Sennacherib, Rabshakeh, in his message to Hezekiah, says, “Behold thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, upon Egypt” 2 Kings 18:21. The expression is remarkable. He does not speak of Egypt, as a power, weak, frail, failing, but, passively, as crushed by another. It is the same word and image which he uses in his prophecy of our Lord, “a bruised reed (רצץ קנה *qâneh râtsats*) shall He not break,” i. e., He shall not break that which is already bruised. The word implies, then, that the king of Egypt had already received some decided blow before the second expedition of Sennacherib. The annals of Sennacherib‘s reign, still preserved in his inscriptions, break off in the eighth of his twenty-two years, and do not extend to the time of this second expedition against Hezekiah. Nor does Holy Scripture say, in what year this second expedition took place. In this he defeated “the kings of Egypt and the king of Meroe at Altakou (Elteke) and Tamna (Timnatha).”

Sennacherib's son Esarhaddon appears for the time to have subdued Egypt and Ethiopia, and to have held them as kingdoms dependent on himself. "He acquired Egypt and the inner parts of Asia," is the brief statement of Abydenus (i. e., of Berosus): "He established" (his son relates) "twenty kings, satraps, governors in Egypt", among which can be recognized Necho, (the father of Psammetichus) king of Memphis and Sais; a king of Tanis, or Zoan (now San); Natho (or, according to another copy, Sept), Hanes, Sebennytus, Mendes, Bubastis, Siyout or Lycopolis, Chemmis, Tinis, and No. These were all subordinate kings, for so he entitles each separately in the list, although he sums up the whole, "These are the names of the Kings, Pechahs, Satraps who in Egypt obeyed my father who begat me." Tearcho or Taracho himself, "king of Egypt and Ethiopia", was in like way subject to Esarhaddon. The account of the revolt, which his son Asshur-bani-pal quelled, implies also a fixed settlement in Egypt. The 20 kings were involved in the rebellion through fear of Taracho, but there is notice of other servants of Esarhaddon who remained faithful and were maltreated by Taraoho.

Asshur-bani-pal says also, that he strengthened his former garrisons. One expedition of Esarhaddon (probably toward the close of his reign, since he does not mention it in his own annals which extend over eight years) is related by his son Asshur-bani-pal. "He defeated Tirhakah in the lower country, after which, proceeding Southward, he took the city, where the Ethiopian held his court," and assumed the title, "king of the kings of Egypt and conqueror of Ethiopia." On another inscription in a palace built for his son, at Tarbisi, now Sherif-khan, he entitles himself "king of the kings of Egypt, Pathros, Ethiopia." We do not, however, find the addition, which appears to recur upon every conquest of a people not before conquered by Assyria, "which the kings, my fathers, had not subdued." This addition is so regular, that the absence of it, in itself, involves a strong probability of a previous conquest of the country.

The subdual apparently was complete. They revolted at the close of the reign of Esarhaddon (as his son Asshur-bani-pal relates) from fear of Taracho rather than from any wish of their own to regain independence. Asshur-bani-pal accordingly, after the defeat of Taracho, forgave and restored them. Even the second treacherous revolt was out of fear, lest

Taracho shall return, upon the withdrawal of the Assyrian armies. This second revolt and perhaps a subsequent revolt of Urdamanie a stepson of Taracho, who succeeded him, Asshur-bani-pal seems to have subdued by his lieutenants, without any necessity of marching in person against them. Thebes was taken and retaken; but does not appear to have offered any resistance. Taracho, upon his defeat at Memphis, fled to it, and again abandoned it as he had Memphis, and the army of Asshur-bani-pal made a massacre in it. Once more it was taken, when it had been recovered by Urdamanie, and then, if the inscriptions are rightly deciphered, strange as it is, the carrying off of men and women from it is mentioned in the midst of that of "great horses and apes." "Silver, gold, metals, stones, treasures of his palace, dyed garments, berom and linen, great horses, men, male and female, immense apes - they drew from the midst of the city, and brought as spoils to Nineveh the city of my dominion, and kissed my feet."

All of those kings having been conquerors of Egypt, the captivity of No might equally hav, e taken place under any of them. All of them employed the policy, which Sargon apparently began, of transporting to a distance those whom they had conquered. Yet it is, in itself, more probable, that it was at the earlier than at the later date. It is most in harmony with the relation of Nahum to Isaiah that, in regard to the conquest of Thebes also, Nahum refers to the victory over Egypt and Ethiopia foretold by Isaiah, when Sargon's general, the Tartan, was besieging Ashdod. The object of Isaiah's prophecy was to undeceive Judah in regard to its reliance on Egypt and Ethiopia against Assyria, which was their continual bane, morally, religiously, nationally. But the prophecy goes beyond any mere defeat in battle, or capture of prisoners. It relates to conquest within Egypt itself. For Isaiah says, "the king of Assyria shall lead into captivity Egyptians and Ethiopians, young and old" Isaiah 20:4. They are not their choice young men, the flower of their army, but those of advanced age and those in their first youth, such as are taken captive, only when a population itself is taken captive, either in a marauding expedition, or in the capture of a city. The account of the captivity of No exactly corresponds with this. Nahum says nothing of its permanent subdual, only of the captivity of its inhabitants. But Esarhaddon apparently did not carry the Egyptians captive at all. Every fact given in the Inscriptions looks like a permanent settlement. The establishment of the 20 subordinate kings, in the whole length and breadth

of Egypt, implies the continuance of the previous state of things, with the exception of that subordination. No itself appears as one of the cities settled apparently under its native though tributary king.

In regard to the fulfillment of prophecy, they who assume as an axiom, or petitio principii, that there can be no prophecy of distant events, have overlooked, that while they think that, by assuming the later date, they bring Nahum‘s prophecy of the capture of Nineveh nearer to its accomplishment, they remove in the same degree Isaiah‘s prophecy of the captivity of Egyptians and Ethiopians, young and old, from its accomplishment. “Young and old” are not the prisoners of a field of battle; young and old of the Ethiopians would not be in a city of lower Egypt. If Isaiah‘s prophecy was not fulfilled under Sargon or Sennacherib, it must probably have waited for its fulfillment until this last subdual by Asshurbanipal. For the policy of Esarhaddon and also of Asshurbanipal, until repeated rebellions wore his patience, was of settlement, not of deportation. If too the prophecy of Nahum were brought down to the reign of Asshurbanipal, it would be the more stupendous.

For the empire was more consolidated. Nahum tells the conqueror, flushed with his own successes and those of his father, that he had himself no more inherent power than the city whose people he had carried captive. Thebes too, like Nineveh, dwelt securely, conquering all, unreached by any ill, sea-girt, as it were, by the mighty river on which she rested. She too was strengthened with countless hosts of her own and of allied people. Yet she fell. Nineveh, the prophet tells her, was no mightier, in herself. Her river was no stronger defense than that sea of fresh water, the Nile; her tributaries would disperse or become her enemies. The prophet holds up to her the vicissitudes of No-amon, as a mirror to herself. As each death is a renewed witness to man‘s mortality, so each marvelous reverse of temporal greatness is a witness to the precariousness of other human might. No then was an ensample to Nineveh, although its capture was by the armies of Nineveh. They had been, for centuries, two rivals for power. But the contrast bad far more force, when the victory over Egypt was fresh, than after 61 years of alternate conquest and rebellion.

But, anyhow, the state of Nineveh and its empire, as pictured by Nahum, is inconsistent with any times of supposed weakness in the reign of its last king: the state of Judah, with reference to Assyria, corresponds with that under Sennacherib but with none below. They are these. Assyria was in its full unimpaired strength Nahum 1:12; Nahum 2:12. She still blended those two characters so rarely combined, but actually united in her and subsequently in Babylon, of a great merchant and military people. She had, at once, the prosperity of peace and of war. Lying on a great line of ancient traffic, which bound together East and West, India with Phoenicia, and with Europe through Phoenicia, both East and West poured their treasures into the great capital, which lay as a center between them, and stretched out its arms, alike to the Indian sea and the Mediterranean. Nahum can compare its merchants only to that which is countless by man, the locusts or the stars of heaven Nahum 3:16.

But amid this prosperity of peace, war also was enriching her. Nineveh was still sending out its messengers (such as was Rabshakeh), the leviers of its tribute, the demanders of submission. It was still one vast lion-lair, its lions still gathering in prey from the whole earth Nahum 2:12-13, still desolating, continually, unceasingly, in all directions Nahum 3:19, and now, especially, devising evil against God and His people Nahum 1:9, Nahum 1:11. Upon that people its yoke already pressed, for God promises to break it off from them Nahum 1:13; the people was already afflicted, for God says to it, "Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more" Nahum 1:12, namely, by this invader. The solemn feasts of Judah were hindered through the presence of ungodly invaders; Belial, the counselor of evil spoken of under that name, already passing through her. War was around her, for he promises that one should publish peace upon her mountains Nahum 1:15. This was the foreground of the picture. This was the exact condition of things at Hezekiah's second invasion, just before the miraculous destruction of his army. Sennacherib's yoke was heavy, for he had exacted from Hezekiah "three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold" 2 Kings 18:14; Hezekiah had not "two thousand horsemen" 2 Kings 18:23; the "great host" 2 Kings 18:17 of the Assyrians encircled Jerusalem. They summoned it to surrender on the terms, that they should pay a new tribute, and that Sennacherib, whenever it pleased him, should remove them to Assyria 2 Kings 18:31-32.

At no subsequent period were there any events corresponding to this description. Manasseh was carried captive to Babylon by Esarhaddon; but probably this was no formidable or resisted invasion, since the book of Kings passes it over altogether, the Chronicles mention only that the Assyrian generals took Manasseh prisoner in a thicket (2 Chronicles 33:11, accordingly not in Jerusalem, and carried him to Babylon. Probably, this took place, in the expedition of Esarhaddon to the West, when he settled in the cities of Samaria people of different nations, his captives Ezra 4:2, Ezra 4:9-10. The capture of Manasseh was then, probably, a mere incident in the history. Since he was taken among the thickets, he had probably fled, as Zedekiah did afterward, and was taken in his place of concealment. This was simply personal. No taking of towns is mentioned, no siege, no terror, no exaction of tribute, no carrying away into captivity, except of the single Manasseh. The grounds of his restoration are not mentioned.

The Chronicles mention only the religious aspect of his captivity and his restoration, his sin and his repentance. But it seems probable that he was restored by Esarhaddon, upon the same system of policy, on which he planted subjects of his own in Samaria and the country around Zidon, built a new town to take the place of Zidon, and joined in the throne of Edom one, brought up in his own palace. For, when restored, Manasseh was set at full liberty to fortify Jerusalem 2 Chronicles 33:14, as Hezekiah had done, and to put "captains of war in all the cities of Judah" 2 Chronicles 33:14. This looks as if he was sent back as a trusted tributary of Esarhaddon, and as a frontier-power against Egypt. At least, 60 years afterward, we find Josiah, in the like relation of trust to Nebuchadnezzar, resisting the passage of Pharaoh-Necho. However, the human cause of his restoration must remain uncertain. Yet clearly, in their whole history, there is nothing to correspond to the state of Judaea, as described by Nahum.

A recent critic writes, "Nahum's prophecy must have been occasioned by an expedition of mighty enemies against Nineveh. The whole prophecy is grounded on the certain danger, to which Nineveh was given over; only the way in which this visible danger is conceived of, in connection with the eternal truths, is here the properly prophetic." Ewald does not explain how the danger, to which "Nineveh was given over" was certain, when it did not

happen. The explanation must come to this. Nahum described a siege of Nineveh and its issue, as certain. The description in itself might be either of an actual siege, before the prophet‘s eyes, or of one beheld in the prophet‘s mind. But obviously no mere man, endowed with mere human knowledge, would have ventured to predict so certainly the fall of such a city as Nineveh, unless it was “given over to certain danger.” But according to the axiom received in Ewald‘s school, Nahum, equally with all other men, could have had only human prescience.

Therefore, Nahum, prophesying the issue so confidently, must have prophesied when Nineveh was so “given over.” The a priori axiom of the school rules its criticism. Meanwhile the admission is incidentally made, that a prophecy so certain, had it related to distant events, was what no man, with mere human knowledge, would venture upon. Ewald accordingly thinks that the prophecy was occasioned by a siege of Phraortes; which siege Nahum expected to be successful; which however failed, so that Nahum was mistaken, although the overthrow which he foretold came to pass afterward! The siege, however, of Nineveh by Phraortes is a mere romance. Herodotus, who alone attributes to Phraortes a war with Assyria, has no hint, that he even approached to Nineveh. He simply relates that Phraortes “subdued Asia, going from one nation to another, until, leading an army against the Assyrians, he perished himself, in the second year of his reign, and the greater part of his army.”

It is not necessary to consider the non-natural expositions, by which the simple descriptions of Nahum were distorted into conformity with this theory, which has no one fact to support it. Herodotus even dwells on the good condition of the Assyrian affairs, although isolated from their revolted allies, and seemingly represents the victory as an easy one. And, according to Herodotus, whose account is the only one we have, Phraortes (even if he ever fought with the Ninevites, and Herodotus‘ account is not merely the recasting of the history of another Median Frawartish who, according to the Behistun Inscription, claimed the throne of Media against Darius, and perished in battle with him) had only an unorganized army. Herodotus says of Cyaxares, his son, “He is said to have been more warlike far than his forefathers, and he first distributed Asiatics into distinct bands, and separated the spearmen and archers and horsemen from one another,

whereas, before, everything had alike mixed into one confused mass." Such an undisciplined horde could have been no formidable enemy for a nation, whom the monuments and their history exhibit as so warlike and so skilled in war as the Assyrians.

Another critic,, then, seeing the untenableness of this theory, ventures (as he never hesitated at any paradox) to place the prophet Nahum, as an eye-witness of the first siege of Cyaxares.

Herodotus states that Cyaxares, the son of Phraortes, twice besieged Nineveh. First, immediately after his father's death, to avenge it; the second, after the end of the Scythian troubles, when he took it. The capture of Nineveh was in the first year of Nabopolassor 625 b.c. The accession of Cyaxares, according to Herodotus, was 633 b.c. Eight years then only elapsed between his first siege and its capture, and, if it be true, that the siege lasted two years, there was an interval of six years only. But, at this time, the destruction of Nineveh was no longer a subject of joy to Judah. Since the captivity of Manasseh, Judah had had nothing to fear from Assyria; nor do we know of any oppression from it. Holy Scripture mentions none. The Assyrian monuments speak of expeditions against Egypt; but there was no temptation to harass Judah, which stood in the relation of a faithful tributary and an outwork against Egypt, and which, when Nineveh fell, remained in the same relation to its conquerors, into whose suzerainty it passed, together with the other dependencies of Assyria. The relation of Josiah to Babylon was the continuation of that of Manasseh to Esarhaddon.

The motive of this theory is explained by the words, "With a confidence, which leaves room for no doubt, Nahum expects a siege and an ultimate destruction of Nineveh. The security of his tone, nay that he ventures at all to trope so enormous a revolution of the existing state of things, must find its explanation in the circumstances of the time, out of the then condition of the world; but not until Cyaxares reigned in Media, did things assume an aspect, corresponding to this confidence." It is well that this writer doffs the courteous language, as to the "hopes," "expectations," "inferences from God's justice," and brings the question to the issue, "there is such absolute certainty of tone," that Nahum must have had either a divine or a human

knowledge. He acknowledges the untenableness of any theory width would account for the prophecy of Nahum on any human knowledge, before Cyaxares was marching against the gates of Nineveh. Would human knowledge have sufficed then? Certainly, from such accounts as we have, Nineveh might still have stood against Cyaxares and its own rebel and traitorous general, but for an unforeseen event which man could not bring about, the swelling of its river.

But, as usual, unbelief fixes itself upon that which is minutest, ignores what is greatest. There are, in Nahum, three remarkable predictions.

(1) The sudden destruction of Sennacherib‘s army and his own remarkable death in the house of his god.

(2) The certain, inevitable, capture of Nineveh, and that, not by capitulation or famine, not even by the siege or assault, which is painted so vividly, but the river, which was its protection, becoming the cause of its destruction.

(3) Its utter desolation, when captured. The first, people assume to have been the description of events past; the second, the siege, they assume to have been present; and that, when truman wisdom could foresee its issue; the third, they generalize. The first is beyond the reach of proof now. It was a witness of the Providence and just judgment of God, to those days, not to our‘s. A brief survey of the history of the Assyrian Empire will show, that the second and third predictions were beyond human knowledge.

The Assyrian Empire dated probably from the ninth century before Christ. Such, it has been pointed out, is the concurrent result of the statements of Berosus and Herodotus. Moses, according to the simplest meaning of his words, spake of the foundation of Nineveh as contemporary with that of Babylon. “The beginning of the kingdom of Nimrod,” he relates, “was Babel and Erech, and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh” Genesis 10:10-11. Oppressed probably and driven forth by Nimrod, Asshur and his Semitic descendants went forth from the plain of Shinar, the Babylonia of after-ages. Had Moses intended to express (what some have thought), that

Nimrod "went forth out of that land to Assyria," he would doubtless have used the ordinary style of connected narrative; "And he went forth thence." He would probably also have avoided ambiguity, by expressing that Nimrod "went forth to Asshur" Genesis 25:18 using a form, which he employs a little later. As it is, Moses has used a mode of speech, by which, in Hebrew, a parenthetical statement would be made, and he has not used the form, which occurs in every line of Hebrew narrative to express a continued history. No one indeed would have doubted that such was the meaning, but that they did not see, how the mention of Asshur, a son of Shem, came to be anticipated in this account of the children of Ham. This is no ground for abandoning the simple construction of the Hebrew. It is but the history, so often repeated in the changes of the world, that the kingdom of Nimrod was founded on the expulsion of the former inhabitants. Nimrod began his kingdom; "Asshur went forth."

It is most probable, from this same brief notice, that Nineveh was, from the first, that aggregate of cities, which it afterward was. Moses says, "And he builded Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calach and Resen, between Nineveh and Calach; this is that great city" Genesis 10:11-12. This cannot be understood as said exclusively of Nineveh; since Nineveh was mentioned first in the list, of cities, and the mention of the three others had intervened; and, in the second place where it is named, it is only spoken of indirectly and subordinately; it is hardly likely to be said of Resen, of whose unusual size nothing is elsewhere related. It seems more probable, that it is said of the aggregate of cities, that they formed together one great city, the very characteristic of Nineveh, as spoken of in Jonah.

Nineveh itself lay on the Eastern side of the Tigris, opposite to the present Mosul. In later times, among the Syrian writers, As shur becomes the name for the country, distinct from Mesopotamia and Babylonia, front which it was separated by the Tigris, and bounded on the North by Mount Niphates.

This distinction, however, does not occur until after the extinction of the Assyrian empire. On the contrary, in Genesis, Asshur, in one place, is spoken of as West of the Hiddekel or Tigris, so that it must at that time have comprised Mesopotamia, if not all on this side of the Tigris, i. e., Babylonia.

In another place, it is the great border-state of Arabia on the one side, as was Egypt on the other. The sons of Ishmael, Moses relates, Genesis 25:18, dwell from Havilah unto Shur that is before Egypt, as thou goest to Assyria; i. e., they dwelt on the great caraven-route across the Arabian desert from Egypt to Babylonia. Yet Moses mentions, not Babylon, but Asshur. In Balaam‘s prophecy Numbers 24:22, Asshur stands for the great Empire, whose seat was at one time at Nineveh, at another at Babylon, which should, centuries afterward, carry Israel captive.

Without entering into the intricacies of Assyrian or Babylonian history further than is necessary for the immediate object, it seems probable, that the one or other of the sovereigns of these nations had an ascendency over the others, according to his personal character and military energy. Thus, in the time of Abraham, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, in his expedition against the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, took with him, as subordinate allies, the kings of Shinar, (or Babylon) and Ellasar, as well as Tidal king of nations, a king probably of Nomadic tribes. The expedition was to avenge the rebellion of the petty kings in the valley of Siddim against Chedorlaomer, after they had been for twelve years tributary. But, although the expedition closed with the attack on the live kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Zoar, its extent on the East side of the Jordan from Ashteroth Karnaim in Basan to Elparan (perhaps Elath on the Red Sea), and the defeat of the giant tribes, the Rephaim, Zuzim, Emim, Horites, the Amalekites and the Amorites in their several abodes, seems to imply one of those larger combinations against the aggressions of the East, which we meet with in later times.

It was no insulated conflict which spread over nearly three degrees of latitude. But it was the king of Elam, not the king of Babylon or of Asshur, who led this expedition; and those other kings, according to the analogy of the expeditions of Eastern monarchs, were probably dependent on him. It has been observed that the inscriptions of a monarch whose name partly coincides with that of Chedorlaomer, namely, Kudurmabuk, or Kudurmapula, show traces of a Persian influence on the Chaldee characters; but cuneiform decipherers having desponded of identifying those monarchs, Chedorlaomer appears as yet only so far cOnnected with Babylon, that its

king was a tributary sovereign to him or a vice-king like those of later times, of whom Sennacherib boasts, “Are not my princes altogether kings?”

Assyria, at this time, is not mentioned, and so, since we know of its existence at an earlier period, it probably was independent. Lying far to the North of any of the nations here mentioned, it, from whatever cause or however it may have been engaged, took no share in the war. Subsequently also, down to a date almost contemporary with the Exodus, it has been observed that the name of Asshur does not appear on the Babylonian inscriptions, nor does it swell the titles of the king of Babylon. A little later than the Exodus, however, in the beginning of the 14th century b.c., Asshur and Egypt were already disputing the country which lay between them. The account is Egyptian, and so, of course, only relates the successes of Egypt. Thothmes III, in his fortieth year, according to Mr. Birch, received tribute from a king of Nineveh. In another monument of the same monarch, where the line, following on the name Nineveh, is lost, Thothmes says that he “erected his tablet in Naharaina (Mesopotamia) for the extension of the frontiers of Kami” (Egypt). Amenophis III, in the same century, represented Asiatic captives, with the names of Patens (Padan-Aram), Asuria, Karukamishi (Carchemish”). “On another column are Saenkar (Shiner), Naharaina, and the Khita (Hittites).” The mention of these contiguous nations strengthens the impression that the details of the interpretation are accurate. All these inscriptions imply that Assyria was independent of Babylon. In one, it is a co ordinate power; in the two others, it is a state which had measured its strength with Egypt, under one of its greatest conquerors, though, according to the Egyptian account, it had been worsted.

Another account, which has been thought to be the first instance of the extension of Babylonian authority so far northward, seems to me rather to imply the ancient self-government of Assyria.: “A record of Tiglath-pileser I. declares him to have rebuilt a temple in the city of Asshur, which had been taken down 60 years previously, after it had lasted for 641 years frp, the date of its first foundation by Shamas-Iva, son of Ismi-Dagon.” Sir H. Rawlinson thinks that it is probable (although only probable), that this Ismi-Dagon is a king, whose name occurs in the brick-legends of Lower Babylonia. Yet the Ismi-Dagon of the bricks does not bear the title of king

of Babylon, but of king of Niffer only; “his son,” it is noticed, “does not take the title of king; but of governor of Hur.”

The name Shamas-Iva nowhere occurs in connection with Babylonia, but it docks recur, at a later period, as the name of an Assyrian Monarch. Since the names of the Eastern kings so often continue on in the same kingdom the recurrence of that name, at a later period, makes it even probable, that Shamas-Iva was a native king. There is absolutely nothing to connect his father Ismi-Dagon with the Ismi-Dagon king of Niffer, beyond the name itself, which, being Semitic, may just as well have belonged to a native king of Nineveh as to a king of Lower Babylonia. Nay, there is nothing to show that Ismi-Dagon was not an Assyrian Monarch who reigned at Niffer, for the name of his father is still unknown; there is no evidence that his father was ever a king, or, if a king, where he reigned. It seems to me in the last degree precarious to assume, without further evidence, the identity of the two kings. It has, further, yet to be shown that Lower Babylonia had, at that time, an empire, as distinct from its own local sovereignty. We know from Holy Scripture of Nimrod‘s kingdom in Shinar, a province distinct from Elymais, Mesopotamia, Assyria, and probably Chaldaea. In Abraham‘s time, 1900 b.c., we find again a king of Shinar. Shinar again, it is supposed, appears in Egyptian inscriptions, in the 14th century, b.c.; and, if so, still distinct from Mesopotamia and Assyria. But all this implies a distinct kingdom, not an empire.

Again, were it ever so true, that Shamas-Iva was a son of a king in Lower Babylonia, that be built a temple in Kileh-Shergat, as being its king, and that he was king, as placed there by Ismi-Dagon, this would be no proof of the continual dependence of Assyria upon Babylonia. England did not continue a dependency of France, because conquered by William of Normandy. How was Alexander‘s empire broken at once! Spain under Charles the V was under one sovereignty with Austria; Spain with France had, even of late, alike Bourbon kings. A name would, at most, show an accidental, not a permanent, connection.

But there is, at present, no evidence implying a continued dependence of Assyria upon Babylon. Two facts only have been alleged;

1) that the cuneiform writing of inscriptions at Kileh-Shergat, 40 miles South of Nineveh, has a Babylonian character;

2) that, on those bricks, four names have been found of inferior Satraps.

But 1) the Babylonian character of the inscriptions would show a dependence of civilization, not of empire. Arts flourished early at Babylon, and so the graven character of the Inscriptions too may have been curried to the rougher and warlike North. The garment, worked at Babylon, was, in the 15th century b.c., exported as far as Palestine, and was, for its beauty, the object of Achan‘s covetousness Joshua 7:21.

2) In regard to the satraps whose names are found on the bricks of Kileh-Shergat, it does not appear, that they were tributary to Babylon at all; they may, as far as it appears, have been simply inferior officers of the Assyrian empire. Anyhow, the utmost which such a relation to Babylon would evince, if ever so well established, would be a temporary dependence of Kileh-Shergat itself, not of Nineveh or the Assyrian kingdom. Further, the evidence of the duration of the dependency would, be as limited at its extent. Four satraps would be no evidence as to this period of 700 years, only a century less than has elapsed since the Norman conquest. The early existence of an Assyrian kingdom has been confirmed by recent cuneiform discoveries, which give the names of 8 Assyrian kings, the earliest of whom is supposed to have reigned about 3 12 centuries before the Commencement of the Assyrian Empire.

The “empire,” Herodotus says, “Assyria held in Upper Asia for 520 years;” Berosus, “for 526 years.” The Cuneiform Inscriptions give much the same result. Tiglath-pileser, who gives five years‘ annals of his own victories, mentions his grandfather‘s grandfather, the 4th king before him, as the king who “first organized the country of Assyria,” who “established the troops of Assyria in authority.” The expression, “established in authority,” if it may be pressed, relates to foreign conquest. If this Tiglath-pileser be the same whom Sennacherib, in the 10th year of his own reign, mentions as having lost his gods to Merodach-ad-akhi, king of Mesopotamia, 418 years before, then, since Sennacherib ascended the throne about 703 b.c., we should have 1112 b.c. for the latter part of the

reign of Tiglath-pileser I, and counting tills and the six preceding reigns at 20 years each, should have about 1252 b.c. for the beginning of the Assyrian empire. It has been calculated that if the 526 years, assigned by Berosus to his 45 Assyrian kings, are (as Polyhistor states Berosus to have meant) to be dated back from the accession of Pul who took tribute from Menahem, and so from between 770 b.c. and 760 b.c., they carry back the beginning of the dynasty to about 1290 b.c. If they be counted, (as is perhaps more probable) from the end of the reign of Pul 2 Kings 15:19, i. e., probably 747 b.c., "the era of Nabonassar," the Empire would commence about 1273 b.c. Herodotus, it has been shown, had much the same date in his mind, when he assigned 520 years to the Assyrian empire in upper Asia, dating back from the revolt of the Medes. For he supposed this revolt to be 179 years anterior to the death of Cyrus 529 b.c. (and so, 708 b.c.) plus a period of anarchy before the accession of Deioces. Allowing 30 years for this period of anarchy, we have 738 b.c. plus 520, i. e., 1258 b.c., for the date of the commencement of Assyrian empire according to Herodotus. Thus, the three testimonies would coincide in placing the beginning of that Empire anyhow between 1258 and 1273 b.c.

But this Empire started up full-grown. It was the concentration of energy and power, which had before existed. Herodotus' expression is "rulers of Upper Asia." Tiglath-pileser attributes to his forefather, that he "organized the country," and "established the armies of Assyria in authority." The second king of that list takes the title of "ruler over the people of Bel", i. e., Babylonia. The 4th boasts to have reduced "all the lands of the Magian world." Tiglath-pileser I claims to have conquered large parts of Cappadocia, Syria from Tsukha to Carchemish, Media and Muzr. According to the inscription at Bavian, he sustained a reverse, and lost his gods to a king of Mesopotamia, which gods were recovered by Sennacherib from Babylon. Yet this exception the more proves that conquest was the rule. For, had there been subsequent successful invasions of Assyria by Babylonia, the spoils of the 5th century backward would not have been alone recovered or recorded. If the deciphering of the Inscriptions is to be trusted, Nineveh was the capital, even in the days el Tiglath-pileser I. For Sennacherib brought the gods back, it is said, and put them in their places, i. e., probably where he himself reigned, at Nineveh. Thence then they were taken in the reign of Tiglath-pileser. Nineveh then was his capital also.

Of an earlier portion we have as yet but incidental notices; yet the might of Assyria is attested by the presence of Assyrian names in the Egyptian dynastic lists, whether the dynasties were themselves Assyrian, or whether the names came in through matrimonial alliances between two great nations.

With few exceptions, as far as appears from their own annals (and these are in the later times confirmed by Holy Scripture), the Assyrian Empire was, almost whenever we hear of it, one long series of victory and rapine. It is an exception, if any monarch is peaceful, and content to "repair the buildings" in his residence, "leaving no evidence of conquest or greatness." Tiglathi-Nin, father of the warlike Asshur-i-danipal or Sardanapalus, is mentioned only in his son's monument, "among his warlike ancestors, who had carried their arms into the Armenian mountains, and there set up stelae to commemorate their conquests."

Civil wars there were, and revolutions. Conquerors and dynasties came to an untimely end; there was parricide, fratricide; but the tide of war and conquest rolled on. The restless warriors gave no rest. Sardanapalus terms himself, "the conqueror from the upper passage of the Tigris to Lebanon and the great sea, who all countries, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, has reduced under his authority." His son, Shalmanubar or Shalmaneser, in his thirty-five years of reign led, in person twenty-three military expeditions. 20,000,16,000, are the numbers of his enemies left dead upon a field of battle with Benhadad and Hazael. Cappadocia, Pontus, Armenia, Media, Babylonia, Syria, Phoenicia, 15 degrees of longitude and 10 of latitude, save where the desert or the sea gave him nothing to conquer, were the range of his repeated expeditions.

He circled round Judaea. He thrice defeated Benhadad with his allies (on several occasions, twelve kings of the Hittites). His own army exceeded on occasions 100,000 fighting men. Twice he defeated Hazael. Israel trader Jehu, Tyre, Sidon, 24 kings in Pontus, kings of the Hittites, of Chaldaea, 27 kings of Persia are among his tributaries; "the shooting of his arrows struck terror," he says, "as far as the sea" (Indian Ocean); "he put up his arrows in their quiver at the sea of the setting sun." His son Shamesiva apparently

subdued Babylonia, and in the West conquered tribes near Mount Taurus, on the North the countries bordering on Armenia to the South and East, the Medes beyond Mount Zagros, and "the Zimri Jeremiah 25:25 in upper Luristan." His son Ivalush III or IV received undisturbed tribute from the kingdoms which his fathers conquered, and ascribes to his god Asshur the grant of "the kingdom of Babylon to his son."

Thus "Assyria with one hand grasped Babylonia; with the other Philistia and Edom; she held Media Proper, S. Armenia, possessed all Upper Syria, including Commagene and Amanus, bore sway over all the whole Syrian coast from Issus to Gaza, and from the coast to the desert." Tiglath-pileser II and Shalmaneser are known to us as conquerors from Holy Scripture. Tiglath-pileser, we are told from the inscriptions, warred and conquered in Upper Mesopotamia, Armenia, Media, Babylonia, drove into exile a Babyionian prince, destroyed Damascus, took tribute from a Hiram king of Tyre, and from a Queen of the Arabs. And so it continued, until nearly the close of the Monarchy.

The new dynasty which began with Sargon were even greater conquerors than their predecessors. Sargon, in a reign of seventeen or nineteen years, defeated the king of Elam, conquered in Iatbour beyond Elam, reigned from Ras, a dependency on Elam, over Poukoud (Pekod), Phoenicia, Syria, etc. to the river of Egypt, in the far Media to the rising sun, in Scythia, Albania, Parthia, Van, Armenia, Colchis, Tubal to the Moschi: he placed his lieutenants as governors over these countries, and imposed tribute upon them, as upon Assyrians; he, probably, placed Merodach-Baladan on the throne of Babylon, and after 12 years displaced him; he reduced all Chaldaea under his rule; he defeated "Sebech (i. e., probably, So), Sultan of Egypt, so that he was heard of no more;" he received tribute from the Pharaoh of Egypt, from a Queen of Arabia and from Himyar the Sabaean. To him first the king of Meroe paid tribute. He finally captured Samaria: he took Gaza, Kharkar, Arpad and Damascus, Ashdod (which it cost Psammetichus 29 years to reconquer), and Tyre, (which resisted Nebuchadnezzar for 13 years). He added to the Satrapy of Parthia, placed a Satrap or Lieutenant over Commagene and Sentaria, Kharkar, Tel-Garimmi, Gamgoum, Ashdod, and a king of his own choice over Albania. lie seized 55 walled cities in Armenia, 11, which were held to

be “inaccessible fortresses;” and 62 great cities in Commagene; 34 in Media; he laid tribute on the “king of the country of rivers.”

He removed whole populations at his will; from Samaria, he carried captive its inhabitants, 27,800, and placed them in “cities of the Medes” 2 Kings 17:6; 2 Kings 18:11; he removed those of Commagene to Elam; all the great men of the Tibareni, and the inhabitants of unknown cities, to Assyria; Cammanians, whom he had conquered, to Tel-Garimmi, a capital which he rebuilt; others whom he had vanquished in the East he placed in Ashdod: again he placed “Assyrians devoted to his empire” among the Tibareni; inhabitants of cities unknown to us, in Damascus; Chaldaeans in Commagene, extracted from the Annales de Philosophie Chretienne T. vi. (5e*sêrie*). Oppert p. 8, gives as the meaning of his name, “actual king,” “*roi de fait* (שׂר־כן *shar -kēn*) Sargon himself, if Oppert has translated him rightly, gives as its meaning, “righteous prince,” p. 38).: “The Comukha were removed from the extreme North to Susiana, and Chaldaeans were brought from the extreme South to supply their place.” “Seven kings of Iatnan, seven days voyage off in the Western seas, whose names were unknown to the kings” his “fathers; hearing of” his “deeds, came before” him to Babylon with “presents:” as did the king of Asmoun, who dwelt in the midst of the Eastern sea (the Persian gulf). He placed his statue, “writing on it the glory of Asshur his master,” in the capital of Van, in Kikisim (Circesium) as also in Cyprus, which he does not name, but where it has been discovered in this century. The Moschian king, with his 3000 towns, who had never submitted to the kings his predecessors, sent his submission and tribute to him.

Sennacherib, the son of Sargon, says of himself, “Assour, the great Lord, has conferred on me sovereignty over the peoples; he has extended my dominion over all those who dwell in the world. From the upper Ocean of the setting sun to the lower Ocean of the rising sun, I reduced under my power all who carried aloft their head.”

He defeated Merodach Baladan and the king of Elam together; took in one expedition, “79 great strong cities of the Chaldaeans anti 820 small towns;” he took prisoners by hundreds of thousands; 200,150 in his first expedition against Hezekiah, from 44 great walled cities which he took and

little villages innumerable; 208,000 from the Nabathseans anti Hagarenes: he employed on his great buildings 360,000 men, gathered from Chaldea and Aramaea, from Cilicia and Armenia; he conquered populations in the North, which "had of old not submitted to the kings my brothers," annexed them to the prefecture of Arrapachitis and set up his image; he received tribute from the governor of Khararat, wasted the 2 residence cities, 34 smaller cities of Ispahara king of Albania, joining a part of the territory to Assyria, and calling its city, Ilhinzas, the city of Sennacherib;

He reduced countries of "Media, whose names the kings his brothers had not heard; he set a king, Toubaal, over the great and little Sidon, Sarepta, Achzib, Acco, Betzitti, Mahalliba; the kings of Moab, Edom, Bet-Amman, Avvad, Ashdod, submitted to him; he deteated an "innumerable host" of Egyptians at Altakou (Elteke); sons of the king of Egypt fell into his hands; he captured Ascalon, Bene-Barak, Joppa, Hazor; put back at Amgarron (Migron) the expelled king Padi, who had been surrendered to Hezekiah; gave portions of the territory of Hezekiah to the kings of Ashdod, Migron, Gaza; he drove Merodach-baladan again to Elam, captured his brothers, wasted his cities, and placed his own oldest son, Assurnadin, on the throne of Babylon took seven impregnable cities of the Toukharri, placed like birds' nests on the mountains of Nipour; conquered the king of Oukkou in Dayi, among mountains which none of his ancestors had penetrated; look Oukkou and 33 other cities; attached Elam, "crossing" the Persian gulf "in Syrian vessels"; capturing the men, and destroying the cities; in another campaign, he garrisoned, with prisoner-warriors of his own, cities in Elam which his father had lost.

NAHUM CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The burden - Jerome: "The word משׂא *mas's'â'* ‹burden‘ is never placed in the title, except when the vision is heavy and full of burden and toil."

Of Nineveh - The prophecy of Nahum again is very stern and awful. Nineveh, after having "repented at the preaching of Jonah," again fell back into the sins whereof it had repented, and added this, that, being employed by God to chasten Israel, it set itself, not to inflict the measure of God‘s displeasure, but to uproot the chosen people, in whom was promised the birth of Christ. It was then an antichrist, and a type of him yet to come. Jonah‘s mission was a call to repentance, a type and forerunner of all God‘s messages to the world, while the day of grace and the world‘s probation lasts. Nahum, "the full of exceeding comfort," as his name means, or "the comforter" is sent to John 16:6, John 16:8. "reprove the world of judgment." He is sent, prominently, to pronounce on Nineveh its doom when its day of grace should be over, and in it, on the world, when it and "all the works therein shall be burned up" 2 Peter 3:10.

With few words he directly comforts the people of God Nahum 1:15; elsewhere the comfort even to her is indirect, in the destruction of her oppressor. Besides this, there is nothing of mercy or call to repentance, or sorrow for their desolation (as in Jeremiah 3:12; Jeremiah 8:18, Jeremiah 8:21), but rather the pouring out of the vials of the wrath of God upon her and on the evil world, which resists to the end all God‘s calls and persecutes His people. The Book of Jonah proclaims God, "a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, who repents Him of the evil." Nahum speaks of the same attributes, yet closes with, "and will not at all acquit the wicked.": "The Merciful Himself, who is by Nature Merciful, the Holy Spirit, seemeth, speaking in the prophet, to laugh at their calamity." All is desolation, and death. The aggression against God is retorted upon the aggressor; one reeling strife for life or death; then the silence of the graveyard. And so, in its further meaning, "the prophecy belongs to the close of the world and the comfort of the saints therein, so that whatsoever they see in the world, they may hold cheap, as passing away and perishing and prepare themselves for the Day of Judgment, when the Lord shall he the Avenger of the true Assyrian."

So our Lord sets forth the end of the world as the comfort of the elect. “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh” Luke 21:28. This is the highest fulfillment of the prophecy, for “then will the wrath of God against the wicked be fully seen, who now patiently waiteth for them for mercy.”

The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite - o“He first defines the object of the prophecy, whereto it looks; then states who spake it and whence it was;” the human instrument which God employed. The fuller title, “The book of the vision of Nahum” (which stands alone) probably expresses that it was not, like most prophecies, first delivered orally, and then collected by the prophet, but was always (as it is so remarkably) one whole. “The weight and pressure of this ‹burden.‘ may be felt from the very commencement of the book.”

Verse 2

God is jealous and the Lord revengeth - Rather (as the English margin) God “very jealous and avenging is the Lord.” The Name of God, יהוה (*YHVH*), “He who Is,” the Unchangeable, is thrice repeated, and thrice it is said of Him that He is an Avenger. It shows both the certainty and greatness of the vengeance, and that He who inflicts it, is the All-Holy Trinity, who have a care for the elect. God‘s jealousy is twofold. It is an intense love, not bearing imperfections or unfaithfulness in that which It loves, and so chastening it; or not bearing the ill-dealings of those who would injure what It loves, and so destroying them. To Israel He had revealed Himself as “a Exodus 20:5-6 jealous God, visiting iniquity but shewing mercy;” here, as jealous for His people against those who were purely His enemies and the enemies of His people (see Zechariah 1:14), and so His jealousy burns to their destruction, in that there is in them no good to be refined, but only evil to be consumed.

The titles of God rise in awe; first, “intensely jealous” and “an Avenger;” then, “an Avenger and a Lord of wrath;” One who hath it laid up with Him, at His Command, and the more terrible, because it is so; the Master of it, (not, as man, mastered by it; having it, to withhold or to discharge; yet so discharging it, at last, the more irrevocably on the finally impenitent. And this He says at the last, “an Avenger to His adversaries,” (literally, “those who hem and narrow Him in”). The word “avenged” is almost appropriated to God in the Old Testament, as to punishment which He inflicts, or at least causes to be inflicted, whether on individuals Genesis

4:15, Genesis 4:24; 1 Samuel 24:12; 2 Samuel 4:8; 2 Kings 9:7; Jeremiah 11:20; Jeremiah 15:15; Jeremiah 20:12, or upon a people, (His own Leviticus 26:25; Psalm 99:8; Ezekiel 24:8 or their enemies Deuteronomy 32:41, Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 18:48; Isaiah 34:8; Isaiah 35:4; Isaiah 47:3; Isaiah 59:17; Isaiah 61:2; Isaiah 63:4; Micah 5:14; Jeremiah 46:10; Jeremiah 50:15, Jeremiah 50:28; Jeremiah 51:6, Jeremiah 51:11, Jeremiah 51:36; Ezekiel 25:14, Ezekiel 25:17, for their misdeeds. In the main it is a defect. Personal vengeance is mentioned only in characters, directly or indirectly censured, as Samson Judges 15:7; Judges 16:20 or Saul. It is forbidden to man, punished in him, claimed by God as His own inalienable right. "Vengeance is Mine and requital" (Deuteronomy 32:35, compare Psalm 94:1). "Thou shalt not avenge nor keep up against the children of My people" Leviticus 19:18. Yet it is spoken of, not as a mere act of God, but as the expression of His Being. "Shall not My soul be avenged of such a nation as this?" Jeremiah 5:9, Jeremiah 5:29; Jeremiah 9:9.

And a Reserver of wrath for His enemies - The hardened and unbelieving who hate God, and at last, when they had finally rejected God and were rejected by Him, the object of His aversion. It is spoken after the manner of men, yet therefore is the more terrible. There is that in God, to which the passions of man correspond; they are a false imitation of something which in Him is good, a distortion of the true likeness of God, in which God created us and whisk man by sin defaced.: "Pride doth imitate exaltedness: whereas Thou Alone art God exalted over all. Ambition, what seeks it, but honors and glory? Whereas Thou alone art to be honored above all and glorious for evermore. The cruelty of the great would fain be feared; but who is to be feared but God alone, out of whose power what can be wrested or withdrawn, when, or where, or whither, or by whom? The tendernesses of the wanton would fain be counted love: yet is nothing more tender than Thy charity; nor is aught loved more healthfully than that Thy truth, bright and beautiful above all. Curiosity makes semblance of a desire of knowledge; whereas Thou supremely knowest all. Yea, ignorance and foolishness itself is cloaked under the name of simplicity and uninjuriousness: because nothing is found more single than Thee; and what less injurious, since they are his own works which injure the sinner?

Yea, sloth would fain be at rest; but what stable rest beside the Lord? Luxury affects to be called plenty and abundance; but Thou art the fullness and never-failing plenteousness of incorruptible pleasures. Prodigality

presents a shadow of liberality: but Thou art the most overflowing Giver of all good. Covetousness would possess many things; and Thou possessest all things. Envy disputes for excellency: what more excellent than Thou? Anger seeks revenge: who revenges more justly than Thou? Fear startles at things unaccustomed or sudden, which endanger things beloved, and takes forethought for their safety; but to Thee what unaccustomed or sudden, or who separats from Thee what Thou lovest? Or where but with Thee is unshaken safety? Grief pines away for things lost, the delight of its desires; because it would have nothing taken from it, as nothing can from Thee. Thus doth the soul seek without Thee what she finds not pure and untainted, until she returns to Thee. Thus, all pervertedly imitate Thee, who remove far from Thee, and lift themselves up against Thee. But even by thus imitating Thee, they imply Thee to be the Creator of all nature; whence there is no place, whither altogether to retire from Thee." And so, in man, the same qualities are good or bad, as they have God or self for their end.: "The joy of the world is a passion. Joy in the Holy Spirit or to joy in the Lord is a virtue. The sorrow of the world is a passion. The sorrow according to God which works salvation is a virtue. The fear of the world which hath torment, from which a man is called fearful, is a passion. The holy tear of the Lord, which abides forever, from which a man is called reverential, is a virtue. The hope of the world, when one‘s hope is in the world or the princes of the world, is a passion. Hope in God is a virtue, as well as faith and charity. Though these four human passions are not in God, there are four virtues, having the same names, which no one can have, save from God, from the Spirit of God." in man they are "passions," because man is so far "passive" and suffers under them, and, through original sin, cannot hinder having them, though by God‘s grace he may hold them in.

God, without passion and in perfect holiness, has qualities, which in man were jealousy, wrath, vengeance, unforgivingness, a "rigor of perfect justice toward the impenitent, which punishes so severely, as though God had fury;" only, in Him it is righteous to punish man‘s unrighteousness. Elsewhere it is said, "God keepeth not for ever" Psalm 103:9, or it is asked, "will He keep forever?" Jeremiah 3:5, and He answers, "Return, and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, saith the Lord, I will not keep for ever" Jeremiah 3:12. Man‘s misdeeds and God‘s displeasure remain with God, to be effaced on man‘s repentance, or "by his

hardness and impenitent heart man treasureth up unto himself wrath in the day of wrath and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will reward each according to his works" Romans 2:5-6.

Verse 3

The Lord is slow to anger - Nahum takes up the words of Jonah Jonah 4:2 as he spoke of God's attributes toward Nineveh, but only to show the opposite side of them. Jonah declares how God is "slow to anger," giving men time of repentance, and if they do repent, "repenting Him also of the evil;" Nahum, that the long-suffering of God is not "slackness," that "He is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

And strong in power - Divine long-suffering gees along with Divine power. God can be long-suffering, because He can, whenever He sees good, punish. His long-suffering is a token, not of weakness, but of power. He can allow persons the whole extent of trial, because, when they are past cure, He can end it at once. "God is a righteous judge, strong and patient, and God wraths every day" Psalm 7:11. The wrath comes only at the last, but it is ever present with God. He cannot but be displeased with the sin; and so the Psalmist describes in the manner of men the gradual approximation to its discharge. "If he (the sinner) will not return (from evil or to God), He will whet His sword; He hath trodden His bow and directed it: He hath prepared for him instruments of death; He hath made his arrows burning" Psalm 7:12-13. We see the arrow with unextinguishable fire, ready to be discharged, waiting for the final decision of the wicked, whether he will repent or not, but that still "the Day of the Lord will come" 2 Peter 3:9-10. "He will not at all acquit."

The words occur originally in the great declaration of God's attributes of mercy by Moses, as a necessary limitation of them; they are continued to God's people, yet with the side of mercy predominant Jeremiah 30:11; Jeremiah 46:28; they are pleaded to Himself Numbers 14:18; they are the sanction of the third commandment Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11. He "will not acquit" of His own will, apart from His justice. So He saith, "I can of Mine own self do nothing" John 5:30, i. e., (in part), not as unjust judges, who "call good evil and evil good," following their own will, not the merits of the case; but, "as I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just." He cannot even have mercy and spare unjustly, nor without the lowliness of penitence.

Even if it is Jerusalem, over which He wept, or His "companion, His own familiar friend" Psalm 55:14, He, who is no "accepter of persons," cannot of mere favor forgive the impenitent.

The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm - The vengeance of God comes at last swiftly, vehemently, fearfully, irresistibly. "When they say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them" 1 Thessalonians 5:3, and all creation stands at the command of the Creator against His enemies. "He shall take to Him His jealousy for complete armor, and make the creature His weapon, for the revenge of His enemies" (Wisd. 5:17).

And the clouds are the dust of His feet - Perhaps the imagery is from the light dust raised by an earthly army, of which Nahum's word is used Ezekiel 26:10. The powers of heaven are arrayed against the might of earth. On earth a little dust, soon to subside; in heaven, the whirlwind and the storm, which sweep away what does not bow before them. The vapors, slight on outward seeming, but formed of countless multitudes of mist-drops, are yet dark and lowering, as they burst, and resistless. "The Feet of God are that power whereby He trampleth upon the ungodly." So it is said to the Son, "Sit Thou on My Right Hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." Tempests have also, without figure, been used to overthrow God's enemies (Exodus 14:27; Joshua 10:11; Judges 5:20; 1 Samuel 2:10; and 1 Samuel 7:10; 2 Samuel 22:15).

Verse 4

He rebuketh the sea and maketh it dry - Delivering His people, as He did from Pharaoh Psalm 106:9, the type of all later oppressors, and of antichrist. "His word is with power; to destroy them at once with one rough word (Wisd. 12:9). The restlessness of the barren and troubled sea is an image of the wicked. "And drieth up all the rivers" Isaiah 57:20, as He did Jordan. His coming shall be far more terrible than when all the hearts of the inhabitants of the land did melt. "Bashan languisheth and Carmel; and the flower of Lebanon languisheth" Joshua 2:11. Bashan was richest in pastures; Carmel, according to its name, in gardens and vineyards; Lebanon, in vines also and fragrant flowers Hosea 14:7; Song of Song of Solomon 4:11 , but chiefly in the cedar and cypress; it had its name from the whiteness of the snow, which rests on its summit. These mountains then together are emblems of richness, lasting beauty, fruitfulness, loftiness; yet all, even that which by nature is not, in the variety of seasons, wont to fade,

dries up and withers before the rebuke of God. But if these thing are "done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" All freshness, beauty, comeliness, show of outward nature, shall fade as grass; all ornament of men‘s outward graces or gifts, all mere show of goodness, shall fall off like a leaf and perish. If the glory of nature perishes before God, how much more the pride of man! Bashan also was the dwelling-place of the race of giants, and near Libanus was Damascus; yet their inhabitants became as dead men and their power shrank to nothing at the word of God.

Verse 5

The mountains quaked at Him, and the hills melted - As of their own accord. The words are a renewal of those of Amos Amos 9:13. Inanimate nature is pictured as endowed with the terror, which guilt feels at the presence of God. All power; whether greater or less, whatsoever lifteth itself up, shall give way in that Day, which shall be "upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up" Isaiah 2:13-14. "And the earth is burned" (rather lifteth itself up; as an an earthquake it seems, as it were, to rise and sink down, lifting itself as if to meet its God or to flee. What is strongest, shaketh; what is hardest, melteth; yea, the whole world trembles and is removed.: "If," said even Jews of old, "when God made Himself known in mercy, to give the law to His people, the world was so moved at His presence, how much more, when He shall reveal Himself in wrath!" The words are so great that they bear the soul on to the time, when the heaven and earth shall flee away from the Face of Him "Who sitteth on the throne, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" Revelation 20:11; 2 Peter 3:10. And since all judgments are images of the Last, and the awe at tokens of God‘s presence is a shadow of the terror of that coming, he adds,

Verse 6

Who can stand before His indignation? - This question appeals to our own consciences, that we cannot. It anticipates the self-conviction at every day of God‘s visitation, the forerunners of the lust. The word rendered "indignation" is reserved almost exclusively to denote the wrath of God.: "Who can trust in his own righteousness, and, for the abundance of his works or consciousness of his virtues, not be in need of mercy? ‹Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified;‘ and in Job it is said truly, ‹Behold He put no trust in His

servants, and His Angels He charged with folly. How much less in them that dwell in houses of‘ clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which ewe crushed before the moth?‘ Job 4:18-19. It were needless now to prove, that man‘s own deserts suffice to no one, and that we are not saved but by the grace of God, ‹for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God‘ Romans 3:23. Wherefore he saith, ‹before His indignation,‘ standing face to Face before Him in wrath.”

Literally, “in the Face of:” guilt cannot look in the face of man, how much less, of God. The bliss of the righteous is the punishment of the wicked, to behold God face to Face. For “whoever trusts in his own works deserves His indignation. and thinking he stands, righteously does he fall.”

His fury is poured out - נתך is used of the pouring out of God‘s wrath, Jeremiah 7:20; Jeremiah 42:18; 2 Chronicles 12:7 (as more commonly שׁפך here its native meaning is brought out the more, by adding כאש .

Like fire - , sweeping away, like a torrent of molten fire, him who presumes that be can stand before His Face, as He did the cities of the plain Psalm 97:3; Psalm 50:3; Psalm 68:3; Psalm 18:8. The rocks are like so many towers of nature, broken down and crushed “by Him” literally, “from Him.” It needs not any act of God‘s. He wills and it is done. Those who harden themselves, are crushed and broken to pieces, the whole fabric they had built for themselves and their defenses, crumbling and shivered. If then they, whose hearts are hard as rocks, and bold against all peril, and even Satan himself, whose “heart is as firm as a stone, yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone” Job 41:24, shall be crushed then, who shall abide?

Verse 7

The Lord is good: a stronghold in the day of trouble - “Good and doing good,” and full of sweetness; alike good and mighty; good in giving Himself and imparting His goodness to His own; yea “none is good, save God” Luke 18:19; Himself the stronghold wherein His own amy take refuge; both in the troubles of this life, in which “He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able” 1 Corinthians 10:13, and in that Day, which shall hem them in on every side, and leave no place of escape except Himself.

And He knoweth them that tuust in Him - So as to save them; as Rahab was saved when Jericho perished, and Lot out of the midst of the overthrow and Hezekiah from the host of Sennacherib. He knows them with an individual, ever-present, knowledge. He says not only, “He shall own

them," but He ever "knoweth them." So it is said; "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous" Psalm 1:6; "The Lord knoweth the, days of the upright" Psalm 37:18; and our Lord says, "I know My sheep" John 10:14, John 10:27; and Paul, "The Lord knoweth them that are His" 2 Timothy 2:19. God speaks of this knowledge also in the past, of His knowledge, when things as yet were not, "I have known thee by name;" or of loving kindness in the past, "I knew thee in the wilderness" Hosea 13:5, "you alone have I known of all the families of the earth" Amos 3:2, its contrariwise our Lord says, that He shall say to the wicked in the Great Day, "I never knew you" Matthew 7:23. That God, being what He is, should take knowledge of us, being what we are, is such wondrous condescension, that it involves a purpose of love, yea, His love toward us, as the Psalmist says admiringly, "Lord, what is man that Thou takest knowledge of him?" Psalm 144:3.

Them that trust in Him - It is a habit, which has this reward; "the trusters in Him," "the takers of refuge in Him." It is a continued unvarying trust, to which is shown this everpresent love and knowledge.

Yet this gleam of comfort only discloses the darkness of the wicked. Since those who trust God are they whom God knows, it follows that the rest He knows not. On this opening, which sets forth the attributes of God toward those who defy Him and those who trust in Him, follows the special application to Nineveh.

Verse 8

But with an overrunning flood He will make an utter end of the place thereof - that is, of Nineveh, although not as yet named, except in the title of the prophecy, yet present to the prophet's mind and his hearers, and that the more solemnly, as being the object of the wrath of God, so that, although unnamed, it would be known so to be. Image and reality, the first destruction and the last which it pictures, meet in the same words. Nineveh itself was overthrown through the swelling of the rivers which flowed around it and seemed to be its defense (see the note at Nahum 2:6). Then also, the flood is the tide of the armies, gathered from all quarters, Babylonians, Medes, Persians, Arabians, Bactrians, which like a flood should sweep over Nineveh and leave nothing standing. It is also the flood of the wrath of God, in whose Hands they were and who, by them, should "make a full end of it," literally, "make the place thereof a thing consumed,"

a thing which has ceased to be. For a while, some ruins existed, whose name and history ceased to be known; soon after, the ruins themselves were effaced and buried. Such was the close of a city, almost coeval with the flood, which had now stood almost as many years as have passed since Christ came, but which now defied God. Marvelous image of the evil world itself, which shall flee away from the face of Him who sat on the throne, "and there was found no place for it" Revelation 20:11.

And darkness shall pursue His enemies - Better, "He shall pursue His enemies into darkness" Darkness is, in the Old Testament, the condition, or state in which a person is, or lives; it is not an agent, which pursues. Isaiah speaks of the "inhabitants of darkness" Isaiah 42:7, "entering unto darkness" Isaiah 47:5; "those who are in darkness" Isaiah 49:9. "The grave is all darkness" Psalm 88:12; Job 17:13, "darkness, and the shadow of death" Job 10:21. Hence, even Jews rendered, "He shall deliver them to hell." Into this darkness it is said, God shall pursue them, as other prophets speak of being "driven forth into darkness". The darkness, the motionless drear abode, to which they are driven, anticipates the being cast into "the outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Rup.: "The vengeance of God on" these who remain "His enemies" to the last, "ends not with the death of the body; but evil spirits, who are darkness and not light, pursue their souls, and seize them." They would not hear Christ calling to them, "Walk, while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you" John 12:35. "They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof" Job 24:13. "They loved darkness rather than light" John 3:19. And so they were driven into the darkness which they chose and loved.

Verse 9

The prophet had in few words summed up the close of Nineveh; he now upbraids them with the sin, which should bring it upon them, and foretells the destruction of Sennacherib. Nineveh had, before this, been the instrument of chastising Israel and Judah. Now, the capture of Samaria, which had cast off God, deceived and emboldened it. Its king thought that this was the might of his own arm; and likened the Lord of heaven and earth to the idols of the pagan, and said, "Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?" 2 Kings 18:35. He sent "to reproach the living God" 2 Kings 19:16 and "defied the Holy One of Israel"

(see Isaiah 8:10. While the rich man was speaking comfort to his soul as to future years, God was making an utter end. "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee."

Affliction shall not rise up the second time - Others have understood this, "affliction shall not rise up the second time," but shall destroy at once, utterly and finally (compare 1 Samuel 26:8; 2 Samuel 20:10): but:

(1) the idiom there, "he did not repeat to him," as we say, "he did not repeat the blow" is quite different;

(2) it is said "affliction shall not rise up," itself, as if it could not. The causative of the idiom occurs in 2 Samuel 12:11, "lo, I will cause evil to rise up against thee;" as he says afterward, "Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more" Nahum 1:12. "God," He had said, "is good for a refuge in the day of affliction;" now, personifying that affliction, he says, that it should be so utterly broken, that it should rise up no more to vex them, as when a serpent's head is, not wounded only but, crushed and trampled underfoot, so that it cannot again lift itself up. The promises of God are conditioned by our not falling back into sin. He saith to Nineveh, "God will not deliver Judah to thee, as He delivered the ten tribes and Samaria." Judah repented under Hezekiah, and He not only delivered it from Sennacherib, but never afflicted them again through Assyria. Renewal of sin brings renewal or deepening of punishment. The new and more grievous sins under Manasseh were punished, not through Assyria but through the Chaldeans.

The words have passed into a maxim, "God will not punish the same thing twice," not in this world and the world to come, i. e., not if repented of. For of the impenitent it is said, "destroy them with a double destruction" Jeremiah 17:18. Chastisement here is a token of God's mercy; the absence of it, or prosperous sin, of perdition; but if any refuse to be corrected, the chastisement of this life is but the beginning of unending torments.

Verse 10

For while they be leiden together as thorns - that is, as confused, intertwined, sharp, piercing, hard to be touched, rending and tearing whosoever would interfere with its tangled ways, and seemingly compact together and strong; "and while they are drunken as their drink", not

“drinkers” only but literally, “drunken,” swallowed up, as it were, by their drink which they had swallowed, mastered, overcome, powerless, “they shall be derogated as stubble fully dry”, rapidly, in an instant, with an empty crackling sound, unresisting, as having nothing in them which can resist. Historically, the great defeat of the Assyrians, before the capture of Nineveh, took place while its king, flushed with success, was giving himself to listlessness; and having distributed to his soldiers victims, and abundance of wine, and other necessaries for banqueting, the whole army was negligent and drunken.”

In like way Babylon was taken amid the feasting of Belshazzar 1 Kings 20:16. And so it may well be meant here too, that Sennacherib‘s army, secure of their prey, were sunk in revelry, already swallowed up by wine, before they were swallowed up by the pestilence, on the night when the Angel of the Lord went out to smite them, and, from the sleep of revelry, they slept the sleep from which they shall not awake until the Judgment Day. God chooses the last moment of the triumph of the wicked, when he is flushed by his success, the last of the helplessness of the righteous, when his hope can be in the Lord alone, to exchange their lots. “The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked comes in his stead” Proverbs 11:8. Spiritually, “the false fullness of the rich of this world, is real leanness; the greenness of such grass (for all flesh is grass) is real dryness. Marvelous words, “fully dry.” For what is dryness but emptiness?” They are perfected, but in dryness, and so perfectly prepared to be burned up. “The thorns had, as far as in them lay, choked the good seed, and hated the Seed-corn, and now are found, like stubble, void of all seed, fitted only to be burned with fire. For those who feast themselves “without fear is reserved the blackness of darkness forever” Jude 1:12-13.

Verse 11

There is one come out of thee - that is, Nineveh, “that imagineth” deviseth,, “evil, Lord, Sennacherib, against the the rod of God‘s anger” Isaiah 10:5-7, yet who “meant not so,” as God meant. “And this was his counsel,” as is every counsel of Satan, “that they could not resist him, and so should withdraw themselves from the land of God, “into a land like their own” Isaiah 36:16-17, but whose joy and sweetness, its vines and its fig-trees, should not be from God, but from the Assyrian, i. e., from Satan.

Verse 12

Though they be quiet and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down - Literally, "If they be entire," i. e., sound unharmed, unimpaired in their numbers, unbroken in their strength, undiminished, perfect in all which belongs to war; "and thus many even thus shall they be mown down (or shorn), and he passeth away". With might outwardly unscathed, "without hand" Daniel 2:34, and "thus many," i. e., many, accordingly, as being unweakened; as many as they shall be, "so shall they be mown down, and he," their head and king, "shall pass away and perish" (compare Psalm 48:4). Their numbers shall be, as their condition before, perfect; their destruction as their numbers, complete. It is wonderful how much God says in few words; and how it is here foretold that, with no previous loss, a mighty host secure and at ease, in consequence of their prosperity, all are at one blow mown down, like the dry grass before the scythe, are cut off and perish; and one, their king, "passeth away," first by flight, and then by destruction. As they had shorn the glory of others Isaiah 7:20, so should they be shorn and cut down themselves.

Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more - oUnless by new guilt thou compel Me. God always relieves us from trouble, as it were with the words, "sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" John 5:14. In the end, afflictions shall be turned into joy, and "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be anymore paid" Revelation 21:4.

Verse 13

For now will I break his yoke from off thee - God, lest His own should despair, does not put them off altogether to a distant day, but saith, now. Historically, the beginning of the fall is the earnest of the end. By the destruction of Sennacherib, God declared His displeasure against Assyria; the rest was matter of time only. Thus, Haman‘s wise men say to him, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him" Esther 6:13; as He saith in Isaiah, "I will break the Assyrian in My land, and upon My mountains tread him underfoot; then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders" Isaiah 14:25.: "In that He saith, not ‹I will loose,‘ ‹will undo,‘ but ‹I will break,‘ ‹will burst,‘ He sheweth that He will in such wise free Jerusalem, as to pour out displeasure on the enemy. The very mode of speaking shows the greatness of His displeasure against those who, when for the secret purpose of His

judgments they have power given them against the servants of God, feed themselves on their punishments, and moreover dare to boast against God, as did the Assyrian, ‹By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom‘ Isaiah 10:13."

Verse 14

And the Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee, O Assyrian - In the word "I have afflicted thee," the land of Israel is addressed, as usual in Hebrew, in the feminine; here, a change of gender in Hebrew shows the person addressed to be different.: "By His command alone, and the word of His power, He cut off the race of the Assyrian, as he says in Wisdom, of Egypt, "Thine Almighty word leaped down from heaven, out of Thy royal throne; as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction, and brought Thine unfeigned commandment as a sharp sword, and standing up filled all things with death," (Wisd. 18:15,16), or else it may be, He gave command to the Angels His Ministers. God commands beforehand, that, when it comes to pass, it may be known "that not by chance," nor by the will of man, "nor without His judgment but by the sentence of God" the blow came.

No move of thy name be sown - As Isaiah saith, "the seed of evildoers shall never be renowned" Isaiah 14:20. He prophesies, not the immediate but the absolute cessation of the Assyrian line. If the prophecy was uttered at the time of Sennacherib‘s invasion, seventeen years before his death, not Esarhaddon only, but his son Asshurbanipal also, whose career of personal conquest, the last glory of the house of the Sargonides and of the empire, began immediately upon his father‘s reign of thirteen years, was probably already born. Asshurbanipal in this case would only have been thirty-one, at the beginning of his energetic reign, and would have died in his fifty-second year. After him followed only an inglorious twenty-two years. The prophet says, "the Lord hath commanded." The decree as to Ahab‘s house was fulfilled in the person of his second son, as to Jeroboam and Baasha in their sons. It waited its appointed time, but was fulfilled in the complete excision of the doomed race.

Out of the house of thy gods will I cut off graven image and molten image - As thou hast done to others Isaiah 37:19, it shall be done to thee.: "And when even the common objects of worship of the Assyrian and Chaldean were not spared, what would be the ruin of the whole city!" So little shall thy gods help thee, that "there shalt thou be punished, where thou

hopest for aid. ‹Graven and molten image‘ shall be thy grave; amid altar and oblations, as thou worshipest idols," thanking them for thy deliverance, "shall thy unholy blood be shed," as it was by his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer. Isaiah 37:38. "I will make it thy grave";, what God makes remains immovable, cannot be changed. But He "maketh thy grave" in hell, where not only that rich man in the Gospel hath his grave; but all who are or have been like him, and especially thou, O Asshur, of whom it is written, "Asshur is there and all her company; his graves are about him: all of them slain, fallen by the sword. Whose graves are set in the sides of the pit and her company is round about her grave: all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which caused terror in the land of the living" Ezekiel 32:22-23. "Graven and molten image," the idols which men adore, the images of their vanity, the created things which they worship instead of the true God (as they whose god is their belly), in which they busy themselves in this life, shall be their destruction in the Day of Judgment.

For thou art vile - Thou honoredst thyself and dishonoredst God, so shalt thou be dishonored, as He saith, "Them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" 1 Samuel 2:30. So when he had said to Edom, "thou art greatly despised" Obadiah 1:2, he adds the ground of it, "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee. For thou art vile" Obadiah 1:3. Great, honored, glorious as Assyria or its ruler were in the eyes of men, the prophet tells him, what he was in himself, being such in the eyes of God, light, empty, as Daniel said to Belshazzar, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting" Daniel 5:27, of no account, vile.

Verse 15

Behold upon the mountains, the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace - From mountain-top to mountain-top by beacon-fires they spread the glad tidings. Suddenly the deliverance comes, sudden its announcement. "Behold!" Judah, before hindered by armies from going up to Jerusalem, its cities taken 2 Kings 18:13, may now again "keep the feasts" there, and "pay the vows," which "in trouble she promised;" "for the wicked one," the ungodly Sennacherib, "is utterly cut off, he shall no more pass through thee;" "the army and king and empire of the Assyrians have perished." But the words of prophecy cannot be bound down to this. These large promises, which, as to this world, were forfeited in the next reign, when Manasseh was taken captive to Babylon, and still more in the

seventy years‘ captivity, and more yet in that until now, look for a fulfillment, as they stand.

They sound so absolute. “I will afflict thee no more,” “the wicked shall no more pass through thee,” “he is utterly (literally, the whole of him) cut off.” Nahum joins on this signal complete deliverance from a temporal enemy, to the final deliverance of the people of God. The invasion of Sennacherib was an avowed conflict with God Himself. It was a defiance of God. He would make God‘s people, his; he would “cut it off that it be no more a people, and that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance” Psalm 83:4. There was a more “evil counselor” behind, whose agent was Sennacherib. He, as he is the author of all murders and strife, so has he a special hatred for the Church, whether before or since Christ‘s Coming. Before, that he right cut off that Line from whom “the Seed of the woman” should be born, which should destroy his empire and crush himself, and that he might devour the Child who was to be born Revelation 12:4.

Since, because her members are his freed captives, and she makes inroads on his kingdom, and he hates them because he hates God and Christ who dwells in them. As the time of the birth of our Lord neared, his hate became more concentrated. God overruled the hatred of Edom or Moab, or the pride of Assyria, to His own ends, to preserve Israel by chastising it. Their hatred was from the evil one, because it was God‘s people, the seed of Abraham, the tribe of Judah, the line of David. If they could be cut off, they of whom Christ was to be born according to the flesh, and so, in all seeming, the hope of the world, were gone. Sennacherib then was not a picture only, he was the agent of Satan, who used his hands, feet, tongue, to blaspheme God and war against His people. As then we have respect not to the mere agent, but to the principal, and should address him through those he employed (as Elisha said of the messenger who came to slay him, “is not the sound of his master‘s feet behind him?” 2 Kings 6:32), so the prophet‘s words chiefly and most fully go to the instigator of Sennacherib, whose very name he names, Belial. It is the deliverance of the Church and the people of God which he foretells, and thanks God for.

To the Church he says in the Same of God, “Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more” Nahum 1:12. The yoke which He will burst

is the yoke of the oppressor, of which Isaiah speaks, and which the Son, to be born of a Virgin, “the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace,” was to break Isaiah 9:4, Isaiah 9:6; the yoke of sin and the bands of fleshly pleasure and evil habits, wherewith we were held captive, so that henceforth we should walk upright, unbowed, look up to heaven our home, and “run the way of Thy commandments when Thou hast set my heart at liberty.” Behold, then, “upon the mountains,” i. e., above all the height of this world, “the feet of him that bringeth good tidings,” i. e., of remission of sins and sanctification by the Spirit and the freedom and adoption as sons, and the casting out of the Prince of this world, “that publisheth peace.” “O Judah,” thou, the true people of God, “keep thy solemn feasts,” the substance of the figures of the law.: “He who is ever engaged on the words, deeds and thoughts of Him, who is by nature Lord, the Word of God, ever lives in His days, ever keeps Lord‘s days. Yea he who ever prepares himself for the true life and abstains from the sweets of this life which deceive the many, and who cherishes not the mind of the flesh but chastens the body and enslaves it, is ever keeping the days of preparation. He too who thinks that Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us, and that we must keep festival, eating the flesh of the Word, there is no time when he keeps not the Passover, ever passing over in thought and every word and deed from the affairs of this life to God, and hasting to His city. Moreover whoso can say truthfully, we have risen together with Christ, yea and also, He hath together raised us and together seated us in the heavenly places in Christ, ever lives in the days of Pentecost; and chiefly, when, going up into the upper room as the Apostles of Jesus, he gives himself to supplication and prayer, that he may become meet for the rushing mighty wind from heaven, which mightily effaces the evil in men and its fruits, meet too for some portion of the fiery tongue froth God.”: “Such an one will keep the feast excellently, having the faith in Christ fixed, hallowed by the Spirit, glorious with the grace of adoption. And he will offer to God spiritual sacrifice, consecrating himself for an odor of sweetness, cultivating also every kind of virtue, temperance, continence, fortitude, endurance, charity, hope, love of the poor, goodness, longsuffering: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Every power of the enemy, which before had dominion over him, shall pass through no more, since Christ commanded the unclean spirits to depart into the abyss and giveth to those who love Him power to resist the enemy, and subdue the

passions, and destroy sin and tread on serpents and scorpions and every power of the enemy."

And these feasts were to he kept "in the spirit not in the letter. For what avails it to keep any feast wilhout, unless there be the feast of contmplation in the soul?". Wherefore he adds, "and pay thy vows," i. e., thyself, whom in Baptism thou hast vowed: for the Wicked One shall no more pass through thee.: "For from what time, O Judah, Christ, by dying and rising again, hallowed thy feasts, he can no longer pass through thee. Thenceforth he perished wholly. Not that he has, in substance, ceased to be, but that the death of the human race, which through his envy came into this world, the two-fold death of body trod soul, wholly perisheth. Where and when did this Belial perish? When died the death which he brought in, whence himself also is called Death? When Christ died, then died the death of our souls; and when Christ rose again, then perished the death of our bodies. When then, O Judah thou keepest thy feast, remember that thy very feast is He, of whom thou savest that by dying He conquered death and by rising He restored life. Hence it is said, Belial shall no more pass through thee.

For if thou look to that alone, that Sennacherib departed, to return no more, and perished, it would not be true to say, Belial hath wholly perished! For after him many a Belial, such as he was, passed through time, and hurt thee far more. Perchance thou sayest, ‹so long as Nineveh standest, how savest thou, that Belial has wholly perisited? So long as the world standeth, how shall I be comforted, that death hath perished? For lo! persecutors tamed with death have stormed, and besides them, many sons of Belial, of whom antichrist will be the worst. How then sayest thou, that Belial has wholly perished?' It follows, "the Scatterer hath gone up before thee." To Judah in the flesh, Nebuchadnezzar who went up against Nineveh, was worse than Sennacherib. Who then is He who went up before thee, and dispersed the world, that great Nineveh, that thou shouldest have full consolation? Christ who descended, Himself ascended; and as He ascended, so shall He come to disperse Nineveh, i. e., to judge the world. What any persecutor doth meanwhile, yea or the Devil himself or antichrist, takes nothing from the truth, that Belial hath "wholly perished." "The prince of this world is cast out." For nothing which they do, or can do, hinders, that both deaths of body and soul are swallowed up in His victory, who hath

ascended to heaven? Belial cannot in the members kill the soul, which hath been made alive by the death of the Head, i. e., Christ; and as to the death of the body, so certain is it that it will perish, that thou mayest say fearlessly that it hath perished, since Christ the Head hath risen."

Each fall of an enemy of the Church, each recovery of a sinful soul being a part of this victory, the words may be applied to each. The Church or the soul are bidden to keep the feast and pay their vows, whatever in their trouble they promised to God. Jerome: "It is said to souls, which confess the Lord, that the devil who, before, wasted thee and bowed thee with that most heavy yoke hath, in and with the idols which thou madest for thyself, perished; keep thy feasts and pay to God thy vows, singing with the angels continually, for no more shall Belial pass through thee, of whom the apostle too saith, What concord hath Christ with Belial? The words too, Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that brings good tidings, that publishes peace" belong, in a degree, to all preachers of the Gospel.: "No one can preach peace, who is himself below and cleaves to earthly things. For warn are for the good things of earth. If thou wouldest preach peace to thyself and thy neighbor, be raised above the earth and its goods, riches and glory. Ascend to the heavenly mountains, whence David also, lifting up his eyes, hoped that his help would come."

NAHUM CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

The prophet, having foretold the destruction of Sennacherib, find in him how the enemy of Judah is wholly cut off, goes on to describe the destruction of Nineveh, and with it of his whole kingdom, and, under it, of antichrist and Satan.

Verse 1

He that dasheth in pieces - Rather, "the Disperser," the instrument of God, whereby he should "break her in pieces like a potter's vessel, or should scatter" her in all lands, is come up against thy face, O Nineveh, i. e., either, over against thee", confronting her as it were, face to face, or directed against thee. From the description of the peace of Judah, the prophet turns suddenly to her oppressor, to whom, not to Judah, the rest of the prophecy is directed. Jacob and Israel are spoken of, not to. The destroyer of Nineveh "went up against the face of Nineveh," not in the presence of Judah and Jacob, who were far away and knew nothing of it. "Keep the munition." While all in Judah is now peace, all in Nineveh is tumult. God whom they had defied, saying that Hezekiah could not "turn away the face of one captain of the least of his servants" Isaiah 36:9, now bids them prepare to meet him whom He would send against them. "Gird up thy loins now, like a man" Job 40:7. Thou who wouldest lay waste others, now, if theft canst, keep thyself. The strength of the words is the measure of the irony. They had challenged God; He in turn challenges them to put forth all their might.

Fence thy defenses - we might say. Their strong walls, high though they were, unassailable by any then known skill of besiegers, would not be secure.

The prophet uses a kindred and allusive word, that their protection needed to be itself protected; and this, by one continued watchfulness. Watch, he adds, the way: spy out (as far as thou canst), the coming of the enemy; strengthen the loins, the seat of strength. Elsewhere they are said to be girded up for any exertion. "Fortify thy strength exceedingly." The expression is rare: commonly it is said of some part of the human frame, knees, arms, or mind, or of man by God.

The same words are strong mockery to those who resist God, good counsel to those who trust in God. "Keep the munition, for He who keepeth thee will not sleep Psalm 121:3; watch the way," by which the enemy may approach from afar, for Satan approacheth, sometimes suddenly, sometimes very stealthily and subtly, "transforming himself into an angel of light." Jerome: "Watch also the way by which thou art to go, as it is said, ‹Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein;' Jeremiah 6:16, so that, having stood in many ways, we may come to that Way which saith, ‹I am the Way.'" Then, "make thy loins strong," as the Saviour commands His disciples, "Let your loins be girded about" Luke 12:35, and the Apostle says, "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth" Ephesians 6:14; for nothing so strengthens as the Truth. For Christ being the Truth, whose with his whole heart hath belived in Christ, is strong against himself, and hath power over the loins, the seat of the passions. Then, since this warfare is hard, he adds, be strong, "fortify thy power mightily;" resist not listlessly, but vehemently; and that, in His strength who hath strengthened our nature, taking it to Himself and uniting it with the Godhead. For without Him, strong though thou be, thou wilt avail nothing.

Verse 2

For the Lord hath turned away - (rather restoreth) the excellency of Jacob Speaking of what should come, as already come. For Nineveh falls, because God restores His people, whom it had oppressed. The restoration of God's favor to His Church is the season of His punishment of their enemies; as, again, His displeasure against her enemies is a token of His favor to her. When Herod was smitten by God, "the word of God grew and multiplied" Acts 12:24. A long captivity was still before Judah, yet the destruction of the Assyrian was the earnest that every "oppressing city should cease" Isaiah 33:1.

The excellency of Jacob - The word, "excellency," is used in a good or bad sense; bad, if man takes the excellency to himself; good, as given by God. This is decisive against a modern popular rendering; "has returned to the excellency of Jacob;" for Scripture knows of no "excellency of Jacob," except God Himself or grace from God. Jacob, if separated from God or left by Him, has no excellency, to which God could return.

As the excellency of Israel - Both the ten and the two tribes had suffered by the Assyrian. The ten had been carried captive by Shalmanezer, the two had been harassed by Sennacherib. After the captivity of the ten tribes, the name Jacob is used of Judah only. It may be then, that the restoration of God‘s favor is promised to each separately. Or, there may be an emphasis in the names themselves. Their forefather bore the name of Jacob in his troubled days of exile; that of Israel was given him on his return Genesis 32:28. It would then mean, the afflicted people (Jacob) shall be restored to its utmost glory as Israel. The sense is the same.

For the emptiers have emptied them out - Their chastisement is the channel of their restoration. Unlike the world, their emptiness is their fullness, as the fullness of the world is its emptiness. The world is cast down, not to arise, for “woe to him that is alone when he falleth: for he hath not another to help him up” Ecclesiastes 4:10. The Church falleth, but “to arise” Micah 7:8: the people is restored, because it had borne chastening Ezekiel 36:3, Ezekiel 36:6-7; “for the Lord hath restored the excellency of Jacob, for the emptiers have emptied them. out and marred their vinebranches” (see Psalm 80:12-13), i. e., its fruit-bearing branches, that, as far as in them lay, it should not bear fruit unto God; but to cut the vine is, by God‘s grace, to make it shoot forth and bear fruit more abundantly.

Verse 3-4

Army is arrayed against army; the armies, thus far, of God against the army of His enemy; all without is order; all within, confusion. The assailing army, from its compactness and unity, is spoken of, both as many and one. The might is of many; the order and singleness of purpose is as of one. The shield, collectively, not shields. “His mighty men;” He, who was last spoken of, was Almighty God, as He says in Isaiah; “I have commanded My consecrated ones; I have also called My mighty ones, them that rejoice in My highness” Isaiah 13:3.

Is reddened - Either with blood of the Assyrians, shed in some previous battle, before the siege began, or (which is the meaning of the word elsewhere), an artificial color, the color of blood being chosen, as expressive of fiery fierceness. The valiant men are in scarlet, for beauty and terror, as, again being the color of blood. It was especially the color of the dress of their nobles one chief color of the Median dress, from whom the Persians adopted their‘s. “The chariots shall be with flaming torches,” literally, “with the fire of steels, or of sharp incisive instruments. Either way

the words seem to indicate that the chariots were in some way armed with steel. For steel was not an ornament, nor do the chariots appear to have been ornamented with metal. Iron would have hindered the primary object of lightness and speed. Steel, as distinct from iron, is made only for incisiveness. In either way, it is probable, that scythed chariots were already in use. Against such generals, as the younger Cyrus and Alexander, they were of no avail; but they must have been terrific instruments against undisciplined armies.

The rush and noise of the British chariots disturbed for a time even Caesar‘s Roman troops. They were probably in use long before. Their use among the ancient Britons, Gauls and Belgians, as also probably among the Canaanites, evinces that they existed among very rude people.

The objection that the Assyrian chariots are not represented in the monuments as armed with scythes is an oversight, since these spoken of by Nahum may have been Median, certainly were not Assyrian. “In the day of His preparation”, when He musters the hosts for the battle; “and the fir-trees shall be terribly shaken;” i. e., fir-spears (the weapon being often named from the wood of which it is made) shall be made to quiver through the force wherewith they shall be hurled.

The chariots shall rage - (Or madden, as the driving of Jehu is said to be “furiously,” literally, in madness) “in the streets.” The city is not yet taken; so, since this takes place “in the streets and broad ways,” they are the confused preparations of the besieged. “They shall justle one against another,” shall run rapidly to and fro, restlessly; “their show (English margin) is like torches,” leaving streaks of fire, as they pass rapidly along. “They shall run” vehemently, “like the lightnings,” swift; but vanishing.

Verse 5

He shall recount his worthies - The Assyrian king wakes as out of a sleep, literally, “he remembers his mighty men” (as Nahum 3:18; Judges 5:13; Nehemiah 3:5); “they stumble in their walk,” literally, paths, not through haste only and eager fear, but from want of inward might and the aid of God. These whom God leads stumble not Isaiah 63:13.: “Perplexed every way and not knowing what they ought to do, their mind wholly darkened and almost drunken with ills, they reel to and fro, turn from one thing to another, and in all” labor in vain.

They shall make haste to the walls thereof, and the defense - (literally, "the covering") shall be prepared The Assyrian monuments leave no doubt that a Jewish writer is right in the main, in describing this as a covered shelter, under which an enemy approached the city; "a covering of planks with skins upon them; under it those who fight against the city come to the wall and mine the wall underneath, and it is a shield over them from the stones, which are cast from off the wall."

The monuments, however, exhibit this shelter, as connected not with mining but with a battering ram, mostly with a sharp point, by which they loosened the walls. Another covert was employed to protect single miners who picked out single stones with a pick-axe. The Assyrians sculptures show, in the means employed against or in defense of their engines, how central a part of the siege they formed. Seven of them are represented in one siege. The "ram" Ezekiel 4:2 is mentioned in Ezekiel as the well-known and ordinary instrument of a siege.

Thus, Nahum 2:3 describes the attack; and Nahum 2:4 describes the defense; the two first clauses of Nahum 2:5 describes the defense; the two last describe clauses the attack. This quick interchange only makes the whole account more vivid.

: "But what avails it to build the house, unless the Lord build it? What helps it to shut the gates, which the Lord unbarreth?" On both sides is put forth the full strength of man; there seems a stand-still to see, what will be, and God brings to pass His own work in His own way.

Verse 6

The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be disolved - All gives way in an instant at the will of God; the strife is hushed; no more is said of war and death; there is no more resistance or bloodshed; no sound except the wailing of the captives, the flight of those who can escape, while the conquerors empty it of the spoil, and then she is left a waste. The swelling of the river and the opening made by it may have given rise to the traditional account of Ctesias, although obviously exaggerated as to the destruction of the wall. The exaggerated character of that tradition is not inconsistent with, it rather implies, a basis of truth. It is inconceivable that it should have been thought, that walls, of the thickness

which Ctesias had described, were overthrown by the swelling of any river, unless some such event as Ctesias relates, that the siege was ended by an entrance afforded to the enemy through some bursting in of the river, had been true.

Nahum speaks nothing of the wall, but simply of the opening of "the gates of the river," obviously the gates, by which the inhabitants could have access to the rivers, which otherwise would be useless to them except as a wall. These "rivers" correspond to the "rivers," the artificial divisions of the Nile, by which No or Thebes was defended, or "the rivers of Babylon" Psalm 137:1 which yet was washed by the one stream, the Euphrates. But Nineveh was surrounded and guarded by actual rivers, the Tigris and the Khausser, and, (assuming those larger dimensions of Nineveh, which are supported by evidences so various) the greater Zab, which was "called the frantic Zab on account of the violence of its current." "The Zab contained (says Ainsworth), when we saw it, a larger body of water than the Tigris, whose tributaries are not supplied by so many snow-mountains as those of the Zab." Of these, if the Tigris be now on a level lower than the rains of Nineveh, it may not have been so formerly.

The Khausser, in its natural direction, ran through Nineveh where, now as of old, it turns a mill, and must, of necessity, have been fenced by gates; else any invader might enter at will: as, in modern times, Mosul has its "gate of the bridge." A break in these would obviously let in an enemy, and might the more paralyze the inhabitants, if they had any tradition, that the river alone could or would be their enemy, as Nahum himself prophesied. Subsequently inaccuracy or exaggeration might easily represent this to be an overthrow of the walls themselves. It was all one, in which way the breach was made.

The palace shall be dissolved - The prophet unites the beginning and the end. The river-gates were opened; what had been the fence against the enemy became an entrance for them: with the river, there poured in also the tide of the people of the enemy. The palace, then, the imperial abode, the center of the empire, embellished with the history of its triumphs, sank, was disolved, and ceased to be. It is not a physical loosening of the sun-dried bricks by the stream which would usually flow harmless by; but the dissolution of the empire itself.: "The temple, that is, his kingdom was

destroyed." The palaces both of Khorsabad and Kouyunjik lay near the Khausser and both bear the marks of fire.

Verse 7

The first word should he rendered, "And it is decreed; She shall be laid bare. It is decreed." All this took place, otherwise than man would have thought, because it was the will of God. She (the people of the city, under the figure of a captive woman) "shall be laid bare," in shame, to her reproach; "she shall be brought up", to judgment, or from Nineveh as being now sunk low and depressed; "and her maids," the lesser cities, as female attendants on the royal city, and their inhabitants represented as women, both as put to shame and for weakness. The whole empire of Nineveh was overthrown by Nabopalassar. Yet neither was the special shame wanting, that the noble matrons and virgins were so led captives in shame and sorrow. "They shall lead her, as with the voice of doves," moaning, yet, for fear, with a subdued voice.

Verse 8

But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water - that is, of many peoples Revelation 17:1, gathered from all quarters and settled there, her multitudes being like the countless drops, full, untroubled, with no ebb or flow, fenced in, "from the days that she hath been," yet even therefore stagnant and corrupted (see Jeremiah 48:11), not "a fountain of living waters," during 600 years of unbroken empire; even lately it had been assailed in vain; now its hour was come, the sluices were broken; the waters poured out. It was full not of citizens only, but of other nations poured into it. An old historian says, "The chief and most powerful of those whom Ninus settled there, were the Assyrians, but also, of other nations, whoever willed." Thus, the pool was filled; but at the rebuke of the Lord they flee. "Stand, stand," the prophet speaks in the name of the widowed city; "shut the gates, go up on the walls, resist the enemy, gather yourselves together, form a band to withstand," "but none shalt look back" to the mother-city which calls them; all is forgotten, except their fear; parents, wives, children, the wealth which is plundered, home, worldly repute. So will men leave all things, for the life of this world. "All that a man hath, will he give for his life" Job 2:4. Why not for the life to come?

Verse 9

Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold - Nineveh had not hearkened of old to the voice of the prophet, but had turned back to sin; it

cannot hearken now, for fear. He turns to the spoiler to whom God‘s judgments assigned her, and who is too ready to hear. The gold and silver, which the last Assyrian King had gathered into the palace which he fired, was mostly removed (the story says, treacherously) to Babylon. Arbaces is said to have borne this and to have removed the residue, to the amount of many talents, to Agbatana, the Median capital. “For there is none end of the store.” Nineveh had stored up from her foundation until then, but at last for the spoiler. “When thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled” Isaiah 33:1. Many “perish and leave their wealth to others” Psalm 49:10. “The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just” Proverbs 13:22. “And glory out of all the pleasant furniture,” (literally as in the margin, “glory out of all vessels of desire”) i. e., however large the spoil, it would be but a portion only; yet all their wealth, though more than enough for the enemy and for them, could not save them. Her “glory,” was but a “weight” to weigh her down, that she should not rise again Zechariah 5:8; Exodus 15:10. Their wealth brought on the day of calamity, availed not therein, although it could not be drawn dry even by the spoiler. Jerome: “They could not spoil so much as she supplied to be spoiled.”

Verse 10

She is empty and void and waste - The completeness of her judgment is declared first under that solemn number, Three, and the three words in Hebrew are nearly the same, with the same meaning, only each word fuller than the former, as picturing a growing desolation; and then under four heads (in all seven) also a growing fear. First the heart, the seat of courage and resolve and high purpose, melteth; then the knees smite together, tremble, shake, under the frame; then, much pain is in all loins, literally, “strong pains as of a woman in travail,” writhing and doubling the whole body, and making it wholly powerless and unable to stand upright, shall bow the very loins, the seat of strength Proverbs 31:17, and, lastly, the faces of them all gather blackness (see the note at Joel 2:6), the fruit of extreme pain, and the token of approaching dissolution.

Verse 11

Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions? - Great indeed must be the desolation, which should call forth the wonder of the prophet of God. He asks “where is it?” For so utterly was Nineveh to be effaced, that its place should scarcely be known, and now is known by the ruins which have been buried, and are dug up. The

messengers of her king had asked, "Where are the gods of Hamath and of Arpad? of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?" 2 Kings 18:34. And now of her it is asked, "Where is Nineveh?" It had "destroyed utterly all lands," and now itself is utterly destroyed. The lion dwelt, fed, walked there, up and down, at will; all was spacious and secure; he terrified all, and none terrified him; he tore, strangled, laid up, as he willed, booty in store; but when he had filled it to the full, he filled up also the measure of his iniquities, and his sentence came from God. Nineveh had set at nought all human power, and destroyed it; now, therefore, God appears in His own Person.

Verse 13

Behold I, Myself, am against thee - (Literally, "toward thee"). God, in His long-suffering, had, as it were, looked away from him; now He looked toward (as in Psalm 37:20) him, and in His sight what wicked one should stand? "Saith the Lord of hosts," whose power is infinite and He changes not, and all the armies of heaven, the truly angels and evil spirits and men are in His Hand, whereto He directs or overrules them. "And I will burn her chariots in the smoke." The Assyrian sculptures attest how greatly their pride and strength lay in their chariots. They exhibit the minute embellishment of the chariots and horses. Almost inconceivably light for speed, they are pictured as whirled onward by the two or, more often, three powerful steeds with eye of fire, the bodies of the slain (or, in peace, the lion) under their feet, the mailed warriors, with bows stretched to the utmost, shooting at the more distant foe.

Sennacherib gives a terrific picture of the fierceness of their onslaught. "The armor, the arms, taken in my attacks, swam in the blood of my enemies as in a river; the war-chariots, which destroy man and beast, had, in their course, crushed the bloody bodies and limbs". All this their warlike pride should be but fuel for fire, and vanish in smoke, an emblem of pride, swelling, mounting like a column toward heaven, disappearing. Not a brand shall then be saved out of the burning; nothing half-consumed; but the fire shall burn, until there be nothing left to consume, as, in Sodom and Gomorrah, "the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. And the sword of the vengeance of God shall devour the young lions" Genesis 19:28, his hope for the time to come, the flower of his youth; "and I will cut off thy prey," what thou hast robbed, and so that thou shouldest rob no more, but that thy spoil should utterly cease from "the earth, and the

voice of thy messengers shall be no more heard," such as Rabshakeh, whereby they insulted and terrified the nations and blasphemed God.

In the spiritual sense, Nineveh being an image of the world, the prophecy speaks of the inroad made upon it through the Gospel, its resistance, capture, desolation, destruction. First, He that "ruleth with a rod of iron," came and denounced "woe to it because of offenses;" then His mighty ones in His Name. Their shield is red, "the shield of faith," kindled and glowing with love. Their raiment too is red, because they wash it in the Blood of the Lamb, and conquer through the Blood of the Lamb, and many shed their own blood "for a witness to them." "The day of His preparation" is the whole period, until the end of the world, in which the Gospel is preached, of which the prophets and apostles speak, as the day of salvation Isaiah 49:8; 2 Corinthians 6:2; to the believing world a day of salvation; to the unbelieving, of preparation for judgment. All which is done, judgments, mercy, preaching, miracles, patience of the saints, martyrdom, all which is spoken, done, suffered, is part of the one preparation for the final judgment. The chariots, flashing with light as they pass, are "the chariots of salvation" Habakkuk 3:8, bearing the brightness of the doctrine of Christ and the glory of His truth throughout the world, enlightening while they wound; the "spears" are the word of God, slaying to make alive.

On the other hand, in resisting, the world clashes with itself. It would oppose the Gospel, yet knows not how; is "maddened with rage, and gnashes its teeth, that it can prevail nothing". On the broad ways which lead to death, where "Wisdom uttereth her voice" and is not heard, it is hemmed in, and cannot find a straight path; its chariots dash one against another, and yet they breathe their ancient fury, and run to and fro like lightning, as the Lord saith, "I beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven" Luke 10:18. Then shall they "remember their mighty ones," all the might of this world which they ascribed to their gods, their manifold triumphs, whereby in pagan times their empire was established; they shall gather strength against strength, but it shall be powerless and real weakness. While they prepare for a long siege, without hand their gates give way; the kingdom falls, the world is taken captive by a blessed captivity, suddenly, unawares, as one says in the second century; "Men cry out that the state is beset, that the Christians are in their fields, in their forts, in their islands!" These mourn

over their past sins, and beat their breasts, in token of their sorrow; yet sweeter shall be the plaint of their sorrow, than any past joy.

Sit they shall mourn as doves, and their mourning is as melody and the voice of praise in the ear of the Most High. One part of the inhabitants of the world being thus blessedly taken, the rest are fled. So in all nearness of God‘s judgments, those who are net brought nearer, flee further. “They flee, and look not back, and none heareth the Lord speaking, “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings” Jeremiah 3:22. So then, hearing not His Voice, stand, stand, they flee away from His presence in mercy, into darkness for ever. Such is the lot of the inhabitants of the world; and what is the world itself? The prophet answers what it has been. A pool of water, into which all things, the riches and glory, and wisdom, and pleasures of this world, have flowed in on all sides, and which gave back nothing. All ended in itself. The water came from above, and became stagnant in the lowest part of the earth. “For all the wisdom of this world, apart from the sealed fountain of the Church, and of which it cannot be said, the streams thereof make glad the city of God nor are of those waters which, above the heavens, praise the Name of the Lord, however large they may seem, yet are little, and are enclosed in a narrow bound” Luke 10:18.

These either are hallowed to God, like the spoils of Egypt, as when the eloquence of Cyprian was won through the fishermen, or the gold and silver are offered to Him, or they are left to be wasted and burned up. “All which is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, all under the sun,” remain here.: “If they are thine, take them with thee. When be dieth, he shall carry nothing away, his glory shall not descend after him” Psalm 49:17. True riches are, not wealth, but virtues, which the conscience carries with it, that it may be rich forever.” The seven-fold terrors Nahum 2:10, singly, may have a good sense, that the stony heart shall be melted, and the stiff knees, which before were not bent to God, be bowed in the Name of Jesus. Yet more fully are they the deepening horrors of the wicked in the Day of Judgment, when “men‘s hearts shall fail them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” Luke 21:26, closing with the everlasting confusion of face, “the shame and everlasting contempt,” to which the wicked shall rise.

As the vessel over the fire is not cleansed, but blackened, so through the judgments of God, whereby the righteous are cleansed, the wicked gather but fresh defilement and hate. Lastly, the prophet asks, "Where is the dwelling of those who had made the world a den of ravin, where the lion," even the devil who is "a roaring lion," and all antichrists 1 John 2:18, destroyed at will; where Satan made his dwelling in the hearts of the worldly, and "tore in pieces for his whelps," i. e., killed souls of men and gave them over to inferior evil spirits to be tormented, and "filled his holes with prey," the pit of hell with the souls which he deceived?. The question implies that they shall not be. "They which have seen him shall say, Where is he?" Job 20:7. God Himself answers, that He Himself will come against it to judgment, and destroy all might arrayed against God; and Christ shall "smite the Wicked one with the rod of His Mouth" Isaiah 11:4, and the "sharp two-edged sword out of His mouth shall smite all nations" Revelation 1:16; Revelation 19:15, Revelation 19:21, "and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever" Revelation 14:11; and it should no more oppress, nor "any messenger of Satan" go forth to harass the saints of God.

NAHUM CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

The prophecy of the destruction in Nineveh is resumed in a dirge over her; yet still as future. It pronounces a woe, yet to come.

Verse 1

Woe to the bloody city - Literally, "city of bloods", i. e., of manifold bloodshedding, built and founded in blood Habakkuk 2:12; Jeremiah 22:13, as the prosperity of the world ever is. Murder, oppression, wresting of judgment, war out of covetousness, grinding or neglect of the poor, make it "a city of bloods." Nineveh, or the world, is a city of the devil, as opposed to the "city of God.": "Two sorts of love have made two sorts of cities; the earthly, love of self even to contempt of God; the heavenly, love of God even to contempt of self. The one glorieth in itself, the other in the Lord.": "Amid the manifold differences of the human race, in languages, habits, rites, arms, dress, there are but two kinds of human society, which, according to our Scriptures, we may call two cities. One is of such as wish to live according to the flesh; the other of such as will according to the Spirit." "Of these, one is predestined to live forever with God; the other, to undergo everlasting torment with the devil." Of this city, or evil world, Nineveh, the city of bloods, is the type.

It is all full of lies and robbery - Better, "it is all lie; it is full of robbery" (rapine). "Lie" includes all falsehood, in word or act, denial of God, hypocrisy; toward man, it speaks of treachery, treacherous dealing, in contrast with open violence or rapine. The whole being of the wicked is one lie, toward God and man; deceiving and deceived; leaving no place for God who is the Truth; seeking through falsehood things which fail. Man "loveth vanity and seeketh after leasing" Psalm 4:2. All were gone out of the way. Alb.: "There were none in so great a multitude, for whose sake the mercy of God might spare so great a city." It is full, not so much of booty as of rapine and violence. The sin remains, when the profit is gone. Yet it ceases not, but perseveres to the end; "the prey departs not;" they will neither leave the sin, nor the sin them; they neither repent, nor are weary of sinning. Avarice especially gains vigor in old age, and grows by being fed. "The prey departeth not," but continues as a witness against it, as a lion's lair is defiled by the fragments of his prey.

Verse 2

The noise (literally, "voice") of the whip - There is cry against cry; the voice of the enemy, brought upon them through the voice of the oppressed. Blood hath a voice which crieth Genesis 4:10 to heaven; its echo or counterpart, as it were, is the cry of the destroyer. All is urged on with terrific speed. The chariot-wheels quiver in the rapid onset; the chariots bound, like living things; the earth echoes with the whirling swiftness of the speed of the cavalry. The prophet within, with the inward ear and eye which hears "the mysteries of the Kingdom of God" Matthew 13:11, Matthew 13:16 and sees things to come, as they shall come upon the wicked, sees and hears the scourge coming, with The words in Hebrew are purposely chosen with rough "r" sounds: רעשׁ *raʿash* דהר *dâhar* מרקדה *meraqēdâh* a great noise, impetuously; and so describes it as present. Wars and rumors of wars are among the signs of the Day of Judgment. The "scourge," though literally relating to the vehement onset of the enemy, suggests to the thoughts, the scourges of Almighty God, wherewith He chastens the penitent, punishes the impenitent; the wheel, the swift changes of man's condition in the rolling-on of time. "O God, make them like a rolling thing" Psalm 83:14.

Verse 3

The horseman lifteth up - Rather, "leading up: the flash of the sword, and the lightning of the spear." Thus, there are, in all, seven inroads, seven signs, before the complete destruction of Nineveh or the world; as, in the Revelations, all the forerunners of the Judgment of the Great Day are summed up under the voice of seven trumpets and seven vials. Rup.: "God shall not use homes and chariots and other instruments of war, such as are here spoken of, to judge the world, yet, as is just, His terrors are foretold under the name of those things, wherewith this proud and bloody world hath sinned. For so all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Matthew 26:52. They who, abusing their power, have used all these weapons of war, especially against the servants of God, shall themselves perish by them, and there shall be none end of their corpses, for they shall be corpses forever: for, dying by an everlasting death, they shall, without end, be without the true life, which is God." "And there is a multitude of slain." Death follows on death. The prophet views the vast field of carnage, and everywhere there meets him only some new form of death, slain, carcasses, corpses, and these in multitudes, an oppressive heavy number, without end, so that the yet living stumble and fall upon the carcasses of the

slain. So great the multitude of those who perish, and such their foulness; but what foulness is like sin?

Verse 4

Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favored harlot - There are "multitudes of slain" because of the "multitude of whoredoms" and love of the creature instead of the Creator. So to Babylon Isaiah saith, "they (loss of children and widowhood) shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, for the great abundance of thine enchantments" Isaiah 47:9. The actual use of "enchantments," for which Babylon was so infamous, is not elsewhere attributed to the Assyrians. But neither is the word elsewhere used figuratively; nor is Assyria, in its intimate relation to Babylon, likely to have been free from the longing, universal in pagandom, to obtain knowledge as to the issue of events which would affect her. She is, by a rare idiom, entitled "mistress of enchantments," having them at her command, as instruments of power. Mostly, idolatries and estrangement from God are spoken of as "whoredoms," only in respect of those who, having been taken by God as His own, forsook Him for false gods.

But Jezebel too, of whose offences Jehu speaks under the same two titles 2 Kings 9:22, was a pagan. And such sins were but part of that larger all-comprehending sin, that man, being made by God for Himself, when he loves the creature instead of the Creator, divorces himself from God. Of this sin world empires, such as Nineveh, were the concentration. Their being was one vast idolatry of self and of "the god of this world." All, art, fraud, deceit, protection of the weak against the strong 2 Kings 16:7-9; 2 Chronicles 28:20-21, promises of good Isaiah 36:16-17, were employed, together with open violence, to absorb all nations into it. The one end of all was to form one great idol-temple, of which the center and end was man, a rival worship to God, which should enslave all to itself and the things of this world. Nineveh and all conquering nations used fraud as well as force, enticed and entangled others, and so sold and deprived them of freedom. (see Joel 3:3).

Nor are people less sold and enslaved, because they have no visible master. False freedom is the deepest and most abject slavery. All sinful nations or persons extend to others the infection of their own sins. But, chiefly, the "wicked world," manifoldly arrayed with fair forms, and

“beautiful in the eyes of those who will not think or weigh how much more beautiful the Lord and Creator of all,” spreads her enticements on all sides “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,” “her pomps and vanities,” worldly happiness and glory and majesty, and ease and abundance, deceives and sells mankind into the power of Satan. It is called well-favored (literally, good of grace), because the world has a real beauty, nor, “unless there were a grace and beauty in the things we love, could they draw us to them.” They have their beauty, because from God; then are they deformed, when “things hold us back from God, which, unless they were in God, were not at all.”

We deform them, if we love them for our own sakes, not in Him; or for the intimations they give of Him.: “Praise as to things foul has an intensity of blame. As if one would speak of a skilled thief, or a courageous robber, or a clever cheat. So though he calls Nineveh a well-favored harlot, this will not be for her praise, (far from it!) but conveys the heavier condenmation. As they, when they would attract, use dainty babblings, so was Nineveh a skilled artificer of ill-doing, well provided with means to capture cities and lands and to persuade them what pleased herself.” She selleth not nations only but families, drawing mankind both as a mass, and one by one after her, so that scarce any escape.

The adultery of the soul from God is the more grieveus, the nearer God has brought any to Himself, in priests worse than in the people, in Christians than in Jews, in Jews than in pagan; yet God espoused mankind to Him when He made him. His dowry were gifts of nature. If this be adultery, how much sorer, when betrothed by the Blood of Christ, and endowed with the gift of the Spirit!

Verse 5

Behold I am against thee, saith the Lord of Hosts - Jerome: “I will not send an Angel, nor give thy destruction to others; I Myself will come to destroy thee.” Cyril: “She has not to do with man, or war with man: He who is angered with her is the Lord of hosts. But who would meet God Almighty, who hath power over all, if He would war against him?” In the Medes and Persians it was God who was against them. “Behold I am against thee,” literally, “toward thee.” It is a new thing which God was

about to do. “Behold!” God in His long-suffering had seemed to overlook her. Now, He says, I am toward thee, looking at her with His all-searching eye, as her Judge. Violence is punished by suffering; deeds of shame by shame. All sin is a whited sepulchre, fair without, foul within. God will strip off the outward fairness, and lay bare the inward foulness. The deepest shame is to lay bare, what the sinner or the world veiled within. “I will discover thy skirts,” i. e., the long-flowing robes which were part of her pomp and dignity, but which were only the veil of her misdeeds. “Through the greatness of thine iniquity have thy skirts been discovered,” says Jeremiah in answer to the heart‘s question, “why have these things come upon me?” Upon thy face, where shame is felt. The conscience of thy foulness shall be laid bare before thy face, thy eyes, thy memory continually, so that thou shalt be forced to read therein, whatsoever thou hast done, said, thought. “I will show the nations thy nakedness,” that all may despise, avoid, take example by thee, and praise God for His righteous judgments upon thee. The Evangelist heard “much people in heaven saying Alleluia” to God that “He hath judged the whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication” Revelation 19:1-2. And Isaiah saith, “They shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that hath trangsressed against Me” Isaiah 66:24.

Verse 6

And I will cast abominable filth upon thee - Alb.: “like a weight, that what thou wouldest not take heed to as sin, thou mayest feel in punishment.” “Abominable things had God seen” Jeremiah 13:27 in her doings; with abominable things would he punish her. Man would fain sin, and forget it as a thing past. “God maketh him to possess the iniquities of his youth” Job 13:26, and binds them around him, so that they make him to appear what they are, “vile” (compare Wisd. 4:18), “These things hast thou done and I kept silence; - I will reprove thee and set them in order before thine eyes. And will set thee as a gazing-stock” Psalm 50:21, that all, while they gaze at thee, take warning from thee (compare 2 Chronicles 7:20). “I will cast thee to the ground; before kings will I give thee, for them to gaze upon thee” Ezekiel 28:17.: “Whoever does not amend on occasion of others, others shall be amended on occasion of him.”

Verse 7

All they that look upon thee shall flee from thee - through terror, lest they should share her plagues, as Israel did, when the earth swallowed up

Korah, Dathan and Abiram; and they who "had been made rich by Babylon, stand ajar off, for the fear of her torment. All they who look on thee" Revelation 18:15. She was set as a thing to be "gazed at." He tells the effect on the gazers. "Each one who so gazed" at her should flee; one by one, they should gaze, be scared, flee (compare Psalm 31:11; Psalm 64:8). Not one should remain. "Who will bemoan her?" Not one should pay her the passing tribute of sympathy at human calamity, the shaking of the head at her woe (compare Job 16:4-5). Whoever had no compassion shall find none.

Verse 8

Art thou better - More populous or more powerful, "than the populous No?" rather than No-Ammon, so called from the idol Ammon, worshiped there. No-Ammon, (or, as it is deciphered in the Cuneiform Inscriptions, *Nia*), meaning probably "the portion of Ammon", was the sacred name of the capital of Upper Egypt, which, under its common name, Thebes, was far-famed, even in the time of Homer, for its continually accruing wealth, its military power, its 20,000 chariots, its vast dimensions attested by its 100 gates.

Existing earlier, as the capital of Upper Egypt, its grandeur began in the 18th dynasty, alter the expulsion of the Hyksos, or Semitic conquerors of Egypt. Its Pharaohs were conquerors, during the 18th to 20th dynasties, 1706-1110 b.c. - about six centuries. It was then the center of a world empire. Under a disguised name, its rulers were celebrated in Geek story also, for their worldwide conquests. The Greek statements have in some main points been verified by the decipherment of the hieroglyphics. The monuments relate their victories in far Asia, and mention Nineveh itself among the people who paid tribute to them. They warred and conquered from the Soudan to Mesopotamia. A monument of Tothmosis I (1066 b.c.) still exists at Kerman, between the 20th and 19th degrees latitude, boasting, in language like that of the Assyrian conquerors; "All lands are subdued, and bring their tributes for the first time to the gracious god". "The frontier of Egypt," they say, "extends Southward to the mountain of Apta (in Abyssinia) and Northward to the furthest dwellings of the Asiatics." The hyperbolic statements are too undefined for history, but widely-conquering monarchs could alone have used them.: "At all periods of history, the possession of the country which we call Soudan (the Black country) comprising Nubia, and which the ancients called by the collective name of Kous (Cush) or Aethiopia, has been an exhaustless source of wealth to

Egypt. Whether by way of war or of commerce, barks laden with flocks, corn, hides, ivory, precious woods, stones and metals, and many other products of those regions, descended the Nile into Egypt, to fill the treasures of the temples and of the court of the Pharaohs: and of metals, especially gold, mines whereof were worked by captives and slaves, whose Egyptian name noub seems to have been the origin of the name Nubia, the first province S. of Egypt." "The conquered country of Soudan, called Kous in the hieroglyphic inscriptions, was governed by Egyptian princes of the royal family, who bore the name of ‹prince royal of Kous.'"

But the prophet's appeal to Nineveh is the more striking, because No, in its situation, its commerce, the sources of its wealth, its relation to the country which lay between them, had been another and earlier Nineveh. Only, as No had formerly conquered and exacted tribute from all those nations, even to Nineveh itself, so now, under Sargon and Sennacherib, Nineveh had reversed all those successes, and displaced the Empire of Egypt by its own, and taken No itself. No had, under its Tothmoses, Amenophes, Sethos, the Ousertesens, sent its messengers Nahum 2:13, the leviers of its tribute, had brought off from Asia that countless mass of human strength, the captives, who (as Israel, before its deliverance, accomplished its hard labors) completed those gigantic works, which, even after 2000 years of decay, are still the marvel of the civilized world. Tothmosis I, after subduing the Sasou, brought back countless captives from Naharina (Mesopotamia); Tothmosis III, in 19 years of conquests, (1603-1585 b.c.) "raised the Egyptian empire to the height of its greatness. Tothmosis repeatedly attacked the most powerful people of Asia, as the Routen (Assyrians?) with a number of subordinate kingdoms, such as Asshur, Babel, Nineveh, Singar; such as the Remenen or Armenians, the Zahi or Phoenicians, the Cheta or Hittites, and manymore. We learn, by the description of the objects of the booty, sent to Egypt by land and sea, counted by number and weight, many curious details as to the industry of the conquered peoples of central Asia, which do honor to the civilization of that time, and verify the tradition that the Egyptian kings set up stelae in conquered countries, in memory of their victories. Tothmosis III. set up his stele in Mesopotamia, ‹for having enlarged the frontiers of Egypt.'" Amenophis too is related to have "taken the fortress of Nenii (Nineveh).": "He returned from the country of the higher Routen, where he had beaten

all his enemies to enlarge the frontiers of the land of Egypt": "he took possession of the people of the South, and chastised the people of the North:" "at Abd-el-Kournah" he was represented as "having for his footstool the heads and backs of five peoples of the S. and four peoples of the North (Asiatics).": "Among the names of the peoples, who submitted to Egypt, are the Nubians, the Asiatic shepherds, the inhabitants of Cyprus and Mesopotamia.": "The world in its length and its breadth" is promised by the sphinx to Tothmosis IV. He is represented as "subduer of the negroes."

Under Amenophis III, the Memnon of the Greeks, "the Egyptian empire extended Northward to Mesopotamia, Southward to the land of Karou." He enlarged and beautified No, which had from him the temple of Louksor, and his vocal statue, "all people bringing their tributes, their children, their horses, a mass of silver, of iron and ivory from countries, the roads whereto we know not." The king Horus is saluted as "the sun of the nine people; great is thy name to the country of Ethiopia"; "the gracious god returns, having subdued the great of all people." Seti I (or Sethos) is exhibited, as reverenced by the Armenians, conquering the Sasou, the "Hittites, Naharina (Mesopotamia), the Routen (Assyrians?) the Pount, or Arabs in the South of Arabia, the Amari or Amorites, and Kedes, perhaps Edessa." Rameses II, or the great (identified with the Pharaoh of the Exodus), conquered the Hittites in the North; in the South it is recorded, "the gracious god, who defeated the nine people, who massacred myriads in a moment, annihilated the people overthrown in their blood, yet was there no other with him."

The 20th Dynasty (1288-1110 b.c.) began again with conquests.: "Rameses III. triumphed over great confederations of Libyans and Syrians and the Isles of the Mediterranean. He is the only king who, as the monuments shew, carried on war at once by land and sea." Beside many names unknown to us, the Hittites, Amorites, Circesium, Aratus, Philistines, Phoenicia, Sasou, Pount, are again recognized. North, South East and West are declared to be tributary to him, and of the North it is said, "The people, who knew not Egypt, come to thee, bringing gold and silver, lapis-lazuli, all precious stones." He adorned Thebes with the great temple of Medinet-Abou and the Ramesseum. The brief notices of following Rameses' speak of internal prosperity and wealth: a fuller account of Rameses XII speaks of his "being in Mesopotamia to exact the annual tribute," how "the kings of

all countries prostrated themselves before him, and the king of the country of Bouchten (it has been conjectured, Bagistan, or Ecbatana) presented to him tribute and his daughter.": "He is the last Pharaoh who goes to Mesopotamia, to collect the annual tributes of the petty kingdoms of that country."

On this side of the Euphrates, Egypt still retained some possessions to the time of Necho, for it is said, "the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt" 2 Kings 24:7. Thebes continued to be embellished alike by "the high priests of Ammon," who displaced the ancient line, and kings of the Bubastite Dynasty, Sesonchis I or Sisak, Takelothis II, and Sesonchis III. The Ethiopian dynasty of Sabakos and Tearko or Tirhaka in another way illustrates the importance of No. The Ethiopian conquerors chose it as their royal city. There, in the time of Sabakos, Syria brought it tribute; there Tirhaka set up the records of his victories; and great must have been the conqueror, whom Strabo put on a line with Sesostris.

Its site marked it out for a great capital; and as such the Ethiopian conqueror seized it. The hills on either side retired, encircling the plain, through the center of which the Nile brought down its wealth, connecting it with the untold riches of the south.: "They formed a vast circus, where the ancient metropolis expaneled itself On the West, the Lybian chain presents abrupt declivities which command this side of the plain, and which bend away above Bab-el-molouk, to end near Kournah at the very bank of the river. On the East, heights, softer and nearer, descend in long declivities toward Louksor and Karnak, and their crests do not approach the Nile until after Medamout, an hour or more below Karnak." The breadth of the valley, being about 10 miles, the city (of which, Strabo says, "traces are now seen of its magnitude, 80 stadia in length") must have occupied the whole.: "The city embraced the great space, which is now commonly called the plain of Thebes and which is divided by the Nile into two halves, an Eastern and a Western, the first bounded by the edge of the Arabian wilderness, the latter by the hills of the dead of the steep Libyan chain."

The capital of Egypt, which was identified of old with Egypt itself, thus lay under the natural guardianship of the encircling hills which expanded to

receive it, divided into two by the river which was a wall to both. The chains of hills, on either side were themselves fenced in on East and West by the great sand-deserts unapproachable by an army. The long valley of the Nile was the only access to an enemy. It occupied apparently the victorious army of Asshurbanipal "a month and ten days" to march from Memphis to Thebes.: "At Thebes itself there are still remains of walls and fortifications, strong, skillfully constructed, and in good preservation, as there are also in other Egyptian towns above and below it. The crescent-shaped ridge of hills approaches so close to the river at each end as to admit of troops defiling past, but not spreading out or maneuvering. At each of these ends is a small old fort of the purely Egyptian, i. e., the ante-Hellenic period. Both above and below there are several similar crescent sweeps in the same chain of hills, and at each angle a similar fort."

All successive monarchs, during more centuries than have passed since our Lord came, successively beautified it. Everything is gigantic, bearing witness to the enormous mass of human strength, which its victorious kings had gathered from all nations to toil for its and their glorification. Wonderful is it now in its decay, desolation, death; one great idol-temple of its gods and an apotheosis of its kings, as sons of its gods.: "What spires are to a modern city, what the towers of a cathedral are to the nave and choir, that the statues of the Pharaohs were to the streets and temples of Thebes. The ground is strewn with their fragments; the avenues of them towered high above plain and houses. Three of gigantic size still remain. One was the granite statue of Rameses himself, who sat on the rightside of the entrance to his palace. - The only part of the temple or palace, at all in proportion to him, must have been the gateway, which rose in pyramidal towers, now broken down and rolling in a wild ruin down to the plain."

It was that self-deifying, against which Ezekiel is commanded to prophesy; "Speak and say; thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself" Ezekiel 29:3.: "Everywhere the same colossal proportions are preserved. Everywhere the king is conquering, ruling, worshiping, worshiped. The palace is the temple. The king is priest. He and his horses are ten times the size of the rest of the army. Alike in battle and in worship,

he is of the same stature as the gods themselves. Most striking is the familiar gentleness, with which, one on each side, they take him by each hand, as one of their own order, and then, in the next compartment, introduce him to Ammon, and the lion-headed goddess. Every distinction, except of degree, between divinity and royalty is entirely leveled."

Gigantic dimensions picture to the eye the ideal greatness, which is the key to the architecture of No.: "Two other statues alone remain of an avenue of eighteen similar or nearly similar statues, some of whose remnants lie in the field behind them, which led to the palace of Amenophis III, every one of the statues being Amenophis himself, thus giving in multiplication what Rameses gained in solitary elevation.": "Their statues were all of one piece." Science still cannot explain, how a mass of nearly 890 tons of granite was excavated at Syene, transported and set up at Thebes, or how destroyed.

Nozrani, In Egypt and Syria, p. 278: "The temper of the tools, which cut adamantine stone as sharply and closely as an ordinary scoop cuts an ordinary cheese, is still a mystery." Everything is in proportion. The two sitting colossi, whose "breadth across the shoulders is eighteen feet, their height forty-seven feet, fifty-three above the plain, or, with the half-buried pedestal, sixty feet, were once connected by an avenue of sphinxes of eleven hundred feet with what is now ‹Kom-el-Hettan,' or ‹the mound of sand-stone,' which marks the site of another palace and temple of Amenophis III.; and, to judge from the little that remains, it must have held a conspicuous rank among the finest monuments of Thebes. All that now exists of the interior are the bases of its columns, some broken statues, and Syenite sphinxes of the king, with several lionheaded figures of black granite".

The four villages, where are the chief remaining temples, Karnak, Luksor, Medinet-Abou, Kournah, form a great quadrilateral, each of whose sides is about one and a half mile, and the whole compass accordingly six miles. The avenue of six hundred sphinxes, which joined the temple of Luksor with Karnak must have been one and a half mile long: one of its obelisks is a remarkable ornament of Paris. Mostly massiveness is the characteristic, since strength and might were their ideal. Yet the massive

columns still preserved, as in the temple of Rameses II, are even of piercing beauty. And for the temple of Karnak! Its enclosure, which was some two miles in circumference, bears the names of Monarchs removed from one another, according to the Chronology, by above two thousand years.: "A stupendous colonnade, of which one pillar only remains erect, once extended across its great court, connecting the W. gate of entrance with that at its extremity. The towers of the Eastern gate are mere heaps of stones, poured down into the court on one side and the great hall on the other; giant columns have been swept away like reeds before the mighty avalanche, and one hardly misses them. And in that hall, of 170 feet by 329 feet, 134 columns of colossal proportions supported its roof; twelve of them, 62 feet high and about 35 in circumference, and on each side a forest of 66 columns, 42 feet 5 in. in height. Beyond the center avenue are seen obelisks, gateways and masses of masonry; every portion of these gigantic ruins is covered with sculpture most admirably executed, and every column has been richly painted."

Stanley, Sinai and Palestine, p. xli.: "Imagine a long vista of courts and doorways and colonnades and halls; here and there an obelisk shooting up out of the ruins, and interrupting the opening view of the forest of columns. - This mass of ruins, some rolled down in avalanches of stone, others perfect and painted, as when they were first built, is approached on every side by avenues of gateways. East and West, North and South, these vast approaches are found. Some are shattered, but in every approach some remain; and in some can be traced, beside, the further avenues, still in parts remaining by hundreds together, avenues of ram-headed sphinxes. Every Egyptian temple has, or ought to have, one of those grand gateways, formed of two sloping towers, with the high perpendicular front between." Then, over and above, is "their multiplied concentration. - Close before almost every gateway in this vast array were the colossal figures, usually in granite, of the great Rameses, sometimes in white and red marble, of Amenophis and of Thothmes. Close by them, were pairs of towering obelisks, which can generally be traced by pedestals on either side. - You have only to set up again the fallen obelisks which lie at your feet; to conceive the columns, as they are still seen in parts, overspreading the whole; to reproduce all the statues, like those which still remain in their august niches, to gaze on the painted wails and pillars of the immense ball,

which even now can never be seen without a thrill of awe, and you have ancient Thebes before you."

And most of these paintings were records of their past might.: "There remained on the massive buildings Egyptian letters, recording their former wealthiness; and one of the elder priests, bidden to interpret his native language, related that of old 700,000 of military age dwelt there; and with that army king Rhamses gained possession of Libya, Ethiopia, the Medes and Persians, the Bactrian and Scythian; and held in his empire the countries which the Syrians and Armenians and neighboring Cappadocians inhabit, the Bithynian also and Lycian to the sea. There were read tee the tributes imposed on the natives, the weight of silver amid gold; the number of arms and horses, and the gifts to the temples, ivory and frankincense, and what supplies of corn and utensils each nation should pay, not less magnificent than are now enjoined by Parthian violence or by Roman power."

That was situate among the rivers - Literally, "the dweller, she that dwelleth." Perhaps the prophet wished to express the security and ease, in which she dwelt "among the rivers." They encircled, folded round her, as it were, so that she was a little world in herself, secluded from all who would approach to hurt her. The prophet's word, "rivers", is especially used of the branches or canals of the Nile, which is also called the "sea". The Nile passed through No, and doubtless its canals encircled it. Egypt is said by a pagan to be "walled by the Nile as an everlasting wall," "Whose rampart was (rampart is) the sea." Wall and rampart are, properly, the outer and inner wall of a city, the wall and forewall, so to speak. For all walls and all defenses, her enfolding walls of sea would suffice. Strong she was in herself; strong also in her helpers.

Verse 9

Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength - Literally, "Egypt was strength, and Ethiopia, and boundless." He sets forth first the imperial might of No; then her strength from foreign, subdued power. The capital is a sort of impersonation of the might of the state; No, of Egypt, as Nineveh, of Assyria. When the head was cut off or the heart ceased to beat, all was lost. The might of Egypt and Ethiopia was the might of No, concentrated in her. They were strength, and that strength unmeasured by any human standard. Boundless was the strength, which Nineveh had subdued: boundless, the

store Nahum 2:10 which she had accumulated for the spoiler; boundless Nahum 3:3 the carcasses of her slain. "And it was infinite." "The people that came up with the king out of Egypt, were without number" 2 Chronicles 12:3. The Egyptians connected with Thebes are counted by a pagan author at seven million. Put or Phut is mentioned third among the sons of Ham, after Cash anal Mizraim Genesis 10:6. They are mentioned with the Ethiopians in Pharaoh's army at the Euphrates, as joined with them in the visitation of Egypt Ezekiel 30:5; with Cush in the army of Gog Ezekiel 38:15; with Lud in that of Tyre Ezekiel 29:10; a country and river of that name were, Josephus tells us, "frequently mentioned by Greek historians." They dwelt in the Libya, conterminous to the Canopic mouth of the Nile.

And Lubim - These came up against Judah in the army of Shishak 2 Chronicles 12:3 against Rehoboam, and with the Ethiopians, "a huge host" under Zerah the Ethiopian against Asa. The Ribou or Libou appear on the monuments as a people conquered by Menephthes and Rameses III. They were still to be united with Egypt and the Ethiopians in the times of Antiochus Epiphanes Daniel 11:43; so their connection with Egypt was not broken by its fall. Those unwearied enemies had become incorporated with her; and were now her help. These were (English Margin) in thy help; set upon it, given up to it. The prophet appeals to No herself, as it were, "Thou hadst strength." Then he turns away, to speak of her, unwilling to look on the miseries which he has to portray to Nineveh, as the preludes of her own. Without God, vain is the help of man.

Verse 10

Yet was she - (also) carried away, literally, "She also became an exile band," her people were carried away, with all the barbarities of pagan war. All, through whom she might recover, were destroyed or scattered abroad; "the young," the hope of another age, cruelly destroyed (see Hosea 14:1-9; Isaiah 13:16; 2 Kings 8:12); "her honorable men" enslaved (see Joel 3:3), "all her great men prisoners." God's judgments are executed step by step. Assyria herself was the author of this captivity, which Isaiah prophesied in the first years of Hezekiah when Judah was leaning upon Egypt (see Isaiah 20:1-6). It was repeated by all of the house of Sargon. Jeremiah and Ezekiel foretold fresh desolation by Nebuchadnezzar Jeremiah 46:25-26; Ezekiel 30:14-16. God foretold to His people, "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee" Isaiah 43:3; and the Persian monarchs, who

fulfilled prophecy in the restoration of Judah, fulfilled it also in the conquest of Egypt and Ethiopia. Both perhaps out of human policy in part.

But Cambyses‘ wild hatred of Egyptian idolatry fulfilled God‘s word. Ptolemy Lathyrus carried on the work of Cambyses; the Romans, Ptolemy‘s. Cambyses burned its temples; Lathyrus its four-or five-storied private houses; the Roman Gallus leveled it to the ground. A little after it was said of her, “she is inhabited as so many scattered villages.” A little after our Lord‘s Coming, Germanicus went to visit, not it, but “the vast traces of it.”: “It lay overwhelmed with its hundred gates” and utterly impoverished. No was powerful as Nineveh, and less an enemy of the people of God. For though these often suffered from Egypt, yet in those times they even trusted too much to its help (see Isaiah 30). If then the judgments of God came upon No, how much more upon Nineveh! In type, Nineveh is the image of the world as oppressing God‘s Church; No, rather of those who live for this life, abounding in wealth, ease, power, and forgetful of God. If, then, they were punished, who took no active part against God, fought not against God‘s truth, yet still were sunk in the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, what shall be the end of those who openly resist God?

Verse 11

Thou also - As thou hast done, so shall it be done unto thee. The cruelties on No, in the cycle of God‘s judgments, draw on the like upon Nineveh who inflicted them. “Thou also shalt be drunken” with the same cup of God‘s anger, entering within thee as wine doth, bereaving thee of reason and of counsel through the greatness of thy anguish, and bringing shame on thee, and a stupefaction like death. “Thou shalt be hid, a thing hidden” from the eyes of men, “as though thou hadst never been.” Nahum had foretold her complete desolation: he had asked, where is she? Here he describes an abiding condition; strangely fulfilled, as perhaps never to that extent besides; her palaces, her monuments, her records of her glorious triumphs existed still in their place, but hidden out of sight, as in a tomb, under the hill-like mounds along the Tigris. “Thou also shalt seek strength, or a stronghold from the enemy,” out of thyself, since thine own shall be weakness. Yet in vain, since God, is not such to thee Nahum 1:7. “They shall seek, but not find.” “For then shall it be too late to cry for mercy, when

it is the time of justice." "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy" James 2:13.

Verse 12

All thy strong-holds shall be like fig trees, with the first ripe figs - Hanging from them; eagerly sought after, to be consumed. Being ripe, they are ready to fall at once; "if they be shaken;" it needs but the tremulous motion, as when trees wave in the wind, "they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater," not costing even the slight pains of picking them from the ground. So easy is their destruction on the part of God, though it cost more pains to the Babylonians. At the end of the world it shall be yet more fulfilled Revelation 6:13, for then God will use no human instrument, but put forth only His own Almightiness; and all strong-holds of man's pride, moral or spiritual, shall, of themselves, melt away.

Verse 13

Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women - Fierce, fearless, hard, iron men, such as their warriors still are portrayed by themselves on their monuments, they whom no toll wearied, no peril daunted, shall be, one and all, their whole "people, women." So Jeremiah to Babylon, "they shall become, became, women" Jeremiah 50:37; Jeremiah 51:30. He sets it before the eyes. "Behold, thy people are women;" against nature they are such, not in tenderness but in weakness and fear. Among the signs of the Day of Judgment, it stands, "men's hearts failing them for fear" Luke 21:26. Where sin reigns, there is no strength left, no manliness or nobleness of soul, no power to resist. "In the midst of thee," where thou seemest most secure, and, if anywhere, there were hope of safety. The very inmost self of the sinner gives way.

To thine enemies - (This is, for emphasis, prefixed) not for any good to thee, but "to thine enemies shall be set wide open the gates of thy land," not, "thy gates," i. e., the gates of their cities, (which is a distinct idiom), but "the gates of the land" itself, every avenue, which might have been closed against the invader, but which was "laid open." The Easterns, as well as the Greeks and Latins. See further Liddell and Scott, loc. cit.) the πύλαι τῆς Κιλικίας καὶ τῆς Συρίας *pulai tēs Kilikias kai tēs Surias* Xen. Anab. i. 4. 14, the "Amsnicae Pylae" (Q. Curt. iii. 20). Pliny speaks of the "portae Caucasiae" (H. N. vi. 11) or "Iberiae" (Albaniae Ptol. v. 12.) Ibid. 15), used the word "gate" or "doors" of the mountain passes, which gave an access to a land, but which might be held against an enemy. In the pass called "the

Caucasian gates," there were, over and above, doors fastened with iron bars. At Thermopylae or, as the inhabitants called them, Pylae, "gates," the narrow pass was further guarded by a wall. Its name recalls the brilliant history, how such approaches might be held by a devoted handful of men against almost countless multitudes. Of Assyria, Pliny says, "The Tigris and pathless mountains encircle Adiabene." When those "gates of the land" gave way, the whole land was laid open to its enemies.

The fire shall devour thy bars - Probably, as elsewhere, the bars of the gates, which were mostly of wood, since it is added expressly of some, that they were of the iron Psalm 107:16; Isaiah 14:2 or brass 1 Kings 4:13.: "Occasionally the efforts of the besiegers were directed against the gate, which they endeavored to break open with axes, or to set on fire by application of a torch - In the hot climate of S. Asia wood becomes so dry by exposture to the sun, that the most solid doors may readily be ignited and consumed." It is even remarked in one instance that the Assyrians "have not set fire to the gates of this city, as appeared to be their usual practice in attacking a fortified place."

So were her palaces buried as they stood, that the traces of prolonged fire are still visible, calcining the one part and leaving others which were not exposed to it, uncalcined.: "It is incontestable that, during the excavations, a considerable quantity of charcoal, and even pieces of wood, either half-burnt or in a perfect state of preservation, were found in many places. The lining of the chambers also bears certain marks of the action of fire. All these things can be explained only by supposing the fall of a burning roof, which calcined the slabs of gypsum and converted them into dust. It would be absurd to imagine that the burning of a small quantity of furniture could have left on the walls marks like these which are to be seen through all the chambers, with the exception of one, which was only an open passage. It must have been a violent and prolonged fire, to be able to calcine not only a few places, but every part of these slabs, which were ten feet high and several inches thick. So complete a decomposition can be attributed but to intense heat, such as would be occasioned by the fall of a burning roof.

"Botta found on the engraved flag-stones scoria and half-melted nails, so that there is no doubt that these appearances had been produced by the action of intense and long-sustained beat. He remembers, beside, at

Khorsabad, that when he detached some bas-reliefs from the earthy substance which covered them, in order to copy the inscriptions that were behind, he found there coals and cinders, which could have entered only by the top, between the wall and the back of the bas-relief. This can be easily understood to have been caused by the burning of the roof, but is inexplicable in any other manner. What tends most positively to prove that the traces of fire must be attributed to the burning of a wooden roof is, that these traces are perceptible only in the interior of the building. The gypsum also that covers the wall inside is completely calcined, while the outside of the building is nearly everywhere untouched. But wherever the fronting appears to have at all suffered from fire, it is at the bottom; thus giving reason to suppose that the damage has been done by some burning matter falling outside. In fact, not a single bas-relief in a state to be removed was found in any of the chambers, they were all pulverized."

The soul which does not rightly close its senses against the enticements of the world, does, in fact, open them, and death is come up into our windows Jeremiah 9:21, and then "whatever natural good there yet be, which, as bars, would hinder the enemy from bursting in, is consumed by the fire," once kindled, of its evil passions.

Verse 14

Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strongholds - This is not mere mockery at man's weakness, when he would resist God. It foretells that they shall toil, and that, heavily. Toil is added upon toil. Nineveh did undergo a two years' siege. Water stands for all provisions within. He bids them, as before Nahum 2:1, strengthen what was already strong; strongholds, which seemed to "cut off" all approach. These he bids them strengthen, not repairing decays only but making them exceeding strong 2 Chronicles 11:12. Go into clay. We seem to see all the inhabitants, like ants on their nest, all poured out, every one busy, every one making preparation for the defense. Why had there been no need of it? What needed she of towers and fortifications, whose armies were carrying war into distant lands, before whom all which was near was hushed? Now, all had to be renewed. As Isaiah in his mockery of the idol-makers begins with the forging of the axe, the planting and rearing of the trees, which were at length to become the idol (Isaiah 44:12, following), Nahum goes back to

the beginning. The neglected brick-kiln, useless in their prosperity, was to be repaired; the clay, which abounded in the valley of the Tigris, was to be collected, mixed and kneaded by treading, as still represented in the Egyptian monuments. The conquering nation was to do the work of slaves, as Asiatic captives are represented, under their taskmasters, on the monuments of Egypt, a prelude of their future. Xenophon still saw the massive brick wall, on the stone foundation.

Yet, though stored within and fenced without, it shall not stand (see Isaiah 27:10-11).

Verse 15

There - where thou didst fence thyself, and madest such manifold and toilsome preparation,

Shall the fire devour thee. - All is toil within. The fire of God‘s wrath falls and consumes at once. Mankind still, with mire and clay, build themselves Babels. “They go into clay,” and become themselves earthly like the mire they steep themselves in. They make themselves strong, as though they thought “that their houses shall continue forever” Psalm 49:11, and say, “So, take thine ease eat, drink and be merry” Luke 12:19-20. God‘s wrath descends. “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. It shall eat thee up like the canker-worm.” What in thee is strongest, shall be devoured with as much ease as the locust devours the tender grass. The judgments of God, not only overwhelm as a whole, but find cut each tender part, as the locust devours each single blade.

Make thyself many as the cankerworm - As though thou wouldest equal thyself in oppressive number to those instruments of the vengeance of God, gathering from all quarters armies to help thee; yea, though thou make thy whole self one oppressive multitude, yet it shall not avail thee. Nay, He saith, thou hast essayed to do it.

Verse 16

Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven - Not numerous only but glorious in the eyes of the world, and, as thou deemest, safe and inaccessible; yet in an instant all is gone.

The commerce of Nineveh was carried back to prehistoric times, since its rivers bound together the mountains of Armenia with the Persian gulf, and marked out the line, by which the distant members of the human family should supply each others‘ needs. “Semiramis” they say, “built other cities

on the Euphrates and the Tigris, where she placed emporia for those who convey their goods from Media and Paraetacene. Being mighty rivers and passing through a populous country, they yield many advantages to those employed in commerce; so that the places by the river are full of wealthy emporia." The Phoenicians traced back their Assyrian commerce (and as it seems, truly) to those same prehistoric times, in which they alleged, that they themselves migrated from the Persian gulf. They commenced at once, they said, the long voyages, in which they transported the wares of Egypt and Assyria. The building of "Tadmor in the wilderness" 1 Kings 9:18 on the way to Tiphsach (Thapsacus) the utmost bound of Solomon's dominions (1 Kings 5:4 1 Kings 4:24), connected Palestine with that commerce.

The great route for couriers and for traffic, extending for 1,500 or 1,600 miles in later times, must have lain through Nineveh, since, although no mention is made of the city which had perished, the route lay across the two rivers, the greater and lesser Zab, of which the greater formed the Southern limit of Nineveh. Those two rivers led up to two mountain-passes which opened a way to Media and Agbatana; and pillars at the summit of the N. pass attest the use of this route over the Zagros chain about 700 b.c.. Yet a third and easier pass was used by Nineveh, as is evidenced by another monument, of a date as yet undetermined. Two other lines connected Nineveh with Syria and the West. Northern lines led doubtless to Lake Wan and the Black Sea. The lists of plunder or of tribute, carried off during the world-empire of Egypt, before it was displaced by Assyria, attest the extensive imports or manufactures of Nineveh; the titles of "Assyrian nard, Assyrian amomum, Assyrian odors, myrrh, frankincense, involve its trade with the spice countries: domestic manufactures of hers apparently were purple or dark-blue cloaks, embroidery, brocades, and these conveyed in chests of cedar; her metallurgy was on principles recognized now; in one practical point of combining beauty with strength, she has even been copied.

A line of commerce, so marked out by nature in the history of nations, is not changed, unless some preferable line be discovered. Empires passed away, but, at the end of the 13th century a.d., trade and manufacture continued their accustomed course and habitation. The faith in Jesus had converted the ancient paganism; the heresy of Mohammedanism disputed

with the faith for the souls of men; but the old material prosperity of the world held its way. Mankind still wanted the productions of each others‘ lands. The merchants of Nineveh were to be dispersed and were gone: itself and its remembrance were to be effaced from the earth, and it was so; in vain was a new Nineveh built by the Romans; that also disappeared; but so essential was its possession for the necessities of commerce, that Mosul, a large and populous town, arose over against its mounds, a city of the living over-against its buried glories; and, as our goods are known in China by the name of our great manufacturing capital, so a delicate manufacture imposed on the languages of Europe (Italian, Spanish, French, English, German) the name of Mosul.

Even early in this century, under a mild governor, an important commerce passed through Mosul, from India, Persia, Kurdistan, Syria, Natolia, Europe. And when European traffic took the line of the Isthmus ef Suez, the communication with Kurdistan still secured to it an important and exclusive commerce. The merchants of Nineveh were dispersed and gone. The commerce continued over-against its grave.

The cankerworm spoileth and fleeth away - Better, “the locust hath spread itself abroad (marauded) and is flown.” The prophet gives, in three words, the whole history of Nineveh, its beginning and its end. He had before foretold its destruction, though it should be oppressive as the locust; he had spoken of its commercial wealth; he adds to this, that other source of its wealth, its despoiling warfares and their issue. The pagan conqueror rehearsed his victory, “I came, saw, conquered.” The prophet goes further, as the issue of all human conquest, “I disappeared.” The locust (Nineveh) spread itself abroad (the word is always used of an inroad for plunder, destroying and wasting, everywhere: it left the world a desert, and was gone. Ill-gotten wealth makes one poor, not rich. Truly they who traffic in this world, are more in number than they who, seeking treasure in heaven, shall shine as the stars forever and ever. “For many are called, but few, are chosen.” And when all the stars of light “shall abide and praise God Psalm 148:3, these men, though multiplied like the locust, shall, like the locust, pass away, destroying and destroyed. They abide for a while in the chillness of this world; when the Sun of righteousness ariseth, they vanish. This is the very order of God‘s Providence. As truly as locusts, which in the cold and dew are chilled and stiffened, and cannot spread their wings, fly away when

the sun is hot and are found no longer, so shalt thou be dispersed and thy place not anymore be known. It was an earnest of this, when the Assyrians, like locusts, had spread themselves around Jerusalem in a dark day of trouble and of rebuke and of blasphemy Isaiah 37:3, God was entreated and they were not. Midian came up like the grasshopper for multitude Judges 6:4-5; Judges 7:12. In the morning they had fled Judges 7:21. What is the height of the sons of hen? or how do they spread themselves abroad?" At the longest, after a few years it is but as the locust spreads himself and flees away, no more to return.

Verse 17

Thy crowned are as the locust, and thy captains as the great locusts - What he had said summarily under metaphor, the prophet expands in a likeness. "The crowned" are probably the subordinate princes, of whom Sennacherib said, "Are not my princes altogether kings?" Isaiah 10:8. It has been observed that the headdress of the Assyrian Vizier has the ornament which "throughout the whole series of sculptures is the distinctive mark of royal or quasi-royal authority.": "All high officers of state, ‹the crowned captains,‘ were adorned with diadems, closely resembling the lower band of the royal mitre, separated from the cap itself. Such was that of the vizier, which was broader in front than behind, was adorned with rosettes and compartments, and terminated in two ribbons with embroidered and fringed ends, which hung down his back." "Captain" is apparently the title of some military ounce of princely rank.

One such Jeremiah Jeremiah 51:27, in a prophecy in which he probably alludes to this, bids place over the armies of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz, to marshall them against Babylon, against which he summons the cavalry like the rough locust. The "captains" are likened to the "great caterpillars," either as chief in devastation, or as including under them the armies antler their command, who moved at their will. These and their armies now subsided into stillness for a time under the chill of calamity, like the locust "whose nature it is, that, torpid in the cold, they fly in the heat." The stiffness of the locusts through the cold, when they lie motionless, heaps upon heaps, hidden out of sight, is a striking image of the helplessness of Nineveh‘s mightiest in the day of her calamity; then, by a different part of their history, he pictures their entire disappearance.: "The locusts, are commonly taken in the morning when they are agglomerated one on another, in the places where they passed the night. As soon as the sun

warms them, they fly away." "When the sun ariseth, they flee away," literally, "it is chased away."

One and all; all as one. As at God's command the plague of locusts, which He had sent on Egypt, was removed; "there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt" Exodus 10:19; so the mighty of Nineveh were driven north, with no trace where they had been, where they were. "The wind carried them away Isaiah 41:16; the wind passes over him and he is not, and his place knows him no more Psalm 103:16. The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the ungodly for a moment: though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds, yet he shall perish for ever; they which have seen him shall say, where is he? He shall fly away, as a dream, and shall not be formal; neither shall his place any were bebold him Job 20:5-9.

Where they are - So Zechariah asks, "Your fathers, where are they?" Zechariah 1. History, experience, human knowledge can answer nothing. They can only say, where they are not. God alone can answer that much-containing word, "Where-they." They had disappeared from human sight, from their greatness, their visible being, their place on earth.

Verse 18

Thy shepherds - that is, they who should counsel for the people's good and feed it, and "keep watch over their flocks by night," but are now like their master, the "King of Assyria," are his shepherds not the shepherds of the people whom they care not for; these slumber, at once through listlessness and excess, and now have fallen asleep in death, as the Psalmist says, "They have slept their sleep" Psalm 76:6. The prophet speaks of the future, as already past in effect, as it was in the will of God. All "the shepherds of the people", all who could shepherd them, or hold them to together, themselves sleep "the sleep of death;" their mighty men dwelt in that abiding-place, where they shall not move or rise, the grave; and so as Micaiah, in the vision predictive of Ahab's death, "saw all Israel scattered on the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd" 1 Kings 22:17, so the people of the Assyrian monarch shall be "scattered on the mountains," shepherdless, and that irretrievably; no man gathers them.

Verse 19

There is no healing - (literally, "dulling") of thy bruise It cannot be softened or mitigated; and so thy wound is grievous (literally, sick),

incurable, for when the wound ever anew inflames, it cannot be healed. The word, bruise, is the more expressive, because it denotes alike the abiding wound in the body Leviticus 21:19, and the shattering of a state, which God can heal Psalm 60:4; Isaiah 30:26, or which may be great, incurable Jeremiah 30:12. When the passions are ever anew aroused, they are at last without remedy; when the soul is ever swollen with pride, it cannot be healed; since only by submitting itself to Christ, "broken and contrite" by humility, can it be healed. Nineveh sank, and never rose; nothing soothed its fall. In the end there shall be nothing to mitigate the destruction of the world, or to soften the sufferings of the damned. The "rich man, being in torments," asked in vain that Lazarus might "dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue."

All that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee - For none can grieve at thy fall.

Nineveh sinks out of sight amid one universal, exulting, exceeding joy of all who heard the report of her. "For upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" "In that he asketh, upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually? He affirms most strongly that his evil did pass upon all continually." His wickedness, like one continual flood. which knew no ebb or bound, had passed upon the whole world and each one in it; now at length it had passed away, and "the whole earth is at rest, is quiet; they break forth into singing" Isaiah 14:7.

It is not without meaning, that having throughout the prophecy addressed Nineveh (in the feminine), now, in the close Nahum 3:18-19, the prophet turns to him in whom all its wickedness is, as it were, gathered into one, the soul of all its evil, and the director of it, its king. As Nineveh is the image of the world, its pomps, wealth, luxury, vanity, wickedness, oppression, destruction, so its king is the image of a worse king, the Prince of this world.: "And this is the song of triumph of those, over whom ‹his wickedness has passed,‘ not rested, but they have escaped out of his hands. Nahum, ‹the comforter,‘ had ‹rebuked the world of sin;‘ now he pronounces that ‹the prince of this world is judged.‘ ‹His shepherds‘ are they who serve him, who ‹feed the flock of the slaughter,‘ who guide them to evil, not to good. These, when they sleep, as all mankind, dwell there; it is their abiding-place; their sheep are ‹scattered on the mountains,‘ in the heights of their pride, because they are not of the sheep of Christ; and since they

would not be gathered of Him, they are ‹scattered, where none gathereth.‘” “The king of Assyria (Satan) knows that he cannot deceive the sheep, unless he have first laid the shepherds asleep. It is always the aim of the devil to lay asleep souls that watch. In the Passion of the Lord, he weighed down the eves of the Apostles with heavy sleep, whom Christ arouseth, ‹Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation‘ Matthew 26:41; and again, ‹What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch!‘ ‹And no man gathers them,‘ for their shepherds themselves cannot protect themselves. In the Day of God‘s anger, ‹the kings of the earth and the great men, and the rich men and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains‘ Revelation 6:15. Such are his shepherds, and his sheep; but what of himself?

Truly his bruise or breaking can not he healed; his wound or smiting is incurable; that namely whereby, when he came to Him in whom he found nothing John 14:30, yet bruised His heel, and exacted of Him a sinner‘s death, his own head was bruised.” And hence, “all who have ears to hear,” who hear not with the outward only, but with the inner ears of the heart, “clap the hands over thee,” that is, give to God all their souls‘ thanks and praise, raise up their eyes and hands to God in heaven, praising Him who had “bruised Satan under their feet.” Ever since, through the serpent, the evil and malicious one has lied, saying, “ye shall not surely die, eat and ye shall be as gods,” hath his evil, continually and unceasingly, from one and through one, passed upon all men. As the apostle saith, “As by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” Romans 5:12.

Upon whom then hath not his sin paased? Who hath not been shapen in iniquity? and whom did not his mother conceive in sin? Yet, it passes only, for “the world itself also passeth away,” and we pass away from it, and all the evil it can do us, unless we share in its evil, is not abiding, but passing. This then is the cause, and a great cause, why “all that hear the bruit of thee” should “clap the hands over thee;” because thee, whose wickedness passed through one upon all, One Man, who alone was without sin, contemned and bruised, while He riced and justified from wickedness them who “hearing” rejoiced, and rejoicing and believing, “clapped the hands over thee.” Yet they only shall be glad, upon whom his “wickedness,”

although it passed, yet abode not, but in prayer and good deeds, by the grace of God, they lifted up their hands to Him Who overcame, and Who, in His own, overcomes still, to whom be praise and thanksgiving forever and ever. Amen.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE
Habakkuk

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HABAKKUK INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Habakkuk

Habakkuk is eminently the prophet of reverential, awe-filled faith. This is the soul and center of his prophecy. One word alone he addresses directly to his people. It is of marvel at their lack of faith Habakkuk 1:5. "Behold among the heathen and gaze attentively, and marvel, marvel; for I am working a work in your days; ye will not believe, when it is declared unto you." He bids them behold, and gaze, for God is about to work in their own days; he bids them prepare themselves to marvel, and marvel on; for it was a matter, at which political wisdom would stagger; and they, since they did not have faith, would not believe it. The counterpart to this, is that great blessing of faith, which is the key-stone of his whole book Habakkuk 2:4: "the just shall live by his faith."

Isaiah had foretold to Hezekiah that his treasures would be carried to Babylon, his sons would be eunuchs in the palace of its king Isaiah 39:6-7. He had foretold the destruction of Babylon and the restoration of the Jews Isaiah 12:1-6; Isaiah 47:1-15. Prophecy in Habakkuk, full as it is, is almost subordinate. His main subject is, that which occupied Asaph in Job 19:25, or Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and after that receive me into glow, in Asaph Psalm 73:24.

His first subject is, faith struggling under the oppressive sight of the sufferings of the good from the bad within God‘s people; the second subject is the suffering at the hands of those who are God‘s instruments to avenge that wickedness. The third subject, that of his great hymn, is faith, not jubilant until the end, yet victorious, praying, believing, seeing in vision what it prays for, and triumphing in that, of which it sees no tokens, whose only earnest is God‘s old loving-kindnesses to His people, and His Name, under which He had revealed Himself, "He Who Is," the Unchangeable.

The whole prophecy is, so to speak, a colloquy between the prophet and God. He opens it with a reverential, earnest, appeal to God, like that of the saints under the heavenly Altar in the Book of Revelation Revelation 6:10, "How long?" The prophet had prayed to God to end or mitigate the violence, oppressions, strife, contention, despoiling, powerlessness, of the law, crookedness of justice, entrapping of the righteous by the wicked

Habakkuk 1:2-4. God answers Habakkuk 1:6-11, that a terrible day of retribution was coming, that He Himself would raise up the Chaldees, as the instruments of His chastisements, terrible, self-dependent, owning no law or authority but their own will, deifying their own power, sweeping the whole breadth of the land, possessing themselves of it, taking every fenced city, and gathering captives as the sand. This answers one-half of Habakkuk‘s question, as to the prosperity of the wicked among his people. It leaves the other half, as to the condition of the righteous, unanswered, for such scourges of God swept away the righteous with the wicked. Habakkuk then renews the question as to them. But, just Asaph began by declaring his faith Psalm 73:1, “All-good is God to Israel,” the true Israel, the pure of heart, so Habakkuk: “Israel would not die, because He, their God, is Unchangeable Habakkuk 1:12. “Art not Thou of old, O Lord, my God, my holy One? We shall not die; Thou, O Lord, hast set him (the Aramaic) for judgment, and Thou, O Rock, hast founded him to chasten.” Then he appeals to God, “Why then is this? “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil - wherefore keepest Thou silence, when the wicked devoureth him who is more righteous than he?” This closes the first chapter and the first vision, in which he describes, with the vividness of one who saw it before him, the irresistible invasion of the Chaldaeans. Israel was meshed as in a net; should that net be emptied Habakkuk 1:17?

Habakkuk 2:2, “Write the vision” i. e., the prophecy, “and make it plain on the tables,” whereon the prophet was accustomed to write, “that he may run who reads it.” He says also, that it is for a time fixed in the mind of God, and that however, in man‘s sight, it might seem to linger, it would not be anything behind the time Habakkuk 2:3. Then he gives the answer itself in the words Habakkuk 2:4, “Behold his soul which is puffed up is not upright in him; and the just shall live by his faith.”

The swelling pride and self-dependence of the Chaldee stands in contrast with the trustful submission of faith. Of the one God says, it has no ground of uprightness, and consequently will not stand before God; of faith, he says, the righteous shall live by it. But the life plainly is not the life of the body. For Habakkuk‘s ground of complaint was the world-wasting cruelty of the Chaldees. The woe on the Chaldee which follows is even chiefly for bloodshed, in which the righteous and the wicked are massacred

alike. The simple word, shall live, is an entire denial of death, a denial even of any interruption of life. It stands in the same fullness as those words of our Lord John 14:19, "because I live, ye shall live also." The other side of the picture, the fall of the Yet it is manifestly intensive. It most resembles Chaldees, is given in greater fullness, because the fulfillment of God's word in things seen was the pledge of the fulfillment of those beyond the veil of sense and time. In a measured dirge he pronounces a five-fold woe on the five great sins of the Chaldees, their ambition Habakkuk 2:5, Habakkuk 2:8, covetousness Habakkuk 2:9-11, violence Habakkuk 2:12-14, insolence Habakkuk 2:15-17, idolatry Habakkuk 2:18-20. It closes with the powerlessness of the Chaldee idols against God, and bids the whole world be hushed before the presence of the One God, its Maker, awaiting His sentence.

Then follows the prayer, that God would revive His work for Israel, which now seemed dead. He describes the revival as coming, under the images of God's miraculous deliverances of old. The division of the Red Sea and the Jordan, the standing-still of the sun and moon under Joshua, are images of future deliverances; all nature shakes and quivers at the presence of its Maker. Yet not it, but the wicked were the object of His displeasure. The prophet sees his people delivered as at the Red Sea, just when the enemy seemed ready to sweep them away, as with a whirlwind. And, in sight of the unseen, he closes with that wondrous declaration of faith, that all nature should be desolate, all subsistence gone, everything, contrary to God's promises of old to His people, should be around him," and I will rejoice in the Lord, I will exult for joy in the God of my salvation."

This prophecy is not less distinct, because figurative. Rather it is the declaration of God's deliverance of His people, not from the Chaldees only, but at all times. The evil is concentrated in one Evil one, who stands over against the One anointed. "Thou art gone forth for the salvation of Thy people; for salvation with Thine anointed One. Thou crushedst the head out of the house of the wicked One, laying bare the foundation unto the neck," i. e., smiting the house at once, above and below; with an utter destruction. It belongs then the more to all times, until the closing strife between evil and good, Christ and Antichrist, the ἄνομος *anomos* and the Lord. It includes the Chaldee, and each great Empire which opposes itself to the

kingdom of God, and declares that, as God delivered His people of old so He would unto the end.

It may be that Habakkuk chose this name to express the strong faith, whereby he embraced the promises of God. At least, it means one who "strongly enfolds."

Also, perhaps it is on account of the form in which his prophecy is cast, as being spoken (with the exception of that one verse) to God or to the Chaldaean, not to his own people, that he added the title of Prophet to his name. "The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see" (Habakkuk 1:1, add Habakkuk 3:1). For, however the name "prophet" includes all to whom revelations from God came, it is nowhere, in the Old Testament, added as the name of an office to any one, who did not exercise the practical office of the Prophet. Our Lord quotes David as the Prophet Matthew 13:35, and God says to Abimelech of Abraham Genesis 20:7, He is a Prophet, and, in reference to this, the Psalmist speaks of the Patriarchs, as Prophets Psalm 105:14-15. "He reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not Mine anointed and do My prophets no harm," and Hosea speaks of Moses as a prophet Hosea 12:13, and Peter says of David, Acts 2:30, "He being a prophet." But the title is nowhere in the Old Testament added to the name as it is here, Habakkuk the prophet, and as it is elsewhere Samuel the prophet 2 Chronicles 35:18, the prophet Gad, 1 Samuel 22:5, Nathan the prophet 1 Kings 1:32, Ahijah the prophet 1 Kings 11:29, the prophet Jehu 1 Kings 16:7, 1 Kings 16:12, Elijah the prophet 1 Kings 18:36, Elisha the prophet 2 Kings 6:12, Shemaiah the prophet 2 Chronicles 12:5, the prophet Iddo, 2 Chronicles 13:22, the prophet Obed 2 Chronicles 15:8, Isaiah the prophet 2 Kings 19:2; 2 Kings 20:1, Jeremiah the prophet Jeremiah 28:6; Jeremiah 36:26; 2 Chronicles 36:12, Haggai the prophet Ezra 5:1; Ezra 6:14, unless any have exercised the prophetic office. The title of the Prophet is not, in the Old Testament, added to the names of Jacob or even of Moses or David or Solomon or Daniel, although they all prophesied of Christ.

Since Holy Scripture often conveys so much incidentally, it may be that a large range of ministerial office is hinted in the words "write on the tables;" for "the tables" must have been well-known tables, tables upon which prophets (as Isaiah) and probably Habakkuk himself was accustomed

to write. The writing of a few emphatic unexplained words in a public place, which should arouse curiosity, or startle passers-by, would be in harmony with the symbolical actions, enjoined on the prophets and used by them. The "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," had, from their mysteriousness, an impressiveness of their own, apart from the miracle of the writing.

The words appended to the prophecy, "to the chief singer," (as we should say, "the leader of the band" ‹) "with or on my stringed instruments," imply, not only that the hymn became part of the devotions of the temple, but that Habakkuk too had a part in the sacred music which accompanied it. The word so rendered, neginothui, could only mean my stringed instrument‘s, or "my song accompanied with music," as Hezekiah says Isaiah 38:20, "we will sing my songs on the stringed instruments, nenaggen neginothai." But in Habakkuk‘s subscription, "To the chief musician binginothai," neginoth can have no other meaning than in the almost identical inscription of Psalms Psalm 4:1-8; Psalm 6:1-10; Psalm 54:1-7; Psalm 61:1-8; Psalm 67:1-7; Psalm 76:1-12, "To the chief musician binginoth," nor this any other than with stringed instruments, "instruments struck with the hand." (Coll. 1 Samuel 17:16, 1 Samuel 17:23; 1 Samuel 18:10; 1 Samuel 19:9; 2 Kings 3:15). The addition, "with my stringed instruments," shows that Habakkuk himself was to accompany his hymn with instrumental music, and since the mention of the chief musician marks out that it was to form part of the temple-service, Habakkuk must have been entitled to take part in the temple-music, and so must have been a Levite. The Levitical order then had its prophet, as the sacerdotal in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The tradition in the title to Bel and the Dragon, whatever its value, agrees with this; "from the prophecy of Ambakum, son of Jesus, of the tribe of Levi."

This, however, does not give us any hint as to the time when Habakkuk prophesied. For, bad as were the times of Manasseh and Amon, their idolatry consisted in associating idols with God, setting them up in His courts, bringing one even into His temple 2 Kings 21:7, not in doing away His service. They set the two services, and the two opinions 1 Kings 18:21, side by side, adding the false, but not abolishing the true, "consenting to differ," leaving to the worshipers of God their religion, while forcing them to endure, side by side, what seemed an addition, but what was, in fact, a

denial. Habakkuk then might have been allowed to present his hymn for the temple-service, while the king placed in the same temple the statue of Astarte, and required its devil‘s worship to be carried on there. The temple was allowed to go into some degree of decay, for Josiah had it repaired; but we read only of his removing idols, 2 Kings 23:6, not or his having to restore the disused service of God. Of Ahaz it is recorded, that 2 Chronicles 28:24 he shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, which Hezekiah had to open 2 Chronicles 29:3. Nothing of this sort is told of Manasseh and Amon.

Habakkuk, however, has two hints, which determine his age within a few years. He says that the invasion of the Chaldaeans was to be in the days of those to whom he speaks; “in your days” Habakkuk 1:5. Accordingly, he must have spoken to adults, many of whom would survive that invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, in the 4th year of Jehoiakim 605 b.c. He can hardly have prophesied before 645 b.c., about the close of Manasseh‘s reign; for at this date, those who were 20 at the time of the prophecy, would have been 60, at the time of its commenced fulfillment at the battle of Carchemish. On the other hand, in that he speaks of that invasion as a thing incredible to those to whom he was speaking, he must have prophesied before Babylon became independent by the overthrow of Nineveh, 625 b.c. For when Babylon had displaced Nineveh, and divided the Empire of the East with Media and Egypt, it was not a thing incredible, that it would invade Judah in their own days, although it was beyond human knowledge to declare that it certainly would. The Babylonian Empire itself lasted only 89 years; and, to human sight, Judah had as much or more to fear from Egypt as from Babylon. The Median Empire also might as well have swallowed up Judah for the time, as the Babylonian.

The relation of Zephaniah to Habakkuk coincides with this. Zephaniah certainly adopted the remarkable words Then when a writer, who uses much the language of those before him, has an idiom which occurs once beside in Holy Scripture, there being many other expressions, which might equally have been used, any one unbiased would think that he adopted the language of the other. Stahelin admits the connection, but inverts the argument, contrary to the character of both prophets), literally Zephaniah 1:7, “Hush at the presence of the Lord God,” from Habakkuk‘s fuller form; Habakkuk 2:20, “the Lord is in His holy temple; hush at His presence all the earth!”

But Zephaniah prophesied under Josiah, before the destruction of Nineveh b.c. 625, which he foretold Zephaniah 2:13. Habakkuk was also, at latest, an earlier contemporary of Jeremiah who, in one place, at least, in his earlier prophecies, used his language as he does so often, of set purpose, that of the prophets before him, in order to show that the fullness of their prophecies was not yet exhausted. But Jeremiah began to prophesy in the 13th year of Josiah 629 b.c. Jeremiah 1:2; Jeremiah 25:3 Habakkuk, on the other hand, joins himself on with the old prophets and Psalms by the employment of language of Isaiah (Habakkuk 2:14, is from Isaiah 11:9; the form of Habakkuk 1:5 seems suggested by Isaiah 29:9; the standing on the watch-tower Habakkuk 2:1, occurs in Isaiah 21:8; the writing on tables occurs in Isaiah 8:1; Isaiah 30:8, and Habakkuk 2:2; the imagery, "he bath enlarged his desire as hell," Habakkuk 2:5, was probably suggested by Isaiah 5:14. Havernick Symb. ad defend. authentiam vat. Ies. c. 13 - xiv. 23. p. 37ff in Delitzsch Hab. p. viii) and perhaps of Micah (Habakkuk 2:12, and Micah 3:10), by the use of language of Deuteronomy (From Habakkuk 3:10-15), but does not systematically renew their prophecies like Jeremiah or Zephaniah

The ministry then of Habakkuk falls in the latter half of the reign of Manasseh or the earlier half of that of Josiah (for the reign of Amon, being of two years only, is too short to come into account), and there is no decisive evidence for either against the other. In the reign of Manasseh, we are expressly told, that there were prophets, sent to foretell a destruction of Jerusalem as complete as that of Samaria, on account of the exceeding wickedness, into which Manasseh seduced his people. "The Lord spake by His servants, the prophets, saying, Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab; and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down; and I will forsake the remnant of their inheritance, and deliver them into the baud of their enemies, and they shall become a prey and spoil to all their enemies" 2 Kings 21:11-14.

The sinful great men of Manasseh‘s and Amon‘s court and judicature are but too likely to have maintained their power in the early years of the reign of Josiah. For a boy of eight years old (at which age Josiah succeeded his father) 2 Kings 22:1; 2 Chronicles 34:1 could, amid whatsoever sense of right and piety, do little to stem the established wrong and ungodliness of the evil counsellors and judges of his father and grandfather. The sins, which Jeremiah denounces, as the cause of the future captivity of Jerusalem, are the very same, of which Habakkuk complains, “oppression, violence, spoil” Zephaniah 1:9. Jeremiah speaks, in the concrete, of total absence of right judgment (Jeremiah 6:19. “My law they have despised it;” Jeremiah 5:28. “they have not judged the cause, the cause of the fatherless, and they prosper; and the judgment of the poor have they not judged.”) as Habakkuk, in the abstract, of the powerlessness of the law (Habakkuk 1:4, “the law is chilled, and judgment will never go forth; for the wicked encompasseth the just; therefore judgment goeth forth perverted.”) Zephaniah gives the like picture of those earlier years under Josiah (Zephaniah 1:9. where he too foretells the punishment of those, “which fill their masters‘ houses with violence and deceit” and Zephaniah 3:1-4).

But Habakkuk‘s description would not suit the later years of Josiah, when judgment and justice were done. “Did not thy father,” Jeremiah appeals to Jehoiakim, Jeremiah 22:15-16, “eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him; he judged the cause of the poor and needy, then it was well with him; was not this to know Me? saith the Lord.” (Dr. Davidson rightly says, “the spoiling and violence, there Habakkuk 1:2-3 depicted, refer to the internal condition of the theocracy, not to external injuries” (p. 305); but then he contradicts himself and Jeremiah when he says (p. 305) following Ewald (Proph. ii. 30), “The safest conclusion respecting the time of the prophet, is that he lived in the time of Jehoiakim (606-604 B. C), when the kingdom of Judah was in a good moral condition, justice and righteousness having entered into the life of the people after Josiah‘s reforms, and idolatry having almost disappeared.”) But while there is nothing to preclude his having prophesied in either reign, the earliest tradition places him in the close of the reign of Manasseh.

Modern critics have assigned an earlier or later date to Habakkuk, accordingly as they believed that God did, or did not, reveal the future to

man, that there was or was not, superhuman prophecy. Those who denied that God did endow His prophets with knowledge above nature, fell into two classes;

(1) Such as followed Eichhorn‘s unnatural hypothesis, that prophecies were only histories of the past, spoken of, as if it were still future, to which these critics gave the shameless title of “vaticinia post eventum.”. These plainly involved the prophets in fraud.

(2) These who laid down that each prophet lived at a time, when he could, with human foresight, tell what would happen. Would that those who count certainty, as to even a near future, to be so easy a thing, would try their hands at predicting the events of the next few years or months, or even days and, if they fail, acknowledge God‘s Truth! This prejudice, that there could be no real prophecy, ruled, for a time, all German criticism. It cannot be denied, that “the unbelief was the parent of the criticism, not the criticism of the unbelief.” It is simple matter of history, that the unbelief came first; and, if men, a priori, disbelieved that there could be prophecy, it must needs be a postulate of their criticism, that what seemed to be prophecy could not have belonged to a date, when human foresight did not suffice for positive prediction. I will use the words of Delitzsch rather than my own;

“The investigation into the age of Habakkuk could be easily and briefly settled, if we would start from the prejudice, which is the soul of modern criticism, that a prediction of the future, which rested, not on human inferences or on a natural gift of divination, but on supernatural illumination, is impossible. For since Habakkuk foretold the invasion of the Chaldees, he must, in such ease, have come forward at a time, at which natural acuteness could, with certainty, determine bcforehand that sad event; accordingly in or after the time of the battle of Carchemish in the 4th year of Jehoiakim Jeremiah 46:2; 606 b.c. In this decisive battle, Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Necho, and it was more than probable that the king of Babylon would now turn against Judea, since Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, had been set on the throne by Pharaoh Necho 2 Kings 23:34-35, and so held with Egypt. And this is in reality the inference of modern critics.

They bring the Chaldaeans so close under the eyes of the prophet, that he could, by way of nature, foresee their invasion; and so much the closer under his eyes, the more deeply the prejudice, that there is no prophecy in the Biblical sense of the word, has taken root in them, and the more consistently they follow it out. "Habakkuk prophesied under Jehoiakim, for," so Jager expresses himself, "since Jehoiakim was on the side of the Egyptians, it was easy to foresee, that; etc." Just so Ewald; "One might readily be tempted to think, that Habakkuk wrote, while the pious king Josiah was still living; but since the first certain invasion of the Chaldaeans, of which our account speaks 2 Kings 24:1, falls within the reign of king Jehoiakim, somewhat between 608-604 b.c. we must abide by this date."

Hitzig defines the dates still more sharply, according to that principle of principles, to which history with its facts must adapt itself unconditionally. "The prophet announces the arrival of the Chaldaeans in Judea, as something marvelous." Well then, one would imagine, that it would follow from this, that at that time they had not yet come. But no! "Habakkuk," says Hitzig, "introduces the Chaldaeans as a new phenomenon, as yet entirely unknown; he prophesied accordingly at their first arrival into Palestine. But this beyond question falls in the reign of Jehoiakim 2 Kings 24:2. In Jehoiakim's fourth year, i. e., 606, they had fought the battle at Carchemish; in 605 the Chaldaean army seems to have been on its march; the writing of Habakkuk is placed most correctly in the beginning of the year 604 a.d., accordingly, at the time, when the Chaldaeans were already marching with all speed straight on Jerusalem, and (as Hitzig infers from Habakkuk 1:9) after they had come down from the North along the coast, were now advancing from the West, when they, as Ewald too remarks (resting, like Maurer on Habakkuk 1:2-4), "already stood in the holy land, trampling everything under foot with irresistible might, and allowing their own right alone to count as right."

Holding fast to that naturalist a priori, we go yet further. In Habakkuk 2:17, the judgment of God is threatened to the Chaldaean, on account of the violence practiced on Lebanon, and the destruction of its animals. Lebanon is, it is said, the holy land; the animals, its inhabitants: in Habakkuk 3:14, Habakkuk 3:17, the prophet sees the hostile hordes storming in: the

devastation wrought through the war stands clearly before his eyes. This is not possible, unless the Chaldaean were at that time already established in Judaea. However, then, c. i. was written before their invasion, yet c. ii., iii. must have been written after it. "Wherefore," says Maurer, "since it is evident from Jeremiah 46:2; Jeremiah 36:9, that the Chaldaeans came in the year b.c. 605, in the 9th month of the 5th year of the reign of Jehoiakim, it follows that c. i. was written at that very time, but c. ii. iii. at the beginning of 604 b.c., the 6th of Jehoiakim."

"Turn we away from this cheap pseudo-criticism, with its ready-made results, which sacrifices all sense for historical truth to a prejudice, which it seems to have vowed not to allow to be shaken by anything. It seeks at any cost to disburden itself of any prophecy in Scripture, which can only be explained through supernatural agency; and yet it attains its end, neither elsewhere nor in our prophet. Habakkuk 1:5 ff plainly relate to the future, but the detailed description of the Chaldaeans points at something which has not yet taken place, at something hitherto unknown, and the terror of the prophet in announcing their coming, Habakkuk 1:12 ff, recurs also Habakkuk 3:1, Habakkuk 3:16-17; and so, I think, that the time of Habakkuk's activity may be p aced very soon after the battle of Carchemish, in the first half of the reign of Jehoiakim, and so his prophecy as contemporary with Habakkuk 1:5. ff clearly points to its beginning, the reign of Jehoiakim. Even Psalm 44:14,

(2) that a word, slightly varied in pronunciation from a common Hebrew word occurs only in Nahum, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, and Malachi, once in each, when that word is the basis of the name of the river Pishon, mentioned in Genesis, and Stahelin himself places Nahum in the reign of Hezekiah; or,

(3) that no prophet before Jeremiah speaks of the image of the" cup of destiny," whereas the portion given by God for good (David, Psalm 11:6; Asaph, Psalm 75:8) or for ill (David. Psalm 16:5; Psalm 23:5), occurs under that same image in Psalms of David and Asaph; and if the question is to be begged as to the date of Isaiah 51:17, Isaiah 51:22, the corresponding image of "drinking wine, of reeling," occurs in a Psalm of David (Psalm 60:5 (Psalm 60:3 in English)) and being drunk, but not with wine" is imagery of

an earlier chapter in Isaiah; Isaiah 29:9, the image occurs fully in Obadiah Obadiah 1:16.

Such criticism is altogether childish. No one would tolerate it, except that it is adduced to support a popular and foregone conclusion. It would be laughed to scorn, were it used by believers in revelation. In the small remains of the Hebrew Scriptures and language, an induction, if it is to be of any value, must be very distinct. The largeness of Greek literature enables critics to single out Homeric, Herodotean, Eschylean, Pindaric words. In Hebrew we meet with hapax legomena (unique occurrences) in perhaps every prophet, in many Psalms; but it requires far more than the occurrence of the word in one single place, to furnish any even probable inference, that it was framed by the Prophet or Psalmist himself. Still less can it be inferred safely that because, in the scanty remains of Hebrew, a word does not occur before, for example, a certain historical book, it did not exist before the date of that book.

Rather the occurrence of any word in language so simple as that of the historical books, is an evidence that it did exist and was in common use at the time. Poets and orators coin words, in order to give full expression for their thoughts. The characteristic of the sacred historians, both of the Old and New Testament, is to relate the facts in most absolute simplicity. It would be a singular "history of the Hebrew language," which should lay down as a principle, that all those are later words, which do not happen to occur before the books of Kings, Habakkuk, or any other prophet, whom this criticism is pleased to rank among the later books. What are we to do with Habakkuk's own hapax legomena? Granted, that he framed some of them, yet it is impossible that he framed them all. As specimens of the results of such a critical principle, that words, occurring for the first time in any book, are characteristic of the date of that word, let us only take roots beginning with "s."

Had then the Hebrew no name for "nails" (as distinct from hooks, pegs,) as Ecclesiastes and 1 Kings 18:21. As "branches," first occurs in Isaiah, Isaiah 17:6; Isaiah 27:10; Isaiah 10:33; Ezekiel 31:5-6, Ezekiel 31:8) Seed shed, which sprang up in the second year, was known in the Pentateuch but that of the third year would, on that hypothesis, remain unknown until

Hezekiah; nor did the Hebrews express to "drag along the ground," until Hushai, and, after him, Jeremiah. They had no name for winter, as distinct from autumn, until the Canticles Genesis 26:15, Genesis 26:18. Abraham's wells, it might have been said that Hebrew had no word for this act, until the time of Jehoshaphat.

Or as to the criticism itself, קלס *qâlas* is to be a later word, because, except in that Psalm of the sons of Korah, it occurs first in the history of Elisha 2 Kings 2:23. Perhaps it is so rare (and this may illustrate the history of Elisha) because, as used, it seems to have been one of the strongest words in the language for "derision;" at least the verb is used in an intensive form only, and always of strong derision. But then, did the old Hebrews never use derision? Happy exception for one nation, if they never used it wrongly or had no occasion to use it rightly! Yet even though (by a rare exception) Ewald allows the second Psalm to be David's (Job, however, being placed about the 7th century b.c.) the evidence for לעג *lâʿag* as strong a word, would be of the time of David. "Scorning" "scoffing," (unless Psalm 1:1-6 is allowed to be David's) did not begin until Soloman's time "Mocking" was yet later As belongs to a rude people, insult was only shown in acts, of which התעלל is used and from those simple times of the Patriarchs, they had no stronger word than "to laugh at." For this is the only word used in the Pentateuch

But to what end all this? To prove that Habakkuk had no superhuman knowledge of what he foretold? Prophecy occupies, as I said, a subordinate place in Habakkuk. He renews the "burden" of former prophets, both upon his own people and upon the Chaldaeans; but he does not speak even so definitely as they. His office is rather to enforce the connection of sin and punishment: he presupposes the details, which they had declared. Apart from those chapters, which pseudo-criticism denies to Isaiah (Isaiah 39:6-7, Micah had declared not only the complete desolation of Jerusalem Micah 3:12, but that the people should be Micah 4:10 "carried to Babylon, and there delivered, there redeemed from the hands of the enemy."

In the 13th year of Josiah, 628 b.c., and so, three years before the fall of Nineveh, while Babylon was still dependent on Nineveh and governed by a viceroy, and while Nabopolassar was still in the service of the king of

Nineveh, Jeremiah foretold, that Jeremiah 1:14-16 "evil should break forth from the North upon all the inhabitants of the land, and all the families of the kingdoms of the North shall come and set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem and against all the walls thereof round about and against all the cities of Judah," to execute the judgments of God against them for their wickedness. This was his dirge over his country for 23 years (Jeremiah 25:3, see also Jeremiah 5:15-17; Jeremiah 6:1, Jeremiah 6:22-25; Jeremiah 10:22. Also in the collection of all his prophecies from the time of Josiah, which God commanded him to make in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah 36:2, Jeremiah 36:29, he provides them also with a saving against idolatry (in Chaldee) for their use in their captivity in Chaldaea. Jeremiah 10:11) ere yet there was a token of its fulfillment.

Babylon had succeeded to Nineveh in the West and Southwest, and Judah had fallen to the share of Babylon; but the relation of Josiah to Nabopolassar was of a tributary sovereign, which rebellion only could disturb. The greater part of Nabopolassar's 21 year's reign are almost a blank. Chastisement had come, but from the South, not from the North. Eighteen years had passed away, and Josiah had fallen, in resisting Pharaoh-Necho in discharge of his fealty to the king of Babylon. Pharaoh-Necho had taken away one king of Judah, Jehoahaz, the people's choice, whose continued fealty to Babylon represents their minds, and had set up another, Jehoiakim. For three years Judah's new allegiance was alloweth to continue. Who, but God, could tell the issue of the conflict of those two great armies at Carchemish? Egypt with her allies, the Ethiopians, Phut and Lud, were come, rising up like a flood Jeremiah 46:8-9, covering the earth with her armies, as her rivers, when swollen, made her own land one sea.

Necho had apparently in his alliance all the kings of the countries West of the Euphrates: for to them all, in connection with Egypt and subordinate to her, does Jeremiah at that moment give to drink the cup of the wrath of God; to Jeremiah 25:19-24. Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants and his princes and all his people, and all the mingled people (his auxiliaries) and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines and Ashkelon and Azzah and Ekron and the remnant of Ashdod; Edom and Moab and the children of Ammon; and all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Zidon and the kings of the isle beyond the sea (probably Caphtor

Jeremiah 47:4, or Crete, or Cyprus) Dedan and Tema and Buz, and those whose hair is shorn (Arabians) and all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the desert, and all the kings of Zimri. It was a mighty gathering.

All the kings of Elam, all the kings of the Medes, all the kings of the North far and near, all was hostile to Babylon; for all were to drink of the cup beforehand, at the hands of the king of Babylon, and then the king of Sheshach (Babylon) was to drink after them. Necho was one of the most enterprising monarchs. Nabopolassar had shown no signs of enterprise. Nebuchadnezzar, the first and last conqueror of the Babylonian empire, though the alliance with Media and his father‘s empire had been cemented by his marriage, had, as far as we know, remained inactive during 20 years of his father‘s life. He was as yet untried. So little did he himself feel secure as to his inheritance of the throne, even after his success at the head of his father‘s army, that his rapid march across the desert, with light troops, to secure it, and its preservation for him by the chief priest, are recorded in a very concise history.

Neither Egypt nor Jehoiakim foresaw the issue. Defeat taught neither. Two voices only gave, in God‘s name, one unheeded warning. Pharaoh Hophra, the Apries of Herodotus, succeeded Pharaoh Necho in his self-confidence, his aggressions, his defeat. “I am against time,” God says Ezekiel 29:3, “Pharaoh, king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own and I have made it for myself.” “It is said,” relates Herodotus (Herodotus ii. 16), “that Apries believed that there was not a god which could east him down from his eminence, so firmly did he think that he had established himself in his kingdom.”

For a time, Nebuchadnezzar must have been hindered by Eastern wars, since, on Jehoiakim‘s rebellion and perjury, he sent only bands of the Chaldees, with bands of tributary nations, the Syrians, Moabites, Ammonites, against him 2 Kings 24:2. But not in his time only, even after the captivity under his son Jehoiachin and his men of might 2 Kings 24:14-16, the conviction that Nebuchadnezzar could be resisted, still remained in the time of Zedekiah both in Egypt and Judah. Judah would have continued

to hold under Babylonia that same position toward Egypt which it did under Persia, only with subordinate kings instead of governors. Apart from God‘s general promise of averting evil on repentance, Jeremiah, too, expressly tells Israel Jeremiah 4:1, “If thou wilt put away thine abominations out of My sight, thou shalt not remove;” (Jeremiah 7:7, add Jeremiah 17:25-26; Jeremiah 22:2-5), “Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, forever and ever.”

And “in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim,” Jeremiah 26:1, (Jeremiah 26:12, add Jeremiah 26:2-3), “The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words which ye have heard. Therefore, now amend your ways and your doings and obey the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will repent Him of the evil that He hath pronounced against you.” Still later, to Zedekiah Jeremiah 27:11, “The nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, “them will I let remain still in their own land, saith the Lord; and they shall till it and dwell therein” Jeremiah 35:15. “I have sent unto you all My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to year fathers.” Even on the very verge of the capture of Jerusalem, Jeremiah promised to Zedekiah Jeremiah 38:17, “If thou wilt go forth to the king of Babylon‘s princes; - this city shall not be burned with fire.”

Pharaoh Hophra was still strong enough to raise the siege of Jerusalem, when invested by the Chaldaean army Jeremiah 37:5. Jeremiah had the king, his princes, his prophets, all the people of the land against him, because he prophesied that Jerusalem should be burned with fire, that those already taken captives should not return, until the whole had been carried away, and the seventy yearn of captivity were accomplished Jeremiah 25:11-12; Jeremiah 29:10. The warning and the promise of Jeremiah‘s inaugural vision had its accomplishment (Jeremiah 1:18-19, renewed Jeremiah 15:20). “I have made thee a defensed city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the king of Judah, against the princes thereof and against the people ‹of the land; and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver

thee." Had it been matter of human foresight, how was it, that all nations, all their politicians, all their wise men, all their prophets, all Judah, kings, priests, princes, people, were blinded (as in Him of Whom Jeremiah was a shadow,) and Jeremiah alone saw? "Vaticinia post eventum" are, in one sense, easy; namely, to imagine, after an event has taken place, that one could have foreseen it.

And yet who, after the retreat to Corunna, could have foreseen the victories of the Peninsular war? Or, when that tide of 647,000 men was roiling on toward Russia, who could imagine that only a small fraction of those hosts should return, that they should capture Moscow, but find it a tomb; and hunger and cold, reaching at last to 36 degrees below Zero, should destroy more than the sword? "What was the principal adversary of this tremendous power? By whom was it checked and resisted and put down? By none and by nothing but the direct and manifest interposition of God."

The distinctness and perseverance of the prophecy are the more remarkable, because the whole of the greatness of the Chaldaean empire was that of one man. Assyria, in this one case, overreached itself in its policy of transporting conquered populations. It had, probably to check the rebellions of Babylon, settled there a wild horde, which it hoped would neither assimilate with its people, nor itself rebel. Isaiah relates the fact in simple words Isaiah 23:13. Behold the land of the Chaldaeans; this people was not; the Assyrian founded, not that it should cease to be, it for them that dwelt in the wilderness. This does not seem to me necessarily to imply, that the wild people, for whom Assyria founded it, were Chaldaeans or Kurds, whom the king of Assyria had brought from their Northern dwellings in the Carduchaean mountains near Armenia, where Sennacherib conquered.

Isaiah simply uses the name, the land of the Chaldaeans, as does Jeremiah (Jeremiah 24:5; Jeremiah 50:8, Jeremiah 50:25; Jeremiah 51:4; and, united with the name Babylon, Jeremiah 25:12; Jeremiah 50:1, Jeremiah 50:45; Ezekiel 12:13, as Isaiah does Chasdim alone, Isaiah 48:14, Isaiah 48:20) after him, as the name of Babylonia; the ward Babylonia, had it existed, might have been substituted for it. Of this, he says, that it was not, i. e., was of no account but that Assur founded it for wild tribes, whom

he placed there. Whence he brought those tribes, Isaiah does not say. Aeschylus (although indeed in later times) as well as Isaiah and Jeremiah, speak of the population of Babylon, as mingled of various nations; and the language is too large to be confined simply to its merchant-settlers. In Aeschylus "the all-mingled crowd," which "it sends out in long array," are its military contingents. it is its whole population, of which Isaiah and Jeremiah say, it will flee, each to his own land Isaiah 13:14 "It (Babylon) shall be as a chased roe, and as a sheep which no man gathereth; they shall, every man, turn to his own people, and flee every man to his own land. For fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people: Jeremiah 50:16. And they shall flee, every one to his own land."

Thus, Babylonia received that solid accession of strength which ultimately made it a powerful people, 60 years before the beginning of the reign of Josiah; its ancient and new elements would take some time to blend: they did not assume importance until the capture of Nineveh; nor had Judah any reason to dread anything from them, until itself rebelled, early in the reign of Jehoiakim. But 18 years before the death of Josiah, while Judah was a trusted and faithful tributary kingdom, Jeremiah foretold that evil should come upon them from the North, i. e., as he himself explains it, from the Chaldees.

Even then if Habakkuk were brought down to be a contemporary of Jeremiah, still in the 13th year of Josiah, there was nothing to fear. Judah was not in the condition of an outlying country, which Babylonian ambition might desire to reduce into dependence on itself. It was already part of the Babylonian empire, having passed into it, in the partition with Assyria, and hall no more to fear from it, than any of the conquered nations of Europe have now from those who have annexed them, unless they rebel. God alone knew the new ambition of the kings of the smitten and subdued Egypt, their momentary success, Josiah‘s death, Judah‘s relapse into the old temptation of trusting in Egyypt - all, condilions of the fulfillment of Habakkuk‘s and Jeremiah‘s prophecies. Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Zidon, sent embassadors to Zedekiah, to concert measures of resistance against Nebachadnezzar; Jeremiah 27:3, they were encouraged by their Jeremiah 27:9, diviners, dreamers, enchanters, sorcerers, which spoke to them, ye shall not serve the king of Babylon. One alone told them that resistance

would but bring upon them destruction, that submission was their only safety; there was prophecy against prophecy, (Jeremiah 5:12-14; Jeremiah 14:14-16; Jeremiah 23:16-17, Jeremiah 23:21, Jeremiah 23:25-27, Jeremiah 23:30 ff; Jeremiah 27:14-18; 28), among these nations, in Jerusalem, in Babylon Jeremiah 29:8-9, Jeremiah 29:15, Jeremiah 29:21, Jeremiah 29:24; the recent knowledge of the political aspect of Babylon deterred not the false prophets there; all, with one voice, declared the breaking the yoke of the king of Babylon: Jeremiah only saw, that they were framing for themselves Jeremiah 28:13-14 yokes of iron. Had Jehoiakim or Zedekiah, their nobles, and their people possessed that human foresight which that pseudo-critical school holds to be so easy, Judah had never gone into captivity to Babylon. But He Who fashioneth the heart of man knoweth alone the issue of the working of those hearts, which He overrules.

From the necessity of its case, the pseudo-critical school lowers down the words, in which Habakkuk declares the marvelousness of the event which he foretells, and the unbelief of his people. "Look well," he bids them, "marvel ye, marvel on; for I will work a work in your days which ye will not believe, when it shall be told you." It is "something which had not hitherto been, something hitherto unknown," says Stahelin. Yet things hitherto unknown, are not therefore incredible. "It is clear from the contents," says Bleek "that the Chaldees had at that time already extended to the West their expeditions of conquest and destruction, and on the other side, that this had only lately begun and that they were not yet come to Judah and Jerusalem, so that here they were hitherto little known." "The appearance of the Chaldees as world-conquerors was, in Judah, then a quite new phenomenon," says Ewald. "The description of the Chaldees altogether is of such sort, that they appear as a people still little known to the Jews," says Knobel. "That which is incredible for the people consists therein, that God employs just the Chaldees, such as they are described in what follows, for the unexpected chastisement of Israel," says even Umbreit.

What was there incredible, that, when the king of Jerusalem had revolted from Babylon, and had sided with Egypt, its chief enemy, the Chaldaeans, should come against it? As soon might it be said to be incredible that France should invade Prussia, when its hundred thousands were on their march toward the Rhine. During the reign of Manasseh it was

incredible enough, that any peril should impend from Babylon; for Babylon was still subordinate to Assyria: in the early years of Josiah it was still incredible, for his 31 years were years of peace, until Pharaoh Necho disputed the cis-Euphratensian countries with Babylon. When the then East and West came to Carehemish, to decide whether the empire should be, with the East or with the West, nothing was beyond human foresight but the result. Expectation lately hung suspended, perplexed between the forces of Europe. None, the most sagacious, could predict for a single day.

Men might surmise; God only could predict. For 23 years Jeremiah foretold, that the evil would come from the North, not from the South. The powers were well-balanced. Take Habakkuk‘s prophecy as a whole - not that the Chaldaeans should invade Judaea (which in Jehoiakim‘s time was already certain) but that Egypt should be a vain help, and that the Chaldaeans should mesh its people like the fishes of the sea, yet they should still have to disgorge them, because God‘s judgment would come upon them also. This too were incredible. Incredible it was to the kings, the wise, the politicians, the political prophets of Judaea, that Jerusalem itself should be taken. Incredible it was, and there was much human reason for the incredulity. Egypt and Assyria had been matched during centuries. Until the Sargonides, Egypt had, during centuries, the unbroken advantage. But the Sargonides had passed away.

Yet Chaldaea had not, alone, prevailed against Assyria. Why should the yet untried Babylonian be so certain of success, when the whole West of the Euphrates was banded together against him, and fought within their own ground? The kings of Elam add the kings of the Medes Jeremiah 25:25 were now, as under Cyrus, enemies of Babylon. Babylon had enemies before and behind. But God had raised up Nebuchadnezzar to be the hammer of the whole earth Jeremiah 50:23 and had given those cis-Euphratensian lands which leagued against him into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, God says Jeremiah 27:6-7, and all nations shall serve him and his son and his son‘s son, until the very time of his land come; and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. Whence this combination of almost superhuman but short-lived might, this certainty of wide sway down to the third generation, this certainty of its cessation afterward?

There was no time for decay. Alexander‘s empire was yet more short-lived, but it was divided among his successors. Alexander had, by his genius, founded his own empire, which the able generals, whom he had trained, divided among themselves. In the Chaldaean empire, we have an enterprising conspirator, who seizes an occasion, but does little beside which is recorded, nothing alone, nothing, beside that first grasp at power, for himself. He appears only as the ally of Media: (Herodotus i. 74) then a son, a world-wide conqueror, with a genius for consolidating the empire which he inherited, forming an impregnable city, which should also be a province, filling his empire with fortresses, but leaving none after him to maintain what he had so consolidated. By whom could this be foreknown save by Him, with Whom alone it is, to root out and to pull down and to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant? Jeremiah 1:10)

It has been common to praise the outside of Habakkuk‘s prophecy, the purity of his language, the sublimity of his imagery. Certainly it is, humanly speaking, magnicent: his measured cadence is impressive in its simplicity. He too has words and forms, which are unique to him among the remains of Hebrew. But his eminence is rather the condensed thought, expressed often in the simplest words; as when, having carried on the tide of victory of the Chaldaean to its height, everything human subdued before him, all resistance derided, he gathers up his fall and its cause in those eight words Habakkuk 1:11.

HABAKKUK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The burden - On the word "burden" see the note at Nahum 1:1.

Which Habakkuk the prophet did see - The prophet's name signifies "strong embrace." The word in its intensive form is used both of God's enfolding the soul within His tender supporting love, and of man clinging and holding fast to divine wisdom Proverbs 4:8. It fits in with the subject of his prophecy, faith, cleaving fast to God amid the perplexities of things seen. Dion.: "He who is spiritually Habakkuk, cleaving fast to God with the arms of love, or enfolding Him after the manner of one holily wrestling, until he is blessed, enlightened, and heard by Him, is the seer here." "Let him who would in such wise fervidly embrace God and plead with Him as a friend, praying earnestly for the deliverance and consolation of himself and others, but who sees not as yet, that his prayer is heard, make the same holy plaint, and appeal to the clemency of the Creator." (Jer. Abarbanel has the like: "He strengthens himself in pleading his cause with God as to the prosperity of Nebuchadnezzar as if he were joined with God for the cause of his people" Preface to Ezekiel). "He is called ‹embrace' either because of his love to the Lord; or because he engages in a contest and strife and (so to speak) wrestling with God." For no one with words so bold ventured to challenge God to a discussion of His justice and to say to Him, "Why, in human affairs and the government of this world is there so great injustice?"

The prophet - The title, "the prophet," is added only to the names of Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah. Habakkuk may have added it to his name instead because he prominently expostulates with God, like the Psalmists, and does not speak in the name of God to the people. The title asserts that he exercised the pastoral office of the prophets, although not directly in this prophecy.

Did see - Cyril: "God multiplied visons, as is written Hosea 12:10, and Himself spoke to the prophets, disclosing to them beforehand what should be, and all but exhibiting them to sight, as if already present. But that they determined not to speak from their own, but rather transmit to us the words from God, he persuades us at the outset, naming himself a prophet, and showing himself full of the grace belonging thereto."

Verse 2

O Lord, how long shall I cry - Literally, "how long have I cried so intensely to Thee?" Because it is always the cry of the creature to the One who alone can hear or help - its God. Of this cry the Prophet expresses that it had already lasted long. In that long past he had cried out to God but no change had come. There is an undefined past, and this still continues.

How long - as Asaph cries, "how long hast Thou been," and, it is implied, wilt Thou be "wroth against the prayer of Thy people?" as we should say," how long shall Thy wrath continue?" The words which the prophet uses relate to domestic strife and wrong between man and man; violence, iniquity, strife, contention Habakkuk 1:3, nor are any of them used only of the oppression of a foreign enemy. Also, Habakkuk complains of injustice too strong for the law, and the perversion of justice Habakkuk 1:4. And upon this, the sentence is pronounced. The enemy is to be sent for judgment and correction Habakkuk 1:12. They are then the sins of Judah which the prophet rehearses before God, in fellow-suffering with the oppressed. God answers that they shall be removed, but by the punishment of the sinners.

Punishment does not come without sin, nor does sin endure without punishment. It is one object of the Old Testament to exhibit the connection between sin and punishment. Other prophets, as commissioned by God, first denounced the sins and then foretold the punishment of the impenitent. Habakkuk appeals to God's justice, as requiring its infliction. On this ground too this opening of the prophecy cannot be a complaint against the Chaldees, because their wrong would be no ground of the punishment which the prophet denounced, but the punishment itself, requiting wrong to man through human wrong.

Cyril: "The prophet considers the person of the oppressed, enduring the intolerable insolence and contumely of those accustomed to do wrong, and very skillfully doth he attest the unutterable lovingkindness of God, for he exhibits Him as very forbearing, though accustomed to hate wickedness, but that He doth not immediately bring judgment upon the offenders, he showed clearly, saying that so great is His silence and long-suffering, that there needeth a strong cry, in that some practice intolerable covetousness against others, and use an unbridled insolence against the weak, for his very complaints of God's endurance of evil attest the immeasurable loving kindness of God."

Cyril: "You may judge hence of the hatred of evil among the saints. For they speak of the woes of others as their own. So saith the most wise Paul 2 Corinthians 11:29, who is weak and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? and bade us Romans 12:15 weep with those who weep, showing that sympathy and mutual love are especially becoming to the saints."

The prophet, through sympathy or fellow-suffering with the sufferers, is as one of them. He cries for help, as himself needing it, and being in the misery, in behalf of which he prays. He says, "How long shall I cry?" standing, as it were, in the place of all, and gathering all their cries into one, and presenting them before God. It is the cry, in one, of all which is wronged to the God of Justice, of all suffering to the God of love. "When shall this scene of sin, and confusion, and wrong be at an end, and the harmony of God's creation be restored? How long shall evil not exist only, but prevail?" It is the cry of the souls under the altar Revelation 6:10, "How long, O Lord, Holy and True, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" It is the voice of the oppressed against the oppressor; of the Church against the world; weary of hearing the Lord's Name blasphemed, of seeing wrong set up on high, of holiness trampled underfoot. It is in its highest sense His Voice, who, to sanctify our longings for deliverance, said in the days of His Flesh Psalm 22:2, "I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not."

Even cry out - aloud (it is the cry of anguish) Dion.: "We cry the louder, the more we cry from the heart, even without words; for not the moving of the lips, but the love of the heart sounds in the ears of God."

Even cry out unto Thee. - Whether as an exclamation or a continuance of the question, How long? The prophet gathered in one the prolonged cry of past and future. He had cried out; he should cry on, "Violence." He speaks as if the one word, jerked out, as it were, wrung forth from his inmost soul, was, "Violence," as if he said this one word to the God of justice and love.

Verse 3

Why dost Thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold - , or rather, "Why beholdest Thou grievance?" God seemed to reverse what He had said by Balaam Numbers 23:21, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, and hath not seen grievousness in Israel"; and in the Psalms Psalm 10:14,

“Thou hast seen, for thou (emphatic) beholdest grievousness and wrong, to put it in Thy hand,” i. e., Thou layest it up in Thy hand, to cast it back on the head of the evildoer. Now He seemed to behold it and leave it unpunished, which yet Habakkuk says to God below, He could not do Habakkuk 1:13; “Thou canst not look upon iniquity.” What then did this mean? What was the solution?

All forms and shapes of sin are multiplied; oppressive “violence”, such as “covered the earth” before the flood, and brought it down; which Nineveh had to put away Jonah 3:8, and it was spared; “iniquity,” i. e., what is unequal and contrary to truth, falsehood.

Grievance - literally, burdensome wearisome “toil”; “spoiling,” or open robbery; “strife and contention,” both through perversion of the law and, without it, through endless jarrings of man with man. Sin recoils on the sinner. So what he beholds is not “iniquity” only, but (in the same word) “vanity”; “grievance”; which is a burden both to him who suffers, and yet more to him who inflicts it. For nothing is so burdensome as sin, nothing so empty as wickedness. And while to him who suffers, the suffering is temporal, to him who inflicts it, it is eternal. And yet the prophet and whose prays against ungodliness, “must commiserate him who doth wrong yet more, since they hurt what is most precious, their own soul, and that eternally”. All then is full of evil. Wherever the prophet looks, some fresh violence is before him; it confronts him on every side; “strife hath arisen”, come up, exists where it was not before; “contention lifteth itself” on high, bowing down all beside.

Verse 4

Therefore - i. e., Because God seemed not to awake to avenge His own cause, people promised themselves that they might sin on with impunity. Sin produces sin, and wrong produces wrong; it spreads like an infectious disease, propagating itself, and each, to whom it reaches, adds to its poison. At last, it reached those also, who should be in God‘s stead to restrain it. The divine law itself is silenced, by the power of the wicked, by the sin of the judge, the hopelessness of all. When all around is evil, even those not yet lost are tempted to think; “Why should I be other than they? What evil befalls them? Why stand alone?” Even a Psalmist Psalm 73:15, Psalm 73:12-13 speaks as if tempted to “speak even as they. These are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches; verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency;” and Solomon

Ecclesiastes 8:11, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

The law is slacked - literally “is chilled” (as we say, “is paralyzed”), through lack of the fire of love. This is what our Lord says Matthew 24:12, Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. The divine law, the source of all right, being chilled in people‘s hearts, “judgment,” i. e., the sentence of human justice, as conformed to divine justice, “doth never go forth.” Human sense of right is powerless, when there is not the love of God‘s law. It seems always ready to act, but always falls short, like an arrow from an unstrung bow. The man seems always about to do right; he judges, sees, aright - all but does it - yet, at last, he always fails. “It goes not forth. The children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth” Isaiah 37:3.

For the wicked doth compass about the righteous, laying snares for him, as the Jews for our Lord; evil is too strong for a weak will to do right, and overbears it. Pilate sought in many ways, how he might deliver Jesus, yet he finally did deliver Christ into their hands.

Therefore wrong judgment proceedeth - literally, “judgment proceedeth wrested.” He had said, “it never goes forth;” never, that is, in its true character; for, when it does “go forth,” it is distorted. Dion.: “For gifts or favor or fear or hate the guiltless are condemned trod the guilty acquitted, as saith the Psalmist Psalm 82:2, ‹How long will ye judge unjustly and accept the persons of the ungodly?‘” Theoph.: “‹Judgment goes forth perverted‘ in the seat of man‘s judgment (the soul), when, bribed by the pleasures of sense, it leans to the side of things seen, and the ungodly one, the rebel angel, besets and overpowers him who has the sense of right; for it is right that things seen should give way to things unseen 2 Corinthians 4:18; ‹for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.‘” Why then all this? And how long? Why does God bring it before him and He who “is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, behold grievance,” which His Holy Eyes could not endure? Neither the unseen presence of God nor the mission of the prophet checks. If he rebukes, no one hearkened; if he intercedes for sinners, or against sin, God made as though He would not hear. God answers that, though to man‘s impatience the time seems long, judgment shall come, and that, suddenly and speedily. While the righteous is enquiring, “how long?” and the wicked

is saying Matthew 24:48, "My Lord delayeth His coming," He is come, and seen in the midst of them.

Verse 5

Behold ye among the heathen - The whole tone of the words suddenly changes. The Jews flattered themselves that, being the people of God, He would not fulfill His threats upon them. They had become like the pagan in wickedness; God bids them look out among them for the instrument of His displeasure. It was an aggravation of their punishment, that God, who had once chosen them, would now choose these whom He had not chosen, to chasten them. So Moses had foretold; Deuteronomy 32:21, "They have moved Me to jealousy by that which is not God; they have provoked Me to anger with their vanities; and I will move them to jealousy with not-a-people, I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." There were no tokens of the storm which should sweep them away, yet on the horizon. No forerunners yet. And so He bids them gaze on among the nations, to see whence it should come. They might have expected it from Egypt. It should come whence they did not expect, with a fierceness and terribleness which they imagined not.

Regard - look narrowly, weigh well what it portends.

And wonder marvelously - literally, "be amazed, amazed." The word is doubled to express how amazement should follow upon amazement; when the first was passing away, new source of amazement should come; for.

I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. - So incredible it will be, and so against their wills! He does not say, "ye would not believe if it were told you;" much less "if it were told you of others;" in which case the chief thought would be left unexpressed. No condition is expressed. It is simply foretold, what was verified by the whole history of their resistance to the Chaldees until the capture of the city; "Ye will not believe, when it shall be told you." So it ever is. Man never believes that God is in earnest until His judgments come. So it was before the flood, and with Sodom, and with Lot's sons-in-law; so it was with Ahab and Jezebel; so with this destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldaeans, and what is shadowed forth, by the Romans. So Jeremiah complained Jeremiah 5:12, "They have belied the Lord, and said, it is not He; neither shall evil come upon us; neither shall we see sword nor famine," and Jeremiah 20:7-8, "I am in derision daily; everyone mocketh me. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the

word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision daily;" and Isaiah Isaiah 53:1, "Who hath believed our report?" and John the Immerser speaks as though it were desperate Matthew 3:7; "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" and our Lord tells them Matthew 23:38; Luke 13:35, "Your house is left unto you desolate."

And yet they believed not, but delivered Him up to be put to death, lest that should be, which did come, because they put Him to death John 11:48. "If we let Him thus alone, all people will believe on Him; and the Romans shall come, and take away both our place and nation." Therefore, Paul applies these words to the Jews in his day, because the destruction of the first temple by Nebuchadnezzar was an image of the destruction of the second temple (which by divine appointment, contrary to man's intention, took place on the same day), and the Chaldaeans were images of the Romans, that second Babylon, pagan Rome; and both foreshowed the worse destruction by a fiercer enemy - the enemy of souls - the spiritual wasting and desolation which came upon the Jew first, and which shall come on all who disobey the gospel. So it shall be to the end. Even now, the Jews believe not, whose work their own dispersion is; His, who by them was crucified, but who has "all power in heaven and in earth" Matthew 28:18. The Day of Judgment will come like a thief in the night to those who believe not or obey not our Lord's words.

Verse 6

For lo - So God announces a future, in which His Hand shall be greatly visible, whether more or less distant. In His sight it is present.

I raise up - God uses the free will and evil passions of people or devils to His own ends; and so He is said to "raise up" those whom He allows to be stirred up against His people, since the events which His Providence permits, favor their designs, and it rests with Him to withhold them. They lift themselves up for some end of covetousness or pride. But there is a higher order of things, in which God orders their actions to fulfill His righteousness by their iniquities.

The Chaldaeans, that bitter - מר . In Judges 18:25; 2 Samuel 17:8, the less concise נפשׁ מר.

And hasty nation - נמהר as Isaiah 32:4. Jerome: "To its might and warlike boldness almost all the Greeks who have written histories of the barbarians, witness."

Which shall march through the breadth of the land - rather, "the earth," literally "to the breadths of the earth," reaching to its whole length and breadth, all its dimensions as in the description of Gog and Magog Revelation 20:8-9, "the number of whom is as the sand of the sea; and they went up on the breadth of the earth; unhindered, not pent up, but spreading abroad, where they will, over the whole earth." All before it, is one wide even plain which it overspreads and covers, like a flood, and yet is not spent nor exhausted.

To possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs - As God's people had done, so should it be done to them. Spoiling and violence within Habakkuk 1:2-4 attract oppression from without. The overcharged atmosphere casts down the lightning upon them. They had expelled the weak from their dwelling Micah 2:9; others shall possess theirs. Yet this scourge too shall pass by, since, although the Chaldaean did God's Will, He willed it not, but His own (See Isaiah 10:6-7). The words, "not theirs," literally, "not to him" stand with a mysterious fullness of meaning. The dwelling places not being his by right, shall not remain his, although given to him, while God wills.

Verse 7

They are terrible - איום *'âyôm* occurs here only and Habakkuk 1:4; now shall it go forth against them at the mere will of their master, who shall own no other rule or Lord or source of his power. His own will shall be his only law for himself and others. His elevation is too is, in his own thought, from himself. He is self-sufficing; he holds from no other, neither from God nor man. His "dignity" is self-sustained; His "judgment" is irresponsible, as if there were none Ecclesiastes 5:8 higher than he. He has, like all great world-powers, a real dignity and majesty. He infuses awe. The dignity is real but faulty, as being held independently of God. This is a character of antichrist Daniel 11:36; 2 Thessalonians 2:4, a lawless insolence, a lifting up of himself.

Verse 8

Their horses are swifter - literally, lighter, as we say "light of foot"

Than leopards - The wild beast intended is the panther, the lightest, swiftest, fiercest, most bloodthirsty of beasts of prey "It runs most swiftly and rushes brave and straight. You would say, when you saw it, that it is borne through the air." Cyril: "It bounds exceedingly and is exceedingly light to spring down on whatever it pursues."

More fierce - o

Than the evening wolves - Compare Jeremiah 5:6, i. e., than they are when fiercest, going forth to prey when urged to rabidness by hunger the whole day through. Such had their own judges been Zephaniah 3:3, and by such should they be punished. The horse partakes of the fierceness of his rider in trampling down the foe.

Their horsemen shall spread themselves - literally, widespread are their horsemen

And their horsemen from far shall come - Neither distance of march shall weary them, nor diffusion weaken them. So should Moses' prophecy be again fulfilled (Deuteronomy 28:49-50, מרחוק occurs in both.) "The Lord shall raise against thee a nation from far, from the ends of the earth, as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young."

They shall fly as the eagle that hasteth - literally, hasting

To eat - Jerome: "not to fight, for none shall withstand; but with a course like the eagle's, to whom all fowl are subdued, hasting but to eat." Behold, Jeremiah says of Nebuchadnezzar Jeremiah 48:40, he shall fly as an eagle and spread his wings over Moab; and, he repeats the words Jeremiah 49:22, over Bozrah. Our pursuers, Jeremiah says Lamentations 4:19, are swifter than the eagles of the heavens. Ezekiel likens him to Ezekiel 17:3 "a great eagle with great wings full of feathers;" in Daniel's vision he is Daniel 7:4 "a lion with eagle's wings."

Verse 9

They shall come all for violence - "Violence" had been the sin of Judah Habakkuk 1:3-4, and now violence shall be her punishment. It had been ever before the prophet; all were full of it. Now should violence be the very end, one by one, of all the savage horde poured out upon them; they all, each one of them come for violence.

Their faces shall sup up as the east wind - קדומה occurs else only in Ezekiel 11:1, and Ezekiel 11:16 times in Ezekiel 4048 of the ideal city and temple as "Eastwards." But except in the far-fetched explanation of Abarb (mentioned also by Tanchum) that they ravaged, not to settle but to return home with their booty, "Eastwards" would have no meaning. Yet "forwards" is just as insulated a rendering as that adopted by John and D. Kimchi, A. E. Rashi, Oh. Sip., Sal. B. Mel. Arab Tr. (following Jonathan)

"the East-wind; קדומה standing as a metaphor instead of a simile the ה being regarded as paragogic, as in לילה . So also Symmachus ἄνεμος καύσων *anemos kausōn* Jerome: "*ventus urens*.") "As at the breath of the burning wind all green things dry up, so at sight of these all shall be wasted." They shall sweep over everything impetuously, like the east wind, scorching, blackening, blasting, swallowing up all, as they pass over, as the East wind, especially in the Holy Land, sucks up all moisture and freshness.

And they shall gather the captivity - i. e., the captives

As the sand - countless, as the particles which the East wind raises, sweeping over the sand-wastes, where it buries whole caravans in one death.

Verse 10

And they - literally, "he," the word stands emphatically, he, alone against all the kings of the earth

Shall scoff at the kings - and all their might taking them away or setting them up at his pleasure and caprice, subduing them as though in sport

And princes - literally, grave and majestic

Shall be a scorn unto them - i. e. him. Compare Job 41:29. So Nebuchadnezzar bound Jehoiakim 2 Chronicles 36:6; Daniel 1:2 "in fetters to carry him to Babylon;" then, on his submission made him for three years a tributary king 2 Kings 24:1, then on his rebellion sent bands of Chaldees and other tributaries against him 2 Kings 24:2; and then, or when Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin, Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled, that he should "be buried with the burial of an ass, dragged and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem Jeremiah 22:19, his dead body cast out in the day to the heat and in the night to the frost" Jeremiah 36:30. On the one hand, the expression "slept with his fathers" does not necessarily imply that Jehoiakim died a peaceful death, since it is used of Ahab 1 Kings 22:40 and Amaziah 2 Kings 14:20, 2 Kings 14:22 (in the other, Jeremiah's prophecy was equally fulfilled, if the insult to his corpse took place when Nebuchadnezzar took away Jehoiachin three months after his father's death. See Daniel. Josephus attributes both the death and disgrace to Nebuchadnezzar: Ant. x. 6. 3), then Nebuchadnezzar took away Jehoiachin; then Zedekiah. He had also many kings captive with him in Babylon. For on his decease Evil-Merodach brought Jehoiachin out of his prison after 27 years of imprisonment, "and set his throne above the throne of the kings

that were with him in Babylon" 2 Kings 25:27-28. Daniel says also to Nebuchadnezzar Daniel 2:37-38; Daniel 4:22, "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power and strength and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven hath He given into thine hand and hath made thee ruler over all."

They (he) shall deride every strong hold - as, aforetime, when God helped her, Jerusalem laughed the Assyrian to scorn Isaiah 38:22.

For they (he) shall heap dust, and take it - as Nebuchadnezzar did Tyre, whose very name (Rock) betokened its strength. Jerome: "He shall come to Tyre, and, casting a mound in the sea, shall make an island a peninsula, and, amid the waves of the sea, land shall give an entrance to the city."

The mount, or heaped-up earth, by which the besiegers fought on a level with the besieged, or planted their engines at advantage, was an old and simple form of siege, especially adapted to the great masses of the Eastern armies. It was used in David's time 2 Samuel 20:15; and by the Assyrians 2 Kings 19:32, Egyptians Jeremiah 6:6; Jeremiah 32:24; Jeremiah 33:4; Ezekiel 4:2; Ezekiel 21:22 (Ezekiel 21:27 in Hebrew), Ezekiel 26:8), and afterward, the Persians (Herodotus i. 162). Here he describes the rapidity of the siege. To heap up dust and to capture were one and the same thing.

It needed no great means; things slight as the dust sufficed in the hands of those employed by God. Portion by portion 2 Kings 24:7, "the King of Babylon took; all that pertained to the king of Egypt, from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates."

Verse 11

Then shall his mind change - or, better, "Then he sweeps by, חלף *châlaph* is used of the overflowing of a river, Isaiah 8:8, of a wind chasing, Isaiah 21:1, of the invisible presence of God passing by, Job 9:11, or a spirit, Job 4:15, of the swift passing of our days, like ship or eagle, Isaiah 2:18, of rain past and gone, Isaiah 24:5. It is always intransitive, except as piercing the temples of man Judges 5:26, or himself Job 20:24.

A wind - רוח *rûach* metaphor for simile, as Psalm 11:1; Psalm 22:14; (13English) Psalm 90:4; Job 24:5; Isaiah 51:12)

And passes - עבר *ʿâbar* "pass over" (with חלף *châlaph* as here,), Isaiah 8:8; Nahum 1:8; Habakkuk 3:10; "transgress," passim; "pass away," Psalm 37:6; Job 34:29; Nahum 1:12)

And is guilty; this his strength is his god - The victory was completed, all resistance ended. He sweeps by, as his own Euphrates, when over-filled by the swelling Isaiah 8:8 of all its tributary streams, riseth up over all its banks, and overwhelms all where it passes; as a wind which sweepeth Isaiah 21:1 over the desert: and passes over all bounds and laws, human and divine, and is guilty and stands guilty before God, making himself as God.

This his power is his god - God had said to Israel Exodus 6:7, "I will be to thee God." The Chaldaean virtually said, "this my strength is to me my god." This Nebuchadnezzars own words speak Daniel 4:30; "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" And the statue which was to be worshipped, was, very probably, of himself, as the intoxication of pride has made other pagan kings or conquerors, Alexander or Darius. Belshazzar said Isaiah 14:14, "I will be like the Most High," and the prince of Tyre said Ezekiel 28:2, "I am a god, and antichrist shall "exalt himself above all that is called god, and, as God, sit in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is god" 2 Thessalonians 2:4. Such is all pride. It sets itself in the place of God, it ceases to think of itself as God's instrument, and so becomes a god to itself, as though its eminence and strength were its own, and its wisdom were the source of its power (See Ezekiel 28:2-5), and its will the measure of its greatness. The words, with a divine fullness, express severally, that the king Shall sweep along, shall pass over all bounds and all hindrances, and shall pass away, shall be guilty and shall bear his guilt; and so they comprise in one his sin and his punishment, his greatness and his fall. And so, 40 years afterward Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel 5:19-20. "whom he would, he slew; and whom he would, he kept alive; and whom he would, he set up; and whom he would, he put down; but when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him;" Daniel 4:31, "there fell a voice from heaven, The kingdom is departed from thee; and Belshazzar; Daniel 5:23, Daniel 5:30, "in the same night that he lifted up himself against the Lord of heaven, was slain."

Verse 12

The prophet, having summed up the deeds of the enemy of God in this his end, sets forth his questions anew. He had appealed against the evil of the wicked of his people; he had been told of the vengeance by the Chaldaeans (Heading of Psalm 76:1-12) and Jeremiah Jeremiah 12:1, he sets down at the very beginning his entire trust in God, and so, in the name of all who at any time shall be perplexed about the order of God‘s judgments, asks how it shall be, teaching us that the only safe way of enquiring into God‘s ways is by setting out with a living conviction that they, Psalm 25:10, are “mercy and truth.” And so the address to God is full of awe and confidence and inward love. For “God placeth the oil of mercy in the vessel of trustfulness.”

Art Thou not - (the word has always an emphasis) “Thou” and not whatsoever or whosoever it be that is opposed to Thee (be it Nebuchadnezzar or Satan).

From everlasting - literally, from before? See the note at Micah 5:2. Go back as far as man can in thought - God was still before; and so, much more before any of His creatures, such as those who rebel against Him.

O Lord - it is the proper name of God, Revelation 1:8, “Which is and Which was and Which is to come” - I am, the Unchangeable; my God, i. e., whereas his own might is (he had just said) the pagan‘s god, the Lord is his;

Mine Holy One - one word, denoting that God is his God, sufficeth him not, but he adds (what does not elsewhere occur) “mine Holy One” in every way, as hallowing him and hallowed by him. Dion.: “Who hallowest my soul, Holy in Thine Essence, and whom as incomparably Holy I worship in holiness.” All-Holy in Himself, He becometh the Holy One of him to whom He imparteth Himself, and so, by His own gift, belongeth, as it were, to him. The one word in Hebrew wonderfully fits in with the truth, that God becomes one with man by taking him to Himself. It is fall of inward trust too, that he saith, “my God, my Holy One,” as Paul saith, Galatians 2:9, “Who loved me, and gave Himself for me,” i. e., as Augustine explains it, “O Thou God Omnipotent, who so carest for every one of us, as if Thou caredst for him only; and so for all, as if tbey were but one.” The title, “my Holy One,” includes his people with himself; for God was his God, primarily because he was one of the people of God; and his office was for and in behalf of his people.

It involves then that other title which had been the great support of Isaiah, by which he at once comforted his people, and impressed upon them

the holiness of their God, the holiness which their relation to their God required, the Holy One of Israel. Thence, since Habakkuk lived, for his people with himself, on this relation to God, as my God, my Holy One, and that God, the Unchangeable; it follows," We shall not die." There is no need of any mark of inference, "therefore we shall not die." It is an inference, but it so lay in those titles of God, "He Is, My God, My Holy One," that it was a more loving confidence to say directly, we shall not die. The one thought involved the other. God, the Unchangeable, had made Himself their God. It was impossible, then, that lie should cast them off or that they should perish.

We shall not die, is the lightning thought of faith, which flashes on the soul like all inspirations of God, founded on His truth and word, but borne in, as it were, instinctively without inference on the soul, with the same confidence as the Psalmist says Psalm 118:18, "The Lord hath chastened me sore; but He hath not given me over unto death;" and Malachi Malachi 3:6, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Jerome: "Thou createdst us from the beginning; by Thy mercy we are in being hitherto." Thy "gifts and calling are without repentance." Romans 11:29 "did we look to his might; none of us could withstand him. Look we to Thy mercy, Thine alone is it that we live, are not slain by him, nor led to deeds of death." O Lord, again he repeats the Name of God, whereby He had revealed Himself as their God, the Unchangeable; "Thou, whose mercies fail not, hast ordained them for judgment," not for vengeance or to make a full end, or for his own ends and pleasure, but to correct Thine own Jeremiah 10:24; Jeremiah 30:11 in measure, which he, exceeding, sinned (See Isaiah 10:5; Isaiah 47:6; Zechariah 1:15).

And O mighty God - literally, Rock. It is a bold title. "My rock" is a title much used by David, perhaps suggested by the fastnesses amid which he passed his hunted life, to express that not in them but in His God was his safety. Habakkuk purposely widens it. He appeals to God, not only as Israel's might and upholder, but as the sole Source of all strength, the Supporter of all which is upheld, and so, for the time, of the Chaldaean too. Hence, he continues the simple image: "Thou hast founded him". "Thou hast made him to stand firm as the foundation of a building;" to reprove or set before those who have sinned against Thee, what they had done. Since then God was the Rock, who had founded them, from Him Alone had they

strength; when He should withdraw it, they must fall. How then did they yet abide, who abused the power given them and counted it their own? And this the more, since …

Verse 13

Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil - The prophet repeats his complaint (as troubling thoughts are accustomed to come back, after they have been repelled,), in order to answer it more strongly. All sin is hateful in God‘s sight, and in His Holy Wisdom He cannot endure to “look toward iniquity.” As man turns away from sickening sights, so God‘s abhorrence of wrong is pictured by His not being able to “look toward it.” If He looked toward them, they must perish Psalm 104:32. Light cannot co-exist with darkness, fire with water, heat with cold, deformity with beauty, foulness with sweetness, nor is sin compatible with the Presence of God, except as its Judge and punisher. Thou canst not look. There is an entire contradiction between God and unholiness. And yet,

Wherefore lookest thou upon - viewest, as in Thy full sight make the contrast stronger. God cannot endure “to look toward” (אל) iniquity, and yet He does not only this, but beholdeth it, contemplateth it, and still is silent), yea, as it would seem, with favor, bestowing upon them the goods of this life, honor, glory, children, riches, as the Psalmist saith Psalm 73:12; “Behold these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world, they increase in riches?” Why lookest thou upon “them that deal treacherously, holdest Thy tongue,” puttest restraint, as it were, upon Thyself and Thine own attribute of Justice, “when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?” Psalm 143:2 “in God‘s sight no man living can be justified;” and, in one sense, Sodom and Gomorrah were less unrighteous than Jerusalem, and Matthew 10:15; Matthew 11:24; Mark 6:11; Luke 10:12 “it shall be more tolerable for them in the day of Judgment,” because they sinned against less light; yet the actual sins of the Chaldee were greater than those of Jerusalem, and Satan‘s evil is greater than that of these who are his prey.

To say that Judah was more righteous than the Chaldaean does not imply any righteousness of the Chaldaean, as the saying that (Jeremiah 31:11, Del.) “God ransomed Jacob from the hand of one stronger than he,” does not imply any strength remaining to Israel. Then, also, in all the general judgments of God, the righteous too suffer in this world, whence Abraham intercedes for Sodom, if there were but ten righteous in it; lest Genesis 18:23 “the righteous be destroyed with the wicked.” Hence, God also

spared Nineveh in part as having Jonah 4:11 "more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand," i. e., good from evil. No times were more full of sin than those before the destruction of Jerusalem, yet the fury of the Assassins fell upon the innocent. And so the words, like the voice of the souls under the Altar Revelation 6:10, become the cry of the Church at all times against the oppressing world, and of the blood of the martyrs from Abel to the end, "Lord, how long?" And in that the word "righteous" signifies both "one righteous man," and the whole class or generation of the righteous, it speaks both of Christ the Head and of all His members in whom (as by Saul) He was persecuted. The wicked also includes all persecutors, both those who executed the Lord Christ, and those who brought His servants before judgment-seats, and who blasphemed His Name James 2:6-7, and caused many to blaspheme, and killed those whom they could not compel. And God, all the while, seemeth to look away and not to regard.

Verse 14

And makest men as the fishes of the sea - mute, helpless, in a stormy, restless element, no cry heard, but themselves swept away in shoals, with no power to resist.

As the creeping things - whether of the land (as it is mostly used), or the sea Psalm 104:25. Either way, it is a contemptuous name for the lowest of either.

That have no ruler over them - none to guide, order, protect them, and so a picture of man deprived of the care and providence of God.

Verse 15

They take up all of them - (literally "he taketh up all of it") the whole race as though it were one,

With an angle; they catch them - literally, he sweepeth it away

In their (his) net - One fisherman is singled out who partly by wiles (as by the bait of "an angle"), partly by violence (the net or drag) sweeps away and gathers as his own the whole kind. Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldaeans are herein a faint image of Satan, who casts out his baits and his nets in the stormy sea of this life, taking some by individual craft, sweeping others in whole masses, to do evil; and whoso hath no ruler, and will not have Christ to reign over him Luke 19:4, he allures, hurries, drags away as his prey. Jerome: "Adam clave to his hook, and he drew him forth out of Paradise

with his net; and covered him with his drags, his varied and manifold deceits and guiles. And "by one many became sinners," and in Adam we ‹all died,‘ and all saints afterward were with him alike cast out of Paradise. And because he deceived the first man, he ceaseth not daily to slay the whole human race."

Verse 16

Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag - literally he sacrifices unto his, etc. Whatever a man trusts in is his god. If a man relies to compass his end by his strength, or his wisdom, or his forethought, or his wealth, his armies or navies, these his forces are his God. So the Assyrian said Isaiah 10:13, Isaiah 10:15, "By the strength of my hand I did it; and by my wisdom, for I am prudent;" and God answered, "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith?" The coarse forms of idolatry only embody outwardly the deep inward idolatry of the corrupt human mind. The idol is Ezekiel 14:4 "set up in the heart" first. There have not indeed been lacking savage nations, who in very deed worshiped their arms; those of old worshiped spears as immortal gods; Even now we are told of some North American Indians "who designate their bow and arrow as the only beneficent deities whom they know."

Among the civilized Romans, the worship of the eagles, their standards to whom they did sacrifice, was no other nor better. The inward idolatry is only a more subtle form of the same sin, the evil spirit which shapes itself in the outward show. Here the idolatry of self is meant, which did not join creatures with God as objects of worship; but denying, Him in practice or misbelief, became aged to itself. So Habakkuk had said, this his strength is his God. His idol was himself.

Because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous - literally, is in the English margin, well-fed). All the choicest things of the world stood at his command, as Nebuchadnezzar boasted (Daniel 4:30, compare 22), and all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, all the knowledge and wisdom and learning of the world, and the whole world itself, were Satan‘s lawful prey Luke 4:6; John 12:31; Isaiah 49:24 Cyril: "Nebuchadnezzar, as by a hook and meshes and line, swept into his own land both Israel himself and other nations, encompassing them. Satan, as it were, by one line and net, that of sin, enclosed all, and Israel especially, on account of his impiety to Christ. "His food was choice." For Israel was chosen above the rest, as from a holy root, that of the fathers, and having

the "law as a schoolmaster," and being called to the knowledge of the one true God. Yet he, having this glory and grace, was taken with the rest. They became his prey by error; but Israel, knowing Him who is by nature God, in an ungodly manner, slaying Him who was by nature His Begotten Son and who came as Man, were taken in his nets."

Verse 17

Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations? - The prophet, like Isaiah Isaiah 18:4-5, stands at the very last point, before the fury and desire of the enemy was fulfilled. People, like fish, were gathered together for a prey; he who had taken them was rejoicing and exulting beforehand in his booty; his portion and meat were the choice of the earth; the prophet leeks on, as it were, and beholds the net full; there is but one step more; "Shall he empty it? Shall he then devour those whom he has caught? and so cast his emptied net again unceasingly, pitilessly, to slay the nations?" This question he answers in the next chapter - A Deliverer will come!

HABAKKUK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

I will stand - , i. e. I would stand now, as a servant awaiting his master,

Upon my watch - or, keep (Isaiah 21:8. מִשְׁמָר in the same sense Jeremiah 51:12), and "set me (plant myself firmly) upon the tower" (literally, fenced place, but also one straitened and narrowly hemmed in), "and will watch" (it is a title of the prophets, as spying by God's enabling, things beyond human ken); I will spy out, to see a long way off, to see with the inward eye, what He will say unto me (literally, Jerome: in me); first revealing Himself in the prophets "within to the inner man;" then, through them. And what I shall answer when I am reproved, or, upon my complaint literally upon my reproof or arguing; which might mean, either that others argued against him, or that he had argued, pleaded in the name of others, and now listened to hear what God would answer in him (See Numbers 12:6, and at Zechariah 1:19), and so he, as taught by God should answer to his own plea. But he had so pleaded with God, repeatedly, why is this? He has given no hint, that any complained of or reproved him.

Theodotion: "By an image from those who, in war and siege, have the ward of the wall distributed to them, he says, I will stand upon my watch." Cyril: "It was the custom of the saints, when they wished to learn the things of God, and to receive the knowledge of things to come through His voice in their mind and heart, to raise it on high above distractions and anxieties and all worldly care, holding and keeping it unoccupied and peaceful, rising as to an eminence to look around and contemplate what the God of all knowledge should make clear to them. For He hateth the earth-bound and abject mind, and seeks hearts which can soar aloft, raised above earthly things and temporal desires." The prophet takes his stand, apart from people and the thoughts and cares of this world, on his lonely watch, as Moses on the rock, keeping himself and kept by God, and planted firm, so that nothing should move him, fenced around thought straitened in, as in a besieged camp committed to his ward, looking out from his lofty place what answer God would give as to times long distant, and what answer He should give first to himself, and to those to whom his office lay, God's people.

Verse 2

The answer is, that it is indeed for a long time yet. Write the vision, that it may remain for those who come after and not be forgotten, and make it plain upon the tables, whereon he was accustomed to write; and that, in large lasting characters, that he may run that readeth it, that it may be plain to any, however occupied or in haste. So Isaiah too was commanded to write the four words, "haste-prey-speed-spoil."

Verse 3

For the vision is yet for an (the) appointed time - oNot for the present, but to develop itself in the course of time, down to a season which God only knows; as it is subsequently repeated (Daniel 11:27, for it is for the appointed time, Daniel 11:35), "for the end is yet for the appointed time Daniel 8:19; for it is for the appointed time of the end;" and is explained Daniel 10:1, Daniel 10:14, "for the vision is yet for the days Daniel 8:26; for it is for many days Ezekiel 12:27; the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth, is for many days and he prophesieth of the times far off;" yet it should haste toward the end, toward its fulfillment, so that, if it is not at once fulfilled, it should be surely waited for. Theodotion: "It shall certainly be; not in vain hath it been shewn, but as certainly to be. For whatever hath been shown to come and to be, will come and be."

But at the end it shall speak - o(or it breatheth, hasteth to the end), not simply "to its own fulfillment," but to that time of the end which should close the period assigned to it, during which it should continually be putting itself forth, it should come true in part or in shadow, gleams of it should here and then part the clouds, which, until the end, should surround and envelop it.

Being God's truth, he speaks of it as an animate living thing, not a dead letter, but running, hasting on its course, and accomplishing on its way that for which it was sent. The will and purpose of God hasteth on, though to man it seemeth to tarry; it can neither be hurried on, nor doth it linger; before "the appointed time" it cometh not; yet it hasteth toward it, and "will not be behindhand" when the time comes. It does not lie, either by failing to come, or failing, when come, of any jot or tittle. "Though it tarry or linger", continually appearing, giving signs of itself, yet continually delaying its coming, "wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not be behindhand", when the time comes, Revelation 22:7, "He cometh quickly" also, as He saith; because, from Dion.: "though the delay of His coming and of the fulfillment of the vision seem long, yet, in comparison with eternity, it is

very short. In His first coming, He taught why God permitteth these things; in the second coming, He shall teach by experience, how good it it is for the good to bear the persecution of the evil; whence Peter also has to say 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness." The words seem to belong, in the first instance, to the vision itself; but the vision had no other existence or fulfillment than in Him who was the Object of it, and who, in it, was foreshadowed to the mind. The coming of the vision was no other than His coming.

The waiting, to which he exhorts, expresses the religious act, so often spoken of Psalm 33:20; Isaiah 8:17; Isaiah 30:18; Isaiah 64:3; Zephaniah 3:8; Daniel 12:12; Psalm 106:13, of waiting for God, or His counsel, or His promised time. The sense then is wholly the same, when Paul uses the words of the coming of our Lord Himself, Hebrews 10:37, "Yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come and will not tarry." Paul, as well as Habakkuk, is speaking of our Lord's second coming; Paul, of His Coming in Person, Habakkuk, of the effects of that Coming; but both alike of the redressing of all the evil and wrong in the world's history, and the reward of the faithful oppressed. At His first coming He said, John 12:31, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." He came to "put down the mighty from their seat, and to exalt the humble and meek Luke 1:52;" but much more in the second coming, when "He shall come to judge the world with righteousness and the people with His truth" Psalm 46:1-11:13, and to "reward every man according to his works" Matthew 16:27. At all times He seemeth continually to linger, to give signs of His coming, yet He cometh not; when the appointed season shall come, He shall be found not to be later than His word. Yea, all time shall shrink up into a little moment in the presence of a never-ending ever-present eternity.

Cyril: "Having named no one expressly, he says, wait for him, wait for him although delaying, and halt not in thy hope, but let it be rooted and firm, even if the interval be extended. For the God of all seemeth to suggest to the mind of the prophet, that He who was foretold would surely come, yet to enjoin on him to wait for Him on account of the interval. He who believeth My word shall possess life, for this is the reward of these who honor God, and a good reward of His benevolence. He who admitteth faith

and love to dwell in his heart hath as a requital, unaging life and forgiveness of sins and sanctification by the Spirit." Alb.: "He shall live; for, God is not the God of the dead but of the living Matthew 22:32, "Whoso liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die" John 11:26.

It will not lie - God vouchsafes to speak of Himself, as we should be ashamed to speak of one whom we love, teaching us that all doubts question His truth Numbers 23:19 "God is not a man, that He should lie: hath He said and shall He not do it?" "The strength of Israel shall neither lie nor repent" 1 Samuel 15:29. "God that cannot lie promised before the world began" Titus 1:2 Therefore, it follows, "wait for Him," as Jacob says, Genesis 49:18, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord."

Verse 4

Behold, his soul which is lifted up - literally, swollen

Is not upright in him - The construction is probably that of a condition expressed absolutely. Lo, swollen is it, not upright is his soul in him. We should say, "His soul, if it be swollen, puffed up, is not upright in him." The source of all sin was and is pride. It is especially the sin of all oppressors, of the Chaldee, of antichrists, and shall be of the antichrist. It is the parent of all heresy, and of all corruption and rejection of the gospel. It stands therefore as the type of all opposed to it. Of it he says, it is in its very inmost core ("in him") lacking in uprightness. It can have no good in it, because it denies God, and God denies it His grace. And having nothing upright in it, being corrupt in its very inmost being, it cannot stand or abide. God gives it no power to stand. The words stand in contrast with the following, the one speaking of the cause of death, the other of life. The soul, being swollen with pride, shuts out faith, and with it the Presence of God. It is all crooked in its very inner self or being. Paul gives the result, Hebrews 10:39, "if any man draw back, my soul hath no pleasure in him." The prophet's words describe the proud man who stunts aloof from God, in himself; Paul, as he is in the Eyes of God. As that which is swollen in nature cannot be straight, it is clean contrary that the soul should be swollen with pride and yet upright. Its moral life being destroyed in its very inmost heart, it must perish.

Alb.: "Plato saith, that properly is straight, which being applied to what is straight, touches and is touched everywhere. But God is upright, whom the upright soul touches and is touched everywhere; but what is not upright is bent away from God, Psalm 73:1. "God is good unto Israel, the upright in

heart;" Isaiah 26:7, "The way of the just is uprightness, Thou, most Upright, doth weigh the path of the just."

But the just shall live by his faith - The accents emphasize the words, "The just, by his faith he shall live." They do not point to an union of the words, "the just by his faith." Isaiah says that Christ should "justify" many by the knowledge of Himself," but the expression, "just by his faith," does not occur either in the Old or New Testament. In fact, to speak of one really righteous as being "righteous by his faith" would imply that people could be righteous in some other way. "Without faith," Paul says at the commencement of his Old Testament pictures of giant faith, Hebrews 11:6, "it is impossible to please God." Faith, in the creature which does not yet see God, has one and the same principle, a trustful relying belief in its Creator. This was the characteristic of Abraham their father, unshaken, unswerving, belief in God who called him, whether in leaving his own land and going whither he knew not, for an end which he was never to see; or in believing the promise of the son through whom theft Seed was to be, in whom all the nations of the world should be blessed; or in the crowning act of offering that son to God, knowing that he should receive him back, even from the dead.

In all, it was one and the same principle. According to Genesis 15:6, "His belief was counted to him for righteousness," though the immediate instance of that faith was not directly spiritual. In this was the good and bad of Israel. Exodus 4:31: "the people believed." Exodus 14:31: "they believed the Lord and His servant Moses." Psalm 106:12: "then believed they His word, they sang His praise." This contrariwise was their blame Deuteronomy 1:32: "In this ye did not believe the Lord." Deuteronomy 9:23: "ye rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God, and believed Him not, nor hearkened to His voice." Psalm 106:21, Psalm 106:24: "they forgat God their Saviour; they despised the pleasant land, they believed not His word." And God asks, Numbers 14:11, "How long will it be, ere this people belove Me, for all the signs which I have shown among them?" Psalm 78:21-22: "anger came upon Israel, because they believed not in God, and in His salvation trusted not."

Psalm 78:32: "for all this they sinned still, and believed not His wondrous works." Even of Moses and Aaron God assigns this as the ground, why they should not bring His people into the land which He gave

them, Numbers 20:20, “Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel” (at Meribah). This was the watchword of Jehoshaphat‘s victory, 2 Chronicles 20:20, “Believe in the Lord your God and ye shall be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper.” This continued to be one central saying of Isaiah. It was his own commission to his people; Isaiah 6:9, “Go and say to this people; hear ye on, and understand not; see ye on and perceive not.” In sight of the rejection of faith, he spake prominently of the loss upon unbelief; Isaiah 7:9, “If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established;” and, Isaiah 53:1, “Who hath believed our report?” he premises as the attitude of his people toward him, the Center of all faith - Jesus. Yet still, as to the blessings of faith, having spoken of Him, Isaiah 28:16, “Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone,” he subjoins, “he that believeth in Him shall not make haste.”

So it had been the keynote of Habakkuk to his people, “Ye will not believe when it is declared unto you.” Here he is told to declare contrariwise the blessing on belief. “The just shall live by his faith.” The faith, then, of which Habakkuk speaks, is faith, in itself, but a real, true confiding faith. It is the one relation of the creature to the Creator, unshaken trust. The faith may vary in character, according as God reveals more or less of Himself, but itself is one, a loving trust in Him, just as He reveals Himself. Lap. (in Romans 1:17): “By this faith in God, each righteous person begins to live piously, righteously, holily, peacefully and divinely, and advanceth therein, since in every tribulation and misery, by this faith and hope in God he sustains, strengthens, and increases this life of the soul. He says then, “the just lives by faith,” i. e., the unbelieving and unrighteous displeases God, and consequently will not live by the true, right, peaceful and happy life of grace, present righteousness, and future glory because God is displeased with him, and He places his hopes and fears, not in God, but in human beings and man‘s help and in created things. But the righteous who believeth in God shall live a right, sweet, quiet, happy, holy, untroubled life, because, fixed by faith and hope in God who is the true Life, and in God‘s promises, he is dear to God, and the object of His care.

“This sentence, ‹the just shall live by faith,‘ is universal, belonging at once to Jews and Christians, to sinners who are first being justified, as also

to those who are already justified. For the spiritual life of each of these begins, is maintained and grows through faith. When then it is said, ‹the just shall live by his faith,‘ this word, his, marks the cause, which both begins and preserves life. The just, believing and hoping in God, begins to live spiritually, to have a soul right within him, whereby he pleases God; and again, advancing and making progress in this his faith and hope in God, therewith advances and makes progress in the spiritual life, in rightness and righteousness of soul, in the grace and friendship of God, so as more and more to please God."

Most even of the Jewish interpreters have seen this to be the literal meaning of the words. It stands in contrast with, illustrates and is illustrated by the first words, "his soul is swollen, is not upright in him." Pride and independence of God are the center of the want of rightness; a steadfast cleaving to God, whereby "the heart" (as Abraham‘s) "was stayed on God," is the center and cause of the life of the righteous. But since this stayedness of faith is in everything the source of the life of the righteous, then the pride, which issues in want of rightness of the inmost soul, must be a state of death. Pride estranges the soul from God, makes it self-sufficing, that it should not need God, so that he who is proud cannot come to God, to be by Him made righteous. So contrariwise, since by his faith doth the righteous live, this must be equally true whether he be just made righteous from unrighteous, or whether that righteousness is growing, maturing, being perfected in him.

This life begins in grace, lives on in glory. It is begun, in that God freely justifies the ungodly, accounting and making him righteous for and through the blood of Christ; it is continued in faith which worketh by love; it is perfected, when faith and hope are swallowed up in love, beholding God. In the Epistles to the Romans Romans 1:17 and the Galatians Galatians 3:11 Paul applies these words to the first beginning of life, when they who had before been dead in sin, began to live by faith in Christ Jesus who gave them life and made them righteous. And in this sense he is called "just," although before he comes to the faith he is unjust and unrighteous, being unjustified. For Paul uses the word not of what he was before the faith, but what be is, when he lives by faith. Before, not having faith, he had neither righteousness nor life; having faith, he at once has both; he is at once "just"

and “lives by his faith.” These are inseparable. The faith by which he lives, is a living faith, Galatians 5:6, “faith which worketh by love.” In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Hebrews 10:38, Paul is speaking of their endurance in the faith, once received, whose faith is not shaken by the trial of their patience. They who look on beyond things present, and fix their minds steadfastly on the Coming of Christ, will not suffer shipwreck of their faith, through any troubles of this time. Faith is the foundation of all good, the beginning of the spiritual building, whereby it rests on The Foundation, Christ. “Without faith it is impossible to please God,” and so the proud cannot please Him. Through it, is union with Christ and thereby a divine life in the soul, even a life, Galatians 2:20, “through faith in the Son of God,” holy, peaceful, self-posessed Luke 21:19, enduring to the end, being “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” 1 Peter 1:5.

Verse 5

This general rule the prophet goes on to apply in words which belong in part to all oppressors and in the first instance to the Chaldaean, in part yet more fully to the end and to antichrist. “Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine” (or better, “Yea, how much more, since wine is a deceiver, as Solomon says, Proverbs 20:1, “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever erreth thereby shall not be wise;” and Proverbs 23:32, “In the end it biteth like a serpent and pierceth like an adder;” and Hosea Hosea 4:11, “Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.” As wine at first gladdens, then deprives of all reason, and lays a man open to any deceit, so also pride. And whereas all pride deceives, how much more, when people are either heated and excited by the abuse of God‘s natural gifts, or drunken with prosperity and hurried away, as conquerors are, to all excess of cruelty or lust to fulfill their own will, and neglect the laws of God and man.

Literal drunkenness was a sin of the Babylonians under the Persian rule, so that even a pagan says of Babylon, “Nothing can be more corrupt than the manners of that city, and more provided with all to rouse and entice immoderate pleasures;” and “the Babylonians give themselves wholly to wine, and the things which follow upon drunkenness.” It was when flushed with wine, that Belshazzar, with his princes his wives and his concubines, desecrated the sacred vessels, insulted God in honor of his idols, and in the

night of his excess “was slain.” Pride blinded, deceived, destroyed him. It was the general drunkenness of the inhabitants, at that same feast, which enabled Cyrus, with a handful of men, to penetrate, by means of its river, the city which, with its provisions for many years and its impregnable walls, mocked at his siege. He calculated beforehand on its feast and the consequent dissolution of its inhabitants; but for this, in the language of the pagan historian, he would have been caught “as in a trap,” his soldiery drowned.

He is a proud man, neither keepeth at home. - It is difficult to limit the force of the rare Hebrew word rendered “keep at home;” for one may cease to dwell or abide at home either with his will or without it; and, as in the case of invaders, the one may he the result of the other. He who would take away the home of others becomes, by God‘s Providence, himself homeless. The context implies that the primary meaning is the restlessness of ambition; which abides not at home, for his whole pleasure is to go forth to destroy. Yet there sounds, as it were, an undertone, “he would not abide in his home and he shall not.” We could scarcely avoid the further thought, could we translate by a word which does not determine the sense, “he will not home,” “he will not continue at home.” The words have seemed to different minds to mean either; as they may. Such fullness of meaning is the contrary of the ambiguity of pagan oracles; they are not alternative meanings, which might be justified in either case, but cumlative, the one on the other. The ambitious part with present rest for future loss. Nebuchadnezzar lost his kingdom and his reason through pride, received them back when he humbled himself; Belshazzar, being proud and impenitent, lost both his kingdom and life.

Who enlargeth his desire - literally, his soul. The soul becomes like what it loves. The ambitious man is, as we say, “all ambition;” the greedy man, “all appetite;” the cruel man, “all savagery;” the vain-glorious, “all vain glory.” The ruling passion absorbs the whole being. It is his end, the one object of his thoughts, hopes, fears. So, as we speak of “largeness of heart,” which can embrace in its affections all varieties of human interests, whatever affects man, and “largeness of mind” uncramped by narrowing prejudices, the prophet speaks of this “ambitious man widening his soul,” or, as we should speak, “appetite,” so that the whole world is not too large for him to long to grasp or to devour. So the Psalmist prays not to be delivered into the murderous desire of his enemies (Psalm 27:12; Compare

Psalm 41:3 (Psalm 41:2 in English); Isaiah 5:14, "Hell hath enlarged her soul, and opened her mouth beyond measure." It devours, as it were, first in its cravings, then in act.

As hell - which is insatiable Proverbs 30:15. He saith, "enlargeth"; for as hell and the grave are year by year fuller, yet there is no end, the desire "enlargeth" and becometh wider, the more is given to it to satisfy it.

And (he) is (himself) as death - osparing none. Our poetry would speak of a destroyer as being "like the angel of death;" his presence, as the presence of death itself. Where he is, there is death. He is as terrible and as destroying as the death which follows him.

And cannot be satisfied - Even human proverbs say (Juv. Sat. xiv. 139): "The love of money groweth as much as the money itself groweth." "The avaricious is ever needy." Ecclesiastes 5:10: "he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver." For these fleeting things cannot satisfy the undying soul. It must hunger still; for it has not found what will allay its cravings.

But gathereth - literally, "And hath gathered" - He describes it, for the rapidity with which he completes what he longs for, as though it were already done.

Unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people - One is still the subject of the prophecy, rising up at successive times, fulfilling it and passing away, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, Attila, Timur, Genghizchan, Hunneric, scourges of God, all deceived by pride, all sweeping the earth, all in their ambition and wickedness the unknowing agents and images of the evil One, who seeks to bring the whole world under his rule. But shall it prosper?

Verse 6

Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him? - Nebuchadnezzar gathered, Daniel 3:4-5, "all people, nations, and languages, to worship the golden image which he had set up." The second Babylon, pagan Rome, sought to blot out the very Christian Name; but mightier were the three children than the King of Babylon; mightier, virgins, martyrs, and children than Nero or Decius. These shall rejoice over Babylon, that, Revelation 18:20, "God hath avenged them on her."

Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his! - Truly wealth ill-gotten by fraud or oppression, "is not his," who winneth it, before he had it,

nor when he hath it, but a woe. It is not his; the woe is his. “Woe unto him.” He shall have no joy in what he gaineth, and what he hath he shall lose.

How long? - What is the measure of thine impiety and greediness and cruelty? Yet if these are like hell, without measure, there remains another “How long?” How long will the forbearance of God endure thee, which thou art daily exhausting?

This is then the end of all. The conqueror sweeps to him “all nations” and gathereth to him “all peoples.” To what end? As one vast choir in one terrible varied chant of all those thousand thousand voices, to sing a dirge over him of the judgments of God which his ill-doings to them should bring upon him, a fivefold Woe, woe, woe, woe, woe! Woe for its rapacity! Woe for its covetousness! Woe for its oppression! Woe for its insolence to the conquered! Woe to it in its rebellion against God! It is a more measured rhythm than any besides in Holy Scripture; each of the fivefold woes comprised in three verses, four of them closing with the ground, because, for. The opening words carry the mind back to the fuller picture of Isaiah. But Isaiah sees Babylon as already overthrown; Habakkuk pronounces the words upon it, not by name, but as certainly to come, upon it and every like enemy of God‘s kingdom. With each such fall, unto the end of all things, the glory of God is increased and made known. Having, for their own ends, been unconscious and even unwilling promoters of God‘s end, they, when they had accomplished it, are themselves flung away. The pride of human ambition, when successful, boasts “woe to the conquered.” Since “whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,” the ungodly saying of the pagan is reversed, and it stands, “Man sympathizes with the conquering side, God with the conquered.” It is a terrible thought that people should have been the instruments of God, that they should, through ambition or other ends short of God, have promoted His ends which they thought not of, and then should be “weighed in the balance and found wanting,” and themselves be flung away.

Cyr: “Gentiles also departed from their worship under Satan, and having deserted him who aforetime called them, ran unto Christ. For Satan gathered what was not his; but Christ received what was His. For, as God, He is Lord of all.”

And to him that ladeth himself with thick clay - It is the character of these proverbs to say much in few words, sometimes in one, and more than

appears. So the word translated "thick-clay," as if it were two words, in another way means in an intensive sense, "a strong deep pledge." At best gold and silver are, as they have been called, red and white earth. Bern. Serm. 4. in Adv: "What are gold and silver but red and white earth, which the error of man alone maketh, or accounteth precious? What are gems, but stones of the earth? What silk, but webs of worms?" These he "maketh heavy upon" or "against himself" (so the words strictly mean). "For He weigheth himself down with thick clay, who, by avarice multiplying earthly things, hems himself in by the oppressiveness of his own sin, imprisons and, as it were, buries the soul, and heaps up sin as he heaps up wealth." With toil they gather what is not worthless only, but is a burden upon the soul, weighing it down that it should not rise Heavenwards, but should be bowed down to Hell. And so in that other sense while, as a hard usurer, he heaps up the pledges of these whom he oppresses and impoverishes, and seems to increase his wealth, he does in truth "increase against himself a strong pledge," whereby not others are debtors to him, but he is a debtor to Almighty God who careth for the oppressed Jeremiah 17:11 "He that gathereth riches had not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days and at his end shall be a fool."

Verse 7

Shall not they rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee? - The destruction of the wicked is ever sudden at last. Such was the flood Luke 17:26-27, the destruction of Sodom, of Pharaoh, of the enemies of God's people through the Judges, of Sennacherib, Nineveh, Babylon by the Medes and Persians. Such shall the end be Matthew 24:43-44; Matthew 25:13; Luke 17:26-30; Luke 21:34-35; 1 Thessalonians 5:3; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 16:15. As he by his oppressions had pierced others (it is the word used of the oppression of usury), so should it be done to him. "The Medes and Persians who were before subject to the Babylonian empire, and whose kings were subject to Nebuchudnezzar and his successors, rose up and awaked, i. e., stirred themselves up in the days of Belshazzar to rebel against the successors of Nebuchadnezzar which sat on his throne, like a man who awaketh from sleep." The words "awake," "arise," are used also of the resurrection, when the worm of the wicked gnaweth and dieth not (See Isaiah 14:11; Isaiah 66:24).

And thou shall be for booties unto them? - The common phrase is modified to explain the manifoldness of the plunder which he should yield.

So Jeremiah Jeremiah 50:10, “Chaldaea shall be a spoil; all that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the Lord.” See Cyr: “We may hear Him who saith Matthew 12:29, ‹How can one enter into a strong man‘s house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.‘ For, as soon as He was born of the holy Virgin, He began to ‹spoil his goods.‘ For the Magi came from the East - and worshiped Him and honored Him with gifts and became a first-fruits of the Church of the Gentiles. And being vessels of Satan, and the most honored of all his members, they hastened to Christ.”

Verse 8

Because (or For). The prophet assigns the reason of the woes he had just pronounced. “Thou (emphatic), thou hast spoiled many nations, all the resonant of the people shall spoil thee.” So Isaiah Isaiah 33:1, “When thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.” Boundless as his conquests were, each remaining people, tribe, or family shall be his foe. Theodotion: “Having subdued very many, thou shalt be destroyed by few, and they who long endured thy tyranny, arising as from sleep, shall compass thy destruction; and thou shalt pay the penalty of thy countless slaughters and thy great ungodliness and thy lawless violence to cities which thou modest desolate of inhabitants.” Nothing was too great or too little to escape this violence.

All the remnant - Theodotion: “As thou, invading, didst take away the things of others, in like way shall what appertaineth to thee be taken away by those who are left for vengeance.” Jeremiah foretold of Elam “in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah” Jeremiah 49:34-39 (in expansion of the prophecy in the reign of Jehoiakim); “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might. And upon Elam I will bring the four winds from the four quarters of the heavens, and will scatter them toward all these winds, and there shall be no nation where the outcasts of Elam shall not come. For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before her enemies; but it shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the Lord.” Elam is also counted by Ezekiel Jeremiah 39:9) of the nations which he had conquered, who should be gathered against his house.

“Because of men‘s blood and of the violence of” i. e., “to the land, as the violence of,” i. e., “to, Lebanon,” and “men‘s blood” is their blood

which was shed. “To land, city, and all dwellers therein.” Land or earth, city, are left purposely undefined, so that while that in which the offence culminated should be, by the singular, specially suggested, the violence to Judah and Jerusalem, the cruelty condemned should not be limited, to these. The violence was dealt out to the whole land or earth, and in it, to cities, and in each, one by one, to all its inhabitants. Babylon is called Jeremiah 50:23, “the hammer of the whole earth Jeremiah 51:7; a golden cup in the Lord‘s hand, that made all the earth drunken; Isaiah 14:7, after Babylon, “which made it to tremble” Isaiah 14:16, is overthrown.

So Satan had by violence and deceit subdued the whole earth, yet Christ made him a spoil to those whom he had spoiled, and the strong man was bound and his goods Spoiled and himself trampled underfoot. Yet here as throughout the prophets, it is a “remnant” only which is saved Cyril: “Satan too was spoiled by the remnant of the people, i. e., by those justified by Christ and sanctified in the Spirit. For the remnant of Israel was saved.”

Verse 9

Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house - (or, with accents, “that coveteth covetousness or unjust gain, an evil to his house.”) What man coveteth seems gain, but is evil “to his house” after him, destroying both himself and his whole family or race with him. “That he may set his nest on high,” as an eagle, to which he had likened the Chaldee (Habakkuk 1:8. Compare Jeremiah 20:16). A pagan called “strongholds, the nests of tyrants.” The nest was placed “on high” which means also “heaven,” as it is said, Obadiah 1:4, “though thou set thy nest among the stars;” and the tower of Babel was to “reach unto heaven” Genesis 11:4; and the antichrist, whose symbol the King of Babylon is, Isaiah 14:13 says, “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.” Babylon lying in a large plain, on the sides of the Euphrates, the image of its eagle‘s-nest on high must be taken, not from any natural eminence, but wholly from the works of man.

Its walls, and its hanging gardens were among “the seven wonders of the world.” Eye-witnesses speak of its walls, encompassing at least 100 square miles, “and as large as the land-graviat of Hesse Homberg;” those walls, 335, or 330 feet high, and 85 feet broad; a fortified palace, nearly 7 miles in circumference; gardens, 400 Greek feet square, supporting at an artificial

height arch upon arch, of "at least 75 feet," forest trees; a temple to its god, said to have been at least 600 feet high.

If we, creatures of a day, had no one above us, Nebuchadnezzars boast had been true Daniel 4:30, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the Kingdom by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?" He had built an eagle's nest, which no human arm could reach, encircled by walls which laughed its invaders to scorn, which, at that time, no skill could scale or shatter or mine. Even as one sees in a picture the vast mounds which still remain, one can hardly imagine that they were, brick upon brick, wholly the work of man.

To be delivered from the hand (grasp) of evil - that it should not be able to reach him. Evil is spoken of as a living power, which would seize him, whose grasp he would defy. It was indeed a living power, since it was the will of Almighty God, whose servant and instrument Cyrus was, to chasten Babylon, when its sins were full. Such was the counsel, what the result? The evil covetousness which he worked, brought upon him the evil, from which, in that nest built by the hard toil of his captives, he thought to deliver himself.

Verse 10

Thou hast consulted shame to thy house, the cutting off many people, and sinning against thy soul - The wicked, whether out of passion or with his whole mind and deliberate choice and will, takes that counsel, which certainly brings shame to himself and his house, according to the law of God, whereby, according to Exodus 20:5, He "visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him," i. e., until by righteousness and restitution the curse is cut off. Proverbs 15:27: "he that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house." So Jeremiah says Jeremiah 7:19: "Thus saith the Lord, Is it Me they are vexing? Is it not themselves, for the confusion of their faces?" i. e., with that end and object. Holy Scripture overlooks the means, and places us at the end of all. Whatever the wicked had in view, to satisfy ambition, avarice, passion, love of pleasure, or the rest of man's immediate ends, all he was doing was leading on to a further end - shame and death. He was bringing about, not only these short-lived, but the lasting ends beyond, and these far more than the others, since that is the real end of a thing which abides, in which it at last ends. He consulted to cut off many people and

was thereby (though he did not know it) by one and the same act, "guilty of and forfeiting his OWN soul" Proverbs 8:36. The contemporaneousness of the act is expressed by the participle; the pronoun is omitted as in Habakkuk 1:5).

Verse 11

For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it - All things have a voice, in that they are. God's works speak that, for which He made them Psalm 19:1: "The heavens declare the glory of God." Psalm 65:13: "the valleys are clad with corn, they laugh, yea, they sing;" their very look speaks gladness. Cyril: "For the creation itself proclaims the glory of the Maker, in that it is admired as well made. Wherefore there are voices in things, although there are not words." Man's works speak of that in him, out of which and for which he made them. Works of mercy go up for a memorial before God, and plead there; great works, performed amid wrong and cruelty and for man's ambition and pride, have a voice too, and cry out to God, calling down His vengeance on the oppressor. Here the stones of the wall, whereby the building is raised, and the beam, the tye-beam, out of the timber-work wherewith it is finished, and which, as it were, crowns the work, join, as in a chorus, answering one another, and in a deep solemn wailing, before God and the whole world, together chant "Woe, Woe." Did not the blood and groans of men cry out to God, speechless things have a voice to appeal to Him (See Luke 19:40). Against Belshazzar the wall had, to the letter, words to speak.

Each three verses forming one stanza, as it were, of the dirge, the following words are probably not directly connected with the former, as if the woe, which follows, were, so to speak, the chant of these inanimate witnesses against the Chaldaeans; yet they stand connected with it. The dirge began with woe on the wrongful accumulation of wealth from the conquered and oppressed people: it continues with the selfish use of the wealth so won.

Verse 12

Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity! - Nebuchadnezzar "encircled the inner city with three walls and the outer city also with three, all of burnt brick. And having fortified the city with wondrous works, and adorned the gates like temples, he built another palace near the palace of his fathers, surpassing it in height and its

great magnificence." He seemed to strengthen the city, and to establish it by outward defenses. But it was built through cruelty to conquered nations, and especially God's people, and by oppression, against His holy Will. So there was an inward rottenness and decay in what seemed strong and majestic, and which imposed on the outward eye; it would not stand, but fell. Babylon, which had stood since the flood, being enlarged contrary to the eternal laws of God, fell in the reign of his son. Such is all empire and greatness, raised on the neglect of God's laws, by unlawful conquests, and by the toil and sweat and hard service of the poor. Its aggrandizement and seeming strength is its fall. Daniel's exhortation to Nebuchadnezzar Daniel 4:27, "Redeem thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy on the poor," implies that oppressiveness had been one of his chief sins.

Verse 13

Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that (the) people (nations) shall labor - o

In (for) the very fire - literally, to suffice the fire? By God's appointment, the end of all their labor is for the fire, what may suffice it to consume. This is the whole result of their labor; and so it is as if they had toiled for this; they built ceiled palaces and gorgeous buildings, only for the fire to consume them.

And the peoples shall weary themselves for very vanity - They wearied themselves, and what was their reward? What had they to suffice and fill them? "Emptiness." This is "from the Lord of hosts," whom all the armies of heaven obey and all creatures stand at His command against the ungodly, and in whose Hand are all the hosts of earth, and so the oppressor's also, to turn as He wills.

Near upon the first stage of the fulfillment, Jeremiah reinforces the words with the name of Babylon; Jeremiah 51:58: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts! The broad walls of Babylon, shall be utterly destroyed, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labor in vain (for vanity), and the folk in (for) the fire, and they shall be weary."

Verse 14

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord - Habakkuk modifies in a degree the words of Isaiah which he embodies, marking that the destruction of Babylon was a stage only toward

the coming of those good things which God taught His people to long for, not their very coming. All the world should be then full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, not, as yet, wholly of Himself Jerome: "When Babylon shall be overthrown, then shall the power of the might of the Lord be known unto all. So shall the whole earth be filled with the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the bottom of the sea. This as to the letter. But it is plain, that the Devil also and antichrist, and the perverse teaching of heretics, built a city in blood; i. e, their own Church, with the destruction of those whom they deceive … But when they fail in the fire (either this fire which is felt, or consumed in the fire of the devil their prince, or burned up with the fire whereof the Lord says, ‹I came to send a fire upon the earth,' and so brought back from their former course, and doing penitence), the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, when, at the preaching of the apostles, their ‹sound shall go out into all the world,' as waters covering the sea, i. e., all the saltness and bitterness of the world which Satan had rained down and the earth had drunk, the waters of the Lord shall cover, and cause the place of their ancient bitterness not to appear."

Rup.: "‹For the Spirit of the Lord filled the earth,' and when He filled it, ‹the earth was filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord,' so that unlearned and ignorant men became wise and eloquent, and earthly became heavenly, yea, they who were earth became heaven, knowing the glory of the Lord, declaring the glory of God, not any how, but as waters cover the sea. Great as must be waters, which would cover the sea, or compared to which the sea were nothing, far greater is the miracle, when the abundance of heavenly wisdom, given to the simple, surpassed the sea, i. e., the wisdom of all mankind." This verse being already a received image of the spread of the gospel Isaiah 11:9, it would of itself be understood to include this also; but more generally, it declares how upon all the judgments of God, a larger knowledge of Him would follow Cyril: "All things are full of Christ, who is the Glory of the Father; wherefore also He said John 17:4, I have glorified Thee on earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do."

Verse 15

From cruelty the prophet goes on to denounce the woe on insolence. "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor" (to whom he owes love) drink

(literally, that maketh him drink); that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look (gaze with devilish pleasure) on their nakedness." This may either be of actual insults (as in the history of Noah), in keeping certainly with the character of the later Babylonians, the last wantonness of unbridled power, making vile sport of those like himself (his neighbor), or it may be drunkenness through misery Isaiah 29:9 wherein they are bared of all their glory and brought to the lowest shame. The woe also falls on all, who in any way intoxicate others with flattering words or reigned affection, mixing poison under things pleasant, to bring them to shame.

Verse 16

Thou art filled with shame for glory - Oppressors think to make themselves great by bringing others down, to fill themselves with riches, by spoiling others. They loved shame Hosea 4:8, because they loved that, which brought shame; they were filled with shame, in that they sated themselves with shamefulness, which was their shame within, before, in the just judgment of God, shame came on them from without Philemon 3:19. "Their glory was in their shame." They shall be filled, yea, he says, they are already filled; they would satisfy, gorge themselves, with all their hearts' desires; they are "filled to the full," but with shame instead of glory which they sought, or which they already had. "From" and "for" a state of "glory," they were filled with contempt.

Drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered - thy shame like those whom thou puttest to shame, only the greater in being uncircumcised. "The cup of the Lord's Right Hand shall be turned (round) unto thee (or against thee)." It had gone round the circuit of the nations whom God had employed him to chasten, and now, the circle completed, it should be brought round to himself, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you again" Matthew 7:2. So Jeremiah says, Jeremiah 25:26, "And the king of Shesbach shall drink after them;" and of Edom, Lamentations 4:21, "To thee also shall the cup be brought round." Thou, a man, madest man to drink of the cup of thine anger: the cup shall be brought round to thee, but not by man; to thee it shall be given by "the Right Hand of the Lord," which thou canst not escape; it shall be "the cup of the wine of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God" Revelation 16:19; as Asaph had said, Psalm 76:8, "There is a cup in the Lord's hand; it is full of mixture, and He

poureth out therefrom; but the dregs thereof all the ungodly of the earth shall suck them out, shall drink them."

And shameful spewing shall be on thy glory - Jerome: "With the shame of thy spewing shalt thou bring up all thou hast swallowed down, and from the height of glory shalt thou be brought to the utmost ills." The shame of the ungodly cometh forth from himself; the shame he put others to is doubled upon himself; and the very means which he had used to fill himself with glory and greatness, cover the glory which by nature he had, with the deeper disgrace, so that he should be a loathsome and revolting sight to all. Man veils foul deeds under fair words; God, in His word, unveils the foulness.

Verse 17

For the violence of Lebanon - i. e., done to Lebanon, whether the land of Israel of which it was the entrance and the beauty (See Isaiah 37:24, and, as a symbol, Jeremiah 22:6, Jeremiah 22:23; Ezekiel 17:3; but it is used as a symbol of Sennacherib's army, Isaiah 10:34, and the king of Asshur is not indeed spoken of under the name as a symbol (in Ezekiel 21:3,) but is compared to it), or the temple (See the note at Zechariah 12:1), both of which Nebuchadnezzar laid waste; or, more widely, it may be a symbol of all the majesty of the world and its empires, which he subdues, as Isaiah uses it, when speaking of the judgment on the world, Isaiah 2:13, "It shall cover thee, and the spoil (i. e., spoiling, destruction) of beasts (the inhabitants of Lebanon) which made them afraid," or more simply, "the wasting of wild beasts shall crush, Proverbs 10:14; Proverbs 13:3; Proverbs 14:14; Proverbs 18:7) them (selves)," i. e., as it is in irrational nature, that "the frequency of the incursions of very mischievous animals becomes the cause that people assemble against them and kill them, so their (the Chaldaeans') frequent injustice is the cause that they haste to be avenged on thee".

Having become beasts, they shared their history. They spoiled, scared, laid waste, were destroyed. "Whoso seeketh to hurt another, hurteth himself." The Chaldaeans laid waste Judea, scared and wasted its inhabitants; the end of its plunder should be, not to adorn, but to cover them, overwhelm them as in ruins, so that they should not lift up their heads again. Violence returns upon the head of him who did it; they seem to raise a lofty fabric, but are buried under it. He sums up their past experience, what God had warned them beforehand, what they had found.

Verse 18

What profiteth - (*Hath* profited) הועיל מה. Samuel warned them, "Serve the Lord with all your heart, and turn ye not aside; for (it would be) after vanities which will not profit nor deliver for they are vain:" and Jeremiah tells their past; "their prophets prophesied by Baal; and after things יועילי לא which profit not, have they gone." Elsewhere the idol is spoken of as a thing "which will not profit" (future) "My people hath changed its glory יועיל בלא for that which profiteth not," Jeremiah 2:8, Jeremiah 2:11. So Isaiah, "Who hath formed a god, הועיל לבלתי not to profit." Isaiah 44:9.10. "The makers of a graven image are all of them vanity, and their desirable things יועילו בל will not profit."

The graven image, that the maker therefore hath graven it? - What did Baal and Ashtaroth profit you? What availed it ever but to draw down the wrath of God? Even so neither shall it profit the Chaldaean. As their idols availed them not, so neither need they fear them. Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar were propagandists of their own belief and would destroy, if they could, all other worship, false or true: Nebuchadnezzar is thought to have set up his own image 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:15-17. We may take warning at least by our own sins. If we had no profit at all from them, neither will the like profit others. the Jews did, in the main, learn this in their captivity.

The molten image and teacher of lies - It is all one whether by "teacher of lies" we understand the idol, or its priest. For its priest gave it its voice, as its maker created its form. It could only seem to teach through the idol-priest. Isaiah used the title "teacher of lies," of the false prophet Isaiah 9:14. It is all one. Zechariah combines them Zechariah 10:2; "The teraphim have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have had false dreams."

That the maker of his work trusteth therein - This was the special folly of idolatry. The thing made must needs he inferior to its maker. It was one of the corruptions of idolatry that the maker of his own work should trust in what was wholly his own creation, what, not God, but himself created, what had nothing but what it had from himself. He uses the very words which express the relation of man to God, "the Framer" and "the thing framed." Isaiah 29:16, "O your perverseness! Shall the framer be accounted as clay, theft the thing made should say of its Maker, He made

me not, and the thing framed say of its Framer, He hath no hands?" The idol-maker is "the creator of his creature," of his god whom he worships. Again the idol-maker makes "dumb idols" (literally, "dumb nothings") in themselves nothings, and having no power out of themselves; and what is uttered in their name, are but lies. And what else are man's idols of wealth, honor, fame, which he makes to himself, the creatures of his own hands or mind, their greatness existing chiefly in his own imagination before which he bows down himself, who is the image of God?

Verse 19

But then the greater is the "Woe" to him who deceiveth by them. The prophet passes away from the idols as "nothings" and pronounces "woe" on those who deceive by them. He. first expostulates with them on their folly, and would awaken them. "What hath it profited?" (As in Psalm 115:5; 1 Corinthians 12:2) Then on the obstinate he denounces "woe." "Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise." Self-made blindness alone could, in the light of truth, so speak; but yet more lies in the emphatic word, "It." The personal pronoun stands emphatically in Hebrew; He shall teach, lo, He (this same of whom he speaks) this is It which shall teach: It, and not the living God. And yet this same It (the word is again emphatic) he points, as with the finger, to it, "behold, It is laid over with, held fast by, gold and silver," so that no voice could escape, if it had any. "And there is no breath at all in the midst of it" (Compare Jeremiah 10:14 repeated Jeremiah 51:17), literally "All breath, all which is breath, there is none within it;" he first suggests the thought, breath of every sort, and then energetically denies it all; no life of any sort, of man, or bird, or beast, or creeping thing Isaiah 41:23; Jeremiah 10:5; none, good or bad; from God or from Satan; none whereby it can do good or do evil; for which it should be loved or feared. Evil spirits may have made use of idols: they could not give them life, nor dwell in them.

The words addressed to it are the language of the soul in the seeming absence or silence of God (Psalm 7:7; Psalm 35:23; Psalm 44:24; Psalm 59:6; Isaiah 51:9; Delitszch), but mockery as spoken to the senseless stone, as Ehijah had mocked the Baal-priests, "peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked" 1 Kings 18:26-27.

Verse 20

And now having declared the nothingness of all which is not God, the power of man or his gods, he answers again his own question, by summoning all before the presence of the majesty of God.

But the Lord - He had, in condemning them, pictured the tumult of the world, the oppressions, the violence, bloodsheddings, covetousness, insolence, self-aggrandizement of the then world-empire, and had denounced woe upon it; we see man framing his idols, praying to the lifeless stones; and God, of whom none thought, where was He? These were people‘s ways. “But the Lord,” he joins it on, as the complement and corrective of all this confusion.

The Lord is in His holy temple - awaiting, in His long-suffering, to judge. “The temple of God” is where God enshrines Himself, or allows Himself to be seen and adored. “God is wholly everywhere, the whole of Him no where.” There is no contrast between His temple on earth, and His temple in heaven. He is not more locally present in heaven than in earth. It were as anthropomorphic but less pious to think of God, as confined, localized, in heaven as on earth; because it would be simply removing God away from man. Solomon knew, when he built the temple, that “the heaven and heaven of heavens could not contain 1 Kings 8:27 God.” The “holy temple,” which could be destroyed Psalm 79:1, toward which people were to pray Psalm 5:7; Psalm 138:2; Jonah 2:4, was the visible temple 1 Kings 8:29-30, 1 Kings 8:35, 1 Kings 8:38, 1 Kings 8:42, 1 Kings 8:44, 1 Kings 8:48, where were the symbols of God‘s Presence, and of the stoning Sacrifice; but lest His presence should be localized, Solomon‘s repeated prayer is 1 Kings 8:30, 1 Kings 8:39, 1 Kings 8:43, 1 Kings 8:49, “hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place” 1 Kings 8:32, 1 Kings 8:34, 1 Kings 8:36, 1 Kings 8:45; “hear Thou in heaven.” There is then no difference, as though in earlier books the “holy temple” meant that at Jerusalem, in the later, “the heavens?” In the confession at the offering of the “third year‘s tithes,” the prayer is, Deuteronomy 27:15, “look down from Thy holy habitation, from heaven;” and David says, “the Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord‘s throne is in heaven” Psalm 11:4; and, Psalm 18:6, Psalm 18:9: “He heard my voice out of His temple - He bowed the heavens also and came down;” and, Psalm 29:9, “In His temple doth everyone say, Glory.” The simple words are identical though not in the same order as those, in which David, in the same contrast with the oppression of man, ushers in the judgment and final retribution to good and bad, by declaring the unseen

presence of God upon His Throne in heaven, beholding and testing the sons of men.

In His Presence, all the mysteries of our being are solved.

The Lord is in His holy Temple - not, as the idols in temples made with hands, but revealing Himself in the visible temple (Jerome), "dwelling in the Son, by Nature and Union, as He saith John 14:10, "The Father who dwelleth in Me doeth the works;" in each one of the bodies and souls of the saints by His Spirit 1 Corinthians 6:19, in the Blessed, in glory; in the Heavens, by the more evident appearance of His Majesty and the workings of His Power; "everywhere by Essence, Presence, and Power, ‹for in Him we live, and move, and have our being;' nowhere as confined or inclosed." Since then God is in Heaven, beholding the deeds of people, Himself Unchangeable, Almighty, All-holy, "let all the earth keep silence before Him," literally, "hush before Him all the earth," waiting from Him in hushed stillness the issue of this tangled state of being. And to the hashed soul, hushed to itself and its own thought, hushed in awe of His Majesty and "His Presence, before His face," God speaks.

HABAKKUK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

A prayer of Habakkuk - oThe "prayer" of the prophet, in the strictest sense of the word, is contained in the words of Habakkuk 3:2. The rest is, in its form, praise and thanksgiving, chiefly for God's past mercies in the deliverance from Egypt and the entering into the promised land. But thanksgiving is an essential part of prayer, and Hannah is said to have "prayed," whereas the hymn which followed is throughout one thanksgiving. In that also these former deliverances were images of things to come, of every deliverance afterward, and, especially, of that complete divine deliverance which our Lord Jesus Christ performed for us from the power of Satan 1 Corinthians 10:11, the whole is one prayer: "Do, O Lord, as Thou hast done of old; forsake not Thine own works. Such were Thy deeds once; fulfill them now, all which they shadowed forth." It is then a prayer for the manifestation of God's power, and therewith the destruction of His enemies, thenceforth to the Day of Judgment. Cyril: "Having completed the discourse about Babylon, and having fore-announced most clearly, that those who destroyed the holy city and carried Israel captive shall be severely punished, he passes suitably to the mystery of Christ, and from the redemption which took place partially in one nation, he carries on the discourse to that universal redemption, whereby the remnant of Israel, and no less the whole world has been saved."

Upon Shigionoth - The title, "Shiggaion," occurs only once besides Habakkuk 3:6 has 15 words, in five combinations of three words; Habakkuk 3:3, Habakkuk 3:10 have 12 words, in four 3's: Habakkuk 3:4, Habakkuk 3:9, Habakkuk 3:19 have 9 words in three 3's: Habakkuk 3:5, Habakkuk 3:12, Habakkuk 3:15, Habakkuk 3:18 have 6 words in two 3's: Habakkuk 3:17 is divided into 4-3-3-4-3-3; Habakkuk 3:8 is 3-3-3-3-2; Habakkuk 3:11 is 4-3-3; Habakkuk 3:16 is 3-3-3-2-2-2-3. This forces itself on every reader. Delitzsch quotes the Meor. Enaim, i. 60, "The prayer of Habakkuk goeth on three's") yet so that long measures are succeeded by very short.

Verse 2

O Lord, I have heard - i. e., with the inward ear of the heart, "Thy speech," (rather as English margin, Thy report, i. e., the report of Thee) i. e., what may he heard and known of God, or, what he had himself heard. The

word contains in one both what God had lately declared to the prophet, the judgments of God upon the wicked of the people, and upon those who, with their own injustice, done upon them the righteous judgments of God, and that the work of the Lord would be performed in His time for those who in patience wait for it; and also still more largely, what might be heard of God, although, as it were, but a little whisper of His greatness and of the majesty of His workings.

And was afraid - not "fearful" but "afraid in awe," as a creature, and amazed at the surpassing wonderfulness of the work of God. Well may man stand in awe "at the incarnation of the only-begotten Son, how earth should contain Him uncontained by space, how a body was prepared for Him of the virgin by the Holy Spirit, and all the works whereby He shall work the salvation of mankind, the cross, the death, resurrection and ascension, uniting things opposite, a body with one incorporeal, death with life, resurrection with death, a body in heaven. All is full of wonder and awe." Rup.: "This is not a servile fear, but a holy fear which endureth forever, not one which ‹love casteth out,‘ but which it bringeth in, wherein angels praise, dominions adore, powers stand in awe at the majesty of the Eternal God."

O Lord, revive Thy work - God‘s Word seems, often, as it were, dead and "come utterly to an end for evermore" Psalm 77:8, while it is holding on its own course, as all nature seems dead for a while, but all is laid up in store, and ready to shoot forth, as by a sort of resurrection Rup.: "The prophet prophesying prayeth, that it should come quickly, and praying prophesieth that it shall so come." All God‘s dealings with His people, His Church, each single soul, are part of one great work, perfect in itself Deuteronomy 32:4; glory and majesty Psalm 140:3; all which the godly meditateth on Psalm 77:3; Psalm 143:5; which those busied with their own plans, do not look to Isaiah 5:12; it is manifested in great doings for them or with them, as in the Exodus the Psalmist says, "We have heard with our ears, yea, our fathers have told us what work Thou didst in their days, in the times of old" Psalm 44:2; "They proved Me and saw My work" Psalm 95:9; with it He makes His own glad Psalm 92:3; after it has been withdrawn for a while, "He sheweth it to His servants" Psalm 90:6; it issues in judgments on the ungodly, which people consider and declare.

The great work of God on earth, which includes all His works and is the end of all, is the salvation of man through Jesus Christ. This great work

seemed, as it were, asleep, or dead, as trees in winter, all through those 4,000 years, which gave no token of His coming. Included in this great work is the special work of the Hand of God, of which alone it is said, "God said, Let Us make man in Our image after Our Likeness" Genesis 1:26; and, "we are the clay and Thou our Potter, and we are all the work of Thy Hands" Isaiah 64:8; and "Thy Hands have made me and fashioned me together round about" Job 10:8, man; whom, being dead as to the life of the soul through the malice of Satan, Christ revived by dying and rising again. He was "dead in trespasses and sins," and like a carcass putrefying in them, and this whole world one great charnel-house, through man's manifold corruptions, when Christ came to awaken the dead, and they who heard lived John 5:25.

Again, the Center of this work, the special Work of God, that wherein He made all things new, is the Human Body of our Lord, the Temple which was destroyed by death, and within three days was raised up.

The answer to Habakkuk's enquiry, "How long?" had two sides: It had given assurance as to the end. The trial-time would not be prolonged for one moment longer than the counsel of God had fore-determined. The relief would "come, come; it would not be behind-hand." But meantime? There was no comfort to be given. For God knew that deepening sin was drawing on deepening chastisement. But in that He was silent as to the intervening time and pointed to patient expectation of a lingering future, as their only comfort, He implies that the immediate future was heavy. Habakkuk then renews his prayer for the years which had to intervene and to pass away. "In the midst of the years," before that "time appointed", when His promise should have its full fulfillment, before those years should come to their close, he prays; "revive Thy work." The years include all the long period of waiting for our Lord's first coming before He came in the Flesh; and now for His second coming and the "restitution of all things." in this long period, at times God seems to be absent, as when our Lord was asleep in the boat, while the tempest was raging; at times He bids "the storm to cease and there is a great calm."

This, in those long intervals, when God seems to be absent, and to leave all things to time and chance, and love waxes cold, and graces seem rare, is

the prayer of Habakkuk, of prophets and Psalmists, of the Church Psalm 80:14, "Return, we beseech Thee, O God of hosts, look down from heaven, behold and visit this vine Psalm 74:1, Psalm 74:11-12. O God, why hast Thou cast us off forever? Why withdrawest Thou Thy hand, Thy right hand? For God is my king of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. Isaiah 51:9-10 awake, awake, put on strength, Thou Arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not It which did smite Rahab, didst wound the dragon? Art thou not It which didst dry the sea, the waters of the great deep, which didst make the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? Psalm 80:3. Stir up Thy might and come, save us Lamentations 5:21. Renew our days, as of old." So our Lord taught His Church to pray continually, whenever she prayed, "Thy kingdom come," longing not for His final coming only, but for the increase of His glory, and the greater dominion of His grace, and His enthronement in the hearts of people, even before its complete and final coming. "In the midst of the years revive Thy work," is the Church's continual cry.

In the midst of the years make known - literally, "Thou wilt make known: in wrath Thou wilt remember mercy;" and so (as we use the word "wilt") the prophet, at once, foretelleth, expresseth his faith, prayeth. God had made known His work and His power in the days of old. In times of trouble He seems "like a God who hideth Himself." Now, he prays Him to shine forth and help; make known Thy work, before Thou fulfill it, to revive the drooping hopes of man, and that all may see that "Thy word is truth." Make Thyself known in Thy work, that, when the time cometh to Daniel 9:24 "make an end of sin" by the Death of Thy Son, Thy Awful Holiness, and the love wherewith Thou hast John 3:16 "so loved the world," may be the more known and adored.

In wrath Thou wilt remember mercy - So David prayed Psalm 25:6, "Remember Thy tender-mercies and Thy loving-kindnesses; for they are from old." "Thou wilt remember" that counsel for man's redemption which has been from the foundation of the world: for we seem in our own minds to be forgotten of God, when He delayeth to help us. God remembereth mercy Luke 1:54, Luke 1:72 in anger, in that in this life He never chastens without purposes of mercy, and His Mercy ever softeneth His judgments. His Promise of mercy, that the Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, went before the sentence of displeasure Genesis 3:19, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Jerome: "He reveals His wrath that He

may scare us from sin and so may not inflict it;" and when at last He inflicteth it, He hath mercy on the remnant who flee to His Mercy, that we be not like Sodom and Gomorrah. Romans 5:8, "while we were yet sinners," and God was angry, "Christ died for us," and, Titus 3:5, "He saved us, not for works which we had done, but out of His great Mercy," and took away sin, and restored us to life and interruption.

God had already promised by Micah Micah 7:15, "According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt, I will show him marvelous things." Isaiah had often used the great events of that deliverance as the symbols of the future. So now Habakkuk, in one vast panorama, as it were, without distinction of time or series of events, exhibits the future in pictures of the past. In the description itself which follows, he now speaks in the past, now in the future; of which times the future might be a vivid present; and the past a prophetic past. As a key to the whole, he says, "God shall come," indicating that all which follows, however spoken, was a part of that future. In no other way was it an answer to that prayer, "Revive Thy work." To foretell future deliverances in plain words, had been a comfort; it would have promised a continuance of that work. The unity and revival of the work is expressed, in that the past is made, as it was, the image of the future. That future was to be wondrous, superhuman; elsewhere the past miracles had been no image of it. It was to be no mere repetition of the future; and to mark this, the images are exhibited out of their historical order.

Verse 3

God came - literally, shall come

From Teman - "God shall come," as He came of old, clothed with majesty and power; but it was not mere power. The center of the whole picture is, as Micah and Isaiah had prophesied that it was to be, a new revelation Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2: "The law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Isaiah 44:5, "I will give Thee for a covenant to the people (Israel), for a light of the Gentiles." So now, speaking of the new work in store, Habakkuk renews the imagery in the Song of Moses Deuteronomy 33:2, in Deborah's Song Judges 5:5, and in David; Psalm 68:7 but there the manifestation of His glory is spoken of wholly in time past, and Mount Sinai is named. Habakkuk speaks of that coming as yet to be, and omits the express mention of Mount Sinai, which

was the emblem of the law. And so he directs us to another Lawgiver, whom God should raise up like unto Moses Deuteronomy 18:15-18, yet with a law of life, and tells how He who spake the law, God, shall come in likeness of our flesh. And the Holy One from Mount Paran In the earliest passage three places are mentioned, in which or from which the glory of God was manifested; with this difference however, that it is said Deuteronomy 33:2, The Lord came from Sinai, but His glory arose, as we should say "dawned" unto them from Seir, and flashed forth from Mount Paran Seir and Mount Paran are joined together by the symbol of the light which dawned or shone forth from them. In the second passage, the Song of Deborah, Seir and the field of Edom are the place whence God came forth; Sinai melted Judges 5:4-5 at His presence.

In Numbers 20:14-20; Luke 2:14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men," or, as the Seraphim sing first glory to God in Heaven Isaiah 6:3, "Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God of Sabaoth," and then, the whole earth is full of His glory; and Uncreated Wisdom saith (Job 25:3 and so the earth was full of His praise," i. e., the Church militant spread throughout the world, as in the Psalm Psalm 112:3, "The Lord's name is praised from the rising up of the sun unto the going down of the same, and, Psalm 8:1, O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth, who hast set Thy glory above the heavens."

Verse 4

and His brightness - that wherein God dwelleth Ezekiel 10:4, "the brightness of the Lord's glory," before which darkness fleeth Psalm 18:12, "was as the light," or as the sun. Out of the midst of the darkness, wherewith God, as it were Exodus 19:9, Exodus 19:16; Exodus 20:21, hid Himself, the brightness of the "inapproachable Light" wherein "He dwelleth," gleams forth Exodus 24:10, bright as the brightest "light" gathered into one, which man knows of and whereon he cannot gaze. So amid the darkness of the humiliation of His presence in the flesh, John 1:14: "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father;" and, Isaiah 9:2, "the people that walked in darkness see a great light," not dim. Theoph.: "nor weak, nor shadowed, like that of Moses, but pure unimaginable light of the knowledge of God." The brightness too of His flesh was like the light of the Godhead on Mount Tabor; for the Godhead flashed through. Rup.: "As often as He did His marvelous works, He put

forth His "brightness" (tempered for His creatures, since they could not approach the depth of His light, yet) as "light" to enlighten people to know Him. Yet the brightness issues from the Light, co-existing with it, and in it, while issuing from it. And so the words aptly express, how He who is the, Hebrews 1:3, "brightness of the Father's Glory and the express Image of His Person." Wisdom Hebrews 7:25, "brightness of the eternal light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of His goodness," is as the Light from whom He is. Nicene Creed: "Light of Light," Equal to the Father by whom He was begotten. As John says in John 1:9: "That was the true Light, which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world." As He prayeth in John 17:5, "Glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

He had horns coming out of His Hand - Jerome Dion: "Horns are everywhere in Holy Scripture the emblem of strength." It may be, that here "rays" are likened to horns, as the face of Moses is said, with the same image, to have "sent forth rays" after he had long been in the presence of God. So it may be a mingled image of the Glory and might; Light, which was also might. But "horns," though they may be a symbol of "light," are not of "lightning;" and the Hand of God is used as an emblem of His power, His protection, His bounty, His constraining force on His prophets. It is nowhere used of the side or sides. We have two images combined here; "horns" which in every other place in which they are used as a metaphor, is an emblem of power; and "from the hand of" which, wherever it is used of a person, means that the thing spoken of had been in his hand or power really or virtually. Both then combine in the meaning that the might came forth from the directing agency of God who wielded it.

When then did light or might, which lay, as it were, before in the hand of God, go forth from it? For "the hand of God" is always symbolic of His might, whether put forth, or for the time laid up in it. The form of the words remarkably corresponds to those of Moses, in the preface to the blessing on the tribes, which Habakkuk had in mind Deuteronomy 33:2, "From His right hand was a fiery law for them," and Paul says that the glory of Moses' face which he received from the Presence of God, was a symbol of the glory of the law. 2 Corinthians 3:7 says, "The ministration of death written and engraven on stone was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance." The law, being given by God, had a majesty of its own. The Psalms bear witness

to its power in converting, enwisening, rejoicing, enlightening the soul Psalm 19:8. They in whose heart it was, none of their steps slipped Psalm 37:31. The whole 119th Psalm is one varied testimony of its greatness and its power. It was a guide on the way; it was a schoolmaster unto Christ Galatians 3:24, by whom it was fulfilled. But itself bare witness of the greater glory which should come forth from the Hand of God. 2 Corinthians 3:11 states, "If that which is done away were glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." Cyril: "The horn signifieth power, when it is spoken of God the Father exhibiting to us God the Son, Psalm 111:9, ‹His horn shall be exalted in honor.' For all things which were marvelously done were glorious. The only-begotten One then came in our form, and, in regard to the flesh and the manhood, enduring the appearance of our weakness, but, as God, invisible in might and easily subduing whom He willed."

And what has been the weapon of His warfare, whereby He has subdued the might of Satan and the hearts of people, but "the horns" of His cross, whereto His sacred hands were once fastened by the sharp nails, where was the "hiding of His Power," when His almightiness lay hid in His passion Isaiah 53:3, and He was Psalm 22:6 "a worm and no man; a reproach of men and the despised of the people?" Now it is the scepter laid upon His shoulder Isaiah 9:6, the ensign and trophy of His rule, the rod of His strength Psalm 110:2, terrible to devils, salvation to mankind. In it lay His might, although concealed, as He said, "The words, horns are in His hands, show the insignia of His kingdom, by which horns, pushing and thrusting the invisible and opposing powers, He drove them away." Eusebius Dem. Evang. vi. 15. Add Cyprian Test. ad Quirin. ii. 21. p. 57. Oxford Translation: "The horns in His hands, what are they but the trophy of the cross?"

Augustine, de Civ. Dei xviii. 32), "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" John 12:32. His Might was lodged there, although hidden. It was "the hiding-place of His power." The cross was, 1 Corinthians 1:23-24, "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ crucified was the Power of God and the Wisdom of God." Through the Cross was, Matthew 28:18, "all power given to Him both in Heaven and earth." Daniel 7:14: "there was given Him dominion and glory and a

kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him." From Him shall go forth all power in earth; by His hands shall be given the vacant thrones in Heaven, as He says in Revelation 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father in His Throne." There too was the hiding of His Power, in that there, in His Cross, is our shelter, and in His pierced Side our hiding place, where we may take refuge from Satan and our sins; for therein is power.

Consider John 10:28, "Neither shall any pluck them out of My Hand." Light and darkness always meet in God. His inapproachable light is darkness to eyes which would gaze on it. Psalm 104:2, "he covereth Himself with Light as with a garmemt." His light is the very veil which hideth Him. His Light is darkness to those who pry into Him and His Nature; His darkness is light to those who by faith behold Him. He "emptied Himself" Philemon 2:8 and hid Himself; He hid the power of His Godhead in the weakness of the Manhood, and so, 2 Corinthians 4:6, "He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the Face of Jesus Christ." Jerome: "In the Cross was for a while His might hidden, when He said to His Father, Matthew 26:38-39, ‹My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me,‘ and on the Cross itself, Luke 23:13, ‹Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit. ‹"

Verse 5

Before Him went (goeth) the pestilence - then to consume His enemies. Exodus 23:27: "I will send My fear before thee, and will destroy all the people, to whom thou shalt come," and the lightnings are a token that, Psalm 68:1-2, "they which hate Him, flee before Him, and the wicked perish at the Presence of God." So, on His Ascension, Herod and Pilate were smitten by Him, and Elymas and Simon Magus before His apostles, and whatsoever hath lifted itself up against Him hath perished, and antichrist shall perish, Psalm 11:4, "at the breath of His mouth," and all the ungodly on the Day of Judgment.

And burning coals - rather, as English, "burning fever", Deuteronomy 32:2. (where also it is singular, as only beside in רשׁף בני *benēy resheph* Job

5:7.) So A. E., "burning coals" is from Kimchi, Tanchum gives as different opinions "sparks" or "arrows" or "pestilence;" but the meanings "sparks, arrows," are ascribed only to the plural. Psalm 76:4; 88:48; Matthew 13:51, Matthew 13:42, "they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire."

Verse 6

He stood - It is "a metaphor of his giving victory to Israel" Tanchum.

And measured - So Kimchi, A. E., Rashi, Tanchum, Vulgate. It is borne out by Hithpolel. "extended himself," 1 Kings 17:21. By an interchange of dentals; מוד might be = מוט, and so the Aramaic and the Septuagint but in no other case do the two forms co-exist in Hebrew.

The earth - Joshua, after he had conquered the land, meted it out and divided it among the people. He who should come, should measure out the earth in its length and breadth, that earth which His glory filleth. "He stood," as Stephen saw Him, Acts 7:56, "standing at the right hand of God." Isaiah saith, Isaiah 3:13: "The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people." He had not need to go forth, but, in the abode of His glory, "He stood" and beheld and with His eye "measured the earth," as His own, whereas, before the cross, it lay under 1 Corinthians 2:5, "the Prince of this world," and he had said, Luke 4:6, "it is delivered unto me, and unto whomsoever I will, I give it." "He measureth it," and gave it to His apostles. Matthew 28:18; Mark 16:15: "all power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," and, Psalm 19:4, "their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world." He measureth it also, surveying and weighing all who dwell therein, their persons, qualities, deeds, good or bad, to requite them, as "Judge of quick and dead;" as David cast down Moab and measured them with a line, 2 Samuel 8:2, "to put to death and to keep alive."

He beheld, and drove asunder the nations - or, "made the nations to tremble." When Israel came out of Egypt and God divided the Red Sea before them, they sang: Exodus 15:15-16 "The people shall hear and be afraid; terror shall take hold of the inhabitants of Palestine; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold of them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away; fear and dread shall fall on them; by the greatness of Thy power they shall be still as a stone." Fear and awe were to be renewed. All nearness of God brings terror to sinful man. When the news came through

the wise men, that they had, Matthew 2:1-3, "seen in the East the star of Him who was born, King of the Jews," not only was Herod the King troubled, but "all Jerusalem with him." Pilate John 19:8 "was afraid" when he condemned Jesus; the high priests wondered "whereunto this should grow," and expostulated, Acts 5:24, Acts 5:28, "ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood upon us." Pagandom was as a beleaguered city, mastered by an ubiquitous Presence, which they knew not how to meet. "The state is beset: the Christians are in their fields. in their forts, in their islands. Every sex, age, condition, and now even rank is going over to this sect." The fierceness of the persecutions was the measure of their fear. They put forth all human might to stamp out the spark, lest their gods, and the greatness of the empire which they ascribed to their gods, should fall before this unknown Power.

And the everlasting mountains were scattered; the perpetual hills did bow - all power, great or small, gave way before Him. All which withstood was scattered asunder, all which in pride lifted itself up was brought low, although before the coming of the Saviour it had ever gone with neck erect, and none could humble its pride. There is something so marvelous about those ancient mountains. There they stood before man was on the earth; they are so solid, man so slight; they have survived so many generations of man; they will long survive us; they seem as if they would stand forever; nothing could stand before the might of God. What symbol could be more apt? To the greater pride the heavier lot is assigned; the mountains lifted on high above the earth and, as it were, looking down upon it, are scattered or dispersed, as when a stone flieth in pieces under the stroke of the hammer. The "hills" are bowed down only; and this may be the pride of man humbled under the yoke of Christ.

His ways are everlasting - "Everlasting" is set over against "everlasting." The "everlasting" of the creature, that which had been as long as creation had been, co-existing with its whole duration, its most enduring parts, are as things past and gone; "the everlasting mountains, the hills of eternity," have been scattered in pieces and bowed, and are no more. Over against these stands the everpresent eternity of God. "His ways are everlasting," ordered everlastingly, existing everlastingly in the Divine Mind, and, when in act among us, without change in Him. The prophet blends in these great words, things seemingly contrary, ways which imply progress, eternity which is unchangeable "God ever worketh, and ever

resteth; unchangeable, yet changing all; He changeth His works, His purpose unchanged". "For Thou art Most High, and art not changed, neither in Thee doth today come to a close; yet in Thee it doth come to a close; because all such things also are in Thee. For they had no way to pass away, unless Thou heldest them together. ‹And since Thy years fail not,' Thy years are one Today. How many of our's and our fathers' years have flowed away through Thy today; and from it received the measure and the mould of such being as they had; and still others shall flow away, and so receive the mould of their degree of being. But Thou art still the Same; and all things of tomorrow, and all beyond, and all of yesterday, and all behind it, Thou wilt do in this today, Thou hast done in this today"

To these His goings, a highway is made by the breaking down of all which exalted itself, as Isaiah had said, "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low and the Lord Alone shall be exalted in that day" Isaiah 2:17; and "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low" Isaiah 40:3.

Bernard in Ps. Qui habitat. Serra. xi. 8: "The Everlasting ways of the Everlasting God are Mercy and Truth, by these Ways are the hills of the world and the proud demons, the princes of the darkness of this world, bowed down, who knew not the way of mercy and truth nor remembered its paths. What hath he to do with truth, who is a liar and the father of it, and of whom it is written, ‹he abode not in the Truth?' But how far he is from Mercy, our misery witnesseth, inflicted on us by him. When was he ever merciful, ‹who was a murderer from the beginning?' So then those swelling hills were bowed down from the Everlasting Ways, when through their own crookedness they sunk away from the straight ways of the Lord, and became not so much ways as precipices. How much more prudently and wisely are other hills bowed down and humbled by these ways to salvation! For they were not bowed from them, as parting from their straightness, but the Everlasting Ways themselves bowed down. May we not now see the hills of the world bowed down, when those who are high and mighty with devoted submission bow themselves before the Lord. and worship at His Feet? Are they not bowed down, when from their own destructive loftiness

of vanity and cruelty, they are turned to the humble way of mercy and truth?"

Verse 7

I saw - in prophetic vision 1 Kings 22:17.

The tents of Cushan in (under) affliction - Upon the coming of the Lord there follows the visitation of those alien from Him.. Cushan-Rishathaim was the first, whose ambition God overruled to chasten His people Judges 3:8-10.. It has been remarked that as "king of Aram-Naharaim" or North Mesopotamia, he was probably sovereign of the Aram, from which Balak king of Moab, allied with Midian, sent for Balaam to curse Israel. Midian was the last enemy who, at the very entrance of the promised land, seduced God's people into idolatry and foul sin and lusts. Midian became then the object of the wrath of God Numbers 25:17. They were also among the early oppressors of Israel, leaving Judges 6:4, Judges 6:11. "no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor ass," driving them for refuge to dwell in the "dens and the mountains, caves and fastnesses," consuming the produce of their land like locusts, so that he whom God raised up as their subduer, was threshing even in a wine-press to hide it from them.

Both the kingdom of Aram-Naharaim and Midian disappear from history after those great defeats. Midian, beside its princes Judges 8:10. "lost," by mutual slaughter, "one hundred and twenty thousand men who drew sword." It left its name as a proverb for the utter destruction of these who sought to exterminate the people of God. Psalm 83:9, Psalm 83:11-12. "Do unto them as unto the Midianites; make them and their princes like Oreb and Zeeb; all their princes us Zebah and as Zalmunnah, who said, let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession." It was an exterminating warfare, which rolled back on those who waged it. So Isaiah sums up an utter breaking-off of the yoke and the rod of the oppressor, as being Isaiah 9:4 "as in the day of Midian." The same word, aven, is nothingness, iniquity, and the fruit of iniquity, trouble (Job 5:6; Job 26:14; Jeremiah 4:15; Hosea 9:4; not in Psalm 55:4; nor (as Gesenius) in Job 4:8; Psalm 22:8; Isaiah 59:4.) (since iniquity is emptiness and opposed to that which is, God and His Goodness, and ends in sorrow); so then Cushan is seen as lying as all sinners do, weighed down by and under what is very "emptiness."

Tents and curtains are emblems of what shall pass away, under which the wicked shelter themselves from the troubles of this present life, as from heat and rain, "but which in themselves decay, and are consumed by fire." "The curtains of Midian tremble." The prophet uses the present to shew that he was not speaking of any mere past terror, but of that terror, which should still seize those opposed to God. The word "wrath" (רגז *rôgez*) echoes through the hymns; Habakkuk 3:2. here the wicked tremble, רגז *râgaz* under it, to perish; afterward the prophet Habakkuk 3:16. to live.

Verse 8

Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? - The prophet asks the question thrice, as to the two miracles of the dividing of the Red Sea and the Jordan River, thereby the more earnestly declaring, that God meant somewhat by these acts and beyond them. He asks, as Daniel Daniel 7:16. and Zechariah asked, what was the truth of the things which they saw. God's defilings with His former people were as much ensamples of what should be with us 1 Corinthians 10:11. as the visions shown to the prophets. Hereafter too, there shall be Luke 21:25; Revelation 8:6 "signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring;" there shall be deepening plagues upon the sea and the rivers and fountains of waters; and every living soul in the sea shall die Revelation 16:3. But God's purpose therein aforetime was not as to the sea or the rivers, but for the salvation of His elect; so shall it be to the end. Mighty as may be the "mighty waves of the sea" which lift themselves up against the Lord, "mightier on high is the Lord" Psalm 93:4. Jerome: "As Thou didst dry up the Jordan and the Red Sea, fighting for us; for Thou wert not wroth with the rivers or the sea, nor could things without sense offend Thee; so now mounting Thy chariots, and taking Thy bow, Thou wilt give salvation to Thy people; and the oaths which Thou swarest to our fathers and the tribes, Thou wilt fulfill forever."

Thou didst ride upon Thy horses - as though God set His army Psalm 103:12. "the Hosts which do His pleasure," against the armies of earth, as the prophet's servant had his eyes opened to see 2 Kings 6:15. "the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." Jerome: "Yet amidst so many thousands of horses and chariots, there was no rider; He was the Rider and Ruler of those horses, of whom the Psalmist

says Psalm 80:1. ‹Thou that sittest above the Cherubim, shew Thyself.‘ With such horses and such chariots was Elijah also taken up into Heaven.”

And Thy chariots of salvation - literally “Thy chariots are salvation.” Not, as in human armies, except as far as they are the armies of God, to destruction. The end of God‘s armies, His visitations and judgments, is the salvation of His elect, even while they who are inwardly dead, perish outwardly also. Nor, again, do they prepare for the deliverance for which He intends them. With God, to will is to do. His chariots are salvation. His help is present help. His chariots are the tokens and channels of His Presence to aid. And so, they who bore His “Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel, chosen vessels” to bear it, are, in a yet fuller sense, His chariots, which are salvation. Jerome said that they “are holy souls, upon which the word of God cometh, to save them and others by them Psalm 73:23.. Yet such an one, as endowed with might and ready obedience, and swiftness and nobleness to bear the Word of God, and through His might whom they bore, not their own, nor making it their own, bearing down everything which opposed itself.

Cyril: “The object of the prophet, is to show that the second dispensation is better and more glorious, and of incomparably better things than the old. For of old He led Israel forth, through the bodily service of Moses, changing into blood the rivers of Egypt, and doing signs and wonders; then dividing the Red Sea, and carrying over the redeemed, and choking in the waters the most warlike of the Egyptians. But when the only-begotten Word of God became Man, He withdrew the whole human race under heaven from the tyranny of Satan, not changing rivers into blood, nor pouring forth His anger upon waters, nor dividing waves of the sea, nor bringing destruction upon people, but rather destroying the murderous Serpent himself, and taking away the sin which had been invented by him and for him, and loosing the unconquered might of death, and calling all to the knowledge of God, through the holy apostles, who, running forth their course under the whole heaven and bearing about the name of Christ, were very rightly had in admiration.

He saith then, O Lord, most worthy to be heard are those things, of which Thou hast Thyself been the Doer, and what Thou hast done anew is far better than what Thou didst through Moses. For Thou wilt not inflict wrath on rivers, nor show Thy might on the sea; not in these things will Thy

divine and marvelous power gleam forth, but ‹Thou wilt ride upon Thy horses,‘ and ‹Thy chariots are Salvation.‘ What may these horses be? The blessed disciples, apostles and evangelists, they who took on them wholly the yoke of all His divine will, they, the noble, the obedient, ready for all things, whatsoever should please Him; who had Christ to sit upon them, whereof one is the blessed Paul, of whom Himself saith, Acts 9:15: ‹He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My Name before the Gentiles.‘ Of fiery speed were these Horses, encompassing the whole earth; so then the chariots of God are said to be ‹ten thousand times ten thousand‘ Psalm 68:17. For countless, each in their times, and after them, became leaders of the people, and subjected the neck of the understanding to the yoke of the Saviour, and bare about His glory throughout the whole earth, and rightly divided the word of truth, and subdued the whole earth, as with the speed of horsemen."

His chariots are salvation - Cyril: "for they ran not in vain, but to save cities and countries and nations together, Christ overthrowing the empires of devils, who, so to speak, divided among themselves the whole earth, subduing its dwellers to their own will."

Verse 9

Thy bow was made quite naked - The word is repeated for emphasis. Literally, (In) "nakedness, it was laid naked;" the sheath being laid aside and cast away, as Isaiah says, Isaiah 22:6. "Kir laid bare the shield." Gregory, Mor. xix. 9. n. 54, Compare Augustine in Psalm 64:7, "as with a swift arrow," because men regard them not, coming from a bow at a distance which they see not. His more signal judgments He makes bare in sight of all.

According to the oath of (to) the tribes - "the oath which He swore unto our father Abraham," which oath He often renewed to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and again to David This oath, the word and promise of God, was the pledge of the deliverance of His people, that they "should be saved from their enemies, and from the hand of all that hate them." It lay, as it were, covered and hid, so long as God completed it not. Selah. A pause followeth, wherein to meditate on all which is contained in the word or promise of God, which is all time and eternity.

Thou didst cleave the earth with (into) rivers - Sea and river had become dry land for the passing through of God‘s people; again, the rock, struck by Moses‘ rod, was split, so that "rivers ran in the dry places." Until

that Rock, which was Christ, was stricken, and "out of His side came blood and water" John 19:24, the whole world was desert and barren; then it was turned into streams of water, and "now not four but twelve streams went forth from the Paradise of Scriptures" (Jerome) For from the One Fountain which is Christ, there issue many streams, even as many as convey the waters of His teaching, to water the earth.

Verse 10

The mountains saw Thee and they trembled - literally, "they tremble." While man is insensate, inanimate nature feels and attests the presence of its Maker. "It saw it trembles." To see, feel, tremble were one. The prophet does not follow a bare order of events, or bind himself to miracles which actually took place. The mountains tremble with earthquakes, or seem to be shaken by the thunders which they re-echo. And so they are signs, how what is firmest and closes up the way to man, trembles at the Presence of God. Whatever is lifted up shall be bowed down before Him. (See Zechariah 4:7.). But the word "trembled" is that which is especially used of travail pangs and so it may spiritually denote that "they who conceive the fear of God shall bring forth unto salvation." "The overflowing," i. e., the impetuous, sweeping, flow, of the water (or, of waters), such as in themselves would bear all before them, pass by harmless. The more they swell, the more they expend themselves, and pass away. "The whole force of persecution, wherewith they vexed Thy people, at sight of Thee passed away," like a torrent which rages and disappears, and, by raging, the sooner wastes itself.

The deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands - מרום = רום *mârôm* which stands as the accusative of direction with "lifted up the eyes" Isaiah 37:23; Isaiah 40:26.

On high - The noise of the waves, when God brought the strong East wind over it and Psalm 106:9. rebuked it, was as a cry to God; the waves, as they swelled, were like hands lifted up to Him, and stricken one against the other. There is no distinct ground against a slightly different rendering it: "the deep uttered his voice, the height lifted up his hands" i. e., to One yet higher, whom height and depth owned as their Lord and worshipped.

Verse 11

Sun and moon stood still (as one act retiring into) in their habitation - They withdrew, as it were, in the midst of the great tempest, wherein Joshua 10:11-13. "God cast down great stones from heaven upon" His

enemies and they died; and "the sun stood still, and the moon stayed." The sun too withdrew itself in the great darkness at the crucifixion, as not bearing to look upon the death of its Maker, when the majesty of the Sun of Righteousness was darkened o'er; and signs in the sun and in the moon there shall be to the end.

At the light of Thine arrows they went - A. E.: "There was no need of the sun by day, nor of the moon by night; for by the light of Thine arrows can the sons of men hold their way." Tanchum: "This is a mystical interpretation, as you see; this is like the promise of the Most High; Isaiah 60:19. ‹the sun shall be no more for thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee, and the Lord shall be to thee an everlasting light.'" The judgments of God are a light to His people, while they are the destruction of His enemies; in them they "learn righteousness" Isaiah 26:9. The arrows are God's judgments, as they threaten and wound from afar;

The shining of Thy glittering spear - literally, of the lightning of Thy spear, when close at hand. When all other light is withdrawn, and the Sun, our Lord, is hardly beheld in the darkness of the last days, and the moon, the Church, shall not give her light, Christ not shining upon her as before, because "iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold," and "stars," many who seem to shine with the light of grace, "shall fall from heaven," His own shall walk on and advance in holiness. Dion.: "from strength to strength, Psalm 84:7. from good to better, from the way to their home," by the bright light of the lightning of God's Judgments, wherein His glory shall be manifested. Arrows and spears are part of the spiritual armory of God, wherewith the people are subdued unto Him. Cyril: "armory, not wherewith He is girt but which He giveth to those who are meet; bright and as it were full of lightning. For most transparent is virtue." They went then at the light of Thine arrows. Cyril: "because to those who love sin virtue has no beauty, nor, as yet, any brightness. But to those who know her she is nothing less than lightning, bright and transparent, so that whoso hath her is easily known to all around. The disciples then, first having the lightning of Thine arms, shall lead others also to its Light. Admiring and conceiving in themselves those virtues which are the arms of Christ, they shine forth to others, a gleam, as it were, of the bright flash of light inherent in those graces." Rup.: "They were enlightened and began, by preaching, to send forth shining words of truth. But those words are Thine arrows, shining

arrows, showing by their light the way of life, and by their sharp point pricking the hearts of people unto repentance."

Verse 12

Thou didst march the earth in indignation - The word "tread" is used of very solemn manifestations of God, (Judges 5:4; Psalm 68:8; of the procession of the ark, 2 Samuel 6:13. It is denied as to the idols, Jeremiah 10:5.) of His going to give to His own victory over their enemies Not the land only, as of old, but the earth is the scene of His judgments; the earth which was "full of His praise," which He "meted out" Habakkuk 3:3, Habakkuk 3:6 which contained the nations whom He chastened, the whole earth.

Thou dost thresh the heathen in anger - Not then only, but at all times unto the end, distress of nations and perplexity are among the shoots of the fig tree, which betoken that the everlasting, Luke 21:25-31, "summer is nigh at hand." Jerusalem, when it had slain the Prince of Life, was given over to desolation and counted like the pagan. It became the synagogue, not the Church; and so in the destruction of Jerusalem (as it is an image of the destruction of the world) was that again fulfilled, "Thou dost march through the earth in indignation, Thou dost thresh the heathen in anger."

Verse 13

Thou wentest forth - Even a Jew says of this place, Kimchi: "The past is here used for the future; and this is frequent in the language of prophecy; for prophecy, although it be future, yet since it is, as it were, firmly fixed, they use the past concerning it." The prophet speaks again in the past, perhaps to fix the mind on that signal going-forth, when God destroyed Pharaoh, the first enemy who essayed to destroy the chosen line. This stands at the head of all those dispensations, in which God put or shall put forth His might to save His people or destroy their enemies. All is with Him one everlasting purpose; the last were, as it were, embodied in the first: were it not for the last, the first would not have been. Prophecy, in speaking of the first, has in mind all the rest, and chiefly the chiefest and the end of all, the full salvation of His people through Jesus Christ our Lord. "Thou wentest forth," i. e. Rup.: "Thou, the Unseen God, gavest signs which may be seen of Thy Presence or coming to men." "Thou wentest forth," not by change of place, for Thou art not bounded; Thou art without change; but by showing Thy power, and doing something anew openly.

For the salvation of thy people even for salvation with Thine anointed - The English Version is doubtless right. So Aquila, although a Jew rendered, and the 5th Version. The 6th, a Christian, translated, "Thou wentest forth to save Thy people through Jesus, Thy Christ." So also the Vulgate and other old Jewish authorities. Rachmon (in Martini Pug. Fid. f. 534.). notes "that the word (את *'êth*) means "with," as in Genesis 37:2; Genesis 39:2." For although it might he used to mark the object only after a verbal noun, it is not likely that the construction would have been changed, unless the meaning were different. If (את *'êth*) had been only the sign of the object there was no occasion for inserting it at all, and it would probably have been avoided, as only making the sentence ambiguous, in that it may more obviously be taken in the sense adopted by Aquila and the Vulgate and the English version.

The Septuagint and two early heretics who disbelieved the divinity of our Lord (Theodotion and Symmachus) render "to save Thy Christs." Moreover, the Septuagint is wrong in that the "anointed" is never used of the people, but of single persons only, who were shadows of the Christ. "Thine anointed" is understood of one individual - "the king of Judah," by A. E. "Saul and David," by Rashi; "Moses," by Abarb.; "Hezekiah" by Tanchum; but "Messiah Ben David," by Kimchi Sal. b. Mel. God, from the first, helped His people through single persons - Moses, Joshua, each of the Judges - accustoming them to receive deliverance by one, and to gather together all their hopes in One. To Moses He said, Exodus 3:12: "I will be with thee," and to Joshua, Joshua 1:5: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee," and to Cyrus, Isaiah 45:2: "I will go before thee," preparing His people to receive that nearer Presence with His Christ, of which our Lord says: "Believest thou not, that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The Father that Dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works" John 14:10 Rup.: "The Son of God, God Invisible, became Man, visible; and with Him, so going forth, the Holy Spirit went forth ‹to the salvation of His people,' so as to give a visible sign of His Coming. For upon His Christ Himself, Him who was anointed with the Holy Spirit Acts 10:38. ‹He descended in a bodily Shape, as a Dove.' So He ‹went forth to the Salvation of His people,' i. e., to save His people with His Christ, our Saviour;" and again, on the Day of Pentecost, when that other Comforter came, "whom," He said, I" will send unto you from the Father," and in whose Presence His own promise was fulfilled, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." His

Presence was manifested both in the remission of sins, and the parting of graces among all, and in the Hebrews 2:4. "signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost," wherewith "God bare witness to the apostles," when, Mark 16:20, "they went forth, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." A going forth to judgment, at the end of the world, is foretold in the like image of warfare (Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:11 ff).

Thou woundedst (crushedst) the head out of the house of the wicked - One wicked stands over against One anointed, as in Isaiah Isaiah 11:4. "He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked;" and David speaks of one "He shall smite the head over a great land" Psalm 110:6; and Paul speaks of "that wicked, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming" 1 Thessalonians 4:8 Him He shall destroy at once from above and below; overthrowing his kingdom from the foundation. From above, his head was crushed in pieces; from below, the house was razed from its very foundations. So Amos said, Amos 9:1, "The Lord said, Smite the capital, and the lintel (threshold) strike, and wound them in the head, all of them;" and with a different image Amos 2:9. "I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath." First, the head is struck off, crushed; then the house from the foundations to its neck; then as it were the headless walls. The image of the neck may be the rather used to recall, that as the house of God is built of living stones, so the kingdom of the evil one is made of living dead, who shall never cease to exist in an undying death. The bruising of Satan, the head or prince of this evil world, is the deliverance of the world. His head was bruised, when, by the Death of our Lord, "the Prince of this world was cast out;" he is "crushed out of the house of the wicked, whenever he, the strong man," is bound and cast out, and "the soul of the sinner which had been his abode, becomes the house of God, and righteousness dwelleth there and walketh in her."

Rup.: "Thou didst not leave any error or vice in the world unshaken, either what was concealed, like the foundation of a house; or that which was open, as the neck of the body is open;" to the neck, where the destruction from above ceased, so that nothing remained unsmitten. Rup.: "For they being, by the fiery tongues which Thou shewedst without, made fervent and strong, wise and eloquent, ceased not, until they made known to

all, what folly was this world‘s wisdom, what sacrilege its sacred worship.” Dion.: “His secret counsels He laid bare, as the apostle says 2 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Corinthians 12:10. We are not ignorant of his devices; and, to another is given the discerning of spirits.”

Verse 14

Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages - The destruction comes not upon himself only, but upon the whole multitude of his subjects; and this not by any mere act of divine might, but “with his own staves,” turning upon him the destruction which he prepared for others. So it often was of old. When the Midianites and Amalekites and the children of the east Judges 6:3-4 wasted Israel in the days of Gideon “the Lord set every man‘s sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host” Judges 7:22; and when God delivered the Philistines into the hand of Jonathan 1 Samuel 14:12, 1 Samuel 14:16, 1 Samuel 14:20 so it was with “Ammon Moab and the inhabitants of Mount Seir,” at the prayer of Jehoshaphat and his army 2 Chronicles 20:22-23. And so it shall be, God says, at the end, of the army of God; “every man‘s sword shall be against his brother,” Ezekiel 38:21. and Isaiah says, Isaiah 9:20, “every man shall eat the flesh of his own arm,” and Zechariah Zechariah 14:13, “a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay every man hold on the hand of his neighbor, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbor.”

So Pharaoh drove Israel to the shore of the sea, in which he himself perished; Daniel‘s accusers perished in the den of lions, from which Daniel was delivered unharmed; Daniel 6:24. and so Haman was hanged on the gallows which he prepared for Mordecai Esther 7:10. So it became a saying of Psalmists (Psalm 7:5, add Psalm 9:15; Psalm 10:2; Psalm 35:8; Psalm 57:6; Psalm 94:23; Psalm 141:10; Proverbs 5:22; Proverbs 26:27; Ecclesiastes 10:8.) “He made a pit and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made; his mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate:” and this from above, sent down by God. The pagan too observed that there was “no juster law than that artificers of death by their own art should perish.” This too befell him, when he seemed to have all but gained his end. “They came (out) as a whirlwind to scatter me,” with whirlwind force, to drive them asunder to all the quarters of the heavens, as the wind scatters the particles of Job 37:11.

cloud, or (Jeremiah 13:24, add Jeremiah 18:17; Isaiah 41:16, Delitzsch) "as the stubble which passeth away by the wind of the wilderness." Pharaoh at the Red Sea or Sennacherib, sweep all before them. Pharaoh said Exodus 15:9. "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them."

Their rejoicing - It is no longer one enemy. The malice of the members was concentrated in the head; the hatred concentrated in him was diffused in them. The readiness of instruments of evil to fulfill evil is an incentive to those who conceive it; those who seem to ride the wave are but carried on upon the crest of the surge which they first roused. They cannot check themselves or it. So the ambitious conceiver of mischief has his own guilt; the willing instruments of evil have theirs. Neither could be fully evil without the other. Sennacherib had been nothing without those fierce warriors who are pictured on the monuments, with individual fierceness fulfilling his will, nor the Huns without Attila, or Attila without his hordes whose tempers he embodied. Satan would be powerless but for the willing instruments whom he uses. So then Holy Scripture sometimes passes from the mention of the evil multitude to that of the one head, on earth or in hell, who impels them; or from the one evil head who has his own special responsibility in originating it, to the evil multitude, whose responsibility and guilt lies in fomenting the evil which they execute.

Their rejoicing - He does not say simply "they rejoice to," but herein is their exceeding, exulting joy. The wise of this earth glories in his wisdom, the mighty man in his might, the rich in his riches: the truly wise, that he understandeth and knoweth God. But as for these, their exultation is concentrated in this, savagery; in this is their jubilation; this is their passion. Psalmists and pious people use the word to express their exulting joy in God: people must have an object for their empassioned souls; and these, in cruelty.

As it were to devour the poor secretly - From the general he descends again to the individual, but so as now to set forth the guilt of each individual in that stormy multitude which is, as it were, one in its evil unity, when each merges his responsibility, as it were, in that of the body, the horde or the mob, in which he acts. Their exultation, he says, is that of the individual robber trod murderer, who lies wait secretly in his ambush, to spring on the defenseless wanderer, to slay him and devour his substance. Premeditation, passion, lust of cruelty, cowardice, murderousness, habitual

individual savagery and treachery, and that to the innocent and defenseless, are all concentrated in the words, "their exultation is, as it were, to devour the poor secretly," i. e. "in their secret haunt."

Pharaoh had triumphed over Israel. "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in" Exodus 14:3. He rejoiceth in having them wholly in his power, as a lion has his prey in his lair, in secret, unknown to the Eyes of God whom he regarded not, with none to behold, none to deliver. Dion.: "They gloried in oppressing the people of Israel, even as the cruel man glories in secretly rending and afflicting the needy, when without fear they do this cruelty, nor heed God beholding all as Judge. The invisible enemies too rejoice very greatly in the ruin of our souls "Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him: for if I be cast down, they that trouble me will rejoice at it Psalm 13:4. "O Lord and governor of all my life, leave me not to their counsels and let me not fall by them" (Sirach 23:1). Yet God left them not in his hands; but even "brake the head of Leviathan in pieces."

Verse 15

Thou didst walk through the sea with Thine horses - God Himself is pictured as leading them on the way, Himself at the head of their multitude, having, as Asaph said of old "His path in the sea." So Isaiah Isaiah 63:13. "who leddest them in the depths;" and Zechariah Zechariah 10:11. "And he shall pass through the sea." God was literally there; for Acts 17:28. "in Him we live and move and have our being." He who "is wholly everywhere but the whole of Him nowhere" manifested His Presence there. Such anthropomorphisms have a truth, which people's favorite abstractions have not.

Through the heap - oof great waters as of old Exodus 15:8; Psalm 78:13. "the waters stood us a heap, and He made the waters to stand a a heap." The very hindrances to deliverance are in God's hands a way for His ends. The waves of the Red Sea rose in heaps, yet this was but a readier way for the salvation of His people and the destruction of their enemies. Dion.: "God prepareth ever a way for His elect in this present evil world, and leadeth them along the narrow way which leadeth unto life."

Verse 16

When I heard - , better, "I heard and … " The prophet sums up, resuming that same declaration with which he had begun, "I heard, I was afraid." Only now he expresses far more strongly both his awe at God's

judgments and his hopes. He had just beheld the image of the destruction of Pharaoh, the end of the brief triumphing of the wicked and of the trials of God‘s people. But awful as are all the judgments of God upon the enemies of His people, it was not this alone which was the object of his terror. This was deliverance. It was the whole course of God‘s dispensations, which he had heard; God‘s punishment of His people for their sins, and the excision of their oppressors, who, in His Providence, fulfilling their own evil end, executed His chastisements upon them. The deliverances, which shadowed out the future, had their dark side, in that they were deliverances. The whole course of this world is one series of man‘s unfaithfulnesses or sins, God‘s chastisements of them through their fellow-sinners, and His ultimate overt brow of the aggressors. Those first three centuries of glorious martyrdoms were, on the one side, the malice and hatred of Satan and the world against the truth; on the other side, the prophets of those days told their people that they were the chastisements of their sins. Future deliverance implies previous chastisement of those delivered. The prophet then, at the close, in view of all, for himself and all whose perplexities he represented and pleaded before God, chooses his and their portion. “Suffer here and rest forever!” “Endure here any terror, any failure of hopes, yet trust wholly in God, have rest in the day of trouble and sing the endless song!” Again he casts himself back amid all the troubles of this life.

I heard - (i. e. that speech of God uttering judgments to come) “and my belly,” the whole inward self, bodily and mental, all his hidden powers, trembled, “vibrated” as it were, “Sin every fibre of his frame,” at the wrath of God; “my lips quivered at the voice of God,” so that they almost refused their office and could hardly fulfill the prophetic duty and utter the terrors which he had heard; his very strongest parts, the bones, which keep the whole frame of man together, that he be not a shapeless mass, and which remain unconsumed long after the rest has wasted away in the grave, “rottenness entered into them,” corruption and mouldering eating into them; and “I trembled in myself” (literally under me) so that he was a burden to himself and sank unable to support himself, “that I might rest in the day of trouble.”

All up to this time was weariness and terror, and now at once all is repose; the prophet is carried, as it were, over the troubles of this life and the decay of the grave to the sweetness of everlasting rest I, the same, suffer these things, terror, quivering, rottenness in the very bones themselves. “I

(literally) who shall rest in the day of trouble." I who had not rest until then, shall enter into rest then in the very day of trouble to all who found their rest in the world not in God, the day of judgment Psalm 94:12-13.. "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him in Thy law, that Thou mayest give him patience in time of adversity, until the pit be digged up for the ungodly."

"O my soul; had we daily to bear tortures, had we for a long time to endure hell itself, that we might see Christ in His glory and be the companion of His saints, were it not worth enduring all sorrow, that we might be partakers of so exceeding a good, such exceeding glory?"

When he cometh up unto the people, he shall invade them with his troops - or, which is probably meant, "when he cometh up who shall invade them." It is a filling out of "the day of trouble." However, near the trouble came, he, under the protection of God and in firm trust in Him, would be at rest in Him. The troubles of God's prophets are not the outward troubles, but the sins of their people which bring those troubles, the offence against the majesty of God, the loss of souls. Jeremiah was more at rest in the court of the prison, than when all the people did curse him Jeremiah 15:10 for telling them God's truth. He who fears God and His judgments betimes, shall rest in perfect tranquility when those judgments come. The immediate trouble was the fierce assault of the Chaldees whose terror he had described; and this, picturing, as through the prophecy, all other judgments of God even to the last, when devils shall contend about the souls of people, as Satan did about the body of Moses.

Verse 17

Although - literally, For

The fig tree shall not blossom - The prophet repeats his confidence in God, premising his knowledge that all human hopes should fail. I know, he says, all stay and support shall fail; he numbers from the least to the greatest, the fruits of trees, the fig, vine and olive, for sweetness, gladness, cheerfulness Psalm 104:15. whereof the well-being of the vine and fig tree furnishes the proverbial picture of peace and rest. These shall either not shoot forth, or shall at time of fruit-gathering have no produce or having, as it were, labored to bring forth fruit shall lie and fail: yet further "the staff of life" itself shall fail; "the fields shall yield no meat;" all the fields, as though they were but one shall have one common lot, barrenness.

Yet more; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold; not those only, feeding abroad in fields and open plains, shall be driven away, but they shall be carried away by the enemy from the folds, where they seemed penned securely; and not these only, but "there shall be no herd in the stalls," even the stronger animals shall utterly fail; every help for labor, or for clothing, or for food shall cease; he speaks not of privation, partial failure, but of the entire loss of all things, no meat from the fields, no herd in the stalls; and what then?

Verse 18

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. - The words are very impressive, as they stand in the Hebrew. "For," he says, "the fig tree shall not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vines, the labor of the olive hath failed;" (the prophet does not look on, only to these things, but in his mind stands in the midst of them, they are done, and he amid them, feeling their effects) "and the field hath yielded no food; the flock hath been cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stall; and I." He relates it as the result of all which had gone before; such and such was the state of fruit-trees, vintage, harvest, flocks and herds; such was the aspect of all nature, living or inanimate; all was barren, disappointing; all had failed and was gone; and then at last he comes to himself, and I; what is he doing, when all nature and every seeming hope is dead? thus and thus it is with them; and I will rejoice.

He almost uses the expression as to the exultation of the enemy, adopting the same word only in a softer form. "Their exulting joy was" concentrated in this, "as to devour the poor secretly;" he too had "exulting joy." There is a joy against joy - a joy of theirs in the possession of all which their rapacity covets, in the possession of all things: a joy of his amid the privation of all things. He contrasts the two joys, as David had of old; Psalm 17:13, Psalm 17:15: "the men of the world, whose portion is in this life, whose belly Thou fillest with Thy hid treasure; they are sated of children and leave their substance to their babes: I," he adds, "I shall behold Thy Presenee in righteousness, I shall be sated, in the awakening, with Thine image." So Habakkuk, "I will not rejoice only, but shout for joy;" and not so only, but "I will bound for joy;" and this not for a time only; both words express a drawing, yearning of the soul, and this yet more and more,

“I will shout for joy and would shout on; I will bound for joy and would bound on.”

But whence the source of this measureless unutterable joy? In the Lord, the Unchangeable God, “who is and was and is to come,” I am (it is the incommunicable Name); in the God of my salvation: it is almost the Name of Jesus; for jesus is salvation, and the Name means “the Lord is Salvation;” whence the words are here rendered even by a Jew “in God the Author of my redemption,” and yet more sweetly by a father. Augustine, de Civ. D. xviii. 32: “To me what some manuscripts have; ‹I will rejoice in God my Jesus,‘ seems better than what they have, who have not set the Name itself (but saving) which to us it is more loving and sweeter to name.”) “in God my Jesus.” In Him his joy begins, to Him and in Him it flows back and on; before he ventures, amid all the desolation, to speak of joy, he names the Name of God, and, as it were, stays himself in God, is enveloped and wrapped round in God; sad I (the words stand in this order) “and I in the Lord would shout for joy.”

He comes, as it were, and places himself quite close to God, so that nothing, not even his joy should be between himself and God; “and I in the Lord.” All creation, as it had failed, ceases to be; all out of God: he speaks of nothing but himself and God, or rather himself in God; and as He, God, comes before his joy, as its source, so in Him does he lose himself, with joy which cannot be contained, nor expressed, nor rest, but utters itself in the glad motions of untiring love. “I would bound for joy in my Saving God.” Truly all our joy is, to be in Him in whom is all Good, who is all Goodness and all Love.

Verse 19

The Lord God is my strength - The prophet does not inwardly only exult and triumph in God, but he confesses also in words of praise, that in Him he hath all things, that He is All things in him. And as he had confessed the Father, under the Name whereby He revealed Himself to Moses, and the Son, “the Lord God of my salvation,” so he confesses God the Holy Ghost, who, in us, is our strength. “He is our strength,” so that through Him, we can do all things; “He is our strength,” so that without Him, we can do nothing; “He is our strength,” so that when we put forth

strength, we put forth nothing of our own, we add nothing of our own, we use not our own strength, of which we have none, but we do use His; and we have It ever ready to use, as if it were our own. For it is not our own and it is our own; not our own, i. e., not from or of ourselves; but our own, since It is in us, yea "He the Lord our God is our strength," not without us, for He is our strength, but in us.

And so he says further, how we can use it as our own. "He will make my feet like hinds," which bound upward through His imparted strength, trod, when scared by alarms here below, flee tearless to their native reeks, spring from height to height, and at last shew themselves on some high peak, and standing on the Rock, look down on the whole world below their feet and upward on high. Even so when at the end of the world all shall fail, and the love of many shall wax cold, and the Church, which is likened to the fig tree the vine and the (Luke 13:6; Isaiah 5:1; 21:33; etc. Romans 11:17.) olive, shall yield no fruits, and sweetness shall be corrupted by vanities, and the oil of mercy shall be dried up, and lamps go out, and its promises shall fail and it shall lie, having "a show of goodness, but denying the power of it; in words confessing God, and in works denying Him;" and through their own negligences, or the carelessness of pastors, the sheep of Christ shall perish from His very fold, and they who should be strong to labor 1 Corinthians 9:9-10. shall cease, God's elect shall joy in Him, "beholding His goodness, and loving Him in all things, and He will give them free affections, and fervid longings of holy love, whereby they shall not walk only, but run the way of His commandments and prevail over the enemies of their salvation."

Yet though this strength is inward, and used by man, still God who gives it, Himself guides it. Not man shall "direct his own ways," but "He will make me to walk (as on a plain way) upon my high place." Steep and slippery places and crags of the reeks are but ways to the safe height above, to those whom God makes to walk on them; and since he has passed all things earthly, what are his high places, but the heavenly places, even his home, even while a pilgrim here, but now at the end, much more his home, when not in hope only, but in truth, he is "raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus?" Ephesians 2:6)

And now what remains then, but that this song of praise should be forever? And so it is not without meaning, nor was of old thought to be so that there stand here, at the end, words which elsewhere in the Psalms always stand at the beginning. Nor is it anywhere else, "upon my stringed instruments."

To the chief singer on my stringed instruments - To Him to whom all praise is due, through whom we praise Himself, His Spirit pleading in us, for us, "upon my stringed instruments." He Himself, providing, as it were, and teaching the prelude of the endless song, and by His spirit, breathing upon the instrument which He has attuned, and it giving back faithfully, in union with the heavenly choir with whom it is now blended, the angelic hymn, "Glory to God in the Highest."

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Zephaniah

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ZEPHANIAH INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Zephaniah

Zephaniah was called to his role not long after Habakkuk. Since his time was near to that of Habakkuk, so his subject was also related. Both lived when, for the sins of the reign of Manasseh, God had pronounced an irreversible sentence of destruction upon Jerusalem. The mission of both was not to the whole people whose sentence was fixed, but to the individuals who would flee from the wrath to come. The form of Habakkuk‘s prophecy was (as we might say) more subjective; that of Zephaniah was more objective. Habakkuk exhibits the victory of faith in the oppressed faithful - how it would hold to God amid the domestic oppressions, amid the oppressions of the Chaldees by whom those oppressions were to be punished, and, when all shall seem to fail, should, in the certainty of its unseen life, rejoice in its God. The characteristic of Zephaniah is the declaration of the tenderness of the love of God for that remnant of Israel, “the afflicted and poor people,” whom God would “leave in the midst of them” Zephaniah 3:12.

Zephaniah has, like Habakkuk, to declare the judgment on the world. He renews the language of Joel as to “the day of the Lord,” and points to nations and individuals. He opens with the prophecy of one wide destruction of the land and all the sinners in it, its idolaters and its oppressors, its princes, its royal family, its merchants, its petty plunderers, who used rapine under color of their masters‘ name, and brought guilt upon themselves and them. Nothing is either too high or too low to escape the judgments of God. But the visitation upon Judah was only partially of a more comprehensive judgment. Zephaniah foretells the wider destruction of enemies of God‘s people on all sides - of Philistia, Moab, Ammon, on each side of them, and the distant nations on either side, Ethiopia (which then included Egypt) and Assyria. All these particular judgments contain principles of God‘s judgments at all times. But in Zephaniah they seem all to converge in the love of God for the remnant of His people. The nation he calls “a nation not desired” Zephaniah 2:1. He calls to God individuals: “It may be, ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord‘s anger” Zephaniah 2:3. He foretells a sifting time, wherein God would “take away the proud among her” Zephaniah 3:11-12; yet there follows a largeness of Gospel promise and of love Zephaniah 3:12-17, the grounds of which are explained in the

Gospel, but whose tenderness of language is hardly surpassed even by the overwhelming tenderness of "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" Ephesians 3:19.

The prophet's own name "the Lord hath hid" corresponds with this. The Psalmist had said, using this same word, "He shall hide me in His tabernacle in the day of evil: in the secret of His tabernacle He shall hide me" Psalm 27:5; and, "O how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast "laid up" for them that fear Thee. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man. Thou shalt "keep them secretly" Psalm 31:19-20 in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." "They take counsel against Thy "hidden" ones" Psalm 83:4.

The date which Zephaniah prefixed to his prophecy, has not been disputed; for no one felt any interest in denying it. Those who disbelieve definite prophecy invented for themselves a solution, whereby they thought that Zephaniah's prophecy need not be definite, even though uttered in the time of Josiah; so the fact remained unquestioned.

The unaccustomed fullness with which his descent is given implies so much of that personal knowledge which soon fades away, that those who speak of other titles, as having been prefixed to the books, or portions of books of the prophets, by later hands, have not questioned this. The only question is, whether he lived before or in the middle of the reformation by Josiah. Josiah, who came to the throne when eight years old 641 b.c., began the reformation in the 12th year of his reign, 2 Chronicles 34:3-7, when almost twenty; 630 b.c. The extirpation of idolatry could not, it appears, be accomplished at once. The finding of the ancient copy of the law, during the repairs of the temple in the 18th year of his reign, 2 Kings 23:3; 2 Chronicles 34:31 to keep the law, and made a further destruction of idols 2 Chronicles 34:33 before the solemn passover in that year. Even after that passover some abominations had to be removed 2 Kings 23:24. It has been thought that the words, "I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place" Zephaniah 1:4, imply that the worship of Baal had already in some degree been removed, and that God said, that He would complete what had been begun. But the emphasis seems to be rather on the completeness of the destruction, as we should say, that He would efface every remnant of Baal,

than to refer to any effort which had been made by human authority to destroy it.

The prophet joins together, "I will cut off the remnant of Baal, the name of the Chemarim." The cutting off "the name of the Chemarim," or idolatrous priests, is like that of Hosea, "I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name" Hosea 2:17. As the cutting off of "the name of the Chemarim" means their being utterly obliterated, so, probably, does "the cutting off the remnant of Baal." The worship of Baal was cut off, not through Josiah, but (as Zephaniah prophesied) through the captivity. Jeremiah asserts its continuance during his long prophetic office Jeremiah 2:8; Jeremiah 7:9; Jeremiah 11:13; Jeremiah 19:5; Jeremiah 32:29.

In the absence of any direct authority to the contrary, the description of idolatry by Zephaniah would seem to belong to the period, before the measures to abolish it were begun. He speaks as if everything were full of idolatry Zephaniah 1:4-5, the worship of Baal, the worship of the host of heaven upon the housetops, swearing by Maleham, and probably the clothing with strange apparel.

The state also was as corrupt Zephaniah 3:3-4 as the worship. Princes and judges, priests and prophets were all alike in sin; the judges distorted the law between man and man, as the priests profaned all which related to God. The princes were roaring lions; the judges, evening wolves, ever famished, hungering for new prey. This too would scarcely have been, when Josiah was old enough to govern in his own person. Both idolatry and perversion of justice were continued on from the reign of his father Amon. Both, when old enough, he removed. God Himself gives him the praise, that he "did judgment and justice, then it was well with him; he judged the cause of the poor and needy, then it was well with him; was not this to know Me? saith the Lord" Jeremiah 22:15-16. His conversion was in the eighth year of his reign. Then, while he was yet young, he began to "seek after the God of David his father."

The mention of the "king's children" (see the note at Zephaniah 1:8), whom, God says, He would punish in the great day of His visitation, does

not involve any later date. They might, anyhow have been brothers or uncles of the king Josiah. But, more probably, God declares that no rank should be exempt from the judgments of that day. He knew, too, that the sons of Josiah would be then punished for their great sins. The sun of the temporal rule of the house of David set in unmitigated wickedness and sorrow. Of all its kings after Josiah, it is said, they did "evil in the sight of the Lord;" some were distinguished by guilt; all had miserable ends; some of them with aggravated misery.

Zephaniah then probably finished his course before that 12th year of Josiah, (for this prophecy is one whole) and so just before Jeremiah was, in Josiah's 13th year, called to his office, which he fulfilled for half a century, perhaps for the whole age of man.

The foreground of the prophecy of Zephaniah remarkably coincides with that of Habakkuk. Zephaniah presupposes that prophecy and fills it up. Habakkuk had prophesied the great wasting and destruction through the Chaldaeans, and then their destruction. That invasion was to extend beyond Judah (for it was said "he shall scoff at kings" Habakkuk 1:10), but was to include it. The instrument of God having been named by Habakkuk, Zephaniah does not even allude to him. Rather, he brings before Judah the other side, the agency of God Himself. God would not have them forget Himself in His instruments. Hence, all is attributed to God. "I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked, and I will cut off man from the land, saith the Lord. I will also stretch out Mine hand upon Judah; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal. In the day of the Lord's sacrifice, I will punish the princes, etc. In the same day also I will punish all those etc. I will search Jerusalem with candles. The great day of the Lord is near, and I will bring distress upon, etc. O Canaan, land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee. The Lord will be terrible upon them. Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by My sword. And He will destroy Nineveh" Zephaniah 1:2, Zephaniah 1:4, Zephaniah 1:8-9, Zephaniah 1:13-14, Zephaniah 1:17; Zephaniah 2:5, Zephaniah 2:11-13. The wicked of the people had "said in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil" Zephaniah

1:12. Zephaniah inculcates, throughout his brief prophecy, that there is nothing, good or evil, of which He is not the doer or overruler.

But the extent of that visitation is co-extensive with that prophesied by Habakkuk. Zephaniah indeed speaks rather of the effects, the desolation. But the countries, whose desolation or defeat he foretells, are the lands of those, whom the Chaldaeans invaded, worsted, in part desolated. Beside Judah, Zephaniah's subjects are Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia (which included Egypt), Nineveh. And here he makes a remarkable distinction corresponding with the events. Of the Ethiopians or Egyptians, he says only, "ye shall be slain by My sword" Zephaniah 2:12. Of Assyria he foretells Zephaniah 2:13-15 the entire and lasting desolation; the capitals of her palaces in the dust; her cedar-work bare; flocks, wild-beasts, pelican and hedgehog, taking up their abode in her. Moab and Ammon and Philistia have at first sight the two-fold, apparently contradictory, lot; "the remnant of My people," God says, "shall possess them; the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah" Zephaniah 2:9; and, that they should be a perpetual desolation.

This also was to take place, after God had brought back His people out of captivity. Now all these countries were conquered by the Chaldaeans, of which at the time there was no human likelihood. But they were not swept away by one torrent of conquest. Moab and Ammon were, at first, allies of Nebuchadnezzar, and rejoiced at the miseries of the people, whose prophets had foretold their destruction. But, beyond this, Nineveh was at that time more powerful than Egypt. Human knowledge could not have discerned, that Egypt should suffer defeat only, Nineveh should be utterly destroyed. It was the custom of the great conquerors of the East, not to destroy capitals, but to re-people them with subjects obedient to themselves. Nineveh had held Babylon by viceroys; in part she had held it under her own immediate rule. Why should not Babylon, if she conquered Nineveh, use the same policy? Humanly speaking, it was a mistake that she did not.

It would have been a strong place against the inroads of the Medo-Persian empire. The Persians saw its value so far for military purposes, as to build some fort there; and the Emperor Claudius, when he made it a colony, felt the importance of the well-chosen situation. It is replaced by Mosul, a

city of some “20,000 to 40,000” inhabitants. Even after its destruction, it was easier to rebuild it than to build a city on the opposite bank of the Tigris. God declared that it should be desolate. The prediction implied destruction the most absolute. It and its palaces were to be the abode of animals which flee the presence of man; and it perished.

Again, what was less likely than that Philistia, which had had the rule over Israel, strong in its almost impregnable towns, three of whose five cities were named for their strength, Gaza, “strong;” Ashdod, “mighty;” Ekron, “deep-rooting;” one of which, Ashdod, about this very time, resisted for 29 years the whole power of Egypt, and endured the longest siege of any city of ancient or modern times - what, to human foresight, less was likely, than that Philistia should come under the power of the “remnant of the house of Judah,” when returned from their captivity? Yet, it is absolutely foretold. “The seacoast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon they shall lie down in the evening. For the Lord their God shall visit them, and restore their captivity” Zephaniah 2:7. As unlikely was it, that Moab and Ammon, who now had entered upon the territory of the two and a half tribes beyond Jordan, should themselves become the possession of the remnant of Judah. Yet, so it was!

It is then lost labor, even for their own ends, when moderns, who do not believe definite prophecy, would find out some enemy whom Zephaniah may have had in mind in foretelling this wide destruction. It still remains that all that Zephaniah says beforehand was fulfilled. It is allowed that he could not foretell this through any human foresight. The avowed object in looking out for some power, formidable in Zephaniah‘s time, is, that he could not, by any human knowledge, be speaking of the Chaldaeans. But the words stand there. They were written by Zephaniah, at a time when confessedly no human knowledge could have enabled man to predict this of the Chaldaeans; nay, no human knowledge would have enabled anyone to predict so absolutely a desolation so wide and so circumstantially delineated.

That school, however, has not been willing to acquiesce in this, that Zephaniah does “not” speak of the instrument, through whom this desolation was effected. They will have it, that they know, that Zephaniah

had in his mind one, who was “not” the enemy of the Jews or of Nineveh or of Moab and Ammon, and through whom no even transient desolation of these countries was effected. The whole argument is a simple begging of the question.: “The Egyptians cannot be meant, for the Cushites, who are threatened Zephaniah 2:12, themselves belong to the Egyptian army Jeremiah 46:9, and Psammetichus only besieged Ashdod which he also took, without emblazoning ought greater on his shield (Herodotus ii. 157). The Chaldaeans come still less into account, because they did not found an independent kingdom until 625 b.c., nor threaten Judaea until after Josiah‘s death. On the other hand, an unsuspicious and well-accredited account has been preserved to us, that somewhere about this time the Scythians overflowed Palestine too with their hosts. Herodotus relates, that the Scythians, after they had disturbed Cyaxares at the siege of Nineveh, turned toward Egypt; and when they had already arrived in Palestine, were persuaded by Psammetichus to return, and in their return plundered a temple in Ascalon.”

It is true that Herodotus says that “a large Scythian army did, under their king Madyes, burst into Asia in pursuit of the Cimmerians and entered Media - keeping Mount Caucasus on the right,” and that “the Medes opposed and fought them and, being defeated, lost their rule”.

It is true also that Herodotus relates, that “they went thence toward Egypt, and when they were in Palestine-Syria, Psammetichus king of Egypt, meeting them, turned them by gifts and entreaties from going further; that when in their return they were in Ascalon, a city of Syria, whereas most of the Scythians passed by without harming ought, some few of them, being left behind, plundered the temple of Venus Ourania.” In this place also, it is true, Herodotus uses a vague expression, that “for 28 years the Scythians ruled over Asia, and that all things were turned upside down by their violence and contempt. For beside the tributes, they exacted from each what they laid upon each, and beside the tribute, they drove together and took what each had. And most of them Cyaxares and the Medes entertaining as guests, intoxicated and killed. And then the Medes recovered their empire and “became masters of what they held before.”

But, apart from the inconsistency of the period here assigned to their power, with other history, it appears from the account itself, that by "all Asia" Herodotus means "all upper Asia," as he expresses himself more accurately, when relating the expedition of Darius against them.: "Darius wished to take revenge on the Scythians, because they first, making an inroad into Media and defeating in battle those who went against them, began the wrong. For the Scythians, as I have before said, "ruled upper Asia" for 28 years. For, pursuing the Cimmerians, they made an inroad into Asia, putting down the Medes from their rule, for these, before the Scythians came, ruled Asia." The Asia then, which Herodotus supposes the Scythians to have ruled, is co-extensive with the Asia which he supposes the Medes to have ruled previously. But this was all in the north, for having said that, "Phraortes subdued Asia, going from one nation to another," he adds that, having brought Persia under his yoke, "he led an army against those Assyrians who had Nineveh, and there lost most of his army and his own life."

Apart then from the fabulousness of this supposed empire, established by Phraortes, (Cyaxares having been the real thunder of the Median empire,) it is plain that, according to Herodotus himself, the Asia, in which the Scythians plundered and received tribute, were the lands north of Assyria. The expedition against Egypt stands as an insulated predatory excursion, the object of which having been mere plunder, they were bought off by Psammetichus and returned (he tells us) doing no mischief in their way, except that a few lingerers plundered a temple at Ascalon. It was to Media that they first came; the Medes, whom they defeated; the Median empire to which they succeeded; Cyaxares and the Medes, who treacherously destroyed most of them; the Medes, whose empire was restored by the destruction of some, and the return of the rest to their own land.

With this agrees the more detailed account of the Scythians by Strabo, who impeaches the accuracy of the accounts of Herodotus. Having spoken of the migrations of leaders, and by name, of "Madyes the Scythian" (under whom Herodotus states the irruption to have taken place), he says, "the Sacae made the like inroad as the Cimmerians and the Trerians, some longer, some nigh at hand, for they took possession of Bactriana, and

acquired the best land of Armenia, which they also left, named after them Sacasene, and advanced as far as to the Cappadocians and especially those on the Euxine, whom they now call of Pontus (Pontians). But the generals of the Persians who were at the time there, attacking them by night, while they were making a feast upon the spoils, utterly extirpated them."

The direction which he says they took, is the same as that of the Cimmerians, whom Herodotus says that they followed.: "The Cimmerians, whom they also call Trerians, or some tribe of them, often overrun the right side of the Pontus, sometimes making inroads on the Paphlagonians, at others, on the Phrygians. Often also the Cimmerians and Trerians made the like attacks, and they say that the Trerians and Cobus (their king) were, at last expelled by Madyes king of the (Scythians)." Strabo also explains, what is meant by the tributes, of which Herodotus speaks. He is speaking of the Nomadic tribes of the Scythians generally: "Tribute was, to allow them at certain stated times, to overrun the country (for pasturage) and carry off booty. But when they roamed beyond the agreement, there arose war, and again reconciliations and renewed war. Such was the life of the nomads, always setting on their neighbors and then being reconciled again."

The Scythians then were no object of fear to the Jews, whom they passed wholly unnoticed and probably unconscious of their existence in their mountain country, while they once and once only swept unharming along the fertile tracks on the sea-shore, then occupied by the old enemies and masters of the Jews, the Philistines. But Herodotus must also have been misinformed as to the length of time, during which they settled in Media, or at least as to the period during which their presence had any sensible effects. For Cyaxares, whom he represents as having raised the siege of Nineveh, in consequence of the inroad of the Scythians into Media, came to the throne, according to the numbers of Herodotus, 633 b.c. For the reign of Cyaxares having lasted according to him 40 years, that of Astyages 35, and that of Cyrus 29, these 104 years, counted back from the known date of the death of Cyrus, 529 or 530 b.c., bring us to 633 or 636 b.c. as the beginning of the reign of Cyaxares. But the invasion of the Scythians could not have taken place at the first accession of Cyaxares, since, according to Herodotus, he had already defeated the Assyrians, and was besieging Nineveh, when the Scythians burst into Media. According to Herodotus,

moreover, Cyaxares "first distributed Asiatics into troops, and first ordered that each should be apart, spearmen, and archers and cavalry, for before, all were mixed pele-mele together."

Yet, it would not be in a very short time, that those who had been wont to fight in a confused mass, could be formed into an orderly and disciplined army. We could not then, anyhow, date the Scythian inroad, earlier than the second or third year of Cyaxares. On the other hand the date of the capture of Nineveh is fixed by the commencement of the Babylonian Empire, Babylon falling to Nabopolassar. The duration of that empire is measured by the reigns of its kings, of whom, according to Ptolemy's Canon, Nabopolassar reigned 21 years; Nebuchadnezzar, (there called Nabocollasar) 43; Evil-Merodach (Iluaroadam) 2; Neriglissar (Niricassolassar) 4; Nabunahit (Nabonadius with whom his son Belshazzar was co-regent) 17; in all 87 years; and it ends in an event of known date, the capture of Babylon by Cyrus, 538 b.c. The addition of the 87 years of the duration of the empire to that date carries us back to the date assigned to the capture of Nineveh by Nabopolassar in conjunctitan with Cyaxares, 625 b.c. The capture then of Nineveh was removed by 8 or 9 years only from that, which Herodotus gives as the time of the accession of Cyaxares, and since the attack upon Nineveh can hardly have been in his first year, and the last siege probably occupied two, the 28 years of Scythian dominion would dwindle down into something too inconsiderable for history. Probably, they represent some period from their first incursion into Media, to the final return of the survivors, during which they marauded in Media and Upper Asia. The mode, by which "the greater part" (Herodotus tells us) were destroyed, intoxication and subsequent murder at a banquet, implies that their numbers were no longer considerable.

History, with the exception of that one marauding expedition toward Egypt, is entirely silent as to any excursions of the Scythians, except in the north. No extant document hints at any approach of theirs to any country mentioned by Zephaniah. There was no reason to expect any inroad from them. With the exception of Bactriana, which lies some 18 degrees east of Media and itself extended over some 7 degrees of longitude, the countries mentioned by Strabo lie, to what the kings of Assyria mention as the far north, Armenia, and thence, they stretched out to the west, yet keeping

mostly to the neighborhood of the Euxine. Considering the occasion of the mention of the invasion of the Scythians, the relief which their invasion of Media gave to Nineveh, it is even remarkable that there is no mention of any ravages of theirs throughout Mesopotamia or Babylonia. Zephaniah speaks, not of marauding, but of permanent desolation of Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, and of destructive war also on Ethiopia. There is no reason to think that the Scythians approached any of these lands, except Philistia, which they passed through unharming. The sacred writers mention even smaller nations, by whom God chastised Judah in their times, "bands of the Syrians, of Moab, of the children of Ammon," as well as Assyria and Babylon. Ezekiel Habakkuk 1:7 Habakkuk's call, "hush before the Lord" Habakkuk 2:20, and the warning words of Isaiah, Joel, Obadiah Isaiah 13:6; Joel 1:15; Joel 3:15; Obadiah 1:15, "nigh is the day of the Lord;" the image of the "sacrifice," which God had commanded, and the remarkable word, "consecrated," of God's instruments. The allusion is contained in single words, "sacrifice, consecrated;" the context in which they are embodied is different.

The idea only is the same, that Almighty God maketh, as it were, a sacrifice to Himself of those who incorrigibly rebel against Him. Elsewhere, Isaiah draws out the image at much length; "A sword of the Lord is full of bloods; it is smeared with fat, with the blood of lambs and of goats; with the fat of kidneys of rams: for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom" Isaiah 34:6. Jeremiah uses the image in equal fullness of the overthrow of Pharaoh-Necho at the Euphrates; "This is a day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance, that He may avenge Him of His adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with blood, for the Lord God hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates" Jeremiah 46:10. Ezekiel expands it yet more boldly Ezekiel 39:17. Zephaniah drops everything local, and condenses the image into the words, "The Lord hath prepared a sacrifice; He hath consecrated His guests," adding the new bold image, that they whom God employed were, as it were, His invited guests whom He consecrated thereto.

In like way, as to the day of the Lord itself, he accumulates all words of terror from different prophets; from Joel the words, "a day of darkness and

of gloominess; a day of clouds and of thick darkness" Joel 2:2; Zephaniah 1:15: to these he adds "of shouting and the sound of the trumpet" Zephaniah 1:16; Amos 2:2, used by Amos in relation to the destruction of Moab; the two combinations, which precede, occur, the one in a different sense, the other with a slightly different grammatical inflection, in Job.

From Isaiah, Zephaniah adopts that characteristic picture of self-idolizing, which brings down God's judgments on its pride; (the city) "that dwelleth securely, that said in her heart, I and no I beside" Isaiah 47:8; Zephaniah 2:15.

Even where Isaiah says, "For a consumption and that decreed, the Lord God of hosts makes in the midst of all the earth" Isaiah 10:23, and, slightly varying it, "For a consumption and that decreed, I have heard from the Lord God of hosts upon all the earth" Isaiah 28:22, Zephaniah, retaining the two first words, which occur in both places, says more concisely, "For a consumption, nought but terror, will He make all the inhabitants of the earth." Yet, simple as the words are, he pronounced, that God would not only "bring a desolation upon the earth," or "in the midst of the earth," but would make its inhabitants one consumption. Nahum had said of Nineveh, "with an overflowing flood He will make the place thereof an utter consumption" Nahum 1:8. The most forceful words are the simplest.

He uses the exact words of Isaiah, "From beyond the rivers of Cush" Zephaniah 3:10; Isaiah 18:1, than which none can be simpler, and employs the word of festive procession, though in a different form, and having thus connected his prophecy with Isaiah's, all the rest, upon which the prophecy turns, is varied.

In like way he adopts from Micah the three words, "her-that-halteth, and-will-gather her-that-is-driven-out" Micah 4:6; Zephaniah 3:19. The context in which he resets them is quite different.

It has been thought, that the words, "I have heard the reproach of Moab," may have been suggested by those of Isaiah, who begins his lament over Moab, "We have heard of the pride of Moab;" but the force and

bearing of the words is altogether different, since it is God Who says, "I have heard," and so He will punish.

The combination, "the exulters of pride" Isaiah 13:3; Zephaniah 3:11, is common to him with Isaiah: its meaning is uncertain; but it is manifestly different in the two places, since the one relates to God, the other to man.

The words, "They shall build houses and shall not dwell therein; they shall plant vineyards and not drink the wine thereof", are from the original threat in Deuteronomy, from which also the two words, "They-shall-walk as-the-blind Zephaniah 1:17, may be a reminiscence, but with a conciseness of its own and without the characteristic expressions of Deuteronomy, adopted by other sacred writers: "They shall grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness" Deuteronomy 28:29.

Altogether these passages are evidence that Zephaniah is of later date than the prophecies in which the like language occurs; and the fact that he does employ so much language of his predecessors furnishes a strong presumption in any single case, that he in that case also adopted from the other sacred writer the language which they have in common.

It is chiefly on this ground, that a train of modern critics have spoken disparagingly of the outward form and style of Zephaniah. It has, however, a remarkable combination of fullness with conciseness and force. Thus, he begins the enumeration of those upon whom the destruction should fall, with the words, "consuming I will consume all" Zephaniah 1:2: to an enumeration co-extensive with the creation, he adds unexpectedly, "and the stumblingblocks with the wicked" Zephaniah 1:3, anticipating our Lord's words of the Day of Judgment, "they shall gather the stumblingblocks and them that do iniquity" Matthew 13:41: to the different idolatries he adds those of a divided faith, "swearers to the Lord and swearers by Malcham" Zephaniah 1:5; to those who turned away from God he adds those who were unearnest in seeking Him Zephaniah 1:6.

Again, after the full announcement of the destruction in the day of the Lord, the burst, in those five words, "sift-yourselves and-sift (on) nation unlonged for" Zephaniah 2:1, is, in suddenness and condensation, like

Hosea; and so again, in five words, after the picture of the future desolation of Nineveh, the abrupt turn to Jerusalem, "Woe rebellious and-defiled (thou) oppressive city" Zephaniah 2:1, and then follow the several counts of her indictment, in brief disjointed sentences, first negatively, as a whole; each in three or four words, "she-listened not to-voice; she-received not correction; in-the-Lord she-trusted not; to-her-God she-approached not" Zephaniah 3:2; then, in equally broken words, each class is characterized by its sins; "her-princes in-her-midst are roaring lions; her-judges evening wolves; not gnawed-they-bones on-the-morrow; her-prophets empty-babblers, men of-deceits; her-priests profaned holiness, violated law" Zephaniah 3:3-4Then in sudden contrast to all this contumacy, neglect, despite of God, He Himself is exhibited as in the midst of her; the witness and judge of all; there, where they sinned. "The-Lord righteous in-her-midst; He-doth not iniquity; by-morning by-morning His-judgment He-giveth to-light; He-faileth not" Zephaniah 3:5; and then in contrast to the holiness and the judgments of God, follows in four words, the perseverance of man in his shamelessness, and - the fruit of all this presence and doings of the holy and righteous God and judge is, "and-not knoweth the wrong-doer shame."

Zephaniah uses the same disjoining of the clauses in the description of God's future manifestation of His love toward them. Again, it is the same thought, "The-Lord thy-God- (is) in-thy-midst" Zephaniah 3:17; but now in love; "mighty, shall-save; He-shall-rejoice over-thee with-joy; He-shall-keep-silence in-His-love; He-shall-rejoice over-thee with-jubilee." The single expressions are alike condensed; "she-hearkened not to-voice" Zephaniah 3:2, stands for what Jeremiah says at such much greater length, how God had sent all His servants "the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them, but they hearkened not unto Me nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck" Jeremiah 7:24-28. The words "shall-be-silent in-His-love, in their primary meaning, express the deepest human love, but without the accustomed image of betrothal.

"The whole people of Canaan" (Zephaniah 1:11, compare Hosea 12:7) reminds one of Hosea; "the-men-coagulated on-their-lees" Zephaniah 1:12 is much expanded by Jeremiah Jeremiah 48:11, his word occurs before him in Job only and the song of Moses Job 10:10; Exodus 15:8. Single poetic

expressions are, that Moab should become "the possession of briars" Zephaniah 2:9, the word itself being framed by Zephaniah; in the description of the desolation of Nineveh, "a voice singeth in the window; desolation is on the threshold" Zephaniah 2:14, the imagery is so bold, that modern criticism has thought that the word "voice" which occurs in the Old Testament 328 times and with pronouns 157 times more, must signify "an owl," and "desolation" must stand for "a crow." Very characteristic is the word, ""He (see below the note at Zephaniah 2:11) shall famish" all the gods of the earth," expressing with wonderful irony, the privation of their sacrifices, which was the occasion of the first pagan persecutions of the Christians.

When then a writer, at times so concise and poetic as Zephaniah is in these places, is, at others, so full in his descriptions, this is not prolixity, but rather vivid picturing; at one time going through all the orders of creation Zephaniah 1:3; at another, different classes of the ungodly Zephaniah 1:4-9: at yet another, the different parts of the scared woe-stricken city Zephaniah 1:10-11, to set before our eyes the universality of the desolation. Those who are familiar with our own great northern poet of nature, will remember how the accumulation of names adds to the vividness of his descriptions. Yet, here too, there is great force in the individual descriptions, as when he pictures the petty plunderers for their master, and "fill their masters' houses" - not with wealth but - "with violence and fraud", all which remains of wealth gained by fraud and extortion being the sins themselves, which dwell in the house of the fraudulent to his destruction.

In the strictly prophetic part of his office, Jerusalem having been marked out by Micah and Isaiah before him, as the place where God would make the new revelation of Himself, Zephaniah adds, what our Lord revealed to the Samaritan woman John 4:21, that Jerusalem should no longer be the abiding center of worship. "They shall worship Him, every man from his place, all the isles of the nations" Zephaniah 2:11, is a prophecy which, to this day, is receiving an increasing accomplishment. It is a prophecy, not of the spread of Monotheism, but of the worship of Him, to whose worship at that time a handful of Jews could with difficulty be brought to adhere, the desertion or corruption or association of whose worship with idolatry Zephaniah had to denounce and to foretell its punishment. The love which

God should then show to His own is expressed in words, unequaled for tenderness and in conformity to that love is the increasing growth of holiness, and the stricter requirements of God‘s holy justice.

Again, Zephaniah has a prelude to our blessed Lord‘s words, “to whom much is given, of him shall much be required” Luke 12:48, or His Apostle‘s, of the great awe in working out our salvation Philemon 2:12. Progress is a characteristic and condition of the Christian life; “We beseech you, that as ye have received of us, how ye ought to walk and to please God, ye would abound more and more” 1 Thessalonians 4:1. Even so Zephaniah bids “all the meek of the earth, who have wrought His judgments or law to seek diligently that meekness” Zephaniah 2:3, which had already characterized them, and that, not in view of great things, but, if so be they might be saved; it may be that ye may be hid in the day of the Lord‘s anger, as Peter saith, “If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” 1 Peter 4:18. It is again remarkable, how he selects meekness, as the characteristic of the new state of things, which he promises. He anticipates the contrast in the Magnificat, in which the lowest lowliness was rewarded by the highest exaltation. As it is said there, “He hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble and meek” Luke 2:52, so the removal of the proud “from within thee,” and the “leaving of an afflicted and poor people within thee” Zephaniah 3:12, is the special promise by Zephaniah.

Little is said of the captivity. It is a future, variously assumed subject Zephaniah 3:13. Judah in the farthest lands, “beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, is the daughter of My dispersed” Zephaniah 3:10; the whole earth is the scene of their shame Zephaniah 3:19; their praises should be commensurate with their shame, “when I turn back your captivity before your eyes” Zephaniah 3:20; Zephaniah 2:7. But this turning away of their captivity is the only notice, that their punishment should be the going into captivity. The captivity itself is pre-supposed, as certain and as known. So neither are there any images from temporal exaltation. All pride should be removed, as utterly unbefitting God‘s holy presence: “thou shalt no more be haughty in My holy mountain” Zephaniah 2:11. The words expressive of the abasement of those within her are proportionably strong, “My afflicted and poor” Zephaniah 2:12. Some are accustomed, in these days, to talk of God‘s

prophets as patriots. They were such truly, since they loved the land of the Lord with a divine love. But what mere "patriot" would limit his promises to the presence of "a poor people in a low estate," with an unseen presence of God? The description belongs to His kingdom, which was "not of this world" John 18:36: the only king whom Zephaniah speaks of, "the king of Israel" Zephaniah 3:15, is Almighty God. The blessing which he promises, is the corresponding, blessing of peace, "Fear thou not; thou shalt not see evil anymore, none shall make them afraid" Zephaniah 3:16. But the words "Let not thy hands be slack" (Zephaniah 3:2, (Acts 4:32, or whether he had his mind fixed rather on the end, "when the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in" Romans 11:25. The words also (since they may be taken either way) (see the note at Zephaniah 3:10) leave it uncertain whether the Gentiles are spoken of as bringing in the people of God, (as they shall at the end) or whether the first conversion of the Jews, even in the most distant countries, is his subject.

In any case, Zephaniah had a remarkable function - to declare the mercy and judgment of God, judgments both temporal and final, mercies, not of this world, promised to a temper not of this world, "the wisdom which is from above, pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy" James 3:7.

ZEPHANIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The word of the Lord which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah - It seems likely that more forefathers of the prophet are named than is the wont of Holy Scripture, because the last so named was some one remarkable. Nor is it impossible that Zephaniah should have been the great grandson of the King Hezekiah, for although Holy Scripture commonly names the one son only who is in the sacred line, and although there is one generation more than to Josiah, yet if each had a son early, Zephaniah might have been contemporary with Josiah. The names seem also mentioned for the sake of their meaning; at least it is remarkable how the name of God appears in most. Zephaniah, "whom the Lord hid;" Gedaliah, "whom the Lord made great;" Amariah, "whom the Lord promised;" Hezekiah, "whom the Lord strengthened."

Verse 2

I will utterly consume all things - Better "all." The word is not limited to "things" "animate" or "inanimate" or "men;" it is used severally of each, according to the context; here, without limitation, of "all." God and all stand over against one another; God and all which is not of God or in God. God, he says, will utterly consume all from off the land (earth). The prophet sums up in few words the subject of the whole chapter, the judgments of God from his own times to the day of Judgment itself. And this Day Itself he brings the more strongly before the mind, in that, with wonderful briefness, in two words which he conforms, in sound also, the one to the other, he expresses the utter final consumption of all things. He expresses at once the intensity of action and blends their separate meanings, "Taking away I will make an end of all;" and with this he unites the words used of the flood, "from off the face of the earth."

Then he goes through the whole creation as it was made, pairing "man and beast," which Moses speaks of as created on the sixth day, and the creation of the fifth day, "the fowls of the heaven and the fishes of the sea;" and before each he sets the solemn word of God, "I will end," as the act of God Himself. The words can have no complete fulfillment, until "the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up" 2 Peter 3:10, as the Psalmist too, having gone through the creation, sums up, "Thou takest away

their breath, they die and return to their dust" Psalm 104:29; and then speaks of the re-creation, "Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created; and Thou renewest the face of the earth" Matthew 13:41.

Verse 3

The stumbling-blocks with the wicked - Not only shall the wicked be utterly brought to an end, or, in the other meaning of the word, "gathered into bundles to be taken away," but all causes of stumbling too; everything, through which others can fall, which will not be until the end of all things. Then, he repeats, yet more emphatically, "I will cut off the whole race of man from the face of the earth," and then he closes the verse, like the foregoing, with the solemn words, "saith the Lord." All this shall be fulfilled in the Day of Judgment, and all other fulfillments are earnests of the final Judgment. They are witnesses of the ever-living presence of the Judge of all, that God does take account of man's deeds. They speak to men's conscience, they attest the existence of a divine law, and therewith of the future complete manifestation of that law, of which they are individual sentences. Not until the prophet has brought this circle of judgments to their close, does he pass on to the particular judgments on Judah and Jerusalem.

Verse 4

I will also stretch out Mine Hand - As before on Egypt. Judah had gone in the ways of Egypt and learned her sins, and sinned worse than Egypt. "The mighty Hand and stretched-out Arm" Jeremiah 2:10-11, with which she had been delivered, shall be again "stretched out," yet, not for her but "upon" her, "upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem." In this threatened destruction of all, Judah and Jerusalem are singled out, because "judgment" shall "begin at the house of God" 1 Peter 4:17; Jeremiah 25:29. They who have sinned against the greater grace shall be most signally punished. Yet, the punishment of those whom God had so chosen and loved is an earnest of the general judgment. This too is not a partial but a general judgment "upon "all" the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

And I will cut off the remnant of Baal - that is, to the very last vestige of it. Isaiah unites "name and residue" Isaiah 14:22, as equivalents, together with the proverbial, posterity and descendant. Zephaniah distributes them in parallel clauses, "the "residue" of Baal and the "name" of the Chemarim." Good and evil have each a root, which remains in the ground, when the trunk has been hewn down. There is "a remnant according to the election of

grace," when "the rest have been blinded" Romans 11:5, Romans 11:7; and this is a "holy seed" Isaiah 6:13 to carry on the line of God. Evil too has its remnant, which, unless diligently kept down, shoots up again, after the conversion of peoples or individuals. The "mind of the flesh" remains in the regenerate also. The prophet foretells the complete excision of the whole "remnant of Baal," which was fulfilled in it after the captivity, and shall be fulfilled as to all which it shadows forth, in the Day of Judgment. "From this place;" for in their phrensy, they dared to bring the worship of Baal into the very temple of the Lord 2 Kings 23:4. Ribera: "Who would ever believe that in Jerusalem, the holy city, and in the very temple idols should be consecrated? Whoso seeth the ways of our times will readily believe it. For among Christians and in the very temple of God, the abominations of the pagan are worshiped. Riches, pleasures, honors, are they not idols which Christians prefer to God Himself?"

And the name of the Chemarim with the priests - Of the "idolatrous priests" the very name shall be cut off, as God promises by Hosea, that He will "take away the names of Baalim" Hosea 2:17, and by Zechariah, that He "will cut off the names of the idols out of the land" Zechariah 13:2. Yet this is more. Not the "name" only "of the Chemarim," but themselves with their name, their posterity, shall be blotted out; still more, it is God who cuts off all memory of them, blotting them out of the book of the living and out of His own.

They had but a name before, "that they were living, but were dead" Revelation 3:1. Jerome: "The Lord shall take away names of vain glory, wrongly admired, out of the Church yea, the very names of the priests with the priests who vainly flatter themselves with the name of Bishops and the dignity of Presbyters without their deeds. Whence he markedly says, not, "and the deeds of priests with the priests," but the "names;" who only bear the false name, of dignities, and with evil works destroy their own names." The "priests are priests of the Lord," who live not like priests, corrupt in life and doctrine and corrupters of God's people (see Jeremiah 2:8; Jeremiah 5:31). The judgment is pronounced alike on what was intrinsically evil, and on good which had corrupted itself into evil. The title of priest is no where given to the priest of a false God, without some mention in the context, implying that they were idolatrous priests; as the priests of Dagon 1 Samuel 5:5, of the high places as ordained by Jeroboam 1 Kings 13:2, 1 Kings 13:33; 2 Kings 23:20; 2 Chronicles 11:15, of Baal 2 Kings 10:19; 2 Kings

11:18; 2 Chronicles 23:17, of Bethel Amos 7:10, of Ahab 2 Kings 10:11, of those who were not gods 2 Chronicles 13:9, of On, where the sun was worshiped. "The priests" then were God's priests, who in the evil days of Manasseh had manifoldly corrupted their life or their faith, and who were still evil.

The "priests" of Judah, with its kings its princes and the people of the land, were in Jeremiah's inaugural vision enumerated as those, who "shall," God says, "fight against thee, but shall not prevail against thee" Jeremiah 1:18-19. "The priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew Me not" Jeremiah 2:7-8. In the general corruption, "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land, the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule at their hands" Jeremiah 5:30-31: "the children of Israel and the children of Judah, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, have turned unto Me the back, and not the face" Jeremiah 32:32-33. Jeremiah speaks specifically of heavy moral sins. "From the prophet even unto the priest everyone dealeth falsely" Jeremiah 6:13; Jeremiah 8:10; "both prophet and priest are profane" Jeremiah 23:11; "for the sins of her prophets, the iniquities of her" Lamentations 4:13. And Isaiah says of her sensuality; "the priests and the prophets have erred through strong drink; they are swallowed up of wine; they are out of the way through strong drink" Isaiah 28:7.

Verse 5

And them that worship the best of heaven upon the - (flat) housetops This was fulfilled by Josiah who destroyed "the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz" 2 Kings 23:12. Jeremiah speaks as if this worship was almost universal, as though well-near every roof had been profaned by this idolatry. "The houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of Judah, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink-offerings unto other gods" Jeremiah 19:13. "The Chaldaeans that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it with the houses, upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink-offerings to other gods, to provoke Me to anger" Jeremiah 32:29. They worshiped on the house-tops, probably to have

a clearer view of that magnificent expanse of sky, "the moon and stars which" God had "ordained" Psalm 8:3; the "queen of heaven," which they worshiped instead of Himself. There is something so mysterious in that calm face of the moon, as it "walketh in beauty" Job 31:26; God seems to have invested it with such delegated influence over the seasons and the produce of the earth, that they stopped short in it, and worshiped the creature rather than the Creator. Much as men now talk of "Nature," admire "Nature," speak of its "laws," not as laws imposed upon it, but inherent in it, laws affecting us and our well-being; only not in their ever-varying vicissitudes, "doing whatsoever God commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth, whether for correction, or for His land or for mercy!" Job 37:12-13. The idolaters "worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed forever" Romans 1:25; moderns equally make this world their object, only they idolize themselves and their discoveries, and worship their own intellect.

This worship on the house-tops individualized the public idolatry; it was a rebellion against God, family by family; a sort of family-prayer of idolatry. "Did we," say the mingled multitude to Jeremiah, "make our cakes to worship her, and pour out our drink-offerings unto her, without our men?" Jeremiah 44:19. Its family character is described in Jeremiah. "The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto other gods" Jeremiah 7:18. The idolatry spread to other cities. "We will certainly do," they say, "as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem" Jeremiah 44:17. The incense went up continually "as a memorial to God" from the altar of incense in the temple: the "roofs of the houses" were so many altars, from which, street by street and house by house the incense went up to her, for whom they dethroned God, "the queen of heaven." It was an idolatry, with which Judah was especially besotted, believing that they received all goods of this world from them and not from God. When punished for their sin, they repented of their partial repentance and maintained to Jeremiah that they were punished for "leaving off to burn incense to the queen of heaven" Jeremiah 44:2, Jeremiah 44:15, Jeremiah 44:18.

And them that worship … the Lord - but with a divided heart and service; "that swear by (rather to) the Lord," swear fealty and loyal

allegiance to Him, while they do acts which deny it, in that "they swear by Malcham," better (it is no appellative although allied to one) "their king", most probably, I think, "Moloch."

This idolatry had been their enduring idolatry in the wilderness, after the calves had been annihilated; it is "the" worship, against which Israel is warned by name in the law Leviticus 18:21; Leviticus 20:2-4; then, throughout the history of the Judges, we hear of the kindred idolatry of Baal, "the" Lord (who was called also "eternal king" and from whom individuals named themselves "son of (the) king," "servant of (the) king"), or the manifold Baals and Ashtaroth or Astarte. But after these had been removed on the preaching of Samuel 1 Samuel 7:6; 1 Samuel 12:10, this idolatry does not reappear in Judah until the intermarriage of Jehoram with the house of Ahab 2 Kings 8:16-18, 2 Kings 8:26-27; 2 Chronicles 21:6, 2 Chronicles 21:12-13; 2 Chronicles 22:2-4.

The kindred and equally horrible worship of "Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon" 1 Kings 11:7, was brought in by Solomon in his decay, and endured until his high place was defiled by Josiah 2 Kings 23:13-14. It is probable then that this was "their king", of whom Zephaniah speaks, whom Amos and after him Jeremiah, called "their king;" but speaking of Ammon. Him, the king of Ammon, Judah adopted as "their king." They owned God as their king in words; Molech they owned by their deeds; "they worshiped and sware fealty to the Lord" and they "sware by their king;" his name was familiarly in their mouths; to him they appealed as the Judge and witness of the truth of their words, his displeasure they invoked on themselves, if they swore falsely. Cyril: "Those in error were wont to swear by heaven, and, as matter of reverence to call out, ‹By the king and lord Sun.' Those who do so must of set purpose and willfully depart from the love of God, since the law expressly says, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and serve Him alone, and swear by His Name" Deuteronomy 6:13.

The former class who "worshipped on the roofs" were mere idolaters. These "worshiped," as they thought, "the Lord," bound themselves solemnly by oath to Him, but with a reserve, joining a hateful idol to Him, in that they, by a religious act, owned it too as god. The act which they did was in direct words, or by implication, forbidden by God. The command to

"swear by the Lord" implied that they were to swear by none else. It was followed by the prohibition to go after other gods. (Deuteronomy 6:13-14; 10:30, compare Isaiah 65:16; Jeremiah 4:2). Contrariwise, to swear by other gods was forbidden as a part of their service. "Be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the Law of Moses, neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, but cleave unto the Lord your God" (Joshua 23:6-8; compare Amos 8:14). "How shall I pardon thee for this? Thy children have forsaken Me, and have sworn by those who are no gods" Jeremiah 5:7. "They taught My people to swear by Baal" Jeremiah 12:16. They thought perhaps that in that they professed to serve God, did the greater homage to Him, professed and bound themselves to be His, (such is the meaning of "swear to the Lord") they might, without renouncing His service, do certain things, "swear by their king," although in effect they thereby owned hint also as god. To such Elijah said, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him" 1 Kings 18:21; and God by Jeremiah rejects with abhorrence such divided service. "Ye trust in lying words, which will not profit. Will ye steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods, and come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, saying, We are delivered to do all these abominations" Jeremiah 7:8-10. And Hosea, "Neither go ye to Beth-aven, and swear there, The Lord liveth" Hosea 4:15.

Such are Christians, Jerome: "who think that they can serve together the world and the Lord, and please two masters, God and Mammom; who, "being soldiers of Jesus Christ" and having sworn fealty to Him, "entangle themselves with the affairs of this life and offer the same image to God and to Caesar" 2 Timothy 2:3-4. To such, God, whom with their lips they own, is not their God; their idol is, as the very name says, "their king," whom alone they please, displeasing and dishonoring God. We must not only fear, love, honor God, but love, fear, honor all beside for Him Alone.

Verse 6

And them that are turned back from - (Literally, have turned themselves back from following after) the Lord From this half-service, the prophet goes on to the avowed neglect of God, by such as wholly fall away

from Him, not setting His will or law before them, "but turning away from" Him. It is their misery that they were set in the right way once, but themselves "turned themselves back," now no longer "following" God, but "their own lusts, drawn away and enticed" James 1:14 by them. How much more Christians, before whose eyes Christ Jesus is set forth, not as a Redeemer only but as an Example that they should "follow His steps!" 1 Peter 2:21.

And those that have not sought the Lord, nor inquired for Him - This is marked to be a distinct class. "And those who." These did not openly break with God, or turn away overtly from Him; they kept (as men think) on good terms with Him, but, like "the slothful servant," rendered Him a listless heartless service. Both words express diligent search. God is not found then in a careless way. They who "seek" Him not "diligently" Matthew 2:8, do not find Him. "Strive," our Lord says, "to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able" Luke 13:24. She who had lost the one piece of silver, "sought" "diligently" Luke 15:8, until she had found it.

Thus, he has gone through the whole cycle. First, that most horrible and cruel worship of Baal, the idolatrous priests and those who had the name of priests only, mingled with them, yet not openly apostatizing; then the milder form of idolatry, the star-worshipers; then those who would unite the worship of God with idols, who held themselves to be worshipers of God, but whose real king was their idol; then those who openly abandoned God; and lastly those who held with Him, just to satisfy their conscience-qualms, but with no heart-service. And so, in words of Habakkuk and in reminiscence of his awful summons of the whole world before God, he sums up;

Verse 7

Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God - (Literally, "Hush," in awe "from the face of God.") In the presence of God, even the righteous say from their inmost heart, "I am vile, what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" Job 40:4. "Now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" Job 42:5-6. "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified" Psalm 143:2. How much more must the "man without the wedding garment be speechless" Matthew 22:11-12, and every false

plea, with which he deceived himself, melt away before the Face of God! The voice of God‘s Judgment echoes in every heart, “we indeed justly” Luke 23:41.

For the Day of the Lord is at hand - Zephaniah, as is his custom, grounds this summons, which he had renewed from Habakkuk, to hushed silence before God, on Joel‘s prophetic warning, to show that it was not yet exhausted. A day of the Lord, of which Joel warned, had come and was gone; but it was only the herald of many such days; judgments in time, heralds and earnests, and, in their degree, pictures of the last which shall end time.

Dionysius: “All time is God‘s, since He Alone is the Lord of time; yet that is specially said to be His time when He doth anything special. Whence He saith, “My time is not yet come” John 7:6; whereas all time is His.” The Day of the Lord is, in the first instance, Jerome: “the day of captivity and vengeance on the sinful people,” as a forerunner of the Day of Judgment, or the day of death to each, for this too is near, since, compared to eternity, all the time of this world is brief.

For the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice - God had rejected sacrifices, offered amid unrepented sin; they were “an abomination to Him” Isaiah 1:11-15. When man will not repent and offer himself as “a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” Romans 12:1, God, at last, rejects all other outward oblations, and the sinner himself is the sacrifice and victim of his own sins. The image was probably suggested by Isaiah‘s words, “The Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea” Isaiah 34:6; and Jeremiah subsequently uses it of the overthrow of Pharaoh at the Euphrates, “This is the day of the Lord of Hosts; that He may avenge Him of His adversaries, for the Lord God hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates” Jeremiah 46:10. “The Lord hath made all things for Himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil” Proverbs 16:4. All must honor God, either fulfilling the will of God and the end of their own being and of His love for them, by obeying that loving will with their own freewill, or, if they repudiate it to the end, by suffering it.

He hath bid His guests - (Literally, sanctified) God had before, by Isaiah, called the pagan whom He employed to punish Babylon, “My sanctified ones” Isaiah 13:3. Zephaniah, by giving the title to God‘s instruments against Judah, declares that themselves, having become in deeds like the pagan, were as pagan to Him. The instruments of His

displeasure, not they, were so far his chosen, His called. Jeremiah repeats the saying, "Thus saith the Lord against the house of the king of Judah; … I have sanctified against thee destroyers, a man and his weapons" Jeremiah 22:6-7. That is, so far, a holy war in the purpose of God, which fulfills His will; from where Nebuchadnezzar was "His servant" Jeremiah 25:9, avenging His wrongs. Cyril: "To be sanctified, here denotes not the laying aside of iniquity, nor the participation of the Holy Spirit, but, as it were, to be foreordained and chosen to the fulfillment of this end." That is in a manner hallowed, which is employed by God for a holy end, though the instrument, its purposes, its aims, its passions, be in themselves unholy. There is an awe about "the scourges of God." As with the lightning and the tornado, there is a certain presence of God with them, in that through them His Righteousness is seen; although they themselves have as little of God as the "wind and storm" which "fulfill His word." Those who were once admitted to make offerings to God make themselves sacrifices to His wrath; these, still pagan and ungodly and in all besides reprobate, are His priests, because in this, although without their will, they do His will.

Verse 8

I will punish - (Literally, visit upon). God seems oftentimes to be away from His own world. People plot, design, say, in word or in deed, "who is Lord over us?" God is, as it were, a stranger in it, or as a man, who hath "taken a journey into afar country." God uses our own language to us. "I will visit," inspecting (so to say), examining, sifting, reviewing, and when man's sins require it, allowing the weight of His displeasure to fall upon them.

The princes - The prophet again, in vivid detail (as his characteristic is), sets forth together sin and punishment. Amid the general chastisement of all, when all should become one sacrifice, they who sinned most should be punished most. The evil priests had received their doom. Here he begins anew with the mighty of the people and so goes down, first to special spots of the city, then to the whole, man by man. Josiah being a godly king, no mention is made of him. Thirteen years before his death, he received the promise of God, "because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord - I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered unto thy grave in peace, and thou shalt not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place" 2 Kings 22:19-20. In remarkable contrast to Jeremiah, who had to be, in detail and continual pleading with

his people, a prophet of judgment to come, until these judgments broke upon them, and so was the reprover of the evil sovereigns who succeeded Josiah, Zephaniah has to pronounce God‘s judgments only on the “princes” and “the king‘s children.”

Jeremiah, in his inaugural vision, was forewarned, that “the kings Judah, its princes, priests, and the people of the land” Jeremiah 1:18 should war against him, because he should speak unto them all which God should command him. And thenceforth, Jeremiah impleads or threatens kings and the princes together Jeremiah 2:26; Jeremiah 4:9; Jeremiah 8:1; Jeremiah 24:8; Jeremiah 32:37; Jeremiah 34:21. Zephaniah contrariwise, his office lying wholly within the reign of Josiah, describes the princes again as “roaring lions” Zephaniah 3:3, but says nothing of the king, as neither does Micah Micah 3:1, Micah 3:9, in the reign, it may be, of Jotham or Hezekiah. Isaiah speaks of princes, as “rebellious and companions of thieves” Isaiah 1:23. Jeremiah speaks of them as idolaters Jeremiah 31:32-34; Jeremiah 44:21. They appear to have had considerable influence, which on one occasion they employed in defense of Jeremiah Jeremiah 26:16, but mostly for evil Jeremiah 37:15; Jeremiah 38:4, Jeremiah 38:16. Zedekiah inquired of Jeremiah secretly for fear of them Jeremiah 37:17; Jeremiah 38:14-27. They brought destruction upon themselves by what men praise, their resistance to Nebuchadnezzar, but against the declared mind of God. Nebuchadnezzar unwittingly fulfilled the prophets‘ word, when he “slew all the nobles of Judah, the eunuch who was over the war, and seven men of them that were near the king‘s person, and the principal scribe of the host” Jeremiah 39:6; Jeremiah 52:25-27.

And the king‘s children - Holy Scripture mentions chief persons only by name. Isaiah had prophesied the isolated lonely loveless lot of descendants of Hezekiah who should be “eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon” Isaiah 39:7, associated only with those intriguing pests of Eastern courts, a lot in itself worse than the sword (although to Daniel God overruled it to good) and Zedekiah‘s sons were slain before his eyes and his race extinct. Jehoiakim died a disgraced death, and Jehoiachin was imprisoned more than half the life of man.

And all such as are clothed with strange apparel - Israel was reminded by its dress, that it belonged to God. It was no great thing in itself; “a band of dark blue Numbers 15:38; Deuteronomy 22:12 upon the fringes at the four corners of their garments.” But “the band of dark blue” was upon

the high priest‘s mitre, with the plate engraved, “Holiness to the Lord” Exodus 28:36, fastened upon it; “with a band of dark blue” also was the breastplate Exodus 39:21 bound to the ephod of the high priest. So then, simple as it was, it seems to have designated the whole nation, as “a kingdom of priests, an holy nation” Exodus 19:6. It was appointed to them, “that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring; that ye may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy unto your God” Numbers 15:39-40. They might say, “it is but “a band of blue;”” but the “band of blue” was the soldier‘s badge, which marked them as devoted to the service of their God; indifference to or shame of it involved indifference to or shame of the charge given them therewith, and to their calling as a peculiar people. The choice of the strange apparel involved the choice to be as the nations of the world; “we will be as the pagan, as the families of the countries” Ezekiel 20:33.

All luxurious times copy foreign dress, and with it, foreign manners and luxuries; from where even the pagan Romans were zealous against its use. It is very probable that with the foreign dress foreign idolatry was imported. The Babylonian dress was very gorgeous, such as was the admiration of the simpler Jews. “Her captains and rulers clothed in perfection, girded with girdles upon their loins, with flowing dyed attire upon their heads” Ezekiel 23:12, Ezekiel 23:15. Ezekiel had to frame words to express the Hebrew idea of their beauty. Jehoiakim is reproved among other things for his luxury Jeremiah 22:14-15. Outward dress always betokens the inward mind, and in its turn acts upon it. An estranged dress betokened an estranged heart, from where it is used as an image of the whole spiritual mind Romans 13:14; Colossians 3:12; Ephesians 4:24. Jerome: “The garment of the sons of the king and the apparel of princes which we receive in Baptism, is Christ, according to that, “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,” and “Put ye on bowels of mercy, goodness, humililty, patience,” and the rest. Wherein, we are commanded to be clothed with the new man from heaven according to our Creator, and to “lay aside” the clothing of “the old man with his deeds” Ephesians 4:22. Whereas, then we ought to be clothed in such raiment, for mercy we put on cruelty, for patience, impatience, for righteousness, iniquity; in a word, for virtues, vices, for Christ, antichrist. Whence it is said of such an one, “He is clothed with cursing as with a garment” Psalm

109:17. These the Lord will visit most manifestly at His Coming." Rup.: "Thinkest thou that hypocrisy is "strange apparel?" Of a truth. For what stranger apparel than sheeps' clothing to ravening wolves? What stranger than for him who "within is full of iniquity, to appear outwardly righteous before men?" Matthew 23:28.

Verse 9

I will punish all those that leap on the threshold - Neither language nor history nor context allow this to be understood of the idolatrous custom of Ashdod, not to tread on the threshold of the temple of Dagon. It had indeed been a strange infatuation of idolatry, that God's people should adopt an act of superstitious reverence for an idol in the very instance in which its nothingness and the power of the true God had been shown. Nothing is indeed too brutish for one who chooses an idol for the true God, preferring Satan to the good God. Yet, the superstition belonged apparently to Ashdod alone; the worship of Dagon, although another form of untrue worship, does not appear, like that of Baal, to have fascinated the Jews; nor would Zephaniah, to express a rare superstition, have chosen an idiom, which might more readily express the contrary, that they "leapt "on" the threshold," not over it.

They are also the same persons, who "leap on the threshold," and who "fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit." Yet, this relates, not to superstition, but to plunder and goods unjustly gotten. As then, before, he had declared God's judgments upon idolatry, so does he here upon sins against the second table, whether by open violence, or secret fraud, as do also Habakkuk Habakkuk 1:2-3, and Jeremiah Jeremiah 5:27. All, whether open or hidden from man, every wrongful dealing, (for every sin as to a neighbor's goods falls under these two, violence or fraud) shall be avenged in that day. Here again all which remains is the sin. They enriched, as they thought, their masters by art or by force; they schemed, plotted, robbed; they succeeded to their heart's wish; but, "ill-gotten, ill-spent!" They "filled their masters' houses" quite full; but wherewith? with violence and deceit, which witnessed against them, and brought down the judgments of God upon them.

Verse 10

A cry from the fish-gate - "The fish-gate" was probably in the north of the wall of "the second city." For in Nehemiah's rebuilding, the restoration began at the sheep-gate Nehemiah 3:1 (so called doubtless, because the sheep for the sacrifices were brought in by it), which, as being near the temple, was repaired by the priests; then it ascended northward, by two towers, the towers of Meah and Hananeel; then two companies repaired some undescribed part of the wall Nehemiah 3:2, and then another company built the fish-gate Nehemiah 3:3. Four companies are then mentioned, who repaired, in order, to the old gate, which was repaired by another company Nehemiah 3:4-6. Three more companies repaired beyond these; and they left Jerusalem unto the broad wall Nehemiah 3:7-8. After three more sections repaired by individuals, two others repaired a second measured portion, and the tower of the furnaces Nehemiah 3:9-11.

This order is reversed in the account of the dedication of the walls. The people being divided "into two great companies of them that give thanks" Nehemiah 12:31-38, some place near "the tower of the furnaces" was the central point, from which both parted to encompass the city in opposite directions. In this account, we have two additional gates mentioned, "the gate of Ephraim" Nehemiah 12:39, between the "broad wall" and the "old gate," and "the prison-gate," beyond "the sheep-gate," from which the repairs had begun. "The gate of Ephraim" had obviously not been repaired, because, for some reason, it had not been destroyed. Elsewhere, Nehemiah, who describes the rebuilding of the wall so minutely, must have mentioned its rebuilding. It was obviously to the north, as leading to Ephraim. But the tower of Hananeel must have been a very marked tower. In Zechariah Jerusalem is measured from north to south, "from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses" Zechariah 14:10.

It was then itself at the northeast corner of Jerusalem, where towers were of most importance to strengthen the wall, and to command the approach to the wall either way. "The fish-gate" then, lying between it and "the gate of Ephraim," must have been on the north side of the city, and so on the side where the Chaldaean invasions came; yet it must have been much inside the present city, because the city itself was enlarged by Herod Agrippa on the north, as it was unaccountably contracted on the south. The then limits of Jerusalem are defined. For Josephus thus describes "the second wall." (B. J. v. 42): "It took its beginning from that gate which they

called “Gennath,” which belonged to the first wall; it only encompassed the northern quarter of the city and reached as far as the tower of Antonia.” The tower of Antonia was situated at the northwest angle of the corner of the temple. The other end of the wall, the Gennath or “garden” gate, must have opened on cultivated land; and Josephus speaks of the gardens on the north and northwest of the city which were destroyed by Titus in leveling the ground (B. J. v. 32).

But near the tower of Hippicus, the northwestern extremity of the first wall, no ancient remains have been discovered by excavation; but they have been traced north, from “an ancient Jewish semi-circular arch, resting on piers 18 feet high, now buried in rubbish.”

These old foundations have been traced at three places in a line on the east of the Holy Sepulchre (which lay consequently outside the city) up to the judgment gate, but not north of it.

The line from west to east, that is, to the tower of Antonia, is marked generally by “very large stones, evidently of Jewish work, in the walls of houses, especially in the lower parts”. They are chiefly in the line of the Via Dolorosa.

“The fish-gate” had its name probably from a fish-market (markets being in the open places near the gates (see 2 Kings 7:1; Nehemiah 13:16, Nehemiah 13:19)) the fish being brought either from the lake of Tiberius or from Joppa. Near it, the wall ended, which Manasseh, after his restoration from Babylon, “built without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley” 2 Chronicles 33:14. This, being unprotected by its situation, was the weakest part of the city.: “The most ancient of the three walls could be considered as impregnable, as much on account of its extreme thickness, as of the height of the mountain on which it was built, and the depth of the valleys at its base, and David, Solomon and the other kings neglected nothing to place it in this state.” Where they had made themselves strong, there God‘s judgment should find them.

And a howling from the second - city, as it is supplied in Nehemiah, who mentions the prefect set over it. It was here that Huldah the prophetess lived, who prophesied the evils to come upon Jerusalem, after Josiah should

be “gathered to” his “grave in peace.” It was probably the lower city, which was enclosed by the second wall. It was a second or new city, as compared to the original city of David, on Mount Moriah. On this the enemy who had penetrated by the fish-gate would first enter; then take the strongest part of the city itself. Gareb Jeremiah 31:39 and Bezetha were outside of the then town; they would then be already occupied by the enemy before entering the city.

A great crashing from the hills - These are probably Zion, and Mount Moriah on which the temple stood, and so the capture is described as complete. Here should be not a cry or howling only, but an utter destruction. Mount Moriah was the seat of the worship of God; on Mount Zion was the state, and the abode of the wealthy. In human sight they were impregnable. The Jebusites mocked at David‘s siege, as thinking their city impregnable 2 Samuel 5:6; but God was with David and he took it. He and his successors fortified it yet more, but its true defense was that the Lord was round about His people” Psalm 125:2, and when lie withdrew His protection, then this natural strength was but their destruction, tempting them to resist first the Chaldaeans, then the Romans. Human strength is but a great crash, falling by its own weight and burying its owner. “This threefold cry, from three parts of the city, had a fulfillment before the destruction by the Romans. In the lower part of the city Simon tyrannized, and in the middle John raged, and “there was a great crashing from the hills,” that is, from the temple and citadel where was Eleazar, who stained the very altar of the temple with blood, and in the courts of the Lord made a pool of blood of divers corpses.”

Cyril: “In the assaults of an enemy the inhabitants are ever wont to flee to the tops of the hills, thinking that the difficulty of access will be a hindrance to him, and will cut off the assaults of the pursuers. But when God smiteth, and requireth of the despisers the penalties of their sin, not the most towered city nor impregnable circuits of walls, not height of hills, or rough rocks, or pathless difficulty of ground, will avail to the sufferers. Repentance alone saves, softening the Judge and allaying His wrath, and readily inviting the Creator in His inherent goodness to His appropriate gentleness. Better is it, with all our might to implore that we may not offend Him. But since human nature is prone to evil, and “in many things we all offend” James 3:2, let us at least by repentance invite to His wonted clemency the Lord of all, Who is by nature kind.”

Verse 11

Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh - Literally, "Mortar", "in which," Jerome says, "corn is pounded; a hollow vessel, and fit for the use of medical men, in which properly ptisans are wont to be beaten (or made). Striking is it, that Scripture saith not, ‹who dwell in the valley or in the alley,‘ but who "dwell in the mortar," because as corn, when the pestle striketh, is bruised, so the army of the enemy shall rush down upon you" (Jerome). The place intended is probably so much of the valley of the Tyropoeon, which intersected Jerusalem from north to south, as was enclosed by the second wall, on the north, and the first wall on the south. The valley "extended as far as the fountain of Siloam," and united with the valley of Jehoshaphat a little below Ophel. It was "full of houses," and, from its name as well as from its situation, it was probably the scene of petty merchandise, where the occasions in which men could and did break the law and offend God, were the more continual, because they entered into their daily life, and were a part of it. The sound of the pestle was continually heard there; another sound should thereafter be heard, when they should not bruise, but be themselves bruised. The name "Maktesh" was probably chosen to express how their false hopes, grounded on the presence of God‘s temple among them while by their sins they profaned it, should be turned into true fears. They had been and thought themselves "Mikdash," "a holy place,. sanctuary;" they should be Maktesh, wherein all should be utterly bruised in pieces.

Jerome: "Whoso considereth the calamities of that siege, and how the city was pressed and hemmed in, will feel how aptly he calls them "the inhabitants of a mortar;" for, as grains of corn are brought together into a mortar, to the end that, when the pestle descendeth, being unable to fly off, they may be bruised, so the people flowing together, out of all the countries of Judaea, was narrowed in by a sudden siege, and through the savage cruelty of the above leaders of the sedition, was unutterably tortured from within, more than by the enemy without."

For all the merchant people are cut down - (Literally, "the people of Canaan") that is Ch.: "they who in deeds are like the people of Canaan," according to that, "Thou art of Canaan and not of Judah," and, "Thy father is an Amorite and thy mother a Hittite". So our Lord says to the reprobate Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil" John 8:44.

All they that bear silver are cut off - (Literally, "all laden with"). The silver, wherewith they lade themselves, being gotten amiss, is a load upon them, weighing them down until they are destroyed.

Verse 12

I will search - (Literally, "diligently"). The word is always used of a minute diligent search, whereby places, persons, things, are searched and sifted one by one in every corner, until it be found whether a thing be there or no. Hence, also of the searching out of every thought of the heart, either by God Proverbs 20:27, or in repentance by the light of God Lamentations 3:40.

Jerusalem with candles - so that there should be no corner, no lurking-place so dark, but that the guilty should be brought to light. The same diligence, which Eternal Wisdom used, to "seek and to save that which was lost Luke 15:8, lighting a candle and searching diligently," until it find each lost piece of silver, the same shall Almighty God use that no hardened sinner shall escape. Cyril: "What the enemy would do, using unmingled phrensy against the conquered, that God fitteth to His own Person, not as being Himself the Doer of things so foreign, but rather permitting that what comes from anger should proceed in judgment against the ungodly." It was an image of this, when, at the taking of Jerusalem by the Romans, they "dragged out of common sewers and holes and caves and tombs, princes and great men and priests, who for fear of death had hid themselves."

How much more in that Day when "the secrets of all hearts shalt be revealed" by Him who "searcheth the hearts and reins, and to Whose Eyes" Psalm 7:9; Psalm 26:2; Jeremiah 11:20; Jeremiah 17:10; Jeremiah 20:12; Revelation 2:23, "which are like flashing Fire, all things are naked and open!" Revelation 1:14. The candles wherewith God searcheth the heart, are men's own consciences Proverbs 20:27, His Own revealed word Psalm 119:104; Proverbs 6:23; 2 Peter 1:19, the lives of true Christians Philemon 2:15. Those, through the Holy Spirit in each, may enlighten the heart of man, or, if he takes not heed, will rise in judgment against him, and show the falsehood of all vain excuses.: "One way of escape only there is. If we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged. I will "search out my" own "ways" and my desires, that He who "shall search out Jerusalem with candles," may find nothing in me, unsought and unsifted. For He will not twice judge the same thing. Would that I might so follow and track out all my offences, that in none I need fear His piercing Eyes, in none be ashamed at the light of His

candles! Now I am seen, but I see not. At hand is that Eye, to whom all things are open, although Itself is not open. Once "I shall know, even as I am known" 1 Corinthians 13:12. Now "I know in part," but I am not known in part, but wholly."

The men that are settled on their lees - Stiffened and contracted. The image is from wine which becomes harsh, if allowed to remain upon the lees, unremoved. It is drawn out by Jeremiah, "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity; therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed" Jeremiah 48:11. So they upon whom "no changes come, fear not God (see Psalm 55:19). The lees are the refuse of the wine, yet stored up (so the word means) with it, and the wine rests, as it were, upon them. So do men of ease rest in things defiled and defiling, their riches or their pleasure, which they hoard up, on which they are bent, so that they, Dionysius: "lift not their mind to things above, but, darkened with foulest desires, are hardened and stiffened in sin."

That say in their heart - Not openly scoffing, perhaps thinking that they believe; but people "do" believe as they love. Their most inward belief, the belief of their heart and affections, what they wish, and the hidden spring of their actions, is, "The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil." They act as believing so, and by acting inure themselves to believe it. They think of God as far away, "Is not God in the height of heaven? And behold the height of the stars, how high they are! And thou sayest, How doth God know? Can He judge through the dark cloud? Thick goads are a covering to Him, that He seeth not; and He walketh in the circuit of heaven" Job 22:12-14, "The ungodly in the pride of his heart" (thinketh); "He will not inquire; all his devices" (speak), "There is no God. Strong are his ways at all times; on high are Thy judgments out of his sight" Psalm 10:4-5. "They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless, and they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it" Psalm 94:5-6.

"Such things they did imagine and were deceived, for their own wickedness blinded them. As for the mysteries of God, they knew them not" (Wisd. 2:21-22). "Faith without works is dead" James 2:20. Faith which acts not dies out, and there comes in its stead this other persuasion, that God will not repay. There are more Atheists than believe themselves to be such. These act as if there were no Judge of their deeds, and at last come,

themselves to believe that God will not punish Isaiah 5:19; Malachi 2:17. What else is the thought of all worldlings, of all who make idols to themselves of any pleasure or gain or ambition, but "God will not punish?" "God cannot punish the (wrongful, selfish,) indulgence of the nature which He has made." "God will not be so precise." "God will not punish with everlasting severance from Him, the sins of this short life." And they see not that they ascribe to God, what He attributes to idols that is, not-gods. "Do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed and behold it together". "Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good" Jeremiah 10:5. These think not that God does good, for they ascribe their success to their own diligence, wisdom, strength, and thank not God for it. They think not that He sends them evil. For they defy Him and His laws, and think that they shall go unpunished. What remains but that He should be as dumb an idol as those of the pagan?

Verse 13

Therefore their goods - Literally, "And their strength." It is the simple sequel in God's Providence. It is a continued narrative. God will visit those who say, that God does not interfere in man's affairs, and, it shall be seen Jeremiah 44:28 whose words shall stand, God's or their's. All which God had threatened in the law shall be fulfilled. God, in the fulfillment of the punishment, which He had foretold in the law Leviticus 26:32-33; Psalm 52:7. But if indeed their houses are adorned in a costly manner, they shall not be theirs, for they shall be burned, and themselves go into captivity, leaving all in their house, and deprived of all which would gladden. And this God said clearly to the king of Judah by Jeremiah, "Thou hast builded thyself a large house and wide chambers, ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. Shalt thou reign because thou closest thyself with cedar!" Jeremiah 22:14-15. Gregory (Mor. viii. 14): "As the house of the body is the bodily dwelling, so to each mind its house is that, wherein through desire it is wont to dwell," and "desolate" shall they be, being severed forever from the things they desired, and forever deserted by God. "They shall also build houses but not inhabit them," as the rich man said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years … . Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" Luke 12:19-20. Before the siege by the Romans, Jerusalem and the temple had been greatly beautified, only to be

destroyed. “And they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof.” This is the woe, first pronounced in the law Deuteronomy 28:39, often repeated and ever found true. Wickedness makes joy its end, yet never finds it, seeking it where it is not, out of God.

Verse 14

The great Day of the Lord is near - The prophet again expands the words of Joel, accumulating words expressive of the terrors of that Day, showing that though “the great and very terrible Day of the Lord” Joel 2:31, (Joel had said) “a day of darkness and gloominess, of clouds and of thick darkness” Joel 2:2, “which was then coming and nigh at hand” Joel 2:1, had come and was gone, it was only a forerunner of others; none of them final; but each, because it “was” a judgment and an instance of the justice of God, an earnest and forerunner of other judgments to the end. Again, “a great Day of the Lord was near.” This Day had itself, so to speak, many hours and divisions of the day. But each hour tolleth the same knell of approaching doom. Each calamity in the miserable reigns of the sons of Josiah was one stroke in the passing-bell, until the de struction of Jerusalem by the Chaldaeans, for the time closed it.

The judgment was complete. The completeness of that excision made it the more an image of every other like day until the final destruction of all which, although around or near to Christ, shall in the Great Day be found not to be His, but to have rejected Him. Jerome: “Truly was vengeance required, ‹from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, whom they slew between the temple and the altar‘ Matthew 23:35, and at last when they said of the Son of God, “His blood be upon us and upon our children” Matthew 27:25, they experienced a bitter day, because they had provoked the Lord to bitterness; a Day, appointed by the Lord, in which not the weak only but the mighty shall be bowed down, and wrath shall come upon them to the end. For often before they endured the wrath of the Lord, but that wrath was not to the uttermost. What need now to describe how great calamities they endured in both captivities, and how they who rejected the light of the Lord, walked in darkness and thick darkness, and they who would not hear the trumpet of the solemn feast-days, heard the shout of the enemy.

But of the “fenced cities” and “lofty corner-towers” of Judaea, which are until now destroyed even to the ground, the eyes, I deem, can judge better

than the ears. We especially, now living in that province, can see, can prove what is written. We scarcely discern slight traces of ruins of what once were great cities. At Shiloh, where was the tabernacle and ark of the testament of the Lord, scarcely the foundations of the altar are shown. Rama and Bethoron and the other noble cities built by Solomon, are shown to be little villages. Let us read Joseplius and the prophecy of Zephaniah; we shall see his history before our eyes. And this must be said not only of the captivity, but even to the present day. The treacherous farmers, having slain the servants, and, at last, the Son of God, are prevented from entering Jerusalem, except to wail, and they purchase at a price leave to weep the ruin of their city, so that they who once bought the Blood of Christ, buy their tears; not even their tears are costless.

You may see on the day that Jerusalem was taken and destroyed by the Romans, a people in mourning come, decrepit old women and old men, in aged and ragged wretchedness, showing in their bodies and in their guise the wrath of the Lord. The hapless crowd is gathered, and amid the gleaming of the Cross of Christ, and the radiant glory of His Resurrection, the standard also of the Cross shining from Mount Olivet, you may see the people, piteous but unpitied, bewail the ruins of their temple, tears still on their cheeks, their arms livid and their hair disheveled, and the soldier asketh a guerdon, that they may be allowed to weep longer. And doth any, when he seeth this, doubt of the "day of trouble and distress, the day of darkness and gloominess, the day of clouds and thick darkness, the day of the trumpet and alarm?" For they have also trumpets in their sorrow, and, according to the prophecy, the voice of "the solemn feast-day is turned into mourning." They wail over the ashes of the sanctuary and the altar destroyed, and over cities once fenced, and over the high towers of the temple, from which they once cast headlong James the brother of the Lord."

But referring the Day of the Lord to the end of the world or the close of the life of each, it too is near; near, the prophet adds to impress the more its nearness, for it is at hand to each; and when eternity shall come, all time shall seem like a moment, "A thousand years, when past, are like a watch in the night" Psalm 90:4; one fourth part of one night.

And hasteth greatly - For time whirls on more rapidly to each, year by year, and when God's judgments draw near, the tokens of them thicken, and

troubles sweep one over the other, events jostle against each other. The voice of the day of the Lord. That Day, when it cometh, shall leave no one in doubt what it meaneth; it shall give no uncertain sound, but shall, trumpet-tongued, proclaim the holiness and justice of Almighty God; its voice shall be the Voice of Christ, which "all that are in the graves shall hear and come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation" John 5:28-29.

"The mighty men shall cry there bitterly, for "bitter is the remembrance of death to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions, unto the man that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath prosperity in all things" (Ecclesiastes 8:8. Rather, wrath shall come upon "the kings" of the earth, "and the great men and the rich men and the mighty men, and" they shall will to "hide" themselves "from the Face of Him that sitteth on the Throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great Day of His wrath is come: and who shall be able to stand?" Revelation 6:15-17.

The mighty men shall cry there bitterly - The prophet has spoken of time, "the day of the Lord." He points out the more vividly the unseen sight and place, "there;" so David says, "There they feared a fear" Psalm 14:5. He sees the place; he hears the bitter cry. So near is it in fact; so close the connection of cause and effect, of sin and punishment. There shall be a great and bitter cry, when there shall be no place for repentance. It shall be a mighty cry, but mighty in the bitterness of its distress. "Mighty men shall be mightily tormented" (Wisd. 6:6), that is, those who have been mighty against God, weak against Satan, and shall have used their might in his service.

Verse 15

A day of wrath - In which all the wrath of Almighty God, which evil angels and evil men have treasured to them for that day, shall be poured out: "the" day of wrath, because then they shall be brought face to face before the presence of God, but thenceforth they shall be cast out of it forever.

A day of trouble and distress - Both words express, how anguish shall narrow and hem them in; so that there shall be no escape; above them, God displeased; below, the flames of Hell; around, devils to drag them away, and Angels casting them forth "in bundles to burn them;" without, "the books" which shall be opened;" and within, conscience leaving them no escape.

A day of wasteness and desolation - In which all things shall return to their primeval void, before "the Spirit of God brooded upon the face of the waters," His presence being altogether withdrawn.

A day of darkness and gloominess - For sun and moon shall lose their brightness, and no brightness from the Lamb shall shine upon the wicked, but they shall be driven into "outer darkness."

A day of clouds and thick darkness - Hiding from them the Face of the Sun of Righteousness, and covering Him, so that their "prayers should not pass through" Lamentations 3:44.

Verse 16

A day of the trumpet and alarm - othat is, of the loud blast of the trumpet, which sounds alarm and causes it. The word is especially the shrill loud noise of the trumpet (for sacred purposes in Israel itself, as ruling all the movements of the tabernacle and accompanying their feasts); then also of the "battle cry." They had not listened to the voice of the trumpet, as it called them to holy service; now they shall hear "the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God" 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

Against the high towers - Literally, "corners", and so "corner-towers." This peculiarity describes Jerusalem, whose walls "were made artificially standing in a line curved inwards, so that the flanks of assailants might be exposed." By this same name Judges 20:2; 1 Samuel 14:38; Isaiah 19:13; Zechariah 10:4 are called the mighty men and chiefs of the people, who, humanly speaking, hold it together and support it; on these chiefs in rebellion against God, whether devils or evil men, shall punishment greatly fall.

Verse 17

I will bring distress upon men - I will hem them in, in anguish on all sides. God Himself shall meet them with His terrors, wherever they turn. "I will hem them in, that they may find it so".

That they shall walk like blind men - Utterly bereft of counsel, seeing no more than the blind which way to turn, grasping blindly and franticly at anything, and going on headlong to their own destruction. So God forewarned them in the law; "Thou shalt grope at noon day, as the blind gropeth in darkness" Job 5:14; and, "They grope in the dark without light, and He maketh them to stagger like a drunken man" Job 12:25; and Isaiah foretelling of those times, "We grope for the wall, as the blind; and we grope, as if we had no eyes; we stumble in the noon-day as in the night.

Because they have sinned against the Lord" Isaiah 59:10, and so He hath turned their wisdom into foolishness, and since they have despised Him, He hath made them objects of contempt. "Their blood shall be poured out like dust" 1 Samuel 2:30, as abundant and as valueless; utterly disregarded by Him, as Asaph complains, "their blood have they shed like water" Psalm 79:3; contemptible and disgusting as what is vilest; "their flesh as the dung," refuse, decayed, putrefied, offensive, enriching by its decay the land, which had been the scene of their luxuries and oppressions. Yet, the most offensive disgusting physical corruption is but a faint image of the defilement of sin. This punishment, in which the carrion remains should be entombed only in the bowels of vultures and dogs, was especially threatened to Jehoiakim; "He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, dragged and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem" Jeremiah 22:19.

Verse 18

Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath - Gain unjustly gotten was the cause of their destruction. For, as Ezekiel closes the like description; "They shall cast their silver into the streets, and their gold shall be removed; their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord; they shall not satisfy their souls nor fill their bowels: "because it is the stumbling-block of their iniquity" Ezekiel 7:19. Much less shall any possession, outward or inward, be of avail in the Great Day; since in death the rich man's "pomp shall not follow him" Psalm 49:17, and every gift which he has misused, whether of mind or spirit, even the knowledge of God without doing His will, shall but increase damnation. "Sinners will then have nothing but their sins."

Here the prophet uses images belonging more to the immediate destruction; at the close the words again widen, and belong, in their fullest literal sense, to the Day of Judgment. "The whole land," rather, as at the beginning, "the whole earth shall be devoured by the fire of His jelousy; for He shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land:" rather, "He shall make an utter, yea altogether a terriffic destruction of all the dwellers of the earth." What Nahum had foretold of Nineveh, "He shall make the place thereof an utter consumption," that Zephaniah foretells of all the inhabitants of the world. For what is this, "the whole earth shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy," but what Peter says, "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up?" 2 Peter 3:13. And what

is that he says, “He shall make all the dwellers of the earth an utter, yea altogether a hasty destruction,” but a general judgment of all, who belong to the world, whose home, citizenship, whose whole mind is in the world, not as true Christians, who are strangers and pilgrims here, and their “citizenship is in heaven?” Hebrews 11:13; Philemon 3:20.

These God shall make an utter, terrific, speedy destruction, a living death, so that they shall at once both be and not be; be, as continued in being; not be, as having no life of God, but only a continued death in misery. And this shall be through the jealousy of Almighty God, that divine quality in Him, whereby He loves and wills to be loved, and endures not those who give to others the love for which He gave so much and which is so wholly due to Himself Alone. Augustine, Conf. i. 5. p. 3, Oxford Translation: “Thou demandest my love, and if I give it not, art wroth with me, and threatenest me with grievous woes. Is it then a slight woe to love Thee not?” What will be that anger, which is Infinite Love, but which becomes, through man‘s sin, Hate?

ZEPHANIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

Having set forth the terrors of the Judgment Day, the prophet adds an earnest call to repentance; and then declares how judgments, forerunners of that Day, shall fall, one by one, on those nations around, who know not God, and shall rest upon Nineveh, the great beautiful ancient city of the world. Jerome: "See the mercy of God. It had been enough to have set before the wise the vehemence of the coming evil. But because He willeth not to punish, but to alarm only, Himself calleth to repentance, that He may not do what He threatened." Cyril: "Having set forth clearly the savageness of the war and the greatness of the suffering to come, he suitably turns his discourse to the duty of calling to repentance, when it was easy to persuade them, being terrified. For sometimes when the mind has been numbed, and exceedingly bent to evil, we do not readily admit even the will to repent, but fear often drives us to it, even against our will. He calls us then to friendship with Himself. For as they revolted, became aliens, serving idols and giving up their mind to their passions, so they would, as it were, retrace their steps, and lay hold of the friendship of God, choosing to serve Him, nay and Him Alone, and obey His commandments. Wherefore, while we have time, while the Lord, in His forbearance as God, gives way, let us enact repentance, supplicate, say weeping, "remember not the sins and offences of my youth" Psalm 25:7; let us unite ourselves with Him by sanctification and sobriety. So shall we be sheltered in the day of wrath, and wash away the stain of our falls, before the Day of the Lord come upon us. For the Judge will come, He will come from heaven at the due season, and will reward each according to his work."

Gather yourselves together, yea gather together - orather, "Sift yourselves, yea sift". The exact image is from gathering stubble or dry sticks, which are picked up one by one, with search and care.

So must men deal with the dry and withered leaves of a past evil life. The English rendering however, comes to the same meaning. We use, "collect oneself" for bringing oneself, all one's thoughts, together, and so, having full possession of oneself. Or "gathering ourselves" might stand in contrast with being "abroad," as it were, out of ourselves amid the manifoldness of things seen. Jerome: "Thou who, taken up with the business of the world, hurriest to and fro amid divers things, return to the

Church of the saints, and join thyself to their life and assembly, whom thou seest to please God, and bring together the dislocated members of thy soul, which now are not knit together, into one frame of wisdom, and cleave to its embrace." "Gather yourselves" into one, wherein ye have been scattered; to the One God, from whom they had wandered, seeking pleasure from His many creatures; to His one fold and Church, from which they had severed themselves outwardly by joining the worship of Baal, inwardly, by serving him and his abominable rites; joining and joined to the assembly of the faithful, by oneness of faith and life.

In order to repent, a man must know himself thoroughly; and this can only be done by taking act by act, word by word, thought by thought, as far as he can, not in a confused heap or mass, as they lie in any man's conscience, but one by one, each picked up apart, and examined, and added to the sear unfruitful heap, plucking them as it were, and gathering them out of himself, that so they may, by the Spirit of burning, the fire of God's Spirit kindling repentance, be burned up, and not the sinner himself be fuel for fire with them. The word too is intensive, "Gather together all which is in you, thoroughly, piece by piece" (for the sinner's whole self becomes chaff, dry and empty). To use another image, "Sift yourselves thoroughly, so that nothing escape, as far as your diligence can reach, and then - "And gather on," that is, "glean on;" examine yourselves, "not lightly and after the manner of dissemblers before God," but repeatedly, gleaning again and again, to see if by any means anything have escaped: continuing on the search and ceasing not.

The first earnest search into the soul must be the beginning, not the end. Our search must be continued, until there be no more to be discovered, that is, when sin is no more, and we see ourselves in the full light of the presence of our Judge. For a first search, however diligent, never thoroughly reaches the whole deep disease of the whole man; the most grievous sins hide other grievous sins, though lighter. Some sins flash on the conscience, at one time, some at another; so that few, even upon a diligent search, come at once to the knowledge of all their heaviest sins. When the mist is less thick, we see more clearly what was before one dark dull mass of imperfection and misery.: "Spiritual sins are also with difficulty sifted, (as they are,) by one who is carnal. Whence it happens, that

things in themselves heavier he perceives less or very little, and conscience is not grieved so much by the memory of pride or envy, as of impurities and crimes."

So having said, "Sift yourselves through and through," he says, "sift on." A diligent sifting and search into himself must be the beginning of all true repentance and pardon.: "What remains, but that we give ourselves wholly to this work, so holy, and needful? "Let us search and try our ways and our doings", and let each think that he has made progress, not if he find not what to blame, but if he blame what he finds. Thou hast not sifted thyself in vain, if thou hast discovered that thou needest a fresh sitting; and so often has thy search not failed thee, as thou judgest that it must be renewed. But if thou ever dost this, when there is need, thou dost it ever. But ever remember that thou needest help from above and the mercy of Jesus Christ our Lord Who is over all, God blessed forever." The whole course of self-examination then lies in two words of divine Scripture. And withal he warns them, instead of gathering together riches which shall "not be able to deliver them in the day of trouble," to gather themselves into themselves, and so "judge" themselves "thoroughly, that they be not judged of the Lord" 1 Corinthians 11:31-32.

O nation not desired - othat is, having nothing in itself to be desired or loved, but rather, for its sin, hateful to God. God yearneth with pity and compassion over His creatures; He "hath a desire to the work of His Hands". Here Israel is spoken to, as what he had made himself, hateful to God by his sins, although still an object of His tender care, in what yet remained to him of nature or grace which was from Himself.

Verse 2

Before the decree bring forth - God's word is full (as it were) of the event which it foretelleth; it contains its own fulfillment in itself, and "travaileth" until it come to pass, giving signs of its coming, yet delaying until the full time. Time is said to bring forth what is wrought in it. "Thou knowest not, what a day shall bring forth."

Before the day pass as the chaff - Or, parenthetically, "like chaff the day passeth by." God's counsels lie wrapt up, as it were, in the womb of time, wherein He hides them, until the moment which He has appointed, and they break forth suddenly to those who look not for them. The mean season is given for repentance, that is, the day of grace, the span of

repentance still allowed, which is continually whirling more swiftly by; and woe, if it be fruitless as chaff! Those who profit not by it shall also be as chaff, carried away pitilessly by the whirlwind to destruction. Time, on which eternity hangs, is a slight, uncertain thing, as little to be counted upon, as the light dry particles which are the sport of the wind, driven uncertainly here and there. But when it is "passed," then "cometh," not "to" them, but "upon" them, from heaven, overwhelming them, "abiding upon" John 3:36 them, not to pass away, "the heat of the anger of Almighty God." This warning he twice repeats, to impress the certainty and speed of its conming Genesis 41:32. It is the warning of our Lord, "Take heed, lest that day come upon you unawares" Luke 21:34.

Verse 3

Seek ye the Lord - He had exhorted sinners to penitence; he now calls the righteous to persevere and increase more and more. He bids them "seek diligently", and that with a three-fold call, to seek Him from whom they received daily the three-fold blessing Numbers 6:23-26, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as he had just before threatened God‘s impending judgment with the same use of the mysterious number, three. They, whom he calls, were already, by the grace of God, "meek," and "had wrought His judgment." Rup.: "Submitting themselves to the word of God, they had done and were doing the judgment of God, ‹judging themselves that they benot judged;‘ the beginning of which judgment is, as sinners and guilty of death, to give themselves to the Cross of the Lord, that is, to be ‹baptized‘ in ‹His Death and be buried with Him by Baptism into death;‘ but the perfection of that judgment or righteousness is, to ‹walk in newness of life, as He rose from the dead through the glory of the Father‘ Romans 6:3-4."

Dionysius: "Since the meek already have God through grace as the Possessor and Dweller in their heart, how shall they seek Him but that they may have Him more fully and more perfectly, knowing Him more clearly, loving Him more ardently, cleaving to Him more inseparably, that so they may be heard by Him, not for themselves only, but for others?" It is then the same Voice as at the close of the Revelation, "the righteous, let him be still more righteous; the holy, let him be still more holy" Revelation 22:11. They are the "meek," who are exhorted "diligently" to "seek meekness," and they who had "wrought His judgment," who are "diligently" to "seek Righteousness." And since our Lord saith, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart" Matthew 11:29, He bids (Jerome) "those who imitated His

meekness and did His judgment, to seek the Lord in their meekness." Meekness and Righteousness may be His Attributes, Who is All-gentleness and All-Righteousness, the Fountain of all, wheresoever it is, in gentleness receiving penitents, and, as "the Righteous Judge, giving the crown of righteousness" to those who "love Him and keep His commandments," yea He joineth righteousness with meekness, since without His mercy no man living could be justified in His Sight. Cyril: "God is sought by us, when, of our choice, laying aside all listlessness, we thirst after doing what pleases Him; and we shall do judgment too, when we fulfill His divine law, working out what is good unshrinkingly; and we shall gain the prize of righteousness, when crowned with glory for well-doing and running the well-reported anti blameless way of true piety to God and of love to the brethren, for ‹love is the fulfilling of the law' Romans 13:10."

It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger - Rup.: "Shall these too then scarcely be ‹hid in the day of the Lord's anger?' Doth not the Apostle Peter say the very same? ‹If it first begin at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?' 1 Peter 4:17-18. So then, although any be ‹meek,' although he ‹have wrought the judgment' of the Lord, let him ever suspect himself, nor think that he has ‹already attained,' since neither can any righteous be saved, if he be judged ‹without mercy.'" Dionysius: "He saith, if ‹may' be; not that there is any doubt that the meek and they who perseveringly seek God, shall then be saved, but, to convey how difficult it is to be saved, and how fearful and rigorous is the judgment of God." To be hid is to be sheltered from wrath under the protection of God; as David says, "In the time of trouble He shall hide me" Psalm 27:5; and, "Thou shalt hide them (that trust in Thee) in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man; Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues" Psalm 31:20. And in Isaiah, "A Man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest" Isaiah 32:2; and, "There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain" Isaiah 5:6.

Verse 4

For - As a ground for repentance and perseverance, he goes through Pagan nations, upon whom God's wrath should come. Jerome: "As Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, after visions concerning Judah, turn to other nations

round about, and according to the character of each, announce what shall come upon them, and dwell at length upon it, so doth this prophet, though more briefly" And thus under five nations, who lay west, east, south and north, he includes all mankind on all sides, and, again, according to their respective characters toward Israel, as they are alien from, or hostile to the Church; the Philistines Zephaniah 2:4-7, as a near, malicious, infesting enemy; Moab and Ammon Isaiah 2:8-10, people akin to her (as heretics) yet ever rejoicing at her troubles and sufferings; Etheopians Isaiah 5:12, distant nations at peace with her, and which are, for the most part, spoken of as to be brought unto her; Assyria Isaiah 16:4; Amos 1:13-15; Amos 2:1-3; Jeremiah 48:27-30, Jeremiah 48:42; Jeremiah 49:1; Ezekiel 20:3, Ezekiel 20:6, Ezekiel 20:8), trampled on His sanctuary, overthrew His temple and blasphemed the Lord, the prophecy is turned against them. So then, before the captivity came, while Josiah was yet king, and Jerusalem and the temple were, as yet, not overthrown, the prophecy is directed against those who mocked at them. "Gaza shall be forsaken." Out of the five cities of the Philistines, the prophet pronounces woe upon the same four as Amos Amos 1:6-8 before, Jeremiah Jeremiah 25:20 soon after, and Zechariah Zechariah 9:5-6 later. Gath, then, the fifth had probably remained with Judah since Uzziah 2 Chronicles 26:6 and Hezekiah 2 Kings 18:8. In the sentence of the rest, regard is had (as is so frequent in the Old Testament) to the names of the places themselves, that, henceforth, the name of the place might suggest the thought of the doom pronounced upon it.

The names expressed boastfulness, and so, in the divine judgment, carried their own sentence with them, and this sentence is pronounced by a slight change in the word. Thus ‹Azzah‘ (Gaza,) ‹strong‘ shall be ‹Azoobah, desolated;‘ "Ekron, deep-rooting", shall "Teaker, be uprooted;" the "Cherethites" (cutters off) shall become (Cheroth) "diggings;" "Chebel, the band" of the sea coast, shall be in another sense "Chebel," an "inheritance" Zephaniah 2:5, Zephaniah 2:7, divided by line to the remnant of Judah; and "Ashdod" (the waster shall be taken in their might, not by craft, nor in the way of robbers, but "driven forth" violently and openly in the "noon-day."

For Gaza shall be forsaken - Some vicissitudes of these towns have been noted already. The fulfillment of the prophecy is not tied down to time; the one marked contrast is, that the old pagan enemies of Judah should be destroyed, the house of Judah should be restored, and should re-enter upon the possession of the land, promised to them of old. The

Philistine towns had, it seems, nothing to fear from Babylon or Persia, to whom they remained faithful subjects. The Ashdodites (who probably, as the most important, stand for the whole) combined with Sanballat, "the Ammonites and the Arabians" Nehemiah 4:7, to hinder the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. Even an army was gathered, headed by Samaria Nehemiah 2:19; Nehemiah 6:6. The old sin remaining, Zechariah renewed the sentence by Zephaniah against the four cities Jeremiah 47:1) made Egypt a naval power. This became a characteristic of these Philistine cities. They themselves lay more or less inland, and had a city connected with them of the same name, on the shore. Thus there was an, "Azotus by the sea," and an "Azotus Ispinus." There were "two Iamniae, one inland." But Ashdod lay further from the sea than Gaza; Yamnia, (the Yabneel of Joshua Joshua 15:11, in Uzziah's time, Yabneh 2 Chronicles 26:6) further than Ashdod. The port of Yamnia was burned by Judas (2 Samuel 12:12; and our Lord, "Whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops" Luke 12:3; and Paul, "the Lord shall come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart" 1 Corinthians 4:5. And "they who by seducing words in life or in doctrine uprooted others, shall be themselves rooted up" Matthew 15:13.

Verse 5

The "woe" having been pronounced on the five cities apart, now falls upon the whole nation of the Cherethites or Philistines. The Cherethites are only named as equivalent to the Philistines, probably as originally a distinct immigration of the same people. The name is used by the Egyptian slave of the Amalekite 1 Samuel 30:14 for those whom the author of the first book of Samuel calls Philistines 1 Samuel 30:16. Ezekiel uses the name parallel with that of "Philistines," with reference to the destruction which God would bring upon them.

The word of the Lord - Comes not to them, but "upon" them, overwhelming them. To them He speaketh not in good, but in evil; not in grace, but in anger; not in mercy, but in vengeance. Philistia was the first enemy of the Church. It showed its enmity to Abraham and Isaac and would fain that they should not sojourn among them Genesis 21:34; Genesis 26:14-15, Genesis 26:28. They were the hindrance that Israel should not go straight to the promised land Exodus 13:17. When Israel passed the Red Sea

Exodus 15:14, "sorrow" took hold of them." They were close to salvation in body, but far in mind. They are called "Canaan," as being a chief nation of it Genesis 15:21, and in that name lay the original source of their destruction. They inherited the sins of Canaan and with them his curse, preferring the restless beating of the barren, bitter sea on which they dwelt, "the waves of this troublesome world," to being a part of the true Canaan. They would absorb the Church into the world, and master it, subduing it to the pagan Canaan, not subdue themselves to it, and become part of the heavenly Canaan.

Verse 6

The seacoast shall be dwellings and cottages - oliterally, cuttings or diggings. This is the central meaning of the word; the place of the Cherethites (the cutters off) shall be "cheroth" of shepherds, places which they dug up that their flocks might be enclosed therein. The tracts once full of fighting men, the scourge of Judah, should be so desolate of its former people, as to become a sheep-walk. Men of peace should take the place of its warriors.

So the shepherds of the Gospel with their flocks have entered into possession of war-like nations, turning them to the Gospel. They are shepherds, the chief of whom is that Good Shepherd, who laid down His Life for the sheep. And these are the sheep of whom He speaks, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My Voice; and there shall be one fold and One Shepherd" John 10:16.

Verse 7

And the coast shall be - Or probably, "It shall be a portion for the remnant of the house of Judah." He uses the word, employed in the first assignment of the land to Israel; and of the whole people as belonging to God, "Jacob is the ‹lot‘ of His inheritance" Deuteronomy 32:9. "The tract of the sea," which, with the rest, was assigned to Israel, which, for its unfaithfulness, was seldom, even in part, possessed, and at this time, was wholly forfeited, should be a portion for the mere "remnant" which should be brought back. David used the word in his psalm of thanksgiving, when he had brought the ark to the city of David, how God had "confirmed the covenant to Israel, saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance" 1 Chronicles 16:18; Psalm 105:11; and Asaph, "He cast

out the he athen before them and divided to them an inheritance by line" Psalm 78:55. It is the reversal of the doom threatened by Micah, "Thou shalt have none, that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the Lord" Micah 2:5. The word is revived by Ezekiel in his ideal division of the land to the restored people Ezekiel 47:13. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" Romans 11:29. The promise, which had slumbered during Israel's faithlesshess, should be renewed to its old extent.: "There is no prescription against the Church." The boat threatens to sink; it is tossed, half-submerged, by the waves; but its Lord "rebukes the wind and the sea; wind and sea obey Him, and there is a great calm" Matthew 8:26-27.

For the remnant of the house of Juda - Yet, who save He in whose hand are human wills, could now foresee that Judah should, like the ten tribes, rebel, be carried captive, and yet, though like and worse than Israel in its sin Jeremiah 3:8-11; Ezekiel 16:48-52; Ezekiel 23:11, should, unlike Israel, be restored? The re-building of Jerusalem was, their enemies pleaded, contrary to sound policy Ezra 4:12-16: the plea was for the time accepted, for the rebellions of Jerusalem were recorded in the chronicles of Babylon Ezra 4:19-22. Yet the falling short of the complete restoration depended on their own wills. God turned again their captivity; but they only, "whose spirit God stirred," willed to return. The temporal restoration was the picture of the spiritual. They who returned had to give up lands and possessions in Babylonia, and a remnant only chose the land of promise at such cost. Babylonia was as attractive as Egypt formerly.

In the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening - One city is named for all. "They shall lie down," he says, continuing the image from their flocks, as Isaiah, in a like passage, "The first-born of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety" Isaiah 4:1-6:30.

The true Judah shall overspread the world; but it too shall only be a remnant; these shall, in safety, "go in and out and find pasture" John 10:9. "In the evening" of the world they shall find their rest, for then also in the time of antichrist, the Church shall be but a remnant still. "For the Lord their God shall visit them," for He is the Good Shepherd, who came to seek the one sheep which was lost and who says of Himself, "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick" Ezekiel 34:16; and who in the end will more completely "turn away their captivity," bring His banished to their everlasting home, the Paradise from which they

have been exiled, and separate forever the sheep from the goats who now oppress and scatter them abroad Ezekiel 1719.

Verse 8

I - Dionysius: "God, Who know all things, "I heard" that is, have known within Me, in My mind, not anew but from eternity, and now I shew in effect that I know it; wherefore I say that I hear, because I act after the manner of one who perceiveth something anew." I, the just Judge, heard (see Isaiah 16:6; Jeremiah 48:39; Ezekiel 35:12-13). He was present and "heard," even when, because He avenged not, He seemed not to hear, but laid it up in store with Him to avenge in the due time Deuteronomy 32:34-35.

The reproach of Moab and the reviling of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached My people - Both words, "reproached, reviled," mean, primarily, cutting speeches; both are intensive, and are used of blaspheming God as unable to help His people, or reviling His people as forsaken by Him. If directed against man, they are directed against God through man. So David interpreted the taunt of Goliah, "reviled the armies of the living God" (1 Samuel 17:26, 1 Samuel 17:36, 1 Samuel 17:45, coll. 10. 25), and the Philistine cursed David "by his gods" 1 Samuel 17:43. In a Psalm David complains, "the reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon me" (Psalm 69:10 (9)); and a Psalm which cannot be later than David, since it declares the national innocency from idolatry, connects with their defeats, the voice of him "that reproacheth and blasphemeth" (Psalm 44:16 (17), joining the two words used here). The sons of Corah say, "with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me, while they say daily unto me, where is thy God?" Psalm 42:10. So Asaph, "The enemy hath reproached, the foolish people hath blasphemed Thy Name" Psalm 74:10, Psalm 74:18; and, "we are become a reproach to our neighbors. Wherefore should the pagan say, where is their God? render unto our neighbors - the reproach wherewith they have reproached Thee, O Lord" Psalm 79:4, Psalm 79:10, Psalm 79:12. And Ethan, "Remember, Lord, the reproach of Thy servants - wherewith Thine enemies have reproached, O Lord, wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of Thine Anointed" Psalm 89:50-51.

In history the repeated blasphemies of Sennacherib and his messengers are expressed by the same words. In earlier times the remarkable concession of Jephthah, "Wilt not thou possess what Chemosh thy god

giveth thee to possess? so whomsoever the Lord our God shall drive out before us, them will we possess" Judges 11:24, implies that the Ammonites claimed their land as the gift of their god Chemosh, and that that war was, as that later by Sennacherib, waged in the name of the false god against the True.

The relations of Israel to Moab and Ammon have been so habitually misrepresented, that a review of those relations throughout their whole history may correct some wrong impressions. The first relations of Israel toward them were even tender. God reminded His people of their common relationship and forbade him even to take the straight road to his own future possessions, across their hand against their will. "Distress them not, nor contend with them," it is said of each, "for I will not give thee of their land for a possession, for I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession" Deuteronomy 2:9, Deuteronomy 2:19. Idolaters and hostile as they were, yet, for their father's sake, their title to their land had the same sacred sanction, as Israel's to his. "I," God says, "have given it to them as a possession." Israel, to their own manifest inconvenience, "went along through the wilderness, and compassed the land of Edom, and the land of Moab, but came not within the border of Moab" Judges 11:18. By destroying Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan, Israel removed formidable enemies, who had driven Moab and Ammon out of a portion of the land which they had conquered from the Zamzummim and Anakim Deuteronomy 2:10, Deuteronomy 2:20-21, and who threatened the remainder, "Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites" Numbers 21:25, Numbers 21:31.

Heshbon, Dibon, Jahaz, Medeba, Nophah "were cities in the land of the Amorites, in" which "Israel dwelt." The exclusion of Moab and Ammon from the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation Deuteronomy 23:3 was not, of course, from any national antipathy, but intended to prevent a debasing intercourse; a necessary precaution against the sensuousness of their idolatries. Moab was the first in adopting the satanic policy of Balaam, to seduce Israel by sensuality to their idolatries; but the punishment was appointed to the partners of their guilt, the Midianites Numbers 25:17; 31, not to Moab. Yet Moab was the second nation, whose ambition God overruled to chasten His people's idolatries. Eglon, king of

Moab, united with himself Ammon and Amalek against Israel. The object of the invasion was, not the recovery of the country which Moab had lost to the Amorites but, Palestine proper.

The strength of Moab was apparently not sufficient to occupy the territory of Reuben. They took possession only of "the city of palm trees" Judges 3:13; either the ruins of Jericho or a spot close by it; with the view apparently of receiving reinforcements or of securing their own retreat by the ford. This garrison enabled them to carry their forays over Israel, and to hold it enslaved for 18 years. The oppressiveness of this slavery is implied by the cry and conversion of Israel to the Lord, which was always in great distress. The memory of Eglon, as one of the oppressors of Israel, lived in the minds of the people in the days of Samuel 1 Samuel 12:9. In the end, this precaution of Moab turned to its own destruction, for, after Eglon was slain, Ephraim, under Ehud, took the fords, and the whole garrison, 10,000 of Moab's warriors, "every strong man and every man of might" Judges 3:29, were intercepted in their retreat and perished. For a long time after this, we hear of no fresh invasion by Moab. The trans-Jordanic tribes remained in unquestioned possession of their land for 300 years Judges 11:13, although claiming the land down to the Arnon, and already being in possession of the southernmost portion of that land, Aroer, since Israel smote him "from Aroer unto Minnith" Judges 11:33. The land then, according to a law recognized by nations, belonged by a twofold right to Israel;

(1) that it had been won, not from Moab, but from the conquerors of Moab, the right of Moab having passed to its conquerors;

(2) that undisputed and unbroken possession "for time immemorial" as we say, 300 years, ought not to be disputed.

The defeat by Jephthah stilled them for near 50 years until the beginning of Saul's reign, when they refused the offer of the "men of Jubesh-Gilead" to serve them, and, with a mixture of insolence and savagery, annexed as a condition of accepting that entire submission, "that I may thrust out all your right eyes, to lay it as a reproach to Israel" 1 Samuel 11:1-2. The signal victory of Saul 1 Samuel 11:11 still did not prevent Ammon, as well as

Moab, from being among the enemies whom Saul "worsted". The term "enemies" implies that "they" were the assailants. The history of Naomi shows their prosperous condition, that the famine, which desolated Judah Rth 1:1 , did not reach them, and that they were a prosperous land, at peace, at that time, with Israel. If all the links of the genealogy are preserved Rth 4:21-22 , Jesse, David's father, was grandson of a Moabitess, Ruth, and perhaps on this ground David entrusted his parents to the care of the king of Moab 1 Samuel 22:3-4.

Sacred history gives no hint, what was the cause of his terrible execution upon Moab. But a Psalm of David speaks to God of some blow, under which Israel had reeled. "O God, Thou hast abhorred us, and broken us in pieces; Thou hast been wroth: Thou hast made the land to tremble and cloven it asunder; heal its breaches, for it shaketh; Thou hast showed Thy people a hard thing, Thou hast made it drink wine of reeling" Psalm 60:3-5; and thereon David expresses his confidence that God would humble Moab, Edom, Philistia. While David then was engaged in the war with the Syrians of Mesopotamia and Zobah (Psalm 60:1-12 title), Moab must have combined with Edom in an aggressive war against Israel. "The valley of salt", where Joab returned and defeated them, was probably within Judah, since "the city of salt" Joshua 15:62 was one of the six cities of the wilderness. Since they had defeated Judah, they must have been overtaken there on their return.

Yet this too was a religious war. "‹Thou,'" David says "hast given a ‹banner to them that fear Thee,' to be raised aloft because of the truth" Psalm 60:4.

There is no tradition, that the kindred Psalm of the sons of Corah, Psalm 44:1-3; yet the inroad, by which they had suffered, was one of spoiling Psalm 44:10, Psalm 44:12, not of subdual. Yet this too was a religious war, from their neighbors. They were slain for the sake of God Psalm 44:22, they were covered with shame on account of the reproaches and blasphemies Psalm 44:13-14 of those who triumphed over God, as powerless to help; they were a scorn and derision to the petty nations around them. It is a Psalm of unshaken faith amid great prostration: it describes in detail what

the lxth Psalm sums up in single heavy words of imagery; but both alike complain to God of what His people had to suffer for His sake.

The insolence of Ammon in answer to David‘s message of kindness to their new king, like that to the men of Jabesh Gilead, seems like a deliberate purpose to create hostilities. The relations of the previous king of Ammon to David, had been kind 2 Samuel 10:2-3, perhaps, because David being a fugitive from Israel, they supposed him to be Saul‘s enemy. The enmity originated, not with the new king, but with “the princes of the children of Ammon” 2 Samuel 10:3. David‘s treatment of these nations 2 Samuel 8:2; 2 Samuel 12:31 is so unlike his treatment of any others whom he defeated, that it implies an internecine warfare, in which the safety of Israel could only be secured by the destruction of its assailants.

Mesha king of Moab records one war, and alludes to others, not mentioned in Holy Scripture. He says, that before his own time, “Omri, king of Israel, afflicted Moab many days;” that “his son (Ahab) succeeded him, and he too said, ‹I will afflict Moab.‘” This affliction he explains to be that “Omri possessed himself of the land of Medeba” (expelling, it is implied, its former occupiers) “and that” (apparently, Israel), “dwelt therein,” “(in his days and in) the days of his son forty years.” He was also in possession of Nebo, and “the king of Israel” (apparently Omri,) “buil(t) Jahaz and dwelt in it, when he made war with me”. Jahaz was near Dibon. In the time of Eusebius, it was still “pointed out between Dibon and Medeba”.

Mesha says, “And I took it to annex it to Dibon.” It could not, according to Mesha also, have been south of the Arnon, since Aroer lay between Dibon and the Arnon, and Mesha would not have annexed to Dibon a town beyond the deep and difficult ravine of the Arnon, with Aroer lying between them. It was certainly north of the Arnon, since Israel was not permitted to come within the border of Moab, but it was at Jahaz that Sihon met them and fought the battle in which Israel defeated him and gained possession of his land, “from the Arnon to the Jabbok” Numbers 21:23-25. It is said also that “Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites from Aroer which is on the edge of the river Arnon”, and the city which is in the river unto Gilead Joshua 13:16, Joshua 13:18. Aroer on the edge of the river Arnon, and the

city which is in the river" Arnon, again occur in describing the southern border of Reuben, among whose towns Jahaz is mentioned, with Beth-Baal-Meon and Kiriathaim, which have been identified.

The afflicting then of Moab by Omri, according to Mesha, consisted in this, that he recovered to Israel a portion of the allotment of Reuben, between 9 and 10 hours in length from north to south, of which, in the time of Israel‘s weakness through the civil wars which followed on Jeroboam‘s revolt, Moab must have dispossessed Reuben. Reuben had remained in undisturbed possession of it, from the first expulsion of the Amorites to the time at least of Rehoboam, about five hundred years.: "The men of Gad" still "dwelt in Ataroth," Mesha says, "from time immemorial."

The picture, which Mesha gives, is of a desolation of the southern portion of Reuben. For, "I rebuilt," he says, "Baal-Meon, Kiriathaim, Aroer, Beth-bamoth, Bezer, Beth-Diblathaim, Beth-baal-Meon." Of Beth-Bamoth, and probably of Bezer, Mesha says, that they had previously been destroyed. But Reuben would not, of course, destroy his own cities. They must then have been destroyed either by Mesha‘s father, who reigned before him, when invading Reuben, or by Omri, when driving back Moab into his own land, and expelling him from these cities. "Possibly" they were dismantled only, since Mesha speaks only of Omri‘s occupying Medeba, Ataroth, and Jahaz. He held these three cities only, leaving the rest dismantled, or dismantling them, unable to place defenders in them, and unwilling to leave them as places of aggression for Moab. But whether they ever were fortified towns at all, or how they were desolated, is mere conjecture. Only they were desolated in these wars.

But it appears from Mesha‘s own statement, that neither Omri nor Ahab invaded Moab proper. For in speaking of his successful war and its results, he mentions no town south of the Arnon. He must have been a tributary king, but not a foot of his land was taken. The subsequent war was not a mere revolt, nor was it a mere refusal to pay tribute, of which Mesha makes no complaint. Nor could the tribute have been oppressive to him, since the spoils, left in the encampment of Moab and his allies shortly after his revolt, is evidence of such great wealth. The refusal to pay tribute would have involved nothing further, unless Ahaziah had attempted to enforce it, as

Hezekiah refused the tribute to Assyria, but remained in his own borders. But Ahaziah, unlike his brother Jehoram who succeeded him, seems to have undertaken nothing, except the building of some ships for trade 2 Chronicles 20:35-36. Mesha‘s war was a renewal of the aggression on Reuben.

Heshbon is not mentioned, and therefore must, even after the war, have remained with Reuben.

Mesha‘s own war was an exterminating war, as far as he records it. “I fought against the city,” (Ataroth), he says, “and took it, and killed all the mighty of the city for the well-pleasing of Chemosh and of Moab;” “I fought against it (Nebo) from break of day until norm and took it, and slew all of it, 7,000 men; the ladies and maidens I devoted to Ashtar Chemosh;” to be desecrated to the degradations of that sensual idolatry. The words too “Israel perished with an everlasting destruction” stand clear, whether they express Mesha‘s conviction of the past or his hope of the future.

The war also, on the part of Moab, was a war of his idol Chemosh against God. Chemosh, from first to last, is the agent. “Chemosh was angry with his land;” “Chemosh (was pleased) with it in my days;” “I killed the mighty for the well-pleasing of Chemosh;” “I took captive thence all (…)and dragged it along before Chemosh at Kiriath;” “Chemosh said to me, Go and take Nebo against Israel;” “I devoted the ladies and maidens to Ashtar-Chemosh;” “I took thence the vessels of ihvh and dragged them before Chemosh;” “Chemosh drove him (the king of Israel) out before (my face);” “Chemosh said to me, Go down against Horonaim.” “Chemosh (…)it in my days.”

Contemporary with this aggressive war against Israel must have been the invasion by “the children of Moab and the children of Ammon, the great multitude from beyond the sea, from Syria” 2 Chronicles 20:1-2, in the reign of Jehoshaphat, which brought such terror upon Judah. It preceded the invasion of Moab by Jehoshaphat in union with Jehoram and the king of Edom. For the invasion of Judah by Moab and Ammon took place, while Ahab‘s son, Ahaziah, was still living. For it was after this, that Jehoshaphat joined with Ahaziah in making ships to go to Tarshish. But the expedition

against Moab was in union with Jehoram who succeeded Ahaziah. The abundance of wealth which the invaders of Judah brought with them, and the precious jewels with which they had adorned themselves, show that this was no mere marauding expedition, to spoil; but that its object was, to take possession of the land or at least of some portion of it.

They came by entire surprise on Jehoshaphat, who heard of them first when they were at Hazazon-Tamar or Engedi, some 36 12 miles from Jerusalem. He felt himself entirely unequal to meet them, and cast himself upon God. There was a day of public humiliation of Judah at Jerusalem. "Out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord" 2 Chronicles 20:4. Jehoshaphat, in his public prayer, owned, "we have no might against this great company which cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee" 2 Chronicles 20:13. He appeals to God, that He had forbidden Israel to invade Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, so that they turned away from them and destroyed them not; and now these rewarded them by "coming to cast us out of Thy possession which Thou hast given us to inherit" 2 Chronicles 20:10. One of the sons of Asaph foretold to the congregation, that they might go out fearlessly, for they should not have occasion to fight.

A Psalm, ascribed to Asaph, records a great invasion, the object of which was the extermination of Israel. "They have said; Come and let us cut them off from" being "a nation, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance" Psalm 83:4. It had been a secret confederacy. "They have taken crafty counsel against Thy people" Psalm 83:3. It was directed against God Himself, that is, His worship and worshipers. "For they have taken counsel in heart together; against Thee do they make a covenant" Psalm 83:5. It was a combination of the surrounding petty nations; Tyre on the north, the Philistines on the west; on the south the Amalekites, Ishmaelites, Hagarenes; eastward, Edom, Gebal, Moab, Ammon. But its most characteristic feature was, that Assur (this corresponds with no period after Jehoshaphat) occupies a subordinate place to Edom and Moab, putting them forward and helping "them." "Assur also," Asaph says, "is joined with them; they have become an arm to the children of Lot" Psalm 83:8. This agrees with the description, "there is come against thee a great multitude from beyond the sea, from Syria."

Scripture does not record, on what ground the invasion of Moab by Jehoram and Jehoshaphat, with the tributary king of Edom, was directed against Moab proper; but it was the result doubtless of the double war of Moab against Reuben and against Judah. It was a war, in which the strength of Israel and Moab was put forth to the utmost. Jehoram had mustered all Israel 2 Kings 3:6; Moab had gathered all who had reached the age of manhood and upward, "everyone who girded on a girdle and upward" 2 Kings 3:21. The three armies, which had made a seven days' circuit in the wilderness, were on the point of perishing by thirst and falling into the hands of Moab, when Elisha in God's name promised them the supply of their want, and complete victory over Moab. The eager cupidity of Moab, as of many other armies, became the occasion of his complete overthrow. The counsel with which Elisha accompanied his prediction, "ye shall smite every fenced city and every choice city, and every good tree ye shall fell, and all springs of water ye shall stop up, and every good piece of land ye shall waste with stones" 2 Kings 3:19, was directed, apparently, to dislodge an enemy so inveterate. For water was essential to the fertility of their land and their dwelling there. We hear of no special infliction of death, like what Mesha records of himself. The war was ended by the king of Moab's sacrificing the heir-apparent of the king of Edom, which naturally created great displeasure against Israel, in whose cause Edom thus suffered, so that they departed to their own land and finally revolted.

Their departure apparently broke up the siege of Ar and the expedition. Israel apparently was not strong enough to carry on the war without Edom, or feared to remain with their armies away from their own land, as in the time of David, of which Edom might take the advantage. We know only the result.

Moab probably even extended her border to the south by the conquest of Horonaim.

After this, Moab is mentioned only on occasion of the miracle of the dead man, to whom God gave life, when cast into Elisha's sepulchre, as he came in contact with his bones. Like the Bedouin now, or the Amalekites of

old, “the bands of Moab came into the land, as the year came” 2 Kings 13:20. Plunder, year by year, was the lot of Israel at the hands of Moab.

On the east of Jordan, Israel must have remained in part (as Mesha says of the Gadites of Arocr) in their old border. For after this, Hazael, in Jehu‘s reign, smote Israel “from Aroer which is by the river Arnon” 2 Kings 10:33; and at that time probably Amman joined with him in the exterminating war in Gilead, destroying life before it had come into the world, “that they might enlarge their border”. Jeroboam ii, 825 b.c.; restored Israel “to the sea of the plain” Deuteronomy 3:17) to its northern extremity, lower in latitude than Heshbon, yet above Nebo and Medeba, lcaving accordingly to Moab all which it had gained by Mesha. Uzziah, a few years later, made the Ammonites tributaries 2 Chronicles 26:8; 810 b.c. But 40 years later 771 b.c., Pul, and, after yet another 30 years, 740, Tiglath-pileser having carried away the trans-Jordanic tribes 1 Chronicles 5:26, Moab again possessed itself of the whole territory of Reuben. Probably before.

For 726 b.c., when Isaiah foretold that “the glory of Moab should be contemned with all that great multitude” Isaiah 16:14, he hears the wailing of Moab throughout all his towns, and names all those which had once been Reuben‘s and of whose conquest or possession Moab had boasted Isaiah 15:1-2, Isaiah 15:4, Nebo, Medeba, Dibon, Jahaz, Baiith; as also those not conquered then Isaiah 15:4-5, Isaiah 15:1, Heshbon, Elealeh; and those of Moab proper, Luhith, Horonaim, and its capitals, Ar-Moab and Kir-Moab. He hears their sorrow, sees their desolation and bewails with their weeping Isaiah 16:9. He had prophesied this before, and now, three years Isaiah 16:13-14 before its fulfillment by Tiglath-Pileser, he renews it. This tender sorrow for Moab has more the character of an elegy than of a denunciation; so that he could scarcely lament more tenderly the ruin of his own people.

He mentions also distinctly no sin there except pride. The pride of Moab seems something of common notoriety and speech. “We have heard” Isaiah 16:6. Isaiah accumulates words, to express the haughtiness of Moab; “the pride of Moab; exceeding proud; his pride and his haughtiness and his wrath,” pride overpassing bounds, upon others. His words seem to be formed so as to keep this one bared thought before us, as if we were to say “pride, prideful, proudness, pridefulness;” and withal the unsubstantialness

of it all, “the unsubstantiality of his lies.” Pride is the source of all ambition; so Moab is pictured as retiring within her old bounds, “the fords of Arnon,” and thence asking for aid; her petition is met by the counter-petition, that, if she would be protected in the day of trouble, the out-casts of Israel might lodge with her now: “be thou a covert to her from the face of the spoiler” Isaiah 16:4-5. The prophecy seems to mark itself out as belonging to a time, after the two and a half tribes had been desolated, as stragglers sought refuge in Moab, and when a severe infliction was to come on Moab: “the Isaiah 16:14 remnant” shall be “small, small not great.”

Yet Moab recovered this too. It was a weakening of the nation, not its destruction. Some 126 years after the prophecy of Isaiah, 30 years after the prophecy of Zephaniah, Moab, in the time of Jeremiah, was in entire prosperity, as if no visitation had ever come upon her. What Zephaniah says of the luxuriousness of his people, Jeremiah says of Moab; “Moab is one at ease from his youth; he is resting on his lees; and he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity” Jeremiah 48:11. They “say, We are mighty and strong men for the war” Jeremiah 48:14. Moab was a “strong staff, a beautiful rod” Jeremiah 48:17; “he magnified himself against the Lord” Jeremiah 48:26; “Israel was a derision to him” Jeremiah 48:27; “he skipped for joy” at his distress. Jeremiah repeats and even strengthens Isaiah‘s description of his pride; “his pride, proud” Jeremiah 48:29, he repeats, “exceedingly; his loftiness,” again “his pride, his arrogancy, and the haughtiness of his heart.”

Its “strongholds” Jeremiah 48:18 were unharmed; all its cities, “far and near,” are counted one by one, in their prosperity Jeremiah 48:1, Jeremiah 48:3, Jeremiah 48:5, Jeremiah 48:21-24; its summer-fruits and vintage were plenteous; its vines, luxuriant; all was joy and shouting. Whence should this evil come? Yet so it was with Sodom and Gomorrah just before its overthrow. It was, for beauty, “a paradise of God; well-watered everywhere; as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt” Genesis 13:10. In the morning “the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of the furnace” Genesis 19:28. The destruction foretold by Jeremiah is far other than the affliction spoken of by Isaiah. Isaiah prophesies only a visitation, which should reduce her people: Jeremiah foretells, as did Zephaniah, captivity and the utter destruction of her cities. The destruction foretold is complete.

Not of individual cities only, but of the whole he saith, "Moab is destroyed" Jeremiah 48:4. "The spoiler shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape, and the valley shall perish and the high places shall be destroyed, as the Lord hath spoken" Jeremiah 48:8.

Moab himself was to leave his land. "Flee, save your lives, and ye shall be like the heath in the wilderness. Chemosh shall go forth into captivity; his priests and his princes together. Give pinions unto Moab, that it may flee and get away, and her cities shall be a desolation, for there is none to dwell therein" Jeremiah 17:6. It was not only to go into captivity, but its home was to be destroyed. "I will send to her those who shall upheave her, and they shall upheave her, and her vessels they shall empty, all her flagons" (all that aforetime contained her) "they shall break in pieces" Jeremiah 48:12. Moab is destroyed and her cities" Jeremiah 48:15; "the spoiler of Moab is come upon her; he hath destroyed the strongholds" Jeremiah 48:18. The subsequent history of the Moabites is in the words, "Leave the cities and dwell in the rock, dwellers of Moab, and be like a dove which nesteth in the sides of the mouth of the pit" Jeremiah 48:28. The purpose of Moab and Ammon against Israel which Asaph complains of, and which Mesha probably speaks of, is retorted upon her. "In Heshbon they have devised evil against it; come and let us cut it off from being a nation. Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against the Lord" Jeremiah 48:2, Jeremiah 48:42.

Whence should this evil come? They had, with the Ammonites, been faithful servants of Nebuchadnezzar against Judah 2 Kings 24:2. Their concerted conspiracy with Edom, Tyre, Zidon, to which they invited Zedekiah (Jeremiah 27:2 following), was dissolved. Nebuchadnezzars march against Judaea did not touch them, for they "skipped with joy" Jeremiah 48:27 at Israel's distresses. The connection of Baalis, king of the Ammonites, with Ishmael Jeremiah 40:14; Jeremiah 41:10 the assassin of Gedaliah, whom the king of Babylon made governor over the land 2 Kings 25:22-26; Jeremiah 40:6; Jeremiah 41:1 out of their own people, probably brought down the vengeance of Nebuchadnezzar. For Chaldaeans too were included in the slaughter Jeremiah 41:3. The blow seems to have been aimed at the existence of the people, for the murder of Gedaliah followed upon the rallying of the Jews "out of all the places whither they had been

driven" Jeremiah 40:12. It returned on Ammon itself; and on Moab who probably on this, as on former occasions, was associated with it. The two nations, who had escaped at the destruction of Jerusalem, were warred upon and subdued by Nebuchadnezzar in the 23d year of his reign, the 5th after the destruction of Jerusalem.

And then probably followed that complete destruction and disgraced end, in which Isaiah, in a distinct prophecy, sees Moab trodden down by God as "the heap of straw is trodden down in the waters (the kethib) of the dunghill, and he (Moab) stretcheth forth his hands in the midst thereof, as the swimmer stretcheth forth his hands to swim, and He, God, shall bring down his pride with the treacheries of his hands" Isaiah 25:10-12. It speaks much of the continued hostility of Moab, that, in prophesying the complete deliverance for which Israel waited, the one enemy whose destruction is foretold, is Moab and those pictured by Moab. "We have waited for Him and He will save us - For in this mountain (Zion) shall the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under Him" Isaiah 25:9-10.

After this, Moab, as a nation, disappears from history. Israel, on its return from the captivity, was again enticed into idolatry by Moabite and Anmonite wives, as well as by those of Ashdod and others Nehemiah 13:23-26, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Egyptians, Amorites Ezra 9:1. Sanballat also, who headed the opposition to the rebuilding of Jerusalem, was a Moabite Nehemiah 2:10; Nehemiah 4:1-8; Tobiah, an Ammonite Nehemiah 4:2, Nehemiah 4:9. Yet it went no further than intrigue and the threat of war. They were but individuals, who cherished the old hostility. In the time of the Maccabees, the Ammonites, not Moab, "with a mighty power and much people" were in possession of the Reubenite cities to Jazar (Ezekiel 25:3; and against the land of Israel, because it was desolated; and against the house of Judah, because they went into captivity." The like temper is shown in the boast, "Because that Moab and Seir do say; Behold the house of Judah is like unto the pagan" Ezekiel 25:8, that is, on a level with them.

Forbearing and long-suffering as Almighty God is, in His infinite mercy, He does not, for that mercy's sake, bear the direct defiance of Himself. He allows His creatures to forget Him, not to despise or defy Him. And on this

ground, perhaps, He gives to His prophecies a fulfillment beyond what the letter requires, that they may be a continued witness to Him. The Ammonites, some 1600 years ago, ceased to "be remembered among the nations." But as Nineveh and Babylon, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, by being what they are, are witnesses to His dealings, so the way in which Moab and Ammon are still kept desolate is a continued picture of that first desolation. Both remain rich, fertile; but the very abundance of their fertility is the cause of their desolation. God said to Ammon, as the retribution on his contumely: "therefore, behold, I give thee to the children of the East for a possession, and they shall set their encampments in thee, and place their dwellings in thee; "they" shall eat thy fruit and "they" shall drink thy milk; and I will make Rabbah a dwelling-place of camels, and the children of Ammon a couchingplace for flocks" Ezekiel 25:4-5.

Of Moab He says also, "I will open the side of Moab from the cities, which are on his frontiers, the glory of the country, unto the men of the East with the Ammonites" Ezekiel 25:8, Ezekiel 25:10. And this is an exact description of the condition of the land at this day. All travelers describe the richness of the soil. We have seen this as to Moab. But the history is one and the same. One of the most fertile regions of the world, full of ruined towns, destitute of villages or fixed habitations, or security of property, its inhabitants ground down by those, who have succeeded the Midianites and the Amalekites, "the children of the East." "Thou canst not find a country like the Belka," says the Arabic proverb, but "the inhabitants cultivate patches only of the best soil in that territory when they have a prospect of being able to secure the harvest against the invasion of enemies." "We passed many ruined cities," said Lord Lindsay, "and the country has once been very populous, but, in 35 miles at least, we did not see a single village; the whole country is one vast pasturage, overspread by the flocks and herds of the Anezee and Beni Hassan Bedouins."

The site of Rabbath Amman was well chosen for strength. Lying "in a long valley" through which a stream passed, "the city of waters" could not easily be taken, flor its inhabitants compelled to surrender from hunger or thirst. Its site, as the eastern bound of Peraea, "the last place where water could be obtained and a frontier fortress against the wild tribes beyond",

marked it for preservation. In Greek times, the disputes for its possession attest the sense of its importance. In Roman, it was one of the chief cities of the Decapolis, though its population was said to be a mixture of Egyptians, Arabians, Phoenicians. The coins of Roman Emperors to the end of the second century contain symbols of plenty, where now reigns utter desolation.

In the 4th century, it and two other now ruined places, Bostra and Gerasa, are named as "most carefully and strongly walled." It was on a line of rich commerce filled with strong places, in sites well selected for repelling the invasions of the neighboring nations. Centuries advanced. It was greatly beautified by its Roman masters. The extent and wealth of the Roman city are attested both by the remains of noble edifices on both sides of the stream, and by pieces of pottery, which are the traces of ancient civilized dwelling, strewed on the earth two miles from the city.: "At this place, Amman, as well as Gerasa and Gamala, three colonial settlements within the compass of a day's journey from one another, there were five magnificent theaters and one ampitheater, besides temples, baths, aqueducts, naumachia, triumphal arches.": "Its theater was the largest in Syria; its colonnade had at least 50 columns." The difference of the architecture shows that its aggrandizement must have been the work of different centuries: its "castle walls are thick, and denote a remote antiquity; large blocks of stone are piled up without cement and still hold together as well as if recently placed." It is very probably the same which Joab called David to take, after the city of waters had been taken; within it are traces of a temple with Corinthian columns, the largest seen there, yet "not of the best Roman times."

Yet Amman, the growth of centuries, at the end of our 6th century was destroyed. For "it was desolate before Islam, a great ruin.": "No where else had we seen the vestiges of public magnificence and wealth in such marked contrast with the relapse into savage desolation." But the site of the old city, so well adapted either for a secure refuge for its inhabitants or for a secure depository for their plunder, was, on that very ground, when desolated of its inhabitants, suited for what God, by Ezekiel, said it would become, a place, where the men of the East should stable their flocks and herds, secure from straying. What a change, that its temples, the center of the worship of its

successive idols, or its theaters, its places of luxury or of pomp, should be stables for that drudge of man, the camel, and the stream which gave it the proud title of "city of waters" their drinking trough! And yet of the cities whose destruction is prophesied, this is foretold of Rabbah alone, as in it alone is it fulfilled! "Ammon," says Lord Lindsay, "was situated on both sides of the stream; the dreariness of its present aspect is quite indescribable. It looks like the abode of death; the valley stinks with dead camels; one of them was rotting in the stream; and though we saw none among the ruins, they were absolutely "covered" in every direction with their dung." "Bones and skulls of camels were mouldering there (in the area of the ruined theater) and in the vaulted galleries of this immense structure." "It is now quite deserted, except by the Bedouins, who water their flocks at its little river, descending to it by a "wady," nearly opposite to a theater (in which Dr. Mac Lennan saw great herds and flocks) and by the "akiba."

Re-ascending it, we met sheep and goats by thousands, and camels by hundreds." Another says, "The space intervening between the river and the western hills is entirely covered with the remains of buildings, now only used for shelter for camels and sheep." Buckingham mentions incidentally, that he was prevented from sleeping at night "by the bleating of flocks and the neighing of horses, barking of dogs etc." Another speaks of "a small stone building in the Acropolis now used as a shelter for flocks." While he was "traversing the ruins of the city, the number of goats and sheep, which were driven in among them, was exceedingly annoying, however remarkable, as fulfilling the prophecies". "Before six tents fed sheep and camels". "Ezekiel points just to these Ezekiel 20:5, which passage Seetzen cites. And in fact the ruins are still used for such stalls."

The prophecy is the very opposite to that upon Babylon, though both alike are prophecies of desolation. Of Babylon Isaiah prophesies, "It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it bedwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there, neither shall the shepherds make fold there, but wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and the ostriches shall dwell there, and the jackals shall cry in their desolate houses, and howling creatures in their pleasant palaces" Isaiah 13:20. And the ruins are full of wild beasts. Of Rabbah, Ezekiel prophesied that it should be "a possession for the men of

the East, and I" Ezekiel 25:4-5, God says, "will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching-place for flocks;" and man's lawlessness fulfills the will and word of God.

Verse 9

Therefore as I live, saith the Lord of hosts - Life especially belongs to God, since He Alone is Underived Life. "He hath life in Himself" John 5:26. He is entitled "the living God," as here, in tacit contrast with the dead idols of the Philistines 1 Samuel 17:26, 1 Samuel 17:36, with idols generally Jeremiah 10:10; or against the blasphemies of Sennacherib 2 Kings 19:4, 2 Kings 19:16, the mockeries of scoffers Jeremiah 23:36, of the awe of His presence (Deuteronomy 5:25 (Deuteronomy 5:26 in Hebrew)), His might for His people Joshua 3:10; as the object of the soul's longings, the nearness in the Gospel, "children of the living God" (Hosea 1:10 (Hosea 2:1 in Hebrew)). "Since He can swear by no greater, He sware by Himself" Hebrews 6:13. Since mankind are ready mostly to believe that God means well with them, but are slow to think that He is in earnest in His threats, God employs this sanction of what He says, twice only in regard to His promises or His mercy Isaiah 49:18; Ezekiel 33:10; everywhere else to give solemnity to His threats Numbers 14:28; Deuteronomy 32:40, (adding לעולם) Jeremiah 22:24; Ezekiel 5:11; Ezekiel 14:16, Ezekiel 14:18, Ezekiel 14:20; Ezekiel 16:48; (as Judge) Ezekiel 17:16, Ezekiel 17:19; Ezekiel 18:3; (in rebuke) Ezekiel 20:3, Ezekiel 20:31, Ezekiel 20:33; Ezekiel 33:27; Ezekiel 34:8; Ezekiel 35:11. In the same sense, I swear by Myself, Jeremiah 22:5; Jeremiah 49:13; hath sworn by Himself, Amos 6:8; by the excellency of Jacob, Amos 8:7). The appeal to the truth of His own being in support of the truth of His words is part of the grandeur el the prophet Ezekiel in whom it chiefly occurs. God says in the same meaning, by Myself have I sworn, of promises which required strong faith.

Saith the Lord of Hosts - Their blasphemies had denied the very being of God, as God, to whom they preferred or likened their idols; they had denied His power or that He could avenge, so He names His Name of power, "the Lord of the hosts" of heaven against their array against His border, I, "the Lord of hosts" who can fulfill what I threaten, and "the God of Israel" who Myself am wronged in My people, will make "Moab as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah." Sodom and Gomorrah had once been flourishing cities, on the borders of that land, which Israel

had won from the Amorite, and of which Moab and Ammon at different times possessed themselves, and to secure which Ammon carried on that exterminating war. For they were to the east of the plain "between Bethel and Ai," where Lot made his choice, "in the plain or circle of Jordan" Genesis 13:1, Genesis 13:3, Genesis 13:11, the well known title of the tract, through which the Jordan flowed into the Dead Sea. Near this, lay Zoar, (Ziara) beneath the caves whither Lot, at whose prayer it had been spared, escaped from its wickedness.

Moab and Ammon had settled and in time spread from the spot, wherein their forefathers had received their birth. Sodom, at least, must have been in that part of the plain, which is to the east of the Jordan, since Lot was bidden to flee to the mountains, with his wife and daughters, and there is no mention of the river, which would have been a hindrance Genesis 19:17-23. Then it lay probably in that "broad belt of desolation" in the plain of Shittim, as Gomorrah and others of the Pentapolis may have lain in "the sulphur-sprinkled expanse" between El Riha (on the site of Jericho) and the dead sea, "covered with layers of salt and gypsum which overlie the loamy subsoil, literally, fulfilling the descriptions of Holy Writ (says an eye-witness), "Brimstone and salt and burning, that it is not sown nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein" Deuteronomy 29:23: "a fruitful land turned into salthess" Psalm 107:34. "No man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it" Jeremiah 49:18. An elaborate system of artificial irrigation was carried through that cis-Jordanic tract, which decayed when it was desolated of man, and that desolation prevents its restoration.

The doom of Moab and Ammon is rather of entire destruction beyond all recovery, than of universal barrenness. For the imagery, that it should be the "breeding" (literally, ‹possession‘) "of nettles" would not be literally compatible, except in different localities, with that of "saltpits," which exclude all vegetation. Yet both are united in Moab. The soil continues, as of old, of exuberant fertility; yet in part, from the utter neglect and insecurity of agriculture it is abandoned to a rank and encumbering vegetation; elsewhere, from the neglect of the former artificial system of irrigation, it is wholly barren. The plant named is one of rank growth, since outcasts could lie concealed under it Job 30:7. The preponderating authority seems to be for "mollach," the Bedouin name of the "mallow," Prof. E. H.

Palmer says, “which,” he adds, “I have seen growing in rank luxuriance in Moab, especially in the sides of deserted Arab camps.”

The residue of My people shall spoil them, and the remnant of My people shall possess them - Again, a remnant only, but even these shall prevail against them, as was first fulfilled in Judas Maccabaeus (1 Maccabees 5:6-8).

Verse 10

This shall they have for their pride - Literally, “This to them instead of their pride.” Contempt and shame shall be the residue of the proud man; the exaltation shall be gone, and all which they shall gain to themselves shall be shame. Moab and Ammon are the types of heretics. As they were akin to the people of God, but hating it; akin to Abraham through a lawless birth, but ever molesting the children of Abraham, so heretics profess to believe in Christ, to be children of Christ, and yet ever seek to overthrow the faith of Christians. As the Church says, “My mothers children are” “angry with me” Song of Song of Solomon 1:5 . They seem to have escaped the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah (pagan sins), and to have found a place of refuge (Zoar); and yet they are in darkness and cannot see the light of faith; and in an unlawful manner they mingle, against all right, the falsehood of Satan with the truth of God; so that their doctrines become, in part, “doctrines of devils,” in part have some stamp of the original truth.

To them, as to the Jews, our Lord says, “Ye are of your father the devil.” While they profess to be children of God, they claim by their names to have God for their Father (Moab) and to be of His people (Ammon), while in hatred to His true children they forfeit both. As Moab seduced Israel, so they the children of the Church. They too enlarge themselves against the borders of the Church, rending off its children and making themselves the Church. They too utter reproaches and revilings against it. “Take away their revilings,” says an early father, “against the law of Moses, and the prophets, and God the Creator, and they have not a word to utter.” They too “remove the old landmarks which the fathers” (the prophets and Apostles) “have set.” And so, barrenness is their portion; as, after a time, heretics ever divide, and do not multiply; they are a desert, being out of the Church of God: and at last the remnant of Judah, the Church, possesses them, and absorbs them into herself.

Verse 11

The Lord will be terrible unto - (upon) them that is, upon Moab and Ammon, and yet not in themselves only, but as instances of His just judgment. Whence it follows, "For He will famish all the gods of the earth" (Rup.). Miserable indeed, to whom the Lord is terrible! Whence is this? Is not God by Nature sweet and pleasurable and serene, and an Object of longing? For the Angels ever desire to look into Him, and, in a wonderful and unspeakable way, ever look and ever long to look. For miserable they, whose conscience makes them shrink from the face of Love. Even in this life they feel this shrinking, and, as if it were some lessening of their grief, they deny it, as though this could destroy the truth, which they ‹hold down in unrighteousness.'" Romans 1:18.

For He will famish all the gods of the earth - Taking away "the fat of their sacrifices, and the wine of their drink-offerings" Deuteronomy 32:38. Within 80 years from the death of our Lord, the governor of Pontus and Bithynia wrote officially to the Roman Emperor, that "the temples had been almost left desolate, the sacred rites had been for a long time intermitted, and that the victims had very seldom found a purchaser," before the persecution of the Christians, and consulted him as to the amount of its continuance. Toward the close of the century, it was one of the Pagan complaints, which the Christian Apologist had to answer "they are daily melting away the revenues of our temples." The prophet began to speak of the subdual of Moab and Ammon; he is borne on to the triumphs of Christ over all the gods of the Pagan, when the worship of God should not be at Jerusalem only, but "they shall worship Him, every one from his place."

Even all the isles of the pagan - For this is the very note of the Gospel, that, Cyril: "each who through faith in Christ was brought to the knowledge of the truth, by Him, and with Him, "worshipeth from his place" God the Father; and God is no longer known in Judaea only, but the countries and cities of the Pagan, though they be separated by the intervening sea from Judaea, no less draw near to Christ, pray, glorify, thank Him unceasingly. For formerly "His name" was "great in Israel" Psalm 76:1, but now He is well known to all everywhere; earth and sea are full of His glory, and so every one ‹worshipeth Him from his place;' and this is what is said, ‹As I live, saith the Lord, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord' Numbers 14:21." "The isles" are any distant lands on the seashore (Jeremiah 25:22, following; Ezekiel 26:15, following; Psalm 72:10), especially the very distant Isaiah 66:19; but also Asia Minor Daniel 11:1,

Daniel 11:8 and the whole coast of Europe, and even the Indian Archipelago, since the ivory and ebony came from its "many isles."

Zephaniah revives the term, by which Moses had spoken of the dispersion of the sons of Japhet: "By these were the ‹isles of the Gentiles' divided in their lands, every one after his tongue" Genesis 10:5. He adds the word, "all;" all, wherever they had been dispersed, every one from his place, shall worship God. One universal worship shall ascend to God from all everywhere. So Malachi prophesied afterward; "From the rising up of the sun even to the going down of the same My Name shall be great among the Gentiles, and "in every place" incense shall be offered unto God and a pure offering, for My Name shall be great among the pagan, saith the Lord of hosts" Malachi 1:11. Even a Jew says here: "This, without doubt, refers to the time to come, when all the inhabitants of the world shall know that the Lord is God, and that His is the greatness and power and glory, and He shall be called the God of the whole earth." The "isles" or "coasts of the sea" are the more the emblem of the Church, in that, Cyril: "lying, as it were, in the sea of this world and encompassed by the evil events in it, as with bitter waters, and lashed by the most vehement waves of persecutions, the Churches are yet founded, so that they cannot fall, and rear themselves aloft, and are not overwhelmed by afflictions. For, for Christ's sake, the Churches cannot be shaken, and ‹the gates of hell shall not prevail against them' Matthew 16:18."

Verse 12

Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by My sword - Literally, "Ye Ethiopians also, the slain of My sword are they." Having summoned them to His throne, God speaks of them, not to them anymore; perhaps in compassion, as elsewhere in indignation. The Ethiopians were not in any direct antagonism to God and His people, but allied only to their old oppressor, Egypt. They may have been in Pharaoh Necho's army, in resisting which, as a subject of Assyria, Josiah was slain: they are mentioned Jeremiah 46:9 in that army which Nebuchadnezzar smote at Carchemish in the 4th year of Jehoiakim. The prophecy of Ezekiel implies rather, that Ethiopia should be involved in the calamities of Egypt, than that it should be itself invaded. "Great terror shall be in Ethiopia, ‹when the slain shall fall in Egypt' Ezekiel 30:4." "Ethiopia and Lybia and Lydia etc. and all the men of the land that is in league, shall fall ‹with these,' by the

sword" Ezekiel 30:5. "They also that ‹uphold Egypt‘ shall fall" Ezekiel 30:6.

Syene, the frontier-fortress over against Ethiopia, is especially mentioned as the boundary also of the destruction. "Messengers" God says, "shall go forth from Me to make the careless Ethiopians afraid" Ezekiel 30:9, while the storm was bursting in its full desolating force upon Egypt. All the other cities, whose destruction is foretold, are cities of lower or upper Egypt.

But such a blow as that foretold by Jeremiah and Ezekiel must have fallen heavily upon the allies of Egypt. We have no details, for the Egyptians would not, and did not tell of the calamities and disgraces of their country. No one does. Josephus, however, briefly but distinctly says, that after Nebuchadnezzar had in the 23rd year of his reign, the 5th after the destruction of Jerusalem, "reduced into subjection Moab and Ammon, he invaded Egypt, with a view to subdue it," "killed its then king, and having set up another, captured for the second time the Jews in it and carried them to Babylon." The memory of the devastation by Nebuchadnezzar lived on apparently in Egypt, and is a recognized fact among the Muslim historians, who had no interest in the fulfillment of Jewish prophecy, of which it does not appear that they even knew.

Bokht-nasar (Nebuchadnezzar), they say, "made war on the son of Nechas (Necho), slew him and ruined the city of Memphis" and many other cities of Egypt: he carried the inhabitants captive, without leaving one, so that Egypt remained waste forty years without one inhabitant." Another says, The refuge which the king of Egypt granted to the Jews who fled from Nebuchadnezzar brought this war upon it: for he took them under his protection and would not give them up to their enemy. Nebuchadnezzar, in revenge, marched against the king of Egypt and destroyed the country." "One may be certain," says a good authority, "that the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar was a tradition generally spread in Egypt and questioned by no one."

Ethiopia was then involved, as an ally, and as far as its contingent was concerned, in the war, in which Nebuchadnezzar desolated Egypt for those 40 years. But, although this fulfilled the prophecy of Ezekiel, Isaiah, some

sixty years before Zephaniah, prophesied a direct conquest of Ethiopia. I "have given," God says, "Egypt as thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee" Isaiah 43:3. It lay in God's purpose, that Cyrus should restore His own people, and that his ambition should find its vent and compensation in the lands beyond. It may be that, contrary to all known human policy, Cyrus restored the Jews to their own land, willing to bind them to himself, and to make them a frontier territory toward Egypt, not subject only but loyal to himself. This is quite consistent with the reason which he assigns; "The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem which is in Judah" Ezra 1:2-3; and with the statement of Josephus, that he was moved thereto by "reading the prophecy which Isaiah left, 210 years before."

It is, alas! nothing new to Christians to have mixed motives for their actions: the exception is to have a single motive, "for the glory of God." The advantage to himself would doubtless flash at once on the founder of a great empire, though it did not suggest the restoration of the Jews. Egypt and Assyria had always, on either side, wished to possess themselves of Palestine, which lay between them. Anyhow, one Persian monarch did restore the Jews; his successor possessed himself of "Egypt, and part, at least, of Ethiopia." Cyrus wished, it is related, "to war in person against Babylon, the Bactrians, the Sacae, and Egypt." He perished, as is known, before he had completed the third of his purposed conquests. Cambyses, although after the conquest of Egypt he planned ill his two more distant expeditions, reduced "the Ethiopians bordering upon Egypt" ("lower Ethiopia and Nubia"), and these "brought gifts" permanently to the Persian Sovereign. Even in the time of Xerxes, the Ethiopians had to furnish their contingent of troops against the Greeks. Herodotus describes their dress and weapons, as they were reviewed at Doriscus. Cambyses, then, did not lose his hold over Ethiopia and Egypt, when forced by the rebellion of Pseudo-Smerdis to quit Egypt.

Verse 13

Zephaniah began by singling out Judah amid the general destruction, "I will also stretch out My Hand upon Judah" Zephaniah 1:4; he sums up the judgment of the world in the same way; "He will stretch out, or, Stretch He forth, "His Hand against the north and destroy Asshur, and make Nineveh a

desolation." Judah had, in Zephaniah's time, nothing to fear from Assyria. Isaiah Isaiah 39:6 and Micah Micah 4:10 had already foretold, that the captivity would be to Babylon. Yet of Assyria alone the prophet, in his own person, expresses his own conformity with the mind of God. Of others he had said, "the word of the Lord is against you, O Canaan, and I will destroy thee; As I live, saith the Lord, Moab shall be as Sodom. Ye also, O Ethiopians, the, slain of My sword are they." Of Assyria alone, by a slight inflection of the word, he expresses that he goes along with this, which he announces.

He does not say as an imprecation, "May He stretch forth His hand;" but gently, as continuing his prophecies, "and," joining on Asshur with the rest; only instead of saying "He will stretch forth," by a form almost insulated in Hebrew, he says, "And stretch He forth His Hand." In a way not unlike, David having declared God's judgments, "The Lord trieth the righteous; and the wicked and the lover of violence doth His soul abhor, subjoineth, On the wicked rain He snares," signifying that he (as all must be in the Day of judgment), is at one with the judgment of God. This is the last sentence upon Nineveh, enforcing that of Jonah and Nahum, yet without place of repentance now. He accumulates words expressive of desolateness. It should not only be a "desolation" Zephaniah 2:4, Zephaniah 2:9, as he had said of Ashkelon, Moab and Amman, but a dry, parched, unfruitful Isaiah 53:2 land. As Isaiah, under the same words, prophesies that the dry and desolate land should, by the Gospel, be glad, so the gladness of the world should become dryness and desolation. Asshur is named, as though one individual, implying the entireness of the destruction; all shall perish as one man; or as gathered into one and dependent upon one, its evil King. "The north" is not only Assyria, in that its armies came upon Judah from the north, but it stands for the whole power of evil (see Isaiah 14:13), as Nineveh for the whole beautiful, evil, world. The world with "the princes of this world" shall perish together.

Verse 14

And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her - No desolation is like that of decayed luxury. It preaches the nothingness of man, the fruitlessness of his toils, the fleetingness of his hopes and enjoyments, and their baffling when at their height. Grass in a court or on a once beaten road, much more, in a town, speaks of the passing away of what has been, that man was

accustomed to be there, and is not, or is there less than he was. It leaves the feeling of void and forsakenness. But in Nineveh not a few tufts of grass here and there shall betoken desolation, it shall be one wild rank pasture, where "flocks" shall not feed only, but "lie down" as in their fold and continual resting place, not in the outskirts only or suburbs, but in the very center of her life and throng and busy activity, "in the midst of her," and none shall fray them away. So Isaiah had said of the cities of Aroer, "they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down and none shall make them afraid" Isaiah 17:2, and of Judah until its restoration by Christ, that it should be "a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks" (Isaiah 32:14, compare Jeremiah 6:2). And not only those which are wont to be found in some connection with man, but "all the beasts of a nation", the troops of wild and savage and unclean beasts which shun the dwellings of man or are his enemies, these in troops have their lair there.

Both the cormorant and the bittern - They may be the same. The pelican retires inland to consume its food. Tristram, Houghton, in Smith's Bible Dictionary, "Pelican" note. It could be a hedgehog.

Shall lodge in the upper lintels of it. - The "chapiters" (English margin) or capitals of the pillars of the temples and palaces shall lie broken and strewn upon the ground, and among those desolate fragments of her pride shall unclean animals haunt. The pelican has its Hebrew name from vomiting. It vomits up the shells which it had swallowed whole, after they had been opened by the heat of the stomach, and so picks out the animal contained in them, the very image of greediness and uncleanness. It dwells also not in deserts only but near marshes, so that Nineveh is doubly waste.

A voice shall sing in the windows - In the midst of the desolation, the muteness of the hedgehog and the pensive loneliness of the solitary pelican, the musing spectator is even startled by the gladness of a bird, joyous in the existence which God has given it. Instead of the harmony of music and men-singers and women-singers in their palaces shall be the sweet music of some lonely bird, unconscious that it is sitting "in the windows" of those, at whose name the world grew pale, portions of the outer walls being all which remain of her palaces. "Desolation" shall be "in the thresholds," sitting, as it were, in them; everywhere to be seen in them; the more, because unseen. Desolation is something oppressive; we "feel" its presence. There, as the warder watch and ward at the empty portals, where once was the fullest throng, shall "desolation sit," that no one enter. "For He shall

uncover (hath uncovered, English margin) the cedar-work:" in the roofless palaces, the carved "cedar-work" shall be laid open to wind and rain. Any one must have noticed, how piteous and dreary the decay of any house in a town looks, with the torn paper hanging uselessly on its walls. A poet of our own said niche beautiful ruins of a wasted monastery:

"For the gay beams of lightsome day
Gild, but to flout the ruins gray."

But at Nineveh it is one of the mightiest cities of the world which thus lies waste, and the bared "cedar-work" had, in the days of its greatness, been carried off from the despoiled Lebanon or Hermon.

Verse 15

This utter desolation is "the rejoicing city" (so unlike is it, that there is need to point out that it is the same); this is she, who was full of joy, exulting exceedingly, but in herself, not in God; "that dwelt carelessly," literally, "securely," and so carelessly; saying "Peace and safety" 1 Thessalonians 5:3, as though no evil would come upon her, and so perishing more certainly and miserably (see Judges 18:27) "That said in her heart," this was her inmost feeling, the moving cause of all her deeds; "I am and there is none beside me;" literally, "and there is no I beside," claiming the very attribute of God (as the world does) of self-existence, as if it alone were "I," and others, in respect of her, were as nothing. Pantheism, which denies the being of God, as Author of the world, and claims the life in the material world to be God, and each living being to be a part of God, is only this self-idolatry, reflected upon and carried out in words. All the pride of the world, all self-indulgence which says, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," all covetousness which ends in this world, speaks this by its acts, "I and no I beside."

How is she become a desolation - Has passed wholly into it, exists only as a desolation, "a place for beasts to lie down in," a mere den for "the wild beasts. Every one that passeth by her shall hiss" in derision, "and wag" (or wave) "his hand" in detestation, as though putting the hand between them and it, so as not to look at it, or, as it were, motioning it away. The action is different from that of "clapping the hands in exultation" Nahum 3:19.

"It is not difficult," Jerome says, "to explain this of the world, that when the Lord hath stretched forth His Hand over the north and destroyed the Assyrian, the Prince of this world, the world also perishes together with its Princes, and is brought to utter desolation, and is pitied by none, but all hiss

and shake their hands at its ruin. But of the Church it seems, at first sight, blasphemous to say that it shall be a pathless desert, and wild beasts shall dwell in her, and that afterward it shall be said insultingly over her; ‹This is the city given up to ill, which "dwelt carelessly and said in her heart, I and none beside."‘ But whoso should consider that of the Apostle, wherein he says, "in the last days perilous times shall come" 2 Timothy 3:1-5, and what is written in the Gospel, that "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" Matthew 24:12, so that then shall that be fulfilled, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find the faith on the earth?" he will not marvel at the extreme desolation of the Church, that, in the reign of antichrist, it shall be reduced to a desolation and given over to beasts, and shall suffer whatever the prophet now describes.

For if for unbelief "God spared not the natural branches," but "brake them off," and "turned rivers into a wilderness and the water-springs into a dry ground," and "a fruitful land into barrenness, for the iniquity of them that dwell therein," why not as to those of whom He had said, "He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs, and there He maketh the hungry to dwell" Psalm 107:33-36; and as to those whom "out of the wild olive He hath grafted into the good olive tree," why, if forgetful of this benefit, they depart from their Maker and worship the Assyrian, should He not undo them and bring them to the same thirst wherein they were before? Which, whereas it may be understood generally of the coming of antichrist or of the end of the world, yet it may, day by day, be understood of those who feign to be of the Church of God, and "in works deny it, are hearers of the word not doers," who in vain boast in an outward show, whereas herds that is, troops of vices dwell in them, and brute animals serving the body, and all the beasts of the field which devour their hearts (and pelicans, that is, gluttons, whose ‹god is their belly‘) and hedgehogs, a prickly animal full of spikes which pricketh whatever it toucheth.

After which it is subjoined, that the Church shall therefore suffer this, or hath suffered it, because it lifted itself up proudly and raised its head like a cedar, given up to evil works, and yet promising itself future blessedness, and despising others in its heart, nor thinking that there is any other beside itself, and saying, "I am, and there is no other beside me," how is it become

a solitude, a lair of beasts! For where before, dwelt the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and Angels presided over its ministries, there shall beasts dwell. And if we understand that, every one that passeth by shall hiss, we shall explain it thus; when Angels shall pass through her, and not remain in her, as was their wont, they shall be amazed and marvel, and shall not support and bear her up with their hand, when falling, but shall lift up the hands and shall pass by. Or they shall make a sound as those who mourn. But if we understand this of the devil and his angels, who destroyed the vine also that was brought out of Egypt, we shall say, that through the soul, which before was the temple of God and hath ceased so to be, the serpent passeth, and hisseth and spitteth forth the venom of his malice in her, and not this only, but setteth in motion his works which figuratively are called hands."

Rup.: "The earlier and partial fulfillment of prophecy does not destroy, it rather confirms, the entire fulfillment to come. For whoso heareth of the destruction of mighty cities, is constrained to believe the truth of the Gospel, that the fashion of this world passeth away, and that, after the likeness of Nineveh and Babylon, the Lord will in the end judge the whole world also."

ZEPHANIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

The "woe," having gone round the pagan nations, again circles round where it began, the "Jerusalem that killed the prophets and stoned those that were sent unto her" Matthew 23:37. Woe upon her, and joy to the holy Jerusalem, the "new Jerusalem Revelation 3:12; Revelation 21:10, the Jerusalem which is from above, the mother of us all," close this prophecy; both in figure; destruction of her and the whole earth, in time, the emblem of the eternal death; and the love of God, the foretaste of endless joy in Him.

Woe - "Rebellious and polluted;" "thou oppressive city!". The address is the more abrupt, and bursts more upon her, since the prophet does not name her. He uses as her proper name, not her own name, city of peace," but "rebellious," "polluted;" then he sums up in one, thou "oppressive city."

Jerusalem's sin is threefold, actively rebelling against God; then, inwardly defiled by sin; then cruel to man. So then, toward God, in herself, toward man, she is wholly turned to evil, not in passing acts, but in her abiding state:

(1) rebellious

(2) defiled

(3) oppressive

She is known only by what she has become, and what has been done for her in vain. She is rebellious, and so had had the law; defiled, and so had been cleansed; and therefore her state is the more hopeless.

Verse 2

She obeyed not the Voice - Of God, by the law or the prophets, teaching her His ways; and when, disobeying, He chastened her, "she received not correction," and when He increased His chastisements, she, in the declining age of the state and deepening evil, turned not unto Him, as in the time of the judges, nor ceased to do evil.

In the Lord she trusted not - But in Assyria or Egypt or her idols. Our practical relation to God is summed up in the four words, "Mis-trust self; trust God." Man reverses this, and when "self-trust" has of course failed him, then he "mistrusts God". "Such rarely ask of God, what they hope they may obtain from man. They strain every nerve of their soul to obtain what they want; canvass, flatter, fawn, bribe, court favor; and betake themselves to God when all human help fails. They would be indebted, not to God, but to their own diligence. For the more they receive of God, the less, they see, can they exalt their own diligence, the more they are bound to thank God, and obey Him the more strictly."

To her God she drew not nigh - Even in trouble, when all draw near unto Him, who are not wholly alien from Him; she drew not near by repentance, by faith hope or love, or by works meet for repentance, but in heart remained far from Him. And yet He was "her" own "God," as He had shown Himself in times past, who changes not, while we change; is faithful to us, while we fail Him; is still our God, while we forget Him; "waits, to have mercy upon us;" shines on us while we interpose our earth-born clouds between us and Him. Dionysius: "Not in body nor in place, but spiritually and inwardly do we approach to the uncircumscribed God," owning Him as our Father, to whom we daily say "Our Father."

Verse 3

The prophet having declared the wickedness of the whole city, rehearses how each in Church and state, the ministers of God in either, who should have corrected the evil, themselves aggravated it. Not enemies, without, destroy her, but

Her princes within her - In the very midst of the flock, whom they should in God's stead "feed with a true heart," destroy her as they will, having no protection against them. "Her judges are evening wolves" (see Habakkuk 1:8); these who should in the Name of God redress all grievances and wrongs, are themselves like wild beasts, when most driven by famine. "They gnaw not the bones until the morrow or on the morrow" (literally, in the morning). They reserve nothing until the morning light, but do in darkness the works of darkness, shrinking from the light, and, in extreme rapacity, devouring at once the whole substance of the poor. As Isaiah says, "Thy princes are rebellious and companions of thieves" Isaiah 1:23, and "The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of His people and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard: the spoil of the poor is in

your houses" Isaiah 3:14. And Ezekiel, "Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves, ravening the prey to shed blood, to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain" Ezekiel 22:27.

Verse 4

Her prophets are light - , boiling and bubbling, up, like water boiling over, empty boasters claiming the gift of prophecy, which they have not; "boldly and rashly pouring out what they willed as they willed;" promising good things which shall not be. So they are "her" prophets, to whom they "prophesy smooth things" (see Micah 2:11), "the prophets of this people" not the prophets of God; "treacherous persons" (literally, men of treacheries) wholly given to manifold treacheries against God in whose Name they spake and to the people whom they deceived. Jerome: "They spake as if from the mouth of the Lord and uttered everything against the Lord." "The leaders of the people," those who profess to lead it aright, Isaiah says, "are its misleaders" (Isaiah 9:15 (Isaiah 9:16 in English)). "Thy prophets," Jeremiah says, "have seen vain and foolish things for thee; they have seen for thee false visions and causes of banishment" Lamentations 2:14.

Her priests have polluted her sanctuary - Literally, "holiness," and so holy rites, persons Ezra 8:28, things, places (as the sanctuary), sacrifices. All these they polluted, being themselves polluted; they polluted first themselves, then the holy things which they handled, handling them as they ought not; carelessly and irreverently, not as ordained by God; turning them to their own use and self-indulgence, instead of the glory of God; then they polluted them in the eyes of the people, "making them to abhor the offering of the Lord" 1 Samuel 2:17, since, living scandalously, they themselves regarded the Ministry entrusted to them by God so lightly. Their office was to "put difference between holy and unholy and between clean and unclean, and to teach the children all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them by Moses" Leviticus 10:10-11; that they "should sanctify themselves and be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 11:44; Leviticus 19:2, etc.). But they on the contrary, God says by Ezekiel, "have done violence to My law and have profaned My holy things; they have made no difference between holy and profane, and have taught none between clean and unclean" Ezekiel 22:26. "Holy" and "unholy" being the contradictory of each other, these changed what God had hallowed into its exact contrary.

It was not a mere short-coming, but an annihilation (so to speak), of God‘s purposes.

Cyril: “The priests of the Church then must keep strict watch, not to profane holy things. There is not one mode only of profaning them, but many and divers. For priests ought to be purified both in soul and body, and to cast aside every form of abominable pleasure. Rather should they be resplendent with zeal in well-doing, remembering what Paul saith, ‹walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh‘ Galatians 5:16.”

They have oppressed, done violence, to the law - Openly violating it; or straining it, or secretly wresting and using its forms to wrong and violence, as in the case of Naboth and of Him, of whom Naboth thus far bore the Image. “‹We have a law, and by our law He ought to die‘ John 19:7. Law exists to restrain human violence; these reversed God‘s ordinances; violence and law changed places: first, they did violence to the majesty of the law, which was the very voice of God, and then, through profaning it, did violence to man. Forerunners herein of those, who, when Christ came, “transgressed the commandment of God, and made it of none effect by their traditions” Matthew 15:6; omitting also the weightier matters of the law, judgment and mercy and faith; full of extortion and excess!” Matthew 23:23, Matthew 23:25.

Verse 5

But, beside these “evening wolves in the midst of her,” there standeth Another “in the midst of her,” whom they knew not, and so, very near to them although they would not draw near to Him. But He was near, to behold all the iniquities which they did in the very city and place called by His Name and in His very presence; He was in her to protect, foster her with a father‘s love, but she, presuming on His mercy, had cast it off. And so He was near to punish, not to deliver; as a Judge, not as a Saviour. Dionysius: “God is everywhere, Who says by Jeremiah, ‹I fill heaven and earth‘ Jeremiah 23:24. But since, as Solomon attesteth, ‹The Lord is far from the wicked‘ Proverbs 15:29, how is He said here to be in the midst of these most wicked men? Because the Lord is far from the wicked, as regards the presence of love and grace; still in His Essence He is everywhere, and in this way He is equally present to all.”

The Lord is in the midst thereof; He will not do iniquity - Dionysius: “Since He is the primal rule and measure of all righteousness; therefore from the very fact that He doeth anything, it is just, for He cannot do amiss,

being essentially holy. Therefore He will give to every man what he deserves. Therefore we chant, ‹The Lord is upright, and there is no unrighteousness in Him‘ Psalm 92:15." justice and injustice, purity and impurity, cannot be together. God‘s presence then must destroy the sinners, if not the sin. He was "in the midst of them," to sanctify them, giving them His judgments as a pattern of theirs; "He will not do iniquity:" but if they heeded it not, the judgment would fall upon themselves. It were for God to become "such an one as themselves" Psalm 50:21, and to connive at wickedness, were He to spare at last the impenitent.

Every morning - (Literally, in the morning, in the morning) one after the other, quickly, openly, daily, continually, bringing all secret things, all works of darkness, to light, as He said to David, "Thou didst it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun" 2 Samuel 12:12. Doth He bring His judgments to light," so that no sin should be hidden in the brightness of His Light, as He said by Hosea, "Thy judgments are a light which goeth forth." Cyril: "Morning by morning, He shall execute His judgments, that is, in bright day and visibly, not restraining His anger, but bringing it forth in the midst, and making it conspicuous, and, as it were, setting in open vision what He had foreannounced." Day by day God gives some warning of His judgments. By chastisements which are felt to be His on this side or on that or all around, He gives ensamples which speak to the sinner‘s heart. "He faileth not." As God said by Habakkuk, that His promises, although they seem to "linger," were not "behind" Habakkuk 2:3 the real time, which lay in the Divine Mind, so, contrariwise, neither are His judgments. His hand is never missing at the appointed time. "But the unjust," he, whose very being and character, "iniquity," is the exact contrary to what he had said of the perfection of God, "Who doth not iniquity," or, as Moses had taught them in his song, "all His ways are judgment, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He" Deuteronomy 32:4. "Knoweth no shame," as God saith by Jeremiah, "Thou refusedst to be ashamed" Jeremiah 3:3. They were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush" Jeremiah 6:15; Jeremiah 8:12. Even thus they would not be ashamed of their sins, "that they might be converted and God might heal them" Isaiah 6:10.

Verse 6

I have cut off the nations - God appeals to His judgments on pagan nations, not on any particular nation, as far as we know; but to past history,

whether of those, of whose destruction Israel itself had been the instrument, or others. The judgments upon the nations before them were set forth to them, when they were about to enter on their inheritance, as a warning to themselves. “Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things, for in all these have the nations defiled themselves, which I cast out before you: and the land is defiled; therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land vomiteth out her inhabitants. And ye, ye shall keep My statutes and My judgements and shall not commit any of these abominations - And the land shall not spue you out when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations which were before you” (Leviticus 18:24-26, Leviticus 18:28, add Leviticus 20:23). The very possession then of the land was a warning to them; the ruins, which crowned so many of its hilltops, were silent preachers to them; they lived among the memories of God‘s visitations; if neglected, they were an earnest of future judgments on themselves.

Yet God‘s judgments are not at one time only. Sennacherib appealed to their own knowledge, “Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly. Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed?” Isaiah 37:11, Isaiah 37:13. Hezekiah owned it as a fact which he knew: “Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their land” Isaiah 37:18. And God owns him as His instrument: “Now I have brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defensed cities into ruinous heaps” Isaiah 37:26: and, “I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil and to take the prey, and to tread them down as the mire of the streets,” and says of him, “It is in his heart to destroy and to cut off nations not a few”. The king of Babylon too he describes as “the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms. that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof” Isaiah 14:16-17. Habakkuk recently described the wide wasting by the Babylonians, and the helplessness of nations before him Habakkuk 1:14-16.

Their towers, corner towers - othe most carefully fortified parts of their fortified cities, “are desolate; I made their streets waste.” The desolation is complete, within as well as without; ruin itself is hardly so desolate as the empty habitations and forsaken streets, once full of life, where

“The echoes and the empty tread

Would sound like voices from the dead."

Verse 7

I said, surely thou wilt fear Me - God speaks of things here, as they are in their own nature. "It could not but be," that in the very presence of the Hand of God, destroying others but as yet sparing them, they must learn to fear Him; they must stand in awe of Him for His judgments on others; they must be in filial fear of Him for His loving longsuffering toward themselves. "Thou ‹wilt‘ receive instruction," corrected and taught through God‘s correction of others and the lighter judgments on themselves, as Solomon says, "I looked, I set my heart: I saw, I received instruction" Proverbs 24:32. He saith, "receive," making it man‘s free act. God brings it near, commends it to him, exhorts, entreats, but leaves him the awful power to "receive" or to refuse. God speaks with a wonderful tenderness. "Surely thou ‹wilt‘ stand in awe of Me; thou ‹wilt‘ receive instruction; thou wilt now do what hitherto thou hast refused to do." There was (so to speak) nothing else left for them, in sight of those judgments. He pleads their own interests. The lightning was ready to fall. The prophet had, in vision, seen the enemy within the city. Yet even now God lingers, as it were, "If thou hadst known in this thy day, the things which are for thy peace" Luke 19:42.

So their - (her) dwelling should not be cut off His own holy land which He had given them. A Jew paraphrases, "And He will not cut off their dwellings from the land of the house of My Shechinah" (God‘s visible presence in glory). Judah, who was before addressed "thou," is now spoken of in the third person, "her;" and this also had wonderful tenderness. It is as though God were musing over her and the blessed fruits of her return to Him; "it shall not be needed to correct her further." "Howsoever I punished them:" literally, "all" (that is, ‹all‘ the offences) "which I visited upon her," as God saith of Himself, "‹visiting‘ the ‹sins‘ of the fathers ‹upon‘ the children" Exodus 20:5; Exodus 34:7; Numbers 14:18, and this is mostly the meaning of the words "visit upon." Amid and not withstanding all the offences which God had already chastised, He, in His love and compassion, still longeth, not utterly to remove them from His presence, if they would but receive instruction "now;" but they would not. "How often," our Lord says, "would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" Matthew 23:37. "But indeed," "probably, Of a truth" (it is a word strongly affirming what

follows) "they rose early, they corrupted all their doings;" God gave them His warnings, awaited the result; they lost no time, they began with morning light; they hasted to rise, burdened themselves, made sure of having the whole day before them, to - seek God as He had sent His prophets, "rising early and sending them?" Jeremiah 7:13, Jeremiah 7:25; Jeremiah 11:7; Jeremiah 26:5; Jeremiah 29:19.

No, nor even simply to do ill, but of set purpose. to do, not this or that corruptly, but "to corrupt all their doings." Jerome: "They with diligence and eagerness rose early, that, with the same haste wherewith they ought to have returned to Me, they might shew forth in deed what they had conceived amiss in their mind." There are as many aggravations of their sin as there are words. The four Hebrew words bespeak eagerness, willfulness, completeness enormity, in sin. They "rose early," themselves deliberately "corrupted," of their own mind made offensive, "all" their "doings," not slight acts, but "deeds," great works done with a high hand.

Verse 8

Therefore wait ye upon - (for) Me God so willeth not to punish, but that all should lay hold of His mercy, that He doth not here even name punishment. Judah had slighted His mercies; He was ready to forgive all they had sinned, if they would "now" receive instruction; they in return set themselves to corrupt "all" their doings. They had wholly forsaken Him. "Therefore" - we should have expected, as elsewhere, "Therefore I will visit all your iniquities upon you." But not so. The chastisement is all veiled; the prophet points only to the mercy beyond. "Therefore wait ye for Me." All the interval of chastisement is summed up in these words; that is, since neither My mercies toward you, nor My chastisement of others, lead you to obey Me, "therefore" the time shall be, when My Providence shall not seem to be over you, nor My presence among you (see Hosea 3:3-5); but then, "wait ye for Me" earnestly, intensely, perseveringly, "until the day, that I rise up to the prey." "The day" is probably in the first instance, the deliverance from Babylon. But the words seem to be purposely enlarged, that they may embrace other judgments of God also.

For the words to "gather the nations, assemble the kingdoms," describe some array of nations against God and His people; gathering themselves for their own end at that time, but, in His purpose, gathering themselves for their own destruction, rather than the mere tranquil reunion of those of

different nations in the city of Babylon, when the Medes and Persians came against them. Nor again are they altogether fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, or any other event until now. For although then a vast number of the dispersed Jews were collected together, and were at that time "broken off" Romans 11:20 and out of covenant with God, they could hardly be called "nations," (which are here and before Joel 3:2, Joel 3:9-16 and Zechariah Psalm 69:24; Psalm 79:6; Jeremiah 6:11; Jeremiah 10:25; Jeremiah 14:16; Ezekiel 21:31; Revelation 16:1). The outpouring of all God's wrath, the devouring of the whole earth, in the fullest sense of the words, belongs to the end of the world, when He shall say to the wicked, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." In lesser degrees, and less fully, the substance of the prophecy has again and again been fulfilled to the Jewish Church before Christ, at Babylon and under the Maccabees; and to the Christian, as when the Muslims hemmed in Christendom on all sides, and the waves of their conquests on the east and west threatened to meet, overwhelming Christendom. The Church, having sinned, had to "wait" for a while "for God" who by His Providence withdrew Himself, yet at last delivered it.

And since the whole history of the Church lies wrapt up in the Person of the Redeemer, "the day that I rise up to the prey," is especially the Day in which the foundation of His Church was laid, or that in which it shall be completed; the Day whereon He rose again, as the first-fruits, or that Day in which He shall "stand again on the earth", to judge it; "so coming even as He went up into heaven" Acts 1:11. Then, "the prey" must be, what God vouch-safes to account as His gain, "the prey" which is "taken from the mighty" Isaiah 49:24-25, and "the lawful captivity, the prey of the terrible one," which shall be delivered; even that spoil which the Father bestowed on Him "Who made His soul an offering for sin" Isaiah 53:10, Isaiah 53:12, the goods of the strong man Matthew 12:29 whom He bound, and spoiled us, His lawful goods and captives, since we had "sold" (Romans 7:14, coll; Isaiah 50:1; Isaiah 52:3) ourselves "under sin" to him. Cyril: "Christ lived again having spoiled hell, because "it was not possible" (as it is written) "that He," being by nature Life, "should be holden of death" Acts 2:24.

Here, where spoken of with relation to the Church, "the jealousy" of Almighty God is that love for His people (see the note at Nahum 1:2),

which will not endure their ill-treatment by those who (as all anti-Christian power does) make themselves His rivals in the government of the world.

Verse 9

For then - In the order of God‘s mercies. The deliverance from Babylon was the forerunner of that of the Gospel, which was its object. The spread of the Gospel then is spoken of in the connection of God‘s Providence and plan, and time is overlooked. Its blessings are spoken of, as “then” given when the earnest was given, and the people, from whom according to the flesh Christ was to be born, were placed anew in the land where He was to be born. Lap.: “The prophet springs, as is his wont, to Christ and the time of the new law.” And in Christ, the End of the Law, the prophet ends.

I will turn - Contrary to what they had before, “to the people,” literally, “peoples,” the nations of the earth, “a pure language,” literally, “a purified lip.” It is a real conversion, as was said of Saul at the beginning 1 Samuel 10:9; “God” (literally) “turned to him another heart.” Before the dispersion of Babel the world was “of one lip,” but that, impure, for it was in rebellion against God. Now it shall be again of “one lip;” and that, “purified.” The purity is of faith and of life, “that they way call upon the Name of the Lord,” not as heretofore on idols, but that every tongue should confess the one true God, Father Son and Holy Spirit, in Whose Name they are baptized. This is purity of faith. To “call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus” Acts 22:16; Romans 10:13 is the very title of Christian worship; “all that called upon the Name” of Jesus, the very title of Christians Acts 9:14, Acts 9:21; 1 Corinthians 1:2. “To serve Him with one consent,” literally, “with one shoulder,” evenly, steadfastly, “not unequally yoked,” but all with united strength, bearing Christ‘s “easy yoke” and “one another‘s burdens, fulfilling the law of Christ.” This is purity of life. The fruit of the lips is the “sacrifice of praise” Hebrews 13:15.

God gave back one pure language, when, on the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, the Author of purity, came down in fiery tongues upon the Apostles, teaching them and guiding them “into the whole truth” John 16:13, and to “speak to every one in his own tongue, wherein he was born, the wonderful works of God” Acts 2:8, Acts 2:11. Thenceforth there was to be a higher unity than that of outward language. For speech is not the outer sound, but the thoughts which it conveys and embodies. The inward thought is the soul of the words. The outward confusion of Babel was to hinder

oneness in evil and a worse confusion. At Pentecost, the unity restored was oneness of soul and heart, wrought by One Spirit, whose gift is the one Faith and the one Hope of our calling, in the One Lord, in whom we are one, grafted into the one body, by our baptism Ephesians 4:3-6. The Church, then created, is the One Holy Universal Church diffused throughout all the world, everywhere with one rule of Faith, "the Faith once for all delivered unto the saints," confessing one God, the Trinity in Unity, and serving Him in the one law of the Gospel with one consent.

Christians, as Christians, speak the same language of Faith, and from all quarters of the world, one language of praise goes up to the One God and Father of all.: "God divided the tongues at Babel, lest, understanding one another, they should form a destructive unity. Through proud men tongues were divided; through humble Apostles tongues were gathered in one. The spirit of pride dispersed tongues; the Holy Spirit gathered tongues in one. For when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, they spake with the tongues of all, were understood by all; the dispersed tongues were gathered into one. So then, if they are yet angry and Gentiles, it is better for them to have their tongues divided. If they wish for one tongue, let them come to the Church, for in diversity of the tongues of the flesh, there is one tongue in the Faith of the heart." In whatever degree the oneness is impaired within the Church, while there is yet one faith of the creeds, He alone can restore it and ‹turn to her a purified language,' who first gave it to those who waited for Him. Both praise and service are perfected above, where the Blessed, with one loud voice, ‹shall cry, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the Throne and unto the Lamb; blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be unto our God forever and ever' Revelation 7:10, Revelation 7:12. And they who ‹have come out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb," shall be ‹before the Throne of God and serve Him day and night in His Temple' Revelation 7:14-15."

Verse 10

From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia - (See Isaiah 18:1.) The farthest southern people, with whom the Jews had contact, stand as the type of the whole world beyond. The utmost bound of the known inhabited land should not be the bound of the Gospel. The conversion of Abyssinia is one, but the

narrowest fulfillment of the prophecy. The whole new world, though not in the mind of the prophet, was in the mind of Him who spake by the prophet.

My suppliants - He names them as what they shall be when they shall come to Him. They shall come, as needy, to the Fountain of all good, asking for mercy of the unfailing Source of all mercy. He describes the very character of all who come to God through Christ. "The daughter of My dispersed." God is, in the way of Providence, the Father of all, although, by sin, alienated from Him; from where Paul says, "we are the offspring of God" Acts 17:28. They were "dispersed," severed from the oneness in Him and from His house and family; yet still, looking on them as already belonging to Him, He calls them, "My dispersed," as by Caiaphas, being high priest, He prophesied that "Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" John 11:51-52.

Shall bring Mine offering - oThe offering is the same as that which Malachi prophesies shall continue under the New Testament, which offering was to be offered to the Name of God, not in Jerusalem, but Malachi 1:11 "in every place from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same." The dark skin of the Ethiopian is the image of ingrained sin, which man could not efface or change Jeremiah 13:23: their conversion then declares how those steeped in sin shall be cleansed from all their darkness of mind, and washed white from their sins in Baptism and beautified by the grace of God. Cyril: "The word of prophecy endeth in truth. For not only through the Roman empire is the Gospel preached, but it circles round the barbarous nations. And there are Churches everywhere, shepherds and teachers, guides and instructors in mysteries, and sacred altars, and the Lamb is invisibly sacrificed by holy priests among Indians too and Ethiopians. And this was said plainly by another prophet also, ‹For I am a great King, saith the Lord, and My Name is great among the pagan, and in every place incense is offered to My Name and a pure sacrifice' Malachi 1:11."

Verse 11

In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings - Because God, forgiving them, will blot them out and no more remember them. This was first fulfilled in the Gospel. Cyril: "No one can doubt that when Christ came in the flesh, there was an amnesty and remission to all who believed. ‹For we are justified not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His great mercy.' But we have been released from shame.

For ‹He‘ hath restored us to freedom of access to God, Who for our sakes arose from the dead, and for us ascended to heaven in the presence of the Father. ‹For Christ, our Forerunner, hath ascended for us now to appear in the presence of God.‘ So then He took away the guilt of all and freed believers from failures and shame.” Peter, even in heaven, must remember his denial of our Lord, yet not so as to be ashamed or pained anymore, since the exceeding love of God will remove all shame or pain.

Rup.: “Mighty promise, mighty consolation. Now, before that Day comes, the Day of My Resurrection, thou wilt be ashamed and not without reason, since thou ownest by a true confession, ‹all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags‘ Isaiah 64:6. But at that Day it will not be so, especially when that shall be which I promise thee in the prophets and the Psalms, ‹There shall be a Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness‘ Zechariah 13:1; whence David also, exulting in good hope of the Holy Spirit, saith, ‹Thou shalt wash me and I shall be whiter than snow‘ Psalm 51:7. For though he elsewhere saith, ‹they looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed‘ Psalm 34:5, yet in this mortal life, when the Day of My Resurrection doth not fully shine upon thee, thou art after some sort ashamed; as it is written, ‹What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?‘ Romans 6:21, but that shame will bring glory, and, when that glory cometh in its place, will wholly pass away. But when the fullness of that day shall come, the fullness of My Resurrection, when the members shall rise, as the Head hath risen, will the memory of past foulness bring any confusion? Yea the very memory of the miseries will be the richest subject of singing, according to that, ‹My song shall be alway of the loving-kindness of the Lord‘ Psalm 89:1.” For how shall the redeemed forget the mercies of their redemption, or yet how feel a painful shame even of the very miseries, out of which they were redeemed by the fullness of the overstreaming Love of God?

For then will I take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride - (Those of thee who exult in pride.) All confusion shall (cease, because all pride shall cease, the parent of sin and confusion. The very gift of God becomes to the carnal a source of pride. Pride was to the Jew also the great hindrance to the reception of the Gospel. He made his “boast of the law,” yea, in God Himself, that he “knew His will,” and was a “guide of others” Romans 2:17-20, Romans 2:23, and so was the more indignant, that the pagan was made equal to him, and that he too was called

to repentance and faith in Christ. So, "going about to establish his own righteousness, he did not submit himself to the righteousness of God," but shut himself out from the faith and grace and salvation of Christ, and rejected Himself. So (Rup.), "thy pride" may be the pride in being the people of God, and having Abraham for their father. "And thou shalt no more be haughty in My holy mountain," "but thou shalt stand in the great and everlasting abiding-place of humility, knowing perfectly, that thou now ‹knowest in part‘ only, and confessest truly that no one ever could or can by his own works be justified in the sight of God. ‹For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God‘ Romans 3:23." Pride which is ever offensive to God, is yet more hideous in a holy place or a holy office, "in" Mount Sion where the temple was or in the Christian priesthood.

Verse 12

I will also leave - (Over, as a remnant, it is still the same heavy prophecy, that a remnant only ‹shall be saved‘) "an afflicted and poor people." priests, (except that ‹great company who were obedient to the faith‘) Acts 6:7, scribes, lawyers, Pharisees, Sadducees were taken away; and there remained "the people of the land", the "unlearned and ignorant" Acts 4:13, "the weak things of the world and the things despised" 1 Corinthians 1:27-28 who bore the very title of their Master, "the poor and needy; poor in Spirit" Psalm 41:1; poor also in outward things, since "they who had lands, sold them and they had all things common" Acts 2:44-45; Acts 4:32, Acts 4:35. They were afflicted above measure outwardly in the (Acts 8:1; Acts 9:2, Acts 9:13-14; Acts 12:1-2; Acts 13:50; Acts 14:5, Acts 14:22; 22; etc. Romans 8:17, Romans 8:35-36; Romans 12:14; 1 Corinthians 9:19; 2 Corinthians 1:8-9; 2 Corinthians 12:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Timothy 3:11-12; Hebrews 10:32-34; James 2:6-7; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 1 Peter 4:13; Revelation 1:9; Revelation 6:9 etc.) persecutions, "reproaches, spoiling of" their "goods," stripes, deaths, which they endured for Christ‘s sake.

They knew too their own poverty, Rup: "knowing themselves to be sinners, and that they were justified only by faith in Jesus Christ." When the rest were cast out "of the midst of her," these should be left "in the midst of her" (the words stand in contrast with one another) in the bosom of the Church. "And they shall trust in the name of the Lord." "As they looked to be justified only in the Name of Christ," and (Dionysius) "trusted in the grace and power of God alone, not in any power or wisdom or eloquence or

riches of this world, they converted the world to a faith above nature." Cyril: "Conformed in this too to Christ. Who for our sakes became poor and almost neglected both His divine glory and the supereminence of His nature, to subject Himself to the condition of a servant. So then those instructed in His laws after His example, think humbly of themselves, They became most exceedingly loved of God, and chiefly the divine disciples, who were set as lights of the world."

Verse 13

The remnant of Israel - The same poor people, the "true Israel" of whom God said, "I leave over" (the word is the same) "a poor people," few, compared with the rest who were blinded; of whom the Lord said, "I know whom I have chosen" John 13:18. These "shall not do iniquity nor speak lies." Cyril: "This is a spiritual adorning, a most beautiful coronet of glorious virtues. For where meekness and humility are and the desire of righteousness, and the tongue unlearns vain words and sinful speech, and is the instrument of strict truth, there dawns a bright and most perfect virtue. And this beseems those who are in Christ. For the beauty of piety is not seen in the Law, but gleams forth in the power of Evangelic teachings."

Our Lord said of Nathanael, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile" John 1:47, and to the Apostles, "I send you forth as sheep among wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves" Matthew 10:16; and of the first Christians it is said, "they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house did eat their merit with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people" Acts 2:46-47. This is the character of Christians, as such, and it was at first fulfilled; "whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin" 1 John 3:9; "whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" 1 John 5:18. An Apologist, at the close of the second century, could appeal to the Roman Emperor, that no Christian was found among their criminals, "unless it be only as a Christian, or, if he be anything else, he is immediately no longer a Christian. We alone then are innocent! What wonder if this be so, of necessity? And truly of necessity it is so. Taught innocence by God, we both know it perfectly, as being revealed by a perfect Master; and we keep it faithfully, as being committed to us by an Observer, Who may not be despised.": "Being so vast a multitude of men, almost the

greater portion of every state, we live silently and modestly, known perhaps more as individuals than as a body, and to be known by no other sign than the reformation of our former sins."

Now in the Church, which "our earth dimm'd eyes behold," we can but say, as in regard to the cessation of war under the Gospel, that God's promises are sure on His part, that still "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts," that the Gospel is "a power of God unto salvation" Romans 1:16, that "the preaching of the Cross is, unto us which are saved, the power of God" 1 Corinthians 1:18; "unto them that are called, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God" 1 Corinthians 1:24; that those who will, "are kept by God through faith unto salvation" 1 Peter 1:5; but that now too "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" Romans 9:6, and that "the faithlessness of man does not make the faith of God of none effect" Romans 3:3.: "The Church of God is universally holy in respect of all, by institutions and administrations of sanctity; the same Church is really holy in this world, in relation to all godly persons contained in it, by a real infused sanctity; the same is farther yet at the same time perfectly holy in reference to the saints departed and admitted to the presence of God; and the same Church shall hereafter be most completely holy in the world to come, when all the members, actually belonging to it, shall be at once perfected in holiness and completed in happiness."

Most fully shall this be fulfilled in the Resurrection. Rup.: "O blessed day of the Resurrection, in whose fullness no one will sin in word or deed! O great and blessed reward to every soul, which, although it hath now "done iniquity" and "spoken falsehood," yet willeth not to do it further! Great and blessed reward, that he shall now receive such. immovableness, as no longer to be able to do iniquity or speak falsehood, since the blessed soul, through the Spirit of everlasting love inseparably united with God its Creator, shall now no more be capable of an evil will!"

For they shall feed - On the hidden manna, Dionysius: "nourished most delicately by the Holy Spirit with inward delights, and spiritual food, the bread of life." In the things of the body too was "distribution made unto every man according as he had need" Acts 4:35. "And they shall lie down" in the green pastures where He foldeth them; "and none shall make them afraid" 1 Peter 1:5, "for they were ready to suffer and to die for the Name of

the Lord Jesus" Acts 21:13. "They departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name" Acts 5:41. Before the Resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit, how great was the fearfulness, unsteadfastness, weakness of the disciples; how great, after the infusion of the Holy Spirit, was their constancy and imperturbableness, it is delightsome to estimate in their Acts," when they "bare His Name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel" Acts 9:15, and he who had been afraid of a little maid, said to the high priest, "We ought to obey God rather than men" Acts 5:29. Cyril: "When Christ the Good Shepherd Who laid down His life for His sheep, shone upon us, we are fed in gardens and pastured among lilies, and lie down in folds; for we are folded in Churches and holy shrines, no one scaring or spoiling us, no wolf assailing nor lion trampling on us, no robber breaking through, no one invading us, to steal and kill and destroy; but we abide in safety and participation of every good, being in charge of Christ the Saviour of all."

Verse 14

Sing, O daughter of Sion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem - Very remarkable throughout all these verses is the use of the sacred number three, secretly conveying to the thoughtful soul the thought of Him, Father Son and Holy Spirit, the Holy and Undivided Trinity by whose operation these things shall be. Threefold is the description of their being freed from sins:

(1) they shall "not do iniquity,"

(2) "nor speak lies,"

(3) "neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth."

Threefold their blessedness; They shall:

(1) "feed,"

(2) "lie down,"

(3) "none make them afraid."

Threefold the exhortation to joy here. (Rup.): "Sing to God the Father; ‹shout‘ to God the Son; ‹be glad and rejoice‘ in God the Holy Spirit, which Holy Trinity is One God, from whom thou hast received it that thou art:

(1) ‹the daughter of Zion‘

(2) ‹Israel‘

(3) ‹the daughter of Jerusalem‘

‹The daughter of Zion‘ by faith, ‹Israel‘ by hope, ‹Jerusalem‘ by charity.” And this hidden teaching of that holy mystery is continued; “The Lord,” God the Father, “hath taken away thy judgments; He God” the Son, “hath cast out (cleared quite away) thine enemy; the king of Israel, the Lord,” the Holy Spirit, “is in the midst of thee!” Zephaniah 3:15. The promise is threefold:

(1) “thou shalt not see evil anymore”

(2) “fear thou not”

(3) “let not thine hands be slack”

The love of God is threefold:

(1) “He will rejoice over thee with joy”

(2) “He will rest in His love”

(3) “He will joy over thee with singing”

Again the words in these four verses are so framed as to be “ful”- filled in the end. All in this life are but shadows of that fullness. First, whether the Church or the faithful soul, she is summoned by all her names, “daughter of Zion” (“the thirsty” athirst for God) “Israel” (“Prince with God”) “Jerusalem” (“City of Peace”). By all she is called to the fullest joy in God with every expression and every feeling. “Sing;” it is the inarticulate, thrilling, trembling burst of joy; “shout;” again the inarticulate yet louder swell of joy, a trumpet-blast; and then too, deep within, “be glad,” the calm even joy of the inward soul; “exult,” the triumph of the soul which cannot contain itself for joy; and this, “with the whole heart,” no corner of it not pervaded with joy. The ground of this is the complete removal of every evil, and the full presence of God.

Verse 15

The Lord hath taken away thy judgments - Her own, because brought upon her by her sins. But when God takes away the chastisements in mercy, He removes and forgives the sin too. Else, to remove “the judgments” only, would be to abandon the sinner. “He hath cast out,” literally, “cleared quite away”, as a man clears away all hindrances, all which stands in the way, so that there should be none whatever left - “thine enemy;” the one enemy, from whom every hindrance to our salvation comes, as He saith, “Now

shall the prince of this world be cast out. The King of Israel, even the Lord" John 12:31, Christ the Lord, "is in the midst of thee," of whom it is said, "He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them" Revelation 7:15, and who Himself saith, "Lo I am with you always unto the end of the world" Matthew 28:20. "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of you" Matthew 18:20.

He who had removed "from the midst of her" the proud, Who had left "in the midst of her" those with whom He dwelleth, shall Himself dwell "in the midst of her" in mercy, as He had before in judgment Matthew 18:11-12, Matthew 18:15, Matthew 18:5. He cleanseth the soul for His indwelling, and so dwelleth in the mansion which He had prepared for Himself. "Thou shalt not see evil anymore." For even the remains of evil, while we are yet in the flesh, are overruled, and "work together to good to those who love God" Romans 8:28. They cannot separate between the soul and Christ. Rather, He is nearer to her in them. We are bidden to "count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations" James 1:2, for all sorrows are but medicine from a father‘s hand.: "And truly our way to eternal joy is to suffer here with Christ, and our door to enter into eternal life is gladly to die with Christ, that we may rise again from death and dwell with Him in everlasting life."

So in the Revelation, it is first said that God should dwell with His people, and then that all pain shall cease. "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them and be their God. And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be anymore pain, for the former things are passed away" Revelation 21:3-4. Cyril: "In the inmost meaning of the words, he could not but bid her rejoice and be exceeding glad and rejoice with her whole heart, her sins being done away through Christ. For the holy and spiritual Zion, the Church, the multitude of believers, is justified in Christ alone, and we are saved by Him and from Him, escaping the harms of our invisible enemies, and having in the midst of us the King and God of all, Who appeared in our likeness, the Word from God the Father, through whom we see not evil, that is, are freed from all who could do us evil. For He is the worker of our acceptableness, our peace, our wall, the bestower of incorruption, the dispenser of crowns, Who lighteneth the assaults of devils, Who giveth us to ‹tread on serpents and scorpions and all

the power of the enemy‘ Luke 10:19 - through whom we are in good hope of immortality and life, adoption and glory, through whom we shall not see evil anymore.”

Verse 16

In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not - For “perfect love casteth out fear” John 4:18; from where he saith, “Fear not, little flock; it is your Father‘s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” Luke 12:32. Who then and what should the Church or the faithful soul fear, since “mightier is He that is in her, than he that is in the world? And to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack,” through faint-heartedness (see Hebrews 12:12), but work with all thy might; be ready to do or bear anything; since Christ worketh with, in, by thee, and “in due time we shall reap, if we faint not” Galatians 6:9.

Verse 17

The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save - What can He then not do for thee, since He is Almighty? What will He not do for thee, since “He will save?” whom then should we fear? “If God be for us, who can be against us?” Romans 8:31. But then was He especially “in the midst of” us, when God “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us; and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and Truth” John 1:14. Thenceforth He ever is in the midst of His own. He with the Father and the Holy Spirit “come unto them and make Their abode with them” John 14:23, so that they are “the temple of God. He will save,” as He saith, “My Father is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father‘s hand. I and My Father are One” John 10:29-30. Of the same time of the Christ, Isaiah saith almost in the same words; “Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees, Say to them that are of a feeble heart, Be strong, fear not, behold your God will come, He will come and save you” Isaiah 35:3-4; and of the Holy Trinity, “He will save us” Isaiah 33:22.

He will rejoice, over thee with joy - Love, joy, peace in man are shadows of that which is in God, by whom they are created in man. Only in God they exist undivided, uncreated. Hence, God speaks after the manner of men, of that which truly is in God. God joyeth “with an uncreated joy” over the works of His Hands or the objects of His Love, as man joyeth over the object of “his” love. So Isaiah saith, “As the bridegroom rejoiceth over

the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" Isaiah 62:5. As with uncreated love the Father resteth in good pleasure in His well-beloved Son, so "God is well-pleased with the sacrifices of loving deeds" Hebrews 13:16. and, "the Lord delighteth in thee" Isaiah 62:4; and, "I will rejoice in Jerusalem and joy in My people" Isaiah 65:19; and, "the Lord will again rejoice over thee for good" Deuteronomy 30:9. And so in a two-fold way God meeteth the longing of the heart of man.

The soul, until it hath found God, is evermore seeking some love to fill it, and can find none, since the love of God Alone can content it. Then too it longeth to be loved, even as it loveth. God tells it, that every feeling and expression of human love may be found in Him, whom if any love, he only "loveth Him, because He first loved us" 1 John 4:19. Every inward and outward expression or token of love are heaped together, to express the love of Him who broodeth and as it were yearneth "over" (it is twice repeated) His own whom He loveth. Then too He loveth thee as He biddeth thee to love Him; and since the love of man cannot be like the love of the Infinite God, He here pictures His own love in the words of man's love, to convey to his soul the oneness wherewith love unites her unto God. He here echoes in a manner the joy of the Church, to which He had called her 1 John 4:14, in words the self-same or meaning the same.

We have "joy" here for "joy" there; "singing" or the unuttered unutterable jubilee of the heart, which cannot utter in words its joy and love, and joys and loves the more in its inmost depths because it cannot utter it. A shadow of the unutterable, because Infinite Love of God, and this repeated thrice; as being the eternal love of the Everblessed Trinity. This love and joy the prophet speaks of, as an exuberant joy, one which boundeth within the inmost self, and again is wholly "silent in His love," as the deepest, tenderest, most yearning love broods over the object of its love, yet is held still in silence by the very depth of its love; and then, again, breaks forth in outward motion, and leaps for joy, and uttereth what it cannot form in words, for truly the love of God in its unspeakable love and joy is past belief, past utterance, past thought. Rup.: "Truly that joy wherewith ‹He will be silent in His love,' that exultation wherewith ‹He will joy over thee with singing, ‹Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man' 1 Corinthians 2:9."

The Hebrew word also contains the meaning, "He in His love shall make no mention of past sins, He shall not bring them up against thee, shall not upbraid thee, yea, shall not remember them" Jeremiah 31:34; Jeremiah 33:8; Micah 7:18. It also may express the still, unvarying love of the Unchangeable God. And again trow the very silence of God, when He seemeth not to hear, as He did not seem to hear Paul, is a very fruit of His love. Yet that entire forgiveness of sins, and that seeming absence are but ways of showing His love. Hence, God speaks of His very love itself, "He will be silent in His love," as, before and after, "He will rejoice, He will joy over thee."

In the next few verses Zephaniah 3:18-21 still continuing the number "three," the prophecy closes with the final reversal of all which, in this imperfect state of things, seems turned upside down, when those who now mourn shall be comforted, they who now bear reproach and shame shall have glory, and those who now afflict the people of God shall be undone.

Verse 18

I will gather them that are sorrowful - for the solemn assembly, in which they were to "rejoice" Leviticus 23:40; Deuteronomy 12:12, Deuteronomy 12:18; Deuteronomy 16:11; Deuteronomy 27:7 before God and which in their captivity God made to cease. "They were of thee" Lamentations 1:4; Lamentations 2:6, the true Israel who were "grieved for the affliction of Joseph; to whom the reproach of it was a burden" Amos 6:6 (rather, ‹on whom reproach was laid‘): for this "reproach of Christ is greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," and such shall inherit the blessing, "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you and east out your name as evil, for the Son of Man‘s sake; rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy, for, behold your reward is great in heaven" Luke 6:22-23.

Verse 19

Behold, at that time I will undo - (Literally, I deal with. While God punisheth not, He seemeth to sit still Isaiah 18:4, be silent Habakkuk 1:13, asleep Psalm 44:23. Then He shall act, He shall "deal" according to their deserts with "all," evil men or devils, "that afflict thee," His Church. The prophecy looked for a larger fulfillment than the destruction of Jerusalem, since the Romans who, in God‘s Hands, avenged the blood of His saints,

themselves were among those who "afflicted her." "And will save her," the flock or sheep "that halteth" (see Micah 4:6-7), Dionysius: "imperfect in virtue and with trembling faith," "and gather," like a good and tender shepherd, "her that was driven out" (see Isaiah 40:11); scattered and dispersed through persecutions. All infirmities within shall be healed; all troubles without, removed.

And I will get them praise and fame - (Literally, I will make them a praise and a name) "in every land where they have been put to shame.". Throughout the whole world have they been "the offscourings of all things" 1 Corinthians 4:13; throughout the whole world should their praise be, as it is said, "Thou shalt make them princes in all lands" Psalm 45:16. One of themselves saith, "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of this world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are" 1 Corinthians 1:26-28. Rup.: "These He maketh a praise and a name there, where they were without name and dispraised, confounding by them and bringing to nought those wise and strong and mighty, in whose sight they were contemptible."

Verse 20

At that time will I bring you in - that is, into the one fold, the one Church, the one "Household of God, even in the time that I gather you." "That time" is the whole time of the Gospel; the one "day of salvation," in which all who shall ever be gathered, shall be brought into the new Jerusalem. These words were fulfilled, when, at our Lord's first Coming, the remnant, the true Israel, those "ordained to eternal life" were brought in. It shall be fulfilled again, when "the fullness of the Gentiles shall be "come in," and so all Israel shall be saved" Romans 11:25-26. It shall most perfectly be fulfilled at the end, when there shall be no going out of those once "brought" in, and those who have gathered others into the Church, shall be "a name and a praise among all people of the earth," those whom God hath "redeemed out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation" Revelation 5:9, shining like stars forever and ever.

When I turn back your captivity - Rup.: "That conversion, then begun, now perfected, when the dead shall rise and they shall be placed on

the right hand, soon to receive the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. O mighty spectacle of the reversed captivity of those once captives; mighty wonder at their present blessedness, as they review the misery of their past captivity!" "Before your eyes," so that we shall see what we now believe and hope for, the end of all our sufferings, chastisements, losses, achings of the heart, the fullness of our Redemption. That which our eyes have looked for, "our eyes shall behold and not another," the everliving God as He is, face to Face; "saith the Lord," Who is the Truth Itself, all Whose words will be fulfilled. "heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away" Mark 13:31, saith He who is "God blessed forever." And so the prophet closes in the thought of Him, Whose Name is I am, the Unchangeable, the everlasting Rest and Center of those who, having been once captives and halting and scattered among the vanities of the world, turn to Him, to whom be glory and thanksgiving forever and ever. Amen.

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Haggai

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HAGGAI INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Haggai

Haggai ישׁישׁי *yeshîyshây* the termination "-ai" is more frequently an abbreviation of the name of God which enters so largely into Hebrew names, as indeed we have חגיה *chaggîyâh* 1 Chronicles 6:30. And this occurs not only, when the first part of the word is a verb, אחסבי *'ăchassebay* יהדי *yehedday* יהמי *yîhemay* יעני *yaʿenay* יעשׁי *yaʿăs'ay* אחזי *'achezay* ישׁמרי *yîshemeray* יריבי *yerîybay* יאתרי *ye'ateray* (as Kohler observes p. 2.), but when it is a noun, as מתני *matenay* הדי *hîdday* אמתי *'ămîtay* שׁלמי *shalemay* צלתי *tsîlletay* (coll. מתניה *mattaneyâh* and מתניהו *mattaneyâhû*), שׁמשׁי *shîmeshay* 1 Chronicles 26:5 perhaps שׁבתי *shabbetay* שׁטרי *shîṭeray* or again אתי *'îttay* is the oldest of the three-fold band, to whom, after the captivity, the Word of God came, and by whom He consecrated the beginnings of this new condition of the chosen people.

He gave them these prophets, connecting their spiritual state after their return with that before the captivity, not leaving them wholly desolate, nor Himself without witness. He withdrew them about 100 years after, but some 420 years before Christ came, leaving His people to yearn the more for Him, of whom all the prophets spoke. Haggai himself seems to have almost finished his earthly course, before he was called to be a prophet; and in four months his office was closed. He speaks as one who had seen the first house in its glory Haggai 2:3, and so was probably among the very aged men, who were the links between the first and the last, and who laid the foundation of the house in tears Ezra 3:12. After the first two months Zechariah first prophesies in the 8th month Zechariah 1:1.

Haggai resumes at the close of the 9th month and there ends Haggai 2:10, Haggai 2:20. On the same day in the 11th month, the series of visions were given to Zechariah Zechariah 1:7.) of his office, Zechariah, in early youth, was raised up to carry on his message; yet after one brief prophecy was again silent, until the aged prophet had ended the words which God gave him. Yet in this brief space he first stirred up the people in one month to rebuild the temple, prophesied of its glory through the presence of Christ Haggai 2:1-9, yet taught that the presence of what was holy sanctified not the unholy, Haggai 2:12. and closes in Him who, when heaven and earth

shall be shaken, shall abide, and they whom God hath chosen in Him. Haggai 2:20-23.)

It has been the custom of critics, in whose eyes the prophets were only poets, to speak of the style of Haggai as "tame, destitute of life and power," showing "a marked decline in" what they call "prophetic inspiration." The style of the sacred writers is, of course, conformed to their mission. prophetic descriptions of the future are but incidental to the mission of Haggai. Preachers do not speak in poetry, but set before the people their faults or their duties in vivid earnest language. Haggai sets before the people vividly their negligence and its consequences; he arrests their attention by his concise questions; at one time retorting their excuses Haggai 1:4; at another asking them abruptly, in God's name, to say why their troubles came Haggai 1:9.

Or he puts a matter of the law to the priests, that they may draw the inference, before he does it himself Haggai 2:12-13. Or he asks them, what human hope had they Haggai 2:19, before he tells them of the divine. Or he asks them (what was in their heart), "Is not this house poor?" Haggai 2:3 before he tells them of the glory in store for it. At one time he uses heaped and condensed antitheses Haggai 1:6, to set before them one thought; at another he enumerates, one by one, how the visitation of God fell upon all they had Haggai 1:11, so that there seemed to be no end to it. At another, he uses a conciseness, like John Baptist's cry, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," in his repeated Haggai 1:5-7. "Set your heart to your ways;" and then, with the same idiom, "set your heart" Haggai 2:15-18 namely, to God's ways, what He had done upon disobedience, what He would do upon obedience. He bids them work for God, and then he expresses the acceptableness of that work to God, in the three words Haggai 1:8, "And-I-will-take-pleasure in-it and-will-be-glorified." When they set themselves to obey, he encouraged them with the four words Haggai 1:13, "I with-you saith the-Lord." This conciseness must have been still more impressive in his words, as delivered. We use many words, because our words are weak. Many of us can remember how the house of lords was hushed, so hear the few low, but sententious words of the aged general and statesman. But conceive the suggestive eloquence of those words, as a whole sermon, "Set your-heart on-your-ways."

Of distant prophecies there are only two Haggai 2:6-9, Haggai 2:21-23, so that the portion to be compared with the former prophets consists but of at most 7 verses. In these the language used is of the utmost simplicity. Haggai had only one message as to the future to convey, and he enforced it by the repeated use of the same word, that temporal things should be shaken, the eternal should remain, as Paul sums it up Hebrews 12:26. He, the long-yearned for, the chosen of God, the signet on His hand, should come; God would fill that house, so poor in their eyes, with glory, and there would He give peace. Haggai had an all-containing but very simple message to give from God. Any ornament of diction would but have impaired and obscured its meaning. The two or three slight idioms, noticed by one after another, are, though slight, forcible.

The office of Haggai was mainly to bring about one definite end, which God, who raised him up and inspired him, accomplished by him. It is in the light of this great accomplishment of the work entrusted to him on the verge of man‘s earthly course, that his power and energy are to be estimated. The words which are preserved in his book are doubtless (as indeed was the case as to most of the prophets) the representatives and embodiment of many like words, by which, during his short office, he roused the people from their dejection indifference and irreligious apathy, to the restoration of the public worship of God in the essentials of the preparatory dispensation.

Great lukewarmness had been shown in the return. The few looked mournfully to the religious center of Israel, the ruined temple, the cessation of the daily sacrifice, and, like Daniel Daniel 9:20, “confessed” their “sin and the sin of their people Israel, and presented their supplication before the Lord their God for the holy mountain of their God.” The most part appear, as now, to have been taken up with their material prosperity, and, at best, to have become injured to the cessation of their symbolic worship, connected, as it was, with the declaration of the forgiveness of their sins. Then too, God connected His declaration of pardon with certain outward acts: they became indifferent to the cessation of those acts, because few returned. The indifference was even remarkable among those, most connected with the altar. Of the 24 Ezra 2:36-39. returned; of the Levites, only 74 individuals

Ezra 2:40; while of those assigned to help them, the Nethinim and the children of Solomon‘s servants, there were 392 Ezra 2:58.

This coldness continued at the return of Ezra. The edict of Artaxerxes Ezra 7:13-14, as suggested by Ezra, was more pious than those appointed to the service of God. In the first instance, no Levite answered to the invitation Ezra 8:15; on the special urgency and message of Ezra Ezra 8:18-19, “by the good hand of God upon us they brought us a man of understanding,” of the sons of Levi; some 3 or 4 chief Levites; their sons and brethren; in all, 38; but of the Nethinim, nearly six times as many, 220 Ezra 8:20. These who thought more of temporal prosperity than of their high spiritual nobility and destination, had flourished doubtless in that exile as they have in their present homelessness, as “wanderers among the nations.” Haman calculated apparently on being able to “pay out” of their spoils “ten thousand talents of silver (Esther 3:9. Ahasuerus apparently, in acceding to Haman‘s proposal, made over to him the lives and property of the Jews. The silver is given unto thee the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee. Esther 3:11). The Jew‘s property, was confiscated with their lives. On the contrary, it was noticed, that the Jews, when permitted to defend their lives, did not lay their hands on the prey, which, by the king‘s decree, was granted to them, with authority to take the lives of those who should assault them. Esther 8:11; Esther 9:10, Esther 9:15-16.) some 300,000,000 British pounds, two-thirds of the annual revenue of the Persian Empire “into the king‘s treasuries.”

The numbers who had returned with Zerubbabel had been (as had been foretold of all restorations) only “a remnant.” There were 42,360 free men, with 7,337 male or female slaves Ezra 2:64-65; Nehemiah 7:66-67. In the time of Augustus, it was no uncommon thing for a person to have 200 slaves (Hor. Sat. i. 9. 11) it is said that very many Romans possessed 10,000 or 20,000 slaves. Athenaeus vi. p. 272). The whole population which returned was not more than 212,000, free men and women and children. The proportion of slaves is about 112, since in their case adults of both sexes were counted. The enumeration is minute, giving the number of their horses, mules, camels, asses.. The chief of the fathers however were not poor, since (though unspeakably short of the wealth, won by David and consecrated to the future temple) they Ezra 2:68-69 offered freely for the

house of God, to set it up in its place, a sum about 117,100 British pounds of our money. They had, beside, a grant from Cyrus, which he intended to cover the expenses of the building, the height and breadth whereof were determined by royal edict Ezra 4:3.

The monarch, however, of an eastern empire had, in proportion to its size, little power over his subordinates or the governors of the provinces, except by their recall or execution, when their oppressions or peculations notably exceeded bounds. The returned colony, from the first, were in fear of the nations, "the peoples of those countries" Ezra 3:3, their old enemies probably; and the first service," the altar to offer burnt-offerings thereon," was probably a service of fear rather than of love, as it is said Ezra 3:3, "they set up the altar upon its bases, for it was in fear upon them from the peoples of the lands, and they offered burnt-offerings thereon unto the Lord." They hoped apparently to win the favor of God, that He might, as of old, protect them against their enemies. However, the work was carried on Ezra 3:7 "according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia" and the foundations of the temple were laid amidst mixed joy at the carrying on of the work thus far, and sorrow at its poverty, compared to the first temple Ezra 3:11-13.

The hostility of the Samaritans discouraged them. Mixed as the religion of the Samaritans was - its better element being the corrupt religion of the ten tribes, its worse the idolatries of the various nations, brought there in the reign of Esarhaddon - the returned Jews could not accept their offer to join in their worship, without the certainty of admitting, with them, the idolatries, for which they had been punished so severely. For the Samaritans pleaded the identity of the two religions Ezra 4:2, "Let us build with you, for we serve your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto Him since the days of Esarhaddon which brought us up hither." But in fact this mixed worship, in which 2 Kings 17:33 they feared the Lord and served their own gods, came to this, that 2 Kings 17:34 "they feared not the Lord, neither did they after the law and commandment which the Lord commanded the children of Jacob." For God claims the undivided allegiance of His creatures "these 2 Kings 17:41, feared the Lord and served their graven images, both their children and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they to this day." But this worship included some of the most cruel

abominations of pagandom, the sacrifice of their children to their gods 2 Kings 17:31.

The Samaritans, thus rejected, first themselves harassed the Jews in building, apparently by petty violence, as they did afterward in the rebuilding of the walls by Nehemiah "The people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and wore them out in building." This failing, they Ezra 4:5 "hired counselors" (doubtless at the Persian court), to "frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, until the reign of Darius king of Persia." The object of the intrigues was probably to intercept the supplies, which Cyrus had engaged to bestow, which could readily be effected in an eastern court without any change of purpose or any cognizance of Cyrus.

In the next reign of Ahashverosh (i. e., Khshwershe, a title of honor of Cambyses) Ezra 4:6 they wrote accusations against the Jews, seemingly without any further effect, since none is mentioned. Perhaps Cambyses, in his expedition to Egypt, knew more of the Jews, than the Samaritans thought, or he may have shrunk from changing his father‘s decree, contrary to the fundamental principles of Persism, not to alter any decree, which the sovereign (acting, as he was assumed to do, under the influence of Ormuzd) had written. Pseudo-Smerdis (who doubtless took the title of honor, Artachshatr) may, as an impostor, have well been ignorant of Cyrus‘ decree, to which no allusion is made Ezra 4:7. From him the Samaritans, through Rehum the chancellor, obtained a decree prohibiting, until further notice, the rebuilding of the city. The accusers had overreached themselves, for the ground of their accusation was, the former rebellions of the city Ezra 4:12-13, Ezra 4:15-16; the prohibition accordingly extended only to the city Ezra 4:19, Ezra 4:21, not to the temple.

However, having obtained the decree, they were not scrupulous about its application, and "made" the Jews "to cease Ezra 4:23 by arm and power," the governor of the Jews being apparently unable, the governor of the cis-Euphratensian provinces being unwilling, to help. As this, however, was, in fact, a perversion of the decree, the Jews were left free to build, and in the second year of Darius Hystaspis Ezra 5:1-2, "Haggai, and then Zechariah, prophesied in the name of the God of Israel" to Zerubbabel, the native

governor, and Joshua the high priest, “and the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem; and they began to build the house of God in Jerusalem.” Force was no longer used. Those engaged in building appealed to the edict of Cyrus; the edict was found at Ecbatana Ezra 6:2, and the supplies which Cyrus had promised, were again ordered. The difficulty was at the commencement. The people had been cowed perhaps at first by the violence of Rehum and his companions; but they had acquiesced readily in the illegal prohibition, and had Haggai 1:9 run each to his own house, some of them to their Haggai 1:4 “ceiled houses.”

All, employers or employed, were busy on their husbandry. But nothing flourished. The laborers‘ wages disappeared, as soon as gained Haggai 1:6. East and west wind alike brought disease to their grain; both, as threatened upon disobedience in the law Deuteronomy 28:22. The east wind scorched and dried it up; the warm west wind turned the ears yellow and barren; the hail smote the vines, so that when the unfilled and mutilated clusters were pressed out, only two-fifths of the hoped-for produce was yielded; and of the grain, only one half Haggai 2:16.

In the midst of this, God raised up an earnest preacher of repentance. Haggai was taught, not to promise anything at the first, but to set before them, what they had been doing, and what was its result Haggai 2:5-11. He sets it before them in detail; tells them that God had so ordered it for their neglect of His service, and bids them to amend. He bids them quit their accustomed ways; “go up into the mountain; bring wood; build the house.” Conceive in Christian England, after some potato disease, or foot-and-mouth-disease (in Scriptural language “a murrain among the cattle”), a preacher arising and bidding them, consider your ways, and as the remedy, not to look to any human means, but to do something, which would please Almighty God; and not preaching only but effecting what he preached. Yet such was Haggai. He stood among his people, his existence a witness of the truth of what he said; himself one, who had lived among the outward splendors of the former temple; a contemporary of those, who said Jeremiah 7:4, “the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these;” who had held it to be impossible that Judah should be carried captive; who had prophesied the restoration of the vessels of God Jeremiah 27:16; Jeremiah 28:3, which had been carried away, not, as God foretold,

after the captivity, but as an earnest that the fuller captivity should not be Jeremiah 28:2; yet who had himself, according to the prophecies of the prophets of those days, been carried into captivity, and was now a part of that restoration which God had promised.

He stood among them "in gray-haired might," bade them do, what he bade them, in the name of God, to do; and they did it. When they had set about the work, he assured them of the presence of God with them Haggai 1:13. A month later, when they were seemingly discouraged at its poorness, he promised them in God's name, that its glory would be greater than that of Solomon's Haggai 2:3-9. Three days after, in contrast with the visitations up to that time, while there was as yet no token of any change, he promised them in the name of God Haggai 2:19, "From this day will I bless you."

He himself apparently saw only the commencement of the work, for his prophecies lay within the second year of Darius and the temple was not completed until the sixth Ezra 6:15. Even the favorable rescript of Darius must have arrived after his last prophecy, since it was elicited by the inquiry of the governor, consequent upon the commenced rebuilding Ezra 5:3, only three months before his office closed Haggai 1:15; Haggai 2:10, Haggai 2:20.

While this restoration of the public worship of God in its intregrity was his main office, yet he also taught by parable Haggai 2:10-15 that the presence of what was outwardly holy did not, in itself, hallow those, among whom it was; but was itself unhallowed by inward unholiness.

Standing, too, amid the small handful of returned exiles, not, altogether, more than the inhabitants of Sheffield, he foretold, in simple all-comprehending words, that central gift of the Gospel Haggai 2:9, "In this place will I give peace, saith the Lord." So had David, the sons of Korah, Micah, Isaiah, Ezekiel prophesied Psalm 72:3-7; Psalm 85:8, Psalm 85:10; Micah 5:5; Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 26:12; Isaiah 32:17; Isaiah 52:7; Isaiah 53:5; Isaiah 54:10, Isaiah 54:13; Isaiah 57:19; Isaiah 60:17; Isaiah 66:12; Ezekiel 34:25; Ezekiel 37:26, but the peace was to come, not then, but in the days of the Messiah. Other times had come, in which the false prophets had said Jeremiah 6:14; Jeremiah 8:11; Jeremiah 14:13, "Peace, peace, when there

was no peace;" when God had taken away His peace from Jeremiah 16:5; "this people." And now, when the chastisements were fulfilled, when the land lay desolate, when every house of Jerusalem lay burned with fire 2 Chronicles 36:19 and the "blackness of ashes" alone "marked where they stood;" when the walls were broken down so that, even when leave was given to rebuild them, it seemed to their enemies a vain labor to Nehemiah 4:2; "revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish which were burned;" when Nehemiah 2:3 "the place of their fathers' sepulchres lay waste, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire;" when, for their sakes, Zion was Micah 3:12 "plowed as a field" and "Jerusalem was become heaps" - let any one picture to himself the silver-haired prophet standing, at first, alone, rebuking the people, first through their governor and the high priest, then the collected multitude, in words, forceful from their simplicity, and obeyed! And then let them think whether anything of human or even divine eloquence was lacking, when the words flew straight like arrows to the heart, and roused the people to do at once, amid every obstacle, amid every down-heartedness or outward poverty, that for which God sent them. The outward ornament of words would have been misplaced, when the object was to bid a downhearted people, in the name of God, to do a definite work. Haggai sets before his people cause and effect; that they denied to God what was His, and that God denied to them what was His to give or to withhold. His sermon was, in His words whom he foretold; "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." He spoke in the name of God, and was obeyed.

"The Holy Spirit, who spake by the mouth of the prophets, willed that he by a foreboding name should be called Haggai, i. e., ‹festive,' according to the subject whereof He should speak by his mouth. Yet was there not another festiveness in the prophet's heart, than the joy which he had or could have with the people, from the rebuilding of that temple made with hands, again to be defiled and burned with fire irrecoverably? Be it that the rebuilding of that temple, which he saw before him, was a matter of great festive joy; yet not in or for itself, but for Him, the festive joy of saints and angels and men, Christ; because when the temple should be rebuilt, the walls also of the city should be rebuilt and the city again inhabited and the people be united in one, of whom Christ should be born, fulfilling the truth of the promise made to Abraham and David and confirmed by an oath. So

then we, by aid of the Holy Spirit, so enter upon what Haggai here speaketh, as not doubting that he altogether aimeth at Christ. And so may we in some sort be called or be Haggais, i. e., ‹festive,‘ by contemplating that same, which because he should contemplate, he was, by a divine foreboding, called Haggai.”

HAGGAI CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

In the second year of Darius - , i. e., Hystaspis. The very first word of prophecy after the captivity betokens that they were restored, not yet as before, yet so, as to be hereafter, more than before. The earthly type, by God‘s appointment, was fading away, that the heavenly truth might dawn. The earthly king was withdrawn, to make way for the heavenly. God had said of Jeconiah Jeremiah 22:30, “No man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Israel:” and so now prophecy begins to be dated by the years of a foreign earthly ruler, as in the Baptism of the Lord Himself Luke 3:1. Yet God gives back in mercy more than He withdraws in chastisement. The earthly rule is suspended, that people might look out more longingly for the heavenly.

In the sixth month - They counted by their own months, beginning with Nisan, the first of the ecclesiastical year (which was still used for holy purposes and in sacred history), although, having no more any kings, they dated their years by those of the empire, to which they were subject (See Zechariah 1:7; Zechariah 7:1) in the sixth month, part of our July and August, their harvest was past, and the dearth, which they, doubtless ascribed (as we do) to the seasons, and which Haggai pointed out to be a judgment from God, had set in for this year also. The months being lunar, the first day of the month was the festival of the new moon, a popular feast Proverbs 7:20 which their forefathers had kept Isaiah 1:13-14, while they neglected the weightier matters of the law, and which the religious in Israel had kept, even while separated from the worship at Jerusalem (2 Kings 4:23; add Amos 8:5; Hosea 2:11). In its very first day, when the grief for the barren year was yet fresh, Haggai was stirred to exhort them to consider their way; a pattern for Christian preachers, to bring home to people‘s souls the meaning of God‘s judgments. God directs the very day to be noted, in which He called the people anew to build His temple, both to show the readiness of their obedience, and a precedent to us to keep in memory days and seasons, in which He stirs our souls to build more diligently His spiritual temple in our souls.

By the hand of Haggai - God does almost everything which He does for a person through the hands of people. He commits His words and works for people into the hands of human beings as His stewards, to dispense

faithfully to His household. Luke 12:42. Hence, He speaks so often of the law, which He commanded "by the hand of Moses;" but also as to other prophets, Nathan 2 Samuel 12:25, Ahijal, 1 Kings 12:15; 1 Kings 14:16; 2 Chronicles 10:15. Jehu 1 Kings 16:7, Jonah 2 Kings 14:25, Isaiah Isaiah 20:2, Jeremiah Jeremiah 37:2, and the prophets generally. 2 Chronicles 29:25 the very prophets of God, although gifted with a Divine Spirit, still were willing and conscious instruments in speaking His words.

Unto Zerubbabel - (so called from being born in Babylon) "the son of Sheatiel." By this genealogy Zerubbabel is known in the history of the return from the captivity in Ezra and Nehemiah Ezra 3:2, Ezra 3:8; Ezra 5:2; Nehemiah 12:1. God does not say by Jeremiah, that Jeconiah should have no children, but that he should in his lifetime be childless, as it is said of those married to the uncle's or brother's widow Leviticus 20:20-21, "they shall die childless." Jeremiah rather implies that he should have children, but that they should die untimely before him. For he calls Jeconiah Jeremiah 22:30, "a man who shall not prosper in his days; for there shall not prosper a man of his seed, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Israel." He should die (as the word means) "bared" of all, alone and desolate. The own father of Shealtiel appears to have been Neri Luke 3:27, of the line of Nathan son of David; not, of the line of the kings of Judah. Neri married, one must suppose, a daughter of Assir, son of Jeconiah 1 Chronicles 3:17-19 whose grandson Shealtiel was; and Zerubbabel was the own son of Pedaiah, the brother of Shealtiel, as whose son he was in the legal genealogy inscribed, according to the law as to those who die childless Deuteronomy 23:5-10, or as having been adopted by Shealtiel being himself childless, as Moses was called the son of the daughter of Pharaoh Exodus 2:10. So broken was the line of the unhappy Jehoiachin, two thirds of whose own life was passed in the prison Jeremiah 52:31, into which Nebuchadnezzar did cast him.

Governor of Judah - The foreign name betokens that the civil rule was now held from a foreign power, although Cyrus showed the Jews the kindness of placing one of themselves, of royal extraction also, as his deputy over them.

The lineage of David is still in authority, connecting the present with the past, but the earthly kingdom had faded away. Under the name "Sheshbazzar" Zerubbabel is spoken of both as the "prince" and the "governor" Ezra 5:14, of Judah. With him is joined "Joshuah the son of

Josedech, the high priest," whose father went into captivity 1 Chronicles 6:15, when his grandfather Seraiah was slain by Nebuchadnezzar 2 Kings 25:18-21. The priestly line is also preserved. Haggai addresses these two, the one of the royal, the other of the priestly, line, as jointly responsible for the negligence of the people; he addresses the people only through them. Together, they are types of Him, the true King and true priest, Christ Jesus, who by the resurrection raised again the true temple, His Body, after it had been destroyed.

Verse 2

Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say - Not Zerubbabel or Joshua, but "this people." He says not, "My people," but reproachfully "this people," as, in acts, disowning Him, and so deserving to be disowned by Him. "The time is not come," literally "It is not time to come, time for the house of the Lord to be built". They might yet sit still; the time for them "to come" was not yet, for not yet was the "time for the house of the Lord to be built." Why it was not time, they did not say. The government did not help them; the original grant by Cyrus Ezra 3:7 was exhausted; the Samaritans hindered them, because they would not own them, (amid their mishmash of worship, "worshiping," our Lord tells them John 4:22, "they know not what"), as worshipers of the same God. It was a bold excuse, if they said, that the 70 years during which the temple was to lie waste, were not yet ended.

The time had long since come, when, 16 years before, Cyrus had given command that the house of God should be built. The prohibition to build, under Artaxerxes or Pseudo-Smerdis, applied directly to the city and its walls, not to the temple, except so far as the temple itself, from its position, might be capable of being used as a fort, as it was in the last siege of, Jerusalem. Yet in itself a building of the size of the temple, apart from outer buildings, could scarcely so be used. The prohibition did not hinder the building of stately private houses, as appears from Haggai's rebuke. The hindrances also, whatever they were, had not begun with that decree. The death of Pseudo-Smerdis had now, for a year, set them free, if had they had any zeal for the glory and service of God. Otherwise, Haggai would not blamed them. God, knowing that He would bend the heart of Darius, as He had that of Cyrus, requires the house to be built without the king's decree. It was built in faith, that God would bring through what He had enjoined,

although outward things were as adverse now as before. And what He commanded He prospered Ezra 56.

There was indeed a second fulfillment of 70 years, from the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar 586 b.c., to its consecration in the 6th year of Darius 516 b.c. But this was through the willfulness of man, prolonging the desolation decreed by God, and Jeremiah‘s prophecy relates to the people not to the temple.

“The prophet addresses his discourse to the chiefs (in Church and state) and yet accuses directly, not their listlessness but that of the people, in order both to honor them before the people and to teach that their sins are to be blamed privately not publicly, lest their authority should be injured, and the people incited to rebel against them; and also to shew that this fault was directly that of the people, whom he reproves before their princes, that, being openly convicted before them, it might be ashamed, repent, and obey God; but that indirectly this fault touched the chiefs themselves, whose office it was to urge the people to this work of God”. “For seldom is the prince free from the guilt of his subjects, as either assenting to, or winking at them, or not coercing them, though able.”

Since also Christians are the temple of God, all this prophecy of Haggai is applicable to them. “When thou seest one who has lapsed thinking and preparing to build through chastity the temple which he had before destroyed through passion, and yet delaying day by day, say to him, ‹Truly thou also art of the people of the captivity, and sayest, The time is not yet come for building the house of the Lord.‘ Whoso has once settled to restore the temple of God, to him every time is suited for building, and the prince, Satan, cannot hinder, nor, the enemies around. As soon as being thyself converted, thou callest upon the name of the Lord, He will say, “Behold Me”. “To him who willeth to do right, the time is always present; the good and right-minded have power to fulfill what is to the glory of God, in every time and place.”

Verse 3

And the word of the Lord came - o“Before, he prophesied nothing, but only recited the saying of the people; now he refutes it in his prophecy, and

repeats, again and again, that he says this not of himself, but from the mind and mouth of God." It is characteristic of Haggai to inculcate thus frequently, that his words are not his own, but the words of God. Yet "the prophets, both in their threats and prophecies, repeat again and again, "Thus saith the Lord," teaching us, how we should prize the word of God, hang upon it, have it ever in our mouth, reverence, ruminate on, utter, praise it, make it our continual delight."

Verse 4

Is it time for you - You, being what you are, the creatures of God, "to dwell in your ceiled houses," more emphatically, in your houses, and those "ceiled," probably with costly woods, such as cedar. But where then was the excuse of want of means? They imitated, in their alleged poverty, what is spoken of as magnificent in their old kings, Solomon and Shallum, but not having, as Solomon first did (1 Kings 6:9, ויספן), "covered the house of God with beams and rows of cedar". "Will ye dwell in houses artificially adorned, not so much for use as for delight, and shall My dwelling-place, wherein was the Holy of holies, and the cherubim, and the table of showbread, be bestreamed with rains, desolated in solitude, scorched by the sun?"

"With these words carnal Christians are reproved, who have no glow of zeal for God, but are full of self-love, and so make no effort to repair, build, or strengthen the material temples of Christ, and houses assigned to His worship, when aged, ruinous, decaying or destroyed, but build for themselves curious, voluptuous, superfluous dwellings. In these the love of Christ gloweth not; these Isaiah threateneth, Isaiah 5:8, Isaiah 5:12. "Woe to you who join house to house and field to field, and regard not the work of the Lord!"

To David and Solomon the building of God's temple was their heart's desire; to early Christian Emperors, to the ages of faith, the building of Churches; now mostly, owners of lands build houses for this world's profit, and leave it to the few to build in view of eternity, and for the glory of God.

Verse 5

And now, thus saith the Lord of hosts; "Consider," (literally "set your heart upon) your ways," what they had been doing, what they were doing, and what those doings had led to, and would lead to. This is ever present to

the mind of the prophets, as speaking God‘s words, that our acts are not only “ways” in which we go, each day of life being a continuance of the day before; but that they are ways which lead, somewhere in God‘s Providence and His justice; to some end of the “way,” good or bad. So God says by Jeremiah Jeremiah 21:8. “I set before you the way of life and the way of death;” and David Psalm 16:11, “Thou wilt show me the path of life,” where it follows, “In Thy presence is the fullness of joy and at Thy Right Hand there are pleasures forevermore;” and Solomon Proverbs 6:23, “Reproofs of instruction are the way of life;” and, he is in Proverbs 10:17, “the way of life who keepeth instruction; and he who forsaketh rebuke, erreth;” and Proverbs 15:24, “The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath;” and of the adulterous woman, Proverbs 7:27. “Her house are the ways of hell, going down to the chambers of death” and Proverbs 5:5-6, “her feet go down unto death; her steps take hold on hell; lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life.” Again, Proverbs 14:12; Proverbs 16:25. “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, and the end thereof are the ways of death;” and contrariwise Proverbs 4:18, “The path of the righteous is a shining light, shining more and more until the mid-day” Proverbs 2:13. “The ways of darkness” are the ways which end in darkness; and when Isaiah says Isaiah 59:8, “The way of peace hast thou not known,” he adds, “whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.” They who choose not peace for their way, shall not find peace in and for their end.

On these your ways, Haggai says, “set your hearts,” not thinking of them lightly, nor giving a passing thought to them, but fixing your minds upon them; as God says to Satan Job 1:8, “Hast thou set thy heart on My servant Job?” and God is said to set His eye or His face upon man for good Jeremiah 24:6; or for evil Jeremiah 21:10, He speaks also, not of setting the mind, applying the understanding, giving the thoughts, but of “setting the heart,” as the seat of the affections. It is not a dry weighing of the temporal results of their ways, but a loving dwelling upon them, for repentance without love is but the gnawing of remorse.

d **Set your heart on your ways; -** i. e., your affections, thoughts, works, so as to be circumspect in all things; as the apostle Paul says 1 Timothy 5:21, “Do nothing without forethought,” i. e., without previous judgment of

reason; and Solomon Proverbs 4:25, “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee;” and the son of Sirach, “Son, do nothing without counsel and when thou hast done it thou wilt not repent.” For since, according to a probable proposition, nothing in human acts is indifferent, i. e., involving neither good nor ill deserts, they who do not thus set their hearts upon their ways, do they not daily incur almost countless sins, in thought, word, desire, deed, yea and by omission of duties? Such are all fearless persons who heed not to fulfill what is written Proverbs 4:23, ‹Keep your heart with all watchfulness. ‹“

“He “sows much” to his own heart, but “brings in little,” who by reading and hearing knows much of the heavenly commands, but by negligence in deeds bears little fruit. “He eats and is not satisfied,” who, hearing the words of God, coveteth the gains or glory of the world. Well is he said not to be “satisfied,” who eateth one thing, hungereth after another. He drinks and is not inebriated, who inclineth his ear to the voice of preaching, but changeth not his mind. For through inebriation the mind of those who drink is changed. He then who is devoted to the knowledge of God‘s word, yet still desireth to gain the things of the world, drinks and is not inebriated. For were he inebriated, no doubt he would have changed his mind and no longer seek earthly things, or love the vain and passing things which he had loved. For the Psalmist says of the elect Psalm 36:8, “they shall be inebriated with the richness of Thy house,” because they shall be filled with such love of Almighty God, that, their mind being changed, they seem to be strangers to themselves, fulfilling what is written Matthew 16:24, ‹If any will come after Me, let him deny himself. ‹“

Verse 6

Ye have sown much - The prophet expresses the habitualness of these visitations by a vivid present. He marks no time and so expresses the more vividly that it was at all times. It is one continually present evil. “Ye have sown much and there is a bringing in little; there is eating and not to satisfy; there is drinking and not to exhilarate; there is clothing and not to be warm It is not for the one or the other years, as, since the first year of Darius Hystaspis; it is one continued visitation, coordinate with one continued negligence. As long as the sin lasted, so long the punishment. The visitation itself was twofold; impoverished harvests, so as to supply less sustenance;

and various indisposition of the frame, so that what would, by God‘s appointment in nature, satisfy, gladden, warm, failed of its effect. “And he that laboreth for hire, gaineth himself hire into a bag full of holes” (literally “perforated.”) The labor pictured is not only fruitless, but wearisome and vexing. There is a seeming result of all the labor, something to allure hopes; but immediately it is gone. The pagan assigned a like baffling of hope as one of the punishments of hell, “Better and wiser to seek to be blessed by God, Who bestoweth on us all things. And this will readily come to those who choose to be of the same mind with Him and prefer what is for His glory to their own. For so saith the Saviour Himself to us Matthew 6:33, Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

“He loses good deeds by evil acts, who takes account of his good works, which he hits before his eyes, and forgets the faults which creep in between; or who, after what is good, returns to what is vain and evil”. “Money is seen in the pierced bag, when it is cast in, but when it is lost, it is not seen. They then who look how much they give, but do not weigh how much they gain wrongly, cast their rewards into a pierced bag. Looking to the Hope of their confidence they bring them together; not looking, they lose them.”

“They lose the fruit of their labor, by not persevering to the end, or by seeking human praise, or by vain glory within, not keeping spiritual riches under the guardianship of humility. Such are vain and unprofitable men, of whom the Saviour saith, Matthew 6:2. ‹Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. ‹“

Verse 8

Go up into the mountain - Not Mount Lebanon, from where the cedars had been brought for the first temple; from where also Zerubbabel and Joshua had procured some out of Cyrus‘ grant Ezra 3:7, at the first return from the captivity. They were not required to buy, expend, but simply to give their own labor. They were themselves to “go up to the mountain,” i. e., the mountainous country where the trees grew, “and bring” them. So, in order to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, Ezra made a proclamation Nehemiah 8:15 “in all their cities and in Jerusalem, go ye up to the mountain and bring leafy branches of vines, olives, myrtles, palms.” The palms, anyhow, were timber. God required not goodly stones, such as had been already used, and

such as hereafter, in the temple which was built, were the admiration even of disciples of Jesus Matthew 24:1, but which were, for the wickedness of those who rejected their Saviour, "not to be left, one stone upon another." He required not costly gifts, but the heart. The neglect to build the temple was neglect of Himself, who ought to be worshiped there. His worship sanctified the offering; offerings were acceptable, only if made with a free heart.

And I will have pleasure in it - God, who has declared that He has no Micah 6:7 "pleasure in thousands of rams, ten thousands of rivers of oil," had delight in Psalm 147:11 "them that feared Him," that are "upright in their way," Proverbs 11:20 that "deal truly" Proverbs 12:22 in the "prayer" of the "upright" Proverbs 15:8, and so in the temple too, when it should be built to His glory.

And will be glorified - oGod is glorified in man, when man serves Him; in Himself, when He manifests aught of His greatness; in His great doings to His people Isaiah 26:15; Isaiah 44:23; Isaiah 60:21; Isaiah 61:3, as also in the chastisement of those who disobey Him Exodus 14:4; Ezekiel 28:22. God allows that glory, which shines ineffably throughout His creation, to be obscured here through man's disobedience, to shine forth anew on his renewed obedience. The glory of God, as it is the end of the creation, so is it His creature's supreme bliss. When God is really glorified, then can He show forth His glory, by His grace and acceptance. (Augustine, Serm. 380, n. 6.) "The glory of God is our glory. The more sweetly God is glorified, the more it profits us:" yet not our profit, but the glory of God is itself our end; so the prophet closes in that which is our end, "God will be glorified."

"Good then and well-pleasing to God is zeal in fulfilling whatever may appear necessary for the good condition of the Church and its building-up, collecting the most useful materials, the spiritual principles in inspired Scripture, whereby he may secure and ground the conception of God, and may shew that the way of the Incarnation was well-ordered, and may collect what pertains to accurate knowledge of spiritual erudition and moral goodness. Nay, each of us may be thought of, as the temple and house of God. For Christ "dwelleth in us" by the Spirit, and we are "temples of the living God," according to the Scripture 2 Corinthians 6:16. Let each then build up his own heart by right faith, having the Saviour as the "precious foundation." And let him add thereto other materials, obedience, readiness for anything, courage, endurance, continence. "So being framed together by

that which every joint supplieth, shall we become a holy temple, a habitation of God through the Spirit" Ephesians 4:16; Ephesians 2:21-22. But those who are slow to faith, or who believe but are sluggish in shaking off passions and sins and worldly pleasure, thereby cry out in a manner, The time is not come to build the house of the Lord."

Verse 9

Ye looked - , literally "a looking;" as though he said, it has all been one looking, "for much," for increase, the result of all sowing, in the way of nature: "and behold it came to little," i. e., less than was sown; as Isaiah denounced to them of old by God's word, Isaiah 5:10. "the seed of a homer shall yield an ephah," i. e., one tenth of what was sown. "And ye brought it home, and I blew upon it," so as to disperse it, as, not the wheat, but the chaff is blown before the wind. This, in whatever way it came to pass, was a further chastisement of God. The little seed which they brought in lessened through decay or waste. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. God asks by his prophet, what He asks in the awakened conscience Psalm 39:11. "God with rebukes chastens man for sin." Conscience, when alive, confesses for "what" sin; or it asks itself, if memory does not supply the special sin. Unawakened, it complains about the excess of rain, the drought, the blight, the mildew, and asks, not itself, why, in God's Providence, these inflictions came in these years? They felt doubtless the sterility in contrast with the exceeding prolificalness of Babylonia, as they contrasted the "light bread," Numbers 21:5. the manna, with Numbers 11:5. the plenteousness of Egypt. They ascribed probably their meagre crops (as we mostly do) to mere natural causes, perhaps to the long neglect of the land during the captivity. God forces the question upon their consciences, in that Haggai asks it in His Name, in whose hands all powers stand, "saith the Lord of host." They have not to talk it over among themselves, but to answer Almighty God, "why?" That "why?" strikes into the inmost depths of conscience!

Because of My house which is waste, and ye run - literally, "are running," all the while, "each to his own house" They were absorbed in their material interests, and had no time for those of God. When the question was of God's house, they stir not from the spot; when it is of their own concerns, they run. Our Lord says, Matthew 6:33. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added

unto you." Man reverses this, seeks his own things first, and God withholds His blessing.

"This comes true of those who prefer their own conveniences to God's honor, who do not thoroughly uproot self-love, whose penitence and devotion are shewn to be unstable, for on a slight temptation they are overcome. Such are they who are bold, self-pleasing, wise and great in their own eyes, who do not ground their conversation on true and solid humility."

(Cyr.) "To those who are slow to fulfill what is for the glory of God, and the things whereby His house, the Church, is firmly stayed, neither the heavenly dew cometh, which enricheth hearts and minds, nor the fruitfulness of the earth; i. e., right action; not food nor wine nor use of oil. But they will be ever strengthless and joyless, unenriched by spiritual oil, and remain without taste or participation of the blessing through Christ."

Verse 10

Therefore, for you, - on your account; (As in Psalm 44:43.) for your sins, (Jon.) He points out the moral cause of the drought, whereas men think of this or that cause of the variations of the seasons, and we, e. g., take into our mouths Scriptural words, as "murrain of cattle," and the like, and think of nothing less than why it was sent, or who sent it. Haggai directs the mind to the higher Cause, that as they withheld their service from God, so, on their account and by His will, His creatures withheld their service from them.

Verse 11

And I called for a drought upon the land - God called to the people and they would not hear. It is His ever-repeated complaint to them. "I called unto you, and ye would not hear." He called to His inanimate creatures to punish them, and "they" obeyed. So Elisha tells the woman, whose son he had restored to life, 2 Kings 8:1. "The Lord hath called to the famine, and it shall also come to the land seven years."

And upon men, - in that the drought was oppressive to man. The prophet may also allude to the other meaning of the word, "waste," "desolation." They had left the house of the Lord "waste," therefore God called for waste, desolation, upon them.

Verse 12

Then Zerubbabel, and all the remnant of the people - , not, "the rest of people" but "the remnant," those who remained over from the captivity, the fragment of the two tribes, which returned to their own land, "hearkened unto the voice of the Lord." This was the beginning of a conversion. In this one thing they began to do, what, all along, in their history, and most in their decay before the captivity they refused to do - obey God‘s word. So God sums up their history, by Jeremiah, Jeremiah 22:21. "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, thou saidst, I will not hear. This is thy way from thy youth, that thou hearkenedst not unto My voice." Zephaniah 3:2 still more briefly, "she hearkened not unto (any) voice." Now in reference, it seems, to that account of their disobedience, Haggai says, using the self-same formula, "they hearkened unto the voice of the Lord, "according to the words of Haggai." They obeyed, not vaguely, or partly, but exactly, "according to the words" which the messenger of God spake.

And they feared the Lord - o"Certainly the presence of the Divine Majesty is to be teared with great reverence." "The fear of punishment at times transports the mind to what is better, and the infliction of sorrows harmonizes the mind to the fear of God; and that of the Proverbs comes true, Proverbs 13:13. "He that feareth the Lord shall be recompensed," and Proverbs 19:23 "the fear of the Lord tendeth to life;" and Wisdom (Proverbs 19:12 the fear of the Lord shall rejoice the heart, and giveth joy and gladness and a long life." See how gently and beseemingly God smites us."

"See how the lovingkindness of God immediately goes along with all changes for the better. For Almighty God changes along with those who will to repent, and promises that He will be with them; which what can equal? For when God is with us, all harm will depart from us, all good come in to us."

Verse 13

And Haggai, the Lord‘s messenger - Malachi, whose own name was framed to express that he was "the Lord‘s messenger," and Haggai alone use the title, as the title of a prophet; perhaps as forerunners of the great prophet whom Malachi announced. Malachi also speaks of the priest, as Malachi 2:7 "the messenger of the Lord of hosts," and prophesies of John Baptist as Malachi 3:1 "the messenger" of the Lord, who should go before His face. Haggai, as he throughout repeats that his words were God‘s words, frames a new word to express, in the language of the New

Testament; 2 Corinthians 5:20 that he had an embassy from God; "in the Lord's message."

I am with you - All the needs and longings of the creature are summed up in those two words, "I with you." "Who art Thou and who am I? Thou, He Who Is; I, he who am not;" nothing, yea worse than nothing. Yet "if Romans 8:31, God be for us," Paul asks, "who can be against us?" Our blessed Lord's parting promise to the Apostles, and in them to the Church, was, Matthew 28:20. "Lo I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." The all-containing assurance goes beyond any particular promise of aid, as, "I will help you, and will protect you, so that your building shall have its completion." This is one fruit of it, "since I am in the midst of you, no one shall be able to hinder your building." But, more widely, the words bespeak "His" presence in love, who knows all our needs, and is Almighty to support and save us in all. So David says Psalm 23:4, "when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me:" and God says by another Psalm 91:15, I will be "with him in trouble," and by Isaiah Isaiah 43:2, "When thou passest through the waters," I will be "with thee."

Verse 14

And the Lord stirred up the spirit - The words are used of any strong impulse from God to fulfill His will, whether in those who execute His will unknowingly as Pul 1 Chronicles 5:26, to carry off the trans-Jordanic tribes, or the Philistines and Arabians against Jehoram, 2 Chronicles 21:16. or the Medes against Babylon Jeremiah 51:11, or knowingly, as of Cyrus to restore God's people and rebuild the temple Ezra 1:1, or of the people themselves to return Ezra 1:5, "The spirit of Zerubbabel and the spirit of Joshua were stirred, that the government and priesthood may build the temple of God: the spirit of the people too, which before was asleep in them; not the body, not the soul, but the spirit. which knoweth best how to build the temple of God." "The Holy Spirit is stirred up in us, that we should enter the house of the Lord, and do the works of the Lord."

"Again, observe that they did not set themselves to choose to do what should please God, before He was with them and stirred up their spirit. We shall know hence also, that although one choose zealously to do good and be in earnest therein, yet he will accomplish nothing, unless God be with him, raising him up to dare, and sharpening him to endure, and removing all torpor. For so the wondrous Paul says of those entrusted with the divine

preaching 1 Corinthians 15:11, I labored more abundantly than they all, yet added very wisely, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me, and the Saviour Himself saith to the holy Apostles, John 15:5. Without Me ye can do nothing. For He is our desire, He, our courage to any good work; He our strength, and, if He is with us, we shall do well Ephesians 2:21-22, building ourselves to a holy temple, a habitation of God in the Spirit; if He depart and withdraws, how should any doubt, that we should fail, overcome by sluggishness and want of courage?"

Verse 15

In the four and twentieth day of the month - The interval of twenty-three days must have been spent in preparation, since the message came on the first of the month, and the obedience was immediate.

HAGGAI CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month - This was the seventh day of the feast of tabernacles, Leviticus 23:34, Leviticus 23:36, Leviticus 23:40-42. and its close. The eighth day was to be a sabbath, with its "holy convocation," but the commemorative feast, the dwelling in booths, in memory of God's bringing them out of Egypt, was to last seven days. The close then of this feast could not but revive their sadness at the glories of their first deliverance by God's "mighly hand and outstretched arm," and their present fewness and poverty. This depression could not but bring with it heavy thoughts about the work, in which they were, in obedience to God, engaged; and that, all the more, since Isaiah and Ezekiel had prophesied of the glories of the Christian Church under the symbol of the temple. This despondency Haggai is sent to relieve, owning plainly the reality of its present grounds, but renewing, on God's part, the pledge of the glories of this second temple, which should be thereafter.

Verse 3

Who is left among you? - The question implies that there were those among them, who had seen the first house in its glory, yet but few. When the foundations of the first temple were laid, there were many Ezra 3:12. "Many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundations of this house were laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice." Fifty-nine years had elapsed from the destruction of the temple in the eleventh year of Zedekiah to the first of Cyrus; so that old men of seventy years had seen the first temple, when themselves eleven years old. In this second of Darius seventy years had passed, so that those of 78 or 80 years might still well remember it. Ezra's father, Seraiah, was slain in the eleventh year of Zedekiah; so he must have been born at latest a few months later; yet he lived to the second of Artaxerxes.

Is not such as it is as nothing? - oBeside the richness of the sculptures in the former temple, everything, which admitted of it, was overlaid with gold 1 Kings 6:22, 1 Kings 6:28, 1 Kings 6:30, 1 Kings 6:32, 1 Kings 6:35, "Solomon overlaid the whole house with gold, until he had finished all the house, the whole altar by the oracle, the two cherubim, the floor of the house, the doors of the holy of holies" and the ornaments of it, "the

cherubims thereon" and "the palm trees he covered with gold fitted upon the carved work 1 Kings 7:48-50, the altar of gold and the table of gold, whereupon the showbread was, the ten candlesticks of pure gold, with the flowers and the lamps and the tongs of gold, the bowls, the snuffers and the basons and the spoons and the censers of pure gold, and hinges of pure gold for all the doors of the temple 2 Chronicles 3:4-9. The porch that was in the front of the house, twenty cubits broad and 120 cubits high, was overlaid within with pure gold;" the house glistened with precious stones; and the gold (it is added) was "gold of Parvaim," a land distant of course and unknown to us. "Six hundred talents of gold" (about 4,320,000 British pounds were employed in overlaying the holy of holies. "The upper chambers were also of gold; the weight of the nails was fifty shekels of gold."

Verse 4

Yet now be strong … and work - They are the words with which David exhorted Solomon his son to be earnest and to persevere in the building of the first temple 1 Chronicles 28:10. "Take heed now, for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong and do" 1 Chronicles 28:20. "Be strong and of good courage, and do." This combination of words occurs once only elsewhere 2 Chronicles 19:11, in Jehoshaphat's exhortation to "the 2 Chronicles 19:8. Levites and priests and chiefs of the fathers of Israel," whom he had set as judges in Jerusalem. Haggai seems then to have adopted the words, with the purpose of suggesting to the down-hearted people, that there was need of the like exhortation, in view of the building of the former temple, whose relative glory so depressed them. The word "be strong" (elsewhere rendered, "be of good courage") occurs commonly in exhortations to persevere and hold fast, amid whatever obstacles..

Verse 5

The words which I covenanted - The words stand more forcibly, because abruptly.

It is an exclamation which cannot be forced into any grammatical relation with the preceding. The more exact idiom would have been "Remember," "take to heart." But the prophet points to it the more energetically, because he casts it, as it were, into the midst, not bound up with any one verb. This would be the rather done in speaking to the people, as David to his followers (1 Samuel 30:23, which Ewald compares, Lehrb.

n. 329. a. p. 811, ed. 8. and in his Die Proph. iii. 183. Only he, not very intelligibly, makes it a sort of oath, By the word, By that which the Lord hath given us. But he suggests the like broken sentence Zech. vii. 7), "That which the Lord hath given us and hath preserved us and given the company against us into our hands!" i. e., "Would you deal thus with it?" The abrupt form rejects it as shocking. So here, "The word which I covenanted with you," i. e. this, "I will be with you," was the central all-containing promise, to which God pledged Himself when He brought them out of Egypt. He speaks to them as being one with those who came up out of Egypt, as if they were the very persons. The Church, ever varying in the individuals of whom it is composed, is, throughout all ages, in God's sight, one; His promises to the fathers are made to the children in them. So the Psalmist says, "There" (at the dividing of the Red Sea and the Jordan) "do we rejoice in Him," as if present there; and our Lord promises to the Apostles, Matthew 28:20. "I am with you always even to the end of the world," by an ever-present presence with them and His Church founded by them in Him.

My Spirit abideth among you, - as the Psalmist says Psalm 102:27, "they (the heavens) perish and Thou abidest" Psalm 33:11, "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever" Psalm 111:3, "His righteousness endureth forever." The Spirit of God is God the Holy Spirit, with His manifold gifts. Where He is, is all good. As the soul is in the body, so God the Holy Spirit is in the Church, Himself its life, and bestowing on all and each every good gift, as each and all have need. As Paul says of the Church of Christ 1 Corinthians 12:4, 1 Corinthians 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:11, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, who worketh all in all. All these worketh one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." But above and beyond all gifts He is present as the Spirit of holiness and love, making the Church and those in whom He individually dwells, acceptable to God. Special applications, such as "the Spirit of wisdom and might;" a spirit such as He gave to Moses to judge His people; the spirit of prophecy; or the spirit given to Bezaleel and Aholiab for the work of the sanctuary - these recognize in detail the one great truth, that all good, all wisdom, from least to greatest, comes from God the Holy Spirit; though one by one they would exclude more truth than they each contain.

Verse 6

Yet once, it is a little while - This, the rendering of Paul to the Hebrews, is alone grammatical. "Yet once." By the word yet he looks back to the first great shaking of the moral world, when God's revelation by Moses and to His people broke upon the darkness of the pagan world, to be a monument against pagan error until Christ should come; once looks on, and conveys that God would again shake the world, but once only, under the one dispensation of the Gospel, which should endure to the end.

It is a little while - o"The 517 years, which were to elapse to the birth of Christ, are called a little time, because to the prophets, ascending in heart to God and the eternity of God, all times, like all things of this world, seem, as they are, only a little thing, yea a mere point;" which has neither length nor breadth. So John calls the time of the new law, "the last hour" 1 John 2:18, "Little children, it is the last hour." It was little also in respect to the time, which had elapsed from the fall of Adam, upon which God promised the Saviour Christ Genesis 3:15, little also in respect to the Christian law, which has now lasted above 1,800 years, and the time of the end does not seem yet near.

I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land - It is one universal shaking of all this our world and the heavens over it, of which the prophet speaks. He does not speak only of Luke 21:25 "signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars," which might be, and yet the frame of the world itself might remain. It is a shaking, such as would involve the dissolution of this our system, as Paul draws out its meaning; Hebrews 12:27. "This word, once more, signifieth the removing of the things that are shaken, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." Prophecy, in its long perspective, uses a continual foreshortening, speaking of things in relation to their eternal meaning and significance, as to that which shall survive, when heaven and earth and even time shall have passed away. It blends together the beginning and the earthly end; the preparation and the result; the commencement of redemption and its completion; our Lord's coming in humility and in His Majesty. Scarcely any prophet but exhibits things in their intrinsic relation, of which time is but an accident.

It is the rule, not the exception. The Seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head, was promised on the fall: to Abraham, the blessing through his seed; by Moses, the prophet like unto him; to David, an everlasting covenant 2 Samuel 23:5. Joel unites the out-pouring of the Spirit of God on the Day of Pentecost, and the hatred of the world until the Day of

Judgment Joel 2:28-32; Isaiah 66:22-24, Daniel, the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes, of Anti-Christ, and the Resurrection; Obadiah 1:18-21. Zephaniah, the punishment of Judah and the final judgment of the earth. Malachi, our Lord‘s first and second coming Malachi 3:1-5, Malachi 3:17-18; Malachi 4:1-6.

Nay, our Lord Himself so blends together the destruction of Jerusalem and the days of Anti-Christ and the end of the world, that it is difficult to separate them, so as to say what belongs exclusively to either The prophecy is an answer to two distinct questions of the Apostles,

(1) “When shall these things (namely, the destruction of the temple) be?”

(2) “And what shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the world?” Our Lord answers the two questions in one. Some things seem to belong to the first coming, as Matthew 24:15-16, “the abomination of desolation spoke of by Daniel,” and the flight from Matthew 24:24 “Judea into the mountains.” But the exceeding deceivableness is authoritatively interpreted by Paul 2Thes Matthew 5:2-10. of a distant time; and our Lord Himself, having said that “all these things,” of which the Apostles had inquired, should take place in that generation Mark 13:30 speaks of His absence as of a man taking a far journey Mark 13:3, and says that “not the angels in heaven knew that hour, neither the Son Mark 13:32, which precludes the idea, that He had just before declared that the whole would take place in that generation. For this would be to make out, that He declared that the Son knew not the hour of His Coming, which He had just (on this supposition) declared to be in that generation.

So then, here. There was a general shaking upon earth before our Lord came. Empires rose and fell. The Persian fell before Alexander‘s; Alexander‘s world-empire was ended by his sudden death in youth; of his four successors, two only continued, and they too fell before the Romans; then were the Roman civil wars, until, under Augustus, the temple of Janus was shut. “For it greatly beseemed a work ordered by God, that many kingdoms should be confederated in one empire, and that the universal preaching might find the peoples easily accessible who were held under the

rule of one state." In the heavens was the star, which led the wise men, the manifestation of Angels to the shepherds; the preternatural darkness at the Passion; the Ascension into the highest heaven, and the descent of the Holy Spirit with Acts 2:2, "a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind." "God had moved them (heaven and earth) before, when He delivered the people from Egypt, when there was in heaven a column of fire, dry ground amid the waves, a wall in the sea, a path in the waters, in the wilderness there was multiplied a daily harvest of heavenly food (the manna), the rock gushed into fountains of waters. But He moved it afterward also in the Passion of the Lord Jesus, when the heaven was darkened, the sun shrank back, the rocks were rent. the graves opened, the dead were raised, the dragon, conquered in his waters, saw the fishers of men, not only sailing in the sea, but also walking without peril. The dry ground also was moved, when the unfruitful people of the nations began to ripen to a harvest of devotion and faith - so that "more were the children of the forsaken, than of her which had a husband," and Isaiah 35:1. "the desert flourished like a lily". "He moved earth in that great miracle of the birth from the Virgin: He moved the sea and dry land, when in the islands and in the whole world Christ is preached. So we see all nations moved to the faith."

And yet, whatever preludes of fulfillment there were at our Lord's first coming, they were as nothing to the fulfillment which we look for in the second, "when Isaiah 24:19-20 the earth shall be utterly broken down; the earth, clean dissolved; the earth, moved exceedingly; the earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a hanging-cot in a vineyard and the transgression thereof is heavy upon it; and it shall fall and not rise again;" whereon follows an announcement of the final judgment of men and angels, and the everlasting kingdom of the blessed in the presence of God.

Of that "day of the Lord," Peter uses our Lord's image, Matthew 24:43. that it shall 2 Peter 3:10. come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works therein shall be burned up."

Verse 7

And the desire of all nations shall come - The words can only mean this, the central longing of all nations

He whom they longed for, either through the knowledge of Him spread by the Jews in their dispersion, or mutely by the aching craving of the human heart, longing for the restoration from its decay. "The earnest expectation of the creature" did not begin with the Coming of Christ, nor was it limited to those, who actually came to Him Romans 8:19-22. "The whole creation," Paul saith, "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." It was enslaved, and the better self longed to be free; every motion of grace in the multitudinous heart of man was a longing for its Deliverer; every weariness of what it was, every fleeting vision of what was better, every sigh from out of its manifold ills, were notes of the one varied cry, "Come and help us." Man's heart, formed in the image of God, could not but ache to be reformed by and for Him, though "an unknown God," who should reform it.

This longing increased as the time drew near, when Christ should come. The Roman biographer attests the existence of this expectation, not among the Jews only, but in the East; this was quickened doubtless among the pagan by the Jewish Sibylline book, in that, amid the expectations of one sent from heaven, who should found a kingdom of righteousness, which the writer drew from the Hebrew prophets, he inserted denunciations of temporal vengeance upon the Romans, which Easterns would share. Still, although written 170 years before our Lord came, it had not apparently much effect until the time, when, from the prophecies of Daniel it was clear, that He must shortly come. Yet the attempt of the Jewish and pagan historian to wrest it to Vespasian, shows how great must have been the influence of the expectation, which they attempted to turn aside.

The Jews, who rejected our Lord whom Haggai predicted, still were convinced that the prediction must be fulfilled before the destruction of the second temple. The impulse did not cease even after its destruction. R. Akiba, whom they accounted "the first oracle of his time, the first and greatest guardian of the tradition and old law," of whom they said, that "God revealed to him things unknown to Moses," was induced by this prophecy to acknowledge the impostor Bar-cochab, to the destruction of himself and of the most eminent of his time; fulfilling our Lord's words

John 5:43, “I am come in My fathers name, and ye receive Me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.”

Akiba, following the traditional meaning of the great prophecy which rivetted his own eyes, paraphrased the words, “Yet a little, a little of the kingdom, will I give to Israel upon the destruction of the first house, and after the kingdom, lo! I will shake heaven, and after that will come the Messiah.”

Since the words can only mean “the Desire of all nations,” he or that which all nations long for, the construction of the words does not affect the meaning. Herod doubtless thought to advance his own claims on the Jewish people by his material adorning of the temple; yet, although mankind do covet gold and silver, few could seriously think that, while a pagan immoral but observant poet could speak of “gold undiscovered and so better placed,” or our own of the “pale and common drudge ‹Tween man and man,” a Hebrew prophet could recognize gold and silver as “the desire of all nations.” Rabbi Akiba and Jerome‘s Jewish teachers, after our Lord came, felt no difficulty in understanding it of a person. We cannot in English express the delicacy of the phrase, whereby manifoldness is combined in unity, the Object of desire containing in itself many objects of desire.

To render “the desire of all nations” or “the desires of all nations” alike fail to do this. A great pagan master of language said to his wife, “fare you well, my longings,” i. e., I suppose, if he had analyzed his feelings, he meant that she manifoldly met the longings of his heart; she had in herself manifold gifts to content them. So Paul sums up all the truths and gifts of the Gospel, all which God shadowed out in the law and had given us in Christ, under the name of “the good things to come.” A pious modern writer speaks of “the unseen desirables of the spiritual world.” A psalmist expresses at once the collective, “God‘s Word” and the “words” contained in it, by an idiom like Haggai‘s, joining the feminine singular as a collective with the plural verb; “How sweet are Thy word unto my taste,” literally “palate.”

It is God‘s word, at once collectively and individually, which was to the Psalmist so sweet. What was true of the whole, was true, one by one, of

each part; what was true of each part, was true of the whole. So here, the object of this longing was manifold, but met in one, was concentrated in One, 1 Corinthians 1:30. "in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." That which the whole world sighed and mourned for, knowingly or unknowingly, light to disperse its darkness, liberty from its spiritual slavery, restoration from its degradation, could not come to us without some one, who should impart it to us.

But if Jesus was "the longed-for of the nations" before He came, by that mute longing of need for that which it wants (as the parched ground thirsteth for the rain how much more afterward! So Micah and Isaiah describe many peoples inviting one another Micah 4:2; Isaiah 2:3. "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths." And in truth He became the "desire of the nations," much more than of the Jews; as, Paul says, (Romans 10:19-20; quoting Deuteronomy 32:21. Isaiah 65:2.) God foretold of old; "Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are not a people: by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold and saith, I was found of them that sought Me not."

So until now and in eternity, "Christ is the longing of all holy souls, who long for nothing else, than to please Him, daily to love Him more, to worship Him better. So John longed for Him; "Come, Lord Jesus Revelation 22:20. So Isaiah Isaiah 26:8-9, "The desire of our soul is to Thy Name and to the remembrance of Thee: with my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me, will I seek Thee early." So Ignatius, "Let fire, cross, troops of wild beasts, dissections, rendings, scattering of bones, mincing of limbs, grindings of the whole body, ill tortures of the devil come upon me, only may I gain Jesus Christ. - I seek Him Who for us died; I long for Him Who for us rose."

"Hungerest thou and desirest food? Long for Jesus! He is the bread and refreshment of Angels. He is manna, "containing in Him all sweetness and pleasurable delight." Thirstest thou? Long for Jesus! He is the well of "living water," refreshing, so that thou shouldest thirst no more. Art thou sick? Go to Jesus. He is the Saviour, the physician, nay, salvation itself. Art

thou dying? Sigh for Jesus! He is "the resurrection and the life." Art thou perplexed? Come to Jesus! He is "the Angel of great counsel." Art thou ignorant and erring? Ask Jesus; He is "the way, the truth and the life." Art thou a sinner? Call on Jesus! For "He shall save His people from their sins." To this end He came into the world: "This is all His fruit, to take away sin." Art thou tempted by pride, gluttony, lust, sloth? Call on Jesus! He is humility, soberness, chastity, love, fervor: "He bare our infirmities, and carried," yea still beareth and carrieth, "our griefs."

Seekest thou beauty? He is "fairer than the children of men." Seekest thou wealth? In Him are "all treasures," yea in Him "the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth." Art thou ambitious of honors? "Glory and riches are in His house." "He is the King of glory." Seekest thou a friend? He hath the greatest love for thee, who for love of thee came down from heaven, toiled, endured the Sweat of Blood, the Cross and Death; He prayed for thee by name in the garden, and poured forth tears of Blood! Seekest thou wisdom? He is the Eternal and Uncreated Wisdom of the Father! Wishest thou for consolation and joy? He is the sweetness of souls, the joy and jubilee of Angels. Wishest thou for righteousness and holiness? He is "the Holy of holies;" He "is everlasting Righteousness," justifying and sanctifying all who believe and hope in Him. Wishest thou for a blissful life? He is "life eternal," the bliss of the saints. Long then for Him, love Him, sigh for Him! In Him thou wilt find all good; out of Him, all evil, all misery. Say then with Francis, ‹My Jesus, my love and my all!' O Good Jesus, burst the cataract of Thy love, that its streams, yea seas, may flow down upon us, yea, inebriate and overwhelm us."

And I will fill this house with glory - The glory then was not to be anything, which came from man, but directly from God. It was the received expression of God's manifestation of Himself in the tabernacle Exodus 40:34-35. in Soloman's temple, 1 Kings 8:11; 2 Chronicles 5:14; 2 Chronicles 7:1-12, and of the ideal temple Ezekiel 43:5; Ezekiel 44:4. which Ezekiel saw, after the likeness of that of Solomon, that "the glory of the Lord filled the house." When then of this second temple God uses the self-same words, that He will "fill it with glory," with what other glory should He fill it than His own? In the history it is said, "the glory of the Lord filled the temple;" for there man relates what God did. Here it is God Himself who speaks; so He says not, "the glory of the Lord," but, "I will fill

the house with glory," glory which was His to give, which came from Himself. To interpret that glory of anything material, is to do violence to language, to force on words of Scripture an unworthy sense, which they refuse to bear.

The gold upon the walls, even had the second temple been adorned like the first did not fill the temple of Solomon. However richly any building might be overlaid with gold, no one could say that it is filled with it. A building is filled with what it contains; a mint or treasure-house may be filled with gold: the temple of God was "filled," we are told, with "the glory of the Lord." His creatures bring Him such things as they can offer; they bring Isaiah 60:6 "gold and incense;" they Psalm 72:10 "bring presents" and "offer gifts;" they do it, moved by His Spirit, as acceptable to Him. God was never said to give these offerings to Himself.

Verse 8

The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine - These words, which have occasioned some to think, that God, in speaking of the glory with which He should fill the house, meant our material riches, suggest the contrary. For silver was no ornament of the temple of Solomon. Everything was overlaid with gold. In the tabernacle there were bowls of silver, in Soloman's temple they and all were of gold 1 Kings 7:50; 2 Chronicles 4:8. Silver, we are expressly told, "was nothing accounted of 1 Kings 10:21 in the days of Solomon: he 1 Kings 10:27. made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones - for abundance." Rather, as God says by the Psalmist Psalm 50:10-12, "Every beast of the forest is Mine, so are the cattle upon a thousand hills: I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is Mine and the fullness thereof:" so here He tells them, that for the glory of His house He needed not gold or silver: for all the wealth of the world is His. They had no ground "to grieve then, that they could not equal the magnificence of Solomon who had abundance of gold and silver." All was God's. He would fill it with divine glory. The Desire of all nations, Christ, should come, and be a glory, to which all created glory is nothing.

"God says really and truly, that the silver and gold is His, which in utmost bounty He created, and in His most just government administers, so that, without His will and dominion, neither can the bad have gold and silver for the punishment of avarice, nor the good for the use of mercy. Its

abundance does not inflate the good, nor its want crush them: but the bad, when bestowed, it blinds: when taken away, it tortures."

"It is as if He would say, Think not the temple inglorious, because, may be, it will have no portion of gold or silver, and their splendor. I need not such things. How should I? "For Mine is the silver and Mine the gold, saith the Lord Almighty." I seek rather true worshipers: with their brightness will I guild this temple. Let him come who hath right faith, is adorned by graces, gleams with love for Me, is pure in heart, poor in spirit, compassionate and good." "These make the temple, i. e., the Church, glorious and renowned, being glorified by Christ. For they have learned to pray, Psalm 90:17. "The glory of the Lord our God be upon us."

Verse 9

The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former - or, perhaps, more probably, "the later glory of this house shall be greater than the former;" for he had already spoken of the present temple, as identical with that before the captivity. "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory, anti how do you see it now?" He had spoken of its "first glory." Now he says, in contrast, its later glory should be greater than that of its most glorious times. In this case the question, whether the temple of tiered was a different material building from that of Zerubbabel, falls away.

In either case, the contrast is between two things, either the temple in that its former estate, and this its latter estate after the captivity, or the two temples of Solomon and Zerubbabel. There is no room for a third temple. God holds out no vain hopes. To comfort those distressed by the poverty of the house of God which they were building, God promises a glory to this house greater than before. A temple, erected, after this had lain waste above 1800 years, even if Antichrist were to come now and to erect a temple at Jerusalem, could be no fulfillment of this prophecy.

In material magnificence the temple of Solomon, built and adorned with all the treasures accumulated by David and enlarged by Solomon, far surpassed all which Herod, amid his attempts to give a material meaning to the prophecy, could do. His attempt shows how the eyes of the Jews were fixed on this prophecy, then when it was about to be fulfilled. While taking pains, through the gradualness of his rebuilding, to preserve the identity of

the fabric, he lavished his wealth, to draw off their thoughts from the king, whom the Jews looked for, to himself. The friendship of the Romans who were lords of all, was to replace the "all nations," of whom Haggai spoke; he pointed also to the length of peace, the possession of wealth, the greatness of revenues, the surpassing expenditure beyond those before. A small section of Erastians admitted these claims of the murderer of his sons.

The Jews generally were not diverted from looking on to Him who should come. Those five things, the absence whereof they felt, were connected with their atoning worhip or God‘s presence among them; "the ark with the mercy-seat and the cherubim, the Urim and Tummin, the fire from heaven, the Shechinah, the Holy Spirit." Material magnificence could not replace spiritual glory. The explanations of the great Jewish authorities, that the second temple was superior to the first in structure (which was untrue) or in duration, were laid aside by Jews who had any other solution wherewith to satisfy themselves. "The Shechinah and the five precious things," says one, "which, according to our wise of blessed memory, were in it, and not in the second house, raised and exalted it beyond compare." Another says, "When Haggai saith, ‹greater shall be the glory of this later house than the first,‘ how is it; that the house which Zerubbabel built through the income which the king of Persia gave them was more glorious than the house which Solomon built? And though it is said that the building which Herod made, was exceeding beautiful and rich, we should not think that it was in its beauty like to the house which Solomon built. For what the wise of blessed memory have said of the beauty of the house of Herod is in relation to the house which Zerubbabel built. How much more, since Scripture saith not, ‹Great shall be the beauty or the wealth of this latter house above the first,‘ but the glory: and the glory is not the wealth or the beauty, or the largeness of the dimensions of the building, as they said in their interpretations, for the ‹glory‘ is in truth spoken of the glory of God, which filled the tabernacle, after it was set up, and of the glory of God which filled the house of God, which Solomon built, when he brought the ark into the holy of holies, which is the Divine cloud and the Light supreme, which came down thither in the eyes of all the people, and it is said, ‹And it was when the priests came out of the Italy place, the cloud filled the house of God, and the priests could not stand to minister because

of the cloud, for the glory of God filled the house of God.‘ And this glory was not in the second house.

And how shall it be said, if so, ‹great shall be the glory of this later house above the first?‘” The poor unconverted Jew did not know the answer to his question: “Through the presence of God, in the substance of our flesh; through the son given to us, Whose name should be Mighty God.” The glory of this temple was in Him Who John 1:14. was made Flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” “There Christ, the Son of God, was, as a Child, offered to God: there He sat in the midst of the Doctors; there He taught and revealed things, hidden from the foundation of the world. The glory of the temple of Solomon was, that in it the majesty of God appeared, veiling itself in a cloud: in this, that same Majesty showed itself, in very deed united with the Flesh, visible to sight: so that Jesus Himself said, John 14:9. “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” This it was which Malachi sang with joy Malachi 3:1, “The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in.”

And in this place I will give peace - Temporal peace they had now, nor was there any prospect of its being disturbed. They were quiet subjects of the Persiam empire, which included also all their former enemies, greater or less. Alexander subdued all the bordering countries which did not yield, but spared themselves. Temporal peace then was nothing, to be then given them, for they had it. In later times they had it not. The temple itself was profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes (Isaiah 9:6-7 “the Prince of peace: of the increase of His government and of His peace there was to be no end;” in His days Psalm 72:3, Psalm 72:7 “the mountains were to bring peace to the people; there should be abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth; the work of righteousness was to be peace Isaiah 32:17, the chastisement of our peace (that which obtained it) was upon Him” Isaiah 53:5, “great should be the peace of her children” Isaiah 54:13, in the Gospel God would give peace, true peace, to the “far off and the near” Isaiah 57:19. He would extend Isaiah 66:12 “peace to her like a river:” the good things of the Gospel was “the publishing of peace” Isaiah 52:7. The Gospel is described as Zechariah 9:10 “shall speak peace to the Pagan;” He himself should be “our peace” Micah 5:5. And when He was born, the angels proclaimed

Luke 2:14 "on earth peace, goodwill toward men" Luke 1:79. "The Dayspring from on high visited us, to guide our feet into the way of peace." He Himself says John 14:27, "My peace I leave with you." He spake, that John 16:33 "in Me ye might have peace." Peter sums up "the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, as Acts 10:36 preaching peace by Jesus Christ Romans 14:17. The kingdom of God is joy and peace Ephesians 2:14-15, Ephesians 2:17; Christ is our peace; made peace; preaches peace. God calleth us to peace" 1 Corinthians 7:15 in the Gospel Romans 5:1, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord Galatians 5:22, the fruit of the Spirit is love joy peace." Spiritual peace being thus prominent in the Gospel and in prophecy, as the gift of God, it were unnatural to explain the peace which God promised here to give, as other than He promised elsewhere; peace in Him who is "our peace, Jesus Christ."

"Peace and tranquility of mind is above all glory of the house; because peace passeth all understanding. This is peace above peace, which shall be given after the third shaking of heaven sea earth, dry land, when He shall destroy all powers anti principalities (in the day of judgment). - And so shall there be peace throughout, that, no bodily passions or hindrances of unbelieving mind resisting, Christ shall be all in all, exhibiting the hearts of all subdued to the Father."

Verses 11-14

Ask now the priests concerning the law - The priests answer rightly, that, by the law, insulated unholiness spread further than insulated holiness. The flesh of the sacrifice hallowed whatever it should touch, but not further; but the human being, who was defiled by touching a dead body, defiled all he might touch Numbers 19:22. Haggai does not apply the first part; namely, that the worship on the altar which they reared, while they neglected the building of the temple, did not hallow. The possession of a truly tiring does not counterbalance disobedience. Contrariwise, one defilement defiled the whole man and all which he touched, according to that James 2:10, "whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

In the application, the two melt into one, for the holy thing, namely, the altar which they raised out of fear on their return, so far from hallowing the land or people by the sacrifices offered thereon, was itself defiled. "This

people" and "this nation" (not "My people") since they in act disowned Him. "Whatever they offer there," i. e., on that altar, instead of the temple which God commanded, is unclean, offending Him who gave all.

Verse 15

And now, I pray you - Observe his tenderness, in drawing their attention to it, "Consider from this day and upward." He bids them look backward, "from before a stone was laid upon a stone," i. e., from the last moment of their neglect in building the house of God; "from since those days were," or from the time backward "when those things were," (resuming, in the word, "from-their-being", the date which he had just given, namely, the beginning of their resuming the building backward, during all those years of neglect) "one came to a heap of twenty measures." The precise measure is not mentioned: the force of the appeal lay in the proportion: the heap of grain which, usually, would yield twenty, (whether bushels or seahs or any other measure, for the heap itself being of no defined size, neither could the quantity expected from it be defined) there were ten only; "one came to the pressvat to draw out fifty" vessels out of the press, or perhaps fifty poorah, i. e., the ordinary quantity drawn out at one time from the press, there were, or it bad become twenty, two-fifths only of what they looked for and ordinarily obtained. The dried grapes yielded so little.

Verse 17

I smote you with blasting and mildew, - two diseases of grain, which Moses had foretold Deuteronomy 28:27. as chastisements on disobedience and God's infliction, of which Amos had spoken in these self-same words. Amos 4:9. Haggai adds the hail, as destructive of the vines. Psalm 78:47. Yet (And) ye turned you not to Me literally "there were none" - your, (accusative i. e., who turned you unto Me. The words are elliptical, but express the entire absence of conversion, of any who turned to God.

Verse 18

From the day that the foundation of the Lord's house - Zechariah, in a passage corresponding to this, uses the same words Zechariah 8:9, "the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built," not of the first foundation, but of the work as resumed in obedience to the words by "the mouth of the prophets," Haggai and himself, which, Ezra also says, was Ezra 4:24; Ezra 5:1. "in the second

year of Darius." But that work was resumed, not now at the time of this prophecy, but three months before, on the 24th of the sixth month. Since then the word translated here, from, is in no case used of the present time, Haggai gives two dates, the resumption of the work, as marked in these words, and the, actual present. He would then say, that even in these last months, since they had begun the work, there were as yet no signs for the better. There was yet no "seed in the barn," the harvest having been blighted and the fruit-trees stripped by the hail before the close of the sixth month, when they resumed the work. Yet though there were as yet no signs of change, no earnest that the promise should be fulfilled, God pledges His word, "from this day I will bless you."

Thenceforth, from their obedience, God would give them those fruits of the earth, which in His Providence had been, during their negligence, withheld. "God," said Paul and Barnabas, Acts 14:17. "left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

All the Old and New Testament, the Law, the prophets and the Psalms, the Apostles and our Lord Himself, bear witness to the Providence of God who makes His natural laws serve to the moral discipline of His creature, man. The physical theory, which presupposes that God so fixed the laws of His creation, as to leave no room for Himself to vary them, would, if ever so true, only come to this, that Almighty God knowing absolutely (as He must know) the actions of His creatures (in what way soever this is reconcilable with our free-agency, of which we are conscious), framed the laws of His physical creation, so that plenty or famine, healthiness of our cattle or of the fruits of the earth or their sickness, should coincide with the good or evil conduct of man, with his prayers or his neglect of prayer. The reward or chastisement alike come to man, whether they be theresult of God‘s will, acting apart from any system which He has created, or in it and through it.

It is alike His Providential agency, whether He have established any such system with all its minute variations, or whether these variations are the immediate result of His sovereign will. If He has instituted any physical system, so that the rain, hail, and its proportions, size, destructiveness, should come in a regulated irregularity, as fixed in all eternity as the

revolutions of the heavenly bodies or the courses of the comets, then we come only to a more intricate perfection of His creation, that in all eternity He framed those laws in an exact conformity to the perfectly foreseen actions of men good and evil, and to their prayers also: that He, knowing certainly whether the creature, which He has framed to have its bliss in depending on Him, would or would not cry unto Him, framed those physical laws in conformity therewith; so that the supply of what is necessary for our wants or its withholding shall be in all time inworked into the system of our probation. Only, not to keep God out of His own world, we must remember that other truth, that, whether God act in any such system or no, He Hebrews 1:3. "upholdeth all things by the word of His power" by an everpresent working; so that it is He who at each moment doth what is done, doth and maintains in existence all which He has created in the exact order and variations of their being. Psalm 148:8. "Fire and hail, snow and vapor, stormy wind fulfilling His word," are as immediate results of His Divine Agency, in whatever way it pleaseth Him to act, and are the expression of His will.

Verse 21

I will shake - Haggai closes by resuming the words of a former prophecy to Zerubbabel and Joshua, which ended in the coming of Christ. Even thus it is plain, that the prophecy does not belong personally to Zerubbabel, but to him and his descendants, chiefly to Christ. There was in Zerubbabel's time no shaking of the heaven or of nations. Darius had indeed to put down an unusual number of rebellions in the first few years after his accession; but, although he magnified himself on occasion of their suppression, they were only so many distinct and unconcerted revolts, each under its own head. All were far away in the distant East, in Babylonia, Susiana, Media, Armenia, Assyria, Hyrcania, Parthia, Sagartia, Margiana, Arachosia. The Persian empire, spread "probably over 2,000,000 square miles, or more than half of modern Europe," was not threatened; no foreign enemy assailed it; one impostor only claimed the throne of Darius. This would, if successful, have been, like his own accession, a change of dynasty, affecting nothing externally.

But neither were lasting, some were very trifling. Two decisive battles subdued Babylonia: of Media the brief summary is given "the Medes revolted from Darius, and having revolted were brought back into

subjection, defeated in battle." The Susianians killed their own pretender, on the approach of the troops of Darius. We have indeed mostly the account only of the victor. But these are only self-glorying records of victories, accomplished in succession, within a few years. Sometimes the satrap of the province put the revolt down at once. At most two battles ended in the crucifixion of the rebel. The Jews, if they heard of them, knew them to be of no account. For the destroyer of the Persian empire was to come from the West Daniel 8:5, the fourth sovereign was to stir up all against the realm of Grecia Daniel 11:2, and Darius was but the third. In the same second year of Darius, in which Haggai gave this prophecy, the whole earth was exhibited to Zechariah as Zechariah 1:11, "sitting still and at rest."

The overthrow prophesied is also universal. It is not one throne only, as of Persia, but "the throne," i. e., the sovereigns, "of kingdoms;" not a change of dynasty, but a destruction of their "strength;" not of a few powers only, but "the kingdoms of the pagan;" and that, in detail; that, in which their chief strength lay, the chariots and horsemen and their riders, and this, man by man, "every one by the sword of his brother." This mutual destruction is a feature of the judgments at the end of the world against Gog and Magog Ezekiel 38:21; and of the yet unfulfilled prophecies of Zechariah Zechariah 14:17. Its stretching out so far does not hinder its partial fulfillment in earlier times. Zerubbabel stood, at the return from the captivity, as the representative of the house of David and heir of the promises to him, though in an inferior temporal condition; thereby the rather showing that the main import of the prophecy was not temporal. As then Ezekiel prophesied, Ezekiel 34:23. "I will set up One Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, My servant David" Ezekiel 37:24-25; "And David My servant shall be king over them; and My servant David shall be their prince forever;" and Jeremiah Jeremiah 30:9. "They shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them; and Hosea, that Hosea 3:5. after many days shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king," meaning by David, the great descendant of David, in whom the promises centered, so in his degree, the promise to Zerubbabel reaches on through his descendants to Christ; that, amid all the overthrow of empires, God would protect His sons' sons until Christ should come, the King of kings and Lord of lords, whose Daniel

2:44. “kingdom shall never be destroyed, but it shall break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms, and shall stand fast forever.”

Verse 23

I will make thee as a signet - God reverses to Zerubbabel the sentence on Jeconiah for his impiety. To Jeconiah He had said Jeremiah 22:24, “though he were the signet upon My right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence; and I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life.” The signet was very precious to its owner, never parted with, or only to those to whom authority was delegated (as by Pharaoh to Joseph Genesis 41:42, or by Ahasuerus to Haman Esther 3:10 and then to Mordecai Esther 8:2.); through it his will was expressed. Hence, the spouse in the Canticles says, 2 Thessalonians 1:10. by Zerubbabel in the building of His house. He gave him estimation with Cyrus, who entrusted him with the return of his people, and made him (who would have been the successor to the throne of Judah, had the throne been re-established) his governor over the restored people.

God promises to him and his descendants protection amid all shaking of empires. “He was a type of Christ in bringing back the people from Babylon, as Christ delivered us from sin death and hell: he built the temple, as Christ built the Church; he protected his people against the Samaritans who would hinder the building, as Christ protects His Church: he was dear and joined to God, as Christ was united to Him, and hypostatically united and joined His Humanity to the Word. The true Zerubbabel then, i. e., Christ, the son and antitype of Zerubbabel, is the signet in the hand of the Father, both passively and actively, whereby God impresses His own Majesty thoughts and words and His own Image on men angels and all creatures.” “The Son is the Image of God the Father, having His entire and exact likeness, and in His own beauty beaming forth the nature of the Father. In Him too God seals us also to His own likeness, since, being conformed to Christ, we gain the image of God.” “Christ, as the Apostle says, is Hebrews 1:3 “the Image of the invisible God, the brightness of His Glory and the express Image of His Person,” who, as the Word and Seal and express Image, seals it on others. Christ is here called a signet, as Man not as God. For it was His Manhood which He took of the flesh and race of Zerubbabel. He is then, in His Manhood, the signet of God;

1) as being hypostatically united with the Son of God;

2) because the Word impressed on His Humanity the likeness of Himself, His knowledge, virtue, holiness, thoughts, words, acts and conversation;

3) because the Man Christ was the seal, i. e., the most evident sign and witness of the attributes of God, His power, justice, wisdom, and especially His exceeding love for man. For, that God might show this, He willed that His Son should be Incarnate. Christ thus Incarnate is as a seal, in which we see expressed and depicted the love power justice wisdom etc. of God;

4) because Christ as a seal, attested and certified to us the will of God, His doctrine law commands, i. e., those which He promulgated and taught in the Gospel.

"No one," John saith John 1:18, "hath seen God at any time: the Only-Begotten Son Who is the Image the Father, He hath declared Him." Hence, God gave to Christ the power of working miracles, that He might confirm His words as by a seal, and demonstrate that they were revealed and enjoined to Him by God, as it is in John John 6:27, "Him hath God the Father sealed." "Christ is also the seal of God, because by His impress, i. e., the faith grace virtue and conversation from Him and by the impress in Baptism and the other sacraments, "He willed to conform us to the Image of His Son," Romans 8:29. that 1 Corinthians 15:49, "as we have borne the image of the earthly Adam, we mnay also bear the image of the heavenly." Then, Christ, like a seal, seals and guards His faithful against all temptations and enemies. The seal of Christ is the Cross, according to that of Ezekiel, "Seal a mark upon the foreheads of the men who sigh," and in the Revelation Revelation 7:2, "I saw another Angel having the seal of the living God." For the Cross guardeth us against the temptations of the flesh, the world and the devil, and makes us followers, soldiers, and martyrs of Christ crucified. Whence the Apostle says, Galatians 6:17. "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

"This is said without doubt of the Messiah, the expected;" says even a Jewish controversialist, "who shall be of the seed of Zerubbabel; and therefore this promise was not fulfilled at all in himself: for at the time of

this prophecy he had aforetime been governor of Judah, and afterward he did not rise to any higher dignity than what he was up to that day: and in like way we find that God said to Abraham our father in the covenant between the pieces, Genesis 15:7, Genesis 15:18. "I am the Lord who brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees to give thee this land to inherit it," and beyond doubt this covenant was confirmed of God to the seed of Abraham, as lie Himself explained it there afterward, when He said, "In that day God made a covenant with Abraham, saying, To thy seed have I given this land etc.," and many like these.

Abarbanel had laid down the right principles, though of necessity misapplied. "Zerubbabel did not reign in Jerusalem and did not rule in it, neither lie nor any man of his seed; but immediately after the building of the house, he returned to Babylon and died there in his captivity, and how saith he, ‹In that day I will take thee?' For after the fall of the kingdom of Persia Zerubbabel is not known for any greatness, and his name is not mentioned in the world. Where then will be the meaning of ‹And I will place thee as a signet, for thee have I chosen?' For the signet is as the seal-ring which a man putteth on his hand, it departeth not from it, night or day. And when was this fulfilled in Zerubbabel? But the true meaning, in my opinion, is, that God showed Zerubbabel that this very second house would not abide, for after him should come another captivity, and of this he says, ‹I shake the heaven etc.,' and afterward, after a long time, will God take His vengeance of these nations ‹which have devoured Jacob and laid waste his dwelling place;' and so he says ‹I will overthrow the thrones, etc.,' and He sheweth him further that the king who shall rule over Israel at the time of the redemption is the Messiah of the seed of Zerubbabel and of the house of David; and God saw good to shew him all this to comfort him and to speak to his heart; and it is as if he said to him, ‹It is true that thou shalt not reign in the time of the second temple, nor any of thy seed, but in that day when God shall overthrow the throne of the kingdoms of the nations, when He gathereth His people Israel and redeemeth them, then shalt thou reign over My people, for of thy seed shall he be who ruleth from Israel at that time forever, and therefore he saith, ‹I will take thee, O Zerubabbel etc.,' for because the Messiah was to be of his seed he saith, that he will take him; and this is as he says, Ezekiel 37:24. ‹And David My servant shall be a prince to them forever;' for the very Messiah, he shall be David, he shall be

Zerubbabel, because he shall be a scion going forth out of their hewn trunk" Isaiah 11:1.

For I have chosen thee - God's forecoming love is the ground of all the acceptableness of His creature 1 John 4:19. "We love Him, because He first loved us." Zerubbabel was a devoted servant of God. God acknowledges his faithfulness. Only, the beginning of all was with God. God speaks of the nearness to Himself which He had given him. But in two words He cuts off all possible boastfulhess of His creature. Zerubbabel was all this, not of himself, but "because God had chosen" him. Even the sacred manhood of our Lord (it is acknowledged as a theological truth) was not chosen for any foreseen merits, but for the great love, with which God the Father chose it, and God the Son willed to be in such wise incarnate, and God the Holy Spirit willed that that Holy Thing should be conceived of Him. So God says of Him Isaiah 42:1, "Behold My Servant whom I uphold, Mine elect in whom My soul delighteth;" and God bare witness to Him Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5, "This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

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Zechariah

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ZECHARIAH INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Zechariah

Zechariah entered into his prophetic function two months after Haggai's first prophecy. He was still a youth, when God called him Zechariah 2:4, and so, since in the second year of Darius Hystaspis 18 years had elapsed from the first of Cyrus, he must have been brought in infancy from Babylon. His father Berechiah probably died young, since, in Ezra, the prophet is called after his grandfather, "Zechariah the son of Iddo" Ezra 5:1; Ezra 6:14. He succeeded his grandfather in the office of "the priests, the chief of the fathers," (of which there were twelve) in the days of Joiakim, the son of Joshua, the High priest Nehemiah 12:10, Nehemiah 12:12, Nehemiah 12:16. Since then, while he prophesied together with Haggai, Joshua was still high priest, and it is Joshua whom he sees in his vision in that same year Zechariah 3:1, he must have entered into his prophetic function before he succeeded to that other dignity. Yet neither is there any reason to think that he ever laid it aside, since we do not hear of any prophet, called by God, who did abandon it. Rather, like Jeremiah, he exercised both; called to the priesthood by the birth given to him by God, called to the prophetic function by divine inspiration.

Like Jeremiah, Zechariah was called in early youth to the prophetic function. The same designation, by which Jeremiah at first excused himself as unfit for the office, is given to Zechariah, "youth." The term does not indeed mark any definite age; for Joseph, when he was so designated by the chief butler Genesis 41:12, was 28; Benjamin and Absalom had sons of their own. They were probably so called as terms of affection, the one by his brother Judah Genesis 43:8; Genesis 44:22, Genesis 44:30, Genesis 44:33, the other by David his father 2 Samuel 18:5, 2 Samuel 18:12, 2 Samuel 18:29, 2 Samuel 18:32. But his grandfather Iddo was still in the discharge of his office. The length of his ministry is equally unknown. Two years after his first entrance upon it Zechariah 7:1, when Haggai's function was closed, he was bidden to answer from God those who enquired whether, now that they were freed from the captivity, they should keep the national fasts which they had instituted on occasion of some of the mournful events which had ushered it in. His remaining prophecies bear no date. The belief, that he lived and prophesied to old age, may have a true foundation, though unknown to us. We only know that he survived the high

priest, Joshua, since his own accession to his office of head of the priests, in his division, was in the days of Joiakim, the son of Joshua.

Zechariah‘s book opens with a very simple, touching call to those returned from the captivity, linking himself with the former prophets, but contrasting the transitoriness of all human things, those who prophesied and those to whom they prophesied, with the abidingness of the Word of God. It consists of four parts, differing in outward character, yet with a remarkable unity of purpose and end. All begin with a foreground subsequent to the captivity; all reach on to a further end; the first two to the coming of our Lord; the third from the deliverance of the house then built, during the invasion of Alexander, and from the victories of the Maccabees, to the rejection of the true Shepherd and the curse upon the false; the last, which is connected with the third by its title, reaches from a future repentance for the death of Christ to the final conversion of the Jews and Gentiles.

The outward difference, that the first prophecy is in visions; the second prophecy is a response to an enquiry made of him; the last two visions, in free delivery, obviously did not depend upon the prophet. The occasion also of the first two bodies of prophecy involved that they were written in prose. For the imagery was borne on the prophet‘s mind in visions. The function of the prophet was only to record them and the explanations given to him of parts of them, which could only be done in prose. So far, he was like the apostles, who enquired of our Lord (when in the flesh) as to the meaning of His parables. There is, as in the later chapters, an abundance of imagery; and it may have pleased God to adapt the form of His revelation to the imaginative mind of the young prophet who was to receive it. But the visions are, as the name implies, pictures which the prophet sees, and which he describes.

Even a rationalist writer saw this.: “Every vision must form a picture, and the description of a vision must have the appearance of being read from a picture. It follows from the nature of the description of a vision, that for the most part it cannot be composed in any elevated language. The simplest prose is the best vehicle for a relation (and such is the description of a vision), and elaborate ornament of language were foreign to it. The beauty, greatness, elevation of a vision, as described, must lie in the conception, or

in the symmetry, or wondrous boldness in the grouping of the images. Is the whole group, piece by piece, in all its parts, to the most minute shading, faithful and described with the character of truth, the exhibition of the vision in words is perfect."

The four portions were probably of different dates, since they stand in order in the prophet's book, as indeed the second portion is dated two years later than the first. For in the first part God's people are exhorted to come from Babylon Zechariah 2:7, which command, many in the time of Ezra, obeyed, and doubtless individuals subsequently, when a prosperous polity was restored; in the latter part, Babylon is mentioned no more; only in one place, in the imagery of earlier prophets, the future gathering of God's people is symbolized under the previous deliverance from West and East, Egypt and Assyria (Zechariah 10:10, compare Isaiah 11:11, Isaiah 11:16; Hosea 11:11).

But they agree in this, that the foreground is no longer, as in the former prophets, deliverance from Babylon. In the first part, the reference to the vision of the four empires in Daniel removes the promise of the Deliverer to the fourth empire. For the series of visions having closed with the vision of the four chariots, there follows at once the symbolic act of placing the crown or crowns on the head of the high priest and the promise of the Messiah, Who should be king and priest Zechariah 6:10-13. In the later part the enemies spoken of are in one place the Greeks Zechariah 9:13, subsequent to the protection of the temple under Alexander; in another, they are the final gathering of all nations against Jerusalem Zechariah 12:2-3, Zechariah 12:9; Zechariah 14:2-3, Zechariah 14:14, Zechariah 14:16, which Joel also places at the end of all things Joel 3:2, after the outpouring of the Spirit, as it was poured out on the day of Pentecost.

In both parts alike, there is no mention of any king or of any earthly ruler; in both, the ruler to come is the Messias. In both, the division of the two kingdoms is gone. The house of Israel and house of Judah are united, not divided; they had been distinct wholes, now they are in interests as one. Zechariah promises a future to both collectively, as did Jeremiah Jeremiah 23:6; Jeremiah 50:20 long after the captivity of Israel, and Ezekiel promised that they should both again be one in the hand of God Ezekiel 37:16-19.

The “brotherhood between Judah and Israel” still existed, after they had weighed the thirty pieces of silver for the Good Shepherd. The captivity, in God‘s Providence, ended at once the kingdom of Israel and the religious schism, the object of which was to maintain the kingdom.

Even before the captivity, “divers of Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem” 2 Chronicles 30:11, to the Passover of Hezekiah; nay, “a great multitude of the people from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun” 2 Chronicles 30:18, who had neglected or despised the first invitation 2 Chronicles 30:10, came subsequently. In the great passover of Josiah, we hear of “all Judah and Israel that were present” 2 Chronicles 35:18. The edict of Cyrus related to the “people of the Lord God of heaven, and was published throughout all his kingdom” Ezra 1:1-2, which included “the cities of the Medes” 2 Kings 17:6, where Israel had been removed. The sacred history is confined to Jerusalem, whence the Gospel was to go forth; yet, even “the sons of Bethel” Ezra 2:2, Ezra 2:28, the center of the rival, idolatrous worship, which was “among the mountains of Ephraim,” were among those of the people of Israel who returned with Zerubbabel. It is inconceivable that, as the material prosperity of Palestine returned, even many of the ten tribes should not have returned to their country.

But place was no condition of the unity of the Church. Those who returned recognized the religious oneness of all the twelve tribes, wherever dispersed. At the dedication of the house of God, they Ezra 6:17 “offered a sin-offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.” At that passover were present, not only “the children of Israel which had come again out of the captivity,” but, “all such as had separated themselves unto them from the defilements of the people of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel” Ezra 6:21, i. e., Israelites, who had been defiled by the heathen idolatries. The “house of David” is mentioned; for of his seed according to the flesh Messiah was to be born, but it is his “house,” not any earthly ruler in it.

In both parts alike, Zechariah connects his prophecies with the former prophets, the fulfillment of whose warnings he impressed upon his people in his opening exhortation to them Zechariah 1:4-6, and in his answer to the

question about keeping the fasts Zechariah 7:7-14 which related to the destruction of the city and temple. In the first part, the title "the Branch" Zechariah 3:8; Zechariah 6:12 is used as a proper name, recalling the title of the Messiah in Isaiah and Jeremiah, "the Branch of the Lord" Isaiah 4:2, "a righteous Branch" Jeremiah 23:5, "a Branch of righteousness" Jeremiah 33:15, whom God would raise up to David. The prophecy of the mutual exhortation of peoples and cities to worship at Jerusalem (Zechariah 8:20-22, compare Micah 4:1-2; Isaiah 2:3) is an echo of those of Isaiah and Micah, prolonging them. The prophecy of the four chariots, the symbol of those world-empires, would be unintelligible without the visions in Daniel which it presupposes.

The union of the offices of priest and king in the Messiah is a renewal of the promise through David (Zechariah 6:13, coll. Psalm 110:1-7). In the last chapters, the continuousness of the prophet's diction admits still more of this interweaving of the former prophecies, and these alike from the earlier and later prophets. The censure of Tyre for its boast of its wisdom is a renewal of that of Ezekiel (Zechariah 9:2, and Ezekiel 28:3); the prophecy against the Philistine cities, of that of Zephaniah Zechariah 9:5; Zephaniah 2:4; the remarkable prediction that, when the king should come to Zion, chariots and horses, not of the enemy but of Judah should be cut off, is renewed from Micah Zechariah 9:10; Micah 5:10; the extent of his peaceful kingdom is from a psalm of Solomon Psalm 72:8; the loosing of the exile from the pit, and God's rendering double unto them, are in Isaiah Zechariah 9:12; Isaiah 51:14; Isaiah 61:7. The description of the sifting, in which, two parts having been cut off; even the remaining third should be anew tried and cleansed, is condensed from Ezekiel, so that, "shall be cut off, shall expire," correspond to the natural and violent deaths, by famine and by the sword, spoken of in Ezekiel. The words, "I have said, it is My people, and it will say, the Lord my God," are almost verbally from Hosea, "I say to not-my-people, thou art My people, and it will say, my God;" only omitting the allusion to the significant name of the prophet's son.: "The first part of Zechariah 14:10, "the whole land shall be turned as a plain from Gebah to Rimmon, and Jerusalem shall be exalted," reminds of Isaiah and Ezekiel; the latter part, "it shall be inhabited in her place from the tower of Hananeel to the king's winepresses, and men shall dwell in it and there shall be no more utter desolation, but Jerusalem shall dwell securely," reminds of

Jeremiah, “The city shall be built to the Lord from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner; it shall not be plucked up nor thrown down any more” Jeremiah 31:38, Jeremiah 31:40.

The words, “and every one that is left of all the nations shall go up to worship the king, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles” Zechariah 14:16, reminds of Isaiah, “From new-moon to his newmoon, and from sabbath to his sabbath shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the Lord” Isaiah 66:23. Zechariah 14:17-19 are an expansion of Isaiah 60:12; Isaiah 5:20 expresses the thought of Ezekiel 43:13: the prophecy Zechariah 14:21, “there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord forever,” refers back to Ezekiel” Ezekiel 44:9. The symbolizing of the Gospel by the life-giving waters which should flow forth from Jerusalem, originally in Joel 3:18, is a miniature of the full picture in Ezekiel Zechariah 14:8; Ezekiel 47:1-13. The promise, “I will cut off the names of the idols from the land and they shall be no more remembered” Zechariah 13:2; Hosea 2:17, in part verbally agrees with that of Hosea, “And I will remove “the names of the” Baalim “from” her mouth, “and they shall be no more remembered” by their names;” only, since the Baal-worship was destroyed by the captivity, the more general name of “idols” is substituted.

Equally, in descriptions not prophetic, the symbolizing of the wicked by the title of the goats, “I punished the goats” Zechariah 10:3; Ezekiel 34:17, is renewed from Ezekiel; “I judge between flock and flock, between the rams and the he-goats.” The description of the shepherds who destroyed their flocks retains from Jeremiah the characteristic expression, “and hold themselves not guilty.” The minuteness of the enumeration of their neglects and cruelties is the same (amid differences of the words whereby it is expressed): “the perishing shall he not visit, those astray shall he not seek, and the broken shall he not heal; the sound shall he not nurture, and the flesh of the fat shall he eat and their claws he shall split” Zechariah 11:16. In Ezekiel, “Ye eat the fat and clothe you with the wool; the fat ye slay; the flock ye feed not; the diseased have ye not healed; and the broken have ye not bound, and the wandering have ye not sought” Ezekiel 34:3-4. The imagery of Obadiah, that Israel should be a flame amidst grain to consume it, is retained; the name of Edom is dropped, for the prophecy relates to a larger gathering of enemies. Zechariah has, “In that day I will make the

governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among wood and like a lamp of fire in a sheaf of corn, and they shall eat on the right hand and on the left all nations round about" Zechariah 12:6: Obadiah; "The house of Jacob shall be ‹fire‘ and the house of Jacob a ‹flame,‘ and the house of Esau stubble, and it shall kindle on them and shall eat them" Obadiah 1:18. Even so slight an expression as "the pride of Jordan" Zechariah 11:3, as designating the cane-break around it, is unique to Jeremiah Jeremiah 12:5; Jeremiah 49:19; Jeremiah 50:44.

Zechariah is eminently an Evangelic prophet, as much as Isaiah, and equally in both portions.

The use of different words in unlike subjects is a necessary consequence of that unlikeness. In contrast with that pseudo-criticism, which counts up the unlike words in different chapters of a prophet, the different words used by the same modern poet have been counted. A finer perception will see the correspondence of a style, when the rhythm, subject, words, are different. No one familiar with English poetry could doubt that "the Bard," and "the Elegy in a country Churchyard," however different in subject and style and words, were by the same hand, judging alone from the labored selection of the epithets, however different. Yet, there is not one characteristic word or idiom which occurs in both. But the recurrence of the same or like words or idioms, if unusual elsewhere, is a subordinate indication of sameness of authorship.

They are thus enumerated by the writers who have answered the attacks on the authorship of Zechariah.

"Common to both parts are the idioms, from him who goeth and from him who returneth, which do not occur elsewhere; the whole Jewish people are throughout designated as "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" Zechariah 8:13, or "the house of Judah and the house of Joseph" Zechariah 10:6, or "Judah Israel and Jerusalem" (Zechariah 1:19, (Zechariah 2:2, Hebrew)), or "Ephraim and Jerusalem" Zechariah 9:10, or "Judah and Ephraim" Zechariah 9:13, or "Judah and Israel" Zechariah 11:14. There is in both parts the appeal to future knowledge of God‘s doings to be obtained by experience Zechariah 2:13; Zechariah 11:11; in both, internal discord is

directly attributed to God, whose Providence permits it Zechariah 8:10; Zechariah 11:6; in both the prophet promises God's gifts of the produce of the earth Zechariah 8:12; Zechariah 10:1; in both he bids Jerusalem burst out for joy; in the first, "for lo, God says, I come and will dwell in the midst of thee" (Zechariah 2:1-13:14, (10, English)); in the second, "behold thy King cometh unto thee" Zechariah 9:9.

The purity of language is alike in both parts of the book. No one Syriasm occurs in the earlier chapters. The prophet, who returned as a child to Judea, formed his language upon that of the older prophets.

In both there is a certain fullness of language, produced by dwelling on the same thought or word; in both, the whole and its parts are, for emphasis, mentioned together. In both parts, as a consequence of this fullness, there occurs the division of the verse into live sections, contrary to the usual rule of Hebrew parallelism.

This rhythm will appear more vividly in instances;
"And He shall build the temple of the Lord;
And He shall bear majesty;
And he shall sit and rule on his throne;

And he shall be a priest on his throne;

And a counsel of peace shall be between them both.
Zechariah 6:13
Ashkelon shall see, and shall fear;
Gaza, and shall tremble exceedingly;
And Ekron, and ashamed is her expectation;

And perished hath a king from Gaza,

And Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.
Zechariah 9:5
And I will take away his blood from his mouth;
And his abominations from between his teeth;
And he too shall be left to our God,

And he shall be as a govenor in Judah;

And Ekron as a Jebusite.
Zechariah 9:7
"In that day, saith the Lord,
I will smite every horse with astonishment,
And his rider with madness;

And upon the house of Judah I will open my eyes,

And every horse of the nations I will smite with blindness."
Zechariah 12:4

Koster further refers to Zechariah 1:4, Zechariah 1:17; Zechariah 3:5, Zechariah 3:9 and, on the other hand, to Zechariah 9:9-10, Zechariah 9:13, Zechariah 9:15; Zechariah 10:11; Zechariah 11:2, Zechariah 11:7, Zechariah 11:9, Zechariah 11:17; Zechariah 12:10; Zechariah 14:4, Zechariah 14:8.

With one considerable exception, those who would sever the six last chapters from Zechariah, are now at one in placing them before the captivity. Yet, Zechariah here too speaks of the captivity as past. Adopting the imagery of Isaiah, who foretells the delivery from the captivity as an opening of a prison, he says, in the name of God, "By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" Zechariah 9:11. Again, "The Lord of hosts hath visited His flock, the house of Judah. I will have mercy upon them (Judah and Joseph) and they shall be as though I had not cast them off" Zechariah 10:3-5. The mention of the mourning of all the "families that remain" Zechariah 12:14 implies a previous carrying away. Yet more; Zechariah took his imagery of the future restoration of Jerusalem, from its condition in his own time. "It shall be lifted up and inhabited in its place from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner-gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses" Zechariah 14:10. "The gate of Benjamin" is doubtless "the gate of Ephraim," since the road to Ephraim lay through Benjamin; but the gate of Ephraim existed in Nehemiah's time Nehemiah 8:16; Nehemiah 12:39, yet was not then repaired, as neither was the tower of Hananeel Nehemiah 3:1, having been left, doubtless, at the destruction of Jerusalem,

being useless for defense, when the wall was broken down. So at the second invasion the Romans left the three impregnable towers, of Hippicus, Phasaelus, and Mariamne, as monuments of the greatness of the city which they had destroyed. Benjamin‘s gate, the corner gate, the tower of Hananeel, were still standing; “the king‘s winepresses” were naturally uninjured, since there was no use in injuring them; but “the first gate” was destroyed, since not itself but “the place” of it is mentioned.

The prophecy of the victory over the Greeks fits in with times when Assyria or Chaldaea were no longer the instruments of God in the chastisement of His people. The notion that the prophet incited the few Hebrew slaves, sold into Greece, to rebel against their masters, is so absurd, that one wonders that any one could have ventured to forge it and put it upon a Hebrew prophet.

Since, moreover, all now, who sever the six last chapters from the preceding, also divide these six into two halves, the evidence that the six chapters are from one author is a separate ground against their theory. Yet, not only are they connected by the imagery of the people as the flock of God Zechariah 9:16; Zechariah 10:3, whom God committed to the hand of the Good Shepherd Zechariah 11:4-14, and on their rejecting Him, gave them over to an evil shepherd Zechariah 11:15-17; but the Good Shepherd is One with God Zechariah 11:7-12; Zechariah 13:7. The poor of the flock, who would hold to the Shepherd, are designated by a corresponding word.

A writer has been at pains to show that two different conditions of things are foretold in the two prophecies. Granted. The first, we believe, has its foreground in the deliverance during the conquests of Alexander, and under the Maccabees, and leads on to the rejection of the true Shepherd and God‘s visitation on the false. The later relates to a later repentance and later visitation of God, in part yet future. By what law is a prophet bound down to speak of one future only?

For those who criticize the prophets, resolve all prophecy into mere “anticipation” of what might, or might not be, denying to them all certain knowledge of any future, it is but speaking plainly, when they imagine the author of the three last chapters to have “anticipated” that God would

interpose miraculously to deliver Jerusalem, then, when it was destroyed. It would have been in direct contradiction to Jeremiah, who for 39 years in one unbroken dirge predicted the evil which should come upon Jerusalem. The prophecy, had it preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, could not have been earlier than the reign of the wretched Jehoiakim, since the mourning for the death of Josiah is spoken of as a proverbial sorrow of the past. This invented prophet then would have been one of the false prophets, who contradicted Jeremiah, prophesying good, while Jeremiah prophesied evil; who encouraged Zedekiah in his perjury, the punishment whereof Ezekiel solemnly denounced Ezekiel 13:10-19, prophesying his captivity in Babylon as its penalty; he would have been one of those, of whom Jeremiah said that they spake lies Jeremiah 14:14; Jeremiah 23:22; Jeremiah 27:15; Jeremiah 28:15; Jeremiah 29:8-9 in the name of the Lord. It was not "anticipation" on either side.

It was the statement of those who spoke more certainly than we could say, "the sun will rise tomorrow." They were the direct contradictories of one another. The false prophets said, "the Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace" Jeremiah 8:11; Jeremiah 23:17; the true, "they have said, ‹Peace, peace,‘ when there is no peace" Ezekiel 13:2-10; the false said, "sword and famine shall not be in the land" Jeremiah 14:15; the true "By sword and famine shall their prophets be consumed;" the false said, "ye shall not serve the king of Babylon; thus saith the Lord, even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years" Jeremiah 27:9-14; Jeremiah 28:11; the true, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and all nations shall serve him, and his son and his son‘s son" Jeremiah 27:4, Jeremiah 27:6-7. The false said, "I will bring again to this place Jeconiah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon" Jeremiah 28:4; the true, "I will cast thee out and the mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born, and there ye shall die. But to the land, whereunto they desire to return, thither they shall not return" Jeremiah 22:26-27. The false said; "The vessels of the Lord‘s house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon" Jeremiah 27:16; the true "the residue of the vessels that remain in this city, - they shall be carried to Babylon" Jeremiah 27:19-22.

If the writer of the three last chapters had lived just before the destruction of Jerusalem in those last reigns, he would have been a political fanatic, one of those who, by encouraging rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, brought on the destruction of the city, and, in the name of God, told lies against God. "That which is most peculiar in this prophet," says one, "is the uncommon high and pious hope of the deliverance of Jerusalem and Judah, notwithstanding all visible greatest dangers and threatenings. At a time when Jeremiah, in the walls of the capital, already despairs of any possibility of a successful resistance to the Chaldees and exhorts to tranquility, this prophet still looks all these dangers straight in the face with swelling spirit and divine confidence, holds, with unbowed spirit, firm to the like promises of older prophets, as 2 Chronicles 26:6, and some imagined "attitude of Jeroboam II against Damascus and Hamath," or "a concealed denunciation against Persia," against which Zechariah did not wish to prophesy openly, or to have had no special meaning at all.

It is marvelous, on what slight data this modern school has satisfied itself that these chapters were written before the captivity. To take the statement of an epitomator of German pseudo-criticism: "Damascus, Tyre, and Sidon, Philistia, Javan Zechariah 9:1, Zechariah 9:6-12 Assyria and Egypt Zechariah 10:10 are the enemies of Judah." "The historial stand-point is different from that of Zechariah 13:1." The "house," not the kingdom. The house existed after the captivity. Zerubbabel, whom the Persians made governor, was its representative.

"Idols and false prophets (Zechariah 10:2; Zechariah 13:2 etc.) harmonize only with a time prior to the exile."

Idolatry certainly was not the prevailing national sin, after God had taught the people through the captivity. It is commonly taken for granted, that there was "none." But where is the proof? Malachi would hardly have laid the stress on "marrying the daughters of a strange god" Malachi 2:11, had there been no danger that the marriage would lead to idolatry. Nehemiah 13:26 Nehemiah speaks of the sin, into which Solomon was seduced by "outlandish women," as likely to recur through the heathen marriages; but idolatry was that sin. Half of the children could only speak

the language of their mothers Nehemiah 13:23-24. It were strange, if they had not imbibed their mothers‘ idolatry, too. In a battle in the Maccabee war, it is related “under the coats of every one that was slain they found things consecrated to the idols of the Jamnites, which is forbidden the Jews by their law” (Zechariah 10:2); much as people now, who more or less earnestly have their fortunes told, would be surprised at being called idolaters. But Zechariah was probably speaking of sins which had brought on the captivity, not of his own day. The prediction repeated from an older prophet, that in the true Judah, the Church, God would cut off even the names and the memory of idols, does not imply that they existed.

False prophets continued after the captivity. Shemaiah, who “uttered a prophecy against” Nehemiah, “the prophetess Noadiah,” and “the rest of the prophets,” are known to us from Nehemiah‘s relation Nehemiah 6:12, Nehemiah 6:14. Such there were before our Lord came, of whom He said, that they “were thieves and robbers” John 10:8: He warned against them, as “coming in sheep‘s clothing,” but “inwardly they are ravening wolves” Matthew 7:15; He foretold that “many false prophets shall arise and deceive many” Matthew 24:11, Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22; the Acts tell us of the “false prophet Acts 13:6, a Jew, Bar-jesus;” and “Theudas,” and “Judas” of Galilee Acts 5:36-37. John says, “many false prophets have gone out into the world” 1 John 4:1. False prophets aggravated the resistance to the Romans and the final destruction of Jerusalem.

“The mention of a king or kingdom, in Zechariah 11:6; Zechariah 13:7, does not suit the age of Zechariah.”

Zechariah had already implied that they had no king then, for he had bidden Zion to rejoice that her king “would come” to her; accordingly she had none. In Zechariah 11:6, God says, “I will no more pity the land; I will deliver man, every one into the hand of his king.” It is an event, not of the prophet‘s time, but of the future; in Zechariah 13:7, there is no mention of any king at all.

Such being the entire absence of proof that these chapters were written before the captivity, the proof that Zechariah 11:6, compare Isaiah 9:20; Isaiah 49:26; Jeremiah 19:9.) relates to civil confusion, such as is foretold

also, with the same metaphor, by Isaiah and Jeremiah. The choice was large, since the kingdom of Israel had the curse of discord and irreligion entailed upon it, and no king ventured to cut off the entail by cutting off the central sin, the worship of the calves, which were to consolidate it by a worship, the rival of that at Jerusalem. Of the 18 kings between Jeroboam and Hosea, 9, including Tibni, died violent deaths.

The choice was directed to Menahem, because of the words in Zechariah, "three shepherds also I cut off in one month," and Shallum murdered Zachariah the son of Jeroboam; and he himself, after he had "reigned a full month in Samaria," was murdered by Menahem. Here, then, were two kings cut off: But the third? Imagination is to supply it. One conjectures Menahem; but "he" reigned 10 years, and so, he invents a meaning for the word, that the prophet does not mean "cut off," but "denied" them, leaving it open whether he meant "removed" or merely "did not acknowledge them, as Menahem at first certainly found no recognition with the prophetic order" 2 Kings 15:16, 2 Kings 15:19; another imagined "some third rival of Zachariah and Shallum, of whom there is no mention in the historical books;" but there is no room for a third king, since Shallum murdered Zachariah; and Menahem, Shallum; another found in Hebrew words have signified "before the people publicly assembled together."

The Syro-Hexaplar version by Paul of Tela translates the words, and introduces "Kebdaam" with Origen's asterism, and so, as not belonging to the Septuagint The Alexandrian and two other manuscripts (one of Constantinople cent. x.) also retain the rendering. The singular "conspired," which excludes "Keblaam" from the place which it commonly occupies, occurs in 3 manuscripts, the Syro-Hex. Georg. Slav-Ostrog. Versions and the Complutensian; "and smote him" is also sing. in 3 manuscripts and Compl. The word "Keblaam" was doubtless only the Hebrew words, written by one, who did not know how to translate them, and is variously written and placed as if the scribes did not know what to do with it. Four manuscripts make it the name of a place, "in Ieblaam." They are retained in the place of the Hebrew words in the Vat. manuscript, but more commonly are added to "Shallum son of Jabis:" in some manuscripts and a note in the Syr. Hexapla, they are followed by "and Selem or Selem his father."

They are written, “Kebdaam, Kebdiam, Kebdam, Kaddaam, Kaibdaam, Keblaam, Keddaam, Kebdaan, Ieblaam, Iebaan, Iebdaam Bdaam, Beldaam.” See the Septuagint ed. Parsons) which had crept into the Septuagint, an usurper Kobal-am, of whom he says truly, “we hear nothing;” another conceived of some usurper after the murder of Zachariah or of Shallum (this is left free), who about this time “may” have set himself at the head of the kingdom, but scarcely maintained himself some weeks; another says, “This refers probably to the Interregnum 784-773, in which many “may” have set themselves as kings, but none have maintained themselves.” Another “An anti-king “may” at this time have set himself up in other parts of the kingdom, whom Menahem overthrew as he did that murderer.” Others say of the whole, “The symbolical representation, Zechariah 11:3 ff, admits of no detailed explanation, but can be understood only as a whole. It describes the evil condition of Judah under Ahaz.” Another, equally certain that it relates to Ahaz, says, “the three shepherds, who peished in one and the same month, were probably men who, in the long anarchy before Hosea ascended the throne, contended for the sceptre.”

Yet, another is so confident in this interpretation as to the three kings, Shallum, Zechariah and Menahem, that, whereas the book of Kings says expressly that Shallum reigned “a full month” 2 Kings 15:13 literally, “a month of days,” the commentator says, “The month cannot have been full; Zechariah 11:8 evidently refers to the three Kings, Sachariah, Sallum and Menahem,” while others will have it that Zechariah by “one month” means some indefinite space more than a month. This is indeed required (although not stated) by all these theories, since Shallum alone reigned “a full month,” and, consequently, the other two kings (if intended at all by the term “shepherds”) must have been cut off at some period, outside of that “one month.”

Truly, theory is a very exacting taskmaster, though strangely fascinating. It is to be one of the triumphs of the neo-criticism to distinguish between the authorship of 2 Kings 15:8-14. The succession of murders was not so rapid as when Zimri had murdered Elah, Baasha‘s son, and after reigning 7 days, committed suicide, lest he should fall into the hands of Omri 1 Kings 16:15-18. Elah and Zimri were cut off in one month; Zachariah and Shallum, in two. But in neither case was there any visible result, except a

partial retribution of God‘s justice. The last executioner of God‘s justice “slept with his fathers;” his retribution was after death. He was not cut off. And this is the proof, which is to supplant the testimony to Jesus. The Apostle‘s words come true, as so often beside: “They shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables” 2 Timothy 4:4.

“Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way, yet saidst thou not, there is no hope” Isaiah 57:10. One should have thought that some must have, at times, thought of the old days, when the prophecy was interpreted of the Good Shepherd and of the 30 pieces of silver which were the price of His Blood, and which were cast into the house of the Lord Matthew 26:14-16; Matthew 27:3-10. But this would have been fatal to “historical criticism,” whose province was to find out events of the prophet‘s own day to fill up the words of prophecy.

The human authorship of any books of Holy Scripture, and so of these chapters of Zechariah is, in itself, a matter which does not concern the soul. It is an untrue imputation, that the date of books of the Bible is converted into matter of faith. In this case Jesus has not set His seal upon it; God the Holy Spirit has not declared it. But, as in other cases, what lay as the foundation of the theory was the unbelief that God, in a way above nature, when it seemed good to Him, revealed a certain future to His creature man. It is the postulate, (or axiom, as appears to these critics), that there is no superhuman prophecy, which gives rise to their eagerness, to place these and other prophetic books or portions of books where they can say to themselves that they do not involve such prophecy. To believers it has obviously no religious interest, at what time it pleased Almighty God to send any of His servants the prophets. Not the dates assigned by any of these self-devouring theories, but the grounds alleged in support of those dates, as implying unbelief in God‘s revelation of Himself, make the question one of religious interest, namely, to show that these theories are as unsubstantial as their assumed base is baseless.

It is an infelicity of the modern German mind, that it is acute in observing detailed differences, rather than comprehensive in grasping deeper resemblances. It has been more busied in discovering what is new than in observing the grounds of what is true. It does not, somehow, acquire

the power of balancing evidence, which is habitual to the practical minds of our own countrymen. To take an instance of criticism, apart from theology, the genuineness of a work of Plato.

"The genuineness of the Laws," says their recent translator, "is sufficiently proved by more than 20 citations of them in the writings of Aristotle (whom Plato designated "the intellect of the school," and who must have been intimate with him for some 17 years) who was residing at Athens during the last years of the life of Plato, and who returned to Athens at the time when he was himself writing his Politics and Constitutions;

(2) by the allusion of Isocrates, writing 346 b.c., a year after the death of Plato, and not more than 2 or 3 years after the composition of the Laws:

(3) by the reference of the comic poet Alexis, a younger contemporary of Plato (356 b.c.);

(4) by the unanimous voice of later antiquity, and the absence of any suspicion among ancient writers worth noticing."

Yet, German acuteness has found out reasons why the treatise should not be Plato's. Those reasons are plausible, as most untrue things are. As put together carefully by one who still attaches no weight to them, they look like a parody of the arguments, produced by Germans to tear in pieces the books of Holy Scripture. Mutatis mutandis, they have such an absurdly ludicrous resemblance, that it provokes a smile. Some 50 years ago, there was a tradition at Gottingen, where Heyne had lived, that he attributed the non-reception of the theories as to Homer in England to the English Bishops, who "apprehended that the same principle would be applied to Holy Scripture." Now, for half a century more, both sets of critics have had full scope. The Classical sceptics seem to me to have the advantage. Anyone who knew only a little of the uncritical criticism applied to the sacred books could imagine what a jubilee of triumph it would have occasioned if such differences as those pointed out between "the Laws" and other treatises of Plato could have been pointed out to detach any book of Holy Scripture from its traditional writer. Yet it is held inadequate by one, of whom an admirer said, that "his pecliar mode of criticism cut the very

sinews of belief." I insert the criticisms, (omitting the details of illustration) because their failure may open the eyes of some to the utter valuelessness of this sort of criticism. The accuracy of the criticisms is not questioned; the statements are not said to be exaggerated; yet, they are held invalid. The question then comes with great force to the conscience; "Why, rejecting arguments so forcible as to a treatise of Plato, do I accept arguments very inferior, as to such or such a book of the Old or New Testament, - certain chapters of Isaiah, or Ecclesiastes, or these chapters of Zechariah, or the Epistle to the Hebrews, or the Revelation of John - except on grounds of theology, not of criticism, and how am I true to myself in rejecting such arguments as to human books, and accepting them as to divine books?"

d **A Table of Dates, which in the 19th Century Have Been Assigned to 2 Kings 15:19 and the capture of Damascus by Tiglath-Pileser 2 Kings 16:9 i. e., between the 40th of Uzziah and the 3rd of AhazKnobel**

d

d Zechariah 13:7-9In the first 10 years of Pekah before the war with Ahaz (i. e. between b.c. 759-749)Ewald

d

d Zechariah 10:1-12Perhaps contemporary with Zephaniah (in the time of Josiah).DeWette

d

d Zech. 11Might be put in the time of AhazId.

d

d Zechariah 10:1-12Ahaz, soon after war with Pekah and Rezin.Bleek

d

d Zechariah 11:1-3Invasion of some Assyrian king.

d

d Zechariah 12:4-17Menahem, and the end of Uzziah.

d

d Zechariah 10:1-12Between 739-731 b.c., the 7 years‘ anarchy between Hosea‘s murder of Pekah and his own accession.

d

d Zechariah 10:1-12. The Anarchy after death of Jeroboam II. (b.c. v. 784-772) Ortenberg.

d

d Zechariah 11:1-3Zechariah 11:4-17; Zechariah 13:7-9Shortly after the war of Pekah and Rezin.

d

d Zechariah 910Not before Jeroboam, nor before Uzziah‘s accession, but before the death of Zechariah son of JeroboamHitzig

d

d Zechariah 11Beginning of reign of MenahemHitzig

d

d Possibly contemporary with HoseaBauer

d

d Zechariah 9After capture of Damascus by Tiglath-PileserMovers

d

d Zech. 1214Manasseh, in view of a siege by Esarhaddonce

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

In the eighth month - oThe date joins on Zechariah‘s prophecy to those of Haggai. Two months before, “in the sixth month” Haggai 1:1, had Haggai, conjointly with Zechariah Ezra 5:1-2, exhorted Zerubbabel and the people to resume the intermitted building of the temple. These had used such diligence, notwithstanding the partial discouragement of the Persian Government, that God gave them “in the seventh month” Ezra 5:3-5, the magnificent promise of the later glory of the temple through the coming of Christ Haggai 2:1-9. Still, as Haggai too warned them, the conversion was not complete. So Zechariah in the eighth, as Haggai in the ninth Haggai 2:10-14 month, urges upon them the necessity of thorough and inward repentance, as the condition of partaking of those promises.

Osorius: “Thrice in the course of one saying, he mentions the most holy name of God; partly to instruct in the knowledge of Three Persons in one Nature, partly to confirm their minds more strongly in the hope of the salvation to come.”

Verse 2

Wroth was the Lord against your fathers with wrath - othat is, a wrath which was indeed such, whose greatness he does not further express, but leaves to their memories to supply. Cyril: “Seest thou how he scares them, and, setting before the young what befell those before them, drives them to amend, threatening them with the like or more grievous ills, unless they would wisely reject their fathers‘ ways, esteeming the pleasing of God worthy of all thought and care. He speaks of great wrath. For it indicates no slight displeasure that He allowed the Babylonians to waste all Judah and Samaria, burn the holy places and destroy Jerusalem, remove the elect Israel to a piteous slavery in a foreign land, severed from sacrifices, entering the holy court no more nor offering the thank-offering, or tithes, or first-fruits of the law, but precluded by necessity and, fear even from the duty of celebrating his prescribed and dearest festivals. The like we might address to the Jewish people, if we would apply it to the mystery of Christ. For after they had “killed the prophets” and had “crucified the Lord of glory” Himself, they were captured and destroyed; their famed temple was levelled, and Hosea‘s words were fulfilled in them; “The children of Israel

shall abide many days without a king and without a prince, without a sacrifice and without an image, without an ephod and without teraphim".

Verse 3

Therefore say thou - Literally, "And thou sayest," that is, this having been so, it follows that thou sayest or must say, "Turn ye unto Me." In some degree they had turned to God, for whose sake they had returned to their land; and again when, after some negligence Haggai 1:2-11, they renewed the building of the temple, and God had said, "I am with you" Haggai 1:13. But there needed yet a more inward, more complete turning, whereon God promises a yet nearer presence, as Malachi repeats the words Malachi 3:7, and James exhorts, "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you" James 4:8. Those who have turned to God need ever to turn more into the center of the narrow way. As the soul opens itself more to God, God, whose communication of Himself is ever hindered only by our closing the door of our hearts against Him, enters more into it. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" John 14:23.

Osorius: "People are said to be converted, when leaving behind them deceitful goods, they give their whole mind to God, bestowing no less pains and zeal on divine things than before on the nothings of life."

Conc. Trid. Sess. vi. c. 5: "When it is said in Holy Scripture, "Turn unto Me and I will turn unto you," we are admonished as to our own freedom; when we answer, "Turn us, Lord, unto Thee, and we shall be turned," we confess that we are forecome by the grace of God."

Verse 4

Be ye not like your fathers - Strangely infectious is the precedent of ill. Tradition of good, of truth, of faith, is decried; only tradition of ill and error are adhered to. The sin of Jeroboam was held sacred by every king of Israel: "The statutes of Omri were diligently kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab" Micah 6:16. "They turned back and were treacherous like their forefathers; they turned themselves like a deceitful bow" Psalm 78:57, is God's summary of the history of Israel. Cyril: "Absurd are they who follow the ignorances of their fathers, and ever plead inherited custom as an irrefragable defense, though blamed for extremest ills. So idolaters especially, being called to the knowledge of the truth, ever bear in mind the

error of their fathers and, embracing their ignorance as an hereditary lot, remain blind."

The former prophets - The prophets spake God's words, as well in their pastoral office as in predicting things to come, in enforcing God's law and in exhorting to repentance, as in announcing the judgments on disobedience. The predictive as well as the pastoral office were united in Nathan 2 Samuel 7:4-16; 2 Samuel 12:1-14, Gad 1 Samuel 22:5; 1 Samuel 24:11, Shemaiah 2 Chronicles 11:2-4; 2 Chronicles 12:5-8, Azariah 2 Chronicles 16:7-9, Elijah 1 Kings 17:1, 1 Kings 17:14; 1 Kings 18:1, 1 Kings 18:41; 1 Kings 21:19, 1 Kings 21:21, 1 Kings 21:23, 1 Kings 21:29; 2 Kings 1:4, 2 Kings 1:16, Elisha 2 Kings 3:17-18; 2 Kings 4:16; 2 Kings 5:27; 2 Kings 7:1-2; 2 Kings 8:10-13; 2 Kings 13:14-19, Micaiah the son of Imla, whose habitual predictions against Ahab induced Ahab to say 1 Kings 22:8, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." The specific calls to conversion here named and their fruitlessness, are summed up by Jeremiah as words of all the prophets. For ten years he says, "The word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking, and ye have not hearkened. And the Lord hath sent unto you all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending; but ye have not hearkened nor inclined your ear to hear. They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil ways and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord hath given unto you and to your fathers forever and ever; and go not after other gods to serve and worship them, and provoke Me not to anger with the works of your hands, and I will do you no hurt. But ye have not hearkened unto Me, saith the Lord; that ye might provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt. Therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Because ye have not heard My words … " Jeremiah 25:3-8. The prophetic author of the book of Kings sums up in like way, of "all the prophets and all the seers." "The Lord testified against Israel and against Judah by the hand of all the prophets and all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets, and they did not hear, and hardened their neck, like the neck of their fathers" 2 Kings 17:13.

The characteristic word, "turn from your evil ways and the evil of your doings" occurring in Jeremiah, it is probable, that this summary was chiefly

in the mind of Zechariah, and that he refers not to Isaiah, Joel, Amos etc., (as all the prophets were preachers of repentance), but to the whole body of teachers, whom God raised up, analogous to the Christian ministry, to recall people to Himself.

The title, "the former prophets," contrasts the office of Haggai and Zechariah, not with definite prophets before the captivity, but with the whole company of those, whom God sent as He says, so unremittingly.

And they hearkened not unto Me - Jerome: "They heard not the Lord warning through the prophets, attended not - not to the prophets who spake to them but - not to Me, saith the Lord. For I was in them who spake and was despised. Whence also the Lord in the Gospel saith, "He that receiveth you, receiveth Me" Matthew 10:40.

Verse 5

Your fathers, where are they? - The abrupt solemnity of the question seems to imply an unexpected close of life which cut short their hopes, plans, promises to self. "When they said, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them" 1 Thessalonians 5:3. Yet not they only but the prophets too, who ministered God's Word to them, these also being human beings, passed away, some of them before their time as people, by the martyr's death. Many of them saw not their own words fulfilled. But God's word which they spake, being from God, passed not away.

Verse 6

Only My words and My decrees - Which God spake by them, "did not they overtake them?" (as Psalm 2:7; Zephaniah 2:2). Pagan reminiscence of God's justice acknowledged, "Rarely hath punishment with limping tread parted with the forerunning miscreant." "All these curses," Moses foretells, "shall come upon thee and overtake thee, until thou art destroyed" Deuteronomy 28:45.

And they returned to God and said - The history of the Jews in Babylon is omitted in Holy Scripture, except as to His special dealings with Daniel and his three companions. Yet Jeremiah confesses in words, what Zechariah had apparently in his mind; "The Lord hath done that which He purposed; He hath fulfilled His word, which He commanded in the days of old" Lamentations 2:17. The Lamentations are one long confession of deserved punishment, such as Daniel too made in the name of his people with himself Daniel 9:4-16.

It was one long waiting for God and for the restoration of His visible worship. Yet repentance was a condition of their restoration.

Verse 7

On the twenty-fourth day - Exactly five months after the building of the temple was resumed Haggai 2:15, and two months after Haggai's last prophecy Haggai 2:20. The series of visions, leading onward, from the first deliverance from the enemies who oppressed them, to the Coming of Christ, is given as a reward to their first whole-hearted endeavor to restore their worship of Him. The visions are called the "word of the Lord," because they were prophecy, made visible to the eye, conveying the revelation to the soul, and in part explained by Him.

Verse 8

I saw in the night - that is, that following on "the twenty-fourth day." The darkness of the night perhaps was chosen, as agreeing with the dimness of the restored condition. Night too is, Dionysius), "through the silence of the senses and of the fancy, more suited for receiving divine revelations."

A man riding upon a red horse - The man is an angel of God, appearing in form of man, as Daniel says, "The man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, touched me" Daniel 9:21. He is doubtless the same who appeared to Joshua in form of man, preparing thereby for the revelation of God manifest in the flesh - He, before whom Joshua fell on his face and in him worshiped God, through whom also God required the same tokens of reverence as He had from Moses. "Joshua lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold there stood a man over against him with a sword drawn in his hand, who said, as Captain of the Lord's host am I come" (Joshua 5:13-15. See the note on "the Angel of the Lord" in Dr. Pusey's Daniel the Prophet, pp. 519-525). He rides here, as Leader of the host who follow Him; to Him the others report, and He instructs the Angel who instructs the prophet. Red, being the color of blood, symbolizes doubtless "the vengeance of God to be inflicted on the enemies of the Jews for their sins committed against the Jews" (Dionysius), exceeding the measure of chastisement allowed by God. It probably was Michael Daniel 10:13, who is entitled in Daniel, "your prince Daniel 10:21, the great prince which standeth up for the children of thy people".

And he was standing - Almost as we say, stationary, abiding in that one place. The description is repeated Zechariah 1:10 apparently as identifying

this angel, and so he and the "angel of the Zechariah 1:11 Lord" are probably one.

The myrtle trees - from their fragrance and lowness, probably symbolize the Church, as at once yielding a sweet odor, and in a low estate, or lowly. The natural habits of the myrtle make it the fitter symbol.

And behind him - The relation of the Angel as their chief is represented by their following him. This is consistent with their appearing subsequently as giving report to him. The red and white horses are well-known symbols of war and glory, whence He who sits on "the white horse" Revelation 6:2 in the revelations, "went forth conquering and to conquer." The remaining color is somewhat uncertain. If it be ashen gray, it would correspond to the pale horse of the revelations, and the union of the two colors, black and white, is calculated to be a symbol of a chequered state of things, whereas a mingled color like "chestnut" is not suggestive of any symbol.

Verse 9

What are these? - He asks, not who, but what they import.

The angel that talked with me - Literally, "spake in me." The very rare expression seems meant to convey the thought of an inward speaking, whereby the words should be borne directly into the soul, without the intervention of the ordinary outward organs. God says to Moses, "If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make Myself known unto him in a vision, I will speak (literally) in him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so - In him will I speak mouth to mouth Numbers 12:6-9;" and Habakkuk says of the like inward teaching, "I will watch to see, what He will speak in me". It is the characteristic title of one attendant-angel, who was God's expositor of the visions to Zechariah (Zechariah 1:13-14, Zechariah 1:19, (Zechariah 2:2 Hebrew) Zechariah 2:3; (7) Zechariah 4:1, Zechariah 4:4-5; Zechariah 5:5, Zechariah 5:10; Zechariah 6:4). Dionysius: "By his ministry God showed me things to come, in that that angel formed in the spirit and imaginative power of Zechariah phantasms or images of things which were foreshown him, and gave him to understand what those images signified."

Verse 10

And the man answered - To the question addressed to the attendant-angel. He himself took the word.

These are they whom the Lord sent to walk up and down - Satan says of himself that he came "from going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it" Job 2:2. As he for evil, so these for good. Their

office was not a specific or passing duty, as when God sent His angels with some special commission, such as those recorded in Holy Scripture. It was a continuous conversation with the affairs of people, a minute course of visiting, inspecting our human deeds and ways, a part of the "wonderful order", in which God has "ordained and constituted the services of angels and men." Nor is it said that the angels were limited, each to his own special province, as we learn through Daniel, that certain great angels, princes among them, had the charge of empires or nations, even of the pagan. These angels had apparently only the office of inspecting and reporting to angels of a higher order, themselves a subordinate order in the heavenly Hierarchy. Nor are they spoken of, as executing any judgments of God, or as pacifying the earth; they may have been so employed; but they are only said to have reported the state in which they found it.

These answered the unexpressed inquiry of the angel of the Lord, as he had answered the unuttered question of the angel, attendant on Zechariah.

Verse 11

Sitteth still and is at rest - At rest, as the word seems to express, from its accustomed state of tumult and war. Wars, although soon to break out again, were in the second year of Darius for the time suspended. The rest, in which the world was, suggests the contrast of the yet continuing unrest allotted to the people of God. Such rest had been promised to Israel, on its return from the captivity, but had not yet been fulfilled. Through the hostility of the Samaritans the building of the temple had been hindered and was just recommenced; the wall of Jerusalem was yet broken down Nehemiah 1:3; its fire-burned gates not restored; itself was a waste Nehemiah 2:3; its houses unbuilt Nehemiah 7:4. This gives occasion to the intercession "of the Angel of the Lord."

Verse 12

And the Angel of the Lord answered - the implied longing, by intercession with God. As the angel-interpreter in Job had "the office of no mere created angel, but one, anticipative of His, who came at once to redeem and justify," so the Angel of the Lord, in whom God was, exercised at once a mediatorial office with God, typical of our Lord's high priest's prayer Jeremiah 25:11-12; Jeremiah 29:10, were on the eve of their conclusion at the time of Daniel's great prayer of intercession Daniel 9:2; they ended with the capture of Babylon, and the edict of Cyrus, permitting

the Jews to return 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1. Yet there seems to have been a secondary fulfillment, from the destruction of the temple and city, in Zedekiah‘s eleventh year 2 Kings 25:2, 2 Kings 25:8-9,588 b.c. to the second year of Darius, 519 b.c. Such double fulfillments of prophecy are not like alternative fulfillments. They are a more intricate and fuller, not an easier fulfillment of it. Yet “these 70 years” do not necessitate such a double fulfillment. It might express only a reverent wonder, that the 70 years being accomplished, the complete restoration was not yet brought to pass. Cyril: “God having fixed the time of the captivity to the 70th year, it was necessary to be silent, so long as the time was not yet come to an end, that he might not seem to oppose the Lord‘s will. But, when the time was now come to a close and the fear of offending was removed, he, knowing that the Lord cannot lie, entreats and ventures to enquire whether His anger has come to an end, as had those who sinned; or whether, fresh sins having accrued, there shall be a further delay, and their forlorn estate shall be yet further extended. They then who worship God have a good and not uncertain hope, that, if they should offend from infirmity, yet have they those who should entreat for them, not people only, but the holy angels themselves, who render God gracious and propitious, soothing His anger by their purity, and in a manner winning the grieved judge. Then the Angel entreated for the synagogue to the Jews; but we, who believe and have been sanctified in the Spirit 1 John 2:1-2, “have an Advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins,” and as the inspired Paul writes, “God hath set Him forth as a propitiation through faith, freeing from sin those who come to Him” Romans 3:25.

Verse 13

And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me - Either directly, at the intercession of the angel of the Lord, or mediately through an answer first given to him, and by him communicated to the subordinate angel. Neither is expressed.

Good words - As God had promised, “after seventy years shall be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word unto you, causing you to return to this place” Jeremiah 29:10; and Joshua says, “There failed not ought of any good word which the Lord spake unto the house of Israel” (Joshua 21:43 (45 English) add Joshua 23:14-15).

Comfortable words - Literally, “consolations” (as Isaiah 57:18). Perhaps the Angel who received the message had, from their tender

compassion for us, whereby they "joy over one sinner that repenteth" Luke 15:10, a part in these consolations which he conveyed.

Verse 14

Cry thou - The vision was not for the prophet alone. What he saw and heard, that he was to proclaim to others. The vision, which he now saw alone, was to be the basis and substance of his subsequent preaching Jonah 1:2; Isaiah 40:2, Isaiah 40:6, whereby he was to encourage his people to persevere.

I am jealous for Jerusalem - Literally, "I have been," not now only but in time past even when I did not show it, "and am jealous", with the tender love which allows not what it loves to be injured. The love of God, until finally shut out, is unchangeable, He pursues the sinner with chastisements and scourges in His love, that he may yet be converted and live. But for God's love to him and the solicitations of His grace, while yet impenitent and displeasing Him, he could not turn and please Him.

And for Zion - Which especially He had chosen to put His Name there, and there to receive the worship of His people; "the hill which God desired to dwell in" Psalm 68:16, "which He loved" (Psalm 78:68; add Psalm 132:13-14). Dionysius: "With great and special love have I loved the people of the Jews and what pertained to them, and out of that love have I so diligently and severely corrected her excesses, that she may be more careful for the time to come, as a husband corrects most sharply a wife most dear to him, if she be unfaithful. Whence in the book of Maccabees it is written, "It is a token of His great goodness, when wicked doers are not suffered any long time, but are immediately punished. For not as with other nations, whom the Lord patiently forbeareth to punish, till they be come to the fullness of their sins, so dealeth He with us; lest, being come to the height of sin, afterward He should take vengeance of us. And therefore He never withdraweth His mercy from us, and though He punisheth with adversity, yet doth He never forsake His people" (2 Maccabees 6:13-16).

Verse 15

I am sore displeased - literally "with great anger am I angered against the nations which are at ease." The form of the words shows that the greatness of the displeasure of God against those who oppress His people, is proportionate to the great and tender love toward themselves. God had been angered indeed with His people; with their enemies He was "angered with a

great anger;" and that the more, because they were at ease, in unfeeling self-enjoyment amid the miseries of others.

I was a little displeased - Little, in comparison with our deserts; little in comparison with the anger of the human instruments of His displeasure; little in comparison with theirs, who, in their anger, sought their own ends.

They helped forward the affliction - o"He is wroth with the nations at ease, because He delivered His people to be corrected, but they used cruelty toward those delivered; He wills them to be amended as a son by a schoolmaster; they set themselves to slay and punish them, as an enemy. Like that in Isaiah, "I gave them into thy hands; thou didst show them no mercy; upon the ancients hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke" Isaiah 47:6.

Or it may be, "helped for evil," in order to bring about evil, as in Jeremiah, "Behold I set My face against you for evil, and to destroy all Judah" Jeremiah 44:11, that is, as we should say, they were the instruments of God,, "cooperated in the execution of My justice toward you, but cruelly and with perverse intention. For although the Assyrians and Chaldaeans wasted the Jewish people, God so ordaining in as far as He willed through them to punish in the present the sins of His people, yet they did it, not in view of God and out of zeal for righteousness, but out of pride covetousness and with the worst ends. Hence God says by Isaiah, "Woe to Asshur, the rod of Mine anger, and the staff in his hand is Mine indignation. Howbeit he thinketh not so, but his heart is to destroy and cut off nations not a few" Isaiah 10:5, Isaiah 10:7.

Verse 16

Therefore - This being so, since God was so jealous for His people, so displeased with their persecutors, "thus saith the Lord," Dionysius, "I who "in wrath remember mercy, am returned" Habakkuk 3:2, not by change of place, who am uncircumscribed, not existing in place, to the people of Judah and Jerusalem in mercies, manifoldly benefiting them by various effects of My love." The single benefits, the rebuilding of His House, and so the restoration of His public worship, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, are but instances of that all-containing mercy, His restored presence in tender mercies. "I am returned," God says, although the effects of His return were yet to come.

A line shall be stretched forth over Jerusalem - Before, when it stood, this had been done to destroy 2 Kings 21:13; Isaiah 34:11; now, when

destroyed, to rebuild.

Osorius: "The temple was built then, when the foundations of the walls were not yet laid. In man's sight it would have seemed more provident that the walls should be first builded, that then the temple might be builded more securely. To God, in whom alone is the most firm stay of our life and salvation, it seemed otherwise. For it cannot be that he, to whom nothing is dearer fhan zeal for the most holy religion, should be forsaken of His help."

Verse 17

Cry yet - A further promise; not only should Jerusalem be rebuilt, but should as we say, overflow with good; and God, who had seemed to cast off His people, should yet comfort her, and should show in act that He had chosen her. "love." In all the cases, which Gesenius cites as meaning "love" Genesis 6:2; 1 Samuel 20:30; 2 Samuel 15:15; Proverbs 1:29; Proverbs 3:31; Isaiah 1:29, the sense would be injured by rendering, "loved") Zechariah thrice repeats the promise, given through Isaiah Isaiah 14:1 to Jerusalem, before her wasting by the Chaldaeans, reminding the people thereby, that the restoration, in the dawn whereof they lived, had been promised two centuries before. Yet, against all appearances. My cities shall overflow with good, as being God's; yet would the Lord comfort Zion; yet would He choose Jerusalem.

Osorius: "What is the highest of all goods? what the sweetest solace in life? what the subject of joys? what the oblivion of past sorrow? That which the Son of God brought upon earth, when He illumined Jerusalem with the brightness of His light and heavenly discipline. For to that end was the city restored, that in it, by the ordinance of Christ, for calamity should abound bliss; for desolation, fullness; for sorrow, joy; for want, affluence of heavenly goods."

This first vision having predicted the entire restoration, the details of that restoration are given in subsequent visions.

Verse 18

And I lifted up mine eyes - oCyril on Zechariah 2:1: "Not those of the body (for such visions are invisible to the eyes of the flesh), but rather the inner eyes of the heart and mind." It seems as though, at the close of each

vision, Zechariah sank in meditation on what had been shown him; from which he was again roused by the exhibition of another vision.

I saw four horns - The mention of the horns naturally suggests the thought of the creatures which wielded them; as in the first vision that of the horses following the chiefs, implies the presence of the riders upon them. And this the more, since the word "fray them away" implies living creatures, liable to fear. Cyril: "The horn, in inspired Scripture, is always taken as an image of strength, and mostly of pride also, as David said to some, "I said unto the fools, Deal not so foolishly, and to the ungodly, Lift not up the horns. Lift not up your horns on high and speak not with a stiff neck" Psalm 75:4. The prophet then sees four horns, that is, four hard and warlike nations, who could easily uproot cities and countries."

Verse 19

These are the horns which have scattered - o"The four horns which scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem, are four nations, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Macedonians and Romans; as the Lord, on the prophet's enquiry, explains here, and Daniel unfolds most fully 1 Corinthians 3:10; and the Lord, when wroth, said that He would "take away from Jerusalem artificer and wise man" Isaiah 3:3. And the Lord Himself, Son of the Almighty God and of the Creator of all, is called "the son of the carpenter" Matthew 13:55.

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

A man with a measuring line in his hand - Probably the Angel of the Lord, of whom Ezekiel has a like vision. Jerome: "He who before, when he lift up his eyes, had seen in the four horns things mournful, now again lifts up his eves to see a man, of whom it is written, "Behold a man whose name is the Branch" Zechariah 6:12; of whom we read above, "Behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees, which were in the bottom" Zechariah 1:8. Of whom too the Father saith; He builded My city, "whose builder and maker is God" Hebrews 11:10. He too is seen by Ezekiel in a description like this, "a man whose appearance was like the appearance of brass" Ezekiel 40:3, that is, "burnished and shining as fire, with a line of flax in his hand and a measuring reed" Ezekiel 1:7. The office also seems to be one of authority, not to measure the actual length and breadth of Jerusalem, but to lay down what it should be, (Cyril), "to mark it out broad and very long."

Verse 3

The angel that talked with me went forth - Probably to receive the explanation which was given him for Zechariah; and another angel, a higher angel, since he gives him a commission, "went forth to meet him," being (it seems probable) instructed by the Angel of the Lord, who laid down the future dimensions of the city. The indefiniteness of the description, another angel, implies that he was neither the Angel of the Lord, nor (were they different) Michael, or the man with the measuring line, but an angel of intermediate rank, instructed by one higher, instructing the lower, who immediately instructed Zechariah.

Verse 4

And said unto him, Run, speak unto this young man - The prophet himself, who was to report to his people what he heard. Jeremiah says, "I am a youth" Jeremiah 1:6; and, "the young man," "the young prophet," carried the prophetic message from Elisha to Jehu. "Youth,'" common as our English term in regard to man, is inapplicable and unapplied to angels, who have not our human variations of age, but exist, as they were created.

Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls - Or as villages (see the notes at Habakkuk 3:14), namely, an unconfined, uncramped population, spreading itself freely, without restraint of walls, and (it

follows) without need of them. Clearly then it is no earthly city. To be inhabited as villages would be weakness, not strength; a peril, not a blessing. The earthly Jerusalem, so long as she remained unwalled, was in continual fear and weakness. God put it into the heart of His servant to desire to restore her; her wall was built, and then she prospered. He Himself had promised to Daniel, that "Her street shall be rebuilt, and her wall, even in strait of times" Daniel 9:25. Nehemiah mourned 73 years after this, 443 b.c., when it was told him, "The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire" Nehemiah 1:3. He said to Artaxerxes, "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulehres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?" Nehemiah 2:3. When permitted by Artaxerxes to return, he addressed the rulers of the Jews, "Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire; come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach; and they said, let us rise and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work" Nehemiah 2:17-18. When "the wall was finished and our enemies heard, and the pagan about us saw it, they were much cast down in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God" Nehemiah 6:15-16.

This prophecy then looks on directly to the time of Christ. Wonderfully does it picture the gradual expansion of the kingdom of Christ, without bound or limit, whose protection and glory God is, and the character of its defenses. It should "dwell as villages," peacefully and gently expanding itself to the right and the left, through its own inherent power of multiplying itself, as a city, to which no bounds were assigned, but which was to fill the earth. Cyril: "For us God has raised a church, that truly holy and far-famed city, which Christ fortifies, consuming opponents by invisible powers, and filling it with His own glory, and as it were, standing in the midst of those who dwell in it. For He promised; "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." This holy city Isaiah mentioned: "thine eyes shall see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation; a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken" Isaiah 33:20; and to her he saith, "enlarge the place of thy, tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitation; spare not; lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt break

forth on the right hand and on the left" Isaiah 54:2-3. For the church of Christ is widened and extended boundlessly, ever receiving countless souls who worship Him." Rup.: "What king or emperor could make walls so ample as to include the whole world? Yet, without this, it could not encircle that Jerusalem, the church which is diffused through the whole world. This Jerusalem, the pilgrim part of the heavenly Jerusalem, is, in this present world, inhabited without walls, not being contained in vile place or one nation. But in that world, where it is daily being removed hence, much more can there not, nor ought to be, nor is, any wall around, save the Lord, who is also the glory in the midst of it."

Verse 5

And I, Myself in My own Being, will be to her a wall of fire - Not protection only, an inner circle around her, however near an enemy might press in upon her, but destructive to her enemies. Isaiah says, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise in judgment against thee thou shalt condemn" Isaiah 54:17. Its defense, Isaiah says, shall be immaterial. "We have a strong city; salvation shall God appoint for walls and bulwarks" Isaiah 26:1; "thou shalt call thy walls salvation and thy gates praise" Isaiah 60:18). By a different figure it is said, "I will encamp about mine house because of the army" Zechariah 9:8.

And glory will I be in the midst of her - As Isaiah says, "The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory" Isaiah 60:19; and of Christ, "In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be Beauty and Glory - to the escaped of Israel" Isaiah 4:2.

Verse 6

Ho! ho! and flee - Such being the safety and glory in store for God's people in Jerusalem, He who had so provided it, the Angel of the Lord, bids His people everywhere to come to it, saving themselves also from the peril which was to come on Babylon. So Isaiah bade them, "Go ye forth of Babylon; flee ye from the Chaldaeans with a voice of singing; declare ye, tell this, utter it to the end of the earth; say ye, The Lord hath redeemed His servant Jacob" Isaiah 48:20. "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence; touch no unclean thing: go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord" Isaiah 52:11; and Jeremiah, "Flee ye out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul; be not cut off in her iniquity, for this is the time of the Lord's vengeance. He will render unto

her a recompense" (Jeremiah 51:6, add. Jeremiah 50:8). "My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye, every man his soul from the fierce anger of the Lord" Jeremiah 51:45.

The words, "flee, deliver thyself," imply an imminent peril on Babylon, such as came upon her, two years after this prophecy, in the fourth year of Darius. But the earnestness of the command, its repetition by three prophets, the context in isaiah and Jeremiah, imply something more than temporal peril, the peril of the infection of the manners of Babylon, which may have detained there many who did not return. Whence in the New Testament, the words are cited, as to the great evil city of the world; "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you" 2 Corinthians 6:17; and under the name of Babylon; "I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" Revelation 18:4.

For I have spread you abroad as the four winds of heaven - The north country, although its capital and center was Babylon, was the whole Babylonian empire, called "the North" Jeremiah 1:13-14; Jeremiah 3:18; Jeremiah 4:6; Jeremiah 6:1, Jeremiah 6:22; Jeremiah 23:8 because its invasions always came upon Israel from the north. But the book of Esther shows that, sixty years after this, the Jews were dispersed over the 127 provinces of the Persian empire, from India (the Punjab) to Ethiopia Esther 1:1; Esther 3:8, Esther 3:12-14; Esther 8:5, Esther 8:9, whether they were purposely placed by the policy of the conquerors in detatched groups, as the ten tribes were in the "cities of the Medes" 2 Kings 17:6, or whether, when more trusted, they migrated of their own accord. God, in calling them to return, reminds them of the greatness of their dispersion. He had dispersed them abroad as the four winds of heaven. He, the Same, recalled them.

Verse 7

Dwellest with the daughter of Babylon - The unusual idiom is perhaps chosen as expressive of God's tenderness, even to the people who were to be destroyed, from which Israel was to escape.

Verse 8

After the glory - Jonathan: "Which it is promised to bring upon you." This being the usual construction, the words involve a great course of God's dealing, of first showing favor to those who will receive favor, then abandoning or punishing the rest; as, when the eight souls had been

received into the ark, the flood came; when Lot and his had escaped out of Sodom, the fire came down from heaven; when Israel had passed the Red Sea, Pharaoh‘s hosts were drowned; the election obtained what israel sought for, the rest were blinded. “The glory” then would be the glory, of which God says, “I will be the glory in the midst of you” Romans 11:7.

But further He who speaketh is Almighty God, “Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, He hath sent me; For lo I wave My hand against them - and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me; Lo I come and dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord, and many nations shall cleave unto the Lord in that day, and they shall be to Me a people and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know, that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you” Zechariah 2:8-10. In all which series of promises, the I, of whom Israel were to know that the Lord of hosts had sent Him, is the I, who affirms of Himself what belongs to Almighty God only, inflicting punishment on the enemies of Judah, indwelling the Church and people, receiving the pagan as His own; and it is precisely by all these acts of power and love, that Israel shall know that the Lord of hosts had sent Him.

(Jerome: “In what follows, ‹Thus saith the Lord of hosts, After glory, He hath sent Me‘ etc., the Saviour is introduced speaking, who, being Almighty God, saith that He was sent by the Father Almighty, not according to that whereby He was Almighty, but according to that, that, after glory, He was sent, “who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, and was made obedient unto the Father even unto death; and that, the death of the Cross” Philemon 2:6. Nor is it marvel that Christ is called Almighty, in whose Person we read in the Apocalypse of John, “These things saith the faithful Witness - I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which was and which is and which is to come, the Almighty” Revelation 1:5, Revelation 1:8, “to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth” Matthew 28:18; and who saith, “All things of the Father‘s are Mine” John 16:15. But if all things, that is, God from God, Lord from. Lord, Light from Light, therefore also Almighty from Almighty; for it cannot be, that diverse should be the glory of those whose Nature is One.”

For he who toucheth - So as to injure, you, “toucheth the apple of His eye,” that is, of Him who sent Him, Almighty God. So Jerome, Theodoret Others, as Cyril, of his own eye, turning to evil to himself; but the analogy

of the other passages is against it), as in the song of Moses, "He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye" Deuteronomy 32:10; and David prays, "Keep me as the apple of the eye" Psalm 17:8.

Verse 9

For behold I will shake My hand against them - As God promised of old against the enemies of His people, and they shall be a spoil to those who served them habitually.

And ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent Me - Theodoret: "He was sent, not as God, but as Man. For as God He is equal to the Father. For He saith, "I am in the Father and the Father in Me, and, The Father who dwelleth in Me He doeth the works" John 14:10, and, "I and My Father are one" John 10:30, and "He who hath seen Me hath seen the Father" John 14:9. But He is sent, as man, fulfilling the dispensation for us, not lessening the divine nature. The prophet then intimated not the duality only, but the equality of the persons."

Verse 10

Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion - It is a great jubilee of joy, to which Zion is invited. Thrice beside is she invited with this same word, and all for the restored or renewed Presence of God. "Cry aloud for joy, thou barren which bare not" Isaiah 54:1, as here, on the coming in of the Gentiles, "Cry aloud for joy, O daughter of Zion; jubilate, O Israel; rejoice and exult with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem; the Lord, the King of Israel, is in the midst of thee" Zephaniah 3:14-15. "Shout and cry aloud for joy, O inhabitant of Zion; for great in the midst of thee is the Holy One of Israel" Isaiah 12:6. The source of joy is a fresh coming of God, a coming, whereby He should dwell abidingly among them: truly what is this, but the Incarnation? As John saith, "The Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us" John 1:14; and, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and shall be their God" Revelation 21:3.

Cyril: "Hence too you may learn how great a subject of contentment above is the Presence of the Saviour upon earth. He could not then but bid the spiritual Zion, "which is the Church of the Living God" 1 Timothy 3:15, the most sacred multitude of those saved by faith, to cry aloud for joy and rejoice. But it was announced that He should come and be in the midst of her. For John saith to us, The Word "was in the world" John 1:10, and,

being God, was not severed from His creatures, but He was Himself the Source of life to all living, and holding all things together to well-being and life; but "the world knew Him not" John 1:10: for it worshiped the creature. But He came among us, when, taking our likeness, He was conceived by the holy Virgin, and "was seen upon earth and conversed with men", and the divine David witnesseth saying, "Our God shall come manifestly, and shall not keep silence" Psalm 50:3. Then also was there a haven for the Gentiles. For now no longer was the race of Israel alone taught, but the whole earth was engoldened with the evangelical preachings, and in every nation and country "great is His Name."

Jerome: "This too is to be understood of the Person of the Lord, that He exhorts His people, being restored from the captivity to their former abode, to be glad and rejoice, because the Lord Himself cometh and dwelleth in the midst of her, and many nations shall believe in Him, of whom it is said, "Ask of Me and I will give Thee nations for Thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Thy possession" Psalm 2:8, and He shall dwell in the midst of them, as He saith to His disciples, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" Matthew 28:20.

Verse 11

And many nations shall join themselves - cleaving to Him by a close union. Isaiah had so spoken of single proselytes Isaiah 56:3-6; Jeremiah had used the word of Israel's self-exhortation after the return from Babylon; "going and weeping," they shall go and seek the Lord their God, saying, "Come and let us join ourselves unto the Lord, in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten" Jeremiah 50:4-5. This Zechariah now predicts of "many nations." The Jews were scarcely half-restored themselves, a mere handful. They had wrought no conversions among the pagan, yet prophecy continues its unbroken voice, "many nations shall join themselves unto the Lord."

And shall be My people - Literally, "be to Me a people." This is exactly the history of the Christian church, unity amid diversity; many nations still retaining their national existence, yet owned by God as one people and His own. The words are those in which God adopted Israel in Egypt; "I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be your God" Exodus 6:7. This was the covenant with them, "that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the

Lord thy God, that He may establish thee today for a people unto Himself, and that he may be unto thee a God" (Deuteronomy 29:12-13, add Leviticus 26:12; Deuteronomy 27:9; 1 Samuel 12:22; 2 Samuel 7:23-24; 2 Kings 11:17; 1 Chronicles 17:22; 2 Chronicles 23:16; Jeremiah 7:23; Jeremiah 11:4). The contrary was the title of the pagan, "not a people; with whom God said, I will move Israel to jealousy" Deuteronomy 32:21. The closeness of union Jeremiah expresses; "As the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave to Me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord, that they might be unto Me for a people and for a name and for a praise and for a glory" Jeremiah 13:11. This was the object of the existence of Israel; to this it was to be restored Jeremiah 24:7; Jeremiah 30:22; Jeremiah 31:1; Jeremiah 32:38 by conversion Ezekiel 11:20; Ezekiel 14:11; Ezekiel 36:28; Ezekiel 37:23, Ezekiel 37:27; Zechariah 8:8; to this special privilege of Israel "many nations" were to be admitted; yet not so as to be separate from Israel, for He adds, "and I will dwell in, the midst of thee," Judah. God would dwell in His Church, formed of Israel and the Gentiles, yet so that the Gentiles should be grafted into Israel, becoming one with them.

Verse 12

And the Lord shall inherit Judah His portion - The inheritance of the Lord is the title which God commonly gave to Israel (Deuteronomy 4:20; Deuteronomy 9:26, Deuteronomy 9:29; 1 Samuel 26:19; 2 Samuel 14:16; 2 Samuel 20:19; 2 Samuel 21:3; 1 Kings 8:51; Psalm 28:9; Psalm 33:12; Psalm 68:10; Psalm 78:62, Psalm 78:71; Psalm 119:1; Psalm 106:40, Joel 2:17; Joel 3:2, (Hebrew) Isaiah 19:25; Isaiah 47:6; Jeremiah 12:7-9; Jeremiah 50:11). God is said to be the portion of Israel Jeremiah 10:16; Jeremiah 51:19; of the pious Psalm 16:5; Psalm 73:26; Psalm 119:57; Psalm 142:6; Lamentations 3:24; once only beside, is Israel said to be the portion of God Deuteronomy 32:9; once only is God said to inherit Israel, "Pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance" Exodus 34:9. Zechariah unites the two rare idioms.

In the holy land - The land is again made holy by God, and sanctified by His Presence. So He calls the place where He revealed Himself to Moses, "holy ground" Exodus 3:5. So it is said, "the holy place" Leviticus 10:17; Leviticus 14:13, "the holy house" 1 Chronicles 29:3, "the holy ark" 2 Chronicles 35:3, "the holy city" Nehemiah 11:1, Nehemiah 11:18; Isaiah 48:2; Isaiah 52:1, "the holy mountain" Isaiah 27:13; Jeremiah 31:23;

Zechariah 8:3, "the holy people" Isaiah 62:12, "the holy chambers" (Ezekiel 42:13 all), or, with reference to their relation to God who consecrates them, "My holy mountain" Psalm 2:6; Isaiah 11:9; Isaiah 56:7; Isaiah 57:13; Isaiah 65:11, Isaiah 65:25; Isaiah 66:20; Ezekiel 20:40; Joel 2:1; Joel 3:17; Obadiah 1:16. Zephaniah 3:11, "Thy holy habitation" Exodus 15:13, "Thy holy dwelling-place" (Deuteronomy 26:15. "His holy hab." Psalm 68:6; Jeremiah 25:30; Zechariah 2:1-13:17) "thy holy temple" (Psalm 5:8; Psalm 79:1; Psalm 138:2; Jonah 2:5, Jonah 2:8, "His holy temple," Micah 1:2; Habakkuk 2:20), "Thy holy mountain" (Psalm 15:1; Psalm 43:3; Daniel 9:16. "His holy hill," Psalm 3:5; Psalm 48:2; Psalm 99:9), "Thy holy oracle" Psalm 28:2, "Thy holy city" Daniel 9:24, "cities" Isaiah 64:9, "His holy place" Psalm 24:1-10:, "His holy border." Psalm 78:54. It is not one technical expression, as people now by a sort of effort speak of "the holy land." Everything which has reference to God is holy. The land is holy, not for any merits of theirs, but because God was worshiped there, was specially present there. It was an anticipation and type of "Thy holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee." This land their fathers had "polluted with blood" Psalm 106:38; God says, "they defiled My land" Jeremiah 2:7; Jeremiah 3:9; Jeremiah 16:18; Ezekiel called her eminently, "the land that is not cleansed" Ezekiel 22:24. Now God said, "I will remove the iniquity of the land" Zechariah 3:9, and she was again a holy land, as hallowed by Him.

It is not a mere conversion of the pagan, But, as Isaiah Isaiah 2:3 and Micah Micah 4:2 foretold; a conversion, of which Jerusalem should be the center, as our Lord explained to the Apostles after His Resurrection, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" Luke 24:47.

Verse 13

Be silent - Literally, "hush all flesh, before the Lord" (see at Habakkuk 2:20, p. 207); man in his weakness Genesis 6:3; 2 Chronicles 32:8; Job 10:4; Psalm 56:4; Psalm 78:39; Isaiah 31:3; Jeremiah 17:5, "flesh and blood" in the language of the New Testament Matthew 16:17; 1 Corinthians 15:50; Galatians 1:16, before God his Maker. "All flesh," the whole human race Genesis 6:12; Psalm 65:3; Psalm 145:21; Isaiah 40:5-6; Isaiah 49:26; Isaiah 66:23; Joel 3:1; Ezekiel 21:4, Ezekiel 21:9-10, is to be hushed before God, because His judgments, as His mercies, are over all.

For God ariseth - God seemeth to be quiescent, as it were, when He bears with us; to arise, when He puts forth His power, either for us, when we pray, "Lord, awake to help me" (Psalm 59:4, add Psalm 7:7; Psalm 44:24); or in displeasure. His "holy habitation" is alike the tabernacle 1 Samuel 2:29, 1 Samuel 2:32; Psalm 26:9; Psalm 68:6, temple 2 Chronicles 36:15, heaven Deuteronomy 26:15; Jeremiah 25:30; 2 Chronicles 30:27, since His presence is in all.

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

And He - God, (for the office of the attendant angel was to explain, not to show the visions) "showed me Joshua the high priest, standing before the Angel of the Lord;" probably to be judged by him; as in the New Testament, "to stand before the Son of Man;" for although "standing before," whether in relation to man or God,, expresses attendance upon, yet here it appears only as a condition, contemporaneous with that of Satan's, to accuse him. Although, moreover, the Angel speaks with authority, yet God's Presence in him is not spoken of so distinctly, that the high priest would be exhibited as standing before him, as in his office before God.

And Satan - Etymologically, the enemy, as, in the New Testament, "your adversary the devil" 1 Peter 5:8, etymologically, the accuser. It is a proper name of the Evil one, yet its original meaning, "the enemy, was not lost. Here, as in Job, his malice is shown in accusation; "the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God, day and night" Revelation 12:10. In Job Job 1:8-11; Job 2:3-5, the accusations were calumnious; here, doubtless, true. For he accused Job of what would have been plain apostacy Job 1:11; Job 2:5; Joshua and Zerubbabel had shared, or given way to, the remissness of the people, as to the rebuilding of the temple and the full restoration of the worship of God Ezra 3:1-13; 4. For this, Haggai had reproved the people, through them Haggai 1:1-11. Satan had then a real charge, on which to implead them. Since also the whole series of visions relates to the restoration from the captivity, the guilt, for which Satan impleads him with Jerusalem and Jerusalem in him, includes the whole guilt, which had rested upon them, so that for a time God had seemed to have cast "away His people" Romans 11:1. Satan "stands at his right hand," the place of a protector Psalm 16:8; Psalm 109:31; Psalm 121:5; Psalm 142:4, to show that he had none to save him, and that himself was victorious.

Verse 2

And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee - Jerome: "This they so explain, that the Father and the Son is Lord, as we read in the Psalm 110:1-7, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand." The Lord speaketh of another Lord; not that He, the Lord who speaketh, cannot rebuke, but that, from the unity of nature, when the Other rebuketh, He

Himself who speaketh rebuketh. For "he who seeth the Son, seeth the Father also" John 14:9. It may be that God, by such sayings, also accustomed people, before Christ came, to believe in the Plurality of Persons in the One Godhead. The rebuke of God must be with power. "Thou hast rebuked the nations, Thou hast destroyed the ungodly" Psalm 9:5. "Thou hast rebuked the proud, accursed" Psalm 119:21. "They perish at the rebuke of Thy Countenance" Psalm 80:16. "At Thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a deep sleep" Psalm 76:6. "God shall rebuke him, and he fleeth far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind" Isaiah 17:13. "He rebuked the Red Sea and it dried up" Psalm 106:9. "The foundations of the world were discovered at Thy rebuke, O Lord" (Psalm 18:15, add Nahum 1:4). He "rebuked the seed" Malachi 2:3, and it perished; the devourer" Malachi 3:11, and it no longer devoured. The rebuke then of the blasted spirit involved a withering rejection of himself and his accusations, as when Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and he departed out of his victim Mark 1:25-26; Mark 9:25; Luke 4:35; Luke 9:42.

The Lord hath chosen Jerusalem - Joshua then is acquitted, not because the accusation of Satan was false, but out of the free love of God for His people and for Joshua in it and as its representative. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" Romans 8:33-34. The high priest, being "himself also compassed with infirmity, needed daily to offer up sacrifices first for his own sins, and then for the people's" Hebrews 5:2-3. As Isaiah said, on the sight of God, "I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" Isaiah 6:5, and, until cleansed by the typical coal, dared not offer himself for the prophetic office, so here Satan, in Joshua, aimed at the whole priestly office, and in it, at Israel's relation to God.

Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? - Cyril: "As if he should say, Israel confessedly has sinned, and is liable to these charges. Yet it has suffered no slight punishment; it has endured sufferings, and has scarce been snatched out of them, as a half-burned "brand out of the fire." For not yet had it shaken off the dust of the harms from the captivity; only just now and scarely had it escaped the flame of that most intolerable calamity. Cease then imputing sin to them, on whom God has had mercy."

Verse 3

Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments - Such, it is expressed, was his habitual condition; he was one so clothed. The "filthy garment," as defilement generally, is, in Scripture, the symbol of sin. "We are all as the unclean, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" Isaiah 64:6. "He that is left in Zion and he that remaineth in Jerusalem shall be called holy - when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion" Isaiah 4:3-4. "There is a generation, pure in its own eyes, and it is not washed from its filthiness" Proverbs 30:12. The same is expressed by different words, signifying pollution, defilement by sin; "Woe unto her that is filthy and polluted" Zephaniah 3:1; "The land was defiled with blood" Psalm 106:38; "they were defiled with their own works". It is symbolized also by the "divers washings" Hebrews 9:10 of the law, representing restored purity; and the use of the word by Psalmists and prophets; "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity" Psalm 51:4; "wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes" Isaiah 1:16; "O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness" Jeremiah 4:14. In later times at least, the accused were clothed in black, not in defiled garments.

Verse 4

And He spake to those who stood before Him - the ministering angels who had waited on the Angel of the Lord to do His bidding.

See, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee - The pardoning words of the Lord to David by Nathan, "The Lord too hath put away thy sin" 2 Samuel 12:13. "And clothe thee with change of raiment, that is, such as were taken off and reserved for great occasions. As the filthy garments were not necessarily other than the high priest's vesture, symbolically defiled through the sins of the people, so neither need these be other than the priestly garments in their purity and freshness. The words imply the condition, not the nature of the vestment. (Cyril: "The high priest having been thus taken to represent the whole people, the filthy garments would be no unclear symbol of the wickedness of the people. For clad, as it were, with their sins, with the ill-effaceable spot of ungodliness, they abode in captivity, subject to retribution, paying the penalty of their unholy deeds. But when God had pity on them, He bade them be freed from their defilements, and in a manner re-clad with justifying grace. He indicates to them the end of their toils. For where remission of sin is, there follows of necessity freedom from the evils brought through sin." He adds that a clean mitre should be put upon his head, (Cyril), "that so we might understand

that the glory of the priesthood ever, in a sort, concurs with the condition of the people. For the boast of the priesthood is the purity of those in their charge. As then when the people was in sin, the raiment of the priest also was in a manner defiled, so if it were again well-approved, pure and bright is the fashion of the priesthood, and free its access to God. So the inspired Paul having ministered to the Gentiles the Gospel of Christ, seeing them advancing in graces, writes, "By your boast, brethren, which I have in Christ Jesus" 1 Corinthians 15:31, and, "my joy and crown" Philemon 4:1.

Verse 5

And I said, let them set a fair mitre on his head - This seems to have been purposely omitted, in order to leave something, and that, the completion of all, to be done at the intercession of the prophet. The glory and complement of the high priest's sacrificial attire was the mitre with the "holy crown upon it and the plate of prate gold, on which was graven, Holiness to the Lord" Exodus 28:36-38; Exodus 29:6; which was to "be upon" the high priest's "forehead, that he may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; which was always to be upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord." The renewed gift of this was reserved for the intercession of man co-working with God.

And the angel of the Lord standing by - Seeing that all was done aright, and, now that the acquittal was complete, standing to give the charge.

Verse 6

And the angel of the Lord protested - Solemnly (etymologically, called God to witness) as in, "Did I not make thee swear by the Lord and protested unto thee" 1 Kings 2:42, laying it as an obligation upon him. The charge is given to Joshua, and in him to all successive high priests, while Israel should continue to be God's people, as the condition of their acceptance.

Verse 7

If thou wilt walk in My ways and if thou wilt keep My charge - Both of these are expressions, dating from the Pentateuch, for holding on in the way of life, well-pleasing to God and keeping the charge given by God. It was the injunction of the dying David to Solomon, "Keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes … " 1 Kings 2:3.

Then shalt thou also judge My house - Judgment, in the place of God, was part of the high priest‘s office Deuteronomy 17:9-13; Deuteronomy 19:17; Malachi 2:7. Yet these judgments also were given in the house of God. The cause was directed to be brought to God, and He through His priests judged it. Both then may be comprehended in the world, the oversight of the people itself and the judgment of all causes brought to it. Jonathan: “Thou shalt judge those who minister in the house of My sanctuary.”

And I will give thee place to walk among those who stand by - that is, among the ministering spirits, who were “standing before the Angel of the Lord” Zechariah 3:4. This can be fully only after death, when the saints shall be received among the several choirs of angels. Jonathan: “In the resurrection of the dead I will revive thee and give thee feet walking among these Seraphim.” Even in this this since “our conversation is in heaven” Philemon 3:20, and the life of priests should be an angel-life, it may mean, that he should have free access to God, his soul in heaven, while his body was on this earth.

Verse 8

Thou and thy companions which sit before thee; yea men of marvelous signs are they - oIt seems probable that the words addressed to Joshua begin here; else the “men of signs” would be the companions of Joshua, to the exclusion of Himself. His companions are probably ordinary priests, who sit as sharing his dignity as priest, but “before him,” as inferiors. So Ezekiel says, “I was sitting in my house, and the elders of Israel were sitting before me” Ezekiel 8:1. They are “images of the things to come” Hebrews 10:1. Isaiah‘s two sons, with their prophetic names, “Haste-spoil speed-prey, and a-remnant shall-return,” were with his own name, “salvation-of-the-Lord, signs and portents” Isaiah 8:18 of the future Israel. Isaiah, walking naked and barefoot, was “a sign and portent” Isaiah 20:3 against Egypt. God tells Ezekiel, that in the “removal of his stuff, as stuff for the captivity, I have set thee for a portent unto the house of Israel” Ezekiel 12:6.

I, he explains his act, “am your portent; like as I have done, so shall it be done unto you” Ezekiel 12:11. When forbidden to mourn on the death of his wife; “Ezekiel is unto you for a portent; according to all that he hath done, shall ye do; and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord God” Ezekiel 24:24. Wherein then were Joshua and the other priests portents of

what should be? One fact alone had stood out, the forgiveness of sins. Accusation and full forgiveness, out of God‘s free mercy, were the substance of the whole previous vision. It was the full reinstatement of the priesthood. The priesthood so restored was the portent of what was to come. To “offer the offering of the people, and make an atonement for them; Leviticus 9:7; “to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year” Leviticus 16:34, was the object of the existence of the priesthood. Typical only it could be, because they had “but the blood of bulls and goats to offer, which could,” in themselves, “never take away sins” Hebrews 10:4. But in this their act they were portents of what was to come. He adds here, “For, behold, I will bring My Servant the Branch.”

The Branch - Had now become, or Zechariah made it, a proper name. Isaiah had prophesied, “In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious for the escaped of Israel” Isaiah 4:2; and, in reference to the low estate of him who should come, “There shall come forth a rod out of the stump of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” Isaiah 11:1; and Jeremiah, “Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth, and this is the name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteouness” Jeremiah 23:5-6; and, “In those days and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land” Jeremiah 33:15. Of him Zechariah afterward spoke as, “a man whose name is the Branch” Zechariah 6:12.

Here Zechariah names him simply, as a proper name, “My servant, the, Branch,” as Ezekiel prophesied of “My servant David.” The title “My servant,” which is Isaiah‘s chiefest title of the Messiah, occurs in connection with the same image of ills youth‘s lowly estate, and of His atoning Death. “He shall grow up before Him as a sucker, and as a root from a dry ground” Isaiah 53:2; “a scion shall grow out of his roots” Isaiah 11:1.. Lest then God should seem to have spoken untruly, in promising to the legal priesthood that it should ever have the oversight over His house, there was need to fore-announce the mystery of Christ, that the things of the law should cease and He Himself should judge His own house through the Scion from Himself, His Son.

Osorius: “Look ye to the Branch of the Lord; set Him as the example of life; in Him, as a most strong tower, place with most becoming faith all your hope of salvation and immortality. For He is not only a Branch, who shall fill you with the richness of divine fruit, but a stone also, to break all the essays of the enemy.”

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Verse 9

For behold the stone, that I hare laid before Joshua - This must be an expansion of what he had said, or the ground of it, being introduced by, for. It must be something future, to be done by God Himself, since God says, “I will grave the graving thereof;” something connected with the remission of sins, which follows upon that graying. The stone, then, cannot be the stone of foundation of the material temple (Rashi). For this had long before been laid. The head-cornerstone, the completion of the building, had nothing remarkable, why God should be said to grave it. The plumbline was not a part even of the material temple. “The stone is one stone.” But to interpret it by other prophecy, one stone there is, of which God says, “Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation, he that believeth shall not make haste” Isaiah 28:16; that stone, of which our Lord reminded the Jews, “the stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner”; “Jesus Christ Himself, the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” Ephesians 2:20-21.

On this stone had Joshua, with all those typical priests, to look, in whom alone they and all have forgiveness, whose Sacrifice their sacrifices pictured and pleaded. “It,” says an old mystical Jewish book, a “is the stone of foundation, on which the earth is founded, which God Himself laid, that the world might receive blessing from it”. “The Shechinah is called the stone, through which the world subsisteth; of which it is said, ‹A stone of seven eyes, and, the stone which the builders refused.‘” This “stone,” God says, I have laid or set before Joshua, that is, for him to consider; as He speaks to Solomon and his children, of “My commandments which I have set before you” 1 Kings 9:6.

Rup.: “That the stone is the Lord Jesus Christ, the head cornerstone, elect, laid as a foundation; and that the seven eyes on the one stone are the

sevenfold Spirit of God which rested upon Him, is or ought to be unknown to no one. For to Him "God giveth not the Spirit by measure" John 3:34, and "in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" Colossians 2:9. This stone was rejected by people, but chosen and honored by God." Osorius: "This stone then, on which the house of God and our whole salvation resteth, is placed by God before that high priest. That is, the most holy Name of Jesus, the virtue piety and largeness of Jesus is, by the Divine Spirit, showed to the priest, that he might understand the End of the law and holiness, to whom all the actions of life and the offices of the priesthood were to be referred. In which stone was foreshown to the divine man, not the invisible strength only, but also the manifold light of the Divine Intelligence. For it follows;"

Upon this one stone are seven eyes - Whether they are the eyes of God, resting in loving care upon it, or whether, as the wheels in Ezekiel's vision were "full of eyes round about" Ezekiel 1:18; Ezekiel 10:12, the eyes are pictured as on the stone itself, marking that it symbolized a being with manifold intelligence. Zechariah speaks of the eyes of "the Lord which run to and fro on the earth" Zechariah 4:10, and John, of the "Lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, seat forth into all the earth" Revelation 5:6. Either symbol harmonizes with the context, and is admissible in language. before and afterward, I have laid it, I will engrave the graving thereof; and so it corresponds to the "It shall grow up before Him as a tender plant" Isaiah 53:2. But the contrast, that on one stone there are seven eyes, perhaps rather suggests that the eyes are on the stone itself, and He, the "Living Stone," is pictured with an universality of sight, whereby, with a divine knowledge, He surveys and provides for the well-being of His whole Church. It has some analogy too to the sevenfold Spirit which was to rest upon Him.. "For this stone to have seven eyes is to retain in operation the whole virtue of the Spirit of seven-fold grace. For according to the distribution of the Holy Spirit, ones receives prophecy; another, knowledge; another, miracles; another, kinds of tongues; another, interpretation of words; but no one attaineth to have all the gifts of that same Spirit. But our Creator taking on Him our infirmities, because, through the power of His Divinity, He showed that He had at once in Him all the virtues of the Holy Spirit, united beyond doubt the bright gleams of the sevenfold constellation." "None among men had together all the operations of the Holy Spirit, save the Mediator of God

and man alone, whose is that same Spirit, who proceeds from the Father before all worlds."

Osorius: "The stone is one. For as we have in God One Spirit, one faith, one sacrament of that most pure laver, so we worship One Christ, the one only Deliverer of the human race, and Author of our righteousness and everlasting salvation; and strengthened by His guardianship, we hope for immortality and eternal glory. Who, though He be One, governs all things with ineffable wisdom. For His wisdom is aptly described by the seven eyes. For the number seven generally describes an universality of good."

Behold I will engrave the graving thereof - As of a costly stone. What the graving is, is not explained; but manifestly it is everything which concurs to its beauty.. "This stone is of earth, and of the power and workmanship of God.". "It signifies Him who had His birth in virgin-earth, but framed skillfully by the power of the Holy Spirit." That Precious Stone was further graven, through the providence and will of God, when Jerome: "He caused it to be wounded by the nails of the Cross and the soldier's lance, and in His passion took away the iniquity of the earth in one day, of which it is written, "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it" Psalm 118:24. Beautiful were the gifts and graces which Christ received, as Man; but beautiful beyond all beauty must be those glorious scars, with which He allowed His whole Body to be riven, that, "throughout the whole frame His love might be engraven." Ribera: "What even in the Body of the Lord can be lovelier or more lightful than those five Wounds, which He willed to retain in His immortal Being, lest the blessed should be deprived of that splendor, surpassing far the light of sun had stars?"

And I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day - On "one day" in the year was the typical atonement; in one day absolutely, God Himself would make the iniquity of that land to depart. "One day" is always emphatic, that things are crowded into it, which seemed too much for one day. Year by year came the day of atonement: its yearly repetition showed that nothing lasting was effected. On "one day" that removal should be, which needed no renewal. A Jewish writer confessed the mystery, while he said, (Rashi), "One day; I know not what that day is." Ask any Christian child, "On what day was iniquity removed, not from the land only, but from all lands?" he would say, "On the day when Jesus died."

Verse 10

Under the vine and under the fig tree - Micah had already made the description of the peaceful days of Solomon 1 Kings 4:25, a symbol Micah 4:4 of the universal fearless peace of the time of Christ. Lap.: "Christ by His passion shall not only take away iniquity, but also bring peace, delight, free communication of all things, so that all things among Christians should be common. For the law of Christ enjoineth charity, forgiveness of injuries, patience, love of enemies etc., all which bring temporal peace."

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

The angel came again - The angel (as before Zechariah 2:3) had gone forth to receive some fresh instruction from a higher angel or from God.

And awakened me - As a man is awakened out of sleep. Zechariah, overwhelmed by the greatness of the visions, must have sunk down in a sort of stupor, as after the vision of the ram and he-goat, as Gabriel was speaking with him, Daniel says, "I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground, and he touched me and set me upright" Daniel 8:18; and again at the voice of the angel, who, after his three weeks' fast Daniel 10:9, came to declare to him Daniel 10:21 the scripture of truth; and at the Transfiguration, "Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they were awake, they saw His glory." Luke 9:32. Osorius: "Wondrous and stupendous mysteries were they which were shown to the divine man. He saw the Branch of the Lord; he saw His invincible might; he saw His brightness of Divine Intelligence and Providence; he saw the amplitude of beauty and dignity. Nailed then and struck still with amazement, while he revolved these things in his mind, sunk in a sort of sleep, he is borne out of himself and, mantled around with darkness, understands that the secret things of Divine Wisdom cannot be perfectly comprehended by the mind of any. This then he attained that, his senses being overpowered, he should see nothing, save that wherein is the sum of wisdom, that this immensity of the divine excellence cannot be searched out. By this sleep he was seized, when he was roused by the angel to see further mysteries."

Verse 2

And I said, I have looked and behold a candlestick all of gold - The candlestick is the seven-branched candlestick of the tabernacle Exodus 25:31, but with variations purposely introduced to symbolize the fuller and more constant supply of the oil, itself the symbol of God's Holy Spirit, who:

"Enables with perpetual light
The dullness of our blinded sight."

The first variation is "her bowl on the top of the candlestick," containing the oil; then (as dependent on this) the pipes to derive the oil into each lamp, "seven several pipes to the seven lamps," that is, seven to each; and

the two olive trees on either side of the bowl, whose extreme and fine branches poured through two golden pipes the golden oil into the bowl which supplied the lamp. The multiplied conduits imply the large and perfect supply of oil unceasingly supplied, the seven being symbolic of perfection or of the reconciling of God (symbolized by 3) unto the world (symbolized by 4, its four quarters); the spontaneous flow of the golden oil from the olive trees symbolizes the free gift of God.

Verse 4

Osorius: "Awakened from his state of sleep, even thus the prophet seemed slowly to understand what was shown him. He asks then of the instructing angel. The angel, almost amazed, asks if he knowns it not, and when he plainly declares his ignorance, makes clear the enigma of the vision."

Verse 6

This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel - Osorius: "As if he were to say, the meaning of the vision and scope of what has been exhibited is, ‹God‘s doings have almost cried aloud to Zerubbabel that all these visions shall come to an end in their time, not effected by human might nor in fleshly strength, but in power of the Holy Spirit and through Divine Will.‘ For the Only Begotten became Man as we are, but He warred not after the flesh, to set up the Church as a candlestick to the world, nor did He, through sensible weapons and armed phalanxes, make those two people His own, or place the spiritual lights on the candlestick; but in the might of His own Spirit He appointed in the Church "first Apostles, then prophets and evangelists" 1 Corinthians 12:28, and all the rest of the saintly band, filling them with divine gifts and enriching them abundantly by the influx of His Spirit."

Cyril: "Not then in great power nor in fleshly might were the things of Christ, but in power of the Spirit was Satan spoiled, and the ranks of the adverse powers fell with him; and Israel and those who aforetime served the creature rather than the Creator, were called to the knowledge of God through faith. But that He saved all under heaven, not by human arm, but by His own power as God Emmanuel, Hosea too protested, "I will have mercy upon the house of Judah and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow nor by sword nor by battle nor by chariots nor by horses nor by horsemen" Hosea 1:7. But exeeeding fittingly was this said to Zerubbabel, who was of the tribe of Judah and at, that time administered the

royal seat at Jerusalem. For that he might not think that, since such glorious successes were foreannounced to him, wars would in their season have to be organized, he lifts him up from these unsound and human thoughts, and bids him be thus minded, that the force was divine, the might of Christ, who should bring such things to pass, and not human."

Having given this key of the whole vision, without explaining its details, God enlarges what He had said to Zerubbabel, as He had in the preceding chapter to Joshua Zechariah 3:8-10.

Verse 7

Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt be a plain - The words have the character of a sacred proverb; "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased" Luke 14:11; Luke 18:14. Isaiah prophesies the victories of the Gospel in the same imagery, "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain" Isaiah 40:4. And in the New Testament Paul says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. As it is the character of antichrist, that he "opposeth and exalteth himself above everything that is called God" 2 Thessalonians 2:4, so of Satan himself it had been said in the former vision, that he stood at the right hand of Joshua "to to resist him" Joshua 3:1.

So then the mountain symbolizes every resisting power; Satan and all his instruments, who, each in his turn, shall oppose himself anti be brought low. In the first instance, it was Sanballat and his companions, who opposed the rebuilding of the temple, on account of the "exclusiveness" of Zerubbabel and Joshua, because they would not make the temple the abode of a mixed worship of him whom they call your God and of their own idolatries. In all and each of his instruments, the persecuting emperors or the heretics, it was the one adversary. Cyril: "The words seem all but to rebuke the great mountain, that is, Satan, who riseth up and leadeth against Christ the power of his own stubbornness, who was figuratively spoken of before Joshua 3:1. For that as far as it was allowed and in him lay, he warred fiercely against the Saviour, no one would doubt, who considered

how he approached Him when fasting in the wilderness, and seeing Him saving all below, willed to make Him his own worshiper, showing Him "all the kingdoms of the world," saying that all should be His, if He "would fall down and worship him" Matthew 4:8-9. Then out of the very choir of the holy Apostles he snatched the traitor disciple, persuading him to became the instrument of the Jewish perverseness. He asks him, "Who art thou?" disparaging him and making him of no account, great as the mountain was and hard to withstand, and in the way of every one who would bring about such things for Christ, of whom, as we said, Zerubbabel was a type."

And he shall bring forth the headstone - The foundation of the temple had long been laid. Humanly it still hung in the balance whether they would be permitted to complete it Isaiah 28:16. In the Psalm, the building hall been commenced; those who were building had disregarded and despised the stone, but "it became the head of the corner," crowning and binding the work in one.

Both images together express, how Christ is the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last; the Foundation of the spiritual building, the Church, and its summit and completion; the unseen Foundation which was laid deep in Calvary, and the Summit to which it grows and which holds it firm together. Whence Peter unites the two prophecies, and blends with them that other of Isaiah, that Christ would "be a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of people but chosen of God and precious, ye also are built up a spiritual house - Whence also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: unto you which believe He is precious, but unto them which be diobedient, the same stone which the builders refused is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, to them which stumble at the word being disobedient" 1 Peter 2:4-7.

A Jew paraphrases this of the Messiah; Jonathan: "And He shall reveal His Messiah, whose name was spoken from the beginning, and he shall rule over all nations."

With shoutings, grace, grace unto it - that is, all favor from God unto it, redoubled favors, grace upon grace. The completion of the building was but the commencement of the dispensation under it. It was the beginning not the end. They pray then for the continued and manifold grace of God, that He would carry on the work, which He had begun. Perseverance, by the

grace of God, crowns the life of the Christian; our Lord‘s abiding presence in grace with His Church unto the end of the world, is the witness that He who founded her upholds her in being.

Verse 8

And the word of the Lord - Keil: “This word of the Lord is not addressed through ‹the interpreting angel,‘ but direct from the Lord, and that through the ‹Angel of the Lord‘. For though in the first instance the words, “the hands of Zerubbabel etc.,” relate to the building of the material temple, and announce its completion through Zerubbabel yet the inference, “and thou shalt know theft the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you,” shows that the meaning is not exhausted thereby, but that here too this building is mentioned only as a type of the building of the spiritual temple; and the completion of the typical temple is but a pledge of the completion of the true temple. For not through the completion of the material temple, but only through the building of the kingdom of God, shadowed forth by it, can Judah know, that the Angel of the Lord was sent to him.”

Verse 10

The simplest rendering is marked by the accents. “For who hath despised the day of small things? and (that is, seeing that there have rejoiced and seen the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, these seven, the Eyes of the Lord, they are running to and fro in all the earth,” 1:e., since God hath with joy and good-pleasure beheld the progress of the work of Zerubbabel, who can despise the day of small things? The day of small things was not only that of the foundation of the temple, but of its continued building also. The old men indeed, “that had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes” Ezra 4:12. But while in progress too, Haggai asks, “Who is left among you that saw this house in its first glory? And how do ye see it now? is not in your eyes such as it, as nothing?” Haggai 2:3. But that temple was to see the day of great things, when “the later glory of this house shall be greater than the former, and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts” Haggai 2:9.

They are the eyes of the Lord which run to and fro - He uses almost the words of the prophet Hanani to Asa, “the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him.” 2 Chronicles 16:9 yet this assurance that God‘s watchful providence is over the whole earth, betokens more than

the restoration of the material temple, whose only hindrance could be the will of one man, Darius.

The day of small things - is especially God‘s day, whose “strength is made perfect in weakness; who raised Joseph from the prison, David from the sheepfold, Daniel from slavery, and converted the world by the fishermen and the tentmaker, having Himself first become the Carpenter. “Wouldest thou be great? Become little.” “Whenever,” said Theresa, (Ribera, vita Ther. ap. Lap.), “I am to receive some singular grace, I first annihilate myself, sink into my own nothingness, so as to seem to myself to be nothing, be capable of nothing.”

Verse 11

And I answered and said - The vision, as a whole, had been explained to him. The prophet asks as to subordinate parts, which seemed perhaps inconsistent with the whole. If the whole imports that everything should be done by the Spirit of God, not by human power, what means it that there are these two olive-trees? And when the Angel returned no answer, to invite perhaps closer attention and a more definite question, he asks again;

Verse 12

What are the two spikes of the olive? - Comparing the extreme branches of the olive-tree, laden with their fruit, to the ears of corn, which “were by or in the hand of the golden pipes, which empty forth the golden oil from themselves.” Zechariah‘s expression, in the hand of or, if so be, by the hand of the two pipes, shows that these two were symbols of living agents, for it is nowhere, used except of a living agent, or of that which it personified as such.

Verse 14

These are the two sons of oil - Probably not as themselves anointed, (for another word is used for this. Which stand by the Lord of the whole earth, as His servants and ministers. The candlestick is almost authoritatively interpreted for us, by the adoption of the symbol in the Revelation, where our Lord is exhibited “as walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks” Revelation 1:13; Revelation 2:1, and, it is said, “the seven candlesticks are the seven Churches” Revelation 1:20; and our Lord says to the Apostles, on whom He founded the Church; “Ye are the light of the world: men light a candle, and put it on a candlestick, and it giveth light to them that are in the house” (Matthew 5:14-15, compare Philemon 2:15). Cyril: “The golden candlestick is the Church, as being

honored in the world, most bright in virtues, raised on high exceedingly by the doctrines of the true knowledge of God. But there are seven lamps, having light, not of their own, but brought to them from without, and nourished by the supplies through the olive tree. These signify the holy apostles, evangelists, and those who, each in their season, were teachers of the churches, receiving, like lamps, into their mind and heart the illumination from Christ, which is nourished by the supplies of the Spirit, casting forth light to those who are in the house."

Theodoret: "The pipes of the lamps, which pour in the oil, signify the unstinted prodigality of the loving-kindness of God to man." The most difficult of explanation (as is plain from the variety of interpretations) is this last symbol of the spikes of the olive-tree, through whom flows the oil of the Holy Spirit to the candlesticks, and which yet represent created beings, ministers, and servants of God. Perhaps it represents that, in the church, grace is ministered through men, as Paul says, "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastor's and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ - that we - may grow up into Him in all things which is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" Ephesians 4:7-8, Ephesians 4:11-12, Ephesians 4:14-16.

What Paul expresses by "all the body, having nourishment ministered and being knit together by joints and bands, from the Head, and so increasing with the increase of God" Colossians 2:19, (as he elsewhere speaks of "the ministration of the Spirit" 2 Corinthians 3:8; "he that ministereth to you the Spirit" Galatians 3:5) "that" Zechariah may express by the oil being poured, through the living tubes, the bowl, the sevenfold pipes, into the lamps, which shone with the God-given light. So Paul speaks again, of "having this treasure in earthen vessels" 2 Corinthians 4:7. Joshua and Zerubbabel, as representatives of the priestly and royal offices, shadowed forth what was united in Christ, and so, in their several offices, they might be included in the symbol of the olive-tree, they could not

exhaust it; for people who, having served God in their generation, were to pass away, could not be alone intended in a vision, which describes the abiding being of the church.

Osorius: “Christ is both all-holy Priest and supreme eternal King. In both ways He supplies to us the light which He brought. For from Him piety and righteousness flow unceasingly to the Church, that it never lack the heavenly light. The oil is expressed into tubes; thence passed through pipes into the vessel which contains the lamps; to designate the various suppliers of light, which, the nearer they are to the effluence of the oil, the more they resemble Him by whom they are appointed to so divine an office. The seven lamps are the manifold Churches, distinct in place but most closely bound together by the consent of one faith and by the bond of charity. For although the Church is one, yet it is distinct according to the manifold variety of nations. They are said to be seven, both on account of the seven gifts of the Spirit, mentioned by Isaiah, and because in the Numbers 3 and 4, is contained an emblem of piety and righteousness. There are 7 pipes to each lamp, to signify that each has need of many instruments, that the light may be maintained longer. For as there are diversities of gifts, so must there needs be the functions of many ministers, to complete one work. But the lamps are set in a circle, that the oil of one may flow more readily into others, and it, in turn, may receive from others their superabundance, to set forth the communion of love and the indissoluble community of faith.”

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

Hitherto all had been bright, full of the largeness of the gifts of God; of God‘s favor to His people; the removal of their enemies; the restoration and expansion and security of God‘s people and Church under His protection; the acceptance of the present typical priesthood and the promise of Him, through whom there should be entire forgiveness: the abiding illumining of the Church by the Spirit of God. Yet there is a reverse side to all this, God‘s judgments on those who reject all His mercies. Augustine, de Civ. Del. 17:3. Ribera: “Prophecies partly appertain to those in whose times the sacred writers prophesied, partly to the mysteries of Christ. And therefore it is the custom of the prophets, at one time to chastise vices and set forth punishments, at another to predict the mysteries of Christ and the Church.”

And I turned and - Or, “Again I lifted up my eyes” Genesis 26:18; 2 Kings 1:11, 2 Kings 1:13; Jeremiah 18:14, having again sunk down in meditation on what he had seen, “and behold a roll flying;” as, to Ezekiel was shown “a hand with a roll of a book therein, and he spread it before me.” Ezekiel‘s roll also was “written within and without, and there was written, therein lamentation and mourning and woe” Ezekiel 2:9-10. It was a wide unfolded roll, as is involved in its flying; but its “flight signified the very swift coming of punishment; its flying from heaven that the sentence came from the judgment-seat above” (Ribera).

Verse 2

And he - (the interpreting angel) said unto me It cannot be without meaning, that the dimensions of the roll should be those of the tabernacle, as the last vision was that of the candlestick, after the likeness of the candlestick therein. The explanations of this correspondence do not exclude each other. It may be that “judgment shall begin at the house of God” 1 Peter 4:17; that the punishment on sin is proportioned to the nearness of God and the knowledge of Him; that the presence of God, which was for life, might also be to death, as Paul says; “God maketh manifest the savor of this knowledge by us in every place; for we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish; to the one we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other the savor of life unto life” 2 Corinthians 2:14-16; and Simeon said, “This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel” Luke 2:34.

Verse 3

Over the face of the whole earth - primarily land, since the perjured persons, upon whom the curse was to fall Zechariah 5:4, were those who swore falsely by the name of God: and this was in Judah only. The reference to the two tables of the law also confines it primarily to those who were under the law. Yet, since the moral law abides under the Gospel, ultimately these visions related to the Christian Church, which was to be spread over the whole earth. The roll apparently was shown, as written on both sides; the commandments of the first table, in which perjury is forbidden, on the one side; those relating to the love of our neighbor, in which stealing is forbidden, on the other. Theodoret: "He calleth curse that vengeance, which goeth through the whole world, and is brought upon the workers of iniquity. But hereby both prophets and people were taught, that the God of all is the judge of all people, and will exact meet punishment of all, bringing utter destruction not on those only who live ungodly toward Himself, but on those also who are unjust to their neighbors. For let no one think that this threat was only against thieves and false-swearers; for He gave sentence against all iniquity. For since all the law and the prophets hang on this word, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself," He comprised every sort of sin under false swearing and theft. The violation of oaths is the head of all ungodliness. One who so doeth is devoid of the love of God. But theft indicates injustice to one's neighbor; for no one who loves his neighbor will endure to be unjust to him. These heads then comprehend all the other laws."

Shall be cut off - Literally, "cleansed away", as something defiled and defiling, which has to be cleared away as offensive: as God says, "I will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, until it be all gone" (1 Kings 14:10, add 1 Kings 21:21), and so often in Deuteronomy, "thou shalt put the evil away from the midst of thee" (Deuteronomy 13:5 (6 Heb.); Deuteronomy 17:7; Deuteronomy 19:19; Deuteronomy 21:21; Deuteronomy 22:21, Deuteronomy 22:24; Deuteronomy 24:7), or "of Israel" Deuteronomy 17:12; Deuteronomy 23:22, and in Ezekiel, "I will disperse thee in the countries and will consume thy filthiness out of thee" Ezekiel 22:15. Set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot and may burn, and the filthiness of it may be molten, that the scum of it may be consumed" Ezekiel 24:11.

Verse 4

I will bring it forth - Out of the treasure-house, as it were; as he says, "He bringeth forth the wind out of His treasures" Jeremiah 10:13; Jeremiah 51:16; and, "Is not this laid up in store with Me, sealed up among My treasures?" To Me belongeth "vengeance and recompense" Deuteronomy 32:34-35. And it shall remain, literally, "lodge for the night," until it has accomplished that for which it was sent, its utter destruction. Lap.: "So we have seen and see at this day powerful families, which attained to splendor by rapine or ill-gotten goods, destroyed by the just judgment of God, that those who see it are amazed, how such wealth perceptibly yet insensibly disappeared." Chrys. on the statues 15. n. 13. p. 259. Oxford Translation: "Why doth it overthrow the stones and the wood of the swearer's house? In order that the ruin may be a correction to all. For since the earth must hide the swearer, when dead, his house, overturned and become a heap, will by the very sight be an admonition to all who pass by and see it, not to venture on the like, lest they suffer the like, and it will be a lasting witness against the sin of the departed."

Paganism was impressed with the doom of him who consulted the oracle, whether he should foreswear himself for gain. "Swear," was the answer, "since death awaits too the man, who keeps the oath; yet Oath hath a son, nameless, handless, footless; but swift he pursueth, until he grasp together and destroy the whole race and house." "In the third generation, there was nought descended from him," who had consulted about this perjury, "nor hearthstone reputed to be his. It had been uprooted and effaced." A pagan orator relates, as well known, that "the perjurer escapes not the vengeance of the gods, and if not himself, yet the sons and whole race of the foresworn fall into great misfortunes." God left not Himself without witness.

Lap.: "The prophet speaks of the curse inflicted on the thieves and false swearers of his own day; but a fortiori he includes that which came upon them for slaying Christ. For this was the greatest of all, which utterly overthrew and consumed Jerusalem, the temple and polity, so that that ancient and glorious Jerusalem exists no longer, as Christ threatened. "They shall lay thee even with the ground, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another" Luke 19:44. This resteth upon them these" 1800 "years."

Verse 5

Then the angel went forth - From the choirs of angels, among whom, in the interval, he had retired, as before (Zephaniah 2:3 (7 Hebrew)) he had gone forth to meet another angel.

Verse 6

This is the ephah that goeth forth - Theodoret: "We too are taught by this, that the Lord of all administers all things in weight and measure. So, foretelling to Abraham that his seed should be a sojourner and the cause thereof, He says, "for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" Genesis 15:16, that is, they have not yet committed sins enough to merit entire destruction, wherefore I cannot yet endure to give them over to the slaughter, but will wait for the measure of their iniquity." The relation then of this vision to the seventh is, that the seventh tells of God's punishment on individual sinners; this, on the whole people, when the iniquity of the whole is full.

This is their resemblance, as we say, their look, that is, the look, appearance, of the inhabitants "in all the land." This then being the condition of the people of the land, at the time to which the vision relates, the symbolical carrying away of the full measure of sin cannot be its forgiveness, since there was no repentance, but the taking away of the sin with the sinner. Cyril: "The Lord of all is good and loving to mankind; for He is patient toward sinners and endures transgressors, waiting for the repentance of each; but if one perseveres long in iniquity, and come to the term of the endurance allowed, it remains that he should be subjected to punishment, and there is no account of this long forebarance, nor can he be exempt from judgment proportioned to what he has done. So then Christ says to the Jewish people, rushing with unbridled phrensy to all strange excess, "Fill ye up the measure of your fathers" Matthew 23:32. The measure then, which was seen, pointed to the filling up of the measure of the transgression of the people against Himself." Jerome: "The angel bids him behold the sins of the people Israel, heaped together in a perfect measure, and the transgression of all fulfilled - that the sins, which escaped notice, one by one, might, when collected together, be laid open to the eyes of all, and Israel might go forth from its place, and it might be shown to all what she was in her own land." Ribera: "I think the Lord alluded to the words of the prophet, as though He would say, "Fill up the measure of sins"

which your fathers began of old, as it is in Zechariah, that is, ye will soon fill it; for ye so haste to do evil, that ye will soon fill it to the utmost."

Verse 7

And behold there was lifted up a talent of lead - the heaviest Hebrew weight, elsewhere of gold or silver; the golden talent weighing, 1,300,000 grains; the silver, 660,000; here, being lead, it is obviously an undefined mass, though circular, corresponding to the Ephah. The Ephah too was the largest Hebrew measure, whose compass cannot now, with certainty, be ascertained. Both probably were, in the vision, ideal. Theodoret: "Holy Scripture calleth the punishment of sin, lead, as being by nature heavy. This the divine David teacheth us, "mine iniquities are gone over my head: as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me" Psalm 38:4. The divine Zechariah seeth sin under the image of a woman; for most evils are engendered by luxury. But he seeth the punishment, like most heavy lead, lying upon the mouth of iniquity, according to a Psalm, "all iniquity shall stop her mouth" Psalm 107:42. Ambr. in Psalm 1:1-6, "and hath not sat in the seat of the scornful" Psalm 1:1; and, "thou sittest and speakest against thy brother" Psalm 50:20; (Lap.), "not standing as by the way, but sitting, as if of set purpose, of custom and habit." "Whoso hath peace in sins is not far from lying down in them, so that, oppressed by a spirit of slumber, he neither sees light, nor feels any blow, but is kept down by the leaden talent of his obduracy."

Verse 8

And cast her into the midst of the Ephah - As yet then the measure was not full. Ribera: "She had the lower part within the Ephah, but the upper, especially the head, without. Though the Jews had slain the prophets and done many grievous things, the greatest sin of all remained to be done. But when they had crucified Christ and persecuted the Apostles and the Gospel, the measure was full; she was wholly within the Ephah, no part remained without, so that the measure was filled."

And he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof - that is, doubtless of the Ephah; as in Genesis, "a great stone was on the mouth of the well" Genesis 29:2, so that there should be no access to it.

Verse 9

There came out two women - It may be that there may be no symbol herein, but that he names women because it was a woman who was so

carried; yet their wings were the wings of an unclean bird, strong, powerful, borne by a force not their own; with their will, since they flew; beyond their will, since the wind was in their wings; rapidly, inexorably, irresistibly, they flew and bore the Ephah between heaven and earth. No earthly power could reach or rescue it. God would not. It may be that evil spirits are symbolized, as being like to this personified human wickedness, such as snatch away the souls of the damned, who, by serving them, have become as they.

Verse 11

To build it an house in the land of Shinar - The name of Shinar, though strictly Babylonia, carries back to an older power than the world-empire of Babylon; which now too was destroyed. "In the land of Shinar" Genesis 11:2 was that first attempt to array a world-empire against God, ere mankind was ye dispersed. And so it is the apter symbol of the antitheist or anti-Christian world, which by violence, art, falsehood, sophistry, wars against the truth. To this great world-empire it was to be removed; yet to live there, no longer cramped and confined as within an Ephah, but in pomp and splendor. A house or temple was to be built for it, for its honor and glory; as Dagon 1 Samuel 5:2-5 or Ashtaroth 1 Samuel 31:10, or Baal 2 Kings 10:23 had their houses or temples, a great idol temple, in which the god of this world should be worshiped.

And it - - "The house," "shall be established" firmly on its base, like the house of God, and it, (wickedness) shall be tranquilly rested on its base, as an idol in its temple, until the end come. In the end, the belief of those of old was, that the Jews would have great share in the antagonism to Christ and His empire. At the first, they were the great enemies of the faith, and sent forth, Justin says,, those everywhere who should circulate the calumnies against Christians, which were made a ground of early persecutions. In the end, it was believed, that antichrist should be from them, that they would receive him as their Christ, the last fulfillment of our Lord's words, "I am come in My Father's name and ye receive Me not; another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" John 5:43.

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

Behold, four chariots going forth - Alb.: "By the secret disposal of God into the theater of the world," "from between two mountains of brass." Both Jews and Christians have seen that the four chariots relate to the same four empires, as the visions in Daniel.

"The two mountains." It may be that the imagery is from the two mountains on either side of the valley of Jehoshaphat, which Joel had spoken of as the place of God's judgment, Joel 3:2, and Zechariah afterward Zechariah 14:4. It may then picture that the judgments go forth from God. Anyhow the powers, symbolized by the four chariots, are pictured as closed in on either side by these mountains, strong as brass, unsurmountable, undecaying, (Ribera), "that they should not go forth to other lands to conquer, until the time should come, fixed by the counsels of God, when the gates should be opened for their going forth." The mountains of brass may signify the height of the Divine Wisdom ordering this, and the sublimity of the power which putteth them in operation; as the Psalmist says, "Thy righteousnesses are like the mountains of God" Psalm 36:6.

Verse 2-3

The symbol is different from that in the first vision. There Zechariah 1:8, they were horses only, with their riders, to go to and fro to enquire; here they are war-chariots with their horses, to execute God's judgments, each in their turn. In the first vision also, there is not the characteristic fourfold division, which reminds of the four world-empires of Daniel Daniel 2; after which, in both prophets, is the mention of the kingdom of Christ. Even if the grisled horses be the same as the speckled of the first vision, the black horses are wanting there, as well as the succession, in which they go forth. The only resemblance is, that there are horses of divers colors, two of which, red and white, are the same. The symbol of the fourth empire, grizzled, strong, remarkably corresponds with the strength and mingled character of the fourth empire in Daniel.

Verse 5

These are the four spirits of the heavens - They cannot be literal winds: for spirits, not winds, stand before God, as His servants, as in Job, "the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord" (Job 1:6; Job

2:1. This they did, (Jerome), "for these four kingdoms did nothing without the will of God." Zechariah sums up in one, what former prophets had said separately of the Assyrian, the Babylonian, Egyptian, Persian. "O Assyria, the rod of Mine anger - I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him a charge" Isaiah 10:5. "I will send and take all the families of the north, and Nebuchadrezzar, the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land" Jeremiah 25:9. "The Lord shall hiss for the fly, that is in the uttermost part of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria, and they shall come, and shall rest, all of them, in the desolate valleys" Isaiah 7:18-19. "I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord; and they shall come, and shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem" Jeremiah 1:15. Whatever the human impulse or the human means, all stand before the Lord of the whole earth, ministering to His will whose are all things, the Judge of all, who withholdeth the chastisement till the iniquity is full, and then, through man's injustice, executes His own just judgment. Osorius: "He says that they went forth from where they had stood before the Lord of the whole earth, to show that their power had been obtained by the counsel of God, that they might serve His will. For no empire was ever set up on earth without the mind, counsel and power of God. He exalts the humble and obscure, He prostrates the lofty, who trust overmuch in themselves, arms one against the other, so that no fraud or pride shall be without punishment."

Verse 6

The black horses which are therein go forth - Literally, "That chariot wherein the black horses are, these go forth." Jerome: "Most suitably is the first chariot, wherein the red homes were, passed over, and what the second, third, fourth did is described. For when the prophet related this, the Babylonian empire had passed, and the power of the Medes possessed all Asia." Red, as the color of blood, represented Babylon as sanguinary; as it is said in the Revelation, "There went out another horse, red, and power was given to him that sat thereon, to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another, and there was given him a sharp sword" Revelation 6:4. "The black" were to go forth to the north country, the ancient title of Babylon. For Babylon, though taken, was far from being broken. They had probably been betrayed through the weakness of their king's. Their

resistance, in the first carefully prepared (Herodotus, iii. 150) revolt against Darius, was more courageous than that against Cyrus: and more desperate.

Since probably more Jews remained in it, than returned to their own country, what was to befall it had a special interest for them. They had already been warned in the third vision Zechariah 2:7 to escape from it. The color black doubtless symbolizes the heavy lot, inflicted by the Medo-Persians; as in the Revelation it is said, "the sun became black as sackcloth of hair" Revelation 6:12; and to the beast in Daniel's vision which corresponded with it, it was said, "Arise, devour much flesh" Daniel 7:5; and in the Revelation, "he that sat on the black horse" Revelation 6:5-6 was the angel charged with the infliction of famine. Of the Medes, Isaiah had said, "I will stir up the Medes against them (Babylon), which shall not regard silver; and gold, they shall not delight in it. Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children" Isaiah 13:17-18.

The white went forth after them - For the Greek empire occupied the same portion of the earth as the Persian. White is a symbol of joy, gladness Ecclesiastes 9:8, victory Revelation 6:2, perhaps also, from its relation to light, of acute intelligence. It may relate too to the benevolence of Alexander to the Jewish nation. "Alexander used such clemency to the conquered, that it seemed as though he might be called rather the founder than the destroyer of the nations whom he subdued."

And the grizzled - The Romans in their mingled character, so prominent in the fourth empire of Daniel, "go forth" Daniel 2:41-43 to the south country, that is, Egypt; as Daniel speaks of "the ships of Chittim" Daniel 11:30 and the intervention of the Romans first in regard to the expulsion of Antiochus Epiphanes from Egypt; in Egypt also, the last enduring kingdom of any successor of Alexander, that of the Ptolemies, expired. "30 years afterward, the Son of God was to bring light to the earth. The prophet so interweaves the prediction, that from the series of the four kingdoms it is brought to the Birth of the Eternal King".

Verse 7

And the strong went forth and sought to go, that they might walk to and fro through the earth - The mention of their strength corresponds to the extent of the power and commission, for which they asked, to go to and fro, up and down, at their will, unhindered, through the whole earth. The Babylonian empire held Egypt only out of Asia; the Persian was conquered

in its efforts against Europe, in Greece; Alexander‘s was like a meteor, gleaming but breaking into the four: the Roman combined East and West and within large limits tranquilly.

And he said go, walk to and fro in the earth - He commanded, and they, which were before withheld, went, “and they walked to and fro on the earth,” ordering all things at their will, under the Providence of God, whereby He gave free access to the Gospel in all their wide empire. The Greek empire being extinguished, the Romans no longer went into any given country, but superintended and governed all human things in (it is the language of the New Testament) “all the world.” Cyril: “These same, the dappled and ashen-grey horses were commanded to traverse the earth, and they did traverse it; for they mastered all under heaven, and ruled the whole earth, God consenting and arraying those who swayed the Roman might with this brilliant glory. For, as God, He knew beforehand the greatness of their future piety.”

Verse 8

Then God, or the Angel of the Lord - who speaks of what belonged to God alone, “called me” (probably “loudly” Judges 4:10, Judges 4:13; 2 Samuel 20:4-5), so as to command his attention to this which most immediately concerned his people.

These have quieted My spirit in the north country - Or rather, “have made My anger to rest” on, that is, have carried it thither and deposited it there, made it to rest upon them, as its abode, as John saith of the unbelieving, “The wrath of God abideth on him” John 3:36. Babylon had been the final antagonist and subduer of the people of God. It had at the outset destroyed the temple of God, and carried off its vessels to adorn idol-temples. Its empire closed on that night when it triumphed over God, using the vessels dedicated to Him, to the glorifying of their idols. “In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldaeans slain.” This final execution of God‘s anger upon that their destroyer was the earnest of the rest to them; and in this the visions pause.

Verse 9

And the word of the Lord came to me - The visions being closed, Zechariah marks the change by adopting the usual formula, with which the prophets authenticated, that they spake not of themselves, but by the Spirit of God. The act enjoined is a symbolic act, pointing and summing up and

interpreting the visions, as some of the visions had been already expanded by fresh revelations following immediately upon them.

Verse 10

Take of the captivity - Of that which they had brought with them. "The captivity" was, in Jeremiah), and Ezekiel Ezekiel 1:2; Ezekiel 3:11, Ezekiel 3:15; Ezekiel 11:24-25, the title of those who had been actually carried captive and were at that moment in captivity. Ezra continues it of those who had been in captivity, though now returned from exile. Yet not without a reference to the circumstances or causes of that captivity. It is the "captivity" Ezra 1:11 which Sheshbazzar brings from Babylon, or Ezra subsequently; the "children of the captivity" Ezra 8:35, who set themselves to build the temple of God Ezra 4:1; who dedicated it and kept the passover. The title is used apparently as an aggravation of sin, like that which had been chastened by that captivity. Here, the term seems to imply some blame, that they remained of their own accord in this state of severance from the altar, where alone special worship of God and sacrifice could be offered. They had been removed against their will; yet, as Christians often do, acquiesced in the loss, rather than forego their temporal advantages. Still they wished to take part in the work of restoring the public worship, and so sent these men, with their contribution of gold and silver, to their brethren, who had returned; as, in the first times of the Gospel, the Christians everywhere made collections for the poor saints, who dwelt in Jerusalem. And this their imperfect zeal was instantly accepted.

And go thyself - To make the act more impressive, "on that same day," as matter of urgency, "and thou shalt come to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah, whither they have come from Babylon". The exiles who had brought presents for the building of the temple, lodged, it seems, in the house of Josiah, whether they doubted or no that their presents would be accepted, since they chose Babylon, not Jerusalem for their abode. This acceptance of their gifts symbolized the incoming of those from afar. It is remarkable that all five names express a relation to God. "Tobiah" in Nehemiah 2:10; Nehemiah 6:1; 3) the Tobias here and 14; 4) Tobit and Tobias in his book), "The Lord is my good;" "Yedaiah," "God knoweth" or "careth for;" Josiah, "The Lord supporteth"; "Zephaniah," "The Lord hideth," and perhaps "Cheldai," "The Lord's world". They had taken religious instead of worldly names. Probably Zechariah was first to accept the offerings from the three exiles, and then to take the actual gold from the

house of Josiah whither they had brought it. The pilgrims from Babylon and their host are included in one common blessing.

Verse 11

And make crowns - Or a "crown", as in Job, "I would bind it as a crown unto me," and our Lord is seen in the Revelation, "on His Head were many crowns". The singular is used of "a royal crown", apparently of a festive crown; and figuratively; (Job 19:9, (plur. Job 31:36) Proverbs 4:9; Proverbs 12:4; Proverbs 14:24; Proverbs 16:31. Proverbs 17:6); even of Almighty God Himself as a crown; but no where of the mitre of the high priest.

The characteristic of the act is, that "the crown" or crowns (it is not in the context said, which) were placed on the head of the one high priest, Joshua; "and thou shall place" (it or them, it is not said which) "upon the head of Joshua son of Josedech the high priest, and shalt say unto him." If crowns were made of each material, there were two crowns. But this is not said, and the silver might have formed a circlet in the crown of gold, as, in modern times, the iron crown of Lombardy, was called iron, because it had "a plate of iron in its summit, being else of gold and most precious". In any case the symbolical act was completed by the placing of a royal crown upon the head of the high priest. This, in itself, represented that He, whom he and all other priests represented, would be also our King. It is all one then, whether the word designate one single crown, so entitled for its greatness, or one united royal crown, that is, one crown uniting many crowns, symbolizing the many kingdoms of the earth, over which our High Priest and King should rule.

Either symbol, of separate crowns "the golden at Rome." Du Cang. Otto of Frisingen said that Frederic received 5 crowns; the first at Aix for the kingdom of the Franks; a second at Ratisban for that of Germany; a third at Pavia for the kingdom of Lombardy; the fourth at Rome for the Roman empire from Adrian iv; the fifth of Monza for the kingdom of Italy." In our own memory, Napoleon I. having been crowned in France, was crowned with the iron crown at Monza), or an united crown, has been used in the same meaning, to symbolize as many empires, as there were crowns.

On Zerubbabel no crown was placed. It would have been confusing; a seeming restoration of the kingdom, when it was not to be restored; an

encouragement of the temporal hopes, which were the bane of Israel. God had foretold, that none of the race of Jehoiakim should prosper, "sitting on the throne of David, or ruling any more in Israel." Nehemiah rejects the imputation of Sanballat, "Thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem," There is "a king in Judah." He answers, "There are no such things done as thou sayest; and thou feignest them out of thine own heart" Nehemiah 6:6-8. But Isaiah had foretold much of the king who should reign: Zechariah, by placing the royal crown on the head of Joshua, foreshowed that the kingdom was not to be of this world. The royal crown had been taken away in the time of Zedekiah, "Thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem and take away the crown; this shall not be this; exalt the low and abase the high; an overthrow, overthrow, overthrow will I make it; this too is not; until he come whose the right is, and I will give it" (Ezekiel 21:31-32 (Ezekiel 21:26-27 in English)).

But the Messiah, it was foretold, was to be both priest and king; "a priest after the order of Melchizedec" Psalm 110:4, and a king, set by the Lord "upon His holy hill of Zion" Psalm 2:6. The act of placing the crown on the head of Joshua the high priest, pictured not only the union of the offices of priest and king in the person of Christ, but that He should be King, being first our High Priest. Joshua was already high priest; being such, the kingly crown was added to him. It says in act, what Paul says, that "Christ Jesus, being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him" Philemon 2:8-9.

Verse 12

The prophet is taught to explain his own symbolic act. "Behold the Man whose name is the Branch". "Not for himself, but for Christ, whose name Joshua bare, and whose Priesthood and Princedom he represented," was the crown given him. The prophet had already foretold the Messiah, under the name of the Branch. Here he adds,

And he shall grow up out of His place - Lowly and of no seeming account, as God foretold by Jeremiah, "I will cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David" Jeremiah 33:15; and Jesus Himself said, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" John 12:24. Alone He grew up

before God, as a tender plant Isaiah 53:2, unknown of man, known to God. It is that still, Divine Life at Nazareth, of which we see only that one bright flash in the temple, the deep saying, not understood even by Joseph and Mary, and then, "He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject unto them" (see Luke 2:49-51).

And he shall build the temple of the Lord - The material temple was soon to be finished, and that by Zerubbabel, to whom this had been promised, Zechariah 4:10, not by Joshua. It was then a new temple, to be built from the foundation, of which He Himself was to be "the foundation" Isaiah 28:16; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:20-21, as He said, "On this rock I will build My Church" Matthew 16:18; and in Him "all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple to the Lord" Ephesians 2:21. Osorius: "He it is, who built the house; for neither Solomon nor Zerubbabel nor Joshua son of Josedech could build a house worthy of the majesty of God. For "the Most High" Acts 7:48-49, Stephen says, "dwelleth not in temples made with hands, as saith the prophet; Heaven is My throne and earth is My footstool; what house will ye build Me, saith the Lord?" For if they could have built a house for God, He would not have allowed His house to be burned and overthrown. What then is the house of God which Christ built? The Church, founded on faith in Him, dedicated by His Blood, stablished by the stayedness of divine virtue, adorned with divine and eternal riches, wherein the Lord ever dwelleth."

Verse 13

Even He - Literally, "He Himself." The repetition shows that it is a great thing, which he affirms; "and He," again emphatic, "He," the same who shall build the temple of the Lord, "He shall bear the glory." Great must be the glory, since it is affirmed of Him as of none beside, "He shall bear glory," "He should build the temple of the Lord," as none beside ever built it; He should bear glory, as none beside ever bare it, "the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" John 1:14. This word glory is almost always used of the special glory of God, and then, although seldom, of the Majesty of those, on whom God confers majesty as His representatives, as Moses, or Joshua Numbers 27:20, or "the glory of the kingdom" given to Solomon 1 Chronicles 29:25. It is used also of Him, a likeness of whom these vicegerents of God bare, in a Psalm whose language belongs (as Jews too have seen,) to One more than man, although also of glory given by God, either of grace or nature.

So in our Lord‘s great High Priest‘s prayer lie says, “Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine ownself with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was” John 17:5; and prays, “that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me, where I am; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me” John 17:24. So Paul, applying the words of the eighth Psalm, says of our Lord, “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and horror” Hebrews 2:9; and the angels and saints round the Throne say, “Worthy is the Lamb which was slain to receive power and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing, and those on earth answer, Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever” Revelation 5:12-13. That glory Isaiah saw; in His miracles He “manifested forth His glory” John 12:41, “which resided in Him” John 2:11; in His Transfiguration, the three Apostles “saw His glory” Luke 9:32, shining out from within Him; “into this His glory” (Luke 24:26; add 1 Peter 1:11-12), He told the disciples at Emmaus, the prophets said, that He was to enter, having first suffered what He suffered; in this His glory He is to sit, when He judges. “And He shall sit and rule on His Throne” Matthew 19:28; Luke 9:26. His rule shall be, not passing but abiding, not by human might, but in peaceful majesty, as God says, “Yet have I set My king upon My holy bill of Zion” Psalm 2:6, and again, Sit Thou on My Right Hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool” Psalm 110:1; and the angel said to Mary, “The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end” Luke 1:32-33.

And He shall be a priest upon His Throne - He shall be at once king and priest, as it is said, “Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedec.” When the Christ should reign, He should not cease to be our Priest. He, having all power given to Him in heaven and earth, reigneth over His Church and His elect by His grace, and over the world by His power, yet ever liveth to make intercession for us. Rup.: “Not dwellings now on what is chiefest, that “by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invincible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him, and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist” Colossians 1:16-17, how many crowns of glory belong to Him, One and the

Same, God and man, Christ Jesus! He then "will bear glory and will sit upon His throne and shall be a priest on His throne."

How just this is, it is easier to think than to express, that "He should sit and rule all things, by whom all things were wade, and He should be a Priest forever," by whose Blood all things are reconciled. "He shall rule then upon His throne, and He shall be a priest upon His throne," which cannot be said of any of the saints, because it is the right of none of them, to call the throne of his rule or of his priesthood his own, but of this Only Lord and Priest, whose majesty and throne are one and the same with the Majesty of God, as He saith, "When the Son of Man shall come in His Majesty (Glory), then shall He sit upon the throne of His Majesty (Glory)" Matthew 25:31. And what meaneth that re-duplication, and He shall rule on His Throne, but that One and the Same, of whom all this is said, should be and is King and Priest. He who is King shall rule on His Throne, because kingdom and priesthood shall meet in One Person, and One shall occupy the double throne of kingdom and priesthood." He alone should be our King; He alone our Saviour: He alone the Object of our love, obedience and adoration.

And the counsel of peace shall be between them both - "The counsel of peace" is not merely peace, as Jerome seems to interpret: "He is both king and priest, and shall sit both on the royal and sacerdotal throne, and there shall be peaceful counsel between both, so that neither should the royal eminence depress the dignity of the priesthood, nor the dignity of the priesthood, the royal eminency, but both should be consistent in the glory of the One Lord Jesus." For had this been all, the simple idiom, "there shall be peace between them," would have been used here, as elsewhere (Judges 4:17; 1 Samuel 7:14; 1 Kings 5:16 (12English)). But "counsel of peace," must, according to the like idioms, signify "a counsel devising or procuring peace" for some other than those who counsel thereon. We have the idiom itself, "counsellors of peace" Proverbs 12:20.

They twain - Might be said of things: but things are naturally not said to counsel, so that the meaning should be, that the thrones of the priests and of the Branch should counsel. For the throne is in each case merely subordinate. It is not as we might say, "the See of Rome," or "of Constantinople," or "of Canterbury," meaning the successive Bishops. It is simply the material throne, on which He sits. Nor is anything said of any throne of a priest, nor had a priest any throne. His office was to stand

“before the Lord,” his intercessorial office to “offer gifts and sacrifices for sin” Hebrews 5:1; Hebrews 9:9. To “offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins and then for the people‘s” Hebrews 7:27, was his special office and honor.

There are then not two thrones. One sits on His Throne, as King and Priest. It seems only to remain, that the counsel of peace should be between Jesus and the Father; as Jerome says, “I read in the book of some, that this, “there shall be a peaceful counsel between the two,” is referred to the Father and the Son, because He “came to do not His own will, but the Will of the Father” John 5:30; John 6:38, and “the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father” John 14:10. In Christ all is perfect harmony. There is a counsel of peace between Him and the Father whose temple He builds. The Will of the Father and the Son is one. Both had one Will of love toward us, the salvation of the world, bringing forth peace through our redemption. God the Father “so loved the world, that He gave His Only-Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” John 3:16; and God the Son “is our peace, who hath made both one, that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross, and came and preached peace to them which were afar off and to them that were nigh” Ephesians 2:14, Ephesians 2:16-17.

Others seem to me less naturally to interpret it of Christ in His two offices. Rup.: “There shall be the counsel of peace between them, the ruler and the priest, not that Christ is divided, but that those two princedoms, which were hitherto divided, (the priest and the king being different persons) should be united in the One Christ. Between these two princedoms, being inseparably joined in one, shall be the counsel of peace, because through that union we have peace; and through Him “it pleased the Father to reconcile all things unto Himself, and that all things should be brought to peace through the Blood of His cross, whether things in earth or things in heaven” Colossians 1:19-20.

Verse 14

And the crowns shall be to Helem - There is no ground apparent to us, why the name “Helem” appears instead of “Holdai”, or “Hen” for “Josiah:” yet the same person must have been called both Hen and Josiah, since the father‘s name is the same in both places. They cannot both be intended as explanations of the former names, since Helem stands insulated in Hebrew,

its meaning conjectural. Perhaps then they were the own names of the individuals, and the names compounded with the name of God, honorable names which they had taken.

For a memorial in the temple of the Lord - They brought a passing gift, but it should be for a lasting memorial in their behalf. It is a renewal of the well-known term of the law. The two stones, engraven with the names of the children of Israel, upon the shoulders of the Ephod, were to the end, that Aaron should "bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial" Exodus 28:12, Exodus 28:22; Exodus 39:7; continually, it is added of the "breastplate with its twelve precious stones Exodus 28:29; the atonement money of the children of Israel was to be appointed for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, that it may be a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord, to make atonement for their souls; "to make an atonement for their souls before the Lord" Exodus 30:16. They were to "blow with the trumpets over their burnt-offerings, and over the sacrifice of their peace-offerings, that they may be to you for a memorial before your God" Numbers 10:10.

When Midian had been smitten before Israel, and not one of Israel had been slain, they brought all the gold which had accrued to them, and "Moses and Eleazar took the gold, and brought it into the tabernacle, a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord" Numbers 31:50, Numbers 31:54. So the angel said to Cornelius, "thy prayers and thy alms are come up for a memorial before God" Acts 10:4, Acts 10:31. Rup.: "This is what we look for, that to all the saints and friends of God, whom these signify, those crowns which they made of their gold and silver for the Lord Jesus, shall be an everlasting memorial in that heavenly temple of the Lord." The tradition of the Jews, that this was literally, observed, can hardly be without foundation. Cyril: "These their offerings shall be for grace to those who dedicated them and an occasion of doxology. For the piety of princes becomes to the rest a path to the love of God. But when Christ is crowned by us, then shall also the multitude of the Gentiles haste to the knowledge of Him."

Verse 15

And they who are far off shall come - They who came from Babylon with offerings to God, became types of the Gentiles, of whom the Apostle says, "Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off have become

nigh through the blood of Christ" Ephesians 2:13; and, "He came and preached peace to you which were far off and to them that were nigh" Ephesians 2:17; and "the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call" Acts 2:39.

And build in - or upon, the temple of the Lord (Nehemiah 4:4, Nehemiah 4:11 (Nehemiah 4:10, Nehemiah 4:17 in English).) Not "build it" for it was to be built by "the Branch," but "build on," labor on, it. It was a building, which should continually be enlarged; of which Paul says, "I, as a wise master-builder, according to the grace given unto me, laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon; let every man take heed how, he buildeth thereupon" 1 Corinthians 3:10. Cyril: "What shall they build? Themselves, compacting themselves with the saints, and joining together in faith to oneness with those of Israel, Jesus Christ Himself being the head cornerstone and uniting together in harmony through Himself, what was of old divided. For He united "the two peoples into one new man, making peace, and reconciling in His own body all things unto the Father" Ephesians 2:15-16, which being accomplished, we shall own the truth of the holy prophets, and know clearly that it was God who spake in them and declared to us beforehand the mystery of Christ."

And this shall be - Not as though the coming of Christ depended upon their faithfulness, but their share in it. "Ye shall know (he had said) that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you;" but whether this knowledge should reach to individuals, depends upon their obedience and their willingness to know; "it shall be,, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God. For none of the wicked," Daniel says, "shall understand" Daniel 12:10; and Hosea, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them and the transgressors shall stumble at them"; and the wise man, "he that keepeth the law of the Lord getteth the understanding thereof" (John 7:17; "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God: John 8:47: Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice" John 18:37. Osorius: "Because he had said, And ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me unto you, he warns them, that the fruit of that coming will reach to those only, who should hear God and with ardent mind join themselves to His name. For as many as believed in Him were made sons of God; but the rest were cast into outer

darkness. But they receive Christ, who hear His voice and do not refuse His rule. For He was made the cause of eternal salvation to tell who obey Him."

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

In the fourth year of Darius - Two years after the series of visions, shown to him, and two years before the completion of the temple. Chisleu being December, it was the end of 518 b.c.

Verse 2

When they held sent unto the house of God - Rather, "And Bethel sent;" that is, the inhabitants of Bethel sent. "The house of God" is nowhere in Holy Scripture called Bethel. Bethel is always the name of the place.. The "house of God" is designated by historians, Psalmists, prophets, by the name, "Beth-elohim," more commonly "Beth-Ha-elohim, the God;" or "of the Lord," YHVH. Zechariah and Haggai use these names. It is not likely that the name, Beth-el, should have first been given to the house of God, when it had been desecrated by the idolatries of Jeroboam. Bethel also is, in the Hebrew order of the words, naturally the subject. Nor is there any reason why they should have sent to Bethel, since they sought an answer from God. For it would be forced to say that they sent to Bethel, in order that those at Bethel should send to Jerusalem; which is not said.

It were unnatural also that the name of the sender should not have been mentioned, when the names of persons inferior, because sent, are recorded. Bethel, in Nehemiah's time Nehemiah 11:31, was one of the chief places of Benjamin. "Two hundred twenty and three of the men of Bethel and Ai" Ezra 2:28 had returned with Zerubbabel. The answer being to "the people" of the land, such were doubtless the enquirers, not those still in Babylon. The answer shows that the question was not religious, though put as matter of religion. It is remarkable that, whereas in the case of those who brought presents from Babylon, the names express some relation to God, these names are singularly, the one of a parricide son of Sennacherib Isaiah 37:38; 2 Kings 19:37, and of one, chief among the King of Babylon's princes; the other probably a secular name, "the king's friend".

Osorius: "I do not see why under the name of Bethel, the city so called is not understood. For since Jerusalem was not yet fortified, the Jews chose them sites in various places, where they should be less harassed. All hatred was concentrated on that city, which the neighbors wished not to be restored to its former greatness. Other cities they did not so molest. Bethel then, that

is, the assembly of the city, sent messengers to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to God and consult the wise there."

To entreat the face of the Lord - They wished, it seems, (so to speak) to ingratiate themselves with God with an account of their past self-humiliation, on the day when the house of God was burned by Nebuchadnezzar. In regard to God, the word is always used of entreating Him by earnest prayer.

Verse 3

Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself? - "In the fifth month," from the seventh to the tenth day, Jerusalem was in flames, fired by Nebuchadnezzar. "He burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem and every great man's house he burnt with fire".

Jerome: "Now since it is said that the temple is builded and we see that no cause of sorrow remaineth, answer, we pray, are we to do this or to change our sorrow into joy?"

Separating myself - This seems to be added, to intensify the fast which they had kept. The Nazarite was bound to "separate himself from wine and strong drink" Numbers 6:3, and so, they severed themselves to the Lord, and consecrated themselves to Him (Amos 2:11). These had severed themselves from food, from things pleasant, from pleasure, from sin, it may be, for the day, but not abidingly: they had not given themselves to God.

As I have done these so many years - Literally, "how many." As if, although they knew that they were seventy years, they could not count them.

Verse 5

Speak unto all the people of the land - They of Bethel had spoken as one man, as Edom said to Israel, "Thou shalt not pass by me" Numbers 20:18; and "the men of Israel said to the Hivite; Perhaps thou dwellest in the midst of me, and how shall I make a league with thee?" Joshua 9:7. God gives the answer not to them only, but to all like-minded with them, "all the people of the land," the whole population (in our language); as Jeremiah says, "ye and your fathers, your kings and your princes and all the people of the land" Jeremiah 44:21, and, "the scribe who mustered the people of the land." Jeremiah 52:25.

When ye fasted and that, mourning - It was no mere abstinence from food (severe as the Jewish fasts were, one unbroken abstinence from

evening to evening) but with real mourning, the word being used only of mourning for the dead (Genesis 23:2; Genesis 50:10; 1 Samuel 25:1; 1 Samuel 28:3; 2 Samuel 1:12; 2 Samuel 3:31; 2 Samuel 11:26; 1 Kings 13:29-30; 1 Kings 14:13, 1 Kings 14:18; Ecclesiastes 12:5; Jeremiah 16:4-6; Jeremiah 22:18; (twice); Jeremiah 25:33; Jeremiah 34:5; Ezekiel 24:16, Ezekiel 24:23; Zechariah 12:10, Zechariah 12:12), or, in a few instances,, for a very great public calamity; probably with beating on the breast.

In the seventh month - The murder of Gedaliah, "whom the king of Babylon made governor of the land," completed the calamities of Jerusalem, in the voluntary, but prohibited exile to Egypt, for fear lest the murder should be avenged on them Jeremiah 4143.

Did ye at all fast unto Me, Me? - God emphatically rejects such fasting as their‘s had been, as something, unutterably alien from Him, "to Me, Me!" Yet the fasting and mourning had been real, but irreligious, like remorse for ill-deeds, which has self only for its ground. He prepares the way for His answer by correcting the error of the question. Osorius: "Ye fasted to yourselves, not to Me. For ye mourned your sorrows, not your misdeeds; and your public fast was undertaken, not for My glory, but out of feeling for your own grief. But nothing can be pleasing to God, which is not referred to His glory. But those things alone can be referred to His glory, which are done with righteousness and devotion."

Verse 6

And when ye eat and when ye drink, is it not ye who eat and ye who drink? - Conversely now that, after your return, ye feast for joy, this is no religious act; ye have all the good of it, there is no thanksgiving to God. Contrary to the apostle‘s saying, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glow of God" 1 Corinthians 10:31. "He eateth and drinketh to himself, who receiveth the nourishments of the body, which are the common gifts of the Creator, without the needy. And anyone fasts to himself, if he doth not give to the poor what for the time he withdraweth from himself, but keepeth it to be thereafter offered to his appetite. Hence, it is said by Joel, sanctify a fast. For to ‹sanctify a fast‘ is to show an abstinence worthy of God through other good deeds. Let anger cease, quarrels be hushed. For in vain is the flesh worn, if the mind is not refrained from evil pleasures, since the Lord says by the prophet, "Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate … " Isaiah 57:3-4.

Verse 7

Should ye "not hear" the words, or, Know ye "not the words?" The verb is presupposed in the emphatic question, as in, "Shall I, the blood of these men?" 2 Samuel 23:17. David omits the word "drink" for abhorrence.

By the former prophets - Isaiah and Jeremiah, "when Jerusalem was dwelling abidingly," at ease, as the whole world then was, except herself, "and the south and the low-country," both belonging to Judah, were inhabited. The restoration then was still very incomplete, since he contrasts their then condition with the present, as inhabited or no. The mountain, the south, and the low country, known still by its name of Sephela to Greeks, made up the territory of Judah Joshua 10:40, Judges 1:9; Jeremiah 17:26; Jeremiah 32:44; Jeremiah 33:13.

Verse 8

Instead of quoting the former prophets, Zechariah gives the substance of their exhortations, as renewed to himself.

Verse 9

Thus spake the Lord - that is, through the former prophets, for he goes on to speak of their rejection in the past. "Execute true judgment." He retains the words of Ezekiel. The injunction itself runs throughout the prophets. "Shew mercy" (as Isaiah 1:17, Isaiah 1:23; Isaiah 58:6-7; Jeremiah 7:5; Ezekiel 18:8; Hosea 12:6, etc.), that is, tender love, to all; compassion, to the unhappy. Omit no act of love, God so loves the loving. Lap.: "Like Paul to the Romans Romans 13:9, he names only the duties to the neighbor, but understands what relates to God. For the love of our neighbor presupposes the love of God, from which it springs." Jerome: "After strictness of justice, let mercy to all follow, and specially to brethren, of the same blood and of one faith. Brother and neighbor we ought to account the whole human race, since we are all born of one parent, or those who are of the household of faith, according to the parable of the Gospel, "which willeth us to understand by neighbor, nor our kin, but all men" (Luke 10:30 ff).

Verse 10

And oppress not - He had commanded positive acts of love; he now forbids every sort of unlove. "He that oppresseth the poor," Solomon had said, "reproacheth his Maker. The widow, the orphan, the stranger, the afflicted" Proverbs 24:31, are, throughout the law, the special objects of God's care. This was the condition which God made by Jeremiah; "If ye

thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor; if ye oppress not the stranger the fatherless and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt, then will I cause you to dwell in this, place" Jeremiah 7:5-7. It was on the breach of the covenant to set their brethren free in the year of release, that God said; "I proclaim a liberty for you to the sword, to the pestilence and to the famine, and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth" Jeremiah 34:17.

And let none of you imagine - that is, "devise, as, by Micah, God retorted the evil upon them. They "devised evil on their beds; therefore, behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks" Micah 2:1, Micah 2:3.

Verse 11

But they gave a backsliding shoulder - Like a restive animal, which would not endure the yoke, dull and stupid as the beasts: as Hosea says, "Israel slideth back like a backsliding heifer" Hosea 4:16. Nehemiah confesses the same; "they gave a backsliding shoulder and hardened their neck and would not hear" Nehemiah 9:29.

And made heavy their ears - Fulfilling in themselves what God foretold to Isaiah would be the result of his preaching, "make their ears heavy." The heart, which will not hearken, becomes duller by the outward hearing, as Paul says, "The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected" Hebrews 6:7-8.

Verse 12

Harder than adamant - The stone, whatever it be, was hard enough to cut ineffaceable characters: it was harder than flint. It would cut rocks; it could not be graven itself, or receive the characters of God.

This is the last sin, obduracy, persevering impenitence, which "resisted the Holy Spirit" Acts 7:51. and "did despite to the Spirit of grace" Hebrews 10:29. Not through infirmity, but of set purpose, they hardened themselves, lest "they should convert" Isaiah 6:10 and be healed. They feared to trust themselves to God's word, lest He should convert them by it.

Lest they should hear the law and the words which the Lord God sent by His Spirit by the hand of the former prophets - The Holy Spirit was the chief agent; "by His Spirit;" the inspired prophets were His

instruments; by the hand of. Nehemiah confesses the same to God: "Thou didst protest to them by Thy Spirit by the hand of Thy prophets" Nehemiah 9:30. Moses was one of the greatest prophets. The law then may be included, either as delivered by Moses, or as being continually enforced by all the prophets. Observe the gradations:

(1) The words of God are not heard.

(2) The restive shoulder is shown; people turn away, when God, by the inner motions of His Spirit or by lesser chastisements, would bring them to the yoke of obedience. Osorius: "They would not bear the burden of the law, whereas they willingly bore that most heavy weight of their sins."

(3) Obduracy. Osorius: "Their adamantine heart could be softened neither by promises nor threats." Therefore nothing remained but the great wrath, which they had treasured to themselves against the day of wrath. And so Zechariah returns to that, wherewith his message and visions of future mercy began, the great wrath which fell upon their fathers Zechariah 1:7.

Osorius: "‹I sought not,' He says, ‹for your tears; I enjoined not bitterness of sorrow; but what, had they been done, the calamity, for which those tears were meet, had never befallen you. What was it which I admonished you formerly by the former prophets to recall you from sin? What I bid you by Zechariah now. This I preach, admonish, testify, inculcate upon you. ‹"

Verse 13

And it came to pass - that is, this which God had said, "As He cried and they heard not, so shall they cry and I will not hear, saith the Lord of hosts." God had often said this. "It shall be too late to cry for mercy, when it is the time of justice." So Wisdom had said by Solomon; "then, that is, when distress and anguish cometh upon them, they shall call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, and they shall not find Me" Proverbs 1:27-28. So by Isaiah, "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of bloods" Isaiah 1:15. So by Hosea, Hosea 5:6, by Micah Micah 3:4, by Jeremiah Jeremiah 11:14; Jeremiah 14:12. It was one

message which was verilied in every day of chastisement, "there will be a ‹too late;‘" not a final "too late," until the end of ends comes, but a "too late" for them, a "too late" to avert that particular judgment of God, whereby the sinner‘s earthly trial and future were changed permanently.

Verse 14

But I scattered them - Rather, "And I will scatter them." The saying continues what God had said that he had said, and which had come to pass. Among all nations whom they knew not. So God had repeatedly said by Jeremiah, "I will cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, ye nor your fathers; where I will not show you favor" (Jeremiah 16:13; add Jeremiah 15:14; Jeremiah 17:4). This was the aggravation of the original woe in the law: "The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand, a nation of fierce countenance" Deuteronomy 28:49-50. There was no mitigation of suffering, when the common bond between man and man, mutual speech, was wanting.

That no man passed through nor returned - Literally, "from passer through and from returner;" as in the prophecy of Alexander‘s march and return, "because of him that passeth by and of him that returneth" Zechariah 9:8; and of Seir God saith, "I will cut off from him, passer-through and returner". As we say, there shall be no traffic more through her.

And they made the pleasant land desolate - They were the doers of what they by their sins caused, by bringing down the judgments of God. Heretofore the land which God had given them, had been in our language "the envy" of all who knew it now they had made it into a desolation, one wide waste Joel 1:7; Isaiah 13:9; Jeremiah 2:15; Jeremiah 4:7; Jeremiah 18:16; Jeremiah 19:8; Jeremiah 25:9; Jeremiah 50:3; Jeremiah 51:29.

Dionysius: "What is said in the beginning of the chapter against Jews who abstained indiscreetly, applies mystically to all, not inward, but rude Christians, who not being diligent enough but rather negligent about acts of piety and inward prayer and reformation of the powers of the soul, account highly of bodily exercises and outward observances, and use no slight scrupulosity as to things of less moment, and do not attend to the chief things, charity, humility, patience meekness. On these it must be inculcated, that if they wish their fasts and other outward exercises to please God, they must judge true judgment, and be compassionate, kind, liberal to their neighbors, keep their mind ever steadfast in God, cast away wholly all

hardness of heart, and be soft and open to receive within them the word of God. Otherwise their land will be desolate, that is, deprived of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and they scattered amid various vices." Jerome: "That which was formerly a pleasant land, and the hospice of the Trinity, is turned into a desert and dwelling-place of dragons."

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

Dionysius: "After the Lord had, in the preceding chapter, manifoldly rebuked the Jewish people, He now comforts it with renewed promises, as a good physician, who after a bitter draught employs sweet and soothing remedies; as that most loving Samaritan poured in wine and oil." The chapter falls into two portions, each marked by the words, The Word of the Lord of hosts came or came unto me, the first Zechariah 8:18-23 containing the answer to the original question as to those fasts, in the declaration of the joy and the spread of the Gospel. The first portion has, again, a sevenfold, the second, a threefold subordinate division; marked by the beginning, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts."

Verse 2

Thus saith the Lord of hosts - Jerome: "At each word and sentence, in which good things, for their greatness, almost incredible are promised, the prophet premises, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts," as if he would say, Think not that what I pledge you are my own, and refuse me not credence as man. What I unfold are the promises of God."

I was jealous - Literally, "I have been and am jealous for.". He repeats in words slightly varied, but in the same rhythm, the declaration of tits tender love wherewith He opened the series of visions, thereby assuring beforehand that this was, like that, an answer of peace. The form of words shows, that this was a jealousy for, not with her; yet it was one and the same strong, yea infinite love, whereby God, as He says, "clave unto their fathers to love them and chose their seed after them out of all nations" Deuteronomy 10:15. His jealousy of their sins was part of that love, whereby, (Dionysius), "without disturbance of passion or of tranquillity, He inflicted rigorous punishment, as a man fearfully reproves a wife who sins." They are two different forms of love according to two needs. Rup.: "The jealousy (Zelus) of God is good, to love people and hate the sins of people. Contrariwise the jealousy of the devil is evil, to hate people and love the sins of people." Osorius: "Since God's anger had its origin in the vehemence of His love (for this sort of jealousy arises from the greatness of love), there was hope that the anger might readily be appeased toward her."

Verse 3

I am returned - Dionysius: "Without change in Myself, I am turned to that people from the effect of justice to the sweetness of mercy, "and I will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem," in the temple and the people, indwelling the hearts of the good by charity and grace. Christ also, Very God and Very Man, visibly conversed and was seen in Zion." Osorius: "When He says, ‹I am turned,' He shows that she was turned too. He had said, "Turn unto Me and I will turn unto you;" otherwise she would not have been received into favor by Him. As the fruit of this conversion, He promises her His presence, the ornaments of truth, the hope of security, and adorns her with glorious titles."

God had symbolized to Ezekiel the departure of His special presence, in that the "glory of the God of Israel" which was over the temple, at "the very place where they placed the image of jealousy, "went up from the Cherub" Ezekiel 8:4-5, whereupon it was, "to the threshold of the house" Ezekiel 9:3; then "stood over the Cherubim" Ezekiel 10:4, Ezekiel 10:18; and then "went up from the midst of the city and stood upon the mountain, which is on the east side of the city" Ezekiel 11:23, so removing from them. He had prophesied its return in the vision of the symbolic temple, how "the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate looking toward the East, and the Spirit took me up and brought me into the inner court, and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house" Ezekiel 43:4. This renewed dwelling in the midst of them, Zechariah too prophesies, in the same terms as in his third vision, "I will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem" (Zechariah 2:1-13:14, Hebrew (Zechariah 2:10 in English)).

And Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth - , being what she is called, since God would not call her untruly; so Isaiah says, "afterward thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city" Isaiah 1:26, and they shall call thee the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel". So Zephaniah had prophesied, "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies" Zephaniah 3:13. Truth embraces everything opposite to untruth; faithfulness, as opposed to faithlessness; sincerity, as opposed to simulation; veracity, as opposed to falsehood; honesty, as opposed to untruth in act; truth of religion or faith, as opposed to untrue doctrine. Dionysius: "It shall be called the city of truth, that is, of the True God or of truth of life, doctrine, and justice. It is chiefly verified by the Coming of Christ, who often preached in Jerusalem, in whom the city afterward believed."

And the mountain of the Lord of hosts - Mount Zion, on which the temple shall be built, shall be called and be "the mountain of holiness." This had been the favorite title of the Psalmists, and Isaiah (Isaiah 11:9; Isaiah 56:7; Isaiah 57:13; Isaiah 65:11, Isaiah 65:25; Isaiah 66:20; also in Joel 2:1; Joel 3:17; Obadiah 1:16; Zephaniah 3:11; Daniel 9:16, Daniel 9:20); and Obadiah had foretold, "upon Mount Zion there shall be holiness" Obadiah 1:17; and Jeremiah, "As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The Lord shall bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness" Jeremiah 31:23. It should be called and be; it should fulfill the destination of its titles; as, in the Apostles' Creed we profess our belief of "the holy Catholic Church," and holiness is one of its characteristics.

Verse 4

There shall yet dwell old men and old women - Dionysius: "Men and women shall not be slain now, as before in the time of the Babylonish destruction, but shall fulfill their natural course." It shall not be, as when "He gave His people over unto the sword; the fire consumed their young men and their maidens were not given to marriage; the priests were slain by the sword and their widows made no lamentation" Psalm 78:63-64; apart from the horrible atrocities of pagan war, when the unborn children were destroyed in their mothers' womb 2 Kings 15:16; Hosea 13:16; Amos 1:13, with their mothers. Yet (as in Zechariah 1:17), once more as in the days of old, and as conditionally promised in the law Deuteronomy 4:10; Deuteronomy 5:16, Deuteronomy 5:33; Deuteronomy 6:2; Deuteronomy 11:9; Deuteronomy 17:20; Deuteronomy 22:7; Deuteronomy 32:47; Ezekiel 20:17. As death is the punishment of sin, so prolongation of life to the time which God has now made its natural term, seems the more a token of His goodness. This promise Isaiah had renewed, "There shall no more be an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days" Isaiah 65:20. In those fierce wars neither young nor very old were spared. It implied then a long peace, that people should live to that utmost verge of human life.

The man, whose staff is in his hand for the multitude of days - The two opposite pictures, the old men, Dionysius), "so aged that they support with a staff their failing and trembling limbs," and the young in the glad buoyancy of recent life, fresh from their Creator's hands, attest alike the goodness of the Creator, who protecteth both, the children in their yet undeveloped strength, the very old whom He hath brought through "all the

changes and chances of this mortal life," in their yet sustained weakness. The tottering limbs of the very old, and the elastic perpetual motion of childhood are like far distant chords of the diapason of the Creator's love. It must have been one of the most piteous sights in that first imminent destruction of Jerusalem Jeremiah 6:11; Jeremiah 9:21, how "the children and the sucklings swooned in the streets of the city; how the young children fainted for hunger in the top of every street" Lamentations 2:11, Lamentations 2:19.

We have but to picture to ourselves any city in which one lives, the ground strewn with these little all-but corpses, alive only to suffer. We know not, how great the relief of the yet innocent, almost indomitable joyousness of children is, until we miss them. In the dreadful Irish famine of 1847 the absence of the children from the streets of Galway was told me by Religious as one of its dreariest features. In the dreary back-streets and alleys of London, the irrepressible joyousness of children is one of the bright sun-beams of that great Babylon, amid the oppressiveness of the anxious, hard, luxurious; thoughtless, careworn, eager, sensual, worldly, frivolous, vain, stolid, sottish, cunning, faces, which traverse it. God sanctions by His word here our joy in the joyousness of children, that He too taketh pleasure in it, He the Father of all. It is precisely their laughing, the fullness of her streets of these merry creations of His hands, that He speaks of with complacency.

Verse 6

If it should be marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in those - (not these) days, shall it be marvelous in Mine eyes also? saith the Lord of hosts Man's anticipations, by reason of his imperfections and the chequered character of earthly things, are always disappointing. God's doings, by reason of His infinite greatness and goodness, are always beyond our anticipations, past all belief. It is their very greatness which staggers us. It is not then merely that the temporal promises seemed "too good to be true" (in our words) (Jerome), "in the eyes of the people who had come from the captivity, seeing that the city almost desolate, the ruins of the city-walls, the charred houses showed the doings of the Babylonians." It is in the day of the fulfillment, not of the anticipation, that they would seem marvelous in their eyes, as the Psalmist says, "This is the Lord's doing: and it is marvelous in our eyes".

The temporal blessings which God would give were not so incredible. They were but the ordinary gifts of His Providence: they involved no change in their outward relations. His people were still to remain under their Persian masters, until their time too should come. It was matter of gladness and of God‘s Providence, that the walls of Jerusalem should be rebuilt: but not so marvelous, when it came to pass. The mysteries of the Gospel are a marvel even to the blessed angels. That fulfillment being yet future, so the people, in whose eyes that fulfillment should be marvelous, were future also. And this was to be a remnant still. It does not say, “this people which is a remnant,” nor “this remnant of the people,” that is, those who remained over out of the people who went into captivity, or this remnant, but “the remnant of this people,” that is, those who should remain over of it, that is, of the people who were returned. It is the remnant of the larger whole, this people (see at Amos 1:8, vol. i. p. 247, n. 28, and on Haggai 1:12, p. 305). It is still “the remnant according to the election of grace;” that election which obtained what all Israel sought, but, seeking wrongly, were blinded Romans 11:5-7.

Shall it be marvelous in Mine eyes also? - It is an indirect question in the way of exclamation. “It be marvelous in Mine eyes also,” rejecting the thought, as alien from the nature of God, to whom “all things are possible, yea, what with men is impossible” Matthew 19:26. As God says to Jeremiah, “Behold, I am, the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?” Jeremiah 32:27. “For with God nothing shall be impossible” Luke 1:37. “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God” Luke 18:27. “For with God all things are possible.” Mark 10:27 Cyril: “For He is the Lord of all powers, fulfilling by His will what exceedingly surpasseth nature, and efecting at once what seemeth Him good. The mystery of the Incarnation passeth all marvel and discourse, and no less the benefits redounding to us. For how is it not next to incredible, that the Word, Begotten of God, should be united with the flesh and be in the form of a servant, and endure the Cross and the insults and outrages of the Jews? Or how should one not admire above measure the issue of the dispensation, whereby sin was destroyed, death abolished, corruption expelled, and man, once a recreant slave, became resplendent with the grace of an adopted son?”

Verse 7

I will save My people from the East country and from the West country - Dionysius: "that is, the whole world; for Israel had been scattered in every part of the world." God had said to Israel, "I will bring thy seed from the east and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back" Isaiah 43:5-6. The two tribes had been carried to Babylon and had been dispersed, or had been allowed to migrate to the various provinces of the Babylonian or Persian empire. But these were in the East, though commonly called the north, because they invaded Israel from the north. Those who had migrated to Egypt were in the south. As yet none were in the West. The dispersion, as well as the gathering, was still future. When our Lord came, they had migrated westward. Greece, Italy, Asia minor, were full of them; and from all they were gathered. All Paul's Epistles written to named Churches, were written to Churches formed from converts in the West. In all these countries God would gather His one people, His Church, not of "the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles" Romans 9:24, grafted into them, as our Lord said, "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom (the unbelieving Jews, who were not the remnant) shall be cast out into outer darkness" Matthew 8:11-12.

Verse 8

They shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem - Not the literal Jerusalem; for this would not contain the Jews from all quarters of the world, whom, as they multiplied, the whole land could not contain; but the promised Jerusalem, the Jerusalem, which "should be inhabited as towns without walls," to which the Lord should be a wall of fire round about.

And they shall be My people - He promises this as to those who were already His people; "I will save My people - and will bring them, and they shall dwell - and they shall be My people." And this they were to be in a new way, by conversion of heart, as Jeremiah says, "I will give them an heart to know Me, that I am the Lord, and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto Me with their whole heart" (Jeremiah 24:7; add Jeremiah 30:22), and, "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and will write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people" Jeremiah 31:33.

Osorius: “The circuit of one city will not contain so great a multitude. But one confession of faith, one conspiration of sanctity, one communion of religion and righteousness, can easily enfold all born of the holy fathers, united to them in faith and piety. And God is specially called the God of all these. For He specially consults for these, loads them with benefits, fences them in with most strong protection, illumines them with His light, crowns them, when confirmed in the image of His beauty, with glory immortal and divine.”

In truth and in righteousness - This too is on account of their former relation to God. Isaiah had upbraided them for a worship of God, “not in truth and righteousness” Isaiah 48:1. Jeremiah had said, “Thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness” Jeremiah 4:2. God should be their God in truth and righteousness; Ribera: “truth in fulfilling His promises; righteousness in rewarding every man according to his works.”

Verse 9

Let your hands be strong - The fulfillment of God‘s former promises are the earnest of the future; His former providences, of those to come. Having then those great promises for the time to come, they were to be earnest in whatever meantime God gave them to do. He speaks to them, “as hearing in these days,” that is, that fourth year of Darius in which they apparently were, “these words from the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day when the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid, the temple, that it might be built.” Haggai was now gone to his rest. His voice had been silent for two years. But his words lived on. The fulfillment of what the prophets had then spoken in God‘s Name, was a ground, why their hands should be strong, now and thereafter, for every work which God gave or should give them to do. Ribera: “Some things are said to Jerusalem, that is, to the Jews, which belong to them only; some relate to what is common to them and the other members of the Church, that is, these who are called from the Gentiles. Now he speaks to the Jews, but not so as to seem to forget what he had said before. He would say, Ye who hear the words, which in those days when the temple was founded, Haggai and Zechariah spake, be strong and proceed to the work which ye began of fulfilling the will of the Lord in the building of the temple, and in keeping from the sins, in which ye were before entangled. For as, before ye began to build the temple, ye were afflicted with many calamities, but after ye had begun, all

things went well with you, as Haggai said, “so, if you cultivate piety and do not depart from God, ye shall enjoy great abundance of spiritual good” Haggai 2:15-19. Osorius: “The memory of past calamity made the then tranquillity much sweeter, and stirred the mind to greater thanksgiving. He set forth then the grief of those times when he says;”

Verse 10

There was no hire for man - Literally, “hire for man came not to pass.” It was longed for, waited for and came not. So little was the produce, that neither laborer nor beast of burden were employed to gather it in.

Neither was there peace to him who went out or came in because of the affliction, better, of the adversary - In such an empire as the Persian, there was large scope for actual hostility among the petty nations subject to it, so that they did not threaten revolt against itself, or interfere with the payment of tribute, as in the Turkish Empire now, or in the weak government of Greece. At the rebuilding of the walls, after this time, the Samaritans, “Arabians, Ammonites, Ashdodites conspired to fight against Jerusalem,” and to “slay them” Nehemiah 4:7-11. They are summed up here in the general title used here, “our adversaries”.

For I set - Literally, “and I set.” Domestic confusions and strife were added to hostility from without. Nehemiah‘s reformation was, in part, to stop the grinding usury in time of dearth or to lear the king‘s taxes, through which men sold lands, vineyards, even their children Nehemiah 5:1-12.

(**literally) let them loose, each against his neighbor -** in that He left them to their own ways and did not withhold them.

Verse 11

And now - The words imply a contrast of God‘s dealings, rather than a contrast of time. “I am not to the remnant of this people.” He had said, “I will be to them God;” so now He does not say that He will not do to them, “as in former days,” but “I am not to the remnant” of this people as heretofore. He would be, as tie was in Jesus, in a new relation to them.

Verse 12

For the seed shall be peace - o“Your seed shall be peace and a blessing, so that they will call it ‹a seed of peace.‘” The unusual construction is perhaps adopted, in order to suggest a further meaning. It is a reversal of the condition, just spoken of, when there was “no peace to him that went, or to him that returned.”

The vine shall give her fruit and the ground shall give her increase - The old promise in the law on obedience Leviticus 26:4, as the exact contrary was threatened on disobedience Leviticus 26:20. It had been revived in the midst of promise of spiritual blessing and of the coming of Christ, in Ezekiel Ezekiel 34:27. Ribera: "By the metaphor of sensible things he explains (as the prophets often do) the abundance of spiritual good in the time of the new law, as did Hosea Hosea 2:21-22, Joel Joel 2:23-25; Joel 3:18, Amos Amos 9:13, and many others." "And I will cause the remnant of the people to inherit." Ribera: "As if he said, I promised these things not to you who live now, but to the future remnant of your people, that is, those who shall believe in Christ and shall be saved, while the rest perish. These shall possess these spiritual goods, which I promise now, under the image of temporal." As our Lord said, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be My son" Revelation 21:7.

Verse 13

As ye were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you - The ten tribes bore the name of Israel, in contrast with the two tribes with the name of Judah, not only in the history but in the prophets; as Hosea says, "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, and on the house of Judah I will have mercy" Hosea 1:6-7. Here he unites both; both, in the time of their captivity, were a curse, were held to be a thing accursed, as it is said, "He that is hanged is the curse of God" Deuteronomy 21:23, that is, a thing accursed by Him; and God foretold of Judah, that they should be "a desolation and a curse" 2 Kings 22:10, and by Jeremiah, "I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for hurt, a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse in all places whither I shall drive them"; and in deed, when it was so, "therefore is your land a desolation and an astonishment and a curse without an inhabitant, as at this day" Jeremiah 44:22.

Now the sentence was to be reversed as to both. "As ye were a curse, among the nations, naming each, so I will save you." There would have been no proportion between the curse and the blessing, unless both had been included under the blessing, as they were under the curse. But Israel had no share in the temporal blessing, not returning from captivity, as Zechariah knew they were not returned hitherto. Therefore the blessings promised must be spiritual. Even a Jewish commentator saw this. "It is

possible, that this may have been spoken of the second temple, on condition that they should keep the commandments of the Lord; or, it is still future, referring to the days of the Messiah: and this is proved by the following verse which says, ‹O house of Judah and house of Israel.‘ During the second temple the house of Israel did not return."

And ye shall be a blessing - This is a revival and an application of the original promise to Abraham, "thou shalt be a blessing" Genesis 12:2; which was continued to Jacob, "God give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee and to thy seed with thee" Genesis 28:4. And of the future king, of whom it is said, "Thou gavest him length of days forever and ever," David says, "Thou hast made him blessings forever" Psalm 21:4, Psalm 21:6, and again, "They shall be blessed in Him" Psalm 72:17). So Isaiah had said of the days of Christ, "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the land;" Isaiah 19:24; and symbolically of the cluster of grapes, "Destroy it not: for a blessing is in it" Isaiah 65:8; and Ezekiel, "I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing" Ezekiel 34:26. They were this; for of them, "according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever" Romans 9:5; of them were the Apostles and Evangelists, of them every writer of God‘s word, of them those who carried the Gospel throughout the world. Osorius: "Was this fulfilled, when the Jews were under the Persians? or when they paid tribute to the Greeks? or when they trembled, hour by hour, at the mention of the Roman name? Do not all count those who rule much happier than those oppressed by the rule of others? The prediction then was fulfilled, not then, but when Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shone on the earth, and He chose from the Hebrews lights, through whom to dissipate darkness and illumine the minds of people who were in that darkness. The Jews, when restored from the captivity, seemed born to slavery." They were reputed to be of slaves the most despised. "But when they had through Christ been put in possession of that most sure liberty, they overthrew, through their empire, the power and tyranny of the evil spirits."

Verse 14

As I thought to punish you - (Literally, to do evil to you) "and repented not." In like way God says in Jeremiah, "I have purposed and will not repent." Jeremiah 4:28.

Verse 15

So have I turned and purposed in these days to do well unto Jerusalem - Dionysius: "God, to be better understood, speaketh with the feelings and after the manner of men, although, in the passionless and unchangeable God, there is no provocation to anger, nor turning, implying change in Himself." So He says by Jeremiah, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil" Jeremiah 29:11. And, with the same contrast as here, "As I have watched over them to pluck up and to break down and to throw down, and to destroy and to afflict, so will I watch over them, to build and to plant, saith the Lord" Jeremiah 31:28. His having done what He purposed before was an earnest the more, that He would do what He purposed now. His chastisements were the earnests of His mercies; for they too were an austere form of His love. Osorius: "When the Lord stretches out His hand to strike those who are contumacious in guilt, none can hold His hand that He exact not the due punishment. Therefore He says, that He repented not; so, when He receives to grace those who repent of their sins, no one can any way delay the course of His benevolence. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" Romans 11:29.

And to the house of Judah - Ribera: He speaks to the two tribes, not to, or of the ten, because Christ was to come to the two tribes, and Zechariah was prophesying to them, and they were to be admonished to prepare themselves in good works, lest the coming of Christ should not profit them, on account of their depraved ways. But the ten tribes were far off in the cities of the Medes, nor was Christ to come to them; but they were to hear the Gospel through the Apostles, and so he prophesies of the conversion of all to the glory of Christ, yet he could not admonish all, but those only to whom he was sent.

Verse 16

These are the things that ye shall do - He exhorts them to the same duties, to which the former prophets had exhorted their fathers, Zechariah 7:9-10, and, as before, first positively to truth and peace; then to avoid everything contrary to it. "Judgment of peace" must be judgment which issues in peace, as all righteous judgment righteously received, in which case each party acquiesces, must. Kimchi: "If ye judge righteousness, there will be peace between the litigants, according to that proverb, Sanhedr. f. 7. a. quoted by Me. Caul, p. 78), ‹He that hath his coat taken from him by the tribunal, let him sing and go his way' ("because," says a gloss (Rashi,

quoted Ibid.), "they have judged the judgment of truth, and have taken away that which would have been stolen property, if he retained it," being in fact not his). And they have quoted that, "And all this people shall go to their place in peace" Exodus 18:23.: "All this people," even he that is condemned in judgment. It is also interpreted of arbitration. What sort of judgment is that, in which there is peace? It is that of arbitration."

Verse 17

For all these things do I hate - Literally, emphatic, "For they are all these things which I hate." This is the sum of what I hate; for they comprise in brief the breaches of the two tables, the love of God and of man.

Verse 19

The fast of the fourth month - On the ninth day "of the fourth month" of Zedekiah's eleventh year, Jerusalem, in the extremity of famine, opened to Nebuchadnezzar, and his princes sat in her gate; in the "tenth month" of his ninth year Nebuchadnezzar began the siege. Ezekiel was bidden "on its tenth day; write thee the name of the day, of this same day," Ezekiel 24:1-2, as the beginning of God's uttermost judgments against "the bloody city". The days of national sorrow were to be turned late exuberant joy, "joy and gladness and cheerful feasts" Esther 8:17; Esther 9:19, Esther 9:22; Ecclesiastes 7:14, for the sorrows, which they commemorated, were but the harbingers of joy, when the chastisements were ended; only He adds, love the truth and peace; for such love whereby they would be Israelites indeed, in whose spirits is no guile, were the conditions of their participating the blessings of the Gospel, of which he goes on to speak;

Verse 20

It shall yet be that - The promises are those which God had already made by Isaiah (Isaiah 2:2 ff) and Micah (Micah 4:1 ff). Yet where was the show of their fulfillment? The Jews themselves, a handful: the temple unfinished; its completion depending, in human sight, upon the will of their pagan masters, the rival worship at Samaria standing and inviting to coalition. Appearances and experience were against it. God says virtually, that it was, in human sight, contrary to all expectations. But "weakness is aye Heaven's might." Despite of all, of the fewness of those who were returned, their downheartedness, broken condition, hopelessness, though all had hitherto failed, though, or rather because, all human energy and strength were gone, as God had said before, "The Lord shall yet (Zechariah 1:17;

Zechariah 2:1-13:16 (12English)) choose Jerusalem," so now, It shall "yet" be "that."

Nations and many cities shall come - He describes vividly the eagerness and mutual impulse, with which not only many but mighty nations should throng to the Gospel, and every fresh conversion should win others also, until the great tide should sweep through the world.

Verse 21

The inhabitants of one city shall go to another - It is one unresting extension of the fairly, the restlessness of faith and love. Osorius: "They shall not be satisfied with their own salvation, careless about the salvation of others; they shall employ all labor and industry, with wondrous love, to provide for the salvation of others as if it were their own." It is a marvelous stirring of minds. Missionary efforts, so familiar with us as to be a household word, were unknown then. The time was not yet come. "Before the faith" in Christ came, the Jewish people were not to be the converters of mankind. They were to await for Him, the Redeemer of the world, through whom and to whom they were to be first converted, and then the world through those who were of them. This mutual conversion was absolutely unknown. The prophet (see below on Zechariah 9:12) predicts certainly that it would be, and in God's time it was. "From you," Paul writes to a small colony in Greece, "sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad" 1 Thessalonians 1:8. "Your faith" Romans 1:8, he writes to the pagan capital of the world, "is spoken of throughout the whole world."

Within eighty years after our Lord's Ascension, the Roman governor of Bithynia reported, on occasion of the then persecution, that it spread as a contagion. Pliny ad. Trajan Eph. x. 97: "The contagion of that superstition traversed not cities only but villages and scattered houses too." Before the persecution, the temples had been desolated, the solemn rites long intermitted, the sacrificed animals had very rarely found a purchaser. An impostor of the same date says,, Pontus is full of atheists and Christians." "There is no one race of people," it was said before the middle of the second century, "whether Barbarians or Greeks or by whatsoever name called, whether of those wandering houseless tribes who live in wagons or those pastoral people who dwell in tents, in which there are not prayers and Eucharists to the Father and Creator of all things, through the name of the crucified Jesus." "The word of our teacher," said another,, "abode not in

Judaea alone, as philosophy in Greece; but was poured out throughout the whole world, persuading Greeks and barbarians in their several nations and villages and every city, whole houses and each hearer individually, and having brought over to the truth no few even of the very philosophers. And if any ordinary magistrate forbid the Greek philosophy, immediately it vanishes; but our teaching, immediately at its first announcement, kings and emperors and subordinate rulers and governors with all their mercenaries and countless multitudes forbid, and war against us and try to extirpate; but it the rather flourishes."

The second century had not closed, before another said,, "We are a people of yesterday, and yet we have filled every place belonging to you, cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camp, your tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum! We leave you your temples only. We can count your armies; our numbers in a single province will be greater." "People cry out that the state is beset; that the Christians are in their fields, in their forts, in their islands. They mourn, as for a loss, that every sex, age, condition, and now even rank is going over to this sect.": "On whom besides have all nations believed, except on Christ who hath already come?" Then having enumerated the nations mentioned in the Acts Acts 2:9-11, he adds, "And now the varieties of the Getulians, and the many tracts of the Moors, all the bounds of the Spains, and the divers nations of the Gauls, and places of the Britons, unreached by the Romans but subdued to Christ; of Sarmatians, Dacians, Germans, and Scythians, and of many remote nations, and many provinces and islands, unknown to us, and which we can scarce enumerate. In all which places the name of Christ, who hath already come, reigneth, seeing that before Him the gates of all cities are opened and none are shut against Him, before whom "the bars of iron are broken in pieces and the gates of brass are opened" Isaiah 45:2.

In all these places dwelleth a people called by the name of Christ. For who could reign over all, save Christ the Son of God, who was foretold as about to reign over all nations forever?" Then having contrasted the limited rule of Solomon, Darius, the Pharaohs, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, "the Romans who protect their own empire by the strength of their legions and are unable to extend the might of their kingdom beyond these nations (Germans, Britons, Moors, Getulians), he sums up, "but the kingdom and

the Name of Christ is extended everywhere, is believed in everywhere, is worshiped by all the nations above enumerated. Everywhere He reigns, everywhere is adored, is given everywhere equally to all. With Him no king hath greater favor; no Barbarian inferior joy; no dignities or birth enhance the merit of any; to all He is equal; to all, King; to all Judge; to all, God and Lord." A little later, a pagan owns, while calumniating,, "Those most foul rites of that impious coalition are growing throughout the whole world, as bad things come up most luxuriantly, evil ways creeping on daily." The Christian answers. "That our number increases daily, this is no imputation of error, but a testimony to praise. For in a good mode of life, its own persevere, aliens accrue to it."

Let us go on and on - Perseveringly, until we attain "to entreat the face of the Lord." It is not a Theism or Monotheism, but the God, who had revealed Himself to Israel, who, when our Lord came, was worshiped in Jerusalem, to which those invited say, "I too would go with thee." Yet not so, but the words seem to speak of that which is a special gift of the Gospel, continued progress, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, to press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us go on and on" Philemon 3:13-14; whence it is a Christian proverb,, "not to go on is to go back.": "The whole life of a good Christian is a holy longing to make progress." "The one perfection of man is, to have found that he is not perfect.": "If thou sayest, It sufficeth, thou art lost.": "To be unwilling to increase, is to decrease."

Verse 23

Ten men of all languages of the nations - Ten is the symbol of a whole, all the numbers before it meeting in it and starting again from it. The day of Pentecost was to be the reversal of the confusion of Babel; all were to have one voice, as God had said, "It (the time) shall come to gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see My glory" Isaiah 66:18.

They shall lay hold of the skirt of one man who is a Jew - Jerome: "That is, of the Lord and Saviour, of whom it is said, "A prince shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until He shall come, for whom it is laid up, and for Him shall the Gentiles wait" Genesis 49:8-10; for "there shall be a rod of Jesse, and He who shall arise to rule over the Gentiles, to Him shall the Gentiles seek" Isaiah 11:10. And when they shall lay hold of Him, they shall desire to tread in His steps, since God

is with Him. Or else, whosoever shall believe out of all nations, shall lay hold of a man who is a Jew, the Apostles who are from the Jews, and shall say, Let us go with you; for we have known through the prophets and from the voice of all the Scriptures, that the Son of God, Christ, God and Lord, is with you. Where there is a most manifest prophecy, and the coming of Christ and His Apostles and the faith of all nations is preached, let us seek for nothing more."

Cyril: "Christ turning our sorrow into joy and a feast and good days and gladness, and transferring lamentation into cheerfulness, the accession to the faith and union to God by sanctification in those called to salvation shall not henceforth be individually; but the cities shall exhort each other thereto, and all nations shall come in multitudes, the later ever calling out to those before them, "I too will go." For it is written, "iron sharpeneth iron, so doth a man the countenence of another" Proverbs 27:17. For the zeal of some is ever found to call forth others to fulfill what is good. But what is the aim proposed to the cities, that is, the Gentiles? "To entreat and to seek the face of the Lord," that is, Christ, who is the exact image of God the Father, and, as is written, "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person" Hebrews 1:3, of whom also the divine David saith, "Shew Thy countenance to Thy servant" Psalm 119:135.

For the Image and Countenance of God the Father hath shone upon us. Having Him propitious and kind, we lay aside the injury from sin, being justified through faith, "not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to His great mercy" Titus 3:5. But how they shall come, he explains. By the ten men you are to understand time perfect number of those who come. For the number ten is the symbol of perfection. But that those of the Gentiles, who cleave to the holy Apostles, took in hand to go the same way with them, being justified by the faith in Christ, he sets evidently before us. For little children, if they would follow their fathers, lay hold of the hem of their dress, and, aided by the touch and hanging from their dress, walk steadily and safely. In like way, they too who "worshiped the creature rather than the Creator" Romans 1:25, choosing as their true fathers the bringers-in of the Gospel-doctrines, and joining themselves by like-mindedness to them, follow them, being still of childlike minds, and go the same way, ever showing themselves zealous followers of their life, and

by continued progress advancing "to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" Ephesians 4:13.

But why do they follow them? Being persuaded that God is with them, that is, Emmanuel, God with us. But that this calling belongs not only to those of the blood of Israel but to all nations throughout the world, he indicated by saying, that those who laid hold of that hem should be of all languages. But when were the nations called to the knowledge of the truth, and when did they desire to seek the face of the Lord and to entreat it, and to go the same way, as it were, as the holy Apostles, except when the Only-Begotten came to us, who is "the expectations of the nations" Genesis 49:10; to whom also the divine David singeth, "All the naions, whom Thou hast made, shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord?" Psalm 86:9. For the multitude of the nations also is saved through Him."

The startling condescension of this passage is, that our Lord is spoken of as "a man, a Jew." Yet of His human Nature it is not only the simple truth, but essential to the truth. Pilate said to Him in scorn, "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me" John 18:35. But it was essential to the fulfillment of God's promises. The Christ was to be "the Son of David" Matthew 1:1; Matthew 22:42. "Hath not the Scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the linen of Bethlehem, where David was?" John 7:42. David, "being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne Acts 2:30; "Of this man's seed hath God, according to promise, raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus" Acts 13:23. Whence Paul begins his great doctrinal Epistle with this contrast, "the Gospel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power" Romans 1:1-4. He was that "one Man among a thousand, whom Solomon says, I found; but a woman among all those have I not found" Ecclesiastes 7:28; the one in the whole human race. It was fulfilled in the very letter when "they brought to Him all that were diseased, and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole" Matthew 14:35-36. "The whole multitude sought to touch Him, for there went virtue out of Him and healed all" (Luke 6:19, add Luke 8:46; Mark 5:30).

Even the Jews saw the reference to the Messiah.: “All nations shall come, falling on their faces before the Messiah and the Israelites, saying, Grant, that we may be Thy servants and of Israel. For as relates to the doctrine and the knowledge of the law, the Gentiles shall be their servants, according to that, “In those days ten men etc.””

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

The burden - oof the word of the Lord in (or, upon) the land of Hadrach The foreground of this prophecy is the course of the Victories of Alexander, which circled round the holy land without hurting it, and ended in the overthrow of the Persian empire. The surrender of Damascus followed first, immediately on his great victory at the Issus; then Sidon yielded itself and received its ruler from the conqueror, Tyre he utterly destroyed; Gaza, we know, perished; he passed harmless by Jerusalem. Samaria, on his return from Egypt, he chastised.

It is now certain that there was a city called Hadrach in the neighborhood of Damascus and Hamath, although its exact site is not known. "It was first found upon the geographical tablets among the Assyrian inscriptions." "In the catalogue of Syrian cities, tributary to Nineveh, (of which we have several copies in a more or less perfect state, and varying from each other, both in arrangement and extent) there are three names, which are uniformly grouped together and which we read Manatsuah, Magida (Megiddo) and Du'ar (Dor). As these names are associated with those of Samaria, Damascus, Arpad, Hamath, Carchemish, Hadrach, Zobah, there can be no doubt of the position of the cities". In the Assyrian Canon, Hadrach is the object of three Assyrian expeditions, 9183 (b.c. 818), 9190 (811) and 9200 (801). The first of these follows upon one against Damascus, 9182 (817). In the wars of Tiglath-pileser II. (the Tiglath-pileser of Holy Scripture,) it has been twice deciphered;

(1) In the war b.c. 738,737, after the mention of "the cities to Saua the mountain which is in Lebanon were divided, the land of Bahalzephon to Ammana" (Ammon), there follows Hadrach; and subsequently there are mentioned as joined to the league, "19 districts of Hamath, and the cities which were round them, which are beside the sea of the setting sun."

(2) In his "War in Palestine and Arabia", "the city of Hadrach to the land of Saua," and six other cities are enumerated, as "the cities beside the upper sea," which, he says, "I possessed, and six of my generals as governors over them I appointed." No other authority nearly approaches these times. The nearest authority is of the second century after our Lord, 116 a.d.: "R. Jose,

born of a Damascene mother, said," answering R. Yehudah ben Elai,, "I call heaven and earth to witness upon me, that I am of Damascus, and that there is a place called Hadrach." Cyril of Alexandria says that "the land of Hadrach must be somewhere in the eastern parts, and near to Emath (now Epiphania of Antioch) a little further than Damascus, the metropolis of the Phoenicians and Palestine." A writer of the 10th century says that there was "a very beautiful mosque there, called the Mesjed-el-Khadra, and that the town was named from it." The conjecture that Hadrach might be the name of a king, or an idol, will now probably be abandoned, nor can the idea, (which before seemed the most probable and which was very old), that it was a symbolic name, hold any longer.

For the prophets do use symbolic names; but then they are names which they themselves frame. Micah again selects several names of towns, now almost unknown and probably unimportant, in order to impress upon his people some meaning connected with them, but then he does himself so connect it. He does not name it (so to say), leaving it to explain itself. The name Hadrach would be a real name, used symbolically, without anything in the context to show that it is a symbol.

The cities, upon which the burden or heavy prophecy tell, possessed no interest for Israel. Damascus was no longer a hostile power; Hamath had ever been peaceable, and was far away; Tyre and Sidon did not now carry on a trade in Jewish captives. But the Jews knew from Daniel, that the empire, to which they were in subjection, would be overthrown by Greece Daniel 8:20-21. When that rapid attack should come, it would be a great consolation to them to know, how they themselves would fare. It was a turning point in their history and the history of the then known world. The prophet describes (see below at Zechariah 9:8) the circuit, which the conqueror would take around the land which God defended; how the thunder-cloud circled round Judaea, broke irresistibly upon cities more powerful than Jerusalem, but was turned aside from the holy city "in going and returning," because God encamped around it.

"The selection of the places and of the whole line of country corresponds very exactly to the march of Alexander after the battle of Issus, when Damascus, which Darius had chosen as the strong depository of his

wealth, of Persian women of rank, confidential officers and envoys,, was betrayed, but so opened its gates to his general, Parmenio. Zidon, a city renowned for its antiquity and its founders, surrendered freely; Tyre, here specially marked out, was taken after a 7 months‘ siege; Gaza too resisted for 5 months, was taken, and, as it was said, ‹plucked up.‘”

And Damascus shall be the rest thereof - God‘s judgment fell first upon Damascus. But the word “resting-place” is commonly used of quiet peaceful resting, especially as given by God to Israel; of the ark, the token of the Presence of God, after its manifold removals, and of the glorious dwelling-place of the Christ among people. The prophet seems then purposely to have chosen a word of large meaning, which should at once express (as he had before) Zechariah 6:8, that the word of God should fall heavily on Damascus and yet be its resting-place. Hence, about the time of our Lord, the Jews interpreted this of the coming of the Messiah, that “Jerusalem should reach to the gates of Damascus. Since Damascus shall be the place of His rest, but the place of His rest is only the house of the sanctuary, as it is said, “This is My rest for ever; here will I dwell.” Another added,, “All the prophets and all prophesied but of the years of redemption and the days of the Messiah.” Damascus, on the conversion of Paul, became the first resting-place of the word of God, the first-fruits of the Gentiles whom the Apostle of the Gentiles gathered from east to west throughout the world.

When (or For) the eyes of man - As (literally, and that is, especially beyond others) “of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the Lord.” This also implies a conversion of Gentiles, as well as Jews. For man, as contrasted with Israel, must be the pagan world, mankind. “The eyes of all must needs look in adoration to God, expecting all good from Him, because the Creator of all provided for the well-being of all, as the Apostle says, “Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yea, of the Gentiles also” Romans 3:29. God‘s time of delivering His people is, when they pray to Him. So Jehoshaphat prayed, “O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? For we have no strength against this great company, which is come against us, and we know not what we shall do; but our eyes are on Thee” 2 Chronicles 20:12; and the Psalmist says, “The eyes of all wait toward Thee; and, “toward them that fear Him.” Psalm 33:18, or in Ezra‘s Chaldee, “The eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews” Ezra 5:5., or, “the eyes of the Lord thy God are upon it” (the land), Deuteronomy 11:12; but there is

no construction like "the Lord hath an eye on (obj.) man" (as 70: Jonathan, Syr.) The passages, "whose eyes are opened upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give etc." Jeremiah 32:19, "his eyes behold the nations," are altogether different. "The eye of" must be construed as "his own eye.") "as the eyes of servants are unto the hand of their masters, add as the eyes of a maiden are unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes are unto the Lord our God, until He have mercy upon us."

"For in those days," says a Jew, who represents the traditional interpretation, (Rashi), man shall look to his Creator, and his eyes shall look to the Blessed One, as it was said above, we will go with you, and they shall join themselves, they and their cities, to the cities of Israel." And another; (Kimchi), "In those days the eyes of all mankind shall be to the Lord, not to idols or images; therefore the land of Hadrach and Damascus, and the other places near the land of Israel - shall be included among the cities of Judah, and shall be in the faith of Israel."

Verse 2

And Hamath also shall border thereby - oNear to it in place and character, it shall share its subdual. After the betrayal of Damascus, Parmenio was set over all Syria. "The Syrians, not as yet tamed by the losses of war, despised the new empire, but, swiftly subdued, they did obediently what they were commanded."

And Zidon - Zidon, although probably older than Tyre, is here spoken of parenthetically, as subordinate. Perhaps, owing to its situation, it was a wealthy, rather than a strong place. Its name is "Fishing-town;" in Joshua, it is called "the great" Joshua 11:8; Joshua 19:28, perhaps the metropolis; while Tyre is named from its strength Joshua 19:29. It infected Israel with its idolatry Judges 10:6, and is mentioned among the nations who oppressed them and from whom God delivered them on their prayers Judges 10:12, probably under Jabin. In the time of the Judges, it, not Tyre, was looked to for protection Judges 18:7, Judges 18:28. In the times of Ezekiel it had become subordinate, furnishing "rowers" Ezekiel 27:8 to Tyre; but Esarhaddon, about 80 years before, boasts that he had taken it, destroyed its inhabitants, and re-populated it with people from the East, building a new city which he called by his own name. Tyre too had been taken by Nebuchadnezzar. At the restoration from the captivity, Sidon had the first place, Ezra 3:7, which it retained in the time of Xerxes. But Artaxerxes

Ochus gained possession of it by treachery, when all Phoenicia revolted from Persia, and, besides those crucified, 40,000 of its inhabitants perished by their own hands, twenty years before the invasion of Alexander, to whom it submitted willingly.

The prophet having named Tyre and Zidon together, yet continues as to Tyre alone, as being alone of account in the days of which he is speaking, those of Alexander.

Although - Rather, "because she is very wise." Man's own wisdom is his foolishness and destruction, "as the foolishness of God" is his wisdom and salvation. God "taketh the wise in their own craftiness" Job 5:13. "For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" 1 Corinthians 1:21. Of the Hagarenes it is said, they "seek wisdom upon earth; none of these know the way of wisdom, or remember her paths" (Ezekiel 28:2, Ezekiel 28:8. So of Edom Obadiah says, "The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock. Shall I not destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?" Obadiah 1:3, Obadiah 1:8.

Verse 3

And Tyre did build herself a stronghold - She built it for herself, not for God, and trusted to it, not to God, and so its strength brought her the greater fall. The words in Hebrew express yet more. "Tyre" (Zor) literally, "the rock," "built herself mazor, tower," a rock-like fort, as it were, a rock upon exceeding strength, binding her together.. "The walls, 150 feet high and of breadth proportionate, compacted of large stones, embedded in gypsum," seemed to defy an enemy who could only approach her by sea. "In order to make the wall twice as strong they built a second wall ten cubits broad, leaving a space between of five cubits, which they filled with stones and earth." Yet high walls do not fence in only; they also hem in. Mazor is both "a stronghold" and "a siege." Wealth and strength, without God, do but invite and embitter the spoiler and the conqueror."

And she heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets - "Though he heap up silver as the dust," Job says, "The King" Job 27:16, Solomon, "made silver in Jerusalem as stones" 2 Chronicles 9:27. Through her manifold commerce she gathered to herself wealth, as abundant as the mire and the dust, and as valueless. "Gold and silver," said a pagan, "are but red and white earth." Its strength was its destruction. Tyre

determined to resist Alexander,, “trusting in the strength of the island, and the stores which they had laid up,” the strength within and without, of which the prophet speaks.

Verse 4

Behold - Such were the preparations of Tyre. Over against them, as it were, the prophet sets before our eyes the counsels of God. Theodoret: “Since they had severed themselves from the providence of God, they were now to experience His power.” “The Lord will cast her out”, literally, deprive her of her possessions, give her an heir of what she had amassed, namely: the enemy; “and he will smite her power or wealth”, of which Ezekiel says, “With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures: by the greediness of thy wisdom and by thy traffic thou hast increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches” Ezekiel 28:4-5. All wherein she relied, and so too the stronghold itself, God would smite in the sea. The sea was her confidence and boast. She said “I am a God; I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas” Ezekiel 28:2.

The scene of her pride was to be that of her overthrow; the waves, which girt her round, should bury her ruins and wash over her site. Even in the sea the hand of God should find her, and smite her in it, and into it, and so that she should abide in it. “They mocked at the king, as though be thought to prevail against Neptune (the sea).” “Ye despise this land-army, through confidence in the place, that ye dwell in an island,” was the message of Alexander, “but soon will I show you that ye dwell on a continent.”

Every device had been put in force in its defense: the versatility by which the inhabitants of an island, some 2 12 miles in circumference, held at bay the conqueror of the battle of Issus with unlimited resources,, “engineers from Cyprus and all Phoenicia,” and, “a fleet of 180 ships from Cyprus,” attests the wisdom in which the prophet says, she would trust. “She had already a profusion of catapults and other machines useful in a siege, and easily prepared manifold others by the makers of war-engines and all sorts of artificers whom she had, and these invented new engines of all sorts; so that the whole circuit of the city was filled with engines.” Divers who should loosen the mole; grappling hooks and nets to entangle near-assailants; melted metal or heated sand to penetrate between the joints of their armor; bags of sea-weed to deaden the blows of the battering

machines; a fireship navigated so as to destroy the works of the enemy, while its sailors escaped; fiery arrows; wheels set in continual motion, to turn aside the missiles against them,, bear witness to an unwearied inventiveness of defense. The temporary failures might have shaken any mind but Alexander‘s (who is even said to have hesitated but that he dared not, by abandoning the enterprise, lose the prestige of victory. Yet all ended in the massacre of 6,000,7,000, or 8,000 of her men, the crucifixion of 2,000, the sale of the rest, whether 13,000 or 30,000, into slavery. None escaped save those whom the Sidonians secreted in the vessels,, with which they had been compelled to serve against her.

And she herself - When her strength is overthrown, “shall be devoured with fire.”: “Alexander, having slain all, save those who fled to the temples, ordered the houses to be set on fire.”

Verse 5

Ashkelon shall see and fear - The words express that to see and fear shall be as one. The mightiest and wealthiest, Tyre, having fallen, the neighbor cities of Philistia who had hoped that her might should be their stay, shall stand in fear and shame. Tyre, being a merchant-city, the mother-city of the cities of the African coast and in Spain, its desolation caused the more terror Isaiah 23:5-11.

And the - (a)

d **king shall perish from Gaza -** that is it shall have no more kings. It had been the policy of the world-empires to have tributary kings in the petty kingdoms which they conquered, thus providing lot their continued tranquil submission to themselves. The internal government remained as before: the people felt no difference, except as to the payment of the tribute. The policy is expressed by the title “king of kings,” which they successively bore. Sennacherib speaks of the kings of Ascalon, Ekron and Gaza.

A contemperary of Alexander mentions, that the king of Gaza was brought alive to Alexander on its capture. Alexander‘s policy was essentially different from that of the world-monarchs before him. They desired only to hold an empire as wide as possible, leaving the native kings, if they could; and only, if these were intractable, placing their own lieutenants. Alexander‘s policy was to blend East and West into one.. These petty sovereignties, so many insulated centers of mutual repulsion, were essentially at variance with this plan, and so this remnant of sovereignty of

1,500 years was taken away by him, when, after a siege in which he himself was twice wounded, he took it. Alexander wholly depopulated it, and repeopled the city with strangers.

And Ashkelon shall not be inhabited - Ashkelon yielded at once to Jonathan, when he "camped against it" (Judges 14:19. Commentators have assigned reasons, why Samson might have gone so far as the maritime Ascalon, whereas, in fact, he went to a city close by.

That city, in 536 a.d., had its Bishop.: "The site shows the remains of an early Christian Church or convent:" as a great lintel of stone, resembling somewhat the Maltese Cross, lies on the ground." It was probably destroyed by the inundation of Muslim conquest. In 1163 a.d. it was a ruin. The distance of the ruins from the Ascalon Maiumas corresponds to that assigned by Benjamin of Tudela, being twice the distance of that city from Ashdod; but since he was at Beth Jibrin, he must have been not far from the spot where it has been recently discovered. The Ashkelon, which was Herod's birth-place and which he beautified, must have been the well-known city by the sea; since the distance from Jerusalem assigned by Josephus is too great for the old Ashkelon, and he speaks of it as on the sea.

Verse 6

And a bastard shall dwell at Ashdod - oThe "mamzer" was one born unlawfully, whether out of marriage, or in forbidden marriage, or in adultery. Here it is, probably, like our "spurious brood"; whether it was so itself or in the eyes of the Ashdodites; whence he adds.

I will cut off the pride of the Philistines - Pride would survive the ruin of their country, the capture of their cities, the less of independence. It would not survive the loss of their nationality; for they themselves would not be the same people, who were proud of their long descent and their victories over Israel. The breaking down of nationalities, which was the policy of Alexander, was an instrument in God's hands in cutting off their pride.

Verse 7

And I will take away his blood out of his mouth - The "abominations" being idol-sacrifices, the "bloods" will also be, the blood mingled with the wine of sacrifices, of which David says, "Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer" Psalm 16:4; and Ezekiel unites the offences, "Ye eat With

the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood" Ezekiel 33:25.

But he that remaineth - Better, "And he too" shall remain over to our God." Of the Philistines too, as of Israel, "a remnant shall be saved." After this visitation their idolatry should cease; God speaks of the Philistine nation as one man; He would wring his idol-sacrifices and idol-enjoyments from him; he should exist as a nation, but as God's.

And he shall be as a governor in Judah - Literally, "a captain of a thousand," merged in Judah as in a larger whole, as each tribe was divided into its "thousands," yet intimately blended, in no inferior position, with the people of God, as each converted nation became an integral yet unseparated whole in the people of God.

And Ekron as a Jebusite - Ekron was apparently the least important of the few remaining Philistine cities (see at Joel 1:8, vol. 1); yet he shall he, as those of the Canaanite nations who were not destroyed, nor fled, but in the very capital and center of Israel's worship, "dwelt with the children of Benjamin and Judah" Joshua 15:63; Judges 1:21, and were, as a type of the future conversion and absorption of the pagan, incorporatcd into Judah.

Verse 8

And I will encamp about my house - (for my house's sake) because of the army "Because," it is added in explanation, "of him that passeth by and of him that returneth;" Alexander, who passed by with his army, on his way to Egypt, and "returned," having founded Alexandria.

It was a most eventful march; one of the most eventful in the history of mankind. The destruction of the Persian empire, for which it prepared, was in itself of little moment; Alexander's own empire was very brief. As Daniel had foretold, he came, cast down Persia "to the ground, waxed very great, and when he was strong, the great horn was broken" Daniel 8:7-8. But with the marvelous perception which characterized him, he saw and impressed upon his successors the dependibleness of the Jewish people. When he came into Judaea, he sent to the high priest for aid against Tyre and for the like tribute as he used to pay to Darius, promising that he would not repent of choosing the friendship of the Macedonians. The high priest refused on the ground of the oath, by which his people were bound in fealty to the earthly king of kings, whom Alexander came to subdue.

Alexander threatened to teach all, through its fate, to whom fealty was due. This, after the conquest of Gaza, he prepared to fulfill. He came, he saw, he was conquered. Jaddua and his people prayed to God. Taught by God in a dream not to fear, he went to meet the conqueror. The gates of the city were thrown open. There marched out, not an army such as encountered the Romans, but as he had been taught, a multitude in white garments, and the priests going belove in their raiment of fine linen. The high priest, in his apparel of purple and gold, having on his head the mitre, and on it the golden plate, whereon was written the name of God, advanced alone, and the Conqueror, who was expected to give the city to be plundered, and the high priest to be insulted and slain, kissed the name of God, recognizing in the priest one whom lie had seen in the like dress in a dream, who had bidden him, when hesitating, cross to Asia; for that he would go before his army and deliver the Persian empire to him.

The result is related to have been, that Alexander promised to allow the Jews in Judea to live according to their own laws, remitted the tribute of every seventh year, acceded beforehand to the terms to be proposed by those in Babylonia and Media, and that many Jews joined his army, under condition that they might live under their own laws.

Rationalism, while it remains such, cannot admit of Daniel‘s prophecies which the high priest showed him, declaring that a Greek should destroy the Persian empire, which Alexander rightly interpreted of himself. But the facts remain; that the conqueror, who, above most, gave way to his anger, bestowed privileges almost incredible on a nation, which under the Medes and Persians had been “the most despised part of the enslaved;” made them equal in privileges to his own Macedonians, who could hardly brook the absorption of the Persians, although in inferior condition, among themselves.

The most despised of the enslaved became the most trusted of the trusted. They became a large portion of the second and third then known cities of the world. They became Alexandrians, Antiochenes, Ephesians, without ceasing to be Jews. The law commanded faithfulness to oaths, and they who despised their religion respected its fruits.

The immediate successors of Alexander, Ptolemy Lagi and Antiochus Nicator, followed his policy; Ptolemy especially on the ground of the fealty shown to Darius; Nicator, as having observed their faithfulness as soldiers, who had served with him; but they were so enrolled on this visit to Jerusalem. The pagan kings multiplied, in their own purpose, faithful subjects to themselves; in God‘s design, they prepared in Asia and Egypt a seed-plot for the Gospel. The settlement of the Jews at Alexandria formed the language of the Gospel; that wonderful blending of the depth of the Hebrew with the clearness and precision of the Greek. Everywhere the seed of the preparatory dispensation was sown, to be fostered, grow and ripen with the harvest of the Gospel.

For now have I seen with Mine eyes - This is the counterpart of what the Psalmists and pious people so often pray, “Awake to help me and behold” Psalm 59:4; “Look down from heaven, behold and visit this vine” Psalm 80:14; Psalm 9:13; “Look upon my trouble from them that hate me” “Look upon my affliction and my trouble; look upon my enemies, for they are many” Psalm 25:18-19; “Look upon my adversity and deliver me” Psalm 119:153; “O Lord, behold my affliction” (Lamentations 1:9, add 11; Lamentations 2:20); “Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress” Lamentations 1:20; “Look and behold my reproach” Lamentations 5:1; “Open Thine eyes, O Lord, and see” Isaiah 37:17; Daniel 9:18; “Look clown from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and glory” Isaiah 63:15. With God, compassion is so intrinsic an attribute, that He is pictured as looking away, when He does not put it forth. With God, to behold is to help.

Verse 9

From the protection, which God promised to His people and to His House, the prophet passes on to Him who was ever in his thoughts, and for whose sake that people and temple were preserved. He had described the great conqueror of this world, sweeping along in his course of victory. In contrast with such as he, he now exhibits to his people the character and procession of their king. “Rejoice greatly.” Not with this world‘s joy. God never exhorts man to “rejoice greatly” in this world‘s fleeting joys. He allows us to be glad, as children, before Him; He permits such buoyancy of heart, if innocent; but He does not command it. “Now” He commands His people to burst out into a jubilee of rejoicing: they were to dance and shout for gladness of spirit; “despising the poor exultation of this world and exulting with that exceeding” yet chaste joy, which befits the true bliss to be

brought by their King and Saviour. Rup.: "This word, ‹greatly,‘ means that there should be no measure whatever in their exultation; for the exultation of the children of the bridegroom is far unlike to the exultation of the children of this world." Cyril: "He biddeth the spiritual Zion rejoice, inasmuch as dejection was removed. For what cause of sorrow is there, when sin has been removed, death trampled under foot, and human nature called to the dignity of freedom, and crowned with the grace of adoption and illumined with the heavenly gift?"

Behold, thy king cometh unto thee - He does not say "a king," but "‹thy‘ king;" thy king, thine own, the long-promised, the long-expected; He who, when they had kings of their own, given them by God, had been promised as "the" king; "the righteous Ruler among men" 2 Samuel 23:3, of the seed of David; He who, above all other kings, was "their" King and Savior; whose kingdom was to absorb in itself all kingdoms of the earth; "the King of kings, and Lord of lords." Her king was to come "to her." He was in a manner then "of her," and "not of her;" "of her," since He was to be "her king," "not of her," since He was to "come to her." As Man, He was born of her: as God, the Word made flesh, He "came to" her. "‹To thee,‘ to be manifest unto thee; ‹to be thine by communion of nature‘ 1 Timothy 3:16; ‹as He is thine, by the earnest of the Eternal Spirit and the gift of the Father, to procure thy good‘ Hebrews 2:14. ‹Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given‘ Isaiah 9:6." Of this, His entry into Jerusalem was an image. But how should he come? "He shall come to thee," says an old Jewish writing,, "to atone thee; He shall come to thee, to upraise thee; He shall come to thee, to raise thee up to His temple, and to espouse thee with an everlasting espousal."

He is just and having salvation - Just or righteous, and the Fountain of justice or righteousness. For what He is, "that" He diffuseth. Righteousness which God "Is," and righteousness which God, made Man, imparts, are often blended in Holy Scripture. Isaiah 45:21; Isaiah 53:11; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Jeremiah 33:15-16; Malachi 4:2. This is also the source of the exceeding joy. For the coming of their king in righteousness would be, to sinful man, a cause, not of joy but of fear. This was the source of the Angel‘s message of joy; "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour" Luke 2:10-11.

He is just - Dionysius: "Because in the Divine Nature, He is the Fountain of all holiness and justice." "As Thou art righteous Thyself, Thou

orderest all things righteously. For Thy power is the beginning of righteousness". According to the nature which He took, He was also most just; for He ever sought the glory of the Father, and "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His Mouth" 1 Peter 2:22. In the way also of justice He satisfied for people, delivering Himself for their faults to the pain of the most bitter death, to satisfy the honor of the Divine Majesty, so that sin should not remain unpunished. Hence, He saith of Himself; "He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him" John 7:18. Of whom also Stephen said to the Jews, "Your fathers slew them which showed before of the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers" Acts 7:52.

Righteousness is an awful attribute of God. It is a glory and perfection of His Being, for the perfect to gaze on and adore. Mercy, issuing in our salvation, is the attribute which draws us sinners. And this lies in the promise that He should "come to them," however the one word נושע *nôshaʿ* be rendered. The meaning of such a prophecy as this is secure, independent of single words. The whole context implies, that He should come as a ruler and deliverer, whether the word נושע *nôshaʿ* signify "endued with salvation" (whereas the old versions rendered it, "Saviour"), or whether it be, "saved." For as He came, not for Himself but for us, so, in as far as He could be said to be saved, He was "saved," not for Himself but for us. Of our Lord, as Man, it is, in like way, said, "Thou shalt not leave His soul in Hell" Psalm 16:10, or, "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it" Acts 2:24.

As Man, He was raised from the dead; as God, He raised Himself from the dead, for our sakes, for whom He died. For us, He was born a Saviour; for us, He was endued with salvation; for us, He was saved from being held of death; in like way as, of His Human Nature, the Apostle says, "He was heard, in that He feared" Hebrews 5:7. To us, as sinners, it is happiest to hear of the Saviour; but the most literal meaning "saved" has its own proper comfort: for it implies the Sufferings, by which that salvation was procured, and so it contains a hint of the teaching by Isaiah, "He was taken from oppression and from judgment;" upon which that same wide reign follows, of which David, in his picture of the Passion Psalm 22:27-28, and Isaiah Isaiah 53:10-12 prophesy. Osorius: "This ‹saved‘ does not imply, that He obtained salvation for His own otherwise than from Himself. "Mine own

arm," He saith in Isaiah, "brought salvation unto Me" Isaiah 63:5. But its Man, He obtained salvation from the indwelling Godhead. For when He destroyed the might of death, when, rising from the dead, He ascended into heaven, when He took on Him the everlasting kingdom of heaven and earth, He obtained salvation from the glory of the Father, that is, from His own Divinity, to impart it to all His. The Hebrew word then in no way diminishes the amplitude of His dignity. For we confess, that the Human Nature of Christ had that everlasting glory added to It from His Divine Nature, so that He should not only be Himself adorned with those everlasting gifts, but should became the cause of everlasting salvation to all who obey Him."

Lowly - Outward lowliness of condition, is, through the grace of God, the best fosterer of the inward. The word "lowly" wonderfully expresses the union of both; lowness of outward state with lowliness of soul. The Hebrew word expresses the condition of one, who is bowed down, brought low through oppression, affliction, desolation, poverty, persecution, bereavement; but only if at the same time, he had in him the fruit of all these, in lowliness of mind, submission to God, piety. Thus, our Lord pronounces the blessedness of "the poor" and "the poor in spirit," that is, poor in estate, who are poor in soul also. But in no case does it express lowliness of mind without lowness of condition. One lowly, who was not afflicted, would never be so called. The prophet then declares that their king should come to them in a poor condition, "stricken, smitten, and afflicted" Isaiah 53:4, and with the special grace of that condition, meekness, gentleness and lowliness of soul; and our Lord bids us, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart" Matthew 11:29. Dionysius: "He saith of Himself in the Gospel, ‹The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His Head' Matthew 8:20. ‹For though He was rich, He for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich' 2 Corinthians 8:9."

Lowly and riding upon an ass - Kings of the earth ride in state. The days were long since by, when the sons of the judges rode on asses Judges 10:4; Judges 12:14. Even then the more distinguished rode on "white" (that is, roan) Judges 5:10 asses. The mule, as a taller animal, was used by David 1 Kings 1:33, 1 Kings 1:38, 1 Kings 1:44 and his sons 2 Samuel 13:29; 2 Samuel 18:9, while asses were used for his household 2 Samuel 16:2, and by Ziba, Shimei, Mephibosheth, Ahitophel, 2 Samuel 16:1; 2 Samuel 17:23;

2 Samuel 19:26; 1 Kings 2:40, and, later, by the old prophet of Bethel 1 Kings 13:13, 1 Kings 13:23, 1 Kings 13:27. David had reserved horses for 100 chariots, 2 Samuel 8:4, after the defeat of the Syrians, but he himself did not use them. Absalom employed "chariots and horses" 2 Samuel 15:1 as part of his pomp, when preparing to displace his father; and Solomon multiplied them 1 Kings 4:26; 1 Kings 10:26; 2 Chronicles 1:14; 2 Chronicles 9:25. He speaks of it as an indignity or reverse; "I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking, as servants, upon the earth" Ecclesiastes 10:7.

The burial of an ass became a proverb for a disgraced end Jeremiah 22:19. There is no instance in which a king rode on an ass, save He whose kingdom was not of this world. The prophecy, then, was framed to prepare the Jews to expect a prophet-king, not a king of this world. Their eyes were fixed on this passage. In the Talmud, in their traditional interpretations, and in their mystical books, they dwelt on these words. The mention of the ass, elsewhere, seemed to them typical of this ass, on which their Messiah should ride. "If a man in a dream seeth an ass," says the Talmud, "he shall see salvation." It is an instance of prophecy which, humanly speaking, a false Messiah could have fulfilled, but which, from its nature, none would fulfill, save the True. For "their" minds were set on earthly glory and worldly greatness: it would have been inconsistent with the claims of one, whose kingdom was of this world.

It belonged to the character of Him, who was buffeted, mocked, scourged, spit upon, crucified, died for us, and rose again. It was divine humiliation, which in the purpose of God, was to be compensated by divine power. In itself it would, if insulated, have been unmeaning. The Holy Spirit prophesied it, Jesus fulfilled it, to show the Jews, of what nature His kingdom was. Hence, the challenge;, "Let us look at the prophecy, that in words, and that in act. What is the prophecy? "Lo, thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and upon a colt;" not driving chariots as other kings, not in pomp nor attended by guards, but showing herein also all gentleness. Ask the Jew then, What king, riding on an ass, came to Jerusalem? He could name none, save this One alone." An ancient writer says,, "The Greeks too" (not the Jews only) "will laugh at us, saying, that ‹The God of the Christians, who is called Christ, sat upon an ass.'" The

same mockery was probably intended by Sapor king of Persia, which the Jews met with equal pride.

The taunt continues until now.: “It is not hid from you, O congregation of Christians, that ‹rider upon an ass‘ indicates Christ.” The Mohammedans appropriate the title “rider upon a camel” to Mohammad, as the grander animal. The taunt of worshiping “Him who sat upon an ass” was of the same class as those of the worship of the Crucified;, “one dead and crucified, who could not save himself;” “a crucified Man,” “that great Man,” or (if it suited them so to speak) “that great sophist who was crucified,” but who now, for above 1800 years, reigns, “to all, the King; to all, the Judge; to all, Lord and God.” “Christ did not only fulfill prophecies or plant the doctrines of truth, but did thereby also order our life for us, everywhere laying down for us rules of necessary use and, by all, correcting our life.” Even Jews, having rejected our Lord, saw this. “Not from poverty,” says one, (Kimchi), “for behold the whole world shall be in his power - but from humility he will ride upon an ass; and further to show that Israel (namely, the establishment of His kingdom or Church) shall not lack horse nor chariot: therefore it is added, “And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem.” And another;, “He, that is, thy true king David, shall come to thee; and he mentions of his qualities that he shall be “righteous and נושע *nôsha*ʿ in his wars; but his salvation shall not be from strength of his wars, for he shall come “lowly” and “riding upon an ass.” “And riding on an ass,” this is not on account of his want, but to show that peace and truth shall be in his days; and therefore he says immediately, “And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem;” namely, that such shall be the peace and stillness in the world, that in Ephraim (that is, the tribes) and in Jerusalem (that is, the kingdom of Judah) they shall “trust” no more in horse and in rider, but “in the name of God.” And because it is the way of princes and chiefs to take example from the life of their kings, and to do as they, therefore he saith, that when the king Messiah rideth upon an ass, and “has no pleasure in the strength of a horse,” there will be no other in Jerusalem or the lands of the tribes, who will have pleasure in riding on a horse. And therefore he says, “And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem;” and he assigns the reason for this, when he says, “And the battlebow shall be cut off and he shall speak peace among the nations,” that is, there shall be no

more war in the world, because he shall "speak peace unto the nations, and by the word of his lips he shall dispose peace unto them." Isaiah 26:12.

And upon a colt, the foal of an ass - The word rendered "colt," as with us, signifies the young, as yet unbroken animal. In the fulfillment, our Lord directed His disciples to find "an ass tied, and a colt with her, whereon never man sat" Matthew 21:2; Mark 11:2; Luke 19:30. The prophet foretold that He would ride on both animals; our Lord, by commanding both to be brought, showed that the prophet had a special meaning in naming both. Matthew relates that both were employed. "They brought the ass and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set Him thereon." The untrained colt, an appendage to its mother, was a yet humbler animal. But as the whole action was a picture of our Lord's humility and of the unearthliness of His kingdom, so, doubtless, His riding upon the two animals was a part of that picture. There was no need of two animals to bear our Lord for that short distance. John notices especially, "These things understood not His disciples at the first" John 12:16. The ass, an unclean stupid debased ignoble drudge, was in itself a picture of unregenerate man, a slave to his passions and to devils, toiling under the load of ever-increasing sin. But, of man, the Jew had been under the yoke and was broken; the Gentiles were the wild unbroken colt. Both were to be brought under obedience to Christ.

Verse 10

And I will cut off the chariot - The horse is the symbol of worldly power, as the ass is of meekness. "Some," says the Psalmist, "put their trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God" Psalm 20:7. "A horse is but a vain thing to save a man" Psalm 33:17. "He delighteth not in the strength of a horse" Psalm 147:10). In scarcely any place in Holy Scripture is the horse spoken of in relation to man, except as the instrument of war. It represents human might, which is either to be consecrated to the Lord, or destroyed by Him (see Micah 5:10). As the "stone, cut out without hands" Daniel 2:34, broke in pieces and absorbed into itself all the kingdoms of the world, so here He, whose Kingdom should not be of this world, should supersede human might. His kingdom was to begin by doing away, among His followers, all, whereby human kingdoms are established. He first cuts off the chariot and the horse, not from His enemies, but from His own people; His people, not as a civil

polity, but as the people of God. For the prophet speaks of them as Ephraim and Judah, but Ephraim had no longer a distinct existence.

And He shall speak peace unto the pagan - As the Apostle says, "He came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh" Ephesians 2:17. He shall speak it to them, as He who hath power to give it to them, peace with God, peace in themselves, the reconciliation of God and man, and the remission of their sins.

Osorius: "At His birth the heavenly host announced peace to men; all His doctrine has peace for its end; when His death was at hand, He especially commended peace to His disciples, that peace which the world knoweth not, which is contained in tranquility of mind, burning zeal for charity. Divine grace. This same peace He brought to all who gathered themselves to His empire and guidance, that, emerging from intestine wars and foul darkness, they might behold the light of liberty, and, in all wisdom keep the grace of God."

And His dominion shall be from sea to sea - The bounds of the promised land, in its utmost range, on the west, were the Mediterranean sea; on the east, "the great river," the Euphrates. The prophet pictures its extension, so as to embrace the whole world, taking away, first the one bound, then the other. "From sea to sea" is from the Mediterranean to the most extreme east, Where the Ocean encircles the continent of Asia; "from the river to the ends of the earth," is from the Euphrates to the most extreme west, embracing the whole of Europe; and whatever may lie beyond, to the ends of the earth, where earth ceaseth to be. It is this same lowly and afflicted king, whose entry into Jerusalem is on a despised animal, who shall, by His mere will, make war to cease, who shall, by His mere word, give peace to the pagan.

Verse 11

As for thee also - The prophet turns from the deliverance of the whole world to the former people, the sorrows which they should have in the way, and the protection which God would bestow upon them for the sake of Him, who, according to the flesh, was to be born of them. "Thou too;" he had spoken of the glories of the Church, such as her king, when He should come, should extend it, embracing earth's remotest bounds: he turns to her, Israel after the flesh, and assures her of the continued protection of God, even in her lowest estate. The deliverance under the Maccabees was, as those under the judges had been, an image of the salvation of Christ and a

preparation for it. They were martyrs for the One God and for the faith in the Resurrection, and, whether by doing or by suffering, preserved the sacred line, until Christ should come.

By the blood of thy covenant - Osorius: "Not by the blood of those victims of old, but by the blood of thy covenant, wilt thou be united to the empire of Christ, and so obtain salvation. As the Lord Himself says, This is the blood of covenant, which is shed for you." "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" Romans 11:29. That symbolic blood, by which, fore-signifying the New Covenant, He made them His own people, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words," Exodus 24:8, endured still, amid all their unfaithfulness and breaches of it. By virtue of it God would send forth her imprisoned ones "out of the" deep, dry "pit," "the dungeon" wherein they could be kept securely, because life was not threatened (as in Genesis 37:24). Out of any depth of hopeless misery, in which they seemed to be shut up, God would deliver them; as David says, "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock and established my goings" Psalm 40:2; and Jeremiah, "They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me. I called upon Thy Name, O Lord; out of the low dungeon Thou hast heard my voice" Lamentations 3:53, Lamentations 3:55-56. Augustine, de Civ. Dei. xviii. 35. 3): "The dry and barren depth of human misery, where are no streams of righteousness, but the mire of iniquity."

Verse 12

Turn ye to the stronghold - that is, Almighty God; as the Psalmists so often say, "The Lord is the defense of my life" (Psalm 27:1, add Psalm 31:5; Psalm 37:39; Psalm 43:2; Psalm 52:9); and Joel, "The Lord shall be a stronghold of the children, of Israel"; and Nahum, "The Lord is a stronghold in the day of trouble" Nahum 1:7; And, David said, "Thou hast been a shelter for me, a strong tower against the enemy" Psalm 61:3; "the Name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe" Proverbs 18:10; and again, "Be Thou to me a rock of strength, a house of defense to save me - Bring me forth out of the net that they have laid privily for me; for Thou art my stronghold". The "stronghold," "cut off" from all approach from an enemy, stands in contrast with the deep dungeon of calamity. The "return" must be a willing return, one in their own power; "return to the stronghold," which is Almighty God, must be by conversion

of heart and will. Even a Jewish commentator Kimchi paraphrases, "Turn ye to God; for He is a stronghold and tower of strength."

Ye prisoners of - (the) hope Not, accordingly, any hope, or generally, "hope," but the special hope of Israel, "the hope" which sustained them in all those years of patient expectations, as Paul speaks of "the hope of Israel," for which he says, "I am bound with this chain" Acts 28:20. "I stand to be judged for the hope of the promise made by God unto our fathers, unto which promise our twelve tribes, serving God instantly day and night, hope to come; for which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews" Acts 26:6-7. And in his Epistles, "the hope laid up for you in heaven" Colossians 1:5; "the hope of the Gospel" Colossians 1:23; and, "looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" Titus 2:13. He writes also of "keeping the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" Hebrews 3:6; of "the full assurance of the hope unto the end" Hebrews 6:11; of "fleeing to lay hold on the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" Hebrews 6:18-19. He does not speak of hope as a grace or theological virtue, but, objectively, as the thing hoped for. So Zechariah calls to them as bound, held fast by "the hope," bound, as it were, to it and by it, so as not to let it go, amid the persecution of the world, or weariness of expectation; as Paul also says, "before faith came, we were guarded, kept in ward, under the law, shut up unto the faith which was about to be revealed" Galatians 3:23.

Even to-day - Amid all contrary appearances, "do I declare, that I will render double unto thee;" as He had said by Isaiah, "For your shame ye shall have double" Isaiah 61:7.

Verse 13

When - or For I have bent Judah for me As a mighty bow which is only drawn at full human strength, the foot being placed to steady it. It becomes a strong instrument, but only at God's Will. God Himself bends it. It cannot bend itself. "And filled the bow with Ephraim." The bow is filled, when the arrow is laid upon it. God would employ both in their different offices, as one. "And raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece." Let people place this prophecy where they will, nothing in the history of the world was more contradictory to what was in human sight possible. "Greece was, until Alexander, a colonizing, not a conquering, nation. The Hebrews had no human knowledge of the site or circumstances of Greece.

There was not a little cloud, like a man‘s hand, when Zechariah thus absolutely foretold the conflict and its issue. Yet here we have a definite prophecy later than Daniel, fitting in with his temporal prophecy, expanding part of it, reaching on beyond the time of Antiochus, and fore-announcing the help of God in two definite ways of protection;

(1) “without war,” against the army of Alexander Zechariah 9:1-8;

(2) “in the war” of the Maccabees; and these, two of the most critical periods in their history after the captivity 2 Chronicles 14:8-10 ff), and he met Zerah the Ethiopian with his million of combatants, besides his 500 chariots, and defeated him. And this, in reliance on the “Lord his God, to whom he cried, Lord, it is nothing to Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power; help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy Name we go against this multitude” 2 Chronicles 14:11. Asa‘s words found an echo in Judas Maccabaeus (Hebrews 11:34.

Verse 14

And the Lord shall be seen over them - o“He will reveal himself,” protecting them. Cyril: “He says plainly, that the Lord God will be with them and will fight in serried array with them and will with them subdue those who resist them.” It is as if he would say, “When they go forth and preach everywhere, the Lord shall work with them and confirm the word with signs following” Mark 16:20. “And His arrow shall go forth as the lightning.” Habakkuk directly calls the lightnings the arrows of God: “at the light of Thine arrows they went”. Here it is probably of an invisible agency, and so compared to that awful symbol of His presence, the lightning.

And the Lord God shall blow with the trumpet - As their Commander, ordering their goings. The blowing of the trumpet by the priests in war was commanded, as a reminiscence of themselves before God, “If ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets, and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies” Numbers 10:9. Abijah said, “God Himself is with us for our captain, and His priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you” 2 Chronicles 13:12.

And shall go with whirlwinds of the south - As being the most vehement and destructive. So Isaiah, “As whirlwinds in the south sweep by,

He cometh from a desert, from a terrible land" Isaiah 21:1. Such smote the four corners of the house where Job's children were, and they perished.

Verse 15

The Lord of hosts, shall defend them - As God says, "I will defend this city to save it, for Mine own sake and for My servant David's sake". The word is used by Isaiah only before Zechariah, and of the protection of Almighty God. The image of the complete protection on all sides stands first in God's words to Abraham, "I am thy shield" Genesis 15:1; David thence says to God, "Thou, O Lord, art a shield around me" (Psalm 3:4, (Psalm 3:3 in English)).

And they shall devour, and subdue - Or more probably (as in the margin), "shall tread on, the stones of the sling," as in the image of leviathan in Job, "The son of the bow will not make him flee; sling-stones are to him turned into stubble; clubs are counted as stubble; he laugheth at the shaking of a spear" (Job 41:20-21 (28,29 English)). Their enemies shall fall under them, as harmless and as of little account as the slingstones which have missed their aim, and lie as the road to be passed over. It is not expressed what they shall devour, and so the image is not carried out, but left indefinite, as destruction or absorption only; as in that, "thou shalt consume (literally, eat) all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee" Deuteronomy 7:16; and, "they are our bread" Numbers 14:9; and in that, "they shall devour (literally, eat) all the people round about" Zechariah 12:6, where the image is of fire, not of eating. The one thought seems to be, that their enemies should cease to be, so as to molest them any more, whether by ceasing to be their enemies or by ceasing to be. There is no comparison here, (as in Balaam) with the lion; or of eating flesh or drinking blood, which, apart from the image of the wild beast, would be intolerable to Israel, to whom the use of blood, even of animals, was so strictly forbidden. They should disappear, as completely as fuel before the fire, or food before the hungry. The fire was invigorated, not extinguished, by the multitude of the fuel: the multitude of the enemies but nerved and braced those, whom they sought to destroy.

And they shall be filled like bowls, like the corners of the altar - They shall be consecrated instruments of God; they shall not prevail for themselves, but for Him; they shall be hallowed like the bowls of the temple, from which the sacrificial blood is sprinkled on His altar, or "as the corners of the altar" which receive it.

Verse 16

And the Lord their God shall save them in that day - Still all should be God‘s doing; they themselves were but as a flock, as sheep among wolves, ready for the slaughter; but they were “the flock, His people,” as He says, “I will increase them like the flock, men, as the flock of holy things, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks, men” Ezekiel 36:37-38. “As a man saves his flock with all his strength, so He will save His people; for they are His flock.” As in, “Thou leddest Thy people like sheep by the hand of Moses and Aaron” Psalm 77:20.

They shall be as the stones of a crown - While God‘s enemies shall be trampled under foot, as a common thing which has failed its end, these shall be precious stones; a consecrated diadem of king or priest, “raised aloft,” so that all can see. “On His land.” It was laid down, as the title-deed to its whole tenure, “the land is Mine” Leviticus 25:23, and much more our Christian land, bought and purified by the blood of Christ.

Verse 17

For how great is His goodness - For it is unutterable! As the Psalmist said, “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth!” Psalm 8:1, and Jacob, “How awful is this place!” Genesis 28:17, and the Psalmist, “How awful are Thy doings!” The goodness and the beauty are the goodness and beauty of God, whose great doings had been his theme throughout before. Of the goodness the sacred writers often speak, since of this we have extremest need. And this He showed to Moses, “I will cause all My goodness to pass before thy face” Exodus 33:19. Of this we know somewhat personally in this life; for beside the surpassing. amazingness of it in the work of our redemption, we are surrounded by it, immersed in it, as in a fathomless, shoreless ocean of infinite love, which finds entrance into our souls, whenever we bar it not out.

Goodness is that attribute of God, whereby He loveth to communicate to all, who can or will receive it, all good; yea, Himself, “who is the fullness and universality of good, Creator of all good, not in one way, not in one kind of goodness only, but absolutely, without beginning, without limit, without measure, save that whereby without measurement He possesseth and embraceth all excellence, all perfection, all blessedness, all good.” This Good His Goodness bestoweth on all and each, according to the capacity of each to receive it, nor is there any limit to His giving, save His creature‘s

capacity of receiving, which also is a good gift from Him. "From Him all things sweet derive their sweetness; all things fair, their beauty; all things bright, their splendor; all things that live, their life; all things sentient, their sense; all that move, their vigor; all intelligences, their knowledge; all things perfect, their perfection; all things in any wise good, their goodness."

The beauty of God - Belongs rather to the beatific vision. Yet David speaks of the Beauty of Christ, "Thou art exceeding fairer then the children of men" Psalm 45:2; and Isaiah says, "Thine eyes shall behold the King in His beauty" Isaiah 33:17. But the Beauty of God "eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor can heart of man conceive." Here, on earth, created beauty can, at least when suddenly seen, hold the frame motionless, pierce the soul, glue the heart to it, entrance the affections. Light from heaven kindles into beauty our dullest material substances; the soul in grace diffuses beauty over the dullest human countenance; the soul, ere it has passed from the body, has been known to catch, through the half-opened portals, such brilliancy of light, that the eye even for some time after death has retained a brightness, beyond anything of earth. "The earth's form of beauty is a sort of voice of the dumb earth. Doth not, on considering the beauty of this universe, its very form answer thee with one voice, ‹Not I made myself, but God?'" Poets have said:

"Old friends … shall lovelier be,
As more of heaven in each we see,"
(Christian Year. Morning Hymn.)
Or,
"When he saw,
" - God within him light his face."
(Tennyson, In memoriam. T. has "The God.")

And Holy Scripture tells us that when Stephen, "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit," was about to speak of Jesus to the council which arraigned him, "all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" Acts 6:5, Acts 6:15. It has been said, that if we could see a soul in grace, its beauty would so pierce us, that we should die. But the natural beauty of the soul transcends all corporeal beauty which so attracts us; the natural beauty of the last angel surpasseth all natural beauty of soul. If we could ascend from the most beautiful form, which the soul could here imagine, to the least glorious body of the beatified, on and on through the countless thousands of glorious bodies, compared wherewith

heaven would be dark and the sun lose its shining; and yet more from the most beautiful deified soul, as visible here, to the beauty of the disembodied soul, whose image would scarce be recognized, because, “the bodily eyes gleamed with angelic radiancy;” yea, let the God-enlightened soul go on and on, through all those choirs of the heavenly hierarchies, clad with the raiment of Divinity, from choir to choir, from hierarchy to hierarchy, admiring the order and beauty and harmony of the house of God; yea, let it, aided by divine grace and light, ascend even higher, and reach the bound and term of all created beauty, yet it must know that the divine power and wisdom could create other creatures, far more perfect and beautiful than all which He hath hitherto created.

Nay, let the highest of all the Seraphs sum in one all the beauty by nature and grace and glory of all creatures, yet could it not be satisfied with that beauty, but must, because it was not satisfied with it, conceive some higher beauty. Were God immediately, at every moment to create that higher beauty at its wish, it could still conceive something beyond; for, not being God, its beauty could not satisfy its conception. So let him still, and in hundred thousand, hundred thousand, thousand years with swiftest flight of understanding multiply continually those degrees of beauty, so that each fresh degree should ever double that preceding, and the divine power should, with like swiftness, concur in creating that beauty, as in the beginning He said, “let there be light and there was light;” after all those millions of years, he would be again. at the beginning, and there would be no comparison between it and the divine beauty of Jesus Christ, God and Man. For it is the bliss of the finite not to reach the Infinite. That city of the blest which is lightened by the glory of God, and the Lamb is the light thereof, sees It, enabled by God, as created eye can see It, and is held fast to God in one jubilant exstacy of everlasting love.

“The prophet, borne out of himself by consideration of the divine goodness, stands amazed, while he contemplates the beauty and Deity of Christ: he bursts out with unaccustomed admiration! How great is His goodness, who, to guard His flock, shall come down on earth to lay down His life for the salvation of His sheep! How great His beauty, who is the ““brightnesss of the glory and the Image of the Father,” and comprises in His Godhead the measure of all order and beauty! With what firm might does He strengthen, with what joy does He overwhelm the souls which gaze

most frequently on His beauty, and gives largely and bountifully that corn, by whose strength the youths are made strong. He supplieth abundantly the wine, whereby the virgins, on fire with His love, are exhilarated and beautified. But both are necessary, that the strength of the strong should be upheld by the "bread from heaven," and that sound and uncorrupt minds, melted with the sweetness of love, should be recreated with wine, that is, the sweetness of the Holy Spirit, and be borne aloft with great joy, in the midst of extreme toils. For all who keep holily the faith of Christ, may be called "youths," for their unconquered strength, and virgins for their purity and integrity of soul. For all these that heavenly bread is prepared, that their strength be not weakened, and the wine is inpoured, that they be not only refreshed, but may live in utmost sweetness."

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

Ask ye of the Lord rain - "Ask and ye shall receive" our Lord says. Zechariah had promised in God's name blessings temporal and spiritual: all was ready on God's part; only, he adds, ask them of the Lord, the Unchangeable, the Self-same not of Teraphim or of diviner, as Israel had done aforetime Jeremiah 44:15-28. He had promised, "If ye shall hearken diligently unto My coramandments, to love the Lord your God, I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, and I will send grass in thy field for thy cattle" Deuteronomy 11:13-15. God bids them ask Him to fulfill His promise. The "latter rain" alone is mentioned, as completing what God had begun by the former rain, filling the ears before the harvest. Both had been used as symbols of God's spiritual gifts, and so the words fit in with the close of the last chapter, both as to things temporal and eternal. Osorius: "He exhorts all frequently to ask for the dew of the divine grace, that what had sprung up in the heart from the seed of the word of God, might attain to full ripeness."

The Lord maketh bright clouds - (Rather) "lightnings, into rain," as Jeremiah says, "He causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He maketh lightnings into rain" Jeremiah 10:13; Jeremiah 51:16; and the Psalmist, "He maketh lightnings into rain" Psalm 135:7, disappearing as it were into the rain which follows on them. "And giveth them." While man is asking, God is answering. "Showers of rain", "rain in torrents," as we should say, or "in floods," or, inverted, "floods of rain." "To every one grass," rather, "the green herb, in the field," as the Psalmist says, "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and green herb for the service of men" (Psalm 104:14, see also Genesis 1:30; Genesis 3:18). This He did with individual care, as each had need, or as should be best for each, as contrariwise He says in Amos, "I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city; one piece was rained upon, and the piece, whereon it rained not, withered" (Amos 4:7; see note).

The Rabbis observed these exceptions to God's general law, whereby He "sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" Deuteronomy 32:2. Cyril: "The law of Moses and the prophets were the former rain."

Verse 2

For the teraphim have spoken vanity - Rather, "spake vanity." He appeals to their former experience. Their father had sought of idols, not of God; therefore they went into captivity. The "teraphim" were used as instruments of divination. They are united with the "ephod," as forbidden, over against the allowed, means of enquiry as to the future, in Hosea, "without an ephod and without teraphim" Hosea 3:4; they were united in the mingled worship of Micah Judges 17:5; Judges 18:14, Judges 18:17-18, Judges 18:20; Josiah "put" them "away" together with the "workers with familiar spirits and the wizards" 2 Kings 23:24, to which are added, "the idols." It was probably, a superstition of Eastern origin. Rachel brought them with her from her father's house, and Nebuchadnezzar used them for divination. Ezekiel 21:21. Samuel speaks of them, apparently, as things which Saul himself condemned. "Rebellion is as the sin of divination, and stubbornness as iniquity or idolatry, and teraphim" 1 Samuel 15:23. For it was probably in those his better days, that "Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits and wizards out of the land" 1 Samuel 28:3. Samuel then seems to tell him, that the sins to which he clave were as evil as those which he had, in an outward zeal, like Jehu, condemned. Anyhow, the "teraphim" stand united with the "divination" which was expressly condemned by the law Deuteronomy 18:13-14. The use of the teraphim by Rachel Genesis 31:19, Genesis 31:34-35 and Michal 1 Samuel 19:13, 1 Samuel 19:16 (for whatever purpose) implies that it was some less offensive form of false worship, though they were probably the "strange gods" Genesis 35:2, Genesis 35:4 which Jacob bade his household to put away, or, anyhow, among them, since Laban calls them, "my gods" Genesis 31:30, Genesis 31:32.

Zechariah uses anew the words of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, "Hearken ye not to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers" Jeremiah 27:9; and, "let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams, which ye cause to be dreamed" Jeremiah 29:8; and Ezekiel, "While they see vanity unto thee, while they divine a lie unto thee" (Ezekiel 21:29; add Ezekiel 22:28). The words not only joined on the prophet's warning with the past, but reminded them of the sentence which followed on their neglect. The echo of the words of the former prophets came to them, floating, as it were, over the ruins of the former temple.

Therefore they went their way as a flock - Which, having no shepherd, or only such as would mislead them, removed, but into captivity. "They were troubled." The trouble lasted on, though the captivity ended at the appointed time. Nehemiah speaks of the exactions of former governors, "The former governors which were before me, laid heavy weights upon the people, and took from them in bread and wine, after forty shekels of silver; also their servants used dominion over the people; and I did not so, because of the fear of God" Nehemiah 5:15.

Because there was no shepherd - As Ezekiel said of those times, "They were scattered, because there is no shepherd; and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered: My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth; and none did search or seek after them" Ezekiel 34:5-6.

Verse 3

Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds - As Ezekiel continued, "Thus saith the Lord God; Behold I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand" Ezekiel 34:10.

I punished the he-goats - The evil powerful are called the "he-goats of the earth: Isaiah 14:9; and in Ezekiel God says, "I will judge between cattle and cattle, between rams and he-goats" Ezekiel 34:17; and our Lord speaks of the reprobate as goats, the saved as sheep Matthew 25:32. God "visited upon these in His displeasure, "because" He "visited His flock, the people of Judah," to see to their needs and to relieve them.

And hath made them as the goodly horse - As, before, He said, "I made thee as the sword of a mighty man" Zechariah 9:13 Judah's might was not in himself; but, in God's hands, he had might like and above the might of this world; he was fearless, resistless; as Paul says, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" 2 Corinthians 10:4.

Verse 4

Out of him came forth - Or rather, "From him is the corner," as Jeremiah, "Their nobles shall be from themselves, and their governor shall go forth from the midst of them" Jeremiah 30:21. Her strength, though given by God, was to be inherent in her, though from her too was to come He who was to be "the head-corned-stone," the sure Foundation and Crowner of the whole building.

From thee the nail - An emblem of fixedness in itself, (as Isaiah says, "I will fasten him a nail to a sure place" Isaiah 22:23) and of security given to others dependent on Him, as Isaiah says further, "And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, from the vessels of cups to the vessels of flagons" Isaiah 22:24; all, of much or little account, the least and the greatest. Osorius: "Christ is the cornerstone; Christ is the nail fixed in the wall, whereby all vessels are supported. The word of Christ is the bow, whence the arrows rend the king's enemies."

From it every exactor shall go forth together - God had promised Zechariah 9:8 that no "oppressor," or "exactor Isaiah 14:2, shall pass through them anymore." He seems to repeat it here. "From thee shall go forth every oppressor together; go forth," not to return: as lsaiah had said, "Thy children shall make haste to return; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee" Isaiah 49:17. "From it, its cornerstone; from it, the sure nail; from it, the battle bow; from it," he no longer unites closely with it, that which should be from it, or of it, but - "from it shall go forth every oppressor together;" one and all, as we say; a confused pele-mele body, as Isaiah, "all that are found of thee are bound together" Isaiah 22:3; "together shall they all perish" Isaiah 31:3; or, in separate clauses, "they are all of them put to shame; together they shall go into confusion" Isaiah 45:16.

Verse 5

And they - (the house of Judah, of whom he had said, He hath made them as the goodly horse in the battle) shall be as mighty men, trampling on the mire of the streets Micah had said, "she shall be a trampling, as the mire of the streets" Micah 7:10, and David, "I did stamp them as the mire of the street" 2 Samuel 22:43. Zechariah, by a yet bolder image, pictures those trampled upon, as what they had become, "the mire of the streets," as worthless, as foul; as he had said, "they shall trample on the sling-stones" Zechariah 9:15. And they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, not in their own strength, he still reminds them; they shall have power, because God empowers them; strength, because God strengthens them: in presence of which, the goodly war-horse of God, human strength, "the riders on horses, shall be ashamed."

Verse 6

I will bring them again to place them - Zechariah seems to have condensed into one word two of Jeremiah, "I will bring them again" unto this place, and "I will cause them to dwell" safely Jeremiah 32:37. Kimchi. It is not a confusion of forms, but the blending of two words into one. So also Ibn Ezra): "The two ideas are here both implied, he will cause them to return to their land, and will cause them to dwell there in peace and security."

For I will have mercy upon them - Dionysius: "For the goodness and lovingkindness of God, not any merits of our‘s, is the first and principal cause of our whole salvation and grace. Therefore the Psalmist says, ‹neither did their own arm save them; but Thy right hand and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favor unto them‘ Psalm 44:3."

And they shall be, as though I had not cast them off - (Etymologically, "loathed," "cast off as a thing abhorrent".) God is ever "the God of the present." He does not half-forgive. "Their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more" Hebrews 8:12. God casts off the sinner, as being what he is, a thing abhorrent, as penitence confesses of itself that it is "a dead dog, a loathsome worm, a putrid corpse." God will not clothe with a righteousness, which He does not impart. He restores to the penitent all his lost graces, as though he had never forfeited them, and cumulates them with the fresh grace whereby He converts him (see vol. i. on Joel 2:25, pp. 192,193). It is an entire re-creation. "They shall be, as though I had not cast them off." "I will settle you as in your old estates, and will do good, more than at your beginnings, and ye shall know that I am the Lord" Ezekiel 36:11.

For I am the Lord their God, and will hear them - As He says by Malchi, "I am the Lord; I change not" Malachi 3:6. His unchangeableness belongs to His Being; "I Am; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed;" and by Hosea, "The Lord of hosts, The Lord is His memorial, therefore turn thou to thy God" (Hosea 12:5-6, (6,7 Heb.) See vol. i. pp. 119,120). Because God was "their God," and as surely as He was "their God," He would hear them. His Being was the pledge of His hearing. "I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them" Isaiah 41:17.

Verse 7

And Ephraim, they shall be like a mighty man - Prophecy, through the rest of the chapter, turns to Ephraim, which had not yet been restored.

With regard to them, human victory retires out of sight, though doubtless, when their wide prison was broken at the destruction of the Persian empire, many were free to return to their native country, as others spread over the West in Asia Minor, Greece, Rome, and so some may have taken part in the victories of the Maccabees. Yet not victory, but strength, gladness beyond natural g adness, as through wine, whereby the mind is exhilarated above itself; and that, lasting, transmitted to their children, large increase, holy life in God, are the outlines of the promise.

Their heart shall rejoice in the Lord - Psalm 44:3: "As the principal object, the first, highest, most worthy Giver of all good, to whom is to be referred all gladness, which is conceived from created goods, that ‹whose glorieth may glory in the Lord' 2 Corinthians 10:17, in whom alone the rational creature ought to take delight."

Verse 8

I will hiss for them - Formerly God had so spoken of His summoning the enemies of His people to chastise them. "It shall be in that day, that the Lord shall hiss for the fly, that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria, and they shall come, and shall rest all of them in. the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns and upon all bushes" Isaiah 7:18-19. "He will hiss unto them from the ends of the earth, and behold they shall come with speed swiftly; none shall be weary or stumble among them". He would gather them, like the countless numbers of the insect creation, which, if united, would irresistibly desolate life. He would summon them, as the bee-owner, by his shrill call, summons and unites his own swarm. Now, contrariwise God would summon with the same His own people. The fulfillment of the chastisement was the earnest of the ease of the fulfillment of the mercy.

For I have redeemed them - Then they are His, being redeemed at so dear a price. Dionysius: "For Christ, as far as in Him lay, redeemed all." God had done this in purpose, as John speaks of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" Revelation 13:8.

And they shall increase as they increased - Kimchi: "As they increased in Egypt, so shall they increase at that time." The marvels of God's favor in Egypt shall be repeated. The increase there had been promised beforehand. "Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation" Genesis 46:3. The fulfillment is recorded, "the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied,

and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them" Exodus 1:7. God appointed that this should be part of their confession at their yearly prosperity, the offering of the basket of first-fruits; "A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went into Egypt and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous" Deuteronomy 26:5. The Psalmist dwelt upon it. "He increased His people greatly, and made them stronger than their enemies" Psalm 105:24. It became then one of the resemblances between the first deliverance and the last. Dionysius: "For the Apostles and others converted from Judaism, had more spiritual children, all those whom they begat in Christ, than the synagogue ever had after the flesh."

Verse 9

And I will sow them among the nations - Such had been the prophecy of Hosea; "I will sow her unto Me in the earth," as the prelude of spiritual mercies, "and I will have mercy on her that had not obtained mercy, and I will say to not-my-people, Thou art My people, and they shall say, my God". Hosea's saying, "I will sow her in the earth" that is, the whole earth and that "to Me," corresponds to, and explains Zechariah's brief saying, "I will sow them among the nations." The sowing, which was future to Hosea, had begun; but the purpose of the sowing, the harvest, was wholly to come; when it should be seen, that they were indeed sown by God, that "great" should "be the day of Jezreel" (Hosea 1:11. See vol. i. p. 25). And Jeremiah said, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah, with the seed of man and with the seed of beast" Jeremiah 31:27. The word is used of sowing to multiply, never of mere scattering.

And they shall remember Me in far countries - So Ezekiel had said, "And they that escape of you shall remember Me among the nations, whither they shall be carried captive - and they shall loath themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations, and they shall know that I am the Lord" Ezekiel 6:9.

And shall live - As Ezekiel again says, "Ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up out of your graves, O My people, and shall put My Spirit in you, and ye shall live" Ezekiel 37:13-14. "With their children." A continuous gift, as Ezekiel, "they and their children, and their children's children forever: and My servant David shall be their prince forever." Ezekiel 37:25.

And turn again - To God, being converted, as Jeremiah had been bidden to exhort them; "Go and proclaim these words toward the north" Jeremiah 3:12, the cities of the Medes whither they were carried captive, "and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you;" "Turn, O backsliding children - and I with take you, one of a city, and two of a family, and will bring you to Zion, and I will give you pastors according to Mine heart" Jeremiah 3:14-15. "Return, ye backsliding children; I will heal your backslidings." And they answer, "Behold, we come unto Thee; for Thou art the Lord our God" Jeremiah 3:22. So Isaiah had said, "A remnant shall return, the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God". Dionysius: "They shall return by recollection of mind and adunation and simplification of the affections toward God so as ultimately to intend that one thing, which alone is necessary."

Verse 10

I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt - Individuals had fled to Egypt; but here probably Egypt and Assyria stand, as of old, for the two great conflicting empires, between which Israel lay, at whose hands she had suffered, and who represent the countries which lay beyond them. Hosea unites (Hosea 11:10-11; Isaiah 11:15-16; add Isaiah 19:23-25; Isaiah 27:13; Isaiah 52:4; Micah 7:12. See ab. p. 96), "the West, Assyria, Egypt," the three then known divisions of the world, Europe, Asia, Africa (see at Hosea 11:11, vol. i., p. 115). Asshur, after Nineveh perished, stands clearly for the world-empire of the East at Babylon, and then in Persia Ezra 6:22. Balaam includes under Asshur, first Babylon, then the third world-empire (Numbers 24:22-24; coll. Daniel 11:30).

Babylon, which was first subject to Nineveh, then subjected it, was at a later period known to Greek writers (who probably had their information from Persian sources) as part of Assyria.

And I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon - Their old dwellings, east and west of Jordan. "And place shall not be found for them, as Isaiah says, "The children of thy bereaved estate shall yet say in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place, that I may dwell" Isaiah 49:20.

Verse 11

And He - that is, Almighty God, shall pass through the sea, affliction As He says, "When thou walkest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not oveflow thee. And shall smite the waves in

the sea" Isaiah 43:2, as in Isaiah, "The Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea" Isaiah 11:15. The image is from the deliverance of Egypt: yet it is said, that it should not be any exact repetition of the miracles of Egypt; it would be as the Red Sea Exodus 14:10, Exodus 14:12, which would as effectually shut them in, and in presence of which they might again think themselves lost, through which God would again bring them. But it would not be the Red sea itself; for "the sea" through which they should be brought, would be "affliction;" as our own poet speaks of "taking arms against a sea of troubles." Cyril: "The promise of succor to those who believe in Christ is under the likeness of the things given to those of old; for as Israel was conveyed across the Red sea, braving the waves in it; "for the waters stood upright as an heap" Exodus 15:8, God bringing this to pass marvelously; and as "they passed the Jordan on foot" Joshua 3:17; so he says, those who are called through Moses to the knowledge of Christ, and have been saved by the ministries of the holy Apostles, they shall pass the waves of this present life, like an angrily foaming sea, and, being removed from the tumult of this life, shall, undisturbed, worship the true God. And they shall pass through temptations, like sweeping rivers, saying with great joy, in like way, "Unless the Lord had been for us, may Israel now say, the waters had drowned us, the stream had gone over our souls" Psalm 124:1-5.

He shall smite the waves in the sea. There, where the strength of the powers of this world is put forth against His people, there He will bring it down. "All the deeps of the river," that is, of the Nile,

"Shall be dried up." The Nile as a mighty river is substituted for the Jordan, symbolizing the greater putting forth of God's power in the times to come.

And the pride of Asshur shall be brought down - Ribera: "When the good receive their reward, then their enemies shall have no power over them, but shall be punished by Me, because they injured My elect. - By the Assyrians and Egyptians he understands all their enemies."

Verse 12

I will strengthen them in the Lord - As our Lord said to Paul, "My strength is made perfect in weakness," and Paul said in turn, "When I am weak, then am I strong. And in His Name shall they walk up and down," have their whole conversation (Dionysius), "in Him according to His will, and diligent in all things to speak and act in ills grace and divine hope."

Jerome: "Christians walk in the Name of Christ, and there is written on the new white stone given to them a "new name" Revelation 2:17, and under the dignity of a name so great, they walk with God, as "Enoch walked and pleased God and was translated" Genesis 5:24.

Saith the Lord - Dionysius: "Again the Lord God speaks of the Lord God, as of Another, hinting the plurality of Persons in the Godhead."

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Introduction

Rup.: "‹All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth,' saith the Psalmist Psalm 25:11, and, ‹I will sing to Thee of mercy and judgment' Psalm 101:1. So is this prophecy divided. Above, almost all were promises of mercy, which are now fulfilled in deed; and from this, "Open, O Lebanon, thy doors", all are terrible edicts of truth and tokens of just judgment. How much sweetness and softness and pleasantness is therein, "Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion: shout, O daughter of Jerusalem;" what bitterness and acerbity and calamity to those, to whom he says, "Open, O Lebanon, thy doors, that the fire may devour thy cedars; howl, O fir tree; howl, O ye oaks of Basan." As then, before, we beheld His mercy in those who believed and believe; so now let us contemplate His just judgment on those who believed not." Gilead and Lebanon Zechariah 10:10 had been named as the restored home of Ephraim; but there remained a dark side of the picture, which the prophet suddenly presents, with the names of those self-same lands, "Open thy doors, O Lebanon; howl, O ye oaks of Basan" Zechariah 11:1-2.

Verse 1

Open thy doors, O Lebanon - Lebanon, whose cedars had stood, its glory, for centuries, yet could offer no resistance to him who felled them and were carried off to adorn the palaces of its conquerors (see above at Zephaniah 2:14, and note 2. p. 276), was in Isaiah Isaiah 14:8; Isaiah 37:24 and Jeremiah Jeremiah 22:6-7 the emblem of the glory of the Jewish state; and in Ezekiel, of Jerusalem, as the prophet himself explains it Ezekiel 17:3, Ezekiel 17:12; glorious, beauteous, inaccessible, so long as it was defended by God; a ready prey, when abandoned by Him. The center and source of her strength was the worship of God; and so Lebanon has of old been understood to be the temple, which was built with cedars of Lebanon, towering aloft upon a strong. summit; the spiritual glory and the eminence of Jerusalem, as Lebanon was of the whole country, and, "to strangers who came to it, it appeared from afar like a mountain full of snow; for, where it was not gilded, it was exceeding white, being built of marble." But at the time of destruction it was "a den of thieves" Matthew 21:13, as Lebanon, amidst its beauty, was of wild beasts.

Rup.: "I suppose Lebanon itself, that is, "the temple," felt the command of the prophet's words, since, as its destruction approached, its doors

opened without the hand of man. Josephus relates how, "at the passover, the eastern gate of the inner temple, being of brass and very firm, and with difficulty shut at eventide by twenty men; moreover with bars strengthened with iron, and having very deep bolts, which went down into the threshold, itself of one stone, was seen at six o'clock at night to open of its own accord. The guards of the temple running told it to the officer, and he, going up, with difficulty closed it. This the uninstructed thought a very favorable sign, that God opened to them the gate of all goods. But those taught in the divine words, understood that the safety of the temple was removed of itself, and that the gate opened."

A saying of this sort is still exstant.: "Our fathers have handed down, forty years before the destruction of the house, the lot of the Lord did not come up on the right hand, and the tongue of splendor did not become white, nor did the light from the evening burn, and the doors of the temple opened of their own accord, until Rabbi Johanan ben Zaccai rebuked them, and said, ‹O temple, why dost thou affright thyself? I know of thee that thy end is to be destroyed, and of this Zechariah prophesied, "Open thy doors, O Lebanon, and let the fire devour thy cedars.'" The "forty years" mentioned in this tradition carry back the event exactly to the Death of Christ, the temple having been burned 73 a.d.. Josephus adds that they opened at the passover, the season of His Crucifixion. On the other hand, the shutting of the gates of the temple, when they had "seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple" Acts 21:30, seems miraculous and significant, that, having thus violently refused the preaching of the Gospel, and cast Paul out, they themselves were also shut out, denoting that an entrance was afterward to be refused them.

And let afire devour thy cedars - Jerusalem, or the temple, were, after those times, burned by the Romans only. The destruction of pride, opposed to Christ, was prophesied by Isaiah in connection with His Coming Isaiah 10:34; Isaiah 11:1.

Verse 2

Howl, O cypress, for the cedar is fallen - Jerusalem or the temple having been likened to Lebanon and its cedars, the prophet carries on the image, speaking of the priests princes and people, under the title of firs, cypresses and oaks, trees inferior, but magnificent. He shows that it is imagery, by ascribing to them the feelings of people. The more glorious and

stately, "the cedars," were destroyed. Woe then to the rest, "the cypress;" as our Lord says, "If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done, in the dry?" Luke 23:31, and Peter, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 Peter 4:18.

For the defensed forest is come down - That which was closed and inaccessible to the enemy. All which was high and lifted up was brought low, "came down," even to the ground.

Verse 3

A voice of the howling of the shepherds, for their glory is spoiled - It echoes on from Jeremiah before the captivity, "Howl, ye shepherds - A voice of the cry of the shepherds. and an howling of the principal of the flock; for the Lord hath spoiled their pasture" Jeremiah 25:34, Jeremiah 25:36. There is one chorus of desolation, the mighty and the lowly; the shepherds and the young lions; what is at other times opposed is joined in one wailing. "The pride of Jordan" are the stately oaks on its banks, which shroud it from sight, until you reach its edges, and which, after the captivity of the ten tribes, became the haunt of lions and their chief abode in Palestine, "on account of the burning heat, and the nearness of the desert, and the breadth of the vast solitude and jungles" (Jerome). See Jeremiah 49:19; Jeremiah 50:44; 2 Kings 17:25. The lion lingered there even to the close of the 12th cent. Phocas in Reland Palaest. i. 274. Cyril says in the present, "there are very many lions there, roaring horribly and striking fear into the inhabitants").

Verse 4

Thus saith the Lord my God, Feed the flock of the slaughter - The fulfillment of the whole prophecy shows, that the person addressed is the prophet, not in, or for himself, but (as belongs to symbolic prophecy) as representing Another, our Lord. It is addressed, in the first instance, to Zechariah. For Zechariah is bidden, "take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd" Zechariah 11:15, in words addressed to himself, personally; "And the Lord said unto me." But he who was to represent the foolish shepherd, had represented the True Shepherd, since it is said to him, "Take unto thee yet." But He, the Shepherd addressed, who does the acts commanded, speaks with the authority of God. He says, "I cut off three shepherds in one month" Zechariah 11:8; "I broke My covenant which I had made with all the peoples" Zechariah 11:10; "the poor of the flock waited upon Me" Zechariah 11:11; "I cut asunder Mine other staff, Bands, that I

might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel" Zechariah 11:14. But in Zechariah's time, no three shepherds were cut off, the covenant made by God was not broken on His part, there was no such visible distinction between those who waited on God, and those who, outwardly too, rejected Him.

Feed the flock of the slaughter - Those who were, even before the end, slain by their evil shepherds whom they followed, and who in the end would be given to the slaughter, as the Psalmist says, "we are counted as sheep for the slaughter" Psalm 44:22, because they would not hear the voice of the True Shepherd, and were not His sheep. They were already, by God's judgment, a prey to evil shepherds; and would be so yet more hereafter. As a whole then, they were "sheep of the slaughter." It is a last Charge given to feed them. As our Lord says, "Last of all, He sent unto them His Son, saying, They will reverence My Son" Matthew 21:37. This failing, nothing remained but that the flock would be given up, as they themselves say, "He will miserably destroy those wicked people, and will let out His vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render Him the fruits in their seasons" Matthew 21:41, that is, our Lord explains it, "The kingdom of heaven shall be taken from them, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Yet a remnant should be saved" Matthew 21:43, for whose sake the larger flock was still to be fed: and, as our Lord, as Man, wept over Jerusalem, whose sentence He pronounced, so He still feeds those who would not turn to Him that they might be saved, and who would in the end be "a flock of slaughter," "Death their shepherd" Psalm 49:14, since they chose death rather than Life.

Verse 5

Whose possessors - (buyers) slay them and hold themselves not guilty, rather, are not guilty either in their own eyes, or in the sight of God, since He gave them up and would no more avenge them. They contract no guilt. Aforetime God said; "Israel was holiness to the Lord, the first-fruits of His increase; all that devour him shall be guilty: evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord" Jeremiah 2:3. Now God reversed this, as He said by the same prophet, "My people hath been lost sheep; their shepherds have caused them to go astray; they have turned them away on the mountains; all that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries say, We are not guilty, because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice, yea, the hope of their fathers, the Lord" Jeremiah 50:6-7. The offence of

injuring Israel was that they were God‘s people: when He cast them forth, they who chastened them were His servants Jeremiah 25:9; Jeremiah 27:6; Jeremiah 43:10, His instruments, and offended only when through pride they knew not in whose hands they themselves were Isaiah 10:7; Habakkuk 1:11, or through cruelty exceeded their office Isaiah 47:6; Zechariah 1:18, and so they became guilty.

And they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich - Even Sennacherib felt himself in part, or thought best to own himself, to be an instrument in God‘s hand Isaiah 36:10. But Titus when he “entered Jerusalem, marveled at the strength of the city and its towers, which ‹he tyrants‘ in phrensy abandoned. When then he had beheld their solid strength and the greatness of each rock, and how accurately they were fitted in, and how great their length and breadth, he said ‹By the help of God we have warred: and God it was who brought down the Jews from those bulwarks: for what avail the hands of man or his engines against such towers?‘ Much of this sort he said to his friends.” The Jews also were “sold” in this war, as they had not been in former captures; and that, not by chance, but because the Roman policy was different from all, known by “experience” in the time of Zechariah. Into Babylon they had been carried captive, as a whole, because it was the will of God, after the “seventy years” to restore them. In this war, it was His will to destroy or disperse them; and so those above 17 were sent to Egypt to the works; those below 17 were sold.: “The whole number taken prisoners during the wars were 1,100,000,” beside those who perished elsewhere. Jerome: “Read we the ancient histories and the traditions of the mourning Jews, that at the Tabernaculum Abrahae (where now is a very thronged mart every year) after the last destruction, which they endured from Adrian, many thousands were sold, and what could not be sold were removed into Egypt, and destroyed by shipwreck or famine and slaughter by the people. No displeasure came upon the Romans for the utter destruction, as there had upon the Assyrians and Chaldaeans.”

And their own shepherds - (In contrast to those who “bought” and “sold” them, who accordingly were not their own, temporal or spiritual) they to whom God had assigned them, who should have fed them with the word of God, strengthened the diseased, healed the sick, bound up the broken, and sought the lost, “pity them not” Ezekiel 34:4. He says what they should have done, in blaming them for what they did not do. They owed them a tender compassionate love; they laid aside all mercy, and

became wolves, as Paul says; "After my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" Acts 20:29-30. They who owed them all love, shall have none. Jerome: "No marvel then, he says, if enemies shall use the right of conquest, when their very shepherds and teachers spared them not, and, through their fault, the flock was given over to the wolves." All were corrupted, high priest, priests, scribes, lawyers, Pharisees, Sadducees. No one had pity on them.

Verse 6

For I will no more pity - Therefore were they a "flock of the slaughter," because God would "have no pity" on those who went after shepherds "who had no Pity" upon them, but corrupted them; who "entered not in themselves, and those who were entering in, they hindered" Luke 11:52.

The inhabitants of the land - "That land, of which he had been speaking," Judaea. "And lo." God, by this word, "lo," always commands heed to His great doings with man; I, I, Myself, visibly interposing, "will deliver man," the whole race of inhabitants, "every one into his neighbor's hand," by confusion and strife and hatred within, "and into the hand of his king," him whom they chose and took as their own king, when they rejected Christ as their King, repudiating the title which Pilate gave Him, to move their pity. Whereas He, their Lord and God, was their King, they formally "denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go; they denied the Holy One and the Just" Acts 3:13-14, and said, "We have no king but Caesar" John 19:15.

And they - The king without and the wild savages within, "shall smite," bruise, crush in pieces, like a broken vessel, "the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver" them. Their captivity shall be without remedy or end. Holy Scripture often says, "there is no deliverer Judges 18:28; 2 Samuel 14:6; Job 5:4; Psalm 7:3; Psalm 50:22; Psalm 71:11; Isaiah 5:29; Isaiah 42:22; Hosea 5:14, Micah 5:7-8, or "none can deliver out of My hand" Deuteronomy 32:39; Job 10:7; Psalm 50:22; Psalm 71:11; Isaiah 43:13; Daniel 8:4, Daniel 8:7, or, since God delighteth in doing good, I Exodus 6:6; 2 Kings 20:6; Jeremiah 15:21; Jeremiah 39:17; Ezekiel 34:27, He 1 Samuel 7:3; Psalm 18:15; Psalm 72:12; 2 Kings 17:39; Isaiah 19:20; Isaiah 31:5; Job 5:19, will deliver, or delivered Exodus 18:10; Joshua 24:10; Judges 6:9; 1 Samuel 10:18; 1 Samuel 14:10; 2 Samuel 22:1; Psalm 34:5,

Psalm 34:18; 54:9; Ezra 8:31; Jeremiah 20:13 from the hands of the enemy, or their slavery, or their own fears, or afflictions, or the like. God nowhere else says absolutely as here, "I will not deliver". "Hear, O Jew," says Jerome, "who holdest out to thyself hopes most vain, and hearest not the Lord strongly asserting, "I will not deliver them out of their hands," that thy captivity among the Romans shall have no end." In the threatened captivity before they were carried to Babylon, the prophet foretold the restoration: here only it is said of Judah, as Hosea had said of lsrael, that there should be no deliverer out of the hand of the king whom they had chosen.

Verse 7

The prophetic narrative which follows, differs in its form, in some respects, from the symbolical actions of the prophets and from Zechariah's own visions. The symbolical actions of the prophets are actions of their own: this involves acts, which it would be impossible to represent, except as a sort of drama. Such are the very central points, the feeding of the flock, which are still intelligent people who understand God's doings: the cutting off of the three shepherds; the asking for the price; the unworthy price offered; the casting it aside. It differs from Zechariah's own visions, in that they are for the most part exhibited to the eye, and Zechariah's own part is simply to enquire their meaning and to learn it, and to receive further revelation. In one case only, he himself interposes in the action of the vision Zechariah 3:1-10:15; but this too, as asking that it might be done, not, as himself doing it. Here, he is himself the actor, yet as representing Another, who alone could cut off shepherds, abandon the people to mutual destruction, annulling the covenant which He had made. Maimonides, then, seems to say rightly;: "This, "I fed the flock of the slaughter," to the end of the narrative, where he is said to have asked for his hire, to have received it, and to have cast it into the temple, to the treasurer, all this Zechariah saw in prophetic vision. For the command which he received, and the act which he is said to have done, took place in prophetic vision or dream." "This," he adds, "is beyond controversy, as all know, who are able to distinguish the possible from the impossible."

Osorius: "The actions, presented to the prophets are not always to be understood as actions but as predictions. As when God commands Isaiah, to make the heart of the people dull Isaiah 6:10 that is, to denounce to the people their future blindness, through which they would, with obstinate mind, reject the mercies of Christ. Or when He says, that He appointed

Jeremiah Jeremiah 1:10 to destroy and to build; to root out and to plant. Or when He commanded the same prophet to cause the nations to drink the cup, whereby they should be bereft of their senses (Jeremiah 25:15 ff), Jeremiah did nothing of all this, but asserted that it would be. So here."

And I will feed the flock of the slaughter - Rather And (our, so) "I fed." The prophet declares, in the name of our Lord, that He did what the Father commanded Him. He fed the flock, committed to His care by the Father, who, through their own obstinacy, became "the flock of slaughter." What could be done, He did for them; so that all might see that they perished by their own fault. The symbol of our Lord, as the Good Shepherd, had been made prominent by Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, "Behold the Lord will come, as a Mighty One - He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom: He shall gently lead those that are with young" Isaiah 40:10-11. And Jeremiah, having declared God‘s judgments on the then shepherds Jeremiah 23:2, "I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their fold; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them. Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper - and this is the name whereby He shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness" Jeremiah 23:3-6. And Ezekiel with the like context Ezekiel 34:22-23; and, uniting both offices, "David, My servant, shall be king over them, and they shall all have One Shepherd" Ezekiel 37:24. It was apparent then beforehand, who this Shepherd was to be, to whom God gave the feeding of the flock.

"Even ‹you,‘ or ‹for you, ye poor of the flock;‘ or, ‹therefore,‘ being thus commanded, (fed I) the poor of the flock". The whole flock was committed to Him to feed. He had to seek out all "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" Matthew 10:6; Matthew 15:24. Dionysius: "He fed, for the time, the Jews destined to death, until their time should come;" the fruit of His labor was in the "little flock" Luke 12:32, "the faithful Jews who believed in Him, out of the people of the flock aforesaid, or the synagogue, who in the primitive Church despised all earthly things, leading a most pure life." So He says, "I will feed My flock and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God: I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind that which was broken, and will

strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong, I will feed them with judgment" Ezekiel 34:15-16.

The elect are the end of all God's dispensations. He fed all; yet the fruit of His feeding, His toils, His death, the travail of His soul, was in those only who are saved. So Paul says, "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory" 2 Timothy 2:10. He fed all; but the "poor of the flock" alone, those who were despised of men, because they would not follow the pride of the high priests and scribes and Pharisees, believed on Him, as they themselves say, "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on Him?" John 12:48, and Paul says, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are" 1 Corinthians 1:26-28.

And I took unto Me two - (shepherd's) staves as David says, "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" Psalm 23:4. "The one I called Beauty or Loveliness", as the Psalmist longs to "behold the beauty or loveliness" of God in His temple Psalm 27:4, and says; let "the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us" Psalm 90:17.

And the other I called Bands - Literally, "Binders". The one staff represents the full favor and loving-kindness of God; when this was broken, there yet remained the other, by which they were held together as a people in covenant with God. "And I fed the flock." This was the use of his staves; He tended them with both, ever putting in exercise toward them the loving beauty and grace of God, and binding them together and with Himself.

Verse 8

And I cut off three shepherds in one month - Jerome: "I have read in some one's commentary, that the shepherds, cut off in the indignation of the Lord, are to be understood of priests and false prophets and kings of the Jews, who, after the passion of Christ, were all cut off in one time, of whom Jeremiah speaketh, "The priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew Me not; the pastors also transgressed against Me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things which do not profit" Jeremiah 2:8, and again, "As the thief is ashamed when he is found,

so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests and their prophets" Jeremiah 2:26; and "they said, Come, let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet" Jeremiah 18:18.

Theodoret: "He speaks of the kings of the Jews, and prophets and priests; for by the three orders they were shepherded." Cyril: "The true and good Shepherd having been already pointed out, it was right and necessary that the hirelings and false shepherds should be removed, the guides of the Jews in the law. The three shepherds were, I deem, those who exercised the legal priesthood, and those appointed judges of the people, and the interpreters of Scripture, that is, the lawyers. For these too fed Israel. Those who had the glory of the priesthood were of the tribe of Levi only; and of them Malachi says, "The priest's lips shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth" Malachi 2:7. But those who received authority to judge were also selected, yet were appointed out of every tribe. In like way the lawyers, who were ever assessors to the judges, and adduced the words of the law in proof of every matter.

But we shall find that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself expressly pronounced woe on the Pharisees and scribes and lawyers. For He said, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees" Luke 11:44. And when one of the lawyers hereupon answered Him saying, "Master, so saying Thou reproachest us also," He said, "Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers" Luke 11:45-46. These "three Shepherds" then, priests and judges and lawyers owho remained in their own orders and places, until the coming of Christ, were very justly taken away "in one month." For since "they killed the Prince of life" Acts 3:15, thereby also are they mown down, and that in the month of the first fruits, in which Emmanuel endured to be slain for us. They remained indeed administering Israel, even after the Saviour's Cross, through the long-suffering and compassion of Almighty God calling them to repentance; but, in the sentence passed by God, they were taken away, at that time, when they delivered to the Cross the Saviour and Redeemer of all. They were taken away then in one mouth;" Nisan. a.d. 33. The three offices, King, Divine Teacher, Priest, were to be united in Christ: they might have been held

under Him: those who rejected them in Him, forfeited them themselves. These then He made to disappear, effaced them from the earth.

And My soul was straightened - For them oIt is used of the divine grief at the misery of His people. "And their soul abhorred Me, nauseated Me" oKimchi: "When it is said, "Their soul also abhorreth Me," the meaning is, ‹My soul did not loathe them first, but their soul first despised Me, therefore My Soul abhorred them.'" The soul which drives away God's good Spirit, comes at last to loathe Him and the thought and mention of Him.

Verse 9

And I said, I will not feed you - God, at last, leaves the rebellious soul or people to itself, as He says by Moses, "Then My anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and will hide My Face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall find them" Deuteronomy 31:17: and our Lord tells the captious Jews; "I go My way, and ye shall seek Me and shall die in your sins" John 8:21.

That which dieth, let it die - Zechariah seems to condense, but to repeat the abandonment in Jeremiah; "Cast them out of My sight, and let them go forth. And it shall be, if they shall say unto thee, Where shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the Lord, Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity" oFirst, God gives over to death without violence, by famine or pestilence, those whose lot it should be; another portion to violent death by the sword; "that which is cut off shall be cut off; and the rest," the flock of slaughter, would be turned into wolves; and, as in the awful and horrible siege of Jerusalem, those who had escaped these deaths, "the left-over, shall eat every one of the flesh of his neighbor," every law of humanity and of nature broken. Osorius: "So should they understand at last, how evil and bitter a thing it is for all who lived by My help to be despoiled of that help?"

Verse 10

And I took my staff Beauty, and cut it asunder - Not, as aforetime, did He chasten His people, retaining His relation to them: for such chastening is an austere form of love. By breaking the staff of His tender love, He signified that this relation was at an end.

That I might dissolve My covenant which I had made with all the people - Rather, "with all the peoples," that is, with all nations. Often as it

is said of Israel, that they brake the covenant of God Leviticus 26:15; Deuteronomy 31:16, Deuteronomy 31:20; Isaiah 24:5; Jeremiah 11:10; Jeremiah 31:32; Ezekiel 16:59; Ezekiel 44:7, it is spoken of God, only to deny that He would break it (Leviticus 26:44; Judges 2:1, and, strongly, Jeremiah 33:20-21), or in prayer that He would not Jeremiah 14:21. Here it is not absolutely the covenant with His whole people, which He brake; it is rather, so to speak, a covenant with the nations in favor of Israel, allowing thus much and forbidding more, with regard to His people. So God had said of the times of Christ; "In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and with the fowls of the heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground" (Hosea 2:18, (20, Hebrew)); and, "I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land" Ezekiel 34:25; and in Job "thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of' the field shall be at peace with thee" Job 5:23. This covenant He willed to annihilate. He would no more interpose, as He had before said, "I will not deliver from their hand" Zechariah 11:6. whoever would might do, what they would, as the Romans first, and well nigh all nations since, have inflicted on the Jews, what they willed; and Mohammedans too have requited to them their contumely to Jesus.

Verse 11

And so the poor of the flock that waited upon Me knew - The rest were blinded; those who listened to God's word, observed His prophet, waited on Him and observed His words, knew from the fulfillment of the beginning, that the whole was God's word. Every darkening cloud around the devoted city was an earnest, that the storm, which should destroy it, was gathering upon it. So our Lord warned, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is near. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart" Luke 21:20-21. The "little flock which waited upon" the Good Shepherd, obeyed the warning, and, fleeing to Pella, escaped the horrible judgment which fell on those who remained. Osorius: "They remembered that it had been predicted many centuries before, and that the Lord, by whose Spirit the prophet spake, foretold that in that city "one stone should not be left upon another" Matthew 24:2.

Verse 12

And I said unto them, If ye think good, give Me My price - God asks of us a return, not having any proportion to His gifts of nature or of grace,

but such as we can render. He took the Jews out of the whole human race, made them His own, "a peculiar people," freed them from "the bondage and the iron furnace of Egypt," gave them "the land flowing with milk and honey," fed and guarded them by His Providence, taught them by His prophets. He, the Lord and Creator of all, was willing to have them alone for His inheritance, and, in return, asked them to love Him with their whole heart, and to do what He commanded them. "He sent His servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of the vineyard; and the husbandmen took His servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Last of all, He sent unto them His Son" Matthew 21:34-37, to ask for those fruits, the return for all His bounteous care and His unwearied acts of power and love. o"Give Me," He would say, "some fruits of piety, and tokens of faith."

Osorius: "What? Does He speak of a price? Did the Lord of all let out His toil? Did He bargain with those, for whom he expended it for a certain price? He did. He condescended to serve day and night for our salvation and dignity; and as one hired, in view of the reward which He set before Him, to give all His care to adorn and sustain our condition. So He complains by Isaiah, that He had undergone great toil to do away our sins. But what reward did He require? Faith and the will of a faithful heart, that thereby we might attain the gift of righteousness, and might in holy works pant after everlasting glory. For He needeth not our goods; but He so bestoweth on us all things, as to esteem His labor amply paid, if He see us enjoy His gifts. But tie so asketh for this as a reward, as to leave us free, either by faith and the love due, to embrace His benefits, or faithlessly to reject it. This is His meaning, when He saith,"

And if not, forbear - God does not force our free-will, or constrain our service. He places life and death before us, and bids us choose life. By His grace alone we can choose Him; but we can refuse His grace and Himself. "Thou shalt say unto them," He says to Ezekiel, "Thus saith the Lord God, He that heareth, let him hear, and he that forbeareth, let him forbear" (Ezekiel 3:27; add Ezekiel 2:5, Ezekiel 2:7; Ezekiel 3:11). This was said to them, as a people, the last offer of grace. It gathered into one all the past. As Elijah had said, "If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him" 1 Kings 18:21; so He bids them, at last to choose openly, whose they would be, to whom they would give their service; and if they would refuse

in heart, to refuse in act also. "Forbear," cease, leave off, abandon; and that forever.

So they weighed for My price thirty pieces of silver - The price of a slave, gored to death by an ox Exodus 21:32. Whence one of themselves says, o"you will find that a freeman is valued, more or less, at 60 shekels, but a slave at thirty." He then, whom the prophet represented, was to be valued at "thirty pieces of silver." It was but an increase of the contumely, that this contemptuous price was given, not to Him, but for Him, the Price of His Blood. It was matter of bargain. "Judas said, What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?" Matthew 26:15. The high priest, knowingly or unknowingly, fixed on the price, named by Zechariah. As they took into their mouths willingly the blasphemy mentioned in the Psalm; "they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord, that He would deliver Him; let Him deliver Him, seeing that He delighted in Him" Psalm 22:7-8; so perhaps they fixed on the "thirty pieces of silver," because Zechariah had named them as a sum offered in contumely to him, who offered to be a shepherd and asked for his reward.

Verse 13

And the Lord said unto me, Cast it - As a thing vile and rejected, as torn flesh was to be cast to dogs Exodus 22:31, or a corpse was cast unburied Isaiah 14:19; Isaiah 34:3; Jeremiah 14:16; Jeremiah 22:19; Jeremiah 26:23; Jeremiah 36:30, or the dead body of Absalom was cast into the pit 2 Samuel 18:17, or the dust of the idolaltars into the brook Kedron by Josiah 2 Kings 23:12, or the idols to the moles and the bats (Isaiah 2:20, add Ezekiel 20:8); or Judah and Israel from the face of God 2 Kings 13:23; 2 Kings 17:20; 24:21; Jeremiah 52:3 into a strange land (Deuteronomy 29:27, (28 English); Coniah and his seed, a vessel in which is no pleasure, Jeremiah 22:28, into a land which they knew not; or the rebels against God, said, "let us cast away their cards from us" Psalm 2:3; or wickedness was cast into the Ephah Zechariah 5:1-11:18; once it is added, "for loathing" Ezekiel 16:5.

Unto the potter - The words exactly correspond with the event, that the "thirty pieces of silver" were "cast" or flung away othat their ultimate destination was the potter, whose field was bought with them; but that they were not cast directly to him, (which were a contemptuous act, such as would not be used whether for a gift or a purchase), but were cast to him "in the house of the Lord." They were "flung away" by the remorse of Judas,

and, in God‘s Providence, came to the potter. Whether any portion of this was a direct symbolic action of the prophet, or whether it was a prophetic vision, in which Zechariah himself was an actor, and saw himself in the character which he described, doing what he relates, cannot now be said certainly, since God has not told us. It seems to me more probable, that these actions belonged to the vision, because in other symbolic actions of the prophets, no other actors take part; and it is to the last degree unlikely, that Zechariah, at whose preaching. Zerubbabel and Joshua and all the people set themselves earnestly to rebuild the temple, should have had so worthless a price offered to him; and the casting a price, which God condemned, into the house of God, at the command of God, and so implying His acceptance of it, were inconsistent. It was fulfilled, in act consistently, in Judas‘ remorse; in that he “flung away the pieces of silver,” which had stained his soul with innocent blood, “in the temple,” perhaps remembering the words of Zechariah; perhaps wishing to give to pious uses, too late, money which was the price of his soul; whereas God, even through the chief priests, rejected it, and so it came to the potter, its ultimate destination in the Providence of God. Osorius: “He saith, “cast it unto the potter,” that they might understand that they would be broken as a potter‘s vessel.”

A goodly price, that I was prized at of them - Literally, “the magnificence of the value, at which I was valued of them!” The strong irony is carried on by the, “at which I was valued of them,” as in the idiom, “thou wert precious in my sight” 1 Samuel 26:21; Psalm 72:14; 2 Kings 1:13-14; Isaiah 43:4. Precious the thought of God to David Psalm 139:17; precious the redemption of the soul of man Psalm 49:9; and precious was the Shepherd who came to them; precious was the value, whereat He was valued by them oAnd yet He, who was so valued, was Almighty God. For so it stands: “Thus saith the Lord God, Cast it unto the potter, the goodly price that I was prized at of them.” The name, “the potter,” connects the prophecy with that former prophecy of Jeremiah Jeremiah 19:1-15, denouncing the judgment of God for the shedding of innocent blood, whereby they had defiled “the valley of the son of Hinnom, which was at the entry of the gate of the pottery, oand which, through the vengeance of God there, should be called “the valley of slaughter” Jeremiah 19:6.

The price of this innocent Blood, by the shedding of which the iniquities of their fathers were filled up, should rest on that same place, for whose

sake God said, “I will break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter‘s vessel, that cannot be made whole again” Jeremiah 19:11. So then Matthew may have quoted this prophecy as Jeremiah‘s, to signify how the woes, denounced on the sins committed in this same place, should be brought upon it through this last crowning sin, and “all the righteous blood which had been shed, should come upon that generation” o

None of the other cases of mixed quotation come up to this. Mark quotes two prophecies, of Malachi and of Isaiah as Isaiah‘s Mark 1:2-3. Matthew blends in one, words of Isaiah Isaiah 62:1 and Zechariah Zechariah 9:9 as “the prophet” Matthew 21:4-5. Our Lord unites Isaiah 56:7, and Jeremiah 7:11, with the words,” It is written.”

Of earlier fathers “Tertullian” simply quotes the prophecy as Jeremiah‘s (adv. Marc. iv. 40). “Origen” says, “Jeremiah is not said to have prophesied this anywhere in his books, either what are read in the Churches, or reported (referuntur) among the Jews. I suspect that it is an error of writing, or that it is some secret writing of Jeremiah wherein it is written.” (in Matt. p. 916.) “Euscbius” says, “Consider since this, is not in the prophet Jeremiah, whether we must think that it was removed from it by some wickedness, or whether it was a clericai error of those who made the copies of the Gospels carelessly.” Dem. Ev. x. p. 481).

Verse 14

And I cut asunder mine other staff, Bands, to dissolve the brotherhood between Judah and Israel - Hitherto prophecy had spoken of the healing of the great breach between Israel and Judah, in Christ. “The Lord,” Isaiah said, “shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim” Isaiah 11:12-13; and Hosea, “Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together and shall appoint themselves one Head” Hosea 1:11; and Jeremiah, “In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel.” Jeremiah 3:18. And Ezekiel, in the midst of the captivity, in a symbolic action the counterpart of this, is bidden, “Take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions;

then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and all the house of Israel his companions, and join them one to another into one stick, and they shall become one in thy hand" Ezekiel 37:16-17; and, when asked the meaning of this act, he was to say, "Thus saith the Lord God, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and will make them one stick, and they shall be one in Mine hand" Ezekiel 37:19.

And dropping the symbol; "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the pagan, whither they be gone - and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel: and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all - I will cleanse them, and they shall be My people and I will be their God, and David My servant shall be king over them, and they all shall have one Shepherd" Ezekiel 37:21-24. Such should be the unity of those who would be gathered under the One Shepherd. And so it was, "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" Acts 4:32; and long afterward it was a proverb among the pagan, o"See how these Christians love one another." Zechariah is here speaking of those who had rejected the Good Shepherd, the Israel and Judah after the flesh, who shut themselves out from the promises of God. This had its first fulfillment in the terrible dissolution of every band of "brotherhood" and of our common nature, which made the siege of Jerusalem a proverb for horror, and precipitated its destruction. o"Having thus separated the believing from the unbelieving, He bared the rest of His care. And what we now see bears witness to the prophecy. For the Jews, being deprived, of prophets and priests and kings and temple and ark and altar and mercy-seat and candlestick and table and the rest, through which the legal worship was performed, have come to be deprived also of the guardianship from above; and, scattered, exiled, removed, serve against their will those who preach Christ: denying Him as Lord, they yield service to His servants. The prophet having foretold these things of Christ, our God and Saviour, and reproved the obstinacy of the Jews, naturally turns his prophecy straight to the God-opposed christ whom they expect, as they say. So said the Lord in the holy Gospels to them, "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not; another will come in his own name, and him ye will receive" John 5:43. This the blessed Paul also

prophesied of them, "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that all might be damned, who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness" 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. The like does the blessed Zechariah prophesy, having received the power of the Holy Spirit."

Verse 15

Take to thee yet the instrument - o

Of a foolish shepherd - Osorius: "Yet He had enacted one tragedy, in which he clearly set forth the future guilt of Judas; now another is set forth, the accumulated scoffing through antichrist. For as Paul said, because they receive not the Spirit of truth, the Allrighteous Judge shall send them a spirit of "delusion, that they should believe a lie" 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11. He calls him a foolish shepherd, for since the extremest folly consists in the extremest wickedness, he will be the most foolish, who reached the highest impiety, and this he will do by arrogating to himself divinity and claiming divine honors 2 Thessalonians 2:4.

This is the only action, which the prophet had to enact or to relate. If it was a visible act, the instrument might be a staff which should bruise, an instrument which should bear a semblance to that of the good shepherd, but which should be perncious. Cyril: "Good shepherds, who understood their business, had slight staves, that, if there should be occasion to strike, the stricken sheep might not be bruised; but one who understandeth not, beats them with thicker clubs." Or it may mean also, whatever he would use for the hurtful treatment of the sheep, such as he proceeds to speak of. He is spoken of as, in fact, foolishly sinful: for sin is the only real folly, and all real folly has sin mingled in it. The short-lived wisdom of the foolish shepherd for his own ends should also be his destruction.

Verse 16

I will raise up - God supplies the strength or wisdom which people abuse to sin. He, in His Providence, disposeth the circumstances, of which the ambitious avail themselves. antichrist, whom the Jews look for, will be as much an instrument of God for the perfecting the elect, as the Chaldees Habakkuk 1:6 or the Assyrians Amos 6:14 whom God raised up, for the chastisement of His former people, or the Medes against Babylon Isaiah 13:17.

Which shall not visit them that be cut off - Zechariah uses the imagery, yet not the exact words of Jeremiah Jeremiah 23:1-2 and Ezekiel Ezekiel 34:3-4. Neglect of every duty of a shepherd to his flock, to the sick, the broken, the sound; direct injury of them, preying upon them, make up the picture.

Which shall not visit - Or tend, "that which is cut off:" fulfilling God's judgment, "that which is to be cut off let it be cut off" Zechariah 11:9.

Neither shall seek the young one - Better, "the scattered, dispersed," as the Good Shepherd "came to seek and to save that which was lost" Luke 19:10; Matthew 18:11. "Nor heal that which is broken; bound not," Ezekiel says Ezekiel 34:4.: "The broken legs of sheep are healed no otherwise than those of people; rolled in wool impregnated with oil and wine, and then bound up with splinters placed round about it."

Nor feed that which standeth still - Better, "the whole" Yet Jonathan renders as English), as the word always means, "in its good estate," like our prayer, "that Thou wouldest strengthen those who do stand."

Verse 17

Woe to the idol shepherd - (A shepherd of nothingness, one who hath no quality of a shepherd;) "who leaveth the flock." The condemnation of the evil shepherd is complete in the abandonment of the sheep; as our Lord says, "He that is an hireling and not the Shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling and careth not for the sheep" John 10:12-13.

Or it may equally be, "Shepherd, thou idol," including the original meaning of nothingness, such as antichrist will be, (Jerome), "while he calleth himself God, and willeth to be worshiped." Jerome: "This shepherd shall therefore arise in Israel, because the true Shepherd had said, ‹I will not feed you.' He is prophesied of by another name in Daniel the prophet Daniel 9, and in the Gospel Mark 13, and in the Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians 2, as ‹the abomination of desolation,' who shall sit in the temple of the Lord, and make himself as God. He cometh not to heal but to destroy the flock of Israel. This shepherd the Jews shall receive, whom the ‹Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth; and destroy with the brightness of His coming?"'

The sword shall be upon - (against) his arm and right eye His boast shall be of intelligence, and might. The punishment and destruction shall be

directed against the instrument of each, the eye and the arm. Jerome: "The eye, whereby he shall boast to behold acutely the mysteries of God, and to see more than all prophets heretofore, so that he shall call himself son of God. But the word of the Lord shall be upon his arm and upon his right eye, so that his strength and all his boast of might shall be dried up, and the knowledge which he promised himself falsely, shall be obscured in everlasting darkness." (Dionysius: "Above and against the power of antichrist, shall be the virtue and vengeance and sentence of Christ, who shall ‹slay‘ him ‹with the breath of His mouth.‘ The right arm, the symbol of might, and the right eye which was to direct its aim, should fail together, through the judgment of God against him. He, lately boastful and persecuting shall become blind and powerless, bereit alike of wisdom and strength.

The "right" in Holy Scripture being so often a symbol of what is good, the left of what is evil, it may be also imagined, that (Osorius), "the left eye, that is, the acumen and cunning to devise deadly frauds, will remain uninjured: while the ‹right eye,‘ that is, counsel to guard against evil, will be sunk in thick darkness. And so, the more he employs his ability to evil, the more frantically will he bring to bear destruction upon himself:"

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Introduction

Jerome: "from ‹I will make Jerusalem‘ to ‹Awake, O sword,‘ there is a threefold exposition. For some of the Jews say that these things have already been fulfilled in part from Zerobabel to Pompey who, first of the Romans, took Judea and the temple, as Josephus relates. Others think that it is to be fulfilled at the end of the world, when Jerusalem shall be restored, which the miserable Jewish race promiseth itself with its anointed, of whom we read above as the foolish shepherd. But others, that is, we who are called by the name of Christ, say that these things are daily fulfilled, and will be fulfilled in the Church to the end of the world."

Verse 1

The burden of the word of the Lord for - Rather, "upon (see at Nahum 1:1, p. 129) Israel." If this prophecy is a continuation of the last, notwithstanding its fresh title, then "Israel" must be the Christian Church, formed of the true Israel which believed, and the Gentiles who were grafted into them. So Cyril; "Having spoken sufficiently of the Good Shepherd Christ, and of the foolish, most cruel shepherd who butchered the sheep, that is, antichrist, he seasonably makes mention of the persecutions which would from time to time arise against Israel; not the Israel according to the flesh, but the spiritual, that Jerusalem which is indeed holy, "the Church of the Living God" 1 Timothy 3:15. For as we say, that "he" is spiritually a Jew, who hath the "circumcision in the heart," Romans 2:29, that through the Spirit, "and not" in the flesh "through the letter;" so also may "Israel" be conceived, not that of the blood of Israel, but rather that, which has a mind beholding God. But such are all who are called to sanctification through the faith in Christ, and who in Him and by Him, know of God the Father. For this is the one true elected way of beholding God."

Since the Good Shepherd was rejected by all, except the "poor of the flock," the "little flock" which believed in Him, and thereupon the "band" of "brotherhood" was dissolved between Israel and Judah, "Israel" in those times could not be Israel after the flesh, which then too was the deadly antagonist of the true israel, and thus early also chose antichrist, such as was Bar-Cochba, with whom so many hundreds of thousands perished. There was no war then against Jerusalem, since it had ceased to be (see the notes on Micah 3:12).

But Zechariah does not say that this prophecy, to which he has annexed a separate title, follows, in time, upon the last; rather, since he has so separated it by its title, he has marked it as a distinct prophecy from the preceding. It may be, that he began again from the time of the Maccabees and took God‘s deliverances of the people Israel then, as the foreground of the deliverances to the end).

Yet in the times of Antiochus, it was one people only which was against the Jews, and Zechariah himself speaks only of the Greeks; Zechariah 9:13; here he repeatedly emphasizes that they were “all nations” (Zechariah 12:2-3, Zechariah 12:6, Zechariah 12:9). It may then rather be, that the future, the successive efforts of the world to crush the people of God, and its victory amid suffering, and its conversions of the world through the penitent looking to Jesus, are exhibited in one great perspective, according to the manner of prophecy, which mostly exhibits the prominent events, not their order or sequence.: “The penitential act of contrite sinners, especially of Jews, looking at Him “whom they pierced,” dates from the Day of Pentecost, and continues to the latter days, when it will be greatly intensified and will produce blessed results, and is here concentrated into one focus. The rising up of God‘s enemies against Christ‘s Church, which commenced at the same time, and has been continued in successive persecutions from Jews, Gentiles, and other unbelievers in every age, and which will reach its climax in the great antichristian outbreak of the last times, and be confounded by the Coming of Christ to judgment, is here summed up in one panoramic picture, exhibited at once to the eye.”

Which stretcheth forth the heavens - God‘s creative power is an ever-present working, as our Lord says, “My Father worketh hitherto and I work” John 5:17. His preservation of the things which He has created is a continual re-creation. All “forces” are supported by Him, who alone hath life in Himself. He doth not the less “uphold all things by the word of His power,” because, until the successive generations, with or without their will, with or against His Will for them, shall have completed His Sovereign Will, He upholds them uniformly in being by His Unchanging Will. Man is ever forgetting this, and because, “since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as from the beginning of the creation” 2 Peter 3:4, they relegate the Creator and His creating as far as they can to some time, as far back as

they can imagine, enough to fill their imaginations, and forget Him who made them, in whose bands is their eternity, who will be their Judge. So the prophets remind them and us of His continual working, which people forget in the sight of His works; "Thus saith the Lord; He that createth the heavens, and stetcheth them out; He that spreadeth forth the earth and its produce, who giveth breath to the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein" Isaiah 42:5; and, "I am the Lord who maketh all things, who stretcheth out the heavens alone, who spreadeth abroad the earth by Myself" Isaiah 44:24; speaking at once of that, past in its beginning yet present to us in its continuance, but to Him ever-present present; and of things actually present to us, "that frustrateth the tokens of the liars" Isaiah 44:25; and of things to those of that day still future, "that confirmeth the word of His servant, and performeth the counsel of His messengers" Isaiah 44:26: the beginning of which was not to be till the taking of Babylon. And the Psalmist unites past and present in one, "Donning light as a garment, stretching out the heavens as a curtain; who layeth the beams of His chambers on the waters, who maketh the clouds His chariot; who walketh on the wings of the wind; who maketh His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire; He founded the earth upon its base." Psalm 104:2-5. And Amos, "He that formeth the mountains and createth the winds, and declareth unto man his thoughts" (Amos 4:13, add Amos 5:8); adding whatever lieth nearest to each of us.

And formeth the spirit of man, within him - Both by the unceasing creation of souls, at every moment in some spot in our globe, or by the re-creation, for which David prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" Psalm 51:10. He who formed the hearts of people can overrule them as He wills. Cyril: "But the spirit of man is formed by God in him, not by being called to the beginnings of being, although it was made by Him, but, as it were, transformed from weakness to strength, from unmanliness to endurance, altogether being transelemented from things shameful to better things."

Cyril: "It is the custom of the holy prophets, when about to declare beforehand things of no slight moment, to endeavor to show beforehand the Almightiness of God, that their word may obtain credence, though they should declare what was beyond all hope, and (to speak of our conceptions) above all reason and credibility."

Verse 2

I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling - For encouragement, He promises the victory, and at first mentions the attack incidentally. Jerusalem is as a cup or basin, which its enemies take into their hands; a stone, which they put forth their strength to lift; but they themselves reel with the draught of God‘s judgments which they would give to others, they are torn by the stone which they would lift to fling. The image of the “cup” is mostly of God‘s displeasure, which is given to His own people, and then, His judgment of chastisement being exceeded, given in turn to those who had been the instruments of giving it. Thus, Isaiah speaks of “the cup of trembling.” Thou, “Jerusalem, hast drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling, hast wrung them out. Therefore hear thou this, thou afflicted and drunken but not with wine. Thus saith thy Lord, the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of His people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, the dregs of the cup of My fury; thou shalt no more drink it again: but I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee” Isaiah 51:17, Isaiah 51:21-23. Jeremiah speaks of “the cup of God‘s anger,” as given by God first to Jerusalem, then to all whom Nebuchadnezzar should subdue, then to Babylon itself Jeremiah 25:15-26; and as “passing through” to Edom also Lamentations 4:21; Jeremiah 49:12; Ezekiel, of “Aholibah” Ezekiel 23:31-33 (Jerusalem) “drinking the cup of Samaria.” In Jeremiah alone, Babylon is herself the cup. “Babylon” is “a golden cup in the Lord‘s hand, that made all the nations drunken; the nations have drunken of the wine; therefore the nations are mad” Jeremiah 51:7. Now Jerusalem is to be, not an ordinary cup, but a large “basin” or vessel, from which all nations may drink what will make them reel.

“And also upon Judah will it be in the siege against Jerusalem, that is, the burden of the word of the Lord which was on Israel” should be “upon Judah,” that is, upon all, great and small.

Verse 3

I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone to all nations - What is “a stone to all nations?” It is not a rock or anything in its own nature immovable, but a “stone,” a thing rolled up and down, moved, lifted, displaced, piled on others, in every way at the service and command of people, to do with it what they willed. So they thought of that “stone cut out without hands” Daniel 2:45; that “tried stone and sure foundation, laid in

Zion" Isaiah 28:16; that "stone" which, God said in Zechariah, "I have laid" Zechariah 3:9; of which our Lord says, "the stone, which the builders rejected, is become the head of the corner" Luke 20:17; "whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" Matthew 21:44; Luke 20:18. The Church, built on the stone, seems a thing easily annihilated; ten persecutions in succession strove to efface it; Diocletian erected a monument, commemorating that the Christian name was blotted out. It survived; he perished.

The image may have been suggested by the custom, so widely prevailing in Judaea, of trying the relative strength of young men, by lifting round stones selected for that end.

Jerome: "The meaning then is, I will place, Jerusalem to all nations like a very heavy stone to be lifted up. They will lift it up, and according to their varied strength, will waste it; but it must needs be, that, while it is lifted, in the very strain of lifting the weight, that most heavy stone should leave some scission or rasure on the bodies of those who lift it. Of the Church it may be interpreted thus; that all persecutors, who fought against the house of the Lord, are inebriated with that cup, which Jeremiah gives to all nations, to drink and be inebriated and fall and vomit and be mad. Whosoever would uplift the stone shall lift it, and in the anger of the Lord, whereby He chastens sinners, will hold it in his hands; but he himself will not go unpunished, the sword of the Lord fighting against him."

All that burden themselves with it will be cut to pieces - More exactly, "scarified, lacerated;" shall bear the scars. "Though" (rather, "and") "all the people (peoples, nations) of the earth shall be gathered together against it." The prophet marshals them all against Jerusalem, only to say how they should perish before it. So in Joel God says, "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat", speaking of that last closing strife of antichrist against God. Wars against Israel had either been petty, though anti-theistic, wars of neighboring petty nations, pitting their false gods against the True, or one, though world-empire wielded by a single will. The more God made Himself known, the fiercer the opposition. The Gospel claiming "obedience to the faith among all nations" Romans 1:5, provoked universal rebellion. Herod and Pontius Pilate became friends through rejection of Christ; the Roman Caesar and the

Persian Sapor, Goths and Vandals, at war with one another, were one in persecuting Christ and the Church. Yet in vain.

Verse 4

In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, stupefying - Zechariah revives the words concentrated by Moses, to express the stupefaction at their ills, which God would accumulate upon His people, if they perseveringly rebelled against Him. Each expresses the intensity of the visitation. "The horse and his rider" Exodus 15:1. The scared cavalry throws into confusion the ranks, of which it was the boast and strength.

And on the house of Judah I will open My eyes - In pity and love and guidance, as the Psalmist says, "I will counsel, with Mine eye upon thee" Psalm 32:8, in contrast with "the blindness" with which God would smite the powers arrayed against them.

Verse 5

And the princes of Judah - He pictures the onemindedness of the Church. No one shall assume anything to himself; each shall exalt the strength which the other was to him; but all, "in the Lord. The princes of Judah" shall say "in their heart," not outwardly or politically, but in inward conviction, "strength to me" (all speak as one) "are the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the Lord of hosts their God." The highest in human estimation acknowledge that their strength is in those who are of no account in this world; as, in fact the hearts of the poor are evermore the strength of the Church; but that, "in the Lord of hosts;" in Him, in whose hands are the powers of heaven and earth, over against the petty turmoil on earth. God had chosen Jerusalem Zechariah 1:17; Zechariah 2:12; Zechariah 3:2; therefore she was invincible. "That most glorious prince of Judah, Paul, said, ‹I can do all things in Christ who instrengtheneth me. ‹"

Verse 6

I will make the governors of Judah like a hearth - or "cauldron" of fire large, broad, deep, and full of fire, among the wood which is prepared for burning, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf The fire could not kindle the wood or the sheaf, of itself, unless applied to it. All is of the agency of God: "I will make."

Ribera: "He foretells the increase of the Church, which by such persecutions shall not be diminished, but shall be marvelously increased. The preachers of the Church shall raise up all the peoples round about, shall

destroy all unbelief, and shall kindle the hearts of hearers with the fire of the divine word." "On the right hand and on the left." Ribera: "He indicates the strength and success of the preachers, whom no one can resist nor hinder," as our Lord says, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist" Luke 21:15.

And Jerusalem shall again - Rather, "yet, be inhabited." "Yet" is a sort of burden in Zechariah's prophecies. Osorius: "They at once burned up by the flame all the defilement of vices, and kindled the minds of people with the torch of divine love; at once consumed the enemy and cast a heavenly fire into the human heart: ‹yet;' in despite of all appearances, of all which is against her. ‹She shall yet dwell in her own place in Jerusalem;' for, however the waves of this world chafe and lash themselves into foam against her, they break themselves, not her; as soon as they have reached their utmost height, they fall back; if they toss themselves, and, for a moment, hide her light, they fall down at all sides, and the ray shines out, steady as before; for she is ‹founded on a rock,' against which ‹the gates of hell' should not ‹prevail' Matthew 16:18.

Verse 7

The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first - Still it is, ‹the Lord shall save.' We have, on the one side, the ‹siege,' the gathering of all the peoples of the earth ‹against Jerusalem, the horse and his rider.' On the other, no human strength; not, as before, in the prophecy of the Maccabees, the bow, the arrow, and the sword, though in the hand of God Zechariah 9:13. It is thrice, ‹I will make' Zechariah 9:2-3,; ‹I will smite' (Zechariah 9:4 bis); and now, ‹The Lord shall save.' By ‹the tents,' he probably indicates their defenselessness. God would ‹save' them first; that ‹the glory of the house of David - ‹be not great against' or ‹over Judah,' may not overshadow it; but all may be as one; for all is the free gift of God, the mere grace of God, that ‹he that glorieth may glory in the Lord' Jeremiah 9:24; 1 Corinthians 1:31; 2 Corinthians 10:17, and both "may own that, in both, the victory is the Lord's" (Jerome).

Lap.: "In Christ Jesus is neither Jew nor Greek; neither bond nor free, neither rich nor poor" Galatians 3:28; "but all are one," namely a new creation; yea in Christendom the poor are the highest, both because Christ "preached to the poor" Luke 4:18, and pronounced the "poor blessed" Luke 6:20, and He made the Apostles, being poor, nobles in His kingdom, through whom He converted kings and princes, as is written, "ye see your

calling, brethren, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the would to confound the things which fire mighty … " 1 Corinthians 1:26; and, "Hath not God called the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which God has promised to them that love Him?" James 2:5. The rich and noble have greater hindrances to humility and Christian virtues, than the poor. For honors puff up, wealth and delights weaken the mind; wherefore they need greater grace of Christ to burst their bonds than the poor. Wherefore, for the greater grace shown them, they are bound to give greater thanks unto Christ."

Verse 8

In that day the Lord shall defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble, rather, he theft stumbleth among them, shall be as David - The result of the care and the defense of God is here wholly spiritual, "the strengthening of such as do stand, and the raising up of such as fall." It is not simply one feeble, but one "stumbling" and ready to fall, who becomes as David, the great instance of one who fell, yet was raised. Daniel says of a like trial-time, "And some of those of understanding shall stumble, to try them and to purge and to make them white, to the time of the end" Daniel 11:35. Ribera: "Such care will God have of protecting the sons of the Church, when it shall be infested with persecutions, that he who shall have fallen through human infirmity, either deceived by heretics or overcome by fear of tortures, shall arise the more fervent and cautious, and with many tears shall make amends for his sins to God, as did David. "He who stumbled shall be as David," because the sinner returneth' to repentance. This is not said of all times, nor of all (for many have stumbled, who never rose) but chiefly of the first times of the Church and of people of great sanctity, such as were many then."

And the house of David shall be as God - They who stumbled became really like David; but he, though mighty and a great saint of God, though he once fell, was man. How then could the house of David be really like God? Only fully in Him, who, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God" Philemon 2:6; who said, "He who hath seen Me, hath seen My Father also" John 14:9; "I and the Father are one" John 10:30. And this the prophet brings out by adding, "as the Angel of the Lord before

them," that is, that one Angel of the Lord, in whom His very Presence and His Name was; who went before them, to guide them (see "Daniel the prophet" pp. 519-523). Else, having said, "like God," it had been to lessen what he had just said, to add, "like the Angel of the Lord." Our Lord prayed for those who are truly His, "As Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they may be one in Us; that they may be one as We are one, I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfect in one" John 17:21-23; and Paul saith, "Christ is formed in us" Galatians 4:19; "Christ dwelleth in our hearts by faith" Ephesians 3:17; "Christ liveth in me" Galatians 2:20; "Christ is in you" Romans 8:10; "Christ is our life" Colossians 3:4; "Christ is all and in all" Colossians 3:11; "we grow into Him which is the Head, even Christ" Ephesians 4:15; "we are in Christ" Romans 16:7; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 1:22; and Peter, we are "partakers of the divine nature" 2 Peter 1:4; and John, "As He is, so are we in this world" 1 John 4:17. Then in a degree the glory of Christ passeth over to those who dwell in Him, and in whom He dwells by the Spirit, as Paul says; "Ye received me, as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus" Galatians 4:14.

Verse 9

In that day, I will seek to destroy - Woe indeed to those, whom Almighty God shall "‹seek‘ to destroy!" Man may seek earnestly to do, what at last he cannot do. Still it is an earnest seeking. And whether it is used of human seeking which fails, or which succeeds 1 Samuel 14:4; 1 Samuel 23:10; Ecclesiastes 12:10, inchoate or permitted 1 Kings 11:22; Zechariah 6:7, it is always used of seeking to do, what it is a person‘s set purpose to do if he can. Here it is spoken of Almighty God. Ribera: "He saith not, ‹I will destroy‘ but ‹I will seek to destroy,‘ that is, it shall ever be My care to destroy all the enemies of the Church, that they may in no way prevail against it: this I will do alway to the end of the world."

Verse 10

And I will pour - As He promised by Joel, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh" (Joel 2:28. See vol. i. pp. 193,194), largely, abundantly, "upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem," all, highest and lowest, from first to last, the "Spirit of grace and supplication," that is, the "Holy Spirit" which conveyeth "grace," as "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding" Isaiah 11:2 is "the Spirit" infusing "wisdom and understanding," and the "Spirit of counsel and might" is that same Spirit, imparting the gift "of counsel" to see what is to be done and "of might" to

do it, and the Spirit "of the knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" is that same "Spirit," infusing loving acquaintance with God, with awe at His infinite Majesty. So "the Spirit of grace and supplication," is that same Spirit, infusing grace and bringing into a state of favor with God, and a "Spirit of supplication" is that Spirit, calling out of the inmost soul the cry for a yet larger measure of the grace already given. Paul speaks of "the love of God poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" Romans 5:5; and of "insulting the Spirit of grace", rudely repulsing the Spirit, who giveth grace. Osorius: "When God Himself says, ‹I will pour out,' He sets forth the greatness of His bountifulness whereby He bestoweth all things."

And they shall look - with trustful hope and longing. Cyril: "When they had nailed the Divine Shrine to the Wood, they who had crucified Him, stood around, impiously mocking. But when He had laid down His life for us, "the centurion and they that were with him, watching Jesus, seeing the earthquake and those things which were done, feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God" Matthew 27:54. As it ever is with sin, compunction did not come till the sin was over: till then, it was overlaid; else the sin could not be done. At the first conversion, the three thousand "were pricked ‹in the heart.' "when told that He "whom they had taken and with wicked hands had crucified and slain, is Lord and Christ" Acts 2:23, Acts 2:36. This awoke the first penitence of him who became Paul. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" This has been the center of Christian devotion ever since, the security against passion, the impulse to self-denial, the parent of zeal for souls, the incentive to love; this has struck the rock, that it gushed forth in tears of penitence: this is the strength and vigor of hatred of sin, to look to Him whom our sins pierced, "who" Paul says, "loved me and gave Himself for me." Osorius: "We all lifted Him up upon the Cross; we transfixed with the nails His hands and feet; we pierced His Side with the spear. For if man had not sinned, the Son of God would have endured no torment."

And they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for an only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for a first-born - We feel most sensibly the sorrows of this life, passing as they are; and of these, the loss of an only son is a proverbial sorrow. "O daughter of My people, gird thee with sackcloth and wallow thyself in ashes," God says; "make thee the mourning of an only son, Most bitter lamentation"

Jeremiah 6:26. "I will make it as the mourning of an only son" Amos 8:10. The dead man carried out, "the only son of his mother and she was a widow," is recorded as having touched the heart of Jesus. Alb.: "And our Lord, to the letter, was the Only-Begotten of His Father and His mother." He was "the first-begotten of every creature" Colossians 1:15, and "we saw His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" John 1:14. This mourning for Him whom our sins pierced and nailed to the tree, is continued, week by week, by the pious, on the day of the week, when He suffered for us, or in the perpetual memorial of His Precious Death in the Holy Eucharist, and especially in Passion-Tide. God sends forth anew "the Spirit of grace and supplication," and the faithful mourn, because of their share in His Death. The prophecy had a rich and copious fulfillment in that first conversion in the first Pentecost; a larger fulfillment awaits it in the end, when, after the destruction of antichrist, "all Israel shall" be converted and "be saved." Romans 11:26.

There is yet a more awful fulfillment; when "He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him" Revelation 1:7. But meanwhile it is fulfilled in every solid conversion of Jew pagan or careless Christian, as well as in the devotion of the pious. Zechariah has concentrated in few words the tenderest devotion of the Gospel, "They shall look on Me whom they pierced." Lap.: "Zechariah teaches that among the various feelings which we can elicit from the meditation on the Passion of Christ, as admiration, love, gratitude, compunction, fear, penitence, imitation, patience, joy, hope, the feeling of compassion stands eminent, and that it is this, which we especially owe to Christ suffering for us. For who would not in his inmost self grieve with Christ, innocent and holy, yea the Only Begotten Son of God, when he sees Him nailed to the Cross and enduring so lovingly for him sufferings so manifold and so great? Who would not groan out commiseration, and melt into tears? Truly says Bonaventure in his ‹goad of divine love:' ‹What can be more fruitful, what sweeter than, with the whole heart, to suffer with that most bitter suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ? ‹"

Verse 11

As the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon - This was the greatest sorrow, which had fallen on Judah. Josiah was the last hope

of its declining kingdom. His sons probably showed already their unlikeness to their father, whereby they precipitated their country‘s fall. in Josiah‘s death the last gleam of the sunset of Judah faded into night. Of him it is recorded, that “his pious acts, according to what was written in the law of the Lord,” were written in his country‘s history 2 Chronicles 35:26, 2 Chronicles 35:7; for him the prophet “Jeremiah wrote a dirge” 2 Chronicles 35:25; “all” the minstrels of his country “spake of him in their dirges” 2 Chronicles 35:25. The dirges were “made an ordinance” which survived the captivity; “to this day” 2 Chronicles 35:25, it is said at the close of the Chronicles. Among the gathering sorrows of Israel, this lament over Josiah was written in the national collection of “dirges” 2 Chronicles 35:25. “Hadadrimmon,” as being compounded of the name of two Syrian idols, is, in its name, a witness how Syrian idolatry penetrated into the kingdom, when it was detached from the worship of God. It was (Jerome) “a city near Jezreel, now called Maximinianopolis in the plain of Megiddon, in which the righteous king Josiah was wounded by Pharaoh Necho.” This “was 17 miles from Caesarea, 10 from Esdraelon.” Its name still survives in a small village, south of Megiddon, and so, on the way back to Jerusalem.

Verses 12-14

This sorrow should be universal but also individual, the whole land, and that, family by family; the royal family in the direct line of its kings, and in a branch from Nathan, a son of David and whole brother of Solomon 1 Chronicles 3:5, which was continued on in private life yet was still to be an ancestral line of Jesus Luke 3:31: in like way the main priestly family from Levi, and a subordinate line from a grandson of Levi, “the family of Shimei” Numbers 3:23; and all the remaining families, each with their separate sorrow, each according to Joel‘s call, “let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber and the bride out of her closet” Joel 2:16, each denying himself the tenderest solaces of life.

Dionysius: “The ungrateful and ungodly, daily, as far as in them lies, crucify Christ, as Paul says, “crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh and putting Him to an open shame” Hebrews 6:6. And on these Christ, out of His boundless pity, poureth forth a spirit of grace and supplication, so that, touched with compunction, with grieving and tearful feeling, they look on Christ, suffering with His suffering, and bewailing their own impurities.”

Osorius: “The likeness is in the sorrow, not in its degree. Josiah had restored religion, removed a dire superstition, bound up relaxed morals by healthful discipline, recalled to its former condition the sinking state. In their extremest needs light shone on them, when there came his unlooked-for death, Therewith the whole state seemed lost. So in the Death of Christ, they who loved Him, saw His divine works, placed their whole hope of salvation in His goodness, suddenly saw the stay of their life extinct, themselves deprived of that most sweet contact, all hope for the future cut off: But the grief in the death of Christ was the more bitter, as He awoke a greater longing for Himself, and had brought a firmer hope of salvation.”

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

In that day there shall be a fountain opened - Zechariah often repeats, "in that day" Zechariah 12:3-4, Zechariah 12:6, Zechariah 12:8-9, Zechariah 12:11; Zechariah 13:1-2, Zechariah 13:4; Zechariah 14:6, Zechariah 14:8, Zechariah 14:13, Zechariah 14:20, resuming his subject again and again, as a time not proximate, but fixed and known of God, of which he declared somewhat. It is "that day" which "Abraham desired to see, and saw it" John 8:56, whether by direct revelation, or in the typical sacrifice of Isaac, "and was glad:" it was "that day" which "many prophets and kings and righteous men desired to see" Matthew 13:17; Luke 10:24, and in patience waited for it,: "the" one "day of salvation" of the Gospel. He had spoken of repentance, in contemplation of Christ crucified; he now speaks of forgiveness and cleansing, of sanctification and consequent obedience. The "fountain shall be" not simply "opened," but shall remain open. Isaiah had already prophesied of the refreshment of the Gospel. "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them, I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys" Isaiah 41:17-18; here it is added, "for sin. and for uncleanness."

There were "divers" Hebrews 9:10 symbolical "washings" under the law; the Levites were "sprinkled with the water of purifying" Numbers 8:7, literally, "the water of taking away of sin: living waters" Numbers 19:17, put to the ashes of an heifer, were appointed as a "water for" (removing) "defilements" (Numbers 19:9, Numbers 19:13, Numbers 19:20-21 bis; Numbers 31:23); "a cleansing of sin" Numbers 19:9. Now, there should be one ever-open fountain for all "the house of David." Theodoret: "Who that fountain is, the Lord Himself teacheth through Jeremiah, ‹they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters' Jeremiah 2:13; and in the Gospel He says, ‹If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink' John 7:37; and ‹The water which I shall give him, is a fountain of living water, gushing up to everlasting life' John 4:14. This was ‹open to the house of David;' for of that kindred He took human nature. It was opened also ‹for the dwellers of Jerusalem,' for the sprinkling of holy baptism; through which we have received remission of sins." Cyril: "That, receiving divine and holy baptism, we are sprinkled with the Blood of Christ to the

remission of sins, who can doubt?" Dionysius: "Of this fountain much was foretold by Ezekiel, ‹that a fountain should issue forth from the temple of the Lord, and ‹go down into the desert' Ezekiel 47:1, Ezekiel 47:8-9, and ‹every soul, to whom it shall come, shall live;' and Joel, ‹A fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and water the valley of Shillim' Joel 3:18. Of this fountain Peter said to the Jews, when ‹pricked in the heart' and seeking forgiveness, ‹Let everyone of you be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins'" Acts 2:37-38.

Verse 2

I will cut off the names of the idols - This had been a fence against idolatry. To name evil is a temptation to evil. Wrong words are the parents of wrong acts. To speak of evil awakens curiosity or passion; curiosity is one of the strongest incentives to act. All public mention of terrible crimes (it has been observed) produces imitation of the specific form of crime. Hence, it was commanded, "make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth" Exodus 23:13. And Joshua names it in his dying charge to Israel, "Be ye therefore very strong to keep and to are all that is written in the book of the law of Moses - either make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them" Joshua 23:6-7. Hence, they "changed" the "names" of cities, which bare idol names. David speaks of it, as part of fealty to God. "I will, not take their names upon my lips" Psalm 16:4.

Hosea prophesies of the times of the new covenant; "I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall be no more remembered by their name" Hosea 2:17. Isaiah, "The idols he shall utterly abolish" Isaiah 2:18. Zechariah foretells their abolition with a turn of words, formed apparently on those of Hosea; but slightly varied, because the worship of Baal, such a plague-spot in the time of Hosea, one, which continued until the year before the captivity, was gone, He implies nothing as to his own times, whether idolatry still existed. He predicts its entire abolition in the whole compass of the enlarged Judah, that is, of Christendom.

And also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land - False prophecy sets itself to meet a craving of human nature to know something of its future. False prophets there were, even in the time of Nehemiah, and those in some number, hired to prophesy against the word of

God. Our Lord warns against them. “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep‘s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” Matthew 7:15. “Many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many” Matthew 24:11. Many false prophets, John says, “are gone out into the world” John 4:1. False prophets attended the decline of Judaism. Such was the author of the Jewish Sibylline book, prophesying the destruction of the Romans, and fixing the mind of his people on temporal aggrandizement: false prophets were suborned by the Jewish “tyrants” and encouraged the Jews in the resistance which ruined the devoted city:, false prophets have arisen in Christianity; but, like the Phrygian women who led Tertullian astray, they “went out,” were cast out “from it, as not being of it.”

Cyril: “After that the Only Begotten Word of God appeared to us, the dull and childish toys of idolatry perished and were utterly destroyed, and with it were taken away the strange and impious devices of the false prophets, who were full of the evil, unclean spirit, and could be readily detected as laboring under a kindred disease to the idolaters. For both had one president of impiety, Satan.” Not 50 years after the Crucifixion, a pagan wrote his work, “on the failure of oracles.” The outpouring of the Holy “Spirit of grace and supplication” Zechariah 12:10, should sweep away “the unclean spirit”, (Zechariah alone anticipates the language of the New Testament) which became “a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets” 1 Kings 22:21-23 sought to them.

Verse 3

His father and mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live - The prophet describes the zeal against false prophecy, with reference to the law against those who seduced to apostasy from God. Deuteronomy 13:6-10: “the nearest relations were themselves to denounce any who had secretly tried to seduce them, and themselves, as the accusers, to cast the first stone at them. Cyril: “Such shall in those times be the reverence to Godward, so careful shall they be of perfect probity and laudable life, that parents themselves shall be stimulated against their children, if they should speak falsely anything from their own heart, as though God spoke by them - How true that word is, and how accredited the prophecy! This indicates clearly a great advance toward godliness, God transforming things or the better. What aforetime was held in great esteem, is now hated and accursed and held intolerable.”

Verse 4

The prophets shall be ashamed, every one of them - They who before their conversion, gave themselves to such deceits, shall be ashamed of their deeds; as, after the defeat of the seven sons of the chief priest Sceva, "fear fall on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified, and many that believed came and confessed and showed their deeds: many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together and burned them before all, and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily," Luke subjoins, "grew the word of God and prevailed" Acts 19:13-20.

Neither shall wear a rough garment to deceive Feigning themselves ascetics and mourners for their people, as the true prophets were in truth. The sackcloth, which the prophets wore Isaiah 20:2, was a rough garment of hair Isaiah 22:12; Jeremiah 4:8; Jeremiah 6:26, worn next to the skin 1 Kings 21:27; 2 Kings 6:30; Job 16:15, whence Elijah was known to Ahaziah, when described as "a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins" 2 Kings 1:8. It was a wide garment, enveloping the whole frame, and so, afflictive to the whole body. Jerome: "This was the habit of the prophets, that when they called the people to penitence, they were clothed with sackcloth."

Verse 5

And he shall say - Repudiating his former claims, "I am a husbandman:" for a man hath taught me from my youth." There was no room then for his having been a false prophet, since he had had from his youth one simple unlettered occupation, as Amos said truly of himself; "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son: but I was an herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit" Amos 7:14. The prophet does not approve the lie, any more than our Lord did the injustice of the "unjust steward." Our Lord contrasted the wisdom "in their generation" of a bad man for his ends, with the unwisdom of "the children of light," who took no pains to secure their God. Zechariah pictures vividly, how people would anyhow rid themselves of all suspicion of false prophesying.

Verse 6

And one shall say unto him, What are those wounds in thy hands? - The words are simple; the meaning different, according as they are united with what immediately precedes, or the main subject, Him whom they

pierced, for whom they were to mourn, and, on their mourning, to be cleansed, and of whom it is said in the next verse, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd." Jerome and others explain it of the punishment inflicted by parents. "These wounds and bruises I received, condemned by the judgment of my parents, and of those who did not hate but loved me. And so will truth prevail dissipating falsehood, that he too, who was punished for his own fault, will own that he suffered rightly."

But wounds of chastisement are not inflicted on the hands, and the punishment of false prophecy was not such wounds, but death. Wounds in the hands were no punishment, which parents would inflict. They were the special punishment of the cross, after sustaining which, One only lived. The most literal interpretation, then, of the wounds in the hands harmonizes with the piercing before, and the smiting of the Good Shepherd which follows, of whom David too prophesied, "They pierced My Hands and My Feet" Psalm 22:16. "What are those wounds on Thy hands? How long, think you, and how and by whom will this be said to Him? For ever and ever, unceasingly, and with unspeakable admiration it will be said, both by God the Father, "to whom He was obedient unto death, the death of the Cross" Philemon 2:8: it will be said also both by the holy "angels" who "desire to look into" Him 1 Peter 1:12, and by people whom He has redeemed. O great miracle, wonderful spectacle, especially in the Lord of all, to bear wounds in the midst of His Hands! And He shall say; "With these I was wounded in the house of those who loved Me." O great sacrilege, sacrilegious homicide, that such wounds were inflicted in the house of those who loved. He will not say, ‹with these I was wounded by those who loved Me,‘ but ‹in the house of those who loved Me.‘ For they who inflicted them, loved Him not.

But they were the house of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and David, and the rest like them, who loved Me, and expected Me, who was promised to them. Yet so to speak is not to answer the question, ‹what are these wounds?‘ For it is one thing to ask, what are these wounds, another to say, where they were inflicted. Having said, that they were inflicted in the house of those who loved Me. He says, what they are, ‹the Cup which My Father hath given Me to drink.‘ For what He subjoins, is the Voice of the Father giving the Cup. ‹Sword, awake, etc.‘ is as though he said, Ask ye, What are these wounds? I say, ‹the tokens of obedience, the signs of the Father‘s will

and command. The Lord of hosts, God the Father ‹hath not spared‘ Me, ‹His own Son, but hath given‘ Me ‹for‘ you ‹all.‘ And He said, ‹Awake, o sword, against Jify Shepherd, and against the Man cohering to Me,‘ which is as much as, ‹O Death, have thou power over My Son, My good Shepherd, the Man who cohereth to Me, that is, who is joined in unity of Person with the Word who is consubstantial with Me!‘ And then, as though the sword asked, how or how far shall I arise against this Thy Shepherd, he subjoins, ‹Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.‘ Hence, the Shepherd Himself, when about to be smitten, spake, ‹All ye shall be offended because of Me this night. For it is written, I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered‘ Matthew 26:31. So then to those who say, ‹what are those wounds in the midst of Thy hands?‘ is appositely subjoined the Voice of the Father, saying, ‹Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd etc.‘ in the meaning, ‹They are monuments of the Father‘s love, the tokens of My Obedience, because He ‹spared not His own Son,‘ and I ‹became obedient‘ to Him for you all, ‹even unto death, and that, the death of the Cross. ‹“

Verse 7

Awake, O sword - So Jeremiah apostrophises the sword, “O thou sword of the Lord, when wilt thou be quiet?” Jeremiah 47:6. The prophets express what “will be,” by a command that it should be; “Make the heart of this people heavy” Isaiah 6:10. But by this command he signifies that human malice, acting freely, could do no more than His “Hand and” His “counsel determined before to be done” Acts 4:28. The envy and hatred of Satan, the blind fury of the chief priests, the contempt of Herod, the guilty cowardice of Pilate, freely accomplished that Death, which God had before decreed for the salvation of the world. The meaning then is, (Ribera), “the sword shall be aroused against My Shepherd, that is, I will allow Him to be smitten by the Jews. But by ‹the sword‘ he designates death, persecution, wounding etc. as above, the ‹sword upon his right arm‘ Zechariah 11:17, and, where the passion of Christ is spoken of, ‹Deliver my soul from the sword‘ Psalm 22:20. So also, ‹All the sinners of the people shall die by the sword‘ Amos 9:10,” (Jerome), “which cannot be taken literally; for many sinners perish by shipwreck, poison, drowning, fire.” Amos then “so spake, because many died by war, yet not all by the sword, but others by pestilence and famine, all which he includes under ‹the sword‘ Amos 9:10. This smiting began,

when the Lord was taken, and His sheep began to be scattered; but the prophecy which, before, was being gradually fulfilled, was fully fulfilled in His death, and the apostles were dispersed till the day of the Resurrection at eventide."

Against the Man, My Fellow - that is, One united by community of nature. A little before, God had spoken of Himself as priced at "the thirty pieces of silver," yet as breaking the covenant which He had made with all nations for His people; as "pierced through, yet as pouring the spirit of grace and supplication" on those who pierced Him, that they should mourn their deed, and as, thereon, ever cleansing them from sin. As Man, God was sold, was pierced.: "God, in flesh, not working with aught intervening as in the prophets, but having taken to Him a Manhood connatural with Himself and made one, and through His flesh akin to us, drawing up to Him all humanity. What was the manner of the Godhead in flesh? As fire in iron, not transitively but by communication. For the fire does not dart into the iron, but remains there and communicates to it of its own virtue, not impaired by the communication, yet filling wholly its recipient."

The bold language of the Fathers only expressed the actuality of the Incarnation. Since the Manhood was taken into God, and in Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and God and Man were one Christ. then was it all true language. His Body was "the Body of God"; His flesh "the flesh of the Word"; and it was lawful to speak of "the flesh of the Deity", of "the Passion of the Word", "the Passion of Christ, my God", "the Passion of God", "God dead and buried", "God suffered", "murderers of God", "the Godhead dwelt in the flesh bodily, which is all one with saying that, being God, He had a proper body, and using this as an instrument, He became Man for our sakes, and, because of this, things proper to the flesh are said to be His, since He was in it, as hunger, thirst, suffering, fatigue and the like, of which the flesh is capable, while the works proper to the Word Himself as raising the dead and restoring the blind, He did through His own Body," is but a continuance of the language of Zechariah, since He who was sold, was priced, was Almighty God. Jesus being God and Man, the sufferings of His Humanity were the sufferings of God, although, as God, He could not suffer.

Now, conversely, God speaks of the Shepherd who was slain, as "My Fellow," united in Nature with Himself, although not the Manhood of Jesus

which suffered, but the Godhead, united with It in one Person, was Consubstantial with Himself. The name might perhaps be most nearly represented by "connatural.": "When then the title is employed of the relation of an individual to God, it is clear that that individual can be no mere man, Jut must be one, united with God by unity of Being. The Akin of the Lord is no, other than He who said in the Gospel "I and My Father are One" John 10:30, and who is designated as "the Only-Begotten Son, who is in the Bosom of the Father" John 1:18. The word, it seems, was especially chosen, as being used in the Pentateuch, only in the laws against injuring a fellow-man. The prophet thereby gives prominence to the seeming contradiction between the command of the Lord, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd," and those Of His own law, whereby no one is to injure his fellow.

He thus points out the greatness of that end, for the sake of which the Lord regards not that relation, whose image among men He commanded to be kept holy. He speaks after the manner of people. He calls attention to the greatness of that sacrifice, whereby He "spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all" Romans 8:32. The word ‹Man‘ forms a sort of contrast with "My Fellow." He whom the sword is to reach must unite the Human Nature with the divine." Jews too have seen that the words, "My Fellow," imply an equality with God; only since they own not Him, who was God and Man, they must interpret it of a false claim on the part of man, overlooking that it is given Him by God.

And I will turn My hand o **upon the little ones -** Doing to them as He had done to the Shepherd. So our Lord forewarned them: "If they have persecuted Me they will also persecute you" John 15:20: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me, before it hated you" John 15:18: "Ye shall be hated of all men for My name‘s sake" Matthew 10:22; Luke 21:17: "they will deliver you up to the councils and scourge you in the synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My name‘s sake" (Matthew 10:17-18; add Luke 21:12): "they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all men for My name‘s sake" Matthew 24:9; and to the Scribes and Pharisees, "I send unto you prophets and wise men and scribes, and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues and

persecute them from city to city, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth" Matthew 23:34-35.

The little ones - As Jeremiah speaks of "the least of the flock" Jeremiah 49:20, and the Lord said, "fear not, little flock" Luke 12:32, little and weak in itself but mighty in Him and in His grace. Three centuries of persecution, alike in the Roman empire and beyond it in Persia, fulfilled the prophet's words and deepened the foundation of the Church and cemented its fabric.

Verse 8

In all the land, two parts therein shall be cut off and die - "In all the land of Israel," says a Jewish interpreter; (Kimchi); " - the land, in which the Good Shepherd had been slain and the sheep scattered, "that upon you." our Lord had said, "may come all the righteous blood." As David punished Moab, "with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive" 2 Samuel 8:2; and Ezekiel prophesied, "A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee: and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee" Ezekiel 5:12; so now, the greater part should be destroyed, but a remnant should be saved. "But the third part shall be left therein. Even so then at this present time also," Paul says, "there is a remnant according to the election of grace" Romans 11:5. Osorius: "The third part only shall be saved from the common destruction; yet not so, that they should suppose that glory was to be obtained amid ease."

Verse 9

I will bring the third part through the fire - Such is always God's ways. "Thou hast proved us, O God; Thou hast tried us, like as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the snare, Thou laidest trouble upon our loins: we went through fire and water, and Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place" Psalm 66:9-11. "I have refined thee, but not with silver, I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction" Isaiah 48:10; and, "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God" Acts 14:22.

Dionysius: "In adversity virtue is most tried, and it is shown what advance a person has made; for ‹patience' hath ‹a perfect work' James 1:4; and it is called the touchstone of all other virtues, as is written; ‹God tried His elect as gold in the furnace and received them as a burnt offering'; and, ‹All the faithful who have pleased the Lord have passed through many tribulations'. And the angel Raphael saith to Tobias, ‹Because thou wert accepted of God, need was that temptation should prove thee'."

“Adversities are granted to the elect of God, and therefore to be rejoiced in with the whole heart.” “Fire, crosses, racks were prepared; swords executioners torturers were put in action; new forms of suffering were invented, and yet Christian virtue remained moveless, unconquered: the fiercer the onslaught, the more glorious was the triumph.”: “The more suffered, the more believed in Christ.” Osorius: “Whose virtue they adimired, these they imitated, and shared the suffering, that they might be partakers of the glory. This was that fire, whereby God willed that His own should be tried and purified, that, with Christ whom they gave themselves to imitate, they might enjoy everlasting glory.”

I will bless him and will say, It is My people - Dionysius: “not only by creation as the rest, but by devotion and worship, by predestination and infusion of grace, by singular Providence, by mutual love; ‹and it shall say, The Lord is my God,‘ whom alone above all things, I long for, love, worship.”

This promise is oftentimes renewed through the prophets, oftentimes fulfilled in Christ, whenever the Church is recalled from listlessness by fiery trials, and through them her children are restored to deeper devotedness and closer union with God.

ZECHARIAH CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Introduction

"The Jews," Jerome says, "say that these things are to be fulfilled under Gog; others that they were accomplished in part, in the times of the Macedonians, Egyptians, and other nations. We, leaving the truth of the time to the judgment of the Lord, would explain what is written." Eusebius points out that it cannot be said to have been fulfilled under Antiochus Epiphanes; "If any think that these things are, then let him consider again and again, whether he can refer the rest of the prophecy also to the times of Antiochus; as, that ‹the feet of the Lord stood on the mount of Olives' Zechariah 14:4, that ‹the Lord in that day' Zechariah 14:9, became ‹king over the whole earth;' and so, as to the rest of the prophecy." And although more was fulfilled in the last siege by the Romans, still those who would explain it solely of this, are obliged to mingle explanations partly literal, as that Jerusalem should be the earthly Jerusalem, which was destroyed, partly metaphorical, as to the mount of Olives, its division into two parts etc. It seems then probable that, like the kindred prophecy of Joel Joel 2:30; Joel 3:18, it relates chiefly to the time of the end, and that as our Lord unites the destruction of Jerusalem with His Coming in the Day of Judgment, so here are united that first destruction with the last rebellion of man, in the times of antichrist. Since then much or most may be yet future, it seems safer, as Jerome suggests, to explain the prophet's symbolic language, leaving the times of the fulfillment to Him, in whose hands they are.

Verse 1

Behold the Day of the Lord cometh - Literally, "a day cometh, the Lord's," in which He Himself shall be Judge, and no longer leave man to fulfill his own will, and despise God's; in which His glory and holiness and the righteousness of all His ways shall be revealed.

And thy spoil shall be in the midst of thee - Jerome: "How great will the strait be, that the spoils should be divided in the midst of her. It often happens that what, by a sudden assault, is plundered in the city, is divided in the field or in solitude, lest the enemy should come upon them. But now there will be such a heavy weight of ills, such will be the security of conquest, that the spoils shall be divided in the midst of the city."

Verse 2

I Will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle - This is a feature which belongs to the end. It had been dwelt upon by Joel; Joel 3:2-9, Joel 3:11; Ezekiel spoke of the "many nations" Ezekiel 38:6, Ezekiel 38:15, Ezekiel 38:22 which should come under Gog. John foretells of an universal strife at the end, when "The spirits of devils, working miracles, go forth unto the king; of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" Revelation 16:14; and "Satan shall be loosed out of his prison and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints round about, and the beloved city" Revelation 20:7-9. Since no creature can do aught but what God wills, and, in his phrensy against God's people, is but His instrument, "to try them and to purge and to make white to the time of the end" Daniel 11:35; Daniel 12:10; and the strength of body or intellect, which is abused against His law, He continuously in the order of nature supplies, God may be said to do what Satan does against Him. Satan, in his blind fury, crowns martyrs, fills the thrones of heaven, works, against his will, the All-wise Will of God.

And the houses rifled, and the women … - The horrors of pagan war repeat themselves through people's ever-recurring passions. What was foretold as to Babylon is repeated in the same words as to the Church of God. Seemingly "all things" come "alike to all Ecclesiastes 9:2: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean and to the unclean: to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner." The outward event is the same, the hidden part is known to God alone. "And the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city," unlike the lot of the earthly Jerusalem, in the destruction both by Nebuchadnezzar (which was past) and the Romans (see at Micah 3:12, pp. 46-50). At the first, "Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, carried away the rest of the people left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude" 2 Kings 25:11, so that Jeremiah mourned over it, "Because of the mountain of Zion which is desolate, foxes walk" (habitually) "upon it" Lamentations 5:18. The Romans (see at pp. 46,47) "effaced the city." Now "a remnant is not cut off," because "for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" Matthew

24:32; for our Lord had said, that "the gates of hell should not prevail against" His Church Matthew 16:18.

Verse 3

The Lord shall go forth and shall fight - Jerome: "Is to be taken like that in Habakkuk, ‹Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people, for salvation with Thine Anointed" Habakkuk 3:13, and in Micah, ‹For behold, the Lord cometh forth out of His place, and will come down and will tread upon the high places of the earth, and the mountains shall be molten under Him, and the valleys shall be cleft" Micah 1:3-4; and Isaiah also, "The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man; He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war; He shall cry; He shall prevail over His enemies" Isaiah 42:13. "God is said to ‹go forth,' when by some wondrous deed He declares His Presence - His Deity is, as it were, laid up, so long as He holds Himself in, and does not by any token show His power. But He ‹goes forth,' and bursts forth, when He exercises some judgment, and worketh some new work, which striketh terror." God then will "go forth out of His place," when He is constrained to break through His quietness and gentleness and clemency, for the amendment of sinners. He who elsewhere speaketh through the prophet, ‹I, the Lord, change not' Malachi 3:6, and to whom it is said, ‹Thou art the same' Psalm 102:28, and in the Epistle of James, ‹With whom is no change' James 1:17, now ‹goeth forth' and fighteth ‹as in the day of battle,' when He overwhelmed Pharaoh in the Red sea; and ‹fought for Israel.'" "The Lord shall fight for you," became the watchword of Moses Exodus 14:14; Deuteronomy 1:30; 13:22; Deuteronomy 20:4 and the warrior Joshua in his old age (Joshua 23:10; compare Joshua 10:14, Joshua 10:42; Joshua 23:3), after his life's experience Joshua 10:14, Joshua 10:42; Joshua 23:3, and Nehemiah. "Be not afraid by reason of this great multitude" Nehemiah 4:20, said Jahaziel, son of Zachariah, when the "Spirit of the Lord came upon" him; "for the battle is not your's, but God's" 2 Chronicles 20:15.

As He fought in the day of battle - Osorius: "All wars are so disposed by the power of God, that every victory is to be referred to His counsel and will. But this is not seen so clearly, when people, elate and confident, try to transfer to themselves all or the greater part of the glory of war. Then may the war be eminently said to be the Lord's, when no one drew sword, as it is written, "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" Exodus 14:14. Of all God's wars, in which human insolence could claim no part of the glory, none was more wondrous than that, in which Pharaoh and

his army were sunk in the deep. "The Lord," said Moses Exodus 15:3, "is a man of war: the Lord is His Name." "That day of battle" was the image of one much greater. In that, Pharaoh's army was sunk in the deep; in this, the power of evil, in Hell: in that, what could in some measure be conquered by human strength, was subdued; in this, a tyranny unconquerable; in that, a short-lived liberty was set up; the liberty brought by Christ through subdual of the enemy, is eternal. As then the image yields to the truth, earthly goods to heavenly, things perishable to eternal, so the glory of that ancient victory sinks to nothing under the greatness of the latter."

Verse 4

And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives - "Over against Jerusalem to the east, wherein riseth the Sun of Righteousness." The Mount of Olives is the central eminence of a line of hills, of rather more than a mile in length, overhanging the city, from which it is separated only by the narrow bed of the valley of the brook Cedron. It rises 187 feet above Mount Zion, 295 feet above Mount Moriah, 443 feet above Gethsemane, and lies between the city and the wilderness toward the dead sea: around its northern side, wound the road to Bethany and the Jordan. There, probably, David worshiped 2 Samuel 15:32; his son, in his decay, profaned it 1 Kings 11:7; Josiah desecrated his desecrations 2 Kings 23:13; there "upon the mountain, which is on the east side of the city, the glory of the Lord stood," when it had "gone up from the midst of the city" Ezekiel 11:23; it united the greatest glory of the Lord on earth, His Ascension, with its deepest sorrow, in Gethsemane. Since the Angel said, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" Acts 1:11, the old traditional opinion is not improbable, that our Lord shall come again to judge the earth, where He left the earth, near the place of His Agony and Crucifixion for us. So shall "the Feet" of God literally, "stand upon the Mount of Olives." Elsewhere it may be that "the Feet of the uncircumscribed and simple God are to be understood not materially, but that the loving and fixed assistance of His power is expressed by that name" (Dionysius).

Which is true, or whether, according to an old opinion, the last act of antichrist shall be an attempt to imitate the Ascension of Christ (as the first antichrist Simon Magus was said to have met his death in some attempt to fly) and be destroyed by His Coming there, the event must show.

And the Mount of Olives shall cleave - (be cleft) in (from) the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west that is, the cleft shall be east and west, so as to form a "very great valley" through it - from Jerusalem toward the Jordan eastward; and this shall be, in that "half of the mountain shall remove northward, and half thereof southward." If this be literal, it is to form an actual way of escape from Jerusalem; if figurative, it symbolizes how that which would be the greatest hindrance to escape, the mountain which was higher than the city, blocking, as it were, the way, should itself afford the way of escape; as Zechariah speaks, "O great mountain, before Zerubbabel" thou shalt become a "plain" Zechariah 4:7; and Isaiah, "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain" Is. Isaiah 40:4; that is, every obstacle should be removed.

Verse 5

And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains - Rather, along the valley of My mountains namely, of those mountains, which God had just formed by dividing the mount of Olives. "For the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal, that is, Azel," the same word which enters into Beth-Azel of Micah, where the allusion probably is to its firm-rootedness. It is more probable that the name of a place should have been chosen with an allusive meaning, as in Micah, than that an unusual appellative should have been chosen to express a very common meaning. Cyril had heard of it as the name of a village at the extremity of the mountain. Elsewhere it might very probably have been destroyed in the destructive Roman wars: The Roman camp in the last siege must have been very near it. The destruction of villages, after the frantic revolt under Bar-Kochba, was enormous.

Yea, ye shall flee like as ye fled from before the earthquake - An earthquake in the time of Uzziah, whose memory survived the captivity to the time of Zechariah, nearly two centuries, must have been very terrible, but no historical account remains of it, Josephus having apparently described the past earthquake in the language which Zechariah uses of the future (see the introduction to Amos). Such an earthquake is the more remarkable a visitation in Jerusalem, because it was out of the line of earthquakes. These were to the north and east of Palestine: within it, they were almost unknown (see Amos 4:11, vol. i. p. 286). Interpositions of God even in man's favor, are full of awe and terror. They are tokens of the presence of the all-holy among the unholy. Fear was an accompaniment of

special miracles in the Gospel, not only among the poor Gadarenes Mark 5:15; Luke 8:25, or the people, but even the Apostles; apart from the effect of the sight of angels on us who are in the flesh. It is then quite compatible, that the valley so formed should be the means of deliverance, and yet an occasion of terror to those delivered through it. The escape of the Christians in Jerusalem to Pella, during the break of the siege, after the withdrawal of Cestius Gallus was a slight image of this deliverance.

And the Lord thy God shall come, and all the saints with Thee, O God - The prophet, having spoken of God as "my God," turns suddenly to speak to Him, as present. Jerome on Zechariah 14:6-7: "This is manifestly said of the second Coming of the Saviour, of which John too in his Apocalypse says, ‹Behold He shall come with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him' Revelation 1:7. And the Lord Himself in the Gospel declareth, that ‹the Son of Man shall come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory' Matthew 24:30. He shall ‹come with the clouds,' that is, with the angels, who are ‹ministering spirits' and are sent for different offices, and with the prophets and apostles." Ribera: "Whenever Scripture says that the saints and angels come with Christ, it is always speaking of His second Coming, as in that, ‹When the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all His holy angels with Him' Matthew 25:31, and in the Epistle of Jude, ‹Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment' Jude 1:14-15."

Verse 6

The light shall not be clear nor dark - Or, more probably, according to the original reading, "In that day there will be no light; the bright ones will contract themselves," as it is said, "The stars shall withdraw their shining."

This is evermore the description of the Day of Judgment, that, in the presence of God who is Light, all earthly light shall grow pale. So Joel had said, "The sun and moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining" Joel 3:15. And Isaiah, "The moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion and in Jersalem and before His ancients gloriously" Isaiah 24:23; and, "Behold the day of the Lord cometh, The stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine" Isaiah 13:9-10. All know well our Lord's words Matthew 24:29. John, like Zechariah, unites the failure of the heavenly light "with a great earthquake, and the sun became as

sackcloth of hair: and the moon become as blood; and the stars of heaven fell upon the earth" Revelation 6:12-13.

Verse 7

And it shall be one day: it shall be known unto the Lord: not day, and not night; and at the eventide it shall be light - "One" special "day; one," unlike all beside; known unto God, and to Him alone. For God alone knows the day of the consummation of all things, as He saith, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no one, neither the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, (so as to reveal it) but the Father only" Mark 13:32. Neither wholly "day," because overclouded with darkness; nor wholly "night," for the streaks of light burst through the darkness chequered of both; but in "eventide," when all seems ready to sink into the thickest night, "there shall be light." Divine light always breaks in, when all seems darkness; but then the chequered condition of our mortality comes to an end, then comes the morning, which has no evening; the light which has no setting; "perpetual light, brightness infinite;" when "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold" Isaiah 30:26; and "the glory of God doth lighten" Revelation 21:23 the eternal city, "and the Lamb is the light" thereof; and "in Thy light we shall see light" Psalm 36:9. "Christ shall be to us eternal light, a long perpetual day."

Verse 8

And it shall be, that living waters - Kimchi: "This is what is said in the prophecy of Joel, ‹A fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord' Joel 3:18; and in that of Ezekiel, ‹And behold there ran out waters.' Ezekiel 47:2." Zechariah leaves to the mind to supply what the former prophets had said of the fertilizing life-giving character of those waters. He adds that they should pervade the whole land, west as well as east; "to the former," rather "the Eastern Sea", into which they would by nature flow, and toward "the hinder," that is, the Western Sea, the Mediterranean, which natural waters could not "reach." This their flow, he adds, should be perpetual, "These streams shall not dry up and their waters shall not fail"; therefore drought shall not lessen them, nor winter-cold bind them. "From Jerusalem as from a fountain shall stream forth living waters of wisdom and grace to all nations".

Cyril: "Again he tells us, under a figure, that exceeding great and large shall be that outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the saints, especially when

they shall be removed to that holy eternal life in the world to come. For now through faith in Christ we are enriched, as with an earnest, with the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit. But after the Resurrection, sin being wholly taken away, the Holy Spirit will be in us, not as an earnest or in a measure; but richly bounteously and perfectly shall we enjoy the grace through Christ. He calleth, then, ‹living water,‘ the Spirit which, he says, will come forth from the Jerusalem which is from above. But that the Holy Scripture is accustomed to liken the Divine Spirit to ‹water,‘ the Giver thereof, the Son, accredits, saying, ‹he that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water‘ John 7:38. This the Evangelist explains, ‹This spake He of the Spirit, which they who believe in Him should receive‘ John 7:39. Since then the Spirit is life-giving, rightly does he liken it to that, which is life-giving to the frame."

Verse 9

And the Lord shall be king over all the earth - Such should be the influence of the living water, that is, of the Spirit of God. God who has ever reigned and will reign, "a great King over all the earth" Psalm 47:3, Psalm 47:8, shall be owned by His creatures, as what He is.

There shall be one Lord - More exactly, "The Lord shall be One, and His Name One." He had before prophesied, "I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land" Zechariah 13:2. The Church being thus cleansed, no other lord or object of worship should be named but "Himself." This is one of those prophecies, of continued expansion and development, ever bursting out and enlarging, yet never, until the end, reaching its full fulfillment. Dionysius: "Since in this life we contemplate God in His effects, in which His whole perfection shineth not forth now we know Him obscurely and imperfectly, His perfections being in divers diversely represented. In our home we shall see Him as He is, face to Face, through His Essence. Therefore then He will be represented by one name, as He shall be beheld by one gaze."

Verse 10

All the land shall be turned as a plain from Rimmon to Gebah - Kimchi: "All the land, which is round about Jerusalem, which is now mountains, as is said, "The mountains are round about Jerusalem" Psalm 125:2, shall be level as a plain, but Jerusalem itself shall be exalted, and high above all the earth." The dignity of the Church, as "a city set upon a

hill, which cannot be hid" Matthew 5:14, is symbolized here by the sinking of all around and its own uprising; as in Micah and Isaiah, "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills" Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1. Gebah, literally, hill," now, "Jeva," was a frontier-garrison, held once by the Philistines 1 Samuel 14:5, and fortified by Asa 1 Kings 15:22, in the northern boundary of Benjamin, together with Michmash (1Sam. loc. cit.) (now Mukhmas), commanding an important pass, by which Jerusalem was approached Isaiah 10:28-29. "Rimmon, south of Jerusalem" is mentioned in Joshua among the southern towns of Judah Joshua 15:32, given to Simeon Joshua 19:7; 1 Chronicles 4:32. Both survived the Captivity. They mark then the north and south of the kingdom of Judah, a long mountain chain, which is pictured as sinking down into a plain, that Jerusalem alone might be exalted.

From Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate - Benjamin's gate must obviously be a gate to the north, and doubtless the same as "the gate of Ephraim", the way to Ephraim lying through Benjamin. This too has probably reference to the prophecy of Jeremiah, that "the city shall be built to the Lord from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner" Jeremiah 31:38. "Jehoash, king of Israel, broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim to the corner-gate, four hundred cubits" 2 Kings 14:13; 2 Chronicles 25:23, after the war with Amaziah. Zechariah seems to speak of Jerusalem, as it existed in his time. For the tower of Hananeel Nehemiah 3:1 still existed; the "first gate" was probably destroyed, since he speaks not of it, but of its "place;" the gate of Benjamin and the corner-gate probably still existed, since Nehemiah Nehemiah 3:1, Nehemiah 3:3, Nehemiah 3:6, Nehemiah 3:13-15 mentions the building of the sheep-gate, the fish-gate, the old gate, or gate of the old city, the valley-gate, the dung-gate, the gate of the fountain; but not these.

Verse 11

And they shall dwell in it - In peace, going forth from it, neither into "captivity," nor in flight Zechariah 14:2, Zechariah 14:5; for God should exempt from curse the city which He had chosen, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, and He says of the heavenly Jerusalem, "there shall be no more curse" Revelation 22:3.

Verse 12

Again, upon the restoration of His people follows the destruction of His enemies. It shall, first and chiefly, be God's doing, not man's. "This shall be

the plague." The word is used of direct infliction by pestilence, "wherewith the Lord shall smite all the people (peoples) that fought against Jerusalem." The awful description is of living corpses. Lap.: "The enemies of Jerusalem shall waste, not with fever or disease, but by a plague from God, so that, being sound, standing, living, in well-being, they should waste and consume away," as Isaiah speaks of the "carcasses of the men, that have transgressed against Me; for their worm shall not die - and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh" Isaiah 66:24.

Their flesh shall consume away - Rather, "wasting away the flesh of each one." It is the act of God, in His individual justice to each one of all those multitudes gathered against Him. One by one, "their eyes," of which they said, "let our eye look on Zion" Micah 4:11, that is, with joy at its desolation, "shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue," wherewith they blasphemed God, "shall consume away in their mouths" (compare Psalm 12:3; Isaiah 36:15, Isaiah 36:18; Isaiah 37:3-4, Isaiah 37:17, Isaiah 37:23, Isaiah 37:29). Appalling, horrible, picture! "standing on their feet," yet their flesh mouldering away as in a grave-yard, their sightless balls decaying in their holes, the tongue putrefying in their mouth, a disgust to themselves and to others! Yet what, compared to the horrible inward decay of sin, whereby men "have a name that they live and are dead?" Revelation 3:1. Jerome: "Let us read Ecclesiastical histories, what Valerian, Decius, Diocletian, Maximian, what the savagest of all, Maximin, and lately Julian suffered, and then we shall prove by deeds, that the truth of prophecy was fulfilled in the letter also."

Verse 13

A great tumult - And panic fear, such as God said He would send upon the Canaanites before Israel Deuteronomy 7:23, or on Israel itself, if disobedient Deuteronomy 28:20; or which fell on the Philistines after Jonathan's capture of the garrison at Michmash, when every man's "sword was against his fellow". There is no real unity, except in God; elsewhere, since each seeks his own, all must be impregnated with mutual suspicion, ready at any moment to be fanned into a flame; as when, at the blowing of Gideon's trumpets, "the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow" Judges 7:22; or when, at Jehoshaphat's prayer, "the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy; and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another" 2 Chronicles 20:32.

And they shall lay hold, every one on the hand of his neighbor - Every one shall be every one‘s foe. Each shall, in this tumultuous throng, grasp the other‘s hand, mastering him powerfully. “And his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbor,” as was prophesied of Ishmael, “his hand will be against every man, and every man‘s hand against him” Genesis 16:12.

Verse 14

And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem - This seems more probable than the alternative rendering of the English margin, “against.” For Judah is united with Jerusalem as one, in the same context Zechariah 14:21; and, if it had shared with the pagan, it must also have shared their lot. It is Judah itself, not “a remnant of Judah,” as it is “every one that is left of all the nations” Zechariah 14:16, which is thus united to Jerusalem: it is that same Judah, as a whole, of which it is said, “it shall fight.” Nor is anything spoken of” conversion,” which is said of those left from the pagan nations, who had fought against her. Yet for Judah to have joined an exterminating pagan war against Jerusalem, even though constrained, had, like the constrained sacrifices to pagan gods, been apostasy. But there is not even a hint that, as Jonathan apologetically paraphrases, they were “constrained.”

The war is to be Judah‘s free act: “Judah also shall fight.” Again, those gathered against Jerusalem, and their warfare against it, had been described at the outset, as “all nations” (Zechariah 14:2-3: here the subject is not the gathering or fighting, but the overthrow. Nor is there any decisive contrary idiom; for, although when used of people, it always means “fight against,” yet, of place, it as often, means “fight in”. Probably then the prophet means, that not only should God fight for His people, but that “Judah also” should do its part, as Paul says, “We, then, as workers together with Him” 2 Corinthians 6:1; and, “we are laborers together with God” 1 Corinthians 3:9; and, “I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” 1 Corinthians 15:10; or, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” Philemon 2:12. God so doth all things in the Church, for the conversion of the pagan, and for single souls, as to wait for the cooperation of His creature.: “God made thee without thee; He doth not justify thee without thee.”

And the wealth of all the pagan round about shall be gathered - Whatever the world had taken in their war against the Church shall be

abundantly repaid. “All the pagan” had combined to plunder Jerusalem; “the wealth of all the pagan” Zechariah 14:2 shall be gathered to requite them. Lap.: “As Isaiah says, The nations, converted to Christ, brought all their wealth to the Church, whence he congratulates the Church, saying, “Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breasts of kings - For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver” Isaiah 60:16-17; under which he typically understands, (Dionysius), “wisdom, philosophy, eloquence, learning, and all the other arts and sciences, liberal and mechanical, wherewith the pagan shall be adorned, who are converted to the faith. So shall the gifts of nature be perfected by the gifts of grace, and ‹they‘ shall defend the Church who erstwhile attacked it.”

Verse 15

And so shall be the plague of the Lord … - Dionysius: “So, when God sendeth the plague, all the irrational animals of antichrist and his satellites shall perish as the aforesaid men, who used them, perished. For, for the sins of men, God, to their greater confusion, sometimes slays their beasts, sometimes also for their loving correction.” “The imagery is from the Mosaic law of the ban. If a whole city became guilty of idolatry, not the inhabitants only, but the beasts were to be destroyed Deuteronomy 13:15, so that here, in miniature, should be repeated the relation of the irrational to the rational part of the creation, according to which, for the sins of men, ‹the creature is,‘ against its will, ‹made subject to vanity.‘ Analogous is it also, that on the offence of Achan Joshua 7:24-25, beside him and his children, his oxen, asses and sheep were (stoned and) burned with him.”

Verse 16

Every one that is left of the nations - God so gives the repentance, even through His visitations, that, in proportion to the largeness of the rebellion and the visitation upon it, shall be the largeness of the conversion. “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled” Luke 21:24. And Paul, “Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles shall be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved” Romans 11:25-26. Hitherto prophets had spoken of a “remnant” of Jacob, who should “return to the mighty God” Isaiah 10:21, and should be saved; now, upon this universal rebellion of the pagan. He foretells the conversion of a remnant of the pagan also.

Shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts - There is a harmony between the rebellion and the repentance. The

converted shall go to worship God there, where they had striven to exterminate His worshipers. The prophet could only speak of the Gospel under the image of the law. "The Feast of Tabernacles" has its counterpart, not, like the Pascha or the Pentecost, in any single feast, but in the whole life of the Gospel. It was a thanksgiving for past deliverance; it was a picture of their pilgrim-life from the passage of the Red Sea, until the parting of the Jordan opened to them the entrance to their temporary rest in Canaan (see at greater length Hosea 12:9, vol. i. p. 122). Jerome: "In that vast, wide, terrible wilderness, where was no village, house, town, cave, it made itself tents, wherein to sojourn with wives and children, avoiding by day the burning sun, by night damp and cold and hurt from dew; and it was ‹a statute forever in their generations; ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all, that are Israelites born, shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know, that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt' Leviticus 23:41-43."

Lap.: "Much more truly do Christians keep the feast of tabernacles, not once in the year only, but continually, unceasingly. This is, what Peter admonisheth, ‹Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts' 1 Peter 2:11. And Paul often teacheth that we, like Abraham, are strangers on earth, but ‹citizens' of heaven ‹with the saints, and of the household of God' Ephesians 2:19. ‹Faith,' he says, ‹is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. By faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God' Hebrews 11:1, Hebrews 11:9-10." Jerome: "As long as we are in progress, in the course and militant, we dwell in tabernacles, striving with all our mind to pass from the tabernacles to the firm and lasting dwelling-place of the house of God. Whence, also holy David said, ‹I am a stranger with Thee and a sojourner, as all my fathers were' Psalm 39:12. So speaketh he, who is still in Egypt and yet placed in the world. But he who goeth forth out of Egypt, and entereth a desert from vices, holdeth his way and says in the Psalm, ‹I will pass through to the place of the tabernacle of the Wonderful unto the house of God' (Psalm 41:5, Vulgate). Whence, also he says elsewhere, ‹How amiable are Thy dwellings. Thou Lord of hosts; my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord' and a little after, ‹Blessed are they who dwell in thy house, they shall be alway praising

Thee‘ Psalm 41:4. ‹The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous‘ Psalm 118:15. ‹One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to enquire in His temple‘ Psalm 27:4.

Whoso dwelleth in such tabernacles, and hastes to go from the tabernacles to the court, and from the court to the house, and from the house to the temple of the Lord, ought to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles etc.” It symbolizes how, (Dionysius), “in the New Testament, Christians, being delivered through Christ from the slavery to sin and satan, and sojourning in this vale of misery, by making progress in virtues go up to the home of the heavenly paradise, the door of glory being open by the merit of the Lord‘s Passion, and so the faithful of Christ celebrate the feast of tabernacles; and, after the destruction of antichrist, they will celebrate it the more devoutly, as there will then be among them a fuller fervor of faith.”

Verse 17

Whoso will not go up - Cyril: “To those who ‹go not up,‘” he threatens the same punishment as persecutors would endure. For enemies, and they who will not love, shall have the same lot. This is, I think, what Christ Himself said, ‹Whoso is not with Me is against Me, and whoso gathereth not with Me scattereth‘ Luke 11:23.”

Upon them there shall be no rain - Rain was the most essential of God‘s temporal gifts for the temporal well-being of His people. Moses marked out this, as his people were entering on the promised land, with recent memory of Egypt‘s independence of rain in Egypt itself, and that this gift depended on obedience. “The land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, whence, ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs” Deuteronomy 11:10-11: but a “land of hills and valleys, it drinketh water of the rain of heaven; a land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year. And it shall be, if ye shall hearken diligently unto My commandments - I will give you the rain of your land in its season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn and thy wine and thine oil.

And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full."

But the threat on disobedience corresponded therewith. "Take heed to yourselves," Moses continues, "that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside and serve other gods - and the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and He shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit, and ye perish quickly from off the good land, which the Lord giveth you" Deuteronomy 28:23-24. Amos speaks of the withdrawal of rain as one of God's chastisements (Amos 4:7. See vol. i. p. 28): the distress in the time of Ahab is pictured in the history of the woman of Sarepta 1 Kings 17:9-16, and Ahab's directions to Obadiah 1 Kings 18:5. But it is also the symbol of spiritual blessings; both are united by Hosea Hosea 6:3 and Joel Joel 2:23. as Joel and Amos also speak of spiritual blessings exclusively under the figure of temporal abundance Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13. In Isaiah it is simply a symbol, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together" (Isaiah 45:8. See also Isaiah 5:6, both together Isaiah 30:23)

Verse 18

And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain - Rather, "and there shall not be." It may be that the prophet chose this elliptical form, as well knowing that the symbol did not hold as to Egypt, which, however it ultimately depended on the equatorial rains which overfilled the lakes which supply the Nile, did not need that fine arrangement of the rains of Autumn and Spring which were essential to the fruitfulness of Palestine. The omission leaves room for the somewhat prosaic supply of Jonathan, "The Nile shall not ascend to them." More probably the words are left undefined with a purposed abruptness, "there shall not be upon them," namely, whatever they need: the omission of the symbol in these two verses might the more suggest, that it is a symbol only. Egypt, the ancient oppressor of Israel, is united with Judah as one, in the same worship of God, as Isaiah had said, "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria" Isaiah 19:24; and since it is united in the duty, so also in the punishment for despising it.

Osorius: "Let not Egypt be proud, that it is watered by the Nile, as if it needed no rain: that is, let no one be secure in this life. For though we stand

by faith, yet may we fall. For although bedewed by the efflux of divine grace, and filled with its richness, yet if we give not thanks continually for such great gifts, God will count us as the rest, to whom such copious goodness never came. The safety of all then lies in this, that while we are in these tabernacles, we cherish the divine benefits, and unceasingly praise the Lord, who hath heaped such benefits upon us."

Cyril: "Under the one nation of the Egyptians, he understands those who are greatly deceived, and chose idolatry most unreasonably, to whom it will be a grave inevitable judgment, the pledge of destruction, that they despise the acceptable grace of salvation through Christ. For they are murderers of their own souls, if, when they could lay hold of eternal life and the divine gentleness, open to all who will choose it and put off the burden of sin, they die in their errors; the stain and pollution from transgression and error uncleansed, although the Divine Light illumined all around and called those in darkness to receive sight. Of each of these I would say, ‹Better is an untimely birth than he; for he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness" Ecclesiastes 6:3-4. "Good had it been for them, if they had never been born" Matthew 26:24, is the Saviour‘s word. That this is not said of the Egyptians only, but shall come true of all nations, who shall altogether be punished, if they are reckless of the salvation through Christ and honor not His festival, he will establish in these words;

Verse 19

This shall be the sin of Egypt and the sin of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles - For before the coming of the Saviour, good perhaps had been in part the excuse of the pagan, that they had been called by none. For no one had preached unto them. Wherefore the Saviour also, pointing out this in the Gospel parables, said, ‹the laborers‘ Matthew 20:7, called ‹at the eleventh hour, said, No man hath hired us.‘ But when Christ cast His light upon us, ‹bound the strong man‘ Matthew 12:29, removed from his perverseness those subject to him, justified by faith those who came to Him, laid down His life for the life of all, they will find no sufficient excuse who admit not so reverend a grace. It will be true of the pagan too, if Christ said of them, ‹If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin‘ John 15:22."

The prophet says "sin," not punishment, for sin includes "the punishment," which is its due, and which it entails: it does not express the punishment, apart from the sin. It was "the sin" which comprised and involved all other sin, the refusal to worship God as He had revealed Himself, and to turn to Him. It was to say, "We will not have" Him "to reign over us" Luke 19:14.

Verse 20

In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord - He does not say only, that they should be consecrated to God, as Isaiah says of Tyre, "Her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord" Isaiah 23:18; he says that, "the bells of the horses," things simply secular, should bear the same inscription as the plate on the high priest's forehead. Perhaps the comparison was suggested by the bells on the high priest's dress; not the lamina only on his forehead, but bells (not as his, which were part of his sacred dress), bells, altogether secular, should be inscribed with the self-same title, whereby he himself was dedicated to God.

Holiness to the Lord - He does not bring down what is sacred to a level with common things, but he uplifts ordinary things, that they too, should be sacred, as Paul says, "whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" 1 Corinthians 10:31.

And the pots of the Lord's house shall be like bowls before the altar - The pots are mentioned, together with other vessels of the Lord's house Ezekiel 38:3; 1 Kings 7:45; 2 Kings 25:14; 2 Chronicles 4:11, 2 Chronicles 4:16; Jeremiah 52:18-19, but not in regard to any sacred use. They were used, with other vessels, for dressing the victims 2 Chronicles 35:13 for the partakers of the sacrifices. These were to be sacred, like those made for the most sacred use of all, "the bowls for sprinkling," whence, that sacrificial blood was taken, which was to make the typical atonement.

Verse 21

And every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness to the Lord - Everything is to be advanced in holiness. All the common utensils everywhere in the people of God shall not only be holy, but "holiness," and capable of the same use as the vessels of the temple.

And there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts - The actual Canaanite had long since ceased to be; the Gibeonites,

the last remnant of them, had been absorbed among the people of God. But "all Israel" were not "of Israel." Isaiah had called its princes and people, "rulers of Sodom, people of Gomorrah" Isaiah 1:10. Ezekiel had said, "Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite" Ezekiel 16:3. Hosea used at least the term of two-fold meaning, "Canaan, in whose hands are the balances of deceit" Hosea 12:7; and Zephaniah, "All the people of Canaan are destroyed" Zephaniah 1:11. After the time of the Canon, Daniel is introduced saying, "O thou seed of Canaan and not of Judah". Ezekiel had spoken of ungodly priests, not only as uncircumcised in heart (according to the language of Deuteronomy Deuteronomy 10:16; Deuteronomy 30:6), but uncircumcised in flesh also, altogether alien from the people of God Ezekiel 44:7. The prophet then speaks, as Isaiah, "It shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it" Isaiah 35:8, and Joel, "then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more" Joel 3:17 This shall have its full fulfillment in the time of the end. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither" whatsoever "worketh abomination or a lie;" and, "without" are "dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers and murderers and idolaters, and whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie" Revelation 21:27; Revelation 22:15.

Cyril: "Although born of the blood of Israel, those of old eagerly imitated the alien Canaanites. But after that the Only-Begotten Word of God came among us, and, having justified by faith sealed with the Holy Spirit, those who came to His grace, our mind hath been steadfast, unshaken, fixed in piety. Nor will anyone persuade those who are sanctified, to honor any other god save Him who is, by nature and in truth, God, whom we have known in Christ. For in Himself He hath shown us the Father, saying, "He that hath seen Me hash seen the Father" John 14:9. Wherefore "in that" day, that is, at that time, he says, "there shall be no Canaanite," that is, alien and idolater, "in the house of the Lord Almighty?" Theodoret: "But may the Almighty God bring the saying true at this time also, that no Canaanite should be seen among us, but that all should live according to the Gospellaws. and await that blessed hope and the appearance of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, with whom be glory to the Father with the Holy Spirit, now and ever and to endless ages. Amen."

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MALACHI INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Malachi

The last prophet of the Old Testament, like the forerunner of our Lord, whom he foreannounced under his own name. “The messenger of the Lord,” willed to be but “the voice of one crying in the wilderness;” as his great successor, who took up his message, when asked, “Who art thou? What sayest thou of thyself?” said John 1:23, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord.” He mentions neither his parentage, nor birthplace, nor date; nor did he add the name of his office, and he has left it to be guessed, whether the name under which he is known, was the name which he bore among men; so wholly did he will to be hidden. No one before him is recorded to have carried his name. It may be that he framed it for himself, and willed to be known only as what it designated, “the messenger of the Lord.” This was a favorite title with him, since, in this brief prophecy, he uses it, as describing the priest‘s office, and that of the forerunner Malachi 2:7; Malachi 3:1; whereas, before him, except once by Haggai and once by Isaiah Haggai 1:13; Isaiah 42:19, it had been used only of the blessed angels.

There is, however, no ground to think that it was not his name. Even the Septuagint, which paraphrases it, “His messenger,” prefix to the book the name Malachi; and the title, “my messenger,” would not have described that he was “the messenger of God,” since the name of God had not preceded. “If names are to be interpreted,” Jerome says, “and history is to be framed from them, not a spiritual meaning to be derived, then Hosea who is called Saviour, and Joel whose name means, ‹Lord God,‘ and the other prophets will not be men, but rather angels or the Lord and Saviour, according to the meaning of their name.” No special stress was laid upon the name, even by the Origenists, who supposed Haggai, Malachi and John the Immerser to have been angels. Origen himself supposed John the Immerser to have been an angel in human form, and Melchizedek, as well as Malachi. More widely, that, “they became the words in the prophets.”

At the time of our Lord, some accounted him to have been Ezra, perhaps for his zeal for the Law. His date must, however, have been later, since there is no mention of the building of the temple, whose service was in its regular order. In the New Testament, like others of the twelve, he is cited without

his name, or the substance of his prophecy, is spoken of or alluded to, without any reference to any human author Luke 1:17, Luke 1:76; Matthew 17:10; John 1:21; so entirely was his wish to remain hidden fulfilled.

Yet he probably bore a great part in the reformation, in which Nehemiah cooperated outwardly, and to effect which, after he had, on the expiring of his 12 years of office Nehemiah 5:14, returned to Persia, he obtained leave to visit his own land again Nehemiah 13:6, apparently for a short time. For he mentions his obtaining that leave, in connection with abuses at Jerusalem, which had taken place in his absence, and which he began reforming, immediately on his arrival. But three chief abuses, the neglect of God‘s service, the defilement of the priesthood and of their covenant, and the cruelty to their own Jewish wives, divorcing them to make way for idolatresses, are subjects of Malachi‘s reproofs. Nehemiah found these practices apparently rampant. It is not then probable that they had been, before, the subjects of Malachi‘s denunciation, nor were his own energetic measures probably fruitless, so that there should be occasion for these denunciations afterward. It remains, then, as the most probable, that Malachi, as the prophet, cooperated with Nehemiah, as the civil authority, as Haggai and Zechariah had with Zerubbabel, “So Isaiah cooperated with Hezekiah; Jeremiah with Josiah. Of a mere external reformation there is no instance” in Jewish history.

It does not appear, whether Nehemiah, on his return, was invested by the king of Persia with extraordinary authority for these reforms, or whether he was appointed as their governor. The brief account affords no scope for the mention of it. It is not then any objection to the contemporaneousness of Malachi and Nehemiah, that, whereas Nehemiah, while governor, “required not the bread of the governor,” i. e., the allowance granted him by the Persian government, as an impost upon the people, Malachi upbraids the people that they would not offer to their governor the poor things which they offered to Almighty God, or that the governor would not accept it, in that it would be an insult rather than an act of respect. For:

(1) the question in Malachi is of a free-offering, not of an impost;

(2) Nehemiah says that he did not "require it," not that he would not accept it;

(3) there is no evidence that he was now governor, nor

(4) any reason why he should not accept in their improved condition, what he did not "require Nehemiah 5:18, because the bondage was heavy upon this people."

Presents were, as they are still, a common act of courtesy in the East.

Like John the Immerser, though afar off, he prepared the way of the Lord by the preaching of repentance. More than other prophets, he unveils priests and people to themselves, interprets their thoughts to them, and puts those thoughts in abrupt naked language, picturing them as demurring to every charge which he brought against them. They were not, doubtless, conscious hypocrites. For conscious hypocrisy is the sin of individuals, aping the graces which others possess and which they have not, yet wish to be held in estimation for having. Here, it is the mass which is corrupt. The true Israel is the exception Malachi 3:16 - "those who feared the Lord, the jewels of Almighty God." It is the hypocrisy of self-deceit, contented with poor, limited, outward service, and pluming itself upon it. Malachi unfolds to them the meaning of their acts. His thesis is themselves, whom he unfolds to them.

He interprets himself, putting into their mouths words, betokening a simple unconsciousness either of God's goodness or their own evil Malachi 1:2. "Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us?" This was their inward thought, as it is the thought of all, ungrateful to God. But his characteristic is, that he puts these thoughts into abrupt, bold bad words, which might startle them for their hideousness, as if he would say, "This is what your acts mean." He exhibits the worm and the decay, which lay under the whited exterior Malachi 1:6. "Ye say, Wherein have we despised Thy Name?" Perhaps, they were already learning, not to pronounce the proper Name of God, while they caused it to be despised. Or they pronounced it with reverent pause, while they showed that they held cheap God and His service Malachi 1:7. "Ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible Malachi

1:7, Malachi 1:12. Ye say, the table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, his meat, is contemptible." Their acts said it. What a reading of thoughts Malachi 1:13! "Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness!" It is the language of the heart in all indevotion Malachi 2:14. "Ye say, Wherefore?" as if innocently unconscious of the ground of God's judgment Malachi 3:8. "Wherein have we robbed Thee?" The language of those who count the earth as their own Malachi 2:17. "Ye say, Wherein have we wearied Him? When ye say, Everyone that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and in them doth He delight, or, Where is the God of judgment?" The heart's speech in all envy at the prosperity of the wicked!

Yet the object of all this unfolding them to themselves, is their repentance. We already have the self-righteousness of the Pharisees, and the Sadducees' denial of God's Providence. And we already have the voice of John the Immerser, "of the wrath to come." They professed to Malachi 3:1; Malachi 4:1 "delight in the coming of the messenger of the covenant;" yet their deeds were such as would be burned up with the fire of His coming, not, rewarded.

Pharisees and Sadduces are but two off-shoots of the same ungodliness; Pharisees, while they hoped by outward acts to be in favor with God, they become, at least, secret Sadducees, when the hope fails. First, they justify themselves. God had said to them Malachi 2:8-9, "Ye are departed out of the way: I have made you base, as ye have not kept My ways." They say Malachi 3:14, "It is vain to serve God; and what profit, that we have kept His ordinance?" (affirming that they had done, what God called them to repentance for not doing) God said Malachi 2:13, "Ye have covered the altar of the Lord with tears," the tears of their wronged wives; they insist on their own austerities Malachi 3:14, "we have walked mournfully before the Lord our God." Then comes the Sadducee portion. God had called them to obedience and said (Malachi 3:10, ובתנוני *ûbethânûnîy*), "Prove Me now herewith: they say, (Malachi 3:15, בצנו *bâchănû*), the workers of wickedness have proved God, and are saved." God promised. "All nations shall call you blessed;" they answer, "and now we call the proud blessed. What have we spoken against Thee?" is the last self-justifying question, which Malachi records of them; and this, while reproaching God for the

uselessness of serving Him, and choosing the lot of those who rejected Him.

Thereon Malachi abandons this class to their own blindness. There was hope amid any sin. However, it rebelled against God. This was a final denial of God‘s Providence and rejection of Himself. So Malachi closes with the same prophecy, with which John the Immerser prepared our Lord‘s coming, “His Luke 3:17 fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor; and will gather the wheat into His garner, but the chaff He shall burn with fire unquenchable.” The unspeakable tenderness of God toward “those who fear His name,” and the severity to those who finally rebel, are perhaps nowhere more vividly declared, than in these closing words of the Old Testament. Yet the love of God, as ever, predominates; and the last prophet closes with the word “Remember,” and with one more effort to avert the curse which they were bringing upon themselves. Yet no prophet declares more expressly the rejection of the people, to whom he came to minister, the calling the Gentiles, the universal worship, in of the earth, of Him who was hitherto worshiped by the Jews only; and that, not at Jerusalem, but each offering, in his own place, the sacrifice which hitherto (as they had recently experienced, in their captivity at Babylon) could be offered up in Jerusalem only. To him alone it was reserved to prophesy of the unbloody sacrifice, which should be offered unto God “in every place” throughout the world “from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.” It has been said, “Malachi is like a late evening, which closes a long day, but he is at the same time the morning twilight which bears in its bosom a glorious day.”

“When prophecy was to be withdrawn from the ancient Church of God, its last light was mingled with the rising beams of the Sun of Righteousness. In one view it combined a retrospect of the Law with the clearest specific signs of the Gospel advent Malachi 4:4. Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded him on Mount Horeb, for all Israel, with the statutes and the judgments. Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Prophecy had been the oracle of Judaism and of Christianity, to uphold the authority of the one, and reveal the promise of the other. And now its latest admonitions were like those of a faithful departing minister, embracing and summing up his

duties. Resigning its charge to the personal precursor of Christ, it expired with the Gospel upon its lips."

A school, which regards the "prophets" chiefly as "poets," says that "the language is prosaic, and manifests the decaying spirit of prophecy." The office of the prophets was, to convey in forceful words, which God gave them, His message to His people. The poetic form was but an accident. God, who knows the hearts of His creatures whom He has made, knows better than we, why He chose such an instrument. Zechariah, full of imagination, He chose some years before. But He preserved in history the account of the words which Zechariah spoke, not the words wherewith he urged the rebuilding of the temple, in his own book. If Malachi had spoken in imaginative language, like that of Ezekiel, to whom God says Ezekiel 33:32, "thou art unto them like a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument, and they hear thy words and they do them not," it may be that they would have acted then, as they did in the time of Ezekiel. It may be, that times like those of Malachi, apathetic, self-justifying, complaining, self-complacent, needed a sterner, more abrupt, more startling voice to awaken them. "Wisdom was justified of her children."

God performed by him a reformation for the time being: He gave through him a warning to the generation, when our Lord would come, that He would come, as their Judge as well as their Saviour, and, how they would stand in the day of His coming. He gave it as a book to His whole Church, whereby to distinguish seeming from real service. Parting words are always solemn, as closing the past, and opening out a future of expectation before us. The position of Malachi, as the last of the prophets, bids us the more solemnly prepare for that dread day, our Lord's second coming, which he foretold, in one with the first coming, warning us that we do not deceive ourselves, in unconsciousness of our own evil and remembrance of our seeming good, until He professes unto us Matthew 7:23, "I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."

MALACHI CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel - o"The word of the Lord is heavy, because it is called a burden, yet it hath something of consolation, because it is not ‹against,‘ but to Israel. For it is one thing when we write to this or that person; another, when we write ‹against‘ this or that person; the one being the part of friendship, the other, the open admission of enmity."

"By the hand of Malachi;" through him, as the instrument of God, deposited with him; as Paul speaks of 1 Corinthians 9:17; Titus 1:3, "the dispensation of the Gospel 2 Corinthians 5:19, the Lord of reconciliation; Galatians 2:7, the Gospel of the uncircumcision, being committed to him."

Verse 2

I have loved you, saith the Lord - What a volume of God‘s relations to us in two simple words, "I-have-loved you". So would not God speak, unless He still loved. "I have loved and do love you," is the force of the words. When? And since when? In all eternity God loved; in all our past, God loved. Tokens of His love, past or present, in good or seeming ill, are but an effluence of that everlasting love. He, the Unchangeable, ever loved, as the apostle of love says 1 John 4:19, "we love Him, because He first loved us." The deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, the making them His Romans 9:4, "special people, the adoption, the covenant, the giving of the Law, the service of God and His promises," all the several mercies involved in these, the feeding with manna, the deliverance from their enemies whenever they returned to Him, their recent restoration, the gift of the prophets, were so many single pulses of God‘s everlasting love, uniform in itself, manifold in its manifestations. But it is more than a declaration of His everlasting love. "I have loved you;" God would say; with "a special love, a more than ordinary love, with greater tokens of love, than to others." So God brings to the penitent soul the thought of its ingratitude: I have loved "you:" I, you. And ye have said, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" It is a characteristic of Malachi to exhibit in all its nakedness man‘s ingratitude. This is the one voice of all people‘s complaints, ignoring all God‘s past and present mercies, in view of the one thing which He withholds, though they dare not put it into words: "Wherein hast Thou loved us Psalm 78:11?

Within a while they forgot His works, and the wonders that He had showed them Psalm 106:13: they made haste, they forgot His works."

"Was not Esau Jacob's brother! saith the Lord: and I loved Jacob, and Esau have I hated." "While they were yet in their mother's womb, before any good or evil deserts of either, God said to their mother Genesis 25:23, The older shall serve the younger. The hatred was not a proper and formed hatred (for God could not hate Esau before he sinned) but only a lesser love," which, in comparison to the great love for Jacob, seemed as if it were not love. "So he says Genesis 29:31. The Lord saw that Leah was hated; where Jacob's neglect of Leah, and lesser love than for Rachel, is called ‹hatred;' yet Jacob did not literally hate Leah, whom he loved and cared for as his wife." This greater love was shown in preferring the Jews to the Edomites, giving to the Jews His law, Church, temple, prophets, and subjecting Edom to them; and especially in the recent deliverance "He does not speak directly of predestination, but of pre-election, to temporal goods." God gave both nations alike over to the Chaldees for the punishment of their sins; but the Jews He brought back, Edom He left unrestored.

Verse 3

And I made his mountains a waste, and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness - o

Malachi attests the first stage of fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Joel 3:19, vol. i. pp. 214,215), "Edom shall be a desolate wilderness." In temporal things, Esau's blessing was identical with Jacob's; "the fatness of the earth and of the dew of heaven from above;" and the rich soil on the terraces of its mountain-sides, though yielding nothing now except a wild beautiful vegetation, and its deep glens, attest what they once must have been, when artificially watered and cultivated. The first desolation must have been through Nebuchadnezzar, in his expedition against Egypt, when he subdued Moab and Ammon; and Edom lay in his way, as Jeremiah had foretold Jeremiah 25:9, Jeremiah 25:21.

Verse 4

Whereas Edom saith - oWe are impoverished - oיִרֹשָׁשׁ .), or, more probably, "we were crushed." Either gives an adequate sense. Human self-confidence will admit anything, as to the past; nay, will even exaggerate past evil to itself, "Crush us how they may, we will arise and repair our

losses." So Ephraim said of old Isaiah 9:9-10, "in the pride and stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn-stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars." It is the one language of what calls itself, "indomitable;" in other words, "untameable," conquerors or every other gambler; "we will repair our losses." All is again staked and lost.

"They shall call them the border of wickedness." Formerly, it had its own proper name, "the border of Edom," as other countries Exodus 10:14, Exodus 10:19, "all the border of Egypt Deuteronomy 2:18, the border of Moab 1 Samuel 11:3, 1 Samuel 11:7; 1 Samuel 27:1; 1 Chronicles 21:12, the whole border of Israel 2 Chronicles 11:13, the border of Israel Judges 11:22, the whole border of the Amorite." Henceforth, it should be known no more by its own name; but as "the border of wickedness," where wickedness formerly dwelt, and, hence, the judgment of God and desolation from Him came upon it, "an accursed land." In a similar manner, Jeremiah says somewhat of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 22:8-9. Compare Deuteronomy 29:23-28.) "Many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say, every man to his neighbor, Wherfore hath the Lord done this unto this great city? Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshiped other gods and served them." Only Israel would retain its name, as it has; Edom should be blotted out wholly and forever.

Verse 5

And your eyes shall see - Malicious pleasure in looking on at the misery of Judaea and Jerusalem, had been a special sin of Edom: now God would show Judah the fruit of its reversal, and His goodness toward themselves., "Ye have assurance of His love toward you and providence over you, when ye see that ye are returned to your own land, and can inhabit it, but they cannot do this: but "they build and I throw down," and ye, therefore, praise and magnify My name for this, and ye shall say, "The Lord shall be magnified on the border of Israel, i. e., His greatness shall be always manifest upon you;" high above and exalted over the border of Israel which shall retain its name, while Edom shall have ceased to be. Wickedness gives its name to Edom's border, as in Zechariah's vision it was removed and settled in Babylon Zechariah 5:8, Zechariah 5:11.

Verse 6

A son honoreth his father, and a slave his lord - Having spoken of the love of God, he turns to the thanklessness of man. God appeals to the first feelings of the human heart, the relation of parent and child, or, failing this, to the natural self-interest of those dependent on their fellow-men. A "son" by the instinct of nature, by the unwritten law written in the heart, "honoreth his father." If he fails to do so, he is counted to have broken the law of nature, to be an unnatural son. If he is, what by nature he ought to be, he does really honor him. He does not even speak of love, as to which they might deceive themselves. He speaks of "honor," outward reverence only; which whoso showeth not, would openly condemn himself as an unnatural son, a bad slave. "Of course," the Jews would say, "children honor parents, and slaves their masters, but what is that to us?" God turns to them their own mental admission.

"If I am a Father." "Although, before ye were born, I began to love you in Jacob as sons, yet choose by what title ye will name Me: I am either your Father or your Lord. If a Father, render me the honor due to a father, and offer the piety worthy of a parent. If a Lord, why despise ye Me? Why fear ye not your Lord?" God was their Father by creation, as He is Father of all, as Creator of all. He had come to be their Father in a nearer way, by temporal redemption and adoption as His special people, creating them to be a nation to His glory. This they were taught to confess in their psalmody Psalm 100:3, "He hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture." This title God had given them in sight of the Egyptians Exodus 4:22, "Israel is My son, My firstborn:" of this Hosea reminded them; Hosea 11:1, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt;" and Jeremiah reassured them Jeremiah 31:9, "I am a Father to Israel and Ephraim is My firstborn:" this, Isaiah had pleaded to God Isaiah 63:16, "Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not. Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer, Thy name is from everlasting Isaiah 64:8. And now, O Lord, Thou art our Father; we the clay, and Thou our potter; and we all, the work of Thy hands." God had impressed this His relation of Father, in Moses' prophetic warning; Deuteronomy 32:6, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not He thy Father that hath bought thee? hath He not made thee and established thee?" "God is the Father of the faithful:

1) by creation;

2) by preservation and governance;

3) by alimony;

4) by fatherly care and providence;

5) by faith and grace, whereby He justifies and adopts us as sons and heirs of His kingdom."

"If I am a Father." He does not throw doubt, that He is our Father; but, by disobedience, we in deeds deny it. Our life denies what we in words profess. "Where is My honor?" "Why obey ye not My precepts, nor honor Me with acts of adoration; praying, praising, giving thanks, sacrificing, and reverently fulfilling every work of God? For Jeremiah 48:10. cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully."

"And if I am your Lord, as I certainly am, and specially by singular providence." "He is our Lord by the same titles, that He is our Father, and by others, as that He has redeemed us, and purchased us to Himself by the Blood of His Son; that He is the Supreme Majesty, whom all creation is bound to serve; that, setting before us the reward of eternal glory, He has hired us as servants and laborers into His vineyard." God Alone is Lord through universal sovereignty, underived authority, and original source of laws, precepts, rights; and all other lords are but as ministers and instruments, compared to Him, the Lord and original Doer of all. Hence, He says Isaiah 42:8, "I am the Lord; that is My Name, and My glory will I not give to another."

"Where is My fear?" which ought to be shown to Me. "If thou art a servant, render to the Lord the service of fear; if a son, show to thy Father the feeling of piety. But thou renderest not thanks, neither lovest nor fearest God. Thou art then either a contumacious servant or a proud son." "Fear includes reverence, adoration, sacrifice, the whole worship of God." "Whoso feareth is not over-curious, but adores; is not inquisitive, but praises, and glorifies."

“Fear is twofold; servile, whereby punishment, not fault, is dreaded; filial, by which fault is feared. In like way service is twofold. A servant with a service of fear, purely servile, does not deserve to be called a son of God, nor is in a state of salvation, not having love. Whence Christ, distinguishing such a servant from a son of God by adoption, saith John 8:35, “The servant abideth not in the house forever, but the son abideth ever: and again John 15:15, The servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth.” But a servant, whose service is of pure and filial love, is also a son, of whom the Saviour saith, Matthew 25:21, Matthew 25:23, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” But since a distinction is made here between the son and the servant, he seems to be speaking of servile fear, which, although it doth not good well and meritoriously, i. e., with a right intention and from love, yet withdraws from ill, and is the beginning of wisdom, because it disposeth to grace. Whence it is written (Proverbs 16:6, “By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.”

“God requireth to be feared as a Lord, honored as a Father, loved as a Husband. Which is chiefest of these? Love. Without this, fear has torment, honor has no grace. Fear, when not enfreed by love, is servile. Honor, which cometh not from love, is not honor, but adulation. Honor and glory belong to God Alone; but neither of them will God accept, unless seasoned with the honey of love.”

“Saith the Lord unto you, O priests, who despise My Name,” literally “despisers of My Name,” habitually beyond others. The contempt of God came especially from those bound most to honor him. priests, as consecrated to God, belonged especially to God. “Malachi begins his prophecy and correction by the correction of the priests; because the reformation of the state and of the laity hangs upon the reformation of the clergy and the priest, for Hosea 4:9, “as is the priest, such also is the people?” He turns, with a suddenness which must have been startling to them, to them as the center of the offending.

“And ye say, Wherein have we despised Thy Name?” Before, it was ignorance of God‘s love: now it is ignorance of self and of sin. They affect to themselves innocence and are unconscious of any sin. They said to

themselves doubtless (as many do now) "we cannot help it; we do the best we can, under the circumstances." Without some knowledge of God's love, there can be no sense of sin; without some sense of sin, no knowledge of His love. They take the defensive, they are simply surprised, like Cain, Genesis 4:9, "Am I my brother's keeper?" or many of the lost in the day of judgment Matthew 7:22-23, "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? And in Thy Name have cast out devils? And in Thy Name done many wonderful works?" and yet were all the while "workers of iniquity," to whom He will say, "I never knew you." And Matthew 25:44, Matthew 25:46 says: "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee?" And yet they "shall go away into everlasting punishment."

Verse 7

Offering polluted bread upon Mine altar - This, continuing on the words, "despisers of My Name,", is the answer to their question, "Wherein have we despised Thy Name?" "Bread" might stand, in itself, either for the showbread, or for the מנחה *minchāh* meal-offering, which was the necessary accompaniment of sacrifices and sometimes the whole.

But here the "polluted bread" cannot be the showbread, since this was not put upon the altar, but upon its own table; and although the altar is, as here, also called "a table", in regard to the sacrifice hereon consumed, "the table" of the showbread is nowhere called "altar." The prophet then means by "bread," either the meal-offering, as representing the sacrifice, or the offerings by fire altogether, as in Ezekiel Ezekiel 44:7, "When ye offer My bread, the fat and the blood;" and in Leviticus "the offerings of the Lord, made by fire, the bread of their God, do they offer;" and of the "peace-offering Leviticus 3:11, the priest shall burn it upon the altar; the bread of the offering made by fire unto the Lord:" and specifically, of animals with blemish, as these, it is forbidden Leviticus 22:25, "Neither from a stranger's hand shall ye offer the bread of your God of any of these, because their corruption is in them, blemishes in them: they shall not be accepted for you." It was, as it were, a feast of God with man, and what was withdrawn from the use of man by fire, was, as it were, consumed by God, to whom it was offered.

It was “polluted,” in that it was contrary to the law of God which forbade to sacrifice any animal, “lame or blind” or with “any ill blemish,” as being inconsistent with the typical perfection of the sacrifice. Even the Gentiles were careful about the perfection of their sacrifices.

“Blind is the sacrifice of the soul, which is not illumined by the light of Christ. Lame is his sacrifice of prayer, who comes with a double mind to entreat the Lord.” “He offereth one weak, whose heart is not established in the grace of God, nor by the anchor of hope fixed in Christ. These words are also uttered against those who, being rich, offer to the Creator the cheaper and least things, and give small alms.”

“And ye say, Wherewith have we polluted Thee?” It is a bold expression. Yet a word, to which we are but too ill-accustomed, which expresses what most have done, “dishonor God,” comes to the same. Though less bold in expression, they are yet like in meaning Ezekiel 13:19. “Will ye pollute Me anymore among My people?” or Ezekiel 20:9, Ezekiel 20:14, Ezekiel 20:22, “that My Name should not be polluted before the pagan Ezekiel 43:7. My holy Name shall Israel no more defile Ezekiel 39:7, “I will not let them pollute My Name anymore.” “Much more in the new law, in which the Sacrifice is Christ Himself our God, whence the Apostle says expressly 1 Corinthians 11:27, “Whoso eateth this bread and drinketh this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” “For when the sacraments are violated, Himself, whose sacraments they are, is violated.” God speaks of our acts with an unveiled plainness, which we should not dare to use. “As we are said to sanctify God, when we minister to Him in holiness and righteousness, and so, as far as in us lies, show that He is holy; so we are said to pollute Him, when we conduct ourselves irreverently and viciously before Him, especially in His worship, and thereby, as far as in us lies, show that He is not holy and is to be dishonored.”

“In that ye say, the table of the Lord is contemptible,” literally “contemptible is it,”, and so any contemptible thing might be offered on it. They said this probably, not in words, but in deeds. Or, if in words, in plausible words. “God doth not require the ornamenting of the altar, but the devotion of the offerers.” “What good is it, if we offer the best? Be what we

offer, what it may, it is all to be consumed by fire." "The pretext at once of avarice and gluttony!" And so they kept the best for themselves. They were poor, on their return from the captivity. Anyhow, the sacrifices were offered. What could it matter to God? And so they dispensed with God's law.

"So at this day we see some priests and prelates, splendid in their tables and feasts, sordid in the altar and temple; on the table are costly napkins and wine; on the altar torn linen and wine-mace rather than wine." "We pollute the bread, that is, the Body of Christ, when we approach the altar unworthily, and, being defiled, drink that pure Blood, and say, ‹The table of the Lord is contemptible;' not that anyone dareth to say this, but the deeds of sinners pour contempt on the table of God."

Verse 8

And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? - Others, "it is not evil," as we should say, "there is no harm in it." Both imply, alike, an utter unconsciousness on the part of the offerer, that it was evil: the one, in irony, that this was always their answer, "there is nothing amiss;" the other is an indignant question, "is there indeed nought amiss?" And this seems the most natural.

The sacrifice of the "blind" and "lame" was expressly forbidden in the law Deuteronomy 15:21, and the sick in manifold varieties of animal disease. "Whatever hath a blemish ye shall not offer Leviticus 22:22, blind or with limb broken, or wounded or mangy or scabby or scurfy." Perfectness was an essential principle of sacrifice; whether, as in the daily sacrifice, or the sin or trespass-offerings, typical of the all-perfect Sacrifice, or in the whole-burnt-offering, of the entire self-oblation. But these knew better than God, what was fit for Him and them. His law was to be modified by circumstances. He would not be so particular (as people now say so often.)

Is it then fit to offer to God what under the very same circumstances man would not offer to man? Against these idle, ungrateful, covetous thoughts God saith,

"Offer it now unto thy governor." He appeals to our own instinctive thought of propriety to our fellow creature, which may so often be a test to

us. No one would think of acting to a fellow-creature, as they do to Almighty God. Who would make diligent preparation to receive any great one of the earth, and turn his back upon him, when come? Yet what else is the behavior of most Christians after holy communion? If thou wouldest not do this to a mortal man, who is but dust and ashes, how much less to God Almighty, the King of kings and Lord of lords! "The words are a reproof to those most negligent persons, who go through their prayers to God without fear, attention, reverence or feeling; but if they have to speak to some great man, prelate or prince, approach him with great reverence, speak carefully and distinctly and are in awe of him. Do not thou prefer the creature to the Creator, man to God, the servant to the Lord, and that Lord, so exalted and so Infinite."

Verse 9

And now entreat, I pray you, God o **that He will be gracious unto you -** This is not a call to repentance, for he assumes that God would not accept them. It is rather irony; "go now, seek the favor of God, as ye would not that of your governor." "From your hand," not from your fathers, not from aliens, "hath this been: will He accept persons from you?" The unusual construction seems to imply a difference of meaning; as if he would say, that it consisted not with the justice of God, that He should be an "accepter of persons," (which He declares that He is not) which yet He would be, were He to accept them, while acting thus.

Verse 10

Who is there even among you? - This stinginess in God's service was not confined to those offices which cost something, as the sacrifices. Not even services absolutely costless, which required only a little trouble, as that of closing the folding-doors of the temple or the outer court, or bringing the fire to consume the sacrifices, would they do without some special hire. All was mercenary and hireling service. Others have rendered it as a wish, "who is there among you!" i. e., would that there were one among you, who would close the doors altogether; so shall ye not kindle fire on Mine altar for nought, i. e., fruitlessly! But apart from the difficulty of the construction, it is not God's way to "quench the smouldering flax." He who bids, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost," accepts any imperfect service rather than none. He does not break off the last link, which binds man to Himself. Then, if or when God willed His

service to surcease, He would do it Himself, as He did by the destruction of the temple before the captivity, or finally by the Romans. It would have been an ungodly act (such as was only done by Ahaz, perhaps the most ungodly king of Israel) 2 Chronicles 28:24, and one which especially called down His wrath 2 Chronicles 29:8, to close the doors, and therewith to break off all sacrifice. Manasseh carried the worship of false gods into the temple itself; Ahaz, as far as in him lay, abolished the service of God. A prophet of God could not express a wish, that pious Israelites (for it is presupposed that they would do this out of zeal for God‘s honor) should bring the service of God to an end.

He sums up with an entire rejection of them, present and future. “I have no pleasure in you;” it is a term of repudiation, sometimes of disgust “neither will I accept an offering at your hands.” He says not simply Jeremiah 6:20, “your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto Me, but, I will not accept it.” Such as they were, such they would be hereafter. God would not accept their sacrifices, but would replace them.

Verse 11

For - The form of words does not express whether this declaration relates to the present or the future. It is a vivid present, such as is often used to describe the future. But the things spoken of show it to be future. The Jewish sacrifices had defects, partly incidental, partly inherent. Incidental were those, with which the prophet had upbraided them; inherent (apart from their mere typical character) that they never could be the religion of the world, since they were locally fixed at Jerusalem. Malachi tells them of a new sacrifice, which should be offered throughout the then pagan world, grounded on His new revelation of Himself to them. “For great shall be My Name among the pagan.” The prophet anticipates an objection which the Jews might make to him. Joshua 7:9, “what then will God do unto His great Name?” Those by which He would replace them, would be more worthy of God in two ways:

1) in themselves,

2) in their universality.

“Then,” whatsoever the pagan worshiped, even if some worshiped an “unknown God,” His “Name” was not known to them, nor “great among them.” Those who knew of Him, knew of Him, not as the Lord of heaven and earth, but as the God of the Jews only; their “offerings” were not “pure,” but manifoldly defiled. A Hebrew prophet could not be an apologist for pagan idolatry amidst its abominations, or set it on a level with the worship which God had, for the time, appointed; much less could he set it forth as the true acceptable service of God. Malachi himself speaks of it, as an aggravation of cruelty in their divorcing of their wives, that they Malachi 2:11 “married the daughter of a strange god.”

The worship of those Jews, who remained, out of secular interests, in foreign countries, could not be represented as “the pure offering;” for they made no offerings: then as now, these being forbidden out of Jerusalem; nor would the worship of such Jews, as were scattered in the large empire of Persia, be contrasted with that at Jerusalem, as “the” pure worship; else why should the Jews have returned? It would have been an abolition of the law before its time. Malachi prophesies then, as had Micah, Isaiah, Zephaniah Zephaniah 2:11, of a new revelation of God, when, and in which, people should “worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the pagan.”

Our Lord Himself explains and expands it in His words to the Samaritan woman; John 4:21, John 4:23-24, “Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth,” and declared the rejection of the Jews, sealing their own sentence against themselves Matthew 21:41, Matthew 21:43, “I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof;” and before Matthew 8:11-12, “Many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, and the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness.”

“Incense shall be offered unto My name,” literally I think, “there shall be incense, oblation made unto My name” (this is a mere question of construction), “and a pure oblation.”

This sacrifice, which should be offered, is designated by the special name of “meal-offering.” (Leviticus 2:7 (Leviticus 2:14 in English) and the verses following.) God would not accept it from the Jews; He would, from the Pagan. It was a special sacrifice, offered by itself as an unbloody sacrifice, or together with the bloody sacrifice. (Leviticus 6:17 (Leviticus 6:10 in Hebrew)), “It is most holy, as the sin-offering and as the trespass-offering.” In the daily sacrifice it was offered morning and evening, with the lamb. Since this was typical of the precious blood-shedding of the “Lamb without spot” upon the cross, so was the meal-offering which accompanied it, of the holy eucharist.

The early Christians saw the force of the prediction, that sacrifice was contrasted with sacrifice, the bloody sacrifices which were ended by the “One full perfect and sufficient sacrifice oblation and satisfaction” made by our Lord “on the altar of the cross for the sins of the whole world,” and those sacrifices which He commanded to be made on our altars, as a memorial of Him. So Justin, who was converted probably 133 a.d., within 30 years from the death of John, says “God has, therefore, beforehand declared, that all who through this name offer those sacrifices, which Jesus, who is the Christ, commanded to be offered, that is to say, in the eucharist of the bread and of the cup, which are offered in every part of the world by us Christians, are well-pleasing to Him. But those sacrifices, which are offered by you and through those priests of yours, He wholly rejects, saying, “And I will not accept your offerings at your hands. For from the rising of the sun even to the going down of the same, My Name is glorified among the Gentiles; but ye profane it.”

He points out further the failure of the Jewish explanation as to “their” sacrifices, in that the Church was everywhere, not so the Jews. “You and your teachers deceive yourselves, when you interpret this passage of Scripture of those of your nation who were in the dispersion and say that it speaks of their prayers and sacrifices made in every place, as pure and well-pleasing, and know that you speak falsely, and endeavor in every way to

impose upon yourselves; first, because your people are not found, even now, from the rising to the setting of the sun, but there are nations, in which none of your race have ever dwelt: while there is not one nation of people, whether Barbarians, or Greeks, or by whatsoever name distinguished, whether of those (nomads) who live in wagons, or of those who have no houses, or those pastoral people that dwell in tents, among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of all things, through the name of the crucified Jesus. And you know that at the time when the prophet Malachi said this, the dispersion of you through the whole world, in which you now are, had not yet taken place; as is also shown by Scripture."

Irenaeus in the same century "He took that which is part of the creation, namely, bread, and gave thanks, saying, ‹This is My body.' And the cup likewise, which is of the creation which pertains unto us, He professed to be His own blood, and taught people the new oblation of the New Testament; which the Church receiving from the apostles offers unto God in the world: unto Him who giveth us nourishment, the firstfruits of His own gifts, in the New Testament; of which in the twelve prophets Malachi gave beforehand this intimation (quoting Malachi 1:10-11); most evidently intimating hereby, that while the former people should cease to make offerings to God, in every place sacrifice should be offered unto Him, and that in pureness; His Name also is glorified among the Gentiles. Now what other name is there, which is glorified among the Gentiles, than that which belongs to our Lord, by whom the Father is glorified, and man is glorified?

And because man belongs to His Own Son, and is made by Him, He calls him His Own. And as if some King were himself to paint an image of his own son, he justly calls it his own image, on both accounts, first that it is his son's, next, that he himself made it: so also the Name of Jesus Christ, which is glorified in the Church throughout the whole world, the Father professes to be His own, both because it is His Son's, and because He Himself wrote and gave it for the salvation of men. Because, therefore, the Name of the Son properly belongs to the Father, and in God Almighty through Jesus Christ the Church makes her offering, well saith He on both accounts, ‹And in every place incense is offered unto My Name, and a pure sacrifice.' And incense, John in the Apocalypse declares to be the prayers of

the saints. Therefore, the offering of the Church, which the Lord hath taught to be offered in the whole world, is accounted with God as a pure sacrifice, and accepted of Him."

Tertullian contrasts the "sacerdotal law through Moses, in Leviticus, prescribing to the people of Israel, that sacrifices should in no other place be offered to God than in the land of promise, which the Lord God was about to give to the people Israel and to their brethren, in order that on Israel's introduction thither, there should be there celebrated sacrifices and holocausts, as well for sins as for souls, and nowhere else but in the holy land Leviticus 17:1-6; Deuteronomy 12:5-14, Deuteronomy 12:26-27, and this subsequent prediction of the Spirit through the prophets, that in every place and in every land there should be offered sacrifices to God. As He says through the angel Malachi, one of the twelve prophets (citing the place)."

Hippolytus, a disciple of Irenaeus, 220 a.d. martyr, in a commentary on Daniel, says that "when Anti-Christ cometh, the sacrifice and libation will be taken away, which is now in every place offered by the Gentiles to God." The terms "Sacrifice offered in every place" are terms of Malachi.

So Cyprian, in his Testimonies against the Jews, sums up the teaching of the passage under this head, "That the old sacrifice was to be made void, and a new sacrifice instituted."

In the "apostolic Constitutions," the prophecy is quoted as "said by God of His ecumenical Church."

Eusebius says, "The truth bears witness to the prophetic word, whereby God, rejecting the Mosaic sacrifices, foretells that which shall be among us. ‹For from the rising of the sun' etc. We sacrifice then to the supreme God the sacrifice of praise; we sacrifice the divine, reverend and holy oblation: we sacrifice, in a new way according to the New Testament, the pure sacrifice. The broken heart is also called a sacrifice to God - We sacrifice also the memory of that great Sacrifice, performing it according to the mysteries which have been transmitted by Him."

Cyril of Jerusalem speaks of it only as prophesying the rejection of the Jews and the adoption of the Gentiles.

In the liturgy of Mark, it is naturally quoted, only, as fulfilled "in the reasonable and unbloody sacrifice, which all nations offer to Thee, O Lord, from the rising of the sun to the setting thereof," not in reference to the cessation of Jewish sacrifices.

Chrysostom dwells on its special force, coming from so late a prophet. "Hear Malachi, who came after the other prophets. For I adduce, for the time, no testimony either of Isaiah or Jeremiah or any other before the captivity, lest thou shouldest say that the terrible things which he foretold were exhausted in the captivity. But I adduce a prophet, after the return from Babylon and the restoration of your city, prophesying clearly about you. For when they had returned, and recovered their city, and rebuilt the temple and performed the sacrifices, foretelling this present desolation then future, and the taking away of the sacrifice, Malachi thus speaks in the Person of God (Malachi 1:10 (end) and Malachi 1:12 (beginning)). When, oh Jew, happened all this? When was incense offered to God in every place? when a pure sacrifice? Thou couldest not name any other time, than this, after the coming of Christ. If the prophet foretelleth not this time and our sacrifice, but the Jewish, the prophecy will be against the law.

For if, when Moses commandeth that sacrifice should be offered in no other place than the Lord God should choose, and shutteth up those sacrifices in one place, the prophet says that incense should be offered in every place and a pure sacrifice, he opposeth and contradicteth Moses. But there is no strife nor contention. For Moses speaketh of one sacrifice, and Malachi of another. Where doth this appear? (From the place, not Judaea only; from the mode, that it should be pure; from the offerers, not Israel, but the nations), from East to West, showing that whatever of earth the sun surveys, the preaching will embrace. He calls the former sacrifice impure, not in its own nature but in the mind of the offerers; if one compares the sacrifice itself, there is such a boundless distance, that this (that offered by Christians) might in comparison be called ‹pure. ‹"

Even the cold, but clear, Theodoret has "Foretelling to the Jews the cessation of the legal priesthood, he announces the pure and unbloody sacrifice of the Gentiles. And first he says to the Jews, ‹I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will not accept a sacrifice at your hands.' Then he foreshows the piety of the Gentiles, ‹For from the rising of the sun' etc. Malachi 1:11, you then I will wholly reject, for I detest altogether what you do. Wherefore also I reject the sacrifice offered by you; but instead of you, I have the whole world to worship Me. For the dwellers in the whole earth, which the rising and setting sun illumines, will everywhere both offer to Me incense, and will sacrifice to Me the pure sacrifice, which I love. For they shall know My name and My will, and shall offer to Me reverence due. So the Lord said to the Samaritan woman, ‹Woman, believe Me, that the hour cometh and now is, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father.' The blessed Paul, being instructed in this, says 1 Timothy 2:8, ‹I will that men pray everywhere' etc., and the divine Malachi clearly taught us in this place the worship now used, for the circumscribed worship of the priests is brought to an end, and every place is accounted fit for the worship of God, and the sacrifice of irrational victims is ended, and He, our spotless Lamb, Who taketh away the sin of the world, is sacrificed."

Lastly, Augustine, "Malachi, prophesying of the Church which we see propagated through Christ, says most plainly to the Jews in the person of God, ‹I have no pleasure in you, and will not receive an offering at your hands. For from the rising of the sun' etc. Since we see this sacrifice through the priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchizedek, now offered to God in every place from the rising of the sun to its setting; but the sacrifice of the Jews, of which it is said, ‹I have no pleasure in you, neither will I accept an offering from your hands,' they cannot deny to have ceased; why do they yet expect another Christ, since what they read as prophesied and see fulfilled, could not be fulfilled, except through Him?"

Verse 12

And ye have profaned - o(are habitually profaning it), in that ye say It was the daily result of their daily lives and acts. "It is probable that the priests did not use such words, but that by their very deeds, they proclaimed this aloud: as in the, ‹The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.' For

in that he is seen to be a despiser, though he say it not in words, yet, by their very deeds and by the crookedness of their lives, they all but cry out, There is no God. For they who live as though God beheld not, and do all things recklessly and unholily, by their own deeds and works deny God. So they who are not earnest to preserve to the holy altar the reverence becoming to it, by the very things which they do, say,

The table of the Lord is despised - Not the "table of showbread," since it is so called in reference to the sacrifice offered thereon. Ezekiel had probably so called the altar, which he saw in his vision of the new temple. Ezekiel 44:16. It is what was before called "the altar;" an altar, in regard to the sacrifices offered to God; a "table," in regard to the food of the sacrifice therefrom received. Both names, "altar" Matthew 5:23; Hebrews 13:10. and "table" 1 Corinthians 10:21. being received in the New Testament, both were received in the early Church. For each represented one side of the great eucharistic action, as it is a Sacrifice and a sacrament. But the title "altar" was the earliest.

It may be here a different profaneness of the priests. They connived at the sin of the people in sacrificing the maimed animals which they brought, and yet, since they had their food from the sacrifices, and such animals are likely to have been neglected and ill-conditioned, they may very probably have complained of the poverty of their lot, and despised the whole service. For the words used, "its produce, the eating thereof is contemptible" belong to their portion, not to what was consumed by fire. With this agrees their cry.

Verse 13

What a weariness! - What an onerous service it is! The service of God is its own reward. If not, it becomes a greater toil, with less reward from this earth, than the things of this earth. Our only choice is between love and weariness.

And ye have snuffed - (puffed) at it, i. e., at the altar; as a thing contemptible. "Ye, have brought that which was taken by violence." In despising any positive law of God, they despised the lawgiver; and so, from contempt of the ceremonial law, they went on to break the moral law. It were indeed a mockery of God, to break a law whereby He bound man to man, and therefrom to seek to appease Himself. Yet in rough times, people, even in Christianity, have made their account with their souls, by giving to

the poor a portion of what they had taken from the rich. “God,” it was said to such an one, “rejects the gifts obtained by violence and robbery. He loves mercy, justice and humanity, and by the lovers of these only will He be worshiped.” (Sirach 34:18-20.) “He that sacrificeth of a thing wrongfully gotten, his offering is ridiculous, and the gifts of unjust men are not accepted. The Most High is not pleased with the offerings of the wicked, neither is He pacified for sin by the multitude of sacrifices. Whoso bringeth an offering of the goods of the poor doeth as one that killeth the son before the father‘s eyes.”

Verse 14

Cursed is the deceiver - o“The fraudulent, hypocritical, false or deceitful dealer, who makes a show of one thing, and doth or intends another, nor doth to his power what he would make a show of doing; as if he could deceive God in doing in His service otherwise than He required, and yet be accepted by Him.” The whole habit of these men was not to break with God, but to keep well with Him on as easy terms as they could. They even went beyond what the law required in making vows, probably for some temporal end, and then substituted for that which had typical perfection, the less valuable animal, the ewe and that, diseased. It was probably, to prevent self-deceit, that the law commanded that the oblation for a vow should be Leviticus 22:19, Leviticus 22:21, “a male without blemish, perfect;” lest (which may be a temptation in impulsive vows) repenting of their vow, they should persuade themselves, that they had vowed less than they had. Ordinarily, then, it would not have been allowed to one, who had not the best to offer, to vow at all. But, in their alleged poverty, the prophet supposes that God would so far dispense with His own law, and accept the best which anyone had, although it did not come up to that law. Hence the clause, “which hath in his flock a male.” “If thou hast not a male, that curse in no wise injureth thee. But saying this, he showeth, that they have what is best, and offer what is bad.”

They sinned, not against religion only, but against justice also. “For as a merchant, who offers his goods at a certain price, if he supply them afterward adulterated and corrupted, is guilty of fraud and is unjust, so he who promised to God a sacrifice worthy of God, and, according to the law, perfect and sound, is fraudulent and sins against justice, if he afterward gives one, defective, mutilated, vitiated, and is guilty of theft in a sacred thing, and so of sacrilege.”

Clergy or "all who have vowed, should learn hence, that what they have vowed should be given to God, entire, manly, perfect, the best. For, reverence for the Supreme and Divine Majesty to whom they consecrate themselves demandeth this, that they should offer Him the highest, best and most perfect, making themselves a whole-burnt-offering to God."

, "They who abandon all things of the world, and kindle their whole mind with the fire of divine love, these become a sacrifice and a whole-burnt-offering to Almighty God.", "Man himself, consecrated and devoted in the name of God, is a sacrifice." He then offers a corrupt thing who, like Ananias, keeps back "part of the price," and is the more guilty, because, while it was his own, it was in his own power.

I am a great King - o"As God is Alone Lord through His universal Providence and His intrinsic authority, so He Alone is King, and a King so great, that of His greatness or dignity and perfection there is no end."

My Name is dreadful among the pagan - Absence of any awe of God was a central defect of these Jews. They treated Him, as they would not a fellow-creature, for whom they had any respect or awe or fear. Some remaining instinct kept them from parting with Him; but they yielded a cold, wearisome, heartless service. Malachi points to the root of the evil, the ignorance, how awful God is. This is the root of so much irreverence in people's theories, thoughts, conversations, systems, acts, of the present day also. They know neither God or themselves. The relation is summed up in those words to a saint, "Knowest thou well, Who I am, and who thou art? I am He Who Is, and thou art she who is not." So Job says in the presence of God Job 42:5-6, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." To correct this, God, from the beginning, insists on the title which He gives Himself. (Deuteronomy 10:16-17; Deuteronomy 7:21. Nehemiah uses it in his prayers Nehemiah 1:5; Nehemiah 9:32 and Daniel Daniel 9:4. It occurs also Nehemiah 4:8 (14English) Psalm 47:3; 68:36; Psalm 89:8; Psalm 96:4; Psalm 99:3; Psalm 111:9; Zephaniah 2:11. "Circumcise the foreskin of your hearts and be no more stiff-necked: for the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, the mighty and the terrible;" and in warning Deuteronomy 28:58-59, "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest

fear this glorious and fearful name, The Lord thy God, then the Lord thy God will make thy plagues wonderful" etc.

MALACHI CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

And now this is My commandment unto you - , not a commandment, which He gave them, but a commandment in regard to them. As God said of old, upon obedience, "I will command My blessing unto you," so now He would command what should reach them, but a curse. "He returns from the people to the priests, as the fountain of the evil, whose carelessness about things sacred he had rebuked before. Let the priests of the new law hear this rebuke of God, and conceive it dictated to them by the Holy Spirit to hear, from whom God rightly requires greater holiness, and so will punish them more grievously, if careless or scandalous in their office." All Christians are, in some sense 1 Peter 2:9, "a royal, holy priesthood," over and above the special "Christian priesthood;" as the Jews, over and above the special priesthood of Aaron, were a Exodus 19:6, "kingdom of priests." What follows then belongs, in their degree, to them and their duties.

Verse 2

If ye will not lay to heart - , namely, the rebukes addressed to them, "to give glory to God." For the glory of God is the end and aim of the priesthood. This should be the principle and rule of their whole life, "to the greater glory of God." "I will send the curse upon you," namely, that which He had threatened in the law upon disobedience; and will "curse your blessings," will turn your blessings into a curse. He does not say, I will send you curses instead of blessings, but, I will make the blessings themselves a curse. Psalm 69:23. "The things which should have been to their wealth became to them an occasion of falling;" to the proud, the things which lift them up; to the gluttonous, their abundance; to the avaricious, their wealth; which, if used to the glory of God, become blessings, do, when self not God is their end, by God's dispensation and Providence, become a curse to them. "The goods of nature, the goods of fortune, the goods of the Church allowed to you, I will turn to your greater damnation, permitting you to abuse them to pride; and your damnation shall be the more penal, the more good things ye have received from Me. Whence Christ declares in the Gospel Luke 12:48, ‹Unto whomever much is given, of him shall be much required. ‹"

Yea, I have cursed them - (literally, it), i. e., each one of the blessings, "already." God's judgments as well as His mercies are individual with a

minute care, showing that it is His doing. The curse had already gone forth, and had begun to seize upon them from the time that they began to despise His Name. His judgments do not break in at once, but little by little, with warnings of their approach, that so we may turn to Him, and "escape the wrath to come."

Verse 3

Lo, I will rebuke the seed for your sake - oi. e., that it should not grow. He who worketh by His sustaining will all the operations of nature, would at His will withhold them. Neither priests nor Levites cultivated the soil; yet, since the tithes were assigned to them, the diminution of the harvest affected them. The meal-offering too was a requisite part of the sacrifice. (See also Joel 1:13; Joel 2:14.)

And spread dung upon your phaces, the dung o **of your solemn feasts -** , or, "of your sacrifices." It was by the law carried without the camp and burned with the animal itself. They had brought before the face of God maimed, unfitting sacrifices; they should have them cast back, with their refuse, upon them; "as a lord that rejecteth a gift, brought to him by his servant, casts it back in his time." "Of your sacrifices, not of Mine, for I am not worshiped in them: ye seek to please, not Me, but yourselves." So God said of Eli 1 Samuel 2:30, "them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed."

And one shall take you away with it - , literally "to it." They should be swept away, as if they were an appendage to it, as God said 1 Kings 14:10, "I will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, until all be gone." As are the offerings, so shall it be with the offerers.

Verse 4

And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you: - this, which He had just uttered. They who believe not God when threatening, know that He is in earnest and not to be trifled with, through His punishing. "That My covenant might be with Levi." God willed to punish those who at that time rebelled against Him, that He might spare those who should come after them. He chastened the fathers, who showed their contempt toward Him, that their sons, taking warning thereby, might not be cut off. He continues to say, what the covenant was, which He willed still to be, if they would repent.

Verse 5

My covenant was with him life and peace; - literally "the life and the peace;" that, which alone is true "life and peace." The covenant was not with Levi himself, but with Aaron, his representative, with whom the covenant was made in the desert, as is indeed here expressed; and, in him, with all his race after him, who succeeded him in his office; as, when it is said, that 1 Chronicles 6:49, "Aaron and his sons offered upon the altar of burnt-offering," it must needs be understood, not of Aaron in person alone and his sons then living, but of any of his race that succeeded in his and their room. So our Lord promised to be with His Apostles Matthew 28:20, "always to the end of the world," i. e., with them and those whom they should appoint in their stead, and these others, until He should Himself come. God promised, if they would keep the law, that they should live in peace on the earth; yea, that they should have peace of mind and a life of grace. "Life" is an indefectible being, which man does not forfeit by sin, to which death is no interruption, changing only the place of the soul‘s life.

And I gave them to him - , in, or as, "fear," "Fear, not servile but filial and pure, as Paul bids Christians Philemon 2:12, ‹work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.‘" God gave them an awful gift, to be held with fear and awe, for its very preciousness, as one would hold anxiously what is very precious, yet very fragile and easily marred.

And he feared Me, and was afraid before My Name - Malachi unites two words, the second expressive of strong fear, by which a man is, as it were, crushed or broken. They are often united in Hebrew, but as expressing terror, which men are bidden not to feel before men. Toward man it is ever said Deuteronomy 1:21; Deuteronomy 31:8; Joshua 1:9; Joshua 10:25; 1 Chronicles 22:13; 1 Chronicles 28:20; 2 Chronicles 20:15, 2 Chronicles 20:17; 2 Chronicles 32:7; Isaiah 51:7; Jeremiah 23:4; Jeremiah 30:10; Jeremiah 46:27; Ezra 2:6; Ezra 3:9, "fear not, neither be ye dismayed;" toward God Alone, it is a matter of praise. Man‘s highest fear is too little, for he knows not, who God is. So Isaiah says Isaiah 8:12-13, "Fear ye not their fear (the fear of this people), nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself, and let Him be your fear and let Him be your dread." "What can be more precious (than this fear)? For it is written Proverbs 13:13, ‹He who feareth the Lord will be rewarded.‘ (Sirach 1:11), ‹The fear of the Lord is honor and glory and gladness and a crown of rejoicing.‘ He saith, "the fear, wherewith he feareth Me and was afraid," i. e., he received the fear of God

in his whole heart and soul. For these reduplications and emphases suggest to the hearer how rooted in virtue are those thus praised."

Verse 6

The law of truth was in his mouth - Apart from those cases, which were brought to the priests at the tabernacle (Deuteronomy 17:9-11; Deuteronomy 19:17 (add Deuteronomy 21:5; Ezekiel 44:23-24), hence, the use of אלהים Exodus 21:6; Exodus 22:7-8.), in which their voice was the voice of God through them, to teach the law was part of the office both of the priest and Levite. Of the priest God says; Leviticus 10:11, "that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes, which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses:" of the tribe of Levi generally Moses says Deuteronomy 33:10, "They shall teach Jacob Thy judgments and Israel Thy law." After the schism of the ten tribes, a prophet says to Asa, that "Israel" had 2 Chronicles 15:3, "for long time been without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law." They are evil times, of which Ezekiel says Ezekiel 7:26, "the law shall perish from the priest;" and God says of corrupt priests Jeremiah 2:8, "The priest said not, where is the Lord? And they that handle the law knew Me not. Ezekiel 22:26; Zephaniah 3:4 they did violence to My law." Upon their return from the captivity Ezra was known to Artaxerxes as Ezra 7:12, Ezra 7:21, "a scribe of the law of the God of heaven," and he looked upon him apparently, as one who should keep the people in good order by teaching it. Ezra 7:25-26, "thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God which is in thy hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people which are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God, and teach ye them that know them not: and whosoever will not do the law of thy God or the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him." Ezra says of himself, that he Ezra 7:10, "had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments."

"God's Psalm 119:142 law is the truth; the true doctrine of this law did he teach the people, and instruct them in the true meaning and intent thereof, that, according to the right rule, they might frame all their actions; nothing of it did he conceal from them, nor teach any thing contrary to it or false. This was in his mouth; nothing contrary to it was found in his lips."

And iniquity was not found in his lips - He expresses the perfectness of that teaching, first positively, then negatively. The true priest taught truth without any admixture of wrong. "Not only is he a betrayer of the truth,

who, transgressing the truth, openly teaches a lie for the truth; but he too, who does not freely utter the truth, which he ought to utter freely, or who does not freely defend the truth which he ought to defend freely, is a betrayer of the truth. Romans 10:10, ‹For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.‘" "Nothing," says Ambrose to the Emperor Theodosius, "is so perilous to the priest with God, so disgraceful with men, as not to utter freely what he thinks. For it is written Psalm 119:46, ‹I spake of Thy testimonies before kings, and was not ashamed.‘ And, therefore, a priest‘s silence ought to displease your Clemency; his freedom, to please you. For you are involved in the peril of my silence, art aided by the good of my free speech."

He walked with Me - To awe of God, truthfulness of teaching, he adds a devout continual contact with God. Like the patriarchs of old, Enoch and Noah, he Genesis 5:24; Genesis 6:9 "walked with God." He not only lived in the presence, but walked up and down with Him, through his whole life, as a Friend, "having respect in all things to Him and His glory."

In peace and equity - The inward peace with God overflowing in peace to men. The brief words comprise the duties of both tables; as that Hebrews 12:14; Romans 12:18, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see God; 2 Corinthians 13:11. Live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you; Matthew 5:9. blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." "God‘s covenant with him was of peace Malachi 2:5, so he observed it on his part." Even "equity," or real considerate justice, would alienate those, whom it found wrong, so he joins with it "peace," that even equity was not administered but with love. "To have peace with God, what is it but to will to be mended and to do what He willeth, and in nothing to offend Him?"

And turned away many from iniquity - They, the true priests of the Old Testament then, were not satisfied with their own sanctification, but were zealous for the salvation of souls. What a history of zeal for the glory of God and the conversion of sinners in those, of whom the world knows nothing; of whose working, but for the three words in the closing book of the Old Testament, we should have known nothing! The prophets upbraid the sins of the many; the Psalms are the prayers given to and used by the pious; such incidental sayings as these, record some of the fruits. "Be of the disciples of Aaron," said Hillel "who loved peace and followed peace, and who loved men and brought them near to the law." Yet even under the

Gospel Gregory complains "The world is full of priests; yet in the harvest of God the laborers are few. For we undertake the priestly office, but do not fulfill its work. We receive the fruit of holy Church in daily stipend, but labor not for the everlasting Church in preaching." "There are many priests," says a writer in the 4th century, "and few priests; many in name, few in deed. See then, how ye sit on your thrones, for the throne maketh not the priest, but the priest the throne; the place sanctifieth not the man, but the man the place. Whoso sitteth well on the throne, receiveth honor from the throne; whoso ill, doth injustice to the throne. Thou sittest in judgment. If thou livest well and teachest well, thou wilt be a judge of all; if thou teachest well and livest ill, thine own only. For by teaching well and living well thou instructest the people, how it ought to live; by teaching well and living ill, thou teachest God, how He should condemn thee." "We who are called priests, above the ills which we have of our own, add also the deaths of others. For we slay as many as we, in tepidity and silence, see daily go to death. He who is placed under thee dies without thee, when in that which causes his death, thou hast withstood him. For to that death, which thou hast not withstood, thou wilt be added."

Verse 7

For the priest's lips should keep knowledge - o"He assigns the reason for what he had just said, the law of truth was in his mouth; they had done what it was their duty to do; as in Ecclesiasticus it is said of Aaron (Titus 1:9, ‹exhort by sound doctrine and to convince gainsayers.' Wherefore Ambrose calls the Bible, which contains the law of God, ‹the book of priests,' as specially belonging to them, to be specially studied by them. Jerome notes that he says keep, not ‹give forth,' that they should speak seasonably, and give their fellow-servants meat in due season."

For he is the messenger (or angel) of the Lord of hosts - Malachi gives to the priest the title which belongs to the lowest order of the heavenly spirits, as having an office akin to theirs; as Haggai does to the prophet, Haggai 2:11. as an extraordinary "messenger" of God; and Paul tells the Galatians Galatians 4:14, "ye received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus;" and Christ, by John, speaks to the leaders of the seven congregations, good or bad, or of mixed good and bad, as "the angels Revelation 1:20 of those churches."

"Since in the heavenly hierarchy the order of angels is the lowest, and in the eucharistical hierarchy the order of the priesthood is the highest", "most

truly is the priest of God called angel, i. e., messenger, because he intervenes between God and man, and announces the things of God to the people; and, therefore, were the Urim and Thummim placed on the priest‘s breastplate of judgment, that we might learn, that the priest ought to be learned, a herald of divine truth.” Much more in the New Testament. “Who, as it were in a day, can form one of earth, to be the defender of truth, to stand with angels, to give glory with archangels, to transmit the sacrifices to the altar above, to be partaker of the priesthood of Christ, to reform the thing formed, and present the image, to re-create for the world above, to be a god and make men partakers of the divine nature?” 2 Peter 1:4. “The priesthood is enacted on earth, but is ranked with the heavenly ranks. Very rightly. For not man, not angel, not archangel, not any other created power, but the Paraclete Himself hath ordained this office, and persuaded them, while yet abiding in the flesh, to conceive the ministry of the angels. Wherefore, he who is consecrated as priest, ought to be pure, as if he stood among the heavenly powers.”, “The throne of the priesthood is placed in the heavens, and he is entrusted with ministering things of heaven. Who saith this? The King of heaven Himself. For He saith, ‹Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.‘ So the priest standeth in the middle between God and human nature, bringing down to us divine benefits, and transmitting thither our supplications.”

Verse 8

But ye - oare departed out of the way “of knowledge, truth, equity, fear of God, which I appointed to Aaron and the Levites.” “Ye have caused many to stumble at the law.” He does not simply say, “in the law,” but “at” it. The law was what they stumbled at. They did not only misunderstand the law, through the false teaching of the priests, as though it allowed things which in truth were sins (although this too); itself was their source of stumbling. As Jesus Himself was “a rock of offence” whereon they stumbled, because through His divine holiness He was not what they expected Him to be, so contrariwise the law became an offence to them through the unholiness and inconsistency of the lives and ways of those who taught it; much as we now hear Christianity spoken against, because of the inconsistency of Christians. So Paul saith to the Jews Romans 2:24, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is

written;" and, for the sins of Eli's sons (1 Samuel 2:17, Pococke) "men abhorred the offering of the Lord."

And have corrupted the covenant of Levi - as it is said in Nehemiah, Nehemiah 13:29, "They have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood and of Levi, that covenant which was life and peace" Malachi 2:5, and, therefore, forfeited them.

Verse 9

Therefore have I made you contemptible - They had said in their hearts Malachi 1:7, "The table of the Lord is contemptible." So God would requite them "measure for measure." Yet not only so, but in their office as judges, against the repeated protestations in the law Leviticus 19:15, "Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty, in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor Deuteronomy 1:17, ye shall not respect persons in judgment Deuteronomy 16:19, thou shall not wrest judgment," he says,

Ye have accepted persons in the law - You have interpreted the law differently for rich and poor, or have put it in force against the poor, not against the rich. It would include actual bribery; but there are many more direct offences against equal justice. How differently is the like offence against the eighth commandment visited upon the poor who have real temptation to it, and the rich who have none, but the lust of the eyes!

Crows he condones, vexes the simple dove - That contempt which they cast upon God and His law, by wresting it out of respect to persons, that so they might gain favor and respect from them, so honoring them more than Him, and seeking to please them more than Him, will He cast back on them making them contemptible even in the eyes of those, from whom they thought by that means to find respect.

Verse 10

Have we not all one Father? - o

Hath not one God created us? - Malachi turns abruptly to another offence, in which also the priests set an evil example, the capricious dismissal of their Hebrew wives and taking other women in their stead. Here, as before, he lays down, at the outset, a general moral principle, which he applies. "The one Father" (it appears from the parallel), is manifestly Almighty God, as the Jews said to our Lord John 8:41, "We have one Father, even God." He created them, not only as He did all mankind, but by the spiritual relationship with Himself, into which He brought them.

So Isaiah speaks (Isaiah 43:1, Isaiah 43:7, Isaiah 43:21, add Isaiah 44:2, Isaiah 44:21, Isaiah 44:24), "Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel. Every one that is called by My Name; I have created Him for My glory; I have formed him; yea I have made him. This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise."

And from the first in Moses' song Deuteronomy 32:6, "Is not He thy Father that created thee? Hath He not made thee and established thee?" This creation of them by God, as His people, gave them a new existence, a new relation to each other; so that every offence against each other was a violation of their relation to God, who had given them this unity, and was, in a nearer sense than of any other, the common Father of all. "Why then," the prophet adds, "do we deal treacherously, a man against his brother, to profane the covenant of our fathers?" He does not yet say, wherein this treacherous dealing consisted; but awakens them to the thought, that sin against a brother is sin against God, Who made him a brother; as, and much more under the Gospel, in which we are all members of one mystical body 1 Corinthians 8:12, "when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ." He speaks of the sin, as affecting those who did not commit it.

Why do we deal treacherously? So Isaiah, before his lips were cleansed by the mystical coal, said Isaiah 6:5, "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips," and the high priest Joshua was shown in the vision, clothed with defiled garments; (Zechariah 3:3-4. See ab. pp. 354,355) and the sin of Achan became the "sin of the children of Israel" Joshua 7:1, Joshua 7:11, and David's sinful pride in numbering the people was visited upon all. 1 Corinthians 12:26, "whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." They "profaned" also "the covenant of their fathers," by marrying those whom God forbade, and who would seduce, as pagan wives had Solomon, from His worship. Paul in sanctioning the remarriage of widows, adds, "only 1 Corinthians 7:39. in the Lord," i. e., Christian husbands. "He who treated as null the difference between the Israelites and a pagan woman, showed that the difference between the God of Israel and the God of the pagan had before become null to him, whence it follows."

Verse 11

Treacherously has Judah dealt; an abomination is committed in Israel - The prophet, by the order of the words, emphasizes the "treachery" and the "abomination." This have they done; the very contrary to what was required of them as the people of God. He calls the remnant of Judah by the sacred name of the whole people, of whom they were the surviving representatives. The word "abomination" is a word belonging to the Hebrew, and is used especially of things offensive to, or separating from, Almighty God; idolatry, as the central dereliction of God, and involving offences against the laws of nature, but also all other sins, as adultery, which violate His most sacred laws and alienate from Him.

Hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which He loved - , in themselves, who had been separated and set apart by God to Himself as a Exodus 19:6. "holy nation. Jeremiah 2:3. Israel was holiness to the Lord." "The Lord is holy, perfect holiness; His name, holy; all things relating to Him, holy; His law, covenant and all His ordinances and institutions holy; Israel, His special people, an holy people; the temple and all things therein consecrated to Him, holy; Jerusalem, the city of the great God, holy; yea, the whole and of His inheritance, holy; so that whosoever doth not observe those due respects which to any of these belong, may be said to have profaned the holiness which He loved."

Unlawful marriages and unlawful lusts were in themselves a special profanation of that holiness. The high priest was to Leviticus 21:14-15, "take a virgin of his own people to wife, and not to profane his seed among the people." The priests who "married stranqe wives, defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood" Nehemiah 13:29. The marriage with idolatresses brought, as one consequence, the profanation by their idolatries. The prohibition is an anticipation of the fuller revelation in the Gospel, that 1 Corinthians 6:15-20 the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and so, that "sins against the body" are profanations of the temple of God. "As those who acknowledge, worship and serve the true God are called His Deuteronomy 32:19; 2 Corinthians 6:18 sons and daughters, so they that worshiped any strange god are, by like reason, here called the daughters of that god. Hence, the Jews say, ‹He that marrieth a pagan woman is, as if he made himself son-in-law to an idol. ‹"

Hath married the daughter of a strange god - And so he came into closest relation with idols and with devils.

Verse 12

The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar - , literally "The Lord cut off from the man that doeth this, watcher and answerer." A proverbial saying apparently, in which the two corresponding classes comprise the whole. Yet so, probably, that the one is the active agent; the other, the passive. The one as a "watcher" goes his rounds, to see that nothing stirreth against that which he is to guard; the other "answereth," when roused. Together, they express the two opposite classes, active and passive sin; those who originate the sin, and those who adopt or retain it at the instigation of the inventor or active propagator of it. It will not exempt from punishment, that he was led into the sin.

From the tabernacles of Jacob - Perhaps "he chose the word, to remind them of their unsettled condition," out of which God had brought them.

And him that offereth an offering unto the Lord of hosts - i. e., him, who, doing these things, offereth an offering to God, to bribe Him, as it were, to connivance at his sin. In the same meaning, Isaiah says, that God hateth Isaiah 1:13. "iniquity and the solemn meeting," and Isaiah 61:8, "I hate robbery with burnt-offering;" or Solomon Proverbs 15:8, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord Proverbs 28:9; he that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination." And God by Amos says, "I hate, I despise, your feast-days, and will not accept your solemn assemblies." In one sense the sacrifice was an aggravation, in that the worship of God made the offence either a sin against light, or implied that God might be bribed into connivance in the breaking of His laws. The ancient discipline of removing from communion those guilty of grievous sin was founded on this principle.

Verse 13

And this ye have done again - , adding the second sin of cruelty to their wives to the taking foreign women; "they covered the altar of God with tears," in that they by ill-treatment occasioned their wives to weep there to God; and God regarded this, as though they had stained the altar with their tears.

Insomuch that He regardeth not the offering anymore - God regarded the tears of the oppressed, not the sacrifices of the oppressors. He would not accept what was thus offered Him as a thing well-pleasing to Him, acceptable to win His good pleasure.

Verse 14

And ye say, Wherefore? - They again act the innocent, or half-ignorant. What had they to do with their wives‘ womanly tears? He who knows the hearts of all was Himself the witness between them and the wife of youth of each; her to whom, in the first freshness of life and their young hearts, each had plighted his troth having been entrusted by her with her earthy all. Genesis 31:49-50. “The Lord,” said even Laban, when parting from his daughters, “watch between me and thee, when we are absent, the one from the other; if thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness between me and thee.”

And he dealt treacherously against her - , violating his own faith and her trusting love, which she had given once for all, and could not now retract. “And she is thy companion;” she has been another self, the companion of thy life, sharing thy sorrows, joys, hopes, fears, interests; different in strength, yet in all, good and ill, sickness and health, thy associate and companion; the help meet for the husband and provided for him by God in Paradise; and above all, “the wife of thy covenant,” to whom thou didst pledge thyself before God. These are so many aggravations of their sin. She was the wife of their youth, of their covenant, their companion; and God was the Witness and Sanctifier of their union. Marriage was instituted and consecrated by God in Paradise. Man was to leave father and mother (if so be), but to cleave to his wife indissolubly. For they were to be Matthew 19:6, “no more twain, but one flesh.” Hence, as a remnant of Paradise, even the pagan knew of marriage, as a religious act, guarded by religious sanctions. Among God‘s people, marriage was a Proverbs 2:17 “covenant of their God.” To that original institution of marriage he seems to refer in the following:

Verse 15

And did not He - , God, of whom he had spoken as the witness between man and his wife, “make one,” namely, Adam first, to mark the oneness of marriage and make it a law of nature, appointing “that out of man (created in His own image and similitude), woman should take her beginning, and, knitting them together, did teach that it should never be lawful to put asunder those, whom He by matrimony had made one?” “Between those two, and consequently between all other married, to be born from them, He willed that there should be one indivisible union, for Adam could be

married to no other save Eve, since no other had been created by God, nor could Eve turn to any other man than Adam, since there was no other in the world. ‹Infringe not then this sanction of God, and unity of marriage, and degenerate not from your first parents, Adam and Eve.‘" "If divorce had been good, Jesus says, God would not have made one man and one woman, but, having made one Adam, would have made two women, had He meant that he should cast out the one, bring in the other; but now by the mode of creation, He brought in this law, that each should have, throughout, the wife which he had from the beginning. This law is older than that about divorce, as much as Adam is older than Moses."

Yet had he the residue of the spirit - Genesis 2:7, "the breath of life, which He breathed into Adam, and man became a living soul." All the souls, which God would ever create, are His, and He could have called them into being at once. Yet in order to designate the unity of marriage, He willed to create but one. So our Lord argues against divorce Matthew 19:4-6, "Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning, made them male and female?" They both together are called "one man" Genesis 1:27, and, therefore, should be of one mind and spirit also, the unity of which they ought faithfully to preserve.

And wherefore one? - "Seeking a seed of God," i. e., worthy of God, for from religious marriage, religious offspring may most be hoped from God; and by violating that law, those before the flood brought in a spurious, unsanctified generation, so that God in His displeasure destroyed them all. "And take heed to your spirit," which ye too had from God, which was His, and which He willed in time to create. He closes, as he began, with an appeal to man‘s natural feeling, "let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth."

Verse 16

He hateth putting away - oHe had allowed it "for the hardness of their hearts," yet only in the one case of some extreme bodily foulness discovered upon marriage, and which the woman, knowing the law, concealed at her own peril. Not subsequent illness or any consequences of it, however loathsome (as leprosy), were a ground of divorce, but only this concealed foulness, which the husband "found" upon marriage. The capricious tyrannical divorce, God saith, "He hateth:" a word Naturally used only as to sin, and so stamping such divorce as sin.

One covereth violence with his garment - oor, "and violence covereth his garment," or, it might be, in the same sense, "he covereth his garment with violence", so that it cannot be hid, nor washed away, nor removed, but envelopes him and his garment; and that, to his shame and punishment.

It was, as it were, an outer garment of violence, as Asaph says Psalm 73:6, "violence covereth them as a garment;" or David Psalm 109:18, "he clothed himself with cursing as with a garment." It was like a garment with "fretting leprosy," unclean and making unclean, to be burned with fire. Leviticus 13:47-58. Contrariwise, the redeemed saints had Revelation 7:14 "washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb." Having declared God's hatred of this their doing, he sums up in the same words, but more briefly; "and this being so, ye shall take heed to your spirit, and not deal treacherously."

Verse 17

Ye have wearied the Lord with your words - o"By your blasphemous words, full of unbelief and mistrust, you have in a manner wearied God. He speaks of God, after the manner of men, as a man afflicted by the ills of others. Whence also the Lord says in Isaiah Isaiah 1:14, "I am weary to bear them," and Isaiah 43:24, "thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins; thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities." In like way the Apostle says Ephesians 4:30.

With the same contumacy as before, and unconsciousness of sin, they ask, "Wherein?" It is the old temptation at the prosperity of the wicked. "Does God love the wicked? if not, why does He not punish them?" "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." "The people, when returned from Babylon, seeing all the nations around, and the Babylonians themselves, serving idols but abounding in wealth, strong in body, possessing all which is accounted good in this world, and themselves, who had the knowledge of God, overwhelmed with want, hunger, servitude, is scandalized and says, ‹There is no providence in human things; all things are borne along by blind chance, and not governed by the judgment of God; nay rather, things evil please Him, things good displease Him; or if God does discriminate all things, where is His equitable and just judgment?' Questions of this sort minds, which believe not in the world to come, daily raise to God, when they see the wicked in power, the saints in low estate; such as Lazarus, whom we read of in the Gospel, who, before the gate of the rich man in his

purple, desires to support his hungry soul with the crumbs which are thrown away from the remnants of the table, while the rich man is of such savagery and cruelty, that he had no pity on his fellow-man, to whom the tongues of the dogs showed pity; not understanding the time of judgment, nor that those are the true goods, which are for ever, say, He is pleased with the evil, and, Where is the God of judgment?"

Where is the God of the judgment? - o"i. e., of that judgment, the great, most certain, most exact, clearsighted, omniscient, most just, most free, wherein He regards neither powerful nor rich nor gifts, nor anything but justice? For He is the God of the judgment, to whom it belongs by nature to judge all men and things by an exact judgment: for His nature is equity itself, justice itself, providence itself, and that, most just, most wise. To Him it belongs to be the Judge of all, and to exercise strict judgment upon all; and He will exercise it fully on that decisive and last day of the world, which shall be the horizon between this life and the next, parting off time from eternity, heaven from hell, the blessed from the damned forever, through Christ, whom He constituted Judge of all, quick and dead."

MALACHI CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

God answers their complaints of the absence of His judgments, that they would come, but would include those also who clamored for them. For no one who knew his own sinfulness would call for the judgment of God, as being himself, chief of sinners. Augustine pictures one saying to God, "Take away the ungodly man," and that God answers, "Which?"

Behold, I send My messenger before My face, and he shall prepare My way before Me - they, then, were not prepared for His Coming, for whom they clamored. The messenger is the same whom Isaiah had foretold, whose words Malachi uses Isaiah 40:3: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straiqht in the desert a highway for our God. Luke 1:76. Thou, child," was the prophecy on John the Immerser's birth, "shalt be called the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His way, to give knowledge of salvation unto His people, for the remission of their sins." Repentance was to be the preparation for the kingdom of Christ, the Messiah, for whom they looked so impatiently.

He who speaks, is He who should come, God the Son. For it was before Him Who came and dwelt among us, that the way was to be prepared. He speaks here in His divine nature, as the Lord Who should send, and Who should Himself come in our flesh. In the Gospel, when He was come in the flesh, He speaks not of His own Person but of the Father, since "indivisible are the operations of the Trinity, and what the One doth, the other Two do, since the Three are of one nature, power and operation." Whence Christ, in order to give no excuse to the Jews to speak against Him before the time, refers it, as He does His life John 6:57. His doctrine John 7:16 words John 3:11; John 5:43; John 8:38, John 8:40, John 8:47, John 8:55; John 12:49; John 14:10, John 14:24 and works John 4:34; John 5:19-20, John 5:26, John 5:30, John 5:36; John 6:38; John 8:28; John 9:4; John 10:25, John 10:32, John 10:37-38; John 14:10-11 to the Father.

"Those works, which do not relate to that which b uniquely belongs to each Person, being common, are ascribed now to One Person, now to Another, in order to set forth the One Substance in the Trinity of Persons." Thus, John says John 12:41. Isaiah spoke of the unbelief of the Jews, when

he "saw" the "glory" of God the Son "and spake of Him," and Paul says Acts 28:25. that the "Holy Spirit spake" then "by" him.

And he shall prepare the way before Meo- "The same is God's way here, and Christ's there, an evident proof that Christ is one God with the Father, and that, in Christ, God came and was manifest in the flesh." The prophets and all who turned men to righteousness, or who retained the knowledge of the truth or of righteousness or of God in the world, did, in their degree, prepare the way for Christ. But John was His immediate forerunner "before His Face," the herald of His immediate approach; from where he is called "the end of the law, and the beginning of the Gospel," "the lamp before the Light, the voice before the Word, the mediator between the Old and the New Testament;" "the link of the law and of grace; a new morning star; a ray, before the true Sun should burst forth," the end of night, the beginning of day.

And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple - He, Whose Coming they sought for, was Almighty God, "the God of Judgment." He who should come, was "the Lord," again Almighty God, since, in usage too, none else is called "the Lord," as none else can be. The temple also, to which He was to come, the temple of God, is His own. "The messenger, or the Angel of the covenant," plainly, even from the parallelism, is the same as "the Lord." It was "one," for whom they looked; one, of whose absence they complained; Malachi 2:17, "where is the God of judgment?" one, who should come to His temple, one whose coming they sought and prepared "to have pleasure in;" one, of whom it is repeated, "lo, He cometh," one, in the day of whose coming, at whose appearing, it was asked, "who shall stand?" "All Christian interpreters are agreed that this Lord is Christ Acts 2:36, whom God hath made both Lord and Christ, and Acts 10:36. Who is Lord over all; by whom all things were made, are sustained and governed; Who is (as the root of the word implies) the basis and foundation, not of any private family, tribe or kingdom, but of all; 1 Corinthians 8:6. by whom are all things and we by Him: and whose we are also by right of redemption; and so He is Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:16. Lord of lords and King of kings, deservedly called the Lord." As then the special presence of God was often indicated in connection with "the Angel of the Lord," so, here, He who was to come was entitled the Angel or messenger of the covenant, as God also calls Him the covenant itself.

Isaiah 42:6, “I will give Thee for a covenant of the people, a light of the Gentiles.” He it was Isaiah 63:9, “the Angel of His presence,” who saved His former people, in whom His “Name was,” and who, by the prerogative of God, would Exodus 23:21, “not pardon their transgressions.” He should be Hebrews 12:24; Hebrews 8:6, “the Mediator of the new and better covenant” which is promised Jeremiah 31:32-33; Hebrews 8:9, “not according to the covenant, that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt,” which “My covenant they broke, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord; but this shall be the covenant, that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God and they shall be My people.”

Whom ye seek, are seeking, whom ye delight in - , i. e., profess so to do; “He will come,” but will be very different from Him whom ye look for, an Avenger on your enemies. Judgment will come, but it will begin with yourselves.

Shall suddenly come - o“unawares, when men should not think of them; whence perhaps it is that the Jews reckon the Messiah among what shall come unawares.” As, it is here said of His first Coming, so it is said of His second Coming (which may be comprehended under this here spoken of) that except they diligently watch for it Luke 21:35, “it shall come upon them unawares Mark 13:36. suddenly Matthew 24:44. in such an hour as they think not.” “The Lord of glory always comes, like a thief in the night, to those who sleep in their sins.”

Lo, He will come - : he insists again and calls their minds to that Coming, certain, swift, new, wonderful, on which all eyes should be set, but His coming would be a sifting-time.

Verse 2

And who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? - The implied answer is, “No one;” as in the Psalm Psalm 130:3, “If Thou, Lord, wilt mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” Joel had asked the same, “The day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?” “How can the weakness of man endure such might; his blindness, such light; his frailty, such power; his uncleanness, such holiness; the chaff, such a fire? For He is like a refine‘s fire. Who would not fail through stupefaction, fear, horror, shrinking reverence, from such majesty?”

Malachi seems to blend, as Joel, the first and second coming of our Lord. The first coming too was a time of sifting and severance, according as those, to whom He came, did or did not receive Him. The severance was not final, because there was yet space for repentance; but it was real, an earnest of the final judgment. John 9:39, "for judgment," our Lord says, "I am come into this world, that they which see not may see, and they which see might be made blind;" and again John 12:31, "Now is the judgment of this world;" and John 3:18, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the Only-Begotten Son of God; John 3:36. He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." As, on the other hand, He saith John 6:54. "whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath eternal life;" and John 6:47, "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" "hath," He saith; not, "shall have;" "hath it," in present reality and earnest, though he may forfeit it: so the other class is "condemned already," although the one may repent and be saved, the other may Ezekiel 33:18. "turn from his righteousness and commit iniquity;" and if he persevere in it, "shall die therein."

It is then one ever-present judgment. Every soul of man is in a state of grace or out of it; in God's favor or under His wrath; and the judgment of the Great Day, in which the secrets of men's hearts shall be revealed, will be but an outward manifestation of that now hidden judgment. But the words, in their fullest sense, imply a passing of that judgment, in which men do or do not stand, as in those of our Lord Luke 21:35-36. "As a snare shall that day come on all those that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man;" and Paul Ephesians 6:13. "Take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand;" and in the Revelation Revelation 6:16-17. "They said to the mountains and rocks; Fall on us, and hide us from the wrath of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Asaph says of a temporal, yet for this life, final destruction; Psalm 76:6-7, "At Thy rebuke, O God of, Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a deep sleep. Thou art to be feared, and who may stand in Thy sight, when Thou art angry?"

For He is like a refiner‘s fire, and like fuller‘s soup - Two sorts of materials for cleansing are mentioned, the one severe, where the baser materials are inworked with the rich ore; the other mild, where the defilement is easily separable. “He shall come like a refining fire; Psalm 50:3-4, ‹a fire shall burn before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. Then He shall call the heaven from above, and the earth, that He may judge HIs people;‘ streams of fire shall sweep before, bearing away all sinners. For the Lord is called a fire, and a Deuteronomy 4:24. consuming fire, so as to burn our 1 Corinthians 3:12. wood, hay, stubble. And not fire only, but fuller‘s soap. To those who sin heavily, He is a refining and consuming fire, but to those who commit light sins, fuller‘s soap, to restore cleanness to it, when washed.”

Yet, though light in comparison, this too had its severity, for clothes which were washed (of which the word is used) were trampled on by the feet. “The nitrum and the fuller‘s soap is penitence.” Yet the whiteness and purity so restored, is, at the last, perfected. Inspiration could find no more adequate comparison for us, for the brightness of our Lord‘s raiment from the glory of the Transfiguration, than Mark 9:3, “exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.”

Our Lord is, in many ways, as a fire. He says of Himself; Luke 12:49, “I am come to send a fire upon earth, and what will I, if it be already kindled?” John Baptist said of Him Luke 3:16, “He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” He kindles in the heart “a fire of love,” which softens what is hard, the will.

“Wash whate‘er of stain is here,
Sprinkle what is dry or sere,
Heal and bind the wounded sprite;
Bend whate‘er is stubborn still,
Kindle what is cold and chill,
What hath wandered guide aright.”

But as God is “a consuming fire,” Who must burn out the dross, unless we be Jeremiah 6:29-30 “reprobate silver” which “the founder melteth in vain,” either He must, by His grace, consume the sin within us, or must consume us with it, in hell.

Verse 3

And He shall sit - oas a King and Judge on His throne, with authority, yet also to try accurately the cause of each, separating seeming virtues from real graces; hypocrites, more or less consciously, from His true servants.

He shall purify o **the sons of Levi -** These had been first the leaders in degeneracy, the corrupters of the people by their example and connivance. Actually Acts 6:7, "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Barnabas also was a Levite. Acts 4:36. But more largely, as Zion and Jerusalem are the titles for the Christian Church, and Israel who believed was the true Israel, so "the sons of" Levi are the true Levites, the Apostles and their successors in the Christian priesthood.

It was through three centuries of persecutions that the Church was purified by fire.

That they may offer - , literally "and they shall be unto thy Lord offers of a meal-offering in righteousness," i. e., they shall be such, and that, habitually, abidingly. Again, here and in the next words, "and the meal-offering of Judah shall be pleasant unto the Lord," it is remarkable, that the "meal-offering," to which the holy eucharist corresponds, is alone mentioned. Of bloody offerings Malachi is silent, for they were to cease.

In righteousness - , as Zacharias prophesied, "that we might serve Him in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life."

Verse 4

Then (And) shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem - The "law," the new revelation of God, was to Isaiah 2:3. "go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Judah and Jerusalem then are here the Christian Church. "They shall be, pleasant (literally sweet) unto the Lord." It is a reversal (using the self-same word) of what God had said of them in the time of their religious decay Hosea 9:4. "they shall not offer wine-offerings to the Lord, neither shall they be sweet unto Him; Jeremiah 6:20. your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto Me."

As in the days of old - , before the days of degeneracy; as it stands in the ancient Liturgies "Vouchsafe to look upon them (the consecrated oblations) with a propitious and serene Countenance, and to accept them, as Thou vouchsafedst to accept the gifts of Thy righteous Abel and the sacrifice of our patriarch Abraham, and the holy sacrifice, the immaculate offering, which Thy high priest Melchizedec offered unto Thee." "The oblation of the sacrament of the eucharist, made by the Jews who should believe in Christ, which is known to have been first instituted by Christ in

the city of Jerusalem, and afterward to have been continued by His disciples (Acts 2:42, Acts 2:46.) shall be pleasing unto the Lord, as the sacrifices of the patriarchs, Melchizedec, Abraham, and the holy priests in the law, as Aaron; yea, the truth takes precedence of the figure and shadow; the sacrifice of the new law is more excellent and acceptable to God, than all the sacrifice, of the law or before the law. With this agrees what the Lord saith to the synagogue Isaiah 1:25-26, Isaiah 1:28, "I will turn My hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin; and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors, as at the beginning: and the destruction of the transgressors, and of the sinners, shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed." So now it follows.

Verse 5

And I will come near to you to judgment - They had clamored for the coming of "the God of judgment;" God assures them that He will come to judgment, which they had desired, but far other than they look for. The few would be purified; the great mass of them (so that He calls them "you"), the main body of those who had so clamored, would find that He came as a Judge, not for them but against them.

And I will be a swift witness - o"In judging I will bear witness, and witnessing, I, the same, will bring forth judgment, saith the Lord; therefore, the judgment shall be terrible, since the judge is an infallible witness, whom the conscience of no one will be able to contradict."

God would be a "swift witness," as He had said before, "He shall come suddenly." Our Lord calls Himself (Revelation 3:14; Revelation 1:5, "I, and not other witnesses, having seen with My own eyes." Theod. Jerome) "the Faithful and True witness," when He stands in the midst of the Church, as their Judge. God's judgments are always unexpected by those, on whom they fall. The sins are those especially condemned by the law; the use of magical arts as drawing men away from God, the rest as sins of special malignity. Magical arts were rife at the time of the Coming of our Lord; and adultery, as shown in the history of the woman taken in adultery, when her accusers were convicted in their own consciences. (John 8:9, "adulterous generation." Matthew 12:39. Lightfoot on John 8:3 quotes Sotah f. 47. 1. "From the time that homicides were multiplied, the beheading of the heifer ceased: from the time that adulterers were multiplied, the bitter waters ceased:" and Maimonides on Sotah, c. 3. "When the adulterers multiplied

under the second Temple, the Sanhedrin abolished the ordeal of the adulteresses by the bitter water; relying on its being written, ‹I will not visit your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery.‘" Lightfoot subjoins, "The Gemarists teach that Johanan ben Zacchai was the author of that advice, who was still alive, in the Sanhedrin, and perhaps among those who brought the adulteress before Christ. For some things make it probable, that the "scribes and Pharisees," mentioned here, were elders of the synagogue." Justin reproaches them with having fresh wives, wherever they went throughout the world. Dial. fin. p. 243. Oxford translation.)

Oppress the hireling - , literally "oppress the hire," i. e., deal oppressively in it. "Behold," says James James 5:4, "the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is by you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." The mere delay in the payment of the wages of the laborer brought sin unto him, against whom he cried to God Deuteronomy 24:14-15. It is no light sin, since it is united with the heaviest, and is spoken of as reaching the ears of God. The widow and the fatherless stand in a relation of special nearness to God.

And fear not Me - He closes with the central defect, which was the mainspring of all their sins, the absence of the fear of God. The commission of any of these sins, rife as they unhappily are, proves that those who did them had no fear of God. "Nothing hinders that this should be referred to the first coming of Christ. For Christ, in preaching to the Jews, exercised upon them a judgment of just rebuke, especially of the priests, Scribes and Pharisees, as the Gospels show."

Verse 6

I am the Lord, I change not - , better, more concisely, "I, the Lord

I change not - . The proper name of God, "He who Is," involves His unchangeableness. For change implies imperfection; it changes to that which is either more perfect or less perfect: to somewhat which that being, who changes, is not or has not. But God has everything in Himself perfectly. "Thou Alone, O Lord, Art what Thou Art, and Thou Art Who Art. For what is one thing in the whole and another in parts, and wherein is anything subject to change, is not altogether what Is. And what beginneth from not being, and can be conceived, as not being, and only subsisteth through another thing, returns to not-being; and what hath a ‹has been,‘

which now is not, and a ‹to be,‘ which as yet is not, that is not, properly and absolutely. But Thou Art what Thou Art. For whatever Thou Art in any time or "way," that Thou Art wholly and always; and Thou Art, Who Art properly and simply, because Thou hast neither ‹to have been‘ or ‹to be about to be;‘ but only to be present; and canst not be conceived, ever not to have been." "There is only one simple Good, and, therefore, One Alone Unchangeable, which is God."

"Our" life is a "becoming" rather than a simple "being;" it is a continual losing of what we had, and gaining what we had not, for "in as far as any one is not what he was, and is what he was not, so far forth he dieth and ariseth;" dieth to what he was, ariseth to be something otherwise.

"Increase evidences a beginning; decrease, death and destruction. And, therefore, Malachi says, ‹I am God, and I change not,‘ ever retaining His own state of being; because what has no origin cannot be changed."

So the Psalmist says Psalm 102:27, "As a vesture, Thou shalt change them and they shall be changed, but Thou art the Same, and Thy years shall not fail;" and Balaam, controlled by God Numbers 23:19. "God is not a man, that He should lie, or the son of man, that He should repent;" and James 1:17, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Of this unchangeableness of God, His holy ones partake, as far as they fix themselves on God. "The soul of man hangs upon Him, by whom it was made. And because it was made, to desire God Alone, but everything which it desires below is less than He, rightly doth not that suffice it, which is not God. Hence, is it, that the soul is scattered hither and thither, and is repelled from everything, toward which it is borne, through satiety of them. But holy men guard themselves by cautious observation, lest they should be relaxed from their intentness by change, and because they desire to be the same, wisely bind themselves to the thought, whereby they love God. For in the contemplation of the Creator, they will receive this, that they should ever enjoy one stability of mind. No changeableness then dissipates them, because their thought ever perseveres, free from unlikeness to itself. This therefore they now imitate, striving with effort, which hereafter they shall with joy receive as a gift." To which unchangeableness the prophet had bound himself by the power of love, when he said Psalm 27:4, "One thing I

required of the Lord, which I will require, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord." To this unity Paul clave intently, when he said, Philemon 3:13-14: "One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and stretching forth to those things which are before, I press forward toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

And ye sons of Jacob are not consumed - Man would often have become weary of man's wickedness and waywardness. We are impatient at one another, readily despair of one another. God might justly have cast off them and us; but He changes not. He abides by the covenant which He made with their fathers; He consumed them not; but with His own unchangeable love awaited their repentance. Our hope is not in ourselves, but in God.

Verse 7

Even from the days of your fathers - Back to those days and from them ye are gone away from My ordinances. "I am not changed from good; ye are not changed from evil. I am unchangeable in holiness; ye are unchangeable in perversity."

Return unto Me - The beginning of our return is from the preventing grace of God. Jeremiah 31:18; Lamentations 5:21, "turn Thou me, and I shall be turned, for Thou art the Lord my God," is the voice of the soul to God, preparing for His grace; Psalm 85:4, "turn us, O God of our salvation." For, not in its own strength, but by His grace can the soul turn to God. "Turn thou to Me and I will return unto you," is the Voice of God, acknowledging our free-will, and promising His favor, if we accept His grace in return.

And ye say, Wherein shall we return? - Strange ignorance of the blinded soul, unconscious that God has aught against it! It is the Pharisaic spirit in the Gospel. It would own itself doubtless in general terms a sinner, but when called on, wholly to turn to God, as being wholly turned from Him, it asks, "In what? What would God have of me?" as if ready to do it.

Verse 8

Shall a man rob or cheat - , defraud God? God answers question by question, but thereby drives it home to the sinner's soul, and appeals to his conscience. The conscience is steeled, and answers again, "In what?" God specifies two things only, obvious, patent, which, as being material things, they could not deny. "In tithes and offerings." The offerings included several classes of dues to God:

(a) the first fruits;

(b) the annual half-shekel Exodus 30:13-15;

(c) the offerings made for the tabernacle Exodus 25:2-3; Exodus 35:5, Exodus 35:21, Exodus 35:24; Exodus 36:3, Exodus 36:6 and the second temple Ezra 8:25 at its first erection; it is used of ordinary offerings;

(d) of the tithes of their own tithes, which the Levites paid to the priests Numbers 18:26, Numbers 18:28-29;

(e) of the portions of the sacrifice which accrued to the priests Leviticus 7:14.

Verse 9

Ye have been cursed with the curse - (not "with a curse"). The curse threatened had come upon them: but, as fore-supposed in Leviticus by the repeated burden, "If ye still walk contrary to Me," they had persevered in evil. God had already shown His displeasure. But they, so far from being amended by it, were the more hardened in their sin. Perhaps as men do, they pleaded their punishment, as a reason why they should not amend. They defrauded God, under false pretences. They were impoverished by His curse, and so they could not afford to pay the tithes; as men say, "the times are bad; so we cannot help the poor" of Christ. "And Me ye still are defrauding" Me, ye; man, God. And that not one or other, but this whole people. It was a requital as to that, in which they had offended. "Because ye have not rendered tithes and first-fruits, therefore ye are cursed in famine and penury." "Because the people did not render tithes and first-fruits to the Levites, the Lord saith, that He Himself suffered fraud, whose ministers, constrained by hunger and penury, deserted the temple. For, if He is visited by others in prison, and sick, is received and cared for, and, hungry and athirst, receives food and drink, why should He not receive tithes in His ministers, and, if they are not given, be Himself deprived of His portion?"

Verse 10

Bring the whole tithes - , not a part only, keeping back more or less, and, as he had said, defrauding God, offering, like Ananias, apart, as if it had been the whole; into the treasury, where they were collected in the time

of Hezekiah and again, at this time, by the direction of Nehemiah, "so that there shall be food," not superfluity, in My house "for those who minister in the house of My sanctuary." Nehemiah 13:10-23. "The Levites and singers had, before the reformation, fled every one to his field, because the portion of the Levites had not been given them." On Nehemiah's remonstrance, aided by Malachi, "the tithe of corn and the wine and the new oil were brought into the treasuries."

Bring the whole tithes - o"Thou knowest that all things which come to thee are God's, and dost not thou give of His own to the Creator of all? The Lord God needeth not: He asketh not a reward, but reverence: He asketh not anything of thine, to restore to Him. He asketh of thee "first-fruits and tithes." Niggard, what wouldest thou do, if He took nine parts to Himself, and left thee the tenth? What if He said to thee; ‹Man, thou art Mine, Who made thee; Mine is the land which thou tillest; Mine are the seeds, which thou sowest; Mine are the animals, which thou weariest; Mine are the showers, Mine the winds, Mine the sun's heat; and since Mine are all the elements, whereby thou livest, thou who givest only the labor of thine hands, deservest only the tithes.' But since Almighty God lovingly feeds us, He gives most ample reward to us who labor little: claiming to Himself the tithes only, He has condoned us all the rest."

And prove Me now herewith, in or by this thing - God pledges Himself to His creatures, in a way in which they themselves can verify. "If you will obey, I will supply all your needs; if not, I will continue your dearth." By whatever laws God orders the material creation, He gave them a test, of the completion of which they themselves could judge, of which they themselves must have judged. They had been afflicted with years of want. God promises them years of plenty, on a condition which He names. What would men think now, if anyone had, in God's name, promised that such or such a disease, which injured our crops or our cattle, should come at once to an end, if any one of God's laws should be kept? We should have been held as finatics, and rightly, for we had no commission of God. God authenticates those by whom He speaks; He promises, who alone can perform.

"There are three keys which God hath reserved in His own hands, and hath not delivered to any to minister or substitute, the keys of life, of rain, and of the resurrection. In the ordering of the rain they look on His great power, no less than in giving life at first, or afterward raising the dead to it;

as Paul saith Acts 14:17, "God left not Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave rain, from heaven and fruitful seasons."

If I will not open the windows of heaven - oIn the time of the flood, they were, as it were, opened, to man's destruction: now, God would rain abundantly for you, for their sakes. "And pour you out, literally empty out to you," give to them fully, holding back nothing. So in the Gospel it is said, that the love of God is "shed abroad poured out and forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us."

"That there is not room enough to receive it; literally until there is no sufficiency." (In Psalm 72:7 (quoted by Ges. Ros. etc.) "there shall be abundance of peace ירח בלי עד, literally, "until there be no moon," has a literal meaning, that the peace should last until the end of our creation, without saying anything of what lies beyond.) The text does not express what should not suffice, whether it be on God's part or on man's. Yet it were too great irony, if understood of God. His superabundance, "above all which we can ask or think," is a first principle in the conception of God, as the Infinite Source of all being. But to say of God. that He would pour out His blessing, until man could not contain it, is one bliss of eternity, that God's gifts will overflow the capacity of His creatures to receive them. The pot of oil poured forth the oil, until, on the prophets saying 2 Kings 4:6, "Bring me yet a vessel," the widows son said, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed." God's gifts are limited only by our capacity to receive them.

Verse 11

And I will rebuke the devourer - , the locust, caterpillar, or any like scourge of God. It might be, that when the rain watered the fields, the locust or caterpillar etc. might destroy the grain, so that the labors of man should perish; wherefore he adds, "I will rebuke the devourer. Neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time," holding out a fair promise, but cut off by the frost-wind or the hail; the blossoms or the unripe fruit strewing the earth, as a token of God's displeasure.

Verse 12

All nations shall call you blessed - The promise goes beyond the temporal prosperity of their immediate obedience. Few could know or think much of the restored prolificalness of Judaea; none could know of its antecedents. A people, as well as individuals, may starve, and none know of

it. Had the whole population of Judah died out, their Persian masters would not have cared for it, but would have sent fresh colonists to replace them and pay the tribute to the great king. The only interest, which all nations could have in them, was as being the people of God, from whom He should come, "the Desire of all nations, in whom all the families of the earth would be blessed." Of this, God‘s outward favor was the earnest; they should have again the blessings which He had promised to His people.

And ye shall be called a delightsome land - , literally "a land of good pleasure." It was not so much the land as the people; ye shall be called. The land stands for the people upon it, in whom its characteristics lay. The river Jordan was not so bright as Abana and Pharpar: "the aspect of the shore" is the same, when the inhabitants are spiritually or morally dead; only the more beautiful, in contrast with the lifeless "spirit of man." So Isaiah says Isaiah 62:2-4, "The nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shrill be called by a name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name Thou shalt no more be called Forsaken, nor shall thy land be called Desolate, but thou shalt be called My-delight-is-in-her, and thy land Married: for the Lord delighteth in thee and thy land shall be married." God and man should delight in her.

Verse 13

Your words have been stout against Me - , probably "oppressive to Me," as it is said, the famine was strong upon the land. And ye have said, "What have we spoken among ourselves against Thee?" Again, the entire unconsciousness of self-ignorance and self-conceit! They had criticized God, and knew it not. "Before, he had said Malachi 2:17. ‹Ye have wearied the Lord with your words, and ye said, Wherein have we wearied Him? When ye said, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord‘" etc.

Now he repeats this more fully. For the people who returned from Babylon seemed to have a knowledge of God, and to observe the law, and to understand their sin, and to offer sacrifices for sin; to pay tithes, to observe the sabbath, and the rest, commanded in the law of God, and seeing all the nations around them abounding in all things, and that they themselves were in penury, hunger and misery, was scandalized and said, ‹What does it benefit me, that I worship the One True God, abominate idols, and, pricked with the consciousness of sin, walk mournfully before God?‘ A topic, which is pursued more largely in Psalm 73." Only the Psalmist relates

his temptations to God, and God‘s deliverance of him from them; these adopted them and spake them against God. They claim, for their partial and meagre service, to have fulfilled God‘s law, taking to themselves God‘s words of Abraham, “he kept My charge”.

Verse 14

Ye have said, It is vain to serve the God - o“as receiving no gain or reward for their service. This is the judgment of the world, whereby worldlings think pious, just, sincere, strict men, vain, i. e., especially when they see them impoverished, despised, oppressed, afflicted, because they know not the true goods of virtue and eternal glory, but measure all things by sight, sense and taste. Truly, if the righteous had not hope of another and better life, in vain would they afflict themselves, and bear the afflictions of others. For, as the Apostle says 1 Corinthians 15:19. ‹If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.‘ But now, hoping for another blessed and eternal life for the slight tribulations of this, we are the happiest of all men.”

And we have walked mournfully - oAgain they take in their mouths the words of Psalmists, that they took the garb of mourners, going about mourning before God for their country‘s afflictions.

Verse 15

And now we call the proud happy (blessed) - This being so, they sum up the case against God. God had declared that all nations should “call them blessed” Malachi 3:12. if they would obey. They answer, using His words; And “now we (they lay stress on the word we,) pronounce blessed,” in fact, those whom God had pronounced cursed: Psalm 119:21. “Thou hast rebuked the proud, who are cursed.” Their characteristic, among other bad men, is of insolence Proverbs 21:24. arrogance, boiling over with self-conceit, and presumptuous toward God. The ground of Babylon‘s sentence was “she hath been proud toward the Lord, the Holy One of Israel;” Jethro says of the Egyptians, as a ground of his belief in God (Exodus 18:11. It is used of Egypt toward Israel. Nehemiah 9:16.) “for, in the thing that they dealt proudly,” He was “above them.” It describes the character of the act of Israel, when God bade them “not go up, neither fight, and they would not hear, and went up presumptuously into the battle” Deuteronomy 1:41, Deuteronomy 1:43 the contumacious act of those, who, appealing to the judgment of God, afterward refused it: Deuteronomy 17:12-13. of

Johanan‘s associates, who accuse Jeremiah of speaking falsely in the name of God; Jeremiah 43:2. they are persons who rise up Psalm 86:14. forge lies against Psalm 119:69. dig pits for Psalm 119:85. deal perversely with, Psalm 119:78. hold in derision Psalm 119:51. oppress Psalm 119:122. the pious. Whether or no, they mean specifically the pagan, those, whom these pronounced blessed, were those who were contemptuous toward God.

Yea, the workers of wickedness - , those who habitually work it, whose employment it is, “are built up; yea, they have tried God and have escaped.” God had promised that, if Jeremiah 12:16, “they will diligently learn the ways of My people, they shall be built up in the midst of My people;” these say, the workers of wickedness “had been built up:” God had bidden themselves Jeremiah 3:10, “make trial of Me in this;” these answer, the wicked had made trial of Him, and had been unpunished.

Verse 16

Then they that feared the Lord spake often among themselves - The proud-speaking of the ungodly called out the piety of the God-fearing. “The more the ungodly spake against God, the more these spake among themselves for God.” Both went on until the Great Day of severance. True, as those said, the distinction between righteous and wicked was not made yet, but it was stored up out of sight. They “spake among themselves,” strengthening each other against the ungodly sayings of the ungodly.

And the Lord hearkened and heard it - God, whom these thought an idle looker-on, or regardless, all the while (to speak after the manner of men) was “bending the ear” from heaven “and heard.” Not one pious loyal word for Him and His glory, escaped Him.

And a book of remembrance was written before Him - Kings had their chronicles written wherein people‘s good or ill deeds toward them were recorded. But the image is one of the oldest in Scripture, and in the self-same words, “the Lord said to Moses, Write this, a memorial in a book.” God can only speak to us in our own language. One expression is not more human than another, since all are so. Since with God all things are present, and memory relates to the past, to speak of God as “remembering” is as imperfect an expression in regard to God, as to speak of “a book.”, “Forgetfulness hath no place with God, because He is in no way changed; nor remembrance, because He forgetteth not.” Both expressions are used, only to picture vividly to our minds, that our deeds are present with God, for good or for evil; and in the Day of Judgment He will make them

manifest to men and angels, as though read out of a book, and will requite them. So Daniel had said Daniel 7:10, "the judgment was set, and the books were opened." And John says Revelation 20:12, "The books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." So Moses says to God, Exodus 32:32, "If not, blot me out of Thy book which Thou hast written;" and David, prophesying, prays Psalm 69:28, "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written among the righteous;" and our Lord bids His discipies Luke 10:20, "Rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven."

And that thought upon His name - Rather, "esteemed, prized," it, in contrast with those who Malachi 1:6. "despised;" as, of Christ, when He should come, it is said Isaiah 53:3, "He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." "The thinking on His Name imports, not a bare thinking of, but a due esteem and awful regard of, so as with all care to avoid all things which may tend to the dishonor of it, as always in His presence and with respect to Him and fear of Him." "Those are meant who always meditate on the ways of the Lord and the knowledge of His Godhead, for His name is Himself, and He is His Name;" "the wise in heart who know the mystery of the awful glorious Name."

Verse 17

And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels - othe recurrence of the words, עשה אני אשר יום, Malachi 4:3 in English), and the סגלה לי והייתם Deuteronomy 7:6, there is the equivalent לעם לו להיות סגלה, and the like, Deuteronomy 14:2; Psalm 135:4.) or perhaps better, "And they shall be to Me, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day which I make (or, in which I do this) a special treasure." "In the day of judgment, those who fear Me and believe and maintain My providence shall be to Me a special treasure, i. e., a people uniquely belonging and precious to Me, blessed in the vision and fruition of Me. For as in the old law, Israel was a special treasure a special people and inheritance of God, chosen out of all nations, so in the new law, Christians, and those who are righteous through grace, are the special treasure of God, and in heaven shall be His special treasure in glory, possessed by God and possessing God.' The "special treasure," is something, much prized, made great store of, and guarded. Such are Christians, bought at a great price, even by the precious Blood of Christ; but much more evidently such shall they be, Malachi says,

in all eternity, which that day of final retribution shall decide, "joying in the participation of their Creator, by Whose eternity they are fixed, by Whose truth they are assured, by Whose gift they are holy."

And I will spare them - It is a remarkable word, as used of those who should be to Him a "special treasure," teaching that, not of their own merits, they shall be such, but by His great mercy. It stands in contrast with the doom of the wicked, whom that day shall sentence to everlasting less of God. Still, the saved also shall have needed the tender mercy of God, whereby He pardoned their misdeeds and had compassion upon them Psalm 130:3, "If Thou, Lord, shalt lay up iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" Among those whom God will spare on that day, will be countless, whom the self-righteous despised as sinners. "I will spare them, although formerly sinners; I will spare them, repenting, and serving Me with the service of a pious confession, as a man spareth his own son which served him." For our Lord saith of the son, who refused to go work in his Father's vineyard, and afterward repented and went, that he Matthew 21:31, "did the will of his Father."

Verse 18

Then shall ye return, or turn - , not, "return" in the sense of returning to God, for in that day will be the time of judgment, not of repentance; nor yet, "then shall ye again see;" for this is what they denied; and, if they had ceased to deny it, they would have been converted, not in that day, but before, when God gave them grace to see it. They shall turn, so as to have other convictions than before; but, as Judas. The Day of Judgment will make a great change in earthly judgment. Last shall be first and first last; this world's sorrow shall end in joy, and worldly joy in sorrow; afflictions shall be seen to be God's love: Psalm 119:75, "Thou in very faithfulness hast afflicted me;" and the unclouded prosperity of the ungodly to be God's abandonment of them. The picture of the surprise of the wicked in the Day of Judgment, in the Wisdom of Solomon, is a comment on the prophet (Wisdom of Solomon 5:1-5), "Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labors; when they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed with the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all they looked for: and they, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves, This was he whom we had sometimes in derision and a proverb of reproach: we fools counted his life madness and his end to be

without honor: how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!”

MALACHI CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

For, behold, the day cometh, which shall burn as an oven - He had declared the great severance of the God-fearing and the God-blaspheming, those who served and those who did not serve God; the righteous and the wicked; now he declares the way and time of the severance, the Day of Judgment. Daniel had described the fire of that day, Daniel 7:9-10, "The throne (of the Ancient of days) was a fiery flame; his wheels a burning fire: a fiery stream issued and came forth from Him: the judgment was set and the books were opened." Fire is ever spoken of, as accompanying the judgment Psalm 50:3. "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence, a fire shall devour before Him Isaiah 66:15-16. Behold the Lord will come with fire: for by fire and by the sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: 1 Corinthians 3:13 every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire: and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." Peter tells us that fire will be of this burning world; 2 Peter 3:7-10. "the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of' ungodly men; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

The oven, or furnace, pictures the intensity of the heat, which is white from its intensity, and darts forth, fiercely, shooting up like a living creature, and destroying life, as the flame of the fire of Nebuchadnezzars Daniel 3:22 "burning fiery furnace slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego." The whole world shall be one burning furnace.

And all the proud and all that do wickedly - All those, whom those complainers pronounced "blessed," Malachi 3:15, yea and all who should thereafter be like them (he insists on the universality of the judgment), "every doer of wickedness," up to that day and those who should then be, shall be stubble." The proud and mighty, who in this life were strong as iron and brass, so that no one dared resist them, but they dared to fight with God, these, in the Day of Judgment, shall be most powerless, as stubble cannot resist the fire, in an ever-living death."

That shall leave them neither root nor branch - "i. e. they shall have no hope of shooting up again to life; that life, I mean, which is worthy of

love, and in glory with God, in holiness and bliss. For when the root has not been wholly cut away, nor the shoot torn up as from the depth, some hope is retained, that it may again shoot up. For, as it is written Job 10:4:7, ‹There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sproul again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease.‘ But if it be wholly torn up from below and from its very roots, and its shoots be fiercely cut away, all hope, that it can again shoot up to life, will perish also. So, he saith, will all hope of the lovers of sin perish. For so the divine Isaiah clearly announces Isaiah 66:24, "their worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh."

Verse 2

But (And) unto you, who fear My Name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise - It is said of God Psalm 84:11, "The Lord God is a sun and a shield, and Isaiah 60:19-20, The Lord shall be to thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory; thy sun shall no more go down, for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light;" and Zacharias, speaking of the office of John the Baptist in the words of Malachi, "thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His way, speaks of Luke 1:76, Luke 1:78-79. the tender mercy of our God, whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness." "He who is often called Lord and God, and Angel and Captain of the Lord‘s host, and Christ and priest and Word and Wisdom of God and Image, is now called the Sun of Righteousness. He, the Father promises, will arise, not to all, but to those only who fear His Name, giving them the light of the Sun of Righteousness, as the reward of their fear toward Him. This is God the Word Who saith, ‹I am the Light of the world,‘ Who was ‹the Light of every one who cometh into the world."‘ Primarily, Malachi speaks of our Lord‘s second Coming, when Hebrews 9:28. "to them that look for Him shall He appear, a second time unto salvation."

For as, in so many places (As Psalm 1:6; Psalm 2:12; Psalm 3:7-8; Psalm 5:10-12; Psalm 6:8-10; Psalm 7:16-17; Psalm 9:17-20; Psalm 10:16-18; Psalm 11:6-7; Psalm 17:13-15; Psalm 20:8; Psalm 26:9-12; Psalm 31:23; Psalm 32:10-11; Psalm 34:21-22; Psalm 35:26-28; Psalm 36:10-12; Psalm 37:38-40; Psalm 40:15-17; Psalm 50:22-23; Psalm 52:5-9; Psalm 55:22-23; Psalm 58:10-11; Psalm 63:10-11; Psalm 64:9-10; Psalm 73:27-28; Psalm 104:33-35; Psalm 112:9-10; Psalm 126:5; Psalm 149:9.) the Old Testament exhibits the opposite lots of the righteous and the wicked, so here

the prophet speaks of the Day of Judgment, in reference to the two opposite classes, of which he had before spoken, the proud and evil doers, and the fearers of God. The title, "the Sun of Righteousness," belongs to both comings, "in the first, lie diffused rays of righteousness, whereby He justified and daily justifies any sinners whatever, who will look to Him, i. e., believe in Him and obey Him, as the sun imparts light; joy and life to all who turn toward it." In the second, the righteousness which He gave, lie will own and exhibit, cleared from all the misjudgment of the world, before men and Angels. Yet more, healing is, throughout Holy Scripture, used of the removal of sickness or curing of wounds, in the individual or state or Church, and, as to the individual, bodily or spiritual.

So David thanks God, first for the forgiveness Psalm 103:3-5, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;" then for healing of his soul, "Who healeth all thy diseases;" then for salvation, "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;" then for the crown laid up for him, "Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies;" then, with the abiding sustenance and satisfying joy, "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things." Healing then primarily belongs to thin life, in which we are still encompassed with infirmities, and even His elect and His saints have still, whereof to be healed. The full then and complete healing of the soul, the integrity of all its powers will be in the life to come. There, will be "understanding without error, memory without forgetfulness, thought without distraction, love without simulation, sensation without offence, satisfying without satiety, universal health without sickness." "For through Adam's sin the soul was wounded in understanding, through obscurity and ignorance; in will, through the leaning to perishing goods; as concupiscent, through infirmity and manifold concupiscence. In heaven Christ will heal all these, giving to the understanding light and knowledge; to the will, constancy in good; to the desire, that it should desire nothing but what is right and good. Then too the healing of the seal will be the light of glory, the vision and fruition of God, and the glorious endowments consequent thereon, overstreaming all the powers of the soul and therefrom to the body." "God has made the soul of a nature so mighty, that from its most full beatitude, which at the end of time is promised to the saints, there shall overflow to the inferior nature, the body, not bliss, which belongs to the soul as intelligent and capable of fruition, but the fullness of health that is, the vigorousness of incorruption."

And ye shall go forth - , as from a prison-house, from the miseries of this lifeless life, and grow up, or perhaps more probably, bound as the animal, which has been confined, exults in its regained freedom, itself full of life and exuberance of delight. So the Psalmist Psalm 149:5, "The saints shall exult in glory." And our Lord uses the like word, as to the way, with which they should greet persecution to the utmost, for His Name's sake. Swiftness of motion is one of the endowments of the spiritual body, after the resurrection; as the angels, to whom the righteous shall be like, Luke 20:36, Ezekiel 1:14 ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning."

Verse 3

And ye shall tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet. It shall be a great reversal. He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he, that humbleth himself shall be exalted - Here the wicked often have the pre-eminence. This was the complaint of the murmurers among the Jews; in the morning of the Resurrection Psalm 49:14, "the upright shall have dominion over them." The wicked, he had said, shall be as stubble, and that day Psalm 4:1, "shall burn them up;" here, then, they are as the ashes, the only remnant of the stubble, as the dust under the feet. "The elect shall rejoice, that they have, in mercy, escaped such misery. Therefore they shall be kindled inconceivably with the divine love, and shall from their inmost heart give thanks unto God." And being thus of one mind with God, and seeing all things as He seeth, they will rejoice in His judgments, because they are His. For they cannot have one slightest velleity, other than the all-perfect Will of God. So Isaiah closes his prophecy Isaiah 66:24, "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men, that have transgressed against Me, for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh. So Psalm 58:10. The righteous shall rejoice, when he seeth the vengeance;" and another Psalmist Psalm 107:42, "The righteous shall see and rejoice; and all wickedness shall stop her mouth; and Job Job 22:19. The righteous see and are glad, and the innocent laugh them to scorn."

Verse 4

Remember ye the law of Moses, My servant - Galatians 3:24. "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." They then who were most faithful to the law, would be most prepared for Christ. But for those of his own day, too, who were negligent both of the ceremonial and moral law,

he says "Since the judgment of God will be so fearful, remember now unceasingly and observe the law of God given by Moses."

Which I commanded - o

Unto him for - (literally upon, incumbent upon) all Israel Not Moses commanded them, but God by His servant Moses; therefore He "would in the day of judgment take strict account of each, whether they had or had not kept them. He would glorify those who obeyed, He would condemn those who disobeyed them." They had asked, "Where is the God of judgment? What profit, that we have kept the ordinance?" He tells them of the judgment to come, and bids them take heed, that they did indeed keep them, for there was a day of account to be held for all.

The statutes and judgments - Better, "statutes and judgments," i. e., consisting in them; it seems added as an explanation of the word, law, individualizing them. Duty is fulfilled, not in a general acknowledgment of law, or an arbitrary selection of some favorite commandments, which cost the human will less; as, in our Lord's time, they minutely observed the law of tithes, but Matthew 23:23: "omitted weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." It is in obedience to the commandments, one by one, one and all. Moses exhorted to the keeping of the law, under these same words: Deuteronomy 4:1-2, Deuteronomy 4:5, Deuteronomy 4:8, Deuteronomy 4:14, "Now, therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and judgments which I teach you, to do them, that ye may live. Ye shall not add unto the word that I command you, neither shall ye diminish it. Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me. What nation so great, that hath statutes and judgments, righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? The Lord commanded me at that time, to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land, whither ye go to possess it."

Verse 5

Behold I will send (I send, as a future, proximate in the prophet's mind) you Elijah the prophet - The Archangel Gabriel interprets this for us, to include the sending of John the Immerser. For he not only says Luke 1:17. that he shall "go before" the Lord "in the spirit and power of Elias," but describes his mission in the characteristic words of Malachi, "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children:" and those other words also, "and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," perhaps represent the sequel in Malachi, "and the hearts of the children to the fathers;" for their hearts

could only be so turned by conversion to God, whom the fathers, patriarchs and prophets, knew, loved and served; and whom they served in name only. John the Immerser, in denying that he was Elias, John 1:21 denied only, that he was that great prophet himself. Our Lord, in saying Matthew 11:14, "This is Elias, which was for to come Matthew 17:12 that Elias is come already and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed," met the error of the scribes, that He could not be the Christ, because Elias was not yet come. When He says Matthew 17:11, "Elias truly shall first come and restore all things," He implies a coming of Elijah, other than that of John the Immerser, since he was already martyred, and all things were not yet restored. This must also be the fullest fulfillment. "For the great and terrible Day of the Lord" is the Day of Judgment, of which all earthly judgments, however desolating, (as the destruction of Jerusalem) are but shadows and earnests. Before our Lord's coming all things looked on to His first coming, and, since that coming, all looks on to the second, which is the completion of the first and of all things in time.

Our Lord's words, "Elias truly shall first come and restore all things," seem to me to leave no question, that, as John the Immerser came, in the spirit and power of Elias, before His first coming, so, before the second coming, Elijah should come in person, as Jews and Christians have alike expected. This has been the Christian expectation from the first. Justin Martyr asked his opponent "Shall we not conceive that the Word of God has proclaimed Elias to be the forerunner of the great and terrible day of His second Coming?" "Certainly," was Trypho's reply. Justin continues, "Our Lord Himself taught us in His own teaching that this very thing shall be, when the said that ‹Elias also shall come;' and we know that this shall be fulfilled, when He is about to come from heaven in glory." Tertullian says "Elias is to come again, not after a departure from life, but after a translation; not to be restored to the body, from which he was never taken; but to be restored to the world, from which he was translated; not by way of restoration to life, but for the completion of prophecy; one and the same in name and in person." "Enoch and Elias were translated, and their death is not recorded, as being deferred; but they are reserved as to die, that they may vanquish Antichrist by their blood."

And, in proof that the end was not yet, "No one has yet received Elias; no one has yet fled from Antichrist." And the ancient author of the verses

against Marcion;, “Elias who has not yet tasted the debt of death, because he is again to come into the world.” Origen says simply in one place, that the Saviour answered the question as to the objection of the Scribes, “not annulling what had been handed down concerning Elias, but affirming that there was another coming of Elias before Christ, unknown to the scribes, according to which, not knowing him, and, being in a manner, accomplices in his being cast into prison by Herod and slain by him, they had done to him what they listed.” Hippolytus has, “As two Comings of our Lord and Saviour were indicated by the Scriptures, the first in the flesh, in dishonor, that He might be set at naught - the second in glory, when He shall come from heaven with the heavenly host and the glory of the Father - so two forerunners were pointed out, the first, John, the son of Zacharias, and again - since He is manifested as Judge at the end of the world, His forerunners must first appear, as He says through Malachi, ‹I will send to you Elias the Tishbite before the great and terrible day of the Lord shall come. ‹“

Hilary, “The Apostles inquire in anxiety about the times of Elias. To whom He answereth, that “Elias will come and restore all things,” that is, will recall to the knowledge of God, what he shall find of Israel; but he signifies that John came “in the spirit and power of Elias,” to whom they had shown all severe and harsh dealings, that, foreannouncing the Coming of the Lord, he might be a forerunner of the Passion also by an example of wrong and harass.” “We understand that those same prophets (Moses and Elias) will come before His Coming, who, the Apocalypse of John says, will be slain by Antichrist, although there are various opinions of very many, as to Enoch or Jeremiah, that one of them is to die, as Elias.”

Hilary the Deacon, 355 a.d., has on the words, “I suppose God hath set forth us the Apostles last;” “He therefore applies these to his own person, because he was always in distress, suffering, beyond the rest, persecutions and distresses, as Enoch and Elias will suffer, who will be Apostles at the last time. For they have to be sent before Christ, to make ready the people of God, and fortify all the Churches to resist Antichrist, of whom the Apocalypse attests, that they will suffer persecutions and be slain.” “When the faithless shall be secure of the kingdom of the devil, the saints, i. e., Enoch and Elias being slain, rejoicing in the victory, and ‹sending gifts, one to another‘ as the Apocalypse says Revelation 11:10 sudden destruction

shall come upon them. For Christ at His Coming, shall destroy them all." Gregory of Nyssa quotes the prophecy under the heading, that "before the second Coming of our Lord, Elias should come."

Ambrose, "Because the Lord was to come down from heaven, and to ascend to heaven, He raised Elias to heaven, to bring him back to the earth at the time He should please." "The beast, Antichrist, ascends from the abyss to fight against Elias and Enoch and John, who are restored to the earth for the testimony to the Lord Jesus, as we read in the Apocalypse of John."

Jerome gives here the mystical meaning; "God will send, in Elias (which is interpreted ‹My God‘ and wire is of the town Thisbe, which signifies ‹conversion‘ or ‹penitence‘) the whole choir of the prophets, "to convert the heart of the fathers to the sons," namely, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the patriarchs, that their posterity may believe in the Lord the Saviour, in whom themselves believed: ‹for Abraham saw the day of the Lord and was glad.‘" Here, he speaks of the "coming of Elias before their anointed," as a supposition of Jews and Judaizing heretics. But in commenting on our Lord‘s words in Matthew, he adheres twice to the literal meaning. On Matthew 11:14-15, "Some think that John is therefore called Elias, because, as, according to Malachi, at the second coming of the Saviour. On Matthew 17:11-12, Elias will precede and announce the Judge to come, so did John at His first coming, and each is a messenger, of the first or second coming of the Lord:" and again concisely, On Matthew 17:11-12, "He who is to come in the second Coining of the Saviour in the actual body, now comes through John in spirit and power;" and he speaks of Enoch and Elias as "the two witnesses in the Revelation, since, according to the Apocalypse of John, Enoch and Elias are spoken of, as having to die."

Chrysostom, "When He saith that Elias "cometh and shall restore all things," He means Elias himself, and the conversion of the Jews, which shall then be; but when He saith, "which was to come," He calls John, Elias, according to the manner of his ministry."

In Augustine‘s time it was the universal belief., "When he (Malachi) had admonished them to remember the law of Moses, because he foresaw, that

they would for a long time not receive it spiritually, as it ought, he added immediately; “And I will send you Elias the Thisbite” etc. That when, through this Elias, the great and wonderful prophet, at the last time before the judgment, the law shall have been expounded to them, the Jews shall believe in the true Christ, i. e., in our Christ, is everywhere in the mouths and hearts of the faithful. For not without reason is it hoped, that he shall come before the Coming of the Saviour, as Judge, because not without reason is it believed that he still lives. For he was carried in a chariot of fire from things below; which Scripture most evidently attests. When he shall come then, by expounding the law spiritually, which the Jews now understand carnally, he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children.”

Cyril of Alexandria, his antagonist “Theodoret, and Theodore” of Mopsuestia, who was loose from all tradition, had the same clear belief. Cyril; “It is demonstrative of the gentleness and long-suffering of God, that Elias also the Tishbite shall shine upon us, to foreannounce when the Judge shall come to those in the whole world. For the Son shall come down, as Judge, in the glory of the Father, attended by the angels, and shall ‹sit on the throne of His glory, judging the world in righteousness, and shall reward every man according to his works.‘ But since we are in many sins, well is it for us, that the divine prophet goes before Him, bringing all those on earth to one mind; that all, being brought to the unity through the faith, and ceasing from evil intents, may fulfill that which is good, and so be saved when the Judge cometh down. The blessed John the Baptist came before Him “in the spirit and power of Elias.” But, as he preached saying, ‹Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight,‘ so also the divine Elias proclaims His then being near and all-but-present, that He may ‹judge the world in righteousness.‘” Theodoret;, “Malachi teaches us how, when Antichrist shall presume on these things, the great Elias shall appear, preaching to the Jews the coming of Christ: and he shall convert many, for this is the meaning of, “he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children,” i. e., the Jews (for these he calls fathers, as being older in knowledge) to those who believed from the Gentiles. They who shall believe through the preaching of the great Elias, and shall join themselves to the Gentiles who seized the salvation sent to them, shall become one church.

He hints, how when these things are done by Antichrist, Michael the Archangel will set all in motion, that Elias should come and foreannounce the coming of the Lord that the then Jews may obtain salvation." And on this place, "Knowing well, that they would neither obey the law, nor receive Him when He came, but would deliver Him to be crucified, He promises them, in His unspeakable love for man, that He will again send Elias as a herald of salvation, ‹Lo, I will send you Elias the Tishbite.' And signifying the time, He added, ‹Before the great and terrible day of the Lord shall come:' He named the Day of His Second Coming. But He teaches us, what the great Elias shall do, when he comes, ‹Who shall bring back the heart of the father to the son' etc. And pointing out the end, for which Elias should first come, ‹Lest I come and smite the earth utterly.' For lest, finding you all in unbelief, I send you all to that endless punishment, Elias will first come, and will persuade you, O Jews, to unite you indissolubly with those, who from the Gentiles believe in Me, and to be united to My one Church."

Theodore of Mopsuestia paraphrases: "In addition to all which I have said, I give you this last commandment, to remember My law, which I gave to all Israel through Moses, plainly declaring what they ought to do in each thing, and as the first token of obedience, to receive the Lord Christ when He cometh, appearing for the salvation of all men: Who will end the law, but show His own perfection. It had been well, had you immediately believed Him when He came, and known Him, as He whom Moses and all the prophets signified, Who should put an end to the law, and reveal the common salvation of all men, so that it should be manifest to all, that this is the sum and chief good of the whole dispensation of the law, to bring all men to the Lord Christ, Who, for those great goods, should be manifested in His own time. But since, when He manifested Himself, ye manifested your own ungainliness, the blessed Elias shall be sent to you before the second Coming of Christ, when He will come from heaven, to unite those who, for religion, are separated from each other, and, through the knowledge of religion, to bring the fathers to one-mindedness with the children, and in a word, to bring all men to one and the same harmony, when those, then found in ungodliness, shall receive from him the knowledge of the truth in the communion with the godly thence ensuing."

“The African author of the work on the promises and predictions of God.” (between 450 and 455 a.d.)

, “Against Antichrist shall be sent two witnesses, the prophets Enoch and Elijah, against whom shall arise three false prophets of Antichrist.”

Isidore of Seville 595 a.d.;, “Elias, borne in a chariot of fire, ascended to heaven, to come according to the prophet Malachi at the end of the world, and to precede Christ, to announce His last coming, with great deeds and wondrous signs, so that, on earth too, Antichrist will war against him, be against him, or him who is to come with him, and will slay them; their bodies also will lie unburied in the streets. Then, raised by the Lord, they will smite the kingdom of Antichrist with a great blow. After this, the Lord will come, and will slay Antichrist with the word of His mouth, and those who worshiped him.”, “This will be in the last times, when, on the preaching of Elias, Judah will be converted to Christ.”

To add one more, for his great gifts, Gregory the Great., “It is promised, that when Elias shall come, he shall bring back the hearts of the sons to their fathers, that the doctrine of the old, which is now taken from the hearts of the Jews, may, in the mercy of God, return, when the sons shall begin to understand of the Lord God, what the fathers taught.”, “Although Elias is related to have been carried to heaven, he deferred, he did not escape, death. For it is said of him by the mouth of the Truth Himself, ‹Elias shall come and restore all things.‘ He shall come to ‹restore all things;‘ for to this end is he restored to this world, that he may both fulfill the office of preaching, and pay the debt of the flesh.”, “The holy Church, although it now loses many through the shock of temptation, yet, at the end of the world, it receives its own double, when, having received the Gentiles to the full, all Judaea too, which shall then be, agrees to hasten to its faith. For hence it is written, “Until the fullness of the Gentiles shall come, and so all Israel shall be saved.”

Hence, in the Gospel the Truth says, “Elias shall come and shall restore all things.” For now the Church has lost the Israelites, whom it could not convert by preaching; but then, at the preaching of Elias, while it collects all which it shall find, it receives in a manner more fully what it has lost.”,

“John is spoken of as to come in the spirit and power of Elias, because, as Elias shall precede the second Coming of the Lord, so John preceded His first. For as Elias will come, as precursor of the Judge, so John was made the precursor of the Redeemer. John then was Elias in spirit; he was not Elias in person. What then the Lord owned as to spirit, that John denies as to the person.”

Whether Elijah is one of the two witnesses spoken of in the Apocalypse, is obviously a distinct question. Of commentators on the Apocalypse, Arethas remarks that as to Elijah, there is clear testimony from Holy Scripture, this of Malachi; but that, with regard to Enoch, we have only the fact of his being freed from death by translation, and the tradition of the Church. John Damascene fixed the belief in the Eastern Church. In the West, Bede e. g., who speaks of the belief that the two witnesses were Elijah and Enoch, as what was said by “some doctors,” takes our Lord‘s declaration, that Elijah shall return, in its simple meaning. (on Matthew 17:11; Mark 9.) Yet it was no matter of faith. When the belief as to a personal Antichrist was changed by Luther and Calvin, the belief of a personal forerunner of Christ gave way also.

Verse 6

And he shall turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children - Now they were unlike, and severed by that unlikeness from each other. Yet not on earth, for on earth parents and children were alike alienated from God, and united between themselves in wickedness or worldliness. The common love of the world or of worldly pursuits, or gain or self-exaltation, or making a fortune or securing it, is, so far, a common bond of interest to those of one family, through a common selfishness, though that selfishness is the parent of general discord, of fraud, violence, and other misdeeds. Nay, conversion of children or parents becomes rather a source of discord, embittering the unconverted. Whence our Lord says, “Think not, that I Matthew 10:34-36. am come to send peace on the earth. I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: and a man‘s foes shall be they of his own household;” a prophecy fulfilled continually in the early persecutions, even to the extent of those other words of our Lord Matthew 10:21, “the brother shall deliver up the

brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death."

It is fulfilled also in the intense hatred of the Jews at this day, to any who are converted to Christ; a hatred which seems to have no parallel in the world. Nor do the words seem to mean that fathers and children should be united in one common conversion to God, as one says Ibn Ezra. The Jews, although mostly agreed, that Elijah will come, are disagreed as to the end of his coming. By some he is spoken of as a Redeemer. Tanchuma (f. 31. 1), "God said to Israel, In this world I sent an angel to east out the nations before you, but in the future (or, in the world to come, Yalkut Shim'oni f. 98-29) myself will lead you and will ‹send you Elijah the prophet.'" Pesikta rabbathi (in Yalkut Shim'oni ii. f. 32. 4)" Both redeemed Israel: Moses in Egypt, and Elias in that which is to come." (Id. ib. f. 53. 2), "I send you a redeemer." Midrash Shocher tof Ibid. f. 884, "Israel said, ‹It is written of the first redemption, ‹He sent Moses His servant, Aaron whom He had chosen; send me two like them.' God answered; ‹I will send you Elijah the prophet: this is one, the other is he, of whom Isaiah spoke Isaiah 42:1. Behold, my servant whom I have chosen.'" "Shemoth Rabba (Sect. 3. John 8:56 "as these believed, hoped for, longed exceedingly for, and loved Christ to come, so their sons should believe, hope in, long exceedingly for and love Christ, Who was come, yea is present; and so the heart of fathers, which before was turned from their unbelieving children, he should turn to them, now believing, and cause the patriarchs to own and love the Jews believing in Christ, as indeed their children, for ‹your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; he saw it and was glad, Christ saith. ‹"

Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse - , i. e., with an utter destruction, from which there should be no redemption. In the end, God will so smite the earth, and all, not converted to Him. The prayer and zeal of Elijah will gain a reprieve, in which God will spare the world for the gathering of His own elect, the full conversion of the Jews, which shall fulfill the Apostle's words Romans 11:26, "So shall all Israel be saved."

After the glad tidings, Malachi, and the Old Testament in him, ends with words of awe, telling us of the consequence of the final hardening of the heart; the eternal severance, when the unending end of the everlasting Gospel itself shall be accomplished, and its last grain shall be gathered into the garner of the Lord. The Jews, who would be wiser than the prophet, repeat the previous verse, because Malachi closes so awfully. The Maker of

the heart of man knew better the hearts which He had made, and taught their authors to end the books of Isaiah and Ecclesiastes with words of awe, from which man‘s heart so struggles to escape. To turn to God here, or everlasting destruction from His presence there, is the only choice open to thee.” “Think of this, when lust goads thee, or ambition solicits thee, or anger convulses thee, or the flesh blandishes thee, or the world allures thee, or the devil displays his deceitful pomp and enticement. In thy hand and thy choice are life and death, heaven and hell, salvation and damnation, bliss or misery everlasting. Choose which thou willest. Think, ‹A moment which delighteth, eternity which tortureth;‘ on the other hand, ‹a moment which tortureth, eternity which delighteth.‘“

“I see that all things come to an end:
Thy commandment is exceeding broad.”
Psalm 119:96

“As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after Thee, O God.”
Psalm 42:1

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MATTHEW INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Matthew

The word "Gospel" means "good news," or "a joyful message." It commonly signifies the message itself, but it is here used to denote "the book" containing the record of the message. The title "saint," given to the sacred writers of the New Testament, is of Roman Catholic origin, and is of no authority.

It has been generally believed that Matthew wrote his Gospel in his native tongue; that is, the language of Palestine. That language was not pure Hebrew but a mixture of the Hebrew, Chaldaic, and Syriac, commonly called "Syro-Chaldaic" or "Aramaic." Our Saviour undoubtedly used this language in his conversation and his disciples would naturally use this language also, unless there were good reasons why they should write in a foreign tongue. It is agreed that the remainder of the New Testament was written in Greek. The reason for this, in preference to the native language of the writers, was that Greek was the language then generally spoken and understood throughout the eastern countries conquered by Alexander the Great, and particularly in Judea, and in the regions where the apostles first labored.

The Christian fathers, without any exception, assert that Matthew wrote his Gospel for the use of the Christians in Palestine, and say that it was written in the Hebrew dialect. It should be remarked, however, that many modern critics of much eminence do not suppose the evidence that Matthew wrote in Hebrew to be decisive, and believe that there is sufficient proof that, like the other writers of the New Testament, Matthew wrote in Greek. See Lardner's *Works*, vol. v. p. 308-318, London edition, 1829.

The Gospel of Matthew exists now, however, only in Greek. The original Hebrew, or Syro-Chaldaic, if it were written in that language, has been. designedly laid aside or undesignedly lost. The question, then, naturally arises, Who is the author of the greek translation which we possess? And is it to be regarded as of divine authority?

It has been conjectured by some that Matthew himself furnished a Greek translation of the Hebrew. This conjecture, in itself probable enough, is

destitute, however, of testimony to support it. Athanasius, one of the early fathers, says that it was translated by "James, the brother of our Lord according to the flesh." Papias, another of the early fathers, says that "each one translated it as he was able." If James translated it, there can be no question about its inspiration and canonical authority. Nor does it affect the question of its inspiration, even if we are ignorant of the name of the translator. The proper inquiry is whether it had such evidence of inspiration as to be satisfactory to the Church in the times when they were under the direction of the apostles. None acquainted with ancient history will doubt that it *had* such evidence.

Epiphanius says that the Gospel by Matthew was written while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome. This was about 63 a.d., about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. It is now generally supposed that this Gospel was written about this time. There is very clear evidence in the Gospel that it was written *before* the destruction of Jerusalem. The destruction of the Holy City is clearly and minutely foretold, but there is not the slightest intimation in it that these predictions had been accomplished - a thing which we should naturally expect if the Gospel was not written until after these calamities came upon the Jews. Compare Acts 11:28. It has been only recently uniformly regarded as having been written *before* either of the other evangelists. Some of late have, however, endeavored to show that the Gospel by Luke was written first. All testimony, and all ancient arrangements of the books, are against the opinion; and when such is the fact, it is of little consequence to attend to other arguments.

In all copies of the New Testament, and in all translations, this Gospel has been placed *first*. This, it is probable, would not have been done had not Matthew published his Gospel *before* any other was written.

Matthew, the writer of this Gospel, also called Levi, son of Alphaeus, was a publican (tax-gatherer) under the Romans. See the Matthew 9:9 note; Luke 5:27 note. Of his life and death little is known with certainty. Socrates, a writer of the 5th century a.d., says that Matthew went to Ethiopia after the apostles were scattered abroad from Judea, and he died a martyr in a city called Nadebbar, but by what kind of death is altogether uncertain. However, others speak of his preaching and dying in Parthia or

Persia, and the diversity of their accounts seems to show that they are all without good foundation. See Lardher‘s *Works*, vol. v. pp. 296,297.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The book of the generation - This is the proper title of the chapter. It is the same as to say, "the account of the ancestry or family, or the genealogical table of Jesus Christ." The phrase is common in Jewish writings. Compare Genesis 5:1. "This is the book of the generations of Adam," i. e., the genealogical table of the family or descendants of Adam. See also Genesis 6:9. The Jews, moreover, as we do, kept such tables of their own families. and it is probable that this was copied from the record of the family of Joseph.

Jesus - See the notes at Matthew 1:21.

Christ - The word "Christ" is a Greek word, Χριστός Christossignifying "anointed." The Hebrew word, משיח mâshîyachsignifying the same is "Messiah." Hence, Jesus is called either the Messiah, or the Christ, meaning the same thing. The Jews speak of the Messiah; Christians speak of him as the Christ. In ancient times, when kings and priests were set apart to their office, they were anointed with oil, Leviticus 4:3; Leviticus 6:20; Exodus 28:41; Exodus 29:7; 1 Samuel 9:16; 1 Samuel 15:1; 2 Samuel 23:1. To anoint, therefore, means often the same as to consecrate, or to set apart to an office. Hence, those thus set apart are said to be anointed, or to be the anointed of God. It is for this reason that the name is given to the Lord Jesus. Compare the notes at Daniel 9:24. He was set apart by God to be the King, and High Priest, and Prophet of his people. Anointing with oil was, moreover, supposed to be emblematic of the influences of the Holy Spirit; and since God gave him the Spirit without measure John 3:34, so he is especially called "the Anointed of God."

The Son of David - The word "son" among the Jews had a great variety of significations. It means literally a son; then a grandson; a descendant: an adopted son; a disciple, or one who is an object of tender affection one who is to us as a son. In this place it means a descendant of David; or one who was of the family of David. It was important to trace the genealogy of Jesus up to David, because the promise had been made that the Messiah should be of his family, and all the Jews expected that it would be so. It would be impossible, therefore, to convince a Jew that Jesus was the Messiah, unless it could be shown that he was descended from David. See Jeremiah 23:5; Psalm 132:10-11, compared with Acts 13:23, and John 7:42.

The son of Abraham - The descendant of Abraham. The promise was made to Abraham also. See Genesis 12:3; Genesis 21:12; compare Hebrews 11:13; Galatians 3:16. The Jews expected that the Messiah would be descended from him; and it was important, therefore, to trace the genealogy up to him also. Though Jesus was of humble birth, yet he was descended from most illustrious ancestors. Abraham, the father of the faithful - "the beauteous model of an Eastern prince," and David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, the conqueror, the magnificent and victorious leader of the people of God, were both among his ancestors. From these two persons, the most eminent for piety, and the most renowned for their excellencies of all the people of antiquity, sacred or profane, the Lord Jesus was descended; and though his birth and life were humble, yet they who regard an illustrious descent as of value, may find here all that is to be admired in piety, purity, patriotism, splendor, dignity, and renown.

Verses 2-16

These verses contain the genealogy of Jesus. Luke also Luke 3 gives a genealogy of the Messiah. No two passages of Scripture have caused more difficulty than these, and various attempts have been made to explain them. There are two sources of difficulty in these catalogues.

1.Many names that are found in the Old Testament are here omitted; and,

2.The tables of Matthew and Luke appear in many points to be different.

From Adam to Abraham Matthew has mentioned no names, and Luke only has given the record. From Abraham to David the two tables are alike. Of course there is no difficulty in reconciling these two parts of the tables. The difficulty lies in that part of the genealogy from David to Christ. There they are entirely different. They are manifestly different lines. Not only are the names different, but Luke has mentioned, in this part of the genealogy, no less than 42 names, while Matthew has recorded only 27 names.

Various ways have been proposed to explain this difficulty, but it must be admitted that none of them is perfectly satisfactory. It does not comport with the design of these notes to enter minutely into an explanation of the perplexities of these passages. All that can be done is to suggest the various ways in which attempts have been made to explain them.

1. It is remarked that in nothing are mistakes more likely to occur than in such tables. From the similarity of names, and the different names by

which the same person is often called, and from many other causes, errors would be more likely to creep into genealogical tables than in other writings. Some of the difficulties may have possibly occurred from this cause.

2. Most interpreters have supposed that Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph, and Luke that of Mary. They were both descended from David, but in different lines. This solution derives some plausibility from the fact that the promise was made to David, and as Jesus was not the son of Joseph, it was important to show that Mary was also descended from him. But though this solution is plausible, and may be true, yet it wants evidence. It cannot, however, be proved that this was not the design of Luke.

3. It has been said also that Joseph was the legal son and heir of Heli, though the real son of Jacob, and that thus the two lines terminated in him. This was the explanation suggested by most of the Christian fathers, and on the whole is the most satisfactory. It was a law of the Jews that if a man died without children, his brother should marry his widow. Thus the two lines might have been intermingled, According to this solution, which was first proposed by Africanus, Matthan, descended from Solomon, married Estha, of whom was born Jacob. After Matthan‘s death, Matthat being of the same tribe, but of another family, married his widow, and of this marriage Heli was born. Jacob and Heli were therefore children of the same mother. Heli dying without children, his brother Jacob married his widow, and begat Joseph, who was thus the legal son of Heli. This is agreeable to the account in the two evangelists. Matthew says that Jacob begat Joseph; Luke says that Joseph was the son of Heli, i. e., was his legal heir, or was reckoned in law to be his son. This can be seen by the plan on the next page, showing the nature of the connection.

Though these solutions may not seem to be entirely satisfactory, yet there are two additional considerations which should set the matter at rest, and lead to the conclusion that the narratives are not really inconsistent.

1. No difficulty was ever found, or alleged, in regard to them, by any of the early enemies of Christianity. There is no evidence that they ever adduced them as containing a contradiction. Many of those enemies were

acute, learned, and able; and they show by their writings that they were not indisposed to detect all the errors that could possibly be found in the sacred narrative. Now it is to be remembered that the Jews were fully competent to show that these tables were incorrect, if they were really so; and it is clear that they were fully disposed, if possible, to do it. The fact, therefore, that it is not done, is clear evidence that they thought it to be correct. The same may be said of the acute pagans who wrote against Christianity. None of them have called in question the correctness of these tables. This is full proof that, in a time when it was easy to understand these tables, they were believed to be correct.

2. The evangelists are not responsible for the correctness of these tables. They are responsible only for what was their real and professed object to do. What was that object? It was to prove to the satisfaction of the Jews that Jesus was descended from David, and therefore that there was no argument from his ancestry that he was not the promised Messiah. Now to make this out, it was not necessary, nor would it have conduced to their argument, to have formed a new table of genealogy. All that could be done was to go to the family records - to the public tables, and copy them as they were actually kept, and show that, according to the records of the nation, Jesus was descended from David. This, among the Jews, would be full and decided testimony in the case. And this was doubtless done. In the same way, the records of a family among us, as they are kept by the family, are proof in courts of justice now of the birth, names, etc., of individuals. Nor is it necessary or proper for a court to call them in question or to attempt to correct them. So, the tables here are good evidence to the only point that the writers wished to establish: that is, to show to the Jews that Jesus of Nazareth was descended from David. The only inquiry which can now be fairly made is whether they copied those tables correctly. It is clear that no man can prove that they did not so copy them, and therefore that no one can adduce them as an argument against the correctness of the New Testament.

Verse 17

So all the generations … - This division of the names in the genealogical tables was doubtless adopted for the purpose of aiding the memory. It was common among the Jews; and other similar instances are preserved. The Jews were destitute of books besides the Old Testament, and

they had but few copies of that among them, and those chiefly in their synagogues. They would therefore naturally devise plans to keep up the remembrance of the principal facts in their history. One method of doing this was to divide the tables of genealogy into portions of equal length, to be committed to memory. This greatly facilitated the remembrance of the names. A man who wished to commit to memory the names of a regiment of soldiers would naturally divide it into companies and platoons, and this would greatly facilitate his work. This was doubtless the reason in the case before us. And, though it is not strictly accurate, yet it was the Jewish way of keeping their records, and answered their purpose. There were three leading persons and events that nearly, or quite, divided their history into equal portions: Abraham, David, and the Babylonian captivity. From one to the other was about 14 generations, and by omitting a few names it was sufficiently accurate to be made a general guide or directory in recalling the principal events in their history.

In counting these divisions, however, it will be seen that there is some difficulty in making out the number 14 in each division. This may be explained in the following manner: In the first division, Abraham is the first and David the last, making 14 altogether. In the second series, David would naturally be placed first, and the 14 was completed in Josiah, about the time of the captivity, as sufficiently near for the purpose of convenient computation, 2 Chronicles 35. In the third division Josiah would naturally be placed first, and the number was completed in Joseph; so that David and Josiah would be reckoned twice. This may be shown by the following table of the names:

d **First**
DivisionSecond
DivisionThird
Division

d

d AbrahamDavidJosias

d

d IsaacSolomonJechonias

d

d JacobRoboamSalathiel

d

d JudasAbiaZorobabel

d

d PharesAsaAbiud

d

d EsromJosaphatEliakim

d

d AramJoramAzor

d

d AminadabOziasSadoc

d

d NaassonJoathamAchim

d

d SalmonAchazEliud

d

d BoazEzekiasEleazar

d

d ObedManassesMatthan

d

d JesseAmonJacob

d

d DavidJosiasJoseph

d

d 141414

d

d

Carrying away into Babylon - This refers to the captivity of Jerusalem, and the removal of the Jews to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, 588 years before Christ. See 2 Chronicles 36. Josiah was king when these calamities began to come upon the Jews, but the exact time of the 70 years of captivity did not commence until the 11th year of Zedekiah‘s reign, or 32 years after the death of Josiah. Babylon was situated on the Euphrates, and was encompassed with walls which were about 60 miles in circuit, 87 feet broad, and 350 feet high, and the city was entered by 100 brass gates - 25 on each side. It was the capital of a vast empire, and the Jews remained there for 70 years. See Barnes‘ notes at Isaiah 13.

Verse 18

Now the birth of Jesus Christ - The circumstances attending his birth.

Was on this wise - In this manner.

Espoused - Betrothed, or engaged to be married. There was commonly an interval of ten or twevle months, among the Jews, between the contract of marriage and the celebration of the nuptials (see Genesis 24:55; Judges

14:8; Deuteronomy 20:7), yet such was the nature of this engagement, that unfaithfulness to each other was deemed adultery. See Deuteronomy 22:25, Deuteronomy 22:28.

With child by the Holy Ghost - See the note at Luke 1:35.

Verse 19

Her husband - The word in the original does not imply that they were married. It means here the man to whom she was espoused.

A just man - Justice consists in rendering to every man his own. Yet this is evidently not the character intended to be given here of Joseph. The meaning is that he was kind, tender, merciful; that he was so attached to Mary that he was not willing that she should be exposed to public shame. He sought, therefore, secretly to dissolve the connection, and to restore her to her friends without the punishment commonly inflicted on adultery. The word just has not unfrequently this meaning of mildness, or mercy. See 1 John 1:9; compare Cicero, *De Fin.* 5,23.

A public example - To expose her to public shame or infamy. Adultery has always been considered a crime of a very heinous nature. In Egypt, it was punished by cutting off the nose of the adulteress; in Persia, the nose and ears were cut off; in Judea, the punishment was death by stoning, Leviticus 20:10; Ezekiel 16:38, Ezekiel 16:40; John 8:5. This punishment was also inflicted where the person was not married, but betrothed, Deuteronomy 21:23-24. In this case, therefore, the regular punishment would have been death in this painful and ignominious manner. Yet Joseph was a religious man - mild and tender; and he was not willing to complain of her to the magistrate, and expose her to death, but sought to avoid the shame, and to put her away privately.

Put her away privily - The law of Moses gave the husband the power of divorce, Deuteronomy 24:1. It was customary in a bill of divorce to specify the causes for which the divorce was made, and witnesses were also present to testify to the divorce. But in this case, it seems, Joseph resolved to put her away *without specifying the cause*; for he was not willing to make her a public example. This is the meaning here of "privily." Both to Joseph and Mary this must have been a great trial. Joseph was ardently attached to her, but her character was likely to be ruined, and he deemed it proper to separate her from him. Mary was innocent, but Joseph was not yet satisfied of her innocence. We may learn from this to put our trust in God. He will defend the innocent. Mary was in danger of being exposed to shame. Had

she been connected with a cruel, passionate, and violent man, she would have died in disgrace. But God had so ordered it that she was betrothed to a man mild, amiable, and tender: and in due time Joseph was apprised of the truth in the case, and took his faithful and beloved wife to his bosom. Thus, our only aim should be to preserve a conscience void of offence, and God will guard our reputation. We may be assailed by slander; circumstances may be against us; but in due time God will take care to vindicate our character and save us from ruin. See Psalm 37:5-6.

Verse 20

He thought on these things - He did not act hastily. He did not take the course which the law would have permitted him to do, if he had been hasty, violent, or unjust. It was a case deeply affecting his happiness, his character, and the reputation and character of his chosen companion. God will guide the thoughtful and the anxious. And when we have looked patiently at a perplexed subject, and know not what to do, then God, as in the case of Joseph, will interpose to lead us and direct our way. Psalm 25:9.

The angel of the Lord - The word "angel" literally means a messenger. It is applied chiefly in the Scriptures to those invisible holy beings who have not fallen into sin: who live in heaven (1 Timothy 5:21; compare Jude 1:6); and who are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. See the Hebrews 1:13-14 notes, and Daniel 9:21 note. The word is sometimes applied to men, as messengers Luke 7:24; Luke 9:52; James 2:25; to the winds Psalm 104:4; to the pestilence Psalm 78:49; or to whatever is appointed to make known or to execute the will of God. It is commonly applied, however, to the unfallen, happy spirits that are in heaven, whose dignity and pleasure it is to do the will of God. Various ways were employed by them in making known the will of God, by dreams, visions, assuming a human appearance, etc.

In a dream - This was a common way of making known the will of God to the ancient prophets and people of God, Genesis 20:3; Genesis 30:1, Genesis 30:11, Genesis 30:24; Genesis 37:5; Genesis 41:1; 1 Kings 3:5; Daniel 7:1; Job 4:13-15; compare my notes at Isaiah. In what way it was ascertained that these dreams were from God cannot now be ascertained, It is sufficient for us to know that in this way many of the prophecies were communicated, and to remark that there is no evidence that we are to put reliance on our dreams. Dreams are wild, irregular movements of the mind

when it is unshackled by reason, and it is mere superstition to suppose that God now makes known His will in this way.

Son of David - Descendant of David. See Matthew 1:1. The angel put him in mind of his relation to David perhaps to prepare him for the intelligence that Mary was to be the mother of the Messiah - the promised heir of David.

Fear not - Do not hesitate, or have any apprehensions about her virtue and purity. Do not fear that she will be unworthy of you, or will disgrace you.

To take unto thee Mary thy wife - To take her as thy wife; to recognize her as such, and to treat her as such.

For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost - Is the direct creation of divine power. A body was thus prepared pure and holy, and free from the corruption of sin, in order that he might be qualified for his great work the offering of a pure sacrifice to God. As this was necessary in order to the great work which he came to perform, Joseph is directed by an angel to receive her as pure and virtuous, and as every way worthy of his love. Compare the notes at Hebrews 10:5.

Verse 21

His name Jesus - The name Jesus is the same as Saviour. It is derived from the verb signifying to save, In Hebrew it is the same as Joshua. In two places in the New Testament it is used where it means Joshua, the leader of the Jews into Canaan, and in our translation the name Joshua should have been retained, Acts 7:45; Hebrews 4:8. It was a very common name among the Jews.

He shall save - This expresses the same as the name, and on this account the name was given to him. He saves people by dying to redeem them; by giving the Holy Spirit to renew them John 16:7-8; by His power in enabling them to overcome their spiritual enemies, in defending them from danger, in guiding them in the path of duty, in sustaining them in trials and in death; and He will raise them up at the last day, and exalt them to a world of purity and love.

His people - Those whom the Father has given to him. The Jews were called the people of God because he had chosen them to himself, and regarded them as His special and beloved people, separate from all the nations of the earth. Christians are called the people of Christ because it was the purpose of the Father to give them to him Isaiah 53:11; John 6:37;

and because in due time he came to redeem them to himself, Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:2.

From their sins - This was the great business of Jesus in coming and dying. It was not to save people in their sins, but from their sins. Sinners could not be happy in heaven. It would be a place of wretchedness to the guilty. The design of Jesus was, therefore, to save them from sin; and from this we may learn:

1. That Jesus had a design in coming into the world. He came to save his people; and that design will surely be accomplished. It is impossible that in any part of it he should fail.

2. We have no evidence that we are his people unless we are saved from the power and dominion of sin. A mere profession of being His people will not answer. Unless we give up our sins; unless we renounce the pride, pomp, and pleasure of the world, we have no evidence that we are the children of God. It is impossible that we should be Christians if we indulge in sin and live in the practice of any known iniquity. See 1 John 3:7-8.

3. That all professing Christians should feel that there is no salvation unless it is from sin, and that they can never be admitted to a holy heaven hereafter unless they are made pure, by the blood of Jesus, here.

Verse 22

Now all this was done - The prophecy here quoted is recorded in Isaiah 7:14. See the notes at that passage. The prophecy was delivered about 740 years before Christ, in the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah. The land of Judea was threatened with an invasion by the united armies of Syria and Israel, under the command of Rezin and Pekah. Ahaz was alarmed, and seems to have contemplated calling in aid from Assyria to defend him. Isaiah was directed, in his consternation, to go to Ahaz, and tell him to ask a sign from God Isaiah 7:10-11; that is, to look to God rather than to Assyria for aid. This he refused to do. He had not confidence in God, but feared that the land would be overrun by the armies of Syria Matthew 1:12, and relied only on the aid which he hoped to receive from Assyria. Isaiah answered that, in these circumstances, the Lord would himself give a sign, or a pledge, that the land should be delivered. The sign was, that a virgin should have a son, and that before that son would arrive to years of discretion, the land would

be forsaken by these hostile kings. The prophecy was therefore designed originally to signify to Ahaz that the land would certainly be delivered from its calamities and dangers, and that the deliverance would not be long delayed. The land of Syria and Israel, united now in confederation, would be deprived of both their kings, and thus the land of Judah would be freed from the threatening danger. This appears to be the literal fulfillment of the passage in Isaiah.

Might be fulfilled - It is more difficult to know in what sense this could be said to be fulfilled in the birth of Christ. To understand this, it may be remarked that the word "fulfilled" is used in the Scriptures and in other writings in many senses, of which the following are some:

1. When a thing is clearly predicted, and comes to pass, as the destruction of Babylon, foretold in Isaiah 13:19-22; and of Jerusalem, in Psalm 14:3 was at first spoken of a particular race of wicked men." Yet it is applicable to others, and in this sense may be said to have been fulfilled. See Romans 3:10. In this use of the word fulfilled, it means, not that the passage was at first intended to apply to this particular thing, but that the words aptly or appropriately express the thing spoken of, and way be applied to it. We may say the same of this which was said of another thing, and thus the words express both, or are fulfilled. The writers of the New Testament seem occasionally to have used the word in this sense.

Verse 23

Behold, a virgin shall be with child - Matthew clearly understands this as applying literally to a virgin. Compare Luke 1:34. It thus implies that the conception of Christ was miraculous, or that the body of the Messiah was created directly by the power of God, agreeably to the declaration in Hebrews 10:5; "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me."

And they shall call his name Emmanuel - That is, his name shall be so called. See the notes at Isaiah 7:14. The word "Immanuel" is a Hebrew word, עִמָּנוּאֵל ʿimmânû'êlcf. Ἐμμανουήλ Emmanouēland literally means "God with us." Matthew doubtless understands it as denoting that the Messiah was really "God with us," or that the divine nature was united with the human. He does not affirm that this was its meaning when used in reference to the child to whom it was first applied, but this is its

signification as applicable to the Messiah. It was suitably expressive of his character; and in this sense it was fulfilled. When first used by Isaiah, it denoted simply that the birth of the child was a sign that God was with the Jews to deliver them. The Hebrews often incorporated the name of Yahweh, or God, into their proper names. Thus, Isaiah means "the salvation of Yah;" Eleazer, "help of God:" Eli, "my God," etc. But Matthew evidently intends more than was denoted by the simple use of such names. He had just given an account of the miraculous conception of Jesus: of his being begotten by the Holy Spirit. God was therefore his Father. He was divine as well as human. His appropriate name, therefore, was "God with us." And though the mere use of such a name would not prove that he had a divine nature, yet as Matthew uses it, and meant evidently to apply it, it *does* prove that Jesus was more than a man; that he was God as well as man. And it is this which gives glory to the plan of redemption. It is this which is the wonder of angels. It is this which makes the plan so vast, so grand, so full of instruction and comfort to Christians. See Philemon 2:6-8. It is this which sheds such peace and joy into the sinner's heart; which gives him such security of salvation, and which renders the condescension of God in the work of redemption so great and his character so lovely.

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find,
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terror to my mind.
But if immanuel's face appears,
My hope, my joy, begins.
His grace removes my slavish fears.
His blood removes my sins."

For a full examination of the passage, see Barnes' notes at Isaiah 7:14.

Verse 24

Being raised from sleep - Having fully awoke.

Did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him - That is, he took Mary to wife. Probably this was done immediately, since he was now convinced of her innocence, and, by delay, he would not leave any ground of suspicion that he had not confidence in her.

Verse 25

Knew her not - The doctrine of the virginity of Mary before the birth of Jesus is a doctrine of the Scriptures, and is very important to be believed.

But the Bible does not affirm that she had no children afterward. Indeed, all the accounts in the New Testament lead us to suppose that she *did* have them. See the notes at Matthew 13:55-56. The language here evidently implies that she lived as the wife of Joseph *after* the birth of Jesus.

Her first-born son - Her oldest son, or the one who had the privilege of birthright by the law. This does not of necessity imply that she had other children, though it seems probable. It was the name given to the son which was born first, whether there were others or not.

His name Jesus - This was given by divine appointment, Matthew 1:21. It was conferred upon him on the eighth day, at the time of his circumcision, Luke 2:21.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

When Jesus was born - See the full account of his birth in Genesis 35:19; Rth 4:11 ; Psalm 132:6. It was called the city of David Luke 2:4, because it was the city of his nativity, 1 Samuel 16:1, 1 Samuel 16:18. It was called Bethlehem of Judea, to distinguish it from a town of the same name in Galilee, Joshua 19:15. The soil of Bethlehem was noted for its fertility. Ancient travelers frequently spoke of its productions. The town is situated on an eminence, in the midst of hills and vales. At present (circa 1880‘s) it contains about 200 houses, inhabited chiefly by Christians and Muslims, who live together in peace. About 200 paces east of Bethlehem the place is still shown where our Saviour is supposed to have been born. There is a church and a convent there; and beneath the church a subterranean chapel, which is lighted by 32 lamps, which is said to be the place where was the stable in which Jesus was born, though no certain reliance is to be placed on the tradition which makes this the birthplace of the Saviour.

Herod the king - Judea, where our Saviour was born, was a province of the Roman Empire. It was taken about 63 years before his birth by Pompey, and placed under tribute. Herod received his appointment from the Romans, and had reigned at the time of the birth of Jesus for 34 years. Though he was permitted to be called king, yet he was, in all respects, dependent on the Roman emperor. He was commonly called “Herod the Great” because he had distinguished himself in the wars with Antigonus and his other enemies, and because he had evinced great talents in governing and defending his country, in repairing the temple, and in building and ornamenting the cities of his kingdom. He was, however, as much distinguished for his cruelty and his crimes as he was for his greatness. At this time Augustus was Emperor of Rome. The world was at peace. A large part of the known nations of the earth was united under the Roman emperor. Contact between different nations was easy and safe. Similar laws prevailed. The use of the Greek language was general throughout the world. All these circumstances combined to render this a favorable time to introduce the gospel, and to spread it through the earth; and the providence of God was remarkable in preparing the nations in this manner for the easy and rapid spread of the Christian religion.

Wise men - The original word here is μάγοι magoifrom which comes our word magician, now used in a bad sense, but not so in the original. The persons here denoted were philosophers, priests, or astronomers. They lived chiefly in Persia and Arabia. They were the learned men of the Eastern nations. devoted to astronomy, to religion, and to medicine. They were held in high esteem by the Persian court, were admitted as counsellors, and followed the camps in war to give advice.

From the east - It is not known whether they came from Persia or Arabia. Both countries might be denoted by the word East that is, east from Judea.

Jerusalem - The capital of Judea. As there is frequent reference in the New Testament to Jerusalem; as it was the place of the public worship of God; as it was the place where many important transactions in the life of the Saviour occurred, and where he died; and as no Sunday school teacher can intelligently explain the New Testament without some knowledge of that city, it seems desirable to present, a brief description of it. A more full description may be seen in Calmet‘s Dictionary, and in the common works on Jewish antiquities. Jerusalem was the capital of the kingdom of Judah, and was built on the line dividing that tribe from the tribe of Benjamin. It was once called “Salem” Genesis 14:18; Psalm 76:2, and in the days of Abraham was the home of Melchizedek. When the Israelites took possession of the promised land, they found this stronghold in the possession of the Jebusites, by whom it was called Jebus or Jebusi, Joshua 18:28.

The name “Jerusalem” was probably compounded of the two by changing a single letter, and calling it, for the sake of the sound, “Jerusalem” instead of “Jebusalem.” The ancient Salem was probably built on Mount Moriah or Acra - the eastern and western mountains on which Jerusalem was subsequently built. When the Jebusites became masters of the place, they erected a fortress in the southern quarter of the city, which was subsequently called Mount Zion, but which they called “Jebus”; and although the Israelites took possession of the adjacent territory Joshua 18:28, the Jebusites still held this fortress or upper town until the time of David, who wrested it from them 2 Samuel 5:7-9, and then removed his court from Hebron to Jerusalem, which was thenceforward known as the city of David, 2 Samuel 6:10, 2 Samuel 6:12; 1 Kings 8:1. Jerusalem was built on several hills Mount Zion on the south, Mount Moriah on the east,

upon which the temple was subsequently built (see the notes at Matthew 21:12), Mount Acra on the west, and Mount Bezetha on the north.

Mount Moriah and Mount Zion were separated by a valley, called by Josephus the Valley of Cheesemongers, over which there was a bridge or raised way leading from the one to the other. On the southeast of Mount Moriah, and between that and Mount Zion, there was a bluff or high rock capable of strong fortification, called Ophel. The city was encompassed by hills. On the west there were hills which overlooked the city; on the south was the valley of Jehoshaphat, or the valley of Hinnom (see the notes at Matthew 5:22), separating it from what is called the Mount of Corruption; on the east was the valley or the brook Kedron, dividing the city from the Mount of Olives. On the north the country was more level, though it was a broken or rolling country. On the southeast the valleys of the Kedron and Jehoshaphat united, and the waters flowed through the broken mountains in a southeasterly direction to the Dead Sea, some 15 miles distant.

The city of Jerusalem stands in 31 degrees 50 minutes north latitude, and 35 degrees 20 minutes east longitude from Greenwich. It is 34 miles southeasterly from Jaffa - the ancient Joppa which is its seaport, and 120 miles southwesterly from Damascus. The best view of the city of Jerusalem is from Mount Olivet on the east (compare the notes at Matthew 21:1), the mountains in the east being somewhat higher than those on the west. The city was anciently enclosed within walls, a part of which are still standing. The position of the walls has been at various times changed, as the city has been larger or smaller, or as it has extended in different directions. The wall on the south formerly included the whole of Mount Zion, though the modern wall runs over the summit, including about half of the mountain. In the time of the Saviour the northern wall enclosed only Mounts Acra and Moriah north, though after his death Agrippa extended the wall so as to include Mount Bezetha on the north.

About half of that is included in the present wall. The limits of the city on the east and the west, being more determined by the nature of the place, have been more fixed and permanent. The city was watered in part by the fountain of Siloam on the east for a description of which, see the Luke 13:4 note, and Isaiah 7:3 note), and in part by the fountain of Gihon on the west

of the city, which flowed into the vale of Jehoshaphat; and in the time of Solomon by an aqueduct, part of which is still remaining, by which water was brought from the vicinity of Bethlehem. The “pools of Solomon,” three in number, one rising above another, and adapted to hold a large quantity of water, are still remaining in the vicinity of Bethlehem. The fountain of Siloam still flows freely (see the note at Isaiah 7:3)though the fountain of Gihon is commonly dry. A reservoir or tank, however, remains at Gihon. Jerusalem had, probably, its highest degree of splendor in the time of Solomon. About 400 hundred years after, it was entirely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. It lay utterly desolate during the 70 years of the Jewish captivity.

Then it was rebuilt, and restored to some degree of its former magnificence, and remained about 600 years, when it was utterly destroyed by Titus in 70 a.d. In the reign of Adrian the city was partly rebuilt under the name of AElia. The monuments of Pagan idolatry were erected in it, and it remained under Pagan jurisdiction until Helena, the mother of Constantine, overthrew the memorials of idolatry, and erected a magnificent church over the spot which was supposed to be the place of the Redeemer‘s sufferings and bruial. Julian, the apostate, with the design to destroy the credit of the prophecy of the Saviour that the temple should remain in ruins Matthew 24, endeavored to rebuild the temple. His own historian, Ammianus Marcellinus (see Warburton‘s *Divine Legation of Moses*), says that the workmen were impeded by balls of fire coming from the earth, and that he was compelled to abandon the undertaking.

Jerusalem continued in the power of the Eastern emperors until the reign of the Caliph Omar, the third in succession from Mohammed, who reduced it under his control about the year 640. The Saracens continued masters of Jerusalem until the year 1099, when it was taken by the Crusaders under Godfrey of Bouillon. They founded a new kingdom, of which Jerusalem was the capital, which continued eighty-eight years under nine kings. At last this kingdom was utterly ruined by Saladin; and though the Christians once more obtained possession of the city, yet they were obliged again to relinquish it. In 1217 the Saracens were expelled by the Turks, who have continued in possession of it ever since. Jerusalem has been taken and pillaged 17 times, and millions of people have been slaughtered within its

walls. At present there is a splendid mosque - the mosque of Omar - on the site of the temple. The present population of Jerusalem (circa 1880‘s) is variously estimated at from 15,000 to 30,000 Turner estimates it at 26,000; Richard son, 20,000; Jowett, 15,000; Dr. Robinson at 11,000, namely, Muslims 4,500; Jews 3,000, Christians 3,500. - *Biblical Researches*, vol. ii. p. 83,84.

The Jews have a number of synagogues. The Roman Catholics have a convent, and have the control of the church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Greeks have twelve convents; the Armenians have three convents on Mount Zion and one in the city; the Copts, Syrians, and Abyssinians have each of them one convent. The streets are narrow, and the houses are of stone, most of them low and irregular, with flat roofs or terraces, and with small windows only toward the street, usually protected by iron grates. The above description has been obtained from a great variety of sources, and it would be useless to refer to the works where the facts have been obtained.

Verse 2

Where is he … - There was at that time a prevalent expectation that some remarkable personage was about to appear in Judea. The Jews were anxiously looking for the coming of the Messiah. By computing the time mentioned by Daniel Daniel 9:25-27, they knew that the period was approaching when he would appear. This personage, they supposed would be a temporal prince, and they were expecting that he would deliver them from Roman bondage. It was natural that this expectation should spread into other countries. Many Jews at that time lived in Egypt, in Rome, and in Greece; many, also, had gone to Eastern countries, and in every place they carried their sacred writings, and diffused the expectation that some remarkable person was about to appear. Suetonius, a Roman historian, speaking of this rumor. says: “An ancient and settled persuasion prevailed throughout the East that the Fates had decreed some one to proceed from Judea who should attain universal empire.” Tacitus, another Roman historian, says: “Many were persuaded that it was contained in the ancient books of their priests, that at that very time the East should prevail, and that some one should proceed from Judea and possess the dominion.” Josephus also, and Philo, two Jewish historians, make mention of the same expectation. The fact that such a person was expected is clearly attested.

Under this expectation these wise men came to do him homage, and inquired anxiously where he was born?

His star - Among the ancients the appearance of a new star or comet was regarded as an omen of some remarkable event. Many such appearances are recorded by the Roman historians at the birth or death of distinguished men. Thus they say that at the death of Julius Caesar a comet appeared in the heavens and shone seven days. These wise men also considered this as an evidence that the long-expected Prince was born. It is possible that they had been led to this belief by the prophecy of Balaam, Numbers 24:17, "There shall come a star out of Jacob," etc. What this star was is not known. There have been many conjectures respecting it, but nothing is revealed concerning it. We are not to suppose that it was what we commonly mean by a star. The stars are vast bodies fixed in the heavens, and it is absurd to suppose that one of them was sent to guide the wise men. It is most probable that it was a luminous appearance, or meteor, such as we now see sometimes shoot from the sky, which the wise men saw, and which directed them to Jerusalem. It is possible that the same thing is meant which is mentioned by Luke 2:9; "The glory of the Lord shone round about them;" i. e., (see the note on this place), a great light appeared shining around them. That light might have been visible from afar, and might have been seen by the wise men in the East.

In the East - This does not mean that they had seen the star to the east of themselves, but that, when they were in the East, they had seen this star. As this star was in the direction of Jerusalem. it must have been west of them. It might be translated, "We, being in the East, have seen his star." It is called his star, because they supposed it to be intended to indicate the time and place of his birth.

To worship him - This does not mean that they had come to pay him religious homage, or to adore him They regarded him as the King of the Jews, but there is no evidence that they supposed that he was divine. They came to honor him as a Prince, or a king, not as God. The original word implies no more than this. It means to prostrate oneself before another; to fall down and pay homage to another. This was the mode in which homage was paid to earthly kings, and this they wished to pay to the new-born King of the Jews. See the same meaning of the word in Matthew 20:20; Matthew 18:26; Acts 10:25; Luke 14:10. The English word "worship" also meant formerly "to respect, to honor, to treat with civil reverence‘" (Webster).

Verse 3

Had heard these things - Had heard of their coming, and of the star, and of the design of their coming.

He was troubled - Herod had obtained the kingdom by great crimes, and by shedding much blood. He was therefore easily alarmed by any remarkable appearances; and the fact that this star appeared, and that it was regarded as proof that a King of the Jews was born, alarmed him. Besides, it was a common expectation that the Messiah was about to appear, and he feared that his reign was about to come to an end. He therefore began to inquire in what way he might secure his own safety and the permanency of his government.

All Jerusalem - The people of Jerusalem, and particularly the friends of Herod. There were many in Jerusalem to whom the coming of the Messiah would be a matter of joy; but all of Herod‘s friends would doubtless be alarmed at his coming.

Verse 4

The chief priests - By the chief priests here are meant not only the high priest and his deputy, but. also the heads or chiefs of the 24 classes into which David had divided the sacerdotal families, 1 Chronicles 23:6; 24; 2 Chronicles 8:14; Ezra 8:24.

Scribes - By the scribes, in the New Testament, are meant learned men; men skilled in the law, or the lawyers of the nation. They kept the records of the Courts of justice, the registers of the synagogues, wrote articles of contract and sale, bills of divorce, etc. They were also called lawyers, Matthew 22:35, and doctor‘s of the law, Luke 5:17. They were called scribes. from the fact of their writing the public records. They were not, however, a religious sect, but might be either Pharisees or Sadducees. By the chief priests and scribes here mentioned is denoted the Sanhedrin or great council of the nation. This was composed of 72 men, who had the charge of the civil and religious affairs of the Jews. On this occasion Herod, in alarm, called them together, professedly to make inquiry respecting the birth of the Messiah.

Demanded of them - Inquired, or asked of them. As they were the learned men of the nation, and as it was their business to study and explain the Old Testament, they were presumed to know what the prophecies had declared on that point. His object was to ascertain from prophecy where he was born, that he might put him to death, and thus calm the anxieties of his

own mind. He seems not to have had any doubt about the time when he would be born. He was satisfied that the time had come.

Verse 5-6

By the prophet - The Sanhedrin answered without hesitation. The question where he would be born had been settled by prophecy. This prophecy is found in Micah 5:2. In that prophecy both the place of his birth and the character of the Messiah are so clearly set forth that there was no room to doubt. It will be observed that there is a considerable difference between the passage as quoted by the Sanhedrin and as it stands in Micah. The main point, however, is retained - the place of his birth. We are not concerned, therefore, in showing how these passages can be reconciled. Matthew, moreover, is not responsible for the correctness of the quotation. He affirms only that the chief priests and scribes gave this answer to Herod, and that Herod was satisfied. Admitting that they did not quote the passage correctly, it does not prove that Matthew has not reported their answer as they gave it, and this is all that he pretends to give.

Art not the least - In Micah, "though thou be little." Though a small place so far as population is concerned, yet it shall not be small, or be the least in honor; for the Messiah shall be born there. His birth gave the place an honor which could not be conferred on the larger cities by all their numbers, their splendor, and their wealth. The birth of a distinguished personage was always supposed to give honor and importance to a city or country. Thus, seven cities contended for the honor of giving birth to Homer; Stratford-upon-Avon is distinguished as the birthplace of Shakespeare; and Corsica as the birthplace of Napoleon.

A Governor - A ruler. This is one of the characters of the Messiah, who is the king of his people, John 18:37. The word "rule" here means to rule as a shepherd does his flock, in faithfulness and tenderness. Compare John 10:11; Isaiah 40:10-11; Isaiah 9:7.

Verse 7

Privily - Secretly, privately. He did this to ascertain the time when Jesus was born.

Diligently - Accurately, exactly. He took pains to learn the precise time when the star appeared. He did this because he naturally concluded that the star appeared just at the time of his birth, and he wished to know precisely how old the child was.

Verse 8

Go, and search diligently … - Herod took all possible means to obtain accurate information respecting the child, that he might be sure of destroying him. He not only ascertained the probable time of his birth, and the place where he would be born, but he sent the wise men that they might actually see him, and bring him word. All this might have looked suspicious if he had not clothed it with the appearance of religion. He said to them, therefore, that he did it that he might go and worship him also. From this we may learn,

1.That wicked people often cloak their evil designs under the appearance of religion. They attempt to deceive those who are really good, and to make them suppose that they have the same design.

2.Wicked people often attempt to make use of the pious to advance their evil purposes. Men like Herod will stop at nothing if they can carry out their ends. They endeavor to deceive the simple, to allure the unsuspecting, and to beguile the weak, in order to accomplish their own purposes of wickedness.

3.The plans of wicked people are often well laid. Those plans occupy a long time. Such people make diligent inquiry, and all of it has the appearance of religion. But God sees through the design; and though people are deceived, yet God cannot be fooled, Proverbs 15:3.

Verse 9-10

The star … went before them - From this it appears that the star was a luminous meteor, perhaps at no great distance from the ground. It is not unlikely that they lost sight of it after they had commenced their journey from the East. It is probable that it appeared to them first in the direction of Jerusalem. They concluded that the expected King had been born, and immediately commenced their journey to Jerusalem. When they arrived there, it was important that they should be directed to the very place where he was, and the star again appeared. It was for this reason that they rejoiced. They felt assured that they were under a heavenly guidance, and would be conducted to the new-born King of the Jews. And this shows:

1.That the birth of Jesus was an event of great moment, worthy of the divine interposition in directing these men to find the place of his nativity.

2.God will guide those who are disposed to find the Saviour. Even if for a time the light should be withdrawn, yet it will again appear, and direct us

in the way to the Redeemer.

3.Our being led to Christ should fill us with joy. He is the way, the truth, and the life; the Saviour, the friend, the all in all; there is no other way of life, and there is no peace to the soul until he is found. When we are guided to him, therefore, our hearts should overflow with joy and praise; and we should humbly and thankfully follow every direction that leads to the Son of God, John 12:35-36.

Verse 11

The house - The place where he was born, or the place where they lived at that time.

Fell down - This was the usual way of showing respect or homage among the Jews, Esther 8:3; Job 1:20; Daniel 3:7; Psalm 72:11; Isaiah 46:6.

Worshipped him - Did him homage as King of the Jews. See the notes at Matthew 2:2.

Had opened their treasures - The treasures which they had brought, or the boxes, etc., in which they had brought their gold, etc.

They presented unto him gifts - These were presented to him as King of the Jews, because they supposed he was to be a distinguished prince and conqueror. It was customary in the East to show respect for persons of distinction by making presents or offerings of this kind. See Genesis 32:14; Genesis 43:11; 1 Samuel 10:27; 1 Kings 10:2; Psalm 72:10-15. This custom is still common in the East, and it is everywhere there unusual to approach a person of distinguished rank without a valuable present.

Frankincense - Frankincense is a white resin or gum. It is obtained from a tree by making incisions in the bark, and suffering the gum to flow out. It is highly odoriferous or fragrant when burned, and was therefore used in worship, where it was burned as a pleasant offering to God. See Exodus 30:8; Leviticus 16:12. It is found in the East Indies, but chiefly in Arabia; and hence it has been supposed probable that the wise men came from Arabia.

Myrrh - This was also a production of Arabia, and was obtained from a tree in the same manner as frankincense. The name denotes bitterness, and was given to it on account of its great bitterness. It was used chiefly in embalming the dead, because it had the property of preserving dead bodies from putrefaction. Compare John 19:39, it was much used in Egypt and in

Judea. It was obtained from a thorny tree, which grows 8 or 9 feet high. It was at an early period an article of commerce Genesis 37:25, and was an ingredient of the holy ointment, Exodus 30:23. It was also used as an agreeable perfume, Esther 2:12; Psalm 45:8; Proverbs 7:17. It was also sometimes mingled with wine to form an article of drink. Such a drink was given to our Saviour, when about to be crucified, as a stupefying potion, Mark 15:23; compare Matthew 27:34. The offerings here referred to were made because they were the most valuable which the country of the Magi or wise men produced. They were tokens of respect and homage which they paid to the new-born King of the Jews. They evinced their high regard for him, and their belief that he was to be an illustrious prince; and the fact that their deed is recorded with approbation shows us that we should offer our most valuable possessions, our all, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Wise men came from far to do him homage, and bowed down, and presented their best gifts and offerings. It is right that we give to him also our hearts, our property, our all.

Verse 12

Warned of God - This was done, doubtless, because, if they had given Herod precise information where he was, it would have been easy for him to send forth and kill him. And from this we learn that God will watch over those whom He loves; that He knows how to foil the purposes of the wicked, and to deliver His own out of the hands of those who would destroy them.

In a dream - See the note at Matthew 1:20.

Verse 13

The angel appeareth to Joseph in a dream - See Matthew 1:20.

Flee into Egypt - Egypt is situated to the southwest of Judea, and is distant from Bethlehem perhaps about 60 miles. It was at this time a Roman province. There were many Jews there, who had a temple and synagogues (see the notes at Isaiah 19:18), and Joseph, therefore, would be among his own countrymen, and yet beyond the reach of Herod. The jurisdiction of Herod extended only to the River Sihon, or "river of Egypt," and, of course, beyond that Joseph was safe from his designs. For a description of Egypt, see the notes at Isaiah 19. It is remarkable that this is the only time in which our Saviour was out of Palestine, and that this was in the land where the children of Israel had suffered so much and so long under the oppression of the Egyptian kings. The very land which was the land of bondage and

groaning for the Jews, became now the land of refuge and safety for the new-born King of Judea. God can overturn nations and kingdoms, so that those whom he loves shall be safe anywhere.

Verse 14

When he arose - Having arisen; that is, he arose immediately after awaking from his dream, and prepared at once to obey the command,

By night - Thus he showed his prompt obedience to the command, and at the same time so concealed his departure as to render himself and Mary and the child safe from pursuit.

Verse 15

The death of Herod - Herod died in the thirty-seventh year of his reign. It is not certainly known in what year he began his reign, and hence it is impossible to determine the time that Joseph remained in Egypt. The best chronologers have supposed that he died somewhere between two and four years after the birth of Christ, but at what particular time cannot now be determined. Nor can it be ascertained at what age Jesus was taken into Egypt. It seems probable that he was supposed to be a year old (see Matthew 2:16), and of course the time that he remained in Egypt was not long. Herod died of a most painful and loathsome disease in Jericho. See the notes at Matthew 2:16; also Josephus, *Ant*. xvii. 6. 5.

That it might be fulfilled … - This language is recorded in Hosea 11:1. It there evidently speaks of God‘s calling His people out of Egypt, under Moses. See Exodus 4:22-23. It might be said to be fulfilled in his calling Jesus from Egypt, because the words in Hosea aptly expressed this also. The same love which led him to deliver His people Israel from the land of Egypt, now led him also to deliver His Son from that place. The words used by Hosea would express both events. See the notes at Matthew 1:22. Perhaps, also, the place in Hosea became a proverb, to express any great deliverance from danger; and thus it could be said to be fulfilled in Christ, as other proverbs are in cases to Which they are applicable. It cannot be supposed that the passage in Hosea was a prophecy of the Messiah. It is evidently used by Matthew only because the language is appropriate to express the event.

Verse 16

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men - When he saw that he had been deceived by them; that is, that they did not return as he had expected. It does not mean that they did it for the purpose

of mocking or deriding him, but that he was disappointed in their not returning, or that he had been trifled with.

Exceeding wroth - Very angry. He had been disappointed and deceived. He expected to send an executioner and kill Jesus alone. But, since he was disappointed in this, he thought he would accomplish the same thing, and be sure to destroy him, if he sent forth and put all the children in the place to death. This is an illustration of the power of anger. It stops at nothing. If it cannot accomplish just what it wishes, it does not hesitate to go much further, and accomplish much more evil than it at first designed. He that has a wicked heart, and indulges in anger, knows not where it will end, and will commonly commit far more evil than he at first intended.

Slew all the children - That is, all the male children. This is implied in the original. The design of Herod was to cut off him that had been born king of the Jews. His purpose, therefore, did not require that he should slay the female children; and though he was cruel, yet we have no right to think that he attempted anything except what he thought to be for his own safety, and to secure himself from a rival.

In all the coasts thereof - The word "coast" is commonly applied now to the regions around the sea, as the seacoast. Here it means the adjacent places, the settlements or hamlets around Bethlehem - all that were in that neighborhood. We do not know how large a place Bethlehem was, nor, of course, how many were slain; but it was never a large town, and the number could not be very great. It is not probable that it contained more than one or two thousand inhabitants, and in this case the number of children killed was not over twenty or thirty.

From two years old and under - Some writers have said that this does not mean, in the original, that they had completed two years; but that they had entered on the second year, or had completed about one year, and entered on the second. But the meaning of the word is doubtful. It is quite probable that they would not be particular about the exact age, but killed all that were about that age.

According to the time … - He had endeavored to ascertain of the wise men the exact time of his birth. He supposed he knew the age of Jesus. He slew, therefore, all that were of his age; that is, all that were born about the time when the star appeared - perhaps from six months old to two years. There is no reason to think that he would command those to be slain who had been born after the star appeared.

This destruction of the infants of Bethlehem is not mentioned by Josephus, but for this omission three reasons may be given:

1. Josephus, a Jewish historian and a Jew, would not be likely to record anything that would appear to confirm the truth of Christianity.

2. This act of Herod was really so small, compared with his other crimes, that the historian might not think it worthy of record. Bethlehem was a small and obscure village, and the other crimes of Herod were so great and so public, that it is not to be wondered at that the Jewish historian has passed over this.

3. The order was probably given in secret, and might not have been known to Josephus. It pertained to the Christian history; and if the evangelists had not recorded it, it might have been unknown or forgotten. Besides, no argument can be drawn from the silence of the Jewish historian. No reason can be given why Matthew should not be considered to be as fully entitled to credit as Josephus. Yet there is no improbability in the account given by Matthew.

Herod was an odious and bloody tyrant, and the facts of his reign prove that he was abundantly capable of this wickedness. The following bloody deeds will show that the slaying of the infants was in perfect accordance with his character. The account is taken from Josephus, as arranged by Dr. Lardner. Aristobulus, brother of his wife Mariamne, was murdered by his direction at eighteen years of age, because the people of Jerusalem had shown some affection for his person. In the seventh year of his reign, he put to death Hyrcanus, grandfather of Mariamne, then 80 years of age, and who had formerly saved Herod‘s life; a man who had, in every revolution of fortune, shown a mild and peaceable disposition. His beloved and beautiful wife, Mariamne, had a public execution, and her mother Alexandra followed soon after - Alexander and Aristobulus, his two sons by Mariamne, were strangled in prison by his orders upon groundless suspicions, as it seems, when they were at man‘s estate, were married, and had children.

In his last sickness, a little before he died, he sent orders throughout Judea requiring the presence of all the chief men of the nation at Jericho. His orders were obeyed, for they were enforced with no less penalty than that of death. When they were come to Jericho he had them all shut up in the circus, and calling for his sister Salome and her husband Alexis, he said to them, "My life now is short, I know the Jewish people, and nothing will please them better than my death. You have them now in your custody. As soon as the breath is out of my body, and before my death can be known, do you let in the soldiers upon them and kill them. All Judea, then, and every family, will, though unwillingly, mourn at my death." No, Josephus says that with tears in his eyes he conjured them, by their love to him and their fidelity to God, not to fail of doing him this honor. What objection, after this account, can there be to the account of his murdering the infants at Bethlehem? Surely there could be no cruelty, barbarity, or horrid crime which such a man was not capable of perpetrating.

Verse 17

Then was fulfilled - The word "fulfilled," here. is used evidently in the sense that the words in Jeremiah aptly express the event which Matthew was recording. Compare the notes at Matthew 1:22.

That which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet - Jeremiah. This quotation is taken from Jeremiah 31:15. The original design of the prophecy was to describe the sorrowful departure of the people of Israel into captivity after the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuzaradan. The captives were assembled at Rama, Jeremiah himself being in chains, and there the fate of those who had escaped in the destruction of the city was decided at the will of the conqueror, Jeremiah 40:1. The nobles had been slain; the sons of the king had been murdered in his presence; the eyes of the king had been put out, and the people were then gathered at Rama in chains, whence they were to start on their mournful journey, slaves to a cruel monarch, leaving behind them all that was dear in life. The sadness of such a scene is well expressed in the language of the prophet, and it no less beautifully and suitably applies to the melancholy event which the evangelist records, and there could be no impropriety in his using it as a quotation.

Verse 18

In Rama was there a voice heard - Rama was a small town in the tribe of Benjamin. Rachel was the mother of Benjamin, and was buried near to

Bethlehem, Genesis 35:16-19. Rama was about 6 miles northwest of Jerusalem, near Bethel, and was some 10 or 12 miles from Bethlehem. The name Rama signifies an eminence, and was given to the town because it was situated on a hill. Rama is commonly supposed to be the same as the Arimarthea of the New Testament the place where Joseph lived who begged the body of Jesus. See Matthew 27:57. This is also the same place in which Samuel was born, where he resided, died. and was buried, and where he anointed Saul as king, 1 Samuel 1:1, 1 Samuel 1:19; 1 Samuel 2:11; 1 Samuel 8:4; 1 Samuel 19:18; 1 Samuel 25:1. Mr. King, an American missionary, was at Rama - now called Romba - in 1824; and Mr. Whiting, another American missionary, was there in 1835. Mr. Whiting says: "The situation is exceedingly beautiful. It is about two hours distant from Jerusalem to the northwest, on an eminence commanding a view of a wide extent of beautiful diversified country. Hills, plains, and valleys, highly cultivated fields of wheat and barley, vineyards and oliveyards, are spread out before you as on a map, and numerous villages are scattered here and there over the whole view. To the west and northwest, beyond the hill-country, appears the vast plain of Sharon, and further still you look out upon the great and wide sea. It occurred to me as not improbable that in the days of David and Solomon this place may have been a favorite retreat during the heat of summer, and that here the former may have often struck his sacred lyre. Some of the Psalms, or at least one of them (see Psalm 104:25, seem to have been composed in some place which commanded a view of the Mediterranean; and this is the only place, I believe, in the vicinity of Jerusalem that affords such a view."

Rama was once a strongly fortified city, but there is no city here at present. A half-ruined Muslim mosque, which was originally a Christian church, stands over the tomb of the prophet; besides which, a few miserable dwellings are the only buildings that remain on this once-celebrated spot. Compare the notes at Isaiah 10:29. The tomb of Rachel, which is supposed to mark the precise spot where Rachel was buried (compare Genesis 35:18-20; Genesis 48:7), is near to Bethlehem, and she is represented as rising and weeping again over her children. "The tomb is a plain Saracenic mausoleum, having no claims to antiquity in its present form, but deeply interesting in sacred associations; for, by the singular consent of all authorities in such questions, it marks the actual site of her grave." - *The Land and the Book*, vol. ii. 501.

By a beautiful figure of speech, the prophet introduces the mother weeping over the tribe, her children, and with them weeping over the fallen destiny of Israel, and over the calamities about te come upon the land. Few images could be more striking than thus to introduce a mother, long dead, whose sepulchre was near, weeping bitterly over the terrible calamities that befell her descendants. The language and the image also aptly and beautifully expressed the sorrows of the mothers in Bethlehem when Herod slew their infant children. Under the cruelty of the tyrant almost every family was a family of tears, and well might there be lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning.

We may remark here that the sacred writers were cautious of speaking of the characters of wicked people. Here was one of the worst men in the world, committing one of the most awful crimes, and yet there is not a single mark of exclamation; there is not a single reference to any other part of his conduct; there is nothing that could lead to the knowledge that his character in other respects was not upright. There is no wanton and malignant dragging him into the narrative that they might gratify malice in making free with a very bad character. What was to their purpose, they recorded; what was not, they left to others. This is the nature of religion. It does not speak evil of others except when necessary, nor then does it take pleasure in it.

Verse 19

Herod was dead - See the notes at Matthew 2:15. Herod left three sons, and the kingdom was at his death divided between them. To Archelaus was given Judea, Idumea, and Samaria; to Philip, Batanea and Trachonitis; to Antipas, Galilee and Perea.

Each of these was also called Herod, and these are the individuals who are so frequently referred to in the New Testament during the ministry. of the Saviour and the labors of the apostles. The above table will show at a glance the chief connections of this family, as far as they are mentioned in the sacred history.

Verse 20

They are dead who sought … - This either refers to Herod alone, as is not uncommon, using the plural number for the singular; or it may refer to Herod and his son Antipater. He was of the same cruel disposition as his father, and was put to death by his father about five days before his own death.

Verse 22

He heard that Archelaus did reign - Archelaus possessed a cruel and tyrannical disposition similar to his father. At one of the Passovers he caused 3,000 of the people to be put to death in the temple and city. For his crimes, after he had reigned 9 years, he was banished by Augustus, the Roman emperor, to Gaul, where he died. Knowing his character, and fearing that he would not be safe, Joseph hesitated about going there, and was directed by God to go to Galilee, a place of safety.

The parts of Galilee - The country of Galilee. At this time the land of Palestine was divided into three parts: Galilee, on the north; Samaria, in the middle; and Judea, on the south. Galilee was under the government of Herod Antipas, who was comparatively a mild prince, and in his dominions Joseph might find safety.

Verse 23

And he came and dwelt - That is, he made it his permanent residence. The Lord Jesus, in fact, resided there until he entered on the work of his ministry until he was about 30 years of age.

In a city called Nazareth - This was a small town, situated in Galilee, west of Capernaum, and not far from Cana. It was built partly in a valley and partly on the declivity of a hill, Luke 4:29. A hill is yet pointed out, to the south of Nazareth, as the one from which the people of the place attempted to precipitate the Saviour. It was a place, at that time, proverbial for wickedness, John 4:46. It is now (circa 1880‘s) a large village, with a convent and two churches. One of the churches, called the Church of the Annunciation, is the finest in the Holy Land, except that of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

A modern traveler describes Nazareth as situated upon the declivity of a hill, the vale which spreads out before it resembling a circular basin encompassed by mountains. Fifteen mountains appear to meet to form an inclosure for this beautiful spot, around which they rise like the edge of a shell, to guard it against intrusion. It is a rich and beautiful field, in the midst of barren mountains.

Another traveler (circa 1880‘s) speaks of the streets as narrow and steep. The houses, which are flat-roofed, are about 250 in number, and the inhabitants he estimates at 2,000. The population of the place is variously stated. though the average estimate is 3,000, of whom about 500 are Turks, and the rest are nominal Christians.

As all testimony to the truth and fidelity of the sacred narrative is important, I will here introduce a passage from the journal of Mr. Jowett, an intelligent modern traveler, especially as it is so full an illustration of the passage of Luke already cited.

“Nazareth is situated on the side, and extends nearly to the foot, of a hill, which, though not very high, is rather steep and overhanging. The eye naturally wanders over its summit in quest of some point from which it might probably be that the people of this place endeavored to cast our Saviour down Luke 4:29, but in vain; no rock adapted to such an object appears here. At the foot of the hill is a modest, simple plain, surrounded by low hills, reaching in length nearly a mile; in breadth, near the city, 150 yards; but farther south, about 400 yards. On this plain there are a few olive and fig trees, sufficient, or rather scarcely sufficient, to make the spot picturesque. Then follows a ravine, which gradually grows deeper and narrower toward the south; until, after walking about another mile, you find yourself in an immense chasm, with steep rocks on either side, from whence you behold, as it were beneath your feet and before you, the noble plain of Esdraelon. Nothing can be finer than the apparently immeasurable prospect of this plain, bounded on the south by the mountains of Samaria. The elevation of the hills on which the spectator stands in this ravine is very great; and the whole scene, when we saw it. was clothed in the most rich mountain-blue color that can be conceived.

At this spot, on the right hand of the ravine, is shown the rock to which the men of Nazareth are supposed to have conducted our Lord for the purpose of throwing him down. With the New Testament in our hands we endeavored to examine the probabilities of the spot; and I confess there is nothing in it which excites a scruple of incredulity in my mind. The rock here is perpendicular for about 50 feet, down which space it would be easy

to hurl a person who should be unawares brought to the summit, and his perishing would be a very certain consequence. That the spot might be at a considerable distance from the city is an idea not inconsistent with Luke‘s account; for the expression. thrusting Jesus out of the city, and leading him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, gives fair scope for imagining that in their rage and debate the Nazarenes might, without originally intending his murder, press upon him for a considerable distance after they had left the synagogue. The distance, as already noticed, from modern Nazareth to the spot is scarcely two miles; a space which, in the fury of persecution, might soon be passed over. Or, should this appear too considerable, it is by no means certain but that Nazareth may at that time have extended through the principal part of the plain, which I have described as lying before the modern town. In this case, the distance passed over might not exceed a mile. I can see, therefore, no reason for thinking otherwise than that this may be the real scene where our divine prophet Jesus received so great a dishonor from the people of his own country and of his own kindred.”

Mr. Fisk, an American missionary, was at Nazareth in the autumn of 1823. His description corresponds generally with that of Mr. Jowett. He estimates the population to be from 3,000 to 5,000, namely, Greeks, 300 to 400 families; Turks, 200 families; Catholics, 100 families; Greek Catholics, 40 to 50 familis; Maronites, 20 to 30 families; say, in all, 700 families.

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken … - The words here are not found in any of the books of the Old Testament, and there has been much difficulty in ascertaining the meaning of this passage. Some have supposed that Matthew meant to refer to Judges 13:5, to Samson as a type of Christ; others that he refers to Isaiah 11:1, where the descendant of Jesse is called “a Branch;” in the Hebrew נצר NêtzerSome have supposed that he refers to some prophecy which was not recorded, but handed down by tradition. But these suppositions are not satisfactory. It is much more probable that Matthew refers not to any particular place, but to the leading characteristics of the prophecies respecting him. The following remarks may make this clear:

1. He does not say “by the prophet,” as in Matthew 1:22; Matthew 2:5, Matthew 2:15, but “by the prophets,” meaning no one particularly, but the general character of the prophecies.

2. The leading and most prominent prophecies respecting him were, that he was to be of humble life; to be despised and rejected. See Isaiah 53:2-3, Isaiah 53:7-9, Isaiah 53:12; John 1:46; John 7:52. To come from Nazareth, therefore, or to be a Nazarene, was the same as to be despised, or to be esteemed of low birth; to be a root out of dry ground, having no form or comeliness. This was what had been predicted by all the prophets. When Matthew says, therefore, that the prophecies were "fulfilled," his meaning is, that the predictions of the prophets that he would be of a low and despised condition, and would be rejected, were fully accomplished in his being an inhabitant of Nazareth, and despised as such.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

In those days - The days here referred to cannot be those mentioned in the preceding chapter, for John was but six months older than Christ. Perhaps Matthew intended to embrace in his narrative the whole time that Jesus lived at Nazareth; and the meaning is, "in those days while Jesus still dwelt at Nazareth," John began to preach. It is not probable that John began to baptize or preach long before the Saviour entered on his ministry; and, consequently, from the time that is mentioned in the close of the second chapter to that mentioned in the beginning of the third, an interval of twenty-five years or more elapsed.

John the Baptist - Or John the baptizer - so called from his principal office, that of baptizing. Baptism, or the application of water, was a rite well known to the Jews, and practiced when they admitted proselytes to their religion from paganism. - Lightfoot.

Preaching - The word rendered "preach" means to proclaim in the manner of a public crier; to make proclamation. The discourses recorded in the New Testament are mostly brief, sometimes consisting only of a single sentence. They were public proclamations of some great truth. Such appear to have been the discourses of John, calling people to repentance.

In the wilderness of Judea - This country was situated along the Jordan and the Dead Sea, to the east of Jerusalem. The word translated "wilderness" does not denote, as with us, a place of boundless forests, entirely destitute of inhabitants; but a mountainous, rough, and thinly settled country, covered to some considerable extent with forests and rocks, and better suited for pasture than for tilling. There were inhabitants in those places, and even villages, but they were the comparatively unsettled portions of the country, 1 Samuel 25:1-2. In the time of Joshua there were six cities in what was then called a wilderness, Joshua 15:61-62.

Verse 2

Repent ye - Repentance implies sorrow for past offences 2 Corinthians 7:10; a deep sense of the evil of sin as committed against God Psalm 51:4; and a full purpose to turn from transgression and to lead a holy life. A true penitent has sorrow for sin, not only because it is ruinous to his soul, but chiefly because it is an offence against God, and is that abominable thing which he hates, Jeremiah 44:4. It is produced by seeing the great danger and

misery to which it exposes us; by seeing the justice and holiness of God Job 42:6; and by seeing that our sins have been committed against Christ, and were the cause of his death, Zechariah 12:10; Luke 22:61-62. There are two words in the New Testament translated "repentance," one of which denotes a change of mind, or a reformation of life; and the other, sorrow or regret that sin has been committed. The word used here is the former, calling the Jews to a change of life, or a reformation of conduct. In the time of John, the nation had become extremely wicked and corrupt, perhaps more so than at any preceding period. Hence, both he and Christ began their ministry by calling the nation to repentance.

The kingdom of heaven is at hand - The phrases kingdom of heaven, kingdom of Christ, kingdom of God, are of frequent occurrence in the Bible. They all refer to the same thing. The expectation of such a kingdom was taken from the Old Testament, and especially from Daniel, Daniel 7:13-14. The prophets had told of a successor to David that should sit on his throne 1 Kings 2:4; 1 Kings 8:25; Jeremiah 33:17. The Jews expected a great national deliverer. They supposed that when the Messiah should appear, all the dead would be raised; that the judgment would take place; and that the enemies of the Jews would be destroyed, and that they themselves would be advanced to great national dignity and honor.

The language in which they were accustomed to describe this event was retained by our Saviour and his apostles. Yet they early attempted to correct the common notions respecting his reign. This was one design, doubtless, of John in preaching repentance. Instead of summoning them to military exercises, and collecting an army, which would have been in accordance with the expectations of the nation, he called them to a change of life; to the doctrine of repentance - a state of things far more accordant with the approach of a kingdom of purity.

The phrases "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" have been supposed to have a considerable variety of meaning. Some have supposed that they refer to the state of things in heaven; others, to the personal reign of Christ on earth; others, that they mean the church, or the reign of Christ in the hearts of his people. There can be no doubt that there is reference in the words to the condition of things in heaven after this life. But the church of God is a preparatory state to that beyond the grave - a state in which Christ pre-eminently rules and reigns and there is no doubt that the phrases

sometimes refer to the state of things in the church; and that they may refer, therefore, to the state of things which the Messiah was to set up his spiritual reign begun in the church on earth and completed in heaven.

The expression "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" would be best translated, "the reign of God draws near." We do not say commonly of a kingdom that it is movable, or that it approaches. A reign may be said to be at hand; and it may be said with propriety that the time when Christ would reign was at hand. In this sense it is meant that the time when Christ should reign, or set up his kingdom, or begin his dominion on earth, under the Christian economy, was about to commence. The phrase, then, should not be confined to any period of that reign, but includes his whole dominion over his people on earth and in heaven.

In the passage here it clearly means that the coming of the Messiah was near, or that the time of the reign of God which the Jews had expected was coming.

The word "heaven," or "heavens," as it is in the original, means sometimes the place so called; and sometimes it is, by a figure of speech, put for the Great Being whose residence is there, as in Daniel 4:26; "the Heavens do rule." See also Mark 11:30; Luke 15:18. As that kingdom was one of purity, it was proper that the people should prepare themselves for it by turning from their sins, and by bringing their hearts into a state suitable to his reign.

Verse 3

The prophet Esaias - The prophet Isaiah. Esaias is the Greek mode of writing the name. This passage is taken from Isaiah 40:3. It is here said to have been spoken in reference to John, the forerunner of Christ. The language is such as was familiar to the Jews. and such as they would understand. It was spoken at first with reference to the return from the captivity at Babylon. In ancient times, it was customary in the march of armies to send messengers, or pioneers, before them to proclaim their approach; to provide for them; to remove obstructions; to make roads, level hills, fill up valleys, etc. Isaiah, describing the return from Babylon, uses language taken from that custom. A crier, or herald, is introduced. In the

vast deserts that lay between Babylon and Judea he is represented as lifting up his voice, and, with authority, commanding a public road to be made for the return of the captive Jews, with the Lord as their deliverer. "Prepare his ways, make them straight," says he. The meaning in Isaiah is, "Let the valleys be exalted, or filled up, and the hills be levelled, and a straight, level highway be prepared, that they may march with ease and safety." See the notes at Isaiah 40:3-4. The custom here referred to is continued in the East at the present time. "When Ibrahim Pasha proposed to visit certain places on Lebanon, the emeers and sheiks sent forth a general proclamation, somewhat in the style of Isaiah's exhortation, to all the inhabitants, to assemble along the proposed route and prepare the way before him. The same was done in 1845, on a grand scale, when the present sultan visited Brousa. The stones were gathered out, the crooked places straightened, and the rough ones made level and smooth." - *The Land and the Book*, Vol i. pp. 105,106.

As applied to John, the passage means that he was sent to remove obstructions, and to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah, like a herald going before an army on the march, to make preparations for its coming.

Verse 4

His raiment of camel's hair - His clothing. This is not the fine hair of the camel from which our elegant cloth is made called camlet, nor the more elegant stuff brought from the East Indies under the name of "camel's hair," but the long shaggy hair of the camel, from which a coarse cheap cloth is made, still worn by the poorer classes in the East, and by monks. This dress of the camel's hair, and a leather belt, it seems, was the common dress of the prophets, 2 Kings 1:8; Zechariah 13:4.

His meat was locusts - His food. These constituted the food of the common people. Among the Greeks the vilest of the people used to eat them; and the fact that John made his food of them is significant of his great poverty and humble life. The Jews were allowed to eat them, Leviticus 11:22. Locusts are flying insects, and are of various kinds. The green locusts are about 2 inches in length and about the thickness of a man's finger. The common brown locust is about 3 inches long. The general form and appearance of the locust is not unlike the grasshopper. They were one of the plagues of Egypt Joel 1:4; Isaiah 33:4-5. "Some species of the locust

are eaten until this day in Eastern countries, and are even esteemed as a delicacy when properly cooked. After tearing off the legs and wings, and taking out the entrails, they stick them in long rows upon wooden spits, roast them at the fire, and then proceed to devour them with great zest. There are also other ways of preparing them. For example: they cook them and dress them in oil; or, having dried them, they pulverize them, and, when other food is scarce, make bread of the meal. The Bedouins pack them with salt in close masses, which they carry in their leather sacks. From these they cut slices as they may need them. It is singular that even learned men have suffered themselves to hesitate about understanding these passages of the literal locust, when the fact that these are eaten by the Orientals is so abundantly proved by the concurrent testimony of travelers.

One of them says they are brought to market on strings in all the cities of Arabia, and that he saw an Arab on Mount Sumara who had collected a sackful of them. They are prepared in different ways. An Arab in Egypt, of whom he requested that he would immediately eat locusts in his presence, threw them upon the glowing coals; and after he supposed they were roasted enough, he took them by the legs and head, and devoured the remainder at one mouthful. When the Arabs have them in quantities they roast or dry them in an oven, or boil them and eat them with salt. The Arabs in the kingdom of Morocco boil the locusts; and the Bedouins eat locusts, which are collected in great quantities in the beginning of April, when they are easily caught. After having been roasted a little upon the iron plate on which bread is baked, they are dried in the sun, and then put into large sacks, with the mixture of a little salt.

They are never served up as a dish, but every one takes a handful of them when hungry" (*Un. Bib. Dic.*). Burckhardt, one of the most trustworthy of travelers, says: "All the Bedouins of Arabia and the inhabitants of towns in Nejd and Hedjaz are accustomed to eat locusts." "I have seen at Medina and Tayf locust-shops, where these animals were sold by measure. In Egypt and Nubia they are only eaten by the poorest beggars *The Land and the Book*, ii. 107). "Locusts," says Dr. Thomson (*The Land and the Book*, ii. 108), "are not eaten in Syria by any but the Bedouin on the extreme frontiers, and it is always spoken of as an inferior article of food, and regarded by most with disgust and loathing tolerated only by the very poorest people. John the Baptist, however, was of this class either from

necessity or election." It is remarkable that not only in respect to his food, but also in other respects, the peculiarities in John's mode of life have their counterparts in the present habits of the same class of persons. "The coat or mantle of camel's hair is seen still on the shoulders of the Arab who escorts the traveler through the desert, or of the shepherd who tends his flocks on the hills of Judea or in the valley of the Jordan. It is made of the thin, coarse hair of the camel, and not of the fine hair, which is manufactured into a species of rich cloth. I was told that both kinds of raiment are made on a large scale at Nablus, the ancient Shechem. The ‹leathern girdle' may be seen around the body of the common laborer, when fully dressed, almost anywhere; whereas men of wealth take special pride in displaying a rich sash of silk or some other costly fabric" (Hackett's *Illustrations of Scripture*, p. 104).

Wild honey - This was probably the honey that he found in the rocks of the wilderness. Palestine was often called the land flowing with milk and honey, Exodus 3:8, Exodus 3:17; Exodus 13:5. Bees were kept with great care, and great numbers of them abounded in the fissures of trees and the clefts of rocks. "Bees abound there still, not only wild, but hived, as with us. I saw a great number of hives in the old castle near the Pools of Solomon; several, also, at Deburieh, at the foot of Tabor: and again at Mejdel, the Magdala of the New Testament, on the Lake of Tiberias. Maundrell says that he saw ‹bees very industrious about the blossoms' between Jericho and the Dead Sea, which must have been within the limits of the very ‹desert' in which John ‹did eat locusts and wild honey'" (Hackett's *Illustrations of Scripture*, p. 104). There is also a species of honey called wild honey, or wood honey (1 Samuel 14:27, margin), or honeydew, produced by certain little insects, and deposited on the leaves of trees, and flowing from them in great quantities to the ground. See 1 Samuel 14:24-27. This is said to be produced still in Arabia, and perhaps it was this which John lived upon.

Verse 5

Jerusalem - The people of Jerusalem.

All Judea - Many people from Judea. It does not mean that literally all the people went, but that great multitudes went. It was general. Jerusalem was in the part of the country called Judea. Judea was situated on the west side of the Jordan. See the notes at Matthew 2:22.

Region about Jordan - On the east and west side of the river. Near to Jordan.

Verse 6

Were baptized - The word "baptize" βαπτίζω baptizosignifies originally to tinge, to dye, to stain, as those who dye clothes. It here means to cleanse or wash anything by the application of water. See the notes at Mark 7:4. Washing, or ablution, was much in use among the Jews, as one of the rites of their religion, Numbers 19:7; Hebrews 9:10. It was not customary, however, among them to baptize those who were converted to the Jewish religion until after the Babylonian captivity. At the time of John, and for some time previous, they had been accustomed to administer a rite of baptism, or washing, to those who became proselytes to their religion; that is, to those who were converted from being Gentiles. This was done to signify that they renounced the errors and worship of the pagans, and as significant of their becoming pure by embracing a new religion.

It was a solemn rite of washing, significant of cleansing from their former sins, and purifying them for the special service of Yahweh. John found this custom in use; and as he was calling the Jews to a new dispensation - to a change in their form of religion - he administered this rite of baptism (washing), to signify the cleansing from sin, the adopting of the new dispensation, or the fitness for the pure reign of the Messiah. He applied an old ordinance to a new purpose. As it was used by him it was a significant rite, or ceremony, intended to denote the putting away of impurity, and a purpose to be pure in heart and life. The Hebrew word טבל Tabalwhich is rendered by the word "baptize," occurs in the Old Testament in the following places, namely: Leviticus 4:6; Leviticus 14:6, Leviticus 14:51; Numbers 19:18; Rth 2:14 ; Exodus 12:22; Deuteronomy 33:24; Joshua 3:15; Job 9:31; Leviticus 9:9; 1 Samuel 14:27 (twice); 2 Kings 5:14; 2 Kings 8:15; Genesis 37:31; Joshua 3:15.

It occurs in no other places; and from a careful examination of these passages its meaning among the Jews is to be derived. From these passages it will be seen that its radical meaning is neither to sprinkle nor to immerse. It is to dip, commonly for the purpose of sprinkling, or for some other purpose.

Thus, to dip the finger, i. e., a part of the finger, in blood enough to sprinkle with, Leviticus 4:6. To dip a living bird, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop, in the blood of the bird that was killed, for the purpose of sprinkling; where it could not be that all these would be immersed the blood of a single bird, Leviticus 14:6. To dip hyssop in the water, to sprinkle with, Numbers 19:18. To dip a portion of bread in vinegar, Rth 2:14 . To dip the feet in oil - an emblem of plenty, Deuteronomy 33:24. To dye, or stain, Ezekiel 23:15. To plunge into a ditch, so as to defile the clothes, Job 9:31. To dip the end of a staff in honey, 1 Samuel 14:27. To dip in Jordan - a declaration respecting Naaman the Syrian, 2 Kings 5:14. The direction of the prophet was to wash himself 2 Kings 5:10, and this shows that he understood washing and baptizing to mean the same thing. To dip a towel, or quilt, so as to spread it on the face of a man to smother him, 2 Kings 8:15.

In none of these cases can it be shown that the meaning of the word is to immerse entirely But in nearly all the cases the notion of applying the water to a part only of the person or object, though it was by dipping, is necessarily to be supposed.

In the New Testament the word βαπτίζω baptizoin various forms, occurs 80 times; 57 with reference to persons. Of these 57 times, it is followed by "in" ἐν en18 times, as in water, in the desert, in Jordan; 9 times by "into" εἰς eisas into the name, etc., into Christ; once it is followed by ἐπί epi Acts 2:38, and twice by "for" ὑπέρ huper 1 Corinthians 15:29.

The following remarks may be made in view of the investigation of the meaning of this word:

1.That in baptism it is possible, perhaps probable, that the notion of dipping would be the one that would occur to a Jew.

2.It would not occur to him that the word meant of necessity to dip entirely, or to immerse completely.

3.The notion of washing would be the one which would most readily occur, as connected with a religious rite. See the cases of Naaman, and Mark 7:4 (Greek).

4.It cannot be proved from an examination of the passages in the Old and New Testaments that the idea of a complete immersion was ever connected with the word, or that it ever occurred in any case. If those who were baptized went into the water, it is still not proved by that, that the only mode of baptism was by immersion, since it might have been by pouring, though they were in the water.

5.It is not positively enjoined anywhere in the New Testament that the only mode of baptism shall be by an entire submersion of the body under water. Without such a precept it cannot be made obligatory on people of all ages, nations, and climes, even if it were probable that in the mild climate of Judea it was the usual mode.

In Jordan - The River Jordan is the eastern boundary of Palestine or Judea. It rises in Mount Lebanon, on the north of Palestine, and runs in a southerly direction, underground, for 13 miles, and then bursts forth with a great noise at Cesarea Philippi. It then unites with two small streams, and runs some miles farther, and empties into the Lake Merom. From this small lake it flows 13 miles, and then falls into the Lake Gennesareth, otherwise called the Sea of Tiberias or the Sea of Galilee. Through the middle of this lake, which is 15 miles long and from 6 miles to 9 miles wide, it flows undisturbed, and preserves a southerly direction for about 70 miles, and then falls into the Dead Sea. The Jordan, at its entrance into the Dead Sea, is about 90 feet wide. It flows in many places with great rapidity, and when swollen by rains pours like an impetuous torrent. It formerly regularly overflowed its banks in time of harvest, that is, in March, in some places 600 paces, Joshua 3:15; 1 Chronicles 12:15. These banks are covered with small trees and shrubs, and afford a convenient dwelling for wild beasts. Allusion is often made to these thickets in the sacred Scriptures, Jeremiah 49:19; Jeremiah 50:44. On the reason why a river, or a place abounding in water, was selected for administering baptism, see the notes at John 3:23.

Verse 7

Pharisees and Sadducees - The Jews were divided into three great sects - the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. In addition to these, some smaller sects are mentioned in the New Testament and by Josephus: the Herodians, probably political friends of Herod; the Galileans, a branch of the Pharisees; and the Therapeutae, a branch of the Essenes, but converts from the Greeks. The three principal sects are supposed to have originated

about 150 years before Christ, as they are mentioned by Josephus at that time in his history. Of course nothing is said of them in the Old Testament, as that was finished about 400 years before the Christian era.

I. The Pharisees were the most numerous and wealthy sect of the Jews. They derived their name from the Hebrew word Pharash, which signifies to set apart, or to separate, because they separated themselves from the rest of their countrymen, and professedly devoted themselves to special strictness in religion. Their leading tenets were the following: that the world was governed by fate, or by a fixed decree of God; that the souls of men were immortal, and were either eternally happy or miserable beyond the grave; that the dead would be raised; that there were angels, good and bad; that God was under obligation to bestow special favor on the Jews; and that they were justified by their own conformity to the law. They were proud, haughty, self-righteous, and held the common people in great disrespect, John 7:49. They sought the offices of the state, and affected great dignity. They were ostentatious in their religious worship, praying in the corners of the streets, and seeking publicity in the bestowment of alms. They sought principally external cleanliness, and dealt much in ceremonial ablutions and washing.

They maintained some of the laws of Moses very strictly. In addition to the written laws, they held to a multitude which they maintained had come down from Moses by tradition. These they felt themselves as much bound to observe as the written Law. Under the influence of these laws they washed themselves before meals with great scrupulousness; they fasted twice a week - on Thursday, when they supposed that Moses ascended Mount Sinai, and on Monday, when he descended; they wore broad phylacteries, and enlarged the fringe or borders of their garments; they loved the chief rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues. In general, they were a corrupt, hypocritical, office-seeking, haughty class of men. There are, however, some honorable exceptions recorded, Acts 5:34; perhaps, also, Mark 15:43; Luke 2:25; Luke 23:51; John 19:38-42; John 3:1; John 7:50.

II. The Sadducees are supposed to have taken their name from Sadok, who flourished about 260 years before the Christian era. He was a pupil of Antigonus Sochaeus, president of the sanhedrin, or great council of the

nation. He had taught the duty of serving God disinterestedly, without the hope of reward or the fear of punishment. Sadok, not properly understanding the doctrine of his master, drew the inference that there was no future state of rewards or punishments, and on this belief he founded the sect. The other notions which they held, all to be traced to this leading doctrine, were:

1.That there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit Matthew 22:23; Acts 23:8; and that the soul of man perishes with the body.

2.They rejected the doctrine of fate or decrees.

3.They rejected all traditions, and professed to receive only the books of the Old Testament. They were far less numerous than the Pharisees, but their want of numbers was compensated, in some degree, by their wealth and standing in society. Though they did not generally seek office, yet several of them were advanced to the high priesthood.

III. The Essenes, a third sect of the Jews, are not mentioned in the New Testament. They differed from both the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They were Jewish monks or hermits, passing their time little in society, but mostly in places of obscurity and retirement. It is not probable, therefore, that our Saviour often, if ever, encountered them; and this, it is supposed, is the reason why they are not mentioned in the New Testament. They were a contemplative sect, having little to do with the common business of life. The property which they possessed they held in common. They denied themselves, in a great measure, the usual comforts of life, and were exceedingly strict in the observance of the duties of religion. They were generally more pure than the rest of the Jews, and appear to have been an unambitious, a modest, and retiring sort of people. The two sexes were not in company except on the Sabbath, when they partook of their coarse fare (only bread and salt) together. They practiced dancing in their worship. Few of them were married; they were opposed to oaths, and they asserted that slavery was repugnant to nature. In regard to doctrine, they did not differ materially from the Pharisees, except that they objected to the sacrifices of slain animals, and of course did not visit the temple, and were not, therefore, likely to come into public contact with the Saviour. They perpetuated their sect by proselytes, and by taking orphan children to train up.

The other sects of the Jews were too insignificant to demand any particular notice here. It may be said of the Jews generally that they possessed little of the spirit of religion; that they had corrupted some of the most important doctrines of the Bible; and that they were an ignorant, proud, ambitious, and sensual people. There as great propriety, therefore, in John‘s proclaiming to them the necessity of repentance.

Generation of vipers - Vipers are a species of serpents, from 2 to 5 feet in length and about an inch thick, with a flat head. They are of an ash or yellowish color, speckled with long brown spots. There is no serpent that is more poisonous. The person bitten by them swells up almost immediately, and falls down dead. See Acts 28:6. The word “serpent,” or “viper,” is used to denote both cunning and malignancy. In the phrase “be ye wise as serpents” Matthew 10:16 it means be prudent, or wise, referring to the account in Genesis 3:1-6. Among the Jews the serpent was regarded as the symbol of cunning, circumspection, and prudence. It was so regarded in the Egyptian hieroglyphics. In the phrase “generation of vipers” Matthew 12:34, the viper is the symbol of wickedness, of envenomed malice - a symbol drawn from the venom of the serpent. It is not quite certain in which of these senses the phrase is used in this place. Probably it is used to denote their malignancy and wickedness.

Wrath to come - John expresses his astonishment that sinners so hardened and so hypocritical as they were should have been induced to flee from coming wrath. The wrath to come means the divine indignation, or the punishment that will come on the guilty. See 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9.

Verse 8

Bring forth therefore fruits … - That is, the proper fruits of reformation; the proper evidence that you are sincere. Do not bring your cunning and dissimulation to this work; do not carry your hypocrisy into your professed repentance, but evince your sincerity by forsaking sin, and thus give evidence that this coming to Jordan to be baptized is not an act of dissimulation. No discourse could have been more appropriate or more cutting.

Fruits - Conduct. See Matthew 7:16-19.

Meet for repentance - Fit for repentance; appropriate to it the proper expression of repentance.

Verse 9

And think not to say … - They regarded it as sufficient righteousness that they were descended from so holy a man as Abraham. Compare John 8:33-37, John 8:53. John assured them that this was a matter of small consequence in the sight of God. Of the very stones of the Jordan he could raise up children to Abraham. The meaning seems to be this: God, from these stones, could more easily raise up those who should be worthy children of Abraham, or be like him, than simply, because you are descendants of Abraham, make you, who are proud and hypocritical, subjects of the Messiah‘s kingdom. Or, in other words, mere nativity, or the privileges of birth, avail nothing where there is not righteousness of life. Some have supposed, however, that by these stones he meant the Roman soldiers, or the pagan, who might also have attended on his ministry; and that God could “of them” raise up children to Abraham.

Verse 10

The axe is laid at the root of the tree - Laying the axe at the root of a tree is intended to denote that the tree is to be cut down. It was not merely to be trimmed, or to be cut about the limbs, but the very tree itself was to be struck. That is, a searching, trying kind of preaching has been commenced. A kingdom of justice is to be set up. Principles and conduct are to be investigated. No art, no dissimulation, will be successful: People are to be tried by their lives, not by birth or profession. They who are not found to bear this test are to be rejected. The very root shall feel the blow, and the fruitless tree shall fall. This is a beautiful and very striking figure of speech, and a very direct threatening of future wrath. John regarded them as making a fair and promising profession, as trees in blossom do. But he told them, also, that they should bear fruit as well as flowers. Their professions of repentance were not enough. They should show, by a holy life, that their profession was genuine.

Verse 11

Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear - The word translated here as “shoes” has a signification different from what it has in our language. At first, in order to keep the feet from the sharp stones or the burning sand, small pieces of wood were fastened to the soles of the feet, called “sandals.” Leather, or skins of beasts dressed, afterward were used. The foot was not covered at all, but the sandal, or piece of leather or wood, was bound by thongs. The people put off these when they enter a house, and put them on when they leave it. To unloose and bind on sandals, on such occasions, was

formerly the business of the lowest servants. The expression in this place, therefore, denotes great humility, and John says that he was nor worthy to be the servant of him who should come after him.

Shall baptize you - Shall send upon you the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is frequently represented as being poured out upon his people, Proverbs 1:23; Isaiah 44:3; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the same, therefore, as the sending of his influences to convert, purify, and guide the soul.

The Holy Ghost - The third person of the adorable Trinity, whose office it is to enlighten, renew, sanctify, and comfort the soul He was promised by the Saviour to convince of sin, John 16:8; to enlighten or teach the disciples, John 14:26; John 16:13; to comfort them in the absence of the Savior, John 14:18; John 16:7; to change the heart. Titus 3:5. To be baptized with the Holy Spirit means that the Messiah would send upon the world a far more powerful and mighty influence than had attended the preaching of John. Many more would be converted. A mighty change would take place. His ministry would not affect the external life only, but the heart. the motives, the soul; and would produce rapid and permanent changes in the lives of people. See Acts 2:17-18.

With fire - This expression has been variously understood. Some have supposed that John refers to the afflictions and persecutions with which men would be tried under the Gospel; others, that the word "fire" means judgment or wrath. According to this latter interpretation, the meaning is that he would baptize a portion of mankind - those who were willing to be his followers - with the Holy Spirit, but the rest of mankind - the wicked - with fire; that is, with judgment and wrath. Fire is a symbol of vengeance. See Isaiah 5:24; Isaiah 61:2; Isaiah 66:24. If this is the meaning, as seems to be probable, then John says that the ministry of the Messiah would be far more powerful than his was. It would be more searching and testing; and they who were not suited to abide the test would be cast into eternal fire. Others have supposed, however, that by fire, here, John intends to express the idea that the preaching of the Messiah would be refining, powerful, purifying, as fire is sometimes an emblem of purity, Malachi 3:2. It is difficult to ascertain the precise meaning further than that his ministry would be very trying, purifying, searching. Multitudes would be converted; and those who were not true penitents would not be able to abide the trial, and would be driven away.

Verse 12

His fan - The word used here and rendered "fan" means a winnowing shovel instead. It was used for throwing the grain, after it was threshed, into the air, so that the chaff might be driven away by the wind. This mode of separating the grain from the chaff is still practiced in the East. It is not probable that the fan, as the term is now used, was known to the Orientals as an instrument for cleaning grain. See the notes at Isaiah 30:24.

His floor - The threshing-floor was an open space, or area, in the field, usually on an elevated part of the land, Genesis 50:10. It had no covering or walls. It was a space of ground 30 or 40 paces in diameter, and made smooth by rolling it or treading it hard. A high place was selected for the purpose of keeping it dry, and for the convenience of winnowing the grain by the wind. The grain was usually trodden out by oxen. Sometimes it was beaten with flails, as with us; and sometimes with a sharp threshing instrument, made to roll over the grain and to cut the straw at the same time. See the notes at Isaiah 41:15.

Shall purge - Shall cleanse or purify. Shall remove the chaff, etc.

The garner - The granary, or place to deposit the wheat.

Unquenchable fire - Fire that shall not be extinguished, that will utterly consume it. By the floor, here, is represented the Jewish people. By the wheat, the righteous, or the people of God. By the chaff, the wicked. They are often represented as being driven away like chaff before the wind, Job 21:18; Psalm 1:4; Isaiah 17:13; Hosea 13:13. They are also represented as chaff which the fire consumes, Isaiah 5:24. This image is often used to express judgments, Isaiah 41:15; "Thou shall thresh the mountains and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff." By the unquenchable fire is meant the eternal suffering of the wicked in hell, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Mark 9:48; Matthew 25:41.

Verse 13

Then cometh Jesus - The Saviour is now introduced as about to enter on his work, or as about to be solemnly set apart to his great office of Messiah and Redeemer. The expression "cometh" implies that the act was voluntary on his part; that he went for that purpose and for no other. He left the part of Galilee - Nazareth - where he had lived for nearly 30 years, and went to the vicinity of the Jordan, where John was baptizing the people in great numbers, that he might be set apart to his work. The occasion was doubtless chosen in order that it might be as public and solemn as possible.

It is to be remembered, also, that it was the main purpose of John's appointment to introduce the Messiah to the world, Matthew 3:3.

To be baptized of him - By him. Baptism was not in his case a symbol of personal reformation and repentance, for he was sinless; but it was a solemn rite by which he was set apart to his great office. It is true, also, that although he was personally holy, and that the baptism in his case had a different signification, in this respect, from that which is implied when it is administered now, yet that even in his case the great idea always implied in the ordinance of baptism had a place; for it was a symbol of holiness or purity in that great system of religion which he was about to set up in the world.

Verse 14

John forbade him - Refused him.

I have need - It is more suitable that I should be baptized with thy baptism, the Holy Spirit, than that thou shouldest be baptized in water by me. I am a sinner, and unworthy to administer this to the Messiah.

Verse 15

Thus it becometh us - It is suitable and proper. And though you may feel yourself unworthy, yet it is proper it should be done.

All righteousness - There was no particular precept in the Old Testament requiring this, but he chose to give the sanction of his example to the baptism of John, as to a divine ordinance. The phrase "all righteousness," here, is the same as a righteous institution or appointment. Jesus had no sin. But he was about to enter on his great work. It was proper that he should be set apart by his forerunner, and show his connection with him, and give his approbation to what John had done. He submitted to the ordinance of baptism, also, in order that occasion might be taken, at the commencement of his work, for God publicly to declare his approbation of him, and his solemn appointment to the office of the Messiah.

Verse 16

Out of the water - This shows that he had descended to the river. It literally means, "he went up directly from the water." The original does not imply that they had descended into the river, and it cannot be proved, therefore, from this passage, that his baptism was by immersion; nor can it be proved that even, if his baptism was by immersion, that therefore the same mode is binding on people now. In order to demonstrate from this passage that immersion is essential, it is necessary to demonstrate:

(a) that he went into the river;
(b) that, being there, he was wholly immersed;

(c) that the fact that he was immersed, if he was, proves that all others must be, in order that there could be a valid baptism.

Neither of these three things has ever been demonstrated from this passage, nor can they be.

The heavens were opened unto him - This was done while he was praying, Luke 3:21. The ordinances of religion will be commonly ineffectual without prayer. If in those ordinances we look to God, we may expect that he will bless us; the heavens will be opened, light will shine upon our path, and we shall meet with the approbation of God. The expression, "the heavens were opened," is one that commonly denotes the appearance of the clouds when it lightens. The heavens appear to open or give way. Something of this kind probably appeared to John at this time. The same appearance took place at Stephen's death, Acts 7:56. The expression means that he was permitted to see far into the heavens beyond what the natural vision would allow.

To him - Some have referred this to Jesus, others to John. It probably refers to John. See John 1:33. It was a testimony given to John that this was the Messiah.

He saw - John saw.

The Spirit of God - See Matthew 3:11. This was the third person of the Trinity, descending upon him in the form of a dove, Luke 3:22. The dove, among the Jews, was the symbol of purity of heart, harmlessness, and gentleness, Matthew 10:16; compare Psalm 55:6-7. The form chosen here was doubtless an emblem of the innocence, meekness, and tenderness of the Saviour. The gift of the Holy Spirit, in this manner, was the public approbation of Jesus John 1:33, and a sign of his being set apart to the office of the Messiah. We are not to suppose that there was any change done in the moral character of Jesus, but only that he was publicly set apart to his work, and solemnly approved by God in the office to which he was appointed.

Verse 17

A voice from heaven - A voice from God. This was probably heard by all who were present. This voice, or sound, was repeated on the mount of transfiguration, Matthew 17:5; Luke 9:35-36; 2 Peter 1:17. It was also heard

just before his death, and was then supposed by many to be thunder, John 12:25-30. It was a public declaration that Jesus was the Messiah.

My beloved Son - This is the title which God himself gave to Jesus. It denotes the nearness of his relation to God, and the love of God for him, Hebrews 1:2. It implies that he was equal with God, Hebrews 1:5-8; John 10:29-33; John 19:7. The term "Son" is expressive of love of the nearness of his relation to God, and of his dignity and equality with God.

I am well pleased - or, I am ever delighted. The language implies that he was constantly or uniformly well pleased with him; and in this solemn and public manner he expressed his approbation of him as the Redeemer of the world.

The baptism of Jesus has usually been regarded as a striking manifestation of the doctrine of the Trinity, or the doctrine that there are three Persons in the divine nature:

(1) there is the Person of "Jesus Christ," the Son of God, baptized in Jordan, elsewhere declared to be equal with God, John 10:30.

(2) the Holy Spirit descending in a bodily form upon the Saviour. The Holy Spirit is also equal with the Father, or is also God, Acts 5:3-4.

(3) the Father, addressing the Son, and declaring that He was well pleased with him.

It is impossible to explain this transaction consistently in any other way than by supposing that there are three equal Persons in the divine nature or essence, and that each of these sustains an important part in the work of redeeming people.

In the preaching of John the Baptist we are presented with an example of a faithful minister of God. Neither the wealth, the dignity, nor the power of his auditors deterred him from fearlessly declaring the truth respecting their character. He called things by their right names. He did not apologize for their sins. He set their transgressions fairly before them, and showed them faithfully and fearlessly what must be the consequence of a life of sin. So should all ministers of the Gospel preach. Rank, riches, and power should have nothing to do in shaping and gauging their ministry. In respectful terms, but without shrinking, all the truth of the Gospel must be spoken, or woe will follow the ambassador of Christ, 1 Corinthians 9:16.

In John we also have an example of humility. Blessed with great success, attended by the great and noble, and with nothing but principle to keep him from turning it to his advantage, he still kept himself out of view, and pointed to a far greater Personage at hand. So should every minister of Jesus, however successful, keep the Lamb of God in his eye, and be willing - nay, rejoice - to lay all his success and honors at Jesus‘ feet.

Everything about the work of Jesus was wonderful. No person had before come into the world under such circumstances. God would not have attended the commencement of his life with such wonderful events if it had not been of the greatest moment to our race, and if he had not possessed a dignity above all prophets, kings, and priests. His “name” was to be called “Wonderful, Councillor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace;” “of the increase of his government and peace” there was to be “no end;” “upon the throne of David and of his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice forever” Isaiah 9:6-7; and it was proper that a voice from heaven should declare that he was the long-promised prince and Saviour; that the angels should attend him, and the Holy Spirit signalize his baptism by his personal presence. And it is proper that we, for whom he came, should give to him our undivided affections, our time, our influence, our hearts, and our lives.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit - Led up by the Spirit. Luke says Luke 4:1 that Jesus was "full of the Holy Spirit;" and it was by his influence, therefore, that he went into the desert to be tempted. It was not done by presumption on the part of Jesus, nor was it for a mere display of his power in resisting temptation; but it was evidently that it might be seen that his holiness was such that he could not be seduced from allegiance to God. When the first Adam was created he was subjected to the temptation of the devil, and he fell and involved the race in ruin: it was not improper that the second Adam - the Redeemer of the race - should be subjected to temptation, in order that it might be seen that there was no power that could alienate him from God; that there was a kind and a degree of holiness which no art or power could estrange from allegiance. Mark Mark 1:12 says that this occurred "immediately" after his baptism; that is, in his case, as not unfrequently happens, the great temptation followed immediately the remarkable manifestation of the divine approbation and favor. In the clearest manifestations of the divine favor to us we may not be far from most powerful temptations, and then may be the time when it is necessary to be most carefully on our guard.

Into the wilderness - See the notes at Matthew 3:1.

To be tempted - The word "tempt," in the original, means to try, to endeavor, to attempt to do a thing; then, to try the nature of a thing, as metals by fire; then, to test moral qualities by trying them, to see how they will endure; then, to endeavor to draw people away from virtue by suggesting motives to evil. This is the meaning here, and this is now the established sense of the word in the English language.

The devil - This word originally means an adversary, or an accuser; then, any one opposed to us; then, an enemy of any kind. It is given in the Scriptures, by way of eminence, to the leader of evil angels - a being characterized as full of subtlety, envy, art, and hatred of mankind. He is known, also, by the name Satan, Job 1:6-12; Matthew 12:26; Beelzebub, Matthew 12:24; the old Serpent, Revelation 12:9; and the Prince of the power of the air, Ephesians 2:2. The name is once given to women 1 Timothy 3:11; "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers;" in the original, devils.

Verse 2

Had fasted - Abstained from food.

Forty days and forty nights - It has been questioned by some whether Christ abstained wholly from food, or only from the food to which he was accustomed. Luke says Luke 4:2 that he ate nothing. This settles the question. Mark says Mark 1:13 that angels came and ministered unto him. At first view this would seem to imply that he did eat during that time. But Mark does not mention the time when the angels performed this office of kindness, and we are at liberty to suppose that he means to say that it was done at the close of the 40 days; and the rather as Matthew, after giving an account of the temptation, says the same thing Matthew 4:2. There are other instances of persons fasting 40 days recorded in the Scriptures. Thus, Moses fasted 40 days, Exodus 34:28. Elijah also fasted the same length of time, 1 Kings 19:8. In these cases they were no doubt miraculously supported.

Verse 3

The tempter - The devil, or Satan. See Matthew 4:1.

If thou be the Son of God - If thou art God‘s own Son, then thou hast power to work a miracle, and here is a suitable opportunity to try thy power, and show that thou art sent from God.

Command that these stones … - The stones that were lying around him in the wilderness. No temptation could have been more plausible, or more likely to succeed, than this. He had just been declared to be the Son of God Matthew 3:17, and here was an opportunity to show that he was really so. The circumstances were such as to make it appear plausible and proper to work this miracle. “Here you are,” was the language of Satan, “hungry, cast out, alone, needy, poor, and yet the Son of God! If you have this power, how easy could you satisfy your wants! How foolish is it, then, for the Son of God, having all power, to be starving in this manner, when by a word he could show his power and relieve his wants, and when in the thing itself there could be nothing wrong!”

Verse 4

But he answered and said … - In reply to this artful temptation Christ answered by a quotation from the Old Testament. The passage is found in Deuteronomy 8:3. In that place the discourse is respecting manna. Moses says that the Lord humbled the people, and fed them with manna, an unusual kind of food, that they might learn that man did not live by bread only, but that there were other things to support life, and that everything

which God had commanded was proper for this. The term “word,” used in this place, means very often, in Hebrew, thing, and clearly in this place has that meaning. Neither Moses nor our Saviour had any reference to spiritual food, or to the doctrines necessary to support the faith of believers; but they simply meant that God could support life by other things than bread; that man was to live, not by that only, but by every other thing which proceeded out of his mouth; that is, which he chose to command people to eat. The substance of his answer, then, is: “It is not so imperiously necessary that I should have bread as to make a miracle proper to procure it. Life depends on the will of God. He can support it in other ways as well as by bread. He has created other things to be eaten, and man may live by everything that his Maker has commanded.” And from this temptation we may learn:

1. That Satan often takes advantage of our circumstances and wants to tempt us. The poor, the hungry, and the naked he often tempts to repine and complain, and to be dishonest in order to supply their necessities.

2. Satan‘s temptations are often the strongest immediately after we have been remarkably favored. Jesus had just been called the Son of God, and Satan took this opportunity to try him. He often attempts to fill us with pride and vain self-conceit when we have been favored with any peace of mind, or any new view of God, and endeavors to urge us to do something which may bring us low and lead us to sin.

3. His temptations are plausible. They often seem to be only urging us to do what is good and proper. They seem even to urge us to promote the glory of God, and to honor him. We are not to think, therefore, that because a thing may seem to be good in itself, that therefore it is to be done. Some of the most powerful temptations of Satan occur when he seems to be urging us to do what shall be for the glory of God.

4. We are to meet the temptations of Satan, as the Saviour did, with the plain and positive declarations of Scripture. We are to inquire whether the thing is commanded, and whether, therefore, it is right to do it, and not trust to our own feelings, or even our wishes, in the matter.

Verse 5

Then the devil taketh him up - This does not mean that he bore him through the air; or that he compelled him to go against his will, or that he performed a miracle in any way to place him there. There is no evidence that Satan had power to do any of these things, and the word translated taketh him Up does not imply any such thing. It means to conduct one; to lead one; to attend or accompany one; or to induce one to go. It is used in the following places in the same sense: Numbers 23:14; "And he (Balak) brought him (Balaam) into the field of Zophim," etc. That is, he led him, or induced him to go there. Matthew 17:1; "and after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James," etc.; that is, led or conducted them - not by any means implying that he bore them by force. Matthew 20:17; "Jesus, going to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart," etc. See also Matthew 26:37; Matthew 27:27; Mark 5:40. From these passages, and many more, it appears that all that is meant here is, that Satan conducted Jesus, or accompanied him; but not that this was done against the will of Jesus.

The holy city - Jerusalem, called holy because the temple was there, and because it was the place of religious solemnities.

Setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple - It is not perfectly certain to what part of the temple the sacred writer here refers. It has been supposed by some that he means the roof. But Josephus says that the roof was covered by spikes of gold, to prevent its being polluted by birds; and such a place would have been very inconvenient to stand upon. Others suppose that it was the top of the porch or entrance to the temple. But it is more than probable that the porch leading to the temple was not as high as the main building. It is more probable that he refers to that part of the sacred edifice which was called Solomon‘s Porch. The temple was built on the top of Mount Moriah. The temple itself, together with the courts and porches, occupied a large space of ground. See the notes at Matthew 21:12. To secure a level spot sufficiently large, it was necessary to put up a high wall on the east. The temple was surrounded with porches or piazzas 50 feet broad and 75 feet high. The porch on the south side was, however, 67 feet broad and 150 high. From the top of this to the bottom of the valley below was more than 700 feet, and Josephus says that one could scarcely look down without dizziness. The word "pinnacle" does not quite express the force of the original. It is a word given usually to birds, and denotes wings, or anything in the form of wings, and was given to the roof of this porch

because it resembled a bird dropping its wings. It was on this place, doubtless, that Christ was placed.

Verse 6

And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down - The temptation here was, that he should at once avail himself of the protection of a promise of safety made to him, and thus demonstrate that he was the Messiah. If he was the true Messiah he had a certain assurance of protection, a promise that no harm could befall him; and thus, by so surprising a miracle, and such a clear proof of the divine interposition, he could at once establish his claim to the Messiahship. How much more easy would this be than to engage in a slow work of years to establish that claim; to encounter fatigue, and want, and poverty, and persecution, before that claim would be admitted! And where could be a more suitable place for thus at once demonstrating that he was the Son of God, than on this pinnacle of the temple, in the very midst of Jerusalem, and perhaps in the presence of thousands who would see the wonderful performance? The temptation, therefore, in this case was, that by thus establishing his claim he would avoid all the obloquy, persecution, and suffering which he must otherwise endure if he attempted to prove that he was the Son of God by a life of toil and privation.

It is written - That is, there is a passage of Scripture which promises special protection in such a case, and on which you may rely. The argument was not, perhaps, that this applied exclusively to the Messiah, but that, if applicable in any case, it would be in this; if any one could plead this promise, assuredly he could who claimed to be the Son of God.

He shall give his angels charge concerning thee … - That is, they shall protect thee.

And in their hands they shall bear thee up - They shall sustain thee, or hold thee up, so that thou shalt not be endangered by the fall.

Lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone - This would be especially appropriate in such a case. The promise, as Satan applied it, was that he should not be injured by the stones lying at the bottom of the wall or in the valley below. The case, therefore, seemed to be one that was especially contemplated by the promise.

Verse 7

Jesus said unto him, It is written again - Again the Saviour replied to Satan by a text of Scripture - a passage which expressly forbade an act like

this.

Thou shall not tempt the Lord thy God - This is quoted literally from Deuteronomy 6:16. The meaning is, thou shalt not try him; or, thou shalt not, by throwing thyself into voluntary and uncommanded dangers, appeal to God for protection, or trifle with the promises made to those who are thrown into danger by his providence. It is true, indeed, that God aids those of his people who are placed by him in trial or danger; but it is not true that the promise was meant to extend to those who wantonly provoke him and trifle with the promised help. Thus, Satan, artfully using and perverting Scripture, was met and repelled by Scripture rightly applied.

Verse 8

An exceeding high mountain - It is not known what mountain this was. It was probably some elevated place in the vicinity of Jerusalem, from the top of which could be seen no small part of the land of Palestine. The Abbe Mariti speaks of a mountain on which he was, which answers to the description here. "This part of the mountain," says he, "overlooks the mountains of Arabia, the country of Gilead, the country of the Amorites, the plains of Moab, the plains of Jericho, the River Jordan, and the whole extent of the Dead Sea." So Moses, before he died, went up into Mount Nebo, and from it God showed him "all the land of Gilead unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, and the city of palm-trees, unto Zoar," Deuteronomy 34:1-3. This shows that there were mountains from which no small part of the land of Canaan could be seen; and we need not suppose that there was any miracle when they were shown to the Saviour.

All the kingdoms of the world - It is not probable that anything more is intended here than the kingdoms of Palestine, or of the land of Canaan, and those in the immediate vicinity. Judea was divided into three parts, and those parts were called kingdoms; and the sons of Herod, who presided over them, were called kings. The term "world" is often used in this limited sense to denote a part or a large part of the world, particularly the land of Canaan. See Romans 4:13, where it means the land of Judah; also Luke 2:1, and the note on the place.

The glory of them - The riches, splendor, towns, cities, mountains, etc., of this beautiful land,

Verse 9

All these things … - All these kingdoms. All these dominions Satan claimed a right to bestow on whom he pleased, and with considerable justice. They were excessively wicked; and with no small degree of propriety, therefore, he asserted his claim to give them away. This temptation had much plausibility. Satan regarded Jesus as the king of the Jews. As the Messiah he supposed he had come to take possession of all that country. He was poor, and unarmed, and without followers or armies. Satan proposed to put him in possession of it at once, without any difficulty, if he would acknowledge him as the proper lord and disposer of that country; if he would trust to him rather than to God.

Worship me - See the notes at Matthew 2:2. The word here seems to mean, to acknowledge Satan as having a right to give these kingdoms to him; to acknowledge his dependence on him rather than God; that is, really to render religious homage. We may be surprised at his boldness. But he had been twice foiled. He supposed it was an object dear to the heart of the Messiah to obtain these kingdoms. He claimed a right over them; and he seemed not to be asking too much, if he gave them to Jesus, that Jesus should be willing to acknowledge the gift and express gratitude for it. So plausible are Satan‘s temptations, even when they are blasphemous; and so artfully does he present his allurements to the mind.

Verse 10

Get thee hence - These temptations, and this one especially, the Saviour met with a decided rebuke. This was a bolder attack than any which had been made before. The other temptations had been founded on an appeal to his necessities, and an offer of the protection of God in great danger; in both cases plausible, and in neither a direct violation of the law of God. Here was a higher attempt, a more decided and deadly thrust at the piety of the Saviour. It was a proposition that the Son of God should worship the devil, instead of honoring and adoring Him who made heaven and earth; that he should bow down before the Prince of wickedness and give him homage.

It is written - In Deuteronomy 6:13. Satan asked him to worship him. This was expressly forbidden, and Jesus therefore drove him from his presence.

Verse 11

Then the devil leaveth him - He left him for a time, Luke 4:13. He intended to return again to the temptation, and, if possible, to seduce him

yet from God. Compare John 14:30; Luke 22:53. See the notes at Hebrews 12:4.

The angels came and ministered - See the notes at Matthew 1:20. They came and supplied his wants and comforted him. From this narrative we may learn:

(a) That no one is so holy as to be free from temptation, for even the Son of God was sorely tempted.

(b) That when God permits a temptation or trial to come upon us, he will, if we look to him, give us grace to resist and overcome it, 1 Corinthians 10:13.

(c) We see the art of the tempter. His temptations are adapted to times and circumstances. They are plausible. What could have been mere plausible than his suggestions to Christ? They were applicable to his circumstances. They had the appearance of much piety. They were backed by passages of Scripture misapplied, but still most artfully presented. Satan never comes boldly and tempts people to sin, telling them that they are committing sin. Such a mode would defeat his design. It would put people on their guard. He commences, therefore, artfully and plausibly, and the real purpose does not appear until he has prepared the mind for it. This is the way with all temptation. No wicked person would at once tempt another to be profane, to be drunk, to be an infidel, or to commit adultery. The principles are first corrupted. The confidence is secured. The affections are won. And *then* the allurement is little by little presented, until the victim falls. How everyone should be on his guard at the very first appearance of evil, at the first suggestion that may possibly lead to sin!

(d) One of the best ways of meeting temptation is by applying Scripture. So our Saviour did, and they will always best succeed who best wield the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, Ephesians 6:17.

Verse 12

John was cast into prison - For an account of the imprisonment of John see Matthew 14:1-13.

He departed into Galilee - See Matthew 2:22. The reasons why Jesus then went into Galilee were probably:

1.Because the attention of the people had been much excited by John‘s preaching, and things seemed to be favorable for success in his own ministry.

2.It appeared desirable to have some one to second John in the work of reformation.

3.It was less dangerous for him to commence his labors there than near Jerusalem. Judea was under the dominion of the scribes, and Pharisees, and priests. They would naturally look with envy on any one who set himself up for a public teacher, and who should attract much attention there. It was important, therefore, that the work of Jesus should begin in Galilee, and become somewhat established and known before he went to Jerusalem.

Verse 13

Leaving Nazareth - Because his townsmen cast him out, and rejected him. See Matthew 9:1. Here he healed the nobleman‘s son John 4:47; Peter‘s wife‘s mother Matthew 8:14; the centurion‘s servant Matthew 8:5-13; and the ruler‘s daughter Matthew 9:23-25.

Upon the sea coast - The Sea of Tiberias.

In the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim - These were two tribes of the children of Israel which were located in this part of the land of Canaan, and constituted in the time of Christ a part of Galilee. Compare Genesis 49:13; Joshua 19:10, Joshua 19:32. The word “borders” here means boundaries. Jesus came and lived in the boundaries or regions of Zabulon and Naphthali.

Verses 14-16

That it might be fulfilled … - This place is recorded in Isaiah 9:1-2. Matthew has given the sense, but not the very words of the prophet. For the meaning of the passage as employed by Isaiah, see the notes at Isaiah 9:1-2.

By the way of the sea - Which is near to the sea, or in the vicinity of the sea.

Beyond Jordan - This does not mean to the east of Jordan, as the phrase sometimes denotes, but rather in the vicinity of the Jordan, or perhaps in the vicinity of the sources of the Jordan. See Deuteronomy 1:1; Deuteronomy 4:49.

Galilee of the Gentiles - Galilee was divided into upper and lower Galilee. Upper Galilee was called Galilee of the Gentiles, because it was

occupied chiefly by Gentiles. It was in the neighborhood of Tyre, Sidon, etc. The word "Gentiles" includes in the Scriptures all who are not Jews. It means the same as nations, or, as we should say, the pagan nations.

Matthew 4:16

The people which sat in darkness - This is an expression denoting great ignorance.

As in darkness or night we can see nothing, and know not where to go, so those who are ignorant of God and their duty are said to be in darkness. The instruction which removes this ignorance is called light. See John 3:19; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 1:5; 1 John 2:8. As ignorance is often connected with crime and vice, so darkness is sometimes used to denote sin, 1 Thessalonians 5:5; Ephesians 5:11; Luke 22:53.

Saw great light - That is, as the passage is employed by Matthew, the light under the Messiah would spring up among them. In that region he grew up, and in that region he preached a great part of his discourses and performed a great part of his miracles.

The region and shadow of death - This is a forcible and beautiful image, designed also to denote ignorance and sin. It is often used in the Bible, and is very expressive. A "shadow" is caused by an object coming between us and the sun. So the Hebrews imaged death as standing between us and the sun, and casting a long, dark, and baleful shadow abroad on the face of the nations, denoting their great ignorance, sin, and woe.. It denotes a dismal, gloomy, and dreadful shade, where death and sin reign, like the chills, damps, and horrors of the dwelling-place of the dead. See Job 10:21; Job 16:16; Job 34:22; Psalm 23:4; Jeremiah 2:6. See also the notes at Isaiah 9:2. These expressions denote that the country of Galilee was especially dark. We know that the people were proverbially ignorant and stupid. They were distinguished for a coarse, outlandish manner of speech Mark 14:70, and are represented as having been also distinguished by a general profligacy of morals and manners. It shows the great compassion of the Saviour, that he went to preach to such poor and despised sinners. Instead of seeking the rich and the learned, he chose to minister to the needy, the ignorant, and the contemned. His office is to enlighten the ignorant; his delight to guide the wandering, and to raise up those that are in the shadow of death. In doing this, Jesus set an example for all his followers. It is their duty to seek out those who are sitting in the shadow of death, and to send the gospel to them. No small part of the world is still lying in wickedness -

as wicked and wretched as was the land of Zabulon and Naphthali in the time of Jesus. The Lord Jesus is able to enlighten them also, and every Christian should regard it a privilege, as well as a duty, to imitate his Saviour in this, and to be permitted to send to them the light of life. See Matthew 28:19.

Verse 17

See the notes at Matthew 3:2.

Verse 18

Sea of Galilee - This was also called the Sea of Tiberias and the Lake of Gennesareth, and also the Sea of Chinnereth, Numbers 34:11; Deuteronomy 3:17; Joshua 12:3. Its form is an irregular oval, with the large end to the north. It is about 14 miles in length, and from 6 miles to 9 miles in width. It is about 600 feet lower than the Mediterranean, and this great depression accounts for some of its special phenomena. There is no part of Palestine, it is said, which can be compared in beauty with the environs of this lake. Many populous cities once stood on its shores, such as Tiberias, Bethsaida, Capernaum, Chorazin, Hippo, etc. The shores are described by Josephus as a perfect paradise, producing every luxury under heaven at all seasons of the year, and its remarkable beauty is still noticed by the traveler. "Seen from any point of the surrounding heights, it is a fine sheet of water a burnished mirror set in a framework of surrounding hills and rugged mountains, which rise and roll backward and upward to where hoary Hermon hangs the picture on the blue vault of heaven." The lake is fed mainly by the Jordan; but besides this there are several great fountains and streams emptying into it during the rainy seasons, which pour an immense amount of water into it, raising its level several feet above the ordinary mark. See *The Land and the Book* (Thomson), vol. ii. p. 77. Lieutenant Lynch reports its greatest ascertained depth at 165 feet. The waters of the lake are sweet and pleasant to the taste, and clear. The lake still abounds with fish, and gives employment, as it did in the time of our Saviour, to those who live on its shores. It is, however, stormy, probably due to the high hills by which it is surrounded.

Simon called Peter - The name "Peter" means a rock, and is the same as "Cephas." See the Matthew 16:18 note; also John 1:42 note; 1 Corinthians 15:5 note.

Verse 19

Fishers of men - Ministers or preachers of the gospel, whose business it shall be to win souls to Christ.

Verse 20

Straightway - Immediately - as all should do when the Lord Jesus calls them.

Left their nets - Their nets were the means of their living, perhaps all their property. By leaving them immediately, and following him, they gave every evidence of sincerity. They showed, what we should, that they were willing to forsake all for the sake of Jesus, and to follow him wherever he should lead them. They went forth to persecution and death for his sake; but also to the honor of saving souls from death, and establishing a church that shall continue to the end of time. Little did they know what awaited them when they left their unmended nets to rot on the beach, and followed the unknown and unhonored Jesus of Nazareth. So we know not what awaits us when we become his followers; but we should cheerfully go when our Saviour calls, willing to commit all into his hands - come honor or dishonor, sickness or health, riches or poverty, life or death. Be it ours to do our duty at once, and to commit the result to the great Redeemer who has called us. Compare Matthew 6:33; Matthew 8:21-22; John 21:21-22.

Follow him - This is an expression denoting that they became his disciples, 2 Kings 6:19.

Verse 21

And going on from thence - From the place where he had found Peter and Andrew, Matthew 4:18.

Saw two other brothers - They were men engaged in the same employment, as it is probable that there were many such in the neighborhood of the lake.

In a ship - A small vessel. In fact, it was little more, probably, than a sail-boat.

Mending their nets - A very common employment when they were not actually engaged in fishing.

Verse 22

Left their father - This showed how willing they were to follow Jesus. They showed us what we ought to do. If necessary, we should leave father, and mother, and every friend, Luke 14:26. If they will go with us, and be Christians, it is well; if not, yet they should not hinder us. We should be the followers of Jesus. And, while in doing it we should treat our friends kindly

and tenderly, yet we ought at all hazards to obey God, and do our duty to him. We may add that many, very many children, since Sunday schools have commenced, have been the means of their parents‘ conversion. Many children have spoken to their parents, or read the Bible to them, or other books, and prayed for them, and God has blessed them and converted them. Every child in a Sunday school ought to be a Christian; and then should strive and pray that God would convert his parents, and make them Christians too. We see here, too, what humble instruments God makes use of to convert people. He chose fishermen to convert the world. He chooses the foolish to confound the wise. And it shows that religion is true, and is the power of God, when he makes use of such instruments to change the hearts of people and save their souls. See the notes at 1 Corinthians 1:26-28.

Verse 23

All Galilee - See the notes at Matthew 2:22.

Synagogues - Places of worship, or places where the people assembled together to worship God. The origin of synagogues is involved in much obscurity. The sacrifices of the Jews were appointed to be held in one place, at Jerusalem. But there was nothing to forbid the other services of religion to be performed at any other place. Accordingly, the praises of God were sung in the schools of the prophets; and those who chose were assembled by the prophets and seers on the Sabbath, and the new moons, for religious worship, 2 Kings 4:23; 1 Samuel 10:5-11. The people would soon see the necessity of providing convenient places for their services, to shelter them from storms and from the heat, and this was probably the origin of synagogues. At what time they were commenced is unknown. They are mentioned by Josephus a considerable time before the coming of Christ; and in his time they were multiplied, not only in Judea, but wherever there were Jews. There were no less than 480 in Jerusalem alone before it was taken by the Romans.

Synagogues were built in any place where ten men were found who were willing to associate for the purpose, and were the regular customary places of worship. In them the law, i. e. the Old Testament, divided into suitable portions, was read, prayers were offered, and the Scriptures were expounded. The law was so divided that the five books of Moses, and portions of the prophets, could be read through each year. The Scriptures. after being read, were expounded. This was done, either by the officers of the synagogue, or by any person who might be invited by the officiating

minister. Our Saviour and the apostles were in the habit of attending at those places continually, and of speaking to the people, Luke 4:15-27; Acts 13:14-15.

The synagogues were built in imitation of the temple, with a center building, supported by pillars, and a court surrounding it. See the notes at Matthew 21:12. In the center building, or chapel, was a place prepared for the reading of the law. The law was kept in a chest, or ark, near to the pulpit. The uppermost seats Matthew 23:6 were those nearest to the pulpit. The people sat around, facing the pulpit. When the law was read, the officiating person rose; when it was expounded, he was seated. Our Saviour imitated their example, and was commonly seated in addressing the people, Matthew 5:1; Matthew 13:1.

Teaching - Instructing the people, or explaining the gospel.

The gospel of the kingdom - The good news respecting the kingdom he was about to set up; or the good news respecting the coming of the Messiah and the nature of his kingdom.

Preaching - See the notes at Matthew 3:1.

All manner of sickness - All kinds of sickness.

Verse 24

And his fame went throughout all Syria - It is not easy to fix the exact bounds of Syria in the time of our Saviour. It was, perhaps, the general name for the country lying between the Euphrates on the east, and the Mediterranean on the west; and between Mount Taurus on the north, and Arabia on the south. Through all this region his celebrity was spread by his power of working miracles; and, as might be expected, the sick from every quarter were brought to him, in the hope that he would give relief.

Those possessed with devils - Much difficulty exists, and much has been written respecting those in the New Testament said to be possessed with the devil. It has been maintained by many that the sacred writers only meant by this expression to denote those who were melancholy or epileptic, or afflicted with some other grievous disease. This opinion has been supported by arguments too long to be repeated here. On the other hand, it has been supposed that the persons so described were under the influence of evil spirits, who had complete possession of the faculties, and who produced many symptoms of disease not unlike melancholy, madness, and

epilepsy. That such was the fact will appear from the following considerations:

1.Christ and the apostles spoke to them and of them as such; they addressed them, and managed them, precisely as if they were so possessed, leaving their hearers to infer beyond a doubt that such was their real opinion.

2.Those who were thus possessed spake, conversed, asked questions, gave answers, and expressed their knowledge of Christ, and their fear of him things that certainly could not be said of diseases, Matthew 8:28; Luke 8:27.

3.The devils, or evil spirits, are represented as going out of the persons possessed, and entering the bodies of others, Matthew 8:32.

4.Jesus spake to them, and asked their name, and they answered him. He threatened them, commanded them to be silent, to depart, and not to return, Mark 1:25; Mark 5:8; Mark 9:25.

5.Those possessed are said "to know Christ; to be acquainted with the Son of God," Luke 4:34; Mark 1:24. This could not be said of diseases.

6.The early fathers of the Church interpreted these passages in the same way. They derived their opinions probably from the apostles themselves, and their opinions are a fair interpretation of the apostles' sentiments.

7.If it is denied that Christ believed in such possessions, it does not appear why any other clearly-expressed sentiment of his may not in the same way be disputed. There is, perhaps, no subject on which he expressed himself more clearly, or acted more uniformly, or which he left more clearly impressed on the minds of his disciples.

Nor is there any absurdity in the opinion that those persons were really under the influence of devils. For:

1.It is no more absurd to suppose that an angel, or many angels, should have fallen and become wicked than that so many people should.

2.It is no more absurd that Satan should have possession of the human faculties, or inflict diseases, than that people should do it a thing which is done every day. What is more common than for a wicked man to corrupt the

morals of others, or, by inducing them to become intemperate, to produce a state of body and mind quite as bad as to be possessed with the devil?

3.We still see a multitude of cases that no man can prove not to be produced by the presence of an evil spirit. Who would attempt to say that some evil being may not have much to do in the case of madmen?

4.It afforded an opportunity for Christ to show his power over the enemies of himself and of man, and thus to evince himself qualified to meet every enemy of the race, and triumphantly to redeem his people. He came to destroy the power of Satan, Acts 26:18; Romans 16:20-21.

Those which were lunatic - This name is given to the disease from the Latin name of the moon (Luna). It has the same origin in Greek. It was given because it was formerly imagined that the patient was affected by the increase or the decrease of the moon. The name is still retained, although it is certain that the moon has no effect on the disease. The disease is mentioned only in this place, and in Matthew 17:15. It was probably the falling-sickness or epilepsy, the same as the disease mentioned Mark 9:18-20; Luke 9:39-40.

And those that had the palsy - Many infirmities were included under the general name of palsy in the New Testament.

1.The paralytic shock, affecting the whole body.

2.The hemiplegy, affecting only one side of the body; the most frequent form of the disease.

3.The paraplegy, affecting all the system below the neck.

4.The catalepsy. This is caused by a contraction of the muscles in the whole or a part of the body, and is very dangerous. The effects are very violent and fatal. For instance, if, when a person is struck, he happens to have his hand extended, he is unable to draw it back; if not extended, he is unable to stretch it out. It gradually becomes diminished in size, and dried up in appearance. Hence, it was called the withered hand, Matthew 12:10-13.

5.The cramp. This, in Eastern countries, is a fearful malady, and by no means unfrequent. It originates from chills in the night. The limbs, when

seized by it, remain unmovable, and the person afflicted with it resembles one undergoing a torture. This was probably the disease of the servant of the centurion, Matthew 8:6; Luke 7:2. Death follows from this disease in a few days.

And he healed them - This was done evidently by miraculous power. A miracle is an effect produced by divine power above, or opposed to, what are regular effects of the laws of nature. It is not a violation of the laws of nature, but is a suspension of their usual operation, for some important purpose. For instance, the regular effect of death is that the body returns to corruption. The ordinary laws of chemistry had been suspended by the operation of life - a power superior to those laws, and producing new combinations of matter in the animal or vegetable organization. When life is extinct those laws act in their proper power, and the body is decomposed; that is, the materials of which it is composed, under chemical laws, return to their natural forms of gases and earths. When one who claims to be from God suspends that regular effect, and gives life to a dead body for some important purpose, it is a miracle. Such an effect is clearly the result of divine power. No other being but God can do it. When, therefore, Christ and the apostles exercised this power, it was clear evidence that God approved of their doctrines; that he had commissioned them; and that they were authorized to declare his will. He would not give this attestation to a false doctrine. Most or all of these diseases were incurable. When Christ cured them by a word, it was the clearest of all proofs that he was sent from heaven. This is one of the strong arguments for Christianity.

Verse 25

From Decapolis - Decapolis was the name of a region of country in the bounds of the half-tribe of Manasseh, mainly on the east of Jordan. It was so called because it included 10 cities - the meaning of the word Decapolis in Greek. Geographers generally agree that Scythopolis was the chief of these cities, and was the only one of them west of the Jordan; that Hippo (Hippos), Gadara, Dion (or Dios), Pelea (or Pella), Gerasa (or Gergesa), Philadelphia, and Raphana (or Raphanae), were seven of the remaining nine, and the other two were either Kanatha and Capitolias, or Damascus and Otopos. These cities were inhabited chiefly by foreigners (Greeks) in the days of our Saviour, and not by Jews. Hence, the keeping of swine by the Gergesenes Matthew 8:30-33, which was forbidden by the Jewish law.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

And seeing the multitudes - The great numbers that came to attend on his ministry. The substance of this discourse is recorded also in Luke 6:17-20.

Went up into a mountain - This mountain, or hill, was somewhere in the vicinity of Capernaum, but where precisely is not mentioned. He ascended the hill, doubtless, because it was more convenient to address the multitude from an eminence than if he were on the same level with them. A hill or mountain is still shown a short distance to the northwest of the ancient site of Capernaum, which tradition reports to have been the place where this sermon was delivered, and which is called on the maps the Mount of Beatitudes. The hill commonly believed to be that on which the sermon was delivered is on the road from Nazareth to Tiberias, not far from the latter place. The hill is known by the name of Kuran Huttin, the Horns of Huttin. Of this hill Professor Hackett (*Illustrations of Scripture*, pp. 323,324) says: "Though a noontide heat was beating down upon us with scorching power, I could not resist the temptation to turn aside and examine a place for which such a claim has been set up, though I cannot say that I have any great confidence in it. The hill referred to is rocky, and rises steeply to a moderate height above the plain. It has two summits, with a slight depression between them, and it is from these projecting points, or horns, that it receives the name given to it. From the top the observer has a full view of the Sea of Tiberias. The most pleasing feature of the landscape is that presented by the diversified appearance of the fields. The different plots of ground exhibit various colors, according to the state. of cultivation: some of them are red, where the land has been newly plowed up, the natural appearance of the soil; others yellow or white, where the harvest is beginning to ripen, or is already ripe; and others green, being covered with grass or springing grain. As they are contiguous to each other, or intermixed, these particolored plots present at some distance an appearance of joyful chequered work, which is really beautiful.

"In rhetorical descriptions of the delivery of the Sermon on the Mount, we often hear the people represented as looking up to the speaker from the sides of the hill, or listening to him from the plain. This would not be possible with reference to the present locality; for it is too precipitous and

too elevated to allow of such a position. The Saviour could have sat there, however, in the midst of his hearers, for it affords a platform amply large enough for the accommodation of the hundreds who may have been present on that occasion."

And when he was set - This was the common mode of teaching among the Jews, Luke 4:20; Luke 5:3; John 8:2; Acts 13:14; Acts 16:13.

His disciples came unto him - The word "disciples" means "learners," those who are taught. Here it is put for those who attended on the ministry of Jesus, and does not imply that they were all Christians. See John 6:66.

Verse 3

Blessed are the poor in spirit - The word "blessed" means "happy," referring to that which produces felicity, from whatever quarter it may come.

Poor in spirit - Luke says simply, Blessed are the poor. It has been disputed whether Christ meant the poor in reference to the things of this life, or to the humble. The gospel is said to be preached to the poor, Luke 4:18; Matthew 11:5. It was predicted that the Messiah would preach to the poor, Isaiah 61:1. It is said that they have special facilities for being saved, Matthew 19:23; Luke 18:24. The state of such persons is therefore comparatively blessed, or happy. Riches produce care, anxiety, and dangers, and not the least is the danger of losing heaven by them. To be poor in spirit is to have a humble opinion of ourselves; to be sensible that we are sinners, and have no righteousness of our own; to be willing to be saved only by the rich grace and mercy of God; to be willing to be where God places us, to bear what he lays on us, to go where he bids us, and to die when he commands; to be willing to be in his hands, and to feel that we deserve no favor from him. It is opposed to pride, and vanity, and ambition. Such are happy:

1.Because there is more real enjoyment in thinking of ourselves as we are, than in being filled with pride and vanity.

2.Because such Jesus chooses to bless, and on them he confers his favors here.

3.Because theirs will be the kingdom of heaven hereafter.

It is remarkable that Jesus began his ministry in this manner, so unlike all others. Other teachers had taught that happiness was to be found in honor, or riches, or splendor, or sensual pleasure. Jesus overlooked all those

things, and fixed his eye on the poor and the humble, and said that happiness was to be found in the lowly vale of poverty more than in the pomp and splendors of life.

Theirs is the kingdom of heaven - That is, either they have special facilities for entering the kingdom of heaven, and of becoming Christians here, or they shall enter heaven hereafter. Both these ideas are probably included. A state of poverty a state where we are despised or unhonored by people is a state where people are most ready to seek the comforts of religion here, and a home in the heavens hereafter. See the notes at Matthew 2:2.

Verse 4

Blessed are they that mourn - This is capable of two meanings: either, that those are blessed who are afflicted with the loss of friends or possessions, or that they who mourn over sin are blessed. As Christ came to preach repentance, to induce people to mourn over their sins and to forsake them, it is probable that he had the latter particularly in view. Compare 2 Corinthians 7:10. At the same time, it is true that the gospel only can give true comfort to those in affliction, Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:18. Other sources of consolation do not reach the deep sorrows of the soul. They may blunt the sensibilities of the mind; they may produce a sullen and reluctant submission to what we cannot help: but they do not point to the true source of comfort. In the God of mercy only; in the Saviour; in the peace that flows from the hope of a better world, and there only, is there consolation, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 2 Corinthians 5:1. Those that mourn thus shall be comforted. So those that grieve over sin; that sorrow that they have committed it, and are afflicted and wounded that they have offended God, shall find comfort in the gospel. Through the merciful Saviour those sins may be forgiven. In him the weary and heavy-ladened soul shall find peace Matthew 11:28-30; and the presence of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, shall sustain them here John 14:26-27, and in heaven all their tears shall be wiped away, Revelation 21:4.

Verse 5

The meek - Meekness is patience in the reception of injuries. It is neither meanness nor a surrender of our rights, nor cowardice; but it is the opposite of sudden anger, of malice, of long-harbored vengeance. Christ insisted on his right when he said, “If I have done evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?” John 18:23. Paul asserted his right

when he said, “They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves, and fetch us out,” Acts 16:37. And yet Christ was the very model of meekness. It was one of his characteristics, “I am meek,” Matthew 11:29. So of Paul. No man endured more wrong, or endured it more patiently than he. Yet the Saviour and the apostle were not passionate. They bore all patiently. They did not press their rights through thick and thin, or trample down the rights of others to secure their own.

Meekness is the reception of injuries with a belief that God will vindicate us. “Vengeance is his; he will repay,” Romans 12:19. It little becomes us to take his place, and to do what he has promised to do.

Meekness produces peace. It is proof of true greatness of soul. It comes from a heart too great to be moved by little insults. It looks upon those who offer them with pity. He that is constantly ruffled; that suffers every little insult or injury to throw him off his guard and to raise a storm of passion within, is at the mercy of every mortal that chooses to disturb him. He is like “the troubled sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.”

They shall inherit the earth - This might have been translated the land. It is probable that here is a reference to the manner in which the Jews commonly expressed themselves to denote any great blessing. It was promised to them that they should inherit the land of Canaan. For a long time the patriarchs looked forward to this, Genesis 15:7-8; Exodus 32:13. They regarded it as a great blessing. It was so spoken of in the journey in the wilderness, and their hopes were crowned when they took possession of the promised land, Deuteronomy 1:38; Deuteronomy 16:20. In the time of our Saviour they were in the constant habit of using the Old Testament, where this promise perpetually occurs, and they used it “as a proverbial expression to denote any great blessing, perhaps as the sum of all blessings,” Psalm 37:20; Isaiah 60:21. Our Saviour used it in this sense, and meant to say, not that the meek would own great property or have many lands, but that they would possess special blessings. The Jews also considered the land of Canaan as a type of heaven, and of the blessings under the Messiah. To inherit the land became, therefore, an expression denoting those blessings. When our Saviour uses this language here, he means that the meek shall be received into his kingdom, and partake of its blessings here, and of the glories of the heavenly Canaan hereafter. The

value of meekness, even in regard to worldly property and success in life, is often exhibited in the Scriptures, Proverbs 22:24-25; Proverbs 15:1; Proverbs 25:8, Proverbs 25:15. It is also seen in common life that a meek, patient, mild man is the most prospered. An impatient and quarrelsome man raises up enemies; often loses property in lawsuits; spends his time in disputes and broils rather than in sober, honest industry; and is harassed, vexed, and unsuccessful in all that he does. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," 1 Timothy 4:8. Compare 1 Timothy 6:3-6.

Verse 6

Blessed are they which do hunger … - Hunger and thirst, here, are expressive of strong desire. Nothing would better express the strong desire which we ought to feel to obtain righteousness than hunger and thirst. No needs are so keen, none so imperiously demand supply, as these. They occur daily, and when long continued, as in case of those shipwrecked, and doomed to wander months or years over burning sands, with scarcely any drink or food, nothing is more distressing. An ardent desire for anything is often represented in the Scriptures by hunger and thirst, Psalm 42:1-2; Psalm 63:1-2. A desire for the blessings of pardon and peace; a deep sense of sin, and want, and wretchedness, is also represented by thirsting, Isaiah 55:1-2.

They shall be filled - They shall be satisfied as a hungry man is when supplied with food, or a thirsty man when supplied with drink. Those who are perishing for want of righteousness; those who feel that they are lost sinners and strongly desire to be holy, shall be thus satisfied. Never was there a desire to be holy which God was not willing to gratify, and the gospel of Christ has made provision to satisfy all who truly desire to be holy. See Isaiah 55:1-3; Isaiah 65:13; John 4:14; John 6:35; John 7:37-38; Psalm 17:15.

Verse 7

Blessed are the merciful - That is, those who are so affected by the sufferings of others as to be disposed to alleviate them. This is given as an evidence of piety, and it is said that they who show mercy to others shall obtain it. The same sentiment is found in Matthew 10:42; "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward." See also Matthew 25:34-40. This should be done with a wish to

glorify God; that is, in obedience to his commandments, and with a desire that he should be honored, and with a feeling that we are benefiting one of his creatures. Then he will regard it as done to him, and will reward us. See the sentiment of this verse, that the merciful shall obtain mercy, more fully expressed in 2 Samuel 22:26-27; and in Psalm 18:25-26.

Nowhere do we imitate God more than in showing mercy. In nothing does God delight more than in the exercise of mercy, Exodus 34:6; Ezekiel 33:11; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9. To us, guilty sinners; to us, wretched, dying, and exposed to eternal woe, he has shown his mercy by giving his Son to die for us; by expressing his willingness to pardon and save us; and by sending his Spirit to renew and sanctify our hearts. Each day of our life, each hour, and each moment, we partake of his undeserved mercy. All the blessings we enjoy are proofs of his mercy. If we, then, show mercy to the poor, the wretched, the guilty, it shows that we are like God. We have his spirit, and shall not lose our reward. And we have abundant opportunity to do it. Our world is full of guilt and woe, which we may help to relieve; and every day of our lives we have opportunity, by helping the poor and wretched, and by forgiving those who injure us, to show that we are like God. See the notes at Matthew 6:14-15.

Verse 8

Blessed are the pure in heart - That is, whose minds, motives, and principles are pure; who seek not only to have the external actions correct, but who desire to be holy in heart, and who are so. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart.

They shall see God - There is a sense in which all will see God, Revelation 1:7. That is, they will behold him as a Judge, not as a Friend. In this place it is spoken of as a special favor. So also in Revelation 22:4, "And they shall see his face." To see the face of one, or to be in the presence of any one, were terms among the Jews expressive of great favor. It was regarded as a high honor to be in the presence of kings and princes, and to be permitted to see them, Proverbs 22:29, "He shall stand before kings." See also 2 Kings 25:19, "Those that stood in the king's presence;" in the Hebrew, those that saw the face of the king; that is, who were his favorites and friends. So here, to see God, means to be his friends and favorites, and to dwell with him in his kingdom.

Verse 9

Blessed are the peacemakers - Those who strive to prevent contention, strife, and war; who use their influence to reconcile opposing parties, and to prevent lawsuits and hostilities in families and neighborhoods. Every man may do something of this; and no man is more like God than he who does it. There ought not to be unlawful and officious interference in that which is none of our business; but without any danger of acquiring this character, every man has many opportunities of reconciling opposing parties. Friends, neighbors, people of influence, lawyers, physicians, ministers of the gospel, may do much to promote peace. And it should be taken in hand in the beginning. "The beginning of strife," says Solomon, "is like the letting out of water." "An ounce of prevention," says the English proverb, "is worth a pound of cure." Long and most deadly quarrels might often be prevented by a little kind interference in the beginning.

Children of God - See the notes at Matthew 1:1. Those who resemble God, or who manifest a spirit like his. He is the Author of peace 1 Corinthians 14:33; and all those who endeavor to promote peace are like him, and are worthy to be called his children.

Verse 10

Blessed are they which are persecuted - To persecute means literally to pursue; follow after, as one does a flying enemy. Here it means to vex, or oppress one, on account of his religion. They persecute others who injure their names, reputation, property, or who endanger or take their life, on account of their religious opinions.

For righteousness' sake - Because they are righteous, or are the friends of God. We are not to seek persecution. We are not to provoke it by strange sentiments or conduct; by violating the laws of civil society, or by modes of speech that are unnecessarily offensive to others. But if, in the honest effort to be Christians, and to live the life of Christians, others persecute and revile us, we are to consider this as a blessing. It is an evidence that we are the children of God, and that he will defend us. "All that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," 2 Timothy 3:12.

Theirs is the kingdom of heaven - They have evidence that they are Christians, and that they will be brought to heaven.

Verse 11

Blessed are ye when men shall revile you - Reproach you; call you by evil and contemptuous names; ridicule you because you are Christians. Thus, they said of Jesus that he was a Samaritan and had a devil John 8:48;

that he was mad John 10:20; and thus they reviled and mocked him on the cross, Matthew 27:39-44. But, being reviled, he reviled not again 1 Peter 2:23; and thus being reviled, we should bless 1 Corinthians 4:12; and thus, though the contempt of the world is not in itself desirable, yet it is blessed to tread in the footsteps of Jesus, to imitate his example, and even to suffer for his sake, Philemon 1:29.

All manner of evil against you falsely - An emphasis should be laid on the word falsely in this passage. It is not blessed to have evil spoken of us if we deserve it; but if we deserve it not, then we should not consider it as a calamity. We should take it patiently, and show how much the Christian, under the consciousness of innocence, can bear, 1 Peter 3:13-18.

For my sake - Because you are attached to me; because you are Christians. We are not to seek such things. We are not to do things to offend others; to treat them harshly or unkindly, and. to court revilings. We are not to say or do things, though they may be on the subject of religion, designed to disgust or offend. But if, in the faithful endeavor to be Christians, we are reviled, as our Master was, then we are to take it with patience, and to remember that thousands before us have been treated in like manner. When thus reviled or persecuted, we are to be meek, patient, humble; not angry; not reviling again; but endeavoring to do good to our persecutors and slanderers, 2 Timothy 2:24-25. In this way many have been convinced of the power and excellence of that religion which they were persecuting and reviling. They have seen that nothing else but Christianity could impart such patience and meekness to the persecuted; and have, by this means, been constrained to submit themselves to the gospel of Jesus. Long since it became a proverb, "that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

Verse 12

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad - Regard it as a great privilege thus to be persecuted and to suffer - a thing not to be mourned over, but as among the chief blessings of life.

For great is your reward in heaven - That is, your reward will be great in the future world. To those who suffer most, God imparts the highest rewards. Hence, the crown of martyrdom has been thought to be the brightest that any of the redeemed shall wear; and hence many of the early Christians sought to become martyrs, and threw themselves in the way of their persecutors, that they might be put to death. They literally rejoiced, and leaped for joy, at the prospect of death for the sake of Jesus. Though

God does not require us to seek persecution, yet all this shows that there is something in religion to sustain the soul which the world does not possess. Nothing but the consciousness of innocence, and the presence of God, could bear up the sufferers in the midst of these trials; and the flame, therefore, kindled to consume the martyr, has also been a bright light, showing the truth and power of the gospel of Jesus.

The prophets … - The holy men who came to predict future events, and who were the religious teachers of the Jews. For an account of their persecution, see Hebrews 11.

Verse 13

Ye are the salt of the earth - Salt renders food pleasant and palatable, and preserves from putrefaction. So Christians, by their lives and instructions, are to keep the world from entire moral corruption. By bringing down the blessing of God in answer to their prayers, and by their influence and example, they save the world from universal vice and crime.

Salt have lost its savour - That is, if it has become tasteless, or has lost its preserving properties. The salt used in this country is a chemical compound - chloride of sodium - and if the saltness were lost, or it were to lose its savor, there would be nothing remaining. It enters into the very nature of the substance. In eastern countries, however, the salt used was impure, or mingled with vegetable or earthy substances, so that it might lose the whole of its saltness, and a considerable quantity of earthy matter remain. This was good for nothing, except that it was used to place in paths, or walks, as we use gravel. This kind of salt is common still in that country. It is found in the earth in veins or layers, and when exposed to the sun and rain, loses its saltness entirely. Maundrell says, “I broke a piece of it, of which that part that was exposed to the rain, sun, and air, though it had the sparks and particles of salt, yet it had perfectly lost its savor. The inner part, which was connected to the rock, retained its savor, as I found by proof. So Dr. Thomson (*The Land and the Book*, vol. ii. pp. 43,44) says, “I have often seen just such salt, and the identical disposition of it that our Lord has mentioned. A merchant of Sidon having farmed of the government the revenue from the importation of salt, brought over an immense quantity from the marshes of Cyprus - enough, in fact, to supply the whole province for at least 20 years. This he had transferred to the mountains, to cheat the government out of some small percentage. Sixty-five houses in June - Lady Stanhope‘s village were rented and filled with salt. These houses have

merely earthen floors, and the salt next the ground, in a few years, entirely spoiled. I saw large quantities of it literally thrown into the street, to be trodden underfoot by people and beasts. It was ‹good for nothing.‘

"It should be stated in this connection that the salt used in this country is not manufactured by boiling clean salt water, nor quarried from mines, but is obtained from marshes along the seashore, as in Cyprus, or from salt lakes in the interior, which dry up in summer, as the one in the desert north of Palmyra, and the great lake of Jebbul, southeast of Aleppo.

"Maundrell, who visited the lake at Jebbul, tells us that he found salt there which had entirely ‹lost its savor,‘ and the same abounds among the debris at Usdum, and in other localities of rocksalt at the south end of the Dead Sea. Indeed, it is a well-known fact that the salt of this country, when in contact with the ground, or exposed to rain and sun, does become insipid and useless. From the manner in which it is gathered, much earth and other impurities are necessarily collected with it. Not a little of it is so impure that it cannot be used at all, and such salt soon effloresces and turns to dust - not to fruitful soil, however. It is not only good for nothing itself, but it actually destroys all fertility wherever it is thrown; and this is the reason why it is cast into the street. There is a sort of verbal verisimilitude in the manner in which our Lord alludes to the act: ‹it is cast out‘ and ‹trodden under foot;‘ so troublesome is this corrupted salt, that it is carefully swept up, carried forth, and thrown into the street. There is no place about the house, yard, or garden where it can be tolerated. No man will allow it to be thrown on to his field, and the only place for it is the street, and there it is cast to be trodden underfoot of men."

Verse 14

The light of the world - The light of the world often denotes the sun, John 11:9. The sun renders objects visible, shows their form, their nature, their beauties, their deformities. The term light is often applied to religious teachers. See Matthew 4:16; Luke 2:32; John 1:4; John 8:12; Isaiah 49:6. It is pre-eminently applied to Jesus in these places, because he is, in the moral world, what the sun is in the natural world. The apostles, Christian ministers, and all Christians, are lights of the world, because they, by their instructions and example, show what God requires, what is the condition of

man, what is the way of duty, peace, and happiness the way that leads to heaven.

A city that is set on a hill … - Many of the cities of Judea were placed on the summits or sides of mountains, and could be seen from afar. Perhaps Jesus pointed to such a city, and told his disciples that they were like it. Their actions could not be hid. The eyes of the world were upon them. They must be seen; and as this was the case, they ought to be holy, harmless, and undefiled.

Maundrell, Jowett, and others suppose that the Sermon on the Mount was delivered in the vicinity of the present city of Safed, or "the Horns of Huttin" (see the notes at Matthew 5:1), and that this city may have been in his eye, and may have been directly referred to by the Saviour when he uttered this sentiment. It would give additional force and beauty to the passage to suppose that he pointed to the city. Of this Dr. Thomson (*The Land and the Book*, vol. i. pp. 420,421) says, "The shape of the hill is a well-described oval, and the wall corresponds to it. The bottom of the outer ditch is now a very flourishing vineyard, and the entire circuit is not far from half a mile. The wall is mostly modern, but built on one more ancient, portions of which can be seen on the east side. The interior summit rises about a hundred feet higher than this wall, and was a separate castle, strongly defended. Here are beveled stones, as heavy, and as aged in appearance, as those of the most celebrated ruins in the country; and they prove that this has been a place of importance from a remote age. These ancient parts of the castle render it all but certain that there was then a city or citadel on this most conspicuous ‹hill‘ top; and our Lord might well point to it to illustrate and confirm his precept. The present Hebrew name is Zephath, and may either refer to its elevation like a watchtower, or to the beauty and grandeur of the surrounding prospects. Certainly they are quite sufficient to suggest the name. There lies Gennesaret, like a mirror set in framework of dark mountains and many-faced hills. Beyond is the vast plateau of the Hauran, faintly shading with its rocky ranges the utmost horizon eastward. Thence the eye sweeps over Gilead and Bashan, Samaria and Carmel, the plains of Galilee, the coasts of Phoenicia, the hills of Naphtali, the long line of Lebanon, and the lofty head of Hermen - a vast panorama, embracing a thousand points of historic and sacred interest."

Verse 15

Neither do men light a candle … - The word rendered "candle" means any portable light, as a lamp, candle, lantern. Compare Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16; Luke 12:35. Jesus proceeded here to show them that the very reason why they were enlightened was that others might also see the light, and be benefited by it. When people light a candle, they do not conceal the light, but place it where it may be of use. So it is with religion. It is given that we may benefit others. It is not to be concealed, but suffered to show itself, and to shed light on a surrounding wicked world.

A bushel - Greek, a measure containing nearly a peck. It denotes anything, here, that might conceal the light.

Verse 16

Let your light so shine … - Let your holy life, your pure conversation, and your faithful instructions, be everywhere seen and known. Always, in all societies, in all business, at home and abroad, in prosperity and adversity, let it be seen that you are real Christians.

That they may see your good works - The proper motive to influence us is not simply that we may be seen (compare Matthew 6:1), but it should be that our heavenly Father may be glorified. The Pharisees acted to be seen of men, true Christians act to glorify God, and care little what people may think of them, except as by their conduct others may he brought to honor God, yet they should so live that people may see from their conduct what is the proper nature of their religion.

Glorify your Father - Praise, or honor God, or be led to worship him. Seeing in your lives the excellency of religion, and the power and purity of the gospel, they may be won to be Christians also, and give praise and glory to God for his mercy to a lost world.

We learn here:

1.that religion, if it exists, cannot be concealed.

2.that where it is not manifest in the life, it does not exist.

3.that "professors" of religion, who live like other people, give evidence that they have never been truly converted.

4.that to attempt to conceal or hide our Christian knowledge or experience is to betray our trust, injure the cause of piety, and to render our lives useless. And,

5.that good actions will be seen, and will lead people to honor God. If we have no other way of doing good - if we are poor, and unlearned, and unknown yet we may do good by our lives. No sincere and humble Christian lives in vain. The feeblest light at midnight is of use.

"How far the little candle throws his beams!
So shines a good deed in a naughty world!"

Verse 17

Think not that I am come … - Our Saviour was just entering on his work. It was important for him to state what he came to do. By his setting up to be a teacher in opposition to the scribes and Pharisees, some might charge him with an intention to destroy their law, and to abolish the customs of the nation. He therefore told them that he did not come for that end, but really to fulfill or accomplish what was in the law and the prophets.

To destroy - To abrogate; to deny their divine authority; to set people free from the obligation to obey them. "The law." The five books of Moses called the law. See the notes at Luke 24:44.

The Prophets - The books which the prophets wrote. These two divisions here seem to comprehend the Old Testament, and Jesus says that he came not to do away or destroy the authority of the Old Testament.

But to fulfil - To complete the design; to fill up what was predicted; to accomplish what was intended in them. The word "fulfill" also means sometimes "to teach" or "to inculcate," Colossians 1:25. The law of Moses contained many sacrifices and rites which were designed to shadow forth the Messiah. See the notes at Hebrews 9. These were fulfilled when he came and offered himself a sacrifice to God,

"A sacrifice of nobler name.
And richer blood than they."

The prophets contained many predictions respecting his coming and death. These were all to be fulfilled and fully accomplished by his life and his sufferings.

Verse 18

Verily - Truly, certainly. A word of strong affirmation.

Till heaven and earth pass - This expression denotes that the law never would be destroyed until it should be all fulfilled. It is the same as saying everything else may change; the very earth and heaven may pass away, but the law of God shall not be destroyed until its whole design has been accomplished.

One jot - The word "jot," or yod(י y), is the name of the Hebrew letter I, the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

One tittle - The word used here, in the Greek, means literally a little horn, then a point, an extremity. Several of the Hebrew letters were written with small points or apices, as in the Hebrew letter, shin (שׁ sh), or the Hebrew letter, sin (שׂ s), which serve to distinguish one letter from another. To change a small point of one letter, therefore, might vary the meaning of a word, and destroy the sense. The name "little horn" was given to these points probably from the manner in which they were written, resembling a little horn. Professor Hackett says of a manuscript which he saw a Jew transcribing: "One peculiarity, that struck me at once as I cast my eye over the parchment, was the horn-like appearance attached to some of the letters. I had seen the same mark, before this, in Hebrew manuscripts, but never where it was so prominent as here. The sign in question, as connected with the Hebrew Letter Lamedh (ל L) in particular, had almost the appearance of an intentional imitation of a ram‘s head. It was to that appendage of the Hebrew letters that the Saviour referred when he said, "‹Not one jot or little horn‘ (as the Greek term signifies, which our version renders ‹tittle,‘) ‹shall pass from the law until all be fulfilled.‘" - *Illustrations of Scripture*, p. 234. Hence, the Jews were exceedingly cautious in writing these letters, and considered the smallest change or omission a reason for destroying the whole manuscript when they were transcribing the Old Testament. The expression, "one jot or tittle," became proverbial, and means that the smallest part of the law should not be destroyed.

The laws of the Jews are commonly divided into moral, ceremonial, and judicial. The moral laws are such as grow out of the nature of things, and which cannot, therefore, be changed - such as the duty of loving God and his creatures. These cannot be abolished, as it can never be made right to hate God, or to hate our fellow-men. Of this kind are the ten commandments, and these our Saviour has neither abolished nor superseded. The ceremonial laws are such as are appointed to meet certain states of society, or to regulate the religious rites and ceremonies of a people. These can be changed when circumstances are changed, and yet the moral law be untouched. A general in an army may command his soldiers to appear sometimes in a red coat and sometimes in blue or in yellow. This would be a ceremonial law, and might be changed as he pleased. The duty of obeying him, and of being faithful to his country, could not be changed.

This is a moral law. A parent might permit his children to have 50 different dresses at different times, and love them equally in all. The dress is a mere matter of ceremony, and may be changed. The child, in all these garments, is bound to love and obey his father. This is a moral law, and cannot be changed. So the laws of the Jews. Those designed to regulate mere matters of ceremony and rites of worship might be changed. Those requiring love and obedience to God and love to people could not be changed, and Christ did not attempt it, Matthew 19:19; Matthew 22:37-39; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9. A third species of law was the judicial, or those laws regulating courts of justice which are contained in the Old Testament. These were of the nature of the ceremonial law, and might also be changed at pleasure. The judicial law of the Hebrews was adapted to their own civil society. When the form of their polity was changed this was of course no longer binding. The ceremonial law was fulfilled by the coming of Christ: the shadow was lost in the substance, and ceased to be binding. The moral law was confirmed and unchanged.

Verse 19

Whosoever therefore shall break - Shall violate or disobey.

One of these least commandments - The Pharisees, it is probable, divided the precepts of the law into lesser and greater, teaching that they who violated the former were guilty of a trivial offence only. See Matthew 23:23. Christ teaches that in his kingdom they who make this distinction, or who taught that any laws of God might be violated with impunity, should be called least; while they should be held in high regard who observed all the laws of God without distinction.

Shall be called least - That is, shall be least. See Matthew 5:9. The meaning of this passage seems to be this: in the kingdom of heaven, that is, in the kingdom of the Messiah, or in the church which he is about to establish (see the notes at Matthew 3:2), he that breaks the least of these commandments shall be in no esteem, or shall not be regarded as a proper religious teacher. The Pharisees, by dividing the law into greater and lesser precepts, made no small part of it void by their traditions and divisions, Matthew 23:23; Matthew 15:3-6. Jesus says that in his kingdom all this vain division and tradition would cease. Such divisions and distinctions would be a small matter. He that attempted it should be the least of all. People

would be engaged in yielding obedience to all the law of God without any such vain distinctions.

Shall be called great - He that teaches that all the law of God is binding, and that the whole of it should be obeyed, without attempting to specify what is most important, shall be a teacher worthy of his office, and shall be called great. Hence, we learn:

1.that all the law of God is binding on Christians. Compare James 2:10.

2.that all the commands of God should be preached, in their proper place, by Christian ministers.

3.that they who pretend that there are any laws of God so small that they need not obey them, are unworthy of his kingdom. And,

4.that true piety has respect to all the commandments of God. Compare Psalm 119:6.

Verse 20

Your righteousness - Your holiness; your views of the nature of righteousness, and your conduct and lives. Unless you are more holy than they are, you cannot be saved.

Shall exceed - Shall excel, or abound more. The righteousness of true Christians is seated in the heart, and is therefore genuine. Jesus means that unless they had more real holiness of character than the scribes and Pharisees, they could not be saved.

The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees - See the notes at Matthew 3:7. Their righteousness consisted in outward observances of the ceremonial and traditional law. They offered sacrifices, fasted often. prayed much, were punctilious about ablutions, and tithes, and the ceremonies of religion, but neglected justice, truth, purity, and holiness of heart. See Matthew 3:2. Shall not be a suitable subject of his kingdom here, or saved in the world to come.

Verse 21

Ye have heard - Or, this is the common interpretation among the Jews. Jesus proceeds here to comment on some prevailing opinions among the Jews; to show that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was defective; and that people needed a better righteousness, or they could not

be saved. He illustrates what he meant by that better righteousness by showing that the common opinions of the scribes were erroneous.

By them of old time - This might be translated to the ancients, referring to Moses and the prophets. But it is more probable that Jesus here refers to the interpreters of the law and the prophets. He did not set himself against the law of Moses, but against the false and pernicious interpretations of the law prevalent in his time.

Thou shalt not kill - See Exodus 20:13. This properly denotes taking the life of another with malice, or with an intention to murder him. The Jews understood it as meaning no more. The comment of our Saviour shows that it was spiritual, and was designed to extend to the thoughts and feelings as well as the external act.

Shall be in danger of - Shall be held guilty, and be punished by. The law of Moses declared that the murderer should be put to death, Leviticus 24:21; Numbers 35:16. It did not say, however, by whom this should be done, and it was left to the Jews to organize courts to have cognizance of such crimes, Deuteronomy 16:18.

The judgment - This was the tribunal that had cognizance of cases of murder, etc. It was a court that sat in each city or town, and consisted commonly of seven members. It was the lowest court among the Jews, and from it an appeal might be taken to the Sanhedrin.

Verse 22

But I say unto you - Jesus being God as well as man John 1:1, John 1:14, and therefore, being the original giver of the law, had a right to expound it or change it as he pleased. Compare Matthew 12:6, Matthew 12:8. He therefore spoke here and elsewhere as having authority, and not as the scribes. It may be added here that no mere man ever spake as Jesus did, when explaining or enforcing the law. He did it as having a right to do it; and he that has a right to ordain and change laws in the government of God must be himself divine.

Is angry with His brother without a cause - Anger, or that feeling which we have when we are injured, and which prompts us to defend ourselves when in danger, is a natural feeling, given to us:

1.As a proper expression of our disapprobation of a course of evil conduct; and

2.That we may defend ourselves when suddenly attacked.

When excited against sin, it is lawful. God is angry with the wicked, Psalm 7:11. Jesus looked on the hypocritical Pharisees with anger, Mark 3:5. So it is said, "Be ye angry, and sin not, Ephesians 4:26. This anger, or indignation against sin, is not what our Saviour speaks of here. What he condemns here is anger without a cause; that is, unjustly, rashly, hastily, where no offence has been given or intended. In that case it is evil; and it is a violation of the sixth commandment, because "he that hateth his brother, is a murderer," 1 John 3:15. He has a feeling which would lead him to commit murder, if it were fully acted out. The word "brother" here refers not merely to one to whom we are nearly related, having the same parent or parents, as the word is commonly used, but includes also a neighbor, or perhaps anyone with whom we may be associated. As all people are descended from one Father and are all the creatures of the same God, so they are all brethren: and so every man should be regarded and treated as a brother, Hebrews 11:16.

Raca - This is a Syriac word, expressive of great contempt. It comes from a verb signifying to be empty, vain; and hence, as a word of contempt, denotes senseless, stupid, shallow-brains. Jesus teaches here that to use such words is a violation of the spirit of the sixth commandment, and if indulged, may lead to a more open and dreadful infraction of that law. Children should learn that to use such words is highly offensive to God, for we must give an account for every idle word which we speak in the day of judgment, Matthew 12:36.

In danger of the council - The word translated "council" is in the original Sanhedrin, and there can be no doubt that the Saviour refers to the Jewish tribunal of that name. This was instituted in the time of the Maccabees, probably about 200 years before Christ. It was composed of 72 judges: the high priest was the president of this tribunal. The 72 members were made up of the chief priests and elders of the people and the scribes. The chief priests were such as had discharged the office of the high priest, and those who were the heads of the twenty-four classes of priests, who were called in an honorary way high or chief priests. See Matthew 2:4. The elders were the princes of the tribes or heads of the family associations. It is not to be supposed that all the elders had a right to a seat here, but such only as were elected to the office. The scribes were learned people of the nation elected to this tribunal, being neither of the rank of priests or elders. This tribunal had cognizance of the great affairs of the nation. Until the time

when Judea was subjected to the Romans, it had the power of life and death. It still retained the power of passing sentence, though the Roman magistrate held the right of execution. It usually sat in Jerusalem, in a room near the temple. It was before this tribunal that our Saviour was tried. It was then assembled in the palace of the high priest, John 18:24.

Thou fool - This term expressed more than want of wisdom. It was expressive of the highest guilt. It had been commonly used to denote those who were idolaters Deuteronomy 22:21, and also one who is guilty of great crimes, Joshua 7:15; Psalm 14:1.

Hell fire - The original of this is "the gehennah of fire." The word gehenna, γέεννα geennacommonly translated "hell," is made up of two Hebrew words, and signifies the valley of Hinnom. This was formerly a pleasant valley near to Jerusalem, on the south. A small brook or torrent usually ran through it and partly encompassed the city. This valley the idolatrous Israelites devoted formerly to the horrid worship of Moloch, 2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chronicles 28:3. In that worship, the ancient Jewish writers inform us, the idol of Moloch was of brass, adorned with a royal crown, having the head of a calf, and his arms extended as if to embrace anyone. When they offered children to him they heated the statue within by a great fire, and when it was burning hot they put the miserable child into his arms, where it was soon consumed by the heat; and, in order that the cries of the child might not be heard, they made a great noise with drums and other instruments about the idol. These drums were called תף tophand hence a common name of the place was Tophet, תפת Tophet Jeremiah 7:31-32.

After the return of the Jews from captivity, this place was held in such abhorrence that, by the example of Josiah 2 Kings 23:10, it was made the place where to throw all the dead carcasses and filth of the city, and was not unfrequently the place of public executions. It became, therefore, extremely offensive; the sight was terrific; the air was polluted and pestilential; and to preserve it in any manner pure, it was necessary to keep fires continually burning there. The extreme loathsomeness of the place; the filth and putrefaction; the corruption of the atmosphere, and the lurid fires blazing by day and night, made it one of the most appalling and terrific objects with which a Jew was acquainted. It was called the gehenna of fire, and was the image which our Saviour often employed to denote the future punishment of the wicked.

In this verse it denotes a degree of suffering higher than the punishment inflicted by the "court of seventy," or the Sanhedrin, and the whole verse may therefore mean, "He that hates his brother without a cause is guilty of a violation of the sixth commandment, and shall be punished with a severity similar to that inflicted by the court of judgment. He that shall suffer his passions to transport him still further, so that he shall make his brother an object of derision and contempt, shall be exposed to severer punishment, corresponding to that which the Sanhedrin (council) inflicts. But he who shall load his brother with odious appellations and abusive language shall incur the severest degree of punishment, represented by being burned alive in the horrid and awful valley of Hinnom."

The amount, then, of this difficult and important verse is this: The Jews considered but one crime a violation of the sixth commandment, namely, actual murder, or willful, unlawful taking life. Jesus says that the commandment is much broader. It relates not only to the external act, but to the feelings and words. He specifies three forms of such violation:

1.Unjust anger.

2.Anger accompanied with an expression of contempt.

3.Anger, with an expression not only of contempt, but wickedness.

Among the Jews there were three degrees of condemnation: that by the "judgment," the "council," and the "fire of Hinnom." Jesus says likewise there shall be grades of condemnation for the different ways of violating the sixth commandment. Not only murder shall be punished by God, but anger and contempt shall be regarded by him as a violation of the law, and punished according to the offence. As these offences were not actually cognizable before the Jewish tribunals, he must mean that they will be punished hereafter, and all these expressions therefore relate to degrees of punishment proportionate to crime in the future world - the world of justice and of woe.

Verse 23-24

Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar … - The Pharisees were intent only on the external act in worship. They looked not at all to the internal state of the mind. If a man conformed to the external rites of religion, however much envy, and malice, and secret hatred he might have, they thought he was doing well. Our Saviour taught a different doctrine. It

was of more consequence to have the heart right than to perform the outward act. If, therefore, says he, a man has gone so far as to bring his gift to the very altar, and should remember that anyone had anything against him, it was his duty there to leave his offering and go and be reconciled. While a difference of this nature existed, his offering could not be acceptable. He was not to wait until the offended brother should come to him; he was to go and seek him out, and be reconciled. So now the worship of God will not be acceptable, however well performed externally, until we are at peace with those that we have injured. "To obey is better than sacrifice," 1 Samuel 15:22. He that comes to worship his Maker filled with malice, and hatred, and envy, and at war with his brethren, is a hypocritical worshipper, and must meet with God's displeasure. God is not deceived, and he will not be mocked.

Thy gift - Thy sacrifice. What thou art about to devote to God as an offering.

To the altar - The altar was situated in front of the temple, and was the place on which sacrifices were made. See the notes on plan, Matthew 21:12. To bring a gift to the altar was expressive of worshipping God, for this was the way in which he was formerly worshipped.

Thy brother - Any man, especially any fellow-worshipper. Anyone of the same religious society.

Hath aught - Is offended, or thinks he has been injured by you in any manner.

First be reconciled - This means to settle the difficulty; to make proper acknowledgment or satisfaction for the injury. If you have wronged him, make restitution. If you owe him a debt which ought to be paid, pay it. If you have injured his character, confess it and seek pardon. If he is under an erroneous impression, if your conduct has been such as to lead him to suspect that you have injured him, make an explanation. Do all in your power; and all you ought to do, to have the matter settled. From this we learn:

1.That, in order to worship God acceptably, we must do justice to our fellow-men.

2.Our worship will not be acceptable unless we do all we can to live peaceably with others.

3.It is our duty to seek reconciliation with others when we have injured them.

4.This should be done before we attempt to worship God.

5.This is often the reason why God does not accept our offerings, and we go empty away from our devotions. We do not do what we ought to others; we cherish improper feelings or refuse to make proper acknowledgments, and God will not accept such attempts to worship him.

Verse 25-26

Agree with thine adversary quickly - This is still an illustration of the sixth commandment. To be in hostility, to go to law, to be litigious, is a violation always, on one side or the other, of the law requiring us to love our neighbor, and our Saviour regards it as a violation of the sixth commandment. While you are in the way with him, says he, that is, while you are going to the court, before the trial has taken place, it is your duty, if possible, to come to an agreement. It is wrong to carry the contention to a court of law. See 1 Corinthians 6:6-7. The consequence of not being reconciled, he expresses in the language of courts. The adversary shall deliver to the judge, and he to the executioner, and he shall throw you into prison. He did not mean to say that this would be literally the way with God, but that His dealings with those that harbored these feelings, and would not be reconciled with their brethren, were represented by the punishment inflicted by human tribunals. That is, he would hold all such as violators of the sixth commandment, and would punish them accordingly.

There is no propriety in the use sometimes made of this verse, in representing God as the "adversary" of the sinner, and urging him to be reconciled to God while in the way to judgment. Nor does the phrase "thou shalt by no means come out thence until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing" refer to the eternity of future punishment. It is language taken from courts of justice, to illustrate the truth that God will punish people according to justice for not being reconciled to him. The punishment in the future world will be eternal indeed Matthew 25:46, but this passage does not prove it.

Thine adversary - A man that is opposed to us in law. It here means a creditor; a man who has a just claim on us.

In the way with him - While you are going before the court. Before the trial comes on. It is remarkable that this very direction is found in the Roman law of the Twelve Tables, which expressly directed the plaintiff and defendant to make up the matter while they were in the way, or going to the praetor - in via, rem uti pacunt orato. - *Blackstone's Commentary*, iii. p. 299. Whether the Saviour had any reference to this cannot be determined. As the Roman laws prevailed to some extent in Palestine, however, it is possible that there was such an allusion.

The officer - The executioner; or, as we should say, the sheriff.

The uttermost farthing - The last farthing. All that is due. The farthing was a small coin used in Judea, equal to two mites. It was not quite equal to half a farthing of British money.

Verse 27-28

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery - See the notes at Matthew 5:21. Our Saviour in these verses explains the seventh commandment. It is probable that the Pharisees had explained this commandment, as they had the sixth, as extending only to the external act; and that they regarded evil thoughts and a wanton imagination as of little consequence, or as not forbidden by the law. Our Saviour assures them that the commandment did not regard the external act merely, but the secrets of the heart, and the movements of the eye. He declares that they who indulge a wanton desire, that they who look on a woman to increase their lust, have already, in the sight of God, violated the commandment, and committed adultery in the heart. Such was the guilt of David, whose deep and awful crime fully shows the danger of indulging in evil desires, and in the rovings of a wanton eye. See 2 Peter 2:14. So exceeding strict and broad is the law of God! And so heinous in his sight axe thoughts and feelings which may be forever concealed from the world!

Verse 29

Thy right eye - The Hebrews, like others, were accustomed to represent the affections of the mind by the members or parts of the body, Romans 7:23; Romans 6:13. Thus, the bowels denoted compassion; the heart, affection or feeling; the reins, understanding, secret purpose. An evil eye denotes sometimes envy Matthew 20:15, and sometimes an evil passion, or sin in general. Mark 7:21-22; "out of the heart proceedeth an evil eye." In this place, as in 2 Peter 2:14, the expression is used to denote strong adulterous passion, unlawful desire, or wicked inclination. The right eye

and hand are mentioned, because they are of most use to us, and denote that, however strong the passion may be, or difficult to part with, yet that we should do it.

Offend thee - The noun from which the verb "offend," in the original, is derived, commonly means a stumbling-block, or a stone placed in the way, over which one might fall. It also means a net, or a certain part of a net against which, if a bird strikes, it springs the net, and is taken. It comes to signify, therefore, anything by which we fall, or are ensnared; and applied to morals, means anything by which we fall into sin, or by which we are ensnared. The English word "offend" means now, commonly, to displease; to make angry; to affront. This is by no means the sense of the word in Scripture. It means to cause to fall into sin. The eye does this when it wantonly looks upon a woman to lust after her.

Pluck it out … - It cannot be supposed that Christ intended this to be taken literally. His design was to teach that the dearest objects, if they cause us to sin, are to be abandoned; that by all sacrifices and self-denials we must overcome the evil propensities of our nature, and resist our wanton imaginations. Some of the fathers, however, took this commandment literally. Our Saviour several times repeated this sentiment. See Matthew 18:9; Mark 9:43-47. Compare also Colossians 3:5.

It is profitable for thee - It is better for thee. You will have gained by it.

One of thy members perish - It is better to deny yourself the gratification of an evil passion here, however much it may cost you, than to go down to hell forever.

Thy whole body should be cast into hell - Thy body, with all its unsubdued and vicious propensities. This will constitute no small part of the misery of hell. The sinner will be sent there as he is, with every evil desire, every unsubdued propensity, every wicked and troublesome passion, and yet with no possibility of gratification. It constitutes our highest notions of misery when we think of a man filled with anger, pride, malice, avarice, envy and lust, and with no opportunity of gratifying them forever. This is all that is necessary to make an eternal hell. On the word hell, see the notes at Matthew 5:22.

Verse 30

And if thy right hand offend thee - The right hand is selected for the same reason as the right eye, because it is one of the most important members of the human body. The idea is, that the dearest earthly objects are

to be sacrificed rather than that we should commit sin; that the most rigid self-denial should be practiced, and that the most absolute self-government should be maintained at any sacrifice, rather than that we should suffer the mind to be polluted by unholy thoughts and impure desires.

Verse 31-32

It hath been said … - That is, by Moses, Deuteronomy 24:1-2. The husband was directed, if he put his wife away, to give her a bill of divorce, that is a certificate of the fact she had been his wife, and that he had dissolved the marriage. There was considerable difference of opinion among the Jews for what causes the husband was permitted to do this. One of their famous schools maintained that it might be done for any cause, however trivial. The other maintained that adultery only could justify it. The truth was, however, that the husband exercised this right at pleasure; that he was judge in the case, and dismissed his wife when and for what cause he chose. And this seems to be agreeable to the law in Deuteronomy. Our Saviour in Mark 10:1-12, says that this was permitted on account of the hardness of their hearts, but that in the beginning it was not so. God made a single pair, and ordained marriage for life. But Moses found the people so much hardened; so long accustomed to the practice, and so rebellious, that, as a matter of civil appointment, he thought it best not to attempt any change. Our Saviour brought marriage back to its original intention, and declared that whosoever put away his wife henceforward, except for one offence, should be guilty of adultery. This is now the law of God. This was the original institution. This is the only law that is productive of peace and good morals, and that secures the respect due to a wife, and the good of children. Nor has any man or set of men - any legislature or any court, civil or ecclesiastical - a right to interfere, and declare that divorces may be granted for any other cause. They, therefore, whoever they may be, who are divorced for any cause except the single one of adultery, if they marry again, are, according to the Scriptures, living in adultery. No earthly laws can trample down the laws of God, or make that right which he has solemnly pronounced wrong.

Verse 33

Thou shalt not forswear thyself - Christ here proceeds to correct another false interpretation of the law. The law respecting oaths is found in Leviticus 19:12, and Deuteronomy 23:23. By those laws people were forbid to perjure themselves, or to forswear, that is, swear falsely.

Perform unto the Lord - Perform literally, really, and religiously what is promised in an oath.

Thine oaths - An oath is a solemn affirmation or declaration, made with an appeal to God for the truth of what is affirmed, and imprecating his vengeance, and renouncing his favor if what is affirmed is false. A false oath is called perjury, or, as in this place, forswearing.

It appears, however, from this passage, as well as from the ancient writings of the Jewish rabbins, that while the Jews professedly adhered to the law, they had introduced a number of oaths in common conversation, and oaths which they by no means considered to be binding. For example, they would swear by the temple, by the head, by heaven, by the earth. So long as they kept from swearing by the name Yahweh, and so long as they observed the oaths publicly taken, they seemed to consider all others as allowable, and allowedly broken. This is the abuse which Christ wished to correct. "It was the practice of swearing in common conversation, and especially swearing by created things." To do this, he said that they were mistaken in their views of the sacredness of such oaths. They were very closely connected with God; and to trifle with them was a species of trifling with God. Heaven is his throne; the earth his footstool; Jerusalem his special abode; the head was made by him, and was so much under his control that we could not make one hair white or black. To swear by these things, therefore, was to treat irreverently objects created by God, and could not be without guilt. It is remarkable that the sin here condemned by the Saviour prevails still in Palestine in the same form and manner referred to here. Dr. Thomson (*The Land and the Book*, vol. ii. p. 284) says, "The people now use the very same sort of oaths that are mentioned and condemned by our Lord. They swear by the head, by their life, by heaven, and by the temple, or what is in its place, the church. The forms of cursing and swearing, however, are almost infinite, and fall on the pained ear all day long."

Our Saviour here evidently had no reference to judicial oaths, or oaths taken in a court of justice. It was merely the foolish and wicked habit of swearing in private conversation; of swearing on every occasion and by everything that he condemned. This he does condemn in a most unqualified manner. He himself, however, did not refuse to take an oath in a court of law, Matthew 26:63-64. So Paul often called God to witness his sincerity,

which is all that is meant by an oath. See Romans 1:9; Romans 9:1; Galatians 1:20; Hebrews 6:16. Oaths were, moreover, prescribed in the law of Moses, and Christ did not come to repeal those laws. See Exodus 22:11; Leviticus 5:1; Numbers 5:19; Deuteronomy 29:12, Deuteronomy 29:14.

Verse 34-35

But I say unto you, Swear not at all - That is, in the manner which he proceeds to specify. Swear not in any of the common and profane ways customary at that time.

By heaven; for it is God‘s throne - To swear by that was, if it meant anything, to swear by Him that sitteth thereon, Matthew 23:22.

Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool - Swearing by that, therefore, is really swearing by God. Or perhaps it means:

1.that we have no right to pledge, or swear by, what belongs to God; and,

2.that oaths by inanimate objects are unmeaningful and wicked.

If they are real oaths, they are by a living Being, who has power to take vengeance. A footstool is that on which the feet rest when sitting. The term is applied to the earth to denote how lowly and humble an object it is when compared with God.

Jerusalem - See the notes at Matthew 2:1.

City of the Great King - That is, of God; called the Great King because he was the King of the Israelites, and Jerusalem was the capital of the nation, and the place where he was especially honored as king. Compare Psalm 46:4; Psalm 48:1-2; Psalm 87:3.

Verse 36

Neither shalt thou swear by thy head - This was a common oath. The Gentiles also used this oath. To swear by the head was the same as to swear by the life; or to say, I will forfeit my life if what I say is not true. God is the Author of the life, and to swear by that, therefore, is the same as to swear by him.

Because thou canst not make one hair white or black - You have no control or right over your own life. You cannot even change one single hair. God has all that control; and it is therefore improper and profane to pledge what is God‘s gift and God‘s property; and it is the same as swearing by God himself.

Verse 37

But let your communication - Your word; what you say.

Be, Yea - Yes. This does not mean that we should always use the word "yea," for it might as well have been translated "yes"; but it means that we should simply affirm or declare that a thing is so.

More than these - More than these affirmations.

Cometh of evil - Is evil. Proceeds from some evil disposition or purpose. And from this we may learn:

1. That profane swearing is always the evidence of a depraved heart. To trifle with the name of God, or with any of his works, is itself most decided proof of depravity.

2. That no man is believed any sooner in common conversation because he swears to a thing. When we hear a man swear to a thing, it is pretty good evidence that he knows what he is saying to be false, and we should be on our guard. He that will break the third commandment will not hesitate to break the ninth also. And this explains the fact that profane swearers are seldom believed. The man who is always believed is he whose character is beyond suspicion in all things, who obeys all the laws of God, and whose simple declaration, therefore, is enough. A man that is truly a Christian, and leads a Christian life, does not need oaths and profaneness to make him believed.

3. It is no mark of a gentleman to swear. The most worthless and vile. the refuse of mankind, the drunkard and the prostitute, swear as well as the best dressed and educated gentleman. No particular endowments are requisite to give finish to the art of cursing. The basest and meanest of mankind swear with as much tact and skill as the most refined, and he that wishes to degrade himself to the very lowest level of pollution and shame should learn to be a common swearer. Any person has talents enough to learn to curse God and his fellowmen, and to pray - for every man who swears prays - that God would sink him and others into hell. No profane person knows but that God will hear his prayer, and send him to the regions of woe.

4. Profaneness does no one any good. Nobody is the richer, or wiser, or happier for it. It helps no one's morals or manners. It commends no one to any society. The profane man must be, of course, shut out from female

society, and no refined conversation can consist with it. It is disgusting to the refined; abominable to the good; insulting to those with whom we associate; degrading to the mind; unprofitable, needless, and injurious in society; and awful in the sight of God.

5. God will not hold the profane swearer guiltless. Wantonly to profane His name, to call His vengeance down, to curse Him on His throne, to invoke damnation, is perhaps of all offences the most awful. And there is not in the universe more cause of amazement at His forbearance, than that God does not rise in vengeance, and smite the profane swearer at once to hell. Verily, in a world like this, where His name is profaned every day, and hour, and moment by thousands, God shows that He is slow to anger, and that His mercy is without bounds!

Verses 38-41

An eye for an eye … - This command is found in Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20, and Deuteronomy 19:21. In these places it was given as a rule to regulate the decisions of judges. They were to take eye for eye, and tooth for tooth, and to inflict burning for burning. As a judicial rule it is not unjust. Christ finds no fault with the rule as applied to magistrates, and does not take upon himself to repeal it. But instead of confining it to magistrates, the Jews had extended it to private conduct, and made it the rule by which to take revenge. They considered themselves justified by this rule to inflict the same injury on others that they had received. Our Saviour remonstrates against this. He declares that the law had no reference to private revenge, that it was given only to regulate the magistrate, and that their private conduct was to be governed by different principles.

The general principle which he laid down was, that we are not to resist evil; that is, as it is in the Greek, nor to set ourselves against an evil person who is injuring us. But even this general direction is not to be pressed too strictly. Christ did not intend to teach that we are to see our families murdered, or be murdered ourselves; rather than to make resistance. The law of nature, and all laws, human and divine, justify self-defense when life is in danger. It cannot surely be the intention to teach that a father should sit by coolly and see his family butchered by savages, and not be allowed to defend them. Neither natural nor revealed religion ever did, or ever can, inculcate this doctrine. Our Saviour immediately explains what he means by

it. Had he intended to refer it to a case where life is in danger, he would most surely have mentioned it. Such a case was far more worthy of statement than those which he did mention.

A doctrine so unusual, so unlike all that the world had believed. and that the best people had acted on, deserved to be formally stated. Instead of doing this, however, he confines himself to smaller matters, to things of comparatively trivial interest, and says that in these we had better take wrong than to enter into strife and lawsuits. The first case is where we are smitten on the cheek. Rather than contend and fight, we should take it patiently, and turn the other cheek. This does not, however, prevent our remonstrating firmly yet mildly on the injustice of the thing, and insisting that justice should be done us, as is evident from the example of the Saviour himself. See John 18:23. The second evil mentioned is where a man is litigious and determined to take all the advantage the law can give him, following us with vexatious and expensive lawsuits. Our Saviour directs us, rather than to imitate him rather than to contend with a revengeful spirit in courts of justice to take a trifling injury, and yield to him. This is merely a question about property, and not about conscience and life.

Coat - The Jews wore two principal garments, an interior and an exterior. The interior, here called the "coat," or the tunic, was made commonly of linen, and encircled the whole body, extending down to the knees. Sometimes beneath this garment, as in the case of the priests, there was another garment corresponding to pantaloons. The coat, or tunic, was extended to the neck. and had long or short sleeves. Over this was commonly worn an upper garment, here called "cloak," or mantle. It was made commonly nearly square, of different sizes, 5 or 6 cubits long and as many broad, and was wrapped around the body, and was thrown off when labor was performed. If, said Christ, an adversary wished to obtain, at law, one of these garments, rather than contend with him let him have the other also. A reference to various articles of apparel occurs frequently in the New Testament, and it is desirable to have a correct view of the ancient mode of dress. in order to a proper understanding of the Bible. The Asiatic modes of dress are nearly the same from age to age, and hence it is not difficult to illustrate the passages where such a reference occurs. The ordinary dress consisted of the inner garment, the outer garment, the girdle (belt), and the sandals. In regard to the sandals, see the notes at Matthew 3:11.

In the girdle (belt) was the place of the pouch Matthew 10:9, and to it the sword and dirk were commonly attached. Compare 2 Samuel 20:8. In modern times the pistols are also fastened to the belt. It is the usual place for the handkerchief, smoking materials, inkhorn, and, in general, the implements of one‘s profession. The belt served to confine the loose-flowing robe or outer garment to the body. It held the garment when it was tucked up, as it was usually in walking or in labor. Hence, “to gird up the loins” became a significant figurative expression, denoting readiness for service, activity, labor, and watchfulness; and “to loosen the loins” denoted the giving way to repose and indolence, 2 Kings 4:29; Job 38:3; Isaiah 5:27; Luke 12:35; John 21:7.

Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile - The word translated “shall compel” is of Persian origin. Post-offices were then unknown. In order that the royal commands might be delivered with safety and despatch in different parts of the empire, Cyrus stationed horsemen at proper intervals on all the great public highways. One of those delivered the message to another, and intelligence was thus rapidly and safely communicated. These heralds were permitted to compel any person, or to press any horse, boat, ship, or other vehicle that they might need for the quick transmission of the king‘s commandments. It was to this custom that our Saviour refers. Rather, says he, than resist a public authority requiring your attendance and aid for a certain distance, go peaceably twice the distance.

A mile - A Roman mile was 1,000 paces.

Twain - Two.

Verse 42

Give to him that asketh thee - This is the general rule. It is better to give sometimes to an undeserving person than to turn away one who is really in need. It is good to be in the habit of giving. At the same time, the rule must be interpreted so as to be consistent with our duty to our families 1 Timothy 5:8 and with other objects of justice and charity. It is seldom, perhaps never, good to give to a person who is able to work, 2 Thessalonians 3:10. To give to such is to encourage laziness, and to support the idle at the expense of the industrious. If such a one is indeed hungry, feed him; if he needs anything further, give him employment. If a widow, an orphan, a man of misfortune, or an infirmed man, lame, or sick, is at your door, never send any of them away empty. See Hebrews 13:2; Matthew 25:35-45. So this is true of a poor and needy friend that wishes to

borrow. We are not to turn away or deny him. This deserves, however, some limitation. It must be done in consistency with other duties. To lend to every worthless man would be to throw away our property, encourage laziness and crime, and ruin our own families. It should be done consistently with every other obligation, and of this everyone is to be the judge. Perhaps our Saviour meant to teach that where there was a deserving friend or brother in need, we should lend to him without usury, and without standing much about the security.

Verse 43

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy - The command to love our neighbor was a law of God, Leviticus 19:18. That we must therefore hate our enemy was an inference drawn from it by the Jews. They supposed that if we loved the one, we must of course hate the other. They were total strangers to that great, special law of religion which requires us to love both. A neighbor is literally one that lives near to us; then, one who is near to us by acts of kindness and friendship. This is its meaning here. See also Luke 10:36.

Verse 44

Love your enemies - There are two kinds of love, involving the same general feeling, or springing from the same fountain of good-will to all mankind, but differing so far as to admit of separation in idea. The one is that feeling by which we approve of the conduct of another, commonly called the love of complacency; the other, that by which we wish well to the person of another, though we cannot approve his conduct. This is the love of benevolence, and this love we are to bear toward our enemies. It is impossible to love the conduct of a person who curses and reviles us, who injures our person or property, or who violates all the laws of God; but, though we may hate his conduct, and suffer keenly when we are affected by it, yet we may still wish well to the person; we may pity his madness and folly; we may speak kindly *of* him and *to* him; we may return good for evil; we may aid him in the time of trial; we may seek to do him good here and to promote his eternal welfare hereafter, Romans 12:17-20. This seems to be what is meant by loving our enemies; and this is a special law of Christianity, and the highest possible test of piety, and probably the most difficult of all duties to be performed.

Bless them that curse you - The word "bless" here means to "speak well of" or "speak well to:" - not to curse again or to slander, but to speak

of those things which we can commend in an enemy; or, if there is nothing that we can commend, to say nothing about him. The word "bless," spoken of God, means to regard with favor or to confer benefits, as when God is said to bless his people. When we speak of our "blessing God," it means to praise Him or give thanks to Him. When we speak of blessing people, it "unites" the two meanings, and signifies to confer favor, to thank, or to speak well of.

Despitefully use you - The word thus translated means, first, to injure by prosecution in law; then, wantonly and unjustly to accuse, and to injure in any way. This seems to be its meaning here.

Persecute - See the notes at Matthew 5:10.

Verse 45

That ye may be the children of your Father - In Greek, the sons of your Father. The word "son" has a variety of significations. See the notes at Matthew 1:1. Christians are called the "sons" or "children" of God in several of these senses: as his offspring; as adopted; as his disciples; as imitators of Him. In this passage the word is applied to them because, in doing good to enemies, they resemble God. He makes His sun to rise upon the evil and good, and sends rain, without distinction, on the just and unjust. So His people should show that they imitate or resemble Him, or that they possess His spirit, by doing good in a similar way.

Verse 46

What reward have ye? - The word "reward" seems to be used in the sense of "deserving of praise." If you only love those that love you, you are selfish; it is not genuine love for the "character," but love for the "benefit," and you deserve no commendation. The very "publicans" would do the same.

The publicans - The publicans were tax-gatherers. Judea was a province of the Roman empire. The Jews bore this foreign yoke with great impatience, and paid their taxes with great reluctance. It happened, therefore, that those who were appointed to collect taxes were objects of great detestation. They were, besides, people who would be supposed to execute their office at all hazards; men who were willing to engage in an odious and hated employment; people often of abandoned character, oppressive in their exactions, and dissolute in their lives. By the Jews they were associated in character with thieves and adulterers; with the profane

and the dissolute. Christ says that even these wretched people would love their benefactors.

Verse 47

And if you salute your brethren … - The word "salute" here means to show the customary tokens of civility, or to treat with the common marks of friendship. See the notes at Luke 10:4. The Saviour says that the worst men, the very publicans, would do this. Christians should do more; they should show that they have a different spirit; they should treat their "enemies" as well as wicked people do their "friends." This should be done:

1.Because it is "right;" it is the only really amiable spirit; and,

2.We should show that religion is not selfish, and is superior to all other principles of action.

Verse 48

Be ye therefore perfect … - The Saviour concludes this part of the discourse by commanding his disciples to be "perfect." This word commonly means "finished, complete, pure, holy." Originally, it is applied to a piece of mechanism, as a machine that is complete in its parts. Applied to people, it refers to completeness of parts, or perfection, where no part is defective or wanting. Thus, Job Job 1:1 is said to be "perfect;" that is, not holy as God, or "sinless" - for fault is afterward found with him Job 9:20; Job 42:6; but his piety was "proportionate" - had a completeness of parts was consistent and regular. He exhibited his religion as a prince, a father, an individual, a benefactor of the poor. He was not merely a pious man in one place, but uniformly. He was consistent everywhere. See the notes at that passage. This is the meaning in Matthew. Be not religious merely in loving your friends and neighbors, but let your piety be shown in loving your enemies; imitate God; let your piety be "complete, proportionate, regular." This every Christian may be; this every Christian must be.

Remarks On Matthew 5:28. And yet what law is more frequently violated? By obscene anecdotes and tales; by songs and gibes; by double meanings and innuendoes; by looks and gestures; by conversation, and obscene books and pictures, this law of our Saviour is perpetually violated. If there is any one sentiment of most value for the comfort, the character, the virtuous sociability of the young - one that will shed the greatest charm over society, and make it the most pure, it is that which inculcates "perfect delicacy" and "purity" in the contact of the sexes. Virtue of any kind never

blooms where this is not cherished. Modesty and purity once gone, every flower that would diffuse its fragrance over life withers and dies with it. There is no one sin that so withers and blights every virtue, none that so enfeebles and prostrates every ennobling feeling of the soul, as the violation of the seventh commandment in spirit or in form, in thought or in act. How should purity dwell in the heart, breathe from the lips, kindle in the eye, live in the imagination, and dwell in the conversation of all the young! An eternal, avenging God is near to every wanton thought, marks every eye that kindles with impure desire, rolls the thunder of justice over every polluted soul, and is preparing woe for every violator of the laws of purity and chastity, Proverbs 7:22-23; Proverbs 5:5; Proverbs 2:18.

4. Revenge is equally forbidden. Persecution, slander, a spirit of litigation, anger, personal abuse, dueling, suicide, murder, are all violations of the law of God, and all must call down His vengeance.

5. We are bound to love our enemies. This is a law of Christianity, original and unique. No system of religion but Christianity has required it, and no act of Christian piety is more difficult. None shows more the power of the grace of God; none is more ornamental to the character; none more like God; and none furnishes better evidence of piety. He that can meet a man kindly who is seeking his hurt; who can speak well of one that is perpetually slandering and cursing him; that can pray for a man that abuses, injures, and wounds him: and that can seek heaven for him that wishes his damnation, is in the way to life. This is religion, beautiful as its native skies; pure like its Source; kind like its Author; fresh like the dews of the morning; clear and diffusive like the beams of the rising sun; and holy like the feelings and words that come from the bosom of the Son of God. He that can do this need not doubt that he is a Christian. He has caught the very spirit of the Saviour, and he must inherit eternal life.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

Take heed that ye do not your alms - The word "alms" here denotes liberality to the poor and needy. In the margin, as in the best editions of the Greek it is "righteousness;" either referring to almsgiving as eminently a righteous act, or more probably including all that is specified in this and the following verses - almsgiving, prayer, fasting, Galatians 2:10; James 1:27; Luke 19:8.

Before men … - Our Lord does not require us never to give alms before people, but only forbids our doing it "to be seen of them," for the purposes of ostentation and to seek their praise. To a person who is disposed to do good from a right motive, it matters little whether it be in public or in private. The only thing that renders it even desirable that our good deeds should be seen is that God may be glorified. See Matthew 5:16.

Otherwise - If your only motive for doing it is to be seen by people, God will not reward you. Take heed, therefore, that you do not do it to be seen, "otherwise" God will not reward you.

Verse 2

Do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do - The word "hypocrite" is taken from "stage-players," who act the part of others, or speak not their own sentiments, but the sentiments of others. It means here, and in the New Testament generally, those who "dissemble" or hide their real sentiments, and assume or express other feelings than their own - those who, for purposes of ostentation, gain, or applause, put on the appearance of religion. It is probable that such persons, when they were about to bestow alms, caused a trumpet to be sounded, professedly to call the poor together to receive it, but really to call the people to see the proofs of their liberality and piety; or perhaps it may mean that they should not make a great noise about it, like sounding a trumpet.

In the synagogues - The word "synagogue" commonly means the place of assembling for religious worship known by that name. See the notes at Matthew 4:23. It might mean, however, any "collection of people" assembled for any purpose, and it is not improbable that it has that meaning here. It does not appear that they made a noise in bestowing charity in the synagogues, or that charity was commonly bestowed there; but it was

probably done on occasion of any great assemblage, in any place of concourse, and at the corners of the streets, where it could be seen by many.

They have their reward - That is, they obtain the applause they seek the reputation of being charitable; and as this applause was all they wished, there is, of course, no further reward to be looked for or obtained.

Verse 3-4

Let not thy left hand know … - This is a proverbial expression, signifying that the action should be done as secretly as possible. The Hebrews often attribute actions to members which properly belong to persons. The encouragement for performing our acts of charity in secret is that it will be pleasing to God; that he will see the act, however secret it may be, and will openly reward it. If the reward is not granted in this life, it will be in the life to come. In multitudes of cases, however, alms given to the poor are "lent to the Lord" Proverbs 19:17, and will be repaid in this life. Rarely, perhaps never, has it been found that the man who is liberal to the poor has ever suffered by it in his worldly circumstances.

Verse 5

And when thou prayest … - Hypocrites manifested the same spirit about prayer as almsgiving; it was done in public places. The word "synagogues," here, clearly means, not the place of worship of that name, but places where many were accustomed to assemble - near the markets or courts, where they could be seen of many. Our Lord evidently could not mean to condemn prayers in the synagogues. It might be said that he condemned ostentatious prayer there, while they neglected secret prayer; but this does not appear to be his design. The Jews were much in the habit of praying in public places. At certain times of the day they always offered their prayers. Wherever they were, they suspended their employment and paid their devotions. This is also practiced now everywhere by Muslims, and in many places by Roman Catholics. It seems, also, that they sought publicity, and regarded it as proof of great piety.

Verse 6

Enter into thy closet - Every Jewish house had a place for secret devotion. The roofs of their houses were flat places, well adapted for walking, conversation, and meditation. See the notes at Matthew 9:2. Professor Hackett ("*Illustrations of Scripture*," p. 82) says: "On the roof of the house in which I lodged at Damascus were chambers and rooms along the side and at the corners of the open space or terrace, which constitutes

often a sort of upper story. I observed the same thing in connection with other houses." Over the porch, or entrance of the house, there was frequently a small room of the size of the porch, raised a story above the rest of the house, expressly appropriated for the place of retirement. Here, in secrecy and solitude, the pious Jew might offer his prayers, unseen by any but the Searcher of hearts. To this place, or to some similar place, our Saviour directed his disciples to repair when they wished to hold communion with God. This is the place commonly mentioned in the New Testament as the "upper room," or the place for secret prayer.

The meaning of the Saviour is, that there should be some place where we may be in secret - where we may be alone with God. There should be some "place" to which we may resort where no ear will hear us but "His" ear, and no eye can see us but His eye. Unless there is such a place, secret prayer will not be long or strictly maintained. It is often said that we have no such place, and can secure none. We are away from home; we are traveling; we are among strangers; we are in stages and steamboats, and how can we find such places of retirement? I answer, the desire to pray, and the love of prayer, will create such places in abundance. The Saviour had all the difficulties which we can have, but yet he lived in the practice of secret prayer. To be alone, he rose up "a great while before day," and went into a solitary place and prayed, Mark 1:35. With him a grove, a mountain, a garden, furnished such a place, and, though a traveler, and among strangers, and without a house, he lived in the habit of secret prayer. What excuse can they have for not praying who have a home, and who spend the precious hours of the morning in sleep, and who will practice no self-denial that they may be alone with God? O Christian! thy Saviour would have broken in upon these hours, and would have trod his solitary way to the mountain or the grove that he might pray. He did do it. He did it to pray for thee, too indolent and too unconcerned about thy own salvation and that of the world to practice the least self-denial in order to commune with God! How can religion live thus? How can such a soul be saved?

The Saviour does not specify the times when we should pray in secret. He does not say how often it should be done. The reasons may have been:

(1)that he designed that his religion should be "voluntary," and there is not a better "test" of true piety than a disposition to engage often in secret

prayer. He intended to leave it to his people to show attachment to him by coming to God often, and as often as they chose.

(2)an attempt to specify the times when this should be done would tend to make religion formal and heartless. Mohammed undertook to regulate this, and the consequence is a cold and formal prostration at the appointed hours of prayer all over the land where his religion has spread.

(3)the periods are so numerous, and the seasons for secret prayer vary so much, that it would nor be easy to fix rules when this should be done.

Yet without giving rules, where the Saviour has given none, we may suggest the following as times when secret prayer is proper:

1. In the morning. Nothing can be more appropriate when we have been preserved through the night, and when we are about to enter upon the duties and dangers of another day, than to render to our great Preserver thanks, and to commit ourselves to His fatherly care.

2. In the evening. When the day has closed, what would be more natural than to offer thanksgiving for the mercies of the day, and to implore forgiveness for what we have said or done amiss? And when about to lie down again to sleep, not knowing but it may be our last sleep and that we may awake in eternity, what more proper than to commend ourselves to the care of Him "who never slumbers nor sleeps?"

3. We should pray in times of embarrassment and perplexity. Such times occur in every man's life, and it is then a privilege and a duty to go to God and seek his direction. In the most difficult and embarrassed time of the American Revolution, Washington was seen to retire to a grove in the vicinity of the camp at Valley Forge. Curiosity led a man to observe him, and the father of his country was seen on his knees supplicating the God of hosts in prayer. Who can tell how much the liberty of this nation is owing to the answer to the secret prayer of Washington?

4. We should pray when we are beset with strong temptations. So the Saviour prayed in the garden of Gethsemane (compare Hebrews 5:7-8), and so we should pray when we are tempted.

5. We should pray when the Spirit prompts us to pray; when we feel lust like praying; when nothing can satisfy the soul but prayer. Such times occur in the life of every Christian, (and they are "spring-times" of piety - favorable gales to waft us on to heaven. Prayer to the Christian, at such times, is just as congenial as conversation with a friend when the bosom is filled with love; as the society of father, mother, sister, child is, when the heart glows with attachment; as the strains of sweet music are to the ear best attuned to the love of harmony; as the most exquisite poetry is to the heart enamored with the muses; and as the most delicious banquet is to the hungry.

Prayer, then, is the element of being - the breath the vital air; and, then, the Christian must and should pray. He is the most eminent Christian who is most favored with such strong emotions urging him to prayer. The heart is then full; the soul is tender; the sun of glory shines with unusual splendor; no cloud intervenes; the Christian rises above the world, and pants for glory. then we may go to be alone with God. We may enter the closet, and breathe forth our warm desires into his ever-open ear, and He who sees in secret will reward us openly.

In secret - Who is unseen.

Who seeth in secret - Who sees what the human eye cannot see; who sees the real designs and desires of the heart. Prayer should always be offered, remembering that God is acquainted with our real desires; and that it is those real desires, and not the words of prayer, that he will answer.

Verse 7

Use not vain repetitions - The original word here is supposed to be derived from the name of a Greek poet, who made long and weary verses, declaring by many forms and endless repetitions the same sentiment. Hence, it means to repeat a thing often; to say the same thing in different words, or to repeat the same words, as though God did not hear at first. An example of this we have in 1 Kings 18:26; "They called on Baal from morning until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us!" It may serve to illustrate this passage, and to show how true is the description here of prevailing modes of prayer, to refer to the forms and modes of devotion still practiced in Palestine by the Muslims. Dr. Thomson ("*The Land and the Book* ") gives the following description of what actually occurs: "See those men on that elevated terrace. One has spread his cloak, other their Persian rugs toward

the south. They are Muslims, preparing to say prayers - rather perform them, in this most public place, and in the midst of all this noise and confusion.

"Let us stop and watch the ceremony as it goes on. That man next us raises his open hands until the thumbs touch the ears, exclaiming aloud, "Allah-hu-akbar" - ‹God is great.‘ After uttering mentally a few short petitions, the hands are brought down and folded Together near the girdle, while he recites the first chapter of the Koran, and two or three other brief passages from the same book. And now he bends forward, rests his hands upon his knees, and repeats three times a formula of praise to ‹God most great.‘ Then, standing erect, he cries "Allah-hu-akbar," as at the beginning. Then see him drop upon his knees, and bend forward until his nose and forehead touch the ground directly between his expanded hands. This he repeats three times, muttering all the while the same short formulas of prayer and praise. The next move will bring him to his knees, and then, settling back upon his heels, he will mumble over various small petitions, with sundry grunts and exclamations, according to taste and habit. He has now gone through one regular Rek'ahand, standing up as at the first, and on exactly the same spot, he will perform a second, and even a third, if specially devout, with precisely the same genuflections.

"They are obliged to repeat some expressions thirty times, others many hundred times. Would that these remarks did not apply to nominal Christians in this land as well as to Muslims!"

The heathen do - The original word is that which is commonly translated "Gentile." The world was divided into two parts, the Jews and the Gentiles; that is, in the original, the "nations," the nations destitute of the true religion. Christ does not fix the length of our prayers. He says that we should not repeat the same thing, as though God did not hear; and it is not improbable that he intended to condemn the practice of long prayers. His own supplications were remarkably short.

Verses 9-13

This passage contains the Lord‘s prayer, a composition unequalled for comprehensiveness and for beauty. It is supposed that some of these petitions were taken from those in common use among the Jews. Indeed some of them are still to be found in Jewish writings, but they did not exist in this beautiful combination. This prayer is given as a "model." It is

designed to express the "manner" in which we are to pray, evidently not the precise words or petitions which we are to use. The substance of the prayer is recorded by Luke, Luke 11:2-4. In Luke, however, it varies from the form given in Matthew, showing that he intended not to prescribe this as a form of prayer to be used always, but to express the substance of our petitions, or to show what petitions it would be proper to present to God. That he did not intend to prescribe this as a form to be invariably used is further evident from the fact that there is no proof that either he or his disciples ever used exactly this form of prayer, but clear evidence that they prayed often in other language. See Matthew 26:39-42, Matthew 26:44; Luke 22:42; Acts 1:24.

Matthew 6:9

Our Father - God is called a Father,

1.as he is the Creator and the Great Parent of all;

2.the Preserver of the human family and the Provider for their wants, Matthew 5:45; Matthew 6:32;

3.in a special sense he is the Father of those who are adopted into his family; who put confidence in him; who are the true followers of Christ, and made heirs of life, Romans 8:14-17.

Hallowed be thy name - The word "hallowed" means to render or pronounce holy. God's name is essentially holy; and the meaning of this petition is, "Let thy name be celebrated, venerated, and esteemed as holy everywhere, and receive from all people proper honor." It is thus the expression of a wish or desire, on the part of the worshipper, that the name of God, or that God himself, should be held everywhere in proper veneration.

Matthew 6:10

Thy kingdom come - The word "kingdom" here means "reign." Note, Matthew 3:2. The petition is the expression of a wish that God may "reign" everywhere; that his laws may be obeyed; and especially that the gospel of Christ may be advanced everywhere, until the world shall be filled with his glory.

Thy will be done - The will of God is, that people should obey his law, and be holy. The word "will," here, has reference to his law, and to what would be "acceptable" to him. To pray, then, that his will may be done, on earth as in heaven, is to pray that his "law," his "revealed will," may be

obeyed and loved. His law is perfectly obeyed in heaven, and his true children most ardently desire and pray that it may also be obeyed on the earth.

The object of these three "first" petitions, is, that God's name should be glorified and his kingdom established; and by being placed first, we learn that his glory and kingdom are of more consequence than our wants, and that these should be first in our hearts and petitions before a throne of grace.

Matthew 6:11

Give us this day … - The word "bread," here, denotes doubtless everything necessary to sustain life. See the notes at Matthew 4:4. Compare Deuteronomy 8:3. This petition implies our dependence on God for the supply of our wants. As we are dependent on him one day as much as another, it was evidently the intention of the Saviour that prayer should be offered every day. The petition, moreover, is expressed in the plural number - give us - and it is evidently therefore, intended to be used by more than one, or by some community of people. No community or congregation can meet every day for worship but families. It is therefore evident that this prayer contains a strong implied command for daily family prayer. It can nowhere else be used so as fully to come up to the meaning of the original intention; and nowhere else can it be breathed forth with so much propriety and beauty as from the lips of a father, the venerable priest of his household, and the pleader with God for those rich blessings which a parental bosom desires on his beloved offspring.

Matthew 6:12

And forgive us our debts … - The word "debts" is used here figuratively.

It does not mean "literally" that we are "debtors to God," but that our sins have a resemblance to debts. Debtors are those who are bound to others for some claim in commercial transactions; for something which we have had, and for which we are bound to pay according to contract. "Literally" there can be no such transaction between God and us. It must be used figuratively. We have not met the claims of law. We have violated its obligations. We are exposed to its penalty. We are guilty, and God only can forgive, in the same way as none but a "creditor" can forgive a debtor. The word "debts" here, therefore, means "sins," or offences against God - offences which none but God can forgive. In the parallel place in Luke 11:4, the word sins is used. The measure by which we may expect forgiveness is

that which we use in reference to others See Psalm 18:25-26; Matthew 18:23; Mark 11:26; Luke 11:4.

This is the invariable rule by which God dispenses pardon He that comes before him unwilling to forgive, harboring dark and revengeful thoughts, how can he expect that God will show him that mercy which he is unwilling to show to others? It is not, however, required that we should forgive "debts" in a pecuniary sense. To them we have a right, though they should not be pushed with an overbearing and oppressive spirit; not so as to sacrifice the feelings of mercy in order to secure the claims of justice. No one has a right to oppress; and when a debt cannot be paid, or when it would greatly distress a debtor's wife and children, or a widow and an orphan, or when calamity has put it out of the power of an honest man to pay the debt, the spirit of Christianity requires that it should be forgiven. To such cases this petition in the Lord's prayer doubtless extends. But it was probably intended to refer principally to injuries of character or person which we have received from others. If we cannot from the heart forgive them, we have the assurance that God will never forgive us.

Matthew 6:13

And lead us not into temptation - A petition similar to this is offered by David, Psalm 141:4; "Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with the workers of iniquity." God tempts no man. See James 1:13. This phrase, then, must be used in the sense of "permitting." Do not "suffer" us, or "permit" us, to be tempted to sin. In this it is implied that God has such control over the tempter as to save us from his power if we call upon him. The word "temptation," however (see the note at Matthew 4:1), means sometimes "trial, affliction," anything that "tests" our virtue. If this be the meaning here, as it may be, then the import of the prayer is, "Do not afflict or try us." It is not wrong to pray that we may be saved from suffering if it be the will of God. See Luke 22:42.

Deliver us from evil - The original in this place has the article - deliver us from the evil - that is, as has been supposed, the Evil One, or Satan. He is elsewhere called, by way of eminence, the "Evil One," Matthew 13:19; 1 John 2:13-14; 1 John 3:12. The meaning here is, "deliver us from his power, his snares, his arts, his temptations." He is supposed to be the great parent of evil, and to be delivered from him is to be safe. Or it may mean, "deliver

us from the various evils and trials which beset us, the heavy and oppressive calamities into which we are continually liable to fall."

Thine is the kingdom - That is, thine is the reign or dominion. Thou hast control over all these things, and canst so order them as to answer these petitions.

Thine is the power - Thou hast power to accomplish what we ask. We are weak, and cannot do it; but thou art Almighty, and all things are possible with thee.

Thine is the glory - That is, thine is the honor or praise. Not for "our honor," but that thy glory, thy goodness, may be displayed in providing for our wants; thy power exerted in defending us; thy praise be celebrated by causing thy kingdom to spread through the earth.

This "doxology," or ascription of praise, is connected with the prayer by the word "for," to signify that all these things - the reign, power, and glory of God - will be manifested by granting these petitions. It is not because we are to be benefited, but that God's name and perfections may be manifested. His glory is, then, the first and principal thing which we are to seek when we approach him. We are to suffer our concerns to be lost sight of in the superior glory and honor of his name and dominion. We are to seek temporal and eternal life chiefly because the honor of our Maker will be promoted, and his name be more illustriously displayed to his creatures. He is to be "first, last, supremest, best," in our view; and all selfish and worldly views are to be absorbed in that one great desire of the soul that God may be "all in all." Approaching him with these feelings, our prayers will be answered; our devotions will ascend like incense, and the lifting up our hands will be like the evening sacrifice.

Amen - This is a word of Hebrew origin, from a verb signifying "to be firm, secure, to be true and faithful." It is a word expressing consent or strong approbation; a word of strong asseveration. It means "verily, certainly, so be it." It is probable that this word was used by the people in the synagogue to signify their assent to the prayer that was uttered by the minister, and, to some extent, it was probably so used in the Christian Church. See 1 Corinthians 14:16.

It may be proper to remark that this doxology, "for thine is the kingdom," etc., is missing in many manuscripts, and that its authenticity is doubtful.

Verse 14-15

For if ye forgive men their trespasses - If ye forgive others when they offend or injure you.

Your heavenly Father will also forgive you - This is constantly required in the Bible. See the notes at Matthew 6:12. Our Saviour says we should forgive even if the offence be committed seventy times seven times, Matthew 18:22. By this is meant, that when a man asks forgiveness, we are cordially and forever to pardon the offence; we are to declare our willingness to forgive him. If he does not ask forgiveness, yet we are still to treat him kindly; not to harbor malice, not to speak ill of him, to be ready to do him good, and be always prepared to declare him forgiven when he asks it, and if we are not ready and willing to forgive him; we are assured that God will not forgive us.

Verse 16

Moreover, when ye fast - The word "fast" literally signifies to abstain from food and drink, whether from necessity or as a religious observance. It is, however, commonly applied in the Bible to the latter. It is, then, an expression of grief or sorrow. Such is the constitution of the body, that in a time of grief or sorrow we are not disposed to eat; or, we have no appetite. The grief of the "soul" is so absorbing as to destroy the natural appetites of the "body." People in deep affliction eat little, and often pine away and fall into sickness, because the body refuses, on account of the deep sorrow of the mind, to discharge the functions of health. "Fasting, then, is the natural expression of grief." It is not arbitrary; it is what every person in sorrow naturally does. This is the foundation of its being applied to religion as a sacred rite. It is because the soul, when oppressed and burdened by a sense of sin, is so filled with grief that the body refuses food. It is, therefore, appropriate to scenes of penitence, of godly sorrow, of suffering, and to those facts connected with religion which are suited to produce grief, as the prevalence of iniquity, or some dark impending calamity, or storm, or tempest, pestilence, plague, or famine. It is also useful to humble us, to bring us to reflection, to direct the thoughts away from the allurements of this world to the bliss of a better. It is not acceptable except it be the "real expression," of sorrow; the natural effect of the feeling that we are burdened with crime.

The Jews fasted often. They had four "annual" fasts in commemoration of the capture of Jerusalem Jeremiah 52:7, of the burning of the temple

Zechariah 7:3, of the death of Gedaliah Jeremiah 41:4, and of the commencement of the attack on Jerusalem Zechariah 8:19. In addition to these, they had a multitude of occasional fasts. It was customary, also, for the Pharisees to fast twice a week, Luke 18:12.

Of a sad countenance - That is, sour, morose; with assumed expressions of unfelt sorrow.

They disfigure their faces - That is, they do not anoint and wash themselves as usual: they are uncombed, filthy, squalid, and haggard. It is said that they were often in the habit of throwing ashes on their heads and faces; and this, mixing with their tears, served still further to disfigure their faces. So much pains will people take, and so much suffering will they undergo, and so much that is ridiculous will they assume, to impose on God and people. But they deceive neither. God sees through the flimsy veil. Human eyes can pierce a disguise so thin. Hypocrites overact their part. Not having the genuine principles of piety at heart, they know not what is its proper expression, and hence they appear supremely contemptible and abominable. Never should people exhibit outwardly more than they feel; and never should they attempt to exhibit anything for the mere sake of ostentation.

They have their reward - They have all that they desired - the praise of men and "the pleasure of ostentation." See the notes at Matthew 6:2.

Verse 17-18

But thou when thou fastest, anoint … - That is, appear as you do daily. Do not assume any new appearance, or change your visage or dress. The Jews and all neighboring nations were much in the habit of washing and anointing their bodies. This washing was performed at every meal; and where it could be effected, the head, or other parts of the body, was daily anointed with sweet or olive oil. In a warm climate, exposed to the great heat of the sun, this practice conduced much to health, preserved the skin smooth and tender, and afforded a most grateful sensation and odor. See Mark 7:2-3; James 5:14; Mark 11:13; John 12:3.

The meaning of this whole commandment is, when you regard it to be your duty to fast, do it as a thing expressing deep feeling or sorrow for sin, not by assuming unfelt gravity and moroseness, but in your ordinary dress and appearance; not to attract attention, but as an expression of feeling toward God, and he will approve and reward it.

Verse 19

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth - Treasures, or wealth, among the ancients, consisted in clothes or changes of raiment, as well as in gold, silver, gems, wine, lands, and oil. It meant an abundance of "anything" that was held to be conducive to the ornament or comfort of life. As the Orientals delighted much in display, in splendid equipage, and costly garments, their treasures, in fact, consisted much in beautiful and richly-ornamented articles of apparel. See Genesis 45:22, where Joseph gave to his brethren "changes of raiment;" Joshua 7:21, where Achan coveted and secreted "a goodly Babylonian garment." Compare also Judges 14:12. This fact will account for the use of the word "moth." When we speak of "wealth," we think at once of gold, and silver, and lands, and houses. When a Hebrew or an Orientalist spoke of wealth, he thought first of what would make a "display;" and included, as an essential part, splendid articles of dress. The "moth" is a small insect that finds its way to clothes and garments, and destroys them. The "moth" would destroy their apparel, the "rust" their silver and gold; thus all their treasure would waste away. The word rendered "rust" signifies anything which "eats into," and hence, anything which would consume one's property, and may have a wider signification than mere rust.

And where thieves break through and steal - The houses in the East were not unfrequently made of clay hardened in the sun, or of loose stones, and hence it was comparatively easy, as it was not uncommon, for thieves to "dig through" the wall, and effect an entrance in that way. See the notes at Job 24:16.

Verse 20-21

Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven - That is, have provision made for your eternal felicity. Do not exhaust your strength and spend your days in providing for the life here, but let your chief anxiety be to be prepared for eternity. Compare the notes at Isaiah 55:2. In heaven nothing corrupts; nothing terminates; no enemies plunder or destroy. To have treasure in heaven is to possess evidence that its purity and joys will be ours. It is to be heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, 1 Peter 1:4. The heart, or affections, will of course be fixed on the treasure. To regulate the heart, it is therefore important that the treasure, or object of attachment, should be right.

Verse 22-23

The light of the body … - The sentiment stated in the preceding verses - the duty of fixing the affections on heavenly things - Jesus proceeds to illustrate by a reference to the "eye." When the eye is directed steadily toward an object, and is in health, or is single, everything is clear and plain. If it vibrates, flies to different objects, is fixed on no one singly, or is diseased, nothing is seen clearly. Everything is dim and confused. The man, therefore, is unsteady. The eye regulates the motion of the body. To have an object distinctly in view is necessary in order to correct and regulate action. Rope-dancers, that they may steady themselves, fix the eye on some object on the wall, and look steadily at that. If they should look down on the rope or the people, they might become dizzy and fall. A man crossing a stream on a log, if he will look across at some object steadily, will be in little danger. If he looks down on the dashing and rolling waters, he will become dizzy, and fall. So Jesus says, in order that the conduct may be right, it is important to fix the affections on heaven. Having the affections there - having the eye of faith single, steady, unwavering - all the conduct will be correspondent.

Single - Steady, directed to one object. Not confused, as persons' eyes are when they see double.

Thy body shall be full of light - Your conduct will be regular and steady. All that is needful to direct the body is that the eye be fixed right. No other light is required. So all that is needful to direct the soul and the conduct is, that the eye of faith be fixed on heaven; that the affections be there.

If, therefore, the light that is in thee … - The word "light," here, signifies "the mind," or principles of the soul. If this is dark, how great is that darkness! The meaning of this passage may be thus expressed: The light of the body, the guide and director, is the eye. All know how calamitous it is when that light is irregular or extinguished, as when the eye is diseased or lost. So the light that is in us is the soul. If that soul is debased by attending exclusively to earthly objects - if it is diseased, and not fixed on heaven how much darker and more dreadful will it be than any darkness of the eye! Avarice darkens the mind, obscures the view, and brings in a dreadful and gloomy night over all the faculties.

Verse 24

No man can serve two masters … - Christ proceeds to illustrate the necessity of laying up treasures in heaven from a well-known fact, that a servant cannot serve two masters at the same time. His affections and obedience would be divided, and he would fail altogether in his duty to one or the other. One he would love, the other he would hate. To the interests of the one he would adhere, the interests of the other he would neglect. This is a law of human nature. The supreme affections can be fixed on only one object. So, says Jesus, the servant of God cannot at the same time obey him. and be avaricious, or seek treasures supremely on earth. One interferes with the other, and one or the other will be, and must be, surrendered.

Mammon - Mammon is a Syriac word, a name given to an idol worshipped as the god of riches. It has the same meaning as Plutus among the Greeks. It is not known that the Jews ever formally worshipped this idol, but they used the word to denote wealth. The meaning is, ye cannot serve the true God, and at the same time be supremely engaged in obtaining the riches of this world. One must interfere with the other. See Luke 16:9-11.

Verse 25

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought … - The general design of this paragraph, which closes the chapter, is to warn his disciples against avarice, and, at the same time, against anxiety about the supply of their needs. This he does by four arguments or considerations, expressing by unequalled beauty and force the duty of depending for the things which we need on the providence of God. The "first" is stated in Matthew 6:25; "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" In the beginning of the verse he charged his disciples to take "no thought" - that is, not to be "anxious" about the supply of their wants. In illustration of this he says that God has given "life," a far greater blessing than "meat;" that he has created the body, of far more consequence than raiment. Shall not he who has conferred the "greater" blessing be willing to confer the "less?" Shall not he who has formed the body so curiously, and made in its formation such a display of power and goodness, see that it is properly protected and clothed? He who has displayed "so great" goodness as to form the body, and breathe into it the breath of life, will surely "follow up" the blessing, and confer the "smaller" favor of providing that that body shall be clothed, and that life preserved.

No thought - The word "thought," when the Bible was translated, meant "anxiety," and is so used frequently in Old English authors. Thus, Bacon says, "Haweis died with ‹thought‘ and anguish before his business came to an end." As such it is used here by our translators, and it answers exactly to the meaning of the original. Like many other words, it has since somewhat changed its signification, and would convey to most readers an improper idea. The word "anxiety" would now exactly express the sense, and is precisely the thing against which the Saviour would guard us. See Luke 8:14; Luke 21:34; Philemon 4:6. "Thought" about the future is right; "anxiety, solicitude, trouble" is wrong. There is a degree of "thinking" about the things of this life which is proper. See 1 Timothy 5:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; Romans 12:11. But it should not be our supreme concern; it should not lead to anxiety; it should not take time that ought to be devoted to religion.

For your life - For what will "support" your life.

Meat - This word here means "food" in general, as it does commonly in the Bible. We confine it now to animal food. When the Bible was translated, it denoted all kinds of food, and is so used in the old English writers. It is one of the words which has changed its meaning since the translation of the Bible was made.

Raiment - Clothing.

Verse 26

Behold the fowls of the air - The second argument for confidence in the providence of God is derived from a beautiful reference to the fowls or feathered tribes. See, said the Saviour, see the fowls of the air: they have no anxiety about the supply of their wants; they do not sow or reap; they fill the grove with music, and meet the coming light of the morning with their songs, and pour their notes on the zephyrs of the evening, unanxious about the supply of their needs; yet how few die with hunger! How regularly are they fed from the hand of God! How he ministers to their unnumbered wants! How cheerfully and regularly are their necessities supplied! You, said the Saviour to his disciples, you are of more consequence than they are; and shall God feed them in such numbers, and suffer you to want? It cannot be. Put confidence, then, in that Universal Parent that feeds all the fowls of the air, and do not fear but that he will also supply your needs.

Better than they - Of more consequence. Your lives are of more importance than theirs, and God will therefore provide for them.

Verse 27

Which of you, by taking thought - The third argument is taken from their extreme weakness and helplessness. With all your care you cannot increase your stature a single cubit. God has ordered your height. Beyond his appointment your powers are of no avail, and you can do nothing. So of raiment. He, by His providence, orders and arranges the circumstances of your life. "Beyond" that appointment of His providence, beyond his care for you, your efforts avail nothing. Seeing, then, that he alike orders your growth and the supply of your needs, how obvious is the duty of depending upon him, and of beginning all your efforts, feeling that He only can grant you the means of preserving life.

One cubit - The cubit was originally the length from the elbow to the end of the middle finger. The cubit of the Scriptures is not far from 22 inches. Terms of "length" are often applied to life, and it is thought by many to be so here. Thus, it is said, "Thou hast made my days as a handbreadth" Psalm 39:5; "Teach me the measure of my days" Psalm 39:4. In this place it is used to denote a "small length." You cannot increase your stature even a cubit, or in the smallest degree. Compare Luke 12:26.

Stature - This word means "height." The original word, however, means oftener "age," John 9:21; "He is of age;" so also John 9:23. If this be its meaning here, as is probable (compare Robinson, *Lexicon*), it denotes that a man cannot increase the length of his life at all. The utmost anxiety will not prolong it one hour beyond the time appointed for death.

Verse 28-29

Consider the lilies of the field - The fourth consideration is taken from the care which God bestows on lilies. Watch the growing of the lily. It toils not, and it spins not; yet night and day it grows. With a beauty with which the most splendid monarch of the East was never adorned. it expands its blossom and fills the air with fragrance. Yet this beauty is of short continuance. Soon it will fade, and the beautiful flower will be cut down and burned. God "so little" regards the bestowment of beauty and ornament as to give the highest adorning to this which is soon to perish. When He thus clothes a lily - a fair flower, soon to perish - will he be unmindful of his children? Shall they dear to His heart and imbued with immortality - lack that which is proper for them, and shall they in vain trust the God that decks the lily of the valley?

Even Solomon in all his glory … - The common dress of Eastern kings was purple, but they sometimes wore white robes. See Esther 8:15; Daniel 7:9. It is to this that Christ refers. Solomon, says he, the richest and most magnificent king of Israel, was not clothed in a robe of "so pure a white" as the lily that grows wild in the field.

Verse 30

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field - What grows up in the field, or grows wild and without culture. The word "grass," applied here to the lily, denotes merely that it is a vegetable production, or that it is among the things which grow wild, and which are used for fuel.

Which today is - It lives today, or it lives for a day. It is short-lived, and seems to be a thing of no value, and is so treated.

Is cast into the oven - The Jews had different modes of baking. In early times they frequently baked in the sand, warmed with the heat of the sun. They constructed, also, movable ovens made of clay, brick, or plates of iron. But the most common kind, and the one here probably referred to, was made by excavating the ground 2 1/2 feet in diameter, and from 5 to 6 feet deep. This kind of oven still exists in Persia. The bottom was paved with stones. It was heated by putting wood or dry grass into the oven, and, when heated, the ashes were removed and the bread was placed on the heated stones. Frequently, however, the oven was an earthen vessel without a bottom, about 3 feet high, smeared outside and inside with clay, and placed upon a frame or support. Fire was made within or below it. When the sides were sufficiently heated, thin patches of dough were spread on the inside, and the top was covered, without removing the fire as in the other cases, and the bread was quickly baked.

Verse 32-33

For after all these things do the Gentiles seek - That is, those destitute of the true doctrines of religion, and unacquainted with proper dependence on Divine Providence, make it their chief anxiety thus to seek food and clothing. But you, who have a knowledge of your Father in heaven; who know that He will provide for your needs, should not be anxious. Seek first His kingdom; seek first to be righteous, and to become interested in His favor, and all necessary things will be added to you. He has control over all things, and He can give you what you need. He will give you what he deems best for you.

Verse 34

Take therefore no thought … - That is, no anxiety. Commit your way to God. The evil, the trouble, the anxiety of each day as it comes, is sufficient without perplexing the mind with restless cares about another day. It is wholly uncertain whether you live to see another day. If you do, it will bring its own trouble, and it will also bring the proper supply of your needs. God will be the same Father then as today, and will make then, as he does now, proper provision for your wants.

The morrow shall take thought - The morrow will have anxieties and cares of its own, but it will also bring the proper provision for those cares. Though you will have needs, yet God will provide for them as they occur. Do not, therefore, increase the cares of today by borrowing trouble from the future. Do your duty faithfully now, and depend upon the mercy of God and his divine help for the troubles which are yet to come.

Remarks On Matthew 6:19-24. It is the parent of many foolish and hurtful lusts. It alienates the affections from God produces envy of another‘s prosperity; leads to fraud, deception, and crime to obtain wealth, and degrades the soul. Man is formed for nobler pursuits than the mere desire to be rich. He lives for eternity, where silver will not be needed and where gold will be of no value. That eternity is near; and though we have wealth like Solomon, and though we be adorned as the lily, yet like Solomon we must soon die, and like the lily our beauty will soon fade. Death will lay us alike low; the rich and the poor will sleep together; and the worm will feed no more sweetly on the unfed and unclothed son of poverty, than on the man clothed in fine linen, and the daughter of beauty and pride. As avarice is moreover the parent of discontent, he only that is contented with the allotments of Providence, and is not restless for a change, is happy. After all, this is the true source of enjoyment. Anxiety and care, perplexity and disappointment, find their way more readily to the mansions of the rich than to the cottages of the poor. It is the mind, not mansions, and gold, and adorning, that gives ease; and he that is content with his situation will “smile upon his stool, while Alexander weeps upon the throne of the world.”

6. We see how comparatively valueless is “beauty.” How little it is regarded by God! He gives it to the lily, and in a day it fades and is gone. He gives it to the wings of the butterfly, and soon it dies and its beauty is forgotten. He gives it to the flowers of the spring, soon to fall; to the leaves of the forest, soon to grow yellow and decay in the autumn. How many

lilies and roses does he cause to blossom in solitude where no man is, where they "waste their sweetness on the desert air!" How many streams ripple in the wilderness, and how many cataracts age after age, have poured their thunders on the air, unheard and unseen by mortals! So little does God think of beauty. So the human form and "face divine." How soon is all that beauty marred; and, as in the lily, how soon is its last trace obliterated! In the cold grave, among the undistinguished multitudes of the dead, who can tell which of all the mouldering host was blessed with a "lovely set of features or complexion?" Alas, all has faded like the morning flower. How vain, then, to set the affections on so frail a treasure!

7. We see the duty and privilege of depending for our daily needs on the bounties of Providence. Satisfied with the troubles of today, let us not add to those troubles by anxieties about tomorrow. The pagan, and they who know not God, will be anxious about the future; but they who know him, and have caught the spirit of Jesus, may surely trust him for the supply of their wants. The young lions do roar, and seek their meat at the hand of God, Psalm 104:21. The fowls of heaven are daily supplied. Shall man only, of all the creatures on earth, vex himself and be filled with anxious cares about the future? Rather, like the rest of the creation, let us depend on the aid of the universal Parent, and feel that he who hears the young ravens which cry will also supply our necessities.

8. Especially is the remark just made of value in reference to those in early life. Life is a stormy ocean. Over that ocean no being presides but God. He holds the winds in his hands, and can still their howlings, and calm the heaving billows. On that ocean the young have just launched their frail bark. Daily they will need protection; daily will they need supplies; daily will they be in danger, and exposed to the rolling of the billows that may ingulf them forever. Ignorant, inexperienced, and in danger, how should they look to God to guide and aid them! Instead of vexing themselves with anxious cares about the future, how should they place humble reliance on God! Safe in His hand, we shall outride the storm and come to a haven of peace. he will supply our wants if we trust him, as he does those of the songsters of the grove. He will be the guide of our youth and the strength of our manhood. If we seek Him, He will be found of us; if we forsake Him, He will cast us off forever, 1 Chronicles 28:9.

9. From all this, how manifest is the propriety of seeking first the kingdom of God! First in our affections, first in the objects of pursuit, first in the feelings and associations of each morning, be the desire and the aim for heaven. Having this, we have assurance of all that we need. God, “our” Father, will then befriend us, and in life and death all will be well.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

Judge not … - This command refers to rash, censorious, and unjust judgment. See Romans 2:1. Luke Luke 6:37 explains it in the sense of "condemning." Christ does not condemn judging as a magistrate, for that, when according to justice, is lawful and necessary. Nor does he condemn our "forming an opinion" of the conduct of others, for it is impossible "not" to form an opinion of conduct that we know to be evil. But what he refers to is a habit of forming a judgment hastily, harshly, and without an allowance for every palliating circumstance, and a habit of "expressing" such an opinion harshly and unnecessarily when formed. It rather refers to private judgment than "judicial," and perhaps primarily to the customs of the scribes and Pharisees.

Verse 2

With what judgment … - This was a proverb among the Jews. It expressed a truth; and Christ did not hesitate to adopt it as conveying his own sentiments. It refers no less to the way in which people will judge of us, than to the rule by which God will judge us. See 2 Samuel 22:27; Mark 4:24; James 2:13.

Mete - Measure. You shall be judged by the same rule which you apply to others.

Verse 3

And why beholdest thou the mote … - A mote signifies any "light substance," as dry chaff, or fine spires of grass or grain. It probably most usually signified the small "spiculae" or "beards" on a head of barley or wheat. It is thus placed in opposition to the word "beam."

Beam - The word used here signifies a large piece of squared timber. The one is an exceedingly small object, the other a large one. The meaning is, that "we are much more quick and acute to judge of small offences in others, than of much larger offences in ourselves." Even a very "small" object in the eye of another we discern much more quickly than a much larger one in our own; a small fault in our neighbor we see much more readily than a large one in ourselves. This was also a proverb in frequent use among the Jews, and the same sentiment was common among the Greeks, and deserves to be expressed in every language.

Verse 5

Thou hypocrite, first cast out … - Christ directs us to the proper way of forming an opinion of ethers, and of reproving and correcting them. By first amending our own faults, or casting the beam out of our eye, we can "consistently" advance to correct the faults of others. There will then be no hypocrisy in our conduct. We shall also "see clearly" to do it. The beam, the thing that obscured our sight, will be removed, and we shall more clearly discern the "small" object that obscures the sight of our brother. The sentiment is, that the readiest way to judge of the imperfections of others is to be free from greater ones ourselves. This qualifies us for judging, makes us candid and consistent, and enables us to see things as they are, and to make proper allowances for frailty and imperfection.

Verse 6

Give not that which is holy … - By some the word "holy" has been supposed to mean "flesh offered in sacrifice," made holy, or separated to a sacred use; but it probably means here "anything connected with religion" - admonition, precept, or doctrine. Pearls are precious stones found in shell-fish, chiefly in India, in the waters that surround Ceylon. They are used to denote anything especially precious, Revelation 17:4; Revelation 18:12-16; Matthew 13:45. In this place they are used to denote the doctrines of the gospel. "Dogs" signify people who spurn, oppose, and abuse that doctrine; people of special sourness and malignity of temper, who meet it like growling and quarrelsome curs, Philemon 3:2; 2 Peter 2:22; Revelation 22:15. "Swine" denote those who would trample the precepts underfoot; people of impurity of life; those who are corrupt, polluted, profane, obscene, and sensual; those who would not know the value of the gospel, and who would tread it down as swine would pearls, 2 Peter 2:22; Proverbs 11:22. The meaning of this proverb, then, is, do not offer your doctrine to those violent and abusive people who would growl and curse you; nor to those especially debased and profligate who would not perceive its value, would trample it down, and would abuse you. This verse furnishes a beautiful instance of what has been called the "introverted parallelism." The usual mode of poetry among the Hebrews, and a common mode of expression in proverbs and apothegms, was by the parallelism, where one member of a sentence answered to another, or expressed substantially the same sense with some addition or modification. See the Introduction to the Book of Job. Sometimes this was alternate, and sometimes it was introverted - where the first and fourth lines would correspond, and the

second and third. This is the case here. The dogs would tear, and not the swine; the swine would trample the pearls under their feet, and not the dogs. It may be thus expressed:

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs,
Neither cast ye your pearls before swine,
Lest they (that is, the swine) trample them under their feet,
And turn again (that is, the dogs) and rend you.

Verses 7-11

Ask, and it shall be given you … - There are here three different forms presented of seeking the things which we need from God - asking, ‹seeking, and knocking. The latter is taken from the act of knocking at a door for admittance. See Luke 13:25; Revelation 3:20. The phrases signify to seek with earnestness, diligence, and perseverance. The promise is, that what we seek shall be given us. It is of course implied that we seek with a proper spirit, with humility, sincerity, and perseverance. It is implied, also, that we ask the things which it may be consistent for God to give - that is, things which he has promised to give, and which would be best for us, and most for his own honor, 1 John 5:14. Of that God is to be the judge. And here there is the utmost latitude which a creature can ask. God is willing to provide for us, to forgive our sins, to save our souls, to befriend us in trial, to comfort us in death, to extend the gospel through the world. Man "can" ask no higher things of God; and these he may ask, assured that he is willing to grant them.

Christ encourages us to do this by the conduct of parents. No parent turns away his child with that which would be injurious. He would not give him a stone instead of bread, or a serpent instead of a fish. God is better and kinder than the most tender earthly parents; and with what confidence, therefore, may we come as his children, and ask what we need! Parents, he says, are evil; that is, are imperfect, often partial, and not unfrequently passionate; but God is free from all this, and therefore is ready and willing to aid us.

Every one that asketh receiveth - That is, every one that asks aright; that prays in faith, and in submission to the will of God. He does not always give the very thing which we ask, but he gives what would be better. A parent will not always confer the "very thing" which a child asks, but he will seek the welfare of the child, and give what he thinks will be most for its good. Paul asked that the thorn from his flesh might be removed. God

did not "literally" grant the request, but told him that his "grace" should be "sufficient" for him. See the notes at 2 Corinthians 12:7-9.

A fish - A fish has some resemblance to a serpent; yet no parent would attempt to deceive his child in this. So God will not give to us that which might appear to be of use, but which would be injurious.

Verse 12

All things whatsoever … - This command has been usually called the "Saviour's golden rule," a name given to it on account of its great value. All that you "expect" or "desire" of others in similar circumstances, do to them. Act not from selfishness or injustice, but put yourself in the place of the other, and ask what you would expect of him. This would make you impartial, candid, and just. It would destroy avarice, envy, treachery, unkindness, slander, theft, adultery, and murder. It has been well said that this law is what the balance-wheel is to machinery. It would prevent all irregularity of movement in the moral world, as that does in a steam-engine. It is easily applied, its justice is seen by all people, and all must acknowledge its force and value.

This is the law and the prophets - That is, this is the sum or substance of the Old Testament. It is nowhere found in so many words, but if is a summary expression of all that the law required. The sentiment was in use among the Jews. Hillel, an ancient Rabbi, said to a man who wished to become a proselyte, and who asked him to teach him the whole law, "Whatever is hateful to you, do not do to another." Something of the same sentiment was found among the ancient Greeks and Romans, and is found in the writings of Confucius.

Verse 13-14

Enter ye in at the strait gate - Christ here compares the way to life to an entrance through a gate. The words "straight" and "strait" have very different meanings. The former means "not crooked;" the latter, "pent up, narrow, difficult to be entered." This is the word used here, and it means that the way to heaven is "pent up, narrow, close," and not obviously entered. The way to death is open, broad, and thronged. The Saviour here referred probably to ancient cities. They were surrounded with walls and entered through gates. Some of those, connected with the great avenues to the city, were broad and admitted a throng; others, for more private purposes, were narrow, and few would be seen entering them. So, says Christ, is the path to heaven. It is narrow. It is not "the great highway" that

people tread. Few go there. Here and there one may be seen - traveling in solitude and singularity. The way to death, on the other hand, is broad. Multitudes are in it. It is the great highway in which people go. They fall into it easily and without effort, and go without thought. If they wish to leave that and go by a narrow gate to the city, it would require effort and thought. So, says Christ, "diligence" is needed to enter life. See Luke 13:24. None go of course. All must strive, to obtain it; and so narrow, unfrequented, and solitary is it, that few find it. This sentiment has been beautifully versified by Watts:

"Broad is the road that leads to death,
And thousands walk together there;
But wisdom shows a narrower path,
With here and there a traveler."

Verse 15

False prophets - The word prophet originally means one who foretells future events. As prophets, however, were commonly regarded as public instructors on the subject of religion, the word came to denote all who were religious teachers. See the notes at Romans 12:6. In this sense it is probably used here. A false prophet is a teacher of incorrect doctrine, or one falsely and unjustly laying claims to divine inspiration. It probably had reference to the false teachers then among the Jews.

Who come in sheep's clothing - The sheep is an emblem of innocence, sincerity, and harmlessness. To come in sheep's clothing is to assume the appearance of sanctity and innocence, when the heart is evil.

Ravening wolves - Rapacious; voraciously devouring; hungry even to rage. Applied to the false teachers, it means that they assumed the appearance of holiness in order that they might the more readily get the property of the people. They were full of extortion and excess. See Matthew 23:25.

Verse 16

Ye shall know them by their fruits - The Saviour gives the proper test of their character. People do not judge of a tree by its leaves, or bark, or flowers, but by the fruit which it bears. The flowers may be beautiful and fragrant, the foliage thick and green; but these are merely ornamental. It is the "fruit" that is of chief service to man; and he forms his opinion of the nature and value of the tree by that fruit. So of pretensions to religion. The

profession may be fair; but the "conduct" - the fruit - is to determine the nature of the principles.

Verse 17

A corrupt tree - The word "corrupt" here does not signify, as our translation would seem to indicate, that the tree "had been" good, but had become "vitiated;" but that it was a tree of a useless character, of a nature that produced nothing beneficial.

Verse 21

Not every one that saith … - The Saviour goes on to say that many, on the ground of a mere profession such as he had just referred to, would claim admittance into his kingdom. Many would plead that they had done miracles, and preached or prophesied much, and on the ground of that would demand an entrance into heaven. The power of working miracles had no necessary connection with piety. God may as well, if he chooses, give the power of raising the dead to a wicked man, as the skill of healing to a wicked physician. A miracle is a display "of his own power" through the medium of another. An act of healing the sick is also a display of "his power" through the agency of another. In neither of these cases is there any necessary connection with moral character. So of preaching or prophesying. God may use the agency of a man of talents, though not pious, to carry forward His purposes. Saving power on the mind is the work of God, and he may convey it by any agency which he chooses. Accordingly, many may be found in the day of judgment who may have been endowed with powers of prophecy or miracle, as Balaam or the magicians of Egypt; in the same way as many people of distinguished talents may be found, yet destitute of piety, and who will be shut out of his kingdom. See Matthew 7:21; 1 Corinthians 1:26; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. In this last place Paul says that, though he spoke with the tongue of angels, and had the gift of prophecy, and could remove mountains, and had nor charity or love, all would be of no avail. See the notes at 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

Verse 22

In that day - That is, in the last day, the day of judgment; the time when the principles of all pretenders to prophecy and piety shall be tried.

Verse 23

Profess unto them - Say unto them; plainly declare.

I never knew you - That is, I never approved of your conduct; never loved you; never regarded you as my friends. See Psalm 1:6; 2 Timothy

2:19; 1 Corinthians 8:3. This proves that, with all their pretensions, they had never been true followers of Christ. Jesus will not then say to false prophets and false professors of religion that he had once known them and then rejected them; that they had been once Christians and then had fallen away; that they had been pardoned and then had apostatized but that he had never known them - they had never been true christians. Whatever might have been their pretended joys, their raptures, their hopes, their self-confidence, their visions, their zeal, they had never been regarded by the Saviour as his true friends. I do not know of a more decided proof that Christians do not fall from grace than this text. It settles the question; and proves that whatever else such people had, they never had any true religion. See 1 John 2:19.

Verses 24-27

Jesus closes the sermon on the mount by a beautiful comparison, illustrating the benefit of attending to his words. It was not sufficient to "hear" them; they must be "obeyed." He compares the man who should hear and obey him to a man who built his house on a rock. Palestine was to a considerable extent a land of hills and mountains. Like other countries of that description, it was subject to sudden and violent rains. The Jordan, the principal stream, was annually swollen to a great extent, and became rapid and furious in its course. The streams which ran among the hills, whose channels might have been dry during some months of the year, became suddenly swollen with the rain, and would pour down impetuously into the plains below. Everything in the way of these torrents would be swept off. Even houses, erected within the reach of these sudden inundations, and especially if founded on sand or on any unsolid basis, would not stand before them. The rising, bursting stream would shake it to its foundation; the rapid torrent would gradually wash away its base; it would totter and fall. Rocks in that country were common, and it was easy to secure for their houses a solid foundation. No comparison could, to a Jew, have been more striking. So tempests, and storms of affliction and persecution, beat around the soul. Suddenly, when we think we are in safety, the heavens may be overcast, the storm may lower, and calamity may beat upon us. In a moment, health, friends, comforts may be gone. How desirable, then, to be possessed of something that the tempest cannot reach! Such is an interest in Christ, reliance on his promises, confidence in his protection, and a hope of heaven through his blood. Earthly calamities do not reach these; and,

possessed of religion, all the storms and tempests of life may beat harmlessly around us.

There is another point in this comparison. The house built upon the sand is beat upon by the floods and rains; its foundation gradually is worn away; it falls, and is borne down the stream and is destroyed. So falls the sinner. The floods are wearing away his sandy foundation; and soon one tremendous storm shall beat upon him, and he and his hopes shall fall, for ever fall. Out of Christ; perhaps having "heard" his words from very childhood; perhaps having taught them to others in the Sunday school; perhaps having been the means of laying the foundation on which others shall build for heaven, he has laid for himself no foundation, and soon an eternal tempest shall beat around his naked soul. How great will be that fall! What will be his emotions when sinking forever in the flood, and when he realizes that he is destined forever to live and writhe in the peltings of that ceaseless storm that shall beat when "God shall rain snares, fire, and a horrible tempest" upon the wicked!

Verse 28-29

His doctrine - His teaching.

As one having authority, and not as the scribes - The scribes were the learned people and teachers of the Jewish nation, and were principally Pharisees. They taught chiefly the sentiments of their Rabbis, and the traditions which had been delivered; they consumed much of their time in useless disputes and "vain jangling." Jesus was open, plain, grave, useful, delivering truth as "became" the oracles of God; not spending his time in trifling disputes and debating questions of no importance, but confirming his doctrine by miracles and argument; teaching "as having power," as it is in the original, and not in the vain and foolish manner of the Jewish doctors. He showed that he had authority to explain, to enforce, and to "change" the ceremonial laws of the Jews. He came with authority such as no "man" could have, and it is not remarkable that his explanations astonished them. From this chapter we may learn,

1. The evil of censorious judging, Matthew 7:1-5. We cannot see the heart. We have ourselves possibly greater faults than the persons that we condemn. They may possibly be of a different kind; but it is nevertheless not uncommon for persons to he very censorious toward faults in others, which they have to much greater extent themselves.

2. We see how we are to treat people who are opposers of the gospel, Matthew 7:6. We are not to present it to them when we know they will despise it and abuse us. We should, however, be cautious in forming that opinion of them. Many people may be far more ready to hear the gospel than we imagine, and a word seasonably and kindly spoken may be the means of saving them, Proverbs 25:11; Ecclesiastes 11:6. We should not meet violent and wicked opposers of the gospel with a harsh, overbearing, and lordly spirit - a spirit of dogmatizing and anger; nor should we violate the laws of social contact under the idea of "faithfulness." Religion gains nothing by outraging the established laws of social life, 1 Peter 3:8. If people will not hear us when we speak to them kindly and respectfully, we may be sure they will not when we abuse them and become angry. We harden them against the truth, and confirm them in the opinion that religion is of no value. Our Saviour was always mild and kind, "and in not a single instance did he do violence to the laws of social intercourse, or fail in the respect due from one man to another." When with harshness people speak to their superiors; when they abuse them with unkind words, coarse epithets, and unfeeling denunciations; when children and youth forget their station, and speak in harsh, authoritative tones to the aged, they are violating the very first principles of the gospel - meekness, respect, and love. Give honor to whom honor is due, and be kind, be courteous.

3. Christ gives special encouragement to prayer, Matthew 7:7-11. Especially his remarks apply to the young. What child is there that would not go to his parent and ask him for things which were necessary? What child doubts the willingness of a kind parent to give what he thinks will be best for him? But God is more willing to give than the best parent. We need of "him" gifts of far more importance than we ever can of an earthly father. None but God can forgive, enlighten, sanctify, and save us. How strange that many ask favors of an "earthly" parent daily and hourly, and never ask of the Great Universal Father a single blessing for time or eternity!

4. There is danger of losing the soul, Matthew 7:13-14. The way to ruin is broad; the path to heaven is narrow. People naturally and readily go in the former; they never go in the latter without design. When we enter on the journey of life, we naturally fall into the broad and thronged way to ruin.

Our original propensity, our native depravity, our disinclination to God and religion, lead us to that, and we never leave it without effort. How much more natural to tread in a way in which multitudes go, than in one where there are few travelers, and which requires an effort to find it! And how much danger is there that we shall continue to walk in that way until it terminates in our ruin! No one is saved without effort. No one enters on the narrow way without design; no one by following his natural inclination and propensities. And yet how indisposed we are to effort! how unwilling to listen to the exhortations which would call us from the broad path to a narrower and less frequented course! How prone are people to feel that they are safe if they are with the many, and that the multitude that attend them constitute a safeguard from danger!

"Encompassed by a throng,
On ‹numbers‘ they depend;
They say so many can‘t be wrong,
And miss a happy end."

Yet did God ever spare a guilty city because it was large? Did he save the army of Sennacherib from the destroying angel because it was mighty? Does he hesitate to cut people down by the plague, the pestilence, and by famine, because they are numerous? Is he deterred from consigning people to the grave because they swarm upon the earth, and because a mighty throng is going to death? So in the way to hell. Not numbers, nor power, nor might, nor talent will make that way safe; nor will the path to heaven be a dangerous road because few are seen traveling there. The Saviour knew and felt that people are in danger; and hence, with much solemnity, he warned them when he lived, and now warns us, to strive to enter in at the narrow gate.

5. Sincerity is necessary in religion, Matthew 7:15-23. Profession is of no value without it. God sees the heart, and the day is near when He will cut down and destroy all those who do not bring forth the fruits of righteousness in their lives. If in anything we should be honest and sincere, surely it should be in the things of religion. God is never deceived Galatians 6:7, and the things of eternity are of too much consequence, to be lost by deluding ourselves or others. We may deceive our fellowmen, but we do not deceive our Maker; and soon He will strip off our thin covering, and show us as we are to the universe. If anything is of prominent value in religion, it is "honesty" - honesty to ourselves, to our fellow-men, and to God. Be

willing to know the worst of your case. Be willing to be thought of, by God and people, "as you are." Assume nothing which you do not possess, and pretend to nothing which you have not. Judge of yourselves as you do of others - not by words and promises, but by the life. Judge of yourselves as you do of trees; not by leaves and flowers, but by the fruit.

6. We may learn the importance of building our hopes of heaven on a firm foundation, Matthew 7:24-27. No other foundation can any man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 3:11. He is the tried Corner Stone, 1 Peter 2:6; Ephesians 2:20. On an edifice raised on that foundation the storms of persecution and calamity will beat in vain. Hopes thus reared will sustain us in every adversity, will remain unshaken by the terrors of death, and will secure us from the tempests of wrath that shall beat upon the guilty. How awful, in the day of judgment, will it be to have been deceived! How dreadful the shock to find then that the house has been built on the sand! How dreadful the emotions, to see our hopes totter on the brink of ruin; to see sand after sand washed away, and the dwelling reel over the heaving deep, and fall into the abyss to rise no more! Ruin, awful and eternal ruin, awaits those who thus deceive themselves, and who trust to a name to live, while they are dead.

7. Under what obligations are we for this "Sermon on the Mount!" In all languages there is not a discourse to be found that can be compared with it for purity, and truth, and beauty, and dignity. Were there no other evidence of the divine mission of Christ, this alone would be sufficient to prove that he was sent from God. Were these doctrines obeyed and loved, how pure and peaceful would be the world! How would hypocrisy be abashed and confounded! How would impurity hang its head! How would peace reign in every family and nation! How would anger and wrath flee! And how would the race - the lost and benighted tribes of people, the poor, and needy, and sorrowful - bend themselves before their common Father, and seek peace and eternal life at the hands of a merciful and faithful God!

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

When he was come down from the mountain - That is, immediately on his descending from the mountain. His discourse had attracted great attention, and the fame of it drew together great multitudes, who were convinced that he had come from God. Then follows, in this chapter and the chapter succeeding, a succession of "miracles" not less remarkable than his teaching was; miracles that tended to confirm beyond a doubt the impression made by his sermon that he was sent from God.

Great multitudes followed him - Great numbers of those who had been with him in the mountain, and great numbers of others who were attracted by the fame of that discourse.

Verse 2

There came a leper - No disease with which the human family has been afflicted has been more dreadful than that which is often mentioned in the Bible "as the leprosy." It first exhibits itself on the surface of the skin. The appearance is not always the same, but it commonly resembles the spot made by the puncture of a pin or the pustules of a ringworm. The spots generally make their appearance very suddenly. Perhaps its appearance might be hastened by any sudden passion, as fear or anger. See Numbers 12:10; 2 Chronicles 26:19. The spots commonly exhibit themselves at first on the face, about the nose and eyes, and increase in size a number of years, until they become as large as a pea or a bean.

There are three kinds of leprosy, distinguished by the appearance of the spots - the white, the black, and the red leprosy. These spots, though few at first, gradually spread until they cover the whole body.

But, though the "appearance" of the disease is at first in the skin, yet it is deeply seated in the bones, and marrow, and joints of the body. We have reason to suppose that in children it is concealed in the system for a number of years until they arrive at the age of puberty; and in adults for three or four years, until at last it gives fearful indications on the skin of its having gained a well-rooted and permanent existence. A leprous person may live twenty, or thirty, or even fifty years, if he received the disease at his birth, but they will be years of indescribable misery. The bones and marrow are pervaded with the disease. The malady advances from one stage to another

with slow and certain ruin. “Life still lingers amid the desolation;” the joints, and hands, and feet lose their power; and the body “collapses,” or falls together in a form hideous and awful. There is a form of the disease in which it commences at the extremities: the joints separate; the fingers, toes, and other members one by one fall off; and the malady thus gradually approaches the seat of life. The wretched victim is thus doomed to see himself dying “piecemeal,” assured that no human power can arrest for a moment the silent and steady march of this foe to the seat of life.

This disease is contagious and hereditary. It is easily communicated from one to another, and is transmitted to the third and fourth generation. The last generation that is afflicted with it commonly exhibits the symptoms by decayed teeth, by a fetid breath, and by a diseased complexion.

Moses gave particular directions by which the real leprosy was to be distinguished from other diseases. See Leviticus 14:4 ‹s margin), one of which was slain and the other dismissed, Leviticus 14:5-7. In compliance with the laws of the land, Jesus directed the man that he had healed to make the customary offering, and to obtain the testimony of the priest that he was healed. The leprosy has once, and but once, appeared in America. This loathsome and most painful disease has in all other instances been confined to the Old World, and chiefly to the Eastern nations.

It is matter of profound gratitude to a benignant God that this scourge has been permitted but once to visit the New World. That awful calamity was on the island of Guadeloupe, in the West Indies, about the year 1730, and is thus described by an eye-witness: “Its commencement is imperceptible. There appear only some few white spots on the skin. At first they are attended with no pain or inconvenience, but no means whatever will remove them. The disease imperceptibly increases for many years. The spots become larger, and spread over the whole body. When the disease advances, the upper part of the nose swells, the nostrils become enlarged, and the nose itself grows soft. Tumors appear on the jaws; the eyebrows swell; the ears become thick; the points of the fingers, as also the feet and the toes, swell; the nails become scaly; the joints of the hands and feet separate and drop off. In the last stage of the disease the patient becomes a hideous spectacle, and falls to pieces.

Worshipped him - Bowed down before him, to show him respect. See the notes at Matthew 2:2.

If thou wilt - This was an exhibition of great faith, and also an acknowledgment of his dependence on the will of Jesus, in order to be healed. So every sinner must come. He must feel that Jesus "can" save him. He must also feel that he has no claim on him; that it depends on his sovereign will; and must cast himself at his feet with the feelings of the leper:

"I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I know
I shall forever die."

Happily, no one ever came to Jesus with this feeling who was not received and pardoned.

Make me clean - Heal me. The leprosy was regarded as an unclean and disgusting disease. To be "healed," therefore, was expressed by being "cleansed" from it.

Verse 3

And Jesus … touched him - It was an offence to the Jews to "touch" a leprous person, and was regarded as making him who did it ceremonially impure, Leviticus 13:3. The act of putting forth his hand and "touching" him, therefore, expressed the intention of Jesus to cure him, and was a pledge that he "was," in fact, already cured.

Verse 4

See thou tell no man - This command is to be understood as extending only to the time until he had made the proper representation to the priest. It was his duty to hasten to him immediately Leviticus 14:2; not to delay by talking about it, but, as the first thing, to obey the laws of God, and make proper acknowledgments to him by an offering. The place where this cure was performed was in Galilee, a distance of 40 or 50 miles from Jerusalem; and it was his duty to make haste to the residence of the priest, and obtain his sanction to the reality of the cure. Perhaps, also, Christ was apprehensive that the report would go "before" the man if he delayed, and the priest, through opposition to Jesus, might pronounce it an imposition.

And offer the gift that Moses commanded - That Moses directed to be offered by a leper when he was cured. That gift consisted of "two birds alive and clean, cedar-wood, scarlet, and hyssop," Leviticus 14:4.

For a testimony unto them - Not to the priest, but to the people. Show thyself to the priest, and get his testimony to the reality of the cure, as a proof to the people that the healing is genuine. It was necessary that he should have that testimony before he could be received to the congregation or allowed to mingle with the people. Having this, he would be, of course, restored to the privileges of social and religious life, and the proof of the miracle, to the people, would be put beyond a doubt.

Verse 5

Capernaum - See the notes at Matthew 4:13.

There came unto him a centurion - A centurion was the commander of 100 men in the Roman armies. Judea was a Roman province, and garrisons were kept there to preserve the people in subjection. This man was probably by birth a pagan. See Matthew 8:10.

Verse 6

Sick of the palsy - See the notes at Matthew 4:24. The particular form which the palsy assumed in this case is not mentioned. It seems it was a violent attack. Perhaps it was the painful form which produced violent "cramps," and which immediately endangered his life.

Verse 8

I am not worthy … - This was an expression of great humility. It refers, doubtless, to his view of his "personal" unworthiness, and not merely to the fact that he was a "Gentile." It was the expression of a conviction of the great dignity and power of the Saviour, and of a feeling that he was so unlike him that he was not suitable that the Son of God should come into his dwelling. So every truly penitent sinner feels - a feeling which is appropriate when he comes to Christ.

Verse 9

I am a man … - He had full confidence in the ability of Jesus to heal his servant, and requested him simply to give the command. This request he presented in a manner appropriate to a soldier. I am a man, says he, under authority. That is, I am subject to the commands of others, and know how to obey. I have also under me soldiers who are accustomed to obedience. I say to one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes. I am "prepared," therefore, to believe that your commands will be obeyed. As these obey me, so do diseases, storms, and seas obey you. If men obey me, who am an "inferior" officer, subject to another, how much more shall diseases obey you - the original source of power having control over all

things! He asked, therefore, simply that Christ would give commandment, and he felt assured he would be obeyed.

Verse 10

When Jesus heard it, he marveled - He wondered at it, or he deemed it remarkable.

I have not found so great faith - The word "faith," here, means "confidence" or belief that Christ had power to heal his servant. It does not of "necessity" imply that he had saving faith; though, from the connection and the spirit manifested, it seems probable that he had. If this was so, then he was the first Gentile convert to Christianity, and was a very early illustration of what was more clearly revealed afterward - that the pagan were to be brought to the knowledge of the truth.

Not in Israel - Israel was a name given to "Jacob" Genesis 32:28-29, because, as a prince, he had power with God; because he persevered in wrestling with the angel that met him, and obtained the blessing. The name is derived from two Hebrew words signifying "Prince" and "God." He was one of the patriarchs, a progenitor of the Jewish nation; and the names "Israel and Israelites" were given to them, as the name Romans to the Roman people was in honor of Romulus, and the name "American" to this continent from "Americus Vespuccius." The name Israel was given to the whole nation until the time of Jeroboam, when only the ten tribes that revolted received the name, probably because they were a majority of the nation. After the captivity of Babylon it was given to all the Jews indiscriminately. See Matthew 10:6; Acts 7:42; Hebrews 8:8; Mark 15:32. It here means, "I have not found such an instance of "confidence" among the Jews."

Verse 11

Many shall come from the east … - Jesus takes occasion from the faith of a Roman centurion to state that this conversion would not be solitary; that many pagans - many from the east and west would be converted to the gospel, and be saved, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were. The phrase "from the east and from the west," in the Scripture, is used to denote the "whole world," Isaiah 45:6; Isaiah 59:19. The phrase, "shall sit down," in the original, refers to the manner of sitting at meals (see the notes at Matthew 23:6); and the enjoyments of heaven are described under the similitude of a feast or banquet - a very common manner of speaking of it, Matthew 26:29; Luke 14:15; Luke 22:30. It is used here to denote felicity, enjoyment, or

honor. To sit with those distinguished men was an honor, and would be expressive of great felicity.

Verse 12

The children of the kingdom - That is, the children, or the people, who "expected the kingdom," or to whom it properly belonged; or, in other words, the Jews. they supposed themselves to be the special favorites of heaven. They thought that the Messiah would enlarge their nation and spread the triumphs of their kingdom. They called themselves, therefore, the children or the members of the kingdom of God, to the exclusion of the Gentiles. Our Saviour used the manner of speech to which they were accustomed, and said that "many of the pagans would be saved, and many Jews lost.

Shall be cast out into outer darkness … - This is an image of future punishment. It is not improbable that the image was taken from Roman dungeons or prisons. They were commonly constructed under ground. They were shut out from the light of the sun. They were, of course, damp, dark, and unhealthy, and probably most filthy. Masters were in the habit of constructing such prisons for their slaves, where the unhappy prisoner, without light, or company, or comfort, spent his days and nights in weeping from grief, and in vainly gnashing his teeth from indignation. The image expresses the fact that the wicked who are lost will be shut out from the light of heaven, and from peace, and joy, and hope; will weep in hopeless grief, and will gnash their teeth in indignation against God, and complain against his justice. What a striking image of future woe! Go to a damp, dark, solitary, and squalid dungeon; see a miserable and enraged victim; add to his sufferings the idea of eternity, and then remember that this, after all, is but an image, a faint image, of hell! Compare the notes at Matthew 22:13.

Verse 13

He was healed in that self-same hour - This showed decisively the goodness and power of Jesus. No miracle could be more complete. There could be no imposition or deception.

This account, or one similar to this, is found in Luke 7:1-10. There has been a difference of opinion whether the account in Luke refers to the same case as that recorded in Matthew, or whether a second centurion, encouraged by the success of the first, applied to our Saviour in a similar case and manner, and obtained the same success. In support of the supposition that they are different narratives, it is said that they disagree so

far that it is impossible to reconcile them, and that it is not improbable that a similar occurrence might take place, and be attended with similar results.

To a plain reader, however, the narratives appear to be the same. They agree in the character of the person, the place, and apparently the time; in the same substantial structure of the account; in the expression of similar feelings, the same answers, and the same result. It is very difficult to believe that all these circumstances would coincide in two different stories.

They differ, however. Matthew says that the centurion "came himself." Luke says that he at first sent elders of the Jews, and then his particular friends. He also adds that he was friendly to the Jews, and had built them a synagogue. An infidel will ask whether there is not here a palpable contradiction. In explanation of this, let it be remarked:

1. That the fact that the centurion came himself, supposing that to have been the fact, is no evidence that others did not come also. It was "in" the city. The centurion was a great favorite, and had conferred on the Jews many favors, and they would be anxious that the favor which he desired of Jesus should be granted. At his suggestion, or of their own accord, his Jewish friends might apply to Jesus, and press the subject upon him, and be anxious to represent the case as favorably as possible. All this was probably done, as it would be in any other city, in considerable haste and apparent confusion; and one observer might fix his attention strongly on one circumstance, and another on another. It is not at all improbable that the same representation and request might have been made both by the centurion and his friends. Matthew might have fixed his eye very strongly on the fact that the centurion came himself, and been particularly struck with his deportment; and Luke on the remarkable zeal shown by the friends of a pagan, the interest they took in his welfare, and the circumstance that he had done much for them. Full of these interesting circumstances, he might comparatively have overlooked the centurion himself. But,

2. It was a maxim among the Jews, as it is now in law, "that what a man does by another, he does himself." So, in Mark 10:35, James and John are represented as coming to the Saviour with a request: in Matthew 20:20, it appears that they presented their request through their mother. In John 4:1,

Jesus is said to baptize, when, in fact, he did not do it himself, but by his disciples. In John 19:1, Pilate is said to have scourged Jesus; but he certainly did not do it with his own hands. In the case of the centurion, Matthew narrates what occurred very briefly; Luke goes more into detail, and states more of the circumstances. Matthew was intent on the great leading facts of the cure. He was studious of brevity. He did not choose to explain the particular circumstances. He says that the centurion "made the application" and received the answer. He does not say whether by himself or by "an agent." Luke explains particularly "how" it was done. There is no more contradiction, therefore, than there would be if it should be said of a man in a court of law that he came and made application for a new trial, when the application was really made by his lawyer. Two men, narrating the fact, might exhibit the same variety that Matthew and Luke have done, and both be true. It should never be forgotten that "the sacred narrative of an event is what it is stated to be by all the sacred writers; as the testimony in a court in which a case is decided is what is stated by all the credible witnesses, though one may have stated one circumstance and another another."

One thing is most clearly shown by this narrative: that this account was not invented by the evangelists for the sake of imposition. If it had been, they would have "agreed in all the circumstances."

Verse 14-15

This account is contained also in Mark 1:29-31, and Luke 4:38-41. Mark says that Simon and Andrew lived together, and that James and John went with them to the house. He adds, also, that before the miracle they spake to him about the sick person. The miracle was direct and complete. She that had been sick was so completely restored as to attend to them and minister to them. The mention of "Peter's wife's mother" proves that Peter either then was or had been married. The fair and obvious interpretation is, that his wife was then living. Compare 1 Corinthians 9:5, and see the note at that place. Peter is claimed by the Roman Catholics to be the head of the church and the vicegerent of Christ. The Pope, according to their view, is the successor of this apostle. On what pretence do they maintain that it is wrong for "priests" to marry? Why did not Christ at once reject Peter from being an apostle for having a wife? How remarkable that he should be set

up as the head of the church, and an example and a model to all who were to succeed him! But all this is human law, and is contrary to the New Testament. Compare 1 Timothy 3:2, 1 Timothy 3:4-5. That Peter had a wife was no objection to his being an apostle, and marriage has been expressly declared to be "honorable in all," Hebrews 13:4.

Verse 16

When the even was come … - The fame of the miracles of Jesus would probably draw together a crowd, and those who had friends that were afflicted would bring them. All that were brought to him he healed. This was proof of two things: first, of his great benevolence; and, secondly, of his divine mission. He might have established the latter by miracles that would do no good. None of his miracles were performed, however, merely to make a display of power, unless the cursing of the barren fig-tree be an exception. Compare Mark 11:11-14. What is here recorded occurred on the evening of the Sabbath, Mark 1:21-32. The Jews kept the Sabbath from evening to evening, Leviticus 23:32. On the Sabbath they would not even bring their sick to be healed Luke 13:14; but as soon as it was closed, on the evening of the same day, they came in multitudes to be cured.

Possessed with devils - See the notes at Matthew 4:24.

With his word - By his command; by a word.

Verse 17

That it might be fulfilled … - This passage is found in Isaiah 53:4. Our English translation of that important passage is, "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." The Greek in Matthew is an exact translation of the Hebrew, and the same translation should have been made in both places. In Isaiah 53:1-12, Isaiah fully states the doctrine of the atonement, or that the Messiah was to suffer for sin. In the verse quoted here, however, he states the very truth which Matthew declares. The word translated "griefs" in Isaiah, and "infirmities" in Matthew, means properly, in the Hebrew and Greek, "diseases of the body." In neither does it refer to the disease of the mind, or to sin. To bear those griefs is clearly to bear them away, or to remove them. This was done by his miraculous power in healing the sick. The word rendered "sorrows" in Isaiah, and "sicknesses" in Matthew, means "pain, grief, or anguish of mind." To "carry" these is to sympathize with the sufferers; to make provision for alleviating those sorrows, and to take them away. This he did by his precepts and by his example; and the cause of all sorrows - "sin" - he removed by the

atonement. The passage in Isaiah and Matthew, therefore, mean precisely the same thing. See "Magee on Atonement," and the notes at Isaiah, Isaiah 53.

Verse 18

Unto the other side - Jesus was now in Capernaum, a city at the northwest corner of the Sea of Tiberias, or Sea of Galilee. See the notes at Matthew 4:18. The country to which he purposed to go was the region on the east of the Sea of Tiberias.

Verse 19-20

And a certain scribe came … - It is not improbable that this man had seen the miracles of Jesus, and had formed an expectation that by following him he would obtain some considerable worldly advantage. Christ, in reply to his professed purpose to follow him, proclaimed his own poverty, and dashed the hopes of the avaricious scribe. The very foxes and birds, says he, have places of repose and shelter, but the Son of man has no home and no pillow. He is a stranger in his own world - a wanderer and an outcast from the homes of people. Compare John 1:11.

Son of man - This means, evidently, Jesus himself. No title is more frequently given to the Saviour than this, and yet there is much difficulty in explaining it. The word "son" is used in a great variety of significations. See the notes at Matthew 1:1. The name "Son of man" is given to Jesus only three times in the New Testament Acts 7:56; Revelation 1:13; Revelation 14:14, except by himself. When he speaks of himself, this is the most common appellation by which he is known. The phrase "Son of God," given to Christ, denotes a unique connection with God, John 10:36. The name "Son of man" probably denotes a corresponding unique connection with man. Perhaps the Saviour used it to signify the interest he felt in man; his special love and friendship for him; and his willingness to devote himself to the best interests of the race. It is sometimes, however, used as synonymous with "Messiah," Matthew 16:28; John 1:34; Acts 8:37; John 12:34.

Verse 21

And another of his disciples … - The word "disciple" properly signifies "learner," and was given to the followers of Jesus because they received him as their teacher. See the notes at Matthew 5:1. It does not of necessity mean that a "disciple" was a pious man, but only one of the

multitude, who, for various causes, might attend on his instructions. See John 6:66; John 9:28.

Suffer me first to go and bury my father - This seemed to be a reasonable request, as respect for parents, living or dead, is one of the first duties of religion. But the Saviour saw that in his circumstances there might be danger, if he was thus permitted to go, that he would not return to him: and he commanded him, therefore, to perform the more important duty - the duty of attending to the salvation of his soul even at the risk of the apparent neglect of another duty. The first duty of man is religion, and everything else should be made subordinate to that.

Verse 22

Let the dead bury their dead - The word "dead" is used in this passage in two different senses. It is apparently a paradox, but is suited to convey the idea very distinctly to the mind. The Jews used the word "dead" often to express indifference toward a thing; or, rather, to show that that thing has no "influence" over us. Thus, to be dead to the world; to be dead to the law Romans 7:4; to be dead to sin Romans 6:11, means that the world, law, and sin have not influence or control over us; that we are free from them, and act "as though they were not." A body in the grave is unaffected by the pomp and vanity, by the gaiety and revelry, by the ambition and splendor that may be near the tomb. So people of the world are dead to religion. They see not its beauty, hear not its voice, are not won by its loveliness. This is the class of people to which the Saviour refers here. Let people, says he, who are uninterested in my work, and who are "dead in sin" Ephesians 2:1, take care of the dead. Your duty is now to follow me.

There may have been several reasons for this apparently harsh direction. One may have been to "test" the character and attachment of the man. If he had proper love for Christ, he would be willing to leave his friends, even in the most tender and trying circumstances. This is required, Matthew 10:27; Luke 14:26. A second reason may have been, that if he returned "at that time," his friends might ridicule or oppose him, or present plausible arguments, "in the afflictions of the family," why he should not return to Christ. The thing to which he was called was moreover of more importance than any earthly consideration; and, for that time, Christ chose to require of the man a very extraordinary sacrifice, to show his sincere attachment to him. Or it may have been that the Saviour saw that the effect of visiting his

home at that time might have been to drive away all his serious impressions, and that he would return to him no more.

His impressions may not have been deep enough, and his purpose to follow the Saviour may not have been strong enough to bear the trial to which he would be subjected. Strange as it may seem, there are few scenes better suited to drive away serious impressions than those connected with a funeral. We should have supposed it would be otherwise: but facts show it to be so, and demonstrate that if this was one of the reasons which influenced the Saviour, he had a thorough knowledge of human nature. The arrangements for the funeral, the preparation of mourning apparel, and the depth of sorrow in such cases, divert the mind from its sins and its personal need of a Saviour; and hence few persons are awakened or converted as the result of death in a family. The case here was a "strong" one - it was as strong as can well be conceived; and the Saviour meant to teach by this that nothing is to be allowed to divert the mind from religion nothing to be an excuse for not following him. Not even the death of a father, and the sorrows of an afflicted family, are to be suffered to lead a man to defer religion, or to put off the purpose to be a Christian. That is a fixed duty - a duty not to be deferred or neglected, whether in sickness or health, at home or abroad whether surrounded by living and happy kindred, or whether a father, a mother, a child, or a sister lies in our house dead.

It is the "regular" duty of children to obey their parents, and to show them kindness in affliction, and to evince proper care and respect for them when dead. Nor did our Saviour show himself insensible to these duties. He taught here, however, as he always taught, that a regard to friends, and ease, and comfort, should be "subordinate to the gospel;" and that we should always be ready to sacrifice these when duty to God requires it.

Verse 23

Into a ship - This was on the Sea of Tiberias. The "ship" in which they sailed was probably a small open boat with sails, such as was commonly used for fishing on the lake.

His disciples - Not merely the apostles, but probably many others. There were many other ships in company with him, Mark 4:36. This circumstance would render the miracle much more striking and impressive.

Verse 24

A great tempest - A violent storm; or a "wind" so strong as to endanger their lives. This lake was subject to sudden squalls. Dr. Thomson ("The Land and the Book," vol. ii. p. 59) says: "Small as the lake is, and placid, in general, as a molten mirror, I have repeatedly seen it quiver, and leap, and boil like a caldron, when driven by fierce winds from the eastern mountains."

The ship was covered with the waves - The billows dashed against the ship Mark 4:37, so that it was fast filling and in danger of sinking.

He was asleep - On the hinder part of the vessel, on a pillow, Mark 4:38. It was in the night, and Jesus had retired to rest. He was probably weary, and slept calmly and serenely. He apprehended no danger, and showed to his disciples how calmly one can sleep with a pure conscience, and who feels safe in the hands of God.

Verse 25

Save us - Save our lives.

We perish - We are in danger of perishing. This showed great confidence in the Saviour. It shows, also, where sinners and Christians should always go who feel that they are in danger of perishing. There is none that can save from the storms of divine wrath but the Son of God.

Verse 26

Why are ye fearful? - You should have remembered that the Son of God, the Messiah, was on board. You should not have forgotten that he had power to save, and that with him you are safe. So Christians should never fear danger, disease, or death. With Jesus they are safe. No enemy can reach him; and as he is safe, so they shall be also, John 14:19.

Rebuked the winds - Reproved them, or commanded them to be still. What a power was this! What irresistible proof that he was divine! His word awed the tempest and allayed the storm! There is not anywhere a sublimer description of a display of power. Nor could there be clearer proof that he was truly the Son of God.

A great calm - The winds were still, and the sea ceased to dash against the vessel and to endanger their lives.

Verse 27

The men marveled - Wondered, or were amazed.

What manner of man - What kind of a personage. How unlike other men! What a vast display of power! and how far exalted above mortals

must he be!

Jesus spake to the winds; rebuked their raging, and the sea was suddenly calm. The storm subsided; the ship glided smoothly; danger fled; and in amazement they stood in the presence of him who controlled the tempests that God had raised; and they felt that "he" must be God himself, for none but God could calm the heaving billows and scatter the tempest. No scene could have been more grand than this display of the power of Jesus. The darkness; the dashing waves; the howling winds; the heaving and tossing ship; the fears and cries of the seamen, all by a single word hushed into calm repose, present an image of power and divinity irresistibly grand and awful. So the tempest rolls and thickens over the head of the awakened sinner. So he trembles over immediate and awful destruction. So, while the storm of wrath howls, and hell threatens to ingulf him, he comes trembling to the Saviour. He hears; he rebukes the storm, and the sinner is safe. An indescribable peace takes possession of the soul, and he glides on a tranquil sea to the haven of eternal rest. See Isaiah 57:20-21; Romans 5:1; Philemon 4:7.

Verses 28-34

The same account of the demoniacs substantially is found in Luke 8:26-38.

Matthew 8:28

The other side - The other side of the Sea of Tiberias.

Country of the Gergesenes - Mark Mark 5:1 says that he came into the country of the "Gadarenes." This difference is only apparent.

"Gadara" was a city not far from the Lake Gennesareth, one of the ten cities that were called "Decapolis." See the notes at Matthew 4:25. "Gergesa" was a city about 12 miles to the southeast of Gadara, and about 20 miles to the east of the Jordan. There is no contradiction, therefore, in the evangelists. He came into the region in which the two cities were situated, and one evangelist mentioned one, and the other another. It shows that the writers had not agreed to impose on the world; for if they had, they would have mentioned the same city; and it shows. also, they were familiar with the country. No men would have written in this manner but those who were acquainted with the facts. Impostors do not mention places or homes if they can avoid it.

There met him two - Mark and Luke speak of only one that met him. "There met him out of the tombs a man," Mark 5:2. "There met him out of the tombs a certain man," Luke 8:27. This difference of statement has given rise to considerable difficulty. It is to be observed, however, that neither Mark nor Luke say that there was no more than one. For particular reasons, they might have been led to fix their attention on the one that was more notorious, and furious, and difficult to be managed. Had they denied plainly that there was more than one, and had Matthew affirmed that there were two, there would have been an irreconcilable contradiction. As it is, they relate the affair as other people would. It shows that they were honest witnesses. Had they been impostors; had Matthew and Luke agreed to write books to deceive the world, they would have agreed exactly in a case so easy as this. They would have told the story with the same circumstances. Witnesses in courts of law often differ in unimportant matters; and, provided the main narrative coincides, their testimony is thought to be more valuable.

Luke has given us a hint why he recorded only the cure of one of them. He says there met him "out of the city, a man, etc.; or, as it should be rendered, "a man of the city" a citizen. Yet the man did not dwell in the city, for he adds in the same verse, "neither abode he in any house, but in the tombs." The truth of the case was, that he was born and educated in the city. He had probably been a man of wealth and eminence; he was well known, and the people felt a deep interest in the case. Luke was therefore particularly struck with his case; and as his cure fully established the power of Jesus, he recorded it. The other person that Matthew mentions was probably a stranger, or one less notorious as a maniac, and he felt less interest in the cure. Let two persons go into a lunatic asylum and meet two insane persons, one of whom should be exceedingly fierce and ungovernable, and well known as having been a man of worth and standing; let them converse with them, and let the more violent one attract the principal attention, and they would very likely give the same account that Matthew and Luke do, and no one would doubt the statement was correct.

Possessed with devils - See the notes at Matthew 4:24.

Coming out of the tombs - Mark and Luke say that they lived among the tombs. The sepulchres of the Jews were frequently caves beyond the walls of the cities in which they dwelt, or excavations made in the sides of hills, or sometimes in solid rocks. These caves or excavations were

sometimes of great extent. They descended to them by flights of steps. These graves were not in the midst of cities, but in groves, and mountains, and solitudes. They afforded, therefore, to insane persons and demoniacs a place of retreat and shelter. They delighted in these gloomy and melancholy recesses, as being congenial to the wretched state of their minds. Josephus also states that these sepulchres were the haunts and lurking-places of those desperate bands of robbers that infested Judea. For further illustration of this subject see my notes at Isaiah 14:9; Isaiah 22:16; Isaiah 65:4. The ancient Gadara is commonly supposed to be the present Umkeis. "Near there Burckhardt reports that he found many sepulchres in the rocks, showing how naturally the conditions of the narrative respecting the demoniacs could have been fulfilled in that region. Reliable writers state that they have seen lunatics occupying such abodes of corruption and death." - Hackett's "Illustrations of Scripture," p. 109.

Dr. Thomson, however ("The Land and the Book," vol. ii. pp. 34-37), maintains that Gadara could not have been the place of the miracle, since that place is about "three hours" (some 10 or 12 miles) to the south of the extreme shore of the lake in that direction. He supposes that the miracle occurred at a place now called "Kerza" or "Gersa." which he supposes was the ancient "Gergesa." Of this place he says: "In this Gersa or Chersa we have a position which fulfills every requirement of the narratives, and with a name so near that in Matthew as to be in itself a strong corroboration of the truth of this identification. It is, within a few rods of the shore, and an immense mountain rises directly above it, in which are ancient tombs, out of some of which the two men possessed of the devils may have issued to meet Jesus. The lake is so near the base of the mountain that the swine, rushing madly down it, could not stop, but would be hurried on into the water and drowned. The place is one which our Lord would be likely to visit, having Capernaum in full view to the north, and Galilee ‹over against it,' as Luke says it was. The name, however, pronounced by Bedouin Arabs is so similar to Gergesa, that, to all my inquiries for this place, they invariably said it was at Chersa, and they insisted that they were identical, and I agree with them in this opinion."

Matthew 8:29

What have we to do with thee? - This might have been translated with great propriety, What hast thou to do with us? The meaning is "Why dost thou trouble or disturb us?" See 2 Samuel 16:10; 2 Kings 9:18; Ezra 4:3.

Son of God - The title, "Son of God," is often given to Christ. People are sometimes called sons, or children of God, to denote their adoption into his family, 1 John 3:1. But the title given to Christ denotes his superiority to the prophets Hebrews 1:1; to Moses, the founder of the Jewish economy Hebrews 3:6; it denotes his unique and near relation to the Father, as evinced by his resurrection Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33; it denotes his special relation to God from his miraculous conception Luke 1:35; and is equivalent to a declaration that he is divine, or equal to the Father. See the notes at John 10:36.

Art thou come hither to torment us? … - By "the time" here mentioned is meant the day of judgment. The Bible reveals the doctrine that evil spirits are not now bound as they will be after that day; that they are permitted to tempt and afflict people, but that in the day of judgment they also will be condemned to everlasting punishment with all the wicked, 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6. These spirits seemed to be apprised of that, and were alarmed lest the day that they feared had come. They besought him, therefore, not to send them out of that country, not to consign them then to hell, but to put off the day of their final punishment.

Mark and Luke say that Jesus inquired the name of the principal demoniac, and that he called his name "Legion, for they were many." The name legion was given to a division in the Roman army. It did not always denote the same number, but in the time of Christ it consisted of 6,000 to 3,000 foot soldiers and 3,000 horsemen. It came, therefore, to signify "a large number," without specifying the exact amount.

Matthew 8:30

A herd of many swine - The word "herd," here applied to swine, is now commonly given to "cattle." Formerly, it signified any collection of beasts, or even of people.

The number that composed this "herd" was 2,000, Mark 5:13.

Matthew 8:33

They that kept them fled - These swine were doubtless owned by the inhabitants of the country.

Whether they were Jews or Gentiles is not certainly known. It was not properly in the territory of Judea; but, as it was on its borders, it is probable that the inhabitants were a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. Swine were to Jews unclean animals, and it was unlawful for Jews to eat them, Leviticus 11:7. They were forbidden by their own laws to keep them, even for the

purpose of traffic. Either, therefore, they had expressly violated the law, or these swine were owned by the Gentiles.

The keepers fled in consternation. They were amazed at the power of Jesus. Perhaps they feared a further destruction of property; or, more likely they were acquainted with the laws of the Jews, and regarded this as a judgment of heaven for keeping forbidden animals, and for tempting the Jews to violate the commands of God.

This is the only one of our Saviour‘s miracles, except the case of the fig-tree that he cursed Matthew 21:18-20, in which he caused any destruction of property. It is a striking proof of his benevolence, that his miracles tended directly to the comfort of mankind. It was a proof of goodness added to the direct purpose for which his miracles were performed. That purpose was to confirm his divine mission; and it might have been as fully done by splitting rocks, or removing mountains, or causing water to run up steep hills, as by any other display of power. He chose to exhibit the proof of his divine power, however, in such a way as to benefit mankind.

Infidels have objected to this whole narrative. They have said that this was a wanton and unauthorized violation of private rights in the destruction of property. They have said, also, that the account of devils going into swine, and destroying them, was ridiculous. In regard to these objections the narrative is easily vindicated.

1. If Christ, as the Bible declares, is divine as well as human - God as well as man - then he had an original right to that and all other property, and might dispose of it as he pleased, Psalm 50:10-12. If God had destroyed the herd of swine by pestilence or by lightning, by an inundation or by an earthquake, neither the owners or anyone else would have had reason to complain. No one now feels that he has a right to complain if God destroys a thousand times the amount of this property by overturning a city by an earthquake. Why, then, should complaints be brought against him if he should do the same thing in another way?

2. If this property was held “by the Jews,” it was a violation of their law, and it was right that they should suffer the loss; if “by the Gentiles,” it was

known also to be a violation of the law of the people among whom they lived; a temptation and a snare to them; an abomination in their sight; and it was proper that the nuisance should be removed.

3. The cure of two men, one of whom was probably a man of distinction and property, was of far more consequence than the amount of property destroyed. To restore a "deranged" man now would be an act for which "property" could not compensate, and which could not be measured in value by any pecuniary consideration. But,

4. Jesus was not at all answerable for this destruction of property. He did not "command," he only "suffered" or "permitted" the devils to go into the swine. He commanded them merely to "come out of the magi." They originated the purpose of destroying the property, doubtless for the sake of doing as much mischief as possible, and of destroying the effect of the miracle of Christ. In this they seem to have had most disastrous success, and they only are responsible.

5. If it should be said that Christ permitted this, when he might have prevented it, it may be replied that the difficulty does not stop there. He permits all the evil that exists, when he might prevent it. He permits men to do much evil, when he might prevent it. He permits one bad man to injure the person and property of another bad man. He permits the bad to injure the good. He often permits a wicked man to fire a city, or to plunder a dwelling, or to rob a traveler, destroying property of many times the amount that was lost on this occasion. Why is it any more absurd to suffer a wicked spirit to do injury than a wicked man? or to suffer a "legion of devils" to destroy a herd of swine, than for "legions of men" to desolate nations, and cover fields and towns with ruin and slaughter.

Matthew 8:34

The whole city came out - The people of the city probably came with a view of arresting him for the injury done to the property; but, seeing him, and being awed by his presence, they only besought him to leave them.

Out of their coasts - Out of their country.

This shows:

1.That the design of Satan is to prejudice people against the Saviour, and even to make what Christ does an occasion why they should desire him t

leave them.

2.The power of avarice. These people preferred their property to the Saviour. They loved it so much that they were blind to the evidence of the miracle, and to the good he had done to the miserable people whom he had healed.

It is no uncommon thing for people to love the world so much; to love property - even like that owned by the people of Gadara so much as to see no beauty in religion and no excellence in the Saviour; and, rather than part with it, to beseech Jesus to withdraw from them. The most grovelling employment, the most abandoned sins, the most loathsome vices, are often loved more than the presence of Jesus, and more than all the blessings of his salvation.

Remarks On Matthew 8:5-10. He sustained a fair character, and had done much for the Jews. Yet he had no exalted conception of himself. Compared with the Saviour, he felt that he was unworthy that he should come to his dwelling. So feels every humble soul. "Humility is an estimate of ourselves as we are." It is a willingness to be known, and talked of, and treated just according to truth. It is a view of ourselves as lost, poor, and wandering creatures. Compared with other people with angels, with Jesus, and with God - it is a feeling by which we regard ourselves as unworthy of notice. It is a readiness to occupy our appropriate station in the universe, and to put on humbleness of mind as our proper array, 1 Peter 5:5.

3. We have in the case of the centurion an equally beautiful exhibition of "faith." He had unwavering confidence in the power of Jesus. He did not doubt at all that he was able to do for him just what he "needed, and what he wished him to do." This is faith; and every man who has this "trust" or confidence in Christ for salvation, has "saving faith."

4. Humility and faith are always connected. The one prepares the mind for the other. Having a deep sense of our weakness and unworthiness, we are prepared to look to Him who has strength. Faith also produces humility. Jesus was humble; and believing on him, we catch his spirit and learn of him, Matthew 11:28-30. Compared with him, we see our unworthiness. Seeing his "strength," we see our "feebleness;" seeing "his" strength exerted to save creatures impure and ungrateful as we are, we sink away into an increased sense of our unfitness for his favor.

5. We see the compassion and kindness of Jesus, Matthew 8:16-17. He has borne "our" heavy griefs. He provides comfort for us in sickness and sustains us in dying. But for his merciful arm, we should sink; and dying, we should die without hope. But:

"Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are;
While on his breast we lean our head,
And breathe our life out sweetly there."

6. We are forcibly struck with his condescension, Matthew 8:19-20. People of wickedness and crime dwell in splendid mansions, and stretch themselves on couches of ease; when afflicted, they recline on beds of down; but Jesus had no home and no pillow. The birds that fill the air with music and warble in the groves, nay, the very foxes, have homes and a shelter from the storms and elements; but He that made them, clothed in human flesh, was a wanderer, and had nowhere to lay his head. His sorrows he bore alone; his dwelling was in the mountains. In the palaces of the people for whom he toiled, and for whom he was about to bleed on a cross, he found no home and no sympathy. Surely this was compassion worthy of a God.

7. It is no disgrace to be poor. The Son of God was poor, and it is no dishonor to be like him. If our Maker, then, has cast our lot in poverty; if he takes away by sickness or calamity the fruits of our toils; if he clothes us in homely and coarse apparel; if he bids the winds of heaven to howl around our open and lonely dwellings, let us remember that the Redeemer of mankind trod the same humble path, and that it can be no dishonor to be likened to him who was the beloved Son of God.

8. We should be willing to embrace the gospel without hope of earthly reward, Matthew 8:19-23. Religion promises no earthly honors or wealth. It bids its disciples to look beyond the grave for its highest rewards. It requires people to love religion "for its own sake;" to love the Saviour, even when poor, and cast out, and suffering, "because he is worthy of love;" and to be willing to forsake all the allurements which the world holds out to us for the sake of the purity and peace of the gospel.

9. We learn the necessity of forsaking all for the sake of the gospel. Our first duty is to God, our Creator and Saviour; our second, to friends, to our

relations, and to our country, Matthew 8:22. When God commands we must follow him, nor should any consideration of ease, or safety, or imaginary duty deter us. To us it is of no consequence what people say or think of us. Let the will of God be prayerfully ascertained, and then let it be done though it carry us through ridicule and flames.

10. Jesus can preserve us in the time of danger, Matthew 8:23-27. He hushed the storm and his disciples were safe. His life was also in danger with theirs. Had the ship sunk, without a miracle he would have perished with them. So in every storm of trial or persecution, in every heaving sea of calamity, he is united to his followers. His interest and theirs is the same. He feels for them, he is touched with their infirmities, and he will sustain them. Because I live, says he, ye shall live also. Never, never, then, shall man or devil pluck one of his faithful followers from his hand, John 10:27-28.

11. All that can disturb or injure us is under the control of the Christian's Friend, Matthew 8:28-32. The very inhabitants of hell are bound, and beyond his permission they can never injure us. In spite, then, of all the malice of malignant beings, the friends of Jesus are safe.

12. It is no uncommon thing for people to desire Jesus to depart from them, Matthew 8:34. Though he is ready to confer on them important favors, yet they hold His favors to be of far less consequence than some unimportant earthly possession. Sinners never love him, and always wish him away from their dwellings.

13. It is no uncommon thing for Jesus to take people at their word, and leave them. He gives them over to worldly thoughts and pursuits; he suffers them to sink into crime, and they perish forever. Alas, how many are there, like the dwellers in the country of the Gergesenes, that ask him to depart; that see him go without a sigh; and that never, never again behold him coming to bless them with salvation!

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

And he entered into a ship … - Jesus acceded to the request of the people of Gadara Matthew 8:34, recrossed the Lake of Gennesareth, and returned to his own city. By "his own city" is meant Capernaum Mark 2:1, the city which was at that time his home, or where he had his dwelling. See the notes at Matthew 4:13. This same account, with some additional circumstances, is contained in Mark 2:3-12, and Luke 5:18-26.

Verse 2

A man sick of the palsy - See the notes at Matthew 4:24.

Lying on a bed - This was probably a mattress, or perhaps a mere blanket spread to lie on, so as to be easily borne. Being light, Jesus might with propriety command him to take it up and walk, Matthew 9:6.

Mark says "they uncovered the roof," Mark 2:4. Luke says "they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling," Luke 5:19. To us it would appear that much injury must have been done to the house where Jesus was, and that they must be much incommoded by the removal of tiles and rafters, etc. An acquaintance, however, with the mode of building in the East removes every difficulty of this nature. Houses in Eastern countries are commonly square in their form, and of a single story. On approaching them from the street a single door is seen in the center, and usually, directly above it, a single latticed window. This destitution of doors and lights from the streets, though it gives their dwellings a sombre appearance, is yet adapted to the habits of retirement and secrecy among the people of the East, where they are desirous of keeping their "females" from observation. See the notes at Matthew 6:6. On entering the only door in front, the first room is a small square room, surrounded with benches, called the "porch." In this room the master of the family commonly transacts business, and on private occasions receives visits. Passing through the porch, you enter a large square room directly in the center of the building, called the court. Luke says that the "paralytic" was let down "into the midst;" not in the midst of the "people," but of the "building" - the "middle place" of the house. This "court" is paved commonly with marble; and, if possible, a fountain of water is formed in the center, to give it beauty, and to diffuse a grateful coolness. This room is surrounded by a gallery or covered walk on

every side. From that covered walk doors open into the other apartments of the house.

This center room, or court, is commonly uncovered or open above. In wet weather, however, and in times of great heat of the sun, it is covered with an awning or canvas, stretched on cords and capable of being easily removed or rolled up. This is what Mark means when he says "they uncovered the roof." They "rolled up" or removed this awning.

From the court to the roof the ascent is by flights of stairs, either in the covered walk or gallery or in the porch. The roof is nearly flat. It is made of earth; or, in houses of the rich, is a firmly; constructed flooring, made of coals, chalk, gypsum, and ashes, made hard by repeated blows. On those roofs spears of grass. wheat, or barley sometimes spring up; but these are soon withered by the sun, Psalm 129:6-8. The roof is a favourite place for walking, for repose in the cool of the day, for conversation, and for devotion. See the notes at Matthew 6:6. On such a roof Rahab concealed the spies Joshua 2:6, Samuel talked with Saul 1 Samuel 9:25, David walked at eventide 2 Samuel 11:2), and Peter went up to pray Acts 10:9. This roof was surrounded with a "balustrade," or railing, breast-high, on the sides; but where a house was contiguous to another, and of the same height, the railing was lower, so as to walk from one roof to another. In cities where the houses were constructed in this manner, it was possible to walk through a considerable part of the city on the roofs. A breastwork or railing was of course built in the same manner around the "open space" in the center, to prevent persons from falling into the court below. This railing, or breastwork, is what Luke Luke 5:19 says they let him down through. They removed it, probably, so that the couch could be conveniently let down with cords; and, standing on the roof "over" the Saviour, they let the man down directly before him. The perseverance they had manifested was the evidence of their faith or confidence in his power to heal the sick man.

Be of good cheer: thy sins be forgiven thee - It may seem remarkable, since the man came only to be "healed," that Jesus should have first declared his sins forgiven. For this the following reasons may be suggested:

1. The man might have brought on this disease of the palsy by a long course of vicious indulgence. Conscious of guilt, he may have feared that he was so great a sinner that Christ would not regard him. He therefore

assured him that his offences were pardoned, and that he might lay aside his fears.

2. Jesus might be willing to show his power to forgive sins. Had he stated it without any miracle, the Jews would not have believed it, and even his disciples might have been staggered. In proof of it, he worked a miracle; and no one, therefore, could doubt that he had the power. The miracle was performed in "express attestation" of the assertion that he had power to forgive sins. As God would not work a miracle to confirm a falsehood or to deceive people, the miracle was a solemn confirmation, on the part of God, that Jesus had the power to forgive sins.

3. The Jews regarded disease as the effect of sin, John 9:2; James 5:14-15. There is a "real" connection between sin and suffering, as in the case of gluttony, intemperate drinking, lewdness, debauchery. Jesus might be willing to direct the minds of the spectators "to this fact;" and, by pointing them to a manifest instance of the effect of sin, to lead them to hate and forsake it. Diseases are sometimes the direct judgment of God for sin, 1 Corinthians 5:3-5; 1 Corinthians 11:30; 2 Samuel 24:10-14. This truth, also, Christ might have been desirous of impressing on the people.

Verse 3

This man blasphemeth - The word "blaspheme" originally means to speak evil of anyone; to injure by words; to blame unjustly. When applied to God, it means to speak of him unjustly; to ascribe to him acts and attributes which he does not possess; or to speak impiously or profanely. It also means to say or do anything by which his name or honor is insulted, or which conveys an "impression" unfavourable to God. It means. also, to attempt to do, or say a thing, which belongs to him alone, or which he only can do. This is its meaning here. Christ was charged "with saying a thing in his own name, or attempting to do a thing, which properly belonged to God;" thus assuming the place of God, and doing him injury, as the scribes supposed, by an invasion of his prerogatives. "None," said they (see Mark and Luke), "can forgive sins but God only." In this they reasoned correctly. See Isaiah 43:25; Isaiah 44:22. None of the prophets had this power; and by saying that "he forgave sins," Jesus was understood to affirm that he was

divine; and as he proved this by working a miracle expressly to confirm the claim, it follows that he is divine, or equal with the Father.

Verse 4

Jesus, knowing their thoughts - Mark says, "Jesus perceived "in his spirit" that they so reasoned." The power of searching the heart, and of knowing the thoughts of people, belongs only to God, 1 Chronicles 28:9; Romans 8:27; Revelation 2:23; Jeremiah 17:10. In claiming this, as Jesus did here, and often elsewhere, he gave clear proofs of his omniscience, John 2:24-25.

Verse 5

For whether is easier to say - Thy "sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk?" The one involves divine "power," the other divine "authority," and neither can be done but by God. One is as easy as the other; and to be able to do the one, involves the right and the power to do the other.

Verse 6

But that ye may know … - That you may have full proof on that point; that you may see that I have power to forgive sin, I will perform an act which all must perceive and admit to require the power of God.

Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine own house - The fact that the paralytic man could do this would prove that a miracle was performed. He was healed by a word; it was done instantaneously; it was done in the most public manner. The fact that a man, just before perfectly helpless, could now take up and carry his own bed or couch, proved that a divine "power" had been exerted; and that fact proved that he who had performed the miracle must also have the "power" and the "authority" to forgive sin. It is proper to add, in illustrating this, that in the East a "bed" is often nothing more than a bolster and a blanket spread on the floor. "The bed provided for me," says Professor Hackett ("Illustrations of Scripture," p. 112) "consisted merely of a bolster and a blanket spread on the floor. The latter could be drawn partially over the body if any one wished, though the expectation seemed to be that we should sleep in our ordinary dress, without any additional covering. Such a bed is obviously a portable one; it is easy to take it up, fold it together, and carry it from place to place, as convenience may require."

Verse 8

They glorified God - See the notes at Matthew 5:16. To "glorify" God, here, means to "praise him," or to acknowledge his power. The expression, "which had given such power to people," was a part of "their" praise. It expresses no sentiment of the evangelist about the nature of Christ, but is a record of their feelings and their praise.

Verse 9

He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom - That is, at the place where "custom," or "tribute," was received; or, in other words, he was a "publican" or tax-gatherer. See the notes at Matthew 5:47. This man was the writer of this gospel. The same account is found in Mark 2:14, and Luke 5:27-28. Both those evangelists call him "Levi." That it was the same man is known by the circumstances in which he was called being the same in all the evangelists, and by their all concurring in the statement that the Saviour was present at a feast soon after he called him, and by the fact that "Levi" is not mentioned in the catalogue of the apostles. The Jews were in the habit of giving several names to the same person. Thus Peter was also called Simon and Cephas. It is worthy of remark that Luke has mentioned a circumstance favorable to Matthew, which Matthew himself has omitted. Luke says "he left all." Had Matthew said this, it would have been a commendation of himself utterly unlike the evangelists. No men were ever further from "praising themselves" than they were.

Verse 10

And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house - This was at a feast given to him by "Levi" or "Matthew," Luke 5:29. This is another circumstance favorable to Matthew, but omitted by him, and recorded by Luke; showing also that the apostles were averse to praising themselves. To receive Christ hospitably and kindly was a commendable act, and it strongly evinces Matthew's freedom from ostentation that he has not himself mentioned the fact. It thus illustrates the command of the Saviour, as recorded by himself, Matthew 6:1-4.

At meat - At the table; at supper.

Many publicans and sinners came - Probably the old friends of Matthew who had been invited by him. The character of a "publican," or tax-gatherer, among the Jews was commonly not very respectable (see notes at Matthew 5:47; Matthew 18:17), and there is no improbability in supposing that Matthew, before his conversion, had sustained the general

character of such people, and that his associations and friendships had been among those who were not remarkable for their morality.

Verse 11

Why eateth and drinketh … - To eat and drink with others denotes intimacy and familiarity. The Pharisees, by asking this question, accused him of seeking the society of such people, and of being the companion of the wicked. The inference which they would draw was, that he could not be himself righteous, since he delighted in the company of abandoned people.

Verse 12

They that be whole … - Jesus, in reply, said that the whole needed not a physician. Sick persons only needed his aid. A physician would not commonly be found with those that were in health. His proper place was among the sick. So, says he, "If you Pharisees are such as you think yourselves - already pure and holy - you do not need my aid. It would be of no use to you, and you would not thank me for it. With those persons who feel that they are sinners I may be useful, and there is my proper place." Or the expression may mean, "I came on purpose to save sinners: my business is with them. There are none righteous; and as a physician is in his proper place with the "sick," so am I with guilty and miserable sinners."

Verse 13

But go ye and learn … - To reprove them, and to vindicate his own conduct, he appealed to a passage of Scripture with which they ought to have been acquainted: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," Hosea 6:6. This is not a declaration on the part of God that he was opposed to "sacrifices" or "offerings for sin;" for he had appointed and commanded many, and had therefore expressed his approbation of them. It is a Hebrew mode of speaking, and means, "I prefer mercy to sacrifice;" or, "I am more pleased with acts of benevolence and kindness than with a mere external compliance with the duties of religion." Mercy here means benevolence or kindness toward others. "Sacrifices" were offerings made to God on account of sin, or as an expression of thanksgiving. They were commonly bloody offerings, or animals slain; signifying that the sinner offering them deserved to die himself, and pointing to the great sacrifice or offering which Christ was to make for the sins of the world. "Sacrifices" were the principal part of the worship of the Jews, and hence came to signify "external worship in general." This is the meaning of the word here. The sense in which our Saviour applies it is this: "You Pharisees are exceedingly

tenacious of the "external" duties of religion; but God has declared that he prefers benevolence or mercy to those external duties. It is proper, therefore, that I should associate with sinners for the purpose of doing them good."

I came not to call the righteous … - No human beings are by nature righteous, Psalm 14:3; Romans 1:18-32; Romans 3:10-18. The Pharisees, however, "pretended" to be righteous. Christ might have meant by this answer that it was not the design of his coming to cal such persons to repentance, knowing that they would spurn his efforts, and that to a great extent they would be vain; or, more probably, he meant to affirm that his proper and only business was to call to repentance such people as he was now with. He came to seek and save such, and it was his "proper business," therefore, to associate with them.

Repentance - See the notes at Matthew 3:2.

Verses 14-17

Then came the disciples of John … - This narrative is found also in Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:33-39. The reference here is to John the Baptist. It is probable that they had understood that John was the forerunner of the Messiah; and if such was the case, they could not account for the fact that there was such a difference between them and the disciples of Jesus. The Pharisees fasted often - regularly twice a week besides the great national days of fasting, Luke 18:12. See the notes at Matthew 6:16-18. This was the established custom of the land, and John did not feel himself authorized to make so great a change as to dispense with it. They were desirous of knowing, therefore, why Jesus had done it.

Besides, it is probable that this question was put to Jesus when John was in prison, and his disciples, involved in deep grief on account of it, observed days of fasting. Fasting was the natural expression of sorrow, and they wondered that the followers of Jesus did not join with them in lamenting the captivity of him who was the forerunner and baptizer of their Lord.

Christ, in reply to them, used three illustrations, all of them going to establish the same thing - that "we should observe a fitness and propriety in things." The first is taken from a marriage. The children of the bride-chamber - that is, the bridemen, or "men who had the special care of the bridal chamber, and who were therefore his special friends" - do not think

of fasting while he is with them. With them it is a time of festivity and rejoicing, and mourning would not be appropriate. When he is removed or taken away, then their festivity will be ended, and "then" will be the proper time for sorrow. So, says he, John, your friend and teacher, is in captivity. With you it is a time of deep grief, and it is appropriate that you should fast. I am with my disciples. It is with them a time of joy. It is not fit that they should use the tokens of grief, and fast now. When I am taken away, it will then be proper that they should fast. For an account of the ceremonies of an Eastern marriage, see the notes at Matthew 25:1-13.

Matthew 9:16

No man putteth a piece of new cloth … - A second illustration was drawn from a well-known fact, showing also that there was "a propriety or fitness of things." None of you, says he, in mending an old garment, would take a piece of entire new cloth.

There would be a waste in it. An old piece, or a piece like the garment, would be better. The word here translated "new," in the original means "rude, undressed, not fulled" by the cloth-dresser. In this state, if applied to an old garment, and if wet, it would "contract" and draw off a part of the garment to which it was attached, and thus make the rent worse than it was. So, says he, my "new" doctrines do not match with the old rites of the Pharisees. There is a fitness of things. Their doctrines require much fasting. In my system it would be incongruous; and if my new doctrines were to be attached to their old ones, it would only make the matter worse.

Matthew 9:17

Neither do men put new wine … - The third illustration was taken from wine put into bottles.

Bottles, in Eastern nations, were made, and are still made, of skins of beasts. Generally the skin was taken entire from a sheep or a goat, and, properly prepared, was filled with wine or water. Such bottles are still used, because, in crossing deserts of sand, they have no other conveyances but camels, or other beasts of burden. It would be difficult for them to carry glass bottles or kegs on them. They therefore fill two skins, and fasten them together and lay them across the back of a camel, and thus carry wine or water to a great distance. These bottles were, of course, of different sizes, as the skins of kids, goats, or oxen might be used. Bruce describes particularly a bottle which he saw in Arabia, made in this manner of an ox-skin, which would hold 60 gallons, and two of which were a lead for a camel. By long

usage, however, bottles of skins became tender and would be easily ruptured. New wine put into them would ferment, and swell and burst them open. New skins or bottles would yield to the fermenting wine, and be strong enough to hold it from bursting. So, says Christ, there is "fitness" or propriety of things. It is not "fit" that my doctrine should be attached to or connected with the old and corrupt doctrines of the Pharisees. New things should be put together, and made to match.

This account of Eastern bottles may illustrate the following passages in the Bible: The Gibeonites took "wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up," Joshua 9:4. "My belly is ready to burst, like new bottles," Job 32:19. "I am become like a bottle in the smoke," Psalm 119:83; i. e., like a bottle of skin hung up in a tent filled with smoke.

Verses 18-26

The account contained in these verses is also recorded, with some additional circumstances, in Matthew 9:18

There came a certain ruler - Mark and Luke say that his name was Jairus, and that he was a "ruler of the synagogue;" that is, one of the elders to whom was committed the care of the synagogue.

See the notes at Matthew 4:23.

And worshipped him - That is, fell down before him, or expressed his respect for him by a token of profound regard. See the notes at Matthew 2:2.

My daughter is even now dead - Luke says that this was his only daughter, and that she was twelve years of age. Mark and Luke say that she was "at the point of death," and that information of her actual death was brought to him by one who was sent by the ruler of the synagogue, while Jesus was going. Matthew combined the two facts, and stated the representation which was made to Jesus, without stopping particularly to exhibit the manner in which it was done. In a summary way he says that the ruler communicated the information. Luke and Mark, dwelling more particularly on the circumstances, state at length the way in which it was done; that is, by himself stating, in a hurry, that she was "about to die," or "was dying," and then in a few moments sending word that "she was dead." The Greek word, rendered "is even now dead," does not of necessity mean, as our translation would express, that she had actually expired, but only that

she was "dying" or about to die. Compare Genesis 48:21. It is likely that a father, in these circumstances, would use a word as nearly expressing actual death as would be consistent with the fact that she was alive. The passage may be expressed thus: "My daughter was so sick that she must be by this time dead."

Come and lay thy hand upon her - It was customary for the Jewish prophets, in conferring favors, to lay their hand on the person benefited. Jesus had probably done so also, and the ruler had probably witnessed the fact.

Matthew 9:20

And, behold, a woman … - This disease was by the Jews reckoned unclean Leviticus 15:25, and the woman was therefore unwilling to make personal application to Jesus, or even to touch his person. The disease was regarded as incurable. She had expended all her property, and grew worse, Mark 5:26.

Touched the hem of his garment - This garment was probably the square garment which was thrown over the shoulders. See notes at Matthew 5:40. This was surrounded by a border or "fringe;" and this "fringe," or the loose threads hanging down, is what is meant by the "hem." The Jews were commanded to wear this, in order to distinguish them from other nations. See Numbers 15:38-39; Deuteronomy 22:12.

Mark says that "the woman, fearing and trembling," came and told him all the truth. Perhaps she feared that, from the impure nature of her disease, he would be offended that she touched him.

Matthew 9:22

But Jesus tutored him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort - Jesus silenced her fears, commended her faith, and sent her away in peace.

He used an endearing appellation, calling her "daughter," a word of tenderness and affection, and dismissed her who had been twelve long and tedious years labouring under a weakening and offensive disease, now in an instant made whole. Her faith, her strong confidence in Jesus, had been the means of her restoration. It was the "power" of Jesus that cured her; but that power would not have been exerted but in connection with faith. So in the salvation of a sinner. No one is saved who does not believe; but faith is the instrument, and not the power, that saves.

Matthew 9:23

And widen Jesus came into the ruler‘s house … - Jesus permitted only three of his disciples, Peter, James, and John the brother of James, and the father and mother of the damsel, to go in with him where the corpse lay, Mark 5:37-40

It was important that there should be “witnesses” of the miracle, and he chose a sufficient number. “Five” witnesses were enough to establish the fact. The witnesses were impartial. The fact that she was dead was established beyond a doubt. Of this the mourners, the parents, the messengers, the people, were satisfied. If she was presented to the people “alive,” the proof of the miracle was complete. The presence of more than the “five” witnesses would have made the scene tumultuous, and have been less satisfactory evidence of the fact of the restoration of the child. Five sober witnesses are always better than the confused voices of a rabble. These were the same disciples that were with him on the Mount of Transfiguration and in the Garden of Gethsemane, Mark 9:2; Mark 14:33; 2 Peter 1:17-18.

And saw the minstrels and the people making a noise - Minstrels” are persons who play on instruments of music. The people of the East used to bewail the dead by cutting the flesh, tearing the hair, and crying bitterly. See Jeremiah 9:17; Jeremiah 16:6-7; Ezekiel 24:17. The expressions of grief at the death of a friend, in Eastern countries, are extreme. As soon as a person dies, all the females in the family set up a loud and doleful cry. They continue it as long as they can without taking breath, and the shriek of wailing dies away in a low sob. Nor do the relatives satisfy themselves with these expressions of violent grief. They hire persons of both sexes, whose employment it is to mourn for the dead in the like frantic manner. See Amos 5:16; Jeremiah 9:20. They sing the virtues of the deceased, recount his acts, dwell on his beauty, strength, or learning; on the comforts of his family and home, and in doleful strains ask him why he left his family and friends.

To all this they add soft and melancholy music. They employ “minstrels” to aid their grief, and to increase the expressions of their sorrow. This violent grief continues, commonly, eight days. In the case of a king, or other very distinguished personage, it is prolonged through an entire month. This grief does not cease at the house; it is exhibited in the procession to the grave, and the air is split with the wailings of real and of hired mourners. Professor Hackett (“Illustrations of Scripture,” pp. 121,122) says: “During my stay at Jerusalem I frequently heard a singular

cry issuing from the houses in the neighborhood of the place where I lodged, or from those on the streets through which I passed. It was to be heard at all hours - in the morning, at noonday, at evening, or in the deep silence of night. For some time I was at a loss to understand the cause of this strange interruption of the stillness which, for the most part, hangs so oppressively over the lonely city. Had it not been so irregular in its occurrence, I might have supposed it to indicate some festive occasion; for the tones of voice (yet hardly tones so much as shrieks) used for the expression of different feelings sound so much alike to the unpracticed ear, that it is not easy always to distinguish the mournful and the joyous from each other.

I ascertained, at length, that this special cry was, no doubt, in most instances, the signal of the death of some person in the house from which it was heard. It is customary, when a member of the family is about to die, for the friends to assemble around him and watch the ebbing away of life, so as to remark the precise moment when he breathes his last, upon which they set up instantly a united outcry, attended with weeping, and often with beating upon the breast, and tearing out the hair of the head. This lamentation they repeat at other times, especially at the funeral, both during the procession to the grave and after the arrival there, as they commit the remains to their last resting-place."

The Jews were forbidden to tear their hair and cut their flesh. See Leviticus 19:28; Deuteronomy 14:1. They showed their grief by howling, by music, by concealing the chin with their garment, by rending the outer garment, by refusing to wash or anoint themselves, or to converse with people, by scattering ashes or dust in the air, or by lying down in them, Job 1:20; Job 2:12; 2 Samuel 1:2-4; 2 Samuel 14:2; 2 Samuel 15:30; Mark 14:63. The expressions of grief, therefore, mentioned on this occasion, though excessive and foolish, were yet strictly in accordance with Eastern customs.

Matthew 9:24

The maid is not dead, but sleepeth - It cannot be supposed that our Lord means "literally" to say that the child was not dead.

Every possible evidence of her death had been given, and he acted on that himself, and conveyed to the people the idea that he raised her "from

the dead." He meant to speak in opposition to their opinions. It is not unlikely that Jairus and the people favored the opinions of the Sadducees, and that "they" understood by her being dead that she had "ceased to be," and that she would never be raised up again. In opposition to this, the Saviour used the expression "she sleepeth;" affirming mildly both that the "body" was dead, and "implying" that "her spirit" still lived, and that she would be raised up again. A similar mode of speaking occurs in John 11:11 "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." The sacred writers often spoke of the pious dead as "sleeping," 2 Peter 3:4; Acts 7:60; 1 Corinthians 15:6, 1 Corinthians 15:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15. The meaning of this passage, then, is, the maid has not ceased to "exist;" but, though her body is dead, yet her spirit lives, and she sleeps in the hope of the resurrection.

Laughed him to scorn - Derided him; ridiculed him.

Matthew 9:25

He went in - With the father, and mother, and three disciples, Mark 5:37-40.

The maid arose - She returned to life.

There could be no deception here. "Parents" could not be imposed on in such a case, nor could such a multitude be deceived. The power of Jesus was undoubtedly shown to be sufficient to raise the dead.

Verse 27

And when Jesus departed thence - The scene of this miracle was near Capernaum. The blind men probably followed him with their cry for aid immediately on his leaving the house of Jairus.

Thou Son of David - By the Son of David the Jews meant the Messiah. He was the descendant or Son of David by way of eminence, Isaiah 9:7; Luke 1:32; Revelation 22:16. See the notes at Matthew 1:1. This was therefore a profession of belief, on the part of these blind men, of the Messiahship of Jesus, and, at the same time, the expression of a belief that, being the Messiah, he could heal them.

Have mercy on us - That is, show compassion toward us in our affliction, and restore to us the blessing of sight.

Verse 28

And when he was come into the house - That is, either into the house which he usually occupied in Capernaum, or the house of some friend. They had followed him, but thus far he had not seemed to heed their cries, and he

entered the house as if he did not intend to regard them - probably for the trial of their faith.

The blind men came to him - That is, they followed him into the house. They showed a determination to persevere until they obtained what they asked.

Believe ye that I am able to do this? - To work such a miracle. Though they had followed him and cried after him, yet he required of them an open profession of their faith in regard to his power.

They said unto him, Yea, Lord - We have no doubt of this. We came with that assurance: we have followed thee with that belief. It was on this simple profession of their faith that the miracle was performed, as it is on the simple profession of our faith that our souls will be saved.

Verse 29

Then touched he their eyes - Simply to indicate that the power proceeded from him. Compare Matthew 8:3.

According to your faith … - That is, you have "believed" that you could be healed, be healed accordingly. Your faith covered the whole extent of the work respecting my power and the absolute restoration to sight, and that power is exerted accordingly, and your sight is restored. So with the sinner. If he has faith in the Son of God; if he believes that he is able and willing to save him: and if he earnestly desires to be saved, the power of Jesus will be put forth to the full extent of his faith.

Verse 30

And their eyes were opened - Immediately. That is, their sight was restored: "And Jesus straitly charged them." He enjoined it on them in the most earnest and solemn manner.

See that no man know it - That is, do not make proclamation of this; do not make it your business to tell every man of it; do not go forth as if I wished that you should proclaim this abroad. The injunction could not mean that they should screen the fact that no one "should" know it, for there were witnesses of it, and it would be made known; but they were not to make it a point to proclaim to the world what was done to them. This was in accordance with the usual habit of the Saviour Matthew 8:4; Matthew 12:16, and also with his own precepts to others Matthew 6:1-4.

Verse 31

But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame - The report of what he had done. This was not unnatural for them. They were so

filled with joy that they could not repress their feelings. In this, however, they violated the express command of the Saviour; but he was not responsible for that.

Verse 32

And as they went out, behold, they brought unto him - That is, the friends of the dumb man brought him. This seems to have occurred as soon as the blind men which had been healed left him. Possibly it was from what they had observed of his power in healing them.

A dumb man possessed with a devil - That is, the effect of the "possession," in his case, was to deprive him of speech. Those "possessed with devils" were affected in different ways (see the notes at Matthew 4:24), and there is no improbability in supposing that if other forms of disease occurred under demoniacal possessions, this form might occur also.

Verse 33

And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake - The miracle is narrated in the briefest terms; but the effect was immediate and the restoration was complete.

It was never so seen in Israel - Never was there in our land - among the Jews - such a succession of wonders, so striking, so marvelous, so full of the power of God. This was literally true.

Verse 34

But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils - That is, Beelzebub. See the notes at Matthew 12:24. They did not deny the reality of the miracle or the facts in the case, but they ascribed what was done to the power of the great leader of the fallen host, as if Jesus were in league with him. For the manner in which the Saviour met that reasoning, see the notes at Matthew 12:25-28.

Verse 35

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages … - That is, in all parts of Galilee, for his labors were, as yet, confined to that part of Palestine. Compare the notes at Matthew 4:24-25.

Verse 36

But when he saw the multitudes - That followed him from place to place. When he saw their anxiety to be instructed and saved.

He was moved with compassion on them - He pitied them.

Because they fainted - The word used here refers to the weariness and fatigue which results from labor and being burdened. He saw the people

burdened with the rites of religion and the doctrines of the Pharisees; sinking down under their ignorance and the weight of their traditions; neglected by those who ought to have been enlightened teachers; and scattered and driven out without care and attention. With great beauty he compares them to sheep wandering without a shepherd. Judea was a land of flocks and herds. The faithful shepherd, by day and night, was with his flock. He defended it, made it to lie down in green pastures, and led it beside the still waters, Psalm 23:2. Without his care the sheep would stray away. They were in danger of wild beasts. They panted in the summer sun, and they did not know where the cooling shade and stream was. So, said the Saviour, is it with this people. No wonder that the compassionate Redeemer was moved with pity.

Verse 37

The harvest truly is plenteous … - Another beautiful image. A waving field of golden grain invites many reapers and demands haste. By the reference to the harvest here, he meant that the multitude of people that flocked to his ministry was great. The people expected the Messiah. They were prepared to receive the gospel; but the laborers were few. He directed them, therefore, to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send forth reapers. God is the proprietor of the great harvest of the world, and he only can send people to gather it in.

Remarks On Matthew 9:1-2. Nothing was suffered to prevent the purpose of presenting the helpless paralytic to the Saviour. So the poor helpless sinner should come. No obstacle should prevent him. He should lay himself at his feet, and feel that Jesus holds over him the power of life and death, and that no other being can save.

2. Jesus has the power to forgive sins, Matthew 9:6. He claimed it, and worked a miracle to prove it. If he had it then, he has it still. To him, then, the lost sinner may come with the assurance that as he freely "then" exerted that power, so he is ever the same, and will do it now.

3. Jesus Christ is divine. Nothing could prove it more clearly than the power to pardon sinners. Only God can pronounce what shall be done with transgressors of His law, Isaiah 43:25. He that claims this right must be either an impostor or God. But no impostor ever yet worked a real miracle. Jesus was therefore divine. He can save to the uttermost all who come to God through him.

4. We see here the proper rule to be observed in mingling with the wicked, Matthew 9:10-13. It should not be of choice or for pleasure. We should not enter into their follies or vices. We should not seek enjoyment in their society. We should mingle with them simply to transact necessary business and to do them good, and no further, Psalm 1:1.

5. In the case of the ruler and the woman that was diseased, we have a strong instance of the nature of faith. They came not doubting the power of Jesus - fully assured that he was able to heal. So all genuine believers come to him. They do not doubt his power or willingness to save them. Poor, and lost, and ruined by sin, and in danger of eternal death, they come. His heart is open. He puts forth his power, and the soul is healed, and the sin and danger gone.

6. The young must die, and may die in early life, Matthew 9:18. Very short graves are in every burying-ground. Thousands and millions, not more than twelve years of age, have died. Thousands and millions, not more than twelve years of age, are yet to die. Many of these may be taken from Sunday schools. Their class, their teacher - their parents, sisters, brothers - must be left, and the child be carried to the grave. Many children of that age that have been in Sunday schools have died happy. They loved the Saviour, and they were ready to go to him. Jesus was near to them when they died, and they are now in heaven. Of every child we may ask, Are you ready also to go when God shall call you? Do you love the Lord Jesus, so as to be willing to leave all your friends here and go to him?

7. Jesus can raise up the dead, and he will raise up all that love him, Matthew 9:25. Many little children will be raised up to meet him in the last great day. He shall come in the clouds. The angel shall sound a trumpet, and all the dead shall hear. All shall be raised up and go to meet him. All that loved him here will go to heaven. All who were wicked, and did not love him here, will go to everlasting suffering.

8. We see the duty of praying for the conversion of the world, Matthew 9:37-38. The harvest is as plenteous as it was in the time of Christ. More than 600 million are still without the gospel, and there are not still many

laborers to go into the harvest. The world is full of wickedness, and only God can qualify those who shall go and preach the gospel to the dark nations of the earth. Without ceasing we ought to entreat of God to pity the nations, and to send to them faithful people who shall tell them of a dying Saviour.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples … - This account of sending the apostles forth is recorded also in Mark 6:7-11, and Luke 9:1-6. Mark says that he sent them out two and two. This was a kind arrangement, that each one might have a companion, and that thus they might visit more places and accomplish more labor than if they were all together. These twelve were the original number of apostles. The word "apostle" means one that is "sent," and was given to them because they were "sent forth" to preach the gospel. They were ambassadors of Christ. To this number Matthias was afterward added, to supply the place of Judas Acts 1:26, and Paul was specially called to be an apostle to the Gentiles, Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 15:8-9; Galatians 1:1. In all, therefore, there were 14 apostles.

In selecting "twelve" at first, it is probable that the Saviour was somewhat guided by the number of the tribes of Israel. Twelve was, with them, a well-known number, and it was natural that he should select one for every tribe. Their office was clearly made known. They were to heal the sick, cast out devils, raise the dead, preach the gospel. They were to be with him to receive his instructions, to learn the nature of his religion, be witnesses to his resurrection, and then to bear his gospel around the globe. The number twelve was the best number for these purposes that could be selected. It was sufficiently "large" to answer the purpose of testimony, and it was "so small" as not to tend to disorder, or that they could easily be divided into parties or factions. They were not learned men, and could not be supposed to spread their religion by art or talents. They were not men of wealth, and could not bribe men to follow them. They were not men of rank and office, and could not compel people to believe. They were just such men as are always found the best witnesses in courts of justice - plain men, of good sense, of fair character, of great honesty, and with favorable opportunities of ascertaining the facts to which they bore witness. Such men everybody believes, and especially when they are willing to lay down their lives to prove their sincerity.

It was important that the Saviour should choose them early in his ministry, in order that they might be fully acquainted with him; might

treasure up his instructions, and observe his manner of life and his person, so that, by having been long acquainted with him, they might be able to testify to his identity and be competent witnesses of his resurrection. No witnesses were ever so well qualified to give testimony as they, and none ever gave so much evidence of their sincerity as they did. See Acts 1:21-22.

Verse 2

Now the names of the twelve apostles - The account of their being called is more fully given in Mark 3:13-18, and Luke 6:12-19. Each of those evangelists has recorded the circumstances of their appointment. They agree in saying it was done on a mountain; and, according to Luke, it was done before the sermon on the mount was delivered, perhaps on the same mountain, near Capernaum. Luke adds that the night previous had been spent "in prayer" to God. See the notes at Luke 6:12.

Simon, who is called Peter - The word "Peter" means a rock. He was also called Cephas, John 1:42; 1 Corinthians 1:12; 1 Corinthians 3:22; 1 Corinthians 15:5; Galatians 2:9. This was a Syro-Chaldaic word signifying the same as Peter. This name was given probably in reference to the "resoluteness and firmness" which he was to exhibit in preaching the gospel. Before the Saviour's death he was rash, impetuous, and unstable. Afterward, as all history affirms, he was firm, zealous, steadfast, and immovable. The tradition is that he was at last crucified at Rome with his head downward, thinking it too great an honor to die as his Master did. See the notes at John 21:18. There is no certain proof, however, that this occurred at Rome, and no absolute knowledge as to the place where he died.

James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother - This James was killed by Herod in a persecution, Acts 12:2. The other James, the son of Alpheus, was stationed at Jerusalem, and was the author of the epistle that bears his name. See Galatians 1:19; Galatians 2:9; Acts 15:13. A James is mentioned Galatians 1:19 as "the Lord's brother." It has not been easy to ascertain why he was thus called. He is here called the son of "Alpheus," that is, of Cleophas, John 19:25. Alpheus and Cleophas were but different ways of writing and pronouncing the same name. This Mary, called the mother of James and Joses, is called the wife of Cleophas, John 19:25.

Verse 3

Philip and Bartholomew - These two were probably sent out together. Philip was a native of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. He is not the same as Philip the evangelist, mentioned in Acts 6:5; Acts 21:8. Bartholomew (literally, "the son of Tolmai").

Thomas - Literally, "a twin," in reference to which he is also called "Didymus," John 11:16. For his character, see the notes at John 20:25. "And Matthew the publican." See the notes at Matthew 9:9. "James the son of Alpheus." See the note above.

And Lebbeus, called Thaddeus - These two words have the same signification in Hebrew. Luke calls him "Judas," by a slight change from the name "Thaddeus." Such changes are common in all writings.

Verse 4

Simon the Canaanite - Luke calls him "Simon Zelotes," the zealous. It is probable that he was one of a small sect of the Jews called "Zealots," on account of special zeal in religion. His native place was probably "Cana." Afterward he might with propriety be called by either title.

Judas Iscariot - It is probable this name was given to him to designate his native place. Carioth was a small town in the tribe of Judah.

Verse 5

Into the way of the Gentiles - That is, among the Gentiles, or nowhere but among the Jews. The full time for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles was not come. It was proper that it should be first preached to the Jews, the ancient covenant people of God, and the people among whom the Messiah was born. Afterward he gave them a charge to go into all the world, Matthew 28:19.

And into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not - The Samaritans occupied the country formerly belonging to the tribe of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh. This region was situated between Jerusalem and Galilee; so that in passing from the one to the other, it was a direct course to pass through Samaria. The capital of the country was Samaria, formerly a large and splendid city. It was situated about 15 miles to the northwest of the city of Shechem or Sychar (see the notes at John 4:5), and about 40 miles to the north of Jerusalem. For a description of this city, see the notes at Isaiah 28:1. Sychar or Shechem was also a city within the limits of Samaria.

This people was formerly composed of a few of the ten tribes and a mixture of foreigners. When the ten tribes were carried away into captivity

to Babylon, the King of Assyria sent people from Cutha, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim to inhabit their country, 2 Kings 17:24; Ezra 4:2-11. These people at first worshipped the idols of their own nations; but, being troubled with lions, which had increased greatly while the country remained uninhabited, they supposed it was because they had not honored the God of the country. A Jewish priest was therefore sent to them from Babylon to instruct them in the Jewish religion. They were instructed partially from the books of Moses, but still retained many of their old rites and idolatrous customs, and embraced a religion made up of Judaism and idolatry, 2 Kings 17:26-28.

The grounds of difference between the two nations were the following:

1. The Jews, after their return from Babylon, set about rebuilding their temple. The Samaritans offered to aid them. The Jews, however, perceiving that it was not from a love of true religion, but that they might obtain a part of the favors granted to the Jews by Cyrus, rejected their offer. The consequence was, that a stare of long and bitter animosity arose between them and the Jews.

2. While Nehemiah was engaged in building the walls of Jerusalem, the Samaritans used every art to thwart him in his undertaking, Nehemiah 6:1-14.

3. The Samaritans at length obtained leave of the Persian monarch to build a temple for themselves. This was erected on "Mount Gerizim," and they strenuously contended that that was the place designated by Moses as the place where the nation should worship. Sanballat, the leader of the Samaritans, constituted his son-in-law, Manasses, high priest. The religion of the Samaritans thus became perpetuated, and an irreconcilable hatred arose between them and the Jews. See the notes at John 4:20.

4. Afterward Samaria became a place of resort for all the outlaws of Judea. They received willingly all the Jewish criminals and refugees from justice. The violators of the Jewish laws, and those who had been excommunicated, betook themselves for safety to Samaria, and greatly

increased their numbers and the hatred which subsisted between the two nations.

5. The Samaritans received only the five books of Moses, and rejected the writings of the prophets and all the Jewish traditions. From these causes arose an irreconcilable difference between them, so that the Jews regarded them as the worst of the human race John 8:48, and had no dealings with them, John 4:9.

Our Saviour, however, preached the gospel to them afterward Acts 8:25. The gospel was, however, first preached to the Jews.

Verse 6

But go rather to the lost sheep … - That is, to the Jews. He regarded them as wandering and lost, like sheep straying without a shepherd. They had been the chosen people of God; they had long looked for the Messiah; and it was proper that the gospel should be first offered to them.

Verse 7

The kingdom of heaven is at hand - Or, more literally, the "reign" of heaven, or of God, draws near. See the notes at Matthew 3:2.

Verse 8

Freely ye have received, freely give - That is, they were not to sell their favors of healing, preaching, etc. They were not to make a money-making business of it, to bargain specifically to heal for so much, and to cast out devils for so much. This, however, neither then nor afterward precluded them from receiving a competent support. See Luke 10:7; 1 Corinthians 9:8-14; 1 Timothy 5:18.

Verses 9-15

See also Mark 6:8-11, and Luke 9:3-5. In both these places the substance of this account is given, though not so particularly as in Matthew. The general subject is the instructions given to the apostles.

Matthew 10:9

Provide neither gold nor silver, nor brass - This prohibition of gold, silver, and brass is designed to prevent their providing money for their journey.

Pieces of money of "small value" were made of brass.

In your purses - Literally, in your girdles (belts). See the notes at Matthew 5:38-41. A "girdle" or "sash" was an indispensable part of the dress. This girdle was made "hollow," and answered the purpose of a purse. It was convenient, easily borne, and safe.

Matthew 10:10

Nor scrip - That is, knapsack.

This was made of skin or coarse cloth, to carry provisions in. It was commonly hung around the neck.

Neither two coats - See the notes at Matthew 5:40.

Neither shoes - The original is the word commonly rendered sandals. See the notes at Matthew 3:11.

Mark says, in recording this discourse, "but be shod with sandals." Between him and Matthew there is an apparent contradiction, but there is really no difference. According to Matthew, Jesus does not forbid their "wearing" the sandals which they probably had on, but only forbids their "supplying themselves with more," or with "superfluous ones." Instead of making provision for their feet when their "present" shoes were worn out, they were to trust to Providence to be supplied, and "go as they were." The meaning of the two evangelists may be thus expressed: "Do not procure anything more for your journey than you have on. Go as you are, shod with sandals, without making any more preparation."

Nor yet staves - In the margin, in all the ancient versions, and in the common Greek text, this is in the singular number - "nor yet" a staff. But Mark says that they might have a "staff:" "Jesus commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only." To many this would appear to be a contradiction. Yet the "spirit" of the instruction, the main thing that the writers aim at, is the same. That was, that they were "to go just as they were, to trust to Providence, and not to spend any time in making preparation for their journey. Some of them, probably, when he addressed them, "had staves," and some had not. To those who "had," he did not say that they should throw them away, as the instructions he was giving them might seem to require, but he suffered them to take them (Mark). To those who had not, he said they should not spend time in procuring them (Matthew), but "they were all to go just as they were."

The workman is worthy of his meat - This implies that they were to expect a proper supply for their needs from those who were benefited. They were not to make "bargain and sale" of the power of working miracles, but

they were to expect competent support from preaching the gospel, and that not merely as a gift, but because they were "worthy" of it, and had a right to it.

Matthew 10:11

Who in it is worthy - That is, who in it sustains such a character that he will be disposed to show you hospitality and to treat you kindly.

This shows that they were not needlessly to throw themselves in the way of insult.

And there abide - There remain; as Luke adds, "Go not from house to house." They were to content themselves with one house; not to wander about in the manner of vagrants and mendicants; not to appear to be people of idleness and fond of change; not to seem dissatisfied with the hospitality of the people; but to show that they had regular, important business; that they valued their time; that they were disposed to give themselves to labor, and were intent only on the business for which he had sent them. If ministers of the gospel are useful, it will be by not spending their time in idle chit-chat, and wandering around as if they had nothing to do, but in an honest and laborious improvement of their time in study, in prayer, in preaching, and in visiting their people.

Matthew 10:12

And when ye come into a house, salute it - The word "house" here evidently means "family," as it does in the following verse.

See also Matthew 12:25, and John 4:53; "And himself believed and his whole house." The apostles were directed to salute the family - to show them the customary tokens of respect, and to treat them with civility. Religion never requires or permits its friends to outrage the common rules of social contact. It demands of them to exhibit to all the customary and proper tokens of respect, according to their age and station, 1 Peter 2:12-25; 1 Peter 3:8-11; Philemon 4:8. For the mode of salutation, see the notes at Luke 10:4-5.

Matthew 10:13

If the house be worthy - That is, if the "family" be worthy, or be willing to receive you as my disciples.

Let your peace come upon it - That is, let the peace or happiness which you seek or for which you pray in saluting it (see Luke 10:5), come upon it; or seek their peace and happiness by prayer, instruction, by remaining with them, and imparting to them the blessings of the gospel.

But if it be not worthy … - If the family be unwilling to receive you; if they show themselves unfriendly to you and your message.

Let your peace return to you - This is a Hebrew mode of saying that your peace shall not come upon it, Psalm 35:13. It is a mode of speaking derived from bestowing a gift. If people were willing to receive it, they derived the benefit from it; if not, then of course the present came back or remained in the hand of the giver. So Christ figuratively speaks of the peace which their labor would confer. If received kindly and hospitably by the people, they would confer on them most valuable blessings. If rejected and persecuted, the blessings which they sought for others would come upon themselves. they would reap the benefit of being cast out and persecuted for their Master‘s sake, Matthew 5:10.

Matthew 10:14

Shake off the dust of your feet - The Jews taught uniformly that the dust of the Gentiles was impure, and was to be shaken off.

To shake off the dust from the feet, therefore, was a significant act, denoting that they regarded them as impure, profane, and paganish, and that they declined any further connection with them. It is recorded that this was actually done by some of the apostles. See Acts 13:51; Acts 18:6.

Matthew 10:15

It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom … - The cities here mentioned, together with Admah and Zeboim, were destroyed by fire and brimstone on account of their great wickedness.

They occupied the place afterward covered by the Dead Sea, bounding Palestine on the southeast, Genesis 19:24-25. Christ said that their punishment will be more “tolerable” - that is, more easily borne - than that of the people who reject his gospel. The reason is, that they were not favored with so much light and instruction. See Matthew 11:23-24; Luke 12:47-48. Sodom and Gomorrah are often referred to as signal instances of divine vengeance, and as sure proofs that the wicked shall not go unpunished. See 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 1:7.

Verse 16

As sheep in the midst of wolves - That is, I send you, inoffensive and harmless, into a cold, unfriendly, and cruel world. Your innocence will not be a protection.

Be wise as serpents … - Serpents have always been an emblem of wisdom and cunning, Genesis 3:1. The Egyptians used the serpent in their hieroglyphics as a symbol of wisdom. Probably the thing in which Christ directed his followers to imitate the serpent was in its caution in avoiding danger. No animal equals them in the rapidity and skill which they evince in escaping danger. So said Christ to his disciples, You need caution and wisdom in the midst of a world that will seek your lives. He directs them, also, to be harmless, not to provoke danger, not to do injury, and thus make their fellow-men justly enraged against them. Doves are, and always have been, a striking emblem of innocence. Most people would foolishly destroy a serpent, be it ever so harmless, yet few are so hard-hearted as to kill a dove.

Verse 17

But beware of men - That is, be on your guard against people who are like wolves, Matthew 10:16. Do not run unnecessarily into danger. Use suitable prudence and caution, and do not needlessly endanger your lives.

Councils - The word used here commonly signifies the great council of the nation, the Sanhedrin. See the notes at Matthew 5:22. Here it seems to refer to any judicial tribunal, of which there were some in every village.

They will scourge you in their synagogues - Scourging, or "whipping," is often mentioned in the New Testament as a mode of punishment. The law of Moses directed that the number of stripes should not exceed 40, but might be any number less, at the discretion of the judge, Deuteronomy 25:2-3. The person who was sentenced to scourging was formerly laid upon the ground, and the blows inflicted on his back in the presence of the judge. In later times the criminal was tied to a low post. Scourging is still practiced in the East, but the blows are commonly inflicted on the soles of the feet. It is called the "bastinado."

The instrument formerly used was a "rod." Afterward they employed thongs or lashes attached to the rod. To make the blows severe and more painful, they sometimes fastened sharp points of iron or pieces of lead in the thongs. These were called "scorpions," 1 Kings 12:11. The law was express that the number of stripes should not exceed forty. The Jews, to secure greater accuracy in counting, used a scourge with three lashes, which inflicted three stripes at once. With this the criminal was struck thirteen times, making the number of blows thirty-nine. Paul was five times scourged in this way. See 2 Corinthians 11:24.

The Romans did not feel themselves bound by the law of the Jews in regard to the "number" of stripes, but inflicted them at pleasure. Thus our Saviour was scourged until he was so weak as not to be able to bear his cross. This was often done in the synagogue. See Matthew 23:34; Acts 22:19; Acts 26:11.

Verse 18

And ye shall be brought … - This prediction was completely and abundantly fulfilled, Acts 5:26; Acts 12:1-4; Acts 23:33; Acts 26:1, Acts 26:28, Acts 26:30. Peter is said to have been brought before Nero, and John before Domitian, Roman emperors; and others before Parthian, Scythian, and Indian kings. They were to stand there to bear a testimony against them; or, as it might be rendered, to them. That is, they were to be "witnesses to them" of the great facts and doctrines of the Christian religion; and if they rejected Christianity, they would be witnesses "against" them in the day of judgment. The fulfillment of this prophecy is a signal evidence that Christ possessed a knowledge of the future. Few things were more improbable when this was uttered than that the fishermen of Galilee would stand before the illustrious and mighty monarchs of the East and the West.

Verse 19-20

Take no thought - That is, be not anxious or unduly solicitous. See the notes at Matthew 6:25. This was a full promise that they should be inspired, and was a most seasonable consolation. Poor, and ignorant, and obscure fishermen would naturally be solicitous what they should say before the great men of the earth. Eastern people regarded kings as raised far above common mortals - as approaching to divinity. How consoling, then, the assurance that God would aid them and speak within them!

Verse 21

And the brother shall deliver up the brother … - Were there no evidence that this had been done, it would scarcely be "credible." The ties which bind brothers and sisters, and parents and children together, are so strong that it could scarcely be believed that division of sentiment on religious subjects would cause them to forget these tender relations. Yet history assures us that this has been often done. If this be so, then how inexpressibly awful must be the malignity of the human heart by nature against religion! Nothing else but this dreadful opposition to God and his

gospel ever has induced or ever can induce people to violate the most tender relations, and consign the best friends to torture, racks, and flames. It adds to the horrors of this, that those who were put to death in persecution were tormented in the most awful modes that human ingenuity could devise. They were crucified; were thrown into boiling oil; were burned at the stake; were roasted slowly over coals; were compelled to drink melted lead; were torn in pieces by beasts of prey; were covered with pitch and set on fire. Yet, dreadful as this prediction was, it was fulfilled; and, incredible as it seems, parents and children, husbands and wives, were found wicked enough to deliver up each other to these cruel modes of death on account of attachment to the gospel. Such is the opposition of the heart of man to the gospel! That hostility which will overcome the strong ties of natural affection, and which will be satisfied with nothing else to show its power, can be no slight opposition to the gospel of God.

Verse 22

Ye shall be hated of all men - That is, of all kinds of people. The human heart would be opposed to them, because it is opposed to Christ.

But he that endureth to the end … - That is, to the end of life, be it longer or shorter. He that bears all these unspeakable sufferings, and who does not shrink and apostatize, will give decisive evidence of attachment to me, and shall enter into heaven. See Revelation 3:21-22.

Verse 23

When they persecute … - The apostles were not permitted to "throw away" their lives. Where they could preserve them without denying their Lord, they were to do it. Yet all the commands of Christ, as well as their conduct, show that they were rather to lay down their lives than deny their Saviour. We are to preserve our lives by all proper means, but we are rather to die than save ourselves by doing anything wrong.

Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel … - That is, in fleeing from persecutors from one city to another, you shall not have gone to every city in Judea until the end of the Jewish economy shall occur. See the notes at Matthew 24:28-30. By "the coming of the Son of Man," that is, of "Christ," is probably meant the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened about thirty years after this was spoken. The words are often used in this sense. See Matthew 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27, Luke 21:32.

Verse 24-25

The disciple is not above his master … - That is, you must expect the same treatment which I have received. They have called me, your Master and Teacher, Beelzebub, the prince of the devils (see Matthew 12:24; Luke 11:15; John 8:48), and you must expect that they will call all of the family by the same name. "Beelzebub" was a god of the Ekronites. See 2 Kings 1:2. The word literally means "the god of flies," so called because this idol was supposed to protect them from the numerous swarms of flies with which that country abounded. The correct reading here, as in Luke 11:15, Luke 11:18-19; Mark 3:22, is supposed to be, not "Beelzebub," but "Beelzebul" (Griesbach, Hahn, Robinson, *Lexicon*) an Aramean form of the word meaning the "god of dung" or "filth." The name, thus altered by the Jews by changing a single letter, was given to Satan to express supreme contempt and aversion. The Jews seem to have first given to Satan the name of a pagan god, and then, to express their sense of the character of Satan, to have changed that name by altering a single letter so as to express their aversion in the most emphatic manner. By giving the name to Christ, they poured upon him the greatest possible abuse and contempt.

Verse 26

Fear them not … - He encouraged them by the assurance that God would protect them. and that their truth and innocence should yet be vindicated. It is probable that the declaration, There is nothing covered, etc., was a proverb among the Jews. By it our Saviour meant that their "innocence," their "principles," and their "integrity," though then the world might not acknowledge them, in due time would be revealed, or God would vindicate them and the world would do them justice. They were, then, to be willing to be unknown, despised, persecuted for a time, with the assurance that their true characters would yet be understood and their sufferings appreciated.

Verse 27

What I say to you in darkness … - That is, in "secret," in "private," in "confidence. The private instructions which I give you while with me do you proclaim publicly, on the "house-top." The "house-top," the flat roof, was a public, conspicuous place. See 2 Samuel 16:22. See also the notes at Matthew 9:1-8.

Verse 28

Them which kill the body - That is, people, who have no power to injure the soul, the immortal part. The body is a small matter in comparison

with the soul. Temporal death is a slight thing compared with eternal death. He directs them, therefore, not to be alarmed at the prospect of temporal death, but to fear God, who can destroy both soul and body forever. This passage proves that the bodies of the wicked will be raised up to be punished forever.

In hell - See the notes at Matthew 5:22.

Verses 29-31

Are not two sparrows … - He encourages them not to fear by two striking considerations: first, that God takes care of sparrows, the smallest and least valuable of birds; and, secondly, by the fact that God numbers even the hairs of the head. The argument is, that if He takes care of birds of the least value, if He regards so small a thing as the hair of the head, and numbers it, He will certainly protect and provide for you. You need not, therefore, fear what man can do to you.

Sparrows - The sparrows are well-known birds in Syria. They are small; they are found in great numbers; they are tame, intrusive, and nestle everywhere. "They are extremely pertinacious in asserting their right of possession, and have not the least reverence for any place or thing. David alludes to these characteristics of the sparrow in Psalm 84:1-12, when he complains that they had appropriated even the altars of God for their nests. Concerning himself, he says, I watch, and am as a sparrow upon the housetop, Psalm 102:7. When one of them has lost its mate - a matter of everyday occurrence - he will sit on the housetop alone, and lament by the hour his sad bereavement. These birds are snared and caught in great numbers, but, as they are small, and not much relished for food, five sparrows may still be sold for two farthings; and when we see their countless numbers, and the eagerness with which they are destroyed as a worthless nuisance, we can better appreciate the assurance that our heavenly Father, who takes care of them, so that not one can fall to the ground without his notice, will surely take care of us, who are of more value than many sparrows." - "*The Land and the Book* " (Thomson), vol. i. pp. 52,53.

Farthing - See the notes at Matthew 5:26.

Without your Father - That is, God, your Father, guides and directs its fall. It falls only with His permission, and where He chooses.

Matthew 10:30

The very hairs of your head are all numbered - That is, each one has exercised the care and attention of God.

He has fixed the number; and, though of small importance, yet he does not think it beneath him to determine how few or how many they shall be. He will therefore take care of you.

Verse 32-33

Whosoever therefore shall confess me … - The same word in the original is translated "confess" and "profess," 1 Timothy 6:12-13; 2 John 1:7; Romans 10:10. It means to acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ, and our dependence on him for salvation, and our attachment to him, in every proper manner. This profession may be made in uniting with a church, at the communion, in conversation, and in conduct. The Scriptures mean, by a profession of religion, an exhibition of it in every circumstance of the life and before all people. It is not merely in one act that we must do it, but in every act. We must be ashamed neither of the person, the character, the doctrines, nor the requirements of Christ. If we are; if we deny him in these things before people; if we are unwilling to express our attachment to him in every way possible, then it is right that he should "disown all connection with us," or deny us before God, and he will do it.

Verses 34-36

Think not that I am come … - This is taken from Micah 7:6. Christ did not here mean to say that the object of his coming was to produce discord and contention, for he was the Prince of Peace, Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 11:6; Luke 2:14; but he means to say that such would be one of the effects of his coming. One part of a family that was opposed to Him would set themselves against those who believed in him. The wickedness of men, and not the religion of the gospel, is the cause of this hostility. It is unnecessary to say that no prophecy has been more strikingly fulfilled; and it will continue to be fulfilled until all unite in obeying his commandments. Then his religion will produce universal peace. Compare the notes at Matthew 10:21.

But a sword - The sword is an instrument of death, and to send a sword is the same as to produce hostility and war.

Verse 37

He that loveth father or mother … - The meaning of this is clear. Christ must be loved supremely, or he is not loved at all. If we are not

willing to give up all earthly possessions, and forsake all earthly friends, and if we do not obey him rather than all others, we have no true attachment to him.

Is not worthy of me - Is not appropriate to be regarded as a follower of me, or is not a Christian.

Verse 38

And he that taketh not his cross … - When persons were condemned to be crucified, a part of the sentence was that they should carry the cross on which they were to die to the place of execution. Thus, Christ carried his, until he fainted from fatigue and exhaustion. See notes at Matthew 27:31. The cross was usually composed of two rough beams of wood, united in the form of this figure of a cross It was an instrument of death. See the notes at Matthew 27:31-32. To carry it was burdensome, was disgraceful, was trying to the feelings, was an addition to the punishment. So "to carry the cross" is a figurative expression, denoting that we must endure whatever is burdensome, or is trying, or is considered disgraceful, in following Christ. It consists simply in doing our duty, let the people of the world think of it or speak of it as they may. It does not consist in making trouble for ourselves, or doing things merely "to be opposed;" it is doing just what is required of us in the Scriptures, let it produce whatever shame, disgrace, or pain it may. This every follower of Jesus is required to do.

Verse 39

He that findeth his life … - The word "life" in this passage is used evidently in two senses. The meaning may be expressed thus: He that is anxious to save his "temporal" life, or his comfort and security here, shall lose "eternal" life, or shall fail of heaven. He that is willing to risk or lose his comfort and "life" here for my sake, shall find "life" everlasting, or shall be saved. The manner of speaking is similar to that where he said, "Let the dead bury their dead." See notes at Matthew 8:22.

Verses 40-42

He that receiveth you … - In all these three illustrations Christ meant to teach substantially the same thing - that he that would entertain kindly or treat with hospitality himself, his disciples, a prophet, or a righteous man, would show that he approved their character, and should not fail of proper reward. To receive in the "name" of a prophet is to receive "as" a prophet; to do proper honour to his character, and to evince attachment to the cause in which he was engaged.

Matthew 10:42

These little ones - By "these little ones" are clearly meant his disciples.

They are called "little ones" to denote their want of wealth, rank, learning, and whatever the world calls "great." They were "little" in the estimation of the world and in their own estimation. They were "learners," not yet "teachers;" and they made no pretensions to what attracts the admiration of mankind.

A cup of cold" water "only - Few would refuse a cup of cold water to any man, if thirsty and weary, and yet not all people would give it to such a one "because he was a Christian," or to express attachment to the Lord Jesus. In bestowing it on a man "because he was a Christian," he would show love to the Saviour himself; in the other case he would give it from mere sympathy or kindness, evincing no regard for the Christian, the Christian's Master, or his cause. In one case he would show that he loved the cause of religion; in the other case, he would not.

Remarks On Matthew 10:7-8. The apostles were to confer the highest favors on mankind without reward. Like air, and sunbeams, and water - gifts of God - they are without price. The poor are welcome; the rich, unaided by their wealth, are welcome also; the wide world may freely come and partake the rich blessings or the gospel of peace.

3. Ministers of the gospel, and all the followers of Jesus, should depend on the providence of God for support and the supply of their wants, Matthew 10:9-10. He sent his apostles into a cold, unfriendly world, and he took care of them. So none that trust Him shall lack. The righteous shall not be forsaken. The God who has in His hand all the pearls of the ocean, the gold in the heart of the earth, and the cattle on a thousand hills, and that feeds the raven when it cries, will hear the cries of His children and supply their needs.

4. We see the duty of treating kindly the messengers of salvation, Matthew 10:11-13. Christ expected that in every city and town they would find some who would welcome them. He promised the reward of a prophet to those who should receive a prophet, and assured those of his favor who had nothing better to bestow than even a cup of cold water. The ministers of religion are sent to benefit the world. It is but right that in that world they should be kindly received, and that their wants should be supplied.

5. The guilt of rejecting the gospel, Matthew 10:14-15. It is not a small matter to reject an offer of heaven. A palace, a throne, a rich earthly inheritance, might be rejected, and, compared with rejecting the gospel, it would be a trifle. But life eternal is not like thrones, and gold, and palaces. This lost, all is lost. The gospel rejected, all is gone. Nor hope nor happiness awaits him that hath spurned this offer. God requires everyone to believe the gospel; and woe, woe, a greater woe than befell guilty Sodom and Gomorrah, to him who rejects it.

6. Judgment will certainly overtake the guilty, Matthew 10:15. It fell upon Sodom, and it will fall on all transgressors. None shall escape. Damnation may slumber long over the wicked, and they may long mock the God of truth, but in due time their feet will slide, and the whole creation shall not be able to save them from woe. How dangerous, how awful is the condition of an impenitent sinner!

7. We are to take proper care of our lives, Matthew 10:23. The apostles were to flee from danger, when they could do it without denying their Lord. So are we. He that throws away his life when it might have been, and ought to have been preserved, is a self-murderer. He that exposes himself when duty does not require it, and whose life pays the forfeit, goes before God "rushing unbidden into his Maker's presence," nor can he be held guiltless.

8. We are to persevere "in our duty" through all trials, Matthew 10:23. Neither the world, nor pain, nor poverty, nor persecution. nor death is to appal us. He that endures to the end shall be saved. We have but one thing to do - to do the will of God, to "be Christians everywhere," and to leave the event with him.

9. God exercises a particular providence, Matthew 10:29-30. He watches the falling sparrow, numbers the hairs of the head, and for the same reason he presides over all other things. The Lord reigneth, says the Psalmist, let the earth rejoice, Psalm 97:1.

10. The duty of making a profession of religion, Matthew 10:32-33. It must be done in a proper way, or Christ will disown us in the day of

judgment. It is impossible to neglect it, and have evidence of piety. If ashamed of him, he will be ashamed of us.

11. Religion is easy, and easily tested, Matthew 10:40-42. What more easy than to give a cup of water to a stranger, and what more easy than to know from what motive we do it! Yet how many are there who, while they would do the thing, would yet "lose eternal life" rather than do it with a view of honoring Christ or showing attachment to him! How dreadful is the opposition of the human heart to religion! How amazing that man will not do the slightest act to secure an interest in the kingdom of God!

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

And it came to pass … - The directions to the apostles were given in the vicinity of Capernaum. The Saviour went from thence to preach in their cities; that is, in the cities in the vicinity of Capernaum, or in Galilee. He did not yet go into Judea.

Verse 2

The account contained in this chapter of Matthew, to the Matthew 11:19, is found, with no material variation, in Matthew 14:3-4.

It is not certainly known why John sent to Jesus. It might have been to satisfy his disciples that he was the Messiah; or he might have been desirous of ascertaining for himself whether this person, of whom he heard so much, was the same one whom he had baptized, and whom he knew to be the Messiah. See John 1:29.

Verse 3

Art thou he that should come? - That is, Art thou the Messiah, or the Christ? The Jews expected a Saviour. His coming had been long foretold, Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 9:1-6; Isaiah 11:1-5; Isaiah 35:4-6; Isaiah 53:1-12; Daniel 9:24-27. See also John 6:14. Compare Deuteronomy 18:18-19. In common language, therefore, he was familiarly described as "he that was to come." Luke adds here Luke 7:21, that at the time when the messengers came to him, Jesus "cured many of their infirmities, and plagues, and of evil spirits." An answer was therefore ready to the inquiries of John.

Verse 4-5

Go and show John again … - Jesus referred them for an answer to these miracles. They were proof that he was the Messiah. Prophets had indeed performed miracles, but no prophet had performed so many, or any so important. Jesus, moreover, performed them "in his own name" and by his own power. Prophets had done it by the power of God. Jesus, therefore, performed the works which none but the Messiah could do, and John might easily infer that he was the Christ.

The poor have the gospel preached to them - It was predicted of the Messiah that he would preach good tidings to the meek Isaiah 61:1; or, as it is rendered in the New Testament, "He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," Luke 4:18. By this, therefore, also, John might infer

that he was truly the Messiah. It adds to the force of this testimony that the "poor" have always been overlooked by Pharisees and philosophers. No sect of philosophers had condescended to notice them before Christ, and no system of religion had attempted to instruct them before the Christian religion. In all other schemes the poor have been passed by as unworthy of notice.

Verse 6

And blessed is he … - The word "offence" means a "stumbling-block." See the notes at Matthew 5:29. This verse might be rendered, "Happy is he to whom I shall not prove a stumbling-block." That is, happy is he who shall not take offence at my poverty and lowliness of life, so as to reject me and my doctrine. Happy is the one who can, notwithstanding that poverty and obscurity, see the evidence that I am the Messiah, and follow me. It is not improbable that John wished Jesus publicly to proclaim himself as the Christ, instead of seeking retirement. Jesus replied that he gave sufficient evidence of that by his works; that a man might discover it if he chose; and that he was blessed or happy who should appreciate that evidence and embrace him as the Christ, in spite of his humble manner of life.

Verse 7

And as they departed … - Jesus took occasion, from the inquiries made by John's disciples, to instruct the people respecting the true character of John. Multitudes had gone out to hear him when he preached in the desert Matthew 3, and it is probable that many had been attracted by the novelty of his appearance or doctrines, or had gone simply to see and hear a man of singular habits and opinions. Probably many who followed Christ had been of that number. He took occasion, therefore, by some striking questions, to examine the motives by which they had been drawn to his ministry.

A reed shaken with the wind? - The region of country in which John preached, being overflowed annually by the Jordan, produced great quantities of "reeds" or "canes," of a light fragile nature, easily shaken by the wind. They were therefore an image of a light, changing, inconstant man. John's sending to Christ to inquire his character might have led some to suppose that he was changing and inconstant, like a reed. He had once acknowledged him to be the Messiah, and now, being in prison and sending to him to inquire into the fact, they might have supposed he had no firmness

or fixed principles. Jesus, by asking this question, declared that, notwithstanding this appearance, this was not the character of John.

Verse 8

Clothed in soft raiment - The kind of raiment here denoted was the light, thin clothing worn by effeminate persons. It was made commonly of fine linen, and was worn chiefly for ornament. Christ asks them whether they were attracted by anything like that. He says that the desert was not the place to expect it. In the palaces of kings, in the court of Herod, it might be expected, but not in the place where John was. This kind of clothing was an emblem of riches, splendor, effeminacy, feebleness of character. He meant to say that John was a man of a different stamp - coarse in his exterior, hardy in his character, firm in his virtue, suited to endure trials and privations, and thus qualified to be the forerunner of the toiling and suffering Messiah.

Verse 9

A prophet? - He next asks whether they went to see a prophet. They had regarded him as such, and Jesus tells them that in this their apprehensions of him were correct.

More than a prophet - Sustaining a character more elevated and sacred than the most distinguished of the ancient prophets. Those had been regarded as the most eminent of the prophets who had most clearly predicted the Messiah. Isaiah had been distinguished above all others for the sublimity of his writings, and the clearness with which he had foretold the coming of Christ. Yet John surpassed even him. He lived in the time of the Messiah himself. He predicted his coming with still more clarity. He was the instrument of introducing him to the nation. He was, therefore, first among the prophets.

Verse 10

For this is he … - The passage of Scripture here quoted is found in Malachi 3:1. The substance of it is contained also in Isaiah 40:3.

Prepare thy way - That is, to prepare "the people;" to make them ready, by proper instructions, to receive the Messiah.

Verse 11

Among them that are born of women - This is an emphatic way of saying that there "had never" been a greater "man" than John. See Job 14:1.

He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he - The phrase "kingdom of heaven" is used in many senses. See the notes at

Matthew 3:2. It here probably means, "in preaching the kingdom of God," or the gospel. It could hardly be affirmed of the obscurest and most ignorant Christian that he had clearer views than Isaiah or John; but of the apostles of the Saviour, of the first preachers who were with him and who heard his instructions, it might be said that they had more correct apprehensions than any of the ancient prophets, or than John.

Verse 12

And from the days of John … - That is, from the days when John began to preach. It is not known how long this was, but it was not probably more than a year. Our Saviour here simply states a fact. He says there was a great rush or a crowd pressing to hear John. Multitudes went out to hear him, as if they were about to take the kingdom of heaven by force. See Matthew 3:5. So, he says, it has continued. Since "the kingdom of heaven," or "the gospel," has been preached, there has been a "rush" to it. People have been "earnest" about it; they have come "pressing" to obtain the blessing, as if they would take it by violence. There is allusion here to the manner in which cities were taken. Besiegers "pressed" upon them with violence and demolished the walls. With such "earnestness" and "violence," he says, people had pressed around him and John since they began to preach. There is no allusion here to the manner in which individual sinners seek salvation, but it is a simple record of the fact that multitudes had thronged around him and John to hear the gospel.

Verse 13

All the prophets … - It is meant by this verse that John introduced a new dispensation; and that the old one, under which the prophets and the law of Moses were the guide, was closed when he preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. By the "law" is meant here the five books of Moses; by the prophets, the remainder of the books of the Old Testament.

Verse 14

If ye will receive it - This is a mode of speaking implying that the doctrine which he was about to state was different from their common views; that he was about to state something which varied from the common expectation, and which therefore they might be disposed to reject.

This is Elias … - That is, "Elijah." Elias is the "Greek" mode of writing the Hebrew word "Elijah." An account of him is found in the first and second books of Kings. He was a distinguished prophet, and was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire, 2 Kings 2:11. The prophet Malachi Malachi

4:5-6 predicted that "Elijah" would be sent before the coming of the Messiah to prepare the way for him. By this was evidently meant, not that he should appear "in person," but that one should appear with a striking resemblance to him; or, as Luke Luke 1:17 expresses it, "in the spirit and power of Elijah." But the Jews understood it differently. They supposed that Elijah would appear in person. They also supposed that Jeremiah and some other of the prophets would appear also to usher in the promised Messiah and to grace his advent. See Matthew 16:14; Matthew 17:10; John 1:21. This prevalent belief was the reason why he used the words "if ye will receive it," implying that the affirmation that "John" was the promised Elijah was a doctrine contrary to their expectation.

Verse 15

He that hath ears … - This expression is frequently used by Christ. It is a proverbial expression, implying that the highest attention should be given to what was spoken. The doctrine about John he regarded as of the greatest importance. He among you, says he, that has the faculty of understanding this, or that will believe that this is the Elijah spoken of, let him attend to it and remember it.

Verses 16-19

But whereunto shall I liken … - Christ proceeds to reprove the inconsistency and fickleness of that age of people. He says they were like children - nothing pleased them. He refers here to the "plays" or "sports" of children. Instrumental music, or piping and dancing, were used in marriages and festivals as a sign of joy. See the notes at Isaiah 5:11-12. Compare Job 21:11; 2 Samuel 6:14; Judges 11:34; Luke 15:25. Children imitate their parents and others, and act over in play what they see done by others. Among their childish sports, therefore, was probably an imitation of a wedding or festal occasion. We have seen also (the notes at Matthew 9:23) that funerals were attended with mournful music, and lamentation, and howling. It is not improbable that children also, in play: imitated a mournful funeral procession. One part are represented as sullen and dissatisfied. They would not enter into the play: nothing pleased them. The others complained of it. We have, said they, taken all pains to please you. We have piped to you, have played lively tunes, and have engaged in cheerful sports, but you would not join with us; and then we have played different games, and imitated the mourning at funerals, and you are equally sullen; "you have not lamented;" you have not joked with us. Nothing pleases you. So, said

Christ, is this generation of people. “John” came one way, “neither eating nor drinking,” abstaining as a Nazarite, and you were not pleased with him. I, the Son of man, have come in a different manner, “eating and drinking;” not practicing any austerity, but living like other people, and you are equally dissatisfied - nay, you are less pleased. You calumniate him, and abuse me for not doing the very thing which displeased you in John. Nothing pleases you. You are fickle, changeable, inconstant, and abusive.

Markets - Places to sell provisions; places of concourse, where also children flocked together for play.

We have piped - We have played on musical instruments. A “pipe” was a wind instrument of music often used by shepherds.

Neither eating nor drinking - That is, abstaining from some kinds of food and wine, as a Nazarite. It does not mean that he did not eat at all, but that he was remarkable for abstinence.

He hath a devil - He is actuated by a bad spirit. He is irregular, strange, and cannot be a good man.

The Son of man came eating and drinking - That is, living as others do; not practicing austerity; and they accuse him of being fond of excess, and seeking the society of the wicked.

Gluttonous - One given to excessive eating.

Wine-bibber - One who drinks much wine. Jesus undoubtedly lived according to the general customs of the people of his time. He did not affect singularity; he did not separate himself as a Nazarite; he did not practice severe austerities. He ate that which was common and drank that which was common. As wine was a common article of beverage among the people, he drank it. It was the pure juice of the grape, and for anything that can be proved, it was without fermentation. In regard to the kind of wine which was used, see the notes at John 2:10. No one should plead the example, at any rate, in favor of making use of the wines that are commonly used in this country - wines, many of which are manufactured here, and without a particle of the pure juice of the grape, and most of which are mixed with noxious drugs to give them color and flavor.

Wisdom is justified of her children - The children of wisdom are the wise - those who understand. The Saviour means that though that generation of Pharisees and fault-finders did not appreciate the conduct of John and himself, yet the “wise,” the candid - those who understood the reasons of their conduct - would approve of and do justice to it.

Verse 20

Then began he to upbraid … - That is, to reprove, to rebuke, to denounce heavy judgment.

Verse 21

Chorazin and Bethsaida - These were towns not far from Capernaum, but the precise situation is unknown. See "The Land and the Book" (Thomson), vol. ii. pp. 8,9. Bethsaida means literally a "house of hunting" or "a house of game," and it was probably situated on the banks of the Sea of Galilee, and supported itself by hunting or fishing. It was the residence of Philip, Andrew, and Peter, John 1:44. It was enlarged by Philip the Tetrarch, and called "Julia," after the emperor's daughter.

Tyre and Sidon - These were cities of Phoenicia, formerly very opulent, and distinguished for merchandise. They were situated on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea, and were in the western part of Judea. They were therefore well known to the Jews. Tyre is frequently mentioned in the Old Testament as being the place through which Solomon derived many of the materials for building the temple, 2 Chronicles 2:11-16. It was also a place against which one of the most important and pointed prophecies of Isaiah was directed. See the notes at Ezekiel 26:4-14. Both these cities were very ancient. Sidon was situated within the bounds of the tribe of Asher Joshua 19:28, but this tribe could never get possession of it, Judges 1:31. It was famous for its great trade and navigation. Its inhabitants were the first remarkable merchants in the world, and were much celebrated for their luxury. In the time of our Saviour it was probably a city of much splendor and extensive commerce. It is now called Seide, or Saide, and is far less populous and splendid than it was in the time of Christ. It was subdued successively by the Babylonians, Egyptians, and Romans, the latter of whom deprived it of its freedom.

Messrs. Fisk and King, American missionaries, passed through Sidon in the summer of 1823, and estimated the population, as others have estimated it, at 8,000 or 10,000; but Mr. Goodell, another American missionary, took up his residence there in June, 1824, for the purpose of studying the Armenian language with a bishop of the Armenian Church who lives there, and of course had far better opportunities to know the statistics of the place. He tells us there are six Muslim mosques, a Jewish synagogue, a Maronite, Latin, and Greek church. Dr. Thomson ("The Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 164) supposes that the population may now be about 10,000 - about 6,800

Moslems, 850 Greek Catholics, 750 Maronites, 150 Greeks, and 300 Jews. It exports tobacco, oil, fruit, and silk, but the amount of exports is small.

Tyre was situated about 20 miles south of Sidon. It was built partly on a small island about 70 paces from the shore, and partly on the mainland. It was a city of great extent and splendor, and extensive commerce. It abounded in luxury and wickedness. It was often besieged. It held out against Shalmaneser five years, and was taken by Nebuchadnezzar after a siege of "thirteen" years. It was afterward rebuilt, and was at length taken by Alexander the Great, after a most obstinate siege of five months. There are no signs now of the ancient city. It is the residence only of a few miserable fishermen, and contains, amid the ruins of its former magnificence, only a few huts. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Ezekiel: "Thou shalt be built no more; though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again" Ezekiel 26:21. For a description of Tyre as it was formerly and as it is now, see the notes at Job 1:21; Job 2:12; Jeremiah 6:26. The meaning is, that they would have repented with "expressions of deep sorrow." Like Nineveh, they would have seen their guilt and danger, and would have turned from their iniquities. "Heathen" cities would have received him better than the cities of the Jews, his native land,

Verse 23

And thou, Capernaum - See the notes at Matthew 4:13.

Which art exalted to heaven - This is an expression used to denote great privileges. He meant that they were especially favored with instruction. The city was prosperous. It was signally favored by its wealth. Most of all, it was signally favored by the presence, the preaching, and the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here he spent a large portion of his time in the early part of his ministry, and in Capernaum and its neighborhood he performed his chief miracles.

Shalt be brought down to hell - This does not mean that all the people would go to hell, but that the city which had flourished so prosperously would lose its prosperity, and occupy the "lowest place" among cities. The word "hell" is used here, not to denote a place of punishment in the future world, but a state of "desolation and destructions." It stands in contrast with the word "heaven." As their being exalted to heaven did not mean that the "people" would all be saved or dwell in heaven, so their being brought

down to "hell" refers to the desolation of the "city." Their privileges, honors, wealth, etc., would be taken away, and they would sink as low among cities as they had been before exalted. This has been strictly fulfilled. In the wars between the Jews and the Romans, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, etc., were so completely desolated that it is difficult to determine their former situation. See the notes at Matthew 4:13. It is not to be denied, also, that he threatened future punishment on those who rejected him. The truth inculcated is, that those who are especially favored will be punished accordingly if they abuse their privileges.

If the mighty works … had been done in Sodom - See the notes at Matthew 10:15. Sodom was destroyed on account of its great wickedness. Christ says if his miracles had been performed there, they would have repented, and consequently the city would not have been destroyed. As it was, it would be better for Sodom in the day of judgment than for Capernaum, for its inhabitants would not be called to answer for the abuse of so great privileges.

Verse 25-26

From the wise and prudent - That is, from those who "thought" themselves wise - "wise" according to the world's estimation of wisdom, 1 Corinthians 1:26-27.

Hast revealed them unto babes - To the poor, the ignorant, and the obscure; the teachable, the simple, the humble. By the wise and prudent here he had reference probably to the proud and haughty scribes and Pharisees in Capernaum. They rejected his gospel, but it was the pleasure of God to reveal it to obscure and more humble people. The reason given, the only satisfactory reason, is, that it so seemed good in the sight of God. In this the Saviour acquiesced, saying, "Even so, Father;" and in the dealings of God it is proper that all should acquiesce. "Such is the will of God" is often the only explanation which can be offered in regard to the various events which happen to us on earth. "Such is the will of God" is the only account which can be given of the reason of the dispensations of his grace. Our understanding is often confounded. We are unsuccessful in all our efforts at explanation. Our philosophy fails, and all that we can say is, "Even so, Father; for so it seems good to thee." And this is enough. That God does a thing, is, after all, the best reason which we "can" have that it is right. It is a "security" that nothing wrong is done; and though now mysterious, yet light will hereafter shine upon it like the light of noonday. I

have more certainty that a thing is right if I can say that I know such is the will of God, than I could have by depending on my own reason. In the one case I confide in the infallible and most perfect God; in the other I rely on the reason of a frail and erring man. God never errs; but nothing is more common than for people to err.

Verse 27

All things are delivered … - The same doctrine is clearly taught often in the New Testament. See John 3:35; John 6:46; John 10:15; Colossians 1:16-17. It means that Christ has control over all things for the good of his church; that the government of the universe is committed to him "as Mediator," that he may redeem his people and guide them to glory, Ephesians 1:20-22.

No man knoweth the Son - That is, such is the nature of the Son of God, such the mystery of the union between the divine and human nature, such his exalted character as "divine," that no mortal can fully comprehend Jesus. None but God fully knows him. If he had been only a mere man, this language surely would not have been used of him.

Neither knoweth any man the Father … - In the original this is, neither knoweth "anyone" the Father except the Son. That is, no man or angel clearly and fully comprehends the character of the infinite God; none but the Son - the Lord Jesus - and he to whom he makes him known, have any just apprehensions of his being and perfections.

Verse 28

All ye that labour and are heavy laden - The Saviour here, perhaps, refers primarily to the Jews, who groaned under the weight of their ceremonial laws and the traditions of the elders, Acts 15:10. He tells them that by coming to him, and embracing the new system of religion, they would be freed from these burdensome rites and ceremonies. There can be no doubt, however, that he meant here chiefly to address the poor, lost, ruined sinner: the man "burdened" with a consciousness of his transgressions, trembling at his danger, and seeking deliverance. For such there is relief. Christ tells them to come to him, to believe in him, and to trust him, and him only, for salvation. Doing this, he will give them rest - rest from their sins, from the alarms of conscience, from the terrors of the law, and from the fears of eternal death.

Verse 29

Take my yoke - This is a figure taken from the use of oxen, and hence signifying to labor for one, or in the service of anyone. The "yoke" is used in the Bible as an emblem:

(1)of bondage or slavery, Leviticus 26:13; Deuteronomy 28:38.

(2)of afflictions or crosses, Lamentations 3:27.

(3)of the punishment of sin, Lamentations 1:14,

(4)of the commandments of God.

(5)of legal ceremonies, Acts 15:10; Galatians 5:1.

It refers here to the religion of the Redeemer; and the idea is, that they should embrace his system of religion and obey him. All virtue and all religion imply "restraint" - the restraint of our bad passions and inclinations - and subjection to laws; and the Saviour here means to say that the restraints and laws of his religion are mild, and gentle, and easy. Let anyone compare them with the burdensome and expensive ceremonies of the Jews (see Acts 15:10), or with the religious rites of the pagan everywhere, or with the requirements of the Popish system, and he will see how true it is that Jesus' yoke is easy. And let his laws and requirements be compared with the laws which sin imposes on its votaries - the laws of fashion, and honor, and sensuality - and he will feel that religion is "freedom," John 8:36. "He is a freeman whom the truth makes free, and all are slaves besides." It is "easier" to be a Christian than a sinner; and of all the yokes ever imposed on people, that of the Redeemer is the lightest.

For I am meek … - See the notes at Matthew 5:5. This was eminently Christ's personal character. But this is not its meaning here. He is giving a reason why they should embrace his religion. That was, that he was not harsh, overbearing, and oppressive, like the Pharisees, but meek, mild, and gentle in his government. His laws were reasonable and tender, and it would be easy to obey him.

Verse 30

My yoke is easy … - That is, the services that I shall require are easily rendered. They are not burdensome, like all other systems of religion. So the Christian always finds them. In coming to him there is "a peace which passeth all understanding;" in believing in him, "joy;" in following him "through evil and good report," a comfort "which the world giveth not;" in

bearing trials and in persecution, “the hope of glory;” and in keeping his commandments, great reward.

Remarks On Matthew 11:2-3. John was solicitous to ascertain his true character, and nothing is of more importance for all than to understand his true character. Upon him depends all the hope that man has of happiness beyond the grave. He saves, or man must perish. “He” will save, or we must die forever. With what earnestness, therefore, should the old and the young inquire into his character. Our eternal all demands it; and while this is delayed, we are endangering our everlasting felicity.

2. Clear proof has been furnished that Jesus is the Christ and can save us, Matthew 11:4-5. If his miracles did not prove that he came from God, nothing can prove it. If he could open the eyes of the blind, then he can enlighten the sinner; if he could unstop the ears of the deaf, then he can cause us to hear and live; if he could heal the sick, and make the lame walk, then he can heal our spiritual maladies, and make us walk in the way of life; if he could raise the dead, then he can raise those dead in sin, and breathe into us the breath of eternal life. If he was willing to do all this for the body which is soon to perish, then he will be much more willing to do it for the soul, that never dies. Then the poor, lost sinner may come and live.

3. We see in this chapter Christ‘s manner of praising or complimenting men, Matthew 11:7-15. He gave, in no measured terms, his exalted opinion of John - gave him praise which had been bestowed on no other mortal ranked him far above the purest and sublimest of the prophets. But this was not done in the presence of John, “nor was it done in the presence of those who would inform John of it.” It was when the disciples of John had “departed,” and his commendation of John was spoken to “the multitude,” Matthew 11:7. He waited until his disciples were gone, apprehending, doubtless, that they would be likely to report what he said in praise of their master, and then expressed his high opinion of his character. The practice of the world is to praise others to their faces, or in the presence of those who will be sure to inform them of it, and to speak evil of them when absent. Jesus delivered his unfavorable opinions of others to the people themselves; their excellences he took pains to commend where they would not be likely to hear of them. He did good to both, and in both prevented the existence of pride.

4. The wicked take much pains, and are often fickle and inconsistent, for the sake of abusing and calumniating religious people, Matthew 11:18-19. They found much fault with the Saviour for doing the very same thing which they blamed John for not doing. So it is commonly with people who slander professors of religion. They risk their own characters, to prove that others are hypocrites or sinners. The object is not truth, but calumny and opposition to religion; and hitherto no means have been too base or too wicked to pour contempt on the followers of Christ.

5. The purest characters may expect the shaft of calumny and malice, and often in proportion to their purity, Matthew 11:19. Even the Saviour of the world was accused of being intemperate and a glutton. If the only perfectly pure being that ever trod the earth was thus accused, let not his followers think that any strange thing has happened to them if they are falsely accused.

6. Judgments will overtake guilty people, and cities, and nations, Matthew 11:21-22. They fell on Sodom, Tyre, Sidon, and Capernaum. They may long linger; but in due time the hand of God will fall on the wicked, and they will die - forever die.

7. The wicked will suffer in proportion to their privileges, Matthew 11:23-24. So it was with Capernaum. And if they of ancient days suffered thus; if more tremendous judgments fell on them than even on guilty Sodom, what shall be the doom of those who go down to hell from this day of light? The Saviour was indeed there a few days; he worked a few miracles; but they had not, as we have, all his instructions; they had not Sunday schools, and Bible classes, and the stated preaching of the gospel, nor was the world blessed then, as now, with extensive and powerful revivals of religion. How awful must be the doom of those who are educated in the ways of religion - who are instructed from Sabbath to Sabbath - who grow up amid the means of grace - and then are lost!

8. The poor and needy; the weary and heavy-ladened; the soul sick of sin and of the world; the sinner conscious of guilt and afraid to die, may come to Jesus Christ and live, Matthew 11:28-30. The invitation is wide as the world. The child and the old man may seek and find salvation at the feet

of the same Saviour. No child is too young; no man is too old: no one is too great a sinner. Christ is “full” of mercy, and all who come shall find peace. O how should we, in this sinful and miserable world, borne down with sin, and exposed each moment to death - how should we come and find the peace which he has promised to all, and take the yoke which all have found to be light!

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

Matthew 12:1-8. The account contained in these verses is also recorded in Mark 2:23-28, and Luke 6:1-5.

At that time - Luke Luke 6:1 fixes the time more particularly. He says that it was "the second Sabbath after the first." To understand this, it is proper to remark that the "Passover" was observed during the month "Abib," or Nisan, answering to the latter part of March and the first of April. The feast was held seven days, commencing on the fourteenth day of the month Exodus 23:15, on the "second" day of the paschal week. The law required that a sheaf of "barley" should be offered up as the first-fruits of the harvest, Leviticus 23:10-11. From this day was reckoned seven weeks to the feast of "Pentecost" Leviticus 23:15-16, called also the feast of weeks Deuteronomy 16:10, and the feast of the harvest, Exodus 23:16. This second day in the feast of the Passover, or of unleavened bread, was the beginning, therefore, from which they reckoned toward the Pentecost. The Sabbath in the week following would be the "second Sabbath" after this first one in the reckoning, and this was doubtless the time mentioned when Christ went through the fields. It should be further mentioned, that in Judea the barley harvest commences about the beginning of May, and both that and the wheat harvest are over by the twentieth. Barley is in full ear in the beginning of April. There is no improbability, therefore, in this narrative on account of the season of the year. This feast was always held at Jerusalem.

Through the corn - Through the "barley," or "wheat." The word "corn," as used in our translation of the Bible, has no reference to "maize," or "Indian corn," as it has with us. Indian corn was unknown until the discovery of America, and it is scarcely probable that the translators knew anything about it. The word "corn" was applied, as it is still in England, to wheat, rye, oats, and barley. This explains the circumstance that they "rubbed it in their hands" Luke 6:1 to separate the grain from the chaff.

Verse 2

Upon the Sabbath day - The Pharisees, doubtless desirous of finding fault with Christ, said that in plucking the grain on the "Sabbath day" they had violated the commandment. Moses had commanded the Hebrews to abstain from all servile work on the Sabbath, Exodus 20:10; Exodus 35:2-3;

Numbers 15:32-36. On any other day this would have been clearly lawful, for it was permitted, Deuteronomy 23:25.

Verse 3

But he said unto them … - To vindicate his disciples, he referred them to a similar case, recorded in the Old Testament, and therefore one with which they ought to have been acquainted. This was the case of David. The law commanded that twelve loaves of bread should be laid on the table in the holy place in the tabernacle, to remain a week, and then to be eaten by the "priests only." Their place was then supplied by fresh "bread." This was called the "showbread," Leviticus 24:5-9. David, fleeing before Saul, weary and hungry, had come to Ahimelech the priest; had found only this bread; had asked it of him, and had eaten it contrary to the "letter" of the law, 1 Samuel 21:1-7. David, among the Jews, had high authority. This act had passed uncondemned. It proved that in "cases of necessity the laws did not bind a man" - a principle which all laws admit. So the "necessity" of the disciples justified them in doing on the Sabbath what would have been otherwise unlawful.

Verse 4-5

How he entered into the house of God - That is, the "tabernacle," the temple not being then built.

Have ye not read in the law? - In the law, or in the books of Moses.

Profane the Sabbath - He referred them to the conduct of the priests also. On the Sabbath days they were engaged, as well as on other days, in killing beasts for sacrifice, Numbers 28:9-10. Two lambs were killed on the Sabbath, in addition to the daily sacrifice. The priests must be engaged in killing them, and making fires to burn them in sacrifice, whereas to kindle a fire was expressly forbidden the Jews on the Sabbath, Exodus 35:3. They did that which, for other persons to do, would have been "profaning" the Sabbath. Yet they were blameless. They did what was necessary and commanded. This was done in the very temple, too, the place of holiness, where the law should be most strictly observed.

Verse 6-7

One greater than the temple - Here the Saviour refers to himself, and to his own dignity and power. "I have power over the laws; I can grant to my disciples a dispensation from those laws. An act which I command or permit them to do is therefore right." This proves that he was divine. None but God can authorize people to do a thing contrary to the divine laws. He

refers them again Matthew 12:7 to a passage he had before quoted (See the notes at Matthew 9:13), showing that God preferred acts of righteousness, rather than a precise observance of a ceremonial law.

Mark adds Mark 2:27 "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." That is, the Sabbath was intended for the welfare of man; it was designed to promote his happiness, and not to produce misery by harsh, unfeeling requirements. It is not to be so interpreted as to produce suffering by making the necessary supply of wants unlawful. Man was not made for the Sabbath. Man was created first, and then the Sabbath was appointed for his happiness, Genesis 2:1-3. His necessities, his real comforts and needs, are not to be made to bend to that which was made "for him." The laws are to be interpreted favorably to his real wants and comforts. This authorizes works only of real necessity, not of imaginary wants, or amusements, or common business and worldly employments.

Verse 8

For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day - To crown all, Christ says that he was Lord of the Sabbath. He had a right to direct the manner of its observance - undoubted proof that he is divine.

Verses 9-13

The account contained in these verses is recorded also in Mark 3:1-5, and Luke 6:6-10.

Matthew 12:10

The very hairs of your head are all numbered - That is, each one has exercised the care and attention of God.

He has fixed the number; and, though of small importance, yet he does not think it beneath him to determine how few or how many they shall be. He will therefore take care of you.

Matthew 12:12

How much, then, is a man better than a sheep? - Of more consequence or value.

If you would show an act of kindness to a brute beast on the Sabbath, how much more important is it to evince similar kindness to one made in the image of God!

It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days - This was universally allowed by the Jews in the abstract; and Jesus only showed them that the principle on which they acted in other things applied with more force to the

case before him, and that the act which he was about to perform was, by their own confession, lawful.

Matthew 12:13

Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand - This was a remarkable commandment.

The man might have said that he had no strength - that it was a thing which he could not do. Yet, "being commanded," it was his duty to obey. He did so, and was healed. So the sinner. It is his duty to obey whatever God commands. He will give strength to those who endeavor to do his will. It is not right to plead, when God commands us to do a thing, that we have no strength. He will give us strength, if there is a disposition to obey. At the same time, however, this passage should not be applied to the sinner as if it proved that he has no more strength or ability than the man who had the withered hand. It proves no such thing: it has no reference to any such case. It may be used to prove that man should instantly obey the commands of God, without pausing to examine the question about his ability, and especially without saying "that he can do nothing." What would the Saviour have said to this man if he had objected that he could not stretch out his hand?

It was restored whole - Christ had before claimed divine authority and power Matthew 12:6-9, he now showed that he possessed it. By his "own power" he healed him, thus evincing by a miracle that his claim of being Lord of the Sabbath was well founded.

These two cases determine what may be done on the Sabbath. The one was a case of "necessity," the other of "mercy." The example of the Saviour, and his explanations, show that these are a part of the proper duties of that holy day. Beyond an "honest" and "conscientious" discharge of these two duties, people may not devote the Sabbath to any secular purpose. If they do, they do it at their peril. They go beyond what His authority authorizes them to do. They do what he claimed the special right of doing, as being Lord of the Sabbath. They usurp His place, and act and legislate where God only has a right to act land legislate. People may as well trample down any other law of the Bible as that respecting the Sabbath.

Verses 14-21

This account is found also in Mark 3:6-12.

Matthew 12:14

The Pharisees … held a council … - Mark adds that the Herodians also took a part in this plot. They were probably a "political" party attached firmly to Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, tetrarch of Galilee. He was the same man who had imprisoned and beheaded John the Baptist, and to whom the Saviour, when arraigned, was sent by Pilate. See the notes at Luke 3:1. He was under Roman authority, and was a strong advocate of Roman power. All the friends of the family of Herod were opposed to Christ, and ever ready to join any plot against his life. They remembered, doubtless, the attempts of Herod the Great against him when he was the babe of Bethlehem, and they were stung with the memory of the escape of Jesus from his bloody hands. The attempt against him now, on the part of the Pharisees, was the effect of "envy." They hated his popularity, they were losing their influence, and they therefore resolved to take him out of the way.

Matthew 12:15

But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself … - He knew of the plot which they had formed against his life; but his hour was not yet come, and he therefore sought security.

By remaining, his presence would only have provoked them further and endangered his own life. He acted, therefore, the part of prudence and withdrew. Compare the notes at Matthew 10:23.

Mark adds that he withdrew "to the sea;" that is, to the Sea of Galilee. or Tiberias. He states also Matthew 3:7-8 that "a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard what great things he did, came unto him." As some of these places were without the limits of Judea or inhabited by "Gentiles," this statement of Mark throws light on the passage quoted by Matthew Matthew 12:21, "In his name shall the Gentiles trust."

Pressed by the crowd Mark 3:9, Jesus went aboard a "small vessel," or "boat," called by Mark a "ship." This he did for the convenience of being separated from them and more easily addressing them. We are to suppose the lake still and calm; the multitudes, most of whom were sick and diseased, on the shore and pressing to the water's edge; and Jesus thus

healing their diseases, and preaching to them the good news of salvation. No scene could be more sublime than this.

Matthew 12:16

And he charged them … - He was "at this time" desirous of concealment.

He wished to avoid their plots and to save his life.

Matthew 12:17

That it might be fulfilled … - Matthew here quotes a passage from Isaiah 42:1-4, to show the "reason why he thus retired from his enemies and sought concealment." The Jews, and the disciples also at first, expected that the Messiah would be a conqueror, and vindicate himself from all his enemies. When they saw him retiring before them, and, instead of subduing them by force, seeking a place of concealment, it was contrary to all their previous notions of the Messiah. Matthew by this quotation shows that "their" conceptions of him had been wrong. Instead of a warrior and an earthly conqueror, he was "predicted" under a totally different character. Instead of shouting for battle, lifting up his voice in the streets, oppressing the feeble - "breaking bruised reeds and quenching smoking flax, as a conqueror" - he would be peaceful, retiring; would strengthen the feeble, and would cherish the faintest desires of holiness. This appears to be the general meaning of this quotation here. Compare the notes at Isaiah 42:1-4.

Matthew 12:18

My servant - That is, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus; called a servant from his taking the "form" of a "servant," or his being born in a humble condition Philemon 2:7, and from his obeying or "serving" God. See Hebrews 10:9.

Shall show judgment to the Gentiles - The word "judgment" means, in the Hebrew, law, "commands, etc.," Psalm 19:9; Psalm 119:29-30. It means the "whole system of truth;" the law of God in general; the purpose, plan, or "judgment" of God about human duty and conduct. Here it means, evidently, the system of "gospel truth," the Christian scheme.

Gentiles - All who were not Jews. This prophecy was fulfilled by the multitudes coming to him from Idumea and beyond Jordan, and from Tyre and Sidon, as recorded by Mark 3:7-8.

Matthew 12:19

He shall not strive … - He shall not shout as a warrior.

He shall be meek, retiring, and peaceful. Streets were places of concourse. The meaning is, that he should not seek publicity and popularity.

Matthew 12:20

A bruised reed … - The reed is an emblem of feebleness, as well as of fickleness or want of stability, Matthew 11:7. A bruised, broken reed is an emblem of the poor and oppressed. It means that he would not oppress the feeble and poor, as victorious warriors and conquerors did. It is also an expressive emblem of the soul broken and contrite on account of sin; weeping and mourning for transgression. He will not break it; that is, he will not be severe, unforgiving, and cruel. He will heal it, pardon it, and give it strength.

Smoking flax - This refers to the wick of a lamp when the oil is exhausted - the dying, flickering flame and smoke that hang over it. It is an emblem, also, of feebleness and infirmity. He would not further oppress those who had a little strength; he would not put out hope and life when it seemed to be almost extinct. He would not be like the Pharisees, proud and overbearing, and trampling down the poor. It is expressive, also, of the languishing graces of the people of God. He will not treat them harshly or unkindly, but will cherish the feeble flame, minister the "oil" of grace, and kindle it into a blaze.

Till he send forth judgment unto victory - "Judgment" here means truth - the truth of God, the gospel. It shall be victorious - it shall not be vanquished. Though the Messiah is not "such" a conqueror as the Jews expected, yet he "shall" conquer. Though mild and retiring, yet he will be victorious.

Matthew 12:21

And in his name … - The Hebrew in Isaiah is, "And the isles shall wait for his law." The idea is, however, the same.

The "isles" denote the Gentiles, or a part of the Gentiles - those out of Judea. The meaning is, that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, and that they should receive it. See the notes at Isaiah 41:1 for an explanation of the word "islands," as it is used in the Bible.

Verses 22-30

Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil - See the notes at Matthew 4:24. The same account, substantially, is found in Mark 3:22-27, and Luke 11:14-26.

Matthew 12:23

Is not this the Son of David? - That is, Is not this the promised "descendant" of David, the Messiah? They were acquainted with the prophecy in Isaiah 35:5, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped," and they inferred that he must be the promised Messiah who was able to do this. This inference was drawn by the common people, and not by the proud and haughty Pharisees. It is not uncommon that people of plain common sense, though unlearned, see the true meaning of the Bible, while those who are filled with pride and science, falsely so called, are blinded.

Matthew 12:24

But when the Pharisees heard it … - It was necessary for the Pharisees, who had determined to reject Jesus of Nazareth, to account in "some" way for the miracles he had performed.

Here was a manifest miracle, an exertion of power unquestionably superior to what people could put forth. The common people were fast drawing the proper inference from it, and coming into the belief that this was the Messiah. The authority and power of the Pharisees were declining. Unless, therefore, some way should be devised of accounting for these facts, their influence would be at an end. Whatever way of accounting for them was adopted, it was necessary that they should acknowledge that there was "superhuman power." The people were fully persuaded of this, and no man could deny it. They therefore ascribed it to the prince of the devils - to Beelzebub. In this they had two objects:

1.To concede to the people that here was a "miracle," or a work above mere human power.

2.To throw all possible contempt on Jesus. Beelzebub, or Beelzebul, as it is in the Greek, and correctly rendered in the margin, was an opprobrious name given to the leader of the devils as an expression of supreme contempt. See the notes at Matthew 10:25.

Matthew 12:25, Matthew 12:26

And Jesus knew their thoughts … - To know the thoughts of the heart belongs only to God, Psalm 139:2; Jeremiah 17:10.

Every kingdom … - Their subtle and cunning device was completely foiled, and Jesus made their argument recoil on their own heads. A kingdom or a family can prosper only by living in harmony. The different parts and members must unite in promoting the same objects. If divided - if one part

undoes what the other does - it must fall. So with the kingdom of Satan. It is your doctrine that Satan has "possessed" these whom I have cured. It is also your doctrine that he has helped me to cure them. If so, then he has helped me to undo what he had done. He has aided me to cast himself out - that is, to oppose and discomfit himself. At this rate, how can there be any stability in his kingdom? It must fall, and Satan must have less than human prudence.

Matthew 12:27

By whom do your children cast them out? - Your disciples; your followers.

See the notes at Matthew 1:1. Christ was not satisfied by showing them the intrinsic absurdity of their argument. He showed them that it might as well be applied to them as to him. your disciples, taught by you and encouraged by you, pretend to cast out devils. If your argument be true that a man who casts out devils must be in league with the devil, then "your disciples" have made a covenant with him also. You must therefore either give up this argument, or admit that the working of miracles is proof of the assistance of God.

Therefore they shall be your judges - They condemn you and your argument. They are conclusive witnesses against the force of your reasoning.

Matthew 12:28

But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God … - The Spirit of God, here, means the "power" of God - in Luke, by the "finger" of God.

Compare Exodus 8:19; Psalm 8:3. If this work is not by the aid of Satan, then it is by the aid of God. Then his kingdom, or "reign," is come, Matthew 3:2. The reign of Satan over people, and the reign of God are in opposition. If God expels Satan from his dominion over people, then his reign has come.

Matthew 12:29

Or else … - The Saviour makes use of a new illustration to confute the Pharisees, drawn from breaking into a house.

A man could not break into the house of a strong man and take his property unless he had rendered the man himself helpless. If he had taken his goods, it would therefore be sufficient proof that he had bound the man. So I, says he, have taken this "property - this possessed person" - from the dominion of Satan. It is clear proof that I have subdued "Satan himself," the

"strong" being that had him in possession. The words "or else" mean "or how:" "How, or in what way, can one, etc."

Spoil his goods - The word "spoil" commonly means, now, to corrupt, injure, or destroy. Here it means "to plunder," to take with violence, as it commonly does in the Bible. See Colossians 2:8, Colossians 2:15; Exodus 3:22.

Matthew 12:30

He that is not with me … - In addition to his other arguments, Jesus urges this general principle, that there can be but two parties in the universe.

If anyone did not act with him, he was against him. If he gathered not with him, he scattered. This is taken from the practice of persons in harvest. He that did not gather with him, or "aid" him, scattered abroad, or opposed him. The application of this was, "As I have not united with Satan, but opposed him, there can be no league between us." The charge, therefore, is a false one.

Verse 31-32

In this place, and in Mark 3:28-30, Jesus states the awful nature of the sin of which they had been guilty. That sin was the sin against the Holy Spirit. It consisted in charging him with being in league with the devil, or accusing him of working his miracles, not by the "spirit" or "power" of God, but by the aid of the prince of the devils. It was therefore a direct insult, abuse, or evil speaking against the Holy Spirit - the spirit by which Jesus worked his miracles. That this was what he intended by this sin, at that time, is clear from Mark 3:30, "because they said he had an unclean spirit." All other sins - all speaking against the Saviour himself - might be remitted. But this sin was clearly against the Holy One; it was alleging that the highest displays of God's mercy and power were the work of the devil; and it argued, therefore, the deepest depravity of mind. The sin of which he speaks is therefore clearly stated. It was accusing him of working miracles by the aid of the devil, thus dishonoring the Holy Spirit.

All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven - That is, only on condition that people repent and believe. If they continue in this sin they cannot be forgiven, Mark 16:16; Romans 2:6-9.

Blasphemy - Injurious or evil speaking of God. See the notes at Matthew 9:3.

A word against the Son of man - The Jews were offended at the humble life and appearance of the Saviour. They reproached him as being a Nazarene - sprung from Nazareth, a place from which no good was expected to proceed; with being a Galilean, from Galilee, a place from which no prophet came, John 7:52. Jesus says that reproaches of this kind could be pardoned. Reflections on his poverty, on his humble birth, and on the lowliness of his human nature might be forgiven; but for those which affected his divine nature, accusing him of being in league with the devil, denying his divinity, and attributing the power which manifestly implied divinity to the prince of fallen spirits, there could be no pardon. This sin was a very different thing from what is now often supposed to be the sin against the Holy Spirit. It was a wanton and blasphemous attack on the divine power and nature of Christ. Such a sin God would not forgive.

Speaketh against the Holy Ghost - The word "ghost" means "spirit," and probably refers here to the "divine nature" of Christ - the power by which he performed his miracles. There is no evidence that it refers to the third person of the Trinity; and the meaning of the whole passage may be: "He that speaks against me as a man of Nazareth - that speaks contemptuously of my humble birth, etc., may be pardoned; but he that reproaches my divine nature, charging me with being in league with Satan, and blaspheming the power of God manifestly displayed "by me," can never obtain forgiveness."

Neither in this world, nor in that which is to come - That is, as Mark expresses it, "hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." This fixes the meaning of the phrase. It means, then, not the future age or dispensation, known among the Jews as the world to come, but it means that the guilt will be unpardoned forever; that such is the purpose of God that he will not forgive a sin so direct, presumptuous, and awful. It cannot be inferred from this that any sins will be forgiven in hell. The Saviour meant simply to say that there were "no possible circumstances" in which the offender could obtain forgiveness. He certainly did "not" say that any sin unpardoned here would be pardoned hereafter.

Verse 33

Either make … - The fact asserted in this verse is, that a tree is known, not by its leaves, or bark, or form, but by its fruit. The application to the argument is this: "You are to judge of man's being in league with Satan by his works. If my doctrines and works be properly the works of Satan, then I

am corrupt; if not, then your charge is blasphemy. So, on the other hand, if, notwithstanding your professions, your works are the works of the devil, and your doctrines are such as he would teach, it would prove respecting you that which you charge on me." In this indirect but powerful manner he advances to the charge against them, which he urges in the following verses.

Verse 34-35

O generation of vipers! - Christ here applies the argument which he had suggested in the previous verse. They were a wicked race; like poisonous reptiles, with a corrupt and evil nature. They could not be expected to speak good things - that is, to speak favorably of him and his works. As the bad fruit of a tree was the proper effect of its "nature," so were their words about him and his works the proper effect of their nature. The "abundance" or fullness of the "heart" produced the words of the lips. "Vipers" are a poisonous kind of serpents, not often a yard long, and about an inch thick, having a flat head. The males have two large teeth, through which a most deadly poison is thrown into the wound made by the bite. They are an emblem of malignity and mischief. These were strong expressions to be used by the meek and lowly Jesus; but they were not the effect of anger and malice; they were a declaration of the true character of the people with whom he was conversing - a declaration most justly deserved. See the notes at Matthew 3:7.

Verse 36

But I say unto you … - Christ closes this address to his malignant and wicked hearers by a solemn declaration that for these things God would bring them into judgment. Therefore. They who had spoken so malignantly against him, could not escape.

Idle word - This literally means a vain, thoughtless, useless word; a word that accomplishes no good. Here it means, evidently, "wicked, injurious, false, malicious, for such" were the words which they had spoken.

Verse 37

By thy words thou shalt be justified … - That is, "words" are the indication of the true principles of the heart; by "words" the heart shall be known, as the tree is by its fruit. If they are true, proper, chaste, instructive, pious, they will prove that the heart is right. If false, envious, malignant, and impious, they will prove that the heart is wrong, and will therefore be

among the causes of condemnation. It is not meant that words will be the only thing that will condemn man, but that they will be an important part of the things for which he shall be condemned. See James 3:3-12.

Verses 38-42

We would see a sign from thee - See Luke 11:16, Luke 11:29-32. A "sign" commonly signifies a miracle - that is, a sign that God was with the person or had sent him. Compare the notes at Isaiah 7:11. Luke adds that this was done "tempting him;" that is, trying him, doubting if he had the power to do it. If these persons had been present with him for any considerable time, they had already seen sufficient proofs that he was what he claimed to be. They might have been, however, those who had recently come, and then the emphasis must be laid on "we" - we, as well as the others, would see a proof that thou art the Christ. In either case it was a temptation. If they had not seen him work a miracle, yet they should have believed it by testimony. Compare John 20:29. Perhaps, however, the emphasis is to be laid on the words "from heaven." They might profess not to doubt that his miracles were real, but they were not quite satisfactory. They were desirous of seeing something, therefore, that should clear up their doubts - where there could be no opportunity for dispute. A comet, or lightning, or thunder, or sudden darkness, or the gift of food raining upon them, they supposed would be decisive. Possibly they referred in this to Moses. He had been with God amid thunders and lightnings, and he had given them manna - "bread from heaven" to eat. They wished Jesus to show some miracle equally undoubted.

Matthew 12:39

An evil and adulterous generation - The relation of the Jews to God was often represented as a marriage contract - God as the husband, and the Jewish people as the wife.

See Isaiah 57:3; Hosea 3:1; Ezekiel 16:15. Hence, their apostasy and idolatry are often represented as adultery. This is the meaning, probably, here. They were evil, and unfaithful to the covenant or to the commandments of God - an apostate and corrupt people. There is, however, evidence that they were literally an adulterous people.

There shall no sign be given to it … - They sought some direct miracle "from heavens." Jesus replied that no "such" miracle should be given. He did not mean to say that he would work no more miracles, or give no more evidence that he was the Christ, but he would give "no such miracle" as

they required. "He would give one that ought to be as satisfactory evidence to them that he was from God, as the miraculous preservation of Jonah was to the Ninevites that he was divinely commissioned." As Jonah was preserved three days by miracle and then restored alive, so he would be raised from the dead after three days. As on the ground of this preservation the Ninevites believed Jonah and repented, so, on the ground of his resurrection, the people of an adulterous and wicked generation ought to repent, and believe that he was from God. "The sign of the prophet Jonas" means the "sign" or "evidence" which was given to the people of Nineveh that he was from God - to wit, that he had been miraculously preserved, and was therefore divinely commissioned. The word "Jonas" is the Greek way of writing the Hebrew word "Jonah," as "Elias" is for "Elijah."

Matthew 12:40

For as Jonas was three days … - See Jonah 1:17

This event took place in the Mediterranean Sea, somewhere between Joppa and Tarshish, when he was fleeing from Nineveh. It is said that the "whale" seldom passes into that sea, and that its throat is too small to admit a man. It is probable, therefore, that a fish of the "shark kind" is intended. Sharks have been known often to swallow a man entire. The fish in the book of Jonah is described merely as a "great fish," without specifying the kind. It is well known that the Greek word translated whale, in the New Testament, does not of necessity mean a whale, but may denote a large fish or sea-monster of any kind. - Robinson, *Lexicon*.

Three days and three nights - It will be seen in the account of the resurrection of Christ that he was in the grave but two nights and a part of three days. See Matthew 18:6. This computation is, however, strictly in accordance with the Jewish mode of reckoning. If it had "not" been, the Jews would have understood it, and would have charged our Saviour as being a false prophet, for it was well known to them that he had spoken this prophecy, Matthew 27:63. Such a charge, however, was never made; and it is plain, therefore, that what was "meant" by the prediction was accomplished. It was a maxim, also, among the Jews, in computing time, that a part of a day was to be received as the whole. Many instances of this kind occur in both sacred and profane history. See 2 Chronicles 10:5, 2 Chronicles 10:12; Genesis 42:17-18. Compare Esther 4:16 with Esther 5:1.

In the heart of the earth - The Jews used the word "heart" to denote the "interior" of a thing, or to speak of being in a thing. It means, here, to be

in the grave or sepulchre.

Matthew 12:41

The men of Nineveh - Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire.

It was founded by Asshur, Genesis 10:11. It was situated on the banks of the River Tigris, to the northeast of Babylon. It was a city of vast extent, and of corresponding wickedness. It was 48 miles in circuit; its walls were 100 feet high and 10 thick, and were defended by fifteen hundred towers, each 200 feet in height. It contained in the time of Jonah, it is supposed, six hundred thousand inhabitants. The destruction of Nineveh, threatened by Jonah in forty days, was suspended, by their repentance, two hundred years. It was then overthrown by the Babylonians about six hundred years before Christ. During the siege a mighty inundation of the river Tigris took place, which threw down a part of the walls, through which the enemy entered, and sacked and destroyed the city. This destruction had been foretold one hundred and fifteen years before by Nahum Nahum 1:8; "But with an overwhelming flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof:" and Nahum 2:6; "The gates of the river shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved." Its ruins have been lately discovered by Layard, and have contributed much to the establishment of the truth of Scripture history. Those remains are on the east side of the river Tigris, nearly opposite to the city of Mosul.

Shall condemn it - That is, their conduct, in repenting under the preaching of Jonah, shall condemn this generation. They, ignorant and wicked pagan, repented when threatened with "temporal" judgment by a mere man - Jonah; you, Jews, professing to be enlightened, though threatened for your great wickedness with eternal punishment "by the Son of God" - a far greater being than Jonah - repent not, and must therefore meet with a far heavier condemnation.

Matthew 12:42

The queen of the south - That, is, the Queen of Sheba, 1 Kings 10:1

Sheba was probably a city of Arabia, situated to the south of Judea. Compare the notes at Isaiah 60:6.

From the uttermost parts of the earth - This means simply from the most distant parts of the habitable world "then known." See a similar expression in Deuteronomy 28:49. As the knowledge of geography was limited, the place was, "in fact," by no means in the extreme parts of the earth. It means that she came from a remote country; and she would

condemn that generation, for she came "a great distance" to hear the wisdom of Solomon, but the Jews of that age would not listen to the wisdom of one "much greater" than Solomon, though present with them.

Verses 43-45

When the unclean spirit … - The "general sentiment" which our Saviour here teaches is much more easily understood than the illustration which he uses. The Jews had asked a sign from heaven that should decisively prove that he was the Messiah, and satisfy their unbelief. He replies that, though he should give them such a sign a proof conclusive and satisfactory, and though for a time they should profess to believe and apparently reform, yet such was the obstinacy of their unbelief and wickedness, that they would soon return to their former course. and become worse and worse. Infidelity and wickedness, like an evil spirit in a possessed man, were appropriately at "home" in them. If driven out, they would find no other place so comfortable and undisturbed as their bosoms. Everywhere they would be, comparatively, like an evil spirit going through deserts and lonely places, and finding no place of rest. They would return, therefore, and dwell with them.

He walketh through dry places - That is, through deserts - regions of country unwatered, sandy, barren, desolate. That our Saviour here speaks according to the ancient belief of the Jews that evil spirits had their abodes in those desolate, uninhabited regions, there can be no doubt; nor can there be any doubt that the Bible gives countenance to the opinion. Thus Revelation 18:2; "Babylon - is become the habitation of "devils" and the hold of "every foul spirit;" that is, has become "desolate - a place where evil spirits appropriately dwell. So Isaiah 13:21; "And satyrs shall dance there:" "i. e." according to the ancient Greek translation, "devils or demons shall dance there." See also Jeremiah 50:39. Compare the Isaiah 34:4 note; Deuteronomy 32:17 note.

Seeking rest, and findeth none - These desolate and dry regions are represented as uncomfortable habitations; so much so, that the dissatisfied spirit, better pleased with a dwelling in the bosoms of people, as affording an opportunity of doing evil, seeks a return there.

Matthew 12:44

Then he saith, I will return into my house … - The man is called his house, because the spirit had dwelt in him.

He findeth it empty … - There is here a continuance of the reference to the dwelling of the spirit in people.

The man was called his "house." By the absence of the evil spirit the house is represented as unoccupied, or "empty, swept," and "garnished;" that is, while the evil spirit was away, the man was restored to his right mind, or was freed from the influence of the evil spirit.

Garnished - Adorned, put in order, furnished. Applied to the "man," it means that his mind was sane and regular when the evil spirit was gone, or he had a "lucid interval."

Matthew 12:45

Then goeth he … - Seeing the state of the man; dissatisfied with a lonely dwelling in the desert where he could do no evil; envious of the happiness of the individual, and supremely bent on wickedness, he resolved to increase his power of malignant influences and to return.

He is therefore represented as taking seven other spirits still worse than himself, and returning to his former habitation. Seven denotes a large but indefinite number. It was a favorite number with the Jews, and was used to denote "completeness" or "perfection," or any "finished" or "complete" number. See 1 Samuel 2:5. Compare Revelation 1:4. Here it means a sufficient number completely to occupy and harass his soul.

Even so shall it be with this generations - This shows the scope and design of this illustration. The state of that man was a representation of that generation of people. Much might be done to cure their unbelief, much to reform them externally; but such was the firm hold which the principles of infidelity and wickedness had taken of their minds "as their proper habitation," that they would return, after all the means used to reform them, and they would be worse and worse. And this was literally accomplished. After all the instructions and miracles of the Saviour and his apostles; after all that had been done for them by holy people and prophets, and by the judgments and mercies of God; and after all their external temporary reformations - like the temporary departure of an evil spirit from a man possessed - yet such was their love of wickedness that the nation became worse and worse. They increased in crime, like the seven-fold misery and wretchedness of the man into whose bosom the seven additional evil spirits came. They rejected God's messengers, abused his mercies, crucified his Son, and God gave their temple, and capital, and nation into the hands of the Romans. and thousands of the people to destruction.

It is not "proved" by this passage that evil spirits actually "dwell" in deserts It is proved only that such was the opinion of the Jews; that that opinion was drawn from some expressions in the Bible; and that "such expressions were sufficiently clear to justify the Saviour in drawing an argument from them to confound those who firmly believed that such was the case." Nor is there any absurdity in the opinion; for,

1.There are evil spirits. See the notes at Matthew 8:33.

2.They must exist in "some place."

3.There is as much propriety that they should be located about our earth as anywhere.

4.The clear doctrine of the Bible is, that many of them have much to do with our world.

5.It is as reasonable that they should dwell commonly in desolate and uninhabited regions as anywhere else.

Verses 46-50

See also Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21.

His brethren - There has been some difference of opinion about the persons who are referred to here, some supposing that they were children of Mary his mother, others that they were the children of Mary, the wife of Cleophas or Alpheus, his "cousins," and called "brethren" according to the customs of the Jews. The natural and obvious meaning is, however, that they were the children of Mary his mother. See also Mark 6:3. To this opinion, moreover, there can be no valid objection.

Matthew 12:48

Who is my mother? … - There was no want of affection or respect in Jesus toward his mother, as is proved by his whole life.

See especially Luke 2:51, and John 19:25-27. This question was asked merely to "fix the attention" of the hearers and to prepare them for the answer - that is, to show them who sustained toward him the nearest and most tender relation. To do this he pointed to his disciples. Dear and tender as were the ties which bound him to his mother and brethren, yet those which bound him to his disciples were more tender and sacred. How great was his love for his disciples, when it was more than even that for his

mother! And what a bright illustration of his own doctrine, that we ought to forsake father, and mother and friends, and houses, and lands, to be his followers!

Remarks On Matthew 12:1-13. His conduct was an explanation of the meaning of the fourth commandment. By his example we may learn what may be done. He himself performed only those works on the Sabbath which were strictly necessary for life, and those which tended to benefit the poor, the afflicted, and needy. Whatever work is done on the Sabbath that is not for these ends must be wrong. All labor that can as well be done on another day all which is not for the support of life, or to aid the ignorant, poor, and sick. must be wrong. This example justifies teaching the ignorant, supplying the wants of the poor, instructing children in the precepts of religion, teaching those to read in Sunday schools who have no other opportunity for learning, and visiting the sick, when we go not for formality, or "to save time on some other day," but to do them good.

2. The Sabbath is of vast service to mankind. It was made for man - not for man to violate or profane, or to be a day of mere idleness, but to improve to his spiritual and eternal good. Where people are employed through "six" days in worldly occupations, it is kind toward them to give them one day particularly to prepare for eternity. Where there is no Sabbath there is no religion. This truth, from the history of the world, will bear to be recorded in letters of gold - "that true religion will exist among men only when they strictly observe the Sabbath." They, therefore, who do most to promote the observance of the Sabbath, are doing most for religion and the welfare of man. In this respect Sunday school teachers may do more, perhaps, than all the world besides for the best interests of the world.

3. In the conduct of Christ Matthew 12:14-15 we have an illustration of the nature of Christian prudence. He did not throw himself needlessly into danger. He did not remain to provoke opposition. He felt that his time was not come, and that his life, by a prudent course, should be preserved. He therefore withdrew. Religion requires us to sacrifice our lives rather than deny the Saviour. To throw our lives away when, with good conscience, they might be preserved, is self-murder.

4. The rejection of the gospel in one place is often the occasion of its being received elsewhere, Matthew 12:15. People may reject it to their own

destruction; but somewhere it "will" be preached, and will be the power of God unto salvation. The wicked cannot drive it out of the world. They only secure their own ruin, and, against their will, benefit and save others. To reject it is like turning a beautiful and fertilizing stream from a man's own land. He does not, he cannot dry it up. "It will flow somewhere else." He injures himself and perhaps benefits multitudes. People never commit so great foolishness and wickedness, and so completely fail in what they aim at, as in rejecting the gospel. A man, hating the light of the sun, might get into a cave or dungeon, and be in total darkness; but the sun will continue to shine, and millions, in spite of him, will be benefited by it. So it is with the gospel.

5. Christ was mild, quiet, retiring not clamorous or noisy, Matthew 12:19. So is all religion. There is no piety in noise; if there was, then thunder and artillery would be piety. Confusion and discord are not religion. Loud words and shouting are not religion. Religion is love, reverence, fear, holiness, a deep and awful regard for the presence of God, profound apprehensions of the solemnities of eternity, imitation of the Saviour. It is still. It is full of awe - an awe too great to strive, or cry, or lift up the voice in the streets. If people ever should be overawed and filled with emotions "repressing" noise and clamor, it should be when they approach "the great God."

6. The feeble may trust to Jesus, Matthew 12:20. A child of any age, an ignorant person, the poorest man, may come, and he shall in nowise be east out. It is a sense of our weakness that Jesus seeks. Where that is "he" will strengthen us, and we shall not fail.

7. Grace will not be extinguished, Matthew 12:20. Jesus, where he finds it in the feeblest degree, will not destroy it. He will cherish it. He will kindle it to a flame. It will burn brighter and brighter, until it "glows like that of the pure spirits above."

8. People are greatly prone to ascribe all religion to the devil, Matthew 12:24. Anything that is unusual, anything that confounds them, anything that troubles their consciences, they ascribe to fanaticism, overheated zeal, and Satan. It has always been so. It is sometimes an easy way to stifle their

own convictions, and to bring religion into contempt. “Somehow or other,” like the Pharisees, infidels must account for revivals of religion, for striking instances of conversion, and for the great and undeniable effects which the gospel produces. How easy to say that it is “delusions,” and that it is the work of the devil! How easy to show at once the terrible opposition of their own hearts to God, and to boast themselves in their own wisdom, in having found a cause so simple for all the effects which religion produces in the world! How much pains, also, men will take to secure their own perdition, rather than to admit it to be possible that Christianity is true!

9. We see the danger of blasphemy - the danger of trifling with the influences of the Holy Spirit, Matthew 12:31-32. Even if we do not commit the unpardonable sin, yet we see that all trifling with the Holy Spirit is a sin very near to God, and attended with infinite danger. He that “laughs away” the thoughts of death and eternity; he that seeks the society of the frivolous and trifling, or of the sensual and profane, for the express purpose of driving away these thoughts; and he that struggles directly against his convictions, and is resolved that he will not submit to God, may be, for aught he knows, making his damnation sure. Why should God “ever” return when a man has “once” rejected the gospel? Who would be to blame if the sinner is then lost? Assuredly not God. None but himself. Children sometimes do this. Then is the time, the very time, when they should begin to love God and Jesus Christ. Then the Spirit also strives. Many “have then” given their hearts to him and become Christians. Many more might have done so, if they had not grieved away the Spirit of God.

10. We see the danger of rejecting Christ, Matthew 12:38-42. All past ages, all the wicked and the good, the foolish and the wise, will rise up in the day of judgment, and condemn us, if we do not believe the gospel. No people, heretofore, have seen so much light as we do in this age. And no people can be so awfully condemned as those who, in a land of light, of Sundays and Sunday schools, reject Christ and go to hell. Among the 120,000 children of Nineveh Jonah 4:11 there was not one single Sunday school. There was no one to tell them of God and the Saviour. They have died and gone to judgment. Children now living will die also, and go to meet them in the day of judgment. How will they condemn the children of this age, if they do not love the Lord Jesus Christ!

11. Sinners, when awakened, if they grieve away the Spirit of God, become worse than before, Matthew 12:43-45. They are never as they were before. Their hearts are harder, their consciences are more seared, they have a more bitter hatred of religious people, and they plunge deeper and deeper into sin. Seven devils often dwell where one did, and God gives the man over to blindness of mind and hardness of heart. This shows, also, the great guilt and danger of grieving the Holy Spirit.

12. We see the love of Christ for his followers, Matthew 12:46-50. Much as he loved his mother, yet he loved his disciples more. He still loves them. He will always love them. His heart is full of affection for them. And though poor, and despised, and unknown to the rich and mighty, yet to Jesus they are dearer than mother, and sisters, and brothers.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 1-2

The sea-side - This was the Sea of Tiberias. The multitude stood on the shore near to him, so that he could be easily heard. He went into a ship - that is, a boat; and sat down to address them. Few spectacles could be more interesting than a vast crowd on the hanks of a smooth and tranquil sea - an emblem of his instructions - and the Son of God addressing them on the great interests of eternity.

Verses 3-9

In parables - The word "parable" is derived from a Greek word signifying "to compare together," and denotes a similitude taken from a natural object to illustrate a spiritual or moral subject. It is a narrative of some fictitious or real event, in order to illustrate more clearly some truth that the speaker wished to communicate. In early ages it was much used. Pagan writers, as Aesop, often employed it. In the time of Christ it was in common use. The prophets had used it, and Christ employed it often in teaching his disciples. It is not necessary to suppose that the narratives were strictly true. The main thing - "the inculcation of spiritual truth" - was gained equally, whether it was true or was only a supposed case. Nor was there any dishonesty in this. It was well understood no person was deceived. The speaker was not "understood" to affirm the thing "literally narrated," but only to fix the attention more firmly on the moral truth that he presented. The "design" of speaking in parables was the following:

1.To convey truth in a more interesting manner to the mind, adding to the truth conveyed the beauty of a lovely image or narrative.

2.To teach spiritual truth so as to arrest the attention of ignorant people, making an appeal to them through the "senses."

3.To convey some offensive truth, some pointed personal rebuke. in such a way as to bring it "home" to the conscience. Of this kind was the parable which Nathan delivered to David 2 Samuel 12:1-7, and many of our Saviour‘s parables addressed to the Jews.

4.To "conceal" from one part of his audience truths which he intended others should understand. Thus Christ often, by this means, delivered truths to his disciples in the presence of the Jews, which he well knew the Jews

would not understand; truths pertaining to them particularly, and which he was under no obligations to explain to the Jews. See Mark 4:33; Matthew 13:13-16.

Our Saviour's parables are distinguished above all others for clearness, purity, chasteness, importance of instruction, and simplicity. They are taken mostly from the affairs of common life, and intelligible, therefore, to all people. They contain much of "himself" - his doctrine, life, design in coming, and claims, and are therefore of importance to all people; and they are told in a style of simplicity intelligible to the child, yet instructive to people of every rank and age. In his parables, as in all his instructions, he excelled all people in the purity, importance, and sublimity of his doctrine.

Matthew 13:3

A sower went forth to sow - The image here is taken from an employment known to all people, and therefore intelligible to all.

Nor can there be a more striking illustration of preaching the gospel than placing the seed in the ground, to spring up hereafter and bear fruit.

Sower - One who sows or scatters seed - a farmer. It is not improbable that one was near the Saviour when he spoke this parable.

Matthew 13:4

Some seeds fell by the way-side - That is, the hard "path" or headland, which the plow had not touched, and where there was no opportunity for it to sink into the earth.

Matthew 13:5

Stony places - Where there was little earth, but where it was hard and rocky, so that the roots could not strike down into the earth for sufficient moisture to support the plant.

When the sun became hot they of course withered away. They sprang up the sooner because there was little earth to cover them.

Forthwith - Immediately. Not that they sprouted and grew any quicker or faster than the others, but they were not so long in reaching the surface. Having little root, they soon withered away.

Matthew 13:7

Among thorns - That is, in a part of the field where the thorns and shrubs had been imperfectly cleared away and not destroyed.

They grew with the grain, crowded it, shaded it, exhausted the earth, and thus choked it.

Matthew 13:8

Into good ground - The fertile and rich soil.

In sowing, by far the largest proportion of seed will fall into the good soil; but Christ did not intend to teach that these proportions would be exactly the same among those who heard the gospel. Parables are designed to teach some "general" truth, and the circumstances should not be pressed too much in explaining them.

An hundred-fold … - That is, a hundred, sixty, or thirty "grains" for each one that was sowed an increase by no means uncommon. Some grains of wheat will produce twelve or fifteen hundred grains. The usual proportion on a field sown, however, is not more than twenty, fifty, or sixty bushels for one.

Matthew 13:9

Who hath ears … - This is a proverbial expression, implying that it was every man's duty to pay attention to what was spoken, Matthew 11:15.

Verses 10-17

Christ, in these verses, gives a "reason" why he used this manner of instruction. See also Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:9-10.

Matthew 13:11

The mysteries of the kingdom - The word "mystery," in the Bible, properly means a thing that is "concealed," or that "has been concealed." It does not mean that the thing was "incomprehensible," or even difficult to be understood.

The thing might be "plain" enough if revealed, but it means simply that it "had" not been before made known. Thus the "mysteries of the kingdom" do not mean any doctrines incomprehensible in themselves considered, but simply doctrines about the preaching of the gospel and the establishment of the new kingdom of the Messiah, which "had not" been understood, and which were as yet concealed from the great body of the Jews. See Romans 16:25; Romans 11:25; Ephesians 3:3-4, Ephesians 3:9. Of this nature was the truth that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles; that the Jewish polity was to cease; that the Messiah was to die, etc. To the disciples it was given to know these truths. This was important for them, as they were to carry the gospel around the globe. To the others it was not "then" given. They were too gross, too earthly; they had too, grovelling conceptions of the Messiah's kingdom to understand these truths, even if communicated to them. They were not to preach the gospel, and hence our Saviour was at particular pains to instruct his apostles in the system which they were to

preach. The Pharisees, and Jews generally, were not prepared to receive the system, and would not have believed it, and therefore he purposely employed a kind of teaching which was intended for his apostles only.

Matthew 13:12

Whosoever hath … - This is a proverbial method of speaking.

It means that a man who improves what light, grace, and opportunities he has, shall have them increased. From him that improves them not, it is proper that they should be taken away. The Jews had many opportunities of learning the truth, and some light still lingered among them; but they were gross and sensual, and misimproved them, and it was a just judgment that they should be deprived of them. Superior knowledge was given to the disciples of Christ: they improved it, however slowly, and the promise was that it should be greatly increased.

Matthew 13:13

Because they seeing, see not - Mark Mark 4:12 and Luke Luke 8:10 say, "That seeing, they may not see etc.;" but there is no difference.

Matthew simply states the "fact," that though they saw the "natural" meaning of the story - though they literally understood the parable - yet they did not understand its "spiritual" signification. Mark and Luke do not state the "fact," but affirm that he spoke with this "intention" - implying that such "was" the result. Nor was there any dishonesty in this, or any unfair disguise. He had truths to state which he wished his "disciples particularly" to understand. They were of great importance to their ministry. Had he clearly and fully stated them to the Jews, they would have taken his life long before they did. He therefore chose to state the doctrines so that if their hearts had been right, and if they had not been malignant and blind, "they might have understood them." His doctrines he stated in the best possible way, and it was not his fault if they did not understand him. By little and little, in this way, he prepared many even of the Jews to receive the truth; by the only possible way of ever gaining access to their minds. It was, moreover, entirely proper and right to impart instruction to his disciples which he did not "intend" for others.

Matthew 13:14

And in them is fulfilled … - This place is quoted substantially from Isaiah 6:9-10. It was literally fulfilled in the time of Isaiah. In the time of Christ the people had the same character. Like them, they closed their eyes upon the truth, and rejected the divine teaching. The words of Isaiah were

therefore "as well fitted" to express the character of the people in the time of Christ as in that of the prophet. In this sense they were "fulfilled," or "filled up;" that is, "a case occurred that corresponded to their meaning." See the notes at Matthew 1:22. It is not by any means intended that Isaiah, when he spoke these words, had any reference to the time of Christ. The meaning in both places is, that the people were so gross, sensual, and prejudiced, that they "would" not see the truth, or understand anything that was contrary to their grovelling opinions and sensual desires; a case by no means uncommon in the world. See the passage more fully explained in my notes at Matthew 13:16

Blessed are your eyes … - That is, you are happy that you are permitted to see truth which they will not see.

You are permitted to understand the spiritual meaning of the parables, and in some degree the plan of salvation.

Matthew 13:17

Many prophets and righteous men … - They wished to see the times of the Messiah.

They looked to it as a time when the hopes of the world would be fulfilled, and when the righteous would be happy, John 8:56. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." Compare also 1 Peter 1:10-12; Hebrews 11:13. So Isaiah and the prophets looked forward to the coming of the Messiah as the consummation of their wishes and the end of the prophecies, Revelation 19:10. The object always dearest to the hearts of all righteous people is to witness the coming and advancement of the kingdom of Christ. Compare Revelation 22:20.

Verses 18-23

See also Mark 4:13-20; Luke 8:11-15. "Hear ye, therefore, the parable of the sower." That is, hear the "explanation" or the "spiritual meaning" of the narrative given before. Mark adds Mark 4:13, "Know ye not this parable? And how, then, shall ye know all parables?" By which it seems that the Saviour regarded this as one of the simplest and plainest of the parables, and gave an explanation of it that they might understand the general principles of interpreting others.

Matthew 13:19

When any one heareth … - The seed represents the word of God communicated in any manner to the minds of people - by the Scriptures, by

preaching, by acts of Providence, or by the direct influences of the Holy Spirit.

Then cometh the wicked one - That is, Satan Mark 4:15, or the devil Luke 8:12 - the one eminently "wicked," the accuser, the tempter.

He is represented by the fowls that came and picked up the seed by the way-side. The gospel is preached to people hardened in sin. It makes no impression. It lies like seed on the "hard path;" it is easily taken away, and never suffered to take root.

Matthew 13:20, Matthew 13:21

But he that received the seed into stony places - Jesus explains this as denoting those who hear the gospel; who are caught with it as something new or pleasing; who profess to be greatly delighted with it, and who are full of zeal for it.

Yet they have no root in themselves. They are not true Christians. Their hearts are not changed. They have not seen their guilt and danger, and the true excellency of Christ. They are not "really" attached to the gospel; and when they are tried and persecution comes, they fall - as the rootless grain withers before the scorching rays of the noonday sun.

Anon - "Quickly," or "readily."

With joy receiveth it - They are under deep distress for sin; they are apprehensive of danger; they hear the offer of mercy, and they seem to themselves to embrace the gospel. It offers them peace, pardon, salvation, and religion assumes for a time a lovely aspect. They imagine that they are pardoned, and they have a temporary peace and joy. Their anxieties subside. Their fears are gone. They are for a time happy. "The mere subsiding of anxious feeling from any cause will make the mind for a time happy." They have only to imagine, therefore, that their sins are forgiven, to produce a certain kind of peace and joy. But there is no ground of permanent joy, as there is in true pardon, and soon their joy subsides, and all evidence of piety disappears. There is no strength of principle to resist temptation; there is no real love of the Saviour; and in times of trial and persecution they show that they have no true religion, and fall away.

By and by - Mark, "Immediately." That is, it soon occurs, or this is an effect which may be expected soon to follow.

Is offended - Stumbles or falls, for this is the meaning of the word "offend" in the New Testament. See the notes at Matthew 5:29. Persecution and trial are placed in his path, and he falls as he would over a "stumbling-

block." He has no strength of principle - no real confidence in God - no true religion. Mere excited animal feeling is all that he ever had, and that is not sufficient to sustain him when the trial comes.

Matthew 13:22

He also that received seed among the thorns - These represent the cares, the anxieties, and the deceitful lure of riches, or the way in which a desire to be rich deceives people.

They take the time and attention. They do not leave opportunity to examine the state of the soul. Besides, riches allure, and promise what they do not yield. They promise to make us happy; but, when gained, they do not do it. The soul is not satisfied. There is the same desire to possess more wealth. And to this there is no end "but death." In doing it there is every temptation to be dishonest, to cheat, to take advantage of others, to oppress others, and to wring their hard earnings from the poor. Every evil passion is therefore cherished by the love of gain; and it is no wonder that the word is choked, and every good feeling destroyed, by this "execrable love of gold." See the notes at 1 Timothy 6:7-11. How many, O how many, thus foolishly drown themselves in destruction and perdition! How many more might reach heaven, if it were not for this deep-seated love of that which fills the mind with care, deceives the soul, and finally leaves it naked, and guilty, and lost!

Matthew 13:23

Into good ground - Those whose hearts are prepared by grace to receive it honestly, and to give it full opportunity to grow.

In a rich and mellow soil - in a heart that submits itself to the full influence of truth, unchecked by cares and anxieties; under the showers and summer suns of divine grace; with the heart spread open, like a broad, luxuriant field, to the rays of the morning and to evening dews, the gospel takes deep root and grows; it has full room, and then and there only shows "what it is."

Verses 24-30

The kingdom of heaven is likened … - That is, the "gospel resembles." The kingdom of heaven (see the notes at Matthew 3:2) means here the effect of the gospel by its being preached. The meaning of this parable is plain. The field represents the "world," in which the gospel is preached. The "good seed," the truths preached by Christ and his apostles.

Matthew 13:25

While men slept, his enemy came … - That is, "in the night," when it could be done without being seen, an enemy came and scattered bad seed on the new-plowed field, perhaps before the good seed had been harrowed in.

Satan thus sows false doctrine in darkness. In the very place where the truth is preached, and while the hearts of people are open to receive it, by false but plausible teachers he takes care to inculcate false sentiments. Often it is one of his arts, in a revival of religion, to spread secretly dangerous notions of piety. Multitudes are persuaded that they are Christians who are deceived. They are awakened, convicted, and alarmed. They take this for conversion. Or they find their burden gone; they fancy that they hear a voice; or a text of Scripture is "brought" to them, saying that their sins are forgiven; or they see Christ hanging on the cross in a vision; or they dream that their sins are pardoned, and they suppose they are Christians. But they are deceived. None of these things are any conclusive evidence of piety. All these may exist, and still there be no true love to God or Christ, and no real hatred of sin and change of heart. An enemy may do it to deceive them, and to bring dishonor on religion.

Sowed tares - By "tares" is probably meant a degenerate kind of wheat, or the darnel-grass growing in Palestine. In its growth and form it has a strong resemblance to genuine wheat; but it either produces no grain, or that of a very inferior and hurtful kind. Probably it comes near to what we mean by "chess." It was extremely difficult to separate it from the genuine wheat, on account of its similarity while growing.

"The tare abounds all over the East, and is a great nuisance to the farmer. It resembles the American "cheat (chess)," but the "head" does not droop like cheat, nor does it branch out like oats. The grain, also, is smaller, and is arranged along the upper part of the stalk, which stands perfectly erect. The "taste" is bitter, and when eaten separately, or even when diffused in ordinary bread, it causes dizziness, and often acts as a violent emetic. Barn-door fowls also become dizzy from eating it. In short, it is a strong soporific poison, and must be carefully winnowed, and picked out of the wheat grain by grain, before grinding, or the flour is not healthy. Even the farmers, who in this country generally "weed" their fields, do not attempt to separate the one from the other. They would not only mistake good grain for them, but very commonly the roots of the two are so

intertwined that it is impossible to separate them without plucking up both. Both, therefore, must be left to "grow together" until the time of harvest." - (Thomson) "The Land and the Book," vol. ii. pp. 111,112. Thus, "tares" aptly represented hypocrites in the church. Strongly resembling Christians in their experience, and, in some respects, their lives it is impossible to distinguish them from genuine Christians, nor can they be separated until it is done by the Great Searcher of hearts at the day of judgment. An enemy the devil hath done it. And nowhere has he shown profounder cunning, or done more to adulterate the purity of the gospel.

And went his way - There is something very expressive in this. He knew the soil; he knew how the seed would take root and grow. He had only to sow the seed and let it alone. So Satan knows the soil in which he sows his doctrine. He knows that in the human heart it will take deep and rapid root. It needs but little culture. Grace needs constant attendance and care. Error, and sin, and hypocrisy are the native products of the human heart, and, when left alone, start up with deadly luxuriancy.

Matthew 13:26

Then appeared the tares also - That is, then the tares were "first discovered." They had grown with the wheat, but were so much like it as not to be noticed until the wheat began to ripen.

So true piety and false hopes are not known by professions, by "blades," and leaves, and flowers, but by the fruit.

Matthew 13:29

Ye root up also the wheat - They so much resembled the true wheat that even then it would be difficult to separate them.

By gathering them, they would tread down the wheat, loosen and disturb the earth, and greatly injure the crop. In the harvest it could be done without injury.

Matthew 13:30

Let both grow together - They would not spoil the true wheat, and in time of harvest it would be easy to separate them.

Our Saviour teaches us here:

1.That hypocrites and deceived persons must be expected in the church.

2.That this is the work of the enemy of man. They are not the work of Christianity any more than traitors are of patriotism, or counterfeiters are of the proper effect of legislating about money. They belong to the world, and hypocrisy is only one form of sin. The Christian religion never "made" a

hypocrite, nor is there a hypocrite on the earth whose principles and practice it does not condemn.

3.That all hope of removing them entirely would be vain.

4.That an "attempt" to remove them altogether would injure real Christianity, by causing excitements, discord, and hard feelings even among Christians.

5.That Christ will himself separate them at the proper time. There is no doubt that it is the duty of the church to keep itself pure, and to cut off gross and manifest offenders, 1 Corinthians 5:4-5; but the Saviour refers here to those who may be "suspected" of hypocrisy, but against whom it cannot be proved; to those who so successfully imitate Christians as to make it difficult or impossible for man to distinguish them.

Verse 31-32

See also Mark 4:30-32. The kingdom of heavens See the notes at Matthew 3:2. It means here either piety in a renewed heart or the church. In either case the commencement is small. In the heart it is at first feeble, easily injured, and much exposed. In the church there were few at first, ignorant, unknown, and unhonored; yet soon it was to spread through the world.

Grain of mustard-seed - The plant here described was very different from that which is known among us. It was several years before it bore fruit and became properly a tree. Mustard, with us, is an annual plant: it is always small, and is properly an herb. The Hebrew writers speak of the mustard-tree as one on which they could "climb," as on a fig-tree. Its size was much owing to the climate. All plants of that nature grow much larger in a warm climate, like that of Palestine, than in colder regions. The seeds of this tree were remarkably small, so that they, with the great size of the plant, were an apt illustration of the progress of the church and of the nature of faith, Matthew 17:20.

"I have seen," says Dr. Thomson,this plant on the rich plain of Akkar as tall as the horse and his rider. It has occurred to me on former visits that the mustard-tree of the parable probably grew at this spot, or possibly at Tabiga, near Capernaum, for the water in both is somewhat similar, and so are the

vegetable productions. To furnish an adequate basis for the proverb, it is necessary to suppose that a variety of it was cultivated in the time of our Saviour, which grew to an enormous size, and shot forth large branches, so that the fowls of the air could lodge in the branches of it. It may have been perennial, and have grown to a considerable tree; and there are traditions in the country of such so large that a man could climb into them; and after having seen "red pepper" bushes grow on year after year, into tall shrubs, and the "castor-bean" line the brooks about Damascus like the willows and the poplars, I can readily credit the existence of mustard-trees large enough to meet all the demands of our Lord's parable. - "*The Land and the Book*," vol. ii. p. 101.

Young converts often suppose they have much religion. It is not so. They are, indeed, in a new world. Their hearts glow with new affections. They have an elevation, an ecstasy of emotion, which they may not have afterward like a blind man suddenly restored to sight. The sensation is new and especially vivid, yet little is seen distinctly. His impressions are indeed more vivid and cheering than those of him who has long seen and to whom objects are familiar. In a little time, too, the young convert will see more distinctly, will judge more intelligently, will love more strongly, though not with so much "new emotion," and will be prepared to make more sacrifices for the cause of Christ.

Verse 33

The kingdom of heaven - The meaning here is the same as in the last parable; perhaps, however, intending to denote more properly the secret and hidden nature of piety in the soul. The other parable declared the "fact" that the gospel would greatly spread, and that piety in the heart would greatly increase. This states the "way" or "mode" in which it would be done. It is secret, silent, steady; pervading all the faculties of the soul and all the kingdoms of the world, as leaven, or yeast, though hidden in the flour, and though deposited only in one place, works silently until all the mass is brought under its influence.

Three measures - These were small measures (see the margin); but the particular amount is of no consequence to the story; nor is anything to be inferred from the fact that three are mentioned. That number is mentioned as a circumstance giving interest to the parable, but designed to convey no spiritual instruction. The measure mentioned here probably contained about a peck and a half.

Verse 34-35

That it might be fulfilled - This is taken from Psalm 78:2-3. The sense, and not the very words of the Psalm, are given. Christ taught, as did that prophet - Asaph - in parables. The words of Asaph described the manner in which Christ taught, and in this sense it could be said that they were fulfilled. See the notes at Matthew 1:22-23.

Verses 36-43

Declare unto us - That is, explain the meaning of the parable. This was done in so plain a manner as to render comment unnecessary. The Son of man, the Lord Jesus, sows the good seed - that is, preaches the gospel. This he did personally, and does now by his ministers, his providence, and his Spirit, by all the means of conveying "truth" to the mind. This seed was, by various means, to be carried over all the world. It was to be confined to no particular nation or people. The good seed was the children of the kingdom; that is, of the kingdom of God, or Christians. For these the Saviour toiled and died. They are the fruit of his labors. Yet amid them were wicked people; and all hypocrites and unbelievers in the church are the work of Satan. Yet they must remain together until the end, when they shall be separated, and the righteous saved and the wicked lost. The one shall shine clear as the sun, the other be cast into a furnace of fire - a most expressive image of suffering.

We have no idea of more acute suffering than to be thrown into the fire, and to have our bodies made capable of bearing the burning heat, and living on m this burning heat forever and forever. It is not certain that our Saviour meant to teach here that hell is made up of "material" fire; but it is certain that he meant to teach that this would be a proper "representation" of the sufferings of the lost. We may be further assured that the Redeemer would not deceive us, or use words to torment and tantalize us. He would not talk of hell-fire which had no existence, nor would the Saviour of people hold out frightful images merely to terrify mankind. If he has spoken of hell, then there is a hell. If he meant to say that the wicked shall suffer, then they will suffer. If he did not mean to deceive mankind, then there is a hell, and then the wicked will be punished. The impenitent, therefore, should be alarmed. And the righteous, however much wickedness they may see, and however many hypocrites there may be in the church, should be cheered with the prospect that soon the just will be separated from the unjust, and that they shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Verse 44

The kingdom of heaven - The gospel. The new dispensation. The offer of eternal life. See the notes at Matthew 3:2. The Saviour in this parable compares that kingdom to treasure hid in a field; that is, to money concealed; or more likely to a mine of silver or gold that was unknown to the owner of the field.

He hideth - That is, he conceals the fact that he has found it; he does not tell of it. With a view of obtaining this, Jesus says that a man would go and sell his property and buy the field. The conduct of the man would be dishonest. It would be his duty to inform the owner of the field of the discovery. He would be really endeavoring to gain property belonging to another at far less than its real value, and the principle of real integrity would require him to inform the owner of the discovery. But Christ does not intend to vindicate his conduct. He merely states the way in which people do "actually" manage to obtain wealth. He states a case where a man would actually "sacrifice his property," and practice diligence and watchfulness to obtain the wealth which he had discovered. The point of the parable lies in his "earnestness," his anxiety, his care, and his actually obtaining it. The gospel is more valuable than such a treasure, Psalm 19:10; Proverbs 3:13-15. It is hidden from most people. When a person sees it and hears it, it is his duty to sacrifice all that hinders his obtaining it, and to seek it with the earnestness with which other people seek for gold. The truth often lies buried: it is like rich veins of ore in the sacred Scriptures; it must be searched out with diligence, and its discovery will repay a man for all his sacrifices, Luke 14:33; Philemon 3:8.

Verse 45-46

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman - The meaning is, that the proper seeking for salvation, or the proper conduct in reference to religion, is like the conduct of a "merchantman." In his searches he found one pearl of great value, and sold all his possessions to obtain it. So, says the Saviour, people seeking for happiness and finding the gospel - the pearl of great price - should be willing to sacrifice all other things for this. Pearls are precious stones found in the shells of oysters, chiefly in the East Indies. See the notes at Matthew 7:6. They are valuable on account of their beauty and because they are rare. The value of them is greatly increased by their size. The meaning of this parable is nearly the same as the other. It is

designed to represent the gospel as of more value than all other things, and to impress on us the duty of sacrificing all that we possess in order to obtain it.

Verses 47-50

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net … - This parable does not differ in meaning from that of the tares. The gospel is compared to a net dragging along on the bottom of a lake, and collecting all - good and bad. The gospel may be expected to do the same; but in the end of the world, when the net "is drawn in," the bad will be separated from the good; the one will be cast away, and the other saved. Our Saviour never fails to keep before our minds the great truth that there is to be a day of judgment, and that there will be a separation of the good and the evil. He came to preach salvation; and it is a remarkable fact, also, that the most fearful accounts of hell and of the sufferings of the damned, in the Scriptures, are from his lips. How does this agree with the representations of those who say that all will be saved?

Verses 51-53

Jesus kindly asked them whether they had understood these things. If not, he was still willing to teach them. He enjoined on them their duty to make a proper use of this knowledge by speaking another parable.

Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven - That is, every man that is acquainted with the gospel or with the truth. As the disciples had said that they had understood the truth, he says that it should not be unemployed. They should bring it forth in due time, like a householder bringing out of his treasury, or place of deposit, what had been laid up there at any time, as it was needed.

Bringeth forth - As occasion demands; as sickness, or calamity, or the wants of his family, or the poor require.

Treasure - The word "treasure" here means a place of deposit, not for money merely, but for anything necessary for the comfort of a family. It is the same as "treasury" or a place of "deposit."

New and old - Things lately acquired, or things that had been laid up for a long time. So, said Christ, you, my disciples, are to be. The truth, new or old, which you have gained, keep it not laid up and hid, but bring it forth, in due season and on proper occasions, to benefit others. Every preacher should be properly instructed. Christ for three years gave instructions to the apostles; and they who preach should be able to understand the gospel, to

defend it, and to communicate it to others. Human learning alone is indeed of no value to a minister; but all learning that will enable a man better to understand the Bible and communicate its truths is valuable, and should, if possible, be gained. A minister should be like the father of a family - distributing to the church as it needs; and out of his treasures bringing forth truth to confirm the feeble, to enlighten the ignorant, and to recover and guide those who are in danger of straying away.

Verse 54

Into his own country - That is, into Nazareth. Mark, who has also recorded this Mark 6:1-6, says that it took place on the Sabbath. It was common for our Saviour to speak in the synagogues. Any Jew had a fight to address the people, if called on by the minister; and our Saviour often availed himself of the right to instruct the people and declare his doctrines. See Matthew 4:23.

Verse 55-56

Is not this the carpenter‘s son? - Mark says, “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?” Both these expressions would probably be used in the course of the conversation, and Matthew has recorded one and Mark the other. The expression recorded by Mark is a strong, perhaps decisive proof that he had himself worked at the business until he was 30 years of age. The people in the neighborhood would understand well the nature of his early employments. It is therefore almost certain that this had been his manner of life. A useful employment is always honorable. Idleness is the parent of mischief. Our Saviour, therefore, spent the greatest part of his life in honest, useful industry. Until the age of 30 he did not choose to enter on his great work; and it was proper before that time that he should set an example to the world of honorable though humble industry. Life is not wasted in such employments. They are appointed as the lot of man; and in the faithful discharge of duties in the relations of life, though obscure; in honest industry, however humble; in patient labor, if connected with a life of religion, we may be sure that God will approve our conduct. It was, moreover, the custom of the Jews - even those of wealth and learning - to train all their children to some “trade” or manual occupation. Thus Paul was a tent-maker. Compare Acts 18:3.

This was, on the part of the Saviour, an example of great condescension and humility. It staggers the faith of many that the Son of God should labour in an occupation so obscure and lowly. The infidel sneers at the idea

that "He that made the worlds" should live thirty years in humble life as a poor and unknown mechanic. Yet the same infidel will loudly praise Peter the Great of Russia because he laid aside his imperial dignity and entered the British service as a "ship-carpenter," that he might learn the art of building a navy. Was the purpose of "Peter" of more importance than that of the Son of God? If Peter, the heir to the throne of the Czars, might leave his elevated rank and descend to a humble employment, and secure by it the applause of the world, why might not the King of kings evince a similar character for an infinitely higher object?

His brethren, James … - The fair interpretation of this passage is, that these were the sons and daughters of Joseph and Mary. The people in the neighborhood thought so, and spoke of them as such.

Verse 57

And they were offended in him - That is, they took offence at his humble birth, and at the indigent circumstances of his family. They were too proud to be taught by one who, in family connections, they took to be their equal or inferior. People always look with envy on those of their own rank who advance pretensions to uncommon wisdom or superior power.

A prophet is not without honour … - This seems to be a proverbial expression. Jesus advances it as a general truth. There might be some exceptions to it, but He was not an exception. Everywhere else he had been more honored than at home. There they knew his family. They had seen his humble life. They had been his companions. They were envious of his wisdom, and were too proud to be taught by him. A case remarkably similar to this occurs in the history of the discovery of America. Columbus, a native of Genoa, had by patient study conceived the idea that there was a vast continent which might be reached by sailing to the west. Of this his countrymen had no belief. Learned people had long studied the science of geography, and they had never imagined that such a continent could exist; and they were indignant that He, an obscure man, should suppose that he "possessed wisdom superior to all the rest of mankind united." It was accordingly a fact that he was obliged to seek for patrons of his undertaking out of his own country; that there he received his first honors; and to other kingdoms the discoveries of the obscure Genoese gave their chief wealth and highest splendor.

Verse 58

Did not many mighty works - Miracles. This implies that he performed some miracles. Mark tells us what they were: "He laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them," Mark 6:5.

Because of their unbelief - That is, it would have been useless to the great purposes of his mission to have worked miracles there. We are not to suppose that his power was limited by the belief or unbelief of people; but they were so "prejudiced," so set against him, that they were not in a condition to "judge of evidence" and to be convinced. They would have charged it to derangement, or sorcery, or the agency of the devil. Compare John 10:20. It would have been of no use, therefore, in proving to them that he was from God, to have worked miracles. He did, therefore, only those things which were the proper work of benevolence, and which could not easily be charged on the devil. He gave "sufficient" proof of his mission, and left them in their chosen unbelief without excuse. It is also true, in spiritual things, that the unbelief of a people prevents the influences of the Holy Spirit from being sent down to bless them. God requires faith. He hears only the prayers of faith. And when there is little true belief, and prayer is cold and formal, there the people sleep in spiritual death and are unblessed.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verse 1

Herod the tetrarch - See also Mark 6:14-16; Luke 9:7-9. This was a son of Herod the Great. Herod the Great died probably in the first year after the birth of Christ, and left his kingdom to his three sons, of whom this "Herod Antipas" was one. He ruled over Galilee and Perea. See the notes at Matthew 2:15. The title "tetrarch" literally denotes one who rules over a "fourth" part of any country. It came, however, to signify the governor or ruler of any province subject to the Roman emperor - Robinson, Lexicon.

Heard of the fame of Jesus - Jesus had been a considerable time engaged in the work of the ministry, and it may seem remarkable that he had not before heard of him. Herod might, however, have been absent on some expedition to a remote part of the country. It is to be remembered, also, that he was a man of much dissoluteness of morals, and that he paid little attention to the affairs of the people. He might have heard of Jesus before, but it had not arrested his attention. He did not think it a matter worthy of much regard.

Verse 2

This is John the Baptist - Herod feared John. His conscience smote him for his crimes. He remembered that he had wickedly put him to death. He knew him to be a distinguished prophet; and he concluded that no other one was capable of working such miracles but he who had been so eminent a servant of God in his life, and who, he supposed, had again risen from the dead and entered the dominions of his murderer. The alarm in his court, it seems, was general. Herod's conscience told him that this was John. Others thought that it might be the expected Elijah or one of the old prophets, Mark 6:15.

Verses 3-5

For Herod had laid hold on John … - See Mark 6:17-20; Luke 3:19-20. This Herodias was a granddaughter of Herod the Great. She was first married to Herod Philip, by whom she had a daughter, Salome, probably the one that danced and pleased Herod. Josephus says that this marriage of Herod Antipas with Herodias took place while he was on a journey to Rome. He stopped at his brother's; fell in love with his wife; agreed to put away his own wife, the daughter of Aretas, King of Petraea; and Herodias agreed to leave her own husband and live with him. They were living,

therefore, in adultery; and John, in faithfulness, though at the risk of his life, had reproved them for their crimes. Herod was guilty of two crimes in this act:

1.Of "adultery," since she was the wife of another man.

2.Of "incest," since she was a near relation, and such marriages were expressly forbidden, Leviticus 18:16.

Verses 6-12

See also Mark 6:21-29. But when Herod's birthday was come Kings were accustomed to observe the day of their birth with much pomp, and commonly, also, by giving a feast to their principal nobility. See Genesis 40:20. Mark adds that this birthday was kept by making a supper to his "lords, high captains, and chief estates in Galilee;" that is to the chief men in office. "High captains" means, in the original, commanders of thousands, or of a division of 1,000 people.

The daughter of Herodias - That is, "Salome," her daughter by her former husband. This was a violation of all the rules of modesty and propriety. One great principle of all eastern nations is to keep their females from public view. For this purpose they are confined in a particular part of the house, called the harem. See the notes at Matthew 9:1-8. If they appear in public, it is always with a veil, so closely drawn that their faces cannot be seen. No modest woman would have appeared in this manner before the court, and it is probable, therefore, that she partook of the dissolute principles of her mother. It is also probable that the dance was one well known in Greece - the lascivious and wanton dance of the Ionics.

Matthew 14:7

He promised with an oath - This a foolish and wicked oath.

To please a wanton girl, the monarch called the eternal God to witness his willingness to give her half his kingdom, Mark 6:23. It seems, also, that he was willing to shed the holiest blood it contained. An oath like this it was not lawful to make, and it should have been broken. See Matthew 14:9.

Matthew 14:8

Being before instructed of her mother - Not before she danced, but afterward, and before she made the request of Herod.

See Mark 6:24. The only appearance of what was right in the whole transaction was her honoring her mother by consulting her, but in this she only intended to accomplish the purposes of wickedness more effectively.

In a charger - The original word means a large platter on which food is placed. We should have supposed that she would have been struck with abhorrence at such a direction from her mother; but she seems to have been gratified. John, by his faithfulness, had offended the whole family, and here was ample opportunity for an adulterous mother and her dissolute child to gratify their resentment. It was customary for princes to require the heads of persons ordered for execution to be brought to them. For this there were two reasons:

1.To gratify their resentment - to feast their eyes on the proof that their enemy was dead; and,

2.To ascertain the fact that the sentence had been executed.

There is a similar instance in Roman history of a woman requiring the head of an enemy to be brought to her. Agrippina, the mother of Nero, who was afterward emperor, sent an officer to put to death Lollia Paulina, who had been her rival for the imperial dignity. When Lollia‘s head was brought to her, not knowing it at first, she examined it with her own hands until she perceived some particular feature by which the lady was distinguished.

Matthew 14:9

And the king was sorry - There might have been several reasons for this.

1. Herod had a high respect for John, and feared him. He knew that he was a holy man, and had “observed him,” Mark 6:20. In the margin (Mark) this is “kept him,” or “saved him.” In fact he had interposed and saved John from being put to death by Herodias, who had had a quarrel with John, and would have killed him but for Herod, Mark 6:19. Herod, though a bad man, had a respect and veneration for John as a holy and just man, as wicked people often will have.

2. John was in high repute among the people, and Herod might have been afraid that his murder might excite commotion.

3. Herod, though a wicked man, does not appear to have been insensible to some of the common principles of human nature. Here was a great and most manifest crime proposed - no less than the murder of an acknowledged prophet of the Lord. It was deliberate. It was to gratify the malice of a wicked woman. It was the price of a few moments‘ entertainment. His conscience, though in feeble and dying accents, checked

him. He would have preferred a request not so manifestly wicked, and that would not have involved him in so much difficulty.

For the oath's sake - Herod felt that he was bound by this oath; but he was not. The oath should not have been taken: but, being taken, he could not be bound by it. No oath could justify a man in committing murder. The true principle is, that Herod was bound by a prior obligation - by the law of God - not to commit murder; and no act of his, be it an oath or anything else, could free him from that obligation.

And them which sat with him at meat - This was the strongest reason why Herod murdered John. He had not firmness enough to obey the law of God and to follow the dictates of conscience against the opinions of wicked people. He was afraid of the charge of cowardice and want of spirit; afraid of ridicule and the contempt of the wicked. This is the principle of the laws of honor; this the foundation of dwelling. It is not so much for his own sake that one man murders another in a duel, for the offence is often a mere trifle - it is a word, or look, that never would injure him. It is because the "men of honor," as they call themselves, his companions, would consider him a coward and would laugh at him. Those companions may be unprincipled contemners of the laws of God and man; and yet the duellist, against his own conscience, against the laws of God, against the good opinion of the virtuous part of the world, and against the laws of his country, seeks by deadly aim to murder another merely to gratify his dissolute companions. And this is the law of honor! This is the secret of duelling! This the source of that remorse that settles in awful blackness, and that thunders damnation around the duellist in his dying hours! It should be added, this is the course of all youthful guilt. Young men are led along by others. They have not firmness enough to follow the teachings of a father and of the law of God. They are afraid of being called mean and cowardly by the wicked; and they often sink low in vice and crime, never to rise again.

At meat - That is, at supper. The word "meat," at the time the Bible was translated, meant provisions of all kinds. It is now restricted to flesh, and does not convey a full idea of the original.

Matthew 14:11

And his head was brought in a charger … - For the sake of these wicked people, the bloody offering - the head of the slaughtered prophet was brought and given as the reward to the daughter and mother.

What an offering to a woman! Josephus says of Herodias that "she was a woman full of ambition and envy, having a mighty influence on Herod, and able to persuade him to things he was not at all inclined to." This is one of the many proofs that we have that the evangelists drew characters according to truth.

Matthew 14:12

And his disciples … - The head was with Herodias.

The body, with pious care, they buried.

And went and told Jesus - This was done, probably, for the following reasons:

1.It was an important event, and one particularly connected with the work of Jesus. John was his forerunner, and it was important that he should be made acquainted with his death.

2.It is not unreasonable to suppose that in their affliction they came to him for consolation; nor is it improper in our affliction to follow their example, and go and tell Jesus.

3.Their master had been slain by a cruel king. Jesus was engaged in the same cause, and they probably supposed that he was in danger. They therefore came to warn him of it, and he Matthew 14:13 sought a place of safety.

Verses 13-21

A full narrative of the feeding the five thousand is given in each of the other evangelists: in Mark 6:32-44; in Luke 9:10-17; in John 6:1-14.

Matthew 14:13

And when Jesus heard of it, he departed - He went to a place of safety.

He never threw himself unnecessarily into danger. It was proper that he should secure his life until the appointed time had come for him to die.

By a ship into a desert place - That is, he crossed the Sea of Galilee. He went to the country east of the sea, into a place little inhabited. Luke says Luke 9:10 he went to a place called Bethsaida. See the notes at Matthew 11:21. "A desert place" means a place little cultivated, where there were few or no inhabitants. On the east of the Sea of Galilee there was a large tract of country of this description rough, uncultivated, and chiefly used to pasture flocks.

Matthew 14:14

Was moved with compassion - That is, pitied them.

Mark 6:34 says he was moved with compassion because they were as sheep having no shepherd. A shepherd is one who takes care of a flock. It was his duty to feed it; to defend it from wolves and other wild beasts; to take care of the young and feeble; to lead it by green pastures and still waters, Psalm 23:1-6. In Eastern countries this was a principal employment of the inhabitants. When Christ says the people were as sheep without a shepherd, he means that they had no teachers and guides who cared for them and took pains to instruct them. The scribes and Pharisees were haughty and proud, and cared little for the common people; and when they did attempt to teach them, they led them astray. They therefore came in great multitudes to him who preached the gospel to the poor Matthew 11:5, and who was thus the good shepherd, John 10:14.

Matthew 14:15

The time is now past - That is, the day is passing away; it is near night, and it is proper to make some provision for the temporal wants of so many.

Perhaps it may mean it was past the usual time for refreshment.

Matthew 14:16

Jesus said They need not depart; give ye them to eat - John adds John 6:5-6 that previous to this Jesus had addressed Philip, and asked, Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? and that he "said this to prove him; for he himself knew what he would do;" that is, he said this to try his faith; to test the confidence of Philip in himself.

Philip, it seems, had not the kind of confidence which he ought to have had. He immediately began to think of their ability to purchase food for them. Two hundred pennyworth of bread, said he, would not be enough, John 6:7. In the original it is two hundred denarii. These were Roman coins amounting to about fourteen cents (7d.) each. The whole two hundred, therefore, would have been equal to about twenty-eight dollars. In the view of Philip this was a great sum, a sum which twelve poor fishermen were by no means able to provide. It was this fact, and not any unwillingness to provide for them, which led the disciples to request that they should be sent into the villages around in order to obtain food. Jesus knew how much they had, and he required of them, as he does of all, implicit faith, and told them to give them to eat. He requires us to do what he commands, and we need not doubt that he will give us strength to accomplish it.

Matthew 14:17

We have here but five loaves … - These loaves were in the possession of a lad, or young man, who was with them, and were made of barley, John 6:9

It is possible that this lad was one in attendance on the apostles to carry their food, but it is most probable he was one who had provision to sell among the multitude. Barley was a cheap kind of food, scarcely one-third the value of wheat, and was much used by poor people. A considerable part of the food of the people in that region was probably fish, as they lived on the borders of a lake that abounded in fish.

Matthew 14:19

And he commanded the multitude to sit down - In the original it is "to recline" on the grass, or to lie as they did at their meals.

The Jews never sat, as we do, at meals, but reclined or lay at length. See the notes at Matthew 23:6. Mark and Luke add that they reclined in companies, by hundreds and by fifties.

And looking up to heaven, he blessed - Luke adds, he blessed "them;" that is, the loaves. The word "to bless" means, often, to give thanks; sometimes to pray for a blessing; that is, to pray for the divine favor and friendship; to pray that what we do may meet his approbation. In seeking a blessing on our food, it means that we pray that it may be made nourishing to our bodies; that we may have proper gratitude to God, the giver, for providing for our wants; and that we may remember the Creator while we partake the bounties of his providence. Our Saviour always sought a blessing on his food. In this he was an example for us. What he did we should do. It is right thus to seek the blessing of God. He provides for us; he daily opens his hand and satisfies our wants, and it is proper that we should render suitable acknowledgments for his goodness.

The custom among the Jews was universal. The form of prayer which they used in the time of Christ has been preserved by their writers, the Talmudists. It is this: "Blessed be thou, O Lord our God, the King of the world, who hast produced this food and this drink from the earth and the vine."

And brake - The loaves of bread, among the Jews, were made thin and brittle, and were therefore broken and not cut.

Matthew 14:20

And they did all eat, and were filled - This was an undoubted miracle.

The quantity must have been greatly increased to have supplied so many. He that could increase that small quantity so much had the power of creation; and he that could do that could create the world out of nothing, and had no less than divine power.

Twelve baskets full - The size of these baskets is unknown. They were probably such as travelers carried their provisions in. They were used commonly by the Jews in their journeys. In traveling among the Gentiles or Samaritans, a Jew could expect little hospitality. There were not, as now, public houses for the entertainment of strangers. At great distances there were caravansaries, but they were intended chiefly as lodging-places for the night, and not to provide food for travelers. Hence, in journeying among strangers or in deserts, they carried baskets of provisions, and this is the reason why they were furnished with them here. It is probable that each of the apostles had one, and they were all filled. John John 6:12 says that Jesus directed them to gather up these fragments, that nothing might be lost - an example of economy. God creates all food; it has, therefore, a kind of sacredness; it is all needed by some person or other, and none should be lost.

Matthew 14:21

Five thousand men, besides … - Probably the whole number might have been ten thousand, To feed so many was an act of great benevolence and a stupendous miracle.

Verse 22-23

And straightway Jesus constrained … - See Mark 6:45-56; John 6:15-21. The word "straightway" means immediately; that is, as soon as the fragments were gathered up. To "constrain" usually means to compel. It here means to command. There was no need of compulsion. They were at this time on the east side of the Lake of Gennesareth. He directed them to get into a ship and cross over to the other side; that is, to Capernaum. Mark adds that he sent them to Bethsaida Mark 6:45. Bethsaida was situated at the place where the Jordan empties into the lake on the east side of the river. Compare the notes at Matthew 11:21. It is probable that he directed them to go in a ship or boat to Bethsaida, and remain there till he should dismiss the people, and that he would meet them there, and with them cross the lake. The effect of the miracle on the multitude was so great John 6:14 that they believed him to be that prophet which should come into the world; that is, the Messiah, the king that they had expected, and they were about to take

him by force and make him a king, John 6:15. To avoid this, Jesus got away from them as privately as possible. He went into a solitary mountain alone. In view of the temptation - when human honors were offered to him and almost forced upon him - he retired for private prayer; an example for all who are tempted with human honors and applause. Nothing is better to keep the mind humble and unambitious than to seek some lonely place; to shut out the world with all its honors; to realize that the great God, before whom all creatures and all honors sink to nothing, is round about us; and to ask him to keep us from pride and vainglory.

Verse 24

But the ship was now in the midst of the sea - John says they had sailed about 25 or 30 furlongs. About 7 1/2Jewish furlongs made a mile; so that the distance they had salted was not more than about 4 miles. At no place is the Sea of Tiberias much more than 10 miles in breadth, so that they were literally in the midst of the sea.

Verse 25

And in the fourth watch of the night - The Jews anciently divided the night into three parts of four hours each, usually called watches. The first of these watches is mentioned in Lamentations 2:19, the middle watch in Judges 7:19, and the morning watch in Exodus 14:24. In the time of our Saviour they divided the night into four watches, the fourth having been introduced by the Romans. These watches consisted of three hours each. The first commenced at six and continued until nine; the second from nine to twelve; the third from twelve to three; and the fourth from three to six. The first was called evening; the second midnight; the third cock-crowing; the fourth morning, Mark 13:35. It is probable that the term watch was given to each of these divisions from the practice of placing sentinels around the camp in time of war, or in cities, to watch or guard the camp or city; and that they were at first relieved three times in the night, but under the Romans four times. It was in the last of these watches, or between three and six in the morning, that Jesus appeared to the disciples, so that he had spent most of the night alone on the mountain in prayer.

Walking on the sea - A manifest and wonderful miracle. It was a boisterous sea. It was in a dark night. The little boat was 4 or 5 miles from the shore, tossed by the billows.

Verse 26

They were troubled - They were afraid. The sight was remarkable. It was sufficient to awe them. In the dark night, amid the tumultuous billows appeared the form of a man. They thought it was a spirit an apparition. It was a common belief among the ancients that the spirits of people after death frequently appeared to the living.

Verses 28-31

And Peter answered … - Here is an instance of the characteristic ardor and rashness of Peter. He had less real faith than he supposed, and more ardor than his faith would justify. He was rash, headlong, incautious, really attached to Jesus, but still easily daunted and prone to fall. He was afraid, therefore, when in danger, and, sinking, cried again for help. Thus he was suffered to learn his own character, and his dependence on Jesus: a lesson which all Christians are permitted sooner or later to learn by dear-bought experience.

Verse 32

And when they were come into the ship the wind ceased - Here was a new proof of the power of Jesus. He that has power over winds and waves has all power. John adds John 6:21 that the ship was immediately at the land whither they went; another proof, amid this collection of wonders, that the Son of God was with them. They came, therefore, and worshipped him, acknowledging him to be the Son of God. That is, they gave him homage, or honored him as the Son of God.

Verses 34-36

Land of Gennesaret - This region was in Galilee, on the west side of the Sea of Tiberias; and in this land was situated Capernaum, to which he had directed his disciples to go.

The hem of his garment - That is, the fringe or border on the outer garment. See the notes at Matthew 9:20.

Remarks On Matthew 14:1-4. Herod‘s guilt was the only reason why he thought John the Baptist had risen. At another time he would altogether have disbelieved it. Consciousness of guilt will at some period infallibly torment a man.

2. The duty of faithfulness, Matthew 14:4. John reproved Herod at the hazard of his life, and he died for it; but he had the approbation of conscience and of God. So will all who do their duty. Here was an example of fidelity to all ministers of religion. They are not to fear the face of man, however rich, or mighty, or wicked.

3. The righteous will command the respect of the wicked. Herod was a wicked man, but he respected John and feared him, Mark 6:20. The wicked profess to despise religion, and many really do; but their consciences tell them that religion is a good thing. In times of trial they will sooner trust Christians than others. In sickness and death they are often glad to see them and hear them pray, and desire the comfort which they have; and, like Balsam, say, "Let me die the death of the righteous," Numbers 23:10. No person, young or old, is ever the less really esteemed for being a Christian.

4. People are often restrained from great sins by mere selfish motives, as Herod was by the love of popularity, Matthew 14:5. Herod would have put John to death long before had it not been that he feared the people. His constantly desiring to do it was a kind of prolonged murder. God will hold men guilty for desiring to do evil; and will not justify them if they are restrained, not by the fear of him, but by the fear of people.

5. We see the effect of what is called the principle of honor, Matthew 14:9. It was in obedience to this that Herod committed murder. This is the principle of duelling and war. No principle is so foolish and wicked. The great mass of people disapprove of it. The wise and good have always disapproved of it. This principle of honor is usually the mere love of revenge. It is often the fear of being laughed at. It produces evil. God cannot and will not love it. The way to prevent duels and murders is to restrain the passions and cultivate a spirit of meekness and forgiveness when young; that is, to come early under the full influence of the gospel.

6. People should be cautious about promises, and especially about oaths. Herod made a foolish promise, and confirmed it by a wicked oath, Matthew 14:9. Promises should not be made without knowing what is promised, and without knowing that it will be right to perform them. Oaths are always wicked except when made before a magistrate, and on occasions of real magnitude. The practice of profane and common swearing, like that of Herod, is always foolish and wicked, and sooner or later will bring people into difficulty.

7. Amusements are often attended with evil consequences, Matthew 14:6-11. The dancing of a frivolous and profligate girl was the means of the death of one of the holiest of men. Dancing, balls, splendid parties, and theaters are thought by many to be innocent; but they are a profitless waste of time. They lead to forgetfulness of God. They nourish passion and sensual desires. They often lead to the seduction and ruin of the innocent. They are unfit for dying creatures. From the very midst of such scenes the "happy" may go to the judgment bar of God. How poor a preparation to die! How dreadful the judgment seat to such!

8. Jesus will take care of the poor, Matthew 14:14-21. He regarded the temporal as well as the spiritual needs of the people. Rather than see them suffer, he worked a miracle to feed them. So, rather than see us suffer, God is daily doing what man cannot do. He causes the grain to grow; he fills the land, and seas, and air with living creatures; nay, he provides in desert places for the support of man. How soon would all people and beasts die if he did not put forth continued power and goodness for the supply of our wants!

9. It is the duty of Christians to be solicitous about the temporal wants of the poor, Matthew 14:15. They are with us. By regarding them, and providing for them, we have an opportunity of showing our attachment to Christ, and our resemblance to God, who continually does good.

10. A blessing should be sought on our enjoyments, Matthew 14:19. It is always right to imitate Christ. It is right to acknowledge our dependence on God, and in the midst of mercies to pray that we may not forget the Giver.

11. We see the duty of economy. The Saviour, who had power to create worlds by a word, yet commanded to take up the fragments, that nothing might be lost, John 6:12. Nothing that God has created and given to us should be wasted.

12. It is proper to make preparation for private prayer. Jesus sent the people away that he might be alone, Matthew 14:22-23. So Christians should take pains that they may have times and places for retirement. A

grove or a mountain was the place where our Saviour sought to pray, and there, too, may we find and worship God.

13. In time of temptation, of prosperity, and honor, it is right to devote much time to secret prayer. Jesus, when the people were about to make him a king, retired to the mountain, and continued there until the early morning in prayer, John 6:15.

14. When Christ commands us to do a thing we should do it, Matthew 14:22. Even if it should expose us to danger, it should be done.

15. In times of danger and distress, Jesus will see us and will come to our relief, Matthew 14:25-26. Even in the tempest that howls, or on the waves of affliction that beat around us, he will come, and we shall be safe.

16. We should never be afraid of him. We should always have good cheer when we see him, Matthew 14:27. When he says, "It is I," he also says, "be not afraid." He can still the waves, and conduct us safely to the port which we seek.

17. Nothing is too difficult for us when we act under the command of Christ. Peter at his command leaves the ship and walks on the billows, Matthew 14:29.

18. Christ sometimes leaves his people to see their weakness and their need of strength. Without his continued aid they would sink. Peter had no strength of his own to walk on the deep, and Christ suffered him to see his dependence, Matthew 14:30.19. The eye, in difficulty, should be fixed on Christ. As soon as Peter began to look at the waves and winds, rather than Christ, he began to sink, Matthew 14:30. True courage in difficulties consists not in confidence in ourselves, but in confidence in Jesus, the Almighty Saviour and Friend.

20. Prayer may be instantly answered. When we are in immediate danger, and offer a prayer of faith, we may expect immediate aid, Matthew 14:31.

21. Pride comes before a fall. Peter was self-confident and proud, and he fell. His confidence and rashness were the very means of showing the weakness of his faith, Matthew 14:31.

22. It is proper to render homage to Jesus, and to worship him as the Son of God, Matthew 14:33.

23. We should be desirous that all about us should partake of the benefits that Christ confers. When we know him and have tested his goodness, we should take pains that all around us may also be brought to him and be saved, Matthew 14:35.

24. Jesus only can make us perfectly whole. No other being can save us. He that could heal the body can save the soul. A word can save us. With what earnestness ought we to plead with him that we may obtain his saving grace! Matthew 14:36.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verses 1-9

See also Mark 7:1-9.

Then came to Jesus … - Mark says that they saw the disciples of Jesus eating with unwashed hands.

Matthew 15:2

Transgress the tradition of the elders - The world "elders" literally means "old men." Here it means the "ancients," or their "ancestors." The "tradition of the elders" meant something handed down from one to another by memory; some precept or custom not commanded in the written law, but which scribes and Pharisees held themselves bound to observe.

They supposed that when Moses was on Mount Sinai two sets of laws were delivered to him: one, they said, was recorded, and is that contained in the Old Testament; the other was handed down from father to son, and kept uncorrupted to their day. They believed that Moses, before he died, delivered this law to Joshua; he to the Judges; they to the prophets; so that it was kept pure until it was recorded in the Talmuds. In these books these pretended laws are now contained. They are exceedingly numerous and very trifling. They are, however, regarded by the Jews as more important than either Moses or the prophets.

One point in which the Pharisees differed from the Sadducees was in holding to these traditions. It seems, however, that in the particular traditions mentioned here, all the Jews were united; for Mark adds Mark 7:3 that "the Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders." Mark has also added that this custom of washing extended not merely to their hands before eating, but in coming from the market; and also to cups, and pots, and brass vessels, and tables, Mark 7:3-4. They did this professedly for the sake of cleanliness. So far it was well. But they also made it a matter of superstition. They regarded external purity as of much more importance than the purity of the heart. They had many foolish rules about it respecting the quantity of water that was to be used, the way in which it should be applied, the number of times it should be changed, the number of those that might wash at a time, etc. Our Saviour did not think it proper to regard these rules, and this was the reason why they "found fault" with him.

Matthew 15:3

But he answered … - They accused him of violating their traditions, as though they were obligatory.

In his answer he implied that his disciples were not bound to obey their traditions - they were invented by human beings. He said, also, that those traditions could not be binding, as they violated the commandments of God. He proceeded to specify a case in which their tradition made void one of the plain laws of God; and if that was their character, then they could not blame him for not regarding them.

Matthew 15:4

For God commanded … - That is, in the fifth commandment Exodus 20:12, and in Exodus 21:17. To "honor" is to obey, to reverence, to speak kindly to, to speak and think well of. To "curse" is to disobey, to treat with irreverence, to swear at, to speak ill of, to think evil of in the heart, to meditate or do any evil to a parent. All this is included in the original word.

Let him die the death - This is a Hebrew phrase, the same as saying, "let him surely die." The Jewish law punished this crime with death. This duty of honoring and obeying a parent was what Christ said they had violated by their traditions. He proceeds to state the way in which it was done.

Matthew 15:5

It is a gift - In Mark it is "corban." The word "corban" is a Hebrew word denoting a gift.

Here it means a thing dedicated to the service of God, and therefore not to be appropriated to any other use. The Jews were in the habit of making such dedications. They devoted their property to God for sacred uses, as they pleased. In doing this they used the word קרבן qaarbaanor κορβᾶν korbanor some similar word, saying, this thing is "corban," i. e., it is a gift to God, or is sacred to him. The law required that when a dedication of this kind was made it should be fulfilled. "Vow and pay unto the Lord your God," Psalm 76:11. See Deuteronomy 23:21. The law of God required that a son should honor his parent; i. e., among other things, that he should provide for his needs when he was old and in distress. Yet the Jewish teachers said that it was more important for a man to dedicate his property to God than to provide for the needs of his parent.

If he had once devoted his property once said it was “corban,” or a gift to God - it could not be appropriated even to the support of a parent. If a parent was needy and poor, and if he should apply to a son for assistance, and the son should reply, though in anger, “It is devoted to God; this property which you need, and by which you might be profited by me, is “corban” - I have given it to God;” the Jews said the property could not be recalled, and the son was not under obligation to aid a parent with it. He had done a more important thing in giving it to God. The son was free. He could not be required to do anything for his father after that. Thus, he might, in a moment, free himself from the obligation to obey his father or mother. In a sense somewhat similar to this, the chiefs and priests of the Sandwich Islands had the power of devoting anything to the service of the gods by saying that it was “taboo,” or “tabooed;” that is, it became consecrated to the service of religion; and, no matter who had been the owner, it could then be appropriated for no other use. In this way they had complete power over all the possessions of the people, and could appropriate them for their own use under the pretence of devoting them to religion. Thus, they deprived the people of their property under the plea that it was consecrated to the gods. The Jewish son deprived his parents of a support under the plea that the property was devoted to the service of religion. The principle was the same, and both systems were equally a violation of the rights of others.

Besides, the law said that a man should die who cursed his father, i. e., that refused to obey him, or to provide for him, or spoke in anger to him. Yet the Jews said that, though in anger, and in real spite and hatred, a son said to his father, “All that I have which could profit you I have given to God,” he should be free from blame. Thus, the whole law was made void, or of no use, by what appeared to have the appearance of piety. “No man, according to their views, was bound to obey the fifth commandment and support an aged and needy parent, if, either from superstition or spite, he chose to give his property to God, that is, to devote it to some religious use.”

Our Saviour did not mean to condemn the practice of giving to God, or to religious and charitable objects. The law and the gospel equally required this. Jesus commended even a poor widow that gave all her living, Mark 12:44, but he condemned the practice of giving to God where it interfered

with our duty to parents and relations; where it was done to get rid of the duty of aiding them; and where it was done out of a malignant and rebellious spirit, with the semblance of piety, to get clear of doing to earthly parents what God required.

Matthew 15:7

Ye hypocrites! - See the notes at Matthew 7:5. Hypocrisy is the concealment of some base principle under the pretence of religion. Never was there a clearer instance of it than this an attempt to get rid of the duty of providing for needy parents under an appearance of piety toward God.

Esaias - That is, Isaiah. This prophecy is found in Isaiah 29:13.

Prophesy of you - That is, he spoke of the people of his day of the Jews, as Jews - in terms that apply to the whole people. He properly characterized the nation in calling them hypocrites. The words are applicable to the nation at all times, and they apply, therefore, to you. He did not mean particularly to speak of the nation in the time of Christ, but he spoke of them as having a national character of hypocrisy. Compare the notes at Matthew 1:22-23.

Matthew 15:8

Draweth nigh unto me with their mouth … - That is, they are regular in the forms of worship; they are strict in ceremonial observances, and keep the law outwardly; but God requires the heart, and that they have not rendered.

Matthew 15:9

In vain do they worship me - That is, their attempts to worship are "vain," or are not real worship - they are mere "forms."

Teaching for doctrines … - The word "doctrines," here, means the requirements of religion - things to be believed and practiced in religion.

God only has a right to declare what shall be done in his service; but they held their traditions to be superior to the written word of God, and taught them as doctrines binding the conscience. See the notes at Isaiah 29:13.

Verses 10-14

See also Mark 7:15-17.

And he called the multitude - In opposition to the doctrines of the Pharisees, the Saviour took occasion to show them that the great source of pollution was the heart. They supposed that external things chiefly defiled a man. On this all their doctrines about purification were founded. This

opinion of the Jews it was of great importance to correct. The Saviour took occasion, therefore, to direct the people to the true source of defilement - their own hearts. He particularly directed them to it as of importance - "Hear and understand."

Matthew 15:11

Not that which goeth into the mouth … - The disciples were charged with being sinners for transgressing the tradition of the elders in eating with unwashed hands.

Christ replies that what they should eat could not render them sinners. The man, the moral agent, the soul, could not be polluted by anything that was eaten. What proceeds from the man himself, from his heart, would defile him.

Defileth - Pollutes, corrupts, or renders sinful.

Matthew 15:12

The Pharisees were offended - They were so zealous of their traditions that they could not endure that their absurdities should be exposed.

Matthew 15:13

Every plant … - Religious doctrine is not inaptly compared to a plant. See 1 Corinthians 3:6-8. It is planted in the mind for the purpose of producing fruit in the life, or right conduct. Jesus here says that all those doctrines of which his Father was not the author must be rooted up or corrected. The false doctrines of the Pharisees, therefore, must be attacked, and it was no wonder if they were indignant. It could not be helped. It was his duty to attack them. He was not surprised that they were enraged; but, notwithstanding their opposition, their doctrine should be destroyed.

Matthew 15:14

Let them alone - That is, do not be troubled at their rage.

Be not anxious about it. This result is to be expected. They are greatly attached to their traditions, and you are not to wonder that they are indignant. They lead, also, the blind. They have a vast influence over the multitude, and it is to be expected that they will be enraged at any doctrines that go to lessen their authority or influence. By commanding them "to let them alone," Christ does not mean that they were to be suffered to remain in error without any attempt to refute or correct them, for this he was doing then; but he meant to charge his disciples not to mind them or to regard their opposition - it was to be expected.

If the blind lead the blind … - This was a plain proposition. A blind man, attempting to conduct blind men, would fall into every ditch that was in the way. So with religious teachers. If these Pharisees, themselves ignorant and blind, should be suffered to lead the ignorant multitude, both would be destroyed. This was another reason for confuting their errors, or for rooting up the plants which God had not planted. He wished, by doing it, to save the deluded multitude.

God often suffers one man to lead many to ruin. A rich and profligate man, an infidel, a man of learning, a politician, or a teacher, is allowed to sweep multitudes to ruin. This is not unjust, for those who are led are not compelled to follow such people. They are free in choosing such leaders, and they are answerable for being led to ruin.

Verses 15-20

See also Mark 7:17-23.

Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable - See the notes at Matthew 13:3. The word "parable" sometimes means a dark or obscure saying, Psalm 78:2. Peter meant, "Explain to us more fully this obscure and novel doctrine." To us, now, it is plain; to the disciples, just coming out of Judaism, the doctrine of Jesus was obscure. Mark says that the disciples asked him. There is no contradiction. The question was put by Peter in the name of the disciples; or several of them put the question, though Matthew has mentioned only one. An omission is not a contradiction.

Matthew 15:16

Are ye also yet without understanding? - Jesus appeals, in explaining this, to their common sense; and he wonders that they had not yet learned to judge the foolish traditions of the Jews by the decisions of common sense and by his own instructions.

Matthew 15:17

Do ye not understand … - The meaning of this may be thus expressed: The food which is eaten does not affect the mind, and therefore cannot pollute it.

The doctrine of the Pharisees, that neglect of washing and of similar observances defiles a man, cannot be true. Those things pertain to the body as much as food does, and they cannot affect the soul. That must be purified by something else than external washing, and it is polluted by other things

than a neglect of mere outward ceremonies. The seat of corruption is within - it is the heart itself; and if people would be made pure, this must be cleansed. If that is corrupt, the whole man is corrupt.

Matthew 15:18-20

Christ proceeds to state what does defile the man, or render him a sinner:

1. "Evil thoughts" These are the first things - these are the fountains of all others. Thought precedes action. Thought, or purpose, or motive, gives its character to conduct. All evil thoughts are here intended. Though we labor to suppress them, yet they defile us. They leave pollution behind them.

2. "Murders." Taking the life of others with malice. The malice has its seat in the heart, and the murder therefore proceeds from the heart, 1 John 3:15.

3. "Adulteries, fornication." See Matthew 5:28.

4. "Thefts." Theft is the taking and carrying away the goods of others without their knowledge or consent. Thefts are caused by coveting the property of others. They proceed, therefore, from the heart, and violate at the same time two commandments - the tenth commandment in thought and the eighth commandment in act.

5. "False witness." Giving wrong testimony. Concealing the truth, or stating what we know to be false - a violation of the ninth commandment. It proceeds from a desire to injure others, to take away their character or property, or to do them injustice. It proceeds thus from the heart.

6. "Blasphemies." See the notes at Matthew 9:3. Blasphemy proceeds from opposition to God, hatred of his character Romans 8:7, and from a desire that there should be no God. It proceeds from the heart. See Psalm 14:1. Mark adds several things to those enumerated by Matthew:

(a) "Covetousness." The unlawful desire of what others possess, this always proceeds from the heart.

(b) "Wickedness." The original here means malice, or a desire of injuring others, Romans 1:29.

(c) "Deceit," i. e., fraud, concealment, cheating in trade. This proceeds from a desire to benefit ourselves by doing injustice to others, and this proceeds from the heart.

(d) Lasciviousness. Lust, obscenity, unbridled passion - a strong, evil desire of the heart.

(e) "An evil eye." That is, an eye that is sour, malignant, proud; or an eye of lust and passion. See Matthew 5:28; Matthew 20:15; 2 Peter 2:14, "Having eyes full of adultery, that cannot cease from sin."

(f) "Pride." An improper estimate of our own importance; thinking that we are of much more consequence than we really are. This is always the work of an evil heart.

(g) "Foolishness." Not a lack of intellect - man is not to blame for that - but a moral folly, consisting in choosing evil ends and the bad means of gaining them; or, in other words, sin and wickedness. All sin is folly. It is foolish for a man to disobey God, and foolish for anyone to go to hell.

Matthew 15:20

These are the things which defile a man - These are the true sources of pollution in man.

These are what corrupt and degrade. It is not the neglect of washing the body which defiles; it is the deep, inward corruption of the heart. And what a fountain of pollution is the human soul! What an array of crimes to proceed from the heart of man! What a proof of guilt! What strictness is there in the law of God! How universal is depravity!

Verses 21-28

This narrative is also found in Mark 7:24-30.

The coasts of Tyre and Sidon - These cities were on the seacoast or shore of the Mediterranean. See the notes at Matthew 11:21. Jesus went there for the purpose of concealment Mark 7:24, perhaps still to avoid Herod.

Matthew 15:22

A woman of Canaan - This woman is called, also, a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, Mark 7:26

In ancient times, the whole land, including Tyre and Sidon, was in the possession of the Canaanites, and called Canaan. The Phoenicians were descended from the Canaanites. The country, including Tyre and Sidon, was called Phoenicia, or Syro-Phoenicia. That country was taken by the Greeks under Alexander the Great, and those cities, in the time of Christ, were Greek cities. This woman was therefore a Gentile, living under the Greek government, and probably speaking the Greek language. She was by birth a Syro-Phoenician, born in that country, and descended, therefore, from the ancient Canaanites. All these names might, with propriety, be given to her.

Coasts - Regions or countries.

Thou son of David - Descendant of David. See the notes at Matthew 1:1. The phrase here means the Messiah.

Is grievously vexed with a devil - See the notes at Matthew 4:24. The woman showed great earnestness. She cried unto him, and fell at his feet, Mark 7:25.

Matthew 15:23

But he answered her not a word - This was done to test her faith, and that there might be exhibited to the apostles an example of the effect of persevering supplication.

The result shows that it was not unwillingness to aid her, or neglect of her. It was proper that the strength of her faith should be fully tried.

Matthew 15:24

But he answered and said, I am not sent … - This answer was made to the woman, not to the disciples.

The "lost sheep of the house of Israel" were the Jews. He came first to them. He came as their expected Messiah. He came to preach the gospel himself to the Jews only. Afterward it was preached to the Gentiles, but the ministry of Jesus was confined almost entirely to the Jews.

Matthew 15:25

She came and worshipped - That is, bowed down to him or did him reverence.

See the notes at Matthew 8:2.

Lord, help me! - A proper cry for a poor sinner, who needs the help of the Lord Jesus.

Matthew 15:26

But he answered and said, It is not meet … - That is, it is not appropriate or proper.

Children's bread - The Jews considered themselves as the special children of God.

To all other nations they were accustomed to apply terms of contempt, of which dogs was the most common. The Muslims still apply the term "dogs" to Christians, and Christians and Jews to each other. The term is designed as an expression of the highest contempt. The Saviour means to say that he was sent to the Jews. The woman was a Gentile. He meant merely using a term in common use, and designed to test her faith in the strongest manner - that it did not comport with the design of his personal ministry to apply benefits intended for the Jews to others. Evidently he cannot be understood as intending to justify or sanction the use of such terms, or calling names. He meant to try her faith. As if he had said, "You are a Gentile; I am a Jew. The Jews call themselves children of God. You they vilify and abuse, calling you a dog. Are you willing to receive of a Jew, then, a favor? Are you willing to submit to these appellations to receive a favor of one of that nation, and to acknowledge your dependence on a people that so despise you?" It was, therefore, a trial of her faith, and was not a lending of his sanction to the propriety of the abusive term. He regarded her with a different feeling.

Matthew 15:27

And she said, Truth, Lord … - What you say is true.

Let it be that the best food should be given to the children - let the Jews have the chief benefit of thy ministry; but the dogs beneath the table eat the crumbs. So let me be regarded as a dog, a pagan, as unworthy of everything. Yet grant one exertion of that almighty power displayed so signally among the Jews, and heal the despised daughter of a despised heathen mother."

Matthew 15:28

Great is thy faith - That is, thy trust, confidence.

The word here seems to include, also, the humility and perseverance manifested in pressing her suit. The daughter was healed then. Going home, she found her well and composed, Mark 7:30.

Verses 29-31

Sea of Galilee - That is, the Lake of Gennesaret. For an account of the principal diseases mentioned here, see the notes at Matthew 4:24.

Maimed - Those to whom a hand or foot was wanting. See Matthew 18:8. To cure them - that is, to restore a hand or foot - was a direct act of creative power. It is no wonder, therefore, that the people wondered.

And they glorified the God of Israel - To glorify here means to praise; to acknowledge his power and goodness. The God of Israel was the God that the Israelites or Jews worshipped.

Verses 32-39

The miracle recorded here - the feeding of the four thousand - took place on a mountain near the Sea of Galilee. The same account is recorded in Mark 8:1-10. The circumstances of the miracle are so similar to the one recorded in Matthew 14:14-21, as to need little additional explanation.

Matthew 15:32

Three days, and have nothing to eat - This is not, perhaps, to be taken literally, but only that during that time they had been deprived of their ordinary or regular food.

They had had only a very scanty supply, and on the third day even that began to fail.

Matthew 15:39

Coasts of Magdala - Mark says, "The parts of Dalmanutha." Magdala was probably the same place which was formerly called Migdol, Joshua 19:38. It is now called Mejdel, and is situated a few miles north of the city of Tiberias, in the land of Gennesaret, on the western side of the Sea of Tiberias, and directly east of Cana of Galilee. "It is a wretched hamlet of a dozen low huts huddled into one, and the whole ready to tumble into a dismal heap of black basaltic rubbish." - The Land and the Book (Thomson), vol. ii. p. 108. This was the birthplace of Mary Magdalene, out of whom the Saviour cast seven devils, Mark 16:9. Dalmanutha was probably a small village near to Magdala, of which no remains have been discovered. There is no contradiction in the statements of the two evangelists here, for they do not say that Jesus went to either of these towns, but only to the coasts or parts where they were situated.

Remarks On Matthew 15:1-6.

2.That people are strongly disposed to explain away the law of God, if possible. It is too strict for them, and too spiritual. They dare not often

attack it directly, but they will explain it and dilute it so as to make it mean nothing. Wicked people do not love God‘s law, Matthew 15:4-6.

3.People are prone to introduce foolish rites into religion. They do not love what God has commanded, and they attempt to compensate for not loving his doctrines by being great sticklers for their own, Matthew 15:2; Mark 7:3-4.

4.All addition to the law of God is evil, Matthew 15:3. All ceremonies in religion which are not authorized by the New Testament are wrong. Man has no right to ordain rites to bind the conscience where God has commanded none, Colossians 2:23. People come the nearest to that which is right when they live nearest to just what God has commanded in the Bible.

5.Hypocrites should be unmasked and detected, Matthew 15:7. He does a great service to people who detects their hypocrisy. That close and faithful preaching which lays open the heart, and shows people what they are, is that which comes nearest to the example of Christ. It may pain them, but the wounds of a friend are faithful Proverbs 27:6; and we should honor and love the man that, by the grace of God, can show us our own hearts. We always honor most the physician of the body that is most skilled in detecting and curing disease, and so should we the physician of the soul.

6.We should be exceedingly cautious in avoiding formality in worship, Matthew 15:8-9. It is hypocrisy. God requires the heart. To render to him only the service of the lips is to mock him. Nothing can be acceptable but true piety, genuine love, and hearty obedience; nothing more hateful than an appearance of worshipping God, while the heart is in sin and the world.

7.The duty of honoring parents, Matthew 15:4-6. Nothing can explain away this duty. It is binding on all. Parents should be obeyed, loved, respected. God requires it and we cannot be free from the duty. Under age, a child is bound always to obey a parent where the parent does not command anything contrary to the Bible; but when the parent commands anything contrary to the Bible, the child is not bound to obey, Acts 5:29. After the child is of age, he is to respect, love, and honor the parent; and, if poor and needy, to provide for his wants until he dies. It is certainly proper that we

should do all that we can to comfort those in old age who did so much for us in childhood. A child can never repay a parent for his kindness to him.

8.We are not at liberty to give to anything else not even to religious uses - what is necessary to render our parents comfortable, Matthew 15:4-6. They have the first claim on us. And though it is our duty to do much in the cause of benevolence, yet our first duty should be to see that our parents do not suffer.

9.People easily take offence when they are faithfully reproved, and especially when their hypocrisy is exposed; and especially if this exposure is about some small matter on which they have greatly set their hearts some ceremony in worship or some foolish rite, Matthew 15:12.

10.Every false doctrine is to be opposed and should be rooted up, Matthew 15:13. It is to be opposed by arguments and candid investigation, and not by abuse and misrepresentation. Christ never misrepresented any man‘s doctrine. He always stated it just as it was - just as they held it; and then, by argument and the word of God, he showed it was wrong. This is the proper way to manage all controversies.

11.It is of great importance to search the heart, Matthew 15:19-20. It is a fountain of evil. It is the source of all crime. External conduct is comparatively of little importance. In the sight of God, the heart is of more importance; and if that were pure, all would be well.

12.The doctrine of man‘s depravity is true, Matthew 15:19. If the heart produces those things which are specified by the Saviour it cannot be pure. And yet who is there from whose heart, at some time, these things have not proceeded? Alas, the world is full of instances that prove that the human heart may produce all these things.

13.In our distress, and the distress of our children and friends, we should go to Jesus. We should, indeed, use all proper means to restore our friends when they are sick; but we should feel that God only can grant returning health and life, Matthew 15:22.

14.We should not be discouraged that our prayers are not immediately answered. God knows the proper time to answer them, and it may be of great importance to us that the answer should be deferred, Matthew 15:23.

15.We should still persevere, Matthew 15:24-27. We should not be discouraged. We should not be disheartened even by the appearance of neglect or unkind treatment.

16.Our prayers will be answered if we persevere, Matthew 15:28. They that seek shall find. In due time - in the best and most proper time - a gracious God will lend an ear to our request, and grant the thing we need.

17.We should come with humility and faith, Matthew 15:27. We can never think too little of ourselves, or too much of the mercy and faithfulness of Christ. Prayers of humility and faith only are answered.

18.Christ will take care of his poor and needy followers. We may be assured that he has power to give us all we need, and that in times of necessity he will supply our wants, Matthew 15:32-38.

19.The great number of poor in the world is no reason why he should not supply them, Matthew 15:38. He daily supplies the wants of nine hundred millions of human beings, besides countless numbers of the beasts of the field, of the fowls of heaven, and the fishes of the sea. It is a small thing to supply the needs of the few poor people on the earth, and He who feeds the world will take care of us in the time of need.

20.We should be grateful to God for our daily food. We should render to him proper thanksgiving, Matthew 15:36.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verses 1-4

See also Mark 8:11-12.

The Pharisees also, and the Sadducees - See the notes at Matthew 3:7.

Tempting - That is, trying him - feigning a desire to see evidence that he was the Messiah, but with a real desire to see him make the attempt to work a miracle and fail, so that they might betray him and ruin him.

A sign from heaven - Some miraculous appearance in the sky. Such appearances had been given by the prophets; and they supposed, if he was the Messiah, that his miracles would not all be confined to the earth, but that he was able to give some signal miracle from heaven. Samuel had caused it to thunder 1 Samuel 12:16-18; Isaiah had caused the shadow to go back ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz Isaiah 38:8; and Moses had sent manna from heaven, Exodus 16:4; John 6:31. It is proper to say, that though Christ did not choose then to show such wonders, yet far more stupendous signs from heaven than these were exhibited at his death.

Matthew 16:2, Matthew 16:3

He answered … - The meaning of this answer is, There are certain indications by which you judge about the weather.

In the evening you think you can predict the weather tomorrow. You have evidence in the redness of the sky by which you judge. So there are sufficient indications on which you should judge concerning me and these times. My miracles, and the state of affairs in Judea, are an indication by which you should judge.

Is red - Almost all nations have observed this as an indication of fair weather.

In the morning … the sky is red and lowering - That is, there are threatening clouds in the sky, which are made red by the rays of the rising sun. This, in Judea, was a sign of a tempest. In other places, however, the signs of a storm may be different.

The face of the sky - The appearance of the sky.

Matthew 16:4

A wicked and adulterous generation … - See the notes at Matthew 12:38-40. Mark adds Mark 8:12 that he signed deeply in spirit. He did not say this without feeling; he was greatly affected with their perverseness and obstinacy.

Verses 5-12

The account in these verses is also recorded in Mark 8:13-21.

Matthew 16:5

And when his disciples were come to the other side - That is, to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

Mark says that he entered into a ship again, and departed to the other side. The conversation with the Pharisees and Sadducees had been on the western side of the Sea of Galilee. See the notes at Matthew 15:39. They crossed from that side again to the east.

Had forgotten to take bread - That is, had forgotten to lay in a sufficient supply. They had, it seems, not more than one loaf, Mark 8:14.

Matthew 16:6-11

Take heed … - That is, be cautious, be on your guard.

The leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees - Leaven is used in making bread.

It passes secretly, silently, but certainly through the mass of dough. See the notes at Matthew 13:33. "None can see its progress." So it was with the doctrines of the Pharisees. They were insinuating, artful, plausible. They concealed the real tendency of their doctrines; they instilled them secretly into the mind, until they pervaded all the faculties like leaven.

They reasoned … - The disciples did not understand him as referring to the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees, because the word "leaven" was not often used among the Jews to denote doctrines, no other instance of this use of the word occurring in the Scriptures. Besides, the Jews had many particular rules about the leaven (yeast) which might be used in making bread. Many held that it was not lawful to eat bread made by the Gentiles; and the disciples, perhaps, supposed that he was cautioning them not to procure a supply from the Pharisees and Sadducees.

O ye of little faith! - Jesus, in reply, said that they should not be so anxious about the supply of their temporal wants. They should not have supposed, after the miracles that he had performed in feeding so many, that he would caution them to be anxious about procuring bread for their necessities. It was improper, then, for them to reason about a thing like that, but they should have supposed that he referred to something more important. The miracles had been full proof that he could supply all their wants without such anxiety.

Matthew 16:12

Then understood they … - After this explanation they immediately saw that he referred to the doctrines of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Erroneous doctrines are like leaven in the following respects:

1.They are at first slight and unimportant in appearance, just as leaven is small in quantity as compared with the mass that is to be leavened.

2.They are insinuated into the soul unawares and silently, and are difficult of detection.

3.They act gradually.

4.They act most certainly.

5.They will pervade all the soul, and bring all the faculties under their control.

Verses 13-20

See also Mark 8:27-29, and Luke 9:18-20.

Cesarea Philippi - There were two cities in Judea called Caesarea. One was situated on the borders of the Mediterranean (See the notes at Acts 8:40), and the other was the one mentioned here. This city was greatly enlarged and ornamented by Philip the tetrarch, son of Herod, and called Caesarea in honor of the Roman emperor, Tiberius Caesar. To distinguish it from the other Caesarea the name of Philip was added to it, and it was called Caesarea Philippi, or Caesarea of Philippi. It was situated in the boundaries of the tribe of Naphtali, at the foot of Mount Hermon. It is now called Panias or Banias, and contains (circa 1880‘s) about 200 houses, and is inhabited chiefly by Turks. The word “coasts” here now usually applied to land in the vicinity of the sea - means “borders” or “regions.” He came into the part of the country which appertained to Cesarea Philippi. He was passing northward from the region of Bethsaida, on the coasts of Magdala Matthew 15:39, where the transactions recorded in the previous verses had occurred.

When Jesus came - The original is, “when Jesus was coming.” Mark says Mark 8:27 that this conversation took place when they were in the way, and this idea should have been retained in translating Matthew. While in the way, Jesus took occasion to call their attention “to the truth that he was the Messiah.” This truth it was of much consequence that they should

fully believe and understand; and it was important, therefore, that he should often learn their views, to establish them if right, and correct them if wrong. He began, therefore, by inquiring what was the common report respecting him.

Whom do men say … - This passage has been variously rendered. Some have translated it, "Whom do men say that I am? the Son of man?" Others, "Whom do men say that I am - I, who am the Son of man - i. e., the Messiah?" The meaning is nearly the same. He wished to obtain the sentiments of the people respecting himself.

Matthew 16:14

And they said … - See the notes at Matthew 11:14. They supposed that he might be John the Baptist, as Herod did, risen from the dead. See Matthew 14:2. He performed many miracles, and strongly resembled John in his manner of life, and in the doctrines which he taught.

Matthew 16:16

And Simon Peter answered … - Peter, expressing the views of the apostles, with characteristic forwardness answered the question proposed to them by Jesus: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The Christ - The Messiah, the "Anointed" of God. See the notes at Matthew 1:1.

The Son - That is, the Son by way of eminence - in a special sense. See the notes at Matthew 1:17. This appellation was understood as implying divinity, John 10:29-36.

Of the living God - The term "living" was given to the true God to distinguish him from idols, that are dead, or lifeless blocks and stones. He is also the Source of life, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. The word "living" is often given to him in the Old Testament, Joshua 3:10; 1 Samuel 17:26, 1 Samuel 17:36; Jeremiah 10:9-10, etc. In this noble confession Peter expressed the full belief of himself and of his brethren that he was the long-expected Messiah. Other people had very different opinions of him, but they were satisfied, and were not ashamed to confess it.

Matthew 16:17

And Jesus answered, Blessed art thou … - Simon Bar-jona is the same as Simon son of Jona. Bar is a Syriac word signifying son. The father of Peter, therefore, was Jona, or Jonas, John 1:42; John 21:16-17.

Blessed - That is, happy, honored, evincing a proper spirit, and entitled to the approbation of God.

For flesh and blood - This phrase usually signifies man (see Galatians 1:16; Ephesians 6:12), and it has been commonly supposed that Jesus meant to say that man had not revealed it, but he seems rather to have referred to himself. "This truth you have not learned from my lowly appearance, from my human nature, from my apparent rank and standing in the world. You, Jews, were expecting to know the Messiah by his external splendor; his pomp and power as a man; but you have not learned me in this manner. I have shown no such indication of my Messiahship. Flesh and blood have not shown it. In spite of my appearance, my lowly state - my lack of resemblance to what you have expected, you have learned it as from God." They had been taught this by Jesus' miracles, his instructions, and by the direct teachings of God upon their minds. To "reveal" is to make known, or communicate something that was unknown or secret.

Matthew 16:18

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter - The word "Peter," in Greek, means "a rock." It was given to Simon by Christ when he called him to be a disciple, John 1:42

Cephas is a Syriac word, meaning the same as Peter - a rock, or stone. The meaning of this phrase may be thus expressed: "Thou, in saying that I am the Son of God, hast called me by a name expressive of my true character. I, also, have given to thee a name expressive of your character. I have called you Peter, a rock, denoting firmness, solidity, stability, and your confession has shown that the name is appropriate. I see that you are worthy of the name, and will be a distinguished support of my religion."

And upon this rock … - This passage has given rise to many different interpretations. Some have supposed that the word "rock" refers to Peter's confession, and that Jesus meant to say, upon this rock, this truth that thou hast confessed, that I am the Messiah and upon confessions of this from all believers, I will build my church. Confessions like this shall be the test of piety, and in such confessions shall my church stand amid the flames of persecution, the fury of the gates of hell. Others have thought that Jesus referred to himself. Christ is called a rock, Isaiah 28:16; 1 Peter 2:8. And it has been thought that he turned from Peter to himself, and said, "Upon this rock, this truth that I am the Messiah - upon myself as the Messiah, I will build my church." Both these interpretations, though plausible, seem forced upon the passage to avoid the main difficulty in it. Another interpretation is, that the word "rock" refers to Peter himself.

This is the obvious meaning of the passage; and had it not been that the Church of Rome has abused it, and applied it to what was never intended, no other interpretation would have been sought for. "Thou art a rock. Thou hast shown thyself firm, and suitable for the work of laying the foundation of the church. Upon thee will I build it. Thou shalt be highly honored; thou shalt be first in making known the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles." This was accomplished. See Galatians 2:9. But Christ did not mean, as the Roman Catholics say he did, to exalt Peter to supreme authority above all the other apostles, or to say that he was the only one upon whom he would rear his church. See Galatians 2:11, where Paul withstood Peter to his face, because he was to be blamed - a thing which could not have happened if Christ (as the Roman Catholics say) meant that Peter was absolute and infallible. More than all, it is not said here, or anywhere else in the Bible, that Peter would have infallible successors who would be the vicegerents of Christ and the head of the church. The whole meaning of the passage is this: "I will make you the honored instrument of making known my gospel first to Jews and Gentiles, and I will make you a firm and distinguished preacher in building my church."

Will build my church - This refers to the custom of building in Judea upon a rock or other very firm foundation. See the notes at Matthew 7:24. The word "church" literally means "those called out," and often means an assembly or congregation. See Acts 19:32, Greek; Acts 7:38. It is applied to Christians as being "called out" from the world. It means sometimes the whole body of believers, Ephesians 1:22; 1 Corinthians 10:32. This is its meaning in this place. It means, also, a particular society of believers worshipping in one place, Acts 8:1; Acts 9:31; 1 Corinthians 1:2, etc.; sometimes, also, a society in a single house, as Romans 16:5. In common language it means the church visible - i. e., all who profess religion; or invisible, i. e., all who are real Christians, professors or not.

And the gates of hell … - Ancient cities were surrounded by walls. In the gates by which they were entered were the principal places for holding courts, transacting business, and deliberating on public matters. See the notes at Matthew 7:13. Compare the notes at Job 29:7. See also Deuteronomy 22:4; 1 Samuel 4:18; Jeremiah 36:10; Genesis 19:1; Psalm 69:12; Psalm 9:14; Proverbs 1:21. The word "gates," therefore, is used for counsels, designs, machinations, evil purposes.

"Hell" means, here, the place of departed spirits, particularly evil spirits; and the meaning of the passage is, that all the plots, stratagems, and machinations of the enemies of the church would not be able to overcome it a promise that has been remarkably fulfilled.

Matthew 16:19

And I will give unto thee … - A key is an instrument for opening a door.

He that is in possession of it has the power of access, and has a general care of a house. Hence, in the Bible, a key is used as a symbol of superintendence an emblem of power and authority. See the Isaiah 22:22 note; Revelation 1:18; Revelation 3:7 notes. The kingdom of heaven here means, doubtless, the church on earth. See the notes at Matthew 3:2. When the Saviour says, therefore, he will give to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, he means that he will make him the instrument of opening the door of faith to the world the first to preach the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. This was done, Matthew 18:18. The only pre-eminence, then, that Peter had was the honor of first opening the doors of the gospel to the world.

Whatsoever thou shalt bind … - The phrase "to bind" and "to loose" was often used by the Jews. It meant to prohibit and to permit. To bind a thing was to forbid it; to loose it, to allow it to be done. Thus, they said about gathering wood on the Sabbath day, "The school of Shammei binds it" - i. e., forbids it; "the school of Hillel looses it" - i. e., allows it. When Jesus gave this power to the apostles, he meant that whatsoever they forbade in the church should have divine authority; whatever they permitted, or commanded, should also have divine authority - that is, should be bound or loosed in heaven, or meet the approbation of God. They were to be guided infallibly in the organization of the church:

1.by the teaching of Christ, and,

2.by the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

This does not refer to persons, but to things - "whatsoever," not whosoever. It refers to rites and ceremonies in the church. Such of the Jewish customs as they should forbid were to be forbidden, and such as they thought proper to permit were to be allowed. Such rites as they should appoint in the church were to have the force of divine authority. Accordingly, they commanded the Gentile converts to "abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood" Acts 15:20; and, in general, they organized the church, and

directed what was to be observed and what was to be avoided. The rules laid down by them in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, in connection with the teachings of the Saviour as recorded in the evangelists, constitute the only law binding on Christians in regard to the order of the church, and the rites and ceremonies to be observed in it.

Matthew 16:20

Then charged … - That is, he commanded them.

Mark 8:30 and Luke Luke 9:21 say (in Greek) that he strictly or severely charged them. He laid emphasis on it, as a matter of much importance. The reason of this seems to be that his time had not fully come; that he was not willing to rouse the Jewish malice, and to endanger his life, by having it proclaimed that he was the Messiah. The word "Jesus" is wanting in many manuscripts, and should probably be omitted: "Then he charged them strictly to tell no man that he was the Christ or Messiah."

Verses 21-23

See also Mark 7:31-33; Luke 9:22. "From that time forth." This was the first intimation that he gave that he was to die in this cruel manner. He had taken much pains to convince them that he was the Messiah; he saw by the confession of Peter that they were convinced, and he then began to prepare their minds for the awful event which was before him. Had he declared this when he first called them they would never have followed him. Their minds Were not prepared for it. They expected a temporal, triumphant prince as the Messiah. He first, therefore, convinced them that he was the Christ, and then, with great prudence, began to correct their apprehensions of the proper character of the Messiah.

Elders - The men of the great council or Sanhedrin. See the notes at Matthew 5:7.

Chief priests and scribes - See the notes at Matthew 3:7.

Matthew 16:22

Then Peter took him - This may mean either that he interrupted him, or that he took him aside, or that he took him by the hand as a friend.

This latter is probably the true meaning. Peter was strongly attached to him. He could not bear to think of Jesus' death. He expected, moreover, that he would be the triumphant Messiah. In his ardor, and confidence, and strong attachment, he seized him by the hand as a friend, and said, "Be it far from thee." This phrase might have been translated, "God be merciful to

thee; this shall not be unto thee." It expressed Peter's strong desire that it might not be. The word "rebuke" here means to admonish or earnestly to entreat, as in Luke 17:3. It does not mean that Peter assumed authority over Christ, but that he earnestly expressed his wish that it might not be so. Even this was improper. He should have been submissive, and not have interfered.

Matthew 16:23

Get thee behind me, Satan - The word "Satan" literally means "an adversary," or one who opposes us in the accomplishment of our designs.

It is applied to the devil commonly, as the opposer or adversary of man; but there is no evidence that the Lord Jesus meant to apply this term to Peter, as signifying that he was Satan or the devil, or that he used the term in anger. He may have used it in the general sense which the word bore as an adversary or opposer; and the meaning may be, that such sentiments as Peter expressed then were opposed to him and his plans. His interference was improper. His views and feelings stood in the way of the accomplishment of the Saviour's designs. There was, undoubtedly, a rebuke in this language, for the conduct of Peter was improper; but the idea which is commonly attached to it, and which, perhaps, our translation conveys, implies a more severe and harsh rebuke than the Saviour intended, and than the language which he used would express.

Thou art an offence - That is, a stumbling-block. Your advice and wishes are in my way. If followed, they would prevent the very thing for which I came.

Thou savourest not - Literally, thou thinkest not upon; or your language and spirit are not such as spring from a supreme regard to the will of God, or from proper views of him, but such as spring from the common views entertained by people. You think that those things should not be done which God wishes to be done. You judge of this matter as people do who are desirous of honor; and not as God, who sees it best that I should die, to promote the great interests of mankind.

Verses 24-28

This discourse is also recorded in Mark 8:34-38; Mark 9:1; and Luke 9:23-27.

Let him, deny himself - That is, let him surrender to God his will, his affections, his body, and his soul. Let him not seek his own happiness as the

supreme object, but be willing to renounce all, and lay down his life also, if required.

Take up his cross - See the notes at Matthew 10:38.

Matthew 16:25

Whosoever will save his life … - See the notes at Matthew 10:39.

Matthew 16:26

For what is a man profited … - To gain the whole world means to possess it as our own - all its riches, its honors, and its pleasures.

"To lose his own soul" means to be cast away, to be shut out from heaven, to be sent to hell. Two things are implied by Christ in these questions:

1.That they who are striving to gain the world, and are unwilling to give it up for the sake of religion, will lose their souls; and,

2.That if the soul is lost, nothing can be given in exchange for it, or that it can never afterward be saved. There is no redemption in hell.

Matthew 16:27

For the Son of man … - That is, he will return to judge the world.

He will come in glory the glory of his Father the majesty with which God is accustomed to appear, and which befits God. He will be attended by angels. He will judge all people.

Reward - The word "reward" means recompense. He will deal with them according to their character. The righteous he will reward in heaven with glory and happiness. The wicked he will send to hell, as a reward or recompense for their evil works. This fact, that he will come to judgment, he gives as a reason why we should be willing to deny ourselves and follow him. Even though it should be now attended with contempt and suffering, yet then he will reward his followers for all their shame and sorrow, and receive them to his kingdom. He adds Mark 8:38, that if we are ashamed of him here, he will be ashamed of us there. That is, if we reject and disown him here, he will reject and disown us there.

Matthew 16:28

Verily I say unto you … - To encourage them, he assured them that, though his kingdom was now obscure and despised - though he was cast out and little known - yet the time was near when he would be regarded in a different manner, and his kingdom be established with great power.

This cannot refer to the end of the world, and there is no need of referring it to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Taste of death - That is, die. Before they die they shall see this.

Son of man coming in his kingdom - Mark and Luke have explained this: Mark 9:1, "Until they have seen the kingdom of God come with power;" Luke 9:27, "Till they see the kingdom of God." The meaning evidently is, "till they shall see my kingdom," i. e., my church, now small, feeble, and despised, greatly enlarged, established, and spreading with great rapidity and extent. All this was accomplished. All these apostles, except Judas, lived to see the wonders of the day of Pentecost; some of them, John particularly, saw the Jewish nation scattered, the temple destroyed, the gospel established in Asia, Rome, Greece, and in a large part of the known world.

Remarks On Matthew 16:1-3. In respect to natural objects they are watchful. In them they feel a deep interest, and they watch for every sign that may affect their interest. They are too much concerned to judge falsely. But they feel no such interest in religious things. Hence, it happens that people who have good sense and much wisdom in regard to worldly concerns, are often exceedingly foolish in regard to religion. They believe reports respecting religion, revivals, and missions, which they would despise on any other subject. They read and believe newspapers and other publications, which they would hold in contempt on any other topic but religion. They give a degree of weight to arguments against the Bible, and against the doctrines of the gospel, to which they would attach little or no importance on any other subject. They sustain themselves in infidelity by arguments which they would regard as of no force if the same kind of reasoning was urged in defense of anything else.

2. It is of importance to watch the signs of the times, Matthew 16:3. In the days of Christ it was the duty of the people to look at the evidence that he was the Messiah. The proofs were clear that he was the Messiah. It is also important to look at the signs of the times in which we live. They are clear also. Much is doing; and the diffusion of the Bible, the labors among the pagan, the distribution of tracts, and perhaps, above all, the institution of Sunday schools, betoken an eventful age, and are an indication that brighter days are about to dawn on the world. We should watch these signs that we may rejoice; that we may pray with more fervor, and that we may do our part to advance the kingdom of God. Little children should grow up believing that they live in an important age; that they enjoy many special privileges, and that they may and must do much to spread the gospel

through the earth. Even in childhood, they should pray, and they should give to benefit others; and, most of all, they should give themselves to Christ, that they may benefit others with a right spirit.

3. Sinners should be addressed with deep feeling and faithfulness, Mark 8:12. Jesus sighed deeply. So should we. We should not be harsh, or sour, or cold and unfeeling when we address our fellow-men about eternity. We should weep over them, and pray for them, and speak to them, not as if we were better than they, but with an earnest desire for their salvation. Compare Acts 20:31; Philemon 3:18.

4. People easily mistake plain instruction, Matthew 16:7. And especially is this the case where there is any chance of giving a worldly turn to the instruction. If people‘s thoughts - even those of Christians were more off from the world, and they thought less of the supply of their temporal wants, they would understand the truths of religion much better than they do. No man can understand the doctrines of religion aright whose principal concern is what he shall eat, and drink, and wear. Hence, even Christians are often strangely ignorant of the plainest truths of religion; and hence the importance of teaching those truths to children before their thoughts become engrossed by the world; and hence, too, the importance of Sunday schools.

5. We should not have undue anxiety about the supply of our wants. Christ supplied many thousands by a word, and he can easily supply us, Matthew 16:9-12.

6. We should learn, from his past goodness, to trust him for the future, Matthew 16:9-12.

7. We should be on our guard against error, Matthew 16:11. It is sly, artful, plausible, working secretly, but effectually. We should always be cautious of what we believe, and examine it by the word of God. False doctrines are often made as much like the truth as possible, for the very purpose of deceiving. “Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light,” 2 Corinthians 11:14.

8. It is important to ascertain our views of Christ, Matthew 16:13-15. Our all depends on this. If we do not think and feel right respecting him we cannot be safe. We should often, then, ask ourselves - we should ask one another - what we think of Christ.

9. It is our duty to profess attachment to Christ. It should be done boldly, and always, Matthew 16:16. We should never be ashamed of him. And to do this, we should always, in our own hearts, believe that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

10. We should esteem it a great happiness and honor to be enabled thus to show our attachment to him. The world may not honor us, but God will, and He will pronounce us blessed, Matthew 16:17.

11. God only reveals to people right views of Christ, Matthew 16:17. This he does by his word and Spirit. We should, then search the Bible; and we should pray much that God would reveal his Son in us, and enable us boldly to confess him before people.

12. The church is safe, Matthew 16:18. It may be small - it may be feeble - it may weep much - it may be much opposed and ridiculed - it may have mighty enemies - the rich and the great may set themselves against it - but it is safe. It is founded upon a rock. Its enemies shall never be able to overcome it. Jesus has promised it, and in all ages he has shown that he has remembered his promise. It has not been suffered to become extinct. It has been persecuted, opposed, ridiculed, and almost driven from the world; but a few have been found who have loved the Lord; and soon the flame has kindled, and the church has shone forth "fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and terrible as any army with banners." So it is still. Feeble churches may mourn much - iniquity may abound - the few pious people may weep in secret places, but Jesus hears their groans and counts their tears, and they and the church are safe. He is their friend, and all the powers of hell shall not prevail against his church.

13. The importance of prudence in delivering truth, Matthew 16:21. It should be well-timed - it should be when people are prepared to receive it. Especially is this true of young converts. They have need of milk, and not

of strong meat. They should not be surprised that many doctrines of the Bible are mysterious now, but they will fully comprehend them hereafter. Peter, a young convert, did not understand the plain doctrine that Jesus must die for sin, yet it was made clear to him later, and, most cordially, he loved it.

14. It is highly wicked and improper to attempt to counsel God, or to think that we understand things better than he does, Matthew 16:22-23. God‘s plan is the best plan; and though it does not fall within our views of “wisdom,” yet we should be still. It is all wise. What He does we do not know now, yet we shall know hereafter.

15. We see what religion requires, Matthew 16:24. We must deny ourselves. We must submit to trials. We must do our duty. We must welcome persecution, Matthew 5:10. We must be, in all places, among all people, and in every employment, Christians, no matter what may happen. Come poverty, disease, persecution, death, it is ours to take up the cross and do our duty. So, apostles, and martyrs, and the Saviour himself have gone before us, and we must follow in their steps:

“Shall I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize
And sailed through bloody seas?
“Sure I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord,
To bear the cross, endure the shame,
Supported by Thy Word.”

16. How foolish are the people of this world! Matthew 16:26. In a little time how worthless will be all their wealth! It is gained by anxiety, and toil, and tears. It never satisfies. It harasses them with constant care. It smooths no wrinkles on their brow, alleviates no pain when they are sick, saves no friend from death, gives no consolation in regard to the future, and may be left at any moment. Others will soon possess, and perhaps scatter in dissipation, what they have obtained by so much toil. See Psalm 39:6. And while they scatter or enjoy it, where shall the soul of him be who spent all his probation to obtain it? Alas! Lost, lost, lost - forever lost! And no wealth, no man, no devil, no angel, can redeem him, or be given for his

soul. The harvest will be past, the summer ended, and he not saved. In gaining the world he made two things certain - disappointment and trouble here, and an eternity of woe hereafter. How foolish and wicked is man!

17. The righteous should rejoice that Jesus will come again to our world. He will reward them, Matthew 16:27. He will come as their friend, and they shall ascend with him to heaven.

18. The wicked should weep and wail that Jesus will come again to our world. He will punish them for their crimes, Matthew 16:27. They cannot escape. See Revelation 1:7.

19. It will not be long before he will come, Matthew 16:28. At any rate, it will not be long before we shall meet him. Death is near; and then we must stand before him, and give an account of the deeds done in the body.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

Matthew 17:1-9. See also Mark 9:2-10; Luke 9:28-36.

And after six days - That is, six days from the conversation recorded in the last chapter.

Luke Luke 9:28 says, about an eight days after. Matthew mentions the six days that intervened between the day of the conversation and the transfiguration. Luke includes both those days, and thus reckons eight. Besides, Luke does not pretend to fix the precise time. He says, "about an eight days after."

Taketh Peter, and James, and John - These three disciples were with him, also, in the garden of Gethsemane, Mark 14:33. He designed to prepare them in an eminent degree for the work of the gospel ministry by the previous manifestations of his glory, and of his patience in suffering.

Into a high mountain apart - That is, apart from the other disciples. It is commonly supposed that this was Mount Tabor, a high mountain in Galilee. The name of the mountain is not, however, mentioned in the New Testament. Luke adds Luke 9:28 that he went up there to pray. Our Saviour prayed much. When he did it he chose to be alone. For this purpose he often ascended mountains or went into the deserts. There is something in the solitude and deep and awful stillness of a lofty mountain favorable to devotion.

Verse 2

And was transfigured before them - The word "transfigure" means to change the appearance or form. It does not denote the change of the substance of a thing, but simply of its appearance. It puts on a new aspect. What this change was we are expressly told.

1. His face shone as the sun; that is, with a special brightness. A similar appearance is described respecting Moses when he came down from the mount, Exodus 34:29-30. See also Hebrews 1:3, where Christ is called the brightness of the glory of God: in the original, the splendor or shining, like the brightness of the sun.

2. The second change was that of his garments. They were white as the light. Mark says, "exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth could white them." The word "fuller" means, commonly, one who dresses cloth or

fulls it, so as to make it more thick and strong. Here it means one who bleaches cloth or makes it white; one who cleanses garments when by wearing they become soiled. Among the Greeks that was a distinct trade. Luke says, "white and glistering," that is, resplendent, shining, or a very bright white. There is no evidence here that what is commonly said of him is true, that his body was so changed as to show what his glorified body is. His body, so far as the sacred writers inform us, underwent no change. All this splendor and glory was a change in appearance only. The Scriptures should be taken just as they are, without any attempt to affix a meaning to them which the sacred writers did not intend.

Raiment - Clothing. John may refer to this transfiguration in John 1:14, as Peter does in 2 Peter 1:16-17.

Verse 3

And behold there appeared unto them Moses and Elias - Moses, a distinguished servant of God, by whom the law was given, and whose institutions typified the Messiah. It was particularly proper that he should appear, when his prophecies and types were about to be fulfilled, and the rites which he had instituted were about to be done away. Elias, or Elijah, a distinguished prophet, taken to heaven without seeing death. See 2 Kings 2:11. Elijah had been honored eminently by being thus translated, and still more by being made the model of the forerunner of the Messiah, Malachi 4:5; Luke 1:17; Matthew 11:14. They appeared "in glory" Luke 9:31; i. e., as they are in heaven with the glory which the redeemed have there.

Talking with him - Luke Luke 9:31 informs us that they conversed about "his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." To redeemed spirits that death was an object of intense interest. By faith in that death they had been saved; and now that the Redeemer of mankind was about to die, it is no wonder that this was the burden of his and their thoughts.

Luke adds Luke 9:32 that "Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep." It is not improbable that this was in the night; that Jesus was engaged in prayer; and that he had permitted his weary followers to compose themselves to rest. It was after they were awaked that they saw this vision. Probably the sudden splendor, the bright shining aroused them from sleep.

Verse 4

Let us make here three tabernacles - A tabernacle is a tent. It was made, commonly, by fixing posts into the ground, and stretching on them cloth fastened by cords. See the notes at Isaiah 33:20. In some instances they were made of branches of trees a temporary shelter from the sun and rain, not a permanent dwelling. Peter was rejoiced at the vision and desirous of continuing it. He proposed, therefore, that they should prolong this interview and dwell there. Mark adds, "For he wist not (that is, knew not) what to say, for they were sore afraid." They were frightened, amazed, and rejoiced; and, in the ecstasy of the moment, Peter proposed to remain there.

Verse 5

A bright cloud overshadowed them - The word "overshadow" here means, rather, to "be diffused" or "spread" over them. It does not mean that it made a shade. A cloud was the symbol of the divine presence. Thus, God went before the Israelites in a cloudy pillar - dark by day and bright by night Exodus 14:19-20; he appeared on Mount Sinai in a cloud bright by fire Exodus 24:15-17; and a cloud, the symbol of the divine presence - called the Shechinah - dwelt continually in the most holy place in the temple, 1 Kings 8:10-11; Ezekiel 1:4; Ezekiel 10:4. When, therefore, the disciples saw this cloud, they were prepared to hear the word of the Lord.

This is my beloved Son - This was the voice of God. This was the second time that, in a remarkable manner, God had declared this. See Matthew 3:17. This was spoken to confirm the disciples; to make known to them that it was their duty to hear Christ rather than any other, and to honor him more than Moses and Elijah; and to strengthen their faith in him when they should go forth to preach the gospel after he was shamefully put to death. After this, it was impossible for them to doubt that he was truly the Son of God. See 2 Peter 1:17-18.

Verse 6

They fell on their face - They entered into the cloud, or the cloud enveloped them, Luke 9:34. "They were therefore afraid." They were awed at the presence of God, and prostrated themselves in solemn adoration on the ground, and their fears were removed only by the voice of their beloved Master. No man can see God and live; and it is only the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 4:6), that mortals can bear.

Verse 9

Tell the vision to no man - This vision was designed particularly to confirm them in the truth that he was the Messiah. While he was with them

it was unnecessary that they should relate what they had seen. When he was crucified they would need this evidence that he was the Christ. Then they were to use it. There were three witnesses of it as many as the law required Deuteronomy 17:6; Hebrews 10:28, and the proof that he was the Messiah was clear. Besides, if they had told it then, it would have provoked the Jews and endangered his life. His time was not yet come.

Vision - Sight; appearance. What they had seen on the mount.

Charged them - Gave them a commandment.

The sole design of this transfiguration was to convince them that he was the Christ; that he was greater than the greatest of the prophets; that he was the Son of God.

Mark adds Mark 9:10, "they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean." The Pharisees believed that the dead would rise, and there is no doubt that the disciples believed it; but their views were not clear, and, in particular, they did not understand what he meant by his rising from the dead. They do not appear to have understood, though he had told them Mark 12:40 that he would rise after three days.

Verses 10-13

See also Mark 9:11-13.

Why then say the scribes … - The disciples appear to have been satisfied now that he was the Messiah. The transfiguration had taken away all their doubts, but they recollected that it was a common doctrine among the Jews that Elijah would appear before the Messiah came, and they did not then recollect that he had appeared. To this difficulty the word then refers. "We are satisfied that thou art the Christ, but Elijah has not yet come, as was expected; what, then, is the meaning of the common opinions of our learned men, the scribes? Were they right or wrong in their expectation of Elijah?" See the notes at Matthew 11:14.

Matthew 17:11

Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things - He did not mean by this that Elijah was yet to come, for he tells them immediately Matthew 17:12 that he had come; but he meant to affirm that it was a true doctrine which the scribes taught, that Elijah would appear before the coming of the Messiah. To "restore" means to put into the former situation. See Matthew

12:13. Hence, it means to heal, to correct, to put in proper order. Here it means that Elijah would put things in a proper state; he would be the instrument of reforming the people, or of restoring them, in some measure, to proper notions about the Messiah and preparing them for his coming. Before the coming of John their views were erroneous, their expectations were worldly, and their conduct were exceedingly depraved. He corrected many of their notions about the Messiah (see Matthew 17:12

Elias is come already - That is, John the Baptist has come, in the spirit and power of Elias. See Luke 1:17.

They have done unto him whatsoever they listed - The word "list" is an old English word, signifying to choose, to desire, to be inclined. See Judges 3:8. It means, here, that they had done to John as they pleased; that is, they had put him to death, Matthew 14:10.

Mark adds Mark 9:12 that Jesus told them that it was "written of the Son of man that he must suffer many things, and be set at naught." This was written of him particularly in Isaiah 53:1-12. To be set at naught is to be esteemed as worthless or as nothing; to be cast out and despised. No prophecy was ever more strikingly fulfilled. See Luke 23:11, Luke 23:14-21. This narrative, with some additions, is found in Luke 9:37-43.

Verse 14

And when they were come to the multitude - This took place on the day following the transfiguration, Luke 9:37. This multitude was probably composed of persons who had attended on his ministry, many of whom were his real disciples. With them, as Mark Mark 9:15 informs us, were "scribes questioning with them." That is, they were probably professedly making inquiries about the Saviour, but really attempting to introduce their own sentiments, and to draw them off from him. They probably artfully asked them many questions about his birth, his family, his appearance, his manner of life, and his instructions, all which were contrary to the general expectation respecting the Messiah, and they intended, therefore, to insinuate that such a person could not be the Christ. The people were persuaded that he was the Messiah. and it would not have done to have attacked their opinions openly, but they attempted to gain the same point by sly insinuations. Error is always subtle, and often puts on the appearance of calm and honest inquiry. Well had he compared them to leavens, Matthew 16:11-12. The multitude, seeing Jesus coming down, left the scribes, and

ran to meet him (Mark). They were amazed, probably because they had not expected to see him there. In their joy at meeting him in this unexpected manner, they "saluted" him (Mark); that is, probably they prostrated themselves before him after the manner of salutation in Eastern countries. See the notes at Luke 10:4. Jesus, seeing the scribes and their artful design, reproved them by asking them why they questioned thus with his disciples, Mark 9:16. Conscious of their guilt and their base purpose, they returned no answer.

A certain man kneeling down to him - That is, saluting him, or showing high regard for him. See the notes at Luke 10:4. It did not imply religious homage, but merely high respect and earnest entreaty.

Verse 15

Lord, have mercy - The word "Lord" here means "Sir," a title of civility, not implying divinity.

My son - This was an only son (Luke). He was possessed with a devil. This calamity was attended with the following symptoms: he was lunatic (see the notes at Matthew 4:24); he was sore vexed; that is, he suffered greatly, or was greatly afflicted; he fell often suddenly, in the manner of persons having epileptic fits; he was dumb - that is, he was mute except when the seizure was coming upon him, for Luke says that when the spirit took him he cried suddenly out; he foamed and gnashed with his teeth, and wasted away, or became poor and emaciated. Luke Luke 9:39 adds of the evil spirit, "it teareth him that he foameth again, and, bruising him, hardly departeth from him;" that is, scarcely departed from him, or he had only short intervals of reason, for so the passage in Luke, "bruising him, hardly departeth from him," should be translated.

Verse 16

And I brought him to thy disciples … - That is, not to the apostles, for they had power over unclean spirits Matthew 10:8, but to others of his followers who attempted to work miracles. It is probable that many of his disciples attempted this who were not personal attendants on his ministry, Mark 9:38.

Verse 17

Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation! - Perverse means that which is twisted or turned from the proper direction; and is often used of the eyes, when one or both are turned from their natural position. Applied to a generation or race of people, it means that they hold

opinions turned or perverted from the truth, and that they were wicked in their conduct. Jesus applied this, probably, to the Jews, and not to his real disciples.

How long shall I suffer you? - That is, how long shall I bear with you? How long is it necessary to show such patience and forbearance with your unbelief and perversity? This was not so much an expression of impatience or complaint as a reproof for their being so slow to believe that he was the Messiah, notwithstanding his miracles.

Mark adds Mark 9:20-22 that when he that was possessed was brought, the spirit, by a last desperate struggle, threw him down and tore him, and left him apparently dead. He adds further, that the case had existed during the whole life of his son, from a child. This was a case of uncommon obstinacy. The affliction was fixed and lasting. The disciples, seeing the obstinacy of the case - seeing that he was a deaf-mute, wasted away, torn, and foaming - despaired of being able to cure him. They lacked the faith which was necessary; doubted whether they could cure him, and therefore could not.

The father of the child said Mark 9:22, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us;" an expression implying a weak faith, a lingering doubt whether he could restore him. Jesus replied to this, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" Mark 9:23; implying that the difficulty in the case was not that he could not heal him, but that he had not the proper kind and degree of faith with which to come to him. That is, this cure shall be effected if you have faith. Not that his faith would give Jesus the power to heal him, but it would render it proper that he should exert that power in his favor. In this way, and in this only, are all things possible to believers.

The man had faith, Mark 9:24. The father came, as a father should do, weeping, and praying that his faith might be increased, so as to make it proper that Jesus should interpose in his behalf, and save his child.

Help my unbelief, Mark 9:24. This was an expression of humility. If my faith is defective, supply what is lacking. Help me to overcome my unbelief. Let not the defect of my faith be in the way of this blessing.

Verse 18

And Jesus rebuked the devil - The word "rebuke" has the combined force of reproving and commanding. He reproved him for having afflicted the child, and he commanded him to come out of him. Mark Mark 9:25 has recorded the words which he used words implying reproof and command: "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him, and enter no more into him." And the spirit cried, and with a mighty convulsion came out, leaving the child apparently dead. Jesus lifted him up by the hand (Mark), and gave him to his father (Luke).

Verse 19

Then came the disciples … - This inquiry was made in some house to which they retired near the place where the miracle was performed (Mark). Jesus told them, in reply, that it was because of their unbelief that they had not been able to cast him out. They were appalled by the difficulty of the case and the obstinacy of the disease. Their faith would not have made it more easy for God to work this miracle, but such was his will - such the way in which he worked miracles, that he required faith in those who were the instruments.

Verse 20

As a grain of mustard-seed - See the notes at Matthew 13:31-32. The mustard-seed was the smallest of all seeds. It has been supposed by some, therefore, that he meant to say, If you have the smallest or feeblest faith that is genuine, you can do all things. The mustard-seed produced the largest of all herbs. It has been supposed by others, therefore, to mean, If you have increasing, expanding, enlarged faith, growing and strengthening from small beginnings, you can perform the most difficult undertaking. There is a principle of vitality in the grain of seed stretching forward to great results, which illustrates the nature of faith. Your faith should be like that. This is probably the true meaning.

Ye shall say unto this mountain … - Probably he pointed to a mountain near, to assure them that if they had such faith they might accomplish the most difficult undertakings - things that at first would appear impossible.

Verse 21

Howbeit, this kind … - This kind means this kind of devils - this species of possession. Where they have had long possession where they

produce such painful, fixed, and alarming effects, they can be expelled only in connection with prayer and fasting.

Goeth not out but by prayer and fasting - That is, in order to work miracles of this kind to cast out devils in cases so obstinate and dreadful as this, faith of the highest kind is necessary. That faith is produced and kept vigorous only by much prayer, and by such abstinence from food as fits the mind for the highest exercises of religion, and leaves it free to hold communion with God.

Verse 22-23

See also Mark 9:30-33; Luke 9:43-45.

And while they abode in Galilee - Galilee, the northern part of Palestine. See the notes at Matthew 2:22.

The Son of man shall be betrayed … - To betray means to deliver up in a treacherous manner. This was done by Judas Iscariot, called for that act the traitor, Matthew 26:14-16, Matthew 26:47-50. A traitor, or betrayer, is one who makes use of confidence reposed in him for the purpose of delivering him up who puts that confidence in him to the hands of enemies.

Matthew 17:23

And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again - See Matthew 12:40. Mark and Luke add that they understood not that saying, and it was hid from them, and they were afraid to ask him. The reasons of this may have been,

1.They were strongly attached to him, and were exceedingly sorry (Matthew) at any intimation that he was soon to leave them. They learned with great slowness and reluctance, therefore, that he was to be treated in this manner.

2.They were not willing to believe it. They knew that he was the Messiah, but they supposed that he was to be a distinguished prince, and was to restore the kingdom to Israel, Acts 1:6. But to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies, and be put to death, appeared to them to be frustrating all these expectations.

3.Though what he said was plain enough, yet they did not understand it; they could not see how he could be the Messiah, and yet be put to death in this manner; nor did they understand it fully until after the resurrection.

Verses 24-27

And when they were come to Capernaum - See the notes at Matthew 4:13.

They that received tribute - In the original this is, they who received the didrachma, or double drachma. The drachma was a Grecian coin worth about fifteen cents (7 1/2 d.) of British money. The didrachma, or double drachma, was a silver coin equal to the Attic drachma, and, in the time of Josephus, equal to the Jewish half shekel, that is, about 30 cents (circa 1880's). This tribute, consisting of the didrachma or double drachma, was not paid to the Roman government, but to the Jewish collectors for the use of the temple service. It was permitted in the law of Moses (see Exodus 30:11-16) that in numbering the people half a shekel should be received of each man for the services of religion. This was in addition to the tithes paid by the whole nation, and seems to have been considered as a voluntary offering. It was devoted to the purchase of animals for the daily sacrifice, wood, flour, salt, incense, etc., for the use of the temple.

Doth not your master pay tribute? - This tribute was voluntary, and they therefore asked him whether he was in the habit of paying taxes for the support of the temple. Peter replied that it was his custom to pay all the usual taxes of the nation.

Matthew 17:25

Jesus prevented him - That is, Jesus commenced speaking before Peter, or spoke before Peter had told him what he had said. This implies that, though not present with Peter when he gave the answer, yet Jesus was acquainted with what he had said.

Prevent - To go before, or precede. It did not mean, as it now does with us, to hinder or obstruct. See the same use of the word in Psalm 59:10; Psalm 79:8; Psalm 88:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; Psalm 119:148.

Of whom do the kings of the earth … - That is, earthly kings.

Their own children - Their sons; the members of their own family.

Or of strangers? - The word "strangers" does not mean foreigners, but those that were not their own sons or members of their family. Peter replied that tribute was collected of those out of their own family. Jesus answered, Then are the children, or sons of the kings, free; that is, taxes are not required of them. The meaning of this may be thus expressed: "Kings do not tax their own sons. This tribute-money is taken up for the temple service; that is, the service of my Father. I, therefore, being the Son of God, for whom this is taken up, cannot be lawfully required to pay this tribute."

This argument is based on the supposition that this was a religious, and not a civil tax. If it had been the latter, the illustration would not have been pertinent.

Matthew 17:27

Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them - That is, lest they should think that we despise the temple and its service, and thus provoke needless opposition; though we are not under obligation to pay it, yet it is best to pay it to them.

Go to the sea - This was at Capernaum, on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias.

Thou shalt find a piece of money - In the original, thou shalt find a stater, a Roman silver coin of the value of four drachmas, or one shekel, and of course sufficient to pay the tribute for two - himself and Peter.

In whatever way this is regarded, it is proof that Jesus was possessed of divine attributes. If he knew that the first fish that came up would have such a coin in his mouth, it was proof of omniscience. If he created the coin for the occasion and placed it there, then it was proof of divine power. The former is the most probable supposition. It is by no means absurd that a fish should have swallowed a silver coin. Many of them bite eagerly at anything bright, and would not hesitate, therefore, at swallowing a piece of money.

Remarks On Matthew 17:1. Christ often went into deserts and on mountains that he might be by himself. This should be done:

(1)to avoid the appearance of ostentation.

(2)pride is easily excited when we know that others hear us pray.

Everyone should have some place - some closet - to which he may retire at any time, with the assurance that none sees him but God. See the notes at Matthew 6:6.

2. In such seasons we shall meet God, Matthew 17:2. It was in such a season that the divine favor was uniquely shown to Christ. Then the transfiguration took place - the brightest manifestation of his glory that ever occurred on earth. So the clearest and most precious manifestations of the love and glory of God will be made to us in prayer.

3. We see the great glory of Christ, Matthew 17:2. No such favor had been granted to any prophet before him. We see the regard in which he was held by Moses and Elias among the greatest of the prophets. We see the honor which God put on him, exalting him far above them both, Matthew

17:5. The glory of heaven encompasses the Lord Jesus, and all its redeemed pay him reverence. In him the divine nature shines illustriously; and of him and to him the divinity speaks in glory as the only begotten Son of God.

4. It is right to have particular affection for some Christians more than others, at the same time that we should love them all. Christ loved all his disciples, but he admitted some to special friendship and favors, Matthew 17:1. Some Christians may be more congenial to us in feeling, age, and education than others; and it is proper, and may be greatly to our advantage, to admit them among our special friends.

5. The death of Jesus is an object of great interest to the redeemed. Moses and Elias talked of it, Luke 9:31. Angels also desire to look into this great subject, 1 Peter 1:12. By that death all the redeemed are saved, and in that death the angels see the most signal display of the justice and love of God.

6. Christians should delight to be where God has manifested his glory. The feeling of Peter was natural, Matthew 17:4. His love of the glorious presence of Christ and the redeemed was right. He erred only in the manner of manifesting that love. We should always love the house of prayer - the sanctuary the place where Christ has manifested himself as especially glorious and precious to our souls, or unique as our Friend and Deliverer.

7. We need not be afraid of the most awful displays of deity if Christ be with us, Matthew 17:7. Were we alone we should fear. None could see God and live, for he is a consuming fire, Hebrews 12:29. But with Jesus for our friend we may go confidently down to death; we may meet him at his awful bar; we may dwell in the full splendors of his presence to all eternity.

8. Saints at death are taken to happiness and live now in glory, Matthew 17:3. Moses and Elias were not created anew, but went to heaven as they were. They came from heaven and returned thither. The spirits of all people live, therefore, in happiness or woe after the body is dead.

9. It is not unreasonable to suppose that saints may have some knowledge of what is done here on earth. Moses and Elias appear to have

been acquainted with the fact that Jesus was about to die at Jerusalem.

10. The Scriptures will be fulfilled. The fulfillment may take place when we little know it, or in events that we should not suppose were intended for a fulfillment, Matthew 17:12.

11. Erroneous teachers will endeavor to draw us away from the truth, Mark 9:14. They will do it by art, and caution, and the appearance of calm inquiry. We should always be on our guard against any teachers appearing to call in question what Christ has plainly taught us.

12. Christ, in his word and by his Spirit, is a safe teacher, Mark 9:15. When people are suggesting plausible doubts about doctrine, or attempting to unsettle our minds by cavils and inquiry, we should leave them, and apply by prayer, and by searching the Bible, to Christ, the great Prophet, who is the way, the truth, and the life.

13. Parents should be earnest for the welfare of their children, Matthew 17:15. It is right for them to pray to God, in times of sickness, that he would heal them. Miracles are not to be expected, but God only can bless the means which parents use for their sick and afflicted children.

14. Parents may do much by faith and prayer for their children. Here the faith of the parent was the means of saving the life of the child, Matthew 17:14-18. So the faith of parents - a faith producing diligent instruction, a holy example, and much prayer, may be the means of saving their souls. God will not, indeed, save them on account of the faith of the parent, but the holy life of a father and mother may be the means of training up their children for heaven.

15. It is proper to pray to Jesus to increase our faith, Mark 9:24. We may be sensible of our unbelief may feel that we deserve condemnation, and that we deserve no favor that is usually bestowed on faith; but we may come to him and implore of him an increase of faith, and thus obtain the object of our desires.

16. Our unbelief hinders our doing much that we might do, Matthew 17:20. We shrink from great difficulties, we fail in great duties, because we do not put confidence in God, who is able to help us. The proper way to live a life of religion and peace is to do just what God requires of us, depending on his grace to aid us.

17. We see the proper way of increasing our faith, Matthew 17:21. It is by much prayer, self-denial, and fasting. Faith is a plant that never grows in an uncultivated soil, and is never luxuriant unless it is often exposed to the beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

18. It is right to weep and mourn over the death of Jesus, Matthew 17:23. It was a cruel death, and we should mourn that our best Friend passed through such sufferings. Yet we should rather mourn that our sins were the cause of such bitter sorrows; and that, but for our sins, and the sins of the rest of mankind, he might have been always happy.

"'Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were;
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.
"'Twas you that pulled the vengeance down
Upon his guiltless head.
Break, break, my heart! O burst, mine eyes!
And let my sorrows bleed."

19. At the same time, we should rejoice that God made his death the source of the richest blessings that ever descended on mankind. He rose and brought life and immortality to light, Matthew 17:23.

20. We should comply with all the requirements of the laws of the land, if not contrary to the law of God. It is important that governments should be supported, Matthew 17:25. See also Romans 13:1-7.

21. We should also be willing to contribute our just proportion to the support of the institutions of religion. The tribute which Jesus paid here by a miracle was for the support of religion in the temple, Matthew 17:24-27. He understood of how much value are the institutions of religion to the welfare of man. He worked a miracle, therefore, to make a voluntary offering to support it. Religion promotes the purity, peace, intelligence, and order of

the community, and every man is therefore under obligation to do his part toward its support. If any man doubts this, he has only to go to the places where there is no religion among scoffers, and thieves, and adulterers, and prostitutes, and pick-pockets, and drunkards. No money is ever lost that goes in any way to suppress these vices and to make people better.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Verses 1-6

See also Mark 9:33-41; Luke 9:46-50.

Who is the greatest in the kingdom, of heaven? - By the kingdom of heaven they meant the kingdom which they supposed he was about to set up - his kingdom as the Messiah. They asked the question because they supposed, in accordance with the common expectation of the Jews, that he was about to set up a temporal kingdom of great splendor, and they wished to know who should have the principal offices, and posts of honor and profit. This was among them a frequent subject of inquiry and controversy. Mark Mark 9:34 informs us that they had had a dispute on this subject in the way. Jesus, he says, inquired of them what they had been disputing about. Luke Luke 9:47 says that Jesus perceived the thought of their heart an act implying omniscience, for none can search the heart but God, Jeremiah 17:10. The disciples, conscious that the subject of their dispute was known, requested Jesus to decide it, Matthew 18:1. They were at first silent through shame (Mark), but, perceiving that the subject of their dispute was known, they came, as Matthew states, and referred the master to him for his opinion.

Matthew 18:2, Matthew 18:3

Except ye be converted - The word "converted" means changed or turned.

The verb means to change or turn from one habit of life or set of opinions to another, James 5:19; Luke 22:32. See also Matthew 7:6; Matthew 16:23; Luke 7:9, etc., where the same word is used in the original. It sometimes refers to that great change called the new birth or regeneration Psalm 51:13; Isaiah 60:5; Acts 3:19, but not always. It is a general word, meaning any change. The word "regeneration" denotes a particular change the beginning to live a spiritual life. The phrase, "Except ye be converted," does not imply, of necessity, that they were not Christians before, or had not been born again. It means that their opinions and feelings about the kingdom of the Messiah must be changed. They had supposed that he was to be a temporal prince. They expected he would reign as other kings did. They supposed he would have his great officers of state, as other monarchs had, and they were ambitiously inquiring who should hold the highest offices. Jesus told them that they were wrong in their views and

expectations. No such things would take place. From these notions they must be turned, changed or converted, or they could have no part in his kingdom. These ideas did not fit at all the nature of his kingdom.

And become as little children - Children are, to a great extent, destitute of ambition, pride, and haughtiness They are characteristically humble and teachable. By requiring his disciples to be like them, he did not intend to express any opinion about the native moral character of children, but simply that in these respects they must become like them. They must lay aside their ambitious views and their pride, and be willing to occupy their proper station - a very lowly one. Mark says Mark 9:35 that Jesus, before he placed the little child in the midst of them, told them that "if any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all and servant of all." That is, he shall be the most distinguished Christian who is the most humble, and who is willing to be esteemed least and last of all. To esteem ourselves as God esteems us is humility, and it cannot be degrading to think of ourselves as we are; but pride, or an attempt to be thought of more importance than we are, is foolish, wicked, and degrading.

Matthew 18:4

The greatest … - That is, shall be the most eminent Christian shall have most of the true spirit of religion.

Matthew 18:5

And whoso shall receive one such little child - That is, whoso shall receive and love one with a spirit like this child one who is humble, meek, and unambitious - that is, a real Christian.

In my name - As a follower of me, or because he is attached to me.

Whoso receives one possessed of my spirit, or who loves him because he has that spirit, loves me also. The word "receive" means to approve, love, or treat with kindness; to aid in the time of need. See Matthew 25:35-40.

Mark Mark 9:38 and Luke Luke 9:49 add a conversation that took place on this occasion, which has been omitted by Matthew. John told him that they had seen one casting out devils in his name, and they forbade him, because he followed not with them. Jesus replied that he should not have been forbidden, for there was no one who could work a miracle in his name that could lightly speak evil of him. That is, though he did not attend them though he had not joined himself to their society, yet he could not really be

opposed to him. Indeed, they should have remembered that the power to work a miracle must always come from the same source, that is, God; and that he who had the ability given him to work a miracle, and who did it in the name of Christ, must be a real friend to him. It is probable, from this, that the power of working miracles in the name of Christ was given to many who did not attend on his ministry.

Matthew 18:6

Whoso shall offend - That is, cause to fall, or to sin; or who should place anything in their way to hinder their piety or happiness. See notes at Matthew 5:29.

These little ones - That is, Christians manifesting the spirit of little children, 1 John 2:1, 1 John 2:12, 1 John 2:18, 1 John 2:28.

It were better for him that a millstone … - Mills, anciently, were either turned by hand (see the notes at Matthew 24:41), or by beasts, chiefly by mules. These last were of the larger kind, and the original words denote that it was this kind that was intended. This was one mode of capital punishment practiced by the Greeks, Syrians, Romans, and by some other nations. The meaning is, it would be better for him to have died before he had committed the sin. To injure, or to cause to sin, the feeblest Christian, will be regarded by Christ as a most serious offence, and will be punished accordingly.

Verse 7

Woe unto the world because of offences - That is, offences will be the cause of woe or of suffering. Offences, here, mean things that will produce sin: that will cause us to sin, or temptations to induce others to sin. See the notes at Matthew 5:29.

It must needs be … - That is, such is the depravity of man that there will be always some who are attempting to make others sin; some people of wickedness endeavoring to lead Christians astray, and rejoicing when they have succeeded in causing them to fall. Such, also, is the strength of our native corruption and the force of passion, that our besetting sins will lead us astray.

Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh - He who leads others into sin is awfully guilty - no man can be more guilty. No wickedness can be more deeply seated in the heart than that which attempts to mar the peace, defile the purity, and destroy the souls of others; and yet in all ages there have been multitudes who, by persecution, threats, arts, allurements,

and persuasion, have endeavored to seduce Christians from the faith and to lead them into sin.

Verse 8-9

If thy hand … - See the notes at Matthew 5:29-30. The sense in all these instances is the same. Worldly attachments, friendships, and employments of any kind, that cannot be pursued without leading us into sin, be they ever so dear to us, must be abandoned, or the soul will be lost.

It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed … - It is not meant, by this, that when the body shall be raised it will be maimed and disfigured in this manner. It will be perfect. See 1 Corinthians 15:42-44. But these things are said for the purpose of carrying out or making complete the figure or the representation of cutting off the hands, etc. The meaning is, it is better to go to heaven without enjoying the things that caused us to sin, than to enjoy them here and then be lost.

Halt - Lame.

Maimed - With a loss of limbs.

Into hell fire - It is implied, in all this, that if their sins, however dear to them, were not abandoned, the soul must go into everlasting fire. This is conclusive proof that the sufferings of the wicked will be eternal. See the notes at Mark 9:44, Mark 9:46, Mark 9:48.

Verse 10

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones. … - That is, one who has become like a little child, or a Christian.

For I say unto you … - Jesus then proceeds to state the reason why we should not despise his feeblest and obscurest follower. That reason is drawn from the care which God exercises over them. The first instance of that care is, that "in heaven their angels do always behold his face." He does not mean, I suppose, to state that every good man has his guardian angel, as many of the Jews believed; but that the angels were, in general, the guards of his followers, and aided them and watched over them. See the notes at Hebrews 1:14.

Do always behold the face of God - This is taken from the practice of earthly courts. To be admitted to the presence of a king; to be allowed to see his face continually; to have free access to him at all times, was deemed a mark of special favor 1 Kings 10:8; Esther 1:14, and was esteemed a security for his protection. So, says our Saviour, we should not despise the

obscurest Christian, for he is ministered to by the highest and noblest of beings by beings who are always enjoying the favor and friendship of God.

Verse 11

For the Son of man … - This is a second reason why we should not despise Christians. That reason is, that the Son of man came to seek and save them. He came in search of them when lost; he found them; he redeemed them. It was the great object of his life; and, though they may be obscure and little in the eye of the world, yet that cannot be an object of contempt which the Son of God sought by his toils and his death.

Son of man - See the notes at Matthew 8:19-20.

That which was lost - Property is lost when it is consumed, mislaid, wasted, sunk in the ocean, etc. - when we have no longer the use of it. Friends are lost when they die - we enjoy their and happiness. He is useless to society. So all people are "lost." They are wicked, miserable wanderers from God. They are lost to piety, to happiness, to heaven. These Jesus came to save by giving his own life a ransom, and shedding his own blood that they might be recovered and saved.

Verses 12-14

To show still further the reason why we should not despise Christians, he introduced a parable showing the joy felt when a thing lost is found. A shepherd rejoices over the recovery of one of his flock that had wandered more than over all that remained; so God rejoices that man is restored: so he seeks his salvation, and wills that not one thus found should perish. If God thus loves and preserves the redeemed, then surely man should not despise them. See this passage further explained in Luke 15:4-10.

Verse 15

Moreover, if thy brother - The word "brother," here, evidently means a fellow-professor of religion. Christians are called brethren because they belong to the same redeemed family, having a common Father - God; and because they axe united in the same feelings, objects, and destiny.

Trespass against thee - That is, injure thee in any way, by words or conduct. The original word means sin against thee. This may be done by injuring the character, person, or property.

Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone - This was required under the law, Leviticus 19:17. In the original it is "go and reprove him." Seek an explanation of his conduct, and if he has done wrong,

administer a friendly and brotherly reproof. This is required to be done alone:

1. That he may have an opportunity of explaining his conduct. In nine cases out of ten, where one supposes that he has been injured, a little friendly conversation would set the matter right and prevent difficulty.

2. That he may have an opportunity of acknowledging his offence or making reparation, if he has done wrong. Many would be glad of such an opportunity, and it is our duty to furnish it by calling on them.

3. That we may admonish them of their error if they have done an injury to the cause of religion. This should not be blazoned abroad. It can do no good - it does injury; it is what the enemies of religion wish. Christ is often wounded in the house of his friends; and religion, as well as an injured brother, often suffers by spreading such faults before the world.

Thou hast gained thy brother - To gain means, sometimes, to preserve or to save, 1 Corinthians 9:19. Here it means thou hast preserved him, or restored him, to be a consistent Christian. Perhaps it may include the idea, also, thou hast reconciled him to thyself - thou hast gained him as a Christian brother.

Verse 16

But if he will not hear thee … - That is, if he spurns or abuses you, or will not be entreated by you, and will not reform.

Take with thee one or two more - The design of taking them seems to be,

1.That he might be induced to listen to them, Matthew 18:17. They should be persons of influence or authority; his personal friends, or those in whom he could put confidence.

2.That they might be witnesses of his conduct before the church, Matthew 18:17. The law of Moses required two or three witnesses, Deuteronomy 19:15; 2 Corinthians 13:1; John 8:17.

Verse 17

Tell it to the church - See the notes at Matthew 16:18. The church may here mean the whole assembly of believers, or it may mean those who are authorized to try such cases - the representatives of the church, or these who act for the church. In the Jewish synagogue there was a bench of elders

before whom trials of this kind were brought. It was to be brought to the church in order that he might be admonished, entreated, and, if possible, reformed. This was, and is always to be, the first business in disciplining an offending brother.

But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be … - The Jews gave the name "heathen" or "Gentile" to all other nations but themselves. With them they had no religious contact or communion.

Publican - See the notes at Matthew 5:47. Publicans were people of abandoned character, and the Jews would have no contact with them. The meaning of this is, cease to have religious contact with him, or to acknowledge him as a Christian brother. It does not mean that we should cease to show kindness to him and aid him in affliction or trial, for that is required toward all people; but it means that we should disown him as a Christian brother, and treat him as we do other people not connected with the church. This should not be done until all these steps are taken. This is the only way of kindness. This is the only way to preserve peace and purity in the church.

Verse 18

Whatsoever ye shall bind … - See the notes at Matthew 16:19. These words were spoken to the apostles. Jesus had before addressed the same words to Peter, Matthew 16:19. He employs them here to signify that they all had the same power; that in ordering the affairs of the church he did not intend to give Peter any supremacy or any exclusive right to regulate it. The meaning of this verse is, whatever you shall do in the discipline of the church shall be approved by God or bound in heaven. This promise, therefore, cannot be understood as extending to all Christians or ministers, for all others but the apostles may err.

Verse 19

Again I say unto you, That if two of you … - This is connected with the previous verses. The connection is this: The obstinate man is to be excluded from the church, Matthew 18:17. The care of the church - the power of admitting or excluding members - of organizing and establishing it - is committed to you, the apostles, Matthew 18:18. Yet there is not need of the whole to give validity to the transaction. When two of you agree, or have the same mind, feelings, and opinion, about the arrangement of affairs in the church, or about things desired for its welfare, and shall ask of God, it shall be done for them. See Acts 1:14-26; 15:1-29. The promise here has

respect to the apostles in organizing the church. It cannot with any propriety be applied to the ordinary prayers of believers. Other promises are made to them, and it is true that the prayer of faith will be answered, but that is not the truth taught here.

Verse 20

For where two or three … - This is a general assertion made to support the particular promise made Matthew 18:19 to his apostles. He affirms that wherever two or three are assembled together in his name, he is in the midst of them.

In my name - That is,

1.By my authority, acting for me in my church. See John 10:25; John 16:23.

2.It may mean for my service; in the place of prayer and praise, assembled in obedience to my commend, and with a desire to promote my glory.

There am I in the midst of them - Nothing could more clearly prove that Jesus must be omnipresent, and, of course, be God. Every day, perhaps every hour, two or three, or many more, may be assembled in every city or village in the United States, in England, in Greenland, in Africa, in Ceylon, in the Sandwich Islands, in Russia, and in Judea - in almost every part of the world - and in the midst of them all is Jesus the Saviour. Millions thus at the same time, in every quarter of the globe, worship in his name, and experience the truth of the promise that he is present with them. It is impossible that he should be in all these places and not be God.

Verse 21

Then came Peter … - The mention of the duty Matthew 18:15 of seeing a brother when he had offended us, implying that it was a duty to forgive him, led Peter to ask how often this was to be done.

Forgive him - To forgive is to treat as though the offence was not committed - to declare that we will not harbor malice or treat unkindly, but that the matter shall be buried and forgotten.

Verse 22

Till seven times? - The Jews caught that a man was to forgive another three times, but not the fourth. Peter more than doubled this, and asked whether forgiveness was to be exercised to so great an extent.

I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but, Until seventy times seven - The meaning is, that we are not to limit our forgiveness to any fixed

number of times. See Genesis 4:24. As often as a brother injures us and asks forgiveness, we are to forgive him. It is, indeed, his duty to ask forgiveness, Luke 17:4. If he does this, it is our duty to declare that we forgive him, and to treat him accordingly. If he does not ask us to forgive him, yet we are not at liberty to follow him with revenge and malice, but are still to treat him kindly and to do him good, Luke 10:30-37.

Verse 23

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened … - The phrase, "the kingdom of heaven," here has reference to the church, or to the way in which God will deal with his people. "It shall be in my church as it was with a certain king; or God will deal with the members of his church as a certain king did with his servants." See the notes at Matthew 3:2. This parable (see Matthew 13:3) is related to show the duty of forgiving others. It is not necessary to suppose that it was a true narrative, but only that it illustrated the truth which he was teaching. At the same time it may be true that such an occurrence really took place.

Would take account of his servants - To take account means to reckon, to settle up affairs. The word "servants" here means, probably, petty princes, or, more likely, collectors of the revenue or taxes. Among the ancients kings often farmed out, or sold for a certain sum, the taxes of a particular district or province. Thus, when Judea was subject to Egypt or Rome, the kings frequently sold to the high priest the taxes to be raised from Judea on condition of a much smaller sum being paid to them. This secured to them a certain sum, but it gave occasion to much oppression in the collection of the taxes. It is probable that some such persons are intended by the word servants.

Verse 24

Ten thousand talents - A talent was a sum of money, or weight of silver or gold amounting to three thousand shekels. A silver shekel was worth, after the captivity, not far from half a dollar of our money. A talent of silver was worth (circa 1880's) 1,519.23 =342British pounds, 3 shillings, 9d.; of gold, 243,098.88 =5,475 British pounds. If these were silver talents, as is probable, then the sum owed by the servant was 15,180,000, or about 3,421,875 British sterling (circa 1880's), a sum which proves that he was not a domestic, but some tributary prince. The sum is used to show that the debt was immensely large, and that our sins are so great that they cannot be estimated or numbered. Compare Job 22:5.

Verse 25

His lord commanded him to be sold … - By the laws of the Hebrews they were permitted to sell debtors, with their wives and children, into servitude for a time sufficient to pay a debt. See 2 Kings 4:1; Leviticus 25:39-46; Amos 8:6.

Verse 26

The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him - This does not mean that he paid him religious homage, but that in a humble, reverent, and earnest manner he entreated him to have patience with him. He prostrated himself before his lord, as is customary in all Eastern nations when subjects are in the presence of their king. See the notes at Matthew 2:2.

Verse 27

The lord of that servant was moved with compassion … - He had pity on him. He saw his distressed condition. He pitied his family. He forgave him the whole debt. This represents the mercy of God to people. "They have sinned." They owe to God more than can be paid. They are about to be cast off; but God has mercy on them, and, in connection with their prayers, forgives them. We are not to interpret the circumstances of a parable too strictly. The illustration taken from selling the wife and children Matthew 18:25 is not to be taken literally, as if God would punish a man for the sins of his father; but it is a circumstance thrown in to keep up the story - to make it consistent - to explain the reason why the servant was so anxious to obtain a delay of the time of payment.

Verse 28-29

But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him an hundred pence - Greek, δεναριον denarionLatin, denarius; a Roman silver coin in common use. When Greece became subject to the Romans, and especially under the emperors, the denarius was regarded as of equal value with the Attic drachma - about 7 1/2 d. sterling, or 15 cents (circa 1880's); consequently, this debt was about 15 dollars - a very small sum compared with what had been forgiven to the first servant. Perhaps our Saviour, by this, meant to teach that the offences which our fellow-men commit against us are very small and insignificant compared with our offences against God. Since God has forgiven us so much we ought to forgive each other the small offences which are committed.

Took him by the throat - Took him in a violent and rough manner - half choked or throttled him. This was the more criminal and base, as he

had himself been so kindly treated and dealt so mildly with by his lord.

Besought - Entreated, pled with him.

Verse 31

So when his fellow-servants … - This is a mere circumstance thrown into the story for the sake of keeping, or making a consistent narrative. It cannot be intended to teach that other Christians should go and tell God what a brother has done; for God well knows all the actions of his children, and does not need us surely to inform him of what is done. It is abusing the Bible, and departing from the design of parables, to press every circumstance, and to endeavor to extract from it some spiritual meaning. Our Saviour, in this parable, designed most clearly to exhibit only one great truth - the duty of forgiving our brethren, and the great evil of not forgiving a brother when he offends us. The circumstances of the parable are intended only to make the story consistent with itself, and thus to impress the general truth more fully on the mind.

Verse 34

Delivered him to the tormentors - The word "tormentors" here probably means keepers of the prisons. Torments were inflicted on criminals, not on debtors. They were inflicted by stretching the limbs, or pinching the flesh, or putting out the eyes, or taking off the skin while alive, etc. It is not probable that anything of this kind is intended, but only that the servant was punished by imprisonment until the debt should be paid.

Verse 35

So likewise … - This verse contains the sum or moral of the parable. When Christ has explained one of his own parables, we are to receive it just as he has explained it, and not attempt to draw spiritual instruction from any parts or circumstances which he has not explained. The following seems to be the particulars of the general truth which he meant to teach:

1.that our sins are great.

2.that God freely forgives them.

3.that the offences committed against us by our brethren are comparatively small.

4.that we should therefore most freely forgive them.

5.that if we do not, God will be justly angry with us, and punish us.

From your hearts - That is, not merely in words, but really and truly to feel and act toward him as if he had not offended us.

Trespasses - Offences, injuries. Words and actions designed to do us wrong.

Remarks On Matthew 18:1. The apostles at first sought honor, and expected office as a consequence of following Christ. So thousands have done since. Religion, notwithstanding all the opposition it has met with, really commands the confidence of mankind. To make a profession of it may be a way of access to that confidence. Thousands, it is to be feared, even yet enter the church merely to obtain some worldly benefit. Especially does this danger beset ministers of the gospel. There are few paths to the confidence of mankind so easily trod as to enter the ministry. Every minister, of course, if at all worthy of his office, has access to the confidence of multitudes, and is never despised but by the worst and lowest of mankind. No way is so easy to step at once to public confidence. Other people toil long to establish influence by personal character. The minister has it by virtue of his office. Those who now enter the ministry are tempted far more in this respect than were the apostles; and how should they search their own hearts, to see that no such abominable motive has induced them to seek that office!

2. It is consummate wickedness thus to prostitute the most sacred of all offices to the worst of purposes. The apostles at this time were ignorant. They expected a kingdom in which it would be right to seek distinction. But we labor under no such ignorance. We know that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and woe to the man that acts as though it were. Deep and awful must be the doom of him who thus seeks the honors of the world while he is professedly following the meek and lowly Jesus!

3. Humility is indispensable to religion, Matthew 18:3. No man who is not humble can possibly be a Christian. He must be willing to esteem himself as he is, and to have others esteem him so also. This is humility, and humility is lovely. It is not meanness it is not cowardice - it is not want of proper self-esteem; it is a view of ourselves just as we are, and a willingness that God and all creatures should so esteem us. What can be more lovely than such an estimation of ourselves! and how foolish and wicked is it to be proud that is, to think more of ourselves, and wish others to think so, than we really deserve! To put on appearances, and to magnify our own

importance, and to think that the affairs of the universe could not go on without us, and to be indignant when all the world does not bow down to do us homage this is hypocrisy as well as wickedness; and there may be, therefore, hypocrites out of the church as well as in it.

4. Humility is the best evidence of piety, Matthew 18:4. The most humble man is the most eminent Christian. He is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The effect of sin is to produce pride. Religion overcomes it by producing a just sense of ourselves, of other people, of angels, and of God. We may therefore measure the advance of piety in our own souls by the increase of humility.

5. We see the danger of despising and doing injury to real Christians, and more especially the guilt of attempting to draw them into sin, Matthew 18:6. God watches over them. He loves them. In the eye of the world they may be of little importance, but not so with God. The most obscure follower of Christ is dear, infinitely dear, to him, and he will take care of him. He that attempts to injure a Christian, attempts to injure God; for God has redeemed him, and loves him.

6. People will do much to lead others into sin, Matthew 18:7. In all communities there are some who seem to live for this. They have often much wealth, or learning, or accomplishment, or address, or professional influence, and they employ it for the sake of seducing the unwary and leading them into ruin. Hence, offences come, and many of the young and thoughtless are led astray. But He who has all power has pronounced woe upon them, and judgment will not always linger. No class of people have a more fearful account to render to God than they who thus lead others into vice and infidelity.

7. We must forsake our dearest sins, Matthew 18:8-9. We must do this, or go to hell-fire. There is no way of avoiding it. We cannot love and cherish those sins and be saved.

8. The wicked they who will not forsake their sins - must certainly go to eternal punishment, Matthew 18:8-9. So said the compassionate Saviour. The fair and obvious meaning of his words is that the sufferings of hell are

eternal, and Christ did not use words without meaning. He did not mean to frighten us by bugbears or to hold up imaginary fears. If Christ speaks of hell, then there is a hell. If he says it is eternal, then it is so. Of this we may be sure, that every word which the God of mercy has spoken about the punishment of the wicked is full of meaning.

9. Christians are protected, Matthew 18:10. Angels are appointed as their friends and guardians. Those friends are very near to God. They enjoy his favor, and his children shall be safe.

10. Christians are safe, Matthew 18:11-14. Jesus came to save them. He left the heavens for this end. God rejoices in their salvation. He secures it at great sacrifices, and none can pluck them out of his hand. After the coming of Jesus to save them - after all that he has done for that, and that only - after the joy of God and of angels at their recovery, it is impossible that they should be wrested from him and destroyed. See John 10:27-28.

11. It is our duty to admonish our brethren when they injure us, Matthew 18:15. We have no right to speak of the offence to anyone else, not even to our best friends, until we have given them an opportunity to explain.

12. The way to treat offending brethren is clearly pointed out, Matthew 18:15-17. Nor have we a right to take any other course. Infinite Wisdom - the Prince of Peace - has declared that this is the way to treat our brethren. No other can be right; and no other, therefore, can be so well adapted to promote the peace of the church. And yet how different from this is the course commonly pursued! How few go honestly to an offending brother and tell him his fault! Instead of this, every breeze bears the report - it is magnified - mole-hills swell to mountains, and a quarrel of years often succeeds what might have been settled at once. No robber is so cruel as he who steals away the character of another. Nothing can compensate for the loss of this. Wealth, health, mansions, equipage, all are trifles compared with this. Especially is this true of a Christian. His reputation gone, he has lost his power of doing good; he has brought dishonor on the cause he most loved; he has lost his peace, and worlds cannot repay him.

"Who steals my purse, steals trash: 'tis something, nothing:
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands.

But he that filches from me my good name

Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed."

13. We have every encouragement to pray, Matthew 18:20. We are poor, and sinful, and dying, and none can comfort us but God. At his throne we may find all that we want. We know not which is most wonderful - that God deigns to hear our prayers, or that people are so unwilling to use so simple and easy a way of obtaining what they so much need.

14. We should never be weary of forgiving our brethren, Matthew 18:22. We should do it cheerfully. We should do it always. We are never better employed than when we are doing good to those who have injured us. Thus doing, we are most like God.

15. There will be a day in which we must give up our account, Matthew 18:23. It may tarry long; but God will reckon with us, and everything shall be brought into judgment.

16. We are greatly indebted to God - far, far beyond what we are able to pay, Matthew 18:24. We have sinned, and in no way can we make atonement for past sins; but Jesus the Saviour has made an atonement and paid our debt, and we may be free.

17. It is right to pray to God when we feel that we have sinned, and are unable to pay the debt, Matthew 18:26. We have no other way. Poor, and needy, and wretched, we must cast ourselves upon his mercy or die - die forever.

18. God will have compassion on those who do this, Matthew 18:27. At his feet, in the attitude of prayer, the burdened sinner finds peace. We have nowhere else to go but to the very Being that we have offended. None but he can save us from death.

19. From the kindness of God to us we should learn not to oppress others, Matthew 18:28.

20. It is our true interest, as well as duty, to forgive those that offend us, Matthew 18:34. God will take vengeance, and in due time we must suffer if we do not forgive others.

21. Christians are often great sufferers for harboring malice. As a punishment, God withdraws the light of his countenance; they walk in darkness; they cannot enjoy religion; their conscience smites them, and they are wretched. No man ever did or ever can enjoy religion who did not from his heart forgive his brother his trespasses.

22. One reason why Christians ever walk in darkness is, that there is some such duty neglected. They think they have been injured, and very possibly they may have been; they think they are in the right, and possibly they are so; but mingled with a consciousness of this is an unforgiving spirit, and they cannot enjoy religion until that is subdued.

23. Forgiveness must not be in word merely, but from the heart, Matthew 18:35. No other can be genuine. No other is like God.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Introduction

Matthew 19:1-12. See also Mark 10:1-12.

Verse 1

Coasts of Judea beyond Jordan - The narrative here refers to the last journey of the Saviour from Galilee to Jerusalem, to attend the last Passover which he celebrated.

A considerable lapse of time occurred between his last discourse in the preceding chapter and what is recorded here, and several important events have been recorded by Luke and John which occurred in the interval, as the sending out of the seventy disciples Luke 9:51-56; John 7:2-10; the healing of the ten lepers Luke 17:11-19; the public teaching of Jesus at the feast of Tabernacles John 8:1; the reproof of the unbelieving Jews, and the escape of the Saviour from their hands Luke 10:28-37; the incidents in the house of Martha and Mary Luke 10:38-42; the return of the seventy Luke 10:17-24; the healing of the blind man on the Sabbath John 11:47-54. See Robinson's Harmony. Matthew and Mark now resume the narrative by relating that after Jesus had left Galilee he approached Jerusalem by passing through the country beyond Jordan. The country was, in general, called Perea, and appertained to Judea, being the region formerly occupied by the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. The word "coasts" means regions or parts. See the notes at Matthew 2:16.

Verse 3

The Pharisees came - See the notes at Matthew 3:7.

Tempting him - This means, to get him, if possible, to express an opinion that should involve him in difficulty.

Is it lawful … - There was the more art in the captious question which they proposed, as at that time the people were very much divided on the subject. A part, following the opinions of Hillel, said that a man might divorce his wife for any offence, or any dislike he might have of her. See the notes at Matthew 5:31. Others, of the school of Shammai, maintained that divorce was unlawful except in case of adultery. Whatever opinion, therefore, Christ expressed, they expected that he would involve himself in difficulty with one of their parties.

Verses 4-6

And he answered and said … - Instead of referring to the opinions of either party, Jesus called their attention to the original design of marriage, to the authority of Moses an authority acknowledged by them both.

Have ye not read? - Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:21-22. "And said, For this cause," etc., Genesis 2:24. That is, God, at the beginning, made but one man and one woman: their posterity should learn that the original intention of marriage was that a man should have but one wife.

Shall leave his father and mother - This means, shall bind himself more strongly to his wife than he was to his father or mother. The marriage connection is the most tender and endearing of all human relations more tender than even that bond which unites us to a parent.

And shall cleave unto his wife - The word "cleave" denotes a union of the firmest kind. It is in the original taken from gluing, and means so firmly to adhere together that nothing can separate them.

They twain shall be one flesh - That is, they two, or they that were two, shall be united as one - one in law, in feeling, in interest, in affection. They shall no longer have separate interests, but shall act in all things as if they were one - animated by one soul and one wish. The argument of Jesus here is, that since they are so intimately united as to be one, and since in the beginning God made but one woman for one man, it follows that they cannot be separated but by the authority of God. Man may not put away his wife for every cause. What God has joined together man may not put asunder. In this decision he really decided in favor of one of the parties; and it shows that when it was proper, Jesus answered questions without regard to consequences, from whatever cause they might have been proposed, and however much difficulty it might involve him in. Our Lord, in this, also showed consummate wisdom. He answered the question, not from Hillel or Shammai, their teachers, but from Moses, and thus defeated their malice.

Verse 7

Why did Moses … - To this they objected that Moses had allowed such divorces Deuteronomy 24:1; and if he had allowed them, they inferred that they could not be unlawful. See the notes at Matthew 5:31.

Verse 8

He saith unto them … - Jesus admits that this was allowed, but still he contends that this was not the original design of marriage. It was only a temporary expedient growing out of a special state of things, and not designed to be perpetual. It was on account of the hardness of their hearts.

Moses found the custom in use. He found a hard-hearted and rebellious people. In this state of things he did not deem it prudent to forbid a practice so universal; but it might be regulated; and, instead of suffering the husband to divorce his wife in a passion, he required him, in order that he might take time to consider the matter, and thus make it probable that divorces would be less frequent, to give her a writing; to sit down deliberately to look at the matter, and probably, also, to bring the case before some scribe or learned man, to write a divorce in the legal form. Thus doing, there might be an opportunity for the matter to be reconciled, and the man to be persuaded not to divorce his wife. This, says our Saviour, was a permission growing out of a particular state of things, and designed to remedy a prevailing evil; but at first it was not so. God intended that marriage should be between one man and one woman, and that they were only to be separated, in the case specified, by him who had formed the union.

Hardness of your hearts - He speaks here of his hearers as a part of the nation. The hardness of you Jews; as when we say, we fought with England and gained our independence; that is, we, the American people, though it was done by our fathers. He does not mean to say, therefore, that this was done on account of the people whom he addressed, but of the national hardness of heart - the stubbornness of the Jewish people as a people.

Verse 9

And I say unto you - Emphasis should be laid here on the word "I." This was the opinion of Jesus - this he proclaimed to be the law of his kingdom this the command of God ever afterward. Indulgence had been given by the laws of Moses; but that indulgence was to cease, and the marriage relation to be brought back to its original intention. Only one offence was to make divorce lawful. This is the law of God; and by the same law, all marriages which take place after divorce, where adultery is not the cause of divorce, are adulterous. Legislatures have no right to say that people may put away their wives for any other cause; and where they do, and where there is marriage afterward, by the law of God such marriages are adulterous!

Verse 10

His disciples say … - The disciples were full of Jewish notions. They thought that the privilege of divorcing a wife when there was a quarrelsome disposition, or anything else that rendered the marriage unhappy, was a great privilege; and that in such cases to be always bound to live with a wife

was a great calamity. They said, therefore, that if such was the case - such the condition on which people married - it was better not to marry.

Verse 11

All men cannot receive this saying - The minds of people are not prepared for this. This saying evidently means what the disciples had just said that it was good for a man not to marry. It might be good in certain circumstances - in times of persecution and trial, or for the sake of laboring in the cause of religion without the care and burden of a family. It might be good for many to live, as some of the apostles did, without marriage, but it was not given to all people, 1 Corinthians 7:1, 1Corinthians 7:7,1 Corinthians 7:9. To be married, or unmarried, might be lawful, according to circumstances, 1 Corinthians 7:26.

Verse 12

For there are some eunuchs … - Jesus proceeds to state that there were some who were able to receive that saying and to remain in an unmarried state. Some were so born; some were made such by the cruelty of men; and there were some who voluntarily abstained from marriage for the kingdom of heaven‘s sake - that is, that they might devote themselves entirely to the proper business of religion. Perhaps he refers here to the Essenes, a sect of the Jews (see the notes at Matthew 3:7), who held that marriage was unsuitable to their condition; who had no children of their own, but perpetuated their sect by adopting the poor children of others. Eunuchs were employed chiefly in attending on the females or in the harem. They rose often to distinction, and held important offices in the state. Hence, the word is sometimes used with reference to such an officer of state, Acts 8:27.

Verse 13

Then were brought little children - See also Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17. Probably these were brought by some of his followers, who desired not only to devote themselves to Jesus, but all that they had - their children as well as themselves. All the Jews were accustomed to devote their children to God by circumcision. It was natural, therefore, under the new dispensation, that it should be done. Luke says they were infants. They were undoubtedly those who were not old enough to come by choice, but their coming was an act of the parents.

Put his hands on them and pray - It was customary among the Jews, when blessings were sought for others in prayer, to lay the hands on the head of the person prayed for, implying a kind of consecration to God. See

Genesis 48:14; Matthew 9:18. They had also much confidence in the prayers of pious men, believing that those blessed by a saint or a prophet would be happy. See Numbers 22:6; Luke 2:28.

The disciples rebuked them - That is, reproved them, or told them it was improper. This they did, probably, either:

1.because they thought that they were too young; or,

2.because they thought that they would be troublesome to their Master.

Verse 14

Jesus said, Suffer little children, … - Mark adds, he was much displeased at what the disciples said. It was a thing highly gratifying to him, and which he earnestly sought, that children should be brought to him, and a case where it was very improper that they should interfere.

Of such is the kingdom of heaven - The kingdom of heaven evidently means here the church. See the notes at Matthew 3:2. In Mark and Luke it is said he immediately added, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall not enter therein." Whosoever shall not be humble, unambitious, and docile, shall not be a true follower of Christ or a member of his kingdom. Of such as these - that is, of persons with such tempers as these - is the church to be composed. He does not say of those infants, but of such persons as resemble them, or are like them in temper, is the kingdom of heaven made up. As emblematic, therefore, of what his own followers were to be, and as having traits of character so strongly resembling what he required in his followers, it was proper that they should be brought to him. At the same time, it was proper on their own account that they should be brought to him, and that his blessing should be sought on them.

All are fallen; all have, a tendency to sin, and none but Jesus can save them. Little children, too, are in a world of sickness and death, and in the beginning of life it is proper to invoke on them the blessing of the Saviour. They are to live forever beyond the grave; and as they have just entered on a career of existence which can never terminate, it is an appropriate act to seek the blessing of that Saviour who only can make them happy forever, as they enter on their career of existence. No act, therefore, can be more proper than that by which parents, in a solemn ordinance of religion, give them up to God in baptism, consecrating them to his service, and seeking for them the blessing of the Saviour. It is probable - it is greatly to be hoped

- that all infants will be saved. No contrary doctrine is taught in the sacred Scriptures. But it does not appear to be the design of this passage to teach that all infants will be saved. It means simply that they should be suffered to be brought to Christ as amiable, lovely, and uncorrupted by the world; as having traits of mind resembling those among real Christians; and as themselves needing his blessing.

Verse 15

He laid his hands on them - Mark says he blessed them. That is, he pronounced or sought a blessing on them.

Verses 16-30

This account is found also in Mark 10:17-31; Matthew 19:16

One came - This was a young man, Matthew 19:20. He was a ruler (Luke); probably a ruler in a synagogue, or of the great council of the nation; a place to which he was chosen on account of his unblemished character and promising talents. He came running (Mark); evincing great earnestness and anxiety, He fell upon his knees (Mark); not to worship him, but to pay the customary respectful salutation; exhibiting the highest regard for Jesus as an extraordinary religious teacher.

Good Master - The word "good" here means, doubtless, most excellent; referring not so much to the moral character of Jesus as to his character as a religious teacher. It was probably a title which the Jews were in the habit of applying to their religious teachers. The word "Master" here means teacher.

What good thing shall I do? - He had attempted to keep all the commandments. He had been taught by his Jewish teachers that people were to be saved by doing something - that is, by their works; and he supposed that this was to be the way under every system of religion. He had lived externally a blameless life, but yet he was not at peace: he was anxious, and he came to ascertain what, in the view of Jesus, was to be done, that his righteousness might be complete. To "have eternal life" means to be saved. The happiness of heaven is called "life," in opposition to the pains of hell, called "death," or an eternal dying, Revelation 2:2; Revelation 20:14. The one is real life, answering the purposes of living - living to the honor of God and in eternal happiness; the other is a failure of the great ends of existence - prolonged, eternal suffering, of which temporal death is but the feeble image.

Matthew 19:17

Why callest thou me good? - Why do you give to me a title that belongs only to God? You suppose me to be only a man, yet you give me an appellation that belongs only to God.

It is improper to use titles in this manner. As you Jews use them they are unmeaning; and though the title may apply to me, yet, you did not intend to use it in the sense in which it is proper, as denoting infinite perfection or divinity; but you intended to use it as a complimentary or a flattering title, applied to me as if I were a mere man - a title which belongs only to God. The intentions, the habit of using mere titles, and applying as a compliment terms belonging only to God, is wrong. Christ did not intend here to disclaim divinity, or to say anything about his own character, but simply to reprove the intention and habit of the young man - a most severe reproof of a foolish habit of compliment and flattery, and seeking pompous titles.

Keep the commandments - That is, do what God has commanded. He in the next verses informs him what he meant by the commandments. Jesus said this, doubtless, to try him, and to convince him that he had by no means kept the commandments, and that in supposing he had he was altogether deceived. The young man thought he had kept them, and was relying on them for salvation. It was of great importance, therefore, to convince him that he was, after all, a sinner. Christ did not mean to say that any man would be saved by the works of the law, for the Bible teaches plainly that such will not be the case, Romans 3:20, Romans 3:28; Romans 4:6; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:9; 2 Timothy 1:9. At the same time, however, it is true that if a man perfectly complied with the requirements of the law he would be saved, for there would be no reason why he should be condemned. Jesus, therefore, since he saw he was depending on his works, told him that if he would enter into life that is, into heaven - he must keep the commandments; if he was depending on them he must keep them perfectly, and if this was done he would be saved. The reasons why Christ gave him this direction were, probably:

1.because it was his duty to keep them.

2.because the young man depended on them, and he ought to understand what was required if he did - that they should be kept perfectly, or that they were not kept at all.

3.because he wanted to test him, to show him that he did not keep them, and thus to show him his need of a Saviour.

Matthew 19:18, Matthew 19:19

He saith unto him, Which? - In reply to the inquiry of the young man, Jesus directed him to the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and fifth Exodus 20:12-16, as containing the substance of the whole - as containing particularly what he intended to show him that he had not kept. See notes at Matthew 5:21, Matthew 5:27.

Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder - See the notes at Matthew 5:21-26.

Thou shalt not commit adultery - See the notes at Matthew 5:27-32.

Thou shalt not steal - To steal is to take the property of another without his knowledge or consent.

Thou shalt not bear false witness - Give testimony contrary to truth. This may be done in a court of justice, or by private or public slander. It means to say things of another which are not true.

Honour thy father … - That is,

1.Obey them, keep their commands, Colossians 3:20; Ephesians 6:1-3.

2.Respect them, show them reverence.

3.Treat their opinions with respect - do not despise them or ridicule them.

4.Treat their habits with respect. Those habits may be different from ours; they may be antiquated, and to us strange, odd, or whimsical; but they are the habits of a parent, and they are not to be ridiculed.

5.Provide for them when sick, weary, old, and infirm. Bear with their weakness, comply with their wishes, speak to them kindly, and deny yourselves of rest, and sleep, and ease, to promote their welfare.

To this he added another - the duty of loving our neighbor, Leviticus 19:18. This Christ declared to be the second great commandment of the law, Matthew 22:39. A neighbor means:

1.any person who lives near to us.

2.any person with whom we have dealings.

3.afriend or relative, Matthew 5:43.

4.any person - friend, relative, countryman, or foe, Mark 12:31.

5.any person who does us good or confers a favor on us, Luke 10:27-37,

This commandment means, evidently:

1.that we should not injure our neighbor in his person, property, or character.

2.that we should not be selfish, but should seek to do him good.

3.that in a case of debt, difference, or debate, we should do what is right, regarding his interest as much as our own.

4.that we should treat his character, property, etc., as we do our own, according to what is right.

5.that, in order to benefit him, we should practice self-denial, or do as we would wish him to do to us, Matthew 7:12.

It does not mean:

1.that the love of ourselves, according to what we are, or according to truth, is improper. The happiness of myself is of as much importance as that of any other man, and it is as proper that it should be sought.

2.It does not mean that I am to neglect my own business to take care of my neighbor‘s. My happiness, salvation, health, and family are committed especially to myself; and, provided I do not interfere with my neighbor‘s rights or violate my obligations to him, it is my duty to seek the welfare of my own as my first duty, 1 Timothy 5:8, 1 Timothy 5:13; Titus 2:5. Mark adds to these commandments, “Defraud not;” by which he meant, doubtless, to express the substance of this to love our neighbor as ourselves. It means, literally, to take away the property of another by violence or by deceiving him, thus showing that he is not loved as we love ourselves.

Matthew 19:20

All these things have I kept from my youth up - I have made them the rule of my life.

I have endeavored to obey them. Is there anything that I lack - are there any new commandments to be kept? Do you, the Messiah, teach any command besides those which I have learned from the law and from the Jewish teachers, which it is necessary for me to obey in order to be saved?

Matthew 19:21

If thou wilt be perfect - The word "perfect" means complete in all its parts, finished, having no part wanting.

Thus a watch is perfect or complete when it has all its proper wheels, and hands, and casements in order. Job was said to be perfect (see the notes at Job 1:1), not that he was sinless, for he is afterward reproved by God himself Job 40:4; but because his piety was properly proportioned, or had a completeness of parts. He was a pious father, a pious magistrate, a pious neighbor, a pious citizen. His religion was not confined to one thing, but it extended to all. Perfect means, sometimes, the filling up, or the carrying out, or the expression of a principle of action. Thus, 1 John 2:5; "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." That is, the keeping of the commandments of God is the proper expression, carrying out, or completion of the love of God. This is its meaning here. If thou wilt be perfect, complete, finished - if thou writ show the proper expression of this keeping of the commandments, go, etc. Make the obedience complete. Mark says Mark 10:21, Jesus, beholding him, loved him. He was pleased with his amiableness, his correct character, his frankness, his ingenuousness. Jesus, as a man, was capable of all the emotions of most tender friendship. As a man, we may suppose that his disposition was tender and affectionate, mild and calm. Hence, he loved with special affection the disciple John, eminently endowed with these qualities; and hence he was pleased with the same traits in this young man. Still, with all this amiableness, there is reason to think he was not a Christian, and that the love of mere amiable qualities was all the affection that was ever bestowed on him by the Saviour.

"One thing," adds Mark, "thou lackest." There is one thing missing. You are not complete. This done, you would show that your obedience lacked no essential part, but was complete, finished, proportionate, perfect.

Go and sell that thou hast … - The young man declared that he had kept the law. That law required, among other things, that he should love his neighbor as himself. It required, also, that he should love the Lord his God supremely; that is, more than all other objects. If he had that true love to God and man - if he loved his Maker and fellow-creatures more than he did his property, he would be willing to give up his wealth to the service of God and of man. Jesus commanded him to do this, therefore, to test his

character, and to show him that he had not kept the law as he pretended, and thus to show him that he needed a better righteousness than his own.

Treasure in heaven - See the notes at Matthew 6:20.

Follow me - To follow Jesus then meant to be a personal attendant on his ministry; to go about with him from place to place, as well as to imitate and obey him. Now it means:

1.to obey his commandments.

2.to imitate his example, and to live like him.

Matthew 19:22

He had great possessions - He was very rich.

He made an idol of his wealth. He loved it more than God. He had not kept the commandments from his youth up, nor had he kept them at all; and rather than do good with his treasures, and seek his salvation by obeying God, he chose to turn away from the Saviour and give over his inquiry about eternal life. He probably returned no more. Alas, how many lovely and amiable young persons follow his example!

Matthew 19:23

A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven - Shall with difficulty be saved.

He has much to struggle with, and it will require the greatest of human efforts to break away from his temptations and idols. and to secure his salvation. Compare the notes at 1 Timothy 6:9-10.

Matthew 19:24

It is easier for a camel … - This was a proverb in common use among the Jews, and is still common among the Arabians.

To denote that a thing was impossible or exceedingly difficult, they said that a camel or an elephant might as soon walk through a needle‘s eye. In the use of such proverbs it is not necessary to understand them literally. They merely denote the extreme difficulty of the case.

A camel - A beast of burden much used in Eastern countries. It is about the size of the largest ox, with one or two bunches on his back, with long neck and legs, no horns, and with feet adapted to the hot and dry sand. They are capable of carrying heavy burdens, will travel sometimes faster than the fleetest horse, and are provided with a stomach which they fill with water, by means of which I they can live four or five days without drink. They are very mild and tame, and kneel down to receive and unload their burden.

They are chiefly used in deserts and hot climates, where other beasts of burden are with difficulty kept alive.

A rich man - This rather means one who loves his riches and makes an idol of them, or one who supremely desires to be rich. Mark says Mark 10:24 "How hard is it for them that trust in riches." While a man has this feeling - relying on his wealth alone - it is literally impossible that he should be a Christian; for religion is a love of God rather than the world - the love of Jesus and his cause more than gold. Still a man may have much property, and not have this feeling. He may have great wealth, and love God more; as a poor man may have little, and love that little more than God. The difficulties in the way of the salvation of a rich man are:

1.that riches engross the affections.

2.that people consider wealth as the chief good, and when this is obtained they think they have gained all.

3.that they are proud of their wealth, and unwilling to be numbered with the poor and despised followers of Jesus.

4.that riches engross the time, and fill the mind with cares and anxieties, and leave little for God.

5.that they often produce luxury, dissipation, and vice. that it is difficult to obtain wealth without sin, without avarice, without covetousness, fraud, and oppression, 1 Timothy 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 6:17; James 5:1-5; Luke 12:16-21; Luke 16:19-31.

Still, Jesus says Matthew 19:26, all these may be overcome. God can give grace to do it. Though to people it may appear impossible, yet it is easy for God.

Matthew 19:27

We have forsaken all - Probably nothing but their fishing-nets, small boats, and cottages.

But they were their all - their living, their home; and, forsaking them, they had as really shown their sincerity as though they had possessed the gold of Ophir and lived in the palaces of kings.

What shall we have, therefore? - We have done as thou didst command this young man to do. What reward may we expect for it?

Matthew 19:28

Verily I say unto you - Jesus in this verse declares the reward which they would have.

They were not to look for it now, but in a future period.

That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration - This word occurs but once elsewhere in the New Testament, Titus 3:5. It literally means a new birth, or being born again. Applied to man, it denotes the great change when the heart is renewed, or when the sinner begins to be a Christian. This is its meaning, clearly, in the passage referred to in Titus; but this meaning cannot be applied here. Christ was not born again, and in no proper sense could it be said that they had followed him in the new birth; but the word also means any great change, or a restoration of things to a former state or to a better state. In this sense it is probably used here. It refers to that great revolution - that restoration of order in the universe - that universal new birth which will occur when the dead shall rise, and all human things shall be changed, and a new order of things shall start up out of the ruins of the old, when the Son of man shall come to judgment. The passage, then, should be read, "Ye which have followed me shall, as a reward in the great day of the resurrection of the dead, and of forming the new and eternal order of things - the day of judgment, the regeneration - be signally honored and blessed.

When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory - That is, to judge the world. "Throne of glory" means glorious throne or a splendid throne. It is not to be taken literally, but is used to denote his character as a king and judge, and to signify the great dignity and majesty which will be displayed by him. See Matthew 24:30; Matthew 26:64; Acts 1:11; Acts 17:31.

Sit upon twelve thrones - This is figurative. To sit on a throne denotes power and honor, and means here that they would be distinguished above others, and be more highly honored and rewarded.

Judging the twelve tribes of Israel - Jesus will be the Judge of quick and dead. He only is qualified for it, and the Father hath given all judgment to the Son, John 5:22. To be a judge denotes rank, authority, power. The ancient judges of Israel were people of distinguished courage, patriotism, honor, and valor. Hence, the word comes to denote not so much an actual exercise of the power of passing judgment, as the honor attached to the office; and as earthly kings have those around them dignified with honors and office - counselors and judges, so Christ says that his apostles will

occupy the same relative station in the great day. They will be honored by him, and by all, as apostles, as having, in the face of persecution, left all; as having laid the foundations of his church, and endured all the persecutions of the world.

The twelve tribes of Israel - This was the number of the ancient tribes. By this name the people of God were denoted. By this name Jesus here denotes his redeemed people. See also James 1:1, where Christians are called the twelve tribes. Here it means also, not the Jews, not the world, not the wicked, not that the apostles are to pronounce sentence on the enemies of God, but the people of God, the redeemed. Among them Jesus says his apostles will be honored in the day of judgment, as earthly kings place in posts of office and honor those who have signally served them. Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 6:2.

Matthew 19:29

And every one that hath forsaken houses … - In the days of Jesus, those who followed him were obliged, generally, to forsake houses and home, and to attend him.

In our time it is not often required that we should literally leave them, except when the life is devoted to him among the pagan; but it is always required that we love them less than we do him, that we give up all that is inconsistent with religion, and that we be ready to give up all when he demands it.

For my name‘s sake - From attachment to me. Mark adds, “and for the gospel‘s;” that is, from obedience to the requirements of the gospel, and love for the service of the gospel.

Shall receive a hundred-fold - Mark says “a hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters,” etc. A hundred-fold means a hundred times as much. This is not to be understood literally, but that he will give what will be worth 100 times as much in the peace, and joy, and rewards of religion. It is also literally true that no man‘s temporal interest is injured by the love of God. Mark adds, “with persecutions.” These are not promised as a part of the reward; but amid their trials and persecutions they should find reward and peace.

Matthew 19:30

This verse should have been connected with the following chapter

The parable there spoken is expressly to illustrate this sentiment. See it explained in the notes at Matthew 20:16.

Remarks On Matthew 19:1. Jesus, to avoid the dangers to which he was exposed, left Jerusalem, and passed over to the other side of the Jordan. If duty calls us to remain in the presence of our enemies and the enemies of religion, we should do it. If we can do them good, we should do it. If our presence will only provoke them to anger and bitterness, then we should turn aside. Compare the notes at Matthew 10:23.

2. People will seek every occasion to ensnare Christians, Matthew 19:3. Questions will be proposed with great art, and with an appearance of sincerity, only for the purpose of leading them into difficulty. Cunning men know well how to propose such questions, and triumph much when they have perplexed believers. This is often the boast of people of some standing, who think they accomplish the great purposes of their existence if they can confound other people, and think it signal triumph if they can make others as miserable as themselves.

3. We should not refuse to answer such persons with mildness, when the Bible has settled the question, Matthew 19:4-6. Jesus answered a captious question, proposed on purpose to ensnare him. We may often do much to confound the enemies of religion, and to recommend it, when without passion we hear their inquiries, and deliberately inform them that the question has been settled by God. We had better, however, far better, say nothing in reply, than to answer in anger or to show that we are irritated. All the object of the enemy is gained if he can make us angry.

4. People will search and pervert the Bible for authority to indulge their sins and to perplex Christians, Matthew 19:7. No device is more common than to produce a passage of Scripture known to be misquoted or perverted, yet plausible, for the purpose of perplexing Christians. In such cases, the best way, often, is to say nothing. If unanswered, people will be ashamed of it; if answered, they gain their point, and are ready for debate and abuse.

5. We learn from this chapter that there is no union so intimate as the marriage connection, Matthew 19:6. Nothing is so tender and endearing as this union appointed by God for the welfare of man.

6. This union should not be entered into slightly or rashly. It involves all the happiness of this life and much of that to come. The union demands:

(1)congeniality of feeling and disposition;
(2)of rank or standing in life;

(3)of temper;

(4)similarity of acquirements;

(5)of age;

(6)of talent;

(7)intimate acquaintance.
It should also be a union on religious feelings and opinions:
(1)because religion is more important than anything else;
(2)because it will give more happiness in the married life than anything else;

(3)because where one only is pious, there is danger that the religion of the other will be obscured and blighted;

(4)because no prospect is so painful as that of eternal separation;

(5)because it is paganish, brutal, and mad, to partake the gifts of God in a family and offer no thanksgiving; inexpressibly wicked to live from day to day as if there were no God, no heaven, no hell;

(6)because death is near, and nothing will soothe the pangs of parting but the hope of meeting in the resurrection of the just.
7. No human legislature has a right to declare divorces except in one single case, Matthew 19:9. If they do, they are accessories to the crime that may follow, and presume to legislate where God has legislated before them.
8. Those thus divorced, or pretended to be divorced, and marrying again, are, by the declaration of Jesus Christ, living in adultery, Matthew 19:9. It is no excuse to say that the law of the land divorced them. The law had no such right. If all the legislatures of the world were to say that it was lawful for a man to steal or to commit murder, it would not make it so, and, in spite

of human permission, God would hold a man answerable for theft and murder. So, also, of adultery.

9. The marriage union demands kindness and love, Matthew 19:6. The husband and the wife are one. Love to each other is love to a second self. Hatred, and anger, and quarrels are against ourselves. The evils and quarrels in married life will descend on ourselves, and be gall and wormwood in our own cup.

10. Infants may be brought to Jesus to receive his blessing, Matthew 19:12-15. While on earth, he admitted them to his presence and blessed them with his prayers. If they might be brought then, they may be brought now. Their souls are as precious; their dangers are as great; their salvation is as important. A parent should require the most indubitable evidence that Jesus will not receive his offspring, and will be displeased if the offering is made, to deter him from this inestimable privilege.

11. If children may be brought, they should be brought. It is the solemn duty of a parent to seize upon all possible means of benefiting his children, and of presenting them to God to implore his blessing. In family prayer, in the sanctuary, and in the ordinance of baptism, the blessing of the Redeemer should be sought early and constantly on their precious and immortal souls.

12. Earnestness and deep anxiety are proper in seeking salvation, Matthew 19:16. The young man came running; he kneeled. It was not form and ceremony; it was life and reality. Religion is a great subject. Salvation is important beyond the power of language to express. Eternity is near, and damnation thunders along the path of the guilty. The sinner must be saved soon, or die forever. He cannot be too earnest. He cannot press with too great haste to Jesus. He should come running, and kneeling, and humbled, and lifting the agonizing cry, “What must I do to be saved?”

13. We should come young, Matthew 19:20. No one can come too young. God has the first claim on our affections. He made us, he keeps us, he provides for us, and it is right that we should give our first affections to him. No one who has become a Christian ever yet felt that he had become one too young. No young person that has given his heart to the Redeemer

ever yet regretted it. They may give up the frivolous world to do it; they may leave the circles of the dance and the song; they may be exposed to contempt and persecution, but no matter. He who becomes a true Christian, no matter of what age or rank, blesses God that he was inclined to do it, and the time never can come when for one moment he will regret it. Why, then, will not the young give their hearts to the Saviour, and do that which they know they never can for one moment regret?

14. It is no dishonor for those who hold offices, and who are people of rank, to inquire on the subject of religion, Luke 18:18. Men of rank often suppose that it is only the weak, the credulous, and the ignorant that ever feel any anxiety about religion. Never was a greater mistake. It has been only profligate, and weak, and ignorant people that have been thoughtless. Two-thirds of all the profound investigations of the world have been on this very subject. The wisest and best of the pagans have devoted their lives to inquire about God and their own destiny. So in Christian lands. Were Bacon, Newton, Locke, Milton, Hale, and Boerhaave men of weak minds? Yet their deepest thoughts and most anxious inquiries were on this very subject. So in our own land. Were Washington, Ames, Henry, Jay, and Rush men of weak minds? Yet they were professed believers in revelation. And yet young men of rank, and wealth, and learning often think that they show great independence in refusing to think of what occupied the profound attention of these men, and fancy they are great only by refusing to tread in their steps. Never was a greater or more foolish mistake. If anything demands attention, it is, surely, the inquiry whether we are to be happy forever, or wretched; whether there is a God and Saviour; or whether we are "in a forsaken and fatherless world."

15. It is as important for the rich to seek religion as the poor, Matthew 19:22. They will as certainly die; they as much need religion. Without it they cannot be happy. Riches will drive away no pain on a death-bed - will not go with us when we die - will not save us.

16. It is of special importance that wealthy young persons should be Christians. They are exposed to many dangers. The world - the "happy" and flattering world - will lead them astray. Fond of fashion, dress, and amusement, as many of them are, they are exposed to a thousand follies and

dangers, from which nothing but religion can secrete them. Besides, they may do much good; and God will hold them answerable for all the good they might have done with their wealth.

17. The amiable, the lovely, the moral, need also an interest in Christ, Mark 10:21. If amiable, we should suppose they would be ready to embrace the Saviour. None was ever so moral, so lovely, so pure as he. If we really loved amiableness, then we should come to him - we should love him. But, alas! how many amiable young persons turn away from him, and refuse to follow him! Can they be really lovers of that which is pure and lovely? If so, then why turn away from the Lamb of God?

18. The amiable and the lovely need a better righteousness than their own. With all this, they may make an idol of the world; they may be proud, sensual, selfish, prayerless, and thoughtless about dying. Externally they appear lovely; but oh, how far is the heart from God!

19. Inquirers about religion usually depend on their own works, Matthew 19:16. They are not willing to trust to Jesus for salvation, and they ask what they shall do; and it is only when they find that they can do nothing - that they are poor, and helpless, and wretched that they east themselves on the mercy of God and find peace.

20. Compliments and flattering titles are evil, Matthew 19:17. They ascribe something to others which we know they do not possess. Often beauty is praised where we know there is no beauty - accomplishment where there is no accomplishment - talent where there is no talent. Such praises are falsehood. We know them to be such. We intend to deceive by them, and we know that they will produce pride and vanity. Often they are used for the purpose of destruction. If a man praises us too much, we should look to our purse or our virtue. We should feel that we are in danger, and the next thing will be a dreadful blow - the heavier for all this flattery. They that use compliments much, expect them from others; are galled and vexed when they are not obtained; and are in danger when they are.

21. If we are to be saved, we must do just what God commands us. Matthew 19:17-18. This is all we have to do. We are not to invent anything

of our own. God has marked out the course, and we must follow it.

22. We are easily deceived about keeping the law, Matthew 19:17. We often think we observe it, when it is only the outward form that we have kept. The law is spiritual, and God requires the heart.

23. Riches are a blessing if used aright; if not, they are deceitful, dangerous, ruinous, Matthew 19:23-24. Thousands have lost their souls by the love of riches. None have ever been saved by it.

24. It is our duty to forsake all for Christ, Matthew 19:27-29. Be it little or much, it is all the same to him. It is the heart that he looks at; and we may as really show our love by giving up a fishing-boat and net, as by giving up a palace or a crown. If done in either case, it will be accepted.

25. Religion has its own rewards, Matthew 19:28-29. It gives more than it takes. It more than compensates for all that we surrender. It gives peace, joy, comfort in trial and in death, and heaven beyond. This is the testimony of all Christians of all denominations of all that have lived, and of all that do live that they never knew true peace until they found it in the gospel. The testimony of so many must be true. They have tried the world in all its forms of gaiety, folly, and vice, and they come and say with one voice, Here only is true peace. On any other subject they would be believed. Their testimony here must be true.

26. Those eminent for usefulness here will be received to distinguished honors and rewards in heaven, Matthew 19:28. They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as stars in the firmament forever. See the notes at Daniel 12:3.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Verse 1

For the kingdom of heaven … - The word "for" shows that this chapter should have been connected with the preceding. The parable was spoken expressly to illustrate the sentiment in the last verse of that chapter: "Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." The kingdom of heaven means here the church, including, perhaps, its state here and hereafter. See the notes at Matthew 3:2. It has reference to rewards, and the meaning may be thus expressed: "Rewards shall be bestowed in my kingdom, or on my followers, in the same manner as they were by a certain householder - in such a way that the last shall be equal to the first, and the first last."

A householder - A master of a family. One at the head of family affairs.

His vineyard - No inconsiderable part of Judea was employed in the culture of the grape. Vineyards are often used, therefore, to represent a fertile or well-cultivated place, and hence the church, denoting the care and culture that God has bestowed on it. See the notes at Isaiah 5:7. Compare Jeremiah 12:10. For the manner of their construction, see the notes at Matthew 21:33.

Verse 2

A penny a day - The coin here referred to was a Roman coin, equal in value, at different periods, to 15 cents or 17 cents (7 1/2 d. to 8 1/2 d.) (circa 1880's). The original denotes the Roman denarius δηνάριον dēnariona silver coin, which was originally equivalent to ten ases (a brass Roman coin), from which it gets its name. The consular denarius bore on one side a head of Rome, and an X or a star, to denote the value in ases, and a chariot with either two or four horses. At a later period the casts of different deities were on the obverse, and these were finally superseded by the heads of the Caesars. Many specimens of this coin have been preserved.

It was probably at that time the price of a day's labor. See Tobit 5:14. This was the common wages of a Roman soldier. In England, before the discovery of the mines of gold and silver in South America, and consequently before money was plenty, the price of labor was about in proportion. In 1351 the price of labor was regulated by law, and was a penny a day; but provisions were of course proportionally cheap, and the avails of a man's labor in articles of food were nearly as much as they are now.

Verse 3

About the third hour - The Jews divided their days into twelve equal parts, or hours, beginning at sunrise and ending at sunset. This was, therefore about nine o‘clock in the morning.

Standing idle in the market-place - A place where provisions are sold in towns. Of course, many resort to such places, and it would be the readiest place to meet persons and find employers. They were not, therefore, disposed to be idle, but were waiting in the proper place to find employers.

Verse 4

Whatsoever is right - Whatsoever it shall appear you can earn. The contract with the first was definite; with this one it depended on the judgment of the employer.

Verse 5

The sixth and ninth hour - That is, about twelve o‘clock and three o‘clock.

Verse 6

The eleventh hour - About five o‘clock in the afternoon, or when there was but one working hour of the day left.

Verse 8

When even was come - That is, when the twelfth hour had come; the day was ended, and the time of payment was come.

The steward - A steward is one who transacts business in the place of another. He was one who had the administration of affairs in the absence of the householder, who provided for the family, and who was entrusted with the payment of laborers and servants. He was commonly the most trusty and faithful of the servants, raised to that station as a reward for his fidelity.

Beginning from the last unto the first - It was immaterial where he began to pay, provided he dealt justly by them. In the parable this order is mentioned to give opportunity for the remarks which follow. Had those first hired been first paid, they would have departed satisfied, and the point of the parable would have been lost.

Verse 9

They received every man a penny - There was no agreement how much they should receive, but merely that justice should be done, Matthew 20:4-5, Matthew 20:7. The householder supposed they had earned it, or

chose to make a present to them to compensate for the loss of the first part of the day, when they were willing to work, but could not find employment.

Verse 10

They supposed that they should have received more - They had worked longer - they had been in the heat; they supposed that it was his intention to pay them, not according to contract, but according to the time of the labor.

Verse 11

Murmured - Complained; found fault with.

The goodman of the house - The original here is the same word which in Matthew 20:1 is translated householder, and should have been so translated here. It is the old English way of denoting the father of a family. It expresses no moral quality.

Verse 12

The burden and heat of the day - The burden means the heavy labor, the severe toil. We have continued at that toil in the heat of the day. The others had worked only a little while, and that in the cool of the evening, and when it was fax more pleasant and much less fatiguing.

Verse 13

Friend, I do thee no wrong - I have fully complied with the contract. We had an agreement: I have paid all that I promised. If I choose to give a penny to another man if he labors little or not at all if I should choose to give all my property away to others, it would not affect this contract with you: it is fully met; and with my own with that on which you have no further claim I may do as I please. So, if Christians are just, and pay their lawful debts, and injure no one, the world has no right to complain if they give the rest of their property to the poor, or devote it to send the gospel to the pagan, or to release the prisoner or the captive. It is their own. They have a right to do with it as they please. They are answerable, not to people, but to God, and infidels, and worldly people, and cold professors in the church have no right to interfere.

Verse 14

Take that thine is - Take what is justly due to you what is properly your own.

Verse 15

Is thine we evil because I am good? - The Hebrews used the word evil, when applied to the eye, to denote one envious and malicious,

Deuteronomy 15:9; Proverbs 23:6. The eye is called evil in such cases, because envy and malice show themselves directly in the eye. No passions are so fully expressed by the eye as these. "Does envy show itself in the eye? is thine eye so soon turned to express envy and malice because I have chosen to do good?"

Verse 16

So the last shall be first … - This is the moral or scope of the parable. "To teach this it was spoken." Many that, in the order of time, are brought last into the kingdom, shall be first in the rewards. Higher proportionate rewards shall be given to them than to others. "To all justice shall be done." To all to whom the rewards of heaven are promised they shall be given. Nothing shall be withheld that was promised. If, among this number who are called into the kingdom, I choose to raise some to stations of distinguished usefulness, and to confer on them special talents and higher rewards, I injure no other one. They shall enter heaven, as was promised. If, amid the multitude of Christians, I choose to signalize such men as Paul, and Martyn, and Brainerd, and Spencer, and Summerfield - to appoint some of them to short labor but to wide usefulness, and raise them to signal rewards, I injure not the great multitude of others who live long lives less useful and less rewarded. All shall reach heaven, and all shall receive what I promise to the faithful.

Many be called, but few chosen - The meaning of this, in this connection, I take to be simply this: "Many are called into my kingdom; they come and labor as I command them; many of them are comparatively unknown and obscure; yet they are real Christians, and shall all receive the proper reward. A few I have chosen for higher stations in the church. I have endowed them with apostolic gifts or with superior talents, and suited them for wider usefulness. They may not be as long in the vineyard as others; their race may be sooner run; but I have chosen to honor them in this manner, and I have a right to do it. I injure no one, and have a right to do what I will with my own." Thus explained, this parable has no reference to the call of the Gentiles, nor to the call of aged sinners, nor to the call of sinners out of the church at all. It is simply designed to teach that in the church, among the multitudes who will be saved, Christ makes a difference. He makes some more useful than others, without regard to the time which they serve, and he will reward them accordingly. The parable teaches one truth, and but one; and where Jesus has explained it, we have no right to add

to it, and say that it teaches anything else. It adds to the reason for this interpretation, that Christ was conversing about the rewards that should be given to his followers, and not about the numbers that should be called, or about the doctrine of election. See Matthew 19:27-29.

Verses 17-19

See also Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34.

And Jesus, going up to Jerusalem - That is, doubtless, to the Passover. This journey was from the east side of Jordan. See the notes at Matthew 19:1. At this time he was on this journey to Jerusalem, probably not far from Jericho. This was his last journey to Jerusalem. He was going up to die for the sins of the world.

Took the twelve disciples apart - All the males of the Jews were required to be at this feast, Exodus 23:17. The roads, therefore, on such occasions, would probably be thronged. It is probable, also, that they would travel in companies, or that whole neighborhoods would go together. See Luke 2:44. By his taking them apart is meant his taking them aside from the company. He had something to communicate which he did not wish the others to hear. Mark adds: "And Jesus went before them, and they were amazed; and as they followed they were sore afraid." He led the way. He had told them before Matthew 17:22 that he should be betrayed into the hands of people and be put to death. They began now to be afraid that this would happen, and to be solicitous for his life and for their own safety, and they were amazed at his boldness and calmness, and at his fixed determination to go up to Jerusalem in these circumstances.

Matthew 20:18, Matthew 20:19

Behold, we go up to Jerusalem - Jesus assured them that what they feared would come to pass, but he had, in some measure, prepared their minds for this state of suffering by the promises which he had made to them, Matthew 19:27-30; 20:1-16. In all their sufferings they might be assured that eternal rewards were before them.

Shall be betrayed - See Matthew 17:22. "Unto the chief priests and scribes." The high priest, and the learned men who composed the Sanhedrin or the Great Council of the nation. He was thus betrayed by Judas, Matthew 26:15. He was delivered to the chief priests and scribes, Matthew 26:57.

And they shall condemn him to death - They had not power to inflict death, as that power had been taken away by the Romans; but they had the

power of expressing an opinion, and of delivering him to the Romans to be put to death. This they did, Matthew 26:66; Matthew 27:2.

Shall deliver him to the Gentiles - That is, because they have not the right of inflicting capital punishment, they will deliver him to those who have to the Roman authorities. The Gentiles here means Pontius Pilate and the Roman soldiers. See Matthew 27:2, Matthew 27:27-30.

To mock - See the notes at Matthew 2:16.

To scourge - That is, to whip. This was done with thongs, or a whip made for the purpose, and this punishment was commonly inflicted upon criminals before crucifixion. See the notes at Matthew 10:17.

To crucify him - That is, to put him to death on a cross - the common punishment of slaves. See the notes at Matthew 27:31-32.

The third day … - For the evidence that this was fulfilled, see the notes at Matthew 28:15. Mark and Luke say that he would be spit upon. Spitting on another has always been considered an expression of the deepest contempt. Luke says Luke 18:31, "All things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished." Among other things, he says he shall be "spitefully entreated;" that is, treated with spite or malice; malice, implying contempt. These sufferings of our Saviour, and this treatment, and his death, had been predicted in many places. See Isaiah 53:1-12; Daniel 9:26-27.

Verses 20-28

See also Mark 10:35-45.

Matthew 20:20

Then came to him give mother of Zebedee's children … - This was probably Salome, Mark 15:40; Mark 16:1.

With her sons - The names of these sons were James and John, Mark 10:35

Mark says they came and made the request. That is, they made it, as appears from Matthew, through the medium of their mother; they requested her to ask it for them. It is not improbable that she was an ambitious woman, and was desirous to see her sons honored.

Worshipping him - Showing him respect; respectfully saluting him. In the original, kneeling. See the notes at Matthew 8:2.

Matthew 20:21

Grant that these my two sons may sit … - They were still looking for a temporal kingdom.

They expected that he would reign on the earth with great pomp and glory. They anticipated that he would conquer as a prince and a warrior. They wished to be distinguished in the day of his triumph. To sit on the right and left hand of a prince was a token of confidence, and the highest honor granted to his friends, 1 Kings 2:19; Psalm 110:1; 1 Samuel 20:25. The disciples, here, had no reference to the kingdom of heaven, but only to the kingdom which they supposed he was about to set up on the earth.

Matthew 20:22

Ye know not what ye ask - You do not know the nature of your request, nor what would be involved in it.

You suppose that it would be attended only with honor and happiness if the request was granted, whereas it would require much suffering and trial.

Are ye able to drink of the cup … - To drink of a cup, in the Scriptures, often signifies to be afflicted, or to be punished, Matthew 26:39; Isaiah 51:17, Isaiah 51:22; Psalm 73:10; Psalm 75:8; Jeremiah 25:15; Revelation 16:9. The figure is taken from a feast, where the master of a feast extends a cup to those present. Thus God is represented as extending to his Son a cup filled with a bitter mixture - one causing deep sufferings, John 18:11. This was the cup to which he referred.

The baptism that I am baptized with - This is evidently a phrase denoting the same thing. Are ye able to suffer with me - to endure the trials and pains which shall come upon you and me in endeavoring to build up my kingdom? Are you able to bear it when sorrows shall cover you like water, and you shall be sunk beneath calamities as floods, in the work of religion? Afflictions are often expressed by being sunk in the floods and plunged in deep waters, Psalm 69:2; Isaiah 43:2; Psalm 124:4-5; Lamentations 3:54.

Matthew 20:23

Ye shall indeed drink of my cup … - You will follow me, and you will partake of my afflictions, and will suffer as I shall.

This was fulfilled. James was slain with the sword by Herod, Acts 12:2. John lived many years; but he attended the Saviour through his sufferings, and was himself banished to Patmos, a solitary island, for the testimony of Jesus Christ - a companion of others in tribulation, Revelation 1:9.

Is not mine to give … - The translation of this place evidently does not express the sense of the original. The translation expresses the idea that Jesus has nothing to do in bestowing rewards on his followers. This is at

variance with the uniform testimony of the Scriptures, Matthew 25:31-40; John 5:22-30. The correct translation of the passage would be, "To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, except to those for whom it is prepared by my Father." The passage thus declares that Christ would give rewards to his followers, but only to such as should be entitled to them according to the purpose of his Father. Much as he might be attached to these two disciples, yet he could not bestow any such signal favors on them out of the regular course of things. Rewards were prepared for his followers, and in due time they should be bestowed. He would bestow them according as they had been provided from eternity by God the Father, Matthew 25:34. The correct sense is seen by leaving out that part of the verse in italics, and this is one of the places in the Bible where the sense has been obscured by the introduction of words which have nothing to correspond with them in the original. See a similar instance in 1 John 2:23.

Matthew 20:24

The ten heard it - That is, the ten other apostles.

They were moved with indignation - They were offended at their ambition, and at their desire to be exalted above their brethren.

The word "it" refers not to what Jesus said, but to their request. When the ten heard the request which they had made they were indignant.

Matthew 20:25-27

But Jesus called them unto him - That is, he called all the apostles to him, and stated the principles on which they were to act.

The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them - That is, over their subjects. "You know that such honors are customary among nations. The kings of the earth raise their favorites to posts of trust and power they give authority to some over others; but my kingdom is established in a different manner. All are to be on a level. The rich, the poor, the learned, the unlearned, the bond, the free, are to be equal. He will be the most distinguished that shows most humility, the deepest sense of his unworthiness, and the most earnest desire to promote the welfare of his brethren."

Gentiles - All who were not Jews - used here to denote the manner in which human governments are constituted.

Minister - A servant. The original word is deacon - a word meaning a servant of any kind; one especially who served at the table, and, in the New Testament, one who serves the church, Acts 6:1-4; 1 Timothy 3:8. Preachers

of the gospel are called minister‘s because they are the servants of God and of the church 1 Corinthians 3:5; 1 Corinthians 4:1; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 2 Corinthians 6:4; Ephesians 4:12; an office, therefore, which forbids them to lord it over God‘s heritage, which is the very opposite of a station of superiority, and which demands the very lowest degree of humility.

Matthew 20:28

Even as the Son of man … - See the notes at Matthew 8:20. Jesus points them to his own example. He was in the form of God in heaven, Philemon 2:6. He came to people in the form of a servant, Philemon 2:7. He came not with pomp and glory, but as a man in humble life; and since he came he had not required them to minister to him. “He labored for them.” He strove to do them good. He provided for their needs; fared as poorly as they did; went before them in dangers and sufferings; practiced self-denial on their account, and for them was about to lay down his life. See John 13:4-5.

To give his life a ransom for many - The word “ransom” means literally a price paid for the redemption of captives. In war, when prisoners are taken by an enemy, the money demanded for their release is called a ransom; that is, it is the means by which they are set at liberty. So anything that releases anyone from a state of punishment, or suffering, or sin, is called a ransom. People are by nature captives to sin. They are sold under it. They are under condemnation, Ephesians 2:3; Romans 3:9-20, Romans 3:23; 1 John 5:19. They are under a curse, Galatians 3:10. They are in love with sin They are under its withering dominion, and are exposed to death eternal, Ezekiel 18:4; Psalm 9:17; Psalm 11:6; Psalm 68:2; Psalm 139:19; Matthew 25:46; Romans 2:6-9. They must have perished unless there had been some way by which they could he rescued. This was done by the death of Jesus - by giving his life a ransom. The meaning is, that he died in the place of sinners, and that God was willing to accept the pains of his death in the place of the eternal suffering of the redeemed. The reasons why such a ransom was necessary are:

1.that God had declared that the sinner shall die; that is, that he would punish, or show his hatred to, all sin.

2.that all people had sinned, and, if justice was to take its regular course, all must perish.

3.that man could make no atonement for his own sins. All that he could do, were he holy, would be only to do his duty, and would make no amends for the past. Repentance and future obedience would not blot away one sin.

4.No man was pure, and no angel could make atonement. God was pleased, therefore, to appoint his only-begotten Son to make such a ransom. See John 3:16; 1 John 4:10; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 13:8; John 1:29; Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 8:2-7; Isaiah 53:1-12; This is commonly called the atonement. See the notes at Romans 5:2.

For many - See also Matthew 26:28; John 10:15; 1 Timothy 2:6; 1 John 2:2; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Hebrews 2:9.

Verses 29-34

See Mark 10:46-52, and Luke 18:35-43; Luke 19:1, where this account of his restoring to sight two blind men is also recorded. "And as they departed from Jericho." This was a large town about eight miles west of the Jordan, and about 19 miles northeast from Jerusalem. Near to this city the Israelites crossed the Jordan when they entered into the land of Canaan, Joshua 3:16. It was the first city taken by Joshua, who destroyed it to the foundation, and pronounced a curse on him who should rebuild it, Joshua 6:20-21, Joshua 6:26. This curse was literally fulfilled in the days of Ahab, nearly 500 years later, 1 Kings 16:34. It afterward became the place of the school of the prophets, 2 Kings 2:5. In this place Elisha worked a signal miracle, greatly to the advantage of the inhabitants, by rendering the waters near it, that were before bitter, sweet and wholesome, 2 Kings 2:21. In point of size it was second only to Jerusalem. It was sometimes called the city of palm-trees, from the fact that there were many palms in the vicinity.

A few of them are still remaining, 2 Chronicles 28:15; Judges 1:16; Judges 3:13. At this place died Herod the Great, of a most wretched and foul disease. See the notes at Matthew 2:19. It is now a small village, wretched in its appearance, and inhabited by a very few persons, and called "Riha, or Rah," situated on the ruins of the ancient city (or, as some think, three or four miles east of it), which a modern traveler describes as a poor, dirty village of the Arabs. There are perhaps fifty houses, of rough stone, with roofs of bushes and mud, and the population, two or three hundred, in number, is entirely Muslim. Dr. Thomson (The Land and the Book, vol. ii. p. 443) says of this village, that there are some forty or fifty of the most forlorn habitations that I have seen. And this is Jericho! These houses, or

rather huts, are surrounded by a special kind of fortification, made of nubk, a species of bush very abundant in this plain. Its thorns are so sharp and the branches are so platted together that neither horse nor man will attack it." The road from Jerusalem to Jericho lies through what is called the "wilderness of Jericho," and is described by modern travelers as the most dangerous and forbidding about Palestine. As recently as 1820, an English traveler, Sir Frederick Henniker, was attacked on this road by the Arabs with firearms, who left him naked and severely wounded. See the notes at Luke 10:30. Jesus was going to Jerusalem from the east side of the Jordan Matthew 19:1; his regular journey was therefore through Jericho.

As they departed from Jericho - Luke says, "As he was come nigh unto Jericho." The original word used in Luke, translated "was come nigh," commonly expresses approach to a place, but it does not of necessity mean that always. It may denote nearness to a place, whether going to it or from it. It would be rendered here correctly, "when they were near to Jericho," or when they were in the vicinity of it, without saying whether they were going to it or from it. Matthew and Mark say they were going from it. The passage in Luke 19:1 - "and Jesus entered and passed through Jericho" - which seems to be mentioned as having taken place after the cure of the blind man, does not necessarily suppose that. That passage might be intended to be connected with the account of Zacchaeus, and not to denote the order of time in which these events took place; but simply that as he was passing through Jericho, Zacchaeus sought to see him, and invited him to his house. Historians vary in the circumstances and order of events. The main facts of the narrative are observed; and such variations of circumstances and order, where there is no palpable contradiction, show the honesty of the writers - show that they did not conspire together to deceive, and are in courts of justice considered as confirmations of the truth of the testimony.

Matthew 20:30

Two blind men - Mark and Luke mention but one.

They do not say, however, that there was no more than one. They mention one because he was probably well known; perhaps the son of a distinguished citizen reduced to poverty. His name was Bartimeus. Bar is a Syriac word, meaning "son;" and the name means, therefore, "the son of Timeus." Probably "Timeus" was a man of distinction; and as the case of his son attracted most attention, Mark and Luke recorded it particularly. If

they had said that there was only one healed, there would have been a contradiction. As it is, there is no more contradiction or difficulty than there is in the fact that the evangelists, like all other historians, often omit many facts which they do not choose to record.

Heard that Jesus passed by - They learned who he was by inquiring. They heard a noise, and asked who it was (Luke). They had doubtless heard much of his fame, but had never before been where he was, and probably would not be again. They were therefore more earnest in calling upon him.

Son of David - That is, "Messiah," or "Christ." This was the name by which the Messiah was commonly known. He was the illustrious descendant of David in whom the promises especially centered, Psalm 132:11-12; Psalm 89:3-4. It was the universal opinion of the Jews that the Messiah was to be the descendant of David. See Matthew 22:42. On the use of the word son, see the notes at Matthew 1:1.

Matthew 20:31

And the multitude rebuked them because … - They chid or reproved them, and in a threatening manner told them to be silent.

They cried the more - Jesus, standing still, ordered them to be brought to him (Mark)

His friends then addressed the blind men and told them that Jesus called (Mark). Mark adds that Bartimeus cast away his garment, and rose and came to Jesus. "The garment" was not his only raiment, but was the outer garment, thrown loosely over him, and commonly laid aside when persons labored or ran. See the notes at Matthew 5:40. His doing it denoted haste and earnestness in order to come to Jesus.

Matthew 20:34

And touched their eyes - Mark and Luke say he added, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Thy "confidence, or belief" that I could cure, has been the means of obtaining this blessing.

Faith had no power to open the eyes, but it led the blind men to Jesus; it showed that they had just views of his power; it was connected with the cure. So "faith" has no power to save from sin, but it leads the poor, lost, blind sinner to him who has power, and in this sense it is said we are saved by faith. His "touching" their eyes was merely "a sign" that the power of healing proceeded from him.

Here was an undoubted miracle.

1.These blind men were well known. One, at least, had been blind for a long time.

2.They were strangers to Jesus. They could not have, therefore, "feigned" themselves blind, or done this by any "collusion or agreement" between him and themselves in order to impose on the multitude.

3.The miracle was in the presence of multitudes who took a deep interest in it, and who could easily have detected the imposition if there had been any.

4.The people followed him. They praised or "glorified" God (Mark and Luke). The people gave praise to God also (Luke). They were all satisfied that a real miracle was performed.

Remarks On Matthew 20:13. He will give to every one of his followers all that he promised to give. To him entitled to the least he will give everything which he has promised, and to each one infinitely more than he has deserved.

3. On some he will bestow higher rewards than on others, Matthew 20:16. There is no reason to think that the condition of people in heaven will be "equal," any more than it is on earth. Difference of rank may run through all God's government, and still no one be degraded or be deprived of his rights.

4. God does as he pleases with his own, Matthew 20:15. It is his right to do so - a right which people claim, and which God may claim. If he does injustice to no one, he has a right to bestow what favors on others he pleases. In doing good to another man he does no injury to me. He violated none of my rights by bestowing great talents on Newton or great wealth on Solomon. He did not injure me by making Paul a man of distinguished talents and piety, or John a man of much meekness and love. What he gives me I should be thankful for and improve; nor should I be envious or malignant that he has given to others more than he has to me. Nay, I should rejoice that he has bestowed such favors on undeserving people at all; that the race is in possession of such talents and rewards, to whosoever given; and should believe that in the hands of God such favors will be well bestowed. God is a sovereign, and the Judge of all the earth will do that which is right.

5. It is our duty to go into the vineyard and labor faithfully when ever the Lord Jesus calls us, and until he calls us to receive our reward, Matthew 20:4. It is not that we deserve any favor, or that we shall not say at the end of life that we have been "unprofitable" servants, but He graciously promises that our rewards shall be measured by our faithfulness in His cause. He will have the glory of bringing us into His kingdom and saving us, while He will bestow rewards on us according as we have been faithful in His service.

7. People may be saved in old age, Matthew 20:6. Old people are sometimes brought into the kingdom of Christ and made holy, but it is rare. Few aged people are converted. They drop into the grave as they lived; and to a man who wastes his youth and his middle life in sin, and goes down into the vale of years a rebel against God, there is a dreadful probability that he will die as he lived. It will be found to be true, probably, that by far more than half who are saved are converted before they reach the age of 20. Besides, it is foolish as well as wicked to spend the best of our days in the service of Satan, and to give to God only the poor remnant of our lives that we can no longer use in the cause of wickedness. God should have our first and best days.

8. Neither this parable nor any part of the Bible should be so abused as to lead us to put off the time of repentance to old age. It is "possible," though not "probable," that we shall live to be old. Few, few, of all the world, live to old age. Thousands die in childhood. The time, the accepted time to serve God, is in early life; and God will require it at the hands of parents and teachers if they do not train up the children committed to them to love and obey Him.

9. One reason why we do not understand the plain doctrines of the Bible is our own prejudice, Matthew 20:17-19. Our Saviour plainly told his disciples that he must die. He stated the manner of his death, and the principal circumstances. To us, all this is plain, but they did not understand it (Luke). They had filled their heads with notions about his earthly glory and honor, and they were not willing to see the truth as he stated it. Never was there a more just proverb than that "none are so blind as those who will

not see." So to us the Bible might be plain enough. The doctrines of truth are revealed as clear as a sunbeam, but we are filled with previous notions - we are determined to think differently; and the easiest way to gratify this is to say we do not see it so. The only correct principle of interpretation is, that the Bible is to be taken "just as it is." The meaning that the sacred writers intended to teach is to be sought honestly; and when found, that, and that only, is religious truth.

10. Mothers should be cautious about seeking places of honor for their sons, Matthew 20:20-22. Doing this, they seldom know what they ask. They may be seeking the ruin of their children. it is not in posts of honor that happiness or salvation are certainly secured. Contentment and peace are found oftenest in the humble vale of honest and sober industry - in attempting to fill up our days with usefulness in the situation where God has placed us. As the purest and loveliest streams often flow in the retired grove, far from the thundering cataract or the stormy ocean, so is the sweet peace of the soul; it dwells oftenest far from the bustle of public life, and the storms and tempests of ambition.

11. Ambition in the church is exceedingly improper, Matthew 20:22-28. It is not the nature of religion to produce it. It is opposed to all the modest, retiring, and pure virtues that Christianity produces. An ambitious man will be destitute of religion just in proportion to his ambition, and piety may always be measured by humility. He that has the most lowly views of himself, and the highest of God - that is willing to stoop the lowest to aid his fellow-creatures and to honor God has the most genuine piety. Such was the example of our Saviour, and it can never be any dishonor to imitate the Son of God.

12. The case of the blind men is an expressive representation of the condition of the sinner, Matthew 20:30-34.

(1)people are blinded by sin. They do not by nature see the truth of religion.

(2)it is proper in this state of "blindness" to call upon Jesus to open our eyes. If we ever see, it will be by the grace of God. God is the fountain of light, and those in darkness should seek him.

(3)present opportunities should be improved. This was the first time that Jesus had been in Jericho. It was the last time he would be there. He was passing through it on his way to Jerusalem. So he passes among us by his ordinances. So it may be the last time that we shall have an opportunity to call upon him. While he is near we should seek him.

(4)when people rebuke us and laugh at us, it should not deter us from calling on the Saviour. There is danger that they will laugh us out of our purpose to seek him, and we should cry the more earnestly to him. We should feel that our eternal all depends on our being heard.

(5)the persevering cry of those who seek the Saviour aright will not be in vain. They who cry to him, sensible of their blindness, and sensible that he only can open their eyes, will be heard. He turns none away who thus call upon him.

(6)sinners must rise and come to Jesus. They must cast away everything that hinders their coming. As the blind Bartimeus threw off his "garments," so sinners should throw away everything that hinders their going to him everything that obstructs their progress and cast themselves at his feet. No man will be saved while "sitting still." The command is, "Strive to enter in;" and the promise is made to those only who "ask," and "seek," and "knock."

(7)faith is the only channel through which we shall receive mercy. According to our faith - that is, our confidence in Jesus, our trust and reliance on him so will it be to us. Without that, we shall perish.

(8)they who apply to Jesus thus will receive sight. Their eyes will be opened and they will see clearly.

(9)they who are thus restored to sight should follow Jesus. They should follow him wherever he leads; they should follow him always; they should follow none else but him. He that can give sight to the blind cannot lead us astray. He that can shed light in the "beginning" of our faith, can enlighten our goings through all our pilgrimage, and even down through the dark valley of the shadow of death.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Introduction

Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44.

Verse 1

And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem - They were going up now from Jericho.

Matthew 20:29. The distance was about 19 miles. The most of the way was a desert, or filled with caves, and rocks, and woods - a suitable place for robbers. See Luke 10:30. The Mount of Olives, or "Olivet," is on the east of Jerusalem. Between this and Jerusalem there runs a small stream called the brook Kidron, or Cedron. It is dry in the hot seasons of the year, but swells to a considerable size in time of heavy rains. See the notes at John 18:1. The Mount of Olives was so called from its producing in abundance the olive. It was from Jerusalem about a Sabbath-day's journey. See the notes at Acts 1:12. On the west side of the mountain was the garden of Gethsemane, Luke 22:39; Mark 14:32. On the eastern declivity of the mountain were the villages of Bethphage and Bethany. Mark and Luke say that he came near to both those places.

He appears to have come first to Bethany, where he passed the night John 12:1, John 12:9-11, and in the morning sent over to the adjacent village Bethphage. Bethany was the place where Lazarus lived, whom he raised from the dead John 12:1-7. The Mount of Olives is about a mile in length and about 700 feet in height, and overlooks Jerusalem, so that from its summit almost every part of the city can be seen. The mountain is composed of three peaks or summits. The "olive" is a fruit well known among us as an article of commerce. The tree blooms in June, and bears white flowers. The fruit is small. It is first green, then whitish, and, when fully ripe, black. It encloses a hard stone in which are the seeds. The "wild olive" was common, and differed from the other only in being of a smaller size. There are two roads from Jerusalem to Bethany; one around the southern end of the Mount of Olives, and the other across the summit. The latter is considerably shorter, but more difficult, and it was probably along this road that the Saviour went.

Verse 2

Go into the village over against you - That is, to Bethphage See the notes at Matthew 21:1.

Ye shall find an ass tied … - In Judea there were few horses, and those were chiefly used in war. People seldom employed them in common life and in ordinary journeys. The ass, the mule, and the camel are still most used in Eastern countries. To ride on a horse was sometimes an emblem of war; on a mule and an ass, the emblem of peace. Kings and princes commonly rode on them in times of peace, and it is mentioned as a mark of rank and dignity to ride in that manner, Judges 10:4; Judges 12:14; 1 Samuel 25:20. So Solomon, when he was inaugurated as king, rode on a "mule," 1 Kings 1:33. Riding in this manner, then, denoted neither poverty nor degradation, but was the appropriate way in which a king should ride, and in which, therefore, the King of Zion should enter into his capital, the city of Jerusalem.

Mark and Luke say that he told them they should find "a colt tied." This they were directed to bring. They mention only the colt, because it was this on which he rode.

Verse 3

The Lord hath need of them - This means no more than the "master" has need of them. The word "Lord" often means no more than "master" as opposed to servant, Matthew 10:24; Ephesians 6:5; 1 Peter 3:5-6. The word is sometimes used in the Bible as applied to God, or as a translation of the name Yahweh. Its common use is a mere title of respect given by an inferior to a superior, by a servant to a master, by a disciple to a teacher. As a title of "high respect" it was given to Christ, or the Messiah. The persons to whom these disciples were sent were probably acquainted with the miracles of Jesus and favorably disposed toward him He had attracted great notice in that region, particularly by raising Lazarus from the dead, and most of the people regarded him as the Messiah.

Verse 4-5

All this was done … - The prophecy here quoted is found in Zechariah 9:9. It was always, by the Jews, applied to the Messiah.

Daughter of Zion - That is, "Jerusalem." "Zion" was one of the hills on which the city of Jerusalem was built. On this stood the city of David and some strong fortresses. The names "daughter and virgin" were given to it often, in accordance with the Oriental figurative manner of expression. See

the notes at Isaiah 1:8. Compare Amos 5:2; Psalm 45:13; Psalm 137:8; Isaiah 47:1. It was given to them as an expression of their beauty or comeliness.

Meek - See the notes at Matthew 5:5. The expression here rather denotes "peaceful, not warlike;" not with pomp, and state, and the ensigns of ambition. He came in the manner in which kings were accustomed to ride, but with none of their pride and ambitious feeling.

Sitting upon an ass … - He rode on the colt (Mark and Luke). This expression in Matthew is one which is common with all writers. See Genesis 19:29; Judges 12:7.

Verse 7

And put on them their clothes - This was done as a token of respect, 2 Kings 9:13.

Verse 8

And a very great multitude … - Others showed the same respect by throwing their garments before him; others by cutting down branches of trees and casting them in the way. This was the way in which conquerors and princes were often honored. To cast flowers, or garlands, or evergreens before a warrior returning from victory, or a king entering into his kingdom, was a common way of testifying joyful and triumphant feeling. Thus Josephus says that Alexander and Agrippa were received at Jerusalem. So in our own land some of the most acceptable tokens of rejoicing ever bestowed upon Washington were garlands of roses scattered in his path by children. So the path of Lafayette was often strewed with flowers, as a mark of respect and of a nation's gratitude. John says John 12:13 that these branches were branches of the "palm-tree." The palm was an emblem of "joy and victory." It was used by the Roman soldiers, as well as the Jews, as a symbol of peace. See Revelation 7:9.

The "palm-tree" is common in warm climates, and was abundant in Palestine. The finest grew about Jericho and Engedi. Hence, Jericho was called the city of "palm-trees." The palm has a long and straight body, a spreading top, and an appearance of very great beauty. It produces an agreeable fruit, a pleasant shade, a kind of "honey" little inferior to the honey of bees, and from it was drawn a pleasant "wine" much used in the East. On ancient coins the palm-tree is often a symbol of Judea. On coins made after Jerusalem was taken, Judea is represented by a female sitting

and weeping under a palm-tree. A reference to the palm-tree occurs often in the Bible, and its general form and uses are familiar to most readers.

Strictly speaking, the palm has no branches, but at the summit from forty to eighty twigs or leaf-stalks spring forth. These are referred to in Nehemiah 8:15. The leaves are set around the trunk in circles of about six. The lower row is of great length, and the vast leaves bend themselves in a curve toward the earth: as the circles ascend, the leaves are shorter. In the month of February, there sprout from between the junctures of the lower stalks and the trunk little scales, which develop a kind of bud, the germ of the coming fruit. These germs are contained in a thick and tough skin, not unlike leather. According to the account of a modern traveler, a single tree in Barbary and Egypt bears from fifteen to twenty large clusters of dates, weighing from 15 to 20 lbs. each. The palm-tree lives more than 200 years, and is most productive from the 30th until the 80th year. The Arabs speak of 260 uses to which the different parts of the palm-tree are applied.

The inhabitants of Egypt, Arabia, and Persia depend much on the fruit of the palm-tree for their subsistence. Camels feed on the seed, and the leaves, branches, fibres, and sap are all very valuable.

The "branches" referred to by John John 12:13 are the long "leaves" which shoot out from the top of the tree, and which were often carried about as the symbol of victory. Compare the notes at Isaiah 3:26.

Verse 9

Hosanna to the son of David … - The word "hosanna" means "save now," or "save, I beseech thee." It is a Syriac word, and was a form of acclamation used among the Jews. It was probably used in the celebration of their great festivals. During those festivals they sang Psalm 117:1-2; Psalm 118:25-26. To come "in the name of the Lord" here means to come "by the authority" of the Lord, or to come "commissioned" by him to reveal his will. The Jews had commonly applied this to the Messiah.

Hosanna in the highest - This may mean either "Hosanna in the highest, loftiest strains," or it may be for a prayer to God "Save now, O thou that dwellest in the highest heaven, or among the highest angels." Perhaps the whole song of hosanna may be a prayer to the Supreme God, as well as

a note of triumphant acclamation: "Save now, O thou supremely great and glorious God; save by the Messiah that comes in thy name."

Mark adds that they shouted, "Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord." That is, the kingdom "promised" to David, 1 Kings 2:4; 1 Kings 8:25. "Coming in the name" of the Lord here evidently means coming according to the "promise" of the Lord. The sense may be thus expressed: "Prosperity to the reign of our father David, advancing now according to the promise made to him, and about to be established by the long predicted Messiah, his descendant."

Luke adds Luke 19:38 that they said, "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest." The word "peace" is used here as significant of joy, triumph, exultation at this event. There will be increased peace and rejoicing in heaven from the accession of the redeemed: there will be augmented glory - new songs of praise "among the highest angels."

There is no contradiction here among the evangelists. Among such a multitude, the shouts of exultation and triumph would by no means be confined to the same words. Some would say one thing and some another; and one evangelist recorded what was said by a part of the multitude, and another what was said by another part.

Verse 10

And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved - There was great excitement. The sight of such a multitude, the shouts of the people, and the triumphant procession through the city, excited much attention and inquiry.

Verses 12-22

This paragraph contains the account of the barren fig-tree, and of the cleansing of the temple. See also Mark 11:12-19; Luke 19:45-48.

Matthew 21:12

And Jesus went into the temple of God … - From Mark 11:11-15, it is probable that this cleansing of the temple did not take place on the day that he entered Jerusalem in triumph, but on the day following.

He came and looked round upon all things, Mark says, and went out to Bethany with the twelve. On the day following, returning from Bethany, he saw the fig-tree. Entering into the temple, he purified it "on that day;" or

perhaps he "finished" the work of purifying it on that day, which he commenced the day before. Matthew has mentioned the purifying of the temple, which was performed, probably, on two successive days, or has stated the "fact," without being particular as to the order of events. Mark has stated the order more particularly, and has "divided" what Matthew mentions together.

The "temple of God," that is, the temple dedicated and devoted to the service of God, was built on Mount Moriah. The first temple was built by Solomon, about 1005 years before Christ, 1 Kings 6:38. David, his father, had contemplated the design of building it, and had prepared many materials for it, but was prevented because he had been a man of war, 1 Chronicles 22:1-9; 1 Kings 5:5. This temple, erected with great magnificence, remained until it was destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar, 584 years before Christ, 2 Chronicles 36:6-7, 2 Chronicles 36:19.

After the Babylonian captivity the temple was rebuilt by Zerubbabel, but with vastly inferior and diminished splendor. The aged people wept when they compared it with the glory of the former temple, Ezra 3:8, Ezra 3:12. This was called the "second" temple. This temple was often defiled in the wars before the time of Christ. It had become much decayed and impaired Herod the Great, being exceedingly unpopular among the Jews on account of his cruelties (see the notes at Haggai 2:9. On this building Herod employed 18,000 men, and completed it so as to be suitable for use in 9 years, or about 8 years before Christ. But additions continued to be made to it, and it continued increasing in splendor and magnificence until 64 a.d. John says John 2:20, "forty and six years was this temple in building." Christ was then 30 years of age, which, added to the 16 years occupied in repairing it before his birth, makes 46 years.

The word "temple" was given not merely to the sacred edifice or house itself, but to all the numerous chambers, courts, and rooms connected with it on the top of Mount Moriah. The temple itself was a small edifice, and was surrounded by courts and chambers half a mile in circumference. Into the sacred edifice itself our Saviour never went. The high priest only went into the holy of holies, and that but once a year, and none but priests were

permitted to enter the holy place. Our Saviour was neither. He was of the tribe of "Judah," and he consequently was allowed to enter no further than the other Israelites into the temple. The works that he is said to have performed in the temple, therefore, are to be understood as having been performed in the courts surrounding the sacred edifice. These courts will now be described. The temple was erected on Mount Moriah. The space on the summit of the mount was not, however, large enough for the buildings necessary to be erected. It was therefore enlarged by building high walls from the valley below and filling up the space within. One of these walls was 600 feet in height. The ascent to the temple was by high flights of steps. The entrance to the temple, or to the courts on the top of the mount, was by nine gates, all of them extremely splendid. On every side they were thickly coated with gold and silver. But there was one gate of special magnificence: this was called the Beautiful Gate, Acts 3:2. It was on the east side, and was made of Corinthian brass, one of the most precious metals in ancient times. See the Introduction to 1Corinthians, section 1. This gate was 50 cubits, or 75 feet, in height.

The whole temple, with all its courts, was surrounded by a wall about 25 feet in height. This was built on the wall raised from the base to the top of the mountain, so that from the top of it to the bottom, in a perpendicular descent, was in some places not far from 600 feet. This was particularly the case on the southeast corner; and it was here, probably, that Satan wished our Saviour to cast himself down. See the notes at Matthew 4:6.

On the inside of this wall, between the gates, were piazzas or covered porches. On the eastern, northern, and western sides there were two rows of these porches; on the south, three. These porches were covered walks, about 20 feet in width, paved with marble of different colors, with a flat roof of costly cedar, which was supported by pillars of solid marble, so large that three men could scarcely stretch their arms so as to meet around them. These walks or porches afforded a grateful shade and protection to the people in hot or stormy weather. The one on the east side was distinguished for its beauty, and was called Solomon's porch, John 10:23; Acts 3:11. It stood over the vast terrace or wall which he had raised from the valley beneath, and which was the only thing of his work that remained in the second temple.

When a person entered any of the gates into this space within the wall he saw the temple rising before him with great magnificence; but the space was not clear all the way up to it. Going forward, he came to another wall, enclosing considerable ground, considered more holy than the rest of the hill. The space between this first and second wall was called "the court of the Gentiles." It was so called because Gentiles might come into it, but they could proceed no further. On the second wall and on the gates were inscriptions in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, forbidding any Gentile or unclean person from proceeding further on pain of death. This "court" was not of equal dimensions all the way round the temple. On the east, north, and west it was quite narrow. On the south it was wide, occupying nearly half of the whole surface of the hill. In this court the Gentiles might come. Here was the place where much secular business was transacted. This was the place occupied by the buyers and sellers, and by the money-changers, and which Jesus purified by casting them out.

The enclosure within the second wall was nearly twice as long from east to west as from north to south. This enclosure was also divided. The eastern part of it was called "the court of the women;" so called because women might advance thus far, but no farther. This court was square. It was entered by three gates; one on the north, one on the east directly opposite to the Beautiful gate, and one on the south. In passing from the court of the Gentiles to that of the women, it was necessary to ascend about 9 feet by steps. This court of the women was enclosed with a double wall, with a space between the walls about 15 feet in width, paved with marble. The inner of these two walls was much higher than the one outside. The court of the women was paved with marble. In the corners of that court were different structures for the various uses of the temple. It was in this court that the Jews commonly worshipped. Here, probably, Peter and John, with others, went up to pray, Acts 3:1. Here, too, the Pharisee and publican prayed - the Pharisee near the gate that led forward to the temple; the publican standing far off, on the other side of the court, Luke 18:9-14. Paul also was seized here, and charged with defiling the temple by bringing the Gentiles into that holy place, Acts 21:26-30.

A high wall on the west side of the court of the women divided it from the court of the Israelites, so called because all the males of the Jews might advance there. To this court there was an ascent of fifteen steps. These steps were in the form of a half circle. The great gate to which these steps led was called the gate "Nicanor." Besides this, there were three gates on each side, leading from the court of the women to the court of the Israelites.

Within the court of the "Israelites" was the court of the "priests," separated by a wall about 1 1/2 foot in height. Within that court was the altar of burnt-offering and the laver standing in front of it. Here the priests performed the daily service of the temple. In this place, also, were accommodations for the "priests" when not engaged in conducting the service of the temple, and for the Levites who conducted the music of the sanctuary.

The temple, properly so called, stood within this court. It surpassed in splendor all the other buildings of the holy city; perhaps in magnificence it was unequalled in the world. It fronted the east, looking down through the gates Nicanor and the Beautiful Gate, and onward to the Mount of Olives. From the Mount of Olives on the east there was a beautiful and commanding view of the whole sacred edifice. It was there that our Saviour sat when the disciples directed his attention to the goodly stones with which the temple was built, Mark 13:1. The entrance into the temple itself was from the court "of the priests," by an ascent of twelve steps. The "porch" in front of the temple was 150 feet high and as many broad. The open space in this perch through which the temple was entered was 115 feet high and 37 broad, without doors of any sort, The appearance of this, built, as it was, with white marble, and decorated with plates of silver, from the Mount of Olives was exceedingly dazzling and splendid. Josephus says that in the rising of the sun it reflected so strong and dazzling an effulgence that the eye of the spectator was obliged to turn away. To strangers at a distance, it appeared like a mountain covered with snow, for where it was not decorated with plates of gold it was extremely white and glistening.

The temple itself was divided into two parts. The first, called the "sanctuary" or holy place; was 60 feet in length 60 feet in height, and 30 feet in width. In this was the golden candlestick, the table of showbread,

and the altar of incense. The "holy of holies" or the "most holy place," was 30 feet each way. In the first temple this contained the ark of the covenant, the tables of the law, and over the ark was the mercy-seat and the cherubim. Into this place no person entered but the high priest, and he but once in the year. These two apartments were separated only by a vail, very costly and curiously performed. It was this vail which was rent from the top to the bottom when the Saviour died, Matthew 27:51. Around the walls of the "temple," properly so called, was a structure three stories high, containing chambers for the use of the officers of the temple. The temple was wholly leveled to the ground by the Romans under Titus and Vespasian, and was effectually destroyed, according to the predictions of the Saviour. See the notes at Matthew 24:2. The site of it was made like a plowed field. Julian the apostate attempted to rebuild it, but the workmen, according to his own historian, Ammianus Marcellinus, were prevented by balls of fire breaking out from the ground. See Warburton's "*Divine Legation of Moses*." Its site is now occupied by the Mosque of Omar, one of the most splendid specimens of Saracenic architecture in the world.

And cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple - The place where this was done was not the temple itself, but the outer court "or the court of the Gentiles." This was esteemed the least sacred part of the temple; and the Jews, it seems, did not consider it profanation to appropriate this to any business in any way connected with the temple service. The things which they bought and sold were at first those pertaining. to the sacrifices. It is not improbable, however, that the traffic afterward extended to all kinds of merchandise. It gave rise to much confusion, noise, contention, and fraud, and was exceedingly improper in the temple of the Lord.

The tables of the money-changers - Judea was subject to the Romans. The money in current use was Roman coin; yet the Jewish law required that every man should pay a tribute to the service of the sanctuary of "half a shekel," Exodus 30:11-16. This was a Jewish coin, and the tribute was required to be paid in that coin. It became, therefore, a matter of convenience to have a place where the Roman coin might be exchanged for the Jewish half shekel. This was the "professed" business of these men. Of course, they would demand a small sum for the exchange; and, among so many thousands as came up to the great feasts, it would be a very profitable employment, and one easily giving rise to much fraud and oppression.

The seats of them that sold doves - Doves were required to be offered in sacrifice - Leviticus 14:22; Luke 2:24 - yet it was difficult to bring them from the distant parts of Judea. It was found much easier to purchase them in Jerusalem. Hence, it became a business to keep them to sell to those who were required to offer them.

Mark adds Mark 11:16 that he "would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple." That is, probably, any of the vessels or implements connected with the traffic in oil, incense, wine, etc., that were kept for sale in the temple.

Matthew 21:13

And said It is written … - This is written in Isaiah 56:7. The first part of this verse only is quoted from Isaiah. The rest - "but ye have made it a den of thieves" - was added by Jesus, denoting their abuse of the temple. Thieves and robbers live in dens and caves. Judea was then much infested with them. In their dens thieves devise and practice iniquity. These buyers and sellers imitated them. They made the temple a place of gain; they cheated and defrauded; they took advantage of the poor, and, by their being under a necessity of purchasing these articles for sacrifice, they "robbed" them by selling what they had at an enormous price.

The following reasons may be given why this company of buyers and sellers obeyed Christ:

1.They were overawed by his authority, and struck with the consciousness that he had a right to command,

2.Their own consciences reproved them; they knew they were guilty, and they dared make no resistance.

3.The people generally were then on the side of Jesus, believing him to be the Messiah.

4.It had always been the belief of the Jews that a "prophet" had a right to change, regulate, and order the various affairs relating to external worship. They supposed Jesus to be such, and they did not dare to resist him.

Mark and Luke add, that in consequence of this, the scribes and chief priests attempted to put him to death, Mark 11:18-19; Luke 19:47-48. This they did from "envy," Matthew 27:18. He drew off the people from them, and they envied and hated him. They were "restrained," then, for the fear of

the people; and this was the reason why they plotted "secretly" to put him to death, and why they afterward so gladly heard the proposals of the traitor, Matthew 26:14-15.

Matthew 21:15, Matthew 21:16

When the chief priests … - The chief men of the nation were envious of his popularity.

They could not prevent it; but, being determined to find fault, they took occasion to do so from the shouts of the children. People often are offended that "children" have anything to do with religion, and deem it very improper that "they" should rejoice that the Saviour has come. Our Lord Jesus viewed this subject differently. He saw that it was proper that they should rejoice. they are interested in the concerns of religion, and before evil principles get fast hold of their minds is a proper time for them to love and obey him. The Lord Jesus silenced those who made the objection by appealing to a text of their own Scriptures. This text is found in Psalm 8:2. The quotation is not made directly from the Hebrew. but from the Greek translation. This, however, should create no difficulty. The point of the quotation was to prove that "children" might offer praise to God. This is expressed in both the Hebrew and the Greek.

Matthew 21:17

Bethany - See the notes at Matthew 21:1.

Matthew 21:19

And when he saw a fig-tree in the way … - This tree was standing in the public road.

It was therefore common property and anyone might lawfully use its fruit. Mark says Mark 11:13, "Seeing a fig-tree afar off, having leaves, he came," etc. Not far off "from the road," but at a considerable distance from the place where he was. Having loaves, and appearing healthy and luxuriant, they presumed that there would be fruit on it. Mark says Mark 11:13, "he came, if haply he might find anything thereon." That is, judging from the "appearance" of the tree, it was "probable" that there would be fruit on it. We are not to suppose that our Lord was ignorant of the true condition of the tree, but he acted according to the appearance of things; being a man as well as divine, he acted, of course, as people do act in such circumstances.

And found nothing thereon but leaves only - Mark Mark 11:13 gives as a reason for this that "the time of figs was not yet." That is, the time "of

gathering" the figs was not yet, or had not passed. It was a time when figs were ripe or suitable to eat, or he would not have gone to it, expecting to find them; but the time of gathering them had not passed, and it was to be presumed that they were still on the tree. This took place on the week of the Passover, or in the beginning of April. Figs, in Palestine, are commonly ripe at the Passover. The summer in Palestine begins in March, and it is no uncommon thing that figs should be eatable in April. It is said that they sometimes produce fruit the year round.

Mark Mark 11:12-13 says that this took place on the morning of the day on which he purified the temple. Matthew would lead us to suppose that it was on the day following. Matthew records briefly what Mark records more "fully." Matthew states the fact that the fig-tree was barren and withered away, without regarding minutely the order or the circumstances in which the event took place. There is no contradiction, because Matthew does not affirm that this took place on the morning after the temple was cleansed, though he places it in that order; nor does he say that a day did not elapse after the fig-tree was cursed before the disciples discovered that it was withered, though he does not affirm that it was so. Such circumstantial variations, where there is no positive contradiction, go greatly to confirm the truth of a narrative. They show that the writers were honest men, and did not "conspire" to deceive the world.

And said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee … - Mark calls this "cursing" the tree Mark 11:21. The word "curse," as used by him, does not imply "anger," or disappointment, or malice. It means only "devoting it to destruction," or causing it to wither away. All the "curse" that was pronounced was in the words "that no fruit should grow on it." The Jews used the word "curse" not as always implying "wrath or anger," but to devote to "death," or to any kind of destruction, Hebrews 6:8. It has been commonly thought that the Saviour performed this miracle to denote the sudden "withering away" or destruction of the Jewish people. They, like the fig-tree, promised fair. That was full of leaves, and they full of professions. Yet both were equally barren; and as that was destroyed, so they were soon to be. It was certain that this would be a good "illustration" of the destruction of the Jewish people, but there is no evidence that Jesus intended it as such, and without such evidence we have no right to say that was its meaning. "And presently the fig-tree withered away." That is, before another day. See Mark. It is probable that they were passing directly

onward, and did not stop then to consider it. Matthew does not affirm that it withered "away in their presence," and Mark affirms that they made the discovery on the morning after it was "cursed."

Matthew 21:20

And when the disciples saw it - That is, on the morning following that on which it was cursed, Mark 11:20.

They marveled, saying … - Peter said this, Mark 11:21 Matthew means only to say that this was said to him; Mark tells us which one of them said it.

Matthew 21:21

Jesus answered and said … - Jesus took occasion from this to establish their faith in God, Mark 11:22

He told them that any difficulty could be overcome by faith. To remove a mountain denotes the power of surmounting or removing any difficulty. The phrase was so used by the Jews. There is no doubt that this was "literally" true - that if "they had the faith of miracles," they could remove the mountain before them - the Mount of Olives - for this was as easy for God to do by them as to heal the sick or raise the dead. But the Saviour rather referred, probably, to the difficulties and trials which they would be called to endure in preaching the gospel.

Matthew 21:22

And all things … - He adds an encouragement for them to pray, assuring them that they should have all things which they asked.

This promise was evidently a special one, given to them in regard to working miracles. To them it was true, but it is manifest that we have no right to apply this promise to ourselves. It was desired especially for the apostles; nor have we a right to turn it from its original meaning. There are other promises in, abundance on which we "may" rely in prayer, with confident assurance that our prayers will be heard. Compare the notes at Matthew 7:7-11.

Verses 23-27

See also Mark 11:27-33; Luke 20:1-9.

Matthew 21:23

When he was come into the temple - That is, probably, into the inner court - the court of the Israelites.

They took this opportunity of questioning him on this subject when he was not surrounded by the multitude.

By what authority … - There was a show of propriety in this question. He was making great changes in the affairs of the temple, and they claimed the right to know why this was done, contrary to their permission. He was not "a priest;" he had no civil or ecclesiastical authority as a Jew. It was sufficient authority, indeed, that he came as a prophet and worked miracles. But they professed not to be satisfied with that.

These things - The things which he had just done, in overturning the seats of those that were engaged in traffic, Matthew 21:12.

Matthew 21:24, Matthew 21:25

And Jesus answered … - Jesus was under no obligation to give them an answer.

They well knew by what authority he did this. He had not concealed his power in working miracles, and had not kept back the knowledge that he was the Messiah. He therefore referred them to a similar case - that of John the Baptist. He knew the estimation in which John was held by the people, and he took the wise in their own craftiness. Whatever answer they gave, he knew they Would convict themselves, and so they saw when they looked at the question. They reasoned correctly. If they should say that John received authority to baptize from God or from heaven, he would directly ask why they did not believe him. They professed to hear all the prophets. If they said, "Of men," they would be in danger, for all the people believed that John was a prophet.

The baptism of John - For an account of this, see Matthew 21:26

We fear the people - They feared that the people would stone them (Luke). Such an unpopular sentiment as to profess that all that "John" did was "imposture," would have probably ended in tumult, perhaps in their death.

Matthew 21:27

We cannot tell - This was a direct falsehood. They could have told; and the answer should have been, "We will not tell." There was no reason but that why they did not tell. The reason, probably, why they would not acknowledge that John was a prophet, was that, if they did, they saw he could easily show them by "what authority" he did those things; that is, by his authority as Messiah. John came as his forerunner, pointed him out to the people, baptized him, and bore his public and solemn testimony to the

fact that he was the Messiah, Matthew 3:13-15; John 1:29-34. If they acknowledged one, they must the other. In this way our Saviour was about to lead these crafty men to answer their own question, to their own confusion, about his authority. They saw this; and, having given them a "sufficient" answer, there was no need of stating anything further.

Verses 28-32

But what think ye? - A way of speaking designed to direct them particularly to what he was saying, that they might be self-convicted.

Two sons - By those two sons our Lord intends to represent the conduct of the Jews, and that of the publicans and sinners.

In my vineyard - See the notes at Matthew 21:33. To work in the vineyard here represents the work which God requires man to do.

I will not - This had been the language of the publicans and wicked men. They refused at first, and did not "profess" to be willing to go.

Repented - Changed his mind. Afterward, at the preaching of John and Christ, the publicans - the wicked - repented and obeyed.

The second … said, I go sir; and went not - This represented the conduct of the scribes and Pharisees - "professing" to obey God, observing the external rites of religion, but opposed really to the kingdom of God, and about to put his Son to death.

Whether of them twain … - Which of the two. "They say unto him, The first." This answer was correct; but it is strange that they did not perceive that it condemned themselves.

Go into the kingdom of God - Become Christians, or more readily follow the Saviour. See the notes at Matthew 3:2.

Before you - Rather than you. They are more likely to do it than you. You are self-righteous, self-willed, and obstinate.

John came in the way of righteousness - Many of them have believed, but you have not. That is, in the right way, or teaching the way to be righteous; to wit, by repentance. Publicans and harlots heard him and became righteous, but they did not. They saw it, but, as in one thousand other cases, it did not produce the proper effect on them, and they would not repent.

Verses 33-46

The parable of the vineyard - This is also recorded in Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19.

Matthew 21:33

Hear another parable - See the notes at Matthew 13:3.

A certain householder - See the notes at Matthew 20:1.

Planted a vineyard - A place for the cultivation of grapes. It is often used to represent the church of God. as a place cultivated and valuable. Judea was favorable to vines, and the figure is frequently used, therefore, in the sacred writers. See Matthew 20:1. It is used here to represent the "Jewish people" - the people chosen of the Lord, cultivated with care, and signally favored; or perhaps more definitely, "the city of Jerusalem."

Hedged it round about - This means he enclosed it, either with a fence of wood or stone, or more probably with "thorns," thick set and growing - a common way of enclosing fields in Judea, as it is in England,

And digged a wine-press in it - Mark says, "digged a place for the wine-fat." This should have been so rendered in Matthew. The original word does not mean the "press" in which the grapes were trodden, but the "vat or large cistern" into which the wine ran. This was commonly made by digging into the side of a hill. The "wine-press" was made of two receptacles. The upper one, in Persia at present, is about 8 feet square and 4 feet high. In this the grapes are thrown and "trodden" by men, and the juice runs into the large receptacle or cistern below. See the notes at Isaiah 63:2-3.

And built a tower - See also the notes at Isaiah 5:2. In Eastern countries at present, these towers are often 80 feet high and 30 feet square. They were for the keepers, who defended the vineyards from thieves and animals, especially from foxes, Mark 12:1. This recollection cleared up the mystery. There, before my eyes, stood the towers of which I had so often read and thought; such as stood there when David led forth his flocks to the neighboring pastures; such as furnished to the sacred writers and the Saviour himself so many illustrations for enforcing what they taught.

These towers are said to be sometimes square in form as well as round, and as high as 40 or 50 feet. Those which I examined had a small door near the ground, and a level space on the top, where a man could sit and command a view of the plantation. I afterward saw a great many of these structures near Hebron, where the vine still flourishes in its ancient home; for there, probably, was Eshcol, whence the Hebrew spies returned to Joshua with the clusters of grapes which they had gathered as evidence of the fertility of the land. Some of the towers here are so built as to serve as houses: and during the vintage, it is said that the inhabitants of Hebron take

up their abode in them in such numbers as to leave the town almost deserted.

And let it out … - This was not an uncommon thing. Vineyards were often planted to be let out for profit.

Into a far country - This means, in the original, only that he departed from them. It does not mean that he went out of the "land." Luke adds, "for a long time." That is, as appears, until the time of the fruit; perhaps for a year. This vineyard denotes, doubtless, the Jewish people, or Jerusalem. But these circumstances are not to be particularly explained. They serve to keep up the story. They denote in general that God had taken proper care of his vineyard - that is, of his people; but beyond that we cannot affirm that these circumstances of building the tower, etc., mean any particular thing, for he has not told us that they do, and where he has not explained them we have no right to attempt it.

Matthew 21:34

And when the time of the fruit drew near … - The time of gathering the fruit.

The vineyard was let out, probably, for a part of the fruit, and the owner sent to receive the part that was his.

Sent his servants - These, doubtless, represent the prophets sent to the Jewish people.

Matthew 21:35

And beat one - The word translated here as "beat" properly means to flay or to take off the skin; hence to beat or to whip so that the skin in many places is taken off.

And killed another - Isaiah is said to have been put to death by sawing him asunder.

Many other of the prophets were also put to death. See Luke 13:34; Hebrews 11:37; 1 Samuel 22:18; 1 Kings 19:10.

And stoned another - This was among the Jews a common mode of punishment, Deuteronomy 13:10; Deuteronomy 17:7; Joshua 7:25. Especially was this the case in times of popular tumult, and of sudden indignation among the people, Acts 7:58; Acts 14:19; John 8:59; John 10:31. This does not I imply, of necessity, that those who were stoned "died," but they might be only severely wounded. Mark says, "At him they cast stones and wounded him in the head, and sent him away," etc.

There is a little variation in the circumstances as mentioned by Matthew, and by Mark and Luke, but the substance is the same. Mark and Luke are more particular, and state the order in which the servants were sent one after another. They all denote the dealing of the people of Israel toward the prophets. All these things had been done to them. See Hebrews 11:37; Jeremiah 44:4-6; 2 Chronicles 36:16; Nehemiah 9:26; 2 Chronicles 24:20-21.

Matthew 21:37

Last of all … - Mark adds that this was an only son, greatly beloved.

This beautifully and most tenderly exhibits the love of God in sending his only Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to die for people. Long had he sent the prophets, and they had been persecuted and slain. There was no use in sending any more prophets to the people. They had done all that they could do. God had one only-begotten and well-beloved Son, whom he might send, and whom the world "ought" to reverence even as they should the Father, John 5:23. God is often represented in the Bible as giving his Son, his only-begotten and wellbeloved Son, for a lost world, John 3:16-17; 1 John 4:9, 1 John 4:14; Romans 8:3, Romans 8:32; Galatians 4:4.

Saying, They will reverence my son - To "reverence" means to honor, to esteem, to show deference to. It is that feeling which we have in the presence of one who is greatly our superior. It means to give to such a person, in our feelings and our deportment, the honor which is due to his rank and character.

Matthew 21:38

But when the husbandmen … - They determined to kill him, and as he was the only son, they supposed they could easily seize on the property It was rented to them; was in their possession; and they resolved to keep it.

This circumstance has probably no reference to any particular conduct of the Jews, but is thrown in to keep up the story and fill up the narrative. An heir is one who succeeds to an estate, commonly a son; an "inheritance" is what an heir receives.

Matthew 21:39

And they caught him … - This refers to the conduct of the Jews in putting the Saviour to death.

So they understood it, Matthew 21:45. The Jews put him to death after they had persecuted and slain the prophets. This was done by giving him

into the hands of the Romans and seeking his crucifixion, Matthew 27:20-25; Acts 2:23; Acts 7:51-52.

And cast him out of the vineyard - The vineyard in this parable may represent Jerusalem. Jesus was crucified "out" of Jerusalem, on Mount Calvary, Luke 23:23. See the notes at Hebrews 13:12.

Matthew 21:40

When the lord, therefore … - Jesus then asked them a question about the proper way of dealing with those people.

The design of asking them this question was that they might condemn themselves, and admit the justice of the punishment that was soon to come upon them.

Matthew 21:41

They say … - They answered according as they knew people would act, and would act justly in doing it.

He would take away their privileges and confer them on others. This was the answer which Jesus wished. The case was so clear that they could not answer otherwise. He wished to show them the justice of taking away their national privileges, and punishing them in the destruction of their city and nation. Had he stated this at first they would not have heard him. He, however, by a parable, led them along to "state themselves" the very truth which he wished to communicate, and they had then nothing to answer. They did not, however, yet see the bearing of what they had admitted.

Matthew 21:42, Matthew 21:43

Jesus saith … - Jesus, having led them to admit the justice of the great "principle" on which God was about to act toward them proceeds to apply it by a text of Scripture, declaring that this very thing which they admitted to be proper in the case of the "husbandmen" had been predicted respecting themselves.

This passage is found in Psalm 118:22-23. It was first applicable to David, but no less to Jesus.

The stone - The figure is taken from building a house. The principal stone for size and beauty is that commonly laid as the cornerstone.

Which the builders rejected - On account of its want of beauty or size it was laid aside, or deemed unfit to be a cornerstone. This represents the Lord Jesus, proposed to the Jews as the foundation or cornerstone on which to build the church, but rejected by them - the builders - on account of his

lack of comeliness or beauty; that is, of what they esteemed to be comely or desirable, Isaiah 53:2-3.

The same is become … - Though rejected by them, yet God chose him, and made him the foundation of the church. Christ is often compared to a stone, a cornerstone, a tried, that is, a sure, firm foundation - all in allusion to the custom of building, Acts 4:11; Romans 9:33; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:7.

Lord's doing - The appointment of Jesus of Nazareth to be the foundation of the church is proved by miracle and prophecy to be the work of God.

Marvellous in our eyes - Wonderful in the sight of his people. That he should select his only Son - that he should stoop so low, be despised, rejected, and put to death - that God should raise him up, and build a church on this foundation, embracing the Gentile as well as the Jew, and spreading through all the world, is a subject of wonder and praise to all the redeemed.

Matthew 21:43

The kingdom of God … - Jesus applies the parable to them - the Jews.

They had been the children of the kingdom, or under the reign of God; having his law and acknowledging him as King. They had been his chosen and special people, but he says that now this privilege would be taken away; that they would cease to be the special people of God, and that the blessing would be given to a nation who would bring forth the fruits thereof, or "be righteous" that is, to the Gentiles, Acts 28:28.

Matthew 21:44

Whosoever shall fall … - There is a reference here, doubtless, to Isaiah 8:14-15. Having made an allusion to himself "as a stone," or a rock Matthew 21:42, he proceeds to state the consequences of coming in contact with it. He that falls upon it shall be broken; he that "runs against it" - a cornerstone, standing out from the other parts of the foundation shall be injured, or broken in his limbs or body. He that is offended with my being the foundation, or that opposes me, shall by the act injure himself, or make himself miserable "by so doing," even were there nothing further. But there is something further.

On whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder - That is, in the original, will reduce him to dust, so that it may be scattered by the winds. There is an allusion here, doubtless, to the custom of stoning as a punishment among the Jews. A scaffold was erected twice the height of the

man to be stoned. Standing on its edge, he was violently struck off by one of the witnesses: if he died by the blow and the fall, nothing further was done; if not, a heavy stone was thrown down on him, which at once killed him. So the Saviour speaks of the "falling" of the stone on his enemies. They who oppose him, who reject him, and who continue impenitent, shall be crushed by him in the day of judgment, and perish forever.

Matthew 21:45, Matthew 21:46

At last, they perceived that he spoke of them, and would have gratified their malice at once but they feared the people.

Remarks On Matthew 21:2.

2. It is our duty to obey the Lord Jesus, and to do it at once, Matthew 21:3. When He commands there should be no delay. What he orders is right, and we should not hesitate or deliberate about it.

3. Especially is this the case where He is to be honored, as he was on this occasion, Matthew 21:3, Matthew 21:8. If it was for "our" interest or honor only that we obeyed him, it would be of less consequence; but our obedience will honor Him, and we should seek that honor by any sacrifice or self-denial.

4. We should be willing to give up our property to honor the Lord Jesus, Matthew 21:3. He has a right to it. If given to spread the gospel, it goes, as this did, to increase "the triumphs of our King." We should be willing to give our wealth that he might "gird on his sword," and "ride prosperously among the heathen." Everyone who is saved among the pagan by sending the gospel to them will be for the honor of Jesus. They will go to swell his train when he shall enter triumphantly into his kingdom at the day of judgment.

5. It is our duty to honor him, Matthew 21:7-9. He is King of Zion. He is Lord of all. He reigns, and shall always reign.

"Sinners! Whose love can ne'er forget
The wormwood and the gall,
Go spread your trophies at his feet,
And crown him Lord of all.
"Ye chosen seed of Israel's race;
Ye ransomed from the fall;

Hail him who saves you by his grace,
And crown him Lord of all.
"Let every kindred, every tribe,
On this terrestrial ball,
To him all majesty ascribe,
And crown him Lord of all."

6. "Children" should also honor him and shout "hosanna" to him, Matthew 21:15. The chief priests and scribes, in the time of our Saviour, were displeased that they did it; and many of the great, and many formal professors since, have been displeased that "children" should profess to love and honor Jesus. They have opposed Sunday schools, and opposed the praying of children, and opposed their singing to his praise, and opposed their giving their money to spread his gospel; but Jesus loves such praise and such service. The mouths of babes and sucklings should be taught to speak his name; and whatever the world may say, whatever the proud, the rich, or the formal may say, children should seek him early and give their first years to him. He loves their praises. Perhaps few of all the songs of thanksgiving are so pleasant to his ears as the "hosannas" of a Sunday school.

7. We have here a view of the glory of Jesus, Matthew 21:9-11. Though humble yet he was King. Though most of his life unhonored, yet once he had the honors of his station rendered to him, and entered the city of his father David as a triumphant King of Zion. He will be yet "more" honored. He will come with all his saints, with the glory of his Father, and with the holy angels. There we shall be; and we should be prepared to join with the vast host in shouting hosanna to the returning King of Zion.

8. Yet, amid all these honors, he was meek and lowly, Matthew 21:5. Others would have been proud and lifted up, but he was always meek; his heart was not proud. He is the only one of kings that could bear triumph and honors without being lifted up by it and made proud.

9. Yet amid all his triumphs he wept over Jerusalem (Luke). No king, no conqueror, ever before showed compassion like this. People weep when "they" are afflicted, or are poor and needy; but what prince has ever, in the moment of his triumph, wept over the miseries and dangers of his subjects? Not an instance can be found in all history where an earthly conqueror ever

showed compassion like this. So Jesus has still compassion over blind, ruined, wretched man. Amid all the triumphs of the gospel, he does not forget those I who are yet in their sins, but stretches out his arms to welcome them to his embrace.

10. Prophecy will be certainly and exactly fulfilled (Luke). That respecting Jerusalem was literally accomplished; and in like manner will all that is predicted of "all" sinners assuredly come to pass. If Jerusalem had repented it would have been saved; so if sinners repent they will be saved. If not, like Jerusalem, in due time they will perish.

11. Jesus purified the temple, Matthew 21:12. It was the house of God. So our hearts should be the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit; so, also, they should be pure. All worldly cares, and traffic, and business, that would interfere with the dwelling of the Spirit there, and all wickedness, oppression, extortion, cheating, and pollution should be banished. God dwells not in such polluted temples; and unless we are "pure in heart," he will not be with us, and we shall not see his face in peace. Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

12. Jesus only can purify our hearts. He does it by his blood and Spirit. Over all our sins he holds the same power as he did over the traffickers in the temple. At his command they will flee, and we shall be pure. If our hearts are ever purified, therefore, it will be by the power of Jesus. Nor should we wait in sin for him to do it. We should come to him, and beseech him to have mercy, and to save us from our pollutions.

13. Envy and hatred will take hold of very small matters, to show itself against the good and even the prudent, Matthew 21:15. When the enemies of Jesus could find nothing else to blame, they chose to find fault with the shouting of children. So always in a revival of religion, or any great work of the Lord, it is some small matter that is seized upon something not exactly to the view of wicked objectors - that is made the occasion of reproach and opposition.

14. We must produce fruit in our lives as well as flowers, Matthew 21:19. A profession of religion is like the flowers of spring. A revival is like

fragrant blossoms. They are beautiful, and promise much fruit; but how many wither, and droop, and fall useless to the ground! How few of all the blossoms of the spring produce ripe and mellow fruit in autumn! So, alas! it is often with those who appear well in revivals of religion.

15. If we make a profession and do not produce fruit, Jesus will curse us, and we shall soon wither away, Matthew 21:19-20. He will suffer none to enter into his kingdom on the ground of profession only. If we bear fruit and live lives of piety, we are Christians; if not, all our professions are like the blossoms of spring or the leaves of the tree. They will not save us from the withering frown of Jesus.

16. People will do almost anything right or wrong, and as often wrong as right - to court popularity, Matthew 21:24. It is generally not asked by such people what is "right" or what is "true," but what will secure popularity. If they have that, they are satisfied.

17. People often tell a direct falsehood rather than acknowledge the truth, Matthew 21:27. Especially is this the case when the truth makes against them.

18. Double-dealing and an attempt to evade the truth commonly lead into difficulty. If these people had been honest, they would have had far less trouble, Matthew 21:27.

19. A state of gross and open sin is often more hopeful than one of hypocrisy, pride, and self-conceit, together with external conformity to religion, Matthew 21:28. Multitudes of profane and licentious people may be saved, while the proud and self-righteous will be cut off. The reasons are,

(1)That the wicked, the gross, have no righteousness on which they can pretend to rely.

(2)nothing so effectually prevents religion as pride and self-confidence.

(3)There is often really more ingenuousness and candor, and less of malignity against the gospel, among the openly wicked, than among those

who are outwardly righteous, but who are inwardly like whited sepulchres, full of dead men‘s bones and all uncleanness.

20. Multitudes of people profess to go, and go not, Matthew 21:30. They profess to love God, and love themselves better. They profess to obey him, and yet obey their lusts. They are hypocrites, and destruction must come upon them.

21. Sinners, when they see the effect of truth on others, should repent, Matthew 21:32. It is proof of the truth of religion, and they, as much as others, need it.

22. We see the goodness of God in sending his messengers to a lost world, Matthew 21:33-38. His prophets he sent one after another, and they were put to death. His well-beloved Son he sent, and He also was put to death. Nor is his mercy yet stayed. He still sends his message to sinners. Thousands have died, as his Son did, in attempting to spread the gospel, but still he sends it. We have often, often rejected it, yet still he sends it. What earthly monarch would be treated in this manner? What earthly parent would be so patient and so kind?

23. If we improve not our privileges they will be taken away from us, Matthew 21:43. The gospel will be sent to many of the pagan, and they will be saved, but woe to those who have had it all their lives and are not saved.

24. All who reject the Saviour must perish, Matthew 21:44.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 22

Verse 1

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again in parables - See the notes at Matthew 13:3. That is, he answered or made reply to the Pharisees, who had been enraged at him for what he had already spoken to them, Matthew 21:45-46. He made a still further statement, to show how the gospel would be received and treated by them. The real answer here, as is frequently the case in the New Testament, refers to what was passing in the mind, or to the conduct of those who were addressed, not to what they said.

Verse 2

The kingdom of heaven - See the notes at Matthew 3:2. The idea here is, "God deals with man in his kingdom, or in regard to the dispensation of the gospel, as a certain king did," etc. This parable refers, undoubtedly, to the rejection of the Jews and to the calling of the Gentiles. The gospel, with all its privileges, was offered to the Jewish people; but through their wickedness and pride they rejected it, and all its blessings were offered to the Gentiles and accepted. This is the general truth. Many circumstances are thrown in to fill out the narrative which cannot be particularly explained.

A marriage for his son - Rather a "marriage-feast," or a feast on the occasion of the marriage of his son. The king here doubtless represents God providing for the salvation of the world.

Verse 3

And sent forth his servants - These represent the messengers that God has sent to invite people to his kingdom.

To call them that were bidden - That is, to give notice to those who had before been invited that the feast was ready. It appears that there were two invitations - one considerably previous to the time of the feast, that they might have opportunity to prepare for it, and the other to give notice of the precise time when they were expected.

The wedding - The marriage-feast. The same word in the original as in Matthew 22:2.

They would not come - They might have come if they had chosen, but they would not. So all the difficulty that sinners ever labour under in regard to salvation is in the will. It is a fixed determination not to come and be saved. See the notes at John 5:45.

Verse 4

Other servants - Who might press it on their attention. So God repeats his message to sinners when they reject it.

My dinner - This word literally denotes the meal taken about noon. It is also taken for a meal in general. As marriages were, among Eastern nations, in the evening, it refers here to a meal taken at that time.

Fatlings - This word does not refer to any particular species of animals. It denotes any fat animals. As oxen are also mentioned, however, it refers here, probably, to lambs or calves, 2 Samuel 6:13; 1 Chronicles 15:26.

Verse 5

But they made light of it - Treated it with contempt, as a thing of no consequence - an exact representation of the conduct of sinners in regard to the gospel.

One to his farm - So people are engaged so much in their worldly employment that they pretend they have no time to attend to religion. The world is, in their view, of more value than God.

Merchandise - Traffic; trading.

Verse 6

And the remnant … - That is, a part made light of it; treated it with silent contempt, and coolly went about their business. The others were not satisfied with that, but showed positive malignity. Some sinners seem to be well satisfied by merely neglecting religion; others proceed against it with open violence and bitter malice.

Entreated them spitefully - Used harsh and opprobrious words. Reviled and abused them. This was done because they hated and despised the king. So sinners often abuse and calumniate ministers of religion because they themselves hate God, and can in no way else show their hatred so well.

Verse 7

But when the king heard … - This doubtless refers to the Jews and to Jerusalem. They were murderers, having slain the prophets; and God was about to send forth the armies of the Romans under his providential direction, and to burn up their city. See the notes at Matthew 24.

Wroth - Angry; displeased.

Verse 9

The highways - Literally, the "exit" or "going out" of the "paths or roads." It means the square or principal street, into which a number of smaller streets enter; a place, therefore, of confluence, where many persons

would be seen, and persons of all descriptions. By this is represented the offering of the gospel to the Gentiles. They were commonly regarded among the Jews as living in highways and hedges cast out and despised.

Verse 10

Bad and good - All descriptions of people. None are good by nature; if they were they would not need the gospel; but some are worse than others, and they have special need of it. None can be saved without it.

Verse 11

A man which had not on a wedding garment - In ancient times, kings and princes were accustomed to make presents of changes of raiment to their friends and favourites, to refuse to receive which was an expression of highest contempt, Genesis 45:22; 2 Kings 10:22; Esther 6:8; Esther 8:15. It was, of course, expected that such garments would be worn when they came into the presence of the benefactor. The garments worn on festival occasions were chiefly long white robes, and it was the custom of the person who made the feast to prepare such robes to be worn by the guests. This renders the conduct of this man more inexcusable. He came in his common and ordinary dress, as he was taken from the highway: and though he had not a garment of his own suitable for the occasion, yet one had been provided for him, if he had applied for it. His not doing it was expressive of the highest disrespect for the king. This beautifully represents the conduct of the hypocrite in the church. A garment of salvation might be his, performed by the hands of the Saviour, and dyed in his blood; but the hypocrite chooses the filthy rags of his own righteousness, and thus offers the highest contempt for that provided in the gospel. He is to blame, not for being invited - not for coming, if he would come, for he is freely invited but for offering the highest contempt to the King of Zion in presenting himself with all his filth and rags, and in refusing to be saved in the way provided in the gospel.

Verse 12

Friend - Rather, "companions." The word does not imply friendship.

He was speechless - He had no excuse. So it will be with all hypocrites.

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Verse 13

Cast him into outer darkness - See the notes at Matthew 8:12. This, without doubt, refers to the future punishment of the hypocrite, Matthew 23:23-33; Matthew 24:51.

Verse 14

Many are called, but few are chosen - Our Saviour often uses this expression. It was probably proverbial. The Jews had been called, but few of them had been chosen to life. The great mass of the nation was wicked, and they showed by their lives that they were not chosen to salvation. The Gentiles also were invited to be saved, Isaiah 45:22. Nation after nation has been called; but few, few have yet showed that they were real Christians, the elect of God. It is also true that many who are in the church may prove to be without the wedding garment, and show at last that they were not the chosen of God. This remark in the 14th verse is the inference from the "whole parable," and not of the part about the man without the wedding garment. It does not mean, therefore, that the great mass in the church are simply called and not chosen, or are hypocrites; but the great mass in "the human family," in the time of Christ, who had been "called," had rejected the mercy of God.

Verses 15-22

The Pharisees and Herodians endeavor to entangle Jesus - This narrative is also found in Mark 12:12-17; Luke 20:20-26.

Matthew 22:15

Then went the Pharisees - See the notes at Matthew 3:7.

How they might entangle him - To entangle means to "ensnare," as birds are taken by a net. This is done secretly, by leading them within the compass of the net and then suddenly springing it over them. So to entangle is artfully to lay a plan for enticing; to beguile by proposing a question, and by leading, if possible, to an incautious answer. This was what the Pharisees and Herodians endeavored to do in regard to Jesus.

In his talk - The word "his" is supplied by the translators, perhaps improperly. It means "in conversations," or by "talking" with him; not alluding to anything that he had before said.

Matthew 22:16

The Herodians - It is not certainly known who these were.

It is probable that they took their name from Herod the Great. Perhaps they were first a political party, and were then distinguished for holding some of the special opinions of Herod. Dr. Prideaux thinks that those opinions referred to two things. The first respected subjection to a foreign power. The law of Moses was, that a "stranger should not be set over the Jews as a king," Deuteronomy 17:15. Herod, who had received the

kingdom of Judea by appointment of the Romans, maintained that the law of Moses referred only to a voluntary choice of a king, and did not refer to a necessary submission where they had been overpowered by force. His followers supposed, therefore, that it was lawful in such cases to pay tribute to a foreign prince. This opinion was, however, extensively unpopular among the Jews, and particularly the Pharisees, who looked upon it as a violation of their law, and regarded all the acts growing out of it as oppressive. Hence, the difficulty of the question proposed by them. Whatever way he decided, they supposed he would be involved in difficulty. If he should say it was not lawful, the Herodians were ready to accuse him as being an enemy of Caesar; if he said it was lawful, the Pharisees were ready to accuse him to the people of holding an opinion extremely unpopular among them, and as being an enemy of their rights. The other opinion of Herod, which they seem to have followed, was, that when a people were subjugated by a foreign force, it was right to adopt the rites and customs of their religion. This was what was meant by the "leaven of Herod," Mark 8:15. The Herodians and Sadducees seem on most questions to have been united. Compare Matthew 16:6; Mark 8:15.

We know that thou art true - A hypocritical compliment, not believed by them, but artfully said, as compliments often are, to conceal their true design. "Neither carest thou for any man." That is, thou art an independent teacher, delivering your sentiments without regard to the fear or favor of man. This was true, and probably they believed this. Whatever else they might believe about him, they had no reason to doubt that he delivered his sentiments openly and freely.

For thou regardest not the person of men - Thou art not partial. Thou wilt decide according to truth, and not from any bias toward either party. To regard the person, or to respect the person, is in the Bible uniformly used to denote partiality, or being influenced in a decision, not by truth, but by previous attachment to a "person," or to one of the parties by friendship, or bias, or prejudice, Leviticus 19:15; Jude 1:16; Deuteronomy 16:19; 2 Samuel 14:14; Acts 10:34; James 2:1, James 2:3, James 2:9; 1 Peter 1:17.

Matthew 22:17

Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar? - Tribute was the tax paid to the Roman government.

Caesar - The Roman emperor.

The name Caesar, after the time of Julius Caesar, became common to all the emperors, as Pharaoh was the common name of all the kings of Egypt. The "Caesar" who reigned at this time was Tiberius - a man distinguished for the grossest vices and most disgusting and debasing sensuality.

Matthew 22:18

Jesus perceived their wickedness - This must have been done by his power of searching the heart, and proves that he was omniscient.

No more man has the power of discerning the motives of others.

Tempt ye me - Try me, or endeavor to lead me into difficulty by an insidious question.

Hypocrites - Dissemblers. Professing to be candid inquirers, when their only object was to lead into difficulty. See the notes at Matthew 6:2.

Matthew 22:19

The tribute-money - The money in which the tribute was paid.

This was a Roman coin. The tribute for the temple service was paid in the Jewish shekel; that for the Roman government in foreign coin. Their having that coin about them, and using it, was proof that they themselves held it lawful to pay the tribute; and their pretensions, therefore, were mere hypocrisy.

A penny - A Roman denarius, worth about 14 cents =7d (circa 1880's).

Matthew 22:20

This image - The likeness of the reigning prance was usually struck on the coins.

Superscription - The name and titles of the emperor.

Matthew 22:21

Render, therefore, to Caesar … - Caesar's image and name on the coin proved that it was his.

It was proper, therefore, to give it back to him when he called for it. But while this was done, Jesus took occasion to charge them, also, to give to God what he claimed. This may mean either,

1.The annual tribute due to the temple service, implying that paying tribute to Caesar did not free them from the obligation to do that; or,

2.That they should give their hearts, lives, property, and influence all to God, as his due.

Matthew 22:22

They marveled - They had been foiled in their attempt.

Though he had apparently decided in favor of the Herodians, yet his answer confounded both parties, and wholly prevented the use which they intended to make of it. It was so wise; it so clearly detected their wickedness and foiled their aim, that they were confounded, and retired covered with shame.

Verses 23-33

Conversation of Jesus with the Sadducees respecting the resurrection - See also Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-38.

Matthew 22:23

The same day came the Sadducees - For an account of the Sadducees, see the notes at Matthew 3:7.

No resurrection - The word "resurrection" usually means the raising up the "body" to life after it is dead, John 11:24; John 5:29; 1 Corinthians 15:22. But the Sadducees not only denied this, but also a future state, and the separate existence of the soul after death altogether, as well as the existence of angels and spirits, Acts 23:8. Both these doctrines have commonly stood or fallen together, and the answer of our Saviour respects both, though it more distinctly refers "to the separate existence of the soul, and to a future state of rewards and punishments," than to the resurrection of the body.

Matthew 22:24

Saying, Master, Moses said … - Deuteronomy 25:5-6. This law was given by Moses in order to keep the families and tribes of the Israelites distinct, and to perpetuate them.

Raise up seed unto his brother - That is, the children shall be reckoned in the genealogy of the deceased brother; or, to all civil purposes, shall be considered as his.

Matthew 22:25-28

There were with us seven brethren - It is probable that they stated a case as difficult as possible; and though no such case might have occurred, yet it was supposable, and in their view it presented a real difficulty.

The difficulty arose from the fact, that they supposed that, substantially, the same state of things must take place in the other world as here; that if there is such a world, husbands and wives must be there reunited; and they professed not to be able to see how one woman could be the wife of seven men.

Matthew 22:29

Ye do err, not knowing … - They had taken a wrong view of the doctrine of the resurrection.

It was not taught that people would marry there. The "Scriptures," here, mean the books of the Old Testament. By appealing to them, Jesus showed that the doctrine of the future state was there, and that the Sadducees should have believed it as it was, and not have added the absurd doctrine to it that people must live there as they do here. The way in which the enemies of the truth often attempt to make a doctrine of the Bible ridiculous is by adding to it, and then calling it absurd. The reason why the Saviour produced a passage from the books of Moses Matthew 22:32 was that they had also appealed to his writings, Matthew 22:24. Other places of the Old Testament, in fact, asserted the doctrine more clearly Daniel 12:2; Isaiah 26:19, but he wished to meet them on their own ground. None of those scriptures asserted that people would live there as they do here, and therefore their reasoning was false.

Nor the power of God - They probably denied, as many have done since, that God could gather the scattered dust of the dead and remould it into a body. On this ground they affirmed that the doctrine could not be true - opposing reason to revelation, and supposing that infinite power could not reorganize a body that it had at first organized, and raise a body from its own dust which it had at first raised from nothing.

Matthew 22:30

Neither marry … - This was a full answer to the objections of the Sadducees.

But are as the angels of God - That is, in the manner of their conversation; in regard to marriage and the mode of their existence.

Luke adds that they shall be "equal with the angels." That is, they shall be elevated above the circumstances of mortality, and live in a manner and in a kind of conversation similar to that of the angels. It does not imply that they shall be equal in intellect, but only "in the circumstances of their existence," as that is distinguished from the way in which mortals live. He also adds, "Neither do they die any more, but are the children of God; being the children of the resurrection," or being accounted worthy to be raised up to life, and therefore "sons of God raised up to him."

Matthew 22:31, Matthew 22:32

As touching … - That is, in proof that the dead are raised.

The passage which he quotes is recorded in Exodus 3:6, Exodus 3:15, This was at the burning bush (Mark and Luke). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been dead for a long time when Moses spoke this - Abraham for 329 years, Isaac for 224 years, and Jacob for 198 years - yet God spake then as being still "their God." They must, therefore, be still somewhere living, for God is not the God of the dead; that is, it is absurd to say that God rules over those who are "extinct or annihilated," but he is the God only of those who have an existence. Luke adds, "all live unto him." That is, all the righteous dead, all of whom he can be properly called their God, live unto his glory. This passage does not prove directly that the dead "body" would be raised, but only by consequence. It proves that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had an existence then, or that their souls were alive. This the Sadducees denied Acts 23:8, and this was the main point in dispute. If this was admitted - if there was a state of rewards and punishments - then it would easily follow that the bodies of the dead would be raised.

Verses 34-40

Jesus converses with a Pharisee respecting the law - See also Mark 12:28-34.

Matthew 22:34

The Pharisees … were gathered together - That is, either to rejoice that their great rivals, the Sadducees, had been so completely silenced, or to lay a new plan for ensnaring him, or perhaps both. They would rejoice that the Sadducees had been confounded, but they would not be the less desirous to involve Jesus in difficulty. They therefore endeavored, probably, to find the most difficult question in dispute among themselves, and proposed it to him to perplex him.

Matthew 22:35

A lawyer - This does nor mean one that "practiced" law, as among us, but one learned or skilled in the law of Moses.

Mark calls him "one of the scribes." This means the same thing. The scribes were men of learning - particularly men skilled in the law of Moses. This lawyer had heard Jesus reasoning with the Sadducees, and perceived that he had put them to silence. He was evidently supposed by the Pharisees to be better qualified to hold a debate with him than the Sadducees were, and they had therefore put him forward for that purpose. This man was probably of a candid turn of mind; perhaps willing to know the truth, and

not entering very fully into their malicious intentions, but acting as their agent, Mark 12:34.

Tempting him - Trying him. Proposing a question to test his knowledge of the law.

Matthew 22:36

Which is the great commandment? - That is, the "greatest" commandment, or the one most important.

The Jews are said to have divided the law into "greater and smaller" commandments. Which was of the greatest importance they had not determined. Some held that it was the law respecting sacrifice; others, that respecting circumcision; others, that pertaining to washings and purifying, etc.

The law - The word "law" has a great variety of significations; it means, commonly, in the Bible, as it does here, "the law given by Moses," recorded in the first five books of the Bible.

Matthew 22:37

Jesus said unto him … - Mark says that he introduced this by referring to the doctrine of the unity of God "Hear, O Israel! the Lord thy God is one Lord" - taken from Deuteronomy 6:4. This was said, probably, because all true obedience depends on the correct knowledge of God. None can keep his commandments who are not acquainted with his nature, his perfections, and his right to command,

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart - The meaning of this is, thou shalt love him with all thy faculties or powers. Thou shalt love him supremely, more than all other beings and things, and with all the ardor possible. To love him with all the heart is to fix the affections supremely on him, more strongly than on anything else, and to be willing to give up all that we hold dear at his command,

With all thy soul - Or, with all thy "life." This means, to be willing to give up the life to him, and to devote it all to his service; to live to him, and to be willing to die at his command,

With all thy mind - To submit the "intellect" to his will. To love his law and gospel more than we do the decisions of our own minds. To be willing to submit all our faculties to his teaching and guidance, and to devote to him all our intellectual attainments and all the results of our intellectual efforts.

"With all thy strength" (Mark). With all the faculties of soul and body. To labor and toil for his glory, and to make that the great object of all our efforts.

Matthew 22:38

This the first tend great commandment - This commandment is found in Deuteronomy 6:5. It is the "first" and greatest of all; first, not in "order of time," but of "importance; greatest" in dignity, in excellence, in extent, and duration. It is the fountain of all others. All beings are to be loved according to their excellence. As God is the most excellent and glorious of all beings, he is to be loved supremely. If he is loved aright, then our affections will be directed toward all created objects in a right manner.

Matthew 22:39

The second is like unto it - Leviticus 19:18. That is, it resembles it in importance, dignity, purity, and usefulness. This had not been asked by the lawyer, but Jesus took occasion to acquaint him with the substance of the whole law. For its meaning, see the notes at Matthew 19:19. Compare Romans 13:9. Mark adds, "there is none other commandment greater than these." None respecting circumcision or sacrifice is greater. They are the fountain of all.

Matthew 22:40

On these two commandments hang … - That is, these comprehend the substance of what Moses in the law and what the prophets have spoken.

What they have said has been to endeavor to win people to love God and to love each other. Love to God and man comprehends the whole of religion, and to produce this has been the design of Moses, the prophets, the Saviour, and the apostles.

Mark Mark 12:32-34 adds that the scribe said, "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth;" and that he assented to what Jesus had said, and admitted that to love God and man in this manner was more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices; that is, was of more value or importance. Jesus, in reply, told him that he was "not far from the kingdom of heaven;" in other words, by his reply he had shown that he was almost prepared to receive the doctrines of the gospel. He had evinced such an acquaintance with the law as to prove that he was nearly prepared to receive the teachings of Jesus. See the notes at Matthew 3:2.

Mark and Luke say that this had such an effect that no man after that durst ask him any question, Luke 20:40; Mark 12:34. This does not mean that none of his disciples durst ask him any question, but none of the Jews. He had confounded all their sects - the Herodians Matthew 22:15-22; the Sadducees Matthew 22:23-33; and, last, the Pharisees Matthew 22:34-40. Finding themselves unable to confound him, everyone gave up the attempt at last.

Verses 41-46

Jesus proposes a question concerning the Messiah - See also Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44.

Matthew 22:41

While the Pharisees … - Jesus, having confounded the great sects of the Jews, proceeds, in his turn, to propose to them a question for their solution.

This was done, not for the purpose of vain parade and triumph, but:

1.to show them how ignorant they were of their prophecies.

2.to humble them in view of their ignorance.

3.to bring to their attention the true doctrine respecting the Messiah - his being possessed of a character superior to that of David, the most mighty king of Israel - being his Lord, at the same time that he was his descendant.

Matthew 22:42

What think ye of Christ? - What are your views respecting the Messiah, or "the Christ," especially respecting his "genealogy?" He did not ask them their mews respecting him in general, but only respecting his ancestry.

The article should have been retained in the translation - the Christ or the Messiah. He did not ask them their opinion respecting himself, his person, and work, as would seem in our translation, but their views respecting the Messiah whom they expected.

Whose son is he? - Whose "descendant?" See the notes at Matthew 1:1.

The son of David - The descendant of David, according to the promise.

Matthew 22:43

How then … - How is this doctrine that he is "descended" from David consistent with what David says when he calls him "lord?" How can your opinion be reconciled with that? That declaration of David is recorded in

Psalm 110:1. A "lord" or master is a superior. The word here does not necessarily imply divinity, but only superiority. David calls him his superior, his lord, his master, his lawgiver, and expresses his willingness to obey him. If the Messiah was to be merely a descendant of David, as other men descended from parents if he was to have a human nature only if he did not exist when David wrote - with what propriety could he, then, call him his lord?

In spirit - By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As a prophet, Acts 2:30; Acts 1:16; 2 Samuel 23:2.

Matthew 22:44

The Lord said … - This is the language of David.

"Yahweh said to "my" lord "the Messiah" - sit thou," etc. This was a prediction respecting the exaltation of Christ. To be raised to the right hand of a king was significant of favor, trust, and power. See the notes at Matthew 20:21. This was done respecting Christ, Mark 16:19; Acts 7:55; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 8:1; Hebrews 10:12. "Thine enemies thy footstool." A footstool is that which is under the feet when we are sitting implying that we have it under subjection, or at our control. So, Christ shall put all enemies under his feet - all his spiritual foes - all that rise up against him, Psalm 2:9, Psalm 2:12; Hebrews 10:13; 1 Corinthians 15:25.

Matthew 22:45

If David … - If he was then David's lord if he was his superior - if he had an existence at that time how could he be descended from him? They could not answer him.

Nor is there any way of answering the question but by the admission that the Messiah was divine as well as human; that he had an existence at the time of David, and was his lord and master, his God I and king, and that as man he was descended from him.

Remarks On Matthew 22:3.

2. If they perish, they only will be to blame. The offer was freely made, the salvation was provided, and the only reason why they were not saved was that they would not come, Matthew 22:3.

3. Attention to the affairs of this life, the love of the world, will shut many out of the kingdom of heaven, Matthew 22:5. Some attention to those

things is necessary; but such a devotion to these things as to lead to the loss of the soul never can be right.

4. It is treating God ungratefully to reject his gospel, Matthew 22:3-5. He has sent his Son to die for us; he has entreated us to be saved; he has followed us with mercies; and to reject all these, and refuse to be saved, is to treat him with contempt, as well as to overwhelm ourselves in condemnation. "Man has no right to be damned." He is under the most solemn obligations to be "saved;" and after what God has done for us, deep and dreadful woe will await us if we are so foolish and wicked as to be lost.

5. Many of the poor and needy will be saved, while the haughty and rich will perish forever, Matthew 22:9-10.

6. Let those who make a profession of religion look often to the great day when Christ will search them, Matthew 22:11. There is a day coming that will try us. His eye will be upon us. He will read our hearts, and see whether we are clothed in his righteousness, or only the filthy rags of our own.

7. A profession of religion will not save us, Matthew 22:11-13. It is foolish to deceive ourselves. Nothing but genuine piety, true faith in Jesus, and a holy life, will save us. God asks not profession merely, but the heart. He asks not mockery, but sincerity; not pretension, but reality.

8. The hypocrite must perish, Matthew 22:13. It is right that he should perish. He knew his Master's will and would not do it. He must perish with an awful condemnation. No man sins amid so much light, none with so high a hand. No sin is so awful as to attempt to deceive God, and to palm pretensions on him for reality.

9. Pretended friends are sometimes more dangerous than avowed enemies, Matthew 22:16. Pretended friendship is often for the purpose of decoying us into evil. It throws us off our guard, and we are more easily taken.

10. The truth is often admitted by wicked people from mere hypocrisy, Matthew 22:16. It is only for the purpose of deceiving others and leading them into sin.

11. Wicked people can decide correctly on the character of a public preacher, Matthew 22:16. They often admit his claim in words, but for an evil purpose.

12. It may be right for us sometimes to attend to artful and captious questions, Matthew 22:18. It may afford opportunity to do good; to confound the wicked and to inculcate truth.

13. No cunning can overreach God, Matthew 22:18. He knows the heart, and he perceives the wickedness of all who attempt to deceive him.

14. It is right, and it is our duty to obey the law of the land, when it does not contravene the law of God, Matthew 22:21. "Conscientious Christians make the best citizens." Compare the notes at Romans 13:1-7.

15. We should give honor to civil rulers, Matthew 22:21, We should pay respect to the office, whatever may be the character of the ruler. We should speak well of it, not abuse it; yield proper obedience to its requirements, and not rebel against it. Men may be wicked who hold an office, but the office is ordained by God Romans 13:1-2; and for the sake of the office we must be patient, meek, submissive, and obedient, Matthew 23:3.

16. Yet we are to obey civil rulers no further than their commands are consistent with the law of God, Matthew 22:21. God is to be obeyed rather than man; and when a civil ruler commands a thing contrary to the laws of the Bible and the dictates of our consciences, we may, we must resist it, Acts 5:29.

17. The objections of people to the doctrines of the Bible are often founded on ignorance of what those doctrines are, and distrust of the power of God, Matthew 22:29. People often set up a notion which they call a doctrine of the Bible, and then fight a shadow, and think they have confuted

the truth of God, while that truth was, in fact, untouched. It is a totally different thing from what they supposed.

18. When people attack a doctrine they should be certain that they under stand it, Matthew 22:29. The Sadducees did not understand the true doctrine of the resurrection. The inquiry which they should have made was whether they had correct views of it. This is the inquiry which people ought always first to make when they approach a doctrine of the Bible.

19. We learn the glory and happiness of the state after the resurrection, Matthew 22:30 (Luke). We shall be in some respects equal to the angels. Like them we shall be free from sin, suffering, and death. Like them we shall be complete in knowledge and felicity. Like them we shall be secure of eternal joy. Happy are those - the good of all the earth who shall have part in that resurrection of the just!

20. The dead shall be raised, Matthew 22:31-32. There is a state of happiness hereafter. This the gospel has revealed; and it is the most consoling and cheering truth that has ever beamed upon the heart of man.

21. Our pious friends that have died are now happy, Matthew 22:31-32. They are with God. God is still their God. A father, or mother, or sister, or friend that may have left us is there in perfect felicity. We should rejoice at that, nor should we wish them hack to the poor comforts and the many sufferings of this world.

22. It is our duty to love God with all the heart. Matthew 22:37. No half, formal, cold, and selfish affection comes up to the requirement. It must be full, entire, absolute. It must be pleasure in all his attributes - his justice, his power, his purposes, as well as his mercy and his goodness. God is to be loved just as he is. If man is not pleased with his whole character he is not pleased with him at all.

23. God is worthy of love. He is perfect. He should be loved early in life. Children should love him more than they do father, or mother, or friends. Their first affections should he fixed on God, and fixed on him supremely, until they die.

24. We must love our neighbor, Matthew 22:39. We must do to all as we would have them do to us. This is the law and the prophets: this is the way of justice, of peace, of kindness, of charity, of benevolence. If all men obeyed these laws, the earth would be a paradise, and man would taste the bliss of heaven here below.

25. We may ask here of each one, What think you of Christ? Matthew 22:42. What do you think of the necessity of a Saviour? What do you think of his nature? Is he God as well as man, or do you regard him only as a man? What do you think of his character? Do you see him to be lovely and pure, and is he such as to draw forth the warm affections of your heart? What do you think of salvation by him? Do you depend on him, and trust in him, and expect heaven only on the ground of his merits? Or, do you reject and despise him, and would you have joined in putting him to death? Nothing, more certainly tests the character, and shows what the feelings are, than the views which we entertain of Christ. Here error is fatal error; but he who has just views of the Redeemer, and right feelings toward him, is sure of salvation.

26. We have in this chapter an illustrious specimen of the wisdom of Jesus. He successfully met the snares of his mighty and crafty foes, and with infinite ease confounded them. No art of man could confound him. Never was wisdom more clear, never more triumphant.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 23

Verse 2

Scribes and Pharisees - See the notes at Matthew 3:7.

Moses‘ seat - Moses was the great legislator of the Jews. By him the Law was given. The office of explaining that Law among the Jews devolved on the scribes and Pharisees. In the synagogues they sat while expounding the Law, and rose when they read it. By “sitting in the seat of Moses” we are to understand authority to teach the Law; or, as he taught the nation by giving the Law, so they taught it by explaining it.

Verse 3

All, therefore, whatsoever … - That is, all that they teach that is consistent with the Law of Moses - all the commands of Moses which they read to you and properly explain. The word “all” could not be taken without such a restriction, for Christ himself accuses them of teaching many things contrary to that law, and of making it void by their traditions, Matthew 15:1-6.

They say, and do not - The interpretation which they give to the law is in the main correct, but their lives do not correspond with their teaching. It is not the duty of people to imitate their teachers unless their lives are pure; they are to obey the law of God, and not to frame their lives by the example of evil people.

Verse 4

They bind heavy burdens … - This phrase is derived from the custom of loading animals. The load or burden is bound up and then laid on the beast. So the Pharisees appointed weighty burdens, or grievous and heavy precepts, and insisted that the people should obey them, though they lent no assistance. The “heavy burdens” refer not here to the traditions and foolish customs of the Pharisees, for Jesus would not command the people to observe them; but they clearly mean the ceremonies and rights appointed by Moses, which Peter says neither “they nor their fathers were able to bear,” Acts 15:10. Those rites were numerous, expensive, requiring much time, much property, and laborious. The Pharisees were rigid in requiring that all the people should pay the taxes, give of their property, comply with every part of the law with the utmost rigor, yet they indulged themselves, and bore as little of the expense and trouble as possible; so that, where they

could avoid it, they would not lend the least aid to the people in the toils and expense of their religious rites.

With one of their fingers - In the least degree. They will not render the least aid.

Verse 5

Their phylacteries - The word "phylactery" comes from a word signifying to keep, preserve, or guard. The name was given because phylacteries were worn as amulets or charms, and were supposed to defend or preserve those who wore them from evil. They were small slips of parchment or vellum, on which were written certain portions of the Old Testament. The practice of using phylacteries was founded on a literal interpretation of that passage where God commands the Hebrews to have the law as a sign on their foreheads, and as frontlets between their eyes, Exodus 13:16; compare Proverbs 3:1, Proverbs 3:3; Proverbs 6:21. One kind of phylactery was called a "frontlet," and was composed of four pieces of parchment, on the first of which was written Exodus 12:2-10; on the second, Exodus 13:11-21; on the third, Deuteronomy 6:4-9; and on the fourth, Deuteronomy 11:18-21. These pieces of parchment, thus inscribed, they enclosed in a piece of tough skin, making a square, on one side of which is placed the Hebrew letter shin (שׁ sh) and bound them round their foreheads with a thong or ribbon when they went to the synagogue. Some wore them evening and morning; others only at the morning prayer.

As the token upon the hand was required, as well as the frontlets between the eyes Exodus 13:16, the Jews made two rolls of parchment, written in square letters, with an ink made on purpose, and with much care. They were rolled up to a point, and enclosed in a sort of case of black calf-skin. They were put upon a square bit of the same leather, whence hung a thong of the same, of about a finger in breadth, and about 2 feet long. These rolls were placed at the bending of the left arm, and after one end of the thong had been made into a little knot in the form of the Hebrew letter yod(י y), it was wound about the arm in a spiral line, which ended at the top of the middle finger. The Pharisees enlarged them, or made them wider than other people, either that they might make the letters larger or write more on them, to show, as they supposed, that they had special reverence for the law.

Enlarge the borders of their garments - This refers to the loose threads which were attached to the borders of the outer garment as a fringe. This fringe was commanded in order to distinguish them from ether nations,

and that they might remember to keep the commandments of God, Numbers 15:38-40; Deuteronomy 22:12. The Pharisees made them broader than other people wore them, to show that they had special respect for the law.

Verse 6

The uppermost rooms at feasts - The word "rooms," here, by no means expresses the meaning of the original. It would be correctly rendered the uppermost "places or couches" at feasts. To understand this, it is necessary to remark that the custom among the Jews was not to eat sitting, as we do, but reclining on couches. The table was made by "three" tables, raised like ours and placed so as to form a square, with a clear space in the midst, and one end quite open. Around these tables were placed cushions capable of containing three or more persons. On these the guests reclined, leaning on their left side, with their feet extended from the table, and so lying that the head of one naturally reclined on the bosom of another. To recline near to one in this manner denoted intimacy, and was what was meant by lying "in the bosom" of another, John 13:23; Luke 16:22-23. As the feet were extended "from" the table, and as they reclined instead of sitting, it was easy to approach the feet behind, and even unperceived. Thus, in Luke 7:37-38, while Jesus reclined in this manner, a woman that had been a sinner came to his feet "behind him," and washed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. She stood on the outside of the couches. So our Saviour washed the feet of his disciples as they reclined on a couch in this manner, John 13:4-12. Whenever we read in the New Testament of "sitting" at meals, it always means reclining in this manner, and never sitting as we do. The chief seat, or the "uppermost" one, was the middle couch at the upper end of the table. This the Pharisees loved, as a post of honor or distinction.

Chief seats in the synagogues - The seats usually occupied by the elders of the synagogue, near the pulpit. The meaning is, they love a place of distinction. See the notes at Matthew 4:23.

Verse 7

Greetings in the markets - Markets were places where multitudes of people were assembled together. They were pleased with special attention in public places, and desired that all should show them particular respect.

Greetings - Salutations. See the notes at Luke 10:4.

To be called Rabbi, Rabbi - This word literally signifies great. It was a title given to eminent teachers of the law among the Jews; a title of honor

and dignity, denoting authority and ability to teach. They were gratified with such titles, and wished it given to themselves as denoting superiority. Every time it was given to them it implied their superiority to the persons who used it, and they were fond, therefore, of hearing it often applied to them. There were three titles in use among the Jews - Rab, Rabbi, and Rabban - denoting different degrees of learning and ability, as literary degrees do among us.

Verse 8

Be not ye … - Jesus forbade his disciples to seek such titles of distinction. The reason which he gave was that he was himself their Master and Teacher, They were on a level; they were to be equal in authority; they were brethren; and they should neither covet nor receive a title which implied either an elevation of one above another, or which appeared to infringe on the absolute right of the Saviour to be their only Teacher and Master. The direction here is an express command to his disciples not to receive such a title of distinction. They were not to covet it; they were not to seek it; they were not to do anything that implied a wish or a willingness that it should be appended to their names. Everything which would tend to make a distinction among them or destroy their parity - everything which would lead the world to suppose that there were ranks and grades among them as ministers, they were to avoid. It is to be observed that the command is that they were not to receive the title - "Be not ye called Rabbi." The Saviour did not forbid them giving the title to others when it was customary or not regarded as improper (compare Acts 26:25), but they were not to receive it. It was to be unknown among them. This title corresponds with the title "Doctor of Divinity" as applied to ministers of the gospel; and, so far as I can see, the spirit of the Saviour's command is violated by the reception of such a title, as really as it would have been by their being called "Rabbi." It makes a distinction among ministers. It tends to engender pride and a sense of superiority in those who obtain it, and envy and a sense of inferiority in those who do not; and the whole spirit and tendency of it is contrary to the "simplicity that is in Christ."

Verse 9

And call no man your Father … - This does not, of course, forbid us to apply the term to our real father. Religion requires all proper honor to be shown to Him, Exodus 20:12; Matthew 15:4; Ephesians 6:1-3. But the word "father" also denotes "authority, eminence, superiority, a right to command,

and a claim to particular respect." In this sense it is used here. In this sense it belongs eminently to God, and it is not right to give it to people. Christian brethren are equal. Only God has supreme authority. He only has a right to give laws; to declare doctrines that shall bind the conscience; to punish disobedience. The Jewish teachers affected that title because they seem to have supposed that a teacher formed the man, or gave him real life, and sought, therefore, to be called father. Christ taught them that the source of all life and truth was God, and they ought not to seek or receive a title which properly belongs to him.

Verse 10

Neither be ye called masters - That is, leaders, guides, for this is the literal meaning of the word. It refers to those who go before others; who claim, therefore, the right to direct and control others. This was also a title conferred on Jewish teachers.

Neither of these commands forbids us to give proper titles of civil office to men, or to render them the honor belonging to their station, Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:7; 1 Peter 2:17. They prohibit the disciples of Jesus from seeking or receiving mere empty titles, producing distinctions among themselves, implying authority to control the opinions and conduct of others, and claiming that others should acknowledge them to be superior to them.

Verse 11-12

See the notes at Matthew 20:26.

He that shall humble himself … - God will exalt or honor him that is humble, and that seeks a lowly place among people. That is true religion, and God will reward it.

Verse 13

Woe unto you - You are guilty, and punishment will come upon you. Jesus proceeds to state wherein they were guilty. This most eloquent, most appalling, and most terrible of all discourses ever delivered to mortals was pronounced in the temple, in the presence of multitudes. Never was there more faithful dealing, more terrible reproof, more profound knowledge of the workings of hypocrisy, or more skill in detecting the concealments of sin. This was the last of the Saviour‘s public discourses; and it is a most impressive summary of all that he had ever said, or that he had to say, of a wicked and hypocritical generation.

Scribes and Pharisees - See the notes at Matthew 3:7.

Hypocrites - Note, Matthew 6:2.

Ye shut up the kingdom of heaven - Note, Matthew 3:2. They shut it up by teaching false doctrines respecting the Messiah; by binding the people to an observance of their traditions; by opposing Jesus, and attempting to convince the people that he was an impostor, thus preventing many from becoming his followers. Many were ready to embrace him as the Messiah, and were about entering into the kingdom of heaven - that is, the church - but they prevented it. Luke says Luke 11:52 they had taken away the key of knowledge, and thus prevented their entering in - that is, they had taken away the right interpretation of the ancient prophecies respecting the Messiah, and thus had done all that they could to prevent the people from receiving Jesus as their Redeemer.

Verse 14

Devour widows‘ houses - The word “houses” is used here to denote “property” or possessions of any kind. You take away or get possession of the property of widows by improper arts and pretences. This was done in two ways:

1. They claimed a very exact knowledge of the law and a perfect observance of it. They pretended to extraordinary justice toward the poor, friendship for the distressed, and willingness to aid those who were in embarrassed circumstances. They thus induced “widows” and poor people to commit the management of their property to them as guardians and executors, and then took advantage of them and defrauded them.

2. They put on the appearance of great sanctity, and induced many conscientious but credulous women to give them much, under pretence of devoting it to religious purposes.

Long prayer - Their prayers are said to have been often three hours in length. One rule among them, says Lightfoot, was to meditate an hour, then pray an hour, and then meditate another hour - all of which was included in their “long prayers or devotions.”

Damnation - Condemnation. The word here probably refers to future punishment. It does not always, however. It means, frequently, no more than “condemnation,” or the divine disapprobation of a certain course of conduct, as in 1 Corinthians 11:29; “He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh “damnation” to himself;” that is, he that eateth and

drinketh in an unworthy manner disorderly, not with reverence - is guilty, and his conduct will be disapproved or condemned by God referring solely to the impropriety of the manner of partaking of the Lord‘s supper, and not at all to the worthiness or unworthiness of the person. See the notes at that place. Compare Romans 14:23.

For a pretence - For appearance or show; in order that they might the better defraud poor people. They would not be condemned for “making” long prayers, but because they did it with an evil design. Public prayers should, however, be short, and always to the point. A man praying in a Sunday school should pray for the school, and, usually, not for everything else.

Verse 15

Ye compass sea and land - You take every means, spare no pains, to gain proselytes.

Proselyte - One that comes over from a foreign nation, religion, or sect to us - a convert. Among the Jews there were two kinds of proselytes:

1.“Proselytes of righteousness,” or those who wholly and fully embraced the Jewish religion, who were baptized, who were circumcised, and who conformed to all the rites of the Mosaic institutions.

2.“Proselytes of the gate,” or those who approved of the Jewish religion, renounced the pagan superstitions, and conformed to some of the rites of the Jews, but were not circumcised or baptized.

Twofold more the child of hell - That is, twice as bad. To be a child of hell was a Hebrew phrase, signifying to be deserving of hell, to be awfully wicked. Compare the notes at Matthew 1:1. The Jewish writers themselves say that the proselytes were “scabs of Israel,” and “hindered the coming of the Messiah” by their great wickedness. The Pharisees gained them either to swell their own numbers, or to make gain by extorting their money under various pretences; and when they had accomplished that, they took no pains to instruct them or to restrain them. They had renounced their superstition which had before somewhat restrained them, but the Pharisees had given them no religion in its place to restrain them, and they were consequently left to the full indulgence of their vices.

Verse 16

Whosoever shall swear … - See the notes at Matthew 5:33-37.

The temple - See the notes at Matthew 21:12.

It is nothing - It amounts to nothing - it is not binding.

The gold of the temple - Either the golden vessels in the temple - the candlestick, etc.; or the gold with which the doors and other parts of the temple were covered; or the gold in the treasury. This, it seems, they considered far more sacred than any other part of the temple, but it is not known why.

He is a debtor - He is bound to keep his oath. He is guilty if he violates it.

Verse 17

The temple that sanctifieth the gold - To sanctify is to make holy. The gold had no holiness but what it derived from the temple. If in any other place, it would be no more holy than any other gold. It was foolish, then, to suppose that that was more holy than the temple, from which it received all the sanctity which it possessed.

Verse 18

The altar - The altar of burnt-offerings, in the court of the priests. See the notes at Matthew 21:12. It was made of brass, about 30 feet in length and breadth, and 15 feet in height, 2 Chronicles 4:1. On this altar were offered all the beasts and bloody oblations of the temple.

The gift that is upon it - The gift or offering made to God, so called because it was devoted or "given" to him. The gift upon this altar was always beasts and birds.

Verse 19

The altar that sanctifieth the gift - The altar, dedicated to God, gave all the value or holiness to the offering, and must therefore be the greatest or of the most importance. If, therefore, either bound to the fulfillment of an oath, it must be the altar.

Verse 21

Him that dwelleth therein - That is, God. The temple was his house, his dwelling. In the first, or Solomon's temple, he dwelt between the cherubims in the most holy place. He manifested himself there by a visible symbol, in the form of a cloud resting on the mercy-seat, 1 Kings 8:10, 1 Kings 8:13; Psalm 80:1.

Verse 22

The throne of God - Heaven is his throne, Matthew 5:34. It is so called as being the place where he sits in glory. Jesus says, here, that all who swear at all do, in fact, swear by God, or the oath is good for nothing. To swear by an altar, a gift, or a temple is of no force unless it be meant to

appeal to God himself. The essential thing in an oath is calling God to witness our sincerity. If a real oath is taken, therefore, God is appealed to. If not it is foolish and wicked to swear by anything else.

Verse 23

Ye pay tithe - A tenth part. The law required the Jews to devote a tenth part of all their property to the support of the Levites, Numbers 18:20-24. Another tenth part they paid for the service of the sanctuary, commonly in cattle or grain, but where they lived far from the place of worship they changed it to money, Deuteronomy 14:22-24. Besides these, there was to be every third year a tenth part given to the poor, to be eaten at their own dwellings Deuteronomy 14:28-29; so that nearly one-third of the property of the Jews was devoted to religious services by law. This was besides the voluntary offerings which they made. How much more mild and gentle are the laws of Christianity under which we live!

Mint - A garden herb, in the original so called from its agreeable flavor. It was used to sprinkle the floors of their houses and synagogues to produce a pleasant fragrance.

Anise - Known commonly among us as "dill." It has a fine aromatic smell, and is used by confectioners and perfumers.

Cummin - A plant of the same genus, like "fennel," and used for similar purposes. These were all herbs of little value. The law of Moses said that they should pay tithes of the "fruits of the earth," Deuteronomy 14:22. It said nothing, however, about herbs. It was a question whether these should be tithed. The Pharisees maintained, in their extraordinary strictness, that they ought. Our Saviour says that they were precise in doing small matters which the law had not expressly commanded, while they omitted the greater things which it had enjoined.

Judgment - Justice to others, as magistrates, neighbors, citizens. Giving to all their just dues.

Mercy - Compassion and kindness to the poor and miserable.

Faith - Piety toward God; confidence in him. Faith in God here means that we are to give to him what is his due; as mercy and justice mean to do to people, in all circumstances, what is right toward them.

These ought ye to have done - Attention to even the smallest points of the law of God is proper, but it should not interfere with the "higher" and more important parts of that law.

Verse 24

Which strain at a gnat … - This is a proverb. There is, however, a mistranslation or misprint here, which makes the verse unmeaning. "To strain" at a "gnat" conveys no sense. It should have been to strain out a gnat; and so it is printed in some of the earlier versions, and so it was undoubtedly rendered by the translators. The common reading is a "misprint," and should be corrected. The Greek means to "strain" out by a cloth or sieve.

A gnat - The gnat has its origin in the water; not in great rivers, but in pools and marshes In the stagnant waters they appear in the form of small "grubs" or "larvae." These larvae retain their form about three weeks, after which they turn to chrysalids, and after three or four days they pass to the form of gnats. They are then distinguished by their well-known sharp sting. It is probable that the Saviour here refers to the insect as it exists in its "grub" or "larva" form, before it appears in the form of a gnat. Water is then its element, and those who were nice in their drink would take pains to strain it out. Hence, the proverb. See Calmet's Dict., art. "Gnat." It is used here to denote a very small matter, as a camel is to denote a large object. "You Jews take great pains to avoid offence in very small matters, superstitiously observing the smallest points of the law, like a man carefully straining out the animalculae from what he drinks, while you are at no pains to avoid great sins - hypocrisy, deceit, oppression, and lust - like a man who should swallow a camel." The Arabians have a similar proverb: "He eats an elephant, and is suffocated with a gnat." He is troubled with little things, but pays no attention to great matters.

Verse 25

The cup and the platter - The drinking-cup and the dish containing food. The Pharisees were diligent in observing all the washings and obligations required by their traditions. See the notes at Mark 7:4.

Full of extortion and excess - The outside appeared well; the inside was filled with the fruit of extortion, oppression, and wickedness. The meaning is, that though they took much pains to appear well, yet they obtained a living by extortion and crime. Their cups, neat as they appeared outward, were filled, not with the fruits of honest industry, but with that which had been extorted from the poor by wicked arts. Instead of "excess," many manuscripts and editions of the Greek Testament read "wickedness."

Verse 26

Cleanse first that which is within the cup and the platter - Let them be filled with the fruits of honest industry, and then the outside and the inside will be really "clean." By this allusion to the cup and platter he taught them that it was necessary to cleanse the heart first, that the external conduct might be really pure and holy.

Verse 27

Like unto whited sepulchres - For the construction of sepulchres, see the notes at Matthew 8:28. Those tombs were annually whitewashed to prevent the people from accidentally coming in contact with them as they went up to Jerusalem. This custom is still continued. Dr. Thomson (*The Land and the Book*, vol. i. p. 148) says, "I have been in places where this is repeated very often. The graves are kept clean and white as snow, a very striking emblem of those painted hypocrites, the Pharisees, beautiful without, but full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness within." The law considered those persons unclean who had touched anything belonging to the dead, Numbers 19:16. Sepulchres were therefore often whitewashed, that they might be distinctly seen. Thus "whited," they appeared beautiful; but within they contained the bones and corrupting bodies of the dead. So the Pharisees. Their outward conduct appeared well, but their hearts were full of hypocrisy, envy, pride, lust, and malice - suitably represented by the corruption within a whited tomb.

Verse 29

Ye build the tombs of the prophets - That is, you build sepulchres or tombs ever the prophets that have been slain. This they did professedly from veneration and respect for their character. This is often done at the East at the present day, and indeed elsewhere. Among the Muslims it is a common way of showing respect for any distinguished man to build a tomb for him. By doing this, they profess respect for his character and veneration for his memory. So the Pharisees, by building tombs in this manner, professedly approved of the character and conduct of the prophets, and disapproved of the conduct of their fathers in killing them.

And garnish … - That is, adorn or ornament. This was done by rebuilding them with more taste, decorating them, and keeping them neat and clean. The original word means, also, to show any proper honor to the memory of the dead, as by speaking well of them, praying near them, or rearing synagogues near them in honor of their memory.

Verse 30

And say … - This they professed to say by rebuilding their tombs. They also, probably, publicly expressed their disapprobation of the conduct of their fathers. All this, in building and ornamenting tombs, was a profession of extraordinary piety. Our Lord showed them it was mere pretence.

Verse 31

Ye be witnesses unto yourselves - The emphasis, here, lies in the words "to yourselves." It is an appeal to their conscience. It was not by their building the tombs that they were witnesses that they were the children of those who killed the prophets; but that, in spite of all this pretence of piety, under all this cloak of profession, they knew in their consciences, and were witnesses to themselves, that it was mere hypocrisy, and that they really approved the conduct of those who slew the prophets.

Children of them … - Resembling them; approving their conduct; inheriting their feelings. See the notes at Matthew 1:1. They not only showed that they were descended from them, but that they possessed their spirit, and that, in similar circumstances, they would have done as they did.

Verse 32

Fill ye up, then … - This is a prediction of what they were about to do. He would have them act out their true spirit, and show what they were, and evince to all that they had the spirit of their fathers, Compare the notes at John 13:27. This was done be putting him to death, and persecuting the apostles.

The measure - The full amount, so as to make it complete. By your slaying me, fill up what is lacking of the iniquity of your fathers until the measure is full; until the national iniquity is complete; until as much has been committed as God can possibly bear, and then shall come upon you all this blood, and you shall be destroyed, Matthew 23:34-35.

Verse 33

Ye serpents - This name is given to them on account of their pretending to be pious, and very much devoted to God, but being secretly evil, At the heart, with all their pretensions, they were filled with evil designs, as the serpent was, Genesis 3:1-5

Generation of vipers - See the notes at Matthew 12:34.

Damnation of hell - This refers, beyond all question, to future punishment. So great was their wickedness and hypocrisy, that, if they persevered in this course, it was impossible to escape the damnation that should come on the guilty. This is the sternest language that Jesus ever used

to wicked people. But it by no means authorizes ministers to use such language to sinners now. Christ knew that this was true of them. He had an authority which none now have. It is not the province of ministers to denounce judgment, or to use severe names, least of all to do it on pretence of imitating Christ. He knew the hearts of people. We know them not. He had authority to declare certainly that those whom he addressed would be lost. We have no such authority. He addressed persons; we address characters.

Verse 34

I send unto you prophets … - Jesus doubtless refers here to the apostles, and other teachers of religion. Prophets, wise men, and scribes were the names by which the teachers of religion were known among the Jews, and he therefore used the same terms when speaking of the messengers which he would send. "I send" has the force of the future, I "will" send.

Some of them ye shall kill - As in the case of Stephen Acts 7:59 and James Acts 12:1-2.

Crucify - Punish with death on the cross. There are no cases of this mentioned; but few historical records of this age have come down to us. The Jews had not the power of crucifying, but they had power to deliver those whom they condemned to death into the hands of the Romans to do it.

Shall scourge - See the notes at Matthew 10:17. This was done, Acts 22:19-24; 2 Corinthians 11:24-25.

Persecute … - See the notes at Matthew 5:10. This was fulfilled in the case of nearly all the apostles.

Verse 35

That upon you may come … - That is, the nation is guilty. Your fathers were guilty. You have shown yourselves to be like them. You are about, by killing the Messiah and his messengers, to fill up the iniquity of the land. The patience of God is nearly exhausted, and the nation is about to be visited with signal vengeance. These national crimes deserve national judgments; and the proper judgment for all these crimes are about to come upon you in the destruction of your temple and city.

All the righteous blood - That is, all the judgments due for shedding that blood. God did not hold them guilty for what their fathers had done; but temporal judgments descend on children in consequence of the wickedness of parents, as in the case of drunken and profligate parents. A drunken

father wastes the property that his children might have possessed. A gambler reduces his children to poverty and want. An imprudent and foolish parent is the occasion of leading his sons into places of poverty, ignorance, and crime, materially affecting their character and destiny. See the notes at Romans 5:12-19. So of the Jews. The appropriate effects of their fathers' crimes were coming on the nation, and they would suffer.

Upon the earth - Upon the land of "Judea." The word is often used with this limitation. See Matthew 4:8.

Righteous Abel - Slain by Cain, his brother, Genesis 4:8.

Zacharias, son of Barachias - It is not certainly known who this was. Some have thought that it was the Zecharias whose death is recorded in 2 Chronicles 24:20-21. He is there called the son of Jehoiada; but it is known that it was common among the Jews to have two names, as Matthew is called Levi; Lebbeus, Thaddeus; and Simon, Cephas. Others have thought that Jesus referred to Zecharias the prophet, who might have been massacred by the Jews, though no account of his death is recorded. It might have been known by tradition.

Whom ye slew - Whom you, Jews, slew. Whom your nation killed.

Between the temple and the altar - Between the temple, properly so called, and the altar of burnt-offering in the court of the priests. See the plan of the temple. Matthew 21:12.

Verse 36

Upon this generation - The destruction of Jerusalem took place about forty years after this was spoken. See the next chapter.

Verse 37

O Jerusalem … - See the notes at Luke 19:41-42.

Would I have gathered - Would have protected and saved.

Thy children - Thy people.

Verse 38

Your house - The temple. The house of worship of the Jews. The chief ornament of Jerusalem.

Desolate - About to be desolate or destroyed. To be forsaken as a place of worship, and delivered into the hands of the Romans, and destroyed. See the notes at Matthew 24.

Verse 39

Ye shall not see me … - The day of your mercy is gone by. I have offered you protection and salvation, and you have rejected it. You are

about to crucify me, and your temple to be destroyed, and you, as a nation, to be given up to long and dreadful suffering. You will not see me as a merciful Saviour, offering you redemption any more, until you have borne these heavy judgments. They must come upon you, and be borne, until you would be glad to hail a deliverer, and say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed be he that comes as the Messiah, to bring deliverance. This has not been yet accomplished, but the days will come when the Jews, long cast out and rejected, will hail Jesus as the Messiah, and receive him whom their fathers killed as the merciful Saviour, Romans 11:25-32.

Remarks On Matthew 23:3.

2. We are not to copy the example of wicked people, though they are our teachers or rulers, Matthew 23:3. We are to frame our conduct by the law of God, and not by the example of people.

3. People are often very rigid in exacting of others what they fail altogether of performing themselves, Matthew 23:4.

4. We are not to seek human honors Matthew 23:8, nor to give flattering titles to others, nor to allow others to give them to us Matthew 23:9. Our highest honor is in humility, and he is most exalted who is most lowly, Matthew 23:11-12.

5. In the descriptions of the scribes and Pharisees in this chapter, we have a full-length portrait of a hypocrite.

(1) they shut up the kingdom of heaven against others, Matthew 23:13. They made great pretensions to knowledge, but they neither entered in themselves, nor suffered others.

(2) they committed the grossest iniquity under a cloak of religion, Matthew 23:14. They cheated widows out of their property, and made long prayers to hide their villainy.

(3) they showed great zeal in making proselytes, yet did it only for gain, and made them more wicked, Matthew 23:15.

(4) they taught false doctrine, and they resorted to artful contrivances to destroy the force of oaths, and to shut out the Creator from their view, Matthew 23:16-22.

(5) they were superstitious, Matthew 23:23. Small matters they were exact in; matters of real importance they cared little about.

(6) they took great pains to appear well, while they themselves knew that it was all deceit and falsehood, Matthew 23:25-28.

(7) they professed great veneration for the memory of the pious dead, while at the same time they were conscious that they really approved the conduct of those that killed them, Matthew 23:29-31.

Never, perhaps, was there a combination of more wicked feelings and hypocritical actions than among them; and never was there more profound knowledge of the human heart, and more faithfulness, than in him who tore off the mask, and showed them what they were.

6. It is amazing with what power and authority our blessed Lord reproves this wicked people. It is wonderful that they ever waited for a mock trial, and did not kill him at once. But his time was not come, and they were restrained, and not buffered to act out the fury of their mad passions.

7. Jesus pities dying sinners, Matthew 23:37. He seeks their salvation. He pleads with them to be saved. He would gather them to him, if they would come. The most hardened, even like the sinners of Jerusalem, he would save if they would come to him. But they will not. They turn from him, and tread the road to death.

8. The reason why the wicked are not saved is their own obstinacy. They choose not to be saved, and they die. If they will not come to Christ, it is right that they should die. If they do not come, they must die.

9. The sinner will be destroyed, Matthew 23:38. The day will come when the mercy of God will be clean gone forever, and the forbearance of

God exhausted, and then the sinner must perish. When once God has given him over, he must die. No man, no parent, no minister, no friend, no angel, no archangel, can then save. Salvation is lost, forever lost. Oh how amazing is the folly of the wicked, that they weary out the forbearance of God, and perish in their sins!

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Introduction

Jesus foretells the destruction of the temple as he takes his final leave of it, and teaches what were the signs of his coming. These predictions are also recorded in Mark 13; Luke 21:5-38.

Verse 1

And Jesus went out - He was going over to the Mount of Olives, Matthew 24:3.

The buildings of the temple - The temple itself, with the surrounding courts, porches, and other edifices. See the notes at Matthew 21:12. Mark says that they particularly pointed out the "stones" of the temple, as well as the buildings. "In that temple," says Josephus, the Jewish historian, "were several stones which were 45 cubits in length, 5 in height, and 6 in breadth;" that is, more than 70 feet long, 10 wide, and 8 high. These stones, of such enormous size, were principally used in building the high wall on the east side, from the base to the top of the mountain. They were also, it is said, beautifully painted with variegated colors.

Verse 2

There shall not be left here one stone upon another - At the time this was spoken, no event was more improbable than this. The temple was vast, rich, splendid. It was the pride of the nation, and the nation was at peace. Yet in the short space of 40 years all this was accomplished exactly. Jerusalem was taken by the Roman armies, under the command of Titus, 70 a.d. The account of the siege and destruction of the city is left us by Josephus, a historian of undoubted veracity and singular fidelity. He was a Jewish priest. In the wars of which he gives an account, he fell into the hands of the Romans, and remained with them during the siege and destruction of the city. Being a Jew, he would of course say nothing designed to confirm the prophecies of Jesus Christ; yet his whole history appears almost like a running commentary on these predictions respecting the destruction of the temple. The following particulars are given on his authority:

After the city was taken, Josephus says that Titus "gave orders that they should now "demolish the whole city and temple," except three towers, which he reserved standing. But for the rest of the wall, it was laid so completely even with the ground by those who "dug it up from the

foundation," that there was nothing left to make those believe who came hither that it had ever been inhabited." Maimonides, a Jewish writer, has also recorded that "Terentius Rufus, an officer in the army of Titus, with a plowshare tore up the foundations of the temple, that the prophecy might be fulfilled, ‹Zion shall be plowed as a field,'" Micah 3:12. This was all done by the direction of divine Providence. Titus was desirous of preserving the temple, and frequently sent Josephus to the Jews to induce them to surrender and save the temple and city. But the prediction of the Saviour had gone forth, and, notwithstanding the wish of the Roman general, the temple was to be destroyed. The Jews themselves first set fire to the porticoes of the temple. One of the Roman soldiers, without any command, threw a burning firebrand into the golden window, and soon the temple was in flames. Titus gave orders to extinguish the fire; but, amid the tumult, none of the orders were obeyed. The soldiers pressed to the temple, and neither fear nor entreaties, nor stripes could restrain them. Their hatred of the Jews urged them on to the work of destruction, and thus, says Josephus, the temple was burned against the will of Caesar. - *Jewish Wars*, b. 6 chapter 4, section 5-7.

Verse 3

He sat upon the Mount of Olives - See the notes at Matthew 21:1. From that mount there was a magnificent view of the whole city.

The disciples came unto him privately - Not all of them, but Peter, James, John, and Andrew, Mark 13:3. The prediction that the temple would be destroyed Matthew 24:2 had been made in the presence of all the apostles. A "part" now came privately to know more particularly when this would be.

When shall these things be? - There are three questions here:

1.when those things should take place

2.what should be the signs of his own coming

3.what should be the signs that the end of the world was near

To these questions He replies in this and the following chapters. This He does, not by noticing them distinctly, but by intermingling the descriptions of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the end of the world, so that it is sometimes difficult to tell to what particular subject his remarks apply. The principle on which this combined description of two events was spoken

appears to be, that "they could be described in the same words," and therefore the accounts are intermingled. A similar use of language is found in some parts of Isaiah, where the same language will describe the return from the Babylonian captivity, and deliverance by the Messiah. See Introduction to Isaiah, section 7.

Sign of thy coming - Evidence that thou art coming. By what token shall we know that thou art coming?

Verse 4-5

Take heed … - Jesus, in reply to their question, first gives them a caution to beware of deception. They were to be constantly on their guard, because many would arise to deceive the people.

Many shall come in my name - Not in the name or by the authority of Jesus, or claiming to be His followers, and to be sent by him, but in the name of the Messiah, or claiming to be the Messiah.

I am Christ - I am the Messiah. See the notes at Matthew 1:1. The Messiah was expected at that time, Matthew 2:1-2. Many would lay, claims to being the Messiah, and, as He was universally expected, multitudes would easily be led to believe in them. There is abundant evidence that this was fully accomplished. Josephus informs us that there were many who pretended to divine inspiration; who deceived the people, leading out numbers of them into the desert. "The land," says He "was overrun with magicians, seducers, and impostors, who drew the people after them in multitudes into solitudes and deserts, to see I the signs and miracles which they promised to show by the power of God." Among these are mentioned particularly Dositheus, the Samaritan, who affirmed that He was Christ; Simon Magus, who said He appeared among the Jews as the Son of God; and Theudas, who persuaded many to go with him to the river Jordan, to see the waters divided. The names of 24 false Messiahs are recorded as having appeared between the time of the Emperor Adrian and the year 1682.

Verse 6

And ye shall hear of wars … - It is recorded in the history of Rome that violent agitations prevailed in the Roman empire previous to the destruction of Jerusalem. Four emperors, Nero, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, suffered violent deaths in the short space of eighteen months. In consequence of these changes in the government, there were commotions throughout the empire. Parties were formed, and bloody and violent wars were the consequence of attachment to particular emperors. This is the more

remarkable, as at the time that the prophecy was made, the empire was in a state of peace.

Rumours of wars - Wars declared or threatened, but not carried into execution. Josephus says that Bardanes, and after him Vologeses, declared war against the Jews, but it was not carried into execution, *Antig*. xx. 34. He also says that Vitellius, governor of Syria, declared war against Aretas, king of Arabia, and wished to lead his army through Palestine, but the death of Tiberius prevented the war, *Antiq.* xviii. 5. 3.

The end is not yet - The end of the Jewish economy; the destruction of Jerusalem will not immediately follow. Be not, therefore, alarmed when you hear of those commotions. Other signs will warn you when to be alarmed and seek security.

Verse 7

Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom - At Caesarea the Jews and Syrians contended about the right to the city, and twenty thousand of the Jews were slain. At this blow the whole nation of the Jews was exasperated, and carried war and desolation through the Syrian cities and villages. Sedition and civil war spread throughout Judea; Italy was also thrown into civil war by the contests between Otho and Vitellius for the crown.

And there shall be famines - There was a famine foretold by Agabus Acts 11:28, which is mentioned by Tacitus, Suetonius, and Eusebius, and which was so severe in Jerusalem, Josephus says, that many people perished for want of food, *Antiq.* xx. 2. Four times in the reign of Claudius (41-54 a.d.) famine prevailed in Rome, Palestine, and Greece.

Pestilences - Raging epidemic diseases; the plague, sweeping off multitudes of people at once. It is commonly the attendant of famine, and often produced by it. A pestilence is recorded as raging in Babylonia, 40 a.d. (Josephus, *Antiq.* xviii. 9. 8); in Italy, 66 a.d. (Tacitus 16. 13). Both of these took place before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Earthquakes - In prophetic language, earthquakes sometimes mean political commotions. Literally, they are tremors or shakings of the earth, often shaking cities and towns to ruin. The earth opens, and houses and people sink indiscriminately to destruction. Many of these are mentioned as preceding the destruction of Jerusalem. Tacitus mentions one in the reign of Claudius, at Rome, and says that in the reign of Nero the cities of Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colosse were overthrown, and the celebrated Pompeii was

overwhelmed and almost destroyed by an earthquake, Annales, 15. 22. Others are mentioned as occurring at Smyrna, Miletus, Chios, and Samos. Luke adds, "And fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven," Luke 21:11. Josephus, who had probably never heard of this prophecy, and who certainly would have done nothing designedly to show its fulfillment, records the prodigies and signs which He says preceded the destruction of the city.

A star, says he, resembling a sword, stood over the city, and a comet that continued a whole year. At the feast of unleavened bread, during the night, a bright light shone round the altar and the temple, so that it seemed to be bright day, for half an hour. The eastern gate of the temple, of solid brass, fastened with strong bolts and bars, and which had been shut with difficulty by twenty men, opened in the night of its own accord. A few days after that feast, He says, "Before sunsetting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities." A great noise, as of the sound of a multitude, was heard in the temple, saying, "Let us remove hence." Four years before the war began, Jesus, the son of Ananus, a plebeian and a husbandman, came to the feast of the tabernacles when the city was in peace and prosperity, and began to cry aloud, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegroom and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!" He was scourged, and at every stroke of the whip He cried, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" This cry, Josephus says, was continued every day for more than seven years, until He was killed in the siege of the city, exclaiming, "Woe, woe to myself also!" - *Jewish Wars*, b. 6 chapter 9, section 3.

Verse 8

The beginning of sorrows - Far heavier calamities are yet to come before the end.

Verse 9

To be afflicted - By persecution, imprisonment, scourging, etc.

"They shall deliver you up to councils" (Mark). To the great council, or Sanhedrin - for this is the word in the original. See the notes at Matthew 5:22. This was fulfilled when Peter and John were brought before the council, Acts 4:5-7. Mark further adds Mark 13:9 that they should be delivered to synagogues and to prisons to be beaten, and should be brought

before rulers and kings for his name‘s sake. All this was remarkably fulfilled. Peter and John were imprisoned Acts 4:3; Paul and Silas were imprisoned Acts 16:24, and also beaten Acts 16:23; Paul was brought before Gallic Acts 18:12, before Felix Acts 24:24, and before Agrippa Acts 25:23.

And shall kill you - That is, shall kill some of you. Stephen was stoned Acts 7:59; James was killed by Herod Acts 12:2; and, in addition to all that the sacred writers have told us, the persecution under Nero took place before the destruction of Jerusalem, in which were put to death, with many others, Peter and Paul. Most of the apostles, it is believed, died by persecution.

When they were delivered up, Jesus told them not to premeditate what they should say, for he would give them a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries would not be able to gainsay or resist, Luke 21:14-15. The fulfillment of this is recorded in the case of Stephen Acts 6:10, and of Paul, who made Felix “tremble,” Acts 24:25.

Ye shall be hated of all nations - This was fulfilled then, and has been in all ages. It was judged to be a crime to be a Christian. Multitudes for this, and for nothing else, were put to death.

For my name‘s sake - On account of attachment to me, or because you bear my “name as Christians.”

Verse 10

Many shall be offended - See the notes at Matthew 5:29. Many shall stumble, fall, apostatize from a profession of religion. Many who “professed” to love me will then show that they had no “real” attachment to me; and in those trying times it will be seen that they knew nothing of genuine Christian love. See 1 John 2:19.

Shall betray one another - Those who thus apostatize from professed attachment to me will betray others who really love me. This they would do to secure their own safety, by revealing the names, habitations, or places of concealment of others.

Shall hate one another - Not that real Christians would do this, but those who had professed to be such would then show that they were not his true followers, and would hate one another. Luke adds that they should be betrayed “by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends,” Luke 21:16. They would break over the most tender ties to surrender Christians to punishment. So great would be their hatred of Christianity, that it would

overcome all the natural endearments of kindred and home. This, in the persecutions of Christians, has often occurred, and nothing shows more fully the deep and deadly hatred of the human heart to the gospel. Compare the notes at Matthew 10:21.

Verse 11

And many false prophets - Many men pretending to be prophets or foretellers of future events. This refers not to the false "Messiahs" of which he had spoken Matthew 24:5, but to prophets who should appear during the siege of the city. Of them Josephus says: "The tyrannical zealots who ruled the city suborned "many false prophets" to declare that aid would be given to the people from heaven. This was done to prevent them from attempting to desert, and to inspire confidence in God." - "*Jewish Wars*," b. 6 chapter 5, section 2,3.

Verse 12

And because iniquity … - The word "iniquity" here seems to include the cruelty of the Jews and Romans in their persecutions; the betraying of Christians by those who professed to be such; and the pernicious errors of false prophets arid others. The effect of all this would be, that the ardor of feeling of many Christians would be lessened. The word "wax" means to "become." It is an old Saxon word, not used now in this sense except in the Bible. The fear of death, and the deluding influence of false teachers, would lessen the zeal of many timid and weak professors; perhaps, also, of many real but feeble Christians.

Verse 13

He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved - The word "end," here, has by some been thought to mean the destruction of Jerusalem, or the end of the Jewish economy, and the meaning has been supposed to be "he that perseveres in bearing these persecutions to the end of the wars shall be safe. God will protect his people from harm, so that not a hair of the head shall perish." Others, with more probability, have referred this to final salvation, and refer the end to the close of life. "He that bears afflictions and persecutions faithfully that constantly adheres to his religion, and does not shrink until death shall be saved, or shall enter heaven." So Luke Luke 21:18 says, "there shall not an hair of your head perish" - that is, they would be saved. "An hair of the head," or the smallest part or portion, is a proverbial expression, denoting the "certainty and completeness" of their salvation. Luke Luke 21:19 adds further: "In your patience possess ye

your souls" - that is, keep your souls "patient;" keep proper possession of patience as your own. It is a part of religion to teach it, and in these trying times let it not depart from you.

Verse 14

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world - The evidence that this was done is to be chiefly derived from the New Testament, and there it is clear. Thus Paul declares that it was preached to every creature under heaven Colossians 1:6, Colossians 1:23; that the faith of the Romans was spoken of throughout the whole world Romans 1:8; that he preached in Arabia Galatians 1:17, and at Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum Romans 15:19. We know also that He traveled through Asia Minor, Greece, and Crete; that he was in Italy, and probably in Spain and Gaul, Romans 15:24-28. At the same time, the other apostles were not idle; and there is full proof that within thirty years after this prophecy was spoken, churches were established in all these regions.

For a witness unto all nations - This preaching the gospel indiscriminately to "all" the Gentiles shall be a proof to them, or a witness, that the division between the Jews and Gentiles was about to be broken down. Hitherto the blessings of revelation had been confined to the Jews. They were the special people of God. His messages had been sent to them only. When, therefore, God sent the gospel to all other people, it was proof, or "a witness unto them," that the special Jewish economy was at an end.

Then shall the end come - The end of the Jewish economy; the destruction of the temple and city.

Verse 15

The abomination of desolation - This is a Hebrew expression, meaning an abominable or hateful destroyer. The Gentiles were all held in abomination by the Jews, Acts 10:28. The abomination of desolation means the Roman army, and is so explained by Luke 21:20. The Roman army is further called the "abomination" on account of the images of the emperor, and the eagles, carried in front of the legions, and regarded by the Romans with divine honors.

Spoken of by Daniel the prophet - Daniel 9:26-27; Daniel 11:31; Daniel 12:11, see the notes at those passages.

Standing in the holy place - Mark says, standing where it ought not," meaning the same thing. All Jerusalem was esteemed "holy," Matthew 4:5. The meaning of this is, when you see the Roman armies standing in the

holy city or encamped around the temple, or the Roman ensigns or standards in the temple. Josephus relates that when the city was taken, the Romans brought their idols into the temple, and placed them over the eastern gate, and sacrificed to them there, "*Jewish Wars*," b. 6 chapter 6, section 1.

Whoso readeth … - This seems to be a remark made by the evangelist to direct the attention of the reader particularly to the meaning of the prophecy by Daniel.

Verse 16

Then let them … - Then Christians may know that the end is come, and should seek a place of safety. Destruction would not only visit the "city," but would extend to the surrounding part of Judea.

The mountains - The mountains of Palestine abound in caves, a safe retreat for those who are pursued. In all ages these caves have been the favorite places of robbers, and they were also resorted to by those in danger, 1 Samuel 13:6; 1 Samuel 22:1; 2 Samuel 23:13; Joshua 10:16. In those mountains they would be safe.

Verse 17

Him which is on the house-top - The roofs of the houses in Eastern countries were made flat, so that they were favorable places for walking and retirement. See the notes at Matthew 9:1-8. The meaning here is, that He who should be on the house-top when this calamity came upon the city "should flee without delay;" He should not even take time to secure any article of apparel from his house. So sudden would be the calamity, that by attempting to do this He would endanger his life.

Verse 18

Return back to take his clothes - His clothes which, in "working," He had laid aside, or which, in fleeing, he should throw off as an encumbrance. "Clothes" here means the "outer" garment, commonly laid aside when men worked or ran. See the notes at Matthew 5:40.

These directions were followed. It is said that the Christians, warned by these predictions, fled from Jerusalem to Pella, and other places beyond the Jordan; so that there is not evidence that a single "Christian" perished in Jerusalem - Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, lib. 3 chapter 6.

Verse 20

But pray ye … - The destruction was certainly coming. It could not be prevented; yet it was right to pray for a mitigation of the circumstances, that it might be as mild as possible. So we know that calamity is before us; sickness, pain, bereavement, and death are in our path; yet, though we know that these things must come upon us, it is right to pray that they may come in as mild a manner as may be consistent with the will of God. We must die, but it is right to pray that the pains of our dying may be neither long nor severe.

In the winter - On account of the cold, storms, etc. To be turned then from home, and compelled to take up an abode in caverns, would be a double calamity.

Neither on the sabbath-day - Long journeys were prohibited by the law on the Sabbath, Exodus 16:29. The law of Moses did not mention the distance to which persons might go on the Sabbath, but most of the Jews maintained that it should not be more than 2000 cubits. Some supposed that it was 7 furlongs, or nearly a mile. This distance was allowed in order that they might go to their places of worship. Most of them held that it was not lawful to go further, under any circumstances of war or affliction. Jesus teaches his disciples to pray that their flight might not be on the Sabbath, because, if they should not go farther than a Sabbath-day‘s journey, they would not be beyond the reach of danger, and if they did, they would be exposed to the charge of violating the law. It should be added that it was almost impracticable to travel in Judea on that day, as the gates of the cities were usually closed, Nehemiah 13:19-22.

Verse 21

There shall be great tribulation - The word “tribulation” means calamity or “suffering.” Luke Luke 21:24 has specified in what this tribulation would consist: “They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled.” That is, until the time allotted for the Gentiles “to do it” shall be fully accomplished, or as long as God is pleased to suffer them to do it.

The first thing mentioned by Luke is, that they should fall “by the edge of the sword” - that is, would be slain in war, as the sword was then principally used in war. This was most strikingly fulfilled. Josephus, in describing it, uses almost the very words of our Saviour. “All the calamities, says he, which had befallen any nation from the beginning of the world”

were but small in comparison with those of the Jews. - *Jewish Wars*, b. i. preface, section 4.

He has given the following account of one part of the massacre when the city was taken: "And now, rushing into the city, they slew whomsoever they found, without distinction, and burned the houses and all the people who had fled into them; and when they entered for the sake of plunder, they found whole families of dead persons, and houses full of carcasses destroyed by famine, then they came out with their hands empty. And though they thus pitied the dead, they had not the same emotion for the living, but killed all they met, whereby they filled the lanes with dead bodies. "The whole city ran with blood," insomuch that many things which were burning were extinguished by the blood." - "*Jewish Wars*," b. 6 chapter 8, section 5; chapter 9, section 2,3. He adds that in the siege of Jerusalem not fewer than "eleven hundred thousand" perished (*Jewish Wars*, b. 6 chapter 9, section 3) - a number almost half as great as are in the whole city of London. In the adjacent provinces no fewer than "two hundred and fifty thousand" are reckoned to have been slain; making in all whose deaths were ascertained the almost incredible number of "one million three hundred and fifty thousand" who were put to death.

These were not, indeed, all slain with the sword. Many were crucified. "Many hundreds," says Josephus ("*Jewish Wars*," b. v. chapter 11, section 1), "were first whipped, then tormented with various kinds of tortures, and finally crucified; the Roman soldiers nailing them (out of the wrath and hatred they bore to the Jews), one after one way and another after another, to crosses, "by way of jest," until at length the multitude became so great that room was lacking for crosses, and crosses for the bodies." So terribly was their imprecation fulfilled - "his blood be on us and on our children," Matthew 27:25. If it be asked how it was possible for so many people to be slain in a single city, it is to be remembered that the siege of Jerusalem commenced during the time of the Passover, when all the males of the Jews were required to be there, and when it is estimated that more than "three million" were usually assembled. See Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, b. 6 chapter 9, section 3,4.

A horrible instance of the distress of Jerusalem is related by Josephus. The famine during the siege became so great that they ate what the most sordid animals refused to touch. A woman of distinguished rank, having been plundered by the soldiers, in hunger, rage, and despair, killed and roasted her own babe, and had eaten one half of it before the deed was discovered. - *Jewish Wars*, b. 6 chapter 3, section 3,4. This cruel and dreadful act was also in fulfillment of prophecy, Deuteronomy 28:53, Deuteronomy 28:56-57.

Another thing added by Luke Luke 21:24, was, that "they should be led away captive into all nations." Josephus informs us that the captives taken during the whole war amounted to "ninety-seven thousand." The tall and handsome young men Titus reserved for triumph; of the rest, many were distributed through the Roman provinces to be destroyed by wild beasts in theaters; many were sent to the works in Egypt; many, especially those under seventeen years of age, were sold for slaves. - *Jewish Wars*, b. vi. chapter 9, section 2,3.

Verse 22

Except those days should be shortened - If the calamities of the siege should be lengthened out. If famine and war should be suffered to rage.

No flesh be saved - None of the nation would be preserved alive. All the inhabitants of Judea would perish. The war, famine, and pestilence would entirely destroy them.

But for the elect's sake - The "elect" here doubtless means "Christians." See 1 Peter 1:2; Romans 1:7; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:4. The word "elect" means "to choose." It is given to Christians because they are "chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth," 1 Peter 1:2. It is probable that in Jerusalem and the adjacent parts of Judea there were many who were true followers of Christ. On their account - to preserve them alive, and to make them the instruments of spreading the gospel Jesus said that those days should not be lengthened out so as to produce their destruction. It is related by Josephus (*Jewish Wars*, b. 1 chapter 12, section 1) that Titus at first resolved to reduce the city by famine. He therefore built a wall around it to keep any provisions from being carried in, and any of the people from going out. The Jews, however, drew up their army near the walls, engaged in battle, and the Romans

pursued them, provoked by their attempts, and broke into the city. The affairs of Rome, also, at that time demanded the presence of Titus there; and, contrary to his original intention he pressed the siege and took the city by storm, thus "shortening" the time that would have been occupied in reducing it by famine. This was for the benefit of the "elect." So the designs of wicked people, intended by them for the destruction of the people of God, are intended by God for the good of his chosen people. See the notes at Isaiah 10:7.

Verse 23

Lo, here is Christ - The Messiah. The Jews expected the Messiah to deliver them from Roman oppression. In the time of these great calamities they would anxiously look for him. Many would claim "to be" the Messiah. Many would follow those who set up that claim. Many would rejoice to believe that he was come, and would call on others, Christians with the rest, to follow them.

Believe it not - You have evidence that the Messiah has come, and you are not to be deceived by the plausible pretensions of others.

Verse 24

False Christs - Persons claiming to be the Messiah.

False prophets - Persons claiming to be "the prophet" spoken of by Moses Deuteronomy 18:15; or persons pretending to declare the way of deliverance from the Romans, and calling the people to follow them. See Matthew 24:5.

Shall show great signs and wonders - That is, shall pretend to work miracles. They will so nearly resemble prophets in their miraculous power as to render it difficult to detect the imposture. Josephus represents the false Christs and prophets that appeared as "magicians and sorcerers." He says they led the people out into the deserts, and promised to work miracles to deliver them, *Antiq.* b. 20 chapter 8, section 6.

If it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect - So nearly would their pretended miracles resemble true miracles as to render it difficult to detect the imposture; so much so, that if it were possible they would persuade even true Christians that they were the Messiah. But that was not possible. His real friends would be too firmly established in the belief that he was the Christ to be wholly led away by others. Christians may be sometimes led far astray; they may be in doubt about some great doctrines of religion; they may be perplexed by the cavils and cunning craftiness of

those who do not love the truth, but they cannot be entirely deceived and seduced from the Saviour. Our Saviour says that if this "were possible," it would be done then; but it was not possible. Compare the notes at John 10:28-29.

Verse 25

Behold, I have told you before - Mark adds Mark 13:23, "take ye heed." The reason why he told them before was that they might be on their guard, and be prepared for those calamities.

Verse 26

Behold, he is in the desert - The Jews had formed the expectation that the Messiah would appear suddenly from some unexpected quarter; hence, many would be looking to desert places, expecting that he would come from them. Accordingly, most of the impostors and pretended prophets led their people into the deserts.

Go not forth - Do not follow them; they will only deceive you.

In secret chambers - Concealed in some house, or some retired part of the city. Many would, doubtless, pretend that the Messiah was concealed there, and, either for the purpose of encouraging or deceiving the people, would pretend that they had discovered him.

Verse 27

For as the lightning cometh out of the east … - This is not designed to denote the quarter from which he would come, but the manner. He does not mean to affirm that the "Son of man" will come from the "east," but that he will come in a rapid and unexpected manner, like the lightning. Many would be looking for him in the desert, many in secret places; but he said it would be useless to be looking in that manner; it was useless to look to any particular part of the heavens to know where the lightning would next flash. In a moment it would blaze in an unexpected part of the heavens, and shine at once to the other part. So rapidly, so unexpectedly, in so unlooked-for a quarter, would be his coming. See Luke 10:18; Zechariah 9:14.

The coming of the Son of man - It has been doubted whether this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, or to the coming at the day of judgment. For the solution of this doubt let it be remarked:

1.that those two events are the principal scenes in which our Lord said he would come, either in person or in judgment.

2.that the destruction of Jerusalem is described as his coming, his act.

3.that these events - the judgment of Jerusalem and the final judgment in many respects greatly resemble each other.

4.that they "will bear," therefore, to be described in the same language; and,

5.therefore, that the same words often include both events, as properly described by them.

The words had, doubtless, a primary reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, but they had, at the same time, such an amplitude of meaning as also to express his coming to judgment. See the introduction to Isaiah, section 7, (3).

Verse 28

Wheresoever … - The words in this verse are proverbial. Vultures and eagles easily ascertain where dead bodies are, and hasten to devour them. So with the Roman army. Jerusalem is like a dead and putrid corpse. Its life is gone, and it is ready to be devoured. The Roman armies will find it out, as the vultures do a dead carcass, and will come around it to devour it. This proverb also teaches a universal truth. Wherever wicked people are, there will be assembled the instruments of their chastisement. The providence of God will direct them there, as the vultures are directed to a dead carcass.

This verse is connected with the preceding by the word "for," implying that this is a reason for what is said there that the Son of man would certainly come to destroy the city, and that he would come suddenly. The meaning is that he would come, by means of the Roman armies, as "certainly;" as "suddenly," and as unexpectedly as whole flocks of vultures and eagles, though unseen before, see their prey at a great distance and suddenly gather in multitudes around it. Travelers in the deserts of Arabia tell us that they sometimes witness a speck in the distant sky which for a long time is scarcely visible. At length it grows larger, it comes nearer, and they at last find that it is a vulture that has from an immense distance seen a carcass lying on the sand. So keen is their vision as aptly to represent the Roman armies, though at an immense distance, spying, as it were, Jerusalem, a putrid carcass, and hastening in multitudes to destroy it.

Verse 29

Immediately after the tribulation of those days - That is, immediately after these tribulations, events will occur that "may be properly represented" by the darkening of the sun and moon, and by the stars falling from heaven. The word rendered "immediately" - εὐθέως eutheōs- means, properly, "straightway, immediately," Matthew 8:3; Matthew 13:5; Mark 1:31; Acts 12:10; then "shortly," 3 John 1:14. This is the meaning here. Such events would "shortly" or "soon" occur In the fulfillment of the predictions they would be "the next in order," and would occur "before long." The term here requires us to admit that, in order to the fulfillment of the prophecy, it can be shown, or it actually happened, that things "did" soon occur "after the tribulation of those days" which would be "properly represented or described" by the images which the Saviour employs. It is not necessary to show that there could not have been "a more remote" reference to events lying far in the future, in which there would be a more complete fulfillment or "filling up" of the meaning of the words (compare the notes at Matthew 1:22-23); but it is necessary that there should have been events which would be "properly expressed" by the language which the Saviour uses, or which would have been in some proper sense "fulfilled," even if there had not been reference to more remote events. It will be seen in the exposition that this was actually the case, and that therefore there was a propriety in saying that these events would occur "immediately" - that is, "soon, or the next in order." Compare the notes at Revelation 1:1.

Shall the sun be darkened … - The images used here are not to be taken literally. They are often employed by the sacred writers to denote "any great calamities." As the darkening of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars, would be an inexpressible calamity, so any great catastrophe - any overturning of kingdoms or cities, or dethroning of kings and princes is represented by the darkening of the sun and moon, and by some terrible convulsion in the elements. Thus the destruction of Babylon is foretold in similar terms Isaiah 13:10, and of Tyre Isaiah 24:23. The slaughter in Bozrah and Idumea is predicted in the same language, Isaiah 34:4. See also Isaiah 50:3; Isaiah 60:19-20; Ezekiel 32:7; Joel 3:15. To the description in Matthew, Luke has added Luke 21:25-26, "And upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; people's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." All these are figures of great and terrible

calamities. The roaring of the waves of the sea denotes great tumult and affliction among the people. "Perplexity" means doubt, anxiety; not knowing what to do to escape. "Men's hearts should fail them for fear," or by reason of fear. Their fears would be so great as to take away their courage and strength.

Verse 30

The sign of the Son of man - The "evidence" that he is coming to destroy the city of Jerusalem. It is not to be denied, however, that this description is applicable also to his coming at the day of judgment. The disciples had asked him Matthew 24:3 what should be the sign of his coming, and "of the end of the world." In his answer he has reference to both events, and his language may be regarded as descriptive of both. At the destruction of Jerusalem, the sign or evidence of his coming was found in the fulfillment of these predictions. At the end of the world, the sign of his coming will be his personal approach with the glory of his Father and the holy angels, 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Luke 21:27; Matthew 26:64; Acts 1:11.

All the tribes of the earth mourn - That is, either all the "tribes or people" of the land of Judea shall mourn at the great calamities coming upon them, or all the nations of the world shall wail when he comes to judgment. All the wicked shall mourn at the prospect of their doom, Revelation 1:7. The cause of their wailing at the day of judgment will be chiefly that they have pierced, killed, rejected the Saviour, and that they deserve the condemnation that is coming upon them, John 19:37; Zechariah 12:12.

And they shall see the Son of man - The Lord Jesus coming to judgment. Probably this refers more directly to his coming at the last day, though it may also mean that the "evidence" of his coming to destroy Jerusalem will then be seen.

In the clouds of heaven - He ascended in a cloud, Acts 1:9. He shall return in like manner, Acts 1:11. "The clouds of heaven" denote not the clouds in heaven, but the clouds that appear to shut heaven, or the sky, from our view.

With power - Power, manifest in the destruction of Jerusalem, by the wonders that preceded it, and by the overturning of the temple and city. In the day of judgment, power manifest by consuming the material world 2 Peter 3:7, 2 Peter 3:10, 2 Peter 3:12; by raising the dead John 5:29-30; 1 Corinthians 15:52; by changing those who may be alive when he shall come

- that is, making their bodies like those who have died, and who have been raised up 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 15:52; by bringing the affairs of the world to a close, receiving the righteous to heaven Matthew 25:34; 1 Corinthians 15:57, and sending the wicked, however numerous or however strong, down to hell, Matthew 25:41, Matthew 25:46; John 5:29.

Great glory - The word "glory" here means the visible display of honor and majesty. This glory will be manifested by the manner of his coming Matthew 26:64, by the presence of the angels Matthew 25:31, and by the wonders that shall attend him down the sky.

Verse 31

And he shall send his angels - "Angels" signify, literally, "messengers," Luke 7:24; Luke 9:52. The word is often applied to inanimate objects, or to anything that God employs to rescue his people from danger Psalm 104:4; but it most commonly refers to the race of intelligent beings more exalted than man, who are employed often in the work of man's rescue from ruin, and aiding his salvation, Hebrews 1:14. In either of these senses it might here refer to deliverance granted to his people in the calamities of Jerusalem. It is said that there is reason to believe that not one Christian perished in the destruction of that city, God having in various ways secured their escape, so that they fled to Pella, where they lived when the city was destroyed. But the language seems to refer rather to the end of the world, and, no doubt, its principal application was intended to be to the gathering of his elect at the day of judgment:

With a great sound of a trumpet - The Jewish assemblies used to be called together by the sound of a trumpet, as ours are by bells, Leviticus 25:9; Numbers 10:2; Judges 3:27. Hence, when they spoke of convening an assembly, they spoke also of doing it by sounding a trumpet. Our Saviour, speaking to Jews, used language to which they were accustomed, and described the assembling of the people at the last day in language which they were accustomed to use in calling assemblies together. It is not certain, however, that he meant that this would be literally so, but it may be designed only to denote the certainty that the "world would be assembled together." Similar language is often used when speaking of the judgment, 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:52. A trump, or trumpet, was a wind instrument, made at first from the horns of oxen, and afterward of rams' horns, cut off at the smaller extremity. In some instances it was made of brass, in the form of a horn. The common trumpet was straight, made of

brass or silver, a cubit in length, the larger extremity shaped so as to resemble a small bell. In times of peace, in assembling the people, this was sounded softly. In times of calamity, or war, or any great commotion, it was sounded loud. Perhaps this was referred to when our Saviour said, with a great sound of a trumpet.

They shall gather together his elect - Elect. See the notes at Matthew 24:22. The word means Christians - the chosen of God. If this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, it means, "God shall send forth his messengers - whatever he may choose to employ for that purpose: signs, wonders, human messengers, or the angels themselves - and gather Christians into a place of safety, so that they shall not be destroyed with the Jews." If it refers to the last judgment, as it doubtless in a primary or secondary sense does, then it means that he will send his angels to gather his chosen, his elect, together from all places, Matthew 13:39, Matthew 13:41-43. This shall be done before the living shall be changed, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

From the four winds - That is, from the four quarters of the globe - east, west, north, and south. The Jews expressed those quarters by the winds blowing from them See Ezekiel 37:9. See also Isaiah 43:5-6. "From one end of heaven, etc." Mark says Mark 13:27, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. The expression denotes that they shall be gathered from all parts of the earth where they are scattered. The word "heaven" is used here to denote the "visible" heavens or the sky, meaning that through "the whole world" he would gather them. See Psalm 19:1-7; Deuteronomy 4:32.

Verse 32

Now learn a parable - See the notes at Matthew 13:3. The word here means, rather, "an illustration" make a "comparison," or judge of this as you do respecting a fig-tree.

Fig-tree - This was spoken on the Mount of Olives, which produced not only olives, but figs. Possibly one was near when he spoke this.

When his branch … - When the juices return from the roots into the branches, and the buds swell and burst, "as if tender," and too feeble to contain the pressing and expanding leaves when you see that, you judge that spring and summer are near.

Verse 33

So likewise ye … - In the same manner, when you see what I have predicted the "signs" around Jerusalem - then know that its destruction is at hand,

Is near - Luke says Luke 21:28, "your redemption draweth nigh, and Luke 21:31 the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." Your deliverance from the dangers that threaten the city approaches, and the kingdom of God will be set up in the earth; or your everlasting redemption from sin and death will come at the day of judgment, and his eternal kingdom will be established in the heavens.

Verse 34

This generation … - This age; this race of people. A generation is about 30 or 40 years. The destruction of Jerusalem took place about forty years after this was spoken. See the notes at Matthew 16:28.

Till all these things … - Until these things shall be accomplished. Until events shall take place which shall be a fulfillment of these words, if there were nothing further intended. He does not mean to exclude the reference to the judgment, but to say that the destruction of Jerusalem would be such as to make appropriate the words of the prediction, were there nothing beyond. Compare the notes at Matthew 1:22-23. So when "death" was threatened to Adam, the propriety of the threatening would have been seen, and the threatening would have been fulfilled, had people suffered only temporal death. At the same time the threatening had "a fullness of meaning" that would cover also, and justify, eternal death. Thus the words of Christ describing the destruction of Jerusalem had a fulness of signification that would meet also the events of the judgment, and whose meaning would not be "entirely filled up" until the world was closed.

Verse 35

Heaven and earth shall pass away … - You may sooner expect to see the heaven and earth pass away and return to nothing, than my words to fail.

Verse 36

But of that day and hour - Of the precise time of the fulfillment. The "general signs" of its approach have been given, as the budding of the fig-tree is a certain indication that summer is near; but "the precise time" is not indicated by these things. One part of their inquiry was Matthew 24:3 when those things should be. He now replies to them by saying that the precise time would not be foretold. Compare the notes at Acts 1:7.

Knoweth no man, no, not the angels - See the notes at Mark 13:32.

Verse 37

Noe - The Greek way of writing "Noah." See Genesis 69. The coming of the Son of man would be as it was in the days of Noah:

1.In its being sudden and unexpected, the "precise time" not being made known, though the "general" indications had been given.

2.The world would be found as it was then.

Verse 38

For as in the days … - The things mentioned here denote attention to the affairs of this life rather than to what was coming on them. It does not mean that these things were wrong, but only that such was their actual employment, and that they were regardless of what was coming upon them.

Verse 39

They knew not - That is, they knew not the exact time until it came upon them. So, says he, it shall be when the Son of man shall come. They shall not know "the precise time" until he comes, and then they will be found engaged in the ordinary business of life unconcerned.

Verse 40

Then shall two be in the field … - The calamity will come suddenly. There will be no escape for those whom it overtakes.

One shall be taken - The word "taken" may mean either to be taken away from the danger - that is, rescued, as Lot was Luke 17:28-29, or to be taken away "by death." Probably the latter is the meaning.

Verse 41

Two women … - Grinding in the East was performed, as it is now, chiefly by hand. The millstones were about 2 feet in diameter and 12 foot in thickness. The lower one was fixed, and the upper one was turned by a handle or crank. This was done by two persons, who sat opposite to each other. One took hold of the mill-handle and turned it half-way round; the other then seized it and completed the revolution. This was done by women - by servants of the lowest order - and was a very laborious employment. See Exodus 11:5; Job 31:10; Isaiah 47:2; Judges 16:21. The meaning of this verse is similar to the former. Of two persons sitting near each other, one shall be taken and the other. left. The calamity would be sudden, and would come upon them before they were aware.

Verse 42

Watch - Be looking for his coming. Be expecting it as near; as a great event; as coming in an unexpected manner. Watch the signs of his coming, and be ready.

Verse 43

But know this … - If a man knew the hour, or "about the hour," when a robber would come, he would be ready for him. So you know not the exact hour, but you know it is near, when the Son of man will come. He will come suddenly, as a thief comes, without giving previous warning, 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 3:3; Revelation 16:15. "Goodman." See the notes at Matthew 20:11.

Thief - A robber. A thief, with us, means one who takes goods without doing violence - secretly, silently. The original word means one who does it by housebreaking, or by highway violence, Luke 10:30.

Broken up - Broken into either by the doors or windows. See the notes at Matthew 6:19.

In what watch - In which of the four quarters of the night. See the notes at Matthew 14:25.

Verse 44

Be ye also ready - Luke Luke 21:36 says that he charged them to pray always, that they might be accounted worthy to escape those things - the judgments coming upon the wicked - and to stand before the Son of man - that is, to stand there approved by him, or to be admitted to his favor. He also charged them Luke 21:34 to take heed and not to suffer their hearts to be overcharged with surfeiting, or too much eating, or drunkenness, or the cares of this life, lest that day should come upon them unawares; things improper if there were no judgment - especially mad and wicked when the judgment is near.

Verses 45-51

This passage is, in fact, "a parable," though it is not expressly so called. The design is to show that his disciples should act as if they were each moment expecting his return. This he illustrates by the conduct of a servant who did not expect his master soon to return, who acted with great impropriety, and who was accordingly punished.

Matthew 24:45

Who, then, is a faithful and wise servant … - By the conduct of a faithful and wise servant Jesus intends to denote a faithful Christian, a servant of God, or a teacher of religion.

Whom his lord - His master.

The word here has no reference to God. It means the "lord" or master of the servant. Applied to Christian teachers, in the spiritual meaning of the parable, it refers to "Christ," who has appointed them as teachers, and who is their Lord and Master, John 13:13-14.

Over his household - His family. Christian ministers are the servants of God appointed over the church, the family of Christ, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Corinthians 3:5; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 1 Corinthians 12:28.

Meat in due season - The word "meat" here means food of all kinds. When the Bible was translated into English, the word included, as the original does, all kinds of provisions requisite to support and nourish life.

In due season - As they need it, or in the accustomed times. This was the office of a steward. Among the ancients this office was often filled by a "slave" - one who had shown himself trusty and faithful. The duty was to have a general superintendence over the affairs of the family. Applied to Christian ministers, it means that they are to feed the flock of God, to "minister" to their needs, and to do it as they need it, John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2.

Matthew 24:47

Shall make him ruler … - Shall confirm his appointment over his household, and, as a reward, shall place him over all his property.

This does not mean that ministers will have a higher rank or office, but is a circumstance of "the parable" or story, designed to show the effect of faithfulness. Faithful servants of Christ shall be rewarded. This will be done by His approbation, and by the rewards of the heavenly world.

Matthew 24:48

That evil servant - If that servant, so appointed, having this office, should be evil or wicked.

Say in his heart - Secretly suppose.

Delayeth his coming - Will not return in a long time; or does not return as soon as was expected, and perhaps may not at all.

Matthew 24:49

Smite his fellow-servants … - This is the conduct of a wicked servant, who, supposing he would not be called to account, and abusing his authority, gave himself up to oppression, carousing, and debauchery.

It is designed to represent the conduct of ministers who are unfaithful and overbearing, and who abuse their trust in the church.

Matthew 24:51

Shall cut him asunder - This kind of punishment was anciently practiced.

Sometimes it was done by the sword. sometimes by saws. It was practiced among the Chaldeans Daniel 2:5; Daniel 3:29, and among the Hebrews, 2 Samuel 12:31; 1 Samuel 15:33; 1 Kings 3:25; Hebrews 11:37. It was also practiced by the Egyptians and Romans. It is not, perhaps, here to be taken literally, but signifies that the wicked servant should be severely punished.

Hypocrites - See the notes at Matthew 6:2. They are spoken of here as the worst of people.

Weeping and gnashing of teeth - See the notes at Matthew 8:12-13. The unfaithful and wicked minister of God, who lives without expectation or fear of judgment, shall suffer the severest punishment inflicted on sinners in the world of woe.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 25

Verse 1

Then shall the kingdom of heaven - See the notes at Matthew 3:2. The phrase here refers to his coming in the day of judgment.

Shall be likened - Or shall resemble. The meaning is, "When the Son of man returns to judgment, it will be as it was in the case of ten virgins in a marriage ceremony." The coming of Christ to receive his people to himself is often represented under the similitude of a marriage, the church being represented as his spouse or bride. The marriage relation is the most tender, firm, and endearing of any known on earth, and on this account it suitably represents the union of believers to Christ. See Matthew 9:15; John 3:29; Revelation 19:7; Revelation 21:9; Ephesians 5:25-32.

Ten virgins - These virgins, doubtless, represent the church - a name given to it because it is pure and holy. See 2 Corinthians 11:2; Lamentations 1:15; Lamentations 2:13.

Which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom - The "lamps" used on such occasions were rather "torches" or "flambeaux." They were made by winding rags around pieces of iron or earthenware, sometimes hollowed so as to contain oil, and fastened to handles of wood. These torches were dipped in oil, and gave a large light. Marriage "ceremonies" in the East were conducted with great pomp and solemnity. The ceremony of marriage was performed commonly in the open air, on the banks of a stream. Both the bridegroom and bride were attended by friends. They were escorted in a palanquin. carried by four or more persons. After the ceremony of marriage succeeded a feast of seven days if the bride was a virgin, or three days if she was a widow. This feast was celebrated in her father's house. At the end of that time the bridegroom conducted the bride with great pomp and splendor to his own home.

This was done in the evening, or at night, Jeremiah 7:34; Jeremiah 25:10; Jeremiah 33:11. Many friends and relations attended them; and besides those who went with them from the house of the bride, there was another company that came out from the house of the bridegroom to meet them and welcome them. These were probably female friends and relatives of the bridegroom, who went out to welcome him and his new companion to their home. These are the virgins mentioned in this parable. Not knowing precisely the time when the procession would come, they probably went out

early, and waited until they should see indications of its approach. In the celebration of marriage in the East at the present day, many of the special customs of ancient times are observed. “At a Hindu marriage,” says a modern missionary, “the procession of which I saw some years ago, the bridegroom came from a distance, and the bride lived at Serampore, to which place the bridegroom was to come by water. After waiting two or three hours, at length, near midnight, it was announced, in the very words of Scripture, ‹Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.‘ All the persons employed now lighted their lamps, and ran with them in their hands to fill up their stations in the procession. Some of them had lost their lights and were unprepared, but it was then too late to seek them, and the cavalcade moved forward to the house of the bride, at which place the company entered a large and splendidly illuminated area before the house, covered with an awning, where a great multitude of friends, dressed in their best apparel, were seated upon mats. The bridegroom was carried in the arms of a friend, and placed in a superb seat in the midst of the company, where he sat a short time, and then went into the house, the door of which was immediately shut and guarded by sepoys. I and others expostulated with the doorkeepers, but in vain. Never was I so struck with our Lord‘s beautiful parable as at this moment - ‹And the door was shut.‘”

The journal of one of the American missionaries in Greece contains an account of an Armenian wedding which she attended; and, after describing the dresses and previous ceremonies, she says that at 12 o‘clock at night precisely the cry was made by some of the attendants, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh;” and immediately five or six men set off to meet him.

Bridegroom - A newly-married man.

Verses 2-4

And five of them were wise - . The words “wise and foolish,” here, refer only to their conduct; in regard to the oil. The one part was “wise” in taking oil, the other “foolish” in neglecting it. The conduct of those who were “wise” refers to those who are “prepared” for the coming of Christ - prepared by possessing real piety, and not being merely his professed followers. The conduct of those “without” oil expresses the conduct of those who profess to love him, but are destitute of true grace, and are therefore unprepared to meet him. Nothing can be argued from the number here in regard to the proportion of sincere Christians among professors.

circumstances in parables are not to be pressed literally. They are necessary to keep up the story, and we must look chiefly or entirely to the scope or design of the parable to understand its meaning. In this parable the scope is to teach us to "watch" or be ready, Matthew 25:13. It is not to teach us the relative "number" of those who shall be saved and who shall not. In teaching us to "watch and to be ready," our Lord gives great additional interest by the circumstances of this narrative; but there is no authority for saying that he meant to teach that just half of professing Christians would be deceived. The moral certainty is that "nothing like" that number will be found to have been hypocrites.

Oil in their vessels - The five foolish virgins probably expected that the bridegroom would come immediately; they therefore made no provision for any delay. The wise virgins knew that the time of his coming was uncertain, and they therefore furnished themselves with oil. This was carried in "vessels," so that it could be poured on the torches when it was necessary.

Vessels - Cups, cans, or anything to hold oil.

Verse 5

The bridegroom tarried - That is, while they waited for him. It was uncertain at what time he would come. He delayed longer than they expected.

All slumbered and slept - Waiting until near midnight, they fell into repose. This circumstance is not to be pressed to prove that all Christians will be asleep, or cold and careless, when the Lord Jesus shall come. "Many" may be so, but many, also, will be looking for his coming. This circumstance is designed simply to show more clearly the "duty of being ready," Matthew 25:13. It does not mean to affirm it "as a fact" that none will be ready.

Verse 6

At midnight - Later than was the usual custom, and hence, they had fallen asleep.

A cry made - Of those who were coming with the bridegroom.

Verse 7

Trimmed their lamps - Burning until midnight, the oil was exhausted: they gave a dim and obscure light. They trimmed them by removing the burnt parts of the linen or the torch, so that they would burn clear. It was needful, also, to dip them again in oil, or to pour oil upon them. This strikingly represents the conduct of most people at the approach of death.

They then begin to make ready. They are alarmed, anxious, and trembling, and then they ask the aid of others, but often when it is forever too late.

Verse 10

Went in with him to the marriage - The "marriage-feast." The marriage ceremony took place before the bride left her father's house, but a feast was given at the house of her husband, which was also called the "marriage," or a part of the marriage solemnities. This part of the parable doubtless represents the entrance of those who "are ready," or prepared, into the kingdom of God, when the Son of man shall come. They will be ready who have repented of their sins; who truly believe on the Lord Jesus; who live a holy life; and who wait for his coming. See Mark 16:16; John 5:24; Acts 3:19; Revelation 22:11; 2 Peter 3:11-12; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

The door was shut - No more could be admitted to the marriage-feast. So, when the truly righteous shall all be received into heaven, the door will be closed against all others. There will be no room for preparation afterward, Revelation 22:11; Ecclesiastes 11:3; Ecclesiastes 9:10; Matthew 25:46.

Verse 11

Open unto us - This is not to be understood as implying that any will come after the righteous shall be admitted into the kingdom, and claim admission then. It is a part of the parable to illustrate the general truth inculcated, or to prepare the way for what is afterwards said, and to keep up the narrative and make it consistent.

Verse 12

I know you not - You were not in the company of those who attended me to the marriage-feast, and are unknown to me. Applied to professing Christians, having only a profession of religion, but no real piety, it means, I do not know or acknowledge you as Christians. I do not approve of you, or delight in you, or admit that you are my friends. The word "know" is often used in the sense of approving, loving, acknowledging as real friends and followers. See Matthew 7:23; Psalm 1:6; 2 Timothy 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:12.

Verse 13

Watch, therefore … - This is the scope or design of the whole parable. This is the great truth that Christ wished to inculcate, and all parts of the parable are to be interpreted in reference to this admonition. Like the

virgins, many are professedly going to meet the Bridegroom - the Lord Jesus Christ. Like the coming of the bridegroom, his advent will be sudden. It will be to many at an unexpected time. Many, even professing Christians, will be engaged in the business of the world; thoughtless about eternity; not expecting his approach, and not prepared. They will only profess to know him, but in works they will deny him. So death will come. All approaches of the Son of God to judge men are sudden, and to many unexpected. So many, when they shall see him coming, at death or the judgment, will begin, like the foolish virgins, to be active, and to prepare to die; but it will be too late. They that are ready will enter in, and heaven will be closed forever against all others. The "coming" of the Saviour is certain. The precise time "when" he will come is not certain. As the virgins should all have watched and been ready, so should we. They who are Christians should be ever watchful; and they who are not should lose no time to be ready, for in such an hour as they think not the Son of man shall come.

The Son of man cometh - This refers, doubtless, to his coming in the day of judgment. The circumstances of the parable do not seem at all to apply to his coming to destroy Jerusalem, but are aptly expressive of his advent to judge the world.

Verse 14

For the kingdom of heaven … - The "parable of the talents" was spoken still further to illustrate the manner in which he would deal with people at his return to judgment. The words "the kingdom, of heaven" are not in the original, but are very properly inserted by the translators. The design of the parable is to teach that those who improve their talents or faculties in the cause of religion who improve them to their own salvation and in doing good to others shall be proportionally rewarded; but they who neglect their talents, and who neither secure their own salvation nor do good to others, will be punished. The kingdom of heaven is like such a man - that is, "God deals with people in his government as such a man did."

His own servants - That is, such of them as he judged to be worthy of such a trust. These represent the apostles, Christian ministers, professing Christians, and perhaps all people. The going into a far country may represent the Lord Jesus going into heaven. He has given to all talents to improve, Ephesians 4:8; Ephesians 2:12.

His goods - His property representing the offices, abilities, and opportunities for doing good, which he has given to his professed followers.

Verse 15

Five talents - See the notes at Matthew 18:24. The word "talents" here is used to denote indefinitely "a large sum," and is designed to refer to the endowments conferred on people. We have retained in our language the word "talent" as referring to the abilities or gifts of men.

According to his several ability - According to the ability of each one. According as he saw each one was adapted to improve it. So in the church and the world. God gives people stations which he judges them adapted to fill, and requires them to fill them. He makes "distinctions" among people in regard to abilities, and in the powers and opportunities of usefulness, requiring them only to occupy those stations, and to discharge their duties there, 1 Corinthians 4:7.

Verse 16-17

The two who had received most employed their money in trade, and by honest industry doubled it before their master returned, representing the conduct of those who make a good improvement of their abilities, and employ them in doing good.

Verse 18

Digged in the earth … - This represents the conduct of those who neglect the abilities that God has given, and fail to do what he has required. This is done often:

1.On the plea that they do not occupy a high station.

2.That they have slender abilities, and can do little good.

3.As it was in this case, that God had not given them as much as he did others, and they will therefore do nothing.

These pleas are without foundation; because:

1.God does not require us to do as much as those who have greater abilities; but this is not a reason why we should do nothing, 2 Corinthians 8:12.

2.Any situation is honorable, and may be useful, where God has placed us; and though humble, yet in that we may do much good, 1 Corinthians 12:11-31.

3.People of slender abilities may often do more good in the world than people of much greater talents. It is rather a warm heart than a strong head which is required to do good. A humble Christian, by his life, example, and

conversation, may often do much more good than "is" done by those in more elevated stations and with far greater gifts.

We are not to suppose by this, however, that our Saviour meant to teach that only those of feeble talents neglected their duty. The parable does not require us to do this; and the Fact is, perhaps, that those most highly endowed are the farthest from properly improving their talents.

Verse 19

After a long time … - By the return of the lord of those servants to reckon with them is denoted the return of Christ to call people to an account for the manner in which they have improved their talents. See Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Acts 1:11; Acts 17:31.

Reckon with them - To reckon is to settle accounts. Here it means to inquire into their faithfulness, and to reward or punish them accordingly.

Verse 20

I have gained - Gained by trading or by honest industry, Matthew 25:16.

Verse 21

Ruler over many things - I will promote thee to greater honors and to more important trusts.

Joy of thy lord - In the meantime share the pleasures and enjoyments of his palace; be his companion, and receive the rewards which he has promised thee. "The joy of his lord" may mean either the festivals and rejoicings at his return, or the rewards which his lord had prepared for his faithful servants. Applied to Christians, it means that they who rightly improve their talents will, at the return of Christ, be promoted to great honors in heaven, and be partakers of the joys of their Lord in the world of glory. See Matthew 25:34; also 1 John 2:28.

Verse 24

The one talent - The design of this part of the parable is to show that no one is excused for neglecting his duty because he has few talents. God will require of him only according to his ability, 1 Corinthians 4:2; Luke 12:48; 2 Corinthians 8:12.

A hard man - Of a sordid, griping disposition; taking advantage of the poor, and oppressing them.

Reaping … - This is indicative of an avaricious and overbearing disposition; compelling the poor to sow for him, and reaping all the benefit himself.

Hast not strawed - The word "straw" means to "scatter" - as people scatter seed in sowing it. It may mean, also, to "ventilate," or to "fan by ventilating" or winnowing. As "sowing" the seed is mentioned just before, it may be that this refers to gathering grain fanned or winnowed by others, while he did nothing - indicating, also, a hard or sordid disposition.

Verse 25

I was afraid - I feared lest, by some accident, thy talent would be lost if I put it out to trade, and that I should be severely punished by a hard master. I therefore kept it laid up safely, and hid it where it could not be lost.

That is thine - There is what properly belongs to thee. There is the original talent that thou gavest me, and that is all that can be reasonably required. Observe here:

1.That this expresses exactly the feelings of all sinners. God, in their view, is hard, cruel, unjust.

2.All the excuses of sinners are excuses for indolence and sin, and the effect is to cheat themselves out of heaven. The effect of this excuse was that the reward was lost, and such will always be the result of the excuses of sinners for not doing their duty.

3.Sinners grudge everything to God. They are never willing to be liberal toward him but are stinted and close; and if they give, they do it with hard feelings, and say that that is all that he can claim.

Verse 26

Slothful - Indolent, lazy, who had done nothing. God will judge people not merely for doing wrong, but for not "doing" right. See Matthew 25:45. That servant was "wicked," because he had such an opinion of his master; he had shown that he was slothful by not making good use of the talent, Matthew 25:27.

Thou knewest … - This should be understood, and might have been translated, as a question. If you knew that I was Such a man you ought to have acted accordingly, so as to have escaped punishment. Didst thou know that I reap, etc.? Then thou shouldst have given my money to the exchangers, etc. This is not intended to "admit" that he was such a man, but to convict the slothful servant of guilt and folly in not having been prepared to meet him.

Verse 27

The exchangers - The "exchangers" were persons who were in the habit of borrowing money, or receiving it on deposit at a low rate of interest, to be loaned to others at higher interest. They commonly sat by "tables" in the temple, with money ready to exchange or loan. See Matthew 21:12. This money was left with the servant, not to exchange, nor to increase it by any such idle means, but by honest industry and merchandise; but since he was too indolent for that, he ought at least to have loaned it to the exchangers, that his master might have received some benefit from it.

With usury - With interest, increase, or gain. The word "usury," in our language, has a bad signification, meaning unlawful or exorbitant interest. This was contrary to the law, Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:36. The original means "gain," increase, or lawful interest.

Verse 29

For unto every one that hath shall be given - See the notes at Matthew 13:12. This seems to be a proverbial expression. It means, whosoever rightly improves what is committed to him shall receive more, or shall be rewarded; but he that misimproves what is committed to him shall not be rewarded. In pecuniary matters in the literal sense of this parable they who improve their money by industry or merchandise increase it. They who do not who are indolent or vicious lose what they did possess, and it goes into the hands of the faithful and industrious. In the spiritual sense of the parable it means that they who are faithful shall be rewarded - not, however, that anything shall be taken from the unfaithful and given to them; and it means also that the unfaithful and indolent shall be taken away from their privileges and punished.

Verse 30

And cast … - See the notes at Matthew 8:12. The spiritual meaning of the parable may be thus summed up:

1.The servants of God are not all endowed with equal gifts and talents.

2.All, whatever may be their ability, are bound to employ their talents in promoting his honor, and in a proper improvement of them.

3.By employing their talents in a proper manner, they improve and strengthen them.

4.They will be judged according to the improvements which they have made.

5.All sinners look on God as a hard master, and as unreasonable and tyrannical.

6.People will be judged not merely for "doing wrong, but for neglecting to do right."

7.If the servant who kept the talent entire without injuring it, and who returned it to his master as he received it, was nevertheless judged, condemned, and cast away, what must they expect who abuse their talents, destroy by drunkenness and lust the noble faculties conferred on them, and squander the property that might be employed in advancing the interests of morals and religion!

Verse 31

When the Son of man … - This is in answer to the question which the disciples proposed to Jesus respecting the end of the world, Matthew 24:3. That this refers to the last judgment, and not, as some have supposed, to the destruction of Jerusalem, appears:

1.From the fact that it was in answer to an express inquiry respecting "the end" of the world.

2."All nations" were to be assembled, which did not take place at the destruction of Jerusalem.

3.A separation was to take place between the righteous and the wicked, which was not done at Jerusalem.

4.The rewards and punishments are declared to be "eternal."

None of these things took place at the destruction of Jerusalem.

In his glory - In his own proper honor. With his glorified body, and as the head and king of the universe, Acts 1:11; Ephesians 1:20-22; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:24-25, 1 Corinthians 15:52.

The throne of his glory - This means, in the language of the Hebrews, his glorious or splendid throne. It is not to be taken literally, as if there would be a material throne or seat for the King of Zion. It expresses the idea that he will come "as a king and judge" to assemble his subjects before him, and to appoint them their rewards.

Verse 32

And before him … - At his coming to judgment the world will be burned up, 2 Peter 3:10, 2 Peter 3:12; Revelation 20:11. The dead in Christ that is, all true Christians - will be raised up from their graves, 1 Thessalonians 4:16. The living will be changed - i. e., will be made like the glorified bodies of those that are raised from the dead, 1 Corinthians 15:52-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:17. All the wicked will rise and come forth to judgment, John 5:28-29; Daniel 12:2; Matthew 13:41-42; Revelation 20:13. Then shall the world be judged, the righteous saved, and the wicked punished.

And he shall separate … - Shall determine respecting their character, and shall appoint them their doom accordingly.

Verse 33

Shall set the sheep … - By "the sheep" are denoted, here, the righteous. The name is given to them because the sheep is an emblem of innocence and harmlessness. See John 10:7, John 10:14-16, John 10:27; Psalm 100:3; Psalm 74:1; Psalm 23:1-6.

On the right hand - The right hand is the place of honor, and denotes the situation of those who are honored, or those who are virtuous. See Ecclesiastes 10:2; Ephesians 1:20; Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:25, Acts 2:33.

The goats - The wicked. See Ezekiel 34:17.

The left - That is, the left hand. This was the place of dishonor, denoting condemnation. See Ecclesiastes 10:2.

Verse 34

The King - That is, the Lord Jesus, the King of Zion and of the universe, now acting as Judge, Luke 19:38; John 18:37; Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:16.

Blessed of my Father - Made happy or raised to felicity by my Father. See the notes at Matthew 5:3.

Inherit the kingdom - Receive "as heirs" the kingdom, or be received there as the sons of God. Christians are often called heirs of God, Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:6-7; Hebrews 1:14; 1 John 3:2.

Prepared for you … - That is, "designed" for you, or appointed for you. The phrase "from the foundation of the world" is used to denote that this was appointed for them in the beginning; that God has no new plan; that the rewards which he will now confer on them he always intended to confer. Christ says to the righteous that the kingdom was prepared for

"them." Of course, God meant to confer it on "them." They were individuals, and it follows that He intended to bestow His salvation on them as individuals. Accordingly, the salvation of His people is universally represented as the result of the free gift of God, according to His own pleasure, bestowed on individuals, and by a plan which is eternal, Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:4-5, Ephesians 1:11-12; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; John 6:37. This is right and consistent with justice; because:

1.All people are by nature equally undeserving.

2.Bestowing favors on one does not do injustice to another, where neither deserves favor. Pardoning one criminal is not injuring another. Bestowing great talents on Locke, Newton, or Paul did not injure me.

3.If it is right for God to give eternal life to his people, or to admit them to heaven, it was right to "determine" to do it, which is but another way of saying that God resolved from all eternity to "do right."

4.Those who perish choose the paths which lead to death, and will not be saved by the merits of Jesus. No blame can be charged on God if he does not save them against their will, John 5:40; Mark 16:15-16.

Verse 35-36

I was an hungered - The union between Christ and his people is the most tender and endearing of all connections. It is represented by the closest unions of which we have knowledge, John 15:4-6; Ephesians 5:23-32; 1 Corinthians 6:15. This is a union - not physical, but moral; a union of feelings, interests, plans, destiny; or, in other words, he and his people have similar feelings, love the same objects, share the same trials, and inherit the same blessedness, John 14:19; Revelation 3:5, Revelation 3:21; Romans 8:17. Hence, he considers favors shown to his people as shown to himself, and will reward them accordingly, Matthew 10:40, Matthew 10:42. They show attachment to him, and love to his cause. By showing kindness to the poor, the needy, and the sick, they show that they possess his spirit, for he did it when on earth; they evince attachment to him, for he was poor and needy; and they show that they have the proper spirit to outfit them for heaven, 1 John 3:14, 1 John 3:17; James 2:1-5; Mark 9:41.

Was a stranger - The word "stranger" means a foreigner or traveler; in our language, one unknown to us. To receive such to the rites of hospitality

was, in Eastern countries, where there were few or no public houses, a great virtue. See Genesis 18:1-8; Hebrews 8:2.

Took me in - Into your house. Received me kindly.

Naked - Poorly clothed. Among the Jews they were called "naked" who were clad in poor raiment, or who had on only the "tunic" or inner garment, without any outer garment. See the Matthew 5:40 note; also Acts 19:16 note; Mark 14:51-52 notes; Job 22:6 note; Isaiah 58:7 note.

Verses 37-39

Then shall the righteous … - This answer is indicative of humility - a deep sense of their being unworthy such commendation. They will feel that their poor acts of kindness have come so far short of what they should have been that they have no claim to praise or reward. It is not, however, to be supposed that in the day of judgment this will be actually "said" by the righteous, but that this would be a proper expression of their feelings.

Verse 40

One of the least of these - One of the obscurest, the least known, the poorest, the most despised and afflicted.

My brethren - Either those who are Christians, whom he condescends to call brethren, or those who are afflicted, poor, and persecuted, who are his brethren and companions in suffering, and who suffer as he did on earth. See Hebrews 2:11; Matthew 12:50. How great is the condescension and kindness of the Judge of the world, thus to reward our actions, and to consider what we have done to the poor as done to him!

Verse 41

On the left hand - The wicked.

Ye cursed - That is, you who are devoted to destruction, whose characters deserve everlasting punishment, and who are about to enter into it. "To curse" is the opposite of "to bless." It implies a negation of all the blessings of heaven, and a positive infliction of eternal sufferings.

Everlasting fire - "Fire," here, is used to denote punishment. The image is employed to express extreme suffering, as a death by burning is one of the most horrible that can be conceived. The image was taken, probably, from the fires burning in the Valley of Hinnom. See the notes at Matthew 5:22. It has been asked whether the wicked will be burned in literal fire, and the common impression has been that they will be. Respecting that, however, it is to be observed:

1.that the main truth intended to be taught refers not to the manner of suffering, but to the certainty and intensity of it.

2.that the design, therefore, was to present an image of terrific and appalling suffering - an image well represented by fire

3.that this image was well known to the Jews Isaiah 66:24, and therefore expressed the idea in a very strong manner.

4.that all the truth that Christ intended to convey appears to be expressed in the certainty, intensity, and eternity of future torment.

5.that there is no distinct affirmation respecting the mode of that punishment, where the mode was the subject of discourse.

6.that to us it is a subject of comparatively little consequence what will be the mode of punishment.

The fact that the wicked will be eternally punished, cursed of God, should awe every spirit, and lead every man to strive most earnestly to secure his salvation. As, however, the "body" will be raised, it is not unreasonable to suppose that a mode of punishment will be adopted suited to the body - perhaps bearing some analogy to suffering here, in its various forms of flames, and racks, and cold, and heat, and disease, and ungratified desire, and remorse - perhaps the concentration of all earthly woes, all that makes man miserable here, poured upon the naked body and spirit of the wicked in hell forever and ever.

Prepared for the devil - The devil is the prince of evil spirits. This place of punishment was suited for him when he rebelled against God, Jude 1:6; Revelation 12:8-9.

His angels - His messengers, his servants, or those angels that he drew off from heaven by his rebellion, and whom he has employed as his "messengers" to do evil. The word may extend also to all his followers - fallen angels or people. There is a remarkable difference between the manner in which the righteous will be addressed, and the wicked. Christ will say to the one that the kingdom was prepared for them; to the other, that the fire was not prepared for "them," but for another race of beings. they will inherit it because they have the same character "as the devil," and

are therefore suited to the same place - not because it was originally "prepared for them."

Verse 45

Inasmuch as ye did it not … - By not doing good to the "followers" of Christ, they showed that they had no real love to Him. By not doing good to the poor and needy, to the stranger and the prisoner, they showed that they had not his spirit, and were not like him, and were unfit for his kingdom. Let it be observed here that the public ground of their condemnation is the neglect of duty, or because "they did it not." We are not to suppose that they will not also be condemned for their open and positive sins. See Romans 2:9; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5-6; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Revelation 21:8; Psalm 9:17. But their neglect of doing good to him and his people may be the "public" reason of condemning them:

1.Because he wished to give pre-eminence to those virtues, to excite his followers to do them.

2.People should be punished for neglect as well as for positive sin. Sin is a violation of the law, or refusing to do what God commands.

3.Nothing better shows the true state of the heart than the proper performance of those duties, and the true character can be as well tested by neglecting them as by open crimes.

If it is asked how the pagan who never heard of the name of Christ can be justly condemned in this manner, it may be answered:

1.that Christ acknowledges all the poor, and needy, and strangers of every land, as his brethren. See Matthew 25:40.

2.that by neglecting the duties of charity they show that they have not his spirit are not like him.

3.that these duties are clearly made known by conscience and by the light of nature, as well as by revelation, and people may therefore be condemned for the neglect of them.

4.that they are not condemned for not believing in Christ, of whom they have not heard, but for a wrong spirit, neglect of duty, open crime; for being unlike Christ, and therefore unfit for heaven.

One of the least of these - These on my right hand. My brethren. Those who are saved.

Verse 46

And these shall go away - These "persons." Many, holding the doctrine of universal salvation have contended that God would punish sin only. Christ says that "those on his left hand," shall go away - not "sins," but "sinners." Besides, sin, as an abstract thing, cannot be punished. Sin is nothing but an "act" - the act of a transgressor, and, to be reached at all, it must be reached by punishing the offender himself.

Into everlasting punishment - The original word translated here as "punishment" means torment, or suffering inflicted for crime. The noun is used but in one other place in the New Testament - 1 John 4:18; "Fear hath ‹torment.'" The verb from which the noun is derived is twice used - Acts 4:21; 2 Peter 2:9. In all these places it denotes anguish, suffering, punishment. It does not mean simply a "state or condition," but absolute, positive suffering; and if this word does not teach it, no word "could" express the idea that the wicked would suffer. It has been contended that the sufferings of the wicked will not be eternal or without end. It is not the purpose of these notes to enter into debates of that kind further than to ascertain the meaning of the language used by the sacred writers. In regard to the meaning of the word "everlasting" in this place, it is to be observed:

1. that the literal meaning of the word expresses absolute eternity - "always belong," Matthew 18:8; Matthew 19:16; Mark 3:29; Romans 2:7; Hebrews 5:9.

2. that the obvious and plain interpretation of the word demands this signification in this place. The original word - αἰώνιον aionion- is employed in the New Testament 66 times. Of these, in 51 instances it is used of the happiness of the righteous; in two, of God's existence; in six, of the church and the Messiah's kingdom; and in the remaining seven, of the future punishment of the wicked. If in these seven instances we attach to the word the idea of limited duration, consistency requires that the same idea of limited duration should be given it in the 51 cases of its application to the future glory of the righteous, and the two instances of its application to God's existence, and the six eases of its appropriation to the future reign of the Messiah and the glory and perpetuity of the church. But no one will presume to deny that in these instances it denotes unlimited duration, and therefore, in accordance with the sound laws of interpretation and of

language itself, the same sense of unlimited duration must be given it when used of future punishment - Owen, in loc.

3. that, admitting that it was the Saviour‘s design always to teach this doctrine, this would be “the very word” to express it; and if this does not teach it, it could not be taught.

4. that it is not taught in any plainer manner in any confession of faith on the globe; and if this may be explained away, all those may be.

5. that our Saviour knew that this would be so understood by nine-tenths of the world; and if he did not mean to teach it, he has knowingly led them into error, and his honesty cannot be vindicated.

6. that he knew that the doctrine was calculated to produce “fear and terror;” and if he was benevolent, and actually used language calculated to produce this fear and terror, his conduct cannot be vindicated in exciting unnecessary alarms.

7. that the word used here is the same in the original as that used to express the eternal life of the righteous; if one can be proved to be limited in duration, the other can by the same arguments. “The proof that the righteous will be happy forever is precisely the same, and no other, than that the wicked will, be miserable forever.”

8. that it is confirmed by many other passages of Scripture, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Luke 16:26; Revelation 14:11; Psalm 9:17; Isaiah 33:14; Mark 16:16; John 3:36.

Life eternal - Man by sin has plunged himself into death, temporal, spiritual, eternal. Christ, by coming and dying, has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light, 2 Timothy 1:10. “Life” is the opposite of death. It denotes, here, freedom from death, and positive holiness and happiness forever.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 26

Introduction

Mark 14:1-11; Luke 22:1-6; John 12:1-7.

Verse 2

After two days is - the feast of the Passover.

See the notes at Matthew 12:1-8. The festival of the Passover was designed to preserve among the Jews the memory of their liberation from Egyptian servitude, and of the safety of their first-born in that night when the firstborn of the Egyptians perished, Exodus 12:13. It was celebrated seven days, namely, from the 15th to the 21st of the month Abib or Nisan (April), Exodus 12:15-20; Exodus 23:15. During all this period the people ate unleavened bread, and hence the festival was sometimes called the "feast of unleavened bread," Exodus 12:18; Leviticus 23:6. On the evening of the fourteenth day, all the leaven or yeast in the family was removed with great care, as it is to the present time - a circumstance to which the apostle alludes in 1 Corinthians 5:7.

On the tenth day of the month the master of a family separated a lamb or a goat of a year old from the flock Exodus 12:1-6, which he killed on the 14th day before the altar, Deuteronomy 16:2, Deuteronomy 16:5-6. The lamb was commonly slain at about 3 o'clock p. m.. The blood of the paschal lamb was, in Egypt, sprinkled on the door-posts of the houses; afterward it was poured by the priests at the foot of the altar, Exodus 12:7. The lamb thus slain was roasted whole, with two spits thrust through it - one lengthwise and one transversely - crossing each other near the forelegs, so that the animal was in a manner, crucified. Not a bone of it might be broken - a circumstance strongly representing the sufferings of our Lord Jesus, the Passover slain for us, John 19:36; 1 Corinthians 5:7. Thus roasted, the lamb was served up with wild and bitter herbs, Not fewer than ten, nor more than twenty persons, were admitted to these sacred feasts. At first it was observed with their loins girt about, with sandals on their feet, and with all the preparations for an immediate journey. This, in Egypt, was significant of the haste with which they were about to depart from the land of bondage. The custom was afterward retained.

The order of the celebration of this feast was as follows: The ceremony commenced with drinking a cup of wine mingled with water, after having given thanks to God for it. This was the "first cup." Then followed the "washing of hands," with another short form of thanksgiving to God. The table was then supplied with the provisions, namely, the bitter salad, the unleavened bread, the lamb, and a thick sauce composed of dates, figs, raisins, vinegar, etc. They then took a small quantity of salad, with another thanksgiving, and ate it; after which, all the dishes were removed from the table, and a second cup of wine was set before each guest, as at first. The dishes were removed, it is said, to excite the curiosity of children, and to lead them to make inquiry into the cause of this observance. See Exodus 12:26-27. The leading person at the feast then began and rehearsed the history of the servitude of the Jews in Egypt, the manner of their deliverance, and the reason of instituting the Passover. The dishes were then returned to the table, and he said, "This is the Passover which we eat, because that the Lord passed over the houses of our fathers in Egypt;" and then, holding up the salad and the unleavened bread, he stated the design, namely, that the one represented the bitterness of the Egyptian bondage, and the other the suddenness of their deliverance.

This done, he repeated Psalm 113:1-9; Psalm 114:1-8, offered a short prayer, and all the company drank the wine that had been standing some time before them. This was the "second cup." The hands were then again washed, and the meal then eaten with the usual forms and solemnities; after which they washed the hands again, and then drank another cup of wine, called "the cup of blessing," because the leader was accustomed in a particular manner, over that cup, to offer thanks to God for his goodness. This is the cup which our Saviour is supposed to have taken when he instituted the Lord's Supper, called by Paul "the cup of blessing," 1 Corinthians 10:16. There was still another cup, which was drunk when they were about to separate, called the "Hallel," because in connection with it they were accustomed to repeat the lesser Hallel, or Psalm 117:1-2; 118. In accordance with this, our Saviour and his disciples sang a hymn as they were about to go to the Mount of Olives, Matthew 26:30. It is probable that our Saviour complied with these rites according to the custom of the Jews. While doing it, he signified that the typical reference of the Passover was about to be accomplished, and he instituted in place of it "the supper" - the

communion - and, of course, the obligation to keep the Passover then ceased.

The Son of man is betrayed - Will be betrayed. He did not mean to say that they then knew that he would be betrayed, for it does not appear that they had been informed of the precise time; but they knew that the Passover was at hand, and he then informed them that he would be betrayed.

To be crucified - To be put to death on the cross. See the notes at Matthew 27:35.

Matthew 26:3

Then assembled … - This was a meeting of the great council or Sanhedrin.

See the notes at Matthew 5:22.

The palace - The original word properly denotes the Hall or large area in the center of the dwelling, called the court. See the notes at Matthew 9:1-8. It may be understood, however, as referring to the palace itself.

The high priest - Holding the office that was first conferred on Aaron, Numbers 3:10. Antiochus Epiphanes (160 BC), when he had possession of Judea, sold the office to the highest bidder. In the year 152 BC, Alexander, King of Syria, conferred the office on Jonathan (John 11:51. Persons who had been high priests, and had been removed from office, still retained the name. Hence, more than one high priest is sometimes mentioned, though strictly there was but one who held the office.

Matthew 26:4

By subtlety - By guile, deceit, or in some secret manner, so that the people would not know it.

Jesus was regarded by the people as a distinguished prophet, and by most of them, probably, as the Messiah; and the Sanhedrin did not dare to take him away openly, lest the people should rise and rescue him. They were probably aware that he had gone out to Bethany, or to some place adjacent to the city; and as he passed his nights there and not in the city, there was need of guile to ascertain the place to which he had retired, and to take him.

Matthew 26:5

Not on the feast-day - Not during the feast.

The feast lasted for seven days. A vast multitude attended from all parts of Judea. Jerusalem is said to have contained at such times “three million people.” Amid such a multitude there were frequent tumults and seditions,

and the Sanhedrin was justly apprehensive there "would" be now, if, in open day and in the temple, they took away a teacher so popular as Jesus, and put him to death. They therefore sought how they might do it secretly and by guile.

Matthew 26:6

In Bethany - See the notes at Matthew 21:1.

Simon the leper - Simon, who had been a leper.

Leper - See the notes at Matthew 8:1. It was unlawful to eat with persons that had the leprosy, and it is more than probable, therefore, that this Simon had been healed - perhaps by our Lord himself. John John 12:1 says that this was the house where Lazarus was, who had been raised from the dead. Probably Lazarus was a relative of Simon's, and was living with him. Further, he says that they made a supper for Jesus, and that Martha served. He says that this was six days before the Passover. From the order in which Matthew and Mark mention it, it would have been supposed that it was but two days before the Passover, and after the cleansing of the temple; but it is to be observed,

1.that Matthew and Mark often neglect the exact order of the events that they record.

2.that they do not "affirm" at what time this was. They leave it indefinite, saying that "while" Jesus was in Bethany he was anointed by Mary.

3.that Matthew introduced it here for the purpose of giving a "connected" account of the conduct of "Judas." "Judas" complained at the waste of the ointment John 12:4, and one of the effects of his indignation, it seems, was to betray his Lord.

Matthew 26:7

There came to him a woman - This woman was Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, John 12:3.

Having an alabaster box - The "alabaster" is a species of marble, distinguished for being light, and of a beautiful white color, almost transparent.

It was much used by the ancients for the purpose of preserving various kinds of ointment in.

Of very precious ointment - That is, of ointment of "great value;" that was rare and difficult to be obtained. Mark Mark 14:3 and John John 12:3

say that it was ointment of spikenard. In the original it is "nard." It was procured from an herb growing in the Indies, chiefly obtained from the root, though sometimes also from the bark. It was liquid, so as easily to flow when the box or vial was open, and was distinguished particularly for an agreeable smell. See John 12:3. The "pound" in use among the Jews was the Roman, of twelve ounces, answering to our troy weight. That there was a large quantity is further evident from the fact that Judas says it might have been sold for 300 pence (about 9 British pounds), and that the "house" was filled with the odor of the ointment (John).

And poured it on his head - They were accustomed chiefly to anoint the head or hair. John says John 12:3 that she poured it on the "feet" of Jesus, and wiped them with her hair. There is, however, no contradiction. She probably poured it "both" on his head and his feet. Matthew and Mark having recorded the former, John, who wrote his gospel in part to record events omitted by them, completes the account by saying that the ointment was also poured on the feet of the Saviour. To pour ointment on the "head" was common. To pour it on the "feet" was an act of distinguished "humility" and of attachment to the Saviour, and therefore deserved to be particularly recorded.

As he sat at meat - That is, at supper. In the original, as he "reclined" at supper. The ancients did not sit at their meals, but "reclined" at length on couches. See the notes at Matthew 23:6. She came up, therefore, "behind him" as he lay reclined at the table, and, bending down over the couch, poured the ointment on his head and his feet, and, probably kneeling at his feet, wiped them with her hair.

Matthew 26:8

They had indignation - John says that "Judas expressed" indignation.

Probably some of the others felt indignation, but Judas only gave vent to his feelings. The reason why Judas was indignant was, that he had the "bag" John 12:6 - that is, the "purse," or repository of articles "given" to the disciples and to the Saviour. He was a thief, and was in the habit, it seems, of taking out and appropriating to his own use what was put in for them in common The leading trait of Judas's character was avarice, and no opportunity was suffered to pass without attempting by base and wicked means to make money. In his example an avaricious man may learn the true nature and the effect of that groveling and wicked passion. It led him to commit the enormous crime of betraying his Lord to death, and it will

always lead its possessor to guilt. No small part of the sins of the world can be traced to avarice, and many, and many a time since the days of Judas has the Lord Jesus been betrayed among his professed friends by the same base propensity.

Is this waste - This "loss" or "destruction" of property. They could see no use in it, and they therefore supposed it was lost.

Matthew 26:9

Sold for much - Mark and John say for three hundred pence - that is, for about 9 British pounds.

This, to them, was a large sum. Mark says they complained against her. There was also an "implied" murmuring against the Saviour for suffering it to be done. The grumbling was, however, without cause. It was the "property" of Mary. She had a right to dispose of it as she pleased, answerable not to them, but to God. "They" had no right over it, and no cause of complaint if it had been wasted. So Christians now are at liberty to dispose of their property as they please, either in distributing the Bible, in supporting the gospel, in sending it to pagan nations, or in aiding the poor. The people of the world, like Judas, regard it as "wasted." Like Judas, they are indignant. They say it might be disposed of in a better way. Yet, like Judas, they are interfering in that which concerns them not. Like other people, Christians have a right to dispose of their property as they please, answerable only to God. And though an avaricious world esteems it to be "wasted," yet, if their Lord commands it, it will be found to be the "only way" in which it was right for them to dispose of that property, and will be found not to have been in vain.

Matthew 26:10

Trouble ye the woman - That is, disturb her mind by insinuations, as if she had done wrong.

A good work on me - She has done it with a mind grateful, and full of love to me.

The work was good, also, as it was preparative for his death, Matthew 26:12.

Matthew 26:11

For ye have the poor … - Mark adds, "Whensoever ye will, ye may do them good." It was right that they should regard the poor.

It was a plain precept of religion (see Psalm 41:1; Proverbs 14:21; Proverbs 29:7; Galatians 2:10), and our Saviour would not prohibit it, but

do all that was possible to excite his followers to the duty. But every duty should be done in its place, and the duty "then" incumbent was that which Mary had performed. They would afterward have abundant occasion to show their regard for the poor.

Me ye have not always - He alludes here to his dying, and his going away to heaven. He would still be their friend and their Saviour, but would not be physically always present with them, so that they could show kindness "in this way" to him.

Matthew 26:12

She did it for my burial - It is not to be supposed that Mary understood clearly that he was then about to die - for the apostles, it seems, did not fully comprehend it, or that she intended it for his burial; but she had done it as an act of kindness and love, to show her regard for her Lord.

He said that it was a proper preparation for his burial. In ancient times, bodies were anointed and embalmed for the purpose of the sepulchre. Jesus said that this was "really" a preparation for that burial; a fitting him in a proper manner for the tomb.

Matthew 26:13

A memorial - Anything to produce "remembrance." This would be told to her honor and credit, as a memorial of her piety and self-denial; and it is right that the good deeds of the pious should be recorded and had in recollection.

Matthew 26:14

Then one of the twelve … - Luke says that Satan entered into Judas.

That is, Satan tempted (instigated) him to do it. Probably he tempted Judas by appealing to his avarice, his ruling passion, and by suggesting that now was a favorable opportunity to make money rapidly by selling his Lord.

Judas Iscariot - See the notes at Matthew 10:4.

Unto the chief priests - The high priest, and those who had been high priests. The ruling men of the Sanhedrin. Luke adds that he went also "to the captains" Luke 22:4. It was necessary, on account of the great wealth deposited there, and its great sacredness, to guard the temple by night. Accordingly, men were stationed around it, whose leaders or commanders were called "captains," Acts 4:1. These men were commonly of the tribe of Levi, were closely connected with the priests, were men of influence, and Judas went to them, therefore, as well as to the priests, to offer his services

in accomplishing what they so much desired to secure. Probably his object was to get as much money as possible, and he might therefore have attempted to make a bargain with several of them apart from each other.

Matthew 26:15

And they covenanted with him - Made a bargain with him.

Agreed to give him. Mark says they "promised" to give him money. They did not pay it to him "then," lest he should deceive them. When the deed was done, and before he was made sensible of its guilt, they paid him. See Matthew 27:3; Acts 1:18.

Thirty pieces of silver - Mark and Luke do not mention the sum. They say that they promised him "money" - in the original, "silver." In Matthew, in the original, it is thirty "silvers, or silverlings." This was the price "of a slave" (see Exodus 21:32), and it is not unlikely that this sum was fixed on by them to show their "contempt" of Jesus, and that they regarded him as of little value. There is no doubt, also, that they understood that such was the anxiety of Judas to obtain money, that he would betray his Lord for any sum. The money usually denoted by "pieces" of silver, when the precise sum is not mentioned, is a shekel - a silver Jewish coin amounting to about 50 cents, or 2 shillings, 3d. The whole sum, therefore, for which Judas committed this crime was 15, or 3 pounds, 7 shillings, 6d (circa 1880's).

Matthew 26:16

Sought opportunity to betray him - Luke adds, "in the absence of the multitude." This was the chief difficulty - to deliver him into the hands of the priests so as not to have it known by the people, or so as not to excite tumult.

The "opportunity" which he sought, therefore, was one in which the multitude would not see him, or could not rescue the Saviour.

To betray him - The word "betray" commonly means to deliver into the hands of an enemy by treachery or breach of trust; to do it while friendship or faithfulness is "professed." All this took place in the case of Judas. But the word in the original does not necessarily imply this. It means simply to "deliver up," or to give into their hands. He sought opportunity "how he might deliver him up to them," agreeably to the contract.

Verses 17-19

See also Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-13.

Matthew 26:17

The first day … - The feast continued "eight" days, including the day on which the paschal lamb was killed and eaten, Exodus 12:15. That was the fourteenth day of the month Abib, answering to parts of our March and April.

Of unleavened bread - Called so because during those eight days no bread made with yeast or leaven was allowed to be eaten. Luke says, "in which the passover must be killed" - that is, in which the "paschal lamb," or the lamb eaten on the occasion, was killed. The word in the original, translated "Passover," commonly means, not the "feast" itself, but the "lamb" that was killed on the occasion, Exodus 12:43; Numbers 9:11; John 18:28. See also 1 Corinthians 5:7, where Christ, "our Passover," is said to be slain for us; that is, our paschal lamb, so called on account of his innocence, and his being offered as a victim or "sacrifice" for our sins.

Matthew 26:18

Go into the city to such a man - That is, Jerusalem, called the city by way of eminence.

Luke says that the disciples whom he sent were Peter and John. The man to whom they were to go he did not mention by name, but he told them that when they came into the city, a man would meet them bearing a pitcher of water. See Mark and Luke. Him they were to follow, and in the house which he entered they would find a room prepared. The name of the man was not mentioned. The "house" in which they were to keep the Passover was not mentioned. The reason of this probably was, that Christ was desirous of concealing from "Judas" the place where they would keep the Passover. He was acquainted with the design of Judas to betray him. He knew that if Judas was acquainted with the place "beforehand," he could easily give information to the chief priests, and it would give them a favorable opportunity to surprise them, and apprehend "him" without making a tumult. Though it was certain that he would not be delivered up before the time appointed by the Father, yet it was proper "to use the means" to prevent it. There can be little doubt that Jesus was acquainted with this man, and that he was a disciple. The direction which he gave his disciples most clearly proves that he was omniscient. Amid so great a multitude going at that time into the city, it was impossible to know that "a particular man would be met" - a man bearing a pitcher of water - unless Jesus had all knowledge, and was therefore divine.

The Master saith - This was the name by which Jesus was probably known among the disciples, and one which he directed them to give him. See Matthew 23:8, Matthew 23:10. It means, literally, "the teacher," as opposed to "the disciple," or learner; not the "master," as opposed to the "servant or slave." The fact that they used this name as if the man would know whom they meant, and the fact that the man understood them and made no further inquiries, shows that he was acquainted with Jesus, and was probably himself a disciple.

My time is at hand - That is, "is near." By "his time," here, may be meant either his time to eat the Passover, or the time of his death. It has been supposed by many that Jesus, in accordance with a part of the Jews who rejected traditions, anticipated the usual observance of the Passover, or kept it one day sooner. The Pharisees had devised many forms of ascertaining when the month commenced. They placed witnesses around the heights of the temple to observe the first appearance of the new moon; they examined the witnesses with much formality, and endeavored also to obtain the exact time by astronomical calculations. Others held that the month properly commenced when the moon was visible. Thus, it is said a difference arose between them about the time of the Passover, and that Jesus kept it one day sooner than most of the people. The foundation of the opinion that he anticipated the usual time of keeping the Passover is the following:

1. In John 18:28, it is said that on the day on which our Lord was crucified, and of course the day after he had eaten the Passover, the chief priests would not go into the judgment-hall lest they should be defiled, "but that they might eat the passover," evidently meaning that it was to be eaten that day.

2. In John 19:14, the day on which he was crucified is called "the preparation of the passover" - that is, the day on which it was prepared to be eaten in the evening.

3. In John 19:31, the day in which our Lord lay in the grave was called the great day of the Sabbath - "a high day;" that is, the day after the Passover was killed, the Sabbath occurring on the first day of the feast properly, and therefore a day of special solemnity; yet our Saviour had partaken of it two days before, and therefore the day before the body of the

people. If this opinion be true, then the phrase "my time is at hand means my time for keeping the Passover is near. Whether this opinion be true or not, there may be a reference also to his death. The man with whom they were to go was probably a disciple of his, though perhaps a secret one. Jesus might purpose to keep the Passover at his house, that he might inform him more particularly respecting his death, and prepare him for it. He sent, therefore, to him and said, "I will keep the passover ‹at thy house.'"

Mark and Luke add that he would show them "a large upper room, furnished and prepared." Ancient writers remark that, at the time of the great feasts, the houses in Jerusalem were all open to receive guests - that they were in a manner common to the people of Judea; and there is no doubt, therefore, that the master of a house would have it ready on such occasions for company. It is possible, also, that there might have been an agreement between this man and our Lord that he would prepare his house for him, though this was unknown to the disciples. The word rendered "furnished" means, literally, "spread;" that is, "spread" with carpets, and with "couches" on which to recline at the table, after the manner of the East. See the notes at Matthew 23:6.

Matthew 26:19

They made ready the passover - That is, they procured a lamb, multitudes of which were kept for sale in the temple; they had it killed and flayed by the priests, and the blood poured by the altar; they roasted the lamb, and prepared the bitter herbs, the sauce, and the unleavened bread.

This was done, it seems, while our Lord was absent, by the two disciples.

Verse 20

When the even was come - The lamb was killed "between the evenings," Exodus 12:6 (Hebrew) - that is between three o'clock, p. m., and nine in the evening. The Jews reckoned two evenings - one from three o'clock p. m. to sunset, the other from sunset to the close of the first watch in the night, or nine o'clock p. m. The paschal supper was commonly eaten after the setting of the sun, and often in the night, Exodus 12:8.

He sat down - At first the supper was eaten standing, with their loins girded and their staff in their hand, denoting the haste with which they were about to flee from Egypt. Afterward, however, they introduced the practice,

it seems, of partaking of this as they did of their ordinary meals. The original word is, "he reclined" - that is, he placed himself on the couch in a reclining posture, in the usual manner in which they partook of their meals. See the notes at Matthew 23:6. While reclining there at the supper, the disciples had a dispute which should be the greatest. See the notes at Luke 22:24-30. At this time, also, before the institution of the Lord's supper, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, to teach them humility. See the notes at John 13:1-20.

Verses 21-24

As they did eat … - The account contained in these verses is also recorded in Mark 14:18-21; Luke 22:21-23; John 13:21-22. John says that before Jesus declared that one of them should betray him, "he was troubled in spirit, and testified;" that is, he "felt deeply" in view of the greatness of the crime that Judas was about to commit, and the sufferings that he was to endure, and "testified," or gave utterance to his inward feelings of sorrow.

Matthew 26:22

They were exceeding sorrowful - John says John 13:22 "they looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake" - that is, they anxiously looked one at another, conscious each one, except Judas, of no such intention, and each one beginning to examine himself to find whether he was the person intended.

This showed their innocence, and their attachment to Jesus. It showed how sensitive they were to the least suspicion of the kind. It showed that they were willing to know themselves, thus evincing the spirit of the true Christian. Judas only was silent, and was the last to make the inquiry, and that after he had been plainly pointed out Matthew 26:25, thus showing:

1.that guilt is slow to suspect itself;

2.that it shrinks from the light;

3.that it was his purpose to conceal his intention; and,

4.that nothing but the consciousness that his Lord knew his design could induce him to make inquiry.

The guilty would, if possible, always conceal their crimes. The innocent are ready to suspect that they may have done wrong. Their feelings are tender, and they inquire with solicitude whether there may not be something

in their bosoms, unknown to themselves, that may be a departure from right feeling.

Matthew 26:23

He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish - The Jews, at the observance of this ordinance, used a bitter sauce, made of bunches of raisins, mixed with vinegar and other seasoning of the like kind, which they said represented the clay which their fathers were compelled to use in Egypt in making brick, thus reminding them of their bitter bondage there.

This was probably the dish to which reference is made here. It is not improbable that Judas reclined near to our Saviour at the feast, and by his saying it was one that dipped "with him" in the dish, he meant one that was near to him, designating him more particularly than he had done before. John adds (John 13:23-30; see the notes at that place), that "there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples whom Jesus loved" - referring to himself; that Simon Peter beckoned to him to ask Jesus more particularly who it was; that Jesus signified who it was by giving "Judas a sop" - that is, a piece of "bread" or "meat" dipped in the thick sauce; and that Judas, having received it, went out to accomplish his wicked design of betraying him. Judas was not, therefore, present at the institution of the Lord's Supper.

Matthew 26:24

The Son of man, goeth - That is, the Messiah - the Christ. See the notes at Matthew 8:20.

Goeth - Dies, or will die. The Hebrews often spoke in this manner of death, Psalm 39:13; Genesis 15:2.

As it is written of him - That is, as it is "written" or prophesied of him in the Old Testament. Compare Psalm 41:9 with John 13:18. See also Daniel 9:26-27; Isaiah 53:4-9. Luke Luke 22:22 says, "as it was determined." In the Greek, as it was "marked out by a boundary" - that is, in the divine purpose. It was the previous intention of God to give him up to die for sin, or it could not have been certainly predicted. It is also declared to have been by his "determinate counsel and foreknowledge." See the notes at Acts 2:23.

Woe unto that man … - The crime is great and awful, and he will be punished accordingly. He states the greatness of his misery or "woe" in the phrase following.

It had been good … - That is, it would have been better for him if he had not been born; or it would be better now for him if he was to be as "if" he had not been born, or if he was annihilated. This was a proverbial mode of speaking among the Jews in frequent use. In relation to Judas, it proves the following things:

1.that the crime which he was about to commit was exceedingly great;

2.that the misery or punishment due to it would certainly come upon him;

3.that he would certainly deserve that misery, or it would not have been threatened or inflicted; and,

4.that his punishment would be eternal.

If there should be any period when the sufferings of Judas should end, and he be restored and raised to heaven, the blessings of that "happiness without end" would infinitely overbalance all the sufferings he could endure in a limited time, and consequently it would not be true that it would have been better for him not to have been born. Existence, to him, would, on the whole, be an infinite blessing. This passage proves further that, in relation to one wicked man, the sufferings of hell will be eternal. If of one, then it is equally certain and proper that all the wicked will perish forever.

If it be asked how this crime of Judas could be so great, or could be a crime at all, when it was determined beforehand that the Saviour should be betrayed and die in this manner, it may be answered:

1. That the crime was what it was "in itself," apart from any determination of God. It was a violation of all the duties he owed to God and to the Lord Jesus - awful ingratitude, detestable covetousness, and most base treachery. As such it deserved to be punished.

2. The previous purpose of God did not force Judas to do this. In it he acted freely. He did just what his wicked heart prompted him to do.

3. A previous knowledge of a thing, or a previous purpose to permit a thing, does not alter its "nature," or cause it to be a different thing from what it is.

4. God, who is the best judge of the nature of crime, holds all that was done in crucifying the Saviour, though it was by his determinate counsel and foreknowledge, "to be by wicked hands," Acts 2:23. This punishment of Judas proves, also, that sinners cannot take shelter for their sins in the decrees of God, or plead them as an excuse. God will punish crimes for what they "are in themselves." His own deep and inscrutable purposes in regard to human actions will not change "the nature" of those actions, or screen the sinner from the punishment which he deserves.

Verse 25

Thou hast said - That is, thou hast said the truth. It is so. Thou art the man. Compare Matthew 26:64 with Mark 14:62.

Verses 26-30

See also Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:15-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25.

Matthew 26:26

As they were eating - As they were eating the paschal supper, near the close of the meal.

Luke adds that he said, just before instituting the sacramental supper, "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." This is a Hebrew manner of expression, signifying "I have greatly desired." He had desired it, doubtless:

(1)that he might institute the Lord's Supper, to be a perpetual memorial of him;

(2)that he might strengthen them for their approaching trials;

(3) that he might explain to them the true nature of the Passover; and,

(4) that he might spend another season with them in the duties of religion. Every "Christian, about to die will also seek opportunities of drawing specially near to God, and of holding communion with him and with his people.

Jesus took bread - That is, the unleavened bread which they used at the celebration of the Passover, made into thin cakes, easily broken and distributed.

And blessed it - Or sought a blessing on it; or "gave thanks" to God for it. The word rendered "blessed" not unfrequently means "to give thanks." Compare Luke 9:16 and John 6:11. It is also to be remarked that some manuscripts have the word rendered "gave thanks," instead of the one translated "blessed." It appears from the writings of Philo and the Rabbis

that the Jews were never accustomed to eat without giving thanks to God and seeking his blessing. This was especially the case in both the bread and the wine used at the Passover.

And brake it - This "breaking" of the bread represented the sufferings of Jesus about to take place - his body "broken" or wounded for sin. Hence, Paul 1 Corinthians 11:24 adds, "This is my body which is broken for you;" that is, which is about to be broken for you by death, or wounded, pierced, bruised, to make atonement for your sins.

This is my body - This represents my body. This broken bread shows the manner in which my body will be broken; or this will serve to recall my dying sufferings to your remembrance. It is not meant that his body would be literally "broken" as the bread was, but that the bread would be a significant emblem or symbol to recall to their recollection his sufferings. It is not improbable that our Lord pointed to the broken bread, or laid his hands on it, as if he had said, "Lo, my body!" or, "Behold my body! - that which "represents" my broken body to you." This "could not" be intended to mean that that bread was literally his body. It was not. His body was then before them "living." And there is no greater absurdity than to imagine his "living body" there changed at once to a "dead body," and then the bread to be changed into that dead body, and that all the while the "living" body of Jesus was before them.

Yet this is the absurd and impossible doctrine of the Roman Catholics, holding that the "bread" and "wine" were literally changed into the "body and blood" of our Lord. The language employed by the Saviour was in accordance with a common mode of speaking among the Jews, and exactly similar to that used by Moses at the institution of the Passover Exodus 12:11; "It" - that is, the lamb - "is the Lord's Passover." That is, the lamb and the feast "represent" the Lord's "passing over" the houses of the Israelites. It serves to remind you of it. It surely cannot be meant that that lamb was the literal "passing over" their houses - a palpable absurdity - but that it represented it. So Paul and Luke say of the bread, "This is my body broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." This expresses the whole design of the sacramental bread. It is to call to "remembrance," in a vivid manner, the dying sufferings of our Lord. The sacred writers, moreover, often denote that one thing is represented by another by using the word is. See Matthew 13:37; "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man" - that is, represents the Son of man. Genesis 41:26; "the seven good kine are

seven years" - that is, "represent" or signify seven years. See also John 15:1, John 15:5; Genesis 17:10. The meaning of this important passage may be thus expressed: "As I give this broken bread to you to eat, so will I deliver my body to be afflicted and slain for your sins."

Matthew 26:27

And he took the cup - That is, the cup of wine which was used at the feast of the Passover, called the cup of "Hallel," or praise, because they commenced then repeating the "Psalms" with which they closed the Passover.

See Matthew 26:30. This cup, Luke says, he took "after supper" - that is, after they had finished the ordinary celebration of "eating" the Passover. The "bread" was taken "while" they were eating, the cup after they had done eating.

And gave thanks - See the notes at Matthew 26:26.

Drink ye all of it - That is, "all of you, disciples, drink of it;" not, "drink all the wine."

Matthew 26:28

For this is my blood - This "represents" my blood, as the bread does my body.

Luke and Paul vary the expression, adding what Matthew and Mark have omitted. "This cup is the new testament in my blood." By this cup he meant the wine in the cup, and not the cup itself. Pointing to it, probably, he said, "This - ‹wine‘ - represents my blood about to be, shed." The phrase "new testament" should have been rendered "new covenant," referring to the "covenant or compact" that God was about to make with people through a Redeemer. The "old" covenant was that which was made with the Jews by the sprinkling of the blood of sacrifices. See Exodus 24:8; "And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you," etc. In allusion to that, Jesus says, this cup is the new "covenant" in my blood; that is, which is "ratified, sealed, or sanctioned by my blood." In ancient times, covenants or contracts were ratified by slaying an animal; by the shedding of its blood, imprecating similar vengeance if either party failed in the compact. See the notes at Hebrews 9:16. So Jesus says the covenant which God is about to form with people the new covenant, or the gospel economy is sealed or ratified with my blood.

Which is shed for many for the remission of sins - In order that sins may be remitted, or forgiven. That is, this is the appointed way by which God will pardon transgressions. That blood is efficacious for the pardon of sin:

1. Because it is "the life" of Jesus, the "blood" being used by the sacred writers as representing "life itself," or as containing the elements of life, Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:14. It was forbidden, therefore, to eat blood, because it contained the life, or was the life, of the animal. When, therefore, Jesus says that his blood was shed for many, it is the same as saying that His life was given for many. See the notes at Romans 3:25.

2. His life was given for sinners, or he died in the place of sinners as their substitute. By his death on the cross, the death or punishment due to them in hell may be removed and their souls be saved. He endured so much suffering, bore so much agony, that God was pleased to accept it in the place of the eternal torments of all the redeemed. The interests of justice, the honor and stability of his government, would be as secure in saving them in this manner as if the suffering were inflicted on them personally in hell. God, by giving his Son to die for sinners, has shown his infinite abhorrence of sin; since, according to his view, and therefore according to truth, nothing else would show its evil nature but the awful sufferings of his own Son. That he died "in the stead or place" of sinners is abundantly clear from the following passages of Scripture: John 1:29; Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 7:27; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10; Isaiah 53:10; Romans 8:32; 2 Corinthians 5:15.

Matthew 26:29

But I say unto you … - That is, the observance of the Passover, and of the rites shadowing forth future things, here end.

I am about to die. The design of all these types and shadows is about to be accomplished. This is the last time that I shall partake of them with you. Hereafter, when my Father's kingdom is established in heaven, we will partake together of the thing represented by these types and ceremonial observances - the blessings and triumphs of redemption.

Fruit of the vine - "Wine, the fruit or produce" of the vine made of the grapes of the vine.

Until that day - Probably the time when they should be received to heaven. It does not mean here on earth, further than that they would partake

with him in the happiness of spreading the gospel and the triumphs of his kingdom.

When I drink it new with you - Not that he would partake with them of literal wine there, but in the thing represented by it. Wine was an important part of the feast of the Passover, and of all feasts. The kingdom of heaven is often represented under the image of a feast. It means that he will partake of joy with them in heaven; that they will share together the honors and happiness of the heavenly world.

New - In a new manner, or perhaps "afresh."

In my Father's kingdom - In heaven. The place where God shall reign in a kingdom fully established and pure.

Matthew 26:30

And when they had sung a hymn - The Passover was observed by the Jews by singing or "chanting" Matthew 20:1.

Verses 31-35

Jesus foretells the fall of Peter - This is also recorded in Mark 14:27-31; Luke 22:31-34; John 13:34-38.

Matthew 26:31

Then saith Jesus unto them - The occasion of his saying this was Peter's bold affirmation that he was ready to die with him, John 13:36

Jesus had told them that he was going away - that is, was about to die. Peter asked him whither he was going. Jesus replied that he could not follow him then, but should afterward. Peter, not satisfied with that, said that he was ready to lay down his life for him. Then Jesus distinctly informed them that all of them would forsake him that very night.

All ye shall be offended because of me - See the notes at Matthew 5:29. This language means, here, you will all stumble at my being taken, abused, and set at naught; you will be ashamed to own me as a teacher, and to acknowledge yourselves as my disciples; or, my being betrayed will prove a snare to you all, so that you will be guilty of the sin of forsaking me, and, by your conduct, of denying me.

For it is written … - See Zechariah 13:7. This is affirmed here to have reference to the Saviour, and to be fulfilled in him.

I will smite - This is the language of God the Father. I will smite means either that I will give him up to be smitten (compare Exodus 4:21 with Exodus 8:15, etc.), or that I will do it myself. Both of these things were done. God gave him up to the Jews and Romans, to be smitten for the sins

of the world Romans 8:32; and he himself left him to deep and awful sorrows - to bear "the burden of the world's atonement" alone. See Mark 15:34.

The Shepherd - The Lord Jesus - the Shepherd of his people, John 10:11, John 10:14. Compare the notes at Isaiah 40:11.

The sheep - This means here particularly "the apostles." It also refers sometimes to all the followers of Jesus, the friends of God, John 10:16; Psalm 100:3.

Shall be scattered abroad - This refers to their fleeing, and it was fulfilled in that. See Matthew 26:56.

Matthew 26:32

But after I am risen … - This promise was given them to encourage and support them, and also to give them an indication where he might be found.

He did not deny that he would first appear to a part of them before he met them all together (compare Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5), but that he would meet them all in Galilee. This was done. See Mark 16:7; Matthew 28:16.

Galilee - See the notes at Matthew 2:22.

Matthew 26:33

Peter answered … Though all men … - The word "men" is improperly inserted here by the translators. Peter meant only to affirm this of "the disciples." This confidence of Peter was entirely characteristic. He was ardent, sincere, and really attached to his Master. Yet this declaration was made evidently:

1.from true love to Jesus;

2.from too much reliance upon his own strength;

3.from ignorance of himself, and of the trials which he was soon to pass through.

And it most impressively teaches us:

1.that no strength of attachment to Jesus can justify such confident promises of fidelity, made without dependence on him.

2.that all promises to adhere to him should be made relying on him for aid.

3.that we little know how feeble we are until we are tried.

4.that Christians may be left to great and disgraceful sins to show them their weakness.

Luke adds that Jesus said to Peter that Satan had desired to have him, that he might sift him as wheat - that is, that he might thoroughly test him. But Jesus says that he had prayed for him that his faith should not fail, and charged him when he was "converted" - that is, when he was "turned" from this sin - to strengthen his brethren; to wit, by teaching them to take warning by his example. See the notes at Luke 22:31-33.

Matthew 26:34

This night - This was in the "evening" when this was spoken, after the observance of the Passover, and, we may suppose, near nine o'clock p.m.

Before the cock crow - Mark and Luke add, before the cock crowed twice. The cock is accustomed to crow twice once at midnight, and once in the morning at break of day. The latter was commonly called cock-crowing. See Mark 13:35. This was the time familiarly known as "the cock-crowing," and of this Matthew and John speak, without referring to the other. Mark and Luke speak of the "second" crowing, and mean the same time, so that there is no contradiction between them.

Deny me thrice - That is, as Luke adds, deny that "thou knowest" me. See Matthew 26:74.

Matthew 26:35

Will I not deny thee - Will not deny my connection with thee, or that I knew thee.

"All" the disciples said the same thing, and all fled at the approach of danger, "forsaking" their Master and Friend, and practically denying that they knew him, Matthew 26:56.

Verses 36-45

Jesus' agony in Gethsemane - This account is also recorded in Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46; John 18:1.

Matthew 26:36

Then cometh … - After the institution of the Lord's Supper, in the early part of the night, he went out to the Mount of Olives.

In his journey he passed over the brook Cedron John 18:1, which bounded Jerusalem on the east.

Unto a place - John calls this "a garden." This garden was on the western side of the Mount of Olives, and a short distance from Jerusalem. The word used by John means not properly a garden for the cultivation of vegetables, but a place planted with the olive and other trees, perhaps with a fountain of water, and with walks and groves; a proper place of refreshment in a hot climate, and of retirement from the noise of the adjacent city. Such places were doubtless common in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Messrs. Fisk and King, American missionaries were at the place which is commonly supposed to have been the garden of Gethsemane in 1823. They tell us that the garden is about a stone's cast from the brook of Cedron; that it now contains eight large and venerable-looking olives, whose trunks show their great antiquity. The spot is sandy and barren, and appears like a forsaken place. A low broken wall surrounds it.

Mr. King sat down beneath one of the trees and read Isaiah 53:1-12, and also the gospel history of our Redeemer's sorrow during that memorable night in which he was there betrayed; and the interest of the association was heightened by the passing through the place of a party of Bedouins, armed with spears and swords. A recent traveler says of this place that it "is a field or garden about 50 paces square, with a few shrubs growing in it, and eight olive-trees of great antiquity, the whole enclosed with a stone wall." The place was probably fixed upon, as Dr. Robinson supposes, during the visit of Helena to Jerusalem, 326 a.d., when the places of the crucifixion and resurrection were believed to be identified. There is, however, no absolute certainty respecting the places. Dr. Thomson (The Land and the Book, vol. ii. p. 484) supposes it most probable that the real "Garden of Gethsemane" was several hundred yards to the northwest of the present Gethsemane, in a place much more secluded than the one usually regarded as that where the agony of the Saviour occurred, and therefore more likely to have been the place of his retirement. Nothing, however, that is of importance depends on ascertaining the exact spot.

Luke says that Jesus "went as he was wont" - that is, accustomed - "to the Mount of Olives." Probably he had been in the habit of retiring from Jerusalem to that place for meditation and prayer, thus enforcing by his example what he had so often done by his precepts the duty of retiring from the noise and bustle of the world to hold communion with God.

Gethsemane - This word is made up either of two Hebrew words, signifying "valley of fatness" - that is, a fertile valley; or of two words, signifying "an olive-press," given to it, probably, because the place was filled with olives.

Sit ye here - That is, in one part of the garden to which they first came.

While I go and pray yonder - That is, at the distance of a stone's cast, Luke 22:41. Luke adds that when he came to the garden he charged them to pray that they might not enter into temptation - that is, into deep "trials and afflictions," or, more probably, into scenes and dangers that would tempt them to deny him.

Matthew 26:37

And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee - That is, James and John, Matthew 10:2. On two other occasions he had favored these disciples in a particular manner, suffering them to go with him to witness his power and glory, namely, at the healing of the ruler's daughter Luke 8:51, and at his transfiguration on the mount, Matthew 17:1.

Sorrowful - Affected with grief.

Very heavy - The word in the original is much stronger than the one translated "sorrowful." It means, to be pressed down or overwhelmed with great anguish. This was produced, doubtless, by a foresight of his great sufferings on the cross in making an atonement for the sins of people.

Matthew 26:38

My soul is exceeding sorrowful - His human nature - his soul - was much and deeply affected and pressed down.

Even unto death - This denotes extreme sorrow and agony.

The sufferings of death are the greatest of which we have any knowledge; they are the most feared and dreaded by man; and those sufferings are therefore put for extreme and indescribable anguish. The meaning may be thus expressed: My sorrows are so great that under their burden I am ready to die; such is the anxiety of mind, that I seem to bear the pains of death!

Tarry ye here and watch with me - The word rendered "watch" means, literally, to abstain from sleep; then to be vigilant, or to guard against danger. Here it seems to mean to sympathize with him, to unite with him in seeking divine support, and to prepare themselves for approaching dangers.

Matthew 26:39

And he went a little further - That is, at the distance that a man could conveniently cast a stone (Luke).

Fell on his face - Luke says "he kneeled down." He did both.

He first kneeled, and then, in the fervency of his prayer and the depth of his sorrow, he fell with his face on the ground, denoting the deepest anguish and the most earnest entreaty. This was the usual posture of prayer in times of great earnestness. See Numbers 16:22; 2 Chronicles 20:18; Nehemiah 8:6.

If it be possible - That is, if the world can be redeemed - if it be consistent with justice, and with maintaining the government of the universe, that people should be saved without this extremity of sorrow, let it be done. There is no doubt that if it had been possible it would have been done; and the fact that these sufferings were "not" removed, and that the Saviour went forward and bore them without mitigation, shows that it was not consistent with the justice of God and with the welfare of the universe that people should be saved without the awful sufferings of "such an atonement."

Let this cup - These bitter sufferings. These approaching trials. The word cup is often used in this sense, denoting sufferings. See the notes at Matthew 20:22.

Not as I will, but as thou wilt - As Jesus was man as well as God, there is nothing inconsistent in supposing that, as man, he was deeply affected in view of these sorrows. When he speaks of His will, he expresses what "human nature," in view of such great sufferings, would desire. It naturally shrunk from them and sought deliverance. Yet he sought to do the will of God. He chose rather that the high purpose of God should be done, than that that purpose should be abandoned from regard to the fears of his human nature. In this he has left a model of prayer in all times of affliction. It is right, in times of calamity, to seek deliverance. Like the Saviour, also, in such seasons we should, we must submit cheerfully to the will of God, confident that in all these trials he is wise, and merciful, and good.

Matthew 26:40

And findeth them asleep - It may seem remarkable that in such circumstances, with a suffering, pleading Redeemer near, surrounded by danger, and having received a special charge to watch - that is, not to sleep - they should so soon have fallen asleep.

It is frequently supposed that this was proof of wonderful stupidity, and indifference to their Lord‘s sufferings. The truth is, however, that it was just the reverse; “it was proof of their great attachment, and their deep sympathy in his sorrows.” Luke has added that he found “them sleeping” for sorrow - that is, “on account” of their sorrow; or their grief was so great that they naturally fell asleep. Multitudes of facts might be brought to show that this is in accordance with the regular effects of grief. Dr. Rush says: “There is another symptom of grief, which is not often noticed, and that is “profound sleep.” I have often witnessed it even in mothers, immediately after the death of a child. Criminals, we are told by Mr. Akerman, the keeper of Newgate, in London, often sleep soundly the night before their execution. The son of General Custine slept nine hours the night before he was led to the guillotine in Paris.” - Diseases of the Mind, p. 319.

Saith unto Peter … - This earnest appeal was addressed to Peter particularly on account of his warm professions, his rash zeal, and his self-confidence. If he could not keep awake and watch with the Saviour for one hour, how little probability was there that he would adhere to him in the trials through which he was soon to pass!

Matthew 26:41

Watch - See Matthew 26:38. Greater trials are coming on. It is necessary, therefore, still to be on your guard.

And pray - Seek aid from God by supplication, in view of the thickening calamities.

That ye enter not into temptation - That ye be not overcome and oppressed with these trials of your faith so as to deny me. The word “temptation” here properly means what would test their faith in the approaching calamities - in his rejection and death. It would “try” their faith, because, though they believed that he was the Messiah, they were not very clearly aware of the necessity of his death, and they did not fully understand that he was to rise again. They had cherished the belief that he was to establish a kingdom “while he lived.” When they should see him, therefore, rejected, tried, crucified, dead - when they should see him submit to all this as if he had not power to deliver himself - “then” would be the trial of their faith; and, in view of that, he exhorted them to pray that they might not so enter temptation as to be overcome by it and fall.

The spirit indeed is willing … - The mind, the heart is ready and disposed to bear these trials, but the “flesh,” the natural feelings, through

the fear of danger, is weak, and will be likely to lead you astray when the trial comes. Though you may have strong faith, and believe now that you will not deny me, yet human nature is weak, and shrinks at trials, and you should therefore seek strength from on high. This was intended to excite them, notwithstanding he knew that they loved him, to be on their guard, lest the weakness of human nature should be insufficient to sustain them in the hour of their temptation.

Matthew 26:42-44

It is probable that our Lord spent considerable time in prayer, and that the evangelists have recorded rather "the substance" of his petitions than the very "words." He returned repeatedly to his disciples, doubtless to caution them against danger, to show the deep interest which he had in their welfare, and to show them the extent of his sufferings on their behalf

Each time that he returned these sorrows deepened. Again he sought the place of prayer, and as his approaching sufferings overwhelmed him, this was the burden of his prayer, and he prayed the same words. Luke adds that amid his agonies an angel appeared from heaven strengthening him. His human nature began to sink, as unequal to his sufferings, and a messenger from heaven appeared, to support him in these heavy trials. It may seem strange that, since Jesus was divine John 1:1, the divine nature did not minister strength to the human, and that he that was God should receive strength from an "angel." But it should be remembered that Jesus came in his human nature not only to make an atonement, but to be a perfect example of a holy man; that, as such, it was necessary to submit to the common conditions of humanity - that he should live as other people, be sustained as other people, suffer as other people, and be strengthened as other people; that he should, so to speak, take no advantage in favor of his piety, from his divinity, but submit it in all things to the common lot of pious people. Hence, he supplied his wants, not by his being divine, but in the ordinary way of human life; he preserved himself from danger, not as God, but by seeking the usual ways of human prudence and precaution; he met trials as a man; he received comfort as a man; and there is no absurdity in supposing that, in accordance with the condition of his people, his human nature should be strengthened, as they are, by those who are sent forth to be ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, Hebrews 1:14.

Further, Luke adds Luke 22:44 that, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. The word "agony" is taken from the anxiety, effort, and strong emotion of the wrestlers in the Greek games about to engage in a mighty struggle. Here it denotes the extreme anguish of mind, the strong conflict produced in sinking human nature from the prospect of deep and overwhelming calamities.

"Great drops of blood," Luke 22:44. The word rendered here as "great drops" does not mean drops gently falling on the ground, but rather thick and clammy masses of gore, pressed by inward agony through the skin, and, mixing with the sweat, falling thus to the ground. It has been doubted by some whether the sacred writer meant to say that there was actually "blood" in this sweat, or only that the sweat was "in the form" of great drops. The natural meaning is, doubtless, that the blood was mingled with his sweat; that it fell profusely - falling masses of gore; that it was pressed out by his inward anguish; and that this was caused in some way in view of his approaching death. This effect of extreme sufferings, of mental anguish. has been known in several other instances. Bloody sweats have been mentioned by many writers as caused by extreme suffering. Dr. Doddridge says (Note at Luke 22:44) that "Aristotle and Diodorus Siculus both mention bloody sweats as attending some extraordinary agony of mind; and I find Loti, in his "Life of Pope Sextus V.," and Sir John Chardin, in his "History of Persia," mentioning a like phenomenon, to which Dr. Jackson adds another from Thuanus." It has been objected to this account that it is improbable, and that such an event could not occur. The instances, however, which are referred to by Doddridge and others show sufficiently that the objection is unfounded. In addition to these, I may observe that Voltaire has himself narrated a fact which ought forever to stop the mouths of infidels. Speaking of Charles IX of France, in his "Universal History," he says: "He died in his 35th year. His disorder was of a very remarkable kind; the blood oozed out of all his pores. This malady, of which there have been other instances, was owing to either excessive fear, or violent agitation, or to a feverish and melancholy temperament."

Various opinions have been given of the probable causes of these sorrows of the Saviour. Some have thought it was strong shrinking from the

manner of dying on the cross, or from an apprehension of being "forsaken" there by the Father; others, that Satan was permitted in a special manner to test him, and to fill his mind with horrors, having departed from him at the beginning of his ministry for a season Luke 4:13, only to renew his temptations in a more dreadful manner now; and others that these sufferings were sent upon him as the wrath of God manifested against sin that God inflicted them directly upon him by his own hand, to show his abhorrence of the sins of people for which he was about to die. Where the Scriptures are silent about the cause, it does not become us confidently to express an opinion. We may suppose, perhaps, without presumption, that a part or all these things were combined to produce this awful suffering. There is no need of supposing that there was a single thing that produced it; but it is rather probable that this was a rush of feeling from every quarter - his situation, his approaching death, the temptations of the enemy, the awful suffering on account of people's sins, and God's hatred of it about to be manifested in his own death - all coming upon his soul at once sorrow flowing in from every quarter - the "concentration" of the sufferings of the atonement pouring together upon him and filling him with unspeakable anguish.

Matthew 26:45

Sleep on now and take your rest - Most interpreters have supposed that this should be translated as a question rattler than a command,

"Do you sleep now and take your rest? Is this a time, amid so much danger and so many enemies. to give yourselves to sleep?" This construction is strongly countenanced by Luke 22:46, where the expression. Why sleep ye? evidently refers to the same point of time. There is no doubt that the Greek will bear this construction, and in this way the apparent inconsistency will be removed between this command "to sleep," and that in the next verse, "to rise" and be going. Others suppose that, his agony being over, and the necessity of watching with him being now past, he kindly permitted them to seek repose until they should be roused by the coming of the traitor; that while they slept Jesus continued still awake; that some considerable time elapsed between what was spoken here and in the next verse; and that Jesus suffered them to sleep until he saw Judas coming, and then aroused them. This is the most probable opinion. Others have supposed that he spoke this in irony: "Sleep on now, if you can; take rest, if possible, in such dangers and at such a time." But this supposition is

unworthy the Saviour and the occasion. Mark adds, "It is enough." That is, sufficient time has been given to sleep. It is time to arise and be going.

The hour is at hand - The "time" when the Son of man is to be betrayed is near.

Sinners - Judas, the Roman soldiers, and the Jews.

Verse 46

Rise, let us be going - That is, probably, "with them." Let us go wheresoever they shall lead us. The time when "I must die" is come. It is no longer proper to attempt an escape, and no more time can be given to repose.

Verses 47-57

The account of Jesus' being betrayed by Judas is recorded by all the evangelists. See Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:2-12.

Matthew 26:47

Judas, one of the twelve, came - This was done while Jesus was addressing his disciples.

John informs us that Judas knew the place, because Jesus was in the habit of going there with his disciples. Judas had passed the time, after he left Jesus and the other disciples at the Passover, in arranging matters with the Jews, collecting the band, and preparing to go. Perhaps, also, on this occasion they gave him the money which they had promised.

A great multitude with swords and staves - John says that he had received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees." Josephus says (Antiq. b. 20 chapter iv.) that at the festival of the Passover, when a great multitude of people came to observe the feast, lest there should be any disorder, a band of men was commanded to keep watch at the porches of the temple, to repress a tumult if any should be excited. This band, or guard, was at the disposal of the chief priests, Matthew 27:65. It was composed of Roman soldiers, and was stationed chiefly at the tower of Antonia, at the northwest side of the temple. In addition to this, they had constant guards stationed around the temple, composed of Levites. The Roman soldiers were armed with "swords." The other persons that went out carried, probably, whatever was accessible as a weapon. These were the persons sent by the priests to apprehend Jesus. Perhaps other desperate men might have joined them.

Staves - In the original, "wood;" used here in the plural number. It means rather "clubs" or "sticks" than spears. It does not mean "staves."

Probably it means any weapon at hand, such as a mob could conveniently collect. John says that they had "lanterns and torches." The Passover was celebrated at the "full moon;" but this night might have been cloudy. The place to which they were going was also shaded with trees, and lights, therefore, might be necessary.

Matthew 26:48

Gave them a sign - That is, told them of a way by which they might know whom to apprehend - to wit, by his kissing him.

It was night. Jesus was, besides, probably personally unknown to the "Romans" - perhaps to the others also. Judas, therefore, being well acquainted with him, to prevent the possibility of mistake, agreed to designate him by one of the tokens of friendship.

John tells us that Jesus, knowing all things that should come upon him, when they approached him, asked them whom they sought, and that they replied, Jesus of Nazareth. He then informed them that he was the person they sought. They, when they heard it, overawed by his presence and smitten with the consciousness of guilt, went backward and fell to the ground. He again asked them whom they sought. They made the same declaration - Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus then, since they professed to seek only Him, claimed the right that his disciples should be suffered to escape, "that the saying might be fulfilled which he spake John 18:9; Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none."

Matthew 26:49

Hail, Master - The word translated "hail," here, means to "rejoice," to have joy, and also to have "cause" of joy.

It thus expresses the "joy" which one friend has when he meets another, especially after an absence. It was used by the Jews and Greeks as a mode of salutation among friends. It would here seem to express the "joy" of Judas at finding his Master and again being "with him."

Master - In the original, "Rabbi." See the notes at Matthew 23:7.

Kissed him - Gave him the common salutation of friends when meeting after absence. This mode of salutation was more common among Eastern nations than with us.

Matthew 26:50

And Jesus said unto him, Friend - It seems strange to us that Jesus should give the endeared name "friend" to a man that he knew was his

enemy, and that was about to betray him.

It should be remarked, however, that this is the fault of our language, not of the original. In the Greek there are two words which our translators have rendered "friend" - one implying "affection and regard," the other not. One is properly rendered "friend;" the other expresses more nearly what we mean by "companion." It is this "latter" word which is given to the disaffected laborer in the vineyard: "‹Friend,' I do thee no wrong" Matthew 20:13; to the guest which had not on the wedding-garment, in the parable of the marriage feast Matthew 22:12; and to "Judas" in this place.

Wherefore art thou come? - This was said, not because he was ignorant why he had come, but probably to fill the mind of Judas with the consciousness of his crime, and by a striking question to compel him to think of what he was doing.

Matthew 26:51

One of them which were with Jesus - John informs us that this was Peter.

The other evangelists concealed the name, probably because they wrote while Peter was living, and it might have endangered Peter to have it known.

And drew his sword - The apostles were not commonly armed. On this occasion they had provided "two swords," Luke 22:38. In seasons of danger, when traveling, they were under a necessity of providing means of defending themselves against the robbers that infested the country. This will account for their having any swords in their possession. See the notes at Luke 10:30. Josephus informs us that the people were accustomed to carry swords under their garments as they went up to Jerusalem.

A servant of the high-priest - His name, John informs us, was "Malchus." Luke adds that Jesus touched the ear and healed it, thus showing his benevolence to his foes when they sought his life, and giving them proof that they were attacking him that was sent from heaven.

Matthew 26:52

Thy sword into his place - Into the sheath.

For all they that take the sword … - This passage is capable of different significations.

1. They who resist by the sword the civil magistrate shall be punished; and it is dangerous, therefore, to oppose those who come with the authority of the civil ruler.

2. These men, Jews and Romans, who have taken the sword against the innocent, shall perish by the sword. God will take vengeance on them.

3. However, the most satisfactory interpretation is that which regards it as a caution to Peter. Peter was rash. Alone he had attacked the whole band. Jesus told him that his unseasonable and imprudent defense might be the occasion of his own destruction. In doing it he would endanger his life, for they who took the sword perished by it. This was probably a proverb, denoting that they who engaged in wars commonly perished there.

Matthew 26:53

Thinkest thou … - Jesus says that not only would Peter endanger himself, but his resistance implied a distrust of the protection of God, and was an improper resistance of his will.

If it had been proper that they should be rescued, God could easily have furnished far more efficient aid than that of Peter - a mighty host of angels.

Twelve legions - A legion was a division of the Roman army amounting to more than 6,000 men. See the notes at Matthew 8:29. The number "twelve" was mentioned, perhaps, in reference to the number of his apostles and himself. Judas being away, but eleven disciples remained. God could guard him, and each disciple, with a legion of angels: that is, God could easily protect him, if he should pray to him, and if it was his will.

Matthew 26:54

But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled … - That is, the Scriptures which foretold of his dying for the world.

In some way that must be accomplished, and the time had come when, having finished the work which the Father gave him to do, it was proper that he should submit to death. This was said, doubtless, to comfort his disciples; to show them that his death was not a matter of surprise or disappointment to him; and that they, therefore, should not be offended and forsake him.

Matthew 26:55

Against a thief - Rather a "robber." This was the manner in which they would have sought to take a highwayman of desperate character, and armed to defend his life.

It adds not a little to the depth of his humiliation that he consented to be "hunted down" thus by wicked people, and to be treated as if he had been

the worst of mankind.

Daily with you teaching in the temple - For many days before the Passover, as recorded in the previous chapter.

Matthew 26:56

Scriptures of the prophets - The "writings" of the prophets, for that is the meaning of the word "scriptures." He alludes to those parts of the prophetic writings which foretold his sufferings and death.

Then all the disciples … - Overcome with fear when they saw their Master actually taken; alarmed with the terrific appearance of armed men and torches in a dark night, and forgetting their promises not to forsake him, they all left their Saviour to go alone to trial and to death! Alas, how many, when attachment to Christ would lead them to danger, leave him and flee! Mark adds that after the disciples had fled, a young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body, attempted to follow him. It is not known who he was, but not improbably he may have been the owner of the garden and a friend of Jesus. Aroused by the noise from his repose, he came to defend, or at least to follow the Saviour. He cast, in his hurry, such a covering as was at hand around his body, and came to him. The young men among the Romans and Jews attempted to seize him also, and he only secured his safety by leaving in their hands the covering that he had hastily thrown around him. It is not known why this circumstance was recorded by Mark, but it would seem to be probable that it was to mention him with honor, as showing his interest in the Saviour, and his willingness to aid him. See the notes at Mark 14:50-51. This circumstance may have been recorded for the purpose of honoring him by placing his conduct in strong contrast with that of the apostles, who had all forsaken the Saviour and fled.

Matthew 26:57

The trial of our Lord before the council, and the denial of Peter happening at the same time, might be related one before the other, according to the evangelists' pleasure.

Accordingly, Matthew and Mark relate the "trial" first, and Peter's denial afterward; Luke mentions the denial first, and John has probably observed the natural order. The parallel places are recorded in John 18:13-27.

To Caiaphas - John says that they led him first to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas. This was done, probably as a mark of respect, he having been high priest, and perhaps distinguished for prudence, and capable of

“advising” his son-in-law in a difficult case. The Saviour was “detained” there. probably, until the chief priests and elders were assembled.

The high priest - Note, Matthew 26:3. John says he was high priest for that year. Annas had been high priest some years before. In the time of our Saviour the office was frequently changed by the civil ruler. This Caiaphas had prophesied that it was expedient that one should die for the people. See the notes at John 11:49-50.

The scribes and elders - The men composing the great council of the nation, or Sanhedrin, Matthew 5:22. It is not probable that they could be immediately assembled, and some part of the transaction respecting the denial of Peter probably took place while they were collecting.

Verse 58

Peter followed afar off - By this he evinced two things:

1.Real attachment to his Master; a desire to be near him and to witness his trial.

2.Fear respecting his personal safety. He therefore kept so far off as to be out of danger, and yet so near as that he might witness the transactions respecting his Master.

Perhaps he expected to be lost and unobserved in the crowd. Many, in this, imitate Peter. They are afraid to follow the Saviour closely. They fear danger, ridicule, or persecution. They “follow him,” but it is at a great distance - so far that it is difficult to discern that they are in the train, and are his friends at all. Religion requires us to be near to Christ. We may measure our piety by our desire to be with him, to be like him, and by our willingness to follow him always - through trials, contempt, persecution, and death. Compare the notes at Philemon 3:10. John says that another disciple went with Peter. By that other disciple it is commonly supposed, as he did not mention his name, that he meant himself. He was acquainted with the high priest, and went immediately into the hall.

Unto the high priest‘s palace - The word rendered “palace” means, rather, the hall, or middle court, or “area” of his house. It was situated in the center of the palace, and was commonly uncovered. See the notes and plan of a house in Matthew 9:1-8.

And went in - John informs us that he did not go immediately in; but the ether disciple, being known to the high priest, went in first, while Peter remained at the gate or entrance. The other disciple then went out and brought in Peter. Matthew, Mark, and Luke have omitted this circumstance.

John recorded it, probably, because they had omitted it, and because he was the "other disciple" concerned in it.

Sat with the servants to see the end - That is, the end of the trial, or to see how it would go with his Master. The other evangelists say that he stood with the servants warming himself. John says, it being cold, they had made a fire of coals and warmed themselves. It was then, probably, not far from midnight. The place where they were was uncovered; and travelers say that, though the "days" are warm in Judea at that season of the year, yet that the nights are often uncomfortably cold. This fire was made "in the hall" (Luke). The fire was not in a "fireplace," as we commonly suppose, but was probably made of "coals" laid on the pavement. At this place and time was Peter's first "denial" of his Lord, as is recorded afterward. See Matthew 26:69.

Verse 59

False witness - That is, they sought for witnesses who would accuse him of crime of violation of the laws of the land or of God. We are not to suppose that "they wished" them to be "false" witnesses. They were indifferent, probably, whether they were true or false, if they could succeed in condemning him. "The evangelist" calls it false testimony. Before these witnesses were sought, we learn from John John 18:19-23 that the high priest asked Jesus of his disciples and his doctrine. Jesus replied that he had taught openly in the temple, and in secret had said nothing; that is, he had no "secret doctrines" which he had not been willing openly to teach, and he referred the high priest to those who had heard him. In a firm, dignified manner he put himself on trial, and insisted on his rights. "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" John 18:23. This conversation took place, probably, before the council was assembled, and during this time the denials by Peter occurred. Luke informs us Luke 22:66 that the council came together as soon as it was day; that is, probably, near the morning, or not far from the break of day - after Peter had denied him and gone out.

Verse 60

Found none - That is, they found none on whose testimony they could with any show of reason convict him. The reason was, as Mark says Mark 14:56, that "their witnesses agreed not together." They differed about facts, times, and circumstances, as all false witnesses do. Two witnesses were

required by their law, and they did not "dare" to condemn him without conforming, "in appearance" at least, to the requirements of the law.

Verse 61

And said, This fellow said … - Mark has recorded this testimony differently. According to him, they said, "We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another. made without hands." Probably both forms of giving in the testimony were used on the trial, and Matthew has recorded it as it was given at one time and Mark at another, so that there is no contradiction. Mark adds, "But neither so did their witnesses agree together." That which they "attempted" to accuse him of is what he had said respecting his body and their destroying it, John 2:19; "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." This he spoke of his body; they perverted it, endeavoring to show that he meant the temple at Jerusalem. They neither stated it as it was, nor did they state correctly its meaning, nor did they agree about the words used. It was therefore very little to their purpose.

Verse 62-63

Jesus held his peace - Was silent. He knew that the evidence did not even appear to amount to anything worth a reply. He knew that they were aware of that, and that feeling that, the high priest attempted to draw something from him on which they could condemn him.

I adjure thee by the living God - I put thee upon thy oath before God. This was the usual form of putting an oath among the Jews. It implies calling God to witness the truth of what was said. The law respecting witnesses also made it a violation of an oath to conceal any part of the truth; and though our Saviour might have felt that such a question, put in such a manner, was very improper or was unlawful, yet he also knew that to be silent would be construed into a denial of his being the Christ. The question was probably put in auger. They had utterly failed in their proof. They had no way left to accomplish their purpose of condemning him but to draw it from his own lips. This cunning question was therefore proposed. The difficulty of the question consisted in this: If he confessed that he was the Son of God, they stood ready to condemn him for "blasphemy;" if he denied it, they were prepared to condemn him for being an impostor, and for deluding the people under the pretence of being the Messiah.

The living God - Yahweh is called the living God in opposition to idols, which were without life.

The Christ - The Messiah, the Anointed. See the notes at Matthew 1:1.

The Son of God - The Jews uniformly expected that the Messiah would be the Son of God. In their view it denoted, also, that he would be "divine," or equal to the Father, John 10:31-36. To claim that title was therefore, in their view, "blasphemy;" and as they had determined beforehand in their own minds that he was not the Messiah, they were ready at once to accuse him of blasphemy.

Verse 64

Thou hast said - This is a form of assenting or affirming. Thou hast said the truth; or, as Luke Luke 22:70 has it, "Ye say that I am." This was not, however, said "immediately." Before Jesus acknowledged himself to be the Messiah, he said to them Luke 22:67-68, "If I tell you ye will not believe, and if I also ask you" - that is, propose the proofs of my mission, and require you to give your opinion of them "ye will not answer me, nor let me go."

Nevertheless - This word should have been translated: "moreover or furthermore." What follows is designed to explain and give confirmation to what he had said.

Sitting on the right hand of power - That is, of God, called here the Power - equivalent to "the Mighty, or the Almighty." It denotes dignity and majesty; for to sit at the right hand of a prince was the chief place of honor. See the notes at Matthew 20:21.

Coming in the clouds of heaven - See the notes at Matthew 24; 25. The meaning of this is, You shall see "the sign from heaven" which you have so often demanded; even the Messiah returning himself "as the sign," with great glory, to destroy your city and to judge the world.

Verse 65

Then the high priest rent his clothes - The Jews were accustomed to rend their clothes as a token of grief. This was done often as a matter of form, and consisted in tearing a particular part of the garment reserved for this purpose. It was not lawful for the high priest to rip his clothes, Leviticus 10:6; Leviticus 21:10. By that was probably intended the robes of his priestly office. The garment which he now tore was probably his ordinary garment, or the garments which he wore as president of the Sanhedrin - not those in which he officiated as high priest in the things of religion. This was done on this occasion to denote the great grief of the high priest that so great a sin as blasphemy had been committed in his presence.

He hath spoken blasphemy - That is, he has, under oath, arrogated to himself what belongs to God. In asserting that he is the Son of God, and therefore equal in dignity with the Father, and that he would yet sit at his right hand, he has claimed what belongs to no man, and what is therefore an invasion of the divine prerogative. If he had not been the Messiah, the charge would have been true; but the question was whether he had not given evidence that he was the Messiah, and that therefore his claims were just. This point - the only proper point of inquiry - they never examined. They assumed that he was an impostor, and that point being assumed, everything like a pretension to being the Messiah was, in their view, proof that he deserved to die.

Verse 66

What think ye? - What is your opinion? What sentence do you pronounce? As President of the Sanhedrin he demanded their judgment.

He is guilty of death - This was the form which was used when a criminal was condemned to die. The meaning is, he is guilty of a crime to which the law annexes death. This sentence was used before the Jews became subject to the Romans, when they had the power of inflicting death. After they were subject to the Romans, though the power of inflicting capital punishment" was taken away, yet they retained the form when they expressed their opinion of the guilt of an offender. The law under which they condemned him was that recorded in Leviticus 24:10-16, which sentenced him that was guilty of blasphemy to death by stoning. The chief priests, however, were unwilling to excite a popular tumult by stoning him, and they therefore consulted to deliver him to the Romans to be crucified, "under the authority of the Roman name," and thus to prevent any excitement among the people.

Verse 67

Then did they spit in his face - This, among the Jews, as among us, was significant of the highest contempt and insult, Numbers 12:14; Isaiah 50:6; Job 30:10.

And buffeted him - That is, they struck him with their hands closed, or with the fist.

Others smote him with the palms of their hands - The word used in the original here means literally to strike with rods. It also means to strike the mouth with the open hand, as if to prevent a person's speaking, or to evince abhorrence of what he had spoken.

Verse 68

Saying, Prophesy unto us … - Mark informs us that before they said this they had blindfolded him. Having prevented his seeing, they ridiculed his pretensions of being the Messiah. If he Was the Christ, they supposed he could tell who smote him As he bore it patiently and did not answer, they doubtless supposed that they had discovered another reason to think he was an impostor. The word "prophesy" does not mean only to foretell future events, although that is the proper meaning of the word, but also to declare anything that is unknown, or anything which cannot be known by natural knowledge or without revelation. Luke adds, "And many other things blasphemously spoke they against him." There is something very remarkable in this expression. They had charged Him with "blasphemy" in claiming to be the Son of God. This charge they were not able to prove; but the evangelist fixes the charge of "blasphemy" on them, because he really was the Son of God, and they denied it.

Verse 69

Now Peter sat without in the palace - Mark says the first denial took place while Peter was "beneath in the palace." This "palace" was the large hall or court belonging to the residence of the high priest. The part of it where Jesus and the council were was "elevated," probably above the rest for a tribunal. Peter was "beneath or in the "lower part" of the hall, with the servants at the fire. Yet, as Matthew says, he sat without in the palace - that is, out of the palace where they were trying Jesus - to wit, in the lower part of the hall with the servants: both narratives are therefore consistent.

And a damsel came unto him - John John 18:17 says that this damsel was one that kept the door.

Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee - Probably she suspected him from his being in company with John. This was in the early part of the trial of Jesus.

Verse 70

But he deeded before them all … - He denied that he was a disciple; he denied that he knew Jesus; he denied (Mark) that he understood what was meant - that is, he did not see any reason why this question was asked. All this was palpable falsehood, and Peter must have known that it was such. This is remarkable, because Peter had just before been so confident. It is more remarkable, because the edge of the charge was taken off by the

insinuation that "John" was known to be a disciple thou "also" wast with Jesus of Galilee.

Verse 71

When he was gone out into the porch - The "entrance," or the small apartment between the outer door and the large hall in the center of the building. See plan of a house, Notes, Matthew 9:1-8. Peter was embarrassed and confused by the question, and to save his confusion from attracting notice, he went away from the fire into the porch, where he expected to be unobserved - yet in vain. By the very movement to avoid detection, he came into contact with another who knew him and repeated the charge. How clearly does it prove that our Lord was omniscient, that all these things were foreseen!

Another maid saw him - Mark simply says that "a maid" saw him. From Luke it would appear that "a man" spoke to him, Luke 22:58. The truth probably is that both were done. When he first went out, "a maid" charged him with being a follower of Jesus. He was probably there a considerable time. To this charge he might have been silent, thinking, perhaps, that he was concealed, and there was no need of denying Jesus then. Yet it is very likely that the charge would be repeated. A "man," also, might have repeated it; and Peter, irritated, provoked, perhaps thinking that he was in danger, "then" denied his Master the second time. This denial was in a stronger manner and with an oath. While in the porch, Mark says, the cock crew - that is, the first crowing, or not far from midnight.

Verse 73

And after a while - That is, about an hour after (Luke). Peter by this time had returned into the palace or hall, and stood warming himself by the fire, John 18:25.

Thy speech bewrayeth thee - Your language makes it manifest that you are of his company. That is, as Mark adds, he was a "Galilean," and in this way his speech betrayed him. It is probable that the Galileans were distinguished for some peculiarity of pronunciation, perhaps some unique rusticity or coarseness in their manner of speaking, that distinguished them from the refinement of the capital, Jerusalem. This charge, John says John 18:26, was supported by the express affirmation of a kinsman of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, that he had seen him in the garden.

Verse 74

Then began he to curse … - Peter was now irritated beyond endurance. He could no longer resist the evidence that he was known. It had been repeatedly charged on him. His language had betrayed him, and there was a positive witness who had seen him. He felt it necessary, therefore, to be still more decided, and he accordingly added to the sin of denying his Lord the deep aggravation of profane cursing and swearing, affirming what he must have known was false, that he knew not the man. Immediately then the cock crew - that is, the second crowing, or not far from three in the morning.

Verse 75

And Peter remembered the word of Jesus … - Luke has mentioned a beautiful and touching circumstance omitted by the other evangelists, that when the cock crew, "Jesus turned and looked upon Peter," and that then he remembered his words. They were in the same room - Jesus at the upper end of the hall, elevated for a tribunal and Peter below with the servants, so that Jesus could look down upon Peter standing near the fire. By a tender and compassionate look - a single glance of his eye the injured Saviour brought to remembrance all Peter's promises, his own predictions, and the great guilt of the disciple; he overwhelmed him with the remembrance of his sin, and pierced his heart through with many sorrows. The consciousness of deep and awful guilt rushed over Peter's soul; he flew from the palace, he went where he might be alone in the darkness of the night, and "wept bitterly."

The fall of Peter is one of the most melancholy instances of depravity ever committed in our world. But a little while before so confident; seated at the table of the Lord; distinguished throughout the ministry of Christ with special favors; cautioned against this very thing; yet so soon denying him, forgetting his promises, and profanely calling on God to witness what he knew to be false - that he did not know him! Had it been only once, it would have been awful guilt - guilt deeply piercing the Redeemer's soul in the day of trial; but it was three times repeated, and at last with profane cursing and swearing. Yet, while we weep over Peter's fall, and seek not to palliate his crime, we should draw from it important practical uses:

1. The danger of self-confidence. "He that thinketh he standeth should take heed lest he fall" 1 Corinthians 10:12. True Christian confidence is that which relies on God for strength, and feels safety only in the belief that he is able and willing to keep from temptation.

2. The highest favors, the most exalted privileges, do not secure us from the danger of falling into sin. Few men were ever so highly favored as Peter; few ever so dreadfully departed from the Saviour, and brought so deep a scandal on religion.

3. When a man begins to sin; his fall from one act to another is easy - perhaps almost certain. At first, Peter‘s sin was only simple denial; then it increased to more violent affirmation, and ended with open profaneness. So the downward road of crime is easy. When sin is once indulged, the way is open for a whole deluge of crime, nor is the course easily stayed until the soul is overwhelmed in awful guilt.

4. True repentance is deep, thorough, bitter. Peter wept bitterly. It was sincere sorrow - sorrow proportioned to the nature of the offence he had committed.

5. A look from Jesus - a look of mingled affection, pity, and reproof - produces bitter sorrow for sin. We injure Him by our crimes; and His tender look, when we err, pierces the soul through with many sorrows, opens fountains of tears in the bosom, and leads us to weep with bitterness over our transgressions.

6. When we sin when we fall into temptation - let us retire from the world, seek the place of solitude, and pour out our sorrows before God. He will mark our groans; he will hear our sighs; he will behold our tears; and he will receive us to his arms again.

7. Real Christians may be suffered to go far astray. To show them their weakness, to check self-confidence, and to produce dependence on Jesus Christ, they may be permitted to show how weak, and feeble, and rash they are. Peter was a real believer. Jesus had prayed for him “that his faith should fail not,” Luke 22:32. Jesus was always heard in his prayer, John 11:42. He was heard, therefore, then. Peter‘s faith did not fail - that is, his belief in Jesus, his real piety, his true attachment to the Saviour. He knew during the whole transaction that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he himself

was well acquainted with him; but he was suffered to declare that which he knew was not true, and in this consisted his sin. Yet,

8. Though a Christian may be suffered to go astray - may fall into sin - yet he who should, from this example of Peter, think that he might, lawfully do it, or who should resolve to do it, thinking that he might, like Peter, weep and repent, would give evidence that he knew nothing of the grace of God. He that resolves to sin under the expectation of repenting hereafter "cannot be a Christian."

It is worthy of further remark, that the fact that the fall of Peter is recorded by "all" the evangelists is high proof of their "honestly." They were willing to tell the truth as it was; to conceal no fact, even if it made much against themselves, and to make mention of their own faults without attempting to appear to be better than they were. And it is worthy of special observation that Mark has recorded this with all the circumstances of aggravation, perhaps even more so than the others. Yet, by the universal belief of antiquity, the Gospel of Mark was written under Peter's direction, and every part of it submitted to him for examination. Higher proof of the honesty and candor of the evangelists could not be demanded.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Verse 1

Jesus is brought before Pilate - See also Mark 16:1; Luke 23:1; John 18:28.

When the morning was come - This was not long after Jesus had been condemned by the Sanhedrin.

Peter‘s last denial was probably not far from three o‘clock a. m., or near the break of day. As soon as it was light, the Jews consulted together for the purpose of taking his life. The sun rose at that season of the year in Judea not far from five o‘clock a. m., and the time when they assembled, therefore, was not long after Peter‘s denial.

The chief priests and elders of the people took counsel - They ned on his trial Matthew 26:65-66 agreed that he deserved to die, “on a charge of blasphemy;” yet they did not dare to put him to death by stoning, as they did afterward Stephen Luke 23:2. On this accusation, if made out, they supposed Pilate could be induced to condemn Jesus. On a charge of “blasphemy” they knew he could not, as that was not an offence against the Roman laws, and over which, therefore, Pilate claimed no jurisdiction.

To put him to death - To devise some way by which he might be put to death under the authority of the Roman governor.

Verse 2

And when they had bound him - He was “bound” when they took him in the garden, John 18:12. Probably when he was tried before the Sanhedrin in the palace of Caiaphas, he had been loosed from his bonds, being there surrounded by multitudes, and supposed to be safe. As they were about to lead him to another part of the city now, they again bound him. The binding consisted, probably, in nothing more than tying his hands.

Pontius Pilate, the governor - The governor appointed by the Romans over Judea. The governor commonly resided at Caesarea; but he came up to Jerusalem usually at the great feasts, when great numbers of the Jews were assembled, to administer justice, and to suppress tumults if any should arise. The “title” which Pilate received was that of “governor or procurator.” The duties of the office were, chiefly, to collect the revenues due to the Roman emperor, and in certain cases to administer justice. Pilate was appointed governor of Judea by Tiberius, then Emperor of Rome. John says John 18:28 that they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the hall of judgment -

that is, to the part of the "praetorium," or governor's palace, where justice was administered. The Jews did not, however, enter in themselves, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. In Numbers 19:22 it is said that whosoever touched an unclean thing should be unclean. For this reason they would not enter into the house of a pagan, lest they should contract some defilement that would render them unfit to keep the Passover.

Verse 3

Then Judas, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself - This shows that Judas did not suppose that the affair would have resulted in this calamitous manner. He probably expected that Jesus would work a miracle to deliver himself, and not suffer this condemnation to come upon him. When he saw him taken, bound, tried, and condemned - when he saw that all probability that he would deliver himself was taken away - he was overwhelmed with disappointment, sorrow, and remorse. The word rendered "repented himself," it has been observed, does not of necessity denote a change "for the better," but "any" change of views and feelings. Here it evidently means no other change than that produced by the horrors of a guilty conscience, and by deep remorse for crime at its unexpected results. It was not saving repentance. That leads to a holy life this led to an increase of crime in his own death. True repentance leads the sinner to the Saviour. This led away from the Saviour to the gallows. Judas, if he had been a true penitent, would have come then to Jesus; would have confessed his crime at his feet, and sought for pardon there. But, overwhelmed with remorse and the conviction of vast guilt, he was not willing to come into his presence, and added to the crime of treason that of self-murder. Assuredly such a man could not be a true penitent.

Verse 4

I have sinned - I have been guilty. I have done wrong.

In that I have betrayed the innocent blood - That is, in betraying an innocent being to death. Blood is put here for "life," or for the "man." The meaning is, that he knew and felt that Jesus was innocent. This confession is a remarkable proof that Jesus was innocent. Judas had been with him for three years. He had seen him in public and private; he had heard his public teaching and his private views; he had seen him in all circumstances; and if he had done anything evil, or advanced anything against the Roman emperor, Judas was competent to testify it. Had he known any such thing he would have stated it. His testimony, being a disciple of Jesus, would have

been to the chief priests far more valuable than that of any other man; and he might not only have escaped the horrors of a troubled conscience and an awful death, but have looked for an ample reward. That he did not make such a charge that he fully and frankly confessed that Jesus was innocent - and that he gave up the ill-gotten price of treason, is full proof that, in the belief of Judas, the Saviour was free from crime, and even the suspicion of crime.

What is that to us? - This form of speaking denoted that they had nothing to do with his remorse of conscience, and his belief that Jesus was innocent. They had secured what they wanted - the person of Jesus - and they cared little now for the feelings of the traitor. So all wicked men who make use of the agency of others for the accomplishment of crime or the gratification of passion care little for the effect on the instrument. They will soon cast him off and despise him, and in thousands of instances the instruments of villainy and the panders to the pleasures of others are abandoned to remorse, wretchedness, crime, and death.

Verse 5

And he cast down … - This was an evidence of his remorse of conscience for his crime. His ill-gotten gain now did him no good. It would not produce relief to his agonized mind. He "attempted," therefore, to obtain relief by throwing back the price of treason; but he attempted it in vain. The consciousness of guilt was fastened to his soul; and Judas found, as all will find, that to cast away or abandon ill-gotten wealth will not alleviate a guilty conscience.

In the temple - It is not quite certain what part of the temple is here meant. Some have thought that it was the place where the Sanhedrin were accustomed to sit; others, the treasury; others, the part where the priests offered sacrifice. It is probable that Judas cared little or thought little to what particular part of the temple he went. In his deep remorse he hurried to the temple, and probably cast the money down in the most convenient spot, and fled to some place where he might take his life.

And went and hanged himself - The word used in the original, here, has given rise to much discussion, whether it means that he was suffocated or strangled by his great grief, or whether he took his life by suspending himself. It is acknowledged on all hands, however, that the latter is its most usual meaning, and it is certainly the most obvious meaning. Peter says, in giving an account of the death of Jesus Acts 1:18, that Judas, "falling

headlong, burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out." There has been supposed to be some difficulty in reconciling these two accounts, but there is really no necessary difference. Both accounts are true. Matthew records the mode in which Judas attempted his death by hanging. Peter speaks of the result. Judas probably passed out of the temple in great haste and perturbation of mind. He sought a place where he might perpetrate this crime.

He would not, probably, be very careful about the fitness or the means he used. In his anguish, his haste, his desire to die, he seized upon a rope and suspended himself; and it is not at all remarkable, or indeed unusual, that the rope might prove too weak and break. Falling headlong - that is, on his face - he burst asunder, and in awful horrors died - a double death, with double pains and double horrors - the reward of his aggravated guilt. The explanation here suggested will be rendered more probable if it be supposed that he hung himself near some precipitous valley. "Interpreters have suggested," says Professor Hackett (*Illustrations of Scripture*, pp. 275,276), "that Judas may have hung himself on a tree near a precipice over the valley of Hinnom, and that, the limb or rope breaking, he fell to the bottom, and was dashed to pieces by the fall. For myself, I felt, as I stood in this valley and looked up to the rocky terraces which hang over it, that the proposed explanation was a perfectly natural one. I was more than ever satisfied with it. I measured the precipitous, almost perpendicular walls in different places, and found the height to be, variously, 40,36,33,30, and 25 feet. Trees still grow quite near the edge of these rocks, and, no doubt, in former times were still more numerous in the same place. A rocky pavement exists, also, at the bottom of the ledges, and hence on that account, too, a person who should fall from above would be liable to be crushed and mangled as well as killed. The traitor may have struck, in his fall, upon some pointed rock, which entered the body and caused ‹his bowels to gush out.'"

Verse 6

It is not lawful … - It was forbidden Deuteronomy 23:18 to take what was esteemed as an abomination and to offer it to God. The price of blood - that is, of the life of a man - they justly considered as an improper and unlawful offering.

The treasury - The "treasury" was kept in the court of the women. See plan of the temple, Matthew 21:12. It was composed of a number of small

“chests” placed in different parts of the “courts” to receive the voluntary offerings of the people, as well as the half shekel required of every Jew. The original word rendered here as “treasury” contains the notion of an “offering to God.” What was given there was considered as an offering made to him.

The price of blood - The life is in the “blood.” See the notes at Romans 3:25. The word “blood” here means the same as “life.” The price of blood means the price by which the life of a man has been purchased. This was an acknowledgment that in their view Jesus was innocent. They had bought him, not condemned him justly. It is remarkable that they were so scrupulous now about so small a matter, comparatively, as putting this money in the treasury, when they had no remorse about “murdering an innocent” man, and crucifying him who had given full evidence that he was the Messiah. People are often very scrupulous in “small” matters, who stick not at great crimes.

Verse 7

And they took counsel … - They consulted among themselves about the proper way to dispose of this money.

And bought with them - In Acts 1:18, it is said of Judas that “he purchased a field with the reward of his iniquity.” By the passage in the Acts is meant no more than that he “furnished the means” or “was the occasion” of purchasing the field. It is not of necessity implied that Judas actually made the contract and paid down the money to buy a field to bury strangers in - a thing which would be in itself very improbable, but that it was “by his means” that the field was purchased. It is very frequent in the Scriptures, as well as in other writings, to represent a man as doing that which he is only the cause or occasion of another‘s doing. See Acts 2:23; John 19:1; Matthew 27:59-60.

The potter‘s field - Probably this was some field well known by that name, which was used for the purpose of making earthen vessels. The price paid for a field so near Jerusalem may appear to be very small; but it is not improbable that it had been worked until the clay was exhausted, and was neither suitable for that business nor for tillage, and was therefore considered as of little value.

To bury strangers in - Jews, who came up from other parts of the world to attend the great feasts at Jerusalem. The high priests, who regarded the

"Gentiles" as abominable, would not be inclined to provide a burial-place for them.

Verse 8

The field of blood - The field purchased by the price of blood. The name by which this field was called was "Aceldama," Acts 1:19. It was just without the walls of Jerusalem, on the south of Mount Zion. It is now used as a burying-place by the Armenian Christians in Jerusalem, who have a magnificent convent on Mount Zion - Missionary Herald, 1824, p. 66. See the plan of Jerusalem.

To this day - That is, to the day when Matthew wrote this gospel, about 30 years after the field was purchased.

Verse 9

Spoken by Jeremy the prophet - The words quoted here are not to be found in the prophecy of Jeremiah. Words similar to these are recorded in Zechariah 11:12-13, and from that place this quotation has been doubtless made. Much difficulty has been experienced in explaining this quotation. In ancient times, according to the Jewish writers; "Jeremiah" was reckoned the first of the prophets, and was placed first in the "Book of the Prophets," thus: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the twelve minor prophets. Some have thought that Matthew, quoting this place, quoted the Book of the Prophets under the name of that which had the "first" place in the book, that is, Jeremiah; and though the words are those of Zechariah, yet they are quoted correctly as the words of the Book of the Prophets, the first of which was Jeremiah. Others have thought that there was a mistake made by ancient transcribers, writing the name Jeremiah instead of Zechariah; and it is observed that this might be done by the change of only a single letter. It was often the custom to abridge words in writing them. Thus, instead of writing the name of Jeremiah in full, it would be written in Greek, "Iriou." So Zechariah would be written "Zion." By the mere change of Zinto I, therefore, the mistake might easily be made. Probably this is the correct explanation. Others have supposed that the words were "spoken by Jeremiah," and that "Zechariah" recorded them, and that Matthew quoted them as they were - the words of Jeremiah. The passage is not quoted literally; and by its being "fulfilled" is meant, probably, that the language used by Zechariah on a similar occasion would express also this event. See the notes at Matthew 1:22-23. It was language appropriate to this occasion.

The price of him that was valued - That is, the price of him on whom a value was set. The word rendered "valued," here, does not, as often in our language, mean to "esteem," but to "estimate;" not to love, approve, or regard, but to fix a price on, to estimate the value of. This they considered to be thirty pieces of silver, "the common price of a slave."

They of the children of Israel did value - Some of the Jews, the leaders or priests, acting in the name of the nation.

Did value - Did estimate, or fix a price on.

Verse 10

And gave them - In Zechariah it is, I gave them. Here it is represented as being given by the priests. The meaning is not, however, different. It is, that this price "was given" for the potter's field.

As the Lord appointed me - That is, "commanded" me. The meaning of the place in Zechariah is this: He was directed to go to the Jews as a prophet - a pastor of the people. They treated him, as they had done others, with great contempt. He asks them to give him "his price" - that is, the price which they thought he and his pastoral labors were worth, or to show their estimate of his office. If they thought it of value, they were to pay him accordingly; if not, they were to "forbear" - that is, to give nothing. To show their "great contempt" of him and his office, and of God who had sent him, they gave him thirty pieces of silver - "the price of a slave." This God commanded or "appointed him" to give to the potter, or to throw into the pottery to throw away. So in the time of Jesus the same thing was substantially repeated. Jesus came as the Messiah. They hated and rejected him. To show their contempt of him and his cause, they valued him "at the price of a slave." This was thrown down in the temple, taken by the priests, and appropriated to the purchase of a field owned by a "potter" - worn-out land of little or no value; all showing at how low a price, through the whole transaction, the Son of God was estimated. Though the words quoted here are not precisely like those in Zechariah, yet the sense and general structure are the same.

Verse 11

And Jesus stood before the governor - Many things are omitted by Matthew, in the account of this trial, which are recorded by the other evangelists. A much more full account is found in John 18:28-40.

And the governor asked him … - This question was asked On account of the "charge" which the Jews brought against Jesus, "of perverting the

nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar," Luke 23:2. It was on this charge that, after consultation, they had agreed to arraign him before Pilate. See the notes at Matthew 27:1. "They" had condemned him for "blasphemy," but they well knew that Pilate would altogether disregard an accusation of that kind. They therefore attempted to substitute a totally different accusation from that on which they had professed to find him guilty, to excite the jealousy of the Roman governor, and to procure his death on a charge of treason against the Roman emperor.

Thou sayest - That is, thou sayest right, or thou sayest the truth. We may wonder why the Jews, if they heard this confession, did not press it upon the attention of Pilate as a full confession of his guilt. It was what they had accused him of. But it might be doubtful whether, in the confusion, they heard the confession; or, if they did, Jesus took away all occasion of triumph by explaining to Pilate the "nature" of his kingdom, John 18:36. Though he acknowledged that he was a king, yet he stated fully that "his kingdom was not of this world," and that therefore it could not be alleged against him as treason against the Roman emperor. This was done "in the palace," apart from the Jews, and fully satisfied Pilate of his innocence, John 18:23.

Verse 12

When he was accused … - To wit, of perverting the nation, and of forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, Luke 23:2, Luke 23:5. Probably this was done in a tumultuous manner and in every variety of form.

He answered nothing - He was conscious of his innocence. He knew that they could not prove these charges. They offered no testimony to prove them, and, in conscious innocence, he was silent.

Verse 13

They witness against thee - This means, rather, that they accused him. They were not "witnesses," but accusers. These accusations were repeated and pressed. They charged him with exciting the people, teaching throughout, all Judea from Galilee to Jerusalem, and exciting the nation to sedition, Luke 23:5.

Verse 14

To never a word - That is, not at all. He said nothing. This is, an emphatic way of saying that he answered nothing. There was no need of his replying. He was innocent, and they offered no proof of guilt. Besides, his appearance was full evidence in his favor. He was poor, unarmed, without

powerful friends, and alone. His life had been public, and his sentiments were well known, and the charge had on the face of it the aspect of absurdity. It deserved, therefore, no answer.

Marvelled greatly - Wondered exceedingly, or was much surprised. He was probably more surprised that he bore this so meekly, and did not return railing for railing, than that he did not set up a defense. The latter was unnecessary - the former was unusual. The governor was not accustomed to see it, and was therefore greatly amazed.

It was at this time that Pilate, having heard them speak of Galilee Luke 23:5, asked if he was a Galilean. Having ascertained that he was, and being probably desirous of freeing himself from any further trouble in the affair, under pretence that he belonged to Herod‘s jurisdiction, he sent Jesus to Herod, who was then at Jerusalem attending the feast of the Passover, Luke 23:6-12. Herod, having examined him, and finding no cause of death in him, sent him back to Pilate. Pleased with the respect which had been shown him, Herod laid aside his enmity against Pilate, and they became friends. The cause of their friendship does not appear to be at all that they were united in opposing the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah, but the respect which Pilate had shown in sending Jesus to him.

Verses 15-23

See also the parallel places in Mark 15:6-14; Luke 23:17-23; John 18:39-40.

Matthew 27:15

At that feast - The feast of the Passover.

The governor was wont to release … - that is, was “accustomed” to release.

From what this custom arose, or by whom it was introduced, is not known. It was probably adopted to secure popularity among the Jews, and to render the government of the Romans less odious. Any little indulgence granted to the Jews during the heavy oppression of the Romans would serve to conciliate their favor, and to keep the nation from sedition. It might happen often that when persons were arraigned before the Romans on charge of sedition, some special favorite of the people, or some leader, might be among the number. It is evident that if they had the privilege of recovering such a person, it would serve much to allay their feelings, and make tolerable the yoke under which they groaned.

Matthew 27:16

A notable prisoner - The word "notable" means one that is "distinguished" in any way either for great virtues or great crimes.

In this place it evidently means the latter He was perhaps the leader of a band who had been guilty of sedition, and had committed murder in an insurrection, Luke 23:19.

Matthew 27:17

Whom will ye that I release … - Pilate was satisfied of the innocence of Jesus, Luke 23:13-16

He was therefore desirous of releasing him. He expected to release one to the people. He knew that Jesus, though condemned by the chief priests, was yet popular among the people He therefore attempted in this manner to rescue him from the hands of the priests, and expected that the people would prefer Him to an odious and infamous robber and murderer. Had the people been left to themselves it would probably have been done.

Jesus, which is called Christ - That is, Jesus, who claims to be the Messiah. Pilate probably did not believe it, or care much for it. He used the name which Jesus had acquired among the people. Perhaps, also, he thought that they would be more likely to ask him to be released if he was presented to them as the Messiah. Mark Mark 15:9 adds that he asked them whether they would that he should release "the King of the Jews?" It is probable that he asked the question in both ways. Perhaps it was several times repeated, and Matthew has recorded one way in which it was asked, and Mark another. He asked them whether they would demand him who "was called the Christ," expecting that they would be moved by the claims of the Messiah - claims which, when he entered Jerusalem in triumph, and in the temple, they had acknowledged. He asked them whether they would have the "King of the Jews" probably to ridicule the priests who had delivered him on that charge. He did it to show the people how absurd the accusation was. There Jesus stood, apparently a poor, inoffensive, unarmed, and despised man. Herod had set him at naught and scourged him, and sent him back. The charge, therefore, of the priests, that he was a "king" opposed to the Roman emperor, was supremely ridiculous; and Pilate, expecting that the people would see it so, hoped also that they would ask that he might be released.

Matthew 27:18

For he knew that for envy … - This was envy at his popularity.

He drew away the people from them. This Pilate understood, probably, from his knowledge of the pride and ambition of the rulers, and from the fact that no danger could arise from a person that appeared like Jesus. If Pilate knew this, he was bound to release him himself. As a governor and judge, he was under obligation to protect the innocent, and should, in spite of all the opposition of the Jews, at once have set him at liberty. But the Scriptures could not then have been fulfilled. It was necessary, in order that an atonement should be made. that Jesus should be condemned to die. At the same time. it shows the wisdom of the overruling providence of God, that he was condemned by a man who was satisfied of his innocence, and who proclaimed before his accusers his "full belief" that there was no fault in him.

Matthew 27:19

When he was set down on the judgment-seat - Literally, "While he was sitting." This message was probably received when he had resumed his place on the judgment-seat, after Jesus had been sent to Herod.

See the notes at Matthew 27:14.

His wife sent unto him - The reason why she sent to him is immediately stated - that she had a dream respecting him. We know nothing more of her. We do not know whether she had ever seen the Saviour herself, but it would seem that she was apprised of what was taking place, and probably anticipated that the affair-would involve her husband in trouble.

Have thou nothing to do … - That is, do not condemn him. Perhaps she was afraid that the vengeance of heaven would follow her husband and family if he condemned the innocent.

That just man - The word "just," here, has the sense of "innocent," or not guilty. She might have been satisfied of his innocence from other sources as well as from the dream.

I have suffered many things … - Dreams were considered as indications of the divine will, and among the Romans and Greeks, as well as the Jews, great reliance was placed on them. Her mind was probably agitated with the subject. She was satisfied of the innocence of Jesus; and, knowing that the Jews would make every effort to secure his condemnation, it was not unnatural that her mind should be excited during her sleep, perhaps with a frightful prospect of the judgments that would descend on the family of Pilate if Jesus was condemned. She therefore sent to him to secure, if possible, his release.

This day - It was now early in the morning. The Jewish "day" began at sunset, and she employed the usual language of the Jews respecting time. The dream was, in fact, in the night.

Matthew 27:20

Persuaded the multitude - The release of a prisoner was to be to the people, not to the rulers.

The rulers, therefore, in order to secure the condemnation of Jesus, urged on the people to demand Barabbas. The people were greatly under the influence of the priests. Galileans among the citizens of Jerusalem were held in contempt. The priests turned the pretensions of Jesus into ridicule. Hence, in a popular tumult, among a flexible and changing multitude, they easily excited those who, but a little before, had cried Hosanna, to cry, Crucify him.

Matthew 27:21

Whether of the twain? - Which of the two, Jesus or Barabbas?

Matthew 27:23

And the governor said, Why? - Luke informs us that Pilate put this question to them "three times," so anxious was he to release him.

He affirmed that he had found no cause of death in him. He said, therefore, that he would chastise him and let him go. He expected, probably, by causing him to be publicly whipped, to excite their compassion, to satisfy "them," and thus to evade the demands of the priests, and to set him at liberty with the consent of the people. So weak and irresolute was this Roman governor! Satisfied of his innocence, he should at once have preferred "justice to popularity," and acted as became a magistrate in acquitting the innocent.

Let him be crucified - See the notes at Matthew 27:39. Luke says they were instant with loud voices demanding this. They urged it. They demanded it with a popular clamor.

Verse 24

He took water … - The Jews were accustomed to wash their hands when they wished to show that they were innocent of a crime committed by others. See Deuteronomy 21:6; Psalm 26:6. Pilate, in doing this, meant to denote that they were guilty of his death, but that he was innocent. But the mere washing of his hands did not free him from guilt. He was "bound" as a magistrate to free an innocent man; and whatever might be the clamour of the Jews, "he" was guilty at the bar of God for suffering the holy Saviour to

be led to execution, in order to gratify the malice of enraged priests and the clamors of a tumultuous populace.

See ye to it - That is, take it upon yourselves. You are responsible for it, if you put him to death.

Verse 25

His blood be on us … - That is, let the guilt of putting him to death, if there be any, be on us and our children. We will be answerable for it, and will consent to bear the punishment for it. It is remarked by writers that, among the Athenians, if anyone accused another of a capital crime, he devoted himself and children to the same punishment if the accused was afterward found innocent. So in all countries the conduct of the parent involves the children in the consequences of his conduct. The Jews had no right to call down this vengeance on their children, but, in the righteous judgment of God, it has come upon them. In less than forty years their city and temple were overthrown and destroyed. More than a million of people perished in the siege. Thousands died by famine; thousands by disease; thousands by the sword; and their blood ran down the streets like water, so that, Josephus says, it extinguished things that were burning in the city. Thousands were crucified suffering the same punishment that they had inflicted on the Messiah. So great was the number of those who were crucified, that, Josephus says, they were obliged to cease from it, "room being wanted for the crosses, and crosses for the men." See the notes at Matthew 24. To this day, also, the curse has remained. They have been a nation scattered and peeled; persecuted almost everywhere, and a hissing and a byword among people. No single nation, probably, has suffered so much; and yet they have been preserved. All classes of people, all the governments of the earth, have conspired to overwhelm them with calamity, and yet they still live as monuments of the justice of God, and as proofs, going down from age to age, that the Christian religion is true - standing demonstrations of the crime of their fathers in putting the Messiah to death, and in calling down vengeance on their heads.

Verse 26

And when he had scourged Jesus - See the notes at Matthew 10:17. Among the Romans it was customary to scourge or whip a "slave" before he was crucified. This was done to inflict greater suffering. than crucifixion would be alone, and to add to the horrors of the punishment. Our Lord,

being about to be put to death after the manner of a slave, was also treated as a slave as one of the lowest and most despised of mankind.

He delivered him to be crucified - Not merely gave him up to them to crucify him, as if they only were answerable, but he gave him up as a judge, when he ought to have saved his life and might have done it. Crucifixion was a Roman punishment; it was performed by Roman soldiers; Pilate pronounced the sentence from a Roman tribunal, and Pilate affixed the title to the cross. Pilate, therefore, as well as the Jews, was answerable to God for the death of the Savior of the world.

Verses 27-30

See also Mark 15:15-20; John 19:1-3.

Matthew 27:27

Into the common hall - The original word here means, rather, the governor‘s palace or dwelling.

The trial of Jesus had taken place outside of the palace. The Jews would not enter in John 18:28, and it is probable that courts were held often in a larger and more public place than would be a room in his dwelling. Jesus, being condemned, was led by the soldiers away from the Jews “within” the palace, and subjected there to their profane mockery and sport.

The whole band - The “band” or cohort was a tenth part of a Roman legion, and consisted of from 400 to 600 men, according to the size of the legion. Compare the notes at Matthew 8:29.

Matthew 27:28

And they stripped him - That is, they either took off all his upper garments or removed all his clothing, probably the former.

A scarlet robe - Mark says they clothed him in “purple.” The “scarlet” color was obtained from a species of fruit; “purple” from shell-fish.

See the notes at Isaiah 1:18. The ancients gave the name “purple” to any color that had a mixture of “red” in it, and consequently these different colors might be sometimes called by the same name. The “robe” used here was the same kind worn by Roman generals and other distinguished officers of the Roman army, and also by the Roman governors. It was made so as to be placed on the shoulders, and was bound around the body so as to leave the right arm at liberty. As we cannot suppose that Pilate would array him in a new and splendid robe, we must suppose that this was one which had been worn and cast off as useless, and was now used to array the Son of God as an object of ridicule and scorn.

Matthew 27:29

Had platted - The word "platted" here means "woven together." They made a "wreath" of a thorn-bush.

A crown - Or perhaps, rather, a wreath.

A crown was worn by kings, commonly made of gold and precious stones. To ridicule the pretensions of Jesus that he was a king, they probably plucked up a thornbush growing near, made it into something resembling in shape a royal crown, so as to correspond with the old purple robe, and to complete the mockery.

Of thorns - What was the precise species of shrub denoted here is not certainly known. It was, however, doubtless, one of that species that has sharp points of very hard wood. They could therefore be easily pressed into the slain and cause considerable pain. Probably they seized upon the first thing in their way that could be made into a crown, and this happened to be a "thorn," thus increasing the sufferings of the Redeemer. Palestine abounds with thorny shrubs and plants. "The traveler finds them in his path, go where he may. Many of them are small, but some grow as high as a man's head. The Rabbinical writers say that there are no less than 22 words in the Hebrew Bible denoting thorny and prickly plants." Professor's Hackett's Illustrations of Scripture, p. 135. Compare Proverbs 24:30-31; Proverbs 15:19; Jeremiah 4:3.

And a reed in his right hand - A reed is a straight, slender herb, growing in marshy places, and abundant on the banks of the Jordan. It was often used for the purpose of making staves for walking, and it is not improbable that this was such a staff in the possession of some person present. The word is several times thus used. See 2 Kings 18:21; Isaiah 36:6; Ezekiel 29:6. Kings commonly carried a "sceptre," made of ivory or gold, as a sign of their office or rank, Esther 4:11; Esther 8:4. This "reed" or "staff" they put in his hand, in imitation of a "sceptre," to deride, also, his pretensions of being a king.

And they bowed the knee - This was done for mockery. It was an act of pretended homage. It was to ridicule his saying that he was a king. The common mode of showing respect or homage for kings was by kneeling or prostration. It shows amazing forbearance on the part of Jesus that he thus consented to be ridiculed and set at naught. No mere human being would have borne it. None but he who loved us unto death, and who saw the grand

results that would come from this scene of sufferings, could have endured such mockery.

Hail, King of the Jews! - The term "hail" was a common mode of salutation to a king, or even to a friend. It implies, commonly, the highest respect for office as well as the person, and is an invocation of blessings. Here it was used to carry on what they thought to be the farce of his being a king; to ridicule in every possible way the pretensions of a poor, unattended, unarmed man of Nazareth, as if he was a weak impostor or was deranged.

Matthew 27:30

And they spit upon him - This was a token of the deepest contempt and insult.

See the notes at Matthew 26:67.

And took the reed - The cane, probably so large as to inflict a heavy blow.

And smote him on the head - Not merely to injure him by the force of the blow, but to press the "thorns" into his head, and thus to add cruelty to insult.

Verse 31-32

As they came out - That is, either out of the governor's palace where he had been treated with such cruelty and contempt, or out of the gates of the city, to crucify him.

A man of Cyrene - Cyrene was a city of Libya, in Africa, lying west of Egypt. There were many Jews there, and they were in the habit, like others, of going frequently to Jerusalem.

Him they compelled go bear his cross - John says John 19:17 that Jesus went forth "bearing his cross." Luke says Luke 23:26 that they laid the cross on Simon, that he might bear it after Jesus. There is no contradiction in these accounts. It was a part of the usual punishment of those who were crucified that they should bear their own cross to the place of execution. Accordingly, it was laid at first on Jesus, and he went forth, as John says, bearing it. Weak, however, and exhausted by suffering and watchfulness, he probably sunk under the heavy burden, and they laid hold of Simon that he might bear "one end" of the cross, as Luke says, "after Jesus." The cross was composed of two pieces of wood, one of which was placed upright in the earth, and the other crossed it after the form of the

figure of a cross. The upright part was commonly so high that the feet of the person crucified were 2 or 3 feet from the ground.

On the middle of that upright part there was usually a projection or seat on which the person crucified sat, or, as it were, "rode." This was necessary, as the hands were not alone strong enough to bear the weight of the body; as the body was left exposed often many days, and not unfrequently suffered to remain till the flesh had been devoured by vultures or putrefied in the sun. The feet were fastened to this upright piece either by nailing them with large spikes driven through the tender part, or by being lashed by cords. To the cross-piece at the top, the hands, being extended, were also fastened, either by spikes or by cords, or perhaps, in some cases, by both. The hands and feet of our Saviour were both fastened by spikes. Crosses were also sometimes made in the form of the letter X, the limbs of the person crucified being extended to the four parts, and he suffered to die a lingering death in this cruel manner. The cross used in the Crucifixion of Christ appears to have been the former. The mention of the cross often occurs in the New Testament. It was the instrument on which the Saviour made atonement for the sins of the world. The whole of the Christian's hope of heaven, and all his peace and consolation in trial and in death, depend on the sacrifice there made for sin, and on just views and feelings in regard to the fact and the design of the Redeemer's death. See the notes at John 21:18.

Verse 33

Golgotha - This is a Hebrew word, signifying the place of a skull. This is the word which in Luke is called "Calvary." The original Greek, there, also means a skull. The word "calvary" is a Latin word meaning "skull," or place of "skulls." It is not known certainly why this name was given to this place. Some have supposed that it was because the mount resembled in shape a human skull. The most probable opinion, however, is that it was a place of execution; that malefactors were beheaded there or otherwise put to death, and that their bones remained unburied or unburned. Golgotha, or Calvary, was probably a small eminence on the northwest of Jerusalem, without the walls of the city, but at a short distance. Jesus was put to death out of the city, because capital punishments were not allowed within the walls. See Numbers 15:35; 1 Kings 21:13. This was a law among the Romans as well as the Jews. He also died there, because the bodies of the

beasts slain in sacrifice as typical of him were "burned without the camp." He also, as the antitype, suffered "without the gate," Hebrews 13:11-12. The place which is shown as Calvary now is within the city, and must also have been within the ancient walls, and there is no reason to suppose that it is the place where the Saviour was put to death.

Verse 34

They gave him vinegar … - Mark says that, "they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh." The two evangelists mean the same thing. Vinegar was made of light wine rendered acid, and was the common drink of the Roman soldiers, and this might be called either vinegar or wine in common language. "Myrrh" is a bitter substance produced in Arabia, but is used often to denote anything bitter. The meaning of the name is "bitterness." See the notes at Matthew 2:11. "Gall" is properly a bitter secretion from the liver, but the word is also used to denote anything exceedingly "bitter," as wormwood, etc. The drink, therefore, was vinegar or sour wine, rendered "bitter" by the infusion of wormwood or some other very bitter substance. The effect of this, it is said, was to stupefy the senses. It was often given to those who were crucified, to render them insensible to the pains of death. Our Lord, knowing this, when he bad tasted it refused to drink. He was unwilling to blunt the pains of dying. The "cup" which his "Father" gave him he rather chose to drink. He came to suffer. His sorrows were necessary for the work of the atonement, and he gave himself up to the unmitigated sufferings of the cross. This was presented to him in the early part of his sufferings, or when he was about to be suspended on the cross. "Afterward," when he was on the cross and just before his death, vinegar was offered to him "without the myrrh" - the vinegar which the soldiers usually drank - and of this he drank. See Matthew 27:49, and John 19:28-30. When Matthew and Mark say that he "would not drink," they refer to a different thing and a different time from John, and there is no contradiction.

Verse 35

And they crucified him - To "crucify" means to put to death on a cross. The "cross" has been described at Matthew 27:32. The usual manner of the crucifixion was as follows: After the criminal had carried the cross, attended with every possible gibe and insult, to the place of execution, a hole was dug in the earth to receive the foot of it. The cross was laid on the ground; the person condemned to suffer was stripped and was extended on it, and the soldiers fastened the hands and feet either by nails or thongs.

After they had driven the nails deeply in the wood, they elevated the cross with the agonizing sufferer on it, and, in order to fix it more firmly in the earth, they let it fall violently into the hole which they had dug to receive it. This sudden fall gave to the person that was nailed to it a violent and convulsive shock, and greatly increased his sufferings. The crucified person was then suffered to hang, commonly, until pain, exhaustion, thirst, and hunger ended his life. Sometimes the sufferings continued for days; and when friendly death terminated the life, the body was often suffered to remain - a loathsome object, putrefying in the sun or devoured by birds.

This punishment was deemed the most disgraceful and ignominious that was practiced among the Romans. It was the way in which slaves, robbers, and the most notorious and abandoned wretches were commonly put to death. It was this, among other things, that exposed those who preached the gospel to so much shame and contempt among the Greeks and Romans. They despised everything that was connected with the death of one who had been put to death as a slave and an outlaw.

Since it was the most ignominious punishment known, so it was the most painful. The following circumstances made it a death of special pain:

1. The position of the arms and the body was unnatural, the arms being extended back and almost immovable. The least motion gave violent pain in the hands and feet, and in the back, which was lacerated with stripes.

2. The nails, being driven through the parts of the hands and feet which abound with “nerves,” created the most exquisite anguish.

3. The exposure of so many wounds to the air brought on a violent inflammation, which greatly increased the poignancy of the suffering.

4. The free circulation of the blood was prevented. More blood was carried out in the arteries than could be returned by the veins. The consequence was, that there was a great increase of blood in the veins of the head, producing an intense pressure and violent pain. The same was true of other parts of the body. This intense pressure in the blood-vessels was the source of inexpressible misery.

5. The pain gradually increased. There was no relaxation and no rest. There was no prospect but death. The sufferer was commonly able to endure it until the third, and sometimes even to the seventh day. The intense sufferings of the Saviour, however, were sooner terminated. This was caused, perhaps, in some measure, by his previous fatigue and exhaustion, but still more by the intense sufferings of his soul in bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows in making an atonement for the sins of the world.

And parted his garments - It was customary to crucify a person naked. The clothes of the sufferer belonged to those who were executioners. John says (John 19:23) that they divided his garments into four parts, to each soldier a part, but for his coat they cast lots. See the notes at the place. When Matthew says, therefore, that they parted his garments, casting lots, it is to be understood that they "divided" one part of them, and for the other part of them they cast lots.

That it might be fulfilled … - The words here quoted are found in Psalm 22:18. The whole psalm is usually referred to Christ, and is a most striking description of his sufferings and death.

Verse 36

They watched him there - That is, the four soldiers who had crucified him. They watched him lest his friends should come and release him.

Verse 37

And set up over his head - John says John 19:19 that Pilate wrote the title and put it upon the cross. Probably Pilate wrote it or caused it to be written, and directed the soldiers to set it up. A man is often said to do what he directs others to do. It was customary to set up over the heads of persons crucified the crime for which they suffered, and the name of the sufferer The accusation on which Jesus had been condemned by Pilate was his claiming to be the King of the Jews.

This is Jesus, the King of the Jews - The evangelists differ in the account of this title. Mark Mark 15:26 says it was, "The King of the Jews." Luke Luke 23:38, "This is the King of the Jews." John John 19:19, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." But the difficulty may be easily removed. John says that the title was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. It is not at all improbable that the inscription "varied" in these languages. One evangelist may have translated it from the Hebrew, another from the Greek, a third from the Latin, and a fourth may have translated one of the inscriptions a little differently from another. Besides, the evangelists all

agree in the main point of the inscription, namely, that he was the King of the Jews.

Verse 38

Two thieves crucified … - Rather two "robbers." Pilate did not reside in Jerusalem. When he came there on the great feasts, or at other times, it was, in part, to hold courts for the trial of criminals. These robbers had been probably condemned at that time; and to show greater contempt for Jesus, he was crucified between men of that abandoned character, and on a cross that should have been occupied by their companion and leader, Barabbas.

Verse 39

Wagging their heads - In token of derision and insult. See Job 16:4; Psalm 109:25.

Verse 40

Thou that destroyest the temple … - Meaning, Thou that didst boast that thou couldst do it. This was one of the things that had been falsely charged on him. It was intended for painful sarcasm and derision. If he could destroy the "temple," they thought he might easily come down from the cross.

Verse 42-43

He saved others - It does not seem probable that they meant to admit that he had actually saved others, but only that he "pretended" to save them from death by miracles, or that he claimed to be the Messiah, and thus affirmed that he "could" save them. This is, therefore, cutting irony.

If he be the King of Israel … - It may seem strange to some that Jesus did not vindicate by a miracle his claims to be the Messiah, and come down from the cross. But the time had come for him to make an atonement. He had given full and sufficient proof that he was the Christ. Those who had rejected him, and who mocked and taunted him, would have been little likely to admit his claims if he had come down from the cross, since they had set at naught all his other miracles. They said this for the purpose of insult; and Jesus chose rather to suffer, though his character was assailed, than to work a new miracle for their gratification. He had foretold his death, and the time had come; and now, amid revilings, and gibes, and curses, and the severe sarcasms of an angry and apparently triumphant priesthood, he chose to die for the sins of the world. To this they added "insult" to God, profanely calling upon him to interpose by miracle and save him, if he was his friend; and all this when their prophets had foretold this very scene, and

when they were fulfilling the predictions of their own Scriptures. See the Daniel 9:24-27 notes. So wonderful is the way by which God causes His word to be fulfilled.

Verse 44

The thieves also - The robbers, or highwaymen. Luke says Luke 23:39 that one of them did it, and that the other reproved him and was penitent. The account in Luke may, however, easily be reconciled with that in Matthew by supposing that "at first both" of them reviled the Saviour, and that it is of this fact that Matthew speaks. Afterward one of them relented and became penitent perhaps from witnessing the patient sufferings of Christ. It is of this one particularly that Luke speaks. Or it may be that what is true of one of the criminals is by Matthew attributed to both. The evangelists, when for the sake of brevity they avoid particularizing, often attribute to many what is said or done by single persons, meaning no more than that it was done by some one or more of them, without specifying the one. Compare Mark 7:17 with Matthew 15:15; Mark 5:31 with Luke 8:45; Luke 9:13 with John 6:8-9.

Cast the same in his teeth - This is a most unhappy translation. It means in the original simply, they upbraided him or reproached him in the same manner.

Verse 45

Now from the sixth hour - That is, from our twelve o'clock. The Jews divided their day into twelve hours, beginning to count at sunrise.

There was darkness - This could not have been an eclipse of the sun, for the Passover was celebrated at the time of the full moon, when the moon is opposite to the sun. Luke says Luke 23:45 that "the sun was darkened," but it was not by an eclipse. The only cause of this was the interposing power of God - furnishing testimony to the dignity of the sufferer, and causing the elements to sympathize with the pains of his dying Son. It was also especially proper to furnish this testimony when the "Sun of righteousness" was withdrawing his beams for a time, and the Redeemer of men was expiring. A thick darkness, shutting out the light of day, and clothing every object with the gloom of midnight, was the appropriate drapery with which the world should be clad when the Son of God expired. This darkness was noticed by one at least of the pagan writers. Phlegon, a Roman astronomer, speaking of the 14th year of the reign of Tiberius, which is supposed to be that in which our Saviour died, says "that the

greatest eclipse of the sun that was ever known happened then, for the day was so turned into night that the stars appeared."

Over all the land - That is, probably, over the whole land of Judea, and perhaps some of the adjacent countries. The extent of the darkness is not known.

The ninth hour - Until about three o'clock in the afternoon, at which time the Saviour is supposed to have died.

Verse 46

Eli, Eli … - This language is not pure Hebrew nor Syriac, but a mixture of both, called commonly "Syro-Chaldaic." This was probably the language which the Saviour commonly spoke. The words are taken from Psalm 22:1.

My God, my God … - This expression is one denoting intense suffering. It has been difficult to understand in what sense Jesus was "forsaken by God." It is certain that God approved his work. It is certain that he was innocent. He had done nothing to forfeit the favor of God. As his own Son - holy, harmless, undefiled, and obedient - God still loved him. In either of these senses God could not have forsaken him. But the expression was probably used in reference to the following circumstances, namely:

1. His great bodily sufferings on the cross, greatly aggravated by his previous scourging, and by the want of sympathy, and by the revilings of his enemies on the cross. A person suffering thus might address God as if he was forsaken, or given up to extreme anguish.

2. He himself said that this was "the power of darkness," Luke 22:53. It was the time when his enemies, including the Jews and Satan, were suffered to do their utmost. It was said of the serpent that he should bruise the heel of the seed of the woman, Genesis 3:15. By that has been commonly understood to be meant that, though the Messiah would finally crush and destroy the power of Satan, yet he should himself suffer "through the power of the devil." When he was tempted Isaiah 53:4-5 that "he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows; that he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him; that by his stripes we are healed." He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us Galatians 3:13; he was made a sin-offering 2 Corinthians 5:21; he died in our place, on our account, that he might bring us near to God. It was this, doubtless, which caused his intense

sufferings. It was the manifestation of God‘s hatred of sin, in some way which he has not explained, that he experienced in that dread hour. It was suffering endured by Him that was due to us, and suffering by which, and by which alone, we can be saved from eternal death.

Verse 47

This man calleth for Elias - This was done purposely to deride him and his pretensions to be the Messiah. The words “Eli, Eli,” they might easily pretend that they understood to mean Elias, or so pervert them. The taunt would be more cutting, because it was the universal belief of the Jews, as well as the doctrine of Christ, that “Elias” would come before the Messiah. They derided him now, as calling upon “Elias” when God would not help him; still keeping up the pretensions to being the Messiah, and invoking “Elijah” to come from the dead to aid him. Or it is possible that this might have been said by some bystanders who did not understand the language in which he spoke, or who might not have been near enough to hear him distinctly.

Verse 48

One of them ran - John John 19:28 says that this was in consequence of Jesus‘ saying “I thirst.” One of the effects of crucifixion was excessive thirst.

Took a sponge - A sponge is a well-known porous substance that easily absorbs water. It was used in this case because, Jesus being elevated, it was difficult to convey a cup to his lips.

Filled it with vinegar - This was the common drink of Roman soldiers. It was a light wine, turned sour and mixed with water. John says John 19:29 there was a vessel set full of vinegar, probably for the use of the soldiers who watched his crucifixion.

And put it on a reed - John says it was put upon “hyssop.” The “hyssop” was a “shrub,” growing so large sometimes as to be called a “tree,” 1 Kings 4:33. The stalk of this was what Matthew calls a “reed.” The sponge fastened to this could easily be extended to reach the mouth of “Jesus.” This vinegar Jesus drank, for it was not intended to “stupefy” him or blunt his sense of pain, like the “wine” and myrrh.

Verse 49

The rest said … - Still deriding his sufferings, and refusing to allow even the poor consolation of a drink, to assuage the thirst of the Saviour of

the world in his dying agonies.

Verse 50

Cried again with a loud voice - He cried, "It is finished," John 19:30. It was in the height of his agony, probably attended with deep groaning, and uttered amid sorrows which were never else experienced in our world. It finished the work of atonement, made the way of salvation possible, rolled away the curse from guilty people, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all true believers.

Yielded up the ghost - This, though a literal translation, is unhappy. It means resigned his spirit, or "expired." The same phrase is used by the Septuagint in describing the death of Rachel. Genesis 35:18.

Verse 51

The vail of the temple - This was doubtless the veil, curiously performed, which separated the holy from the most holy place, dividing the temple into two apartments, Exodus 26:31-33.

In twain - In two pieces or parts. This was the time of day when the priest was burning incense in the holy place, and it is probable that he witnessed it. The most holy place has been usually considered as a type of heaven, and the tearing of the veil to signify that the way to heaven was now open to all - the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus, being about to enter in as the forerunner of his people. However, about the design of the tearing of the veil, the Scriptures are silent, and conjecture is useless.

And the earth did quake - Or shook. Earthquakes are violent convulsions of the ground, caused commonly by confined and rarefied air. This was probably, however, a miraculous convulsion of the earth, in attestation of the truth that the sufferer was the Messiah, the Son of God, and as an exhibition of wrath at the crimes of those who put him to death. It was not confined to Judea, but was felt in other countries. It is mentioned by Roman writers.

The rocks rent - That is, were torn asunder. Rocks are still seen at Mount Calvary thus rent asunder, which are said to be the ones that were convulsed when the Saviour died.

Verse 52

And the graves were opened - "Graves" or sepulchres were most commonly made, among the Jews, in solid rocks or in caves of rocks. The rending of the rocks, therefore, would lay them open. The graves were

opened by this earthquake, but the dead in them did not rise until after his resurrection.

And many bodies of the saints arose - Of course, it is not known who these were, nor what became of them. It is probable that they were persons who had recently died, and they appear to have been known in Jerusalem; at least, had the ancient saints risen, they would not have been known, and would not so soon have been credited as those who had recently died.

Which slept - Which had died. The death of saints is often called "sleep," Daniel 12:2; 1 Corinthians 15:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:15.

Verse 53

And came out of the graves after his resurrection - The narrative of Matthew does not determine whether they came to life before Jesus rose, and remained in the tombs, or came to life after he died. The latter is probably the correct opinion. There is nothing said of the reason why they were raised. It is not improbable to suppose that it was, amid the other wonders attending the death of Jesus, to convince the Jews that he was the Messiah. Perhaps some who had been his open friends were raised up now as an attestation that he in whom they had believed was the Christ. What became of them after they had entered into the city whether they again died or ascended to heaven, is not revealed, and conjecture is vain.

The holy city - Jerusalem, called holy because the temple was there, because it was devoted to God, and because it was the place of religious solemnities.

Verse 54

Now when the centurion … - Centurion, a captain of a hundred soldiers. He was here placed over the band that attended the crucifixion.

They feared greatly - They regarded these things as proof that God was angry, and they were terrified at the prospect that vengeance was coming on them.

Truly this was the Son of God - They had heard, probably, that Jesus professed to be the Son of God. Seeing these wonders, they believed that God was now attesting the truth of his professions. The centurion was a pagan, and had probably no very distinct notions of the phrase "the Son of God" - perhaps understanding by it only that he was like the pagan heroes who had been deified; but he certainly regarded these wonders as proof that he was "what he professed to be." In the original it is "a son of a god;" an expression perfectly suitable to a polytheist, who believed in the existence

of many gods. Mark Mark 15:39 says that they affirmed that "this man was the Son of God." Luke Luke 23:47, that they said, "Certainly this was a righteous man.' These things were said by "different persons," or at different periods of his sufferings - one evangelist having recorded one saying, and another another.

Verse 55

Beholding afar off - These women were probably not suffered to come near the cross because it was surrounded by soldiers. They witnessed with intense feelings his sufferings from some convenient place as near as they could approach.

Ministering unto him - Attending him and providing for his wants. While multitudes of people joined in the cry, "Crucify him!" and forsook him in his trying moments, it does not appear that any of his female followers were thus unfaithful. In the midst of all his trials, and all the Contempt poured upon him, they adhered to their Redeemer. Never did female constancy shine more brightly, and never was a happier example set for all who should afterward believe on him!

Verse 56

Mary Magdalene - Mary of Magdala. She had a special cause of attachment to the Saviour, having been relieved by him of a most dreadful calamity and restored to her right mind, after being possessed by seven devils. See the notes at Luke 8:2.

And the mother of Zebedee's children - That is, of James and John, Matthew 10:2. Her name was Salome, Mark 15:40.

Verse 57

When the even was come - That is, some time after three o'clock in the afternoon. Before this, the Jews had besought Pilate that the legs of those who were crucified might be broken and the bodies be taken down, that they might not remain on the cross during the Sabbath. The soldiers, coming to Jesus for that purpose, found that he was already dead, contrary to their expectation. A soldier, however, thrust a spear into his side, and there was furnished the fullest proof that he had expired. See the notes at John 19:31-37.

A rich man of Arimathea - It is uncertain where Arimathea was. There were several cities of that name in Judea. It is commonly supposed to be the same as Rama. See the notes at Matthew 2:17. Luke says that this was a "city of the Jews," and it is probable, therefore, that it was in the tribe of

Benjamin, and but a short distance from Jerusalem. This man sustained a high character. He was an "honorable counsellor, who also waited for the kingdom of God" Mark 15:43; he was "a good man and a just" Luke 23:50; he had nobly set himself against the wicked purposes of the Sanhedrin Luke 23:51; he was a disciple of Jesus, though he was not openly his follower, because he feared the Jews, John 19:38.

Verse 58

He went to Pilate - Because no one had a right to remove the body but by authority of the magistrate. Jesus was condemned to be crucified, usually a long and most bitter death, and in common cases it would have been unlawful to have removed the body so soon.

Verse 59

"He wrapped it in a clean linen cloth." John adds that this was done "with spices" John 19:40. The Jews were accustomed to use myrrh, aloes, and other aromatics in large quantities when they buried their dead. When they were not regularly embalmed, which was a long and tedious process, they enclosed the spices in the folds of the linen, or wrapped the body in it. Spices were sometimes used in such quantities as to form a "heap or bed," on which the dead body was laid. Thus it is said of Asa 2 Chronicles 16:14, "they laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odors and spices," etc. There not being time properly to embalm the body of Jesus, he was buried in this manner. The women who attended him, either not being aware of this, or desirous of showing a further regard for him, returned from the sepulchre and prepared other spices with which to embalm him on the first day of the week, Luke 23:56; Luke 24:1.

Verse 60

In his own new tomb - John says John 19:41 that this was in a garden that was "in" or "near" the place where he was crucified. This tomb Joseph had prepared for himself, as was not uncommon among the Jews. Compare the notes at Isaiah 22:16. In this tomb Luke and John inform us that no man had been laid. This was so ordered, in the providence of God, doubtless, that there might be no suspicion about his identity when he rose; that it might not be alleged that another person had risen, or that he was raised by touching the bones of some prophet, as happened to the corpse that touched the bones of Elisha, 2 Kings 13:21. Farther, by being buried here an important prophecy was remarkably fulfilled Isaiah 53:9; "He made his grave - with the rich in his death." The fulfillment of this is the more

remarkable, because during his life he associated with the poor and was himself poor. See the notes at Isaiah 53:9. "Which he had hewn out in the rock." This was a common way of constructing tombs in Judea. See the notes at Matthew 8:28. Being cut out of a rock, there was no way by which the disciples could have access to it but by the entrance, at which the guard was placed, and consequently it was impossible for them to steal him away. The sepulchre, thus secure, was rendered more so by rolling a great stone at its entrance; all possible precautions thus being used, in the providence of God, against imposition and deceit.

Verse 62

Now the next day, that followed the days of the preparation - The first day of the feast of the Passover was called the day of "preparation," because all things were on that day got in readiness for the observances of the paschal week. The Jewish day closed at sunset, and the Sabbath at that time commenced. The "next day" mentioned here does not mean the following day in our acceptation of the word, or the following "morning," but the next day in the Jewish way of speaking - that is, after the next day had commenced, or after sundown. To suppose them to have waited until the next morning would be absurd, as the disciples would be as likely to steal him away the first night as the second.

Verse 63

We remember - They had either heard him say this, or, more probably, had understood that this was one of his doctrines.

That deceiver - One of the charges against him was that he deceived the people, John 7:12. By this title they still chose to designate him, thinking that his death had fully confirmed the truth of the charges against him.

Verse 64

Until the third day - That is, during two nights and the intervening day. This proves that when the Jews spoke of "three days," they did not of necessity mean three "whole days," but parts of three days, as was the case in our Saviour's lying in the grave. See the notes at Matthew 12:40.

The last error shall be worse than the first - That is, the last "deception," or the taking him from the tomb, pretending that he rose, will have a wider influence among the people than the first, or his pretending to be the Messiah.

Verse 65

Ye have a watch - The Jews had a guard of Roman soldiers, who kept watch in the tower of Antonia, on the northwest of the temple. Pilate either referred to these, or to the "watch" that attended the crucifixion - the whole "band" that had been appointed for that. As the torments of crucifixion sometimes lasted many days, the band had been probably granted to them during that time, and they were therefore still at the direction of the chief priests.

Verse 66

Sealing the stone - The sepulchre was made sure by affixing the large stone to the entrance in such a way that it could not be removed without detection. It was sealed. In what way this was done cannot now be certainly told. The cave in which Daniel was cast was fastened in the same manner, and sealed with the king's signet Daniel 6:17, perhaps by fastening the stone in its place with cords, and bringing them together and uniting them with wax, and impressing on that the seal of the king. In this way, letters and books were anciently sealed. Possibly on the sepulchre of Jesus was impressed in this manner the seal of Pilate - the seal of office - making it doubly sure; or it may be that the stone was fitted into the tomb with clay or cement, and on that was impressed the seal of Pilate.

Setting a watch - That is, as large a number of soldiers as they judged necessary to secure the tomb.

We cannot but be struck with the wisdom of God in ordering the circumstances of the Saviour's burial in such a manner as to avoid the possibility of deception. Had all this been done by his "friends," it might have been said that they only pretended to secure the tomb, and only pretended that he was dead. But he was adjudged to be dead "by the Jews themselves;" Pilate was satisfied that that was the fact; they had their own way about his burial; he was buried alone; the place of his sepulchre was made sure, "expressly to prevent his being removed;" and they placed around him a guard, in their own judgment large enough to prevent his being taken away by force or strength. His very enemies, therefore, took every possible precaution to place his resurrection beyond the possibility of suspicion of fraud and imposture, and those precautions were the very means of furnishing the most striking proof that his death, burial, and resurrection were not impositions, but most affecting, awful, and yet cheering realities.

MATTHEW CONTENTS

CHAPTER 28

Introduction

Harmony of the Accounts of the Resurrection, Appearances, and Ascension of Christ

I. The Resurrection

As much difficulty has been felt in reconciling the accounts of the different evangelists respecting the resurrection of Christ, and as infidels have maintained that they are utterly irreconcilable, it may be proper, in closing the notes on Matthew, to give these accounts at one view. One thing should always be borne in mind by all who read the Gospels, namely, that the sacred narrative of an event is what it is declared to be by all the evangelists. That a thing is omitted by one does not prove that another is false because he has recorded it, for the very object of the different Gospels was to give the testimony of independent witnesses to the great facts of the life and death of Jesus. Nor does it prove that there is a contradiction because one relates facts in a different order from another, for neither of them professes to relate facts in the precise order in which they occurred. The object was to relate the facts themselves. With these principles in view, which are conceded to profane historians always, let us look at the accounts which are presented in the sacred narrative respecting the resurrection, appearance, and ascension of Christ.

1. Jesus was laid in the tomb on Friday evening, having been wrapped in linen with myrrh and aloes in a hurried manner, John 19:39-40. The women, not apprised of that, or desiring also to testify their regard for him, prepared spices on the same evening to embalm him, Luke 23:56. As it was too late that night to complete the preparation, they deferred it until the first day of the week, resting on the Sabbath, Luke 23:56.

2. On the first day of the week, early, the women completed their preparation, purchased more spices, and properly mixed them to make an unguent to anoint the bandages in which the body was rolled, Mark 16:1. Or this may refer to the purchase which is mentioned by Luke, meaning that they had bought them - that is, on Friday evening.

3. They came to the grave just as the day began to dawn, or just as the light appeared in the east, yet so dark as to render objects indistinct. It was

“in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week,” Matthew 28:1. “Very early in the morning, at the rising of the sun,” or as the sun was about to rise, Mark 16:2. “Very early in the morning,” Luke 24:1. “Early, while it was yet dark,” John 20:1.

4. Those who came were Mary Magdalene, Matthew 28:1; John 20:1; Mary the mother of James and Joses, Matthew 28:1; Luke 24:10; Mark 15:40; Salome, the wife of Zebedee, and mother of James and John, compare Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod‘s steward, compare Luke 24:10; Luke 8:3; and certain others not specified, Luke 24:1, Luke 24:10.

5. The objects of their coming were:

(1) to see the grave, Matthew 28:1.

(2) to embalm him, or to finish embalming him, Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1.

6. While on the way they inquired who should roll away the stone for them, that they might have access to the body of Jesus, Mark 16:3.

7. When they arrived they found that there had been an earthquake or shaking of the tomb, so that the stone was rolled away, Matthew 28:2; Mark 16:4.

8. The angel who rolled the stone away had sat down on it, and had appeared to the keepers and frightened them; though he did not appear in this place to the women, but only to the keepers, Matthew 28:2-4. At that time, probably our Saviour had risen how long before the women came is not known and cannot be ascertained.

9. When they came there, Mary Magdalene, greatly agitated with the appearance of things, and probably supposing that the body had been stolen, left the other women, and ran to the city, at the distance of half a mile, to inform the disciples, John 20:2.

10. While Mary was gone, the others probably looked around the garden in search of the body, and then came and examined the grave to see if it was not there. The tomb was large, and they entered into it. There "the angel spake unto them," Matthew 28:5. "They saw a young man" - that is, an angel in the appearance of a young man - "sitting on the right side," Mark 16:5. When they entered he was sitting; as they entered he rose and stood, Luke 24:4. Luke adds that there was another with him, Luke 24:4; this other one was not seen when they entered into the grave at the time mentioned by Mark, but was seen when they had fully entered in, as mentioned by Luke.

11. The angel charged them to go and tell the disciples and Peter, Matthew 28:7; Mark 16:7; and to assure them that he would see them in Galilee. He also reminded them of what Jesus had said when they were in Galilee, Luke 24:6-7.

12. They went immediately toward the city, yet taking a different way from the one that Mary had taken, or going in such a way that they did not meet her when she was returning from the city with Peter and John, Matthew 28:8, Mark 16:8. "They said nothing to any man," Luke 24:9-10. In Luke 24:10 it is said that it was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, that told these things to the disciples. Not that Luke affirms that they were together when they told them, but that the information was given by them, though perhaps at different times.

13. While they were gone Mary Magdalene returned to the grave, following Peter and John, who came running, John 20:2-9. They examined the grave, and found that the body was really gone, but as yet they did not know the reason, not having seen the other women to whom the angel had told the cause, and Mary Magdalene having left the women before the angel had spoken to them. As yet, therefore, she was ignorant of the reason of his removal.

14. Peter and John then left the grave, returned to the city, and left Mary alone, John 20:10.

15. While Mary was there alone she looked into the grave, and saw two angels, probably the same that had appeared to the other women, John

20:11-13.

16. Jesus appeared to Mary while she sat alone at the grave, John 20:14-18. Thus, according to Mark Mark 16:9, he appeared to Mary Magdalene "first."

17. Mary then went to tell the disciples that she had seen him, but they did not fully believe her, John 20:18; Mark 16:10-11.

18. Afterward Jesus appeared to the other women, Matthew 28:9; "As they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail." This would seem, in Matthew, to be immediately after they left the grave the first time; but many critics observe that the words "to tell his disciples" are missing in many manuscripts, and of doubtful authority. It may be further said that the words "as they were going" might have been rendered "after they were gone." They do not imply of necessity that the appearance took place immediately, but only after they were gone, without specifying the time. Probably it was not long after he had appeared to Mary Magdalene. They would naturally return to the disciples, and linger around there, that they might ascertain what had become of him, or learn whether he had been seen by anyone. It was, then, probably after they had been away and returned, and after he had been seen by Mary, that they saw him.

II. Appearances of Jesus after the Resurrection

1.To Mary Magdalene, John 20:14; Mark 16:9.

2.To the other women, Matthew 28:9.

3.To Peter, 1 Corinthians 15:5; Luke 24:34.

4.To two disciples as they were going to Emmaus, Mark 16:12-13; 1 Corinthians 15:5; Mark 16:14; Luke 24:36; John 20:19, John 20:24.

6.To the apostles when Thomas was present, John 20:24-29.

7.In Galilee, at the Sea of Tiberias, to Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James and John, and two others, John 21:1-14. This is said to be the third time that he showed himself to the disciples - that is, to the apostles when they were assembled together, John 21:14.

8.To the disciples on a mountain in Galilee, Matthew 28:16.

9.To more than 500 brethren at once, 1 Corinthians 15:6.

10.To James, one of the apostles, 1 Corinthians 15:7.

11.To all the apostles assembled together, 1 Corinthians 15:7. He was seen by them forty days after he rose - probably conversing with them familiarly.

12.To the apostles at his ascension, Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-10.

13.To Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:8; Acts 9:3-5; Acts 22:6-10.

III. The Ascension

1.It was forty days after his resurrection Acts 1:3.

2.He ascended from the Mount of Olives, near Bethany, Luke 24:50; Acts 1:12.

3.It was in the presence of all the apostles, Luke 24:50; Acts 1:9-10.

4.He was received into a cloud, and ascended to heaven, Acts 1:9, Acts 1:11; Luke 24:51; Ephesians 1:20-22.

Verse 1

In the end of the sabbath - The word "end" here means the same as "after" the Sabbath - that is, after the Sabbath was fully completed or finished, and may be expressed in this manner: "In the night following the Sabbath, for the Sabbath closed at sunset, as it began to dawn," etc.

As it began to dawn toward the first day of the week - The word "dawn" is not of necessity in the original. The word there properly means as the first day "approached," or drew on, without specifying the precise time. Mark says Mark 16:1-2 that it was after "the sabbath was past, and very early in the morning, at the rising of the sun" - that is, not that the sun "was risen," but that it was about to rise, or at the early break of day. Luke says Luke 24:1 that it was "very early in the morning;" in the Greek text, "deep twilight," or when there was scarcely any light. John John 20:1 says it was

“very early, while it was yet dark” - that is, it was not yet full daylight, or the sun had not yet risen. The time when they came, therefore, was at the break of day, when the sun was about to rise, but while it was yet so dark as to render objects obscure, or not distinctly visible.

The first day of the week - The day which is observed by Christians as the Sabbath. The Jews observed the seventh day of the week, or our Saturday. During that day our Saviour was in the grave. As he rose on the morning of the first day, that day has always been observed in commemoration of so glorious an event.

Came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary - From Mary Magdalene Christ had cast out seven devils. Grateful for his great mercy, she was one of his firmest and most faithful followers, and was first at the sepulchre, and was first permitted to see her risen Lord. The “other Mary” was not the mother of Jesus, but the mother of James and Joses (Mark). Mark says that “Salome” attended them. Salome was the wife of Zebedee, and the mother of James and John. From Luke Luke 24:10 it appears that Joanna, wife of Chusa, Herod‘s steward (see Luke 8:3), was with them. These four women, Mark says Mark 16:1, having bought sweet spices, came to anoint him. They had prepared a part of them on the evening before the Sabbath, Luke 23:56. They now, according to Mark, completed the preparation and bought more; or the meaning in Mark may be merely that, “having bought” sweet spices, without specifying the time when, they came now to embalm him. John mentions only Mary Magdalene. He does this, probably, because his object was to give a particular account of her interview with the risen Saviour. There is no contradiction among the evangelists; for while one mentions only the names of a part of those who were there, he does not deny that “others” were present also. It is an old maxim, that “he who mentions a few does not deny that there are more.”

To see the sepulchre - To see whether was as it had been left on the evening when he was laid there. To see if the stone was still there, by which they would know that he had not been removed. Mark and Luke say that the design of their coming was to anoint him with the sweet spices which they had prepared. Matthew does not mention that, but he does not “deny” that that was the ultimate design of their coming. It is not improbable that they might have known the manner in which he was buried, with a large quantity of myrrh and aloes; but that was done in haste - it was done by depositing the myrrh and aloes, without mixture or preparation, in the grave-clothes.

They came that they might embalm his body more deliberately, or at least that they might "anoint the bandages" and complete the work of embalming.

Verse 2

There was a great earthquake - Rather there "had been." It does not mean that this was while they were there, or while they were going, but that there "had been" so violent a commotion as to remove the stone. The word rendered here as "earthquake" does not of necessity mean that the convulsion extended to the earth, but only that there had been such a concussion as to remove the stone.

And sat upon it - Sat upon it when the keepers saw him, Matthew 28:4. It is not said that he was sitting when he appeared to the women. From Luke it would rather appear that he was standing.

Verse 3

His countenance - In our language the word "countenance" refers to the "face only;" in the original it refers to his "whole person." His "general aspect, or the appearance of the angel himself," was, etc.

Like lightning - Peculiarly bright and shining.

His raiment white as snow - Celestial beings are usually represented as clothed in white, Acts 1:10; Daniel 7:9; Revelation 3:4-5; Revelation 4:4; Revelation 7:13-14. White, among the Jews, was the symbol of "purity or innocence."

Verse 4

The keepers did shake - It was night. The appearance was sudden and unexpected, and to them terrific. The stone was probably suddenly removed. At the noise, the light, the suddenness of the appearance, they were affrighted.

And became as dead men - Probably by terror they fainted, or were thrown into a swoon. At this time it is probable that the Lord Jesus arose, and hence he was not seen by them when he came forth. At what precise time of the night this was we are not certainly informed. The narrative, however, leads us to suppose that it was not long before the women came to the sepulchre, or near the break of day.

Verse 5

And the angel answered and said … - This was not on the outside of the tomb, for Matthew does not say that the angel appeared to the "women" there, but only to the keepers. Mark says, "entering into the sepulchre, they

saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment" Mark 16:5. Luke says Luke 24:3, "they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus; and as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments." Seeing the stone rolled away and the sepulchre open, they of course anxiously entered into it, to see if the body was there. They did not find it, and there they saw the vision of the angels, who gave them information respecting his resurrection. Infidels have objected that there are three inconsistencies in the accounts by Mark and Luke:

1. that Mark says the angel was sitting, and Luke says they were standing. Answer: The word in Luke does not of necessity mean that they "stood," but only that they were "present." Or it may be that the one that Mark mentions was sitting when they entered, and then arose.

2. It is objected that Luke mentions two, but Mark and Matthew one. Answer: Mark mentions the one who spoke; for it cannot be supposed they both spake the same thing. He does not deny that another was present with him. Luke affirms that there was. This way of speaking is not unfrequent. Thus, Mark and Luke mention only one demoniac who was cured at Gadara. Matthew mentions two. In like manner Mark and Luke speak of only one blind man who was cured at Jericho, while from Matthew it is certain that two were. The fact that but one is mentioned, where it is not denied that there were others, does not prove that there could not be others.

3. Matthew calls this an "angel." Mark and Luke say "a man." Answer: Angels, in the Scriptures, from "appearing" in the form of human beings, are often called as they "appear," and are mentioned as men. See Genesis 18:2, Genesis 18:16, Genesis 18:22; Genesis 19:1, Genesis 19:5. "Fear not ye." That is, "Be not agitated, or troubled, that you do not find the body of the Saviour. I know that ye seek him, and are troubled that he is removed; but you need not fear that he has been stolen. You will see him again in Galilee."

Verse 6

He has risen, as he said - Jesus had often predicted that he would rise, but the disciples did not understand it, and consequently did not expect it, Matthew 16:21; Matthew 20:19.

The place where the Lord lay - The place where a body was deposited in a sepulchre was commonly a niche cut in the wall of the sepulchre. The sepulchre was usually large; that of David was mere than 100 feet in length, cut out of solid rock under ground, and separated into various apartments. All round the sides of those apartments were niches for the dead; or they were ranged around the sides, in places cut in the solid rock just large enough to contain the body. In such a place, probably, our Lord lay.

Verse 7

Tell his disciples - Mark adds particularly, "tell Peter." This was a kind message to Peter, who had so recently denied his Lord. It would serve to cheer him in his despondency, and to assure him that his sin had been forgiven; and it shows the tender love and remembrance of Jesus, even for his unfaithful friends.

Verse 8

And they departed quickly - Joyful at the "news," and wishing to impart it to all, they fled to find the disciples, and to tell them that the Lord was risen.

With fear and great joy - Fear because of:

1.the wonderful scenes which they had witnessed the stone rolled away, and the presence of an angel;

2.aconfused state of mind, apprehensive, perhaps, that it might not, after all, be true.

The news was too good to be credited at once, yet they had sufficient faith in it to fill them with great and unexpected joy. Perhaps no language could better express the state of their minds - the mingled awe and rejoicing - than that which is used here.

And did run … - They ran to announce what they had seen to the disciples. The city, where the disciples were, was half a mile or more from the place.

Verse 9

And as they went … Jesus met them - This was when they left the sepulchre the "second" time. Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene when alone, John 20:14. "Afterward" he appeared to the other women, as related by Matthew. See the accounts of the resurrection harmonized at the end of this chapter.

All hail - This is a term of salutation. The word all has been supplied by the translators. It is not in the original. The meaning of the word "hail,"

here, is rejoice;" a term of salutation connected with the idea of joy at his resurrection, and at meeting them again.

Held him by the feet - Or threw themselves prostrate before him. This was the usual posture of supplication. See 2 Kings 4:37. It does not mean that they took hold of his feet, but only that they cast themselves down before him.

And worshipped him - See the notes at Matthew 8:2. In this place the word "worship" seems to denote the homage due to the Messiah risen from the dead; regarded by them now in a proper light, and entitled to the honor which was due to God, agreeably to John 5:23.

Verse 10

Be not afraid - The ancients, when in the presence of a heavenly being - an angel, or one who was supposed to be possessed of divine power were commonly struck with great "fear," as well as a great sense of their unworthiness. See Luke 5:8; Judges 6:22-23; Judges 13:21-22. These women were in like manner alarmed when they saw Jesus, believing him now especially to be a Divine Being; seeing him returning from the regions of the dead, and doubtless impressed with a new consciousness that they were unworthy of being in his presence. Jesus comforted them. He was the "same Jesus" with whom they had been before his death, and they had no reason now to fear him.

Go tell my brethren - There is something exceedingly tender in the appellation used here - "my brethren." Though he was risen from the dead, though about to be exalted to heaven, yet he did not disdain to call his disciples his brethren. This was calculated still further to silence the fears of the women and to inspire them with confidence.

Into Galilee - Galilee was the northern part of the land. There the Saviour commenced his ministry; and there, away from the noise and confusion of the city, he purposed again to meet them, in retirement and quietness, to satisfy them of his resurrection, and to commission them to go forth and preach the everlasting gospel.

Verse 11

When they were going - Or when they had gone from the tomb.

Some of the watch - Some of the guard that had been set around the tomb to keep it safe. Probably the leaders or officers came to give a true account of what had happened.

Showed unto the chief priests - To Annas and Caiaphas.

Verse 12

And when they were assembled … - They deemed the matter of so much importance as to justify the calling together of the great council of the nation. Notwithstanding all their caution, it was plain that the body of Jesus was gone. It was further plain that the disciples would affirm that he was restored to life again. It was not improbable that Jesus would himself appear, and convince multitudes that he was the Messiah, and that the guilt of putting him to death would, after all their caution and cunning, be charged on them. They had been at great pains to procure his death. They had convinced Pilate that he was dead. They had placed a guard for the express purpose of preventing his being taken away. It would be in vain, after this, to pretend that he was not dead; that he was in a swoon; that he died in appearance only. They had shut themselves out from this, which would have been the most plausible plea, and, whatever course they might now adopt, they were obliged to proceed on the admission that he had been really dead, and that all proper measures had been taken to prevent his being stolen. They concluded, after consultation, that but one way was left - to bribe the soldiers - to induce them to tell a falsehood - and to attempt to convince the world that Jesus, in spite of themselves, and in the face of all probability, had been really stolen.

Large money - Much money. This was given to bribe them; to induce them to conceal the truth, and to affirm what they knew was false.

sa40

Verse 14

The governor‘s ears - To Pilate. If it is reported to him that Jesus was stolen while you slept.

We will persuade him - We will convince or satisfy him, so that he shall not punish you. This they might promise with safety; for,

1.They knew from the character of Pilate that he could be easily bribed.

2.Pilate, after the feast of the Passover, was accustomed to return to Caesarea.

3.He had not been inclined at all to interfere in anything concerning the Saviour until it was urged upon him by the Jews.

He would not be disposed, “of himself,” to take any further trouble about the matter. He would feel that all that could be demanded of him had

been done, and would not be disposed further to interfere, unless the Sanhedrin should demand it. This, of course, they would not do.

Verse 15

This saying is commonly reported - This account of the disappearance of the body of Jesus from the sepulchre is commonly given.

Until this day - The time when Matthew wrote this gospel that is, about 30 years after the resurrection.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus, of which an account is given in this chapter, is one of the most important doctrines of the Christian religion, and is attested by the strongest evidence that can be adduced in favor of any ancient fact. Let it be considered:

1. that he had often foretold his own death and resurrection. See Matthew 12:40; Matthew 16:21; Matthew 20:19.

2. There was no doubt that he was really dead. Of this the Jews. the Romans, and the disciples were all equally well satisfied.

3. Every proper precaution was taken to prevent his removal by stealth. A guard, usually consisting of sixty men, was placed there for the express purpose of keeping him, and the sepulchre was secured by a large stone and by a seal.

4. On the third day the body was missing. In this all were agreed. The high priests did not dare to call that in question. They labored, therefore, to account for it. The disciples affirmed that he was alive. The Jews hired the Roman soldiers to affirm that he was stolen while they slept, and succeeded in making many of the people believe it.

This account of the Jews is attended with the following difficulties and absurdities:

1.The Roman guard was composed usually of 60 men, and they were stationed there for the express purpose of guarding the body of Jesus.

2.The punishment of “sleeping” while on guard in the Roman army was “death,” and it is perfectly incredible that those soldiers should expose themselves in this manner to death.

3.The disciples were few in number, unarmed, weak, and timid. They had just fled before those who took Jesus in the garden, and how can it be believed that in so short a time they would dare to attempt to take away from a Roman guard of armed men what they were expressly set to defend?

4.How could the disciples presume that they would find the Roman soldiers asleep? or, if they should, how was it possible to remove the stone and the body without awaking even "one" of their number?

5.The "regularity and order" of the grave-clothes John 20:6-7 show that the body had not been stolen. When men rob graves of the bodies of the dead, they do not wait coolly to fold up the grave-clothes and lay them carefully by themselves.

6.If the soldiers were "asleep," how did they, or how could they know that the disciples stole the body away? If they were "awake," why did they suffer it?

The whole account, therefore, was intrinsically absurd. On the other hand, the account given by the disciples is perfectly natural and credible.

1. They account for the reason why the soldiers did not see the Saviour when he rose. Terrified at the vision of an angel, they became as dead men.

2. They affirmed that they saw him. All the apostles affirmed this, and many others.

3. They affirmed it in Jerusalem, in the presence of the Jews, before the high priests and the people. See the Acts of the Apostles. If the Jews really believed the account which they themselves had given, why did they not apprehend the apostles, and prove them guilty of the theft and of falsehood? - things which they never attempted, and which show, therefore, that they did not credit their own report.

4. In regard to the Saviour they could not be deceived. They had been with him three years. They knew him as a friend. They again ate and drank with him; they put their fingers into his hands and side; they conversed with him; they were with him 40 days. There were enough of them to bear witness. Law commonly requires not more than one or two competent

witnesses, but here were eleven plain, honest men, who affirmed in all places and at all times that they had seen him. Can it be possible that they could be deceived Then all faith in testimony must be given up.

5. They gave every possible evidence of their sincerity. They were persecuted, ridiculed, scourged, and put to death for affirming this. Yet not one of them ever expressed the least doubt of its truth. They bore everything rather than to deny that they had seen him. They had no motive in doing this but the love of truth. They obtained no wealth by it, no honor, no pleasure. They gave themselves up to great and unparalleled sufferings - going from land to land; crossing almost every sea; enduring the dangers, toils, and privations of almost every clime - for the simple object of affirming everywhere that a Saviour died and rose. If they knew this was an imposition - and if it had been they would have known it - in what way is this remarkable conduct to be accounted for? Do men conduct in this way for nothing? and especially in a plain case, where all that can be required is the testimony of the senses?

6. The world believed them. Three thousand of the Jews themselves believed in the risen Saviour on the day of Pentecost, but 50 days after his resurrection, Acts 2:41. Multitudes of other Jews believed during the lives of the apostles. Thousands of Gentiles believed also, and in 300 years the belief that Jesus rose had spread over and changed the whole Roman empire. If the apostles had been deceivers, that was the age in which they could most easily have been detected. Yet that was the age when converts were most rapidly multiplied, and God affixed His seal to their testimony that it was true.

Verse 16

Then the eleven disciples - Judas was dead, leaving but eleven of the original number of the apostles.

Into a mountain where Jesus lead appointed them - This "appointment" is recorded in Matthew 26:32. On what particular mountain this was is not known. It is probable that Jesus, when he made the appointment, specified the place, which has been omitted by the evangelists. Matthew has omitted many appearances which Jesus made to

his disciples which have been recorded by Luke, John, and Paul. See the harmony of the resurrection at the end of the chapter.

Verse 17

They worshipped him - Paid him honour as the Messiah.

But some doubted - As, for example, Thomas, John 20:25. The disciples had not expected his resurrection; they were therefore slow to believe. The mention of their doubting shows that they were honest men that they were not easily imposed on that they had not previously agreed to affirm that he had risen - that they were convinced only by the strength of the evidence. Their caution in examining the evidence; their slowness to believe; their firm conviction after all their doubts; and their willingness to show their conviction even by their "death," is most conclusive proof that they were "not" deceived in regard to the fact of his resurrection.

Verse 18

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth - The "Son of God," as "Creator," had an original right to all things, to control them and dispose of them. See John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:8. But the universe is put under him more particularly as Mediator, that he might redeem his people; that he might gather a church; that he might defend his chosen; that he might subdue all their enemies, and bring them off conquerors and more than conquerors, Ephesians 1:20-23; 1 Corinthians 15:25-27; John 5:22-23; Philemon 2:6-11. It is in reference to this, doubtless, that he speaks here power or authority committed to him over all things, that he might redeem, defend, and save the church purchased with his own blood. His mediatorial government extends, therefore, over the material world, over angels, over devils, over wicked men, and over his own people.

Verse 19

Go ye therefore - "Because" all power is mine, go! I can defend you. The world is placed under my control. It is redeemed. It is given me in promise by my Father, as the purchase of my death. Though you are weak, yet I am strong! Though you will encounter many troubles and dangers, yet I can defend you! Though you die, yet I live, and the work shall be accomplished!

Teach all nations - The word rendered "teach," here, is not the one that is usually so translated in the New Testament. This word properly means "to

disciple, or to make disciples of." This was to be done, however, by teaching, and by administering baptism.

All nations - This gracious commission was the foundation of their authority to go to the Gentiles. The Jews had expected that the offers of life under the Messiah would be confined to their own nation. Jesus broke down the partition wall, and commissioned his disciples to go everywhere, and bring the "world" to the knowledge of himself.

Baptizing them - as an emblem of the purifying influences of the Christian religion through the Holy Spirit, and solemnly devoting them to God.

In the name … - This phrase does not mean, here, "by the authority" of the Father, etc. To be baptized in the name of the Father, etc., is the same as to be baptized "unto" the Father; as to believe on the "name" of Christ is the same as to believe "on Christ," John 1:12; John 2:23; John 3:18; 1 Corinthians 1:13. To be baptized "unto" anyone is publicly to receive and adopt him as a religious teacher or lawgiver; to receive his system of religion. Thus, the Jews were baptized "unto Moses," 1 Corinthians 10:2. That is, they received the system that he taught; they acknowledged him as their lawgiver and teacher. So Paul asks 1 Corinthians 1:13, "Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" - that is, Were you devoted to Paul by this rite? Did you bind yourselves to "him," and give yourselves away to "him," or to God? So to be baptized in the name of the Father, or unto the Father, means publicly, by a significant rite, to receive his system of religion; to bind the soul to obey his laws; to be devoted to him; to receive, as the guide and comforter of the life, his instructions, and to trust to his promises. To be baptized unto the Son, in like manner, is to receive him as the Messiah - our Prophet, Priest, and King - to submit to his laws, and to receive him as a Saviour. To be baptized unto the Holy Spirit is to receive him publicly as the Sanctifier, Comforter, and Guide of the soul. The meaning, then, may be thus expressed: Baptizing them unto the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by a solemn profession of the only true religion, and by a solemn consecration to the service of the sacred Trinity.

The union of these three names in the form of baptism proves that the Son and Holy Spirit are equal with the Father. Nothing would be more absurd or blasphemous than to unite the name of a creature - a man or an angel - with the name of the ever-living God in this solemn rite. If Jesus was a mere man or an angel, as is held by many who deny his divinity, and

if the Holy Spirit was a mere "attribute" of God, then it would have been the height of absurdity to use a form like this, or to direct the apostles to baptize people under them. How absurd would be the direction - nay, how blasphemous - to have said, "Baptize them unto God, and unto Paul, and unto the "wisdom or power" of God!" Can we believe that our Saviour would have given a direction so absurd as this? Yet, unless he himself is divine, and the Holy Spirit is divine, Jesus gave a direction substantially the same as this. The form of baptism, therefore, has been always regarded as an unbreakable argument for the doctrine of the Trinity, or that the Son and Holy Spirit are equal with the Father.

Verse 20

Lo, I am with you - That is, by my Spirit, my providence, my attending counsel and guidance. I will strengthen, assist, and direct you. This also proves that Christ is divine. If he is a mere man, or a creature, though of the highest order, how could he promise to be "with" his disciples "always," or at all? They would be scattered far and wide. His disciples would greatly increase. If he was "with them" always, he was God; for no finite creature could thus be present with many people scattered in different parts of the world.

Unto the end of the world - The word rendered "world," here, sometimes means "age or state" and by some it has been supposed to mean, I will be with you until the end of this "age," or during the continuance of the Jewish state, to the destruction of Jerusalem. But as the presence of Christ was no less necessary after that than before, there seems to be no propriety in limiting the promise to his own age. It may therefore be considered as a gracious assurance that he would aid, strengthen, guide, and defend all his disciples, but more especially his ministers, to the end of time.

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Mark

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MARK INTRODUCTION

Preface to Mark

Of Mark, the writer of this Gospel, little is certainly known. He is commonly supposed to be the same that is several times mentioned in the New Testament. He was not an apostle, or companion of the Lord Jesus, during his ministry, though some of the fathers affirm that he was one of the seventy disciples. This is improbable, as he is mentioned by Peter 1 Peter 5:13 as "his son;" from which it is supposed that he was converted by the instrumentality of Peter.

From the New Testament we learn that he was sister's son to Barnabas Colossians 4:10; and that his mother's name was Mary, a pious woman in Jerusalem, at whose house the apostles and primitive Christians often assembled, Acts 12:12.

His Hebrew name was John Acts 12:12, and it is probable that he adopted a name better known or more familiar when he visited the Gentiles, a practice not uncommon in that age. He was at first the companion of Paul and Barnabas in their journeys to propagate Christianity, Acts 12:25; Acts 13:5; Acts 15:37. He chose not to attend them through their whole journey, but left them in Pamphylia, and probably returned to Jerusalem, Acts 15:38. Probably at this time he was the companion of Peter, and traveled with him to Babylon, 1 Peter 5:13. Afterward he went with Barnabas to Cyprus, Acts 15:39. Subsequently he went to Rome, at the express desire of Paul, in company with Timothy, 2 Timothy 4:11. He remained at Rome while Paul was a captive there, but how long is uncertain, Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24. From Eusebius, Epiphanius, and Jerome we hear that Mark went from Rome to Alexandria, in Egypt, where he planted a church, and died in the eighth year of the reign of Nero, 64 ad

The time when this Gospel was written is not certainly known. It is supposed to have been between the years 56 and 63 a.d. It is allowed by all that it was written at Rome; of course it was during the latter years of his life, after the apostles had left Judea, Mark 16:20. Mark was for a considerable time the companion of Peter. Though he had not himself been with the Saviour in his ministry, yet, from his long acquaintance with "Peter," he was familiar with the events of his life, and with his instructions.

The uniform testimony of the fathers is that he was the “interpreter” of Peter, and that he wrote this Gospel under the eye of Peter and with his approbation. It has come down to us, therefore, with the sanction of Peter‘s authority. Its right to a place among the inspired books has never been questioned. That it was written by Mark, that it was with Peter‘s approbation, that it was a record of the “facts” which Peter stated in his ministry, and that it was therefore an inspired book, has never been questioned.

MARK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The beginning of the gospel - The word "gospel" literally signifies good news, and particularly the good tidings respecting the way of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ. Some have understood the word "gospel" here to mean "history" or "life - the beginning of the history," etc.; but Mark says nothing of the early life of the Saviour. The word "gospel" here has reference rather to the preaching of John, an account of which immediately follows, and means the beginning of the good news, or annunciation respecting the Messiah. It was very customary thus to prefix a title to a book.

The Son of God - This title was used here to attract attention, and secure the respect of those who should read the gospel. It is no common history. It does not recount the deeds of man - of a hero or a philosopher - but the doctrines and doings of the Son of God. The history, therefore, "commands" respect.

Verse 2-3

As it is written in the prophets - Mark mentions "prophets" here without specifying which. The places are found in Malachi 3:1, and in Isaiah 41:3. See the notes at Matthew 3:3.

Verses 4-8

See the notes at Matthew 3:3, Matthew 3:5-6, Matthew 3:11.

Verses 9-11

See the notes at Matthew 3:13-17.

Verse 12-13

Here Mark relates concisely what Matthew has recorded more at length in Matthew 9:25, where the same word is used in the original: "And when they were all put forth" in Greek, "all driven out."

And was with the wild beasts - This is added to show the desolation and danger of his dwelling there. In this place, surrounded by such dangers, the temptations offered by Satan were the stronger. Amid want and perils, Satan might suppose that he would be more easily seduced from God. But he trusted in his Father, and was alike delivered from dangers, from the wild beasts, and from the power of temptation, thus teaching us what to do in the day of danger and trial.

And the angels ministered unto him - From Luke 4:2 we learn that in those days he did eat nothing. When Mark says, therefore, that the angels ministered to him, it means after the days of temptation had expired, as is said by Matthew 4:11.

Verse 14

Now after that John was put in prison - John was imprisoned by Herod, Matthew 14:3.

Jesus came into Galilee - He left Judea and went into the more retired country of Galilee. He supposed that if he remained in Judea, Herod would also persecute him and attempt to take his life. His time of death had not come, and he therefore prudently sought safety in retirement. Hence, we may learn that when we have great duties to perform for the church of God, we are not to endanger our lives wantonly. When we can secure them without a sacrifice of principle, we are to do it. See Matthew 24:16.

Verse 15

The time is fulfilled - That is, the time for the appearance of the Messiah, the time so long foretold, has come. "The kingdom of God is at hand." See the notes at Matthew 3:2.

Repent ye - Exercise sorrow for sins, and turn from them.

And believe the gospel - Literally, trust in the gospel, or believe the good tidings - to wit, respecting salvation. See the notes at Matthew 4:17.

Verses 16-20

See the notes at Matthew 4:18-22.

Verses 21-28

See also Luke 4:31-37.

Mark 1:21

And they went into Capernaum - For the situation of Capernaum see the notes at Matthew 4:13.

Straightway - Immediately. On the following Sabbath.

The synagogue - See the notes at Matthew 4:23.

And taught - In the synagogue, the presiding elder, after reading the Scriptures, invited anyone who chose to address the people, Acts 13:15. Though our Saviour was not a "priest" of the Levitical order or an "officer" of the synagogue, yet we find him often availing himself of this privilege, and delivering his doctrines to the Jews.

Mark 1:22

He taught them as one that had authority … - See the notes at Matthew 7:29.

Mark 1:23

A man with an unclean spirit - See Matthew 4:24. It is probable that this man had lucid intervals, or he would not have been admitted into the synagogue. When there, one of his fits came on, and he suddenly cried out.

Mark 1:24

Let us alone - Though only one impure spirit is mentioned as possessing this man, yet that spirit speaks also in the name of others.

They were leagued together in the work of evil, and this one knew that if he was punished, others would also share the same fate.

What have we to do with thee? - See the notes at Matthew 8:29. By this the spirit meant to say that, if Jesus cast him out, he would use an improper interference. But this was untrue. The possession of the man was a direct assault upon God and his works. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, and Jesus had a right, therefore, to liberate the captive, and to punish him who had possessed him. So Satan still considers it an infringement of his rights when God frees a "sinner" from bondage and destroys his influence over the soul. So he still asks to be let alone, and to be suffered to lead people captive at his will.

Art thou come to destroy us? - Implying that this could not be the intention of the "benevolent" Messiah; that to be cast out of that man would, in fact, be his destruction, and that therefore he might be suffered still to remain. Or it may imply, as in Matthew 8:29, that the time of their destruction had not come, and that he ought not to destroy them before that.

I know thee who thou art - Evil spirits seem to have been acquainted at once with the Messiah. Besides, they had learned from his miracles that he was the Messiah, and had power over them.

The Holy One of God - The Messiah. See Daniel 9:24. Jesus is called "the Holy One of God" because:

1.Jesus was eminently pure.

2.Because Jesus was the only begotten Son of God - equal with the Father. And,

3.Because Jesus was anointed (set apart) to the work of the Messiah, the mediator between God and man.

Mark 1:25

And Jesus rebuked him - Chided him, or commanded him, with a threatening.

This was not the man that Jesus rebuked, but the spirit, for he instantly commanded the same being to come out of the man. In all this, Jesus did not once address the man. His conversation was with the evil spirit, proving conclusively that it was not a mere disease or mental derangement - for how could the Son of God hold converse with "disease" or "insanity?" - but that he conversed with a "being" who also conversed, reasoned, cavilled, felt, resisted, and knew him. There are, therefore, evil spirits, and those spirits have taken possession of human beings.

Hold thy peace - Greek, "Be muzzled." "Restrain thyself." "Cease from complaints, and come out of the man." This was a very signal proof of the power of Jesus, to be able by a word to silence an evil angel, and, against his will, to compel him to leave a man whom he delighted to torment.

Mark 1:26

And when the unclean spirit … - Still malignant, though doomed to obey - submitting because he was obliged to, not because he chose - he exerted his last power, inflicted all the pain he could, and then bowed to the Son of God and came out.

This is the nature of an evil disposition. Though compelled to obey, though prevented by the command and providence of God from doing what it "would," yet, in seeming to obey, it does all the ill it can, and makes even the appearance of obedience the occasion for increased crime and mischief.

Mark 1:27, **Mark 1:28**

And they were all amazed … - The power of casting out devils was new to them.

It was done by a word. Jesus did it in his own name and by his own authority. This proved that he was superior to all the unclean spirits. In consequence, Jesus' fame spread throughout all the country, and the impression became prevalent that he was the Messiah.

Verses 29-31

See the notes at Matthew 8:14-15.

Verses 32-34

See the notes at Matthew 8:16-17.

And at even, when the sun did set - See the notes at Matthew 8:16.

Mark 1:33

All the city - A great part of the city. A great multitude from the city.

Mark 1:34

And suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him - They knew that he was the Messiah.

If they had spoken, they would have made that known to the people. Jesus was not desirous at that time that that should be publicly known, or that his name should be blazoned abroad. The time had not come when he wished it to be promulgated that he was the Messiah, and he therefore imposed silence on the evil spirits.

Verses 35-37

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day - Luke says Luke 4:42, "when it was day." The passage in Mark means, in the original, not literally "a great while before day," but very early, or while there was yet "much appearance of night." The place in Luke means "at daybreak," at the beginning of day. Then, also, there is much appearance of night; and Luke and Mark therefore refer to the same time before it was fully light, or just at daybreak.

And departed into a solitary place, and there prayed - Observe here:

1.that the Saviour, though perfectly holy, regarded the duty of secret prayer as of great importance.

2.that he, sought a solitary place for it - far away from the world and even from his disciples.

3.that it was early in the morning - always the best time, and a time when it should not be omitted.

4.if Jesus prayed, how much more important is it for us!

If Jesus did it in the morning, how much more important is it for us, before the world gets possession of our thoughts; before Satan fills us with unholy feelings; when we rise fresh from beds of repose, and while the world around us is still! David also thus prayed, Psalm 5:3; Psalm 119:147. He that wishes to enjoy religion will seek a place of secret prayer in the morning. If that is omitted, all will go wrong, our piety will wither. The world will fill our thoughts. Temptations will be strong. Through the day, we shall find it impossible to raise our feelings to a state of proper devotion. It will be found to be true universally, "that the religious enjoyment through

the day will be according to the state of the heart in the morning, and can therefore be measured by our faithfulness in early secret prayer." How different, too, was the conduct of the Saviour from those who spend the precious hours of the morning in sleep! He knew the value of the morning hours; he rose while the world was still; he saw the light as it spread abroad in the east with fresh tokens of his Father's presence, and joined with the universal creation in offering praise to the everywhere present God.

Mark 1:36

And Simon - Simon Peter.

They that were with him - The other apostles.

Mark 1:37

All men seek for thee - That is, many men, or multitudes. The inquiry after him was general. They told him this, evidently, with a view to induce him to leave his place of retirement, and to prevail upon him to appear publicly to instruct the multitudes.

Verse 38

And he said unto them … - This was said in answer to their "implied" request that he would go and meet the multitudes. "Since the anxiety to hear the truth is so great, since such multitudes are waiting to hear the word, let us go into the next towns," etc.

Next towns - Towns in the neighborhood or vicinity of Capernaum. He proposed to carry the gospel to them, rather than that multitudes should leave their homes and attend him in his ministry. The word here rendered "towns" denotes places in size between "cities" and "villages," or large places, but without walls.

For therefore came I forth - That is, came forth from God, or was sent by God. Luke, says Luke 4:43, "for therefore am I sent." Compare John 16:28; "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world." The meaning of this verse therefore is, "Since multitudes press to hear the word, let us not remain here, but go into the neighboring towns also: for I was sent by God not to preach at Capernaum only, but "throughout Judea," and it is therefore improper to confine my labors to this place."

Verse 39

And he preached in their synagogues - See Matthew 4:23.

All Galilee - See Matthew 1:22.

And cast out devils - See Matthew 4:24.

Verses 40-45

And there came a leper … - See the notes at Matthew 8:1-4.

Kneeling down to him - He kneeled and inclined his face to the ground, in token of deep humiliation and earnest entreaty. Compare Luke 5:12.

If thou wilt - This was an acknowledgment of the almighty power of Jesus, and an appeal to his benevolence.

Make me clean - You (Jesus) can heal me of this loathsome and offensive disease, in the eye of the law justly regarded as "unclean," and render me "legally" clean, and restore me to the privileges of the congregation.

And Jesus … touched him - It was by the law considered as unclean to touch a leprous man. See Numbers 5:2. The fact that Jesus touched him was evidence that the requisite power had been already put forth to heal him; that Jesus regarded him as already clean.

I will - Here was a most manifest proof of his divine power. None but God can work a miracle; yet Jesus does it by his "own will" - by an exertion of his own power. Therefore, Jesus is divine.

See thou say nothing to any man - The law of Moses required that a man who was healed of the leprosy should be pronounced clean by the priest before he could be admitted again to the privileges of the congregation, Leviticus 14:4, Leviticus 14:10.

For a testimony unto them - Not to the priest, but to the people, that they may have evidence that it is a real cure. The testimony of the priest on the subject would be decisive.

Mark 1:45

Began to publish it much - That is, he made known his own cure. He was so deeply affected with it, and so much rejoiced, that he followed the natural dictates of his own feelings rather than the command of the Saviour.

Jesus could no more enter openly into the city - The word "could," here, does not refer to any natural inability, or to any physical obstacle in his way, but only denotes that there was difficulty, inconvenience, or impropriety in his doing it then; that he judged it best not then to enter into the city. The difficulty was, probably, that his being in the city drew such crowds of people as rendered it difficult to accommodate them, or so as to excite the opposition of civil rulers.

The city - The city or large town where the leper was cured. The same reason for not entering that city applied also to others, so that he remained

in the deserts, where the multitudes could come to him without any difficulty or opposition.

MARK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

Into Capernaum - See the notes at Matthew 4:13.

After some days - The number of days is not known. Jesus probably remained long enough in the desert to heal the sick who were brought to him, and to give instructions to the multitudes who attended his preaching. Capernaum was not "the city" mentioned in Mark 1:45, and it is probable that there was no difficulty in his remaining there and preaching.

And it was noised … - He entered the city, doubtless, privately; but his being there was soon known, and so great had his popularity become that multitudes pressed to hear him.

Verse 2

So much as about the door - In the "court" or "yard" before the door. They could not get near enough to hear him.

Preached the word unto them - The word of God; the revelation or doctrine which he came to deliver, called "the Word," and "the Word of God," because it was spoken or revealed by God. Compare Acts 6:2-7.

Verses 3-12

See this miracle explained in Matthew 9:2-8.

Palsy - See the notes at Matthew 4:24.

Borne of four - Carried upon a couch Matthew 9:2 by four men.

Mark 2:4

The press - The crowd, the multitude of people. Jesus was probably in the large open area or hall in the center of the house. See the notes at Matthew 9:2. The people pressed into the area, and blocked up the door so that they could not have access to him.

They uncovered the roof where he was - See the notes at Matthew 9:2.

When they had broken it up - When they had removed the awning or covering, so that they could let the man down. See the notes at Matthew 9:2.

Mark 2:5

Their faith - Their confidence or belief that he could heal them.

Son - Literally, "child." The Hebrews used the words "son" and "child" with a great latitude of signification. They were applied to children, to grandchildren, to adopted children, to any descendants, to disciples, followers, young people, and to dependents. See the notes at Matthew 1:1.

In this place it denotes affection or kindness. It was a word of consolation - an endearing appellation, applied by the Saviour to the sick man to show his "compassion," to inspire confidence, and to assure him that he would heal him.

We never saw it on this fashion - Literally, "We never saw it so." We never saw anything like this.

Verse 13

By the sea-side - That is, by the Sea of Tiberias, on the shore of which Capernaum was situated. See the notes at Matthew 4:13.

Verse 14

Levi, the son of Alpheus - The same, undoubtedly, as "Matthew," the writer of the gospel which bears his name. It was not uncommon among the Jews to have two names.

The receipt of custom - See the notes at Matthew 9:9.

Verse 15

Sat at meat in the house - The words "at meat" are not in the original. The phrase means "as he reclined at his meal," or "as he was eating." This feast was made by Matthew in honor of the Saviour. See Luke 5:29.

Publicans - See the notes at Matthew 5:47.

Sinners - Sinners of abandoned character - of the same character that publicans commonly sustained - fit companions of publicans - great sinners.

There were many - That is, many "disciples." Their following him, leaving their homes, and going with him from place to place, was proof of their attachment to him. There is no doubt that our Saviour, in the early part of his ministry, was extremely popular. Multitudes of the common people attended him, and gave conclusive evidence that they were his real disciples, and it was only after much opposition from the rich and the great that he ever became unpopular among the people. Perhaps no preacher has ever attracted so universal attention, and produced so decisive effects upon mankind, as did our Lord in his personal ministry.

Verse 16-17

See the notes at Matthew 9:12-13.

Verse 18

And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast - Were accustomed often to fast. Compare Luke 5:33; Luke 18:12.

And they come and say - The disciples of John come, Matthew 9:4.

Verses 19-22

See the notes at Matthew 9:15-17.

Verses 23-28

See Matthew 12:1-8.

The cornfields - The fields sown with wheat or barley. The word "corn," in the Bible, refers only to grain of that kind, and never to "maize" or "Indian corn."

To pluck the ears of corn - They were hungry, Matthew 12:1. They therefore gathered the wheat or barley as they walked and rubbed it in their hands to shell it, and thus to satisfy their appetite. Though our Lord was with them, and though he had all things at his control, yet he suffered them to resort to this method of supplying their wants. When Jesus, thus "with" his disciples, suffered them to be "poor," we may learn that poverty is not disgraceful; that God often suffers it for the good of his people; and that he will take care, in some way, that their wants shall be supplied. It was "lawful" for them thus to supply their needs. Though the property belonged to another, yet the law of Moses allowed the poor to satisfy their desires when hungry. See Deuteronomy 23:25.

Mark 2:24

That which is not lawful - That is, that which they esteemed to be unlawful on the "Sabbath day." It was made lawful by Moses, without any distinction of days, but "they" had denied its lawfulness on the Sabbath. Christ shows them from their own law that it was "not" unlawful.

Mark 2:25

Have ye never read … - See the notes at Matthew 12:3.

Mark 2:26

Abiathar the priest - From 1 Samuel 21:1, it appears that Ahimelech was high priest at the time here referred to. And from 1 Samuel 23:6, it appears that "Abiathar" was the son of "Ahimelech." Some difficulty has been felt in reconciling these accounts. The probable reason as to why Mark says it was in the days of "Abiathar" is that Abiathar was better known than Ahimelech. The son of the high priest was regarded as his successor, and was often associated with him in the duties of his office. It was not improper, therefore, to designate him as high priest even during the life of his father, especially as that was the name by which he was afterward known. "Abiathar," moreover, in the calamitous times when David came to the throne, left the interest of Saul and fled to David, bringing with him the

ephod, one of the special garments of the high priest. For a long time, during David‘s reign, he was high priest, and it became natural, therefore, to associate “his” name with that of David; to speak of David as king, and Abiathar the high priest of his time. This will account for the fact that he was spoken of rather than his father. At the same time this was strictly true, that this was done in the days of “Abiathar,” who was afterward high priest, and was familiarly spoken of as such; as we say that “General” Washington was present at the defeat of Braddock and saved his army, though the title of “General” did not belong to him until many years afterward. Compare the notes at Luke 2:2.

showbread - See the notes at Matthew 12:4.

Mark 2:27

The sabbath was made for man - For his rest from toil, his rest from the cares and anxieties of the world, to give him an opportunity to call off his attention from earthly concerns and to direct it to the affairs of eternity. It was a kind provision for man that he might refresh his body by relaxing his labors; that he might have undisturbed time to seek the consolations of religion to cheer him in the anxieties and sorrows of a troubled world; and that he might render to God that homage which is most justly due to him as the Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and Redeemer of the world. And it is easily capable of proof that no institution has been more signally blessed to man‘s welfare than the Sabbath. To that we owe, more than to anything else, the peace and order of a civilized community. Where there is no Sabbath there is ignorance, vice, disorder, and crime. On that holy day the poor and the ignorant, as well as the learned, have undisturbed time to learn the requirements of religion, the nature of morals, the law of God, and the way of salvation. On that day man may offer his praises to the Great Giver of all good, and in the sanctuary seek the blessing of him whose favor is life. Where that day is observed in any manner as it should be, order prevails, morals are promoted, the poor are elevated in their condition, vice flies away, and the community puts on the appearance of neatness, industry, morality, and religion. The Sabbath was therefore pre-eminently intended for man‘s welfare, and the best interests of mankind demand that it should be sacredly regarded as an appointment of merciful heaven intended for our best good, and, where improved aright, infallibly resulting in our temporal and eternal peace.

Not man for the sabbath - Man was made "first," and then the Sabbath was appointed for his welfare, Genesis 2:1-3. The Sabbath was not "first" made or contemplated, and then the man made with reference to that. Since, therefore, the Sabbath was intended for man's "good," the law respecting it must not be interpreted so as to oppose his real welfare. It must be explained in consistency with a proper attention to the duties of mercy to the poor and the sick, and to those in peril. It must be, however, in accordance with man's "real good on the whole," and with the law of God. The law of God contemplates man's "real good on the whole;" and we have no right, under the plea that the Sabbath was made for man, to do anything contrary to what the law of God admits. It would not be for our "real good," but for our real and eternal injury, to devote the Sabbath to vice, to labor, or to amusement.

Mark 2:28

Therefore the Son of man … - See the notes at Matthew 12:8.

MARK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-5

See this explained in Matthew 12:9-13.

Mark 3:4

Or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? - It seems to have been a maxim with the Jews that not to do good when we have an opportunity is to do evil; not to save life is to kill or to be guilty of murder. If a man has an opportunity of saving a man‘s life when he is in danger, and does not do it, he is evidently guilty of his death. On this principle our Saviour puts this question to the Jews - whether it was better for him, having the power to heal this man, to do it, or to suffer him to remain in this suffering condition; and he illustrates it by an example, showing that in a manner of much less importance - that respecting their cattle - they would do on the Sabbath just as “he” would if he should heal this man. The same remark may apply to all opportunities of doing good. “The ability to do good imposes an obligation to do it” (Cotton Mather) He that has the means of feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, and instructing the ignorant, and sending the gospel to the destitute, and that does it not, is guilty, for he is practically doing evil; he is suffering evils to exist which he might remove. So the wicked will be condemned in the day of judgment because “they did it not,” Matthew 25:45. If this is true, what an obligation rests upon the rich to do good!

Mark 3:5

With anger - With a severe and stern countenance; with indignation at their hypocrisy and hardness of heart. This was not, however, a spiteful or revengeful passion; it was caused by excessive “grief” at their state: “being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.” It was not hatred of the “men” whose hearts were so hard; it was hatred of the sin which they exhibited, joined with the extreme grief that neither his teaching nor the law of God, nor any means which could be used, overcame their confirmed wickedness. Such anger is not unlawful, Ephesians 4:26. However, in this instance, our Lord has taught us that anger is never lawful except when it is tempered with grief or compassion for those who have offended.

Hardness of their hearts - The heart, figuratively the seat of feeling or affection, is said to be tender when it is easily affected by the sufferings of others - by our own sin and danger - by the love and commands of God; when we are easily made to feel on the great subjects pertaining to our

interest, Ezekiel 11:19-20. It is hard when nothing moves it; when a man is alike insensible to the sufferings of others, to the dangers of his own condition, and to the commands, the love, and the threatenings of God. It is most tender in youth, or when we have committed fewest crimes. It is made hard by indulgence in sin, by long resisting the offers of salvation, or by opposing any great and affecting appeals which God may make to us by his Spirit or providence, by affliction, or by a revival of religion. Hence, it is that the most favorable period for securing an interest in Christ, or for becoming a Christian, is in youth the first, the tenderest, and the best days of life. Nay, in the days of childhood, in the Sabbath-school, God may be found, and the soul prepared to die.

Verse 6

Straightway - Immediately, or as soon as possible.

Took counsel - Laid a plan. Consulted with them. Literally, "made a consultation."

The Harridans - See the notes at Matthew 22:16.

How they might destroy him - They hated him, he was so holy; because he reproved them; because he laid open their hypocrisy; and because he won the hearts of the people and lessened their influence. They therefore determined to remove him, if possible, and thus avoid his reproofs. Sinners would often rather put to death the man that reproves them than forsake their sins. The Pharisees had rather commit any crime, even to the murder of the Messiah, than forsake the sins for which he rebuked them.

Verse 7-8

To the sea - The Sea of Galilee, or to the lonely regions which surrounded the sea, where he might be in obscurity, and avoid their designs against his life. His time had not yet come, and he prudently took care of his life, thus showing that we are not needlessly to throw ourselves into danger.

Galilee - See the notes at Matthew 2:22.

Judea - The southern division of the land of Palestine.

Jerusalem - Jerusalem was "in" Judea. It is mentioned particularly to show that not only the people of the surrounding country came, but also many from the capital, the place of wealth, and honor, and power.

Idumea - The country formerly inhabited by the "Edomites." In the time of the Saviour it was embraced in the country belonging to the Jews. It was south of Judea proper. The word "Idumea" is a Greek word made from

the Hebrew "Edom." It signifies the land of Edom, a name given to Esau, one of the sons of Isaac, Genesis 25:30. The word signifies "red," and the name was given to him because he sought of Jacob red pottage as the price of his birthright. He settled in Mount Seir Deuteronomy 2:5, on the south of the land of Canaan, and the country of Idumea was bounded by Palestine on the north. During the Babylonian captivity the Edomites spread themselves into the country of Judea, and occupied a considerable part of the south of Palestine. They had, however, submitted to the rite of circumcision, and were incorporated with the Jews. From them sprang Herod the Great.

From beyond Jordan - From the region lying east of the river Jordan. The sacred writers lived on the west side of Jordan, and by the country "beyond Jordan" they meant that on the east side.

Tyre and Sidon - See the notes at Matthew 11:21.

Verse 9

A small ship - Rather a "boat." There were properly speaking, no "ships" on the Sea of Tiberias. This was probably a small boat that belonged to the disciples, in which he could draw off from the shore, and teach the people without being pressed by them.

Lest they should throng him - They pressed upon him in great numbers. He had healed many, and those who were still diseased pressed or crowded on him, so that his labors were interrupted and embarrassed. He therefore withdrew from the multitude, and sought a situation where he might address them to greater advantage.

Verse 10

As many as had plagues - As many as had diseases or maladies of body or mind. The word plague, now confined to the pestilence, does not express the meaning of the original, and tends to mislead.

Verse 11-12

Unclean spirits - Persons who were possessed of evil spirits.

Thou art the Son of God - The Son of God, by way of eminence. In this place it is equivalent to the Messiah, who was, among the Jews, called the Son of God. Hence, they were charged not to make him known, because he was not desirous that it should be blazoned abroad that he claimed to be the Messiah. He had not yet done what he wished in order to establish his claims to the Messiahship. He was poor and unhonored, and the claim would be treated as that of an impostor. "For the present," therefore, he did not wish that it should be proclaimed abroad that he was the Messiah. The

circumstance here referred to demonstrates the existence of evil spirits. If these were merely diseased or deranged persons, then it is strange that they should be endowed with knowledge so much superior to those in health. If they were under the influence of an order of spirits superior to man - whose appropriate habitation was in another world - then it is not strange that they should know him, even in the midst of his poverty, to be the Messiah, the Son of God.

Verses 13-19

For an account of the appointment of the apostles, see the notes at Matthew 10:1-4.

And calleth unto him whom he would - Those whom he chose; whom he was about to appoint to the apostleship. See the notes at John 15:16.

Mark 3:14

He ordained twelve - The word rendered "ordained" here does not express our notion of ordination to the ministry. It means, literally, "he made" - that is, he "appointed" twelve to be with him.

Twelve - The reason why "twelve" were chosen was, probably, that such a number would be deemed competent witnesses of what they saw; that they could not be easily charged with being excited by sympathy, or being deluded, as a multitude might; and that, being destined to go into all the world, a considerable number seemed indispensable. Perhaps, also, there was some reference to the fact that "twelve" was the number of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Mark 3:17

Boanerges - This word is made up of two Hebrew words signifying "sons of thunder," meaning that they, on some accounts, "resembled" thunder. See the notes at Matthew 1:1. It is not known why this name was given to James and John. They are nowhere else called by it. Some suppose it was because they wished to call down fire from heaven and consume a certain village of the Samaritans, Luke 9:54. It is, however, more probable that it was on account of something fervid, and glowing, and powerful in their genius and eloquence.

Verse 20

They could not so much as eat bread - Their time and attention were so occupied that they were obliged to forego their regular meals. The affairs of religion may so occupy the attention of ministers and others as to prevent their engaging in their customary pursuits. Religion is all-important - far

more important than the ordinary business of this life; and there is nothing unreasonable if our temporal affairs sometimes give way to the higher interests of our own souls and the souls of others. At the same time, it is true that religion is ordinarily consistent with a close attention to worldly business. It promotes industry, economy, order, neatness, and punctuality - all indispensable to worldly prosperity. Of these there has been no more illustrious example than that of our Saviour himself.

Verse 21

When his friends - Greek, "they who were of him." Not the apostles, but his relatives, his friends, who were in the place of his nativity.

Heard of it - Heard of his conduct: his preaching; his appointing the apostles; his drawing such a multitude to his preaching. This shows that by "his friends" were not meant the apostles, but his neighbors and others who "heard" of his conduct.

They went out to lay hold on him - To take him away from the multitude, and to remove him to his home, that he might be treated as a maniac, so that, by absence from the "causes" of excitement, he might be restored to his right mind.

They said - That is, common report said; or his friends and relatives said, for they did not believe on him, John 7:5. Probably the enemies of Jesus raised the report, and his relatives were persuaded to believe it to be true.

He is beside himself - He is delirious or deranged. The reason why this report gained any belief was, probably, that he had lived among them as a carpenter; that he was poor and unknown; and that now, at 30 years of age, he broke off from his occupations, abandoned his common employment, spent much time in the deserts, denied himself the common comforts of life, and set up his claims to be the Messiah who was expected by all the people to come with great pomp and splendor. The charge of "derangement" on account of attention to religion has not been confined to the Saviour. Let a man be made deeply sensible of his sins, and spend much of his time in prayer, and have no relish for the ordinary amusements or business of life; or let a Christian be much impressed with his obligation to devote himself to God, and "act" as if he believed there was an "eternity," and warn his neighbors of their danger; or let a minister show uncommon zeal and spend his strength in the service of his Master, and the world is not slow to call it derangement. And none will be more ready to originate or believe the

charge than an ungodly and infidel parent or brother, a self-righteous Pharisee or professor in the church. At the same time, men may endanger themselves on the bosom of the deep or in the bowels of the earth for wealth; or may plunge into the vortex of fashion, folly, and vice, and break in upon the hours of repose, and neglect their duties to their family and the demands of business, and in the view of the world it is wisdom and proof of a sane mind! Such is the consistency of boasted reason; such the wisdom and prudence of worldly men!

Verses 22-30

And the scribes … - See the notes at Matthew 12:24-32. The occasion of their saying this was, that he had healed a man possessed with a devil. The scribes, who came from Jerusalem to watch his conduct, charged him with having made a compact or agreement with the prince of the devils.

Verses 31-35

See the notes at Matthew 12:46-50.

MARK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-9

See the parable of the sower explained in the notes at Matthew 13:1-9.

See the parable of the sower explained in the notes at Matthew 13:1-9.

Verses 10-13

See the notes at Matthew 13:10-17. On Mark 4:12, see the notes at John 12:39-40.

When he was alone - That is, separate from the multitude. When he withdrew from the multitude a few followed him for the purpose of more instruction.

Mark 4:13

Know ye not this parable? - This which is so plain and obvious.

How then will ye know all parables? - Those which are more difficult and obscure. As they were themselves to be "teachers," it was important that they should be acquainted with the whole system of religion - of much more importance for them at that time than for the mass of the people.

Verses 14-20

See the notes at Matthew 13:18-23.

Verse 21

Is a candle brought … - A candle is not lit up to be put immediately under a measure or a bed, where it can give no light. Its design is to give light. So my preaching by parables is not designed to obscure the truth, but to throw light on it. You should understand those parables, and, understanding them, should impart the truth to others also, as a candle throws its beams upon a dark world.

Bushel - The word here used in the original means a measure for grain containing about 12 quarts.

Bed - A couch, either to sleep on at night or to recline on at their meals. Probably the latter is here meant, and is equivalent to our saying a candle is not brought to be put "under" the table, but "on" it. See the notes at Matthew 23:6.

Verse 22

There is nothing hid … - See the notes at Matthew 10:26.

Verse 24

Take heed what ye hear - Or, consider well what you hear. Make a good improvement of it.

With what measure ye mete … - You shall be treated according to the use you make of your opportunities of learning. If you consider it well, and make a good improvement of what you hear, you shall be well rewarded. If not, your reward shall be small. This is a proverbial expression. See it explained in the notes at Matthew 7:1-2.

Mete - Measure. With what measure ye measure.

Unto you that hear - To you who are "attentive," and who improve what you hear.

Verse 25

For he that hath … - See the notes at Matthew 13:12. The meaning here seems to be, he that diligently attends to my words shall increase more and more in the knowledge of the truth; but he that neglects them and is inattentive shall become more ignorant; the few things which he had learned he will forget, and his trifling knowledge will be diminished.

Hath not - Does not improve what he possessed, or does not make proper use of his means of learning.

That which he hath - That which he had already learned. By this we are taught the indispensable necessity of giving attention to the means of instruction. The attention must be "continued." It is not sufficient that we have learned some things, or appear to have learned much. All will be in vain unless we go forward, and improve every opportunity of learning the will of God and the way of salvation. So what children are taught will be of little use unless they follow it up and endeavor to improve themselves.

Verse 26

So is the kingdom of God - The gospel, or religion in the soul, may be compared to this. See the notes at Matthew 3:2. This parable is recorded only by Mark.

Verse 27

And should sleep, and rise night and day - Should sleep in the night and rise by day, for so the expression is to be understood. That is, should live in his usual way, without exerting any influence over the growing grain. By this we are not to infer that men are to use no diligence in the obtaining and in the growth of piety; but the illustration shows only that as we cannot tell how grain grows, so we cannot tell the mode in which piety increases in the heart.

He knoweth not how - This is still true. After all the researches of philosophers, no one has been able to tell the way in which grain grows. They can observe one fact after another; they can see the changes; they can see the necessity of rains and suns, of care and shelter, but beyond this they cannot go. So in religion. We can mark the change; we can see the need of prayer, and self-examination, and searching the Scriptures, and the ordinances of religion, but we cannot tell in what way the religious principle is developed and strengthened. As God unseen, yet by the use of proper means, makes the grass to flourish, so God unseen, but by proper means, nourishes the soul, and the plants of piety spring up, and bloom, and bear fruit. Compare the notes at John 3:8.

Verse 28

For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself - That is, it is done without the power of man. It is done while man is engaged in other things. The scope of this passage does not require us to suppose that our Saviour meant to say that the earth had any productive power of itself, but only that it produced its fruits not by the "power of man." God gives it its power. It has no power of its own. So religion in the heart is not by the power of man. It grows he cannot tell how, and of course he cannot without divine aid, control it. It is by the power of God. At the same time, as without industry man would have no harvest, so without active effort he would have no religion. Both are connected with his effort; both are to be measured commonly by his effort Philemon 2:12; both grow he cannot tell how; both increase when the proper means are used, and both depend on God for increase.

First the blade - The green, tender shoot, that first starts out of the earth before the stalk is formed.

Then the ear - The original means the stalk or spire of wheat or barley, as well as the ear.

The full corn - The ripe wheat. The grain swollen to its proper size. By this is denoted, undoubtedly, that grace or religion in the heart is of gradual growth. It is at first tender, feeble, perhaps almost imperceptible, like the first shootings of the grain in the earth. Perhaps also, like grain, it often lies long in the earth before there are signs of life. Like the tender grain, also, it needs care, kindness, and culture. A frost, a cold storm, or a burning sun alike injure it. So tender piety in the heart needs care, kindness, culture. It needs shelter from the frosts and storms of a cold, unfeeling world. It needs

the genial dews and mild suns of heaven; in other words, it needs instruction, prayer, and friendly counsel from parents, teachers, ministers, and experienced Christians, that it may grow, and bring forth the full fruits of holiness. Like the grain, also, in due time it will grow strong; it will produce its appropriate fruit - a full and rich harvest - to the praise of God.

Verse 29

Immediately he putteth in the sickle - This is the way with the farmer. As soon as the grain is ripe it is cut down. So it is often with the Christian. As soon as he is prepared for heaven he is taken there. But we are not to press this part of the parable, as if it meant that all are removed as soon as they are fit for heaven. Every parable contains circumstances thrown in to fill up the story, which cannot be literally interpreted. In this, the circumstance of sleeping and rising cannot be applied to Christ; and in like manner, the harvest, I suppose, is not to be literally interpreted. Perhaps the whole parable may be differently interpreted. The seed sown may mean the gospel which he was preaching. In Judea its beginnings were small; yet he would leave it, commit it to his disciples, and return to his Father. The gospel, in the meantime, left by him, would take root, spring up, and produce an abundant harvest. In due time he would return, send forth the angels, and gather in the harvest, and save his people forever. Compare the notes at Matthew 13:31-33.

Verse 30

Whereunto shall we liken … - This shows the great solicitude which Jesus had to adapt his instructions to the capacity of his disciples. He sought out the most plain and striking illustrations - an example which should be followed by all the ministers of the gospel. At the same time that the instructions of the pulpit should be dignified as our Saviour‘s always were they should be adapted to the capacity of the audience and easily understood. To do this the following things are necessary in a minister:

1.“Humility.” A freedom from a desire to shine, and to astonish the world by the splendor of his talents, and by his learning and eloquence.

2.“Good sense.” A satisfaction in being understood.

3.Acquaintance with the habits of thought and manner of speaking among the people. To do this, frequent contact with them is necessary.

4.“A good sound education.” It is the people of ignorance, with some smattering of learning, and with a desire to confound and astonish people by the use of unintelligible words. and by the introduction of matter that is wholly unconnected with the subject, that most often shoot over the heads of the people. Preachers of humility, good sense, and education are content with being understood, and free from the affectation of saying things to amaze and confound their auditors.

The kingdom of God - See the notes at Matthew 3:2.

Verse 31-32

See the notes at Matthew 13:31-32.

Verse 33

Spake he the word - The word of God. The doctrines of his gospel.

As they were able to hear it - As they could comprehend it. They were like children; and he was obliged to lead them along cautiously and by degrees to a full understanding of the plan of salvation.

Verse 34

Without a parable spake he not unto them - That is, the things pertaining to his kingdom. On other subjects he spake without parables. On these, such was their prejudice, so many notions had they contrary to the nature of his kingdom, and so liable would plain instructions have been to give offence, that he employed this method to “insinuate” truth gradually into their minds, and to prepare them fully to understand the nature of his kingdom.

They were alone - His disciples.

He expounded - Explained. Showed them more at length the spiritual meaning of the parables.

Verses 35-41

See the notes at Matthew 8:18-27.

Mark 4:36

Even as he was in the ship - They took him without making any preparation for the voyage; without providing any food or raiment. He was sitting in a ship, or boat, instructing the people. In the same boat, probably ill fitted to encounter a storm on the lake, they sailed. This would render their danger more imminent and the miracle more striking.

There were with him other little ships - Belonging probably to the people, who, seeing him sail, resolved to follow him.

Mark 4:39

Peace, be still - There is something exceedingly authoritative and majestic in this command of our Lord. Standing amid the howling tempest, on the heaving sea, and in the darkness of night, by his own power he stills the waves and bids the storm subside. None but the God of the storms and the billows could awe by a word the troubled elements, and send a universal peace and stillness among the winds and waves. He must, therefore, be divine. The following remarks by Dr. Thomson, long a resident in Syria, and familiar with the scenes which occur there, will farther illustrate this passage, and the parallel account in Matthew 8:18-27, and also the passage in Matthew 14:23-32. The extract which follows is taken from "The land and the Book," vol. ii. p. 32,33: "To understand the causes of these sudden and violent tempests, we must remember that the lake lies low - 600 feet lower than the ocean; that the vast and naked plateaus of the Jaulan rise to a great height, spreading backward to the wilds of the Hauran and upward to snowy Hermon; that the water-courses have cut out profound ravines and wild gorges, converging to the head of this lake, and that these act like gigantic "funnels" to draw down the cold winds from the mountains.

On the occasion referred to we subsequently pitched our tents at the shore, and remained for three days and nights exposed to this tremendous wind. We had to double-pin all the tent-ropes, and frequently were obliged to hang with our whole weight upon them to keep the quivering tabernacle from being carried up bodily into the air. No wonder the disciples toiled and rowed hard all that night; and how natural their amazement and terror at the sight of Jesus walking on the waves! The faith of Peter in desiring and "daring" to set foot on such a sea is most striking and impressive; more so, indeed, than its failure after he made the attempt. The whole lake, as we had it, was lashed into fury; the waves repeatedly rolled up to our tent door, tumbling over the ropes with such violence as to carry away the tent-pins. And moreover, those winds are not only violent, but they come done suddenly, and often when the sky is perfectly clear. I once went in to swim near the hot baths, and, before I was aware, a wind came rushing over the cliffs with such force that it was with great difficulty I could regain the shore. Some such sudden wind it was, I suppose, that filled the ship with waves so that it was now full, while Jesus was asleep on a pillow in the hinder part of the ship; nor is it strange that the disciples aroused him with the cry of Master! Master! carest thou not that we perish."

MARK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verses 1-20

See this account of the demoniacs fully explained in the notes at Matthew 8:28-34.

Mark 5:4

He had been often bound with fetters and chains - Efforts had been made to confine him, but his great strength - his strength increased by his malady - had prevented it. There often appears to be a great increase of strength produced by insanity, and what is here stated in regard to this maniac often occurs in Palestine and elsewhere now. Dr. Thomson ("The Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 213) says respecting this case: "There are some very similar at the present day - furious and dangerous maniacs, who wander about the mountains, and sleep in tombs and caves. In their worst paroxysms they are quite unmanageable and prodigiously strong." Luke 8:27 says of him that "he were no clothes," or that he was naked, which is also implied in the account in Mark, who tells us that after he was healed he was found "clothed and in his right mind," Mark 4:15. This is often a striking characteristic of insanity. Dr. Pritchard (on "Insanity," p. 26) quotes from an Italian physician's description of raving madness or mania: "A striking and characteristic circumstance is the propensity to go quite naked. The patient tears his clothes to tatters." So Dr. Thomson ("The Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 213) says: "It is one of the most common traits in this madness that the victims refuse to wear clothes. I have often seen them absolutely naked in the crowded streets of Beirut and Sidon. There are also cases in which they run wildly about the country and frighten the whole neighborhood. These poor wretches are held in the greatest reverence by Muslims, who, through some monstrous perversion of ideas, believe them to be inspired and peculiarly holy."

Mark 5:5

Cutting himself with stones - These are all marks of a madman - a man bereft of reason, a wretched outcast, strong and dangerous. The inspired penman says that this madness was caused by an unclean spirit, or by his being under the influence of a devil. That this account is not irrational, see the notes at Matthew 4:24.

Mark 5:6

Worshipped him - Bowed down before him; rendered him homage. This was an acknowledgment of his power, and of his control over fallen spirits.

Mark 5:9

My name is Legion - See the notes at Matthew 8:29.

Mark 5:15

Sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind - There could be no doubt of the reality of this miracle. The man had been well known. He had long dwelt among the tombs, an object of terror and alarm. To see him all at once peaceful, calm, and rational, was proof that it was the power of God only that had done it.

They were afraid - They were awed, as in the presence of God. The word does not mean here that they feared that any evil would happen to them, but that they were affected with awe; they felt that God was there; they were struck with astonishment at what Jesus had done.

Mark 5:19

Jesus suffered him not - Various reasons have been conjectured why Jesus did not suffer this man to go with him. It might have been that he wished to leave him among the people as a conclusive evidence of his power to work miracles. Or it might have been that the man feared that if Jesus left him the devils would return, and that Jesus told him to remain to show to him that the cure was complete, and that he had power over the devils when absent as well as when present. But the probable reason is, that he desired to restore him to his family and friends. Jesus was unwilling to delay the joy of his friends, and to prolong their anxiety by suffering him to remain away from them.

Mark 5:20

In Decapolis - See the notes at Matthew 4:25.

How great things … - This was the natural expression of right feeling at being cured of such a calamity. So the desire of sinners freed from sin is to honor Jesus, and to invite the world to participate in the same salvation, and to join them in doing honor to the Son of God. Compare Psalm 66:16.

Verses 22-43

See the account of the raising of Jairus‘ daughter, and the healing of the woman with an issue of blood, fully explained in the notes at Matthew 9:18-26.

Mark 5:23

Lieth at the point of death - Is dying; in the last agonies.

Mark 5:26

Had suffered many things - Had resorted to many things painful, by the direction of the physicians, in order to be healed.

Mark 5:27

Came in the press behind - In the crowd that pressed upon him. This was done to avoid being noticed. It was an act of faith. She was full of confidence that Jesus was able to heal, but she trembled on account of her conscious unworthiness, thus illustrating the humility and confidence of a sinner coming to God for pardon and life.

Mark 5:30

Virtue had gone out of him - Power to heal. The word in the original means power.

Who touched my clothes? - This be said, not to obtain information, for he had healed her, and must have known on whom the blessing was conferred; but he did it that the woman might herself make a confession of the whole matter, so that the power of her faith and the greatness of the miracle might be manifested to the praise of God.

Mark 5:34

Daughter - A word of kindness, tending to inspire confidence and to dissipate her fears.

Be whole - That is, continue to be whole, for she was already cured.

Of thy plague - Thy disease; literally, thy "scourge." So a word from Jesus heals the moral malady of the sinner.

Mark 5:35, Mark 5:36

Why troublest thou … - It seems that the people had not yet confidence that Jesus could raise the dead. He had not yet done it; and as the child was now dead, and as they supposed that his power over her was at an end, they wished no farther to trouble him. Jesus kindly set the fears of the ruler at rest, and assured him that he had equal power over the dead and the living, and could as easily raise those who had expired as those who were expiring.

Mark 5:38

The tumult - The confusion and weeping of the assembled people.

Wailed - Making inarticulate, mournful sounds; howling for the dead.

Mark 5:39

This ado - This tumult, this bustle or confusion.

And weep - Weep in this inordinate and improper manner. See the notes at Matthew 9:23.

But sleepeth - See the notes at Matthew 9:24.

Mark 5:41

Talitha cumi - This is the language which our Saviour commonly spoke. It is a mixture of Syriac and Chaldee, called Syro-Chaldaic. The proper translation is given by the evangelist - "Damsel, arise."

Mark 5:43

Something should be given her to eat - "He had raised her by extraordinary power, but he willed that she should be sustained by ordinary means." He also in this gave full evidence that she was really restored to life and health. The changes were great, sudden, and certain. There could be no illusion. So, when the Saviour had risen, he gave evidence of his own resurrection by eating with his disciples, John 21:1-13.

MARK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verses 1-6

See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 13:54-58.

Verse 7

And he called unto him the twelve - See the notes at Matthew 10:1.

And began to send them forth by two and two - In order that they might "support" and "encourage" each other in their work. Amid the trials and opposition with which they would meet, mutual counsel and aid would greatly lighten their burdens and alleviate their calamities. Mutual counsel might also contribute to their success, and lead to "united" plans to advance the kingdom of the Redeemer. Jesus here, as in all the work of religion, consulted at the same time the "happiness" and the "usefulness" of his disciples; nor are they ever separated. Whatever contributes to the "usefulness" of his people produces also their happiness; or, in other words, the secret of being happy is to be "useful."

Verses 8-11

See these verses fully explained in the notes at Matthew 10:9-15. In Matthew 10:5 they were commanded not to go among the Gentiles or Samaritans. Mark omits that direction, perhaps, because he was writing for the "Gentiles," and the direction might create unnecessary difficulty or offence. Perhaps he omits it also because the command was given for a temporary purpose, and was not in force at the time of his writing.

Verse 12

Preached that men should repent - See the nature of repentance explained in notes at Matthew 3:2. They were now called upon to repent and reform their lives because sin was evil, because the Messiah had come to preach forgiveness to the penitent, and because at "his" presence it was fit that the nation should turn from its sins and prepare to receive him.

Verse 13

Cast out many devils - See the notes at Matthew 4:24.

And anointed with oil … - Anointing with oil was in common use among the Jews in cases of sickness. It was supposed to have a mild, soothing, and alleviating effect on the body. In James 5:14, the elders of the church, in connection with prayer, were directed also to anoint the sick with "oil." See the notes at that passage. It was also used in wounds. See the notes at Isaiah 1:6. The good Samaritan poured oil and wine into the

wounds of the waylaid Jew, Luke 10:34. Josephus says that, in the last sickness of Herod, his physicians commanded him to be anointed with oil. It need not be supposed, however, that the apostles used oil for mere "medical" purposes. It was used, probably, like the imposition of hands, or like our Saviour's anointing the eyes of the blind with clay; also as a sign, in expectation of imparting that aid and comfort from God which was sought, and which was "represented" by the soothing and gentle effect of oil.

Verses 14-20

See this account of the death of John the Baptist fully explained in the notes at Matthew 14:1-12.

Mark 6:20

For Herod feared John - That is, he stood in awe of him on account of his sanctity, and his boldness and fearlessness in reproving sin.

Knowing that he was a just man and an Holy - A holy, pious, upright, honest man - a man who would not be afraid of him, or afraid to speak his real sentiments.

And observed him - Margin, "kept him, or saved him." This does not mean that he "observed" or obeyed his teachings, but that he kept him in safe custody in order to preserve him from the machinations of Herodias. He was willing to show his respect for John, and to secure him from danger, and even to do "many things" which might indicate respect for him - at least, to do so much as to guard him from his enemies.

And did many things - But he did not do the thing which was demanded of him - to break off from his sins. He attempted to make a compromise with his conscience. He still loved his sins, and did "other" things which he supposed might be accepted in the place of putting away, as he ought, the wife of his brother - the polluted and adulterous woman with whom he lived. Perhaps he treated John kindly, or spoke well of him, or aided him in his wants, and attempted in this way to silence his rebukes and destroy his faithfulness. This was probably before John was imprisoned. So sinners often treat ministers kindly, and do much to make them comfortable, and hear them gladly, while they are still unwilling to do the thing which is demanded of them - to repent and believe the gospel. They expect that their kind attentions will be accepted in the place of what God demands - repentance and the forsaking of their sins.

Verse 30

And the apostles gathered themselves together - That is, those whom he had sent out two and two, Mark 4:7. Having traveled around the country, they returned and met the Saviour at Capernaum.

Verse 31

A desert place - A retired place, across the sea from Capernaum, where they would be free from interruption.

There were many coming and going - Coming to be healed and retiring, or coming to hear him preach. It means that they were "thronged," or that there was a vast multitude attending his preaching.

Verses 32-44

See this narrative explained in the notes at Matthew 14:13-21.

Mark 6:32

By ship - By a boat or a small vessel.

Privately - Without making their plan known. They intended to go privately. It appears, however, that their intention became known, and multitudes followed them.

Mark 6:33

Afoot thither - On foot to the place where they saw them going.

Out of all cities - All cities or large towns in the neighborhood.

Mark 6:34

Much people … as sheep … - They had no one to teach them and guide them. The priests and scribes were proud and corrupt; they despised the common people and neglected them.

Mark 6:35

The time is far passed - The day is almost gone. It is drawing near night.

Mark 6:37

Two hundred pennyworth of bread - About twenty-eight dollars, or 6 British pounds. See the notes at Matthew 14:16. As the disciples had a common purse in which they carried their little property, consisting of the donations of their friends and money to be given to the poor (compare John 12:6; Matthew 26:8-9; Luke 8:3), it is not improbable that they had at this time about this sum in their possession. Philip - for it was he who asked the question John 6:7 - asked, with a mixture of wonder and agitation, whether they should take all their little property and spend it on a single meal? And even if we should, said he, it would not be sufficient to satisfy such a multitude. It was implied in this that, in his view, they could not provide for

them if they wished to, and that it would be better to send them away than to attempt it.

Mark 6:40

In ranks - Literally, in the form of square beds in a garden. By regularly formed companies.

By hundreds and by fifties - Some companies had a hundred in them, and some groupings had fifty in them. We do not need to suppose that these were "exactly" formed or arranged, but that this was approximately the number. The expression indicates a "multitude." There were so many that they sat down, by "hundreds" and by "fifties," in separate companies, upon the green grass.

Mark 6:43

twelve baskets - Baskets belonging to the disciples, in which they carried their provisions, or, perhaps, belonging to some of the multitude.

Fragments - Broken pieces of the bread that remained.

Verses 45-56

See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 14:22-36.

Mark 6:52

They considered not the miracle of the loaves - They did not remember or call to mind the "power" which Jesus had shown in feeding the five thousand by a miracle, and that, having done that, he had power also to save them from the storm.

Their heart was hardened - Their "mind" was dull to perceive it. This does not mean that they were "opposed" to Jesus, or that they had what we denominate "hardness of heart," but simply that they were slow to perceive his power. They did not quickly learn, as they ought to have done, that he had all power, and could therefore allay the storm. The word "heart" is frequently used in this sense. See Ephesians 1:18, in Greek; Romans 1:21; Romans 2:15; 2 Corinthians 4:6.

Mark 6:54

They knew him - They "recollected" Jesus, because he had been there before and worked miracles.

Mark 6:56

The border of his garment - Compare the notes at Matthew 9:20.

MARK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verses 1-23

See this passage explained in the notes at Mark 7:1

Came from Jerusalem - Probably to observe his conduct, and to find matter of accusation against him.

Mark 7:2

Defiled hands - The hands were considered defiled or polluted unless they were washed previous to every meal.

Mark 7:3

Except they wash their hands oft - Our word "oft" means frequently, often. The Greek wore translated oft has been rendered various ways. Some have said that it means "up to the wrist" - unless they wash their hands up to the wrist. Others have said up to the elbow." There is evidence that the Pharisees had some such foolish rule as this about washing, and it is likely that they practiced it faithfully. But the Greek Word πυγμή pugmē- means properly the "fist," and the meaning here is, "Unless they wash their hands (rubbing them) with the fist" - that is, not merely dipping the finger or hands in water as a sign of ablution, but rubbing the hands together as a ball or fist, in the usual Oriental manner when water is poured over them. Hence, the phrase comes to mean "diligently, carefully, sedulously." - Robinson, Lexicon. The idea is, unless they pay the utmost attention to it, and do it carefully and according to rule.

The tradition - What had been handed down; not what was delivered "by writing" in the law of Moses, but what had been communicated from father to son as being proper and binding.

The elders - The ancients; not the old men "then living," but those who had lived formerly.

Mark 7:4

Market - This word means either the place where provisions were sold, or the place where men were convened for any purpose. Here it probably means the former.

Except they wash - In the original, "Except they baptize." In this place it does not mean to immerse the whole body, but only the hands. There is no evidence that the Jews washed their "whole bodies" every time they came from market. It is probable that they often washed with the use of a very small quantity of water.

The washing of cups - In the Greek, "the baptism of cups."

Cups - drinking vessels. Those used at their meals.

Pots - Measures of "liquids." Vessels made of wood, used to hold wine, vinegar, etc.

brazen vessels - Vessels made of brass, used in cooking or otherwise. These, if much polluted, were commonly passed through the fire: if slightly polluted they were washed. Earthen vessels, if defiled, were usually broken.

Tables - This word means, in the original, "beds or couches." It refers not to the "tables" on which they ate, but to the "couches" on which they reclined at their meals. See the notes at Matthew 23:6. These were supposed to be defiled when any unclean or polluted person had reclined on them, and they deemed it necessary to purify them with water. The word "baptism" is here used - in the original, "the baptism of tables;" but, since it cannot be supposed that "couches" were entirely "immersed" in water, the word "baptism" here must denote some other application of water, by sprinkling or otherwise, and shows that the term is used in the sense of washing in any way. If the word is used here, as is clear it is, to denote anything except entire immersion, it may be elsewhere, and baptism is lawfully performed, therefore, without immersing the whole body in water.

Mark 7:7

For doctrines - For commands of God binding on the conscience. Imposing "your" traditions as equal in authority to the laws of God.

Mark 7:8

Laying aside - Rejecting, or making, it give place to traditions; considering the traditions as superior in authority to the divine law. This was the uniform doctrine of the Pharisees. See the notes at Matthew 15:1-9.

The tradition of men - What has been handed down by human beings, or what rests solely on their authority.

Mark 7:9

Full well - These words are capable of different interpretations. Some read them as a question: "Do ye do well in rejecting?" etc. Others suppose they mean "skillfully, cunningly." "You show great cunning or art, in laying aside God's commands and substituting in their place those of men." Others suppose them to be ironical. "How nobly you act! From conscientious attachment to your traditions you have made void the law of God;" meaning to intimate by it that they had acted wickedly and basely.

Mark 7:17

The parable - The "obscure" and difficult remarks which he had made in Mark 7:15. The word "parable," here, means "obscure" and "difficult saying." They could not understand it. They had probably imbibed many of the popular notions of the Pharisees, and they could not understand why a man was not defiled by external things. It was, moreover, a doctrine of the law that men were ceremonially polluted by contact with dead bodies, etc., and they could not understand how it could be otherwise.

Mark 7:18

Cannot defile him - Cannot render his "soul" polluted; cannot make him a "sinner" so as to need this purifying as a "religious" observance.

Mark 7:19

Entereth not into his heart - Does not reach or affect the "mind," the "soul," and consequently cannot pollute it. Even if it should affect the "body," yet it cannot the "soul," and consequently cannot need to be cleansed by a religious ordinance. The notions of the Pharisees, therefore, are not founded in reason, but are mere "superstition."

The draught - The sink, the vault. "Purging all meats." The word "purging," here, means to purify, to cleanse. What is thrown out of the body is the innutritious part of the food taken into the stomach, and leaving only that which is proper for the support of life; and it cannot, therefore, defile the soul.

All meals - All food; all that is taken into the body to support life. The meaning is, that the economy or process by which life is supported "purifies" or "renders nutritious" all kinds of food. The unwholesome or innutritious parts are separated, and the wholesome only are taken into the system. This agrees with all that has since been discovered of the process of digestion and of the support of life. The food taken into the stomach is by the gastric juice converted into a thick pulp called chyme. The nutritious part of this is conveyed into small vessels, and changed into a milky substance called "chyle." This is poured by the thoracic duct into the left subclavian vein and mingles with the blood, and conveys nutriment and support to all parts of the system. The useless parts of the food are thrown off.

Mark 7:20

Hat which cometh out of the man - His words; the expression of his thoughts and feelings; his conduct, as the development of inward malice, anger, covetousness, lust, etc.

Defileth the man - Makes him really polluted or offensive in the sight of God. This renders the soul corrupt and abominable in his sight. See Matthew 15:18-20.

Verses 24-30

See this miracle explained in the notes at Matthew 15:21-28.

Mark 7:24

Would have no man know it - To avoid the designs of the Pharisees he wished to be retired.

Mark 7:26

A Greek - The Jews called all persons "Greeks" who were not of their nation. Compare Romans 1:14. The whole world was considered as divided into Jews and Greeks. Though she might not have been strictly a "Greek," yet she came under this general appellation as a foreigner.

Verse 31

Departing from the coasts - The country or regions of Tyre.

Came unto the sea of Galilee - The Sea of Tiberias. See the notes at Matthew 4:18.

Decapolis - See the notes at Matthew 4:25. He did not go immediately into Capernaum, or any city where he was known, but into the retired regions around the Sea of Galilee. This was done to avoid the designs of the Pharisees, who sought his life.

Verse 32

They bring - That is, his friends brought, or the people brought.

One that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech - Not entirely mute, but who spoke indistinctly or with difficulty. His deafness might not have been of long standing, and his speech, therefore, not entirely ruined.

To put his hand upon him - That is, to cure him. Blessings were commonly imparted by laying on the hands.

Verse 33

And he took him aside from the multitude - Why this was done we have no means of information. It might have been to conceal from the multitude everything respecting the "manner" of cure, in order that none might attempt to cure in a similar way.

And he put his fingers into his ears … - Why this was done it has been found exceedingly difficult to explain. Jesus had power at once to open his ears and loose his tongue, but for some cause he chose to accompany it with

a sign. This was intended, probably, simply to denote that the power of healing came from him; to satisfy the man by the touch that he had this power, and that it could come from no other quarter. Our Saviour often used signs in this way to denote his power to heal. See Mark 8:23; John 9:6.

Verse 34

Looked up to heaven - To lift up the eyes to heaven is an act imploring aid from God, and is an attitude of prayer, Psalm 121:1-2; Mark 6:41; John 11:41.

He sighed - Pitying the sufferings of the man who stood before him.

Ephphatha - This word is "Syriac," the language which our Lord used in addressing the man, and means "Be opened."

Verse 35

The string of his tongue was loosed - The difficulty in his speaking was removed.

Verse 36

Tell no man - Do not noise it abroad. He was not ambitious of being known, and he knew that if much was said of his cures, it would excite the jealousy of the Pharisees and endanger his life.

Verse 37

Beyond measure - Exceedingly; very much. In the Greek, "Very abundantly."

He hath done all things well - All things in a remarkable manner; or, he has perfectly effected the cure of this deaf-mute.

MARK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verses 1-9

See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 15:32-39.

Mark 8:1

In those days - While in the wilderness, where he had cured the deaf-mute man.

Having nothing to eat - Having come unprovided, or having consumed what they had brought.

Mark 8:2

I have compassions - I pity their condition. I am disposed to relieve them.

Mark 8:9

Four thousand - Four thousand "men," besides women and children. See Matthew 15:38. See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 15:32-39.

Verse 10

Dalmanutha - In Matthew 15:39 it is said that he came into the coasts of "Magdala." See the note on the place.

Verses 11-21

See this passage explained in Matthew 16:1-12.

Mark 8:12

Sighed deeply in his spirit - His heart was deeply affected at their wickedness and hypocrisy. The word "spirit" here is taken as the seat of the emotions, passions, affections. He drew groans deeply from his breast.

No sign be given - That is, no such sign as they asked, to wit, a sign "from heaven." He said a sign should be given, the same as was furnished by Jonas, Matthew 16:4. But this was not what they "asked," nor would it be given "because" they asked it.

Mark 8:15

Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees - See Matthew 16:6.

Of Herod - Of the Herodians - of Herod and his followers. Matthew, instead of "Herod," has "the Sadducees." It is not improbably that he cautioned them against them all. The Pharisees sought his life, and were exceedingly corrupt in their doctrine and practice; the Sadducees denied some of the essential doctrines of religion, and the Herodians probably were distinguished for irreligion, sensuality, and corrupt living. They were

united, therefore, with the Pharisees and Sadducees in opposing the claims of Jesus. Matthew has recorded his caution to avoid the Pharisees and Sadducees, and Mark has added, what Matthew had omitted. the caution likewise to beware of the Herodians. Thus, the evangelists speak the same thing.

Verse 22

To Bethsaida - See the notes at Matthew 11:21.

And they bring a blind man unto him - The healing of the blind man of Bethsaida is recorded only by Mark.

Besought him to touch him - That is, to heal him, for they believed that his touch would restore his sight.

Verse 23

Led him out of the town - Why this was done the sacred writers have not told us. It might have been to avoid the collecting of a multitude, and thus to have escaped the designs of the Pharisees who were attempting to take his life, and chiefly on a charge of sedition and of exciting the people. On this account Jesus chose to perform the miracle alone, thus showing that while he did good, he desired to do it in such a way as to avoid the "appearance" of evil, and to prevent, at the same time, ostentation and the malice of his enemies.

Spit on his eyes - Why this was done is not known. It was evidently not intended to perform the cure by any natural effect of the spittle. It was to the man a "sign," an evidence that it was the power of Jesus. The eyes were probably closed. They were perhaps "gummed" or united together by a secretion that had become hard. To apply spittle to them - to wet them - would be a "sign," a natural expression of removing the obstruction and opening them. The power was not in the spittle, but it attended the application of it.

Saw aught - Saw anything.

Verse 24

I see men, as trees, walking - I see men walking, but see them so indistinctly that, but for their "motion," I could not distinguish them from trees. I cannot distinctly see their shapes and features. Probably our Lord did not "at once" restore him fully to sight, that he might strengthen his faith. Seeing that Jesus had partially restored him, it was evidence that he could "wholly," and it led him to exercise faith anew in him, and to feel more strikingly his dependence on him.

Verse 25

Every man clearly - Could see their form and features. His sight was completely restored. Though our Lord did not by this, probably, "intend" to teach any lesson in regard to the way in which the mind of a sinner is enlightened, yet it affords a striking illustration of it. Sinners are by nature blind, 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 2:11; John 9:39. The effect of religion, or of the influence of the Holy Spirit, is to open the eyes, to show the sinner his condition and his danger, and to lead him to "look" on him as a Saviour. Yet at first he sees indistinctly. He does not soon learn to distinguish objects. When converted he is in a new world. Light is shed on every object, and he sees the Scriptures, the Saviour, and the works of creation, the sun, the stars, the hills, the vales, in a new light. He sees the beauty of the plan of salvation, and wonders that he has not seen it before. Yet he sees at first indistinctly. It is only by repeated applications to the Source of light that he sees all things clearly. At first religion appears full of mysteries. Doctrines and facts are brought before his mind that he cannot fully comprehend. He is still perplexed, and he may doubt whether he has ever seen anything aright, or has been ever renewed. Yet let him not despair. Light, in due time, will be shed on these obscure and mysterious truths. Faithful and repeated application to the Father of lights in prayer, and in searching the Scriptures, and in the ordinances of religion, will dissipate these doubts, and he will see all things clearly, and the universe will appear to be filled with one broad flood of light.

Verse 26

The town - The town of Bethsaida.

Nor tell it … - Lest it excite the jealousy of the Pharisees, and produce commotion and danger.

Verses 27-38

See this passage illustrated in the notes at Mark 8:32

He spake that saying openly - With boldness or confidence, or without parables or figures, so that there could be no possibility of misunderstanding him.

Mark 8:38

Ashamed of me - Ashamed to own attachment to me on account of my lowly appearance and my poverty.

And of my words - My doctrines, my instructions.

This adulterous and sinful generation - This age given to wickedness, particularly to adultery.

In the glory of his Father - In the day of judgment. See the notes at Matthew 26:64. The meaning of this verse is, Whosoever shall refuse, through pride or wickedness, to acknowledge and serve Christ here, shall be excluded from his kingdom hereafter. He was lowly, meek, and despised; yet there was an inimitable beauty in his character even then. But he will come again in awful grandeur; not as the babe of Bethlehem, not as the man of Nazareth, but as the Son of God, in majesty and glory. They that would not acknowledge him here must be rejected by him there; they that would not serve him on earth will not enjoy his favor in heaven; they that would cast Him out and despise him must be cast out by him, and consigned to eternal, hopeless sorrow.

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CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

Verily I say … - See the notes at Matthew 16:28. This verse properly belongs to the preceding chapter and the preceding discourse.

Verses 2-10

And after six days … - See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 17:1-9.

Mark 9:3

No fuller - Rather, no "scourer." The office of the person here mentioned was to "scour" or "whiten" cloth; not to "full" it, or to render it thicker.

Mark 9:6

He wist not - He "knew not." He was desirous of saying something, and he knew not what would be proper.

Verses 11-13

Why say the scribes … - See the notes at Matthew 17:10-13.

Verses 14-29

See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 17:14-21.

Mark 9:14

Questioning with them - Debating with the disciples, and attempting to confound them. This he saw as he came down from the mount. In his absence they had taken occasion to attempt to perplex and confound his followers.

Mark 9:15

Were greatly amazed - Were astonished and surprised at his sudden appearance among them.

Saluted him - Received him with the customary marks of affection and respect. It is probable that this was not by any "formal" manner of salutation, but by the "rush" of the multitude, and by hailing him as the Messiah.

Mark 9:16

What question ye? - What is the subject of your inquiry or debate with the disciples?

Mark 9:17

A dumb spirit - A spirit which deprived his son of the power of speaking.

Mark 9:18

And wheresoever - In whatever place - at home or abroad, alone or in public.

He teareth him - He rends, distracts, or throws him into convulsions.

He foameth - At the mouth, like a mad animal. Among us these would all be considered as marks of violent derangement or madness.

And pineth away - Becomes thin, haggard, and emaciated. This was the effect of the violence of his struggles, and perhaps of the want of food.

Mark 9:22

If thou canst do any thing - I have brought him to the disciples, and they could not help him. If thou canst do anything, have compassion.

Mark 9:23

If thou canst believe - This was an answer to the request, and there was a reference in the answer to the "doubt" in the man's mind about the power of Jesus. "I" can help him. If thou" canst believe," it shall be done. Jesus here demanded "faith" or confidence in his power of healing. His design here is to show the man that the difficulty in the case was not in the want of "power" on his part, but in the want of "faith" in the man; in other words, to rebuke him for having "doubted" at all whether he "could" heal him. So he demands faith of every sinner that comes to him, and none that come without "confidence" in him can obtain the blessing.

All things are possible to him that believeth - All things can be effected or accomplished - to wit, by God - in favor of him that believes, and if thou canst believe, this will be done. God will do nothing in our favor without faith. It is right that we should have confidence in him; and if we "have" confidence, it is easy for him to help us, and he willingly does it. In our weakness, then, we should go to God our Saviour; and though we have no strength, yet "he" can aid us, and he will make all things easy for us.

Mark 9:24

Said with tears - The man felt the implied rebuke in the Saviour's language; and feeling grieved that he should be thought to be destitute of faith, and feeling deeply for the welfare of his afflicted son, he wept. Nothing can be more touching or natural than this. An anxious father, distressed at the condition of his son, having applied to the disciples in vain, now coming to the Saviour; and not having full confidence that he had the proper qualification to be aided, he wept. Any man would have wept in his condition, nor would the Saviour turn the weeping suppliant away.

I believe - I have faith. I do put confidence in thee, though I know that my faith is not as strong as it should be.

Lord - This word here signifies merely "master," or "sir," as it does often in the New Testament. We have no evidence that he had any knowledge of the divine nature of the Saviour, and he applied the word, probably, as he would have done to any other teacher or worker of miracles.

Help thou mine unbelief - Supply thou the defects of my faith. Give me strength and grace to put "entire" confidence in thee. Everyone who comes to the Saviour for help has need of offering this prayer. In our unbelief and our doubts we need his aid, nor shall we ever put sufficient reliance on him without his gracious help.

Verses 30-32

See the notes at Matthew 17:22-23.

Mark 9:31

Is delivered - Is given to men to make an atonement by his sufferings and death, and will in due time be taken and killed.

Verses 33-37

See the notes at Matthew 18:1-5.

Verse 38

We saw one … - There is no improbability in supposing that this might have been one of the disciples of John, or one of the seventy whom Jesus had sent out, and who, though he did not "personally" attend on Jesus, yet had the power of working miracles. There is no evidence that he was merely an "exorcist," or that he used the name of Jesus merely as a pretence.

Verse 39

Forbid him not - Do not prevent his doing good. If he can work a miracle in my name, it is sufficient proof of attachment to me, and he should not be prevented.

Can lightly speak evil of me - The word here rendered "lightly" means quickly or "immediately." The meaning of the passage is, that he to whom God gave the power of working a miracle, by that gave evidence that he could not be found among the enemies of Jesus. He ought not, therefore, to be prevented from doing it. There is no reason to think here that John had any improper designs in opposing the man. He thought that it was evidence that he could not be right, because he did not join them and follow the Saviour. Our Lord taught him differently. He opposed no one who gave evidence that he loved him. Wherever he might be or whatever his work,

yet, if he did it in the name of Jesus and with the approbation of God, it was evidence sufficient that he was right. Christians should rejoice in good done by their brethren of any denomination. There are men calling themselves Christians who seem to look with doubt and suspicion on all that is done by those who do not walk with them. They undervalue their labors, and attempt to lessen the evidences of their success and to diminish their influence. True likeness to the Saviour would lead us to rejoice in all the good accomplished. by whomsoever it may be done - to rejoice that the kingdom of Christ is advanced, whether by a Presbyterian, an Episcopalian, a Baptist, or a Methodist. Compare Philemon 1:18.

Verse 41

Whosoever shall give you a cup … - How easy it is to be a Christian! What is easier than to give a cup of cold water to a thirsty disciple of Jesus! But it must be in his name - that is, because he "is" a Christian, and therefore from love "to the Saviour." This is very different from giving it from a mere motive of common kindness. If done from love to Christ, it will be rewarded; and hence we learn that the humblest acts of Christians - the lowest service that is rendered - will be graciously noticed by Jesus and rewarded. None are so humble in his kingdom as not to be able to do good, and none so poor that he may not show attachment to him. The feeblest service will be accepted, and acts of love that may be forgotten by man, will be remembered by Him, and rewarded in heaven.

Verses 42-50

See the notes at Matthew 18:7-9. Millstone. See Matthew 18:6.

Mark 9:44-46

Their worm - This figure is taken from Isaiah 66:24. See the notes at that passage. In describing the great prosperity. of the kingdom of the Messiah, Isaiah says that the people of God "shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men who have transgressed against God." Their enemies would be overcome. They would be slain. The people of God would triumph. The figure is taken from heaps of the dead slain in battle; and the prophet says that the number would be so great that their worm - the worm feeding on the dead - would not die, would live long - as long as there were carcasses to be devoured; and that the fire which was used to burn the bodies of the dead would continue long to burn, and would not be extinguished until they were consumed. The figure, therefore, denotes great misery, and certain and terrible destruction. In these verses it is applied to

the state beyond the grave, and is intended to denote that the destruction of the wicked will be awful, widespread, and eternal.

It is not to be supposed that there will be any "real" worm in hell - perhaps no material fire; nor can it be told what was particularly intended by the undying worm. There is no authority for applying it, as is often done, to remorse of conscience, anymore than to any other of the pains and reflections of hell. It is a mere image of loathsome, dreadful, and "eternal" suffering. In what that suffering will consist it is probably beyond the power of any living mortal to imagine. The word their, in the phrase "their worm," is used merely to keep up the "image" or "figure." Dead bodies putrefying in that valley would be overrun with worms, while the "fire" would not be confined to them, but would spread to other objects kindled by combustibles through all the valley. It is "not" meant, therefore, that every particular sufferer has a special worm, or has particular sins that cause remorse of conscience. That is a truth, but it does not appear that it is intended to be taught here.

Mark 9:49

Every one shall be salted with fire - Perhaps no passage in the New Testament has given more perplexity to commentators than this, and it may be impossible now to fix its precise meaning. The common idea affixed to it has been, that as salt preserves from putrefaction, so fire, applied to the wicked in hell, will have the property of preserving them in existence, or they will "be" preserved amid the sprinkling of fire, to be continually in their sufferings a sacrifice to the justice of God; but this meaning is not quite satisfactory. Another opinion has been, that as salt was sprinkled on the victim preparatory to its being devoted to God (see Leviticus 2:13), so would "the apostles," by trials, calamities, etc., represented here by "fire," be prepared as a sacrifice and offering to God. Probably the passage has no reference at all to future punishment; and the difficulty of interpreting it has arisen from supposing it to be connected with the 48th verse, or given as a "reason" for what is said in "that" verse, rather than considering it as designed to illustrate the "general design" of the passage. The main scope of the passage was not to discourse of future punishment; that is brought in incidentally. The chief object of the passage was -

1.To teach the apostles that "other men," not "with them," might be true Christians, Mark 9:38-39.

2.That they ought to be disposed to look favorably upon the slightest evidence that they "might be true believers," Mark 9:41.

3.That they ought to avoid giving "offence" to such feeble and obscure Christians, Mark 9:42.

4.That "everything" calculated to give offence, or to dishonor religion, should be removed, Mark 9:43. And,

5.That everything which would endanger their salvation should be sacrificed; that they should "deny" themselves in every way in order to obtain eternal life. In this way they would be "preserved" to eternal life.

The word "fire," here, therefore denotes self-denials, sacrifices, trials, in keeping ourselves from the gratification of the flesh. As if he had said, "Look at the sacrifice on the altar. It is an offering to God, about to be presented to him. It is sprinkled with "salt, emblematic of purity, of preservation and of fitting it, therefore, for a sacrifice." So "you" are devoted to God. You are sacrifices, victims, offerings to him in his service. To make you "acceptable" offerings, every thing must be done to "preserve" you from sin and to "purify" you. Self-denials, subduing the lusts, enduring trials, removing offences, are the proper "preservatives" in the service of God. Doing this, you will be acceptable offerings and be saved; without this, you will be "unfit" for his eternal service and will be lost."

Mark 9:50

Lost its saltness … - See the notes at Matthew 5:13.

Have salt in yourselves - Have the preserving, purifying principle always; the principles of denying yourselves, of suppressing pride, ambition, contention, etc., and thus you will be an acceptable offering to God.

Have peace - Avoid contention and quarrelling, struggling for places, honors, and office, and seek each other's welfare, and religion will be honored and preserved in the world.

MARK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verses 1-12

See this question about divorce explained in the notes at Matthew 19:1-12.

Mark 10:12

And if a woman shall put away her husband - It would seem, from this, that a woman, among the Jews, had the power of separating herself from her husband, yet this right is not given her by the law of Moses. There is not, however, any positive evidence that females often claimed or exercised this right. Cases had occurred, indeed, in which it had been done. The wife of Herod had rejected her former husband and married Herod. And though instances of this kind "might" have been attempted to be defended by the example of Pagans, yet our Saviour was desirous of showing them that it did not free them from the charge of adultery. The apostles were going forth to teach Pagan nations, and it was proper for Christ to teach them how to act in such cases, and to show them that they were cases of real adultery.

Verses 13-16

See the notes at Matthew 19:13-15.

Mark 10:13

Should touch them - That is, should lay his hands on them, and pray for them, and bless them. Compare Matthew 19:13. It was common to lay the hands on the head of a person for whom a blessing was asked. See the case of Jacob, Genesis 48:14.

Mark 10:14

Saw it - Saw the conduct of his disciples.

Was much displeased - Because, first, it was a pleasure to Him to receive and bless little children; and, secondly, they were doing what they were not commanded to do - interfering in a case where it was evidently improper.

Mark 10:15

Whosoever shall not receive - Whosoever shall not manifest the spirit of a little child.

The kingdom, of God - The gospel. The new dispensation by the Messiah, "or the reign of God through a Mediator." See the notes at Matthew 3:2.

As a little child - With the temper and spirit of a child - teachable, mild, humble, and free from prejudice and obstinacy.

Shall not enter therein - Shall not be a Christian; shall not be a "real" member of the family of Christ on earth. though he may be a "professor," and shall never enter heaven.

Mark 10:16

Took them up in his arms - These were small children.

Blessed them - Prayed for them, sought a blessing on them, or gave them the assurance of his favor as the Messiah. How happy would it be if all parents thus felt it to be their privilege to present their children to Christ! The question with a parent should be, not whether he ought to present them by prayer, but whether he "may" do it. And so, too, the question respecting infant baptism is not so much whether a parent ought to devote his children to God in this ordinance, as whether he may do it. It is an inestimable privilege to do it; it is not a matter of mere stern and iron-handed duty; and a parent with right feelings will come to God with his children "in every way," and seek his blessing on them in the beginning of their journey of life. Our children are given to us but for a little time. They are in a world of danger, sin, and woe. They are exposed to temptation on every hand,

If God be not their friend, they "have" no friend that can aid them in the day of adversity, or keep them from the snares of the destroyer. If he is their friend they have nothing to fear. The "proper expression, then, of parental feeling," is to come and offer them early to God. A parent should ask only the "privilege" of doing it. He should seek God‘s favor as the best inheritance of his children; and if a parent may devote his offspring to God - if he may daily seek his blessing on them by prayer - it is all that he should ask. With proper feelings he will rush to the throne of grace, and daily seek the protection and guidance of God for his children amid the temptations and snares of an ungodly world, and implore Him to be their guide when the parent shall be laid in the silent grave. So children who have been devoted to God - who have been the daily objects of a father‘s prayers and a mother‘s - tears who have been again and again presented to Jesus in infancy and childhood - are under the most sacred obligations to live to God. They should never forget that a parent sought the favor of God as the chief blessing; and having been offered to "Jesus" by prayer and baptism in their first days on earth, they should make it their great aim to be prepared to meet "him" when he shall come in the clouds of heaven.

Verses 17-31

See this passage illustrated in the notes at Matthew 19:16-30.

Mark 10:17

Gone forth - From the place where he had been teaching.

Into the way - Into the road or path on his journey.

Running - Thus showing the intensity with which he desired to know the way of life. Zeal to know the way to be saved is proper, nor is it possible that it should be too intense if well directed. Nothing else is so important, and nothing demands, therefore, so much effort and haste.

Mark 10:19

Defraud not - Do not take away your neighbor‘s property by fraud or dishonesty. To “cheat” or “defraud,” supposes a covetous desire of a neighbor‘s property, and is usually attended with “falsehood” or “false witness” against a neighbor in obtaining it. It is thus a violation of the ninth and tenth commandments; and our Saviour very properly, therefore, “condensed the two,” and expressed their substance in this - not to defraud. It is, besides, expressly forbidden in Leviticus 19:13; “Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor.”

Mark 10:21

Jesus beholding him, loved him - What occurred afterward showed that the young man did not love the Saviour, or was not a true disciple; so that this expression denotes simply natural affection, or means that Jesus was pleased with his amiableness, his morality, and his “external” regard for the law of God. At the same time, this was entirely consistent with deep sorrow that he would not give his heart to God, and with deep abhorrence of such a love of the world as to blind the mind to the beauty of true religion, and to lead to the rejection of the Messiah and the destruction of the soul.

One thing thou lackest - When the young man came to Jesus he asked him, “What lack I yet?” Matthew 19:20. This “question” Mark has omitted, but he has retained the “answer.” The answer means, there is “one thing” yet wanting. Though all that you have said should be “true,” yet, to make the system complete, or to show that you “really” are disposed to keep the commands of God, go and sell your property. See whether you love “God” more than you do your “wealth.” By doing that you will show that your love of God is supreme; that your obedience is not merely “external” and

"formal," but "sincere" and "real;" the thing now "lacking" will be made up.

Mark 10:24

Children - An expression of affection, perhaps also implying a reproof that their slowness of understanding was like that of children. When they should have seen at once the truth of what he said, they were slow to learn it. It became necessary, therefore, to "repeat" what he had said.

How hard - With how much difficulty.

Mark 10:26

Out of measure - Very much, or exceedingly. The Greek means no more than this.

Mark 10:30

An hundred-fold - One hundred times as much.

In this time - In this life. In the time that he forsakes all.

Houses … - This cannot be taken literally, as promising a hundred times as many "mothers, sisters," etc. It means, evidently, that the loss shall be a hundred times "compensated" or made up; or that, in the possession of religion, we have a hundred times the "value" of all we forsake. This consists in the pardon of sin, in the favor of God, in peace of conscience, in support in trials and in death, and in raising up "friends" in the place of those who are left - "spiritual brethren, and sisters, and mothers," etc. And this corresponds to the experience of all who ever became Christians. At the same time. it is true that godliness is profitable "for all things," having the promise of the life that is, as well as of that which is to come. See the notes at 1 Timothy 4:8. "The favor of God" is the security for every blessing. Obedience to his law secures industry, temperance, chastity, economy, prudence, health, and the confidence of the world - all indispensable to success in life, and all connected. commonly, with success. Though the wicked "sometimes" prosper, yet the "surest" way of prosperity is to fear God and keep his commandments. Thus will all "needed" blessings descend on us "here," and "eternal" blessings hereafter.

With persecutions - Persecutions, or the contempt of the world, and bodily sufferings on account of their religion, they "must" meet. Jesus did not conceal this; but he consoled them. He assured them that "amid" these, or perhaps it should be rendered "after" these, they should find friends and comfort. It is well to bear trial if "God" be our Friend. With the promises of

the Bible in our hand, we may hail persecutions, and thank God that, amid so many sorrows, he has furnished such abundant consolations.

Verses 32-34

See the notes at Matthew 20:17-19.

Mark 10:32

Jesus went before him - In the manner of an intrepid, fearless leader and guide, exposing "himself" to danger and death rather than his followers.

And they rather amazed … - They were afraid that evil would befall him in the city; that the scribes and Pharisees, who had so often sought to kill him, would then do it. Their fear and amazement were increased when he told them what would befall him there. They were amazed that, when he knew so well what would happen, he should still persevere in going up to the city.

Verses 35-45

See the notes at Matthew 20:20-28.

Mark 10:35

And James and John … came unto him - They did this through the instrumentality of their mother. They did not come in "person," but they got their mother to make the request for them. Compare the notes at Matthew 20:20.

Verses 46-52

See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 20:29-34.

Mark 10:46

Blind Bartimeus - Matthew says there were two. Mark mentions but one, though he does not deny that there was another. He mentions this man because he was well known - Bartimeus, the "blind man."

Mark 10:50

Casting away his garment - That is, his outer garment - the one that was thrown loosely over him. See the notes at Matthew 5:40. He threw it off, full of joy at the prospect of being healed, and that he might run without impediment to Jesus. This may be used to illustrate - though it had no such original reference - the manner in which a sinner should come to Jesus. He should throw away the garments of his own righteousness - he should rise speedily - should run with joy - should have full faith in the power of Jesus, and cast himself entirely upon his mercy.

MARK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verses 1-10

See this passage illustrated in the notes at Mark 11:4

Two ways met - A crossroads. A public place, probably near the center of the village.

Mark 11:5

What do ye, loosing the colt? - Or, why do ye do this? What authority have you for doing it?

See this passage illustrated in the notes at Matthew 21:1-16.

Verses 11-26

See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 21:18-22.

Mark 11:11

Into the temple - Not into the edifice properly called "the temple," but into the "courts" which surrounded the principal edifice. Our Saviour, not being of the tribe of Levi, was not permitted to enter into the holy or most holy place; and when, therefore, it is said that he went into the "temple," it is always to be understood of the "courts" surrounding the temple. See the notes at Matthew 21:12.

And when he had looked round about upon all things - Having seen or examined everything. He saw the abominations and abuses which he afterward corrected. It may be a matter of wonder that he did not "at once" correct them, instead of waiting to another day; but it may be observed that God is slow to anger; that he does not "at once" smite the guilty, but waits patiently before he rebukes and chastises.

The eventide - The evening; the time after three o'clock p. m. It is very probable that this was before sunset. The religious services of the temple closed at the offering of the evening sacrifice, at three o'clock, and Jesus probably soon left the city.

Mark 11:13, Mark 11:14

Afar off - See the notes at Matthew 21:19.

Mark 11:15-24

See the notes at Matthew 21:12-22.

Mark 11:16

Any vessel - Any vessel used in cooking, or connected with the sale of their articles of merchandise.

Mark 11:18

All the people were astonished - He became popular among them. The Pharisees saw that their authority was lessened or destroyed. They were therefore envious of him, and sought his life.

His doctrine - His teaching. He taught with power and authority so great that the multitudes were awed, and were constrained to obey.

Mark 11:21

Thou cursedst - To curse means to devote to destruction. This is its meaning here. It does not in this place imply blame, but simply that it should be destroyed.

Mark 11:22

Have faith in God - Literally, "Have the faith of God." This may mean, have strong faith, or have confidence in God; a strong belief that he is able to accomplish things that appear most difficult with infinite ease, as the fig-tree was made to wither away by a word.

Mark 11:25

And when ye stand praying - When ye pray. It seems that the posture in prayer was sometimes standing and sometimes kneeling. God looks upon "the heart" rather than upon our position in worship; and if the heart be right, any posture may be proper. It cannot be doubted, however, that in private, in the family, and wherever it can be conveniently done, the kneeling posture is more proper, as expressing more humility and reverence, and more in accordance with Scripture examples. Compare Psalm 95:6; 2 Chronicles 6:13; Daniel 6:10; Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60; Acts 9:40. Yet a subject like this may be made of too much consequence, and we should be careful that anxiety about a mere form should not exclude anxiety about a far more important matter - the state of the soul.

Forgive … - See the notes at Matthew 6:12, Matthew 6:25.

Verses 27-33

See the notes at Matthew 20:23-27.

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CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-12

See this parable explained in the notes at Matthew 21:33-46.

See this parable explained in the notes at Matthew 21:33-46.

Verses 13-17

See the notes at Matthew 22:15-22.

Verses 18-27

See this passage fully explained in the notes at Matthew 22:23-33.

Mark 12:25

Are as the angels - That is, as the angels in respect to connections and relations. What those connections and relations may be we know not, but this passage teaches that the special relation of "marriage" will not exist. It does not affirm, however, that there will be no recollection of former marriages, or no recognition of each other as having existed in this tender relation.

Mark 12:26

How in the bush - At the burning bush. See Exodus 3:16. The meaning is, "in that part of the book of Exodus which contains the account of the burning bush. When there were no chapters and verses, it was the easiest way of quoting a book of the Old Testament "by the subject," and in this way it was often done by the Jews.

Verses 28-34

See the notes at Matthew 22:34-40.

Mark 12:28

Perceiving that he answered them well - That is, with wisdom, and with a proper understanding of the law. In this case the opinion of the Saviour corresponded with that of the Pharisees; and the question which this scribe put to him now seems to have been one of the very few candid inquiries of him by the Jews for the purpose of obtaining information. Jesus answered it in the spirit of kindness, and commended the conduct of the man.

Mark 12:29

Hear, O Israel! - This was said to call the attention of the Jews to the great importance of the truth about to be proclaimed. See Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

The Lord our God … - Literally, "Yahweh, our God, is one Yahweh." The other nations worshipped many gods, but the God of the Jews was one, and one only. יהוה Yahwehwas undivided; and this great truth it was the design of the separation of the Jewish people from other nations to keep in mind. This was the "peculiar" truth which was communicated to the Jews, and this they were required to keep and remember forever.

Mark 12:30

And thou shalt love … - If Yahweh was the "only" God, then they ought not to love any other being supremely - then they might not bow down before any idol. They were required to love God above all other beings or things, and with all the faculties of their minds. See the notes at Matthew 22:37.

Mark 12:32-34

This answer of the scribe is not found in Matthew.

Is more than all - Is of more importance and value.

Discreetly - Wisely, according to truth.

Not far from the kingdom of God - Thou who dost prefer the "internal" to the "external" worship of God - who hast so just a view of the requirements of the law - canst easily become a follower of me, and art almost fit to be numbered among my disciples. This shows that a proper understanding of the Old Testament, of its laws and requirements, would prepare the mind for Christianity, and suit a person at once to embrace it when presented. One system is grafted on the other, agreeably to Galatians 3:24.

And no man after that durst ask him any question - That is, no one of the scribes, the Pharisees, or the Sadducees durst ask him a question for the purpose of "tempting" him or entangling him. He had completely silenced them. It does not appear, however, but that his "disciples" dared to ask him questions for the purpose of information.

Verses 35-37

See the notes at Matthew 22:41-46.

Mark 12:37

The common people heard him gladly - The success of the Saviour in his preaching was chiefly among the common or the poorer class of people. The rich and the mighty were too proud to listen to his instructions. So it is still. The main success of the gospel is there, and there it pours down its chief blessings. This is not the fault of "the gospel." It would bless the rich

and the mighty as well as the poor, if they came with like humble hearts. God knows no distinctions of men in conferring his favors; and wherever there is a poor, contrite, and humble spirit - be it clothed in rags or in purple - be it on a throne or on a dunghill - there he confers the blessings of salvation.

Verse 38

In his doctrine - In his "teaching," for so it should be rendered.

Beware of the scribes - Be on your guard. Be cautious about hearing them or following them.

Scribes - The learned men of the Jewish nation.

Which love to go in long clothing - In long, flowing robes, as significant of their consequence, leisure, and learning.

Salutations … - See the notes at Matthew 23:6-7.

Verse 40

Which devour widows' houses - Which devour the families of widows, or the means of supporting their families. This they did under pretence of counseling them in the knowledge of the law and in the management of their estates. They took advantage of their ignorance and their unprotected state, and either extorted large sums for their counsel, or perverted the property to their own use.

No wonder that our Saviour denounced them! If there is any sin of special enormity, it is that of taking advantage of the circumstances of the poor, the needy, and the helpless, to wrong them out of the pittance on which they depend for the support of their families; and as God is the friend of the widow and the fatherless, it may be expected that such will be visited with heavy condemnation.

For a pretence - For show, or "pretending" great devotion.

Verse 41

Sat over against - Opposite to, in full sight of.

The treasury - This was in the court of the women. See the notes at Matthew 21:12. In that court there were fixed a number of places or coffers, made with a large open mouth in the shape of a trumpet, for the purpose of receiving the offerings of the people; and the money thus contributed was devoted to the service of the temple - to incense, sacrifices, etc.

Verse 42

Two mites - The word translated "mite" denotes a small coin made of brass - the smallest in use among the Jews. The precise value cannot now be

easily estimated. It was much less than any coin we have, as the "farthing" was less than an English farthing. It was in value about three mills and a half, or one-third of a cent.

Verse 43

This poor widow hath cast more in … - That is, more in proportion to her means, and therefore more that was acceptable to God. He does not mean that this was more in value than all which the others had put in but it showed more love to the sacred cause, more self-denial, and, of course, more sincerity in what she did. This is the rule by which God will reward us. Compare 2 Corinthians 8:12.

Verse 44

Of their abundance - Of their superfluous store. They have given what they did not "need." They could afford it as well as not, and in doing it they have shown no self-denial.

She of her want - Of her poverty.

All her living - All that she had to live on. She trusted in God to supply her wants, and devoted her little property entirely to him. From this passage we may learn:

1. That God is pleased with offerings made to him and his cause.

2. That it is our duty to devote our property to God. We received it from him, and we shall not employ it in a proper manner unless we feel that we are stewards, and ask of him what we shall do with it. Jesus approved the conduct of all who had given money to the treasury.

3. That the highest evidence of love to the cause of religion is not the "amount" given, but the amount compared with our means.

4. That it "may be" proper to give "all" our property to God, and to depend on his providence for the supply of our wants.

5. That God does not despise the humblest offering, if made in sincerity. He loves a cheerful giver.

6. That there are none who may not in this way show their love to the cause of religion. There are few, very few students in Sunday Schools who may not give as much to the cause of religion as this poor widow; and Jesus

would be as ready to approve their offerings as he was hers: and the time to "begin" to be benevolent and to do good is in early life, in childhood.

7. That it is every man's duty to inquire, not how much he gives, but how much compared with what he has; how much self-denial he practices, and what is the "motive" with which it is done.

8. We may remark that few practice self-denial for the purpose of charity. Most give of their abundance - that is, what they can spare without feeling it, and many feel that this is the same as throwing it away. Among all the thousands who give to these objects, how few deny themselves of one comfort, even the least, that they may advance the kingdom of Christ!

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CHAPTER 13

Introduction

The principal things in this chapter are fully explained in Matthew 24.

Verse 1

What manner of stones - The stones here referred to were those used in the building of the temple, and the walls on the sides of Mount Moriah, on which the temple stood. The temple was constructed of white marble, and the blocks were of a prodigious size. Josephus says that these stones were, some of them, 50 feet long, 24 feet broad, and 16 feet in thickness.

Verse 3

On the mount of Olives, over against the temple - The Mount of Olives was directly east of Jerusalem, and from it there was a fine view of the temple.

Verse 9

Take heed to yourselves - Be cautious that no man deceive you; or, take care of your lives, not to run into unnecessary danger.

To councils - The higher ecclesiastical courts of the Jews, including the Sanhedrin, or great council of the nation.

Rulers and kings - Referring to Roman officers.

For a testimony against them - Rather to bear testimony to them, or to be witnesses "before them" of the truth. This was" for the sake" of Jesus, or because they were attached to him; and God would overrule it so that at the same time they should bear witness "to" the rulers of the truth, as was the case with Peter and John, Acts 24:24-25.

Verse 11

Neither do ye premeditate - Do not think beforehand, or "prepare" an answer. You know not what the accusations will be, and God will furnish you with a reply that shall be adapted to the occasion.

Not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit - This is a full promise that they should be inspired, and consequently their defenses recorded in the Acts of the Apostles are the words of the Holy Spirit. There could be no more explicit promise that they should be under an infallible guidance, and we are not left to doubt that they were taught of God. At the same time, this was a most desirable and gracious aid. They were illiterate, unknown, without power. They were unfit of themselves to make the important statements of religion which were requisite, but God gave them power, and

they spake with a wisdom, fearlessness, pungency, and ability which no other men have ever manifested - full proof that these illiterate fishermen were under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 12

The brother shall betray … - The brother shall give up in a treacherous manner his brother to be put to death, on account of his attachment to Jesus. Through fear, or from the hope of reward and from the hatred of the gospel, he will overcome all the natural ties of brotherhood. and give up his own kindred to be burnt or crucified. Perhaps nothing could more clearly show the dreadful evil of those times, as well as the natural opposition of the heart to the religion of Christ.

Verse 15

On the house-top - See the notes at Matthew 9:1-8.

Verse 32

Neither the Son - This text has always presented serious difficulties. It has been asked, If Jesus had a divine nature, how could he say that he knew not the day and hour of a future event? In reply, it has been said that the passage was missing, according to Ambrose, in some Greek manuscripts; but it is now found in all, and there can be little doubt that the passage is genuine. Others have said that the verb rendered "knoweth" means sometimes to "make" known or to reveal, and that the passage means, "that day and hour none makes known, neither the angels, nor the Son, but the Father." It is true that the word has sometimes that meaning, as in 1 Corinthians 2:2, but then it is natural to ask where has "the Father" made it known? In what place did he reveal it? After all, the passage has no more difficulty than that in Luke 2:52, where it is said that Jesus increased in wisdom and stature. He had a human nature. He grew as a man in knowledge. As a man his knowledge must be finite, for the faculties of the human soul are not infinite. As a man he often spoke, reasoned, inquired, felt, feared, read, learned, ate, drank, and walked. Why are not all these, which imply that he was a "man" - that, "as a man," he was not infinite - why are not these as difficult as the want of knowledge respecting the particular "time" of a future event, especially when that time must be made known by God, and when he chose that the man Christ Jesus should grow, and think, and speak "as a man?"

Verse 34

Who left his house - The word "house" often means family. Our Saviour here represents himself as going away, leaving his household the church, assigning to the apostles and all his servants their duty, and leaving it uncertain when he would return. Since his return was a matter of vast consequence, and as the affairs of his kingdom were entrusted to them, just as the affairs of a house are to servants when the master is absent, so it was of vast importance that they should be faithful at their post, that they should defend the house from danger, and be ready for his return.

The porter - The doorkeeper. To the janitor or doorkeeper was entrusted particularly the care of the house, whose duty it was to attend faithfully on those who came and those who left the house.

Verse 35

Watch ye - Be diligent, faithful, and waiting for the return of your Lord, who will come at an unexpected hour.

Master of the house - Denoting here the Lord Jesus.

At even, or at midnight, or … - This refers to the four divisions into which the Jews divided the night.

Verse 36

Find you sleeping - Inattentive to your post, neglecting your duty, and unprepared for his coming.

Verse 37

I say unto all, Watch - This command was proper, not only for those who were expecting the calamities that were soon to come upon the Jews, but for all who are soon to die and to go to the judgment. We know not the time of our death. We know not how soon we shall be called to the judgment. The Son of man may come at any moment, and we should therefore be ready. If we are his friends; if we have been renewed and pardoned; if we have repented of our sins, and have believed on him. and are leading a holy life, we "are" ready. If not, we are unprepared, and soon - probably while we are not expecting it - the cold hand of death will be laid on us, and we shall be hurried to the place where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Oh how important it is to be ready, and to escape the awful sufferings of an eternal hell!

MARK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verses 1-11

See this passage explained in the notes at Mark 14:1

And of unleavened bread - So called because at that feast no other bread was used but that which had been made without leaven or yeast.

By craft - By subtlety (Matthew); that is, by some secret plan that would secure possession of him without exciting the opposition of the people.

Mark 14:3

Ointment - This word does not convey quite the proper meaning. This was a perfume. It was used only to give a pleasant odor, and was liquid.

Of spikenard - The "nard," from which this perfume was made, is a plant of the East Indies, with a small, slender stalk, and a heavy, thick root. The best perfume is obtained from the root, though the stalk and fruit are used for that purpose.

And she brake the box - This may mean no more than that she broke the "seal" of the box, so that it could be poured out. Boxes of perfumes are often sealed or made fast with wax, to prevent the perfume from escaping. It was not likely that she would break the box itself when it was unnecessary, and when the unguent, being liquid, would have been wasted; nor from a broken box or vial could she easily have "poured it" on his head.

Mark 14:5

Three hundred pence - About forty dollars (or 9 British pounds). See the notes at Matthew 26:7.

Mark 14:8

She hath done what she could - She has showed the highest attachment in her power; and it was, as it is now, a sufficient argument against there being any "real" waste, that it was done for the honor of Christ. See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 26:1-16.

Verses 12-16

See the notes at Matthew 26:17-19.

Mark 14:12

They killed the passover - The "paschal lamb," which was slain in keeping the Passover.

Go and prepare - Go and provide a lamb, have it roasted, and properly prepared with the usual things to eat with it.

Mark 14:13

The city - The city of Jerusalem. They were now in Bethany, about 2 miles from the city.

A man bearing a pitcher of water - This could have been known only by the infinite knowledge of Christ. Such a thing could not have been conjectured, nor was there any concert between him and the man that "at that time" he should be in a particular place to meet them, for the disciples themselves proposed the inquiry. If Jesus knew a circumstance like that, then he in the same way must have known all things; then he sees "all" the actions of men - hears every word, and marks every thought; then the righteous are under his care, and the wicked, much as they may wish to be unseen, cannot escape the notice of his eye.

Mark 14:14

The goodman of the house - This signifies simply the "master" of the house. The original word expresses nothing respecting his character, whether it was good or bad.

The guest-chamber - A chamber for guests or friends - an unoccupied room.

Mark 14:15

A large upper room - The word used here denotes the upper room devoted to purposes of prayer, repose, and often of eating. See the notes at Matthew 9:1-8.

Furnished and prepared - Literally, "spread" and "ready." Spread with a carpet, or with "couches" such as were used in eating. See the notes at Matthew 23:6.

Verses 17-31

See this passage explained in the notes at Mark 14:31

More vehemently - More earnestly, more confidently.

Verses 32-42

See the notes at Matthew 26:36-46.

Mark 14:36

Ἀββα AbbaThis word denotes "father." It is a Syriac word, and is used by the Saviour as a word denoting filial affection and tenderness. Compare Romans 8:15.

Mark 14:40

Neither wist they … - Neither "knew" they. They were so conscious of the impropriety of sleeping at that time, that they could not find any answer

to give to the inquiry why they had done it.

Mark 14:41

It is enough - There has been much difficulty in determining the meaning of this phrase. Campbell translates it, “all is over” - that is, the time when you could have been of service to me is gone by. They might have aided him by watching for him when they were sleeping, but now the time was past, and he was already, as it were, in the hands of his enemies. It is not improbable, however, that after his agony some time elapsed before Judas came. He had required them to watch - that is, to keep awake during that season of agony. After that they might have been suffered to sleep, while Jesus watched alone. As he saw Judas approach he probably roused them, saying, It is sufficient - as much repose has been taken as is allowable - the enemy is near, and the Son of man is about to be betrayed.

Verses 43-52

See the notes at Matthew 26:47-57.

Mark 14:45

Master, Master - As if expressing great joy that he had found him again.

Mark 14:51

A certain young man - Who this was we have no means of determining, but it seems not improbable that he may have been the owner of the garden, and that he may have had an understanding with Jesus that he should visit it for retirement when he withdrew from the city. That he was not one of the apostles is clear. It is probable that be was roused from sleep by the noise made by the rabble, and came to render any aid in his power in quelling the disturbance. It is not known why this circumstance is recorded by Mark. It is omitted by all the other evangelists. It may have been recorded to show that the conspirators had instructions to take the “apostles” as well as Jesus, and supposing him to be one of them, they laid hold of him to take him before the high priest; or it “may” have been recorded in order to place his conduct in strong and honorable contrast with the timidity and fear of the disciples, who had all fled. Compare the notes at Matthew 26:56.

A linen cloth cast about his naked body - He was roused from sleep, and probably threw around him, in his haste, what was most convenient. It was common to sleep in linen bed-clothes, and he seized a part of the clothes and hastily threw it round him.

The young men - The Roman soldiers. They were called "young men" because they were made up chiefly of youth. This was a Jewish mode of speaking. See Genesis 14:24; 2 Samuel 2:14; Isaiah 13:18.

Laid hold on him - Supposing him to be one of the apostles.

Verses 53-72

See this fully explained in the notes at Matthew 26:57-75.

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CHAPTER 15

Verse 1

See the principal events in this chapter explained in the notes at Matthew 27.

Verse 16

Called Praetorium - The hall of the "praetor," or Roman governor, where he sat to administer justice.

Whole band - See the notes at Matthew 27:27.

Verse 17

With purple - Matthew says scarlet. See the notes at Matthew 27:28.

About his head - In the form of a garland or diadem. The whole head was not covered, but it was placed in a circle round the temples.

Verse 19

Worshipped him - Mocked him with the "appearance" of homage. The word "worship" here denotes only the respect and honor shown to princes and kings. It does not refer to any "religious" homage. They regarded him as foolishly and madly claiming to be a king - not as claiming to be divine.

Verse 23

Wine mingled … - Matthew says "vinegar." It was probably "wine soured," so that it might be called either. This was the common drink of the Roman soldiers.

Myrrh - See the notes at Matthew 27:34.

Verse 25

And it was the third hour … - In John 19:14 it is said, "And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour, etc. Much difficulty has been felt in reconciling these passages, and infidels have usually adduced them to prove that the evangelists have contradicted themselves. In reconciling them the following remarks may perhaps make the matter clear:

(1) The Jews divided both the night and the day into four equal parts of three hours each. See the notes at Matthew 14:25. The first division of the day commenced at six o'clock in the morning, and ended at nine; the second commenced at nine and ended at twelve, etc. "The third" hour mentioned by Mark would therefore correspond with our nine o'clock; the "sixth" hour mentioned by John would correspond with our twelve, or noon.

(2) mark professes to give the time accurately; John does not. He says "it was about the sixth hour," without affirming that this was exactly the time.

(3) amistake in "numbers" is easily made; and if it should he admitted that such an error had crept into the text here, it would be nothing more than has occurred in many ancient writings. It has been proved, moreover, that it was common not to write the "words" indicating numbers at "length," but to use "letters." The Greeks designated numbers by the letters of the alphabet, and this mode of computation is found in ancient manuscripts. For example, the Cambridge manuscript of the New Testament has in this very place in Mark, not the word "third" written at length, but the Greek letter gamma (γ), the usual notation for third. Now it is well known that it would be easy to mistake this for the Greek letter sigma (ς), the mark denoting "six." An error of this kind in an early manuscript might be extensively propagated, and might have led to the present reading of the text. Such an error is actually known to exist in the "Chronicon" of Paschal, where Otho is said to have reigned ς , (six) months, whereas it is known that he reigned but three, and in this place, therefore, the γ , three, was mistaken for ς , six.

(4) there is some external authority for reading "third" in John 19:14. The Cambridge manuscript has this reading. Nonnus, who lived in the fifth century, says that this was the true reading (Wetstein). Peter of Alexandria, in a fragment concerning the Passover, as quoted by Usher, says, "It was the preparation of the Passover, and about the "third" hour, as," he adds, "the most accurate copies of the Bible have it; and this was the handwriting of the evangelist (John), which is kept, by the grace of God, in his most holy church at Ephesus" (Mill). It is to be admitted, however, that no great reliance is to be placed on this account. That a mistake "might" have occurred in the early manuscripts is not improbable. No man can "prove" that it did "not" so occur, and so long as this cannot be proved, the passages should not be adduced as conclusive proof of contradiction.

After all, perhaps, without the supposition that there is any error in the text, the whole difficulty may be removed by the following statements:

(1) Calvary was “without” the walls of Jerusalem. It was a considerable distance from the place where Jesus was tried and condemned. Some time, more or less, would be occupied in going there, and in the preparatory measures for crucifying him.

(2) it is not necessary to understand “Mark” as saying that it was precisely nine o‘clock, according to our expression. With the Jews it was six until seven; it was the third hour until the fourth commenced; it was the ninth until it was the tenth. They “included” in the “third” hour the whole time from the third to the fourth. The same mode they adopted in regard to their days. See the notes at Matthew 12:40.

(3) it is not unduly pressing the matter to suppose that Mark spoke of the time when the process for crucifixion commenced - that is, when he was condemned - when they entered upon it - when they made the preparation. Between that and the time when he was taken “out” of Jerusalem to Mount Calvary, and when he was actually nailed to the tree, there is no improbability in supposing that there might have been an interval of more than an hour. Indeed, the presumption is that considerably more time than that would elapse.

(4) John does not profess, as has been remarked, to be strictly accurate. He says “it was about the sixth hour,” etc.

(5) now suppose that John meant to indicate the time when he was “actually” suspended on the cross - that he spoke of the “crucifixion” denoting the “act of suspension,” as it struck “him” - and there is no difficulty. Any other two men - any witnesses - might give just such an account now. One man would speak of the time when the process for an execution commenced; another, perhaps, of the very “act” of the execution and would “both” speak of it in general terms, and say that a man was executed at such a time; and the circumstantial variation would “prove” that there was no collusion, no agreement to “impose” on a court - that they were honest witnesses. That is “proved” here.

(6) that this is the true account of the matter is clear from the evangelists themselves, and “especially from Mark.” The three first evangelists concur

in stating that there was a remarkable "darkness" over the whole land from the "sixth" to the "ninth" hour, Matthew 27:45; " Mark 15:33;" Luke 23:44. This fact - in which Mark concurs - would seem to indicate that "the actual crucifixion" continued only during that time - that he was, in fact, suspended at about the sixth hour, though the preparations for crucifying him had been going on (Mark) for two hours before. The fact that Mark Mark 15:33 mentions this darkness as commencing at the "sixth" and not at the "third" hour, is one of the circumstances undesignedly occurring that seems to signify that the crucifixion then had "actually" taken place, though the various arrangements for it Mark 15:25 had been going on from the "third" hour.

One thing is conclusively proved by this - that the evangelists did not "conspire together" to impose on the world. They are independent witnesses, and they were honest men; and the circumstance adverted to here is one that is allowed to be of great value in testimony in courts of justice - "circumstantial variation with essential agreement."

Verse 26

The superscription - The writing over his head upon the cross.

The King of the Jews - See the notes at Matthew 27:37.

Verse 28

And the scripture was fulfilled … - This passage of Scripture is found in Isaiah 53:12. This does not mean that he "was" a transgressor, but simply that in dying he "had a place" with transgressors. Nor does it mean that God regarded him as a sinner; but that at his death, in popular estimation. or by the sentence of the judge, he was "regarded as" a transgressor, and was treated in the same manner as the others who were put to death for their transgressions. Jesus died, the "just" for the "unjust," and in his death, as well as in his life, he was "holy, harmless, undefiled."

Verse 42

The even - The time after three o'clock in the afternoon.

The Preparation … - The following day was to be a day of special solemnity, called the "great day" of the feast. More than ordinary preparation was therefore made for "that" Sabbath on the day before. Hence, the day was known as a day of preparation. This consisted in the preparation of food, etc., to be used on the Sabbath.

Verse 43

Joseph, an honorable counselor - A distinguished man, who probably held a high office among the Jews, as one of their great council, or a Jewish senator. The word "honorable," here, is not a mere title of "office," but is given in reference to his personal character, as being a man of integrity and blameless life.

Waited for the kingdom of God - Waited for, or expected, the coming of the Messiah. But this expression means more than an "indefinite" expectation that the Messiah "would" come, for all the Jews expected that. It implies that he believed "Jesus" to be the Messiah, and that he had "waited" for Him to build up the kingdom of God; and this agrees with what John says John 19:38, that he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. He had retained his "secret" belief, in the hope that Jesus would be proclaimed and treated as the Messiah, and then he probably proposed openly to acknowledge his attachment to him. But God called him to a public profession of attachment in a different manner, and gave this distinguished man grace to evince it. So men often delay a profession of attachment to Christ. They cherish a secret love, they indulge a hope in the mercy of God, but they conceal it for fear of man; whereas God requires that the attachment should be made known. "Whosoever is ashamed of me," said the Saviour, "and of my words, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father and with the holy angels," Mark 8:38. Those who love the Saviour have no right to hide their light under a bushel. As soon as they have evidence satisfactory to their own mind that they are Christians, or have a "prevalent" belief, after faithful examination, that they truly love God, and that they depend on the Lord Jesus for salvation, so soon are they bound to profess Christ before men. This is the command of God, and this is the way of peace. None have the prospect of "comfort" in religion who do not have respect to all of the commandments of God.

Went in boldly unto Pilate - God had raised up this distinguished counselor and secret disciple for a special and most important occasion. The disciples of Jesus had fled, and if they had not, they had no influence with Pilate. Unless there had been a special application to Pilate in behalf of Jesus, his body would have been buried "that night" in the same grave with the malefactors, for it was a law of the Jews that the body of an executed man should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath. At this critical juncture

God called forward this secret disciple - this friend of Jesus, though unknown as such to the world - and gave him confidence. He dared to express sympathy for the Saviour; he went in boldly and begged the body of Jesus. It needed no small measure of courage to do this. Jesus had just been condemned, mocked, spit on, crucified - the death of a slave or of the most guilty wretch. To avow attachment for him now was proof of sincere affection; and the Holy Spirit has thought this worthy of special notice, and has set down this bold attachment of a senator for Jesus for our imitation.

Craved the body - Begged, or asked.

Verse 44

And Pilate marveled if - Wondered if he was dead, or wondered that he was so soon dead. It was not common for persons crucified to expire under two or three days, sometimes not until the sixth or seventh. Joseph had asked for the "body," implying that he was dead. That he was, had been ascertained by the soldiers. See John 19:33.

Verse 45

When he knew it of the centurion - Being informed by the centurion of the fact that he was dead. The centurion had charge of the soldiers who watched him, and could therefore give correct information.

Verse 47

Beheld where he was laid - The affection of these pious females never forsook them, in all the trials and sufferings of their Lord. With true love they followed him to the cross; they came as near to him as they were permitted to come in his last moments; they followed him when taken down and laid in the tomb. The strong, the mighty, the youthful, had fled; but female love never forsook him, even in his deepest humiliation. This is the nature of true love; it is strongest in such scenes. While "professed" attachment will abound in prosperity and live most in sunshine, it is only genuine love that will go into the dark shades of adversity and flourish there. In scenes of poverty, want, affliction, and death, it shows its genuineness. That which lives there is genuine. That which turns away from such scenes is spurious.

MARK CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verses 1-8

See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 28:1-8.

Mark 16:1

Sweet spices - "Aromatics." Substances used in embalming. The idea of sweetness is not, however, implied in the original. Many of the substances used for embalming were "bitter" - as, for example, myrrh - and none of them, perhaps, could properly be called "sweet." The word "spices" expresses all that there is in the original.

Anoint him - Embalm him, or apply these spices to his body to keep it from putrefaction. This is proof that they did not suppose he would rise again; and the fact that they did not "expect" he would rise, gives more strength to the evidence for his resurrection.

Mark 16:4

It was very great - These words belong to the third verse: "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" for, the evangelist adds, it was very great.

Mark 16:5

Sitting on the right side - As they entered. The sepulchre was large enough to admit persons to go into it; not unlike, in that respect, our vaults.

Mark 16:7

Tell his disciples and Peter - It is remarkable that Peter is singled out for special notice. It was proof of the kindness and mercy of the Lord Jesus. Peter, just before the death of Jesus, had denied him. He had brought dishonor on his profession of attachment to him. It would have been right if the Lord Jesus had from that moment cast him off and noticed him no more. But he loved him still. Having loved him once, he loved unto the end, John 13:1. As a proof that he forgave him and still loved him, he sent him this "special" message - the assurance that though he had denied him, and had done much to aggravate his sufferings, yet he had risen, and was still his Lord and Redeemer. We are not to infer, because the angel said, "Tell his disciples and Peter," that Peter was not still a disciple. The meaning is, "Tell his disciples, and especially Peter," sending to him a particular message. Peter was still a disciple. Before his fall, Jesus had prayed for him that his faith should not fail Luke 22:32; and as the prayer of Jesus was "always"

heard John 11:42, so it follows that Peter still retained faith sufficient to be a disciple, though he was suffered to fall into sin.

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Verse 11

Believed not - This is proof that they did not expect his resurrection; proof that they were not easily deceived, and that nothing but the clearest evidence could undeceive them.

Verse 12

He appeared in another form - In a form unlike his ordinary appearance so much so that they did not at first know him. See the notes at Luke 24:13.

Verse 13

The residue - The remainder. Those who remained at Jerusalem.

Verse 14

Afterward he appeared unto the eleven - Judas was dead, and the apostles were then called "the eleven." This was done even when one of them was absent, as Thomas was on this occasion. See the "Harmony of the Accounts of the Resurrection, Appearances, and Ascension of Christ," at the close of the notes on Matthew.

As they sat at meat - The word meat here means food, or meals. As they were reclining at their meals.

And upbraided them … - Rebuked them, or reproached them. This was done because, after all the evidence they had had of his resurrection, still they did not believe. This is a most important circumstance in the history of our Lord‘s resurrection. Never were people more difficult to be convinced of anything than they were of that fact. And this shows conclusively that they had not conspired to impose on the world; that they had given up all for lost when he died; that they did not expect his resurrection; and all this is the strongest proof that he truly rose. They were not convinced until it was impossible for them longer to deny it. Had they expected it, they would have caught easily at the slightest evidence, and would have turned every circumstance in favor of such an event. It may be added that it was impossible that eleven men of good natural understanding should have been deceived in so plain a case. They had been with Jesus three years; they perfectly knew his features, voice, manner; and it is not credible that they should have been deceived by anyone who might have pretended to have been the Lord Jesus.

Verse 15

Into all the world - To the Gentiles as well as the Jews. It was contrary to the opinions of the Jews that the Gentiles should be admitted to the privileges of the Messiah‘s kingdom, or that the partition wall between them should be broken down. See Acts 22:21-22. It was long before the disciples could be trained to the belief that the gospel was to be preached to all men; and it was only by special revelation, even after this command, that Peter preached to the Gentile centurion, Acts 10; Jesus has graciously ordered that the preaching of the gospel shall be stopped by no barriers. Wherever there is man, there it is to be proclaimed. To every sinner he offers life, and all the world is included in the message of mercy, and every child of Adam is offered eternal salvation.

Preach - Proclaim; make known; offer. To do this to every creature is to offer pardon and eternal life to him on the terms of the plan of mercy - through repentance, and faith in the Lord Jesus.

The gospel - The good news. The tidings of salvation. The assurance that the Messiah has come, and that sin may be forgiven and the soul saved.

To every creature - That is, to every human being. Man has no right to limit this offer to any class of men. God commands his servants to offer the salvation to “all men.” If they reject, it is at their peril. God is not to blame

if they do not choose to be saved. His mercy is manifest; his grace is boundless in offering life to a creature so guilty as man.

Verse 16

He that believeth - That is, believeth the gospel. "He who credits it to be true, and acts as if it were true." This is the whole of faith. Man is a sinner. He should act on the belief of this truth and repent. There is a God. Man should believe it, and fear and love him, and seek his favor. The Lord Jesus died to save him. To have faith in him is to believe that this is true, and to act accordingly; that is, to trust him, to rely on him, to love him, to feel that we have no merit, and to cast our all upon him. There is a heaven and a hell. To believe this is to credit the account and act as if it were true - to seek the one and avoid the other. We are to die. To believe this is to act as if this were so; to be in readiness for it, and to expect it daily and hourly. In one word, faith is feeling and acting as if there were a God, a Saviour, a heaven, a hell; as if we were sinners and must die; as if we deserved eternal death and were in danger of it; and, in view of all, casting our eternal interests on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. To do this is to be a Christian: not to do it is to be an infidel.

Is baptized - Is initiated into the church by the application of water, as significant that he is a sinner, and needs the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit. It is worthy of remark that Jesus has made "baptism" of so much importance. He did not say, indeed, that a man could not be saved without baptism, but he has strongly implied that where this is neglected "knowing it to be a command of the Saviour," it endangers the salvation of the soul. Faith and baptism are the beginnings of a Christian life: the one the beginning of piety in the soul, the other of its manifestation before men or of a profession, of religion. Every man endangers his eternal interest by being ashamed of Christ before men. See Mark 8:38.

Shall be saved - Saved from sin Matthew 1:21 and from eternal death John 5:24; John 3:36, and raised to eternal life in heaven, John 5:28; John 17:2, John 17:24.

Shall be damned - That is, condemned by God and cast off from his presence, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9. It implies that they will be adjudged to be guilty by God in the day of judgment Romans 2:12, Romans 2:16; Matthew 25:41; that they will deserve to die forever Romans 2:6, Romans 2:8, and that they will be cast out into a place of woe to all eternity, Matthew 25:46.

It may be asked how it can be just in God to condemn men forever for not believing the gospel? I answer:

1.God has a right to appoint his own terms of mercy.

2.Man has no claim on him for heaven.

3.The sinner rejects the terms of salvation, knowingly, deliberately, and perseveringly.

4.He has a special disregard and contempt for the gospel.

5.His unbelief is produced by the love of sin.

6.He shows by this that he has no love for God, and his law, and for eternity.

7.He slights the objects dearest to God and most like him; and,

8.He must be miserable.

A creature who has no confidence in God; who does not believe that he is true or worthy of his regard, and who never seeks his favor, must be wretched. He rejects God, and he must go into eternity without a Father and without a God. He has no source of comfort in himself, and must die for ever. There is no being in eternity but God that can make man happy, and without his favor the sinner must be wretched.

Verse 17

And these signs - These miracles. These evidences that they are sent from God.

Them that believe - The apostles, and those in the primitive age who were endowed with like power. This promise was fulfilled if it can be shown that these signs followed in the case of any who believed, and it is not necessary to suppose that they would follow in the case of all. The meaning is, that they would be the result of faith, or of the belief of the gospel. It is true that they were. These signs were shown in the case of the apostles and early Christians. The infidel cannot say that the promise has not been fulfilled unless he can show that this never occurred; the Christian should be satisfied that the promise was fulfilled if these miracles were ever actually wrought, though they do not occur now; and the believer now

should not expect a miracle in his case. Miracles were necessary for the establishment of religion in the world; they are not necessary for its continuance now.

In my name - By my authority, and using the power that I would in such cases, if bodily present. This was done; and in this they differed essentially from the manner in which Jesus himself wrought miracles. He did it in "his own name," and as possessing original, underived authority. See the account of his stilling the sea (Matthew 8:26, etc.); of his healing the sick Matthew 9:5-6; of his raising Lazarus, Acts 3:6, etc. There was, therefore, an important difference between Jesus and all the other messengers that God has sent into the world. He acted in his own name; they in the name of another. He wielded his own power; they were the instruments by which God put forth the omnipotence of his arm to save. He was therefore God; they were men of like passions as other men, Acts 14:15.

Shall they cast out devils - See the notes at Matthew 4:24. Compare Acts 16:16-18.

Shall speak with new tongues - Shall speak other languages than their native language. This was remarkably fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:4-11. It existed, also, in other places. See 1 Corinthians 12:10.

Verse 18

They shall take up serpents - When it is necessary for the sake of establishing religion, they shall handle poisonous reptiles without injury, thus showing that God was with them to keep them from harm. This was literally fulfilled when Paul shook the viper from his hand. See Acts 28:5-6.

Any deadly thing - Any poison usually causing death.

Shall not hurt them - There is a similar promise in Isaiah 43:2.

They shall lay hands on the sick … - See instances of this in the Acts of the Apostles, Acts 3:6-7; Acts 5:15, etc.

Verse 19

He was received up into heaven - In a cloud from the Mount of Olives. See Acts 1:9.

The right hand of God - We are not to suppose that God has hands, or that Jesus sits in any particular direction from God. This phrase is taken from the manner of speaking among men, and means that he was exalted to honor and power in the heavens. It was esteemed the place of the highest honor to be seated at the right hand of a prince. So, to be seated at the right

hand of God, means that Jesus is exalted to the highest honor of the universe. Compare Ephesians 1:20-22.

Verse 20

They went forth - The apostles.

Everywhere - In all parts of the world. See the account in the Acts and the Epistles.

The Lord worked with them - By miracles; by removing obstacles; by supporting them; and by giving the gospel success and making it effectual to saving men.

Confirming the word - Showing it to be the word of God or a revelation from heaven.

d **By signs following -** By attending miracles. By raising the dead, healing the sick, etc., as signs that God was with them, and had sent them forth to preach.

Amen - Truly, verily. So be it. This word here, however, is of no authority. There is no reason to think that it was added by Mark.

Mark is more concise than either of the other evangelists. In most instances he coincides with Matthew, though he has added some circumstances which Matthew had omitted. There is no evidence, however, that he copied from Matthew. The last chapter in Mark contains some things omitted in Matthew. and some things of fearful import. We learn from it that the gospel is to be preached to all mankind. Every person is to be offered eternal life, and he rejects it at his peril. The condition of the person who will not believe is fearfully awful. The Son of God has solemnly declared that he shall be damned. He will judge the world, and there is none that can deliver out of his hand. No excuse will be allowed for not believing. Unless a man has faith he must be lost for ever. This is the solemn assurance of the Bible; and in view of this awful declaration of the merciful Redeemer, how sad is the condition of him who has no confidence in Jesus, and who has never looked to him for eternal life! And how important that without delay he should make his peace with God, and possess that faith which is connected with everlasting salvation!

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Luke

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LUKE INTRODUCTION

Preface to Luke

Little is "certainly" known concerning the time and place of writing this Gospel, or concerning the author. The first time we have any mention of the author is in his own history, Acts 16:10-11. He was then the companion of Paul in his travels, and it is evident that he often attended Paul in his journeys, compare Acts 16:11-17; Acts 21:1-6. In each of these places the author of "the Acts " speaks of "his" being in company with Paul. That the same person was the writer of this Gospel is also clear from Acts 1:1.

From this circumstance the ancients regarded this Gospel as in fact the Gospel which Paul had preached. They affirm that Luke recorded what the apostle preached. Thus, Irenaeus says, "Luke, the companion of Paul, put down in a book the gospel preached by him." He also says, "Luke was not only a companion, but also a fellow-labourer of the apostles, especially of Paul." Origen, speaking of the Gospels, says, "The third is that according to Luke, the gospel commended by Paul, published for the sake of the Gentile converts." The testimony of the fathers is uniform that it was written by Luke, the companion of Paul, and was, therefore, regarded by them as really the gospel which Paul preached.

It is not known Where it was written. Jerome says it was composed in Achaia. There seems to be some probability that it was written to persons that were well acquainted with Jewish manners, as the author does not stop to explain the peculiar customs of the Jews, as some of the other evangelists have done. Respecting the time when it was written nothing very definite is known. All that can with certainty be ascertained is that it was written before the death of Paul (65 a.d.), for it was written before the Acts Acts 1:1, and that book only brings down the life of Paul to his imprisonment at Rome, and previous to his going into Spain.

It has been made a matter of inquiry whether Luke was a Gentile or a Jew. On this subject there is no positive testimony. Jerome and others of the fathers say that he was a Syrian, and born at Antioch. The most probable opinion seems to be that he was a proselyte to the Jewish religion, though descended from Gentile parents. For this opinion two reasons may be assigned of some weight. First, he was intimately acquainted, as appears by

the Gospel and the Acts, with the Jewish rites, customs, opinions, and prejudices; and he wrote in their "dialect," that is, with much of the Hebrew phraseology, in a style similar to the other evangelists, from which it appears that he was accustomed to the Jewish religion, and was, therefore, probably a proselyte. Yet the "preface" to his Gospel, as critics have remarked, is pure classic Greek, unlike the Greek that was used by native Jews; from which it seems not improbable that he was by birth and education a Gentile. second. In Acts 21:27, it is said that the Asiatic Jews excited the multitude against Paul because he had introduced "Gentiles" into the temple, thus defiling it. In Acts 21:28 it is said that the Gentile to whom they had reference was "Trophimus," an Ephesian. Yet "Luke" was also at that time with Paul. If he had been regarded as "a Gentile" it is probable that they would have made complaint respecting "him" as well as "Trophimus;" from which it is supposed that he was a Jewish proselyte.

But again, in the Epistle to the Colossians, Colossians 4:9-11, we find Paul saying that Aristarchus, and Marcus, and Barnabas, and Justus saluted them, "who are," he adds, "of the circumcision," that is, Jews by birth. In Colossians 4:14 he says that "Luke," the beloved physician, and Demas also saluted them; from which it is inferred that they were "not of the circumcision," but were by birth Gentiles.

Most writers suppose that Luke, the writer of this Gospel, was intended in the above place in Colossians. If so, his profession was that of "a physician;" and it has been remarked that his descriptions of diseases are more accurate and circumstantial, and have more of "technical" correctness than those of the other evangelists.

Luke does not profess to have been an eye-witness of what he recorded. See Luke 1:2-3. It is clear, therefore, that he was not one of the seventy disciples, nor one of the two who went to Emmaus, as has been sometimes supposed. Nor was he an apostle. By the fathers he is uniformly called the "companion" of the apostles, and especially of Paul.

If he was not one of the apostles, and if he was not one of those expressly commissioned by our Lord to whom the promise of the infallible teaching of the Holy Ghost was given, the question arises by what authority

his Gospel and the Acts have a place in the sacred canon, or what evidence is there that he was divinely inspired?

In regard to this question the following considerations may give satisfaction:

1. They were received by all the churches on the same footing as the first three Gospels. There is not a dissenting voice in regard to their authenticity and authority. The value of this argument is this - that if they had been spurious, or without authority, the fathers were the proper persons to know it.

2. They were published during the lives of the apostles Peter, Paul, and John, and were received during their lives as books of sacred authority. If the writings of Luke were not inspired, and had no authority, those apostles could easily have destroyed their credit, and we have reason to think it would have been done.

3. It is the united testimony of the fathers that this Gospel was submitted to Paul, and received his express approbation. It was regarded as the substance of his preaching, and if it received his approbation it comes to "us" on the authority of his name. Indeed, if this be the case, it rests on the same authority as the epistles of Paul himself.

4. It bears the same marks of inspiration as the other books. It is simple, pure, yet sublime; there is nothing unworthy of God; and it is elevated far above the writings of any uninspired man.

5. If he was not inspired - if, as we suppose, he was a Gentile by birth - and if, as is most clear, he was not an eyewitness of what he records, it is inconceivable that he did not contradict the other evangelists. That he did not "borrow" from them is clear. Nor is it possible to conceive that he could write a book varying in the order of its "arrangement" so much, and adding so many new facts, and repeating so many recorded also by the others, without often having contradicted what was written by them. Let any man compare this Gospel with the spurious gospels of the following centuries, and he will be struck with the force of this remark.

6. If it be objected that, not being an apostle, he did not come within the "promise" of inspiration John 14:26; John 16:13-14 made to the apostles, it may be replied that this was also the case with Paul; yet no small part of the New Testament is composed of his writings. The evidence of the inspiration of the writings of Luke and Paul is to be judged, not only by that "promise," but by the early reception of the churches; by the testimony of the fathers as to the judgment of "inspired men" when living, and by the internal character of the works. Luke has all these equally with the other evangelists.

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CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

Forasmuch as many - It has been doubted who are referred to here by the word "many." It seems clear that it could not be the other evangelists, for the gospel by "John" was not yet written, and the word "many" denotes clearly more than "two." Besides, it is said that they undertook to record what the "eye-witnesses" had delivered to them, so that the writers did not pretend to be eye-witnesses themselves. It is clear, therefore, that other writings are meant than the gospels which we now have, but what they were is a matter of conjecture. What are now known as spurious gospels were written long after Luke wrote his. It is probable that Luke refers to "fragments" of history, or to narratives of "detached" sayings, acts, or parables of our Lord, which had been made and circulated among the disciples and others. His doctrines were original, bold, pure, and authoritative. His miracles had been extraordinary, clear, and awful. His life and death had been peculiar; and it is not improbable - indeed it is highly probable that such broken accounts and narratives of detached facts would be preserved. That this is what Luke means appears farther from Luke 1:3, where "he" professes to give a regular, full, and systematic account from the very beginning - "having had perfect understanding of "all things from the very first." The records of the others - the "many" - were broken and incomplete. His were to be regular and full.

Taken in hand - Undertaken, attempted.

To set forth in order - To compose a narrative. It does not refer to the "order" or "arrangement," but means simply to give a narrative. The word rendered here "in order" is different from that in the third verse, which "has" reference "to order," or to a full and fair "arrangement" of the principal facts, etc., in the history of our Lord.

A declaration - A narrative - an account of.

Which are most surely believed among us - Among Christians - among all the Christians then living. Here we may remark:

1.That Christians of that day had the best of all opportunities for knowing whether those things were true. Many had seen them, and all others had had the account from those who had witnessed them.

2.That infidels now cannot "possibly" be as good judges in the matter as those who lived at the time, and who were thus competent to determine

whether these things were true or false.

3.That all Christians do “most surely believe” the truth of the gospel. It is their life, their hope, their all. Nor can they doubt that their Saviour lived, bled, died, rose, and still lives; that he was their atoning sacrifice, and that he is God over all, blessed forever.

Verse 2

As they delivered them - As they narrated them. As they gave an account of them.

From the beginning - From the commencement of these things - that is, from the birth of John, or perhaps from the beginning of the ministry of Jesus.

Eye-witnesses - Who had seen those things themselves, and who were therefore proper witnesses.

Ministers of the word - The term “word” here means the “gospel.” Luke never uses it, as John does, to denote the second Person of the Trinity. These eye-witnesses and ministers refer, doubtless, to the seventy disciples, to the apostles, and perhaps to other preachers who had gone forth to proclaim the same things.

Verse 3

It seemed good - I thought it best; or, I have also determined. It seemed “to be called for” that there should be a full, authentic, and accurate account of these matters.

Having had perfect understanding … - The literal translation of the original here would be, “having exactly traced everything from the first;” or, “having, by diligent and careful investigation, “followed up” everything to the “source,” to obtain an accurate account of the matter.” This much better expresses the idea. Luke did not profess to have seen these things, and this expression is designed to show how he acquired his information. It was by “tracing up” every account until he became satisfied of its truth. Here observe,

1.That in religion God does not set aside our natural faculties. He calls us to look at evidence; to examine accounts; to make up our own minds. Nor will any man be convinced of the truth of religion who does “not” make investigation and set himself seriously to the task.

2.We see the nature of Luke‘s inspiration. It was consistent with his using his natural faculties or his own powers of mind in investigating the truth. God, by His Holy Spirit, presided over his faculties, directed them, and kept him from error.

In order - This word does not indicate that the exact order of time would be observed, for that is not the way in which he writes; but it means distinctly, particularly, in opposition to the confused and broken accounts to which he had referred before.

Most excellent Theophilus - The word Theophilus means “a friend of God,” or a pious man; and it has been supposed by some that Luke did not refer to any particular “individual,” but to any man that loved God; but there is no reason for this opinion. Significant names were very common, and there is no good reason to doubt that this was some individual known to Luke. The application of the title “most excellent “proves it further. It would not be given to an unknown man. The title “most excellent” has by some been supposed to be given to express his “character,” but it is rather to be considered as denoting rank or office. It occurs only in three other places in the New Testament, and is there given to men “in office” - to Felix and Festus, Acts 23:26; Acts 24:3; Acts 26:25. These titles express no quality of the “men,” but belong to the “office;” and we may hence learn that it is not improper for Christians, in giving honor to whom honor is due, to address men in office by their customary titles, even if their moral character be altogether unworthy of it. Who “Theophilus” was is unknown. It is probable that he was some distinguished Roman or Greek who had been converted, who was a friend of Luke, and who had requested an account of these things. It is possible that this preface might have been sent to him as a private letter with the gospel, and Theophilus chose to have them published together.

Verse 4

The certainty - Have full evidence or proof of.

Been instructed - By the preachers of the gospel. The original word is the one from which is derived our word “catechism - been catechized;” but it does not denote here the “manner” in which the instruction was imparted, as it does with us, but simply the fact that he had been taught those things.

Verse 5

In the days of Herod - See the notes at Matthew 2:1.

Of the course of Abia - When the priests became so numerous that they could not at once minister at the altar, David divided them into 24 classes or courses, each one of which officiated for a week, 1 Chronicles 24:10. Compare 2 Chronicles 8:14. The word "course" means the same as "class," or order. The Greek-based word "Abia" is the same as the Hebrew-based word "Abijah."

His wife was of the daughters of Aaron - A descendant of Aaron, the first high priest of the Jews; so that "John the Baptist" was descended, on the father's and the mother's side, from priests. Our Saviour was not on either side. John would have been legally entitled to a place among the priests; our Saviour, being of the tribe of Judah, would not.

Verse 6

Both righteous - Both "just" or holy. This means here more than external conformity to the law. It is an honorable testimonial of their "piety" toward God.

Walking in … - Keeping the commandments. To walk in the way that God commands is "to obey."

Ordinances - Rites and customs which God had ordained or appointed. These words refer to all the duties of religion which were made known to them.

Blameless - That is, no fault or deficiency could be found in them. They were strict, exact, punctual. Yet this, if it had been mere "external" observance, might have been no proof of piety. Paul, before his conversion, also kept the law "externally" blameless, Philemon 3:6. But in the case of Zechariah and Elizabeth it was real love to God and sincere regard for his law.

Verse 7

Well stricken in years - Old or advanced in life, so as to render the prospect of having children hopeless.

Verse 8

Before God - In the temple, where God dwelt by the symbols of His presence. The temple was regarded by the Jews as the "house" or dwelling of God; and in the "first" temple there was, in the most holy place, a "cloud" called the Shechinah, or a visible sign of the presence of God. It was thus "before God" that Zechariah offered incense.

Verse 9

According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was. - The Jewish writers inform us that it was customary for the priests to divide their daily task by "lot."

To burn incense - Incense is an aromatic or white rosin procured from trees, chiefly in Arabia. It is obtained by making incisions in the tree, and the gum flows out. It is distinguished for an especially pleasant "smell" when burned, and was therefore used in ancient worship. It was burned by the priest twice a day Exodus 30:7, and it seems to have been emblematic of prayer and praise, or of the grateful offerings of the heart wafted toward heaven. The incense used in the temple was made of stacte, onycha, and galbanum Exodus 30:34, with pure frankincense, and it was not lawful for this compound to be used elsewhere than in the house of God.

Into the temple - See the notes at Matthew 21:12. The part of the temple where incense was burned was the "holy place."

Verse 10

The whole multitude - This was the regular time of evening prayer, and multitudes came up to the temple to worship.

Praying without - That is, in the courts around the temple, particularly in the court of the women.

Verse 11

An angel - An "angel" is a messenger sent from God. See the notes at Matthew 1:20. It had now been about 400 years since the time of "Malachi," and since there had been any divine revelation. During that time the nation was looking for the Messiah, but still with nothing more than the ancient prophecies to direct them. Now that he was about to appear, God sent his messenger to announce his coming, to encourage the hearts of his people, and to prepare them to receive him.

On the right side … - The altar of incense stood close by the veil which divided the holy place from the most holy. On the north stood the table of showbread; on the south the golden candlestick. As Zechariah entered, therefore, with his face to the west, the angel would stand on the north, or near the table of showbread. That table was 18 inches square and 3 feet high. The top, as well as the sides and horns, was overlaid with pure gold, and it was finished around the upper surface with a crown or border of gold. Just below this border, four golden rings were attached to each side of the altar, one near each corner. The staves or rods for bearing the altar passed through these rings, and were made of the same wood with the altar itself,

and richly overlaid with the same precious metal. Upon this altar incense was burned every morning and every evening, so that it was literally perpetual, Exodus 30:8. Neither burnt-sacrifice, nor meat-offering, nor drink-offering was permitted upon this altar; nor was it ever stained with blood except once annually, when the priest made atonement, Leviticus 16:18-19.

Verse 12

He was troubled - He was alone, in the presence of God. The appearance of the angel was sudden, unexpected, and therefore fearful.

Verse 13

Thy prayer is heard - That is, thy prayer for offspring. This, among the Jews, was an object of intense desire. No prospect was more gloomy to them than that of dying childless, so that their "name should perish." Special pains, therefore, had been taken in the law to keep up the names of families by requiring a man to marry his brother's wife, Deuteronomy 25:5.

Verse 14

Many shall rejoice at his birth - This does not refer so much to the time of his birth as to the subsequent rejoicing. Such will be his "character," that he will be an honor to the family, and many will rejoice that he lived: or, in other words, he will be a blessing to mankind.

Verse 15

Shall be great - Shall be eminent, or distinguished as a preacher.

In the sight of the Lord - Greek, "before the Lord." That is, shall be "really" or "truly" great. God shall regard him as such.

Shall drink neither wine - The kind of wine commonly used in Judea was a light wine, often not stronger than cider in this country. It was the common drink of all classes of the people. See the notes at John 2:11. The use of wine was forbidden only to the Nazarite, Numbers 6:3. It was because John sustained this character that he abstained from the use of wine.

Strong drink - It is not easy to ascertain precisely what is meant by this word, but we are certain that it does not mean strong drink in our sense of the term. Distilled spirits were not then known. The art of distilling was discovered by an Arabian chemist in the 9th or 10th century; but distilled liquors are not used by Arabians. They banished them at once, as if sensible of their pernicious influence; nor are they used in Eastern nations at all. Europe and America have been the places where this poison has been most

extensively used, and there it has beggared and ruined millions, and is yearly sweeping thousands unprepared into a wretched eternity. The "strong drink" among the Jews was probably nothing more than fermented liquors, or a drink obtained from fermented dates, figs, and the juice of the palm, or the lees of wine, mingled with sugar, and having the property of producing intoxication. Many of the Jewish writers say that by the word here translated "strong drink" was meant nothing more than old wine, which probably had the power of producing intoxication. See the notes at Isaiah 5:11.

Shall be filled with the Holy Ghost … - Shall be divinely designated or appointed to this office, and qualified for it by all needful communications of the Holy Spirit. To be "filled" with the Holy Spirit is to be illuminated, sanctified, and guided by his influence. In this place it refers:

1.To the divine intention that he should be set apart to this work, as God designed that Paul should be an apostle from his mother's womb, Galatians 1:15.

2.It refers to an actual fitting for the work from the birth by the influence of the Holy Spirit, as was the case with Jeremiah Jeremiah 1:5, and with the Messiah himself, Psalm 22:9-10.

Verse 16

Children of Israel - Jews. Descendants of Israel or Jacob.

Shall he turn - By repentance. He shall call them from their sins, and persuade them to forsake them, and to seek the Lord their God.

Verse 17

Shall go before him - Before the Messiah. The connection here leads us to suppose that the word "him" refers to the "Lord their God" in the previous verse. If so, then it will follow that the Messiah was the Lord God of Israel - a character abundantly given him in other parts of the New Testament.

In the spirit and power of Elias - See the notes at Matthew 11:14.

To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children - In the time of John the Jews were divided into a number of different sects. See the notes at Matthew 3:7. They were opposed violently to each other, and pursued their opposition with great animosity. It was impossible but that this opposition should find its way into families, and divide parents and children from each other. John came that he might allay these animosities and produce better

feeling. By directing them all to "one Master," the Messiah, he would divert their attention from the causes of their difference and bring them to union. He would restore peace to their families, and reconcile those parents and children who had chosen different sects, and who had suffered their attachment "to sect" to interrupt the harmony of their households. The effect of true religion on a family will always be to produce harmony. It attaches all the family to "one" great Master, and by attachment to him all minor causes of difference are forgotten.

And the disobedient to the wisdom of the just - The "disobedient" here are the unbelieving, and hence the impious, the wicked. These he would turn to the wisdom of the just, or to such wisdom as the "just" or pious manifest - that is, to true wisdom.

To make ready a people … - To prepare them for his coming by announcing that the Messiah was about to appear, and by calling them to repentance. God has always required people to be pure in a special manner when he was about to appear among them. Thus, the Israelites were required to purify themselves for three days when he was about to come down on Mount Sinai, Exodus 19:14-15. And so, when God the Son was about to appear as the Redeemer, he required that people should "prepare" themselves for his coming. So in view of the future judgment - the second coming of the Son of man - he requires that people should repent, believe, and be pure, 1 Peter 4:7; 2 Peter 3:11-12.

Verse 18

Whereby shall I know this? - The thing was improbable, and he desired "evidence" that it would take place. The testimony of an "angel," and in such a place, should have been proof enough; but people are slow to believe the testimony of heavenly messengers. As a consequence of not believing, he was struck mute.

Verse 19

I am Gabriel - The word "Gabriel" is made up of two Hebrew words, and signifies "man of God." This angel is mentioned as having been deputed to inform "Daniel" that his prayers were heard. See the notes at Daniel 8:16; Daniel 9:21.

That stand in the presence of God - To stand in the presence of one is a phrase denoting "honor" or "favor." To be admitted to the presence of a king, or to be with him, was a token of favor. So to stand before God signifies merely that he was honored or favored by God. He was permitted

to come near him, and to see much of his glory. Compare 1 Kings 10:8; 1 Kings 12:6; 1 Kings 17:1; Proverbs 22:29.

And am sent … - The angels are "ministering spirits" sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation," Hebrews 1:7, Hebrews 1:14. They delight to do the will of God, and one way of doing that will is by aiding his children here, by succoring the afflicted, and by defending those who are in danger. There is no more absurdity or impropriety in supposing that angels may render such aid, than there is in supposing that good people may assist one another; and there can be no doubt that it affords high pleasure to the angels of God to be "permitted" to aid those who are treading the dangerous and trying path which leads to eternity. Holiness is the same as benevolence, and holy beings seek and love opportunities to do good to their fellow creatures. In the eye of holy beings all God's creatures are parts of one great family, and whenever they can do them good they rejoice in the opportunity, at any sacrifice.

These glad tidings - This good news respecting the birth of a son.

Verse 20

Because thou believest not … - This was both a sign and a judgment - a sign that he had come from God, and that the thing would be fulfilled: and a judgment for not giving credit to what he had said. There is no sin in the sight of God more aggravated than unbelief. When God speaks; man should believe; nor can he that "will not" believe escape punishment. God speaks only truth, and we should believe Him. God speaks only what is for our good, and it is right that we should suffer if we do not credit what He says.

Verse 21

The people waited - That is, beyond the usual time.

Marvelled - Wondered. The priest, it is said, was not accustomed to remain in the temple more than half an hour commonly. Having remained on this occasion a longer time, the people became apprehensive of his safety, and wondered what had happened to him.

Verse 22

Had seen a vision - The word "vision" means "sight, appearance," or "spectre," and is commonly applied to spirits, or to beings from another world. When he came out of the temple, it is probable that they "suspected" that something of this nature had detained him there, and that, on inquiry of him, he signified by a nod that this was the case. He was unable to speak,

and they had no way of "perceiving" it but by such a sign. On the word "vision," see the notes at Isaiah 1:1.

For he beckoned unto them - That is, by beckoning unto them, or by a sign, he informed them of what he had seen.

Verse 23

As soon as the days of his ministration … - As soon as he had fulfilled the duties of the week. It might have been supposed that the extraordinary occurrence in the temple, together with his own calamity, would have induced him at once to leave this place and return home; but his duty was in the temple. His piety prompted him to remain there in the service of God. He was not unfitted for burning incense by his dumbness, and it was not proper for him to leave his post. It is the duty of ministers of religion to remain at their work until they are unfitted for it, and unable to serve God in their profession. Then they must retire. But until that time, he that for trifling causes forsakes his post is guilty of unfaithfulness to his Master.

Verse 24

Hid herself - Did not go forth into public, and concealed her condition. This might have been done that she might spend her time more entirely in giving praise to God for his mercies, and that she might have the fullest proof of the accomplishment of the promise before she appeared in public or spoke of the mercies of God.

Verse 25

Thus - In this merciful manner.

To take away my reproach - Among the Jews, a family of children was counted a signal blessing, an evidence of the favor of God, Psalm 113:9; Psalm 128:3; Isaiah 4:1; Isaiah 44:3-4; Leviticus 26:9. To be "barren," therefore, or to be destitute of children, was considered a "reproach" or a "disgrace," 1 Samuel 1:6.

Verse 26

In the sixth month - The sixth month after Elizabeth's conception.

A city of Galilee named Nazareth - See the notes at Matthew 2:22-23.

Verse 27

To a virgin espoused … - See the notes at Matthew 1:18-19. Compare the notes at Isaiah 7:14.

House of David - Family of David, or descendants of David.

Verse 28

Hail - This word of salutation is equivalent to "Peace be with thee," or "Joy be with thee;" a form of speech implying that she was signally favored, and expressing joy at meeting her.

Highly favoured - By being the mother of the long-expected Messiah - the mother of the Redeemer of mankind. Long had he been predicted; long had the eyes of the nation been turned to him, and long had his coming been an object of intense desire. To be reckoned among his "ancestors" was accounted sufficient honor for even Abraham and David. But now the happy "individual" was designated who was to be his mother; and on Mary, a poor virgin of Nazareth, was to come this honor, which would have rendered infinitely illustrious any of the daughters of Adam the honor of giving birth to the world's Redeemer and the Son of God.

The Lord is with thee - The word "is" is not in the original, and the passage may be rendered either "the Lord "is" with thee," or "the Lord be" with thee," implying the prayer of the angel that all blessings from God might descend and rest upon her.

Blessed art thou among women - This passage is equivalent to saying "thou art the most happy of women."

Verse 29

Troubled at his saying - Disturbed or perplexed at what he said. It was so unexpected, so sudden, so extraordinary, and was so high an honor, that she was filled with anxious thoughts, and did not know what to make of it.

Cast in her mind - Thought, or revolved in her mind.

What manner of salutation - What this salutation could mean.

Verse 30

Fear not, Mary - Do not be alarmed at this appearance of an angel. He only comes to announce to you good tidings. Similar language was addressed by an angel to Joseph. See the notes at Matthew 1:20.

Thou hast found favour with God - Eminent favor or mercy in being selected to be the mother of the Messiah.

Verse 31

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb - See the notes at Isaiah 7:14.

And shalt call his name Jesus - A Saviour. See the notes at Matthew 1:21. All this was announced. also, by an angel to Joseph, after this visitation to Mary. See the notes at Matthew 1:20-21.

Verse 32

He shall be great - There is undoubted reference in this passage to Isaiah 9:6-7. By his being "great" is meant he shall be distinguished or illustrious; great in power, in wisdom, in dominion on earth and in heaven.

Shall be called - This is the same as to say he "shall be" the Son, etc. The Hebrews often used this form of speech. See Matthew 21:13.

The Highest - God, who is infinitely exalted; called the Highest, because He is exalted over all his creatures on earth and in heaven. See Mark 5:7.

The throne - The kingdom; or shall appoint him as the lineal successor of David in the kingdom.

His father David - David is called his father because Jesus was lineally descended from him. See Matthew 1:1. The promise to David was, that there should "not fail" a man to sit on his throne, or that his throne should be perpetual 1 Kings 2:4; 1 Kings 8:25; 1 Kings 9:5; 2 Chronicles 6:16, and the promise was fulfilled by exalting Jesus to be a Prince and a Saviour, and the perpetual King of his people.

Verse 33

Over the house of Jacob - The house of Jacob means the same thing as the "family" of Jacob, or the descendants of Jacob - that is, the children of Israel. This was the name by which the ancient people of God were known, and it is the same as saying that he would reign over his own church and people forever. This he does by giving them laws, by defending them, and by guiding them; and this he will do forever in the kingdom of his glory.

Of his kingdom there shall be no end - He shall reign among his people on earth until the end of time, and be their king forever in heaven. his is the only kingdom that shall never have an end; he the only King that shall never lay aside his diadem and robes, and that shall never die. "He "the only King that can defend us from all our enemies, sustain us in death, and reward us in eternity. O how important, then, to have an interest in his kingdom! and how unimportant, compared with "his" favor, is the favor of all earthly monarchs!

Verse 35

The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee - See Matthew 1:20.

The power of the Highest … - This evidently means that the body of Jesus would be created by the direct power of God. It was not by ordinary generation; but, as the Messiah came to redeem sinners - to make atonement for "others," and not for himself it was necessary that his human nature

should be pure, and free from the corruption of the fall. God therefore prepared him a body by direct creation that should be pure and holy. See Hebrews 10:5.

That holy thing … - That holy progeny or child.

Shall be called the Son of God - This is spoken in reference to the human nature of Christ, and this passage proves, beyond controversy, that "one" reason why Jesus was called the Son of God was because he was begotten in a supernatural manner. He is also called the "Son of God" on account of his resurrection, Romans 1:4; Acts 13:33, compared with Psalm 2:7.

Verse 36-37

Thy cousin Elizabeth … - The case of Elizabeth is mentioned to inspire Mary with confidence, and to assure her that what was now promised would be fulfilled. It was almost as improbable that Elizabeth should have a child at her time of life, as it was that Mary should under the circumstances promised.

Verse 38

And Mary said, Behold the handmaid … - This was an expression of resignation to the will of God, and of faith in the promise. To be the "handmaid of the Lord" is to be submissive and obedient, and is the same as saying, "I fully credit all that is said, and am perfectly ready to obey all the commands of the Lord."

Verse 39

And Mary arose - The word "arose" here is equivalent to "setting out," or starting on a journey.

The hill country - The region in the vicinity of Jerusalem, commonly called the hill country of Judea.

City of Juda - What city is meant is not known. Some have supposed it to be Jerusalem, others Hebron; but all is conjecture. It was probably a Levitical city, and the residence of Zechariah when he was not employed in the temple.

Verse 40

Saluted Elizabeth - Expressed great joy and gratification at seeing her, and used the customary tokens of affectionate salutation.

Verse 41

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost - The meaning of this seems to be that she was filled with joy; with a disposition to praise God; with a

prophetic spirit, or a knowledge of the character of the child that should be born of her. All these were produced by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 42

Blessed art thou among women - She here repeated nearly the words of the angel to Mary, esteeming it to be the highest honor among mothers to be the mother of the Messiah. See the notes at Luke 1:28.

Verse 43

And whence is this to me? - An expression of humility. Why is it that the mother of my Lord should come to me, as if to honor me?

Mother of my Lord - The word "Lord" sometimes denotes "divinity," and sometimes superior, master, teacher, or governor. It was given by the Jews to their expected Messiah; but whether they understood it as denoting divinity cannot now be ascertained. It is clear only that Elizabeth used it as denoting great dignity and honor.

Verse 45

Blessed is she that believed - That is, "Mary" who believed what the angel spoke to her. She was blessed not only in the act of believing, but because the thing promised would certainly be fulfilled.

From these expressions of Elizabeth we may learn:

1.That the spirit of prophecy had not entirely ceased among the Jews.

2.That the Holy Spirit is the source of light, comfort, and joy.

3.That everything about the birth of Jesus was remarkable, and that he must have been more than a mere man.

4.That the prospect of the coming of the Messiah was one of great joy and rejoicing to ancient saints; and,

5.That it was a high honor to be "the mother" of him that should redeem mankind.

It is from "that honor" that the Roman Catholics have determined that it is right to worship the Virgin Mary and to offer prayers to her - an act of worship as idolatrous as any that could be offered to a creature. Because:

1.It is not anywhere commanded in the Bible.

2.It is expressly forbidden to worship any being but God, Exodus 34:14; Exodus 20:4-5; Deuteronomy 6:13-14; Isaiah 45:20.

3.It is idolatry to worship or pray to a creature.

4.It is absurd to suppose that the Virgin Mary can be in all places at the same time to hear the prayers of thousands at once, or to aid them. There is no idolatry more gross, and of course more wicked, than to worship the creature more than the Creator, Romans 1:25.

Verse 46

My soul doth magnify the Lord - To "magnify" means to "make great," and then to "extol," to "praise," to "celebrate." It does not mean here strictly to "make great," but to increase "in our estimation" - that is, to praise or extol. See Psalm 34:3; 2 Samuel 7:26.

Verse 47

In God my Saviour - God is called "Saviour," as he saves people from sin and death. He was "Mary's" Saviour, as he had redeemed her soul and given her a title to eternal life; and she rejoiced for that, and especially for his mercy in honoring her by her being made the mother of the Messiah.

Verse 48

He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaid - Literally, he has looked upon the low or humble condition of his handmaid. That is, notwithstanding her humble rank and poverty, he has shown her favor. And this example abundantly teaches what is elsewhere fully taught in the Bible, that God is not a respecter of persons; that he is not influenced, in conferring favors, by wealth, honor, or office, Romans 2:11; Romans 10:11-12. He seeks the humble and the contrite; he imparts his rich blessings to those who feel that they need them, and who will bless him for them, Psalm 138:6; Isaiah 57:15.

From henceforth - Hereafter, or in consequence of this.

All generations - All people. All posterity.

Call me blessed - Pronounce me highly favored or happy in being the mother of the Messiah. It is therefore right to consider her as highly favored or happy; but this certainly does not warrant us to worship her or to pray to her. Abraham was blessed in being the father of the faithful; Paul in being the apostle to the Gentiles; Peter in first preaching the gospel to them; but who would think of worshipping or praying to Abraham, Paul, or Peter?

Verse 49

He that is mighty - God.

Hath done to me great things - Hath conferred on me great favors and distinguished mercies.

And holy is his name - This is an expression of Mary‘s feelings, desiring to bestow on God all honor and praise. As the highest honor, she declared that his “name” was “holy” - that is, that God was free from sin, injustice, and impurity. The “name” of God is often put for God Himself. The proper name of God is יהוה Yahweha word expressive of His “essential being,” derived from the word “to be,” Exodus 3:14; Exodus 6:3; Psalm 83:18. That name is holy; is to be regarded as holy; and to make a common or profane use of it is solemnly forbidden, Exodus 20:7.

Verse 50

His mercy - Favor shown to the miserable and the guilty.

Is on them - Is shown or manifested to them.

That fear him - That “reverence” or honor Him. One kind of fear is that which a servant has of a cruel master, or which a man has of a precipice, the plague, or death. This is not the “fear” which we ought to have toward God. It is the fear which a dutiful child has of a kind and virtuous father a fear of injuring his feelings; of dishonoring him by our life; of doing anything which he would disapprove. It is on those who have such fear of God that his mercy descends. This is the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom, Psalm 111:10; Job 28:28.

d **From generation to generation -** From one age to another - that is, it is unceasing; it continues and abounds. But it means also more than this. It means that God‘s mercy will descend on the children and children‘s children of those that fear him and keep his commandments, Exodus 20:6. In this respect it is an unspeakable privilege to be descended from pious parents; to have been the subject of their prayers, and to have received their blessing. It is also a matter of vast guilt not to copy their example and to walk in their steps. If God is “disposed” to show mercy to thousands of generations, how heavy will be the condemnation if the children of pious parents do not avail themselves of it and early seek his favor!

Verse 51

Hath showed strength with his arm - The “arm” is the symbol of strength. The expression in this and the subsequent verses has no particular reference to his mercy to Mary. From a contemplation of His goodness to her, she enlarges her views to a contemplation of His goodness and power

in general, and to a celebration of the praises of God for all that he has done to all people. This is the nature of true piety. It does not terminate in thinking of God‘s mercy toward ourselves. It thinks of others, and praises God that others also are made partakers of His mercy, and that His goodness is manifested to all His works.

He scattereth the proud - He hath often done it in time of battle and war. When the proud Assyrian, Egyptian, or Babylonian had come against the people of God, He had often scattered them and driven away their armies.

In the imagination of their hearts - Those who were lifted up or exalted in their own view. Those who “thought themselves” to be superior to other men.

Verse 52

Hath put down the mighty - The “mighty” here denotes princes, kings, or conquerors. See Isaiah 14:12-14.

Their seats - Their “thrones,” or the places where they sat in pomp and power.

Exalted them - Raised them up, or placed them in the seats of those who had been removed.

Low degree - Low or humble birth and condition in life. This probably has reference to the case of her ancestor David. Mary was celebrating the mercies of God to herself, to her family, and of course to her ancestors. It was natural to allude to that great event in their history when Saul was overcome in battle, and when David was taken from the sheepfold and placed on the throne. The origin of illustrious families is often obscure. People are often raised by industry, talent, and the favor of God, from very humble stations - from the farm or mechanic‘s shop - to places of great trust in the church and state. They who are thus elevated, if imbued with right feelings, will not despise their former employments nor their former companions, nor will they esteem their parents or friends the less because they still remain in the same rank in life. No conduct is more odious and unchristian than to be ashamed of our birth or the humble circumstances of our friends.

Verse 53

He hath filled the hungry with good things - This is a celebration of the general mercy of God. He hath daily fed the poor, the needy, and those who came to Him with humble hearts.

The rich he hath sent … - While the poor come to him for a supply of their daily wants, the rich come not that their necessities should be supplied, but come with lofty hearts, and insatiable desires that their riches may be increased. When this is the case, God not unfrequently not only "withholds" what they ask, but he takes their riches away by fire, or flood, or disappointments, and sends them away empty, Proverbs 23:5. It is better to be poor and go to God for our daily bread, than to be rich and forget our dependence on Him, and to seek only a great increase of our property.

Verse 54

Hath holpen - Hath helped or assisted. The word rendered "holpen" denotes properly, "to take hold of one, to help him up when he is in danger of falling," and here means that God had succored his people when they were feeble, and were in danger of falling or being overthrown.

His servant Israel - His people the Israelites, or those who truly revered him and kept His commandments. See Isaiah 41:8-9; Hosea 11:1.

In remembrance of his mercy - Or that His mercy may be remembered.

Verse 55

As he spake to our fathers … - That is, He has dealt mercifully with the children of Israel, according as He promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The promise particularly here referred to is that respecting the Messiah which was now about to be fulfilled; but there is no doubt that there was also included the promises respecting all the other mercies which had been conferred on the children of Israel. See Genesis 22:17-18.

Forever - These words are to be referred to the preceding verse - "in remembrance of His mercy" forever, "as he spake," etc. They denote that the "mercy of God" manifested to His people should be had in everlasting remembrance.

There is a striking similarity between this song of praise by Mary and that spoken by "Hannah," 1 Samuel 2:2-10. There are few pieces of "poetry" - for this is poetry, and almost the only poetry in the New Testament - more beautiful than this. It is the language of a humble, thankful, pious, female heart praising God:

1.For his mercy to her, Luke 1:46-49;

2.For his mercy to all people - his "general" goodness, Luke 1:50-53; and,

3.His special goodness to his people, Luke 1:54-55.

Verse 59

On the eighth day - This was the day on which it was required to circumcise children, Genesis 21:4.

And they called him Zacharias - The name of the child was commonly given at the time of the circumcision, Genesis 21:3-4. The name "commonly" given to the eldest son was that of the father.

Verse 60

Shall be called John - This was the name which the angel had said should be given to him, of which Zechariah had probably informed Elizabeth by writing.

Verse 61

There is none of thy kindred … - The Jewish tribes and families were kept distinct. To do this, and to avoid confusion in their genealogical tables, they probably gave only those names which were found among their ancestors. Another reason for this, common to all people, is the respect which is felt for honored parents and ancestors.

Verse 63

He asked - That is, by signs.

A writing table - The table denoted by this word was usually made of wood and covered with wax. The ancients used to write on such tables, as they had not the use of paper. The instrument used for writing was an iron pen or style, by which they marked on the wax which covered the table. Sometimes the writing-table was made entirely of lead.

Verse 64

His mouth was opened … - That is, he was enabled to speak. For nine months he had been mute, and it is probable that they supposed that he had been afflicted with a paralytic affection, and that he would not recover. Hence, their amazement when he spoke. For one act of disbelief all this calamity had come upon him, and it had not come without effect. With true gratitude he offered praise to God for the birth of a son, and for his restoration to the blessings of speech.

Verse 65

And fear came … - The word "fear" often denotes ‹religious reverence.‘ The remarkable circumstances attending the birth of John, and

the fact that Zechariah was suddenly restored to speech, convinced them that God was there, and filled their minds with awe and veneration.

Verse 66

What manner of child … - Such were the remarkable circumstances of his birth that they apprehended that he would be distinguished as a prophet, or that great events would result from his life.

The hand of the Lord was with him - The word "hand" is used to denote "aid, protection, favor." We stretch out the hand to aid those whom we wish to help. The expression here means that God "aided" him, "protected" him, or showed him favor. Some think that these words are a part of the speech of the neighbors - "What manner of child shall this be? God is so evidently with him!"

Verse 67

Filled with the Holy Ghost - See Luke 1:15.

And prophesied - The word "prophesy" means:

1.To foretell future events.

2.To celebrate the praises of God (see 1 Samuel 10:5-6; 1 Kings 18:29); then to,

3.Teach or preach the gospel, etc. See the notes at Romans 12:6.

This song of Zechariah partakes of all. It is principally employed in the praises of God, but it also predicts the future character and preaching of John.

Verse 68

Blessed - See the notes at Matthew 5:3.

Hath visited - The word here rendered "visited" means properly "to look upon;" then to look upon in order "to know the state of anyone;" then to visit for the purpose of "aiding those who need aid," or alleviating misery. Compare Matthew 25:43. In this sense it is used here. God "looked upon" the world - he saw it miserable - he came to relieve it, and brought salvation.

And redeemed - That is, was "about to redeem," or had given the pledge that he "would redeem." This was spoken under the belief that the Messiah, "the Redeemer," was about to appear, and would certainly accomplish his work. The literal translation of this passage is, "He hath made a "ransom" for his people. A "ransom" was the "price" paid to deliver a captive taken in war. A is a prisoner taken in war by B. B has a right to

detain him as a prisoner by the laws of war, but C offers B a "price" if he will release A and suffer him to go at liberty. The price which he pays, and which must be "satisfactory" to B - that is, be a "reason" to B why he should release him is called a "price" or "ransom." Men are sinners. They are bound over to just punishment by the law. The law is holy, and God, as a just governor, must see that the law is honored and the wicked punished; but if anything can be done which will have the same "good effect" as the punishment of the sinner, or which will be an "equivalent" for it - that is, be of equal value to the universe - God may consistently release him.

If he can show the same hatred of sin, and deter others from sinning, and secure the purity of the sinner, the sinner may be released. Whatever will accomplish "this" is called a "ransom," because it is, in the eye of God, a sufficient "reason" why the sinner should not be punished; it is an equivalent for his sufferings, and God is satisfied. The "blood of Jesus" - that is, his death in the place of sinners constitutes such a ransom. It is in their stead. It is for them. It is equivalent to their punishment. It is not itself a "punishment," for that always supposes "personal crime," but it is what God is pleased to accept in the place of the eternal sufferings of the sinner. The king of the "Locrians" made a law that an adulterer should be punished with the loss of his eyes. His "son" was the first offender, and the father decreed that his son should lose one eye, and he himself one also. This was the "ransom." He showed his "love," his regard for the honor of his law, and the determination that the guilty should not escape. So God gave his Son a "ransom" to show his love, his regard to justice, and his willingness to save people; and his Son, in his death, was a ransom. He is often so called in the New Testament, Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:12. For a fuller view of the nature of a ransom, see the notes at Romans 3:24-25.

Verse 69

And hath raised up a horn - A horn is a symbol of strength. The figure is taken from the fact that in horned animals the strength lies in the "horn." Particularly, the great power of the rhinoceros or unicorn is manifested by the use of a single horn of great "strength," placed on the head near the end of the nose. When the sacred writers, therefore, speak of great strength they often use the word "horn," Psalm 148:14; Deuteronomy 33:17; Daniel 7:7-8; Daniel 7:21. The word salvation, connected here with the word "horn,"

means that this "strength," or this mighty Redeemer, was able to save. It is possible that this whole figure may be taken from the Jewish "altar." On each of the four corners of the altar there was an eminence or small projection called a "horn." To this persons might flee for safety when in danger, and be safe, 1 Kings 1:50; 1 Kings 2:28. Compare the notes at Luke 1:11. So the Redeemer "may be" called the "horn of salvation," because those who flee to him are safe.

In the house - In the family, or among the descendants of David.

Verse 70

His holy prophets … - All the prophets are said to have referred to the Messiah, from the beginning of the world. The most striking of these were Jacob Genesis 49:10; Moses Deuteronomy 18:15; Isaiah Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 53:1-12.

Since the world began - This is not to be taken literally, for there were no prophets "immediately after" the creation. It is merely a general expression, designed to denote that all the prophets had predicted the coming of the Messiah. Compare the Luke 24:27 note; Revelation 19:10 note.

Verse 71

Saved from our enemies - The enemies of "man" are his sins, his carnal propensities, his lusts, and the great adversary Satan and his angels, who continually seek to destroy him. From "these" the Messiah came to save us. Compare Genesis 3:15; Matthew 1:21.

The hand - The power; or to save us from them.

Verse 72

To perform the mercy - To show the mercy promised. The expression in the "original" is, "To make mercy with our fathers" - that is, to show kindness to our fathers; and the propriety of it is founded on the fact that mercy to "children" is regarded as kindness to the "parent." Blessing the "children" was blessing the "nation;" was fulfilling the promises made to the fathers, and "showing" that he regarded them in mercy.

His holy covenant - The word "covenant" means compact or agreement. This is in use among people. It implies equality in the parties; freedom from constraint; freedom from previous obligation to do the thing now covenanted; and freedom from obligation to enter into a compact, unless a man chooses so to do. Such a transaction evidently can never take place between man and God, for they are not equal. Man is not at liberty to

“decline” what God proposes, and he is under obligation to do “all” that God commands. When the word “covenant,” therefore, is used in the Bible, it means sometimes a “command;” Sometimes a “promise;” sometimes a “regular law” - as “the covenant of the day and night;” and sometimes the way in which God dispenses mercy - that is, by the old and new covenants. In the place before us it means “the promise” made to Abraham, as the following verses clearly show.

Verse 73

The oath - This oath is recorded in Genesis 22:16-17. It was an oath in which God swore by himself (because he could swear by no greater, Hebrews 6:13-14) that he would surely bless Abraham and his posterity. That promise was now to be entirely fulfilled by the coming of the Messiah.

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Verse 74

Might serve him - Might obey, honor, and worship him. This was regarded as a “favor.” This was what was promised, and for this Zechariah praised God.

Without fear - Fear of death, of spiritual enemies, or of external foes. In the sure hope of God‘s “eternal” favor beyond the grave.

Verse 75

In holiness … - In piety and strict justice.

Before him - In the presence of God. Performed as in his presence, and with the full consciousness that he sees the heart. The “holiness” was not to be merely external, but spiritual, internal, pure, such as “God” would see and approve.

All the days of our life - To death. True religion increases and expands until death.

Verse 76

And thou, child … - Zechariah predicts in this and the following verses the dignity, the employment, and the success of John. He declares what would be the subject of his preaching, and what his success.

Prophet of the Highest - Prophet of God; a prophet “appointed by God” to declare his will, and to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

The face of the Lord - The Lord Jesus, the Messiah, that was about to appear. To go before “the face of one” is the same as to go immediately before one, or to be immediately followed by another.

To prepare his ways - This is taken from Isaiah 40:3. See the Matthew 3:3 niote, and Isaiah 40:3 note.

Verse 77

To give knowledge of salvation - Knowledge of the "way" of salvation: that it was provided, and that the author of salvation was about to appear.

By the remission of their sins - The word remission means pardon or forgiveness. It implies that God will treat the sinner as if he had not committed the sin. The idea here is, that the "salvation" about to be offered was that which was connected with the pardon of sin. There can be no other. God cannot treat people as his friends unless they come to him by repentance and obtain forgiveness. When that is obtained, which he is always disposed to grant, they can be treated with kindness and mercy.

Verse 78

Whereby the dayspring … - The word "dayspring" means the morning light, the aurora, the rising of the sun. It is called the dayspring "from on high" because the light of the gospel shines forth from heaven. God is its Author, and through His mercy it shines upon people. There is here, doubtless, a reference to Isaiah 60:1-2; indeed, almost the very words of that place are quoted. Compare also Revelation 22:16.

Verse 79

To give light … - See the notes at Matthew 4:16.

To guide our feet … - The figure in these verses is taken from travelers, who, being overtaken by night, know not what to do, and who wait patiently for the morning light, that they may know which way to go. So man wandered. So he became benighted. So he sat in the shadow of death. So he knew not which way to go until the Sun of righteousness arose, and then the light shone brightly on his way, and the road was open to the promised land of rest - to heaven.

This song of Zechariah is exceedingly beautiful. It expresses with elegance the great points of the plan of redemption, and the mercy of God in providing that plan. That mercy is "great." It is worthy of praise - of our highest, loftiest songs of thanksgiving; for we were in the shadow of death - sinful, wretched, wandering - and the light arose, the gospel came, and people may rejoice in hope of eternal life.

Verse 80

Waxed strong in spirit - That is, in courage, understanding, and purposes of good, fitting him for his future work. The word "wax" means to "increase, to grow," from an old Saxon word.

In the deserts - In Hebron, and in the hill country where his father resided. He dwelt in obscurity, and was not known publicly by the people.

Until the day of his showing - Until he entered on his public ministry, as recorded in Matthew 3 - that is, probably, until he was about 30 years of age. See Luke 3.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

In those days - About the time of the birth of John and of Christ.

A decree - A law commanding a thing to be done.

Caesar Augustus - This was the Roman emperor. His first name was Octavianus. He was the nephew of Julius Caesar, and obtained the empire after his death. He took the name "Augustus - i. e., august," or honorable - as a compliment to his own greatness; and from him the month "August," which was before called "Sextilis," received its name.

That all the world - There has been much difficulty respecting this passage, from the fact that no such taxing of "all the world" is mentioned by ancient writers. It should have been rendered "the whole land" - that is, the whole land of Palestine. The "whole land" is mentioned to show that it was not "Judea" only, but that it included also "Galilee," the place where Joseph and Mary dwelt. That the passage refers only to the land of Palestine, and not to the whole world, or to all the Roman empire, is clear from the following considerations:

1.The fact that no such taxing is mentioned as pertaining to any other country.

2.The account of Luke demands only that it should be understood of Palestine, or the country where the Saviour was born.

3.The words "world" and "whole world" are not unfrequently used in this limited sense as confined to a single country.

See Matthew 4:8, where Satan is said to have shown to Christ all the kingdoms of "the world," that is, of the land of Judea. See also Joshua 2:3; Luke 4:25 (Greek); Luke 21:26; Acts 11:28.

Should be taxed - Our word "tax" means to levy and raise money for the use of the government. This is not the meaning of the original word here. It means rather to "enroll," or take a "list" of the citizens, with their employments, the amount of their property, etc., equivalent to what was meant by census. Judea was at that time tributary to Rome. It paid taxes to the Roman emperor; and, though Herod was "king," yet he held his appointment under the Roman emperor, and was subject in most matters to him. Farther, as this "enrollment" was merely to ascertain the numbers and property of the Jews, it is probable that they were very willing to be

enrolled in this manner; and hence we hear that they went willingly, without tumult - contrary to the common way when they were "to be taxed."

Verse 2

And this taxing was first made … - This verse has given as much perplexity, perhaps, as any one in the New Testament. The difficulty consists in the fact that "Cyrenius," or "Quirinius," was not governor of Syria until 12 or 15 years after the birth of Jesus. Jesus was born during the reign of Herod. At that time "Varus" was president of Syria. Herod was succeeded by "Archelaus," who reigned eight or nine years; and after he was removed, Judea was annexed to the province of Syria, and Cyrenius was sent as the governor (Josephus, "Ant.," b. xvii. 5). The difficulty has been to reconcile this account with that in Luke. Various attempts have been made to do this. The one that seems most satisfactory is that proposed by Dr. Lardner. According to his view, the passage here means, "This was the "first" census of Cyrenius, governor of Syria." It is called the "first" to distinguish it from one "afterward" taken by Cyrenius, Acts 5:37. It is said to be the census taken by "Cyrenius; governor of Syria; "not that he was "then" governor, but that it was taken by him who was afterward familiarly known as governor. "Cyrenius, governor of Syria," was the name by which the man was known when Luke wrote his gospel, and it was not improper to say that the taxing was made by Cyrenius, the governor of Syria," though he might not have been actually governor for many years afterward. Thus, Herodian says that to Marcus "the emperor" were born several daughters and two sons," though several of those children were born to him "before" he was emperor. Thus, it is not improper to say that General Washington saved Braddock's army, or was engaged in the old French war, though he was not actually made "general" until many years afterward. According to this Augustus sent Cyrenius, an active, enterprising man, to take the census. At that time he was a Roman senator. Afterward, he was made governor of the same country, and received the title which Luke gives him.

Syria - The region of country north of Palestine, and lying between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates. "Syria," called in the Hebrew "Aram," from a son of Shem Genesis 10:22, in its largest acceptation extended from the Mediterranean and the river Cydnus to the Euphrates, and from Mount Taurus on the north to Arabia and the border of Egypt on the south. It was divided into "Syria Palestina," including Canaan and Phoenicia; "Coele-Syria," the tract of country lying between two ridges of Mount Lebanon and

Upper Syria. The last was known as "Syria" in the restricted sense, or as the term was commonly used.

The leading features in the physical aspect of Syria consist of the great mountainous chains of Lebanon, or Libanus and Anti-Libanus, extending from north to south, and the great desert lying on the southeast and east. The valleys are of great fertility, and yield abundance of grain, vines, mulberries, tobacco, olives, excellent fruits, as oranges, figs, pistachios, etc. The climate in the inhabited parts is exceedingly fine. Syria is inhabited by various descriptions of people, but Turks and Greeks form the basis of the population in the cities. The only tribes that can be considered as unique to Syria are the tenants of the heights of Lebanon. The most remarkable of these are the Druses and Maronites. The general language is Arabic; the soldiers and officers of government speak Turkish. Of the old Syriac language no traces now exist.

Verse 4

The city of David - Bethlehem, called the city of David because it was the place of his birth. See the notes at Matthew 2:1.

Because he was of the house - Of the family.

And lineage - The "lineage" denotes that he was descended from David as his father or ancestor. In taking a Jewish census, families were kept distinct; hence, all went to the "place" where their family had resided. Joseph was of the "family" of David, and hence he went up to the city of David. It is not improbable that he might also have had a small paternal estate in Bethlehem that rendered his presence there more desirable.

Verse 7

Her first-born son - Whether Mary had any other children or not has been a matter of controversy. The obvious meaning of the Bible is that she had; and if this be the case, the word "firstborn" is here to be taken in its common signification.

Swaddling clothes - When a child among the Hebrews was born, it was washed in water, rubbed in salt, and then wrapped in swaddling clothes; that is, not garments regularly made, as with us, but bands or blankets that confined the limbs closely, Ezekiel 16:4. There was nothing special in the manner in which the infant Jesus was treated.

Laid him in a manger - The word rendered "inn" in this verse means simply a place of halting, a lodging-place; in modern terms, a khan or

caravanserai (Robinson‘s “Biblical Research in Palestine,” iii. 431). The word rendered “manger” means simply a crib or place where cattle were fed. “Inns,” in our sense of the term, were anciently unknown in the East, and now they are not common. Hospitality was generally practiced, so that a traveler had little difficulty in obtaining shelter and food when necessary. As traveling became more frequent, however, khans or caravanserais were erected for public use - large structures where the traveler might freely repair and find lodging for himself and his beast, he himself providing food and forage. Many such khans were placed at regular intervals in Persia. To such a place it was, though already crowded, that Joseph and Mary resorted at Bethlehem. Instead of finding a place in the “inn,” or the part of the caravanserai where the travelers themselves found a place of repose, they were obliged to be contented in one of the stalls or recesses appropriated to the beasts on which they rode.

The following description of an Eastern inn or caravanserai, by Dr. Kitto, will well illustrate this passage: “It presents an external appearance which suggests to a European traveler the idea of a fortress, being an extensive square pile of strong and lofty walls, mostly of brick upon a basement of stone, with a grand archway entrance. This leads … to a large open area, with a well in the middle, and surrounded on three or four sides with a kind of piazza raised upon a platform 3 or 4 feet high, in the wall behind which are small doors leading to the cells or oblong chambers which form the lodgings. The cell, with the space on the platform in front of it, forms the domain of each individual traveler, where he is completely secluded, as the apparent piazza is not open, but is composed of the front arches of each compartment. There is, however, in the center of one or more of the sides a large arched hall quite open in front … The cells are completely unfurnished, and have generally no light but from the door, and the traveler is generally seen in the recess in front of his apartment except during the heat of the day … Many of these caravanserais have no stables, the cattle of the travelers being accommodated in the open area; but in the more complete establishments … there are … spacious stables, formed of covered avenues extending between the back wall of the lodging apartments and the outer wall of the whole building, the entrance being at one or more of the corners of the inner quadrangle.

The stable is on the same level with the court, and thus below the level of the tenements which stand on the raised platform. Nevertheless, this platform is allowed to project behind into the stable, so as to form a bench … It also often happens that not only this bench exists in the stable, forming a more or less narrow platform along its extent, but also recesses corresponding to these "in front" of the cells toward the open area, and formed, in fact, by the side-walls of these cells being allowed to project behind to the boundary of the platform. These, though small and shallow, form convenient retreats for servants and muleteers in bad weather … Such a recess we conceive that Joseph and Mary occupied, with their ass or mule - if they had one, as they perhaps had tethered - in front … It might be rendered quite private by a cloth being stretched across the lower part."

It may be remarked that the fact that Joseph and Mary were in that place, and under a necessity of taking up their lodgings there, was in itself no proof of poverty; it was a simple matter of necessity there was "no room" at the inn. Yet it is worthy of our consideration that Jesus was born "poor." He did not inherit a princely estate. He was not cradled, as many are, in a palace. He had no rich friends. He had virtuous, pious parents, of more value to a child than many riches. And in this we are shown that it is no dishonor to be poor. Happy is that child who, whether his parents be rich or poor, has a pious father and mother. It is no matter if he has not as much wealth, as fine clothes, or as splendid a house as another. It is enough for him to be as "Jesus" was, and God will bless him.

No room at the inn - Many people assembled to be enrolled, and the tavern was filled before Joseph and Mary arrived.

Verse 8

The same country - Round about Bethlehem.

Shepherds - Men who tended flocks of sheep.

Abiding in the field - Remaining out of doors, under the open sky, with their flocks. This was commonly done. The climate was mild, and, to keep their flocks from straying, they spent the night with them. It is also a fact that the Jews sent out their flocks into the mountainous and desert regions during the summer months, and took them up in the latter part of October or the first of November, when the cold weather commenced. While away in these deserts and mountainous regions, it was proper that there should be someone to attend them to keep them from straying, and from the ravages

of wolves and other wild beasts. It is probable from this that our Saviour was born before the 25th of December, or before what we call "Christmas." At that time it is cold, and especially in the high and mountainous regions about Bethlehem. But the exact time of his birth is unknown; there is no way to ascertain it. By different learned men it has been fixed at each month in the year. Nor is it of consequence to "know" the time; if it were, God would have preserved the record of it. Matters of moment are clearly revealed; those which "he" regards as of no importance are concealed.

Keeping watch … - More literally, "tending their flocks "by turns" through the night watches."

Verse 9

The glory of the Lord - This is the same as a "great" glory - that is, a splendid appearance or "light." The word "glory" is often the same as light, 1 Corinthians 15:41; Luke 9:31; Acts 22:11. The words "Lord" and "God" are often used to denote "greatness" or "intensity." Thus, "trees of God" mean great trees; "hills of God," high or lofty hills, etc. So "the glory of the Lord" here means an exceedingly great or bright luminous appearance perhaps not unlike what Paul saw on the way to Damascus.

Verse 12

This shall be a sign … - The evidence by which you shall know the child is that you will find him wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

Verse 14

Glory to God - Praise be to God, or honor be to God. That is, the praise of redeeming man is due to God. The plan of redemption will bring glory to God, and is designed to express his glory. This it does by evincing his love to people, his mercy, his condescension, and his regard to the honor of his law and the stability of his own government. It is the highest expression of his love and mercy. Nowhere, so far as we can see, could his glory be more strikingly exhibited than in giving his only-begotten Son to die for people.

In the highest - This is capable of several meanings:

1.In the highest "strains," or in the highest possible manner.

2."Among" the highest that is, among the angels of God; indicating that "they" felt a deep interest in this work, and were called on to praise God for the redemption of man.

3.In the highest heavens - indicating that the praise of redemption should not be confined to the "earth," but should spread throughout the universe.

4.The words "God in the highest" may be equivalent to "the Most High God," and be the same as saying, "Let the most high God be praised for his love and mercy to people."

Which of these meanings is the true one it is difficult to determine; but in this they all agree, that high praise is to be given to God for his love in redeeming people. O that not only "angels," but "men," would join universally in this song of praise!

On earth peace - That is, the gospel will bring peace. The Saviour was predicted as the Prince of peace, Isaiah 9:6. The world is at war with God; sinners are at enmity against their Maker and against each other. There is no peace to the wicked. But Jesus came to make peace; and this he did,

1. By reconciling the world to God by His atonement.

2. By bringing the sinner to a state of peace with his Maker; inducing him to lay down the weapons of rebellion and to submit his soul to God, thus giving him the peace which passeth all understanding.

3. By diffusing in the heart universal good-will to people - "disposing," people to lay aside their differences, to love one another, to seek each other's welfare, and to banish envy, malice, pride, lust, passion, and covetousness - in all ages the most fruitful causes of difference among people. And,

4. By diffusing the principles of universal peace among nations. If the gospel of Jesus should universally prevail, there would be an end of war. In the days of the millennium there will be universal peace; all the causes of war will have ceased; people will love each other and do justly; all nations will be brought under the influence of the gospel. O how should each one toil and pray that the great object of the gospel should be universally accomplished, and the world be filled with peace!

Good will toward men - The gift of the Saviour is an expression of good-will or love to people, and therefore God is to be praised. The work of redemption is uniformly represented as the fruit of the love of God, John

3:16; Ephesians 5:2; 1 John 4:10; Revelation 1:5. No words can express the greatness of that love. It can only be measured by the "misery, helplessness," and "danger" of man; by the extent of his sufferings here and in the world of woe if he had not been saved; by the condescension, sufferings, and death of Jesus; and by the eternal honor and happiness to which he will raise his people. All these are beyond our full comprehension. Yet how little does man feel it! and how many turn away from the highest love of God, and treat the expression of that love with contempt! Surely, if God so loved us "first," we ought also to love him, 1 John 4:19.

Verse 15

Unto Bethlehem - The city of David, where the angel had told them they would find the Saviour. These shepherds appear to have been pious people. They were waiting for the coming of the Messiah. On the first intimation that he had actually appeared they went with haste to find him. So all people should without delay seek the Saviour. When told of him by the servants of God, they should, like these shepherds, forsake all, and give no rest to their eyes until they have found him. We may "always" find him. We need not travel to Bethlehem. We have only to cast our eyes to heaven; to look to him and to believe on him, and we shall find him ever near to us, and forever our Saviour and friend.

Verse 17

When they had see it - When they had satisfied themselves of the truth of the coming of the Messiah, and had ascertained that they could not have been mistaken in the appearance of the angels. There was evidence enough to satisfy "them" that what the angels said was true, or they would not have gone to Bethlehem. Having seen the child themselves, they had now evidence that would satisfy others; and accordingly they became the first preachers of the "gospel," and went and proclaimed to others that the Messiah had come. One of the first duties of those who are newly converted to God, and a duty in which they delight, is to proclaim to others what they have seen and felt. It should be done in a proper way and at the proper time; but nothing can or should prevent a Christian recently converted from telling his feelings and views to others - to his friends, to his parents, to his brothers, and to his old companions. And it may be remarked that often more good may be done then than during any other period of their life. Entreaties then make an impression; nor can a sinner well resist the appeals

made to him by one who was just now with him in the way to ruin, but who now treads the way to heaven.

Verse 19

Mary kept all these things - All that happened, and all that was said respecting her child. She "remembered" what the angel had said to "her;" what had happened to Elizabeth and to the shepherds - all the extraordinary circumstances which had attended. the birth of her son. Here is a delicate and beautiful expression of the feelings of a mother. A "mother" forgets none of those things which occur respecting her children. Everything they do or suffer - everything that is said of them, is treasured up in her mind; and often she thinks of those things, and anxiously seeks what they may indicate respecting the future character and welfare of her child.

Pondered - Weighed. This is the original meaning of the word "weighed." She kept them; she revolved them; she "weighed" them in her mind, giving to each circumstance its just importance, and anxiously seeking what it might indicate respecting her child.

In her heart - In her mind. She "thought" of these things often and anxiously.

Verse 20

The shepherds returned - To their flocks.

Glorifying … - Giving honor to God, and celebrating his praises.

Verse 21

Eight days … - This was the regular time for performing the rite of circumcision, Genesis 17:12.

Called Jesus - See the notes at Matthew 1:21.

Verse 22

Days of her purification - Among the Hebrews a mother was required to remain at home for about forty days after the birth of a male child and about eighty for a female, and during that time she was reckoned as impure - that is, she was not permitted to go to the temple or to engage in religious services with the congregation, Leviticus 12:3-4.

To Jerusalem - The place where the temple was, and where the ordinances of religion were celebrated.

To present him to the Lord - Every first-born male child among the Jews was regarded as "holy" to the Lord, Exodus 13:2. By their being ""holy unto the Lord" was meant that unto them belonged the office of "priests." It was theirs to be set apart to the service of God - to offer

sacrifice, and to perform the duties of religion. It is probable that at first the duties of religion devolved on the "father," and that, when he became infirm or died, that duty devolved on the eldest son; and it is still manifestly proper that where the father is infirm or has deceased, the duty of conducting family worship should be performed by the eldest son. Afterward, God chose "the tribe of Levi in the place" of the eldest sons, to serve him in the sanctuary, Numbers 8:13-18. Yet still it was proper to present the child to God, and it was required that it should be done with an offering.

Verse 23

As it is written … - Exodus 13:2.

Verse 24

And to offer a sacrifice … - Those who were able on such an occasion were required to offer a lamb for a burnt-offering, and a pigeon or a turtle-dove for a sin-offering. If not able to bring a "lamb," then they were permitted to bring two turtle-doves or two young pigeons, Leviticus 12:6, Leviticus 12:8.

Turtle-doves - Doves distinguished for having a plaintive and tender voice. By Mary's making this offering she showed her poverty; and our Saviour, by coming in a state of poverty, has shown that it is not dishonorable to be poor. No station is dishonorable where "God" places us. He knows what is best for us, and he often makes a state of poverty an occasion of the highest blessings. If "with" poverty he grants us, as is often the case, peace, contentment, and religion, it is worth far more than all the jewels of Golconda or the gold of Mexico. If it be asked why, since the Saviour was pure from any moral defilement in his conception and birth, it was necessary to offer such a sacrifice: why was it necessary that he should be circumcised, since he had no sin, it may be answered:

1.That it was proper to fulfil all righteousness, and to show obedience to the law, Matthew 3:15.

2.It was necessary for the future usefulness of Christ. Unless he had been circumcised, he could not have been admitted to any synagogue or to the temple. He would have had no access to the people, and could not have been regarded as the Messiah.

Both he and Mary, therefore, yielded obedience to the laws of the land, and thus set us an example that we should walk in their steps. Compare the notes at Matthew 3:15.

Verse 25

Whose name was Simeon - Some have supposed that this Simeon was a son of the famous "Hillel," a distinguished teacher in Jerusalem, and president of the Sanhedrin; but nothing is certainly known of him but what is here related. He was an aged man, of distinguished piety and reputation, and was anxiously expecting the coming of the Messiah. Such an "old age" is especially honorable. No spectacle is more sublime than an old man of piety and high character looking for the appearing of the Lord, and patiently waiting for the time to come when he may be blessed with the sight of his Redeemer.

Just - Righteous before God and man; approved by God as a righteous man, and discharging faithfully his duty to man.

Devout - This word means "a religious man," or a "pious" man. The original expresses the idea of "good reputation, well received," or of high standing among the people.

Waiting for the consolation of Israel - That is, waiting for the "Messiah," who is called "the consolation of Israel" because he would give comfort to them by his appearing. This term was often applied to the Messiah before he actually appeared. It was common to swear, also, by "the consolation of Israel" - that is, by the Messiah about to come. See Lightfoot on this place.

The Holy Ghost … - He was a holy man, and was "divinely inspired" respecting the Messiah about to appear.

Verse 26

And it was revealed unto him - In what way this was done we are not informed. Sometimes a revelation was made by a dream, at others by a voice, and at others by silent suggestion. All we know of this is that it was by the Holy Spirit.

Not see death - Should not die. To "see" death and to "taste" of death, was a common way among the Hebrews of expressing death itself. Compare Psalm 89:48.

The Lord's Christ - Rather "the Lord's Anointed." The word "Christ" means "anointed," and it would have been better to use that word here. To an aged man who had been long waiting for the Messiah, how grateful must have been this revelation - this solemn assurance that the Messiah was near! But this revelation is now given to every man, that he need not taste of death until, by the eye of faith, he may see the Christ of God. He is offered freely. He has come. He waits to manifest himself to the world, and he is

not willing that any should die forever. To us also it will be as great a privilege in our dying hours to have seen Christ by faith as it was to Simeon. It will be the only thing that can support us then - the only thing that will enable us to depart in peace.

Verse 27

By the Spirit - By the direction of the Spirit.

Into the temple - Into that part of the temple where the public worship was chiefly performed - into the court of the women. See the notes at Matthew 21:12.

The custom of the law - That is, to make an offering for purification, and to present him to God.

Verse 28

Blessed God - Thanked or praised God.

Verse 29

Now lettest - Now thou "dost" let or permit. This word is in the indicative mood, and signifies that God was permitting him to die in peace, by having relieved his anxieties, allayed his fears, fulfilled the promises, and having by the appearing of the Messiah, removed every reason why he should live any longer, and every wish to live.

Depart - Die.

According to thy word - Thy promise made by revelation. God never disappoints. To many it might have appeared improbable, when such a promise was made to an old man, that it should be fulfilled. But God fulfils all his word, keeps all his promises, and never disappoints those who trust in him.

Verse 30

Thy salvation - Him who is to procure salvation for his people; or, the Saviour.

Verse 31

Before the face of all people - Whom thou hast provided for all people, or whom thou dost design to "reveal" to all people.

Verse 32

A light to lighten the Gentiles - This is in accordance with the prophecies in the Old Testament, Isaiah 9:6-7; Psalm 98:3; Malachi 4:2. The Gentiles are represented as sitting in darkness that is, in ignorance and sin. Christ is a "light" to them, as by him they will be made acquainted with the character of the true God, his law, and the plan of redemption. As the

darkness rolls away when the sun arises, so ignorance and error flee away when Jesus gives light to the mind. Nations shall come to his light, and kings to the brightness of his rising, Isaiah 60:3.

And the glory … - The first offer of salvation was made to the Jews, John 4:22; Luke 24:47. Jesus was born among the Jews; to them had been given the prophecies respecting him, and his first ministry was among them. Hence, he was their glory, their honor, their light. But it is a subject of special gratitude to us that the Saviour was given also for the Gentiles; for:

1.We are Gentiles, and if he had not come we should have been shut out from the blessings of redemption.

2.It is he only that now.

"Can make our dying bed.
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on his breast we lean our head,
And breathe our life out sweetly there."

Thus our departure may be like that of Simeon. Thus we may die in peace. Thus it will be a blessing to die. But,

3.In order to do this, our life must be like that of Simeon. We must wait for the consolation of Israel. We must look for his coming. We must be holy, harmless, undefiled, "loving" the Saviour. Then death to us, like death to Simeon, will have no terror; we shall depart in peace, and in heaven see the salvation of God, 2 Peter 3:11-12. But,

4.Children, as well as the hoary-headed Simeon, may look for the coming of Christ. They too must die; and "their" death will be happy only as they depend on the Lord Jesus, and are prepared to meet him.

Verse 34

Simeon blessed them - Joseph and Mary. On them he sought the blessing of God.

Is set - Is appointed or constituted for that, or such will be the effect of his coming.

The fall - The word "fall" here denotes "misery, suffering, disappointment," or "ruin." There is a plain reference to the passage where it is said that he should be "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence," Isaiah 8:14-15. Many expected a temporal prince, and in this they were disappointed. They loved darkness rather than light, and rejected him, and fell unto destruction. Many that were proud were brought low by his

preaching. They fell from the vain and giddy height of their own self-righteousness, and were humbled before God, and then, through him, rose again to a better righteousness and to better hopes. The nation also rejected him and put him to death, and, as a judgment, "fell" into the hands of the Romans. Thousands were led into captivity, and thousands perished. The nation rushed into ruin, the temple was destroyed, and the people were scattered into all the nations. See Romans 9:32-33; 1 Peter 2:8; 1 Corinthians 1:23-24.

And rising again - The word "again" is not expressed in the Greek. It seems to be supposed, in our translation, that the "same persons would fall and rise again; but this is not the meaning of the passage. It denotes that many would be ruined by his coming, and that many "others" would be made happy or be saved. Many of the poor and humble, that were willing to receive him, would obtain pardon of sin and peace - would "rise" from their sins and sorrows here, and finally ascend to eternal life.

And for a sign … - The word "sign" here denotes a conspicuous or distinguished object, and the Lord Jesus was such an object of contempt and rejection by all the people. He was despised, and his religion has been the common "mark" or "sign" for all the wicked, the profligate, and the profane, to curse, and ridicule, and oppose. Compare Isaiah 8:18, and Acts 28:22. Never was a prophecy more exactly fulfilled than this. Thousands have rejected the gospel and fallen into ruin; thousands are still falling of those who are ashamed of Jesus; thousands blaspheme him, deny him, speak all manner of evil against him, and would crucify him again if he were in their hands; but thousands also "by" him are renewed, justified, and raised up to life and peace.

Verse 35

Yea, a sword … - The sufferings and death of thy Son shall deeply afflict thy soul. And if Mary had not been thus forewarned and sustained by strong faith, she could not have borne the trials which came upon her Son; but God prepared her for it, and the holy mother of the dying Saviour was sustained.

That the thoughts … - This is connected with the preceding verse: "He shall be a sign, a conspicuous object to be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be made manifest - that is, that they "might show" how much they hated holiness. Nothing so "brings out" the feelings of sinners as to tell them of Jesus Christ. Many treat him with silent contempt; many are

ready to gnash their teeth; many curse him; all show how much by nature the heart is opposed to religion, and thus are really, in spite of themselves, fulfilling the scriptures and the prophecies. So true it that "none can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost," 1 Corinthians 12:3.

Verse 36

Of the tribe of Aser - The tribe of Aser, or Asher, dwelt in the northern part of the land of Canaan. Why Anna was called a prophetess is not known. It might be because she had been the wife of a prophet, or because she was employed in celebrating the praises of God (compare 1 Chronicles 25:1-2, 1 Chronicles 25:4; 1 Samuel 10:5), or because she herself had foretold future events, being inspired.

Verse 37

And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years - That is, she was about 84 years of age. It does not mean that she had been a widow for that long time.

Fastings and prayers - Constant religious service. pending her time in prayer, and in all the ordinances of religion.

Night and day - Continually - that is, at the usual times of public worship and in private. When it is said that she departed not from the temple, it is meant that she was "constant" and "regular" in all the public services at the temple, or was never absent from those services. God blesses those who wait at his temple gates.

Verse 39

They returned into Galilee - Not immediately, but after a time. Luke has omitted the flight into Egypt recorded by Matthew; but he has not denied it, nor are his words to be pressed as if he meant to affirm that they went immediately to Nazareth. A parallel case we have in the life of Paul. When he was converted it is said that he came to Jerusalem, as if he had gone there immediately after his conversion Acts 9:26; yet we learn in another place that this was after an interval of three years, Galatians 1:17-18. In the case before us there is no improbability in supposing that they returned to Bethlehem, then went to Egypt, and then to Galilee.

Verse 40

Strong in spirit - In mind, intellect, understanding. Jesus had a human soul, and that soul was subject to all the proper laws of a human spirit. It therefore increased in knowledge, strength, and character. Nor is it any

more inconsistent with his being God to say that his soul expanded, than to say that his body grew.

Filled with wisdom - Eminent for wisdom when a child - that is, exhibiting an extraordinary understanding, and "wise" to flee from everything sinful and evil.

And the grace of God … - The word "grace" in the New Testament commonly means unmerited favor shown "to sinners." Here it means no more than favor. God showed him favor, or was pleased with him and blessed him.

It is remarkable that this is all that is recorded of the infancy of Jesus; and this, with the short account that follows of his going to Jerusalem, is all that we know of him for thirty years of his life. The design of the evangelists was to give an account of his "public ministry," and not his private life. Hence, they say little of him in regard to his first years. What they do say, however, corresponds entirely with what we might expect. He was wise, pure, pleasing God, and deeply skilled in the knowledge of the divine law. He set a lovely example for all children; was subject to his parents, and increased in favor with God and man.

Verse 42

Twelve years old - All males among the Hebrews were required to appear three times a year before God, to attend on the ordinances of religion in the temple, and it is probable that this was the age at which they first went up to Jerusalem, Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16:16.

To Jerusalem - Where the feasts of the Jews were all held. This was a journey from Nazareth of about 70 miles.

After the custom of the feast - According to the usual manner of the feast.

Verse 43

Had fulfilled the days - The days of the Passover. These were eight days in all - one day for killing the paschal lamb, and seven days for the observance of the feast of unleavened bread, Exodus 12:15; Leviticus 23:5-6.

Verse 44

Supposing him to have been in the company - It may seem very remarkable that parents should not have been more attentive to their only son, and that they should not have been assured of his presence with them

when they left Jerusalem; but the difficulty may be explained by the following considerations:

1.In going to these great feasts, families and neighbors would join together, and form a large collection.

2.It is not improbable that Jesus was "with" them when they were about to start from Jerusalem and were making preparations. Seeing him then, they might have been certain as to his presence.

3.A part of the company might have left before the others, and Joseph and Mary may have supposed that he was with them, until they overtook them at night and ascertained their mistake.

Kinsfolk - Relatives.

Acquaintances - Neighbors who had gone up with them in the same company to Jerusalem.

Verse 46

After three days - This means, probably, "on the third day" after they had left Jerusalem - that is, the first day they went toward Galilee, on the second they returned to Jerusalem, and on the third they found him. Compare Matthew 27:63; Mark 8:31.

In the temple - In the "court" of the temple, for Jesus, not being a Levitical priest, could not enter into the temple itself. See Matthew 21:12.

In the midst of the doctors - The "teachers," the "rabbis," who were the instructors of the people in matters of religion.

Asking them questions - Proposing questions to them respecting the law and the prophets. There is no reason to suppose that this was for the purpose of perplexing or confounding them. The questions were doubtless proposed in a respectful manner, and the answers listened to with proper deference to their age and rank. Jesus was a child, and religion does not teach a child to be rude or uncivil, even though he may really know much more than more aged persons. Religion teaches all, and especially the young, to treat others with respect, to show them the honor that is due, to venerate age, and to speak kindly to all, 1 Peter 2:17; 1 Peter 3:8, 1 Peter 3:9; Exodus 20:12; Matthew 23:3; Romans 13:7.

Verse 48

Why hast thou thus dealt with us? - Why hast thou given us all this trouble and anxiety, in going so far and returning with so much solicitude?

Thy father - Joseph was not the "real" father of Jesus, but he was "legally" so; and as the secret of his birth was not commonly known, he was called his father. Mary, in accordance with that usage, also called him so.

Sorrowing - Anxious, lest in the multitude he might not be found, or lest some accident might have happened to him.

Verse 49

How is it … - "Why" have ye sought me with so much anxiety? "Mary" should have known that the Son of God was safe; that his heavenly Father would take care of him, and that he could do nothing amiss.

Wist ye not - "Know ye not." You had reason to know. You knew my design in coming into the world, and that design was "superior" to the duty of obeying earthly parents, and they should be willing always to give me up to the proper business for which I live.

My Father's business - Some think that this should be translated "in my Father's house" - that is, in the temple. Jesus reminded them here that he came down from heaven; that he had a higher Father than an earthly parent; and that, even in early life, it was proper that he should be engaged in the work for which he came. He did not enter, indeed, upon his public work for eighteen years after this; yet still the work of God was "his" work, and always, even in childhood, it was proper for him to be engaged in the great business for which he came down from heaven.

Verse 50

They understood not … - It is remarkable that they did not understand Jesus in this, but it shows how slow persons are to believe. Even his parents, after all that had taken place, did not seem to comprehend that "he" was to be the Saviour of people, or if they did, they understood it in a very imperfect manner.

Verse 51

Went down with them - Down from Jerusalem, which was in a high, mountainous region.

Was subject unto them - Performed the duty of a faithful and obedient child, and not improbably was engaged in the trade of Joseph - that of a carpenter. Every Jew was required to learn some trade, and there is every reason to think that our Saviour followed that of his reputed father. And from this we learn:

1. That obedience to parents is a duty. Jesus has set an example in this that all children should follow. Though he was the Son of God, and on proper occasions was engaged in the great work of redemption, yet he was also the "son of Mary," and he loved and obeyed his mother, and was "subject" to her.

2. It is no dishonor to be a mechanic, or to be brought up in an obscure employment. Jesus has conferred honor on virtuous industry, and no man should be ashamed of industrious parents, though poor, or of a condition of life that is far from ease and affluence. Industry is honorable, and virtuous poverty should not be regarded as a matter of reproach. The only thing to be ashamed of, in regard to this matter, is when people are idle, or when children are too proud to hear or speak of the occupation of their parents, or to follow the same occupation.

Verse 52

In favour with God - That is, in proportion to his advance in wisdom. This does not imply that he ever lacked the favor of God, but that God regarded him with favor in proportion as he showed an understanding and spirit like his own. Happy are those children who imitate the example of Jesus - who are obedient to parents who increase in wisdom - who are sober, temperate, and industrious, and who thus increase in favor with God and people.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

Now in the fifteenth year - This was the "thirteenth" year of his being sole emperor. He was "two" years joint emperor with Augustus, and Luke reckons from the time when he was admitted to share the empire with Augustus Caesar. See Lardner's "Credibility," vol. i.

Tiberius Caesar - Tiberius succeeded Augustus in the empire, and began his "sole" reign Aug. 19th, 14 a.d. He was a most infamous character - a scourge to the Roman people. He reigned 23 years, and was succeeded by "Caius Caligula," whom he appointed his successor on account of his notorious wickedness, and that he might be, as he expressed it, a "serpent" to the Romans.

Pontius Pilate - Herod the Great left his kingdom to three sons. See the notes at Matthew 2:22. To "Archelaus" he left "Judea." Archelaus reigned "nine" years, when, on account of his crimes, he was banished into Vienne, and Judea was made a Roman province, and placed entirely under Roman governors or "procurators," and became completely tributary to Rome. "Pontius Pilate" was the "fifth" governor that had been sent, and of course had been in Judea but a short time. (See the chronological table.)

Herod being tetrarch of Galilee - This was "Herod Antipas" son of Herod the Great, to whom Galilee had been left as his part of his father's kingdom. The word "tetrarch" properly denotes one who presides over a "fourth part" of a country or province; but it also came to be a general title, denoting one who reigned over any part - a third, a half, etc. In this case Herod had a "third" of the dominions of his father, but he was called tetrarch. It, was this Herod who imprisoned John the Baptist, and to whom our Saviour, when arraigned, was sent by Pilate.

And his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea - "Iturea" was so called from "Jetur," one of the sons of Ishmael, Genesis 25:15; 1 Chronicles 1:31. It was situated on the east side of the Jordan, and was taken from the descendants of Jetur by the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, 1 Chronicles 5:19.

Region of Trachonitis - This region was also on the east of the Jordan, and extended northward to the district of Damascus and eastward to the deserts of Arabia. It was bounded on the west by Gaulonitis and south by

the city of Bostra. Philip had obtained this region from the Romans on condition that he would extirpate the robbers.

Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene - Abilene was so called from "Abila," its chief city. It was situated in Syria, northwest of Damascus and southeast of Mount Lebanon, and was adjacent to Galilee.

Verse 2

Annas and Caiaphas being highpriests - There was, properly speaking, but one high priest of the Jews; yet the name of high priest continued to be given to those who had been in that office, and especially when they still possessed some civil office after they had left the high priesthood. In this case it appears that "Caiapas" was high priest, and Annas "had been," but had been dismissed from the office. It is highly probable that he still held an office under the Romans, and was perhaps president of the Sanhedrin. He is mentioned before Caiaphas because he was the father-in-law to Caiaphas, and probably was the eldest, and had been longest in office. Instances similar to this may be found in Josephus.

There is one remark to be made here about the manner in which the gospels are written. They have every mark of openness and honesty. An impostor does not mention names, and times, and places particularly. If he did, it would be easy to ascertain that he was an impostor. But the sacred writers describe objects and people as if they were perfectly familiar with them. They never appear to be "guarding" themselves. They speak of things most minutely. If, therefore, they had been impostors, it would have been easy to detect them. If, for example, John did not begin to preach in the 15th year of Tiberius - if Philip was "not" tetrarch of Iturea - if Pontius Pilate was not governor of Judea, how easy would it have been to detect them in falsehood! Yet it was never done. Nay, we have evidence of that age, in Josephus, that these descriptions are strictly true; and, consequently, the gospels must have been written by people who were personally acquainted with what they wrote, who were not impostors, and who were "honest" people. If they were "honest," then the Christian religion is true.

Verses 3-9

On the baptism of John - see the notes at Matthew 3.

Verse 10

What shall we do, then? - John had told them to bring forth fruits appropriate to repentance, or to lead a life which showed that their

repentance was genuine. They very properly, therefore, asked how it should be done, or what "would be" such a life.

Verse 11

He that hath two coats … - Or, in other words, aid the poor according to your ability; be benevolent, and you will thus show that your repentance is genuine. It is remarkable that one of the "first" demands of religion is to do good, and it is in this way that it may be shown that the repentance is not feigned. For.

1.The "nature" of religion is to do good.

2.This requires self-denial, and none will deny themselves who are not attached to God. And,

3.This is to imitate Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor.

Coats - See the notes at Matthew 5:40.

Meat - Provision of any kind.

Verse 12

The publicans - See the notes at Matthew 5:47. There is reason to think that the "publicans" or "tax-gatherers" were especially oppressive and hard in their dealings with the people; and that, as they had every opportunity of exacting more than they ought, so they often did it, and thus enriched themselves. The evidence of repentance in them would be to break off their sins in this respect, and to deal justly.

Verse 13

Exact - Demand, or take, no more.

Than that which is appointed - That is, by the government. John does not condemn the office, or say that the employment should be forsaken. Though it was hated by the people - though often abused and therefore unpopular - yet "the office itself" was not dishonorable. If there is a government, it must be supported; and of course there must be people whose duty it is to collect taxes, as the means of the proper support of the government; and as such a support of the government is necessary, so the people should pay cheerfully the just apportionment of their rulers, and regard favorably those who are authorized to collect it. See Romans 13:1-6.

Verse 14

The soldiers likewise - It seems that "they," also came to his baptism. Whether these were Jews or Romans cannot be ascertained. It is not

improbable that, as Judea was a Roman province, they were Jews or Jewish proselytes in the service of Herod Antipas or Philip, and so were really in the Roman service.

Do violence … - Do not take the property of any by unlawful force, or do not use unjust force against the person or property of any individual. it is probable that many of them were oppressive, or prone to violence, rapine, or theft, and burdensome even in times of peace to the inhabitants.

Neither accuse any falsely - It is probable that when they wished the property of others and could not obtain it by violence, or when there was no pretext for violence, they often attempted the same thing in another way, and falsely accused the persons of crime. The word rendered "falsely accused" is the one from which our word "sycophant" is derived. The proper meaning of the word "sycophant" was this: There was a law in Athens which prohibited the importation of "figs." The "sycophant" (literally "the man who made figs to appear," or who showed them) was one who made complaint to the magistrate of persons who had imported figs contrary to law, or who was an "informer;" and then the word came to be used in a general sense to denote "any" complainer - a calumniator - an accuser - an informer. As such persons were usually cringing and fawning, and looked for a reward, the word came to be used also to denote a fawner or flatterer. It is always used in a bad sense. It is correctly rendered here, "do not accuse any falsely."

Be content … - Do not murmur or complain, or take unlawful means to increase your wages.

Wages - This word means not only the "money" which was paid them, but also their "rations" or daily allowance of food. By this they were to show that their repentance was genuine; that it had a practical influence; that it produced a real reformation of life; and it is clear that "no other" repentance would be genuine. Every profession of repentance which is not attended with a change of life is mere hypocrisy. It may farther be remarked that John did not condemn their profession, or say that it was unlawful to be a soldier, or that they must abandon the business in order to be true penitents. It was possible to be a good man and yet a soldier. What was required was that in their profession they should show that they were really upright, and did not commit the crimes which were often practiced in that calling. It is lawful to defend oneself, one‘s family, or one‘s country, and hence, it is lawful to be a soldier. Man everywhere, in all professions,

should be a Christian, and then he will do honor to his profession, and his profession, if it is not a direct violation of the law of God, will be honorable.

Verse 15

In expectation - Expecting the Messiah. Margin, "suspense." That is, they were not certain whether John was not himself the Messiah. They confidently "expected" his appearing, and there minds were in "suspense," or they were in a state of doubt whether he had not already come, and whether John was not the Messiah.

Mused in their hearts of John - Thought of his character, his preaching, and his success, and anxiously inquired whether he did not do the things which were expected of the Messiah.

Verses 16-18

See the notes at Matthew 3:11-12.

Verse 19-20

See the notes at Matthew 14:1-13. "Added this above all." To all his former crimes he added this; not implying that this was the "worst" of his acts, but that this was "one" of his deeds, of like character as the others. The event here mentioned did not take place until some time after this, but it is mentioned here to show what was the end of John's preaching, or to "fill out" the account concerning him.

Verse 21-22

See the notes at Matthew 3:13-17. "Jesus being baptized;" or, Jesus "having been" baptized. This took place after the baptism, and not "during" its administration, Matthew 3:16.

Praying - This circumstance is omitted by the other evangelists; and it shows,

1.That Jesus was in the habit of prayer.

2.That it is proper to offer up special prayer at the administration of the ordinances of religion.

3.That it is possible to pray in the midst of a great multitude, yet in secret. The prayer consisted, doubtless, in lifting up the heart silently to God. So "we" may do it anywhere - about our daily toil - in the midst of multitudes, and thus may pray "always."

Luke 3:22

In a bodily shape - This was a real visible appearance, and was doubtless seen by the people. The dove is an emblem of purity and harmlessness, and the form of the dove was assumed on this occasion to signify, probably, that the spirit with which Jesus would be endowed would be one of purity and innocence. The "Holy Spirit," when he assumes a visible form, assumes that which will be emblematic of the thing to be represented. Thus he assumed the form of "tongues," to signify the miraculous powers of language with which the apostles would be endowed; the appearance of fire, to denote their power, etc., Acts 2:3.

Verse 23

Jesus began to be … - This was the age at which the priests entered on their office, Numbers 4:3, Numbers 4:47; but it is not evident that Jesus had any reference to that in delaying his work to his thirtieth year. He was not subjected to the Levitical law in regard to the priesthood, and it does not appear that prophets and teachers did not commence their work before that age.

As was supposed - As was commonly thought, or perhaps being legally reckoned as his son.

Verses 24-38

See, on this genealogy, the notes at Matthew 1:1-16.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verses 1-14

On the temptation of Jesus, see the notes at Matthew 4:1-11.

Luke 4:2

Being forty days tempted - That is, through forty days he was "tried" in various ways by the devil. The temptations, however, which are recorded by Matthew and Luke did not take place until the forty days were finished. See Matthew 4:2-3.

He did eat nothing - He was sustained by the power of God during this season of extraordinary fasting.

Luke 4:13

Departed for a season - For a time. From this it appears that our Saviour was "afterward" subjected to temptations by Satan, but no "particular" temptations are recorded after this. From John 14:30, it seems that the devil tried or tempted him in the agony in Gethsemane. Compare the notes at Hebrews 12:4. It is more than probable, also, that Satan did much to excite the Pharisees and Sadducees to endeavor to "entangle him," and the priests and rulers to oppose him; yet out of all his temptations God delivered him; and so he will make a way to escape for "all" that are tempted, and will not suffer them to be tempted above that which they are able to bear, 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Luke 4:14

In the power of the Spirit - By the "influence" or direction of the Spirit.

A fame - A report. See Matthew 4:24.

Verse 15

Glorified of all - Praised by all; or, all were pleased with his instructions, and admired his wisdom.

Verse 16

And, as his custom was, he went … - From this it appears that the Saviour regularly attended the service of the synagogue. In that service the Scriptures of the Old Testament were read, prayers were offered, and the Word of God was explained. See the notes at Matthew 4:23. There was great corruption in doctrine and practice at that time, but Christ did not on that account keep away from the place of public worship. From this we may learn:

1.That it is our duty "regularly" to attend public worship.

2.That it is better to attend a place of worship which is not entirely pure, or where just such doctrines are not delivered as we would wish, than not attend at all.

It is of vast importance that the public worship of God should be maintained; and it is "our" duty to assist in maintaining it, to show by our example that we love it, and to win others also to love it. See Hebrews 10:25. At the same time, this remark should not be construed as enjoining it as our duty to attend where the "true" God is not worshipped, or where he is worshipped by pagan rites and pagan prayers. If, therefore, the Unitarian does not worship the true God, and if the Roman Catholic worships God in a manner forbidden and offers homage to the creatures of God, thus being guilty of idolatry, it cannot be a duty to attend on such a place of worship.

The synagogue - See Matthew 4:23.

Stood up for to read - The books of Moses were so divided that they could be read through in the synagogues once in a year. To these were added portions out of the prophets, so that no small part of them was read also once a year. It is not known whether our Saviour read the lesson which was the regular one for that day, though it might seem "probable" that he would not depart from the usual custom. Yet, as the eyes of all were fixed on him; as he deliberately looked out a place; and as the people were evidently surprised at what he did, it seems to be intimated that he selected a lesson which was "not" the regular one for that day. The same ceremonies in regard to conducting public worship which are here described are observed at Jerusalem by the Jews at the present time. Professor Hackett ("*Illustrations of Scripture*," p. 232) says: "I attended the Jewish worship at Jerusalem, and was struck with the accordance of the ceremonies with those mentioned in the New Testament. The sacred roll was brought from the chest or closet where it was kept; it was handed by an attendant to the reader; a portion of it was rehearsed; the congregation rose and stood while it was read, whereas the speaker, as well as the others present, sat during the delivery of the address which formed a part of the service."

Verse 17

There was delivered unto him - By the minister of the synagogue, or the keeper of the sacred books. They were kept in an "ark" or chest, not far from the pulpit, and the minister gave them to whomsoever he chose, to read them publicly.

The book - The volume contained the prophecy of Isaiah. It would seem, from this, that the books were kept separate, and not united into one as with us.

When he had opened the book - Literally, when he had "unrolled" the book. Books, among the ancients, were written on parchments or vellum that is, skins of beasts, and were "rolled" together on two rollers, beginning at each end, so that while reading they rolled off from one to the other. Different forms of books were indeed used, but this was the most common. When used the reader unrolled the manuscript as far as the place which he wished to find, and kept before him just so much as he would read. When the roller was done with, it was carefully deposited in a case.

The place where it was written - Isaiah 61:1-2.

Verse 18

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me - Or, I speak by divine appointment. I am divinely inspired to speak. There can be no doubt that the passage in Isaiah had a principal reference to the Messiah. Our Saviour directly applies it to himself, and it is not easily applicable to any other prophet. Its first application might have been to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon; but the language of prophecy is often applicable to two similar events, and the secondary event is often the most important. In this case the prophet uses most striking poetic images to depict the return from Babylon, but the same images also describe the appropriate work of the Son of God.

Hath anointed me - Anciently kings and prophets and the high priest were set apart to their work by anointing with oil, 1 Kings 19:15-16; Exodus 29:7; 1 Samuel 9:16, etc. This oil or ointment was made of various substances, and it was forbidden to imitate it, Exodus 30:34-38. Hence, those who were set apart to the work of God as king, prophet, or priest, were called the Lord's anointed, 1 Samuel 16:6; Psalm 84:9; Isaiah 45:1. Hence, the Son of God is called the "Messiah," a Hebrew word signifying the "Anointed," or the "Christ," a Greek word signifying the same thing. And by his being "anointed" is not meant that he was literally anointed, for he was never set apart in that manner, but that "God had set him apart" for this work; that "he" had constituted or appointed him to be the prophet, priest, and king of his people. See the notes at Matthew 1:1.

To preach the gospel to the poor - The English word "gospel" is derived from two words - "God" or "good," and "spell," an old Saxon word meaning "history, relation, narration, word, or speech," and the word

therefore means “a good communication” or “message.” This corresponds exactly with the meaning of the Greek word - “a good or joyful message - glad tidings.” By the “poor” are meant all those who are destitute of the comforts of this life, and who therefore may be more readily disposed to seek treasures in heaven; all those who are sensible of their sins, or are poor in spirit Matthew 5:3; and all the “miserable” and the afflicted, Isaiah 58:7. Our Saviour gave it as one proof that he was the Messiah, or was from God, that he preached to “the poor,” Matthew 11:5. The Pharisees and Sadducees despised the poor; ancient philosophers neglected them; but the gospel seeks to bless them - to give comfort where it is felt to be needed, and where it will be received with gratitude. Riches fill the mind with pride, with self-complacency, and with a feeling that the gospel is not needed. The poor “feel” their need of some sources of comfort that the world cannot give, and accordingly our Saviour met with his greatest success the gospel among the poor; and there also, “since,” the gospel has shed its richest blessings and its purest joys. It is also one proof that the gospel is true. If it had been of “men,” it would have sought the rich and mighty; but it pours contempt on all human greatness, and seeks, like God, to do good to those whom the world overlooks or despises. See the notes at 1 Corinthians 1:26.

To heal the brokenhearted - To console those who are deeply afflicted, or whose hearts are “broken” by external calamities or by a sense of their sinfulness.

Deliverance to the captives - This is a figure originally applicable to those who were in captivity in Babylon. They were miserable. To grant deliverance to “them” and restore them to their country - to grant deliverance to those who are in prison and restore them to their families - to give liberty to the slave and restore him to freedom, was to confer the highest benefit and impart the richest favor. In this manner the gospel imparts favor. It does not, indeed, “literally” open the doors of prisons, but it releases the mind captive under sin; it gives comfort to the prisoner, and it will finally open all prison doors and break off all the chains of slavery, and, by preventing “crime,” prevent also the sufferings that are the consequence of crime.

Sight to the blind - This was often literally fulfilled, Matthew 11:5; John 9:11; Matthew 9:30, etc.

To set at liberty them that are bruised - The word “bruised,” here, evidently has the same “general” signification as “brokenhearted” or the

contrite. It means those who are "pressed down" by great calamity, or whose hearts are "pressed" or "bruised" by the consciousness of sin. To set them "at liberty" is the same as to free them from this pressure, or to give them consolation.

Verse 19

To peach the acceptable year of the Lord - The time when God is willing to accept of people, or to receive sinners coming to him. The gospel assures us that the guilty "may" return, and that God will graciously receive them. There is, perhaps, here, an allusion to the year of jubilee - the fiftieth year, when the trumpet was blown, and through the whole land proclamation was made of the liberty of Hebrew slaves, of the remission of debts, and of the restoration of possessions to their original families, Leviticus 25:8-13. The phrase "the acceptable year" means the time when it would be acceptable to God to proclaim such a message, or agreeable to him - to wit, under the gospel.

Verse 20

And he closed the book - That is, he rolled it up again. See the notes at Luke 4:17.

And he gave it again to the minister - That is, to the one in the synagogue who had charge of the books. The word means "servant," and the office was not much unlike that of a sexton now. It was his duty, among other things, to take charge of the books, to hand them to the reader of the law, and then return them to their place.

And sat down - This was usual in speaking in their synagogues. See the notes at Matthew 5:1.

Were fastened on him - Were intently fixed on him, waiting to see what explanation he would give of the words.

Verse 21

This scripture - This writing, or this part of the Scriptures.

Fulfilled - It is coming to pass; the thing originally intended by it is about to be accomplished.

In your ears - In your "hearing;" or you hear, in my preaching, the fulfillment of this prophecy. It is probable that he said much "more" than is here recorded, but Luke has preserved only the "substance" of his discourse. This was the "amount" or "sum"" of his sermon, or his explanation of the passage, that it was now receiving its accomplishment.

Verse 22

All bare him witness - All were witnesses of the power and truth of what he said. Their reason and conscience approved of it, and they were constrained to admit the force and propriety of it, and on this account they wondered.

They wondered - They were struck with the truth and force of his words; and especially when they remembered that he was a native of their own place, and that they had been long acquainted with him, and that he should "now" claim to be the Messiah, and give so much evidence that he "was" the Christ.

The gracious words - The words of grace or favor; the kind, affectionate, and tender exposition of the words, and explanation of the design of his coming, and the nature of the plan of redemption. It was so different from the harsh and unfeeling mode of the Pharisees; so different from all their expectations respecting the Messiah, who they supposed to be a prince and a bloody conqueror, that they were filled with astonishment and awe.

Verse 23

Physician, heal thyself - This proverb was probably in common use at that time. The meaning is this: Suppose that a man should attempt to heal another when he was himself diseased in the same manner; it would be natural to ask him first to cure himself, and thus to render it manifest that he was worthy of confidence. The connection of this proverb, here, is this: "You profess to be the Messiah. You have performed miracles at Capernaum. You profess to be able to deliver us from our maladies, our sins, our afflictions. Show that you have the power, that you are worthy of our confidence, by working miracles here, as you profess to have done at Capernaum." It does not refer, therefore, to any purification of his own, or imply any reflection on him for setting up to teach them. It was only a demand that he would show the proper evidence "by miracles" why they should trust in him, and he proceeds to show them why he would not give them this evidence.

Whatsoever we have heard done - Whatsoever we have heard that thou hast done. It would seem, from this, that Christ had before this performed miracles in Capernaum, though the evangelist has not recorded them.

In Capernaum - Capernaum was on the northwest corner of the Sea of Tiberias, and was not far from Nazareth. It is not improbable that some of

those who then heard him might have been present and witnessed some of his miracles at Capernaum. See the notes at Matthew 4:13.

Verse 24

No prophet is accepted - Has honor, or is acknowledged as a prophet. See the notes at Matthew 13:57.

Verse 25

Of a truth - Truly, and therefore worthy of your credit. He calls attention to two cases where "acknowledged" prophets had so little honor in their own nation that they bestowed their favors on foreigners. So, says he, such is the want of faith in my own country, that I shall work no miracles here, but shall give the evidence of my divine mission to others.

In Israel - In the land of Israel, or Judea. It was therefore the more remarkable, since there were so many in his own country whom he might have helped, that the prophet should have gone to a pagan city and aided a poor widow there.

The days of Elias - The days of Elijah. See the account of this in 1 Kings 18:1, 1 Kings 18:45, it would seem that the rain fell on the "third year" - that is, at the "end" of the third year after the rain had ceased to fall at the usual time. There were two seasons of the year when rains fell in Judea - in October and April, called the "early" and "latter" rain; consequently there was an interval between them of six months. To the three years, therefore, when rain was withheld "at the usual times," are to be added the previous six months, when no rain fell as a matter of course, and consequently three years "and six months" elapsed without rain.

A great famine - A great want of food, from long continued and distressing drought.

Verse 26

Save unto Sarepta - Sarepta was a town between Tyre and Sidon, near the Mediterranean Sea. It was not a "Jewish" city, but a Sidonian, and therefore a "Gentile" town. The word "save" in this verse does not express the meaning of the original. It would seem to imply that the city was Jewish. The meaning of the verse is this: "He was sent to none of the widows in Israel. He was not sent except to Sarepta, to a woman that was a "Sidonian." Dr. Thomson ("*The Land and the Book*," vol. i. p. 232-236) regards Sarepta as the modern Sarafend. He says that the ruins have been frequently dug over for stone to build the barracks at Beirut, and that the broken columns, marble slabs, sarcophagi, and other ruins indicate that it

was once a flourishing city. A large town was built there in the time of the Crusades.

Verse 27

Many lepers - For an account of the leprosy see the notes at Matthew 8:1.

Time of Eliseus - Time of Elisha. The word "Eliseus" is the Greek way of writing the word Elisha, as Elias is of Elijah.

Saving Naaman the Syrian - The account of his cure is contained in 2 Kings 5.

Verse 28

Filled with wrath - They were enraged, probably, for the following reasons:

1.They saw that the cases applied to themselves, because they would not receive the miraculous evidences of his mission.

2.That he would direct his attention to others, and not to them.

3.That the "Gentiles" were objects of compassion with God, and that God often showed more favor to a "single" Gentile than to multitudes of Jews in the same circumstances.

4.That they might be "worse" than the Gentiles. And,

5.That it was a part of his design to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and not confine his labors to them only.

On these accounts their favor was soon turned to wrath, and the whole transaction shows us:

1.That popular applause is of little value.

2.That the slightest circumstances may soon turn the warmest professed friendship to hatred. And,

3.That people are exceedingly unreasonable in being unwilling to hear the truth and profit by it.

Verse 29

The brow of the hill whereon … - The region in which Nazareth was is hilly, though Nazareth was situated "between" two hills, or in a vale among mountains. The place to which they led the Saviour is still shown, and is

called the "Mount of Precipitation." It is at a short distance to the south of Nazareth. See the notes at Matthew 2:23.

Cast him down - This was the effect of a popular tumult. They had no legal right to take life on any occasion, and least of all in this furious and irregular manner. The whole transaction shows:

1.That the character given of the Galileans elsewhere as being especially wicked was a just one.

2.To what extremities the wickedness of the heart will lead people when it is acted out. And,

3.That people are opposed to the truth, and that they would do anything, if not restrained, to manifest their opposition.

Verse 30

Passing through the midst of, them, went his way - This escape was very remarkable. It is remarkable that he should escape out of their hands when their very object was to destroy him, and that he should escape in so peaceful a manner, without violence or conflict. A similar case is recorded in John 8:59. There are but two ways of accounting for this:

1.That "other Nazarenes," who had not been present in the synagogue, heard what was doing and came to rescue him, and in the contest that rose between the two parties Jesus silently escaped.

2.More probably that Jesus by divine power, by the force of a word or look, stilled their passions, arrested their purposes, and passed silently through them. That he "had" such a power over the spirits of people we learn from the occurrence in Gethsemane, when he said, "I am he; and they went backward and fell to the ground," John 18:6.

Verses 31-44

See this explained in the notes at Mark 1:21-39.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

The people pressed upon his - Multitudes came to hear. There were times in the life of our Saviour when thousands were anxious to hear him, and when many, as we have no reason to doubt, became his true followers. Indeed, it is not possible to tell what "might" have been his success, had not the Pharisees and scribes, and those who were in office, opposed him, and taken measures to draw the people away from his ministry; "for the common people heard him gladly," Mark 12:37.

The Lake of Gennesaret - Called also the Sea of Galilee and the Sea of Tiberias. "Gennesaret was the more ancient name of the lake, taken from a small territory or plain of that name on its western borders. See Numbers 34:11; Joshua 19:35, where, after the Hebrew orthography, it is called Chinnereth" (Owen). The plain lying between Capernaum and Tiberias is said by Dr. Thomson ("*The Land and the Book*," vol. i. p. 536) to be a little longer than thirty, and not quite twenty furlongs in breadth. It is described by Josephus as being, in his time, universally fertile. "Its nature is wonderful as well as its beauty. Its soil is so fruitful that all sorts of trees can grow upon it, and the inhabitants accordingly plant all sorts of trees there; for the temperature of the air is so well mixed that it agrees very well with those several sorts; particularly walnuts, which require the coldest air, flourish there in vast plenty. One may call this the ambition of nature, where it forces those plants which are naturally enemies to one another to agree together. It is a happy conjunction of the seasons, as if every one laid claim to this country; for it not only nourishes different sorts of autumnal fruits beyond people's expectations, but preserves them a great while. It supplies people with the principal fruits; with grapes and figs continually during ten months of the year, and the rest of the fruits, as they become ripe, through the whole year; for, besides the good temperature of the air, it is also watered from a most fertile fountain."

Dr. Thomson describes it now as "preeminently fruitful in thorns." This was the region of the early toils of our Redeemer. Here he performed some of his first and most amazing miracles; here he selected his disciples; and here, on the shores of this little and retired lake, among people of poverty and inured to the privations of fishermen, he laid the foundation of a religion which is yet to spread through all the world, and which has already

blessed millions of guilty and miserable people, and translated them to heaven.

Verse 2

Two ships - The ships used on so small a lake were probably no more than fishing-boats without decks, and easily drawn up on the beach. Josephus says there were 230 of them on the lake, attended by four or five men each. That they were small is also clear from the account commonly given of them. A single large draught of fishes endangered them and came near sinking them.

Standing by the lake - Anchored by the lake, or drawn up upon the beach.

Verse 3

Which was Simon's - Simon Peter's.

Prayed him - Asked him.

He sat down - This was the common posture of Jewish teachers. They seldom or never spoke to the people "standing." Compare Matthew 5:1. It may be somewhat difficult to conceive why Jesus should go into a boat and put off from the shore in order to speak to the multitude; but it is probable that this was a small bay or cove, and that when he was "in" the boat, the people on the shore stood round him in the form of an amphitheater. It is not improbable that the lake was still; that scarcely a breeze passed over it; that all was silence on the shore, and that there was nothing to disturb his voice. In such a situation he could be heard by multitudes; and no spectacle could be more sublime than that of the Son of God - the Redeemer of the world - thus speaking from the bosom of a placid lake - the emblem of the peaceful influence of his own doctrines - to the poor, the ignorant, and the attentive multitudes assembled on the shore. Oh how much "more" effect may we suppose the gospel would have in such circumstances, than when proclaimed among the proud, the joyful, the honored, even when assembled in the most splendid edifice that wealth and art could finish!

Verse 4

Launch, out - Go out with your vessels.

Into the deep - Into the sea; at a distance from the shore.

For a draught - A draught of fish; or let down your nets for the "taking" of fish.

Verse 5

Master - This is the first time that the word here translated "Master" occurs in the New Testament, and it is used only by Luke. The other evangelists call him Rabbi, or Lord. The word here used means a "prefect," or one placed "over" others, and hence, it comes to mean "teacher" or "guide."

At thy word - At thy command. Though it seemed so improbable that they would take anything after having in vain toiled all night, yet he was willing to trust the word of Jesus and make the trial. This was a remarkable instance of "faith." Peter, as it appears, knew little then of Jesus. He was not then a chosen apostle. Jesus came to these fishermen almost a stranger and unknown, and yet at his command Peter resolved to make another trial, and go once more out into the deep. Oh, if all would as readily obey him, all would be in like manner blessed. If sinners would thus obey him, they would find all his promises sure. He never disappoints. He asks only that we have "confidence" in him, and he will give to us every needful blessing.

Verse 6

Their net brake - Or their net "began" to break, or was "about" to break. This is all that is implied in the Greek word. If their nets had actually "broken," as our English word seems to suppose, the fish would have escaped; but no more is meant than that there was such a multitude of fishes that their net was "on the point" of being torn asunder.

Verse 7

They beckoned - They gave signs. Perhaps they were at a considerable distance, so that they could not be easily heard.

Their partners - James and John. See Luke 5:10. The following remarks of Dr. Thomson ("*The Land and the Book*," vol. ii. p. 80,81) will furnish a good illustration of this passage. After describing the mode of fishing with the "hand-net" and the "dragnet," he adds: "Again, there is the bag-net and basket-net, of various kinds, which are so constructed and worked as to inclose the fish out in deep water. I have seen them of almost every conceivable size and pattern. It was with some one of this sort, I suppose, that Simon had toiled all night without catching anything, but which, when let down at the command of Jesus, inclosed so great a multitude that the net broke, and they filled two ships with the fish until they began to sink. Peter here speaks of toiling all night; and there are certain kinds of fishing always carried on at night. It is a beautiful sight. With blazing torch the boat glides over the flashing sea, and the men stand

gazing keenly into it until their prey is sighted, when, quick as lightning, they fling their net or fly their spear; and often you see the tired fishermen come sullenly into harbor in the morning, having toiled all night in vain. Indeed, every kind of fishing is uncertain. A dozen times the angler jerks out a naked hook; the hand-net closes down on nothing; the drag-net brings in only weeds; the bag comes up empty. And then again, every throw is successful - every net is full; and frequently without any other apparent reason than that of throwing it on the right side of the ship instead of the left, as it happened to the disciples here at Tiberias."

Verse 8

When Simon Peter saw it - Saw the great amount of fishes; the remarkable success of letting down the net.

He fell down at Jesus' knees - This was a common posture of "supplication." He had no doubt now of the power and knowledge of Jesus. In amazement, wonder, and gratitude, and not doubting that he was in the presence of some divine being, he prostrated himself to the earth, trembling and afraid. So should sinful people "always" throw themselves at the feet of Jesus at the proofs of his power; so should they humble themselves before him at the manifestations of his goodness.

Depart from me - This is an expression of Peter's humility, and of his consciousness of his unworthiness. It was not from want of love to Jesus; it did not show that he would not be pleased with his favor and presence; but it was the result of being convinced that Jesus was a messenger from God - a high and holy being; and he felt that he was unworthy to be in his presence. In his deep consciousness of sin, therefore, he requested that Jesus would depart from him and his little vessel. Peter's feeling was not unnatural, though it was not proper to request Jesus to leave him. It was an involuntary, sudden request, and arose from ignorance of the character of Jesus. We "are" not worthy to be with him, to be reckoned among his friends, or to dwell in heaven with him; but he came to seek the lost and to save the impure. He graciously condescends to dwell with those who are humble and contrite, though they are conscious that they are not worthy of his presence; and we may therefore come boldly to him, and ask him to receive us to his home - to an eternal dwelling with him in the heavens.

Verse 10

Fear not - He calmed their fears. With mildness and tenderness he stilled all their troubled feelings, and to their surprise announced that

henceforward they should be appointed as heralds of salvation.

From henceforth - Hereafter.

Shalt catch men - Thou shalt be a minister of the gospel, and thy business shall be to win people to the truth that they may be saved.

Verse 11

Forsook all - It was not "much" that they left - a couple of small boats and their nets; but it was all they had, even all their living. But this showed their love of Jesus, and their willingness to deny themselves, as "really" as if they had forsaken palaces and gold. All that Jesus asks is that we should leave "all" we have for him; that we should love him "more" than we do whatever friends or property we may possess, and be willing to give them all up when he requires it.

Verses 12-16

See the notes at Matthew 8:2-4.

Verses 17-26

See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 9:1-7.

Luke 5:17

On a certain day - The time and place are not particularly mentioned here, but from Matthew 9:1 it seems it was at Capernaum.

Luke 5:19

The tiling - See the notes at Matthew 9:1-7.

Verses 27-32

See the notes at Matthew 9:9-13.

Luke 5:29

Made him a great feast - This circumstance "Matthew," or "Levi" as he is here called, has omitted in his own gospel. This fact shows how little inclined the evangelists are to say anything in favor of themselves or to praise themselves. True religion does not seek to commend itself, or to speak of what it does, even when it is done for the Son of God. It seeks retirement; it delights rather in the consciousness of doing well than in its being known; and it leaves its good deeds to be spoken of, if spoken of at all, by others. This is agreeable to the direction of Solomon Proverbs 27:2; "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth." This feast was made expressly for our Lord, and was attended by many publicans, probably people of wicked character; and it is not improbable that Matthew got them together for the purpose of bringing them into contact with our Lord to do them good. Our Saviour did not refuse to go, and to go, too, at

the risk of being accused of being a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners, Matthew 11:19. But his motives were pure. In the thing itself there was no harm. It afforded an opportunity of doing good, and we have no reason to doubt that the opportunity was improved by the Lord Jesus. Happy would it be if all the "great feasts" that are made were made in honor of our Lord; happy if he would be a welcome guest there; and happy if ministers and pious people who attend them demeaned themselves as the Lord Jesus did, and they were always made the means of advancing his kingdom. But, alas! there are few places where our Lord would be "so unwelcome" as at great feasts, and few places that serve so much to render the mind gross, dissipated, and irreligious.

Verses 33-39

See this passage illustrated in the notes at Matthew 9:14-17.

Luke 5:39

Having drunk old wine … - Wine increases its strength and flavor, and its mildness and mellowness, by age, and the old is therefore preferable. They who had tasted such mild and mellow wine would not readily drink the comparatively sour and astringent juice of the grape as it came from the press. The meaning of this proverb in this place seems to be this: You Pharisees wish to draw my disciples to the "austere" and "rigid" duties of the ceremonial law - to fasting and painful rites; but they have come under a milder system. They have tasted the gentle and tender blessings of the gospel; they have no "relish" for your stern and harsh requirements. To insist now on their observing them would be like telling a man who had tasted of good, ripe, and mild wine to partake of that which is sour and unpalatable. At the proper time all the sterner duties of religion will be properly regarded; but "at present," to teach them to fast when they see "no occasion" for it - when they are full of joy at the presence of their Master - would be like putting a piece of new cloth on an old garment, or new wine into old bottles, or drinking unpleasant wine after one had tasted that which was more pleasant. It would be ill-timed, inappropriate, and incongruous.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Introduction

Luke 6:1-11. See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 12:1-13.

Verse 1

Second sabbath after the first - See the notes at Matthew 12:1. This phrase has given great perplexity to commentators. A "literal" translation would be, "on the Sabbath called "second first,"" or second first Sabbath. The word occurs nowhere else. It is therefore exceedingly difficult of interpretation. The most natural and easy explanation is that proposed by Scaliger. The "second day" of the Passover was a great festival, on which the wave-sheaf was offered, Leviticus 23:11. From "that day" they reckoned "seven weeks," or seven "Sabbaths," to the day of Pentecost. The "first" Sabbath after that "second day" was called the "second first," or the first from the second day of the feast. The "second" Sabbath was called the "second second," or the second Sabbath from the second day of the feast; the third the "third second," etc. This day, therefore, on which the Saviour went through the fields, was the first Sabbath that occurred after the second day of the feast.

Rubbing them in their hands - The word "corn" here means wheat or barley, and not maize, as in America. They rubbed it in their hands to separate the grain from the chaff. This was common and allowable. Dr. Thomson ("*The Land and the Book*," vol. ii. p. 510,511) says: "I have often seen my muleteers, as we passed along the wheat fields, pluck off ears, rub them in their hands, and eat the grains, unroasted, just as the apostles are said to have done. This also is allowable. The Pharisees did not object to the thing itself, only to the time when it was done. They said it was not lawful to do this on the Sabbath-day. It was work forbidden by those who, through their traditions, had made man for the Sabbath, not the Sabbath for man." So Professor Hackett ("*Illustrations of Scripture*," p. 176,177) says: "The incident of plucking the ears of wheat, rubbing out the kernels in their hands, and eating them Luke 6:1, is one which the traveler sees often at present who is in Palestine at the time of the gathering of the harvest. Dr. Robinson relates the following case: ‹Our Arabs were an hungered, and, going into the fields, they plucked the ears of grain and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. On being questioned, they said this was an old custom,

and no one would speak against it; they were supposed to be hungry, and it was allowed as a charity.‘ The Pharisees complained of the disciples for violating the Sabbath, and not any rights of property.”

Verse 8

But he knew there thoughts - He knew their thoughts - their dark, malicious designs - by the question, which they proposed to him, whether it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath-days (Matthew). In “reply” to their question, Jesus asked them whether they would not release a “sheep” on the Sabbath-day if it was fallen into a pit, and also asked “them” whether it was better to do good than to do evil on that day, implying that to “omit” to do “good” was, in fact, doing “evil.”

Verse 11

Were filled with madness - Probably,

1.Because he had shown his “power” to work a miracle.

2.Because he had shown his power to do it “contrary” to what “they” thought was right.

3.Because by doing it he had shown that he was from “God,” and that “they” were therefore “wrong” in their views of the Sabbath. And,

4.Because he had shown no respect “to their views” of what the law of God demanded.

Pride, obstinacy, malice, and disappointed self-confidence were “all” combined, therefore, in producing madness. Nor were they alone. Men are often enraged because others do good in a way which “they” do not approve of. God gives success to others; and because he has not accommodated himself to “their” views of what is right, and done it in the way which “they” would have prescribed, they are enraged, and filled with envy at people more successful than themselves.

Communed one with another - Spoke together, or laid a plan.

Verse 12

And it came to pass in those days - The designation of the time here is very general. It means “about” the time when the events occurred which had been just narrated.

He went out into a mountain - Jesus was accustomed to resort to such places to hold communion with God, Mark 6:46. He did it because it was retired, free from interruption, and fitted by impressiveness and grandeur to

raise the thoughts to the God that had formed the high hills and the deep-shaded groves.

And continued all night in prayer to God - There has been a difference of opinion about this passage, whether it means that he spent the night in the act of "praying" to God, or in a "place" of prayer. The Jews had places of prayer, called "oratories," built out of their cities or towns, where they could retire from the bustle of a city and hold communion with God. They were built on the banks of rivers (compare Acts 16:13), in groves, or on hills. They were rude inclosures, made by building a rough wall of stone around a level piece of ground, and capable of accommodating a small number who might resort thither to pray. But the more probable opinion is that he spent the whole night in supplication; for:

1. This is the obvious meaning of the passage.

2. The object for which he went out was "to pray."

3. It was an occasion of great importance. He was about to send out his apostles - to lay the foundation of his religion - and he therefore set apart this time especially to seek the divine blessing.

4. It was no unusual thing for Jesus to spend much time in prayer, and we are not to wonder that he passed an entire night in supplication. If it be asked why Jesus should pray "at all" if he was divine, it may be replied that he was also a "man" - a man subject to the same sufferings as others, and, "as a man," needing the divine blessing. There was no more inconsistency in his "praying" than there was in his "eating." Both were "means" employed for an end, and both were equally consistent with his being divine. But Jesus was also "Mediator," and as such it was proper to seek the divine direction and blessing. In "this" case he has set us an example that we should follow. In great emergencies, when we have important duties, or are about to encounter special difficulties, we should seek the divine blessing and direction by "prayer." We should set apart an unusual portion of time for supplication. Nay, if we pass the "whole night" in prayer, it should not be charged as enthusiasm. Our Saviour did it. Men of the world often pass whole nights in plans of gain or in dissipation, and shall it be esteemed strange that Christians should spend an equal portion of time in the far more important business of religion?

Verses 13-16

See the notes at Matthew 10:1-4.

Verse 17

And stood in the plain - It is not affirmed, however, that he stood in the plain when he delivered the following discourse. There has been some doubt whether the following discourse is the same as that recorded in Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10.

On the other hand, "Matthew" says that the sermon was delivered on the "mountain" Matthew 5:1; it is thought to be implied that "Luke" affirms that it was in the "plain." Matthew says that he "sat;" Luke, that he "stood." Yet there is no reason to suppose that there is a difference in the evangelists. Jesus spent the night on the mountain in prayer. In the morning he descended into the open plain and healed many. While there, as Luke says, he "stood" and received those who came to him, and healed their diseases. There is no impropriety in supposing that, being pressed by multitudes, he retired into the mountain again, or to an eminence in the plain, or to the side of the mountain, where the people might be more conveniently arranged and seated to hear him. There he "sat," as recorded by Matthew, and delivered the discourse; for it is to be observed that Luke does "not" say that he delivered the sermon "on the plain," but only that he "healed the sick there."

Tyre and Sidon - See the notes at Matthew 11:21.

Verse 18

Vexed - The word "vex" with us means to provoke, or irritate by petty provocations. Here it means, however, to "afflict," to "torment" - denoting deep and heavy trials.

Unclean spirits - Demons that were impure and unholy, having a delight in tormenting, and in inflicting painful and loathsome diseases.

Verse 19

Virtue - Healing power. See the notes at Mark 5:30.

Verses 20-49

See this passage fully illustrated in the sermon on the mount, in Luke 6:21

That hunger now - Matthew has it, "that hunger and thirst after righteousness." Matthew has expressed more fully what Luke has briefly, but there is no contradiction.

Luke 6:24-26

These verses have been omitted by Matthew. They seem to have been spoken to the Pharisees.

Who are rich - In this world‘s goods. They loved them; they had sought for them; they found their consolation in them. It implies, farther, that they would not seek or receive consolation from the gospel. They were proud, and would not seek it; satisfied, and did not desire it; filled with cares, and had no time or disposition to attend to it. All the consolation which they had reason to expect they had received. Alas! how poor and worthless is such consolation, compared with that which the gospel would give!

Woe unto you that are full! - Not hungry. Satisfied with their wealth, and not feeling their need of anything better than earthly wealth can give. Many, alas! are thus “full.” They profess to be satisfied. They desire nothing but wealth, and a sufficiency to satisfy the wants of the body. They have no anxiety for the riches that shall endure forever.

Ye shall hunger - Your property shall be taken away, or you shall see that it is of little value; and then you shall see the need of something better. You shall feel your want and wretchedness, and shall “hunger” for something to satisfy the desires of a dying, sinful soul.

That laugh now - Are happy, or thoughtless, or joyful, or filled with levity.

Shall mourn and weep - The time is coming when you shall sorrow deeply. In sickness, in calamity, in the prospect of death, in the fear of eternity, your laughter shall be turned into sorrow. “There is” a place where you cannot laugh, and there you will see the folly of having passed the “proper time” of preparing for such scenes in levity and folly. Alas! how many thus spend their youth! and how many weep when it is too late! God gives them over, and “laughs” at their “calamity,” and mocks when their fear comes, Proverbs 1:26. To be happy in “such scenes,” it is necessary to be sober, humble, pious in early life. “Then” we need not weep in the day of calamity; then there will be no terror in death; then there will be nothing to fear in the grave.

Luke 6:26

When all men shall speak well of you - When they shall praise or applaud you. The people of the world will not praise or applaud “my” doctrine; they are “opposed” to it, and therefore, if they speak well of “you” and of “your teachings,” it is proof that you do not teach the true doctrine. If

you do "not" do this, then there will be woe upon you. If men teach false doctrines for true; if they declare that God has spoken that which he has not spoken, and if they oppose what he "has" delivered, then heavy punishments will await them.

For so did their fathers - The fathers or ancestors of this people; the ancient Jews.

To the false prophets - Men who pretended to be of God - who delivered their "own" doctrines as the truth of God, and who accommodated themselves to the desires of the people. Of this number were the prophets of Baal, the false prophets who appeared in the time of Jeremiah, etc.

Luke 6:27, Luke 6:28

See Matthew 5:44-45.

Luke 6:29

See Matthew 5:39-40.

Luke 6:30

See Matthew 5:42.

Luke 6:31

See Matthew 7:12.

Luke 6:32-36

See Matthew 5:46-48.

Luke 6:37-42

See Matthew 7:1-9.

Luke 6:38

Good measure - They shall give you good measure, or "full" measure.

Pressed down - As figs or grapes might be, and thus many more might be put into the measure.

Shaken together - To make it more compact, and thus to give more.

Running over - So full that the measure would overflow.

Shall men give - This is said to be the reward of "giving" to the poor and needy; and the meaning is that the man who is liberal will find others liberal to him in dealing with them, and when he is also in circumstances of want. A man who is himself kind to the poor - who has that "character" established - will find many who are ready to help "him" abundantly when he is in want. He that is parsimonious, close, niggardly, will find few or none who will aid him.

Into your bosom - That is, to you. The word "bosom" here has reference to a custom among Oriental nations of making the bosom or front part of their garments large, so that articles could be carried in them, answering the purpose of our pockets. Compare Exodus 4:6-7; Proverbs 6:27; Rth 3:15 .

Luke 6:39

A parable - A proverb or similitude.

Can the blind lead the blind? - See the notes at Matthew 15:14.

Luke 6:40

The disciple is not … - The learner is not above his teacher, does not know more, and must expect to fare no better. This seems to have been spoken to show them that they were not to expect that their disciples would go "beyond them" in attainments; that if they were blind, their followers would be also; and that therefore it was important for them to understand fully the doctrines of the gospel, and not to be blind leaders of the blind.

Every one that is perfect - The word rendered "is perfect" means sometimes to repair or mend, and is thus applied to mending nets, Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19. Hence, it means to repair or amend in a moral sense, or to make whole or complete. Here it means, evidently, "thoroughly instructed" or "informed." The Christian should be like his Master - holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners. He should copy his example, and grow into the likeness of his Redeemer. Nor can any other be a Christian.

Luke 6:41, Luke 6:42

See the notes at Matthew 7:3-5.

Luke 6:43, Luke 6:44

See the notes at Matthew 7:16-18.

Luke 6:45

This verse is not found in the sermon on the mount as recorded by Matthew, but is recorded by him in Matthew 12:35. See the notes at that passage.

Luke 6:46-49

See the notes at Matthew 7:21-27.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Introduction

Luke 7:1-10. See the notes at Matthew 8:5-13.

Verse 1

In the audience of the people - In the hearing of the people.

Verse 2

Who was dear unto him - That is, he was valuable, trusty, and honored.

Verse 4

They besought him instantly - Urgently or earnestly.

He was worthy - The centurion. He had showed favor to the Jews, and it was not improper to show him a kindness.

Verse 11

A city called Nain - This city was in Galilee, in the boundaries of the tribe of Issachar. It was about two miles south of Mount Tabor, and not far from Capernaum; It is now a small village inhabited by Jews, Muslims, and Christians. Dr. Thomson ("*The Land and the Book*," vol. ii. p. 158) locates it on the northwest corner of a mount now called Jebel ed Duhy, one hour's ride from the foot of Mount Tabor. Of this place he says: "This mount is now called Jebel ed Duhy and that small hamlet on the northwest corner of it is Nain, famous for the restoration of the widow's son to life. It was once a place of considerable extent, but is now little more than a cluster of ruins, among which dwell a few families of fanatical Moslems. It is in keeping with the one historic incident that renders it dear to the Christian, that its only antiquities are tombs. These are situated mainly on the east of the village, and it was in that direction, I presume, that the widow's son was being carried on that memorable occasion. It took me just an hour to ride from the foot of Tabor to Nain."

Verse 12

The gate of the city - Cities were surrounded by walls, to defend them from their enemies. They were entered through "gates" placed at convenient distances from each other. In most cities it was not allowed to bury the dead within the walls; hence, they were carried to some convenient burial-place in the vicinity of the city.

A dead man carried out - A funeral procession. Anciently no Jews were buried within the walls of the city, except the kings and distinguished persons, 1 Samuel 28:3; 2 Kings 21:18. The custom of burying within

cities, and especially within the walls of churches or in their vicinity, had its origin among Christians very early; yet perhaps few customs are more deleterious to health than burials within large cities, especially within the walls of frequented buildings. The effluvia from dead bodies is excessively unwholesome. Burial-places should be in situations of retirement, far from the tread of the happy and busy world, where all the feelings may be still and calm, and where there can be no injury to health from the mouldering bodies of the dead.

Verse 16

Came a fear on all - An "awe" or solemnity at the presence of one who had power to raise the dead, and at the miracle which had been performed.

Glorified God - Praised or honored God that he had sent such a prophet.

And, That God hath visited his people - Some said one thing and some another, but all expressing their belief that God had showed special favor to the people.

Hath visited - See Luke 1:68.

The raising of this young man was one of the most decisive and instructive of our Lord's miracles. There was no doubt that he was dead. There could be no delusion, and no agreement to impose on the people. He came near to the city with no reference to this young man; he met the funeral procession, as it were, by accident, and by a word he restored him to life. All those who had the best opportunity of judging - the mother, the friends - believed him to be dead, and were about to bury him. The evidence that he came to life was decisive. He sat up, he spoke, and "all" were impressed with the full assurance that God had raised him to life. Many witnesses were present, and none doubted that Jesus "by a word" had restored him to his weeping mother.

The whole scene was affecting. Here was a widowed mother who was following her only son, her stay and hope, to the grave. He was carried along - one in the prime of life and the only comfort of his parent - impressive proof that the young, the useful, the vigorous, and the lovely may die. Jesus met them, apparently a stranger. He approached the procession as if he had something important to say; he touched the bier and the procession stood still. He was full of compassion for the weeping parent, and by a word restored the youth, stretched upon the bier, to life. He

sat up, and spoke. Jesus therefore had power over the dead. He also has power to raise sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, to life. He can speak the word, and, though in their death of sin they are borne along toward ruin, he can open their eyes, and raise them up, and restore them revived to real life or to their friends. Often he raises up children in this manner, and gives them, converted to God, to their friends, imparting as real joy as he gave to the widow of Nain by raising her son from the dead, And every child should remember, if he has pious parents, that there is "no way" in which he can give so much joy to them as by embracing Him who is the resurrection and the life, and resolving to live to his glory.

Verses 19-35

See this passage explained in Luke 7:29

The people - The common people.

That heard him - That heard "John."

The publicans - The tax-gatherers, the worst kind of people, who had, however, been converted.

Justified God - Considered God as "just" or "right" in the counsel which he gave by John - to wit, in calling people to repentance, and in denouncing future wrath on the impenitent. Compare Matthew 11:19.

Being baptized … - They "showed" that they approved of the message of God by submitting to the ordinance which he commanded - the ordinance of baptism. This verse and the following are not to be considered as the words of "Luke," but the continuation of the discourse of our Lord. He is saying what took place in regard to John. Among the common people he was approved and obeyed among the rich and learned he was despised.

Luke 7:30

But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected … - It appears from Matthew 3:7 that some of the Pharisees came to John to be baptized; but still this is entirely consistent with the supposition that the great mass of Pharisees and lawyers rejected him.

The counsel of God - The counsel of God toward them was the solemn admonition by John to "repent" and be baptized, and be prepared to receive the Messiah. This was the command or revealed will of God in relation to them. When it is said that they "rejected" the counsel of God, it does not mean that they could frustrate his purposes, but merely that they violated his commands. Men cannot frustrate the "real" purposes of God, but they

can contemn his messages, they can violate his commands, and thus they can reject the counsel which he gives them, and treat with contempt the desire which he manifests for their welfare.

Against themselves - To their own hurt or detriment. God is wise and good. He knows what is best for us. He, therefore, that rejects what God commands, rejects it to his own injury. It "cannot" be well for any mortal to despise what God commands him to do.

Luke 7:31-35

See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 11:16-19. "And the Lord said." This clause is wanting in almost all the manuscripts, and is omitted by the best critics.

Verse 36

One of the Pharisees - His name was Simon, Luke 7:10. Nothing more is known of him. It is not improbable, however, from what follows Luke 7:40-47, that he had been healed by the Saviour of some afflictive disease, and made this feast to show his gratitude.

Sat down to meat - The original word here means only that he placed himself or reclined at the table. The notion of "sitting" at meals is taken from modern customs, and was not practiced by the Jews. See the notes at Matthew 23:6.

Meat - Supper. Food of any kind. Sat down to eat.

Verse 37

In the city - What city is meant is unknown. Some have supposed it was Nain; some Capernaum; some Magdala; and some Jerusalem.

Which was a sinner - Who was depraved or wicked. This woman, it seems, was known to be a sinner - perhaps an abandoned woman or a prostitute. It is certain that she had much to be forgiven, and she had probably passed her life in crime. There is no evidence that this was the woman commonly called Mary Magdalene.

An alabaster-box … - See the notes at Mark 14:3.

Verse 38

Stood at his feet behind him - They reclined, at their meals, on their left side, and their feet, therefore, were extended from the table, so that persons could easily approach them. See the notes at Matthew 23:6.

Began to wash his feet - The Jews wore sandals. These were taken off when they entered a house. It was an act of hospitality and kindness to wash the feet of a guest. "She" therefore began to show her love for the Saviour,

and at the same time her humility and penitence, by pouring forth a flood of tears, and washing his feet in the manner of a servant.

Kissed his feet - The kiss was an emblem of love and affection. In this manner she testified her love for the Lord Jesus, and at the same time her humility and sense of sin by kissing his feet. There could be few expressions of penitence more deep and tender than were these. A sense of all her sins rushed over her mind; her heart burst at the remembrance of them, and at the presence of the pure Redeemer; with deep sorrow she humbled herself and sought forgiveness. She showed her love for him by a kiss of affection; her humility, by bathing his feet; her veneration, by breaking a costly box - perhaps procured by a guilty life - and anointing his feet. In this way we should all come, embracing him as the loved Redeemer, humbled at his feet, and offering all we have - all that we have gained in lives of sin, in our professions, by merchandise and toil, while we were sinners - offering "all" to his service. Thus shall we show the sincerity of our repentance, and thus shall we hear his gracious voice pronounce our sins forgiven.

Verse 39

He spake within himself - Thought.

If he were a prophet - The word "prophet" here means, not one who predicts future events, but one who knows the hearts of people. If Jesus had been sent from God as a prophet, he supposed that he would have known the character of the woman and would have rebuked her.

Would have known … - Because Jesus did not rebuke her and drive her from his presence, he inferred that he could not be acquainted with her character. The Pharisees considered it improper to hold communion with those who were notorious sinners. They judged our Saviour by their own rules, and supposed that "he" would act in the same way; and Simon therefore concluded that he did not know her character and could not be a prophet. Jesus did not refuse the society of the guilty. He came to save the lost; and no person ever came to him so sure of finding a "friend," as those who came conscious that they were deeply depraved, and mourning on account of their crimes.

That toucheth him - The "touch" of a Gentile, or a person singularly wicked, they supposed to be polluting, and the Pharisees avoided it. See Matthew 9:11.

Verse 41

A certain creditor - A man who had lent money or sold property, the payment for which was yet due.

Five hundred pence - About 69 dollars 26 cents, or 14British pounds, 11 shilling, 8d. See the notes at Matthew 18:28.

Fifty - About 7 dollars, or 1British pound, 9 shillings, and 2d.

Verse 42

Frankly forgave - Freely forgave, or forgave entirely without any compensation. This is not designed to express anything about the way in which God forgives sinners. He forgives - forgives freely, but it is in connection with the "atonement" made by the Lord Jesus. If it was a mere "debt" which we owed to God, he might forgive, as this creditor did, without an equivalent. But it is "crime" which he forgives. He pardons as a moral governor. A parent might forgive a "debt" without any equivalent; but he cannot pardon an offending child without regarding his own "character" as a parent, the "truth" of his threatenings, the good order of his house, and the maintenance of his authority. So our sins against God, though they are called "debts," are called so "figuratively." It is not an affair of "money," and God cannot forgive us without maintaining his word, the honor of his government, and law - in other words, without an "atonement." It is clear that by the creditor here our Saviour meant to designate God, and by the "debtors," sinners and the woman present. Simon, whose life had been comparatively upright, was denoted by the one that owed "fifty" pence; the woman, who had been an open and shameless sinner, was represented by the one that owed "five hundred." Yet "neither" could pay. Both must be forgiven or perish. So, however much difference there is among people, "all" need the pardoning mercy of God, and "all," without that, must perish.

Verse 43

I suppose … - He saw not "the point" of our Lord's parable. By thus saying, therefore, he condemned himself, and prepared the way for our Lord's reproof.

Verse 44

Seest thou this woman? - You see what this woman has done to me, compared with what you have done. She has shown me expressions of regard which you, in your own house, have not shown.

I entered into thine house - I came at your invitation, where I might expect all the usual rites of hospitality.

Thou gavest me no water for my feet - Among Eastern people it was customary, before eating, to wash the feet; and to do this, or to bring water for it, was one of the rites of hospitality. See Genesis 18:4; Judges 19:21. The reasons for this were, that they wore "sandals," which covered only the bottom of the feet, and that when they ate they reclined on couches or sofas. It became therefore necessary that the feet should be often washed.

Verse 45

Thou gavest me no kiss - The kiss was a token of affection or a common mode of salutation, and Simon had even neglected this mark of welcoming him to his house. It was often used among "men" as a sign of salutation. Compare Genesis 33:4; Exodus 18:7; Matthew 26:49.

Hath not ceased to kiss my feet - How striking the difference between the conduct of Simon and this woman! He, with all the richness of a splendid preparation, had omitted the common marks of regard and affection. She, in humility, had bowed at his feet, had watered them with tears, and had not ceased to kiss them. The most splendid entertainments do not always express the greatest welcome. There may be in such entertainments much insincerity - much seeking of popularity or some other motive; but no such motive could have operated in inducing a broken-hearted sinner to wash the Saviour's "feet" with tears.

Verse 46

My head with oil - The custom of pouring oil upon the head was universal among the Jews. The oil used was sweet oil or oil of olives, prepared in such a way as to give an agreeable smell. It was also used to render the hair more smooth and elegant. See Rth 3:3 ; 2 Samuel 12:20; 2 Samuel 14:2; Psalm 23:5.

With ointment - This "ointment" was a mixture of various aromatics, and was therefore far more costly and precious than the "oil" commonly used for anointing the head. Her conduct, compared with that of Simon, was therefore more striking. "He" did not give even the common oil "for his head" used on such occasions. "She" had applied to "his feet" a far more precious and valuable "unguent." "He" therefore, showed comparatively "little" love. "She" showed "much."

Verse 47

Wherefore I say unto thee - As the result of this, or because she has done this; meaning by this that she had given "evidence" that her sins had been forgiven. The inquiry with Simon was whether it was proper for Jesus

to “touch her” or to allow her to touch him, because she was such a sinner, Luke 7:39. Jesus said, in substance, to Simon, “Grant that she has been as great a sinner as you affirm, and even grant that if she had “continued so” it might be improper to suffer her to touch me, yet “her conduct” shows that her sins have been forgiven. She has evinced so much love for me as to show that she is no longer “such a sinner” as you suppose, and it is not, therefore, “improper” that she should be suffered to come near me.”

For she loved much - In our translation this would seem to be given as a reason why her sins had been forgiven - that she had loved much “before” they were pardoned; but this is clearly not the meaning. This would be contrary to the whole New Testament, which supposes that love “succeeds,” not “precedes” forgiveness; and which nowhere supposes that sins are forgiven “because” we love God. It would be also contrary to the design of the Saviour here. It was not to show “why” her sins had been forgiven, but to show that she had given evidence that they actually “had” been, and that it was proper, therefore, that she should come near to him and manifest this love. The meaning may be thus expressed: “That her sins, so many and aggravated, have been forgiven - that she is no longer such a sinner as you suppose, is manifest from her conduct. She shows deep gratitude, penitence, love. Her conduct is the “proper expression” of that love. While you have shown comparatively little evidence that you felt that “your sins” were great, and comparatively little love at their being forgiven, “she” has shown that she “felt” hers to be great, and has loved much.”

To whom little is forgiven - He who feels that little has been forgiven - that his sins were not as great as those of others. A man‘s love to God will be in proportion to the obligation he “feels” to him for forgiveness. God is to be “loved” for his perfections, apart from what he has “done” for us. But still it is proper that our love should be increased by a consideration of his goodness; and they who feel - as Christians do - that they are the “chief of sinners,” will feel under infinite obligation to love God and their Redeemer, and that no “expression” of attachment to him can be “beyond” what is due.

Verse 48

Thy sins are forgiven - What a gracious assurance to the weeping, loving penitent! How that voice, spoken to the troubled sinner, stills his anguish, allays his troubled feelings, and produces peace to the soul! And how manifest is it that he that could say thus “must” be God! No man has a “right” to forgive sin. No man “can” speak peace to the soul, and give

assurance that its transgressions are pardoned: Here, then, Jesus gave indubitable proof that he was God as well as man; that he was Lord of the conscience as well as the pitying friend; and that he was as able to read the heart and give peace there, as he was to witness the external expression of sorrow for sin.

Verse 49

Who is this … - A very pertinent question. Who could he be but God? Man could not do it, and there is no wonder that they were amazed.

Verse 50

Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace - See the notes at Mark 5:34.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

Every city and village - Of Galilee.

Preaching an showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God - That the kingdom of God was about to come, or that his reign in the gospel was about to be set up over people. See the notes at Matthew 3:2.

The twelve - The twelve apostles.

Verse 2

Infirmities - Sickness.

Mary called Magdalene - So called from "Magdula," the place of her residence. It was situated on the Sea of Galilee, south of Capernaum. To this place Jesus retired after feeding the 4,000. See the notes at Matthew 15:39.

Out of whom went - By the power of Jesus.

Seven devils - The word "seven" is often used for an indefinite number, and "may" signify merely "many" devils. The expression is used to signify that she was grievously tormented, and rendered, doubtless, insane by the power of evil spirits. See the notes at Matthew 4:24. It has been commonly supposed that Mary Magdalene was a woman of abandoned character, but of this there is not the least evidence. All that we know of her is that she was formerly grievously afflicted by the presence of those evil spirits, that she was perfectly cured by Jesus, and that afterward she became one of his most faithful and humble followers. She was at his crucifixion John 19:25 and burial Mark 15:47, and she was among those who had prepared the materials to embalm him Mark 16:1, and who first went to the sepulchre after the resurrection; and what is particularly interesting in her history, she was the first to whom the risen Redeemer appeared Mark 16:9, and his conversation with her is exceeded in interest and pathos by no passage of history, sacred or profane, John 20:11-18.

Verse 3

Herod's steward - Herod Antipas, who reigned in Galilee. He was a son of Herod the Great. The word "steward" means one who has charge of the domestic affairs of a family, to provide for it. This office was generally held by a "slave" who was esteemed the most faithful, and was often conferred as a reward of fidelity.

Ministered - Gave for his support.

Of their substance - Their property; their possessions. Christians then believed, when they professed to follow Christ, that it was proper to give "all" up to him - their property as well as their hearts; and the same thing is still required that is, to commit all that we have to his disposal; to be willing to part with it for the promotion of his glory, and to leave it when he calls us away from it.

Verses 4-15

See the parable of the sower explained in the notes at Matthew 13:1-23.

Verses 16-18

See the notes at Mark 4:21-25.

Verses 19-21

See the notes at Matthew 12:46-50.

Verses 22-39

See this passage explained in the Matthew 8:23-34 notes, and Mark 5:1-20 notes.

Verses 40-56

See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 9:18-26, and Mark 5:21-43.

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CHAPTER 9

Verses 1-6
See the notes at Matthew 10:1-14.
See the notes at Matthew 10:1-14.

Verses 7-9
See the notes at Matthew 14:1-2. Compare Mark 6:14-16.
Verses 10-17
See the Matthew 14:13-21 notes, and Mark 6:30-44 notes.
Luke 9:10
Bethsaida - A city on the east bank of the river Jordan, near where the river enters into the Sea of Tiberias. In the neighborhood of that city were extensive wastes or deserts.
Luke 9:12
Day began to wear away - To decline, or as it drew near toward evening.
Verses 18-26
See the Matthew 16:13-27 notes; Mark 8:27-38 notes.
Luke 9:20
The Christ of God - The "Anointed" of God. The "Messiah" appointed by God, and who had been long promised by him. See the notes at Matthew 1:1.
Verses 28-36
See an account of the transfiguration in Matthew 17:1-13, and Mark 9:2-13.
Luke 9:29
The fashion - The "appearance."
Glistering - Shining like lightning - of a bright, dazzling whiteness. As Mark says, "more white than any fuller could make it."
Luke 9:31
In glory - Of a glorious appearance. Of an appearance like that which the saints have in heaven.
His decease - literally, his "exit" or "departure." The word translated here "decease" - that is, exit, or "going out" - is elsewhere used to denote death. See 2 Peter 1:15. Death is a departure or going out from this life. In "this" word there may be an allusion to the "departure" of the children of

Israel from Egypt. As that was going out from "bondage," pain, and humiliation, so death, to a saint, is but going forth from a land of captivity and thraldom to one of plenty and freedom; to the land of promise, the Canaan in the skies.

He should accomplish - Which was about to take place.

Luke 9:32

Heavy with sleep - Borne down with sleep - oppressed, overcome with sleep. It may seem remarkable that they should fall asleep on such an occasion; but we are to bear in mind that this may have been in the night, and that they were weary with the toils of the day. Besides, they did not "fall asleep" while the transfiguration lasted. While Jesus was praying, or perhaps after he closed, they fell asleep. "While" they were sleeping his countenance was changed, and Moses and Elias appeared. The first that "they" saw of it was after they awoke, having been probably awakened by the shining of the light around them.

Luke 9:36

Jesus was found alone - That is, the two men had left him. In respect to "them" he was alone.

Verses 37-43

See this passage explained in the Matthew 17:14-21 notes, and Mark 9:14-29 notes.

Verse 44

Let these sayings - Probably this refers to the "sayings of the people," who had seen his miracles, and who on that account had praised and glorified God. On that ground they had acknowledged him to be the Christ. As if he had said, "I am about to die. "You" will then be disconsolate, and perhaps doubtful about my being the Christ. "Then" do you remember these miracles, and the confessions of the people - the evidence which I gave you that I was from God." Or it may mean, "Remember that I am about to die, and let my sayings in regard to that sink down into your hearts, for it is a most important event; and you will have need of remembering, when it takes place, that I told you of it. This last interpretation, however, does not agree as well with the Greek as the former.

Verse 45

It was hid from them - They had imbibed the common notions of the Jews that he was to be a prince and a conqueror, to deliver the nation. They could not understand how that could be, if he was soon to be delivered into

the hands of his enemies to die. In this way it was hid from them - not by God, but by their previous false belief. And from this we may learn that the plainest truths of the Bible are unintelligible to many because they have embraced some belief or opinion before which is erroneous, and which they are unwilling to abandon. The proper way of reading the Bible is to lay aside all previous opinions and submit entirely to God. The apostles should have supposed that their previous notions of the Messiah were wrong, and should have renounced them. They should have believed that what Jesus "then" said was consistent with his being the Christ. So "we" should believe that "all" that God says is consistent with truth, and should forsake all other opinions.

Verses 46-50

See the notes at Matthew 18:1-5. Compare Mark 9:33-38.

Verse 51

Should be received up - The word here translated "received up" means literally a removal from a lower to a higher place, and here it refers evidently to the solemn ascension of Jesus to heaven. It is often used to describe that great event. See Acts 1:11, Acts 1:22; Mark 16:19; 1 Timothy 3:16. The time appointed for him to remain on the earth was about expiring, and he resolved to go to Jerusalem and die. And from this we learn that Jesus made a voluntary sacrifice; that he "chose" to give his life for the sins of people. Humanly speaking, had he remained in Galilee he would have been safe; but that it might appear that he did not shun danger, and that he was really a voluntary sacrifice that no man had power over his life except as he was permitted (John 19:11 - he chose to put himself in the way of danger, and even to go into scenes which he knew would end in his death.

He stedfastly set his face - He determined to go to Jerusalem, or he set out resolutely. When a man goes toward an object, he may be said to set his face toward it. The expression here means only that he "resolved" to go, and it implies that he was not appalled by the dangers - that he was determined to brave all, and go up into the midst of his enemies - to die.

Verse 52

Sent messengers - In the original the word is "angels;" and the use of that word here shows that the word "angel" in the Bible does not always mean heavenly beings.

To make ready - To prepare a place, lodgings, refreshments. He had no reason to expect that he would experience any kind treatment from the

Samaritans if he came suddenly among them, and if they saw that he was going to Jerusalem. He therefore made provision beforehand, and thus has shown us that it is not "improper' to look out beforehand for the supply of our wants, and to guard against want and poverty.

Samaritans - See the notes at Matthew 10:5. They had no dealings with the Jews, John 4:9.

Verse 53

They did not receive him - Did not entertain him hospitably, or receive him with kindness.

Because his face was … - Because they ascertained that he was going to Jerusalem. One of the subjects of dispute between the Jews and Samaritans pertained to the proper situation of the temple. The Jews contended that it should be at Jerusalem; the Samaritans, on Mount Gerizim, and accordingly they had built one there. They had probably heard of the miracles of Jesus, and that he claimed to be the Messiah. Perhaps they had hoped that he would decide that "they" were right in regard to the building of the temple. Had he decided the question in that way, they would have received him as the Messiah gladly; but when they saw that he was going among the Jews - that "by going" he would decide in their favor, they resolved to have nothing to do with him, and they rejected him. And from this we may learn:

1.That people wish all the teachers of religion to fall in with their own views.

2.That if a doctrine does not accord with their selfish desires, they are very apt to reject it.

3.That if a religious teacher or a doctrine favors a rival sect, it is commonly rejected without examination. And,

4.That people, from a regard to their own views and selfishness, often reject the true religion, as the Samaritans did the Son of God, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

Verse 54

James and John - They were called Boanerges - sons of thunder - probably on account of their energy and power in preaching the gospel, or

of their vehement and rash zeal - a remarkable example of which we have in this instance, Mark 3:17.

Wilt thou … - The insult had been offered to Jesus, their friend, and they felt it; but their zeal was rash and their spirit bad. Vengeance belongs to God: it was not theirs to attempt it.

Fire from heaven - Lightning, to consume them.

As Elias did - By this they wished to justify their zeal. Perhaps, while they were speaking, they saw Jesus look at them with disapprobation, and to vindicate themselves they referred to the case of Elijah. The case is recorded in 2 Kings 1:10-12.

Verse 55

Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of - You suppose that you are actuated by a proper love for me; but you know not yourselves. It is rather a love of revenge; rather revengeful feelings toward the "Samaritans" than proper feelings toward "me." We learn here:

1.That "apparent" zeal for God may be only improper opposition toward our fellow-men.

2.That people, when they wish to honor God, should examine their spirit, and see if there is not lying at the bottom of their professed zeal for God some bad feeling toward their fellow-men.

3.That the highest opposition which Jesus met with was not inconsistent with "his" loving those who opposed him, and with his seeking to do them good.

Verse 56

For the Son of man … - You should imitate, in your spirit, the Son of man. "He" came not to destroy. If he had come for that purpose, he would have destroyed these Samaritans; but he came to save. He is not soon angry. "He" bears patiently opposition to himself, and "you" should bear opposition to "him." You should catch his spirit; temper your zeal like his; seek to do good to those who injure you and him; be mild, kind, patient, and forgiving.

Verses 57-60

See the notes at Matthew 8:19-22.

Verse 61

Bid them farewell - To take leave, inform them of the design, and set things at home in order. Jesus did not suffer this, because he probably saw that he would be influenced by a love of his friends, or by their persuasions, not to return to him. The purpose to be a Christian requires "decision." Men should not tamper with the world. They should not consult earthly friends about it. They should not even allow worldly friends to give them "advice" whether to be Christians or not. God is to be obeyed rather than man, and they should come forth boldly, and resolve at once to give themselves to his service.

Verse 62

No man, having put his hand … - To put one's hand to a plow is a proverbial expression to signify undertaking any business. In order that a plowman may accomplish his work, it is necessary to look onward - to be intent on his employment - not to be looking back with regret that he undertook it. So in religion. He that enters on it must do it with his whole heart, He that comes still loving the world - still looking with regret on its pleasures, its wealth, and its honors - that has not "wholly" forsaken them as his portion, cannot be a Christian, and is not fit for the kingdom of God. How searching is this test to those who profess to be Christians! And how solemn the duty of all people to renounce all earthly objects, and to be not only "almost," but "altogether," followers of the Son of God! It is perilous to tamper with the world - to look at its pleasures or to seek its society. He that would enter heaven must come with a heart full of love to God; giving "all" into his hands, and prepared always to give up all his property, his health, his friends, his body, his soul to God, when he demands them, or he cannot be a Christian. Religion is everything or nothing. He that is not willing to sacrifice "everything" for the cause of God, is really willing to sacrifice nothing.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

After these things - After the appointment of the twelve apostles, and the transactions recorded in the previous chapters.

Other seventy - Seventy others besides the apostles. They were appointed for a different purpose from the apostles. The apostles were to be with him; to hear his instructions; to be witnesses of his miracles, his sufferings, his death, his resurrection and ascension, that they might "then" go and proclaim all these things to the world. The seventy were sent out to preach immediately, and chiefly where he himself was about to come. They were appointed for a temporary object. They were to go into the villages and towns, and prepare the way for his coming. The number "seventy" was a favorite number among the Jews. Thus, the family of Jacob that came into Egypt consisted of seventy, Genesis 46:27. The number of elders that Moses appointed to aid him was the same, Numbers 11:16, Numbers 11:25. The number which composed the great Sanhedrin, or council of the nation. was the same. It is not improbable that our Saviour appointed this number with reference to the fact that it so often occurred among the Jews, or after the example of Moses, who appointed seventy to aid him in his work; but it is evident that the office was "temporary" - that it had a specific design - and of course that it would be improper to attempt to find now a "continuation" of it, or a parallel to it, in the Christian ministry.

Two and two - There was much wisdom in sending them in this manner. It was done, doubtless, that they might aid one another by mutual counsel, and that they might sustain and comfort one another in their persecutions and trials. Our Lord in this showed the propriety of having "a religious friend," who would be a confidant and help. Every Christian, and especially every Christian minister, needs such a friend, and should seek some one to whom he can unbosom himself, and with whom he can mingle his feelings and prayers.

Verse 2

See the notes at Matthew 9:36-37.

Verse 3

See the notes at Matthew 10:16.

Verse 4

Purse … scrip … shoes - See the notes at Matthew 10:10.

Salute no man by the way - Salutations among the Orientals did not consist, as among us, of a slight bow or an extension of the hand, but was performed by many embraces and inclinations, and even prostrations of the body on the ground. All this required much "time;" and as the business on which the seventy were sent was urgent, they were required not to "delay" their journey by long and formal salutations of the persons whom they met. "If two Arabs of equal rank meet each other, they extend to each other the right hand, and having clasped, they elevate them as if to kiss them. Each one then draws back his hand and kisses it instead of his friend‘s, and then places it upon his forehead. The parties then continue the salutation by kissing each other‘s beard. They gave thanks to God that they are once more permitted to see their friend - they pray to the Almighty in his behalf. Sometimes they repeat not less than ten times the ceremony of grasping hands and kissing."

It may also be added, in the language of Dr. Thomson ("The Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 534), that "there is such an amount of insincerity, flattery, and falsehood in the terms of salutation prescribed by etiquette, that our Lord, who is truth itself, desired his representatives to dispense with them as far as possible, perhaps tacitly to rebuke them. These ‹instructions‘ were also intended to reprove another propensity which an Oriental can scarcely resist, no matter how urgent his business. If he meets an acquaintance, he must stop and make an endless number of inquiries and answer as many. If they come upon people making a bargain or discussing any other matter, they must pause and intrude their own ideas, and enter keenly into the business, though it in no wise concerns them; and more especially, an Oriental can never resist the temptation to assist "where accounts are being settled or money counted out." The clink of coin has a positive fascination to them. Now the command of our Saviour strictly forbade all such loiterings. They would waste time, distract attention, and in many ways hinder the prompt and faithful discharge of their important mission." The salutation of friends, therefore, was a ceremony which consumed much time; and it was on this account that our Lord on this occasion forbade them to delay their journey to greet others. A similar direction is found in 2 Kings 4:29.

Verse 5

See the notes at Matthew 10:13.

Verse 6

The son of peace - That is, if the "house" or "family" be "worthy," or be disposed to receive you in "peace" and kindness. See Matthew 10:13. "The son of peace" means one "disposed" to peace, or peaceful and kind in his disposition. Compare Matthew 1:1.

Verse 7

See the notes at Matthew 10:11. On this passage Dr. Thomson ("The Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 534) remarks: "The reason (for the command, ‹Go not from house to house‘) is very obvious to one acquainted with Oriental customs. When a stranger arrives in a village or an encampment, the neighbors, one after another, must invite him to eat with them. There is a strict etiquette about it, involving much ostentation and hypocrisy, and a failure in the due observance of this system of hospitality is violently resented, and often leads to alienations and feuds among neighbors; it also consumes much time, causes unusual distraction of mind, leads to levity, and every way counteracts the success of a spiritual mission."

Verses 8-12

See the notes at Matthew 10:14-15.

Verses 13-15

See the notes at Matthew 11:21-24.

Verse 16

See the notes at Matthew 10:40.

Verse 17

The devils are subject unto us - The devils obey us. We have been able to cast them out.

Through thy name - When commanded in thy name to come out of those who are possessed.

Verse 18

I beheld Satan … - "Satan" here denotes evidently the prince of the devils who had been cast out by the seventy disciples, for the discourse was respecting their power over evil spirits. "Lightning" is an image of "rapidity" or "quickness." I saw Satan fall "quickly" or rapidly - as quick as lightning. The phrase "from heaven" is to be referred to the lightning, and does not mean that he saw "Satan" fall "from heaven," but that he fell as quick as lightning from heaven or from the clouds. The whole expression then may mean, "I saw at your command devils immediately depart, as

quick as the flash of lightning. I gave you this power - I saw it put forth - and I give also now, in addition to this, the power to tread on serpents," etc.

Verse 19

To tread on serpents - Preservation from danger. If you tread on a poisonous reptile that would otherwise injure you, I will keep you from danger. If you go among bitter and malignant enemies that would seek your life, I will preserve you. See the notes at Mark 16:18.

Scorpions - The scorpion is an animal with eight feet, eight eyes and a long jointed tail, ending in a pointed weapon or sting. It is found in tropical climates, and seldom exceeds 4 inches in length. Its sting is extremely poisonous, and it is sometimes fatal to life. It is in Scripture the emblem of malicious and crafty men. When rolled up it has some resemblance to an egg, Luke 11:12; Ezekiel 2:6. The annexed cut will give an idea of its usual form and appearance.

The enemy - Satan. The meaning of this verse is, that Jesus would preserve them from the power of Satan and all his emissaries - from all wicked and crafty men; and this shows that he had divine power. He that can control Satan and his hosts that can be present to guard from all their machinations, see all their plans, and destroy all their designs, must be clothed with no less than almighty power.

Verse 20

Rather rejoice … - Though it was an honor to work miracles, though it is an honor to be endowed with talents, and influence, and learning, yet it is a subject of "chief" joy that we are numbered among the people of God, and have a title to everlasting life.

Names are written in heaven - The names of citizens of a city or state were accustomed to be written in a book or register, from which they were blotted out when they became unworthy, or forfeited the favor of their country. Compare Psalm 69:28; Exodus 32:32; Deuteronomy 9:14; Revelation 3:5. That their "names were written in heaven," means that they were "citizens" of heaven; that they were friends of God and "approved" by him, and would be permitted to dwell with him. This was of far more value than all "earthly" honor, power, or wealth, and "in" this people should rejoice more than in eminent endowments of influence, learning, talents, or possessions.

Verse 21-22

See the notes at Matthew 11:25-27.

Verse 23-24

See the notes at Matthew 13:16-17.

Verse 25

A certain lawyer - One who professed to be well skilled in the laws of Moses, and whose business it was to explain them.

Stood up - Rose - came forward to address him.

Tempted him - Feigned a desire to be instructed, but did it to perplex him, or to lead him, if possible, to contradict some of the maxims of the law.

Inherit eternal life - Be saved. This was the common inquiry among the Jews. "They" had said that man must keep the commandments - the written and oral law.

Verse 26

What is written … - Jesus referred him to the "law" as a safe rule, and asked him what was said there. The lawyer was doubtless endeavoring to justify himself by obeying the law. He trusted to his own works. To bring him off from that ground - to make him feel that it was an unsafe foundation, Jesus showed him what the law "required," and thus showed him that he needed a better righteousness than his own. This is the proper use of the law. By comparing ourselves with "that" we see our own defects, and are thus prepared to welcome a better righteousness than our own - that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the law becomes a schoolmaster to lead us to him, Galatians 3:24.

Verse 27-28

See this subject explained in the notes at Matthew 22:37-40.

Verse 29

To justify himself - Desirous to appear blameless, or to vindicate himself, and show that he had kept the law. Jesus wished to lead him to a proper view of his own sinfulness, and his real departure from the law. The man was desirous of showing that he had kept the law; or perhaps he was desirous of justifying himself for asking the question; of showing that it could not be so easily settled; that a mere reference to the "words" of the law did not determine it. It was still a question what was meant by "neighbor." The Pharisees held that the "Jews" only were to be regarded as such, and that the obligation did not extend at all to the Gentiles. The lawyer was probably ready to affirm that he had discharged faithfully his duty to his countrymen, and had thus kept the law, and could justify

himself. Every sinner is desirous of "justifying himself." He seeks to do it by his own works. For this purpose he perverts the meaning of the law, destroys its spirituality, and brings "down" the law to "his" standard, rather than attempt to frame his life by "its" requirements.

Verse 30

Jesus answering - Jesus answered him in a very different manner from what he expected. By one of the most tender and affecting narratives to be found anywhere, he made the lawyer his own judge in the case, and constrained him to admit what at first he would probably have denied. He compelled him to acknowledge that a Samaritan - of a race most hated of all people by the Jews - had shown the kindness of a neighbor, while a "priest" and a "Levite" had denied it "to their own countrymen."

From Jerusalem to Jericho - Jericho was situated about 15 miles to the northeast of Jerusalem, and about 8 miles west of the river Jordan. See the notes at Matthew 20:29.

Fell among thieves - Fell among "robbers." The word "thieves" means those who merely take "property." These were highwaymen and not merely took the property, but endangered the life. They were "robbers." From Jerusalem to Jericho the country was rocky and mountainous, and in some parts scarcely inhabited. It afforded, therefore, among the rocks and fastnesses, a convenient place for highwaymen. This was also a very frequented road. Jericho was a large place, and there was much traveling to Jerusalem. At this time, also, Judea abounded with robbers. Josephus says that at one time Herod the Great dismissed 40,000 men who had been employed in building the temple, a large part of whom became highwaymen (Josephus "Antiquities," xv. 7). The following remarks of Professor Hackett, who visited Palestine in 1852, will furnish a good illustration of the scene of this parable. It is remarkable that a parable uttered more than eighteen hundred years ago might still be appropriately located in this region.

Professor Hackett ("Illustrations of Scripture," p. 215,216) says of this region: "It is famous at the present day as the haunt of thieves and robbers. No part of the traveler's journey is so dangerous as the expedition to Jericho and the Dead Sea. The Oriental pilgrims who repair to the Jordan have the protection of an escort of Turkish soldiers; and others who would make the same journey must either go in company with them, or provide for their safety by procuring a special guard. I was so fortunate as to be able to

accompany the great caravan at the time of the annual pilgrimage. Yet, in spite of every precaution, hardly a season passes in which some luckless wayfarer is not killed or robbed in going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. The place derives its hostile character from its terrible wildness and desolation. If we might conceive of the ocean as being suddenly congealed and petrified when its waves are tossed mountain high, and dashing in wild confusion against each other, we should then have some idea of the aspect of the desert in which the Saviour has placed so truthfully the parable of the good Samaritan. The ravines, the almost inaccessible cliffs, the caverns, furnish admirable lurking-places for robbers. They can rush forth unexpectedly upon their victims, and escape as soon almost beyond the possibility of pursuit.

"Every circumstance in this parable, therefore, was full of significance to those who heard it. The Saviour delivered it near Bethany, on the border of the frightful desert, Luke 10:25, Luke 10:38. Jericho was a sacerdotal city. The passing of priests and Levites between that place and Jerusalem was an everyday occurrence. The idea of a caravanserai or ‹inn‘ on the way was not invented, probably, for the sake of the allegory, but borrowed from the landscape. There are the ruins now of such a shelter for the benighted or unfortunate on one of the heights which overlook the infested road. Thus it is that the instructions of our Lord derive often the form and much of their pertinence from the accidental connections of time and place."

Verse 31

By chance - Accidentally, or as it happened. It means that he did not do it with a "design" to aid the man that was wounded.

A certain priest - It is said that not less than 12,000 priests and Levites dwelt at Jericho; and as their business was at Jerusalem, of course there would be many of them constantly traveling on that road.

When he saw him - He saw him lie, but came not near him.

Passed by on the other side - On the farther side of the way. Did not turn out of his course even to come and see him.

Verse 32

A Levite - The Levites, as well as the priests, were of the tribe of Levi, and were set apart to the duties of religion. The special duty of the priest was "to offer sacrifice" at the temple; to present incense; to conduct the

morning and evening services of the temple, etc. The office or duty of the "Levites" was to render assistance to the priests in their services. In the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness, it was their duty to transport the various parts of the tabernacle and the sacred utensils. It was their duty to see that the tabernacle and the temple were kept clean; to prepare supplies for the sanctuary, such as oil, incense, wine, etc. They had also the care of the sacred revenues, and after the time of David they conducted the sacred "music" of the temple service, 1 Chronicles 23:3-5, 1 Chronicles 23:24-32; 1 Chronicles 24:27-31.

Came and looked on him - It is remarked by critics, here, that the expression used does not denote, as in the case of the priest, that he accidentally saw him and took no farther notice of him, but that he came and looked on him more attentively, but still did nothing to relieve him.

Verse 33

A certain Samaritan - The Samaritans were the most inveterate foes of the Jews. They had no dealings with each other. See the notes at Matthew 10:5. It was this fact which rendered the conduct of this good man so striking, and which was thus set in strong contrast with the conduct of the priest and the Levite. "They" would not help their own afflicted, and wounded countryman. "He," who could not be expected to aid a Jew, overcame all the usual hostility between the people; saw in the wounded man a neighbor, a brother, one who needed aid; and kindly denied himself to show kindness to the stranger.

Verse 34

Pouring in oil and wine - These were often used in medicine to heal wounds. Probably they were mingled together, and had a highly sanative quality. How strikingly is his conduct contrasted with the priest and Levite! And, how particularly as well as beautifully by this does our Saviour show what we ought to do to those who are in circumstances of need! He does not merely say "in general" that he showed him kindness, but he "told how" it was done. He stopped - came where he was - pitied him - bound up his wound - set him on his own beast - conducted him to a tavern - passed the night with him, and then secured the kind attendances of the landlord, promising him to pay him for his trouble and all this without desiring or expecting any reward. If this had been by a Jew, it would have been signal kindness; if it had been by a Gentile, it would also have been great kindness; but it was by a Samaritan - a man of a nation most hateful to the

Jews, and therefore it most strikingly shows what we are to do to friends and foes when they are in distress.

Verse 35

Two pence - About 27 cents, or 1 shilling, 2d. This may seem a small sum, but we are to remember that that sum was probably ten times as valuable then as now - that is, that it would purchase ten times as much food and the common necessaries of life as the same sum would now. Besides, it is probable that all the man wanted was "attention" and kindness, and for all these it was the purpose of the Samaritan to pay when he returned.

The host - The innkeeper.

Verse 36

Was neighbour - Showed the kindness of a neighbor, or evinced the proper feelings of a neighbor. The lawyer had asked him who was his neighbor? Jesus in this beautiful narrative showed him who and what a neighbor was, and he did this in a way that disarmed his prejudice, deeply affected him in regard to his own duty, and evinced the beauty of religion. Had he "at first" told him that a Samaritan might be a neighbor to a Jew and deserve his kindness, he would have been at once revolted at it; but when, by a beautiful and affecting narrative, he brought the "man himself" to see that it might be, he was constrained to admit it. Here we see the beauty of a parable and its use. It disarmed prejudice, fixed the attention, took the mind gently yet irresistibly, and prevented the possibility of cavil or objection. Compare, also, the address of Nathan to David, 2 Samuel 12:1-7.

Verse 37

He that showed mercy - His "Jewish" prejudice would not permit him "to name" the Samaritan, but there was no impropriety, even in his view, in saying that the man who showed so much mercy was really the neighbor to the afflicted, and not he who "professed" to be his neighbor, but who would "do nothing" for his welfare.

Go, and do thou likewise - Show the same kindness to "all" - to friend and foe - and "then" you will have evidence that you keep the law, and not "till" then. Of this man we know nothing farther; but from this inimitably beautiful parable we may learn:

1. That the knowledge of the law is useful to make us acquainted with our own sinfulness and need of a Saviour.

2. That it is not he who “professes” most kindness that really loves us most, but he who will most deny himself that he may do us good in times of want.

3. That religion requires us to do good to “all” people, however “accidentally” we may become acquainted with their calamities.

4. That we should do good to our enemies. Real love to them will lead us to deny ourselves, and to sacrifice our own welfare, that we may help them in times of distress and alleviate their wants.

5. That he is really our neighbor who does us the most good - who helps us in our necessities, and especially if he does this when there has been “a controversy or difference” between us and him.

6. We hence see the beauty of religion. Nothing else will induce people to surmount their prejudices, to overcome opposition, and to do good to those who are at enmity with them. True religion teaches us to regard every man as our neighbor; prompts us to do good to all, to forget all national or sectional distinctions, and to aid all those who are in circumstances of poverty and want. If religion were valuable for nothing “but this,” it would be the most lovely and desirable principle on earth, and all, especially in their early years, should seek it. Nothing that a young person can gain will be so valuable as the feeling that regards all the world as one great family, and to learn early to do good to all.

7. The difference between the Jew and the Samaritan was a difference in “religion” and “religious opinion;” and from the example of the latter we may learn that, while people differ in “opinions” on subjects of religion, and while they are zealous for what they hold to be the truth, still they should treat each other kindly; that they should aid each other in necessity; and that they should thus show that religion is a principle superior to the love of sect, and that the cord which binds man to man is one that is to be sundered by no difference of opinion, that Christian kindness is to be marred by no forms of worship, and by no bigoted attachment for what we esteem the doctrines of the gospel.

Verse 38

A certain village - Bethany. See John 11:1. It was on the eastern declivity of the Mount of Olives. See the notes at Matthew 21:1.

Received him - Received him kindly and hospitably. From this it would seem that "Martha" was properly the mistress of the house. Possibly she was a widow, and her brother Lazarus and younger sister Mary lived with her; and as "she" had the care of the household, this will also show why she was so diligently employed about domestic affairs.

Verse 39

Sat at Jesus' feet - This was the ancient posture of disciples or learners. They sat at the "feet" of their teachers - that is, beneath them, in a humble place. Hence, Paul is represented as having been brought up at the "feet" of Gamaliel, Acts 22:3. When it is said that Mary sat at Jesus' feet, it means that she was "a disciple" of his; that she listened attentively to his instructions, and was anxious to learn his doctrine.

Verse 40

Martha was cumbered about much serving - Was much distracted with the cares of the family, and providing suitably to entertain the Saviour. It should be said here that there is no evidence that Martha had a worldly or covetous disposition. Her anxiety was to provide suitable entertainment for the Lord Jesus. As mistress of the family, this care properly devolved on her; and the only fault which can be charged on her was too earnest a desire to make such entertainment, when she might have sat with Mary at his feet, and, perhaps, too much haste and fretfulness in speaking to Jesus about Mary.

Dost thou not care … - This was an improper reproof of our Lord, as if "he" encouraged Mary in neglecting her duty. Or perhaps Martha supposed that Mary was sitting there to show him the proper expressions of courtesy and kindness, and that she would not think it proper to leave him without his direction and permission. She therefore "hinted" to Jesus her busy employments, her need of the aid of her sister, and requested that he would signify his wish that Mary should assist her.

Verse 41

Thou art careful - Thou art anxious.

Troubled - Disturbed, distracted, very solicitous.

Many things - The many objects which excite your attention in the family. This was probably designed as a slight reproof, or a tender hint that

she was improperly anxious about those things, and that she should, with Mary, rather choose to hear the discourses of heavenly wisdom.

Verse 42

But one thing is needful - That is, religion, or piety. This is eminently and especially needful. Other things are of little importance. This should be secured first, and then all other things will be added. See 1 Timothy 4:8; Matthew 6:33.

That good part - The portion of the gospel; the love of God, and an interest in his kingdom. She had chosen to be a Christian, and to give up her time and affections to God.

Which shall not be taken away - God will not take away his grace from his people, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand, John 10:28-29.

From this interesting narrative we learn:

1. That the cares of this life are dangerous, even when they seem to be most lawful and commendable. Nothing of a worldly nature could have been more proper than to provide for the Lord Jesus and supply his wants. Yet even "for this," because it too much engrossed her mind, the Lord Jesus gently reproved Martha. So a care for our families may be the means of our neglecting religion and losing our souls.

2. It is of more importance to attend to the instructions of the Lord Jesus than to be engaged in the affairs of the world. The one will abide forever; the other will be but for a little time.

3. There "are" times when it is proper to suspend worldly employments, and to attend to the affairs of the soul. It "was" proper for Mary to do it. It would have been proper for Martha to have done it. It "is" proper for all on the Sabbath and at other occasional seasons - seasons of prayer and for searching the word of God - to suspend worldly concerns and to attend to religion.

4. If attention to religion be omitted at "the proper time," it will always be omitted. If Mary had neglected to hear Jesus "then," she might never have heard him.

5. Piety is the chief thing needed. Other things will perish. We shall soon die. All that we can gain we must leave. But the “soul” will live. There is a judgment-seat; there is a heaven; there is a hell; and “all” that is needful to prepare us to die, and to make us happy forever, is to be a friend of Jesus, and to listen to his teaching.

6. Piety is the chief ornament in a female. It sweetens every other virtue; adorns every other grace; gives new loveliness to the tenderness, mildness, and grace of the female character. Nothing is more lovely than a female sitting at the feet of the meek and lowly Jesus, like Mary; nothing more unlovely than entire absorption in the affairs of the world, like Martha. The most lovely female is she who has most of the spirit of Jesus; the least amiable, she who neglects her soul - who is proud, frivolous, thoughtless, envious, and unlike the meek and lowly Redeemer. At his feet are peace, purity, joy. Everywhere else an alluring and wicked world steals the affections and renders us vain, frivolous, wicked, proud, and unwilling to die.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

As he was praying - Luke has taken notice of our Saviour‘s praying often. Thus, at his baptism Luke 3:21; in the wilderness Luke 5:16; before the appointment of the apostles, he continued all night in prayer Luke 6:12; he was alone praying Luke 9:18; his transfiguration also took place when he went up to pray Luke 9:28-29.

Teach us to pray - Probably they had been struck with the excellency and fervor of his prayers, and, recollecting that “John” had taught his disciples to pray, they asked him also to teach “them.” We learn, therefore:

1.That the gifts and graces of others should lead us to desire the same.

2.That the true method of praying can be learned only by our being properly taught. Indeed, we cannot pray acceptably at all unless God shall teach us how to pray.

3.That it is proper for us to meditate beforehand what we are to ask of God, and to arrange our thoughts, that we may not come thoughtlessly into his presence.

Verses 2-4

See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 6:9-13.

Luke 11:4

For we also forgive … - This is somewhat different from the expression in Matthew, though the sense is the same. The idea is, that unless we forgive others, God will not forgive us; and unless we come to him “really” forgiving all others, we cannot expect pardon. It does not mean that by forgiving others we “deserve” forgiveness ourselves, or “merit it,” but that this is a disposition or state of mind without which God cannot consistently pardon us.

Every one that is indebted to us - Every one that has “injured” us. This does not refer to pecuniary transactions, but to offences similar to those which “we” have committed against God, and for which we ask forgiveness. Besides the variations in the “expressions” in this prayer, Luke has omitted the doxology, or close, altogether; and this shows that Jesus did nor intend that we should always use just this “form,” but that it was a

general direction how to pray; or, rather, that we were to pray for these "things," though not always using the same words.

Verses 5-7

And he said unto them … - Jesus proceeds to show that, in order to obtain the blessing, it was necessary to "persevere" in asking for it. For this purpose he introduces the case of a friend's asking bread of another for one who had come to him unexpectedly. His design is solely to show the necessity of being "importunate" or persevering in prayer to God.

At midnight - A time when it would be most inconvenient for his friend to help him; an hour when he would naturally be in bed and his house shut.

Three loaves - There is nothing particularly denoted by the number "three" in this place. Jesus often threw in such particulars merely to fill up the story, or to preserve the consistency of it.

My children are with me in bed - This does not necessarily mean that they were in the "same bed" with him, but that they were "all" in bed, the house was still, the door was shut, and it was troublesome for him to rise at that time of night to accommodate him. It should be observed, however, that the customs of Orientals differ in this respect from our own. Among them it is not uncommon indeed it is the common practice for a whole family - parents, children, and servants - to sleep in the same room. See "The Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 180. This is "not" to be applied to God, as if it were troublesome to him to be sought unto, or as if "he" would ever reply to a sinner in that manner. All that is to be applied to God in this parable is simply that it is proper to "persevere" in prayer. As a "man" often gives because the request is "repeated," and as one is not discouraged because the favor that he asks of his neighbor is "delayed," so God often answers us after long and importunate requests.

Verse 8

I tell you - The Latin Vulgate here adds, "if he shall continue knocking." Though this is not in the Greek, yet it is indispensable that it should be understood in order to the sense. Knocking "once" would not denote "importunity," but it was because he "continued" knocking.

His importunity - His troublesome perseverance; his continuing to disturb the man, and refusing to take any denial. The word "importunity" denotes perseverance in an object, without any regard to time, place, or circumstances - an improper perseverance. By this the man was influenced. Rather than be disturbed he would rise and give what was asked. This is to

be applied to God in no other sense than that he often hears prayers and grants blessings even "long after" they appear to be unanswered or withheld. He does not promise to give blessings "at once." He promises only that he will do it, or "will answer" prayer. But he often causes his people long to wait. He tries their faith. He leaves them to persevere for months or years, until they "feel" entirely their dependence on him, until they see that they can obtain the blessing in no other way, and until they are "prepared" to receive it. Often they are not prepared to receive it when they ask it at first. They may be proud, or have no just sense of their dependence, or they would not value the blessing, or it may "at that time" not be best for them to obtain it. But let no one despair. If the thing is for "our" good, and if it is proper that it "should" be granted, God will give it. Let us first ask aright; let us see that our minds are in a proper state; let us feel our need of the blessing; let us inquire whether God has "promised such" a blessing, and "then" let us persevere until God gives it. Again: people, when they ask anything of God, often give over seeking. They go "once," and if it is not granted they are discouraged. It is not so when we ask anything of people. "Then" we persevere; we take no denial; we go again, and "press" the matter until we obtain it. So we should of God. We should go again and again, until the prayer is heard, and God grants what we ask of him.

Verses 9-12

See this explained in the notes at Matthew 7:7-11.

Luke 11:12

"A scorpion" See the notes at Luke 10:19. Dr. Thomson (*The Land and the Book*, vol. i. p. 379) says: "There is no imaginable likeness between an egg and the ordinary black scorpion of this country, neither in color nor size, nor, when the tail is extended, in shape; but old writers speak of a "white" scorpion, and such a one, with the tail folded up, as in specimens of fossil trilobites, would not look unlike a small egg. Perhaps the contrast, however, refers only to the different properties of the egg and the scorpion, which is sufficiently emphatic."

Pliny ("N. H.," xi. 25) says that in Judea the scorpions are about the size of an egg, and not unlike one in shape.

Verses 14-23

See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 12:22-30.

Verses 24-26

See the notes at Matthew 12:43-45.

Verse 27-28

A certain woman - One of the crowd.

Blessed is the womb … - She thought that the "mother" of such a person must be especially happy in having such a son.

Yea, rather blessed … - Jesus admits that she was happy - that it was an honor to be his mother, but he says that the chief happiness, the highest honor, was to obey the word of God. Compared with this, all earthly distinctions and honors are as nothing. Man's greatest dignity is in keeping the holy commandments of God, and in being prepared for heaven. See the notes at Luke 10:20.

Verses 29-32

See the notes at Matthew 12:38-42.

Verses 33-36

These verses are found in Matthew, but in a different connection. See the notes at Matthew 5:15; Matthew 6:22-23.

Verse 37

And as he spake - While he was addressing the people, and particularly while he was reproving that generation and declaring its crimes.

A certain Pharisee - The Pharisees had been particularly referred to in the discourse of the Saviour recorded in the previous verses. This one, perhaps, having felt particularly the force of the remarks of Jesus, and being desirous of being alone with him, invited him to go home with him. There is little doubt that this was for the purpose of drawing him away from the people; that he did it with a malignant intention, perhaps with a design to confute Jesus in private, or to reprove him for thus condemning the whole nation as he did. He might have seen that those who attacked Jesus "publicly" were commonly unsuccessful, and he desired. probably, to encounter him more privately.

Besought him - Asked him.

To dine with him - The Jews, as well as the Greeks and Romans, had but two principal meals. The first was a slight repast, and was taken about ten or eleven o'clock of our time, and consisted chiefly of fruit, milk, cheese, etc. The second meal was partaken of about three o'clock P. M., and was their principal meal. The "first" is the one here intended.

He went in - Though he knew the evil design of the Pharisee, yet he did not decline the invitation. He knew that it might afford him an opportunity

to do good. These two things are to be observed in regard to our Saviour‘s conduct in such matters:

1.That he did not decline an invitation to dine with a man simply because he was a Pharisee, or because he was a wicked man. Hence, he was charged with being gluttonous, and a friend of publicans and sinners, Matthew 11:19.

2.He seized upon all occasions to do good. He never shrank from declaring the truth, and making such occasions the means of spreading the gospel. If Christians and Christian ministers would follow the example of the Saviour always, they would avoid all scandal, and might do even in such places a vast amount of good.

Sat down - Reclined at the table. See the notes at Matthew 23:6.

Verse 38

Saw it - Saw that he sat immediately down without washing.

Marvelled - Wondered. Was amazed. It was so unusual, and in his view so improper.

Had not first washed - He wondered particularly, as he had been among a mixed multitude, and they esteemed the “touch” of such persons polluting. They never ate, therefore, without such washing. The origin of the custom of washing with so much formality “before” they partook of their meals was that they did not use, as we do, knives and forks, but used their hands only. Hence, as their hands would be often in a dish on the table, it was esteemed proper that they should be washed clean before eating. Nor was their impropriety in the thing itself, but the Pharisees made it a matter of ceremony; they placed no small part of their religion in such ceremonies; and it was right, therefore, that our Lord should take occasion to reprove them for it. Compare Mark 7:4.

Verse 39

See Matthew 23:25. “Ravening.” Robbery, plunder. Here the sense is that the cup and platter were filled with what had been unjustly taken from others. That is, they lived by their wickedness; their food was procured by dishonesty and extortion. This was a most terrible charge; and as it was applied, among others, to the man who had invited the Saviour to dine with him, it shows that nothing would prevent his dealing faithfully with the souls of people. Even in the Pharisee‘s own house, and when expressly invited to partake of his hospitality, he loved his soul so much that he faithfully warned him of his crimes.

Verse 40

Ye fools - How unwise and wicked is your conduct! The word denotes not only "want of wisdom," but also wickedness. Compare Psalm 14:1; Proverbs 13:19; Proverbs 14:9. Your conduct is not merely "foolish," but it is a cloak for sin - designed to countenance wickedness.

Did not he … - Did not God, who made the "body," make also the "soul?" You Pharisees take great pains to cleanse the "body," under a pretence of pleasing "God." Did "he"" not also make the "mind?" and is it not of as much importance that "that" should be pure, as that the body should?

Verse 41

Alms - Charity. Benefactions to the poor.

Such things as ye have - Your property; though it has been gained unjustly: though you have lived by rapine, and have amassed wealth in an improper manner, yet, since "you have it," it is your duty to make the best of it and do good. By giving to the poor, you may show your repentance for your crimes in amassing money in this manner. You may show that you disapprove of your former course of life, and are disposed henceforward to live honestly. If this be the meaning of this passage, then it shows what is the duty of those who have by unjust gains become wealthy, and who are "then" converted to God. It may not be possible for them in every case to make exact restitution to those whom they have injured; thousands of instances of wrong they may have forgotten; many persons whom they have injured may have died; but still they may show, by giving to others, that they do not think their gains acquired honestly, and that they truly repent. They may devote their property to God; distribute it to the poor; or give it to send the gospel to the heathen world. Thus may they show that they disapprove of their former conduct; and thus may be seen one great principle of God's government - "that good finally comes out of evil."

And behold … - Doing this will show that you are a true penitent, and the remainder of your property you will enjoy with a feeling that you have done your duty, and no longer be smitten with the consciousness of hoarding unjust gains. The object of the Saviour here seems to have been to bring the Pharisee to repentance. Repentance consists in sorrow for sin, and in forsaking it. This he endeavored to produce by showing him:

1.The "evil" and hypocrisy of his conduct; and,

2.By “exhorting” him to ““forsake” his sins, and to “show” this by doing good.

Thus doing, he would evince that the “mind” was clean as well the “body;” the “inside” as well as the “outside.”

Verse 42

See Matthew 23:23.

Rue - This is a small garden plant, and is used as a medicine. It has a rosy flower, a bitter, penetrating taste, and a strong smell.

Verse 43-44

See Matthew 23:6, Matthew 23:27.

Verse 45

Lawyers - Men learned in the law; but it is not known in what way the lawyers differed from the “scribes,” or whether they were Pharisees or Sadducees.

Thus saying, thou … - He felt that the remarks of Jesus about loving the chief seats, etc., applied to them as well as to the Pharisees. His conscience told him that if “they” were to blame, “he” was also, and he therefore applied the discourse to himself.

Reproachest - Accusest. Dost calumniate or blame us, for we do the same things. Sinners often consider “faithfulness” as “reproach” - they know not how to separate them. Jesus did “not” reproach or abuse them. He dealt faithfully with them; reproved them; told them the unvarnished truth. Such faithfulness is rare; but when it “is” used, we must expect that people will flinch, perhaps be enraged. Though their consciences tell them they are “guilty,” still they will consider it as abuse.

Verse 46

See the notes at Matthew 23:4.

Verses 47-51

See the notes at Matthew 23:29-36.

Luke 11:49

The wisdom of God - By the “wisdom of God,” here, is undoubtedly meant the Saviour himself. What he immediately says is not written in the Old Testament. Jesus is called “the word of God” John 1:1, because he is the medium by which God “speaks” or makes his will known. He is called “the wisdom of God,” because by him God makes his wisdom known in creation (Colossians 1:13-18 and in redemption 1 Corinthians 1:30. Many

have also thought that the Messiah was referred to in the Proverbs 8:1 of Proverbs, under the name of Wisdom.

I will send … - See Luke 10:3; Matthew 10:16.

Shall slay … - Compare John 16:2; Acts 7:52, Acts 7:59; James 5:10; Acts 12:2; Acts 22:19; 2 Corinthians 11:24-25; 2 Chronicles 36:15-16.

Verse 52

Woe unto you, lawyers! - See the notes at Matthew 23:13.

The key of knowledge - A key is made to open a lock or door. By their false interpretation of the Old Testament they had taken away the true key or method of understanding it. They had hindered the people from understanding it aright. "You endeavor to prevent the people also from understanding the Scriptures respecting the Messiah, and those who were coming to "me" ye hindered." If there is any sin of special magnitude, it is that of keeping the people in ignorance; and few people are so guilty as they who by false instructions prevent them from coming to a knowledge of the truth, and embracing it as it is in Jesus.

Verse 53

To urge him vehemently - To press upon him "violently." They were enraged against him. They therefore pressed upon him; asked him many questions; sought to entrap him, that they might accuse him.

Provoke him … - This means that they put many questions to him about various matters, without giving him proper time to answer. They proposed questions as fast as possible, and about as many things as possible, that they might get him, in the hurry, to say something that would be wrong, that they might thus accuse him. This was a remarkable instance of their cunning, malignity, and unfairness.

Verse 54

Laying wait for him - Or, rather, laying "snares" for him It means that they endeavored to entangle him in his talk; that they did as men do who catch birds - who lay snares, and deceive them, and take them unawares.

That they might accuse him - Before the Sanhedrin, or great council of the nation, and thus secure his being put to death.

From this we may learn:

1. That faithful reproofs must be expected to excite opposition and hatred. Though the "conscience" may be roused, and may testify against the

man that is reproved, yet that does not prevent his hating the reproof and the reprover.

2. We see here the manner in which wicked people endeavor to escape the reproofs of conscience. Instead of repenting, they seek vengeance, and resolve to put the reprover to shame or to death.

3. We see the exceeding malignity which people have against the Lord Jesus. Well was it said that he was set for the fall of many in Israel, that thereby the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed! Luke 2:34-35. Men, now, are not by nature less opposed to Jesus than they were then.

4. We see the wisdom, purity, and firmness of the Saviour. To their souls he had been faithful. He had boldly reproved them for their sins. They sought his life. Multitudes of the artful and learned gathered around him, to endeavor to draw out something of which they might accuse him, yet in vain. Not a word fell from his lips of which they could accuse him. Everything that he said was calm, mild, peaceful, wise, and lovely. Even his cunning and bitter adversaries were always confounded, and retired in shame and confusion. Here, surely, must have been something more than man. None but "God manifest in the flesh" could have known all their designs, seen all their wickedness and their wiles, and escaped the cunning stratagems that were laid to confound and entangle him in his conversation.

5. The same infinitely wise Saviour can still meet and confound all his own enemies and those of his people, and deliver all his followers, as he did himself, from all the snares laid by a wicked world to lead them to sin and death.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

In the mean time - While he was discoursing with the scribes and Pharisees, as recorded in the last chapter.

An innumerable multitude - The original word is "myriad's," or ten thousands. It is used here to signify that there was a great crowd or collection of people, who were anxious to hear him. Multitudes were attracted to the Saviour's ministry, and it is worthy of remark that he never had more to hear him than when he was most faithful and severe in his reproofs of sinners. Men's consciences are on the side of the faithful reprover of their sins; and though they deeply feel the reproof, yet they will still respect and hear him that reproves.

To his disciples first of all - This does not mean that his disciples were, before all others, to avoid hypocrisy, but that this was the "first" or chief thing of which they were to beware. The meaning is this: "He said to his disciples, "Above all things beware," etc.

The leaven - See the notes at Matthew 16:6.

Which is hypocrisy - See the notes at Matthew 7:5. Hypocrisy is like leaven or yeast, because:

1.It may exist without being immediately detected. Leaven mixed in flour is not known until it produces its effects.

2.It is insinuating. Leaven will soon pervade the whole mass. So hypocrisy will, if undetected and unremoved, soon pervade all our exercises and feelings.

3.It is swelling. It puffs us up, and fills us with pride and vanity. No man is more proud than the hypocrite, and none is more odious to God. When Jesus cautions them to beware of "the leaven of the Pharisees," he means that they should be cautious about imbibing their spirit and becoming like them. The religion of Jesus is one of sincerity, of humility, of an entire want of disguise. The humblest man is the best Christian, and he who has the least disguise is most like his Master.

Verses 2-9

Nothing covered - See the notes at Matthew 10:26-32.

Luke 12:3

Shall be proclaimed upon the housetops - See the notes at Matthew 10:27. The custom of making proclamation from the tops or roofs of houses still prevails in the East. Dr. Thomson ("The Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 51,52) says: "At the present day, local governors in country districts cause their commands thus to be published. Their proclamations are generally made in the evening, after the people have returned from their labors in the field. The public crier ascends the highest roof at hand, and lifts up his voice in a long-drawn call upon all faithful subjects to give ear and obey. He then proceeds to announce, in a set form, the will of their master, and demand obedience thereto."

Verse 10

See the notes at Matthew 12:32.

Verse 11-12

See the notes at Matthew 10:17-20.

Verse 13

One of the company - One of the multitude. This man had probably had a dispute with his brother, supposing that his brother had refused to do him justice. Conceiving that Jesus had power over the people - that what he said must be performed - he endeavored to secure him on his side of the dispute and gain his point. From the parable which follows, it would appear that he had no "just" claim on the inheritance, but was influenced by covetousness. Besides, if he "had" any just claim, it might have been secured by the laws of the land,

Speak to my brother - Command my brother.

Divide the inheritance - An inheritance is the property which is left by a father to his children. Among the Jews the older brother had two shares, or twice as much as any other child, Deuteronomy 21:17. The remainder was then equally divided among all the children.

Verse 14

Who made me a judge? - It is not my business to settle controversies of this kind. They are to be settled by the magistrate. Jesus came for another purpose - to preach the gospel, and so to bring people to "a willingness to do" right. Civil affairs are to be left to the magistrate. There is no doubt that Jesus "could" have told him what was right in this case, but then it would have been interfering with the proper office of the magistrates; it might have led him into controversy with the Jews; and it was, besides, evidently apart from the proper business of his life. We may remark, also, that the

appropriate business of ministers of the gospel is to attend to spiritual concerns. They should have little to do with the temporal matters of the people. If they can "persuade men" who are at variance to be reconciled, it is right; but they have no power to take the place of a magistrate, and to settle contentions in a legal way.

Verse 15

Beware of covetousness - One of these brothers, no doubt, was guilty of this sin; and our Saviour, as was his custom, took occasion to warn his disciples of its danger.

Covetousness - An unlawful desire of the property of another; also a desire of gain or riches beyond what is necessary for our wants. It is a violation of the tenth commandment Exodus 20:17, and is expressly called idolatry Colossians 3:5. Compare, also, Ephesians 5:3, and Hebrews 13:5.

A man's life - The word "life" is sometimes taken in the sense of happiness or felicity, and some have supposed this to be the meaning here, and that Jesus meant to say that a man's comfort does not depend on affluence - that is, on more than is necessary for his daily wants; but this meaning does not suit the parable following, which is designed to show that property will not lengthen out a man's life, and therefore is not too ardently to be sought, and is of little value. The word "life," therefore, is to be taken "literally."

Consisteth not - Rather, "dependeth" not on his possessions. His possessions will not prolong it. The passage, then, means: Be not anxious about obtaining wealth, for, however much you may obtain, it will not prolong your life. "That" depends on the will of God, and it requires something besides wealth to make us ready to meet him. This sentiment he proceeds to illustrate by a beautiful parable.

Verse 16

A parable - See the notes at Matthew 13:3.

Plentifully - His land was fertile, and produced even beyond his expectations, and beyond what he had provided for.

Verse 17

He thought within himself - He reasoned or inquired. He was anxious and perplexed. Riches increase thought and perplexity. Indeed, this is almost their only effect - to engross the thoughts and steal the heart away from better things, in order to take care of the useless wealth.

No room - Everything was full.

To bestow - To place, to hoard, to collect.

My fruits - Our word "fruits" is not applied to "grain;" but the Greek word is applied to all the produce of the earth - not only "fruit," but also grain. This is likewise the old meaning of the English word, especially in the plural number.

Verse 18

I will pull down my barns - The word "barns" here, properly means, "granaries," or places exclusively designed to put wheat, barley, etc. They were commonly made, by the ancients, "underground," where grain could be kept a long time more safe from thieves and from vermin. If it be asked why he did not let the old ones remain and build new ones, it may be answered that it would be easier to "enlarge" those already excavated in the earth than to dig new ones.

Verse 19

Much goods - Much property. Enough to last a long while, so that there is no need of anxiety or labor.

Take thine ease - Be free from care about the future. Have no anxiety about coming to want.

Eat, drink, and be merry - This was just the doctrine of the ancient Epicureans and atheists, and it is, alas! too often the doctrine of those who are rich. They think that all that is valuable in life is to eat, and drink, and be cheerful or merry. Hence, their chief anxiety is to obtain the "delicacies of the season " - the luxuries of the world; to secure the productions of every clime at any expense, and to be distinguished for splendid repasts and a magnificent style of living. What a portion is this for an immortal soul! What folly to think that "all" that a man lives for is to satisfy his sensual appetites; to forget that he has an intellect to be cultivated, a heart to be purified, a soul to be saved!

Verse 20

Thou fool - If there is any supreme folly, it is this. As though riches could prolong life, or avert for a moment the approach of pain and death.

This night … - What an awful sentence to a man who, as he thought, had got just ready to live and enjoy himself! In a single moment all his hopes were blasted, and his soul summoned to the bar of his long-forgotten God. So, many are surprised as suddenly and as unprepared. They are snatched from their pleasures, and hurried to a world where there is no

pleasure, and where all their wealth cannot purchase one moment's ease from the gnawings of the worm that never dies.

Shall be required of thee - Thou shalt be required to die, to go to God, and to give up your account.

Then whose … - Whose they may be is of little consequence to the man that lost his soul to gain them; but they are often left to heirs that dissipate them much sooner than the father procured them, and thus they secure "their" ruin as well as his own. See Psalm 39:6; Ecclesiastes 2:18-19.

Verse 21

So is he - This is the portion or the doom.

Layeth up treasure for himself - Acquires riches for his own use - for "himself." This is the characteristic of the covetous man. It is all for "himself." His plans terminate there. He lives only for himself, and acts only with regard to his own interest.

Rich toward God - Has no inheritance in the kingdom of God - no riches laid up in heaven. His affections are all fixed on this world, and he has none for God.

From this instructive parable we learn:

1. That wicked people are often signally prospered - their ground brings forth plentifully. God gives them their desire, but sends leanness into their souls.

2. That riches bring with them always an increasing load of cares and anxieties.

3. That they steal away the affections from God - are sly, insinuating, and dangerous to the soul.

4. That the anxiety of a covetous man is not what "good" he may do with his wealth, but where he may hoard it, and keep it secure from doing any good.

5. That riches cannot secure their haughty owners from the grave. Death will come upon them suddenly, unexpectedly, awfully. In the very midst of the brightest anticipations - in a moment - in the twinkling of an eye it may

come, and all the wealth that has been accumulated cannot alleviate one pang, or drive away one fear, or prolong life for one moment.

6. That the man who is trusting to his riches in this manner is a fool in the sight of God. Soon, also, he will be a fool in his "own" sight, and will go to hell with the consciousness that his life has been one of eminent folly.

7. That the path of true wisdom is to seek first the kingdom of God, and to be ready to die; and "then" it matters little what is our portion here, or how suddenly or soon we are called away to meet our Judge. If our affections are not fixed on our riches, we shall leave them without regret. If our treasures are laid up in heaven, death will be but "going home," and happy will be that moment when we are called to our rest.

Verses 22-31

See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 6:25-33.

Verse 32

Little flock - Our Saviour often represents himself as a shepherd, and his followers as a flock or as sheep. The figure was beautiful. In Judea it was a common employment to attend flocks. The shepherd was with them, defended them, provided for them, led them to green pastures and beside still waters. In all these things Jesus was and is eminently the Good Shepherd. His flock was small. Few "really" followed him, compared with the multitude who professed to love him. But, though small in number, they were not to fear. God was their Friend. He would provide for them. It was his purpose to give them the kingdom, and they had nothing to fear. See Matthew 6:19-21.

Verse 33

Sell that ye have - Sell your property. Exchange it for that which you can use in distributing charity. This was the condition of their being disciples. Their property they gave up; they forsook it, or they put it into common stock, for the sake of giving alms to the poor, Acts 2:44; Acts 4:32; John 12:6; Acts 5:2.

Bags which wax not old - The word "bags," here, means "purses," or the bags attached to their girdles, in which they carried their money. See the notes at Matthew 5:38. By bags which wax not old Jesus means that we should lay up treasure in heaven; that our aim should be to be prepared to

enter there, where all our wants will be forever provided for. Purses, here, grow old and useless. Wealth takes to itself wings. Riches are easily scattered, or we must soon leave them; but that wealth which is in heaven abides forever. It never is corrupted; never flies away; never is to be left.

Wax - This word is from an old Saxon word, and in the Bible means to "grow."

Verse 35-36

Let your loins … - This alludes to the ancient manner of dress. They wore a long flowing robe as their outer garment. See the notes at Matthew 5:38-41. When they labored, or walked, or ran, it was necessary to "gird" or tie this up by a "sash" or girdle about the body, that it might not impede their progress. Hence, to gird up the loins means to be "ready," to be active, to be diligent. Compare 2 Kings 4:29; 2 Kings 9:1; Jeremiah 1:17; Acts 12:8.

Your lights burning - This expresses the same meaning. Be ready at all times to leave the world and enter into rest, when your Lord shall call you. Let every obstacle be out of the way; let every earthly care be removed, and be prepared to follow him into his rest. Servants were expected to be ready for the coming of their lord. If in the night, they were expected to keep their lights trimmed and burning. When their master was away in attendance on a wedding, as they knew not the hour when he would return, they were to be continually ready. So we, as we know not the hour when God shall call us, should be "always" ready to die. Compare the notes at Matthew 25:1-13.

Verse 37

Shall gird himself - Shall take the place of the servant himself. Servants who waited on the table were girded in the manner described above.

Shall make them sit … - Shall place them at his table and feast them. This evidently means that if we are faithful to Christ, and are ready to meet him when he returns, he will receive us into heaven - will admit us to all its blessings, and make us happy there - as if "he" should serve us and minister to our wants. It will be as if a master, instead of sitting down at the table "himself," should place his faithful "servants" there, and be himself the servant. This shows the exceeding kindness and condescension of our Lord. For "us," poor and guilty sinners, he denied himself, took the form of a servant Philemon 2:7, and ministered to our wants. In our nature he has worked out salvation, and he has done it in one of the humblest conditions of the children of men. How should our bosoms burn with gratitude to him,

and how should "we" be willing to serve one another! See the notes at John 13:1-17.

Verses 38-46

See the notes at Matthew 24:42-51.

Second watch - See the notes at Matthew 14:25.

Verse 47

Which knew his lord's will - Who knew what his master wished him to do. He that knows what God commands and requires.

Many stripes - Shall be severely and justly punished. They who have many privileges, who are often warned, who have the gospel, and do not repent and believe, shall be far more severely punished than others. They who are early taught in Sunday schools, or by pious parents, or in other ways, and who grow up in sin and impenitence, will have much more to answer for than those who have no such privileges.

Verse 48

Few stripes - The Jews never inflicted more than forty stripes for one offence, Deuteronomy 25:3. For smaller offences they inflicted only four, five, six, etc., according to the nature of the crime. In allusion to this, our Lord says that he "that knew not" - that is, he who had comparatively little knowledge - would suffer a punishment proportionally light. He refers, doubtless, to those who have fewer opportunities, smaller gifts, or fewer teachers.

Much is given - They who have much committed to their disposal, as stewards, etc. See the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30.

Verse 49

I am, come … - The result of my coming will be that there will be divisions and contentions. He does not mean that he came "for" that purpose, or that he "sought" and "desired" it; but that such was the state of the human heart, and such the opposition of people to the truth, that that would be the "effect" of his coming. See the notes at Matthew 10:34.

Fire - Fire, here, is the emblem of discord and contention, and consequently of calamities. Thus it is used in Psalm 66:12; Isaiah 43:2.

And what will I … - This passage might be better expressed in this manner: "And what would I, but that it were kindled. Since it is "necessary" for the advancement of religion that such divisions should take place; since the gospel cannot be established without conflicts, and strifes, and hatreds, I am even desirous that they should come. Since the greatest blessing which

mankind can receive must be attended with such unhappy divisions, I am willing, nay, desirous that they should come." He did not wish evil in itself; but, as it was the occasion of good, he was desirous, if it "must" take place, that it should take place soon. From this we learn:

1.That the promotion of religion may be expected to produce many contests and bitter feelings.

2.That the heart of man must be exceedingly wicked, or it would not oppose a work like the Christian religion.

3.That though God cannot look on evil with approbation, yet, for the sake of the benefit which may grow out of it, he is willing to permit it, and suffer it to come into the world.

Verse 50

A baptism - See the notes at Matthew 20:22.

Am I straitened - How do I earnestly desire that it were passed! Since these sufferings "must" be endured, how anxious am I that the time should come! Such were the feelings of the Redeemer in view of his approaching dying hour. We may learn from this:

1.That it is not improper to "feel deeply" at the prospect of dying. It is a sad, awful, terrible event; and it is impossible that we should look at it aright "without" feeling - scarcely without trembling.

2.It is not improper to desire that the time should come, and that the day of our release should draw nigh, Philemon 1:23. To the Christian, death is but the entrance to life; and since the pains of death "must" be endured, and since they lead to heaven, it matters little how soon he passes through these sorrows, and rises to his eternal rest.

sa40

Verses 51-53

See the notes at Matthew 10:34-36.

Verses 54-57

See the notes at Matthew 16:2-3.

South wind - To the south and southwest of Judea were situated Arabia, Egypt, and Ethiopia, all warm or hot regions, and consequently the air that came from those quarters was greatly heated.

How is it that ye do not discern this time! - You see a cloud rise, and predict a shower; a south wind, and expect heat. These are regular events.

So you see my miracles; you hear my preaching; you have the predictions of me in the prophets; why do you not, in like manner, infer that "this is the time" when the Messiah should appear?

Verse 58-59

See the notes at Matthew 5:25-26.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

There were present - That is, some persons who were present, and who had heard his discourse recorded in the previous chapter. There was probably a pause in his discourse, when they mentioned what had been done by Pilate to the Galileans.

At that season - At that time - that is the time mentioned in the last chapter. At what period of our Lord‘s ministry this was, it is not easy to determine.

Some that told him - This was doubtless an event of recent occurrence. Jesus, it is probable, had not before heard of it. Why they told him of it can only be a matter of conjecture. It might be from the desire to get him to express an opinion respecting the conduct of Pilate, and thus to involve him in difficulty with the reigning powers of Judea. It might be as a mere matter of news. But, from the answer of Jesus, it would appear that “they” supposed that the Galileans “deserved” it, and that they meant to pass a judgment on the character of those people, a thing of which they were exceedingly fond. The answer of Jesus is a reproof of their habit of hastily judging the character of others.

Galileans - People who lived in Galilee. See the notes at Matthew 2:22. They were not under the jurisdiction of Pilate, but of Herod. The Galileans, in the time of Christ, were very wicked.

Whose blood Pilate had mingled … - That is, while they were sacrificing at Jerusalem, Pilate came suddenly upon them and killed them, and “their” blood was mingled with the blood of the animals that they were slaying for sacrifice. It does not mean that Pilate “offered” their blood in sacrifice, but only that as they were sacrificing he killed them. The fact is not mentioned by Josephus, and nothing more is known of it than what is here recorded. We learn, however, from Josephus that the Galileans were very wicked, and that they were much disposed to broils and seditions. It appears, also, that Pilate and Herod had a quarrel with each other Luke 23:12, and it is not improbable that Pilate might feel a particular enmity to the subjects of Herod. It is likely that the Galileans excited a tumult in the temple, and that Pilate took occasion to come suddenly upon them, and show his opposition to them and Herod by slaying them. “Pilate.” The Roman governor of Judea. See the notes at Matthew 27:2.

Verse 2-3

Suppose ye … - From this answer it would appear that they supposed that the fact that these men had been slain in this manner proved that they were very great sinners.

I tell you, Nay - Jesus assured them that it was not right to draw such a conclusion respecting these men. The fact that men come to a sudden and violent death is not proof that they are especially wicked.

Except ye repent - Except you forsake your sins and turn to God. Jesus took occasion, contrary to their expectation, to make a practical use of that fact, and to warn them of their own danger. He never suffered a suitable occasion to pass without warning the wicked, and entreating them to forsake their evil ways. The subject of religion was always present to his mind. He introduced it easily, freely, fully. In this he showed his love for the souls of people, and in this he set us an example that we should walk in his steps.

Ye shall all likewise perish - You shall all be destroyed in a similar manner. Here he had reference, no doubt, to the calamities that were coming upon them, when thousands of the people perished. Perhaps there was never any reproof more delicate and yet more severe than this. They came to him believing that these men who had perished were especially wicked. He did not tell them that "they" were as bad as the Galileans, but left them to "infer" it, for if they did not repent, they must soon likewise be destroyed. This was remarkably fulfilled. Many of the Jews were slain in the temple; many while offering sacrifice; thousands perished in a way very similar to the Galileans. Compare the notes at Matthew 24. From this account of the Galileans we may learn:

(1) That people are very prone to infer, when any great calamity happens to others, that they are especially guilty. See the Book of Job, and the reasonings of his three "friends."

(2) that that conclusion, in the way in which it is usually drawn, is erroneous. If we see a man bloated, and haggard, and poor, who is in the habit of intoxication, we may infer properly that he is guilty, and that God hates his sin and punishes it. So we may infer of the effects of licentiousness. But we should not thus infer when a man's house is burned down, or when his children die, or when he is visited with a loss of health; nor should we infer it of the nations that are afflicted with famine, or the

plague, or with the ravages of war; nor should we infer it when a man is killed by lightning, or when he perishes by the blowing up of a steamboat. Those who thus perish may be far more virtuous than many that live.

(3) this is not a world of retribution. Good and evil are mingled; the good and the bad suffer, and all are exposed here to calamity.

(4) there is another world a future state - a world where the good will be happy and the wicked punished. There all that is irregular on earth will be regulated; all that appears unequal will be made equal; all that is chaotic will be reduced to order.

(5) when people are disposed to speak about the great guilt of others, and the calamities that come upon them, they should inquire about "themselves." What is "their" character? What is "their" condition? It "may" be that they are in quite as much danger of perishing as those are whom they regard as so wicked.

(6) We must repent. We must all repent or we shall perish. No matter what befalls others, "we" are sinners; "we" are to die; "we" shall be lost unless we repent. Let us, then, think of "ourselves" rather than of "others;" and when we hear of any signal calamity happening to others, let us remember that there is calamity in another world as well as here; and that while our fellow-sinners are exposed to trials "here," we may be exposed to more awful woes "there." Woe "there" is eternal; here, a calamity like that produced by a falling tower is soon over.

Verse 4

Or those eighteen - Jesus himself adds another similar case, to warn them - a case which had probably occurred not long before, and which it is likely they judged in the same manner.

Upon whom the tower in Siloam fell - The name Siloah or Siloam is found only three times in the Bible as applied to water - once in Isaiah 8:6, who speaks of it as running water; once as a pool near to the king's garden in Nehemiah 3:15; and once as a pool, in the account of the Saviour's healing the man born blind, in John 9:7-11. Josephus mentions the fountain of Siloam frequently as situated at the mouth of the Valley of Tyropoeon, or

the Valley of Cheesemongers, where the fountain long indicated as that fountain is still found. It is on the south side of Mount Moriah, and between that and the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The water at present flows out of a small artificial basin under the cliff, and is received into a large reservoir 53 feet in length by 18 feet in breadth. The small upper basin or fountain excavated in the rock is merely the entrance, or rather the termination of a long and narrow subterranean passage beyond, by which the water comes from the Fountain of the Virgin. For what purpose the "tower" here referred to was erected is not known; nor is it known at what time the event here referred to occurred. It is probable that it was not far from the time when the Saviour made use of the illustration, for the manner in which he refers to it implies that it was fresh in the recollection of those to whom he spoke.

Verse 5

I tell you, Nay - It is improper to suppose that those on whom heavy judgments fall in this world are the worst of people. This is not a world of retribution. Often the most wicked are suffered to prosper here, and their punishment is reserved for another world; while the righteous are called to suffer much, and "appear" to be under the sore displeasure of God, Psalm 73. This only we know, that the wicked will not always escape; that God is just; and that none who do suffer here or hereafter, suffer more than they deserve. In the future world, all that seems to be unequal here will be made equal and plain.

Verse 6

This parable - See the notes at Matthew 13:3.

Vineyard - A place where vines were planted. It was not common to plant fig-trees in them, but our Lord represents it as having been sometimes done.

Verse 7

The dresser of his vineyard - The man whose duty it was to trim the vines and take care of his vineyard.

These three years - These words are not to be referred to the time which Christ had been preaching the gospel, as if he meant to specify the exact period. They mean, as applicable to the vineyard, that the owner had been "a long time" expecting fruit on the tree. For three successive years he had been disappointed. In his view it was long enough to show that the tree was barren and would yield no fruit, and that therefore it should be cut down.

Why cumbereth it the ground? - The word “cumber” here means to render “barren” or “sterile.” By taking up the juices of the earth, this useless tree rendered the ground sterile, and prevented the growth of the neighboring vines. It was not merely “useless,” but was doing mischief, which may be said of all sinners and all hypocritical professors of religion. Dr. Thomson (“The Land and the Book,” vol. i. p. 539) says of the barren fig-tree: “There are many such trees now; and if the ground is not properly cultivated, especially when the trees are young - as the one of the parable was, for only “three” years are mentioned they do not bear at all; and even when full grown they quickly fail, and wither away if neglected. Those who expect to gather good crops of well-flavored figs are particularly attentive to their culture - not only plow and dig about them frequently, and manure them plentifully, but they carefully gather out the stones from the orchards, contrary to their general slovenly habits.”

This parable is to be taken in connection with what goes before, and with our Saviour‘s calling the Jewish nation to repentance. It was spoken to illustrate the dealings of God with them, and their own wickedness under all his kindness, and we may understand the different parts of the parable as designed to represent:

1.God, by the man who owned the vineyard.

2.The vineyard as the Jewish people.

3.The coming of the owner for fruit, the desire of God that they should produce good works.

4.The barrenness of the tree, the wickedness of the people.

5.The dresser was perhaps intended to denote the Saviour and the other messengers of God, pleading that God would spare the Jews, and save them from their enemies that stood ready to destroy them, as soon as God should permit.

6.His waiting denotes the delay of vengeance, to give them an opportunity of repentance. And,

7.The remark of the dresser that he might “then” cut it down, denotes the acquiescence of all in the belief that such a judgment would be just.

We may also remark that God treats sinners in this manner now; that he spares them long; that he gives them opportunities of repentance; that many live but to cumber the ground; that they are not only useless to the church, but pernicious to the world; that in due time, when they are fairly tried, they shall be cut down; and that the universe will bow to the awful decree of God, and say that their damnation is just.

Verse 11

There was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity - Was infirm, or was weak and afflicted. This was produced by Satan, Luke 13:16.

Eighteen years - This affliction had continued a long time. This shows that the miracle was real; that the disease was not feigned. Though thus afflicted, yet it seems she was regular in attending the worship of God in the synagogue. There in the sanctuary, is the place where the afflicted find consolation; and there it was that the Saviour met her and restored her to health. It is in the sanctuary and on the Sabbath, also, that he commonly meets his people, and gives them the joys of his salvation.

Verse 12

Thou art loosed from thine infirmity - This was a remarkable declaration. It does not appear that the woman "applied" to him for a cure; yet Jesus addressed her, and the disease departed. How clear would be the proofs from such a case that he was the Messiah! And how mighty the power of him that by a word could restore her to health!

Verse 13

Glorified God - Praised God. Gave thanks to him for healing her. They who are restored to health from sickness owe it to God; and they should devote their lives to his service, as expressive of their sense of gratitude to him who has spared them.

Verse 14

Answered with indignation, because … - He considered this a violation of the Sabbath, doing work contrary to the fourth commandment. If he had reasoned aright, he would have seen that he who could perform such a miracle could not be a violator of the law of God. From this conduct of the ruler we learn:

1.That people are often opposed to good being done, because it is not done "in their own way" and "according to their own views."

2.That they are more apt to look at what they consider a violation of the law in others, than at the good which others may do.

3.That this opposition is manifested not only against those who do good, but also against those who are "benefited." The ruler of the synagogue seemed particularly indignant that "the people" would come to Christ to be healed.

4.That this conduct is often the result of envy. In this case it was rather hatred that the people should follow Christ instead of the Jewish rulers, and therefore envy at the popularity of Jesus, than any real regard for religion.

5.That opposition to the work of Jesus may put on the appearance of great professed regard for religion. Many people oppose revivals, missions, Bible societies, and Sunday-schools - strange as it may seem - "from professed regard to the purity of religion." They, like the ruler here, have formed their notions of religion as consisting in something "very different from doing good," and they oppose those who are attempting to spread the gospel throughout the world.

Verse 15

Thou hypocrite! - You condemn "me" for an action, and yet you perform one exactly similar. You condemn "me" for doing to a woman what you do to a beast. To her I have done good on the Sabbath; you provide for your cattle, and yet blame me for working a miracle to relieve a sufferer on that day.

Stall - A place where cattle are kept to be fed, and sheltered from the weather.

Verse 16

A daughter of Abraham - A descendant of Abraham. See the notes at Matthew 1:1. She was therefore a Jewess; and the ruler of the synagogue, professing a special regard for the Jewish people, considering them as especially favored of God, should have rejoiced that she was loosed from this infirmity.

Whom Satan hath bound - Satan is the name given to the prince or leader of evil spirits, called also the devil, Beelzebub, and the old serpent, Matthew 12:24; Revelation 12:9; Revelation 20:2. By his "binding" her is meant that he had inflicted this disease upon her. It was not properly a "possession" of the devil, for that commonly produced derangement; but

God had suffered him to afflict her in this manner, similar to the way in which he was permitted to try Job. See the notes at Job 1:12; Job 2:6-7. It is no more "improbable" that God would suffer "Satan" to inflict pain, than that he would suffer a wicked "man" to do it; yet nothing is more common than for one "man" to be the occasion of bringing on a disease in another which may terminate only with the life. He that seduces a virtuous man and leads him to intemperance, or he that wounds him or strikes him, may disable him as much as Satan did this woman. If God permits it in one case, he may, for the same reason, in another.

Verse 17

Adversaries - The ruler of the synagogue, and those who felt as he did.

All the people - The persons who attended the synagogue, and who had witnessed the miracle. It is to be remarked:

1.That those who opposed Christ were chiefly the "rulers." They had an "interest" in doing it. Their popularity was at stake. They were afraid that he would draw off the people from them.

2.The common people heard him gladly. Many of them believed in him. The condition of the poor, and of those in humble life, is by far the most favorable for religion, and most of the disciples of Jesus have been found there.

Verses 18-21

See these parables explained in the notes at Matthew 13:31-32.

Verse 22

Cities and villages - Chiefly of Galilee, and those which were between Galilee and Jerusalem.

Teaching and journeying - This evinces the diligence of our Lord. Though on a journey, yet he remembered his work. He did not excuse himself on the plea that he was in haste. Christians and Christian ministers should remember that when their Master traveled he did not "conceal" his character, or think that he was then freed from obligation to do good.

Verse 23

Then said one - Who this was does not appear. It is probable that he was not one of the disciples, but one of the Jews, who came either to perplex him, or to involve him in a controversy with the Pharisees.

Are there few that be saved? - It was the prevalent opinion among the Jews that few would enter heaven. As but two of all the hosts that came out

of Egypt entered into the land of Canaan, so some of them maintained that a proportionally small number would enter into heaven (Lightfoot). On this subject the man wished the opinion of Jesus. It was a question of idle curiosity. The answer to it would have done little good. It was far more important for the man to secure his own salvation, than to indulge in such idle inquiries and vain speculations. Our Lord therefore advised "him," as he does "all, to strive" to enter into heaven.

Verse 24

Strive - Literally, "agonize." The word is taken from the Grecian games. In their races, and wrestlings, and various athletic exercises, they "strove or agonized," or put forth all their powers to gain the victory. Thousands witnessed them. They were long trained for the conflict, and the honor of victory was one of the highest honors among the people. So Jesus says that we should strive to enter in; and he means by it that we should be diligent, be active, be earnest; that we should make it our first and chief business to overcome our sinful propensities, and to endeavor to enter into heaven. This same figure or allusion to the Grecian games is often used in the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 9:24-26; Philemon 2:16; Hebrews 12:1.

Strait gate - See the notes at Matthew 7:13-14. Dr. Thomson ("The Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 32) says: "I have seen these strait gates and narrow ways, ‹with here and there a traveler.‘ They are in retired corners, and must be sought for, and are opened only to those who knock; and when the sun goes down and the night comes on, they are shut and locked. It is then too late."

Will seek to enter in - Many in various ways manifest some desire to be saved. They seek it, but do not agonize for it, and hence, they are shut out. But a more probable meaning of this passage is that which refers this "seeking" to a time that shall be "too late;" to the time when the master has risen up, etc. In this life they neglect religion, and are engaged about other things. At death, or at the judgment, they will seek to enter in; but it will be too late - the door will be shut; and because they did not make religion the chief business of their life, they cannot "then" enter in.

Shall not be able - This is not designed to affirm anything respecting the inability of the sinner, provided he seeks salvation in a proper time and manner. It means that at the time when many will seek - when the door is shut - they will not be able then to enter in, agreeable to Matthew 7:22. In the proper time, when the day of grace was lengthened out, they "might"

have entered in; but there "will be" a time when it will be too late. The day of mercy will be ended, and death will come, and the doors of heaven barred against them. How important, then, to strive to enter in while we have opportunity, and before it shall be too late!

Verse 25

When once the master … - The figure here used is taken from the conduct of a housekeeper, who is willing to see his friends, and who at the proper time keeps his doors open. But there is a proper time for closing them, when he will not see his guests. At night it would be improper and vain to seek an entrance - the house would be shut. So there is a proper time to seek an entrance into heaven; but there will be a time when it will be too late. At death the time will have passed by, and God will be no longer gracious to the sinner's soul.

Verse 26

We have eaten … - Compare Matthew 7:22-23. To have eaten with one is evidence of acquaintanceship or friendship. So the sinner may allege that he was a professed follower of Jesus, and had some evidence that Jesus was his friend. There is no allusion here, however, to the sacrament. The figure is taken from the customs of people, and means simply that they had professed attachment, and perhaps supposed that Jesus was their friend.

In thy presence - With thee - as one friend does with another.

Thou hast taught - Thou didst favor us, as though thou didst love us. Thou didst not turn away from us, and we did not drive thee away. All this is alleged as proof of friendship. It shows us:

1.On how slight evidence people will suppose themselves ready to die. How slender is the preparation which even many professed friends of Jesus have for death! How easily they are satisfied about their own piety! A profession of religion, attendance on the preaching of the word or at the sacraments, or a decent external life, is all they have and all they seek. With this they go quietly on to eternity - go to disappointment, wretchedness, and woe!

2.None of these things will avail in the day of judgment. It will be only true love to God, a real change of heart, and a life of piety, that can save the soul from death. And oh! how important it is that all should search themselves and see what is the real foundation of their hope that they shall enter into heaven!

Verse 27

See the notes at Matthew 7:23.

Verses 28-30

See the notes at Matthew 8:11-12.

Verse 31

Came certain of thee Pharisees - Their coming to him in this manner would have the appearance of friendship, as if they had conjectured or secretly learned that it was Herod's intention to kill him. Their suggestion had much appearance of probability. Herod had killed John. He knew that Jesus made many disciples, and was drawing away many of the people. He was a wicked man, and he might be supposed to fear the presence of one who had so strong a resemblance to John, whom he had slain. It might seem probable, therefore, that he intended to take the life of Jesus, and this might appear as a friendly hint to escape him. Yet it is more than possible that Herod might have sent these Pharisees to Jesus. Jesus was eminently popular, and Herod might not dare openly to put him to death; yet he desired his removal, and for this purpose he sent these people, as if in a friendly way, to advise him to retire. This was probably the reason why Jesus called him a fox.

Herod - Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great. He ruled over Galilee and Perea, and wished Jesus to retire beyond these regions. See the notes at Luke 3:1.

Verse 32

Tell that fox - A fox is an emblem of slyness, of cunning, and of artful mischief. The word is also used to denote a dissembler. Herod was a wicked man, but the "particular thing" to which Jesus here alludes is not his "vices," but his "cunning, his artifice," in endeavoring to remove him out of his territory. He had endeavored to do it by stratagem - by sending these people who pretended great friendship for his life.

Behold, I cast out devils … - Announce to him the fact that I am working miracles in his territory, and that I shall continue to do it. I am not afraid of his art or his enmity. I am engaged in my appropriate work, and shall continue to be as long as is proper, in spite of his arts and his threats.

Today and tomorrow - A little time. The words seem here to be used not strictly, but proverbially - to denote a short space of time. Let not Herod be uneasy. I am doing no evil; I am not violating the laws. I only cure the

sick, etc. In a little time this part of my work will be done, and I shall retire from his dominions.

The third day - After a little time. Perhaps, however, he meant "literally" that he would depart on that day for Jerusalem; that for two or three days more he would remain in the villages of Galilee, and then go on his way to Jerusalem.

I shall be perfected - Rather, I shall have ended my course "here;" I shall have "perfected" what I purpose to do in Galilee. It does not refer to his "personal" perfection, for he was always perfect, but it means that he would have "finished or completed" what he purposed to do in the regions of Herod. He would have completed his work, and would be ready then to go.

Verse 33

I must walk … - I must remain here this short time. These three days I must do cures here, and then I shall depart, though not for fear of Herod. It will be because my time will have come, and I shall go up to Jerusalem to die.

For it cannot be that a prophet should perish out of Jerusalem - I have no fear that Herod will put me to death in Galilee. I shall not depart on that account. "Jerusalem" is the place where the prophets die, and where "I" am to die. I am not at all alarmed, therefore, at any threats of "Herod," for my life is safe until I arrive at Jerusalem. Go and tell him, therefore, that I fear him not. I shall work here as long as it is proper, and shall then go up to Jerusalem to die. The reason why he said that a prophet could not perish elsewhere than in Jerusalem might be:

1.That he knew that he would be tried on a charge of blasphemy, and no other court could have cognizance of that crime but the great council or Sanhedrin, and so he was not afraid of any threats of Herod.,

2.It "had been" the fact that the prophets had been chiefly slain there. The meaning is, "It cannot easily be done elsewhere; it is not usually done. Prophets have generally perished there, and there I am to die. I am safe, therefore, from the fear of Herod, and shall not take the advice given and leave his territory."

Verse 34-35

See the notes at Matthew 23:37-39.

From the message which Jesus sent to Herod we may learn:

1.That our lives are safe in the hands of God, and that wicked people can do no more to injure us than he shall permit. Compare John 19:11.

2.That we "should" go on fearlessly in doing our duty, and especially if we are doing good. We should not regard the threats of people. God is to be obeyed; and even if obedience should involve us in difficulty and trials, still we should not hesitate to commit our cause to God and go forward.

3.We should be on our guard against crafty and unprincipled people. They often "profess" to seek our good when they are only plotting our ruin. Even those professedly coming from our enemies to caution us are often also our enemies, and are secretly plotting our ruin or endeavoring to prevent our doing good.

4.We see here the nature of religion. It shrinks at nothing which is duty. It goes forward trusting in God. It comes out boldly and faces the world. And,

5.How beautiful and consistent is the example of Christ! How "wise" was he to detect the arts of his foes! how "fearless" in going forward, in spite of all their machinations, to do what God had appointed for him to do!

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verse 1

It came to pass - It so happened or occurred.

As he went … - It is probable that he was invited to go, being in the neighborhood Luke 14:12; and it is also probable that the Pharisee invited him for the purpose of getting him to say something that would involve him in difficulty.

One of the chief Pharisees - One of the Pharisees who were "rulers," or members of the great council or the Sanhedrin. See the notes at Matthew 5:22. It does not mean that he was the head of the "sect" of the Pharisees, but one of those who happened to be a member of the Sanhedrin. He was, therefore, a man of influence and reputation.

To eat bread - To dine. To partake of the hospitalities of his house.

On the sabbath-day - It may seem strange that our Saviour should have gone to dine with a man who was a stranger on the Sabbath; but we are to remember:

1.That he was traveling, having no home of his own, and that it was no more improper to go there than to any other place.

2.That he did not go there for the purpose of feasting and amusement, but to do good.

3.That as several of that class of persons were together, it gave him an opportunity to address them on the subject of religion, and to reprove their vices.

If, therefore, the example of Jesus should be pled to authorize accepting an invitation to dine on the Sabbath, it should be pled just as it was. If we can go "just as he did," it is right. If when away from home; if we go to do good; if we make it an occasion to discourse on the subject of religion and to persuade people to repent, then it is not improper. Farther than this we cannot plead the example of Christ. And surely this should be the last instance in the world to be adduced to justify dinner-parties, and scenes of riot and gluttony on the Sabbath.

They watched him - They malignantly fixed their eyes on him, to see if he did anything on which they could lay hold to accuse him.

Verse 2

A certain man before him - In what way he came there we know not. He might have been one of the Pharisee's family, or might have been placed there by the Pharisees to see whether he would heal him. This last supposition is not improbable, since it is said in Luke 14:1 that they watched him.

The dropsy - A disease produced by the accumulation of water in various parts of the body; very distressing, and commonly incurable.

Verse 3

Jesus, answering - To "answer," in the Scriptures, does not always imply, as among us, that anything had been said before. It means often merely to "begin" or to take up a subject, or, as here, to remark on the case that was present.

Is it lawful … - He knew that they were watching him. If he healed the man at once, they would accuse him. He, therefore, proposed the question to them, and when it was asked, they could not say that it was not lawful.

Verse 4

They held their peace - They were silent. They "could" not say it was not lawful, for the law did not forbid it. If it had they would have said it. Here was the time for them to make objections if they had any, and not after the man was healed; and as they "made" no objection "then," they could not with consistency afterward. They were, therefore, effectually silenced and confounded by the Saviour.

He took him - Took hold of the man, or perhaps took him apart into another room. By taking hold of him, or touching him, he showed that the power of healing went forth from himself.

Verse 5-6

See the notes at Matthew 12:11.

Which of you … - In this way Jesus refuted the notion of the Pharisees. If it was lawful to save an ox on the Sabbath, it was also to save the life of a man. To this the Jews had nothing to answer.

Verse 7

A parable - The word parable, here, means rather a "precept, an injunction." He gave a "rule or precept" about the proper manner of attending a feast, or about the humility which ought to be manifested on such occasions.

That were bidden - That were invited by the Pharisee. It seems that he had invited his friends to dine with him on that day.

When he marked - When he observed or saw.

Chief rooms - The word "rooms" here does not express the meaning of the original. It does not mean "apartments," but "the higher places" at the table; those which were nearest the head of the table and to him who had invited them. See the notes at Matthew 23:6. That this was the common character of the Pharisees appears from Matthew 23:6.

Verse 8-9

Art bidden - Are invited.

To a wedding - A wedding was commonly attended with a feast or banquet.

The highest room - The seat at the table nearest the head.

A more honourable man - A more aged man, or a man of higher rank. It is to be remarked that our Saviour did not consider the courtesies of life to be beneath his notice. His chief design here was, no doubt, to reprove the pride and ambition of the Pharisees; but, in doing it, he teaches us that religion does not violate the courtesies of life. It does not teach us to be rude, forward, pert, assuming, and despising the proprieties of refined social contact. It teaches humility and kindness, and a desire to make all happy, and a willingness to occupy our appropriate situation and rank in life; and this is true "politeness," for true politeness is a desire to make all others happy, and a readiness to do whatever is necessary to make them so. They have utterly mistaken the nature of religion who suppose that because they are professed Christians, they must be rude and uncivil, and violate all the distinctions in society. The example and precepts of Jesus Christ were utterly unlike such conduct. He teaches us to be kind, and to treat people according to their rank and character. Compare Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:7; 1 Peter 2:17.

Verse 10

The lowest room - The lowest seat at the table; showing that you are not desirous of distinctions, or greedy of that honor which may properly belong to you.

Shalt have worship - The word "worship" here means "honor." They who are sitting with you shall treat you with respect. They will learn your rank by your being invited nearer to the head of the table, and it will be better to learn it thus than by putting yourself forward. They will do you honor because you have shown a humble spirit.

Verse 11

Whosoever exalteth … - This is universal among people, and it is also the way in which God will deal with people. "Men" will perpetually endeavor to bring down those who endeavor to exalt themselves; and it is a part of God's regular plan to abase the proud, to bring down the lofty, to raise up those that be bowed down, and show "his" favors to those who are poor and needy.

Verse 12

Call not thy friends … - This is not to be understood as commanding us not to entertain "at all" our relatives and friends; but we are to remember the "design" with which our Lord spoke. He intended, doubtless, to reprove those who sought the society of the wealthy, and particularly rich relatives, and those who claimed to be intimate with the great and honorable, and who, to show their intimacy, were in the habit of "seeking" their society, and making for them expensive entertainments. He meant, also, to commend charity shown to the poor. The passage means, therefore, call "not only" your friends, but call also the poor, etc. Compare Exodus 16:8; 1 Samuel 15:22; Jeremiah 7:22-23; Matthew 9:13.

Thy kinsmen - Thy relations.

A recompense - Lest they feel themselves bound to treat you with the same kindness, and, in so doing, neither you nor they will show any kind spirit, or any disposition to do good beyond what is repaid.

Verse 13

The poor - Those who are destitute of comfortable food.

The maimed - Those who are deprived of any member of their body, as an arm or a leg or who have not the use of them so that they can labor for their own support.

Verse 14

Shalt be blessed - Blessed in the "act" of doing good, which furnishes more "happiness" than riches can give, and blessed or rewarded "by God" in the day of judgment.

They cannot recompense thee - They cannot invite you again, and thus pay you; and by inviting "them" you show that you have a "disposition" to do good.

The resurrection of the just - When the just or holy shall be raised from the dead. Then "God" shall reward those who have done good to the poor and needy from love to the Lord Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:42; Matthew 25:34-36.

Verse 15

Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God - The kingdom of God here means the kingdom which the Messiah was to set up. See the notes at Matthew 3:2. The Jews supposed that he would be a temporal prince, and that his reign would be one of great magnificence and splendor. They supposed that the "Jews" then would be delivered from all their oppressions, and that, from being a degraded people, they would become the most distinguished and happy nation of the earth. To that period they looked forward as one of great happiness. There is some reason to think that they supposed that the ancient just people would then be raised up to enjoy the blessings of the reign of the Messiah. Our Saviour having mentioned the "resurrection of the just," this man understood it in the common way of the Jews, and spoke of the special happiness which they expected at that time. The Jews "only," he expected, would partake of those blessings. Those notions the Saviour corrects in the parable which follows.

Verse 16

A great supper - Or great feast. It is said to be "great" on account of the number who were invited.

Bade many - Invited many beforehand. There is little difficulty in understanding this parable. The man who made the supper is, without doubt, designed to represent God; the supper, the provisions which he has made for the salvation of people; and the invitation, the offers which he made to people, particularly to the Jews, of salvation. See a similar parable explained in the notes at Matthew 22:1-14.

Verse 17

Sent his servant - An invitation had been sent before, but this servant was sent at the time that the supper was ready. From this it would seem that it was the custom to announce to those invited just the time when the feast was prepared. The custom here referred to still prevails in Palestine. Dr. Thomson ("The Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 178) says: "If a sheikh, beg, or emeer invites, he always sends a servant to call you at the proper time. This servant often repeats the very formula mentioned in Luke 14:17; Tefŭddŭlûclass="translit"> el 'asha hâderCome, for the supper is ready. The fact that this custom is mainly confined to the wealthy and to the nobility is in strict agreement with the parable, where the certain man who made the great supper and bade many is supposed to be of this class. It is true now, as then, that to refuse is a high insult to the maker of the feast, nor would such

excuses as those in the parable be more acceptable to a Druse emeer than they were to the lord of this ‹great supper.'"

Verse 18

I have bought a piece of ground - Perhaps he had purchased it on condition that he found it as good as it had been represented to him.

I must needs go - I have necessity, or am obliged to go and see it; possibly pleading a contract or an agreement that he would go soon and examine it. However, we may learn from this that sinners sometimes plead that they are under a "necessity" to neglect the affairs of religion. The affairs of the world, they pretend, are so pressing that they cannot find time to attend to their souls. They have no time to pray, or read the Scriptures, or keep up the worship of God. In this way many lose their souls. God cannot regard such an excuse for neglecting religion with approbation. He commands us to seek "first" the kingdom of God and his righteousness, nor can he approve any excuse that people may make for not doing it.

Verse 19

I go to prove them - To try them, to see if he had made a good bargain. It is worthy of remark that this excuse was very trifling. He could as easily have tried them at any other time as then, and his whole conduct shows that he was more disposed to gratify "himself" than to accept the invitation of his friend. He was selfish; just as all sinners are, who, to gratify their own worldliness and sins, refuse to accept the offers of the gospel.

Verse 20

I have married a wife … - Our Saviour here doubtless intends to teach us that the love of earthly relatives and friends often takes off the affections from God, and prevents our accepting the blessings which he would bestow on us. This was the most trifling excuse of all; and we cannot but be amazed that "such" excuses are suffered to interfere with our salvation, and that people can be satisfied for "such" reasons to exclude themselves from the kingdom of God.

Verse 21

Showed his lord - Told his master of the excuses of those who had been invited. Their conduct was remarkable, and it was his duty to acquaint him with the manner in which his invitation had been received.

Being angry - Being angry at the people who had slighted his invitation; who had so insulted him by neglecting his feast, and preferring "for such reasons" their own gratification to his friendship and hospitality.

So it is no wonder that God is angry with the wicked every day. So foolish as well as wicked is the conduct of the sinner, so trifling is his excuse for not repenting and turning to God, that it is no wonder if God cannot look upon their conduct but with abhorrence.

Go out quickly - The feast is ready. There is no time to lose. They who partake of it must do it soon. So the gospel is ready; time flies; and they who partake of the gospel must do it soon, and they who preach it must give diligence to proclaim it to their fellow-men.

The streets and lanes of the city - The places where the poor, etc., would be found. Those first invited were the rich, who dwelt at ease in their own houses. By these the Jews were intended; by those who were in the streets, the Gentiles. Our Lord delivered this parable to show the Jews that the Gentiles would be called into the kingdom of God. They despised the Gentiles, and considered them cast out and worthless, as they did those who were in the lanes of the city.

The maimed … - See the notes at Luke 14:13.

Verse 22

Yet there is room - He went out and invited all he found in the lanes, and yet the table was not full. This he also reported to his master. "There is room!" What a glorious declaration is this in regard to the gospel! There yet is room. Millions have been saved, but there yet is room. Millions have been invited, and have come, and have gone to heaven, but heaven is not yet full. There is a banquet there which no number can exhaust; there are fountains which no number can drink dry; there are harps there which other hands may strike; and there are seats there which others may occupy. Heaven is not full, and there yet is room. The Sunday school teacher may say to his class, there yet is room; the parent may say to his children, there yet is room; the minister of the gospel may go and say to the wide world, there yet is room. The mercy of God is not exhausted; the blood of the atonement has not lost its efficacy; heaven is not full. What a sad message it "would" be if we were compelled to go and say, "There is no more room - heaven is full - not another one can be saved. No matter what their prayers, or tears, or sighs, they cannot be saved. Every place is filled; every seat is occupied." But, thanks be to God, this is not the message which we are to bear; and if there yet is room, come, sinners, young and old, and enter into heaven. Fill up that room, that heaven may be full of the happy and the

blessed. If any part of the universe is to be vacant, O let it be the dark world of woe!

Verse 23

Go out into the highways - Since enough had not been found in the lanes and streets, he commands the servant to go into the roads - the public highways out of the city, as well as to the streets "in" it - and invite them also.

Hedges - A hedge is the inclosure around a field or vineyard. It was commonly made of thorns, which were planted thick, and which kept the cattle out of the vineyard. "A common plant for this purpose is the prickly pear, a species of cactus, which grows several feet high, and as thick as a man's body, armed with sharp thorns, and thus forming an almost impervious defense" (Professor Hackett, "Scripture Illustrations," p. 174). Those in the hedges were poor laborers employed in planting them or trimming them - people of the lowest class and of great poverty. By his directing them to go first into the streets of the city and then into the highways, we are not to understand our Saviour as referring to different classes of people, but only as denoting the "earnestness" with which God offers salvation to people, and his willingness that the most despised should come and live. Some parts of parables are thrown in for the sake of "keeping," and they should not be pressed or forced to obtain any obscure or fanciful signification. The great point in this parable was, that God would call in the Gentiles after the Jews had rejected the gospel. This should be kept always in view in interpreting all the parts of the parable.

Compel them - That is, urge them, press them earnestly, one and all. Do not hear their excuses on account of their poverty and low rank of life, but urge them so as to overcome their objections and lead them to the feast. This expresses the "earnestness" of the man; his anxiety that his table should be filled, and his purpose not to reject any on account of their poverty, or ignorance, or want of apparel. So God is earnest in regard to the most polluted and vile. He commands his servants, his ministers, to "urge" them to come, to "press" on them the salvation of the gospel, and to use all the means in their power to bring into heaven poor and needy sinners.

Verse 24

For I say unto you - These may be considered as the words of Jesus, making an application of the parable to the Pharisees before him.

None of those men - This cannot be understood as meaning that no "Jews" would be saved, but that none of those who had "treated him, in that manner" - none who had so decidedly rejected the offer of the gospel - would be saved. We may here see how dangerous it is "once" to reject the gospel; how dangerous to grieve away the Holy Spirit. How often God forsakes forever the sinner who has been once awakened, and who grieves the Holy Spirit. The invitation is full and free; but when it is rejected, and people turn willfully away from it, God leaves them to their chosen way, and they are drowned in destruction and perdition. How important, then, is it to embrace the gospel "at once;" to accept the gracious invitation, and enter without delay the path that conducts to heaven!

Verses 25-27

See notes on Matthew 10:37-38.

Verse 28

Intending to build a tower - See Matthew 21:33. A tower was a place of defense or observation, erected on high places or in vineyards, to guard against enemies. It was made "high," so as to enable one to see an enemy when he approached; and "strong," so that it could not be easily taken.

Counteth the cost - Makes a calculation how much it will cost to build it.

Verse 29

Haply - Perhaps.

To mock him - To ridicule him. To laugh at him.

Verse 31

With ten thousand to meet … - Whether he will be able, with the forces which he "has," to meet his enemy. Christ here perhaps intends to denote that the enemies which we have to encounter in following him are many and strong, and that "our" strength is comparatively feeble. "To meet him." To contend with him. To gain a victory over him.

Verse 32

Or else - If he is not able. If he is satisfied that he would be defeated.

An ambassage - Persons to treat with an enemy and propose terms of peace. These expressions are not to be improperly pressed in order to obtain from them a spiritual signification. The general scope of the parable is to be learned from the connection, and may be thus expressed:

1. Every man who becomes a follower of Jesus should calmly and deliberately look at all the consequences of such an act and be prepared to

meet them.

2. Men in other things act with prudence and forethought. They do not begin to build without a reasonable prospect of being able to finish. They do not go to war when there is every prospect that they will be defeated.

3. Religion is a work of soberness, of thought, of calm and fixed purpose, and no man can properly enter on it who does not resolve by the grace of God to fulfil all its requirements and make it the business of his life.

4. We are to expect difficulties in religion. It will cost us the mortification of our sins, and a life of self-denial, and a conflict with our lusts, and the enmity and ridicule of the world. Perhaps it may cost us our reputation, or possibly our lives and liberties, and all that is dear to us; but we must cheerfully undertake all this, and be prepared for it all.

5. If we do not deliberately resolve to leave all things, to suffer all things that may be laid on us, and to persevere to the end of our days in the service of Christ, we cannot be his disciples. No man can be a Christian who, when he makes a profession, is resolved after a while to turn back to the world; nor can he be a true Christian if he "expects that he will" turn back. If he comes not with a "full" purpose "always" to be a Christian; if he means not to persevere, by the grace of God, through all hazards, and trials, and temptations; if he is not willing to bear his cross, and meet contempt, and poverty, and pain, and death, without turning back, he "cannot" be a disciple of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 34-35

See the Matthew 5:13 note; Mark 9:49-50 notes.

Salt is good - It is useful. It is good to preserve life and health, and to keep from putrefaction.

His savour - Its saltness. It becomes tasteless or insipid.

Be seasoned - Be salted again.

Fit for the land - Rather, it is not fit "for land," that is, it will not bear fruit of itself. You cannot sow or plant on it.

Nor for the dunghill - It is not good for manure. It will not enrich the land,

Cast it out - They throw it away as useless.

He that hath ears … - See Matthew 11:15. You are to understand that he that has not grace in his heart; who merely makes a profession of religion, and who sustains the same relation to true piety that this insipid and useless mass does to good salt, is useless in the church, and will be rejected. "Real" piety, true religion, is of vast value in the world. It keeps it pure, and saves it from corruption, as salt does meat; but a mere "profession" of religion is fit for nothing. It does no good. It is a mere encumbrance, and all such professors are fit only to be cast out and rejected. All such "must" be rejected by the Son of God, and cast into a world of wretchedness and despair. Compare Matthew 7:22-23; Matthew 8:12; Matthew 23:30; Matthew 25:30; Revelation 3:16; Job 8:13; Job 36:13.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verse 1

Publicans and sinners - See the notes at Matthew 9:10.

Verse 2

Murmured - They affected to suppose that if Jesus treated sinners kindly he must be fond of their society, and be a man of similar character. "They" considered it disgraceful to be with them or to eat with them, and they, therefore, brought a charge against him for it. They "would" not suppose that he admitted them to his society for the purpose of doing them good; nor did they remember that the very object of his coming was to call the wicked from their ways and to save them from death.

Receiveth sinners - Receives them in a tender manner; treats them with kindness; does not drive them from his presence.

And eateth with them - Contrary to the received maxims of the scribes. By eating with them he showed that he did not despise or overlook them.

Verse 3

This parable - See the notes at Matthew 13:3.

Verses 4-6

See the notes at Matthew 18:12-13.

Verse 7

Likewise joy … - It is a principle of human nature that the "recovery" of an object in danger of being lost, affords much more intense joy than the quiet "possession" of many that are safe. This our Saviour illustrated by the case of the lost sheep and of the piece of silver. It might also be illustrated by many other things. Thus we rejoice most in our health when we recover from a dangerous disease; we rejoice over a child rescued from danger or disease more than over those who are in health or safety. We rejoice that property is saved from conflagration or the tempest more than over much more that has not been in danger. This feeling our Lord represents as existing in heaven. "Likewise," in like manner, or on the same principle, there is joy.

In heaven - Among the angels of God. Compare Luke 15:10. Heavenly beings are thus represented as rejoicing over those who repent on earth. They see the guilt and danger of people; they know what God has done for the race, and they rejoice at the recovery of any from the guilt and ruins of sin.

One sinner - One rebel against God, however great may be his sins or however small. If a sinner, he must perish unless he repents; and they rejoice at his repentance because it recovers him back to the love of God, and because it will save him from eternal death.

That repenteth - See the notes at Matthew 9:13.

Just persons - The word "persons" is not in the original. It means simply "just ones," or those who have not sinned. The word may refer to angels as well as to people. There are no "just" people on earth who need no repentance, Ecclesiastes 7:20; Psalm 14:2-3; Romans 3:10-18. Our Saviour did not mean to imply that there were any such. He was speaking of what took place "in heaven," or among "angels," and of "their" emotions when they contemplate the creatures of God; and he says that "they" rejoiced in the repentance of one "sinner" more than in the holiness of many who had not fallen. We are not to suppose that he meant to teach that there were just ninety-nine holy angels to one sinner. He means merely that they rejoice more over the "repentance" of one sinner than they do over many who have not fallen. By this he vindicated his own conduct. The Jews did not deny the existence of angels. They would not deny that their feelings were proper. If "they" rejoiced in this manner, it was not improper for "him" to show similar joy, and especially to seek their conversion and salvation. If they rejoice also, it shows how desirable is the repentance of a sinner. They know of how much value is an immortal soul. They see what is meant by eternal death; and they do not feel "too much," or have "too much anxiety" about the soul that can never die. Oh that people saw it as "they" see it! and oh that they would make an effort, such as angels see to be proper, to save their own souls and the souls of others from eternal death!

Verses 8-10

Ten pieces of silver - In the original, ten "drachmas." The drachma was about the value of fifteen cents, and consequently the whole sum was about a dollar and a half, or six shillings. The sum was small, but it was all she had. The loss of one piece, therefore, was severely felt.

There is joy in the presence … - Jesus in this parable expresses the same sentiment which he did in the preceding. A woman would have more immediate, present, joy at finding a lost piece, than she would in the possession of those which had not been lost. "So," says Christ, there is joy among the angels at the recovery of a single sinner.

Verse 11

And he said - Jesus, to illustrate still farther the sentiment which he had uttered, and to show that it was proper to rejoice over repenting sinners, proceeds to show it by a most beautiful and instructive parable. We shall see its beauty and propriety by remembering that the "design" of it was simply to "justify his conduct in receiving sinners," and to show that to rejoice over their return was proper. This he shows by the feelings of a "father" rejoicing over the "return" of an ungrateful and dissipated son.

Verse 12

And the younger of them said - By this younger son we are to understand the publicans and sinners to be represented. By the older, the Pharisees and scribes.

Give me the portion - The part.

Of goods - Of property.

That falleth to me - That is properly my share. There is no impropriety in supposing that he was of age; and, as he chose to leave his father's house, it was proper that his father should, if he chose, give him the part of the estate which would be his.

He divided unto them his living - His property, or "means" of living. The division of property among the Jews gave the older son twice as much as the younger. In this case it seems the younger son received only money or movable property, and the older chose to remain with his father and dwell on the paternal estate. The lands and fixed property remained in their possession. Among the ancient Romans and Syrophoenicians, it was customary, when a son came to the years of maturity, if he demanded his part of the inheritance, for the father to give it to him. This the son might claim by law. It is possible that such a custom may have prevailed among the Jews, and that our Saviour refers to some such demand made by the young man.

Verse 13

Gathered all together - Collected his property. If he had received flocks or grain, he sold them and converted them into money. As soon as this arrangement had been made he left his father's house.

Took his journey - Went, or traveled.

Into a far country - A country far off from his father's house. He went probably to trade or to seek his fortune, and in his wanderings came at last to this dissipated place, where his property was soon expended.

Wasted his substance - Spent his property.

In riotous living - Literally, "Living without saving anything." He lived extravagantly, and in the most dissolute company. See Luke 15:30. By his wandering away we may understand that sinners wander far away from God; that they fall into dissolute and wicked company; and that their wandering so far off is the reason why they fall into such company, and are so soon and so easily destroyed.

Verse 14

A mighty famine - Famines were common in Eastern nations. They were caused by the failure of the crops - by a want of timely rains, a genial sun, or sometimes by the prevalence of the plague or of the pestilence, which swept off numbers of the inhabitants. In this case it is very naturally connected with the luxury, the indolence, and the dissipation of the people in that land,

Verse 15

Joined himself - Entered the service of that citizen. Hired himself out to him. It would seem that he engaged to do any kind of work, even of the lowest kind.

A citizen - One of the inhabitants of one of the cities or towns of that region, probably a man of property.

Into the fields - Out of the city where the owner lived.

To feed swine - This was a very low employment, and particularly so to a "Jew." It was forbidden to the Jews to eat swine, and of course it was unlawful to keep them. To be compelled, therefore, to engage in such an employment was the deepest conceivable degradation. The "object" of this image, as used by the Saviour in the parable, is to show the loathsome employments and the deep degradation to which sin leads people, and no circumstance could possibly illustrate it in a more striking manner than he has done here. Sin and its results everywhere have the same relation to that which is noble and great, which the feeding of swine had, in the estimation of a Jew, to an honorable and dignified employment.

Verse 16

He would fain - He would gladly. He desired to do it.

The husks - The word "husks" with us denotes the outward covering of grain. In this there is little nourishment, and it is evident that this is not intended here; but the word used here denotes not only "husks," but also leguminous plants, as beans, etc. It is also used to denote the fruit of a tree called the "carob or kharub-tree," which is common in Ionia, Syria, and

Rhodes. The tree is more bushy and thick set than the apple tree, and the leaves are larger and of a much darker green. The following is Dr. Thomson‘s description of the fruit of this tree (“The Land and the Book,” vol. i. p. 22): “The ‹husks‘ - a mistranslation - are fleshy pods, somewhat like those of the locust-tree, from six to ten inches long and one broad, laid inside with a gelatinous substance, not wholly unpleasant to the taste when thoroughly ripe. I have seen large orchards of this kharub in Cyprus, where it is still the food which the swine do eat. The kharub is often called John‘s Bread, and also Locust-tree, from a mistaken idea about the food of the Baptist in the wilderness.” The cut will give an idea of these “pods,” or “husks,” as they are called in our translation.

No man gave unto him - Some have understood this as meaning “no one gave him anything - any bread or provisions;” but the connection requires us to understand it of the “husks.” He did not go a begging - his master was bound to provide for his wants; but the provision which he made for him was so poor that he would have preferred the food of the swine. He desired a portion of “their food,” but that was not given him. A certain quantity was measured out for “them,” and “he” was not at liberty to eat it himself. Nothing could more strikingly show the evil of his condition, or the deep degradation, and pollution, and wretchedness of sin.

Verse 17

He came to himself - This is a very expressive phrase. It is commonly applied to one who has been “deranged,” and when he recovers we say he has “come to himself.” In this place it denotes that the folly of the young man was a kind of derangement - that he was insane. So it is of every sinner. Madness is in their hearts Ecclesiastes 9:3; they are estranged from God, and led, by the influence of evil passions, contrary to their better judgment and the decisions of a sound mind.

Hired servants - Those in a low condition of life - those who were not born to wealth, and who had no friends to provide for them.

I perish - I, who had property and a kind father, and who might have been provided for and happy.

Verse 18

I will arise - This is a common expression among the Hebrews to denote “entering on a piece of business.” It does not imply that he was “sitting,” but that he meant immediately to return. This should be the feeling of every sinner who is conscious of his guilt and danger.

To My father - To his father, although he had offended him, and treated him unkindly, and had provoked him, and dishonored him by his course of conduct. So the sinner. He has nowhere else to go but to "God." He has offended him, but he may trust in his kindness. If "God" does not save him he cannot be saved. There is no other being that has an arm strong enough to deliver from sin; and though it is painful for a man to go to one whom he has offended - though he cannot go but with shame and confusion of face - yet, unless the sinner is willing to go to "God" and confess his faults, he can never be saved.

I have sinned - I have been wicked, dissipated, ungrateful, and rebellious.

Against heaven - The word "heaven" here, as it is often elsewhere, is put for God. I have sinned against "God." See Matthew 21:25. It is also to be observed that one evidence of the genuineness of repentance is the feeling that our sins have been committed chiefly against "God." Commonly we think most of our offences as committed against "man;" but when the sinner sees the true character of his sins, he sees that they have been aimed chiefly against "God," and that the sins against "man" are of little consequence compared with those against God. So David, even after committing the crimes of adultery and murder after having inflicted the deepest injury on "man" - yet felt that the sin as committed against "God" shut every other consideration out of view: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," etc., Psalm 2:4.

Before thee - This means the same as "against" thee. The offences had been committed mainly against God, but they were to be regarded, also, as sins against his "father," in wasting property which he had given him, in neglecting his counsels, and in plunging himself into ruin. He felt that he had "disgraced" such a father. A sinner will be sensible of his sins against his relatives and friends as well as against God. A true penitent will be as ready to "acknowledge" his offences against his fellow-men as those against his Maker.

Verse 19

No more worthy … - "Such has been my conduct that I have been a disgrace to my father. I am not fit to be honored by being called the son of a man so kind and virtuous."

Make me as one … - "Treat me as a servant. Let me come again into your family, but I do not ask to be treated as a son. I am willing to come in

if you will give me only the support that you give to a servant." This evinced,

1.Deep humility - such as a sinner should have.

2.Love for his father‘s house - such as all penitents should have toward God‘s dwelling-place in heaven.

3.Confidence in his father that he would treat him kindly, even if he treated him as a servant. Such confidence all returning penitents feel in God. They are assured that God will treat them kindly that whatever he gives them will be more than they deserve, and they are, therefore, willing to be in his hands. Yet,

4.He had no adequate sense of his father‘s kindness. He did not fully appreciate his character. He was far more kind than he had dared to hope he would be; just as all sinners undervalue the character of God, and find him always more kind than they had supposed. No sinner comes to God with a just and adequate view of his character, but "always" finds him more merciful than he had dared to hope.

Verse 20

He arose, and came - Was coming. But here is no indication of "haste." He did not "run," but came driven by his wants, and, as we may suppose, filled with shame, and even with some doubts whether his father would receive him.

A great way off - This is a beautiful description - the image of his father‘s happening to see him clad in rags, poor, and emaciated, and yet he recognized "his son," and all the feelings of a father prompted him to go and embrace him.

Had compassion - Pitied him. Saw his condition - his poverty and his wretched appearance - and was moved with compassion and love.

And ran - This is opposed to the manner in which the son came. The beauty of the picture is greatly heightened by these circumstances. The son came slowly - the father "ran." The love and joy of the old man were so great that he hastened to meet him and welcome him to his home.

Fell on his neck - Threw his arms around his neck and embraced him.

And kissed him - This was a sign at once of affection and reconciliation. This must at once have dissipated every doubt of the son

about the willingness of his father to forgive and receive him. A kiss is a sign of affection, 1 Samuel 10:1; Genesis 29:13. This is evidently designed to denote the "readiness of God" to pity and pardon returning sinners. In this verse of inimitable beauty is contained the point of the parable, which was uttered by the Saviour to vindicate "his own conduct" in receiving sinners kindly. Who could "blame" this father for thus receiving his repenting son? Not even a Pharisee could blame him; and our Saviour thus showed them, so that "they" could not resist it, that "God" received returning sinners, and that it was right for "him" also to receive them and treat them with attention.

Verse 22

The best robe - The son was probably in rags. The joy of the father is expressed by clothing him in the best raiment, that he might appear well. The "robe" here mentioned is probably the outer garment; and the father told them to put on him the best one that was in the house - one reserved for festival occasions. See Genesis 27:15.

A ring on his hand - To wear a ring on the hand was one mark of wealth and dignity. The rich and those in office commonly wore them. Compare James 2:2. To "give" a ring was a mark of favor, or of affection, or of conferring office. Compare Genesis 41:42; Esther 8:2. Here it was expressive of the "favor" and affection of the father.

Shoes on his feet - Servants, probably, did not usually wear shoes. The son returned, doubtless, without shoes a condition very unlike that in which he was when he left home. When, therefore, the father commanded them to put shoes on him, it expressed his wish that he should not be treated "as a servant," but "as a son." The word "shoes" here, however, means no more than "sandals," such as were commonly worn. And the meaning of all these images is the same - "that God will treat those who return to him with kindness and affection." These images should not be attempted to be "spiritualized." They are beautifully thrown in to fill up the narrative, and to express with more force the "general" truth that "God" will treat returning penitents with mercy and with love. To dress up the son in this manner was a proof of the father's affection. So God will bestow on sinners the marks of his confidence and regard.

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Verse 23

Be merry - Literally, "eating, let us rejoice." The word "merry" does not quite express the meaning of the Greek. "Merriment" denotes a light, playful, jovial mirth. The Greek denotes simply "joy - let us be happy, or joyful."

Verse 24

Was dead - This is capable of two significations:

1."I supposed" that he was dead, but I know now that he is alive.

2.He was "dead to virtue" - he was sunk in pleasure and vice.

The word is not unfrequently thus used. See 1 Timothy 5:6; Matthew 8:22; Romans 6:13. Hence, to be restored to "virtue" is said to be restored again to life, Romans 6:13; Revelation 3:1; Ephesians 2:1. It is probable that this latter is the meaning here. See Luke 15:32.

Was lost - Had wandered away from home, and we knew not where he was.

Verse 25

In the field - At work. This eldest son is designed to represent the Pharisees who had found fault with the Saviour. Their conduct is likened to that of this envious and unnatural brother.

Music and dancing - Dancing was not uncommon among the Hebrews, and was used on various occasions. Thus Miriam celebrated the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt in dances as well as songs, Exodus 15:20. David danced before the ark, 2 Samuel 6:14. It was common at Jewish feasts Judges 21:19-21 and in public triumphs Judges 11:34, and at all seasons of mirth and rejoicings, Psalm 30:11; Jeremiah 31:4, Jeremiah 31:13. It was also used in religious services by the idolaters Exodus 32:19, and also by the Jews, at times, in their religious services, Psalm 149:3; Psalm 150:4. In this case it was an expression of rejoicing. Our Lord expresses no opinion about its "propriety." He simply states "the fact," nor was there occasion for comment on it. His "mentioning it" cannot be pleaded for its lawfulness or propriety, any more than his mentioning the vice of the younger son, or the wickedness of the Pharisees, can be pleaded to justify their conduct. It is an expressive image, used in accordance with the known customs of the country, to express joy. It is farther to be remarked, that if the example of persons in Scripture be pleaded for dancing, it can be "only for just such dances as they practiced" - for sacred or triumphal occasions.

Verses 26-28

Safe and sound - In health.

Verse 29

A kid - A young goat. This was of less value than the calf; and he complains that while his father had never given "him" a thing of so little value as "a kid," he had now given his other son the "fatted calf."

Make merry with - Entertain them give them a feast. This complaint was unreasonable, for his father had divided his property, and he "might" have had his portion, and his father had uniformly treated him with kindness. But it serves to illustrate the conduct of the scribes and Pharisees, and the folly of their complaint.

Verse 30

This thy son - This son of "thine." This is an expression of great contempt. He did not call him "his brother," but "his father's son," to show at once his contempt for his younger brother, and for his father for having received him as he did. Never was there a more striking instance of petty malice, or more unjustifiable disregard of a father's conduct and will.

Thy living - Thy property. This is still designed to irritate the father, and set him against his younger son. It was true that the younger son had been guilty, and foolish, and ungrateful; but he was penitent, and "that" was of more consequence to the father than all his property; and in the joy that he was penitent and was safe, he forgot his ingratitude and folly. So should the older son have done.

Verse 31

All I have is thine - The property was divided. What remained was in reality the older son's. He was heir to it all, and had a right, if he chose, to use it. He had, therefore, no right to complain.

This instructive and beautiful parable was designed to vindicate the conduct of Jesus to show that it was right to receive sinners, and that the conduct of the Pharisees was unreasonable. The older son represents the Pharisees; the younger, the returning sinner, whether Jew or Gentile; and the father, God, who is willing to receive them. The parable had the designed effect. It silenced the adversaries of Jesus and vindicated his own conduct. There is not, perhaps, anywhere to be found a more beautiful and touching narrative than this. Every circumstance is tender and happily chosen; every word has a meaning; every image is beautiful; and the narrative closes just where it is fitted to make the deepest impression. In

addition to what has been suggested, we may learn from this parable the following lessons:

1. That the disposition of a sinner is selfish. He desires to get all that he can, and is impatient of delay, Luke 15:12.

2. Sinners waste their blessings, and reduce themselves to a state of want and wretchedness, Luke 15:13. A life of sin brings on spiritual want and misery. It destroys the faculties, benumbs the mind, hardens the heart, abuses the beneficence of God, and makes us careless of him who gave us all that we have, and indifferent to the consequences of our own conduct.

3. Sinners disregard the future woes that will come upon them. The young man cared not for any calamities that might be the result of his conduct. He went on heedlessly - like every sinner to enjoy himself, and to squander what the toils of his father had procured for him.

4. Afflictions are often the means of bringing sinners to reflection, Luke 15:14. While his property lasted the prodigal cared little about his father. When that was gone, and he was in the midst of a famine, he thought of his ways. When sinners are in prosperity they think little about God. When he takes away their mercies, and they are called to pass through afflictions, then they think of their ways, and remember that God can give them comfort.

5. We have here an impressive exhibition of the wants and woes of a sinner.

(1)he had spent all. He had nothing. So the sinner. He has no righteousness, no comfort.

(2)he was far from God, away from his father, and in a land of strangers. The sinner has wandered, and has no friend. His miseries came upon him "because" he was so far away from God.

(3)his condition was wretched. He was needy, in famine, and without a friend. So the sinner. His condition is aptly denoted by that of the prodigal, who would gladly have partaken of the food of the swine. The sinner has taken the world for his portion, and it neither supplies the wants of his soul,

nor gives him comfort when he is far away from his Father‘s home and from God.

6. The sinner in this situation often applies to the wrong source for comfort, Luke 15:15. The prodigal should at once have returned to his father, but he rather chose to become a servant of a citizen of that region. The sinner, when sensible of his sins, should return at once to God; but he often continues still to wander. He tries new objects. He seeks new pleasures and new friends, and finds them equally unsatisfactory. He engages in new pursuits, but all in vain. He is still comfortless, and in a strange, a famished land,

7. The repentance required in the gospel is a return to a right mind, Luke 15:17. Before his conversion the sinner was alienated from God. He was spiritually deranged. He saw not things as they are. Now he looks on the world as vain and unsatisfactory, and comes to himself. He thinks “aright” of God, of heaven, of eternity, and resolves to seek his happiness there. No man regards things as they are but he who sees the world to be vain, and eternity to be near and awful; and none acts with a “sane mind” but he who acts on the belief that he must soon die; that there is a God and a Saviour - a heaven and a hell.

8. When the sinner returns he becomes sensible of the following things:

(1)That he is in danger of perishing, and must soon die but for relief - “I perish with hunger.”

(2)that God is willing and able to save him - “How and to spare.” There is abundance of mercy for all, and all may come.

(3)he begins to cherish a hope that this may be his. God is willing, and he feels that all that is needful is for him to go to him.

(4)he resolves to go to God - “I will arise and go.”

(5)he comes to him willing to confess all his sins, and desirous of concealing none - “I will say, Father, I have sinned.”

9. True repentance is a voluntary act. It is not forced. It is the resolution of the sinner to go, and he cheerfully and cordially arises and goes, Luke 15:18.

10. A real penitent feels that his sins have been committed against God, Luke 15:18.

11. A true penitent also is willing to acknowledge his offences against his parents, brothers, friends, and all people, Luke 15:18.

12. A real penitent is humble, Luke 15:18. He has no wish to conceal anything, or to be thought more highly of than he "ought" to be.

13. God is willing to receive the true penitent, and has made the richest provision for his return and for his comfort. None need to hesitate to go. All who go, feeling that they are poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked, will find God willing to receive them, and none will be sent empty away.

14. The joy at the return of sinners is great. Angels rejoice over it, and all holy beings are glad.

15. We should not be envious at any favors that God may be pleased to bestow on others, Luke 15:32. He has given "us" more than we deserve; and if, by the sovereignty of his grace, he is pleased to endow others with more grace, or to give them greater talents, or to make them more useful, "we" have no cause to complain. We should rather rejoice that he is pleased to give such mercies to any of our race, and should praise him for the manifestation of his goodness, whether made to us or to other people.

16. The sensible joy when the sinner returns to God is often greater than that which may be felt "after" the return, and yet the real "cause" of rejoicing be no greater. In times of revival, the sensible joy of Christians may be greater than in ordinary seasons. Their graces are quickened, their zeal kindled, and their hopes strengthened.

17. If God is willing to receive sinners, if all holy beings rejoice, then how should Christians strive for their conversion, and seek for their return!

18. If God is willing to receive sinners "now," then all should at once return. There "will" be a time when he will not be willing to receive them. The day of mercy will be ended; and from the misery and want of this

wretched world, they will go down to the deeper miseries and wants of a world of despair where hope never comes; from whence the sinner can never return; and where the cheering thought can never enter the mind that in his Father‘s house there is bread enough and to spare, or where he must feel that if there “is,” it will be forever untasted by the wretched prodigal in the land of eternal famine and death.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verse 1

His disciples - The word "disciples," here, is not to be restricted to the twelve apostles or to the seventy. The parable appears to have been addressed to all the professed followers of the Saviour who were present when it was delivered. It is connected with that in the preceding chapter. Jesus had there been discoursing with the scribes and Pharisees, and vindicating his conduct in receiving kindly publicans and sinners. These "publicans and sinners" are here particularly referred to by the word "disciples." It was with reference to "them" that the whole discourse had arisen. After Jesus had shown the Pharisees, in the preceding chapter, the propriety of his conduct, it was natural that he should turn and address his disciples. Among them there might have been some who were wealthy. The "publicans" were engaged in receiving taxes, in collecting money, and their chief danger arose from that quarter - from covetousness or dishonesty.

Jesus always adapted his instructions to the circumstances of his hearers, and it was proper, therefore, that he should give "these disciples" instructions about their "special" duties and dangers. He related this parable, therefore, to show them "the danger of the love of money;" the guilt it would lead to Luke 16:1; the perplexities and shifts to which it would drive a man when once he had been dishonest Luke 16:3-7; the necessity of using money aright, since it was their chief business Luke 16:9; and the fact that if they would serve God aright they must give up supreme attachment to money Luke 16:13; and that the first duty of religion demanded that they should resolve to serve God, and be honest in the use of the wealth intrusted to them. This parable has given great perplexity, and many ways have been devised to explain it. The above solution is the most simple of any; and if these plain principles are kept in view, it will not be difficult to give a consistent explanation of its particular parts. It should be borne in mind, however, that in this, as well as in other parables, we are not to endeavor to spiritualize every circumstance or allusion. We are to keep in view the great moral truth taught in it, that we cannot serve God and mammon, and that all attempts to do this will involve us in difficulty and sin.

A steward - One who has charge of the affairs of a family or household; whose duty it is to provide for the family, to purchase provisions, etc. This

is, of course, an office of trust and confidence. It affords great opportunity for dishonesty and waste, and for embezzling property. The master‘s eye cannot always be on the steward, and he may, therefore, squander the property, or hoard it up for his own use. It was an office commonly conferred on a slave as a reward for fidelity, and of course was given to him that, in long service, had shown himself most trustworthy. By the “rich man,” here, is doubtless represented God. By the “steward,” those who are his professed followers, particularly the “publicans” who were with the Saviour, and whose chief danger arose from the temptations to the improper use of the money intrusted to them.

Was accused - Complaint was made.

Had wasted - Had squandered or scattered it; had not been prudent and saving.

Verse 2

Give an account - Give a statement of your expenses and of your conduct while you have been steward. This is not to be referred to the day of judgment. It is a circumstance thrown into the parable to prepare the way for what follows. It is true that all will be called to give an account at the day of judgment, but we are not to derive that doctrine from such passages as this, nor are we to interpret this as teaching that our conscience, or the law, or any beings will “accuse us” in the day of judgment. All that will be indeed true, but it is not the truth that is taught in this passage.

Verse 3

Said within himself - Thought, or considered.

My lord - My master, my employer.

I cannot dig - This may mean either that his employment had been such that he could not engage in agriculture, not having been acquainted with the business, or that he was “unwilling” to stoop to so low an employment as to work daily for his support. “To dig,” here, is the same as to till the earth, to work at daily labor.

To beg - These were the only two ways that presented themselves for a living - either to work for it, or to beg.

I am ashamed - He was too proud for that. Besides, he was in good health and strength, and there was no good reason “why” he should beg - nothing which he could give as a cause for it. It is proper for the sick, the lame, and the feeble to beg; but it is “not” well for the able-bodied to do it, nor is it well to aid them, except by giving them employment, and

compelling them to work for a living. He does a beggar who is able to work the most real kindness who sets him to work, and, as a general rule, we should not aid an able-bodied man or woman in any other way. Set them to work, and pay them a fair compensation, and you do them good in two ways, for the habit of labor may be of more value to them than the price you pay them.

Verse 4

I am resolved - He thought of his condition. He looked at the plans which occurred to him. He had been dishonest, and knew that he must lose his place. It would have been better to have "considered before this," and resolved on a proper course of life, and to be faithful to his trust; and his perplexity here teaches us that dishonesty will sooner or later lead us into difficulty, and that the path of honesty is not only the "right" path, but is the path that is filled with most comfort and peace.

When I am put out … - When I lose my place, and have no home and means of support.

They may receive me … - Those who are now under me, and whom I am resolved now to favor. He had been dishonest to his master, and, having "commenced" a course of dishonesty, he did not shrink from pursuing it. Having injured his master, and being now detected, he was willing still farther to injure him, to take revenge on him for removing him from his place, and to secure his own interest still at his expense. He was resolved to lay these persons under such obligations, and to show them so much kindness, that they could not well refuse to return the kindness to him and give him a support. We may learn here,

1.That one sin leads on to another, and that one act of dishonesty will be followed by many more, if there is opportunity.

2.Men who commit one sin cannot get along "consistently" without committing many more. One lie will demand many more to make it "appear" like the truth, and one act of cheating will demand many more to avoid detection. The beginning of sin is like the letting out of waters, and no man knows, if he indulges in one sin, where it will end.

3.Sinners are selfish. They care more about "themselves" than they do either about God or truth. If they seek salvation, it is only for selfish ends, and because they desire a comfortable "abode" in the future world rather than because they have any regard to God or his cause.

Verse 5

Called every one - As he was "steward," he had the management of all the affairs, and, of course, debts were to be paid to him.

Debtors - Those who "owed" his master, or perhaps "tenants;" those who rented land of his master.

Verse 6

A hundred measures - The measure here mentioned is the "bath" which contained, according to Dr. Arbuthnot's tables, 7 12 gallons, or, according to the marginal note, about 9 gallons and 3 quarts.

Oil - Oil of olives, or sweet oil. It was much used for lamps, as an article of food Exodus 29:2, and also for anointing, and, of course, as an article of commerce, 1 Kings 5:11. These were persons, doubtless, who had "rented" land of the rich man, and who were to give him a certain proportion of the produce.

Thy bill - The contract, obligation, or "lease." It was probably written as a "promise" by the debtor and signed by the steward, and thus became binding. Thus he had power to alter it, without supposing that his master would detect it. The bill or contract was in the hands of the steward, and he gave it back to him to write a new one.

Quickly - He supposed that his master would soon remove him, and he was, therefore, in haste to have all things secure beforehand. It is worthy of remark, also, that "all" this was wrong. His master had called for the account: but, instead of rendering it, he engaged in other business, disobeyed his lord still, and, in contempt of his commands, sought his own interest. All sinners would be slow to give in their account to God if they could do it; and it is only because, when God calls them by death, they "cannot but go," that they do not engage still in their own business and disobey him.

Verse 7

Measures of wheat - The measure here mentioned - the "kor," or homer - contained, according to the tables of Dr. Arbuthnot, about 32 pecks, or 8 bushels; or, according to the marginal note, about 14 bushels and a "pottle." A "pottle" is 4 pints. The Hebrew "kor," כר koror "homer," חמר chomerwas equal to 10 baths or 70 gallons, and the actual amount of the measure, according to this, was not far from 8 gallons. Robinson, Lexicon), however, supposes that the bath was 11 12 gallons, and the kor or homer 14 to 45

bushels. The amount is not material to the proper understanding of the parable.

Fourscore - Eighty.

Verse 8

The lord commended - Praised, or expressed admiration at his wisdom. These are not the words of Jesus, as commending him, but a part of the narrative or parable. His "master" commended him - saw that he was wise and considerate, though he was dishonest.

The unjust steward - It is not said that his master commended him because he was "unjust," but because he was "wise." This is the only thing in his conduct of which there is any approbation expressed, and this approbation was expressed by "his master." This passage cannot be brought, therefore, to prove that Jesus meant to commend his dishonesty. It was a commendation of his "shrewdness or forethought;" but the master could no more "approve" of his conduct as a moral act than he could the first act of cheating him.

The children of this world - Those who are "devoted" to this world; who live for this world only; who are careful only to obtain property, and to provide for their temporal necessities. It does not mean that they are especially wicked and profligate, but only that they are "worldly," and anxious about earthly things. See Matthew 13:22; 2 Timothy 4:10.

Are wiser - More prudent, cunning, and anxious about their particular business. They show more skill, study more plans, contrive more ways to provide for themselves, than the children of light do to promote the interests of religion.

In their generation - Some have thought that this means "in their manner of living, or in managing their affairs." The word "generation" sometimes denotes the manner of life, Genesis 6:9; Genesis 37:2. Others suppose that it means "toward or among the people of their own age." They are more prudent and wise than Christians in regard to the people of their own time; they turn their connection with them to good account, and make it subserve their worldly interests, while Christians fail much more to use the world in such a manner as to subserve their spiritual interests.

Children of light - Those who have been enlightened from above - who are Christians. This may be considered as the application of the parable. It does not mean that it is more wise to be a worldly man than to be a child of light, but that those who "are" worldly show much prudence in providing

for themselves; seize occasions for making good bargains; are active and industrious; try to turn everything to the best account, and thus exert themselves to the utmost to advance their interests; while Christians often suffer opportunities of doing good to pass unimproved; are less steady, firm, and anxious about eternal things, and thus show less wisdom. Alas! this is too true; and we cannot but reflect here how different the world would be if all Christians were as anxious, and diligent, and prudent in religious matters as others are in worldly things.

Verse 9

I say unto you - I, Jesus, say to you, my disciples.

Make to yourselves friends - Some have understood the word "friends," here, as referring to the poor; others, to holy angels; and others, to God. Perhaps, however, the word should not be considered as referring to any particular "persons," but is used in accordance with the preceding parable; for in the application our Saviour uses the "language" appropriated to the conduct of the steward to express the "general" truth that we are to make a proper use of riches. The steward had so managed his pecuniary affairs as to secure future comfort for himself, or so as to find friends that would take care of him "beyond" the time when he was put out of the office. That is, he would not be destitute, or cast off, or without comfort, when he was removed from his office. So, says our Saviour to the publicans and those who had property, so use your property as "to secure" happiness and comfort beyond the time when you shall be removed from the present life. "Have reference," in the use of your money, to the future.

Do not use it so that it shall not avail you anything hereafter; but so employ it that, as the steward found friends, comfort, and a home by "his" wisdom in the use of it, so "you" may, after you are removed to another world, find friends, comfort, and a home - that is, may be happy in heaven. Jesus, here, does not say that we should do it "in the same way" that the steward did, for that was unjust; but only that we should "secure the result." This may be done by using our riches as we "should do;" that is, by not suffering them to entangle us in cares and perplexities dangerous to the soul, engrossing the time, and stealing away the affections; by employing them in works of mercy and benevolence, aiding the poor, contributing to the advance of the gospel, bestowing them where they will do good, and in such a manner that God will "approve" the deed, and will bless us for it. Commonly riches are a "hindrance" to piety. To many they are snares; and,

instead of positively "benefiting" the possessor, they are an injury, as they engross the time and the affections, and do not contribute at all to the eternal welfare of the soul. Everything may, by a proper use, be made to contribute to our welfare in heaven. Health, wealth, talents, and influence may be so employed; and this is what our Saviour doubtless means here.

Of the mammon - "By means" of the mammon.

Mammon - A Syriac word meaning riches. It is used, also, as an idol the god of riches.

Of unrighteousness - These words are an Hebrew expression for "unrighteous mammon," the noun being used for an adjective, as is common in the New Testament. The word "unrighteous," here, stands opposed to "the true riches" in Luke 16:11, and means "deceitful, false, not to be trusted." It has this meaning often. See 1 Timothy 6:17; Luke 12:33; Matthew 6:19; Matthew 19:21. It does not signify, therefore, that they had acquired the property "unjustly," but that property was "deceitful" and not to be trusted. The wealth of the steward was deceitful; he could not rely on its continuance; it was liable to be taken away at any moment. So the wealth of the world is deceitful. We cannot "calculate" on its continuance. It may give us support or comfort now, but it may be soon removed, or we taken from "it," and we should, therefore, so use it as to derive benefit from it hereafter.

When ye fail - When ye "are left," or when ye "die." The expression is derived from the parable as referring to the "discharge" of the steward; but it refers to "death," as if God then "discharged" his people, or took them from their stewardship and called them to account.

They may receive you - This is a form of expression denoting merely "that you may be received." The plural form is used because it was used in the corresponding place in the parable, Luke 16:4. The direction is, so to use our worldly goods that "we may be received" into heaven when we die. "God" will receive us there, and we are to employ our property so that he will not cast us off for abusing it.

Everlasting habitations - Heaven, the eternal "home" of the righteous, where all our wants will be supplied, and where there can be no more anxiety, and no more removal from enjoyments, 2 Corinthians 5:1.

Verse 10

He that is faithful … - This is a maxim which will almost universally hold true. A man that shows fidelity in small matters will also in large; and

he that will cheat and defraud in little things will also in those involving more trust and responsibility. Fidelity is required in small matters as well as in those of more importance.

Verse 11

Who will commit … - If you are not faithful in the small matters pertaining to this world, if you do not use aright your property and influence, you cannot expect that God will commit to you the true riches of his grace. Men who are dishonest and worldly, and who do not employ the deceitful mammon as they ought, cannot expect to grow in grace. God does not confer grace upon them, and their being unfaithful in earthly matters is evidence that they "would be" also in much greater affairs, and would likewise "misimprove" the true riches.

True riches - The graces of the gospel; the influences of the Spirit; eternal life, or religion. The riches of this world are false, deceitful, not to be trusted Luke 16:9; the treasures of heaven are "true," faithful, never-failing, Matthew 6:19-20.

Verse 12

Another man's - The word "man's" is not in the original. It is, "If ye have been unfaithful managers for another." It refers, doubtless, to "God." The wealth of the world is "his." It is committed to us as his stewards. It is uncertain and deceitful, and at any moment he can take it away from us. It is still "his;" and if, while intrusted with "this," we are unfaithful, we cannot expect that he will confer on us the rewards of heaven.

That which is your own - The riches of heaven, which, if once given to us, may be considered as "ours" - that is, it will be permanent and fixed, and will not be taken away "as if" at the pleasure of another. We may "calculate" on it, and look forward with the assurance that it will "continue" to be "ours" forever, and will not be taken away like the riches of this world, "as if" they were not ours. The meaning of the whole parable is, therefore, thus expressed: If we do not use the things of this world as we ought - with honesty, truth, wisdom, and integrity, we cannot have evidence of piety, and shall not be received into heaven. If we are true to that which is least, it is an evidence that we are the children of God, and he will commit to our trust that which is of infinite importance, even the eternal riches and glory of heaven.

Verse 13

See the notes at Matthew 6:24.

Verse 14-15

They derided him - The fact that they were "covetous" is here stated as the reason why they derided him, or, as it is literally, "they turned up the nose at him." They contemned or despised the doctrine which he had laid down, probably because it showed them that with their love of money they could not be the true friends of God, or that their profession of religion was really false and hollow. They were "attempting" to serve God and mammon, and they, therefore, looked upon his doctrine with contempt and scorn.

Justify yourselves - "Attempt" to appear just; or; you aim to appear righteous in the sight of people, and do not regard the heart.

That which is highly esteemed - That is, mere external works, or actions performed merely to "appear" to be righteous.

Is abomination - Is abominable, or hateful. The word used here is the one that in the Old Testament is commonly given to "idols," and denotes God's "abhorrence" of such conduct. These words are to be applied "chiefly" to what Jesus was discoursing about. There are many things esteemed among people which are "not" abomination in the sight of God; as, for example, truth, parental and filial affection, industry, etc. But many things, much sought and admired, "are" hateful in his sight. The love of wealth and show, ambition and pride, frivolous and splendid vices, and all the wickedness that people contrive to "gild" and to make appear like virtue - external acts that "appear" well while the heart is evil - are abominable in the sight of God, and "should be" in the sight of people. Compare Luke 18:11-14; 1 Samuel 16:7.

Verse 16

See the notes at Matthew 11:12-14.

Every man - Many people, or multitudes. This is an expression that is very common, as when we say everybody is engaged in a piece of business, meaning that it occupies general attention.

Verse 17

See the notes at Matthew 5:18.

Verse 18

See the notes at Matthew 5:32. These verses occur in Matthew in a different order, and it is not improbable that they were spoken by our Saviour at different times. The design, here, seems to be to reprove the Pharisees for not observing the law of Moses, notwithstanding their great

pretensions to external righteousness, and to show them that they had "really" departed from the law.

Verse 19

There was a certain rich man - Many have supposed that our Lord here refers to a "real history," and gives an account of some man who had lived in this manner; but of this there is no evidence. The probability is that this narrative is to be considered as a parable, referring not to any particular case which "had" actually happened, but teaching that such cases "might" happen. The "design" of the narrative is to be collected from the previous conversation. He had taught the danger of the love of money Luke 16:1-2; the deceitful and treacherous nature of riches Luke 16:9-11; that what was in high esteem on earth was hateful to God Luke 16:15; that people who did not use their property aright could not be received into heaven Luke 16:11-12; that they ought to listen to Moses and the prophets Luke 16:16-17; and that it was the duty of people to show kindness to the poor. The design of the parable was to impress all these truths more vividly on the mind, and to show the Pharisees that, with all their boasted righteousness and their external correctness of character, they might be lost. Accordingly he speaks of no great fault in the rich man - no external, degrading vice - no open breach of the law; and leaves us to infer that the "mere possession of wealth" may be dangerous to the soul, and that a man surrounded with every temporal blessing may perish forever. It is remarkable that he gave no "name" to this rich man, though the poor man is mentioned by name. If this was a parable, it shows us how unwilling he was to fix suspicion on anyone. If it was not a parable, it shows also that he would not drag out wicked people before the public, but would conceal as much as possible all that had any connection with them. The "good" he would speak well of by name; the evil he would not "injure" by exposing them to public view.

Clothed in purple - A purple robe or garment. This color was expensive as well as splendid, and was chiefly worn by princes, nobles, and those who were very wealthy. Compare Matthew 27:28. See the notes at Isaiah 1:18.

Fine linen - This linen was chiefly produced of the flax that grew on the banks of the Nile, in Egypt, Proverbs 7:16; Ezekiel 27:7. It was especially soft and white, and was, therefore, much sought as an article of luxury, and was so expensive that it could be worn only by princes, by priests, or by those who were very rich, Genesis 41:42; 1 Chronicles 15:27; Exodus 28:5.

Fared sumptuously - Feasted or lived in a splendid manner.

Every day - Not merely occasionally, but constantly. This was a mark of great wealth, and, in the view of the world, evidence of great happiness. It is worthy of remark that Jesus did not charge on him any crime. He did not say that he had acquired this property by dishonesty, or even that he was unkind or uncharitable; but simply that he "was a rich man," and that his riches did not secure him from death and perdition.

Verse 20-21

Beggar - Poor man. The original word does not mean "beggar," but simply that he was "poor." It should have been so translated to keep up the contrast with the "rich man."

Named Lazarus - The word Lazarus is Hebrew, and means a man destitute of help, a needy, poor man. It is a name given, therefore, to denote his needy condition.

Laid at his gate - At the door of the rich man, in order that he might obtain aid.

Full of sores - Covered with ulcers; afflicted not only with poverty, but with loathsome and offensive ulcers, such as often are the accompaniments of poverty and want. These circumstances are designed to show how different was his condition from that of the rich man. "He" was clothed in purple; the poor man was covered with sores; "he" fared sumptuously; the poor man was dependent even for the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.

The dogs came - Such was his miserable condition that even the dogs, as if moved by pity, came and licked his sores in kindness to him. These circumstances of his misery are very touching, and his condition, contrasted with that of the rich man, is very striking. It is not affirmed that the rich man was unkind to him, or drove him away, or refused to aid him. The narrative is designed simply to show that the possession of wealth, and all the blessings of this life, could not exempt from death and misery, and that the lowest condition among mortals may be connected with life and happiness beyond the grave. There was no provision made for the helpless poor in those days, and consequently they were often laid at the gates of the rich, and in places of public resort, for charity. See Acts 3:2. The gospel has been the means of all the public charity now made for the needy, as it has of providing hospitals for those who are sick and afflicted. No pagan nation ever had a hospital or an almshouse for the needy, the aged, the blind, the insane. Many heathen nations, as the Hindoos and the Sandwich Islanders,

destroyed their aged people; and "all" left their poor to the miseries of public begging, and their sick to the care of their friends or to private charity.

Verse 22

Was carried by the angels - The Jews held the opinion that the spirits of the righteous were conveyed by angels to heaven at their death. Our Saviour speaks in accordance with this opinion; and as he expressly affirms the fact, it seems as proper that it should be taken literally, as when it is said the rich man died and was buried. Angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who are heirs of salvation Hebrews 1:14, and there is no more improbability in the supposition that they attend departing spirits to heaven, than that they attend them while on earth.

Abraham's bosom - This is a phrase taken from the practice of reclining at meals, where the head of one lay on the bosom of another, and the phrase, therefore, denotes intimacy and friendship. See the notes at Matthew 23:6. Also John 13:23; John 21:20. The Jews had no doubt that Abraham was in paradise. To say that Lazarus was in his bosom was, therefore, the same as to say that he was admitted to heaven and made happy there. The Jews, moreover, boasted very much of being the friends of Abraham and of being his descendants, Matthew 3:9. To be his friend was, in their view, the highest honor and happiness. Our Saviour, therefore, showed them that this poor and afflicted man might be raised to the highest happiness, while the rich, who prided themselves on their being descended from Abraham, might be cast away and lost forever.

Was buried - This is not said of the poor man. Burial was thought to be an honor, and funerals were, as they are now, often expensive, splendid, and ostentatious. This is said of the rich man to show that he had "every" earthly honor, and all that the world calls happy and desirable.

Verse 23

In hell - The word here translated hell ("Hades") means literally a dark, obscure place; the place where departed spirits go, but especially the place where "wicked" spirits go. See the Job 10:21-22 notes; Isaiah 14:9 note. The following circumstances are related of it in this parable:

1.It is "far off" from the abodes of the righteous. Lazarus was seen "afar off."

2.It is a place of torment.

3.There is a great gulf fixed between that and heaven, Luke 16:26.

4.The suffering is great. It is represented by "torment" in a flame, Luke 16:24.

5.There will be no escape from it, Luke 16:26.

The word "hell" here means, therefore, that dark, obscure, and miserable place, far from heaven, where the wicked shall be punished forever.

He lifted up his eyes - A phrase in common use among the Hebrews, meaning "he looked," Genesis 13:10; Genesis 18:2; Genesis 31:10; Deuteronomy 8:3; Luke 6:20.

Being in torment - The word "torment" means "pain, anguish" Matthew 4:24; particularly the pain inflicted by the ancients in order to induce people to make confession of their crimes. These "torments" or tortures were the keenest that they could inflict, such as the rack, or scourging, or burning; and the use of the word here denotes that the sufferings of the wicked can be represented only by the extremest forms of human suffering.

And seeth Abraham … - This was an aggravation of his misery. One of the first things that occurred in hell was to look up, and see the poor man that lay at his gate completely happy. What a contrast! Just now he was rolling in wealth, and the poor man was at his gate. He had no expectation of these sufferings: now they have come upon him, and Lazarus is happy and forever fixed in the paradise of God. It is more, perhaps, than we are authorized to infer, that the wicked will "see" those who are in paradise. That they will "know" that they are there is certain; but we are not to suppose that they will be so near together as to be seen, or as to make conversation possible. These circumstances mean that there will be "a separation," and that the wicked in hell will be conscious that the righteous, though on earth they were poor or despised, will be in heaven. Heaven and hell will be far from each other, and it will be no small part of the misery of the one that it is far and forever removed from the other.

Verse 24

Father Abraham - The Jews considered it a signal honor that Abraham was their "father" - that is, that they were "descendants" from him. Though this man was now in misery, yet he seems not to have abandoned the idea of his relation to the father of the faithful. The Jews supposed that departed

spirits might know and converse with each other. See Lightfoot on this place. Our Saviour speaks in conformity with that prevailing opinion; and as it was not easy to convey ideas about the spiritual world without some such representation, he, therefore, speaks in the language which was usual in his time. We are not, however, to suppose that this was "literally" true, but only that it was designed to represent more clearly the sufferings of the rich man in hell.

Have mercy on me - Pity me. The rich man is not represented as calling on "God." The mercy of God will be at an end when the soul is lost. Nor did he "ask" to be released from that place. Lost spirits "know" that their sufferings will have no end, and that it would be in vain to ask to escape the place of torment. Nor does he ask to be admitted where Lazarus was. He had no "desire" to be in a holy place, and he well knew that there was no restoration to those who once sink down to hell.

Send Lazarus - This shows how low he was reduced, and how the circumstances of people change when they die. Just before, Lazarus was laid at his gate full of sores; now he is happy in heaven. Just before, he had nothing to give, and the rich man could expect to derive no benefit from him; now he asks, as the highest favor, that he might come and render him relief. Soon the poorest man on earth, if he is a friend of God, will have mercies which the rich, if unprepared to die, can never obtain. The rich will no longer despise such people; they would "then" be glad of their friendship, and would beg for the slightest favor at their hands.

Dip the tip … - This was a small favor to ask, and it shows the greatness of his distress when so small a thing would be considered a great relief.

Cool my tongue - The effect of great "heat" on the body is to produce almost insupportable thirst. Those who travel in burning deserts thus suffer inexpressibly when they are deprived of water. So "pain" of any kind produces thirst, and particularly if connected with fever. The sufferings of the rich man are, therefore, represented as producing burning "thirst," so much that even a drop of water would be refreshing to his tongue. We can scarce form an idea of more distress and misery than where this is continued from one day to another without relief. We are not to suppose that he had been guilty of any particular wickedness with his "tongue" as the cause of this. It is simply an idea to represent the natural effect of great suffering, and especially suffering in the midst of great heat.

I am tormented - I am in anguish - in insupportable distress.

In this flame - The lost are often represented as suffering "in flames," because "fire" is an image of the severest pain that we know. It is not certain, however, that the wicked will be doomed to suffer in "material" fire. See the notes at Mark 9:44.

Verse 25

Son - This is a representation designed to correspond with the word "father." He was a descendant of Abraham a Jew - and Abraham is represented as calling this thing to his remembrance. It would not lessen his sorrows to remember that he was a "son" of Abraham, and that he ought to have lived worthy of that relation to him.

Remember - This is a cutting word in this place. One of the chief torments of hell will be the "remembrance" of what was enjoyed and of what was done in this world. Nor will it be any mitigation of the suffering to spend an "eternity" where there will be nothing else to do, day or night, but to "remember" what "was" done, and what "might have been," if the life had been right.

Thy good things - That is, property, splendor, honor.

Evil things - Poverty, contempt, and disease.

But now … - How changed the scene! How different the condition! And how much "better" was the portion of Lazarus, after all, than that of the rich man! It is probable that Lazarus had the most "real" happiness in the land of the living, for riches without the love of God can never confer happiness like the favor of God, even in poverty. But the comforts of the rich man are now gone forever, and the joys of Lazarus have just commenced. "One" is to be comforted, and "the other" to be tormented, to all eternity. How much better, therefore, is poverty, with the friendship of God, than riches, with all that the world can bestow! And how foolish to seek our chief pleasures only in this life!

Verse 26

A great gulf - The word translated "gulf" means chasm, or the broad, yawning space between two elevated objects. In this place it means that there is no way of passing from one to the other.

Fixed - Strengthened - made firm or immovable. It is so established that it will never be movable or passable. It will forever divide heaven and hell.

Which would pass - We are not to press this passage literally, as if those who are in heaven would "desire" to go and visit the wicked in the

world of woe. The simple meaning of the statement is, that there can be no communication between the one and the other - there can be no passing from one to the other. It is impossible to conceive that the righteous would desire to leave their abodes in glory to go and dwell in the world of woe; nor can we suppose that they would wish to go for any reason unless it were possible to furnish relief. That will be out of the question. Not even a drop of water will be furnished as a relief to the sufferer.

d **Neither can they pass to us … -** There can be no doubt that the wicked will desire to pass the gulf that divides them from heaven. They would be glad to be in a state of happiness; but all such wishes will be vain. How, in the face of the solemn statement of the Saviour here, can people believe that there will be a "restoration" of all the wicked to heaven? He solemnly assures us that there can be no passage from that world of woe to the abodes of the blessed; yet, in the face of this, many Universalists hold that hell will yet be vacated of its guilty millions, and that all its miserable inhabitants will be received to heaven! Who shall conduct them across this gulf, when Jesus Christ says it cannot be passed? Who shall build a bridge over that yawning chasm which he says is "fixed?" No: if there is anything certain from the Scripture, it is that they who enter hell return no more; they who sink there sink forever.

Verse 27-28

Five brethren - The number "five" is mentioned merely to preserve the appearance of verisimilitude in the story. It is not to be spiritualized, nor are we to suppose that it has any hidden or inscrutable meaning.

May testify unto them - May bear "witness" to them, or may inform them of what is my situation, and the dreadful consequences of the life that I have led. It is remarkable that he did not ask to go himself. He knew that he could not be released, even for so short a time. His condition was fixed. Yet he had no wish that his friends should suffer, and he supposed that if one went from the dead they would hear him.

Verse 29

They have Moses - The writings of Moses. The first five books of the Bible.

The prophets - The remainder of the Old Testament. What the prophets had written.

Hear them - Hear them speak in the Scriptures. Read them, or hear them read in the synagogues, and attend to what they have delivered.

Verse 30

Nay - No. They will not hear Moses and the prophets. They have heard them so long in vain, that there is no prospect now that they will attend to the message; but if one should go to them directly from the eternal world they would hear him. The novelty of the message would attract their attention, and they would listen to what he would say.

Verse 31

Be persuaded - Be convinced of the truth; of the danger and folly of their way; of the certainty of their suffering hereafter, and be induced to turn from sin to holiness, and from Satan unto God.

From this impressive and instructive parable we may learn:

1.That the souls of people do not die with their bodies.

2.That the soul is "conscious" after death; that it does not "sleep," as some have supposed, until the morning of the resurrection.

3.That the righteous are taken to a place of happiness immediately at death, and the wicked consigned at once to misery.

4.That wealth does not secure from death.

"How vain are riches to secure
Their haughty owners from the grave!"

The rich, the beautiful, the happy, as well as the poor, go down to the grave. All their pomp and apparel, all their honors, their palaces, and their gold cannot save them. Death can as easily find his way into the splendid mansions of the rich as into the cottages of the poor; and the rich shall turn to the same corruption, and soon, like the poor, be undistinguished from common dust and be unknown.

5.We should not envy the condition of the rich.

"On slippery rocks I see them stand,
And fiery billows rollI below.
"Now let them boast how tall they rise,
I'll never envy them again;
There they may stand with haughty eyes,
Till they plunge deep in endless pain.
"Their fancied joys how fast they flee!

Like dreams, as fleeting and as vain;
Their songs of softest harmony.
Are but a prelude to their pain."

6.We should strive for a better inheritance than can be possessed in this life.

"Now I esteem their mirth and wine.
Too dear to purchase with my blood:
Lord, 'tis enough that thou art mine -
My life, my portion, and my God."

7.The sufferings of the wicked in hell will be indescribably great. Think what is represented by "torment;" by burning flame; by insupportable thirst; by that state where a single "drop" of water would afford relief. Remember that "all this" is but a representation of the pains of the damned, and that this will have no intermission day or night, but will continue from year to year, and age to age, without any end, and you have a faint view of the sufferings of those who are in hell.

8.There is a place of sufferings beyond the grave a hell. If there is not, then this parable has no meaning. It is impossible to make "anything" of it unless it be designed to teach that.

9.There will never be any escape from those gloomy regions. There is a gulf fixed - "fixed," not movable. Nor can any of the damned beat a pathway across this gulf to the world of holiness.

10.We see the amazing folly of those who suppose there may be an "end" to the sufferings of the wicked, and who, on that supposition, seem willing to go down to hell to suffer a long time, rather than go at once to heaven. If man were to suffer but a thousand years, or even "one" year, why should he be so foolish as to choose that suffering rather than go at once to heaven, and be happy at once when he dies?

11.God gives us sufficient warning to prepare for death. He has sent his Word, his servants, his Son; he warns us by his Spirit and his providence; by the entreaties of our friends and by the death of sinners; he offers us heaven, and he threatens hell. If all this will not move sinners, what would do it? There is nothing that would.

12.God will give us nothing farther to warn us. No dead man will come to life to tell us of what he has seen. If he did we would not believe him. Religion appeals to man not by ghosts and frightful apparitions. It appeals to their reason, their conscience, their hopes, their fears. It sets life and death soberly before people, and if they “will not” choose the former, they must die. If you will not hear the Son of God and the warnings of the Scriptures, there is nothing which you will or can hear. You will never be persuaded, and will never escape the place of torment.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1-2

It is impossible - It cannot but happen. Such is the state of things that "it will be." See these verses explained in the notes at Matthew 18:6-7.

Verse 3-4

See the notes at Matthew 18:15, Matthew 18:21-22. "Trespass against thee." Sin against thee, or does anything that gives you an offence or does you an injury.

Rebuke - Reprove. Go and tell him his fault, and seek an explanation. Acquaint him with what has been the effect of his conduct, and the state of your feelings, that he may acknowledge his error and repent.

Verse 5

Increase our faith - This duty of forgiving offences seemed so difficult to the disciples that they strongly felt the need of an increase of faith. They felt that they were prone themselves to harbor resentments, and that it required an additional increase of true religion to enable them to comply with the requirements of Jesus. We may learn from this:

1.That Jesus has "the power" of increasing the faith of his people. Strength comes from him, and especially strength to believe the gospel. Hence, he is called the "Author and Finisher" of our faith, Hebrews 12:2.

2.The duty of forgiving offences is one of the most difficult duties of the Christian religion. It is so contrary to our natural feelings; it implies such elevation above the petty feelings of malice and revenge, and is so contrary to the received maxims of the world, which teach us to "cherish" rather than to forgive the memory of offences, that it is no wonder our Saviour dwells much on this duty, and so strenuously insists on it in order to our having evidence that our hearts have been changed.

Some have thought that this prayer that he would increase their faith refers to the power of working miracles, and especially to the case recorded in Matthew 17:16-20.

Verse 6

See Matthew 17:20. "Sycamine-tree." This name, as well as sycamore, is given, among us, to the large tree commonly called the buttonwood; but the tree here mentioned is different. The Latin Vulgate and the Syriac versions translate it "mulberry-tree." It is said to have been a tree that commonly grew in Egypt, of the size and appearance of a mulberry-tree,

but bearing a species of figs. This tree was common in Palestine. It is probable that our Lord was standing by one as he addressed these words to his disciples. Dr. Thomson ("The Land and the Book," vol. i. p. 22-24) says of this tree: "It is generally planted by the wayside, in the open space where several paths meet." (Compare Luke 19:4.) "This sycamore is a remarkable tree. It not only bears several crops of figs during the year, but these figs grow on short stems along the trunk and large branches, and not at the end of twigs, as in other fruit-bearing trees. The figs are small, and of a greenish-yellow color. At Gaza and Askelon I saw them of a purple tinge, and much larger than they are in this part of the country. They were carried to market in large quantities, and appeared to be more valued there than with us. Still, they are, at best, very insipid, and none but the poorer classes eat them. It is easily propagated, merely by planting a stout branch in the ground, and watering it until it has struck its roots into the soil. This it does with great rapidity and to a vast depth. It was with reference to this latter fact that our Lord selected it to illustrate the power of faith.

Now, look at this tree - its ample girth, its wide-spread arms branching off from the parent trunk only a few feet from the ground; then examine its enormous roots, as thick, as numerous, and as wide-spread into the deep soil below as the branches extend into the air above the very best type of invincible steadfastness. What power on earth can pluck up such a tree? Heaven's thunderbolt may strike it down, the wild tornado may tear it to fragments, but nothing short of miraculous power can fairly pluck it up by the roots."

Verse 7

Having a servant … - This parable appears to have been spoken with reference to the rewards which the disciples were expecting in the kingdom of the Messiah. The occasion on which it was spoken cannot be ascertained. It does not seem to have any particular connection with what goes before. It may be supposed that the disciples were somewhat impatient to have the kingdom restored to Israel Acts 1:6 - that is, that he would assume his kingly power, and that they were impatient of the "delay," and anxious to enter on "the rewards" which they expected, and which they not improbably were expecting in consequence of their devotedness to him. In answer to these expectations, Jesus spoke this parable, showing them,

1.That they should be rewarded as a servant would be provided for; but,

2.That this was not the "first" thing; that there was a proper "order" of things, and that thus the reward might be delayed, as a servant would be provided for, but at the proper time, and at the pleasure of the master; and,

3.That this reward was not to be expected as a matter of "merit," but would be given at the good pleasure of God, for they were but unprofitable servants.

By and by - This should have been translated "immediately." He would not, "as the first thing," or "as soon" as he returned from the field, direct him to eat and drink. Hungry and weary he might be, yet it would be proper for him first to attend upon his master. So the apostles were not to be "impatient" because they did not "at once" receive the reward for which they were looking.

To meat - To eat; or, rather, place thyself at the table.

Verse 8

I may sup - Make ready my supper.

Gird thyself - See the notes at Luke 12:37.

Verse 9

I trow not - I "think" not; or I "suppose" not.

Verse 10

Are unprofitable servants - We have conferred no favor. We have "merited" nothing. We have not "benefited" God, or laid him under "obligation." If he rewards us, it will be matter of unmerited favor. This is true in relation to Christians in the following respects:

1.Our services are not "profitable" to God Job 22:2; he "needs" not our aid, and his essential happiness will not be increased by our efforts.

2.The grace to do his will comes from him only, and all the praise of that will be due to him.

3.All that we do is what is our "duty;" we cannot lay claim to having rendered any service that will "bind" him to show us favor; and,

4.Our best services are mingled with imperfections. We come short of his glory Romans 3:23; we do not serve him as sincerely, and cheerfully, and faithfully as we ought; we are far, very far from the example set us by the Saviour; and if we are saved and rewarded, it will be because God will

be merciful to our unrighteousness, and will remember our iniquities no more, Hebrews 8:12.

Verse 11

The midst of Samaria and Galilee - He went from Galilee, and probably traveled through the chief villages and towns in it and then left it; and as Samaria was situated "between" Galilee and Jerusalem, it was necessary to pass through it; or it may mean that he passed along on the borders of each toward the river Jordan, and so passed in the midst, "i. e. between" Galilee and Samaria. This is rendered more probable from the circumstance that as he went from Galilee, there would have been no occasion for saying that he passed "through it," unless it be meant through the "confines" or borders of it, or at least it would have been mentioned before Samaria.

Verse 12

There met him - They were in his way, or in his path, as he was entering the village. They were not allowed to enter the village while they were afflicted with the leprosy, Leviticus 13:46; Numbers 5:2-3.

Lepers - See the notes at Matthew 8:2.

Stood afar off - At a distance, as they were required by law. They were unclean, and it was not lawful for them to come near to those who were in health. As Jesus was traveling, they were also walking in the contrary way, and seeing him, and knowing that they were unclean, they stopped or turned aside, so that they might not expose others to the contagion.

Verse 14

Go show yourselves … - See the notes at Matthew 8:4. By this command he gave them an implied assurance that they would be healed; for the "design" for which they were to go was to exhibit the "evidence" that they were restored, and to obtain permission from the priest to mingle again in society. It may also be observed that this required no small measure of "faith" on their part, for he did not "first" heal them, and then tell them to go; he told them to go without "expressly" assuring them that they would be healed, and without, "as yet," any evidence to show to the priest. So sinners defiled with the leprosy of sin, should put faith in the Lord Jesus and obey his commands, with the fullest confidence that he is able to heal them, and that he "will" do it if they follow his directions; and that in due time they

shall have the fullest evidence that their peace is made with God, and that their souls shall by him be declared free from the defilement of sin.

Were cleansed - Were cured, or made whole.

Verse 15-16

One of them … - This man, sensible of the power of God and grateful for his mercies, returned to express his gratitude to God for his goodness. Instead of obeying "at once" the "letter" of the command, he "first" expressed his thanks to God and to his Great Benefactor. There is no evidence, however, that he did not, "after" he had given thanks to God, and had poured out his joy at the feet of Jesus, go to the priest as he was directed; indeed, he could not have been restored to society without doing it; but he "first" poured out his thanks to God, and gave him praise for his wonderful recovery. The first duty of sinners, after they have been forgiven and have the hope of eternal life, is to prostrate themselves at the feet of their Great Benefactor, and to consecrate themselves to his service. "Then" let them go and show to others the evidence that they are cleansed. Let them go and mingle, like a restored leper, with their families and friends, and show by the purity and holiness of their lives how great is the mercy that has cleansed them.

He was a Samaritan - See the notes at Matthew 10:5. This rendered his conduct more remarkable and striking in the sight of the Jews. "They" considered the Samaritans as especially wicked, and "themselves" as especially holy. This example showed them, like the parable of the good Samaritan, that in this they were mistaken: and one design of this seems to have been to break down the "opposition" between the Jews and Samaritans, and to bring the former to more charitable judgments respecting the latter.

Verse 17-18

Where are the nine? - Jesus had commanded them to go to the priest, and they were probably "literally" obeying the commandment. They were impatient to be healed and "selfish" in wishing it, and had no gratitude to God or their Benefactor. Jesus did not "forbid" their expressing gratitude to him for his mercy; he rather seems to reprove them for "not" doing it. One of the first feelings of the sinner cleansed from sin is a desire to praise his Great Benefactor; and a "real" willingness to obey his commandments is not inconsistent with a wish to render thanks to him for his mercy. With what singular propriety may this question now be asked, "Where are the

nine?" And what a striking illustration is this of human nature, and of the ingratitude of man! One had come back to give thanks for the favor bestowed on him; the others were heard of no more. So now. When people are restored from dangerous sickness, here and there one comes to give thanks to God; but "where are the nine?" When people are defended from danger; when they are recovered from the perils of the sea; when a steamboat is destroyed, and a large part of crew and passengers perish, here and there one of those who are saved acknowledges the goodness of God and renders him praise; but where is the mass of them? They give no thanks; they offer no praise. They go about their usual employments, to mingle in the scenes of pleasure and of sin as if nothing had occurred. Few, few of all who have been rescued from "threatening graves" feel their obligation to God, or ever express it. They forget their Great Benefactor; perhaps the mention of his name is unpleasant, and they scorn the idea that they are under any obligations to him. Such, alas! is man, ungrateful man!

This stranger - This foreigner; or, rather, this alien, or this man of another tribe. In the "Syraic" version, "this one who is of a foreign people." This man, who might have been least "expected" to express gratitude to God. The most unlikely characters are often found to be most consistent and grateful. Men from whom we would expect "least" in religion, are often so entirely changed as to disappoint all our expectations, and to put to shame those who have been most highly favored. The poor often thus put to shame the rich; the ignorant the learned; the young the aged.

Verse 19

Go thy way - To the "priest;" for without "his" certificate he could not again be restored to the society of his friends, or to the public worship of God. Having now appropriately expressed your gratitude, go to the priest and obey the law of God. Renewed sinners, while their hearts overflow with gratitude to Jesus, "express" that gratitude by obeying God, and by engaging in the appropriate duties of their calling and of religion.

Verse 20

Was demanded - Was asked.

Of the Pharisees - This was a matter of much importance to them, and they had taught that it would come with parade and pomp. It is not unlikely that they asked this merely in "contempt," and for the purpose of drawing out something that would expose him to ridicule.

The kingdom of God - The "reign" of God; or the dispensation under the Messiah. See the notes at Matthew 3:2.

With observation - With scrupulous and attentive looking for it, or with such an appearance as to "attract" observation - that is, with pomp, majesty, splendor. He did not deny that, according to their views, the time was drawing near; but he denied that his kingdom would come in the "manner" in which they expected. The Messiah would "not" come with pomp like an earthly prince; perhaps not in such a manner as to be "discerned" by the eyes of sagacious and artful people, who were expecting him in a way agreeable to their own feelings. The kingdom of God is "within" people, and it makes its way, not by pomp and noise, but by silence, decency, and order, 1 Corinthians 14:40.

Verse 21

"Lo here! or, Lo there!" When an earthly prince visits different parts of his territories, he does it with pomp. His movements attract observation, and become the common topic of conversation. The inquiry is, Where is he? which way will he go? and it is a matter of important "news" to be able to say where he is. Jesus says that the Messiah would not come in that manner. It would not be with such pomp and public attention. It would be silent, obscure, and attracting comparatively little notice. Or the passage may have reference to the custom of the "pretended" Messiahs, who appeared in this manner. They said that in this place or in that, in this mountain or that desert, they would show signs that would convince the people that they were the Messiah. Compare the notes at Acts 5:36-37.

Is within you - This is capable of two interpretations.

1. The reign of God is "in the heart." It does not come with pomp and splendor, like the reign of temporal kings, merely to control the external "actions" and strike the senses of people with awe, but it reigns in the heart by the law of God; it sets up its dominion over the passions, and brings every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

2. It may mean the new dispensation is "even now among you." The Messiah has come. John has ushered in the kingdom of God, and you are not to expect the appearance of the Messiah with great pomp and splendor, for he is now among you. Most critics at present incline to this latter interpretation. The ancient versions chiefly follow the former.

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Verse 22

(The days will come He here takes occasion to direct the minds of his disciples to the days of vengeance which were about to fall on the Jewish nation. Heavy calamities will befall the Jewish people, and you will desire a deliverer.

Ye shall desire - You who now number yourselves among my disciples.

One of the days of the Son of man - The Son of man here means "the Messiah," without affirming that "he" was the Messiah. Such will be the calamities of those times, so great will be the afflictions and persecutions, that you will greatly desire "a deliverer" - one who shall come to you in the character in which "you have expected" the Messiah would come, and who would deliver you from the power of your enemies; and at that time, in the midst of these calamities, people shall rise up pretending "to be" the Messiah, and to be able to deliver you. In view of this, he takes occasion to caution them against being led astray by them.

Ye shall not see it - You shall not see such a day of deliverance - such a Messiah as the nation has expected, and such an interposition as you would desire.

Verse 23-24

And they shall say … - Many false Christs, according to Josephus, appeared about that time, attempting to lead away the people. See the notes at Matthew 24:23-27.

Verse 25

See the notes at Mark 8:31.

Verse 26-27

See the notes at Matthew 24:37-39.

Verses 28-30

They did eat … - They were busy in the affairs of this life, as if nothing were about to happen.

The same day … - See Genesis 19:23-25. "It rained." The word here used "might" have been rendered "he" rained. In Genesis it is said that the "Lord" did it.

Fire and brimstone - God destroyed Sodom on account of its great wickedness. He took vengeance on it for its sins; and the example of Sodom is set before people to deter them from committing great transgressions, and as a "full proof" that God will punish the guilty. See Jude 1:7; also Isaiah 1:10; Jeremiah 23:14. Yet, in overthrowing it, he used natural means. He is

not to be supposed to have "created" fire and brimstone for the occasion, but to have "directed" the natural means at his disposal for their overthrow; as he did not "create" the waters to drown the world, but merely broke up the fountains of the great deep and opened the windows of heaven. Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim Deuteronomy 29:23, were four great cities, on a plain where is now the Dead Sea, at the southeast of Palestine, and into which the river Jordan flows. They were built on ground which abounded, doubtless, as all that region now does, in "bitumen or naphtha," which is easily kindled, and which burns with great intensity. The phrase "fire and brimstone" is a Hebrew form of expression, denoting sulphurous fire, or fire having the smell of sulphur; and may denote a volcanic eruption, or any burning like that of naphtha. There is no improbability in supposing either that this destruction was accomplished by lightning, which ignited the naphtha, or that it was a volcanic eruption, which, by direction of God, overthrew the wicked cities.

From heaven - By command of God, or from the sky. To the people of Sodom it had "the appearance" of coming from heaven, as all volcanic eruptions would have. Hundreds of towns have been overthrown in this way, and all by the agency of God. He rules the elements, and makes them his instruments, at his pleasure, in accomplishing the destruction of the wicked.

Luke 17:30

Even thus … - Destruction came upon the old world, and upon Sodom, "suddenly;" when they were engaged in other things, and little expecting this. "So" suddenly and unexpectedly, says he, shall destruction come upon the Jewish people. See the notes at Matthew 24.

Verse 31

See the notes at Matthew 24:17-18.

Verse 32

Remember Lot's wife - See Genesis 19:26. "She" looked back - she delayed - perhaps she "desired" to take something with her, and God made her a monument of his displeasure. Jesus directed his disciples, when they saw the calamities coming upon the Jews, to flee to the mountains, Matthew 24:16. He here charges them to be in haste - not to look back - not to delay - but to escape quickly, and to remember that by delaying the wife of Lot lost her life.

Verse 33

See the notes at Matthew 10:39.

Verses 34-36

See the notes at Matthew 24:40-41.

Verse 37

See the notes at Matthew 24:26.

Where, Lord? - Where, or in what direction, shall these calamities come? The answer implies that it would be where there is the most "guilt and wickedness." Eagles flock where there is prey. So, said he, these armies will flock to the place where there is the most wickedness; and by this their thoughts were directed at once to Jerusalem, the place of eminent wickedness, and the place, therefore, where these calamities might be expected to begin.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Verse 1

A parable - See the notes at Matthew 13:3.

To this end - To show this.

Always - At all times. That is, we must not neglect regular stated seasons of prayer; we must seize on occasions of remarkable providences as afflictions or signal blessings to seek God in prayer; we must "always" maintain a spirit of prayer, or be in a proper frame to lift up our hearts to God for his blessing, and we must not grow weary though our prayer seems not to be answered.

Not to faint - Not to grow weary or give over. The parable is designed to teach us that, though our prayers should long appear to be unanswered, we should persevere, and not grow weary in supplication to God.

Verse 2

A judge which feared not God - One appointed by law to determine causes brought before him. This judge had no reverence for God, and consequently no regard for the rights of man. These two things go together. He that has no regard for God can be expected to have none for man; and our Lord has here indirectly taught us what ought to be the character of a judge that he "should" fear God and regard the rights of man. Compare Deuteronomy 1:16-17.

Regarded man - cared not for man. Had no respect for the opinions or the rights of man.

Verse 3

A widow - This is a circumstance that gives increasing interest to the parable. Judges were bound to show special attention to widows, Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 22:3. The reason of this was that they were defenseless, were commonly poor, and were liable to be oppressed by those in power.

Avenge me - This would have been better translated, "Do me justice against my adversary, or vindicate me from him." It does not denote vengeance or revenge, but simply that she wished to have "justice" done her - a thing which this judge was "bound" to do, but which it seems he had no disposition to do.

Adversary - One opposed in law. In this case it seems that the judge was unwilling to do justice, and probably took advantage of her condition to oppress her.

Verse 4-5

For a while - Probably this means for a "considerable" time. It was his duty to attend to the claims of justice, but this was long delayed.

Within himself - He thought, or came to a conclusion.

Though I fear not … - This contains the reason why he attended to the case at all. It was not from any regard to justice, or to the duties of his office. It was simply to avoid "trouble." And yet his conduct in this case might have appeared very upright, and possibly might have been strictly according to law and to justice. How many actions are performed that "appear well," when the doers of those actions know that they are mere hypocrisy! and how many actions are performed from the basest and lowest motives of "selfishness," that have the appearance of external propriety and even of goodness!

She weary me - The word used here, in the original, is that which was employed to denote the wounds and bruises caused by "boxers," who beat each other, and blacken their eyes, and disable them. See the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:27. Hence, it means any vexatious and troublesome importunity that takes the time, and disables from other employment.

Verse 6

Hear … - Give attention to this, and derive from it practical instruction.

sa40

Verse 7

Shall not God avenge … - We are not to suppose that the character of God is at all represented by this judge, or that "his" principles of conduct are at all like those of the judge. This parable shows us conclusively that many "circumstances" of a parable are not to be interpreted closely: they are mere appendages to the narrative. The great truth which our Saviour "designed" to teach is what we ought to endeavor to find. In this case there can be no doubt what that truth is. He has himself told us that it is, that "men ought always to pray and not to faint." This he teaches by the example in the parable; and the argument which it implies is this:

1.A poor widow, by her perseverance only, obtained from an unjust man what otherwise she would "not" have obtained.

2.God is not unjust. He is good, and disposed to do justice and to bestow mercy.

If, therefore, this "wicked man" by persevering prayer was induced to do justice, how much more shall "God," who is good, and who is not

actuated by any such selfish and base principles, do justice to them who apply to him!

Avenge - Do justice to or vindicate them. This may have a twofold reference.

1. To the disciples in the time of Jesus, who were about to be oppressed and persecuted, and over whom calamities were about to come, "as if" God did not regard their cries and had forsaken them. To them Jesus gives the assurance that God "would" hear their petitions and come forth to vindicate them; and that, notwithstanding all these calamities, he would yet appear for their deliverance.

2. It may have a more "general" meaning. The people of God are often oppressed, calumniated, persecuted. They are few in number and feeble. They seem to be almost forsaken and cast down, and their enemies triumph. Yet in due time God will hear their prayers, and will come forth for their vindication. And even if it should not be "in this life," yet he will do it in the day of judgment, when he will pronounce them blessed, and receive them forever to himself.

His own elect - People of God, saints, Christians; so called because God has "chosen" them to be his. The term is usually given in the Scriptures to the true followers of God, and is a term of affection, denoting his great and special love in choosing them out of a world of sinners, and conferring on them grace, and mercy, and eternal life. See 1 Thessalonians 1:4; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 1:2; Ephesians 1:4. It signifies here that they are especially dear to him; that he feels a deep interest in their welfare, and that he will, therefore, be ready to come forth to their aid. The judge felt no special interest in that widow, yet he heard her; God feels a particular regard, a tender love for his elect, and, therefore, he will hear and save.

Which cry day and night - This expresses one striking characteristic of the elect of God; they pray, and pray constantly. No one can have evidence that he is chosen of God who is not a man of prayer. One of the best marks by which the electing love of God is known is that it disposes us to pray. This passage supposes that when the elect of God are in trouble and pressed down with calamities, they "will" cry unto him; and it affirms that if they do, he will hear their cries and answer their requests.

Though he bear long with them - This passage has been variously interpreted, and there is some variety of reading in the manuscripts. Some

read, “Will not God avenge his elect? Will he linger in their cause?” But the most natural meaning is, “Although he defers long to avenge them, and greatly tries their patience, yet he will avenge them.” He tries their faith; he suffers their persecutions and trials to continue a long time; and it almost “appears” as if he would not interpose. Yet he will do it, and will save them.

Verse 8

Speedily - Suddenly, unexpectedly. He will surely vindicate them, and that at a time, perhaps, when they were nearly ready to give over and to sink into despair. This may refer to the deliverance of the disciples from their approaching trials and persecutions among the Jews; or, in general, to the fact that God will interpose and aid his people.

Nevertheless - But. Notwithstanding this. Though this is true that God will avenge his elect, yet will he find his elect “faithful?” The danger is not that “God” will be unfaithful - he will surely be true to his promises; but the danger is that his elect - his afflicted people - will be discouraged; will not persevere in prayer; will not continue to have confidence in him; and will, under heavy trials, sink into despondency. The sole meaning of this phrase, therefore, is, that “there is more danger that his people would grow weary, than that God would be found unfaithful and fail to avenge his elect.” For this cause Christ spoke the parable, and by the “design” of the parable this passage is to be interpreted.

Son of man cometh - This probably refers to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem - the coming of the Messiah, by his mighty power, to abolish the ancient dispensation and to set up the new.

Faith - The word “faith” is sometimes taken to denote the “whole” of religion, and it has been understood in this sense here; but there is a close connection in what Christ says, and it should be understood as referring to what he said before. The truth that he had been teaching was, that God would deliver his people from their calamities and save them, though he suffered them to be long tried. He asks them here whether, when he came, he should find “this faith,” or a belief of “this truth,” among his followers? Would they be found persevering in prayer, and “believing” that God would yet avenge them; or would they cease to pray “always, and faint?” This is not to be understood, therefore, as affirming that when Christ comes to judgment there will be few Christians on the earth, and that the world will be overrun with wickedness. That “may be” true, but it is not the truth taught here.

The earth - The land referring particularly to the land of Judea. The discussion had particular reference to their trials and persecutions in that land. This question implies that "in" those trials many professed disciples might faint and turn back, and many of his "real" followers almost lose sight of this great truth, and begin to inquire whether God would interpose to save them. The same question may be asked respecting any other remarkable visitation of the Son of God in affliction. When tried and persecuted, do "we" believe that God will avenge us? Do "we" pray always and not faint? Have "we" faith to believe that, though clouds and darkness are round about him, yet righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne? And when storms of persecution assail us, can "we" go to God and confidently commit our cause to him, and believe that he will bring forth our righteousness as the light, and our judgment as the noon-day?

Verse 9

Unto certain - Unto some.

Which trusted in themselves - Who confided in themselves, or who supposed that they were righteous. They did not trust to God or the Messiah for righteousness, but to their own works. They vainly supposed they had themselves complied with the demands of the law of God.

Despised others - Others who were not as externally righteous as themselves. This was the character of the Pharisees. They trusted in their outward conformity to the ceremonies of the law. They considered all who did not do that as sinners. This, moreover, is the true character of self-righteousness. Men of that stamp always despise all others. They think they are far above them in holiness, and are disposed to say to them, Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou, Isaiah 65:5. True religion, on the contrary, is humble. Those who trust in Christ for righteousness feel that "they" are, in themselves, poor, and miserable, and guilty, and they are willing to admit that others may be much better than themselves. Certain it is, they "despise" no one. They love all people; they regard them, however vile, as the creatures of God and as going to eternity, and are disposed to treat them well, and to aid them in their journey toward another world.

Verse 10

The temple - Into one of the courts of the temple - the court where prayer was commonly offered. See the notes at Matthew 21:12.

A Pharisee - See the notes at Matthew 3:7.

Publican - See the notes at Matthew 5:46.

Verse 11

Stood and prayed thus with himself - Some have proposed to render this, "stood by himself" and prayed. In this way it would be characteristic of the sect of the Pharisees, who dreaded the contact of others as polluting, and who were disposed to say to all, Stand by yourselves. The Syraic so renders it, but it is doubtful whether the Greek will allow this construction. If not, it means, he said over to himself what he had done, and what was the ground on which he expected the favour of God.

God, I thank thee - There was still in the prayer of the Pharisee an "appearance" of real religion. He did not profess to claim that he had made himself better than others. He was willing to acknowledge that God had done it for him, and that he had a right to his gratitude for it. Hypocrites are often the most orthodox in opinion of any class of people. They know the truth, and admit it. They use it frequently in their prayers and conversation. They will even persecute those who happen to differ from them in opinion, and who may be really wrong. We are not to judge of the "piety" of people by the fact that they admit the truth, or even that they use it often in their prayers. It is, however, not wrong to thank God that he has kept us from the gross sins which other people commit; but it should not be done in an ostentatious manner, nor should it be done forgetting still that we are great sinners and need pardon. These were the faults of the Pharisees.

Extortioners - Rapacious; avaricious; who take away the goods of others by force and violence. It means, also, those who take advantage of the necessities of others, the poor and the oppressed, and extort their property.

Unjust - They who are not fair and honest in their dealings; who get the property of others by "fraud." They are distinguished from "extortioners" because they who are unjust may have the "appearance" of honesty; in the other case there is not.

Verse 12

I fast twice … - This was probably the Jewish custom. The Pharisees are said to have fasted regularly on the second and fifth days of every week in private. This was "in addition" to the public days of fasting required in the law of Moses, and they, therefore, made more a matter of "merit" of it because it was voluntary.

I give tithes - A tithe means the tenth part of a thing. A tenth part of the possessions of the Jews was required for the support of the Levites,

Numbers 18:21. In addition to the tithes required strictly by law, the Pharisees had tithed everything which they possessed even the smallest matters - as mint, anise, cummin, etc., Luke 11:42. It was "this," probably, on which he so particularly prided himself. As this could not be proved to be strictly "required" in the law, it had more the "appearance" of great piety, and, therefore, he particularly dwelt on it.

I possess - This may mean either all which I "have," or all which I "gain" or acquire. It is not material which meaning be considered the true one.

The religion of the Pharisee, therefore, consisted in:

1.abstaining from injustice to others; in pretending to live a harmless, innocent, and upright life; and,

2.aregular observance of all the external duties of religion.

His "fault" consisted in relying on this kind of righteousness; in not feeling and acknowledging that he was a sinner; in not seeking a religion that should dwell in the "heart" and regulate the feelings; and in making public and ostentatious professions of his own goodness. Most of all was this abominable in the sight of God, who "looks into the heart," and who sees wickedness there when the external actions may be blameless. We may learn from the case of the Pharisee:

1.That it is not the man who has the most orthodox belief that has, of course, the most piety;

2.That people may be externally moral, and not be righteous in the sight of God;

3.That they may be very exact in the external duties of religion, and even go beyond the strict letter of the law; that they may assume a great appearance of sanctity, and still be strangers to true piety; and,

4.That ostentation in religion, or a "boasting" before God of what we are and of what we have done, is abominable in his sight. This spoils everything, even if the life "should be" tolerably blameless, and if there should be real piety.

Verse 13

Standing afar off - Afar off from the "temple." The place where prayer was offered in the temple was the court of women. The Pharisee advanced

to the side of the court nearest to the temple, or near as he could; the publican stood on the other side of the same court if he was a Jew, or in the court of the Gentiles if he was a pagan, as far as possible from the temple, being conscious of his unworthiness to approach the sacred place where God had his holy habitation.

So much as his eyes … - Conscious of his guilt. He felt that he was a sinner, and shame and sorrow prevented his looking up. Men who are conscious of guilt always fix their eyes on the ground.

Smote upon his breast - An expression of grief and anguish in view of his sins. It is a sign of grief among almost all nations.

God be merciful … - The prayer of the publican was totally different from that of the Pharisee. He made no boast of his own righteousness toward God or man. He felt that he was a sinner, and, feeling it, was willing to acknowledge it. This is the kind of prayer that will be acceptable to God. When we are willing to confess and forsake our sins, we shall find mercy, Proverbs 28:13. The publican was willing to do this in any place; in the presence of any persons; amid the multitudes of the temple, or alone. He felt most that "God" was a witness of his actions, and he was willing, therefore, to confess his sins before him. While we should not "seek" to do this "publicly," yet we should be willing at all times to confess our manifold transgressions, to the end that we may obtain forgiveness of the same by God's infinite goodness and mercy." It is not dishonorable to make acknowledgment when we have done wrong. No man is so much dishonored as he who is a sinner and is not willing to confess it; as he who has done wrong and yet attempts to "conceal" the fault, thus adding hypocrisy to his other crimes.

Verse 14

I tell you - The Pharisees would have said that the first man here was approved. Jesus assures them that they judged erroneously. God judges of this differently from people.

Justified - Accepted or approved of God. The word "justify" means to declare or treat as righteous. In this case it means that in their prayers the one was approved and the other not; the one went down with the favor of God in answer to his petitions, the other not.

For every one … - See the notes at Luke 14:11.

Verses 15-30

See the notes at Matthew 19:13-30.

Verses 31-33

See the notes at Matthew 20:17-19.

By the prophets - Those who foretold the coming of the Messiah, and whose predictions are recorded in the Old Testament.

Son of man - The Messiah. They predicted that certain things would take place respecting the Messiah that was to come. See the Daniel 9:25-27 notes; Isaiah 53 notes. "These things," Jesus said, would be accomplished "in him," he being the Son of man, or the Messiah.

Verse 34

Understood none of these things - Though they were "plainly" revealed, yet such were their prejudices and their unwillingness to believe them that they did not understand them. They expected that he would be a temporal prince and a conqueror, and they were not "willing" to believe that he would be delivered into the hands of his enemies. They did not see how that could be consistent with the prophecies. To us now these things appear plain, and we may, hence, learn that those things which to us appear most mysterious may yet appear perfectly plain; and we should learn to trust in God, and "believe" just what he has spoken. See Matthew 16:21; Matthew 17:23.

Verses 35-43

See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 20:29-34.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Verse 1

And Jesus entered … - See the notes at Matthew 20:29. This means, perhaps, "he was passing" through Jericho when Zacchaeus saw him. His house was "in" Jericho.

Verse 2

A man named Zacchaeus - The name Zacchaeus is Hebrew, and shows that this man was a "Jew." The Hebrew name properly means "pure," and is the same as Zacchai in Ezra 2:9; Nehemiah 7:14. The publicans, therefore, were not all foreigners.

Chief among the publicans - Who presided over other tax-gatherers, or who "received" their collections and transmitted them to the Roman government.

He was rich - Though this class of people was despised and often infamous, yet it seems that they were sometimes wealthy. They sustained, however, the general character of "sinners," because they were particularly odious in the eyes of the Jews. See Luke 19:7. The evangelist has thought it worthy of record that he was rich, perhaps, because it was so unlikely that a "rich man" should follow so poor and despised a personage as Jesus of Nazareth, and because it was so unusual a thing during his personal ministry. Not many rich were called, but God chiefly chose the poor of this world Compare 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.

Verse 3

Who he was - Rather "what sort of person," he was, or how he appeared. He had that curiosity which is natural to people to see one of whom they have heard much. It would seem, also, that in this case mere "curiosity" led to his conversion and that of his family. Compare 1 Corinthians 14:23-25. God makes use of every principle - of curiosity, or sympathy, or affection, or hope, or fear - to lead people in the way of salvation, and to impress truth on the minds of sinners.

The press - The crowd; the multitude that surrounded Jesus. Earthly princes are often borne in splendid equipages, or even carried, as in Eastern nations, in palanquins on the shoulders of people. Jesus mingled with the multitude, not seeking distinctions of that sort, and perhaps, "in appearance," not distinguished from thousands that followed him.

Little of stature - Short. Not a tall man.

Verse 4

A sycamore tree - See this described in the notes at Luke 17:6.

Verse 5

Abide at thy house - Remain there, or put up with him. This was an honor which Zacchaeus did not expect. The utmost, it seems, which he aimed at was to see Jesus; but, instead of that, Jesus proposed to remain with him, and to give him the benefit of his personal instruction. It is but one among a thousand instances where the Saviour goes, in bestowing mercies, far beyond the desert, the desire, or the expectation of men; and it is not improper to learn from this example that solicitude to behold the Saviour will not pass unnoticed by him, but will meet with his warm approbation, and be connected with his blessing. Jesus was willing to encourage efforts to come to him, and his benevolence prompted him to gratify the desires of the man who was solicitous to see him. He does not disdain the mansions of the rich any more than he does the dwelling-places of the poor, provided there be a humble heart; and he did not suppose there was "less" need of his presence in order to save in the house of the rich man than among the poor. He set an example to all his ministers, and was not afraid or ashamed to proclaim his gospel amid wealth. He was not awed by external splendor or grandeur.

Verse 7

Murmured - Found fault, complained.

To be a guest - To remain with, or to be entertained by.

A man that is a sinner - All publicans they regarded as great sinners, and the "chief" of the publicans, therefore, they regarded as especially wicked. It would appear also from Zacchaeus' confession that his character "had been" that of an oppressive man. But the people seemed to forget that he might be a penitent, and that the Messiah came to save that which was lost.

Verse 8

The half of my goods I give to the poor - It is not necessary to understand this as affirming that this "had" been his practice, or that he said this in the way of proclaiming his own righteousness. It maybe understood rather as a purpose which he "then" formed under the teaching of Christ. He seems to have been sensible that he was a sinner. Of this he was convinced, as we may suppose, by the presence and discourse of Jesus. At first, attracted only by curiosity, or, it may be, by partial conviction that this was

the Messiah, he had sought to see the Saviour; but his presence and conversation convinced him of his guilt, and he stood and openly confessed his sins, and expressed his purpose to give half his ill-gotten property to the poor. This was not a proclamation of his "own" righteousness, nor the "ground" of his righteousness, but it was the "evidence" of the sincerity of his repentance, and the confession which with the mouth is made unto salvation, Romans 10:10.

And if I have taken - His office gave him the power of oppressing the people, and it seems that he did not deny that it had been done.

By false accusation - This is the same word which in Luke 3:14 is rendered "neither accuse any falsely." The accusation seems to have been so made that the person accused was obliged to pay much greater taxes, or so that his property came into the hands of the informer. There are many ways in which this might be done, but we do not know the exact manner.

I restore him - We cannot suppose that this had been always his practice, for no man would wantonly extort money from another, and then restore him at once four times as much; but it means that he was made sensible of his guilt; perhaps that his mind had been a considerable time perplexed in the matter, and that now he was resolved to make the restoration. This was the "evidence" of his penitence and conversion. And here it may be remarked that this is "always" an indisputable evidence of a man's conversion to God. A man who has hoarded ill-gotten gold, if he becomes a Christian, will be disposed to do good with it. A man who has injured others - who has cheated them or defrauded them, "even by due forms of law," must, if he be a Christian, be willing, as far as possible, to make restoration. Zacchaeus, for anything that appears to the contrary, may have obtained this property by the decisions of courts of justice, but he now felt that it was wrong; and though the defrauded people could not "legally" recover it, yet his conscience told him that, in order to his being a true penitent, he must make restitution. One of the best evidences of true conversion is when it produces this result; and one of the surest evidences that a "professed" penitent is not a "true" one, is when he is "not" disposed to follow the example of this son of Abraham and make proper restitution.

Four-fold - Four times as much as had been unjustly taken. This was the amount that was required in the Jewish law when a sheep had been stolen, and a man was convicted of the theft by trial at law, Exodus 22:1. If he "confessed" it himself, without being "detected" and tried, he had only to

restore what was stolen, and add to it a fifth part of its value, Numbers 5:6-7. The sincerity of Zacchaeus‘ repentance was manifest by his being willing to make restoration as great as if it had been proved against him, evincing “his sense” of the wrong, and his purpose to make full restitution. The Jews were allowed to take “no interest” of their brethren Leviticus 25:35-36, and this is the reason why that is not mentioned as the measure of the restitution. When injury of this kind is done in other places, the least that is proper is to restore the principal and interest; for the injured person has a right “to all” that his property would have procured him if it had not been unjustly taken away.

Verse 9

Salvation is come to this house - This family. They have this day received the blessings of the gospel, and become interested in the Messiah‘s kingdom. Salvation “commences” when people truly receive Christ and their sins are pardoned; it is “completed” when the soul is sanctified and received up into heaven.

Forasmuch - Because. For he has given “evidence” that he is a new man, and is disposed to forsake his sins and receive the gospel.

The son of Abraham - Hitherto, although a Jew, yet he has been a sinner, and a great sinner. He was not worthy to be called a son of Abraham. Now, by repentance, and by receiving the Christ whose day Abraham saw and was glad John 8:56, he has shown himself to be worthy to be called his son. Abraham was an example of distinguished piety; the father of the faithful Romans 4:11, as well as the ancestor of the Jews. They were called his sons who were descended from him, and particularly they who “resembled” him. In this place the phrase is used in both senses.

Verse 10

See the notes at Matthew 18:11.

Verse 11

He spake a parable - This parable has in some respects a resemblance to the parable of the “talents” in Matthew 25:14-28, but it is not the same. They differ in the following respects: That was spoken “after” he had entered Jerusalem; this, while on his way there. That was delivered on the Mount of Olives; this, in the house of Zacchaeus. That was delivered to teach them the necessity of “improving” the talents committed to them; this was for a different design. He was now near Jerusalem. A great multitude attended him. His disciples regarded him as the Messiah, and by this they

understood a temporal prince who should deliver them from the dominion of the Romans and set them at liberty. They were anxious for that, and supposed that the time was at hand, and that "now," as soon as he entered Jerusalem, he would assume the appearance of such a prince and set up his kingdom. To "correct that notion" seems to have been the main design of this parable. To do that, he tells them of a man who had a right to the kingdom, yet who, "before" taking possession of it, went into another kingdom to receive a confirmation of his title, thus intimating that "he" would also go away "before" he would completely set up his kingdom Luke 19:12; he tells them that this nobleman left to his servants "property" to be improved in his absence, as "he" would leave to his disciples "talents" to be used in his service Luke 19:12-13; he tells them that this nobleman was rejected by his own citizens Luke 19:14, as "he" would be by the Jews; and that he received the kingdom and called them to an account, as he also would his own disciples.

Because he was nigh to Jerusalem - The capital of the country, and where they supposed he would probably set up his kingdom.

The kingdom of God should immediately appear - That the reign of the Messiah would immediately commence. He spoke the parable to "correct" that expectation.

Verse 12

A certain nobleman - A prince; a man descended from kings, and having a title, therefore, to succeed in the kingdom.

Went into a far country … - This expression is derived from the state of things in Judea in the time of the Saviour. Judea was subject to the Romans, having been conquered by Pompey about sixty years before Christ. It was, however, governed by "Jews," who held the government "under" the Romans. It was necessary that the prince or king should receive a recognition of his right to the kingdom by the Roman emperor and, in order to this, that he should go to Rome; or, as it is said here, that he might receive to himself a kingdom. This actually occurred several times. Archelaus, a son of Herod the Great, about the time of the birth of Jesus, went to Rome to obtain a confirmation of the title which his father had left him, and succeeded in doing it. Herod the Great, his father, had done the same thing before to secure the aid and countenance of Antony. Agrippa the younger, grandson of Herod the Great, went to Rome also to obtain the favor of Tiberius, and to be confirmed in his government. Such instances,

having frequently occurred, would make this parable perfectly intelligible to those to whom it was addressed. By the nobleman, here, is undoubtedly represented the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ; by his going into a far country is denoted his going to heaven, to the right hand of his Father, "before" he should "fully" set up his kingdom and establish his reign among men.

Verse 13

Ten servants - Nothing in particular is denoted by the number "ten." It is a circumstance intended to keep up the narrative. In general, by these servants our Saviour denotes his disciples, and intends to teach us that talents are given us to be improved, for which we must give an account at his return.

Ten pounds - The word translated "pound" here denotes the Hebrew "minah," which was equal to about 15 dollars, or 3British pounds. The pounds here denote the talents which God has given to his servants on earth to improve, and for which they must give all account in the day of judgment.

Occupy till I come - The word "occupy" here means not merely to "possess," as it often does in our language, but to "improve," to employ "in business," for the purpose of increasing it or of making "profit" on it. The direction was to use this money so as to gain "more" against his return. So Jesus commands his disciples to "improve" their talents; to make the most of them; to increase their capability of doing good, and to do it "until" he comes to call us hence, by death, to meet him. See 1 Corinthians 12:7; Ephesians 4:7.

Verse 14

But his citizens - His "subjects," or the people whom he was desirous of ruling.

Hated him - On account of his character, and their fear of oppression. This was, in fact, the case with regard to Archelaus, the Jewish prince, who went to Rome to be confirmed in his kingdom.

Sent a message, saying … - His discontented subjects, fearing what would be the character of his reign, sent an embassy to remonstrate against his being appointed as the ruler. This actually took place. Archelaus went to Rome to obtain from Augustus a confirmation of his title to reign over that part of Judea which had been left him by his father, Herod the Great. The Jews, knowing his character (compare Matthew 2:22), sent an embassy of

50 men to Rome, to prevail on Augustus "not" to confer the title on him, but they could not succeed. He "received" the kingdom, and reigned in Judea in the place of his father. As this fact was "fresh" in the memory of the Jews, it makes this parable much more striking. By this part of it Christ designed to denote that the Jews would reject "him" - the Messiah, and would say that they did not desire him to reign over them. See John 1:11. So it is true of all sinners that they do not "wish" Jesus to reign over them, and, if it were possible, would cast him off, and never submit to his reign.

Verse 15

See the notes at Matthew 25:19.

Verses 16-19

See the notes at Matthew 25:20-21.

Ten cities - We are not to suppose that this will be "literally" fulfilled in heaven. Christ teaches here that our reward in heaven will be "in proportion" to our faithfulness in improving our talents on earth.

Verse 20

A napkin - A towel. He means by it that he had not wasted it nor thrown it by carelessly, but had been "very careful" of it; so much so as to be at the pains to tie it up in a towel and put it in a safe place, as if he had been "very faithful" to his trust. So many people employ their talents, their learning, their property, their influence. They "have" them; they "keep" them; but they never "use" them in the service of the Lord Jesus; and, in regard to their influence on the church or the world, it would be the same if God had never conferred on them these talents.

Verse 21

An austere man - Hard, severe, oppressive. The word is commonly applied to unripe fruit, and means "sour," unpleasant; harsh. In this case it means that the man was taking every advantage, and, while "he" lived in idleness, was making his living out of the toils of others.

Thou takest up … - Thou dost exact of others what thou didst not give. The phrase is applied to a man who "finds" what has been lost by another, and keeps it himself, and refuses to return it to the owner. All this is designed to show the sinner's view of God. He regards him as unjust, demanding more than man has "power" to render, and more, therefore, than God has a "right" to demand. See the notes at Matthew 25:24.

Verse 22

Out of thine own mouth - By your own statement, or your own views of my character. If you "knew" that this was my character, and "knew" that I would be rigid, firm, and even severe, it would have been the part of wisdom in you to have made the best use of the money in your power; but as you "knew" my character beforehand, and was well acquainted with the fact that I should demand a strict compliance with your obligation, you have no right to complain if you are condemned accordingly. We are not to suppose that God is "unjust or austere;" but what we are to learn from this is, that as people know that God will be "just," and will call them to a strict account in the day of judgment, they ought to be prepared to meet him, and that they cannot then complain if God should condemn them.

Verse 23

The bank - The treasury, or the place of exchange. Why did you not loan it out, that it might be increased?

Usury - Interest.

sa40

Verse 25

And they said unto him - Those standing around him said.

He hath … - This was probably an observation made by some of the bystanders, as if surprised at such a decision. "He has already ten pounds. Why take away this one, and add to what he already possesses? Why should his property be increased at the expense of this man, who has but one pound?" The answer to this is given in the following verse; that every one that hath, to him shall be given; every man who is faithful, and improves what God gives him, shall receive much more.

Verse 26-27

For I say … - These are the words of the "nobleman" declaring the principles on which he would distribute the rewards of his kingdom.

But those mine enemies - By the punishment of those who would not that he should reign over them is denoted the ruin that was to come upon the Jewish nation for rejecting the Messiah, and also upon all sinners for not receiving him as their king. See the notes at the parable of the talents in Matthew 25.

Verses 28-39

See the notes at Matthew 21:1-16.

Verse 40

The stones would … cry out - It is "proper" that they should celebrate my coming. Their acclamations "ought" not to be suppressed. So joyful is the event which they celebrate - the coming of the Messiah - that it is not fit that I should attempt to impose silence on them. The expression here seems to be "proverbial," and is not to be taken literally. Proverbs are designed to express the truth "strongly," but are not to be taken to signify as much as if they were to be interpreted literally. The sense is, that his coming was an event of so much importance that it "ought" to be celebrated in some way, and "would" be celebrated. It would be impossible to restrain the people, and improper to attempt it. The language here is strong proverbial language to denote that fact. We are not to suppose, therefore, that our Saviour meant to say that the stones were "conscious" of his coming, or that God would "make" them speak, but only that there was "great joy" among the people; that it was "proper" that they should express it in this manner, and that it was not fit that he should attempt to repress it.

Verses 41-44

He wept over it - Showing his compassion for the guilty city, and his strong sense of the evils that were about to come upon it. See the notes at Matthew 23:37-39. As he entered the city he passed over the Mount of Olives. From that mountain there was a full and magnificent view of the city. See the notes at Matthew 21:1. The view of the splendid capital - the knowledge of its crimes - the remembrance of the mercies of God toward it - the certainty that it might have been spared if it had received the prophets and himself - the knowledge that it was about to put "him," their long-expected Messiah, to death, and "for" that to be given up to utter desolation - affected his heart, and the triumphant King and Lord of Zion wept! Amid all "his" prosperity, and all the acclamations of the multitude, the heart of the Redeemer of the world was turned from the tokens of rejoicing to the miseries about to come on a guilty people. Yet they "might" have been saved. If thou hadst known, says he, even thou, with all thy guilt, the things that make for thy peace; if thou hadst repented, had been righteous, and had received the Messiah; if thou hadst not stained thy hands with the blood of the prophets, and shouldst not with that of the Son of God, then these terrible calamities would not come upon thee. But it is too late. The national wickedness is too great; the cup is full: mercy is exhausted; and Jerusalem, with all her pride and splendor, the glory of her temple, and the pomp of her service, "must perish!"

For the days shall come … - This took place under Titus, the Roman general, 70 a.d., about thirty years after this was spoken.

Cast a trench about thee - The word "trench" now means commonly a "pit or ditch." When the Bible was translated, it meant also "earth thrown up to defend a camp" (Johnson's "Dictionary"). This is the meaning of the original here. It is not a pit or large "ditch," but a pile of earth, stones, or wood thrown up to guard a camp, and to defend it from the approach of an enemy. This was done at the siege of Jerusalem. Josephus informs us that Titus, in order that he might compel the city to surrender by "famine," built a wall around the whole circumference of the city. This wall was nearly 5 miles in length, and was furnished with thirteen castles or towers. This work was completed with incredible labor in ten days. The professed design of this wall was "to keep" the city "in on every side." Never was a prophecy more strikingly accomplished.

Shall lay thee even with the ground … - This was literally done. Titus caused a plow to pass over the place where the temple stood. See the notes at Matthew 24. All this was done, says Christ, because Jerusalem knew not the time of its visitation - that is, did not know, and "would not" know, that the Messiah had come. "His coming" was the time of their merciful visitation. That time had been predicted, and invaluable blessings promised as the result of his advent; but they would not know it. They rejected him, they put him to death, and it was just that they should be destroyed.

Verse 45-46

See the notes at Matthew 21:12-13.

Verse 47

Daily in the temple - That is, for five or six days before his crucifixion.

Verse 48

Could not find … - Were not able to accomplish their purpose; they did not know "how" to bring it about.

Very attentive - literally, "hung upon him" to hear him. The word denotes an anxious desire, a fixed attention, a cleaving to him, and an unwillingness to "leave" him, so that they might hear his words. This is always the case when people become anxious about their salvation. They manifest it by hanging on the preaching of the gospel; by fixed attention; and by an unwillingness to leave the place where the word of God is preached. In view of the fact that the Lord Jesus wept over Jerusalem, we may remark:

(1)It was on account of the sins and danger of the inhabitants, and of the fact that they had rejected offered mercy.

(2)there was “occasion” for weeping. Jesus would not have wept had there been no cause for it. If they were in no danger, if there was no punishment in the future world, why should he have wept? When the Lord Jesus weeps over sinners, it is the fullest proof that they are in danger.

(3)sinners are in the same danger now. They reject Christ as sinners did then. They despise the gospel as they did then. They refuse now to come to him as the inhabitants of Jerusalem did. Why are they not then in the same danger?

(4)deep feeling, gushing emotions, lively affections, are proper in religion. If the Saviour wept, it is not improper for us to weep - it is right. Nay, can it be right “not” to weep over the condition of lost man.

(5)Religion is tenderness and love. It led the Saviour to weep, and it teaches us to sympathize and to feel deeply. Sin hardens the heart, and makes it insensible to every pure and noble emotion; but religion teaches us to feel “for others‘ woes,” and to sympathize in the danger of others.

(6)Christians and Christian ministers should weep over lost sinners. They have souls just as precious as they had then; they are in the same danger; they are going to the judgment-bar; they are wholly insensible to their danger and their duty.

“Did Christ o‘er sinners weep?
And shall our cheeks be dry?
Let floods of penitential grief.
Burst forth from every eye.
“The Son of God in tears.
Angels with wonder see!
Be thou astonished, O my soul;
He shed those tears for thee.
“He wept that we might weep;
Each sin demands a tear:
In heaven alone no sin is found.
And there‘s no weeping there.”

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Verses 1-8
See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 21:23-27.
Verses 9-19
See this parable explained in the notes at Matthew 21:33-45.
Verses 20-38
See this explained in the Mark 12:13-27 notes.
Verse 39
See the notes at Mark 12:32.
Verses 40-44
See the notes at Matthew 22:41-46.
Verses 45-47
See Matthew 23:1.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Verses 1-4

See this explained in the notes at Mark 12:41-44.

Luke 21:4

Penury - Poverty. See this explained in the notes at Mark 12:41-44.

Verse 5

Goodly stones - Beautiful stones. Either referring to the large, square, and well-finished stones of which the eastern wall was built, or to the precious stones which might have been used in decorating the temple itself. See the notes at Mark 13:1.

Gifts - This word properly denotes anything devoted or dedicated to God. Anciently warriors dedicated to their gods the spoils of war - the shields, and helmets, and armor, and garments of those slain in battle. These were suspended in the temples. It would seem that something of this kind had occurred in the temple of Jerusalem, and that the people, to express their gratitude to God, had suspended on the pillars and perches of the temple gifts and offerings. Josephus mentions particularly a golden "vine" with which Herod the Great had adorned the columns of the temple ("Antiq." xiii. 8). See also 2 Maccabees 5:16; 9:16.

Verse 6

See the notes at Matthew 24:2.

Verses 7-36

The account of the destruction of Jerusalem contained in this chapter has been fully considered in the notes at Luke 21:9

Commotions - Insurrections. Subjects rising against their rulers.

Luke 21:11

Fearful sights - See Matthew 24:7.

Luke 21:12, Luke 21:13

Synagogues, and into prisons - See the notes at Mark 13:9-10.

Luke 21:14

Settle it, therefore, in your hearts - Fix it firmly in your minds - so firmly as to become a settled principle - that you are always to depend on God for aid in all your trials. See Mark 13:11.

Luke 21:15

A mouth - Eloquence, ability to speak as the case may demand. Compare Exodus 4:11.

Gainsay - Speak against. They will not be able to "reply" to it, or to "resist" the force of what you shall say.

Luke 21:18

A hair of your head perish - This is a proverbial expression, denoting that they should not suffer any essential injury. This was strikingly fulfilled in the fact that in the calamities of Jerusalem there is reason to believe that no Christian suffered. Before those calamities came on the city they had fled to "Pella," a city on the east of the Jordan. See the notes at Matthew 24:18.

Luke 21:19

In your patience - Rather by your perseverance. The word "patience" here means constancy or perseverance in sustaining afflictions.

Possess ye your souls - Some read here the "future" instead of the "present" of the verb rendered "possess." The word "possess" means here to "preserve" or keep, and the word "souls" means "lives." This passage may be thus translated: By persevering in bearing these trials you "will" save your lives, or you will be safe; or, by persevering "preserve" your lives; that is, do not yield to these calamities, but bear up under them, for he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. Compare Matthew 24:13.

Luke 21:22

All things which are written may be fulfilled - Judgment had been threatened by almost all the prophets against that wicked city. They had spoken of its crimes and threatened its ruin. Once God had destroyed Jerusalem and carried the people to Babylon; but their crimes had been repeated when they returned, and God had again threatened their ruin. Particularly was this very destruction foretold by Daniel, Daniel 9:26-27; "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." See the notes at that passage.

Luke 21:24

Shall fall … - No less than one million one hundred thousand perished in the siege of Jerusalem.

Shall be led away captive - More than 90,000 were led into captivity. See the notes at Joshua 10:24; 2 Samuel 22:41; Ezekiel 21:29. The bondage of Jerusalem has been long and very oppressive. It was for a long time under the dominion of the Romans, then of the Saracens, and is now of the

Turks, and is aptly represented by a captive stretched on the ground whose neck is "trodden" by the foot of the conqueror.

Until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled - This passage has been understood very differently by different expositors. Some refer it to the time which the Romans who conquered it had dominion over it, as signifying that "they" should keep possession of it until a part of the pagans should be converged, when it should be rebuilt. Thus it was rebuilt by the Emperor Adrian. Others suppose that it refers to the end of the world, when all the Gentiles shall be converted, and they shall "cease" to be Gentiles by becoming Christians, meaning that it should "always" be desolate. Others, that Christ meant to say that in the times of the millennium, when the gospel should spread universally, he would reign personally on the earth, and that the "Jews" would return and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. This is the opinion of the Jews and of many Christians. The meaning of the passage clearly is,

1.That Jerusalem would be completely destroyed.

2.That this would be done by Gentiles - that is, by the Roman armies.

3.That this desolation would continue as long as God should judge it proper in a fit manner to express his abhorrence of the crimes of the nation - that is, until the times allotted to "them" by God for this desolation should be accomplished, without specifying how long that would be, or what would occur to the city after that.

It "may" be rebuilt, and inhabited by converted Jews. Such a thing is "possible," and the Jews naturally seek that as their home; but whether this be so or not, the time when the "Gentiles," as such, shall have dominion over the city is limited. Like all other cities on the earth, it will yet be brought under the influence of the gospel, and will be inhabited by the true friends of God. Pagan, infidel, anti-Christian dominion shall cease there, and it will be again a place where God will be worshipped in sincerity - a place "even then" of special interest from the recollection of the events which have occurred there. "How long" it is to be before this occurs is known only to Him "who hath put the times and seasons in his own power," Acts 1:7.

Luke 21:25

See the notes at Matthew 24:29.

Upon the earth distress of nations - Some have proposed to render the word "earth" by "land," confining it to Judea. It often has this meaning, and there seems some propriety in so using it here. The word translated "distress" denotes anxiety of mind - such an anxiety as people have when they do not know what to do to free themselves from calamities; and it means here that the calamities would be so great and overwhelming that they would not know what to do to escape. There would be a want of counsel, and deep anxiety at the impending evils.

With perplexity - Rather "on account" of their perplexity, or the desperate state of their affairs. The Syriac has it, "perplexity or wringing of hands," which is a sign of deep distress and horror.

The sea and the waves roaring - This is not to be understood literally, but as an image of great distress. Probably it is designed to denote that these calamities would come upon them like a deluge. As when in a storm the ocean roars, and wave rolls on wave and dashes against the shore, and each succeeding surge is more violent than the one that preceded it, so would the calamities come upon Judea. They would roll over the whole land, and each wave of trouble would be more violent than the one that preceded it, until the whole country would be desolate. The same image is also used in Isaiah 8:7-8, and Revelation 18:15.

Luke 21:26

Men's hearts failing them - This is an expression denoting the highest terror. The word rendered "failing" commonly denotes to "die," and here it means that the terror would be so great that people would faint and be ready to die in view of the approaching calamities. And if this was true in respect to the judgments about to come upon Judea, how much more so will it be in the day of judgment, when the wicked will be arraigned before the Son of God, and when they shall have before them the prospect of the awful sufferings of hell - the pains and woes which shall continue forever! It will be no wonder, then, if they call on the rocks and mountains to hide them from the face of God, and if their hearts sink within them at the prospect of eternal suffering.

Luke 21:28

Your redemption draweth nigh - See the notes at Matthew 24:33. This is expressed in Luke 21:31 thus: "the kingdom of God is nigh at hand" - that is, from that time God will signally build up his kingdom. It shall be fully established when the Jewish policy shall come to an end; when the

temple shall be destroyed, and the Jews scattered abroad. Then the power of the Jews shall be at an end; they shall no longer be able to persecute you, and you shall be completely delivered from all these trials and calamities in Judea.

Luke 21:34

Lest at any time your hearts be overcharged … - The meaning of this verse is, "Be continually expecting these things. Do not forget them, and do not be "secure" and satisfied with this life and the good things which it furnishes. Do not suffer yourselves to be drawn into the fashions of the world; to be conformed to its customs; to partake of its feasts and revelry; and so these calamities shall come upon you when you least expect them." And from this we may learn - what alas! we may from the "lives" of many professing Christians - that there is need of cautioning the disciples of Jesus now that they do not indulge in the festivities of this life, and "forget" that they are to die and come to judgment. How many, alas! who bear the Christian name, have forgotten this caution of the Saviour, and live as if their lives were secure; as if they feared not death; as if there were no heaven and no judgment! Christians should feel that they are soon to die, and that their portion is not in this life; and, feeling this, they should be "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God."

Overcharged - Literally, "be made heavy," as is the case with those who have eaten and drunken too much.

Surfeiting - Excessive eating and drinking, so as to oppress the body; indulgence in the pleasures of the table. This word does not include "intoxication," but merely indulgence in food and drink, though the food and drink should be in themselves lawful.

Drunkenness - Intoxication, intemperance in drinking. The ancients were not acquainted with the poison that we chiefly use on which to become drunk. They had no distilled spirits. They became intoxicated on wine, and strong drink made of a mixture of dates, honey, etc. All nations have contrived some way to become intoxicated - to bring in folly, and disease, and poverty, and death, by drunkenness; and in nothing is the depravity of men more manifest than in thus endeavoring to hasten the ravages of crime and death.

Luke 21:35

As a snare - In Matthew and Mark Jesus compares the suddenness with which these calamities would come to the deluge coming in the days of

Noah. Here he likens it to a snare. Birds are caught by a snare or net. It is sprung on them quickly, and when they are not expecting it. So, says he, shall these troubles come upon Judea. The figure is often used to denote the suddenness of calamities, Psalm 69:22; Romans 11:9; Psalm 124:7; Isaiah 24:17.

Luke 21:36

To stand before the Son of man - These approaching calamities are represented as the "coming of the Son of man" to judge Jerusalem for its crimes. Its inhabitants were so wicked that they were not worthy to stand before him and would be condemned, and the city would be overthrown. To "stand before him" here denotes approbation, acquittal, favor, and is equivalent to saying that "they" would be free from these calamities, while they should come upon others. See Romans 14:4; Psalm 1:5; Psalm 130:3; Revelation 6:17. Perhaps, also, there is a reference here to the day of judgment. See the notes at Matthew 24.

Verse 37-38

See the notes at Matthew 21:17.

Came early in the morning - He returned early from the Mount of Olives, and taught in the temple. Our Saviour did not waste his mornings in idleness or sleep. He rose early and repaired to the temple. The people, also, flocked to the sanctuary to hear him. This example is at once an encouragement to early rising and to the early worship of God. It is a reproof of those who spend the part of the day best fitted for devotion in unnecessary sleep; and it shows the propriety, where it can be done, of assembling early in the morning for prayer and the worship of God. Early prayer-meetings have the countenance of the Saviour, and will be found to be eminently conducive to the promotion of religion. The whole example of Jesus goes to show the importance of beginning the day with God, and of lifting up the heart to him for direction, for the supply of our wants, and for preservation from temptation, before the mind is engrossed by the cares, and distracted by the perplexities, and led away by the temptations of this life. Commencing the day with God is like arresting evil at the fountain; prayer at any other time, without this, is an attempt to arrest it when it has swollen to a stream and rolls on like a torrent. Let the day be begun with God, and the work of piety is easy. Let the world have the ascendency in the morning, and it will be likely to have it also at noonday and at evening.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 22

Verse 1-2

See the notes at Matthew 26:1-2.

Verse 3

Then entered Satan into Judas - It is not necessary to suppose that Satan entered personally into the body of Judas, but only that he brought him under his influence; he filled his mind with an evil passion, and led him on to betray his Master. The particular passion of which Satan made use was "avarice" - probably the besetting sin of Judas. To show its exceeding evil and baseness, it is only necessary to say that when it produced its "appropriate" effect in this case, it led to the betraying and crucifixion of the Son of God. We may learn, also, that when Satan "tempts" people, he commonly does it by exciting and raising to the highest pitch their native passions. He does not make them act contrary to their nature, but leads them on to "act out" their proper disposition.

Satan - This word properly means an adversary or an accuser. It is the name which in the Scriptures is commonly given to the prince or leader of evil spirits, and is given to him because he is the "accuser or calumniator" of the righteous (see Revelation 12:10; compare Job 1:6-9), as well as because he is the "adversary" of God.

Being of the number of the twelve - One of the twelve apostles. This greatly aggravated his crime. He should have been bound by most tender ties to Jesus. He was one of his family - long with him, and, treated by him with every mark of kindness and confidence; and nothing could more enhance his guilt than thus to make use of this confidence for the commission of one of the basest crimes.

Verses 4-6

Chief priests and captains - See the notes at Matthew 26:14. See the account of the bargain which Judas made with them explained in the Matthew 26:14-16 notes, and Mark 14:10-11 notes.

Absence of the multitude - The multitude, "the people," were then favorable to Jesus. He had preached in the temple, and many of them believed that he was the Messiah. It was a hazardous thing, therefore, to take him by force, and in their presence, as they might rise and rescue him. Hence, they sought to take him when "he" was away from the multitude;

and as Judas knew of a place where he could be found "alone," they were glad of the opportunity of so easily securing him.

Verses 7-13

See this passage explained in the Matthew 26:17-19 notes, and Mark 14:12-16 notes.

Verse 14

When the hour was come - The hour of eating the paschal lamb, which was in the evening. See the notes at Matthew 26:20.

Verse 15

With desire I have desired - This is a Hebrew form of expression, and means "I have greatly desired." The reasons why he desired this we may suppose to have been:

1.That, as he was about to leave them, he was desirous once of seeing them together, and of partaking with them of one of the religious privileges of the Jewish dispensation. Jesus was "man" as well as God, and he never undervalued the religious rites of his country, or the blessings of social and religious contact; and there is no impropriety in supposing that even he might feel that his human nature might be prepared by the service of religion for his great and terrible sufferings.

2.He doubtless wished to take an opportunity to prepare "them" for his sufferings, and to impress upon them more fully the certainty that he was about to leave them, that they might be prepared for it.

3.We may also suppose that he particularly desired it that he might institute for "their" use, and for the edification of all Christians, the supper which is called by his name - "the Lord's Supper." All his sufferings were the expression of love to his people, and he was desirous of testifying "always" his regard for their comfort and welfare.

Before I suffer - Before I die.

Verse 16

Until it be fulfilled - See the notes at Matthew 26:29.

Verse 17

And he took the cup and gave thanks - This was not the "sacramental" cup, for that was taken "after" supper, Luke 22:20. This was one of the cups which were usually taken during the celebration of the Passover, and pertained to that observance. "After" he had kept this in the usual manner, he instituted the supper which bears his name, using the bread and wine

which had been prepared for the Passover, and thus ingrafted the Lord‘s Supper on the Passover, or superseded the Passover by another ordinance, which was intended to be perpetual.

Verse 19-20

See the notes at Matthew 26:26-28.

Verses 21-23

See the notes at Matthew 26:21-25.

Verse 24

A strife - A contention or debate.

Which of them should be the greatest - The apostles, in common with the Jews generally, had supposed that the Messiah would come as a temporal prince, and in the manner of other princes of the earth - of course, that he would have officers of his government, ministers of state, etc. Their contention was founded on this expectation, and they were disputing which of them should be raised to the highest office. They had before had a similar contention. See Matthew 18:1; Matthew 20:20-28. Nothing can be more humiliating than that the disciples should have had “such” contentions, and in such a time and place. That just as Jesus was contemplating his own death, and laboring to prepare them for it, they should strive and contend about office and rank, shows how deeply seated is the love of power; how ambition will find its way into the most secret and sacred places; and how even the disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus are sometimes actuated by this most base and wicked feeling.

Verse 25

The kings of the Gentiles - The kings of the “nations,” or of the earth. They do this, and it is to be expected of them, and it is right. Our Lord does not mean to say that it was wrong that there should be such authority, but that “his” kingdom was to be of a different character, and they were not to expect it there.

Over them - That is, over the “nations.”

Are called benefactors - The word “benefactor” is applied to one who bestows “favor” on another. It was applied to kings by way of “compliment or flattery.” Some of them might have been truly benefactors of their people, but this was by no means true of “all.” Yet it was applied to all, and especially to the Roman emperors. It is found applied to them often in the writings of Josephus and Philo.

Verse 26-27

But ye shall not be so - Christ here takes occasion to explain the nature of his kingdom. He assures them that it is established on different principles from those of the world; that his subjects were not to expect titles, and power, and offices of pomp in his kingdom. He that would be most advanced in "his" kingdom would be he that was most humble; and in order to show them this, he took a towel and girded himself after the manner of a servant, and washed their feet, to show them what ought to be their feelings toward each other. See John 13:4-17.

He that sitteth at meat - The master of the feast, or one of his guests.

But I am among you … - This was said in connection with his washing their feet. He "showed" them how they ought to feel and act toward each other. "They" ought, therefore, not to aim at office and power, but to be humble, and serve and aid one another.

Verse 28

My temptations - My trials, my humiliations, and my assaults from the power of Satan and a wicked world.

Verse 29

And I appoint unto you a kingdom - He assures them here that they should "have" a kingdom - their expectations would be realized. They had continued with him; they had seen how "he" had lived, and to what trials he had been subjected; they had all along expected a kingdom, and he assures them that they should not be disappointed.

As my Father … - They had seen how God had appointed a kingdom to "him." It was not with pomp, and splendor, and external glory, but it was in poverty, want, persecution, and trial. So would "he" appoint to them a kingdom. They should "surely" possess it; but it would be not with external splendor, but by poverty and toil. The original word "appoint" has the force of a "covenant" or compact, and means that it should be "surely" or certainly done, or that he pledged himself to do it. All Christians must enter into the kingdom of heaven after the manner of their Lord - through much tribulation; but, though it must be, as it was with him, by many tears and sorrows, yet they shall surely reach the place of their rest and the reward of heaven, for it is secured to them by the covenant pledge and faithfulness of their Lord and King.

Verse 30

See the notes at Matthew 19:28.

Verse 31

Simon - Peter. Jesus, foreseeing the danger of Peter, and knowing that he was about to deny him, took occasion to forewarn him and put him on his guard, and also to furnish him with a solace when he should be brought to repentance.

Satan hath desired - Satan is the prince of evil. One of his works is to try the faith of believers to place temptations and trials in their way, that they may be tested. Thus God gave Job into his hands, that it might be seen whether he would be found faithful, or would apostatize. See the notes at Job 1:7-12. So Satan desired to have Peter in his hands, that he might also try him.

May sift you as wheat - Grain was agitated or shaken in a kind of fan or sieve. The grain remained in the fan, and the chaff and dust were thrown off. So Christ says that Satan desired to try Peter; to place trials and temptations before him; "to agitate him" to see whether anything of faith would remain, or whether all would not be found to be chaff - mere natural ordor and false professions.

Verse 32

That thy faith fail not - The word "faith," here, seems to be used in the sense of religion, or attachment to Christ, and the words "fail not" mean "utterly fail" or fail altogether - that is, apostatize. It is true that the "courage" of Peter failed; it is true that he had not that immediate confidence in Jesus and reliance on him which he had before had; but the prayer of Jesus was that he might not altogether apostatize from the faith. God heard Jesus "always" John 11:42; it follows, therefore, that every prayer which he ever offered was answered; and it follows, as he asked here for a specific thing, that that thing was granted; and as he prayed that Peter's faith might not utterly fail, so it follows that there was no time in which Peter was not really a pious man. Far as he wandered, and grievously as he sinned, yet he well knew that Jesus was the Messiah. He "did know" the man; and though his fears overcame him and led him to aggravated sin, yet the prayer of Christ was prevalent, and he was brought to true repentance.

When thou art converted - The word "converted" means turned, changed, recovered. The meaning is, when thou art turned from this sin, when thou art recovered from this heinous offence, then use "your" experience to warn and strengthen those who are in danger of like sins. A man may be "converted or turned" from any sin, or any evil course. He is

"regenerated" but once - at the beginning of his Christian life; he may be "converted" as often as he falls into sin.

Strengthen thy brethren - Confirm them, warn them, encourage them. They are in continual danger, also, of sinning. Use your experience to warn them of their danger, and to comfort and sustain them in their temptations. And from this we learn:

1.That one design of permitting Christians to fall into sin is to show their own weakness and dependence on God; and,

2.That they who have been overtaken in this manner should make use of their experience to warn and preserve others from the same path.

The two epistles of Peter, and his whole life, show that "he" was attentive to this command of Jesus; and in his death he manifested his deep abhorrence of this act of dreadful guilt in denying his blessed Lord, by requesting to be crucified with his head downward, as unworthy to suffer in the same manner that Christ did. Compare the notes at John 21:18.

Verse 33-34

See the notes at Matthew 26:33-35.

Verse 35

When I sent you … - See the notes at Matthew 10:9-10.

Lacked ye … - Did you want anything? Did not God fully provide for you? He refers to this to convince them that his words were true; that their past experience should lead them to put confidence in him and in God.

Verse 36

But now - The Saviour says the times are changed. "Before," he sent them out only for a little time. They were in their own country. Their journeys would be short, and there was no need that they should make preparation for a long absence, or for encountering great dangers. But "now" they were to go into the wide world, among strangers, trials, dangers, and wants. And as the time was near; as he was about to die; as these dangers pressed on, it was proper that they should make provision for what was before them.

A purse - See the notes at Matthew 10:9. He intimates that they should "now" take money, as it would be necessary to provide for their wants in traveling.

Scrip - See the notes at Matthew 10:10.

And he that hath no sword - There has been much difficulty in understanding why Jesus directed his disciples to arm themselves, as if it

was his purpose to make a defense. It is certain that the spirit of his religion is against the use of the sword, and that it was not his purpose to defend himself against Judas. But it should be remembered that these directions about the purse, the scrip, and the sword were not made with reference to his "being taken" in the garden, but with reference "to their future life." The time of the trial in Gethsemane was just at hand; nor was there "time" then, if no other reason existed, to go and make the purchase. It altogether refers to their future life. They were going into the midst of dangers. The country was infested with robbers and wild beasts. It was customary to go armed. He tells them of those dangers - of the necessity of being prepared in the usual way to meet them. This, then, is not to be considered as a specific, positive "command" to procure a sword, but an intimation that great dangers were before them; that their manner of life would be changed, and that they would need the provisions "appropriate to that kind of life." The "common" preparation for that manner of life consisted in money, provisions, and arms; and he foretells them of that manner of life by giving them directions commonly understood to be appropriate to it. It amounts, then, to a "prediction" that they would soon leave the places which they had been accustomed to, and go into scenes of poverty, want, and danger, where they would feel the necessity of money, provisions, and the means of defense. All, therefore, that the passage justifies is:

1.That it is proper for people to provide beforehand for their wants, and for ministers and missionaries as well as any others.

2.That self-defense is lawful.

Men encompassed with danger may lawfully "defend" their lives. It does not prove that it is lawful to make "offensive" war on a nation or an individual.

Let him sell his garment - His "mantle" or his outer garment. See the notes at Matthew 5:40. The meaning is, let him procure one at any expense, even if he is obliged to sell his clothes for it intimating that the danger would be very great and pressing.

Verse 37

This that is written - See the notes at Isaiah 53:12.

Was reckoned among the transgressors - Not reckoned as a transgressor, but "among or with" them - that is, he was treated as transgressors are. He was put to death in their company, and as he "would have been" if he had been a transgressor. He was innocent, holy, harmless,

and undefiled, Hebrews 7:26. God knew this always, and could not "think" of him, or make him "to be" otherwise than he was; yet it pleased him to bruise him, and to give him into the hands of people who did reckon him as a transgressor, and who treated him accordingly.

Have an end - This may either mean, "shall be surely accomplished," or "they are about to be fulfilled," or "are now fulfilled." The former is probably the meaning, denoting that "every" prophecy in regard to him would certainly be accomplished.

Verse 38

Are two swords - The Galileans, it is said, often went armed. The Essenes did so also. The reason was that the country was full of robbers and wild beasts, and it was necessary to carry, in their travels, some means of defense. It seems that the disciples followed the customs of the country, and had with them some means of defense, though they had but two swords among the twelve.

It is enough - It is difficult to understand this. Some suppose that it is spoken "ironically;" as if he had said, "You are bravely armed indeed, with two swords among twelve men, and to meet such a host!" Others, that he meant to reprove them for understanding him "literally," as if he meant that they were then to procure swords for "immediate" battle. As if he had said, "This is absurd, or a perversion of my meaning. I did not intend this, but merely to foretell you of impending dangers after my death." It is to be observed that he did not say "the two swords are enough," but "it is enough;" perhaps meaning simply, enough has been said. Other matters press on, and you will yet understand what I mean.

Verses 39-46

See the Luke 22:43

Strengthening him - His human nature, to sustain the great burden that was upon his soul. Some have supposed from this that he was not divine as well as human; for if he was "God," how could an angel give any strength or comfort? and why did not the divine nature "alone" sustain the human? But the fact that he was "divine" does not affect the case at all. It might be asked with the same propriety, If he was, as all admit, the friend of God, and beloved of God, and holy, why, if he was a mere man, did not "God" sustain him alone, without an angel's intervening? But the objection in neither case would have any force. The "man, Christ Jesus," was suffering. His human nature was in agony, and it is the "manner" of God to sustain the

afflicted by the intervention of others; nor was there any more "unfitness" in sustaining the human nature of his Son in this manner than any other sufferer.

Luke 22:44

In an agony - See this verse explained in the notes at Matthew 26:42-44.

Luke 22:45

Sleeping for sorrow - On account of the greatness of their sorrow. See the notes at Matthew 26:40.

Verses 47-53

See this explained in Matthew 26:48-56.

Luke 22:48

Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? - By the "Son of man" was evidently meant "the Messiah." Judas had had the most satisfactory evidence of that, and did not doubt it. A kiss was the sign of affection. By that slight artifice Judas thought to conceal his base purpose. Jesus with severity reproaches him for it. Every word is emphatic. "Betrayest" thou - dost thou violate all thy obligations of fidelity, and deliver thy Master up to death? Betrayest "thou" - thou, so long with him, so much favored, so sure that this is the Messiah? Betrayest thou "the Son of man" - the Messiah, the hope of the nations, the desire of all people, the world's Redeemer? Betrayest thou the Son of man "with a kiss" - the sign of friendship and affection employed in a base and wicked purpose, intending to add deceit, disguise, and the prostitution of a mark of affection to the "crime of treason?" Every word of this must have gone to the very soul of Judas. Perhaps few reproofs of crime more resemble the awful searchings of the souls of the wicked in the day of judgment.

Verses 54-62

See the notes at Matthew 26:57-75.

Verses 63-71

See the notes at Matthew 26:57-68.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 23

Verse 1

See the notes at Matthew 27:1-2.

Verse 2

This fellow - The word "fellow" is not in the original. It conveys a notion of "contempt," which no doubt they "felt," but which is not expressed in the "Greek," and which it is not proper should be expressed in the translation. It might be translated, "We found this man."

Perverting the nation - That is, exciting them to sedition and tumults. This was a mere wanton accusation, but it was plausible before a Roman magistrate; for,

1.The Galileans, as Josephus testifies, were prone to seditions and tumults.

2.Jesus drew multitudes after him, and they thought it was easy to show that this was itself promoting tumults and seditions.

Forbidding … - About their charges they were very cautious and cunning. They did not say that he "taught" that people should not give tribute - that would have been too gross a charge, and would have been easily refuted; but it was an "inference" which they drew. They said it "followed" from his doctrine. He professed to be a king. They "inferred," therefore, if "he" was "a king," that he must hold that it was not right to acknowledge allegiance to any foreign prince; and if they could make "this" out, they supposed that Pilate "must" condemn him of course.

Tribute - Taxes.

Caesar - The Roman emperor, called also Tiberius. The name "Caesar" was common to the Roman emperors, as "Pharaoh" was to the Egyptian kings. "All" the kings of Egypt were called Pharaoh, or "the" Pharaoh; so all the Roman emperors were called "Caesar."

Verse 3

See the notes at Matthew 27:11.

Verse 4

I find no fault - I see no evidence that he is guilty of what you charge him with. This was after Pilate had taken Jesus into the judgment-hall by himself and examined him "privately," and had been satisfied in regard to the nature of his kingdom. See John 18:33-38. He was "then" satisfied that

though he claimed to be “a king,” yet his kingdom was not of this world, and that “his” claims did not interfere with those of Caesar.

Verse 5

The more fierce - The more urgent and pressing. They saw that there was a prospect of losing their cause, and they attempted to press on Pilate the point that would be most likely now to affect him. Pilate had, in fact, acquitted him of the charge of being an enemy to Caesar, and they, therefore, urged the other point more vehemently.

Stirreth up the people - Excites them to tumult and sedition.

All Jewry - All Judea.

From Galilee to this place - To Jerusalem - that is, throughout the whole country. It is not merely in one place, but from one end of the land to the other.

Verse 6

Whether he were a Galilean - He asked this because, if he was, he properly belonged to Herod‘s jurisdiction, who reigned over Galilee.

Verse 7

Herod‘s jurisdiction - Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great. This was the same Herod that put John the Baptist to death. Jesus had passed the most of his life in the part of the country where he ruled, and it was, therefore, considered that he belonged to his jurisdiction - that is, that it belonged to Herod, not to Pilate, to try this cause.

Verse 10

Vehemently accused him - Violently or unjustly accused him, endeavoring to make it appear that he had been guilty of sedition in Herod‘s province.

Verse 11

Herod with his men of war - With his soldiers, or his body-guard. It is probable that in traveling he had “a guard” to attend him constantly.

Set him at nought - Treated him with contempt and ridicule.

A gorgeous robe - A white or shining robe, for this is the meaning of the original. The Roman princes wore “purple” robes, and “Pilate,” therefore, put such a robe on Jesus. The Jewish kings wore a “white” robe, which was often rendered very shining or gorgeous by much tinsel or silver interwoven. Josephus says that the robe which Agrippa wore was so bright with silver that when the sun shone on it, it so dazzled the eyes that it was difficult to look on it. The Jews and Romans, therefore, decked him in the

manner appropriate to their own country, for purposes of mockery. All this was unlawful and malicious, as there was not the least evidence of his guilt.

Sent him to Pilate - It was by the interchange of these civilities that they were made friends. It would seem that Pilate sent him to Herod as a token of civility and respect, and with a design, perhaps, of putting an end to their quarrel. Herod returned the civility, and it resulted in their reconciliation.

Verse 12

Made friends together … - What had been the cause of their quarrel is unknown. It is commonly supposed that it was Pilate‘s slaying the Galileans in Jerusalem, as related in Luke 13:1-2. The occasion of their reconciliation seems to have been the civility and respect which Pilate showed to Herod in this case. It was not because they were united in “hating” Jesus, as is often the case with wicked people, for Pilate was certainly desirous of releasing him, and “both” considered him merely as an object of ridicule and sport. It is true, however, that wicked people, at variance in other things, are often united in opposing and ridiculing Christ and his followers; and that enmities of long standing are sometimes made up, and the most opposite characters brought together, simply to oppose religion. Compare Psalm 83:5-7.

Verse 15

Nothing worthy of death is done unto him - Deserving of death. The charges are not proved against him. They had had every opportunity of proving them, first before Pilate and then before Herod, unjustly subjecting him to trial before “two” men in succession, and thus giving them a double opportunity of condemning him, and yet, after all, he was declared by both to be innocent. There could be no better evidence that he “was” innocent.

Verse 16

I will therefore chastise him - The word “chastise” here means to “scourge or to whip.” This was usually done before capital punishment, to increase the sufferings of the man condemned. It is not easy to see the reason why, if Pilate supposed Jesus to be “innocent,” he should propose publicly to scourge him. It was as “really” unjust to do that as it was to crucify him. But probably he expected by this to conciliate the minds of his accusers; to show them that he was willing to gratify them if it “could” be done with propriety; and perhaps he expected that by seeing him whipped and disgraced, and condemned to ridicule, to contempt, and to suffering, they would be satisfied. It is farther remarked that among the Romans it

was competent for a magistrate to inflict a "slight" punishment on a man when a charge of gross offence was not fully made out, or where there was not sufficient testimony to substantiate the precise charge alleged. All this shows,

1.The palpable "injustice" of our Lord's condemnation;

2.The persevering malice and obstinacy of the Jews; and,

3.The want of firmness in Pilate.

He should have released him at once; but the love of "popularity" led him to the murder of the Son of God. Man should do his duty in all situations; and he that, like Pilate, seeks only for public favor and popularity, will assuredly be led into crime.

Verse 17

See the notes at Matthew 27:15.

Verses 18-23

See the notes at Matthew 27:20-23.

Verse 24-25

See the notes at Matthew 27:26.

Verse 26

See the notes at Matthew 27:32.

After Jesus - Probably to bear one end of the cross. Jesus was feeble and unable to bear it alone, and they compelled Simon to help him.

Verse 28

Daughters of Jerusalem - Women of Jerusalem. This was a common mode of speaking among the Hebrews.

Weep for yourselves … - This refers to the calamities that were about to come upon them in the desolation of their city by the Romans.

Verse 30

To the mountains, Fall on us … - This is an image of great calamities and judgments. So great will be the calamities that they will seek for shelter from the storm, and will call on the hills to protect them. The same figure is used respecting the wicked in the day of judgment in Revelation 6:16-17. Compare also Isaiah 2:21.

Verse 31

For if they do these things in a green tree … - This seems to be a proverbial expression. A "green" tree is not easily set on fire; a dry one is easily kindled and burns rapidly; and the meaning of the passage is - "If

they, the Romans, do these things to me, who am innocent and blameless; if they punish me in this manner in the face of justice, what will they not do in relation to this guilty nation? What security have they that heavier judgments will not come upon them? What desolations and woes may not be expected when injustice and oppression have taken the place of justice, and have set up a rule over this wicked people?" Our Lord alludes, evidently, to the calamities that would come upon them by the Romans in the destruction of their city and temple. The passage may be applied, however, without impropriety, and with great beauty and force, to the punishment of the wicked in the future world.

Thus applied, it means that the sufferings of the Saviour, as compared with the sufferings of the guilty, were like the burning of a green tree as compared with the burning of one that is dry. A green tree is not adapted to burn; a dry one is. So the Saviour - innocent, pure, and holy - stood in relation to suffering. There were sufferings which an innocent being could not endure. There was remorse of conscience, the sense of guilt, punishment properly so called, and the eternity of woes. He had the consciousness of innocence, and he would not suffer forever. He had no passions to be enkindled that would rage and ruin the soul. The sinner is "adapted" to sufferings, like a dry tree to the fire. He is guilty, and will suffer all the horrors of remorse of conscience. He will be punished literally. He has raging and impetuous passions, and they will be enkindled in hell, and will rage forever and ever. The meaning is, that if the innocent Saviour suffered "so much," the sufferings of the sinner forever in hell must be more unspeakably dreadful. Yet who could endure the sufferings of the Redeemer on the cross for a single day? Who could bear them forever and ever, aggravated by all the horrors of a guilty conscience, and all the terrors of unrestrained anger, and hate, and fear, and wrath? "Why will the wicked die?"

Verse 32-33

See the notes at Matthew 27:35, Matthew 27:38.

Verse 34

Father, forgive them - This is a fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 53:12; "He made intercession for the transgressors." The prayer was offered for those who were guilty of putting him to death. It is not quite certain whether he referred to the "Jews" or "to the Roman soldiers." Perhaps he

referred to both. The Romans knew not what they did, as they were really ignorant that he was the Son of God, and as they were merely obeying the command of their rulers. The Jews knew, indeed, that he was "innocent," and they had evidence, if they would have looked at it, that he was the Messiah; but they did not know what would be the effect of their guilt; they did not know what judgments and calamities they were bringing down upon their country. It may be added, also, that, though they had abundant evidence, if they would look at it, that he was the Messiah, and enough to leave then without excuse, yet they did not, "in fact," believe that he was the Saviour promised by the prophets, and had not, "in fact," any proper sense of his rank and dignity as "the Lord of glory." If they had had, they would not have crucified him, as we cannot suppose that they would knowingly put to death their own Messiah, the hope of the nation, and him who had been so long promised to the fathers. See the notes at 1 Corinthians 2:8. We may learn from this prayer:

1.The duty of praying for our enemies, even when they are endeavoring most to injure us.

2.The thing for which we should pray for them is that "God" would pardon them and give them better minds.

3.The power and excellence of the Christian religion. No other religion "teaches" people to pray for the forgiveness of enemies; no other "disposes" them to do it. Men of the world seek for "revenge;" the Christian bears reproaches and persecutions with patience, and prays that God would pardon those who injure them, and save them from their sins.

4.The greatest sinners, through the intercession of Jesus, may obtain pardon. God heard him, and still hears him "always," and there is no reason to doubt that many of his enemies and murderers obtained forgiveness and life. Compare Acts 2:37, Acts 2:42-43; Acts 6:7; Acts 14:1.

They know not what they do - It was done through ignorance, Acts 3:17. Paul says that, "had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory," 1 Corinthians 2:8. Ignorance does not excuse altogether a crime if the ignorance be willful, but it diminishes its guilt. They "had" evidence; they "might" have learned his character; they "might" have known what they were doing, and they "might" be held answerable for all this. But Jesus here shows the compassion of his heart, and as they were

"really" ignorant, whatever might have been the cause of their ignorance, he implores God to pardon them. He even urges it as a "reason" why they should be pardoned, that they were ignorant of what they were doing; and though people are often guilty for their ignorance, yet God often in compassion overlooks it, averts his anger, and grants them the blessings of pardon and life. So he forgave Paul, for he "did it in ignorance, in unbelief," 1 Timothy 1:13. So God "winked" at the ignorance of the Gentiles, Acts 17:30. Yet this is no excuse, and no evidence of safety, for those who in our day contemptuously put away from them and their children the means of instruction.

Verses 35-39

See the notes at Matthew 27:41-44.

Luke 23:38

In letters of Greek … - See the notes at Matthew 27:37.

Luke 23:39

One of the malefactors - Matthew Matthew 27:44 says "the thieves - cast the same in his teeth." See the apparent contradiction in these statements reconciled in the notes at that place.

If thou be Christ - If thou art the Messiah; if thou art what thou dost pretend to be. This is a taunt or reproach of the same kind as that of the priests in Luke 23:35.

Save thyself and us - Save our lives. Deliver us from the cross. This man did not seek for salvation truly; he asked not to be delivered from his sins; if he had, Jesus would also have heard him. Men often, in sickness and affliction, call upon God. They are earnest in prayer. They ask of God to save them, but it is only to save them from "temporal" death. It is not to be saved from their sins, and the consequence is, that when God "does" raise them up, they forget their promises, and live as they did before, as this robber "would" have done if Jesus had heard his prayer and delivered him from the cross.

Verse 40

Dost not thou fear God … - You are condemned to die as well as he. It is improper for you to rail on him as the rulers and Romans do. God is just, and you are hastening to his bar, and you should, therefore, fear him, and fear that he will punish you for railing on this innocent man.

Same condemnation - Condemnation to death; not death for the same thing, but the same "kind" of death.

Verse 41

Due reward of our deeds - The proper punishment for our crimes. They had been highwaymen, and it was just that they should die.

Verse 42

Remember me - This is a phrase praying for favor, or asking him to grant him an "interest" in his kingdom, or to acknowledge him as one of his followers. It implied that he believed that Jesus was what he claimed to be - the Messiah; that, though he was dying with them, yet he would set up his kingdom; and that he had full power to bless him, though about to expire. It is possible that this man might have heard him preach before his crucifixion, and have learned there the nature of his kingdom; or it may have been that while on the cross Jesus had taken occasion to acquaint them with the nature of his kingdom. While he might have been doing this, one of the malefactors may have continued to rail on him while the other became truly penitent. Such a result of preaching the gospel would not have been unlike what has often occurred since, where, while the gospel has been proclaimed, one has been "taken and another left;" one has been melted to repentance, another has been more hardened in guilt. The promise which follows shows that this prayer was answered. This was a case of repentance in the last hour, the trying hour of death; and it has been remarked that one was brought to repentance there, to show that no one should "despair" on a dying bed; and "but" one, that none should be presumptuous and delay repentance to that awful moment.

When thou comest … - It is impossible now to fix the precise idea which this robber had of Christ's coming. Whether it was that he expected that he would rise from the dead, as some of the Jews supposed the Messiah would; or whether he referred to the day of judgment; or whether to an immediate translation to his kingdom in the heavens, we cannot tell. All that we know is, that he fully believed him to be the Messiah, and that he desired to obtain an interest in that kingdom which he knew he would establish.

Verse 43

Today … - It is not probable that the dying thief expected that his prayer would be so soon answered. It is rather to be supposed that he looked to some "future" period when the Messiah would rise or would return; but Jesus told him that his prayer would be answered that very day, implying, evidently, that it would be "immediately" at death. This is the more

remarkable, as those who were crucified commonly lingered for several days on the cross before they died; but Jesus foresaw that measures would be taken to "hasten" their death, and assured him that "that" day he should receive an answer to his prayer and be with him in his kingdom.

Paradise - This is a word of "Persian" origin, and means "a garden," particularly a garden of pleasure, filled with trees, and shrubs, and fountains, and flowers. In hot climates such gardens were especially pleasant, and hence, they were attached to the mansions of the rich and to the palaces of princes. The word came thus to denote any place of happiness, and was used particularly to denote the abodes of the blessed in another world. The Romans spoke of their Elysium, and the Greeks of the gardens of Hesperides, where the trees bore golden fruit. The garden of Eden means, also, the garden of "pleasure," and in Genesis 2:8 the Septuagint renders the word "Eden by Paradise." Hence, this name in the Scriptures comes to denote the abodes of the blessed in the other world. See the notes at 2 Corinthians 12:4. The Jews supposed that the souls of the righteous would be received into such a place, and those of the wicked cast down to Gehenna until the time of the judgment. They had many fables about this state which it is unnecessary to repeat. The plain meaning of the passage is, "Today thou shalt be made happy, or be received to a state of blessedness with me after death." It is to be remarked that Christ says nothing about the "place where" it should be, nor of the condition of those there, excepting that it is a place of blessedness, and that its happiness is to commence immediately after death (see also Philemon 1:23); but from the narrative we may learn:

1.That the soul will exist separately from the body; for, while the thief and the Saviour would be in Paradise, their "bodies" would be on the cross or in the grave.

2.That immediately after death - the same day - the souls of the righteous will be made happy. They will feel that they are secure; they will be received among the just; and they will have the assurance of a glorious immortality.

3.That state will differ from the condition of the wicked. The promise was made to but one on the cross, and there is no evidence whatever that the other entered there. See also the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31.

4.It is the chief glory of this state and of heaven to be permitted to see Jesus Christ and to be with him: "Thou shalt be with me." "I desire to depart and to be with Christ," Philemon 1:23. See also Revelation 21:23; Revelation 5:9-14.

Verses 44-46

See the notes at Matthew 27:45-50.

Verses 47-49

See the notes at Matthew 27:52-55.

Luke 23:48

The things which were done - The earthquake, the darkness, and the sufferings of Jesus.

Smote their breasts - In token of alarm, fear, and anguish. They saw the judgments of God; they saw the guilt of the rulers; and they feared the farther displeasure of the Almighty.

Verses 50-56

See the Matthew 27:57-61 notes; Mark 15:42-47 notes.

LUKE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Verses 1-12

See the notes at Matthew 28:1-11.

Verse 13

"Two of them." Two of the disciples. The name of one of them was "Cleopas," Luke 24:18. Many have supposed that the other was Luke, and that he omitted his own name from modesty. Others have supposed that it was Peter. See Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5. There is no evidence to guide us here. Dr. Lightfoot has shown that "Cleopas" is the same name as "Alpheus," who was the father of the apostle James, Matthew 10:3.

Emmaus - In regard to the locality of Emmaus, it seems quite probable that it is the same village which is referred to by Josephus ("Jewish Wars," vii. 6, Section 6), who states that, after the destruction of Jerusalem, Titus gave "Emmaus," distant from Jerusalem threescore furlongs, to 800 of his troops, whom he had dismissed from his army, for their habitation. Dr. Thomson ("The Land and the Book," vol. ii. p. 307,540) regards it as the present Kuriet el ‹Aineb, which Dr. Robinson identifies with Kirjath-jearim. Of this place he says: "Kuriet el ‹Aineb itself would be the proper distance from Jerusalem, and being on the road to Jaffa, and on the dividing ridge between the plain and the mountains, the Roman emperor might have deemed it an advantageous post for a colony made up of his disbanded soldiers, who could keep in check the surrounding country. Certain it is that in these later ages the occupants of this place have controlled the whole adjacent region, and for many a generation exercised their lawless tyranny upon helpless pilgrims.

"It took just three hours‘ moderate riding from Kuriet el ‹Aineb to Jerusalem: first, a long descent into Wady Hanina, which passes between it and Soba; then a similar ascent, succeeded by a very steep pass, and a very slippery path down to Kulonia. At this place are some heavy foundations of church, convent, or castle by the road-side, which may be of almost any age, and also gardens of fruit-trees, irrigated by a fountain of excellent water. Kulonia is on a hill north of the road, and appears in a fair way to become a ruin itself before long. The path then winds up a valley, and stretches over a dreary waste of bare rocks until within a mile of the city, when the view opens upon its naked ramparts and the mysterious regions toward the Dead Sea."

Threescore furlongs - Sixty furlongs, or about seven or eight miles. It is not certain that these were apostles, but the contrary seems to be implied in Luke 24:33. See the notes at that verse. If they were not, it is probable that they were intimate disciples, who may have been much with the Saviour during the latter part of his ministry and the closing scenes of his life. But it is wholly unknown why they were going to Emmaus. It may have been that this was their native place, or that they had friends in the vicinity. They seem to have given up all for lost, and to have come to the conclusion that Jesus was not the Messiah, though they naturally conversed about it, and there were many things which they could not explain. Their Master had been crucified contrary to their expectation, their hopes dashed, their anticipation disappointed, and they were now returning in sadness, and very naturally conversed, in the way, of the things which had happened in Jerusalem.

Verse 15

Communed together - Talked together.

And reasoned - They reasoned, doubtless, about the probability or improbability that Jesus was the Messiah; about the evidence of his resurrection; about what was to be done in the present state of things.

Jesus himself drew near … - The disciples were properly employed. Their minds were anxious about the state of things, and they endeavored to arrive at the truth. In this state of things Jesus came to solve their doubts, and to establish them in the belief that he was the Christ; and we may learn from this that Christ will guide those who are sincerely endeavoring to know the truth. They who candidly and seriously endeavor to ascertain what is true and right he will direct; and often in an unexpected manner he will appear, to dissipate their doubts and to scatter all their perplexities. "Our" duty is sincerely to strive to ascertain the truth, and to do his will; and if his people do this, he will not leave them to perplexity and wandering.

Verse 16

Their eyes were holden - This expression is used merely to denote that they did not "know" who he was. It does not appear that there was anything supernatural or miraculous in it, or that God used any power to blind them. It may easily be accounted for without any such supposition; for,

1.Jesus appeared "in another form" Mark 16:12 - that is, different from his "usual" appearance.

2.They were not “expecting” to see him - indeed, they did not suppose that he was alive, and it required the strongest evidence to convince them that he was really risen from the dead.

Verse 17

What manner of communications … - What is the subject of your conversation? What is it that has so much affected your minds? They were deeply affected in the recollection of the death of Jesus; and, as became all Christians, they were conversing about him, and were sad at the overwhelming events that had come upon them.

Verse 18

Art thou only a stranger? … - This is an expression of surprise that he should be unacquainted with an affair that had made so much noise, and that had been attended with so remarkable circumstances. The word “stranger” here denotes one who had come to reside at a place only for a “time,” not a permanent inhabitant. Many Jews came up from all parts of the world to Jerusalem, to keep the Passover there. They appear to have taken Jesus to be such a stranger or foreigner. The meaning of this verse may be thus expressed: “The affair concerning which we are sad has been well known, and has made a great talk and noise, so that all, even the strangers who have come up to remain there but a little time, are well acquainted with it. Art thou the “only one” of them who has not heard it? Is everybody so well acquainted with it, and thou hast not heard of it? It is a matter of surprise, and we cannot account for it.”

Verse 19

A prophet - A teacher sent from God. They did not now call him the “Messiah,” for his “death” had led them to doubt that, but they had no doubt that he was a distinguished “prophet.” The evidence of that was so clear that they “could” not call it in question.

Mighty in deed - Powerful in working miracles, in raising the dead, healing the sick, etc.

In word - In teaching.

Before God and all the people - Manifestly; publicly. So that “God” owned him, and the people regarded him as a distinguished teacher.

Verse 20

Sec the notes at Matthew 26:59-66.

Verse 21

We trusted - We hoped and expected.

Should have redeemed Israel - That he was the Messiah, who would have delivered the nation from the Romans.

Besides all this - It is to be observed that Cleopas states things just as they occurred to his own mind. There is little connection. His mind is confused and distracted. There were so many things that were remarkable in Jesus; there was so much evidence that he was the Messiah; their hopes had been so suddenly dashed by his death, and the succeeding events had been so wonderful, that his mind was confused, and he knew not what to think. The things which he now stated served to increase his perplexity. The expressions here are perfectly natural. They bespeak an agitated mind. They are simple touches of nature, which show that the book was not forged. If the book had been the work of imposture, this artless and perplexed narrative would not have been thought of.

Today is the third day … - Jesus had foretold them that he would rise on the third day. This they did not understand; but it is not improbable that they looked to this day expecting something wonderful, and that the visit to the sepulchre had called it to their recollection, and they were more and more amazed when they put all these things together. As if they had said, "The third day is come, and we have not seen him. Yet we begin to remember his promise - the angels have informed us that he is alive - but we do not know how to put these things together, or what to make of them."

Verse 22-23

Certain women - See Matthew 28:1-7; John 20:12.

A vision of angels - An appearance of angels, or they had seen angels. See John 20:12.

Verse 24

Certain of them which were with us - Peter and John. See John 20:2-9.

Verse 25

O fools - The word "fool" sometimes is a term of reproach denoting "wickedness." In this sense we are forbidden to employ it in addressing another, Matthew 5:22. That, however, is a different word in the Greek from the one which occurs here. The one there used implies contempt, but the one employed in this place denotes "weakness or dulness." He reproached them for not seeing what he had himself so clearly predicted, and what had been foretold by the prophets. The word used in the original does not imply as much "reproach" as the word "fool" does among us. It was not an

expression of "contempt;" it was an expression denoting merely that they were "thoughtless," and that they did not properly "attend to" the evidence that he must die and rise again.

Slow of heart to believe - Not quick to perceive. Dull of learning. They had suffered their previous opinions and prejudices to prevent their seeing the evidence that he must die and rise from the dead.

All that the prophets have spoken - Respecting the character and sufferings of the Messiah. See the notes at Luke 24:27.

Verse 26

Ought not Christ … - Ought not the "Messiah." Was there not evidence that he would do it? and was it not indispensable that he should, in order to fulfil the prophecies? The "necessity" of his suffering these things referred to "here" was that it was foretold that he "would." The reason why it was predicted, and why it was necessary that it should occur, was that it was proper that God should manifest his justice, and do honor to his law, and secure the due regard for his government, while he pardoned the guilty.

Verse 27

Beginning at Moses - At the "writings" of Moses, or at the beginning of the Old Testament; or rather the word "beginning" should be separated from what follows, denoting simply that he "commenced" his discourse, and not that he began at the prophets as well as at Moses; thus, "And commencing his discourse, or replying to them, he expounded from Moses and the prophets," etc.

All the prophets - The books of the Old Testament generally.

He expounded - He explained or interpreted it to them. Probably He showed them that their notions of the Messiah were not according to the Scriptures. "They" expected a temporal prince; they were perplexed because Jesus had not assumed the regal power, but had been put to death. He showed them that according to the prophecies he ought to suffer, and that his "death," therefore, was no argument that he was not the Messiah.

In all the scriptures - In all the "writings" of the Old Testament. They were called "scriptures" because they were "written," the art of printing being then unknown.

The things concerning himself - Concerning the Messiah. It does not appear that he "applied" them to himself, but left them, probably, to make the application. He showed what the Scriptures foretold, and "they" saw that these things applied to Jesus of Nazareth, and began to be satisfied that

he was the Messiah. The most striking passages foretelling the character and sufferings of Christ are the following, which we may suppose it possible our Saviour dwelt upon to convince them that, though he was crucified, yet he was the Christ: Genesis 3:15; Deuteronomy 18:15; Genesis 49:10; Numbers 21:8-9; Isaiah 53:1-12; Daniel 9:25-27; Isaiah 9:6-7; Psalm 110:1-7; Psalm 16:1-11; 22; Malachi 4:2-6.

Verse 28

He made as though he would have gone further - He did not "say" he would go farther, but he kept on as if it was not his intention to stop, and doubtless he "would" have gone on if they had not constrained him to tarry.

Verse 29

Constrained him - They urged him, or pressingly invited him. They did not yet perceive that it was Jesus, but they had been charmed and delighted with his discourse, and they wished to hear him farther. Christians are delighted with communion with the Saviour. They seek it as the chief object of their desire, and they find their chief pleasure in fellowship with him. The two disciples felt it a privilege to entertain the stranger, as they supposed, who had so charmed them with his discourse; and so those to whom the gospel is preached, and who love it, feel it a privilege, and not a burden, to show kindness to those who bear to them the message of salvation.

Abide with us - Remain with us, or pass the night in our house.

Verse 30

Sat at meat - Reclined at the table, or while he was at supper.

He took bread and blessed it … - This was the office of the master of a feast, and perhaps this first attracted particularly their attention. Though he was in "their" house, yet he acted as "master" of the feast, as he used to do with them before his death. Perhaps, also, as he "gave" them the bread, they observed the "prints" in his hands, and they knew that it was Jesus. This was not a "sacramental," but a common supper; yet our Saviour sought a blessing on the food, and thus set an example to all his followers to acknowledge God in their daily gifts, and to seek his benediction in all their enjoyments.

Verse 31

Their eyes were opened - The obscurity was removed. They saw him to be the Messiah. Their doubts were gone, and they saw clearly that he was risen, and was truly, as they had long hoped, the Saviour of people. It is not

meant that they were before "blind," but that they did not know until then who he was.

He vanished out of their sight - He suddenly departed. It does not appear that there was anything miraculous in this, but, during their surprise, he took the opportunity suddenly to withdraw from them.

Verse 32

Our heart burn within us - This is an expression denoting the deep interest and pleasure which they had felt in his discourse before they knew who he was. They now recalled his instruction; they remembered how his words reached the "heart" as he spoke to them; how convincingly he had showed them that the Messiah ought to suffer, and how, while he talked to them of the Christ that they so much loved, their hearts glowed with intense love. This feeling was not confined to them alone. All the followers of Jesus know how precious and tender are the communications of the Saviour, and how the heart glows with love as they think or hear of his life, and sufferings, and death.

He opened to us - He explained to us the Scriptures. See Luke 24:27.

This narrative shows us,

1. How blind people may be to the plainest doctrines of the Scriptures until they are explained to them. These disciples had often read or heard the Scriptures, but never, until then, did they fully understand that the Messiah must suffer.

2. It is proper there should be those whose office it is to explain the Scriptures. Jesus did it while on earth; he does it now by his Spirit; and he has appointed his ministers, whose business it is to explain them.

3. If people attempt to explain the Bible, they should themselves understand it. They should give their time and talents to a suitable preparation to understand the sacred volume. Preaching should consist in "real," and not "fancied" explanations of the Scriptures; the real doctrines which "God" has taught in his word, and not the doctrines that "men" have taught in their systems.

4. Here was convincing evidence that Jesus was the Messiah. This was but one of many instances where Jesus convinced his disciples, contrary to

their previous belief. In this case the evidence was abundant. He first satisfied them from the Old Testament that the very things which had happened were foretold; he then dissipated every doubt by showing "himself" to them and convincing them that he was truly the Christ. There was no chance here for deception and juggling. Who would have met them and talked with them in this way but the real Saviour? Who would have thought of writing this narrative to help an imposture? What impostor would have recorded the dulness of the disciples as to the plain declarations of the Old Testament, and "then" have thought of this device to prop up the narrative? Everything about this narrative - its simplicity - its tenderness - its particularity - its perfect nature - its freedom from all appearance of trick - shows that it was taken from real life; and if so, then the Christian religion is true, for here is evidence that Jesus rose from the dead.

Verse 33

The same hour - Though it was late, and they had stopped, as they thought, for the night, yet such was their joy that they hastened to tell it to their companions and friends. This was natural and proper, and it shows how quick and ready they who have found the Saviour are to tell it to others. Compare John 1:41-45. Young converts to Christ "should hasten" to tell their joy, and should not shrink at self-denial to proclaim to others what God hath done for the soul, Psalm 66:16.

"My lips and cheerful heart, prepare.
To make his mercies known:
Come, ye that fear my God, and hear.
The wonders he hath done.
"When on my head huge sorrows fell,
I sought his heavenly aid;
He saved my sinking soul from hell,
And death's eternal shade."

The eleven - The eleven apostles. Judas was now dead. This shows that the two that went to Emmaus were not apostles.

Verse 34

Saying - The eleven said this.

Hath appeared to Simon - To Peter. It is not known precisely when this happened, as the time and place are not mentioned. Paul has referred to it in 1 Corinthians 15:5, from which it appears that he appeared to "Cephas or

Peter" before he did to any other of the apostles. This was a mark of special love and favor, and particularly, after Peter's denial, it showed how ready he was to pardon, and how willing to impart comfort to those who are penitent, though their sins are great.

Verse 36-37

Jesus stood in the midst of them - This was when the apostles were assembled, and when they had closed the doors for fear of the Jews, John 20:19. It was this fact, as well as his sudden and unexpected appearance, that alarmed them. The doors were shut, and the suddenness of his appearance led them to suppose they had seen a spirit.

Peace be unto you - This was a form of salutation among the Hebrews denoting a wish of peace and prosperity. See Genesis 43:23. It was especially appropriate for Jesus, as he had said before his death that he left "his peace" with them as their inheritance John 14:27, and as they were now alarmed and fearful at their state, and trembling for fear of the Jews, John 20:19.

Verse 38

Why are ye troubled? - Why are you alarmed or frightened?

And why do thoughts … - The word "thoughts" here means "doubts" or suspicions. It is used in this sense also in 1 Timothy 2:8. The doubts which they had were whether he was the Christ. He reproves them for doubting this; for,

1.The Scriptures had foretold his death;

2.He had himself repeatedly done it; and,

3.They had now the testimony of Peter that he had seen Jesus alive, and of the angels that he was risen. After all this evidence, Jesus reproves them for doubting whether he was truly the Messiah.

Verses 39-43

Behold my hands … - Jesus proceeds to give them evidence that he was truly the same person that had been crucified. He first showed them his hands and his feet - still, pierced, and with the wounds made by the nails still open. Compare John 20:27. He told them to handle him and see him. He ate before them. All this was to satisfy them that he was not, as they supposed, a spirit. Nor could better evidence have been given. He appealed to their senses, and performed acts which a disembodied spirit could not do.

Handle me - Or touch me; feel of me. Compare John 20:27.

And see - Be convinced, for you could not thus handle a spirit. The object here was to convince them that his body had really come to life.

For a spirit … - He appeals here to what they well knew; and this implies that the spirit may exist separate from the body. That was the view of the apostles, and our Saviour distinctly countenances that belief.

Luke 24:41

Believed not for joy - Their joy was so great, and his appearance was so sudden and unexpected, that they were bewildered, and still sought more evidence of the truth of what they "wished" to believe. This is nature. We have similar expressions in our language. "The news is too good to be true;" or, "I cannot believe it; it is too much for me."

Any meat - This word does not mean "meat" in our sense of it, but in the old English sense, denoting "anything to eat."

Luke 24:42

Honey-comb - Honey abounded in Palestine, and was a very common article of food. Bees lived in caves of the rocks, in the hollows of trees, and were also kept as with us. The disciples gave, probably, just what was their own common fare, and what was ready at the time.

Verse 44

These are the words - Or this is the "fulfillment" of what I before told you respecting my death. See Luke 18:33; Mark 10:33.

While I was yet with you - Before my death. While I was with you as a teacher and guide.

In the law of Moses - The five books of Moses - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Among the Jews this was the first division of the Old Testament, and was called the "law."

The prophets - This was the second and largest part of the Hebrew Scriptures. It comprehended the books of Joshua, Judges, 1st and 2nd Samuel, 1st and 2nd Kings, which were called the "former prophets;" and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve smaller books from Daniel, to Malachi, which were called the "latter prophets."

The psalms - The word here used probably means what were comprehended under the name of "Hagiographa," or holy writings. This consisted of the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and the two books of Chronicles. This division of the Old Testament was in use

long before the time of Christ, and was what he referred to here; and he meant to say that in "each of" these divisions of the Old Testament there were prophecies respecting himself. The "particular" subject before them was his "resurrection from the dead." A most striking prediction of this is contained in Psalm 16:9-11. Compare it with Acts 2:24-32; Acts 13:35-37.

Verse 45

Opened he their understanding - Enabled them fully to comprehend the meaning of the prophecies which foretold his death and resurrection. They had seen him die, they now saw him risen. Their prejudices were now, by his instructions, and by the facts which they could no longer call in question, removed, and they no longer doubted that he was the Messiah, and that all the "facts" in the case which had before confounded them could be easily accounted for. Hence, we may learn:

1.That "facts," or the farther disclosure of truth, will yet remove the "mysteries" that we now see in religion.

2.That our prejudices and our preconceived opinions are one cause of our seeing so many mysteries in the Bible. If a man is willing to take the plain declarations of the Bible, he will commonly be little perplexed with mysteries.

3.That God only can open the mind so as fully to comprehend the Scriptures. He only can overcome our prejudices, open our hearts, and dispose us to receive the ingrafted word with meekness, and with the simplicity of a child. See Acts 16:14; James 1:21; Mark 10:15.

4.The design of God's opening the understanding is that we may be acquainted with the Scriptures. It is not that we may be made wise above what is written, but that we may submit ourselves wholly to the Word of God.

Verse 46

It behoved - It became; it was proper or necessary that the Messiah should thus suffer. It was predicted of him, and all things have happened as it was foretold.

Verse 47

Repentance - Sorrow for sin and forsaking of it. It was proper that the "necessity" of repentance should be preached among all nations, for all

were sinners. See Acts 17:30.

Remission of sins - Pardon or forgiveness of sins. It should be proclaimed that all people should repent, and that those who are penitent may be pardoned.

In my name - By my command it should be proclaimed that people should repent, and by my merit that they may be pardoned. Pardon is offered by the authority of Christ to all nations, and this is a sufficient warrant to offer the gospel "to every man."

Beginning at Jerusalem - This was the dwelling of his murderers, and it shows his readiness to forgive the vilest sinners. It was the holy place of the temple, the habitation of God, the place of the solemnities of the ancient dispensation, and it was proper that pardon should be first proclaimed there. This was done - the gospel was first preached there. See Acts 13:46.

Verse 48

Are witnesses of these things - Of my life, my sufferings, my death, and my resurrection. How solemn was their office - to "testify" these things to the world, and, in the face of suffering and death, to go and proclaim them to all nations! In like manner, "all" Christians are witnesses for Christ. They are the "evidences" of his mercy and his love, and they should so live that others may be brought to see and love the Saviour.

Verse 49

The promise of my Father - The promise which the Father had made to them "through" the Saviour. See Matthew 10:19; John 14:16-17, John 14:26. The promise was, that they should be aided by the power of the Holy Spirit. He also doubtless referred to the promise of God, made in the days of Joel, respecting the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. See Joel 2:28-29, compared with Acts 2:16-21.

Endued with power from on high - The power which would be given them by the descent of the Holy Spirit - the power of speaking with tongues, of working miracles, and of preaching the gospel with the attending blessing and aid of the Holy Spirit. This was accomplished in the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. See Acts 2.

Verse 50-51

To Bethany - See the notes at Mark 16:19. Bethany was on the eastern declivity of the Mount of Olives, from which our Lord was taken up to heaven, Acts 1:12. Bethany was a favored place. It was the abode of Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus, and our Saviour delighted to be there.

From this place, also, he ascended to his Father and our Father, and to his God and our God.

While he blessed them - While he commanded his benediction to rest upon them; while he assured them of his favor, and commended them to the protection and guidance of God, in the dangers, trials, and conflicts which they were to meet in a sinful and miserable world.

Verse 52

They worshipped him - The word "worship" does not "always" denote religious homage. See the notes at Matthew 2:11. Compare Luke 14:10. But here it is to be remarked,

1.That they offered this worship to an "absent" Saviour. It was "after" he left them and had vanished out of their sight. It was, therefore, an act of religion, and was the "first" religious homage that was paid to Jesus after he had left the world.

2.If "they" worshipped an absent Saviour - a Saviour unseen by the bodily eye, it is right for "us" to do it. It was an example which we "may and should" follow.

3.If worship may be rendered to Jesus, he is divine. See Exodus 20:4-5.

Verse 53

Were continually in the temple - Until the day of Pentecost - that is, about ten days after. See Acts 2.

Praising and blessing God - Chiefly for the full proof that the Messiah had come; had redeemed them, and had ascended to heaven. "Thus the days of their mourning were ended." They were filled with happiness at the assurance of redemption, and expressed what every Christian should feel - fulness of joy at the glad tidings that a Saviour has died, and risen, and ascended to God; and an earnest desire to pour forth in the sanctuary prayers and thanksgivings to the God of grace for his mercy to a lost and ruined world.

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JOHN INTRODUCTION

Preface to John

John, the writer of this Gospel, was the son of Zebedee and Salome; compare Matthew 27:56 with Mark 15:40-41. His father was a fisherman of Galilee, though it would appear that he was not destitute of property, and was not in the lowest condition of life. He had hired men in his employ, Mark 1:20. Salome is described as one who attended our Saviour in his travels, and ministered to his needs, Matthew 27:55; Mark 15:41. Also, John was known to Caiaphas, the high priest John 18:15. On the cross, Jesus commended his own mother (Mary) to John, and he took her into his own home John 19:26-27, with whom, history informs us, she lived until her death, about 15 years after the crucifixion of Christ. From all this it would seem not improbable that John had some property, and was better known than any of the other apostles.

John was the youngest of the apostles when called by Jesus, and John lived to the greatest age; he is the only one who is supposed to have died a peaceful death. He was called to be a follower of Jesus while engaged with his father and his older brother James mending their nets at Lake Tiberias, Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19; Luke 5:10.

John was admitted by our Saviour to special favor and friendship. One of the ancient fathers (Theophylact) says that he was related to him. "Joseph," he says, "had seven children by a former wife, four sons and three daughters, Martha, Esther, and Salome, whose son was John. Therefore, Salome was reckoned our Lord's sister, and John was his nephew." If this was the case, it may explain the reason why James and John sought and expected the first places in his kingdom, Matthew 20:20-21. These may also possibly be the persons who were called our Lord's "brethren" and "sisters," Matthew 13:55-56. This may also explain the reason why our Saviour committed his mother to the care of John on the cross, John 19:27.

The two brothers, James and John, with Peter, were admitted to peculiar favors by our Lord several times. They were the only disciples who were permitted to be present at the raising of the daughter of Jairus, Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51. Only they were permitted to attend the Saviour to the mount

where he was transfigured, Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2. The same three were permitted to be present at his sufferings in the garden of Gethsemane, Matthew 26:36-45; Mark 14:32-42. And, it was to these disciples, together with Andrew, to whom the Saviour specially addressed himself when he made known the desolations that were coming upon Jerusalem and Judea; compare Matthew 24:12; Mark 13:3-4. John was also admitted to special friendship with the Lord Jesus. Hence, he is mentioned as "that disciple whom Jesus loved" John 19:26, and he is represented John 13:23 as leaning upon his bosom at the institution of the Lord's Supper an evidence of unusual friendship. See the notes on that. Though the Redeemer was attached to all his disciples, yet there is no improbability in supposing that his disposition was congenial with that of the meek and amiable John - thus authorizing and settling the example of special friendships among Christians.

To John was committed the care of Mary, the mother of Jesus. After the ascension of Christ he remained some time at Jerusalem, Acts 1:14; Acts 3:1; Acts 4:13. John is also mentioned as having been sent down to Samaria to preach the gospel there with Peter Acts 8:14-25; and from Revelation 1:9. After his return from Patmos he lived peaceably at Ephesus until his death, which is supposed to have occurred not long afterward. He was buried at Ephesus; and it has been commonly thought that he was the only one of the apostles who did not suffer martyrdom. It is evident that he lived to a very advanced period of life. Indeed we do not know his age when Christ called him to follow him, but we cannot suppose that it was less than 25 or 30. If so, he must have been not far from 100 years old when he died.

Many anecdotes are related of him while he remained at Ephesus, but there is no sufficient evidence of their truth. Some have said that he was taken to Rome in a time of persecution and thrown into a caldron of boiling oil, and came out uninjured. It has been said also that, going into a bath one day at Ephesus, he perceived the presence of Cerinthus, who denied the divinity of the Saviour, and that he fled from him hastily, to express his disapproval of Cerinthus' doctrine. It is also said, and of this there can be no doubt, that during his latter years he was not able to make a long discourse. He was carried to the assembly, and was accustomed to say nothing but this: "Little children, love one another." At length his disciples

asked him why he always dwelt upon the same thing. He replied, “Because it is the Lord‘s command; and if this is done, it is sufficient”

Learned men have been much divided about the time when this Gospel was written. Wetstein supposed that it was written just after our Saviour‘s ascension; Mill and LeClerc, that it was written in 97 a.d.; Dr. Lardner, that it was about the year 68 a.d., just before the destruction of Jerusalem. The common opinion is that it was written at Ephesus after his return from Patmos, and of course as late as the year 97 or 98 a.d. Nothing can be determined with certainty on the subject, and it is a matter of very little consequence.

There is no doubt that it was written by John. This is abundantly confirmed by the ancient fathers, and was not questioned by Celsus, Porphyry, or Julian, the most acute enemies of revelation in the early ages. It has never been extensively questioned to have been the work of John, and is one of the books of the New Testament whose canonical authority was never disputed. See Lardner, or Paley‘s “Evidences.”

The design of writing it is stated by John himself in John 20:31. It was to show that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and that those who believed might have life through his name. “This design is kept in view through the whole Gospel, and should be remembered in our attempts to explain it.” Various attempts have been made to show that he wrote it to confute the followers of Cerinthus and the Gnostics, but no satisfactory evidence of such a design has been furnished.

As John wrote after the other evangelists, he has recorded many things which they omitted. He dwells much more fully than they do on the divine character of Jesus. John relates many things pertaining to the early part of Jesus‘ ministry which they had omitted. He records many more of Christ‘s discourses than they have done, and particularly the interesting discourse at the institution of the Supper. See John 1:38, John 1:41; John 5:1-2; John 7:2; John 4:9. The style in the Greek indicates that he was an unlearned man. It is simple, plain, unpolished, such as we should suppose would be used by one in his circumstances. At the same time, it is dignified, containing pure and profound sentiments, and is on many accounts the most

difficult of all the books of the New Testament to interpret. It contains more about Christ, his person, design, and work, than any of the other Gospels. The other evangelists were employed more in recording the miracles, and giving external evidence of the divine mission of Jesus. John is employed chiefly in telling us what Christ was, and what his unique doctrine was. His aim was to show:

1.that Jesus was the Messiah.

2.to show, "from the words of Jesus himself," what the Messiah was.

The other evangelists only record Jesus' parables, his miracles, his debates with the Scribes and Pharisees; John records chiefly Jesus' discourses about himself. If anyone wishes to learn the true. doctrine respecting the "Messiah, the Son of God," expressed in simple language, but with most sublime conceptions; to learn the true nature and character of God, and the way of approach to his mercy-seat; to see the true nature of Christian piety, or the source and character of religious consolation; to have perpetually before him the purest model of character the world has seen, and to contemplate the purest precepts that have ever been delivered to man, he cannot do it better than by a prayerful study of the Gospel by John. It may be added that this Gospel is of itself proof that cannot be overthrown of the truth of revelation. John was a fisherman, unhonored and unlearned, Acts 4:13. What man in that rank of life now could compose a book like this? Can it be conceived that any man of that rank, unless under the influence of inspiration, could conceive notions of God so sublime, could present views of morals so pure and could draw a character so inimitably lovely and pure as that of Jesus Christ? To ask these questions is to answer them. And this Gospel will stand to the end of time as an unanswerable demonstration that the fisherman who wrote it was under a superhuman guidance, and was, according to the promise that he has recorded (John 16:13; compare John 14:26), "guided into all truth." It will also remain as an unanswerable proof that the character which he has described the character of the Lord Jesus - was real. It is a perfect character. It does not have one flaw.

How has this happened? The attempt has often been made to draw a perfect character - and as often, in every other instance, failed. How is it, when Homer and Virgil, and the ancient historians, have all failed to describe a perfect character, with the purest models before them, and with all the aid of imagination, that in every instance they have failed? How is it

that this has at last been accomplished only by a Jewish fisherman? The difficulty is vastly increased if another idea is borne in mind. John describes one whom he believed to have a divine nature, John 1:1. It is an attempt to describe "God in human nature," or to show how the Divine Being acts when united with man, or when appearing in human form. And the description is complete. There is not a word expressed by the Lord Jesus, or an emotion ascribed to him that is inconsistent with such a supposition. But this same attempt was often made, and as often failed. Homer and Virgil, and all the ancient poets, have undertaken to show what the gods would be if they came down and conversed with man. And what were they? What were Jupiter, and Juno, and Venus, and Mars, and Vulcan? Beings of lust, and envy, and contention, and blood. How has it happened that the only successful account which has been given of the divine nature united with the human, and of living and acting as became such a union, has been given by a Jewish fisherman? How, unless the character was real, and the writer under a guidance far superior to the genius of Homer and the imagination of Virgil - the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

In the beginning - This expression is used also in Genesis 1:1. John evidently has allusion here to that place, and he means to apply to "the Word" an expression which is there applied "to God." In both places it clearly means before creation, before the world was made, when as yet there was nothing. The meaning is: that the "Word" had an existence before the world was created. This is not spoken of the man Jesus, but of that which "became" a man, or was incarnate, John 1:14. The Hebrews, by expressions like this, commonly denoted eternity. Thus. the eternity of God is described Psalm 90:2; "Before the mountains were brought forth, etc.;" and eternity is commonly expressed by the phrase, before the foundation of the world." Whatever is meant by the term "Word," it is clear that it had an existence before "creation." It is not, then, a "creature" or created being, and must be, therefore, uncreated and eternal. There is only one Being that is uncreated, and Jesus must be therefore divine. Compare the Saviour's own declarations respecting himself in the following places: John 8:58; John 17:5; John 6:62; John 3:13; John 6:46; John 8:14; John 16:28.

Was the Word - Greek, "was the λόγος LogosThis name is given to him who afterward became "flesh," or was incarnate (John 1:14 - that is, to the Messiah. Whatever is meant by it, therefore, is applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ. There have been many opinions about the reason why this name was given to the Son of God. It is unnecessary to repeat those opinions. The opinion which seems most plausible may be expressed as follows:

1. A "word" is that by which we communicate our will; by which we convey our thoughts; or by which we issue commands the medium of communication with others.

2. The Son of God may be called "the Word," because he is the medium by which God promulgates His will and issues His commandments. See Hebrews 1:1-3.

3. This term was in use before the time of John.

(a)It was used in the Aramaic translation of the Old Testament, as, "e. g.," Isaiah 45:12; "I have made the earth, and created man upon it." In the Aramaic it is, "I, ‹by my word,' have made," etc. Isaiah 48:13; "mine hand

also hath laid the foundation of the earth." In the Aramaic, "‹By my word' I have founded the earth." And so in many other places.

(b)This term was used by the Jews as applicable to the Messiah. In their writings he was commonly known by the term "Mimra" - that is, "Word;" and no small part of the interpositions of God in defense of the Jewish nation were declared to be by "the Word of God." Thus, in their Targum on Deuteronomy 26:17-18, it is said, "Ye have appointed the word of God a king over you this day, that he may be your God."

(c)The term was used by the Jews who were scattered among the Gentiles, and especially those who were conversant with the Greek philosophy.

(d)The term was used by the followers of Plato among the Greeks, to denote the Second Person of the Trinity. The Greek term νοῦς nousor "mind," was commonly given to this second person, but it was said that this nouswas "the word" or "reason" of the First Person of the Trinity. The term was therefore extensively in use among the Jews and Gentiles before John wrote his Gospel, and it was certain that it would be applied to the Second Person of the Trinity by Christians. whether converted from Judaism or Paganism. It was important, therefore, that the meaning of the term should be settled by an inspired man, and accordingly John, in the commencement of his Gospel, is at much pains to state clearly what is the true doctrine respecting the λόγος Logosor Word. It is possible, also, that the doctrines of the Gnostics had begun to spread in the time of John. They were an Oriental sect, and held that the λόγος Logosor "Word" was one of the "Aeones" that had been created, and that this one had been united to the man Jesus. If that doctrine had begun then to prevail, it was of the more importance for John to settle the truth in regard to the rank of the Logos or Word. This he has done in such a way that there need be no doubt about its meaning.

Was with God - This expression denotes friendship or intimacy. Compare Mark 9:19. John affirms that he was "with God" in the beginning - that is, before the world was made. It implies, therefore, that he was partaker of the divine glory; that he was blessed and happy with God. It proves that he was intimately united with the Father, so as to partake of his glory and to be appropriately called by the name God. He has himself explained it. See John 17:5; "And now, O Father, glorify thou we with thine

own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." See also John 1:18; "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." See also John 3:13; "The Son of man, which is in heaven." Compare Philemon 2:6-7.

Was God - In the previous phrase John had said that the Word was "with God." Lest it should be supposed that he was a different and inferior being, here John states that "he was God." There is no more unequivocal declaration in the Bible than this, and there could be no stronger proof that the sacred writer meant to affirm that the Son of God was equal with the Father; because:

1.There is no doubt that by the λόγος Logosis meant Jesus Christ.

2.This is not an "attribute" or quality of God, but is a real subsistence, for it is said that the λόγος Logoswas made flesh σάρξ sarx- that is, became a human being.

3.There is no variation here in the manuscripts, and critics have observed that the Greek will bear no other construction than what is expressed in our translation - that the Word "was God."

4.There is no evidence that John intended to use the word "God" in an inferior sense. It is not "the Word was a god," or "the Word was ‹like God,‘" but the Word "was God." He had just used the word "God" as evidently applicable to Yahweh, the true God; and it is absurd to suppose that he would in the same verse, and without any indication that he was using the word in an inferior sense, employ it to denote a being altogether inferior to the true God.

5.The name "God" is elsewhere given to him, showing that he is the supreme God. See Romans 9:5; Hebrews 1:8, Hebrews 1:10, Hebrews 1:12; 1 John 5:20; John 20:28.

The meaning of this important verse may then be thus summed up:

1.The name λόγος Logosor Word, is given to Christ in reference to his becoming the Teacher or Instructor of mankind; the medium of communication between God and man.

2.The name was in use at the time of John, and it was his design to state the correct doctrine respecting the λόγος LogosThe "Word," or λόγος

Logosexisted “before creation” - of course was not a “creature,” and must have been, therefore, from eternity.

4.He was “with God” - that is, he was united to him in a most intimate and close union before the creation; and, as it could not be said that God was “with himself,” it follows that the λόγος Logoswas in some sense distinct from God, or that there was a distinction between the Father and the Son. When we say that one is “with another,” we imply that there is some sort of distinction between them.

5.Yet, lest it should be supposed that he was a “different” and “inferior” being - a creature - he affirms that he was God - that is, was equal with the Father.

This is the foundation of the doctrine of the Trinity:

1.that the second person is in some sense “distinct” from the first.

2.that he is intimately united with the first person in essence, so that there are not two or more Gods.

3.that the second person may be called by the same name; has the same attributes; performs the same works; and is entitled to the same honors with the first, and that therefore he is “the same in substance, and equal in power and glory,” with God.

Verse 2

The same - The Word, or the λόγος LogosWas in the beginning with God - This seems to be a repetition of what was said in the first verse; but it is stated over again to “guard the doctrine,” and to prevent the possibility of a mistake. John had said that he existed before the creation, and that he was “with God;” but he had not said in the first verse “that the union with God existed in the beginning.” He now expresses that idea, and assures us that that union was not one which was commenced in time, and which might be, therefore, a mere union of feeling, or a compact, like that between any other beings, but was one which existed in eternity, and which was therefore a union of nature or essence.

Verse 3

All things - The universe. The expression cannot be limited to any part of the universe. It appropriately expresses everything which exists - all the

vast masses of material worlds, and all the animals and things, great or small, that compose those worlds. See Revelation 4:11; Hebrews 1:2; Colossians 1:16.

Were made - The original word is from the verb "to be," and signifies "were" by him; but it expresses the idea of creation here. It does not alter the sense whether it is said "‹were‘ by him," or "were ‹created‘ by him." The word is often used in the sense of "creating," or forming from nothing. See James 3:9; and Genesis 2:4; Isaiah 48:7; in the Septuagint.

By him - In this place it is affirmed that "creation" was effected by "the Word," or the Son of God. In Genesis 1:1, it is said that the Being who created the heavens and the earth was God. In Psalm 102:25-28, this work is ascribed to Yahweh. The "Word," or the Son of God, is therefore appropriately called "God." The work of "creation" is uniformly ascribed in the Scriptures to the Second Person of the Trinity. See Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2, Hebrews 1:10. By this is meant, evidently, that he was the agent, or the efficient cause, by which the universe was made. There is no higher proof of omnipotence than the work of creation; and, hence, God often appeals to that work to prove that he is the true God, in opposition to idols. See Isaiah 40:18-28; Jeremiah 10:3-16; Psalm 24:2; Psalm 39:11; Proverbs 3:19. It is absurd to say that God can invest a creature with omnipotence. If He can make a creature omnipotent, He can make him omniscient, and can in the same way make him omnipresent, and infinitely wise and good; that is, He can invest a creature with all His own attributes, or make another being like Himself, or, which is the same thing, there could be two Gods, or as many Gods as He should choose to make. But this is absurd! The Being, therefore, that "created" all things must be divine; and, since this work is ascribed to Jesus Christ, and as it is uniformly in the Scriptures declared to be the work of God, Jesus Christ is therefore equal with the Father.

Without him - Without his agency; his notice; the exertion of his power. Compare Matthew 10:29. This is a strong way of speaking, designed to confirm, beyond the possibility of doubt, what he had just said. He says, therefore, in general, that all things were made by Christ. In this part of the verse he shuts out all doubt, and affirms that there was "no exception;" that there was not a single thing, however minute or unimportant, which was not made by him. In this way, he confirms what he said in the first verse. Christ was not merely called God, but he did the works of God, and therefore the

name is used in its proper sense as implying supreme divinity. To this same test Jesus himself appealed as proving that he was divine. John 10:37, "if I do not the works of my Father, believe me not." John 5:17, "my Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Verse 4

In him was life - The evangelist had just affirmed John 5:3 that by the λόγος Logosor "Word" the world was originally created. One part of that creation consisted "in breathing into man the breath of life," Genesis 2:7. God is declared to be "life," or the "living" God, because he is the source or fountain of life. This attribute is here ascribed to Jesus Christ. He not merely made the material worlds, but he also gave "life." He was the agent by which the vegetable world became animated; by which brutes live; and by which man became a living soul, or was endowed with immortality. This was a "higher" proof that the "Word was God," than the creation of the material worlds; but there is another sense in which he was "life." The "new creation," or the renovation of man and his restoration from a state of sin, is often compared with the "first creation;" and as the λόγος Logoswas the source of "life" then, so, in a similar but higher sense, he is the source of "life" to the soul dead in trespasses and sins, Ephesians 2:1. And it is probably in reference to this that he is so often called "life" in the writings of John. "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in him self," John 5:26; "He giveth life unto the world," John 6:33; "I am the resurrection and the life," John 11:25; "This is the true God and eternal life," John 5:20. See also 1 John 1:1-2; 1 John 5:11; Acts 3:15; Colossians 3:4. The meaning is: that he is the source or the fountain of both natural and spiritual life. Of course he has the attributes of God.

The life was the light of men - "Light" is that by which we see objects distinctly. The light of the sun enables us to discern the form, the distance, the magnitude, and the relation of objects, and prevents the perplexities and dangers which result from a state of darkness. Light is in all languages, therefore, put for "knowledge" - for whatever enables us to discern our duty, and that saves us from the evils of ignorance and error. "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light," Ephesians 5:13. See Isaiah 8:20; Isaiah 9:2. The Messiah was predicted as the "light" of the world, Isaiah 9:2, compared with Matthew 4:15-16; Isaiah 60:1. See John 8:12; "I am the light of the world;" John 12:35-36, John 12:46; "I am come a light into the world." The meaning is, that the λόγος Logosor Word of God is the "instructor or

teacher" of mankind. This was done before his advent by his direct agency in giving man reason or understanding, and in giving his law, for the "law was ordained by angels ‹in the hand of a mediator‹" Galatians 3:19; after his advent by his personal ministry when on earth, by his Spirit John 14:16, John 14:26, and by his ministers since, Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:28.

Verse 5

The light shineth in darkness - Darkness, in the Bible, commonly denotes ignorance, guilt, or misery. See Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:16; Acts 26:18; Ephesians 5:8, Ephesians 5:11; Romans 13:12. It refers here to a wicked and ignorant people. When it is said that "the light shineth in darkness," it is meant that the Lord Jesus came to teach an ignorant, benighted, and wicked world. This has always been the case. It was so when he sent his prophets; so during his own ministry; and so in every age since. His efforts to enlighten and save men have been like light struggling to penetrate a thick, dense cloud; and though a few rays may pierce the gloom, yet the great mass is still an impenetrable shade.

Comprehended it not - This word means "admitted" it not, or "received" it not. The word "comprehend," with us, means to "understand." This is not the meaning of the original. The darkness did not "receive" or "admit" the rays of light; the shades were so thick that the light could not penetrate them; or, to drop the figure, men were so ignorant, so guilty, so debased, that they did not appreciate the value of his instructions; they despised and rejected him. And so it is still. The great mass of men, sunk in sin, will not receive his teachings, and be enlightened and saved by him. Sin always blinds the mind to the beauty and excellency of the character of the Lord Jesus. It indisposes the mind to receive his instructions, just as "darkness" has no affinity for "light;" and if the one exists, the other must be displaced.

Verse 6

A man sent from God - See John 20:31. To do this, it was proper, in the beginning, to prove that "John" was not the Messiah; and this might have been at that time an important object. John made many disciples, Matthew 3:5. Many persons supposed that he might be the Messiah, Luke 3:15; John 1:19. "Many of these disciples of John remained" at Ephesus, "the very place where John is supposed to have written this gospel, long after the ascension of Jesus," Acts 19:1-3. It is not improbable that there might have been many others who adhered to John, and perhaps many who supposed

that he was the Messiah. On these accounts it was important for the evangelist to show that John "was not the Christ," and to show, also, that he, who was extensively admitted to be a prophet, was an important "witness" to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. The evangelist in the first four verses stated that "the Word" was divine; he now proceeds to state the proof that he was a "man," and was the Messiah. The first evidence adduced is the testimony of John the Baptist.

Verse 7-8

For a witness - To give testimony. He came to prepare the minds of the people to receive him John 1:31.

Of the Light - That is, of the Messiah. Compare Isaiah 60:1.

That all men … - It was the object of John's testimony that all people might believe. He designed to prepare them for it; to announce that the Messiah was about to come, to direct the minds of men to him, and thus to prepare them to believe on him when he came. Thus, he baptized them, saying "That they should believe on him who should come after him" Acts 19:4, and thus he produced a very general expectation that the Messiah was about to come. The testimony of John was especially valuable on the following accounts:

1.It was made when he had no personal acquaintance with Jesus of Nazareth, and of course there could have been no collusion or agreement to deceive them, John 1:31.

2.It was sufficiently long before he came to excite general attention, and to fix the mind on it.

3.It was that of a man acknowledged by all to be a prophet of God - "for all men held John to be a prophet," Matthew 21:26.

4.It was "for the express purpose" of declaring beforehand that he was about to appear.

5.It was "disinterested."

He was himself extremely popular. Many were disposed to receive him as the Messiah. It was evidently in his "power" to form a large party, and to be regarded extensively as the Christ. This was the highest honor to which a Jew could aspire; and it shows the value of John's testimony, that he was willing to lay all his honors at the feet of Jesus, and to acknowledge that he

was unworthy to perform for him the office of the humblest servant, Matthew 3:11.

Through him - Through John, or by means of his testimony.

Was not that Light - Was not "the Messiah." This is an explicit declaration designed to satisfy the disciples of John. The evidence that he was not the Messiah he states in the following verses.

From the conduct of John here we may learn,

1.The duty of laying all our honors at the feet of Jesus.

2.As John came that all might believe, so it is no less true of the ministry of Jesus himself. He came for a similar purpose, and we may all, therefore, trust in him for salvation.

3.We should not rely too much on ministers of the gospel. They cannot save us any more than John could; and their office, as his was, is simply to direct people "to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

Verse 9

That was the true Light - Not John, but the Messiah. He was not a false, uncertain, dangerous guide, but was one that was true, real, steady, and worthy of confidence. A false light is one that leads to danger or error, as a false beacon on the shores of the ocean may lead ships to quicksands or rocks; or an "ignis fatuus" to fens, and precipices, and death. A true light is one that does not deceive us, as the true beacon may guide us into port or warn us of danger. Christ does not lead astray. All false teachers do.

That lighteth - That enlightens. He removes darkness, error, ignorance, from the mind.

Every man - This is an expression denoting, in general, the whole human race - Jews and Gentiles. John preached to the Jews. Jesus came "to be a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as to be the "glory of the people of Israel," Luke 2:32.

That cometh into the world - The phrase in the original is ambiguous. The word translated "that cometh" may either refer to the "light," or to the word "man;" so that it may mean either "this ‹true light that cometh‘ into the world enlightens all," or "it enlightens every ‹man that cometh‘ into the world." Many critics, and, among the fathers, Cyril and Augustine, have preferred the former, and translated it, "The true light was he who, coming into the world, enlightened every man." The principal reasons for this are:

1.That the Messiah is often spoken of as he that cometh into the world. See John 6:14; John 18:37.

2.He is often distinguished as "the light that cometh into the world." John 3:19; "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world." John 12:46; "I am come a light into the world."

Christ may be said to do what is accomplished by his command or appointment. This passage means, therefore, that by his own personal ministry, and by his Spirit and apostles, light or teaching is afforded to all. It does not mean that every individual of the human family is enlightened with the knowledge "of the gospel," for this never yet has been; but it means:

1.That this light is not confined to the "Jews," but is extended to all - Jews and Gentiles.

2.That it is provided for all and offered to all.

3.It is not affirmed that at the time that John wrote all "were actually enlightened," but the word "lighteth" has the form of the "future." "This is that light so long expected and predicted, which as the result of its coming into the world, will ultimately enlighten all nations."

Verse 10

He was in the world - This refers, probably, not to his pre-existence, but to the fact that he became incarnate; that he dwelt among human beings.

And the world was made by him - This is a repetition of what is said in John 1:3. Not only "men," but all material things, were made by him. These facts are mentioned here to make what is said immediately after more striking, to wit, that men did not receive him. The proofs which he furnished that they ought to receive him were:

1.Those given while he was "in the world" - the miracles that he performed and his instructions; and,

2.The fact that the "world was made by him." It was remarkable that the world did not know or approve its own Maker.

The world knew him not - The word "knew" is sometimes used in the sense of "approving" or "loving," Psalm 1:6; Matthew 7:23. In this sense it may be used here. The world did not love or approve him, but rejected him and put him to death. Or it may mean that they did not understand or know that he was the Messiah; for had the Jews known and believed that he was

the Messiah, they would not have put him to death, 1 Corinthians 2:8; "Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." Yet they might have known it, and therefore they were not the less to blame.

Verse 11

He came unto his own - His own "land" or "country." It was called his land because it was the place of his birth, and also because it was the chosen land where God delighted to dwell and to manifest his favor. See Isaiah 5:1-7. Over that land the laws of God had been extended, and that land had been regarded as especially his, Psalm 147:19-20.

His own - His own "people." There is a distinction here in the original words which is not preserved in the translation. It may be thus expressed: "He came to his own land, and his own people received him not." They were his people, because God had chosen them to be his above all other nations; had given to them his laws; and had signally protected and favored them, Deuteronomy 7:6; Deuteronomy 14:2.

Received him not - Did not acknowledge him to be the Messiah. They rejected him and put him to death, agreeably to the prophecy, Isaiah 53:3-4. From this we learn,

1.That it is reasonable to expect that those who have been especially favored should welcome the message of God. God had a right to expect, after all that had been done for the Jews, that they would receive the message of eternal life. So he has a right to expect that we should embrace him and be saved.

2.Yet, it is not the abundance of mercies that incline men to seek God. The Jews had been signally favored, but they rejected him. So, many in Christian lands live and die rejecting the Lord Jesus.

3.People are alike in every age. All would reject the Saviour if left to themselves. All people are by nature wicked. There is no more certain and universal proof of this than the universal rejection of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 12

To as many as received him - The great mass; the people; the scribes and Pharisees rejected him. A few in his lifetime received him, and many more after his death. "To receive him," here, means to "believe" on him. This is expressed at the end of the verse.

Gave he power - This is more appropriately rendered in the margin by the word "right" or "privilege." Compare Acts 1:7; Acts 5:4; Romans 9:21; 1 Corinthians 7:37; 1 Corinthians 8:9; 1 Corinthians 9:4-5.

Sons of God - Children of God by adoption. See the notes at Matthew 1:1. Christians are called sons of God:

1.Because they are "adopted" by Him, 1 John 3:1.

2.Because they are "like Him;" they resemble Him and have His spirit.

3.They are united to the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, are regarded by Him as his brethren Matthew 25:40, and are therefore regarded as the children of the Most High.

On his name - This is another way of saying believeth in "him." The "name" of a person is often put for the person himself, John 2:23; John 3:18; 1 John 5:13. From this verse we learn:

1.That to be a child of God is a privilege - far more so than to be the child of any human being, though in the highest degree rich, or learned, or honored. Christians are therefore more honored than any other persons.

2.God gave them this privilege. It is not by their own works or deserts; it is because God chose to impart this blessing to them, Ephesians 2:8; John 15:16.

3.This favor is given only to those who believe on him. All others are the children of the wicked one, and no one who has not "confidence in God" can be regarded as his child. No parent would acknowledge one for his child, or approve of him, who had no confidence in him, who doubted or denied all he said, and who despised his character. Yet the sinner constantly does this toward God, and he cannot, therefore, be called his Son.

Verse 13

Which were born - This doubtless refers to the "new birth," or to the great change in the sinner's mind called regeneration or conversion. It means that they did not become the children of God in virtue of their natural birth, or because they were the children of "Jews," or because they were descended from pious parents. The term "to be born" is often used to denote this change. Compare John 3:3-8; 1 John 2:29. It illustrates clearly and beautifully this great change. The natural birth introduces us to life. The new birth is the beginning of spiritual life. Before, the sinner is "dead" in

sins Ephesians 2:1; now he begins truly to live. And as the natural birth is the beginning of life, so to be born of God is to be introduced to real life, to light, to happiness, and to the favor of God. The term expresses at once the "greatness" and the "nature" of the change.

Not of blood - The Greek word is plural; not of "bloods" - that is, not of "man." Compare Matthew 27:4. The Jews prided themselves on being the descendants of Abraham, Matthew 3:9. They supposed that it was proof of the favor of God to be descended from such an illustrious ancestry. In this passage this notion is corrected. It is not because men are descended from an illustrious or pious parentage that they are entitled to the favor of God; or perhaps the meaning may be, not because there is a union of illustrious lines of ancestry or "bloods" in them. The law of Christ's kingdom is different from what the Jews supposed. Compare 1 Peter 1:23. It was necessary to be "born of God" by regeneration. Possibly, however, it may mean that they did not become children of God by the bloody rite of "circumcision," as many of the Jews supposed they did. This is agreeable to the declaration of Paul in Romans 2:28-29.

d **Nor of the will of the flesh -** Not by natural generation.

Nor of the will of man - This may refer, perhaps, to the will of man in adopting a child, as the former phrases do to the natural birth; and the design of using these three phrases may have been to say that they became the children of God neither in virtue of their descent from illustrious parents like Abraham, nor by their natural birth, nor by being "adopted" by a pious man. None of the ways by which we become entitled to the privileges of "children" among people can give us a title to be called the sons of God. It is not by human power or agency that men become children of the Most High.

But of God - That is, God produces the change, and confers the privilege of being cawed his children. The heart is changed by his power. No unaided effort of man, no works of ours, can produce this change. At the same time, it is true that no man is renewed who does not himself "desire" and "will" to be a believer; for the effect of the change is on his "will" Psalm 110:3, and no one is changed who does not strive to enter in at the strait gate, Philemon 2:12. This important verse, therefore, teaches us:

1.that if men are saved they must be born again.

2.that their salvation is not the result of their birth, or of any honorable or pious parentage.

3.that the children of the rich and the noble, as well as of the poor, must be born of God if they will be saved.

4.that the children of pious parents must be born again; or they cannot be saved. None will go to heaven simply because their "parents" are Christians.

5.that this work is the work of God, and "no man" can do it for us.

6.that we should forsake all human dependence, east off all confidence in the flesh, and go at once to the throne of grace, and beseech of God to adopt us into his family and save our souls from death.

Verse 14

And the Word was made flesh - The word "flesh," here, is evidently used to denote "human nature" or "man." See Matthew 16:17; Matthew 19:5; Matthew 24:22; Luke 3:6; Romans 1:3; Romans 9:5. The "Word" was made "man." This is commonly expressed by saying that he became "incarnate." When we say that a being becomes "incarnate," we mean that one of a higher order than man, and of a different nature, assumes the appearance of man or becomes a man. Here it is meant that "the Word," or the second person of the Trinity, whom John had just proved to be equal with God, became a man, or was united with the man Jesus of Nazareth, so that it might be said that he "was made flesh."

Was made - This is the same word that is used in John 1:3; "All things were made by him." It is not simply affirmed that he was flesh, but that he was made flesh, implying that he had pre-existence, agreeably to John 1:1. This is in accordance with the doctrine of the Scriptures elsewhere. Hebrews 10:5; "a ‹body‘ hast thou prepared me." Hebrews 2:14; "as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." 1 John 4:2; "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." See also 1 Timothy 3:16; Philemon 2:6; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Luke 1:35. The expression, then, means that he became a man, and that he became such by the power of God providing for him a body. It cannot mean that the divine nature was "changed" into the human, for that could not be; but it means that the λόγος Logosor "Word," became so intimately united to Jesus that it might be said

that the Logos, or "Word" "became" or "was" a man, as the soul becomes so united to the body that we may say that it is one person or a man.

And dwell among us - The word in the original denotes "dwelt as in a tabernacle or tent;" and some have supposed that John means to say that the human body was a tabernacle or tent for the λόγος Logosto abide in, in allusion to the tabernacle among the Jews, in which the Shechinah, or visible symbol of God, dwelt; but it is not necessary to suppose this. The object of John was to prove that "the Word" became "incarnate." To do this he appeals to various evidences. One was that he "dwelt" among them; sojourned with them; ate, drank, slept, and was with them for years, so that they "saw him with their eyes, they looked upon him, and their hands handled him," 1 John 1:1. To "dwell in a tent with one" is the same as to be in his family; and when John says he "tabernacled" with them, he means that he was with them as a friend and as one of a family, so that they had full opportunity of becoming familiarly acquainted with him, and could not be mistaken in supposing that "he was really a man."

We beheld his glory - This is a new proof of what he was affirming - "that the word of God became man." The first was, that they had seen him as a man. He now adds that they had seen him in his proper glory "as God and man united in one person," constituting him the unequalled Son of the Father. There is no doubt that there is reference here to the transfiguration on the holy mount. See Matthew 17:1-9. To this same evidence Peter also appeals, 2 Peter 1:16-18. John was one of the witnesses of that scene, and hence he says, "we beheld his glory," Mark 9:2. The word "glory" here means majesty, dignity, splendor.

The glory as of the only-begotten of the Father - The dignity which was appropriate to the only-begotten Son of God; such glory or splendor as could belong to no other. and as properly expressed his rank and character. This glory was seen eminently on the mount of transfiguration. It was also seen in his miracles, his doctrine, his resurrection, his ascension; all of which were such as to illustrate the perfections, and manifest the glory that belongs only to the Son of God.

Only-begotten - This term is never applied by John to any but Jesus Christ. It is applied by him five times to the Saviour, John 1:14, John 1:18; John 3:16, John 3:18; 1 John 4:9. It means literally an only child. Then, as an only child is especially dear to a parent, it means one that is especially beloved. Compare Genesis 22:2, Genesis 22:12, Genesis 22:16; Jeremiah

6:26; Zechariah 12:10. On both these accounts it is bestowed on the Saviour.

1.As he was eminently the Son of God, sustaining a special relation to Him in His divine nature, exalted above all human beings and angels, and thus worthy to be called, by way of eminence, His only Son. Saints are called His "sons" or children, because they are born of His Spirit, or are like Him; but the Lord Jesus is exalted far above all, and deserves eminently to be called His only-begotten Son.

2.He was especially dear to God, and therefore this appellation, implying tender affection, is bestowed upon him.

Full of grace and truth - The word "full" here refers to the "Word made flesh," which is declared to be full of grace and truth. The word "grace" means "favors," gifts, acts of beneficence. He was kind, merciful, gracious, doing good to all, and seeking man's welfare by great sacrifices and love; so much so, that it might be said to be characteristic of him, or he "abounded" in favors to mankind. He was also "full of truth." He declared the truth. In him was no falsehood. He was not like the false prophets and false Messiahs, who were wholly impostors; nor was he like the emblems and shadows of the old dispensation, which were only types of the true; but he was truth itself. He represented things as they are, and thus became the "truth" as well as "the way and the life."

Verse 15

John bare witness of him - The evangelist now returns to the testimony of John the Baptist. He had stated that the Word became incarnate, and he now appeals to the testimony of John to show that, thus incarnate, he was the Messiah.

He that cometh after me - He of whom I am the forerunner, or whose way I am come to prepare. See the notes at Matthew 3:3.

Is preferred before me - Is superior to me. Most critics have supposed that the words translated "is preferred" relate to "time," and not to "dignity;" meaning that though he came after him publicly, being six months younger than John, as well as entering on his work after John, yet that he had existed long before him. Most, however, have understood it more correctly, as our translators seem to have done, as meaning, He was worthy of more honor than I am.

He was before me - This can refer to nothing but his pre-existence, and can be explained only on the supposition that he existed before John, or, as

the evangelist had before shown, from the beginning. He came "after" John in his public ministry and in his human nature, but in his divine nature he had existed long before John had a being - from eternity. We may learn here that it is one mark of the true spirit of a minister of Christ to desire and feel that Christ is always to be preferred to ourselves. We should keep ourselves out of view. The great object is to hold up the Saviour; and however much ministers may be honored or blessed, yet they should lay all at the feet of Jesus, and direct all men to him as the undivided object of affection and honor. It is the business of every Christian, as well as of every Christian minister, to be a witness for Christ, and to endeavor to convince the world that he is worthy of confidence and love.

Verse 16

Of his fulness - In John 1:14 the evangelist has said that Christ was "full of grace and truth." Of that "fullness" he now says that all the disciples had received; that is, they derived from his abundant truth and mercy grace to understand the plan of salvation, to preach the gospel, to live lives of holiness; they "partook" of the numerous blessings which he came to impart by his instructions and his death. These are undoubtedly not the words of John the Baptist, but of the evangelist John, the writer of this gospel. They are a continuation of what he was saying in John 1:14, John 1:15 being evidently thrown in as a parenthesis. The declaration had not exclusive reference, probably, to the apostles, but it is extended to all Christians, for all believers have received of the "fulness of grace and truth" that is in Christ. Compare Ephesians 1:23; Ephesians 3:19; Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9. In all these places our Saviour is represented as the fulness of God - as "abounding" in mercy, as exhibiting the divine attributes, and as possessing in himself all that is necessary to fill his people with truth, and grace, and love.

Grace for grace - Many interpretations of this phrase have been proposed. The chief are briefly the following:

1."We have received under the gospel, grace or favor, ‹instead of‘ those granted under the law; and God has added by the gospel important favors to those which he gave under the law." This was first proposed by Chrysostom.

2."We, Christians, have received grace ‹answering to,‘ or corresponding to that which is in Jesus Christ. We are ‹like‘ him in meekness, humility," etc.

3.“We have received grace ‹as grace‘ - that is, freely. We have not purchased it nor deserved it, but God has conferred it on us ‹freely‘” (Grotius).

4.The meaning is, probably, simply that we have received through him “abundance” of grace or favor. The Hebrews, in expressing the superlative degree of comparison, used simply to repeat the word - thus, “pits, pits,” meaning many pits (Hebrew in Genesis 14:10). So here grace for grace may mean “much” grace; superlative favors bestowed on man; favors superior to all that had been under the law - superior to all other things that God can confer on men. These favors consist in pardon, redemption, protection, sanctification, peace here, and heaven hereafter.

Verse 17

The law was given - The Old Testament economy. The institutions under which the Jews lived.

By Moses - By Moses, as the servant of God. He was the great legislator of the Jews, by whom, under God, their polity was formed. The law worketh wrath Romans 4:15; it was attended with many burdensome rites and ceremonies Acts 15:10; it was preparatory to another state of things. The gospel succeeded that and took its place, and thus showed the greatness of the gospel economy, as well as its grace and truth.

Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ - A system of religion full of favors, and the “true” system, was revealed by him. The old system was one of “law,” and “shadows,” and “burdensome rites;” “this” was full of mercy to mankind, and was true in all things. We may learn from these verses:

1.that all our mercies come from Jesus Christ.

2.“All true believers receive from Christ‘s fulness; the best and greatest saints cannot live without him, the meanest and weakest may live by him. This excludes proud boasting that we have nothing but ‹we have received it,‘ and silenceth perplexing fears that we want nothing but ‹we may receive it.‘”

Verse 18

No man hath seen God at any time - This declaration is probably made to show the superiority of the revelation of Jesus above that of any

previous dispensation. It is said, therefore, that Jesus "had an intimate knowledge of God," which neither Moses nor any of the ancient prophets had possessed. God is invisible: no human eyes have seen him; but Christ had a knowledge of God which might be expressed to our apprehension by saying that he saw him. He knew him intimately and completely, and was therefore fitted to make a fuller manifestation of him. See John 5:37; John 6:46; 1 John 4:12; Exodus 33:20; John 14:9. This passage is not meant to deny that men had witnessed "manifestations" of God, as when he appeared to Moses and the prophets (compare Numbers 12:8; Isaiah 6:1-13); but it is meant that no one has seen the essence of God, or has "fully known God." The prophets delivered what they "heard" God speak; Jesus what he knew of God as his equal, and as understanding fully nature.

The only-begotten Son - See the notes at John 1:14. This verse shows John's sense of the meaning of that phrase, as denoting an intimate and full knowledge of God.

In the bosom of the Father - This expression is taken from the custom among the Orientals of reclining at their meals. See the notes at Matthew 23:6. It denotes intimacy, friendship, affection. Here it means that Jesus had a knowledge of God such as one friend has of another - knowledge of his character, designs, and nature which no other one possesses, and which renders him, therefore, qualified above all others to make him known.

Hath declared him - Hath fully revealed him or made him known. Compare Hebrews 1:1, Hebrews 1:4. This verse proves that Jesus had a knowledge of God above that which any of the ancient prophets had, and that the fullest revelations of his character are to be expected in the gospel. By his Word and Spirit he can enlighten and guide us, and lead us to the true knowledge of God; and there is no true and full knowledge of God which is not obtained through his Son. Compare John 14:6; 1 John 2:22-23.

Verse 19

This is the record - The word "record" here means "testimony," in whatever way given. The word "record" now commonly refers to "written" evidence. This is not its meaning here. John's testimony was given without writing.

When the Jews sent - John's fame was great. See Matthew 3:5. It spread from the region of Galilee to Jerusalem, and the nation seemed to suppose, from the character of his preaching, that he was the Messiah, Luke 3:15. The great council of the nation, or the Sanhedrin, had, among other

things, the charge of religion. They felt it to be their duty, therefore, to inquire into the character and claims of John, and to learn whether he was the Messiah. It is not improbable that they wished that he might be the long-expected Christ, and were prepared to regard him as such.

When the Jews sent priests and Levites - See the notes at Luke 10:31-32. These were probably members of the Sanhedrin.

Verse 20

I am not the Christ - This confession proves that John was not an impostor. He had a wide reputation. The nation was expecting that the Messiah was about to come, and multitudes were ready to believe that John was he, Luke 3:15. If John had been an impostor he would have taken advantage of this excited state of public feeling, proclaimed himself to be the Messiah, and formed a large party in his favor. The fact that he did not do it is full proof that he did not intend to impose on people, but came only as the forerunner of Christ; and his example shows that all Christians, and especially all Christian ministers, however much they may be honored and blessed, should be willing to lay all their honors at the feet of Jesus; to keep themselves back and to hold up before the world only the Son of God. To do this is one eminent mark of the true spirit of a minister of the gospel.

Verse 21

Art thou Elias? - This is the Greek way of writing Elijah. The Jews expected that Elijah would appear before the Messiah came. See the notes at Matthew 11:14. They supposed that it would be the real Elijah returned from heaven. In this sense John denied that he was Elijah; but he did not deny that he was the Elias or Elijah which the prophet intended Matthew 3:3, for he immediately proceeds to state John 1:23 that he was sent, as it was predicted that Elijah would be, to prepare the way of the Lord; so that, while he corrected their false notions about Elijah, he so clearly stated to them his true character that they might understand that he was really the one predicted as Elijah.

That prophet - It is possible that the Jews supposed that not only "Elijah" would reappear before the coming of the Messiah, but also "Jeremiah." See the notes at Matthew 16:14. Some have supposed, however, that this question has reference to the prediction of Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15.

Verse 23

I am the voice … - See the notes at Matthew 3:3.

Verse 24

Were of the Pharisees - For an account of this sect, see the notes at Matthew 3:7. Why they are particularly mentioned is not certainly known. Many of the "Sadducees" came to his baptism Matthew 3:7, but it seems that they did not join in sending to him to know what was the design of John. This circumstance is one of those incidental and delicate allusions which would occur to no impostor in forging a book, and which show that the writers of the New Testament were honest men and knew what they affirmed. Because:

1.The Pharisees composed a great part of the Sanhedrin, Acts 23:6. It is probable that a deputation from the Sanhedrin would be of that party.

2.The Pharisees were very tenacious of rites and customs, of traditions and ceremonies. They observed many. They believed that they were lawful, Mark 7:3-4. Of course, they believed that those rites might be increased, but they did not suppose that it could be done except by the authority of a prophet or of the Messiah. When, therefore, John came "baptizing" - adding a rite to be observed by his followers - baptizing not only Gentiles, but also Jews - the question was whether he had authority to institute a new rite; whether it was to be received among the ceremonies of religion. In this question the Sadducees felt no interest, for they rejected all such rites at once; but the Pharisees thought it was worth inquiry, and it was a question on which they felt themselves specially called on to act as the guardians of the ceremonies of religion.

Verse 25

Why baptizest thou then … - Baptism on receiving a proselyte from "paganism" was common before the time of John, but it was not customary to baptize a "Jew." John had changed the custom. He baptized "all," and they were desirous of knowing by what authority he made such a change in the religious customs of the nation. They presumed, from the fact that he introduced that change, that he claimed to be a prophet or the Christ. They supposed that no one would attempt it without "pretending," at least, authority from heaven. As he disclaimed the character of Christ and of the prophet Elijah, they asked whence he derived his authority. As he had just before applied to himself a prediction that they all considered as belonging to the fore runner of Christ, they "might" have understood "why" he did it;

but they were blind, and manifested, as all sinners do, a remarkable slowness in understanding the plainest truths in religion.

Verse 26

I baptize - He did not deny it; nor did he condescend to state his authority. That he had given. He "admitted" that he had introduced an important "change" in the rites of religion, and he goes on to tell them that this was not all. Greater and more important changes would soon take place without their authority. The Messiah was about to come, and the "power" was about to depart from "their" hands.

There standeth one - There is one.

Among you - In the midst of you. He is undistinguished among the multitude. The Messiah had already come, and was about to be manifested to the people. It was not until the next day John 1:29 that Jesus was manifested or proclaimed as the Messiah; but it is not improbable that he was then among the people that were assembled near the Jordan, and mingled with them, though he was undistinguished. He had gone there, probably, with the multitudes that had been drawn thither by the fame of John, and had gone without attracting attention, though his real object was go receive baptism in this public manner, and to be exhibited and proclaimed as the Messiah.

Whom ye know not - Jesus was not yet declared publicly to be the Christ. Though it is probable that he was then among the multitude, yet he was not known as the Messiah. We may hence learn:

1.That there is often great excellency in the world that is obscure, undistinguished, and unknown. Jesus was near to all that people, but they were not conscious of his presence, for he was retired and obscure. Though the greatest personage ever in the world, yet he was not externally distinguished from others.

2.Jesus may be near to men of the world, and yet they know him not. He is everywhere by his Spirit, yet few know it, and few are desirous of knowing it.

Verse 27

Whose shoe's latchet - See the notes at Matthew 3:11. The "latchet" of sandals was the string or thong by which they were fastened to the feet. To unloose them was the office of a servant, and John means, therefore, that he was unworthy to perform the lowest office for the Messiah. This was

remarkable humility. John was well known; he was highly honored; thousands came to hear him. Jesus was at that time unknown; but John says that he was unworthy to perform the humblest office for Jesus. So we all should be willing to lay all that we have at the feet of Christ, and feel that we are unworthy to be his lowest servants.

Verse 28

In Bethabara - Almost all the ancient manuscripts and versions, instead of "Bethabara" here, have "Bethany," and this is doubtless the true reading. There was a Bethany about 2 miles east of Jerusalem, but there is said also to have been another in the tribe of Reuben, on the east side of the river Jordan, and in this place, probably, John was baptizing. It is about 12 miles above Jericho. The word "Bethabara" means "house or place of a ford." The reading "Bethabara," instead of "Bethany," seems to have arisen from the conjecture of Origen, who found in his day no such place as "Bethany," but saw a town called "Bethabara," where John was said to have baptized, and therefore took the liberty of changing the former reading - Robinson, Lexicon.

Beyond Jordan - On the east side of the Jordan River.

Verse 29

The next day - The day after the Jews made inquiry whether he was the Christ.

Behold the Lamb of God - A "lamb," among the Jews, was killed and eaten at the Passover to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt, Exodus 12:3-11. A lamb was offered in the tabernacle, and afterward in the temple, every morning and evening, as a part of the daily worship, Exodus 29:38-39. The Messiah was predicted as a lamb led to the slaughter, to show his patience in his sufferings, and readiness to die for man, Isaiah 53:7. A lamb, among the Jews, was also an emblem of patience, meekness, gentleness. On "all" these accounts, rather than on any one of them alone, Jesus was called "the Lamb." He was innocent 1 Peter 2:23-25; he was a sacrifice for sin the substance represented by the daily offering of the lamb, and slain at the usual time of the evening sacrifice Luke 23:44-46; and he was what was represented by the Passover, turning away the anger of God, and saving sinners by his blood from vengeance and eternal death, 1 Corinthians 5:7.

Of God - Appointed by God, approved by God, and most dear to him; the sacrifice which he chose, and which he approves to save people from

death.

Which taketh away - This denotes his "bearing" the sins of the world, or the sufferings which made an atonement for sin. Compare Isaiah 53:4; 1 John 3:5; 1 Peter 2:24. He takes away sin by "bearing" in his own body the sufferings which God appointed to show his sense of the evil of sin, thus magnifying the law, and rendering it consistent for him to pardon. See the notes at Romans 3:24-25.

Of the world - Of all mankind, Jew and Gentile. His work was not to be confined to the Jew, but was also to benefit the Gentile; it was not confined to any one part of the world, but was designed to open the way of pardon to all men. He was the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, 1 John 2:2. See the notes at 2 Corinthians 5:15.

Verse 31

I knew him not - John was not personally acquainted with Jesus. Though they were remotely related to each other, yet it seems that they had had heretofore no personal acquaintance. John had lived chiefly in the hill country of Judea. Jesus had been employed with Joseph at Nazareth. Until Jesus came to be baptized Matthew 3:13-14, it seems that John had no acquaintance with him. He understood that he was to announce that the Messiah was about to appear. He was sent to proclaim his coming, but he did not personally know Jesus, or that he was to be the Messiah. This proves that there could have been no collusion or agreement between them to impose on the people.

Should be made manifest - That the Messiah should be "exhibited," or made known. He came to prepare the way for the Messiah, and it now appeared that the Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth.

To Israel - To the Jews.

Verse 32

Bare record - Gave testimony.

I saw the Spirit … - See the notes at Matthew 3:16-17.

Verse 33-34

The same said … - This was the sign by which he was to know the Messiah. He was to see the Spirit descending like a dove and abiding on him. It does not follow, however, that he had no intimation before this that Jesus was the Christ, but it means that by this he should know it infallibly. From Matthew 3:13-14, it seems that John supposed, before the baptism of Jesus, that he claimed to be the Messiah, and, that he believed it; but the

infallible, certain testimony in the case was the descent of the Holy Spirit on him at his baptism.

That this is the Son of God - This was distinctly declared by a voice from heaven at his baptism, Matthew 3:17. This John heard, and he testified that he had heard it.

Verse 35

The next day - The day after his remarkable testimony that Jesus was the Son of God. This testimony of John is reported because it was the main design of this evangelist to show that Jesus was the Messiah. See the introduction. To do this, he adduces the decided and repeated testimony of John the Baptist. This was impartial evidence in the case, and hence he so particularly dwells upon it.

d **John stood -** Or was standing. This was probably apart from the multitude.

Two of his disciples - One of these was Andrew John 1:40, and it is not improbable that the other was the writer of this gospel.

Verse 36

Looking upon Jesus … - Fixing his eyes intently upon him. Singling him out and regarding him with special attention. Contemplating him as the long-expected Messiah and Deliverer of the world. In this way all ministers should fix the eye upon the Son of God, and direct all others to him.

As he walked - While Jesus was walking.

Verse 37

They followed Jesus - They had been the disciples of John. his office was to point out the Messiah. When that was done, they left at once their master and teacher, John. and followed the long-expected Messiah. This shows that John was sincere; that he was not desirous of forming a party or of building up a sect; that he was willing that all those whom he had attracted to himself by his ministry should become followers of Christ. The object of ministers should not be to build up their own interests or to extend their own fame. It is to point men to the Saviour. Ministers, however popular or successful, should be willing that their disciples should look to Christ rather than to them; nay, should forget them and look away from them, to tread in the footsteps of the Son of God; and the conduct of these disciples shows us that we should forsake all and follow Jesus when he is pointed out to us as the Messiah. We should not delay nor debate the matter, but leave at once all our old teachers, guides and companions, and follow

the Lamb of God. And we should do that, too, though "to the world" the Lord Jesus may appear, as he did to the multitude of the Jews, as poor, unknown, and despised. Reader, have you left all and followed him? Have you forsaken the guides of false philosophy and deceit, of sin and infidelity, and committed yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 38

What seek ye? - This was not asked to obtain "information." Compare John 1:48. It was not a harsh reproof, forbidding them to follow him. Compare Matthew 11:28-30. It was a kind inquiry respecting their desires; an invitation to lay open their minds, to state their wishes, and to express all their feelings respecting the Messiah and their own salvation. We may learn:

1.That Jesus regards the first inclinations of the soul to follow him. He "turned" toward these disciples, and he will incline his ear to all who begin to approach him for salvation.

2.Jesus is ready to hear their requests and to answer them.

3.Ministers of the gospel, and all other Christians, should be accessible, kind, and tender toward all who are inquiring the way to life. In conformity with their Master, they should be willing to aid all those who look to them for guidance and help in the great work of their salvation.

Rabbi - This was a Jewish title conferred somewhat as literary degrees now are, and meaning literally "a great one," and was applied to a teacher or master in the Jewish schools. It corresponded with the title "Doctor." Our Saviour solemnly forbade his disciples to wear that title. See the notes at Matthew 23:8. The fact that John "interpreted" this word shows that he wrote his gospel not for the Jews only, but for those who did not understand the Hebrew language. It is supposed to have been written at Ephesus.

Where dwellest thou? - This question they probably asked him in order to signify their wish to be with him and to be instructed by him. They desired more fully to listen to him than they could now by the wayside. They were unwilling to interrupt him in his traveling. Religion teaches people true politeness, or a disposition to consult the convenience of others, and not improperly to molest them, or to break in upon them when engaged. It also teaches us to "desire to be with Christ;" to seek every opportunity of communion with him, and chiefly to desire "to be with him where he is" when we leave this world. Compare Philemon 1:23.

Verse 39

Come and see - This was a kind and gracious answer. He did not put them off to some future period. Then, as now, he was willing that they should come at once and enjoy the full opportunity which they desired of his conversation. Jesus is ever ready to admit those who seek him to his presence and favor.

Abode with him - Remained with him. This was probably the dwelling of some friend of Jesus. His usual home was at Nazareth.

The tenth hour - The Jews divided their day into twelve equal parts, beginning at sunrise. If John used their mode of computation, this was about four o'clock p. m. The Romans divided time as we do, beginning at midnight. If John used their mode, it was about ten o'clock in the forenoon. It is not certain which he used.

Verse 41

He first findeth - He found him and "told him about Jesus" before he brought him to Jesus.

We have found the Messias - They had learned from the testimony of John, and now had been more fully convinced from conversation with Jesus, that he was the Messiah. The word "Messiah," or "Messias," is Hebrew, and means the same as the Greek word "Christ," "anointed." See the notes at Matthew 1:1. From the conduct of Andrew we may learn that it is the nature of religion to desire that others may possess it. It does not lead us to monopolize it or to hide it under a bushel, but it seeks that others also may be brought to the Saviour. It does not "wait" for them to come, but it goes "for" them; it seeks them out, and tells them that a Saviour is found. Young converts should "seek" their friends and neighbors, and tell them of a Saviour; and not only their relatives, but all others as far as possible, that all may come to Jesus and be saved.

Verse 42

Cephas - This is a Syriac word, meaning the same as the Greek word Peter, a stone. See the notes at Matthew 16:17. The stone, or rock, is a symbol of firmness and steadiness of character - a trait in Peter's character after the ascension of Jesus that was very remarkable. before the death of Jesus he was rash, headlong, variable; and it is one proof of the omniscience of Jesus that he saw that Peter "would" possess a character that would be expressed appropriately by the word "stone" or "rock." The word "Jonas" is a Hebrew word, whose original signification is a "dove." It may be that

Jesus had respect to that when he gave Simon the name Peter. "You now bear a name emblematic of timidity and inconstancy. You shall be called by a name denoting firmness and constancy."

Verse 43

Would go forth - Was about to go.

Into Galilee - He was now in Judea, where he went to be baptized by John. He was now about to return to his native country.

Findeth Philip - This does not refer to his calling these disciples to be "apostles," for that took place at the Sea of Tiberias Matthew 4:18, but it refers to their being. convinced that he was the Christ. This is the object of this evangelist, to show how and when they were convinced of this. Matthew states the time and occasion in which they were called to be "apostles;" John, the time in which they first became acquainted with Jesus, and were convinced that he was the Messiah. There is, therefore, no contradiction in the evangelists.

Verse 44

Of Bethsaida - See the notes at Matthew 11:21.

The city of - The place where Andrew and Peter dwelt.

Verse 45

Moses, in the law - Moses, in that part of the Old Testament which he wrote, called by the Jews "the law." See Deuteronomy 18:15, Deuteronomy 18:18; Genesis 49:10; Genesis 3:15.

And the prophets - Isaiah 53:1-12; Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 9:24-27; Jeremiah 23:5-6; etc.

Jesus of Nazareth … - They spoke according to common apprehension. They spoke of him as the son of Joseph because he was commonly supposed to be. They spoke of him as dwelling at Nazareth, though they might not have been ignorant that he was born at Bethlehem.

Verse 46

Can any good thing … - The character of Nazareth was proverbially bad. To be a Galilean or a Nazarene was an expression of decided contempt, John 7:52. See the notes at Matthew 2:23. Nathanael asked, therefore, whether it was possible that the Messiah should come from a place proverbially wicked. This was a mode of judging in the case not uncommon. It is not by examining evidence, but by prejudice. Many persons suffer their minds to be filled with prejudice against religion, and then pronounce at once without examination. They refuse to examine the

subject, for they have set it down that it cannot be true. It matters not where a teacher comes from, or what is the place of his birth, provided he be authorized of God and qualified for his work.

Come and see - This was the best way to answer Nathanael. He did not sit down to reason with him, or speculate about the possibility that a good thing could come from Nazareth; but he asked him to go and examine for himself, to see the Lord Jesus, to hear him converse, to lay aside his prejudice, and to judge from a fair and candid personal inquiry. So we should beseech sinners to lay aside their prejudices against religion, and "to be Christians," and thus make trial for themselves. If men can be persuaded to come to Jesus, all their petty and foolish objections against religion will vanish. They will be satisfied from their own experience that it is true, and in this way only will they ever be satisfied.

Verse 47

An Israelite indeed - One who is really an Israelite - not by birth only, but one worthy of the name. One who possesses the spirit, the piety, and the integrity which become a man who is really a Jew, who fears God and obeys his law. Compare Romans 9:6; Romans 2:28-29.

No guile - No deceit, no fraud, no hypocrisy. He is really what he professes to be - a Jew, a descendant of the patriarch Jacob, fearing and serving God. He makes no profession which he does not live up to. He does not say that Nathanael was without guilt or sin, but that he had no disguise, no trick, no deceit - he was sincere and upright. This was a most honorable testimony. How happy would it be if he, who knows the hearts of all as he did that of Nathanael, could bear the same testimony of all who profess the religion of the gospel!

Verse 48

Whence knowest thou me? - Nathanael was not yet acquainted with the divinity of Christ, and supposed that he had been a stranger to him. Hearing him express a favorable opinion of him, he naturally inquired by what means he had any knowledge of him. His conscience testified to the truth of what Jesus said that he had no guile, and he was anxious to know whence he had learned his character.

Before that Philip called thee - See John 1:45.

When thou wast under the fig-tree - It is evident that it was from something that had occurred under the fig-tree that Jesus judged of his character. What that was is not recorded. It is not improbable that Nathanael

was accustomed to retire to the shade of a certain tree, perhaps in his garden or in a grove, for the purpose of meditation and prayer. The Jews were much in the habit of selecting such places for private devotion, and in such scenes of stillness and retirement there is something especially favorable for meditation and prayer. Our Saviour also worshipped in such places. Compare John 18:2; Luke 6:12. In that place of retirement it is not improbable that Nathanael was engaged in private devotion.

I saw thee - It is clear, from the narrative, that Jesus did not mean to say that he was bodily present with Nathanael and saw him; but he knew his thoughts, his desires, his secret feelings and wishes. In this sense Nathanael understood him. We may learn:

1.that Jesus sees what is done in secret, and is therefore divine.

2.that he sees us when we little think of it.

3.that he sees us especially in our private devotions, hears our prayers, and marks our meditations. And,

4.that he judges of our character chiefly by our private devotions. Those are secret; the world sees them not; and in our closets we show what we are. How does it become us, therefore, that our secret prayers and meditations should be without "guile" and hypocrisy, and such as Jesus will approve!

Verse 49

Rabbi - Master. Applied appropriately to Jesus, and to no one else, Matthew 23:10.

The Son of God - By this title he doubtless meant that he was the Messiah. His conscience told him that he had judged right of his character, and that therefore he must know the heart and the desires of the mind. If so, he could not be a mere man, but must be the long-expected Messiah.

The King of Israel - This was one of the titles by which the Messiah was expected, and this was the title which was affixed to his cross, John 19:18. This case of Nathanael John adduces as another evidence that Jesus was the Christ. The great object he had in view in writing this gospel was to collect the evidence that he was the Messiah, John 20:31. A case, therefore, where Jesus searched the heart, and where his knowledge of the heart convinced a pious Jew that he was the Christ, is very properly adduced as important testimony.

Verse 50

Greater things - Fuller proof of his Messiahship, particularly what is mentioned in the following verse.

Verse 51

Verily, verily - In the Greek, "Amen, amen." The word "amen" means "truly, certainly, so be it" - from the Hebrew verb to confirm, to establish, to be true. It is often used in this gospel. When repeated it expresses the speaker's sense of the importance of what he is saying, and the "certainty" that it is as he affirms.

Ye shall see - Not, perhaps, with the bodily eyes, but you shall have "evidence" that it is so. The thing shall take place, and you shall be a witness of it.

Heaven open - This is a figurative expression, denoting "the conferring of favors." Psalm 78:23-24; "he opened the doors of heaven, and had rained down manna." It also denotes that God was about to work a miracle in attestation of a particular thing. See Matthew 3:16. In the language, here, there is an evident allusion to the ladder that Jacob saw in a dream, and to the angels ascending and descending on it, Genesis 28:12. It is not probable that Jesus referred to any particular instance in which Nathanael should literally see the heavens opened. The baptism of Jesus had taken place, and no other instance occurred in his life in which it is said that the "heavens were" opened.

Angels of God - Those pure and holy beings that dwell in heaven, and that are employed as ministering spirits to our world, Hebrews 1:14. Good men are represented in the Scriptures as being under their protection, Psalm 91:11-12; Genesis 28:12. They are the agents by which God often expressed his will to men, Hebrews 2:2; Galatians 3:19. They are represented as strengthening the Lord Jesus, and ministering unto him. Thus they aided him in the wilderness Mark 1:13, and in the garden Luke 22:43, and they were present when he rose from the dead, Matthew 28:2-4; John 20:12-13. By their ascending and descending upon him it is probable that he meant that Nathanael would have evidence that they came to his aid, and that he would have "the" kind of protection and assistance from God which would show "more fully that he was the Messiah." Thus his life, his many deliverances from dangers, his wisdom to confute his skilled and cunning adversaries, the scenes of his death, and the attendance of angels at his resurrection, may all be represented by the angels descending upon him,

and all would show to Nathanael and the other disciples most clearly that he was the Son of God.

The Son of man - A term by which lie often describes himself. It shows his humility, his love for man, his willingness to be esteemed "as a man," Philemon 2:6-7.

From this interview with Nathanael we may learn:

1.that Jesus searches the heart.

2.that he was truly the Messiah.

3.that he was under the protection of God.

4.that if we have faith in Jesus, it will be continually strengthened the evidence will grow brighter and brighter.

5.that if we believe his word, we shall yet see full proof that his word is true.

6.Since Jesus was under the protection of God, so all his friends will be. God will defend and save us also if we put our trust in Him.

7.Jesus applied terms expressive of humility to himself. He was not solicitous even to be called by titles which he might claim.

So we should not be ambitious of titles and honors. Ministers of the gospel most resemble him when they seek for the fewest titles, and do not aim at distinctions from each other or their brethren. See the notes at Matthew 23:8.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

And the third day - On the third day after his conversation with Nathanael.

Cana - This was a small town about 15 miles northwest of Tiberias and 6 miles northeast of Nazareth. It is now called Kerr Kenna, is under the government of a Turkish officer, and contains perhaps 300 inhabitants, chiefly Catholics. The natives still pretend to show the place where the water was turned into wine, and even one of the large stone water-pots. "A Greek church," says Professor Hackett (‹Illustrations of Scripture,' p. 322), "stands at the entrance of the town, deriving its special sanctity, as I understood, from its being supposed to occupy the site of the house in which the marriage was celebrated to which Jesus and his friends were invited. A priest to whom we were referred as the custodian soon arrived, in obedience to our call, and unlocked the doors of the church. It is a low stone building, pair." "The houses," says Dr. Thomson (‹The Land and the Book,' vol. ii. p. 126), "were built of limestone, cut and laid up after the fashion still common in this region, and some of them may have been inhabited within the last fifty years. There are many ancient cisterns about it, and fragments of water-jars in abundance, and both reminded us of the ‹beginning of miracles.' Some of my companions gathered bits of these water-jars as mementoes witnesses they could hardly be, for those of the narrative were of ‹stone,' while these were baked earth." The place is now quite deserted. Dr. Thomson says: "There is not now a habitable house in the humble village where our blessed Lord sanctioned, by his presence and miraculous assistance, the all-important and world-wide institution of marriage." It was called "Cana of Galilee" to distinguish it from another Cana in the tribe of Ephraim, Joshua 16:9. This was the native place of Nathanael, John 21:2.

The mother of Jesus - Mary. It is not improbable that she was a relative of the family where the marriage took place.

Verse 2

His disciples - Those that he had made when in Judea. These were Peter, Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael. They were not yet called to be apostles, but they believed that he was the Messiah. The miracle performed here was doubtless to convince them more fully that he was the Christ.

Verse 3

When they wanted wine - A marriage feast among the Jews was commonly observed for seven or eight days. It is not probable that there would be a want of wine at the marriage itself, and it is possible, therefore, that Jesus came there some time during the marriage feast.

They have no wine - It is not known why Mary told this to Jesus. It would seem that she had a belief that he was able to supply it, though he had as yet worked no miracle.

Verse 4

Woman - This term, as used here, seems to imply reproof, as if she was interfering in that which did not properly concern her; but it is evident that no such reproof or disrespect was intended by the use of the term "woman" instead of "mother." It is the same term by which he tenderly addressed Mary Magdalene after his resurrection John 20:15, and his mother when he was on the cross, John 19:26. Compare also Matthew 15:28; John 4:21; 1 Corinthians 7:16.

What have I to do with thee? - See the notes at Matthew 8:29. This expression is sometimes used to denote indignation or contempt. See Judges 11:12; 2 Samuel 16:10; 1 Kings 17:18. But it is not probable that it denoted either in this place; if it did, it was a mild reproof of Mary for attempting to control or direct him in his power of working miracles. Most of the ancients supposed this to be the intention of Jesus. The words sound to us harsh, but they might have been spoken in a tender manner, and not have been intended as a reproof. It is clear that he did not intend to refuse to provide wine, but only to delay it a little; and the design was, therefore, to compose the anxiety of Mary, and to prevent her being solicitous about it. It may, then, be thus expressed: "My mother, be not anxious. To you and to me this should not be a matter of solicitude. The proper time of my interfering has not yet come. When that is come I will furnish a supply, and in the meantime neither you nor I should be solicitous." Thus understood, it is so far from being a "harsh reproof," that it was a mild exhortation for her to dismiss her fears and to put proper trust in him.

Mine hour … - My time. The proper time for my interposing. Perhaps the wine was not yet entirely exhausted. The wine had begun to fail, but he would not work a miracle until it was entirely gone, that the miracle might be free-from all possibility of suspicion. It does not mean that the proper

time for his working a miracle, or entering. on his public work had not come, but that the proper time for his interposing there had not arrived.

Verse 5

His mother saith … - It is evident from this verse that his mother did not understand what he had said as a harsh reproof and repulse, but as an indication of his willingness at the proper time to furnish wine. In all this transaction he evinced the appropriate feelings of a son toward a mother.

Verse 6

Six water-pots of stone - Made of stone; or, as we should say, stoneware.

After the manner - After the usual custom.

Of the purifying - Of the "washings" or ablutions of the Jews. They were for the purpose of washing the hands before and after eating Matthew 15:2, and for the formal washing of vessels, and even articles of furniture, Luke 11:39; Mark 7:3-4.

Two or three firkins - It is not quite certain what is meant here by the word "firkins." It is probable that the measure intended is the Hebrew "bath," containing about 7 12 gallons.

Verse 7

With water - This was done by the servants employed at the feast. It was done by "them," so that there might be no opportunity of saying that the disciples of Jesus had filled them with wine to produce the "appearance" of a miracle. In this case there could be no deception. The quantity was very considerable. The servants would know whether the "wine" or "water" had been put in these vessels. It could not be believed that they had either the power or the disposition to impose on others in this manner, and the way was therefore clear for the proof that Jesus had really changed what was known to be water into wine.

To the brim - To the top. So full that no wine could be poured in to give the appearance of a mixture. Further, vessels were used for this miracle in which wine had not been kept. These pots were never used to put wine in, but simply to keep "water" in for the various purposes of ablution. A large number was used on this occasion, because there were many guests.

Verse 8

Draw out now - This command was given to the servants. It showed that the miracle had been performed immediately. As soon as they were filled the servants were directed to take to the governor of the feast. Jesus

made no parade about it, and it does not even appear that he approached the waterpots. He willed it, and it was done. This was a clear exertion of divine power, and made in such a manner as to leave no doubt of its reality.

The governor - One who presided on the occasion. The one who stood at the "head" or upper end of the table. He had the charge of the entertainment, provided the food, gave directions to the servants, etc.

Verse 9

And knew not whence it was - This is said, probably, to indicate that his judgment was not biased by any favor, or any lack of favor, toward Jesus. Had he known what was done, he would have been less likely to have judged impartially. As it is, we have his testimony that this was real wine, and of so fine a body and flavor as to surpass that which had been provided for the occasion. Everything in this miracle shows that there was no collusion or understanding between Jesus and any of the persons at the feast.

Verse 10

Every man - It is customary, or it is generally done.

When men have well drunk - This word does not of necessity mean that they were intoxicated, though it is usually employed in that sense. It may mean when they have drunk sufficient, or to satiety; or have drunk so much as to produce hilarity, and to destroy the keenness of their taste, so that they could not readily distinguish the good from that which was worse. But this cannot be adduced in favor of drunkenness, even if it means to be intoxicated; for,

1.It is not said of those who were present "at that feast," but of what generally occurred. For anything that appears, at that feast all were perfectly temperate and sober.

2.It is not the saying of Jesus that is here recorded, but of the governor of the feast, who is declaring what usually occurred as a fact.

3.There is not any expression of opinion in regard to its "propriety," or in approval of it, even by that governor.

4.It does not appear that our Saviour even heard the observation.

5.Still less is there any evidence that he approved such a state of things, or that he designed that it should take place here. Further, the word

translated “well drunk” cannot be shown to mean intoxication; but it may mean when they had drunk as much as they judged proper or as they desired. then the other was presented. It is clear that neither our Saviour, nor the sacred writer, nor the speaker here expresses any approval of intemperance, nor is there the least evidence that anything of the kind occurred here. It is not proof that we approve of intemperance when we mention, as this man did, what occurs usually among men at feasts.

Is worse - Is of an inferior quality.

The good wine - This shows that this had all the qualities of real wine. We should not be deceived by the phrase “good wine.” We often use the phrase to denote that it is good in proportion to its strength and its power to intoxicate; but no such sense is to be attached to the word here. Pliny, Plutarch, and Horace describe wine as “good,” or mention that as “the best wine,” which was harmless or “innocent” - poculo vini “innocentis.”The most useful wine - “utilissimum vinum” - was that which had little strength; and the most wholesome wine - “saluberrimum vinum” - was that which had not been adulterated by “the addition of anything to the ‹must‘ or juice.” Pliny expressly says that a good wine was one that was destitute of spirit (lib. iv. c. 13). It should not be assumed, therefore, that the “good wine” was “stronger” than the other: it is rather to be presumed that it was milder.

The wine referred to here was doubtless such as was commonly drunk in Palestine. That was the pure juice of the grape. It was not brandied wine, nor drugged wine, nor wine compounded of various substances, such as we drink in this land. The common wine drunk in Palestine was that which was the simple juice of the grape. we use the word “wine” now to denote the kind of liquid which passes under that name in this country - always containing a considerable portion of alcohol not only the alcohol produced by fermentation, but alcohol “added” to keep it or make it stronger. But we have no right to take that sense of the word, and go with it to the interpretation of the Scriptures. We should endeavor to place ourselves in the exact circumstances of those times, ascertain precisely what idea the word would convey to those who used it then, and apply that sense to the word in the interpretation of the Bible; and there is not the slightest evidence that the word so used would have conveyed any idea but that of the pure juice of the grape, nor the slightest circumstance mentioned in this account that would not be fully met by such a supposition.

No man should adduce This instance in favor of drinking wine unless he can prove that the wine made in the waterpots of Cana was just like the wine which he proposes to drink. The Saviour‘s example may be always pleaded just as it was; but it is a matter of obvious and simple justice that we should find out exactly what the example was before we plead it. There is, moreover, no evidence that any other part of the water was converted into wine than that which was “drawn out” of the water-casks for the use of the guests. On this supposition, certainly, all the circumstances of the case are met, and the miracle would be more striking. All that was needed was to furnish a “supply” when the wine that had been prepared was nearly exhausted. The object was not to furnish a large quantity for future use. The miracle, too, would in this way be more apparent and impressive. On this supposition, the casks would appear to be filled with water only; as it was drawn out, it was pure wine. Who could doubt, then, that there was the exertion of miraculous power? All, therefore, that has been said about the Redeemer‘s furnishing a large quantity of wine for the newly-married pair, and about his benevolence in doing it, is wholly gratuitous. There is no evidence of it whatever; and it is not necessary to suppose it in order to an explanation of the circumstances of the case.

Verse 11

This beginning of miracles - This his first public miracle. This is declared by the sacred writer to be a “miracle” - that is, an exertion of divine power, producing a change of the substance of water into wine, which no human power could do.

Manifested forth - Showed; exhibited.

His glory - His power, and proper character as the Messiah; showed that he had divine power, and that God had certainly commissioned him. This is shown to be a real miracle by the following considerations:

1.Real water was placed in the vessels. This the servants believed, and there was no possibility of deception.

2.The water was placed where it was not customary to keep wine. It could not be pretended that it was merely a mixture of water and wine.

3.It was judged to be wine without knowing whence it came. There was no agreement between Jesus and the governor of the feast to impose on the

guests.

4.It was a change which nothing but divine power could effect. He that can change water into a substance like the juice of the grape must be clothed with divine power.

Believed on him - This does not mean that they did not believe on him beforehand, but that their faith was confirmed or strengthened. They saw a miracle, and it satisfied them that he was the Messiah. "Before this" they "believed" on the testimony of John, and from conversation with Jesus John 1:35-51; now they saw that he was invested with almighty power, and their faith was established.

From this narrative we may learn:

1. That marriage is honorable, and that Jesus, if sought, will not refuse his presence and blessing on such an occasion.

2. On such an occasion the presence and approbation of Christ should be sought. No compact formed on earth is more important; none enters so deeply into our comfort in this world; perhaps none will so much affect our destiny in the world to come. It should be entered into, then, in the fear of God.

3. On all such occasions, our conduct should be such that the presence of Jesus would be no interruption or disturbance. He is holy. He is always present in every place; and on all festival occasions our deportment should be such as that we should welcome the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. "That is not a proper stale of feeling or employment which would be interrupted by the presence of the Saviour."

4. Jesus delighted to do good. In the very beginning of his ministry he worked a miracle to show his benevolence. This was the appropriate commencement of a life in which he was to go about doing good. He seized every opportunity of doing it; and at a marriage feast, as well as among the sick and poor, he showed the character which he always sustained - that of a benefactor of mankind.

5. An argument cannot be drawn from this instance in favor of intemperate drinking. There is no evidence that any who were present on that occasion drank too freely.

6. Nor can an argument be drawn from this case in favor even of drinking wine such as we have. The common wine of Judea was the pure juice of the grape, without any mixture of alcohol, and was harmless. It was the common drink of the people, and did not tend to produce intoxication. “Our” wines are a “mixture” of the juice of the grape and of brandy, and often of infusions of various substances to give it color and taste, and the appearance of wine. Those wines are little less injurious than brandy, and the habit of drinking them should be classed with the drinking of all other liquid fires.

The following table will show the danger of drinking the “wines” that are in common use:

d **WineAlcohol Content**

d

d Brandy has fifty-three parts and 39 hundredths in a hundred of alcohol, or5339 percent

d

d Rum5368 percent

d

d Whisky Scotch..5432 percent

d

d Holland Gin.5160 percent

d

d Port Wine, highest kind583 percent

d

d Port Wine, lowest kind140 percent

d

d Madeira, highest kind2942 percent

d

d Madeira, lowest kind934 percent

d

d Lisbon894 percent

d

d Malaga726 percent

d

d Red Champagne130 percent

d

d White280 percent

d

d Currant Wine2025 percent

d

d

It follows that a man who drinks two glasses of most of the wines used has taken as much alcohol as if he had taken one glass of brandy or whisky, and why should he not as well drink the alcohol in the brandy as in the wine? What difference can it make in morals? What difference in its effects on his system? The experience of the world has shown that water, pure water, is the most wholesome, safe, and invigorating drink for man.

Verse 12

To Capernaum - See the notes at Matthew 4:13.

Not many days - The reason why he remained there no longer was that the Passover was near, and they went up to Jerusalem to attend it.

Verse 13

The Jews‘ passover - The feast among the Jews called the Passover. See the notes at Luke 6:1; another John 6:4, and the last one on the night before he was crucified, John 11:55. As his baptism when he entered on his ministry had taken place some time before this - probably not far from six months - it follows that the period of his ministry was not far from three years and a half, agreeably to the prophecy in Daniel 9:27.

Verse 14

Found in the temple … - The transaction here recorded is in almost all respects similar to that which has been explained in the notes at Matthew 21:12. This took place at the commencement of his public ministry; that at the close. On each occasion he showed that his great regard was for the pure worship of his Father; and one great design of his coming was to reform the abuses which had crept into that worship, and to bring man to a proper regard for the glory of God. If it be asked how it was that those engaged in this traffic so readily yielded to Jesus of Nazareth, and that they left their gains and their property, and fled from the temple at the command of one so obscure as he was, it may be replied,

1.That their consciences reproved them for their impiety, and they could not set up the “appearance” of self-defense.

2.It was customary in the nation to cherish a profound regard for the authority of a prophet; and the appearance and manner of Jesus - so

fearless, so decided, so authoritative led them to suppose "he" was a prophet, and they were afraid to resist him.

3.Even then, Jesus had a wide reputation among the people, but it is not improbable that many supposed him to be the Messiah.

4.Jesus on all occasions had a most wonderful control over people. None could resist him. There was something in his manner, as well as in his doctrine, that awed men, and made them tremble at his presence. Compare John 18:5-6. On this occasion he had the manner of a prophet, the authority of God, and the testimony of their own consciences, and they could not, therefore, resist the authority by which he spoke.

Though Jesus thus purified the temple at the commencement of his ministry, yet in three years the same scene was to be repeated. See Matthew 21:12. And from this we may learn:

1.How soon people forget the most solemn reproofs, and return to evil practices.

2.That no sacredness of time or place will guard them from sin. In the very temple, under the very eye of God, these people soon returned to practices for which their consciences reproved them, and which they knew that God disapproved.

3.We see here how strong is the love of gain - the ruling passion of mankind. Not even the sacredness of the temple, the presence of God, the awful ceremonials of religion, deterred them from this unholy traffic. So wicked men and hypocrites will always turn "religion," if possible, into gain; and not even the sanctuary, the Sabbath, or the most awful and sacred scenes, will deter them from schemes of gain. Compare Amos 8:5. So strong is this grovelling passion, and so deep is that depravity which fears not God, and regards not his Sabbaths, his sanctuary, or his law.

Verse 15

A scourge - A whip.

Of small cords - This whip was made as an emblem of authority, and also for the purpose of driving from the temple the cattle which had been brought there for sale. There is no evidence that he used any violence to the men engaged in that unhallowed traffic. The original word implies that

these "cords" were made of twisted "rushes" or "reeds" - probably the ancient material for making ropes.

Verse 17

It was written … - This is recorded in Psalm 69:9. Its meaning is, that he was affected with great zeal or concern for the pure worship of God.

The zeal of thine house - "Zeal" is intense ardor in reference to any object. The "zeal of thine house" means extraordinary concern for the temple of God; intense solicitude that the worship there should be pure, and such as God would approve.

Hath eaten me up - Hath absorbed me, or engaged my entire attention and affection; hath surpassed all other feelings, so that it may be said to be the one great absorbing affection and desire of the mind. Here is an example set for ministers and for all Christians. In Jesus this was the great commanding sentiment of his life. In us it should be also. In this manifestation of zeal he began and ended his ministry. In this we should begin and end our lives. We learn, also, that ministers of religion should aim to purify the church of God. Wicked men, conscience-smitten, will tremble when they see proper zeal in the ministers of Jesus Christ; and there is no combination of wicked men, and no form of depravity, that can stand before the faithful, zealous, pure preaching of the gospel. The preaching of every minister should be such that wicked men will feel that they must either become Christians or leave the house of God, or spend their lives there in the consciousness of guilt and the fear of hell.

Verse 18

What sign … - What "miracle" dost thou work? He assumed the character of a prophet. He was reforming, by his "authority," the temple. It was natural to ask by what authority this was done; and as they had been accustomed to miracles in the life of Moses, and Elijah, and the other prophets, so they demanded evidence that he had authority thus to cleanse the house of God.

Seeing that thou doest - Rather "by what title or authority thou doest these things." Our translation is ambiguous. They wished to know "by what miracle" he had shown, or could show, his right to do those things.

Verse 19

Destroy this temple - The evangelist informs us John 2:21 that by "temple," here, he meant his body. It is not improbable that he pointed with his finger to his body as he spoke. The word "destroy," used here in the

“imperative,” has rather the force of the “future.” Its meaning may thus be expressed: “You are now profaners of the temple of God. You have defiled the sanctuary; you have made it a place of traffic. You have also despised my authority, and been unmoved by the miracles which I have already performed. But your wickedness will not end here. You will oppose me more and more; you will reject and despise me, until in your wickedness you will take my life and ‹destroy‘ my body.” Here was therefore a distinct prediction both of his death and the cause of it. The word “temple,” or “dwelling,” was not unfrequently used by the Jews to denote the “body” as being the residence of the spirit, 2 Corinthians 5:1. Christians are not unfrequently called the temple of God, as being those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells on earth, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16. Our Saviour called his body a temple in accordance with the common use of language, and more particularly because “in him the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily,” Colossians 2:9. The temple at Jerusalem was the appropriate dwelling-place of God. His visible presence was there especially manifested, 2 Chronicles 36:15; Psalm 76:2. As the Lord Jesus was divine - as the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him so his body might be called a “temple.”

In three days I will raise it up - The Jews had asked a “miracle” of him in proof of his authority that is, a proof that he was the Messiah. He tells them that a full and decided proof of that would be his “resurrection from the dead.” Though they would not be satisfied by any other miracle, yet by this they ought to be convinced that he came from heaven, and was the long-expected Messiah. To the same evidence that he was the Christ he refers them on other occasions. See Matthew 12:38-39. Thus early did he foretell his death and resurrection, for at the beginning of his work he had a clear foresight of all that was to take place. This knowledge shows clearly that he came from heaven, and it evinces, also, the extent of his love that he was “willing” to come to save us, knowing clearly what it would cost him. Had he come “without” such an expectation of suffering, his love might have been far less; but when he fully knew all that was before him, when he saw that it would involve him in contempt and death, it shows compassion “worthy of a God” that he was willing to endure the load of all our sorrows, and die to save us from death everlasting. When Jesus says, “‹I‘ will raise it up,” it is proof, also, of divine power. A mere “man” could not say this. No deceased “man” can have such power over his body; and there must have

been, therefore, in the person of Jesus a nature superior to human to which the term "I" could be applied, and which had power to raise the dead - that is, which was divine.

Verse 20

Then said the Jews … - The Jews, either from the ambiguity of his language, or more probably from a design to cavil, understood him as speaking of the temple at Jerusalem. What he said here is all the evidence that they could adduce on his trial Matthew 26:61; Mark 14:58, and they reproached him with it when on the cross, Matthew 27:40. The Jews frequently perverted our Saviour‘s meaning. The language which he used was often that of parables or metaphor; and as they Sought to misunderstand him and pervert his language, so he often left them to their own delusions, as he himself says, "that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand," Matthew 13:13. This was a case which they "might," if they had been disposed, have easily understood. They were in the temple; the conversation was about the temple; and though he probably pointed to his body, or designated it in some plain way, yet they chose to understand him as referring to the temple itself; and as it appeared so improbable that he could raise up that in three days, they sought to pervert his words and pour ridicule on his pretensions.

Forty and six years … - The temple in which they then were was that which was commonly called "the second temple," built after the return of the Jews from Babylon. See the notes at Matthew 21:12. This temple Herod the Great commenced repairing, or began to rebuild, in the eighteenth year of his reign - that is, sixteen years before the birth of Christ (Jos. ‹Ant.,‘ b. xv. Section 1). The main body of the temple he completed in "nine years and a half" (Jos. ‹Ant.,‘ xv. 5,6), yet the temple, with its outbuildings, was not entirely complete in the time of our Saviour. Herod continued to ornament it and to perfect it even until the time of Agrippa (Jos. ‹Ant.,‘ b. xx. chapter viii. Section 11). As Herod began to rebuild the temple sixteen years before the birth of Jesus, and as what is here mentioned happened in the thirtieth year of the age of Jesus, so the time which had been occupied in it was "forty-six years." This circumstance is one of the many in the New Testament which show the accuracy of the evangelists, and which prove that they were well acquainted with what they recorded. It demonstrates that their narration is true. Impostors do not trouble themselves to be very

accurate about names and dates, and there is nothing in which they are more liable to make mistakes.

Wilt thou … - This is an expression of contempt. Herod, with all his wealth and power, had been engaged in this work almost half a century. Can you, an obscure and unknown Galilean, accomplish it in three days? The thing, in their judgment, was ridiculous, and showed, as "they" supposed, that he had no authority to do what he had done in the temple.

Verse 22

When he was risen from the dead … - This saying of our Saviour at that time seemed obscure and difficult. The disciples did not understand it, but they treasured it up in their memory, and the event showed what was its true meaning. Many prophecies are obscure when spoken which are perfectly plain when the event takes place. We learn from this, also, the importance of treasuring up the truths of the Bible now, though we may not perfectly understand them. Hereafter they may be plain to us. It is therefore important that "children," should learn the truths of the sacred Scriptures. Treasured up in their memory, they may not be understood "now," but hereafter they may be clear to them. Every one engaged in teaching a Sunday school, therefore, may be imparting instruction which may be understood, and may impart comfort, long after the teacher has gone to eternity.

They believed - That is, "after" he rose from the dead.

The scripture - The Old Testament, which predicted his resurrection. Reference here must be made to Psalm 16:10; compare Acts 2:27-32; Acts 13:35-37; Psalm 2:7; compare Acts 13:33. They understood those Scriptures in a sense different from what they did before.

The word which Jesus had said - The prediction which he had made respecting his resurrection in this place and on other occasions. See Matthew 20:19; Luke 18:32-33.

Verse 23

Feast-day - Feast. During the celebration of the Passover, which continued eight days.

Miracles which he did - These miracles are not particularly recorded. Jesus took occasion to work miracles, and to preach at that time, for a great multitude were present from all parts of Judea. It was a favorable opportunity for making known his doctrines and showing the evidence that he was the Christ, and he embraced it. We should always seek and embrace

opportunities of doing good, and we should not be "deterred," but rather "excited," by the multitude around us to make known our real sentiments on the subject of religion.

Verse 24

Did not commit himself - The word translated "commit" here is the same which in John 2:23 is translated "believed." It means to put "trust" or "confidence in." Jesus did not put "trust" or "reliance" in them. He did not leave himself in their hands. He acted cautiously and prudently. The proper time for him to die had not come, and he secured his own safety. The reason why he did not commit himself to them is "that he knew all men." He knew the "inconstancy" and "fickleness" of the multitude. He knew how easily they might be turned against him by the Jewish leaders, and how unsafe he would be if they should be moved to sedition and tumult.

Verse 25

Should testify of man - Should give him the character of any man.

He knew what was in man - This he did because he had made all John 1:3, and because he was God, John 1:1. There can be no higher evidence than this that he was omniscient, and was therefore divine. To search the heart is the prerogative of God alone Jeremiah 17:10; and as Jesus knew what was in "these disciples," and as it is expressly said that he knew what was in man - that is, in "all people" - so it follows that he must be equal with God. As he knows "all," he is acquainted with the false pretentions and professions of hypocrites. None can deceive him. He also knows the wants and desires of all his real friends. He hears their groans, he sees their sighs, he counts their tears, and in the day of need will come to their relief.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

A man of the Pharisees - A Pharisee. See the notes at Matthew 3:7.

Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews - One of the "Sanhedrin," or great council of the nation. He is twice mentioned after this as being friendly to our Saviour; in the first instance as advocating his cause, and defending him against the unjust suspicion of the Jews John 7:50, and in the second instance as one who came to aid in embalming his body, John 19:39. It will be recollected that the design of John in writing this gospel was to show that Jesus was the Messiah. To do this he here adduces the testimony of one of the rulers of the Jews, who early became convinced of it, and who retained the belief of it until the death of Jesus.

Verse 2

The same came to Jesus - The design of his coming seems to have been to inquire more fully of Jesus what was the doctrine which he came to teach. He seems to have been convinced that he was the Messiah, and desired to be further instructed in private respecting his doctrine, It was not usual for a man of rank, power, and riches to come to inquire of Jesus in this manner; yet we may learn that the most favorable opportunity for teaching such men the nature of personal religion is when they are alone. Scarcely any man, of any rank, will refuse to converse on this subject when addressed respectfully and tenderly in private. In the midst of their companions, or engaged in business, they may refuse to listen or may cavil. When alone, they will hear the voice of entreaty and persuasion, and be willing to converse on the great subjects of judgment and eternity. Thus Paul says Galatians 2:2, "privately to them which are of reputation," evincing his consummate prudence, and his profound knowledge of human nature.

By night - It is not mentioned why he came by night. It might have been that, being a member of the Sanhedrin, he was engaged all the day; or it may have been because the Lord Jesus was occupied all the day in teaching publicly and in working miracles, and that there was no opportunity for conversing with him as freely as he desired; or it may have been that he was afraid of the ridicule and contempt of those in power, and fearful that it might involve him in danger if publicly known; or it may have been that he was afraid that if it were publicly known that he was disposed to favor the

Lord Jesus, it might provoke more opposition against him and endanger his life. Since no bad motive is imputed to him, it is most in accordance with Christian charity to suppose that his motives were such as God would approve, especially as the Saviour did not reprove him. We should not be disposed to blame men where Jesus did not, and we should desire to find goodness in every man rather than be ever on the search for evil motives. See 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. We may learn here:

1.That our Saviour, though engaged during the day, did nor refuse to converse with an inquiring sinner at night. Ministers of the gospel at all times should welcome those who are asking the way to life.

2.That it is proper for men, even those of elevated rank, to inquire on the subject of religion. Nothing is so important as religion, and no temper of mind is more lovely than a disposition to ask the way to heaven. At all times men should seek the way of salvation, and especially in times of great religions excitement they should make inquiry. At Jerusalem, at the time referred to here, there was great solicitude. Many believed on Jesus. He performed miracles, and preached, and many were converted. There was what would now be called a revival of religion, having all the features of a work of grace. At such a season it was proper, as it is now, that not only the poor, but the rich and great, should inquire the path to life.

Rabbi - This was a title of respect conferred on distinguished Jewish teachers, somewhat in the way that the title "Doctor of Divinity" is now conferred. See the notes at John 1:38. Our Saviour forbade his disciples to wear that title (see the notes at Matthew 23:8), though it was proper for Him to do it, as being the great Teacher of mankind. It literally signifies great, and was given by Nicodemus, doubtless, because Jesus gave distinguished proofs that he came as a teacher from God.

We know - I know, and those with whom I am connected. Perhaps he was acquainted with some of the Pharisees who entertained the same opinion about Jesus that he did, and he came to be more fully confirmed in the belief.

Come from God - Sent by God. This implies his readiness to hear him, and his desire to be instructed. He acknowledges the divine mission of Jesus, and delicately asks him to instruct him in the truth of religion. When we read the words of Jesus in the Bible, it should be with a belief that he came from God, and was therefore qualified and authorized to teach us the way of life.

These miracles - The miracles which he performed in the Temple and at Jerusalem, John 2:23.

Except God be with him - Except God aid him, and except his instructions are approved by God. Miracles show that a prophet or religious teacher comes from God, because God would nor work a miracle in attestation of a falsehood or to give countenance to a false teacher. If God gives a man power to work a miracle, it is proof that he approves the teaching of that man, and the miracle is the proof or the credential that he came from God.

Verse 3

Verily, verily - An expression of strong affirmation, denoting the certainty and the importance of what he was about to say. Jesus proceeds to state one of the fundamental and indispensable doctrines of his religion. It may seem remarkable that he should introduce this subject in this manner; but it should be remembered that Nicodemus acknowledged that he was a teacher come from God; that he implied by that his readiness and desire to receive instruction; and that it is not wonderful, therefore, that Jesus should commence with one of the fundamental truths of his religion. It is no part of Christianity to conceal anything. Jesus declared to every man, high or low, rich or poor, the most humbling truths of the gospel. Nothing was kept back for fear of offending men of wealth or power; and for them, as well as the most poor and lowly, it was declared to be indispensable to experience, as the first thing in religion, a change of heart and of life.

Except a man - This is a universal form of expression designed to include all mankind. Of "each and every man" it is certain that unless he is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. It includes, therefore, men of every character and rank, and nation, moral and immoral, rich and poor, in office and out of office, old and young, bond and free, the slave and his master, Jew and Gentile. It is clear that our Saviour intended to convey to Nicodemus the idea, also, that "he" must be born again. It was not sufficient to be a Jew, or to acknowledge him to be a teacher sent by God that is, the Messiah; it was necessary, in addition to this, to experience in his own soul that great change called the "new birth" or regeneration.

Be born again - The word translated here "again" means also "from above," and is so rendered in the margin. It is evident, however, that Nicodemus understood, it not as referring to a birth "from above," for if he had he would not have asked the question in John 3:4. It is probable that in

the language which he used there was not the same ambiguity that there is in the Greek. The ancient versions all understood it as meaning "again," or the "second time." Our natural birth introduces us to light, is the commencement of life, throws us amid the works of God, and is the beginning of our existence; but it also introduces us to a world of sin. We early go astray. All men transgress. The imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil from the youth up. We are conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity, and there is none that doeth good, no, not one. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and by nature we are dead in trespasses and sins, Genesis 8:21; Psalm 14:2-3; Psalm 51:5; Romans 1:29-32; Romans 3:10-20; Romans 8:7.

All sin exposes men to misery here and hereafter. To escape from sin, to be happy in the world to come, it is necessary that man should be changed in his principles, his feelings, and his manner of life. This change, or the beginning of this new life, is called the "new birth," or "regeneration." It is so called because in many respects it has a striking analogy to the natural birth. It is the beginning of spiritual life. It introduces us to the light of the gospel. It is the moment when we really begin to live to any purpose. It is the moment when God reveals himself to us as our reconciled Father, and we are adopted into his family as his sons. And as every man is a sinner, it is necessary that each one should experience this change, or he cannot be happy or saved. This doctrine was not unknown to the Jews, and was particularly predicted as a doctrine that would be taught in the times of the Messiah. See Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4; Jeremiah 31:33; Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 36:25; Psalm 51:12. The change in the New Testament is elsewhere called the "new creation" 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15, and "life from the dead," or a resurrection, Ephesians 2:1; John 5:21, John 5:24.

He cannot see - To "see," here, is put evidently for enjoying - or he cannot be fitted for it and partake of it.

The kingdom of God - Either in this world or in that which is to come - that is, heaven. See the notes at Matthew 3:2. The meaning is, that the kingdom which Jesus was about to set up was so pure and holy that it was indispensable that every man should experience this change, or he could not partake of its blessings. This is solemnly declared by the Son of God by an affirmation equivalent to an oath, and there can be no possibility, therefore, of entering heaven without experiencing the change which the Saviour contemplated by the "new birth." And it becomes every man, as in the

presence of a holy God before whom he must soon appear, to ask himself whether he has experienced this change, and if he has not, to give no rest to his eyes until he has sought the mercy of God, and implored the aid of his Spirit that his heart may be renewed.

Verse 4

How can a man … - It may seem remarkable that Nicodemus understood the Saviour literally, when the expression "to be born again" was in common use among the Jews to denote a change from "Gentilism" to "Judaism" by becoming a proselyte by baptism. The word with them meant a change from the state of a pagan to that of a Jew. But they never used it as applicable to a Jew, because they supposed that by his birth every Jew was entitled to all the privileges of the people of God. When, therefore, our Saviour used it of a Jew, when he affirmed its necessity of every man, Nicodemus supposed that there was an absurdity in the doctrine, or something that surpassed his comprehension, and he therefore asked whether it was possible that Jesus could teach so absurd a doctrine - as he could conceive no other sense as applicable to a Jew - as that he should, when old, enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born. And we may learn from this:

1.that prejudice leads men to misunderstand the plainest doctrines of religion.

2.that things which are at first incomprehensible or apparently absurd, may, when explained, become clear. The doctrine of regeneration, so difficult to Nicodemus, is plain to a "child" that is born of the Spirit.

3.Those in high rank in life, and who are learned, are often most ignorant about the plainest matters of religion. It is often wonderful that they exhibit so little acquaintance with the most simple subjects pertaining to the soul, and so much absurdity in their views.

4.A doctrine is not to be rejected because the rich and the great do not believe or understand it. The doctrine of regeneration was not false because Nicodemus did not comprehend it.

Verse 5

Be born of water - By "water," here, is evidently signified "baptism." Thus the word is used in Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5. Baptism was practiced

by the Jews in receiving a Gentile as a proselyte. It was practiced by John among the Jews; and Jesus here says that it is an ordinance of his religion, and the sign and seal of the renewing influences of his Spirit. So he said Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." It is clear from these places, and from the example of the apostles Acts 2:38, Acts 2:41; Acts 8:12-13, Acts 8:36, Acts 8:38; Acts 9:18; Acts 10:47-48; Acts 16:15, Acts 16:33; Acts 18:8; Acts 22:16; Galatians 3:27, that they considered this ordinance as binding on all who professed to love the Lord Jesus. And though it cannot be said that none who are not baptized can be saved, yet Jesus meant, undoubtedly, to be understood as affirming that this was to be the regular and uniform way of entering into his church; that it was the appropriate mode of making a profession of religion; and that a man who neglected this, when the duty was made known to him, neglected a plain command of God. It is clear, also, that any other command of God might as well be neglected or violated as this, and that it is the duty of everyone not only to love the Saviour, but to make an acknowledgment of that love by being baptized, and by devoting himself thus to his service.

But, lest Nicodemus should suppose that this was all that was meant, he added that it was necessary that he should "be born of the Spirit" also. This was predicted of the Saviour, that he should "baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire," Matthew 3:11. By this is clearly intended that the heart must be changed by the agency of the Holy Spirit; that the love of sin must be abandoned; that man must repent of crime and turn to God; that he must renounce all his evil propensities, and give himself to a life of prayer and holiness, of meekness, purity, and benevolence. This great change is in the Scripture ascribed uniformly to the Holy Spirit, Titus 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; Romans 5:5; 1 Peter 1:22.

Cannot enter into - This is the way, the appropriate way, of entering into the kingdom of the Messiah here and hereafter. He cannot enter into the true church here, or into heaven in the world to come, except in connection with a change of heart, and by the proper expression of that change in the ordinances appointed by the Saviour.

Verse 6

That which is born of the flesh - To show the necessity of this change, the Saviour directs the attention of Nicodemus to the natural condition of man. By "that which is born of the flesh" he evidently intends man as he is by nature, in the circumstances of his natural birth. Perhaps, also, he alludes

to the question asked by Nicodemus, whether a man could be born when he was old? Jesus tells him that if this could be, it would not answer any valuable purpose; he would still have the same propensities and passions. Another change was therefore indispensable.

Is flesh - Partakes of the nature of the parent. Compare Genesis 5:3. As the parents are corrupt and sinful, so will be their descendants. See Job 14:4. And as the parents are wholly corrupt by nature, so their children will be the same. The word "flesh" here is used as meaning "corrupt, defiled, sinful." The "flesh" in the Scriptures is often used to denote the sinful propensities and passions of our nature, as those propensities are supposed to have their seat in the animal nature. "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness," etc., Galatians 5:19-20. See also Ephesians 2:3; 1 Peter 3:21; 1 Peter 2:18; 1 John 2:16; Romans 8:5.

Is born of the Spirit - Of the Spirit of God, or by the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Is spirit - Is spiritual, "like" the spirit, that is, holy, pure. Here we learn:

1.that all men are by nature sinful.

2.that none are renewed but by the Spirit of God. If man did the work himself, it would he still carnal and impure.

3.that the effect of the new birth is to make men holy.

4.and, that no man can have evidence that he is born again who is not holy, and just in proportion as he becomes pure in his life will be the evidence that he is born of the Spirit.

Verse 7

Marvel not - Wonder not. It is possible that Nicodemus in some way still expressed a doubt of the doctrine, and Jesus took occasion in a very striking manner to illustrate it.

Verse 8

The wind bloweth … - Nicodemus had objected to the doctrine because he did not understand how it could be. Jesus shows him that he ought not to reject it on that account, for he constantly believed things quite as difficult. It might appear incomprehensible, but it was to be judged of by its effects. As in this case of the wind, the effects were seen, the sound was heard,

important changes were produced by it, trees and clouds were moved, yet the wind is not seen, nor do we know whence it comes, nor by what laws it is governed; so it is with the operations of the Spirit. We see the changes produced. Men just now sinful become holy; the thoughtless become serious; the licentious become pure; the vicious, moral; the moral, religious; the prayerless, prayerful; the rebellious and obstinate, meek, and mild, and gentle. When we see such changes, we ought no more to doubt that they are produced by some cause - by some mighty agent, than when we see the trees moved, or the waters of the ocean piled on heaps, or feet the cooling effects of a summer‘s breeze. In those cases we attribute it to the “wind,” though we see it not, and though we do not understand its operations. We may learn, hence:

1.that the proper evidence of conversion is the effect on the life.

2.that we are not too curiously to search for the cause or manner of the change.

3.that God has power over the most hardened sinner to change him, as he has power over the loftiest oak, to bring it down by a sweeping blast.

4.that there may be great variety in the modes of the operation of the Spirit. As the “wind” sometimes sweeps with a tempest, and prostrates all before it, and sometimes breathes upon us in a mild evening zephyr, so it is with the operations of the Spirit. The sinner sometimes trembles and is prostrate before the truth, and sometimes is sweetly and gently drawn to the cross of Jesus.

Where it listeth - Where it “wills” or “pleases.”

So is every one … - Everyone that is born of the Spirit is, in some respects, like the effects of the wind. You see it not, you cannot discern its laws, but you see its effects,” and you know therefore that it does exist and operate. Nicodemus‘ objection was, that he could not “see” this change, or perceive “how” it could be. Jesus tells him that he should not reject a doctrine merely because he could not understand it. Neither could the “wind” be seen, but its effects were well known, and no one doubted the existence or the power of the agent. Compare Ecclesiastes 11:5.

Verse 9

How can these things be? - Nicodemus was still unwilling to admit the doctrine unless he understood it; and we have here an instance of a man of

rank stumbling at one of the plainest doctrines of religion, and unwilling to admit a truth because he could not understand "how" it could be, when he daily admitted the truth of facts in other things which he could as little comprehend. And we may learn:

1.that people will often admit facts on other subjects, and be greatly perplexed by similar facts in religion.

2.that no small part of people's difficulties are because they cannot understand how or why a thing is.

3.that people of rank and learning are as likely to be perplexed by these things as those in the obscurest and humblest walks of life.

4.that this is one reason why such men, particularly, so often reject the truths of the gospel.

5.that this is a very unwise treatment of truth, and a way which they do not apply to other things.

If the wind cools and refreshes me in summer if it prostrates the oak or lashes the sea into foam - if it destroys my house or my grain, it matters little how it does this; and so of the Spirit. If it renews my heart, humbles my pride, subdues my sin, and comforts my soul, it is a matter of little importance how it does all this. Sufficient for me is it to know that it is done, and to taste the blessings which flow from the renewing. and sanctifying grace of God.

Verse 10

A master of Israel - A "teacher" of Israel; the same word that in the second verse is translated "teacher." As such a teacher he ought to have understood this doctrine. It was not new," but was clearly taught in the Old Testament. See particularly Psalm 51:10, Psalm 51:16-17; Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 36:26. It may seem surprising that a man whose business it was to teach the people should be a stranger to so plain and important a doctrine; but when worldly-minded men are placed in offices of religion when they seek those offices for the sake of ease or reputation, it is no wonder that they are strangers to the plain truths of the Bible; and there have been many, and there are still, who are in the ministry itself, to whom the plainest doctrines of the gospel are obscure. No man can understand the Bible fully unless he is a humble Christian, and the easiest way to comprehend the

truths of religion is to give the heart to God and live to his glory. A child thus may have more real knowledge of the way of salvation than many who are pretended masters and teachers of Israel, John 7:17; Matthew 11:25; Psalm 8:2, compared with Matthew 21:16.

Of Israel - Of the Jews; of the Jewish nation.

Verse 11

We speak - Jesus here speaks in the plural number, including himself and those engaged with him in preaching the gospel. Nicodemus had said John 3:2, "we know that thou art," etc., including himself and those with whom he acted. Jesus in reply said, we, who are engaged in spreading the new doctrines about which you have come to inquire, speak what we know. We do not deliver doctrines which we do not practically understand. This is a positive affirmation of Jesus, which he had a right to make about his new doctrine. he knew its truth, and those who came into his kingdom knew it also. We learn here:

1.That the Pharisees taught doctrines which they did not practically understand. They taught much truth Matthew 23:2, but they were deplorably ignorant of the plainest matters in their practical application.

2.Every minister of the gospel ought to be able to appeal to his own experience, and to say that he knows the truth which he is communicating to others.

3.Every Sunday school teacher should be able to say, "I Know what I am communicating; I have experienced what is meant by the new birth, and the love of God, and the religion which I am teaching."

Testify - Bear witness to.

That we have seen - Jesus had seen by his omniscient eye all the operations of the Spirit on the hearts of men. His ministers have seen its effects as we see the effects of the wind, and, having seen men changed from sin to holiness, they are qualified to bear witness to the truth and reality of the change. Every successful minister of the gospel thus becomes a witness of the saving power of the gospel.

Ye receive not - Ye Pharisees. Though we give evidence of the truth of the new religion; though miracles are performed, and proof is given that this doctrine came from heaven, yet you reject it.

Our witness - Our testimony. The evidence which is furnished by miracles and by the saving power of the gospel. Men reject revelation

though it is attested by the strongest evidence, and though it is constantly producing the most desirable changes in the hearts and lives of men.

Verse 12

If I have told you earthly things - Things which occur on earth. Not sensual or worldly things, for Jesus had said nothing of these; but he had told him of operations of the Spirit which had occurred "on earth," whose effects were visible, and which "might" be, therefore, believed. These were the plainest and most obvious of the doctrines of religion.

How shall ye believe - How will you believe. Is there any probability that you will understand them?

Heavenly things - Things pertaining to the government of God and his doings in the heavens; things which are removed from human view, and which cannot be subjected to human sight; the more profound and inscrutable things pertaining to the redemption of men. Hence, learn:

1.The height and depth of the doctrines of religion. There is much that we cannot yet understand,

2.The feebleness of our understandings and the corruptions of our hearts are the real causes why doctrines of religion are so little understood by us.

3.There is before us a vast eternity, and there are profound wonders of God's government, to be the study of the righteous, and to be seen and admired by them forever and ever.

Verse 13

And no man hath ascended into heavens - No man, therefore, is qualified to speak of heavenly things, John 3:12. To speak of those things requires intimate acquaintance with them - demands that we have seen them; and as no one has ascended into heaven and returned, so no one is qualified to speak of them but He who came down from heaven. This does not mean that no one had Gone to heaven or had been saved, for Enoch and Elijah had been borne there (Genesis 5:24; compare Hebrews 11:5; 2 Kings 2:11); and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and others were there: but it means that no one had ascended and "returned," so as to be qualified to speak of the things there.

But he that came down … - The Lord Jesus. He is represented as coming down, because, being equal with God, he took upon himself our

nature, John 1:14; Philemon 2:6-7. He is represented as "sent" by the Father, John 3:17, John 3:34; Galatians 4:4; 1 John 4:9-10.

The Son of man - Called thus from his being "a man;" from his interest in man; and as expressive of his regard for man. It is a favorite title which the Lord Jesus gives to himself.

Which is in Heaven - This is a very remarkable expression. Jesus, the Son of man, was then bodily on earth conversing with Nicodemus; yet he declares that he is "at the same time" in heaven. This can be understood only as referring to the fact that he had two natures that his "divine nature" was in heaven, and his "human nature" on earth. Our Saviour is frequently spoken of in this manner. Compare John 6:62; John 17:5; 2 Corinthians 8:9. Since Jesus was "in" heaven - as his proper abode was there - he was fitted to speak of heavenly things, and to declare the will of God to man And we may learn:

1.that the truth about the deep things of God is not to be learned from "men." No one has ascended to heaven and returned to tell us what is there; and no infidel, no mere man, no prophet, is qualified of himself to speak of them.

2.that all the light which we are to expect on those subjects is to be sought in the Scriptures. It is only Jesus and his inspired apostles and evangelists that can speak of those things.

3.It is not wonderful that some things in the Scriptures are mysterious. They are about things which we have not seen, and we must receive them on the "testimony" of one who has seen them.

4.The Lord Jesus is divine. He was in heaven while on earth. He had, therefore, a nature far above the human, and is equal with the Father, John 1:1.

Verse 14

And as Moses - Jesus proceeds in this and the following verses to state the reason why he came into the world and, in order to this, he illustrates His design, and the efficacy of his coming, by a reference to the case of the brass serpent, recorded in Numbers 21:8-9. The people were bitten by flying fiery serpents. There was no cure for the bite. Moses was directed to make an image of the serpent, and place it in sight of the people, that they

might look on it and be healed. There is no evidence that this was intended to be a type of the Messiah, but it is used by Jesus as strikingly illustrating his work. Men are sinners. There is no cure by human means for the maladies of the soul; and as the people who were bitten might look on the image of the serpent and be healed, so may sinners look to the Saviour and be cured of the moral maladies of our nature.

Lifted up - Erected on a pole. Placed on high, So that it might be seen by the people.

The serpent - The image of a serpent made of brass.

In the wilderness - Near the land of Edom. In the desert and desolate country to the south of Mount Hor, Numbers 21:4.

Even so - In a similar manner and with a similar design. He here refers, doubtless, to his own death. Compare John 12:32; John 8:28. The points of resemblance between his being lifted up and that of the brass serpent seem to be these:

1.In each case those who are to be benefited can he aided in no other way. The bite of the serpent was deadly, and could be healed only by looking on the brass serpent; and sin is deadly in its nature, and can be removed only by looking on the cross.

2.The mode of their being lifted up. The brass serpent was in the sight of the people. So Jesus was exalted from the earth raised on a tree or cross.

3.The design was similar. The one was to save the life, the other the soul; the one to save from temporal, the other from eternal death.

4.The manner of the cure was similar. The people of Israel were to look on the serpent and be healed, and so sinners are to look on the Lord Jesus that they may be saved.

Must - It is proper; necessary; indispensable, if men are saved. Compare Luke 24:26; Luke 22:42.

The Son of man - The Messiah.

Verse 15

That whosoever - This shows the fulness and freeness of the gospel. All may come and be saved.

d **Believeth in him -** Whosoever puts confidence in him as able and willing to save. All who feel that they are sinners, that they have no

righteousness of their own, and are willing to look to him as their only Saviour.

Should not perish - They are in danger, by nature, of perishing - that is, of sinking down to the pains of hell; of being "punished with everlasting destruction" from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, 2 Thessalonians 1:9. All who believe on Jesus shall be saved from this condemnation and be raised up to eternal life. And from this we learn:

1.that there is salvation in no other.

2.that salvation is here full and free for all who will come.

3.that it is easy. What was more easy for a poor, wounded, dying Israelite, bitten by a poisonous serpent, than to look up to a brass serpent? So with the poor, lost, dying sinner. And what more foolish than for such a wounded, dying man to refuse to look on a remedy so easy and effectual? So nothing is more foolish man for a lost and dying sinner to "refuse" to look on God's only Son, exalted on a cross to die for the sins of men, and able to save to the uttermost "all" who come to God by him.

Verse 16

For God so loved - This does not mean that God approved the conduct of men, but that he had benevolent feelings toward them, or was "earnestly desirous" of their happiness. God hates wickedness, but he still desires the Happiness of those who are sinful. "He hates the sin, but loves the sinner." A parent may love his child and desire his welfare, and yet be strongly opposed to the conduct of that child. When we approve the conduct of another, this is the love of complacency; when we desire simply their happiness, this is the love of benevolence.

The world - All mankind. It does not mean any particular part of the world, but man as man - the race that had rebelled and that deserved to die. See John 6:33; John 17:21. His love for the world, or for all mankind, in giving his Son, was shown by these circumstances:

1.All the world was in ruin, and exposed to the wrath of God.

2.All people were in a hopeless condition.

3.God gave his Son. Man had no claim on him; it was a gift - an undeserved gift.

4.He gave him up to extreme sufferings, even the bitter pains of death on the cross.

5.It was for all the world. He tasted "death for every man," Hebrews 2:9. He "died for all," 2 Corinthians 5:15. "He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world," 1 John 2:2.

That he gave - It was a free and unmerited gift. Man had no claim: and when there was no eye to pity or arm to save, it pleased God to give his Son into the hands of men to die in their stead, Galatians 1:4; Romans 8:32; Luke 22:19. It was the mere movement of love; the expression of eternal compassion, and of a desire, that sinners should not perish forever.

His only-begotten Son - See the notes at John 1:14. This is the highest expression of love of which we can conceive. A parent who should give up his only son to die for others who are guilty if this could or might be done - would show higher love than could be manifested in any other way. So it shows the depth of the love of God, that he was willing. to give his only Son into the hands of sinful men that he might be slain, and thus redeem them from eternal sorrow.

Verse 17

To condemn the world - Not to judge, or pronounce sentence on mankind. God might justly have sent him for this. Man deserved condemnation, and it would have been right to have pronounced it; but God was willing that there should be an offer of pardon, and the sentence of condemnation was delayed. But, although Jesus did not come then to condemn mankind, yet the time is coming when he will return to judge the living and the dead, Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:31-46.

Verse 18

He that believeth - He that has confidence in him; that relies on him; that trusts to his merits and promises for salvation. To believe on him is to feel and act according to truth that is, to go as lost sinners, and act toward him as a Saviour from sins; relying on him, and looking to him "only" for salvation. See the notes at Mark 16:16.

Is not condemned - God pardons sin, and delivers us from deserved punishment, because we believe on him. Jesus died in our stead; he suffered for us, and by his sufferings our sins are expiated, and it is consistent for God to forgive. When a stoner, therefore, believes on Jesus, he trusts in him as having died in his place, and God having accepted the offering which

Christ made in our stead, as being an equivalent for our sufferings in hell, there is now no further condemnation, Romans 8:1.

He that believeth not - All who do not believe, whether the gospel has come to them or not. All people by nature.

Is condemned already - By conscience, by law, and in the judgment of God. God disapproves of their character, and this feeling of disapprobation, and the expression of it, is the condemnation. There is no condemnation so terrible as this - that God disapproves our conduct, and that he will express his disapprobation. He will judge according to truth, and woe to that man whose conduct God cannot approve.

Because - This word does not imply that the ground or reason of their condemnation is that they have not believed, or that they are condemned because they do not believe on him, for there are millions of sinners who have never heard of him; but the meaning is this: There is but one way by which men can be freed from condemnation. All people without the gospel are condemned. They who do not believe are still under this condemnation, not having embraced the only way by which they can be delivered from it. The verse may be thus paraphrased: "All people are by nature condemned. There is but one way of being delivered from this state by believing on the Son of God. They who do not believe or remain in that state are still condemned, for they have not embraced the only way in which they can be freed from it. Nevertheless, those to whom the gospel comes greatly heighten their guilt and condemnation by rejecting the offers of mercy, and trampling under foot the blood of the Son of God, Luke 12:47; Matthew 11:23; Hebrews 10:29; Proverbs 1:24-30. And there are thousands going to eternity under this "double" condemnation:

1.for positive, open sin; and,

2.for rejecting God's mercy, and despising the gospel of his Son. This it is which will make the doom of sinners in Christian lands so terrible.

Verse 19

This is the condemnation - This is the cause of condemnation; or this is the reason why men are punished.

That light is come - Light often denotes instruction, teaching, doctrine, as that by which we see clearly the path of duty. all the instruction that God gives us by conscience, reason, or revelation may thus be called light; but this word is used especially to denote the Messiah or the Christ, who is

often spoken of as "the light." See Isaiah 60:1; Isaiah 9:2. Compare Matthew 4:16; also the notes at John 1:4. It was doubtless this light to which Jesus had particular reference here.

Men loved darkness - Darkness is the emblem of ignorance, iniquity, error, superstition - whatever is opposite to truth and piety. Men are said to love darkness more than they do light when they are better pleased with error than truth, with sin than holiness, with Belial than Christ.

Because their deeds are evil - Men who commit crime commonly choose to do it in the night, so as to escape detection. So men who are wicked prefer false doctrine and error to the truth. Thus the Pharisees cloaked their crimes under the errors of their system; and, amid their false doctrines and superstitions, they attempted to convince others that they had great zeal for God.

Deeds - Works; actions.

Verse 20

That doeth evil - Every wicked person.

Hateth the light - This is true of all wicked men. They choose to practice their deeds of wickedness in darkness. They are afraid of the light, because they could be easily detected. Hence, most crimes are committed in the night. So with the sinner against God. He hates the gospel, for it condemns his conduct, and his conscience would trouble him if it were enlightened.

His deeds should be reproved - To "reprove" here means not only to "detect" or make manifest, but also includes the idea of "condemnation" when his deeds are detected. The gospel would make his wickedness manifest, and his conscience would condemn him. We learn from this verse:

1.that one design of the gospel is "to reprove" men. It convicts them of sin in order that it may afford consolation.

2.that men by nature "hate" the gospel. No man who is a sinner loves it; and no man by nature is disposed to come to it, any more than an adulterer or thief is disposed to come to the daylight, and do his deeds of wickedness there.

3.The reason why the gospel, is hated is that men are sinners. "Christ is hated because sin is loved."

4.The sinner must be convicted or convinced of sin. If it be not in this world, it will be in the next. There is no escape for him; and the only way to avoid condemnation in the world to come is to come humbly and acknowledge sin here, and seek for pardon.

Verse 21

Are that doeth truth - He who does right, or he that obeys the truth. Truth here is opposed to error and to evil. The sinner acts from falsehood and error. The good man acts according to truth. The sinner believes a lie - that God will not punish, or that there is no God, or that there is no eternity and no hell. The Christian believes all these, and acts as if they were true. This is the difference between a Christian and a sinner.

Cometh to the light - Loves the truth, and seeks it more and more. By prayer and searching the Scriptures he endeavors to ascertain the truth, and yield his mind to it.

May be made manifest - May be made clear or plain; or that it may be made plain that his deeds are performed in God. He searches for truth and light that he may have evidence that his actions are right.

Wrought in God - That they are performed according to the will of God, or perhaps by the assistance of God, and are such as God will approve. The actions of good people are performed by the influence and aid of God, Philemon 2:12. Of course, if they are performed by his aid, they are such as he will approve. Here is presented the character of a good man and a sincere Christian. We learn respecting that character:

1.He does truth. He loves it, seeks it, follows it.

2.He comes to the light. He does not attempt to deceive himself or others.

3.He is willing to know himself, and aims to do it. He desires to know the true state of his heart before God.

4.A special object of his efforts is that his deeds may be "wrought in God." He desires to be a good man; to receive continual aid from God, and to perform such actions as he will approve.

This is the close of our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus - a discourse condensing the gospel, giving the most striking exhibition and illustration of truth, and representing especially the fundamental doctrine of

regeneration and the evidence of the change. It is clear that the Saviour regarded this as lying at the foundation of religion. Without it we cannot possibly be saved. And now it becomes every reader, as in the presence of God, and in view of the judgment-seat of Christ, solemnly to ask himself whether he has experienced this change? whether he knows by experience what it is to be born of that Spirit? If he does he will be saved. If not, he is in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, and should give no sleep to his eyes until he has made his peace with God.

Verse 22

Land of Judea - The region round about Jerusalem.

And baptized - Jesus did not Himself administer the ordinance of baptism, but his disciples did it by his direction and authority, John 4:2.

Verse 23

In Enon - The word "Enon," or "Aenon," means "a fountain," and was doubtless given to this place because of the fountains there. On the situation of the place nothing certain has been determined. Eusebius places it eight Roman miles south of Scythopolis or Bethshan, and 53 miles northeast of Jerusalem.

Near to Salim - It would seem from this that Salim was better known then than Enon, but nothing can be determined now respecting its site. These places are believed to have been on the west side of the Jordan.

Because there was much water there - John's preaching attracted great multitudes. It appears that they remained with him probably many days. In many parts of that country, particularly in the hilly region near where John preached, it was difficult to find water to accommodate the necessities of the people, and perhaps, also, of the camels with which those from a distance would come. To meet their necessities, as well as for the purpose of baptizing, he selected a spot that was well watered, probably, with springs and rivulets. Whether the ordinance of baptism was performed by immersion or in any other mode, the selection of a place well watered was proper and necessary. The mention of the fact that there was much water there, and that John selected that as a convenient place to perform his office as a baptizer, proves nothing in regard to the mode in which the ordinance was administered, since he would naturally select such a place, whatever was the mode.

Where numbers of people came together to remain any time, it is necessary to select such a place, whatever their employment. An

encampment of soldiers is made on the same principles, and in every camp-meeting that I have ever seen, a place is selected where there is a good supply of water, though not one person should be immersed during the whole services. As all the facts in the case are fully met by the supposition that John might have baptized in some other way besides immersion, and as it is easy to conceive another reason that is sufficient to account for the fact that such a place was selected, this passage certainly should not be adduced to prove that he performed baptism only in that manner.

Verse 24

For John was not yet cast into prison - See Luke 3:20. The mention of this shows that John was not imprisoned until some time after our Lord entered on his ministry. The design of John was to call men to repentance, and to prepare them for the Messiah, and this he continued to do after our Saviour commenced his work. It shows that a minister of religion should be industrious to the day of his death. John still toiled in his work not the "less" because the Messiah had come. So ministers should not labor less when Christ appears by his Spirit, and takes the work into his own hands, and turns many to himself.

Verse 25

A question - Rather a controversy a dispute.

John's disciples - Those who had been baptized by him, and who attached great efficacy and importance to the teaching of their master. Compare the notes at Acts 19:1-5.

And the Jews - Many manuscripts, some of the fathers, and the ancient Syriac version read this in the singular number "with A Jew," one who, it is commonly supposed, had been baptized by the disciples of Jesus.

About purifying - What the precise subject of this dispute was we do not know. From what follows, it would seem probable that it was about the comparative value and efficacy of the baptism performed by John and by the disciples of Jesus. The word "purifying" may be applied to baptism, as it was an emblem of repentance and purity, and was thus used by the Jews, by John, and by Jesus. About this subject it seems that a dispute arose, and was carried to such a length that complaint was made to John. From this we may learn:

1. that even in the time of Jesus, when the gospel began to be preached, there was witnessed what has been ever since - unhappy disputings on the

subject of religion. Even young converts may, By overheated zeal and ignorance, fall into angry discussion.

2. that such discussions are commonly about some unimportant matter of religion - something which they may not yet be qualified to understand, and which does not materially affect them if they could.

3. that such disputes are often connected with a spirit of proselytism - with boasting of the superior excellence of the sect with which "we" are connected, or in connection with whom we have been converted, and often with a desire to persuade others to join with us.

4. that such a spirit is eminently improper on such occasions. Love should characterize the feelings of young converts; a disposition to inquire and not to dispute; a willingness that all should follow the dictates of their own consciences, and not a desire to proselyte them to our way of thinking or to our church. It may be added that there is scarcely anything which so certainly and effectually arrests a revival of religion as such a disposition to dispute, and to make proselytes to particular modes of faith, and of administering the ordinances of the gospel.

Verse 26

Came unto John - Came to him with their complaint; envious and jealous at the success of Jesus, and evidently irritated from the discussion, as if their master was about to lose his popularity.

Rabbi - Master. See the notes at Matthew 23:7. Acknowledging him as their master and teacher.

That was with thee - Who was baptized by thee.

Thou barest witness - See John 1:29-35.

All men come to him - This was the source of their difficulty. It was that Jesus was gaining popularity; that the people flocked to him; that they feared that John would be forsaken, and his followers be diminished in numbers and influence. Thus many love their sect more than they do Christ, and would be more rejoiced that a man became a Presbyterian, a Methodist, a Baptist, than that he became a sincere and humble Christian. This is not the spirit of the gospel. True piety teaches us to rejoice that sinners turn to Christ and become holy, whether they follow us or not. See Mark 9:38-39.

Let Jesus be exalted, and let men turn to Him, is the language of religion, whatever denomination they may feel it their duty to follow.

Verse 27

John answered … - John did not enter into their feelings or sympathize with their love of party. He came to honor Jesus, not to build up a sect, He rejoiced at the success of the Messiah, and began to teach them to rejoice in it also.

A man can receive nothing … - All success is from heaven. All my success was from God. All the success of Jesus is from God. As success comes from the same source, we ought not to be envious. It is designed to answer the same end, and, by whomsoever accomplished, the hand of God is in it, and we should rejoice. If Jesus and his disciples are successful, if all men flee to him, it is proof that God favors him, and you should rejoice.

Verse 28

Bear me witness - You remember that at first I told you I was not the Messiah. As he had been "witness" to Jesus - as he came for no other end but to point him out to the Jews, they ought not to suppose that he was his superior. It was but reasonable to expect that Christ himself would be more successful than his forerunner. "I came, not to form a separate party, a special sect, but to prepare the way that he might be more successful, and that the people might be ready for his coming, and that he might have the success which he has actually met with. You should rejoice, therefore, at that success, and not envy it, for ‹his success‘ is the best proof of the greatness of my word, and of its ‹success also.‘"

Verse 29

He that hath the bride … - This is an illustration drawn from marriage. The bride belongs to her husband. So the church, the bride of the Messiah, belongs to him. It is to be expected, therefore, and desireD, that the people should flock to him.

But the friend of the bridegroom - He whose office it is to attend him on the marriage occasion. This was commonly the nearest friend, and was a high honor.

Rejoiceth greatly - Esteems himself highly honored by the proof of friendship.

The bridegroom‘s voice - His commands, requests, or conversation.

This my joy … - "I sustain to the Messiah the relation which a groomsman does to the groom. The chief honor and the chief joy is not

mine, but his. It is to be expected, therefore, that the people will come to him, and that his success will be great. The relation of Christ to the church is often compared with the marriage relation, denoting the tenderness of the union, and his great love for his people. Compare Isaiah 62:5; Revelation 21:2, Revelation 21:9; Revelation 22:17; Ephesians 5:26-27, Ephesians 5:32; 2 Corinthians 11:2.

Verse 30

He must increase - his authority and influence among the people must grow. his doctrine shall continue to spread until it extends through all the earth.

I must decrease - "The purpose of my ministry is to point men to him. When that is done my work is done. I came not to form a party of my own, nor to set up a religion of my own; and my teaching must cease when he is fully established, as the light of the morning star fades away and is lost in the beams of the rising sun. This evinced John's humility and willingness to be esteemed as nothing if he could honor Christ. It shows us, also, that it is sufficient honor for man if he may be permitted to point sinners to the Lord Jesus Christ. No work is so honorable and joyful as the ministry of the gospel; none are so highly honored as those who are permitted to stand near the Son of God, lead perishing men to his cross. Compare Daniel 12:3.

Verse 31

He that cometh from above - The Messiah, represented as coming down from heaven. See John 3:13; John 6:33; John 8:23. It has been doubted whether the remainder of this chapter contains the words of "John the Baptist" or of "the evangelist." The former is the more probable opinion, but it is difficult to decide it, and it is of very little consequence.

Is above all - In nature, rank, and authority. "Is superior to all prophets" Hebrews 1:1-2; "to all angels" Hebrews 1:4-14, "and is over all the universe as its sovereign Lord," Romans 9:5; Ephesians 1:21-22; Colossians 1:15-19; 1 Corinthians 15:25.

He that is of the earth - He who has no higher nature than the human nature. The prophets, apostles, and John were men like others, born in the same way, and sinking, like others, to the dust. See Acts 14:15. Jesus had a nature superior to man, and "ought," therefore, to be exalted above all.

Is earthly - Is human. Is inferior to him who comes from heaven. Partakes of his origin, which is inferior and corrupt.

Speaketh of the earth - His teaching is inferior to that of him who comes from heaven. It is comparatively obscure and imperfect, not full and clear, like the teaching of him who is from above. This was the case with all the prophets; and even with John the Baptist, as compared with the teaching of Christ.

Verse 32

And what he hath seen … - See John 3:11.

No man receiveth his testimony - The words "no man" are here to be understood in the sense of "few." Though his doctrine is pure, plain, sublime, yet "few," comparatively, received it in faith. Though multitudes came to him, drawn by various motives John 6:26, yet "few" became his "real" disciples, Matthew 26:56; Matthew 7:22.

His testimony - His doctrine. The truth to which he bears "witness" as having "seen" and "known" it, John 3:11. Often many persons "appear" for a time to become the followers of Christ, who in the end are seen to have known nothing of religion, Matthew 13:6; Luke 8:13.

Verse 33

He that hath received his testimony - Hath received and fully believed his doctrine. Hath yielded his heart to its influence.

Hath set to his seal - To "seal" an instrument is to make it sure; to acknowledge it as ours; to pledge our varacity that it is true and binding, as when a man seals a bond, a deed, or a will. Believing a doctrine, therefore, in the heart, is expressed by "sealing it," or by believing it we express our firm conviction that it is true, and that God who has spoken it is true. We vouch for the veracity of God, and assume as our own the proposition that it is the truth of God.

God is true - Is faithful; is the author of the system of doctrines, and will fulfill all that he has promised. We learn here:

1.that to be a true believer is something more than to hold a mere speculative belief of the truth.

2.that to be a believer is to "pledge ourselves" for the truth, to seal it as our own, to adopt it, to choose it, and solemnly assent to it, as a man does in regard to an instrument of writing that is to convey his property, or that is to dispose of it when he dies.

3.Every Christian is a witness for God, and it is his business to show by his life that he believes that God is true to his threatenings and to his

promises. See the notes at Isaiah 43:10.

4.It is a solemn act to become a Christian. It is a surrender of all to God, or giving away body, soul, and spirit to him, with a belief that he is true, and alone is able to save.

5.The man that does not do this - that is not willing to pledge his belief that God is true, sets to his seal that God is a liar and unworthy of confidence, 1 John 5:10.

Verse 34

Whom God hath sent - The Messiah.

Speaketh the words of God - The truth, or commands of God.

For God giveth not the Spirit - The Spirit of God. Though Jesus was God as well as man, yet, as Mediator, God anointed him, or endowed him with the influences of his Spirit, so as to be completely qualified for his great work.

By measure - Not in a small degree, but fully, completely. The prophets were inspired on particular occasions to deliver special messages. The Messiah was continually filled with the Spirit of God. "The Spirit dwelt in him, not as a vessel, but as in a fountain, as in a bottomless ocean (Henry).

Verse 35

Loveth the Son - Loves him eminently, above all the prophets and all the other messengers of God.

Hath given all things into his hand - See the notes at Matthew 28:18.

Verse 36

Hath everlasting life - Has or is in possession of that which is a recovery from spiritual death, and which will result in eternal life in heaven. Piety here is the same that it will be there, except that it will be expanded, matured, purified, made more glorious. It is here life begun the first breathings and pantings of the soul for immortality; yet it is life, though at first feeble and faint, which is eternal in its nature, and which shall be matured in the full and perfect bliss of heaven. The Christian here has a foretaste of the world of glory, and enjoys the same kind of felicity, though not the same degree, that he will there.

Shall not see life - Shall neither enjoy true life or happiness here nor in the world to come. Shall never enter heaven.

The wrath of God - The anger of God for sin. His opposition to sin, and its terrible effects in this world and the next.

Abideth on him - This implies that he is "now" under the wrath of God, or under condemnation. It implies, also, that it will continue to remain on him. It will "abide" or "dwell" there as its appropriate habitation. As there is no way of escaping the wrath of God but by the Lord Jesus Christ, so those who will not believe must go to eternity "as they are," and bear alone and unpitied all that God may choose to inflict as the expression of "his" sense of sin. Such is the miserable condition of the sinner! Yet thousands choose to remain in this state, and to encounter alone all that is terrible in the wrath of Almighty God, rather than come to Jesus, who has borne their sins in his own body on the tree, and who is willing to bless them with the peace, and purity, and joy of immortal life.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

The Lord knew - When Jesus knew. how he knew this we are not informed; whether by that power of omniscience by which he knew all things, or whether some person had informed him of it.

How the Pharisees had heard - The Pharisees, here, seem to denote either the members of the Sanhedrin or those who were in authority. They claimed the authority to regulate the rites and ceremonies of religion, and hence they supposed they had a right to inquire into the conduct of both John and our Lord. They had on a former occasion sent to inquire of John to know by what authority he had introduced such a rite into the religion of the Jewish people. See the notes at John 1:25.

More disciples than John - Though many of the Pharisees came to his baptism John 1:25. The reasons of this were, probably, the severity and justness of his reproofs Matthew 3:7, and the fact that by drawing many after him he weakened their authority and influence. As they were displeased with John, so they were with Jesus, who was doing the same thing on a larger scale - not only making disciples, but baptizing also without their authority, and drawing away the people after him.

Verse 2

Though Jesus himself baptized not - The reason why Jesus did not baptize was probably because, if He had baptized, it might have made unhappy divisions among his followers: those might have considered themselves most worthy or honored who had been baptized by Him. Compare 1 Corinthians 1:17.

Verse 3

He left Judea - The envy and malice of the Pharisees he might have known were growing so rapidly as to endanger his life. As his time to die had not yet come, he retired to Galilee, a country farther from Jerusalem, and much less under their control than Judea. See Mark 2:22; Luke 3:1. Though he feared not death and did not shrink from suffering, yet he did not needlessly throw himself into danger or provoke opposition. He could do as much good in Galilee, probably, as in Judea, and he therefore withdrew himself from immediate danger.

Verse 4

And he must needs go through Samaria - Samaria was between Judea and Galilee. The direct and usual way was to pass through Samaria. Sometimes, however, the Jews took a circuitous route on the east side of the Jordan. See the notes at Matthew 2:22.

Verse 5

Sychar - This city stood about eight miles southeast of the city called Samaria, between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. It was one of the oldest cities of Palestine, and was formerly known by the name of "Shechem," or Sichem, Genesis 33:18; Genesis 12:6. The city was in the tribe of Ephraim, Joshua 21:21. It was at this place that Joshua assembled the people before his death, and here they renewed their covenant with the Lord, Judges 9:46. It was destroyed by Abimelech, who beat down the city and sowed it with salt, Judges 9:45. It was afterward rebuilt, and became the residence of Jeroboam, the King of Israel, 1 Kings 12:25. It was called by the Romans "Flavia Neapolis," and this has been corrupted by the Arabs into "Nablus," its present name. It is still a considerable place, and its site is remarkably pleasant and productive.

The parcel of ground - The piece of ground; or the land, etc.

That Jacob gave … - Jacob bought one piece of ground near to Shalem, a city of Shechem, of the children of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for an hundred pieces of silver, Genesis 33:19. In this place the bones of Joseph were buried when they were brought up from Egypt, Joshua 24:32. He also gave to Joseph an additional piece of ground which he took from the hand of the Amorite by his own valor, "with his sword and his bow," as a portion above that which was given to his brethren, Genesis 48:22. Possibly these pieces of ground lay near together, and were a part of the homestead of Jacob. The well was near to this. There is now, E. Smith mentioned to me in conversation, a place near this well called Shalem.

Verse 6

Jacob's well - This is not mentioned in the Old Testament. It was called "Jacob's well," probably, either because it was handed down by tradition that he dug it, or because it was near to the land which he gave to Joseph. There is still a well a few miles to the east of Nablus, which is said by the people there to be the same. Eli Smith, missionary to Syria, stated to me that he had visited this well. It is about 100 feet deep. It is cut through solid rock of limestone. It is now dry, probably from having been partly filled with rubbish, or perhaps because the water has been diverted by

earthquakes. The well is covered with a large stone, which has a hole in the center large enough to admit a man. It is at the foot of Mount Gerizim, and has a plain on the east.

Sat thus - Jesus was weary, and, being thus weary, sat down on the well. The word translated "on" here may denote also by - he sat down "by" the well, or near it.

The sixth hour - About twelve o'clock noon. This was the common time of the Jewish meal, and this was the reason why his disciples were gone away to buy food.

Verse 7

Of Samaria - Not of the "city" of Samaria, for this was at a distance of 8 miles, but a woman who was a Samaritan, and doubtless from the city of Sychar.

Give me to drink - This was in the heat of the day, and when Jesus was weary with his journey. The request was also made that it might give him occasion to discourse with her on the subject of religion, and in this instance we have a specimen of the remarkably happy manner in which he could lead on a conversation so as to introduce the subject of religion.

Verse 8

Buy meat - Buy food.

Verse 9

No dealings with the Samaritans - For an account of the Samaritans, and of the differences between them and the Jews, see the notes at Matthew 10:5.

Verse 10

The gift of God - The word "gift," here denotes "favor." It may refer to Jesus Himself, as the gift of God to the world, given to save men from death John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 9:15, or it may refer to the opportunity then afforded her of seeking salvation. If thou knewest how favorable an opportunity God now gives thee to gain a knowledge of himself, etc.

And who it is … - If thou knewest that the Messiah was speaking.

Living water - The Jews used the expression "living water" to denote springs, fountains, or running streams, in opposition to dead and stagnant water. Jesus here means to denote by it his doctrine, or his grace and religion, in opposition to the impure and dead notions of the Jews and the Samaritans. See John 4:14. This was one of the many instances in which he took occasion from common topics of conversation to introduce religious

discourse. None ever did it so happily as he did, but, by studying his example and manner, we may learn also to do it. One way to acquire the art is to have the mind full of the subject; to make religion our first and main thing; to carry it with us into all employments and into all society; to look upon everything in a religious light, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, Matthew 12:34.

Verse 11

Hast nothing to draw with - It seems that there were no means of drawing water affixed to the well, as with us. Probably each one took a pail or pitcher and a cord for the purpose. In traveling this was indispensable. The woman, seeing that Jesus had no means of drawing water, and not yet understanding his design, naturally inquired whence he could obtain the water.

The well is deep - If the same one that is there now, it was about 100 feet deep.

Verse 12

Art thou greater? - Art thou wiser, or better able to find water, than Jacob was? It seems that she supposed that he meant that he could direct her to some living spring, or to some better well in that region, and that this implied more knowledge or skill than Jacob had. To find water and to furnish a good well was doubtless considered a matter of signal skill and success. It was a subject of great importance in that region. This shows how ready sinners are to misunderstand the words of Christ, and to pervert the doctrines of religion. If she had had any proper anxiety about her soul, she would at least have "suspected" that he meant to direct her thoughts to spiritual objects.

Our father Jacob - The Samaritans were composed partly of the remnant of the ten tribes, and partly of people sent from Chaldea; still, they considered themselves descendants of Jacob.

Which gave us - This was doubtless the tradition, though there is no evidence that it was true.

And drank thereof … - This was added in commendation of the water of the well. A well from which Jacob, and his sons, and cattle had drank must be pure, and wholesome, and honored, and quite as valuable as any that Jesus could furnish. People like to commend that which their ancestors used as superior to anything else. The world over, people love to speak of that which their ancestors have done, and boast of titles and honors that

have been handed down from them, even if it is nothing better than existed here - because Jacob‘s cattle had drunk of the water.

Verse 13

Shall thirst again - Jesus did not directly answer her question, or say that he was greater than Jacob, but he gave her an answer by which she might infer that he was. He did not despise or undervalue Jacob or his gifts; but, however great might be the value of that well, the water could not altogether remove thirst.

Verse 14

The water that I shall give him - Jesus here refers, without doubt, to his own teaching, his “grace,” his “spirit,” and to the benefits which come into the soul that embraces his gospel. It is a striking image, and especially in Eastern countries, where there are vast deserts, and often a great want of water. The soul by nature is like such a desert, or like a traveler wandering through such a desert. It is thirsting for happiness, and seeking it everywhere, and finds it not. It looks in all directions and tries all objects, but in vain. Nothing meets its desires. Though a sinner seeks for joy in wealth and pleasures, yet he is not satisfied. He still thirsts for more, and seeks still for happiness in some new enjoyment. To such a weary and unsatisfied sinner the grace of Christ is “as cold waters to a thirsty soul.”

Shall never thirst - He shall be “satisfied” with this, and will not have a sense of want, a distressing feeling that it is not adapted to him. He who drinks this will not wish to seek for happiness in other objects. “Satisfied” with the grace of Christ, he will not desire the pleasures and amusements of this world. And this will be forever - in this world and the world to come. “Whosoever” drinketh of this all who partake of the gospel - shall be “forever” satisfied with its pure and rich joys.

Shall be in him - The grace of Christ shall be in his heart; or the principles of religion shall abide with him.

A well of water - There shall be a constant supply, an unfailing fountain; or religion shall live constantly with him.

Springing up - This is a beautiful image, It shall bubble or spring up like a fountain. It is not like a stagnant pool - not like a deep well, but like an ever-living fountain, that flows at all seasons of the year, in heat and cold, and in all external circumstances of weather, whether foul or fair, wet or dry. So religion always lives; and, amid all changes of external circumstances - in heat and cold, hunger and thirst, prosperity and adversity,

life, persecution, contempt, or death - it still lives on, and refreshes and cheers the soul.

Into everlasting life - It is not temporary, like the supply of our natural wants; it is not changing in its nature; it is not like a natural fountain or spring of water, to play a While and then die away, as all natural springs will at the end of the world. It is eternal in its nature and supply, and will continue to live on forever. We may learn here:

1.that the Christian has a never-failing source of consolation adapted to all times and circumstances.

2.that religion has its seat in the heart, and that it should constantly live there.

3.that it sheds its blessings on a world of sin, and is manifest by a continual life of piety, like a constant flowing spring.

4.that its end is everlasting life. It will continue forever; and "whosoever drinks of this shall never thirst, but his piety shall be in his heart a pure fountain "springing up to eternal joy."

Verse 15

The woman said … - It may seem strange that the woman did not yet understand him, but it shows how slow sinners are to understand the doctrines of religion.

Verse 16

Go call thy husband - We may admire the manner which our Saviour took to lead her to perceive that he was the Christ. His instructions she did not understand. He therefore proceeded to show her that he was acquainted with her life and with her sins. His object, here, was to lead her to consider her own state and sinfulness - a delicate and yet pungent way of making her see that she was a sinner. By showing her, also, that he knew her life, though a stranger to her, he convinced her that he was qualified to teach her the way to heaven, and thus prepared her to admit that he was the Messiah, John 4:29.

Verse 17

I have no husband - This was said, evidently, to evade the subject. Perhaps she feared that if she came there with the man that she lived with,

the truth might be exposed. It is not improbable that by this time she began to suspect that Jesus was a prophet.

Hast well said - Hast said the truth.

Verse 18

Hast had five husbands - Who have either died; or who, on account of your improper conduct, have divorced you; or whom you have left improperly, without legal divorce. Either of these might have be. en the case.

Is not thy husband - You are not lawfully married to him. Either she might have left a former husband without divorce, and thus her marriage with this man was unlawful, or she was living with him without the form of marriage, in open guilt.

Verse 19

A prophet - One sent from God, and who understood her life. The word here does not denote one who foretells future events, but one who knew her heart and life, and who must therefore have come from God. She did not yet suppose him to be the Messiah, John 4:25. Believing him now to be a man sent from God, she proposed to him a question respecting the proper place of worship. This point had been long a matter of dispute between the Samaritans and the Jews. She submitted it to him because she thought he could settle the question, and perhaps because she wished to divert the conversation from the unpleasant topic respecting her husbands. The conversation about her manner of life was a very unpleasant topic to her - as it is always unpleasant to sinners to talk about their lives and the necessity of religion - and she was glad to turn the conversation to something else. Nothing is more common than for sinners to change the conversation when it begins to bear too hard upon their consciences; and no way of doing it is more common than to direct it to sonic speculative inquiry having some sort of connection with religion, as if to show that they are willing to talk about religion, and do not wish to appear to be opposed to it. Sinners do not love direct religious conversation, but many are too well-bred to refuse altogether to talk about it; yet they choose to converse about some speculative matter, or something pertaining to the mere "externals" of religion, rather than the salvation of their own souls. So sinners often now change the conversation to some inquiry about a preacher, or about some doctrine, or about building or repairing a place of

worship, or about a Sunday school, in order to seeM to talk about religion, and yet to evade close and faithful appeals to their own consciences.

Verse 20

Our fathers - The Samaritans; perhaps also meaning to intimate that the patriarchs had done it also. See Genesis 12:6; Genesis 33:20.

Worshipped - Had a place of worship.

In this mountain - Mount Gerizim, only a little way from Sychar. On this mountain they had built a temple somewhat similar to the one in Jerusalem. This was one of the main subjects of controversy between them and the Jews. The old Samaritan Pentateuch, or five books of Moses, has the word "Gerizim" instead of "Ebal" in Deuteronomy 27:4. On this account, as well as because the patriarchs are mentioned as having worshipped in Shechem, they supposed that that was the proper place on which to erect the temple.

Ye say - Ye Jews.

In Jerusalem - The place where the temple was built. This was built in accordance with the promise and command of God, Deuteronomy 12:5, Deuteronomy 12:11. In building this, David and Solomon were under the divine direction, 2 Samuel 7:2-3, 2 Samuel 7:13; 1 Kings 5:5, 1 Kings 5:12; 1 Kings 8:15-22. As it was contemplated in the law of Moses that there should be but one place to offer sacrifice and to hold the great feasts, so it followed that the Samaritans were in error in supposing that their temple was the place. Accordingly, our Saviour decided in favor of the Jews, yet in such a manner as to show the woman that the question was of much less consequence than they supposed it to be.

Verse 21

Believe me - As she had professed to believe that he was a prophet, it was right to require her to put faith in what he was about to utter. It also shows the importance of what he was about to say.

The hour cometh - The time is coming, or is near.

When neither in this mountain … - Hitherto the public solemn worship of God has been confined to one place. It has been a matter of dispute whether that place should be Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim. That controversy is to be of much less importance than you have supposed. The old dispensation is about to pass away. The special rites of the Jews are to cease. The worship of God, so long confined to a single place, is soon to be celebrated everywhere, and with as much acceptance in one place as in

another. He does not say that there would be no worship of God in that place or in Jerusalem, but that the worship of God would not be "confined" there. He would be worshipped in other places as well as there.

Verse 22

Ye worship ye know not what - This probably refers to the comparative ignorance and corruption of the Samaritan worship. Though they received the five books of Moses, yet they rejected the prophets, and of course all that the prophets had said respecting the true God. Originally, also, they had joined the worship of idols to that of the true God. See 2 Kings 17:26-34. They had, moreover, no authority for building their temple and conducting public worship by sacrifices there. On all these accounts they were acting in an unauthorized manner. They were not obeying the true God, nor offering the worship which he had commanded or would approve. Thus, Jesus indirectly settled the question which she had proposed to him, yet in such a way as to show her that it was of much less importance than she had supposed.

We know - We Jews. This they knew because God had commanded it; because they worshipped in a place appointed by God, and because they did it in accordance with the direction and teaching of the prophets.

Salvation is of the Jews - They have the true religion and the true form of worship; and the Messiah, who will bring salvation, is to proceed from them. See Luke 2:30; Luke 3:6. Jesus thus affirms that the Jews had the true form of the worship of God. At the same time he was sensible how much they had corrupted it, and on various occasions reproved them for it.

Verse 23

But the hour cometh, and now is - The old dispensation is about to pass away, and the new one to commence. "Already" there is so much light that God may be worshipped acceptably in any place.

The true worshippers - All who truly and sincerely worship God. They who do it with the heart, and not merely in form.

In spirit - The word "spirit," here, stands opposed to rites and ceremonies, and to the pomp of external worship. It refers to the "mind," the "soul," the "heart." They shall worship God with a sincere "mind;" with the simple offering of gratitude and prayer; with a desire to glorify him, and without external pomp and splendor. Spiritual worship is that where the heart is offered to God, and where we do not depend on external forms for acceptance.

In truth - Not through the medium of shadows and types, not by means of sacrifices and bloody offerings, but in the manner represented or typified by all these, Hebrews 9:9, Hebrews 9:24. In the true way of direct access to God through Jesus Christ.

For the Father seeketh … - Jesus gives two reasons why this kind of worship should take place. One is that God sought it, or desired it. He had appointed the old mode, but he did it because he sought to lead the mind to himself even by those forms, and to prepare the people for the purer system of the gospel, and now he sought or desired that those who worshipped him should worship him in that manner. He intimated his will by Jesus Christ.

Verse 24

God is A spirit - This is the second reason why men should worship him in spirit and in truth. By this is meant that God is without a body; that he is not material or composed of parts; that he is invisible, in every place, pure and holy. This is one of the first truths of religion, and one of the sublimest ever presented to the mind of man. Almost all nations have had some idea of God as gross or material, but the Bible declares that he is a pure spirit. As he is such a spirit, he dwells not in temples made with hands Acts 7:48, neither is worshipped with men‘s hands as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, Acts 17:25. A pure, a holy, a spiritual worship, therefore, is such as he seeks - the offering of the soul rather than the formal offering of the body - the homage of the heart rather than that of the lips.

Verse 25

I know that Messias cometh - As the Samaritans acknowledged the five books of Moses, so they expected, also, the coming of the Messiah.

Which is called Christ - These are probably the words of the evangelist, as it is not likely that the woman would explain the name on such an occasion.

Will tell us all things - Jesus had decided the question proposed to him John 4:20 in favor of the Jews. The woman does not seem to have been satisfied with this answer, and said that the Messiah would tell them all about this question. Probably she was expecting that he would soon appear.

Verse 26

I that speak onto thee am - he I am the Messiah. This was the first time that he openly professed it. He did not do it yet to the Jews, for it would have excited envy and opposition. But nothing could be apprehended in

Samaria; and as the woman seemed reluctant to listen to him as a prophet, and professed her willingness to listen to the Messiah, he openly declared that he was the Christ, that by some means he might save her soul. From this we may learn:

1.The great wisdom of the Lord Jesus in leading the thoughts along to the subject of practical personal religion.

2.His knowledge of the heart and of the life. He must be therefore divine.

3.He gave evidence here that he was the Messiah. This was the design of John in writing this gospel. He has therefore recorded this narrative, which was omitted by the other evangelists.

4.We see our duty. It is to seize on all occasions to lead sinners to the belief that Jesus is the Christ, and to make use of all topics of conversation to teach them the nature of religion. There never was a model of so much wisdom in this as the Saviour, and we shall be successful only as we diligently study his character.

5.We see the nature of religion. It does not consist merely in external forms. It is pure, spiritual, active - an ever-bubbling fountain. It is the worship of a pure and holy God, where the heart is offered, and where the desires of an humble soul are breathed out; for salvation.

Verse 27

Upon this - At this time.

Marvelled - Wondered. They wondered because the Jews had no contact with the Samaritans, and they were surprised that Jesus was engaged with her in conversation.

Yet no man said - No one of the disciples. They had such respect and reverence for him that they did not dare to ask him the reason of his conduct, or even to appear to reprove him. We should be confident that Jesus is right, even if we cannot fully understand all that he does.

Verse 28

Left her water-pot - Her mind was greatly excited. She was disturbed, and hastened to the city in great agitation to make this known. She seems to have been convinced that he was the Messiah, and went immediately to

make it known to others. Our first business, when we have found the Saviour, should be to make him known also to others.

Verse 29

Is not this the Christ? - Though she probably believed it, yet she proposed it modestly, lest she should appear to dictate in a case which was so important, and which demanded so much attention. The evidence on which she was satisfied that he was the Messiah was that he had told her all things that she had done - perhaps much more than is here recorded. The question which she submitted to them was whether this was not satisfactory proof that he was the Messiah.

Verse 30

They went out of the city - The men of the city left it and went to Jesus, to hear and examine for themselves.

Verse 31

Prayed him - Asked him.

Verse 32

I have meat to eat - See John 4:34.

Verse 33

Hath any man brought him … - This is one of the many instances in which the disciples were slow to understand the Saviour.

Verse 34

My meat … - Jesus here explains what he said in John 4:32. His great object - the great design of his life - was to do the will of God. He came to that place weary and thirsty, and at the usual time of meals, probably hungry; yet an opportunity of doing good presented itself, and he forgot his fatigue and hunger, and found comfort and joy in doing good - in seeking to save a soul. This one great object absorbed all his powers, and made him forget his weariness and the wants of nature. The mind may be so absorbed in doing the will of God as to forget all other things. Intent on this, we may rise above fatigue, and hardship, and want, and bear all with pleasure in seeing the work of God advance. See Job 23:12; "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necesary food." We may learn, also, that the main business of life is not to avoid fatigue or to seek the supply of our temporal wants, but to do the will of God. The mere supply of our temporal necessities, though most people make it an object of their chief solicitude, is a small consideration in the sight of him who has just views of the great design of human life.

The will of him that sent me - The will of God in regard to the salvation of men. See John 6:38.

To finish his work - To "complete" or fully to do the work which he has commanded in regard to the salvation of men. It is his work to provide salvation, and his to redeem, and his to apply the salvation to the heart. Jesus came to do it by teaching, by his example, and by his death as an expiation for sin. And he shows us that "we" should be diligent. If he was so diligent for our welfare, if he bore fatigue and want to benefit us, then we should be diligent, also, in regard to our own salvation, and also in seeking the salvation of others.

Verse 35

Say not ye - This seems to have been a proverb. Ye say - that is, men say.

Four months and … - The common time from sowing the seed to the harvest, in Judea, was about "four months." The meaning of this passage may be thus expressed: "The husbandman, when he sows his seed, is compelled to wait a considerable period before it produces a crop. He is encouraged in sowing it; he expects fruit; his labor is lightened by that expectation; but it is not "immediate" - it is remote. But it is not so with my preaching. The seed has already sprung up. Scarce was it sown before it produced an abundant harvest. The gospel was just preached to a woman, and see how many of the Samaritans come to hear it also. There is therefore more encouragement to labor in this field than the farmer has to sow his grain."

Lift up your eyes - See the Samaritans coming to hear the gospel.

They are white - Grain, when ripe, turns from a green to a yellow or light color, indicating that it is time to reap it. So here were indications that the gospel was effectual, and that the harvest was to be gathered in. Hence, we may learn:

1. that there is as much encouragement to attempt to save souls as the farmer has to raise a crop.

2. that the gospel is fitted to make an immediate impression on the minds of men. We are to expect that it will. We are not to wait to some future period, as if we could not expect immediate results. This wicked and ignorant people - little likely, apparently, to be affected - turned to God, heard the voice of the Saviour, and came in multitudes to him.

3. We are to expect revivals of religion. Here was one instance of it under the Saviour‘s own preaching. Multitudes were excited, moved, and came to learn the way of life.

4. We know not how much good may be done by conversation with even a single individual. This conversation with a woman resulted in a deep interest felt throughout the city, and in the conversion of many of them to God. So, a single individual may often be the means, in the hand of God, of leading many to the cross of Jesus.

5. What evils may follow from neglecting to do our duty! How easily might Jesus have alleged, if he had been like many of his professed disciples, that he was weary, that he was hungry, that it was esteemed improper to converse with a woman alone, that she was an abandoned character, and there could be little hope of doing her good! How many consciences of ministers and Christians would have been satisfied with reasoning like this? Yet Jesus, in spite of his fatigue and thirst, and all the difficulties of the case, seriously set about seeking the conversion of this woman. And behold what a glorious result! The city was moved, and a great harvest was found ready to be gathered in! “Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.”

Verse 36

He that reapeth - He that gathers the harvest, or he who so preaches that souls are converted to Christ.

Receiveth wages - The laborer in the harvest receives his hire. Jesus says it shall be thus with those who labor in the ministry - he will not suffer them to go unrewarded. See Daniel 12:3; Matthew 19:28.

Gathereth fruit unto life eternal - Converts souls, who shall inherit eternal life. The harvest is not temporary, like gathering grain, but shall result in eternal life.

That both he that soweth … - It is a united work. It matters little whether we sow the seed or whether we reap the harvest. It is part of the same work, and whatever part we may do, we should rejoice. God gives the increase, while Paul may plant and Apollos water. The teacher in the Sunday school, who sows the seed in early life, shall rejoice with the

minister of the gospel who may gather in the harvest, and both join in giving all the praise to God.

Verse 37

That saying - That proverb. This proverb is found in some of the Greek writers (Grotius). Similar proverbs were in use among the Jews. See Isaiah 65:21-22; Leviticus 26:16; Micah 6:15.

One soweth … - One man may preach the gospel, and with little apparent effect; another, succeeding him, may be crowned with eminent success. The seed, long buried, may spring up in an abundant harvest.

Verse 38

I sent you - In the commission given you to preach the gospel. You have not labored or toiled in preparing the way for the great harvest which is now to be gathered in.

Other men laboured -

(1)The prophets, who long labored to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

(2)the teachers among the Jews, who have read and explained the law and taught the people.

(3)John the Baptist, who came to prepare the way. And,

(4)The Saviour himself, who by his personal ministry taught the people, and prepared them for the success which was to attend the preaching of the apostles.

Especially did Jesus lay the foundation for the rapid and extensive spread of the gospel. "He" saw comparatively little fruit of his ministry. He confined his labors to Judea, and even there he was occupied in sowing seed which chiefly sprang up after his death. From this we may learn:

1. That the man who is crowned with eminent success has no cause of "boasting" over others, any more than the man who reaps a field of grain should boast over the man who sowed it. The labor of both is equally necessary, and the labor of both would be useless if God did not give the increase. Compare 1 Corinthians 3:6.

2. We should not be discouraged if we do not meet with immediate success. The man that sows is not disheartened because he does not see the harvest "immediately" spring up. We are to sow our seed in the morning,

and in the evening we are not to withhold our hand, for we know not whether shall prosper, this or that; and we are to go forth bearing precious seed, though "weeping," knowing that we shall come again rejoicing, bearing our sheaves with us, Ecclesiastes 11:4; Psalm 126:6.

3. Every part of the work of the ministry and of teaching men is needful, and we should rejoice that we are permitted to bear any part, however humble, in bringing sinners to the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:21-24.

Verses 39-42

And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him, … - There is seldom an instance of so remarkable success as this. From a single conversation, in circumstances, in a place, and with an individual little likely to be attended with such results, many sinners were converted; many believed on the testimony of the woman; many more came to hear, and believed because they heard him themselves. We should never despair of doing good in the most unpromising circumstances, and we should seize upon every opportunity to converse with sinners on the great subject of their souls' salvation.

Verse 43

Into Galilee - Into some of the parts of Galilee, though evidently not into Nazareth, but probably direct to Cana, John 4:46.

Verse 44

For Jesus himself testified … - See the notes at Matthew 13:57. The connection of this verse with the preceding may be thus explained: "Jesus went to Galilee, but not to Nazareth, for he testified," etc. Or, "Jesus went to Galilee, ‹although' he had said that a prophet had no honor in his own country; yet, because he foreknew that the Galileans would many of them believe on him, he went at this time."

Verse 45

Received him - Received him kindly, or as a messenger of God. They had seen his miracles, and believed on him.

Verse 46

A certain nobleman - One who was of the royal family, connected by birth with Herod Antipas; or one of the officers of the court, whether by birth allied to him or not. It seems that his ordinary residence was at

Capernaum. Capernaum was about a day‘s journey from Cana, where Jesus then was.

Verse 47

He went unto him - Though high in office, yet he did not refuse to go personally to Jesus to ask his aid. He felt as a father; and believing, after all that Jesus had done, that he could cure his son, he traveled to meet him. If men receive benefits of Christ, they must come in the same manner. The rich and the poor, the high and the low, must come personally as humble suppliants, and must be willing to bear all the reproach that may be cast on them for thus coming to him. This man showed strong faith in being willing thus to go to Jesus, but he erred in supposing that Jesus could heal only by his being present with his son.

Would come down - It is probable that the miracles of Jesus heretofore had been performed only on those who were present with him, and this nobleman seems to have thought that this was necessary. One design of Jesus in working this miracle was to show him that this was not necessary. Hence he did not go down to Capernaum, but healed him where he was.

Verse 48

Except ye see signs … - This was spoken not to the nobleman only, but to the Galileans generally. The Samaritans had believed without any miracle. The Galileans, he said, were less disposed to believe him than even they were; and though he had performed miracles enough to convince them, yet, unless they continually saw them, they would not believe.

Verse 49

Come down … - The earnestness of the nobleman evinces the deep and tender anxiety of a father. So anxious was he for his son that he was not willing that Jesus should delay a moment - not even to address the people. He still seems to have supposed that Jesus had no power to heal his son except he was present with him.

Verse 50

Go thy way - This was a kind and tender address. It was designed to convince him that he could word a miracle though not personally present.

Thy son liveth - Thy son shall recover; or he shall be restored to health, according to thy request.

The man believed - The manner in which Jesus spoke it, and the assurance which he gave, convinced the man that he could heal him there as well as to go to Capernaum to do it. This is an instance of the power of

Jesus to convince the mind, to soothe doubts, to confirm faith, and to meet our desires. He blesses not always in the manner in which we ask, but he grants us our main wish. The father wished his son healed by Jesus "going down" to Capernaum. Jesus healed him, but not in the way in which he asked it to be done. God will hear our prayers and grant our requests, but often not in the precise manner in which we ask it. It is his to judge of the best way of doing us good.

Verse 52

The seventh hour - About one o'clock in the afternoon.

The same hour - The very time when Jesus spoke.

The fever left him - It seems that it left him suddenly and entirely; so much so that his friends went to inform the father, and to comfort him, and also, doubtless, to apprise him that it was not necessary to ask aid from Jesus. From this miracle we may learn,

1. That Jesus has an intimate knowledge of all things. He knew the case of this son - the extent of his disease where he was and thus had power to heal him.

2. That Jesus has almighty power. Nothing else could have healed this child. Nor could it be pretended that he did it by any natural means. He was far away from him, and the child knew not the source of the power that healed him. It could not be pretended that there was any collusion or jugglery. The father came in deep anxiety. The servants saw the cure. Jesus was at a distance. Everything in the case bears the mark of being the simple energy of God - put forth with equal ease to heal, whether far or near. Thus, he can save the sinner.

3. We see the benevolence of Jesus. Ever ready to aid, to heal, or to save, he may be called on at all times, and will never be called on in vain.

Verse 53

Himself believed - This miracle removed all his doubts, and he became a real disciple and friend of Jesus.

His whole house - His whole family. We may learn from this,

1. That sickness or any deep affliction is often the means of great good. Here the sickness of the son resulted in the faith of all the family. God often takes away earthly blessings that he may impart rich spiritual mercies.

2. The father of a family may be the means of the salvation of his children. Here the effort of a parent resulted in their conversion to Christ.

3. There is great beauty and propriety when sickness thus results in piety. For that it is sent. God does not willingly grieve or afflict the children of men; and when afflictions thus terminate, it will be cause of eternal joy, of ceaseless praise.

4. There is a special charm when piety thus comes into the families of the rich. and the noble. It is so unusual: their example and influence go so far; it overcomes so many temptations, and affords opportunities of doing so much good, that there is no wonder that the evangelist selected this instance as one of the effects of the power and of the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

A feast - Probably the Passover, though it is not certain. There were two other feasts - the Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles - at which all the males were required to be present, and it might have been one of them. It is of no consequence, however, which of them is intended.

Verse 2

The sheep-market - This might have been rendered the "sheep-gate," or the gate through which the sheep were taken into the city for sacrifice. The marginal rendering is "gate," and the word "market" is not in the original, nor is a "sheep-market" mentioned in the Scriptures or in any of the Jewish writings. A "sheep-gate" is repeatedly mentioned by Nehemiah Nehemiah 3:1, Nehemiah 3:32; Nehemiah 12:39, being that by which sheep and oxen were brought into the city. As these were brought mainly for sacrifice, the gate was doubtless near the temple, and near the present place which is shown as the pool of Bethesda.

A pool - This word may either mean a small lake or pond in which one can swim, or a place for fish, or any waters collected for bathing or washing.

Hebrew tongue - Hebrew language. The language then spoken, which did not differ essentially from the ancient Hebrew.

Bethesda - The house of mercy. It was so called on account of its strong healing properties - the property of restoring health to the sick and infirm.

Five porches - The word "porch" commonly means a covered place surrounding a building, in which people can walk or sit in hot or wet weather. Here it probably means that there were five covered places, or apartments, in which the sick could remain, from each one of which they could have access to the water. This "pool" is thus described by Professor Hackett ("Illustrations of Scripture," pp. 291,292): "Just to the east of the Turkish garrison, and under the northern wall of the mosque, is a deep excavation, supposed by many to be the ancient pool of Bethesda, into which the sick descended after the troubling of the water, and were healed, John 5:1 ff. It is 360 feet long, 130 feet wide, and 75 deep. The evangelist says that this pool was near the sheep-gate, as the Greek probably signifies, rather than sheep-market, as rendered in the English version. That gate, according to Nehemiah 3:1 ff, was on the north side of the temple, and

hence, the situation of this reservoir would agree with that of Bethesda. The present name, Birket Israil, Pool of Israil, indicates the opinion of the native inhabitants in regard to the object of the excavation. The general opinion of the most accurate travelers is that the so-called pool was originally part of a trench or fosse which protected the temple on the north.

Though it contains no water at present except a little which trickles through the stones at the west end, it has evidently been used at some period as a reservoir. It is lined with cement, and adapted in other respects to hold water." Dr. Robinson established by personal inspection the fact of the subterranean connection of the pool of "Siloam" with the "Fountain of the Virgin," and made it probable that the fountain under the mosque of Omar is connected with them. This spring is, as he himself witnessed, an "intermittent" one, and there "may" have been some artificially constructed basin in connection with this spring to which was given the name of "Bethesda." He supposes, however, that there is not the slightest evidence that the place or reservoir now pointed out as "Bethesda" was the Bethesda of the New Testament (Bib. Res., i. 501,506,509). In the time of Sandys (1611) the spring was found running, but in small quantities; in the time of Maundrell (1697) the stream did not run. Probably in his time, as now, the water which had formerly filtered through the rocks was dammed up by the rubbish.

Verse 3

Impotent folk - Sick people; or people who were weak and feeble by long disease. The word means those who were "feeble" rather than those who were afflicted with "acute" disease.

Halt - Lame.

Withered - Those who were afflicted with one form of the palsy that withered or dried up the part affected. See the notes at Matthew 4:24.

Moving of the water - It appears that this pool had medicinal properties only when it was "agitated" or "stirred." It is probable that at regular times or intervals the fountain put forth an unusual quantity of water, or water of special properties, and that "about" these times the people assembled in multitudes who were to be healed.

Verse 4

An angel - It is not affirmed that the angel did this "visibly," or that they saw him do it. They judged by the "effect," and when they saw the waters

agitated, they concluded that they had healing properties, and descended to them. The Jews were in the habit of attributing all favors to the ministry of the angels of God, Genesis 19:15; Hebrews 1:14; Matthew 4:11; Matthew 18:10; Luke 16:22; Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19; Acts 12:11. This fountain, it seems, had strong medicinal properties. Like many other waters, it had the property of healing certain diseases that were incurable by any other means. Thus the waters of Bath, of Saratoga, etc., are found to be highly medicinal, and to heal diseases that are otherwise incurable. In the case of the waters of Bethesda there does not appear to have been anything "miraculous," but the waters seem to have been endued with strong medicinal properties, especially after a periodical agitation. All that is special about them in the record is that this was produced by the ministry of an angel. This was in accordance with the common sentiment of the Jews, the common doctrine of the Bible, and the belief of the sacred writers. Nor can it be shown to be absurd or improbable that such blessings should be imparted to man by the ministry of an angel. There is no more absurdity in the belief that a pure spirit or holy "angel" should aid man, than that a physician or a parent should; and no more absurdity in supposing that the healing properties of such a fountain should be produced by his aid, than that any other blessing should be, Hebrews 1:12. What man can prove that all his temporal blessings do not come to him through the medium of others - of parents, of teachers, of friends, of "angels?" And who can prove that it is unworthy the benevolence of angels to minister to the wants of the poor, the needy, and the afflicted, when "man" does it, and Jesus Christ did it, and God himself does it daily?

Went down - Descended to the pool.

At a certain season - At a certain time; periodically. The people knew "about" the time when this was done, and assembled in multitudes to partake of the benefits. Many medicinal springs are more strongly impregnated at some seasons of the year than others.

Troubled the water - Stirred or "agitated" the water. There was probably an increase, and a bubbling and agitation produced by he admission of a fresh quantity.

Whosoever then first - This does not mean that but one was healed, and that the first one, but that those who first descended into the pool were healed. The strong medicinal properties of the waters soon subsided, and

those who could not at first enter into the pool were obliged to wait for the return of the agitation.

Stepped in - Went in.

Was made whole - Was healed. It is not implied that this was done instantaneously or by a miracle. The water had such properties that he was healed, though probably gradually. It is not less the gift of God to suppose that this fountain restored gradually, and in accordance with what commonly occurs, than to suppose, what is not affirmed, that it was done at once and in a miraculous manner.

In regard to this passage, it should be remarked that the account of the angel in John 5:4 is wanting in many manuscripts, and has been by many supposed to be spurious, There is not conclusive evidence, however, that it is not a part of the genuine text, and the best critics suppose that it should not be rejected. One difficulty has been that no such place as this spring is mentioned by Josephus. But John is as good a historian, and as worthy to be believed as Josephus. Besides, it is known that many important places and events have not been mentioned by the Jewish historian, and it is no evidence that there was no such place as this because he did not mention it. When this fountain was discovered, or how long its healing properties continued to be known, it is impossible now to ascertain. All that we know of it is what is mentioned here, and conjecture would be useless. We may remark, however, that such a place anywhere is an evidence of the great goodness of God. Springs or fountains having healing properties abound on earth, and nowhere more than in our own country. Diseases are often healed in such places which no human skill could remove. The Jews regarded such a provision as proof of the mercy of God. They gave this healing spring the name of a “house of mercy.” They regarded it as under the care of an angel. And there is no place where man should be more sensible of the goodness of God, or be more disposed to render him praise as in a “house of mercy,” than when at such a healing fountain. And yet how lamentable is it that such places - watering places - should be mere places of gaiety and thoughtlessness, of balls, and gambling, and dissipation! How melancholy that amid the very places Where there is most evidence of the goodness of God, and of the misery of the poor, the sick, the afflicted, men should forget all the goodness of their Maker, and spend their time in scenes of dissipation, folly, and vice!

Verse 5

An infirmity - A weakness. We know not what his disease was. We know only that it disabled him from walking, and that it was of very long standing. It was doubtless regarded as incurable.

Verse 7

Sir, I have no man … - The answer of the man implied that he did wish it, but, in addition to all his other trials, he had no "friend" to aid him. This is an additional circumstance that heightened his affliction.

Verse 8

Rise, take up … - Jesus not only restored him to health, but he gave evidence to those around him that this was a real miracle. and that he was really healed. For almost 40 years he had been afflicted. He was not even able to walk. Jesus commanded him not only to "walk," but to take up his "bed" also, and carry that as proof that he was truly made whole. In regard to this we may observe,

1. That it was a remarkable command. The poor man had been sick for a long time, and it does not appear that he expected to be healed except by being put into the waters. Yet Jesus, when he gives a commandment, can give strength to obey it.

2. It is our business to obey the commands of Jesus, however feeble we feel ourselves to be. His grace will be sufficient for us, and his burden will be light.

3. The weak and helpless sinner should put forth his efforts in obedience to the command of Jesus. Never was a sinner more helpless than was this man. If God gave him strength to do his will, so he can all others; and the plea that we can do nothing could have been urged with far more propriety by this man than it can be by any impenitent sinner.

4. This narrative should not be abused. It should not be supposed as intended to teach that a sinner should delay repentance, as if "waiting for God." The narrative neither teaches nor implies "any such thing." It is a simple record of a fact in regard to a man who had no power to heal himself, and who was under no obligation to heal himself. There is no reference in the narrative to the difficulties of a sinner - no intimation that it was intended to refer to his condition; and to make this example an excuse

for delay, or an argument for waiting, is to abuse and pervert the Bible. Seldom is more mischief done than by attempting to draw from the Bible what it was not intended to teach, and by an effort to make that convey spiritual instruction which God has not declared designed for that purpose.

Thy bed - Thy couch; or the mattress or clothes on which he lay.

Verse 9

The Sabbath - To carry burdens on the Sabbath was forbidden in the Old Testament, Jeremiah 17:21; Nehemiah 13:15; Exodus 20:8-10. If it be asked, then, why Jesus commanded a man to do on the Sabbath what was understood to be a violation of the day, it may be answered,

1.That the Son of man was Lord of the Sabbath, and had a right to declare what might be done, and even to dispense with a positive law of the Jews, Matthew 12:8; John 5:17.

2.This was a poor man, and Jesus directed him to secure his property.

3.The Jews extended the obligation of the Sabbath beyond what was intended by the appointment. They observed it superstitiously, and Jesus took every opportunity to convince them of their error, and to restore the day to its proper observance, Matthew 12:6-11; Luke 6:9; Luke 13:14; Luke 14:5. This method he took to show them what the law of God really "permitted" on that day, and that works of necessity and mercy were lawful.

Verse 10

Not lawful - It was forbidden, they supposed, in the Old Testament. The Jews were very strenuous in the observation of the external duties of religion.

Verse 11

He that made me whole - The man reasoned correctly. If Jesus had power to work so signal a miracle, he had a right to explain the law. If he had conferred so great a favor on him, he had a right to expect obedience; and we may learn that the mercy of God in pardoning our sins, or in bestowing any signal blessing, imposes the obligation to obey him. We should yield obedience to him according to what we Know to be his will, whatever may be the opinions of men, or whatever interpretation they may put on the law of God. our business is a simple, hearty, child-like obedience, let the men of the world say or think of us as they choose.

Verse 12

What man is he … - In this verse there is a remarkable instance of the "perverseness" of men, of their want of candor, and of the manner in which they often look at a subject. Instead of looking at the miracle, and at the man's statement of the manner in which he was healed, they look only at what they thought to be a violation of the law. They assumed it as certain that nothing could make his conduct, in carrying his bed on the Sabbath day, proper; and they meditated vengeance, not only on the man who was carrying his bed, but on him, also, who had told him to do it. Thus men often assume that a certain course or opinion is proper, and when anyone differs from them they look only at the difference, but not at the reasons for it. One great source of dispute among men is that they look only at the points in which they differ, but are unwilling to listen to the reasons why others do not believe as they do. It is always enough to condemn one in the eyes of a bigot that he differs from "him," and he looks upon him who holds a different opinion, as the Jews did at this man, "as certainly wrong;" and such a bigot looks at the reasons why others differ from him just as the Jews did at the reason why this man bore his bed on the Sabbath - as not worth regarding or hearing, or as if they could not possibly be right.

Verse 13

Wist not - Knew not.

Had conveyed himself away - Was lost in the crowd. He had silently mingled with the multitude, or had passed on with the crowd unobserved, and the man had been so rejoiced at his cure that he had not even asked for the name of his benefactor.

Verse 14

Findeth him - Fell in with him, or saw him.

In the temple - The man seems to have gone at once to the temple - perhaps a privilege of which he had been long deprived. They who are healed from sickness should seek the sanctuary of God and give him thanks for his mercy. Compare the notes at Isaiah 38:20. There is nothing more improper, when we are raised up from a bed of pain, than to forget God our benefactor, and neglect to praise him for his mercies.

Thou art made whole - Jesus calls to his remembrance the fact that he was healed, in order that he might admonish him not to sin again.

Sin no more - By this expression it was implied that the infirmity of this man was caused by sin - perhaps by vice in his youth. His crime or dissipation had brought on him this long and distressing affliction. Jesus

shows him that he knew the cause of his sickness, and takes occasion to warn him not to repeat it. No man who indulges in vice can tell what may be its consequences. It must always end in evil, and not unfrequently it results in loss of health, and in long and painful disease. This is always the case with intemperance and all gross pleasures. Sooner or later, sin will always result in misery.

Sin no more - Do not repeat the vice. You have had dear-bought experience, and if repeated it will be worse. When a man has been restored from the effects of sin, he should learn to avoid the very appearance of evil. He should shun the place of temptation; he should not mingle again with his old companions; he should touch not, taste not, handle not. God visits with heavier judgment those who have been once restored from the ways of sin and who return again to it. The drunkard that has been reformed, and that returns to his habits of drinking, becomes more beastly; the man that professes to have experienced a change of heart, and who then indulges in sin, sinks deeper into pollution, and is seldom restored. The only way of safety in all such cases is to "sin no more;" not to be in the way of temptation; not to expose ourselves; not to touch or approach that which came near to working our ruin. The man who has been intemperate and is reformed, if he tastes the poison at all, may expect to sink deeper than ever into drunkenness and pollution.

A worse thing - A more grievous disease, or the pains of hell. "The doom of apostates is a worse thing than thirty-eight years' lameness" (Henry).

Verse 16

Persecuted Jesus - They opposed him; attempted to ruin his character; to destroy his popularity; and probably held him up before the people as a violator of the law of God. Instead of making inquiry whether he had not given proof that he was the Messiah, they "assumed" that he must be wrong, and ought to be punished. Thus every bigot and persecutor does in regard to those who differ from them.

To slay him - To put him to death. This they attempted to do because it was directed in the law of Moses, Exodus 31:15; Exodus 35:2. See Luke 6:7, Luke 6:11; Luke 13:14. We see here,

1. How full of enmity and how bloody was the purpose of the Jews, All that Jesus had done was to restore an infirm man to health - a thing which

they would have done for their cattle Luke 6:7, and yet they sought. his life because he had done it for a sick "man."

2. Men are often extremely envious because good is done by others, especially if it is not done according to the way of their denomination or party.

3. Here was an instance of the common feelings of a hypocrite. He often covers his enmity against the power of religion by great zeal for the form of it. He hates and persecutes those who do good, who seek the conversion of sinners, who love revivals of religion and the spread of the gospel, because it is not according to some matter of form which has been established, and on which he supposes the whole safety of the church to hang. There was nothing that Jesus was more opposed to than hypocrisy, and nothing that he set himself more against than those who suppose all goodness to consist in "forms," and all piety in the "shibboleths" of a party.

Verse 17

My Father - God.

Worketh hitherto - Worketh "until now," or until this time. God has not ceased to work on the Sabbath. He makes the sun to rise; He rolls the stars; He causes the grass, the tree, the flower to grow. He has not suspended His operations on the Sabbath, and the obligation to "rest" on the Sabbath does not extend to Him. He created the world in six days, and ceased the work of creation; but He has not ceased to govern it, and to carry forward, by His providence, His great plans on the Sabbath.

And I work - "As God does good on that day; as he is not bound by the law which requires his creatures to rest on that day, so "I" do the same. The law on that subject may be dispensed with, also, in my case, for the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath." In this reply it is implied that he was equal with God from two circumstances:

1.Because he called God his Father, John 5:18.

2.Because he claimed the same exemption from law which God did, asserting that the law of the Sabbath did not bind him or his Father, thus showing that he had a right to impose and repeal laws in the same manner as God. He that has a right to do this must be God.

Verse 18

The more to kill him - The answer of Jesus was suited greatly to irritate them. He did not deny what he had done, but he "added" to that what he well knew would highly offend them. That he should claim the right of dispensing with the law, and affirm that, in regard to its observance, he was in the same condition with God, was eminently suited to enrage them, and he doubtless knew that it might endanger his life. We may learn from his answer:

1.that we are not to keep back truth because it may endanger us.

2.that we are not to keep back truth because it will irritate and enrage sinners. The fault is not in the "truth," but in the "sinner."

3.that when any one portion of truth enrages hypocrites, they will be enraged the more they hear.

Had broken the sabbath - They supposed he had broken it.

Making himself equal with God - This shows that, in the view of the Jews, the name Son of God, or that calling God his Father, implied equality with God. The Jews were the best interpreters of their own language, and as Jesus did not deny the correctness of their interpretations, it follows that he meant to be so understood. See John 10:29-38. The interpretation of the Jews was a very natural and just one. He not only said that God was his Father, but he said that he had the same right to work on the Sabbath that God had; that by the same authority, and in the same manner, he could dispense with the obligation of the day. They had now two pretences for seeking to kill him - one for making himself equal with God, which they considered blasphemy, and the other for violating the Sabbath. For each of these the law denounced death, Numbers 15:35; Leviticus 24:11-14.

Verse 19

The Son can do nothing of himself - Jesus, having stated the extent of his authority, proceeds here to show its "source and nature," and to prove to them that what he had said was true. The first explanation which he gives is in these words: "The Son" - whom he had just impliedly affirmed to be equal with God - did nothing "of himself;" that is, nothing without the appointment of the Father; nothing contrary to the Father, as he immediately explains it. When it is said that he can "do nothing" of himself, it is meant that such is the union subsisting between the Father and the Son that he can do nothing "independently" or separate from the Father. Such is

the nature of this union that he can do nothing which has not the concurrence of the Father, and which he does not command. In all things he must, from the necessity of his nature, act in accordance with the nature and will of God. Such is the intimacy of the union, that the fact that "he" does anything is proof that it is by the concurring agency of God. There is no separate action - no separate existence; but, alike in being and in action, there is the most perfect oneness between him and the Father. Compare John 10:30; John 17:21.

What he seeth the Father do - In the works of creation and providence, in making laws, and in the government of the universe. There is a special force in the word "seeth" here. No person can see God acting in his works; but the word here implies that the Son sees him act, as we see our fellow-men act, and that he has a knowledge of him, therefore, which no mere mortal could possess.

What things soever - In the works of creation and of providence, and in the government of the worlds. The word is without limit - all that the Father does the Son likewise does. This is as high an assertion as possible of his being "equal" with God. If one does "all" that another does or can do, then there must be equality. If the Son does all that the Father does, then, like him, he must be almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, and infinite in every perfection; or, in other words, he must be God. If he had "this" power, then he had authority, also, to do on the Sabbath day what God did.

Verse 20

The Father loveth the Son - This authority he traces to the love which the Father has for him - that special, ineffable, infinite love which God has for his only-begotten Son, feebly and dimly illustrated by the love which an earthly parent has for an only child.

Showeth him - Makes him acquainted with. Conceals nothing from him. From apostles, prophets, and philosophers no small part of the doings of God are concealed. From the "Son" nothing is. And as God shows him "all" that he does, he must be possessed of omniscience, for to no finite mind could be imparted a knowledge of "all" the works of God.

Will show him - Will appoint and direct him to do greater works than these.

Greater works than these - Than healing the impotent man, and commanding him to carry his bed on the Sabbath day. The greater works to

which he refers are those which he proceeds to specify - he will raise the dead and judge the world, etc.

May marvel - May wonder, or be amazed.

Verse 21

As the Father raiseth up the dead - God has power to raise the dead. By his power it had been done in at least two instances - by the prophet Elijah, in the case of the son of the widow of Sarepta 1 Kings 17:22, and by the prophet Elisha, in the case of the Shunamite‘s son, 2 Kings 4:32-35. The Jews did not doubt that God had power to raise the dead. Jesus here expressly affirms it, and says he has the same power.

Quickeneth them - Gives them “life.” This is the sense of the word “quickeneth” throughout the Bible.

Even so - In the same manner. By the same authority and power. The power of raising the dead must be one of the highest attributes of the divinity. As Jesus affirms that he has the power to do this “in the same manner” as the Father, so it follows that he must be equal with God.

The Son quickeneth - Gives life to. This may either refer to his raising the dead from their graves, or to his giving spiritual life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. The former he did in the case of Lazarus and the widow‘s son at Nain, John 11:43-44; Luke 7:14-15. The latter he did in the case of all those who were converted by his power, and still does it in any instance of conversion.

Whom he will - It was in the power of Jesus to raise up any of the dead as well as Lazarus. It depended on his will whether Lazarus and the widow‘s son should come to life. So it depends on his will whether sinners shall live. He has power to renew them, and the renewing of the heart is as much the result of his “will” as the raising of the dead.

Verse 22

Judgeth no man - Jesus in these verses is showing his “equality with God.” He affirmed John 5:17 that he had the same power over the Sabbath that his Father had; in John 5:19, that he did the same things as the Father; in John 5:21 particularly that he had the same power to raise the dead. He now adds that God has given him the authority to “judge” men. The Father pronounces judgment on no one. This office he has committed to the Son. The power of judging the world implies ability to search the heart, and omniscience to understand the motives of all actions. This is a work which

none but a divine being can do, and it shows, therefore, that the Son is equal to the Father.

Hath committed … - Hath appointed him to be the judge of the world. In the previous verse he had said that he had power "to raise the dead;" he here adds that it will be his, also, to "judge" them when they are raised. See Acts 17:31.

Verse 23

That all men should honour … - To honor is to esteem, reverence, praise, do homage to. We honor one when we ascribe to him in our hearts, and words, and actions the praise and obedience which are due to him. We honor God when we obey him and worship him aright. We honor the Son when we esteem him to be as he is; when we have right views and feelings toward him. As he is declared to be God John 1:1, as he here says he has power and authority equal with God, so we honor him when we regard him as such. The primitive Christians are described by Pliny, in a letter to the Emperor Trajan, as meeting together to sing hymns to Christ "as God." So we honor him aright when we regard him as possessed of wisdom, goodness, power, eternity, omniscience - equal with God.

Even as - To the same extent; in the same manner. Since the Son is to be honored even as the Father, it follows that he must be equal with the Father. To "honor the Father" must denote "religious" homage, or the rendering of that honor which is due to God; so to honor the Son must also denote "religious" homage. If our Saviour here did not intend to teach that he ought to be "worshipped," and to be esteemed as "equal" with God, it would be difficult to teach it by any language which we could use.

He that honoureth not the Son - He that does not believe on him, and render to him the homage which is his due as the equal of God.

Honoureth not the Father - Does not worship and obey the Father the First Person of the Trinity - that is does not worship God. He may imagine that he worships God, but there is no God but the God subsisting as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He that withholds proper homage from one, withholds it from all. He that should refuse to honor "the Father," could not be said to honor "God;" and in the like manner, he that honoreth not "the Son," honoreth not "the Father." This appears further from the following considerations:

1.The Father wills that the Son should be honored. He that refuses to do it disobeys the Father.

2.They are equal. He that denies the one denies also the other.

3.The same feeling that leads us to honor the "Father" will also lead us to honor the "Son," for he is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," Hebrews 1:3.

4.The evidence of the existence of the Son is the same as that of the Father. He has the same wisdom, goodness, omnipresence, truth, power.

And from these verses we may learn:

1. That those who do not render proper homage to Jesus Christ do not worship the true God.

2. There is no such God as the infidel professes to believe in. There can be but one God; and if the God of the Bible be the true God, then all other gods are false gods.

3. Those who withhold proper homage from Jesus Christ, who do not honor him even as they honor the Father, cannot be Christians.

4. One evidence of piety is when We are willing to render proper praise and homage to Jesus Christ - to love him, and serve and obey him, with all our hearts.

5. "As a matter of fact," it may be added that they who do not honor the Son do not worship God at all. The infidel has no form of worship; he has no place of secret prayer, no temple of worship, no family altar. Who ever yet heard of an infidel that prayed? Where do such men build houses of worship? Where do they meet to praise God? Nowhere. As certainly as we hear the name "infidel," we are certain at once that we hear the name of a man who has no form of religion in his family, who never prays in secret, and who will do nothing to maintain the public worship of God. Account for it as men may, it is a fact that no one can dispute, that it is only they who do honor to the Lord Jesus that have any form of the worship of God, or that honor him; "and their veneration for God is just in proportion to their love for the Redeemer - just as they honor him."

Verse 24

He that heareth my word - To "hear," in this place, evidently denotes not the outward act of hearing, but to receive in a proper manner; to suffer it to make its proper impression on the mind; to obey. The word "hear" is often used in this sense, Matthew 11:15; John 8:47; Acts 3:23. Many persons outwardly hear the gospel who neither understand nor obey it.

My word - My doctrine, my teaching. All that Jesus taught about Himself, as well as about the Father.

On him that sent me - On the Father, who, in the plan of redemption, is represented as "sending" his Son to save men. See John 3:17. Faith in God, who sent his Son, is here represented as being connected with everlasting life; but there can be no faith in him who "sent" his Son, without faith also in him who is "sent." The belief of one of the true doctrines of religion is connected with, and will lead to, the belief of all.

Hath everlasting life - The state of man by nature is represented as death in sin, Ephesians 2:1. Religion is the opposite of this, or is "life." The "dead" regard not anything. They are unaffected by the cares, pleasures, amusements of the world. They hear neither the voice of merriment nor the tread of the living over their graves. So with sinners. They are unmoved with the, things of religion. They hear not the voice of God; they see not his loveliness; they care not for his threatenings. But religion is "life." The Christian lives with God, and feels and acts as if there was a God. Religion, and its blessings here and hereafter, are one and the same. The happiness of heaven is living for God - being sensible of his presence, and glory, and power - and rejoicing in that. There shall be no more "death" there, Revelation 21:4. This "life," or this religion, whether on earth or in heaven, is the same - the same joys extended and expanded forever. Hence, when a man is converted, it is said that he "has" everlasting life; not merely shall have but is already in possession of that life or happiness which shall be everlasting. It is life begun, expanded, ripening for the skies. He has already entered on his inheritance - that inheritance which is everlasting.

Shall not come into condemnation - He was by nature under condemnation. See John 3:18. Here it is declared that he shall not return to that state, or he will not be again condemned. This promise is sure; it is made by the Son of God, and there is no one that can pluck them out of his hand, John 10:28. Compare the notes at Romans 8:1.

But is passed from death unto life - Has "passed over" from a state of spiritual death to the life of the Christian. The word translated "is passed"

would be better expressed by "has passed." It implies that he has done it voluntarily; that none compelled him; and that the passage is made unto "everlasting" life. Because Christ is the author of this life in the soul, he is called the "Life" John 1:4; and as he has "always" existed, and is the Source of "all life," he is called the "eternal life," 1 John 5:20.

Verse 25

The hour - The time.

Is coming - Under the preaching of the gospel, as well as in the resurrection of the dead.

Now is - It is now taking place. Sinners were converted under his ministry and brought to spiritual life.

The dead - Either the dead in sins, or those that are in their graves. The words of the Saviour will apply to either. Language, in the Scriptures, is often so used as to describe two similar events. Thus the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world are described by Jesus in the same language, Isaiah 7:14. The renewal of the heart, and the raising of the dead at the judgment, are here also described in similar language, because they so far resemble each other that the same language will apply to both.

The voice of the Son of God - The voice is that by which we give command. Jesus raised up the dead by his command, or by his authority. When he did it he spoke, or commanded it to be done. Mark 5:41; "he took the damsel by the hand, and said, Talitha cumi Luke 7:14; "and he came and touched the bier, and said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." John 11:43; "he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." So it is by his command that those who are dead in sins are quickened or made alive, John 5:21. And so at the day of judgment the dead will be raised by his command or voice, though there is no reason to think that his voice will be audibly heard, John 5:28.

Shall live - Shall be restored to life."

Verse 26

As the Father hath life - God is the source of all life. He is thence called the living God, in opposition to idols which have no life. Acts 14:15; "we preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities (idols) ‹unto the living God,'" Joshua 3:10; 1 Samuel 17:26; Jeremiah 10:10. See also Isaiah 40:18-31.

In himself - This means that life in God, or existence, is not derived from any other being. Our life is derived from God. Genesis 2:7; God

"breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" - that is, a living being. All other creatures derive their life from him. Psalm 104:30, Psalm 104:29; "thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust." But God is underived. He always existed as he is. Psalm 90:2; "from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." He is unchangeably the same, James 1:17. It cannot be said that he is "self-existent," because that is an absurdity; no being can originate or create himself; but he is not dependent on any other for "life." Of course, no being can take away his existence; and of course, also, no being can take away his happiness. He has "in himself" infinite sources of happiness, and no other being, no change in his universe can destroy that happiness.

So - In a manner like his. It corresponds to the first "as," implying that one is the same as the other; life in the one is the "same," and possessed in the same manner, as in the other.

Hath he given - This shows that the power or authority here spoken of was "given" or committed to the Lord Jesus. This evidently does not refer to the manner in which the second person of the Trinity exists, for the power and authority of which Christ here speaks is that which he exercises as "Mediator." It is the power of raising the dead and judging the world. In regard to his divine nature, it is not affirmed here that it is in any manner derived; nor does the fact that God is said to have "given" him this power prove that he was inferior in his nature or that his existence was derived. For:

1. It has reference merely "to office." As Mediator, he may be said to have been appointed by the Father.

2. Appointment to office does not prove that the one who is appointed is inferior in nature to him who appoints him. A son may be appointed to a particular work by a parent, and yet, in regard to talents and every other qualification, may be equal or superior to the father. He sustains the relation of a son, and in this relation there is an official inferiority. General Washington was not inferior in nature and talents to the men who commissioned him. He simply derived authority from them to do what he was otherwise fully "able" to do. So the Son, "as Mediator," is subject to the Father; yet this proves nothing about his nature.

To have life - That is, the right or authority of imparting life to others, whether dead in their graves or in their sins.

In himself - There is much that is remarkable in this expression. It is in Him as it is in God. He has the control of it, and can exercise it as he will. The prophets and apostles are never represented as having such power in themselves. They were dependent; they performed miracles in the name of God and of Jesus Christ Acts 3:6; Acts 4:30; Acts 16:18; but Jesus did it by his own name, authority, and power. He had but to speak, and it was done, Mark 5:41; Luke 7:14; John 11:43. This wonderful commission he bore from God to raise up the dead as he pleased; to convert sinners when and where he chose; and finally to raise up all the dead, and pronounce on them an eternal doom according to the deeds done in the body. None could do this but he who had the power of creation - equal in omnipotence to the Father, and the power of searching all hearts - equal in omniscience to God.

Verse 27

Hath given him authority - Hath appointed him to do this. Has made him to be judge of all. This is represented as being the appointment of the Father, Acts 17:31. The word "authority" here (commonly rendered "power") implies all that is necessary to execute judgment - all the physical power to raise the dead, and to investigate the actions and thoughts of the life; and all the "moral right" or authority to sit in judgment on the creatures of God, and to pronounce their doom.

To execute judgment - To do judgment - that is, to judge. He has appointment to "do justice;" to see that the universe suffers no wrong, either by the escape of the guilty or by the punishment of the innocent.

Because be is the Son of man - The phrase "Son of man" here seems to be used in the sense of "because he is a man," or because he has human nature. The term is one which Jesus often gives to himself, to show his union with man and his interest in man. See the notes at Matthew 8:19-20. It is to be remarked here that the word "son" does not have the article before it in the original: Because he is A son of man - that is, because he is a man. It would seem from this that there is a propriety that one in our nature should judge us. What this propriety is we do not certainly know. It may be:

1.Because one who has experienced our infirmities, and who possesses our nature, may be supposed by those "who are judged" to be better qualified than one in a different nature.

2.Because he is to decide between “man” and “God,” and it is proper that our feelings, and nature, and views should be represented in the judge, as well as those of God.

3.Because Jesus has all the feelings of compassion we could ask - all the benevolence we could desire in a judge; because he has ShowN his disposition to defend us by giving his life, and it can never be alleged by those who are condemned that their judge was a distant, cold, and unfriendly being.

Some have supposed that the expression “Son of man” here means the same as “Messiah” (see Daniel 7:13-14), and that the meaning is that God hath made him judge because he was the Messiah. Some of the ancient versions and fathers connected this with the following verse, thus: “Marvel not because I am a man, or because this great work is committed to a man apparently in humble life. You shall see greater things than these.” Thus, the Syriac version reads it, and Chrysostom, Theophylact, and some others among the fathers.

Verse 28

Marvel not - Do not wonder or be astonished at this.

The hour is coming - The “time” is approaching or will be.

All that are in the graves - All the dead, of every age and nation. They are described as “in the graves.” Though many have turned to their native dust and perished from human view, yet God sees them, and can regather their remains and raise them up to life. The phrase “all that are in the graves” does not prove that the same particles of matter will be raised up, but it is equivalent to saying “all the dead.” See the notes at 1 Corinthians 15:35-38.

Shall hear his voice - He will restore them to life, and command them to appear before him. This is a most sublime description, and this will be a wonderful display of almighty power. None but God can “see” all the dead, none but he could remould their frames, and none else could command them to return to life.

Verse 29

Shall come forth - Shall come out of their graves. This was the language which he used when he raised up Lazarus, John 11:43-44.

They that have done good - That is, they who are righteous, or they who have by their good works “shown” that they were the friends of Christ.

See Matthew 25:34-36.

Resurrection of life - Religion is often called life, and everlasting life. See the notes at John 5:24. In the resurrection the righteous will be raised up to the full enjoyment and perpetual security of that life. It is also called the resurrection of life, because there shall be no more "death," Revelation 21:4. The enjoyment of God himself and of his works; of the society of the angels and of the redeemed; freedom from sickness, and sin, and dying, will constitute the life of the just in the resurrection. The resurrection is also called the resurrection of the just Luke 14:14, and the first resurrection, Revelation 20:5-6.

The resurrection of damnation - The word "damnation" means the sentence passed on one by a judge - judgment or condemnation. The word, as we use it, applies only to the judgment pronounced by God on the wicked; but this is not its meaning always in the Bible. Here it has, however, that meaning. Those who have done evil will be raised up "to be condemned or damned." This will be the object in raising them up - this the sole design. It is elsewhere said that they shall then be condemned to everlasting punishment Matthew 25:46, and that they shall be punished with everlasting destruction 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; and it is said of the unjust that they are reserved unto the day of judgment to be punished, 2 Peter 2:9. That this refers to the future judgment - to the resurrection then, and not to anything that takes place in this life - is clear from the following considerations:

1. Jesus had just spoken of what would be done in this life - of the power of the gospel, John 5:25. He adds here that something still more wonderful - something beyond this - would take place. "All that are in the graves" shall hear his voice.

2. He speaks of those who are in their graves, evidently referring to the dead. Sinners are sometimes said to be dead in sin, but sinners are not said to be "in a grave." This is applied in the Scriptures only to those who are deceased.

3. The language used here of the "righteous" cannot be applied to anything in this life. When God converts men, it is not because they "have been good."

4. Nor is the language employed of the evil applicable to anything here. In what condition among men can it be said, with any appearance of sense, that they are brought forth from their graves to the resurrection of damnation? The doctrine of those Universalists who hold that all people will be saved immediately at death, therefore, cannot be true. This passage proves that at the day of judgment the wicked will be condemned. Let it be added that if "then" condemned they will be lost forever. Thus, in Matthew 25:46, it is said to be "everlasting" punishment; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9, it is called "everlasting" destruction. There is no account of redemption in hell - no Saviour, no Holy Spirit, no offer of mercy there.

Verse 30

Of mine own self - See John 5:19. The Messiah, the Mediator, does nothing without the concurrence and the authority of God. Such is the nature of the union subsisting between them, that he does nothing independently of God. Whatever he does, he does according to the will of God.

As I hear I judge - To "hear" expresses the condition of one who is commissioned or instructed. Thus John 8:26, "I speak to the world those things which I have "heard" of him;" John 8:28, "As the Father hath taught me, I speak those things." Jesus here represents himself as commissioned, taught, or sent of God. When he says, "as I ‹hear,'" he refers to those things which the Father had "showed" him John 5:20 - that is, he came to communicate the will of God; to show to man what God wished man to know.

I judge - I determine or decide. This was true respecting the institutions and doctrines of religion, and it will be true respecting the sentence which he will pass on mankind at the day of judgment. He will decide their destiny according to what the Father wills and wishes - that is, according to justice.

Because I seek … - This does not imply that his own judgment would be wrong if he sought his own will, but that he had no "private" ends, no selfish views, no improper bias. He came not to aggrandize himself, or to promote his own views, but he came to do the will of God. Of course his decision would be impartial and unbiased, and there is every security that it will be according to truth. See Luke 22:42, where he gave a memorable instance, in the agony of the garden, of his submission to his Father's will.

Verse 31

If I bear witness of myself - If I have no other evidence than my own testimony about myself.

My witness - My testimony; my evidence. The proof would not be decisive.

Is not true - The word "true," here, means worthy of belief, or established by suitable evidence. See Matthew 22:16; "We Know that thou art true" - that is, worthy of confidence, or that thou hast been truly sent from God, Luke 20:21; John 8:13, John 8:17. The law did not admit a man to testify in his own case, but required two witnesses, Deuteronomy 17:6. Though what Jesus said was true John 8:13, John 8:17, yet he admitted it was not sufficient testimony alone to claim their belief. They had a right to expect that his statement that he came from God would be confirmed by other evidence. This evidence he gave in the miracles which he performed as proof that God had sent him.

Verse 32

There is another - That is, God. See John 5:36.

Verse 33

Ye sent unto John - See John 1:19.

He bare witness … - See John 1:26, John 1:29, John 1:36. This testimony of John ought to have satisfied them. John was an eminent man; many of the Pharisees believed on him; he was candid, unambitious, sincere, and his evidence was impartial. On this Jesus might have rested the proof that he was the Messiah, but he was willing, also, to adduce evidence of a higher order.

Verse 34

I receive not testimony from men - I do not depend for proof of my Messiahship on the testimony of men, nor do I pride myself on the commendations or flattery of men.

But these things … - "This testimony of John I adduce that you might be convinced. It was evidence of your own seeking. It was clear, full, explicited You ‹sent‘ to make inquiry, and he gave you a candid and satisfactory answer. Had you believed that, you would have believed in the Messiah and been saved." Men are often dissatisfied with the very evidence of the truth of religion which they sought, and on which they professed themselves willing to rely.

Verse 35

He was - It is probable that John had been cast into prison before this. Hence, his public ministry had ceased, and our Saviour says he was such a light.

Light - The word in the original properly means a "lamp," and is not the same which in John 1:4-5 is translated "light." That is a word commonly applied to the sun, the fountain of light; this means a lamp, or a light that is lit up or kindled artificially from oil or tallow. A teacher is often called a "light," because he guides or illuminates the minds of others. Romans 2:19; "thou art confident that thou art a guide of the blind, a light of them that sit in darkness;" John 8:12; John 12:46; Matthew 5:14.

A burning - A lamp lit up that burns with a steady luster.

Shining - Not dim, not indistinct. The expression means that he was an eminent teacher; that his doctrines were clear, distinct, consistent.

Ye were willing - You willed, or you chose; you went out voluntarily. This shows that some of those whom Jesus was now addressing were among the great multitudes of Pharisees that came unto John in the wilderness, Matthew 3:7. As they had at one time admitted John to be a prophet, so Jesus might with great propriety adduce his testimony in his favor.

For a season - In the original, for an "hour" - denoting only a short time. They did it, as many others do, while he was popular, and it was the "fashion" to follow him.

To rejoice in his light - To rejoice in his doctrines, and in admitting that he was a distinguished prophet; perhaps, also, to rejoice that he professed to be sent to introduce the Messiah, until they found that he bore testimony to Jesus of Nazareth.

Verse 36

Greater witness - Stronger, more decisive evidence.

The works - The miracles - healing the sick and raising the dead.

Hath given me - Hath committed to me, or appointed me to do. Certain things he intrusted in his hands to accomplish.

To finish - To do or to perform until the task is completed. The word is applied to the "termination" of anything, as we say a task is "ended" or a work is completed. So Jesus said, when he expired, It is "finished" John 19:30. From this it appears that Jesus came to "accomplish" a certain work; and hence we see the reason why he so often guarded his life and sought his safety until the task was fully completed. These works or miracles bore

witness of him; that is, they showed that he was sent from God, because none but God could perform them, and because God would not give such power to any whose life and doctrines he did not approve. They were more decisive proof than the testimony of John, because:

1.John worked no miracles, John 10:41.

2.It was possible that a man might be deceived or be an impostor. It was not possible for God to deceive.

3.The miracles which Jesus performed were such as no human being could work, and no angel. He that could raise the dead must have all power, and he who commissioned Jesus, therefore, must be God.

Verse 37

The Father himself … hath borne witness of me - This God had done,

1.By the miracles which Jesus had performed, and of which he was conversing.

2.At the baptism of Jesus, where he said, "This is my beloved Son," Matthew 3:17.

3.In the prophecies of the Old Testament. It is not easy to say here to which of these he refers. Perhaps he has reference to all.

Ye have neither heard his voice - This difficult passage has been interpreted in various ways. The main design of it seems to be clear - to reprove the Jews for not believing the evidence that he was the Messiah. In doing this he says that they were indisposed to listen to the testimony of God. He affirmed that God had given sufficient evidence of his divine mission, but they had disregarded it. The first thing that he notices is that they had not heard his voice. The word "hear," in this place, is to be understood in the sense of "obey" or listen to. See the notes at John 5:25. The voice of God means his commands or his declarations, however made; and the Saviour said that it had been the "characteristic" of the Jews that they had not listened to the voice or command of God. As this had been their general characteristic, it was not wonderful that they disregarded now his testimony in regard to the Messiah. The voice of God had been literally heard on the mount. See Deuteronomy 4:12; "Ye heard the voice of the words."

At any time - This has been the uniform characteristic of the nation that they have disregarded and perverted the testimony of God, and it was as true of that generation as of their fathers.

Nor seen his shape - No man hath seen God at any time, John 1:18. But the word "shape," here, does not mean "God himself." It refers to the visible "manifestation" of himself; to the "appearance" which he assumed. It is applied in the Septuagint to his manifesting himself to Moses, Numbers 12:8; "With him will I speak mouth to mouth, ‹even apparently;'" in Greek, "in a form" or "shape" the word used here. It is applied to the visible symbol of God that appeared in the cloud and that rested on the tabernacle, Numbers 9:15-16. It is the same word that is applied to the Holy Spirit appearing in bodily shape like a dove, Luke 3:22. Jesus does not here deny that God had "appeared" in this manner, but he says they had not seen - that is, had not "paid attention to," or "regarded," the appearance of God. He had manifested himself, but they disregarded it, and, in particular, they had disregarded his manifestations in attestation of the Messiah. As the word "hear" means to obey, to listen to, so the word "see" means "to pay attention to, to regard" 2 John 1:8; 1 John 3:6, and thus throws light on John 14:9; "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." "I am a ‹manifestation' of God - God appearing in human flesh, as he appeared formerly in the symbol of the cloud; and he that ‹regards me,' or attends to me, regards the Father."

Verse 38

His word abiding in you - His law does not abide in you - that is, you do not regard or obey it. This was the "third" thing that he charged them with.

1.They had not obeyed the command of God.

2.They had not regarded his manifestations, either in the times of the old dispensation, or now through the Messiah.

3.They did not yield to what he had said in the revelation of the Old Testament.

For whom he hath sent - God had foretold that the Messiah would come. He had now given evidence that Jesus was he; but now they rejected him, and this was proof that they did not regard the word of God.

Verse 39

Search the scriptures - The word translated "search" here means to "search diligently" or "search anxiously." It was applied to miners, who search for precious metals - who look anxiously for the "bed" of the ore with an intensity or anxiety proportionate to "their sense" of the value of the metal. Compare the notes at Job 28:3. It is applied by Homer to a lioness robbed of her whelps, and who "searches" the plain to "trace out" the footsteps of the man who has robbed her. It is also applied by him to dogs tracing their game by searching them out by the scent of the foot. It means a diligent, faithful, anxious investigation The word may be either in the indicative or imperative mood. In our translation it is in the imperative, as if Jesus commanded them to search the Scriptures. Cyril, Erasmus, Beza, Bengel, Kuinoel, Tholuck, DeWette, and others, give it as in the indicative: Chrysostom, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wetstein, Stier, Alford, and others, regard it as in the imperative, or as a command. It is impossible to determine which is the true interpretation. Either of them makes good sense, and it is proper to use the passage in either signification. There is abundant evidence that the Jews did search the books of the Old Testament. It is equally clear that all people ought to do it.

The scriptures - The writings or books of the Old Testament, for those were all the books of revelation that they then possessed.

In them ye think ye have eternal life - The meaning of this is: "Ye think that by studying the Scriptures you will obtain eternal life. You suppose that they teach the way to future blessedness, and that by diligently studying them you will attain it." We see by this:

1.That the Jews in the time of Jesus were expecting a future state.

2.The Scriptures teach the way of life, and it is our duty to study them.

The Bereans are commended for searching the Scriptures Acts 17:11; and Timothy is said from a child to have "known the holy scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation," 2 Timothy 3:15. Early life is the proper time to search the Bible, for they who seek the Lord early shall find him.

They are they … - They bear witness to the Messiah. They predict his coming, and the manner of his life and death, Isaiah 53:1-12; Daniel 9:26-27, etc. See the notes at Luke 24:27.

Verse 40

And ye will not come … - Though the Old Testament bears evidence that I am the Messiah; though you professedly search it to learn the way to

life, and though my works prove it, yet you will not come to me to obtain life. From this we may learn:

1.that life is to be obtained in Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and he only can save us.

2.that, in order to do that, we must "come to him" - that is, must come in the way appointed, as lost sinners, and be willing to be saved by him alone.

3.that the reason why sinners are not saved lies in the will. "The only reason why sinners die is because ‹they will not come‘ to Christ for life and happiness: it is not because they ‹cannot,‘ but because they ‹will not‘" (Henry).

4.Sinners have a particular opposition to going to "Jesus Christ" for eternal life. They would prefer any other way, and it is commonly not until all other means are tried that they are willing to submit to him.

Verse 41-42

I receive not honour … - "I do not say these things because I am desirous of human applause, but to account for the fact that you do not believe on me. The reason is, that you have not the love of God in you." In this passage we see:

1.That we should not seek for human applause. It is of very little value, and it often keeps men from the approbation of God, John 5:44.

2.They who will not believe on Jesus Christ give evidence that they have no love for God.

3.The reason why they do not believe on him is because they have no regard for his character, wishes, or law.

Love of God - Love to God.

In you - In your hearts. You do not love God.

Verse 43

I am come in my Father‘s name - By the authority of God; or giving proof that I am sent by him.

If another shall come in his own name - A false teacher setting up himself, and not even pretending to have a divine commission. The Jews were much accustomed to receive and follow particular teachers. In the

time of Christ they were greatly divided between the schools of Hillel and Shammai, two famous teachers.

Ye will receive - You will follow, or obey him as a teacher.

Verse 44

Which receive honour one of another - Who are studious of praise, and live for pride, ambition, and vainglory. This desire, Jesus says, was the great reason why they would not believe on him. They were unwilling to renounce their worldly honors, and become the followers of one so humble and unostentatious as he was. They expected a Messiah of pomp and splendor, and would not submit to one so despised and of so lowly a rank. Had the Messiah come, as they expected, with pomp and power, it would have been an honor, in their view, to follow him; as it was, they despised and rejected him. The great reason why multitudes do not believe is their attachment to human honors, or their pride, and vanity, and ambition. These are so strong, that while they continue they cannot and will not believe. They might, however, renounce these things, and then, the obstacles being removed, they would believe. Learn:

1. A man cannot believe the gospel while he is wholly under the influence of ambition. The two are not compatible. The religion of the gospel is humility, and a man who has not that "cannot" be a Christian.

2. Great numbers are deterred from being Christians by pride and ambition. Probably there is no single thing that prevents so really young men from becoming Christians as this passion. The proud and ambitious heart refuses to bow to the humiliating terms of the gospel.

3. Though while a man is under this governing principle he cannot believe the gospel, yet this proves nothing about his ability to lay that aside, and to yield to truth. that is another question. A child cannot open a trunk when he gets on the lid and attempts to raise his own weight and the cover of the trunk too; but that settles nothing about the inquiry whether he might not get off and then open it. The true question is whether a man can or cannot lay aside his ambition and pride, and about that there ought not to be any dispute. No one doubts that it may be done; and if that can be done, he can become a Christian.

Seek not the honour - The praise, the glory, the approbation of God. The honor which comes from men is their praise, flattery, commendation;

the honor that comes from God is his approbation for doing his will. God alone can confer the honors of heaven - the reward of having done our duty here. That we should seek, and if we seek that, we shall come to Christ, who is the way and the life.

Verse 45-46

Do not think that I will accuse you - Do not suppose that I intend to follow your example. They had accused Jesus of breaking the law of God, John 5:16. He says that he will not imitate their example, though he implies that he might accuse them.

To the Father - To God.

There is one that accuseth you - Moses might be said to accuse or reprove them. He wrote of the Messiah, clearly foretold his coming, and commanded them to hear him. As they did not do it, it might be said that they had disregarded his command; and as Moses was divinely commissioned and had a right to be obeyed, so his command reproved them: they were disobedient and rebellious.

He wrote of me - He wrote of the Messiah, and I am the Messiah, Genesis 3:15; Genesis 12:3; compare John 8:56; Genesis 49:10; Deuteronomy 18:15.

Verse 47

If ye believe not his writings - If you do not credit what he has written which you profess to believe, it is not to be expected that you will believe my declarations. And from this we may learn:

1.That many men who profess to believe the Bible have really no regard for it when it crosses their own views and inclinations.

2.It is our duty to study the Bible, that we may be established in the belief that Jesus is the Messiah.

3.The prophecies of the Old Testament are conclusive proofs of the truth of the Christian religion.

4.He that rejects one part of the Bible, will, for the same reason, reject all.

5.The Saviour acknowledged the truth of the writings of Moses, built his religion upon them, appealed to them to prove that he was the Messiah, and commanded men to search them. We have the testimony of Jesus, therefore,

that the Old Testament is a revelation from God. He that rejects his testimony on This subject must reject his authority altogether; and it is vain for any man to profess to believe in the New Testament, or in the Lord Jesus, without also acknowledging the authority of the Old Testament and of Moses.

We have in this chapter an instance of the profound and masterly manner in which Jesus could meet and silence his enemies. There is not anywhere a more conclusive argument, or a more triumphant meeting of the charges which they had brought against him. No one can read this without being struck with his profound wisdom; and it is scarcely possible to conceive that there could be a more distinct declaration and proof that he was equal with God.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

Jesus went over - Went to the east side of the sea. The place to which he went was Bethsaida, Luke 9:10. The account of this miracle of feeding the five thousand is recorded also in Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17. John has added a few circumstances omitted by the other evangelists.

Verse 2

Because they saw his miracles … - They saw that he had the power to supply their wants, and they therefore followed him. See John 6:26. Compare also Matthew 14:14.

Verse 4

The passover - See the notes at Matthew 26:2, Matthew 26:17.

A feast of the Jews - This is one of the circumstances of explanation thrown in by John which show that he wrote for those who were unacquainted with Jewish customs.

Verse 6

To prove him - To try him; to see if he had faith, or if he would show that he believed that Jesus had power to supply them.

Verse 12

Gather up the fragments - This command is omitted by the other evangelists. It shows the care of Jesus that there should be no waste. Though he had power to provide any quantity of food, yet he has here taught us that the bounties of Providence are not to be squandered. In all things the Saviour set us an example of frugality, though he had an infinite supply at his disposal; he was himself economical, though he was Lord of all. If he was thus saving, it becomes us dependent creatures not to waste the bounties of a beneficent Providence. And it especially becomes the rich not to squander the bounties of Providence. They often feel that they are rich. They have enough. They have no fear of want, and they do not feel the necessity of studying economy. Yet let them remember that what they have is the gift of God - just as certainly as the loaves and fishes created by the Saviour were his gift. It is not given them to waste, nor to spend in riot, nor to be the means of injuring their health or of shortening life. It is given to sustain life, to excite gratitude, to fit for the active service of God.

Everything should be applied to its appropriate end, and nothing should be squandered or lost.

Verse 14

That Prophet … - The Messiah. The power to work the miracle, and the benevolence manifested in it, showed that he was the long-expected Messiah.

Verse 15

When Jesus perceived … - They were satisfied by the miracle that he was the Messiah. They supposed that the Messiah was to be a temporal prince. They saw that Jesus was retiring, unambitious, and indisposed to assume the ensigns of office. They thought, therefore, that they would proclaim him as the long-expected king, and constrain him to assume the character and titles of an earthly prince. Men often attempt to dictate to God, and suppose that they understand what is right better than he does. They are fond of pomp and power, but Jesus sought retirement, and evinced profound humility. Though he had claims to the honor and gratitude of the nation, yet he sought it not in this way; nor did it evince a proper spirit in his followers when they sought to advance him to a place of external splendor and regal authority.

Verses 16-21

See this miracle of walking on the sea explained in the notes at Matthew 14:22-33. Compare Mark 6:45-52.

John 6:21

Immediately - Quickly. Before a long time. How far they were from the land we know not, but there is no evidence that there was a miracle in the case. The word translated "immediately" does not of necessity imply that there was no interval of time, but that there was not a long interval. Thus, in Matthew 13:5, in the parable of the sower, "and immediately (the same word in Greek) they sprung up," etc., Mark 4:17; Matthew 24:29; 3 John 1:14.

Verse 22

The people which stood on the other side of the sea - That is, on the east side, or on the same side with Jesus. The country was called the region beyond or on, the other side of the sea, because the writer and the people lived on the west side.

Jesus went not with his disciples - He had gone into a mountain to pray alone, John 6:15. Compare Mark 6:46.

Verse 23

There came other boats - After the disciples had departed. This is added because, from what follows, it appears that they supposed that he had entered one of those boats and gone to Capernaum after his disciples had departed.

From Tiberias - This town stood on the western borders of the lake, not far from where the miracle had been performed. It was so called in honor of the Emperor Tiberius. It was built by Herod Antipas, and was made by him the capital of Galilee. The city afterward became a celebrated seat of Jewish learning. It is now called Tabaria, and is a considerable place. It is occupied chiefly by Turks, and is very hot and unhealthy. Mr. Fisk, an American missionary, was at Tiberius (Tabaria) in 1823. The old town is surrounded by a wall, but within it is very ruinous, and the plain for a mile or two south is strewed with ruins. The Jordan, where it issues from the lake, was so shallow that cattle and asses forded it easily. Mr. Fisk was shown a house called the house of Peter, which is used as the Greek Catholic church, and is the only church in the place. The number of Christian families is 30 or 40, all Greek Catholics. There were two sects of Jews, each of whom had a synagogue.

The Jewish population was estimated at about 1,000. On the 1st of January, 1837, Tiberius was destroyed by an earthquake. Dr. Thomson (The Land and the Book, vol. ii. pp. 76,77) says of this city: "Ever since the destruction of Jerusalem, it has been chiefly celebrated in connection with the Jews, and was for a long time the chief seat of rabbinical learning. It is still one of their four holy cities. Among the Christians it also early rose to distinction, and the old church, built upon the spot where our Lord gave his last charge to Peter, is a choice bit of ecclesiastical antiquity. The present city is situated on the shore, at the northeast corner of this small plain. The walls inclose an irregular parallelogram, about 100 rods from north to south, and in width not more than 40. They were strengthened by ten round towers on the west, five on the north, and eight on the south. There were also two or three towers along the shore to protect the city from attack by sea. Not much more than one-half of this small area is occupied by buildings of any kind, and the north end, which is a rocky hill, has nothing but the ruins of the old palace.

The earthquake of 1837 prostrated a large part of the walls, and they have not yet been repaired, and perhaps never will be. There is no town in Syria so utterly filthy as Tiberius, or so little to be desired as a residence. Being 600 feet below the level of the ocean, and overhung on the west by a high mountain, which effectually shuts off the Mediterranean breezes, it is fearfully hot in summer. The last time I was encamped at the Baths the thermometer stood at 100ø at midnight, and a steam went up from the surface of the lake as from some huge, smouldering volcano. Of course it swarms with all sorts of vermin. What can induce human beings to settle down in such a place? And yet some 2,000 of our race make it their chosen abode. They are chiefly Jews, attracted hither either to cleanse their leprous bodies in her baths, or to purify their unclean spirits by contact with her traditionary and ceremonial holiness."

Verse 24

Took shipping - Went into the boats.

Came to Capernaum - This was the ordinary place of the residence of Jesus, and they therefore expected to find him there.

Verse 26

Ye seek me, not because … - The miracles which Jesus performed were proofs that he came from God. To seek him because they had seen them, and were convinced by them that he was the Messiah, would have been proper; but to follow him simply because their wants were supplied was mere selfishness of a gross kind. Yet, alas! many seek religion from no better motive than this. They suppose that it will add to their earthly happiness, or they seek only to escape from suffering or from the convictions of conscience, or they seek for heaven only as a place of enjoyment, and regard religion as valuable only for this. All this is mere selfishness. Religion does not forbid our regarding our own happiness, or seeking it in any proper way; but when this is the only or the prevailing motive, it is evident that we have never yet sought God aright. We are aiming at the loaves and fishes, and not at the honor of God and the good of his kingdom; and if this is the only or the main motive of our entering the church, we cannot be Christians.

Verse 27

Labour not - This does not mean that we are to make no effort for the supply of our wants (compare 1 Timothy 5:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:10), but

that we are not to manifest anxiety, we are not to make this the main or supreme object of our desire. See the notes at Matthew 6:25.

The meat that perisheth - The food for the supply of your natural needs. It perishes. The strength you derive from it is soon exhausted, and your wasted powers need to be reinvigorated.

That meat which endureth - The supply of your spiritual wants; that which supports, and nourishes, and strengthens the soul; the doctrines of the gospel, that are to a weak and guilty soul what needful food is to the weary and decaying body.

To everlasting life - The strength derived from the doctrines of the gospel is not exhausted. It endures without wasting away. It nourishes the soul to everlasting life. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint," Isaiah 40:31.

Him hath God the Father sealed - To seal is to confirm or approve as ours. This is done when we set our seal to a compact, or deed, or testament, by which we ratify it as our act. So God the Father, by the miracles which had been performed by Jesus, had shown that he had sent him, that he approved his doctrines, and ratified his works. The miracles were to his doctrine what a seal is to a written instrument. See the notes at John 3:33.

Verse 28

What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? - That is, such things as God will approve. This was the earnest inquiry of men who were seeking to be saved. They had crossed the Sea of Tiberias to seek him; they supposed him to be the Messiah, and they sincerely desired to be taught the way of life; yet it is observable that they expected to find that way as other sinners commonly do - by their works. The idea of doing something to merit salvation is one of the last that the sinner ever surrenders.

Verse 29

This is the work of God - This is the thing that will be acceptable to God, or which you are to do in order to be saved. Jesus did not tell them they had nothing to do, or that they were to sit down and wait, but that there was a work to perform, and that was a duty that was imperative. It was to believe on the Messiah. This is the work which sinners are to do; and doing this they will be saved, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth, Romans 10:4.

Verse 30

What sign showest thou? - On the word sign, compare the notes at Isaiah 7:14. What miracle dost thou work to prove that thou art the Messiah? They had just seen the miracle of the loaves in the desert, which was sufficient to show that he was the Messiah, and it would seem from the preceding narrative that those who crossed the lake to see him supposed that he was the Christ. It seems wonderful that they should so soon ask for further evidence that he was sent from God; but it is not improbable that this question was put by other Jews, rulers of the synagogue, who happened to be present, and who had not witnessed his miracles. Those men were continually asking for signs and proofs that he was the Messiah. See Matthew 12:38-39; Mark 8:11; Luke 11:29. As Jesus claimed the right of teaching them, and as it was manifest that he would teach them differently from what they supposed Moses to teach, it was natural to ask him by what authority he claimed the right to be heard.

Verse 31

Our fathers - The Jews who were led by Moses through the wilderness.

Did eat manna - This was the name given by the Jews to the food which was furnished to them by God in their journey. It means literally, "What is this?" and was the question which they asked when they first saw it, Exodus 16:14-15. It was small like frost, and of the size of coriander-seed, and had a sweetish taste like honey. It fell in great quantities, and was regarded by the Jews as proof of a continued miracle during forty years, and was incontestable evidence of the interposition of God in favor of their fathers. The manna which is sold in the shops of druggists is a different substance from this. It is obtained from the bark of certain trees in Armenia, Georgia, Persia, and Arabia. It is procured, as resin is, by making an incision in the bark, and it flows out or distils from the tree.

As it is written - The substance of this is written in Psalm 78:24-25.

He gave them - This was regarded as a miraculous interference in their behalf, and an attestation of the divine mission of Moses, and hence they said familiarly that Moses gave it to them.

Bread from heaven - The word "heaven," in the Scriptures, denotes often the region of the air, the atmosphere, or that region in which the clouds are. See Matthew 16:3; "The sky (heaven) is red and lowering." Also Matthew 3:16; Luke 4:15; Luke 5:18. The Jews, as appears from their writings (see Lightfoot), expected that the Messiah would provide his

followers with plenty of delicious food; and as Moses had provided for the Jews in the wilderness, so they supposed that Christ would make provision for the temporal wants of his friends. This was the sign, probably, which they were now desirous of seeing.

Verse 32

Moses gave you not that bread from heaven - This might be translated, "Moses gave you not the bread of heaven." The word "that," which makes some difference in the sense, is not necessary to express the meaning of the original. It does not appear that Jesus intended to call in question the fact that their fathers were fed by the instrumentality of Moses, but to state that he did not give them the true bread that was adapted to the wants of the soul. He fed the Body, although his food did not keep the body alive John 6:49 but he did not give that which would preserve the soul from death. God gave, in his Son Jesus, the true bread from heaven which was fitted to man, and of far more value than any supply of their temporal wants. He tells them, therefore, that they are not to seek from him any such supply of their temporal wants as they had supposed. A better gift had been furnished in his being given for the life of the world.

My father giveth you - In the gospel; in the gift of his Son.

The true bread - The trite or real support which is needed to keep the soul from death. It is not false, deceitful, or perishing. Christ is called bread, because, as bread supports life, so his doctrine supports, preserves, and saves the soul from death. He is the true support, not only in opposition to the mere supply of temporal wants such as Moses furnished, but also in opposition to all false religion which deceives and destroys the soul.

Verse 33

The bread of God - The means of support which God furnishes. That which, in his view, is needful for man.

Is he … - Is the Messiah who has come from heaven.

And giveth life … - See the notes at John 1:4.

Verse 35

I am the bread of life - I am the support of spiritual life; or my doctrines will give life and peace to the soul.

Shall never hunger - See the notes at John 4:14.

Verse 36

But I said unto you - This he said, not in so many words, but in substance, in John 6:26. Though they saw him, and had full proof of his

divine mission, yet they did not believe. Jesus then proceeds to state that, although they did not believe on him, yet his work would not be in vain, for others would come to him and be saved.

Verse 37

All - The original word is in the neuter gender, but it is used, doubtless, for the masculine, or perhaps refers to his people considered as a mass or body, and means that every individual that the Father had given him should come to him.

The Father giveth me - We here learn that those who come to Christ, and who will be saved, are given to him by God.

1.God promised him that he should see of the travail of his soul - that is, "the fruit of his wearisome toil" (Lowth), and should be satisfied, Isaiah 53:11.

2.All men are sinners, and none have any claim to mercy, and he may therefore bestow salvation on whom he pleases.

3.All people of themselves are disposed to reject the gospel, John 5:40.

4.God enables those who do believe to do it. He draws them to Him by His Word and Spirit; "He opens their hearts to understand the Scriptures Acts 16:14; and He grants to them repentance, Acts 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25.

5.All those who become Christians may therefore be said to be given to Jesus as the reward of his sufferings, for his death was the price by which they were redeemed. Paul says Ephesians 1:4-5 that, "he hath chosen us in him (that is, in Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

Shall come to me - This is an expression denoting that they would believe on him. To come to one implies our need of help, our confidence that he can aid us, and our readiness to trust to him. The sinner comes to Jesus feeling that he is poor, and needy, and wretched, and casts himself on his mercy, believing that he alone can save him. This expression also proves that men are not compelled to believe on Christ. Though they who believe are given to him, and though his Spirit works in them faith and repentance, yet they are made willing in the day of his power, Psalm 110:3. No man is

compelled to go to heaven against his will, and no man is compelled to go to hell against his will. The Spirit of God inclines the will of one, and he comes freely as a moral agent. The other chooses the way to death; and, though God is constantly using means to save him, yet he prefers the path that leads down to woe.

Him that cometh - Everyone that comes - that is, everyone that comes in a proper mariner, feeling that he is a lost and ruined sinner. This invitation is wide, and full, and free. It shows the unbounded mercy of God; and it shows, also, that the reason, and the only reason, why men are not saved, is that they will not come to Christ. Of any sinner it may be said that if he had been willing to come to Christ he might have come and been saved. As he chooses not to come, he cannot blame God because he saves others who are willing, no matter from what cause, and who thus are made partakers of everlasting life.

In no wise - In no manner, or at no time. The original is simply, "I will not cast out."

Cast out - Reject, or refuse to save. This expression does not refer to the doctrine of perseverance of the saints, but to the fact that Jesus will not reject or refuse any sinner who comes to him.

Verse 38

For I came down … - This verse shows that he came for a specific purpose, which he states in the next verse, and means that, as he came to do his Father's will, he would be faithful to the trust. Though his hearers should reject him, yet the will of God would be accomplished in the salvation of some who should come to Him.

Mine own will - See notes at John 5:30.

Verse 39

Father's will - His purpose; desire; intention. As this is the Father's will, and Jesus came to execute his will, we have the highest security that it will be done. God's will is always right, and he has power to execute it. Jesus was always faithful, and all power was given to him in heaven and on earth, and he will therefore most certainly accomplish the will of God.

Of all which - That is, of every one who believes on him, or of all who become Christians. See John 6:37.

I should lose nothing - Literally, "I should not destroy." He affirms here that he will keep it to life eternal; that, thought the Christian will die, and his body return to corruption, yet he will not be destroyed. The Redeemer

will watch over him, though in his grave, and keep him to the resurrection of the just. This is affirmed of all who are given to him by the Father; or, as in the next verse, "Everyone that believeth on him shall have everlasting life."

At the last day - At the day of judgment. The Jews supposed that the righteous would be raised up at the appearing of the Messiah. See Lightfoot. Jesus directs them to a future resurrection, and declares to them that they will be raised at the last day - the day of judgment. It is also supposed and affirmed by some Jewish writers that they did not believe that the wicked would be raised. Hence, to speak of being raised up in the last day was the same as to say that one was righteous, or it was spoken of as the special privilege of the righteous. In accordance with this, Paul says, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead," Philemon 3:11.

Verse 40

Every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him - It was not sufficient to see him and hear him, but it was necessary, also, to believe on him. Many of the Jews had seen him, but few believed on him. Jesus had said in the previous verse that all that the Father had given him should be saved. But he never left a doctrine so that men must misunderstand it. Lest it should be supposed that if a man was given to him this was all that was needful, and lest anyone should say, "If I am to be saved I shall be, and my efforts will be useless," he states here that it is necessary that a man should believe on him. This would be the evidence that he was given to God, and this would be evidence conclusive that he would be saved. If this explanation of the Saviour had always been attended to, the doctrine of election would not have been abused as it has been. Sinners would not sit down in unconcern, saying that if they are given to Christ all will be well. They would have arisen like the prodigal, and would have gone to God; and, having believed on the Saviour, they would then have had evidence that they were given to him - the evidence resulting from an humble, penitent, believing heart - and then they might rejoice in the assurance that Jesus would lose none that were given to him, but would raise it up at the last day. All the doctrines of Jesus, as he preached them, are safe, and pure, and consistent; as men preach them, they are, unhappily, often inconsistent and open to objection, and are either fitted to produce despair on the one hand, or presumptuous self-confidence on the ether. Jesus teaches men to

strive to enter heaven, as if they could do the work themselves; and yet to depend on the help of God, and give the glory to him, as if he had done it all.

Verse 44

No man can come to me - This was spoken by Jesus to reprove their complaints - "Murmur not among yourselves." They objected to his doctrine, or complained against it, because he claimed to be greater than Moses, and because they supposed him to be a mere man, and that what he said was impossible. Jesus does not deny that these things appeared difficult, and hence he said that if any man believed, it was proof that God had inclined him. It was not to be expected that of themselves they would embrace the doctrine. If any man believed, it would be because he had been influenced by God. When we inquire what the reasons were why they did not believe, they appear to have been:

1. Their improper regard for Moses, as if no one could be superior to him.

2. Their unwillingness to believe that Jesus, whom they knew to be the reputed son of a carpenter, should be superior to Moses.

3. The difficulty was explained by Jesus John 5:40 as consisting in the opposition of their will; and John 5:44 when he said that their love of honor prevented their believing on him. The difficulty in the case was not, therefore, a want of natural faculties, or of power to do their duty, but erroneous opinions, pride, obstinacy, self-conceit, and a deep-felt contempt for Jesus. The word cannot is often used to denote a strong and violent opposition of the will. Thus we say a man is so great a liar that he cannot speak the truth, or he is so profane that he cannot but swear. We mean by it that he is so wicked that while he has that disposition the other effects will follow, but we do not mean to say that he could not break off from the habit. Thus it is said Genesis 37:4 of the brethren of Joseph that they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him. Thus Matthew 12:34, "How can ye, being evil, speak good things?" See Luke 14:33; 1 Samuel 16:2.

Come to me - The same as believe on me.

Draw him - This word is used here, evidently, to denote such an influence from God as to secure the result, or as to incline the mind to believe; yet the manner in which this is done is not determined by the use of

the word. It is used in the New Testament six times. Once it is applied to a compulsory drawing of Paul and Silas to the market-place, Acts 16:19. Twice it is used to denote the drawing of a net, John 21:6, John 21:11. Once to the drawing of a sword John 18:10; and once in a sense similar to its use here John 12:32; "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." What is its meaning here must be determined by the facts about the sinner's conversion. See the notes at John 6:40. In the conversion of the sinner God enlightens the mind John 6:45, he inclines the will Psalm 110:3, and he influences the soul by motives, by just views of his law, by his love, his commands, and his threatenings; by a desire of happiness, and a consciousness of danger; by the Holy Spirit applying truth to the mind, and urging him to yield himself to the Saviour. So that, while God inclines him, and will have all the glory, man yields without compulsion; the obstacles are removed, and he becomes a willing servant of God.

Verse 45

In the prophets - Isaiah 54:13. A similar sentiment is found in Micah 4:1-4, and Jeremiah 31:34; but by the prophets, here, is meant the book of the prophets, and it is probable that Jesus had reference only to the place in Isaiah, as this was the usual way of quoting the prophets.

Shall be all taught of God - This explains the preceding verse. It is by the teaching of his Word and Spirit that men are drawn to God. This shows that it is not compulsory, and that there is no obstacle in the way but a strong voluntary ignorance and unwillingness.

Verse 46

Not that any man hath seen the Father - Jesus added this, evidently, to guard against mistake. He had said that all who came to him were taught of God. The teacher was commonly seen and heard by the pupil; but, lest it should be supposed that he meant to say that a man to come to him must see and hear God, visibly and audibly, he adds that he did not intend to affirm this. It was still true that no man had seen God at any time. They were not, therefore, to expect to see God, and his words were not to be perverted as if he meant to teach that.

Save he which is of God - Jesus here evidently refers to himself as the Son of God. He had just said that no man had seen the Father. When he affirms that he has seen the Father, it implies that he is more than man. He is the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, John 1:18; the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, Hebrews 1:3;

God over all, blessed forever, Romans 9:5. By his being of God is meant that he is the only-begotten Son of God, and sent as the Messiah into the world.

Hath seen - Hath intimately known or perceived him. He knows his nature, character, plans. This is a claim to knowledge superior to what man possesses, and it cannot be understood except by supposing that Jesus is equal with God.

Verse 48

I am that bread of life - My doctrines and the benefits of my mediation are that real support of spiritual life of which the manna in the wilderness was the faint emblem. See John 6:32-33.

Verse 49

Your fathers did eat manna - There was a real miracle performed in their behalf; there was a perpetual interposition of God which showed that they were his chosen people.

And are dead - The bread which they ate could not save them from death. Though God interfered in their behalf, yet they died. We may learn,

1.That that is not the most valuable of God‘s gifts which merely satisfies the temporal wants.

2.That the most distinguished temporal blessings will not save from death. Wealth, friends, food, raiment, will not preserve life.

3.There is need of something better than mere earthly blessings; there is need of that bread which cometh down from heaven, and which giveth life to the world.

Verse 51

The bread that I will give is by flesh - That is, his body would be offered as a sacrifice for sin, agreeably to his declaration when he instituted the Supper: “This is my body which is broken for you,” 1 Corinthians 11:24.

Life of the world - That sinners might, by his atoning sacrifice, be recovered from spiritual death, and be brought to eternal life. The use of the word world hero shows that the sacrifice of Christ was full free ample, and designed for all men, as it is said in 1 John 2:2, “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” In this verse Jesus introduces the subject of his death and atonement. It may be

remarked that in the language which he used the transition from bread to his flesh would appear more easy than it does in our language. The same word which in Hebrew means “bread,” in the Syriac and Arabic means also “flesh.”

Verses 53-55

In these verses Jesus repeats what he had in substance said before.

Except ye eat the flesh … - He did not mean that this should be understood literally, for it was never done, and it is absurd to suppose that it was intended to be so understood. Nothing can possibly be more absurd than to suppose that when he instituted the Supper, and gave the bread and wine to his disciples, they literally ate his flesh and drank his blood. Who can believe this? There he stood, a living man - his body yet alive, his blood flowing in his veins; and how can it be believed that this body was eaten and this blood drunk? Yet this absurdity must be held by those who hold that the bread and wine at the communion are “changed into the body, blood, and divinity of our Lord.” So it is taught in the decrees of the Council of Trent; and to such absurdities are men driven when they depart from the simple meaning of the Scriptures and from common sense. It may be added that if the bread and wine used in the Lord‘s Supper were not changed into his literal body and blood when it was first instituted, they have never been since.

The Lord Jesus would institute it just as he meant it should be observed, and there is nothing now in that ordinance which there was not when the Saviour first appointed it. His body was offered on the cross, and was raised up from the dead and received into heaven. Besides, there is no evidence that he had any reference in this passage to the Lord‘s Supper. That was not yet instituted, and in that there was no literal eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood. The plain meaning of the passage is, that by his bloody death - his body and his blood offered in sacrifice for sin - he would procure pardon and life for man; that they who partook of that, or had an interest in that, should obtain eternal life. He uses the figure of eating and drinking because that was the subject of discourse; because the Jews prided themselves much on the fact that their fathers had eaten manna; and because, as he had said that he was the bread of life, it was natural and easy, especially in the language which he used, to carry out the figure, and say that bread must be eaten in order to be of any avail in supporting and saving men. To eat and to drink, among the Jews, was also expressive of sharing in or partaking of the

privileges of friendship. The happiness of heaven and all spiritual blessings are often represented under this image, Matthew 8:11; Matthew 26:29; Luke 14:15, etc.

John 6:55

Is meat indeed - Is truly food. My doctrine is truly that which will give life to the soul.

Verse 56

Dwelleth in me - Is truly and intimately connected with me. To dwell or abide in him is to remain in the belief of his doctrine, and in the participation of the benefits of his death. Compare John 15:1-6; John 17:21-23.

I in him - Jesus dwells in believers by his Spirit and doctrine. When his Spirit is given them to sanctify them; when his temper, his meekness, his humility, and his love pervade their hearts; when his doctrine is received by them and influences their life, and when they are supported by the consolations of the gospel, it may be said that he abides or dwells in them.

Verse 57

I live by the Father - See the notes at John 5:26.

Verse 58

This is that bread … - This is the true bread that came down. The word "that" should not be in the translation.

Shall live for ever - Not on the earth, but in the enjoyments of a better world.

Verse 60

Many of his disciples - The word "disciple" means "learner." It was applied to the followers of Christ because they were taught by him. It does not imply, of necessity, that those to whom it was given were real Christians, but simply that they were under his teaching, and were professed learners in his school. See Matthew 17:16; Mark 2:18; John 9:28; Matthew 10:24. It is doubtless used in this sense here. It is, however, often applied to those who are real Christians.

This is an hard saying - The word "hard" here means "offensive, disagreeable" - that which they could not bear. Some have understood it to mean "difficult to be understood," but this meaning does not suit the connection. The doctrine which he delivered was opposed to their prejudices; it seemed to be absurd, and they therefore rejected it.

Saying - Rather doctrine or speech - Greek, λόγος logosIt does not refer to any particular part of the discourse, but includes the whole.

Who can hear it? - That is, who can hear it patiently - who can stay and listen to such doctrine or believe it. The effect of this is stated in John 6:66. The doctrines which Jesus taught that were so offensive appear to have been:

1.that he was superior to Moses.

2.that God would save all that he had chosen and those only.

3.that he said he was the bread that came from heaven.

4.that it was necessary to partake of that; that it was necessary that an atonement should be made, and that they should be saved by that.

These doctrines have always been among the most offensive that men have been called on to believe, and many, rather than trust in them, have chosen to draw back to perdition.

Verse 62

What and if … - Jesus does not say that those who were then present would see him ascend, but he implies that he would ascend. They had taken offence because he said he came down from heaven. Instead of explaining that away, he proceeds to state another doctrine quite as offensive to them - that he would reascend to heaven. The apostles only were present at his ascension, Acts 1:9. As Jesus was to ascend to heaven, it was clear that he could not have intended literally that they should eat his flesh.

Verse 63

It is the Spirit that quickeneth - These words have been understood in different ways. The word "Spirit," here, evidently does not refer to the Holy Spirit, for he adds, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit." He refers here, probably, to the doctrine which he had been teaching in opposition to their notions and desires. "My doctrine is spiritual; it is fitted to quicken and nourish the soul. It is from heaven. Your doctrine or your views are earthly, and may be called flesh, or fleshly, as pertaining only to the support of the body. You place a great value on the doctrine that Moses fed the body; yet that did not permanently profit, for your fathers are dead. You seek also food from me, but your views and desires are gross and earthly."

Quickeneth - Gives life. See the notes at John 5:21.

The flesh - Your carnal views and desires, and the literal understanding of my doctrine. By this Jesus shows them that he did not intend that his words should be taken literally.

Profiteth nothing - Would not avail to the real needs of man. The bread that Moses gave, the food which you seek, would not be of real value to man‘s highest wants.

They are spirit - They are spiritual. They are not to be understood literally, as if you were really to eat my flesh, but they are to be understood as denoting the need of that provision for the soul which God has made by my coming into the world.

Are life - Are fitted to produce or give life to the soul dead in sins.

Verse 64

Jesus knew from the beginning … - As this implied a knowledge of the heart, and of the secret principles and motives of men, it shows that he must have been omniscient.

Verse 66

Many of his disciples - Many who had followed him professedly as his disciples and as desirous of learning of him. See the notes at John 6:60.

Went back - Turned away from him and left him. From this we may learn,

1.Not to wonder at the apostasy of many who profess to be followers of Christ. Many are induced to become his professed followers by the prospect of some temporal benefit, or under some public excitement, as these were; and when that temporal benefit is not obtained, or that excitement is over, they fall away.

2.Many may be expected to be offended by the doctrines of the gospel. Having no spirituality of mind, and really understanding nothing of the gospel, they may be expected to take offence and turn back. The best way to understand the doctrines of the Bible is to be a sincere Christian, and aim to do the will of God, John 7:17.

3.We should examine ourselves. We should honestly inquire whether we have been led to make a profession of religion by the hope of any temporal advantage, by any selfish principle, or by mere excited animal feeling. If we have it will profit us nothing, and we shall either fall away of ourselves, or be cast away in the great day of judgment.

Verse 67

The twelve - The twelve apostles.

Will ye also go away? - Many apostatized, and it was natural now for Jesus to submit the question to the twelve. “Will you, whom I have chosen, on whom I have bestowed the apostleship, and who have seen the evidence of my Messiahship, will you now also leave me?” This was the time to try them; and it is always a time to try real Christians when many professed disciples become cold and turn back; and then we may suppose Jesus addressing us, and saying, Will ye also go away! Observe here, it was submitted to their choice. God compels none to remain with him against their will, and the question in such trying times is submitted to every man whether he will or will not go away.

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Verse 68

Simon Peter answered him - With characteristic ardor and promptness. Peter was probably one of the oldest of the apostles, and it was his character to be first and most ardent in his professions.

To whom shall we go - This implied their firm conviction that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he alone was able to save them. It is one of Peter‘s noble confessions - the instinctive promptings of a pious heart and of ardent love. There was no one else who could teach them. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the scribes were corrupt, and unable to guide them aright; and, though the doctrines of Jesus were mysterious, yet they were the only doctrines that could instruct and save them.

Thou hast … - The meaning of this is, thou teachest the doctrines which lead to eternal life. And from this we may learn:

1.that we are to expect that some of the doctrines of the Bible will be mysterious.

2.that, though they are difficult to be understood, yet we should not therefore reject them.

3.that nothing would be gained by rejecting them. The atheist, the infidel - nay, the philosopher, believes, or professes to believe, propositions quite as mysterious as any in the Bible.

4.that poor, lost, sinful man has nowhere else to go but to Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and if the sinner betakes himself to any other

way he will wander and die.

5.We should, therefore, on no account forsake the teachings of the Son of God. The words that he speaks are spirit and are life.

Verse 69

We are sure … - See a similar confession of Peter in Matthew 16:16, and the notes at that place. Peter says we are sure, in the name of the whole of the apostles. Jesus immediately cautions him, as he did on other occasions, not to be too confident, for one of them actually had no such feelings, but was a traitor.

Verse 70

Have not I chosen you twelve? - There is much emphasis in these words. Have not I - I, the Saviour, the Messiah, chosen you in mercy and in love, and therefore it will be a greater sin to betray me? Chosen. Chosen to the apostolic office; conferred on you marks of special favor, and treason is therefore the greater sin. You twelve. So small a number. Out of such a multitude as follow for the loaves and fishes, it is to be expected there should be apostates; but when the number is so small, chosen in such a manner, then it becomes every one, however confident he may be, to be on his guard and examine his heart.

Is a devil - Has the spirit, the envy, the malice, and the treasonable designs of a devil. The word "devil" here is used in the sense of an enemy, or one hostile to him.

Verse 71

He spake of Judas … - There is no evidence that Jesus designated Judas so that the disciples then understood that it was he. It does not appear that the apostles even suspected Judas, as they continued to treat him afterward with the same confidence, for he carried the bag, or the purse containing their little property John 12:6; John 13:29; and at the table, when Jesus said that one of them would betray him, the rest did not suspect Judas until Jesus pointed him out particularly, John 13:26. Jesus spoke of one, to put them on their guard, to check their confidence, and to lead them to self-examination. So in every church, or company of professing Christians, we may know that it is probable that there may be some one or more deceived; but we may not know who it may be, and should therefore inquire prayerfully and honestly, "Lord, is it I?"

Should betray - Would betray. If it be asked why Jesus called a man to be an apostle who he knew had no love for him, who would betray him, and who had from the beginning the spirit of a "devil," we may reply:

1. It was that Judas might be an important witness for the innocence of Jesus, and for the fact that he was not an impostor. Judas was with him more than three years. He was treated with the same confidence as the others, and in some respects even with superior confidence, as he had "the bag" John 12:6, or was the treasurer. He saw the Saviour in public and in private, heard his public discourses and his private conversation, and he would have been just the witness which the high priests and Pharisees would have desired, if he had known any reason why he should be condemned. Yet he alleged nothing against him. Though he betrayed him, yet he afterward said that he was innocent, and, under the convictions of conscience, committed suicide. If Judas had known anything against the Saviour he would have alleged it. If he had known that he was an impostor, and had alleged it, he would have saved his own life and been rewarded. If Jesus was an impostor, he ought to have made it known, and to have bean rewarded for it.

2. It may have been, also, with a foresight of the necessity of having such a man among his disciples, in order that his own death might be brought about in the manner in which it was predicted. There were several prophecies which would have been unfulfilled had there been no such man among the apostles.

3. It showed the knowledge which the Saviour had of the human heart, that he could thus discern character before it was developed, and was able so distinctly to predict that he would betray him.

4. We may add, what benevolence did the Saviour evince - what patience and forbearance - that he had with him for more than three years a man who he knew hated him at heart, and who would yet betray him to be put to death on a cross, and that during all that time he treated him with the utmost kindness!

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Verse 1

After these things - After the transactions which are recorded in the last chapters had taken place, and after the offence he had given the Jews. See John 5:18.

Jesus walked - Or Jesus lived, or taught. He traveled around Galilee teaching.

In Jewry - In Judea, the southern division of Palestine. Compare the notes at John 4:3.

The Jews sought - That is, the rulers of the Jews. It does not appear that the common people ever attempted to take his life.

Verse 2

The Jews‘ feast of tabernacles - Or the feast of tents. This feast was celebrated on the 15th day of the month Tisrianswering to the last half of our month September and the first half of October, Numbers 29:12; Deuteronomy 16:13-15. It was so called from the tents or tabernacles which on that occasion were erected in and about Jerusalem, and was designed to commemorate their dwelling in tents in the wilderness, Nehemiah 8:16-18. During the continuance of this feast they dwelt in booths or tents, as their fathers did in the wilderness, Leviticus 23:42-43. The feast was continued eight days, and the eighth or last day was the most distinguished, and was called the great day of the feast, John 7:37; Numbers 29:35. The Jews on this occasion not only dwelt in booths, but they carried about the branches of palms; willows, and other trees which bore a thick foliage, and also branches of the olive-tree, myrtle, etc., Nehemiah 8:15. Many sacrifices were offered on this occasion Deuteronomy 16:14-16, and it was a time of general joy. It is called by Josephus and Philo the greatest feast, and was one of the three feasts which every male among the Jews was obliged to attend.

Verse 3

His brethren - See the notes at Matthew 12:47.

Thy disciples - The disciples which he had made when he was before in Judea, John 4:1-3.

The works - The miracles.

Verse 4-5

For there is no man … - The brethren of Jesus supposed that he was influenced as others are. As it is a common thing among men to seek popularity, so they supposed that he would also seek it; and as a great multitude would be assembled at Jerusalem at this feast, they supposed it would be a favorable time to make himself known. What follows shows that this was said, probably, not in sincerity, but in derision; and to the other sufferings of our Lord was to be added, what is so common to Christians, derision from his relatives and friends on account of his pretensions. If our Saviour was derided, we also may expect to be by our relatives; and, having his example, we should be content to bear it.

If thou do … - It appears from this that they did not really believe that he performed miracles; or, if they did believe it, they did not suppose that he was the Christ. Yet it seems hardly credible that they could suppose that his miracles were real, and yet not admit that he was the Messiah. Besides, there is no evidence that these relatives had been present at any of his miracles, and all that they knew of them might have been from report. See the notes at Mark 3:21. On the word brethren in John 7:5, see the Matthew 13:55 note, and Galatians 1:19 note.

Verse 6

My time … - The proper time for my going up to the feast. We know not why it was not yet a proper time for him to go. It might be because if he went then, in their company, while multitudes were going, it would have too much the appearance of parade and ostentation; it might excite too much notice, and be more likely to expose him to the envy and opposition of the rulers.

Your time … - It makes no difference to you when you go up. Your going will excite no tumult or opposition; it will not attract attention, and will not endanger your lives. Jesus therefore chose to go up more privately, and to remain until the multitude had gone. They commonly traveled to those feasts in large companies, made up of most of the families in the neighborhood. See the notes at Luke 2:44.

Verse 7

The world cannot hate you - You profess no principles in opposition to the world. You do not excite its envy, or rouse against you the civil rulers. As you possess the same spirit and principles with the men of the world, they cannot be expected to hate you.

I testify of it - I bear witness against it. This was the main cause of the opposition which was made to him. He proclaimed that men were depraved, and the result was that they hated him. We may expect that all who preach faithfully against the wickedness of men will excite opposition. Yet this is not to deter us from doing our duty, and, after the example of Jesus, from proclaiming to men their sins, whatever may be the result.

Verse 8

I go not up yet - Jesus remained until about the middle of the feast, John 7:14. That is, he remained about four days after his brethren had departed, or until the mass of the people had gone up, so that his going might excite no attention, and that it might not be said he chose such a time to excite a tumult. We have here a signal instance of our Lord‘s prudence and opposition to parade. Though it would have been lawful for him to go up at that time, and though it would have been a favorable period to make himself known, yet he chose to forego these advantages rather than to afford an occasion of envy and jealousy to the rulers, or to appear even to excite a tumult among the people.

Verse 12

Murmuring - Contention, disputing.

He deceiveth the people - That is, he is deluding them, or drawing them away by pretending to be the Messiah.

Verse 13

Spake openly of him - The word translated “openly,” here, is commonly rendered “boldly.” This refers doubtless, to those who really believed on him. His enemies were not silent; but his friends had not confidence to speak of him openly or boldly that is, to speak what they really thought. Many supposed that he was the Messiah, yet even this they did not dare to profess. All that they could say in his favor was that he was a good man. There are always many such friends of Jesus in the world who are desirous of saying something good about him, but who, from fear or shame, refuse to make a full acknowledgment of him. Many will praise his morals, his precepts, and his holy life, while they are ashamed to speak of his divinity or his atonement, and still more to acknowledge that they are dependent on him for salvation.

Verse 14

About the midst - Or about the middle of the feast. It continued eight days.

The temple - See the notes at Matthew 21:12.

And taught - Great multitudes were assembled in and around the temple, and it was a favorable time and place to make known his doctrine.

Verse 15

Knoweth this man letters - The Jewish letters or science consisted in the knowledge of their Scriptures and traditions. Jesus exhibited in his discourses such a profound acquaintance with the Old Testament as to excite their amazement and admiration.

Having never learned - The Jews taught their law and tradition in celebrated schools. As Jesus had not been instructed in those schools, they were amazed at his learning. What early human teaching the Saviour had we have no means of ascertaining, further than that it was customary for the Jews to teach their children to read the Scriptures. 2 Timothy 3:15; "from a child thou (Timothy) hast known the holy scriptures."

Verse 16

My doctrine - My teaching, or what I teach. This is the proper meaning of the word "doctrine." It is what is taught us, and, as applied to religion, it is what is taught us by God in the Holy Scriptures.

Is not wine - It is not originated by me. Though I have not learned in your schools, yet you are not to infer that the doctrine which I teach is devised or invented by me. I teach nothing that is contrary to the will of God, and which he has not appointed me to teach.

His that sent me - God's. It is such as he approves, and such as he has commissioned me to teach. The doctrine is divine in its origin and in its nature.

Verse 17

If any man will do his will - Literally, if any man wills or is willing to do the will of God. If there is a disposition in anyone to do that will, though he should not be able perfectly to keep His commandments. To do the will of God is to obey His commandments; to yield our hearts and lives to His requirements. A disposition to do His will is a readiness to yield our intellects, our feelings, and all that we have entirely to Him, to be governed according to His pleasure.

He shall know - He shall have evidence, in the very attempt to do the will of God, of the truth of the doctrine. This evidence is internal, and to the individual it is satisfactory and conclusive. It is of two kinds.

1. He will find that the doctrines which Jesus taught are such as commend themselves to his reason and conscience, and such as are consistent with all that we know of the perfections of God. His doctrines commend themselves to us as fitted to make us pure and happy, and of course they are such as must be from God.

2. An honest desire to obey God will lead a man to embrace the great doctrines of the Bible. He will find that his heart is depraved and inclined to evil, and he will see and feel the truth of the doctrine of depravity; he will find that he is a sinner and needs to be born again; he will learn his own weakness, and see his need of a Saviour, of an atonement, and of pardoning mercy; he will feel that he is polluted, and needs the purifying influence of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, we may learn:

1.That an honest effort to obey God is the easiest way to become acquainted with the doctrines of the Bible.

2.Those who make such an effort will not cavil at any of the doctrines of the Scriptures.

3.This is evidence of the truth of revelation which every person can apply to his own case.

4.It is such evidence as to lead to certainty. No one who has ever made an honest effort to live a pious life, and to do all the will of God, has ever had any doubt of the truth of the Saviour‘s doctrines, or any doubt that his religion is true and is suited to the nature of man. They only doubt the truth of religion who wish to live in sin.

5.We see the goodness of God in giving us evidence of his truth that may be within every man‘s reach. It does not require great learning to be a Christian, and to be convinced of the truth of the Bible. It requires an honest heart, and a willingness to obey God.

Whether it be of God - Whether it be divine.

Or whether I speak of myself - Of myself without being commissioned or directed by God.

Verse 18

That speaketh of himself - This does not mean about or concerning himself, but he that speaks by his own authority, without being sent by God, as mere human teachers do.

Seeketh his own glory - His own praise, or seeks for reputation and applause. This is the case with mere human teachers, and as Jesus in his discourses manifestly sought to honor God, they ought to have supposed that he was sent by him.

No unrighteousness - This word here means, evidently, there is no falsehood, no deception in him. He is not an impostor. It is used in the same sense in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. It is true that there was no unrighteousness, no sin in Jesus Christ, but that is not the truth taught here. It is that he was not an impostor, and the evidence of this was that he sought not his own glory, but the honor of God. This evidence was furnished:

1.in his retiring, unobtrusive disposition; in his not seeking the applause of people;

2.in his teaching such doctrines as tended to exalt God and humble man;

3.in his ascribing all glory and praise to God;

Verse 19

Did not Moses give you the law? - This they admitted, and on this they prided themselves. Every violation of that law they considered as deserving of death. They had accused Jesus of violating it because he had healed a man on the Sabbath, and for that they had sought his life, John 5:10-16. He here recalls that charge to their recollection, and shows them that, though they pretended great reverence for that law, yet they were really its violators in having sought his life.

None of you … - None of you Jews. They had sought to kill him. This was a pointed and severe charge, and shows the great faithfulness with which he was accustomed to proclaim the truth.

Why go ye about to kill me? - Why do ye seek to kill me? See John 5:16.

Verse 20

The people - Perhaps some of the people who were not aware of the designs of the rulers.

Thou hast a devil - Thou art deranged or mad. See John 10:20. As they saw no effort to kill him, and as they were ignorant of the designs of the

rulers, they supposed that this was the effect of derangement.

Verse 21

One work - The healing of the man on the Sabbath, John 5.

Ye all marvel - You all wonder or are amazed, and particularly that it was done on the Sabbath. This was the particular ground of astonishment, that he should dare to do what they esteemed a violation of the Sabbath.

Verse 22

Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision - Moses commanded you to circumcise your children, Leviticus 12:3. The word "therefore" in this place - literally "on account of this" - means, "Moses on this account gave you circumcision, not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;" that is, the reason was not that he himself appointed it as a new institution, but he found it already in existence, and incorporated it in his institutions and laws.

Not because … - Not that it is of Moses. Though Jesus spoke in accordance with the custom of the Jews, who ascribed the appointment of circumcision to Moses, yet he is careful to remind them that it was in observance long before Moses. So, also, the Sabbath was kept before Moses, and alike in the one case and the other they ought to keep in mind the design of the appointment.

Of the fathers - Of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Genesis 17:10.

Ye on the sabbath-day … - The law required that the child should be circumcised on the eighth day. If that day happened to be the Sabbath, yet they held that he was to be circumcised, as there was a positive law to that effect; and as this was commanded, they did not consider it a breach of the Sabbath.

A man - Not an adult man, but a man-child. See John 16:21; "She remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world."

Verse 23

That the law of Moses should not be broken - In order that the law requiring it to be done at a specified time, though that might occur on the Sabbath, should be kept.

Are ye angry … - The argument of Jesus is this: "You yourselves, in interpreting the law about the Sabbath, allow a work of necessity to be done. You do that which is necessary as an ordinance of religion denoting

separation from other nations, or external purity. As you allow this, you ought also, for the same reason, to allow that a man should be completely restored to health - that a work of much more importance should be done." We may learn here that it would be happy for all if they would not condemn others in that thing which they allow. People often accuse others of doing things which they themselves do in other ways.

Every whit whole - Literally, "I have restored the whole man to health," implying that the man's whole body was diseased, and that he had been entirely restored to health.

Verse 24

Judge not according to the appearance - Not as a thing first offers itself to you, without reflection or candor. In appearance, to circumcise a child on the Sabbath might be a violation of the law; yet you do it, and it is right. So, to appearance, it might be a violation of the Sabbath to heal a man, yet it is right to do works of necessity and mercy.

Judge righteous judgment - Candidly; looking at the law, and inquiring what its spirit really requires.

Verse 26

Do the rulers know indeed … - It seems from this that they supposed that the rulers had been convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, but that from some cause they were not willing yet to make it known to the people. The reasons of this opinion were these:

1.They knew that they had attempted to kill him.

2.They now saw him speaking boldly to the people without interruption from the rulers.

They concluded, therefore, that some change had taken place in the sentiments of the rulers in regard to him, though they had not yet made it public.

The rulers - The members of the Sanhedrin, or great council of the nation, who had charge of religious affairs.

Indeed - Truly; certainly. Have they certain evidence, as would appear from their suffering him to speak without interruption?

The very Christ - Is truly or really the Messiah.

Verse 27

Howbeit - But. They proceeded to state a reason why they supposed that he could not be the Messiah, whatever the rulers might think.

We know this man whence he is - We know the place of his birth and residence.

No man knoweth whence he is - From Matthew 2:5, it appears that the common expectation of the Jews was that the Messiah would be born at Bethlehem; but they had also feigned that after his birth he would be hidden or taken away in some mysterious manner, and appear again from some unexpected quarter. We find allusions to this expectation in the New Testament, where our Saviour corrects their common notions, Matthew 24:23; "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not." And again John 7:26, "If they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth; behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not." The following extracts from Jewish writings show that this was the common expectation: "The Redeemer shall manifest himself, and afterward be hid. So it was in the redemption from Egypt. Moses showed himself and then was hidden." So on the passage, Song of Song of Solomon 2:9 - "My beloved is like a roe or a young hart" - they say: "A roe appears and then is hid; so the Redeemer shall first appear and then be concealed, and then again be concealed and then again appear." "So the Redeemer shall first appear and then be hid, and then, at the end of 45 days, shall reappear, and cause manna to descend." See Lightfoot. Whatever may have been the source of this opinion, it explains this passage, and shows that the writer of this gospel was well acquainted with the opinions of the Jews, however improbable those opinions were.

Verse 28

Ye know whence I am - You have sufficient evidence of my divine mission, and that I am the Messiah.

Is true - Is worthy to be believed. He has given evidence that I came from him, and he is worthy to be believed. Many read this as a question - Do ye know me, and know whence I am? I have not come from myself, etc.

Verse 30

Then they sought to take him - The rulers and their friends. They did this:

1.because of his reproof; and,

2.for professing to be the Messiah.

His hour - The proper and the appointed time for his death. See Matthew 21:46.

Verse 31

Will he do more miracles? - It was a common expectation that the Messiah would work many miracles. This opinion was founded on such passages as Isaiah 35:5-6, etc.: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart," etc. Jesus had given abundant evidence of his power to work such miracles, and they therefore believed that he was the Messiah.

Verse 32

The people murmured such things - That is, that the question was agitated whether he was the Messiah; that it excited debate and contention; and that the consequence was, he made many friends. They chose, therefore, if possible, to remove him from them.

Verse 33

Yet a little while am I with you - It will not be long before my death. This is supposed to have been about six months before his death. This speech of Jesus is full of tenderness. They were seeking his life. He tells them that he is fully aware of it; that he will not be long with them; and implies that they should be diligent to seek him while he was yet with them. He was about to die, but they might now seek his favor and find it. When we remember that this was said to his persecutors and murderers; that it was said even while they were seeking his life, we see the special tenderness of his love. Enmity, and hate, and persecution did not prevent his offering salvation to them.

I go unto him that sent me - This is one of the intimations that he gave that he would ascend to God. Compare John 6:62.

Verse 34

Ye shall seek me - This probably means simply, Ye shall seek the Messiah. Such will be your troubles, such the calamities that will come on the nation, that you will earnestly desire the coming of the Messiah. You will seek for a Deliverer, and will look for feign that he may bring deliverance. This does not mean that they would seek for Jesus and not be able to find him, but that they would desire the aid and comfort of the Messiah, and would be disappointed. Jesus speaks of himself as the Messiah, and his own name as synonymous with the Messiah. See the notes at Matthew 23:39.

Shall not find me - Shall not find the Messiah. He will not come, according to your expectations, to aid you. See the notes at Matthew 24.

Where I am - This whole clause is to be understood as future, though the words AM and cannot are both in the present tense. The meaning is, Where I shall be you will not be able to come. That is, he, the Messiah, would be in heaven; and though they would earnestly desire his presence and aid to save the city and nation from the Romans, yet they would not be able to obtain it - represented here by their not being able to come to him. This does not refer to their individual salvation, but to the deliverance of their nation. It is not true of individual sinners that they seek Christ in a proper manner and are not able to find him; but it was true of the Jewish nation that they looked for the Messiah, and sought his coming to deliver them, but he did not do it.

Verse 35

The dispersed among the Gentiles - To the Jews scattered among the Gentiles, or living in distant parts of the earth. It is well known that at that time there were Jews dwelling in almost every land. There were multitudes in Egypt, in Asia Minor, in Greece, in Rome, etc., and in all these places they had synagogues. The question which they asked was whether he would leave an ungrateful country, and go into those distant nations and teach them.

Gentiles - In the original, Greeks. All those who were not Jews were called Greeks, because they were chiefly acquainted with those pagans only who spake the Greek language. It is remarkable that Jesus returned no answer to these inquiries. He rather chose to turn off their minds from a speculation about the place to which he was going, to the great affairs of their own personal salvation.

Verse 37

In the last day - The eighth day of the festival.

That great day - The day of the holy convocation or solemn assembly, Leviticus 23:36. This seems to have been called the great day:

1.because of the solemn assembly, and because it was the closing scene.

2.because, according to their traditions, on the previous days they offered sacrifices for the pagan nations as well as for themselves, but on this day for the Jews only (Lightfoot).

3.because on this day they abstained from all servile labor Leviticus 23:39, and regarded it as a holy day.

4.On this day they finished the reading of the law, which they commenced at the beginning of the feast.

5.because on this day probably occurred the ceremony of drawing water from the pool of Siloam.

On the last day of the feast it was customary to perform a solemn ceremony in this manner: The priest filled a golden vial with water from the fount of Siloam (see the notes at John 9:7), which was borne with great solemnity, attended with the clangor of trumpets, through the gate of the temple, and being mixed with wine, was poured on the sacrifice on the altar. What was the origin of this custom is unknown. Some suppose, and not improbably, that it arose from an improper understanding of the passage in Isaiah 12:3; "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." It is certain that no such ceremony is commanded by Moses. It is supposed to be probable that Jesus stood and cried while they were performing this ceremony, that he might:

1.illustrate the nature of his doctrine by this; and,

2.call off their attention from a rite that was uncommanded, and that could not confer eternal life.

Jesus stood - In the temple, in the midst of thousands of the people.

If any man thirst - Spiritually. If any man feels his need of salvation. See John 4:13-14; Matthew 5:6; Revelation 22:17. The invitation is full and free to all.

Let him come unto me … - Instead of depending on this ceremony of drawing water let him come to me, the Messiah, and he shall find an ever-abundant supply for all the wants of his soul.

Verse 38

He that believeth on me - He that acknowledges me as the Messiah, and trusts in me for salvation.

As the scripture hath said - This is a difficult expression, from the fact that no such expression as follows is to be found literally in the Old Testament. Some have proposed to connect it with what precedes - "He that believeth on me, as the Old Testament has commanded or required" - but to this there are many objections. The natural and obvious meaning here is, doubtless, the true one; and Jesus probably intended to say, not that there was any particular place in the Old Testament that affirmed this in so many words, but that this was the substance of what the Scriptures taught, or this

was the spirit of their declarations. Hence, the Syriac translates it in the plural - the Scriptures. Probably there is a reference more particularly to Isaiah 58:11, than to any other single passage: "Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not." See also Isaiah 44:3-4; Joel 3:18.

Out of his belly - Out of his midst, or out of his heart. The word "belly" is often put for the midst of a thing, the center, and the heart, Matthew 12:40. It means here that from the man shall flow; that is, his piety shall be of such a nature that it will extend its blessings to others. It shall be like a running fountain - perhaps in allusion to statues or ornamented reservoirs in gardens. in which pipes were placed from which water was continually flowing. The Jews used the same figure: "His two reins are like fountains of water, from which the law flows." And again: "When a man turns himself to the Lord, he shall be as a fountain filled with living water, and his streams shall flow to all the nations and tribes of men" (Kuinoel).

Rivers - This word is used to express abundance, or a full supply. It means here that those who are Christians shall diffuse large, and liberal, and constant blessings on their fellow-men; or, as Jesus immediately explains it, that they shall be the instruments by which the Holy Spirit shall be poured down on the world.

Living water - Fountains, ever-flowing streams. That is, the gospel shall be constant and life-giving in its blessings. We learn here:

1.that it is the nature of Christian piety to be diffusive.

2.that no man can believe on Jesus who does not desire that others should also, and who will not seek it.

3.that the desire is large and liberal - that the Christian desires the salvation of all the world.

4.that the faith of the believer is to be connected with the influence of the Holy Spirit, and in that way Christians are to be like rivers of living water.

Verse 39

Of the Spirit - Of the Holy Spirit, that should be sent down to attend their preaching and to convert sinners.

For the Holy Ghost was not yet given - Was not given in such full and large measures as should be after Jesus had ascended to heaven. Certain measures of the influences of the Spirit had been always given in the conversion and sanctification of the ancient saints and prophets; but that abundant and full effusion which the apostles were permitted afterward to behold had not yet been given. See Acts 10:44-45.

Jesus was not yet glorified - Jesus had not yet ascended to heaven - to the glory and honor that awaited him there. It was a part of the arrangement in the work of redemption that the influences of the Holy Spirit should descend chiefly after the death of Jesus, as that death was the procuring cause of this great blessing. Hence, he said John 16:7, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you." See also John 7:8-12; John 14:15-16, John 14:26. Compare Ephesians 4:8-11.

Verse 40

The Prophet - That is, the prophet whom they expected to precede the coming of the Messiah - either Elijah or Jeremiah. See Matthew 16:14.

Verse 41-42

See the notes at Matthew 2:4-6.

Where David was - 1 Samuel 16:1-4.

Verse 45-46

The officers - Those who had been appointed John 7:32 to take him. It seems that Jesus was in the midst of the people addressing them, and that they happened to come at the very time when he was speaking. They were so impressed and awed with what he said that they dared not take him. There have been few instances of eloquence like this. His speaking had so much evidence of truth, so much proof that he was from God, and was so impressive and persuasive, that they were convinced of his innocence, and they dared not touch him to execute their commission. We have here:

1.A remarkable testimony to the commanding eloquence of Jesus.

2.Wicked men may be awed and restrained by the presence of a good man, and by the evidence that he speaks that which is true.

3.God can preserve his friends. Here were men sent for a particular purpose. They were armed with power. They were commissioned by the highest authority of the nation. On the other hand, Jesus was without arms or armies, and without external protection. Yet, in a manner which the

officers and the high priests would have little expected, he was preserved. So, in ways which we little expect, God will defend and deliver us when in the midst of danger.

4.No prophet, apostle, or minister has ever spoken the truth with as much power, grace, and beauty as Jesus. It should be ours, therefore, to listen to his words, and to sit at his feet and learn heavenly wisdom.

Verse 47

Are ye also deceived? - They set down the claims of Jesus as of course an imposture. They did not examine, but were, like thousands, determined to believe that he was a deceiver. Hence, they did not ask them whether they were convinced, or had seen evidence that he was the Messiah; but, with mingled contempt, envy, and anger, they asked if they were also deluded. Thus many assume religion to be an imposture; and when one becomes a Christian, they assume at once that he is deceived, that he is the victim of foolish credulity or superstition, and treat him with ridicule or scorn. Candor would require them to inquire whether such changes were not proof of the power and truth of the gospel, as candor in the case of the rulers required them to inquire whether Jesus had not given them evidence that he was from God.

Verse 48

The rulers - The members of the Sanhedrin, who were supposed to have control over the religious rites and doctrines of the nation.

The Pharisees - The sect possessing wealth, and office, and power. The name Pharisees sometimes denotes those who were high in honor and authority.

Believed on him - Is there any instance in which those who are high in rank or in office have embraced him as the Messiah? This shows the rule by which they judged of religion:

1.They claimed the right of regulating the doctrines and rites of religion.

2.They repressed the liberty of private judgment, stifled investigation, assumed that a new doctrine must be heresy, and labored to keep the people within inglorious bondage.

3.They treated the new doctrine of Jesus with contempt, and thus attempted to put it down, not by argument, but by contempt, and especially

because it was embraced by the common people. This is the way in which doctrines contrary to the truth of God have been uniformly supported in the world; this is the way in which new views of truth are met; and this the way in which those in ecclesiastical power often attempt to lord it over God‘s heritage, and to repress the investigation of the Bible.

Verse 49

This people - The word here translated “people” is the one commonly rendered “the multitude.” It is a word expressive of contempt, or, as we would say, the rabble. It denotes the scorn which they felt that the people should presume to judge for themselves in a case pertaining to their own salvation.

Who knoweth not the law - Who have not been instructed in the schools of the Pharisees, and been taught to interpret the Old Testament as they had. They supposed that any who believed on the humble and despised Jesus must be, of course, ignorant of the true doctrines of the Old Testament, as they held that a very different Messiah from him was foretold. Many instances are preserved in the writings of the Jews of the great contempt in which the Pharisees held the common people. It may here be remarked that Christianity is the only system of religion ever presented to man that in a proper manner regards the poor, the ignorant, and the needy. Philosophers and Pharisees, in all ages, have looked on them with contempt.

Are cursed - Are execrable; are of no account; are worthy only of contempt and perdition. Some suppose that there is reference here to their being worthy to be cut off from the people for believing on him, or worthy to be put out of the synagogue (see John 9:22); but it seems to be an expression only of contempt; a declaration that they were a rabble, ignorant, unworthy of notice, and going to ruin. Observe, however:

1.That of this despised people were chosen most of those who became Christians.

2.That if the people were ignorant, it was the fault of the Pharisees and rulers. It was their business to see that they were taught.

3.There is no way so common of attempting to oppose Christianity as by ridiculing its friends as poor, and ignorant, and weak, and credulous. As

well might food, and raiment, and friendship, and patriotism be held in contempt because the poor need the one or possess the other.

Verse 50

Nicodemus - See John 3:1.

One of them - That is, one of the great council or Sanhedrin. God often places one or more pious men in legislative assemblies to vindicate his honor and his law; and he often gives a man grace on such occasions boldly to defend his cause; to put men upon their proof, and to confound the proud and the domineering. We see in this case, also, that a man, at one time timid and fearful (compare John 3:1), may on other occasions be bold, and fearlessly defend the truth as it is in Jesus. This example should lead every man entrusted with authority or office fearlessly to defend the truth of God, and, when the rich and the mighty are pouring contempt on Jesus and his cause, to stand forth as its fearless defender.

Verse 51

Doth our law … - The law required justice to be done, and gave every man the right to claim a fair and impartial trial, Leviticus 19:15-16; Exodus 23:1-2; Deuteronomy 19:15, Deuteronomy 19:18. Their condemnation of Jesus was a violation of every rule of right. He was not arraigned; he was not heard in self-defense, and not a single witness was adduced. Nicodemus demanded that justice should be done, and that he should, not be condemned until he had had a fair trial. Every man should be presumed to be innocent until he is proved to be guilty. This is a maxim of law, and a most just and proper precept in our judgments in private life.

Verse 52

Art thou also of Galilee? - Here is another expression of contempt. To be a Galilean was a term of the highest reproach. They knew well that he was not of Galilee, but they meant to ask whether he also had become a follower of the despised Galilean. Ridicule is not argument, and there is no demonstration in a gibe; but, unhappily, this is the only weapon which the proud and haughty often use in opposing religion.

Ariseth no prophet - That is, there is no prediction that any prophet should come out of Galilee, and especially no prophet that was to attend or precede the Messiah. Compare John 1:46. They assumed, therefore, that Jesus could not be the Christ.

Verse 53

And every man went unto his own house - There is every mark of confusion and disorder in this breaking up of the Sanhedrin. It is possible that some of the Sadducees might have joined Nicodemus in opposing the Pharisees, and thus increased the disorder. It is a most instructive and melancholy exhibition of the influence of pride, envy, contempt, and anger, when brought to bear on an inquiry, and when they are manifestly opposed to candor, to argument, and to truth. So wild and furious are the passions of men when they oppose the person and claims of the Son of God! It is remarkable, too, how God accomplishes his purposes. They wished to destroy Jesus. God suffered their passions to be excited, a tumult to ensue, the assembly thus to break up in disorder, and Jesus to be safe, for his time had not yet come. "The wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain," Psalm 76:10.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

Mount of Olives - The mountain about a mile directly east of Jerusalem. See the notes at Matthew 21:1. This was the place in which he probably often passed the night when attending the feasts at Jerusalem. The Garden of Gethsemane, to which he was accustomed to resort John 18:2, was on the western side of that mountain, and Bethany, the abode of Martha and Mary, on its east side, John 11:1.

Verse 5

Moses in the law … - The punishment of adultery commanded by Moses was death, Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22. The particular manner of the death was not specified in the law. The Jews had themselves, in the time of Christ, determined that it should be by stoning. See this described in the notes at Matthew 21:35, Matthew 21:44. The punishment for adultery varied. In some cases it was strangling. In the time of Ezekiel Ezekiel 16:38-40 it was stoning and being thrust through with a sword. If the adulteress was the daughter of a priest, the punishment was being burned to death.

Verse 6

Tempting him - Trying him, or laying a plan that they might have occasion to accuse him. If he decided the case, they expected to be able to bring an accusation against him; for if he decided that she ought to die, they might accuse him of claiming power which belonged to the Romans - the power of life and death. They might allege that it was not the giving an opinion about an abstract case, but that she was formally before him, that he decided her case judicially, and that without authority or form of trial. If he decided otherwise, they would have alleged that he denied the authority of the law, and that it was his intention to abrogate it. They had had a controversy with him about the authority of the Sabbath, and they perhaps supposed that he would decide this case as he did that - against them. It may be further added that they knew that Jesus admitted publicans and sinners to eat with him; that one of their charges was that he was friendly to sinners (see Luke 15:2); and they wished, doubtless, to make it appear that he was gluttonous, and a winebibber, and a friend of sinners, and disposed to relax all the laws of morality, even in the case of adultery. Seldom was there a

plan more artfully laid, and never was more wisdom and knowledge of human nature displayed than in the manner in which it was met.

Wrote on the ground - This took place in the temple. The "ground," here, means the pavement, or the dust on the pavement. By this Jesus showed them clearly that he was not solicitous to pronounce an opinion in the case, and that it was not his wish or intention to intermeddle with the civil affairs of the nation.

As though he heard them not - This is added by the translators. It is not in the original, and should not have been added. There is no intimation in the original, as it seems to be implied by this addition, that the object was to convey the impression that he did not hear them. What was his object is unknown, and conjecture is useless. The most probable reason seems to be that he did not wish to intermeddle; that he designed to show no solicitude to decide the case; and that he did not mean to decide it unless he was constrained to.

Verse 7

They continued asking him - They pressed the question upon him. They were determined to extort an answer from him, and showed a perseverance in evil which has been unhappily often imitated.

Is without sin - That is, without this particular sin; he who has not himself been guilty of this very crime - for in this place the connection evidently demands this meaning.

Let him first cast a stone at her - In the punishment by death, one of the witnesses threw the culprit from the scaffold, and the other threw the first stone, or rolled down a stone to crush him. See Deuteronomy 17:6-7. This was in order that the witness might feel his responsibility in giving evidence, as he was also to be the executioner. Jesus therefore put them to the test. Without pronouncing on her case, he directed them, if any of them were innocent, to perform the office of executioner. This was said, evidently, well knowing their guilt, and well knowing that no one would dare to do it.

Verse 9

Beginning at the eldest - As being conscious of more sins, and, therefore, being desirous to leave the Lord Jesus. The word "eldest" here probably refers not to age, but to benefit - from those who were in highest reputation to the lowest in rank. This consciousness of crime showed that the state of the public morals was exceedingly corrupt, and justified the

declaration of Jesus that it was an adulterous and wicked generation, Matthew 16:4.

Alone - Jesus only was left with the woman, etc.

In the midst - Her accusers had gone out, and left Jesus and the woman; but it is by no means probable that the people had left them; and, as this was in the temple on a public occasion, they were doubtless surrounded still by many. This is evident from the fact that Jesus immediately John 8:12 addressed a discourse to the people present.

Verse 10

Hath no man condemned thee? - Jesus had directed them, if innocent, to cast a stone, thus to condemn her, or to use the power which he gave them to condemn her. No one of them had done that. They had accused her, but they had not proceeded to the act expressive of judicial condemnation.

Verse 11

Neither do I condemn thee - This is evidently to be taken in the sense of judicial condemnation, or of passing sentence as a magistrate, for this was what they had arraigned her for. It was not to obtain his opinion about adultery, but to obtain the condemnation of the woman. As he claimed no civil authority, he said that he did not exercise it, and should not condemn her to die. In this sense the word is used in the previous verse, and this is the only sense which the passage demands. Besides, what follows shows that this was his meaning.

Go, and sin no more - You have sinned. You have been detected and accused. The sin is great. But I do not claim power to condemn you to die, and, as your accusers have left you, my direction to you is that you sin no more. This passage therefore teaches us:

1.that Jesus claimed no civil authority.

2.that he regarded the action of which they accused her as sin.

3.that he knew the hearts and lives of men.

4.that men are often very zealous in accusing others of that of which they themselves are guilty. And,

5.that Jesus was endowed with wonderful wisdom in meeting the devices of his enemies, and eluding their deep-laid plans to involve him in ruin.

It should be added that this passage, together with the last verse of the preceding chapter, has been by many critics thought to be spurious. It is wanting in many of the ancient manuscripts and versions, and has been rejected by Erasmus, Calvin, Beza, Grotius, Wetstein, Tittman, Knapp, and many others. It is not easy to decide the question whether it be a genuine part of the New Testament or not. Some have supposed that it was not written by the evangelists, but was often related by them, and that after a time it was recorded and introduced by Papias into the sacred text.

Verse 12

I am the light of the world - See the notes at John 1:4, John 1:9.

Verse 13

Thou bearest record of thyself - Thou art a witness for thyself, or in thy own case. See John 5:31. The law required two witnesses in a criminal case, and they alleged that as the only evidence which Jesus had was his own assertion, it could not be entitled to belief.

Is not true - Is not worthy of belief, or is not substantiated by sufficient evidence.

Verse 14

Jesus answered … - To this objection Jesus replied by saying, first, that the case was such that his testimony alone ought to be received; and, secondly, that he had the evidence given him by his Father. Though, in common life, in courts, and in mere human transactions, it was true that a man ought not to give evidence in his own case, yet in this instance, such was the nature of the case that his word was worthy to be believed.

My record - My evidence, my testimony.

Is true - Is worthy to be believed.

For I know whence I came … but ye … - I know by what authority I act; I know by whom I am sent, and what commands were given me; but you cannot determine this, for you do not know these unless I bear witness of them to you. We are to remember that Jesus came not of himself John 6:38; that he came not to do his own will, but the will of his Father. He came as a witness of those things which he had seen and known John 3:11, and no man could judge of those things for no man had seen them. As he came from heaven; as he knew his Father‘s will; as he had seen the eternal world, and known the counsels of his Father, so his testimony was worthy of confidence. As they had not seen and known these things, they were not qualified to judge. An ambassador from a foreign court knows the will and

purposes of the sovereign who sent him, and is competent to bear witness of it. The court to which he is sent has no way of judging but by his testimony, and he is therefore competent to testify in the case. All that can be demanded is that he give his credentials that he is appointed, and this Jesus had done both by the nature of his doctrine and his miracles.

Verse 15

After the flesh - According to appearance; according to your carnal and corrupt mode; not according to the spiritual nature of the doctrines. By your preconceived opinions and prejudices you are determined not to believe that I am the Messiah.

I judge no man - Jesus came not to condemn the world, John 3:17. They were in the habit of judging rashly and harshly of all; but this was not the purpose or disposition of the Saviour. This expression is to be understood as meaning that he judged no one after their manner; he did not come to censure and condemn men after the appearance, or in a harsh, biased, and unkind manner.

Verse 16

And yet, if I judge - If I should express my judgment of men or things. He was not limited, nor forbidden to do it, nor restrained by any fear that his judgment would be erroneous.

My judgment is true - Is worthy to be regarded.

For I am not alone - I concur with the Father who hath sent me. His judgment you admit would be right, and my judgment would accord with his. He was commissioned by his Father, and his judgment would coincide with all that God had purposed or revealed. This was shown by the evidence that God gave that he had sent him into the world.

Verse 17

In your law - Deuteronomy 17:6; Deuteronomy 19:15. Compare Matthew 18:16. This related to cases in which the life of an individual was involved. Jesus says that if, in such a case, the testimony of two men were sufficient to establish a fact, his own testimony and that of his Father ought to be esteemed ample evidence in the case of religious doctrine.

Two men - If two men could confirm a case, the evidence of Jesus and of God ought not to be deemed insufficient.

Is true - In Deuteronomy, "established." This means the same thing. It is confirmed; is worthy of belief.

Verse 18

I am one that bear witness of myself - In human courts a man is not allowed to bear witness of himself, because he has a personal interest in the case, and the court could have no proof of the impartiality of the evidence; but in the case of Jesus it was otherwise. When one has no party ends to serve; when he is willing to deny himself; when he makes great sacrifices; and when, by his life, he gives every evidence of sincerity, his own testimony may be admitted in evidence of his motives and designs. This was the case with Jesus and his apostles. And though in a legal or criminal case such testimony would not be admitted, yet, in an argument on moral subjects, about the will and purpose of him who sent him, it would not be right to reject the testimony of one who gave so many proofs that he came from God.

The Father … beareth witness of me - By the voice from heaven at his baptism Matthew 3:17, and by the miracles which Jesus performed, as well as by the prophecies of the Old Testament. We may here remark:

1.that there is a distinction between the Father and the Son. They are both represented as bearing testimony; yet,

2.They are not divided. They are not different beings. They bear testimony to the same thing, and are one in counsel, in plan, in essence, and in glory.

Verse 19

Where is thy Father? - This question was asked, doubtless, in derision. Jesus had often given them to understand that by his Father he meant God, John 5:6; They professed to be ignorant of this, and probably looked round in contempt for his Father, that he might adduce him as a witness in the case.

If ye had known me … - If you had listened to my instructions, and had received me as the Messiah, you would also, at the same time, have been acquainted with God. We may here observe,

1.The manner in which Jesus answered them. He gave no heed to their cavil; he was not irritated by their contempt; he preserved his dignity, and gave them an answer worthy of the Son of God.

2.We should meet the cavils and sneers of sinners in the same manner. We should not render railing for railing, but "in meekness instruct those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth," 2 Timothy 2:25.

3.The way to know God is to know Jesus Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John 1:18. No sinner can have just views of God but in Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:6.

Verse 20

The treasury - See the notes at Matthew 21:12.

His hour was not yet come - The time for him to die had not yet arrived, and God restrained them, and kept his life. This proves that God has power over wicked men to control them, and to make them accomplish his own purposes.

Verse 21

I go my way - See the notes at John 7:33.

Ye shall die in your sins - That is, you will seek the Messiah; you will desire his coming, but the Messiah that you expect will not come; and, as you have rejected me, and there is no other Saviour, you must die in your sins. You will die unpardoned, and as you did not seek me where you might find me, you cannot come where I shall be. Observe:

1.All those who reject the Lord Jesus must die unforgiven. There is no way of pardon but by him. See the notes at Acts 4:12.

2.There will be a time when sinners will seek for a Saviour but will find none. Often this is done too late, in a dying moment, and in the future world they may seek a deliverer, but not be able to find one.

3.Those who reject the Lord Jesus must perish. Where he is they cannot come. Where he is is heaven. Where he is not, with his favor and mercy, there is hell; and the sinner that has no Savior must be wretched forever.

Verse 22

Will he kill himself? - It is difficult to know whether this question was asked from ignorance or malice. Self-murder was esteemed then, as it is now, as one of the greatest crimes; and it is not improbable that they asked this question with mingled hatred and contempt. "He is a deceiver; he has broken the law of Moses; he is mad, and it is probable he will go on and kill himself." If this was their meaning, we see the wonderful patience of Jesus

in enduring the contradiction of sinners; and as he bore contempt without rendering railing for railing, so should we.

Verse 23

Ye are from beneath - The expression from bequeath, here, is opposed to the phrase from above. It means, You are of the earth, or are influenced by earthly, sensual, and corrupt passions. You are governed by the lowest and vilest views and feelings, such as are opposed to heaven, and such as have their origin in earth or in hell.

I am from above - From heaven. My views are heavenly, and my words should have been so interpreted.

Ye are of this world - You think and act like the corrupt men of this world.

I am not of this world - My views are above these earthly and corrupt notions. The meaning of the verse is: "Your reference to self-murder shows that you are earthly and corrupt in your views. You are governed by the mad passions of men, and can think only of these." We see here how difficult it is to excite wicked men to the contemplation of heavenly things. They interpret all things in a low and corrupt sense, and suppose all others to be governed as they are themselves.

Verse 24

That I am he - That I am the Messiah.

Verse 25

Who art thou? - As Jesus did not expressly say in the previous verse that he was the Messiah, they professed still not to understand him. In great contempt, therefore, they asked him who he was. As if they had said, "Who art thou that undertakest to threaten us in this manner!" When we remember that they regarded him as a mere pretender from Galilee; that he was poor and without friends; and that he was persecuted by those in authority, we cannot but admire the patience with which all this was borne, and the coolness with which he answered them.

Even the same … - What he had professed to them was that he was the light of the world; that he was the bread that came down from heaven; that he was sent by his Father, etc. From all this they might easily gather that he claimed to be the Messiah. He assumed no new character; he made no change in his professions; he is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and as he had once professed to be the light of the world, so, in the face of contempt, persecution, and death, he adhered to the profession.

The beginning - From his first discourse with them, or uniformly.

Verse 26

I have many things to say - There are many things which I might say to reprove and expose your pride and hypocrisy. By this he implied that he understood well their character, and that he was able to expose it. This, indeed, he had shown them in his conversations with them.

And to judge of you - To reprove in you. There are many things in you which I might condemn.

But he that sent we is true - Is worthy to be believed, and his declarations about men are to be credited. The meaning of this verse may be thus expressed: "I have indeed many things to say blaming or condemning you. I have already said many such things, and there are many more that I might say; but I speak only those things which God has commanded. I speak not of myself I come to execute his commission, and he is worthy to be heard and feared. Let it not be thought, therefore, that my judgment is rash or harsh. It is such as is commanded by God."

Verse 27

They understood not - They knew not, or they were unwilling to receive him as a messenger from God. They doubtless understood that he meant to speak of God, but they were unwilling to acknowledge that he really came from God.

Verse 28

When ye have lifted up - When you have crucified. See John 3:14 note; also John 12:32 note.

The Son of man - See the notes at Matthew 8:19-20.

Then shall ye know - Then shall you have evidence or proof.

That I am he - Am the Messiah, which I have professed to be.

And that I do nothing of myself - That is, you shall have proof that God has sent me; that I am the Messiah; and that God concurs with me and approves my doctrine. This proof was furnished by the miracles that attended the death of Jesus - the earthquake and darkness; but chiefly by his resurrection from the dead, which proved, beyond a doubt, that he was what he affirmed he was - the Messiah.

Verse 29

Is with me - In working miracles, etc.

Hath not left me alone - Though men had forsaken and rejected him, yet God attended him.

Those things that please him - See Matthew 3:17; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Philemon 2:8; Isaiah 53:10-12; 2 Peter 1:17; Luke 3:22; Matthew 17:5. His undertaking the work of redemption was pleasing to God, and he had the consciousness that in executing it he did those things which God approved. It is a small matter to have men opposed to us, if we have a conscience void of offence, and evidence that we please God. Compare Hebrews 11:5; "Enoch - before his translation had this testimony that he pleased God." See also 1 Corinthians 4:3.

Verse 30

Many believed on him - Such was the convincing nature and force of the truths which he presented, that they believed he was the Messiah and received his doctrine. While there were many that became more obstinate and hardened under his preaching, there were many, also, who by the same truth were made penitent and believing. "The same sun that hardens the clay, softens the wax" (Clarke).

Verse 31

If ye continue in my word - If you continue to obey my commandments and to receive my doctrines.

Then are ye … - This is the true test of Christian character. John 14:21; "he that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." See John 2:4; John 3:24; 2 John 1:6. In this place Jesus cautions them against too much confidence from their present feelings. They were just converted - converted by a single sermon. They had had no time to test their faith. Jesus assures them that if their faith should abide the test, if it should produce obedience to his commandments and a truly life, it would be proof that their faith was genuine, for the tree is known by its fruit. So we may say to all new converts, Do not repress your love or your joy, but do not be too confident. Your faith has not yet been tried, and if it does not produce a holy life it is vain, James 2:17-26.

Verse 32

Shall know the truth - See the notes at John 7:17.

The truth shall make you free - The truth here means the Christian religion. Compare Galatians 3:1; Colossians 1:6. The doctrines of the true religion shall make you free - that is, it will free you from the slavery of evil passions, corrupt propensities, and grovelling views. The condition of a sinner is that of a captive or a slave to sin. He is one who serves and obeys the dictates of an evil heart and the promptings of an evil nature, Romans

6:16-17; "Ye were the servants of sin;" - Romans 6:19; "Ye have yielded your members servants unto iniquity;" - Romans 6:20; Romans 7:6, Romans 7:8, Romans 7:11; Romans 8:21; Acts 8:23; "Thou art in the - bond of iniquity;" Galatians 4:3, Galatians 4:9. The effect of the gospel is to break this hard bondage to sin and to set the sinner free. We learn from this that religion is not slavery or oppression. It is true freedom.

"He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,

And all are slaves beside." - Cowper.

The service of God is freedom from degrading vices and carnal propensities; from the slavery of passion and inordinate desires. It is a cheerful and delightful surrender of ourselves to Him whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light.

Verse 33

They answered him - Not those who believed on him, but some who stood by and heard him.

We be Abraham's seed - We are the children or descendants of Abraham. Abraham was not a slave, and they pretended that they were his real descendants, inheriting his freedom as well as his spirit. They meant that they were the direct descendants of Abraham by Isaac, his heir. Ishmael, also Abraham's son, was the son of a bondwoman Galatians 4:21-23, but they were descended in a direct line from the acknowledged heir of Abraham.

Were never in bondage to any, man - This is a most remarkable declaration, and one evidently false. Their fathers had been slaves in Egypt; their nation had been enslaved in Babylon; it had repeatedly been subject to the Assyrians; it was enslaved by Herod the Great; and was, at the very time they spoke, groaning under the grievous and insupportable bondage of the Romans. But we see here:

1.That Jesus was right when he said John 8:44, "Ye are of your father the devil; he is a liar, and the father of it."

2.People will say anything, however false or ridiculous, to avoid and oppose the truth.

3.People groaning under the most oppressive bondage are often unwilling to acknowledge it in any manner, and are indignant at being charged with it. This is the case with all sinners.

4.Sin, and the bondage to sin, produces passion, irritation, and a troubled soul; and a person under the influence of passion regards little what he says, and is often a liar.

5.There is need of the gospel. That only can make people free, calm, collected, meek, and lovers of truth; and since every person is by nature the servant of sin, he should without delay seek an interest in that gospel which can alone make him free.

Verse 34

Whosoever committeth sin … - In this passage Jesus shows them that he did not refer to political bondage, but to the slavery of the soul to evil passions and desires.

Is the servant - Is the slave of sin. He is bound to it as a slave is to his master.

Verse 35

The servant abideth not … - The servant does not, of course, remain forever, or until his death. with his master. If he is disobedient and wicked, the master sells him or turns him away. He is not the heir, and may at any time be expelled from the house of his master. But a son is the heir. He cannot be in this manner cast off or sold. He is privileged with the right of remaining in the family. This takes place in common life. So said the Saviour to the Jews: "You, if you are disobedient and rebellious, may at any time be rejected from being the people of God, and be deprived of your special privileges as a nation. You are in the condition of servants, and unless you are made free by the gospel, and become entitled to the privilege of the sons of God, you will be cast off like an unfaithful slave." Compare Hebrews 3:5-6.

Abideth not - Remains not, or has not the legal right to remain. He may at any time be rejected or sold.

In the house - In the family of his master.

For ever - During the whole time of his life.

The Son - The heir. He remains, and cannot be sold or cast off.

Ever - Continually. Till the day of his death. This is the privilege of a son, to inherit and dispose of the property.

Verse 36

If the Son … - The Son of God - heir of all things - who is forever with God, and who has therefore the right and power to liberate men from their thraldom.

Shall make you free - Shall deliver you from the bondage and dominion of sin.

Free indeed - Truly and really free. You shall be blessed with the most valuable freedom; not from the chains and oppressions of earthly masters and monarchs, but from the bondage of sin.

Verse 37

I know … - I admit that you are the descendants of Abraham. Jesus did not wish to call that in question, but he endeavored to show them that they might be his descendants and still lack entirely his spirit. See the notes at Matthew 3:9.

Ye seek to kill me - John 5:16; John 7:32.

Because my word - My doctrine; the principles of my religion. You have not the spirit of my doctrine; you hate it, and you therefore seek to kill me.

Hath no place - That is, you do not embrace my doctrine, or it exerts no influence over you. The original word conveys the notion that there was no room for his doctrine in their minds. It met with obstructions, and did not penetrate into their hearts. They were so filled with pride, and prejudice, and false notions, that they would not receive his truth; and as they had not his truth or spirit, and could not bear it, they sought to kill him.

Verse 38

I speak … - John 3:11-13.

My Father - God.

Your father - The devil. See John 8:44. To see here means to learn of. They had learned of or been taught by the devil, and imitated him.

Verse 39

Abraham is our father - We are descended from Abraham. Of this the Jews boasted much, as being descended from such an illustrious man. See the notes at Matthew 3:9. As Jesus did not expressly say who he meant John 8:38 when he said they did the works of their father, they obstinately persisted in pretending not to understand him, as if they had said, “We

acknowledge no other father but Abraham, and to charge us with being the offspring of another is slander and calumny."

If ye were Abraham's children - The words "sons" and "children" are often used to denote those who imitate another or who have his spirit. See the notes at Matthew 1:1. Here it means, "if you were worthy to be called the children of Abraham, or if you had his spirit."

Verse 40

Ye seek to kill me - See John 8:37.

This did not Abraham - Or such things Abraham did not do. There are two things noted here in which they differed from Abraham:

1. In seeking to kill him, or in possessing a murderous and bloody purpose.

2. In rejecting the truth as God revealed it. Abraham was distinguished for love to man as well as God. He liberated the captives Genesis 14:14-16; was distinguished for hospitality to strangers Genesis 18:1-8; and received the revelations of God to him, however mysterious, or however trying their observance, Genesis 12:1-4; Genesis 15:4-6; 22. It was for these things that he is so much commended in the New Testament Romans 4:9; Romans 9:9; Galatians 3:6; and, as the Jews sought to kill Jesus instead of treating him hospitably and kindly, they showed that they had none of the spirit of Abraham.

Verse 41

The deeds of your father - See John 8:38. Jesus repeats the charge, and yet repeats it as if unwilling to name Satan as their father. He chose that they should infer whom he meant, rather than bring a charge so direct and repelling. When the Saviour delivered an awful or an offensive truth, he always approached the mind so that the truth might make the deepest impression.

We be not born of fornication - The people still professed not to understand him; and since Jesus had denied that they were the children of Abraham, they affected to suppose that he meant they were a mixed, spurious race; that they had no right to the covenant privileges of the Jews; that they were not worshippers of the true God. Hence, they said, We are not thus descended. We have the evidence of our genealogy. We are worshippers of the true God, descended from those who acknowledged him,

and we acknowledge no other God and Father than him. To be children of fornication is an expression denoting in the Scriptures idolatry, or the worship of other gods than the true God, Isaiah 1:21; Isaiah 57:3; Hebrews 1:2; Hebrews 2:4. This they denied. They affirmed that they acknowledged no God for their Father but the true God.

Verse 42

If God were your Father - If you had the spirit of God, or love to him, or were worthy to be called his children.

Ye would love me - Jesus was "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person," Hebrews 1:3. "Everyone that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him," 1 John 5:1. From this we see:

1.that all who truly love God, love his Son Jesus Christ.

2.that men that pretend that they love God, and reject his Son, have no evidence that they are the friends of God.

3.that those who reject the Bible cannot be the friends of God. If they loved God, they would love Him who came from him, and who bears his image.

Verse 43

Why do ye not … - My meaning is clear, if you were disposed to understand me.

Even because ye cannot hear my word - The word "hear" in this place is to be understood in the sense of bear or tolerate, as in John 6:60. His doctrine was offensive to them. They hated it, and hence they perverted his meaning, and were resolved not to understand him. Their pride, vanity, and wickedness opposed it. The reason why sinners do not understand the Bible and its doctrines is because they cannot bear them. They hate them, and their hatred produces want of candor, a disposition to cavil and to pervert the truth, and an obstinate purpose that it shall not be applied to their case. Hence, they embrace every form of false doctrine, and choose error rather than truth, and darkness rather than light. A disposition to believe God is one of the best helps for understanding the Bible.

Verse 44

Ye are of your father the devil - That is, you have the temper, disposition, or spirit of the devil. You are influenced by him, you imitate

him, and ought therefore to be called his children. See also 1 John 3:8-10; Acts 13:10; "Thou child of the devil."

The devil - See the notes at Matthew 4:1.

The lusts - The desires or the wishes. You do what pleases him.

Ye will do - The word "will," here, is not an auxiliary verb. It does not simply express futurity, or that such a thing will take place, but it implies an act of volitions. This you will or choose to do. The same mode of speech occurs in John 5:40. In what respects they showed that they were the children of the devil he proceeds to state:

1.in their murderous disposition;

2.in rejecting the truth;

3.in being favorable to falsehood and error.

He was a murderer from the beginning - That is, from the beginning of the world, or in the first records of him he is thus represented. This refers to the seduction of Adam and Eve. Death was denounced against sin, Genesis 2:17. The devil deceived our first parents, and they became subject to death, Romans 5:12, and Revelation 12:9; "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world." Besides, Satan has in all ages deceived men, and been the cause of their spiritual and eternal death. His work has been to destroy, and in the worst sense of the word he may be said to have been a murderer. It was by his instigation, also, that Cain killed his brother, 1 John 3:12; "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother." As the Jews endeavored to kill the Saviour, so they showed that they had the spirit of the devil.

Abode not in the truth - He departed from the truth, or was false and a liar.

No truth in him - That is, he is a liar. It is his nature and his work to deceive.

He speaketh of his own - The word "own" is in the plural number, and means of the things that are appropriate to him, or that belong to his nature. His speaking falsehood is originated by his own propensities or disposition; he utters the expressions of his genuine character.

He is a liar - As when he deceived Adam, and in his deceiving, as far as possible, the world, and dragging man down to perdition.

The father of it - The father or originator of falsehood. The word "it" refers to lie or falsehood understood. From him falsehood first proceeded, and all liars possess his spirit and are under his influence. As the Jews refused to hear the truth which Jesus spoke, so they showed that they were the children of the father of lies.

Verse 46

Which of you convinceth me? - To convince, with us, means to satisfy a man's own mind of the truth of anything; but this is not its meaning here. It rather means to convict. Which of you can prove that I am guilty of sin?

Of sin - The word "sin" here evidently means "error, falsehood, or imposture." It stands opposed to truth. The argument of the Saviour is this: A doctrine might be rejected if it could be proved that he that delivered it was an impostor; but as you cannot prove this of me, you are bound to receive my words.

Verse 47

He that is of God - He that loves, fears, and honors God.

Heareth God's words - Listens to, or attends to the doctrines or commandments of God, as a child who loves his parent will regard and obey his commandments. This is an evidence of true piety. A willingness to receive all that God teaches us and to obey all his commandments, is an undoubted proof that we are his friends, John 14:21; 1 John 2:4; 1 John 3:24. As the Jews did not show a readiness to obey the commands of God, it proved that they were not of him, and to this was owing their rejection of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 48

Say we not well - Say we not truly.

Thou art a Samaritan - This was a term of contempt and reproach. See the notes at John 4:9. It had the force of charging him with being a heretic or a schismatic, because the Samaritans were regarded as such.

And hast a devil - See John 7:20. This charge they brought against him because he had said that they were not of God or were not the friends of God. This they regarded as the same as taking sides with the Samaritans, for the question between the Jews and Samaritans was, which of them worshipped God aright, John 4:20. As Jesus affirmed that the Jews were not of God, and as he, contrary to all their views, had gone and preached to the Samaritans John 4, they regarded it as a proof that he was disposed to take part with them. They also regarded it as evidence that he had a devil. The

devil was an accuser or calumniator and as Jesus charged them with being opposed to God, they considered it as proof that he was influenced by such an evil spirit.

devil - In the original, demon. Not the prince or chief of the devils, but an evil spirit.

Verse 49

I have not a devil - To the first part of the charge, that he was a Samaritan, he did not reply. To the other part he replied by saying that he honored his Father. He taught the doctrines that tended to exalt God. He taught that he was holy and true. He sought that men should love him and obey him. All his teaching proved this. An evil spirit would not do this, and this was sufficient proof that he was not influenced by such a spirit.

Verse 50

Mine own glory - My own praise or honor. In all his teaching this was true. He did not seek to exalt or to vindicate himself. He was willing to lie under reproach and to be despised. He regarded little, therefore, their taunts and accusations; and even now, he says, he would not seek to vindicate himself.

There is one that seeketh and judgeth - God will take care of my reputation. He seeks my welfare and honor, and I may commit my cause into his hands without attempting my own vindication. From these verses John 8:46-50 we may learn:

1. That where men have no sound arguments, they attempt to overwhelm their adversaries by calling odious and reproachful names. Accusations of heresy and schism, and the use of reproachful terms, are commonly proof that men are not only under the influence of unchristian feeling, but that they have no sound reasons to support their cause.

2. It is right to vindicate ourselves from such charges, but it should not be done by rendering railing for railing. "In meekness we should instruct those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth," 2 Timothy 2:25.

3. We should not regard it as necessarily dishonorable if we lie under reproach. If we have a good conscience, if we have examined for ourselves, if we are conscious that we are seeking the glory of God, we should be willing, as Jesus was, to bear reproach, believing that God will in due time

avenge us, and bring forth our righteousness as the light, and our judgment as the noonday, Psalm 37:6.

Verse 51

If a man keep my saying - If he believes on me and obeys my commandments.

He shall never see death - To see death, or to taste of death, is the same as to die, Luke 2:26; Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1. The sense of this passage is, "He shall obtain eternal life, or he shall be raised up to that life where there shall be no death." See John 6:49-50; John 3:36; John 5:24; John 11:25-26.

Verse 52

Hast a devil - Art deranged. Because he affirmed a thing which they supposed to be contrary to all experience, and to be impossible.

Verse 53

Whom makest thou thyself? - Or, who dost thou pretend to be? Although the greatest of the prophets have died, yet thou a Nazarene, a Samaritan, and a devil pretendest that thou canst keep thy followers from dying! It would have been scarcely possible to ask a question implying more contempt and scorn.

Verse 54

If I honour myself - If I commend or praise myself. If I had no other honor and sought no other honor than that which proceeds from a desire to glorify myself.

My honour is nothing - My commendation or praise of myself would be of no value. See the notes at John 5:31.

Verse 56

Your father Abraham - The testimony of Abraham is adduced by Jesus because the Jews considered it to be a signal honor to be his descendants, John 8:39. As they regarded the sayings and deeds of Abraham as especially illustrious and worthy of their imitation, so they were bound, in consistency, to listen to what he had said of the Messiah.

Rejoiced - This word includes the notion of desire as well as rejoicing. It denotes that act when, compelled with strong desire for an object, we leap forward toward its attainment with joy; and it expresses:

1.the fact that this was an object that filled the heart of Abraham with joy; and,

2.that he earnestly desired to see it.

We have no single word which expresses the meaning of the original. In Matthew 5:12 it is rendered "be exceeding glad."

To see - Rather, he earnestly and joyfully desired that he might see. To see here means to have a view or distinct conception of. It does not imply that Abraham expected that the Messiah would appear during his life, but that he might have a representation of, or a clear description and foresight of the times of the Messiah.

My day - The, day of the Messiah. The word "day," here, is used to denote the time, the appearance, the advent, and the manner of life of the Messiah. Luke 17:26; "as it was in the days of Noah so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man." See John 9:4; Matthew 11:12. The day of judgment is also called the day of the Son of man, because it will be a remarkable time of his manifestation. Or perhaps in both those cases it is called his day because he will act the most conspicuous part; his person and work will characterize the times; as we speak of the days of Noah, etc., because he was the most conspicuous person of the age.

He saw it - See Hebrews 11:13; "These all died in faith, not having received (obtained the fulfillment of) the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them," etc. Though Abraham was not permitted to live to see the times of the Messiah, yet he was permitted to have a prophetic view of him, and also of the design of his coming; for,

1. God foretold his advent clearly to him, Genesis 12:3; Genesis 18:18. Compare Galatians 3:16; "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ."

2. Abraham was permitted to have a view of the death of the Messiah as a sacrifice for sin, represented by the command to offer Isaac, Genesis 22:1-13. Compare Hebrews 11:19. The death of the Messiah as a sacrifice for the sins of men was that which characterized his work - which distinguished his times and his advent, and this was represented to Abraham clearly by the command to offer his son. From this arose the proverb among the Jews Genesis 22:14, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen," or it shall be provided for; a proverb evidently referring to the offering of the Messiah on the mount for the sins of men. By this event Abraham was impressively told that a parent would not be required to offer in sacrifice his sons for the sins of his soul - a thing which has often been done by pagan; but that God

would provide a victim, and in due time an offering would be made for the world.

Was glad - Was glad in view of the promise, and that he was permitted so distinctly to see it represented. If the father of the faithful rejoiced so much to see him afar off, how should we rejoice that he has come; that we are not required to look into a distant futurity, but know that he has appeared; that we may learn clearly the manner of his coming, his doctrine, and the design of his death! Well might the eyes of a patriarch rejoice to be permitted to look in any manner on the sublime and glorious scene of the Son of God dying for the sins of men. And our chief honor and happiness is to contemplate the amazing scene of man‘s redemption, where the Saviour groaned and died to save a lost and ruined race.

Verse 57

Fifty years old - Jesus is supposed to have been at this time about the age of 33. It is remarkable that when he was so young they should have mentioned the number 50, but they probably designed to prevent the possibility of a reply. Had they said 40 they might have apprehended a reply, or could not be so certain that they were correct.

Hast thou seen Abraham? - It is remarkable, also, that they perverted his words. His affirmation was not that he had seen Abraham, but that Abraham had seen his day. The design of Jesus was to show that he was greater than Abraham, John 8:53. To do this, he says that Abraham, great as he was, earnestly desired to see his time, thus acknowledging his inferiority to the Messiah. The Jews perverted this, and affirmed that it was impossible that he and Abraham should have seen each other.

Verse 58

Verily, verily - This is an expression used only in John. It is a strong affirmation denoting particularly the great importance of what was about to be affirmed. See the notes at John 3:5.

Before Abraham was - Before Abraham lived.

I am - The expression I am, though in the present tense, is clearly designed to refer to a past time. Thus, in Psalm 90:2, “From everlasting to everlasting thou art God.” Applied to God, it denotes continued existence without respect to time, so far as he is concerned. We divide time into the past, the present, and the future. The expression, applied to God, denotes that he does not measure his existence in this manner, but that the word by which we express the present denotes his continued and unchanging

existence. Hence, he assumes it as his name, "I AM," and "I AM that I AM," Exodus 3:14. Compare Isaiah 44:6; Isaiah 47:8. There is a remarkable similarity between the expression employed by Jesus in this place and that used in Exodus to denote the name of God. The manner in which Jesus used it would strikingly suggest the application of the same language to God. The question here was about his pre-existence. The objection of the Jews was that he was not 50 years old, and could not, therefore, have seen Abraham. Jesus replied to that that he existed before Abraham. As in his human nature he was not yet 50 years old, and could not, as a man, have existed before Abraham, this declaration must be referred to another nature; and the passage proves that, while he was a man, he was also endowed with another nature existing before Abraham, and to which he applied the term (familiar to the Jews as expressive of the existence of God) I AM; and this declaration corresponds to the affirmation of John John 1:1, that he was in the beginning with God, and was God. This affirmation of Jesus is one of the proofs on which John relies to prove that he was the Messiah John 20:31, to establish which was the design of writing this book.

Verse 59

Then took they up stones - It seems they understood him as blaspheming, and proceeded, even without a form of trial, to stone him as such, because this was the punishment prescribed in the law for blasphemy, Leviticus 24:16. See John 10:31. The fact that the Jews understood him in this sense is strong proof that his words naturally conveyed the idea that he was divine. This was in the temple. Herod the Great had not yet completed its repairs, and Dr. Lightfoot has remarked that stones would be lying around the temple in repairing it, which the people could easily use in their indignation.

Jesus hid himself - See Luke 4:30. That is, he either by a miracle rendered himself invisible, or he so mixed with the multitude that he was concealed from them and escaped. Which is the meaning cannot be determined.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Verse 1

As Jesus passed by - As he was leaving the temple, John 8:59. This man was in the way in which Jesus was going to escape from the Jews.

Verse 2

Master, who did sin? … - It was a universal opinion among the Jews that calamities of all kinds were the effects of sin. See the notes at Luke 13:1-4. The case, however, of this man was that of one that was blind from his birth, and it was a question which the disciples could not determine whether it was his fault or that of his parents. Many of the Jews, as it appears from their writings (see Lightfoot), believed in the doctrine of the transmigration of souls; or that the soul of a man, in consequence of sin, might be compelled to pass into other bodies, and be punished there. They also believed that an infant might sin before it was born (see Lightfoot), and that consequently this blindness might have come upon the child as a consequence of that. It was also a doctrine with many that the crime of the parent might be the cause of deformity in the child, particularly the violation of the command in Leviticus 20:18.

Verse 3

Neither hath this man sinned … - That is, his blindness is not the effect of his sin, or that of his parents. Jesus did not, evidently, mean to affirm that he or his parents were without any sin, but that this blindness was not the effect of sin. This answer is to be interpreted by the nature of the question submitted to him. The sense is, "his blindness is not to be traced to any fault of his or of his parents."

But that the works of God - This thing has happened that it might appear how great and wonderful are the works of God. By the works of God, here, is evidently intended the miraculous power which God would put forth to heal the man, or rather, perhaps, the whole that happened to him in the course of divine providence first his blindness, as an act of his providence, and then his healing him, as an act of mercy and power. It has all happened, not by the fault of his parents or of himself, but by the wise arrangement of God, that it might be seen in what way calamities come, and in what way God meets and relieves them. And from this we may learn:

1.To pity and not to despise and blame those who are afflicted with any natural deformity or calamity. While the Jews regarded it as the effect of

sin, they looked upon it without compassion. Jesus tells us that it is not the fault of man, but proceeds from the wise arrangement of God.

2.All suffering in the world is not the effect of sin. In this case it is expressly so declared; and there may be many modes of suffering that cannot be traced to any particular transgression. We should be cautious, therefore, in affirming that there can be no calamity in the universe but by transgression.

3.We see the wise and wonderful arrangement of Divine Providence. It is a part of his great plan to adapt his mercies to the woes of men: and often calamity, want, poverty, and sickness are permitted, that he may show the provisions of his mercy, that he may teach us to prize his blessings, and that deep-felt gratitude for deliverance may bind us to him.

4.Those who are afflicted with blindness, deafness, or any deformity, should be submissive to God. It is his appointment, and is right and best. God does no wrong, and the universe will, when all his works are seen, feel and know that he is just.

Verse 4

The works of him … - The works of beneficence and mercy which God has commissioned me to do, and which are expressive of his goodness and power. This was on the Sabbath day John 9:14; and though Jesus had endangered his life (Ecclesiastes 9:10; "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave." From this we may learn:

1.that it is our duty to employ all our time in doing the will of God.

2.that we should seek for opportunities of doing good, and suffer none to pass without improving it. We go but once through the world, and we cannot return to correct errors, and recall neglected opportunities of doing our duty.

3.We should be especially diligent in doing our Lord‘s work from the fact that the night of death is coming. This applies to the aged, for they must soon die; and to the young, for they may soon be called away from this world to eternity.

Verse 5

As long as I am in the world … - As the sun is the natural light of the world, even while it sinks away to the west, so am I, although my days are drawing to a close, the light of the spiritual world. What a sublime description is this! Jesus occupied the same place, filled the same space, shed his beams as far, in the moral world, as the sun does on natural objects; and as all is dark when that sun sinks to the west, so when he withdraws from the souls of men all is midnight and gloom. When we look on the sun in the firmament or in the west, let us remember that such is the great Sun of Righteousness in regard to our souls; that his shining is as necessary, and his beams as mild and lovely on the soul, as is the shining of the natural sun to illumine the material creation. See the notes at John 1:4.

Verse 6

And made clay … - Two reasons may be assigned for making this clay, and anointing the eyes with it. One is, that the Jews regarded spittle as medicinal to the eyes when diseased, and that they forbade the use of medicines on the Sabbath. They regarded the Sabbath so strictly that they considered the preparation and use of medicines as contrary to the law. Especially it was particularly forbidden among them to use spittle on that day to heal diseased eyes. See instances in Lightfoot. Jesus, therefore, by making this spittle, showed them that their manner of keeping the day was superstitious, and that he dared to do a thing which they esteemed unlawful. He showed that their interpretation of the law of the Sabbath was contrary to the intention of God, and that his disciples were not bound by their notions of the sacredness of that day. Another reason may have been that it was common for prophets to use some symbolical or expressive action in working miracles. Thus, Elisha commanded his staff to be laid on the face of the child that he was about to restore to life, 2 Kings 4:29. Compare the notes at Isaiah 8:18. In such instances the prophet showed that the miracle was performed by power communicated through him; so, in this case, Jesus by this act showed to the blind man that the power of healing came from him who anointed his eyes. He could not see him, and the act of anointing convinced him of what might have been known without such an act, could he have seen him that Jesus had power to give sight to the blind.

Verse 7

Wash in the pool - In the fountains.

Of Siloam - See the notes at Luke 13:4.

By interpretation, Sent - From the Hebrew verb to send perhaps because it was regarded as a blessing sent or given by God. Why Jesus sent him to wash there is not known. It is clear that the waters had no efficacy themselves to open the eyes of a blind man, but it is probable that he directed him to go there to test his obedience, and to see whether he was disposed to obey him in a case where he could not see the reason of it. An instance somewhat similar occurs in the case of Naaman, the Syrian leper, 2 Kings 5:10. The proud Syrian despised the direction; the tremble blind man obeyed and was healed. This case shows us that we should obey the commands of God, however unmeaning or mysterious they may appear. God has always a reason for all that he directs us to do, and our faith and willingness to obey him are often tried when we can see little of the reason of his requirements. In the first edition of these notes it was remarked that the word Siloam is from the same verb as Shiloh in Genesis 49:10. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah - until Shiloh (that is, the Sent of God: the Messiah) come," and that John in this remark probably had reference to this prophecy. This was incorrect: and there is no evidence that John in this passage had reference to that prophecy, or that this fountain was emblematic of the Messiah. The original words Siloam and Shiloh are from different roots and mean different things. The former, Siloam שׁלח Shiloachis derived from שׁלה shaalach(to send); the latter, Shiloh שׁילה Shiylohmeans rest or quiet, and was given to the Messiah, probably, because he would bring rest that is, he would be the "prince of peace." Compare Isaiah 9:6.

Verse 8

The neighbours … - This man seems to have been one who attracted considerable attention. The number of persons totally blind in any community is very small, and it is possible that this was the only blind beggar in Jerusalem. The case was one, therefore, likely to attract attention, and one where there could be no imposture, as he was generally known.

Verse 13

To the Pharisees - To the members of the Sanhedrin. They did this, doubtless, to accuse Jesus of having violated the Sabbath, and not, as they ought to have done, to examine into the evidence that he was from God.

Verse 15

The Pharisees asked him how … - The proper question to have been asked in the case was whether he had in fact done it, and not in what way. The question, also, about a sinner‘s conversion is whether in fact it has been

done, and not about the mode or manner in which it is effected; yet it is remarkable that no small part of the disputes and inquiries among men are about the mode in which the Spirit renews the heart, and not about the evidence that it is done.

Verse 16

This man is not of God - Is not sent by God, or cannot be a friend of God.

Because he keepeth not the sabbath-day - They assumed that their views of the Sabbath were correct, and by those views they judged others. It did not occur to them to inquire whether the interpretation which they put on the law might not be erroneous. Men often assume their own interpretations of the Scriptures to be infallible, and then judge and condemn all others by those interpretations.

A sinner - A deceiver; an impostor. They reasoned conclusively that God would not give the power of working such miracles to an impostor. The miracles were such as could not be denied, nor did even the enemies of Jesus attempt to deny them or to explain them away. They were open, public, frequent. And this shows that they could not deny their reality. Had it been possible, they would have done it; but the reality and power of those miracles had already made a party in favor of Jesus, even in the Sanhedrin John 7:50; John 12:42, and those opposed to them could not deny their reality. It may be added that the early opponents of Christianity never denied the reality of the miracles performed by the Savior and his apostles. Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian - as acute foes of the gospel as perhaps have ever lived - never call this in question. They attempted to show that it was by some evil influence, or to account for the miracles in some other way than by admitting the divine origin of the Christian religion, but about the facts they had no question. Were they not as well qualified to judge about those facts as men are now? They lived near the time; had every opportunity to examine the evidence; were skilful and talented disputants; and if they could have denied the reality of the miracles they would have done it. It is scarcely possible to conceive of more conclusive proof that those miracles were really performed, and, if so, then the Lord Jesus was sent by God.

A division - Greek, “A schism.” A separation into two parties.

Verse 17

What sayest thou of him? … - The translation here expresses the sense obscurely. The meaning is, "What sayest thou of him for giving thee sight?" (Campbell); or, "What opinion of him hath this work of power and mercy to thee wrought in thee?" (Hammond).

He is a prophet - That is "I think that the power to work such a miracle proves that he is sent from God. And though this has been done on the Sabbath, yet it proves that he must have been sent by God, for such a power could never have proceeded from man." We see here:

1.A noble confession made by the man who was healed, in the face of the rulers of the people, and when he doubtless knew that they were opposed to Jesus. We should never be ashamed, before any class of men, to acknowledge the favors which we have received from Christ, and to express our belief of his power and of the truth of his doctrine.

2.The works of Jesus were such as to prove that he came from God, however much he may have appeared to oppose the previous notions of men, the interpretation of the law by the Pharisees, or the deductions of reason. People should yield their own views of religion to the teachings of God, and believe that he that could open the eyes of the blind and raise the dead was fitted to declare his will.

Verse 18-19

Is this your son? … - The Pharisees proposed three questions to the parents, by which they hoped to convict the man of falsehood:

1.Whether he was their son?

2.Whether they would affirm that he was born blind? and,

3.Whether they knew by what means he now saw?

They evidently intended to intimidate the parents, so that they might give an answer to one of these questions that would convict the man of deception. We see here the art to which men will resort rather than admit the truth. Had they been half as much disposed to believe on Jesus as they were to disbelieve, there would have been no difficulty in the case. And so with all men: were they as much inclined to embrace the truth as they are to reject it, there would soon be an end of cavils.

Verses 20-22

His parents answered … - To the first two questions they answered without hesitation. They knew that he was their son, and that he was born

blind. The third question they could not positively answer, as they had not witnessed the means of the cure, and were afraid to express their belief. It appears that they had themselves no doubt, but they were not eye-witnesses, and could not be therefore legal evidence.

He is of age - He is of sufficient age to give testimony. Among the Jews this age was fixed at thirteen years.

If any man did confess that he was Christ - Did acknowledge that he was the Messiah. They had prejudged the case, and were determined to put down all free inquiry, and not to be convinced by any means.

Put out of the synagogue - This took place in the temple, or near the temple. It does not refer, therefore, to any immediate and violent putting forth from the place where they were. It refers to excommunication from the synagogue. Among the Jews there were two grades of excommunication; the one for lighter offences, of which they mentioned 24 causes; the other for greater offences. The first excluded a man for 30 days from the privilege of entering a synagogue, and from coming nearer to his wife or friends than 4 cubits. The other was a solemn exclusion forever from the worship of the synagogue, attended with awful maledictions and curses, and an exclusion from all contact with the people. This was called the curse, and so thoroughly excluded the person from all communion whatever with his countrymen, that they were not allowed to sell to him anything, even the necessaries of life (Buxtorf). It is probable that this latter punishment was what they intended to inflict if anyone should confess that Jesus was the Messiah: and it was the fear of this terrible punishment that deterred his parents from expressing their opinion.

Verse 24

Give God the praise - This expression seems to be a form of administering an oath. It is used in Joshua 7:19, when Achan was put on his oath and entreated to confess his guilt. Joshua said, "My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel (in the Greek of the Septuagint, the very expression used in John, ‹Give God the praise‘), and make confession unto him." It is equivalent to an adjuration in the presence of God to acknowledge the truth; as the truth would be giving God praise, confessing the case before him, and trusting to his mercy. Compare 1 Samuel 6:5 The meaning here is not "give God praise for healing you," for they were not willing to admit that he had been cured John 9:18, but confess that there is imposture in the case; that you have declared to us a falsehood, that you

have endeavored to impose on us; and by thus confessing your sin, give praise and honor to God, who condemns all imposture and falsehood, and whom you will thus acknowledge to be right in your condemnation. To induce him to do this, they added that they knew, or were satisfied that Jesus was a sinner. As they considered that point settled, they urged him to confess that he had attempted to impose on them.

We know - We have settled that. He has broken the Sabbath, and that leaves no doubt.

A sinner - A violator of the law respecting the Sabbath, and an impostor. See John 9:16.

Verse 25

Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not - The man had just said that he believed Jesus to be a prophet, John 9:17. By his saying that he did not know whether he was a sinner may be meant that though he might be a prophet, yet that he might not be perfect; or that it did not become him, being an obscure and unlearned man, to attempt to determine that question. What follows shows that he did not believe that he was a sinner, and these words were probably spoken in irony to deride the Pharisees. They were perverse and full of cavils, and were determined not to believe. The man reminded them that the question was not whether Jesus was a sinner; that, though that might be, yet it did not settle the other question about opening his eyes, which was the chief point of the inquiry.

One thing I know … - About this he could have no doubt. He disregarded, therefore, their cavils. We may learn, also, here:

1.That this declaration may be made by every converted sinner. He may not be able to meet the cavils of others. He may not be able to tell how he was converted. It is enough if he can say, "I was a sinner, but now love God; I was in darkness, but have now been brought to the light of truth."

2.We should not be ashamed of the fact that we are made to see by the Son of God. No cavil or derision of men should deter us from such an avowal.

3.Sinners are perpetually shifting the real point of inquiry. They do not inquire into the facts. They assume that a thing cannot be true, and then argue as if that was a conceded point. The proper way in religion is first to inquire into the facts, and then account for them as we can.

Verse 26

How opened he thine eyes? - The reason why they asked this so often was doubtless to attempt to draw him into a contradiction; either to intimidate him, or throw him off his guard, so that he might be detected in denying what he had before affirmed. But God gave to this poor man grace and strength to make a bold confession of the truth, and sufficient common sense completely to confound his proud and subtle examiners.

Verse 28

Thou art his disciple - This they cast at him as a reproach. His defense of Jesus they regarded as proof that he was his follower, and this they now attempted to show was inconsistent with being a friend of Moses and his law. Moses had given the law respecting the Sabbath; Jesus had healed a man contrary, in their view, to the law of Moses. They therefore held Jesus to be a violater and contemner of the law of Moses, and of course that his followers were also.

We are Moses‘ disciples - We acknowledge the authority of the law of Moses, which they alleged Jesus has broken by healing on that day.

Verse 29

We know … - We know that God commanded Moses to deliver the law. In that they were correct; but they assumed their interpretation of the law to be infallible, and, hence, condemned Jesus.

As for this fellow - The word “fellow” is not in the original. It is simply “this.” The word “fellow” implies contempt, which it cannot be proved they intended to express.

Whence he is - We know not his origin, his family, or his home. The contrast with the preceding member of the sentence shows that they intended to express their belief that he was not from God. They knew not whether he was mad, whether he was instigated by the devil, or whether he spoke of himself. See John 7:27; John 8:48-52.

Verse 30

A marvelous thing - This is wonderful and amazing.

Know not from whence he is - That you cannot perceive that he who has performed such a miracle must be from God.

Verse 31

Now we know - That is, it is an admitted or conceded point. No one calls it into question.

God heareth not - When a miracle was performed it was customary to invoke the aid of God. Jesus often did this himself, and it was by his power only that prophets and apostles could perform miracles. The word "heareth" in this place is to be understood as referring to such cases. God will not hear - that is, answer.

Sinners - Impostors. False prophets and pretenders to divine revelation. See John 9:24. The meaning of this verse is, therefore, "It is well understood that God will not give miraculous aid to impostors and false prophets." We may remark here:

1.That the passage has no reference to the prayers which sinners make for salvation.

2.If it had it would not be of course true. It was the mere opinion of this man, in accordance with the common sentiment of the Jews, and there is no evidence that he was inspired.

3.The only prayers which God will not hear are those which are offered in mockery, or when the man loves his sins and is unwilling to give them up. Such prayers God will not hear, Psalm 66:18; "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me;" Isaiah 1:14-15; Job 27:9; Jeremiah 11:11; Ezekiel 8:18; Micah 3:4; Zechariah 7:13,

A worshipper - A sincere worshipper; one who fears, loves, and adores him.

Doeth his will - Obeys his commandments. This is infallibly true. The Scripture abounds with promises to such that God will hear their prayer. See Psalm 34:15; Matthew 7:7-8.

Verse 32

Since the world began - Neither Moses nor any of the prophets had ever done this. No instance of this kind is recorded in the Old Testament. As this was a miracle which had never been performed, the man argued justly that he who had done it must be from God. As Jesus did it not by surgical operations, but by clay, it showed that he had power of working miracles by any means. It may be also remarked that the restoration of sight to the blind by surgical operations was never performed until the year 1728. Dr. Cheselden, an English surgeon, was the first who attempted it successfully, who was enabled to remove a cataract from the eye of a young man, and to restore sight. This fact shows the difficulty of the operation when the most

skillful natural means are employed, and the greatness of the miracle performed by the Saviour.

Verse 33

Could do nothing - Could do no such work as this. This reasoning was conclusive. The fact that Jesus could perform miracles like this was full proof that he was commissioned by God - proof that never has been and never can be refuted. One such miracle proves that he was from God. But Jesus gave many similar proofs, and thus put his divine mission beyond the possibility of doubt.

Verse 34

Wast born in sins - That is, thou wast born in a state of blindness a state which proved that either thou or thy parents had sinned, and that this was the punishment for it. See John 9:2. Thou wast cursed by God with blindness for crime, and yet thou dost set up for a religious teacher! When people have no arguments, they attempt to supply their place by revilings. When they are pressed by argument, they reproach their adversaries with crime, and especially with being blind, perverse, heretical, disposed to speculation, and regardless of the authority of God. And especially do they consider it great presumption that one of an inferior age or rank should presume to advance an argument in opposition to prevailing opinions.

They cast him out - Out of the synagogue. They excommunicated him. See the notes at John 9:22.

Verse 35

Dost thou believe on the Son of God? - Hitherto he had understood little of the true character of Jesus. He believed that he had power to heal him, and he inferred that he must be a prophet, John 9:17. He believed according to the light he had, and he now showed that he was prepared to believe all that Jesus said. This is the nature of true faith. It believes all that God has made known, and it is premiered to receive all that he will teach. The phrase Son of God here is equivalent to the Messiah. See the notes at Matthew 8:29.

Verse 36

Who is he? - It is probable that the man did not know that he who now addressed him was the same who had healed him. He had not yet seen him John 9:7, but he was prepared to acknowledge him when he did see him. He inquired, therefore, who the person was, or wished that he might be pointed

out to him, that he might see him. This passage shows that he was disposed to believe, and had a strong desire to see and hear the Son of God.

Lord - This word here, as in many other instances in the New Testament, means "Sir." It is clear that the man did not know that it was the Lord Jesus that addressed him, and he therefore replied to him in the common language of respect, and asked him to point out to him the Son of God. The word translated "Lord" here is rendered "Sir" in John 4:11; John 20:15; John 12:21; Acts 16:30; Matthew 27:63. It should have been also here, and in many other places.

Verse 38

I believe - This was the overflowing expression of gratitude and faith.

And he worshipped him - He did homage to him as the Messiah and as his gracious benefactor. See the notes at Matthew 2:2. This shows:

1.That it is right and natural to express thanks and praise for mercies.

2.All blessings should lead us to pour out our gratitude to Jesus, for it is from him that we receive them.

3.Especially is this true when the mind has been enlightened, when our spiritual eyes have been opened, and we are permitted to see the glories of the heavenly world.

4.It is right to pay homage or worship to Jesus. He forbade it not. He received it on earth, and for all mercies of providence and redemption we should pay to him the tribute of humble and grateful hearts. The Syriac renders the phrase, "he worshipped him," thus:" and, casting himself down, he adored him." The Persian, "and he bowed down and adored Christ." The Arabic, "and he adored him." The Latin Vulgate, "and, falling down, he adored him."

Verse 39

For judgment - The word "judgment," here, has been by some understood in the sense of condemnation - "The effect of my coming is to condemn the world. But this meaning does not agree with those places where Jesus says that he came not to condemn the world, John 3:17; John 12:47; John 5:45. To judge is to express an opinion in a judicial manner, and also to express any sentiment about any person or thing, John 7:24; John 5:30; Luke 8:43. The meaning here may be thus expressed: "I came to

declare the condition of men; to show them their duty and danger. My coming will have this effect, that some will be reformed and saved, and some more deeply condemned."

That they … - The Saviour does not affirm that this was the design of his coming, but that such would be the effect or result. He came to declare the truth, and the effect would be, etc. Similar instances of expression frequently occur. Compare Matthew 11:25; Matthew 10:34; "I came not to send peace, but a sword" - that is, such will be the effect of my coming.

That they which see not - Jesus took this illustration, as he commonly did, from the case before him; but it is evident that he meant it to be taken in a spiritual sense. He refers to those who are blind and ignorant by sin; whose minds have been darkened, but who are desirous of seeing.

Might see - Might discern the path of truth, of duty, and of salvation, John 10:9.

They which see - They who suppose they see; who are proud, self-confident, and despisers of the truth. Such were evidently the Pharisees.

Might be made blind - Such would be the effect of his preaching. It would exasperate them, and their pride and opposition to him would confirm them more and more in their erroneous views. This is always the effect of truth. Where it does not soften it hardens the heart; where it does not convert, it sinks into deeper blindness and condemnation.

Verse 41

If ye were blind - If you were really blind had had no opportunities of learning the truth. If you were truly ignorant, and were willing to confess it, and to come to me for instruction.

No sin - You would not be guilty. Sin is measured by the capacities or ability of people, and by their opportunities of knowing the truth. If people had no ability to do the will of God, they could incur no blame. If they have all proper ability, and no disposition, God holds them to be guilty. This passage teaches conclusively:

1.that people are not condemned for what they cannot do.

2.that the reason why they are condemned is that they are not disposed to receive the truth.

3.that pride and self-confidence are the sources of condemnation.

4.that if people are condemned, they, and not God, will be to blame.

We see - We have knowledge of the law of God. This they had pretended when they professed to understand the law respecting the Sabbath better than Jesus, and had condemned him for healing on that day.

Your sin remaineth - You are guilty, and your sin is unpardoned. People‘s sins will always be unpardoned while they are proud, and self-sufficient, and confident of their own wisdom. If they will come with humble hearts and confess their ignorance, God will forgive, enlighten, and guide them in the path to heaven.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

Verily, verily - See the notes at John 3:3.

I say unto you - Some have supposed that what follows here was delivered on some other occasion than the one mentioned in the last chapter; but the expression verily, verily, is one which is not used at the commencement of a discourse, and the discourse itself seems to be a continuation of what was said before. The Pharisees professed to be the guides or shepherds of the people. Jesus, in the close of the last chapter, had charged them with being blind, and of course of being unqualified to lead the people. He proceeds here to state the character of a true shepherd, to show what was a hireling, and to declare that he was the true shepherd and guide of his people. This is called John 10:6 a parable, and it is an eminently beautiful illustration of the office of the Messiah, drawn from an employment well known in Judea. The Messiah was predicted under the image of a shepherd. Ezekiel 34:23; Ezekiel 37:24; Zechariah 13:7. Hence, at the close of the discourse they asked him whether he were the Messiah, John 10:24.

Into the sheepfold - The sheepfold was an inclosure made in fields where the sheep were collected by night to defend them from robbers, wolves, etc. It was not commonly covered, as the seasons in Judea were mild. By the figure here we are to understand the Jewish people, or the church of God, which is often likened to a flock, Jeremiah 23:1-4; Zechariah 13:1-9. By the door, here, is meant the Lord Jesus Christ, John 10:7, John 10:9. He is "the way, the truth, and the life," John 14:6. And, as the only proper way of entering the fold was by the door, so the only way of entering the church of God is by believing on him and obeying his commandments. The particular application of this place, however, is to religious teachers, who cannot enter properly on the duties of teaching and guarding the flock except by the Lord Jesus that is, in the way which he has appointed. The Pharisees claimed to be pastors, but not under his appointment. They entered some other way. The true pastors of the church are those who enter by the influences of the Spirit of Jesus, and in the manner which he has appointed.

Some other way - Either at a window or over the wall.

A thief - One who silently and secretly takes away the property of another.

A robber - One who does it by violence or bloodshed. Jesus here designates those pastors or ministers of religion who are influenced not by love to him, but who seek the office from ambition, or the love of power, or wealth, or ease; who come, not to promote the welfare of the church, but to promote their own interests. Alas! in all churches there have been many - many who for no better ends have sought the pastoral office. To all such Jesus gives the names of thieves and robbers.

Verse 2

He that entereth by the door - This was the way in which a shepherd had access to his flock. In John 10:7 Jesus says he is the door. In this place he refers to those who by him - that is, in accordance with his spirit and law become ministers of religion.

Is the shepherd of the sheep - Christ does not here refer to himself, for he is the way or door by which others enter; but he refers to all the ministers of the gospel who have access to the church by him. In the original, the article "the" is missing before the word shepherd - "is a shepherd." By his entering in this manner he shows that he is a shepherd one who cares for his flock, and does not come to kill and destroy.

Verse 3

To him the porter openeth - The porter is the doorkeeper. It seems that the more wealthy Jews who owned flocks employed some person to take charge of the flock. At first all shepherds attended their flocks personally by day and by night, and this continued to be commonly the practice, but not always.

The sheep hear his voice - The voice of the shepherd. A flock will readily discern the well-known voice of one who is accustomed to attend them. The meaning is, that the people of God will be found disposed to listen to the instructions of those who are appointed by Christ, who preach his pure doctrines, and who show a real love for the church of God. There is scarcely any better test of fidelity in the pastoral office than the approbation of the humble and obscure people of God, when they discern in the preacher the very manner and spirit of the doctrines of the Bible.

He calleth his own sheep by name - It was customary, and is still, we are told by travelers, for shepherds to give particular names to their sheep, by which they soon learned to regard the voice of the shepherd. By this our

Saviour indicates, doubtless, that it is the duty of a minister of religion to seek an intimate and personal acquaintance with the people of his charge; to feel an interest in them as individuals, and not merely to address them together; to learn their private needs; to meet them in their individual trials, and to administer to them personally the consolations of the gospel.

Leadeth them out - He leads them from the fold to pasture or to water. Perhaps there is here intended the care of a faithful pastor to provide suitable instruction for the people of his charge, and to feed them with the bread of life. See a beautiful and touching description of the care of the Great Shepherd in Psalm 23:1-6.

Verse 4

He putteth forth - Or leads them out of the fold.

He goeth before them - He leads them, and guides them, and does not leave them. A shepherd spent his time with his flocks. He went before them to seek the best pastures and watering-places, and to defend them from danger. In this is beautifully represented the tender care of him who watches for souls as one that must give account.

Verse 5

A stranger … - This was literally true of a flock. Accustomed to the voice and presence of a kind shepherd, they would not regard the command of a stranger. It is also true spiritually. Jesus by this indicates that the true people of God will not follow false teachers - those who are proud, haughty, and self-seeking, as were the Pharisees. Many may follow such, but humble and devoted Christians seek those who have the mild and self-denying spirit of their Master and Great Shepherd. It is also true in reference to those who are pastors in the churches. They have an influence which no stranger or wandering minister can have. A church learns to put confidence in a pastor; he knows the wants of his people, sees their danger, and can adapt his instructions to them. A stranger, however eloquent, pious, or learned, can have few of these advantages; and it is more absurd to commit the churches to the care of wandering strangers, of those who have no permanent relation to the church, than it would be for a flock to be committed to a foreigner who knew nothing of it, and who had no particular interest in it.

The pastoral office is one of the wisest institutions of heaven. The following extract from The Land and the Book (Thomson) will show how strikingly this whole passage accords with what actually occurs at this day in Palestine: “This is true to the letter. They are so tame and so trained that

they follow their keeper with the utmost docility. He leads them forth from the fold, or from their houses in the villages, just where he pleases. Since there are many flocks in such a place as this, each one takes a different path, and it is his business to find pasture for them. It is necessary, therefore, that they should be taught to follow, and not to stray away into the unfenced fields of grain which lie so temptingly on either side. Anyone that thus wanders is sure to get into trouble. The shepherd calls sharply from time to time to remind them of his presence. They know his voice and follow on; but if a stranger call, they stop short, lift up their heads in alarm, and, if it is repeated, they turn and flee, because they do not know the voice of a stranger.

This is not the fanciful costume of a parable; it is simple fact. I have made the experiment repeatedly. The shepherd goes before, not merely to point out the way, but to see that it is practicable and safe. He is armed in order to defend his charge, and in this he is very courageous. Many adventures with wild beasts occur not unlike that recounted by David, and in these very mountains; for, though there are now no lions here, there are wolves in abundance; and leopards and panthers, exceedingly fierce, prowl about these wild wadies. They not unfrequently attack the flock in the very presence of the shepherd, and he must be ready to do battle at a moment‘s warning. I have listened with intense interest to their graphic descriptions of downright and desperate fights with these savage beasts. And when the thief and the robber come (and come they do), the faithful shepherd has often to put his life in his hand to defend his flock. I have known more than one case in which he had literally to lay it down in the contest. A poor faithful fellow last spring, between Tiberias and Tabor, instead of fleeing, actually fought three Bedouin robbers until he was hacked to pieces with their khanjars, and died among the sheep he was defending.”

Verse 6

This parable - See the notes at Matthew 13:3.

They understood not … - They did not understand the meaning or design of the illustration.

Verse 7

I am the door - I am the way by which ministers and people enter the true church. It is by his merits, his intercession, his aid, and his appointment

that they enter.

Of the sheep - Of the church.

Verse 8

All that ever came before me - This does not refer to the prophets, but to those who came pretending to be the pastors or guides of the people. Some have supposed that he referred to those who pretended to be the Messiah before him; but there is not evidence that any such person appeared before the coming of Jesus. It is probable that he rather refers to the scribes and Pharisees, who claimed to be instructors of the people, who claimed the right to regulate the affairs of religion, and whose only aim was to aggrandize themselves and to oppress the people. See the notes at John 1:18. When the Saviour says that "all" were thieves, he speaks in a popular sense, using the word "all" as it is often used in the New Testament, to denote the great mass or the majority.

Thieves and robbers - See John 10:1; also Jeremiah 23:1; "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture;" Ezekiel 34:2-3; "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed; but ye feed not the flock." This had been the general character of the Pharisees and scribes. They sought wealth, office, ease at the expense of the people, and thus deserved the character of thieves and robbers. They insinuated themselves slyly as a thief, and they oppressed and spared not, like a robber.

The sheep - The people of God - the pious and humble portion of the Jewish nation. Though the great mass of the people were corrupted, yet there were always some who were the humble and devoted people of God. Compare Romans 11:3-4. So it will be always. Though the great mass of teachers may be corrupt, yet the true friends of God will mourn in secret places, and refuse to "listen to the instruction that causeth to err."

Verse 9

By me - By my instruction and merits.

Shall be saved - See John 5:24.

Shall go in and out … - This is language applied, commonly to flocks. It meant that he shall be well supplied, and defended, and led "beside the still waters of salvation."

Verse 10

The thief cometh not … - The thief has no other design in coming but to plunder. So false teachers have no other end in view but to enrich or

aggrandize themselves.

I am come that they might have life - See the notes at John 5:24.

Might have it more abundantly - Literally, that they may have abundance, or that which abounds. The word denotes that which is not absolutely essential to life, but which is superadded to make life happy. They shall not merely have life - simple, bare existence - but they shall have all those superadded things which are needful to make that life eminently blessed and happy. It would be vast mercy to keep men merely from annihilation or hell; but Jesus will give them eternal joy, peace, the society of the blessed, and all those exalted means of felicity which are prepared for them in the world of glory.

Verse 11

The good shepherd - The faithful and true shepherd, willing to do all that is necessary to defend and save the flock.

Giveth his life - A shepherd that regarded his flock would hazard his own life to defend them. When the wolf comes, he would still remain to protect them. To give his life, here, means the same as not to fly, or to forsake his flock; to be willing to expose his life, if necessary, to defend them. Compare Judges 12:3; "I put my life in my hands and passed over," etc.; 1 Samuel 19:5; 1 Samuel 28:21. See John 10:15. The Messiah was often predicted under the character of a shepherd.

Verse 12

A hireling - A man employed to take care of the sheep, to whom wages is paid. As he does not own the sheep, and guards them merely for pay, rather than risk his life he would leave the flock to the ravages of wild beasts. The word translated "hireling" is often employed in a good sense; but here it denotes one who is unfaithful to his trust; and especially those ministers who preach only for support, and who are unwilling to encounter any danger or to practice any self-denial for the welfare of the church of God. They are those who have no boldness in the cause of their Master, but who, rather than lose their reputation or place, would see the church corrupted and wasted by its spiritual foes.

Whose own the sheep are not - Who does not own the sheep.

Verse 13

Because he is a hireling - Because he regards only his wages. He feels no special interest in the flock.

Verse 14

Know my sheep - Know my people, or my church. The word "know" here is used in the sense of affectionate regard or love. It implies such a knowledge of their wants, their dangers, and their characters, as to result in a deep interest in their welfare. Thus the word "knoweth," in John 10:15, is in John 10:17 explained by the word "loveth." Jesus knows the hearts, the dangers, and the wants of his people, and his kindness as their shepherd prompts him to defend and aid them.

Am known of mine - That is, he is known and loved as their Saviour and Friend. They have seen their sins, and dangers: and wants; they have felt their need of a Saviour; they have come to him, and they have found him and his doctrines to be such as they need, and they have loved him. And as a flock follows and obeys its kind shepherd, so they follow and obey him who leads them beside the still waters, and makes them to lie down in green pastures.

Verse 15

As the Father knoweth me … - See the Matthew 11:27 note; also Luke 10:22 note.

I lay down my life for the sheep - That is, I give my life as an atoning sacrifice for their sins. I die in their place, to redeem them from sin, and danger, and death. See John 10:17-18.

Verse 16

Other sheep - There are others who shall be members of my redeemed church.

I have - This does not imply that they were then his friends, but that they would be. There were others whom it was his purpose and intention to call to the blessings of the gospel and salvation. The purpose was so sure, and the fact that they would believe on him so certain, that he could use the present tense as if they were already his own. This purpose was in accordance with the promise Isaiah 53:11, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." An instance of a parallel expression occurs in Acts 18:10, "I have much people in this city" (Corinth). That is, it was the purpose of God to bless the preaching of Paul, and give him many souls as the seals of his ministry. It was so certain that they would believe in the Saviour, that it could be spoken of as if it were already done. This certainty could have existed only in consequence of the intention of God that it should be so. It did not consist in any disposition to embrace the gospel which was foreseen, for they were the most corrupt and licentious people of

antiquity, and it must have been because God meant that it should be so. Declarations like these are full proof that God has a plan in regard to the salvation of men, and that the number is known and determined by him. Learn:

1.that it is not a question of chance or uncertainty whether men shall be saved.

2.that there is encouragement for preaching the gospel. There are those whom God means to save, and if he intends to do it it will be done.

Not of this fold - Not Jews. This is a distinct intimation that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles a doctrine extremely offensive to the Jews. This prediction of the Saviour has been strikingly confirmed in the conversion of millions of the Gentiles to the gospel.

Them also I must bring - Bring into the church and kingdom of heaven. This was to be done, not by his personal ministry, but by the labor of his apostles and other ministers.

One fold - One church; there shall be no distinction, no special national privileges. The partition between the Jews and the Gentiles shall be broken down, and there shall be no pre-eminence of rank or honor, Ephesians 2:14; "Christ hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;" Romans 10:12; "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek."

One shepherd - That is, the Lord Jesus - the common Saviour, deliverer, and friend of all true believers, in whatever land they were born and whatever tongue they may speak. This shows that Christians of all denominations and countries should feel that they are one redeemed by the same blood, and going to the same eternal home. Compare 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11; Acts 17:26.

Verse 17

I lay down my life - I give myself to die for my people, in Jewish and pagan lands. I offer myself a sacrifice to show the willingness of my Father to save them; to provide an atonement, and thus to open the way for their salvation. This proves that the salvation of man was an object dear to God, and that it was a source of special gratification to him that his Son was willing to lay down his life to accomplish his great purposes of benevolence.

That I might take it again - Be raised up from the dead, and glorified, and still carry on the work of redemption. See this same sentiment sublimely expressed in Philemon 2:5-11.

Verse 18

No man taketh it from me - That is, no one could take it by force, or unless I was willing to yield myself into his hands. He had power to preserve his life, as he showed by so often escaping from the Pharisees; he voluntarily went up to Jerusalem, knowing that he would die; he knew the approach of Judas to betray him; and he expressly told Pilate at his bar that he could have no power at all against him except it were given him by his Father, John 19:11. Jesus had a right to lay down his life for the good of people. The patriot dies for his country on the field of battle; the merchant exposes his life for gain; and the Son of God had a right to put himself in the way of danger and of death, when a dying world needed such an atoning sacrifice. This shows the special love of Jesus. His death was voluntary. His coming was voluntary - the fruit of love. His death was the fruit of love. He was permitted to choose the time and mode of his death. He did. He chose the most painful, lingering, ignominious manner of death then known to man, and thus showed his love.

I have power - This word often means authority. It includes all necessary power in the case, and the commission or authority of his Father to do it.

Power to take it again - This shows that he was divine. A dead man has no power to raise himself from the grave. And as Jesus had this power after he was deceased, it proves that there was some other nature than that which had expired, to which the term "I" might be still applied. None but God can raise the dead; and as Jesus had this power over his own body it proves that he was divine.

This commandment - My Father has appointed this, and commissioned me to do it.

Verse 20

He hath a devil - John 7:20.

Is mad - Is deranged, or a maniac. His words are incoherent and unintelligible.

Verse 21

Not the words … - His words are sober, grave, pious, full of wisdom. The preaching of Jesus always produced effect. It made bitter enemies or decided friends. So will all faithful preaching. It is not the fault of the gospel that there are divisions, but of the unbelief and mad passions of men.

Verse 22

The feast of the dedication - Literally, the feast of the renewing, or of the renovation. This feast was instituted by Judas Maccabaeus, in the year 164 b.c. The temple and city were taken by Antiochus Epiphanes in the year 167 b.c. He killed 40,000 inhabitants, and sold 40,000 more as slaves. In addition to this, he sacrificed a sow on the altar of burnt-offerings, and a broth being made of this, he sprinkled it all over the temple. The city and temple were recovered three years afterward by Judas Maccabaeus, and the temple was purified with great pomp and solemnity. The ceremony of purification continued through eight days, during which Judas presented magnificent victims, and celebrated the praise of God with hymns and psalms (Josephus, Ant., b. xii. ch. 11). "They decked, also, the forefront of the temple with crowns of gold and with shields, and the gates and chambers they renewed and hanged doors upon them:" 1 Maccabees 4:52-59. On this account it was called the feast of renovation or dedication. Josephus calls it the feast of lights, because the city was illuminated, as expressive of joy. The feast began on the 25th day of Chisleuanswering to the fifteenth day of December. The festival continued for eight days, with continued demonstrations of joy.

It was winter - The feast was celebrated in the winter. The word here implies that it was cold and inclement, and it is given as a reason why he walked in Solomon‘s porch.

Verse 23

Solomon‘s porch - The porch or covered way on the east of the temple. See the notes at Matthew 21:12.

Verse 24

Tell us plainly - The Messiah was predicted as a shepherd. Jesus had applied that prediction to himself. They supposed that that was an evidence that he claimed to be the Messiah. He also performed miracles, which they considered as evidence that he was the Christ, John 7:31. Yet the rulers made a difficulty. They alleged that he was from Galilee, and that the Messiah could not come from thence, John 7:52. He was poor and despised. He came contrary to the common expectation. A splendid prince and conqueror had been expected. In this perplexity they came to him for a plain and positive declaration that he was the Messiah.

Verse 25

I told you - It is not recorded that Jesus had told them in so many words that he was the Christ, but he had used expressions designed to convey the

same truth, and which many of them understood as claiming to be the Messiah. See John 5:19; John 8:36, John 8:56; John 10:1. The expression "the Son of God" they understood to be equivalent to the Messiah. This he had often used of himself in a sense not to be mistaken.

The works - The miracles, such as restoring the blind, curing the sick, etc.

In my Father's name - By the power and command of God. Jesus was either the Messiah or an impostor. The Pharisees charged him with being the latter Matthew 26:60-61; Matthew 27:63; John 18:36; but God would not give such power to an impostor. The power of working miracles is an attestation of God to what is taught. See the notes at Matthew 4:24.

Verse 26

Are not of my sheep - Are not my people, my followers. You do not possess the spirit of meek and humble disciples. Were it not for pride, and prejudice, and vainglory for your false notions of the Messiah, and from a determination not to believe, you would have learned from my declarations and works that I am the Christ.

As I said unto you - Compare John 8:47.

Verse 27

My sheep - My church, my people, those who have the true spirit of my followers. The name is given to his people because it was an illustration which would be well understood in a country abounding in flocks. There is also a striking resemblance, which he proceeds to state, between them.

Hear my voice - See John 10:3-4. Applied to Christians, it means that they hear and obey his commandments.

I know them - See John 10:14.

d **They follow me -** A flock follows its shepherd to pastures and streams, John 10:3. Christians not only obey Christ, but they imitate him; they go where his Spirit and providence lead them; they yield themselves to his guidance, and seek to be led by him. When Jesus was upon earth many of his disciples followed or attended him from place to place. Hence, Christians are called his followers, and in Revelation 14:4 they are described as "they that follow the Lamb."

Verse 28

I give unto them eternal life - See John 5:24.

Shall never perish - To perish here means to be destroyed, or to be punished in hell. Matthew 10:28; "which is able to destroy (the same word) both soul and body in hell." Matthew 18:14; "it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." John 3:15; "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish" Romans 2:12; They who have sinned without law shall also perish without law" John 17:12; 1 Corinthians 1:18. In all these places the word refers to future punishment, and the declaration of the Saviour is that his followers, his true disciples, shall never be cast away. The original is expressed with remarkable strength: "They shall not be destroyed forever." Syriac: "They shall not perish to eternity." This is spoken of all Christians - that is, of all who ever possess the character of true followers of Christ, and who can be called his flock.

Shall any - The word "any" refers to any power that might attempt it. It will apply either to men or to devils. It is an affirmation that no man, however eloquent in error, or persuasive in infidelity, or cunning: in argument, or mighty in rank; and that no devil with all his malice, power, cunning, or allurements, shall be able to pluck them from his hand,

Pluck them - In the original to rob; to seize and bear away as a robber does his prey. Jesus holds them so secure and so certainly that no foe can surprise him as a robber does, or overcome him by force.

My hand - The hand is that by which we hold or secure an object. It means that Jesus has them safely in his own care and keeping. Compare Romans 8:38-39.

Verse 29

Which gave them me - See John 6:37.

Is greater - Is more powerful.

Than all - Than all others - men, angels, devils. The word includes everything - everything that could attempt to pluck them away from God; in other words, it means that God is supreme. It implies, further, that God will keep them, and will so control all other beings and things that they shall be safe.

None is able - None has power to do it. In these two verses we are taught the following important truths:

1.that Christians are given by God the Father to Christ.

2.that Jesus gives to them eternal life, or procures by his death and intercession, and imparts to them by his Spirit, that religion which shall

result in eternal life.

3.that both the Father and the Son are pledged to keep them so that they shall never fall away and perish. It would be impossible for any language to teach more explicitly that the saints will persevere.

4.that there is no power in man or devils to defeat the purpose of the Redeemer to save his people. We also see our safety, if we truly, humbly, cordially, and daily commit ourselves to God the Saviour. In no other way can we have evidence that we are his people than by such a persevering resignation of ourselves to him, to obey his law, and to follow him through evil report or good report. If we do that we are safe. If we do not that we have no evidence of piety, and are not, cannot be safe.

Verse 30

I and my Father are one - The word translated "one" is not in the masculine, but in the neuter gender. It expresses union, but not the precise nature of the union. It may express any union, and the particular kind intended is to be inferred from the connection. In the previous verse he had said that he and his Father were united in the same object that is, in redeeming and preserving his people. It was this that gave occasion for this remark. Many interpreters have understood this as referring to union of design and of plan. The words may bear this construction. In this way they were understood by Erasmus, Calvin, Bucer, and others. Most of the Christian fathers understood them, however, as referring to the oneness or unity of nature between the Father and the Son; and that this was the design of Christ appears probable from the following considerations:

1.The question in debate was (not about his being united with the Father in plan and counsel, but in power. He affirmed that he was able to rescue and keep his people from all enemies, or that he had power superior to men and devils that is, that he had supreme power over all creation. He affirmed the same of his Father. In this, therefore, they were united. But this was an attribute only of God, and they thus understood him as claiming equality to God in regard to omnipotence.

2.The Jews understood him as affirming his equality with God, for they took up stones to punish him for blasphemy John 10:31, John 10:33, and

they said to him that they understood him as affirming that he was God, John 10:33.

3.Jesus did not deny that it was his intention to be so understood. See the notes at John 10:34-37.

4.He immediately made another declaration implying the same thing, leaving the same impression, and which they attempted to punish in the same manner, John 10:37-39. If Jesus had not intended so to be understood, it cannot be easily reconciled with moral honesty that he did not distinctly disavow that such was his intention. The Jews were well acquainted with their own language. They understood him in this manner, and he left this impression on their minds.

Verse 31

The Jews took up stones - Stoning was the punishment of a blasphemer, Leviticus 24:14-16. They considered him guilty of blasphemy because he made himself equal with God, John 10:33.

Again - They had before plotted against his life John 5:16, John 5:18, and once at least they had taken up stones to destroy him, John 8:59.

Verse 32

Many good works - Many miracles of benevolence healing the sick, etc. His miracles were good works, as they tended to promote the happiness of men, and were proofs of his benevolence. He had performed no other works than those of benevolence; he knew that they could charge him with no other, and he confidently appealed to them as witnesses of that. Happy would it be if all, when they are opposed and persecuted, could appeal even to their persecutors in proof of their own innocence.

Verse 33

For blasphemy - See the notes at Matthew 9:3.

Makest thyself God - See the notes at John 5:18. This shows how they understood what he had said.

Makest thyself - Dost claim to be God, or thy language implies this.

sa40

Verses 34-38

Jesus answered them - The answer of Jesus consists of two parts. The first John 10:34-36 shows that they ought not to object to his use of the

word God, even if he were no more than a man. The second John 10:37-38 repeats substantially what he had before said, left the same impression, and in proof of it he appealed to his works.

John 10:34

In your law - Psalm 82:6. The word "law" here, is used to include the Old Testament.

I said - The Psalmist said, or God said by the Psalmist.

Ye are gods - This was said of magistrates on account of the dignity and honor of their office, and it shows that the Hebrew word translated "god," אלהים elohiymin that place might be applied to man. Such a use of the word is, however, rare. See instances in Exodus 7:1; Exodus 4:16.

John 10:35

Unto whom the word of God came - That is, who were his servants, or who received their dignity and honor only because the law of God was intrusted to them. "The Word of God" here means the command of God; his commission to them to do justice.

The scripture cannot be broken - See Matthew 5:19. The authority of the Scripture is final; it cannot be set aside. The meaning is, "If, therefore, the Scripture uses the word "god" אלהים elohiymas applied to magistrates, it settles the question that it is right to apply the term to those in office and authority. If applied to them, it may be to others in similar offices. It cannot, therefore, be blasphemy to use this word as applicable to a personage so much more exalted than mere magistrates as the Messiah."

John 10:36

Whom the Father hath sanctified - The word "sanctify" with us means to make holy; but this is not its meaning here, for the Son of God was always holy. The original word means to set apart from a common to a sacred use; to devote to a sacred purpose, and to designate or consecrate to a holy office. This is the meaning here. God has consecrated or appointed his Son to be his Messenger or Messiah to mankind. See Exodus 28:41; Exodus 29:1, Exodus 29:44; Leviticus 8:30.

And sent into the world - As the Messiah, an office far more exalted than that of magistrates.

I am the Son of God - This the Jews evidently understood as the same as saying that he was equal with God. This expression he had often applied to himself. The meaning of this place may be thus expressed: "You charge me with blasphemy. The foundation of that charge is the use of the name

God, or the Son of God, applied to myself; yet that same term is applied in the Scriptures to magistrates. The use of it there shows that it is right to apply it to those who sustain important offices (see the notes of John 10:34-35). And especially you, Jews, ought not to attempt to found a charge of blasphemy on the application of a word to the Messiah which in your own Scriptures is applied to all magistrates. And we may remark here:

1.That Jesus did not deny that he meant to apply the term to himself.

2.He did not deny that it was properly applied to him.

3.He did not deny that it implied that he was God. He affirmed only that they were inconsistent, and were not authorized to bring a charge of blasphemy for the application of the name to himself.

John 10:37

The works of my Father - The very works that my Father does. See John 5:17; "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." See the note on that place. The works of his Father are those which God only can do. As Jesus did them, it shows that the name "Son of God," implying equality with God, was properly applied to him. This shows conclusively that he meant to be understood as claiming to be equal with God. So the Jews naturally understood him John 10:39, and they were left with this impression on their minds.

John 10:38

Believe the works - Though you do not credit me, yet consider my works, for they prove that I came from God. No one could do them unless he was sent of God.

Father is in me … - Most intimately connected. See John 5:36. This expression denotes most intimate union - such as can exist in no other case. See Matthew 11:27; Notes, John 17:21.

Verse 39

Sought again to take him - They evidently understood him as still claiming equality with God, and under this impression Jesus left them. Nor can it be doubted that he intended to leave them with this impression; and if so, then he is divine.

He escaped - See John 8:59.

Verse 40

Where John at first baptized - At Bethabara, or Bethany, John 1:28.

Verse 41

No miracle - He did not confirm his mission by working miracles, but he showed that he was a prophet by foretelling the character and success of Jesus. Either miracle or prophecy is conclusive proof of a divine mission, for no man can foretell a future event, or work a miracle, except by the special aid of God. It may be remarked that the people of that place were properly prepared by the ministry of John for the preaching of Jesus. The persecution of the Jews was the occasion of his going there, and thus the wrath of man was made to praise him. It has commonly happened that the opposition of the wicked has resulted in the increased success of the cause which they have persecuted. God takes the wise in their own craftiness, and brings glory to himself and salvation to sinners out of the pride, and passions, and rage of wicked men.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

A certain man was sick - The resurrection of Lazarus has been recorded only by John. Various reasons have been conjectured why the other evangelists did not mention so signal a miracle. The most probable is, that at the time they wrote Lazarus was still living. The miracle was well known, and yet to have recorded it might have exposed Lazarus to opposition and persecution from the Jews. See John 12:10-11. Besides, John wrote for Christians who were out of Palestine. The other gospels were written chiefly for those who were in Judea. There was the more need, therefore, that he should enter minutely into the account of the miracle, while the others did not deem it necessary or proper to record an event so well known.

Bethany - A village on the eastern declivity of the Mount of Olives. See the notes at Matthew 21:1.

The town of Mary - The place where she lived. At that place also lived Simon the leper Matthew 26:6, and there our Lord spent considerable part of his time when he was in Judea. The transaction recorded in this chapter occurred nearly four months after those mentioned in the previous chapter. Those occurred in December, and these at the approach of the Passover in April.

Verse 2

It was that Mary … - See the Matthew 26:6 note; Luke 7:36-50 notes.

Verse 3

Whom thou lovest - John 11:5. The members of this family were among the few special and intimate friends of our Lord. He was much with them, and showed them marks of special friendship Luke 10:38-42, and they bestowed upon him special proofs of affection in return. This shows that special attachments are lawful for Christians, and that those friendships are especially lovely which are tempered and sweetened with the spirit of Christ. Friendships should always be cemented by religion, and one main end of those attachments should be to aid one another in the great business of preparing to die.

Sent unto him - They believed that he had power to heal him John 11:21, though they did not then seem to suppose that he could raise him if he died. Perhaps there were two reasons why they sent for him; one,

because they supposed he would be desirous of seeing his friend; the other, because they supposed he could restore him. In sickness we should implore the aid and presence of Jesus. He only can restore us and our friends; he only can perform for us the office of a friend when all other friends fail; and he only can cheer us with the hope of a blessed resurrection.

Verse 4

This sickness is not unto death - The word "death" here is equivalent to remaining under death, Romans 6:23. "The wages of sin is death" - permanent or unchanging death, opposed to eternal life. Jesus evidently did not intend to deny that he would die. The words which he immediately adds show that he would expire, and that he would raise him up to show forth the power and glory of God. Compare John 11:11. Those words cannot be understood on any other supposition than that he expected to raise him up. The Saviour often used expressions similar to this to fix the attention on what he was about to say in explanation. The sense may be thus expressed: "His sickness is not fatal. It is not designed for his death, but to furnish an opportunity for a signal display of the glory of God, and to furnish a standing proof of the truth of religion. It is intended to exhibit the power of the Son of God, and to be a proof at once of the truth of his mission; of his friendship for this family; of his mild, tender, special love as a man; of his power and glory as the Messiah; and of the great doctrine that the dead will rise.

For the glory of God - That God may be honored. See John 9:3.

That the Son of God … - The glory of God and of his Son is the same. That which promotes the one promotes also the other. Few things could do it more than the miracle which follows, evincing at once the lovely and tender character of Jesus as a man and a friend, and his power as the equal with God.

Verse 6

He abode two days - Probably Lazarus died soon after the messengers left him. Jesus knew that (John 11:11), and did not hasten to Judea, but remained two days longer where he was, that there might not be the possibility of doubt that he was dead, so that when he came there he had been dead four days, John 11:39. This shows, moreover, that he intended to raise him up. If he had not, it could hardly be reconciled with friendship thus to remain, without any reason, away from an afflicted family.

Where he was - At Bethabara John 1:28; John 10:40, about 30 miles from Bethany. This was about a day‘s journey, and it renders it probable that Lazarus died soon after the message was sent. One day would be occupied before the message came to him; two days he remained; one day would be occupied by him in going to Bethany; so that Lazarus had been dead four days John 11:39 when he arrived.

Verse 8

Of late - About four months before, John 10:31.

Verse 9-10

Twelve hours - The Jews divided the day from sunrise to sunset into twelve equal parts. A similar illustration our Saviour uses in John 9:4-5. See the notes at that place.

If any man walk - If any man travels. The illustration here is taken from a traveler. The conversation was respecting a journey into Judea, and our Lord, as was his custom, took the illustration from the case before him.

He stumbleth not - He is able, having light, to make his journey safely. He sees the obstacles or dangers and can avoid them.

The light of this world - The light by which the world is illuminated that is, the light of the sun.

In the night - In darkness he is unable to see danger or obstacles, and to avoid them. His journey is unsafe and perilous, or, in other words, it is not a proper time to travel.

No light in him - He sees no light. It is dark; his eyes admit no light within him to direct his way. This description is figurative, and it is difficult to fix the meaning. Probably the intention was the following:

1.Jesus meant to say that there was an allotted or appointed time for him to live and do his Father‘s will, represented here by the 12 hours of the day.

2.Though his life was nearly spent, yet it was not entirely; a remnant of it was left.

3.A traveler journeyed on until night. It was as proper for him to travel the twelfth hour as any other.

4.So it was proper for Jesus to labor until the close. It was the proper time for him to work. The night of death was coming, and no work could then be done.

5.God would defend him in this until the appointed time of his death. He had nothing to fear, therefore, in Judea from the Jews, until it was the will of God that he should die. He was safe in his hand, and he went fearlessly into the midst of his foes, trusting in him. This passage teaches us that we should be diligent to the end of life: fearless of enemies when we know that God requires us to labor, and confidently committing ourselves to Him who is able to shield us, and in whose hand, if we have a conscience void of offence, we are safe.

Verse 11

Lazarus sleepeth - Is dead. The word "sleep" is applied to death,

1.Because of the resemblance between them, as sleep is the "kinsman of death." In this sense it is often used by pagan writers.

2.However, in the Scriptures it is used to intimate that death will not be final: that there will be an awaking out of this sleep, or a resurrection. It is a beautiful and tender expression, removing all that is dreadful in death, and filling the mind with the idea of calm repose after a life of toil, with a reference to a future resurrection in increased vigor and renovated powers. In this sense it is applied in the Scriptures usually to the saints, 1 Corinthians 11:30; 1 Corinthians 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:10; Matthew 9:24.

Verse 12

If the sleep, he shall do well - Sleep was regarded by the Jews, in sickness, as a favorable symptom; hence it was said among them, "Sleep in sickness is a sign of recovery, because it shows that the violence of the disease has abated" (Lightfoot). This seems to have been the meaning of the disciples. They intimated that if he had this symptom, there was no need of his going into Judea to restore him.

Verse 15

I am glad … - The meaning of this verse may be thus expressed: "If I had been there during his sickness, the entreaties of his sisters and friends would have prevailed with me to restore him to health. I could not have refused them without appearing to be unkind. Though a restoration to health would have been a miracle, and sufficient to convince you, yet the miracle of raising him after being four days dead will be far more impressive, and

on that account I rejoice that an opportunity is thus given so strikingly to confirm your faith."

To the intent - To furnish you evidence on which you might be established in the belief that I am the Messiah.

Verse 16

Thomas, which is called Didymus - These names express the same thing. One is Hebrew and the other Greek. The name means a twin.

Die with him - It has been much doubted by critics whether the word him refers to Lazarus or to Jesus. They who refer it to Lazarus suppose this to be the meaning: "Let us go and die, for what have we to hope for if Jesus returns into Judea? Lately they attempted to stone him, and now they will put him to death, and we also, like Lazarus, shall be dead." This expression, is supposed to be added by John to show the slowness with which Thomas believed, and his readiness to doubt without the fullest evidence. See John 20:25. Others suppose, probably more correctly, that it refers to Jesus: "He is about to throw himself into danger. The Jews lately sought his life, and will again. They will put him to death. But let us not forsake him. Let us attend him and die with him." It may be remarked that this, not less than the other mode of interpretation, expresses the doubts of Thomas about the miracle which Jesus was about to work.

Verse 17

In the grave - It was sometimes the custom to embalm the dead, but in this case it does not seem to have been done. He was probably buried soon after death.

Verse 18

Nigh unto Jerusalem - This is added to show that it was easy for many of the Jews to come to the place. The news that Jesus was there, and the account of the miracle, would also be easily carried to the Sanhedrin.

Fifteen furlongs - Nearly two miles. It was directly east from Jerusalem. Dr. Thomson (The Land and the Book, vol. ii. p. 599) says of Bethany: "It took half an hour to walk over Olivet to Bethany this morning, and the distance from the city, therefore, must be about two miles. This agrees with what John says: ‹Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.' The village is small, and appears never to have been large, but it is pleasantly situated near the southeastern base of the mount, and has many fine trees about and above it. We, of course, looked at the remains of those old edifices which may have been built in the age of

Constantine, and repaired or changed to a convent in the time of the Crusades. By the dim light of a taper we also descended very cautiously, by 25 slippery steps, to the reputed sepulchre of Lazarus, or El Azariyehas both tomb and village are now called. But I have no description of it to give, and no questions about it to ask. It is a wretched cavern, every way unsatisfactory, and almost disgusting."

Verse 19

Many of the Jews - Probably their distant relatives or their friends.

To comfort - These visits of consolation were commonly extended to seven clays (Grotius; Lightfoot).

Verse 20

Then Martha … - To Martha was intrusted the management of the affairs of the family, Luke 10:40. It is probable that she first heard of his coming, and, without waiting to inform her sister, went immediately out to meet him. See John 11:28.

Sat still in the house - The word "still" is not in the original. It means that she remained sitting in the house. The common posture of grief among the Jews was that of sitting, Job 2:8; Ezekiel 8:14. Often this grief was so excessive as to fix the person in astonishment, and render him immovable, or prevent his being affected by any external objects. It is possible that the evangelist meant to intimate this of Mary's grief. Compare Ezra 9:3-4; Nehemiah 1:4; Isaiah 47:1.

Verse 22

Whatsoever thou wilt ask of God - Whatever is necessary to our consolation that thou wilt ask, thou canst obtain. It is possible that she meant gently to intimate that he could raise him up and restore him again to them.

Verse 23

Thy brother shall rise again - Martha had spoken of the power of Jesus. He said nothing of himself in reply. It was not customary for him to speak of himself, unless it was demanded by necessity. It cannot be doubted that by rising again, here, Jesus referred to the act which he was about to perform; but as Martha understood it, referring to the future resurrection, it was full of consolation. The idea that departed friends shall rise to glory is one that fills the mind with joy, and one which we owe only to the religion of Christ.

Verse 24

At the last day - The day of judgment. Of this Martha was fully convinced; but this was not all which she desired. She in this manner delicately hinted what she did not presume expressly to declare her wish that Jesus might even now raise him up.

Verse 25

I am the resurrection - I am the author or the cause of the resurrection. It so depends on my power and will, that it may be said that I am the resurrection itself. This is a most expressive way of saying that the whole doctrine of the resurrection came from him, and the whole power to effect it was his. In a similar manner he is said to be made of God unto us "wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," 1 Corinthians 1:30.

And the life - John 1:4. As the resurrection of all depends on him, he intimated that it was not indispensable that it should be deferred to the last day. He had power to do it now as well as then.

Though he were dead - Faith does not save from temporal death; but although the believer, as others, will die a temporal death, yet he will hereafter have life. Even if he dies, he shall hereafter live.

Shall he live - Shall be restored to life in the resurrection.

Verse 26

Whosoever liveth - He had just spoken of the prospects of the pious dead. He now says that the same prospects are before the living who have like faith. Greek, "Every one living and believing on me."

Shall never die - As the dead, though dead, shall yet live, so the living shall have the same kind of life. They shall never come into eternal death. See John 6:50-51, John 6:54, John 6:58. Greek, "Shall by no means die forever."

Believest thou this? - This question was doubtless asked because it implied that he was then able to raise up Lazarus, and because it was a proper time for her to test her own faith. The time of affliction is a favorable period to try ourselves to ascertain whether we have faith. If we still have confidence in God, if we look to him for comfort in such seasons, it is good evidence that we are his friends. He that loves God when he takes away his comforts, has the best evidence possible of true attachment to him.

Verse 27

Yea, Lord - This was a noble confession. It showed her full confidence in him as the Messiah, and her full belief that all that he said was true. See Matthew 16:16.

Verse 28

She went her way - Jesus probably directed her to go, though the evangelist has not recorded it, for she said to Mary, The Master calleth for thee.

Secretly - Privately. So that the others did not hear her. This was done, perhaps, to avoid confusion, or because it was probable that if they knew Jesus was coming they would have made opposition. Perhaps she doubted whether Jesus desired it to be known that he had come.

The Master is come - This appears to have been the appellation by which he was known to the family. It means, literally, teacher, and was a title which he claimed for himself. "One is your Master, even Christ" Matthew 23:8, Matthew 23:10. The Syriac has it, "Our Master."

Verse 31

Saying, She goeth unto the grave - Syriac, "They thought that she went to weep." They had not heard Martha call her. The first days of mourning among the Jews were observed with great solemnity and many ceremonies of grief.

Verse 33

He groaned in the spirit - The word rendered "groaned," here, commonly denotes to be angry or indignant, or to reprove severely, denoting violent agitation of mind. Here it also evidently denotes violent agitation - not from anger, but from grief. He saw the sorrow of others, and he was also moved with sympathy and love. The word "groan" usually, with us, denotes an expression of internal sorrow by a special sound. The word here, however, does not mean that utterance was given to the internal emotion, but that it was deep and agitating, though internal.

In the spirit - In the mind. See Acts 19:21. Paul purposed in the spirit that is, in his mind, Matthew 5:3.

Was troubled - Was affected with grief. Perhaps this expression denotes that his countenance was troubled, or gave indications of sorrow (Grotins).

Verse 34

Where have ye laid him? - Jesus spoke as a man. In all this transaction he manifested the deep sympathies of a man; and though he who could raise the dead man up could also know where he was, yet he chose to lead them to the grave by inducing them to point the way, and hence, he asked this question.

Verse 35

Jesus wept - It has been remarked that this is the shortest verse in the Bible; but it is exceedingly important and tender. It shows the Lord Jesus as a friend, a tender friend, and evinces his character as a man. And from this we learn:

1.That the most tender personal friendship is not inconsistent with the most pure religion. Piety binds stronger the ties of friendship, makes more tender the emotions of love, and seals and sanctifies the affections of friends.

2.It is right, it is natural, it is indispensable for the Christian to sympathize with others in their afflictions. Romans 12:15; "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

3.Sorrow at the death of friends is not improper. It is right to weep. It is the expression of nature and religion does not forbid or condemn it. All that religion does in the case is to temper and chasten our grief; to teach us to mourn with submission to God; to weep without complaining, and to seek to banish tears, not by hardening the heart or forgetting the friend, but by bringing the soul, made tender by grief, to receive the sweet influences of religion, and to find calmness and peace in the God of all consolation.

4.We have here an instance of the tenderness of the character of Jesus, The same Savior wept over Jerusalem, and felt deeply for poor dying, sinners. To the same tender and compassionate Saviour Christians may now come Hebrews 4:15; and to him the penitent sinner may also come, knowing that he will not cast him away.

Verse 38

It was a cave - This was a common mode of burial. See the notes at Matthew 8:28.

A stone lay upon it - Over the mouth of the cave. See Matthew 27:60.

Verse 39

Four days - This proves that there could be no deception, for it could not have been a case of suspended animation. All these circumstances are mentioned to show that there was no imposture. Impostors do not mention minute circumstances like these. They deal in generals only. Every part of this narrative bears the marks of truth.

Verse 40

Said I not unto thee - This was implied in what he had said about the resurrection of her brother, John 11:23-25. There would be a manifestation of the glory of God in raising him up which she would be permitted, with all others, to behold.

The glory of God - The power and goodness displayed in the resurrection. It is probable that Martha did not really expect that Jesus would raise him up, but supposed that he went there merely to see the corpse. Hence, when he directed them to take away the stone, she suggested that by that time the body was offensive.

Verse 41

Lifted up his eyes - In an attitude of prayer. See Luke 18:13; Matthew 14:19.

I thank thee that thou hast heard me - It is possible that John has recorded only the sum or substance of the prayer on this occasion. The thanks which Jesus renders here are evidently in view of the fact that power had been committed to him to raise up Lazarus. On account of the people, and the signal proof which would be furnished of the truth of his mission, he expressed his thanks to God. In all his actions, he recognized his union to the Father, and his dependence upon him as Mediator.

Verse 42

And I knew - "As for me. So far as I am concerned. I had no anxiety, no doubt as to myself, that I should always be heard; but the particular ground of gratitude is the benefit that will result to those who are witnesses." Jesus never prayed in vain. He never attempted to work a miracle in vain; and in all his miracles the ground of his joy was, not that he was to be praised or honored, but that others were to be benefited and God glorified.

Verse 43

A loud voice - Greek, "A great voice." Syriac: "A high voice." This was distinctly asserting his power. He uttered a distinct, audible voice, that there might be no suspicion of charm or incantation. The ancient magicians and jugglers performed their wonders by whispering and muttering. See the notes at Isaiah 8:19. Jesus spake openly and audibly, and asserted thus his power. So, also, in the day of judgment he will call the dead with a great sound of a trumpet, Matthew 24:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

Lazarus, come forth! - Here we may remark:

1. That Jesus did this by his own power.

2. The power of raising the dead is the highest of which we can conceive. The ancient pagan declared it to be even beyond the power of God. It implies not merely giving life to the deceased body, but the power of entering the world of spirits, of recalling the departed soul, and of reuniting it with the body. He that could do this must be omniscient as well as omnipotent; and if Jesus did it by his own power, it proves that he was divine.

3. This is a striking illustration of the general resurrection. In the same manner Jesus will raise all the dead. This miracle shows that it is possible; shows the way in which it will be done by the voice of the Son of God; and demonstrates the certainty that he will do it. Oh how important it is that we be prepared for that moment when his voice shall be heard in our silent tombs, and he shall call us forth again to life!

Verse 44

He that was dead - The same man, body and soul.

Bound hand and foot - It is not certain whether the whole body and limbs were bound together, or each limb separately. When they embalmed a person, the whole body and limbs were swathed or bound together by strips of linen, involved around it to keep together the aromatics with which the body was embalmed. This is the condition of Egyptian mummies. See Acts 5:6. But it is not certain that this was always the mode. Perhaps the body was simply involved in a winding-sheet. The custom still exists in western Asia. No coffins being used, the body itself is more carefully and elaborately wrapped and swathed than is common or desirable where coffins are used. In this method the body is stretched out and the arms laid straight by the sides, after which the whole body, from head to foot, is wrapped round tightly in many folds of linen or cotton cloth; or, to be more precise, a great length of cloth is taken and rolled around the body until the whole is enveloped, and every part is covered with several folds of the cloth. The ends are then sewed, to keep the whole firm and compact; or else a narrow bandage is wound over the whole, forming, ultimately, the exterior surface. The body, when thus enfolded and swathed, retains the profile of the human form; but, as in the Egyptian mummies, the legs are not folded separately, but together; and the arms also are not distinguished, but confined to the sides in the general envelope. Hence, it would be clearly

impossible for a person thus treated to move his arms or legs, if restored to existence.

The word rendered "grave-clothes" denotes also the bands or clothes in which new-born infants are involved. He went forth, but his walking was impeded by the bands or clothes in which he was involved.

And his face … - This was a common thing when they buried their dead. See John 20:7. It is not known whether the whole face was covered in this manner, or only the forehead. In the Egyptian mummies it is only the forehead that is thus bound.

Loose him - Remove the bandages, so that he may walk freely. The effect of this miracle is said to have been that many believed on him. It may be remarked in regard to it that there could not be a more striking proof of the divine mission and power of Jesus. There could be here no possibility of deception:

1.The friends of Lazarus believed him to be dead. In this they could not be deceived. There could have been among them no design to deceive.

2.He was four days dead. It could not be a case, therefore, of suspended animation.

3.Jesus was at a distance at the time of his death. There was, therefore, no agreement to attempt to impose on others.

4.No higher power can be conceived than that of raising the dead.

5.It was not possible to impose on his sisters, and to convince them that he was restored to life, if it was not really so.

6.There were many present who were convinced also. God had so ordered it in his providence that to this miracle there should be many witnesses. There was no concealment, no jugglery, no secrecy. It was done publicly, in open day, and was witnessed by many who followed them to the grave, John 11:31.

7.Others, who saw it, and did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, went and told it to the Pharisees. But they did not deny that Jesus had raised up Lazarus. They could not deny it. The very ground of their alarm - the very reason why they went - was that he had actually done it. Nor did the

Pharisees dare to call the fact in question. If they could have done it, they would. But it was not possible; for,

8.Lazarus was yet alive John 12:10, and the fact of his resurrection could not be denied. Every circumstance in this account is plain, simple, consistent, bearing all the marks of truth. But if Jesus performed this miracle his religion is true. God would not give such power to an impostor; and unless it can be proved that this account is false, the Christian religion must be from God.

Verse 46

Some of them … - We see here the different effect which the word and works of God will have on different individuals. Some are converted and others are hardened; yet the evidence of this miracle was as clear to the one as the other. But they would not be convinced.

Verse 47

A council - A meeting of the Sanhedrin, or Great Council of the nation. See the notes at Matthew 2:4. They claimed the right of regulating all the affairs of religion. See the notes at John 1:19.

What do we? - What measures are we taking to arrest the progress of his sentiments?

For this man doeth many miracles - If they admitted that he performed miracles, it was clear what they ought to do. They should have received him as the Messiah. It may be asked, If they really believed that he worked miracles, why did they not believe on him? To this it may be replied that they did not doubt that impostors might work miracles. See Matthew 24:24. To this opinion they were led, probably, by the wonders which the magicians performed in Egypt Deuteronomy 13:1. As they regarded the tendency of the doctrines of Jesus to draw off the people from the worship of God, and from keeping his law John 9:16, they did not suppose themselves bound to follow him, even if he did work miracles.

Verse 48

All men - That is, all men among the Jews. The whole nation.

And the Romans shall come - They were then subject to the Romans - tributary and dependent. Whatever privileges they had they held at the will of the Roman emperor. They believed, or feigned to believe, that Jesus was intending to set up a temporal kingdom. As he claimed to be the Messiah,

so they supposed, of course, that he designed to be a temporal prince, and they professed to believe that this claim was, in fact, hostility to the Roman emperor. They supposed that it would involve the nation in war if he was not arrested, and that the effect would be that they would be vanquished and destroyed. It was on this charge that they at last arraigned him before Pilate, Luke 23:2-3.

Will take away - This expression means to destroy, to ruin, to overthrow, Luke 8:12; Acts 6:13-14.

Our place - This probably refers to the temple, Acts 6:13-14. It was called "the place" by way of eminence, as being the chief or principal place on earth - being the seat of the special worship of God. This place was utterly destroyed by the Romans. See the notes at Matthew 24.

And nation - The nation or people of the Jews.

Verse 49

Caiaphas - See the notes at Luke 3:2.

Being high-Priest that same year - It is probable that the office of high priest was at first for life, if there was no conduct that rendered the person unworthy the office. In that case the incumbent was removed. Thus Abiathar was removed by Solomon, 1 Kings 2:27. Subsequently the kings, and especially the conquerors of Judea, claimed and exercised the right of removing the high priest at pleasure, so that, in the time of the Romans, the office was held but a short time. (See the Chronological Table.) Caiaphas held the office for about 10 years.

Ye know nothing at all - That is, you know nothing respecting the subject under consideration. You are fools to hesitate about so plain a case. It is probable that there was a party, even in the Sanhedrin, that was secretly in favor of Jesus as the Messiah. Of that party Nicodemus was certainly one. See John 3:1; John 7:50-51; John 11:45; John 12:42; "Among the chief rulers, also, many believed on him," etc.

Verse 50

It is expedient for us - It is better for us. Literally, "It is profitable for us."

That one man should die - Jesus they regarded as promoting sedition, and as exposing the nation, if he was successful, to the vengeance of the Romans, John 11:48. If he was put to death they supposed the people would be safe. This is all, doubtless, that he meant by his dying for the people. He did not himself intend to speak of his dying as an atonement or a sacrifice;

but his words might also express that, and, though he was unconscious of it, he was expressing a real truth. In the sense in which he intended it there was no truth in the observation, nor occasion for it, but in the sense which the words might convey there was real and most important truth. It was expedient, it was infinitely desirable, that Jesus should die for that people, and for all others, to save them from perishing.

Verse 51

Not of himself - Though he uttered what proved to be a true prophecy, yet it was accomplished in a way which he did not intend He had a wicked design. He was plotting murder and crime. Yet, wicked as he was, and little as he intended it, God so ordered it that he delivered a most precious truth respecting the atonement. Remark:

1.God may fulfill the words of the wicked in a manner which they do not wish or intend.

2.He may make even their malice and wicked plots the very means of accomplishing his purposes. What they regard as the fulfillment of their plans God may make the fulfillment of his, yet so as directly to overthrow their designs, and prostrate them in ruin.

3.Sinners should tremble and be afraid when they lay plans against God, or seek to do unjustly to others.

Being high priest that year - It is not to be supposed that Caiaphas was a true prophet, or was conscious of the meaning which John has affixed to his words; but his words express the truth about the atonement of Jesus, and John records it as a remarkable circumstance that the high priest of the nation should unwittingly deliver a sentiment which turned out to be the truth about the death of Jesus. Great importance was attached to the opinion of the high priest by the Jews, because it was by him that the judgment by Urim and Thummim was formerly declared in cases of importance and difficulty, Numbers 27:21. It is not certain or probable that the high priest ever was endowed with the gift of prophecy; but he sustained a high office, the authority of his name was great, and it was thence remarkable that he uttered a declaration which the result showed to be true, though not in the sense that he intended.

He prophesied - He uttered words which proved to be prophetic; or he expressed at that time a sentiment which turned out to be true. It does not mean that he was inspired, or that he deserved to be ranked among the true

prophets; but his words were such that they accurately expressed a future event. The word "prophecy" is to be taken here not in the strict sense, but in a sense which is not uncommon in the sacred writers. Acts 21:9; "and the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy." See the Romans 12:6 note; 1 Corinthians 14:1 note; compare Matthew 26:68; Luke 22:64.

That Jesus should die - Die in the place of men, or as an atonement for sinners. This is evidently the meaning which John attaches to the words.

For that nation - For the Jews. As a sacrifice for their sins. In no other sense whatever could it be said that he died for them. His death, so far from saving them in the sense in which the high priest understood it, was the very occasion of their destruction. They invoked the vengeance of God when they said, "His blood be on us and on our children" Matthew 27:25, and all these calamities came upon them because they would not come to him and be saved - that is, because they rejected him and put him to death, Matthew 23:37-39.

Verse 52

Should gather together in one - All his chosen among the Jews and Gentiles. See John 10:16.

The children of God - This is spoken not of those who were then Christians, but of all whom God should bring to him; all who would be, in the mercy of God, called, chosen, sanctified among all nations, John 10:16.

Verse 53

They took counsel - The judgment of the high priest silenced opposition, and they began to devise measures to put him to death without exciting tumult among the people. Compare Matthew 26:5.

Verse 54

No more openly - No more publicly, in the cities and towns. Jesus never exposed his life unnecessarily to hazard. Although the time of his death was determined in the counsel of God, yet this did not prevent his using proper means to preserve his life.

The wilderness - See the notes at Matthew 3:1.

A city called Ephraim - This was probably a small town in the tribe of Ephraim, about five miles west of Jericho.

Verse 55

Jews' passover - See the notes at Leviticus 22:1-6. For want of this, great inconvenience was sometimes experienced. See 2 Chronicles 30:17-

18. Different periods were necessary in order to be cleansed from ceremonial pollution. For example, one who had been polluted by the touch of a dead body, of a sepulchre, or by the bones of the dead, was sprinkled on the third and seventh days, by a clean person, with hyssop dipped in water mixed in the ashes of the red heifer. After washing his body and clothes he was then clean. These persons who went up before the Passover were doubtless those who had in some manner been ceremonially polluted.

Verse 56

Will not come to the feast? - They doubted whether he would come. On the one hand, it was required by law that all males should come. On the other, his coming was attended with great danger. This was the cause of their doubting. It was in this situation that our Saviour, like many of his followers, was called to act. Danger was on the one hand, and duty on the other. He chose, as all should, to do his duty, and leave the event with God. He preferred to do it, though he knew that death was to be the consequence; and we should not shrink, when we have reason to apprehend danger, persecution, or death, from an honest attempt to observe all the commandments of God.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

Then Jesus came to Bethany - This was near to Jerusalem, and it was from this place that he made his triumphant entry into the city. See the notes at Matthew 21:1.

Verses 2-8

See this passage explained in the notes at Matthew 26:3-16.

John 12:2

A supper - At the house of Simon the leper, Matthew 26:6.

Lazarus was … - The names of Martha and Lazarus are mentioned because it was not in their own house, but in that of Simon. Lazarus is particularly mentioned, since it was so remarkable that one who had been once dead should be enjoying again the endearments of friendship. This shows, also, that his resurrection was no illusion - that he was really restored to the blessings of life and friendship. Calmet thinks that this was about two months after his resurrection, and it is the last that we hear of him. How long he lived is unknown, nor is it recorded that he made any communication about the world of spirits. It is remarkable that none who have been restored to life from the dead have made any communications respecting that world. See Luke 16:31, and the notes at 2 Corinthians 12:4.

John 12:4

Which should betray him - Greek, "who was to betray him" - that is, who would do it.

John 12:5

Three hundred pence - About 40,00, or 8 British pounds, 10 shillings (circa 1880's).

And given to the poor - The avails or value of it given to the poor.

John 12:6

Had the bag - The word translated "bag" is compounded of two words, meaning "tongue," and "to keep or preserve." It was used to denote the bag in which musicians used to keep the tongues or reeds of their pipes when traveling. Hence, it came to mean any bag or purse in which travelers put their money or their most precious articles. The disciples appear to have had such a bag or purse in common, in which they put whatever money they had, and which was designed especially for the poor, Luke 8:3; John 13:29; Acts 2:44. The keeping of this, it seems, was intrusted to Judas; and it is

remarkable that the only one among them who appears to have been naturally avaricious should have received this appointment. It shows us that every man is tried according to his native propensity. This is the object of trial - to bring out man‘s native character; and every man will find opportunity to do evil according to his native disposition, if he is inclined, to it.

And bare … - The word translated “bare” means literally “to carry as a burden.” Then it means “to carry away,” as in John 20:15; “If thou hast borne him hence.” Hence, it means to carry away as a thief does, and this is evidently its meaning here. It has this sense often in classic writers. Judas was a thief and stole what was put into the bag. The money he desired to be entrusted to him, that he might secretly enrich himself. It is clear, however, that the disciples did not at this time know that this was his character, or they would have remonstrated against him. They learned it afterward. We may learn here:

1.that it is not a new thing for members of the church to be covetous. Judas was so before them.

2.that such members will be those who complain of the great waste in spreading the gospel.

3.that this deadly, mean, and grovelling passion will work all evil in a church. It brought down the curse of God on the children of Israel in the case of Achan 1 Timothy 6:9.

Verse 10

That they might put Lazarus also to death - When men are determined not to believe the gospel, there is no end to the crimes to which they are driven. Lazarus was alive, and the evidence of his resurrection was so clear that they could not resist it. They could neither deny it, nor prevent its effect on the people. As it was determined to kill Jesus, so they consulted about the propriety of removing Lazarus first, that the number of his followers might be lessened, and that the death of Jesus might make less commotion. Unbelief stops at no crime. Lazarus was innocent; they could bring no charge against him; but they deliberately plotted murder rather than believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verses 12-19

See this passage explained in the notes at Mark 11:1-11; John 12:16

Was glorified - Was raised from the dead, and had ascended to heaven.

John 12:17

Bare record - Testified that he had raised him, and, as was natural, spread the report through the city. This excited much attention, and the people came out in multitudes to meet one who had power to work such miracles.

John 12:19

Prevail nothing - All your efforts are ineffectual to stop the progress of his opinions, and to prevent the people from believing on him.

The world - As we should say, "Everybody - all the city has gone out." The fact that he met with such success induced them to hasten their design of putting him to death, John 11:53.

Verse 20

Certain Greeks - In the original, "some Hellenists" - -the name commonly given to the Greeks. The same name was commonly used by the Jews to denote all the pagan nations, because most of those whom they knew spoke the Greek language, John 7:34; Romans 1:16; Romans 2:9-10; Romans 3:9. "Jews and Greeks." The Syriac translates this place, "Some of the Gentiles." There are three opinions in regard to these persons:

1.that they were Jews who spoke the Greek language, and dwelt in some of the Greek cities. It is known that Jews were scattered in Asia Minor, Greece, Macedonia, Egypt, etc., in all which places they had synagogues. See the notes at John 7:35,

2.that they were proselytes from the Greeks.

3.that they were still Gentiles and idolaters, who came to bring offerings to Yahweh to be deposited in the temple. Lightfoot has shown that the surrounding pagans were accustomed not only to send presents, sacrifices, and offerings to the temple, but that they also frequently attended the great feasts of the Jews. Hence, the outer court of the temple was called the court of the Gentiles. Which of these opinions is the correct one cannot be determined.

Verse 21

Bethsaida of Galilee - See the notes at John 1:44.

Would see Jesus - It is probable that the word "see," here, implies also a desire to converse with him, or to hear his doctrine about the nature of his

kingdom. They had seen or heard of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and, either by curiosity or a desire to be instructed, they came and interceded with his disciples that they might be permitted to see him. In this there was nothing wrong. Christ made the curiosity of Zacchaeus the means of his conversion, Luke 19:1-9. If we wish to find the Saviour, we must seek for him and take the proper means.

Verse 22

Telleth Andrew - Why he did not at once tell Jesus is not known. Possibly he was doubtful whether Jesus would wish to converse with Gentiles, and chose to consult with Andrew about it.

Tell Jesus - Whether the Greeks were with them cannot be determined. From the following discourse if would seem probable that they were, or at least that Jesus admitted them to his presence and delivered the discourse to them.

Verse 23

The hour is come - The time is come. The word "hour" commonly means a definite part or a division of a day; but it also is used to denote a brief period, and a fixed, definite, determined time. It is used in this sense here. The appointed, fixed time is come - that is, is so near at hand that it may be said to be come.

The Son of man - This is the favorite title which Jesus gives to himself, denoting his union with man, and the interest he felt in his welfare. The title is used here rather than "The Son of God," because as a man he had been humble, poor, and despised; but the time had come when, as a man, he was to receive the appropriate honors of the Messiah.

Be glorified - Be honored in an appropriate way - that is, by the testimony which God would give to him at his death, by his resurrection, and by his ascension to glory. See John 7:39.

Verse 24

Verily, verily - An expression denoting the great importance of what he was about to say. We cannot but admire the wisdom by which he introduces the subject of his death. They had seen his triumph. They supposed that he was about to establish his kingdom. He told them that the time had come in which he was to be glorified, but not in the manner in which they expected. It was to be by his death. But as they would not at once see how this could be, as it would appear to dash their hopes, he takes occasion to illustrate it by a beautiful comparison. All the beauty and richness of the harvest results

from the fact that the grain had died. If it had not died it would never have germinated or produced the glory of the yellow harvest. So with him. By this he still keeps before them the truth that he was to be glorified, but he delicately and beautifully introduces the idea still that he must die.

A corn - A grain.

Of wheat - Any kind of grain - wheat, barley; etc. The word includes all grain of this kind.

Into the ground - Be buried in the earth, so as to be accessible by the proper moisture.

And die - The whole body or substance of the grain, except the germ, dies in the earth or is decomposed, and this decomposed substance constitutes the first nourishment of the tender germ a nutriment wonderfully adapted to it, and fitted to nourish it until it becomes vigorous enough to derive its support entirely from the ground. In this God has shown his wisdom and goodness. No one thing could be more evidently fitted for another than this provision made in the grain itself for the future wants of the tender germ.

Abideth alone - Produces no fruit. It remains without producing the rich and beautiful harvest. So Jesus intimates that it was only by his death that he would be glorified in the salvation of men, and in the honors and rewards of heaven, Hebrews 2:9; "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." Philemon 2:8-9; "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him," etc. Hebrews 12:2; "who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." See also Ephesians 1:20-23.

Verse 25

He that loveth his life … - This was a favorite principle, a sort of "axiom" with the Lord Jesus, which he applied to himself as well as to his followers. See the Matthew 10:39 note; Luke 9:24 note.

Verse 26

Serve me - Will be my disciple, or will be a Christian. Perhaps this was said to inform the Greeks John 12:20 of the nature of his religion.

Let him follow me - Let him imitate me; do what I do, bear what I bear, and love what I love. He is discoursing here particularly of his own sufferings and death, and this passage has reference, therefore, to calamity

and persecution. “You see me triumph - you see (me enter Jerusalem, and you supposed that my kingdom was to be set up without opposition or calamity; but it is not. I am to die; and if you will serve me, you must follow me even in these scenes of calamity; be willing to endure trial and to bear shame, looking for future reward.”

Where I am - See John 14:3; John 17:24. That is, he shall be in heaven, where the Son of God then was in his divine nature, and where he would be as the glorified Messiah. See the notes at John 3:13. The natural and obvious meaning of the expression “I am” implies that he was then in heaven. The design of this verse is to comfort them in the midst of persecution and trial. They were to follow him to any calamity; but, as he was to be glorified as the result of his sufferings, so they also were to look for their reward in the kingdom of heaven, Revelation 3:21; “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.”

Verse 27

Now is my soul troubled - The mention of his death brought before him its approaching horrors, its pains, its darkness, its unparalleled woes. Jesus was full of acute sensibility, and his human nature shrunk from the scenes through which he was to pass. See Luke 23:41-44.

What shall I say? - This is an expression denoting intense anxiety and perplexity. As if it were a subject of debate whether he could bear those sufferings; or whether the work of man‘s redemption should be abandoned, and he should call upon God to save him. Blessed be his name that he was willing to endure these sorrows, and did not forsake man when he was so near being redeemed! On the decision of that moment - the fixed and unwavering purpose of the Son of God depended man‘s salvation. If Jesus had forsaken his purpose then, all would have been lost.

Father, save me - This ought undoubtedly to have been read as a question - “Shall I say, Father, save me?” Shall I apply to God to rescue me? or shall I go forward to bear these trials? As it is in our translation, it represents him as actually offering the prayer, and then checking himself. The Greek will bear either interpretation. The whole verse is full of deep feeling and anxiety. Compare Matthew 26:38; Luke 12:50.

This hour - These calamities. The word “hour,” here, doubtless has reference to his approaching sufferings the appointed hour for him to suffer. Shall I ask my Father to save me from this hour - that is, from these approaching sufferings? That it might have been done, see Matthew 26:53.

But for this cause - That is, to suffer and die. As this was the design of his coming as he did it deliberately - -as the salvation of the world depended on it, he felt that it would not be proper to pray to be delivered from it. He came to suffer, and he submitted to it. See Luke 23:42.

Verse 28

Glorify thy name - The meaning of this expression in this connection is this: "I am willing to bear any trials; I will not shrink from any sufferings. Let thy name be honored. Let thy character, wisdom, goodness, and plans of mercy be manifested and promoted, whatever sufferings it may cost me." Thus Jesus showed us that God's glory is to be the great end of our conduct, and that we are to seek that, whatever sufferings it may cost us.

I have both glorified it - The word "it" is not here in the original, but it is not improperly supplied by the translators. There can be no doubt that when God says here that he had glorified his name, he refers to what had been done by Christ, and that this was to be understood as an attestation that he attended him and approved his work. See John 12:30. He had honored his name, or had glorified him, by the pure instructions which he had given to man through him; by the power displayed in his miracles; by proclaiming his mercy through him; by appointing him to be the Messiah, etc.

Will glorify it again - By the death, the resurrection, and ascension of his Son, and by extending the blessings of the gospel among all nations. It was thus that he sustained his Son in view of approaching trials; and we may learn:

1.that God will minister grace to us in the prospect of suffering.

2.that the fact that God will be honored by our afflictions should make us willing to hear them.

3.that whatever was done by Christ tended to honor the name of God. This was what he had in view. He lived and suffered, not for himself, but to glorify God in the salvation of men.

Verse 29

The people - A part of the people.

It thundered - The unexpected sound of the voice would confound and amaze them; and though there is no reason to doubt that the words were spoken distinctly Matthew 3:17, yet some of the people, either from

amazement or envy, would suppose that this was a mere natural phenomenon.

An angel spake - It was the opinion of many of the Jews that God did not speak to men except by the ministry of angels, Hebrews 2:2; "The word spoken by angels;" Galatians 3:19; "It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator."

Verse 30

Came not because of me - Not to strengthen or confirm me; not that I had any doubts about my course, or any apprehension that God would not approve me and glorify his name.

For your sakes - To give you a striking and indubitable proof that I am the Messiah; that you may remember it when I am departed, and be yourselves comforted, supported, and saved.

Verse 31

Now is the judgment of this world - Greek: "crisis." This expression, doubtless, has reference to his approaching death, and whatever he means by judgment here relates to something that was to be accomplished by that death. It cannot mean that then was to be the time in which the world was to be finally judged, for he says that he did not come then to judge the world John 12:47; John 8:15, and he has clearly declared that there shall be a future day when he will judge all mankind. The meaning of it may be thus expressed: "Now is approaching the decisive scene, the eventful period - the crisis - when it shall be determined who shall rule this world. There has been a long conflict between the powers of light and darkness between God and the devil. Satan has so effectually ruled that he may be said to be the prince of this world; but my approaching death will destroy his kingdom, will break down his power, and will be the means of setting up the kingdom of God over man." The death of Christ was to be the most grand and effectual of all means that could be used to establish the authority of the law and the government of God, Romans 8:3-4. This it did by showing the regard which God had for his law; by showing his hatred of sin, and presenting the strongest motives to induce man to leave the service of Satan; by securing the influences of the Holy Spirit, and by his putting forth his own direct power in the cause of virtue and of God. The death of Jesus was the determining cause, the grand crisis, the concentration of all that God had ever done, or ever will do, to break down the kingdom of Satan, and set up his power over man. Thus was fulfilled the prediction Genesis

3:15, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Now shall the prince of this world - Satan, or the devil, John 14:30; John 16:11. He is also called the god of this world, 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 6:12; "The rulers of the darkness of this world" - that is, the rulers of this dark world a well-known Hebraism. He is also called "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," Ephesians 2:2. All these names are given him from the influence or power which he has over the men of this world, because the great mass of men have been under his control and subject to his will.

Be cast out - His kingdom shall be destroyed; his empire shall come to an end. It does not mean that his reign over all men would entirely cease then, but that then would be the crisis, the grand conflict in which he would be vanquished, and from that time his kingdom begin to decline, until it would finally cease, and then be free altogether from his dominion. See Luke 10:18; Colossians 1:18-20; Acts 26:18; 1 Corinthians 15:25-26; Revelation 20:14.

Verse 32

Be lifted up - See John 3:14; John 8:28.

Will draw - John 6:44. The same word is used in both places.

All men - I will incline all kinds of men; or will make the way open by the cross, so that all men may come. I will provide a way which shall present a strong motive or inducement - the strongest that can be presented to all men to come to me.

Verse 34

We have heard out of the law - Out of the Old Testament; or rather we have been so taught by those who have interpreted the law to us.

That Christ - That the Messiah.

Abideth for ever - Will remain forever, or will live forever. The doctrine of many of them certainly was that the Messiah would not die; that he would reign as a prince forever over the people. This opinion was founded on such passages of Scripture as these: Psalm 110:4, "Thou art a priest forever;" Daniel 2:44; Daniel 8:13-14. In the interpretation of these passages they had overlooked such places as Isaiah 53:1-12; nor did they understand how the fact that he would reign for ever could be reconciled with the idea of his death. To us, who understand that his reign does not refer to a temporal, an earthly kingdom, it is easy.

How sayest thou … - We have understood by the title "the Son of man" the same as the Messiah, and that he is to reign forever. How can he be put to death?

Who is this Son of man? - "The Son of man we understand to be the Messiah spoken of by Daniel, who is to reign forever. To him, therefore, you cannot refer when you say that he must be lifted up, or must die. Who is it - what other Son of man is referred to but the Messiah?" Either ignorantly or willfully, they supposed he referred to some one else than the Messiah.

Verse 35

Yet a little while is the light with you - Jesus did not reply directly to their question. He saw that they were offended by the mention of his death, and he endeavored to arrive at the same thing indirectly. He tells them, therefore, that the light would be with them a little while, and that they ought to improve the opportunity while they had it to listen to his instructions, to require with candor, and thus to forsake their false notions respecting the Messiah.

The light - John 1:4. It is probable that they understood this as denoting the Messiah. See John 8:12; "I am the light of the world;" John 9:4.

Walk … - John 11:9. Whatever you have to do, do it while you enjoy this light. Make good use of your privileges before they are removed. That is, while the Messiah is with you, avail yourselves of his instructions and learn the way to life.

Lest darkness - Lest God should take away all your mercies, remove all light and instruction from you, and leave you to ignorance, blindness, and woe. This was true that darkness and calamity were to come upon the Jewish people when the Messiah was removed; and it is also true that God leaves a sinner to darkness and misery when he has long rejected the gospel.

For he … - See John 11:10.

Verse 36

While ye have light - This implied two things:

1.that he was the light, or was the Messiah.

2.that he was soon to be taken away by death.

In this manner he answered their question - not directly, but in a way to convey the truth to their minds, and at the same time to administer to them a useful admonition. Jesus never aroused the prejudices of men unnecessarily,

yet he never shrank from declaring to them the truth in some way, however unpalatable it might be.

Believe in the light - That is, in the Messiah, who is the light of the world.

That ye may be the children … - That ye may be the friends and followers of the Messiah. See the notes at Matthew 1:1. Compare John 8:12; Ephesians 5:8; "Now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light."

Did hide himself from them - John 8:59. He went out to Bethany, where he commonly passed the night, Luke 21:37.

Verse 37

So many miracles - This does not refer to any miracles performed on this occasion, but to all his miracles performed in view of the nation, in healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, etc. John here gives the summary or the result of all his work undeniable proof of his being the Messiah, yet the nation did not believe on him.

Before them - Before the Jewish nation. Not in the presence of the people whom he was then addressing, but before the Jewish people.

They believed not - The Jewish nation did not believe as a nation, but rejected him.

Verse 38

The saying - The word of Isaiah, or that which Isaiah predicted. This occurs in Isaiah 53:1.

Might be fulfilled - That the same effect should occur which occurred in the time of Isaiah. This does not mean that the Pharisees rejected Christ in order that the prophecy of Isaiah should be fulfilled, but that by their rejection of him the same thing had occurred which took place in the time of Isaiah. His message was despised by the nation, and he himself put to death. And it was also true - by the same causes, by the same nation that the same gospel message was rejected by the Jews in the time of Christ. The same language of the prophet would express both events, and no doubt it was intended by the Holy Spirit to mark both events. In this way it was completely fulfilled. See the notes at Isaiah 53:1.

Our report - Literally, by report is meant "what is heard." Our speech, our message. That is, few or none have received the message. The form of the question is an emphatic way of saying that it was rejected.

The arm of the Lord - The arm is a symbol of power, as it is the instrument by which we execute our purposes. It is put for the power of God, Isaiah 51:9; Isaiah 52:10. Thus, he is said to have brought out the children of Israel from Egypt with a high arm that is, with great power. It hence means God‘s power in defending his people, in overcoming his enemies, and in saving the soul. In this place it clearly denotes the power displayed by the miracles of Christ.

Revealed - Made known, seen, understood. Though the power of God was displayed, yet the people did not see and understand it.

Verse 39

They could not believe - See Mark 6:5; “He could there do no mighty works,” etc. The works can and could are often used in the Bible to denote the existence of such obstacles as to make a result certain, or as affirming that while one thing exists another thing cannot follow. Thus, John 5:44; “How can ye believe which receive honor one of another.” That is, while this propensity to seek for honor exists, it will effectually prevent your believing. Thus Genesis 37:4 it is said of the brethren of Joseph that they “could not speak peaceably unto him.” That is, while their hatred continued so strong, the other result would follow. See also Matthew 12:34; Romans 8:7; John 6:60; Amos 3:3. In this case it means that there was some obstacle or difficulty that made it certain that while it existed they would not believe. What that was is stated in the next verse; and while that blindness of mind and that hardness of heart existed, it was impossible that they should believe, for the two things were incompatible. But this determines nothing about their power of removing that blindness, or of yielding their heart to the gospel. It simply affirms that while one exists the other cannot follow. Chrysostom and Augustine understand this of a moral inability, and not of any natural want. of power. “They could not, because they would not” (Chrysostom in loco). So on Jeremiah 13:23, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin,” etc., he says, “he does not say if is impossible for a wicked man to do well, but, because “they will not, therefore they cannot.” Augustine says on this place: “If I be asked why they could not believe, I answer without hesitation, because they would not: because God foresaw their evil will, and he announced it beforehand by the prophet.”

Said again - Isaiah 6:9-10.

Verse 40

He hath blinded their eyes - The expression in Isaiah is, "Go, make the heart of this people fat, and shut their eyes." That is, go and proclaim truth to them truth that will result in blinding their eyes. Go and proclaim the law and the will of God, and the effect will be, owing to the hardness of their heart, that their eyes will be blinded and their hearts hardened. As God knew that this would be the result - as it was to be the effect of the message, his commanding Isaiah to go and proclaim it was the same in effect, or in the result, as if he had commanded him to blind their eyes and harden their hearts. It is this effect or result to which the evangelist refers in this place. He states that God did it, that is, he did it in the manner mentioned in Isaiah, for we are limited to that in our interpretation of the passage. In that case it is clear that the mode specified is not a direct agency on the part of God in blinding the mind - which we cannot reconcile with any just notions of the divine character - but "in suffering the truth to produce a regular effect on sinful minds, without putting forth any positive supernatural influence to prevent it." The effect of truth on such minds is to irritate, to enrage, and to harden, unless counteracted by the grace of God. See Romans 7:8-9, Romans 7:11; 2 Corinthians 2:15-16. And as God knew this, and, knowing it, still sent the message, and suffered it to produce the regular effect, the Evangelist says "he hath blinded their minds," thus retaining the substance of the passage in Isaiah without quoting the precise language; but in proclaiming the truth there was nothing wrong on the part of God or of Isaiah, nor is there any indication that God was unwilling that they should believe and be saved.

That they should not see … - This does not mean that it was the design of God that they should not be converted, but that it was the effect of their rejecting the message. See the notes at Matthew 13:14-15.

Verse 41

When he saw his glory - Isaiah 6:1-10. Isaiah saw the Lord (in Hebrew, יהוה Yahweh) sitting on a throne and surrounded with the seraphim. This is perhaps the only instance in the Bible in which Yahweh is said to have been seen by man, and for this the Jews affirm that Isaiah was put to death. God had said Exodus 33:20, "No man shall see me and live;" and as Isaiah affirmed that he had seen Yahweh, the Jews, for that and other reasons, put him to death by sawing him asunder. See Introduction to Isaiah, Section 2. In the prophecy Isaiah is said expressly to have seen Yahweh John 12:1; and in John 12:5, "Mine eyes have seen the King Yahweh of hosts." By his

glory is meant the manifestation of him - the Shechinah, or visible cloud that was a representation of God, and that rested over the mercy-seat. This was regarded as equivalent to seeing God, and John here expressly applies this to the Lord Jesus Christ; for he is nor affirming that the people did not believe in God, but is assigning the reason why they believed not on Jesus Christ as the Messiah. The whole discourse has respect to the Lord Jesus, and the natural construction of the passage requires us to refer it to him. John affirms that it was the glory of the Messiah that Isaiah saw, and yet Isaiah affirms that it was Yahweh; and from this the inference is irresistible that John regarded Jesus as the Yahweh whom Isaiah saw. The name Yahweh is never, in the Scriptures, applied to a man, or an angel, or to any creature. It is the unique, incommunicable name of God. So great was the reverence of the Jews for that name that they would not even pronounce it. This passage is therefore conclusive proof that Christ is equal with the Father.

Spake of him - Of the Messiah. The connection requires this interpretation.

Verse 42

The chief rulers - Members of the Sanhedrin - Nicodemus, Joseph, and others like them.

Because of the Pharisees - The Pharisees were a majority of the council.

Did not confess him - Did not openly avow their belief that he was the Messiah. Two of them, however, did afterward evince their attachment to him. These were Joseph and Nicodemus, John 19:38-39. That Joseph was one of them appears from Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50-51.

Put out of the synagogue - Excommunicated. See the notes at John 9:22.

Verse 43

The praise of men - The approval of human beings. It does not appear that they had a living, active faith, but that they were convinced in their understanding that he was the Messiah. They had that kind of faith which is so common among people - a speculative acknowledgment that religion is true, but an acknowledgment which leads to no self-denial, which shrinks from the active duties of piety, and fears man more than God. True faith is active. It overcomes the fear of man; it prompts to self-denying duties, Hebrews 11. Nevertheless, it was no unimportant proof that Jesus was the

Messiah, that any part of the great council of the Jews were even speculatively convinced of it: and it shows that the evidence could not have been slight when it overcame their prejudices and pride, and constrained them to admit that the lowly and poor man of Nazareth was the long expected Messiah of their nation.

Verse 44

Jesus cried and said - John does not say where or when this was; it is probable, however, that it was a continuation of the discourse recorded in John 12:30-36. Jesus saw their unbelief, and proceeded to state the consequence of believing on him, and of rejecting him and his message.

Believeth not on me - That is, not on me alone, or his faith does not terminate on me. Compare Matthew 10:20; Mark 9:37. It involves, also, belief in him that sent me. Jesus uniformly represents the union between himself and God as so intimate that there could not be faith in him unless there was also faith in God. He did the same works John 5:17, John 5:20, John 5:36; John 10:25, John 10:37, and taught the very doctrine which God had commissioned him to do, John 8:38; John 5:30, John 5:20-23.

Verse 45

Seeth me … - This verse is a strong confirmation of his equality with God. In no other way can it be true that he who saw Jesus saw him that sent him, unless he were the same in essence. Of no man could it be affirmed that he who saw him saw God. To say this of Paul or Isaiah would have been blasphemy. And yet Jesus uses this language familiarly and constantly. It shows that he had a consciousness that he was divine, and that it was the natural and proper way of speaking when speaking of himself. Compare John 5:17.

Verse 46

A light into the world - John 8:12; John 1:9; John 3:19.

Walk in darkness - In gross and dangerous errors. Darkness is put for error as well as for sin, John 3:19; 1 John 1:5. It is also used to denote the state when the comforts of religion are withdrawn from the soul, Isaiah 8:22; Joel 2:2; Isaiah 59:9; John 8:12.

Verse 47

I judge him not … - John 8:15. It was not his present purpose to condemn men. He would come to condemn the guilty at a future time. At present he came to save them. Hence he did not now even pronounce

decisively on the condition of those who rejected him, but still gave them an opportunity to be saved.

Verse 48

He that rejecteth me - Luke 10:16. The word "reject" means to despise, or to refuse to receive him.

Hath one - That is, he needs not my voice to condemn him. He will carry his own condemnation with him, even should I be silent. His own conscience will condemn him. The words which I have spoken will be remembered and will condemn him, if there were nothing further. From this we learn:

1.that a guilty conscience needs no accuser.

2.that the words of Christ, and the messages of mercy which the sinner has rejected, will be remembered by him.

3.that this will be the source of his condemnation. This will make him miserable, and there will be no possibility of his being happy.

4.that the conscience of the sinner will concur with the sentence of Christ in the great day, and that he will go to eternity self-condemned. It is this which will make the pains of hell so intolerable to the sinner.

5.The word that Christ has spoken, the doctrines of his gospel, and the messages of mercy, will be that by which the sinner will be judged in the last day. Every person will be judged by that message, and the sinner will be punished according to the frequency and clearness with which the rejected message has been presented to his mind, Matthew 12:41.

Verse 49

Of myself - John 7:16-18.

Verse 50

Is life everlasting - Is the cause or source of everlasting life. He that obeys the commandment of God shall obtain everlasting life; and this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his only-begotten Son, 1 John 3:22. We see here the reason of the earnestness and fidelity of the Lord Jesus. It was because he saw that eternal life depended on the faithful preaching of the message of God. He therefore proclaimed it in the face of all opposition, contempt, and persecution. And we see also:

1.That every minister of religion should have a deep and abiding conviction that he delivers a message that is to be connected with the eternal welfare of his hearers. And,

2.Under the influence of this belief, he should fearlessly deliver his message in the face of bonds, poverty, contempt, persecution, and death.

It may not be improper to remark here that this is the close of the public preaching of Christ. The rest of his ministry was employed in the private instruction of his apostles, and in preparing them for his approaching death. It is such a close as all his ministers should desire to make a solemn, deliberate, firm exhibition of the truth of God, under a belief that on it was depending the eternal salvation of his hearers, and uttering without fear the solemn message of the Most High to a lost world.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

The feast of the passover - See the notes at Matthew 26:2, Matthew 26:17.

His hour was come - The hour appointed in the purpose of God for him to die, John 12:27.

Having loved his own - Having given to them decisive and constant proofs of his love. This was done by his calling them to follow him; by patiently teaching them; by bearing with their errors and weaknesses; and by making them the heralds of his truth and the heirs of eternal life.

He loved them unto the end - That is, he continued the proofs of his love until he was taken away from them by death. Instances of that love John proceeds immediately to record in his washing their feet and in the institution of the Lord‘s Supper. We may remark that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He does not change; he always loves the same traits of character; nor does he withdraw his love from the soul. If his people walk in darkness and wander from him, the fault is theirs, not his. His is the character of a friend that never leaves or forsakes us; a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Psalm 37:28; “the Lord … forsaketh not his saints.” Isaiah 49:14-17; Proverbs 18:24.

Verse 2

Supper being ended - This translation expresses too much. The original means while they were at supper; and that this is the meaning is clear from the fact that we find them still eating after this. The Arabic and Persic translations give it this meaning. The Latin Vulgate renders it like the English.

The devil - The leader or prince of evil spirits.

Having now put it into the heart - Literally, having cast it into the heart. Compare Ephesians 6:16; “The fiery darts of the wicked.” See Acts 5:3; Luke 22:3. The meaning of this passage is that Satan inclined the mind of Judas to do this, or he tempted him to betray his Master. We know not precisely how this was done, but we know that it was by means of his avarice. Satan could tempt no one unless there was some inclination of the mind, some natural or depraved propensity that he could make use of. He presents objects in alluring forms fitted to that propensity, and under the influence of a strong or a corrupt inclination the soul yields to sin. In the

case of Judas it was the love of money; and it was necessary to present to him only the possibility of obtaining money, and it found him ready for any crime.

Verse 3

Jesus knowing … - With the full understanding of his dignity and elevation of character, he yet condescended to wash their feet. The evangelist introduces his washing their feet by saying that he was fully conscious of his elevation above them, as being intrusted with all things, and this made his humiliation the more striking and remarkable. Had he been a mere human teacher or a prophet, it would have been remarkable; but when we remember the dignity of his nature, it shows how low he would stoop to teach and save his people.

Had given all things … - See the notes at Matthew 28:18.

Was come from God - See the notes at John 8:42.

Went to God - Was about to return to heaven. See John 6:61-62.

Verse 4

He riseth from supper - Evidently while they were eating. See John 13:2.

Laid aside his garments - His outer garment. See the notes at Matthew 5:40. This was his mantle or robe, which is said to have been without seam. It was customary to lay this aside when they worked or ran, or in the heat of summer.

Took a towel and girded himself - This was the manner of a servant or slave. See the notes at Luke 17:8.

Verse 5

Began to wash … - It was uniformly the office of a servant to wash the feet of guests, 1 Samuel 25:41. It became a matter of necessity where they traveled without shoes, and where they reclined on couches at meals. It should be remembered here that the disciples were not sitting at the table, as we do, but were lying with their feet extended from the table, so that Jesus could easily have access to them. See the notes at Matthew 23:6.

Verse 6

Dost thou wash my feet? - Every word here is emphatic. Dost thou - the Son of God, the Messiah - perform the humble office of a servant - toward me, a sinner? This was an expression of Peter‘s humility, of his reverence for Jesus, and also a refusal to allow him to do it. It is possible, though not certain from the text, that he came to Simon Peter first.

Verse 7

Thou knowest not now - Though he saw the action of Jesus, yet he did not fully understand the design of it. It was a symbolical action, inculcating a lesson of humility, and intended to teach it to them in such a manner that it would be impossible for them ever to forget it. Had he simply commanded them to be humble, it would have been far less forcible and impressive than when they saw him actually performing the office of a servant.

Shalt know hereafter - Jesus at that time partially explained it John 13:14-15; but he was teaching them by this expressive act a lesson which they would continue to learn all their lives. Every day they would see more and more the necessity of humility and of kindness to each other, and would see that they were the servants of Christ and of the church, and ought not to aspire to honors and offices, but to be willing to perform the humblest service to benefit the world. And we may remark here that God often does things which we do not fully understand now, but which we may hereafter. He often afflicts us; he disappoints us; he frustrates our plans. Why it is we do not know now, but we yet shall learn that it was for our good, and designed to teach us some important lesson of humility and piety. So he will, in heaven, scatter all doubts, remove all difficulties, and show us the reason of the whole of his mysterious dealings in his leading us in the way to our future rest. We ought also, in view of this, to submit ourselves to him; to hush every murmur, and to believe that he does all things well. It is one evidence of piety when we are willing to receive affliction at the hand of God, the reason of which we cannot see, content with the belief that we may see it hereafter; or, even if we never do, still having so much confidence in God as to believe that what He does is right.

Verse 8

Thou shalt never wash my feet - This was a decided and firm expression of his reverence for his Master, and yet it was improper. Jesus had just declared that it had a meaning, and that he ought to submit to it. We should yield to all the plain and positive requirements of God, even if we cannot now see how obedience would promote his glory.

If I wash thee not - This had immediate reference to the act of washing his feet; and it denotes that if Peter had not so much confidence in him as to believe that an act which he performed was proper, though he could not see its propriety - if he was not willing to submit his will to that of Christ and

implicitly obey him, he had no evidence of piety. As Christ, however, was accustomed to pass from temporal and sensible objects to those which were spiritual, and to draw instruction from whatever was before him, some have supposed that he here took occasion to state to Peter that if his soul was not made pure by him he could not be his follower. Washing is often thus put as an emblem of moral purification, 1 Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:5-6. This is the meaning, also, of baptism. If this was the sense in which Jesus used these words, it denotes that unless Christ should purify Peter, he could have no evidence that he was his disciple. "Unless by my doctrine and spirit I shall purify you, and remove your pride Matthew 26:33, your lack of constant watchfulness Matthew 26:40, your anger Matthew 26:51, your timidity and fear Matthew 26:70, Matthew 26:74, you can have no part in me" (Grotius).

Hast no part with me - Nothing in common with me. No evidence of possessing my spirit, of being interested in my work, and no participation in my glory.

Verse 9

Not my feet only … - Peter, with characteristic readiness and ardor, saw now that everything depended on this. His whole salvation, the entire question of his attachment to his Master, was involved. If to refuse to have his feet washed was to be regarded as evidence that he had no part with Jesus, he was not only willing, but desirous that it should be done; not only anxious that his feet should be cleansed, but his hands and his head - that is, that he should be cleansed entirely, thoroughly. Perhaps he saw the spiritual meaning of the Saviour, and expressed his ardent wish that his whole soul might be made pure by the work of Christ. A true Christian is desirous of being cleansed from all sin. He has no reserve. He wishes not merely that one evil propensity should be removed, but all; that every thought should be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ 2 Corinthians 10:5; and that his whole body, soul, and spirit should be sanctified wholly and be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Thessalonians 5:23. His intellect, his will, his affections, his fancy, memory, judgment, he desires should be all brought under the influence of the gospel, and every power of the body and mind be consecrated unto God.

Verse 10

He that is washed - This is a difficult passage, and interpreters have been divided about its meaning. Some have supposed that it was customary to bathe before eating the paschal supper, and that the apostles did it; Jesus

having said, "he that hath bathed his body is clean except in regard to his feet - to the dirt contracted in returning from the bath, and that there was need only that the feet should be washed in order to prepare them properly to receive the supper." They suppose, also, that the lesson which Jesus meant to teach was that they were really pure John 15:3; that they were qualified to partake of the ordinances of religion, and needed only to be purified from occasional blemishes and impurities (Grotius). Others say that there is not evidence that the Jews bathed before partaking of the Paschal Supper, but that reference is made to the custom of washing their hands and their face. It is known that this was practiced. See the Matthew 15:2 note; Mark 7:3-4 notes. Peter had requested him to wash his hands and his head. Jesus told him that as that had been done, it was unnecessary to repeat it; but to wash the feet was an act of hospitality, the office of a servant, and that all that was needed now was for him to show this condescension and humility. Probably reference is had here to internal purity, as Jesus was fond of drawing illustrations from every quarter to teach them spiritual doctrine; as if he had said, "You are clean by my word and ministry John 15:3; you are my followers, and are prepared for the scene before you. But one thing remains. And as, when we come to this rite, having washed, there remains no need of washing except to wash the feet, so there is now nothing remaining but for me to show you an example that you will always remember, and that shall complete my public instructions to you."

Is clean - This word may apply to the body or the soul.

Every whit - Altogether, wholly.

Ye are clean - Here the word has doubtless reference to the mind and heart.

But not all - You are not all my true followers, and fitted for the ordinance before us.

Verse 11

Who should betray him - Greek: "He knew him who was about to betray him."

Verse 12

Know ye what … - Do you know the meaning or design of what I have done unto you?

Verse 13

Ye call me Master - Teacher.

And Lord - This word is applied to one who rules, and is often given to God as being the Proprietor and Ruler of all things. It is given to Christ many hundred times in the New Testament.

Ye say well … - Matthew 23:8, Matthew 23:10.

So I am - That is, he was their Teacher and Instructor, and he was their Sovereign and King.

Verse 14-15

Ye also ought to wash … - Some have understood this literally as instituting a religious rite which we ought to observe; but this was evidently not the design; because:

1.There is no evidence that Jesus intended it as a religious observance, like the Lord‘s Supper or the ordinance of baptism.

2.It was not observed by the apostles or the primitive Christians as a religious rite.

3.It was a rite of hospitality among the Jews, a common, well-known thing, and performed by servants.

4.It is the manifest design of Jesus here to inculcate a lesson of humility; to teach them by his example that they ought to condescend to the most humble offices for the benefit of others. They ought not to be proud, and vain, and unwilling to occupy a low place, but to regard themselves as the servants of each other, and as willing to befriend each other in every way. And especially as they were to be founders of the church, and to be greatly honored, he took this occasion of warning them against the dangers of ambition, and of teaching them, by an example that they could not forget, the duty of humility.

Verse 16-17

The servant is not … - This was universally true, and this they were to remember always, that they were to manifest the same spirit that he did, and that they were to expect the same treatment from the world. See the notes at Matthew 10:24-25.

Verse 18

I speak not of you all - That is, in addressing you as clean, I do not mean to say that you all possess this character.

I know whom I have chosen - He here means evidently to say that he had not chosen them all, implying that Judas had not been chosen. As, however, this word is applied to Judas in one place John 6:70, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" it must have a different meaning here from that which it has there. There it evidently refers to the apostleship. Jesus had chosen him to be an apostle, and had treated him as such. Here it refers to purity of heart, and Jesus implies that, though Judas had been chosen to the office of apostleship, yet he had not been chosen to purity of heart and life. The remaining eleven had been, and would be saved. It was not, however, the fault of Jesus that Judas was not saved, for he was admitted to the same teaching, the same familiarity, and the same office; but his execrable love of gold gained the ascendency, and rendered vain all the means used for his conversion.

But that the scripture … - These things have occurred in order that the prophecies may receive their completion. It does not mean that Judas was compelled to this course in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, but that this was foretold, and that by this the prophecy did receive a completion. "The scripture." This is written in Psalm 41:9. It is commonly understood of Ahithophel, and of the enemies of David who had been admitted to his friendship, and who had now proved ungrateful to him.

May be fulfilled - See the notes at Matthew 1:22. It is difficult to tell whether this prophecy had a primary reference to Judas, or whether it be meant that it received a more complete fulfillment in his case than in the time of David. The cases were similar; the same words would describe both events, for there was an exhibition of similar ingratitude and baseness in both cases, so that the same words would fitly describe both events.

He that eateth bread with me - To eat with one was a proof of friendship. See 2 Samuel 9:11; Matthew 9:11; Genesis 43:32. This means that Judas had been admitted to all the privileges of friendship, and had partaken of the usual evidences of affection. It was this which greatly aggravated his offence. It was base ingratitude as well as murder.

Hath lifted up his heel - Suidas says that this figure is taken from those who are running in a race, when one attempts to trip the other up and make him fall. It was a base and ungrateful return for kindness to which the Lord Jesus referred, and it means that he who had been admitted to the intimacies of friendship had ungratefully and maliciously injured him. Some suppose the expression means to lay snares for one others, to kick or injure a man

after he is cast down (Calvin on Psalm 41:9). It is clear that it denotes great injury, and injury aggravated by the fact of professed friendship. It was not merely the common people, the open enemies, the Jewish nation that did it, but one who had received all the usual proofs of kindness. It was this which greatly aggravated our Saviour‘s sufferings.

Verse 19

Now I tell you before it come … - They would see by that that he had a knowledge of the heart and the power of foretelling future events, and must therefore have been sent by God. This does not imply that they had no faith before this, but that their faith would be increased and strengthened by it.

Verse 20

He that receiveth … - This sentiment is found in the instructions which Jesus gave to his disciples in Matthew 10:40. Why he repeats it at this time cannot now be known. It is certain that it is not closely connected with the subject of his conversation. Perhaps, however, it was to show how intimately united he, his Father, his apostles, and all who received them were. They who received them received him, and they who received him received God. So he who betrayed him, betrayed, for the same reason, God. Hence Judas, who was about to betray him, was also about to betray the cause of religion in the world, and to betray God and his cause. Everything pertaining to religion is connected together. A man cannot do dishonor to one of the institutions of religion without injuring all; he cannot dishonor its ministers or the Saviour without dishonoring God. And this shows that one prominent ground of the Saviour‘s solicitude was that his Father might be honored, and one source of his deep grief at the treason of Judas was that it would bring injury upon the whole cause of religion in the world.

Verse 21

Troubled in spirit - See John 12:27. The reason of his trouble here was that Judas, a professed friend, was about to betray him. He doubtless foresaw the deep and dreadful sorrows of his approaching death, and was also deeply affected with the ingratitude and wickedness of a professed friend. Jesus was man as well as God, and he felt like other men. His human nature shrank from suffering, and his tender sensibilities were affected not less deeply than would be those of other men by baseness and treason.

Testified - He bore witness to the truth; openly declared what he had before intimated - that one of them would betray him.

Verse 22

Doubting of whom … - The word translated "doubting" denotes that kind of anxiety which a man feels when he is in perplexity, and knows not what to say or do. We should say they were at a loss. See the notes at Matthew 26:22.

Verse 23

Leaning on Jesus' bosom - This does not mean that he was at that time actually lying on his bosom, but that he occupied a situation next to him at the table, so that his head naturally fell back on his bosom when he spoke to him. See the notes at Matthew 23:6.

Whom Jesus loved - This was doubtless John himself. The evangelists are not accustomed to mention their own names when any mark of favor or any good deed is recorded. They did not seek publicity or notoriety. In this case the appellation is more tender and honorable than any mere name. John was admitted to special friendship, perhaps, because the natural disposition of our Saviour was more nearly like the amiableness and mildness of John than any of the other disciples (Robert Hall). The highest honor that can be conferred on any man is to say that Jesus loved him. Yet this is an honor which all may possess, but which none can inherit without his spirit and without loving him. It is an honor which cannot be won by wealth or learning, by beauty or accomplishments, by rank or earthly honors, but only by the possession of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price, 1 Peter 3:4; compare Romans 8:9.

Verse 25

He then lying on Jesus' breast - This is a different word from the one rendered John 13:23 leaning. It means falling back or reclining on the bosom of Jesus. When Peter spake, John laid his head back on the bosom of Jesus, so that he could speak to him privately without being heard by others.

Verse 26

Jesus answered - That is, he answered John. It does not appear that either Judas or the other apostles heard him.

Shall give a sop - The word translated "sop" means a morsel, a piece of bread, or anything else eaten - as much as we are accustomed to take at a mouthful. Jesus was about to dip it in the sauce which was used at the Passover. The word "dip," in the original, is that from which is derived the word "baptize." It means here that Jesus would dip it into the sauce as we do a piece of bread. It is probable that it was not an unusual thing for the master of a feast to help others in this way, as it does not appear to have

attracted the attention of the others as at all remarkable. It was an indication to John who the betrayer was, and a hint which Judas also probably understood.

Verse 27

After the sop - After he had taken and probably eaten it. By this Judas saw that Jesus knew his design, and that he could not conceal his plan. He saw, also, that the other disciples would be acquainted with it; and, aroused by sudden anger, or with the apprehension that he should lose his reward, or that Jesus might escape, he resolved on executing his plan at once.

Satan entered into him - The devil had before this put it into his heart to betray Jesus John 13:2, but he now excited him to a more decided purpose. See Luke 22:3; also Acts 5:3; "Why hath Satan filled thine heart," etc.

What thou doest, do quickly - This showed to Judas that Jesus was acquainted with his design. He did not command him to betray him, but he left him to his own purpose. He had used means enough to reclaim him and lead him to a holy life, and now he brought him to a decision. He gave him to understand that he was acquainted with his plan, and submitted it to the conscience of Judas to do quickly what he would do. If he relented, he called on him to do it at once. If he could still pursue his wicked plan, could go forward when he was conscious that the Saviour knew his design, he was to do it at once. God adopts all means to bring men to a decision. He calls upon them to act decisively, firmly, immediately. He does not allow them the privilege to deliberate about wicked deeds, but calls on them to act at once, and to show whether they will obey or disobey him; whether they will serve him, or whether they will betray fits cause. He knows all their plans, as Jesus did that of Judas, and he calls on men to act under the full conviction that he knows all their soul. Sin thus is a vast evil. When men can sin knowing that God sees it all, it shows that the heart is fully set in them to do evil, and that there is nothing that will restrain them.

Verse 28-29

No man at the table knew - This shows that Jesus had signified to John only who it was that should betray him.

The bag - The traveling-bag in which they put their common property. See the notes at John 12:6.

Have need of against the feast - The feast of the Passover. This feast continued seven days, and they supposed that Jesus had directed him to

make preparation for their needs on those days.

Verse 30

It was night - It was in the evening, or early part of the night. What is recorded in the following chapters took place the same night.

Verse 31

Now is the Son of man glorified - The last deed is done that was necessary to secure the death of the Son of man, the glory that shall result to him from that death, the wonderful success of the gospel, the exaltation of the Messiah, and the public and striking attestation of God to him in the view of the universe. See the notes at John 12:32.

Verse 32

If God be glorified in him - If God is honored by him. If the life and death of the Messiah be such as to lead to the honor of God, such as shall manifest its perfections, and show his goodness, truth, and justice, then he will show that he thus approves his work.

God shall also glorify him - He will honor the Messiah. He will not suffer him to go without a proper attestation of his acceptance, and of the honor that God puts on him. Jesus here confidently anticipated that the Father would show that he was pleased with what he had done. He did it in the miracles that attended his death, in his resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and in the success of the gospel. We may remark that God will always, in the proper time and way, manifest his approbation of those who live so as to promote the honor of his name.

In himself - Or by himself; by a direct and public expression of his approbation. Not by the ministry of angels or by any other subordinate attestation, but by an expression that shall be direct from him. This was done by his direct interposition in his resurrection and ascension to heaven.

Shall straightway - Immediately, or without delay. This refers to the fact that the time when God would put this honor on him was at hand. His death, resurrection, and ascension were near.

Verse 33

Little children - An expression of great tenderness, denoting his deep interest in their welfare. As he was about to leave them, he endeavors to mitigate their grief by the most tender expressions of attachment, showing that he felt for them the deep interest in their welfare which a parent feels for his children. The word “children” is often given to Christians as implying:

1.that God is their Father, and that they sustain toward him that endearing relation, Romans 8:14-15.

2.as denoting their need of teaching and guidance, as children need the aid and counsel of a father. See the corresponding term "babes" used in 1 Corinthians 3:1; 1 Peter 2:2.

3.It is used, as it is here, as an expression of tenderness and affection. See Galatians 4:19; 1 John 2:1, 1 John 2:12, 1 John 2:28; 1 John 3:7, 1 John 3:18; 1 John 4:4; 1 John 5:21.

Yet a little while I am with you - He did not conceal the fact that he was soon to leave them. There is something exceedingly tender in this address. It shows that he loved them to the end; that as their friend and guide, as a man, he felt deeply at the thoughts of parting from them, and leaving them to a cold and unfeeling world. A parting scene at death is always one of tenderness; and it is well when, like this, there is the presence of the Savior to break the agony of the parting pang, and to console us with the words of his grace.

As I said unto the Jews - See John 7:34.

So now I say to you - That is, they could not follow him then, John 13:36; John 14:2. He was about to die and return to God, and for a time they must be willing to be separated from him. But he consoled them John 13:36 with the assurance that the separation would be only temporary, and that they should afterward follow him.

Verse 34

A new commandment - This command he gave them as he was about to leave them, to be a badge of discipleship, by which they might be known as his friends and followers, and by which they might be distinguished from all others. It is called new, not because there was no command before which required people to love their fellow-man, for one great precept of the law was that they should love their neighbor as themselves Leviticus 19:18; but it was new because it had never before been made that by which any class or body of people had been known and distinguished. The Jew was known by his external rites, by his uniqueness of dress, etc.; the philosopher by some other mark of distinction; the military man by another, etc. In none of these cases had love for each other been the distinguishing and special badge by which they were known. But in the case of Christians they were not to be known by distinctions of wealth, or learning, or fame; they were

not to aspire to earthly honors; they were not to adopt any special style of dress or badge, but they were to be distinguished by tender and constant attachment to each other.

This was to surmount all distinction of country, of color, of rank, of office, of sect. Here they were to feel that they were on a level, that they had common wants, were redeemed by the same sacred blood, and were going to the same heaven. They were to befriend each other in trials; be careful of each other‘s feelings and reputation; deny themselves to promote each other‘s welfare. See 1 John 3:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Galatians 6:2; 2 Peter 1:7. In all these places the command of Jesus is repeated or referred to, and it shows that the first disciples considered this indeed as the special law of Christ. This command or law was, moreover, new in regard to the extent to which this love was to be carried; for he immediately adds, “As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” His love for them was strong, continued, unremitting, and he was now about to show his love for them in death. John 15:13; “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” So in 1 John 3:16 it is said that “we ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren.” This was a new expression of love; and it showed the strength of attachment which we ought to have for Christians, and how ready we should be to endure hardships, to encounter dangers, and to practice self-denial, to benefit those for whom the Son of God laid down his life.

Verse 35

By this shall all men … - That is, your love for each other shall be so decisive evidence that you are like the Saviour, that all people shall see and know it. It shall be the thing by which you shall be known among all men. You shall not be known by special rites or habits; not by a special form of dress or manner of speech; not by special austerities and unusual customs, like the Pharisees, the Essenes, or the scribes, but by deep, genuine, and tender affection. And it is well known it was this which eminently distinguished the first Christians, and was the subject of remark by the surrounding pagans. “See,” said the pagan, “see how they love one another! They are ready to lay down their lives for each other.” Alas! how changed is the spirit of the Christian world since then! Perhaps, of all the commands of Jesus, the observance of this is that which is least apparent to a surrounding world. It is not so much that they are divided into different sects, for this

may be consistent with love for each other; but it is the want of deep-felt, genuine love toward Christians even of our own denomination; the absence of genuine self-denial; the pride of rank and wealth; and the fact that professed Christians are often known by anything else rather than by true attachment to those who bear the same Christian name and image. The true Christian loves religion wherever it is found equally in a prince or in a slave, in the mansion of wealth or in the cottage of poverty, on the throne or in the hut of want. He overlooks the distinction of sect, of color, and of nations; and wherever he finds a man who bears the Christian name and manifests the Christian spirit, he loves him. And this, more and more as the millennium draws near, will be the special badge of the professed children of God. Christians will love their own denominations less than they love the spirit and temper of the Christian, wherever it may be found.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verse 1

Let not your heart be troubled - The disciples had been greatly distressed at what Jesus had said about leaving them. Compare John 16:6, John 16:22. Perhaps they had indicated their distress to him in some manner by their countenance or their expressions, and he proceeds new to administer to them such consolations as their circumstances made proper. The discourse in this chapter was delivered, doubtless, while they were sitting at the table partaking of the Lord‘s Supper (see John 14:31); that in Luke 24:21.

Ye believe in God - This may be read either in the indicative mood or the imperative. Probably it should be read in the imperative - “Believe on God, and believe on me.” If there were no other reason for it, this is sufficient, that there was no more evidence that they did believe in God than that they believed in Jesus. All the ancient versions except the Latin read it thus. The Saviour told them that their consolation was to be found at this time in confidence in God and in him; and he intimated what he had so often told them and the Jews, that there was an indissoluble union between him and the Father. This union he takes occasion to explain to them more fully, John 14:7-12.

Believe in - Put confidence in, rely on for support and consolation.

Verse 2-3

In my Father‘s house - Most interpreters understand this of heaven, as the special dwelling-place or palace of God; but it may include the universe, as the abode of the omnipresent God.

Are many mansions - The word rendered “mansions” means either the act of dwelling in any place (John 14:23, “we will make our abode with him”), or it means the place where one dwells. It is taken from the verb to remain, and signifies the place where one dwells or remains. It is applied by the Greek writers to the tents or temporary habitations which soldiers pitch in their marches. It denotes a dwelling of less permanency than the word house. It is commonly understood as affirming that in heaven there is ample room to receive all who will come; that therefore the disciples might be sure that they would not be excluded. Some have understood it as affirming that there will be different grades in the joys of heaven; that some of the mansions of the saints will be nearer to God than others, agreeably to 1

Corinthians 15:40-41. But perhaps this passage may have a meaning which has not occurred to interpreters.

Jesus was consoling his disciples, who were affected with grief at the idea of his separation. To comfort them he addresses them in this language: "The universe is the dwelling-place of my Father. All is his house. Whether on earth or in heaven, we are still in his habitation. In that vast abode of God there are many mansions. The earth is one of them, heaven is another. Whether here or there, we are still in the house, in one of the mansions of our Father, in one of the apartments of his vast abode. This we ought continually to feel, and to rejoice that we are permitted to occupy any part of his dwelling-place. Nor does it differ much whether we are in this mansion or another. It should not be a matter of grief when we are called to pass from one part of this vast habitation of God to another. I am indeed about to leave you, but I am going only to another part of the vast dwelling-place of God. I shall still be in the same universal habitation with you; still in the house of the same God; and am going for an important purpose - to fit up another abode for your eternal dwelling." If this be the meaning, then there is in the discourse true consolation. We see that the death of a Christian is not to be dreaded, nor is it an event over which we should immoderately weep. It is but removing from one apartment of God's universal dwelling-place to another - one where we shall still be in his house, and still feel the same interest in all that pertains to his kingdom. And especially the removal of the Saviour from the earth was an event over which Christians should rejoice, for he is still in the house of God, and still preparing mansions of rest for His people.

If it were not so … - I have concealed from you no truth. You have been cherishing this hope of a future abode with God. Had it been ill founded I would have told you plainly, as I have told you other things. Had any of you been deceived, as Judas was, I would have made it known to you, as I did to him."

I go to prepare a place for you - By his going is meant his death and ascent to heaven. The figure here is taken from one who is on a journey, who goes before his companions to provide a place to lodge in, and to make the necessary preparations for their entertainment. It evidently means that he, by the work he was yet to perform in heaven, would secure their admission there, and obtain for them the blessings of eternal life. That work

would consist mainly in his intercession, Hebrews 10:12-13, Hebrews 10:19-22; Hebrews 7:25-27; Hebrews 4:14, Hebrews 4:16.

That where I am - This language could be used by no one who was not then in the place of which he was speaking, and it is just such language as one would naturally use who was both God and man - in reference to his human nature, speaking of his going to his Father; and in reference to his divine nature, speaking as if he was then with God.

Ye may be also - This was language eminently fitted to comfort them. Though about to leave them, yet he would not always be absent. He would come again at the day of judgment and gather all his friends to himself, and they should be ever with him, Hebrews 9:28. So shall all Christians be with him. And so, when we part with a beloved Christian friend by death, we may feel assured that the separation will not be eternal. We shall meet again, and dwell in a place where there shall be no more separation and no more tears.

Verse 4

Whither I go ye know - He had so often told them that he was to die, and rise, and ascend to heaven, that they could not but understand it, Matthew 16:21; Luke 9:22; Luke 18:31-32.

The way ye know - That is, the way that leads to the dwelling-place to which he was going. The way which they were to tread was to obey his precepts, imitate his example, and follow him, John 14:6.

Verse 5

We know not whither thou goest - Though Jesus had so often told them of his approaching death and resurrection, yet it seems they did not understand him, nor did they fully comprehend him until after his resurrection. See Luke 24:21. They entertained the common notions of a temporal kingdom; they supposed still that he was to be an earthly prince and leader, and they did not comprehend the reason why he should die. Thomas confessed his ignorance, and the Saviour again patiently explained his meaning. All this shows the difficulty of believing when the mind is full of prejudice and of contrary opinions. If Thomas had laid aside his previous opinions - had he been willing to receive the truth as Jesus plainly spoke it, there would have been no difficulty. Faith would have been an easy and natural exercise of the mind. And so with the sinner. If he were willing to receive the plain and unequivocal doctrines of the Bible, there would be no difficulty; but his mind is full of opposite opinions and plans, occupied with

errors and vanities, and these are the reasons, and the only reasons, why he is not a Christian. Yet who would say that, after the plain instructions of Jesus, Thomas might not have understood him? And who will dare to say that any sinner may not lay aside his prejudices and improper views, and receive the plain and simple teaching of the Bible?

Verse 6

I am the way - See Isaiah 35:8. By this is meant, doubtless, that they and all others were to have access to God only by obeying the instructions, imitating the example, and depending on the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the leader in the road, the guide to the wandering, the teacher of the ignorant, and the example to all. See John 6:68; "Thou hast the words of eternal life;" 1 Peter 2:21; "Christ - suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps;" Hebrews 9:8-9.

The truth - The source of truth, or he who originates and communicates truth for the salvation of men. Truth is a representation of things as they are. The life, the purity, and the teaching of Jesus Christ was the most complete and perfect representation of the things of the eternal world that has been or can be presented to man. The ceremonies of the Jews were shadows; the life of Jesus was the truth. The opinions of men are fancy, but the doctrines of Jesus were nothing more than a representation of facts as they exist in the government of God. It is implied in this, also, that Jesus was the fountain of all truth; that by his inspiration the prophets spoke, and that by him all truth is communicated to men. See the notes at John 1:17.

The life - See John 11:25, and the notes at John 1:4.

No man cometh to the Father but by me - To come to the Father is to obtain his favor, to have access to his throne by prayer, and finally to enter his kingdom. No man can obtain any of these things except by the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. By coming by him is meant coming in his name and depending on his merits. We are ignorant, and he alone can guide us. We are sinful, and it is only by his merits that we can be pardoned. We are blind, and he only can enlighten us. God has appointed him as the Mediator, and has ordained that all blessings shall descend to this world through him. Hence he has put the world under his control; has given the affairs of men into his hand, and has appointed him to dispense whatever may be necessary for our peace, pardon, and salvation, Acts 4:12; Acts 5:31.

Verse 7

If ye had known me - By this Jesus does not intend to say that they were not truly his disciples, but that they had not a full and accurate knowledge of his character and designs. They still retained, to a large extent, the Jewish notions respecting a temporal Messiah, and did not fully understand that he was to die and be raised from the dead.

Ye should have known my Father also - You would have known the counsels and designs of my Father respecting my death and resurrection. If you had been divested of your Jewish prejudices about the Messiah, if you had understood that it was proper for me to die, you would also have understood the purposes and plans of God in my death; and, knowing that, you would have seen that it was wise and best. We see here that a correct knowledge of the character and work of Christ is the same as a correct knowledge of the counsels and plans of God; and we see, also, that the reasons why we have not such a knowledge are our previous prejudices and erroneous views.

From henceforth - From this time. From my death and resurrection you shall understand the plans and counsels of God.

Ye know him - You shall have just views of his plans and designs.

Have seen him - That is, they had seen Jesus Christ, his image, and the brightness of his glory Hebrews 1:3, which was the same as having seen the Father, John 14:9.

Verse 8

Lord, show us the Father - Philip here referred to some outward and visible manifestation of God. God had manifested himself in various ways to the prophets and saints of old, and Philip affirmed that if some such manifestation should be made to them they would be satisfied. It was right to desire evidence that Jesus was the Messiah, but such evidence "had been" afforded abundantly in the miracles and teaching of Jesus, and that "should" have sufficed them.

Verse 9

So long time - For more than three years Jesus had been with them. He had raised the dead, cast out devils, healed the sick, done those things which no one could have done who had not come from God. In that time they had had full opportunity to learn his character and his mission from God. Nor was it needful, after so many proofs of his divine mission, that God should "visibly manifest" himself to them in order that they might be convinced that he came from him.

He that hath seen me - He that has seen my works, heard my doctrines, and understood my character. He that has given "proper attention" to the proofs that I have afforded that I came from God.

Hath seen the Father - The word "Father" in these passages seems to be used with reference to the divine nature, or to God represented "as a Father," and not particularly to the distinction in the Trinity of Father and Son. The idea is that God, as God, or as a Father, had been manifested in the incarnation, the works, and the teachings of Christ, so that they who had seen and heard him might be said to have had a real view of God. When Jesus says, "hath seen the Father," this cannot refer to the essence or substance of God, for He is invisible, and in that respect no man has seen God at any time. All that is meant when it is said that God is seen, is that some manifestation of him has been made, or some such exhibition as that we may learn his character, his will, and his plans. In this case it cannot mean that he that had seen Jesus with the bodily eyes had in the same sense seen God; but he that had been a witness of his miracles and of his transfiguration - that had heard his doctrines and studied his character - had had full evidence of his divine mission, and of the will and purpose of the Father in sending him. The knowledge of the Son was itself, of course, the knowledge of the Father. There was such an intimate union in their nature and design that he who understood the one understood also the other. See the notes at Matthew 11:27; also Luke 10:22; John 1:18.

Verse 10

I am in the Father - See the notes at John 10:38.

The words that I speak … - See the notes at John 7:16-17.

The Father that dwelleth in me - Literally, "The Father remaining in me." This denotes most intimate union, so that the works which Jesus did might be said to be done by the Father. It implies a more intimate union than can subsist between a mere man and God. Had Jesus been a mere man, like the prophets, he would have said, "The Father who sent or commissioned me doeth the works;" but here there is reference, doubtless, to that mysterious and special union which subsists between the Father and the Son.

He doeth the works - The miracles which had been performed by Jesus. The Father could be said to do them on account of the intimate union between him and the Son. See John 5:17, John 5:19, John 5:36; John 10:30.

Verse 11

Believe me … - Believe my declarations that I am in the Father, etc. There were two grounds on which they might believe; one was his own testimony, the other was his works.

Or else - If credit is not given to my words, let there be to my miracles.

For the very works‘ sake - On account of the works; or, be convinced by the miracles themselves. Either his own testimony was sufficient to convince them, or the many miracles which he had performed in healing the sick, raising the dead, etc.

Verse 12

He that believeth on me - This promise had doubtless special reference to the apostles themselves. They were full of grief at his departure, and Jesus, in order to console them, directed them to the great honor which was to be conferred on them, and to the assurance that God would not leave them, but would attend them in their ministry with the demonstrations of his mighty power. It cannot be understood of all his followers, for the circumstances of the promise do not require us to understand it thus, and it has not been a matter of fact that All Christians have possessed power to do greater works than the Lord Jesus. It is a general promise that greater works than he performed should be done by his followers, without specifying that all his followers would be instrumental in doing them.

The works that I do - The miracles of healing the sick, raising the dead, etc. This was done by the apostles in many instances. See Acts 5:15; Acts 19:12; Acts 13:11; Acts 5:1-10.

Greater works than these shall he do - Interpreters have been at a loss in what way to understand this. The most probable meaning of the passage is the following: The word “greater” cannot refer to the miracles themselves, for the works of the apostles did not exceed those of Jesus in power. No higher exertion of power was put forth, or could be, than raising the dead. But, though not greater in themselves considered, yet they were greater in their effects. They made a deeper impression on mankind. They were attended with more extensive results. They were the means of the conversion of more sinners. The works of Jesus were confined to Judea. They were seen by few. The works of the apostles were witnessed by many nations, and the effect of their miracles and preaching was that thousands from among the Jews and Gentiles were converted to the Christian faith. The word “greater” here is used, therefore, not to denote the absolute exertion of power, but the effect which the miracles would have on

mankind. The word "works" here probably denotes not merely miracles, but all things that the apostles did that made an impression on mankind, including their travels, their labors, their doctrine, etc.

Because I go unto my Father - He would there intercede for them, and especially by his going to the Father the Holy Spirit would he sent down to attend them in their ministry, John 14:26, John 14:28; John 16:7-14. See Matthew 28:18. By his going to the Father is particularly denoted his exaltation to heaven, and his being placed as head over all things to his church, Ephesians 1:20-23; Philemon 2:9-11. By his being exalted there the Holy Spirit was given John 16:7, and by his power thus put forth the Gentiles were brought to hear and obey the gospel.

Verse 13

Whatsoever ye shall ask - This promise referred particularly to the apostles in their work of spreading the gospel; it is, however, true of all Christians, if what they ask is in faith, and according to the will of God, James 1:6; 1 John 5:14.

In my name - This is equivalent to saying on my account, or for my sake. If a man who has money in a bank authorizes us to draw it, we are said to do it in his name. If a son authorizes us to apply to his father for aid because we are his friends, we do it in the name of the son, and the favor will be bestowed on us from the regard which the parent has to his son, and through him to all his friends. So we are permitted to apply to God in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, because God is in him well pleased Matthew 3:17, and because we are the friends of his Son he answers our requests. Though we are undeserving, yet he loves us on account of his Son, and because he sees in us his image. No privilege is greater than that of approaching God in the name of his Son; no blessings of salvation can be conferred on any who do not come in his name.

That will I do - Being exalted, he will be possessed of all power in heaven and earth Matthew 28:18, and he therefore could fulfill all their desires.

That the Father may be glorified in the Son - See the notes at John 13:31.

Verse 15

If ye love me - Do not show your love by grief at my departure merely; or by profession, but by obedience.

Keep my commandments - This is the only proper evidence of love to Jesus, for mere profession is no proof of love; but that love for him which leads us to do all his will, to love each other, to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, and to follow him through evil report and through good report, is true attachment. The evidence which we have that a child loves its parents is when that child is willing, without hesitation, gainsaying, or complaining, to do all that the parent requires him to do. So the disciples of Christ are required to show that they are attached to him supremely by yielding to all his requirements, and by patiently doing his will in the face of ridicule and opposition, 1 John 5:2-3.

Verse 16

I will pray the Father - This refers to his intercession after his death and ascension to heaven, for this prayer was to be connected with their keeping his commandments. In what way he makes intercession in heaven for his people we do not know. The fact, however, is clearly made known, Romans 8:34; Hebrews 4:14-15; Hebrews 7:25. It is as the result of his intercession in heaven that we obtain all our blessings, and it is through him that our prayers are to be presented and made efficacious before God.

Another Comforter - Jesus had been to them a counsellor, a guide, a friend, while he was with them. He had instructed them, had borne with their prejudices and ignorance, and had administered consolation to them in the times of despondency. But he was about to leave them now to go alone into an unfriendly world. The other Comforter was to be given as a compensation for his absence, or to perform the offices toward them which he would have done if he had remained personally with them. And from this we may learn, in part, what is the office of the Spirit. It is to furnish to all Christians the instruction and consolation which would be given by the personal presence of Jesus, John 16:14. To the apostles it was particularly to inspire them with the knowledge of all truth, John 14:26; John 15:26. Besides this, he came to convince men of sin. See the notes at John 16:8-11. It was proper that such an agent should be sent into the world:

1.Because it was a part of the plan that Jesus should ascend to heaven after his death.

2.Unless some heavenly agent should be sent to carry forward the work of salvation, man would reject it and perish.

3.Jesus could not be personally and bodily present in all places with the vast multitudes who should believe on him. The Holy Spirit is omnipresent, and can reach them all. See the notes at John 16:7.

4.It was manifestly a part of the plan of redemption that each of the persons of the Trinity should perform his appropriate work the Father in sending his Son, the Son in making atonement and interceding, and the Spirit in applying the work to the hearts of men.

The word translated "Comforter" is used in the New Testament five times. In four instances it is applied to the Holy Spirit - John 14:16, John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7. In the other instance it is applied to the Lord Jesus - 1 John 2:1; "We have an advocate (Paraclete - Comforter) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." It is used, therefore, only by John. The verb from which it is taken has many significations. Its proper meaning is to call one to us Acts 27:20; then to call one to aid us, as an advocate in a court; then to exhort or entreat, to pray or implore, as an advocate does, and to comfort or console, by suggesting reasons or arguments for consolation. The word "comforter" is frequently used by Greek writers to denote an advocate in a court; one who intercedes; a monitor, a teacher, an assistant, a helper. It is somewhat difficult, therefore, to fix the precise meaning of the word. It may be translated either advocate, monitor, teacher, or helper. What the office of the Holy Spirit in this respect is, is to be learned from what we are elsewhere told he does. We learn particularly from the accounts that our Saviour gives of his work that that office was:

1.to comfort the disciples; to be with them in his absence and to supply his place; and this is properly expressed by the word Comforter.

2.to teach them, or remind them of truth; and this might be expressed by the word monitor or teacher, John 14:26; John 15:26-27.

3.to aid them in their work; to advocate their cause, or to assist them in advocating the cause of religion in the world, and in bringing sinners to repentance; and this may be expressed by the word advocate, John 16:7-13. It was also by the Spirit that they were enabled to stand before kings and magistrates, and boldly to speak in the name of Jesus, Matthew 10:20. These seem to comprise all the meanings of the word in the New Testament, but no single word in our language expresses fully the sense of the original.

That he may abide with you for ever - Not that he should remain with you for a few years, as I have done, and then leave you, but be with you in all places to the close of your life. He shall be your constant guide and attendant.

Verse 17

The Spirit of truth - He is thus called here because he would teach them the truth, or would guide them into all truth, John 16:13. He would keep them from all error, and teach them the truth, which, either by writing or preaching, they were to communicate to others.

The world - The term world is often used to denote all who are entirely under the influence of the things of this world - pride, ambition, and pleasure; all who are not Christians, and especially all who are addicted to gross vices and pursuits, 1 Corinthians 1:21; 1 Corinthians 11:32; John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4.

Cannot receive - Cannot admit as a Teacher or Comforter, or cannot receive in his offices of enlightening and purifying. The reason why they could not do this is immediately added.

Because it seeth him not - The men of the world are under the influence of the senses. They walk by sight, and not by faith. Hence, what they cannot perceive by their senses, what does not gratify their sight, or taste, or feeling, makes no impression on them. As they cannot see the operations of the Spirit John 3:8, they judge that all that is said of his influence is delusive, and hence, they cannot receive him. They have an erroneous mode of judging of what is for the welfare of man.

Neither knoweth him - To know, in the Scriptures, often means more than the act of the mind in simply understanding a thing. It denotes every act or emotion of the mind that is requisite in receiving the proper impression of a truth. Hence, it often includes the idea of "approbation," of "love," of "cordial feeling," Psalm 1:6; Psalm 37:18; Psalm 138:6; Nahum 1:7; 2 Timothy 2:19. In this place it means the approbation of the heart; and as the people of the world do not approve of or desire the aid of the Spirit, so it is said they cannot receive him. They have no love for him, and they reject him. Men often consider his work in the conversion of sinners and in revivals as delusion. They love the world so much that they cannot understand his work or embrace him.

He dwelleth in you - The Spirit dwells in Christians by his sacred influences. There is no personal union, no physical indwelling, for God is

essentially present in one place as much as in another; but he works in us repentance, peace, joy, meekness, etc. He teaches us, guides us, and comforts us. See the notes at Galatians 5:22-24. Thus, he is said to dwell in us when we are made pure, peaceable, holy, humble; when we become like him, and cherish his sacred influences. The word "dwelleth" means to remain with them. Jesus was to be taken away, but the Spirit would remain. It is also implied that they would know his presence, and have assurance that they were under his guidance. This was true of the apostles as inspired men, and it is true of all Christians that by ascertaining that they have the "graces of the Spirit" - joy, peace, long-suffering, etc. they know that they are the children of God, 1 John 3:24; 1 John 5:10.

Verse 18

Comfortless - Greek, "orphans." Jesus here addresses them as children, John 13:33. He says that he would show them the kindness of a parent, and, though he was going away, he would provide for their future welfare. And even while he was absent, yet they would sustain to him still the relation of children. Though he was to die, yet he would live again; though absent in body, yet he would be present with them by his Spirit; though he was to go away to heaven, yet he would return again to them. See John 14:3.

Verse 19

A little while - This was the day before his death.

Seeth me no more - No more until the day of judgment. The men of the world would not see him visibly, and they had not the eye of faith to discern him.

But ye see me - Ye shall continue to see me by faith, even when the world cannot. You will continue to see me by the eye of faith as still your gracious Saviour and Friend.

Because I live - Though the Saviour was about to die, yet was he also about to be raised from the dead. He was to continue to live, and though absent from them, yet he would feel the same interest in their welfare as when he was with them on earth. This expression does not refer "particularly" to his "resurrection," but his "continuing to live." He had a nature which could not die. As Mediator also he would be raised and continue to live: and he would have both power and inclination to give them also life, to defend them, and bring them with him.

Ye shall live also - This doubtless refers to their future life. And we learn from this:

1.That the life of the Christian depends on that of Christ. They are united; and if they were separated, the Christian could neither enjoy spiritual life here nor eternal joy hereafter.

2.The fact that Jesus lives is a pledge that all who believe in him shall he saved. He has power over all our spiritual foes, and he can deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and from all temptations and trials.

Verse 20

At that day - In the time when my life shall be fully manifested to you, and you shall receive the assurance that I live. This refers to the time after his resurrection, and to the manifestations which in various ways he would make that he was alive.

That I am in my "Father … - That we are most intimately and indissolubly united. See the notes at John 10:38.

Ye in me - That there is a union between us which can never be severed. See the notes at John 15:1-7.

Verse 21

He that hath … - This intimate union is further manifested by these facts:

1.That true love to Jesus will produce obedience. See John 14:15.

2.That those who love him will be loved of the Father, showing that there is a union between the Father and the Son.

3.That Jesus also will love them, evincing still the same union. Religion is love. The love of one holy being or object is the love of all. The kingdom of God is one. His people, though called by different names, are one. They are united to each other and to God, and the bond which unites the whole kingdom in one is love.

Will manifest myself to him - To manifest is to show, to make appear, to place before the eyes so that an object may be seen. This means that Jesus would so show himself to his followers that they should see and know that he was their Saviour. In what way this is done, see John 14:23.

Verse 22

Judas saith unto him - This was the same as Lebbeus or Thaddeus. See Matthew 10:3. He was the brother of James, and the author of the Epistle of Jude.

How is it … - Probably Judas thought that he spake only of his resurrection, and he did not readily see how it could be that he could show himself to them, and not be seen also by others.

Verse 23

Will keep my words - See John 14:15.

We will come to him - We will come to him with the manifestation of pardon, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Spirit. It means that God will manifest himself to the soul as a Father and Friend; that Jesus will manifest himself as a Saviour; that is, that there will be shed abroad in the heart just views and proper feelings toward God and Christ. The Christian will rejoice in the perfections of God and of Christ, and will delight to contemplate the glories of a present Saviour. The condition of a sinner is represented as one who has gone astray from God, and from whom God has withdrawn, Psalm 58:3; Proverbs 28:10; Ezekiel 14:11. He is alienated from God, Ephesians 2:12; Isaiah 1:4; Ephesians 4:18; Colossians 1:21. Religion is represented as God returning to the soul, and manifesting himself as reconciled through Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:18; Colossians 1:21.

Make our abode - This is a figurative expression implying that God and Christ would manifest themselves in no temporary way, but that it would be the privilege of Christians to enjoy their presence continually. They would take up their residence in the heart as their dwelling-place, as a temple fit for their abode. See 1 Corinthians 3:16; "Ye are the temple of God;" 1 Corinthians 6:19; "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost;" 2 Corinthians 6:16; "Ye are the temple of the living God." This does not mean that there is any personal union between Christians and God - that there is any special indwelling of the essence of God in us for God is essentially present in all places in the same way; but it is a figurative mode of speaking, denoting that the Christian is under the influence of God; that he rejoices in his presence, and that he has the views, the feelings, the joys which God produces in a redeemed soul, and with which he is pleased.

Verse 24

The word which ye hear is not mine - See the notes at John 5:19; John 7:16.

Verse 25

Have I spoken - For your consolation and guidance. But, though he had said so many things to console them, yet the Spirit would be given also as their Comforter and Guide.

Verse 26

Will send in my name - On my account. To perfect my work. To execute it as I would in applying it to the hearts of men. See John 14:13.

Shall teach you all things - All things which it was needful for them to understand in the apostolic office, and particularly those things which they were not prepared then to hear or could not then understand. See John 16:12. Compare the notes at Matthew 10:19-20. This was a full promise that they would be inspired, and that in organizing the church, and in recording the truths necessary for its edification, they would be under the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Bring all things to your remembrance - This probably refers to two things:

1. He would seasonably remind them of the sayings of Jesus, which they might otherwise have forgotten. In the organization of the church, and in composing the sacred history, he would preside over their memories, and recall such truths and doctrines as were necessary either for their comfort or the edification of his people. Amid the multitude of things which Jesus spake during a ministry of more than three years, it was to be expected that many things which he had uttered, that would be important for the edification of the church, would be forgotten. We see, hence, the nature of their inspiration. The Holy Spirit made use of their memories, and doubtless of all their natural faculties. He so presided over their memories as to recall what they had forgotten, and then it was recorded as a thing which they distinctly remembered, in the same way as we remember a thing which would have been forgotten had not some friend recalled it to our recollection.

2. The Holy Spirit would teach them the meaning of those things which the Saviour had spoken. Thus they did not understand that he ought to be put to death until after his resurrection, though he had repeatedly told them of it, Luke 24:21, Luke 24:25-26. So they did not until then understand that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles, though this was also declared before. Compare Matthew 4:15-16; Matthew 12:21, with Acts 10:44-48.

Verse 27

Peace I leave with you - This was a common form of benediction among the Jews. See the notes at Matthew 10:13. It is the invocation of the

blessings of peace and happiness. In this place it was, however, much more than a mere form or an empty wish. It came from Him who had power to make peace and to confer it on all, Ephesians 2:15. It refers here particularly to the consolations which he gave to his disciples in view of his approaching death. He had exhorted them not to be troubled John 14:1, and he had stated reasons why they should not be. He explained to them why he was about to leave them; he promised them that he would return; he assured them that the Holy Spirit would come to comfort, teach, and guide them. By all these truths and promises he provided for their peace in the time of his approaching departure. But the expression refers also, doubtless. to the peace which is given to all who love the Saviour. They are by nature enmity against God, Romans 8:7. Their minds are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters east up mire and dirt, Isaiah 57:20. They were at war with conscience, with the law and perfections of God, and with all the truths of religion. Their state after conversion is described as a state of peace. They are reconciled to God; they acquiesce in all his claims; and they have a joy which the world knows not in the word, the promises, the law, and the perfections of God, in the plan of salvation, and in the hopes of eternal life. See Romans 1:7; Romans 5:1; Romans 8:6; Romans 14:7; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 2:17; Ephesians 6:15; Philemon 4:7; Colossians 3:15.

My peace - Such as I only can impart. The special peace which my religion is fitted to impart.

Not as the world -

1.Not as the objects which men commonly pursue - pleasure, fame, wealth. They leave care, anxiety, remorse. They do not meet the desires of the immortal mind, and they are incapable of affording that peace which the soul needs.

2.Not as the men of the world give. They salute you with empty and flattering words, but their professed friendship is often reigned and has no sincerity. You cannot be sure that they are sincere, but I am.

3.Not as systems of philosophy and false religion give. They profess to give peace, but it is not real. It does not still the voice of conscience; it does not take away sin; it does not reconcile the soul to God.

4.My peace is such as meets all the wants of the soul, silences the alarms of conscience, is fixed and sure amid all external changes, and will abide in the hour of death and forever. How desirable, in a world of anxiety and care, to possess this peace! and how should all who have it not, seek that which the world can neither give nor take away!

Neither let it be afraid - Of any pain, persecutions, or trials. You have a Friend who will never leave you; a peace that shall always attend you. See John 14:1.

Verse 28

Ye have heard … - John 14:2-3.

If ye loved me - The expression is not to be construed as if they had then no love to him, for they evidently had; but they had also low views of him as the Messiah; they had many Jewish prejudices, and they were slow to believe his plain and positive declarations. This is the slight and tender reproof of a friend, meaning manifestly if you had proper love for me; if you had the highest views of my character and work; if you would lay aside your Jewish prejudices, and put entire, implicit confidence in what I say.

Ye would rejoice - Instead of grieving, you would rejoice in the completion of the plan which requires me to return to heaven, that greater blessings may descend on you by the influences of the Holy Spirit.

Unto the Father - To heaven; to the immediate presence of God, from whom all the blessings of redemption are to descend.

For my Father is greater than I - The object of Jesus here is not to compare his nature with that of the Father, but his condition. Ye would rejoice that I am to leave this state of suffering and humiliation, and resume that glory which I had with the Father before the world was. You ought to rejoice at my exaltation to bliss and glory with the Father (Professor Stuart). The object of this expression is to console the disciples in view of his absence. This he does by saying that if he goes away, the Holy Spirit will descend, and great success will attend the preaching of the gospel, John 16:7-10. In the plan of salvation the Father is represented as giving the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the various blessings of the gospel. As the Appointer, the Giver, the Originator, he may be represented as in office superior to the Son and the Holy Spirit. The discourse has no reference, manifestly, to the nature of Christ, and cannot therefore be adduced to prove that he is not divine. Its whole connection demands that we interpret it as relating solely to the imparting of the blessings connected with redemption, in which the

Son is represented all along as having been sent or given, and in this respect as sustaining a relation subordinate to the Father.

Verse 29

Before it come to pass - Before my death, resurrection, and ascension.

Ye might believe - You might be confirmed or strengthened in faith by the evidence which I gave that I came from God - the power of foretelling future events.

Verse 30

Will not talk much - The time of my death draws near. It occurred the next day.

The prince of this world - See the notes at John 12:31.

Cometh - Satan is represented as approaching him to try him in his sufferings, and it is commonly supposed that no small part of the pain endured in the garden of Gethsemane was from some dreadful conflict with the great enemy of man. See Luke 22:53; "This is your hour and the power of darkness." Compare Luke 4:13.

Hath nothing in me - There is in me no principle or feeling that accords with his, and nothing, therefore, by which he can prevail. Temptation has only power because there are some principles in us which accord with the designs of the tempter, and which may be excited by presenting corresponding objects until our virtue be overcome. Where there is no such propensity, temptation has no power. As the principles of Jesus were wholly on the side of virtue, the meaning here may be that, though he had the natural appetites of man, his virtue was so supreme that Satan "had nothing in him" which could constitute any danger that he would be led into sin, and that there was no fear of the result of the conflict before him.

Verse 31

That the world may know that I love the Father - That it might not be alleged that his virtue had not been subjected to trial. It was subjected. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, Hebrews 4:15. He passed through the severest forms of temptation, that it might be seen and known that his holiness was proof to all trial, and that human nature might be so pure as to resist all forms of temptation. This will be the case with all the saints in heaven, and it was the case with Jesus on earth.

Even so I do - In all things he obeyed; and he showed that, in the face of calamities, persecutions, and temptations, he was still disposed to obey his Father. This he did that the world might know that he loved the Father.

So should we bear trials and resist temptation; and so, through. persecution and calamity, should we show that we are actuated by the love of God. “Arise, let us go hence.” It has been commonly supposed that Jesus and the apostles now rose from the paschal supper and went to the Mount of Olives, and that the remainder of the discourse in John 15; 16, together with the prayer in John 17, was delivered while on the way to the garden of Gethsemane; but some have supposed that they merely rose from the table, and that the discourse was finished before they left the room. The former is the more correct opinion. It was now probably toward midnight, and the moon was at the full, and the scene was one, therefore, of great interest and tenderness. Jesus, with a little band, was himself about to die, and he went forth in the stillness of the night, counselling his little company in regard to their duties and dangers, and invoking the protection and blessing of God his Father to attend, to sanctify, and guide them in the arduous labors, the toils, and the persecutions they were yet to endure, John 17.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verse 1

I am the true vine - Some have supposed that this discourse was delivered in the room where the Lord‘s Supper was instituted, and that, as they had made use of wine, Jesus took occasion from that to say that he was the true vine, and to intimate that his blood was the real wine that was to give strength to the soul. Others have supposed that it was delivered in the temple, the entrance to which was adorned with a golden vine (Josephus), and that Jesus took occasion thence to say that he was the true vine; but it is most probable that it was spoken while they were going from the paschal supper to the Mount of Olives. Whether it was suggested by the sight of vines by the way, or by the wine of which they had just partaken, cannot now be determined. The comparison was frequent among the Jews, for Palestine abounded in vineyards, and the illustration was very striking. Thus, the Jewish people are compared to a vine which God had planted, Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80:8-16; Joel 1:7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 19:10. When Jesus says he was the true vine, perhaps allusion is had to Jeremiah 2:21. The word “true,” here, is used in the sense of real, genuine. He really and truly gives what is emblematically represented by a vine. The point of the comparison or the meaning of the figure is this: A vine yields proper juice and nourishment to all the branches, whether these are large or small. All the nourishment of each branch and tendril passes through the main stalk, or the vine, that springs from the earth. So Jesus is the source of all real strength and grace to his disciples. He is their leader and teacher, and imparts to them, as they need, grace and strength to bear the fruits of holiness.

And my Father is the husbandman - The word “vine-dresser” more properly expresses the sense of the original word than husbandman. It means one who has the care of a vineyard; whose office it is to nurture, trim, and defend the vine, and who of course feels a deep interest in its growth and welfare. See the notes at Matthew 21:33. The figure means that God gave, or appointed his Son to be, the source of blessings to man; that all grace descends through him; and that God takes care of all the branches of this vine - that is, of all who are by faith united to the Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus and all his church he feels the deepest interest, and it is an object of

great solicitude that his church should receive these blessings and bear much fruit.

Verse 2

Every branch in me - Everyone that is a true follower of me, that is united to me by faith, and that truly derives grace and strength from me, as the branch does from the vine. The word "branch" includes all the boughs, and the smallest tendrils that shoot out from the parent stalk. Jesus here says that he sustains the same relation to his disciples that a parent stalk does to the branches; but this does not denote any physical or incomprehensible union. It is a union formed by believing on him; resulting from our feeling our dependence on him and our need of him; from embracing him as our Saviour, Redeemer, and Friend. We become united to him in all our interests, and have common feelings, common desires, and a common destiny with him. We seek the same objects, are willing to encounter the same trials, contempt, persecution, and want, and are desirous that his God shall be ours, and his eternal abode ours. It is a union of friendship, of love, and of dependence; a union of weakness with strength; of imperfection with perfection; of a dying nature with a living Saviour; of a lost sinner with an unchanging Friend and Redeemer. It is the most tender and interesting of all relations, but not more mysterious or more physical than the union of parent and child, of husband and wife Ephesians 5:23, or friend and friend.

That beareth not fruit - As the vinedresser will remove all branches that are dead or that bear no fruit, so will God take from his church all professed Christians who give no evidence by their lives that they are truly united to the Lord Jesus. He here refers to such cases as that of Judas, the apostatizing disciples, and all false and merely nominal Christians (Dr. Adam Clarke).

He taketh away - The vine-dresser cuts it off. God removes such in various ways:

1.by the discipline of the church.

2.by suffering them to fall into temptation.

3.by persecution and tribulation, by the deceitfulness of riches, and by the cares of the world Matthew 13:21-22; by suffering the man to be placed in such circumstances as Judas, Achan, and Ananias were such as to show what they were, to bring their characters fairly out, and to let it be seen that they had no true love to God.

4.by death, for God has power thus at any moment to remove unprofitable branches from the church.

Every branch that beareth fruit - That is, all true Christians, for all such bear fruit. To bear fruit is to show by our lives that we are under the influence of the religion of Christ, and that that religion produces in us its appropriate effects, Galatians 5:22-23. Notes, Matthew 7:16-20. It is also to live so as to be useful to others, As a vineyard is worthless unless it bears fruit that may promote the happiness or subsistence of man, so the Christian principle would be worthless unless Christians should live so that others may be made holy and happy by their example and labors, and so that the world may be brought to the cross of the Saviour.

He purgeth it - Or rather he prunes it, or cleanses it by pruning. There is a use of words here - a paronomasia - in the original which cannot be retained in the translation. It may be imperfectly seen by retaining the Greek words "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away αἴρει aireievery branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it καθαίρει kathaireinow ye are clean καθαροί ," etc. The same Greek word in different forms is still retained. God purifies all true Christians so that they may be more useful. He takes away that which hindered their usefulness; teaches them; quickens them; revives them; makes them more pure in motive and in life. This he does by the regular influences of his Spirit in sanctifying them, purifying their motives, teaching them the beauty of holiness, and inducing them to devote themselves more to him. He does it by taking away what opposes their usefulness, however much they may be attached to it, or however painful to part with it; as a vine-dresser will often feel himself compelled to lop off a branch that is large, apparently thrifty, and handsome, but which bears no fruit, and which shades or injures those which do. So God often takes away the property of his people, their children, or other idols. He removes the objects which bind their affections, and which render them inactive. He takes away the things around man, as he did the valued gourds of Jonah Jonah 4:5-11, so that he may feel his dependence, and live more to the honor of God, and bring forth more proof of humble and active piety.

Verse 3

Now ye are clean - Still keeping up the figure καθαροί katharoiIt does not mean that they were perfect, but that they had been under a process of

purifying by his instructions all the time he had been with them. He had removed their erroneous notions of the Messiah; he had gradually reclaimed them from their fond and foolish views respecting earthly honors; he had taught them to be willing to forsake all things; and he had so trained and disciplined them that immediately after his death they would be ready to go and bear fruit among all nations to the honor of his name. In addition to this, Judas had been removed from their number, and they were now all true followers of the Saviour. See the notes at John 13:10.

Through the word - By means of the teachings of Jesus while he had been with them.

Verse 4

Abide in me - Remain united to me by a living faith. Live a life of dependence on me, and obey my doctrines, imitate my example, and constantly exercise faith in me.

And I in you - That is, if you remain attached to me, I will remain with you, and will teach, guide, and comfort you. This he proceeds to illustrate by a reference to the vine. If the branch should be cut off an instant, it would die and be fruitless. As long as it is in the vine, "from the nature of the case," the parent stock imparts its juices, and furnishes a constant circulation of sap adapted to the growth and fruitfulness of the branch. So our piety, if we should be separate from Christ, or if we cease to feel our union to him and dependence on him, withers and droops. While we are united to him by a living faith, from the nature of the case, strength flows from him to us, and we receive help as we need. Piety then, manifested in good works, in love, and self-denial, is as natural, as easy, as unconstrained. and as lovely as the vine covered with fruitful branches is at once useful and enticing.

Verse 5

I am the vine - John 15:1.

Without me ye can do nothing - The expression "without me" denotes the same as separate from me. As the branches, if separated from the parent stock, could produce no fruit, but would immediately wither and die, so Christians, if separate from Christ, could do nothing. The expression is one, therefore, strongly implying dependence. The Son of God was the original source of life, John 1:4. He also, by his work as Mediator, gives life to the world John 6:33, and it is by the same grace and agency that it is continued in the Christian. We see hence:

1.that to him is due all the praise for all the good works the Christian performs.

2.that they will perform good works just in proportion as they feel their dependence on him and look to him. And,

3.that the reason why others fail of being holy is because they are unwilling to look to him, and seek grace and strength from him who alone is able to give it.

Verse 6

If a man, abide not in me - See John 15:4. If a man is not truly united to him by faith, and does not live with a continual sense of his dependence on him. This doubtless refers to those who are professors of religion, but who have never known anything of true and real connection with him.

Is cast forth - See the notes at John 15:2. Also Matthew 8:12; Matthew 22:13.

Is withered - Is dried up. A branch cut off withers. So of a soul unconnected with Christ, however fair it may have appeared. and however flourishing when a profession of religion was first made, yet when it is tried, and it is seen that there was no true grace, everything withers and dies. The zeal languishes, the professed love is gone, prayer is neglected, the sanctuary is forsaken, and the soul becomes like a withered branch reserved for the fire of the last great day. See a beautiful illustration of this in Ezekiel 15:1-8.

Men gather them - The word "men" is not in the original, and should not have been in the translation. The Greek is "they gather them," a form of expression denoting simply they are gathered, without specifying by whom it is done. From Matthew 13:40-42, it seems that it will be done by the angels. The expression means, as the withered and useless branches of trees are gathered for fuel, so shall it be with all hypocrites and false professors of religion.

Are burned - See Matthew 13:42.

Verse 7

My words - My doctrine; my commandments.

Abide in you - Not only are remembered, but are suffered to remain in you as a living principle, to regulate your affections and life.

Ye shall ask … - See John 14:13. This promise had particular reference to the apostles. It is applicable to other Christians only so far as they are in circumstances similar to the apostles, and only so far as they possess their spirit. We learn from it that it is only when we keep the commandments of Christ - only when we live by faith in him, and his words are suffered to control our conduct and affections, that our prayers will be heard. Were we perfect in all things, he would always hear us, and we should be kept from making an improper petition; but just so far as men regard iniquity in their heart, the Lord will not hear them, Psalm 66:18.

Verse 8

Herein - In this - to wit, in your bearing much fruit.

Glorified - Honored.

Bear much fruit - Are fruitful in good works; are faithful, zealous, humble, devoted, always abounding in the work of the Lord. This honors God.

1.Because it shows the excellence of his law which requires it.

2.Because it shows the power of his gospel, and of that grace which can overcome the evil propensities of the heart and produce it.

3.Because the Christian is restored to the divine image, and it shows how excellent is the character after which they are formed. They imitate God, and the world sees that the whole tendency of the divine administration and character is to make man holy; to produce in us that which is lovely, and true, and honest, and of good report. Compare Matthew 7:20; Philemon 4:8.

So - That is, in doing this.

Shall ye be my disciples - This is a true test of character. It is not by profession, but it is by a holy life, that the character is tried. This is a test which it is easy to apply, and one which decides the case. It is worthy of remark that the Saviour says that those who bear much fruit are they who are his disciples. The design and tendency of his religion is to excite men to do much good, and to call forth all their strength, and time, and talents in the work for which the Saviour laid down his life. Nor should anyone take comfort in the belief that he is a Christian who does not aim to do much good, and who does not devote to God all that he has in an honest effort to glorify his name, and to benefit a dying world. The apostles obeyed this command of the Saviour, and went forth preaching the gospel everywhere,

and aiming to bring all men to the knowledge of the truth; and it is this spirit only, manifested in a proper manner, which can constitute any certain evidence of piety.

Verse 9

As the Father hath loved me - The love of the Father toward his only-begotten Son is the highest affection of which we can conceive. Compare Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5. It is the love of God toward his coequal Son. who is like him in all things, who always pleased him, and who was willing to endure the greatest sacrifices and toils to accomplish his purpose of mercy. Yet this love is adduced to illustrate the tender affection which the Lord Jesus has for all his friends.

So have I loved you - Not to the same degree, for this was impossible, but with the same kind of love - deep, tender. unchanging; love prompting to self-denials, toils, and sacrifices to secure their welfare.

Continue ye - The reason which he gives for their doing this is the strength of the love which he had shown for them. His love was so great for them that he was about to lay down his life. This constitutes a strong reason why we should continue in his love:

1.Because the love which he shows for us is unchanging.

2.It is the love of our best friend - love whose strength was expressed by toils, and groans, and blood.

3.As he is unchanging in the character and strength of his affection, so should we be. Thus only can we properly express our gratitude; thus only show that we are his true friends.

4.Our happiness here and forever depends altogether on our continuing in the love of Christ. We have no source of permanent joy but in that love.

In my love - In love to me. Thus it is expressed in the Greek in the next verse. The connection also demands that we understand it of our love to him, and not of his love to us. The latter cannot be the subject of a command; the former may. See also Luke 11:42; 1 John 2:5; Jude 1:21.

Verse 10

See John 14:23-24.

Verse 11

These things - The discourse in this and the previous chapter. This discourse was designed to comfort them by the promise of the Holy Spirit

and of eternal life, and to direct them in the discharge of their duty.

My joy - This expression probably denotes the happiness which Jesus had, and would continue to have, by their obedience, love, and fidelity. Their obedience was to him a source of joy. It was that which he sought and for which he had labored. He now clearly taught them the path of duty, and encouraged them to persevere, notwithstanding he was about to leave them. If they obeyed him, it would continue to him to be a source of joy. Christ rejoices in the obedience of all his friends; and, though his happiness is not dependent on them, yet their fidelity is an object which he desires and in which he finds delight. The same sentiment is expressed in John 17:13.

Your joy might be full - That you might be delivered from your despondency and grief at my departure; that you might see the reason why I leave you, be comforted by the Holy Spirit, and be sustained in the arduous trials of your ministry. See 1 John 1:4; 2 John 1:12. This promise of the Saviour was abundantly fulfilled. The apostles with great frequency speak of the fulness of their joy - joy produced in just the manner promised by the Saviour - by the presence of the Holy Spirit. And it showed his great love, that he promised such joy; his infinite knowledge, that, in the midst of their many trials and persecutions, he knew that they would possess it; and the glorious power and loveliness of his gospel, that it could impart such joy amid so many tribulations. See instances of this joy in Acts 13:52; Romans 14:17; 2 Corinthians 2:3; Galatians 5:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; 1 Thessalonians 3:9; 1 Peter 1:8; Romans 5:11; 2 Corinthians 7:4.

Verse 12

This is my commandment - The special law of Christianity, called hence "the new commandment." See the notes at John 13:34.

As I have loved you - That is, with the same tender affection, willing to endure trials, to practice self-denials, and, if need be, to lay down your lives for each other, 1 John 3:16.

Verse 13

Greater love hath … - No higher expression of love could be given. Life is the most valuable object we possess; and when a man is willing to lay that down for his friends or his country, it shows the utmost extent of love. Even this love for friends has been rarely witnessed. A very few cases like that of Damon and Pythias have occurred where a man was willing to save the life of his friend by giving his own. It greatly enhances the love of

Christ, that while the instances of those who have been willing to die for friends have been so rare, he was willing to die for enemies - bitter foes, who rejected his reign, persecuted him, reviled him, scorned him, and sought his life, 1 John 4:10; Romans 5:6, Romans 5:10. It also shows us the extent of his love that he gave himself up, not to common sufferings, but to the most bitter, painful, and protracted sorrows, not for himself, not for friends, but for a thoughtless and unbelieving world. "O Lamb of God, was ever pain was ever love like thine!"

Verse 15

I call you not servants - This had been the common title by which he addressed them Matthew 10:24-25; John 12:26; John 13:13; but he had also before this, on one occasion, called them friends Luke 12:4, and on one occasion after this he called them servants, John 15:20. He here means that the ordinary title by which he would hence forth address them would be that of friends.

The servant knoweth not … - He receives the command of his master without knowing the reason why this or that thing is ordered. It is one of the conditions of slavery not to be let into the counsels and plans of the master. It is the privilege of friendship to be made acquainted with the plans wishes, and wants of the friend. This instance of friendship Jesus had given them by making them acquainted with the reasons why he was about to leave them, and with his secret wishes in regard to them. As he had given their this proof of friendship, it was proper that he should not withhold from them the title of friends.

His lord - His Master.

I have called you friends - I have given you the name of friends. He does not mean that the usual appellation which he had given them had been than of friends, but that such was the title which he had now given them.

For all things … - The reason why he called them friends was that he had now treated them as friends. He had opened to them his mind; made known his plans; acquainted them with the design of his coming, his death, his resurrection, and ascension; and, having thus given them the clearest proof of friendship, it was proper that he should give them the name.

That I have heard … - Jesus frequently represents himself as commissioned or sent by God to accomplish an important work, and as being instructed by him in regard to the nature of that work. See the notes at John 5:30. By what he had heard of the Father, he doubtless refers to the

design of God in his coming and his death. This he had made known to them.

Verse 16

Ye have not chosen me - The word here translated "chosen" is that from which is derived the word "elect," and means the same thing. It is frequently thus translated, Mark 13:20; Matthew 24:22, Matthew 24:24, Matthew 24:31; Colossians 3:12. It refers here, doubtless, to his choosing or electing them to be apostles. He says that it was not because they had chosen him to be their teacher and guide, but because he had designated them to be his apostles. See John 6:70; also Matthew 4:18-22. He thus shows them that his love for them was pure and disinterested; that it commenced when they had no affection for him; that it was not a matter of obligation on his part, and that therefore it placed them under more tender and sacred obligations to be entirely devoted to his service. The same may be said of all who are endowed with talents of any kind, or raised to any office in the church or the state. It is not that they have originated these talents, or laid God under obligation. What they have they owe to his sovereign goodness, and they are bound to devote all to his service. Equally true is this of all Christians. It was not that by nature they were more inclined than others to seek God, or that they had any native goodness to recommend them to him, but it was because he graciously inclined them by his Holy Spirit to seek him; because, in the language of the Episcopal and Methodist articles of religion, "The grace of Christ prevented them;" that is, went before them, commenced the work of their personal salvation, and thus God in sovereign mercy chose them as His own. Whatever Christians, then, possess, they owe to God, and by the most tender and sacred ties they are bound to be his followers.

I have chosen you - To be apostles. Yet all whom he now addressed were true disciples. Judas had left them; and when Jesus says he had chosen them to bear fruit, it may mean, also, that he had "chosen them to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth," 2 Thessalonians 2:13.

Ordained you - Literally, I have placed you, appointed you, set you apart. It does not mean that he had done this by any formal public act of the imposition of hands, as we now use the word, but that he had designated or appointed them to this work, Luke 6:13-16; Matthew 10:2-5.

Bring forth fruit - That you should be rich in good works; faithful and successful in spreading my gospel. This was the great business to which they were set apart, and this they faithfully accomplished. It may be added that this is the great end for which Christians are chosen. It is not to be idle, or useless, or simply to seek enjoyment. It is to do good, and to spread as far as possible the rich temporal and spiritual blessings which the gospel is fitted to confer on mankind.

Your fruit should remain - This probably means,

1. That the effect of their labors would be permanent on mankind. Their efforts were not to be like those of false teachers. the result of whose labors soon vanish away Acts 5:38-39, but their gospel was to spread - was to take a deep and permanent hold on people, and was ultimately to fill the world, Matthew 16:18. The Saviour knew this, and never was a prediction more cheering for man or more certain in its fulfillment.

2. There is included, also, in this declaration the idea that their labors were to be unremitted. They were sent forth to be diligent in their work, and untiring in their efforts to spread the gospel, until the day of their death. Thus, their fruit, the continued product or growth of religion in their souls, was to remain, or to be continually produced, until God should call them from their work. The Christian, and especially the Christian minister, is devoted to the Saviour for life. He is to toil without intermission, and without being weary of his work, until God shall call him home. The Saviour never called a disciple to serve him merely for a part of his life, nor to feel himself at liberty to relax his endeavors, nor to suppose himself to be a Christian when his religion produced no fruit. He that enlists under the banners of the Son of God does it for life. He that expects or desires to grow weary and cease to serve him, has never yet put on the Christian armor, or known anything of the grace of God. See Luke 9:62.

That whatsoever … - See John 15:7.

Verse 18

If the world hate you - The friendship of the world they were not to expect, but they were not to be deterred from their work by its hatred. They had seen the example of Jesus. No opposition of the proud, the wealthy, the learned, or the men of power, no persecution or gibes, had deterred him from his work. Remembering this, and having his example steadily in the eye, they were to labor not less because wicked men should oppose and

deride them. It is enough for the disciple to be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord, Matthew 10:25.

Verse 19

If ye were of the world - If you were actuated by the principles of the world. If, like them, you were vain, earthly, sensual, given to pleasure, wealth, ambition, they would not oppose you.

Because ye are not of the world - Because you are influenced by different principles from men of the world. You are actuated by the love of God and holiness; they by the love of sin.

I have chosen you out of the world - I have, by choosing you to be my followers, separated you from their society, and placed you under the government of my holy laws.

Therefore … - A Christian may esteem it as one evidence of his piety that he is hated by wicked men. Often most decided evidence is given that a man is the friend of God by the opposition excited against him by the profane, by Sabbath-breakers, and by the dissolute, 1 John 3:13; John 7:7.

Verse 20

Remember the word that I said … - At their first appointment to the apostolic office. See Matthew 10:24-25.

Verse 21

My name‘s sake - On my account. Because you are my followers and possess my spirit. See the notes at John 14:13.

Because they know not him that sent me - They will not believe that God has sent me. They do not so understand his character, his justice, or his law, as to see that it was fit that he should send his Son to die. They are so opposed to it, so filled with pride and opposition to a plan of salvation that is so humbling to people, as to be resolved not to believe it, and thus they persecute me, and will also you.

Verse 22

And spoken unto them - Declared unto them the will of God, and made known his requirements. Jesus had not less certainly shown by his own arguments that he was the Messiah than by his miracles. By both these kinds of proof their guilt was to be measured. See John 15:26. No small part of the gospel of John consists of arguments used by the Saviour to convince the Jews that he came from God. He here says if he had not used these arguments, and proved to them his divine mission, they had not had sin.

Had not had sin - This is evidently to be understood of the particular sin of persecuting and rejecting him. Of this he was speaking; and though, if he had not come, they would have been guilty of many other sins, yet of this, their great crowning sin, they would not have been guilty. We may understand this, then, as teaching:

1. That they would not have been guilty of this kind of sin. They would not have been chargeable with rejecting the signal grace of God if Jesus had not come and made an offer of mercy to them.

2. They would not have been guilty of the same degree of sin. The rejection of the Messiah was the crowning act of rebellion which brought down the vengeance of God, and led on their special national calamities. By way of eminence, therefore, this might be called the sin - the special sin of their age and nation. Compare Matthew 23:34-39; Matthew 27:25. And this shows us, what is so often taught in the Scriptures, that our guilt will be in proportion to the light that we possess and the mercies that we reject, Matthew 11:20-24; Luke 12:47-48. If it was such a crime to reject the Saviour then, it is a crime now; and if the rejection of the Son of God brought such calamities on the Jewish nation, the same rejection will involve the sinner now in woe, and vengeance, and despair.

No cloak - No covering, no excuse. The proof has been so clear that they cannot plead ignorance; it has been so often presented that they cannot allege that they had no opportunity of knowing it. It is still so with all sinners.

Verse 23

He that hateth me … - To show them that this was no slight crime, he reminds them that a rejection of himself is also a rejection of God. Such is the union between them, that no one can hate the one without also hating the other. See John 5:19-20; John 14:7, John 14:9.

Verse 24

The works which none other man did - The miracles of Jesus surpassed those of Moses and the prophets:

1.In their number. He healed great multitudes, and no small part of his life was occupied in doing good by miraculous power.

2.In their nature. They involved a greater exertion of power. He healed all forms of disease. He showed that his power was superior to all kinds of pain. He raised Lazarus after he had been four days dead. He probably

refers also to the fact that he had performed miracles of a different kind from all the prophets.

3.He did all this by his own power; Moses and the prophets by the invoked power of God. Jesus spake and it was done, showing that he had power of himself to do more than all the ancient prophets had done. It may be added that his miracles were done in a short time. They were constant, rapid, continued, in all places. Wherever he was, he showed that he had this power, and in the short space of three years and a half it is probable that he performed more miracles than are recorded of Moses and Elijah, and all the prophets put together.

Verse 25

In their law - Psalm 35:19. All the Old Testament was sometimes called the law. The meaning here is that the same thing happened to him which did to the psalmist. The same words which David used respecting his enemies would express, also, the conduct of the Jews and their treatment of the Messiah. In both cases it was without cause. Jesus had broken no law, he had done no injury to his country or to any individual. It is still true that sinners hate him in the same way. He injures no one, but, amid all their hatred, he seeks their welfare; and, while they reject him in a manner for which they "can give no reason in the day of judgment," he still follows them with mercies and entreats them to return to him. Who has ever had any reason to hate the Lord Jesus? What injury has he ever done to any one of the human race? What evil has he ever said or thought of any one of them? What cause or reason had the Jews for putting him to death? What reason has the sinner for hating him now? What reason for neglecting him? No one can give a reason for it that will satisfy his own conscience, none that has the least show of plausibility. Yet no being on earth has ever been more hated, despised, or neglected, and in every instance it has been "without a cause." Reader, do you hate him? If so, I ask you why? Wherein has he injured you? or why should you think or speak reproachfully of the benevolent and pure Redeemer?

Verse 27

Ye also shall bear witness - You shall be witnesses to the world to urge on them the evidences that the Lord Jesus is the Messiah.

Have been with me - They had for more than three years seen his works, and were therefore qualified to bear witness of his character and doctrines.

From the beginning - From his entrance on the public work of the ministry, Matthew 4:17-22. Compare Acts 1:21-22.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verse 1

These things - The things spoken in the two previous chapters, promising them divine aid and directing them in the path of duty.

Be offended - For the meaning of the word offend, see the notes at Matthew 5:29. It means here the same as to stumble or fall - that is, to apostatize. He proceeds immediately to tell them, what he had often apprised them of, that they would be subject to great persecutions and trials. He was also himself about to be removed by death. They were to go into an unfriendly world. All these things were in themselves greatly fitted to shake their faith, and to expose them to the danger of apostasy. Compare Luke 24:21. If they had not been apprised of this, if they had not known why Jesus was about to die, and if they had not been encouraged with the promised aid of the Holy Spirit, they would have sunk under these trials, and forsaken him and his cause. And we may learn hence:

1.that if Christians were left to themselves they would fall away and perish.

2.that God affords means and helps beforehand to keep them in the path of duty.

3.that the instructions of the Bible and the help of the Holy Spirit are all granted to keep them from apostasy.

4.that Jesus beforehand secured the fidelity and made certain the continuance in faith of his apostles, seeing all their dangers and knowing all their enemies. And, in like manner, we should be persuaded that "he is able to keep that which we commit to him against that day," 2 Timothy 1:12.

Verse 2

Out of the synagogues - See the notes at John 9:22. They would excommunicate them from their religious assemblies. This was often done. Compare Acts 6:13-14; Acts 9:23-24; Acts 17:5; Acts 21:27-31.

Whosoever killeth you - This refers principally to the Jews. It is also true of the Gentiles, that in their persecution of Christians they supposed they were rendering acceptable service to their gods.

God‘s service - The Jews who persecuted the apostles regarded them as blasphemers, and as seeking to overthrow the temple service, and the system of religion which God had established. Thus, they supposed they were rendering service to God in putting. them to death, Acts 6:13-14; Acts 21:28-31. Sinners, especially hypocrites, often cloak enormous crimes under the pretence of great zeal for religion. Men often suppose, or profess to suppose, that they are rendering God service when they persecute others; and, under the pretence of great zeal for truth and purity, evince all possible bigotry, pride, malice, and uncharitableness. The people of God have suffered most from those who have been conscientious persecutors; and some of the most malignant foes which true Christians have ever had have been in the church, and have been professed ministers of the gospel, persecuting them under pretence of great zeal for the cause of purity and religion. It is no evidence of piety that a man is full of zeal against those whom he supposes to be heretics; and it is one of the best proofs that a man knows nothing of the religion of Jesus when he is eminent for self-conceit in his own views of orthodoxy, and firmly fixed in the opinion that all who differ from him and his sect must of course be wrong.

Verse 3

See John 15:21.

Verse 4

These things - These things which are about to happen, John 16:1-2. He had foretold them that they would take place.

Ye may remember … - By calling to mind that he had foretold these things they would perceive that he was omniscient, and would remember, also, the consolations which he had afforded them and the instructions which he had given them. Had these calamities come upon them without their having been foretold, their faith might have failed; they might have been tempted to suppose that Jesus was not aware of them, and of course that he was not the Messiah. God does not suffer his people to fall into trials without giving them sufficient warning, and without giving all the grace that is needful to bear them.

At the beginning - In the early part of the ministry of Jesus. The expression these things here refers, probably, to all the topics contained in these chapters. He had, in the early part of his ministry, forewarned them of calamities and persecutions Matthew 10:16; Matthew 5:10-12; Matthew 9:15, but he had not so fully acquainted them with the nature, and design,

and sources of their trials; he had not so fully apprised them of the fact, the circumstances, and the object of his death and of his ascension to heaven; he had not revealed to them so clearly that the Holy Spirit would descend, and sanctify, and guide them; and especially he had not, in one continued discourse, grouped all these things together, and placed their sorrows and consolations so fully before their minds. All these are included, it is supposed, in the expression "these things."

Because I was with you - This is the reason which he gives why he had not at first made known to them clearly the certainty of their calamities and their joys; and it implies:

1.that it was not needful to do it at once, as he was to be with them for more than three years, and could have abundant opportunity gradually to teach these things, and to prepare them for the more full announcement when he was about to leave them.

2.that while he was with them he would go before them, and the weight of calamities would fall on him, and consequently they did not so much then need the presence and aid of the Holy Spirit as they would when he was gone.

3.that his presence was to them what the presence of the Holy Spirit would be after his death, John 16:7. He could teach them all needful truth. He could console and guide them. Now that he was to leave them, he fully apprised them of what was before them, and of the descent of the Holy Spirit to do for them what he had done when with them.

Verse 5-6

Now I go my way - Now I am about to die and leave you, and it is proper to announce all these things to you.

None of you asketh me … - They gave themselves up to grief instead of inquiring why he was about to leave them. Had they made the inquiry, he was ready to answer them and to comfort them. When we are afflicted we should not yield ourselves to excessive grief. We should inquire why it is that God thus tries us; and we should never doubt that if we come to him, and spread out our sorrows before him, he will give us consolation.

Verse 7

It is expedient for you … - The reason why it was expedient for them that he should go away, he states to be, that in this way only would the

Comforter be granted to them. Still, it may be asked why the presence of the Holy Spirit was more valuable to them than that of the Saviour himself? To this it may be answered:

1. That by his departure, his death, and ascension - by having these great facts before their eyes they would be led by the Holy Spirit to see more fully the design of his coming than they would by his presence. While he was with them, notwithstanding the plainest teaching, their minds were filled with prejudice and error. They still adhered to the expectation of a temporal kingdom, and were unwilling to believe that he was to die. When he should have actually left them they could no longer doubt on this subject, and would be prepared to understand why he came. And this was done. See the Acts of the Apostles everywhere. It is often needful that God should visit us with severe affliction before our pride will be humbled and we are willing to understand the plainest truths.

2. While on the earth the Lord Jesus could be bodily present but in one place at one time. Yet, in order to secure the great design of saving men, it was needful that there should be some agent who could be in all places, who could attend all ministers, and who could, at the same time, apply the work of Christ to people in all parts of the earth.

3. It was an evident arrangement in the great plan of redemption that each of the persons of the Trinity should perform a part. As it was not the work of the Spirit to make an atonement, so it was not the work of the Saviour to apply it. And until the Lord Jesus had performed this great work, the way was not open for the Holy Spirit to descend to perform his part of the great plan; yet, when the Saviour had completed his portion of the work and had left the earth, the Spirit would carry forward the same plan and apply it to men.

4. It was to be expected that far more signal success would attend the preaching of the gospel when the atonement was actually made than before. It was the office of the Spirit to carry forward the work only when the Saviour had died and ascended; and this was actually the case. See John 14:16.

Verse 8

He will reprove - The word translated "reprove" means commonly to demonstrate by argument, to prove, to persuade anyone to do a thing by presenting reasons. It hence means also to convince of anything, and particularly to convince of crime. This is its meaning here. He will convince or convict the world of sin. That is, he will so apply the truths of God to men's own minds as to convince them by fair and sufficient arguments that they are sinners, and cause them to feel this. This is the nature of conviction always.

The world - Sinners. The men of the world. All men are by nature sinners, and the term the world may be applied to them all, John 1:10; John 12:31; 1 John 5:19.

Verse 9

Of sin - The first thing specified of which the world would be convinced is sin. Sin, in general, is any violation of a law of God, but the particular sin of which men are here said to be convinced is that of rejecting the Lord Jesus. This is placed first, and is deemed the sin of chief magnitude, as it is the principal one of which men are guilty. This was particularly true of the Jews who had rejected him and crucified him; and it was the great crime which, when brought home to their consciences by the preaching of the apostles, overwhelmed them with confusion, and filled their hearts with remorse. It was their rejection of the Son of God that was made the great truth that was instrumental of their conversion. Acts 2:22-23, Acts 2:37; Acts 3:13-15; Acts 4:10, Acts 4:26-28; compare John 16:31-33. It is also true of other sinners. Sinners, when awakened, often feel that it has been the great crowning sin of their lives that they have rejected the tender mercy of God, and trampled on the blood of his Son; and that they have for months and years refused to submit to him, saying that they would not have him to reign over them. Thus is fulfilled what is spoken by Zechariah, Zechariah 12:10; "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn." Throughout the New Testament this is regarded as the sin that is pre-eminently offensive to God, and which, if unrepented of, will certainly lead to perdition, Mark 16:16; John 3:36. Hence, it is placed first in those sins of which the Spirit will convince men; and hence if we have not yet been brought to see our guilt in rejecting God's tender mercy through his Son, we are yet in the gall of bitterness and under the bond of iniquity.

Verse 10

Of righteousness - This seems clearly to refer to the righteousness or innocence of Jesus himself. He was now persecuted. He was soon to be arraigned on heavy charges, and condemned by the highest authority of the nation as guilty. Yet, though condemned, he says that the Holy Spirit would descend and convince the world that he was innocent.

Because I go to my Father - That is, the amazing miracle of his resurrection and ascension to God would be a demonstration of his innocence that would satisfy the Jews and Gentiles. God would not raise up an impostor. If he had been truly guilty, as the Jews who condemned him pretended, God would not have set his seal to the imposture by raising him from the dead; but when he did raise him up and exalt him to his own right hand, he gave his attestation to his innocence; he showed that he approved his work, and gave evidence conclusive that Jesus was sent from God. To this proof of the innocence of Jesus the apostles often refer, Acts 2:22-24; Acts 17:31; Romans 1:4; 1 Corinthians 15:14, etc.; 1 Timothy 3:16. This same proof of the innocence or righteousness of the Savior is as satisfactory now as it was then. One of the deepest feelings which an awakened sinner has, is his conviction of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He sees that he is holy; that his own opposition to him has been unprovoked, unjust, and base; and it is this which so often overwhelms his soul with the conviction of his own unworthiness, and with earnest desires to obtain a better righteousness than his own.

And ye see me no more - That is, he was to be taken away from them, and they would not see him until his return to judgment; yet this source of grief to them would be the means of establishing his religion and greatly blessing others.

Verse 11

Of judgment - That God is just, and will execute judgment. This is proved by what he immediately states.

The prince of this world - Satan. See the notes at John 12:31. The death of Christ was a judgment or a condemnation of Satan. In this struggle Jesus gained the victory and subdued the great enemy of man. This proves that God will execute judgment or justice on all his foes. If he vanquished his great enemy who had so long triumphed in this world, he will subdue all others in due time. All sinners in like manner may expect to be condemned. Of this great truth Jesus says the Holy Spirit will convince men. God showed himself to be just in subduing his great enemy. He showed that he

was resolved to vanquish his foes, and that all his enemies in like manner must be subdued. This is deeply felt by the convicted sinner. He knows that he is guilty. He learns that God is just. He fears that he will condemn him, and trembles in the apprehension of approaching condemnation. From this state of alarm there is no refuge but to flee to Him who subdued the great enemy of man, and who is able to deliver him from the vengeance due to his sins. Convinced, then, of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and of his ability and willingness to save him, he flees to his cross, and seeks in him a refuge from the coming storm of wrath.

In these verses we have a condensed and most striking view of the work of the Holy Spirit. These three things comprise the whole of his agency in the conversion of sinful men; and in the accomplishment of this work he still awakens, convinces, and renews. He attends the preaching of the gospel, and blesses the means of grace, and manifests his power in revivals of religion. He thus imparts to man the blessings purchased by the death of Jesus, carries forward and extends the same plan of mercy, and will yet apply it to all the kingdoms and tribes of men. Have we ever felt his power, and been brought by his influence to mourn over our sins, and seek the mercy of a dying Saviour?

Verse 12

I have yet many things to say … - There were many things pertaining to the work of the Spirit and the establishment of religion which might be said. Jesus had given them the outline; he had presented to them the great doctrines of the system, but he had not gone into details. These were things which they could not then bear. They were still full of Jewish prejudices, and were not prepared for a full development of his plans. He probably refers here to the great change which were to take place in the Jewish system - the abolition of sacrifices and the priesthood, the change of the Sabbath, the rejection of the Jewish nation, etc. For these doctrines they were not prepared, but they would in due time be taught them by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 13

The Spirit of truth - So called because he would teach them all necessary truth.

Will guide you into all truth - That is, truth which pertained to the establishment of the Christian system, which they were not then prepared to

hear. We may here remark that this is a full promise that they would be inspired and guided in founding the new church; and we may observe that the plan of the Saviour was replete with wisdom. Though they had been long with him, yet they were not prepared then to hear of the changes that were to occur; but his death would open their eyes, and the Holy Spirit, making use of the striking and impressive scenes of his death and ascension, would carry forward with vast rapidity their views of the nature of the Christian scheme. Perhaps in the few days that elapsed, of which we have a record in the first and second chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, they learned more of the true nature of the Christian plan than they would have done in months or years even under the teaching of Jesus himself. The more we study the plan of Christ, the more shall we admire the profound wisdom of the Christian scheme, and see that it was eminently fitted to the great design of its Founder - to introduce it in such a manner as to make on man the deepest impression of its wisdom and its truth.

Not speak of himself - Not as prompted by himself. He shall declare what is communicated to him. See the notes at John 7:18.

Whatsoever he shall hear - What he shall receive of the Father and the Son; represented by hearing, because in this way instruction is commonly received. See the notes at John 5:30.

Things to come - Probably this means the meaning of things which were to take place after the time when he was speaking to them - to wit, the design of his death, and the nature of the changes which were to take place in the Jewish nation. It is also true that the apostles were inspired by the Holy Spirit to predict future events which would take place in the church and the world. See Acts 11:28; Acts 20:29; Acts 21:11; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Peter 1:14; and the whole book of Revelation.

Verse 14

Shall glorify me - Shall honor me. The nature of his influence shall be such as to exalt my character and work in view of the mind.

Shall receive of mine - Literally, “shall take of or from me.” He shall receive his commission and instructions as an ambassador from me, to do my will and complete my work.

Shall show it - Shall announce or communicate it to you. This is always the work of the Spirit. All serious impressions produced by him lead to the Lord Jesus 1 Corinthians 12:3, and by this we may easily test our feelings. If we have been truly convicted of sin and renewed by the Holy Spirit, the

tendency of all his influences has been to lead us to the Saviour; to show us our need of him; to reveal to us the loveliness of his character, and the fitness of his work to our needs; and to incline us to cast our eternal interests on his almighty arm, and commit all to his hands.

Verse 15

All things … - See Matthew 28:18; Matthew 11:27. No one could have said this who was not equal with the Father. The union was so intimate, though mysterious, that it might with propriety be said that whatever was done in relation to the Son, was also done in regard to the Father. See John 14:9.

Verse 16

A little while - His death would occur in a short time. It took place the next day. See John 14:19.

Ye shall not see me - That is, he would be concealed from their view in the tomb.

And again a little while - After three days he would rise again and appear to their view.

Because I go … - Because it is a part of the plan that I should ascend to God, it is necessary that I should rise from the grave, and then you will see me, and have evidence that I am still your Friend. Compare John 7:33. Here are three important events foretold for the consolation of the disciples; yet they were stated in such a manner that, in their circumstances and with their prejudices, it appeared difficult to understand him.

Verse 20

Ye shall weep … - At my crucifixion, sufferings, and death. Compare Luke 23:27.

The world - Wicked men. The term world is frequently used in this sense. See John 16:8. It refers particularly, here, to the Jews who sought his death, and who would rejoice that their object was obtained.

Shall be turned into joy - You will not only rejoice at my resurrection, but even my death, now the object of so much grief to you, will be to you a source of unspeakable joy. It will procure for you peace and pardon in this life, and eternal joy in the world to come. Thus their greatest apparent calamity would be to them, finally, the source of their highest comfort; and though then they could not see how it could be, yet if they had known the whole case they would have seen that they might rejoice. As it was, they were to be consoled by the assurance of the Saviour that it would be for

their good. And thus, in our afflictions, if we could see the whole case, we should rejoice. As it is, when they appear dark and mysterious, we may trust in the promise of God that they will be for our welfare. We may also remark here that the apparent triumphs of the wicked, though they may produce grief at present in the minds of Christians, will be yet overruled for good. Their joy shall be turned into mourning, and the mourning of Christians into joy; and wicked men may be doing the very thing - as they were in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus - that shall yet be made the means of promoting the glory of God and the good of his people, Psalm 76:10.

Verse 22

I will see you again - After my resurrection.

Your joy no man taketh from you - You shall be so firmly persuaded that I have risen and that I am the Messiah, that neither the threats nor persecutions of men shall ever be able to shake your faith and produce doubt or unbelief, and thus take away your joy. This prediction was remarkably fulfilled. It is evident that after his ascension not one of the apostles ever doubted for a moment that he had risen from the dead. No persecution or trial was able to shake their faith; and thus, amid all their afflictions, they had an unshaken source of joy.

Verse 23

In that day - After my resurrection and ascension.

Ye shall ask me nothing - The word rendered "ask" here may have two significations, one to ask by way of inquiry, the other to ask for assistance. Perhaps there is reference here to both these senses. While he was with them they had been accustomed to depend on him for the supply of their wants, and in a great degree to propose their trials to him, expecting his aid. See Matthew 8:25; John 11:3. They were also dependent on his personal instructions to explain to them the mysteries of his religion, and to remove their perplexities on the subject of his doctrines. They had not sought to God through him as the Mediator, but they had directly applied to the Saviour himself. He now tells them that henceforward their requests were to be made to God in his name, and that he, by the influences of his Spirit, would make known to them what Jesus would himself do if bodily present. The emphasis in this verse is to be placed on the word "me." Their requests were not to be made to him, but to the Father.

Whatsoever ye shall ask … - See John 14:13.

Verse 24

Hitherto - During his ministry, and while he was with them.

Have ye asked … - From the evangelists, as well as from this declaration, it seems that they had presented their requests for instruction and aid to Jesus himself. If they had prayed to God, it is probable that they had not done it in his name This great truth that we must approach God in the name of the Mediator was reserved for the last that the Saviour was to communicate to them. It was to be presented at the close of his ministry. Then they were prepared in some degree to understand it; and then, amid trials, and wants, and a sense of their weakness and unworthiness, they would see its preciousness, and rejoice in the privilege of being thus permitted to draw near to God. Though he would be bodily absent, yet their blessings would still be given through the same unchanging Friend.

Ask … - Now they had the assurance that they might approach God in his name; and, amid all their trials, they, as well as all Christians since, might draw near to God, knowing that he would hear and answer their prayers.

That your joy … - See John 15:11.

Verse 25

In proverbs - In a manner that appears obscure, enigmatical, and difficult to be understood. It is worthy of remark, that though his declarations in these chapters about his death and resurrection appear to us to be plain, yet to the apostles, filled with Jewish prejudices, and unwilling to believe that he was about to die, they would appear exceedingly obscure and perplexed. The plainest declarations to them on the subject would appear to be involved in mystery.

The time cometh - This refers, doubtless, to the time after his ascension to heaven, when he would send the Holy Spirit to teach them the great truths of religion. It does not appear that he himself, after his resurrection, gave them any more clear or full instruction than he had done before.

I shall show you plainly - As Jesus said that he would send the Holy Spirit John 16:7, and as he came to carry forward the work of Christ, so it may be said that the teachings of the Holy Spirit were the teachings of Christ himself.

Of the Father - Concerning the will and plan of the Father; particularly his plan in the establishment and spread of the Christian religion, and in organizing the church. See Acts 10.

Verse 26

I say not unto you that I will pray … - In John 14:16, Jesus says that he would pray the Father, and that he would send the Comforter. In Hebrews 7:25, it is said that Jesus ever liveth to make intercession for us; and it is constantly represented in the New Testament that it is by his intercession in heaven now that we obtain the blessings of pardon, peace, strength, and salvation. Compare Hebrews 9:24. This declaration of Jesus, then, does not mean that he would not intercede for them, but that there was no need then of his mentioning it to them again. They knew that; and, in addition to that, he told them that God was ready and willing to confer on them all needful blessings.

Verse 27

See John 14:21, John 14:23.

Verse 28

I came forth from the Father - I came sent by the Father.

And am come into the world - See John 3:19; John 6:14, John 6:62; John 9:39.

Verse 29

Now speakest thou plainly - What he had said that perplexed them was that which is contained in John 16:16. Compare John 16:17-19; "A little while and ye shall not see me," etc. This he had now explained by saying John 16:28, "Again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." In this there was no ambiguity, and they expressed themselves satisfied with this explanation.

Verse 30

Now are we sure that thou knowest … - Their difficulty had been to understand what was the meaning of his declaration in John 16:16. About this they conversed among themselves, John 16:17-19. It is evident that they had not mentioned their difficulty to him, and that he had not even heard their conversation among themselves, John 16:19. When, therefore, by his answers to them John 16:20-28, he showed that he clearly understood their doubts; and when he gave them an answer so satisfactory without their having inquired of him, it satisfied them that he knew the heart, and that he assuredly came from God. They were convinced that there was" no need that any man should ask him," or propose his difficulties to him, since he knew them all and could answer them.

Verse 31

Do ye now believe? - Do you truly and really believe? This question was evidently asked to put them on a full examination of their hearts. Though they supposed that they had unshaken faith - faith that would endure every trial, yet he told them that they were about to go through scenes that would test them, and where they would need all their confidence in God. When we feel strong in the faith we should examine ourselves. It may be that we are deceived; and it may be that God may even then be preparing trials for us that will shake our faith to its foundation. The Syriac and Arabic read this in the indicative as an affirmation - "Ye do now believe." The sense is not affected by this reading.

Verse 32

The hour cometh - To wit, on the next day, when he was crucified.

Ye shall be scattered - See Matthew 26:31.

Every man to his own - That is, as in the margin, to his own home. You shall see me die, and suppose that my work is defeated, and return to your own dwellings. It is probable that the two disciples going to Emmaus were on their way to their dwellings, John 21:1-14; Matthew 28:7.

Leave me alone - Leave me to die without human sympathy or compassion. See the notes at Matthew 26:31, Matthew 26:56.

Because the Father is with me - His Father was his friend. He had all along trusted in God. In the prospect of his sufferings he could still look to him for support. And though in his dying moments he suffered so much as to use the language, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" yet it was language addressed to him still as his God - "My God, my God." Even then he had confidence in God - confidence so strong and unwavering that he could say, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit," Luke 23:46. In all these sufferings he had the assurance that God was his friend, that he was doing his will, that he was promoting his glory, and that he looked on him with approbation. It matters little who else forsakes us if God be with us in the hour of pain and of death; and though poor, forsaken, or despised, yet, if we have the consciousness of his presence and his favor, then we may fear no evil. His rod and his staff, they will comfort us. Without his favor then, death will be full of horrors, though we be surrounded by weeping relatives, and by all the honor, and splendor, and wealth which the world can bestow. The Christian can die saying, I am not alone, because the Father is with me. The sinner dies without a friend that can alleviate his sufferings - without one source of real joy.

Verse 33

In me - In my presence, and in the aid which I shall render you by the Holy Spirit.

In the world - Among the men to whom you are going. You must expect to be persecuted, afflicted, tormented.

I have overcome the world - He overcame the prince of this world by his death, John 12:31. He vanquished the great foe of man, and triumphed over all that would work our ruin. He brought down aid and strength from above by his death; and by procuring for us the friendship of God and the influence of the Spirit; by his own instructions and example; by revealing to us the glories of heaven, and opening our eyes to see the excellence of heavenly things, he has furnished us with the means of overcoming all our enemies, and of triumphing in all our temptations. See the notes at John 14:19; also Romans 8:34-37; 1 John 4:4; 1 John 5:4; Revelation 12:11. Luther said of this verse "that it was worthy to be carried from Rome to Jerusalem upon one's knees." the world is a vanquished enemy; Satan is a humbled foe; and all that believers have to do is to put their trust in the Captain of their salvation, putting on the whole armor of God, assured that the victory is theirs, and that the church shall yet shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners, Song of Song of Solomon 6:10 .

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

These words - The words addressed to them in the preceding chapters. They were proceeding to the garden of Gethsemane. It adds much to the interest of this prayer that it was offered in the stillness of the night, in the open air, and in the especially tender circumstances in which Jesus and his apostles were. It is the longest prayer recorded in the New Testament. It was offered on the most tender and solemn occasion that has ever occurred in our world, and it is perhaps the most sublime composition to be found anywhere. Jesus was about to die. Having expressed his love to his disciples, and made known to them his last desires, he now commends them to the protection and blessing of the God of grace. This prayer is moreover a specimen of the manner of his intercession, and evinces the interest which he felt in behalf of all who should become his followers in all ages of the world.

Lifted up his eyes - This was the common attitude of prayer. Compare Luke 18:13.

The hour is come - That is, the appointed time for his sufferings and death. Compare the notes at John 12:27.

Glorify thy Son - Honor thy Son. See John 11:4. Give to the world demonstration that I am thy Son. So sustain me, and so manifest thy power in my death, resurrection, and ascension, as to afford indubitable evidence that I am the Son of God.

That thy Son also may glorify thee - This refers clearly to the manifestation of the honor of God which would be made by the spread of the gospel among men, John 17:2. Jesus prayed that God would so honor him in his death that striking proof might be furnished that he was the Messiah, and men thus be brought to honor God. By his death the law, the truth, and the mercy of God were honored. By the spread of his gospel and the conversion of sinners; by all that Christ will do, now that he is glorified, to spread his gospel, God will be honored. The conversion of a single sinner honors God; a revival of religion is an eminent means of promoting his honor; and the spread of the gospel among all nations shall yet do more than all other things to promote the honor of God among men. Whatever honors the Saviour honors God. Just as he is exalted in view of the mind, so will God be honored and obeyed.

Verse 2

As thou hast given him power - It was on the ground of this power given to Christ that the apostles were commanded to go and teach all nations. See the notes at Matthew 28:18-19.

All flesh - All men, Matthew 24:22; Luke 3:6.

That he should give eternal life - See the notes at John 5:24.

To as many as thou hast given him - See the notes at John 10:16; John 6:37. To all on whom the Father has purposed to bestow the blessings of redemption through his Son. God has a plan in all he does, extending to men as well as to other objects. One part of his plan was that the atonement of Christ should not be in vain. Hence he promised him that he should see of the travail of his soul and should be satisfied Isaiah 53:11; and hence the Saviour had the assurance that the Father had given him a portion of the human family, and would apply this great work to them. It is to be observed here that the Saviour in this prayer makes an important distinction between "all flesh" and those who were "given to him." He has power over all. He can control, direct, restrain them. Wicked men are so far under his universal dominion, and so far restrained by his power, that they will not be able to prevent his bestowing redemption on those were given him that is, all who will believe on him. Long ago, if they had been able, they would have banished religion from the world; but they are under the power of Christ, and it is his purpose that there shall be "a seed to serve him," and that "the gates of hell shall not prevail" against his church. Men who oppose the gospel should therefore feel that they cannot prevent the salvation of Christians, and should be alarmed lest they be found "fighting against God."

Verse 3

This is life eternal - This is the source of eternal life; or it is in this manner that it is to be obtained. The knowledge of God and of his Son Jesus Christ is itself a source of unspeakable and eternal joy. Compare John 11:25; John 6:63; John 12:50.

Might know thee - The word "know" here, as in other places, expresses more than a mere speculative acquaintance with the character and perfections of God. "It includes all the impressions on the mind and life which a just view of God and of the Saviour is fitted to produce." It includes, of course, love, reverence, obedience, honor, gratitude, supreme affection. "To know God as he is" is to know and regard him as a lawgiver,

a sovereign, a parent, a friend. It is to yield the whole soul to him, and strive to obey his law.

The only true God - The only God, in opposition to all false gods. What is said here is in opposition to idols, not to Jesus himself, who, in 1 John 5:20, is called "the true God and eternal life."

And Jesus Christ - To know Jesus Christ is to have a practical impression of him as he is - that is, to suffer his character and work to make their due impression on the heart and life. Simply to have heard that there is a Saviour is not to know it. To have been taught in childhood and trained up in the belief of it is not to know it. To know him is to have a just, practical view of him in all his perfections as God and man; as a mediator; as a prophet, a priest, and a king. It is to feel our need of such a Saviour, to see that we are sinners, and to yield the whole soul to him, knowing that he is a Saviour suited to our needs, and that in his hands our souls are safe. Compare Ephesians 3:19; Titus 1:16; Philemon 3:10; 1 John 5:20. In this verse is contained the sum and essence of the Christian religion, as it is distinguished from all the schemes of idolatry and philosophy, and all the false plans on which men have sought to obtain eternal life. The Gentiles worshipped many gods; the Christian worships one - the living and the true God; the Jew, the Deist, the Muslim, the Socinian, profess to acknowledge one God, without any atoning sacrifice and Mediator; the true Christian approaches him through the great Mediator, equal with the Father, who for us became incarnate, and died that he might reconcile us to God.

Verse 4

Have glorified thee - In my instructions and life. See his discourses everywhere, the whole tendency of which is to put honor on God.

I have finished the work - Compare John 19:30. When he says "I have finished," he probably means to include also his death. All the preparations for that death were made. He had preached to the Jews; he had given them full proof that he was the Messiah; he had collected his disciples; he had taught them the nature of his religion; he had given them his parting counsel, and there was nothing remaining to be done but to return to God. We see here that Jesus was careful that his great and important work should be done before his dying hour. He did not postpone it to be performed just as he was leaving the world. So completely had he done his work, that even before his death he could I say, "I have finished the work." How happy would it be if men would imitate his example, and not leave their great

work of life to be done on a dying bed? Christians should have their work accomplished, and when that hour approaches, have nothing to do but to die, and return to their Father in heaven.

Verse 5

With thine own self - In heaven, granting me a participation of the same honor which the Father has. He had just said that he had glorified God on the earth, he now prays that God would glorify him in heaven.

With the glory - With the honor. This word also includes the notion of happiness, or everything which could render the condition blessed.

Before the world was - There could not be a more distinct and clear declaration of the pre-existence of Christ than this. It means before the creation of the world; before there was any world. Of course, the speaker here must have existed then, and this is equivalent to saying that he existed from eternity. See John 1:1-2; John 6:62; John 3:13; John 16:28. The glory which he had then was that which was proper to the Son of God, represented by the expression â€œbeing in the bosom of the Fatherâ€ John 1:18, denoting intimacy, friendship, united felicity. The Son of God, by becoming incarnate, is represented as â€œhumbling himselfâ€ (Greek: he â€œemptied himselfâ€), Philippians 2:8. He laid aside for a time the external aspect of honor, and consented to become despised, and to assume the form of a servant. He now prays that God would raise him up to the dignity and honor which he had before his incarnation. This is the state to which he is now exalted, with the additional honor of having made atonement for sin, and having opened the way to save a race of rebels from eternal death. The lowest condition on earth is frequently connected with the highest honors of heaven. Man looks on the outward appearance. God looks to him that is humble and of a contrite spirit.

Verse 6

Have manifested thy name - The word "name" here includes the attributes or character of God. Jesus had made known his character, his law, his will, his plan of mercy - or, in other words, he had revealed God to them. The word "name" is often used to designate the person, John 15:21; Matthew 10:22; Romans 2:24; 1 Timothy 6:1.

Which thou gavest me - God gave them to him in his purpose. He gave them by his providence. He so ordered affairs that they heard him preach and saw his miracles; and he gave them by disposing them to follow him when he called them.

Thine they were - All men are God‘s by creation and by preservation, and he has a right to do with them as seemeth good in his sight. These men he chose to designate to be the apostles of the Saviour; and he committed them to him to be taught, and then commissioned them to carry his gospel, though amid persecutions, to the ends of the world. God has a right to the services of all; and he has a right to appoint us to any labor, however humble, or hazardous, or wearisome, where we may promote his glory and honor his name.

Verse 7

They have known - They have been taught that and have believed it.

Hast given me - This refers, doubtless, to the doctrine of Christ, John 17:8. They are assured that all my instructions are of God.

Verse 8

The words - The doctrines. Christ often represented himself as instructed and sent to teach certain great truths to men. Those he taught, and no others. See the notes at John 5:30.

Verse 9-10

I pray for them - In view of their dangers and trials, he sought the protection and blessing of God on them. His prayer was always answered.

Not for the world - The term world here, as elsewhere, refers to wicked, rebellious, vicious men. The meaning of this expression here seems to be this: Jesus is praying for his disciples. As a reason why God should bless them, he says that they were not of the world; that they had been taken out of the world; that they belonged unto God. The petition was not offered for wicked, perverse, rebellious men, but for those who were the friends of God and were disposed to receive his favors. This passage, then, settles nothing about the question whether Christ prayed for sinners. He then prayed for his disciples, who were not those who hated him and disregarded his favors. He afterward extended the prayer for all who should become Christians, John 17:20. When on the cross he prayed for his crucifiers and murderers, Luke 23:34.

For they are thine - This is urged as a reason why God should protect and guide them. His honor was concerned in keeping them; and we may always “fill our mouths with” such “arguments” when we come before God, and plead that his honor will be advanced by keeping us from evil, and granting us all needful grace.

I am glorified in them - I am honored by their preaching and lives. The sense of this passage is, "Those who are my disciples are thine. That which promotes my honor will also promote thine. I pray, therefore, that they may have needful grace to honor my gospel, and to proclaim it among men."

Verse 11

I am no more in the world - I have finished my work among men, and am about to leave the world. See John 17:4.

These are in the world - They will be among wicked men and malignant foes. They will be subject to trials and persecutions. They will need the same protection which I could give them if I were with them.

Keep - Preserve, defend, sustain them in trials, and save them from apostasy.

Through thine own name - Our translators seem to have understood this expression as meaning "keep by thy power," but this probably is not its meaning. It is literally "keep in thy name." And if the term name be taken to denote God himself and his perfections (see the note at John 17:6), it means "keep in the knowledge of thyself. Preserve them in obedience to thee and to thy cause. Suffer them not to fall away from thee and to become apostates."

That they may be one - That they may be united.

As we are - This refers not to a union of nature, but of feeling, plan, purpose. Any other union between Christians is impossible; but a union of affection is what the Saviour sought, and this he desired might be so strong as to be an illustration of the unchanging love between the Father and the Son. See John 17:21-23.

Verse 12

While I was with them in the world - While I was engaged with them among other men - surrounded by the people and the temptations of the world. Jesus had now finished his work among the men of the world, and was performing his last offices with his disciples.

I kept them - By my example, instructions, and miracles. I preserved them from apostasy.

In thy name - In the knowledge and worship of thee. See John 17:6-11.

Those that thou gavest me … - The word "gavest" is evidently used by the Saviour to denote not only to give to him to be his real followers, but also as apostles. It is used here, probably, in the sense of giving as apostles. God had so ordered it by his providence that they had been given to him to

be his apostles and followers; but the terms "thou gavest me" do not of necessity prove that they were true believers. Of Judas Jesus knew that he was a deceiver and a devil, John 6:70; "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Judas is there represented as having been chosen by the Saviour to the apostleship, and this is equivalent to saying that he was given to him for this work; yet at the same time he knew his character, and understood that he had never been renewed.

None of them - None of those chosen to the apostolic office.

But the son of perdition - See the notes at Matthew 1:1. The term son was given by the Hebrews to those who possessed the character described by the word or name following. Thus, sons of Belial - those who possessed his character; children of wisdom those who were wise, Matthew 11:19. Thus Judas is called a son of perdition because he had the character of a destroyer. He was a traitor and a murderer. And this shows that he who knew the heart regarded his character as that of a wicked man one whose appropriate name was that of a son of perdition.

That the scripture … - See the notes at John 13:18. Compare Psalm 12:9.

Verse 13

My joy fulfilled … - See the notes at John 15:11. The expression "my joy here probably refers to the joy of the apostles respecting the Saviour - the joy which would result from his resurrection, ascension, and intercession in heaven.

Verse 14

I have given them … - See John 17:8.

The world hath hated them … - John 15:18-21.

Verse 15

That thou shouldest take them out of the world - Though they were going into trials and persecutions, yet Jesus did not pray that they might be removed soon from them. It was better that they should endure them, and thus spread abroad the knowledge of his name. It would be easy for God to remove his people at once to heaven, but it is better for them to remain, and show the power of religion in supporting the soul in the midst of trial, and to spread his gospel among men.

Shouldest keep them from the evil - This may mean either from the evil one that is, the devil, or from evil in general that is, from apostasy, from sinking in temptation. Preserve them from that evil, or give them such grace

that they may endure all trials and be sustained amid them. See the notes at Matthew 6:13. It matters little how long we are in this world if we are kept in this manner.

Verse 16

See John 15:19.

Verse 17

Sanctify them - This word means to render pure, or to cleanse from sins, 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 6:11. Sanctification in the heart of a Christian is progressive. It consists in his becoming more like God and less attached to the world; in his getting the ascendency over evil thoughts, and passions, and impure desires; and in his becoming more and more weaned from earthly objects, and attached to those things which are unseen and eternal. The word also means "to consecrate, to set apart to a holy office or purpose." See John 17:19; also the notes at John 10:36. When Jesus prayed here that God would sanctify them, he probably included both these ideas, that they might be made personally more holy, and might be truly consecrated to God as the ministers of his religion. Ministers of the gospel will be really devoted to the service of God just in proportion as they are personally pure.

Through thy truth - Truth is a representation of things as they are. The Saviour prayed that through those just views of God and of themselves they might be made holy. To see things as they are is to see God to be infinitely lovely and pure; his commands to be reasonable and just; heaven to be holy and desirable; his service to be easy, and religion pleasant, and sin odious; to see that life is short, that death is near; that the pride, pomp, pleasures, wealth, and honors of this world are of little value, and that it is of infinite importance to be prepared to enter on the eternal state of being. He that sees all this, or that looks on things as they are, will desire to be holy. He will make it his great object to live near to God and to glorify his name. In the sanctification of the soul God makes use of all truth, or of everything fitted to make a representation of things as they are to the mind. His Word states that and no more; His Spirit and His Providence do it. The earth and the heavens, the seasons, the sunshine and the rain, are all fitted to teach us his goodness and power, and lead us to him. His daily mercies tend to the same end, and afflictions have the same design. Our own sickness teaches us that we are soon to die. The death of a friend teaches us the instability of all earthly comforts, and the necessity of seeking better joys. All these things

are fitted to make just representations to the mind, and thus to sanctify the soul. As the Christian is constantly amid these objects, so he should be constantly growing in grace, and daily and hourly gaining new and deeper impressions of the great truths of religion.

Thy word is truth - All that thou hast spoken - that is, all that is contained in the Bible. All the commands and promises of God; His representations of His own character and that of man; His account of the mission and death of His Son; of the grave, the resurrection, judgment, and eternity, all tend to represent things as they are, and are thus fitted to sanctify the soul. We have here also the testimony of the Saviour that the revelation which God has given is true. All that God has spoken is true, and the Christian should rejoice and the sinner should tremble. See Psalm 19:7-14.

Verse 19

I sanctify myself - I consecrate myself exclusively to the service of God. The word "sanctify" does not refer here to personal sanctification, for he had no sin, but to setting himself apart entirely to the work of redemption.

That they also … -

1. That they might have an example of the proper manner of laboring in the ministry, and might learn of me how to discharge its duties. Ministers will understand their work best when they most faithfully study the example of their great model, the Son of God.

2. That they might be made pure by the effect of my sanctifying myself - that is, that they might be made pure by the shedding of that blood which cleanses from all sin. By this only can men be made holy; and it was because the Saviour so sanctified himself, or set himself to this work so unreservedly as to shed his own blood, that any soul can be made pure and fit for the kingdom of God.

Verse 20-21

Neither pray I for these alone … - Not for the apostles only, but for all who shall be converted under the preaching of the gospel. They will all need similar grace and be exposed to similar trials. It is a matter of unspeakable joy that each Christian, however humble or unknown to men however poor, unlearned, or despised, can reflect that he was remembered

in prayer by "him whom God heareth always." We value the prayers of pious friends. How much more should we value this petition of the Son of God! To that single prayer we who are Christians owe infinitely more real benefits than the world can ever bestow; and in the midst of any trials we may remember that the Son of God prayed for us, and that the prayer was assuredly heard, and will be answered in reference to all who truly believe.

All may be one - May be united as brethren. Christians are all redeemed by the same blood, and are going to the same heaven. They have the same wants, the same enemies, the same joys. Though they are divided into different denominations, yet they will meet at last in the same homes of glory. Hence they should feel that they belong to the same family, and are children of the same God and Father. There are no ties so tender as those which bind us in the gospel. There is no friendship so pure and enduring as that which results from having the same attachment to the Lord Jesus. Hence, Christians, in the New Testament, are represented as being indissolubly united - parts of the same body, and members of the same family, Acts 4:32-35; Ephesians 2:20-22; Romans 12:5. On the ground of this union they are exhorted to love one another, to bear one another's burdens, and to study the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another, Ephesians 4:3; Romans 12:5-16.

As thou, Father, art in me - See John 14:10. This does not affirm that the union between Christians should be in all respects like that between the Father and the Son, but only in the points in which they are capable of being compared. It is not the union of nature which is referred to, but the union of plan, of counsel, of purpose seeking the same objects, and manifesting attachment to the same things, and a desire to promote the same ends.

That they also may be one in us - To be in God and in Christ is to be united to God and Christ. The expression is common in the New Testament. The phrase used here denotes a union among all Christians founded on and resulting from a union to the same God and Saviour.

That the world may believe … - That the world, so full of animosities and fightings, may see the power of Christian principle in overcoming the sources of contention and producing love, and may thus see that a religion that could produce this must be from heaven. See the notes at John 13:34. This was done. Such was the attachment of the early Christians to each

other, that a pagan was constrained to say, “See how these Christians love one another!”

Verse 22

And the glory … - The honor which thou hast conferred on me by admitting me to union with thee, the same honor I have conferred on them by admitting them to like union with me.

May be one, even as we are one - Not in nature, or in the mode of existence - for this was not the subject of discourse, and would be impossible - but in feeling, in principle, in purpose. Evincing, as the Father and the Son had always done, the same great aim and plan; not pursuing different interests, or counteracting each other‘s purposes, or forming parties, but seeking the same ends by the same means. This is the union between the Father and the Son. Always, in the creation, preservation, and redemption of the world, the Father and the Son have sought the same object, and this is to be the model on which Christians should act.

Verse 23

May be made perfect in one - That their union may be complete. That there may be no jars, discords, or contentions. A machine is perfect or complete when it has all its parts and is in good order when there is no portion of it wanting. So the union of Christians, for which the Saviour prayed, would be complete or perfect if there were no controversies, no envyings, no contentions, and no heart-burnings and jealousies. It is worthy of remark here how entirely the union of his people occupied the mind of Jesus as he drew near to death. He saw the danger of strifes and contentions in the church. He knew the imperfections of even the best of men. He saw how prone they would be to passion and ambition; how ready to mistake love of sect or party for zeal for pure religion; how selfish and worldly men in the church might divide his followers, and produce unholy feeling and contention; and he saw, also, how much this would do to dishonor religion.

Hence, he took occasion, when he was about to die, to impress the importance of union on his disciples. By solemn admonition, and by most tender and affecting appeals to God in supplication, he showed his sense of the value of this union. He used the most sublime and impressive illustration; he adverted to the eternal union between the Father and himself; he reminded them of his love, and of the effect that their union would have on the world, to fix it more deeply in their hearts. The effect has shown the infinite wisdom of the Saviour. The contentions and strifes of

Christians have shown his knowledge in foreseeing it. The effect of all this on religion has shown that he understood the value of union. Christians have contended long enough. It is time that they should hear the parting admonitions of their Redeemer, and go unitedly against their common foe. The world still lies in wickedness; and the friends of Jesus, bound by the cords of eternal love, should advance together against the common enemy, and spread the triumphs of the gospel around the globe. All that is needful now, under the blessing of God, to convince the world" that God sent the Lord Jesus, is that very union among all Christians for which he prayed;" and when that union of feeling, and purpose, and action shall take place, the task of sending the gospel to all nations will be soon accomplished, and the morning of the millennial glory will dawn upon the world.

Verse 24

I will - This expression, though it commonly denotes command, is here only expressive of desire. It is used in prayer, and it was not the custom of the Saviour to use language of command when addressing God. It is often used to express strong and earnest desire, or a pressing and importunate wish, such as we are exceedingly anxious should not be denied, Mark 6:25; Mark 10:35; Matthew 12:38; Matthew 15:28.

Where I am - In heaven. The Son of God was still in the bosom of the Father, John 1:18. See the notes at John 7:34. Probably the expression here means where I shall be.

My glory - My honor and dignity when exalted to the right hand of God. The word "behold" implies more than simply seeing; it means also to participate, to enjoy. See the John 3:3 note; Matthew 5:8 note.

Thou lovedst me … - This is another of the numerous passages which prove that the Lord Jesus existed before the creation of the world. It is not possible to explain it on any other supposition.

Verse 25

Hath not known thee - See the notes at John 17:3.

Verse 26

Thy name - See the notes at John 17:6.

And will declare it - After my resurrection, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit, Luke 24:45; Acts 1:3.

I in them - By my doctrines and the influences of my Spirit. That my religion may show its power, and produce its proper fruits in their minds,

Galatians 4:19.

The discourse in John 14; 15; 16 is the most tender and sublime that was ever pronounced in our world. No composition can be found anywhere so fitted to sustain the soul in trial or to support it in death. This sublime and beautiful discourse is appropriately closed by a solemn and most affecting prayer - a prayer at once expressive of the profoundest reverence for God and the tenderest love for men - simple, grave, tender, sublime, and full of consolation. It is the model for our prayers, and with like reverence, faith, and love we should come before God. This prayer for the church will yet be fully answered; and he who loves the church and the world cannot but cast his eyes onward to that time when all believers shall be one; when contentions, bigotry, strife, and anger shall cease; and when, in perpetual union and love, Christians shall show forth the power and purity of that holy gospel with which the Saviour came to bless mankind. Soon may that happy day arise!

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Verse 1

The brook Cedron - This was a small stream that flowed to the east of Jerusalem, through the valley of Jehoshaphat, and divided the city from the Mount of Olives. It was also called Kidron and Kedron. In summer it is almost dry. The word used here by the evangelist - χειμάῤῥου cheimarrou- denotes properly a water-stream (from χεῖρμα , shower or water, and ῥέω reō ῥόος roosto flow, flowing), and the idea is that of a stream that was swollen by rain or by the melting of the snow (Passow, Lexicon). This small rivulet runs along on the east of Jerusalem until it is joined by the water of the pool of Siloam, and the water that flows down on the west side of the city through the valley of Jehoshaphat, and then goes off in a southeast direction to the Dead Sea. (See the map of the environs of Jerusalem.) Over this brook David passed when he fled from Absalom, 2 Samuel 15:23. It is often mentioned in the Old Testament, 1 Kings 15:13; 2 Chronicles 15:16; 2 Chronicles 30:14; 2 Kings 23:6, 2 Kings 23:12.

Where was a garden - On the west side of the Mount of Olives. This was called Gethsemane. See the notes at Matthew 26:36. It is probable that this was the property of some wealthy man in Jerusalem - perhaps some friend of the Saviour. It was customary for the rich in great cities to have country-seats in the vicinity. This, it seems, was so accessible that Jesus was accustomed to visit it, and yet so retired as to be a suitable place for devotion.

Verse 2

Jesus ofttimes resorted thither - For what purpose he went there is not declared, but it is probable that it was for retirement and prayer. He had no home in the city, and he sought this place, away from the bustle and confusion of the capital, for private communion with God. Every Christian should have some place - be it a grove, a room, or a garden - where he may be alone and offer his devotions to God. We are not told much of the private habits of Jesus, but we are permitted to know so much of him as to be assured that he was accustomed to seek for a place of retirement, and during the great feasts of the Jews the Mount of Olives was the place which he chose, Luke 21:37; Matthew 21:17; John 8:1.

Verse 3

A band - See the notes at Matthew 26:47; Matthew 27:27. John passes over the agony of Jesus in the garden, probably because it was so fully described by the other evangelists.

Lanterns … - This was the time of the full moon, but it might have been cloudy, and their taking lights with them shows their determination to find him.

Verse 6

They went backward … - The cause of their retiring in this manner is not mentioned. Various things might have produced it. The frank, open, and fearless manner in which Jesus addressed them may have convinced them of his innocence, and deterred them from prosecuting their wicked attempt. His disclosure of himself was sudden and unexpected; and while they perhaps anticipated that he would make an effort to escape, they were amazed at his open and bold profession. Their consciences reproved them for their crimes, and probably the firm, decided, and yet mild manner in which Jesus addressed them, the expression of his unequalled power in knowing how to find the way to the consciences of men, made them feel that they were in the presence of more than mortal man. There is no proof that there was here any miraculous power, any mere physical force, and to suppose that there was greatly detracts from the moral sublimity of the scene.

Verse 8

Let these go their way - These apostles. This shows his care and love even in the hour of danger. He expected to die. They were to carry the news of his death to the ends of the earth. Hence he, the faithful Captain of salvation, went foremost into trials; he, the Good Shepherd, secured the safety of the flock, and went before them into danger. By the question which he asked those who came out against him, he had secured the safety of his apostles. He was answered that they sought for him. He demanded that, agreeably to their declaration, they should take him only, and leave his followers at liberty. The wisdom, caution, and prudence of Jesus forsook him in no peril, however sudden, and in no circumstances, however difficult or trying.

Verse 9

The saying - John 17:12. As he had kept them for more than three years, so he still sought their welfare, even when his death was near.

Verse 10-11

See the notes at Matthew 26:51-52.

The servant‘s name was Malchus - His name is mentioned by neither of the other evangelists, nor is it said by the other evangelists who was the disciple that gave the blow. It is probable that both Peter and the servant were alive when the other gospels were written.

Verse 12

See Matthew 26:50.

Verse 13

To Annas first - Probably his house was nearest to them, and he had great authority and influence in the Jewish nation. He had been himself a long time high priest; he had had five sons who had successively enjoyed the office of high priest, and that office was now filled by his son-in-law. It was of importance, therefore, to obtain his sanction and counsel in their work of evil.

That same year - John 11:49.

Verse 14

Which gave counsel … - John 11:49-50. This is referred to here, probably, to show how little prospect there was that Jesus would have justice done him in the hands of a man who had already pronounced on the case.

Verses 15-18

See the notes at Matthew 26:57-58.

Another disciple - Not improbably John. Some critics, however, have supposed that this disciple was one who dwelt at Jerusalem, and who, not being a Galilean, could enter the palace without suspicion. John, however, mentions the circumstance of his being known to them, to show why it was that he was not questioned as Peter was. It is not probable that any danger resulted from its being known that he was a follower of Jesus, or that any harm was meditated on them for this. The questions asked Peter were not asked by those in authority, and his apprehensions which led to his denial were groundless.

Verse 19

The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples - To ascertain their number and power. The charge on which they wished to arraign him was that of sedition, or of rebellion against Caesar. To make that plausible, it was necessary to show that he had made so many disciples as to form a strong and dangerous faction; but, as they had no direct proof of that, the

high priest insidiously and improperly attempted to draw the Saviour into a confession. Of this he was aware, and referred him to the proper source of evidence - his open, undisguised conduct before the world.

His doctrine - His teaching. The sentiments that he inculcated. The object was doubtless to convict him of teaching sentiments that tended to subvert the Mosaic institutions, or that were treasonable against the Roman government. Either would have answered the design of the Jews, and they doubtless expected that he - an unarmed and despised Galilean, now completely in their power - would easily be drawn into confessions which art and malice could use to procure his condemnation.

Verse 20

Openly to the world - If his doctrine had tended to excite sedition and tumult, if he had aimed to overthrow the government, he would have trained his friends in secret; he would have retired from public view, and would have laid his plans in private. This is the case with all who attempt to subvert existing establishments. Instead of that, he had proclaimed his views to all. He had done it in every place of public concourse in the synagogue and in the temple. He here speaks the language of one conscious of innocence and determined to insist on his rights.

Always resort - Constantly assemble. They were required to assemble there three times in a year, and great multitudes were there constantly.

In secret … - He had taught no private or concealed doctrine. He had taught nothing to his disciples which he had not himself taught in public and commanded them to do, Matthew 10:27; Luke 12:3.

Verse 21

Why askest thou me? Ask them … - Jesus here insisted on his rights, and reproves the high priest for his unjust and illegal manner of extorting a confession from him. If he had done wrong, or taught erroneous and seditious doctrines, it was easy to prove it, and the course which he had a right to demand was that they should establish the charge by fair and incontrovertible evidence. We may here learn:

1.That, though Jesus was willing to be reviled and persecuted, yet he also insisted that justice should be done him.

2.He was conscious of innocence, and he had been so open in his conduct that he could appeal to the vast multitudes which had heard him as witnesses in his favor.

3.It is proper for us, when persecuted and reviled, meekly but firmly to insist on our rights, and to demand that justice shall be done us. Laws are made to protect the innocent as well as to condemn the guilty.

4.Christians, like their Saviour, should so live that they may confidently appeal to all who have known them as witnesses of the sincerity, purity, and rectitude of their lives, 1 Peter 4:13-16.

Verse 22

One of the officers - One of the inferior officers, or those who attended on the court.

With the palm, of his hand - This may mean: "Gave him a blow either with the open hand or with a rod" - the Greek does not determine which. In whatever way it was done, it was a violation of all law and justice. Jesus had showed no disrespect for the office of the high priest, and if he had, this was not the proper way to punish it. The Syriac reads thus: "Smote the cheek of Jesus." The Vulgate and Arabic: "Gave him a blow."

Verse 23

Spoken evil - In my answer to the high priest. If there was any disrespect to the office, and lack of regard for the law which appointed him, then testify to the fact, and let punishment be inflicted according to the law; compare Exodus 22:28.

But if well … - While an accused person is on trial he is under the protection of the court, and has a right to demand that all legal measures shall be taken to secure his rights. On this right Jesus insisted, and thus showed that, though he had no disposition to take revenge, yet he claimed that, when arraigned, strict justice should be done. This shows that his precept that when we are smitten on one cheek we should turn the other Matthew 5:39, is consistent with a firm demand that justice should be done us. That precept refers, besides, rather to private masters than to judicial proceedings. It does not demand that, when we are unjustly arraigned or assaulted, and when the law is in our favor, we should sacrifice our rights to the malignant accuser. Such a surrender would be injustice to the law and to the community, and be giving legal triumph to the wicked, and destroying the very end of all law. In private matters this effect would not follow, and we should there bear injuries without reviling or seeking for vengeance.

Verse 24

Compare John 18:13 with Matthew 26:57.

Verse 25-26

See the notes at Matthew 26:72-74.

Verse 28

See Matthew 27:1-2.

Hall of judgment - The praetorium - the same word that in Matthew 27:27, is translated "common hall." See the notes on that place. It was the place where the Roman proctor, or governor, heard and decided cases brought before him. Jesus had been condemned by the Sanhedrin, and pronounced guilty of death Matthew 26:66; but they had not power to carry their sentence into execution John 18:31, and they therefore sought that he might be condemned and executed by Pilate.

Lest they should be defiled - They considered the touch of a Gentile to be a defilement, and on this occasion, at least, seemed to regard it as a pollution to enter the house of a Gentile. They took care, therefore, to guard themselves against what they considered ceremonial pollution, while they were wholly unconcerned at the enormous crime of putting the innocent Saviour to death, and imbruing their hands in their Messiah's blood. Probably there is not anywhere to be found among men another such instance of petty regard to the mere ceremonies of the law and attempting to keep from pollution, at the same time that their hearts were filled with malice, and they were meditating the most enormous of all crimes. But it shows us how much more concerned men will be at the violation of the mere forms and ceremonies of religion than at real crime, and how they endeavor to keep their consciences at ease amid their deeds of wickedness by the observance of some of the outward ceremonies of religion by mere sanctimoniousness.

That they might eat the passover - See the notes at Matthew 26:2, Matthew 26:17. This defilement, produced by contact with a Gentile, they considered as equivalent to that of the contact of a dead body Leviticus 22:4-6; Numbers 5:2, and as disqualifying them to partake of the passover in a proper manner. The word translated "passover" means properly the paschal lamb which was slain and eaten on the observance of this feast. This rite Jesus had observed with his disciples the day before this. It has been supposed by many that he anticipated the usual time of observing it one day, and was crucified on the day on which the Jews observed it; but this opinion is improbable. The very day of keeping the ordinance was

specified in the law of Moses, and it is not probable that the Saviour departed from the commandment. All the circumstances, also, lead us to suppose that he observed it at the usual time and manner, Matthew 26:17, Matthew 26:19. The only passage which has led to a contrary opinion is this in John; but here the word passover does not, of necessity, mean the paschal lamb. It probably refers to the Feast which followed the sacrifice of the lamb, and which continued seven days. Compare Numbers 28:16-17. The whole feast was called the Passover, and they were unwilling to defile themselves, even though the paschal lamb had been killed, because it would disqualify them for participating in the remainder of the ceremonies (Lightfoot).

Verse 30

If he were not a malefactor - A violator of the law. If we had not determined that he was such, and was worthy of death, Matthew 26:66. From this it appears that they did not deliver him up to be tried, but hoped that Pilate would at once, give sentence that he should be executed according to their request. It is probable that in ordinary cases the Roman governor was not accustomed to make very strict inquiry into the justice of the sentence. The Jewish Sanhedrin tried causes and pronounced sentence, and the sentence was usually approved by the governor; but in this case Pilate, evidently contrary to their expectations, proceeded himself to rehear and retry the cause. He had doubtless heard of the miracles of Jesus. He seems to have been strongly pre-possessed with the belief of his innocence. He knew that they had delivered him from mere envy Matthew 27:18, and hence, he inquired of them the nature of the case, and the kind of charge which they expected to substantiate against him.

Verse 31

Judge him … - The Jews had not directly informed him that they had judged him and pronounced him worthy of death. Pilate therefore tells them to inquire into the ease; to ascertain the proof of his guilt, and to decide on what the law of Moses pronounced. It has been doubted whether this gave them the power of putting him to death, or whether it was not rather a direction to them to inquire into the case, and inflict on him, if they judged him guilty, the mild punishment which they were yet at liberty to inflict on criminals. Probably the former is intended. As they lied already determined that in their view this case demanded the punishment of death, so in their answer to Pilate they implied that they had pronounced on it, and that he

ought to die. They still, therefore, pressed it on his attention, and refused to obey his injunction to judge him.

It is not lawful … - The Jews were accustomed to put persons to death still in a popular tumult Acts 7:59-60, but they had not the power to do it in any case in a regular way of justice. When they first laid the plan of arresting the Saviour, they did it to kill him Matthew 26:4; but whether they intended to do this secretly, or in a tumult, or by the concurrence of the Roman governor, is uncertain. The Jews themselves say that the power of inflicting capital punishment was taken away about 40 years before the destruction of the temple; but still it is probable that in the time of Christ they had the power of determining on capital cases in instances that pertained to religion (Josephus, *Antiq.*, b. 14: Matthew 26:5; hence, they sought to bring in the authority of Pilate. To do this, they endeavored to make it appear that it was a case of sedition and treason, and one which therefore demanded the interference of the Roman governor. Hence, it was on this charge that they arraigned him, Luke 23:2. Thus, a tumult might be avoided, and the odium of putting him to death which they expected would fall, not on themselves, but upon Pilate!

Verse 32

That the saying of Jesus … - To wit, that he would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles and be crucified, Matthew 20:19. Neither of these things would have happened if he had been put to death in the way that the Jews first contemplated, Matthew 26:4. Though it should be admitted that they had the power, in religious cases, to do this, yet in such a case it would not have been done, as Jesus predicted, by the Gentiles; and even if it should be admitted that they had the right to take life, yet they had not the right to do it by crucifixion. This was particularly a Roman punishment. And thus it was ordered, in the providence of God, that the prediction of Jesus in both these respects was fulfilled.

Verse 33

Art thou the King of the Jews? - This was after they had accused him of perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, Luke 23:2-3.

Verse 34

Of thyself - From any conviction of your own mind, or any apprehension of danger. During all the time in which you have been praetor, have you seen anything in me that has led you to apprehend sedition or

danger to the Roman power? This evidently was intended to remind Pilate that nothing was proved against him, and to caution him against being influenced by the malicious accusations of others. Jesus demanded a just trial, and claimed that Pilate should not be influenced by any reports that he might have heard of him.

Verse 35

Am I a Jew? - Am I likely to be influenced by Jewish prejudices and partialities? Am not I, being a Roman, likely to judge impartially, and to decide on the accusations without being blessed by the malignant charges of the accusers?

Thine own nation … - In this Pilate denies that it was from anything that he had observed that Jesus was arraigned. He admits that it was from the accusation of others; but then he tells the Saviour that the charge was one of moment, and worthy of the deepest attention. It had come from the very nation of Jesus, from his own countrymen, and from the highest authority among the people. As such it demanded consideration, and Pilate besought him to tell him what he had done - that is, what there had been in his conduct that had given occasion for this charge.

Verse 36

My kingdom … - The charge on which Jesus was arraigned was that of laying claim to the office of a king. He here substantially admits that he did claim to be a king, but not in the sense in which the Jews understood it. They charged him with attempting to set up an earthly kingdom, and of exciting sedition against Caesar. In reply to this, Jesus says that his kingdom is not of this world - that is, it is not of the same nature as earthly kingdoms. It was not originated for the same purpose, or conducted on the same plan. He immediately adds a circumstance in which they differ. The kingdoms of the world are defended by arms; they maintain armies and engage in wars. If the kingdom of Jesus had been of this kind, he would have excited the multitudes that followed him to prepare for battle. He would have armed the hosts that attended him to Jerusalem. He would not have been alone and unarmed in the garden of Gethsemane. But though he was a king, yet his dominion was over the heart, subduing evil passions and corrupt desires, and bringing the soul to the love of peace and unity.

Not from hence - That is, not from this world.

Verse 37

Art thou a king then? - Dost thou admit the charge in any sense, or dost thou lay claim to a kingdom of any kind?

Thou sayest … - This is a form of expression denoting affirmation. It is equivalent to yes.

That I am a king - This does not mean simply that Pilate affirmed that he was a king; it does not appear that he had done this; but it means, "Thou affirmest the truth; thou declarest what is correct, for I am a king." I am a king in a certain sense, and do not deny it.

To this end … - Compare John 3:11-12, etc. Jesus does not here affirm that he was born to reign, or that this was the design of his coming; but it was to bear witness to and to exhibit the truth. By this he showed what was the nature of his kingdom. It was not to assert power; not to collect armies; not to subdue nations in battle. It was simply to present truth to men, and to exercise dominion only by the truth. Hence, the only power put forth in restraining the wicked, in convincing the sinner, in converting the heart, in guiding and leading his people, and in sanctifying them, is that which is produced by applying truth to the mind. Men are not forced or compelled to be Christians. They are made to see that they are stoners, that God is merciful, that they need a Redeemer, and that the Lord Jesus is fitted to their case, and yield themselves then wholly to his reign. This is all the power ever used in the kingdom of Christ, and no men in his church have a right to use any other. Alas! how little have persecutors remembered this! And how often, under the pretence of great regard for the kingdom of Jesus, have bigots attempted by force and flames to make all men think as they do! We see here the importance which Jesus attached to truth. It was his sole business in coming into the world. He had no other end than to establish it. We therefore should value it, and seek for it as for hid treasures, Proverbs 23:23.

Every one … - See John 8:47.

sa40

Verse 38

What is truth? - This question was probably asked in contempt, and hence Jesus did not answer it. Had the question been sincere, and had Pilate really sought it as Nicodemus had done John 18:33, and as soon as Pilate had asked the question, without waiting for an answer, he went out. It is evident that he was satisfied, from the answer of Jesus John 18:36-37, that he was not a king in the sense in which the Jews accused him; that he would

not endanger the Roman government, and consequently that he was innocent of the charge alleged against him. He regarded him, clearly, as a fanatic poor, ignorant, and deluded, but innocent and not dangerous. Hence, he sought to release him; and, hence, in contempt, he asked him this question, and immediately went out, not expecting an answer.

This question had long agitated the world. It was the great subject of inquiry in all the schools of the Greeks. Different sects of philosophers had held different opinions, and Pilate now, in derision, asked him, whom he esteemed an ignorant fanatic, whether he could solve this long-agitated question. He might have had an answer. If he had patiently waited in sincerity, Jesus would have told him what it was. Thousands ask the question in the same way. They have a fixed contempt for the Bible; they deride the instructions of religion; they are unwilling to investigate and to wait at the gates of wisdom; and hence, like Pilate, they remain ignorant of the great Source of truth, and die in darkness and in error. All might find truth if they would seek it; none ever will find it if they do not apply for it to the great source of light the God of truth, and seek it patiently in the way in which he has chosen to communicate it to mankind. How highly should we prize the Bible! And how patiently and prayerfully should we search the Scriptures, that we may not err and die forever! See the notes at John 14:6.

I find in him no fault - See Luke 23:4.

Verse 39-40

See the notes at Matthew 27:15-21.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Verses 1-3

See the notes at Matthew 27:26-30.

Verse 4

Behold, I bring him forth … - Pilate, after examining Jesus, had gone forth and declared to the Jews that he found no fault in him, John 18:38. At that time Jesus remained in the judgment hall. The Jews were not satisfied with that, but demanded still that he should be put to death, John 19:39-40. Pilate, disposed to gratify the Jews, returned to Jesus and ordered him to be scourged, as if preparatory to death, John 19:1. The patience and meekness with which Jesus bore this seem to have convinced him still more that he was innocent, and he again went forth to declare his conviction of this; and, to do it more effectually, he said, "Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know," etc. - that they might themselves see, and be satisfied, as he had been, of his innocence. All this shows his anxiety to release him, and also shows that the meekness, purity, and sincerity of Jesus had power to convince a Roman governor that he was not guilty. Thus, the highest evidence was given that the charges were false, even when he was condemned to die.

Verse 5

Behold the man! - It is probable that Pilate pointed to the Saviour, and his object evidently was to move them to compassion, and to convince them, by a sight of the Saviour himself, that he was innocent. Hence, he brought him forth with the crown of thorns, and the purple robe, and with the marks of scourging. Amid all this Jesus was meek, patient, and calm, giving evident proofs of innocence. The conduct of Pilate was as if he had said, "See! The man whom you accuse is arrayed in a gorgeous robe, as if a king. He has been scourged and mocked. All this he has borne with patience. Look! How calm and peaceful! Behold his countenance! How mild! His body scourged, his head pierced with thorns! Yet in all this he is meek and patient. This is the man that you accuse; and he is now brought forth, that you may see that he is not guilty."

Verse 6

They cried out, saying, Crucify him … - The view of the Saviour's meekness only exasperated them the more. They had resolved on his death; and as they saw Pilate disposed to acquit him, they redoubled their cries,

and endeavored to gain by tumult, and clamor, and terror, what they saw they could not obtain by justice. When men are determined on evil, they cannot be reasoned with. Every argument tends to defeat their plans, and they press on in iniquity with the more earnestness in proportion as sound reasons are urged to stay their course. Thus sinners go in the way of wickedness down to death. They make up in firmness of purpose what they lack in reason. They are more fixed in their plans in proportion as God faithfully warns them and their friends admonish them.

Take ye him … - These are evidently the words of a man weary with their importunity and with the subject, and yet resolved not to sanction their conduct. It was not the act of a judge delivering him up according to the forms of the law, for they did not understand it so. It was equivalent to this: "I am satisfied of his innocence, and shall not pronounce the sentence of death. If you are bent on his ruin - if you are determined to put to death an innocent man - if my judgment does not satisfy you - take him and put him to death on your own responsibility, and take the consequences. It cannot be done with my consent, nor in the due form of law; and if done, it must be by you, without authority, and in the face of justice." See Matthew 27:24.

Verse 7

We have a law - The law respecting blasphemy, Leviticus 24:16; Deuteronomy 13:1-5. They had arraigned Jesus on that charge before the Sanhedrin, and condemned him for it, Matthew 26:63-65. But this was not the charge on which they had arraigned him before Pilate. They had accused him of sedition, Luke 23:2. On this charge they were now convinced that they could not get Pilate to condemn him. He declared him innocent. Still bent on his ruin, and resolved to gain their purpose, they now, contrary to their first intention, adduced the original accusation on which they had already pronounced him guilty. If they could not obtain his condemnation as a rebel, they now sought it as a blasphemer, and they appealed to Pilate to sanction what they believed was required in their law. Thus, to Pilate himself it became more manifest that he was innocent, that they had attempted to deceive him, and that the charge on which they had arraigned him was a mere pretence to obtain his sanction to their wicked design.

Made himself - Declared himself, or claimed to be.

The Son of God - The law did not forbid this, but it forbade blasphemy, and they considered the assumption of this title as the same as blasphemy John 10:30, John 10:33, John 10:36, and therefore condemned him.

Verse 8

When Pilate therefore heard that saying - That they had accused him of blasphemy. As this was not the charge on which they had arraigned him before his bar, he had not before heard it, and it now convinced him more of their malignity and wickedness.

He was the more afraid - What was the ground of his fear is not declared by the evangelist. It was probably, however, the alarm of his conscience, and the fear of vengeance if he suffered such an act of injustice to be done as to put an innocent man to death. He was convinced of his innocence. He saw more and more clearly the design of the Jews; and it is not improbable that a pagan, who believed that the gods often manifested themselves to people, dreaded their vengeance if he suffered one who claimed to be divine, and who might be, to be put to death. It is clear that Pilate was convinced that Jesus was innocent; and in this state of agitation between the convictions of his own conscience, and the clamors of the Jews, and the fear of vengeance, and the certainty that he would do wrong if he gave him up, he was thrown into this state of alarm, and resolved again to question Jesus, that he might obtain satisfaction on the subjects that agitated his mind.

Verse 9

Whence art thou? - See the notes at John 7:27. Pilate knew that he was a Galilean, but this question was asked to ascertain whether he claimed to be the Son of God - whether a mere man, or whether divine.

Jesus gave him no answer - Probably for the following reasons:

1.Jesus had already told Pilate Jesus‘ design, and the nature of his kingdom, John 18:36-37.

2.Jesus had said enough to satisfy Pilate of Jesus‘ innocence. Of that Pilate was convinced. Pilate‘s duty was clear, and if he had had firmness to do it, he would not have asked this. Jesus, by his silence, therefore rebuked Pilate for his lack of firmness, and his unwillingness to do what his conscience told him was right.

3.It is not probable that Pilate would have understood Jesus if Jesus had declared to Pilate the truth about Jesus‘ origin, and about his being the Son of God.

4.After what had been done - after he had satisfied Pilate of his innocence, and then had been beaten and mocked by his permission he had no reason to expect justice at his hands, and therefore properly declined to make any further defense. By this the prophecy Isaiah 53:7 was remarkably fulfilled.

Verse 10

Speakest thou not … - This is the expression of a man of pride. He was not accustomed to be met with silence like this. He endeavored, therefore, to address the fears of Jesus, and to appall him with the declaration that his life was at his disposal, and that his safety depended on his favor. This arrogance called forth the reply of the Savior, and he told him that he had no power except what was given him from above. Jesus was not, therefore, to be intimidated by any claim of power in Pilate. His life was not in his hands, and he could not stoop to ask the favor of a man.

Verse 11

No power - No such power as you claim. You have not originated the power which you have. You have just as much as is given, and your ability extends no further.

Except it were given thee - It has been conceded or granted to you. God has ordered your life, your circumstances, and the extent of your dominion. This was a reproof of a proud man in office, who was forgetful of the great Source of his authority, and who supposed that by his own talents or fortune he had risen to his present place. Alas, how many men in office forget that God gives them their rank, and vainly think that it is owing to their own talents or merits that they have risen to such an elevation. Men of office and talent, as well as others, should remember that God gives them what they have, and that they have no influence except as it is conceded to them from on high.

From above - From God, or by his direction, and by the arrangements of his providence. Romans 13:1; "there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." The words "from above" often refer to God or to heaven, James 1:17; James 3:15, James 3:17; John 3:3 (in the Greek). The providence of God was remarkable in so ordering affairs that a man, flexible and yielding like Pilate, should be entrusted with power in Judea. Had it been a man firm and unyielding in his duty one who could not be terrified or awed by the multitude Jesus would not have been delivered to

be crucified, Acts 2:23. God thus brings about his wise ends; and while Pilate was free, and acted out his nature without compulsion, yet the purposes of God, long before predicted, were fulfilled, and Jesus made an atonement for the sins of the world. Thus God overrules the wickedness and folly of men. He so orders affairs that the true character of men shall be brought out, and makes use of that character to advance his own great purposes.

Therefore - On this account. "You are a magistrate. Your power, as such, is given you by God. You are not, indeed, guilty for accusing me, or malignantly arraigning me; but you have power intrusted to you over my life; and the Jews, who knew this, and who knew that the power of a magistrate was given to him by God, have the greater sin for seeking my condemnation before a tribunal appointed by God, and for endeavoring to obtain so solemn a sanction to their own malignant and wicked purposes. They have endeavored to avail themselves of the civil power, the sacred appointment of God, and on this account their sin is greater." This does not mean that their sin was greater than that of Pilate, though that was true; but their sin was greater on account of the fact that they perseveringly and malignantly endeavored to obtain the sanction of the magistrate to their wicked proceedings. Nor does it mean, because God had purposed his death Acts 2:23, and given power to Pilate, that therefore their sin was greater, for God's purpose in the case made it neither more nor less. It did not change the nature of their free acts. This passage teaches no such doctrine, but that their sin was aggravated by malignantly endeavoring to obtain the sanction of a magistrate who was invested with authority by God, and who wielded the power that God gave him. By this Pilate ought to have been convinced, and was convinced, of their wickedness, and hence he sought more and more to release him.

He that delivered me - The singular here is put for the plural, including Judas, the high priests, and the Sanhedrin.

Verse 12

Sought to release him - He was more and more convinced of his innocence, and more unwilling to yield him to mere malice and envy in the face of justice.

But the Jews cried out … - This moved Pilate to deliver Jesus into their hands. He feared that he would be accused of unfaithfulness to the interests of the Roman emperor if he did not condemn a man whom his own

nation had accused of sedition. The Roman emperor then on the throne was exceedingly jealous and tyrannical, and the fear of losing his favor induced Pilate to deliver Jesus into their hands.

Caesar's friend - The friend of the Roman emperor. The name of the reigning emperor was Tiberius. After the time of Julius Caesar all the emperors were called Caesar, as all the kings of Egypt were called Pharaoh. This emperor was, during the latter part of his reign, the most cruel, jealous, and wicked that ever sat on the Roman throne.

Verse 13

Judgment-seat - The tribunal or place of pronouncing sentence. He came here to deliver him, in due form of law, into the hands of the Jews.

Pavement - This was an area or room of the judgment hall whose floor was made of small square stones of various colors. This was common in palaces and houses of wealth and splendor. See the notes at Matthew 9:2.

Gabbatha - This word is not elsewhere used. It comes from a word signifying to be elevated. The name given to the place by the Hebrews was conferred from its being the place of the tribunal, as an elevated place.

Verse 14

The preparation of the passover - See the notes at Mark 15:42.

The sixth hour - Twelve o'clock noon. Mark says Mark 15:25 that it was the third hour. See the difficulty explained in the notes at that place.

Verses 16-22

See the notes at Matthew 27:32-37.

John 19:22

What I have written … - This declaration implied that he would make no change. He was impatient, and weary of their solicitations. He had yielded to them contrary to the convictions of his own conscience, and he now declared his purpose to yield no further.

Verse 23

His garments - The plural here is used to denote the outer garment. It was made, commonly, so as to be easily thrown on or off, and when they labored or walked it was girded about the loins. See the notes at Matthew 5:40.

Four parts - It seems, from this, that there were four soldiers employed as his executioners.

His coat - His under garment, called the tunic.

Was without seam - Josephus (Antiq., b. 3 chapter 8, Section 4) says of the garment or coat of the high priest that "this vesture was not composed of two pieces, nor was it sewed together upon the shoulders and the sides; but it was one long vestment, so woven as to have an aperture for the neck. It was also parted where the hands were to come out." It seems that the Lord Jesus, the great High Priest of his people, had also a coat made in a similar manner. Compare Exodus 39:22.

Verse 24

Let us not rend it - It would then have been useless. The outer garment, being composed of several parts - fringes, borders, etc. Deuteronomy 12:12 - could be easily divided.

That the scripture … - Psalm 22:18.

Verse 26

The disciple … whom he loved - See John 13:23.

Woman - This appellation certainly implied no disrespect. See the notes at John 2:4.

Behold thy son! - This refers to John, not to Jesus himself. Behold, my beloved disciple shall be to you a son, and provide for you, and discharge toward you the duties of an affectionate child. Mary was poor. It would even seem that now she had no home. Jesus, in his dying moments, filled with tender regard for his mother, secured for her an adopted son, obtained for her a home, and consoled her grief by the prospect of attention from him who was the most beloved of all the apostles. What an example of filial attention! What a model to all children! And how lovely appears the dying Saviour, thus remembering his afflicted mother, and making her welfare one of his last cares on the cross, and even when making atonement for the sins of the world!

Verse 27

Behold thy mother! - One who is to be to thee as a mother. The fact that she was the mother of Jesus would secure the kindness of John, and the fact that she was now intrusted to him demanded of him affectionate regard and tender care.

From that hour … - John seems to have been in better circumstances than the other apostles. See John 18:16. Tradition says that she continued to live with him in Judea until the time of her death, which occurred about fifteen years after the death of Christ.

Verses 28-30

See the notes at Matthew 27:46-50.

That the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst - See Psalm 69:21. Thirst was one of the most distressing circumstances attending the crucifixion. The wounds were highly inflamed, and a raging fever was caused, usually, by the sufferings on the cross, and this was accompanied by insupportable thirst. See the notes at Matthew 27:35. A Mameluke, or Turkish officer, was crucified, it is said in an Arabic manuscript recently translated, on the banks of the Barada River, under the castle of Damascus. He was nailed to the cross on Friday, and remained until Sunday noon, when he died. After giving an account of the crucifixion, the narrator proceeds: "I have heard this from one who witnessed it; and he thus remained until he died, patient and silent, without wailing, but looking around him to the right and the left, upon the people. But he begged for water, and none was given him; and the hearts of the people were melted with compassion for him, and with pity on one of God's creatures, who, yet a boy, was suffering under so grievous a trial. In the meantime the water was flowing around him, and he gazed upon it, and longed for one drop of it; and he complained of thirst all the first day, after which he was silent, for God gave him strength" - Wiseman's Lectures, pp. 164,165, ed.

John 19:30

It is finished - The sufferings and agonies in redeeming man are over. The work long contemplated, long promised, long expected by prophets and saints, is done. The toils in the ministry, the persecutions and mockeries, and the pangs of the garden and the cross, are ended, and man is redeemed. What a wonderful declaration was this! How full of consolation to man! And how should this dying declaration of the Saviour reach every heart and affect every soul!

Verse 31

The preparation - John 19:14.

That the bodies … - The law required that the bodies of those who were hung should not remain suspended during the night. See Deuteronomy 21:22-23. That law was made when the punishment by crucifixion was unknown, and when those who were suspended would almost immediately expire. In the punishment by crucifixion, life was lengthened out for four, five, or eight days. The Jews therefore requested that their death might be hastened, and that the land might not be polluted by their bodies remaining suspended on the Sabbath day.

Was an high day - It was:

1.The Sabbath.

2.It was the day on which the paschal feast properly commenced.

It was called a high day because that year the feast of the Passover commenced on the Sabbath. Greek: "Great day."

Their legs might be broken - To hasten their death. The effect of this, while they were suspended on the cross, would be to increase their pain by the act of breaking them, and to deprive their body of the support which it received from the feet, and to throw the whole weight on the hands. By this increased torment their lives were soon ended. Lactantius says that this was commonly done by the Romans to persons who were crucified. The common period to which persons crucified would live was several days. To compensate for those lingering agonies, so that the full amount of suffering might be endured, they increased their sufferings by breaking their limbs, and thus hastening their death.

Verse 33

Saw that he was dead - Saw by the indications of death on his person, and perhaps by the testimony of the centurion, Matthew 27:54. The death of Jesus was doubtless hastened by the intense agony of the garden, and the special sufferings endured as an atonement for sin on the cross. Compare Matthew 27:46.

Verse 34

One of the soldiers - One of those appointed to watch the bodies until they were dead. This man appears to have doubted whether he was dead, and, in order to see whether he was not yet sensible, he pierced him with his spear. The Jews designed that his legs should be broken, but this was prevented by the providence of God; yet in another way more satisfactory proof was obtained of his death than would have been by the breaking of his legs. This was so ordered, no doubt, that there might be the fullest proof that he was truly dead; that it could not be pretended that he had swooned away and revived, and so, therefore, that there could not be the least doubt of his resurrection to life.

With a spear - The common spear which soldiers used in war. There can be no doubt that such a stroke from the strong arm of a Roman soldier would have caused death, if he had not been already dead; and it was, doubtless, to furnish this conclusive proof that he was actually dead, and that an atonement had thus been made for mankind, that John mentions so

particularly this fact. Let the following circumstances be remembered, showing that death must have ensued from such a wound:

(1)The Saviour was elevated but a little from the ground, so as to be easily reached by the spear of a soldier.

(2)the wound must have been transversely upward, so as to have penetrated into the body, as he could not have stood directly under him.

(3)it was probably made with a strong arm and with violence.

(4)the spear of the Roman soldier was a lance which tapered very gently to a point, and would penetrate easily.

(5)the wound was comparatively a large wound. It was so large as to admit the hand John 20:27; but for a lance thus tapering to have made a wound so wide as to admit the hand, it must have been at least four or five inches in depth, and must have been such as to have made death certain. If it be remembered that this blow was probably in the left side, the conclusion is inevitable that death would have been the consequence of such a blow. To make out this fact was of special importance, probably, in the time of John, as the reality of the death of Jesus was denied by the Gnostics, many of whom maintained that he died in appearance only.

Pierced his side - Which side is not mentioned, nor can it be certainly known. The common opinion is that it was the left side. Car. Frid. Gruner (Commentatio Antiquaria Medica de Jesu Christi Morte, 30-36) has attempted to show that it must have been the left side. See Wiseman‘s Lectures, pp. 161,162, and Kuinoel on John 19:34, where the arguments of Gruner are fully stated. It is clear that the spear pierced to the region of the heart.

And forthwith came … - This was evidently a natural effect of thus piercing the side. Such a flowing of blood and water makes it probable that the spear reached the heart, and if Jesus had not before been dead, this would have closed his life. The heart is surrounded by a membrane called the pericardium. This membrane contains a serous matter or liquor resembling water, which prevents the surface of the heart from becoming dry by its continual motion (Webster). It was this which was pierced and from which the water flowed. The point of the spear also reached one of the ventricles of the heart, and the blood, yet warm, rushed forth, either

mingled with or followed by the water of the pericardium, so as to appear to John to be blood and water flowing together. This was a natural effect, and would follow in any other case. Commentators have almost uniformly supposed that this was significant; as, for example, that the blood was an emblem of the eucharist, and the water of baptism, or that the blood denoted justification, and the water sanctification; but that this was the design there is not the slightest evidence.

It was strictly a natural result, adduced by John to establish one fact on which the whole of Christianity turns that he was truly dead. On this depends the doctrine of the atonement, of his resurrection, and all the prominent doctrines of religion. This fact it was of importance to prove, that it might not be pretended that he had only suffered a syncope, or had fainted. This John establishes. He shows that those who were sent to hasten his death believed that he had expired; that then a soldier inflicted a wound which would have terminated life if he had not been already dead; and that the infliction of this wound was followed by the fullest proof that he had truly expired. On this fact he dwells with the interest which became a subject of so much importance to the world, and thus laid the foundation for undoubted assurance that the Lord Jesus died for the sins of men.

Verse 35

He that saw it - John himself. He is accustomed to speak of himself in the third person.

His record is true - His testimony is true. Such was the known character of this writer, such his sacred regard for truth, that he could appeal to that with full assurance that all would put confidence in him. He often appeals thus to the fact that his testimony was known to be true. It would be well if all Christians had such a character that their word would be assuredly believed.

Verse 36

That the scripture should be fulfilled - See Exodus 12:46. John here regards the paschal lamb as an emblem of Christ; and as in the law it was commanded that a bone of that lamb should not be broken, so, in the providence of God, it was ordered that a bone of the Saviour should not be broken. The Scripture thus received a complete fulfillment respecting both the type and the antitype. Some have supposed, however, that John referred to Psalm 34:20.

Verse 37

Another‘ scripture - Zechariah 12:10. We must here be struck with the wonderful providence of God, that so many scriptures were fulfilled in his death. All these things happened without any such design on the part of the men engaged in these scenes; but whatever was done by Jew or Gentile tended to the fulfillment of prophecies long on record, and with which the Jews themselves ought to have been familiar. Little did they suppose, when delivering him to Pilate when he was mocked when they parted his garments when they pierced him - that they were fulfilling ancient predictions. But in this way God had so ordered it that the firmest foundation should be laid for the belief that he was the true Messiah, and that the designs of wicked men should all be overruled to the fulfillment of the great plans which God had in sending his Son.

Verses 38-42

See the notes at Matthew 27:57-61.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Verses 1-12

For an account of the resurrection of Christ, see the notes at John 20:9

The scripture - See Luke 24:26, Luke 24:46. The sense or meaning of the various predictions that foretold his death, as, for example, Psalm 2:7, compare Acts 13:33; Psalm 16:9-10, compare Acts 2:25-32; Psalm 110:1, compare Acts 2:34-35.

For an account of the resurrection of Christ, see the notes at Matthew 28.

Verse 13

They have taken away - That is the disciples or friends of Jesus who had laid him there. Perhaps it was understood that the body was deposited there only to remain over the Sabbath, with an intention then of removing it to some other place of burial. Hence, they hastened early in the morning to make preparation, and Mary supposed they had arrived before her and had taken him away.

Verse 14

Knew not that it was Jesus - She was not expecting to see him. It was yet also twilight, and she could not see distinctly.

Verse 16

Jesus saith unto her, Mary - This was spoken, doubtless, in a tone of voice that at once recalled him to her recollection.

Rabboni - This is a Hebrew word denoting, literally, my great master. If was one of the titles given to Jewish teachers. This title was given under three forms:

(a)Rab, or master - the lowest degree of honor.

(b)Rabbi, my master - a title of higher dignity.

(c)Rabboni, my great master the most honorable of all.

This title, among the Jews, was only given to seven persons, all persons of great eminence. As given by Mary to the Saviour, it was at once an expression of her joy, and an acknowledgment of him, as her Lord and Master. It is not improbable that she, filled with joy, was about to cast herself at his feet.

Verse 17

Touch me not … - This passage has given rise to a variety of interpretations. Jesus required Thomas to touch him John 20:27, and it has been difficult to ascertain why he forbade this now to Mary. The reason why he directed Thomas to do this was, that he doubted whether he had been restored to life. Mary did not doubt that. The reason why he forbade her to touch him now is to be sought in the circumstances of the case. Mary, filled with joy and gratitude, was about to prostrate herself at his feet, disposed to remain with him, and offer him there her homage as her risen Lord. This is probably included in the word touch in this place; and the language of Jesus may mean this: "Do not approach me now for this purpose. Do not delay here. Other opportunities will yet be afforded to see me. I have not yet ascended - that is, I am not about to ascend immediately, but shall remain yet on earth to afford opportunity to my disciples to enjoy my presence." From Matthew 28:9, it appears that the women, when they met Jesus, held him by the feet and worshipped him. This species of adoration it was probably the intention of Mary to offer, and this, at that time, Jesus forbade, and directed her to go at once and give his disciples notice that he had risen.

My brethren - See John 15:15.

My Father and your Father … - Nothing was better fitted to afford them consolation than this assurance that this God was theirs; and that, though he had been slain, they were still indissolubly united in attachment to the same Father and God.

Verse 19

The same day at evening - On the first day of the week, the day of the resurrection of Christ.

When the doors were shut - This does not mean that the doors were fastened, though that might have been the case, but only that they were closed. Jesus had been taken from them, and it was natural that they should apprehend that the Jews would next attempt to wreak their vengeance on his followers. Hence, they met in the evening, and with closed doors, lest the Jews should bring against them the same charge of sedition that they had against the Lord Jesus. It is not certainly said what was the object of their assembling, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that it was to talk over the events which had just occurred, to deliberate about their condition, and to engage in acts of worship. Their minds were doubtless much agitated. They had seen their Master taken away and put to death; but a part of their

number also had affirmed that they had seen him alive. In this state of things they naturally came together in a time and place of safety. It was not uncommon for the early Christians to hold their meetings for worship in the night. In times of persecution they were forbidden to assemble during the day, and hence, they were compelled to meet in the night. Pliny the younger, writing to Trajan, the Roman emperor, and giving an account of Christians, says that "they were accustomed to meet together on a stated day before it was light, and sing among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ as God." True Christians will love to meet together for worship. Nothing will prevent this; and one of the evidences of piety is a desire to assemble to hear the Word of God, and to offer to him prayer and praise. It is worthy of remark that this is the first assembly that was convened for worship on the Lord's Day, and in that assembly Jesus was present. Since that time, the day has been observed in the church as the Christian Sabbath, particularly to commemorate the resurrection of Christ.

Came Jesus … - There is no evidence that he came into their assembly in any miraculous manner. For anything that appears to the contrary, Jesus entered in the usual way and manner, though his sudden appearance alarmed them.

Peace be unto you - The sudden manner of his appearance, and the fact that most of them had not before seen him since his resurrection, tended to alarm them. Hence, he addressed them in the usual form of salutation to allay their fears, and to assure them that it was their own Saviour and Friend.

Verse 20

He showed unto them his hands … - In this manner he gave them indubitable proofs of his identity. He showed them that he was the same Being who had suffered; that he had truly risen from the dead, and had come forth with the same body. That body had not yet put on its glorified form. It was necessary first to establish the proof of his resurrection, and that could be done only by his appearing as he was when he died.

Verse 21

As my Father hath sent me - As God sent me to preach, to be persecuted, and to suffer; to make known his will, and to offer pardon to men, so I send you. This is the design and the extent of the commission of the ministers of the Lord Jesus. He is their model; and they will be successful only as they study his character and imitate his example. This

commission he proceeds to confirm by endowing them all with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 22

He breathed on them - It was customary for the prophets to use some significant act to represent the nature of their message. See Genesis 2:7. The word rendered "spirit" in the Scriptures denotes wind, air, breath, as well as Spirit. Hence, the operations of the Holy Spirit are compared to the wind, John 3:8; Acts 2:2.

Receive ye the Holy Ghost - His breathing on them was a certain sign or pledge that they would be endowed with the influences of the Holy Spirit. Compare Acts 1:4; John 2.

Verse 23

Whose soever sins … - See the notes at Matthew 16:19; Matthew 18:18. It is worthy of remark here that Jesus confers the same power on all the apostles. He gives to no one of them any special authority. If Peter, as the Papists pretend, had been appointed to any special authority, it is wonderful that the Saviour did not here hint at any such pre-eminence. This passage conclusively proves that they were invested with equal power in organizing and governing the church. The authority which he had given Peter to preach the gospel first to the Jews and the Gentiles, does not militate against this. See the notes at Matthew 16:18-19. This authority given them was full proof that they were inspired. The meaning of the passage is not that man can forgive sins that belongs only to God Isaiah 43:23 but that they should be inspired; that in founding the church, and in declaring the will of God, they should be taught by the Holy Spirit to declare on what terms, to what characters, and to what temper of mind God would extend forgiveness of sins. It was not authority to forgive individuals, but to establish in all the churches the terms and conditions on which men might be pardoned, with a promise that God would confirm all that they taught; that all might have assurance of forgiveness who would comply with those terms; and that those who did not comply should not be forgiven, but that their sins should be retained. This commission is as far as possible from the authority which the Roman Catholic claims of remitting sin and of pronouncing pardon.

Verse 25

Except I shall see … - It is not known what was the ground of the incredulity of Thomas. It is probable, however, that it was, in part, at least,

the effect of deep grief, and of that despondency which fills the mind when a long-cherished hope is taken away. In such a case it requires proof of uncommon clearness and strength to overcome the despondency, and to convince us that we may obtain the object of our desires. Thomas has been much blamed by expositors, but he asked only for proof that would be satisfactory in his circumstances. The testimony of ten disciples should have been indeed sufficient, but an opportunity was thus given to the Saviour to convince the last of them of the truth of his resurrection. This incident shows, what all the conduct of the apostles proves, that they had not conspired together to impose on the world. Even they were slow to believe, and one of them refused to rely even on the testimony of ten of his brethren. How unlike this to the conduct of men who agree to impose a story on mankind! Many are like Thomas. Many now are unwilling to believe because they do not see the Lord Jesus, and with just as little reason as Thomas had. The testimony of those eleven men - including Thomas who saw him alive after he was crucified; who were willing to lay down their lives to attest that they had seen him alive; who had nothing to gain by imposture, and whose conduct was removed as far as possible from the appearance of imposture, should be regarded as ample proof of the fact that he rose from the dead.

Verse 26

And after eight days again - That is, on the return of the first day of the week. From this it appears that they thus early set apart this day for assembling together, and Jesus countenanced it by appearing twice with them. It was natural that the apostles should observe this day, but not probable that they would do it without the sanction of the Lord Jesus. His repeated presence gave such a sanction, and the historical fact is indisputable that from this time this day was observed as the Christian Sabbath. See Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10.

Verse 28

My Lord and my God - In this passage the name God is expressly given to Christ, in his own presence and by one of his own apostles. This declaration has been considered as a clear proof of the divinity of Christ, for the following reasons:

1. There is no evidence that this was a mere expression, as some have supposed, of surprise or astonishment.

2. The language was addressed to Jesus himself - “Thomas … said unto him.”

3. The Saviour did not reprove him or check him as using any improper language. If he had not been divine, it is impossible to reconcile it with his honesty that he did not rebuke the disciple. No pious man would have allowed such language to be addressed to him. Compare Acts 14:13-15; Revelation 22:8-9.

4. The Saviour proceeds immediately to commend Thomas for believing; but what was the evidence of his believing? It was this declaration, and this only. If this was a mere exclamation of surprise, what proof was it that Thomas believed? Before this he doubted. Now he believed, and gave utterance to his belief, that Jesus was his Lord and his God.

5. If this was not the meaning of Thomas, then his exclamation was a mere act of profaneness, and the Saviour would not have commended him for taking the name of the Lord his God in vain. The passage proves, therefore, that it is proper to apply to Christ the name Lord and God, and thus accords with what John affirmed in John 1:1, and which is established throughout this gospel.

Verse 29

Because thou hast seen me - Because you have looked upon my body, and seen the proofs that I am the same Saviour that was crucified. Jesus here approves the faith of Thomas, but more highly commends the faith of those who should believe without having seen.

Blessed - Happy, or worthy of the divine approbation. The word has here the force of the comparative degree, signifying that they would be in some respects more blessed than Thomas. They would evince higher faith.

That have not seen … - Those who should be convinced by the testimony of the apostles, and by the influences of the Spirit. They would evince stronger faith. All faith is of things not seen; and God blesses those most who most implicitly rely on his word.

Verse 30

Other signs - Other miracles. Many were recorded by the other evangelists, and many which he performed were never recorded, John 21:25.

Verse 31

These are written - Those recorded in this gospel.

That ye might believe … - This is a clue to the design which John had in view in writing this gospel. The whole scope or end of the book is to accomplish two objects:

1.To prove that Jesus was the Messiah; and,

2.That they who looked at the proof might be convinced and have eternal life.

This design is kept in view throughout the book. The miracles, facts, arguments, instructions, and conversations of our Lord all tend to this. This point had not been kept in view so directly by either of the other evangelists, and it was reserved for the last of the apostles to collect those arguments, and make out a connected demonstration that Jesus was the Messiah. If this design of John is kept steadily in view, it will throw much light on the book, and the argument is unanswerable, framed after the strictest rules of reasoning, infinitely beyond the skill of man, and having throughout the clearest evidence of demonstration.

JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Verse 1

The sea of Tiberias - Called also the Sea of Galilee, being situated in Galilee. See the notes at Matthew 4:18. In this place Jesus had promised to meet them, Mark 14:28; Mark 16:7; Matthew 26:32; Matthew 28:10. This interview of Jesus is but just mentioned by Matthew Matthew 28:16, and is omitted by both Mark and Luke. This is the reason why John relates so particularly what occurred there. Galilee was a retired place where they would be free from danger, and was therefore a safe and convenient situation for Jesus to meet them, in order to give them his last instructions.

On this wise - Thus. In this manner.

Verse 2

There were together - Probably residing in the same place. While they were waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit, they still found it proper to be usefully employed. Their Master had been taken away by death, and the promised Spirit had not descended on them. In the interval - before the promised Spirit was poured upon them - they chose not to be idle, and therefore returned to their former employment. It is to be remarked, also, that they had no other means of support. While with Jesus, they were commonly supplied by the kindness of the people; but now, when the Saviour had died, they were cut off from this means of support, and returned to the honest labor of their early lives. Moreover, they had been directed by the Saviour to repair to a mountain in Galilee, where he would meet them, Matthew 28:10. This was probably not far from Lake Galilee, so that, until he came to them, they would naturally be engaged in their old employment. Ministers of the gospel should be willing to labor, if necessary, for their own support, and should not esteem such labor dishonorable. God has made employment indispensable to man, and if the field of labor is not open in one way, they should seek it in another. If at any time the people withhold the supply of their needs, they should be able and willing to seek support in some other honest occupation.

Verse 3

That night they caught nothing - This was so ordered in the providence of God that the miracle which was performed might appear more remarkable.

Verse 4

Knew not that it was Jesus - Probably it was yet twilight, and in the distance they could not distinctly recognize him.

Verse 5

Children - A term of affection and friendship, 1 John 2:18.

Any meat - This word (Greek) means anything eaten with bread. It was used by the Greeks especially to denote fish (Schleusner).

Verse 6

On the right side - Why the right side is mentioned is not known. Grotius supposes that it was the side nearest the shore, where there was less probability of taking fish. It does not appear that they yet recognized the Lord Jesus, but from some cause they had sufficient confidence in him to make another trial. Perhaps they judged that he was one skilled in that employment, and knew where there was the greatest probability of success.

Verse 7

Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved - John, John 13:23.

It is the Lord - He was convinced, perhaps, by the apparent miracle, and by looking more attentively on the person of one who had been the means of such unexpected and remarkable success.

His fisher's coat - His upper or outer garment or tunic, in distinction from the inner garment or tunic which was worn next the skin. In the case of Peter it may have been made of coarse materials such as fishermen commonly wore, or such as Peter usually wore when he was engaged in this employment. Such garments are common with men of this occupation. This outer garment he probably had laid aside.

He was naked - He was undressed, with nothing on but the undergarment or tunic. The word does not require us to suppose a greater degree of nakedness than this. See the Mark 14:51 note; also 1 Samuel 19:24 note.

Did cast himself into the sea - With characteristic ardor, desirous of meeting again his Lord, and showing his affection for him.

Verse 8

Two hundred cubits - About 350 feet, or a little more than 20 rods.

Verse 9

They saw a fire … - We have no knowledge whence this was produced - whether it was, as Grotius supposes, by a miracle, or whether it was a place occupied by other fishermen, where they also might cook the fish

which they had caught. As no miracle is mentioned, however, there is no reason for supposing that any existed in the case.

Verse 11

An hundred and fifty and three - The number is mentioned because it seems to have been a very unusual draught, and it was particularly gratifying and striking to them after they had spent the whole night and had caught nothing. This convinced them that it was no other than the same Saviour who had so often worked wonders before them that was now with them.

Verse 12

Come and dine - The word in the original means the meal which is taken in the morning, or breakfast.

Verse 13

Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread … - It is not said that Jesus himself ate with them, but he gave them food. The design of this interview seems to have been to convince them that he had truly risen from the dead. Hence, he performed a miracle before they suspected that it was he, that there might be no room to say that they had ascribed to him the power of the miracle through friendship and collusion with him. The miracle was such as to satisfy them of its truth, and was, in accordance with all his works, not for mere display, but for utility. He remained with them, was with them at their meal, conversed with them, and thus convinced them that he was the same Friend who had died.

Verse 14

The third time - See the "Harmony of the Accounts of the Resurrection of Jesus."

Verse 15

Lovest thou me more than these? - There is a slight ambiguity here in the original, as there is in our translation. The word these may be in the neuter gender, and refer to these things his boat, his fishing utensils, and his employments; or it may be in the masculine, and refer to the apostles. In the former sense it would mean, "Lovest thou me more than thou lovest these objects? Art thou now willing, from love to me, to forsake all these, and go and preach my gospel to the nations of the earth?" In the other sense, which is probably the true sense, it would mean, "Lovest thou me more than these other apostles love me?" In this question Jesus refers to the profession of superior attachment to him which Peter had made before his death Matthew

26:33; “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.” Compare John 13:37. Jesus here slightly reproves him for that confident assertion, reminds him of his sad and painful denial, and now puts this direct and pointed question to him to know what was the present state of his feelings. After all that Peter had had to humble him, the Saviour inquired of him what had been the effect on his mind, and whether it had tended to prepare him for the arduous toils in which he was about to engage. This question we should all put to ourselves. It is a matter of much importance that we should ourselves know what is the effect of the dealings of divine Providence on our hearts, and what is our present state of feeling toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thou knowest that I love thee - Peter now made no pretensions to love superior to his brethren. His sad denial had convinced him of the folly of that claim; but still he could appeal to the Searcher of the heart, and say that he knew that he loved him. Here is the expression of a humbled soul - soul made sensible of its weakness and need of strength, yet with evidence of true attachment to the Saviour. It is not the most confident pretensions that constitute the highest proof of love to Christ; and the happiest and best state of feeling is when we can with humility, yet with confidence, look to the Lord Jesus and say, “Thou knowest that I love thee.”

Feed my lambs - The word here rendered “feed” means the care afforded by furnishing nutriment for the flock. In the next verse there is a change in the Greek, and the word rendered feed denotes rather the care, guidance, and protection which a shepherd extends to his flock. By the use of both these words, it is supposed that our Saviour intended that a shepherd was both to offer the proper food for his flock and to govern it; or, as we express it, to exercise the office of a pastor. The expression is taken from the office of a shepherd, with which the office of a minister of the gospel is frequently compared. It means, as a good shepherd provides for the wants of his flock, so the pastor in the church is to furnish food for the soul, or so to exhibit truth that the faith of believers may be strengthened and their hope confirmed.

My lambs - The church is often compared to a flock. See John 10:1-16. Here the expression my lambs undoubtedly refers to the tender and the young in the Christian church; to those who are young in years and in Christian experience. The Lord Jesus saw, what has been confirmed in the experience of the church, that the success of the gospel among men

depended on the care which the ministry would extend to those in early life. It is in obedience to this command that Sunday schools have been established, and no means of fulfilling this command of the Saviour have been found so effectual as to extend patronage to those schools. It is not merely, therefore, the privilege, it is the solemn duty of ministers of the gospel to countenance and patronize those schools.

Verse 16

Feed my sheep - The word here rendered "feed," as has been remarked, is different from the word in the previous verse. It has the sense of governing, caring for, guiding, protecting - the kind of faithful vigilance which a shepherd uses to guide his flock, and to make provision against their wants and dangers. It may be implied here that the care needed for the young in the church is to instruct them, and for those in advanced years both to instruct and govern them.

My sheep - This term commonly denotes the church in general, without respect to age, John 10.

Verse 17

The third time - It is probable that Jesus proposed this question three times because Peter had thrice denied him. Thus he tenderly admonished him of his fault and reminded him of his sin, while he solemnly charged him to be faithful and vigilant in the discharge of the duties of the pastoral office. The reason why the Saviour addressed Peter in this manner was doubtless because he had just denied him - had given a most melancholy instance of the instability and weakness of his faith, and of his liability to fall. As he had thus been prominent in forsaking him, he took this occasion to give to him a special charge, and to secure his future obedience. Hence, he so administered the charge as to remind him of his fault; and he made him so prominent as to show the solicitude of the Saviour that, henceforward, he might not be left to dishonor his high calling. This same charge, in substance, he had on other occasions given to the apostles Matthew 18:18, and there is not the slightest evidence here that Christ intended, as the Papists pretend, to give Peter any special primacy or eminence in the church. The charge to Peter arose, manifestly, from his prominent and melancholy act in denying him, and was the kind and tender means used by a faithful Saviour to keep him from similar acts in the future dangers and trials of life. It is worthy of remark that the admonition was effectual. Henceforward, Peter was one of the most firm and unwavering of

all the apostles, and thus fully justified the appellation of a rock, which the Saviour by anticipation had given him. See the notes at John 1:42.

Verse 18

When thou wast young - When in early life thou didst gird thyself, etc. The Jews, in walking or running, girded their outer garments around them, that they might not be impeded. See the notes at Matthew 5:38-41.

Thou girdedst - The expression here denotes freedom. He did as he pleased - he girded himself or not he went or remained, as he chose. Perhaps the expression refers rather to that time than to the previous period of Peter‘s life. “Thou being now young or in the vigor of life, hast just girded thyself and come freely to the shore.” In either case the Saviour intimates that at the end of his life he would not be thus free.

When thou shalt be old - Ancient writers say that Peter was put to death about thirty-four years after this. His precise age at that time is not known.

Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands - When Peter was put to death, we are told that he requested that he might be crucified with his head downward, saying that he who had denied his Lord as he had done was not worthy to die as he did. This expression of Christ may intimate the readiness of Peter thus to die. Though he was not at liberty as when he was young, though bound by others, yet he freely stretched out his hands on the cross, and was ready to give up his life.

Another shall gird thee - Another shall bind thee. The limbs of persons crucified were often bound instead of being nailed, and even the body was sometimes girded to the cross. See the notes at Matthew 27:35.

Carry thee … - Shall bear thee, or shall compel thee to go to prison and to death. This is not said to intimate that Peter would be unwilling to suffer martyrdom, but it stands opposed to the freedom of his early life. Though willing when compelled to do it, yet he would not seek it; and though he would not needlessly expose himself to it, yet he would not shrink from it when it was the will of God.

Verse 19

By what death … - In these words two things are implied:

1.that Peter would die a violent death; and,

2.that his death would be such as to honor God.

The ancients say that Peter was crucified at Rome, about 34 years after this, with his head downward. Clemens says that he was led to the

crucifixion with his wife, and sustained her in her sufferings by exhorting her to remember the example of her Lord. He also adds that he died, not as the philosophers did, but with a firm hope of heaven, and patiently endured the pangs of the cross (Strom. vii.). This declaration of the Saviour was doubtless continually before the mind of Peter, and to the hour of his death he maintained the utmost constancy and fidelity in his cause, thus justifying the appellation which the Lord Jesus gave him - a rock.

Verse 20

Which also leaned … - See John 13:24-25.

Verse 21

What shall this man do? - This question probably means, "What death shall he die?" But it is impossible to ascertain certainly why Peter asked this question. John was a favorite disciple, and perhaps Peter suspected that he would have a happier lot, and not be put to death in this manner. Peter was grieved at the question of Jesus; he was probably deeply affected with the account of his own approaching sufferings; and, with perhaps a mixture of grief and envy, he asked what would be his lot. But it is possible, also, that it was from kindness to John - a deep solicitude about him, and a wish that he might not die in the same manner as one who had denied his Lord. Whatever the motive was, it was a curiosity which the Lord Jesus did not choose to gratify.

Verse 22

That he tarry - That he live. The same word is used to express life in Philemon 1:24-25; 1 Corinthians 15:6.

Till I come - Some have supposed this to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem; others to the day of judgment; others to signify that he would not die a violent death; but the plain meaning is, "If I will that he should not die at all, it is nothing to thee." In this way the apostles evidently understood it, and hence raised a report that he would not die. It is remarkable that John was the last of the apostles; that he lived to nearly the close of the first century, and then died a peaceful death at Ephesus, being the only one, as is supposed, of the apostles who did not suffer martyrdom. The testimony of antiquity is clear on this point; and though there have been many idle conjectures about this passage and about the fate of John, yet no fact of history is better attested than that John died and was buried at Ephesus.

What is that to thee? - From this passage we learn:

1.that our main business is to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

2.that there are many subjects of religion on which a vain and impertinent curiosity is exercised. All such curiosity Jesus here reproves.

3.that Jesus will take care of all his true disciples, and that we should not be unduly solicitous about them.

4.that we should go forward to whatever he calls us to persecution or death - not envying the lot of any other man, and anxious only to do the will of God.

Verse 23

Then went this saying … - This mistake arose very naturally:

1.From the words of Jesus, which might be easily misunderstood to mean that he should not die; and,

2.It was probably confirmed when it was seen that John survived all the other apostles, had escaped all the dangers of persecution, and was leading a peaceful life at Ephesus. This mistake John deemed it proper to correct before he died, and has thus left on record what Jesus said and what he meant.

Verse 24

This is the disciple … - This proves that the beloved disciple was John.

We know - That is, it is known; it is universally admitted. It was so decidedly his character that he always declared the truth, that it had become known and was unquestioned, so that he himself might appeal to the universal testimony in his behalf. In this case, therefore, we have the testimony of a man whose character for nearly a century was that of a man of truth - so much so that it had become, in a manner, proverbial, and was put beyond a doubt. It is impossible to believe that such a man would sit down deliberately to impose on mankind, or to write a book which was false; and if not, then this book is true, and that is the same as saying that Christianity is a religion from heaven.

Verse 25

Many other things - Many miracles, John 20:30. Many discourses delivered, etc.

I suppose … - This is evidently the figure of speech called a hyperbole. It is a mode of speech where the words express more or less than is literally

true. It is common among all writers; and as the sacred writers, in recording a revelation to men, used human language, it was proper that they should express themselves as men ordinarily do if they wished to be understood. This figure of speech is commonly the effect of surprise, or having the mind full of some object, and not having words to express the ideas: at the same time, the words convey no falsehood. The statement is to be taken as it would be understood among the persons to whom it is addressed; and as no one supposes that the author means to be understood literally, so there is no deception in the case, and consequently no impeachment of his veracity or inspiration. Thus, when Longinus said of a man that "he was the owner of a piece of ground not larger than a Lacedaemonian letter," no one understood him literally. He meant, evidently, a very small piece of land, and no one would be deceived. So Virgil says of a man, "he was so tall as to reach the stars," and means only that he was very tall. So when John says that the world could not contain the books that would be written if all the deeds and sayings of Jesus were recorded, he clearly intends nothing more than that a great many books would be required, or that it would be extremely difficult to record them all; intimating that his life was active, that his discourses were numerous, and that he had not pretended to give them all, but only such as would go to establish the main point for which he wrote that he was the Messiah, John 20:30-31. The figure which John uses here is not uncommon in the Scriptures, Genesis 11:4; Genesis 15:5; Numbers 13:33; Daniel 4:20.

This gospel contains in itself the clearest proof of inspiration. It is the work of a fisherman of Galilee, without any proof that he had any unusual advantages. It is a connected, clear, and satisfactory argument to establish the great truth that Jesus was the Messiah. It was written many years after the ascension of Jesus. It contains the record of the Saviour's profoundest discourses, of his most convincing arguments with the Jews, and of his declarations respecting himself and God. It contains the purest and most elevated views of God to be found anywhere, as far exceeding all the speculations of philosophers as the sun does the blaze of a taper. It is in the highest degree absurd to suppose that an unlettered fisherman could have originated this book. Anyone may be convinced of this by comparing it with what would be the production of a man in that rank of life now. But if John has preserved the record of what has occurred so many years before, then it shows that he was under the divine guidance, and is himself a proof, a full

and standing proof, of the fulfillment of the promise which he has recorded that the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth, John 14:26. Of this book we may, in conclusion, apply the words spoken by John respecting his vision of the future events of the church: “Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this” book, “and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand,” Revelation 1:3.

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ACTS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Acts

There is no evidence that the title, "The Acts of the Apostles," affixed to this book, was given by divine authority or by the writer himself. It is a title, however, which, with a little variation, has been given to it by the Christian church at all times. The term "Acts " is not used, as it is sometimes with us, to denote decrees or laws, but it denotes the doings of the apostles. It is a record of what the apostles did in founding and establishing the Christian church. It is worthy of remark, however, that it contains chiefly a record of the actions of Peter and Paul. Peter was commissioned to open the doors of the Christian church to both Jews and Gentiles (see the note on Matthew 16:18-19); and Paul was chosen to bear the gospel especially to the pagan world. Since these two apostles were the most prominent and distinguished in founding and organizing the Christian church, it was deemed proper that a special and permanent record should be made of their labors. At the same time, occasional notices are given of the other apostles; but of their labors elsewhere than in Judea, and of their death, except that of James Acts 12:2, the sacred writers have given no information.

All antiquity is unanimous in ascribing this book to Luke as its author. It is repeatedly mentioned and quoted by the early Christian writers, and is mentioned as his work without a dissenting voice. The same thing is clear from the book itself. It professes to have been written by the same person who wrote a "former treatise," addressed to the same person, Theophilus (compare Acts 1:1 with Luke 1:3), and it bears manifest marks of being from the same pen. It is designed evidently as a continuation of that Gospel, since, in this book, the author has taken up the history at the very time where he left it in the Gospel Acts 1:1-2.

Where, or at what time, this book was written, is not known with certainty. However, since the history is continued to the second year of the residence of Paul at Rome Acts 28:31, Acts was evidently written about as late as the year 62 a.d. And, since it makes no mention of the subsequent facts in the life of Paul, or of any other event of history, it seems clear that it was not written much after that time. It has been common, therefore, to fix the date of the book at about 63 a.d. It is also probable that it was written at

Rome. In Acts 28:16 Luke mentions his own arrival at Rome with Paul. Since Luke does not mention his departure from that city, it is to be presumed that Acts was written there. Some have supposed that it was written at Alexandria in Egypt, but of that there is no sufficient evidence.

The canonical authority of this book rests upon the same foundation as that of the Gospel by the same author. Its authenticity has not been called in question at any time in the church.

This book has commonly been regarded as a history of the Christian church, and of course the first ecclesiastical history that was written. But it cannot have been designed as a general history of the church. Many important transactions have been omitted. It gives no account of the church at Jerusalem after the conversion of Paul; it omits his journey into Arabia Galatians 1:17; it gives no account of the propagation of the gospel in Egypt or in Babylon 1 Peter 5:13, or of the foundation of the church at Rome, or of many of Paul's voyages and shipwrecks 2 Corinthians 11:25; and, it omits the labors of most of the apostles, and confines the narrative chiefly to the transactions of Peter and Paul.

The design and importance of this history may be learned from the following particulars:

1. It contains "a record of the promised descent and operations of the Holy Spirit." The Lord Jesus promised that after he had departed to heaven he would send the Holy Spirit to carry forward the great work of redemption, John 14:16-17; John 15:26; John 16:7-14. The apostles were directed to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high, Luke 24:49. The four Gospels contained a record of the life, instructions, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. But it is clear that he contemplated that the most signal triumphs of his gospel should take place after his ascension to heaven, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The descent of the Spirit, and his influence on the souls of men, was therefore a most important part of the work of redemption. Without an authentic, an inspired record of that, the account of the operations of God the Father, Son, and Spirit in the work of redemption would not have been complete. The purposes of the Father in regard to that plan were made

known clearly in the Old Testament; the record of what the Son did in accomplishing it was contained in the Gospels; and some book was necessary that should contain a record of the actions of the Holy Spirit. Since the Gospels, therefore, may be regarded as a record of the work of Christ to save people, so may the Acts of the Apostles be considered as a record of the actions of the Holy Spirit in the same great work. Without that, the way in which the Spirit operates to renew and save would have been known very imperfectly.

2. This book is "an inspired account of the character of true revivals of religion." It records the first revivals that occurred in the Christian church. The scene on the Day of Pentecost was one of the most remarkable displays of divine power and mercy that the world has ever known. It was the commencement of a series of stupendous movements on the earth to recover human beings. It was the true model of a revival of religion, and it is a demonstration that such scenes as have characterized our own age and nation especially are strictly in accordance with the spirit of the New Testament. The entire Book of the Acts of the Apostles records the effect of the gospel when it comes fairly in contact with the minds of people. The gospel was addressed to every class. It met the Jew and the Gentile, the bond and the free, the learned and the ignorant, the rich and the poor, and it showed its power everywhere in subduing the mind to itself. It was proper that some record should be preserved of the displays of that power, and that record we have in this book. And it was especially proper that there should be given by an inspired man an account of the descent of the Holy Spirit, "a record of a true revival of religion." It was certain that the gospel would produce excitement. The human mind, as all experience shows, is prone to enthusiasm and fanaticism; and people might be disposed to pervert the gospel to scenes of wildfire, disorder, and tumult. That the gospel would produce excitement was well known to its Author. It was well, therefore, that there should be some record to which the church might always appeal as an infallible account of the proper effects of the gospel, some inspired standard to which might be brought all excitements on the subject of religion. If they are in accordance with the first triumphs of the gospel, they are genuine; if not, they are false.

3. This book shows that "revivals of religion are to be expected in the church." If they existed in the best and purest days of Christianity, they are to be expected now. If, by means of revivals, the Holy Spirit chose at first to bless the preaching of the truth, the same thing is to be expected. still. If in this way the gospel was at first spread among the nations, then we are to infer that this will be the mode in which it will finally spread and triumph in the world.

4. The Acts of the Apostles contains a record of the organization of the Christian church. That church was founded simply by the proclamation of the truth, and chiefly by a simple statement of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The "Acts of the Apostles" contains the highest models of preaching, and the purest specimens of that simple, direct, and pungent manner of addressing people, which may be expected to be attended with the influences of the Holy Spirit. It contains some of the most tender, powerful, and eloquent appeals to be found in any language. If a man wishes to learn how to preach well he can probably acquire it nowhere else so readily as by giving himself to the prayerful and profound study of the specimens of preaching contained in this book. At the same time we have here a view of the character of the true church of Christ. The simplicity of this church must strike every reader of "the Acts." Religion is represented as a work of the heart, the pure and proper effect of truth on the mind. It is free from pomp and splendor, and from costly and magnificent ceremonies. There is no apparatus to impress the senses, no splendor to dazzle, no external rite or parade adapted to draw the affections from the pure and spiritual worship of God. How unlike to the pomp and parade of pagan worship! How unlike the vain and pompous ceremonies which have since, alas, crept into no small part of the Christian church!

5. In this book we have many striking and impressive illustrations of what the gospel is suited to produce, to make people self-denying and benevolent. The apostles engaged in the great enterprise of converting the world. To secure that, they cheerfully forsook everything. Paul became a convert to the Christian faith, and, for that, cheerfully gave up all his hopes of preferment and honor, and welcomed toil and privation in foreign lands. Compare Philemon 3:4-11, 2 Corinthians 11:24-27. The early converts had all things in common Acts 2:44; those "which used curious arts," and were

gaining property by a course of iniquity, forsook their schemes of ill-gotten gain, and burned their books publicly Acts 19:19; Ananias and Sapphira were punished for attempting to impose on the apostles by hypocritical, professed self-denials Acts 5:1-10; and throughout the book there occur constant instances of sacrifices and toil to spread the gospel around the globe. Indeed, these great truths had manifestly seized upon the minds of the early Christians: that the gospel was to be preached to all nations; that whatever stood in the way of that was to be sacrificed; that whatever toils and dangers were necessary were to be borne; and that even death itself was cheerfully to be met if it would promote the spread of true religion. Therefore, this was genuine Christianity. This is still the spirit of the gospel of Christ.

6. This book throws important light on the Epistles. It is a connecting link between the Gospels and the other parts of the New Testament. Instances of this will be noticed in the notes. One of the most clear and satisfactory evidences of the genuineness of the books of the New Testament is to be found in the undesigned coincedences between the Acts and the Epistles. This argument was first clearly stated and illustrated by Dr. Paley. His little work, the Horae Paulinae, which illustrates it, is one of the most indisputable proofs which have yet been furnished of the truth of the Christian religion.

7. This book contains incontrovertible evidence of the truth of Christianity. It is a record of its early triumphs. Within the space of 30 years after the death of Christ the gospel had been carried to all parts of the civilized and to no small portion of the uncivilized world. Its progress and its triumphs were not concealed. Its great transactions were not "done in a corner." It had been preached in the most splendid, powerful, and enlightened cities; churches were already founded in Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, and at Rome. The gospel had spread in Arabia, Asia Minor, Greece, Macedon, Italy, and Africa. It had assailed the most mighty existing institutions. It had made its way over the most formidable barriers. It had encountered the most deadly and malignant opposition. It had traveled to the capital (Rome), and had secured such a hold even in the imperial city as to make it certain that it would finally overturn the established religion and seat itself upon the ruins of paganism.

Within 30 years, it had settled the point that it would overturn every bloody altar, close every pagan temple, bring under its influence everywhere the men of office, rank, and power, and that "the banners of the faith would soon stream from the palaces of the Caesars." All this would be accomplished by the instrumentality of Jews - of fishermen - of Nazarenes. They did not have either wealth, armies, or allies. With the exception of Paul, they were people without much education. They were taught only by the Holy Spirit, armed only with the power of God, victorious only because Christ was their Captain, and the world acknowledged the presence of the messengers of the Highest One and the power of the Christian religion. Its success never has been, and never can be accounted for by any other supposition than that God Himself attended it! And if the Christian religion is not true, the change which was brought about by the twelve apostles is the most inexplicable, mysterious, and wonderful event that has ever been witnessed in this world. Their success will stand until the end of time as an argument for the truth of God's overall plan (see 2 Corinthians 13:8). It will always confound the infidel. And, it will forever sustain the Christian with the assured belief that this is a religion which has proceeded from the all-powerful and infinitely benevolent God.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

The former treatise - The former book. The Gospel of Luke is here evidently intended. Greek: the former λόγος logosmeaning "a discourse," or "a narrative."

O Theophilus - See the notes on Luke 1:3. Since this book was written to the same individual as the former, it was evidently written with the same design to furnish an authentic and full narrative of events concerning which there would be many imperfect and exaggerated accounts. See Luke 1:1-4. Since these events pertained to the descent of the Spirit, to the spread of the gospel, to the organization of the church, to the kind of preaching by which the church was to be collected and organized, and as the facts in the case constituted a full proof of the truth of the Christian religion, and the conduct of the apostles would be a model for ministers and the church in all future times, it was of great importance that a fair and full narrative of these things should be preserved. Luke was the companion of Paul in his travels, and was an eye-witness of no small part of the transactions recorded in this book. See Acts 16:10, Acts 16:17; Acts 20:1-6; Acts 13:10; 1 Timothy 1:16; James 1:2; Matthew 2:3; Matthew 3:5; Acts 2:5; Romans 11:26; Colossians 1:6. In each of these places the word here translated "all" occurs in the original, and means "many, a large part, the principal portion." It has the same use in all languages. "This word often signifies, indefinitely, a large portion or number, or a great part" (Webster).

That Jesus - The Syriac Version adds, "Jesus our Messiah." This version was probably made in the second century.

Began to do … - This is a Hebrew form of expression; meaning the same thing as that Jesus did and taught. See Genesis 9:20, "Noah began to be a farmer," that is, was a farmer. Genesis 2:3, in the Septuagint: "Which God began to create and make"; in the Hebrew, "which God created and made." Mark 4:7, "began to send them forth by two and two," that is, sent them forth. See also Mark 10:32; Mark 14:65, "And some began to spit on him"; in the parallel place in Matthew 26:67, "they did spit in his face."

To do - This refers to his miracles and his acts of benevolence, including all that he did for man's salvation. It probably includes, therefore, his sufferings, death, and resurrection, as a part of what he has done to save people.

To teach - His doctrines. As the writer had given an account of what the Lord Jesus did, so he was now about to give a narrative of what his apostles did in the same cause, that thus the world might be in possession of an inspired record respecting the establishment of the Christian church. The record of these events preserved in the sacred narrative is one of the greatest blessings that God has conferred on mankind; and one of the highest privileges which people can enjoy is that which has been conferred so abundantly on this age in the possession of the Word of God.

Verse 2

Until the day - The 40th day after the resurrection, Acts 1:3. See Luke 24:51.

In which he was taken up - In which he ascended to heaven. He was taken up into a cloud, and is represented as having been borne or carried to heaven, Acts 1:9.

After that … - This passage has been variously rendered. The Syriac translates it, "After he had given commandment unto the apostles whom he had chosen by the Holy Spirit." So also the Ethiopic version. Others have joined the words "through the Holy Spirit" to the phrase "was taken up," making it mean that he was taken up by the Holy Spirit. But the most natural and correct translation seems to be what is in our King James Version.

Through the Holy Ghost - To understand this, it is necessary to call to mind the promise that Jesus made before his death, that after his departure, the Holy Spirit would descend to be a guide to his apostles. See John 16:7-11, and the notes on that place. It was to be his office to carry forward the work of redemption in applying it to the hearts of people. Whatever was done, therefore, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, was to be regarded as under the unique influence and direction of the Holy Spirit. Even the instructions of Jesus and his commission to the apostles, were to be regarded as coming within the department of the sacred Spirit, or within the province of his unique work. The instructions were given by divine authority, by infallible guidance, and as a part of the work which the Holy Spirit was sent down to accomplish. Under the direction and guidance of that Spirit the apostles were to go forth; by his aid they were to preach the gospel, to organize the church, to establish its order and its doctrines; and hence, the entire work was declared to be by his direction. Though in his

larger and more mighty influences the Spirit did not descend until the day of Pentecost (Luke 24:49; compare John 20:22.

Had given commandments - Particularly the command to preach the gospel to all nations, Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-19. It may be worthy of remark, that the word "commandments," as a noun in the plural number, does not occur in the original. The single word which is translated, "had given commandments" is a participle, and means simply "having commanded." There is no need, therefore, of supposing that there is reference here to any other command than to that great and glorious injunction to preach the gospel to every creature. That was a command of so much importance as to be worthy of a distinct record, as constituting the sum of all that the Saviour taught them after his resurrection.

The apostles - The eleven that remained after the treason and death of Judas.

Whom he had chosen - Matthew 10:1-4; Luke 6:12-16.

Verse 3

He showed himself - The resurrection of Jesus was the great fact on which the truth of the gospel was to be established. Hence, the sacred writers so often refer to it, and establish it by so many arguments. As the fact of his resurrection lay at the foundation of all that Luke was about to record in his history, it was of importance that he should state clearly the sum of the evidence of it in the beginning of his work.

After his passion - After he suffered, referring particularly to his death as the consummation of his sufferings. The word "passion" with us means commonly excitement or agitation of mind, as love, hope, fear, anger, etc. The original means "after he suffered." The word "passion," applied to the Saviour, denotes his last sufferings. Thus, in the Litany of the Episcopal Church, it is beautifully said, "By thine agony and bloody sweat; by thy cross and passion, good Lord, deliver us." The Greek word of the same derivation is rendered sufferings in 1 Peter 1:11; 1 Peter 4:13; Colossians 1:24.

By many infallible proofs - The word rendered here "infallible proofs" does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. In Greek authors it denotes an infallible sign or argument by which anything can be certainly known (Schleusner). Here it means the same - evidence that he was alive which could not deceive, or in which they could not be mistaken. That evidence consisted in his eating with them, conversing with them, meeting them at

various times and places, working miracles John 21:6-7, and uniformly showing himself to be the same friend with whom they had been familiar for more than three years. This evidence was infallible:

(1) Because it was to them unexpected. They had manifestly not believed that he would rise again, John 20:25; Luke 24:19-24. There was, therefore, no delusion resulting from any expectation of seeing him, or from a design to impose on people.

(2) it was impossible that they could have been deceived in relation to one with whom they had been familiar for more than three years. No people in the possession of reason could be made to believe that they really saw, talked with, and ate with, a friend whom they had known so long and familiarly, unless it was real.

(3) there were enough of them to avoid the possibility of deception. Though it might be pretended that one man could be imposed on, yet it could not be that an imposition could be practiced for forty days on eleven men, who were all at first incredulous.

(4) he was with them sufficient time to give evidence of his personal identity. It might be pretended, if they had seen him but once, that they were deceived. But they saw him often, and for the space of more than a month.

(5) they saw him in various places and at times in which there could be no deception. If they had pretended that they saw him rise, or saw him at twilight in the morning when he rose, it might have been said that they were deluded by something that was merely the result of imagination. It might have been said that, expecting to see him rise, their hopes, in the agitated state of their minds, deceived them, and that they only fancied that they saw him. But it is not pretended by the sacred writers that they saw him rise. An impostor "would have affirmed this, and would not have omitted it." But the sacred writers affirmed that they saw him after he was risen; when they were free from agitation; when they could judge coolly; in Jerusalem; in their own company when at worship; when journeying to Emmaus; when in Galilee; when he went with them to Mount Olivet; and when he ascended to heaven: and how could they have been deceived in this?

(6) he appeared to them as he had always done, as a friend, companion, and benefactor; he ate with them, performed a miracle before them, was engaged in the same work as he was before he suffered, renewed the same promise of the Holy Spirit, and gave them his commands respecting the work which he had died to establish, and the work which he required them to do - carrying out the same purposes and plans which he had before he died. In all these circumstances it was impossible that they should be deceived.

Being seen of them forty days - There are no less than thirteen different appearances of Jesus to his disciples recorded. For an account of them, see the notes at the end of the gospel of Matthew.

Speaking to them … - He was not only seen by them, but he continued the same topics of discourse as before his sufferings; thus showing that he was the same person that had suffered, and that his heart was still intent on the same great work. And as his heart was occupied with the same purposes which endued his attention before he suffered, we are taught by this that we should aim at the same great work in all the circumstances of our being. Afflictions, persecutions, and the prospect of death never turned him from his great plan; nor should they be allowed to divert our minds from the great work which God has given us to do.

The things pertaining to the kingdom of God - For an explanation of this phrase, the kingdom of God, see the notes on Matthew 3:2. The meaning is, Jesus gave them instructions about the organization, spread, and edification of his church.

Verse 4

And being assembled together - Margin, "or, eating together." This sense is given to this place in the Latin Vulgate, the Ethiopic, and the Syriac versions. But the Greek word has not properly this signification. It has the meaning of "congregating, or assembling." It should have been, however, translated in the active sense, "and having assembled them together." The apostles were scattered after his death. But this passage denotes that he had assembled them together by his authority, for the purpose of giving them a charge respecting their conduct when he should have left them. When this occurred does not appear from the narrative; but it is probable that it was not long before his ascension; and it is clear that the place where they were assembled was Jerusalem.

But wait for the promise of the Father - For the fulfillment of the promise respecting the descent of the Holy Spirit made by the Father.

Which ye have heard of me - Which I have made to you. See John 14:16, John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7-13.

Verse 5

For John truly baptized … - These are the words of Jesus to his apostles, and he evidently has reference to what was said of John‘s baptism compared with his own in Matthew 3:11; John 1:33. In those verses John is represented as baptizing with water, but the Messiah who was to come, as baptizing with the Holy Spirit and with fire. This promise was now about to be fulfilled in a remarkable manner. See Acts 2.

Not many days hence - This was probably spoken not long before his ascension, and of course not many days before the day of Pentecost.

Verse 6

When they therefore were come together - At the Mount of Olives. See Acts 1:9, Acts 1:12.

Wilt thou at this time … - The apostles had entertained the common opinions of the Jews about the temporal dominion of the Messiah. They expected that he would reign as a prince and conqueror, and would free them from the bondage of the Romans. Many instances where this expectation is referred to occur in the gospels, notwithstanding all the efforts which the Lord Jesus made to explain to them the true nature of his kingdom. This expectation was checked, and almost destroyed by his death Luke 24:21, and it is clear that his death was the only means which could effectually change their opinions on this subject. Even his own instructions would not do it; and nothing but his being taken from them could direct their minds effectually to the true nature of his kingdom. Yet, though his death checked their expectations, and appeared to thwart their plans, his return to life excited them again. They beheld him with them; they were assured that it was the same Saviour; they saw now that his enemies had no power over him; they could not doubt that a being who could rise from the dead could easily accomplish all his plans. And as they did not doubt now that he would restore the kingdom to Israel, they asked whether he would do it at that time? They did not ask whether he would do it at all, or whether they had correct views of his kingdom; but, taking that for granted, they asked him whether that was the time in which he would do it. The emphasis of the inquiry lies in the expression, “at this time,” and hence, the answer of

the Saviour refers solely to the point of their inquiry, and not to the correctness or incorrectness of their opinions. From these expectations of the apostles we may learn:

(1)That there is nothing so difficult to be removed from the mind as prejudice in favor of erroneous opinions.

(2)that such prejudice will survive the plainest proofs to the contrary.

(3)that it will often manifest itself even after all proper means have been taken to subdue it. Erroneous opinions thus maintain a secret ascendency in a man‘s mind, and are revived by the slightest circumstances, even long after it was supposed that they were overcome, and in the face of the plainest proofs of reason or of Scripture.

Restore - Bring back; put into its former situation. Judea was formerly governed by its own kings and laws; now, it was subject to the Romans. This bondage was grievous, and the nation sighed for deliverance. The inquiry of the apostles evidently was, whether he would now free them from the bondage of the Romans, and restore them to their former state of freedom and prosperity, as in the times of David and Solomon. See Isaiah 1:26. The word “restore” also may include more than a reducing it to its former state. It may mean, wilt thou now bestow the kingdom and dominion to Israel, according to the prediction in Daniel 7:27?

The kingdom - The dominion; the empire; the reign. The expectation was that the Messiah the king of Israel would reign over people, and that thus the nation of the Jews would extend their empire over all the earth.

To Israel - To the Jews, and particularly to the Jewish followers of the Messiah. Lightfoot thinks that this question was asked in indignation against the Jews. “Wilt thou confer dominion on a nation which has just put thee to death?” But the answer of the Saviour shows that this was not the design of the question.

Verse 7

It is not for you to know - The question of the apostles respected the time of the restoration; it was not whether he would do it. Accordingly, his answer meets precisely their inquiry; and he tells them in general that the time of the great events of God‘s kingdom was not to be understood by them. They had asked a similar question on a former occasion, Matthew 24:3, “Tell us when shall these things be?” Jesus had answered them then by showing them that certain signs would precede his coming, and then by

saying Matthew 24:36, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." God has uniformly reproved a vain curiosity on such points, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2; 2 Peter 3:10; Luke 12:39-40.

The times or the seasons - The difference between these words is, that the former denotes any time or period that is indefinite or uncertain; the later denotes a fixed, definite, or appropriate time. They seem to be used here to denote the periods that would mark or determine all future events.

The Father hath put … - So entirely had the Father reserved the knowledge of these to himself, that it is said that even the Son did not know them. See Mark 3:32, and the notes on that place.

In his own power - That is, he has fixed them by his own authority, he will bring them about in his own time and way; and therefore it is not proper for people anxiously to inquire into them. All prophecy is remarkably obscure in regard to the time of its fulfillment. The reasons why it is so are such as the following:

(1)To excite people to watch for the events that are to come, as the time is uncertain, and they will come "like a thief in the night."

(2)as they are to be brought about by human agency, they are so arranged as to call forth that agency. If people knew just when an event was to come to pass, they might be remiss, and feel that their own efforts were not needed.

(3)the knowledge of future scenes of the exact time, might alarm people, and absorb their thoughts so entirely as to prevent a proper attention to the present duties of life. Duty is ours now; God will provide for future scenes.

(4)promises sufficiently clear and full are therefore given us to encourage us, but not so full as to excite a vain and idle curiosity. All this is eminently true of our own death, one of the most important future scenes through which we are to pass. It is certainly before us; it is near; it cannot be long delayed; it may come at any moment. God has fixed the time, but will not inform us when it shall be. He does not gratify a vain curiosity; nor does he terrify us by announcing to us the day or the hour when we are to die, as we do a man that is to be executed. This would be to make our lives like that of a criminal sentenced to die, and we should through all our life, through fear of death, be subject to bondage, Hebrews 2:15. He has made

enough known to excite us to make preparation, and to be always ready, having our loins girt about and our lamps trimmed and burning, Luke 12:35.

Verse 8

But ye shall receive power … - Literally, as it is translated in the margin, "Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you." This was said to them to console them. Though they could not know the times which God reserved in his own appointment, yet they should receive the promised Guide and Comforter. The word "power" here refers to the help or aid which the Holy Spirit would grant; the power of speaking with new tongues; of preaching the gospel with great effect; of enduring great trials, etc. See Mark 16:17-18. The apostles had impatiently asked him if he was then about to restore the kingdom to Israel. Jesus by this answer rebuked their impatience, taught them to repress their ill-timed ardor; and assured them again of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Ye shall be witnesses - For this purpose they were appointed; and to prepare them for this they had been with him for more that three years. They had seen his manner of life, his miracles, his meekness, his sufferings; they had listened to his instructions, and had conversed and eaten with him as a friend; they had seen him after he was risen, and were about to see him ascend to heaven; and they were thus qualified to bear witness to these things in all parts of the earth. Their number was so great that it could not be pretended that they were deceived; they had been so intimate with him and his plans that they were qualified to state what his doctrines and purposes were; and there was no motive but conviction of the truth that could induce them to make the sacrifices which they would be required to make in communicating these things to the world. In every respect, therefore, they were qualified to be impartial and competent witnesses. The original word here is μάρτυρες marturesmartyrs. From this word the name martyrs has been given to those who suffered in times of persecution. The reason why this name was given to them was that they bore witness to the life, instructions, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, even in the midst of persecution and death. It is commonly supposed that nearly all of the apostles bore witness as martyrs in this sense to the truths of the Christian religion, but of this there is not clear proof. See Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. p. 55,56. Still the word here does not

necessarily mean that they to whom this was addressed would be martyrs, or would be put to death in bearing witness to the Lord Jesus; but that they were everywhere to testify to what they knew of him. The fact that this was the design of their appointment, and that they actually bore such testimony, is abundantly confirmed in the Acts of the Apostles, Acts 1:22; Acts 5:32; Acts 10:39, Acts 10:42; Acts 22:15.

In Jerusalem - In the capital of the nation. See Acts 8:1, Acts 8:4. The apostles remained there until Herod put James to death. Compare Acts 8:1, with Acts 12:1-2. This was about eight years. During this time, however, Paul was called to the apostleship, and Peter had preached the gospel to Cornelius, Philip to the eunuch, etc.

In all Judea - Judea was the southern division of the Holy Land, and included Jerusalem as the capital. See the notes on Matthew 2:22.

And in Samaria - This was the middle portion of Palestine. See the notes at Matthew 2:22. This was fulfilled by the disciples. See Acts 8:1, "And they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria"; compare Acts 1:4-5, "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." See also Acts 1:14; Acts 9:31.

And unto the uttermost part of the earth - The word "earth," or "land," is sometimes taken to denote only the land of Palestine. But here there does not seem to be a necessity for limiting it thus. If Christ had intended that, he would have mentioned Galilee, as being the only remaining division of the country. But as he had expressly directed them to preach the gospel to all nations, the expression here is clearly to be considered as including the Gentile lands as well as the Jewish. The evidence that they did this is found in the subsequent parts of this book, and in the history of the church. It was in this way that Jesus replied to their question. Though he did not tell them the time when it was to be done, nor affirm that he would restore the kingdom to Israel, yet he gave them an answer that implied that the work should advance - should advance much further than the land of Israel; and that they would have much to do in promoting it. All the commands of God, and all his communications, are such as to call up our energy, and teach us that we have much to do. The uttermost parts of the earth have been given to the Saviour Psalm 2:8, and the church should not rest until he whose right it is shall come and reign, Ezekiel 21:27.

Verse 9

While they beheld - While they saw him. It was of importance to state that circumstance, and to state it distinctly. It is not affirmed in the New Testament that they "saw him rise" from the dead, because the evidence of that fact could be better established by their seeing him after he was risen. But the truth of his "ascension to heaven" could not be confirmed in that manner. Hence, it was so arranged that he should ascend in open day, and in the presence of his apostles; and that not when they were asleep, or were inattentive to what was occurring, but when they were engaged in a conversation that' would fix the attention, and even when they were looking upon him. Had Jesus vanished secretly, or had he disappeared in the night, the apostles would have been amazed and confounded; perhaps they would even have doubted whether they had not been deceived. But when they saw him leave them in this manner, they could not doubt that he had ascended to heaven, and that God approved his work, and would carry it forward. This event was exceedingly important:

(1) It was a confirmation of the truth of the Christian religion.

(2) it enabled the apostles to state distinctly where the Lord Jesus was, and at once directed their affections and their thoughts away from the earth, and opened their eyes on the glory of the scheme of religion they were to establish. If their Saviour was in heaven, it settled the question about the nature of his kingdom. It was clear that it was not designed to be a temporal kingdom. The reasons why it was proper that the Lord Jesus should ascend to heaven rather than remain on earth were:

(1) That he had "finished" the work which God gave him to do "on the earth" John 17:4; John 19:30, and it was proper that he should be received back to the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, John 17:4-5; Philemon 2:6, Philemon 2:9-10.

(2) it was proper that he should ascend in order that the Holy Spirit might come down and perform his part of the work of redemption. Jesus, by his personal ministry, as a man, could be but in one place; the Holy Spirit could be in all places, and could apply the work to all people. See note on John 16:7.

(3) apart of the work of Christ was yet to be performed in heaven. That was the work of intercession. The high priest of the Jews not only made an atonement, but also presented the blood of sacrifice before the mercy-seat, as the priest of the people, Leviticus 16:11-14. This was done to typify the entrance of the great high priest of our profession into the heavens, Hebrews 9:7-8, Hebrews 9:11-12. The work which he performs there is the work of intercession, Hebrews 7:25. This is properly the work which an advocate performs in a court for his client. As applicable to Christ, the meaning is, that he, as our great high priest, still manages our cause in heaven; secures our interests; obtains for us grace and mercy. His work, in this respect, consists in his appearing in the presence of God for us Hebrews 9:24; in his presenting the merits of his blood Hebrews 9:12, Hebrews 9:14; and in securing the continuance of the mercy which has been bestowed on us, and which is still needful for our welfare. The Lord Jesus also ascended that he might assume and exercise the office of King in the immediate seat of power. All worlds were made subject to him for the welfare of the church; and it was needful that he should be solemnly invested with that power in the presence of God as the reward of his earthly toils. 1 Corinthians 15:25, "he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet." Compare Ephesians 1:20-22; Philemon 2:6-11.

A cloud received him - He entered into the region of the clouds, and was hid from their view. But two others of our race have been taken bodily from earth to heaven. Enoch was transported (Genesis 5:24; compare Hebrews 11:5); and Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind, 2 Kings 2:11. It is remarkable that when the return of the Saviour is mentioned, it is uniformly said that he will return in the clouds, Acts 1:11; Matthew 24:30; Matthew 26:64; Mark 13:26; Revelation 1:7; Daniel 7:13. The clouds are an emblem of sublimity and grandeur, and perhaps this is all that is intended by these expressions, Deuteronomy 4:11; 2 Samuel 22:12; Psalm 97:2; Psalm 104:3.

Verse 10

Looked stedfastly - They fixed their eyes, or gazed intently toward heaven. Luke 4:20, "and the eyes of all them in the synagogue were fastened (Greek: the same word as here) on him." It denotes the intense gaze when we are deeply interested, and wish to see clearly and distinctly. They were amazed and confounded; what had occurred was unlocked for; for they had just been inquiring whether he would not, at that time, restore the kingdom to Israel. With this mingled amazement, disappointment, and

curiosity, and with an earnest desire to catch the last glimpse of their beloved master, they naturally continued to gaze on the distant clouds where he had mysteriously disappeared from their view. Never was a scene more impressive, grand, and solemn than this.

Toward heaven - Toward the distant clouds or sky which had received him.

As he went up - Literally, upon him going up; that is, they gazed on him as he ascended, and doubtless they continued to gaze after he had disappeared from their view.

Two men - From the raiment of these "men," and the nature of their message, it seems clear that they were angelic beings, who were sent to meet and comfort the disciples on this occasion. They appeared in human form, and Luke describes them as they appeared. Angels are not infrequently called people. Luke 24:4, "two men stood by them in shining garments," etc. Compare John 20:12; Matthew 28:5. As two angels are mentioned only as addressing the apostles after the resurrection of Jesus John 20:12; Luke 24:4, it is no unnatural supposition that these were the same who had been designated to the honorable office of bearing witness to his resurrection, and of giving them all the information about that resurrection, and of his ascension, which their circumstances needed.

In white apparel - Angels are commonly represented as clothed in white. See the John 20:12 note; Matthew 28:3 note; Mark 16:5 note. It is an emblem of purity; and the worshippers of heaven are represented as clothed in this manner. Revelation 3:4, "they shall walk with me in white"; Revelation 3:5, "He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment"; Revelation 4:4; Revelation 7:9, Revelation 7:13-14.

Verse 11

Ye men of Galilee - Galilee was the place of their former residence, and they were commonly known by the name of Galileans.

Why stand ye … - There is doubtless a slight degree of censure implied in this, as well as a design to call their attention away from a vain attempt to see the departed Saviour. The impropriety may have been:

(1)In the feeling of disappointment, as if he would not restore the kingdom to Israel.

(2)Possibly they were expecting that he would again soon appear, though he had often foretold them that he would ascend to heaven.

(3)there might have been an impropriety in their earnest desire for the mere bodily presence of the Lord Jesus, when it was more important that he should be in heaven. We may see here also that it is our duty not to stand in idleness, and to gaze even toward heaven. We, as well as the apostles, have a great work to do, and we should actively engage in it without delay.

Gazing up - Looking up.

This same Jesus - This was said to comfort them. The same tried friend who had been so faithful to them would return. They ought not, therefore, to look with despondency at his departure.

Into heaven - This expression denotes into the immediate presence of God; or into the place of perpetual purity and happiness, where God especially manifests his favor. The same thing is frequently designated by his sitting on the right hand of God, as emblematic of power, honor, and favor. See the Mark 16:19; Mark 14:62 notes; Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 8:1 notes; Acts 7:55 note; Romans 8:34 note; Ephesians 1:20 note.

Shall so come - At the day of judgment. John 14:3, "if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again," etc.

In like manner … - In clouds, as he ascended. See the Acts 1:9 note; 1 Thessalonians 4:16 note. This address was designed to comfort the disciples. Though their master and friend was taken from them, yet he was not removed forever. He would come again with similar majesty and glory to vindicate his people, and to tread his enemies under his feet. The design for which he will come will be to judge the world, 2 Peter 3:4. It is right that he should defend his cause. Hence, the Lord Jesus will come to guard the avenues to heaven, and to see that the universe suffers no wrong by the admission of an improper person to the skies.

(4) the great transactions of redemption have been public, open, often grand. The apostasy was public, in the face of angels and of the universe. Sin has been open, public high-handed. Misery has been public, and has rolled its deep and turbid waves in the face of the universe. Death has been public; all worlds have seen the race cut down and moulder. The death of Jesus was public: the angels saw it; the heavens were clothed with mourning; the earth shook, and the dead arose. Jesus was publicly whipped, cursed, crucified; and it is proper that he should publicly triumph - that all heaven rejoicing, and all hell at length humbled, should see his public victory. Hence, he will come with clouds - with angels - with fire - and will

raise the dead, and exhibit to all the universe the amazing close of the scheme of redemption.

(5) we have in these verses a description of the most grand and wonderful events that this world has ever known - the ascension and return of the Lord Jesus. Here is consolation for the Christian; and here is a source of ceaseless alarm to the sinner.

Verse 12

Then returned they unto Jerusalem - In Luke 24:52, we are told that they worshipped Jesus before they returned, and it is probable that the act of worship to which he refers was what is mentioned in this chapter their gazing intently on their departing Lord.

From the mount called Olivet - From the Mount of Olives. See the notes on Matthew 21:1. The part of the mountain from which he ascended was the eastern declivity, where stood the little village of Bethany, Luke 24:50.

A sabbath-day's journey - As far as might be lawfully traveled by a Jew on the Sabbath. This was 2,000 paces or cubits, or seven furlongs and a half - not quite one mile. See the notes On Matthew 24:20. The distance of a lawful journey on the Sabbath was not fixed by the laws of Moses, but the Jewish teachers had fixed it at 2,000 paces. This measure was determined on because it was a tradition that in the camp of the Israelites, when coming from Egypt, no part of the camp was more than 2000 paces from the tabernacle, and over this space, therefore, they were permitted to travel for worship. Perhaps, also, some countenance was given to this from the fact that this was the extent of the suburbs of the Levitical cities, Numbers 35:5. Mount Olivet was only 5 furlongs from Jerusalem, and Bethany was 15 furlongs. But on the eastern declivity of the mountain the tract of country was called, for a considerable space, the region of Bethany; and it was from this place that the Lord Jesus ascended.

Verse 13

Were come in - To Jerusalem.

They went up into an upper room - The word ὑπερῷον huperoōnhere translated "upper room," occurs only four times in the New Testament: Acts 9:37, "She (Dorcas) was sick and died; whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber" (see also Acts 9:39); Acts 20:8, "And there

were many lights in the upper chamber where they were gathered together." The room so designated was an upper chamber used for devotion, or as a place where to lay the dead before burial, or occasionally for conversation, etc. Here it evidently means the place where they were assembled for devotion. Luke 24:53 says they were continually "in the temple" praising and blessing God; and some have supposed that the upper room here designated was one of the rooms in the temple. But there is no evidence of that, and it is not very probable. Such a room as that here referred to was a part of every house, especially in Jerusalem; and the disciples probably selected one where they might be together, and yet so retired that they might be safe from the Jews. The expression used in Luke 24:53, "They were continually - διαπαντός diapantos- in the temple," signifies no more than that this was a frequent or customary resort; they were always in the temple at the usual seasons of devotion, or they were in the constant habit of resorting thither. "Even DeWette allows that there is no discrepancy."

Where abode - Where were remaining. This does not mean that this was their permanent habitation; but they remained there waiting for the descent of the Holy Spirit.

Peter … - All the apostles were there which Jesus had at first chosen except Judas, Luke 6:13-16.

Verse 14

These all continued … - The word "continued" denotes "persevering and constant attention." The main business was devotion. Acts 6:4, "we will give ourselves continually to the ministry of the word." Romans 12:12, "continuing instant in prayer"; Romans 13:6, "Attending continually upon this very thing." It is their main and constant employment. Compare Colossians 4:2.

With one accord - Greek: ὁμοθυμαδόν homothumadon- "with one mind." The word denotes the entire harmony of their views and feelings. There were no schisms, no divided interests, no discordant purposes. This is a beautiful picture of devotion, and a specimen of what social worship ought now to be, and a beautiful illustration of Psalm 133:1-3. The apostles felt that they had one great object; and their deep grief at the loss of their master, and their doubts and perplexities, led them, as all afflictions ought to lead us, to the throne of grace.

In prayer and supplication - These words are nearly synonymous, and are often interchanged. They express here petitions to God for blessings,

and prayer to avert impending evils.

With the women - The women that had followed the Lord Jesus from Galilee, Luke 8:2-3, Luke 8:23, Luke 8:49, Luke 8:55; Luke 24:10; Matthew 27:55. The women particularly mentioned are Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, the mother of Zebedee‘s children, Joanna the wife of Chuza, and Susanna. Besides these, there were others whose names are not mentioned. Most of them were relatives of the apostles or of the Saviour; and it is not improbable that some of them were wives of the apostles. Peter is known to have been married Matthew 8:14, and had his wife in attendance with him in his travels 1 Corinthians 9:5; and the same was doubtless true of some of the other apostles, 1 Corinthians 9:5.- Mary, the mother of Jesus, is here particularly mentioned, showing that she now cast in her lot with the apostles. She had, besides, been specially entrusted to the care of John John 19:26-27, and had no other home. This is the last time that she is mentioned in the New Testament.

And with his brethren - See the notes on Matthew 12:46. At first they had been unbelieving about the claims of Jesus John 7:5; but it seems that they had been subsequently converted.

Verse 15

In those days - On one of the days intervening between the ascension of Jesus and the day of Pentecost.

Peter stood up - Peter standing up, or rising. This is a customary expression in the Scriptures when one begins to do a thing, Luke 15:18. The reason why Peter did this may be seen in the notes on Matthew 16:16-17. It is not improbable, besides, that Peter was the most aged of the apostles; and from his uniform conduct we know that he was the most ardent. It was perfectly characteristic, therefore, for him to introduce the business of the election of a new apostle.

The disciples - This was the name, which was given to them as being learners in the school of Christ. See the notes on Matthew 5:1.

The number of the names - The number of the persons, or individuals. The word “name” is often used to denote “the person,” Revelation 3:4; Acts 4:12; Acts 18:15; Ephesians 1:21. In Syriac it is, “The assembly of people was about an hundred and twenty.” This was the first assembly convened to transact the business of the church; and it is not a little remarkable that the vote in so important a matter as electing apostle was by the entire church. It settles the question that the election of a minister and pastor should be by

the church, and that a pastor should not be placed over a church by a patron, or by an ecclesiastical body. If a case could ever occur where it would be right and proper that one should be selected to exercise the office of a minister of Christ by the ministry only, the election of one to fall the office of an apostle was such a case. And yet in this the entire church had a voice. Whether this was all the true church at this time does not appear from the history. This expression cannot mean that there were no more Christians, but that these were all that had convened in the upper room. It is certain that our Saviour had, by his own ministry, brought many others to be his true followers. Compare 1 Corinthians 15:6.

Verse 16

Men and brethren - This is a customary mode of address, implying affection and respect, Acts 13:26. The Syriac renders it more appropriately than by the introduction of the conjunction "and" - "Men, our brethren."

This scripture - This prediction contained in the writings of the Old Testament. Compare the notes on John 5:39. The passage to which Peter refers is commonly supposed to be that recorded in Psalm 41:9, "Yea, mine own familiar friend … hath lifted up his heel against me." This is expressly applied to Judas by our Saviour, in John 13:18. But it seems clear that the reference is not to the 41st Psalm, but to the passage in the 69th Psalm which Peter proceeds to quote in Acts 1:20.

Must needs have been fulfilled - It would certainly be fulfilled. Not that there was any physical necessity or any compulsion; but it could not but occur that a prediction of God would be fulfilled. This makes no affirmation about the freedom of Judas in doing it. A man will be just as free in wickedness if it be foretold that he will be wicked, as if it had never been known to any other being but himself.

The Holy Ghost … - This is a strong attestation to the inspiration of David, and accords with the uniform testimony of the New Testament, that the sacred writers spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, 2 Peter 1:21.

Concerning Judas - In what respect this was concerning Judas, see Acts 1:20.

Which was guide … - Matthew 26:47; John 18:3.

Verse 17

He was numbered with us - He was chosen as an apostle by the Lord Jesus, Luke 6:13-16. This does not mean that he was a true Christian, but

that he was reckoned among the apostles. Long before he betrayed him, Jesus declared that he was a devil, John 6:70. He knew his whole character when he chose him, John 2:25. If it be asked why he chose such a man to be an apostle; why he was made the treasurer of the apostles, and was admitted to the fullest confidence; we may reply, that a most important object was gained in having such a man - a spy - among them. It might be pretended, when the apostles bore testimony to the purity of life, of doctrine, and of purpose of the Lord Jesus, that they were interested and partial friends; that they might be disposed to suppress some of his real sentiments, and represent him in a light more favorable than the truth. Hence, the testimony of such a man as Judas, if favorable, must be invaluable.

It would be free from the charge of partiality. If Judas knew anything unfavorable to the character of Jesus, he would have communicated it to the Sanhedrin. If he knew of any secret plot against the government, or seditious purpose, he had every inducement to declare it. He had every opportunity to know it; he was with him; heard him converse; was a member of his family, and admitted to terms of familiarity. Yet even Judas could not be bought or bribed, to testify against the moral character of the Saviour. If he had done it, or could have done it, it would have preserved him from the charge of treason; would have entitled him to the reputation of a public benefactor in discovering secret sedition; and would have saved him from the pangs of remorse, and from self-murder. Judas would have done it if he could. But he alleged no such charge; he did not even dare to lisp a word against the pure designs of the Lord Jesus; and his own reproofs of conscience Matthew 27:4, and his voluntary death Matthew 27:5, furnish the highest proof that can be desired of his conviction that the betrayed Redeemer was innocent.

Judas would have been just the witness which the Jews desired of the treasonable purposes of Jesus. But that could not be procured, even by gold; and they wore compelled to suborn other men to testify against the Son of God, Matthew 26:60. We may add here, that the introduction of such a character as that of Judas Iscariot into the number of the apostles, and the use to be made of his testimony, would never have occurred to the author of a forged book. He would have said that they were all the true friends of the Lord Jesus. To have invented such a character as that of Judas, and to make him perform such a part in the plan as the sacred writers do, would have

required too much art and cunning - was too refined and subtle a device, to have been thought of unless it had actually occurred.

Verse 18

Now this man … - The money which was given for betraying the Lord Jesus was thrown down in the temple, and the field was purchased with it by the Jewish priests. See Matthew 27:5, Matthew 27:10, and the notes on that place. A man is said often to do a thing when he furnishes means for doing it. Compare Matthew 27:60, "And laid it (the body of Jesus) in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock." That is, had caused to be hewn out. John 4:1, "when, therefore, the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus "made and baptized" more disciples than John." Through his disciples, for Jesus himself baptized not, John 4:2. The same principle is recognized in law in the well-known maxim, "Qui facit per alium, facit per se."

The reward of iniquity - The price which he had for that deed of stupendous wickedness - the betraying of the Lord Jesus.

And falling headlong - The word here rendered "headlong" - πρηνής prēnēs(Latin "pronus," whence our English word "prone") - means properly "bent forward, head-foremost"; and the idea is, that his position in hanging himself was such that when the cord broke he fell headlong, or fell forward on his face. This can easily be supposed if he threw himself from a rock or elevated place. He first hanged himself, and then fell and was burst asunder. See the notes on Matthew 27:5.

Verse 19

It was known … - , Matthew 27:8. The scene in the temple; the acts of the priests in purchasing the field, etc., would make it known; and the name of the field would preserve the memory of the guilt of Judas.

Their proper tongue - The language spoken by the Jews the Syro-Chaldaic.

Aceldama - This is composed of two Syro-Chaldaic words, and means literally, the field of blood.

Verse 20

For it is written … - See Psalm 69:25. This is the prediction doubtless to which Peter refers in Acts 1:16. The intermediate passage in Acts 1:18-19, is probably a parenthesis; the words of Luke, not of Peter. So Calvin, Kuinoel, Olshausen, DeWette, and Hackett understand it. It is not probable

that Peter would introduce a narrative like this, with which they were all familiar, in an address to the disciples. The Hebrew in the Psalm is, "Let their habitation (Hebrew: fold, enclosure for cattle; tower, or palace) be desolate, and let none dwell in their tents." This quotation is not made literally from the Hebrew, nor from the Septuagint. The plural is changed to the singular, and there are some other slight variations. The Hebrew is, "Let there be no one dwelling in their tents." The reference to the tents is omitted in the quotation. The term "habitation," in the Psalm, means evidently the dwelling-place of the enemies of the writer of the Psalm. It is an image expressive of their overthrow and defeat by a just God: "Let their families be scattered, and the places where they have dwelt be without an inhabitant, as a reward for their crimes."

If the Psalm was originally composed with reference to the Messiah and his sufferings, the expression here was not intended to denote Judas in particular, but one of his foes who was to meet the just punishment of rejecting, betraying, and murdering him. The change, therefore, which Peter made from the plural to the singular, and the application to Judas especially "as one of those enemies," accords with the design of the Psalm, and is such a change as the circumstances of the case justified and required. It is an image, therefore, expressive of judgment and desolation coming upon his betrayer - an image to be literally fulfilled in relation to his habitation, drawn from the desolation when a man is driven from his home, and when his dwelling-place becomes tenantless. It is not a little remarkable that this Psalm is repeatedly quoted as referring to the Messiah: Psalm 69:9, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," expressly applied to Christ in John 2:17, John 2:21, "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" - the thing which was done to Jesus on the cross, Matthew 27:34.

The whole Psalm is expressive of deep sorrow of persecution, contempt, weeping, being forsaken, and is throughout applicable to the Messiah; with what is remarkable, not a single expression necessarily limited to David. It is not easy to ascertain whether the ancient Jews referred this Psalm to the Messiah. A part of the title to the Psalm in the Syriac version is, "It is called a prophecy concerning those things which Christ suffered, and concerning the casting away of the Jews." The prophecy in Acts 1:25 is not to be understood of Judas alone, but of the enemies of the Messiah in general, of

which Judas was one. On this principle the application to Judas of the passage by Peter is to be defended.

And his bishopric let another take - This is quoted from Psalm 109:8, "Let his days be few, and let another take his office." This is called "a Psalm of David," and is of the same class as Psalm 6:1-10; Psalm 42:1-11; This class of Psalms is commonly supposed to have expressed David's feelings in the calamitous times of the persecution by Saul, the rebellion of Absalom, etc. They are all also expressive of the condition of a suffering and persecuted Messiah, and many of them are applied to him in the New Testament. The general principle on which most of them are applicable is, not that David personated or typified the Messiah which is nowhere affirmed, and which can be true in no intelligible sense - but that he was placed in circumstances similar to the Messiah; was encompassed with like enemies; was persecuted in the same manner. They are expressive of high rank, office, dignity, and piety, cast down, waylaid, and encompassed with enemies.

In this way they express "general sentiments" as really applicable to the case of the Messiah as to David. They were placed in similar circumstances. The same help was needed. The same expressions would convey their feelings. The same treatment was proper for their enemies. On this principle it was that David deemed his enemy, whoever he was, unworthy of his office, and desired that it should be given to another. In like manner, Judas had rendered himself unworthy of his office, and there was the same propriety that it should be given to another. And as the office had now become vacant by the death of Judas, and according to one declaration in the Psalms, so, according to another, it was proper that it should be conferred on some other person. The word rendered "office" in the Psalm means the care, charge, business, oversight of anything. It is a word applicable to magistrates, whose care it is to see that the laws are executed; and to military men who have charge of an army, or a part of an army.

In Job 10:12 it is rendered "thy visitation." In Numbers 4:16, "and to the office of Eleazar," etc. In the case of David it refers to those who were entrusted with military or other offices who had treacherously perverted them to persecute and oppose him, and who had thus shown themselves unworthy of the office. The Greek word which is used here, ἐπισκοπὴν episkopēnis taken from the Septuagint, and means the same thing as the

Hebrew. It is well rendered in the margin "office, or charge." It means charge or office in general, without in itself specifying of what kind. It is the concrete of the noun ἐπισκόπους episkopouscommonly translated "bishop," and means his office, charge, or duty. That word means simply having the oversight of anything, and as applied to the officers of the New Testament, it denotes merely "their having charge of the affairs of the church," without specifying the nature or the extent of their jurisdiction.

Hence, it is often interchanged with presbyter or elder, and denotes the discharge of the duties of the same office: Acts 20:28, "Take heed (presbyters or elders, Acts 20:17) to yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers" - ἐπισκόπους episkopous-bishops; Hebrews 12:15, "Looking diligently," etc. - ἐπισκοποῦντες episkopountes Philemon 1:1, "with the bishops and deacons"; "Paul called presbyters bishops, for they had at that time the same name" (Theodoret, as quoted by Sehleusner); 1 Peter 5:2, "Feed the flock of God (that is, you who are elders, or presbyters, 1 Peter 5:1), taking the oversight thereof" - ἐπισκοποῦντες episkopountesThese passages show that the term in the New Testament designates the supervision or care which was exercised over the church, by whomsoever performed, without specifying the nature or extent of the jurisdiction. It is scarcely necessary to add that Peter here did not intend to affirm that Judas sustained any office corresponding to what is now commonly understood by the term "bishop."

Verse 21

Wherefore of these men - Of those who had witnessed the life and works of Christ, and who were therefore qualified to discharge the duties of the office from which Judas fell. Probably Peter refers to the seventy disciples, Luke 10:1-2.

Went in and out - A phrase signifying that he was their constant companion. It expresses in general all the actions of the life, Psalm 121:8; Deuteronomy 28:19; Deuteronomy 31:2.

Verse 22

Beginning from the baptism of John - The words "beginning from" in the original refer to the Lord Jesus. The meaning may be thus expressed, "during all the time in which the Lord Jesus, beginning (his ministry) at the time when he was baptized by John, went in and out among us, until the

time when he was taken up," etc. From those who had during that time been the constant companions of the Lord Jesus must one be taken, who would thus be a witness of his whole ministry.

Must one be ordained - It is fit or proper that one should be ordained. The reason of this was, that Jesus had originally chosen the number twelve for this work, and as one of them had fallen, it was proper that the vacancy should be filled by some person equally qualified for the office. The reason why it was proper that he should be taken from the seventy disciples was, that they had been particularly distinguished by Jesus himself, and had been witnesses of most of his public life, Luke 10:1-16. The word "ordained" with us has a fixed and definite signification. It means to set apart to a sacred office with proper forms and solemnities, commonly by the imposition of hands. But this is not, of necessity, the meaning of this passage. The Greek word usually denoting "ordination" is not used here. The expression is literally, "must one be, or become, γενέσθαι genesthaia witness with us of his resurrection." The expression does not imply that he must be set apart in any particular manner, but simply that one should be designated or appointed for this specific purpose, to be a witness of the resurrection of Christ.

Verse 23

And they appointed two - They proposed, or, as we should say, nominated two. Literally, they placed two, or made them to stand forth, as persons do who are candidates for office. These two were probably-more distinguished by prudence, wisdom, piety, and age than the others, and they were so nearly equal in qualifications that they could not determine which was the best suited for the office.

Joseph called Barsabas … - It is not certainly known what the name Barsabas denotes. The Syriac word "Bar" means "son," and the word "Sabas" has been translated "an oath, rest, quiet, or captivity." Why the name was given to Joseph is not known but probably it was the family name - Joseph son of Sabas. Some have conjectured that this was the same man who, in Acts 4:36, is called Barnabas. But of this there is no proof. Lightfoot supposes that he was the son of Alpheus and brother of James the Less, and that he was chosen on account of his relationship to the family of the Lord Jesus.

Was surnamed Justus - Who was called Justus. This is a Latin name, meaning just, and was probably given him on account of his distinguished

integrity. It was not uncommon among the Jews for a man to have several names, Matthew 10:3.

And Matthias - Nothing is known of the family of this man, or of his character, further than that he was numbered with the apostles, and shared their lot in the toils, the persecutions, and the honors of preaching the gospel to mankind.

Verse 24

And they prayed - As they could not agree on the individual, they invoked the direction of God in their choice - an example which should be followed in every selection of an individual to exercise the duties of the sacred office of the ministry.

Which knowest the hearts of all men - This is often declared to be the special prerogative of God, Jeremiah 17:10, "I, Yahweh, search the heart," etc.; Psalm 139:1, Psalm 139:23; 1 Chronicles 28:9. Yet this attribute is also expressly ascribed to Jesus Christ, Revelation 2:18; compare 23, "These things saith the Son of God - I am he which searcheth the reins and the hearts"; John 2:25; John 6:64; John 16:19. There are strong reasons for supposing that the apostles on this occasion addressed this prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ:

(1)The name Lord - Κύριος Kurios- is the common appellation which they gave to him, Acts 2:36; Acts 7:59-60; Acts 10:36; 1 Corinthians 2:8; Philemon 2:11; Revelation 11:8, et al.

(2)we are told that they worshipped him, or rendered him divine honors after his ascension, Luke 24:52.

(3)the disciples were accustomed to address him after his crucifixion by the names Lord or God indifferently, Acts 1:6; John 20:28; Acts 7:59.

(4)this was a matter pertaining especially to the church which the Lord Jesus had redeemed, and "to his own arrangement" in regard to it. He had chosen the apostles; he had given them their commission; he had fixed their number; and, what is worthy of special remark here, he had been the companion of the very men here designated as candidates for the office, and knew their qualifications for this work. If the apostles ever called on the Lord Jesus after his ascension, this was a case in which they would be likely to do it. That it was done is clear from the account of the death of Stephen, Acts 7:59-60. And in this important matter of ordaining a new apostle to be

a witness for Jesus Christ, nothing was more natural than that they should address him, though bodily absent, as they would assuredly have done if he were present. But if on this occasion they did actually address Christ, then two things clearly follow. First, that it is proper to render him divine homage, agreeably to the uniform declarations of the Scripture: John 5:23, "That all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father"; Hebrews 1:6, "And let all the angels of God worship him"; Philemon 2:10-11; Revelation 5:8-14; 1 Thessalonians 3:11-12. Secondly, he must be divine. To none other but God can religious homage be rendered; and none other can be described as knowing the hearts of all people. The reason why they appealed to him on this occasion as the searcher of the heart was doubtless the great importance of the work to which the successor of Judas was to be called. One apostle of fair external character had proved a traitor; and, with this fact before them, they appealed to the Saviour himself to select one who would be true to him, and not bring dishonor upon his cause.

Show whether … - Show which of them.

Thou hast chosen - Which of the two thou hast judged to be best qualified for the work.

Verse 25

That he may take part of this ministry - The word rendered "part" - κλῆρον klēron- is the same which in the next verse is rendered lots. It properly means a lot or portion the portion divided to a man, or assigned to him by casting lots; and also the instrument or means by which the lot is determined. The former is its meaning here; the office, or portion of apostolic work, which would fall to him by taking the place of Judas.

Ministry and apostleship - This is an instance of the figure of speech hendiadys, when two words are used to express one thing. It means the apostolic ministry. See instances in Genesis 1:14, "Let them be for signs and for seasons," that is, signs of seasons; Acts 23:6, "Hope and resurrection of the dead," that is, hope of the resurrection of the dead.

From which Judas by transgression fell - Literally, went aside - παρέβη parebē- "as opposed to the idea of adhering faithfully to the character and service which his apostleship required of him" (Prof. Hackett). The transgression referred to was his treason and suicide.

That he might go to his own place - These words by different interpreters have been referred both to Matthias and Judas. Those who refer them to Matthias say that they mean that Judas fell that Matthias might go

to his own place, that is, to a place for which he was suited, or well qualified. But to this there are many objections:

1. The apostolic office could with no propriety be called, in reference to Matthias, his own place, until it was actually conferred upon him.

2. There is no instance in which the expression to go to his own place is applied to a successor in office.

3. It is not true that the design or reason why Judas fell was to make way for another. He fell by his crimes; his avarice, his voluntary and enormous wickedness.

4. The former part of the sentence contains this sentiment: "Another must be appointed to this office which the death of Judas has made vacant." If this expression, "that he might go," etc., refers to the successor of Judas, it expresses the same sentiment, but more obscurely.

5. The obvious and natural meaning of the phrase is to refer it to Judas. But those who suppose that it refers to Judas differ greatly about its meaning. Some suppose that it refers to his own house, and that the meaning is, that he left the apostolic office to return to his own house; and they appeal to Numbers 24:25. But it is not true that Judas did this; nor is there the least proof that it was his design. Others refer it to the grave, as the place of man, where all must lie; and particularly as an ignominious place where it was proper that a traitor like Judas should lie. But there is no example where the word "place" is used in this sense, nor is there an instance where a man, by being buried, is said to return to his own or proper place. Others have supposed that the manner of his death by hanging is referred to as his own or his proper place. But this interpretation is evidently an unnatural and forced one. The word "place" cannot be applied to an act of self-murder. It denotes "habitation, abode, situation in which to remain"; not an act. These are the only interpretations of the passage which can be suggested, except the common one of referring it to the abode of Judas in the world of woe. This might be said to be his own, as he had prepared himself for it, and as it was proper that he who betrayed his Lord should dwell there. This interpretation may be defended by the following considerations:

1. It is the obvious and natural meaning of the words. It commends itself by its simplicity and its evident connection with the context. It has in all ages been the common interpretation; nor has any other been adopted, except in cases where there was a theory to be defended about future punishment. Unless people had previously made up their minds not to believe in future punishment, no one would ever have thought of any other interpretation. This fact alone throws strong light on the meaning of the passage.

2. It accords with the crimes of Judas, and with all that we know of him. What the future doom of Judas would be was not unknown to the apostles. Jesus Christ had expressly declared this - "it had been good for that man if he had not been born"; a declaration which could not be true if, after any limited period of suffering, he was at last admitted to eternal happiness. See Matthew 26:24, and the notes on that place. This declaration was made in the presence of the eleven apostles, at the institution of the Lord's Supper, and at a time when their attention was absorbed with deep interest in what Christ said; and it was therefore a declaration which they would not be likely to forget. As they knew the fate of Judas beforehand, nothing was more natural for them than to speak of it familiarly as a thing which had actually occurred when he betrayed his Lord and hung himself.

3. The expression "to go to his own place" is one which is used by the ancient writers to denote "going to an eternal destiny." Thus, the Jewish Tract, Baal Turim, on Numbers 24:25, says, "Balaam went to his own place, that is, to Gehenna," to hell. Thus, the Targum, or Chaldee Paraphrase on Ecclesiastes 6:6, says," Although the days of a man's life were two thousand years, and he did not study the Law, and do justice, in the day of his death his soul shall descend to hell, to the one place where all sinners go." Thus, Ignatius in the Epistle to the Magnesians says, "Because all things have an end, the two things death and life shall lie down together, and each one shall go to his own place." The phrase his own place means the place or abode which was suited for him, which was his appropriate home.

Judas was not in a place which befitted his character when he was an apostle; he was not in such a place in the church; he would not be in

heaven. Hell was the only place which was suited to the man of avarice and of treason. And if this be the true interpretation of this passage, then it follows:

1. That there will be such a thing as future, eternal punishment. There is certainly one man in hell, and ever will be. If there is one there, for the same reason there may be others. All objections to the doctrine are removed by this single fact; and it cannot be true that all people will be saved.

2. Each individual in eternity will find his own proper place. The punishment of hell is not an arbitrary appointment. Every man will go to the place for which his character is suited. The hypocrite is not suited for heaven. The man of pride, and avarice, and pollution, and falsehood, is not suited for heaven. The place adapted to such people is hell; and the design of the judgment will be to assign to each individual his proper abode in the eternal world. It would not be fit that the holy and pure should dwell forever in the same place with the unholy and impure; and the Lord Jesus will come to assign to each his appropriate eternal habitation.

3. The sinner will have no cause of complaint. If he is assigned to his proper place, he cannot complain. If he is unfit for heaven, he cannot complain that he is excluded. And if his character and feelings are such as make it proper that he should find his eternal abode among the enemies of God, then he must expect that a God of justice and equity will assign him such a doom. But,

4. This will not alleviate his pain; it will deepen his woe. He will have the eternal consciousness that that, and that only, is his place - the abode for which he is suited. The prison is no less dreadful because a man is conscious that he deserves it. The gallows is not the less terrible because the man knows that he deserves to die. And the consciousness of the sinner that he is unfit for heaven; that there is not a solitary soul there with whom he could have sympathy or friendship; that he is fit for hell, and hell only, will be an ingredient of eternal bitterness in the cup of woe that awaits him. Let not the sinner then hope to escape; for God will assuredly appoint his residence in that world to which his character here is adapted.

The character and end of Judas is one of the most important and instructive things in history. It teaches us:

1. That Christ may employ wicked men for important purposes in his kingdom. See the notes on Acts 1:17. He does no violence to their freedom; he permits them to act as they please, but brings important ends out of their conduct. One of the most conclusive arguments for the pure character of Jesus Christ is drawn from the silent testimony of Judas.

2. The character of Judas was eminently base and wicked. He was influenced by one of the worst human passions; and yet he concealed it from all the apostles. It was remarkable that any man should have thought of making money in such a band of men; but avarice will show itself everywhere.

3. We see the effects of covetousness in the church. It led to the betraying of Jesus Christ, and to his death; and it has often betrayed the cause of pure religion since. There is no single human passion that has done so much evil in the church of God as this. It may be consistent with external decency and order, and in accordance with the principles on which the world acts, and which it approves, and it may therefore be indulged without disgrace, while open and acknowledged vices would expose their possessors to shame and ruin. And yet it paralyses and betrays religion probably more than any single propensity of man.

4. The character of an avaricious man in the church will be developed. Opportunities will occur when it will be seen and known by what principle he is influenced. So it was with Achan Joshua 7:21; so it was with Judas; and so it will be with all. Occasions will occur which will test the character, and show what manner of spirit a man is of. Every appeal to a man‘s benevolence, every call upon his charity, shows what spirit influences him - whether he is actuated by the love of gold, or by the love of Christ and his cause.

Verse 26

And they gave forth their lots - Some have supposed that this means they voted. But to this interpretation there are insuperable objections:

1.The word “lots,” κλήρους klērousis not used to express votes, or suffrage.

2.The expression “the lot fell upon” is not consistent with the notion of voting. It is commonly expressive of casting lots.

3.Casting lots was common among the Jews on important and difficult occasions, and it was natural that the apostles should resort to it in this.

Thus, David divided the priests by lot, 1 Chronicles 24:5. The land of Canaan was divided by lot, Numbers 26:55; Joshua 16:1-10; 1 Samuel 14:41-42. Achan was detected by lot, Joshua 7:16-18. In these instances the use of the lot was regarded as a solemn appeal to God for his direct interference in cases which they could not themselves decide. Proverbs 16:33, “the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” The choice of an apostle was an event of the same kind, and was regarded as a solemn appeal to God for his direction and guidance in a case which the apostles could not determine. The manner in which this was done is not certainly known. The common mode of casting lots was to write the names of the persons on pieces of stone, wood, etc., and put them in one urn, and the name of the office, portion, etc., on others.

These were then placed in an urn with other pieces of stone, etc., which were blank. The names were then drawn at random, and also the other pieces, and this settled the case. The casting of a lot is determined by laws of nature as regularly as anything else. There is properly no chance in it. We do not know how a die may turn up; but this does not imply that it will turn up without any regard to rule, or at haphazard. We cannot trace the influences which may determine either this or that side to come up; but it is done by regular and proper laws, and according to the circumstances of position, force, etc., in which it is cast. Still, although it does not imply any special or miraculous interposition of Providence; though it may not be absolutely wrong, in cases which cannot otherwise be determined, to use the lot, yet it does not follow that it is proper often to make this appeal.

Almost all cases of doubt can be determined more satisfactorily in some other way than by the lot. The habit of appealing to it engenders the love of hazards and of games; leads to heart-burnings, to jealousies, to envy, to strife, and to dishonesty. Still less does the example of the apostles authorize games of hazard, or lotteries, which are positively evil, and

attended with ruinous consequences, apart from any inquiry about the lawfulness of the lot. They either originate in, or promote covetousness, neglect of regular industry, envy, jealousy, disappointment, dissipation, bankruptcy, falsehood, and despair. What is gained by one is lost by another, and both the gain and the loss promote some of the worst passions of man boasting, triumph, self-confidence, indolence, dissipation, on the one hand; and envy, disappointment, sullenness, desire of revenge, remorse, and ruin on the other. God intended that man should live by sober toil. All departures from this great law of our social existence lead to ruin.

Their lots - The lots which were to decide their case. They are called theirs, because they were to determine which of them should be called to the apostolic office.

The lot fell - This is an expression applicable to casting lots, not to voting.

He was numbered - By the casting of the lot, συγκατεψηφίζη sugkatepsēphisthēThis word is from ψῆφος psēphos- a calculus, or pebble, by which votes were given or lots were cast. It means, that by the result of the lot he was reckoned as an apostle. Nothing further is related of Matthias in the New Testament. Where he labored, and when and where he died, is unknown; nor is there any tradition on which reliance is to be placed. The election of Matthias, however, throws some light on the organization of the church.

1. He was chosen to fill the place vacated by Judas, and for a specific purpose, to be a witness of the resurrection of Christ. There is no mention of any other design. It was not to ordain men exclusively, or to rule over the churches, but to be a witness to an important fact.

2. There is no intimation that it was designed that there should be successors to the apostles in the special duties of the apostolic office. The election was for a definite object, and was therefore temporary. It was to fill up the number originally appointed by Christ. When the purpose for which he was appointed was accomplished, the special part of the apostolic work ceased of course.

3. There could be no succession in future ages to the special apostolic office. They were to be witnesses of the work of Christ, and when the desired effect resulting from such a witnessing was accomplished, the office

itself would cease. Hence, there is no record that after this the church even pretended to appoint successors to the apostles, and hence, no ministers of the gospel can now pretend to be their successors in the unique and original design of the appointment of the apostles.

4. The only other apostle mentioned in the New Testament is the apostle Paul, not appointed as the successor of the others, not with any special design except to be an apostle to the Gentiles, as the others were to the Jews, and appointed for the same end, to testify that Jesus Christ was alive, and that he had seen him after he rose, 1 Corinthians 15:8; 1 Corinthians 9:1, 1 Corinthians 9:15; Acts 22:8-9, Acts 22:14-15; Acts 26:17-18. The ministers of religion, therefore, are successors of the apostles, not in their special office as witnesses, but as preachers of the Word, and as appointed to establish, to organize, to edify, and to rule the churches. The unique work of the apostleship ceased with their death. The ordinary work of the ministry, which they held in common with all others who preach the gospel, will continue to the end of time.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

And when the day of Pentecost - The word "Pentecost" is a Greek word signifying the 50th part of a thing, or the 50th in order. Among the Jews it was a applied to one of their three great feasts which began on the 50th day after the Passover. This feast was reckoned from the 16th day of the month Abib, or April, or the second day of the Passover. The paschal lamb was slain on the 14th of the month at evening, Leviticus 23:5; on the 15th day of the month was a holy convocation - the proper beginning of the feast; on the 16th day was the offering of the firstfruits of harvest, and from that day they were to reckon seven weeks, that is, 49 days, to the feast called the Feast of Pentecost, so that it occurred 50 days after the first day of the Feast of the Passover. This feast was also called the Feast of Weeks, from the circumstance that it followed a succession of weeks, Exodus 34:22; Numbers 28:26; Deuteronomy 16:10. It was also a harvest festival, and was accordingly called the Feast of Harvest; and it was for this reason that two loaves made of new meal were offered on this occasion as first-fruits, Leviticus 23:17, Leviticus 23:20; Numbers 28:27-31.

Was fully come - When the day had arrived. The word used here means literally "to be completed," and as employed here refers, not to the day itself, but to the completion of the interval which was to pass before its arrival (Olshausen). See Luke 9:51. Compare Mark 1:15; Luke 1:57. This fact is mentioned, that the time of the Pentecost had come, or fully arrived, to account for what is related afterward, that there were so many strangers and foreigners present. The promised influences of the Spirit were withheld until the greatest possible number of Jews should be present at Jerusalem at the same time, and thus an opportunity be afforded of preaching the gospel to vast multitudes in the very place where the Lord Jesus was crucified, and also an opportunity be afforded of sending the gospel by them into distant parts of the earth.

They were all - Probably not only the apostles, but also the 120 people mentioned in Acts 1:15.

With one accord - See Acts 1:14. It is probable that they had continued together until this time, and given themselves entirely to the business of devotion.

In one place - Where this was cannot be known. Commentators have been much divided in their conjectures about it. Some have supposed that it was in the upper room mentioned in Acts 1:13; others that it was a room in the temple; others that it was in a synagogue; others that it was among the promiscuous multitude that assembled for devotion in the courts of the temple. See Acts 2:2. It has been supposed by many that this took place on the first day of the week; that is, on the Christian Sabbath. But there is a difficulty in establishing this. There was probably a difference among the Jews themselves as to the time of observing this festival: The Law said that they should reckon seven sabbaths; that is seven weeks, "from the morrow after the sabbath," Leviticus 23:15. By this Sabbath the Pharisees understood the second day of the Passover, on whatever day of the week it occurred, which was kept as a day of holy convocation, and which might be called a Sabbath. But the Karaite Jews, or those who insisted on a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, maintained that by the Sabbath here was meant the usual Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. Consequently, with them, the day of Pentecost always occurred on the first day of the week; and if the apostles fell in with their views, the day was fully come on what is now the Christian Sunday. But if the views of the Pharisees were followed, and the Lord Jesus had with them kept the Passover on Thursday, as many have supposed, then the day of Pentecost would have occurred on the Jewish Sabbath, that is, on Saturday (Kuinoel; Lightfoot). It is impossible to determine the truth on this subject. Nor is it of much importance. According to the later Jews, the day of Pentecost was kept also as a festival to commemorate the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai; but no trace of this custom is to be found in the Old Testament.

Verse 2

And suddenly - It burst upon them at once. Though they were waiting for the descent of the Spirit, yet it is not probable that they expected it in this manner. As this was an important event, and one on which the welfare of the church depended, it was proper that the gift of the Holy Spirit should take place in some striking and sensible manner, so as to convince their own minds that the promise was fulfilled, and so as deeply to impress others with the greatness and importance of the event.

There came a sound - ἦχος ēchosThis word is applied to any noise or report. Hebrews 12:19, "the sound of a trumpet"; Luke 4:37, "The fame of him," etc. Compare Mark 1:28.

From heaven - Appearing to rush down from the sky. It was suited, therefore, to attract their attention no less from the direction from which it came, than on account of its suddenness and violence. Tempests blow commonly horizontally. This appeared to come from above; and this is all that is meant by the expression. "from heaven."

As of a rushing mighty wind - Literally, "as of a violent blast borne along" - φερομένης pheromenēs- rushing along like a tempest. Such a wind sometimes borne along so violently, and with such a noise, as to make it difficult even to hear the thunder in the gale. Such appears to have been the sound of this remarkable phenomenon. It does not appear that there was any wind, but the sudden sound was like such a sweeping tempest. It may be remarked, however, that the wind in the sacred Scriptures is often put as an emblem of a divine influence. See John 3:8. It is invisible, yet mighty, and thus represents the agency of the Holy Spirit. The same word in Hebrew רוּח ruwachand in Greek πνεῦμα pneumais used to denote both. The mighty power of God may be denoted also by the violence of a tempest, 1 Kings 19:11; Psalm 29:1-11; Psalm 104:3; Psalm 18:10. In this place the sound as of a gale was emblematic of the mighty power of the Spirit, and of the effects which his coming would accomplish among people.

And it filled - Not the wind filled, But the sound. This is evident:

(1)Because there is no affirmation that there was any wind.

(2)the grammatical structure of the sentence will admit no other construction. The word "filled" has no nominative case but the word "sound": "and suddenly there was a sound as of a wind, and (the sound) filled the house." In the Greek, the word "wind" is in the genitive or possessive case. It may be remarked here that this miracle was really far more striking than the common supposition makes it to have been. A tempest would have been terrific. A mighty wind might have alarmed them. But there would have been nothing unusual or remarkable in this. Such things often happened; and the thoughts would have been directed of course to the storm as an ordinary, though perhaps alarming occurrence. But when all was still; when there was no storm, no wind, no rain, no thunder, such a rushing sound must have arrested their attention, and directed all minds to a phenomenon so unusual and unaccountable.

All the house - Some have supposed that this was a room in or near the temple. But as the temple is not expressly mentioned, this is improbable. It was probably the private dwelling mentioned in Acts 1:13. If it be said that

such a dwelling could not contain so large a multitude as soon assembled, it may be replied that their houses had large central courts (See the notes on Matthew 9:2), and that it is not affirmed that the transactions recorded in this chapter occurred in the room which they occupied. It is probable that it took place in the court and around the house.

Verse 3

And there appeared unto them - There were seen by them, or they saw. The fire was first seen by them in the room before it rested in the form of tongues on the heads of the disciples. Perhaps the fire appeared at first as scintillations or coruscations, until it became fixed on their heads.

Tongues - γλῶσσαι glōssaiThe word "tongue" occurs often in the Scriptures to denote the member which is the instrument of taste and speech, and also to denote "language" or "speech" itself. It is also used, as with us, to denote what in shape resembles the tongue. Thus, Joshua 7:21, Joshua 7:24 (in Hebrew), "a tongue of gold," that is, a wedge of gold; Joshua 15:5; Joshua 18:19; Isaiah 11:15, "The tongue of the sea," that is, a bay or gulf. Thus also we say "a tongue of land." The phrase "tongue of fire" occurs once, and once only, in the Old Testament Isaiah 5:24, "Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble (Hebrew: tongue of fire), and the flame consumeth," etc. In this place the name tongue is given from the resemblance of a pointed flame to the human tongue. Anything long, narrow, and tending to a point is thus in the Hebrew called "a tongue." The word here means, therefore, "slender and pointed appearances" of flame, perhaps at first moving irregularly around the room.

cloven - Divided, separated - διαμεριζόμεναι diamerizomenai- from the verb διαμερίζω diamerizō"to divide, or distribute into parts." Matthew 27:35, "they parted his garments"; Luke 22:17, "Take this (the cup) and divide it among yourselves." Probably the common opinion is, that these tongues or flames were, each one of them split, or forked, or cloven. But this is not the meaning of the expression. The idea is that they were separated or divided one from another; it was not one great flame, but was broken up, or cloven into many parts, and probably these parts were moving without order in the room. In the Syriac it is, "And there appeared unto them tongues which divided themselves like fire, and sat upon each of them." The old Ethiopic version reads it, "And fire, as it were, appeared to them and sat on them."

And it sat upon each of them - Or "rested," in the form of a lambent or gentle flame, upon the head of each one. This showed that the prodigy was directed to them, and was a very significant emblem of the promised descent of the Holy Spirit. After the rushing sound and the appearance of the flames, they could not doubt that here was some remarkable interposition of God. The appearance of fire, or flame, has always been regarded as a most striking emblem of the Divinity. Thus, Exodus 3:2-3, God is said to have manifested himself to Moses in a bush which was burning, yet not consumed. Thus, Exodus 19:16-20, God descended on Mount Sinai in the midst of thunders, and lightnings, and smoke, and fire, striking emblems of his presence and power. See also Genesis 15:17. Thus, Deuteronomy 4:24, God is said to be "a consuming fire." Compare Hebrews 12:29. See Ezekiel 1:4; Psalm 18:12-14. The Classic reader will also instantly recall the beautiful description in Virgil (Aeneid, b. 2:680-691). Other instances of a similar prodigy are also recorded in profane writers (Pliny, H. N., 2:37; Livy, 1:39). These appearances to the apostles were emblematic, doubtless:

(1)Of the promised Holy Spirit, as a Spirit of purity and of power. The prediction of John the Immerser, "He shall baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire" Matthew 3:11 would probably be recalled at once to their memory.

(2)The unique appearance, that of tongues, was an emblem of the diversity of languages which they were about to be able to utter. Any form of fire would have denoted the presence and power of God; but a form was adopted expressive of "what was to occur." Thus, "any divine appearance" or "manifestation" at the baptism of Jesus might have denoted the presence and approbation of God; but the form chosen was that of a dove descending - expressive of the mild and gentle virtues with which he was to be imbued. So in Ezekiel 1:4, any form of flame might have denoted the presence of God; but the appearance actually chosen was one that was strikingly emblematical of his providence. In the same way, the appearance here symbolized their special endowments for entering on their great work - the ability to speak with new tongues.

Verse 4

Were all filled with the Holy Ghost - Were entirely under his sacred influence and power. See the notes on Luke 1:41, Luke 1:67. To be filled

with anything is a phrase denoting that all the faculties are pervaded by it, engaged in it, or under its influence, Acts 3:10, "Were filled with wonder and amazement"; Acts 5:17, "Filled with indignation"; Acts 13:45, "Filled with envy"; Acts 2:4, "Filled with joy and the Holy Spirit."

Began to speak with other tongues - In other languages than their native tongue. The languages which they spoke are specified in Acts 2:9-11.

As the Spirit gave them utterance - As the Holy Spirit gave them power to speak. This language implies plainly that they were now endued with a faculty of speaking languages which they had not before learned. Their native tongue was that of Galilee, a somewhat barbarous dialect of the common language used in Judea - the Syro-Chaldaic. It is possible that some of them might have been partially acquainted with the Greek and Latin, as each of those languages was spoken among the Jews to some extent; but there is not the slightest evidence that they were acquainted with the languages of the different nations afterward specified. Various attempts have been made to account for this remarkable phenomenon without supposing it to be a miracle. But the natural and obvious meaning of the passage is, that they were endowed by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit with ability to speak foreign languages, and languages to them before unknown. It does not appear that each one had the power of speaking all the languages which are specified Acts 2:9-11, but that this ability was among them, and that together they could speak these languages, probably some one and some another. The following remarks may perhaps throw some light on this remarkable occurrence:

(1) It was predicted in the Old Testament that what is here stated would occur in the times of the Messiah. Thus, in Isaiah 28:11, "With … another tongue will he speak unto this people." Compare 1 Corinthians 14:21 where this passage is expressly applied to the power of speaking foreign languages under the gospel.

(2) it was promised by the Lord Jesus that they should have this power, Mark 16:17, "These signs shall follow them that believe … they shall speak with new tongues."

(3) the ability to do it existed extensively and long in the church, 1 Corinthians 12:10-11, "To another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: all these worketh that one and the self-same

Spirit"; Acts 2:28, "God hath set in the church … diversities of tongues." Compare also Acts 2:30, and Acts 14:2, Acts 14:4-6, Acts 14:9, Acts 14:13-14; Acts 14:18-19, Acts 14:22-23, Acts 14:27, Acts 14:39. From this it appears that the power was well known in the church, and was not confined to the apostles. This also may show that in the case in the Acts, the ability to do this was conferred on other members of the church as well as the apostles.

(4) it was very important that they should be endowed with this power in their great work. They were going forth to preach to all nation; and though the Greek and Roman tongues were extensively spoken, yet their use was not universal, nor is it known that the apostles were skilled in those languages. To preach to all nations, it was indispensable that they should be able to understand their language. And in order that the gospel might be rapidly propagated through the earth, it was necessary that they should be endowed with ability to do this without the slow process of being compelled to learn them. It will contribute to illustrate this to remark that one of the principal hindrances in the spread of the gospel now arises from the inability to speak the languages of the nations of the earth, and that among missionaries of modern times a long time is necessarily spent in acquiring the language of a people before they are prepared to preach to them.

(5) one design was to establish the gospel by means of miracles. Yet no miracle could be more impressive than the power of conveying their sentiments at once in all the languages of the earth. When it is remembered what a slow and toilsome process it is to learn a foreign tongue, this would I be regarded by the pagan as one of the most striking miracles which could be performed, 1 Corinthians 14:22, 1 Corinthians 14:24-25.

(6) the reality and certainty of this miracle is strongly attested by the early triumphs of the gospel. That the gospel was early spread over all the world, and that, too, by the apostles of Jesus Christ, is the clear testimony of all history. They preached it in Arabia, Greece, Syria, Asia, Persia, Africa, and Rome. Yet how could this have been effected without a miraculous power of speaking the languages used in all those places? Now, it requires the toil of many years to speak in foreign languages; and the recorded

success of the gospel is one of the most striking attestations to the fact of the miracle that could be conceived.

(7) the corruption of language was one of the most decided effects of sin, and the source of endless embarrassments and difficulties, Matthew 28:19 to send the gospel to all nations, so it is bound to provide that the teachers who shall be sent forth shall be qualified for their work. Hence, one of the reasons of the importance of training men for the holy ministry.

Verse 5

There were dwelling at Jerusalem - The word rendered "dwelling" - κατοικοῦντες katoikountes- properly means to have a fixed and permanent habitation, in distinction from another word - παροικοῦντες paroikeountes- which means to have a temporary and transient residence in a place. But it is not always confined to this signification; and it is not improbable that many wealthy foreign Jews had a permanent residence in Jerusalem for the convenience of being near the temple. This was the more probable, as about that time the Messiah was expected to appear, Acts 8:2, "And devout men carried Stephen to his burial"; Luke 2:25," And the same man (Simeon) was just, and devout." The word "devout" means "yielding a solemn and reverential attention to God in religious exercises, particularly in prayer, pious, sincere, solemn" (Webster), and very well expresses the force of the original.

Out of every nation under heaven - A general expression meaning from all parts of the earth. The countries from which they came are more particularly specified in Acts 2:9-11. The Jews at that time were scattered into almost all nations, and in all places had synagogues. See the John 7:35 note; James 1:1 note; 1 Peter 1:1 note. Still they would naturally desire to be present as often as possible at the great feasts of the nation in Jerusalem. Many would seek a residence there for the convenience of being present at the religious solemnities. Many who came up to the Feast of the Passover would remain to the Feast of the Pentecost. The consequence of this would be, that on such occasions the city would be full of strangers. We are told that when Titus besieged Jerusalem, an event which occurred at about the time of the Feast of the Passover, there were no less than three million people in the city.

Josephus also mentions an instance in which great multitudes of Jews from other nations were present at the feast of Pentecost (Jewish Wars, book 2, chapter 3, section 1). What is here stated as occurring at that time is true of the inhabitants of Jerusalem - four or five thousand in number who reside there now. A large portion of them are from abroad. Prof. Hackett (Illustrations of Scripture, p. 228,229) says of them, "Few of them, comparatively, are natives of the country. The majority of them are aged persons, who repair to the holy city to spend the remainder of their days and secure the privilege of being buried in the Valley of the Kedron, which, as their traditions assert, is to be the scene of the last judgment. At the Jews' Wailing Place one day I met a venerable man, bowed with age, apparently beyond 80, who told me that, in obedience to his sense of duty, he had forsaken his children and home in England, and had come, unattended by any friend, to die and make his grave at Jerusalem. Others of them are those who come here to fulfill a vow, or acquire the merit of a pilgrimage, and then return to the countries where they reside. Among them may be found representatives from almost every land, though the Spanish, Polish, and German Jews compose the greater number.

Like their brethren in other parts of Palestine, except a few in some commercial places, they are wretchedly poor, and live chiefly on alms contributed by their countrymen in Europe and America. They devote most of their time to holy employments, as they are called; they frequent the synagogues, roam over the country to visit places memorable in their ancient history, and read assiduously the Old Testament and the writings of their rabbis. Those of them who make any pretensions to learning understand the Hebrew and rabbinic, and speak as their vernacular tongue the language of the country where they formerly lived, or whence their fathers emigrated."

Verse 6

When this was noised abroad - When the rumor of this remarkable transaction was spread, as it naturally would be.

Were confounded - συνεχύθη sunechuthēThe word used here means literally "to pour together," hence, "to confound, confuse." It is used:

(a)of an assembly or multitude thrown into confusion, Acts 21:27;

(b)of the mind as perplexed or confounded, as in disputation, Acts 9:22; and,

(c)of persons in amazement or consternation, as in this place. They did not understand this; they could not account for it.

Every man heard them speak … - Though the multitude spoke different tongues, yet they now heard Galileans use the language which they had learned in foreign nations. "His own language." His own dialect - διαλέκτῳ dialektōHis own idiom, whether it was a foreign language, or whether it was a modification of the Hebrew. The word may mean either; but it is probable that the foreign Jews would greatly modify the Hebrew, or conform almost entirely to the language spoken in the country where they lived. We may remark here that this effect of the descent of the Holy Spirit was not special to that time. A work of grace on the hearts of people in a revival of religion will always "be noised abroad." A multitude will come together, and God often, as he did here, makes use of this motive to bring them under the influence of religion. Curiosity was the motive here, and it was the occasion of their being brought under the power of truth, and of their conversion. In thousands of cases this has occurred since. The effect of what they saw was to confound them, to astonish them, and to throw them into deep perplexity. They made no complaint at first of the irregularity of what was done, but were all amazed and overwhelmed. So the effect of a revival of religion is often to convince the multitude that it is indeed a work of the Holy One; to amaze them by the display of his power; and to silence opposition and cavil by the manifest presence and the power of God. A few afterward began to cavil Acts 2:13, as some will always do in a revival; but the mass were convinced, as will be the case always, that this was a mighty display of the power of God.

Verse 7

Galileans - Inhabitants of Galilee. It was remarkable that they should speak in this manner, because:

(1)They were ignorant, rude, and uncivilized, John 1:46. Hence, the term Galilean was used as an expression of the deepest reproach and contempt, Mark 14:70; John 7:52.

(2)Their dialect was proverbially barbarous and corrupt, Mark 14:70; Matthew 26:73. They were regarded as an outlandish people, unacquainted with other nations and languages, and hence, the amazement that they could

address them in the refined language of other people. Their native ignorance was the occasion of making the miracle more striking. The native weakness of Christian ministers makes the grace and glory of God more remarkable in the success of the gospel. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us," 2 Corinthians 4:7. The success which God often grants to those who are of slender endowments and of little learning, though blessed with an humble and pious heart, is often amazing to the people of the world. God has "chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise," 1 Corinthians 1:27. This should teach us that no talent or attainment is too humble to be employed for mighty purposes, in its proper sphere, in the kingdom of Christ; and that pious effort may accomplish much, and then burn in heaven with increasing luster for ever, while pride, and learning, and talent may blaze uselessly among people, and then be extinguished in eternal night.

Verse 8

Wherein we were born - That is, as we say, in our native language; what is spoken where we were born.

Verse 9

Parthians … - To show the surprising extent and power of this miracle, Luke enumerates the different nations that were represented then at Jerusalem. In this way the number of languages which the apostles spoke, and the extent of the miracle, can be ascertained. The enumeration of these nations begins at the east and proceeds to the west. Parthians mean those Jews or proselytes who dwelt in Parthia. This country was a part of Persia, and was situated between the Persian Gulf and the Tigris on the west, and the Indus River on the east. The term "Parthia" originally referred to a small mountainous district lying to the northeast of Media. Afterward it came to be applied to the great Parthian kingdom into which this province expanded. Parthia proper, or Ancient Parthia, lying between Asia and Hyrcania, the residence of a rude and poor tribe, and traversed by bare mountains, woods, and sandy steppes, formed a part of the great Persian monarchy. Its inhabitants were of Scythian origin. About 256 years before Christ, Arsaces rose against the Syro-Macedonian power, and commenced a new dynasty in her own person, designated by the title of Arsacidae. This was the beginning of the great Parthian empire, which extended itself in the early days of Christianity over all the provinces of what had been the

Persian kingdom, having the Euphrates for its western boundary, by which it was separated from the dominions of Rome (Kitto‘s Encyclop.). Their empire lasted about 400 years. The Parthians were much distinguished for their manner of fighting. They usually fought on horseback, and when appearing to retreat, discharged their arrows with great execution behind them. They disputed the empire of the East with the Romans for a long time. The language spoken there was that of Persia, and in ancient writers Parthia and Persia often mean the same country.

Medes - Inhabitants of Media. This country was situated westward and southward of the Caspian Sea, between 35 degrees and 40 degrees of north latitude. It had Persia on the south and Armenia on the west. It was about the size of Spain, and was one of the richest parts of Asia. In the Scriptures it is called Madai, Genesis 10:2. The Medes are often mentioned, frequently in connection with the Persians, with whom they were often connected under the same government, 2 Kings 17:6; 2 Kings 18:11; Esther 1:3, Esther 1:14, Esther 1:18-19; Jeremiah 25:25; Daniel 5:28; Daniel 6:8; Daniel 8:20; Daniel 9:1. The language spoken here was also that of Persia.

Elamites - Elam is often mentioned in the Old Testament. The nation was descended from Elam, the son of Shem, Genesis 10:22. It is mentioned as being in alliance with Amraphel, the king of Shinar, and Arioch, king of Ellasar, and Tidal, king of nations, Genesis 14:1. Of these nations in alliance, Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, was the chief, Genesis 14:4. See also Ezra 2:7; Ezra 8:7; Nehemiah 7:12, Nehemiah 7:34; Isaiah 11:11; Isaiah 21:2; Isaiah 22:6, etc. They are mentioned as a part of the Persian empire, and Daniel is said to have resided at Shushan, which is in the province of Elam, Daniel 8:2. The Greeks and Romans gave to this country the name of Elymais. It is now called Kusistan. It was bounded by Persia on the east, by Media on the north, by Babylonia on the west, and by the Persian Gulf on the south. The Elamites were a warlike people, and celebrated for the use of the bow, Isaiah 22:6; Jeremiah 49:35. The language of this people was of course the Persian. Its capital, Shusan, called by the Greeks Susa, was much celebrated. It is said to have been fifteen miles in circumference, and was adorned with the celebrated palace of Ahasuerus. The inhabitants still pretend to show there the tomb of the prophet Daniel.

Mesopotamia - This name, which is Greek, signifies between the rivers; that is, the region lying between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. In Hebrew it was called Aram-Naharaimthat is, Aram, or Syria, of the two rivers. It

was also called Padan Aram, the plain of Syria. In this region were situated some important places mentioned in the Bible: "Ur of the Chaldees, the birthplace of Abraham Genesis 11:27-28; Haran, where Terah stopped on his journey and died Genesis 11:31-32; Charchemish 2 Chronicles 35:20; Hena 2 Kings 19:13; Sepharvaim 2 Kings 17:24. This region, known as Mesopotamia, extended between the two rivers from their sources to Babylon on the south. It had on the north Armenia, on the west Syria, on the east Persia, and on the south Babylonia. It was an extensive, level, and fertile country. The language spoken here was probably the Syriac, with perhaps a mixture of the Chaldee.

In Judea - This expression has greatly perplexed commentators. It has been thought difficult to see why Judea should be mentioned, as if it were a matter of surprise that they could speak in this language. Some have supposed that there is an error in the manuscripts, and have proposed to read Armenia, or India, or Lydia, or Idumea, etc. But all this has been without any authority. Others have supposed that the language of Galilee was so different from that of the other parts of Judea as to render it remarkable that they could speak that dialect. But this is an idle supposition. This is one of the many instances in which commentators have perplexed themselves to very little purpose. Luke recorded this as any other historian would have done. In running over the languages which they spoke, he enumerated this as a matter of course; not that it was remarkable simply that they should speak the language of Judea, but that they should steak so many, meaning about the same by it as if he had said they spoke every language in the world. It is as if a similar miracle were to occur at this time among an assembly of native Englishmen and foreigners. In describing it, nothing would be more natural than to say they spoke French, and German, and Spanish, and English, and Italian, etc. In this there would be nothing remarkable except that they spoke so many languages.

Cappadocia - This was a region of Asia Minor, and was bounded on the east by the Euphrates and Armenia, on the north by Pontus, west by Phrygia and Galatia, and south by Mount Taurus, beyond which are Cilicia and Syria. The language which was spoken here is not certainly known. It was probably, however, a mixed dialect, made up of Greek and Syriac, perhaps the same as that of their neighbors, the Lycaonians, Acts 14:11. This place was formerly celebrated for iniquity, and is mentioned in Greek writers as one of the three eminently wicked places whose name began with C. The

others were Crete (compare Titus 1:12) and Cilicia. After its conversion to the Christian religion, however, it produced many eminent men, among whom were Gregory Nyssen and Basil the Great. It was one of the places to which Peter directed an epistle, 1 Peter 1:1.

In Pontus - This was another province of Asia Minor, and was situated north of Cappadocia, and was bounded west by Paphlagonia. Pontus and Cappadocia under the Romans constituted one province. This was one of the places to which the apostle Peter directed his epistle, 1 Peter 1:1. This was the birthplace of Aquila, one of the companions of Paul, Acts 18:2, Acts 18:18, Acts 18:26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19.

And Asia - Pontus and Cappadocia, etc., were parts of Asia. But the word Asia is doubtless used here to denote the regions or provinces west of these, which are not particularly enumerated. Thus, it is used Acts 6:9; Acts 16:6; Acts 20:16. It probably embraced Mysia, Aeolis, Ionia, Caria, and Lydia. "The term probably denoted not so much a definite region as a jurisdiction, the limits of which varied from time to time, according to the plan of government which the Romans adopted for their Asiatic provinces" (Prof. Hackett, in loco). The capital of this region was Ephesus. See also 1 Peter 1:1. This region was frequently called Ionia, and was afterward the seat of the seven churches in Asia, Revelation 1:4.

Verse 10

Phrygia, and Pamphylia - These were also two provinces of Asia Minor. Phrygia was surrounded by Galatia, Cappadocia, and Pisidia. Pamphylia was on the Mediterranean, and was bounded north by Pisidia. The language of all these places was doubtless the Greek, more or less pure.

In Egypt - This was that extensive country, well known, on the south of the Mediterranean, watered by the Nile. It extends 600 miles from north to south, and from 100 to 120 miles east and west. The language used there was the Coptic tongue. At present the Arabic is spoken. Vast numbers of Jews dwelt in Egypt, and many from that country would be present at the great feasts at Jerusalem. In this country the first translation of the Old Testament was made, which is now called the Septuagint.

In the parts of Libya - Libya is a general name for Africa. It properly denoted the region which was near to Egypt; but the Greeks gave the name to all Africa.

About Cyrene - This was a region about 500 miles west of Alexandria in Egypt. It was also called Pentapolis, because there were in it five

celebrated cities. This country now belongs to Tripoli. Great numbers of Jews resided here. A Jew of this place, Simon by name, was compelled to bear our Saviour‘s cross after him to the place of crucifixion, Matthew 27:32; Luke 23:26. Some of the Cyrenians are mentioned among the earliest Christians, Acts 11:20; Acts 13:1. The language which they spoke is not certainly known.

Strangers of Rome - This literally means “Romans dwelling or tarrying,” that is, at Jerusalem. It may mean either that they were permanently fixed, or only tarrying at Jerusalem - ὁι ἐπιδημοῦντες Ῥωμαῖοι hoi epidēmōuntes RōmaioiThey were doubtless Jews who had taken up their residence in Italy, and had come to Jerusalem to attend the great feasts. The language which they spoke was the Latin. Great numbers of Jews were at that time dwelling at Rome. Josephus says that there were eight synagogues there. The Jews are often mentioned by the Roman writers. There was a Jewish colony across the Tiber from Rome. When Judea was conquered, about 60 years before Christ, vast numbers of Jews were taken captive and carried to Rome. But they had much difficulty in managing them as slaves. They pertinaciously adhered to their religion, observed the Sabbath, and refused to join in the idolatrous rites of the Romans. Hence, they were freed, and lived by themselves across the Tiber.

Jews - Native-born Jews, or descendants of Jewish families.

Proselytes - Those who had been converted to the Jewish religion from among the Gentiles. The great zeal of the Jews to make proselytes is mentioned by our Saviour as one of the special characteristics of the Pharisees, Matthew 23:15. Some have supposed that the expression “Jews and proselytes” refers to the Romans only. But it is more probable that reference is made to all those that are mentioned. It has the appearance of a hurried enumeration; and the writer evidently mentioned them as they occurred to his mind, just as we would in giving a rapid account of so many different nations.

Verse 11

Cretes - Crete, now called Candia, is an island in the Mediterranean, about 200 miles in length and 50 in breadth, about 500 miles southwest of Constantinople, and about the same distance west of Syria or Palestine. The climate is mild and delightful, the sky unclouded and serene. By some this island is supposed to be the Caphtor of the Hebrews, Genesis 10:14. It is mentioned in the Acts as the place touched at by Paul, Acts 27:7-8, Acts

27:13. This was the residence of Titus, who was left there by Paul" to set in order the things that were missing," etc., Titus 1:5. The Cretans among the Greeks were famous for deceit and falsehood. See the notes on Titus 1:12-13. The language spoken there was probably the Greek.

Arabians - Arabia is the great peninsula which is bounded north by part of Syria, east by the Euphrates and the Persian Gulf, south by the Indian Ocean, and west by the Red Sea. It is often mentioned in the Scriptures; and there were doubtless there many Jews. The language spoken there was the Arabic.

In our tongues - The languages spoken by the apostles could not have been less than seven or eight, besides different dialects of the same languages. It is not certain that the Jews present from foreign nations spoke those languages perfectly, but they had doubtless so used them as to make them the common tongue in which they conversed. No miracle could be more decided than this. There was no way in which the apostles could impose on them, and make them suppose they spoke foreign languages, if they really did not; for these foreigners were abundantly able to determine that. It may be remarked that this miracle had most important effects besides that witnessed on the day of Pentecost. The gospel would be carried by those who were converted to all these places, and the way would be prepared for the labors of the apostles there. Accordingly, most of these places became afterward celebrated by the establishment of Christian churches and the conversion of great multitudes to the Christian faith.

The wonderful works of God - τὰ μεγαλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ ta megaleia tou TheouThe great things of God; that is, the great things that God had done in the gift of his Son; in raising him from the dead; in his miracles, ascension, etc. Compare Luke 1:49; Psalm 71:19; Psalm 26:7; Psalm 66:3; Psalm 92:5; Psalm 104:24; etc.

Verse 12

Were in doubt - This expression, διηπόρουν diēporoundenotes "a state of hesitancy or anxiety about an event." It is applied to those who are traveling, and are ignorant of the way, or who hesitate about the road. They were all astonished at this; they did not know how to understand it or explain it, until some of them supposed that it was merely the effect of new wine.

Verse 13

Others, mocking, said - The word rendered "mocking" means "to cavil, to deride." It occurs in the New Testament in only one other place: Acts 17:32, "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked." This was an effect that was not confined to the day of Pentecost. There has seldom been a revival of religion, a remarkable manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit, that has not given occasion for profane mockery and merriment. One characteristic of wicked people is to deride those things which are done to promote their own welfare. Hence, the Saviour himself was mocked; and the efforts of Christians to save others have been the subject of derision. Derision, and mockery, and a jeer, have been far more effectual in deterring people from becoming Christians than any attempts at sober argument. God will treat people as they treat him, Psalm 18:26. And hence, he says to the wicked, "Because I have called and ye refused … but ye have set at naught my counsel; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh," Proverbs 1:24-26.

These men are full of new wine - These men are drunk. In times of a revival of religion men will have some way of accounting for the effects of the gospel, and the way is commonly about as wise and rational as the one adopted on this occasion. "To escape the absurdity of acknowledging their own ignorance, they adopted the theory that strong drink can teach languages" (Dr. McLelland). In modern times it has been usual to denominate such scenes fanaticism, or wildfire, or enthusiasm. When people fail in argument, it is common to attempt to confute a doctrine or bring reproach upon a transaction by "giving it an ill name." Hence, the names Puritan, Quaker, Methodist, etc., were at first given in derision, to account for some remarkable effect of religion on the world. Compare Matthew 11:19; John 7:20; John 8:48. And thus people endeavor to trace revivals to ungoverned and heated passions, and they are regarded as the mere offspring of fanaticism. The friends of revivals should not be discouraged by this; but they should remember that the very first revival of religion was by many supposed to be the effect of a drunken frolic.

New wine - γλεύκους gleukousThis word properly means the juice of the grape which distils before a pressure is applied, and called must. It was sweet wine, and hence, the word in Greek meaning "sweet" was given to it. The ancients, it is said, had the art of preserving their new wine with the special flavor before fermentation for a considerable time, and were in the habit of drinking it in the morning. See Horace, Sat., b. 2:iv. One of the

methods in use among the Greeks and Romans of doing this was the following: An amphora or jar was taken and coated with pitch within and without, and was then filled with the juice which flowed from the grapes before they had been fully trodden, and was then corked so as to be air-tight. It was then immersed in a tank of cold water or buried in the sand, and allowed to remain six weeks or two months. The contents after this process were found to remain unchanged for a year, and hence, the name ἀεί γλεύκος aei gleukos- always sweet. The process was not much unlike what is so common now of preserving fruits and vegetables. Sweet wine, which was probably the same as that mentioned here, is also mentioned in the Old Testament, Isaiah 49:26; Amos 9:13.

Verse 14

But Peter - This was in accordance with the natural temperament of Peter. He was bold, forward, ardent; and he rose now to defend the apostles of Jesus Christ, and Christ himself, from an injurious charge. Not daunted by ridicule or opposition, he felt that now was the time for preaching the gospel to the crowd that had been assembled by curiosity. No ridicule should deter Christians from an honest avowal of their opinions, and a defense of the operations of the Holy Spirit.

With the eleven - Matthias was now one of the apostles, and now appeared as one of the witnesses for the truth. They probably all arose, and took part in the discourse. Possibly Peter began to discourse, and either all spoke together in different languages, or one succeeded another.

Ye men of Judea - People who are Jews; that is, Jews by birth. The original does not mean that they were permanent dwellers in Judea, but that they were Jews, of Jewish families. Literally, "men, Jews."

And all ye that dwell … - All others besides native-born Jews, whether proselytes or strangers, who were abiding at Jerusalem. This comprised, of course, the whole assembly, and was a respectful and conciliatory introduction to his discourse. Though they had mocked them, yet he treated them with respect, and did not render railing for railing 1 Peter 3:9, but sought to convince them of their error.

Be this known … - Peter did not intimate that this was a doubtful matter, or one that could not be explained. His address was respectful, yet firm. He proceeded calmly to show them their error. When the enemies of religion deride us or the gospel, we should answer them kindly and respectfully, yet firmly. We should reason with them coolly, and convince

them of their error, Proverbs 15:1. In this case Peter acted on the principle which he afterward enjoined on all, 1 Peter 3:15, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." The design of Peter was to vindicate the conduct of the apostles from the reproach of intoxication; to show that this could be no other than the work of God; and to make an application of the truth to his hearers. This he did:

(1)By showing that this could not be reasonably supposed to be the effect of new wine, Acts 2:15.

(2)by showing that what had occurred had been expressly predicted in the writings of the Jewish prophets, Acts 2:16-21.

(3)by a calm argument, proving the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and showing that this also was in accordance with the Jewish Scriptures, Acts 2:22-35. We are not to suppose that this was the whole of Peter's discourse, but that these were the topics on which he insisted, and the main points of his argument.

Verse 15

For these are not drunken … - The word these here includes Peter himself, as well as the others. The charge doubtless extended to all.

The third hour of the day - The Jews divided their day into twelve equal parts, reckoning from sunrise to sunset. Of course the hours were longer in summer than in winter. The third hour would correspond to our nine o'clock in the morning. The reasons why it was so improbable that they would be drunk at that time were the following:

(1) It was the hour of morning worship, or sacrifice. It was highly improbable that, at an hour usually devoted to public worship, they would be intoxicated.

(2) it was not usual for even drunkards to become drunk in the daytime, 1 Thessalonians 5:7, "They that be drunken are drunken in the night."

(3) the charge was, that they had become drunk with wine. Ardent spirits, or alcohol, that curse of our times, was unknown. It was very improbable that so much of the weak wine commonly used in Judea should have been taken at that early hour as to produce intoxication.

(4) it was a regular practice with the Jews not to eat or drink anything until after the third hour of the day, especially on the Sabbath, and on all festival occasions. Sometimes this abstinence was maintained until noon. So universal was this custom, that the apostle could appeal to it with confidence, as a full refutation of the charge of drunkenness at that hour. Even the intemperate were not accustomed to drink before that hour. The following testimonies on this subject from Jewish writers are from Lightfoot: "This was the custom of pious people in ancient times, that each one should offer his morning prayers with additions in the synagogue, and then return home and take refreshment" (Maimonides, Shabb., chapter 30). "They remained in the synagogue until the sixth hour and a half, and then each one offered the prayer of the Minchah before he returned home, and then he ate." "The fourth is the hour of repast, when all eat." One of the Jewish writers says that the difference between thieves and honest men might be known by the fact that the former might be seen in the morning at the fourth hour eating and sleeping, and holding a cup in his hand. But for those who made pretensions to religion, as the apostles did, such a thing was altogether improbable.

Verse 16

This is that - This is the fulfillment of that, or this was predicted. This was the second part of Peter's argument, to show that this was in accordance with the predictions in their own Scriptures.

By the prophet Joel - Joel 2:28-32. This is not quoted literally, either from the Hebrew or the Septuagint. The substance, however, is preserved.

Verse 17

It shall come to pass - It shall happen, or shall occur.

In the last days - Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic, after these things, or afterward. The expression the last days, however, occurs frequently in the Old Testament: Genesis 49:1, Jacob called his sons, that he might tell them what should happen to them in the last days, that is, in future times - Heb. in after times; Micah 4:1, "In the last days (Hebrew: in later times) the mountain of the Lord's house," etc.; Isaiah 2:2, "in the last days the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains," etc. The expression then properly denoted "the future times" in general. But, as the coming of the Messiah was to the eye of a Jew the most

important event in the coming ages - the great, glorious, and crowning scene in all the vast futurity, the phrase came to be regarded as properly expressive of that. It stood in opposition to the usual denomination of earlier times.

It was a phrase in contrast with the days of the patriarchs, the kings, the prophets, etc. The last days, or the closing period of the world, were the days of the Messiah. It does not appear from this, and it certainly is not implied in the expression, that they supposed the world would then come to an end. Their views were just the contrary. They anticipated a long and glorious time under the dominion of the Messiah, and to this expectation they were led by the promise that his kingdom should be forever; that of the increase of his government there should be no end, etc. This expression was understood by the writers of the New Testament as referring undoubtedly to the times of the gospel. And hence they often used it as denoting that the time of the expected Messiah had come, but not to imply that the world was drawing near to an end: Hebrews 1:2, "God hath spoken in these last days by his Son"; 1 Peter 1:20, "Was manifested in these last times for you"; 2 Peter 3:3; 1 Peter 1:5; 1 John 2:18, "Little children, it is the last time," etc.; Jude 1:18. The expression the last day is applied by our Saviour to the resurrection and the day of judgment, John 6:39-40, John 6:44-45; John 11:24; John 12:48. Here the expression means simply "in those future times, when the Messiah shall have come."

I will pour out of my Spirit - The expression in Hebrew is, "I will pour out my Spirit." The word "pour" is commonly applied to water or to blood, "to pour it out," or "to shed it," Isaiah 57:6; to tears, "to pour them out," that is," to weep, etc., Psalm 42:4; 1 Samuel 1:15. It is applied to water, to wine, or to blood, in the New Testament, Matthew 9:17; Revelation 16:1; Acts 22:20, "The blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed." It conveys also the idea of "communicating largely or freely," as water is poured freely from a fountain, Titus 3:5-6, "The renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he shed on us abundantly." Thus, Job 36:27, "They (the clouds) pour down rain according to the vapor thereof"; Isaiah 44:3, "I will pour water on him that is thirsty"; Isaiah 45:8, "Let the skies pour down righteousness"; Malachi 3:10, "I will pour you out a blessing." It is also applied to fury and anger, when God intends to say that he will not spare, but will signally punish, Psalm 69:24; Jeremiah 10:25. It is not infrequently applied to the Spirit, Proverbs 1:23; Isaiah 44:3; Zechariah 12:10. As thus used it means

that he will bestow large measures of spiritual influences. As the Spirit renews and sanctifies people, so to pour out the Spirit is to grant freely his influences to renew and sanctify the soul.

My Spirit - The Spirit here denotes the Third Person of the Trinity, promised by the Saviour, and sent to finish his work, and apply it to people. The Holy Spirit is regarded as the source or conveyer of all the blessings which Christians experience. Hence, he renews the heart, John 3:5-6. He is the source of all proper feelings and principles in Christians, or he produces the Christian graces, Galatians 5:22-25; Titus 3:5-7. The spread and success of the gospel is attributed to him, Isaiah 32:15-16. Miraculous gifts are traced to him, especially the various gifts with which the early Christians were endowed, 1 Corinthians 12:4-10. The promise that he would pour out his Spirit means that he would, in the time of the Messiah, impart a large measure of those influences which it was his special province to communicate to people. A part of them were communicated on the day of Pentecost, in the miraculous endowment of the power of speaking foreign languages, in the wisdom of the apostles, and in the conversion of the three thousand,

Upon all flesh - The word "flesh" here means "persons," or "people." See the notes on Romans 1:3. The word "all" here does not mean every individual, but every class or rank of individuals. It is to be limited to the cases specified immediately. The influences were not to be confined to any one class, but were to be communicated to all kinds of persons - old men, youth, servants, etc. Compare 1 Timothy 2:1-4.

And your sons and your daughters - Your children. It would seem that females shared in the remarkable influences of the Holy Spirit. Philip the Evangelist had four daughters which did prophesy, Acts 21:9. It is probable also that the females of the church of Corinth partook of this gift, though they were forbidden to exercise it in public, 1 Corinthians 14:34. The office of prophesying, whatever was meant by that, was not confined to the people among the Jews: Exodus 15:20, "Miriam, the prophetess, took a timbrel," etc.; Judges 4:4, "Deborah, a prophetess, judged Israel"; 2 Kings 22:14. See also Luke 2:36, "There was one Anna, a prophetess," etc.

Shall prophesy - The word "prophesy" is used in a great variety of senses:

(1) It means to predict or foretell future events, Matthew 11:13; Matthew 15:7.

(2) to divine, to conjecture, to declare as a prophet might, Matthew 26:68, "Prophesy who smote thee."

(3) to celebrate the praises of God, being under a divine influence, Luke 1:67. This seems to have been a considerable part of the employment in the ancient schools of the prophet, 1 Samuel 10:5; 1 Samuel 19:20; 1 Samuel 30:15.

(4) to teach - as no small part of the office of the prophets was to teach the doctrines of religion, Matthew 7:22, "Have we not prophesied in thy name?"

(5) it denotes, then, in general, "to speak under a divine influence," whether in foretelling future events, in celebrating the praises of God, in instructing others in the duties of religion, or "in speaking foreign languages under that influence." In this last sense the word is used in the New Testament, to denote those who were miraculously endowed with the power of speaking foreign languages, Acts 19:6. The word is also used to denote "teaching, or speaking in intelligible language, in opposition to speaking a foreign tongue," 1 Corinthians 14:1-5. In this place it means that they would speak under a divine influence, and is specially applied to the power of speaking in a foreign tongue.

Your young men shall see visions - The will of God in former times was communicated to the prophets in various ways. One was by visions, and hence one of the most usual names of the prophets was seers. The name seer was first given to that class of men, and was superseded by the name prophet, 1 Samuel 9:9, "He that is now called a prophet was beforetime called a seer"; 1 Samuel 9:11, 1 Samuel 9:18-19; 2 Samuel 24:11; 1 Chronicles 29:29, etc. This name was given from the manner in which the divine will was communicated, which seems to have been by throwing the prophet into an ecstasy, and then by causing the vision, or the appearance of the objects or events to pass before the mind. The prophet looked upon the passing scene, the often splendid diorama as it actually occurred, and recorded it as it appeared to his mind. Hence, he recorded rather the succession of images than the times in which they would occur. These visions occurred sometimes when they were asleep, and sometimes during a

prophetic ecstasy, Daniel 2:28; Daniel 7:1-2, Daniel 7:15; Daniel 8:2; Ezekiel 11:24; Genesis 15:1; Numbers 12:6; Job 4:13; Job 7:14; Ezekiel 1:1; Ezekiel 8:3.

Often the prophet seemed to be transferred or transported to another place from where he was, and the scene in a distant land or age passed before the mind, Ezekiel 8:3; Ezekiel 40:2; Ezekiel 11:24; Daniel 8:2. In this case the distant scene or time passed before the prophet, and he recorded it as it appeared to him. That this did not cease before the times of the gospel is evident: Acts 9:10, "To Ananias said the Lord in a vision," etc.; Acts 9:12, "and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias," etc.; that is, Paul hath seen Ananias represented to him, though absent; he has had an image of him coming in to him; Acts 10:3, Cornelius "saw in a vision evidently an angel of God coming to him," etc. This was one of the modes by which in former times God made known his will; and the language of the Jews came to express a revelation in this manner. Though there were strictly no visions on the day of Pentecost, yet that was one scene under the great economy of the Messiah under which God would make known his will in a manner as clear as he did to the ancient Jews.

Your old men shall dream dreams - The will of God in former times was made known often in this manner; and there are several instances recorded in which it was done under the gospel. God informed Abimelech in a dream that Sarah was the wife of Abraham, Genesis 20:3. He spoke to Jacob in a dream, Genesis 31:11; to Laban, Genesis 31:24; to Joseph, Genesis 37:5; to the butler and baker, Genesis 40:5; to Pharaoh, Genesis 41:1-7; to Solomon, 1 Kings 3:5; to Daniel, Daniel 2:3; Daniel 7:1. It was prophesied by Moses that in this way God would make known his will, Numbers 12:6. It occurred even in the times of the gospel. Joseph was warned in a dream, Matthew 1:20; Matthew 2:12-13, Matthew 2:19, Matthew 2:22. Pilate's wife was also troubled in this manner about the conduct of the Jews to Christ, Matthew 27:19. As this was one way in which the will of God was made known formerly to people, so the expression here denotes simply that His will would be made known; that it would be one characteristic of the times of the gospel that God would reveal Himself to mankind. The ancients probably had some mode of determining whether their dreams were divine communications, or whether they were, as they are now, the mere erratic wanderings of the mind when unrestrained

and unchecked by the will. At present no confidence is to be put in dreams. Compare the introduction to Isaiah, section 7,12.

Verse 18

And on my servants - The Hebrew text in Joel is "upon the servants." The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, however, render it "on my servants." In Joel, the prophet would seem to be enumerating the different conditions and ranks of society. The influences of the Spirit would be confined to no class; they would descend on old and young, and even on servants and handmaids. So the Chaldee Paraphrase understood it. But the Septuagint and Peter evidently understood it in the sense of servants of God, as the worshippers of God are often called servants in the Scriptures. See Romans 1:1. It is possible, however, that Joel intended to refer to the servants of God. It is not "upon your servants," etc., as in the former expression, "your sons," etc.; but the form is changed, "upon servants and handmaids." The language, therefore, will admit the construction of the Septuagint and of Peter; and it was this variation in the original Hebrew which suggested, doubtless, the mention of "my servants," etc., instead of your servants.

And on my handmaids - Female servants. The name is several times given to pious women, Psalm 86:16; Psalm 116:16; Luke 1:38, Luke 1:48. The meaning of this verse does not materially differ from the former. In the times of the gospel, those who were brought under its influence would be remarkably endowed with ability to declare the will of God.

Verse 19

I will show wonders - Literally, "I will give signs" - δώσω τέρατα dōsō terataThe word in the Hebrew, מופתים mowpatiymmeans properly "prodigies; wonderful occurrences; miracles performed by God or his messengers," Exodus 4:21; Exodus 7:3, Exodus 7:9; Exodus 11:9; Deuteronomy 4:34, etc. It is the common word to denote a miracle in the Old Testament. Here it means, however, a portentous appearance, a prodigy, a remarkable occurrence. It is commonly joined in the New Testament with the word "signs" - "signs and wonders," Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22; John 4:48. In these places it does not of necessity mean miracles, but unusual and remarkable appearances. Here it is used to mean great and striking changes in the sky, the sun, moon, etc. The Hebrew is, "I will give signs in the heaven and upon the earth." Peter has quoted it according to the sense, and not according to the letter. The Septuagint is here a literal translation of the

Hebrew; and this is one of the instances where the New Testament writers did not quote from either.

Much of the difficulty of interpreting these verses consists in affixing the proper meaning to the expression "that great and notable day of the Lord." If it be limited to the day of Pentecost, it is certain that no such events occurred at that time. But there is, it is believed, no propriety in confining it to that time. The description here pertains to "the last days" Acts 2:17; that is, to the whole of that period of duration, however long, which was known by the prophets as "the last times." That period might be extended through many centuries; and during that period all these events would take place. The day of the Lord is the day when God will manifest himself in a special manner; a day when he will so strikingly be seen in his wonders and his judgments that it may be called his day. Thus, it is applied to the day of judgment as the day of the Son of man; the day in which he will be the great attractive object, and will be signally glorified, Luke 17:24; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; Philemon 1:6; 2 Peter 3:12. If, as I suppose, "that notable day of the Lord" here refers to that future time when God will manifest himself in judgment, then we are not to suppose that Peter meant to say that these "wonders" would take place on the day of Pentecost, or had their fulfillment then, "but would occur under that indefinite period called "the last days," the days of the Messiah, and before that period Was closed by the great day of the Lord." The gift of tongues was a partial fulfillment of the general prophecy pertaining to those times. And as the prophecy was thus partially fulfilled, it was a pledge that it would be entirely; and thus there was laid a foundation for the necessity of repentance, and for calling on the Lord in order to be saved.

Blood - Blood is commonly used as an emblem of slaughter or of battle.

Fire - Fire is also an image of war, or the conflagration of towns and dwellings in time of war.

Vapour of smoke - The word "vapor," ἀτμίς atmismeans commonly an exhalation from the earth, etc., easily moved from one place to another. Here it means (Hebrew: Joel) rising columbus or pillars of smoke, and is another image of the calamities of war the smoke rising from burning towns. It has always been customary in war to burn the towns of an enemy, and to render him as helpless as possible. Hence, the calamities denoted here are those represented by such scenes. To what particular scenes there is reference here it is impossible now to say. It may be remarked, however,

that scenes of this kind occurred before the destruction of Jerusalem, and there is a striking resemblance between the description in Joel and that by which our Saviour foretells the destruction of Jerusalem. See the notes on Matthew 24:21-24. Dr. Thomson (*Land and the Book*, vol. 2, p. 311) supposes that the reference in Joel may have been to the usual appearances of the sirocco, or that they may have suggested the image used here. He says: "We have two kinds of sirocco, one accompanied with vehement wind, which fills the air with dust and fine sand. I have often seen the whole heavens veiled in gloom with this sort of sandcloud, through which the sun, shorn of his beams, looked like a globe of dull smouldering fire. It may have been this phenomenon which suggested that strong prophetic figure of Joel, quoted by Peter on the day of Pentecost. Wonders in the heaven and in the earth; blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood. The pillars of smoke are probably those columns of sand and dust raised high in the air by local whirlwinds, which often accompany the sirocco. On the great desert of the Hauran I have seen a score of them marching with great rapidity over the plain, and they closely resemble ‹pillars of smoke.'"

Verse 20

The sun shall be turned into darkness - See the notes on Matthew 24:29. The same images used here with reference to the sun and moon are used also there: They occur not infrequently, Mark 13:24; 2 Peter 3:7-10. The shining of the sun is an emblem of prosperity; the withdrawing, the eclipse, or the setting of the sun is an emblem of calamity, and is often thus need in the Scriptures, Isaiah 60:20; Jeremiah 15:9; Ezekiel 32:7; Amos 8:9; Revelation 6:12; Revelation 8:12; Revelation 9:2; Revelation 16:8. To say that the sun is darkened, or turned into darkness, is an image of calamity, and especially of the calamities of war, when the smoke of burning cities rises to heaven and obscures his light. This is not, therefore, to be taken literally, nor does it afford any indication of what will be at the end of the world in regard to the sun.

The moon into blood - The word "blood" here means that obscure, sanguinary color which the moon has when the atmosphere is filled with smoke and vapor, and especially the lurid and alarming appearance which it assumes when smoke and flames are thrown up by earthquakes and fiery eruptions, Revelation 6:12, "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as

sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood," Revelation 8:8. In this place it denotes great calamities. The figures used are indicative of wars, and conflagrations, and earthquakes. As these things are Deuteronomy 10:21; 2 Samuel 7:23. This will apply to any day in which God signally manifests himself, but particularly to a day when he shall come forth to punish people, as at the destruction of Jerusalem, or at the day of judgment. The meaning is, that those wonders would take place before that distinguished day should arrive when God would come forth in judgment.

Verse 21

Whosoever shall call - In the midst of these wonders and dangers, whosoever should call on the Lord should be delivered (Joel). The name of the Lord is the same as the Lord himself. It is a Hebraism, signifying to call on the Lord, Psalm 79:6; Zechariah 13:9.

Shall be saved - In Hebrew, shall be delivered, that is, from impending calamities. When they threaten, and God is coming forth to judge them, it shall be that those who are characterized as those who call on the Lord shall be delivered. This is equally true at all times. It is remarkable that no Christians perished in the siege of Jerusalem. Though more than a million of Jews perished, yet the followers of Christ who were there, having been warned by him, when they saw the signs of the Romans approaching, withdrew to Aelia, and were preserved. So it shall be in the day of judgment. All whose character it has been that "they called on God" will then be saved. While the wicked will then call on the rocks and the mountains to shelter them from the Lord, those who have invoked his favor and mercy will find deliverance. The use which Peter makes of this passage is this: Calamities were about to come; the day of judgment was approaching; they were passing through the last days of the earth's history, and therefore it became them to call on the name of the Lord, and to obtain deliverance from the dangers which impended over the guilty. There can be little doubt that Peter intended to apply this to the Messiah, and that by the name of the Lord he meant the Lord Jesus. See 1 Corinthians 1:2. Paul makes the same use of the passage, expressly applying it to the Lord Jesus Christ, Romans 10:13-14. In Joel, the word translated "Lord" is יהוה Yahwehthe incommunicable and unique name of God; and the use of the passage before us in the New Testament shows how the apostles regarded the Lord Jesus Christ, and proves that they had no hesitation in applying to him names and attributes which could belong to no one but God.

This verse teaches us:

1. That in prospect of the judgments of God which are to come, we should make preparation. We shall be called to pass through the closing scenes of this earth; the time when the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, and when the great day of the Lord shall come.

2. It is easy to be saved. All that God requires of us is to call upon him, to pray to him, and he will answer and save. If people will not do so easy a thing as to call on God, and ask him for salvation, it is obviously proper that they should be cast off. The terms of salvation could not be made plainer or easier. The offer is wide, free, universal, and there is no obstacle but what exists in the heart of the sinner.

And from this part of Peter‘s vindication of the scene on the day of Pentecost we may learn also:

1. That revivals of religion are to be expected as a part of the history of the Christian church. He speaks of God‘s pouring out his Spirit, etc., as what was to take place in the last days, that is, in the indefinite and large tract of time which was to come, under the administration of the Messiah. His remarks are by no means limited to the day of Pentecost. They are as applicable to future periods as to that time; and we are to expect it as a part of Christian history, that the Holy Spirit will be sent down to awaken and convert people.

2. This will also vindicate revivals from all the changes which have ever been brought against them. All the objections of irregularity, extravagance, wildfire, enthusiasm, disorder, etc., which have been alleged against revivals in modern times, might have been brought with equal propriety against the scene on the day of Pentecost. Yet an apostle showed that that was in accordance with the predictions of the Old Testament, and was an undoubted work of the Holy Spirit. If that work could be vindicated, then modern revivals may be. If that was really liable to no objections on these accounts, then modern works of grace should not be objected to for the same things. And if that excited deep interest in the apostles; if they felt deep concern to vindicate it from the charge brought against it, then

Christians and Christian ministers now should feel similar solicitude to defend revivals, and not be found among their revilers, their calumniators, or their foes. There will be enemies enough of the work of the Holy Spirit without the aid of professed Christians, and that man possesses no enviable feelings or character who is found with the enemies of God and his Christ in opposing the mighty work of the Holy Spirit on the human heart.

Verse 22

Ye men of Israel - Descendants of Israel or Jacob, that is, Jews. Peter proceeds now to the third part of his argument, to show that Jesus Christ had been raised up; that the scene which had occurred was in accordance with his promise, was proof of his resurrection, and of his exaltation to be the Messiah; and that, therefore, they should repent for their great sin in having put their own Messiah to death.

A man approved of God - A man who was shown or demonstrated to have the approbation of God, or to have been sent by him.

By miracles, and wonders, and signs - The first of these words properly means the displays of power which Jesus made; the second, the unusual or remarkable events which attended him, as suited to excite wonder or amazement; the third, the sights or proofs that he was from God. Together, they denote the array or series of remarkable works - raising the dead, healing the sick, etc., which showed that Jesus was sent from God. The proof which they furnished that he was from God was this, that He would not confer such power on an impostor, and that therefore Jesus was what he pretended to be.

Which God did, by him - The Lord Jesus himself often traced his power to do these things to his commission from the Father, but he did it in such a way as to show that he was closely united to him, John 5:19, John 5:30. Peter here says that God did these works by Jesus Christ, to show that Jesus was truly sent by him, and that therefore he had the seal and attestation of God. The same thing Jesus himself said, John 5:36, "The work which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." The great works which God has made in creation, as well as in redemption, he is represented as having done by his Son, Hebrews 1:2, "By whom also he made the worlds," John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-19.

In the midst of you - In your own land. It is also probable that many of the persons present had been witnesses of his miracles.

As ye yourselves also know - They knew it either by having witnessed them, or by the evidence which everywhere abounded of the truth that he had performed them. The Jews, even in the time of Christ, did not dare to call his miracles in question, John 15:24. While they admitted the miracle, they attempted to trace it to the influence of Beelzebub, Matthew 9:34; Mark 3:22. So decided and numerous were the miracles of Jesus, that Peter here appeals to them as having been known by the Jews themselves to have been performed, and with a confidence that even riley could not deny it. On this he proceeds to rear his argument for the truth of his Messiahship.

Verse 23

Him, being delivered - ἔκδοτον ekdotonThis word, delivered, is used commonly of those who are surrendered or delivered into the hands of enemies or adversaries. It means that Jesus was surrendered, or given up to his enemies by those who should have been his protectors. Thus, he was delivered to the chief priests, Mark 10:33. Pilate released Barabbas, and delivered Jesus to their will, Mark 15:15; Luke 23:25. He was delivered unto the Gentiles, Luke 18:32; the chief priests delivered him to Pilate, Matthew 27:2; and Pilate delivered him to be crucified, Matthew 27:26; John 19:16. In this manner was the death of Jesus accomplished, by being surrendered from one tribunal to another, and one demand of his countrymen to another, until they succeeded in procuring his death. It may also be implied here that he was given or surrendered by God Himself to the hands of people. Thus, he is represented to have been given by God, John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10. The Syriac translates this, "Him, who was destined to this by the foreknowledge and will of God, you delivered into the hands of wicked men," etc. The Arabic, "Him, delivered to you by the hands of the wicked, you received, and after you had mocked him you slew him."

By the determinate counsel - The word translated "determinate" - τῇ ὡρίσμένῃ tē hōrismenē- mean, properly, "what is defined, marked out, or bounded; as, to mark out or define the boundary of a field," etc. See Romans 1:1, Romans 1:4. In Acts 10:42, it is translated "ordained of God"; denoting His purpose that it should be so, that is, that Jesus should be the Judge of quick and dead; Luke 22:22, "The Son of man goeth as it is determined of him," that is, as God has purposed or determined beforehand

that he should go; Acts 11:29, "The disciples … determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea," that is, they resolved or purposed beforehand to do it; Acts 17:26, "God … ‹hath determined‘ the times before appointed and fixed," etc. In all these places there is the idea of a purpose, intention, or plan implying intention, and marking out or fixing the boundaries to some future action or evens. The word implies that the death of Jesus was resolved by God before it took place. And this truth is established by all the predictions made in the Old Testament, and by the Saviour himself. God was not compelled to give up his Son. There was no claim on him for it. He had a right, therefore, to determine when and how it should be done. The fact, moreover, that this was predicted, shows that it was fixed or resolved on. No event can be foretold, evidently, unless it be certain that it will take place. The event, therefore, must in some way be fixed or resolved on beforehand,

Counsel - βουλή boulēThis word properly denotes "purpose, decree, will." It expresses the act of the mind in willing, or the purpose or design which is formed. Here it means the purpose or will of God; it was his plan or decree that Jesus should be delivered: Acts 4:28, "For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel ἡ βουλή σου hē boulē soudetermined before to be done"; Ephesians 1:11, "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"; Hebrews 6:17, "God willing … to show … the immutability of his counsel." See Acts 20:27; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Luke 23:51. The word here, therefore, proves that Jesus was delivered by the deliberate purpose of God; that it was according to his previous intention and design. The reason why this was insisted on by Peter was that he might convince the Jews that Jesus was not delivered by weakness, or because he was unable to rescue himself. Such an opinion would have been inconsistent with the belief that he was the Messiah. It was important, then, to assert the dignity of Jesus, and to show that his death was in accordance with the fixed design of God, and therefore that it did not interfere in the least with his claims to be the Messiah. The same thing our Saviour has himself expressly affirmed, John 19:10-11; John 10:18; Matthew 26:53.

Foreknowledge - This word denotes "the seeing beforehand of an event yet to take place." It implies:

1.Omniscience; and,

2.That the event is fixed and certain.

To foresee a contingent event, that is, to foresee that an event will take place when it may or may not take place, is an absurdity. Foreknowledge, therefore, implies that for some reason the event will certainly take place. What that reason As, however, God is represented in the Scriptures as purposing or determining future events; as they could not be foreseen by him unless he had so determined, so the word sometimes is used in the sense of determining beforehand, or as synonymous with decreeing, Romans 8:29; Romans 11:2. In this place the word is used to denote that the delivering up of Jesus was something more than a bare or naked decree. It implies that God did it according to his foresight of what would be the best time, place, and manner of its being done. It was not the result merely of will; it was will directed by a wise foreknowledge of what would be best. And this is the case with all the decrees of God. It follows from this that the conduct of the Jews was foreknown. God was not disappointed in anything respecting their treatment of his Son, nor will he be disappointed in any of the actions of people. Notwithstanding the wickedness of the world, his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure, Isaiah 46:10.

Ye have taken - See Matthew 26:57. Ye Jews have taken. It is possible that some were present on this occasion who had been personally concerned in taking Jesus, and many who had joined in the cry, "Crucify him, Luke 23:18-21. It was, at any rate, the act of the Jewish people by which this had been done. This was a striking instance of the fidelity of that preaching which says, as Nathan did to David, "Thou art the man!" Peter, once so timid that he denied his Lord, now charged this atrocious crime to his countrymen, regardless of their anger and his own danger. He did not deal in general accusations, but brought the charges home, and declared that they were the people who had been concerned in this amazing crime. No preaching can be successful that does not charge to people their personal guilt, and that does not fearlessly proclaim their ruin and danger.

By wicked hands - Greek: "through or by the hands of the lawless or wicked." This refers, doubtless, to Pilate and the Roman soldiers, through whose instrumentality this had been done. The reasons for supposing that this is the true interpretation of the passage are these:

(1)The Jews had not the power of inflicting death themselves.

(2)the term used here, "wicked," ἀνόμων anomōnis not applicable to the Jews, but to the Romans. It properly means lawless, or those who had not

the Law, and is often applied to the pagan, Romans 2:12, Romans 2:14; 1 Corinthians 9:21.

(3)the punishment which was inflicted was a Roman punishment.

(4)it was a matter of fact that the Jews, though they had condemned him, yet had not put him to death themselves, but had demanded it of the Romans. But, though they had employed the Romans to do it, still they were the prime movers in the deed; they had plotted, and compassed, and demanded his death, and they were, therefore, not the less guilty. The maxim of the common law and of common sense is, "He who does a deed by the instrumentality of another is responsible for it." It was from no merit of the Jews that they had not put him to death themselves. It was simply because the power was taken away from them.

Have crucified - Greek: "Having affixed him to the cross, ye have put him to death." Peter here charges the crime fully on them. Their guilt was not diminished because they had employed others to do it. From this we may remark:

1. That this was one of the most amazing and awful crimes that could be charged to any people. It was malice, and treason, and hatred, and murder combined. Nor was it any common murder. It was their own Messiah whom they had put to death; the hope of their fathers; he who had been long promised by God, and the prospect of whose coming had so long cheered and animated the nation. They had now imbrued their hands in his blood, and stood charged with the awful crime of having murdered the Prince of Peace.

2. It is no mitigation of guilt that we do it by the instrumentality of others. It is often, if not always, a deepening and extending of the crime.

3. We have here a striking and clear instance of the doctrine that the decrees of God do not interfere with the free agency of people. This event was certainly determined beforehand. Nothing is clearer than this. It is here expressly asserted; and it had been foretold with undeviating certainty by the prophets. God had, for wise and gracious purposes, purposed or decreed in his own mind that his Son should die at the time and in the manner in which he did; for all the circumstances of his death, as well as of his birth

and his life, were foretold; and yet in this the Jews and the Romans never supposed or alleged that they were compelled or cramped in what they did. They did what they chose. If in this case the decrees of God were not inconsistent with human freedom, neither can they be in any case. Between those decrees and the freedom of man there is no inconsistency, unless it could be shown - what never can be that God compels people to act contrary to their own will. In such a case there could be no freedom. But that is not the case with regard to the decrees of God. An act is what it is in itself; it can be contemplated and measured by itself. That it was foreseen, foreknown, or purposed does not alter its nature, anymore than it does that it be remembered after it is performed. The memory of what we have done does not destroy our freedom. "Our own purposes" in relation to our conduct do not destroy our freedom; nor can the purposes or designs of any other being violate one free moral action, unless he compels us to do a thing against our will.

4. We have here a proof that the decrees of God do not take away the moral character of an action. It does not prove that an action is innocent if it is shown that it is a part of the wise plan of God to permit it, Never was there a more atrocious crime than the crucifixion of the Son of God; and yet it was determined on in the divine counsels. So with all the deeds of human guilt. The purpose of God to permit them does not destroy their nature or make them innocent. They are what they are in themselves. The purpose of God does not change their character; and if it is right to push them in fact, they will be punished. If it is right for God to punish them, it was right to resolve to do it. The sinner must answer for his sins, not for the plans of his Maker; nor can he take shelter in the day of wrath against what he deserves in the plea that God has determined future events. If any people could have done it, it would have been those whom Peter addressed; yet neither he nor they felt that their guilt was in the least diminished by the fact that Jesus was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God."

5. If this event was predetermined; if that act of amazing wickedness, when the Son of God was put to death, was fixed by the determinate counsel of God, then all the events leading to it, and the circumstances attending it, were also a part of the decree. The one could not be determined without the other.

6. If that event was determined, then others may also be consistently with human freedom and responsibility. There can be no deed of wickedness that will surpass that of crucifying the Son of God, and if the acts of his murderers were a part of the wise counsel of God, then on the same principle are we to suppose that all events are under his direction, and ordered by a purpose infinitely wise and good.

7. If the Jews could not take shelter from the charge of wickedness under the plea that it was foreordained, then no stoners can do it. This was as clear a case as can ever occur; and yet the apostle did not intimate that an excuse or mitigation for their sin could be pled from this cause. This case, therefore, meets all the excuses of sinners from this plea, and proves that those excuses will not avail them or save them in the day of judgment.

Verse 24

Whom God hath raised up - This was the main point, in this part of his argument, which Peter wished to establish. He could not but admit that the Messiah had been in an ignominious manner put to death. But he now shows them that God had also raised him up; had thus given his attestation to his doctrine; and had sent down his Spirit according to the promise which the Lord Jesus made before his death.

Having loosed the pains of death - The word â€œloosed,â€ Î»Ï Ïƒ Î±Ï, lusasis opposed to bind, and is properly applied to a cord, or to anything which is bound. See Matthew 21:2; Mark 1:7. Hence, it means to free or to liberate, Luke 13:16; 1Â Corinthians 7:27. It is used in this sense here; though the idea of untying or loosing a band is retained, because the word translated â€œpainsâ€ often means â€œa cord or band.â€

The pains of death - á½ Î´á¿–Î½Î±Ï, Ï„Î¿á¿¦ Î¸Î¬Î½Î±Ï„Î¿Ï… Å dinas tou thanatouThe word translated â€œpainsâ€ denotes properly â€œthe extreme sufferings of parturition, and then any severe or excruciating pangs.â€ Hence, it is applied also to death, as being a state of extreme suffering. A very frequent meaning of the Hebrew word of which this is the translation is cord or band. This, perhaps, was the original idea of the word; and the Hebrews expressed any extreme agony under the idea of bands or cords closely drawn, binding and constricting the limbs, and producing severe pain. Thus, death was represented under this image of a band that

confined people, that pressed closely on them, that prevented escape, and produced severe suffering. For this use of the word ×—×‘×œ chebelsee Psalm 119:61; Isaiah 66:7; Jeremiah 22:23; Hosea 13:13. It is applied to death, Psalm 18:5, â€œThe snares of death prevented meâ€ ; corresponding to the word â€œsorrowsâ€ in the previous part of the verse; Psalm 116:3, â€œThe sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell (Hades or Sheol, the cords or pains that were binding me down to the grave) gat held on me.â€

We are not to infer from this that our Lord suffered anything after death. It means simply that he could not be held by the grave, but that God loosed the bonds which had held him there; that he now set him free who had been encompassed by these pains or bonds until they had brought him down to the grave. Pain, mighty pain, will encompass us all like the constrictions and bindings of a cord which we cannot loose, and will fasten our limbs and bodies in the grave. Those bands begin to be thrown around us in early life, and they are drawn closer and closer, until we lie panting under the stricture on a bed of pain, and then are still and immovable in the grave - subdued in a manner not a little resembling the mortal agonies of the tiger in the convolutions of the boa constrictor, or like Laocoon and his sons in the folds of the serpents from the Island of Tenedos.

It was not possible - This does not refer to any natural impossibility, or to any inherent efficacy or power in the body of Jesus itself, but simply means that â€œin the circumstances of the case such an event could not be.â€ Why it could not be he proceeds at once to show. It could not be consistently with the promises of the Scriptures. Jesus was the â€œPrince of lifeâ€ Acts 3:15; he had life in himself John 1:4; John 5:26; he had power to lay down his life and to take it again John 10:18; and it was indispensable that he should rise. He came, also, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death that is, the devil Hebrews 2:14; and as it was his purpose to gain this victory, he could not be defeated in it by being confined to the grave.

Verse 25

For Daniel speaketh … - This doctrine that the Messiah must rise from the dead Peter proceeds to prove by a quotation from the Old Testament. This passage is taken from Psalm 16:8-11. It is made from the Greek version of the Septuagint, with only one slight and unimportant change. Nor is there any material change, as will be seen, from the Hebrew. In what

sense this Psalm can be applied to Christ will be seen after we have examined the expressions which Peter alleges.

I foresaw the Lord - This is an unhappy translation. To foresee the Lord always before us conveys no idea, though it may be a literal translation of the passage. The word means "to foresee," and then "to see before us," that is, "as present with us, to regard as being near." It thus implies "to put confidence in one; to rely on him, or expect assistance from him." This is its meaning here. The Hebrew is, "I expected, or waited for." It thus expresses the petition of one who is helpless and dependent, who waits for help from God. It is often thus used in the Old Testament.

Always before my face - As being always present to help me, and to deliver me out of all my troubles.

He is on my right hand - To be at hand is to be near to afford help. The right hand is mentioned because that was the place of dignity and honor. David did not design simply to say that he was near to help him, but that he had the place of honor, the highest place in his affections, Psalm 109:31. In our dependence on God we should exalt him. We should not merely regard him as our help, but should at the same time give him the highest place in our affections.

That I should not be moved - That is, that no great evil or calamity should happen to me; that I may stand firm. The phrase denotes "to sink into calamities, or to fall into the power of enemies," Psalm 62:2, Psalm 62:6; Psalm 46:6. This expresses the confidence of one who is in danger of great calamities, and who puts his trust in the help of God alone.

Verse 26

Therefore - Peter ascribes these expressions to the Messiah. The reason why he would exult or rejoice was, that he would be preserved amidst the sorrows that were coming on him, and could look forward to the triumph that awaited him. Thus, Paul says Hebrews 12:2 that "Jesus … "for the joy that was set before him," endured the cross, despising the shame," etc. Throughout the New Testament, the shame and sorrow of his sufferings were regarded as connected with his glory and his triumph, Luke 24:26; Philemon 2:6-9; Ephesians 1:20-21. In this our Saviour has left us an example that we should walk in his steps. The prospect of future glory and triumph should sustain us amidst all afflictions, and make us ready, like him, to lie down in even the corruptions of the grave.

Did my heart rejoice - In the Hebrew this is in the prescott tense, "my heart rejoices." The word "heart" here expresses "the person," and is the same as saying "I rejoice." The Hebrews used the different members to express the person. And thus we say, "every soul perished; the vessel had 40 hands; wise heads do not think so; hearts of steel will not flinch," etc. (Prof. Stuart on Psalm 16:1-11). The meaning is, because God is near me in time of calamity, and will support and deliver me, I will not be agitated or fear, but will exult in the prospect of the future, in view of the "joy that is set before me."

My tongue was glad - Hebrew, My glory or my honor exults. The word is used to denote "majesty, splendor, dignity, honor." It is also used to express the heart or soul, either because that is the chief source of man's dignity, or because the word is also expressive of the liver, regarded by the Hebrews as the seat of the affections, Genesis 49:6, "Unto their assembly, mine honor," that is, my soul, or myself, "be not thou united"; Psalm 57:8, "Awake up, my glory," etc.; Psalm 108:1, "I will sing … even with my glory." This word the Septuagint translated "tongue." The Arabic and Latin Vulgate have also done the same. Why they thus use the word is not clear. It may be because the tongue, or the gift of speech, was what chiefly contributes to the honor of man, or distinguishes him from the brutal creation. The word "glory" is used expressly for "tongue" in Psalm 30:12; "To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent."

Moreover also - Truly; in addition to this.

My flesh - My body. See Acts 2:31; 1 Corinthians 5:5. It means here properly the body separate from the soul; the dead body.

Shall rest - Shall rest or repose in the grave, free from corruption.

In hope - In confident expectation of a resurrection. The Hebrew word rather expresses confidence than hope. The passage means, "My body will I commit to the grave, with a confident expectation of the future, that is, with a firm belief that it will not see corruption, but will be raised up." It thus expresses the feelings of the dying Messiah; the assured confidence which he had that his repose in the grave would not be long, and would certainly come to an end. The death of Christians is also in the New Testament represented as a sleep, and as repose Acts 7:60; 1 Corinthians 15:6, 1 Corinthians 15:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 1 Thessalonians 4:15; 2 Peter 3:4; and they may also, after the example of their Lord, commit their bodies to the dust, in hope. They will lie in the grave under the assurance of a happy resurrection; and though their bodies, unlike his, will moulder to their native dust, yet this corruptible will put on incorruption, and this mortal will put on immorality, 1 Corinthians 15:53.

Verse 27

Thou wilt not leave my soul - The word "soul," with us, means "the thinking, the immortal part of man," and is applied to it whether existing in connection with the body or separate from it. The Hebrew word translated "soul" here, נפשׁ nepheshhowever, may mean "spirit, mind, life," and may denote here nothing more than "me" or "myself." It means, properly, "breath"; then "life," or "the vital principle, a living being"; then "the soul, the spirit, the thinking part." Instances where it is put for the individual himself, meaning "me" or "myself" may be seen in Psalm 11:1; Psalm 35:3, Psalm 35:7; Job 9:21. There is no clear instance in which it is applied to the soul in its separate state, or disjoined from the body. In this place it must be explained in part by the meaning of the word hell. If that means grave, then this word probably means "me"; thou wilt not leave me in the grave. The meaning probably is, "Thou wilt not leave me in Sheol, neither," etc. The word "leave" here means, "Thou wilt not resign me to, or wilt not give me over to it, to be held under its power."

In hell - - εἰς ᾅδου eis HadouThe word "hell," in English, now commonly denotes "the place of the future eternal punishment of the wicked." This sense it has acquired by long usage. It is a Saxon word, derived from helan, "to cover," and denotes literally "a covered or deep place" (Webster); then "the dark and dismal abode of departed spirits"; and then "the place of torment." As the word is used now by us, it by no means

expresses the force of the original; and if with this idea we read a passage like the one before us, it would convey an erroneous meaning altogether, although formerly the English word perhaps expressed no more than the original. The Greek word "Hades" means literally "a place devoid of light; a dark, obscure abode"; and in Greek writers was applied to the dark and obscure regions where disembodied spirits were supposed to dwell. It occurs only eleven times in the New Testament. In this place it is the translation of the Hebrew שׁאול Sheowl Revelation 20:13-14, it is connected with death: "And death and hell (Hades) delivered up the dead which were in them"; "And death and hell (Hades) were cast into the lake of fire." See also Revelation 6:8; Revelation 1:18, "I have the keys of hell and death." In 1 Corinthians 15:55 it means the grave: "O grave (Hades), where is thy victory?" In Matthew 11:23 it means a deep, profound place, opposed to an exalted one; a condition of calamity and degradation, opposed to former great prosperity: "Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell" (Hades). In Luke 16:23 it is applied to the place where the rich man was after death, in a state of punishment: "In hell (Hades) he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." In this place it is connected with the idea of suffering, and undoubtedly denotes a place of punishment. The Septuagint has used this word commonly to translate the word שׁאול Shèowlit is used as a translation of the phrase "the stones of the pit" Isaiah 14:19; twice to express silence, particularly the silence of the grave Psalm 94:17; Psalm 115:17; once to express the Hebrew for "the shadow of death" Job 38:17; and sixty times to translate the word Sheol. It is remarkable that it is never used in the Old Testament to denote the word קבר qeberwhich properly denotes "a grave or sepulchre." The idea which was conveyed by the word Sheol, or Hades, was not properly a grave or sepulchre, but that dark, unknown state, including the grave, which constituted the dominions of the dead. What idea the Hebrews had of the future world it is now difficult to explain, and is not necessary in the case before us. The word originally denoting simply "the state of the dead, the insatiable demands of the grave," came at last to be extended in its meaning, in proportion as they received new revelations or formed new opinions about the future world. Perhaps the following may be the process of thought by which the word came to have the special meanings which it is found to have in the Old Testament:

(1) The word “death” and the grave קבר qeberwould express the abode of a deceased body in the earth.

(2) man has a soul, a thinking principle, and the inquiry must arise, What will be its state? Will it die also? The Hebrews never appear to have believed that. Will it ascend to heaven at once? On that subject they had at first no knowledge. Will it go at once to a place of happiness or of torment? Of that, also, they had no information at first Yet they supposed it would live; and the word שׁאול Sheowlexpressed just this state - the dark, unknown regions of the dead; the abode of spirits, whether good or bad; the residence of departed people, whether fixed in a permanent habitation, or whether wandering about. As they were ignorant of the size and spherical structure of the earth, they seem to have supposed this region to be situated in the earth, far below us, and hence, it is put in opposition to heaven, Psalm 139:8, “If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell (Sheol), behold, thou art there”; Amos 9:2. The most common use of the word is, therefore, to express those dark regions, the lower world, the region of ghosts, etc. Instances of this, almost without number, might be given. See a most striking and sublime instance of this in Isaiah 14:9; “Hell from beneath is moved to meet thee,” etc.; where the assembled dead are represented as being agitated in all their vast regions at the death of the King of Babylon.

(3) the inquiry could not but arise whether all these beings were happy. This point revelation decided; and it was decided in the O d Testament. Yet this word would better express the state of the wicked dead than the righteous. It conveyed the idea of darkness, gloom, wandering; the idea of a sad and unfixed abode, unlike heaven. Hence, the word sometimes expresses the idea of a place of punishment: Psalm 9:17, “The wicked shall be turned into hell,” etc.; Proverbs 15:11; Proverbs 23:14; Proverbs 27:20; Job 26:6. While, therefore, the word does not mean properly a grave or a sepulchre, it does mean often “the state of the dead,” without designating whether in happiness or woe, but implying the continued existence of the soul. In this sense it is often used in the Old Testament, where the Hebrew word is Sheol, and the Greek Hades: Genesis 37:35, “I will go down into the grave, unto my son, mourning” I will go down to the dead, to death, to my son, still there existing; Genesis 42:38; Genesis 44:29, “He shall bring

down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave; Numbers 16:30, Numbers 16:33; 1 Kings 2:6, 1 Kings 2:9; etc. etc. in the place before us, therefore, the meaning is simply, thou wilt not leave me among the dead. This conveys all the idea. It does not mean literally the grave or the sepulchre; that relates only to the body. This expression refers to the deceased Messiah. Thou wilt not leave him among the dead; thou wilt raise him up. It is from this passage, perhaps, aided by two others (Romans 10:7, and 1 Peter 3:19), that the doctrine originated that Christ "descended," as it is expressed in the Creed, "into hell"; and many have invented strange opinions about his going among lost spirits. The doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church has been that he went to purgatory, to deliver the spirits confined there. But if the interpretation now given be correct, then it will follow:

(1)That nothing is affirmed here about the destination of the human soul of Christ after his death. That he went to the region of the dead is implied, but nothing further.

(2)It may be remarked that the Scriptures affirm nothing about the state of his soul in that time which intervened between his death and resurrection. The only intimation which occurs on the subject is such as to leave us to suppose that he was in a state of happiness. To the dying thief he said, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." When Jesus died, he said, "It is finished"; and he doubtless meant by that that his sufferings and toils for man's redemption were at an end. All suppositions of any toils or pains after his death are fables, and without the slightest warrant in the New Testament.

Thine Holy One - The word in the Hebrew which is translated here "Holy One" properly denotes "One who is tenderly and piously devoted to another," and corresponds to the expression used in the New Testament, "my beloved Son." It is also used, as it is here by the Septuagint and by Peter, to denote "One that is holy, that is set apart to God." In this sense it is applied to Christ, either as being set apart to this office, or as so pure as to make it proper to designate him by way of eminence the Holy One, or the Holy One of God. It is several times used as the wellknown designation of the Messiah: Mark 1:24, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God"; Luke 4:34; Acts 3:14, "But ye denied the Holy One, and the just," etc. See also Luke 1:35, "That holy thing that is born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

To see corruption - To see corruption is to experience it, to be made partakers of it. The Hebrews often expressed the idea of experiencing anything by the use of words pertaining to the senses, as, to taste of death, to see death, etc. Corruption here means putrefaction in the grave. The word which is used in the Psalm, שׁחת shachathis thus used in Job 17:14, "I have said to corruption, thou art my father," etc. The Greek word used here properly denotes this. Thus, it is used in Acts 13:34-37. This meaning would be properly suggested by the Hebrew word, and thus the ancient versions understood it. The meaning implied in the expression is, that he of whom the Psalm was written should be restored to life again; and this meaning Peter proceeds to show that the words must have.

Verse 28

Thou hast made known … - The Hebrew is, "Thou wilt make known to me," etc. In relation to the Messiah, it means, Thou wilt restore me to life.

The ways of life - This properly means the path to life; as we say, the road to preferment or honor; the path to happiness; the highway to ruin, etc. See Proverbs 7:26-27. It means, thou wilt make known to me life itself, that is, thou wilt restore me to life. The expressions in the Psalm are capable of this interpretation without doing any violence to the text; and if the preceding verses refer to the death and burial of the Messiah, then the natural and proper meaning of this is, that he would be restored to life again.

Thou shalt make me full of joy - This expresses the feelings of the Messiah in view of the favor that would thus be showed him; the resurrection from the dead, and the elevation to the right hand of God. It was this which is represented as sustaining him the prospect of the joy that was before him, in heaven, Hebrews 12:2; Ephesians 1:20-22.

With thy countenance - Literally, "with thy face," that is, in thy presence. The words "countenance" and "presence" mean the same thing, and denote "favor," or the "honor and happiness" provided by being admitted to the presence of God. The prospect of the honor that would be bestowed on the Messiah was what sustained him. And this proves that the person contemplated in the Psalm expected to be raised from the dead, and exalted to the presence of God. That expectation is now fulfilled, and the Messiah is now filled with joy in his exaltation to the throne of the universe. He has "ascended to his Father and our Father"; he is "seated at the right

hand of God"; he has entered on that "joy which was set before him"; he is "crowned with glory and honor"; and "all things are put under his feet." In view of this, we may remark:

(1)That the Messiah had full and confident expectation that he would rise from the dead. This the Lord Jesus always evinced, and often declared it to his disciples.

(2)if the Saviour rejoiced in view of the glories before him, we should also. We should anticipate with joy an everlasting dwelling in the presence of God, and the high honor of sitting "with him on his throne, as he overcame, and is set down with the Father on his throne."

(3)the prospect of this should sustain us, as it did him, in the midst of persecution, calamity, and trials. Thy will soon be ended; and if we are his friends, we shall "overcome," as he did, and be admitted to "the fulness of joy" above, and to the "right hand" of God, "where are pleasures forevermore."

Verse 29

Men and brethren - This passage of the Psalms Peter now proves could not relate to David, but must have reference to the Messiah. He begins his argument in a respectful manner, addressing them as his brethren, though they had just charged him and the others with intoxication. Christians should use the usual respectful forms of salutation, whatever contempt and reproaches they may meet with from opposers.

Let me freely speak - That is, "It is lawful or proper to speak with boldness, or openly, respecting David." Though he was eminently a pious man, though venerated by us all as a king, yet it is proper to say of him that he is dead, and has returned to corruption. This was a delicate way of expressing high respect for the monarch whom they all honored, and yet evinced boldness in examining a passage of Scripture which probably many supposed to have reference solely to him.

Of the patriarch David - The word "patriarch" properly means "the head or ruler of a family"; and then "the founder of a family, or an illustrious ancestor." It was commonly applied to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by way of eminence, the illustrious founders of the Jewish nation, Hebrews 7:4; Acts 7:8-9. It was also applied to the heads of the families, or the chief men of the tribes of Israel, 1 Chronicles 24:31; 2 Chronicles 19:8,

etc. It was thus a title of honor, denoting "high respect." Applied to David, it means that he was the illustrious head or founder of the royal family, and the word is expressive of Peter's intention not to say anything disrespectful of such a king, at the same time that he freely canvassed a passage of Scripture which had been supposed to refer to him.

Dead and buried - The record of that fact they had in the O d Testament. There had been no pretence that he had risen, and therefore the Psalm could not apply to him.

His sepulchre is with us - Is in the city of Jerusalem., Sepulchres wore commonly situated without the walls of cities and the limits of villages. The custom of burying in towns was not commonly practiced. This was true of other ancient nations as well as the Hebrews, and is still in Eastern countries, except in the case of kings and very distinguished men, whose ashes are permitted to rest within the walls of a city: 1 Samuel 28:3, "Samuel was dead … and Israel … buried him in Ramah, in his own city"; 2 Kings 21:18, "Manasseh … was buried in the garden of his own house"; 2 Chronicles 16:14, Asa was buried in the city of David; 2 Kings 14:20. David was buried in the city of David 1 Kings 2:10, with his fathers; that is, on Mount Zion, where he built a city called after his name, 2 Samuel 5:7. Of what form the tombs of the kings were is not certainly known. It is almost certain, however, that they would be constructed in a magnificent manner.

The tombs were commonly excavations from rocks, or natural caves; and sepulchres cut out of the solid rock, of vast extent, are Known to have existed. The following account of the tomb called "the sepulchre of the kings" is abridged from Maundrell: "The approach is through an entrance cut out of a solid rock, which admits you into an open court about 40 paces square, cut down into the rock. On the south side is a portico nine paces long and four broad, hewn likewise out of the solid rock. At the end of the portico is the descent to the sepulchres. The descent is into a room about 7 or 8 yards square, cut out of the natural rock. From this room there are passages into six more, all of the same fabric with the first. In every one of these rooms, except the first, were coffins placed in niches in the sides of the chamber," etc. (Maundrell's Travels). If the tombs of the kings were of this form, it is clear that they were works of great labor and expense.

Probably, also, there were, as there are now, costly and splendid monuments erected to the memory of the mighty dead. The following extract from "The Land and the Book," and cut on the next page (from Williams' Holy City), will illustrate the usual construction of tombs: "The entire system of rooms, niches, and passages may be comprehended at once by an inspection of the plan of the Tombs of the Judges near Jerusalem. The entrance faces the west, and has a vestibule (a) 13 feet by 9. Chamber (B), nearly 20 feet square, and 8 high. The north side is seen in elevation in Fig. 2, and shows two tiers of niches, one over the other, not often met with in tombs. There are seven in the lower tier, each 7 feet long, 20 inches wide, and nearly 3 feet high. The upper tier has three arched recesses, and each recess has two niches. From this room (B) doors lead out into chambers (C and D), which have their own special system of niches, or Ioculi, for the reception of the bodies, as appears on the plan. I have explored scores of sepulchres at Ladakiyeh closely resembling this at Jerusalem, and there are many in the plain and on the hillsides above us here at Sidon of the same general form chambers within chambers, and each with niches for the dead, variously arranged according to taste or necessity."

These tombs are about a mile northwest of Jerusalem. "The tombs which are commonly called the ‹Tombs of the Kings' are in an olivegrove about half a mile north of the Damascus Gate, and a few rods east of the great road to Nablus. A court is sunk in the solid rock about 90 feet square and 20 deep. On the west side of this court is a sort of portico, 39 feet long, 17 deep, and 15 high. It was originally ornamented with grapes, garlands, and festoons, beautifully done on the cornice; and the columns in the center, and the pilasters at the corners, appear to have resembled the Corinthian order. A very low door in the south end of the portico opens into the ante-chamber - 19 feet square, and 7 or 8 high. From this three passages conduct into other rooms, two of them, to the south, having five or six crypts. A passage also leads from the west room down several steps into a large vault running north, where are crypts parallel to the sides. These rooms are all cut in rock intensely hard, and the entrances were originally closed with stone doors, made with panels and hung on stone hinges, which are now all broken. The whole series of tombs indicates the hand of royalty and the leisure of years, but by whom and for whom they were made is a mere matter of conjecture. I know no good reason for ascribing them to Helena of

Adiabene. Most travelers and writers are inclined to make them the sepulchres of the Asmonean kings" (The Land and the Book, vol. 2, pp. 487,488). The site of the tomb of David is no longer known.

Unto this day - That the sepulchre of David was well known and honored is clear from Josephus (Antiq., book 7, chapter 15, section 3): "He (David) was buried by his son Solomon in Jerusalem with great magnificence, and with all the other funeral pomps with which kings used to be buried. Moreover, he had immense wealth buried with him: for one thousand and three hundred years afterward Hyrcanus the high priest, when he was besieged by Antiochus, and was desirous of giving him money to raise the siege, opened one room of David's sepulchre and took out three thousand talents. Herod, many years afterward, opened another room, and took away a great deal of money," etc. See also Antiq., book 13, chapter 8, section 4. The tomb of a monarch like David would be well known and had in reverence. Peter might, then, confidently appeal to their own belief and knowledge that David had not been raised from the dead. No Jew believed or supposed it. All, by their care of his sepulchre, and by the honor with which they regarded his grave, believed that he had returned to corruption. The Psalm, therefore, could not apply to him.

Verse 30

Therefore - As David was dead and buried, it was clear that he could not have referred to himself in this remarkable declaration. It followed that he must have had reference to some other one.

Being a prophet - One who foretold future events. That David was inspired is clear, 2 Samuel 23:2. Many of the prophecies relating to the Messiah are found in the Psalms of David: Psalm 22:1, compare Matthew 27:46; Luke 24:44 - Psalm 22:18, compare Matthew 27:35 - Psalm 69:21, compare Matthew 27:34, Matthew 27:48 - Psalm 69:25, compare Acts 1:20.

And knowing - Knowing by what God had said to him respecting his posterity.

Had sworn with an oath - The places which speak of God as having sworn to David are found in Psalm 89:3-4, "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish," etc.; and Psalm 132:11, "The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David, he will not turn from it, Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon my throne"; Psalm 89:35-36. The promise to which reference is made in all these places is in 2 Samuel 7:11-16.

Of the fruit of his loins - Of his descendants. See 2 Samuel 7:12; Genesis 35:11; Genesis 46:26; 1 Kings 8:19, etc.

According to the flesh - That is, so far as the human nature of the Messiah was concerned, he would be descended from David. Expressions like these are very remarkable. If the Messiah was only a man, they would be unmeaning. They are never used in relation to a mere man; and they imply that the speaker or writer supposed that there pertained to the Messiah a nature which was not according to the flesh. See Romans 1:3-4.

He would raise up Christ - That is, the Messiah. To raise up seed, or descendants, is to give them to him. The promises made to David in all these places had immediate reference to Solomon and to his descendants. But it is clear that the New Testament writers understood them as referring also to the Messiah. And it is no less clear that the Jews understood that the Messiah was to be descended from David, Matthew 12:23; Matthew 21:9; Matthew 22:42, Matthew 22:45; Mark 11:10; John 7:42, etc. In what way these promises that were made to David were understood as applying to the Messiah, it may not be easy to determine. The fact, however, is clear. The following remarks may throw some light on the subject:

(a)The kingdom which was promised to David was to have no end; it was to be established forever. Yet his descendants died, and all other kingdoms changed.

(b)The promise likewise stood by itself; it was not made to any other of the Jewish kings; nor were similar declarations made of surrounding kingdoms and nations. It came, therefore, gradually to be applied to that future king and kingdom which was the hope of the nation; and their eyes were anxiously fixed on the long-expected Messiah.

(c)At the time that he came it had become the settled doctrine of the Jews that he was to descend from David, and that his kingdom was to be perpetual.

On this belief of the prophecy the apostles argued; and the opinions of the Jews furnished a strong point by which they could convince them that Jesus was the Messiah. Peter affirms that David was aware of this, and that he so understood the promise as referring not only to Solomon, but in a far more important sense to the Messiah. Happily we have a commentary of David himself as expressing his own views of that promise. That commentary is found particularly in Psalm 2:1-12; Psalm 16:1-11; In these

Psalms there can be no doubt that David looked forward to the coming of the Messiah; and there can be as little that he regarded the promise made to him as extending to his coming and his reign.

It may be remarked that there are some important variations in the manuscripts in regard to this verse. The expression "according to the flesh" is omitted in many mss., and is now left out by Griesbach in his New Testament. It is omitted also by the ancient Syriac and Ethiopic versions, and by the Latin Vulgate.

To sit on his throne - To be his successor in his kingdom. Saul was the first of the kings of Israel. The kingdom was taken away from him and his posterity, and conferred on David and his descendants. It was determined that it should be continued in the family of David, and no more go out of his family, as it had from the family of Saul. The unique characteristic of David as king, or what distinguished him from the other kings of the earth, was that he reigned over the people of God. Israel was his chosen people, and the kingdom was over that nation. Hence, he that should reign over the people of God, though in a manner somewhat different from David, would be regarded as occupying his throne, and as being his successor. The form of the administration might be varied, but it would still retain its prime characteristic as being a reign over the people of God. In this sense the Messiah sits on the throne of David. He is his descendant and successor. He has an empire over all the friends of the Most High. And as that kingdom is destined to fill the earth, and to be eternal in the heavens, so it may be said that it is a kingdom which shall have no end. It is spiritual, but not the less real; defended not with carnal weapons, but not the less really defended; advanced not by the sword and the din of arms, but not the less really advanced against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places; not under a visible head and earthly monarch, but not less really under the Captain of salvation and the King of kings.

Verse 31

He, seeing this before … - By the spirit of prophecy. From this it appears that David had distinct views of the great doctrines pertaining to the Messiah.

Spake … - See Psalm 16:1-11.

That his soul … - See the notes on Acts 2:27.

Verse 32

This Jesus - Peter, having shown that it was predicted that the Messiah would rise, now affirms that such a resurrection occurred in the case of Jesus. If it was a matter of prophecy, all objection to the truth of the doctrine was taken away, and the only question was whether there was evidence that this had been done. The proof of this Peter now alleges, and offers his own testimony, and that of his brethren, to the truth of this great and glorious fact.

We are all witnesses - It seems probable that Peter refers here to the whole 120 who were present, and who were ready to attest it in any manner. The matter which was to be proved was that Jesus was seen alive after he had been put to death. The apostles were appointed to bear witness of this. We are told by Paul 1 Corinthians 15:6 that he was seen by more than five hundred brethren, that is, Christians, at one time. The 120 assembled on this occasion were doubtless part of the number, and were ready to attest this. This was the proof that Peter alleged; and the strength of this proof was, and should have been, perfectly irresistible:

(1)They had seen him themselves. They did not conjecture it or reason about it; but they had the evidence on which people act every day, and which must be regarded as satisfactory the evidence of their own senses.

(2)the number was such they could not be imposed on. If 120 persons could not prove a plain matter of fact, nothing could be established by testimony; there could be no way of arriving at any facts.

(3)the thing to be established was a plain matter. It was not that they "saw him rise." That they never pretended: Impostors would have done this. But it was that they saw him, talked, walked, ate, drank with him, being alive, after, he had been crucified. The fact of his death was matter of Jewish record, and no one called it in question. The only fact for Christianity to make out was that he was seen alive afterward, and this was attested by many witnesses.

(4)they had no interest in deceiving the world in this thing. There was no prospect of pleasure, wealth, or honor in doing it.

(5)they offered themselves now as ready to endure any sufferings, or to die, in attestation of the truth of this event.

Verse 33

Therefore, being by the right hand - The right hand among the Hebrews was often used to denote "power"; and the expression here means, not that he was exalted to the right hand of God. but by his power. He was raised from the dead by his power, and borne to heaven, triumphant over all his enemies. The use of the word "right hand" to denote "power" is common in the Scriptures: Job 40:14, "Thine own right hand can save thee"; Psalm 17:7, "Thou savest by thy right hand them that trust in thee"; Psalm 18:35; Psalm 20:6; Psalm 21:8; Psalm 44:3; Psalm 60:5, etc.

Exalted - Constituted King and Messiah in heaven. Raised up from his condition of humiliation to the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, John 17:5.

And having received … - The Holy Spirit was promised to the disciples before his death, John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:13-15. It was expressly declared:

(1)That the Holy Spirit would not be given except the Lord Jesus should return to heaven John 16:7; and,

(2)That this gift was in the power of the Father, and that he would send him, John 14:26; John 15:26. This promise was now fulfilled, and those who witnessed the extraordinary scene before them could not doubt that it was the effect of divine power.

Hath shed forth this … - This power of speaking different languages and declaring the truth of the gospel. In this way Peter accounts for the remarkable events before them. What had occurred could not be produced by new wine, Acts 2:15. It was expressly foretold, Acts 2:16-21. It was predicted that Jesus would rise, Acts 2:22-31. The apostles were witnesses that he had risen, and that he had promised that the Holy Spirit would descend; and the fulfillment of this promise was a rational way of accounting for the scene before them. It was unanswerable; and the effect on those who witnessed it was such as might be expected.

Verse 34-35

For David is not ascended into the heavens - That is, David has not risen from the dead and ascended to heaven. This further shows that Psalm 16:1-11 could not refer to David, but must refer to the Messiah. Great as they esteemed David, and much as they were accustomed to apply these expressions of the Scripture to him, yet they could not be applicable to him. They must refer to some other being; and especially that passage which

Peter now proceeds to quote. It was of great importance to show that these expressions could not apply to David, and also that David bore testimony to the exalted character and dignity of the Messiah. Hence, Peter here adduces David himself as affirming that the Messiah was to be exalted to a dignity far above his own. This does not affirm that David was not saved, or that his spirit had not ascended to heaven, but that he had not been exalted in the heavens in the sense in which Peter was speaking of the Messiah.

But he saith himself - Psalm 110:1.

The Lord - The small capitals used in translating the word "Lord" in the Bible denote that the original word is יהוה YahwehThe Hebrews regarded this as the unique name of God, a name incommunicable to any other being. It is not applied to any being but God in the Scriptures. The Jews had such a reverence for it that they never pronounced it; but when it occurred in the Scriptures they pronounced another name, אדני AdonaayHere it means, "Yahweh said," etc.

My Lord - This is a different word in the Hebrew - it is אדֹני AdonaayIt properly is applied by a servant to his master, or a subject to his sovereign, or is used as a title of respect by an inferior to a superior. It means here, "Yahweh said to him whom I, David, acknowledge to be my superior and sovereign." Thus, though he regarded him as his descendant according to the flesh, yet he regarded him also as his superior and Lord. By reference to this passage our Saviour confounded the Pharisees, Matthew 22:42-46. That the passage in this Psalm refers to the Messiah is clear. Our Saviour, in Matthew 22:42, expressly applied it thus, and in such a manner as to show that this was the well-understood doctrine of the Jews. See the notes on Matthew 22:42, etc.

Verse 36

Therefore let all … - "Convinced by the prophecies, by our testimony, and by the remarkable scenes exhibited on the day of Pentecost, let all be convinced that the true Messiah has come and has been exalted to heaven."

House of Israel - The word "house" often means "family": "let all the family of Israel, that is, all the nation of the Jews, know this."

Know assuredly - Be assured, or know without any hesitation or possibility of mistake. This is the sum of his argument or his discourse. He had established the points which he purposed to prove, and he now applies it to his hearers.

God hath made - God hath appointed or constituted. See Acts 5:31.

That same Jesus - The very person who had suffered. He was raised with the same body, and had the same soul; he was the same being, as distinguished from all others. So Christians, in the resurrection, will be the same beings that they were before they died.

Whom ye have crucified - See Acts 2:23. There was nothing better suited to show them the guilt of having done this than the argument which Peter used. He showed them that God had sent him as the Messiah, and that he had showed his love for him in raising him from the dead. The Son of God, and the hope of their nation, they had put to death. He was not an impostor, nor a man sowing sedition, nor a blasphemer, but the Messiah of God; and they had imbrued their hands in his blood. There is nothing better suited to make sinners fear and tremble than to show them that, in rejecting Christ, they have rejected God; in refusing to serve him they have refused to serve God. The crime of sinners has a double malignity, as committed against a kind and lovely Saviour, and against the God who loved him, and appointed him to save people. Compare Acts 3:14-15.

Both Lord - The word "lord" properly denotes "proprietor, master, or sovereign." Here it means clearly that God had exalted him to be the king so long expected; and that he had given him dominion in the heavens, or, as we should say, made him ruler of all things. The extent of this dominion may be seen in John 17:2; Ephesians 1:21, etc. In the exercise of this orifice, he now rules in heaven and on earth, and will yet come to judge the world. This truth was particularly suited to excite their fear. They had murdered their sovereign, now shown to be raised from the dead, and entrusted with infinite power. They had reason, therefore, to fear that he would come forth in vengeance, and punish them for their crimes. Sinners, in opposing the Saviour, are at war with their living and mighty sovereign and Lord. He has all power, and it is not safe to contend against the judge of the living and the dead.

And Christ - Messiah. They had thus crucified the hope of their nation; imbrued their hands in the blood of him to whom the prophets had looked; and put to death that Holy One, the prospect of whose coming had sustained the most holy men of the world in affliction, and cheered them when they looked on to future years. He who was the hope of their fathers had come, and they had put him to death; and it is no wonder that the consciousness of this - that a sense of guilt, and shame, and confusion should overwhelm their minds, and lead them to ask, in deep distress, what they should do.

Verse 37

Now when they heard this - When they heard this declaration of Peter, and this proof that Jesus was the Messiah. There was no fanaticism in his discourse; it was cool, close, pungent reasoning. He proved to them the truth of what he was saying, and thus prepared the way for this effect.

They were pricked in their heart - The word translated were "pricked," κατενύγησαν katenugēsanis not used elsewhere in the New Testament. It properly denotes "to pierce or penetrate with a needle, lancet, or sharp instrument"; and then "to pierce with grief, or acute pain of any kind." It corresponds precisely to our word "compunction." It implies also the idea of sudden as well as acute grief. In this case it means that they were suddenly and deeply affected with anguish and alarm at what Peter had said. The causes of their grief may have been these:

(1)Their sorrow that the Messiah had been put to death by his own countrymen.

(2)their deep sense of guilt in having done this. There would be mingled here a remembrance of ingratitude, and a consciousness that they had been guilty of murder of the most aggravated and horrid kind, that of having killed their own Messiah.

(3)the fear of his wrath. He was still alive; exalted to be theft Lord; and entrusted with all power. They were afraid of his vengeance; they were conscious that they deserved it; and they supposed that they were exposed to it.

(4)what they had done could not be undone. The guilt remained; they could not wash it out. They had imbrued theft hands in the blood of innocence, and the guilt of that oppressed their souls. This expresses the usual feelings which sinners have when they are convicted of sin.

Men and brethren - This was an expression denoting affectionate earnestness. Just before this they mocked the disciples, and charged them with being filled with new wine, Acts 2:13. They now treated them with respect and confidence. The views which sinners have of Christians and Christian ministers are greatly changed when they are under conviction for sin. Before that they may deride and oppose them; then, they are glad to be taught by the obscurest Christian, and even cling to a minister of the gospel as if he could save them by his own power.

What shall we do? - What shall we do to avoid the wrath of this crucified and exalted Messiah? They were apprehensive of his vengeance, and they wished to know how to avoid it. Never was a more important question asked than this. It is the question which all convicted sinners ask. It implies an apprehension of danger, a sense of guilt, and a readiness to "yield the will" to the claims of God. This was the same question asked by Paul Acts 9:6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and by the jailor Acts 16:30 "He … came, trembling, … and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The state of mind in this case - the case of a convicted sinner - consists in:

(1)A deep sense of the evil of the past life; remembrance of a thousand crimes perhaps before forgotten; a pervading and deepening conviction that the heart, and conversation, and life have been evil, and deserve condemnation.

(2)Apprehension about the justice of God; alarm when the mind looks upward to him, or onward to the day of death and judgment.

(3)an earnest wish, amounting sometimes to agony, to be delivered from this sense of condemnation and this apprehension of the future.

(4)areadiness to sacrifice all to the will of God; to surrender the governing purpose of the mind, and to do what he requires. In this state the soul is prepared to receive the offers of eternal life; and when the sinner comes to this, the offers of mercy meet his case, and he yields himself to the Lord Jesus, and finds peace.

In regard to this discourse of Peter, and this remarkable result, we may observe:

(1) That this is the first discourse which was preached after the ascension of Christ, and is a model which the ministers of religion should imitate.

(2) it is a clear and close argument. There is no ranting, no declamation, nothing but truth presented in a clear and striking manner. It abounds with proof of his main point, and supposes that his hearers were rational beings, and capable of being influenced by truth. Ministers have no right to address people as incapable of reason and thought, nor to imagine, because they are

speaking on religious subjects, that therefore they are at liberty to speak nonsense.

(3) though these were eminent sinners, and had added to the crime of murdering the Messiah that of deriding the Holy Spirit and the ministers of the gospel, yet Peter reasoned with them coolly, and endeavored to convince them of their guilt. People should be treated as endowed with reason, and as capable of seeing the force and beauty of the great truths of religion.

(4) the arguments of Peter were adapted to produce this effect on their minds, and to impress them deeply with the sense of their guilt. He proved to them that they had been guilty of putting the Messiah to death; that God had raised him up, and that they were now in the midst of the scenes which established one strong proof of the truth of what he was saying. No class of truths could have been so well adapted to make an impression of their guilt as these.

(5) Conviction for sin is a rational process on a sinner‘s mind. It is the proper state produced by a view of past sins. It is suffering truth to make an appropriate impression; suffering the mind to feel as it ought to feel. The man who is guilty ought to be willing to see and confess it. It is no disgrace to confess an error, or to feel deeply when we know we are guilty. Disgrace consists in a hypocritical desire to conceal crime; in the pride that is unwilling to avow it; in the falsehood which denies it. To feel it and to acknowledge it is the mark of an open and ingenuous mind.

(6) these same truths are adapted still to produce conviction for sin. The sinner‘s treatment of the Messiah should produce grief and alarm. He did not murder him, but he has rejected him; he did not crown him with thorns, but he has despised him; he did not insult him when hanging on the cross, but he has a thousand times insulted him since; he did not pierce his side with the spear, but he has pierced his heart by rejecting him and contemning his mercy. “For these things he should weep.” In the Saviour‘s resurrection he has also a deep interest. He rose as the pledge that we may rise; and when the sinner looks forward, he should remember that he must meet the ascended Son of God. The Saviour reigns; he lives, Lord of all. The sinner‘s

deeds now are aimed at his throne, and his heart, and his crown. All his crimes are seen by his sovereign, and it is not safe to mock the Son of God on his throne, or to despise him who will soon come to judgment. When the sinner feels these truths he should tremble and cry out, What shall I do?

(7) we see here how the Spirit operates in producing conviction of sin. It is not in an arbitrary manner; it is in accordance with truth, and by the truth. Nor have we a right to expect that he will convict and convert people except as the truth is presented to their minds. They who desire success in the gospel should present clear, striking, and impressive truth, for such only God is accustomed to bless.

(8) we have in the conduct of Peter and the other apostles a striking instance of the power of the gospel. Just before, Peter, trembling and afraid, had denied his Master with an oath; now, in the presence of the murderers of the Son of God, he boldly charged them with their crime, and dared their fury. Just before, all the disciples forsook the Lord Jesus and fled; now, in the presence of his murderers, they lifted their voice and proclaimed their guilt and danger, even in the city where he had been just arraigned and put to death. What could have produced this change but the power of God? And is there not proof here that a religion which produces such changes came from heaven?

Verse 38

Then Peter said unto them - Peter had been the chief speaker, though others had also addressed them. He now, in the name of all, directed the multitude what to do.

Repent - See the notes on Matthew 3:2. Repentance implies sorrow for sin as committed against God, along with a purpose to forsake it. It is not merely a fear of the consequences of sin or of the wrath of God in hell. It is such a view of sin, as evil in itself, as to lead the mind to hate it and forsake it. Laying aside all view of the punishment of sin, the true penitent hates it. Even if sin were the means of procuring him happiness; if it would promote his gratification and be unattended with any future punishment, he would hate it and turn from it. The mere fact that it is evil, and that God hates it, is a sufficient reason why those who are truly penitent hate it and forsake it. False repentance dreads the consequences of sin; true repentance dreads sin

itself. These persons whom Peter addressed had been merely alarmed; they were afraid of wrath, and especially of the wrath of the Messiah. They had no true sense of sin as an evil, but were simply afraid of punishment. This alarm Peter did not regard as by any means genuine repentance. Such conviction for sin would soon wear off, unless their repentance became thorough and complete. Hence, he told them to repent, to turn from sin, to exercise sorrow for it as an evil and bitter thing, and to express their sorrow in the proper manner. We may learn here:

(1) That there is no safety in mere conviction for sin: it may soon pass off, and leave the soul as thoughtless as before.

(2) there is no goodness or holiness in mere alarm or conviction. The devils … tremble. A man may fear who yet has a firm purpose to do evil, if he can do it with impunity.

(3) many are greatly troubled and alarmed who never repent. There is no situation where souls are so easily deceived as here. Alarm is taken for repentance; trembling for godly sorrow; and the fear of wrath is taken to be the true fear of God.

(4) true repentance is the only thing in such a state of mind that can give any relief. An ingenuous confession of sin, a solemn purpose to forsake it, and a true hatred of it, is the only thing that can give the mind composure. Such is the constitution of the mind that nothing else will furnish relief. But the moment we are willing to make an open confession of guilt, the mind is delivered of its burden, and the convicted soul finds peace. Until this is done, and the hold on sin is broken, there can be no peace.

(5) we see here what direction is to be given to a convicted sinner. We are not to direct him to wait; nor to lead him to suppose that he is in a good way; nor to tell him to continue to seek; nor to call him a mourner; nor to take sides with him, as if God were wrong and harsh; nor to advise him to read, and search, and postpone the subject to a future time. We are to direct him to repent; to mourn over his sins, and to forsake them. Religion demands that he should at once surrender himself to God by genuine repentance; by confession that God is right and that he is wrong; and by a firm purpose to live a life of holiness.

Be baptized - See the notes on Matthew 3:6, Matthew 3:16. The direction which Christ gave to his apostles was that they should baptize all who believed, Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16. The Jews had not been baptized; and a baptism now would be a profession of the religion of Christ, or a declaration made before the world that they embraced Jesus as their Messiah. It was equivalent to saying that they should publicly and professedly embrace Jesus Christ as their Saviour. The gospel requires such a profession, and no one is at liberty to withhold it. A similar declaration is to be made to all who are inquiring the way to life. They are to exercise repentance; and then, without any unnecessary delay, to evince it by partaking of the ordinances of the gospel. If people are unwilling to profess religion, they have none. If they will not, in the proper way, show that they are truly attached to Christ, it is proof that they have no such attachment. Baptism is the application of water, as expressive of the need of purification, and as emblematic of the influences from God that can alone cleanse the soul. It is also a form of dedication to the service of God.

In the name of Jesus Christ - Not εἰς eisinto, but ἐπί epiupon. The usual form of baptism is into the name of the Father, etc. - εἰς eisHere it does not mean to be baptized by the authority of Jesus Christ, but it means to be baptized for him and his service; to be consecrated in this way, and by this public profession, to him and to his cause. The expression is literally upon the name of Jesus Christ: that is, as the foundation of the baptism, or as that on which its propriety rested or was based. In other words, it is with an acknowledgment of him in that act as being what his name imports the Sinner‘s only Hope, his Redeemer, Lord, Justifier, King (Prof. Hackett, in loco). The name of Jesus Christ means the same as Jesus Christ himself. To be baptized to his name is to be devoted to him. The word “name” is often thus used. The profession which they were to make amounted to this: a confession of sins; a hearty purpose to turn from them; a reception of Jesus as the Messiah and as a Saviour; and a determination to become his followers and to be devoted to his service. Thus, 1 Corinthians 10:2, to be baptized unto Moses means to take him as a leader and guide. It does not follow that, in administering the ordinance of baptism, they used only the name of Jesus Christ. It is much more probable that they used the form prescribed by the Saviour himself Matthew 28:19; though, as the special mark of a Christian is that he receives and honors Jesus Christ, this name is used here as implying the whole. The same thing occurs in Acts 19:5.

For the remission of sins - Not merely the sin of crucifying the Messiah, but of all sins. There is nothing in baptism itself that can wash away sin. That can be done only by the pardoning mercy of God through the atonement of Christ. But baptism is expressive of a willingness to be pardoned in that way, and is a solemn declaration of our conviction that there is no other way of remission. He who comes to be baptized, comes with a professed conviction that he is a sinner; that there is no other way of mercy but in the gospel, and with a professed willingness to comply with the terms of salvation, and to receive it as it is offered through Jesus Christ.

And ye shall receive … - The gift of the Holy Spirit here does not mean his extraordinary gifts, or the power of working miracles, but it simply means, you shall partake of the influences of the Holy Spirit "as far as they may be adapted to your case" - as far as may be needful for your comfort, peace, and sanctification. There is no evidence that they were all endowed with the power of working miracles, nor does the connection of the passage require us thus to understand it. Nor does it mean that they had not been awakened "by his influences." All true conviction is from him, John 16:8-10. But it is also the office of the Spirit to comfort, to enlighten, to give peace, and thus to give evidence that the soul is born again. To this, probably, Peter refers; and this all who are born again and profess faith in Christ possess. There is peace, calmness, joy; there is evidence of piety, and that evidence is the product of the influences of the Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," etc., Galatians 5:22, Galatians 5:24.

Verse 39

For the promise - That is, the promise respecting the particular thing of which he was speaking - the influences of the Holy Spirit. This promise he had adduced in the beginning of his discourse Acts 2:17, and he now applies it to them. As the Spirit was promised to descend on Jews and their sons and daughters, it was applicable to them in the circumstances in which they then were. The only hope of lost sinners is in the promises of God, and the only thing that can give comfort to a soul that is convicted of sin is the hope that God will pardon and save.

Unto you - To you Jews, even though you have crucified the Messiah. The promise had special reference to the Jewish people.

To your children - In Joel, to their sons and daughters, who would, nevertheless, be old enough to prophesy. Similar promises occur in Isaiah 44:3, "I will pour my Spirit on thy seed, and my blessing on thine

offspring"; and in Isaiah 59:21, "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever." In these and similar places their descendants or posterity are denoted. It does not refer merely to children as children, and should not be adduced as applicable exclusively to infants. It is a promise I to parents that the blessings of salvation shall not be confined to parents, but shall be extended also to their posterity. Under this promise parents may be encouraged to train up their children for God; they are authorized to devote them to him in the ordinance of Christian baptism, and they may trust in his gracious purpose thus to perpetuate the blessings of salvation from age to age.

To all - To the whole race; not limited to Jews.

Afar off - To those in other lands. It is probable that Peter here referred to the Jews who were scattered in other nations; for he does not seem yet to have understood that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles. See Romans 10:12, Romans 10:14-20; 11. The Gentiles are sometimes clearly indicated by the expression "afar off Ephesians 2:13, Ephesians 2:17; and they are represented as having been brought nigh by the blood of Christ. The phrase is equally applicable to those who have been far off from God by their sins and their evil affections. To them also the promise is extended if they will return.

Even as many … - The promise is not to those who do not hear the gospel, nor to those who do not obey it; but it is to those to whom God in his gracious providence shall send it. He has the power and right to pardon. The meaning of Peter is, that the promise is ample, full, free; that it is suited to all, and may be applied to all; that there is no defect or lack in the provisions or promises, but that God may extend it to whomsoever he pleases. We see here how ample and full are the offers of mercy. God is hot limited in the provisions of his grace; but the plan is applicable to all mankind. It is also the purpose of God to send it to all people, and he has given a solemn charge to his church to do it. We cannot reflect but with deep pain on the fact that, although these provisions have been made - fully made; that they are adapted to all people; but that yet they have been extended by his people to so small a portion of the human family. If the promise of life is to all, it is the duty of the church to send to all the message of mercy.

Verse 40

Many other words - This discourse, though one of the longest in the New Testament, is but an outline. It contains, however, the substance of the plan of salvation, and is admirably arranged to attain its object.

Testify - Bear witness to. He bore witness to the promises of Christianity; to the truths pertaining to the danger of sinners; and to the truth respecting the character of that generation.

Exhort - He entreated them by arguments and promises.

Save yourselves - This expression here denotes, preserve yourselves from the influence, opinions, and fate of this generation. It implies that they were to use diligence and effort to deliver themselves. God deals with people as free agents. He calls upon them to put forth their own power and effort to be saved. Unless they put forth their own strength, they will never be saved. When they are saved, they will ascribe to God the praise for having inclined them to seek him, and for the grace whereby they are saved.

This generation - This age or race of people; the Jews then living. They were not to apprehend danger from them from which they were to deliver themselves; but they were to apprehend danger from being with them, united in their plans; designs, and feelings. From the influence of their opinions, etc., they were to escape. That generation was signally corrupt and wicked. See Matthew 12:39; Matthew 16:4; Mark 8:38. They had crucified the Messiah; and they were, for their sins, soon to be destroyed.

Order? this untoward generation? - Untoward: "Perverse, refractory, not easily guided or taught" (Webster). The same character our Saviour had given of that generation in Matthew 11:16-19. This character they had shown uniformly. They were smooth, cunning, plausible; but they were corrupt in principle, and wicked in conduct. The Pharisees had a vast hold on the people. To break away from them was to set at defiance all their power and doctrines; to alienate themselves from their teachers and friends; to brave the authority of those in office, and those who had long claimed the right of teaching and guiding the nation. The chief danger of those who were now awakened was from that generation; that they would deride, or denounce, or persecute them, and induce them to abandon their seriousness, and turn back to their sins. And hence, Peter exhorted them at once to break off from them, and give themselves to Christ. We may hence learn:

(1) That if sinners will be saved they must make an effort. There is no promise to any unless they will exert themselves.

(2) the principal danger which besets those who are awakened arises from their former companions. They are often wicked, cunning, rich, mighty. They may be their kindred, and will seek to drive off their serious impressions by derision, or argument, or persecution. They have a powerful hold on the affections, and they will seek to use it to prevent those who are awakened from becoming Christians.

(3) those who are awakened should resolve at once to break off from their evil companions, and unite themselves to Christ and his people. There may be no other way in which this can be done than by resolving to forsake altogether the society of those who are infidels, and scoffers, and profane. They should forsake the world, and give themselves up to God, and resolve to have only so much contact with the world, in any respect, as may be required by duty, and as may be consistent with a supreme purpose to live to the honor of God.

Verse 41

They that gladly received - The word rendered "gladly" means "freely, cheerfully, joyfully." It implies that they did it without compulsion, and with joy. Religion is not compulsion. They who become Christians do it cheerfully; they do it rejoicing in the privilege of becoming reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. Though so many received his word and were baptized, yet it is implied that there were others who did not. It is probable that there were multitudes assembled who were alarmed, but who did not receive the word with joy. In all revivals there are many who become alarmed, and who are anxious about their souls, but who refuse to embrace the gospel, and again become thoughtless, and are ruined.

His word - The message which Peter had spoken respecting the pardon of sin through Jesus Christ.

Were baptized - That is, those who professed a readiness to embrace the offers of salvation. The narrative plainly implies that this was done the same day. Their conversion was instantaneous. The demand on them was to yield themselves at once to God. And their profession was made, and the ordinance which sealed their profession administered without delay.

And the same day - The discourse of Peter commenced at nine o'clock in the morning, Acts 2:15. How long it continued it is not said; but the

ceremony of admitting them to the church and of baptizing them was evidently performed on the same day. The mode in which this is done is not mentioned; but it is highly improbable that in the midst of the city of Jerusalem three thousand persons were wholly immersed in one day. The whole narrative supposes that it was all done in the city; and yet there is no probability that there were conveniences there for immersing so many persons in a single day. Besides, in the ordinary way of administering baptism by immersion, it is difficult to conceive that so many persons could have been immersed in so short a time. There is, indeed, here no positive proof that they were not immersed; but the narrative is one of those incidental circumstances often much more satisfactory than philological discussion, that show the extreme improbability that all this was done by wholly immersing them in water. It may be further remarked that here is an example of very quick admission to the church. It was the first great work of grace under the gospel. It was the model of all revivals of religion. And it was doubtless intended that this should be a specimen of the manner in which the ministers of religion should act in regard to admissions to the Christian church. Prudence is indeed required; but this example furnishes no warrant for advising those who profess their willingness to obey Jesus Christ, to delay uniting with the church. If persons give evidence of piety, of true hatred of sin, and of attachment to the Lord Jesus; they should unite themselves to his people without delay.

There were added - To the company of disciples, or to the followers of Christ.

Souls - Persons. Compare 1 Peter 3:20; Genesis 12:5. It is not affirmed that all this took place in one part of Jerusalem, or that it was all done at once; but it is probable that this was what was afterward ascertained to be the fruit of this day‘s labor, the result of this revival of religion. This was the first effusion of the Holy Spirit under the preaching of the gospel; and it shows that such scenes are to be expected in the church, and that the gospel is suited to work a rapid and mighty change in the hearts of people.

Verse 42

And they continued stedfastly - They persevered in, or they adhered to. This is the inspired record of the result. That any of these apostatized is nowhere recorded, and is not to be presumed. Though they had been suddenly converted; though they were suddenly admitted to the church; though they were exposed to much persecution and contempt, and to many

trials, yet the record is that they adhered to the doctrines and duties of the Christian religion. The word rendered "continued stedfastly" - προσκαρτεροῦντες proskarterountes- means "attending one, remaining by his side, not leaving or forsaking him."

The apostles' doctrine - This does not mean that they held or believed the doctrines of the apostles, though that was true; but it means that they adhered to, or attended on, their teaching or instruction. The word doctrine has now a technical sense, and means a collection and arrangement of abstract views supposed to be contained in the Bible. In the Scriptures the word means simply "teaching"; and the expression here denotes that they continued to attend on their instructions. One evidence of conversion is a desire to be instructed in the doctrines and duties of religion, and a willingness to attend on the preaching of the gospel.

And fellowship - The word rendered "fellowship," κοινωνία koinōniais often rendered "communion." It properly denotes "having things in common, or participation, society, friendship." It may apply to anything which may be possessed in common, or in which all may partake. Thus, all Christians have the same hope of heaven; the same joys; the same hatred of sin; the same enemies to contend with. Thus, they have the same subjects of conversation, of feeling, and of prayer; or they have communion in these things. And thus the early Christians had their property in common. The word here may apply to either or to all of these things to their conversation, their prayers, their dangers, or their property; and means that they were united to the apostles, and participated with them in whatever befell them. It may be added that the effect of a revival of religion is to unite Christians more and more, and to bring those who were before separated to union and love. Christians feel that they are a band of brethren, and that, however much they were separated before they became Christians, now they have great and important interests in common; they are united in feelings, in interests, in dangers, in conflicts, in opinions, and in the hopes of a blessed immortality.

Breaking of bread - The Syriac renders this "the eucharist" or the Lord's Supper. It cannot, however, be determined whether this refers to their partaking of their ordinary food together, or to feasts of charity, or to the Lord's Supper. The bread of the Hebrews was made commonly into cakes, thin, hard, and brittle, so that it was broken instead of being cut. Hence, to denote "intimacy or friendship," the phrase "to break bread

together" would be very expressive in the same way as the Greeks denoted it by drinking together, συμπόσιον sumposionFrom the expression used in Acts 2:44, compare with Acts 2:46, that they had all things common, it would rather seem to be implied that this referred to the participation of their ordinary meals. The action of breaking bread was commonly performed by the master or head of a family immediately after asking a blessing (Lightfoot).

In prayers - This was one effect of the influence of the Spirit, and an evidence of their change. A genuine revival will be always followed by a love of prayer.

Verse 43

And fear came - That is, there was great reverence or awe. The multitude had just before derided them Acts 2:13; but so striking and manifest was the power of God on this occasion, that it silenced all clamors, and produced a general veneration and awe. The effect of a great work of God's grace is commonly to produce an unusual seriousness and solemnity in a community, even among those who are not converted. It restrains, subdues, and silences opposition.

Every soul - Every person or individual; that is, upon the people generally; not only on those who became Christians, but upon the multitudes who witnessed these things. All things were suited to produce this fear: the recent crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth; the wonders that attended that event; the events of the day of Pentecost; and the miracles performed by the apostles, were all suited to diffuse solemnity, thought, anxiety through the community.

Many wonders and signs - See the notes on Acts 2:22. This was promised by the Saviour, Mark 16:17. Some of the miracles which they performed are specified in the following chapters.

Verse 44

All that believed - That is, that believed that Jesus was the Messiah; for that was the distinguishing point by which they were known from others.

Were together - Were united; were joined in the same thing. It does not mean that they lived in the same house, but they were united in the same community, or engaged in the same thing. They were doubtless often together in the same place for prayer and praise. One of the best means for strengthening the faith of young converts is for them often to meet together for prayer, conversation, and praise.

Had all things common - That is, all their property or possessions. See Acts 4:32-37; Acts 5:1-10. The apostles, in the time of the Saviour, evidently had all their property in common stock, and Judas was made their treasurer. They regarded themselves as one family, having common needs, and there was no use or propriety in their possessing extensive property by themselves. Yet even then it is probable that some of them retained an interest in their property which was not supposed to be necessary to be devoted to the common use. It is evident that John thus possessed property which he retained, John 19:27. And it is clear that the Saviour did not command them to give up their property into a common stock, nor did the apostles enjoin it: Acts 5:4, "While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold was it not in thine own power?" It was, therefore, perfectly voluntary, and was as evidently adapted to the special circumstances of the early converts. Many of them came from abroad. They were from Parthia, and Media, and Arabia, and Rome, and Africa, etc. It is probable, also, that they now remained longer in Jerusalem than they had at first proposed; and it is not at all improbable that they would be denied now the usual hospitalities of the Jews, and excluded from their customary kindness, because they had embraced Jesus of Nazareth, who had been just put to death. In these circumstances, it was natural and proper that they should share their property while they remained together.

Verse 45

And sold - That is, they sold as much as was necessary in order to procure the means of providing for the needs of each other.

Possessions - Property, particularly real estate. This word, κτήματα ktēmatarefers properly to their fixed property, as lands, houses, vineyards, etc. The word rendered "goods," ὑπάρξεις huparxeisrefers to their personal or movable "property."

And parted them to all - They distributed them to supply the needs of their poorer brethren, according to their necessities.

As every man had need - This expression limits and fixes the meaning of what is said before. The passage does not mean that they sold all their possessions, or that they relinquished their title to all their property, but that they so far regarded all as common as to be willing to part with it if it was needful to supply the needs of the others. Hence, the property was laid at the disposal of the apostles, and they were desired to distribute it freely to meet the needs of the poor, Acts 4:34-35.

This was an important incident in the early propagation of religion, and it may suggest many useful reflections:

1. We see the effect of religion. The love of property is one of the strongest affections which people have. There is nothing that will overcome it but religion. That will; and one of the first effects of the gospel was to loosen the hold of Christians on property.

2. It is the duty of the church to provide for the needs of its poor and needy members. There can be no doubt that property should now be regarded as so far common as that the needs of the poor should be supplied by those who are rich. Compare Matthew 26:11.

3. If it be asked why the early disciples evinced this readiness to part with their property in this manner, it may be replied:

(1)That the apostles had done it before them. The family of the Saviour had all things common.

(2)it was the nature of religion to do it.

(3)the circumstances of the persons assembled on this occasion were such as to require it. They were many of them from distant regions, and probably many of them of the poorer class of the people in Jerusalem. In this they evinced what should be done in behalf of the poor in the church at all times.

4. If it be asked whether this was done commonly among the early Christians, it may be replied that there is no evidence that it was. It is mentioned here, and in Acts 4:32-37, and Acts 5:1-7. It does not appear that it was done even by all who were afterward converted in Judea; and there is no evidence that it was done in Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi, Rome, etc. That the effect of religion was to make people liberal and willing to provide for the poor there can be no doubt. See 2 Corinthians 8:19; 2 Corinthians 9:2; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Galatians 2:10. But there is no proof that it was common to part with their possessions and to lay them at the feet of the apostles. Religion does not contemplate, evidently, that people should break up all the arrangements in society, but it contemplates that those who have property should be ready and willing to part with it for the help of the poor and needy.

5. If it be asked, then, whether all the arrangements of property should be broken up now, and believers have all things in common, we are prepared to answer "No." Because:

(1)This was an extraordinary case.

(2)it was not even enjoined by the apostles on them.

(3)it was practiced nowhere else.

(4)it would be impracticable. No community where all things were held in common has long prospered. It has been attempted often, by pagans, by infidels, and by fanatical sects of Christians. It ends soon in anarchy, licentiousness, idleness, and profligacy; or the more cunning secure the mass of the property, and control the whole. Until all people are made alike, there could be no hope of such a community; and if there could be, it would not be desirable. God evidently intended that people should be excited to industry by the hope of gain; and then he demands that their gains shall be devoted to his service. Still, this was a noble instance of Christian generosity, and evinced the power of religion in loosing the hold which people commonly have on the world. It rebukes also those professors of religion, of whom, alas, there are many, who give nothing to benefit either the souls or bodies of their fellow-men.

Verse 46

With one accord - Compare Acts 1:14; Acts 2:1.

In the temple - This was the public place of worship; and the disciples were not disposed to leave the place where their fathers had so long worshipped God. This does not mean that they were constantly in the temple, but only at the customary hours of prayer - at nine o'clock in the morning, and at three o'clock in the afternoon.

And breaking bread - See the notes on Acts 2:42.

From house to house - In the margin, "at home." So the Syriac and Arabic. The common interpretation, however, is, that they did it in their various houses, now in this and now in that, as might be convenient. If it refers to their ordinary meals, then it means that they partook in common of what they possessed, and the expression "did eat their meat" seems to imply that this refers to their common meals, and not to the Lord's Supper.

Did eat their meat - Did partake of their food. The word "meat" with us is applied to "flesh." In the Bible, and in Old English authors, it is applied to "provisions" of any kind. Here it means all kinds of sustenance; what nourished them - τροφῆς trophēs- and the use of this word proves that it does not refer to the Lord's Supper; for that ordinance is nowhere represented as designed for an ordinary meal, or to nourish the body. Compare 1 Corinthians 11:33-34.

With gladness - With rejoicing. This is one of the effects of religion. It is far from gloom; it diffuses happiness over the mind; it bestows additional joy in the participation of even our ordinary pleasures.

Singleness of heart - This means with a sincere and pure heart. They were satisfied and thankful. They were not perplexed or anxious; nor were they solicitous for the luxurious living, or aspiring after the vain objects of the people of the world. Compare Romans 12:8; 2 Corinthians 1:12; Colossians 3:22; Ephesians 6:5.

Verse 47

Praising God - See Luke 24:53.

And having favour - See Luke 2:52.

With all the people - That is, with the great mass of the people; with the people generally. It does not mean that all the people had become reconciled to Christianity; but their humble, serious, and devoted lives won the favor of the great mass of the community, and silenced opposition and cavil. This was a remarkable effect, but God has power to silence opposition; and there it nothing so well suited to do this as the humble and consistent lives of his friends.

And the Lord added - See Acts 5:14; Acts 11:24, etc. It was the Lord who did this. There was no power in man to do it; and the Christian loves to trace all increase of the church to the grace of God.

Added - Caused, or inclined them to be joined to the church.

The church - To the assembly of the followers of Christ - τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ tē ekklēsiaThe word rendered "church" properly means "those who are called out," and is applied to Christians as being called out, or separated from the world. It is used only three times in the gospels, Matthew 16:18; Matthew 18:17, twice. It occurs frequently in other parts of the New Testament, and usually as applied to the followers of Christ. Compare Acts 5:11; Acts 7:38; Acts 8:1, Acts 8:3; Acts 9:31; Acts 11:22, Acts 11:26; Acts 12:1, Acts 12:5, etc. It is used in Classic writers to denote "an assembly" of

any kind, and is twice thus used in the New Testament Acts 19:39, Acts 19:41, where it is translated "assembly."

Such as should be saved - This whole phrase is a translation of a participle - τοὺς σωζομένους tous sōzomenousIt does not express any purpose that they should be saved, but simply the fact that they were those who would be, or who were about to be saved. It is clear, however, from this expression, that those who became members of the church were those who continued to adorn their profession, or who gave proof that they were sincere Christians. It is implied here, also, that those who are to be saved will join themselves to the church of God. This is everywhere required; and it constitutes one evidence of piety when they are willing to face the world, and give themselves at once to the service of the Lord Jesus. Two remarks may be made on the last verse of this chapter; one is, that the effect of a consistent Christian life will be to command the respect of the world; and the other is, that the effect will be continually to increase the number of those who shall be saved. In this case they were daily added to it; the church was constantly increasing; and the same result may be expected in all cases where there is similar zeal, self-denial, consistency, and prayer.

We have now contemplated the foundation of the Christian church and the first glorious revival of religion. This chapter deserves to be profoundly studied by all ministers of the gospel, as well as by all who pray for the prosperity of the kingdom of God. It should excite our fervent gratitude that God has left this record of the first great work of grace, and our earnest prayers that He would multiply and extend such scenes until the earth shall be filled with His glory.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

Peter and John went up … - In Luke 24:53, it is said that the apostles were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. From Acts 2:46, it is clear that all the disciples were accustomed daily to resort to the temple for devotion. Whether they joined in the sacrifices of the temple-service is not said; but the thing is not improbable. This was the place and the manner in which they and their fathers had worshipped. They came slowly to the conclusion that they were to leave the temple, and they would naturally resort there with their countrymen to worship the God of their fathers. In the previous chapter Acts 2:43 we are told in general that many wonders and signs were done by the hands of the apostles. From the many miracles which were performed, Luke selects one of which he gives a more full account, and especially as it gives him occasion to record another of the addresses of Peter to the Jews. An impostor would have been satisfied with the general statement that many miracles were performed. The sacred writers descend to particulars, and tell us where, and in relation to whom, they were performed. This is a proof that they were honest people, and did not intend to deceive.

Into the temple - Not into the edifice properly called the temple, but into the court of the temple, where prayer was accustomed to be made. See the notes on Matthew 21:12.

At the hour of prayer … - The Jewish day was divided into twelve equal parts; of course, the ninth hour would be about three o‘clock p. m. This was the hour of evening prayer. Morning prayer was offered at nine o‘clock. Compare Psalm 55:17; Daniel 6:10.

Verse 2

Lame from his mother‘s womb - The mention of this shows that there was no deception in the case. The man had been always lame; he was obliged to be carried; and he was well known to the Jews.

Whom they laid daily - That is, his friends laid him there daily. He would therefore be well known to those who were in the habit of entering the temple. Among the ancients there were no hospitals for the sick, and no alms-houses for the poor. The poor were dependent, therefore, on the Charity of those who were in better circumstances. It became an important matter for them to be placed where they would see many people. Hence, it

was customary to place them at the gates of rich men Luke 16:20; and they also sat by the highway to beg where many persons would pass, Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35; John 9:1-8. The entrance to the temple would be a favorable place for begging; for:

(1)great multitudes were accustomed to enter there; and,

(2)when going up for the purposes of religion, they would be more inclined to give alms than at other times; and especially was this true of the Pharisees, who were particularly desirous of publicity in bestowing charity. It is recorded by Martial (i. 112) that the custom prevailed among the Romans of placing the poor by the gates of the temples; and the custom was also observed a long time in the Christian churches.

At the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful - In regard to this gate there have been two opinions, one of which supposes that it was the gate commonly called Nicanor, which led from the court of the Gentiles to the court of the women (see Plan in notes on Matthew 21:12), and the other that it was the gate at the eastern entrance of the temple, commonly called Susan. It is not easy to determine which is intended; though from the fact that what is here recorded occurred near Solomon‘s porch (Acts 3:11; compare the Plan of the Temple, Matthew 21:12), it seems probable that the latter was intended. This gate was large and splendid. It was made of Corinthian brass, a most valuable metal, and made a magnificent appearance (Josephus, Jewish Wars, book 5, chapter 5, section 3).

To ask alms - Charity.

Verse 3

Who, seeing Peter … - There is no evidence that he was acquainted with them or knew who they were. He asked of them as he was accustomed to do of the multitude that entered the temple.

Verse 4

Fastening his eyes - The word used here denotes “to look intently, or with fixed attention.” It is one of the special words which Luke uses (Luke 4:20; Luke 22:56; Acts 1:10; Acts 3:12; Acts 6:15; Acts 7:55; Acts 10:4; etc.) 12 times in all. It is used by no other writer in the New Testament, except twice by Paul, 2 Corinthians 3:7, 2 Corinthians 3:13.

Look on us - All this Was done to fix the attention. He wished to call the attention of the man distinctly to himself, and to what he was about to do. It was also done that the man might be fully apprised that his restoration to health came from him.

Verse 6

Silver and gold have I none - The man had asked for money; Peter assures him that he had not that to give; what he did was done, however, in such a way as to show his willingness to aid him if he had possessed money.

Such as I have - Such as is in my power. It is not to be supposed that he meant to say that he originated this power himself, but only that it was entrusted to him. He immediately adds that it was derived solely from the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the name - Compare Acts 4:10. In Mark 16:17-18, it is said, "These signs shall follow them that the sick, and they shall recover." The expression means "by his authority," or "in virtue of power derived from him." We are here struck with a remarkable difference between the manner in which the Lord Jesus performed miracles and that in which it was done by his apostles. He did it in his own name and by virtue of his own power. The apostles never attempted to perform a miracle by their own power. It was only in the name of Jesus; and this circumstance alone shows that there was a radical difference between Christ and all other prophets and teachers.

Of Nazareth - This was the name by which he was commonly known. By the name he had been designated among the Jews and on the cross. It is by no means improbable that the man had heard of him by this name, and it was important that he should understand that it was by the authority of him who had been crucified as an impostor.

Rise up and walk - To do this would be evidence of signal power. It is remarkable that in cases like this they were commanded to do the thing at once. See similar cases in John 5:8; Matthew 9:6; Matthew 12:13. It would have been easy to allege that they had no power; that they were lame, or sick, or palsied, and could do nothing until God should give them strength. But the command was to do the thing; nor did the Saviour or the apostles stop to convince them that they could do nothing. They did not doubt that if it were done they would ascribe the power to God. Precisely like this is the condition of the sinner. God commands him to do the thing; to repent, and believe, and lead a holy life. It is not merely to attempt to do it, to make use of means, or to wait on him, but it is actually to repent and believe the gospel. Where he may obtain power to do it is another question. It is easy for him to involve himself in difficulty, as it would have been in these cases. But the command of God is positive, and must be obeyed. If not obeyed,

people must perish, just as this man would have been always lame if he had put forth no effort of his own. When done, a convicted sinner will do just as this man did, instinctively give all the praise to God, Acts 3:8.

Verse 7

And he took him - He took hold of his hand. To take hold of the hand in such a ease was an offer of aid, an indication that Peter was sincere, and was an inducement to him to make an effort. This may be employed as a beautiful illustration of the manner of God when he commands people to repent and believe. He does not leave them alone; he extends help, and aids their efforts. If they tremble, and feel that they are weak, and needy, and helpless, his hand is stretched out and his power exerted to impart strength and grace.

His feet and ankle-bones - The fact that strength was immediately imparted; that the feet, long lame, were now made strong, was a full and clear proof of miraculous power.

Verse 8

And he, leaping up - This was a natural expression of joy, and it was a striking fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 35:6; "Then shall the lame man leap as an hart." The account here given is one that is perfectly natural. The man would be filled with joy, and would express it in this manner. He had been lame from a child; he had never walked; and there was more in the miracle than merely giving strength. The art of "walking" is one that is acquired by long practice. Children learn slowly. Caspar Hauser, discovered in one of the cities of Germany, who had been confined in prison from a child, was unable to walk in an easy way when released, but stumbled in a very awkward manner (see his Life). When, therefore, this man was able at once to walk, it was clear proof of a miracle.

Praising God - This was the natural and appropriate expression of his feelings on this occasion. His heart would be full; and he could have no doubt that this blessing had come from God alone. It is remarkable that he did not even express his gratitude to Peter and John. They had not pretended to restore him in their own name, and he would feel that man could not do it. It is remarkable that he praised God without being taught or entreated to do it. It was instinctive - the natural feeling of the heart. So a sinner. His first feelings, when he is converted, will be to ascribe the praise to God. While he may and will feel regard for the ministry by whose instrumentality he has received the blessing, yet his main expression of gratitude will be to

God. And this he will do instinctively. He needs no prompter; he knows that no power of man is equal to the work of converting the soul, and will rejoice, and give all the praise to the God of grace.

Verse 9-10

And all the people … - The people who had been accustomed to see him sit in a public place.

And they knew … - In this they could not be deceived; they had seen him a long time, and now they saw the same man expressing his praise to God for complete recovery. The particulars in this miracle are the following, and they are as far as possible from any appearance of imposture:

1. The man had been afficated from a child. This was known to all the people. At this time he was 40 years of age, Acts 4:22.

2. He was not an impostor. If he had pretended lameness, it is wonderful that he had not been detected before, and not have been suffered to occupy a place thus in the temple.

3. The apostles had no agency in placing him there. They had not seen him before. There was manifestly no collusion or agreement with him to attempt to impose on the people.

4. The man himself was convinced of the miracle, and did not doubt that the power by which he had been healed was of God.

5. The people were convinced of the same thing. They saw the effects; they had known him well; they had had every opportunity to know that he was diseased, and they were now satisfied that he was restored. There was no possibility of deception in the case. It was not merely the friends of Jesus that saw this; not those who had an interest in the miracle, but those who had been his enemies, and who had just before been engaged in putting him to death. Let this miracle be compared, in these particulars, with those pretended miracles which have been affirmed to have been performed in defense of other systems of religion, and it will be seen at once that in these there is every appearance of sincerity, honesty, and truth; in them, every mark of deception, fraud, and imposition. (See Paley‘s “Evidences of Christianity,” proposition ii. chapter ii.)

Verse 11

Held Peter and John - The word "held" means that he "adhered" to them; he "joined himself" to them; he was desirous of "remaining" with them and "participating" with them. "He clung to his benefactors, and would not be separated from them" (Prof. Hackett).

All the people … - Excited by curiosity, they came together. The fact of the cure and the conduct of the man would soon draw together a crowd, and thus furnish a favorable opportunity for preaching to them the gospel.

In the porch … - This "porch" was a covered way or passage on the east side of the temple. It was distinguished for its magnificence. See the plan and description of the temple, notes on Matthew 21:12.

Verse 12

When Peter saw it - Saw the people assembling in such multitudes and wondering at the miracle.

He answered - The word "answer," with us, implies that a question had been asked, or that some subject had been proposed for consideration. But the word is used in a different sense in the Bible. It is often used when no question was asked, but when an occasion was offered for remarks, or when an opportunity was presented to make a statement. It is the same as replying to a thing, or making a statement in regard to some subject, Daniel 2:26; Acts 5:8.

Ye men of Israel - Jews. Compare Acts 2:14.

Why marvel ye at this? - The particular thing which he intended to reprove here was not that they wondered, for that was proper; but that they looked on himself and John as if they had been the authors of this healing. They ought to have understood it. The Jews were sufficiently acquainted with miracles to interpret them and to know whence they proceeded; and they ought not, therefore, to ascribe them to man, but to inquire why they had been performed by God.

Why look ye … - Why do ye fix the eyes with amazement on us, as though we could do this? Why not look at once to God?

By our own power - By any art of healing or by any medicine we had done this.

Or holiness - Piety. As if God had bestowed this on us on account of our personal and eminent piety. It may be remarked that here was ample opportunity for them to establish a reputation of their own. The people were

disposed to pay them honor; they might at once have laid claim to vast authority over them; but they refused all such personal honor, and ascribed all to the Lord Jesus. Whatever success may attend the ministers of the gospel, or however much the world may be disposed to do them honor, they should disclaim all power in themselves, and ascribe it to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not by the talents or personal holiness of ministers, valuable as these are, that people are saved; it is only by the power of God, designed to honor his Son. See 2 Corinthians 3:5-6.

Verse 13

The God of Abraham - He is called the God of Abraham because Abraham acknowledged him as his God, and because God showed himself to be his friend. Compare Matthew 22:32; Exodus 3:6, Exodus 3:15; Genesis 28:13; Genesis 26:24. It was important to show that it was the same God who had done this that had been acknowledged by their fathers, and that they were not about to introduce the worship of any other God. And it was especially important, because the promise had been made to Abraham that in his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed, Genesis 12:3. Compare Galatians 3:16.

Hath glorified - Has honored. You denied, despised, and murdered him, but God has exalted and honored him. This miracle was done in the "name" of Jesus, Acts 3:6. It was the "power of God" that had restored the man; and by putting forth this power, God had shown that he approved the work of his Son, and was disposed to honor him in the view of people. Compare John 17:1; Ephesians 1:20-22; Philemon 2:9-11; Hebrews 2:9; Revelation 1:5-18.

Ye delivered up - That is, you delivered him to the omans to be put to death. See the notes on Acts 2:23.

And denied him in the presence of Pilate - Denied that he was the Messiah. Were unwilling to own him as your long-expected King, John 19:15.

When he was determined … - Matthew 27:17-25; Luke 23:16-23. Pilate was satisfied of his innocence; but he was weak, timid, and irresolute, and he yielded to their wishes. The fact that Pilate regarded him as innocent was a strong aggravation of their crime. They should have regarded him as innocent; but they urged on his condemnation against the deliberate judgment of him before whom they had arraigned him, and thus showed how obstinately they were resolved on his death.

Verse 14

The Holy One … - See Psalm 16:10. Compare the notes on Acts 2:27.

And the Just - The word "just" here denotes "innocent," or "one who was free from crime." It is properly used in reference to law, and denotes "one who stands upright in the view of the law, or who is not chargeable with crime." In this sense, the Lord Jesus was not only personally innocent, but even before his judges he stood unconvicted of any crime. The crime charged on him at first was blasphemy Matthew 26:65, and on this charge the Sanhedrin had condemned him without proof. But of this charge Pilate would not take cognizance, and hence, before him they charged him with sedition, Luke 23:2. Neither of these charges were made out, and of course, in the eye of the law, he was innocent and just. It greatly aggravated their crime that they demanded his death still, even after it was ascertained that they could prove nothing against him, thus showing that it was mere hatred and malice that led them to seek his death.

And desired a murderer - Matthew 27:21.

Verse 15

And killed the Prince of life - The word rendered "prince" denotes properly "a military leader or commander." Hence, in Hebrews 2:10, it is translated "captain:" "It became him … to make the "Captain of their salvation" perfect through sufferings." As a captain or commander leads on to victory and is said to obtain it, so the word comes to denote one who is the "cause," the "author," the "procurer," etc. In this sense it is used, Acts 5:31, "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel," etc. In Hebrews 12:2 it is properly rendered author, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." The word "author," or "giver," would express the meaning of the word here. It also implies that he has dominion over life; an idea, indeed, which is essentially connected with that of his being the author of it. The word "life" here is used in a large sense, as denoting "all manner of life." In this sense it is used in reference to Christ in John 1:4, "In him was life." Compare John 5:26; 1 John 5:11; 1 Corinthians 15:45. Jesus is here called the Prince of life in contrast with him whom the Jews demanded in his place, Barabbas. He was a murderer Luke 23:19; Mark 15:7, one who had destroyed life, and yet they demanded that he whose character it was to destroy life should be released, and the Author of life be put to death.

Whom God hath raised … - Acts 2:24, Acts 2:32.

Verse 16

And his name - The "name" of Jesus is here put for Jesus himself, and it is the same as saying "and he," etc. In this way the word name is often used by the Hebrews, especially when speaking of God, Acts 1:15; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 1:21; Revelation 3:4. It does not mean that there was any efficacy in the mere name of Jesus that would heal the man, but that it was done by his authority and power.

Through faith in his name - By means of faith in him; that is, by the faith which Peter and John had in Jesus. It does not refer to any faith that the man had himself, for there is no evidence that he believed in him. But it was by means of the faith which the apostles exercised in him that the miracle was performed, and was thus a fulfillment of the declaration in Matthew 17:20, "If ye have faith … ye shall to this mountain, remove hence," etc. This truth Peter repeats two or three times in the verse to impress it more distinctly on the minds of his hearers.

Whom ye see and know - There could therefore, be no mistake. He was well known to them. There was no doubt about the truth of the miracle Acts 4:16, and the only inquiry was in what way it had been done. This Peter affirms to have been accomplished only by the power of the Lord Jesus.

Perfect soundness - ὁλοκληρίαν holoklērianThis word is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. It denotes "integrity of parts, freedom from any defect"; and it here means that the cure was perfect and entire, or that he was completely restored to the use of his limbs.

In the presence of you all - You are all witnesses of it, and can judge for yourselves. This shows how confident the apostles were that a real miracle had been performed. They were willing that it should be examined; and this is conclusive proof that there was no attempt at imposture. A deceiver, or one who pretended to work miracles, would have been cautious of exposing the subject to the danger of detection.

Verse 17

And now, brethren - Though they had been guilty of a crime so enormous, yet Peter shows the tenderness of his heart in addressing them still as his brethren. He regarded them as of the same nation with himself; as having the same hopes, and as being entitled to the same privileges. The expression also shows that he was not disposed to exalt himself as being by nature more holy than they. This verse is a remarkable instance of tenderness in appealing to sinners. It would have been easy to have

reproached them for their enormous crimes; but that was not the way to reach the heart. He had indeed stated and proved their wickedness. The object now was to bring them to repentance for it; and this was to be done by tenderness, kindness, and love. People are melted to contrition, not by reproaches, but by love.

I wot - I know; am well apprised of it. I know you will affirm it, and I admit that it was so. Still the enormous deed has been done. It cannot be recalled, and it cam not be innocent. It remains, therefore, that you should repent of it, and seek for pardon.

That through ignorance … - Peter does not mean to affirm that they were innocent in having put him to death, for he had just proved the contrary, and he immediately proceeds to exhort them to repentance. But he means to say that their offence was mitigated by the fact that they were ignorant that he was the Messiah. The same thing the Saviour himself affirmed when dying, Luke 23:34; "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Compare Acts 13:27; 1 Corinthians 2:8. The same thing the apostle Paul affirmed in relation to himself, as one of the reasons why he obtained pardon from the enormous crime of persecution, 1 Timothy 1:13. In cases like these, though crime might be mitigated, yet it was not taken entirely away. They were guilty of demanding that a man should be put to death who was declared innocent; they were urged on with ungovernable fury; they did it from contempt and malice; and the crime of murder remained, though they were ignorant that he was the Messiah. It is plainly implied that if they had put him to death knowing that he was the Messiah, and as the Messiah, there would have been no forgiveness. Compare Hebrews 10:26-29. Ignorance, therefore, is a circumstance which must always be taken into view in an estimate of crime. It is at the same time true that they had opportunity to know that he was the Messiah, but the mere fact that they were ignorant of it was still a mitigating circumstance in the estimate of their crime. There can be no doubt that the mass of the people had no fixed belief that he was the Messiah.

As did also your rulers - Compare 1 Corinthians 2:8, where the apostle says that none of the princes of this world knew the wisdom of the gospel, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. It is certain that the leading scribes and Pharisees were urged on by the most ungovernable fury and rage to put Jesus to death, even when they had abundant opportunity to know his true character. This was particularly the

case with the high priest. But yet it was true that they did not believe that he was the Messiah. Their minds had been prejudiced. They had expected a prince and a conqueror. All their views of the Messiah were different from the character which Jesus manifested. And though they might have known that he was the Messiah; though he had given abundant proof of the fact, yet it is clear that they did not believe it. It is not credible that they would have put to death one whom they really believed to be the Christ. He was the hope, the only hope of their nation; and they would not have dared to imbrue their hands in the blood of him whom they really believed to be the illustrious personage so long promised and expected by their fathers. It was also probably true that no small part of the Sanhedrin was urged on by the zeal and fury of the chief priests. They had not courage to resist them; and yet they might not have entered heartily into this work of persecution and death. Compare John 7:50-53. The speech of Peter, however, is not intended to free them entirely from blame; nor should it be pressed to show that they were innocent. It is a mitigating circumstance thrown in to show them that there was still hope of mercy.

Verse 18

But those things - To wit, those things that did actually occur, pertaining to the life and death of the Messiah.

Had showed - Had announced, or foretold.

By the mouth of all his prophets - That is, by the prophets in general, without affirming that each individual prophet had uttered a distinct prediction respecting this. The prophets "taken together," or the prophecies "as a whole," had declared this. The word "all" is not infrequently used in this somewhat limited sense, Mark 1:37; John 3:26. In regard to the prophecies respecting Christ, see the notes on Luke 24:27.

Hath so fulfilled - He has caused to be fulfilled in this manner; that is, by the rejection, the denial, and the wickedness of the rulers. It has turned out to be in strict accordance with the prophecy. This fact Peter uses in exhorting them to repentance; but it is not to be regarded as an excuse for their sins. The mere fact that all this was foretold; that it was in accordance with the purposes and predictions of God, does not take away the quilt of it, or constitute an excuse for it. In regard to this, we may remark:

(1)The prediction did not change the nature of the act. The mere fact that it was foretold, or foreknown, did not change its character. See notes on Acts 1:23.

(2)Peter still regarded them as guilty. He did not urge the fact that this was foreknown as an excuse for their sin, but to show them that since all this happened according to the prediction and the purpose of God, they might hope in his mercy. The plan was that the Messiah should die to make a way for pardon, and, therefore, they might hope in his mercy.

(3)this was a signal instance of the power and mercy of God in overruling the wicked conduct of people to further his own purposes and plans.

(4)all the other sins of people may thus be overruled, and thus the wrath of man may be made to praise him. But,

(5)This will constitute no excuse for the sinner. It is no part of his intention to honor God, or to advance his purposes; and there is no direct tendency in his crimes to advance his glory. The direct tendency of his deeds is counteracted and overruled, and God brings good out of the evil. But this surely constitutes no excuse for the sinner.

If it be asked why Peter insisted on this if he did not mean that it should be regarded as an excuse for their sin, I reply, that it was his design to prove "that Jesus was the Messiah," and having proved this, he could assure them that there was mercy. Not that they had not been guilty; not that they deserved favor; but that tire fact that the Messiah had come was an argument which proved that any sinners might obtain mercy, as he immediately proceeds to show them.

Verse 19

Repent ye - See the notes on Matthew 3:2.

Therefore - Because of your sin in putting Jesus to death, and "because" he is the Messiah, and God through him is willing to show mercy to the chief of sinners.

And be converted - This expression conveys an idea not at all to be found in the original. It conveys the idea of "passivity," be "converted," as if they were to yield to some foreign influence I that they were now resisting. But the idea of being "passive" in this is not conveyed by the original word. The word means properly to "turn; to return to a path from which one has gone astray; and then to turn away from sins, or to forsake them." It is a word used in a general sense to denote "the whole turning to

God." That the form of the word here ἐπιστρέψατε epistrepsatedoes not denote passivity may be clearly seen by referring to the following places where the same form of the word is used: Matthew 24:18; Mark 13:16; Luke 17:31; 1 Thessalonians 1:9. The expression, therefore, would have been more appropriately rendered "repent and turn, that your sins," etc. "To be converted" cannot be a matter of obligation, but to "turn to God" is the duty of every sinner. The crimes of which he exhorted them to repent were those pertaining to the death of the Lord Jesus, as well as all the past sins of their lives. They were to turn from the course of wickedness in which they and the nation had been so long walking. That your sins, etc. In order that your sins may be forgiven. Sin cannot be pardoned before man repents of it. In the order of the work of grace, repentance must always precede pardon. Of course, no man can have evidence that his sin is pardoned until he repents. Compare Isaiah 1:16-20; Joel 2:13.

May be blotted out - May be forgiven, or pardoned. The expression "to blot out sins" occurs also in Isaiah 43:25; Psalm 51:1, Psalm 51:9; Jeremiah 18:23; Nehemiah 4:5; Isaiah 44:22. The expression "to blot out a name" is applied to expunging it from a "roll," or "catalog," or "list," as of an army, etc. Exodus 32:32-33; Deuteronomy 9:14; Deuteronomy 25:19; Deuteronomy 29:29, etc. The expression to "blot out sins" is taken from the practice of creditors charging their debtors, and when the debt is paid, cancelling it, or wholly removing the record. The word used here properly refers to the practice of writing on tables covered with wax, and then by inverting the stylus, or instrument of writing, smoothing the wax again, and thus removing every trace of the record. This more entirely expresses the idea of pardoning than blotting does. It means wholly to remove the record, the charge, and every trace of the account against us. In this way God forgives sins.

When the times … - The word ὅπως hopōsrendered "when," is commonly rendered that, and denotes the "final cause," or the "reason" why a thing is done, Matthew 2:23; Matthew 5:16, Matthew 5:45, etc. By many it has been supposed to have this sense here, and to mean, "repent … in order that the times of refreshing may come," etc. Thus, Kuinoel, Grotius, Lightfoot, the Syriac version, etc. If used in this sense, it means that their repentance and forgiveness would be the means of introducing peace and joy. Others have rendered it, in accordance with our translation, "when," meaning that they might find peace in the day when Christ should return to

judgment, which return would be to them a day of rest, though of terror to the wicked. Thus, Calvin, Beza, the Latin Vulgate, Schleusner, etc. The grammatical construction will admit of either, though the former is more in accordance with the usual use of the word.

The objection to the former is, that it is not easy to see how their repenting, etc., would be the means of introducing the times of refreshing. And this, also, corresponds very little with the design of Peter in this discourse. That was to encourage them to repentance; to adduce arguments why they should repent, and why they might hope in his mercy. To do this, it was needful only to assure them that they were living under the times graciously promised by God the times of refreshing, when pardon might be obtained. The main inquiry, therefore, is, What did Peter refer to by the times of refreshing, and by the restitution of all things? Did he refer to any particular manifestation to be made then, or to the influence of the gospel on the earth, or to the future state, when the Lord Jesus shall come to judgment? The idea which I suppose Peter intended to convey was this: "Repent, and be converted. You have been great sinners, and are in danger. Turn from your ways, that your sins may be forgiven."

But then, what encouragement would there be for this? or why should it be done? Answer: "You are living under the times of the gospel, the reign of the Messiah, the times of refreshing. This happy, glorious period has been long anticipated, and is to continue to the close of the world. The period which will include the restitution of all things, and the return of Christ to judgment, has come, and is, therefore, the period when you may find mercy, and when you should seek it, to be prepared for his return." In this sense the passage refers to the fact that this time, this dispensation, this economy, including all this, had come, and they were living under it, and might and should seek for mercy. It expresses, therefore, the common belief of the Yews that such a time would come, and the comment of Peter about its nature and continuance. The belief of the Jews was that such times would come.

Peter affirms that the belief of such a period was well founded a time when mercy may be obtained. That time has come. The doctrine that it would come was well founded, and has been fulfilled. This was a reason why they should repent, and hope in the mercy of God. Peter goes on, then,

to state further characteristics of that period. It would include the restitution of all things, the return of Christ to judgment, etc. And all this was an additional consideration why they should repent, and turn from their sins, and seek for forgiveness. The meaning of the passage may therefore be thus summed up: "Repent, since it is a true doctrine that such times would come: they are clearly predicted; they were to be expected; and you are now living under them. In these times; in this dispensation, also, God shall send his Son again to judge the world, and all things shall be closed and settled forever. Since you live under this period, you may seek for mercy, and you should seek to avoid the vengeance due to the wicked, and to be admitted to heaven when the Lord Jesus shall return."

Times of refreshing - The word rendered "refreshing," ἀνάψυξις anapsuxismeans properly "breathing," or "refreshment," after being heated with labor, running, etc. It hence denotes "any kind of refreshment, as rest, or deliverance from evils of any kind." It is used nowhere else in the New Testament, except that the verb is used in 2 Timothy 1:16, "Onesiphorus … oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain." He administered comfort to me in my trials. It is used by the Septuagint in the Old Testament nine times: Exodus 8:15, "But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite"; that is, cessation or rest from the plagues, Hosea 12:8; Jeremiah 49:31; Psalm 69:11, etc. In no place in the Old Testament is the word applied to the terms of the gospel. The idea, however, that the times of the Messiah would be times of rest, ease, and prosperity, was a favorite one among the Jews, and was countenanced in the Old Testament. See Isaiah 28:12, "To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing," etc. They anticipated the times of the gospel as a period when they would have rest from their enemies, a respite from the evils of oppression and war, and great national prosperity and peace. Under the idea that the happy times of the Messiah had come, Peter now addresses them, and assures them that they might obtain pardon and peace.

Shall come - This does not mean that this period was still future, for it had come; but that the expectation of the Jews that such a Messiah would come was well founded. A remarkably similar construction we have concerning Elijah Matthew 17:11, "And Jesus answered and said, Elias truly shall first come, and restore," etc.; that is, the doctrine that Elijah would come was true, though he immediately adds that it had already taken place, Acts 3:12. See the notes on that place.

From the presence of the Lord - Greek: "From the face of the Lord." The expression means that God was "its author." From the face of the Lord means "from the Lord himself:" Mark 1:2, "I send thy messenger before thy face," that is, before thee. Compare Malachi 3:1; Luke 1:76; Luke 2:31.

Verse 20

And he shall send … - Acts 1:1 l. Under this economy of things, he shall send Jesus Christ, that is, the Messiah, to teach people; to redeem them; to save them; to judge the world; to gather his people to himself; and to condemn the wicked. Under this economy they were then. This, therefore, was an argument why they should repent and turn to God, that they might escape in the day of judgment.

Which before was preached … - Who has been proclaimed as the Messiah. The name "Jesus Christ" is equivalent here to "the Messiah." The Messiah had been proclaimed to the Jews as about to come. In his time was to be the period of refreshing. He had come; and they were under the economy in which the blessings of the Messiah were to be enjoyed. This does not refer to his personal ministry, or to the preaching of the apostles, but to the fact that the Messiah had been a long time announced to them by the prophets as about to come. All the prophets had preached him as the hope of the nation. It may be remarked, however, that there is here a difference in the manuscripts. A large majority of them read προκεχειρισμενον prokecheirismenonwho was designated or appointed, instead of who was preached. This reading is approved by Griesbach, Knapp, Bengel, etc. It was followed in the ancient Syriac, the Arabic, etc., and is undoubtedly the true reading.

Verse 21

Whom the heavens must receive - The common belief of the Jews was, that the Messiah would reign on the earth forever, John 12:34. On this account they would object that Jesus could not be the Messiah, and hence, it became so important for the apostles to establish the fact that he had ascended to heaven. The evidence which they adduced was the fact that they saw him ascend, Acts 1:9. The meaning of the expression "whom the heavens must receive," is that it was "fit" or "proper" δεῖ deithat he should ascend. One reason of that fitness or propriety he himself stated in John 16:7; compare John 17:2. It was also fit or expedient that he should do it, to direct the affairs of the universe for the welfare of the church Ephesians 1:20-22, and that he should exercise there his office as a priest in

interceding for his people, 1 John 2:1-2; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 9:24; Romans 8:34, etc. It is remarkable that Peter did not adduce any passage of Scripture on this subject; but it was one of the points on which there was no clear revelation. Obscure intimations of it might be found in Psalm 110:1-7; Psalm 16:1-11; etc., but the fact that he would ascend to heaven was not made prominent in the Old Testament. ‹The words "whom the heaven must receive" also convey the idea of "exaltation" and "power"; and Peter doubtless intended to say that he was clothed with power, and exalted to honor in the presence of God. See Psalm 115:3. Compare 1 Peter 3:22, "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right banal of God; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him." See the notes on Acts 2:33.

Until - This word implies that he would then return to the earth, but it does not imply that he would not again ascend to heaven.

The times of the restitution of all things - The noun rendered restitution ἀποκαταστάσεως apokatastaseōsdoes not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The verb from which it is derived occurs eight times. It means properly "to restore a thing to its former situation," as restoring a "strained" or "dislocated" limb to its former soundness. Hence, it is used to restore, or to heal, in the New Testament: Matthew 12:13, "And it (the hand) was restored whole as the other"; Mark 3:5; Luke 6:10. And hence, it is applied to the preparation or fitness for the coming of the Messiah which was to attend the preaching of John in the character of Elias, Matthew 17:11; Mark 9:12. Thus, in Josephus (Antiq., Mark 2:3, Mark 2:8), the word is used to denote the return of the Jews from the captivity of Babylon, and their restoration to their former state and privileges. The word has also the idea of "consummation, completion, or filling up." Thus, it is used in Philo, Hesychius, Phavorinus, and by the Greek Classics. (See Lightfoot and Kuinoel.) Thus, it is used here by the Syriac: "Until the complement or filling up of the times"; that is, of all the events foretold by the prophets, etc. Thus, the Arabic: "Until the times which shall establish the perfection or completion of all the predictions of the prophets," etc. In this sense the passage means that the heavens must receive the Lord Jesus until all thrums spoken by the prophets in relation to his work, his reign, the spread of the gospel, the triumph of religion, etc., shall have been fulfilled. It also conveys the idea of the predicted recovery of the world from sin, and the restoration of peace and order; the con. summation of the work of the

Messiah, now begun, but not yet complete; slow it may be in its advances, but triumphant and certain in its progress and its close.

All things - All things which have been foretold by the prophets. The expression is limited by the connection to this; and of course it does not mean that all people will be saved, or that all the evils of sin can be repaired or remedied. This can never be, for the mischief is done and cannot be undone; but everything which the prophets have foretold shall receive their completion and fulfillment.

Which God hath spoken - Which have been revealed, and are recorded in the Old Testament.

Of all his holy prophets - This does not mean that each one of the prophets had spoken of these things, but that all which had been spoken would be fulfilled.

Since the world began - This is an expression denoting the same as from the beginning, meaning to affirm with emphasis that all the prophecies would be fulfilled. The apostles were desirous to show that they, as well as the Jews, held entirely to the prophets, and taught no doctrine which they had not taught before them.

Verse 22

For Moses truly said - The authority of Moses among the Jews was absolute and final. It was of great importance, therefore, to show not only that they were not departing from his Law, but that he had actually foretold these very things. The object of the passage is not to prove that the heavens must receive him, but that he was truly the Messiah.

Unto the fathers - To their ancestors, or the founders of the nation. See Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

A Prophet - Literally, one who foretells future events. But it is also used to denote a religious teacher in general. See Romans 12:6. In the passage in Deuteronomy it is evidently used in a large sense, to denote one who would infallibly guide and direct the nation in its religious affairs; one who would be commissioned by God to do this, in opposition to the diviners Acts 3:14 on which other nations relied. The meaning of this passage in Deuteronomy is apparent from the connection. Moses is stating to the Hebrews Acts 3:1-8 the duty and office of the priests and Levites. He then cautions them against conforming to the surrounding nations, particularly on the subject of religious instruction and guidance. They, said he, consult, in times of perplexity, with enchanters, and charmers, and necromancers, and wizards,

etc. Acts 3:11-14, but it shall not be so with you. You shall not be left to this false and uncertain guidance in times of perplexity and danger, for the Lord will raise up, from time to time, a prophet, a man directly commissioned in an extraordinary manner from heaven, like me, who shall direct and counsel you. The promise, therefore, pertains to the serges or, prophets which God would raise up; or it is a promise that God would send his prophets, as occasion might demand, to instruct and counsel the nation. The design was to keep them from consulting with diviners, etc., and to preserve them from following the pretended and false religious teachers of surrounding idolatrous people. In this interpretation most commentators agree. See particularly "Calvin" on this place. Thus explained, the prophecy had no "exclusive" or even "direct" reference to the Messiah, and there is no evidence that the Jews understood it to have any such reference, except as one of the series of prophets that God would raise up and send to instruct the nation. If, then, it be asked on what principle Peter appealed to this, we may reply:

(1) That the Messiah was to sustain the character of a prophet, and the prophecy had reference to him as one of the teachers that God would raise up to instruct the nation.

(2) it would apply to him by way of eminence, as the greatest of the messengers that God would send to instruct the people. In this sense it is probable that the Jews would understand it.

(3) this was one of those emergencies in the history of the nation when they might expect such an intervention. The prophecy implied that in times of perplexity and danger God would raise up such a prophet. Such a time then existed. The nation was corrupt, distracted, subjected to a foreign power, and needed such a teacher and guide. If it be asked why Peter appealed to this rather than to explicit prophecies of the Messiah, we may remark:

(1) That his main object was to show their guilt in having rejected him and put him to death, Acts 3:14-15.

(2) that in order to do this, he sets before them clearly the obligation to obey him; and in doing this, appeals to the express command of Moses. He

shows them that, according to Moses, whoever would not obey such a prophet should be cut off from among the people. In refusing, therefore, to hear this great prophet, and putting him to death, they had violated the express command of their own Lawgiver. But it was possible still to obey him, for he still lived in heaven; and all the authority of Moses, therefore, made it a matter of obligation for them still to hear and obey him. The Jews were accustomed to apply the name prophet to the Messiah John 1:21; John 6:14; John 7:40; Matthew 21:11; Luke 4:24, and it has been shown from the writings of the Jewish rabbis that they believed the Messiah would be the greatest of the prophets, even greater than Moses. See the notes on John 1:21.

The Lord your God - In the Hebrew, "Yahweh, thy God. "Raise up unto you." Appoint, or commission to come to you.

Of your brethren - Among yourselves; of your own countrymen; so that you shall not be dependent on foreigners, or on teachers of other nations. All the prophets were native-born Jews. And it was particularly true of the Messiah that he was to be a Jew, descended from Abraham, and raised up from the midst of his brethren, Hebrews 2:11, Hebrews 2:16-17. On this account it was to be presumed that they would feel a deeper interest in him, and listen more attentively to his instructions.

Like unto me - Not in all things, but only in the point which was under discussion. He was to resemble him in being able to make known to them the will of God, and thus preventing the necessity of looking to other teachers. The idea of resemblance between Moses and the prophet is not very strictly expressed in the Greek, except in the mere circumstance of being raised up. God shall raise up to you a prophet as he has raised up me - ὡς hōs ἐμέ emeThe resemblance between Moses and the Messiah should not be pressed too far. The Scriptures have not traced it further than to the fact that both were raised up by God to communicate his will to the Jewish people, and therefore one should be heard as well as the other.

Him shall ye hear - That is, him shall you obey, or you shall receive his instructions as a communication from God.

In all things, whatsoever … - These words are not quoted literally from the Hebrew, but they express the sense of what is said in Deuteronomy 18:15, Deuteronomy 18:18.

Verse 23

And it shall come to pass - It shall be, or shall occur. This is not the usual word rendered "it shall come to pass." It is a word commonly expressing "futurity," but here it conveys the notion of "obligation." In this verse Peter has not quoted the passage in Deuteronomy literally, but he has given the sense.

Every soul - Every "person" or "individual." Soul is often put for the whole man by the Hebrews, Acts 7:14; Joshua 10:28.

Hear that Prophet - That is, obey his instructions. He shall have authority to declare the will of God; and he that does not obey him refuses to obey God. Compare Luke 10:16; John 13:20.

Shall be destroyed - This quotation is made according to the sense, and not literally. In the Hebrew the expression is Deuteronomy 18:19, "I will require it of him," that is, I will hold him answerable or responsible for it; I will punish him. This expression the Septuagint has rendered by "I will take vengeance on him." The idea of the passage is, therefore, that God would publish the man that would not hear the prophet, without specifying the particular way in which it should be done. The usual mode of punishing such offences was by cutting the offender off from among the people, Exodus 30:33; Exodus 12:15; Exodus 9:15; Numbers 15:31; Numbers 19:13; Leviticus 7:20-21, Leviticus 7:25, Leviticus 7:27, etc. The sense is, that he should be punished in the usual manner; that is, by excision, or by being destroyed from among the people. The word translated "shall be destroyed" means properly "to exterminate, wholly to devote to ruin," as of a wicked people, a wicked man whose life is taken, etc.

To be destroyed from among the people means, however, to be excommunicated, or to be deprived of the privileges of a people. Among the Jews this was probably the most severe punishment that could be inflicted. It involved the idea of being cut off from the privileges of sacrifice and worship in the temple and in the synagogue, etc., and of being regarded as a pagan and an outcast. The idea which Peter expressed here was, that the Jews had exposed themselves to the severest punishment in rejecting and crucifying the Lord Jesus, and that they should, therefore, repent of this great sin, and seek for mercy. The same remark is applicable still to people. The Scriptures abundantly declare the truth, that if sinners will not hear the Lord Jesus, they shall be destroyed. And it becomes each individual to inquire with honesty whether he listens to his instructions and obeys his Law, or whether he is rejecting him and following the devices and desires

of his own heart. It will be a solemn day when the sinner shall be called to render a reason why he has rejected the teachings and laws of the Son of God!

Verse 24

All the prophets - That is, the prophets in general. It may be said of the prophets generally, or of all of them, that they have foretold these things. This expression is not to be pressed as if we were to look for distinct predictions of the Messiah in each one of the prophets. The use of language does not require so strict an interpretation.

From Samuel - In the previous verse (22) Moses was mentioned as the first in order. The next in order was Samuel. The same mention of Moses and Samuel occurs in Psalm 99:6. The reason why Samuel is mentioned here is probably that he was the first prophet after Moses who recorded a prediction respecting the times of the Messiah. The Jews, in their divisions of the books of the Old Testament, reckoned the book of Joshua as the first of the prophets. But in Joshua and Judges there does not occur any distinct prediction of the Messiah. The prophecy in Samuel, to which Peter probably had reference, is in 2 Samuel 7:16. From the time of Moses to Samuel, also, it is probable that no prophet arose. God was consulted by Urim, and Thummim Exodus 28:30; Numbers 27:21, and consequently no extraordinary messenger was sent to instruct the nation.

As many as have spoken - Whosoever has declared the will of God. This is to be taken in a general sense. The meaning is, that the prophets had concurred in foretelling these days. They not merely concurred in foretelling a happy future period, but they foretold distinctly the very things which had actually occurred respecting Jesus of Nazareth; and the Jews, therefore, should listen to the voice of their own prophets.

Verse 25

Ye are the children of the prophets - Greek: "Ye are the sons of the prophets." The meaning is, not that they were literally the "descendants" of the prophets, but that they were their "disciples," "pupils," "followers." They professed to follow the prophets as their teachers and guides. Teachers among the Jews were often spoken of under the appellation of fathers, and disciples as sons, Matthew 12:27. See notes on Matthew 1:1. As they were the professed disciples of the prophets, they should listen to them. As they lived among the people to whom the prophets were sent, and to whom the

promises were made, they should avail themselves of the offer of mercy, and embrace the Messiah.

And of the covenant - Ye are the sons of the covenant; that is, you are of the posterity of Abraham, with whom the covenant was made. The word "sons" was often thus used to denote those to whom any favor pertained. whether by inheritance or in any other way. Thus, Matthew 8:12, "The children (sons) of the kingdom"; John 17:12, "the son of perdition." The word "covenant" denotes properly "a compact or agreement between equals, or those who have a right to make such a compact, and to choose or refuse the terms." When applied to God and man, it denotes a firm promise on the part of God; a pledge to be regarded with all the sacredness of a compact, that he will do certain things on certain conditions. It is called a covenant only to designate its sacredness and the certainty of its fulfillment, not that man had any right to reject any of the terms or stipulations. As man has no such right, as he is bound to receive all that his Maker proposes, so, strictly and literally, there has been no compact or covenant between God and man. The promise to which Peter refers in the passage before us is in Genesis 22:18; Genesis 12:3.

In thy seed - Thy posterity. See Romans 4:13, Romans 4:16. This promise the apostle Paul affirms had express reference to the Messiah, Galatians 3:16. The word "seed" is used sometimes to denote an individual Genesis 4:25; and the apostle Galatians 3:16 affirms that there was special reference to Christ in the promise made to Abraham.

All the kindreds - The word translated "kindreds" πατριαὶ patriaidenotes "those who have a common father or ancestor," and is applied to families. It is also referred to those larger communities which were descended from the same ancestor, and thus refers to nations, Ephesians 3:15. Here it evidently refers to "all nations."

Be blessed - Be made happy.

Verse 26

Unto you first - To you who are Jews. This was the direction, that the gospel should be first preached to the Jews, beginning at Jerusalem, Luke 24:47. Jesus himself also confined his ministry entirely to the Jews.

Having raised up - This expression does not refer to his having raised him from the dead, but is used in the same sense as in Acts 3:22, where God promised that he would raise up a prophet, and send him to teach the people. Peter means that God had appointed his Son Jesus, or had

commissioned him to go and preach to the people to turn them away from their sins.

To bless you - To make you happy; to fulfill the promise made to Abraham.

In turning away - That is, by his preaching, example, death, etc. The highest blessing that can be conferred upon people is to be turned from sin. Sin is the source of all woes, and if people are turned from that, they will be happy. Christ blesses no one in sin, or while loving sin, but by turning them from sin. This was the object which he had in view in coming, Isaiah 59:20; Matthew 1:21. The design of Peter in these remarks was to show them that the Messiah had come, and that now they might look for happiness, pardon, and mercy through him. As the Jews might, so may all; and as Jesus, while living, sought to turn away people from their sins, so he does still, and still designs to bless all nations by the gospel which he had himself preached, and to establish which he died. All may therefore come and be blessed; and all may rejoice in the prospect that these blessings will yet be bestowed on all the kindreds of the earth. May the happy day soon come!

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

The priests - It is probable that these priests were a part of the Sanhedrin, or Great Council of the nation. It is evident that they claimed some authority for preventing the preaching of the apostles.

The captain of the temple - See the Matthew 26:47; Luke 22:4 note. This was the commander of the guard stationed chiefly in the tower Antonia, especially during the great feasts; and it was his duty to preserve order and prevent any tumult. He came at this time to prevent a tumult or suppress a riot, as it was sup posed that the teaching of the apostles and the crowd collected by the healing of the lame man would lead to a tumult.

And the Sadducees - See the notes on Matthew 3:7. One of the doctrines which the Sadducees maintained was, that there was no resurrection of the dead. Hence, they were particularly opposed to the apostles for preaching it, because they gave so clear proof that Jesus had risen, and were thus spreading the doctrine of the resurrection among the people.

Came upon them - This expression implies that they came in a sudden and violent manner. See Luke 20:1.

Verse 2

Being grieved - The word thus translated occurs in only one other place in the New Testament Acts 16:18. It implies more than simple sorrow; it was a mingled emotion of indignation and anger. They did not grieve because they thought it a public calamity, but because it interfered with their authority and opposed their doctrine. It means that it was painful to them, or they could not bear it. It is often the case that bigots, and people in authority, have this kind of grief, at the zeal of people in spreading the truth, and thus undermining their influence and authority.

That they taught the people - The ground of their grief was as much the fact that they should presume to instruct the people as the matter which they taught them. They were offended that unlearned Galileans, in no way connected with the priestly office, and unauthorized by them, should presume to set themselves up as religious teachers. They claimed the right to watch over the interests of the people, and to declare who was authorized to instruct the nation. It has been no unusual thing for men in ecclesiastical stations to take exceptions to the ministry of those who have not been

commissioned by themselves. Such men easily fancy that all power to instruct others is lodged in their hands, and they oppose others simply from the fact that they have not derived their authority from them. The true question in this case was whether these Galileans gave proof that they were sent by God. The working of the miracle in this case should have been satisfactory. We have here, also, a striking instance of the fact that men may turn away from evidence, and from most important points, and fix their attention on something that opposes their prejudices, and which may be a matter of very little moment. No inquiry was made whether the miracle had been really performed; but the only inquiry was whether they had conformed to their views of doctrine and order.

And preached through Jesus … - The Sadducees would be particularly opposed to this. They denied the doctrine of the resurrection, and they were troubled that the apostles adduced proof of it so strong as the resurrection of Jesus. It was perceived that this doctrine was becoming established among the people; multitudes believed that he had risen; and if he had been raised up, it followed also that others would rise. The Sadducees, therefore, felt that their cause was in danger, and they joined with the priests in endeavoring to arrest its spread among the people. This is the account of the first opposition that was made to the gospel as it was preached by the apostles. It is worthy of remark that it excited so much and so speedily the enmity of those in power, and that the apostles were so soon called to test the sincerity of their attachment to their Master. They who but a few days before had fled at the approach of danger, were now called to meet this opposition, and to show their attachment to a risen Redeemer; and they did it without shrinking. They showed now that they were indeed the true friends of the crucified Saviour, and this remarkable change in their conduct is one of the many proofs that they were influenced from above.

Verse 3

Put them in hold - That is, they took them into "custody," or into safe keeping. Probably they committed them to the care of a guard.

Eventide - Evening. It was not convenient to assemble the council at night. This was, moreover, the time for the evening prayer or sacrifice, and it was not usual to assemble the Sanhedrin at that hour.

Verse 4

Howbeit - But; notwithstanding.

Many of them … - This was one of the instances, which has since been so often repeated, in which persecution is seen to have a tendency to extend and establish the faith which it was designed to destroy. It finally came to be a proverb that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church"; and there is no lesson which men have been so slow to learn as that to oppose and persecute men is the very way to confirm them in their opinions and to spread their doctrines. It was supposed here that the disciples were few; that they were without power, wealth, and influence; and that it was easy to crush them at once. But God made their persecution the means of extending, in a signal manner, the truths of the gospel and the triumphs of his word. And so in all ages it has been, and so it ever will be.

And the number … - It seems probable that in this number of 5,000 there were included the 120 persons who are mentioned in Acts 1:15, and the 3,000 people who were converted on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:41. It does not appear probable that 5,000 would have been assembled and converted in Solomon's porch Acts 3:11 on occasion of the cure of the lame man. Luke doubtless means to say that, up to this time, the number of persons who had joined themselves to the apostles was about 5,000. On this supposition, the work of religion must have made a very rapid advance. How long this was after the day of Pentecost is not mentioned, but it is clear that it was at no very distant period; and the accession of near two thousand to the number of believers was a very striking proof of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Of the men - Of the "persons." The word "men" is often used without reference to sex, Luke 11:31; Romans 4:8; Romans 11:4.

Verse 5-6

Their rulers - The rulers of the Jews; doubtless the members of the Sanhedrin, or Great Council of the nation. Compare Acts 4:15. See the notes on Matthew 2:4; Matthew 5:22. The expression their rulers looks as if this book was written for the Gentiles, or Luke would have said our rulers.

Elders - Presbyters, or those who were chosen from among the people to sit in the Sanhedrin. It is probable that the rulers were those who held also some other office, but were also authorized to sit in the Great Council.

Scribes - See the notes on Matthew 2:4.

And Annas … - See the notes on John 18:13. It is by no means certain that Annas was at that time the high priest, but he had been, and doubtless

retained the title. He was father-in-law to Caiaphas, the high priest; and from this fact, together with his former dignity, he is mentioned first.

Caiaphas - Son-in-law of Annas, and now exercising the office of the high priest, John 18:13.

John, and Alexander … - Of these persons nothing more is known. It is clear that they were members of the Great Council, and the mention of their names shows that the men of chief authority and influence were assembled to silence the apostles. Annas and Caiaphas had been concerned in the condemnation of Jesus, and they would now feel a special interest in arresting the progress of the gospel among the people. All the success of the gospel reflected back light upon the wicked ness of the act of condemning the Lord Jesus. And this fact may serve, in part, to account for their strong desire to silence the apostles.

At Jerusalem - εἰς eisThis was the usual place of assembling the Sanhedrin. But the Jewish writers (see Lightfoot on this place) say that 40 years before the destruction of the city, on account of the great increase of crime, etc., the Sanhedrin was removed from place to place. The declaration of Luke that they were now assembled in Jerusalem, seems to imply that they sometimes met in other places. It is probable that the members of the Sanhedrin were not in the city at the time mentioned in Acts 4:3, and this was the reason why the trial was deferred to the next day.

Verse 7

In the midst - In the presence of the Great Council.

By what power … - A similar question was put to Christ in the temple, Matthew 21:23.

By what name - That is, by whose authority. It is very probable that they expected to intimidate the apostles by this question. They claimed the right of regulating the religious affairs of the nation. They had vast power with the people. They assumed that all power to instruct the people should originate with them; and they expected that the apostles would be confounded, as having violated the established usage of the nation. It did not seem to occur to them to enter into an investigation of the question whether this acknowledged miracle did not prove that they were sent by God, but they assumed that they were impostors, and attempted to silence them by authority. It has been usual with the enemies of religion to attempt to intimidate its friends, and when argument fails, to attempt to silence Christians by appealing to their fears.

Verse 8

Filled with the Holy Ghost - See the notes on Acts 2:4.

Ye rulers … - Peter addressed the Sanhedrin with perfect respect. He did not call in question their authority to propose this question. He seemed to regard this as a favorable opportunity to declare the truth and state the evidence of the Christian religion. In this he acted on the principle of the injunction which he himself afterward gave 1 Peter 3:15, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." Innocence is willing to be questioned; and a believer in the truth will rejoice in any opportunity to state the evidence of what is believed. It is remarkable, also, that this was before the Great Council of the nation - the body that was clothed with the highest authority. Peter could not have forgotten that before this very council, and these very men, his Master had been arraigned and condemned; nor could he have forgotten that in the very room where this same council was convened to try his Lord, he had himself shrunk from an honest avowal of attachment to him, and shamefully and profanely denied him.

That he was now able to stand boldly before this same tribunal evinced a remarkable change in his feelings, and was a most clear and impressive proof of the genuineness of his repentance when he went out and wept bitterly. Compare Luke 22:54-62. And we may remark here, that one of the most clear evidences of the sincerity of repentance is when it leads to a result like this. So deeply was the heart of Peter affected by his sin Luke 22:62, and so genuine was his sorrow, that he doubtless remembered his crime on this occasion, and the memory of it inspired him with boldness. It may be further remarked, that one evidence of the genuineness of repentance is a desire to repair the evil which is done by crime. Peter had done dishonor to his Master and his cause in the presence of the great council of the nation. Nothing, on such an occasion, would be more likely to do injury to the cause than for one of the disciples of the Saviour to deny him - one of his followers to be guilty of profaneness and falsehood. But here was an opportunity, in some degree, at least, to repair the evil. Before the same council, in the same city, and in the presence. of the same people, it is not an unnatural supposition that Peter rejoiced that he might have opportunity to bear his testimony to the divine mission of the Saviour whom he had before denied. By using the customary language of respect applied to the Great Council, Peter also has shown us that it is proper to

evince respect for office and for those in power. Religion requires us to render this homage, and to treat men in office with deference, Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:7; 1 Peter 2:13-17.

Verse 9

If we this day - If as is the fact; or since we are thus examined.

Examined - Questioned; if the purpose is to institute an inquiry into this case, or since it is the purpose to institute such an inquiry.

The good deed - The act of benevolence; the benefit conferred on an infirm man. He assumes that it was undeniable that the deed had been done.

To the impotent man - To this man who was infirm or lame. The man was then present, Acts 4:10, Acts 4:14. He may have been arrested with the apostles; or he may have been present as a spectator; or, as Neander supposes, he may have been summoned as a witness.

By what means - This was the real point of the inquiry. The fact that he had been made whole was not denied. The only question was whether it had been done by the authority and power of Jesus of Nazareth, as Peter declared it to be, Acts 3:6, Acts 3:16.

Verse 10

Be it known … - Peter might have evaded the question, or he might have resorted to many excuses and subterfuges (Calvin), if he had been desirous of avoiding this inquiry. But it was a noble opportunity for vindicating the honor of his Lord and Master. It was a noble opportunity also for repairing the evil which he had done by his guilty denial of his Lord. Although, therefore, this frank and open avowal was attended with danger, and although it was in the presence of the great and the mighty, yet he chose to state fully and clearly his conviction of the truth. Never was there an instance of greater boldness, and never could there be a more striking illustration of the fitness of the name which the Lord Jesus gave him, that of a rock, John 1:42; Matthew 16:17-18. The timid, trembling, yielding, and vacillating Simon; he who just before was terrified by a servant-girl, and who on the lake was afraid of sinking, is now transformed into the manly, decided, and firm Cephas, fearless before the Great Council of the nation, and in an unwavering tone asserting the authority of him whom he had just before denied, and whom they had just before put to death. It is not possible to account for this change except on the supposition that this religion is true. Peter had no worldly motive to actuate him. He had

no prospect of wealth or fame by this. Even the hopes of honor and preferment which the apostles had cherished before the death of Jesus, and which might have been supposed to influence them then, were now abandoned by them. Their Master had died, and all their hopes of human honor and power had been buried in his grave. Nothing but the conviction of the truth could have made this change, and transformed this timid disciple to a bold and uncompromising apostle.

By the name - By the authority or power, Acts 3:6.

Of Jesus Christ - The union of these two names would be particularly offensive to the Sanhedrin. They denied that Jesus was the Christ, or the Messiah; Peter, by the use of the word "Christ," affirmed that he was. In the language then used, it would be, "By the name of Jesus, the Messiah."

Of Nazareth - Lest there should be any mistake about his meaning, he specified that he referred to the despised Nazarene; to him who had just been put to death, as they supposed, covered with infamy. Christians little regard the epithets of opprobrium which may be affixed to themselves or to their religion.

Whom ye crucified - There is emphasis in all the expressions that Peter uses. He had before charged the people with the crime of having put him to death, Acts 2:23; Acts 3:14-15. But he now had the opportunity, contrary to all expectation, of urging the charge with still greater force on the rulers themselves, on the very council which had condemned him and delivered him to Pilate. It was a remarkable providence that an opportunity was thus afforded of urging this charge in the presence of the Sanhedrin, and of proclaiming to them the necessity of repentance. Little did they imagine, when they condemned the Lord Jesus, that this charge would be so soon urged. This is one of the instances in which God takes the wise in their own craftiness, Job 5:13. They had arraigned the apostles; they demanded their authority for what they had done; and thus they had directly opened the way, and invited them to the serious and solemn charge which Peter here urges against them.

Verse 11

This is the stone - This passage is found in Psalm 118:22. It is quoted, also, by our Saviour as applicable to himself. See the notes on Matthew 21:42. The ancient Jews applied this to David. In the Targum on Psalm 118:22, this passage is rendered, "The child who was among the sons of Jesse, and was worthy to be constituted king, the builders rejected." The

New Testament writers, however, apply it without any doubt to the Messiah. Compare Isaiah 28:16; Romans 9:33; Ephesians 2:20. And from this passage we may learn that God will overrule the devices and plans of wicked men to accomplish his own purposes. What people despise and set at naught, he esteems of inestimable value in his kingdom. What the great and the mighty contemn, he regards as the very foundation and cornerstone of the edifice which he designs to rear. Nothing has been more remarkable than this in the history of man; and in nothing is more contempt thrown on the proud projects of people, than that what they have rejected God has made the very basis of his schemes.

Verse 12

Neither is there salvation - The word "salvation" properly denotes any "preservation," or keeping anything in a "safe" state; a preserving from harm. It I signifies, also, deliverance from any evil of body or mind; from pain, sickness, danger, etc., Acts 7:25. But it is in the New Testament applied particularly to the work which the Messiah came to do, "to seek and to save that which was lost," Luke 19:10. This work refers primarily to a deliverance of the soul from sin Matthew 1:21; Acts 5:31; Luke 4:18; Romans 8:21; Galatians 5:1. It then denotes, as a consequence of freedom from sin, freedom from all the ills to which sin exposes man, and the attainment of that perfect peace and joy which will be bestowed on the children of God in the heavens. The reasons why Peter introduces this subject here seem to be these:

(1) He was discoursing on the deliverance of the man that was healed - his salvation from a long and painful calamity. This deliverance had been accomplished by the power of Jesus. The mention of this suggested that greater and more important salvation from sin and death which it was the object of the Lord Jesus to effect. As it was by his power that this man had been healed, so it was by his power only that people could be saved from death and hell. Deliverance from any temporal calamity should lead the thoughts to that higher redemption which the Lord Jesus contemplates in regard to the soul.

(2) this was a favorable opportunity to introduce the doctrines of the gospel to the notice of the Great Council of the nation. The occasion invited to it; the mention of a part of the work of Jesus invited to a contemplation of his whole work. Peter would not have done justice to the character and

work of Christ if he had not introduced that great design which he had in view to save people from death and hell. It is probable, also, that he advanced a sentiment in which he expected they would immediately concur, and which accorded with their wellknown opinions, that salvation was to be obtained only by the Messiah. Thus, Paul Acts 26:22-23 says that he taught nothing else than what was delivered by Moses and the prophets, etc. Compare Acts 23:6; Acts 26:6. The apostles did not pretend to proclaim any doctrine which was not delivered by Moses and the prophets, and which did not, in fact, constitute a part of the creed of the Jewish nation.

In any other - Any other person. He does not mean to say that God is not able to save, but that the salvation of the human family is entrusted to the hands of Jesus the Messiah.

For there is none other name - This is an explanation of what he had said in the previous part of the verse. The word "name" here is used to denote "the person himself" (i. e., There is no other being or person.) As we would say, there is no one who can save but Jesus Christ. The word "name" is often used in this sense. See the notes on Acts 3:6, Acts 3:16. That there is no other Saviour, or mediator between God and man, is abundantly taught in the New Testament; and it is, indeed, the main design of revelation to prove this. See 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Acts 10:43.

Under heaven - This expression does not materially differ from the one immediately following, "among men." They are designed to express with emphasis the sentiment that salvation is to be obtained in "Christ alone," and not in any patriarch, or prophet, or teacher, or king, or in any false Messiah.

Given - In this word it is implied that "salvation" has its origin in God; that a Saviour for people must be given by him; and that salvation cannot be originated by any power among people. The Lord Jesus is thus uniformly represented as given or appointed by God for this great purpose John 3:16; John 17:4; 1 Corinthians 3:5; Galatians 1:4; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 5:25; 1 Timothy 2:6; Romans 5:15-18, Romans 5:21; and hence, Christ is called the "unspeakable gift" of God, 2 Corinthians 9:15.

Whereby we must be saved - By which it is fit, or proper δεῖ deithat we should be saved. There is no other way of salvation that is adapted to the great object contemplated, and therefore, if saved, it must be in this way and by this plan. The schemes of people's own devices are not adapted to the purpose, and therefore cannot save. The doctrine that people can be

saved only by Jesus Christ is abundantly taught in the Scriptures. To show the failure of all other schemes of religion was the great design of the first part of the Epistle to the Romans. By a labored argument Paul there shows Revelation 5:9, and will be prepared for eternal union in the service of God in the skies. Still, the Scriptures have not declared that great numbers of the pagan will be saved who have not the gospel. The contrary is more than implied in the New Testament, Romans 2:12.

Neither has the Scripture affirmed that all the pagan will certainly be cut off. It has been discovered by missionaries among the pagan that individuals have, in a remarkable way; been convinced of the folly of idolatry, and were seeking a better religion; that their minds were in a serious, thoughtful, inquiring state; and that they at once embraced the gospel when it was offered to them as exactly adapted to their state of mind, and as meeting their inquiries. Such was extensively the case in the Sandwich Islands; and the following instance recently occurred in this country: "The Flathead Indians, living west of the Rocky Mountains, recently sent a deputation to the white settlements to inquire after the Bible. The circumstance that led to this singular movement is as follows: It appears that a white man (Mr. Catlin) had penetrated into their country, and happened to be a spectator at one of their religious ceremonies. He informed them that their mode of worshipping the Supreme Being was radically wrong, and that the people away toward the rising of the sun had been put in possession of the true mode of worshipping the Great Spirit. On receiving this information, they called a national council to take this subject into consideration. Some said, if this be true, it is certainly high time we were put in possession of this mode. They accordingly deputed four of the chiefs to proceed to Louis to see their great father, General Clark, to inquire of him the truth of this matter.

They were cordially received by the general, who gave them a succinct history of revelation, and the necessary instruction relative to their important mission. Two of them sunk under the severe toils attending a journey of 3,000 miles. The remaining two, after acquiring what knowledge they could of the Bible, its institutions and precepts, returned, to carry back those few rays of divine light to their benighted countrymen." In what way their minds were led to this State we cannot say, or how this preparation for the gospel was connected with the agency and merits of Christ we perhaps cannot understand; but we know that the affairs of this entire world are

placed under the control of Christ John 17:2; Ephesians 1:21-22, and that the arrangements of events by which such people were brought to this state of mind are in his hands. Another remark may here be made. It is, that it often occurs that blessings come upon us from benefactors whom we do not see, and from sources which we cannot trace.

On this principle we receive many of the mercies of life; and from anything that appears, in this way many blessings of salvation may be conferred on the world, and possibly many of the pagan be saved. Still, this view does not interfere with the command of Christ to preach the gospel, Mark 16:15. The great mass of the pagan are not in this state; but the fact here adverted to, so far as it goes, is an encouragement to preach the gospel to the entire world. If Christ thus prepares the way; if he extensively fits the minds of the pagan for the reception of the gospel; if he shows them the evil and folly of their own system, and leads them to desire a better, then this should operate not to produce indolence, but activity, and zeal, and encouragement to enter into the field white for the harvest, and to toil that all who seek the truth, and are prepared to embrace the gospel, may be brought to the light of the Sun of righteousness.

Verse 13

Boldness - This word properly denotes "openness" or "confidence in speaking." It stands opposed to "hesitancy," and to "equivocation" in declaring our sentiments. Here it means that, in spite of danger and opposition, they avowed their doctrines without any attempt to conceal or disguise them.

Peter and John - It was they only who had been concerned in the healing of the lame man, Acts 3:1.

And perceived - When they knew that they were unlearned. This might have been ascertained either by report or by the manner of their speaking.

Unlearned - This word properly denotes "those who were not acquainted with letters, or who had not had the benefit of an education."

Ignorant men - ἰδιῶται idiōtaiThis word properly denotes "those who live in private, in contradistinction from those who are engaged in public life or in office." As this class of persons is commonly also supposed to be less learned, talented, and refined than those in office, it comes to denote "those who are rude and illiterate." The idea intended to be conveyed here

is, that these men had not had opportunities of education (compare Matthew 4:18-21), and had not been accustomed to public speaking, and hence, they were surprised at their boldness. This same character is uniformly attributed to the early preachers of Christianity. Compare 1 Corinthians 1:27; Matthew 11:25. The Galileans were regarded by the Jews as particularly rude and uncultivated, Matthew 26:73; Mark 14:17.

They marvelled - They wondered that men who had not been educated in the schools of the rabbis, and accustomed to speak in public, should declare their sentiments with so much boldness.

And they took knowledge - This expression means simply that riley knew, or that they obtained evidence that they had been with Jesus. It is not said in what way they obtained this evidence, but the connection leads us to suppose it was by the miracle which they had performed, by their firm and bold declaration of the doctrines of Jesus, and perhaps by the irresistible conviction that none would be thus bold who had not been personally with him, and who had not the firmest conviction that he was the Messiah. They had not been trained in their schools, and their boldness could not be attributed to the arts of rhetoric, but was the native, ingenuous, and manly exhibition of a deep conviction of the truth of what they spoke, and that conviction could have been obtained only by their having been with him, and having been satisfied that he was the Messiah. Such conviction is of far more value in preaching than all the mere teachings of the schools; and without such a conviction, all preaching will be frigid, hypocritical, and useless.

Had been with Jesus - Had been his followers, and had attended person ally on his ministry. They gave evidence that they had seen him, been with him, heard him, and were convinced that he was the Messiah. We may learn here:

(1) That if men wish to be successful in preaching, it must be based on deep and thorough conviction of the truth of what they deliver.

(2) they who preach should give evidence that they are acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ; that they have imbibed his spirit, pondered his instructions, studied the evidences of his divine mission, and are thoroughly convinced that he was from God.

(3) boldness and success in the ministry, as well as in everything else, will depend far more on honest, genuine, thorough conviction of the truth than on the endowments of talent and learning, and the arts and skill of eloquence. No man should attempt to preach without such a thorough conviction of truth; and no man who has it will preach in vain.

(4) God often employs the ignorant and unlearned to confound the wise, 1 Corinthians 1:27-28. But it is not by their ignorance. It was not the ignorance of Peter and John that convinced the Sanhedrin. It was done in spite of their ignorance. It was their boldness and their honest conviction of truth. Besides, though not learned in the schools of the Jews, they had been under a far more important training, under the personal direction of Christ himself, for three years; I and now they were directly endowed by the Holy Spirit with the power of speaking with tongues. Though not taught in the schools, yet there was an important sense in which they were not unlearned and ignorant men. Their example should not, therefore, be pled in favor of an unlearned ministry. Christ himself expressed his opposition to an unlearned ministry by teaching them himself, and then by bestowing on them miraculous endowments which no learning at present can furnish. It may be remarked, further, that in the single selection which he made of an apostle after his ascension to heaven, when he came to choose one who had not been under his personal teaching, he chose a learned man, the apostle Paul, and thus evinced his purpose that there should be training or education in those who are invested with the sacred office.

(5) yet in the case before us there is a striking proof of the truth and power of religion. These men had not acquired their boldness in the schools; they were not trained for argument among the Jews; they did not meet them by cunning sophistry; but they came with the honest conviction that what they were saying was true. Were they deceived? Were they not competent to bear witness? Did they have any motive to attempt to palm a falsehood onto people? Infidelity must answer many such questions as these before the apostles can be convicted of imposture.

Verse 14

They could say nothing … - The presence of the man that was healed was an unanswerable fact in proof of the truth of what the apostles alleged.

The miracle was so public, clear, and decisive; the man that was healed was so well known, that there was no evasion or subterfuge by which they could escape the conclusion to which the apostles were conducting them. It evinced no little gratitude in the man that was healed that he was present on this occasion, and showed that he was deeply interested in what befell his benefactors. The miracles of Jesus and his apostles were such that they could not be denied, and hence, the Jews did not attempt to deny that they performed them. Compare Matthew 12:24; John 11:45-46; Acts 19:36.

Verses 15-18

What shall we do to these men? - The object which they had in view was evidently to prevent their preaching. The miracle was performed, and it was believed by the people to have been made. This they could not expect to be able successfully to deny. Their only object, therefore, was to prevent the apostles from making the use which they saw they would to convince the people that Jesus was the Messiah. The question was, in what way they should prevent this; whether by putting them to death, by imprisoning them, or by scourging them; or whether by simply exerting theft authority and forbidding them. From the former they were deterred, doubtless, by fear of the multitude; and they therefore adopted the latter, and seemed to suppose that the mere exertion of their authority would be sufficient to deter them from this in future.

The council - Greek: The "Sanhedrin." This body was composed of 71 or 72 persons, and was entrusted with the principal affairs of the nation. It was a body of vast influence and power, and hence they supposed that their command might be sufficient to restrain ignorant Galileans from speaking. Before this same body, and probably the same men, our Saviour was arraigned, and by them condemned before he was delivered to the Roman governor, Matthew 26:59, etc. And before this same body, and in the presence of the same men, Peter had just before denied his Lord, Matthew 26:70, etc. The fact that the disciples had fled on a former occasion, and that Peter had denied his Saviour, may hate operated to induce them to believe that they would be terrified by their threats, and deterred from preaching publicly in the name of Jesus.

A notable miracle - A known, undeniable miracle.

That it spread - That the knowledge of it may not spread among them any further.

Let us straitly threaten them - Greek: "Let us threaten them with a threat." This is a "Hebraism" expressing intensity, certainty, etc. The threat was a command Acts 4:18 not to teach, implying their displeasure if they did do it. This threat, however, was not effectual. On the next occasion, which occurred soon after Acts 5:40, they added beating to their threats in order to deter them from preaching in the name of Jesus.

Verse 19

Whether it be right … - The apostles abated nothing of their boldness when threatened. They openly appealed to their judges whether their command could be right. And in doing this, they expressed their full conviction of the truth of what they had said, and their deliberate purpose not to regard their command, but still to proclaim to the people the truth that Jesus was the Messiah.

In the sight of God - That is, whether God will judge this to be right. The grand question was how God would regard it. If he disapproved it, it was wrong. It was not merely a question pertaining to their reputation, safety, or life; it was a question of conscience before God. We have here a striking instance of the principle on which Christians act. It is, to lay their safety, reputation, and life out of view, and bring everything to the test whether it will please God. If it will, it is right; if it will not, it is wrong.

To hearken - To "hear" and to "hearken" are often used to denote to "obey," John 5:24; John 8:47, etc.

Judge ye - This was an appeal to them directly as judges and as men. And it may be presumed that it was an appeal which they could not resist. The Sanhedrin acknowledged itself to have been appointed by God, and to have no authority which was not derived from his appointment. Of course, God could modify, supersede, or repeal their authority; and the abstract principle that it was better to obey God than man they could not call in question. The only inquiry was whether they had evidence that God had issued any command in the case. Of that the apostles were satisfied, and that the rulers could not deny. It may be remarked that this is one of the first and most bold appeals on record in favor of the right of private judgment and the liberty of conscience. That liberty was supposed in all the Jewish religion. It was admitted that the authority of God in all matters was superior to that of man. And the same spirit manifested itself thus early in the Christian church against all dominion over the conscience, and in favor of the right to follow the dictates of the conscience and the will of God. As

a mere historical fact, therefore, it is interesting to contemplate this, and still more interesting in its important bearings on human liberty and human happiness. The doctrine is still more explicitly stated in Acts 5:29, "We ought to obey God rather than man."

Verse 20

For … - This is given as a reason why they should obey God rather than man. They had had so clear evidence that God had sent the Messiah, and they had received a direct and solemn command Mark 16:15 to preach the gospel, that they could not be restrained. There was a necessity laid on them to preach. See 1 Corinthians 9:16. Compare Jeremiah 20:9; Acts 18:5; Job 32:18-19; Psalm 39:1-3.

It has already been remarked that these two verses contain an important principle in favor of religious liberty the liberty of conscience and of private judgment. They contain the great principle of Christianity and of the Protestant religion, that the responsibility of men for their religious opinions is direct to God, and that other men have no power of control. The opposite of this is tyranny and oppression. It may be proper, in addition, to present some further remarks, involved in the principle here stated:

(1) Religion, from the beginning, has been favorable to liberty. There was no principle more sacred among the Jews than that they were to be independent of other nations. Perhaps no people have ever been so restive under a foreign yoke, so prone to rebel, and so difficult to be broken down by oppression and by arms, as were the Jews. So true was this, that it appeared to other nations to be mere obstinacy. They were often subdued, but they rose against their oppressors and threw off the yoke. No people have been found who were so difficult to be reduced to slavery. It is well known that the Romans were accustomed to subject the captives taken in war to perpetual servitude; and commonly the spirit of the captive was broken, and he remained quietly in bondage. But not so the Jew. Nothing ever tamed his spirit. No bribes, or threats, or chains could induce him to violate the laws of his religion. Even in captivity, we are told that the Jewish slaves at Rome would observe the Sabbath; would keep the feasts of their nation, and would never conform to the customs of an idolatrous people. To the Romans this appeared to be mere obstinacy. But it was the genius of their religion. The right of liberty of thought was one which they would not surrender. The spirit of the patriarchs was favorable to liberty,

and implied responsibility only to God. Familiarity with the sacred books had taught them these lessons, and neither time nor distance could obliterate them. In the time of Christ, the great mass of the nation were evidently opposed to the tax paid to the Roman nation, and sighed under this burden, until they rose and attempted to assert their rights; and their city, and temple, and land were sacrificed rather than yield this great principle.

(2) this same principle was evinced by the apostles and by the early Christians. With this doctrine fresh upon their hearts, they went forth to other lands. They maintained it at the expense of their blood, and thousands fell as martyrs in the cause of liberty and of private judgment in religion. No one ever defended liberty more firmly than the early martyrs; and each one that died, died in defense of a principle which is now the acknowledged right of all people.

(3) the designs of tyranny and superstition have been to destroy this principle. This was the aim of the Sanhedrin; and yet, when Peter and John appealed to their consciences, they did not dare to avow their purpose. This has been the aim of all tyrants, and this the effect of all superstition. Hence, the Church of Rome has taken away the Scriptures from the people, and has thus furnished incontestable evidence that in its view the Bible is favorable to liberty. For centuries, tyranny reigned in one black flight over Europe; nor was the darkness dispelled until the Bible, that taught people the principles of freedom, was restored to them.

(4) the effect of the principle avowed by the apostles had been uniform. Luther began the reformation by finding in a monastery a copy of the Bible, a book which until that time - when more than twenty years of age - he had never seen. The effect on the liberties of Europe was immediately seen. Hume admitted that whatever liberty England possessed was to be traced to the Puritans. Our own land (America) is a striking instance of the effect of this great principle, and of its influence on the rights of man. And just in proportion as the New Testament is spread abroad will people seek for freedom and break the chains of oppression. The best way to promote universal liberty is to spread the Bible to the ends of the earth. There is not a precept in it that is not favorable to freedom. It tends to enlarge and liberalize the mind; to teach people their rights; to put an end to ignorance,

the universal stronghold of superstition and tyranny; and to diffuse the love of justice, truth, and order. It shows man that he is responsible to God, and that no one has a right to ordain anything which contravenes the liberty of his fellow.

If it be asked here what the principle is, I answer:

(1) That people have a right to their private judgment in matters of religion, subject only to God. The only restraint which, it is now settled, can be imposed on this, is, that no man has a right, under pretence of conscience, to injure or molest his fellow-men, or to disturb the peace and harmony of society.

(2) no magistrate, church, council, or parent, has a right to impose a creed on others, and to demand subscription to it by mere authority.

(3) no magistrate, church, or parent, has a right to control. the free exercise of private judgment in this case. The power of a parent is to teach, advise, and entreat. The duty of a child is to listen with respect; to examine with candor; to pray over the subject, and to be deliberate and calm, not rash, hasty, impetuous, and self-willed. But when the child is thus convinced that his duty to God requires a particular course, then here is a higher obligation than any earthly law, and he must obey God rather than man, ever a father or a mother, Matthew 10:37-38.

(4) every man is responsible to God for his opinions and his conduct. Man may not control him, but God may and will. The great question before every man is, What is right in the sight of God? It is not, What is expedient, or safe, or pleasurable, or honorable among people? but, What is right in the sight of God? Neither in their opinions nor their conduct are people free from responsibility. From this whole subject we see the duty of spreading the Bible. If we love liberty; if we hate tyranny and superstition; if we wish to extend the knowledge of the rights of man, and break every arm of oppression, let us spread far and wide the Book of God, and place in every palace and every cottage on the globe a copy of the sacred Scriptures.

Verse 21

Finding nothing … - That is, not being able to devise any way of punishing them without exciting a tumult among the people, and endangering their own authority. The Sanhedrin was frequently influenced by this fear; and it shows that their own authority was much dependent on the caprice of the multitude. Compare Matthew 21:26.

All men - That is, the great mass or body of the people.

Glorified God - Praised God for the miracle. This implies:

(1)That they believed that the miracle was genuine.

(2)that they were grateful to God for so signal a mercy in conferring health and comfort on a man who had been long afflicted. We may add further, that here is the highest evidence of the reality of the miracle. Even the Sanhedrin, with all their prejudice and opposition, did not call it in question; and the common people, who had doubtless been acquainted with this man for years, were convinced that it was real. It would have been impossible to impose on keensighted and jealous adversaries in this manner if this had been an imposture.

Verse 22

For the man … - The age of the man is mentioned to show the certainty and greatness of the miracle. If it had been a man who had been lame but a few years, or if it had been a child or a very young man, the case would not been so remarkable. But after a continuance of 40 years, all hope of healing him by any ordinary means must have been abandoned, and all pretence that this was jugglery or deception must have been absurd.

Verse 23

Their own company - They joined the other apostles and Christians, Acts 2:44-45.

And reported … - It doubtless became a subject of interesting inquiry what they should do in this case. They had been threatened by the highest authority of the nation, and commanded not to preach again in the name of Jesus. Whether they should obey them and be silent, or whether they should leave Jerusalem and preach elsewhere, could not but be an interesting subject of inquiry, and they very properly sought the counsel of their brethren, and looked to God for direction, an example which all should follow who are exposed to persecution, or who are in any perplexity about the path of duty.

Verse 24

They lifted up their voice - To lift up the voice, among the Hebrews, was a phrase denoting either an "address" to the people Judges 9:7, or a phrase expressive of "weeping" Genesis 29:11; Judges 2:4; Rth 1:9 ; 1 Samuel 24:16, or of "prayer." To lift up the voice to God means simply they prayed to Him.

With one accord - Unitedly. Properly, with one mind or purpose. See notes on Acts 1:14. The union of the early Christians is often noticed in the Acts of the Apostles. Thus far, there was no jar or dissension in their society, and everything has the appearance of the most entire affection and confidence.

Lord - Greek: Δέσποτα Despota- "Despota." From this word is derived the word "despot." This is not the usual word employed by which to address God. The word commonly translated "Lord" is Κυρίος KuriosThe word used here denotes "one who rules over others," and was applied to the highest magistrate or officer. It denotes "authority; power; absoluteness in ruling." It is a word denoting more authority in ruling than the other. That more commonly denotes a property in a thing; this denotes "absolute rule." It is applied to God in Luke 2:29; Revelation 6:10; Jude 1:4; to Jesus Christ, 2 Peter 2:1; to masters, 1 Timothy 6:1; Titus 2:9; 1 Peter 2:18; to husbands, 1 Peter 3:6; and to a possessor or owner, 2 Timothy 2:21.

Thou art God - This ascription of praise seems to have been designed to denote their sense of his power to deliver them, and of his right to dispose of them. They were employed in his service; they were encompassed with dangers; and they acknowledged him as their God, who had made all things, and who had an entire right to direct, and to dispose of them for his own glory. In times of danger and perplexity we should remember that God has a right to do with us as he pleases; and we should go cheerfully, and commit ourselves into his hands.

Which hast made … - Psalm 146:6. Compare Revelation 14:7.

Verse 25

Who by the mouth … - , Psalm 2:1-2. This is a strong, solemn testimony to the inspiration of David. It is a declaration of the apostles, made in solemn prayer, that God himself spake by the mouth of David. This is the second part of their prayer. In the first, they acknowledge the right of God to rule; in this, they appeal to a prophecy; they plead that this was a thing foretold; and as God had foreseen it and foretold it, they appealed to him to protect them. The times of tumult and opposition which had been

foreseen, as about to attend the introduction of the gospel, had now come. They inferred, therefore, that Jesus was the Messiah; and as God had designed to establish his kingdom, they appealed to him to aid and protect them in this great work. This passage is taken from Psalm 2:1-2, and is an exact quotation from the Septuagint. This proves that the Psalm had reference to the Messiah. Thus, it was manifestly understood by the Jews; and the authority of the apostles settles the question. The Psalm was composed by David, but on what occasion is not known; nor is it material to our present purpose. It has been a matter of inquiry whether it referred to the Messiah primarily, or only in a secondary sense. Grotius supposes that it was composed by David when exposed to the hostility of the Assyrians, the Moabites, Philistines, Amalekites, etc.; and that, in the midst of his dangers, he sought consolation in the purpose of God to establish him and his kingdom. But the more probable opinion is, that it referred directly and solely to the Messiah.

Why did the heathen - The nations which were not Jews. This refers, doubtless, to the opposition which would be made to the spread of Christianity, and not merely to the opposition made to the Messiah himself, and to the act of putting him to death.

Rage - This word refers to the excitement and tumult of a multitude; not a settled plan, but rather the heated and disorderly conduct of a mob. It means that the progress of the gospel would encounter tumultuous opposition, and that the excited nations would rush violently to put it down and destroy it.

And the people - The expression "the people" does not refer to a class of people different essentially from the pagan. The "pagan," Hebrew and Greek, "the nations," refer to people as organized into communities; the expression the people is used to denote the same persons without respect to their being so organized. The Hebrews were in the habit, in their poetry, of expressing the same idea essentially in parallel members of a sentence; that is, the last member of a sentence or verse expressed the same idea, with some slight variation, as the former. (See Lowth on the sacred poetry of the Hebrews.)

Imagine - The word "imagine" does not quite express the force of the original. The Hebrew and the Greek both convey the idea of meditating, thinking, purposing. It means that they employed "thought," "plan," "purpose," in opposing the Messiah.

Vain things - The word used here κενά kenais a literal translation of the Hebrew רק rēyqand means usually "empty," as a vessel. which is not filled; then "useless," or what amounts to nothing, etc. Here it means that they devised a plan which turned out to be vain or ineffectual. They attempted an opposition to the Messiah which could not succeed. God would establish his kingdom in spite of their plans to oppose it. Their efforts were vain because they were not strong enough to oppose God; because he had purposed to establish the kingdom of his Son; and because he could overrule even their opposition to advance his cause.

Verse 26

The kings of the earth - The Psalmist specifies more particularly that kings and rulers would be opposed to the Messiah. This had occurred already by the opposition made to the Messiah by the rulers of the Jewish people, and it would be still more evinced by the opposition of princes and kings as the gospel spread among the nations.

Stood up - The word used here παρίστημι paristēmicommonly means "to present oneself, or to stand forth, for the purpose of aiding, counseling," etc. But here it means that they "rose," or "presented themselves," to evince their opposition. They stood opposed to the Messiah, and offered resistance to him.

The rulers - This is another instance of the Hebrew parallelism. The word does not denote another class of people from kings, but expresses the same idea in another form, or in a more general manner, meaning that all classes of persons in authority would be opposed to the gospel.

Were gathered together - Hebrew, consulted together; were united in a consultation. The Greek implies that they were assembled for the purpose of consultation.

Against the Lord - In the Hebrew, "against Yahweh." This is the special name which is given in the Scriptures to God. They rose against his plan of appointing a Messiah, and against the Messiah whom he had chosen.

Against his Christ - Hebrew, against his Messiah, or his Anointed. See the notes on Matthew 1:1. This is one of the places where the word "Messiah" is used in the Old Testament. The word occurs in about 40 places, and is commonly translated "his anointed," and is applied to kings. The direct reference of the word to the Messiah in the Old Testament is not frequent. This passage implies that opposition to the Messiah is opposition to Yahweh. And this is uniformly supposed in the sacred Scriptures. He that

is opposed to Christ is opposed to God. He that neglects him neglects God. He that despises him despises God, Matthew 10:40; Matthew 18:5; John 12:44-45; Luke 10:16, "He that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." The reasons of this are:

(1)That the Messiah is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Hebrews 1:3.

(2)he is equal with the Father, possessing the same attributes and the same power, John 1:1; Philemon 2:6.

(3)he is appointed by God to this great work of saving people. To despise him, or to oppose him, is to despise and oppose him who appointed him to this work, to contemn his counsels, and to set him at naught.

(4)his work is dear to God. It has engaged his thoughts. It has been approved by him. His mission has been confirmed by the miraculous power of the Father, and by every possible manifestation of his approbation and love. To oppose the Messiah is, therefore, to oppose what is dear to the heart of God, and which has long been the object of his tender solicitude. It follows from this, that they who neglect the Christian religion are exposing themselves to the displeasure of God, and endangering their everlasting interests. No man is safe who opposes God; and no man can have evidence that God will approve him who does not embrace the Messiah, whom He has appointed to redeem the world.

Verse 27

For of a truth - Truly; in reality.

Thy holy child Jesus - The word "child" is commonly applied to infants, or to sons and daughters in very early life. The word which is used here παῖς paisis different from what is commonly applied to the Lord Jesus υἱός huiosThe latter expresses sonship without respect to age. The word which is here used also sometimes expresses sonship with out any regard to age, and the word "son" would have been a more happy translation. Thus, the same word is translated in Acts 3:13, Acts 3:26. In Acts 20:12, it is translated "youngman."

Both Herod … - Luke 23:1-12.

With the Gentiles - The Romans, to whom he was delivered to be crucified.

The people of Israel - The Jews, who were excited to this by the rulers, Matthew 27:20.

Verse 28

For to do … - See the notes on Acts 2:23; Acts 3:18. The facts which are brought to view in these verses are among the most remarkable on record. They are briefly these:

(1)That the Jewish rulers were opposed to the Messiah, and slew him.

(2)that the very people to whom he came, and for whose benefit he labored, joined in the opposition, so that it became the act of a united people.

(3)that the Romans, who were there as a sort of representation of all pagan nations, were easily prevailed on to join in the persecution, and to become the executioners.

(4)that thus opposite factions, and dissimilar and prejudiced people, became united in opposing the Messiah.

(5)that the rulers of the Roman people, the emperors, the statesmen, the philosophers, and the rulers of other nations, united to oppose the gospel, and brought all the power of persecution to stay its progress.

(6)that the people of the empire, the mass of people, were easily prevailed upon to join in the persecution, and to endeavor to arrest its progress. It may be added,

(7)That the gospel has encountered similar difficulties and opposition wherever it has been faithfully presented to the attention of people. It has become a very serious question why this has been; on what pretence this opposition has been vindicated, or how it can be accounted for - a question which it is of as much importance for the infidel as for the Christian to settle. We know that accusations of the corrupt lives of the early Christians were freely circulated, and that most gross accounts of their scandalous conduct were propagated by those who chose to persecute them. (See Lardner‘s “Credibility.”) But such accounts are not now believed, and it is not certain that they were ever seriously believed by the rulers of the pagan

people. It is certain that it was not on things account that the first opposition arose to Christ and his religion.

It is not proper here to enter into an examination of the causes of this opposition. We may state the outlines, however, in few words:

(1) The Jewish rulers were mortified, humbled, and moved with envy, that one so poor and despised should claim to be the Messiah. They had expected a Messiah of a different rank and character; and all their prejudices rose at once against his claims to this high office, Matthew 27:18; Mark 15:10.

(2) the common people, disposed extensively to acknowledge his claims, were urged on by the enraged and vindictive priests to demand his death, Matthew 27:20.

(3) Pilate was pressed on against his will by the impetuous and enraged multitude to deliver one whom he regarded as innocent.

(4) the Christian religion, in its advances, struck at once at the whole fabric of superstition in the Roman empire and throughout the world. It did not, like other religions, ask a place amidst the religions already existing. It was exclusive in its claims. It denounced all other systems as idolatry or superstition, and sought to overthrow them. Those religions were interwoven with all the habits of the people; they were connected with all the departments of the state; they gave occupation to a vast number of priests and other officer who obtained their livelihood by the existing superstitions, and who brought, of course, all the supposed sacredness of their character to support them. A religion which attempted to overthrow the whole fabric, therefore, at once excited all their malice. The monarchs whose thrones were based on the existing state of things, and the people who venerated the religion of their ancestors, would be opposed to the new system.

(5) Christianity was despised. It was regarded as one form of the superstition of the Jews, and there were no people who were regarded with so much contempt by other nations as the Jews. The writings of the Romans on this point are full proof.

(6) the new religion was opposed to all the crimes of the world. It began its career in a time of eminent wickedness. It plunged at once into the midst of that wickedness; sought the great cities where crimes and pollutions were concentrated, and boldly reproved every form of prevailing impiety. At Athens, at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Rome itself, it denounced the judgment of God against every form of guilt. Whatever may be charged on the apostles, it will not be alleged that they were timid in denouncing the sins of the world. From all these causes it is not wonderful that the early Christians were persecuted. If it be asked.

(7) Why the same religion meets with opposition now in lands that are nominally Christian, it may be remarked:

(a)that the human heart is the same that it always was, opposed to truth and righteousness;

(b)that religion encounters still a host of sins that are opposed to it - pride, envy, malice, passion, and the love of the world;

(c)that there has always been a special opposition in the human heart to receiving salvation as the gift of God through a crucified Redeemer; and,

(d)that all the forms of vice, and lust, and profaneness that exist in the world, are opposed, and ever will be, to a religion of purity, self-denial, and love.

On the whole, we may remark here:

(1)That the fact that Christianity has been thus opposed, and has triumphed, is no small proof of its divine origin. It has been fairly tried, and still survives. It was well to put it to the rest, and to bring to bear on it everything which had a tendency to crush it, and thus to furnish the highest proof that it is from God.

(2)this religion cannot be destroyed; it will triumph; opposition to it is vain; it will make its way throughout the world; and the path of safety is not to oppose what God is intending to establish in the earth. Sinners who stand opposed to the gospel should tremble and be afraid, for sooner or later they must fall before its triumphant advances. It is not safe to oppose what has already been opposed by kings and rulers in every form, and yet has triumphed. It is not wise to risk one‘s eternal welfare on the question of successful opposition to what God has, in so many ages and ways, pledged

himself to protect; and when God has solemnly declared that the Son, the Messiah, whom he would set on his holy hill of Zion, should "break" his enemies "with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel," Psalm 2:9.

Verse 29

Behold their threatenings - So look upon them as to grant us deliverance. They did not purpose to abandon their undertaking; they resolved to persevere; and they expected that this purpose would involve them in danger. With this purpose they implored the protection of God; they asked that he would not suffer them to be deterred from speaking boldly; and they sought that constant additional proof might be granted of the presence and power of God to confirm the truth of their message.

And grant … - This is an instance of heroic boldness, and a determination to persevere in doing their duty to God. When we are assailed by those in power; when we are persecuted and in danger, we should commit our way unto God, and seek his aid, that we may not be deterred from the path of duty.

Verse 30

By stretching forth thine hand … - The apostles not only desired boldness to speak, but they asked that God would continue to work miracles, and thus furnish to them, and to the people, evidence of the truth of what they delivered. They did not even ask that he would preserve their lives, or keep them from danger. They were intent on their work, and they confidently committed their way to God, making it their great object to promote the knowledge of the truth, and seeking that God would glorify himself by establishing his kingdom among people.

Signs and wonders - Miracles. (See the notes on Acts 2:43.

Verse 31

And when they had prayed - The event which followed was regarded by them as an evidence that God heard their prayer.

The place was shaken - The word which is translated "was shaken" commonly denotes "violent agitation," as the raging of the sea, the convulsion of an earthquake, or trees shaken by the wind, Matthew 11:7; Acts 16:26; Hebrews 12:26. The language here is suited to express the idea of an earthquake. Whether the motion was confined to the house where they

were is not said. They probably regarded this as an answer to their prayer, or as an evidence that God would be with them:

(1)Because it was sudden and violent, and was not produced by any natural causes;

(2)Because it occurred immediately, while they were seeking divine direction;

(3)Because it was an exhibition of great power, and was an evidence that God could protect them; and,

(4)Because a convulsion so great, sudden, and mighty was suited at that time to awe them with a proof of the presence and power of God. A similar instance of an answer to prayer by an earthquake is recorded in Acts 16:25-26. Compare Acts 2:1-2. It may be added, that among the Jews an earthquake was very properly regarded as a striking and impressive proof of the presence of Yahweh, Isaiah 29:6; Psalm 68:8, "The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God; even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel." See also the sublime description in Acts 4:6-11. Compare Matthew 27:54. Among the pagan, an earthquake was regarded as proof of the presence and favor of the Deity. (See Virgil, Aeneid, 3:89.)

They were all filled … - See the notes on Acts 2:4. Their being filled with the Holy Spirit here rather denotes their being inspired with confidence or boldness than being endowed with new powers, as in Acts 2:4.

Verse 32

And the multitude - The number of believers at this time had become large. In Acts 4:4, it is said that it was five thousand, and the number was constantly increasing.

One heart - This expression denotes "tender union." They felt alike, or were attached to the same things, and this preserved them from jars and dissensions.

One soul - This phrase also denotes "close and tender union." No expression could denote it more strikingly than to say of friends they have one soul. Plutarch cites an ancient verse in his life of Cato of Utica with this very expression - "Two friends, one soul" (Grotius). Thus, Diogenes Laertius also (5, Acts 1:11) says respecting Aristotle, that "being asked what was a friend, answered that it was one soul dwelling in two bodies"

(Kuinoel). The Hebrews spake of two friends as being "one man." There can be no more striking demonstration of union and love than to say of more than five thousand suddenly drawn together that they had one soul! And this union they evinced in every way possible - in their conduct, in their prayers, and in their property. How different would have been the aspect of the church if the union had continued to the present time!

Neither said … - That is, I they did not regard it as their own, but to be used for the benefit of the whole society. See the notes on Acts 2:44.

Verse 33

And with great power - See Acts 1:8. The word "power" here denotes "efficacy," and means that they had "ability" given them to bear witness of the resurrection of the Saviour. it refers, therefore, I rather to their preaching than to their miracles.

Gave the apostles witness - The apostles bore testimony to.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus - This was the main point to be established. If it proved that the Lord Jesus came to life again after having been put to death, it established all that he taught, and was a demonstration that he was sent from God. They exerted, therefore, all their powers to prove this, and their success was such as might have been expected. Multitudes were converted to the Christian faith.

And great grace … - The word "grace" means "favor." See the notes on John 1:16. The expression here may mean either that the favor of God was remarkably shown to them, or that they had great favor in the sight of the people. It does not refer, as the expression now does commonly, to the internal blessings of religion on a man's own soul, to their personal advancement in the Christian graces, but to the favor or success that attended their preaching. The meaning probably is, that the "favor" of the "people" toward them was great, or that great success attended their ministry among them. Thus, the same word grace (Greek) is used in Acts 2:47. If this is its meaning, then here is an instance of the power of the testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus to impress the minds of people. But this is not all, nor probably is it the main idea. It is that their union, their benevolence their liberality in supplying the needs of the needy, was a means of opening the hearts of the people, and of winning them to the Saviour. If we wish to incline others to our opinions, nothing is better adapted to it than to show them kindness, and even to minister to their temporal needs.

Benevolence toward them softens the heart, and inclines them to listen to us. It disarms their prejudices, and disposes them to the exercise of the mild and amiable feelings of religion. Hence, our Saviour was engaged in healing the diseases and supplying the needs of the people. He drew around him the poor, the needy, and the diseased, and supplied their necessities, and thus prepared them to receive his message of truth. Thus, God is love, and is constantly doing good, that his goodness may lead people to repentance, Romans 2:4. And hence, no persons have better opportunities to spread the true sentiments of religion, or are clothed with higher responsibilites, than those who have it in their power to do good, or than those who are habitually engaged in bestowing favors. Thus, physicians have access to the hearts of people which other persons have not. Thus, parents have an easy access to the minds of children. for they are constantly doing them good. And thus Sunday-school teachers, whose whole work is a work of benevolence, have direct and most efficient access to the hearts of the children committed to their care.

Verse 34

That lacked - That was in want, or whose needs were not supplied by the others.

As many as … - The word used here is employed in a large, indefinite sense; but it would be improper to press it so as to suppose that every individual that became a Christian sold at once all his property. The sense doubtless is, that this was done "when it was necessary:" they parted with whatever property was needful to supply the needs of their poor brethren. That it was by no means considered a matter of "obligations," or enjoined by the apostles, is apparent from the case of Ananias, Acts 5:4. The fact that "Joses" is particularly mentioned Acts 4:36 shows that it was by no means a universal practice thus to part with all their possessions. He was "one" instance in which it was done. Perhaps there were many other similar instances; but all that the passage requires us to believe is, that they parted with whatever was "needful" to supply the needs of the poor. This was an eminent and instructive instance of Christian liberality, and of the power of the gospel in overcoming one of the strongest passions that ever exist in the human bosom - the love of money. Many of the early Christians were poor. They were collected from the lower orders of the people. But "all" Were not so. Some of them, it seems, were people of affluence; but the effect of

religion was to bring them all, in regard to feeling, at least, on a level. They felt that they were members of one family, and they therefore imparted their property cheerfully to their brethren. Besides this, they were about to go to other lands to preach the gospel, and they cheerfully parted with their property that they might go and proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. See the notes on Acts 2:44.

Verse 35

And laid them down … - That is, they committed the money received for their property to the disposal of the apostles, to distribute it as was necessary among the poor. This soon became a burdensome and inconvenient office, and they therefore appointed men who had special charge of it, Acts 6:1-2, etc.

Verse 36

And Joses - Many manuscripts, instead of "Joses," here read "Joseph." The reasons why this individual is selected and specified particularly were, doubtless, because he was a foreigner; because it was a remarkable instance of liberality; and because he subsequently distinguished himself in the work of the ministry. He gave himself, his property, his all, to the service of the Lord Jesus, and went forth to the self-denying labors of the gospel. He is mentioned elsewhere with honor in the New Testament Acts 11:24, Acts 11:30, and usually as the companion of the apostle Paul. The occasion on which he became connected with Paul in the ministry was when he himself was sent forth by the church at Jerusalem to Antioch. There, it seems, he heard of the fame of Paul and went to Tarsus to seek him, and brought him with him to Antioch, Acts 11:22-26. Before this he had been acquainted with him, and had introduced him to the other apostles at a time when they were afraid of Paul, and unwilling to acknowledge him as an apostle, Acts 9:26-27. At Antioch, Barnabas was led into dissimulation by Peter in regard to the Gentiles, and was reproved by his friend and companion, Paul, Galatians 2:13. He and Paul continued to travel in fellowship until a dispute arose at Antioch about Mark, and they separated, Paul going with Silas through Syria and Cilicia, and Barnabas, with Mark, sailing for his native place, Cyprus, Acts 15:35-41. See the following places for particulars of his history: Acts 11:22, Acts 11:25, Acts 11:30; Acts 12:25; Acts 13:1-2, Acts 13:50; Acts 14:12; Acts 15:12; 1 Corinthians 9:6; Galatians 2:1, Galatians 2:9.

Who by the apostles was surnamed … - The practice of giving surnames, as expressive of character, was not uncommon. Thus, Simon was called Peter, or Cephas, John 1:44; and thus James and John were surnamed Boanerges, Mark 3:17.

Barnabas, which is … - This word properly denotes "the son of prophecy." It is compounded of two Syriac words, the one meaning "son," and the other "prophecy." The Greek word which is used to interpret this παράκλησις paraklēsistranslated "consolation," means properly exhortation, entreaty, petition, or advocacy. It also means "consolation or solace"; and from this meaning the interpretation has been given to the word "Barnabas," but with evident impropriety. It does not appear that the name was bestowed on account of this, though it is probable that he possessed the qualification for administering comfort or consolation in an eminent degree, but on account of his talent for "speaking," or "exhorting" the people to holiness, and his success in preaching. Compare Acts 11:23.

A Levite - One of the descendants of Levi employed in the lower services of the temple. The whole tribe of Levi was set apart to the service of religion. It was divided into priests and Levites. The three sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. Of the family of "Kohath" Aaron was descended, who was the first high priest. His oldest son succeeded him, and the remainder of his sons were "priests." All the others of the tribe of Levi were called "Levites," and were employed in the work of the temple, in assisting the priests in performing sacred music, etc., Deuteronomy 12:18-19; Deuteronomy 18:6-8; 1 Chronicles 23:24.

Of the country of Cyprus - Cyprus is the largest island in the Mediterranean; an island extremely fertile, abounding in wine, honey, oil, wool, etc. It is mentioned in Acts 13:4; Acts 15:39. The island is near to Cicilia, and is not far from the Jewish coast. It is said by Dion Caccius (lib. 68,69) that the Jews were very numerous in that island - Clark. Barnabas afterward became, with Paul, a distinguished preacher to the Gentiles. It is worthy of remark, that "both" were born in pagan countries, though by descent Jews; and as they were trained in pagan lands, they were better suited for their special work. The case of Barnabas is that of a man who had property when he entered the ministry, and who gave up all for the Lord Jesus. The great mass of ministers, like very many who have been distinguished in other professions, have been taken from among the poor, and from humble ranks in life. But all have not been. Many have been

wealthy, and have devoted all to Christ; and in regard to others, it is to be remarked, that a very considerable proportion of them could have gained more “wealth” in some other profession than they do in the ministry. The ministry is a work of self-denial, and none should enter it who are not prepared to devote all to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Verse 1

But a certain man - In the previous chapter the historian had given an account of the eminent liberality and sincerity of the mass of early Christians, in being willing to give up their property to provide for the poor, and had mentioned the case of Barnabas as worthy of special attention. In this chapter he proceeds to mention a case, quite as striking, of insincerity, and hypocrisy, and of the just judgment of God on those who were guilty of it. The case is a remarkable instance of the nature of "hypocrisy," and goes to illustrate the art and cunning of the enemy of souls in attempting to corrupt the church, and to pervert the religion of the gospel. Hypocrisy consists in an attempt to "imitate" the people of God, or to assume the "appearance" of religion, in whatever form it may be manifested. In this case religion had been manifested by great self-denial and benevolence. The hypocrisy of Ananias consisted in "attempting" to imitate this in appearance, and to impose in this way on the early Christians and on God.

With Sapphira his wife - With her concurrence or consent. It was a matter of "agreement" between them, Acts 5:2, Acts 5:9.

Sold a possession - The word used here κτῆμα ktēmadoes not indicate whether this was "land" or some other property. In Acts 5:3, however, we learn that it was "land" that was sold; and the word here translated "possession" is translated in the Syriac, Arabic, and the Latin Vulgate as "land." The pretence for which this was sold was doubtless to have the appearance of religion. That it was "sold" could be easily known by the Christian society, but it might not be so easily known for "how much" it was sold. Hence, the attempt to impose on the apostles. It is clear that they were not under obligation to sell their property. But, "having" sold it for the purposes of religion, it became their duty, if they professed to devote the avails of it to God, to do it entirely, and without any reservation.

Verse 2

And kept back - The word used here means properly "to separate, to part:" and then it means to "separate surreptitiously or clandestinely for our own use" a part of public property, as taxes, etc. It is used but three times in the New Testament, Acts 5:3, and in Titus 2:10, where it is rendered "purloining." Here it means that they "secretly" kept back a part, while "professedly" devoting all to God.

His wife also being privy to it - His wife "knowing it," and evidently concurring in it.

And laid it at the apostles' feet - This was evidently an act professedly of devoting all to God. Compare Acts 4:37; also Acts 5:8-9. That this was his "profession," or "pretence," is further implied in the fact that Peter charges him with having "lied" unto God, Acts 5:3-4.

Verse 3

But Peter said … - Peter could have known this only by "revelation." It was the manifest design of Ananias to deceive; nor was there any way of detecting him but by its being revealed to him by the Spirit of God. As it was an instance of enormous wickedness, and as it was very important to detect and punish the crime, it was made known to Peter directly by God.

Why hath Satan - Great deeds of wickedness in the Scripture are traced to the influence of Satan. Compare Luke 23:3; John 13:27. Especially is Satan called the "father of lies," John 8:44-45. Compare Genesis 3:1-5. As this was an act of "falsehood," or an attempt to deceive, it is with great propriety traced to the influence of Satan. The sin of Ananias consisted in his "yielding" to the temptation. Nowhere in the Bible are people supposed to be free from guilt from the mere fact that they have been "tempted" to commit it. God requires them to "resist" temptation; and if they "yield" to it, they must be punished.

Filled thine heart - A man's "heart" or "mind" is "full" of a thing when he is "intent on it"; when he is strongly "impelled to it"; or when he is fully occupied with it. The expression here means that he was "strongly impelled" or "excited" by Satan to this crime.

To lie to - To attempt to deceive. The deception which he meant to practice was to keep back a "part" of the price, while he "pretended" to bring the whole of it; thus "tempting" God, and supposing that he could not detect the fraud.

The Holy Ghost - τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον to pneuma to hagionThe main inquiry here is, whether the apostle Peter intended to designate in this place the "third person" of the Trinity; or whether he meant to speak of God "as God," without any reference to the distinction of persons; or whether he referred to the "divine influence" which inspired the apostles, without reference to the special offices which are commonly ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Or, in other words, is there a "distinction" here recognized between

the Father and the Holy Spirit? That there "is," will be apparent from the following considerations:

(1) If no such distinction is "intended," it is remarkable that Peter did not use the usual and customary "name" of God. It does not appear why he guarded it so carefully as to denote that this offence was committed against the "Holy Spirit," and "the Spirit of the Lord," Acts 5:9.

(2) the name used here is the one employed in the Scriptures to designate the third person of the Trinity, as implying a distinction from the Father. See Matthew 3:16; Matthew 1:18, Matthew 1:20; Matthew 3:11; Matthew 12:32; Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:8; Mark 3:29; Mark 12:36; Luke 12:10; John 14:26; John 7:39; John 20:22; Acts 4:8; Acts 5:32, etc.

(3) Peter intended, doubtless, to designate an offence as committed particularly against the person, or influence, by which he and the other apostles were inspired. Ananias supposed that he could escape detection, and the offence was one, therefore, against the Inspirer of the apostles. Yet that was the Holy Spirit as "distinct from the Father." See John 14:16-17, John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7-11; John 20:22. Compare Acts 5:32. The offence, therefore, being against him who was "sent" by the Father, and who was appointed to a particular work, clearly supposes that the Holy Spirit is distinct from the Father.

(4) afurther incidental proof of this may be found in the fact that the sin here committed was one of special magnitude - so great as to be deemed worthy of the immediate and signal vengeance of God. Yet the sin against the Holy Spirit is uniformly represented to be of this description. Compare Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-29. As these sins evidently coincide in enormity, it is clear that the same class of sins is referred to in both places; or, in other words, the sin of Ananias was against the third person of the Trinity. Two remarks may be made here:

(1) The Holy Spirit is a distinct Person from the Father and the Son; or, in other words, there is a distinction of some kind in the divine nature that may be designated by the word "person." This is clear from the fact that sin is said to have been committed against him - a sin which it was supposed could not be detected. "Sin" cannot be committed against an "attribute" of

God, or an "influence" from God. We cannot "lie unto" an attribute, or against wisdom, or power, or goodness; nor can we "lie unto" an "influence," merely, of the Most High. Sin is committed against a "Being," not against an "attribute"; and as a sin is here charged on Ananias against "the Holy Spirit," it follows that the Holy Spirit has a "personal" existence, or that there is such a distinction in the divine essence that it may be proper to "specify" a sin as committed especially against him. In the same way sin may be represented as committed especially against the "Father" when his "name" is blasphemed; when his "dominion" is denied; when his mercy in sending his Son is called in question. Sin may be represented as committed against "the Son" when his atonement is denied; his divinity assailed; his character derided, or his invitations slighted. And thus sin may be represented as committed against "the Holy Spirit" when his office of renewing the heart, or sanctifying the soul, is called in question, or when "his" work is ascribed to some malign or other influence. See Mark 3:22-30. And as sin against the Son proves that he is in some sense distinct from the Father, so does sin against the Holy Spirit prove that in some sense he is distinct from the Father and the Son.

(2) the Holy Spirit is divine. This is proved, because he is represented here as being able to search the heart, and to detect insincerity and hypocrisy. Compare Jeremiah 17:10; 1 Chronicles 28:9; 1 Corinthians 2:10, "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God"; Revelation 2:23. And he is expressly "called" God. See the notes on Acts 5:4.

Verse 4

Whiles it remained - As long as it remained unsold. This place proves that there was no "obligation" imposed on the disciples to sell their property. They who did it, did it voluntarily; and it does not appear that it was done by all, or expected to be done by all.

And after it was sold … - Even after the property was sold, and Ananias had the money, still there was no obligation on him to devote it in this way. He had the disposal of it still. The apostle mentions this to show him that his offence was especially aggravated. He was not "compelled" to sell his property - he had not even the poor pretence that he was "obliged" to dispose of it, and was "tempted" to withhold it for his own use. It was "all" his, and might have been retained if he had chosen.

Thou hast not lied unto men - Unto people "only," or, it is not your "main" and "chief" offence that you have attempted to deceive people. It is true that Ananias "had" attempted to deceive the apostles, and it is true, also, that this was a crime; but still, the principal magnitude of the offence was that he had attempted to deceive "God." So small was his crime as committed against "men" that it was lost sight of by the apostles, and the great, crowning sin of attempting to deceive "God" was brought fully into view. Thus, David also saw his sin as committed against "God" to be so enormous that he lost sight of it as an offence to man, and said, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight," Psalm 51:4.

But unto God - It has been "particularly" and "eminently" against God. This is true, because:

(1)He had professedly "devoted" it to God. The act, therefore, had express and direct reference to him.

(2)it was an attempt to deceive him. It implied the belief of Ananias that God would not detect the crime, or see the motives of the heart.

(3)it is the prerogative of God to judge of sincerity and hypocrisy; and this was a case, therefore, which came under his special notice. Compare Psalm 139:1-4. The word "God" here is evidently used in its plain and obvious sense as denoting the "supreme divinity," and the use of the word here shows that the Holy Spirit is "divine." The whole passage demonstrates, therefore, one of the important doctrines of the Christian religion, that the Holy Spirit is distinct from the Father and the Son, and yet is divine.

Verse 5

And Ananias, hearing these words … - Seeing that his guilt was known, and being charged with the enormous crime of attempting to deceive God. He had not expected to be thus exposed; and it is clear that the exposure and the charge came upon him unexpectedly and terribly, like a bolt of thunder.

Fell down - Greek: Having fallen down.

Gave up the ghost - This is an unhappy translation. The original means simply "he expired," or "he died." Compare the notes on Matthew 27:50. This remarkable fact may be accounted for in this way:

(1)It is evidently to be regarded as a "judgment" of God for the sin of Ananias and his wife. It was not the act of Peter, but of God, and was clearly designed to show his abhorrence of this sin. See remarks on Acts 5:11.

(2)though it was the act of God, yet it does not follow that it was not in connection with the usual laws by which he governs people, or that he did not make use of natural means to do it. The sin was one of great aggravation. It was suddenly and unexpectedly detected. The fast that it was known, and the solemn charge that he had "lied unto God," struck him with horror. His conscience would reprove him for the enormity of his crime, and overwhelm him at the memory of his wickedness. These circumstances may be sufficient to account for this remarkable event. It has occurred in other cases that the consciousness of crime, or the fact of being suddenly detected, has given such a shock to the frame that it has never recovered from it. The effect "commonly" is that the memory of guilt preys secretly and silently upon the frame, until, worn out with the lack of rest and peace, it sinks exhausted into the grave. But there have not been missing instances where the shock has been so great as to destroy the vital powers at once, and plunge the wretched man, like Ananias, into eternity. It is not at all improbable that the shock in the case of Ananias was so great as at once to take his life.

Great fear came … - Such a striking and awful judgment on insincerity and hypocrisy was suited to excite awful emotions among the people. Sudden death always does it; but sudden death in immediate connection with crime is suited much more deeply to affect the mind.

Verse 6

And the young men - The youth of the congregation; very probably young men who were in attendance as "servants," or those whose business it was to attend on the congregation, and perform various offices when Christians celebrated their worship (Mosheim). The word used here sometimes denotes a "servant." It is used also, Acts 5:10, to denote "soldiers," as they were commonly enlisted of the vigorous and young. The fact that they took up Ananias voluntarily implies that they were accustomed to perform offices of servitude to the congregation.

Wound him up - It was the usual custom with the Jews to wind the body in many folds of linen before it was buried; commonly also with spices, to preserve it from putrefaction. See the notes on John 11:44. It may

be asked "why" he was so soon buried; and especially why he was hurried away without giving information to his wife. In reply to this, it may be remarked:

1. That it does not appear from the narrative that it was "known" that Sapphira was privy to the transaction, or was near at hand, or even that he had a wife. Ananias came "himself" and offered the money, and the judgment fell at once on him.

2. It was customary among the ancient Persians to bury the body almost immediately after death (Jahn); and it seems probable that the Jews, when the body was not embalmed, imitated the custom. It would also appear that this was an ancient custom among the Jews. See Genesis 23:19; Genesis 25:9; Genesis 35:29; Genesis 48:7; 1 Kings 13:30. Different nations differ in their customs in burying the dead; and there is no impropriety in committing a body soon after death to the tomb.

3. There might have been some danger of an excitement and tumult in regard to this scene if the corpse had not soon been removed; and as no valuable purpose could be answered by delaying the burial, the body was decently committed to the dust.

Verse 7

And it was about the space … - As Sapphira had been no less guilty than her husband, so it was ordered in the providence of God that the same judgment should tome upon both.

Verse 8

For so much - That is, for the sum which Ananias had presented. This was true, that this sum had been received for it; but it was also true that a larger sum had been received. It is as really a falsehood to deceive in this manner, as it would have been to have affirmed that they received much "more" than they actually did for the land. Falsehood consists in making an erroneous representation of a thing in any way for the purpose of deceiving. And "this" species is much more common than an open and bold lie, affirming what is in no sense true.

Verse 9

Agreed together - Conspired, or laid a plan. From this it seems that Sapphira was as guilty as her husband,

To tempt - To try; to endeavor to impose on, or to deceive; that is, to act as if the Spirit of the Lord could not detect the crime. They did this by trying to see whether the Spirit of God could detect hypocrisy.

At the door - Are near at hand. They had not yet returned. The dead were buried without the walls of cities; and the space of three hours, it seems, had elapsed before they returned from the burial.

Shall carry thee out - This passage shows that it was by divine interposition or judgment that their lives were taken. The judgment was in immediate connection with the crime, and was designed as an expression of the divine displeasure.

If it be asked here "why" Ananias and Sapphira were punished in this severe and awful manner, an answer may be found in the following considerations:

(1) This was an atrocious crime - a deep and dreadful act of iniquity. It was committed knowingly, and without excuse, Acts 5:4. It was important that sudden and exemplary punishment should follow it, because the society of Christians was just then organized, and it was designed that it should be a "pure" society, and should be regarded as a body of holy men. Much depended on making an "impression" on the people that sin could not be allowed in this new community, but would be detected and punished.

(2) God has often, in a most solemn manner, shown his abhorrence of hypocrisy and insincerity. By awful declarations and fearful judgments he has declared his displeasure at it. In a particular manner, no small part of the preaching of the Saviour was employed in detecting the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, and denouncing heavy judgments on them. See Mark 12:15; Luke 12:1; 1 Timothy 4:2; Job 8:13; Job 13:16; Job 15:34; Job 20:5; Job 36:13; Matthew 7:5; Luke 11:44. In the very beginning of the Christian church it was important, by a decided and awful act, to impress upon the church and the world the danger and guilt of hypocrisy. Well did the Saviour know that it would be one of the most insidious and deadly foes to the purity of the church; and at its very "threshold," therefore, he set up this solemn warning to guard it, and laid the bodies of Ananias and Sapphira in the path of every hypocrite that would enter the church. If they enter and are destroyed, they cannot plead that they were not fully warned. If they

practice iniquity "in" the church, they cannot plead ignorance of the fact that God intends to detect and punish them.

(3) the apostles were just then establishing their authority. They claimed to be under the influence of inspiration. To establish that, it was necessary to show that they could know the views and motives of those who became connected with the church. If easily imposed on, it would go far to destroy their authority and their claim to infallibility. If they showed that they could detect hypocrisy, even where most artfully concealed, it would establish the divine authority of their message. At the "commencement" of their work, therefore, they gave this decisive and most awful proof that they were under the guidance of an infallible Teacher.

(4) this case does not stand alone in the New Testament. It is clear from other instances that the apostles had the power of punishing sinners, and that a violation of the commands of Christ was attended by sudden and fearful judgments. See 1 Corinthians 11:30, and the case of Elymas the sorcerer in Acts 13:8-11.

(5) neither does this event stand alone in the history of the world. Acts of judgment sometimes occur as sudden and decided, in the providence of God, as in this case. The profane man, the drunkard, the profligate offender is sometimes suddenly stricken down, as in this instance. Cases have not been uncommon where the blasphemer has been smitten in death with the curse on his lips; and God often thus comes forth in judgment to slay the wicked, and to show that there is a God that reigns in the earth. This narrative cannot be objected to as improbable until "all" such cases are disposed of, nor can this infliction be regarded as unjust until all the instances where people die by remorse of conscience, or by the direct judgment of heaven, are "proved" to be unjust also.

In view of this narrative, we may remark:

(1) That God searches the heart, and knows the purposes of the soul. Compare Psalm 1:1-6. 10. Their "property," as well as their bodies and their spirits, they have devoted to him, and they profess to desire to employ it as "he" shall direct and please. And yet, is it not clear that the sin of Ananias

has not ceased in the church? How many professing Christians there are who give "nothing" really to God; who contribute nothing for the poor and needy; who devote nothing, or next to nothing, to any purposes of benevolence; who would employ "million" for their own gratification, and their families, "but not a cent for tribute" to God. The case of Ananias is, to all such, a case of most fearful warning. And on no point should Christians more faithfully examine themselves than in regard to the professed devotion of their "property" to God. If God punished this sin in the beginning of the Christian church, he will do it still in its progress; and in nothing have professed Christians more to fear his wrath than on this very subject.

(7) sinners should fear and tremble before God. He holds their breath in his hands. He can cut them down in an instant. The bold blasphemer, the unjust man, the liar, the scoffer, he can destroy in a moment, and sink them in all the woes of hell. Nor have they any security that he will not do it. The profane man has no evidence that he will live to finish the curse which he has begun; nor the drunkard that he will again become sober; nor the seducer that God will not arrest him in his act of wickedness and send him down to hell! The sinner walks over the grave, and over hell! In an instant he may die, and be summoned to the judgment-seat of God! How awful it is to sin in a world like this; and how fearful the doom which "must" soon overtake the ungodly!

Verse 12

And by the hands … - By the apostles. This verse should be read in connection with the 15th, to which it belongs.

Signs and wonders - Miracles. See the notes on Acts 2:43.

With one accord - With one "mind," or intention. See the notes on Acts 1:14.

In Solomon's porch - See the Matthew 21:12 note; John 10:23 note. They were doubtless there for the purpose of worship. It does not mean that they were there constantly, but at the regular periods of worship. Probably they had two designs in this; one was, to join in the public worship of God in the usual manner with the people, for they did not design to leave the temple service; the other, that they might have opportunity to preach to the people assembled there. In the presence of the great multitudes who came up to worship, they had an opportunity of making known the doctrines of

Jesus, and of confirming them by miracles, the reality of which could not be denied, and which could not be resisted, as proofs that Jesus was the Messiah.

Verse 13

And of the rest - Different interpretations have been given of this expression. Lightfoot supposes that by "the rest" are meant the remainder of the 120 disciples of whom Ananias had been one; and that they feared to put themselves on an equality with the apostles. But this interpretation seems to be far-fetched. Kuinoel supposes that by "the rest" are meant those who had not already joined with the apostles, whether Christians or Jews, and that they were deterred by the fate of Ananias. Pricaeus, Morus, Rosenmueller, Schleusner, and others, suppose that by "the rest" are meant the "rich" men, or the people of authority and influence among the Jews, of whom Ananias was one, and that they were deterred from it by the fate of Ananias. This is by far the most probable opinion, because:

(1)There is an evident contrast between them and the people; "the rest," that is, the others of the rich and great, feared to join with them; but "the people," the common people, magnified them.

(2)the fate of Ananias was suited to have this effect on the rich and great.

(3)Similar instances had occurred before, that the great, though they believed on Jesus, were afraid to come forth publicly and profess him before people. See John 12:42-43; John 5:44.

(4)the phrase "the rest" denotes sometimes what is more excellent, or which is superior in value or importance to something else. See Luke 12:26.

Join himself - Become united to, or associated with. The rich and the great then, as now, stood aloof from them, and were deterred by fear or shame from professing attachment to the Lord Jesus.

But the people - The mass of the people; the body of the nation.

Magnified them - Honored them; regarded them with reverence and fear.

Verse 14

And believers - This is the name by which Christians were designated, because one of the main things that distinguished them was that they "believed" that Jesus was the Christ. It is also an incidental proof that none

should join themselves to the church who are not "believers"; that is, who do not profess to be Christians in heart and in life.

Were the more added - The effect of all these things was to increase the number of converts. Their persecutions, their preaching, and the judgment of God, "all" tended to impress the minds of the people, and to lead them to the Lord Jesus Christ. Compare Acts 4:4. Though the judgment of God had the effect of deterring hypocrites from entering the church - though it produced awe and caution, yet still the number of true converts was increased. An effort to keep the church pure by wholesome discipline, and by cutting off unworthy members, however rich or honored, so far from weakening its true strength, has a tendency greatly to increase its numbers as well as its purity. People will not seek to enter a corrupt church, or regard it as worth any effort to be connected with a society that does not endeavor to be pure.

Multitudes - Compare Acts 4:4.

Verse 15

Insomuch - So that. This should be connected with Acts 5:12. Many miracles were performed by the apostles, "insomuch, etc."

They brought forth - The people, or the friends of the sick, brought them forth.

Beds - κλινῶν klinōnThis word denotes usually the "soft" and "valuable" beds on which the rich commonly lay. And it means that the rich, as well as the poor, were laid in the path of Peter and the other apostles.

Couches - κραββάτων krabatōnThe coarse and hard couches on which the poor used to lie, Mark 2:4, Mark 2:9, Mark 2:11-12; Mark 6:55; John 5:8-12; Acts 9:33.

The shadow of Peter - That is, they were laid in the path so that the shadow of Peter, as he walked, might pass over them. Perhaps the sun was near setting, and the lengthened shadow of Peter might be thrown afar across the way. They were not able to approach him on account of the crowd, and they "imagined" that if they could "anyhow" come under his influence they might be healed. The sacred writer does not say, however, that any "were" healed in this way, nor that they were commanded to do this. He simply states the "impression" which was on the minds of the people that it "might be." Whether they were healed by this, it is left for us merely to conjecture. An instance somewhat similar is recorded in Acts

19:12, where it is expressly said, however, that the sick were healed by contact with "handkerchiefs" and "aprons" that were brought from the body of Paul. Compare also Matthew 9:21-22, where the woman said respecting Jesus "If I may but touch his garment I shall be whole."

Might overshadow - That his shadow might pass over them. Though there is no certain evidence that any were healed in this way, yet it shows the full belief of the people that Peter had the power of working miracles. "Peter" was supposed by them to be eminently endowed with this power, because it was by him that the lame man in the temple had been healed Acts 3:4-6, and because he had been most prominent in his addresses to the people. The persons who are specified in this verse were those who dwelt at Jerusalem.

Verse 16

There came also … - Attracted by the fame of Peter's miracles, as the people formerly had been by the miracles of the Lord Jesus.

Vexed - Troubled, afflicted, or tormented.

Unclean spirits - Possessed with devils; called "unclean" because they prompted to sin and impurity of life. See the notes on Matthew 4:23-24.

And they were healed - Of these persons it is expressly affirmed that they were healed. Of those who were so laid as that the shadow of Peter might pass over them, there is no such direct affirmation.

Verse 17

Then the high priest - Probably "Caiaphas." Compare John 11:49. It seems from this place that he belonged to the sect of the Sadducees. It is certain that he had signalized himself by opposition to the Lord Jesus and to his cause constantly.

Rose up - This expression is sometimes "redundant," and at others it means simply to "begin" to do a thing, or to resolve to do it. Compare Luke 15:18.

And all they that were with him - That is, all they that coincided with him in doctrine or opinion; or, in other words, that portion of the Sanhedrin that was composed of "Sadducees." There was a strong party of Sadducees in the Sanhedrin; and perhaps at this time it was so strong a majority as to be able to control its decisions. Compare Acts 23:6.

Which is the sect - The word translated "sect" here is that from which we have derived our word "heresy." It means simply "sect" or "party," and is not used in a bad sense as implying reproach, or even error. The idea

which "we" attach to it of error, and of denying fundamental doctrines in religion, is one that does not occur in the New Testament.

Sadducees - See the notes on Matthew 3:7. The main doctrine of this sect was the denial of the resurrection of the dead. The reason why "they" were particularly opposed to the apostles rather than the Pharisees was that the apostles dwelt much on the "resurrection of the Lord Jesus," which, if true, completely overthrew their doctrine. All the converts, therefore, that were made to Christianity, tended to diminish their numbers and influence, and also to establish the belief of the "Pharisees" in the doctrine of the resurrection. So long, therefore, as the effect of the labors of the apostles was to establish one of the main doctrines of the "Pharisees," and to confute the "Sadducees," so long we may suppose that the "Pharisees" would either favor them or be silent; and so long the "Sadducees" would be opposed to them, and enraged against them. One sect will often see with composure the progress of another that it really hates, if it will humble a rival. Even opposition to the gospel will sometimes be silent provided the spread of religion will tend to humble and mortify those against whom we may be opposed.

Were filled with indignation - Greek: "zeal." The word denotes any kind of "fervor" or "warmth," and may be applied to any warm or violent affection of the mind, either "envy, wrath, zeal," or "love," Acts 13:45; John 2:17; Romans 10:2; 2 Corinthians 7:7; 2 Corinthians 11:2. Here it probably "includes envy" and "wrath." They were "envious" at the success of the apostles - at the number of converts that were made to a doctrine that they hated, and they were envious that the "Pharisees" were deriving such an accession of strength to their doctrine of the resurrection; and they were "indignant" that the apostles regarded so little their authority, and disobeyed the solemn injunction of the Sanhedrin. Compare Acts 4:18-21.

Verse 18

The common prison - The public prison; or the prison for the keeping of common and notorious offenders.

Verse 19

But the angel of the Lord - This does not denote any "particular" angel, but simply an angel. The "article" is not used in the original. The word "angel" denotes properly a "messenger," and particularly it is applied to the pure spirits that are sent to this world on errands of mercy. See the

notes on Matthew 1:20. The case here was evidently "a miracle." An angel was employed for this special purpose, and the design might have been:

(1)To reprove the Jewish rulers, and to convince them of their guilt in resisting the gospel of God;

(2)To convince the apostles more firmly of the protection and approbation of God;

(3)To encourage them more and more in their work, and in the faithful discharge of their high duty; and,

(4)To give the people a new and impressive proof of the truth of the message which they bore. That they were "imprisoned" would be known to the people. That they were made as secure as possible was also known. When, therefore, the next morning, before they could have been tried or acquitted, they were found again in the temple, delivering the same message still, it was a new and striking proof that they were sent by God.

Verse 20

In the temple - In a public and conspicuous place. In this way there would be a most striking exhibition of their boldness; a proof that "God" had delivered them, and a manifestation of their purpose to obey God rather than man.

All the words - All the doctrines. Compare John 6:68, "Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Of this life - Pertaining to life, to the eternal life which they taught through the resurrection of Jesus. The word "life" is used sometimes to express "the whole of religion," as opposed to the spiritual "death" of sin. See John 1:4; John 3:36. Their deliverance from prison was not that they might be idle, and escape to a place of safety. Again they were to engage in the toils and perils which they had just before encountered. God delivers us from dangers sometimes that we may plunge "into" new dangers; he preserves us from one form of calamity that we may be tried in some new furnace of affliction; he calls us to encounter trials simply "because" he demands it, and as an expression of gratitude to him for his gracious interposition.

Verse 21

Early in the morning - Greek: at the break of day. Compare Luke 24:1; John 8:2.

Called the council together - The Sanhedrin, or the Great Council of the nation. This was clearly for the purpose of "trying" the apostles for disregarding their commandments.

And all the senate - Greek: "eldership." Probably these were not a part of the Sanhedrin, but were people of age and experience, who in Acts 4:8; Acts 25:15, are called "elders of the Jews," and who were present for the sake of counsel Canal advice in a case of emergency.

Verse 23

Found we shut - It had not been broken open; and there was therefore clear proof that they had been delivered by the interposition of God. Nor could they have been released by the guard, for they were keeping watch, as if unconscious that anything had happened, and the officers had the only means of entering the prison.

Verse 24

The captain of the temple - See the notes on Acts 4:1.

Doubted of them - They were in "perplexity" about these things. The word rendered "doubted" denotes "that state of anxiety which arises when a person has lost his way, or when he does not know what to do to escape from a difficulty." See Luke 9:7.

Whereunto this would grow - What this "would be"; or, what would be the result or end of these events. For:

(1)Their authority was disregarded.

(2)God had opposed them by a miracle.

(3)the doctrines of the apostles were gaining ground.

(4)their efforts to resist them had been in vain. They need "not" have doubted; but sinners are not disposed to be convinced of the truth of religion.

Verse 26

Without violence - Not by force; not by "binding" them. Compare Matthew 27:2. The command of the Sanhedrin was sufficient to secure their presence, as they did not intend to refuse to answer for any alleged violation of the laws. Besides, their going before the council would give them

another noble opportunity to bear witness to the truth of the gospel. Christians, when charged with a violation of the laws of the land, should not refuse to answer, Acts 25:11, "If I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die." It is a part of our religion to yield obedience to all the just laws of the land, and to evince respect for all that are in authority, Romans 13:1-7.

For they feared the people - The people were favorable to the apostles. If violence had been attempted, or they had been taken in a cruel and forcible manner, the consequence would have been tumults and bloodshed. In this way, also, the apostles showed that they were not disposed to excite tumult. Opposition by them would have excited commotion; and though "they" would have been rescued, yet they resolved to show that they were not obstinate, contumacious, or rebellious, but were disposed, as far as it could be done with a clear conscience, to yield obedience to the laws of the land,

Verse 28

Straitly command you - Did we not command you with a "threat?" Acts 4:17-18, Acts 4:21.

In this name - In the name of Jesus.

Ye have filled Jerusalem - This, though not so desired, was an honorable tribute to the zeal and fidelity of the apostles. When Chastens are arraigned or persecuted, it is well if the only charge which their enemies can bring against them is that they have been distinguished for zeal and success in propagating their religion. See 1 Peter 4:16, "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glory God on this behalf"; also Acts 5:13-15.

Intend to bring this man's blood upon us - To bring "one's blood" upon another is a phrase signifying to hold or to prove him guilty of murdering the innocent. The expression here charges them with desiring to prove that they had put Jesus to death when he was innocent; to convince "the people" of this, and thus to enrage them against the Sanhedrin; and also to prove that they were guilty, and were exposed to the divine vengeance for having put the Messiah to death. Compare Acts 2:23, Acts 2:36; Acts 3:15; Acts 7:52. That the apostles "did" intend to charge them with being guilty of murder is clear; but it is observable that on "this occasion" they had said no thing of this, and it is further observable that they did not charge it on them "except in their presence." See the places just

referred to. They took no pains to spread this among the people, "except as the people were accessory to the crime of the rulers," Acts 2:23, Acts 2:36. Their consciences were not at ease, and the remembrance of the death of Jesus would occur to them at once at the sight of the apostles.

Verse 29

We ought to obey … - See the notes on Acts 4:19.

Verse 30

Raised up Jesus - This refers to his resurrection.

Hanged on a tree - That is, on the "cross," Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24; Acts 10:39; Acts 13:29. This is the amount of Peter's defense. He begins with the great principle Acts 5:29, which they could not gainsay, that God ought to be obeyed rather than man. He then proceeds to state that they were convinced that God had raised up Jesus from the dead, and as they had such decisive evidence of that, and were commanded by the authority of the Lord Jesus to be "witnesses of that," they were not "at liberty" to be silent. They were bound to obey God rather than the Sanhedrin, and to make known everywhere the fact that the Lord Jesus was risen. The remark that God had raised up Jesus whom they had "slain," does not seem to have been made to irritate or to reproach them, but merely to "identify" him as the person that had been raised. It was also a confirmation of the truth and reality of the miracle. Of his "death" they had no doubt, for they had been at pains to certify it, John 19:31-34. It is certain, however, that Peter did not shrink from charging on them their guilt; nor was he at any pains to "soften" or "mitigate" the severe charge that they had murdered their own Messiah.

Verse 31

Him hath God exalted - See the notes on Acts 2:33.

To be a Prince - ἀρχηγὸν archēgonSee the notes on Acts 3:15. In that place he is called the "Prince of life." Here it means that he is actually in the "exercise" of the office of a prince or a king, at the right hand of his Father. The title "Prince," or "King," was one which was well known as applied to the Messiah. It denotes that he has "dominion" and "power," especially the power which is needful to give repentance and the pardon of sins.

A Saviour - See the notes on Matthew 1:21.

To give repentance - The word "repentance" here is equivalent to "reformation" and "a change of life." The sentiment does not differ from what is said in Acts 3:26.

To Israel - This word properly denotes the "Jews"; but his office was not to be confined to the Jews. Other passages show that it would be also extended to the "Gentiles." The reasons why the "Jews" are particularly specified here are, probably:

(1)Because the Messiah was long promised to the Jewish people, and his first work was there; and,

(2)Because Peter was addressing Jews, and was particularly desirous of leading "them" to repentance.

Forgiveness of sins - Pardon of sin; the act which can be performed by God only, Mark 2:7.

If it be asked in what sense the Lord Jesus "gives repentance," or how his "exaltation" is connected with it, we may answer:

(1) His exaltation is evidence that his work was accepted, and that thus a foundation is laid by which repentance is available, and may be connected with pardon. Unless there was some way of "forgiveness," sorrow for sin would be of no value, even if exercised. The relentings of a culprit condemned for murder will be of no avail unless the executive can "consistently" pardon him; nor would relentings in hell be of avail, for there is no promise of forgiveness. But Jesus Christ by his death has laid a foundation by which repentance "may be" accepted.

(2) he is entrusted with all power in heaven and earth with "reference" to this, to apply his work to people; or, in other words, to bring them to repentance. See John 17:2; Matthew 28:18.

(3) his exaltation is immediately connected with the bestowment of the Holy Spirit, by whose influence people are brought to repentance, John 16:7-11. The Spirit is represented as being "sent" by him as well as by the Father, John 15:26; John 16:7.

(4) Jesus has power in this state of exaltation over all things that can affect the mind. He sends his ministers; he directs the events of sickness or disappointment, of health or prosperity, that will influence the heart. There is no doubt that he can so recall the sins of the past life, and refresh the memory, as to overwhelm the soul in the consciousness of guilt. Thus also he can appeal to man by his "goodness," and by a sense of his mercies; and

especially he can so present a view of "his own" life and death as to affect the heart, and show the evil of the past life of the sinner. Knowing the heart, he knows all the avenues by which it can be approached, and in an instant he can overwhelm the soul with the remembrance of crime.

It was "proper" that the power of pardon should be lodged with the same being that has the power of producing repentance, because:

1.The one appropriately follows the other.

2.They are parts of the same great work - the work which the Saviour came to do; "to remove sin, with all its effects, from the human soul." This power of "pardon" Jesus exercised when he was on the earth, and this he can now dispense in the heavens, Mark 2:9-11.

And from this we may learn:

(1) That Christ is "divine." It is a dictate of natural religion that none can forgive sins against God but God himself. None can pardon but the Being who has been offended. And this is also the dictate of the Bible. The power of "pardoning" sin is one that God claims as "his" prerogative, and it is clear that it can pertain to no other. See Isaiah 43:25; Daniel 9:9; Psalm 130:4. Yet Jesus Christ exercised this power when on earth; gave "evidence" that the exercise of that power was one that was acceptable to God by working a miracle, and removing the "consequences" of sin with which God had visited upon the sinner Matthew 9:6, and exercises it still in heaven. He must, therefore, be divine.

(2) the sinner is dependent on him for the exercise of repentance, and for forgiveness.

(3) the proud sinner must be humbled at his feet. He must be willing to come and receive eternal life at "his" hands. No step is more humiliating than this for proud and hardened people; and there is none which they are more reluctant to do. We always shrink from coming into the presence of one whom we have offended; we are extremely reluctant to confess a fault; but it "must be done," or the soul must be lost for ever.

(4) Christ has power to pardon the greatest offender. He is exalted for this purpose; and he is suited to his work. Even his murderers he could pardon; and no sinner need fear that he who is "a Prince and a Saviour at

the right hand of God" is unable to pardon his sins. To him we may come with confidence; and when pressed with the consciousness of the blackest crimes, and when we feel that we deserve eternal death, we may confidently roll all on his arm.

Verse 32

And we are his witnesses - For this purpose they had been appointed, Acts 1:8, Acts 1:21-22; Acts 2:32; Acts 3:15; Luke 24:48.

Of these things - Particularly of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and of the events which had followed it. Perhaps, however, he meant to include everything pertaining to the life, teachings, and death of the Lord Jesus.

And so is also … - The descent of the Holy Spirit to endow them with remarkable gifts Acts 2:1-4, to awaken and convert such a multitude Acts 2:41; Acts 4:4; Acts 5:14, was an unanswerable attestation of the truth of these doctrines and of the Christian religion. So manifest and decided was the presence of God attending them, that "they" could have no doubt that what they said was true; and so open and public was this attestation, that it was an evidence to all the people of the truth of their doctrine.

Verse 33

When they heard that - That which the apostle Peter had said, to wit, that they were guilty of murder; that Jesus was raised up; and that he still lived as the Messiah.

They were cut to the heart - The word used here properly denotes "to cut with a saw"; and as applied to the "mind," it means to be agitated with "rage" and "indignation," as if wrath should seize upon the mind as a saw does upon wood, and tear it violently, or agitate it severely. When used in connection with "the heart," it means that the heart is violently agitated and rent with rage. See Acts 7:54. It is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. The "reasons" why they were thus indignant were doubtless:

(1)Because the apostles had disregarded their command;

(2)Because they charged them with murder;

(3)Because they affirmed the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus, and thus tended to overthrow the sect of the Sadducees. The effect of the doctrines of the gospel is often to make people enraged.

Took counsel - The word rendered "took counsel" denotes commonly "to will"; then, "to deliberate"; and sometimes "to decree" or "to

determine." It doubtless implies here that "their minds "were made up" to do it; but probably the formal decree was not passed to put them to death.

Verse 34

Then stood there up one - He rose, as is usual in deliberative assemblies, to speak.

In the council - In the Sanhedrin, Acts 4:15.

A Pharisee - The high priest and those who had been most active in opposing the apostles were Sadducees. The Pharisees were opposed to them, particularly on the doctrine in regard to which the apostles were so strenuous, the resurrection of the dead. See the notes on Matthew 3:7. Compare Acts 23:6.

Gamaliel - This name was very common among the Jews. Dr. Lightfoot says that this man was the teacher of Paul Acts 22:3, the son of the "Simon" who took the Saviour in his arms Matthew 15:3. So celebrated was he, that Saul of Tarsus went to Jerusalem to receive the benefit of his instructions, Acts 22:3.

Had in reputation among all the people - "Honored" by all the people. His advice was likely, therefore, to be respected.

To put the apostles forth - This was done, doubtless, because, if the apostles had been suffered to remain, it was apprehended that they would take fresh courage, and be confirmed in their purposes. It was customary, besides, when they deliberated, to command those accused to retire, Acts 4:15.

A little space - A little "time," Luke 22:58.

Verse 36

For before those days - The "advice" of Gamaliel was to permit these men to go on. The "arguments" by which he enforced his advice were:

(1)That there were cases or precedents in point Acts 5:36-37; and,

(2)That if it should turn out to be truly of God, it would be a solemn affair to be involved in the consequences of opposing him. How long before "these days" this transaction occurred, cannot now be determined, as it is not certain to what case Gamaliel refers.

Rose up - That is, commenced or excited an insurrection.

Theudas - This was a name quite common among the Jews. Of this man nothing more is known than is here recorded. Josephus (Antiq., book 20, chapter 5) mentions one "Theudas," in the time of "Fadus," the procurator of Judea, in the reign of the Emperor Claudius (45 or 46 a.d.), who

persuaded a great part of the people to take their effects with them and follow him to the river Jordan. He told them he was a prophet, and that he would divide the river and lead them over. Fadus, however, came suddenly upon them, and slew many of them. Theudas was taken alive and conveyed to Jerusalem, and there beheaded. But this occurred at least ten or fifteen years after this discourse of Gamaliel. Many efforts have been made to reconcile Luke and Josephus, on the supposition that they refer to the same man. Lightfoot supposed that Josephus had made an error in chronology. But there is no reason to suppose that there is reference to the same event; and the fact that Josephus has not recorded the insurrection referred to by Gamaliel does not militate at all against the account in the Acts. For:

(1)Luke, for anything that appears to the contrary, is quite as credible an historian as Josephus.

(2)the name "Theudas" was a common name among the Jews; and there is no improbability that there were "two" leaders of an insurrection of this name. If it "is" improbable, the improbability would affect Josephus' credit as much as that of Luke.

(3)it is altogether improbable that "Gamaliel" should refer to a case which was not well authenticated, and that Luke should record a speech of this kind unless it was delivered, when it would be so easy to detect the error.

(4)Josephus has recorded many instances of insurrection and revolt. He has represented the country as in an unsettled state, and by no means professes to give an account of "all" that occurred. Thus, he says (Antiq., xvii. 10, section 4) that there were "at this time ten thousand other disorders in Judea"; and (section 8) that "Judea was full of robberies." When this "Theudas" lived cannot be ascertained; but as Gamaliel mentions him before Judas of Galilee, it is probable that he lived not far from the time that our Saviour was born; at a time when many false prophets appeared, claiming to be the Messiah.

Boasting himself to be somebody - Claiming to be an eminent prophet probably, or the Messiah.

Obeyed him - The word used here is the one commonly used to denote "belief." As many as believed on him, or gave credit to his pretensions.

Verse 37

Judas of Galilee - Josephus has given an account of this man (Antiq., xvii. 10, section 5), and calls him a "Galilean." He afterward calls him a "Gaulonite," and says he was of the city of "Gamala" (Antiq., 18:1:1). He says that the revolt took place under "Cyrenius," a Roman senator, who came into "Syria to be judge of that nation, and to take account of their substance." "Moreover," says he, "Cyrenius came himself into Judea, which was now added to the province of Syria, to take an account of their substance, and to dispose of Archelaus' money." "Yet Judas, taking with him Saddouk, a Pharisee, became zealous to draw them to a revolt, who both said that this taxation was no better than an introduction to slavery, and exhorted the nation to assert their liberty, etc." "This" revolt, he says, was the commencement of the series of revolts and calamities that terminated in the destruction of the city, temple, and nation.

In the days of the taxing - Or, rather, the "enrolling," or "the census." Josephus says it was designed to take an account of their substance. Compare Luke 2:1-2.

Verse 38

Refrain from these men - Cease to oppose them or to threaten them. The "reason" why he advised this he immediately adds, that if it were of human origin, it would come to nothing; if of God, they could not overthrow it.

This counsel or this work be of men - This plan or purpose. If the apostles had originated it for the purposes of imposture.

It will come to nought - Gamaliel "inferred" that from the two instances which he specified. They had been suppressed without the interference of the Sanhedrin; and he inferred that "this" would also die away if it was a human device. It will be remembered that this is the mere advice of Gamaliel, who was not inspired, and that this opinion should not be adduced to guide us, except as it was an instance of great shrewdness and prudence. It is doubtless right to oppose error in the proper way and with the proper temper, not with arms, or vituperation, or with the civil power, but with argument and kind entreaty. But the sentiment of Gamaliel is full of wisdom in regard to error. For:

(1) The very way to exalt error into notice, and to confirm people in it, is to oppose it in a harsh, authoritative, and unkind manner.

(2) Error, if left alone, will often die away itself. The interest of people in it will often cease as soon as it ceases to be opposed; and, having nothing to fan the flame, it will expire. It is not so with truth.

(3) in this respect the remark may be applied to the Christian religion. It has stood too long, and in too many circumstances of prosperity and adversity, to be of human origin. It has been subjected to all trials from its pretended friends and real foes; and it still lives as vigorous and flourishing as ever. Kingdoms have changed; empires have risen and fallen since Gamaliel spoke this; systems of opinion and belief have had their day, and expired; but the preservation of the Christian religion, unchanged through so many revolutions, and in so many fiery trials, shows that it is not of men, but of God. The argument for the divine origin of the Christian religion from its perpetuity is one that can be applied to no other system that has been, or that now exists. For Christianity has been opposed in every form. It confers no temporal conquests, and appeals to no base and strong native passions. The Muslim faith is supported by the sword and the state; paganism relies on the arm of the civil power and the terrors of superstition, and is sustained by all the corrupt passions of people; atheism and infidelity have been short-lived, varying in their forms, dying today, and tomorrow starting up in a new form; never organized, consolidated, or pure; and never tending to promote the peace or happiness of people. Christianity, without arms or human power, has lived, keeping on its steady and triumphant movement among people, regardless alike of the opposition of its foes, and of the treachery of its pretended friends. If the opinion of Gamaliel was just, it is from God; and the Jews particularly should regard as important an argument derived from the opinion of one of the wisest of their ancient rabbis.

Verse 39

But if it be of God - If God is the "author" of this religion. From this it seems that Gamaliel supposed that it was at least possible that this religion was divine. He evinced a far more candid mind than did the rest of the Jews; but still it does not appear that he was entirely convinced. The arguments which could not but stagger the Jewish Sanhedrin were those drawn from the resurrection of Jesus, the miracle on the day of Pentecost,

the healing of the lame man in the temple, and the release of the apostles from the prison.

Ye cannot overthrow it - Because:

(1)God has almighty power, and can execute his purposes;

(2)Because he is unchanging, and will not be diverted from his plans, Job 23:13-14.

The plan which God forms "must" be accomplished. All the devices of man are feebleness when opposed to him, and he can dash them in pieces in an instant. The prediction of Gamaliel has been fulfilled. People have opposed Christianity in every way, but in vain. They have reviled it; have persecuted it; have resorted to argument and to ridicule; to fire, and faggot, and sword; they have called in the aid of science; but all has been in vain. The more it has been crushed, the more it has risen, and it still exists with as much life and power as ever. The "preservation" of this religion amidst so much and so varied opposition proves that it is of God. No severer trial "can" await it than it has already experienced; and as it has survived so many storms and trials, we have every evidence that, according to the predictions, it is destined to live and to fill the world. See the Matthew 16:18; Isaiah 54:17; Isaiah 55:11 notes; Daniel 4:35 note.

Lest - That is, if you continue to oppose it, you may be found to have been opposing God.

Haply - Perhaps. In the Greek this is "lest at any time"; that is, at some future time, when too late to retract your doings, etc.

Ye be found - It shall appear that you have been opposing God.

Even to fight against God - Greek Θεομάχοι Theomachoi"those who contend with God." The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. To fight against God is to oppose him, or to maintain an attitude of hostility against him. It is an attitude that is most fearful in its character, and will most certainly be attended with an overthrow. No condition can be more awful than such an opposition to the Almighty; no overthrow more terrible than what must follow such opposition. Compare Acts 9:5; Acts 23:9. Opposition to the "gospel" in the Scriptures is uniformly regarded as opposition to God, Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23. People may be said to "fight against" God in the following ways, or on the following subjects:

(1) When they oppose his "gospel," its preaching, its plans, its influence among people; when they endeavor to prevent its diffusion, or to withdraw their families and friends from its influence.

(2) when they oppose the "doctrines" of the Bible. When they become angry that the real truths of religion are preached, and suffer themselves to be irritated and excited by an "unwillingness" that those doctrines should be true, and should be presented to people. Yet this is no uncommon thing. People by nature do not love those doctrines, and they are often indignant that they are preached. Some of the most angry feelings which people ever have arise from this source; and man can never find peace until he is "willing" that God's truth should exert its influence on his own soul, and rejoice that it is believed and loved by others.

(3) people oppose the "Law" of God. It seems to them too "stern" and "harsh." It condemns them; and they are unwilling that it should be applied to them. There is nothing which a sinner likes "less" than he does the pure and holy Law of God.

(4) sinners fight against the "providence" of God. When he afflicts them they rebel. When he takes away their health, or property, or friends, they complain. They esteem him harsh and cruel; and instead of finding peace by "submission," they greatly aggravate their sufferings, and infuse a mixture of wormwood and gall into the cup by complaining and repining. There is no peace in affliction but in the feeling that God is "right." And until this belief is cherished, the wicked will be like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, Isaiah 57:20. Such opposition to God is as wicked as it is foolish. The Lord gave, and has a right to remove our comforts; and we should be still, and know that he is God.

(5) sinners fight against God when they resist the influences of his Spirit; when they "oppose" serious thoughts; when they seek evil or frivolous companions and pleasures rather than submit to God; and when they spurn all the entreaties of their friends to become Christians. All these may be the appeals which God is making to people to be prepared to meet him. And yet it is common for sinners thus to stifle conviction, and refuse even to think of their eternal welfare. Nothing can be an act of more direct and deliberate wickedness and folly than this. Without the aid of the Holy Spirit none can be saved; and to resist his influences is to put away the only prospect of eternal life. To do it is to do it over the grave; not knowing that

another hour of life may be granted; and not knowing that "if" life is prolonged, the Spirit will ever strive again with the heart. In view of this verse, we may remark:

1.That the path of wisdom is to submit at once to the requirements of God. Without this, we must expect conflicts with him, and peril and ruin. No man can be "opposed" to God without endangering himself every minute.

2.Submission to God should be entire. It should extend to every doctrine and demand; every law, and every act of the Almighty. In all his requirements, and in all afflictions, we should submit to him, for thus only shall we find peace.

3.Infidels and scoffers will gain nothing by opposing God. They have thus far been thwarted, and unsuccessful; and they will be still. None of their plans have succeeded; and the hope of destroying the Christian religion, after the efforts of almost two thousand years, must be vain, and will recoil with tremendous vengeance on those who make them.

Verse 40

And to him they agreed - Greek: They were "persuaded" by him; or they trusted to him. They agreed only so far as their design of putting them to death was concerned. They abandoned that design. But they did "not" comply with his advice to let them entirely alone.

And beaten them - The usual amount of "lashes" which were inflicted on offenders was 39, 2 Corinthians 11:24. "Beating," or "whipping," was a common mode of punishing minor offences among the Jews. It was expressly foretold by the Saviour that the apostles would be subjected to this, Matthew 10:17. The reason why they did not adopt the advice of Gamaliel altogether doubtless was, that if they did, they feared that their "authority" would be despised by the people. They had commanded them not to preach; they had threatened them Acts 4:18; Acts 5:28; they had imprisoned them Acts 5:18; and now, if they suffered them to go without even the "appearance" of punishment, their authority, they feared, would be despised by the nation, and it would be supposed that the apostles had triumphed over the Sanhedrin. It is probable, also, that they were so indignant, that they could not suffer them to go without the gratification of subjecting them to the public odium of a "whipping." People, if they cannot

accomplish their full purposes of malignity against the gospel, will take up with even some petty annoyance and malignity rather than let it alone.

Verse 41

Rejoicing - Nothing to most people would seem more disgraceful than a public whipping. It is a punishment inflicted usually not so much because it gives "pain," as because it is esteemed to be attended with disgrace. The Jewish rulers doubtless desired that the apostles might be so affected with the sense of this disgrace as to be unwilling to appear again in public, or to preach the gospel anymore. Yet in this they were disappointed. The effect was just the reverse. If it be asked why they rejoiced in this manner, we may reply:

(1)Because they were permitted thus to imitate the example of the Lord Jesus. He had been scourged and reviled, and they were glad that they were permitted to be treated as he was. Compare Philemon 3:10; Colossians 1:24; 1 Peter 4:13, "Rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings."

(2)because, by this, they had evidence that they were the friends and followers of Christ. It was clear they were engaged in the same cause that he was. They were enduring the same sufferings, and striving to advance the same interests. As they loved the "cause," they would rejoice in enduring even the shame and sufferings which the cause, of necessity, involved. The kingdom of the Redeemer was an object so transcendently important, that for it they were willing to endure all the afflictions and disgrace which it might involve.

(3)they had been told to "expect" this, and they now rejoiced that they had This evidence that they were engaged in the cause of truth. Matthew 5:11-12; Matthew 10:17, Matthew 10:22; 2 Corinthians 12:10; Philemon 1:29; James 1:2.

(4)Religion appears to a Christian so excellent and lovely, that he is willing, for its sake, to endure trial, persecution, and death. With "all" this, it is infinite gain; and we should be willing to endure these trials, if, by them, we may gain a crown of glory. Compare Mark 10:30.

(5)Christians are the professed friends of Christ. We show attachment for friends by being willing to suffer for them; to bear contempt and

reproach on their account; and to share "their" persecutions, sorrows, and calamities.

(6)the apostles were engaged in a cause of innocence, truth, and benevolence. They had "done" nothing of which to be ashamed; and they rejoiced, therefore, in a conscience void of offence, and in the consciousness of integrity and benevolence. When other people "disgrace" themselves by harsh, or vile, or opprobrious language or conduct toward "us," we should not feel that the disgrace belongs to "us." It is "theirs"; and we should not be ashamed or distressed, though their rage should fall on us. See 1 Peter 4:14-16.

Counted worthy - Esteemed to be deserving. That is, esteemed "fit" for it "by the Sanhedrin." It does not mean that "God" esteemed them worthy, but that the Jewish council judged them fit to suffer shame in this cause. They evinced so much zeal and determination of purpose that they were judged fit objects to be treated as the Lord Jesus had himself been.

To suffer shame - To be "dishonored" or "disgraced" in the estimation of the Jewish rulers. The "particular" disgrace to which reference is made here was "whipping." To various other kinds of shame they were also exposed. They were persecuted, reviled, and finally put to death. Here we may remark that a profession of the Christian religion has been in all ages esteemed by many to be a "disgrace." The "reasons" are:

(1)That Jesus is himself despised;

(2)That his precepts are opposed to the gaiety and follies of the world;

(3)That it attacks that on which the people of the world pride themselves;

(4)That it requires a "spirit" which the world esteems mean and grovelling - meekness, humility, self-denial, patience, forgiveness of injuries; and,

(5)That it requires "duties" - prayer, praise, seriousness, benevolence. All these things the people of the world esteem degrading and mean, and hence, they endeavor to subject those who practice them to disgrace. The "kinds" of disgrace to which Christians have been subjected are too numerous to be mentioned here. In former times they were subjected to the

loss of property, of reputation, and to all the shame of public punishment, and to the terrors of the dungeon, the stake, or the rack. One main design of persecution was to select a kind of punishment so "disgraceful" as to deter others from professing religion. Disgrace even yet may attend it. It may subject one to the ridicule of friends - of even a father, mother, or brother. Christians hear their opinions abused; their names vilified; their Bible travestied; the name of their God profaned, and of their Redeemer blasphemed. Their feelings are often wantonly and rudely torn by the cutting sarcasm or the bitter sneer. Books and songs revile them; their specialties are made the occasion of indecent merriment on the stage and in novels; and in this way they are still subjected to shame for the name of Jesus. Every one who becomes a Christian should remember that this is a part of his inheritance, and should not esteem it dishonorable to be treated as his Master was before him, John 15:18-20; Matthew 10:25.

For his name - For attachment to him.

Verse 42

And daily … - Compare 2 Timothy 4:2. See also notes on Acts 2:46.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Verse 1

In those days … - The first part of this chapter contains an account of the appointment of "deacons." It may be asked, perhaps, why the apostles did not appoint these officers at the first organization of the church? To this, question we may reply, that it was better to defer the appointment until an occasion should occur when it would appear to be manifestly necessary and proper. When the church was small, its alms could be distributed by the apostles themselves without difficulty But when it was greatly increased when its charities were multiplied; and when the distribution might give rise to contentions, it was necessary that this matter should be entrusted to the hands of "laymen," and that the "ministry" should be freed from all embarrassment, and all suspicions of dishonesty and unfairness in regard to pecuniary matters. It has never been found to be wise that the temporal affairs of the church should be entrusted in any considerable degree to the clergy, and they should be freed from such sources of difficulty and embarrassment.

Was multiplied - By the accession of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, and of those who were subsequently added, Acts 4:4; Acts 5:14.

A murmuring - A complaint - as if there had been partiality in the distribution.

Of the Grecians - There has been much diversity of opinion in regard to these persons, whether they were "Jews" who had lived among the Gentiles, and who spoke the Greek language, or whether they were proselytes from the Gentiles. The former is probably the correct opinion. The word used here is not what is commonly employed to designate the inhabitants of Greece, but it properly denotes those who "imitate" the customs and habits of the Greeks, who use the Greek language, etc. In the time when the gospel was first preached, there were two classes of Jews - those who remained in Palestine, who used the Hebrew language, and who were appropriately called "Hebrews"; and those who were scattered among the Gentiles, who spoke the Greek language, and who used in their synagogues the Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint. These were called "Hellenists," or, as it is in our translation, "Grecians." See the notes on John 7:35. These were doubtless the persons mentioned here - not those who were proselyted from Gentiles, but those of Jewish origin who were not

natives of Judea, who had come up to Jerusalem to attend the great festivals. See Acts 2:5, Acts 2:9-11. Dissensions would be very likely to arise between these two classes of persons. The Jews of Palestine would pride themselves much on the fact that they dwelt in the land of the patriarchs and the land of promise; that they used the language which their fathers spoke, and in which the oracles of God were given; and that they were constantly near the temple, and regularly engaged in its solemnities. On the other hand, the Jews from other parts of the world would be suspicious, jealous, and envious of their brethren, and would be likely to charge them with partiality, or of taking advantage in their contact with them. These occasions of strife would not be destroyed by their conversion to Christianity, and one of them is furnished on this occasion.

Because their widows … - The property which had been contributed, or thrown into common stock, was understood to be designed for the equal benefit of "all" the poor, and particularly, it would seem, for the poor widows. The distribution before this seems to have been made by the apostles themselves - or possibly, as Mosheim conjectures (Commentary de rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum, pp. 139,118), the apostles committed the distribution of these funds to the Hebrews, and hence, the Grecians are represented as complaining against them, and not against the apostles.

In the daily ministration - In the daily distribution which was made for their needs. Compare Acts 4:35. The property was contributed doubtless with an understanding that it should be "equally" distributed to all classes of Christians that had need. It is clear from the Epistles that "widows" were objects of special attention in the primitive church, and that the first Christians regarded it as a matter of indispensable obligation to provide for their needs, 1 Timothy 5:3, 1 Timothy 5:9-10, 1 Timothy 5:16; James 1:27.

Verse 2

Then the twelve - That is, the apostles. Matthias had been added to them after the apostasy of Judas, which had completed the original number.

The multitude of the disciples - It is not necessary to suppose that all the disciples were convened, which amounted to many thousands, but that the business was laid before a large number; or perhaps "the multitude" here means those merely who were more particularly interested in the matter, and who had been engaged in the complaint.

It is not reason - The original words used here properly denote "it is not pleasing or agreeable"; but the meaning evidently is, it is not "suitable" or "proper." It would be a departure from the design of their appointment, which was to preach the gospel, and not to attend to the pecuniary affairs of the church.

Leave the word of God - That we should neglect or abandon the preaching of the gospel so much as would be necessary if we attended personally to the distribution of the alms of the church. The "gospel" is here called the "Word of God," because it is his message; it is what he has spoken, or which he has commanded to be proclaimed to people.

Serve tables - This expression properly denotes "to take care of, or provide for the table, or for the daily needs of a family." It is an expression that properly applies to a steward or a servant. The word "tables" is, however, sometimes used with reference to "money," as being the place where money was kept for the purpose of "exchange, etc.," Matthew 21:12; Matthew 25:27. Here the expression means, therefore, to attend to the pecuniary transactions of the church, and to make the proper distribution for the needs of the poor.

Verse 3

Look ye out - Select, or choose. As this was a matter pertaining to their own pecuniary affairs, it was proper that "they" should be permitted to choose such men as they could confide in. By this means the apostles would be free from all suspicions. It could not be pretended that "they" were partial, nor could it ever be charged on them that they wished to embezzle the funds by managing them themselves, or by entrusting them to men of their own selection. It follows from this, also, that the right of selecting "deacons" resides "in" the church, and does not pertain to the ministry. It is evidently proper that men who are to be entrusted with the alms of the church should be selected by the church itself.

Among you - That is, from among the Grecians and Hebrews, that there may be justice done, and no further cause of complaint.

Seven men - Seven was a sacred number among the Hebrews, but there does not appear to have been any "mystery" in choosing this number. It was a convenient number, sufficiently large to secure the faithful performance of the duty, and not so large as to cause confusion and embarrassment. It does not follow, however, that the same number is now to be chosen as deacons in a church, for the precise number is not commanded.

Of honest report - Of fair reputation; regarded as men of integrity. Greek: "testified of," or "bear witness to"; that is, whose characters were well known and fair.

Full of the Holy Ghost - This evidently does not mean endowed with miraculous gifts, or the power of speaking foreign languages, for such gifts were not necessary to the discharge of their office, but it means people who were eminently under the influence of the Holy Spirit, or who were of distinguished piety. This was all that was necessary in the case, and this is all that the words fairly imply.

And wisdom - Prudence, or skill, to make a wise and equable distribution. The qualifications of deacons are still further stated and illustrated in 1 Timothy 3:8-10. In this place it is seen that they must be people of eminent piety and fair character, and that they must possess "prudence," or wisdom, to manage the affairs connected with their office. These qualifications are indispensable to a faithful discharge of the duty entrusted to the officers of the church.

Whom we may appoint - Whom we may "constitute," or set over this business. The way in which this was done was by prayer and the imposition of hands, Acts 6:6. Though they were "selected" by the church, yet the power of ordaining them, or setting them apart, was retained by the apostles. Thus, the rights of "both" were preserved - the right of the church to designate those who should serve them in the office of deacon, and the right of the apostles to organize and establish the church with its appropriate officers; on the one hand, a due regard to the liberty and privileges of the Christian community, and, on the other, the security of proper respect for the office as being of apostolic appointment and authority.

Over this business - That is, over the distribution of the alms of the church - not to preach, or to govern the church, but solely to take care of the sacred funds of charity, and distribute them to supply the needs of the poor. The office is distinguished from that of "preaching" the gospel. To that the apostles were to attend. The deacons were expressly set apart to a different work, and to that work they should be confined. In this account of their original appointment, there is not the slightest intimation that they were to "preach," but the contrary is supposed in the whole transaction. Nor is there here the slightest intimation that they were regarded as an order of "clergy," or as in any way connected with the clerical office. In the ancient synagogues of the Jews there were three men to whom was entrusted the

care of the poor. They were called by the Hebrews "parnasin" or "pastors" (Lightfoot, Hor. Heb. et Talin.; Matthew 4:23). From these officers the apostles took the idea probably of appointing deacons in the Christian church, and doubtless intended that their duties should be the same.

Verse 4

But we will give ourselves continually - The original expression used here denotes "intense and persevering" application to a thing, or unwearied effort in it. See the notes on Acts 1:14. It means that the apostles designed to make this their constant and main object, undistracted by the cares of life, and even by attention to the temporal needs of the church.

To prayer - Whether this means "private" or "public" prayer cannot be certainly determined. The passage, however, would rather incline us to suppose that the "latter" was meant, as it is immediately connected with preaching. If so, then the phrase denotes that they would give themselves to the duties of their office, one part of which was public prayer, and another preaching. Still it is to be believed that the apostles felt the need of secret prayer, and practiced it, as preparatory to their public preaching.

And to the ministry of the word - To preaching the gospel, or communicating the message of eternal life to the world. The word "ministry" διακονία diakoniaproperly denotes the employment of a "servant," and is given to the preachers of the gospel because they are employed in this as the "servants" of God and of the church. We have here a view of what the apostles thought to be the proper work of the ministry. They were set apart to this work. It was their main, their only employment. To this their lives were to be devoted, and both by their example and their writings they have shown that it was on this principle they acted. Compare 1 Timothy 4:15-16; 2 Timothy 4:2. It follows also that if their time and talents were to be wholly devoted to this work, it was reasonable that they should receive competent support from the churches, and this reasonable claim is often urged. See the 1 Corinthians 9:7-14 notes; Galatians 6:6 note.

Verse 5

And the saying - "The word" - the counsel, or command,

And they chose Stephen … - A man who soon showed Revelation 2:6, Revelation 2:15, took their rise. But the evidence of this is not clear.

A proselyte - A "proselyte" is one who is converted from one religion to another. See the notes on Matthew 23:15. The word does not mean here that he was a convert to "Christianity" - which was true - but that he had been

converted at Antioch from paganism to the Jewish religion. As this is the only proselyte mentioned among the seven deacons, it is evident that the others were native-born Jews, though a part of them might have been born out of Palestine, and have been of the denomination of "Grecians," or "Hellenists."

Of Antioch - This city, often mentioned in the New Testament (Acts 11:19-20, Acts 11:26; Acts 15:22, Acts 15:35; Galatians 2:11, etc.), was situated in Syria, on the river Orontes, and was formerly called "Riblath." It is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but is frequently mentioned in the Apocrypha. It was built by Seleucus Nicanor, b.c. 301, and was named "Antioch," in honor of his father Antiochus. It became the seat of empire of the Syrian kings of the Macedonian race, and afterward of the Roman governors of the eastern provinces. In this place the disciples of Christ were first called "Christians," Acts 11:26. Josephus says it was the third city in size of the Roman provinces, being inferior only to Seleucia and Alexandria. It was long, indeed, the most powerful city of the East. The city was almost square, had many gates, was adorned with fine fountains, and possessed great fertility of soil and commercial opulence. It was subject to earthquakes, and was often almost destroyed by them. In 588 a.d. above 60,000 persons perished in it in this manner. In 970 a.d. an army of 100,000 Saracens besieged it, and took it. In 1268 a.d. it was taken possession of by the Sultan of Egypt, who demolished it, and placed it under the dominion of the Turks. It is now called "Antakia," and until the year 1822 it occupied a remote corner of the ancient enclosure of its walls, its splendid buildings being reduced to hovels, and its population living in Turkish debasement. It contains now about 10,000 inhabitants (Robinson's Calmet). This city should be distinguished from Antioch in Pisidia, also mentioned in the New Testament, Acts 13:14.

Verse 6

And when they had prayed - Invoking in this manner the blessing of God to attend them in the discharge of the duties of their office.

They laid their hands … - Among the Jews it was customary to lay hands on the head of a person who was set apart to any particular office, Numbers 27:18; Compare Acts 8:19. This was done, not to impart any power or ability, but to "designate" that they received their authority or commission from those who thus laid their hands on them, as the act of laying hands on the sick by the Saviour was an act signifying that the power

of healing came from him, Matthew 9:18; compare Mark 16:18. In such cases the laying on of the hands conveyed of itself no healing power, but was a sign or token that the power came from the Lord Jesus. Ordination has been uniformly performed in this way. See 1 Timothy 5:22. Though the seven deacons had been chosen by the church to this work, yet they derived their immediate commission and authority from the apostles.

Verse 7

And the word of God increased - That is, the gospel was more and more successful, or became more mighty and extensive in its influence. An instance of this success is immediately added.

And a great company of the priests - A great "multitude." This is recorded justly as a remarkable instance of the power of the gospel. How great this company was is not mentioned, but the number of the priests in Jerusalem was very great; and their conversion was a striking proof of the power of truth. It is probable that they had been opposed to the gospel with quite as much hostility as any other class of the Jews. And it is now mentioned, as worthy of special record, that the gospel was sufficiently mighty to humble even the proud, and haughty, and selfish, and envious priests to the foot of the cross. One design of the gospel is to evince the power of truth in subduing all classes of people; and hence, in the New Testament we have the record of its having actually subdued every class to the obedience of faith. Some mss., however, here instead of "priests" read Jews. This reading is followed in the Syriac version.

Were obedient to the faith - The word "faith" here is evidently put for the "Christian religion." Faith is one of the main requirements of the gospel Mark 16:16, and by a figure of speech is put for the gospel itself. To become "obedient to the faith," therefore, is to obey the requirements of the gospel, particularly what requires us to "believe." Compare Romans 10:16. By the accession of the "priests" also no small part of the reproach would be taken away from the gospel, that it made converts only among the lower classes of the people. Compare John 7:48.

Verse 8

And Stephen - The remarkable death of this first Christian martyr, which soon occurred, gave occasion to the sacred writer to give a detailed account of his character, and of the causes which led to his death. Hitherto the opposition of the Jews had been confined to threats and imprisonment; but it was now to burst forth with furious rage and madness, that could be

satisfied only with blood. This was the first in a series of persecutions against Christians which filled the church with blood, and which closed the lives of thousands, perhaps a million, in the great work of establishing the gospel on the earth.

Full of faith - Full of "confidence" in God, or trusting entirely to his promises. See the notes on Mark 16:16.

And power - The power which was evinced in working miracles.

Wonders - This is one of the words commonly used in the New Testament to denote miracles.

Verse 9

Then there arose - That is, they stood up against him, or they opposed him.

Of the synagogue - See the notes on Matthew 4:23. The Jews were scattered in all parts of the world. In every place they would have synagogues. But it is also probable that there would be enough foreign Jews residing at Jerusalem from each of those places to maintain the worship of the synagogue; and at the great feasts, those synagogues adapted to Jewish people of different nations would be attended by those who came up to attend the great feasts. It is certain that there was a large number of synagogues in Jerusalem. The common estimate is, that there were four hundred and eighty in the city (Lightfoot; Vitringa).

Of the Libertines - There has been very great difference of opinion about the meaning of this word. The chief opinions may be reduced to three:

1. The word is Latin, and means properly a "freedman," a man who had been a slave and was set at liberty. Many have supposed that these persons were manumitted slaves of Roman origin, but who had become proselyted to the Jewish religion, and who had a synagogue in Jerusalem. This opinion is not very probable; though it is certain, from Tacitus (Ann., lib. 2:c. 85), that there were many persons of this description at Rome. He says that 4,000 Jewish proselytes of Roman slaves made free were sent at one time to Sardinia.

2. A second opinion is, that these persons were Jews by birth, and had been taken captives by the Romans, and then set at liberty, and were thus called "freedmen" or "liberties." That there were many Jews of this description there can be no doubt. Pompey the Great, when he subjugated

Judea, sent large numbers of the Jews to Rome (Philo, In Legat. a.d. Caium). These Jews were set at liberty at Rome, and assigned a place beyond the Tiber for a residence. See Introduction to the Epistle to the Romans. These persons are by Philo called "libertines," or "freedmen" (Kuinoel, in loco). Many Jews were also conveyed as captives by Ptolemy I. to Egypt, and obtained a residence in that country and the vicinity.

3. Another opinion is, that they took their name from some "place" which they occupied. This opinion is more probable from the fact that all the "other" persons mentioned here are named from the countries which they occupied. Suidas says that this is the name of a place. And in one of the fathers this passage occurs: "Victor, Bishop of the Catholic Church at Libertina, says, unity is there, etc." from this passage it is plain that there was a place called "Libertina." That place was in Africa, not far from ancient Carthage. See Dr. Pearce's Commentary on this place.

Cyrenians - Jews who dwelt at "Cyrene" in Africa. See the notes on Matthew 27:32.

Alexandrians - Inhabitants of Alexandria in Egypt. That city was founded by Alexander the Great, 332 b.c., and was populated by colonies of Greeks and Jews. It was much celebrated, and contained not less than 300,000 free citizens, and as many slaves. The city was the residence of many Jews. Josephus says that Alexander himself assigned to them a particular quarter of the city, and allowed them equal privileges with the Greeks (Antiq., Romans 14:7, Romans 14:2; Against Apion, Romans 2:4). Philo affirms that of five parts of the city, the Jews inhabited two. According to his statement, there dwelt in his time at Alexandria and the other Egyptian cities not less than "ten hundred thousand Jews." Amron, the general of Omar, when he took the city, said that it contained 40,000 tributary Jews. At this place the famous version of the Old Testament called the "Septuagint," or the Alexandrian version, was made. See Robinson's Calmet.

Cilicia - This was a province of Asia Minor, on the seacoast, at the north of Cyprus. The capital of this province was Tarsus, the native place of Paul, Acts 9:11. As Paul was of this place, and belonged doubtless to this synagogue, it is probable that he was one who was engaged in this dispute with Stephen. Compare Acts 7:58.

Of Asia - See the notes on Acts 2:9.

Disputing with Stephen - Doubtless on the question whether Jesus was the Messiah. This word does not denote "angry disputing," but is commonly used to denote "fair and impartial inquiry"; and it is probable that the discussion began in this way, and when they were overcome by "argument," they resorted, as disputants are apt to do, to angry criminations and violence.

Verse 10

To resist - That is, they were not able to "answer" his arguments.

The wisdom - This properly refers to his knowledge of the Scriptures; his skill in what "the Jews" esteemed to be wisdom - acquaintance with their sacred writings, opinions, etc.

And the spirit - This has been commonly understood of the Holy Spirit, by which he was aided; but it rather means the "energy, power," or "ardor" of Stephen. He "evinced" a spirit of zeal and sincerity which they could not withstand; which served, more than mere argument could have done, to convince them that he was right. The evidence of sincerity, honesty, and zeal in a public speaker will often go further to convince the great mass of mankind, than the most able argument if delivered in a cold and indifferent manner.

Verse 11

Then they suborned men - To suborn in law means to procure a person to take such a false oath as constitutes perjury (Webster). It has substantially this sense here. It means that they induced them to declare what was false, or to bring a false accusation against him. This was done, not by declaring a palpable and open falsehood, but by "perverting" his doctrines, and by stating their own "inferences" as what he had actually maintained - the common way in which people oppose doctrines from which they differ. The Syriac reads this place, "Then they sent certain men, and instructed them that they should say, etc." This was repeating an artifice which they had before practiced so successfully in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. See Matthew 26:60-61.

We have heard … - When they alleged that they had heard this is not said. Probably, however, they referred to some of his discourses with the people when he performed miracles and wonders among them, Acts 6:8.

Blasphemous words - See the notes on Matthew 9:3. Moses was regarded with profound reverence. His laws they held to be unchangeable. Any intimation, therefore, that there was a greater Lawgiver than he, or that

his institutions were mere shadows and types, and were no longer binding, would be regarded as blasphemy, even though it should be spoken with the highest professed respect for Moses. That the Mosaic institutions were to be changed, and give place to another and a better dispensation, all the Christian teachers would affirm; but this was not said with a design to blaspheme or revile Moses. "In the view of the Jews," to say that was to speak blasphemy; and hence, instead of reporting what he actually "did" say, they accused him of "saying" what "they" regarded as blasphemy. If reports are made of what people say, their very "words" should be reported; and we should not report our inferences or impressions as what they said.

And against God - God was justly regarded by the Jews as the giver of theft law and the author of their institutions. But the Jews, either willfully or involuntarily, not knowing that they were a shadow of good things to come, and were therefore to pass away, regarded all intimations of such a change as blasphemy against God. God had a right to change or abolish those ceremonial observances, and it was "not" blasphemy in Stephen to declare it.

Verse 12

And they stirred up the people - They "excited" the people, or alarmed their fears, as had been done before when they sought to put the Lord Jesus to death, Matthew 27:20.

The elders - The members of the Sanhedrin, or Great Council.

Scribes - See the notes on Matthew 2:4.

To the council - To the Sanhedrin, or the Great Council of the nation, which claimed jurisdiction in the matters of religion. See the notes on Matthew 2:4.

Verse 13

And set up false witnesses - It has been made a question why these persons are called "false" witnesses, since it is supposed by many that they reported merely the "words" of Stephen. It may be replied that if they did report merely his "words"; if Stephen had actually said what they affirmed, yet they perverted his meaning. They accused him of "blasphemy"; that is, of calumnious and reproachful words against Moses and against God That Stephen had spoken in such a manner, or had designed to "reproach" Moses, there is no evidence. What was said in the mildest manner, and in the way of cool argument, might easily be perverted so as in "their view" to amount to blasphemy. But there is no evidence whatever that Stephen had

ever used these words on any occasion, and it is altogether improbable that he ever did, for the following reasons:

(1)Jesus himself never affirmed that he would destroy that place. He uniformly taught that it would be done by the "Gentiles," Acts 10:14, etc.; Acts 11:2, etc.; Acts 15:20; Acts 21:20, etc. The probability therefore is, that the whole testimony was "false," and was artfully invented to produce the utmost exasperation among the people, and yet was at the same time so plausible as to be easily believed. For on this point the Jews were particularly sensitive; and it is clear that they had some expectations that the Messiah would produce some such changes. Compare Matthew 26:61 with Daniel 9:26-27. The same charge was afterward brought against Paul, which he promptly denied. See Acts 25:8.

This holy place - The temple.

The law - The Law of Moses.

Verse 14

Shall change - Shall abolish them, or shall introduce others in their place.

The customs - The ceremonial rites and observances of sacrifices, festivals, etc., appointed by Moses.

Verse 15

Looking stedfastly on him - Fixing the eyes intently on him. They were probably attracted by the unusual appearance of the man, his meekness, his calm and collected fearlessness, and the proofs of conscious innocence and sincerity.

The face of an angel - This expression is one evidently denoting that he manifested evidence of sincerity, gravity, fearlessness, confidence in God. It is used in the Old Testament to denote special wisdom, 2 Samuel 14:17; 2 Samuel 19:27. In Genesis 33:10, it is used to denote special majesty and glory, as if it were the face of God. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, it is said that the skin of his face shone so that the children of Israel were afraid to come near him, Exodus 34:29-30; 2 Corinthians 3:7, 2 Corinthians 3:13. Compare Revelation 1:16; Matthew 17:2. The expression is used to denote the impression produced on the countenance by communion with God; the calm serenity and composure which follow a confident committing of all into his hands. It is not meant that there was anything "miraculous" in the case of Stephen, but it is language that denotes calmness, dignity, and confidence in God, all of which were so marked on

his countenance that it impressed them with clear proofs of his innocence and piety. The language is very common in the Jewish writings. It is not unusual for deep feeling, sincerity, and confidence in God, to impress themselves on the countenance. Any deep emotion will do this; and it is to be expected with religious feeling, the most tender and solemn of all feeling, will diffuse seriousness, serenity, calmness, and peace not affected sanctimoniousness, over the countenance.

In this chapter we have another specimen of the manner in which the church of the Lord Jesus was established. It was from the beginning amidst scenes of persecution, encountering opposition adapted to try the nature and power of religion. If Christianity was an imposture, it had enemies acute and malignant enough to detect the imposition. The learned, the cunning, and the mighty rose up in opposition, and by all the arts of sophistry, all the force of authority, and all the fearfulness of power, attempted to destroy it in the commencement. Yet it lived; it gained new accessions of strength from every new form of opposition; it evinced its genuineness more and more by showing that it was superior to the arts and malice of earth and of hell.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Introduction

This chapter Acts 7:53-54, and it is therefore difficult to state fully what the design of Stephen was. It seems clear, however, that he intended to convict them of guilt, by showing that they sustained the same character as their forefathers had manifested Acts 7:51-52; and there is some probability that he intended to show that the acceptable worship of God was not to be confined to any place particularly, from the fact that the worship of Abraham, and the patriarchs, and Moses, was acceptable before the temple was raised (Acts 7:2, etc.), and from the declaration in Acts 7:48, that God does not dwell in temples made with hands. All that can be said here is:

(1)That Stephen showed his full belief in the divine appointment of Moses and the historical facts of their religion;

(2)That he laid "the foundation" of an argument to show that those things were not perpetually binding, and that acceptable worship might be offered in other places and in another manner than at the temple.

It has been asked in what way Luke became acquainted with this speech so as to repeat it. The Scripture has not informed us. But we may remark:

(1) That Stephen was the first martyr. His death and the incidents connected with it could not but be a matter of interest to the first Christians, and the substance of his defense, at least, would be familiar to the disciples. There is no improbability in supposing that imperfect copies might be preserved by writing, and circulated among them.

(2) Luke was the companion of Paul. (See the introduction to the Gospel by Luke.) Paul was present when this defense was delivered, and was a man who would be likely to remember what was said on such an occasion. From him Luke might have derived the account of this defense. In regard to this discourse, it may be further remarked, that it is not necessary to suppose that Stephen was inspired. Even if there should be found inaccuracies, as some critics have pretended, in the address, it would not militate against its genuineness. It is the defense of a man on trial under a serious charge; not a man of whom there is evidence that he was "inspired," but a pious, devoted, heavenly-minded man. All that the sacred narrative is responsible for is the correctness of the report. Luke alleges only that such a speech was in fact delivered, without affirming that every particular in it is correct.

Verse 1

Then said the high priest - See the notes on Matthew 2:4. In this case the high priest seems to have presided in the council.

Are these things so? - To wit, the charge alleged against him of blasphemy against Moses and the temple, Acts 6:13-14.

Verse 2

Men, brethren, and fathers - These were the usual titles by which the Sanhedrin was addressed. In all this Stephen was perfectly respectful, and showed that he was disposed to render due honor to the institutions of the nation.

The God of glory - This is a Hebrew form of expression denoting "the glorious God." It properly denotes His "majesty, or splendor, or magnificence"; and the word "glory" is often applied to the splendid appearances in which God has manifested Himself to people, Deuteronomy 5:24; Exodus 33:18; Exodus 16:7, Exodus 16:10; Leviticus 9:23; Numbers 14:10. Perhaps Stephen meant to affirm that God appeared to Abraham in some such glorious or splendid manifestation, by which he would know that he was addressed by God. Stephen, moreover, evidently uses the word "glory" to repel the charge of "blasphemy" against God, and to show that he regarded him as worthy of honor and praise.

Appeared … - In what manner he appeared is not said. In Genesis 12:1, it is simply recorded that God "had said" unto Abraham, etc.

Unto our father - The Jews valued themselves much on being the children of Abraham. See the notes on Matthew 3:9. The expression was therefore well calculated to conciliate their minds.

When he was in Mesopotamia - In Genesis 11:31, it is said that Abraham dwelt "in Ur of the Chaldees." The word "Mesopotamia" properly denotes the region between the two rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris. See notes on Acts 2:9. The name is Greek, and the region had also other names before the Greek name was given to it. In Genesis 11:31; Genesis 15:7, it is called Ur of the Chaldees. Mesopotamia and Chaldea might not exactly coincide; but it is evident that Stephen meant to say that "Ur" was in the country afterward called Mesopotamia. Its precise situation is unknown. A Persian fortress of this name is mentioned by Ammianus Genesis 25:8 between Nisibis and the Tigris.

Before he dwelt in Charran - From Genesis 11:31, it would seem that Terah took his son Abraham of his own accord, and removed to Haran. But from Genesis 12:1; Genesis 15:7, it appears that God had commanded "Abraham" to remove, and so he ordered it in his providence that "Terah" was disposed to remove his family with an intention of going into the land of Canaan. The word "Charran" is the Greek form of the Hebrew "Haran," Genesis 11:31. This place was also in Mesopotamia, in 36 degrees 52 minutes north latitude and 39 degrees 5 minutes east longitude. Here Terah died Genesis 11:32; and to this place Jacob retired when he fled from his brother Esau, Genesis 27:43. It is situated "in a flat and sandy plain, and is inhabited by a few wandering Arabs, who select it for the delicious water which it contains" (Robinson's Calmet).

Verse 3

And said unto him - How long this was said before he went is not recorded. Moses simply says that God had commanded him to go, Genesis 12:1.

Thy kindred - Thy relatives, or family connections. It seems that "Terah" went with him as far as to Haran; but Abraham was apprised that he was to leave his family and to go almost alone.

Into the land … - The country was yet unknown. The place was to be shown him. This is presented in the New Testament as a strong instance of faith, Hebrews 11:8-9. It was an act of "simple confidence" in God. And to leave his country and home; to go into a land of strangers, not knowing whither he went, required strong confidence in God. It is a simple illustration of what man is always required to do at the command of God. Thus, the gospel requires him to commit all to God; to yield body and soul to his disposal; to be ready at his command to forsake father, and mother, and friends, and houses, and lands, for the sake of the Lord Jesus, Luke 14:33; Matthew 19:27, Matthew 19:29. The trials which Abraham might have anticipated may be readily conceived. He was going, in a rude and barbarous age of the world, into a land of strangers. He was without arms or armies, and almost alone. He did not even know the nature or situation of the land, or the character of its inhabitants.

He had no title to it; no claim to urge; and he went depending on the simple promise of God that he would give it to him. He went, therefore, trusting simply to the promise of God. Thus, his conduct illustrated precisely what we are to do in reference to all our coming life, and to the

eternity before us: We are to trust simply to the promise of God, and do what he requires. This is faith. In Abraham it was as simple and intelligible an operation of mind as ever occurs in any instance. Nor is faith in the Scriptures regarded as more mysterious than any other mental operation. If Abraham had seen all that was to result from his going into that land, it would have been a sufficient reason to induce him to do as he did. But God saw it; and Abraham was required to act just as if he had seen it all, and all the reasons why he was called. Upon the strength of God‘s promises, Abraham was called to act. This was faith. It did not require him to act where there was “no reason” for his so acting, but where he did not see the reason. So in all cases of faith. If man could see all that God sees, he would perceive reasons for acting as God requires. But the reasons of things are often concealed, and man is required to act on the belief that God sees reasons why he should so act. To act under the proper impression of that truth which God presents is faith; as simple and intelligible as any other act or operation of the mind. See the notes on Mark 16:16.

Verse 4

Land of the Chaldeans - From Ur of the Chaldees, Genesis 11:31.

When his father was dead - This passage has given rise to no small difficulty in the interpretation. The difficulty is this: From Genesis 11:26, it would seem that Abraham was born when Terah was 70 years of age. “And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.” From Genesis 12:4, it seems that Abraham was 75 years of age when he departed from Haran to Canaan. The age of Terah was therefore but 145 years. Yet in Genesis 11:32, it is said that Terah was 205 old when he died, thus leaving 60 years of Terah‘s life beyond the time when Abraham left Haran. Various modes have been proposed of explaining this difficulty:

(1) Errors in “numbers” are more likely to occur than any other. In the “Samaritan” copy of the Pentateuch, it is said that Terah died in Haran at the age of 105 years, which would suppose that his death occurred 40 years before Abraham left Haran. But the Hebrew, Latin, Vulgate, Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic read it as 205 years.

(2) it is not affirmed that Abraham was born just at the time when Terah was 70 years of age. All that the passage in Genesis 11:26 proves, according to the usual meaning of similar expressions, is, that Terah was 70 years old

before he had any sons, and that the three were born subsequently to that. But which was born first or what intervals intervened between their birth does not appear. Assuredly, it does not mean that all were born precisely at the time when Terah was 70 years of age. Neither does it appear that Abraham was the oldest of the three. The sons of Noah are said to have been Shem, Ham, and Japheth Genesis 5:32; yet Japheth, though mentioned last, was the oldest, Genesis 10:21. As Abraham afterward became much the most distinguished, and as he was the father of the Jewish people, of whom Moses was writing, it was natural that he should be mentioned first if it cannot be proveD that Abraham was the oldest, as assuredly it cannot be, then there is no improbability in supposing that his birth might have occurred many years after Terah was 70 years of age.

(3) the Jews unanimously affirm that Terah relapsed into idolatry before Abraham left Haran; and this they denominate "death," or a moral death (Kuinoel). It is certain, therefore, that, from some cause, they were accustomed to speak of Terah as "dead" before Abraham left him. Stephen only used language which was customary among the Jews, and would employ it, doubtless, correctly, though we may not be able to see precisely how it can be reconciled with the account in Genesis.

Verse 5

And he gave him none inheritance - Abraham led a wandering life; and this passage means that he did not himself receive a permanent possession or residence in that land. The only land which he owned was the field which he "purchased" of the children of Heth for a burial place, Deuteronomy 2:5.

Would give it to him - Genesis 13:15. Abraham did not himself possess all that land; and the promise is evidently equivalent to saying that it would be conferred on the family of Abraham, or the family of which he was the father, without affirming that "he" would himself personally possess it. It is true, however, that Abraham himself afterward dwelt many years in that land as his home, Genesis 15:2-3; Genesis 18:11-12. This is mentioned as a strong instance of his faith; "who against hope believed in hope," Romans 4:18.

Verse 6

And God spake on this wise - In this manner, Genesis 15:13-14.

His seed - His posterity; his descendants.

Should sojourn - This means that they would have a "temporary residence there." The word is used in opposition to a fixed, permanent home, and is applied to travelers, or foreigners.

In a strange land - In the Hebrew Genesis 15:13, "Shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs." The land of Canaan and the land of Egypt were strange lands to them, though the obvious reference here is to the latter.

Should bring them into bondage - Or, would make them slaves, Exodus 1:11.

And entreat them evil - Would oppress or afflict them.

Four hundred years - This is the precise time which is mentioned by Moses, Genesis 15:13. Great perplexity has been experienced in explaining this passage, or reconciling it with other statements. In Exodus 12:40, it is said that their sojourning in Egypt was 430 years. Josephus (*Antiq.*, book 2, chapter 9, section 1) also says that the time in which they were in Egypt was 400 years; though in another place (*Antiq.*, book 2, chapter 15, section 2) he says that they left Egypt f 430 years after their forefather, Abraham, came to Canaan, but 215 years after Jacob removed to Egypt. Paul also Galatians 3:17 says that it was 430 years from the time when the promise was given to Abraham to the time when the Law was given on Mount Sinai. The Samaritan Pentateuch also says Exodus 12:40 that the "dwelling of the sons of Israel, and of their fathers, which they dwelt "in the land of Canaan," and in the land of Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years."

The same is the version of the Septuagint. "A part" of this perplexity is removed by the fact that Stephen and Moses use, in accordance with a very common custom, "round numbers" in speaking of it, and thus speak of 400 years when the literal time was 430. The other perplexities are not so easily removed. From the account which Moses has given of the lives of certain persons, it would seem clear that the time which they spent in "Egypt" was not 400 years. From Genesis 46:8, Genesis 46:11, it appears that "Kohath" was born when Jacob went into Egypt. He lived 133 years, Exodus 6:18. Amram, his son, and the father of Moses lived 137 years, Exodus 6:20. Moses was 80 years old when he was sent to Pharaoh, Exodus 7:7. The whole time thus mentioned, including the time in which the father lived after his son was born, was only 350 years. Exclusive of that, it is reasonable to suppose that the actual time of their being in Egypt could not have been but about 200 years, according to one account of Josephus. The

question then is, how can these accounts be reconciled? The only satisfactory way is by supposing that the 430 years includes the whole time from the calling of Abraham to the departure from Egypt. And that this was the fact is probable from the following circumstances:

(1)The purpose of all the narratives on this subject is to trace the period before they became finally settled in the land of Canaan. During all this period from the calling of Abraham, they were in a wandering, unfixed situation. This constituted substantially one period, including all their oppressions, hardships, and dangers; and it was natural to have reference to this "entire" period in any account which was given.

(2)all this period was properly the period of "promise," not of "possession." In this respect the wanderings of Abraham and the oppressions of Egypt came under the same general description.

(3)Abraham was himself occasionally in Egypt. He was unsettled; and since Egypt was so pre-eminent in all their troubles, it was natural to speak of all their oppressions as having occurred in that country. The phrase "residence in Egypt," or "in a strange land," would come to be synonymous, and would denote all their oppressions and trials. They would speak of their sufferings as having been endured in Egypt, because their afflictions there were so much more prominent than before.

(4)all this receives countenance from the version of the Septuagint, and from the Samaritan text, showing the manner in which the ancient Jews were accustomed to understand it.

(5)it should be added, that difficulties of chronology are more likely to occur than any others; and it should not be deemed strange if there are perplexities of this kind found in ancient writings which we cannot explain. It is so in all ancient records; and all that is usually expected in relation to such difficulties is that we should be able to present a "probable" explanation.

Verse 7

And the nation … - Referring particularly to the Egyptians.

Will I judge - The word "judge," in the Bible, often means to "execute judgment" as well as to pronounce it; that is, "to punish." See John 18:31;

John 3:17; John 8:50; John 12:47; Acts 24:6; 1 Corinthians 5:13, etc. It has this meaning here. God regarded their oppressive acts as deserving His indignation, and He evinced it in the plagues with which He visited upon them, and in their overthrow at the Red Sea.

Shall serve me - Shall worship me, or be regarded as my people.

In this place - That is, in the place where God made this promise to Abraham. These words are not found in Genesis, but similar words are found in Exodus 3:12, and it was a practice, in making quotations, to quote the sense only, or to connect two or more promises having relation to the same thing.

Verse 8

And he gave him - That is, God appointed or commanded this, Genesis 17:9-13.

The covenant - The word "covenant" denotes properly "a compact or agreement between two or more persons," usually attended with seals, pledges, or sanctions. In Genesis 17:7, and elsewhere, it is said that God would establish his "covenant" with Abraham; that is, he made him certain definite promises, attended with pledges and seals, etc. The idea of a strict "compact" or "agreement" between God and man, as between "equal parties"; is not found in the Bible. The word is commonly used, as here, to denote "a promise on the part of God," attended with pledges, and demanding, on the part of man, in order to avail himself of its benefits, a specified course of conduct. The "covenant" is therefore another name for denoting two things on the part of God:

(1)A "command," which man is not at liberty to reject, as he would be if it were a literal covenant; and,

(2)A "promise," which is to be fulfilled only on the condition of obedience. The covenant with Abraham was simply a "promise" to give him the land, and to make him a great nation, etc. It was never proposed to Abraham with the supposition that he was at liberty to reject it, or to refuse to comply with its conditions. Circumcision was appointed as the mark or indication that Abraham and those thus designated were the persons included in the gracious purpose and promise. It served to separate them as a special people; a people whose unique characteristic it was that they obeyed and served the God who had made the promise to Abraham. The phrase "covenant of circumcision" means, therefore, the covenant or

promise which God made to Abraham, of which circumcision was the distinguishing "mark" or "sign."

The twelve patriarchs - The word "patriarch" properly denotes "the father and ruler of a family." But it is commonly applied, by way of eminence, to "the progenitors" of the Jewish race, particularly to "the twelve sons of Jacob." See the notes on Acts 2:29.

Verse 9

Moved with envy - That is, dissatisfied with the favor which their father Jacob showed Joseph, and envious at the dreams which indicated that he was to be raised to remarkable honor above his parents and brethren, Genesis 37:3-11.

Sold Joseph into Egypt - Sold him, that he might be taken to Egypt. This was done at the suggestion of "Judah," who advised it that Joseph might not be put to death by his brethren, Genesis 37:28. It is possible that Stephen, by this fact, might have designed to prepare the way for a severe rebuke of the Jews for having dealt in a similar manner with their Messiah.

But God was with him - God protected him, and overruled all these wicked doings, so that he was raised to extraordinary honors.

Verse 10

And delivered him … - That is, restored him to liberty from his servitude and humiliation, and raised him up to high honors and offices in Egypt.

Favour and wisdom - The favor was the result of his wisdom. His wisdom was particularly evinced in interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh, Genesis 41:40.

All his house - All the family, or all the court and government of the nation.

Verse 11

Now there came a dearth - A famine, Genesis 41:54.

And Chanaan - Jacob was living at that time in Canaan.

Found no sustenance - No food; no means of living.

Verse 12

Was corn in Egypt - The word "corn" here rather denotes "wheat." See the notes on Matthew 12:1.

Our fathers - His ten sons; all his sons except Joseph and Benjamin, Genesis 42: Stephen here "refers" only to the history, without entering into

details. By this general reference he sufficiently showed that he believed what Moses had spoken, and did not intend to show him disrespect.

Verse 13

Joseph was made known - Genesis 45:4.

Joseph's kindred … - His relatives; his family, Genesis 45:16.

Verse 14

All his kindred - His father and family, Genesis 45:17-28; 46:1-26.

Threescore and fifteen souls - Seventy-five persons. There has been much perplexity felt in the explanation of this passage. In Genesis 46:26, Exodus 1:5, and Deuteronomy 10:22, it is expressly said that the number which went down to Egypt consisted of 70 persons. The question is, in what way these accounts can be reconciled? It is evident that Stephen has followed the account which is given by the Septuagint. In Genesis 46:27, that version reads, "But the sons of Joseph who were with him in Egypt were nine souls; all the souls of the house of Jacob which came with Jacob into Egypt were seventy-five souls." This number is made out by adding these nine souls to the 66 mentioned in Genesis 46:26. The difference between the Septuagint and Moses is, that the former mentions five descendants of Joseph who are not recorded by the latter. The "names" of the sons of Ephraim and Manasseh are recorded in 1 Chronicles 7:14-21. Their names were Ashriel, Machir, Zelophehad, Peresh, sons of Manasseh; and Shuthelah, son of Ephraim. Why the Septuagint inserted these, it may not be easy to see. But such was evidently the fact; and the fact accords accurately with the historic record, though Moses did not insert their names. The solution of difficulties in regard to chronology is always difficult; and what might be entirely apparent to a Jew in the time of Stephen, may be wholly inexplicable to us.

Verse 15-16

And died - Genesis 49:33.

He and our fathers - The time which the Israelites remained in Egypt was 215 years, so that all the sons of Jacob were deceased before the Jews went out to go to the land of Canaan.

And were carried over - Jacob himself was buried in the field of Macpelah by Joseph and his brethren, Joshua 24:32; compare Genesis 50:25. No mention is made in the Old Testament of their carrying the bones of any of the other patriarchs, but the thing is highly probable in itself. If the descendants of Joseph carried his bones, it would naturally occur to them to

take also the bones of each of the patriarchs, and give them an honorable sepulchre together in the land of promise. Josephus (*Antiq.*, book 2, chapter 8, section 2) says that "the posterity and sons of these men (of the brethren of Joseph), after some time, carried their bodies and buried them in Hebron; but as to the bones of Joseph, they carried them into the land of Canaan afterward, when the Hebrews went out of Egypt." This is in accordance with the common opinion of the Jewish writers, that they were buried in Hebron. Yet the tradition is not uniform. Some of the Jews affirm that they were buried in Sychem (Kuinoel). As the Scriptures do not anywhere deny that the patriarchs were buried in Sychem, it cannot be proved that Stephen was in error. There is one circumstance of strong probability to show that he was correct. At the time when this defense was delivered, "Sychem" was in the hands of the Samaritans, between whom and the Jews there was a violent hostility. Of course, the Jews would not be willing to concede that the Samaritans had the bones of their ancestors, and hence, perhaps the opinion had been maintained that they were buried in Hebron.

Into Sychem - This was a town or village near to Samaria. It was called Sichar (see the notes on John 4:5), "Shechem," and "Sychem." It is now called "Naplous" or "Napolose," and is ten miles from Shiloh, and about forty from Jerusalem, toward the north.

That Abraham bought - The word "Abraham" here has given rise to considerable perplexity, and it is now pretty generally conceded that it is a mistake. It is certain, from Genesis 33:19 and Joshua 24:32, that this piece of land was bought, not by Abraham, but by "Jacob," of the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. The land which "Abraham" purchased was the cave of Macpelah, of the sons of Heth, in Hebron, Genesis 33:19, "the children of Hamor" - but different ways of rendering the same word.

Verse 17

The time of the promise - The time of the "fulfillment" of the promise.

The people grew … - Exodus 1:7-9.

Verse 18

Till another king arose - This is quoted from Exodus 1:8. What was the "name" of this king is not certainly known. The "common" name of all the kings of Egypt was "Pharaoh," as "Caesar" became the common name of the emperors of Rome after the time of Julius Caesar: thus we say, Augustus Caesar, Tiberius Caesar, etc. It has commonly been supposed to have been the celebrated Rameses, the sixth king of the eighteenth dynasty, and the

event is supposed to have occurred about 1559 years before the Christian era. M. Champollion supposes that his name was Mandonei, whose reign commenced in 1585 b.c., and ended 1565 years before Christ (Essay on the Hieroglyphic System, p. 94,95). Sir Jas. G. Wilkinson supposes that it was Amosis, or Ames, the "first" king of the eighteenth dynasty (Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians, vol. 1, pp. 42,2nd ed.). "The present knowledge of Egyptian history is too imperfect to enable us to determine this point" (Prof. Hackett).

Which knew not Joseph - It can hardly be supposed that he would be ignorant of the name and deeds of Joseph; and this expression, therefore, probably means that he did not favour the designs of Joseph; he did not remember the benefits which he had conferred on the nation; or furnish the patronage for the kindred of Joseph which had been secured for them by Joseph under a former reign. National ingratitude has not been uncommon in the world, and a change of dynasty has often obliterated all memory of former obligations and compacts.

Verse 19

Dealt subtilly - He acted deceitfully; he used fraud. The cunning or deceitful attempt which is referred to, is his endeavour to weaken and destroy the Jewish people by causing their male children to be put to death, Exodus 1:22.

Our kindred - Our nation, or our ancestors.

And evil-entreated - Was unjust and cruel toward them.

So that … - For that purpose, or to "cause" them to cast them out. He dealt with them in this cruel manner, hoping that the Israelites themselves would destroy their own sons, that they might not grow up to experience the same sufferings as their fathers had. The cunning or subtilty of Pharaoh extended to everything that he did to oppress, to keep under, and to destroy the children of Israel.

Verse 20

In which time … - During this period of oppression. See Exodus 2:2, etc.

Was exceeding fair - Greek: "was fair to God"; properly rendered, "was very handsome." The word "God" in the Greek here in accordance with the Hebrew usage, by which anything that is "very handsome, lofty, or grand" is thus designated. Thus, Psalm 36:7, "mountains of God," mean lofty mountains; Psalm 80:11, "cedars of God," mean lofty, beautiful cedars.

Thus, Nineveh is called "a great city to God" (Jonah 3:3, Greek), meaning a very great city. The expression here simply means that Moses was "very fair," or handsome. Compare Hebrews 11:23, where he is called "a proper child"; that is, a "handsome child." It would seem from this that Moses was preserved by his mother on account of his "beauty"; and this is hinted at in Exodus 2:2. And it would also seem from this that Pharaoh had succeeded by his oppressions in what he had attempted; and that it was not unusual for parents among the Jews to expose their children, or to put them to death.

Verse 21

Was cast out - When he was exposed on the banks of the Nile, Exodus 2:3.

And nourished him - Adopted him, and treated him as her own son, Exodus 2:10. It is implied in this that he was educated by her. An adopted son in the family of Pharaoh would be favored with all the advantages which the land could furnish for an education.

Verse 22

Moses was learned - Or, was "instructed." It does not mean that he had that learning, but that he was carefully "trained" or educated in that wisdom. The passage does not express the fact that Moses was distinguished for "learning," but that he was carefully "educated," or that pains were taken to make him learned.

In all the wisdom … - The learning of the Egyptians was confined chiefly to astrology, to the interpretation of dreams, to medicine, to mathematics, and to their sacred science or traditionary doctrines about religion, which were concealed chiefly under their hieroglyphics. Their learning is not infrequently spoken of in the Scriptures, 1 Kings 4:30; compare Isaiah 19:11-12. Their knowledge is equally celebrated in the pagan world. It is known that science was carried from Egypt to Phoenicia, and thence to Greece; and not a few of the Grecian philosophers traveled to Egypt in pursuit of knowledge. Herodotus himself frankly concedes that the Greeks derived very much of their knowledge from Egypt. (See Rawlinson's Herodotus, vol. 2, pp. 80,81; Herodotus, bk. 2, pp. 50,51.)

And was mighty - Was powerful, or was distinguished. This means that he was eminent in Egypt before he conducted the children of Israel forth. It refers to his addresses to Pharaoh, and to the miracles which he performed "before" their departure.

In words - From Exodus 4:10, it seems that Moses was "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." When it is said that he was mighty in words, it means that he was mighty in his communications to Pharaoh, though they were spoken by his brother Aaron. Aaron was in his place, and "Moses" addressed Pharaoh through him, who was appointed to deliver the message, Exodus 4:11-16.

Deeds - Miracles, Exodus 7, etc.

Verse 23

Full forty years old - This is not recorded in the Old Testament; but it is a constant tradition of the Jews that Moses was 40 years of age when he undertook to deliver them. Thus, it is said, "Moses lived in the palace of Pharaoh forty years; he was forty years in Midian; and he ministered to Israel forty years" (Kuinoel).

To visit … - Probably with a view of delivering them from their oppressive bondage. Compare Acts 7:25.

Verse 24

Suffer wrong - The wrong or injury was, that the Egyptian was smiting the Hebrew, Exodus 2:11-12.

Smote the Egyptian - He slew him, and buried him in the sand,

Verse 25

For he supposed - This is not mentioned by Moses; but it is not at all improbable. When they saw him "alone" contending with the Egyptian; when it was understood that he had come and taken vengeance on one of their oppressors, it might have been presumed that he regarded himself as directed by God to interpose, and save the people.

Verse 26

And the next day - Exodus 2:13.

He showed himself - He appeared in a sudden and unexpected manner to them.

Unto them - That is, to "two" of the Hebrews, Exodus 2:13.

As they strove - As they were engaged in a quarrel.

Have set them at one - Greek: "would have urged them to peace." This he did by remonstrating with the man that did the wrong.

Saying - What follows is not quoted literally from the account which Moses gives, but it is substantially the same.

Sirs - Greek: "Men."

Ye are brethren - You belong not only to the same nation, but you are brethren and companions in affliction, and should not, therefore, contend with each other. One of the most melancholy scenes in the world is that, where those who are poor, and afflicted, and oppressed, add to all their other calamities altercations and strifes among themselves. Yet it is from this class that contentions and lawsuits usually arise. The address which Moses here makes to the contending Jews might be applied to the whole human family in view of the contentions and wars of nations: "Ye are "brethren," members of the same great family, and why do you contend with each other?"

Verse 27

But he that did … - Intent on his purpose, filled with rage and passion, he rejected all interference, and all attempts at peace. It is usually the man that does the injury that is unwilling to be reconciled; and when we find a man that regards the entreaties of his friends as improper interference, when he becomes increasingly angry when we exhort him to peace, it is usually a strong evidence that he is conscious that he has been at fault. If we wish to reconcile parties, we should go first to the man that has been injured. In the controversy between God and man, it is the "sinner" who has done the wrong that is unwilling to be reconciled, and not God.

His neighbour - The Jew with whom he was contending.

Who made thee … - What right have you to interfere in this matter? The usual salutation with which a man is greeted who attempts to prevent quarrels.

Verse 28

Wilt thou kill me … - How it was known that he had killed the Egyptian does not appear. It was probably communicated by the man who was rescued from the hands of the Egyptian, Exodus 2:11-12.

Verse 29

Then fled Moses … - Moses fled because he now ascertained that what he had done was known. He supposed that it had been unobserved, Exodus 2:12. But he now thought that the knowledge of it might reach Pharaoh, and that his life might thus be endangered. Nor did he judge incorrectly; for as soon as Pharaoh heard of it, he sought to take his life, Exodus 2:15.

Was a stranger - Or became a sojourner πάροικος paroikosone who had a temporary abode in the land. The use of this word implies that he did not expect to make that his permanent dwelling.

In the land of Madian - This was a part of Arabia. "This would seem," says Gesenius, "to have been a tract of country extending from the eastern shore of the Elanitic Gulf to the region of Moab on the one hand, and to the vicinity of Mount Sinai on the, other. The people were nomadic in their habits, and moved often from place to place." This was extensively a desert region, an unknown land; and Moses expected there to be safe from Pharaoh.

Where he begat two sons - He married Zipporah, the daughter of "Reuel" Exodus 2:18, or "Jethro" Numbers 10:29; Exodus 3:1, a "priest" of Midian. The names of the two sons were Gershom and Eliezer, Exodus 18:3-4.

Verse 30

And when forty years … - At the age of 80 years. This, however, was known by tradition. It is not expressly mentioned by Moses. It is said, however, to have been after the king of Egypt had died Exodus 2:23; and the tradition is not improbable.

In the wilderness of mount Sina - In the desert adjacent to, or that surrounded Mount Sinai. In Exodus 3:1, it is said that this occurred at Mount "Horeb." But there is no contradiction; Horeb and Sinai are different peaks or elevations of the same mountain. They are represented as springing from the same base, and branching out in different elevations. The mountains, according to Burckhardt, are a prodigious pile, comprehending many peaks, and about thirty miles in diameter. From one part of this mountain, Sinai, the Law was given to the children of Israel.

An angel of the Lord - The word "angel" means properly a "messenger" (see the notes on Matthew 1:20), and is applied to the invisible spirits in heaven, to people, to the winds, to the pestilence, or to whatever is appointed as a messenger "to make known" or to execute the will of God. The mere "name," therefore, can determine nothing about the "nature" of the messenger. That "name" might be applied to any messenger, even an inanimate object. The nature and character of this messenger are to be determined by other considerations. The word may denote that the "bush on fire" was the messenger. But a comparison with the other places where this occurs will show that it was a celestial messenger, and perhaps that it was the Messiah who was yet to come, appearing to take the people of Israel under his own charge and direction. Compare John 1:11, where the Jews are called "his own." In Exodus 3:2, it is said that the angel of the Lord

appeared in a flame of fire; in Exodus 3:4 it is said that Yahweh spake to him out of the midst of the bush; language which implies that God was there, and which is strongly expressive of the doctrine that the angel was Yahweh. In Exodus 23:20-21, God says, "I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey "his" voice," etc., Exodus 23:23; Exodus 32:34; Exodus 33:2. In all these places this angel is mentioned as an extraordinary messenger sent to conduct them to the land of Canaan. He was to guide them, to defend them, and to drive out the nations before them. All these circumstances seem to point to the conclusion that this was no other than the future deliverer of the world, who came then to take his people under his own guidance, as emblematic of the redemption of his people.

In a flame of fire - That is, in what "appeared" to be a flame of fire. The "bush" or clump of trees seemed to be on fire, or to be illuminated with a special splendor. God is often represented as encompassed with this splendor, or glory, Luke 2:9; Matthew 17:1-5; Acts 9:3; Acts 12:7.

In a bush - In a grove, or clump of trees. Probably the light was seen issuing from the "midst" of such a grove.

Verse 31

He wondered … - What particularly attracted his attention was the fact that the bush was not consumed, Exodus 3:2-3.

The voice of the Lord - Yahweh spake to him from the midst of the bush. He did not see him. He merely heard a voice.

Verse 32

Saying, I am the God … - See this explained in the notes on Matthew 22:32.

Then Moses trembled - Exodus 3:6.

Verse 33

Then said the Lord … - In Exodus 3:5. To put off the shoes; or sandals, was an act of reverence. The ancients were especially not permitted to enter a temple or holy place with their shoes on. Indeed, it was customary for the Jews to remove their shoes whenever they entered any house as a mere matter of civility. Compare the notes on John 13:5. See Joshua 5:15. "The same custom, growing out of the same feeling," says Prof. Hackett (*Illustrations of Scripture*, pp. 74,75), "is observed among the Eastern nations at the present day. The Arabs and Turks never enter the mosques without putting off their shoes. They exact a compliance with this rule from

those of a different faith who visit these sacred places. Though, until a recent period, the Muslims excluded Christians entirely from the mosques, they now permit foreigners to enter some of them, provided they leave their shoes at the door, or exchange them for others which have not been defiled by common use.

"A Samaritan from Nablus, who conducted Mr. Robinson and Mr. Smith to the summit of Gerizim, when he came within a certain distance of the spot, took off his shoes, saying it was unlawful for his people to tread with shoes upon this ground, it being holy."

Is holy ground - Is rendered sacred by the symbol of the divine presence. We should enter the sanctuary, the place set apart for divine worship, not only with reverence in our hearts, but with every "external" indication of veneration. Solemn awe and deep seriousness become the place set apart to the service of God. Compare Ecclesiastes 5:1.

Verse 34

I have seen … - The repetition of this word is in accordance with the usage of the Hebrew writers when they wish to represent anything emphatically.

Their groaning - Under their oppressions.

Am come down - This is spoken in accordance with human conceptions. It means that God was about to deliver them.

I will send thee … - This is a mere summary of what is expressed at much greater length in Exodus 3:7-10.

Verse 35

Whom they refused - That is, when he first presented himself to them, Exodus 2:13-14. Stephen introduces and dwells upon this refusal in order, perhaps, to remind them that this had been the character of their nation, and to prepare the way for the charge which he intended to bring against those whom he addressed, as being stiff-necked and rebellious. See Acts 7:51-52, etc.

A ruler - A military leader, or a governor in civil matters.

A deliverer - A Redeemer - λυτρωτὴν lutrōtēnIt properly means one who redeems a captive or a prisoner by paying a "price" or "ransom." It is applied thus to the Lord Jesus, as having redeemed or purchased sinners by his blood as a price, Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18; Hebrews 9:12. It is used here, however, in a more "general" sense to denote "the deliverance," without

specifying the manner. Compare Exodus 6:6; Luke 24:21; Luke 1:68; Luke 2:38.

By the hand of the angel - Under the direction and by the "help" of the angel, Numbers 20:16. See on Acts 7:30.

Verse 36

Wonders and signs - Miracles, and remarkable interpositions of God. See the notes on Acts 2:22.

In the land of Egypt - By the ten plagues. Exodus 412.

In the Red sea - Dividing it, and conducting the Israelites in safety, and overthrowing the Egyptians, Exodus 14.

In the wilderness - During their forty years' journey to the promised land. The wonders or miracles were, providing them with manna daily; with flesh in a miraculous manner; with water from the rock, etc., Exodus 16; Exodus 17; etc.

Verse 37

Which said … - Deuteronomy 18:15, Deuteronomy 18:18. See this explained, Acts 3:22. Stephen introduced this to remind them of the promise of a Messiah; to show his faith in that promise; and "particularly" to remind them of their obligation to hear and obey him.

Verse 38

In the church - The word "church" means literally "the people called out," and is applied with great propriety to the assembly or multitude called out of Egypt, and separated from the world. It has not, however, of necessity our idea of a church, but means the "assembly," or people called out of Egypt and placed under the conduct of Moses.

With the angel - In this place there is undoubted reference to the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. Yet that was done by God himself, Acts 7:53; Hebrews 2:2. The essential idea is, that God did it by a messenger, or by mediators. The "character" and "rank" of the messengers, or of the "principal" messenger, must be learned by looking at all the circumstances of the case.

The lively oracles - See Romans 3:2. The word "oracles" here means "commands" or "laws" of God. The word "lively," or "living" ζῶντα zōntastands in opposition to what is dead, or useless, and means what is vigorous, efficacious; and in this place it means that the commands were of such a nature, and given in such circumstances, as to secure attention; to

produce obedience; to excite them to act for God - in opposition to laws which would fall powerless, and produce no effect.

Verse 39

Would not obey … - This refers to what they said of him when he was in the mount, Exodus 32:1, Exodus 32:23.

In their hearts turned … - They wished to return to Egypt. They regretted that they had come out of Egypt, and desired again the things which they had there, as preferable to what they had in the desert, Numbers 11:5. Perhaps, however, the expression means, not that they desired literally to "return" to Egypt, but that "their hearts inclined to the habits and morals of the Egyptians." They forsook God, and imitated the idolatries of the Egyptians.

Verse 40

Saying unto Aaron - Exodus 32:1.

Make us gods - That is, idols.

Verse 41

And they made a calf - This was made of the ear-rings and ornaments which they had brought from Egypt, Exodus 32:2-4. Stephen introduces this to remind them how prone the nation had been to reject God, and to walk in the ways of sin.

Verse 42

Then God turned - That is, turned away from them; abandoned them to their own desires.

The host of heaven - The stars, or heavenly bodies. The word "host" means "armies." It is applied to the heavenly bodies because they are very numerous, and appear to be "marshalled" or arrayed in military order. It is from this that God is called Yahweh "of hosts," as being the ruler of these well-arranged heavenly bodies. See the notes on Isaiah 1:9. The proof that they did this Stephen proceeds to allege by a question from the prophets.

In the book of the prophets - Amos 5:25-26. The twelve minor prophets were commonly written in one volume, and were called the Book of the Prophets; that is, the book containing these several prophecies, Daniel, Hosea, Micah, etc. They were small "tracts" separately, and were bound up together to preserve them from being lost. This passage is not quoted literally; it is evidently made from memory; and though in its main spirit it coincides with the passage in Amos, yet in some important respects it varies from it.

O ye house of Israel - Ye people of Israel.

Have ye offered … - That is, ye have not offered. The interrogative form is often an emphatic way of saying that the thing had "not" been done. But it is certain that the Jews did offer sacrifices to God in the wilderness, though it is also certain that they did not do it with a pure and upright heart. They kept up the form of worship generally, but they frequently forsook God, and offered worship to idols. through the continuous space of forty years they did "not" honor God, but often departed from him, and worshipped idols.

Verse 43

Yea, ye took up - That is, you bore, or you carried with you, for purposes of idolatrous worship.

The tabernacle - This word properly means a "tent"; but it is also applied to the small tent or house in which was contained the image of the god; the shrine, box, or tent in which the idol was placed. It is customary for idolatrous nations to bear their idols about with them, enclosed in cases or boxes of various sizes, usually very small, as their idols are commonly small. Probably they were made in the shape of small "temples" or tabernacles; and such appear to have been the "silver shrines" for Diana, made at Ephesus, Acts 19:24. These shrines, or images, were borne with them as a species of amulet, charm, or talisman to defend them from evil. Such images the Jews seem to have carried with them.

Moloch - This word comes from the Hebrew word signifying "king." This was a god of the Ammonites, to whom human sacrifices were offered. Moses in several places forbids the Israelites, under penalty of death, to dedicate their children to Moloch, by making them pass through the fire, Leviticus 18:21; Leviticus 20:2-5. There is great probability that the Hebrews were addicted to the worship of this deity after they entered the land of Canaan. Solomon built a temple to Moloch on the Mount of Olives 1 Kings 11:7; and Manasseh made his son pass through the fire in honor of this idol, 2 Kings 21:3, 2 Kings 21:6. The image of this idol was made of brass, and his arms extended so as to embrace anyone; and when they offered children to him, they heated the statue, and when it was burning hot, they placed the child in his arms, where it was soon destroyed by heat. It is not certain what this god was supposed to represent. Some suppose it was in honor of the planet Saturn; others, the sun; others, Mercury, Venus, etc. What particular god it was is not material. It was the most cutting reproof

that could be made to the Jews, that their fathers had been guilty of worshipping this idol.

And the star - The Hebrew in this place is, "Chiun your images, the star of your god." The expression used here leads us to suppose that this was a star which was worshipped, but what star it is not easy to ascertain; nor is it easy to determine why it is called both "Chiun" and "Remphan." Stephen quotes from the Septuagint translation. In that translation the word "Chiun" is rendered by the word "Raiphan," or "Rephan," easily changed into "Remphan." Why the authors of that version adopted this is not known. It was probably, however, from one of two causes:

(1) Either because the word "Chiun" in Hebrew meant the same as "Remphan" in the language of Egypt, where the translation was made; or,

(2) Because the "object" of worship called "Chiun" in Hebrew was called "Remphan" in the language of Egypt. It is generally agreed that the object of their worship was the planet "Saturn," or "Mars," both of which planets were worshipped as gods of evil influence. In Arabic, the word "Chevan" denotes the planet Saturn. Probably "Rephan," or "Remphan," is the Coptic name for the same planet, and the Septuagint adopted this because that translation was made in Egypt, where the Coptic language was spoken.

Figures which ye made - Images of the god which they made. See the article "Chiun" in Robinson's Calmet.

And I will carry you away … - This is simply expressing in few words what is stated at greater length in Amos 5:27. In Hebrew it is "Damascus"; but this evidently denotes the Eastern region, in which also Babylon was situated.

Verse 44

The tabernacle of witness - The "tent" or "tabernacle" which Moses was commanded to make. It was called a tabernacle of "witness," or of "testimony," because it was the visible witness or proof of God's presence with them; the evidence that he to whom it was devoted was their protector and guide. The name is given either to the "tent," to the two tables of stone, or to the ark; all of which were "witnesses," or "evidences" of God's relation to them as their Lawgiver and guide, Exodus 16:34; Exodus 25:16, Exodus 25:21; Exodus 27:21; Exodus 30:6, Exodus 30:36; Exodus 31:18, etc.; Numbers 1:50, Numbers 1:53. The two charges against Stephen were,

that he had spoken blasphemy against Moses or his Law, and against the temple, Acts 6:13-14. In the previous part of this defense he had shown his respect for Moses and his Law. He now proceeds to show that he did not design to speak with disrespect of the temple, or the holy places of their worship. He therefore expresses his belief in the divine appointment of both the tabernacle Acts 7:44-46 and of the temple Acts 7:47.

According to the fashion … - According to the pattern that was shown to him, by which it was to be made, Exodus 25:9, Exodus 25:40; Exodus 26:30. As God showed him "a pattern," it proved that the tabernacle had his sanction. Against that Stephen did not intend to speak.

Verse 45

Our fathers that came after - None of the generation that came out of Egypt were permitted to enter into the and of Canaan except Caleb and Joshua, Numbers 14:22-24; Numbers 32:11-12. Hence, it is said that their fathers who "came after," that is, after the generation when the tabernacle was built. The Greek, however, here means, properly, "which also our fathers, having "received," brought," etc. The sense is not materially different. Stephen means that it was not brought in by that generation, but by the next.

With Jesus - This should have been rendered "with Joshua." Jesus is the Greek mode of writing the name "Joshua." But the Hebrew name should by all means have been retained here, as also in Hebrews 4:8.

Into the possession of the Gentiles - Into the land possessed by the Gentiles, that is, into the promised land then occupied by the Canaanites, etc.

Whom God … - That is, he continued to drive them out until the time of David, when they were completely expelled. Or it may mean that the tabernacle was in the possession of the Jews, and was the appointed place of worship, until the time of David, who desired to build him a temple. The Greek is ambiguous. The "connection" favors the latter interpretation.

Verse 46

Who found favour … - That is, God granted him great prosperity, and delivered him from his enemies.

To find a tabernacle - To prepare a permanent dwelling-place for the "ark," and for the visible symbols of the divine presence. Hitherto the ark had been kept in the tabernacle, and had been borne about from place to

place. David sought to build a house that would be permanent, where the ark might be deposited, 1 Chronicles 22:7.

Verse 47

But Solomon … - Built the temple. David was not permitted to do it because he had been a man of war, 1 Chronicles 22:8. He prepared the principal materials for the temple, but Solomon built it, 1 Chronicles 22: Compare 1 Kings 6.

Verse 48

Howbeit - But. Stephen was charged with speaking against the temple. He had now shown that he had due veneration for it, by his declaring that it had been built by the command of God. But he "now" adds that God does not need such a temple. Heaven is his throne; the universe his dwelling-place; and "therefore" this temple might be destroyed. A new, glorious truth was to be revealed to mankind, that God was not "confined" in his worship to any age, or people, or nation. In entire consistency, therefore, with all proper respect for the temple at Jerusalem, it might be maintained that the time would come when that temple would be destroyed, and when God might be worshipped by all nations.

The Most High - God. This sentiment was expressed by Solomon when the temple was dedicated, 1 Kings 8:27.

As saith the prophet - Isaiah 66:1-2. The place is not literally quoted, but the sense is given.

Verse 49

Heaven is my throne - See the notes on Matthew 5:34.

Earth is my footstool - See the notes on Matthew 5:35.

What house … - What house or temple can be large or magnificent enough for the dwelling of Him who made all things?

The place of my rest - My home, my abode, my fixed seat or habitation. Compare Psalm 95:11.

Verse 51

Ye stiff-necked - The discourse of Stephen has every appearance of having been interrupted by the clamors and opposition of the Sanhedrin. This verse has no immediate connection with what precedes, and appears to have been spoken in the midst of opposition and clamor. If we may conjecture in this case, it would seem that the Jews saw the drift of his argument; that they interrupted him; and that when the tumult had somewhat subsided, he addressed them in the language of this verse,

showing them that they sustained a character precisely similar to their rebellious fathers. The word "stiff-necked" is often used in the Old Testament, Exodus 32:9; Exodus 33:3, Exodus 33:5; Exodus 34:9; Deuteronomy 9:6, Deuteronomy 9:13; Deuteronomy 10:16, etc. It is a figurative expression taken from oxen that are refractory, and that will not submit to be yoked. Applied to people, it means that they are stubborn, contumacious, and unwilling to submit to the restraints of Law.

Uncircumcised in heart - Circumcision was a sign of being a Jew - of acknowledging the authority of the laws of Moses. It was also emblematic of purity, and of submission to the Law of God. The expression "uncircumcised in heart" denotes those who were not willing to acknowledge that Law, and submit to it. They had hearts filled with vicious and unsubdued affections and desires.

And ears - That is, who are unwilling to "hear" what God says. Compare Leviticus 26:41; Jeremiah 9:26. See the notes on Romans 2:28-29.

Resist the Holy Ghost - You oppose the message which is brought to you by the authority of God and the inspiration of his Spirit. The message brought by Moses; by the prophets; by the Saviour; and by the apostles - all by the infallible direction of the Holy Spirit - they and their fathers opposed.

As your fathers did … - As he had specified in Acts 7:27, Acts 7:35, Acts 7:39-43.

Verse 52

Which of the prophets … - The interrogative form here is a strong mode of saying that they had persecuted "all" the prophets. It was "the characteristic of the nation" to persecute the messengers of God. This is not to be taken as literally and universally true; but it was a general truth; it was the national characteristic. See the notes on Matthew 21:33-40; Matthew 23:29-35.

And they have slain them … - That is, they have slain the prophets, whose main message was that the Messiah was to come. It was a great aggravation of their offence that they put to death the messengers which foretold the greatest blessing that the nation could receive.

The Just One - The Messiah. See the notes on Acts 3:14.

Of whom ye … - You thus show that you resemble those who rejected and put to death the prophets. You have even gone beyond them in guilt, because you have put the Messiah himself to death.

The betrayers - They are called "betrayers" here because they employed Judas to betray him - agreeable to the maxim in law, "He who does anything by another is held to have done it himself."

Verse 53

Who have received the law - The Law of Moses, given on Mount Sinai.

By the disposition of angels - There has been much diversity of opinion in regard to this phrase, εἰς διαταγὰς ἀγγέλων eis diatagas angelōnThe word translated "disposition" does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It properly means the "constituting" or "arranging" of an army; disposing it into ranks and proper divisions. Hence, it has been supposed to mean that the Law was given "amidst" the various ranks of angels, being present to witness its promulgation. Others suppose that the angels were employed as agents or instruments to communicate the Law. All that the expression fairly implies is the former; that the Law was given amidst the attending ranks of angels, as if they were summoned to witness the pomp and ceremony of giving "law" to an entire people, and through them to an entire world. It should be added, moreover, that the Jews applied the word "angels" to any messengers of God; to fire, and tempest, and wind, etc. And all that Stephen means here may be to express the common Jewish opinion that God was attended on this occasion by the heavenly hosts, and by the symbols of his presence, fire, and smoke, and tempest. Compare Psalm 104:4; Psalm 68:17. Other places declare that the Law was spoken by an angel, one eminent above all attending angels, the special messenger of God. See the notes on Acts 7:38. It is plain that Stephen spoke only the common sentiment of the Jews. Thus, Herod is introduced by Josephus (*Antiq.*, book 15, chapter 5, section 3) as saying, "We have learned in God the most excellent of our doctrines, and the most holy part of our Law by angels," etc. In the eyes of the Jews, it justly gave increased majesty and solemnity to the Law, that it had been given in so grand and imposing circumstances. It greatly aggravated their guilt that, notwithstanding this, they had not kept it.

Verse 54

They were cut to the heart - They were exceedingly enraged and indignant. The whole course of the speech had been such as to excite their anger, and now they could restrain themselves no longer.

They gnashed on him … - Expressive of the bitterness and malignity of their feeling.

Verse 55

Full of the Holy Ghost - See the notes on Acts 2:4.

Looked up stedfastly - Fixed his eyes intently on heaven. Foreseeing his danger, and the effect his speech had produced; seeing that there was no safety in the Great Council of the nation, and no prospect of justice at their hands, he cast his eyes to heaven and sought protection there. When dangers threaten us, our hope of safety lies in heaven. When people threaten our persons, reputation, or lives, it becomes us to fix our eyes on the heavenly world; and we shall not look in vain.

And saw the glory of God - This phrase is commonly used to denote the visible symbols of God. It means some magnificent representation; a splendor, or light, that is the appropriate exhibition of the presence of God, Matthew 16:27; Matthew 24:30. See the notes on Luke 2:9. In the case of Stephen there is every indication of a vision or supernatural representation of the heavenly objects; something in advance of mere "faith" such as dying Christians now have. What was its precise nature we have no means of ascertaining. Objects were often represented to prophets by "visions"; and probably something similar is intended here. It was such an elevation of view - such a representation of truth and of the glory of God, as to be denoted by the word "see"; though it is not to be maintained that Stephen really saw the Saviour with the bodily eye.

On the right hand of God - That is, exalted to a place of honor and power in the heavens. See the Matthew 26:64 note; Acts 2:25 note.

Verse 56

I see the heavens opened - A figurative expression, denoting that he was permitted to see "into" heaven, or to see what was there, as if the firmament was divided, and the eye was permitted to penetrate the eternal world. Compare Ezekiel 1:1.

Verse 57

Then they cried out - That is, probably, "the people," not the members of the council It is evident he was put to death in a popular tumult. They had charged him with blasphemy; and they regarded what he had now said as full proof of it.

And stopped their ears - That they might hear no more blasphemy.

With one accord - In a tumult; unitedly.

Verse 58

And cast him out of the city - This was in accordance with the usual custom. In Leviticus 24:14, it was directed to bring forth him that had cursed without the camp; and it was not usual, the Jewish writers inform us, to stone in the presence of the Sanhedrin. Though this was a popular tumult, and Stephen was condemned without the regular process of trial, yet some of the "forms" of law were observed, and he was stoned in the manner directed in the case of blasphemers.

And stoned him - This was the punishment appointed in the case of blasphemy, Leviticus 24:16. See the notes on John 10:31.

And the witnesses - That is, the false witnesses who bore testimony against him, Acts 6:13. It was directed in the Law Deuteronomy 17:7 that the "witnesses" in the case should be first in executing the sentence of the Law. This was done to prevent false accusations by the prospect that they must be employed as executioners. After they had commenced the process of execution, all the people joined in it, Deuteronomy 17:7; Leviticus 24:16.

Laid down their clothes - Their "outer garments." They were accustomed to lay these aside when they ran or worked. See the notes on Matthew 5:40.

At a young man's feet … - That is, they procured him to take care of their garments. This is mentioned solely because Saul, or Paul, afterward became so celebrated, first as a persecutor, and then an apostle. His whole heart was in this persecution of Stephen; and he himself afterward alluded to this circumstance as an evidence of his sinfulness in persecuting the Lord Jesus, Acts 22:20.

Verse 59

Calling upon God - The word God is not in the original, and should not have been in the translation. It is in none of the ancient mss. or versions. It should have been rendered, "They stoned Stephen, invoking, or calling upon, and saying, Lord Jesus," etc. That is, he was engaged "in prayer" to the Lord Jesus. The word is used to express "prayer" in the following, among other places: 2 Corinthians 1:23, "I call God to witness"; 1 Peter 1:17, "And if ye call on the Father," etc.; Acts 2:21, "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord," etc.; Acts 9:14; Acts 22:16; Romans 10:12-14. This was, therefore, an act of worship; a solemn invocation of the Lord Jesus, in the most interesting circumstances in which a man can be placed - in his dying moments. And this shows that it is right to worship the Lord

Jesus, and to pray to him. For if Stephen was inspired, it settles the question. The example of an inspired man in such circumstances is a safe and correct example. If it should be said that the inspiration of Stephen cannot be made out, yet the inspiration of Luke, who has recorded it, will not be called into question. Then the following circumstances show that he, an inspired man, regarded it as right, and as a proper example to be followed:

(1)He has recorded it without the slightest expression of an opinion that it was improper. On the contrary, there is every evidence that he regarded the conduct of Stephen in this case as right and praiseworthy. There is, therefore, this attestation to its propriety.

(2)the Spirit who inspired Luke knew what use would be made of this case. He knew that it would be used as an example, and as an evidence that it was right to worship the Lord Jesus. It is one of the cases which has been used to perpetuate the worship of the Lord Jesus in every age. If it was wrong, it is inconceivable that it should be recorded without some expression of disapprobation.

(3)the case is strikingly similar to that recorded in John 20:28, where Thomas offered worship to the Lord Jesus "as his God," without reproof. If Thomas did it in the presence of the Saviour without reproof, it was right. If Stephen did it without any expression of disapprobation from the inspired historian, it was right.

(4)these examples were used to encourage Christians and Christian martyrs to offer homage to Jesus Christ. Thus, Pliny, writing to the Emperor Trajan, and giving an account of the Christians in Bithynia, says that they were accustomed to meet and "sing hymns to Christ as to God" (Latriner).

(5)it is worthy of remark that Stephen, in his death, offered the same act of homage to Christ that Christ himself did to the Father when he died, Luke 23:46. From all these considerations, it follows that the Lord Jesus is a proper object of worship; that in most solemn circumstances it is right to call upon him, to worship him, and to commit our dearest interests to his hands. If this may be done, he is divine.

Receive my spirit - That is, receive it to thyself; take it to thine abode in heaven.

Verse 60

And he kneeled down - This seems to have been a "voluntary" kneeling; a placing himself in this position for the purpose of "prayer," choosing to die in this attitude.

Lord - That is, Lord Jesus. See the notes on Acts 1:24.

Lay not … - Forgive them. This passage strikingly resembles the dying prayer of the Lord Jesus, Luke 23:34. Nothing but the Christian religion will enable a man to utter such sentiments in his dying moments.

He fell asleep - This is the usual mode of describing the death of saints in the Bible. It is an expression indicating:

(1)The "peacefulness" of their death, compared with the alarm of sinners;

(2)The hope of a resurrection; as we retire to sleep with the hope of again awaking to the duties and enjoyments of life. See John 11:11-12; 1 Corinthians 11:30; 1 Corinthians 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:10; Matthew 9:24.

In view of the death of this first Christian martyr, we may remark:

(1) That it is right to address to the Lord Jesus the language of prayer.

(2) it is especially proper to do it in afflictions, and in the prospect of death, Hebrews 4:15.

(3) sustaining grace will be derived in trials chiefly from a view of the Lord Jesus. If we can look to him as our Saviour; see him to be exalted to deliver us; and truly commit our souls to him, we shall find the grace which we need in our afflictions.

(4) we should have such confidence in him as to enable us to commit ourselves to him at any time. To do this, we should live a life of faith. In health, and youth, and strength, we should seek him as our first and best friend.

(5) while we are in health we should prepare to die. What an unfit place for preparation for death would have been the situation of Stephen! How impossible then would it have been to have made preparation! Yet the dying bed is often a place as unfit to prepare as were the circumstances of Stephen. When racked with pain; when faint and feeble; when the mind is

indisposed to thought, or when it raves in the wildness of delirium, what an unfit place is this to prepare to die! I have seen many dying beds; I have seen many persons in all stages of their last sickness; but never have I yet seen a dying bed which seemed to me to be a proper place to make preparation for eternity.

(6) how peaceful and calm is a death like that of Stephen, when compared with the alarms and anguish of a sinner! One moment of such peace in that trying time is better than all the pleasures and honors which the world can bestow; and to obtain such peace then, the dying sinner would be willing to give all the wealth of the Indies, and all the crowns of the earth. So may I die and so may all my readers - enabled, like this dying martyr, to commit my departing spirit to the sure keeping of the great Redeemer! When we take a parting view of the world; when our eyes shall be turned for the last time to take a look of friends and relatives; when the darkness of death shall begin to come around us, then may we be enabled to cast the eye of faith to the heavens, and say, “Lord Jesus, receive our spirits.” Thus, may we fall asleep, peaceful in death, in the hope of the resurrection of the just.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Verse 1

And Saul was consenting … - Was pleased with his being put to death and approved it. Compare Acts 22:20. This part of the verse should have been connected with the previous chapter.

And at that time. - That is, immediately following the death of Stephen. The persecution arose on account of Stephen, Acts 11:19. The tumult did not subside when Stephen was killed. The anger of his persecutors continued to be excited against all Christians. They had become so embittered by the zeal and success of the apostles, and by their frequent charges of murder in putting the Son of God to death, that they resolved at once to put a period to their progress and success. This was the first persecution against Christians; the first in a series that terminated only when the religion which they wished to destroy was fully established on the ruins of both Judaism and paganism.

The church - The collection of Christians which were now organized into a church. The church at Jerusalem was the first that was collected.

All scattered - That is, the great mass of Christians.

The regions of Judea … - See the notes on Matthew 2:22.

Except the apostles - Probably the other Christians fled from fear. Why the apostles, who were particularly in danger, did not flee also, is not stated by the historian. Having been, however, more fully instructed than the others, and having been taught their duty by the example and teaching of the Saviour, they resolved, it seems, to remain and brave the fury of the persecutors. For them to have fled then would have exposed them, as leaders and founders of the new religion, to the charge of timidity and weakness. They therefore resolved to remain in the midst of their persecutors; and a merciful Providence watched over them, and defended them from harm. The dispersion extended not only to Judea and Samaria, but those who fled carried the gospel also to Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch, Acts 11:19. There was a reason why this was permitted. The early converts were Jews. They had strong feelings of attachment to the city of Jerusalem, to the temple, and to the land of their fathers. Yet it was the design of the Lord Jesus that the gospel should be preached everywhere. To accomplish this, he suffered a persecution to rage; and they were scattered abroad, and bore his gospel to other cities and lands. Good thus came out of evil; and

the first persecution resulted, as all others have done, in advancing the cause which was intended to be destroyed.

Verse 2

And devout men - Religious men. The word used here does not imply of necessity that they were Christians. There might have been Jews who did not approve of the popular tumult, and the murder of Stephen, who gave him a decent burial. Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, both Jews, thus gave to the Lord Jesus a decent burial, John 19:38-39.

Carried Stephen - The word translated "carried" means properly to "collect," as fruits, etc. Then it is applied to all the preparations necessary for fitting a dead body for burial, as "collecting," or confining it by bandages, with spices, etc.

And made great lamentation - This was usual among the Jews at a funeral. See the notes on Matthew 9:23.

Verse 3

As for Saul - But Saul. He took no interest or part in the pious attentions shown to Stephen, but engaged with zeal in the work of persecution.

He made havoc - ἐλυμαίνετο elumainetoThis word is commonly applied to wild beasts, to lions, wolves, etc., and denotes the "devastations" which they commit. Saul raged against the church like a wild beast - a strong expression, denoting the zeal and fury with which he engaged in persecution.

Entering into every house - To search for those who were suspected of being Christians.

Haling - Dragging, or compelling them.

Committed them to prison - The Sanhedrin had no power to put them to death, John 18:31. But they had power to imprison; and they resolved, it seems, to exercise this power to the utmost. Paul frequently refers to his zeal in persecuting the church, Acts 26:10-11; Galatians 1:13. It may be remarked here that there never was a persecution commenced with more flattering prospects to the persecutors. Saul, the principal agent, was young, zealous, learned, and clothed with power. He showed afterward that he had talents suited for any station, and zeal that tired with no exertion, and that was appalled by no obstacle. With this talent and this zeal he entered on his work. The Christians were few and feeble. They were scattered and unarmed. They were unprotected by any civil power, and exposed, therefore, to the full blaze and rage of persecution. That the church was not

destroyed was owing to the protection of God a protection which not only secured its existence, but which extended its influence and power by means of this very persecution far abroad on the earth.

Verse 4

Went everywhere - That is, they traveled through the various regions where they were scattered. In all places to which they came, they preached the Word.

Preaching the word - Greek: "evangelizing," or announcing the good news of the message of mercy, or the Word of God. This is not the usual word which is rendered "preach," but it means simply announcing the good news of salvation. There is no evidence, nor is there any probability, that all these persons were "ordained" to preach. They were manifestly common Christians who were scattered by the persecution; and the meaning is, that they communicated to their fellow-men in conversation wherever they met them, and probably in the synagogues, where all Jews had a right to speak, the glad tidings that the Messiah had come. It is not said that they set themselves up for public teachers, or that they administered baptism, or that they founded churches, but they proclaimed everywhere the news that a Saviour had come. Their hearts were full of it. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; and they made the truth known to "all" whom they met. We may learn from this:

(1)That persecution tends to promote the very thing which it would destroy.

(2)that one of the best means to make Christians active and zealous is to persecute them.

(3)that it is right for all Christians to make known the truths of the gospel. When the heart is full the lips will speak, and there is no more impropriety in their speaking of redemption than of anything else.

(4)it should be the great object of all Christians to make the Saviour known "everywhere." By their lives, their conversation, and their pious exhortations and entreaties, they should beseech dying sinners to be reconciled to God. And especially should this be done when they "are traveling." Christians when away from home seem almost to imagine that they lay aside the obligations of religion. But the example of Christ and his early disciples has taught us that this is the very time to attempt to do good.

Verse 5

Then Philip - One of the seven deacons, Acts 6:5. He is afterward called the "evangelist," Acts 21:8.

The city of Samaria - This does not mean a city whose "name" was Samaria, for no such city at that time existed. Samaria was a "region," Matthew 2:22. The ancient city Samaria, the capital of that region, had been destroyed by Hyrcanus, so completely as to leave no vestige of it remaining; and he "took away," says Josephus, "the very marks that there had ever been such a city there" (*Antiq.*, book 13, chapter 10, section 3). Herod the Great afterward built a city on this site, and called it "Sebaste"; that is, "Augusta," in honor of the Emperor Augustus (Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 15, chapter 8, section 5). Perhaps this city is intended, as being the principal city of Samaria; or possibly "Sychar," another city where the gospel had been before preached by the Saviour himself, John 4:35, and into that field Philip now entered, and was signally blessed. His coming was attended with a remarkable "revival of religion." The word translated "preach" here is not what is used in the previous verse. This denotes to "proclaim as a crier," and is commonly employed to denote the preaching of the gospel, so called, Mark 5:20; Mark 7:36; Luke 8:39; Matthew 24:14; Acts 10:42; Romans 10:15; 1 Corinthians 9:27; 1 Corinthians 15:12; 2 Timothy 4:2. It has been argued that because "Philip" is said thus to have preached to the Samaritans, that "therefore" all "deacons" have a right to preach, or that they are, under the New Testament economy, an "order" of ministers. But this is by no means clear. For:

(1)It is not evident, nor can it be shown, that the "other" deacons Acts 6:1-15 ever preached. There is no record of their doing so; and the narrative would lead us to suppose that they did not.

(2)they were "appointed" for a very different purpose Acts 6:1-5; and it is fair to suppose that, as "deacons," they confined themselves to the design of their appointment.

(3)it is not said that "Philip" preached in virtue of his being a "deacon." From anything in "this" place, it would seem that he preached as the other Christians did - wherever he was.

(4)but "elsewhere" an express distinction is made between Philip and the others. A new appellation is given him, and he is expressly called the "evangelist," Acts 21:8. From this, it seems that he preached, not "because" he was a "deacon," but because he had received a special "appointment" to this business as an evangelist.

(5)this same office, or rank of Christian teachers, is expressly recognized elsewhere, Ephesians 4:11. All these considerations show that there is "not" in the sacred Scriptures an order of ministers appointed to preach "as deacons."

Verse 6

With one accord - Unitedly, or with one mined. Great multitudes of them did it.

Gave heed - Paid attention to; embraced.

Hearing - Hearing what he said.

Verse 7

For unclean spirits - See the notes on Matthew 4:24.

Crying with loud voice - See the notes on Mark 1:26.

Palsies - See the notes on Matthew 4:24.

Verse 8

And there was great joy - This joy arose:

(1)From the fact that so many persons, before sick and afflicted, were restored to health.

(2)from the conversion of individuals to Christ.

(3)from the mutual joy of "families" and "friends" that their friends were converted. The tendency of a revival of religion is thus to produce great joy.

Verse 9

But there was a certain man called Simon - The fathers have written much respecting this man, and have given strange accounts of him; but nothing more is certainly known of him than is stated in this place. Rosenmuller and Kuinoel suppose him to have been a Simon mentioned by Josephus (*Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 7, section 2), who was born in Cyprus. He was a magician, and was employed by Felix to persuade Drusilla to

forsake her husband Azizus, and to marry Felix. But it is not very probable that this was the same person. (See the note in Whiston's *Josephus*.) Simon Magus was probably a "Jew" or a "Samaritan," who had addicted himself to the arts of magic, and who was much celebrated for it. He had studied philosophy in Alexandria in Egypt (Mosheim, vol. i., pp. 113,114, Murdock's translation), and then lived in Samaria. After he was cut off from the hope of adding to his other powers the power of working miracles, the "fathers" say that he fell into many errors, and became the founder of the sect of the Simonians. They accused him of affirming that he came down as the "Father" in respect to the Samaritans, the "Son" in respect to the Jews, and the "Holy Spirit" in respect to the Gentiles. He did not acknowledge Christ to be the Son of God, but a rival, and pretended himself to be Christ. He rejected the Law of Moses. Many other things are affirmed of him which rest on doubtful authority. He seems to have become an enemy to Christianity, though he was willing "then" to avail himself of some of its doctrines in order to advance his own interests. The account that he came to a tragical death in Rome; that he was honored as a deity by the Roman senate; and that a statue was erected to his memory in the isle of Tiber, is now generally rejected. His end is not known. (See Calmet, art. "Simon Magus," and Mosheim, vol. i., p. 114, note.)

Beforetime - The practice of magic, or sorcery, was common at that time, and in all the ancient nations.

Used sorcery - Greek: μαγεύων mageuōnExercising the arts of the "Magi," or "magicians"; hence, the name Simon "Magus." See the notes on Matthew 2:1. The ancient "Magi" had their rise in Persia, and were at first addicted to the study of philosophy, astronomy, medicine, etc. This name came afterward to signify those who made use of the knowledge of these arts for the purpose of imposing on mankind - astrologers, soothsayers, necromancers, fortune-tellers, etc. Such persons pretended to predict future events by the positions of the stars, and to cure diseases by incantations, etc. See Isaiah 2:6. See also Daniel 1:20; Daniel 2:2. It was expressly forbidden the Jews to consult such persons on pain of death, Leviticus 19:31; Leviticus 20:6. In these arts Simon had been eminently successful.

And bewitched - This is an unhappy translation. The Greek means merely that he "astonished" or amazed the people, or "confounded" their judgment. The idea of "bewitching" them is not in the original.

Giving out … - "Saying"; that is, boasting. It was in this way, partly, that he so confounded them. Jugglers generally impose on people just in proportion to the "extravagance" and folly of their pretensions. The same remark may be made of "quack doctors," and of all persons who attempt to delude and impose on people.

Verse 10

The great power of God - Probably this means only that they believed that he was "invested with" the power of God, not that they supposed he was really the Great God.

Verse 13

Then Simon himself believed also - That is, he believed that Jesus had performed miracles, and was raised from the dead, etc. All this he could believe in entire consistency with his own notions of the power of magic; and all that the connection requires us to suppose is that he believed this Jesus had the power of working miracles; and as he purposed to turn this to his own account, he was willing to profess himself to be his follower. It might have injured his popularity, moreover, if he had taken a stand in opposition when so many were professing to become Christians. People often profess religion because, if they do not, they fear that they will lose their influence, and be left with the ungodly. That Simon was not a real Christian is apparent from the whole narrative, Acts 8:18, Acts 8:21-23.

And when he was baptized - He was admitted to a "profession" of religion in the same way as others. Philip did not pretend to know the heart; and Simon was admitted because he "professed" his belief. This is all the evidence that ministers of the gospel can now have, and it is no wonder that they, as well Philip, are often deceived. The reasons which influenced Simon to make a profession of religion seem to have been these:

(1)An impression that Christianity was "true." He seems to have been convinced of this by the miracles of Philip.

(2)the fact that many others were becoming Christians; and "he" went in with the multitude. This is often the case in revivals of religion.

(3)he was willing to make use of Christianity to advance his own power, influence, and popularity - a thing which multitudes of men of the same mind with Simon Magus have been willing since to do.

He continued … - It was customary and natural for the disciples to remain with their teachers. See Acts 2:42.

And wondered - This is the same word that is translated "bewitched" in Acts 8:9, Acts 8:11. It means that he was amazed that Philip could "really" perform so much greater miracles than "he" had even pretended to. Hypocrites will sometimes be greatly attentive to the external duties of religion, and will be greatly surprised at what is done by God for the salvation of sinners.

Miracles and signs - Greek: signs and great powers, or great miracles. That is, so much greater than he pretended to be able to perform.

Verse 14

They sent - That is, the apostles "deputed" two of their number. This shows conclusively that there was no "chief" or ruler among them. They acted as being equal in authority. The reason why they sent Peter and John was probably that there would be a demand for more labor than Philip could render; a church was to be founded, and it was important that persons of experience and wisdom should be present to organize it, and to build it up. The "harvest" had occurred in Samaria, of which the Saviour spoke John 4:35, and it was proper that they should enter into it. In times of revival there is often more to be done than can be done by the regular servant of a people, and it is proper that he should be aided from abroad.

Peter - This shows that "Peter" had no such authority and primacy as the Roman Catholics claim for him. He exercised no authority in "sending" others, but was himself "sent." He was appointed by their united voice, instead of claiming the power himself of directing "them."

And John - Peter was ardent, hold, zealous, rash; John was mild, gentle, tender, persuasive. There was wisdom in uniting them in this work, as the talents of both were needed; and the excellencies in the character of the one would compensate for the defects of the other. It is observable that the apostles sent "two" together, as the Saviour had himself done. See the notes on Mark 6:7.

Verse 15

Were come down - To Samaria. Jerusalem was generally represented as "up," or "higher" than the rest of the land, Matthew 20:18; John 7:8.

Prayed for them - They sought at the hand of God the extraordinary communications of the Holy Spirit. They did not even pretend to have the power of doing it without the aid of God.

That they might receive the Holy Ghost - The main question here is, what was meant by the Holy Spirit? In Acts 8:20, it is called "the gift of

God." The following remarks may make this plain:

(1)It was not that gift of the Holy Spirit by which "the soul is converted," for they had this when they believed, Acts 8:6. Everywhere the conversion of the sinner is traced to his influence. Compare John 1:13.

(2)it was not the ordinary influences of the Spirit by which "the soul is sanctified"; for sanctification is a progressive work, and this was sudden.

(3)it was something that was discernible by "external effects"; for Simon saw Acts 8:18 that this was done by the laying on of hands.

(4)the phrase "the gift of the Holy Spirit," and "the descent of the Holy Spirit," signified not merely his "ordinary" influences in converting sinners, but those "extraordinary" influences that attended the first preaching of the gospel - the power of speaking with new tongues Acts 19:6.

(5)this is further clear from the fact that Simon wished to "purchase" this power, evidently to keep up his influence among the people, and to retain his ascendency as a juggler and sorcerer. But surely Simon would not wish to "purchase" the converting and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; it was the power of working miracles. These things made it clear that by the gift of the Holy Spirit here is meant the power of speaking with new tongues (compare 1 Corinthians 14) and the power of working miracles. And it is further clear that "this" passage should not be adduced in favor of "the rite of confirmation" in the Christian church. For, besides the fact that there are now no "apostles," the thing spoken of here is entirely different from the rite of confirmation. "This" was to confer the extraordinary power of working miracles; "that" is for a different purpose.

If it be asked "why" this power was conferred on the early Christians, it may be replied that it was to furnish striking proof of the truth of the Christian religion; to impress the people, and thus to win them to embrace the gospel. The early church was thus armed with the power of the Holy Spirit; and this extraordinary attestation of God to his message was one cause of the rapid propagation and permanent establishment of the gospel.

Verse 16

He was fallen - This expression is several times applied to the Holy Spirit, Acts 10:44; Acts 11:15. It does not differ materially from the common expression, "The Holy Spirit descended." It means that he came

from heaven; and the expression "to fall," applied to his influences, denotes the "rapidity" and "suddenness" of his coming. Compare Acts 19:2.

In the name of the Lord Jesus - See the notes on Acts 2:38. See also Acts 10:48; Acts 19:5-6.

Verse 17

Then laid they their hands … - This was an act of "prayer," expressing an invocation to God that he would impart the blessing to "them." On "how many" they laid their hands is not said. It is evident that it was not on "all," for they did not thus lay hands on Simon. Perhaps it was done on a few of the more prominent and leading persons, who were to be employed particularly in bearing witness to the truth of the gospel. It was customary to lay the hands on any person when a "favor" was to be conferred or a blessing imparted. See notes on Matthew 9:18.

Verse 18

Simon saw … - That is, he witnessed the extraordinary effects, the power of speaking in a miraculous manner, etc. See the notes on Acts 8:15.

He offered them money - He had had a remarkable influence over the Samaritans, and he saw that the possession of this power would perpetuate and increase his influence. People commonly employ the tricks of legerdemain for the purpose of making money, and it seems probable that such had been the design of Simon. He saw that if he could communicate to "others" this power; if he could confer on "them" the talent of speaking other languages, it might be turned to vast account, and he sought, therefore, to purchase it of the apostles. From this act of Simon we have derived our word "simony," to denote the buying and selling of ecclesiastical preferment, or church offices, where religion is supported by the state. This act of Simon shows conclusively that he was influenced by improper motives in becoming connected with the church.

Verse 20

Thy money perish with thee - This is expressive of the horror and indignation of Peter at the base offer of Simon. It is not to be understood as an imprecation on Simon. The main idea is the apostle's contempt for the "money," as if he regarded it as of no value. "Let your money go to destruction. We abhor your impious offer. We can freely see "any" amount of money destroyed before we will be tempted to sell the gift of the Holy Spirit. But there was here also an expression of his belief that "Simon" also

would perish. It was a declaration that he was hastening to ruin, and as if this was certain, Peter says, let your money perish "too."

The gift of God - That which he has "given," or conferred as a favor. The idea was absurd that what God himself gave as a sovereign could be purchased. It was "impious" to think of attempting to buy with worthless gold what was of so inestimable value. The "gift of God" here means the extraordinary influences of the Holy Spirit, Acts 10:45; Acts 11:17. How can we pay a "price" to God? All that "we" can give, the silver, and the gold, and the cattle on a thousand hills, belong to him already. We have "nothing" which we can present for his favors. And yet there are many who seek to "purchase" the favor of God. Some do it by alms and prayers; some by penance and fasting; some by attempting to make their own hearts better, and by self-righteousness; and some by penitence and tears. All these will not "purchase" his favor. Salvation, like every other blessing, will be "his gift"; and if ever received, we must be willing to accept it on his own terms; at his own time; in his own way. We are without merit; and if saved, it will be by the sovereign grace of God.

Verse 21

Neither part - You have no "portion" of the grace of God; that is, you are destitute of it altogether. This word commonly denotes the "part" of an inheritance which falls to one when it is divided.

Nor lot - This word means properly a portion which "falls" to one when an estate, or when spoil in war is divided into portions, according to the number of those who are to be partakers, and the part of each one is determined by "lot." The two words denote "emphatically" that he was in no sense a partaker of the favor of God.

In this matter - Greek: in this "word"; that is, thing. That which is referred to here is the religion of Christ. Simon was not a Christian. It is remarkable that Peter judged him so soon, and when he had seen but "one" act of his. But it was an act which satisfied him that he was a stranger to religion. One act may sometimes bring out the "whole character"; it may evince the "governing" motives; it may show traits of character utterly "inconsistent" with true religion; and then it is as certain a criterion as any long series of acts.

Thy heart - Your "affections," or "governing motives"; your principle of conduct. Comp, 2 Kings 10:15. You love gold and popularity, and not the gospel for what it is. There is no evidence here that Peter saw this in a

miraculous manner, or by any supernatural influence. It was apparent and plain that Simon was not influenced by the pure, disinterested motives of the gospel, but by the love of power and of the world.

In the sight of God - That is, God sees or judges that your heart is not sincere and pure. No external profession is acceptable without the heart. Reader, is your heart right with God? Are your motives pure; and does "God" see there the exercise of holy, sincere, and benevolent affections toward him? God "knows" the motives; and with unerring certainty he will judge, and with unerring justice he will fix our doom according to the affections of the heart.

Verse 22

Repent, therefore - Here we may remark:

(1)That Simon was at this time an unconverted sinner.

(2)that the command was given to him "as such."

(3)that he was required to "do the thing"; not to wait or seek merely, but actually to repent.

(4)that this was to be the "first step" in his conversion. He was not even directed to "pray" first, but his first indispensable work was to "repent"; that is, to exercise proper sorrow for this sin, and to "abandon" his plan or principle of action.

And this shows:

(1)that all sinners are to be exhorted to "repent," as their first work. They are not to be told to "wait," and "read," and "pray," in the expectation that repentance will be "given" them. With such helps as they can obtain, they are to "do the thing."

(2)prayer will not be acceptable or heard unless the sinner comes "repenting"; that is, unless he regrets his sin, and "desires" to forsake it. Then, and then only, will he be heard. When he comes "loving" his sins, and resolving still to practice them, God will not hear him. When he comes "desirous" of forsaking them, grieved that he is guilty, and "feeling" his need of help, God will hear his prayer. See Isaiah 1:15; Micah 3:4; Proverbs 1:28; Psalm 66:18.

And pray God - Having a "desire" to forsake the sin, and to be pardoned, "then" pray to God to forgive. It would be absurd to ask forgiveness until a man felt his need of it. This shows that a sinner "ought"

to pray, and "how" he ought to do it. It should be with a desire and purpose to forsake sin, and in that state of mind God will hear the prayer. Compare Daniel 4:27.

If perhaps - There was no certainty that God would forgive him; nor is there any evidence either that Simon prayed, or that he was forgiven. This direction of Peter presents "another" important principle in regard to the conduct of sinners. They are to be directed to repent; not because they have the "promise" of forgiveness, and not because they "hope" to be forgiven, but because sin "is a great evil," and because it is "right" and "proper" that they should repent, whether they are forgiven or not. That is to be left to the sovereign mercy of God. they are to repent of sin, and then they are to feel, not that they have any claim on God, but that they are dependent upon Him, and must be saved or lost at His will. They are not to suppose that their tears will purchase forgiveness, but that they lie at the footstool of mercy, and that there is hope - not certainty - that God will forgive. The language of the humbled sinner is:

"Perhaps he will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish I will pray,
And perish only there.
"I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;
For if I stay away, I
Know I shall forever die."

The thought … - Your "purpose," or "wish." "Thoughts" may be, therefore, evil, and need forgiveness. It is not open sin only that needs to be pardoned; it is the secret purpose of the soul.

Verse 23

For I perceive - That is, by the act which he had done. His offer had shown a state of mind that was wholly inconsistent with true religion. One single sin "may" as certainly show that there is no true piety as many acts of iniquity. It may be so decided, so malignant, so utterly inconsistent with just views as at once to determine what the character is. The sin of Simon was of this character. Peter here does not appear to have claimed the power of judging the "heart"; but he judged, as all other people would, by the act.

In the gall - This word denotes properly "bile," or "that bitter, yellowish-green fluid that is secreted in the liver." Hence, it means anything

very bitter; and also any bad passion of the mind, as anger, malice, etc. We speak of "bitterness" of mind, etc.

Of bitterness - This is a Hebraism; the usual mode of expressing the "superlative," and means "excessive bitterness." The phrase is used respecting idolatry Deuteronomy 29:18, "Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." A similar expression occurs in Hebrews 12:15, "Lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you." "Sin" is thus represented as a "bitter" or poisonous thing; a tiring not only "unpleasant" in its consequences, but ruinous in its character, as a poisonous plant would be in the midst of other plants, Jeremiah 2:19, "It is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God"; Jeremiah 4:18; Romans 3:14, "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness"; Ephesians 4:31. The meaning here is, that the heart of Simon was full of dreadful, malignant sin.

Bond of iniquity - Or, that thou art "bound by" iniquity. That is, that it has the rule over you, and "binds" you as a captive. Sin is often thus represented as "bondage" and "captivity," Psalm 116:16; Proverbs 5:22, "He shall be holden with the cords of his sins"; Romans 7:23-24. These expressions prove conclusively that Simon was a stranger to religion.

Verse 24

Pray ye … - Here remark:

(1) That Simon was directed to pray for himself Acts 8:22, but he had no disposition to do it, but was willing to ask others to do it for him. Sinners will often ask others to pray for them, when they are too proud, or too much in love with sin, to pray for themselves.

(2) the main thing that Peter wished to impress on him was a sense of his sin. Simon did not regard this, but looked only to the punishment. He was terrified and alarmed; he sought to avoid future "punishment," but he had no alarm about his "sins." So it is often with sinners. So it was with Pharaoh Exodus 8:28, Exodus 8:32, and with Jeroboam 1 Kings 13:6. Sinners often quiet their own consciences by asking ministers and Christian friends to pray for them, while "they" still purpose to persevere in iniquity. If people expect to be saved, they must pray "for themselves"; and pray not chiefly to be freed from "punishment," but from the "sin which deserves hell." This is all that we hear of Simon in the New Testament; and the probability is, that, like many other sinners, he did not pray for himself, but

continued to live in the gall of bitterness, and died in the bond of iniquity. The testimony of antiquity is decided on that point. See the notes on Acts 8:9.

Verse 25

In many villages … - They went at first directly to the "city" of Samaria. On their return to Jerusalem they travelled more at leisure, and preached in the villages also - a good example for the ministers of the gospel, and for all Christians, when traveling from place to place. The reason why they returned to Jerusalem, and made that their permanent abode, might have been, that it was important to bear witness to the resurrection of Christ in the very city where he had been crucified, and where his resurrection had occurred. If the doctrine was established "there," it would be more easy to establish it elsewhere.

Verse 26

And the angel of the Lord - The word "angel" is used in the Scriptures in a great variety of significations. See the notes on Matthew 1:20. Here it has been supposed by some to mean literally a celestial messenger sent from God; others have supposed that it means a "dream"; others a "vision," etc. The word properly means a "messenger"; and all that it can be shown to signify here is, that the Lord sent a "message" to Philip of this kind. It is most probable, I think, that the passage means that God communicated the message by his Spirit; for in Acts 8:29, Acts 8:39, it is expressly said that "the Spirit" spake to Philip, etc. Thus, in Acts 16:7, the "Spirit" is said to have forbidden Paul to preach in Bithynia; and in Acts 8:9, the message on the subject is said to have been conveyed in "a vision." There is no absurdity, however, in supposing that an "angel" literally was employed to communicate this message to Phil See Hebrews 1:14; Genesis 19:1; Genesis 22:11; Judges 6:12.

Spake unto Philip - Compare Matthew 2:13.

Arise - See the notes on Luke 15:18.

And go … - Philip had been employed in Samaria. As God now intended to send the gospel to another place, he gave a special direction to him to go and convey it. It is evident that God designed the "conversion" of this eunuch, and the direction to Philip shows how he accomplishes his designs. It is not by miracle, but by the use of means. It is not by direct power without "truth," but it is by a message suited to the end. The

salvation of a single sinner is an object worthy the attention of God. When such a sinner is converted, it is because God forms a plan or "purpose" to do it. when it is done, he inclines his servants to labor; he directs their labors; he leads his ministers; and he prepares the way Acts 8:28) for the reception of the truth.

Toward the south - That is, south of Samaria, where Philip was then laboring.

Unto Gaza - Gaza, or Azzah Genesis 10:19, was a city of the Philistines, given by Joshua to Judah Joshua 15:47; 1 Samuel 6:17. It was one of the five principal cities of the Philistines. It was formerly a large place; was situated on an eminence, and commanded a beautiful prospect. It was in this place that Samson took away the gates of the city, and bore them off, Judges 16:2-3. It was near Askelon, about 60 miles southwest from Jerusalem.

Which is desert - This may refer either to the "way" or to the "place." The natural construction is the latter. In explanation of this, it is to be observed that there were "two" towns of that name, Old and New Gaza. The prophet Zephaniah Zephaniah 2:4 said that "Gaza" should be "forsaken," that is, destroyed. "This was partly accomplished by Alexander the Great (Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 11, chapter 8, sections 3 and 4; book 13, chapter 13, section 3). Another town was afterward built of the same name, but at some distance from the former, and Old Gaza was abandoned to desolation. Strabo mentions ‹Gaza the desert,‘ and Diodorus Siculus speaks of ‹Old Gaza‘" (Robinson‘s *Calmet*). Some have supposed, however, that Luke refers here to the "road" leading to Gaza, as being desolate and uninhabited. Dr. Robinson (*Biblical Res.*, 2:640) remarks: "There were several ways leading from Jerusalem to Gaza. The most frequented at the present day, although the longest, is the way by Ramleh. Anciently there appear to have been two more direct roads. Both these roads exist at the present day, and the one actually passes through the desert, that is, through a tract of country without villages, inhabited only by nomadic tribes." "In this place, in 1823, the American missionaries, Messrs. Fisk and King, found Gaza, a town built of stone, making a very mean appearance, and confining about five thousand inhabitants" (Hall on the Acts).

Verse 27

A man of Ethiopia - Gaza was near the confines between Palestine and Egypt. It was in the direct road from Jerusalem to Egypt. "Ethiopia" was

one of the great kingdoms of Africa, part of which is now called Abyssinia. It is frequently mentioned in Scripture under the name of "Cush." But "Cush" comprehended a much larger region, including the southern part of Arabia, and even sometimes the countries adjacent to the Tigris and Euphrates. Ethiopia proper lay south of Egypt, on the Nile, and was bounded north by Egypt, that is, by the cataracts near Syene; east by the Red Sea, and perhaps part by the Indian Ocean; south by unknown regions in the interior of Africa; and west by Libya and the deserts. It comprehended the modern kingdoms of Nubia or Sennaar, and Abyssinia. The chief city in it was the ancient Meroe, situated on the island or tract of the same name, between the Nile and Ashtaboras, not far from the modern Shendi Robinson's Calmet).

An eunuch … - See the notes on Matthew 19:12. Eunuchs were commonly employed in attendance on the females of the harem; but the word is often used to denote "any confidential officer, or counselor of state." It is evidently so used here.

Of great authority - Of high rank; an officer of the court. It is clear from what follows that this man was a Jew. But it is known that Jews were often raised to posts of high honor and distinction in foreign courts, as in the case of Joseph in Egypt, and of Daniel in Babylon.

Under Candace … - Candace is said to have been the common name of the queens of Ethiopia, as "Pharaoh" was of the sovereigns of Egypt. This is expressly stated by Pliny (Nat. History, 7:29). His words are: "The edifices of the city were few; a woman reigned there of the name of Candace, which name had been transmitted to these queens for many years." Strabo mentions also a queen of Ethiopia of the name of Candace. Speaking of an insurrection against the Romans, he says, "Among these were the officers of queen Candace, who in our days reigned over the Ethiopians." As this could not have been the Candace mentioned here, it is plain that the name was common to these queens - a sort of royal title. She was probably queen of Meroe, an important part of Ethiopia (Bruce's Travels, vol. ii, p. 431; Clarke).

Who had the charge … - The treasurer was an officer of high trust and responsibility.

And had come … - This proves that he was a Jew, or at least a Jewish proselyte. It was customary for the Jews in foreign lands, as far as

practicable, to attend the great feasts at Jerusalem. He had gone up to attend the Passover, etc. See the notes on Acts 2:5.

Verse 28

And, sitting in his chariot - His carriage; his vehicle. The form of the carriage is not known. In some instances the carriages of the ancients were placed on wheels; in others were borne on poles, in the form of a "litter" or palanquin, by men, mules, or horses. See Calmet's "Chariot" article.

Reading Esaias … - Isaiah. Reading doubtless the translation of Isaiah called the Septuagint. This translation was made in Egypt for the special use of the Jews in Alexandria and throughout Egypt, and was what was commonly used. "Why" he was reading the Scriptures, and especially this prophet, is not certainly known. It is morally certain, however, that he was in Judea at the time of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus; that he had heard much of him; that this would be a subject of discussion; and it was natural for him, in returning, to look at the prophecies respecting the Messiah, either to meditate on them as a suitable subject of inquiry and thought, or to examine the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to this office. The prophecy in Isaiah 53:1-12; was so striking, and coincided so clearly with the character of Jesus, that it was natural for a candid mind to examine whether "he" might not be the person intended by the prophet. On this narrative we may remark:

(1)It is a proper and profitable employment, upon returning from "worship," to examine the Sacred Scriptures.

(2)it is well to be in the habit of reading the Scriptures when we are on a journey. It may serve to keep the heart from worldly objects, and secure the affections for God.

(3)it is well at all times to read the Bible. It is one of the means of grace. And it is when we are searching his will that we obtain light and comfort. The sinner should examine with a candid mind the sacred volume. It may be the means of conducting him in the true path of salvation.

(4)God often gives us light in regard to the meaning of the Bible in unexpected modes. How little did this eunuch expect to be enlightened in the manner in which he actually was. Yet God, who intended to instruct and save him, sent the living teacher (Philip), and opened to him the Scriptures, and led him to the Saviour.

Verse 29

The Spirit - See the notes on Acts 8:26. The Holy Spirit is evidently intended here. The thought in Philip‘s mind is here traced to his suggestion. All good thoughts and designs have the same origin.

Join thyself - Join him in his chariot. Go and sit with him.

Verse 30

And Philip ran … - Indicating his haste and his desire to obey the suggestions of the Spirit. A thousand difficulties might have been started in the mind of Philip if he had reflected a little. The eunuch was a stranger; he had the appearance of a man of rank; he was engaged in reading; he might be indisposed to be interrupted or to converse, etc. But Philip obeyed without any hesitation the instructions of the Spirit, and “ran” to him. It is well to follow the first suggestions of the Spirit; to yield to the clear indications of duty, and to perform it at once. Especially in a deed of benevolence, and in conversing with others on the subject of religion, our first thoughts are commonly the safest and the best. If we do not follow them, the calculations of avarice, or fear, or of worldly prudence are very apt to come in. We become alarmed; we are afraid of the rich and the great; we suppose that our conversation and admonitions will be unacceptable. We may learn from this case:

(1) To do our duty at once, without hesitation or debate.

(2) we shall often be disappointed in regard to subjects of this kind. We shall find candid, humble, Christian conversation far more acceptable to strangers, to the rich, and to the great, than we commonly suppose. If, as in this case, they are “alone”; if we approach them kindly; if we do not rudely and harshly address them, we shall find most people willing to talk on the subject of religion. I have conversed with some hundreds of persons on the subject of religion, and do not now recollect but two instances in which I was rudely treated, and in which it was not easy to gain a respectful and kind attention to Christian conversation.

And heard him read - He was reading “loud” - sometimes the best way of impressing truth on the mind in our private reading the Scriptures.

And said … - This question, there might have been reason to fear, would not be kindly received. But the eunuch‘s mind was in such a state that he took no offence from such an inquiry, though made by a footman

and a stranger. He doubtless recognized him as a brother Jew. It is an important question to ask ourselves when we read the Sacred Scriptures.

Verse 31

And he said … - This was a general acknowledgment of his need of direction. It evinced a humble state of mind. It was an acknowledgment, also, originating probably from this particular passage which he was reading. He did not understand how it could be applied to the Messiah; how the description of his humiliation and condemnation Acts 8:33 could be reconciled to the prevalent ideas of his being a prince and a conqueror. The same sentiment is expressed by Paul in Romans 10:14. The circumstance, the state of mind in the eunuch, and the result, strongly remind one of the declaration in Psalm 25:9, "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way."

And he desired … - He was willing to receive instruction, even from a stranger. The rich and the great may often receive valuable instruction from a stranger, and from a poor, unknown man.

Verse 32

The place … - Isaiah 53:7-8.

He was led … - This quotation is taken literally from the Septuagint. It varies very little from the Hebrew. It has been almost universally understood that this place refers to the Messiah; and Philip expressly applies it to him. The word "was led" ἤχθη ēchthēimplies that he was conducted by others; that he was led as a sheep is led to be killed. The general idea is that of "meekness" and "submission" when he was led to be put to death; a description that applies in a very striking manner to the Lord Jesus.

To the slaughter - To be killed. The characteristic here recorded is more remarkable in sheep than in any other animal.

And like a lamb dumb … - Still, patient, unresisting.

So he opened not his mouth - He did not "complain" or "murmur"; he offered no resistance, but yielded patiently to what was done by others. Compare the notes on Isaiah 53.

Verse 33

In his humiliation - This varies from the Hebrew, but is copied exactly from the Septuagint, showing that he was reading the Septuagint. The Hebrew text is: "He was taken from prison and from judgment." The word rendered "prison" denotes any kind of "detention," or even "oppression." It

does not mean, as with us, to be confined "in" a prison or jail, but may mean "custody," and be applied to the detention or custody of the Saviour when his hands were bound, and he was led to be tried. See the notes on Matthew 27:2. It is not known why the Septuagint thus translated the expression "he was taken from prison," etc., by "in his humiliation," etc. The word "from prison" may mean, as has been remarked, however, from "oppression," and this does not differ materially from "humiliation"; and in this sense the Septuagint understood it. The "meaning" of the expression in the Septuagint and the Acts is clear. It denotes that in his state of oppression and calamity; when he was destitute of protectors and friends; when at the lowest state of humiliation, and therefore most the object of pity, "in addition to that," justice was denied him; his judgment - a just sentence - was taken away, or withheld, and he was delivered to be put to death. His deep humiliation and friendless state was "followed" by an unjust and cruel condemnation, when no one would stand forth to plead his cause. Every circumstance thus goes to deepen the view of his sufferings.

His judgment - Justice, a just sentence, was denied him, and he was cruelly condemned.

And who shall declare his generation? - The word "generation" used here properly denotes "posterity"; then "an age" of mankind, comprehending about 30 years, as we speak of this and the next generation; then it denotes "the men" of a particular age or time. Very various interpretations have been given of this expression. Lowth translates it, "His manner of life who would declare?" referring, as he supposes, to the fact that when a prisoner was condemned and led to execution, it was customary for a proclamation to be made by a crier in these words, "Whoever knows anything about his innocence, let him come and declare it." This passage is taken from the Gemara of Babylon (Kennicott, as quoted by Lowth). The same Gemara of Babylon on this passage adds, "that before the death of Jesus, this proclamation was made 40 days; but no defense could be found" - a manifest falsehood, and a story strikingly illustrative of the character of the Jewish writings.

The Gemara was written some time after Christ, perhaps not far from the year 180 (Lardner), and is a collection of commentaries on the traditional laws of the Jews. That this custom existed is very probable; but it is certain that no such thing was done on the trial of the Saviour. The Chaldee paraphrase translates the passage in Isaiah, "He shall collect our

captivity from infirmities and vengeance; and who can declare what wonderful things shall be done for us in his days?" Others have referred this question to his Deity, or his divine "generation"; intimating that no one could explain the mystery of his eternal generation. But the word in the Scriptures has no such signification; and such a sense would not suit the connection (see Calvin in loco.) Others have referred it to "his own spiritual posterity," his disciples, his family; "the number of his friends and followers who could enumerate?" (Calvin, Beza, etc.) Another sense which the word has is to denote the "people" of any particular age or time (Matthew 11:16; Matthew 23:36; Luke 16:8, etc.); and it has been supposed that the question here means, "Who can describe the character and wickedness of the generation when he shall live - the enormous crime of that age, in putting him to death?" On this passage, see the notes on Isaiah 53:8. Perhaps, after all that has been written on this passage, the simple idea is, "Who shall stand up for him, declaring who he is? Who will appear for him? Who will vindicate him?" meaning that all would forsake him, and that there would be none to "declare really who he was."

For his life … - The Hebrew is, "For he was cut off from the land of the living"; that is he was put to death. The expression used in the Acts was taken from the Septuagint, and means substantially the same as the Hebrew.

Verse 34

Answered Philip - That is, "addressed" Phil The Hebrews often use the word "answer" as synonymous with "addressing" one, whether he had spoken or not.

Of himself … - This was a natural inquiry, for there was nothing in the text itself that would determine to whom the reference was. The ancient Jews expressly applied the passage to the Messiah. Thus, the Targum of Jonathan on Isaiah 52:13, "Behold my servant shall deal prudently," etc., renders it, "Behold, my servant, the Messiah, shall be prospered," etc. But we should remember that the eunuch was probably not deeply versed in the Scriptures. We should remember, further, that he had just been at Jerusalem, and that the public mind was agitated about the proceedings of the Sanhedrin in putting Jesus of Nazareth, who claimed to be the Messiah, to death. It is by no means improbable that This passage had been urged as a proof that he was the Messiah; and that the Jews, to evade the force of it, had maintained that it referred to Isaiah or Jeremiah - as they have done since. Yet the subject was so important and so difficult that it had occupied

the attention of the traveler during his journey; and his question shows that he had been deeply pondering the inquiry whether it could refer to Isaiah himself or any of the prophets, or whether it must have reference to the Messiah. In this state of suspense and agitation, when his mind was just suited to receive instruction, God sent a messenger to guide him. He often thus prepares, by His Providence, or by a train of affecting and solemn events, the minds of people for a reception of the truth; and then He sends his messengers to guide the thoughtful and the anxious in the way of peace and salvation.

Verse 35

Opened his mouth - See Matthew 5:2.

At the same scripture - Taking this as a "text" to be illustrated.

Preached unto him Jesus - Showed him that Jesus of Nazareth exactly corresponded to the description of the prophet, and that therefore he referred to the Messiah, and that the Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth. How far Philip detailed the circumstances of the life and death of Christ is unknown. What follows shows also that he stated the design of baptism, and the duty of being baptized.

Verse 36

As they went on their way - In their journey.

A certain water - The expression used here does not determine whether this was a river, a brook, or a standing pool. And there are no circumstances to determine that. It is well known, however, that there is no large river or very considerable stream in this vicinity. All that is intimated is that there was water enough to perform the rite of baptism. Grotius says they came "to a fountain which was in the neighborhood of Bethsora, in the tribe of Juda, at the twentieth milestone from Aelia (Jerusalem) to Hebron." This is, however, a tradition taken from Eusebius. The place is still shown (Pococke).

What doth hinder me … - This shows that he had been instructed by Philip on the nature and design of baptism. It evinces also a purpose at once to give himself to Christ, to profess his name, and to be dedicated to his service.

To be baptized - On the meaning of the word "baptize" βαπτίζω baptizōsee all the notes on Matthew 3:6, Matthew 3:16.

Verse 37

And Philip said … - This was stated by Philip as the proper qualification for making a profession of religion. The terms are:

(1)"Faith," that is, a reception of Jesus as a Saviour; yielding the mind to the proper influences of the truths of redemption. See the notes on Mark 16:16.

(2)there is required not merely the assent of the understanding, but a surrender of the "heart, the will, the affections," to the truth of the gospel. As these were the proper qualifications then, so they are now. Nothing less is required; and nothing but this can constitute a proper qualification for the Lord's Supper.

I believe … - This profession is more than a professed belief that Jesus was "the Messiah." The name "Christ" implies that. "I believe that Jesus the Messiah is the Son of God." He professed his belief that he was the "Son of God" - showing either that he had before supposed that the Messiah "would be" the Son of God, or that Philip had instructed him on that point. It was natural for Philip, in discoursing on the humiliation and poverty of Jesus, to add also that he sustained a higher rank of being than a man, and was the Son of God. What precise ideas the eunuch attached to this expression cannot be now determined. This verse is missing in a very large number of manuscripts (Mill), and has been rejected by many of the ablest critics. It is also omitted in the Syriac and Ethiopic versions. It is not easy to conceive why it has been omitted in almost all the Greek mss. unless it is spurious. If it was not in the original copy of the Acts, it was probably inserted by some early transcriber, and was deemed so important to the connection, to show that the eunuch was not admitted hastily to baptism, that it was afterward retained. It contains, however, an important truth, elsewhere abundantly taught in the Scriptures, that "faith" is necessary to a proper profession of religion.

Verse 38

And they went down both into the water - This passage has been made the subject of much discussion on the subject of baptism. It has been adduced in proof of the necessity of immersion. It is not proposed to enter into that subject here (see the Editors' Notes at Matthew 3:6, Matthew 3:16). It may be remarked here that the preposition εἰς eistranslated "into," does not of necessity mean that they went "into" the water. Its meaning would be as well expressed by "to" or "unto," or as we should say, "they went "to" the water," without meaning to determine whether they went

“into” it or not. Out of “twenty-six” significations which Schleusner has given the word, this is one, and one which frequently occurs: John 11:38, “Jesus, therefore, groaning in himself, cometh to εἰς eisthe grave” - assuredly not “into” the grave; Luke 11:49, “I send them prophets,” Greek, “I send to εἰς eisthem prophets” - “to” them, not “into” them, compare Romans 2:4, 1 Corinthians 14:36; Matthew 12:41, “They repented at εἰς eisthe preaching of Jonas” - not into his preaching; John 4:5, “Then cometh he “to” εἰς eisa city of Samaria,” that is, “near to it,” for the context shows that he had not yet entered “into” it, compare Acts 7:6, Acts 7:8; John 21:4, “Jesus stood “on” εἰς eisthe shore,” that is, not “in,” but “near” the shore. These passages show:

(1)That the word does not necessarily mean that they entered “into” the water. But,

(2)If it did, it does not necessarily follow that the eunuch was immersed. There might be various ways of baptizing, even after they were “in” the water, besides immersing. Sprinkling or pouring might be performed there as well as elsewhere. The most solemn act of baptism that I ever saw performed was, when I was a boy, in the river on the banks of which I was born, where the minister and the candidate went both of them “into” the Myer, and, when near to the middle of the river, the candidate kneeled down in the water, and the minister with a bowl “poured” water on his head. Yet if the fact had been stated, in reference to this case, that “they went both down “into” the water, and came up out of the water,” and it had been hence inferred that the man was “immersed,” it would have been wholly a false inference. No such immersion occurred, and there is, from the narrative here, no more evidence that it occurred in the case of the eunuch. See βαπτίζω baptizōit is incumbent on those who maintain that “immersion” is the only valid mode of baptism to prove that this passage cannot possibly mean anything else, and that there was no other mode practiced by the apostles.

(4)it would still be incumbent to show that if this were the common and even the only mode then, in a warm climate, that it is indispensable that this mode should be practiced everywhere else. No such positive command can be adduced. And it follows, therefore, that it cannot be proved that immersion is the only lawful mode of baptism. See the Editors‘ Notes at Matthew 3:6, Matthew 3:16.

Verse 39

Out of the water - ἐκ ekThis preposition stands opposed to εἰς eis"into"; and as that may mean to, so this may mean From; if that means into, this means here out of.

The Spirit of the Lord - See Acts 8:29. The Spirit had suggested to Philip to go to meet the eunuch, and the same Spirit, now that he had fulfilled the design of his going there, directed his departure.

Caught away - This phrase has been usually understood of a forcible or miraculous removal of Philip to some other place. Some have even supposed that he was borne through the air by an angel (see even Doddridge). To such foolish interpretations have many expositors been led. The meaning is, clearly, that the Spirit, who had directed Philip to go near the eunuch, now removed him in a similar manner. That this is the meaning is clear:

(1) Because it accounts for all that occurred. It is not wise to suppose the existence of a miracle except where the effect cannot otherwise be accounted for, and except where there is a plain statement that there was a miracle.

(2) the word "caught away" ἥρπασεν hērpasendoes not imply that there was a miracle. The word properly means "to seize and bear away anything violently, without the consent of the owner," as robbers and plunderers do. Then it signifies to remove anything in a forcible manner; to make use of strength or power to remove it, Acts 23:10; Matthew 13:19; John 10:28; 2 Corinthians 12:2, 2 Corinthians 12:4, etc. In no case does it ever denote that a miracle is performed. And all that can be signified here is, that the Spirit strongly admonished Philip to go to some other place; that he so forcibly or vividly suggested the duty to his mind as to tear him away, as it were, from the society of the eunuch. He had been deeply interested in the case. He would have found pleasure in continuing the journey with him. But the strong convictions of duty urged by the Holy Spirit impelled him, as it were, to break off this new and interesting acquaintanceship, and to go to some other place. The purpose for which he was sent, to instruct and baptize the eunuch, was accomplished, and now he was called to some other field of labor. A similar instance of interpretation has been considered in the notes on Matthew 4:5.

And he went on his way rejoicing - His mind was enlightened on a perplexing passage of Scripture. He was satisfied respecting the Messiah. He was baptized; and he experienced what all feel who embrace the Saviour and are baptized - joy. It was joy resulting from the fact that he was reconciled to God; and a joy the natural effect of having done his duty promptly in making a profession of religion. If we wish happiness if we would avoid clouds and gloom, we should do our duty at once. If we delay until tomorrow what we ought to do today, we may expect to be troubled with melancholy thoughts. If we find peace, it will be in doing promptly just what God requires at our hands. This is the last that we hear of this man. Some have supposed that he carried the gospel to Ethiopia, and preached it there. But there is strong evidence to believe that the gospel was not preached there successfully until about the year 330 a.d., when it was introduced by Frumentius, sent to Abyssinia for that purpose by Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria. From this narrative we may learn:

(1)That God often prepares the mind to receive the truth.

(2)that this takes place sometimes with the great and the noble, as well as the poor and obscure.

(3)that we should study the Scriptures. This is the way in which God usually directs the mind in the truths of religion.

(4)that they who read the Bible with candor and care may expect that God will, in some mode, guide them into the truth. It will often be in a way which they least expect; but they need not be afraid of being left to darkness or error.

(5)that we should be ready at all times to speak to sinners. God often prepares their minds, as he did that of the eunuch, to receive the truth.

(6)that we should not be afraid of the great, he rich, or of strangers. God often prepares their minds to receive the truth; and we may find a man willing to hear of the Saviour where we least expected it.

(7)that we should do our duty in this respect, as Philip did, promptly. We should not delay or hesitate, but should at once do that which we believe to be in accordance with the will of God. See Psalm 119:60.

Verse 40

But Philip was found - That is, he came to Azotus, or he was not heard of until he reached Azotus. The word is often used in this sense. See 1 Chronicles 29:17, margin; 2 Chronicles 29:29, margin; Genesis 2:20; see also Luke 17:18; Romans 7:10. In all these places the word is used in the sense of to be, or to be present. It does not mean here that there was any miracle in the case, but that Philip, after leaving the eunuch, came to or was in Azotus.

Azotus - This is the Greek name of the city which by the Hebrews was called Ashdod. It was one of the cities which were not taken by Joshua, and which remained in the possession of the Philistines. It was to this place that the ark of God was sent when it was taken by the Philistines from the Israelites; and here Dagon was cast down before it, 1 Samuel 5:2-3. Uzziah, King of Judah, broke down its wall, and built cities or watch-towers around it, 2 Chronicles 26:6. It was a place of great strength and consequence. It was distant about thirty miles from Gaza. It was situated on the coast of the Mediterranean, and had a seaport, which has now entirely disappeared. The sea is now some two miles distant, and the intervening space is a desert of moving sand, which has reached the outskirts of the town (Land and the Book, Dr. Thomson, vol. ii, p. 320). Prof. Hackett (*Illustrations of Scripture*, pp. 142,143) says of this place: "A little village called Esdud perpetuates the ancient name. Ashdod was one of the chief cities of the Philistines, but is now utterly forsaken. The prophet‘s sentence has been executed upon it to the letter: ‹I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod‘ Amos 1:8. The only marks of antiquity which I could discover were a high mound, where the old city stood, covered now with fragments of pottery; two or three cellars or cisterns that seemed to have been recently laid open; two marble columns, one prostrate in the court of a neighboring khan, and the other made into a drinking-trough; several broken pieces of columns or tablets, mostly built into a sakieh, or watering machine; and a few traces of masonry near the Jaffa road, which may have belonged to the city walls. These last are so concealed as to be found only with special pains."

He preached in all the cities - Joppa, Lydda, Askelon, Arimarthea, etc., lying along the coast of the Mediterranean.

Cesarea - This city was formerly called Strato‘s Tower. It is situated on the coast of the Mediterranean, at the mouth of a small river, and has a fine

harbor. It is 36 miles south of Acre, and about 62 miles northwest of Jerusalem, and about the same distance northeast of Azotus. The city is supposed by some to be the Hazor mentioned in Joshua 11:1. It was rebuilt by Herod the Great, and named Caesarea in honor of Augustus Caesar. The city was dedicated to him, and was called Sebaste, the Greek word for Augustus. It was adorned with most splendid houses; and the Temple of Caesar was erected by Herod over against the mouth of the haven, in which was placed the statue of the Roman emperor. It became the seat of the Roman governor while Judea was a Roman province, Acts 23:33; Acts 25:6, Acts 25:13. Philip afterward resided at this place. See Acts 21:8-9. Caesarea at present is inhabited only by jackals and beasts of prey. "Perhaps," says Dr. Clarke, "there has not been in the history of the world an example of any city that in so short a space of time rose to such an extraordinary height of splendor as did this of Caesarea, or that exhibits a more awful contrast to its former magnificence by the present desolate appearance of its ruins. Not a single inhabitant remains. Of its gorgeous palaces and temples, enriched with the choicest works of art, scarcely a trace can be discerned. Within the space of 10 years after laying the foundation, from an obscure fortress, it became the most flourishing and celebrated city of all Syria." Now it is in utter desolation. See Robinson's Calmet, "Caesarea."

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Introduction

This chapter Acts 9 commences a very important part of the Acts of the Apostles the conversion and labors of Saul of Tarsus. The remainder of the book is chiefly occupied with an account of his labors and trials in the establishment of churches, and in spreading the gospel through the Gentile world. As the fact that the gospel was to be thus preached to the Gentiles was a very important fact, and as the toils of the apostle Paul and his fellow-laborers for this purpose were of an exceedingly interesting character, it was desirable to preserve authentic record of those labors; and that record we have in the remainder of this book.

Verse 1

And Saul - See the notes on Acts 7:58; Acts 8:3. He had been engaged be fore in persecuting the Christians, but he now sought opportunity to gratify his insatiable desire on a larger scale.

Yet breathing out - Not satisfied with what he had done, Acts 8:3. The word breathing out is expressive often of any deep, agitating emotion, as we then breathe rapidly and violently. It is thus expressive of violent anger. The emotion is absorbing, agitating, exhausting, and demands a more rapid circulation of blood to supply the exhausted vitality; and this demands an increased supply of oxygen, or vital air, which leads to the increased action of the lungs. The word is often used in this sense in the Classics (Schleusner). It is a favorite expression with Homer. Euripides has the same expression: "Breathing out fire and slaughter." So Theocritus: "They came unto the assembly breathing mutual slaughter" (Idyll. 22:82).

Threatening - Denunciation; threatening them with every breath the action of a man violently enraged, and who was bent on vengeance. It denotes also "intense activity and energy in persecution."

Slaughter - Murder. Intensely desiring to put to death as many Christians as possible. He rejoiced in their death, and joined in condemning them, Acts 26:10-11. From this latter place it seems that he had been concerned in putting many of them to death.

The disciples of the Lord - Against Christians.

Went unto the high priest - See the notes on Matthew 2:4. The letters were written and signed in the name and by the authority of the Sanhedrin, or written and signed in the name and by the authority of the Sanhedrin, or

Great Council of the nation. The high priest did it as president of that council. See Acts 9:14, and Acts 22:5. The high priest at that time was Theophilus, son of Ananus, who had been appointed at the feast of Pentecost, 37 a.d., by Vitellius, the Roman governor. His brother Jonathan had been removed from that office the same year (Kuinoel).

Verse 2

And desired of him - This shows the intensity of his wish to persecute the Christians, that he was willing to ask for such an employment.

Letters - Epistles, implying a commission to bring them to Jerusalem for trial and punishment. From this it seems that the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem claimed jurisdiction over all synagogues everywhere.

To Damascus - This was a celebrated city of Syria, and long the capital of a kingdom of that name. It is situated in a delightful region about 120 miles northeast of Jerusalem, and about one 190 miles southeast of Antioch. It is in the midst of an extensive plain, abounding with cypress and palm-trees, and extremely fertile. It is watered by the river Barrady, anciently called "Abana," 2 Kings 5:12. About 5 miles from the city is a place called the "meeting of the waters," where the Barrady is joined by another river, and thence is divided by art into several streams that flow through the plain. These streams, six or seven in number, are conveyed to water the orchards, farms, etc., and give to the whole scene a very picturesque appearance. The city, situated in a delightful climate, in a fertile country, is perhaps among the most pleasant in the world. It is called by the Orientals themselves the "paradise on earth." It is mentioned often in the Old Testament. It was a city in the time of Abraham, Genesis 15:2. By whom it was founded is unknown. It was taken and garrisoned by David A.M. 2992, 2 Samuel 8:6; 1 Chronicles 18:6. It is subsequently mentioned as sustaining very important parts in the conflicts of the Jews with Syria, 2 Kings 14:25; 2 Kings 16:5; Isaiah 9:11. It was taken by the Romans A.M. 3939, or about 60 years before Christ, in whose possession it was when Saul went there. It was conquered by the Saracens 713 a.d. About the year 1250, it was taken by the Christians in the Crusades, and was captured 1517 a.d. by Selim, and has been since under the Ottoman emperors.

The Arabians call this city "Damasch, or Demesch, or Schams." It is one of the most commercial cities in the Ottoman empire, and is distinguished also for manufactures, particularly for steel, hence called "Damascus steel." The population is estimated by Ali Bey at 200,000 (circa 1880's); Volney

states it at 80,000; Hassel believes it be about 100,000. About 20,000 are Maronites of the Catholic Church, 5,000 are Greeks, and 1,000 are Jews. The road from Jerusalem to Damascus lies between two mountains, not above 100 paces distant from each other; both are round at the bottom, and terminate in a point. That nearest the great road is called "Cocab, the star," in memory of the dazzling light which is here said to have appeared to Saul.

To the synagogues - See the notes on Matthew 4:23. The Jews were scattered into nearly all the regions surrounding Judea, and it is natural to suppose that many of them would be found in Damascus. Josephus assures us that ten thousand were massacred there in one hour; and at another time 18,000, along with their wives and children (*Jewish Wars*, book 2, chapter 20, section 2; book 7, chapter 8, section 7). By whom the gospel was preached there, or how they had been converted to Christianity, is unknown. The presumption is, that some of those who had been converted on the day of Pentecost had carried the gospel to Syria. See the notes on Acts 2:9-11.

That if … - It would seem that it was not certainly known that there were any Christians there. It was presumed that there were, and probably there was a report of that kind.

Of this way - Of this way or mode of life; of this kind of opinions and conduct; that is, any Christians.

He might bring them … - To be tried. The Sanhedrin at Jerusalem claimed jurisdiction over religious opinions, and their authority would naturally be respected by foreign Jews.

Verse 3

And as he journeyed - On his way, or while he was traveling. The place where this occurred is not known. Irby and Mangles say it is "outside the eastern gate." In the Boat and Caravan it is described as about a mile from the town, and near the Christian burying-ground which belongs to the Armenians. All that we know of it is that it was near to Damascus.

And suddenly - Like a flash of lightning.

There shined round about him … - The language which is expressed here would be used in describing a flash of lightning. Many critics have supposed that God made use of a sudden flash to arrest Paul, and that he was thus alarmed and brought to reflection. That God might make use of such means cannot be denied. But to this supposition in this case there are some unanswerable objections:

(1)It was declared to be the appearance of the Lord Jesus: Acts 9:27, "Barnabas declared unto them how that he had ‹seen the Lord in the way;'" 1 Corinthians 15:8, "And last of all he was seen of me also"; 1 Corinthians 9:1, "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"

(2)those who were with Saul saw the light, but did not hear the voice, Acts 22:9. This is incredible on the supposition that it was a flash of lightning near them.

(3)it was manifestly regarded as a message to Saul. The light appeared, and the voice spake to him. The others did not even hear the address. Besides,

(4)It was as easy for Jesus to appear in a supernatural manner as to appear amidst thunder and lightning. That the Lord Jesus appeared is distinctly affirmed, and we shall see that it is probable that he would appear in a supernatural manner.

In order to understand this, it may be necessary to make the following remarks:

(1) God was accustomed to appear to the Jews in a cloud; in a pillar of smoke, or of fire; in that special splendor which they denominated the Shechinah. In this way he went before them into the land of Canaan, Exodus 13:21-22; compare Isaiah 4:5-6. This appearance or visible manifestation they called the "glory of" Yahweh, is. Isaiah 6:1-4; Exodus 16:7, "in the morning ye shall see the glory of the Lord"; Acts 9:10; Leviticus 9:23; Numbers 14:10; Numbers 16:19, Numbers 16:42; Numbers 24:16; 1 Kings 8:11; Ezekiel 10:4. See the notes on Luke 2:9, "The glory of the Lord shone round about them."

(2) the Lord Jesus, in his transfiguration on the mount, had been encompassed with that glory. See the notes on Matthew 17:1-5.

(3) he had spoken of similar glory as pertain that with which he had been invested before his incarnation, and to which he would return; John 17:5, "And now, Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was"; Matthew 25:31, "The Son of Man shall come in his glory." Compare Matthew 16:27; Matthew 19:28. To this glory he had returned when he left the earth.

(4) it is a sentiment which cannot be shown to be incorrect, that the various appearances of "the angel of Yahweh," and of Yahweh, mentioned in the Old Testament, were appearances of the Messiah the God who would be incarnate - the special protector of his people. See Isaiah 6:1-13; compare with John 12:41.

(5) if the Lord Jesus appeared to Saul, it would be in his appropriate glory and honor as the ascended Messiah. That he did appear is expressly affirmed.

(6) this was an occasion when, if ever, such an appearance was proper. The design was to convert an infuriated persecutor, and to make him an apostle. To do this, it was necessary that he should see the Lord Jesus, 1 Corinthians 9:1-2. The design was further to make him an eminent instrument in carrying the gospel to the Gentiles. A signal miracle; a demonstration that he was invested with his appropriate glory John 17:5; a calling up a new witness to the fact of his resurrection, and of his solemn investment with glory in the heavens, seemed to be required in thus calling a violent persecutor to be an apostle and friend.

(7) we are to regard this appearance, therefore, as the reappearance of the Shechinah, the Son of God invested with appropriate glory, appearing to convince an enemy of his ascension, and to change him from a foe to a friend.

It has been objected that as the Lord Jesus had ascended to heaven, it cannot be presumed that his body would return to the earth again. To this we may reply, that the New Testament has thrown no light on this. Perhaps it is not necessary to suppose that his body returned, but that he made such a visible manifestation of himself as to convince Saul that he was the Messiah.

From heaven - From above; from the sky. In Acts 26:13, Paul says that the light was above the brightness of the sun at mid-day.

Verse 4

And he fell to the earth - He was astonished and overcome by the sudden flash of light. There is a remarkable similarity between what

occurred here, and what is recorded of Daniel in regard to the visions which he saw, Daniel 8:17. Also Daniel 10:8, "Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision; and there remained no strength in me, for my comeliness (vigor) was turned into corruption, and I retained no strength." The effect was such as to overpower the body.

And heard a voice - The whole company heard a voice Acts 9:7, but did not distinguish it as addressed particularly to Saul. He heard it speaking to himself.

Saying unto him … - This shows that it was not thunder, as many have supposed. It was a distinct articulation or utterance, addressing him by name.

Saul, Saul - A mode of address that is emphatic. The repetition of the name would fix his attention. Thus, Jesus addresses Martha Luke 10:41, and Simon Luke 22:31, and Jerusalem Matthew 23:37.

Why - For what reason. Jesus had done him no injury; had given him no provocation. All the opposition of sinners to the Lord Jesus and his church is without cause. See the notes on John 15:25, "They hated me without a cause."

Persecutest - See the notes on Matthew 5:11.

Thou me? - Christ and his people are one, John 15:1-6. To persecute them, therefore, was to persecute him, Matthew 25:40, Matthew 25:45.

Verse 5

And he said, Who art thou, Lord? - The word "Lord" here, as is frequently the case in the New Testament, means no more than "sir," John 4:19. It is evident that Saul did not as yet know that this was the Lord Jesus. He heard a voice as of a man; he heard himself addressed, but by whom the words were spoken was to him unknown. In his amazement and confusion, he naturally asked who it was that was thus addressing him.

And the Lord said - In this place the word "Lord" is used in a higher sense, to denote "the Saviour." It is his usual appellation. See the notes on Acts 1:24.

I am Jesus - It is clear, from this, that there was a personal appearance of the Saviour; that he was present to Saul; but in what particular form - whether seen as a man, or only appearing by the manifestation of his glory, is not affirmed. Though it was a personal appearance, however, of the Lord Jesus, designed to take the work of converting such a persecutor into his own hands, yet he designed to convert him in a natural way. He arrested his

attention; he filled him with alarm at his guilt; and then he presented the truth respecting himself. In Acts 22:8, the expression is thus recorded: "I am Jesus of Nazareth," etc. There is no contradiction, as Luke here records only a part of what was said; Paul afterward stated the whole. This declaration was suited especially to humble and mortify Saul. There can be no doubt that he had often blasphemed his name, and profanely derided the notion that the Messiah could come out of Nazareth. Jesus here uses, however, that very designation. "I am Jesus the Nazarene, the object of your contempt and scorn." Yet Saul saw him now invested with special glory.

It is hard … - This is evidently a proverbial expression. Kuinoel has quoted numerous places in which a similar mode of expression occurs in Greek writers. Thus, Euripides, Bacch., 791, "I, who am a frail mortal, should rather sacrifice to him who is a god, than, by giving place to anger, kick against the goads." So Pindar, Pyth., 2:173, "It is profitable to bear willingly the assumed yoke. To kick against the goad is pernicious conduct." So Terence, Phome., 1,2,27, "It is foolishness for thee to kick against a goad." Ovid has the same idea, Tristam, ii. 15. The word translated "pricks" here κέντρον kentronmeans properly "any sharp point which will pierce or perforate," as the sting of a bee, etc. But it commonly means an ox-goad, a sharp piece of iron stuck into the end of a stick, with which the ox is urged on. These goads among the Hebrews were made very large. Thus, Shamgar killed 600 men with one of them, Judges 3:31. Compare 1 Samuel 13:21. The expression "to kick against the prick" is derived from the action of a stubborn and unyielding ox kicking against the goad. And as the ox would injure no one by it but himself; as he would gain nothing, it comes to denote "an obstinate and refractory disposition and course of conduct, resisting the authority of him who has a right to command, and opposing the leadings of Providence, to the injury of him who makes the resistance." It denotes "rebellion against lawful authority, and thus getting into greater difficulty by attempting to oppose the commands to duty." This is the condition of every sinner. If people wish to be happy, they should cheerfully submit to the authority of God. They should not rebel against his dealings. They should not complain against their Creator. They should not resist the claims of their consciences. By all this they only injure themselves. No man can resist God or his own conscience and be happy. People evince this temper in the following ways:

(1) By violating plain laws of God.

(2) by attempting to resist his claims.

(3) by refusing to do what their conscience requires.

(4) by attempting to free themselves from serious impressions and alarms.

(5) by pursuing a course of vice and wickedness against what they know to be right.

(6) by refusing to submit to the dealings of Providence. And,

(7) In any way by opposing God, and refusing to submit to his authority, and to do what is right.

Verse 6

And he, trembling - Alarmed at what he saw and heard, and at the consciousness of his own evil course. It is not remarkable that a sinner trembles when he sees his guilt and danger.

And astonished - At what he saw.

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? - This indicates a subdued soul, a humbled spirit. Just before, he had sought only to do his own will; now he inquired what was the will of the Saviour. Just before he was acting under a commission from the Sanhedrin; now he renounced their authority, and asked what the Lord Jesus would have him to do. Just before he had been engaged in a career of opposition to the Lord Jesus; now he sought at once to do his will. This indicates the usual change in the mind of the sinner when he is converted. The great controversy between him and God is, whose will shall be followed. The sinner follows his own; the first act of the Christian is to surrender his own will to that of God, and to resolve to do what he requires. We may further remark here that this indicates the true nature of conversion. It is decided, prompt immediate. Paul did not debate the matter Galatians 1:16; he did not inquire what the scribes and Pharisees would say; he did not consult his own reputation; he did not ask what the world would think. With characteristic promptness - with a readiness which showed what he would yet be, he gave himself up at once, and entirely, to

the Lord Jesus, evidently with a purpose to do his will alone. This was the case also with the jailor at Philippi, Acts 16:30. Nor can there be any real conversion where the heart and will are not given to the Lord Jesus, to be directed and moulded by him at his pleasure. We may test our conversion then by the example of the apostle Paul. If our hearts have been given up as his was, we are true friends of Christ.

Go into the city - Damascus. They were near it, Acts 9:3.

And it shall be told thee - It is remarkable that he was thus directed. But we may learn from it:

(1) That even in the most striking and remarkable cases of conversion, there is not at once a clear view of duty. What course of life should be followed; what should be done; nay, what should be believed, is not at once apparent.

(2) the aid of others, and especially ministers, and of experienced Christians, is often very desirable to aid even those who are converted in the most remarkable manner. Saul was converted by a miracle; the Saviour appeared to him in his glory; of the truth of his Messiahship he had no doubt, but still he was dependent on an humble disciple in Damascus to be instructed in what he should do.

(3) those who are converted, in however striking a manner it may be, should be willing to seek the counsel of those who are in the church before them. The most striking evidence of their conversion will not prevent their deriving important direction and benefit from the aged, the experienced, and the wise in the Christian church.

(4) such remarkable conversions are suited to induce the subjects of the change to seek counsel and direction. They produce humility; a deep sense of sin and of unworthiness; and a willingness to be taught and directed by anyone who can point out the way of duty and of life.

Verse 7

And the men which journeyed with him - Why these men attended him is unknown. They might have been appointed to aid him, or they may have been travelers with whom Saul had accidentally fallen in.

Stood speechless - In Acts 26:14, it is said that they all fell to the earth at the appearance of the light. But there is no contradiction. The narrative in that place refers to the immediate effect of the appearance of the light. They were immediately smitten to the ground together. This was before the voice spake to Saul, Acts 26:14. In this place Acts 9:7 the historian is speaking of what occurred after the first alarm. There is no improbability that they rose from the ground immediately, and surveyed the scene with silent amazement and alarm. The word "speechless" ἐννεοὶ enneoiproperly denotes "those who are so astonished or stupefied as to be unable to speak." In the Greek writers it means those who are deaf-mutes.

Hearing a voice - Hearing a sound or noise. The word here rendered "voice" is thus frequently used, as in Genesis 3:8; 1 Samuel 12:18; Psalm 29:3-4; Matthew 24:31 (Greek); 1 Thessalonians 4:16. In Acts 22:9, it is said, "They which were with me (Paul) saw indeed the light, and were afraid, but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me." In this place, the words "heard not the voice" must be understood in the sense of "understanding the words," of hearing the address, the distinct articulation, which Paul heard. They heard a "noise"; they were amazed and alarmed, but they did not hear the distinct words addressed to Saul. A similar instance occurs in John 12:28-29, when the voice of God came from heaven to Jesus, "The people who stood by and heard it said it thundered." They heard the sound, the noise; they did not distinguish the words addressed to him. See also Daniel 10:7, and 1 Kings 19:11-13.

Verse 8

When his eyes were opened - He naturally closed them at the appearance of the light, and in his fright kept them closed for some time.

He saw no man - This darkness continued three days, Acts 9:9. There is no reason to suppose that there was a miracle in this blindness, for in Acts 22:11, it is expressly said to have been caused by the intense light. "And when I could not see for the glory of that light," etc. The intense, sudden light had so affected the optic nerve of the eye as to cause a temporary blindness. This effect is not uncommon. The disease of the eye which is thus produced is called "amaurosis," or more commonly "gutta serena." It consists in a loss of sight without any apparent defect of the eye. Sometimes the disease is periodic, coming on suddenly, continuing for three or four days, and then disappearing (Webster). A disease of this kind is often caused by excessive light. When we look at the sun, into a furnace, or into a

crucible with fused metal, we are conscious of a temporary pain in the eye, and of a momentary blindness. “In northern and tropical climates, from the glare of the sun or snow, a variety of amaurosis (gutta serena) occurs, which, if it produces blindness during the day, is named nyctalopia; if during the night, it is called hemeralopia. Another variety exists in which the individual is blind all day, until a certain hour, when he sees distinctly, or he sees and is blind every alternate day, or is only blind one day in the week, fortnight, or month” (the Edinburgh Encyclopedia‘s “Surgery”). A total loss of sight has been the consequence of looking at the sun during an eclipse, or of watching it as it sets in the west. This effect is caused by the intense action of the light on the optic nerve, or sometimes from a disorder of the brain. A case is mentioned by Michaelis (Kuinoel in loco) of a man who was made blind by a bright flash of lightning, and who continued so for four weeks, who was again restored to sight in a tempest by a similar flash of lightning. Electricity has been found to be one of the best remedies for restoring sight in such cases.

Verse 9

And neither did eat nor drink - Probably because he was overwhelmed with a view of his sins, and was thus indisposed to eat. All the circumstances would contribute to this. His past life; his great sins; the sudden change in his views; his total absorption in the vision; perhaps also his grief at the loss of his sight, would all fill his mind, and indispose him to partake of food. Great grief always produces this effect. And it is not uncommon now for an awakened and convicted sinner, in view of his past sins and danger, to be so pained as to destroy his inclination for food, and to produce involuntary fasting. We are to remember also that Paul had yet no assurance of forgiveness. He was arrested, alarmed, convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, and humbled, but he had not found comfort. He was brought to the dust, and left to three painful days of darkness and suspense, before it was told him what he was to do. In this painful and perplexing state, it was natural that he should abstain from food. This case should not be brought now, however, to prove that convicted sinners must remain in darkness and under conviction. Sail‘s case was extraordinary. His blindness was literal. This state of darkness was necessary to humble him and fit him for his work. But the moment a sinner will give his heart to Christ, he may find peace. If he resists, and rebels longer, it will be his own fault. By the nature of the ease, as well as by the promises of the Bible, if a sinner will

yield himself at once to the Lord Jesus, he will obtain peace. That sinners do not sooner obtain peace is because they do not sooner submit themselves to God.

Verse 10

A certain disciple - A Christian. Many have supposed that he was one of the 70 disciples. But nothing more is certainly known of him than is related here. He had very probably been some time a Christian Acts 9:13, and had heard of Saul, but was personally a stranger to him. In Acts 22:12, it is said that he was a devout man according to the Law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there. There was wisdom in sending such a Christian to Saul, as it might do much to conciliate the minds of the Jews there toward him.

Said the Lord - The Lord Jesus is alone mentioned in all this transaction. And as he had commenced the work of converting Saul, it is evident that he is intended here. See the notes on Acts 1:24.

In a vision - Perhaps by a dream. The main idea is, that he revealed his will to him in the case. The word "vision" is often used in speaking of the "communications" made to the prophets, and commonly means that future events were made to pass in review before the mind, as we look upon a landscape. See the notes on Isaiah 1:1; compare Genesis 15:1; Numbers 12:6; Ezekiel 11:24; Acts 10:3; Acts 11:5; Acts 16:9; Daniel 2:19; Daniel 7:2; Daniel 7:1-2, Daniel 7:26; Daniel 10:7. See the notes on Matthew 17:9.

Verse 11

Into the street which is called Straight - This street extends now from the eastern to the western gate, about three miles, crossing the whole city and suburbs in a direct line. Near the eastern gate is a house, said to be that of Judah, in which Paul lodged. There is in it a very small closet, where tradition reports that the apostle passed three days without food, until Ananias restored him to sight. Tradition also says that he had here the vision recorded in 2 Corinthians 12:2. There is also in this street a fountain whose water is drunk by Christians, in remembrance of what, they suppose, the same fountain produced for the baptism of Paul (Robinson, Calmet).

Of Tarsus - This city was the capital of Cilicia, a province of Asia Minor. It was situated on the hanks of the Cydnus River. It was distinguished for the culture of Greek philosophy and literature, so that at one time in its schools, and in the number of its learned men, it was the rival of Athens and Alexandria. In allusion to this, perhaps, Paul says that

he was "born in Tarsus, a citizen of no mean city," Acts 21:39. In reward for its exertions and sacrifices during the civil wars of Rome, Tarsus was made a free city by Augustus. See notes on Acts 16:37; Acts 21:39; Acts 22:28. It still exists as "Tersous," with a population of about 20,000, but is described as "filthy and ruinous."

Behold, he prayeth - This gives us a full indication of the manner in which Saul passed the three days mentioned in Acts 9:9. It is plain, from what follows, that Ananias regarded Saul as an enemy to Christianity, and that he would have been apprehensive of danger if he were with him, Acts 9:13-14. This remark, "Behold, he prayeth," is made to him to silence his fears, and to indicate the change in the feelings and views of Saul. Before, he was a persecutor; now, his change is indicated by his giving himself to prayer. That Saul did not pray before is not implied by this; for he fully accorded with the customs of the Jews, Philemon 3:4-6. But his prayers were not the prayers of a saint. They were the prayers of a Pharisee (compare Luke 18:10, etc.), now they were the prayers of a broken-hearted sinner; then he prayed depending on his own righteousness, now depending on the mercy of God in the Messiah. We may learn here:

(1) That one indication of conversion to God is real prayer. A Christian may as well be characterized by that as by any single appellation - "a man of prayer."

(2) it is always the attendant of true conviction for sin that we pray. The convicted Sinner feels his danger, and his need of forgiveness. Conscious that he has no righteousness himself, he now seeks that of another, and depends on the mercy of God. Before, he was too proud to pray; now, he is willing to humble himself and to ask for mercy.

(3) it is a sufficient indication of the character of any man to say, "Behold, he prays." It at once tells us, better than volumes would without this, what is his real character. Knowing this, we know all about him. We at once confide in his piety, his honesty, his humility, his willingness to do good. It is at the same time the indication of his state with God, and the pledge that he will do his duty to people. We mean, of course, real prayer. Knowing that a man is sincere, and humble, and faithful in his private devotions, and in the devotions of his family, we confide in him; and are willing to trust to his readiness to do all that he is convinced that he ought

to do. Ananias, apprised of this in Saul, had full evidence of the change of his character, and was convinced that he ought to lay aside all his former prejudices, and to seek him, and to acknowledge him as a brother.

Verse 12

And he hath seen in a vision … - When this was shown to Saul, or how, is not recorded. The vision was shown to Saul to assure him when Ananias came that he was no impostor. He was thus prepared to receive consolation from this disciple. He was even apprised of his name, that he might be the more confirmed.

Verse 13-14

I have heard by many … - This was in the vision, Acts 9:10. The passage of such a train of thoughts through the mind was perfectly natural at the command to go and search out Saul. There would instantly occur all that had been heard of his fury in persecution; and the expression here may indicate the state of a mind amazed that such a one should need his counsel, and afraid, perhaps, of entrusting himself to one thus bent on persecution. All this evidently passed in the dream or vision of Ananias, and perhaps cannot be considered as any deliberate unwillingness to go to him. It is clear, however, that such thoughts should have been banished, and that he should have gone at once to the praying Saul. When Christ commands, we should suffer no suggestion of our own thoughts, and no apprehension of our own danger, to interfere.

By many - Probably many who had fled from persecution, and had taken refuge in Damascus. It is also evident Acts 9:14 that Ananias had been apprised, perhaps by letters from the Christians at Jerusalem, of the purpose which Saul had in view in now going to Damascus.

To thy saints - Christians; called saints ἅγιοι hagioibecause they are holy, or consecrated to God.

Verse 15

Go thy way - This is often the only answer that we obtain to the suggestion of our doubts and hesitations about duty. God tells us still to do what he requires, with an assurance only that his commands are just, and that there are good reasons for them.

A chosen vessel - The usual meaning of the word "vessel" is well known. It commonly denotes a "cup or basin," such as is used in a house. It then denotes "any instrument which may be used to accomplish a purpose,

perhaps particularly with the notion of conveying or communicating." In the Scriptures it is used to denote the "instrument" or "agent" which God employs to convey his favors to mankind, and is thus employed to represent the ministers of the gospel, 2 Corinthians 4:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:4. Compare Isaiah 10:5-7. Paul is called "chosen" because Christ had "selected" him, as he did his other apostles, for this service. See the notes on John 15:16.

To bear my name - To communicate the knowledge of me.

Before the Gentiles - The nations; all who were not Jews. This was the principal employment of Paul. He spent his life in this, and regarded himself as especially called to be the apostle of the Gentiles, Romans 11:13; Romans 15:16; Galatians 2:8.

And kings - This was fulfilled, Acts 25:23, etc.; Acts 26:32; Acts 27:24.

And the children of Israel - The Jews. This was done. He immediately began to preach to them, Acts 9:20-22. Wherever he went, he preached the gospel first to them, and then to the Gentiles, Acts 13:46; Acts 28:17.

Verse 16

For I will show him … - This seems to be added to encourage Ananias. He had feared Saul. The Lord now informs him that Saul, hitherto his enemy, would ever after be his friend. He would not merely profess repentance, but would manifest the sincerity of it by encountering trials and reproaches for his sake. The prediction here was fully accomplished, Acts 20:23; 2 Corinthians 11:23-27; 2 Timothy 1:11-12.

Verse 17

Putting his hands on him - This was not "ordination," but was the usual mode of imparting or communicating blessings. See the notes on Matthew 19:13; Matthew 9:18.

Brother Saul - An expression recognizing him as a fellow-Christian.

Be filled with the Holy Ghost - See the notes on Acts 2:4.

Verse 18

As it had been scales - ὡσεὶ λεπίδες hōsei lepidesThe word ὡσεὶ hōsei"as it had been," is designed to qualify the following word. It is not said that scales literally fell from his eyes, but that an effect followed as if scales had been suddenly taken off. Evidently, the expression is deigned to mean no more than this. The effect was such as would take place if some dark, imperious substance had been placed before the eyes, and had been suddenly removed. The cure was as sudden, the restoration to sight was as

immediate, as if such an interposing substance had been suddenly removed. This is all that the expression fairly implies, and this is all that the nature of the case demands. As the blindness had been caused by the natural effect of the light, probably on the optic nerve (Acts 9:8-9, note), it is manifest that no literal removing of scales would restore the vision. We are therefore to lay aside the idea of literal scales falling to the earth. No such thing is affirmed, and no such thing would have met the case. The word translated "scales" is used nowhere else in the New Testament. It means properly "the small crust or layer which composes a part of the covering of a fish, and also any thin layer or leaf exfoliated or separated, as scales of iron, bone, or a piece of bark, etc." (Webster). An effect similar to this is described in Acts 9:17.

(3) the immediate effect shows that this was miraculous. Had it been a slow recovery, it might have been doubtful; but here it was instantaneous, and it was thus put beyond a question that it was a miracle.

And was baptized - In this he followed the example of all the early converts to Christianity. They were baptized immediately. See Acts 2:41; Acts 8:12, Acts 8:36-39.

Verse 19

Had received meat - Food. The word "meat" has undergone a change since our translation was made. It then meant, as the original does, food of all kinds.

With the disciples - With Christians, compare Acts 2:42.

Order? certain days with the disciples? - Certain days: How long is not known. It was long enough, however, to preach the gospel, Acts 9:22; Acts 26:20. It might have been for some months, as he did not go to Jerusalem under three years from that time. He remained some time at Damascus, and then went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus, and then went to Jerusalem, Galatians 1:17. This visit to Arabia Luke has omitted, but there is no contradiction. He does not affirm that he did not go to Arabia.

We have now passed through the account of one of the most remarkable conversions to Christianity that has ever occurred that of the apostle Paul. His conversion has always been justly considered as a strong proof of the Christian religion. Because:

(1) This change could not have occurred by any lack of fair prospects of honor. He was distinguished already as a Jew. He had had the best opportunities for education that the nation afforded. He had every prospect of rising to distinction and office.

(2) it could not have been produced by any prospect of wealth or fame by becoming a Christian. Christians were poor; and to be a Christian then was to be exposed to contempt, to persecution, and to death. Saul had no reason to suppose that he would escape the common lot of Christians.

(3) he was as firmly opposed to Christianity before his conversion as possible. He had already distinguished himself for his hostility. Infidels often say that Christians are prejudiced in favor of their religion. But here was a man, at first a bitter infidel, and a deadly foe to Christianity. All the prejudices of his education, all his prospects, all his former views and feelings, were opposed to the gospel of Christ. He became, however, one of its most firm advocates and friends, and it is for infidels to account for this change. There must have been some cause, some motive for it; and is there anything more rational than the supposition that Saul was convinced in a most striking and wonderful manner of the truth of Christianity?

(4) his subsequent life showed that the change was sincere and real. He encountered danger and persecution to evince his attachment to Christ; he went from land to land, and exposed himself to every peril and every form of obloquy and scorn, always rejoicing that he was a Christian, and was permitted to suffer as a Christian, and has thus given the highest proofs of his sincerity. If such sufferings and such a life were not evidences of sincerity, then it would be impossible to fix on any circumstances of a man‘s life that would furnish proof that he was not a deceiver.

(5) if Paul was sincere; if his conversion was genuine, the Christian religion is true. Nothing else but a religion from heaven could produce this change. There is here, therefore, the independent testimony of a man who was once a persecutor; converted in a wonderful manner; his whole life, views, and feelings revolutionized, and all his subsequent career evincing the sincerity of his feelings and the reality of the change. He is just such a witness as infidels ought to be satisfied with; a man once an enemy; a man

whose testimony cannot be impeached; a man who had no interested motives, and who was willing to stand forth anywhere, and avow his change of feeling and purpose. We adduce him as such a witness; and infidels are bound to dispose of his testimony, or to embrace the religion which he embraced.

(6) the example of Saul does not stand alone. Hundreds and thousands of enemies; persecutors, and slanderers have been changed, and every such one becomes a living witness of the power and truth of the Christian religion. The scoffer becomes reverent; the profane man learns to speak the praise of God; the sullen, bitter foe of Christ becomes his friend, and lives and dies under the influence of his religion. Could better proof be asked that this religion is from God?

Verse 20

And straightway - Immediately. It was an evidence of the genuineness of his conversion that he was willing at once to avow himself to be the friend of the Lord Jesus.

He preached Christ - He proclaimed that Jesus was the Christ. See Acts 9:22. Many manuscripts read here Jesus instead of Christ. Griesbach has adopted this reading. Such is also the Syriac, the Vulgate, and the Ethiopic. The reading accords much better with the subject than the common reading. That Christ, or the Messiah, was the Son of God, all admitted. In the New Testament the names Christ and Son of God are used as synonymous. But the question was whether Jesus was the Christ, and was therefore the Son of God, and this Paul showed to the Jews. Paul continued the practice of attending the synagogues; and in the synagogues anyone had a right to speak who was invited by the officiating minister. See Acts 13:15.

That he is the Son of God - That he is the Messiah.

Verse 21

Were amazed - Amazed at his sudden and remarkable change.

That destroyed - That opposed; laid waste; persecuted. Compare Galatians 1:13.

For that intent - With that design, that he might destroy the church at Damascus.

Verse 22

Increased the more in strength - His conviction of the truth of the Christian religion became stronger every day, and hence his moral strength or boldness increased.

And confounded - See Acts 2:6. The word here means "confuted." It means also occasionally "to produce a tumult or excitement," Acts 19:32; Acts 21:31. Perhaps the idea of producing such a tumor is intended to be conveyed here. Paul confuted the Jews, and by so doing he was the occasion of their tumultuous proceedings, or he so enraged them as to lead to great agitation and excitement - a very common effect of close and conclusive argumentation.

Proving that this - This Jesus.

Is very Christ - Greek: that this is the Christ. The word "very" means here simply in the Greek: ὁ Χριστός ho ChristosIt means that Paul showed by strong and satisfactory arguments that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah. The arguments which he would use may be easily conceived, but the evangelist has not seen fit to record them.

Verse 23

And after that many days … - How long a time elapsed before this is not recorded in this place, but it is evident that the writer means to signify that a considerable time intervened. There is, therefore, an interval here which Luke has not filled up; and if this were the only narrative which we had, we should be at a loss how to understand this. From all that we know now of the usual conduct of the Jews toward the apostles, and especially toward Paul, it would seem highly improbable that this interval would be passed peaceably or quietly. Nay, it would be highly improbable that he would be allowed to remain in Damascus many days without violent persecution. Now it so happens that by turning to another part of the New Testament, we are enabled to ascertain the manner in which this interval was filled up. Turn then to Galatians 1:17, and we learn from Paul himself that he went into Arabia, and spent some time there, and then returned again to Damascus. The precise time which would be occupied in such a journey is not specified, but it would not be performed under a period of some months.

In Galatians 1:18, we are informed that he did not go to Jerusalem until three years after his conversion; and as there is reason to believe that he went up to Jerusalem directly after escaping from Damascus the second time Acts 9:25-26, it seems probable that the three years were spent chiefly

in Arabia. We have thus an account of the "many days" here referred to by Luke. And in this instance we have a striking example of the truth and honesty of the sacred writers. By comparing these two accounts together, we arrive at the whole state of the case. Neither seems to be complete without the other. Luke has left a chasm which he has nowhere else supplied. But that chasm we are enabled to fill up from the apostle himself, in a letter written long after, and without any design to amend or complete the history of Luke - for the introduction of this history into the Epistle to the Galatians was for a very different purpose - to show that he received his commission directly from the Lord Jesus, and in a manner independent of the other apostles.

The two accounts, therefore, are like the two parts of a tally; neither is complete without the other; and yet, being brought together, they so exactly fit as to show that the one is precisely adjusted to the other. And as the two parts were made by different individuals, and without design of adapting them to each other, they show that the writers had formed no collusion or agreement to impose on the world; that they are separate and independent witnesses; that they are honest men; that their narratives are true records of what actually occurred; and the two narratives constitute, therefore, a strong and very valuable proof of the correctness of the sacred narrative. If asked why Luke has not reherded a full account of this in the Acts, it may be replied that there are many circumstances and facts omitted in all histories from the necessity of the case. Compare John 21:25. It is remarkable here, not that he has not recorded this, but that he has left a chasm in his own history which can he so readily filled up.

Were fulfilled - Had elapsed.

Took counsel … - Laid a scheme, or designed to kilt him. Compare Acts 23:12; Acts 25:3. His zeal and success would enrage them, and they knew of no other way in which they could free themselves from the effects of his arguments and influence.

Verse 24

But their laying await - Their counsel; their design.

Was known of Saul - Was made known to him. In what way this was communicated we do not know. This design of the Jews against Saul is referred to in 2 Corinthians 11:32-33, where it is said, "In Damascus, the governor under Aretas the king kept the Damascenes with a garrison,

desirous to apprehend me; and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands."

And they watched the gates - Cities were surrounded by high walls, and of course the gates were presumed to be the only places of escape. As they supposed that Saul, apprised of their designs, would make an attempt to escape, they stationed guards at the gates to intercept him. In 2 Corinthians 11:32, it is said that the governor kept the city for the purpose of apprehending him. It is possible that the governor might have been a Jew, and one, therefore, who would enter into their views. Or if not a Jew, the Jews who were there might easily represent Saul as an offender, and demand his being secured, and thus a garrison or guard might be furnished them for their purpose. See a similar attempt made by the Jews recorded in Matthew 28:14.

Verse 25

Took him by night … - This was done through a window in the wall, 2 Corinthians 11:33.

In a basket - This word is used to denote commonly "the basket in which food was carried," Matthew 15:37; Mark 8:8, Mark 8:20. It was in this way that Rahab let down the spies Joshua 2:15, and so David escaped from Saul, 1 Samuel 19:12. Probably this occurred in an unguarded part of the wall, where some overhanging houses, as is usual in Eastern cities, opened into the outer country. This conduct of Saul was in accordance with the direction of the Lord Jesus Matthew 10:23, "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another," etc. Saul was certain of death if he remained; and as he could secure his life by flight without abandoning any principle of religion, or denying his Lord, it was his duty to do so. Christianity requires us to sacrifice our lives only when we cannot avoid it without denying the Saviour, or abandoning the principles of our religion.

Verse 26

Was come to Jerusalem - He did not go to Jerusalem immediately after he escaped from Damascus. He first went into Arabia, where he spent a considerable part, or the whole of three years. For the reasons why he went there, and why this fact is omitted by Luke in the Acts, see the notes on Galatians 1:18.

He assayed - He attempted; he endeavored.

To join himself - To become connected with them as a fellow-Christian.

But they were all afraid of him - Their fear, or suspicion, was excited probably on these grounds:

(1) They remembered his former violence against Christians. They had an instinctive shrinking from him, and suspicion of the man that had been so violent a persecutor.

(2) he had been absent three years. If they had not heard of him during that time, they would naturally retain much of their old feelings toward him. If they had, they might suspect the man who had not returned to Jerusalem; who had not before sought the society of other Christians; and who had spent that time in a distant country, and among strangers. It would seem remarkable that he had not at once returned to Jerusalem and connected himself with the apostles. But the sacred writer does not justify the fears of the apostles. He simply records the fact of their apprehension. It is not unnatural, however, to have doubts respecting an open and virulent enemy of the gospel who suddenly professes a change in favor of it. The human mind does not easily cast off suspicion of some unworthy motive, and open itself at once to entire confidence. When great and notorious sinners profess to be converted - people who have been violent, artful, or malignant - it is natural to ask whether they have not some unworthy motive still in their professed change. Confidence is a plant of slow growth, and starts up, not by a sudden profession, but is the result of a course of life which is worthy of affection and of trust.

A disciple - A sincere Christian.

Verse 27

But Barnabas - See the notes on Acts 4:36. Barnabas was of Cyprus, not far from Tarsus, and it is not improbable that he had been before acquainted with Saul.

To the apostles - To Peter and James, Galatians 1:18-19. Probably the other apostles were at that time absent from Jerusalem.

And declared unto them … - It may seem remarkable that the apostles at Jerusalem had not before heard of the conversion of Saul. The following considerations may serve in some degree to explain this:

(1) It is certain that contact between different countries was then much more difficult than it is now. There were no posts; no public conveyances; no mails; no telegraphs; nothing that corresponded with our modes of contact between one part of the world and another.

(2) there was at this time a state of animosity amounting to hostility subsisting between Herod and Aretas. Herod the tetrarch had married the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia, and had put her away (Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 18, chapter 5, section 1,2). The result of this was a long misunderstanding between them, and a war; and the effects of that war might have been to interrupt the communication very much throughout all that country.

(3) though the Jews at Jerusalem might have heard of the conversion of Saul, yet it was for their interest to keep it a secret, and not to mention it to Christians. But,

(4) Though the Christians who were there had heard of it, yet it is probable that they were not fully informed on the subject; that they had not had all the evidence of his conversion which they desired; and that they looked with suspicion on him. It was therefore proper that they should have a full statement of the evidence of his conversion; and this was made by Barnabas.

Verse 28

And he was with them … - That is, he was admitted to their friendship, and recognized as a Christian and an apostle. The time during which he then remained at Jerusalem was, however, only fifteen days, Galatians 1:18.

Verse 29

And spake boldly - He openly defended the doctrine that Jesus was the Messiah.

In the name … - By the authority of the Lord Jesus.

Against the Grecians - See the word "Grecians" explained in the notes on Acts 6:1. It means that he not only maintained that Jesus was the Christ in the presence of those Jews who resided at Jerusalem, and who spoke the Hebrew language, but also before those foreign Jews who spoke the Greek language, and who had come up to Jerusalem. They would be as much opposed to the doctrine that Jesus was the Christ as those who resided in Jerusalem.

They went about - They sought to slay him; or they formed a purpose to put him to death as an apostate. See Acts 9:23.

Verse 30

To Cesarea - See the notes on Acts 8:40.

And sent him forth to Tarsus - This was his native city. See the notes on Acts 9:11. It was in Cilicia, where Paul doubtless preached the gospel, Galatians 1:21, "Afterward I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia."

Verse 31

Then had the churches rest - That is, the persecutions against Christians ceased. Those persecutions had been excited by the opposition made to Stephen Acts 11:19; they had been greatly promoted by Saul Acts 8:3; and they had extended doubtless throughout the whole land of Palestine. The precise causes of this cessation of the persecution are not known. Probably they were the following:

(1) It is not improbable that the great mass of Christians had been driven into other regions by these persecutions.

(2) he who had been most active in exciting the persecution; who was, in a sort, its leader, and who was best adapted to carry it on, had been converted. He had ceased his opposition; and even he was now removed from Judea. All this would have some effect in causing the persecution to subside.

(3) but it is not improbable that the state of things in Judea contributed much to turn the attention of the Jews to other matters. Dr. Lardner accounts for this in the following manner: "Soon after Caligula's accession, the Jews at Alexandria suffered very much from the Egyptians in that city, and at length their oratories there were all destroyed. In the third year of Caligula, 39 a.d., Petronius was sent into Syria, with orders to set up the emperor's statue in the temple at Jerusalem. This order from Caligula was, to the Jews, a thunderstroke. The Jews must have been too much engaged after this to mind anything else, as may appear from the accounts which Philo and Josephus have given us of this affair. Josephus says ‹that Caligula ordered Petronius to go with an army to Jerusalem, to set up his statue in the temple there; enjoining him, if the Jews opposed it, to put to death all who made any resistance, and to make all the rest of the nation slaves. Petronius therefore marched from Antioch into Judea with three legions and a large body of auxiliaries raised in Syria. "All were hereupon filled with

consternation, the army being come as far as Ptolemais." See Lardner's *Works*, vol. i, pp. 101,102, London edition, 1829.

Philo gives the same account of the consternation as Josephus (Philo, DeLegat. a.d. Cai., pp. 1024,1025). He describes the Jews "as abandoning their cities, villages, and open country; as going to Petronius in Phoenicia, both men and women, the old, the young, the middle-aged; as throwing themselves on the ground before Petronius with weeping and lamentation," etc. The effect of this consternation in diverting their minds from the Christians can be easily conceived. The prospect that the images of the Roman emperor were about to be set up by violence in the temple, or, that in case of resistance, death or slavery was to be their portion, and the advance of a large army to execute that purpose, all tended to throw the nation into alarm. By the providence of God, therefore, this event was permitted to occur to divert the attention of bloody-minded persecutors from a feeble and bleeding church. Anxious for their own safety, the Jews would cease to persecute the Christians, and thus, by the conversion of the main instrument in persecution, and by the universal alarm for the welfare of the nation, the trembling and enfeebled church was permitted to obtain repose. Thus ended the first general persecution against Christians, and thus effectually did God show that he had power to guard and protect his chosen people.

All Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria - These three places included the land of Palestine. See the notes on Matthew 2:22. The formation of churches in Galilee is not expressly mentioned before this; but there is no improbability in supposing that Christians had traveled there, and had preached the gospel. Compare Acts 11:19. The formation of churches in Samaria is expressly mentioned, Romans 14:19; Romans 15:2; 1 Corinthians 8:1.

And walking - Living. The word is often used to denote "Christian conduct, or manner of life," Colossians 1:10; Luke 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 4:1; 1 John 2:6. The idea is that of travelers who are going to any place, and who walk in the right path. Christians are thus travelers to another country, an heavenly.

In the fear of the Lord - Fearing the Lord; with reverence for him and his commandments. This expression is often used to denote "piety" in

general, 2 Chronicles 19:7; Job 28:28; Psalm 19:9; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 9:10; Proverbs 13:13.

In the comfort of the Holy Ghost - In the consolations which the Holy Spirit produced, John 14:16-17; Romans 5:1-5.

Were multiplied - Were increased.

Verse 32

To the saints - To the Christians.

Which dwelt at Lydda - This town was situated on the road from Jerusalem to Caesarea Philippi. It was about 10 or 12 miles southeast from Joppa, and belonged to the tribe of Ephraim. It was called by the Greeks Diospolis, or city of Jupiter, probably because a temple was at some period erected to Jupiter in that city. It is now so entirely ruined as to be a miserable village. Since the Crusades, it has been called by the Christians George, on account of its having been the scene of the martyrdom of a saint of that name. Tradition says that in this city the Emperor Justinian erected a church.

Verse 33

Eneas - This is a Greek name; and probably he was a Hellenist. See the notes on Acts 6:1.

Sick of the palsy - See the notes on Matthew 4:24.

Verse 34

Maketh thee whole - Cures thee. Peter claimed no power to do it himself. Compare Acts 3:6, Acts 3:16; Acts 4:10.

Make thy bed - This would show that he was truly healed. Compare Matthew 9:6; Mark 2:9, Mark 2:11; John 5:11-12.

Verse 35

And all - The mass, or body of the people. The affliction of the man had been long, and was probably well known; the miracle would be celebrated, and the effect was an extensive revival of religion.

Saron - This was the champaign, or open country, usually mentioned by the name of "Sharon" in the Old Testament, 1Ch Acts 9:16; Acts 27:29; Ca. Acts 2:1; Isaiah 33:9. It was a region of extraordinary fertility, and the name was almost proverbial to denote "any country of great beauty and fertility." Compare Isaiah 33:9; Isaiah 35:2; Isaiah 65:10. It was situated south of Mount Carmel, along the coast of the Mediterranean, extending to Caesarea and Joppa. Lydda was situated in this region.

Turned to the Lord - Were converted; or received the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, Acts 11:21; 2 Corinthians 3:16.

Verse 36

At Joppa - This was a seaport town situated on the Mediterranean, in the tribe of Dan, about 30 miles south of Caesarea, and 45 northwest of Jerusalem. It was the principal seaport of Palestine; and hence, though the harbor was poor, it hind considerable celebrity. It was occupied by Solomon to receive the timber brought for the building of the temple from Tyre 2 Chronicles 2:16, and was used for a similar purpose in the time of Ezra, Ezra 3:7. The present name of the town is Jaffa. It is situated on a promontory jutting out into the sea, rising to the height of about 150 feet above its level, and offering on all sides picturesque and varied prospects. "It owes its existence to the low ledge of rocks which extends into the sea from the extremity of the little cape on which the city stands, and forms a small harbor. Insignificant as it is, and insecure, yet there being no other on all this coast, it was sufficient to cause a city to spring up around it even in the earliest times, and to sustain its life through numberless changes of dynasties, races, and religions down to the present hour. It was, in fact, the only harbor of any notoriety possessed by the Jews throughout the greater part of their national existence. To it the timber for both the temples of Jerusalem was brought from Lebanon, and no doubt a lucrative trade in cedar and pine was always carried on through it with the nations who had possession of the forests of Lebanon. Through it also nearly all the foreign commerce of the Jews was conducted until the artificial port of Caesarea was built by Herod. Here Jonah came to find a ship in which to flee from the presence of the Lord, and from it he sailed for Tarshish.

"Twenty-five years ago the inhabitants of city and gardens were about 6000; now there must be 15,000 at least, and commerce has increased at even a greater ratio. Several sources of prosperity account for the existence and rapid increase of Jaffa. It is the natural landing-place of pilgrims to Jerusalem, both Christians and Jews, and they have created a considerable trade. The Holy City itself has also been constantly rising in importance during the present generation. Then there are extensive soap factories, not only here, but in Ramleh, Lydd, Nablus, and Jerusalem, much of which is exported from this port to all the cities along the coast, to Egypt, and even to Asia Minor through Tarsus. The fruit trade from Jaffa is likewise quite considerable, and lately there have been large shipments of grain to Europe.

Add to this that silk is now being cultivated extensively along the river ‹Aujeh, and in the gardens about the city, and the present prosperity of Jaffa is fully explained.

"Jaffa is celebrated in modern times for her gardens and orchards of delicious fruit more than for anything else. They are very extensive, flourishing, and profitable, but their very existence depends upon the fact that water to any amount can be procured in every garden, and at a moderate depth. The entire plain seems to cover a river of vast breadth, percolating through the sand en route to the sea. A thousand Persian wheels working night and day produce no sensible diminution, and this exhaustible source of wealth underlies the whole territory of the Philistines down to Gaza at least, and probably much further south.

"The fruits of Jaffa are the same as those of Sidon, but with certain variations in their character. Sidon has the best bananas, Jaffa furnishes the best pomegranates. The oranges of Sidon are more juicy and of a richer flavor than those of Jaffa; hut the latter hang on the trees much later, and will bear to be shipped to distant regions. They are therefore more valuable to the producer. It is here only that you see in perfection fragrant blossoms encircling golden fruit. In March and April these Jaffa gardens are indeed enchanting. The air is overloaded with the mingled spicery of orange, lemon, apple, apricot, quince, plum, and china trees in blossom. The people then frequent the groves, sit on mats beneath their grateful shade, sip coffee, smoke the argela, sing, converse, or sleep, as best suits their individual idiosyncrasies, until evening, when they slowly return to their homes in the city. To us of the restless West, this way of making kaif soon wearies by its slumberous monotony, but it is Elysium to the Arabs.

"I have been strolling along the streets, or rather street of Jaffa, for there seems to be but one, and a more crowded thoroughfare I never saw. I had to force my way through the motley crowd of busy citizens, wild Arabs, foreign pilgrims, camels, mules, horses, and donkeys. Then what a strange rabble outside the gate, noisy, quarrelsome, ragged, and filthy! Many are blind, or at least have some painful defect about their eyes, and some are leprous. The peasants hereabout must be very poor, to judge by their rags and squalid appearance. I was reminded of Dorcas and the widows around

Peter exhibiting the coats and garments which that benevolent lady had made, and I devoutly hoped she might be raised again, at least in spirit, for there is need of a dozen Dorcas societies in Jaffa at the present time. "*The Land and the Book*" (Thomson), vol. 2, pp. 271-281.

Tabitha - This word is properly Syriac, and means literally the "gazelle" or "antelope." The name became an appellation of a female, probably on account of the beauty of its form. "It is not unusual in the East to give the names of beautiful animals to young women" (Clark). Compare 1 Timothy 2:10; Titus 2:7.

And almsdeeds - Acts of kindness to the poor.

Verse 37

Whom, when they had washed - Among most people it has been customary to wash the body before it is buried or burned. They prepared her in the usual manner for interment.

In an upper chamber - See the notes on Acts 1:13. There is no evidence that they expected that Peter would raise her up to life.

Verse 38

Was neigh to Joppa - See the notes on Acts 9:32.

They sent unto him … - Why they sent is not affirmed. It is probable that they desired his presence to comfort and sustain them in their affliction. It is certainly possible that they expected he would restore her to life; but as this is not mentioned; as the apostles had as yet raised up no one from the dead; as even Stephen had not been restored to life, we have no authority for assuming, or supposing, that they had formed any such expectation.

Verse 39

Then Peter arose - See the notes on Luke 15:18.

And all the widows - Whom Dorcas had benefited by her kindness. They had lost a benefactress; and it was natural that they should recall her kindness, and express their gratitude, by enumerating the proofs of her beneficence. Each one would therefore naturally dwell on the kindness which had been shown to herself.

Verse 40

But Peter put them all forth - From the room. See a similar case in Matthew 9:25. Why this was done is not said. Perhaps it was because he did not wish to appear as if seeking publicity. If done in the presence of many persons, it might seem like ostentation. Others suppose it was that he might

offer more fervent prayer to God than he would be willing they should witness Compare 2 Kings 4:33.

Tabitha, arise - Compare Mark 5:41-42.

Verse 41

He presented her alive - He exhibited, or showed her to them alive. Compare 1 Kings 17:23.

Verse 42

And many believed … - A similar effect followed when Jesus raised up Lazarus. See John 12:11.

This was the first miracle of this kind that was performed by the apostles. The effect was that many believed. It was not merely a work of benevolence, in restoring to life one who contributed largely to the comfort of the poor, but it was a means of extending and establishing, as it was designed doubtless to do, the kingdom of the Saviour.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Introduction

This chapter Mark 16:15. But he had told them to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high, Luke 24:49.

It was natural, therefore, that they should receive special instructions and divine revelation on a point so important as this; and God selected the case of Cornelius as the instance by which he would fully establish his purpose of conveying the gospel to the Gentile world. It is worthy of observation, also, that he selected Peter for the purpose of conveying the gospel first to the Gentiles. The Saviour had told him that on him he would build his church; that he would give to him first the keys of the kingdom of heaven; that is, that he should be the agent in opening the doors of the church to both Jews and Gentiles. See the notes on Matthew 16:18-19. Peter had, in accordance with these predictions, been the agent in first presenting the gospel to the Jews Galatians 2:11-16.

Verse 1

In Cesarea - See the notes on Acts 8:40.

Cornelius - This is a Latin name, and shows that the man was doubtless a Roman. It has been supposed by many interpreters that he was "a proselyte of the gate"; that is, one who had renounced idolatry, and who observed some of the Jewish rites, though not circumcised, and not called a Jew. But there is no sufficient evidence of this. The reception of the narrative of I Peter Acts 11:1-3 shows that the other apostles regarded him as a Gentile. In Acts 10:28, Peter evidently regards him as a foreigner - one who did not in any sense esteem himself to be a Jew. In Acts 11:1, it is expressly said that "the Gentiles" had received the Word of God, evidently alluding to Cornelius and to those who were with him.

A centurion - One who was the commander of a division in the Roman army, consisting of 100 men. A captain of 100. See the notes on Matthew 8:5.

Of the band - A division of the Roman army, consisting of from 400 to 600 men. See the notes on Matthew 27:27.

The Italian band - Probably a band or regiment that was composed of soldiers from Italy, in distinction from those which were composed of soldiers born in provinces. It is evident that many of the soldiers in the

Roman army would be those who were born in other parts of the world; and it is altogether probable that those who were born in Rome or Italy would claim pre-eminence over those enlisted in other places.

Verse 2

A devout man - Pious, or one who maintained the worship of God. See the notes on Luke 2:25. Compare Acts 2:5; Acts 8:2.

And one that feared God - This is often a designation of piety. See notes on Acts 9:31. It has been supposed by many that the expressions here used denote that Cornelius was a Jew, or was instructed in the Jewish religion, and was a proselyte. But this by no means follows. It is probable that there might have been among the Gentiles a few at least who were fearers of God, and who maintained his worship according to the light which they had. So there may be now persons found in pagan lands who in some unknown way have been taught the evils of idolatry and the necessity of a purer religion, and who may be prepared to receive the gospel. The Sandwich Islands were very much in this state when the American missionaries first visited them. They had thrown away their idols, and seemed to be waiting for the message of mercy and the Word of eternal life, as Cornelius was. A few other instances have been found by missionaries in pagan lands of those who have thus been prepared by a train of providential events, or by the teaching of the Spirit, for the gospel of Christ.

With all his house - With all his family. It is evident here that Cornelius instructed his family, and exerted his influence to train them in the fear of God. True piety will always lead a man to seek the salvation of his family.

Much alms - Large and liberal charity. This is always an effect of piety. See James 1:27; Psalm 41:1.

Prayed to God alway - Constantly; meaning that he was in the regular habit of prayer. Compare Romans 12:12; Luke 18:1; Psalm 119:2; Proverbs 2:2-5. As no particular kind of prayer is mentioned except secret prayer, we are not authorized to affirm that he offered prayer in any other manner. It may be observed, however, that he who prays in secret will usually pray in his family; and as the facially of Cornelius is mentioned as being also under the influence of religion, it is, perhaps, not a forced inference that he observed family worship.

Verse 3

He saw in a vision - See the notes on Acts 9:10.

Evidently - Openly; manifestly.

About the ninth hour - About 3 o‘clock p. m. This was the usual hour of evening worship among the Jews.

An angel of God - See the notes on Matthew 1:20. Compare Hebrews 1:14. This angel was sent to signify to Cornelius that his alms were accepted by God as an evidence of his piety, and to direct him to send for Peter to instruct him in the way of salvation. The importance of the occasion - the introduction of the gospel to a Gentile, and hence, to the entire Gentile world - was probably the chief reason why an angel was commissioned to visit the Roman centurion. Compare Acts 16:9-10.

Verse 4

And when he looked on him - Greek: Having fixed his eyes attentively on him.

He was afraid - At the suddenness and unexpected character of the vision.

What is it, Lord? - This is the expression of surprise and alarm. The word “Lord” should have been translated “sir,” since there is no evidence that this is an address to God, and still less that he regarded the personage present as the Lord. Compare the notes on Acts 9:5. It is such language as a man would naturally use who was suddenly surprised; who should witness a strange form appearing unexpectedly before him; and who should exclaim, Sir, what is the matter?”

Are come up for a memorial - Are remembered before God. Compare Isaiah 45:19. They were an evidence of piety toward God, and were accepted as such. Though he had not offered sacrifice according to the Jewish laws; though he had not been circumcised; yet, having acted according to the light which he had, his prayers were hard, and his alms were accepted. This was done in accordance with the general principle of the divine administration, that God prefers the offering of the heart to external forms; the expressions of love to sacrifice without it. This he had often declared, Isaiah 1:11-15; Amos 5:21-22; 1 Samuel 15:22, “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams,” Hosea 6:6; Ecclesiastes 5:1. It should be remembered, however, that Cornelius was not depending on external morality. His heart was in the work of religion. It should be remembered, further, that he was ready to receive the gospel when it was offered to him, and to become a Christian. In this there was an important difference between him and those who are depending for salvation on their morality in Christian lands. Such people are inclined to

defend themselves by the example of Cornelius, and to suppose that as he was accepted before he embraced the gospel, so they may be without embracing it. But there is an important difference in the two cases. For:

(1) There is no evidence that Cornelius was depending on external morality for salvation. His offering was that of the heart, and not merely an external offering.

(2) Cornelius did not rely on his morality at all. His was a work of religion. He feared God; he prayed to him; he exerted his influence to bring his family to the same state. Moral people do neither. "All their works they do to be seen of men"; and in their heart there is "no good thing toward the Lord God of Israel." Compare 1 Kings 14:13; 2 Chronicles 19:3. Who ever hears of a man that "fears God," and that prays, and that instructs his household in religion, that depends on morality for salvation?

(3) Cornelius was disposed to do the will of God as far as it was made known to him. Where this exists there is religion. The moral man is not.

(4) Cornelius was willing to embrace a Saviour when he was made known to him. The moral man is not. He hears of a Saviour with unconcern; he listens to the message of God's mercy from year to year without embracing it. In all this there is an important difference between him and the Roman centurion; and while we hope that there may be many in pagan lands who are in the same state of mind that he was - disposed to do the will of God as far as made known, and therefore accepted and saved by his mercy in the Lord Jesus, yet this cannot be adduced to encourage the hope of salvation in those who do know his will, and yet will not do it.

Verse 6

He lodgeth - He remains as a guest at his house. See Acts 9:43.

By the sea-side - Joppa was a seaport on the Mediterranean. Tanneries are erected on the margin of streams or of any body of water to convey away the filth produced in the operation of dressing skins.

Verse 7

A devout soldier - A pious man. This is an instance of the effect of piety in a military officer. Few people have more influence; and in this case the effect was seen not only in the piety of his family, but of this attending

soldier. Such men have usually been supposed to be far from the influence of religion; but this instance shows that even the disadvantages of a camp are not necessarily hostile to the existence of piety. Compare Luke 3:14.

Verse 8

And when … - "It has been remarked that from Joppa, Jonah was sent to preach to the Gentiles at Nineveh, and that from the same place Peter was sent to preach to the Gentiles at Caesarea" (Clarke).

Verse 9

Peter went up … - The small room in the second story, or on the roof of the house, was the usual place for retirement and prayer. See the notes on Matthew 6:6; Matthew 9:2. Even when there was no room constructed on the roof, the roof was a common resort for retirement and prayer. Around the edge a battlement or parapet was commonly made, within which a person could be quite retired from public view. "At Jaffa, the ancient Joppa," says Prof. Hackett (lllustrations of Scripture, p. 81), "where Peter was residing at the time of his vision on the house-top, I observed houses furnished with a wall around the roof, within which a person could sit or kneel without any exposure to the view of others, whether on the adjacent houses or in the streets. At Jerusalem I entered the house of a Jew early one morning, and found a member of the family, sitting secluded and alone on one of the lower roofs, engaged in reading the Scriptures and offering his prayers."

Dr. Thomson (Land and the Book, vol. i. p. 52) says of these roofs, "When surrounded with battlements, and shaded by vines trained over them, they afford a very agreeable retreat, even at the sixth hour of the day - the time when Peter was favored with that singular vision, by which the kingdom of heaven was thrown open to the Gentile world."

About the sixth hour - About twelve o'clock (at noon). The Jews had two stated seasons of prayer, morning and evening. But it is evident that the more pious of the Jews frequently added a third season of devotion, probably at noon. Thus, David says Psalm 55:17, "Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud." Thus, Daniel "kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed," Daniel 6:10, Daniel 6:13. It was also customary in the early Christian church to offer prayer at the third, sixth, and ninth hours (Clem. Alex. as quoted by Doddridge). Christians will, however, have not merely stated seasons for prayer, but they will seize upon

moments of leisure, and when their feelings strongly incline them to it, to pray.

Verse 10

And he became very hungry - Prom the connection, where it is said that they were making ready, that is, preparing a meal, it would seem that this was the customary hour of dining. The Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans, however, had but two meals, and the first was usually taken about ten or eleven o‘clock. This meal usually consisted of fruit, milk, cheese, etc. Their principal meal was about six or seven in the afternoon, at which time they observed their feasts. See Jahn‘s Bible. Archaeol. section 145.

He fell into a trance - Greek: an ecstasy, ἔκστασις ekstasisfell upon him. In Acts 11:5, Peter says that in a trance he saw a vision. The word "trance, or ecstasy," denotes "a state of mind when the attention is absorbed in a particular train of thought, so that the external senses are partially or entirely suspended." It is a high species of abstraction from external objects, when the mind becomes forgetful of surrounding things, and is fixed solely on its own thoughts, so that appeals to the external senses do not readily rouse it. The soul seems to have passed out of the body, and to be conversant only with spiritual essences. Thus, Balaam is said to have seen the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance Numbers 24:4, Numbers 24:16; thus Paul, in praying in the temple, fell into a trance Acts 22:17; and perhaps a similar state is described in 2 Corinthians 12:2. This effect seems to be caused by so intense and absorbing a train of thought as to overcome the senses of the body, or wholly to withdraw the mind from their influence, and to fix it on the unseen object that engrosses it. It is often a high state of reverie, or absence of mind, which Dr. Rush describes as "induced by the stimulus of ideas of absent subjects, being so powerful as to destroy the perception of present objects" (*Diseases of the Mind*, p. 310, ed. Philadelphia, 1812). In the case of Peter, however, there was a supernatural influence that drew his attention away from present objects.

Verse 11

And saw heaven opened - Acts 7:56. See the notes on Matthew 3:16. This language is derived from a common mode of speaking in the Hebrew Scriptures, as if the sky above us was a solid, vast expanse, and as if it were opened to present an opportunity for anything to descend. It is language that is highly figurative.

And a certain vessel - See the notes on Acts 9:15.

As it had been - It is important to mark this expression. The sacred writer does not say that Peter literally saw such an object descending; but he uses this as an imperfect description of the vision. It was not a literal descent of a vessel, but it was such a kind of representation to him, producing the same impression, and the same effect, as if such a vessel had descended.

Knit at the four corners - Bound, united, or tied. The corners were collected, as would be natural in putting anything into a great sheet.

Verse 12

Wherein … - This particular vision was suggested by Peter's hunger, Acts 10:10. It was designed, however, to teach him an important lesson in regard to the introduction of all nations to the gospel. Its descending from heaven may have been an intimation that that religion which was about to abolish the distinction between the Jews and other nations was of divine origin. See Revelation 21:2.

Verse 14

I have never eaten … - In the Old Testament God had made a distinction between clean and unclean animals. See Leviticus 11:2-27; Deuteronomy 14:3-20. This law remained in the Scriptures, and Peter pled that he had never violated it, implying that he could not now violate it, as it was a law of God, and that, as it was unrepealed, he did not dare to act in a different manner from what it required. Between that law and the command which he now received in the vision there was an apparent variation, and Peter naturally referred to the well known and admitted written Law. One design of the vision was to show him that that Law was now to pass away.

That is common - This word properly denotes "what pertains to all," but among the Jews, who were bound by special laws, and who were prohibited from many things that were freely indulged in by other nations, the word "common" came to be opposed to the word "sacred," and to denote what was in common use among the pagans, hence, that which was "profane," or "polluted." Here it means the same as "profane," or "forbidden."

Unclean - Ceremonially unclean; that is, what is forbidden by the ceremonial law of Moses.

Verse 15

What God hath cleansed - What God has pronounced or declared pure. If God has commanded you to do a thing, it is not impure or wrong. Perhaps

Peter would suppose that the design of this vision was to instruct him that the distinction between clean and unclean food, as recognized by the Jews, was about to be abolished, Acts 10:17. But the result showed that it had a higher and more important design. It was to show him that they who had been esteemed by the Jews as unclean or profane - the entire Gentile world - might now be admitted to similar privileges with the Jews. That barrier was robe broken down, and the whole world was to be admitted to the same fellowship and privileges in the gospel. See Ephesians 2:14; Galatians 3:28. It was also true that the ceremonial laws of the Jews in regard to clean and unclean beasts was to pass away, though this was not directly taught in this vision. But when once the barrier was removed that separated the Jews and Gentiles, all the laws which were founded on such a distinction, and which were framed to keep up such a distinction, passed away of course. The ceremonial laws of the Jews were designed solely to keep up the distinction between them and other nations. When the distinction was abolished; when other nations were to be admitted to the same privileges, the laws which were made to keep up such a difference received their death-blow, and expired of course. For it is a maxim of all law, that when the reason why a law was made ceases to exist, the law becomes obsolete. Yet it was not easy to convince the Jews that their laws ceased to be binding. This point the apostles labored to establish; and from this point arose most of the difficulties between the Jewish and Gentile converts to Christianity. See Acts 15; and Romans 1415:

Verse 16

This was done thrice - Three times, doubtless to impress the mind of Peter with the certainty and importance of the vision. Compare Genesis 41:32.

Verse 17

Doubted in himself - Doubted in his own mind. He was perplexed, and did not know how to understand it.

Behold, the men … - We see here an admirable arrangement of the events of Providence to fit each other. Every part of this transaction is made to harmonize with every other part; and it was so arranged that just in the moment when the mind of Peter was filled with perplexity, the very event should occur which would relieve him of his embarrassment. Such a coincidence is not uncommon. An event of divine Providence may be as clear an expression of his will, and may as certainly serve to indicate our

duty, as the most manifest revelation would do, and a state of mind may, by an arrangement of circumstances, be produced that will be extremely perplexing until some event shall occur, or some field of usefulness shall open, that will exactly correspond to it, and indicate to us the will of God. We should then carefully mark the events of God‘s providence. We should observe and record the train of our own thoughts, and should watch with interest any event that occurs, when we are perplexed and embarrassed, to obtain, if possible, an expression of the will of God.

Before the gate - The word here rendered “gate,” πυλῶνα pulōnarefers properly to the porch or principal entrance to an Eastern house. See the notes on Matthew 9:2; Matthew 26:71. It does not mean, as with us, a gate, but rather a door. See Acts 12:13.

Verse 19

The Spirit - See the notes on Acts 8:29. Compare Isaiah 65:24, “And it shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer,” etc.

Verse 22

To hear words of thee - To be instructed by thee.

Verse 23

And lodged them - They remained with him through the night. Four days were occupied before Peter met Cornelius at Caesarea. On the first the angel appeared to Cornelius. On the second the messengers arrived at Joppa, Acts 10:9. On the third, Peter returned with them, Acts 10:23; and on the fourth they arrived at Caesarea, Acts 10:24, Acts 10:30.

And certain brethren - Some Christians. They were six in number, Acts 11:12. It was usual for the early Christians to accompany the apostles in their journeys. See Romans 15:24; Acts 15:3; 3 John 1:6; 1 Corinthians 16:6, 1 Corinthians 16:11. As this was an important event in the history of the church - the bearing of the gospel to a Gentile - it was more natural and proper that Peter should be attended with others.

Verse 24

His kinsmen - His relatives, or the connections of his family. A man may often do vast good by calling his kindred and friends to hear the gospel.

Verse 25

Fell down at his feet - This was an act of profound regard for him as an ambassador of God. In Oriential countries it was usual for persons to prostrate themselves at length on the ground before men of rank and honor.

"Worshipped him" This does not mean religious homage, but civil respect - the homage, or profound regard which was due to one in honor. See the notes on Matthew 2:2.

Verse 26

Stand up … - This does not imply that Peter supposed that Cornelius intended to do him religious reverence. It was practically saying to him, "I am nothing more than a man as thou art, and pretend to no right to such profound respects as these, but am ready in civil life to show thee all the respect that is due" (Doddridge).

Verse 27

And as he talked with him - He probably met him at the door, or at a small distance from the house. It was an expression of joy thus to go out to meet him.

Verse 28

It is an unlawful thing - This was not explicitly enjoined by Moses, but it seemed to be implied in his institutions, and was, at any rate, the common understanding of the Jews. The design was to keep them a separate people. To do this, Moses forbade alliances by contract, or marriage, with the surrounding nations, which were idolatrous. See Leviticus 18:24-30; Deuteronomy 7:3-12; compare Ezra 9:11-12. This command the Jews perverted, and explained it as referring to contact of all kinds, even to the exercise of friendly offices and commercial transactions. Compare John 4:9.

Of another nation - Greek: another tribe. It refers here to all who were not Jews.

God hath showed me - Compare Acts 15:8-9. He had showed him by the vision, Acts 10:11-12.

Any man common or unclean - See the notes on Acts 10:14. That no man was to be regarded as excluded from the opportunity of salvation, or was to be despised and abhorred. The gospel was to be preached to all; the barrier between Jews and Gentiles was broken down, and all were to be regarded as capable of being saved.

Verse 29

Without gainsaying - without "saying anything against it"; without hesitation or reluctance.

I ask, therefore … - The main design for which Cornelius had sent for him had been mentioned to Peter by the messenger, Acts 10:22. But Peter

now desired from his own lips a more particular statement of the considerations which had induced him to send for him.

For what intent - For what purpose or design.

Verse 30

Four days ago - See the notes on Acts 10:23.

Until this hour - The ninth hour, or three o'clock, p. m. See Acts 10:3.

A man - Called, in Acts 10:3, an angel. He had the appearance of a man. Compare Mark 16:5.

In bright clothing - See the notes on Matthew 28:3.

Verse 33

Thou hast well done - This is an expression of grateful feeling.

Before God - In the presence of God. It is implied that they believed that God saw them; that they were assembled at his command, and that they were disposed to listen to his instructions.

Verse 34

Then Peter opened his mouth - Began to speak, Matthew 5:2.

Of a truth - Truly, evidently. That is, I have evidence here that God is no respecter of persons.

Is no respecter of persons - The word used here denotes "the act of showing favor to one on account of rank, family, wealth, or partiality arising from any cause." It is explained in James 2:1-4. A judge is a respecter of persons when he favors one of the parties on account of private friendship, or because he is a man of rank, influence, or power, or because he belongs to the same political party, etc. The Jews supposed that they were especially favored by God. and that salvation was not extended to other nations, and that the fact of being a Jew entitled them to this favor. Peter here says that he had learned the error of this doctrine, and that a man is not to be accepted because he is a Jew, nor to be excluded because he is a Gentile. The barrier is broken down; the offer is made to all; God will save all on the same principle; not by external privileges or rank, but according to their character.

The same doctrine is elsewhere explicitly stated in the New Testament, Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25. It may be observed here that this does not refer to the doctrine of divine sovereignty or election. It simply affirms that God will not save a man because he is a Jew, or because he is rich, or learned, or of elevated rank, or on account of external privileges; nor will he exclude a man because he is destitute of these

privileges. But this does not affirm that he will not make a difference in their character, and then treat them according to their character, nor that he will not pardon whom he pleases. That is a different question. The interpretation of this passage should be limited strictly to the case in hand - to mean that God will not accept and save a man on account of external national rank and privileges. That he will not make a difference on other grounds is not affirmed here, nor anywhere in the Bible. Compare 1 Corinthians 4:7; Romans 12:6. It is worthy of remark further, that the most strenuous advocate for the doctrines of sovereignty and election - the apostle Paul - is also the one that labored most to establish the doctrine that God is no respecter of persons - that is, that there is no difference between the Jews and Gentiles in regard to the way of salvation; that God would not save a man because he was a Jew, nor destroy a man because he was a Gentile. Yet in regard to "the whole race viewed as lying on a level," he maintained that God has a right to exercise the prerogatives of a sovereign, and to have mercy on whom he will have mercy. The doctrine may be thus stated:

(1) The barrier between the Jews and Gentiles was broken down.

(2) all people thus were placed on a level none to be saved by external privileges, none to be lost by the lack of them.

(3) all were guilty Romans 3:22; Romans 10:12; Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:6; compare with Romans 9; and Ephesians 1:

Verse 35

But in every nation … - This is given as a reason for what Peter had just said, that God was no respecter of persons. The sense is, that he now perceived that the favors of God were not confined to the Jew, but might be extended to all others on the same principle. The remarkable circumstances here - the vision to him, and to Cornelius, and the declaration that the alms of Cornelius were accepted - now convinced him that the favors of God were no longer to be confined to the Jewish people, but might be extended to all. This was what the vision was designed to teach, and to communicate this knowledge to the apostles was an important step in their work of spreading the gospel.

In every nation - Among all people. Jews or Gentiles. Acceptance with God does not depend on the fact of being descended from Abraham, or of possessing external privileges, but on the state of the heart.

He that feareth him - This is put for piety toward God in general. See notes on Acts 9:31. It means that he who honors God and keeps His Law; he who is a true worshipper of God, according to the light and privileges which he has, is approved by him, as giving evidence that he is his friend.

And worketh righteousness - Does what is right and just. This refers to his conduct toward man. He that discharges conscientiously his duty to his fellow-men, and evinces by his conduct that he is a righteous man. These two things comprehend the whole of religion, the sum of all the requirements of God - piety toward God, and justice toward people; and as Cornelius had showed these, he showed that, though a Gentile, he was actuated by true religion. We may observe here:

(1) That it is not said that Cornelius was accepted on accouter of his good works. Those works were simply an evidence of true piety in the heart; a proof that he feared and loved God, and not a meritorious ground of acceptance.

(2) he improved the light which he had.

(3) "he embraced the Saviour when he was offered to him." This circumstance makes an essential difference between Cornelius and those who depend on their morality in Christian lands. They do not embrace the Lord Jesus, and they are, therefore, totally unlike the Roman centurion. His example should not be pled, therefore, by those who neglect the Saviour, for it furnishes no evidences that they will be accepted when they are totally unlike him.

Verse 36

The word - That is, this is the Word, or "the doctrine." Few passages in the New Testament have perplexed critics more than this. It has been difficult to ascertain to what the term "word" in the accusative case τὸν λόγον ton logonhere refers. Our translation would lead us to suppose that it is synonymous with what is said in the following verse. But it should be remarked that the term used there, and translated "word," as if it were a repetition of what is said here, is a different term. It is not λόγον logonbut

ῥῆμα rēma- a word, a thing; not a doctrine. I understand the first term "word" to be an introduction of the doctrine which Peter set forth, and to be governed by a preposition understood. The whole passage may be thus expressed: Peter had been asked to teach Cornelius and his assembled friends. It was expected, of course, that he would instruct him in regard to the true doctrines of religion - the doctrine which had been communicated to the Jews. He commences, therefore, with a statement respecting the true doctrine of the Messiah, or the way of salvation which was now made known to the Jews. "In regard to the Word, or the doctrine which God sent to the children of Israel, proclaiming peace through Jesus Christ (who is Lord of all), you know already what was done, or the transactions which occurred throughout all Judea, from Galilee, where he commenced his ministry after John had preached, that this was by Jesus Christ, since God had anointed him," etc. Peter here assumes that Cornelius had some knowledge of the principal events of the life of the Saviour, though it was obscure and imperfect; and his discourse professes only to state this more fully and clearly.

Unto the children of Israel - To the Jews. The Messiah was promised to them, and spent his life among them.

Preaching - That is, proclaiming, or announcing. God did this by Jesus Christ.

Peace - This word sometimes refers to the peace or union which was made between Jews and Gentiles, by breaking down the wall of division between them. But it is used here in a wider sense, to denote "peace or reconciliation with God." He announced the way by which man might be reconciled to God, and might find peace.

He is Lord of all - That is, Jesus Christ. He is sovereign, or ruler of both Jews and Gentiles, and hence, Peter saw the propriety of preaching the gospel to one as to the other. See John 17:2; Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22. The word "Lord" used here does not necessarily imply divinity, but only that the Lord Jesus, as Mediator, had been constituted or appointed Lord or Ruler over all nations. It is true, however, that this is a power which we cannot conceive to have been delegated to one that was not divine. Compare Romans 9:5.

Verse 37

That word - Greek: ῥῆμα rēma- a different word from that in the previous verse. It may be translated "thing" as well as "word."

Which was published - Greek: which was done. "You know, though it may be imperfectly, what was done or accomplished in Judea," etc.

Throughout all Judea - The miracles of Christ were not confined to any place, but were performed in every part of the land. For an account of the divisions of Palestine, see the notes on Matthew 2:22.

And began … - Greek: having been begun in Galilee. Galilee was not far from Caesarea. There was, therefore, the more probability that Cornelius had heard of what had occurred there. Indeed, the gospels themselves furnish the highest evidence that the fame of the miracles of Christ spread into all the surrounding regions.

Verse 38

How God anointed … - That is, set him apart to this work, and was with him, acknowledging him as the Messiah. See the notes on Matthew 1:1.

With the Holy Ghost - See the notes on Luke 4:19. The act of anointing kings and priests seems to have been emblematic of the influences of the Holy Spirit. Here it means that God impaled to him the influences of the Holy Spirit, thus consecrating him for the work of the Messiah. See Matthew 3:16-17; John 3:34, "God giveth not the Holy Spirit by measure unto him."

And with power - The power of healing the sick, raising the dead, etc.

Who went about doing good - Whose main business it was to travel from place to place to do good. He did not go for applause, or wealth, or comfort, or ease, but to diffuse happiness as far as possible. This is the simple but sublime record of his life. It gives us a distinct portrait of his character, as he is distinguished from conquerors and kings, from false prophets and from the mass of people.

And healing … - Restoring to health.

All that were oppressed of the devil - All that were possessed by him. See the notes on Matthew 4:23-24.

God was with him - God appointed him, and furnished by his miracles the highest evidence that he had sent him. His miracles were such that they could be performed only by God.

Verse 39

And we are witnesses - We who are apostles. See the notes on Luke 24:48.

In the land of the Jews - In the country of Judea.

Whom they slew … - Our translation would seem to imply that there were two separate acts - first executing him, and then suspending him. But this is neither according to truth nor to the Greek text. The original is simply, "whom they put to death, suspending him on a tree."

On a tree - On a cross. See the notes on Acts 5:30.

Verse 40

Showed him openly - Manifestly; so that there could be no deception, no doubt of his resurrection.

Verse 41

Not to all the people - Not to the nation at large, for this was not necessary in order to establish the truth of his resurrection. He, however, showed himself to many persons. See the Harmony of the Accounts of the Resurrection of Jesus.

Chosen of God - Appointed by God, or set apart by his authority through Jesus Christ.

Who did eat and drink … - And by doing this he furnished the clearest possible proof that he was truly risen; that they were not deceived by an illusion of the imagination or by a phantom. Compare John 21:12-13.

Verse 42

And he commanded us … - ; Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16.

And to testify - To bear witness.

That it is he … - See the notes on John 5:22-27. Compare the references in the margin.

Of quick - The living. The doctrine of the New Testament is, that those who are alive when the Lord Jesus shall return to judge the world, will be caught up in vast numbers like clouds, to meet him in the air, without seeing death, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. Yet before this they will experience such a change in their bodies as shall fit them for the judgment and for their eternal residence - a change which will liken them to those who have died, and have risen from the dead. What this change will be, speculation may fancy, but the Bible has not revealed. See 1 Corinthians 15:52, "The dead shall be raised, and we shall be changed."

Verse 43

To him give … - See the notes on Luke 24:27, Luke 24:44.

That through his name … - This was implied in what the prophets said. See Romans 10:11. It was not, indeed, expressly affirmed that they who believed in him should be pardoned, but this was implied in what they

said. They promised a Messiah, and their religion consisted mainly in believing in a Messiah to come. See the reasoning of the apostle Paul in Romans 4:

Verse 44

The Holy Ghost fell … - Endowing them with the power of speaking with other tongues, Acts 10:46. Of this the apostle Peter makes much in his argument in Acts 11:17. By this, God showed that the Gentiles were to be admitted to the same privileges with the Jews, and to the blessings of salvation in the same manner. Compare Acts 2:1-4.

Which heard the word - The Word of God; the message of the gospel.

Verse 45

And they of the circumcision - Who had been Jews.

Were astonished - Were amazed that Gentiles should be admitted to the same favor as themselves.

Verse 46

Speak with tongues - In other languages than their own native tongue, Acts 2:4.

And magnify God - And praise God.

Verse 47

Can any man forbid water … - They have shown that they are favored in the same way as the Jewish converts. God has manifested himself to them as he did to the Jews on the day of Pentecost. Is it not clear, therefore, that they are entitled to the privilege of Christian baptism? The expression used here is one that would naturally refer to water as being brought; that is, to a small quantity; and would seem to imply that they were baptized, not by immersion, but by pouring or sprinkling.

Verse 48

And he commanded them … - Why Peter did not himself baptize them is unknown. It might be, perhaps, because he chose to make use of the ministry of the brethren who were with him, to prevent the possibility of future cavil. If they did it themselves, they could not so easily be led by the Jews to find fault with it. It may be added, also, that it seems not to have been the practice of the apostles themselves to baptize very extensively. See 1 Corinthians 1:14-17, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel."

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

And the apostles and brethren - The Christians who Were in Judea.

Heard … - So extraordinary an occurrence as that at Caesarea, the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, and their reception into the church, would excite attention, and be likely to produce much sensitiveness in regard to the conduct of Peter and those with him. It was so contrary to all the ideas of the Jews, that it is not to be wondered at that it led to contention.

Verse 2

They that were of the circumcision - Christians who had been converted from among the Jews.

Contended with him - Disputed; reproved him; charged him with being in fault. This is one of the circumstances which show conclusively that the apostles and early Christians did not regard Peter as having any particular supremacy over the church, or as being in any special sense the vicar of Christ upon earth. If he had been regarded as having the authority which the Roman Catholics claim for him, they would have submitted at once to what he had thought proper to do. But the earliest Christians had no such idea of Peter‘s so-called authority. This claim for Peter is not only opposed to this place, but to every part of the New Testament.

Verse 3

And didst eat with them - See the notes on Acts 10:13-14.

Verse 4

But Peter rehearsed - Greek: Peter beginning, explained it to them in order; that is, he began with the vision which he saw, and gave a narrative of the various events in order, as they actually occurred. A simple and unvarnished statement of facts is usually the best way of disarming prejudice and silencing opposition. Opposition most commonly arises from prejudice, or from false and exaggerated statements, and such opposition can be best removed, not by angry contention, but by an unvarnished relation of facts. In most cases prejudice will thus be disarmed, and opposition will die away, as was the case in regard to the admission of the Gentiles to the church.

And expounded it - Explained it; stated it as it actually occurred.

In order - One event after another, as they happened. He thus showed that his own mind had been as much biased as theirs, and stated in what manner his prejudices had been removed. It often happens that those who become most zealous and devoted in any new measures for the advancement of religion were as much opposed to them at first as others. They are led from one circumstance to another, until their prejudices die away, and the providence and Spirit of God indicate clearly their duty.

Verses 5-13

See Acts 10:9-33.

Verse 14

And all thy house - Thy family. This is a circumstance which his omitted in the account in Acts 10:2, that Cornelius feared God with all his house. It is evident from Acts 10:48 that the family also received the ordinance of baptism, and was received into the church.

Verse 15

And as I began to speak - Or, while I was speaking.

The Holy Ghost … - Acts 10:44.

Verse 16

The word of the Lord - See the notes on Acts 1:5.

Verse 17

What was I - What power or right had I to oppose the manifest will of God that the Gentiles should be received into the Christian church.

Withstand God - Oppose or resist God. He had indicated his will; he had showed his intention to save the Gentiles; and the prejudices of Peter were all overcome. One of the best means of destroying prejudice and false opinions is a powerful revival of religion. More erroneous doctrines and unholy feelings are overcome in such scenes than in all the bigoted and fierce contentions that have ever taken place. If people wish to root error out of the church, they should strive by all means to promote everywhere revivals of pure and undefiled religion. The Holy Spirit more easily and effectually silences false doctrine, and destroys heresy, than all the denunciations of fierce theologians; all the alarms of heated zealots for orthodoxy; and all the anathemas which professed love for the purity of the church ever utters from the icebergs on which such champions usually seek their repose and their home.

Verse 18

They held their peace - They were convinced, as Peter had been, by the manifest indications of the will of God.

Then hath God … - The great truth in this manner established that the doors of the church are opened To the entire Gentile world - a truth that was worthy of this remarkable interposition. It at once changed the views of the apostles and of the early Christians; gave them new, large, and liberal conceptions of the gospel; broke down their long-cherished prejudices; taught them to look upon all people as their brethren; impressed their hearts with the truth, never after to be eradicated, that the Christian church was founded for the wide world, and that it opened the same glorious pathway to life wherever man might be found, whether with the narrow prejudice of the Jew, or amidst the degradations of the pagan world. To this truth we owe our hopes; for this, we should thank the God of heaven; and, impressed with it, we should seek to invite the entire world to partake with us of the rich provisions of the gospel of the blessed God.

Verse 19

Now they … - This verse introduces a new train of historical remark; and from this point the course of the history of the Acts of the Apostles takes a new direction. Thus far, the history had recorded chiefly the preaching of the gospel to the Jews. From this point the history records the efforts made to convert the Gentiles. It begins with the labors put forth in the important city of Antioch (Acts 11:19-20); and as, during the work of grace that occurred in that city, the labors of the apostle Paul were especially sought (Acts 11:25-26), the sacred writer thenceforth confines the history mainly to his travels and labors.

Which were scattered abroad - See Acts 8:1.

As far as Phenice - Phoenice, or Phoenicia, was a province of Syria, which in its largest sense comprehended a narrow strip of country lying on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, and extending from Antioch to the borders of Egypt. But Phenice Proper extended only from the cities of Laodicea to Tyre, and included only the territories of Tyre and Sidon. This country was called sometimes simply "Canaan." See the notes on Matthew 15:22.

And Cyprus - An island off the coast of Asia Minor, in the Mediterranean Sea. See the notes on Acts 4:36.

And Antioch - There were two cities of this name, one situated in Pisidia in Asia Minor (see Acts 13:14); the other, referred to here, was

situated on the Orontes River, and was long, the capital of Syria. It was built by Seleucus Nicanor, and was called Antioch in honor of his father Antiochus. It was founded in 301 b.c. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but is several times mentioned in the Apocrypha and in the New Testament. It was long the most powerful city of the East, and was inferior only to Seleucia and Alexandria. It was famous for the fact that the right of citizenship was conferred by Seleucus on the Jews as well as the Greeks and Macedonians, so that here they had the privilege of worship in their own way without molestation. It is probable that the Christians would be regarded merely as a sect of Jews, and would be here suffered to celebrate their worship without interruption.

On this account it may have been that the early Christians regarded this city as of such particular importance, because here they could find a refuge from persecution, and be permitted to worship God without molestation. This city was honored as a Roman colony, a metropolis, and an asylum. It was large; was almost square; had many gaines; was adorned with fine fountains; and was a city of great opulence. It was, however, subject to earthquakes, and was several times nearly destroyed. In the year 588 it experienced an earthquake in which 60,000 persons were destroyed. It was conquered by the Saracens in 638 a.d., and, after some changes and revolutions, was taken during the Crusades, after a long and bloody siege, by Godfrey of Bouillon, June 3,1098 ad. In 1268 it was taken by the Sultan of Egypt, who demolished it, and placed it under the dominion of the Turk. Antioch is now called Antakia, and contains about 10,000 inhabitants (Robinson‘s Calmet). “There was everything in the situation and circumstances of the city,” say Conybeare and Howson (“Life and Epistles of Paul,” vol. 1, p. 121), “to make it a place of concourse for all classes and kinds of people. By its harbor of Seleucia it was in communication with all the trade of the Mediterranean; and, through the open country behind the Lebanon, it was conveniently approached by the caravans from Mesopotamia and Arabia. It united the inland advantages of Aleppo with the maritime opportunities of Smyrna. It was almost an Oriental Rome, in which all the forms of the civilized life of the empire found some representative. Through the first two centuries of the Christian era it was what Constantinople became afterward, ‹the Gate of the East.‘ “If any city in the first century was worthy to be called the Pagan Queen and Metropolis of the East, that city was Antioch. She was represented, in a famous

allegorical statue, as a female figure, seated on a rock and crowned, with the river Orontes at her feet" (Conybeare and Howson, vol. 1, p. 125).

Preaching the word - The Word of God, the Gospel.

To none but unto the Jews only - They had the common prejudices of the Jews, that the offers of salvation were to be made only to Jews.

Verse 20

Were men of Cyprus and Cyrene - Were natives of Cyprus and Cyrene. Cyrene was a province and city of Libya in Africa. It is at present called Cairoan, and is situated in the kingdom of Barca. In Cyprus the Greek language was spoken; and from the vicinity of Cyrene to Alexandria, it is probable that the Greek language was spoken there also. From this circumstance it might have happened that they were led more particularly to address the Grecians who were in Antioch. It is possible, however, that they might have heard of the vision which Peter saw, and felt themselves called on to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

Spake unto the Grecians - πρὸς τοὺς Ἑλληνιστὰς pros tous HellēnistasTo the Hellenists. This word usually denotes in the New Testament "those Jews residing in foreign lands, who spoke the Greek language." See the notes on Acts 6:1. But to them the gospel had been already preached; and yet in this place it is evidently the intention of Luke to affirm that the people of Cyprus and Cyrene preached to those who were not Jews, and that thus their conduct was distinguished from those (Acts 11:19) who preached to the Jews only. It is thus manifest that we are here required to understand the Gentiles as those who were addressed by the people of Cyprus and Cyrene. In many mss. the word used here is Ἕλληνας Hellēnas"Greeks," instead of "Hellenists." This reading has been adopted by Griesbach, and is found in the Syriac, the Arabic, the Vulgate, and in many of the early fathers. The Aethiopic version reads "to the Gentiles." There is no doubt that this is the true reading; and that the sacred writer means to say that the gospel was here preached to. Those who were not Jews, for all were called "Greeks" by them who were not Jews, Romans 1:16. The connection would lead us to suppose that they had heard of what had been done by Peter, and that, imitating his example, they preached the gospel now to the Gentiles also.

Verse 21

And the hand of the Lord - See the notes on Luke 1:66. Compare Psalm 80:17. The meaning is, that God showed them favor, and evinced his

power in the conversion of their hearers.

Verse 22

Then tidings … - The church at Jerusalem heard of this. It was natural that so remarkable an occurrence as the conversion of the Gentiles, and the extraordinary success of the gospel in a splendid and mighty city, should be reported at Jerusalem, and excite deep interest there.

And they sent forth - To aid the disciples there, and to give them their sanction. They had done a similar thing in the revival which occurred in Samaria. See the notes on Acts 8:14.

Barnabas - See Acts 4:36-37. He was a native of Cyprus, and was probably well acquainted with Antioch. He was, therefore, especially qualified for the work on which they sent him.

Verse 23

Had seen the grace of God - The favor, or mercy of God, in converting sinners to himself.

Was glad - Approved of what had been done in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, and rejoiced that God had poured down his Spirit on them. The effect of a revival is to produce joy in the hearts of all those who love the Saviour.

And exhorted them all - Entreated them. They would be exposed to many trials and temptations, and he sought to secure their firm adherence to the cause of religion.

That with purpose of heart - With a firm mind; with a fixed, settled resolution that they would make this their settled plan of life, their main object. A purpose, πρόθεσις prothesisis a resolution of the mind, a plan, or intention, Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11; Ephesians 3:11; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2 Timothy 3:10. It is especially a resolution of the mind in regard to future conduct, and the doctrine of Barnabas here was, undoubtedly, that it should be a regular, fixed, determined plan or design in their minds that they would henceforward adhere to God. Such a plan should be formed by all Christians in the beginning of their Christian life, and without such a plan there can be no evidence of piety. We may also remark that such a plan is one of the heart. It is not simply of the understanding, but is of the entire mind, including the will and affections. It is the leading principle; the strongest affection; the guiding purpose of the will to adhere to God, and, unless this is the prevalent, governing desire of the heart, there can be no evidence of conversion.

They would cleave - Greek: that they would remain; that is, that they would adhere constantly and faithfully attached to the Lord.

Verse 24

For he was a good man - This is given as a reason why he was so eminently successful. It is not said that he was a man of distinguished talents or learning; that he was a splendid or an imposing preacher; but simply that he was a man of an amiable, kind, and benevolent disposition - a pious, humble man of God. We should not undervalue talent, eloquence, or learning in the ministry, but we may remark that humble piety will often do more in the conversion of souls than the most splendid talents. No endowments can be a substitute for this. The real power of a minister is concentrated in this, and without this his ministry will be barrenness and a curse. There is nothing on the earth so mighty as goodness. If a man wished to make the most of his powers, the true secret would be found in employing them for a good object, and suffering them to be wholly under the direction of benevolence. John Howard‘s purpose “to do good” has made a more permanent impression on the interests of the world than the talents of Alexander or Caesar.

Full of the Holy Ghost - Was entirely under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This is the second qualification mentioned here of a good minister. He was not merely exemplary for mildness and kindness of temper, but he was eminently a man of God. He was filled with the influences of the sacred Spirit, producing zeal, love, peace, joy, etc. See Galatians 5:22-23. Compare the notes on Acts 2:4.

And of faith - Confidence in the truth and promises of God. This is the third qualification mentioned; and this was another cause of his success. He confided in God. He depended, not on his own strength, but on the strength of the arm of God. With these qualifications he engaged in his work, and he was successful. These qualifications should be sought by the ministry of the gospel. Others should not indeed be neglected, but a man‘s ministry will usually be successful only as he seeks to possess those endowments which distinguished Barnabas - a kind, tender, benevolent heart; devoted piety; the fulness of the Spirit‘s influence; and strong, unwavering confidence in the promises and power of God.

And much people - Many people.

Was added unto the Lord - Became Christians.

Verse 25

Then departed … - Why Barnabas sought Saul is not known. It is probable, however, that it was owing to the remarkable success which he had in Antioch. There was a great revival of religion, and there was need of additional labor. In such times the ministers of the gospel need additional help, as men in harvest-time need the aid of others. Saul was in this vicinity Acts 9:30, and he was eminently suited to assist in this work. With him Barnabas was well acquainted Acts 9:27, and probably there was no other one in that vicinity whose help he could obtain.

To Tarsus - See the notes on Acts 9:11.

Verse 26

That a whole year - Antioch was a city exceedingly important in its numbers, wealth, and influence. It was for this reason, probably, that they spent so long a time there, instead of traveling in other places. The attention of the apostles was early and chiefly directed to cities, as being places of influence and centers of power. Thus, Paul passed three years in the city of Ephesus, Acts 20:31. And thus he continued a year and a half at Corinth, Acts 18:11. It may be added that the first churches were founded in cities; and the most remarkable success attended the preaching of the gospel in large towns.

They assembled themselves … - They came together for worship.

With the church - Margin, in the church. The Greek ἐν enwill bear this construction; but there is no instance in the New Testament where the word "church" refers to the edifice in which a congregation worships. It evidently here means that Barnabas and Saul convened with the Christian assembly at proper times, through the space of a year, for the purposes of public worship.

And the disciples were called Christians … - As this became the distinguishing name of the followers of Christ, it was worthy of record. The name was evidently given because they were the followers of Christ. But by whom, or with what views it was given, is not certainly known. Whether it was given by their enemies in derision, as the names Puritan, Quaker, Methodist, etc., have been; or whether the disciples assumed it themselves, or whether it was given by divine intimation, has been a matter of debate. That it was given in derision is not probable, for in the name "Christian" there was nothing dishonorable. To be the professed friends of the Messiah, or the Christ, was not with Jews a matter of reproach, for they all professed to be the friends of the Messiah. The cause of reproach with the disciples

was that they regarded Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah; and hence, when their enemies wished to speak of them with contempt, they would speak of them as Galileans Acts 2:7, or as Nazarenes Acts 24:5, "And a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." It is possible that the name might have been given to them as a mere appellation, without intending to convey by it any reproach. The Gentiles would probably use this name to distinguish them, and it might have become thus the common appellation. It is evident from the New Testament, I think, that it was not designed as a term of reproach. It occurs but twice elsewhere: Acts 26:28, "Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian"; 1 Peter 4:16, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." No certain argument can be drawn in regard to the source of the name from the word which is used here. The word used here, and translated "were called" - χρηματίζω chrēmatizō- means:

(1) To transact any business; to be employed in accomplishing anything, etc. This is its usual signification in the Greek writers.

(2) to be divinely admonished, to be instructed by a divine communication, etc., Matthew 2:12; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22; Hebrews 8:5; Hebrews 11:7; Hebrews 12:25.

(3) to be named, or called, in any way, without a divine communication, Romans 7:3, "She shall be called an adulteress." It cannot be denied, however, that the most usual signification in the New Testament is that of a divine monition, or communication; and it is certainly possible that the name was given by Barnabas and Saul. I recline to the opinion, however, that it was given to them by the Gentiles who were there, simply as an appellation, without intending it as a name of reproach; and that it was readily assumed by the disciples as a name that would fitly designate them. If it had been assumed by them, or if Barnabas and Saul had conferred the name, the record would probably have been to this effect; not simply that they "were called," but that they took this name, or that it was given by the apostles. It is, however, of little consequence whence the name originated. It soon became a name of reproach, and has usually been in all ages since, by the wicked, the frivolous, the licentious, and the ungodly.

It is, however, an honored name - the most honorable appellation that can be conferred on a mortal. It suggests at once to a Christian the name of his great Redeemer; the idea of our intimate relation to him; and the thought that we receive him as our chosen Leader, the source of our blessings, the author of our salvation, the fountain of our joys. It is the distinguishing name of all the redeemed. It is not that we belong to this or that denomination; it is not that our names are connected with high and illustrious ancestors; it is not that they are recorded in the books of heraldry; it is not that they stand high in courts, and among the frivolous, the fashionable, and the rich, that true honor is conferred upon men. These are not the things that give distinction and speciality to the followers of the Redeemer. It is that they are "Christians." This is their special name; by this they are known; this at once suggests their character, their feelings, their doctrines, their hopes, their joys.

This binds them all together - a name which rises above every other appellation; which unites in one the inhabitants of distant nations and tribes of men; which connects the extremes of society, and places them in most important respects on a common level; and which is a bond to unite in one family all those who love the Lord Jesus, though dwelling in different climes, speaking different languages, engaged in different pursuits of life, and occupying distant graves at death. He who lives according to the import of this name is the most blessed and eminent of morals. This name shall be had in remembrance when the names of royalty shall be remembered no more, and when the appellations of nobility shall cease to amuse or to dazzle the world.

Verse 27

And in these days - While Barnabas and Saul were at Antioch.

Came prophets - The word "prophet" denotes properly "one who foretells future events." See the notes on Matthew 7:15. It is sometimes used in the New Testament to denote simply "religious teachers, instructors sent from God, without particular reference to future events." To teach the people in the doctrines of religion was a part of the prophetic office, and this idea was only sometimes denoted by the use of the word. See Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 1 Corinthians 12:28; 1 Corinthians 13:2, 1 Corinthians 13:8; 1 Corinthians 14:3, 1Corinthians 14:5,1 Corinthians

14:24. These prophets seem to have been endowed in a remarkable manner with the knowledge of future events; with the power of explaining mysteries; and in some cases with the power of speaking foreign languages. In this case, it seems that one of them at least had the power of foretelling future events.

Verse 28

Named Agabus - This man is mentioned but in one other place in the New Testament. In Acts 21:10-11, he is referred to as having foretold that Paul would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. It is not expressly said that he was a Christian, but the connection seems to imply that he was.

And signified - See John 12:33. The word usually denotes "to indicate by signs, or with a degree of obscurity and uncertainty, not to declare in explicit language." But here it seems to denote simply "to foretell, to predict."

By the Spirit - Under the influence of the Spirit. He was inspired.

Great dearth - A great famine.

Throughout all the world - The word used here οἰκουμένην oikoumenēnusually denotes "the inhabitable world, the parts of the earth which are cultivated and occupied." It is sometimes used, however, to denote "an entire land or country," in contradistinction from the parts of it: thus, to denote "the whole of the land of Palestine" in distinction from its parts; or to denote that an event would have reference to all the land, and not be confined to one or more parts, as Galilee, Samaria, etc. See the notes on Luke 2:1. The meaning of this prophecy evidently is, that the famine would be extensive; that it would not be confined to a single province or region, but that it would extend so far as that it might be called "general." In fact, though the famine was particularly severe in Judea, it extended much further. This prediction was uttered not long after the conversion of Saul, and probably, therefore, about the year, 38 a.d. or 40 a.d. Dr. Lardner has attempted to show that the prophecy had reference only to the land of Judea, though in fact there were famines in other places (Lardher's Works, vol. 1, pp. 253,254, edit. London, 1829).

Which came to pass … - This is one of the few instances in which the sacred writers in the New Testament affirm the fulfillment of a prophecy. The history having been written after the event, it was natural to give a passing notice of the fulfillment.

In the days of Claudius Caesar - The Roman emperor. He began his reign in 41 a.d., and he reigned for 13 years. He was at last poisoned by one of his wives, Agrippina, who wished to raise her son Nero to the throne. During his reign no less than four different famines are mentioned by ancient writers, one of which was particularly severe in Judea, and was the one, doubtless, to which the sacred writer here refers:

(1) The first happened at Rome, and occurred in the first or second year of the reign of Claudius. It arose from the difficulties of importing provisions from abroad. It is mentioned by Dio, whose words are these: "There being a great famine, he (Claudius) not only took care for a present supply, but provided also for the time to come." He then proceeds to state the great expense which Claudius was at in making a good port at the mouth of the Tiber, and a convenient passage from thence up to the city (did, lib. Ix. p. 671,672; see also Suetonius, Claudius, cap. 20).

(2) asecond famine is mentioned as having been particularly severe in Greece. Of this famine Eusebius speaks in his Chronicon, p. 204: "There was a great famine in Greece, in which a modius of wheat (about half a bushel) was sold for six drachmas." This famine is said by Eusebius to have occurred in the ninth year of the reign of Claudius.

(3) in the latter part of his reign, 51 a.d., there was another famine at Rome, mentioned by Suetonius (Claudius, cap. 18), and by Tacitus (*Ann.*, John 12:43). Of this, Tacitus says that it was so severe that it was deemed to be a divine judgment.

(4) afourth famine is mentioned as having occurred particularly in Judea. This is described by Josephus (*Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 2, section 5). "A famine," says he, "did oppress them at the time (in the time of Claudius); and many people died for the lack of what was necessary to procure food withal. Queen Helena sent some of her servants to Alexandria with money to buy a great quantity of grain, and others of them to Cyprus to bring a cargo of dried figs." This famine is described as having continued under the two procurators of Judea, Tiberius Alexander and Cassius Fadus. Fadus was sent into Judea, on the death of Agrippa, about the fourth year of the reign of Claudius, and the famine, therefore, continued probably during the fifth, sixth, and seventh years of the reign of Claudius. See the note in

Whiston's *Josephus*, *Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 2, section 5; also Lardner as quoted above. Of this famine, or of the want consequent on the famine, repeated mention is made in the New Testament.

Verse 29

Then the disciples - The Christians at Antioch.

According to his ability - According as they had prospered. It does not imply that they were rich, but that they rendered such aid as they could afford.

Determined to send relief - This arose not merely from their general sense of obligation to aid the poor, but they felt themselves particularly bound to assist their Jewish brethren. The obligation to relieve the temporal needs of those from whom important spiritual mercies are received is repeatedly enforced in the New Testament. Compare Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:1-2; Galatians 2:10.

Verse 30

Sent it to the elders - Greek: to the presbyters. This is the first mention which we have in the New Testament of elders, or presbyters, in the Christian church. The word literally denotes "aged men," but in the Jewish synagogue it was merely a name of office. It is clear, however, I think, that the elders of the Jewish synagogue here are not included, for the relief Was intended for the "brethren" (Acts 11:29); that is, the Christians who were at Jerusalem, and it is not probable that a charity like. this would have been entrusted to the hands of Jewish elders. The connection here does not enable us to determine anything about the sense in which the word was used. I think it probable that it does not refer to officers in the church, but that it means simply that the charity was entrusted to the aged, prudent, and experienced men in the church, for distribution among the members. Calvin supposes that the apostles were particularly intended. But this is not probable. It is possible that the deacons, who were probably aged men, may be here particularly referred to, but it seems more probable that the charity was sent to the aged members of the church without respect to their office, to be distributed according to their discretion.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

Now about that time - That is, during the time that the famine existed, or the time when Barnabas and Saul went up to Jerusalem. This was probably about the fifth or sixth year of the reign of Claudius, not far from 47 ad.

Herod the king - This was Herod Agrippa. The Syriac so renders it expressly, and the chronology requires us so to understand it. He was a grandson of Herod the Great, and one of the sons of Aristobulus, whom Herod put to death (Josephus, *Antiq.*, 18,5). Herod the Great left three sons, between whom his kingdom was divided - Archelaus, Philip, and Antipas. See the notes on Matthew 2:19. To Philip was left Iturea and Trachonitis. See Luke 3:1. To Antipas, Galilee and Perea; and to Archclaus, Judea, Idumea, and Samaria. Archclaus, being accused of cruelty, was banished by Augustus to Vienna in Gaul, and Judea was reduced to a province, and united with Syria. When Philip died, this region was granted by the Emperor Caligula to Herod Agrippa. Herod Antipas was driven as an exile also into Gaul, and then into Spain, and Herod Agrippa received also his tetrarchy. In the reign of Claudius also, the dominions of Herod Agrippa were still further enlarged. When Caligula was slain, he was at Rome, and having ingratiated himself into the favor of Claudius, he conferred on him also Judea and Samaria, so that his dominions were equal in extent to those of his grandfather, Herod the Great. See Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 19, chapter 5, section 1.

Stretched forth his hands - A figurative expression, denoting that "he laid his hands on them, or that he endeavored violently to oppress the church."

To vex - To injure, to do evil to - κακῶσαί kakōsaiCertain - Some of the church. Who they were the writer immediately specifies.

Verse 2

And he killed … - He caused to be put to death with a sword, either by beheading, or piercing him through. The Roman procurators were entrusted with authority over life, though in the time of Pilate the Jews had not this authority.

James, the brother of John - This was the son of Zebedee, Matthew 4:21. He is commonly called James the Greater, in contradistinction from

James, the son of Alpheus, who is called James the Less, Matthew 10:3. In this manner were the predictions of our Saviour respecting him fulfilled, Matthew 20:23, "Ye shall indeed drink of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with."

Verse 3

And because he saw that it pleased the Jews - This was the principle on which he acted. It was not from a sense of right; it was not to do justice, and to protect the innocent; it was not to discharge the appropriate duties of a magistrate and a king, but it was to promote his own popularity. It is probable that Agrippa would have acted in this way in any circumstances. He was ambitious, vain, and fawning; he sought, as his great principle, popularity, and he was willing to sacrifice, like many others, truth and justice to obtain this end. But there was also a particular reason for this in his case. He held his appointment under the Roman emperor. This foreign rule was always unpopular among the Jews. In order, therefore, to secure a peaceful reign, and to prevent insurrection and tumult, it was necessary for him to court their favor; to indulge their wishes, and to fall in with their prejudices. Alas, how many monarchs and rulers there have been who were governed by no better principle, and whose sole aim has been to secure popularity, even at the expense of law, truth, and justice. That this was the character of Herod is attested by Josephus (*Antiq.*, 19, chapter 8, section 3): "This king (Herod Agrippa) was by nature very beneficent, and liberal in his gifts, and very ambitious to please the people with such large donations; and he made himself very illustrious by the many expensive presents he made them. He took delight in giving, and rejoiced in living with good reputation."

To take Peter also - Peter was one of the most conspicuous men in the church. He had made himself particularly obnoxious by his severe and pungent discourses, and by his success in winning people to Christ. It was natural, therefore, that he should be the next object of attack.

The days of unleavened bread - The Passover, or the seven days immediately succeeding the Passover, during which the Jews were required to eat bread without leaven, Exodus 12:15-18. It was some time during this period that Herod chose to apprehend Peter. Why this time was selected is not known. As it was, however, a season of religious solemnity, and as Herod was desirous of showing his attachment to the religious rites of the nation (Josephus, *Antiq.*, Exodus 19:7, Exodus 19:3), it is probable that he

chose this period to show to them more impressively his purpose to oppose all false religions, and to maintain the existing establishments of the nation.

Verse 4

And when he had apprehended him - When he had taken or arrested him.

He put him in prison - During the solemnities of this religious festival, it would have been deemed improper to have engaged in the trial of a supposed criminal. The minds of the people were expected to be devoted solely to the services of religion; and hence, Herod chose to retain him in custody until the Passover had ended.

To four quaternions of soldiers - A "quaternion" was a company of "four"; consequently the whole number employed here was sixteen. The Romans divided the night into four watches so that the guards could be relieved; those who were on guard occupying three hours, and being then relieved. Of the four who were on guard, two were with Peter in the prison Acts 12:6, and two kept watch before the door of the prison. The utmost precaution was taken that he should not escape; and Herod thus gave the most ample assurance to the Jews of his intention to secure Peter, and to bring him to trial.

Intending after Easter - There never was a more absurd or unhappy translation than this. The original is simply after the Passover (μετὰ τὸ πάσχα meta to paschaThe word "Easter" now denotes the festival observed by many Christian churches in honor of the resurrection of the Saviour. But the original has no reference to that, nor is there the slightest evidence that any such festival was observed at the time when this book was written. The translation is not only unhappy, as it does not convey at all the meaning of the original, but because it may contribute to foster an opinion that such a festival was observed in the time of the apostles. The word "Easter" is of Saxon origin, and is supposed to be derived from "Eostre," the goddess of Love, or the Venus of the North, in honor of whom a festival was celebrated by our pagan ancestors in the month of April (Webster). Since this festival coincided with the Passover of the Jews, and with the feast observed by Christians in honor of the resurrection of Christ, the name came to be used to denote the latter. In the old Anglo-Saxon service-books the term "Easter" is used frequently to translate the word "Passover." In the translation by Wycliffe, the word "paske," that is, "Passover," is used. But Tyndale and

Coverdale used the word "Easter," and hence, it has very improperly crept into our King James Version.

To bring him forth to the people - That is, evidently, to put him publicly to death to gratify them. The providence of God in regard to Peter is thus remarkable. Instead of his being put suddenly to death, as was James, he was reserved for future trial; and thus an opportunity was given for the prayers of the church, and for his consequent release.

Verse 5

But prayer was made - The church was apprised of his imprisonment and danger, and had no resource but to apply to God by prayer. In scenes of danger there is no other refuge; and the result shows that even in most discouraging circumstances God can hear prayer. Nothing scarcely could appear more hopeless than the idea of rescuing Peter out of the hands of Herod, and out of the prison, and out of the custody of sixteen men, by prayer. But the prayer of faith Was prevalent with God.

Without ceasing - Intense, steady, ardent prayer. The word used here ἐκτενής ektenēsis found in only one other place in the New Testament, 1 Peter 4:8, "Have fervent charity among yourselves." The word has rather the idea that their prayer was earnest and fervent than that it was constant.

Of the church - By the church.

Verse 6

And when Herod would have brought him forth - When he was about to bring him to be put to death.

The same night - That is, the night preceding. The intention of Herod was to bring him out as soon as the Passover was over; but during the night which immediately preceded the day in which he intended to bring him to punishment, Peter was rescued.

Peter was sleeping - Here is an instance of remarkable composure, and an illustration of the effects of peace of conscience and of confidence in God. It was doubtless known to Peter what the intention of Herod was. James had just been put to death, and Peter had no reason to expect a better fate. And yet in this state he slept as quietly as if there had been no danger, and it was necessary that he should be roused even by an angel to contemplate his condition and to make his escape. There is nothing that will give quiet rest and gentle sleep so certainly as a conscience void of offence; and in the midst of imminent dangers, he who confides in God may rest securely and calmly. Compare Psalm 3:5; Psalm 4:8.

Between two soldiers - See the notes on Acts 12:4. Peter was bound to the two. His left hand was chained to the right hand of one of the soldiers, and his right hand to the left hand of the other. This was a common mode of securing prisoners among the Romans. See abundant authorities for this quoted in Lardner‘s Credibility, part 1, chapter 10: section 9, London edition, 1829, vol. i. p. 242,243, etc.

And the keepers … - See Acts 12:4. Two soldiers were stationed at the door. We may see now that every possible precaution was used to ensure the safe custody of Peter:

(1) He was in prison.

(2) he was under the charge of sixteen men, who could relieve each other when weary, and thus every security was given that he could not escape by inattention on their part.

(3) he was bound fast between two men. And,

(4) He was further guarded by two others, whose business it was to watch the door of the prison. It is to be remembered, also, that it was death for a Roman soldier to be found sleeping at his post. But God can deliver in spite of all the precautions of people; and it is easy for him to overcome the most cunning devices of his enemies.

Verse 7

And, behold, the angel of the Lord - See the notes on Acts 5:19.

Came upon him - Greek: was present with him; stood near him ἐπέστη epestēAnd a light shined in the prison - Many have supposed that this was lightning. But light, and splendor, and shining apparel are commonly represented as the accompaniments of the heavenly beings when they visit the earth, Luke 2:9; Luke 24:4; compare Mark 9:3. It is highly probable that this light was discerned only by Peter; and it would be to him an undoubted proof of the divine interposition in his behalf.

And he smote Peter on the side - This was, doubtless, a gentle blow or stroke to arouse him from sleep.

And his chains … - This could have been only by divine power. No natural means were used, or could have been used without arousing the

guard. It is a sublime expression of the ease with which God can deliver from danger, and rescue his friends. Compare Acts 16:26.

Verse 8

Gird thyself - When they slept the outer garment was thrown off, and the girdle with which they bound their inner garment, or tunic, was loosed. He was directed now to gird up that inner garment as they usually wore it; that is, to dress himself, and prepare to follow him.

Bind on thy sandals - Put on thy sandals; prepare to walk. See the notes on Matthew 3:11.

Cast thy garment about thee - The outer garment, that was thrown loosely around the shoulders. It was nearly square, and was laid aside when they slept, or worked, or ran. The direction was that he should dress himself in his usual apparel. See the notes on Matthew 5:38-42.

Verse 9

And wist not - Knew not.

That it was true - That it was real.

But thought he saw a vision - He supposed that it was a representation made to his mind similar to what he had seen before. Compare Acts 10:11-12. It was so astonishing, so unexpected, so wonderful, that he could not realize that it was true.

Verse 10

The first and second ward - The word which is here rendered "ward" φυλακήν phulakēnproperly denotes "the act of guarding"; but it is most commonly used to denote "a prison, or place of confinement." In this place it seems to denote the guard itself - the soldiers stationed at intervals in the entrance into the prison. These were passed silently, probably a deep sleep having been sent on them to facilitate the escape of Peter.

The iron gate - The outer gate, Secured with iron, as the doors of prisons are now.

That leadeth unto the city - Or rather into εἰς eisthe city. The precise situation of the prison is unknown. It is supposed by some (compare Lightfoot on this place) that the prison was between two walls of the city, and that the entrance to the prison was immediately from the inner wall, so that the gate opened directly into the city.

Of his own accord - Itself. It opened spontaneously, without the application of any force or key, thus showing conclusively that Peter was delivered by miraculous interposition.

And passed on through one street - Until Peter was entirely safe from any danger of pursuit, and then the angel left him. God had effected his complete rescue, and now left him to his own efforts as usual.

Verse 11

And when Peter was come to himself - This expression naturally means, when he had overcome bas amazement and astonishment at the unexpected deliverance, so as to be capable of reflection. He had been amazed by the whole transaction. He thought it was a vision: and in the suddenness and rapidity with which it was done, he had no time for cool reflection. The events of divine providence often overwhelm and confound us; and such are their suddenness, and rapidity, and unexpected character in their development as to prevent calm and collected reflection.

Of a surety - Certainly, surely. He considered all the circumstances; he saw that he was actually at liberty, and he was satisfied that it could have been effected only by divine interposition.

The expectation of the people - From this it appears that the people earnestly desired his death; and it was to gratify that desire that Herod had imprisoned him.

Verse 12

And when he had considered … - Thinking on the subject; considering what he should do in these circumstances.

He came to the house of Mary … - Probably this house was near him; and he would naturally seek the dwelling of a Christian friend.

The mother of John … - Probably this was the John Mark who wrote the gospel. But this is not certain.

Whose surname - Greek: who was called Mark. It does not mean that he had two names conferred, as with us, both of which were used at the same time, but he was called by either, the Greeks probably using the name Mark, and the Jews the name John. He is frequently mentioned afterward as having been the attendant of Paul and Barnabas in their travels, Acts 12:25; Acts 15:39; 2 Timothy 4:11. He was a nephew of Barnabas, Colossians 4:10.

Where many were gathered together, praying - This was in the night, and it shows the propriety of observing extraordinary seasons of prayer, even in the night. Peter was to have been put to death the next day; and they assembled to pray for his release, and did not intermit their prayers. When dangers increase around us and our friends, we should become more fervent

in prayer. While life remains we may pray; and even when there is no human hope, and we have no power to heal or deliver, still God may interpose, as he did here, in answer to prayer.

Verse 13

At the door of the gate - Rather the door of the vestibule, or principal entrance into the house. The house was entered through such a porch or vestibule, and it was the door opening into this which is here intended. See the notes on Matthew 9:2.

A damsel - A girl.

Came to hearken - To hear who was there.

Named Rhoda - This is a Greek name signifying a rose. It was not unusual for the Hebrews to give the names of flowers, etc., to their daughters. Thus, Susanna, a lily; Hadessa, a myrtle; Tamar, a palm-tree, etc. (Grotius).

Verse 14

She opened not the gate - At this time of night, and in these circumstances, the door would be fastened. Christians were doubtless alarmed by the death of James and the imprisonment of Peter, and they would take all possible precautions for their own safety.

For gladness - In her joy she hastened to inform those who were assembled of the safety of Peter.

Verse 15

Thou art mad - Thou art insane. They seemed to have regarded his rescue as so difficult and so hopeless, that they deemed it proof of derangement that she now affirmed it. And yet this was the very thing for which they had been so earnestly praying. When it was now announced to them that the object of their prayers was granted, they deemed the messenger that announced it insane. Christians are often surprised even when their prayers are answered. They are overwhelmed and amazed at the success of their own petitions, and are slow to believe that the very thing for which they have sought could be granted. It shows, perhaps, with how little faith, after all, they pray, and how slow they are to believe that God can hear and answer prayer. In a revival of religion in answer to prayer, Christians are often overwhelmed and astonished when even their own petitions are granted, and when God manifests his own power in his own way and time. Prayer should be persevered in, and we should place

ourselves in a waiting posture to catch the first indications that God has heard us.

But she constantly affirmed - She insisted on it. How much better it would have been to have hastened at once to the gate, than thus to have engaged in a controversy on the subject. Peter was suffered to remain knocking while they debated the matter. Christians are often engaged in some unprofitable controversy when they should hasten to catch the first tokens of divine favor, and open their arms to welcome the proofs that God has heard their prayers.

Then said they - Still resolved not to be convinced.

It is his angel - Any way of accounting for it rather than to admit the simple fact, or to ascertain the simple truth. All this was caused by the little hope which they had of his release, and their earnest desire that it should be so. It was just such a state of mind as is indicated when we say, "The news is too good to e believed." The expression "It is his angel" may mean that they supposed that the "tutelary guardian," or angel appointed to attend Peter, had come to announce something respecting him, and that he had assumed the voice and form of Peter in order to make them certain that he came from him. This notion arose from the common belief of the Jews that each individual had assigned to him, at birth, a celestial spirit, whose office it was to guard and defend him through life. See the notes on Matthew 18:10. That the Jews entertained this opinion is clear from their writings. See Kuinoel. Lightfoot thinks that they who were assembled supposed that the angel had assumed the voice and manner of Peter in order to intimate to them that he was about to die, and to excite them to earnest prayer that he might die with constancy and firmness. Whatever their opinions were, however, it proves nothing on these points. There is no evidence that they were inspired in these opinions, nor are their notions countenanced by the Scriptures. They were the mere common traditions of the Jews, and prove nothing in regard to the truth of the opinion one way or the other.

Verse 16

Were astonished - They were now convinced that it was Peter, and they were amazed that he had been rescued. As yet they were of course ignorant of the manner in which it was done.

Verse 17

But he, beckoning … - To prevent the noise, and tumult, and transport which was likely to be produced. His wish was, not that there should be

clamorous joy, but that they should listen in silence to what God had done. It was sufficient to awe the soul, and produce deep, grateful feeling. A noise might excite the neighboring Jews, and produce danger. Religion is calm and peaceful; and its great scenes and surprising deliverances are rather suited to awe the soul to produce calm, sober, and grateful contemplation, than the noise of rejoicing, and the shoutings of exultation. The consciousness of the presence of God, and of his mighty power, does not produce rapturous disorder and tumult, but holy, solemn, calm, grateful emotion.

Go, show these things … - Acquaint them that their prayer is heard, and that they may rejoice also at the mercy of God.

Unto James - James, the son of Alpheus, commonly called the Less. See Acts 12:2 note; Acts 1:13 note; Matthew 10:2 note.

And to the brethren - Particularly to the other apostles.

And went into another place - Probably a place of greater safety. Where he went is not known. The papists pretend that he went to Rome. But of this there is no evidence. He is mentioned as in Jerusalem again in Acts 15. The meaning is evidently that he went into some place of retirement until the danger was past.

Verse 18

No small stir - Amazement that he had escaped, and apprehension of the consequences. The punishment which they had reason to expect, for having suffered his escape, was death.

Verse 19

He examined the keepers - The soldiers who were entrusted with his custody. Probably only those who had the special care of him at that watch of the night. The word "examine" here means "to inquire diligently, to make investigation." He subjected them to a rigid scrutiny to ascertain the manner of his escape; for it is evident that Herod did not mean to admit the possibility of a miraculous interposition.

Should be put to death - For having failed to keep Peter. This punishment they had a right to expect for having suffered his escape.

And he went down … - How soon after the escape of Peter he went down to Caesarea, or how long he abode there, is not known. Caesarea was rising into magnificence, and the Roman governors made it often their abode. See the notes on Acts 8:40. Compare Acts 25:1, Acts 25:4. This

journey of Herod is related by Josephus (*Antiq.*, book 19, chapter 8, section 2). He says that it was after he had reigned over all Judea for three years.

And there abode - That is, until his death, which occurred shortly after. We do not learn that he made any further inquiry after Peter, or that he attempted any further persecutions of the Christians. The men on guard were undoubtedly put to death; and thus Herod used all his power to create the impression that Peter had escaped by their negligence; and this would undoubtedly be believed by the Jews. See Matthew 28:15. He might himself, perhaps, have been convinced, however, that the escape was by miracle, and afraid to attempt any further persecutions; or the affairs of his government might have called off his attention to other things; and thus, as in the case of the. "persecution that arose about Stephen," the political changes and dangers might divert the attention from putting Christians to death. See the notes on Acts 9:31. Thus, by the providence of God, this persecution, that had been commenced, not by popular tumult, but by royal authority and power, and that was aimed at the very pillars of the church, ceased. The prayers of the church prevailed; and the monarch was overcome, disappointed, bummed, and, by divine judgment, soon put to death.

Verse 20

And Herod was highly displeased … - Greek: "bore a hostile mind," intending war. See the margin. The Greek word θυμομαχῶν thumomachōndoes not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means to meditate war; to purpose war in the mind; or here, probably, to be enraged or angry at them. What was the cause of this hostility to the people of Tyre and Sidon is not mentioned, and conjecture is useless. It is not at all inconsistent, however, with the well known character of Herod. It was probably from some cause relating to commerce. Tyre and Sidon were under the Roman power, and had some shadow of liberty (Grotius), and it is probable that they might have embarrassed Herod in some of his regulations respecting commerce.

Tyre and Sidon - See the notes on Matthew 11:21. They were north of Caesarea.

They came with one accord - Fearing the effects of his anger, they united in sending an embassage to him to make peace.

Blastus, the king's chamberlain - See Romans 16:23. The word "chamberlain" denotes an officer who is charged with the direction and

management of a chamber or chambers, particularly a bed-chamber. It denotes here a man who had charge of the bed chamber of Herod.

Because their country was nourished … - Was supplied by the territories of Herod. The country of Tyre and Sidon included a narrow strip of land on the coast of the Mediterranean. Of course they were dependent for provisions, and for articles of commerce, on the interior country; but this belonged to the kingdom of Herod; and as they were entirely dependent on his country, as he had power to dry up the sources of their support and commerce, they were the more urgent to secure his favor.

Verse 21

And upon a set day - An appointed, public day. This was the second day of the sports and games which Herod celebrated in Caesarea in honor of Claudius Caesar. Josephus has given an account of this occurrence, which coincides remarkably with the narrative here. The account is contained in his "Antiquities of the Jews," book 19, chapter 8, section 2, and is as follows: "Now when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city Caesarea, which was formerly called Strato's Tower; and there he exhibited shows in honor of Caesar, upon his being informed that there was a certain festival celebrated to make vows for his safety. At which festival a great multitude was gotten together of the principal persons, and such as were of dignity throughout his province. On the second day of which shows he put on a garment made wholly of silver," etc.

Arrayed in royal apparel - In the apparel of a king. Josephus thus describes the dress which Herod wore on that occasion. "He put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of wonderful contexture, and early in the morning came into the theater place of the shows and games, at which time the silver of his garment, being illuminated by the first reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently on him."

Sat upon his throne - This does not denote a throne in the usual sense of that word, but "a high seat" in the theater, where he sat, and from whence he could have a full view of the games and sports. From this place he made his speech.

Made an oration - Addressed the people.' What was the subject of this speech is not intimated by Luke or Josephus.

Verse 22

And the people gave a shout - A loud applause.

It is the voice of a god … - It is not probable that the Jews joined in this acclamation, but that it was made by the idolatrous Gentiles. Josephus gives a similar account of their feelings and conduct. He says, "And presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another (though not for his good), that he was a god; and they added, ‹Be thou merciful unto us; for although we have hitherto reverenced thee only as a king, yet shall we henceforth own thee as a superior to mortal nature.‘" It is true that Josephus says that this was done when they saw his splendid apparel, and that he gives no account of his addressing the people, while Luke describes it as the effect of his speech. But the discrepancy is of no consequence. Luke is as credible an historian as Josephus, and his account is more consistent than that of the Jewish historian. It is far more probable that this applause and adoration would be excited by a speech than simply by beholding his apparel.

Verse 23

And immediately the angel of the Lord - Diseases and death axe in the Scriptures often attributed to an angel. See 2 Samuel 24:16; 1 Chronicles 21:12, 1 Chronicles 21:15, 1 Chronicles 21:20, 1 Chronicles 21:27; 2 Chronicles 32:21. It is not intended that there was a miracle in this case, but it certainly is intended by the sacred writer that his death was a divine judgment on him for his receiving homage as a god. Josephus says of him that he "did neither rebuke them the people nor reject their impious flattery. A severe pain arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner. And when he was quite worn out by the pain in his belly for five days, he departed this life, in the 54th year of his age, and the 7th year of his reign." Josephus does not mention that it was done by an angel, but says that when he looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a rope over his head, and judging it to be an evil omen, he immediately became melancholy, and was seized with the pain.

Because he gave not God the glory - Because he was willing to receive the worship due to God. It was the more sinful in him as he was a Jew, and was acquainted with the true God, and with the evils of idolatry. He was proud, and willing to be flattered, and even adored. He had sought their applause; he had arrayed himself in this splendid manner to excite admiration; and when they carried it even so far as to offer divine homage, he did not reject the impious flattery, but listened stir to their praises.

Hence, he was judged; and God vindicated his own insulted honor by inflicting severe pains on him, and by a most awful death.

And he was eaten of worms - The word used here is not found elsewhere in the New Testament. A similar disease is recorded of Antiochus Epiphanes, in the Apocrypha, Acts 12:9, so that worms rose up out of the body of this wicked man," etc. Probably this was the disease known as morbus pedicularis. It is loathsome, offensive, and most painful. See the death of Antiochus Epiphanes described in Isaiah 42:8.

(3) that the most proud, and mighty, and magnificent princes have no security of their lives. God can in a moment - even when they are surrounded by their worshippers and flatterers - touch the seat of life, and turn them to loathsomeness and putrefaction. What a pitiable being is a man of pride receiving from his fellow-men that homage which is due to God alone! See Isaiah 14.

(4) pride and vanity, in any station of life, are hateful in the sight of God. Nothing is more inappropriate to our situation as lost, dying sinners, and nothing will more certainly meet the wrath of heaven.

(5) we have here a strong confirmation of the truth of the sacred narrative. In all essential particulars Luke coincides in his account of the death of Herod with Josephus. This is one of the many circumstances which show that the sacred Scriptures were written at the time when they professed to be, and that they accord with the truth. See Lardner's Credibility, part 1, chapter 1, section 6.

Verse 24

But the word of God grew … - Great success attended it. The persecutions had now ceased; and notwithstanding all the attempts which had been made to crush it, stir the church increased and flourished. The liberation of Peter and the death of Herod would contribute to extend it. It was a new evidence of divine interposition in behalf of the church; it would augment the zeal of Christians; it would. humble their enemies, and would fill those with fear who had attempted to oppose and crush the church of God.

Verse 25

Returned from Jerusalem - They had gone to Jerusalem to carry alms, and they now returned to Antioch, Acts 11:30.

When they had fulfilled their ministry - When they had accomplished the purpose for which they had been sent there; that is, to deposit the alms of the church at Antioch in the hands of the eiders of the churches, Acts 11:30.

John, whose surname was Mark - See the notes on Acts 12:12. From this period the sacred historian records chiefly the labors of Paul. The labors of the other apostles are, after this, seldom referred to in this book, and the attention is fixed almost entirely on the trials and travels of the great apostle of the Gentiles. His important services, his unwearied efforts, his eminent success, and the fact that Luke was his companion, may be the reasons why his labors are made so prominent in the history. Through the previous chapters we have seen the church rise from small beginnings, until it was even now spreading into surrounding regions. We have seen it survive two persecutions, commenced and conducted with all the power and malice of Jewish rulers. We have seen the most zealous of the persecutors converted to the faith which he once destroyed, and the royal persecutor put to death by the divine judgment. And we have thus seen that God was the protector of the church; that no weapon formed against it could prosper; that, according to the promise of the Redeemer, the gates of hell could not prevail against it. In that God and Saviour who then defended the church, we may still confide, and may be assured that he who was then its friend has it still "engraved on the palms of his hands," and designs that it shall extend until it fills the earth with light and salvation.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

The church that was at Antioch - See the notes on Acts 11:20.

Certain prophets - See the notes on Acts 11:27.

And teachers - Teachers are several times mentioned in the New Testament as an order of ministers, 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; Ephesians 4:11; 2 Peter 2:1. Their precise rank and duty are not known. It is probable that those mentioned here as prophets were the same persons as the teachers. They might discharge both offices, predicting future events, and instructing the people.

As Barnabas - Barnabas was a preacher Acts 4:35-36; Acts 9:27; Acts 11:22, Acts 11:26; and it is not improbable that the names "prophets and teachers" here simply designate the preachers of the gospel.

Simeon that was called Niger - "Niger" is a Latin name meaning "black." Why the name was given is not known. Nothing more is known of him than is mentioned here.

Lucius of Cyrene - Cyrene was in Africa. See the notes on Matthew 27:32. Lucius is afterward mentioned as with the apostle Paul when he wrote the Epistle to the Romans, Revelation 16:21.

And Manaen - He is not mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament.

Which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch - Herod Antipas, not Herod Agrippa. Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, Luke 3:1. The word translated here as "which had been brought up," σύντροφος suntrophosdenotes "one who is educated or nourished at the same time with another." It is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. He might have been connected with the royal family, and, being nearly of the same age, was educated by the father of Herod Antipas with him. He was, therefore, a man of rank and education, and his conversion shows that the gospel was not confined entirely in its influence to the poor.

And Saul - Saul was an apostle; and yet he is mentioned here among the "prophets and teachers," showing that these words denote "ministers of the gospel" in general, without reference to any particular order or rank.

Verse 2

As they ministered to the Lord - It is probable that this took place on some day set apart for fasting and prayer. The expression "ministered to the

Lord" means as they were engaged in prayer to the Lord, or as they were engaged in divine service. The Syriac thus renders the passage.

The Holy Ghost said - Evidently by direct revelation.

Separate me - Set apart to me, or for my service. It does not mean to ordain, but simply to designate, or appoint to this specific work.

For the work whereunto I have called them - Not the apostolic office, for Saul was called to that by the express revelation of Jesus Christ Galatians 1:12, and Barnabas was not an apostle. The "work" to which they were now set apart was that of preaching the gospel in the regions round about Antioch. It was not any permanent office in the church, but was a temporary designation to a missionary enterprise in extending the gospel, especially through Asia Minor, and the adjacent regions. Accordingly, when, in the fulfillment of this appointment, they had traveled through Seleucia, Cyprus, Paphos, Pamphylia, Pisidia, etc., they returned to Antioch, having fulfilled the work to which they were separated. See Acts 14:26-27. "Whereunto I have called them." This proves that they received their commission to this work directly from God the Holy Spirit. Paul and Barnabas had been influenced by the Spirit to engage in this work, but they were to be sent forth by the concurrence and designation of the church.

Verse 3

And when they had fasted - They were fasting when they were commanded to set them apart. Yet this probably refers to an appointed day of prayer, with reference to this very purpose. The first formal mission to the Gentiles was an important event in the church, and they engaged in this appointment with deep solemnity and with humbling themselves before God.

And prayed - This enterprise was a new one. The gospel had been preached to the Jews, to Cornelius, and to the Gentiles at Antioch. But there had been no solemn, public, and concerted plan of sending it to the Gentiles, or of appointing a mission to the pagan. It was a new event, and was full of danger and hardships. The primitive church felt the need of divine direction and aid in the great work. Two missionaries were to be sent forth among strangers, to be exposed to perils by sea and land; and the commencement of the enterprise demanded prayer. The church humbled itself, and this primitive missionary society sought, as all others should do, the divine blessing to attend the labors of those employed in this work. The result showed that the prayer was heard.

And laid their hands on them - That is, those who are mentioned in Acts 13:1. This was not to set them apart to the apostolic office. Saul was chosen by Christ himself, and there is no evidence that any of the apostles were ordained by the imposition of hands (see Acts 1:26 notes; Matthew 10:1-5 notes; Luke 6:12-16 notes), and Barnabas was not an apostle in the original and unique sense of the word. Nor is it meant that this was an ordination to the ministry, to the once of preaching the gospel, for both had been engaged in this before. Saul received his commission directly from the Saviour, and began at once to preach, Acts 9:20; Galatians 1:11-17. Barnabas had preached at Antioch, and was evidently recognized as a preacher by the apostles, Acts 9:27; Acts 11:22-23. It follows, therefore, that this was not an ordination in the doctrinal sense of this term, either Episcopal or Presbyterian, but was a designation to a particular work - a work of vast importance; strictly a missionary appointment by the church, under the authority of the Holy Spirit. The act of laying hands on any person was practiced not only in ordination, but in conferring a favor, and in setting apart for any purpose. See Leviticus 3:2, Leviticus 3:8, Leviticus 3:13; Leviticus 4:4, Leviticus 4:29; Leviticus 16:21; Numbers 8:12; Mark 5:23; Mark 16:18; Matthew 21:46. It means in this case that they appointed them to a particular field of labor, and by laying hands on them they implored the blessing of God to attend them.

They sent them away - The church by its teachers sent them forth under the direction of the Holy Spirit. All missionaries are thus sent by the church; and the church should not forget its ambassadors in their great and perilous work.

Verse 4

Being sent forth by the Holy Ghost - Having been called to this world by the Holy Spirit, and being under his direction.

Departed unto Seleucia - This city was situated at the mouth of the river Orontes, where it fails into the Mediterranean. Antioch was connected with the sea by the Orontes River. Strabo says that in his time they sailed up the river in one day. The distance from Antioch to Seleucia by water is about 41 miles, while the journey by land is only 16 12 miles (Life and Epistles of Paul, vol. 1, p. 185. “Seleucia united the two characters of a fortress and a seaport. It was situated on a rocky eminence, which is the southern extremity of an elevated range of hills projecting from Mount Aranus. From the southeast, where the ruins of the Antioch gate are still

conspicuous, the ground rose toward the northeast into high and craggy summits; and round the greater part of the circumference of 4 miles the city was protected by its natural position. The harbor and mercantile suburb were on level ground toward the west; but here, as on the only weak point at Gibraltar, strong artificial defenses had made compensation for the weakness of nature. Seleucus, who had named his metropolis in his father‘s honor (p. 122), gave his own name to this maritime fortress; and here, around his tomb, his successors contended for the key of Syria. ‹Seleucia by the sea‘ was a place of great importance under the Seleucidae and the Ptolemies, and so it remained under the sway of the Romans. In consequence of its bold resistance to Tigranes when he was in possession of all the neighboring country, Pompey gave it the privileges of a ‹free city;‘ and a contemporary of Paul speaks of it as having those privileges still.

Here, in the midst of unsympathizing sailors, the two missionary apostles, with their younger companion, stepped on board the vessel which was to convey them to Salamis. As they cleared the port, the whole sweep of the bay of Antioch opened on their left - the low ground by the mouth of the Orontes; the wild and woody country beyond it; and then the peak of Mount Casius, rising symmetrically from the very edge of the sea to a height of 5000 feet. On the right, in the southwest horizon, if the day was clear, they saw the island of Cyprus from the first. The current sets northerly and northeast between the island and the Syrian coast. But with a fair wind, a few hours would enable them to run down from Seleucia to Salamis, and the land would rapidly rise in forms well known and familiar to Barnabas and Mark” (Life and Epistles of Paul, vol. 1, pp. 135,138).

They sailed to Cyprus - An island in the Mediterranean, not far from Seleucia. See the notes on Acts 4:36.

Verse 5

And when they were at Salamis - This was the principal city and seaport of Cyprus. It was situated on the southeast part of the island, and was afterward called Constantia.

In the synagogues of the Jews - Jews were living in all the countries adjacent to Judea, and in those countries they had synagogues. The apostles uniformly preached first to them.

And they had also John to their minister - John Mark, Acts 12:12. He was their attendant, yet not pretending to be equal to them in circe. They had been specifically designated to this work. He was with them as their

friend and traveling companion; perhaps also employed in making the needful arrangements for their comfort, and for the supply of their needs in their travels.

Verse 6

And when they had gone through the isle - The length of the island, according to Strabo, was 1,400 stadia, or nearly 170 miles.

Unto Paphos - Paphos was a city at the western extremity of the island. It was the residence of the proconsul, and was distinguished for a splendid temple erected to Venus, who was worshipped throughout the island. Cyprus was fabled to be the place of the birth of this goddess. It had, besides Paphos and Salamis, several towns of note Citium, the birthplace of Zeno, Areathus, sacred to Venus, etc. Its present capital is Nicosia. Whether Paul preached at any of these places is not recorded. The island is formerly supposed to have had one million inhabitants.

A certain sorcerer - Greek: magus, or magician. See the notes on Acts 8:9.

A false prophet - Pretending to be endowed with the gift of prophecy; or a man, probably, who pretended to be inspired.

Bar-jesus - The word "Bar" is Syriac, and means "son." Jesus (Joshua) was not an uncommon name among the Jews. The name was given from his father - son of Jesus, or Joshua; as Bar-Jonas, son of Jonas.

Verse 7

Which was with the deputy - Or with the proconsul. The exact accuracy of Luke in this statement is worthy of special remark. In the time when Augustus united the world under his own power, the provinces were divided into two classes. Augustus found two names which were applied to public officers in existence, one of which was henceforward inseparably blended with the imperial dignity and with military command, and the other with the authority of the senate and its civil administration. The first of these names was "Praetor"; the other was "Consul." What is to be accounted for here is that the latter is the name given by Luke to Sergius Paulus, as if he derived his authority from the senate. The difficulty in the ease is this: that Augustus told the senate and the people of Rome that he would resign to them those provinces where soldiers were unnecessary to secure a peaceful administration, and that he would himself take the care and risk of the other provinces where the presence of the Roman legions would be necessary.

Hence, in the time of Augustus, and in the subsequent reigns of the emperors, the provinces were divided into these two classes; the one governed by men who went forth from the senate, and who would be styled Proconsul, ἀνθύπατος anthupatos- the term used here; and the other those sent forth by the emperor, and who would be styled Procurator, Ἐπίτροπος Epitroposor Proproetor, Ἀντιστράτηγος AntistratēgosBoth these kind of officers are referred to in the New Testament. Now we are told by Strabo and Dio Cassius that "Asaia" and "Achaia" were assigned to the senate, and the title, therefore, of the governor would be Proconsul, as we find in Acts 18:12; Acts 19:38. At the same time, Dio Cassius informs us that Cyprus was retained by the emperor for himself, and the title of the governor, therefore, would naturally have been, not "Proconsul," as here, but "Procurator." Yet it so happens that Dio Cassius has stated the reason why the title "Proconsul" was given to the governor of Cyprus, in the fact which he mentions that "Augustus restored Cyprus to the senate in exchange for another district of the empire." It is this statement which vindicates the strict accuracy of Luke in the passage before us. See Life and Epistles of Paul, vol. 1, pp. 142-144, and also Lardner's Credibility, part 1, chapter 1, section 11, where he has fully vindicated the accuracy of the appellation which is here given to Sergius by Luke.

Sergius Paulus, a prudent man - The word here rendered "prudent" means "intelligent, wise, learned." It also may have the sense of candid, and may have been given to this man because he was of large and liberal views; of a philosophic and inquiring turn of mind; and was willing to obtain knowledge from any source. Hence, he had entertained the Jews; and hence, he was willing also to listen to Barnabas and Saul. It is not often that men of rank are thus willing to listen to the instructions of the professed ministers of God.

Who called for Barnabas and Saul - It is probable that they had preached in Paphos, and Sergius was desirous himself of hearing the import of their new doctrine.

And desired to hear … - There is no evidence that he then wished to listen to this as divine truth, or that he was anxious about his own salvation, but it was rather as a speculative inquiry. It was a professed characteristic of many ancient philosophers that they were willing to receive instruction from any quarter. Compare Acts 17:19-20.

Verse 8

Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) - Elymas the magician. Elymas is the interpretation, not of the name Bar-jesus, but of the word rendered "the sorcerer." It is an Arabic word, and means the same as Magus. It seems that he was better known by this foreign name than by his own.

Withstood them - Resisted them. He was sensible that if the influence of Saul and Barnabas should be extended over the proconsul, that he would be seen to be an impostor, and his power be at an end. His interest, therefore, led him to oppose the gospel. His own popularity was at stake; and being governed by this, he opposed the gospel of God. The love of popularity and power, the desire of retaining some political influence, is often a strong reason why people oppose the gospel.

To turn away the deputy from the faith - To prevent the influence of the truth on his mind; or to prevent his be coming the friend and patron of the Christians.

Verse 9

Saul, (who is also called Paul) - This is the last time that this apostle is called "Saul." Henceforward, he is designated by the title by which he is usually known, as "Paul." When, or why, this change occurred in the name, has been a subject on which commentators are not agreed. From the fact that the change in the name is here first intimated, it would seem probable that it was first used in relation to him at this time. By whom the name was given him whether he assumed it himself, or whether it was first given him by Christians or by Romans - is not intimated. The name is of Roman origin. In the Latin language the name Paulussignifies little, dwarfish; and some have conjectured that it was given by his parents to denote that he was small when born; others, that it was assumed or conferred in subsequent years because he was little in stature. The name is not of the same signification as the name Saul. This signifies one that is asked, or desired. After all the conjectures on this subject, it is probable:

(1) That this name was first used here; for before this, even after his conversion, he is uniformly called Saul.

(2) that it was given by the Romans, as being a name with which they were more familiar, and one that was more consonant with their language and pronunciation. It was made by the change of a single letter; and

probably because the name Paul was common among them, and pronounced, perhaps, with greater facility.

(3) Paul suffered himself to be called by this name, as he was employed chiefly among the Gentiles. It was common for names to undergo changes quite as great as this, without our being able to specify any particular cause, in passing from one language to another. Thus, the Hebrew name Jochanan among the Greeks and Latins was Johannes, with the French it is Jean, with the Dutch Hans, and with us John (Doddridge). Thus, Onias becomes Menelaus; Hillel, Pollio; Jakim, Alcimus; Silas, Silvanus, etc. (Grotius).

Filled with the Holy Ghost - Inspired to detect his sin; to denounce divine judgment; and to inflict punishment on him. See the notes on Acts 2:4.

Set his eyes on him - Looked at him intently.

Verse 10

O full of all subtilty and all mischief - The word "subtilty" denotes "deceit and fraud," and implies that he was practicing an imposition, and that he knew it. The word rendered "mischief" ῥᾳδιουργίας radiourgiasdenotes properly "facility of acting," and then "sleight of hand; sly;, cunning arts, by which one imposes on another, and deceives him with a fraudulent intention." It is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. The art of Elymas consisted probably in sleight of hand, legerdemain, or trick, aided by skill in the abstruse sciences, by which the ignorant might be easily imposed on. See the notes on Acts 8:9.

Child of the devil - Under his influence; practicing his arts; promoting his designs by deceit and imposture, so that he may be called your father. See the notes on John 8:44. Satan is represented here as the author of deceit and the father of lies.

Enemy of all righteousness - Practicing deceit and iniquity, and thus opposed to righteousness and honesty. A man who lives by wickedness will, of course, be the foe of every form of integrity. A man who lives by fraud will be opposed to the truth; a panderer to the vices of people will hate the rules of chastity and purity; a manufacturer or vendor of ardent spirits will be the enemy of temperance societies.

Wilt thou not cease to pervert - In what way he had opposed Paul and Barnabas is not known. It may have been either by misrepresenting their doctrines, or by representing them as apostate Jews thus retarding or

hindering the progress of the gospel. The expression "wilt thou not cease." implies that he had been engaged sedulously in doing this, probably from the commencement of their work in the city.

The right ways of the Lord - The straight paths or doctrines of the Christian religion, in opposition to the crooked and perverse arts of deceivers and impostors. Straight paths denote "integrity, sincerity, truth," Jeremiah 31:9; Hebrews 12:13; compare Isaiah 40:3-4; Isaiah 42:16; Luke 3:5. Crooked ways denote "the ways of the sinner, the deceiver, the impostor," Deuteronomy 32:5; Psalm 125:1-5; Proverbs 2:15; Isaiah 59:8; Philemon 2:15.

Verse 11

The hand of the Lord is upon thee - God shall punish thee. By this sudden and miraculous punishment he would be awed and humbled, and the proconsul and others would be convinced that he was an impostor, and that the gospel was true. His wickedness deserved such punishment; and at the same time that due punishment was inflicted, it was designed that the gospel should be extended by this means. In all this there was the highest evidence that Paul was under the inspiration of God. He was full of the Holy Spirit; he detected the secret feelings and desires of the heart of Elymas; and he inflicted on him a punishment that could have proceeded from none but God. That the apostles had the power of inflicting punishment is apparent from various places in the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Timothy 1:20. The punishment inflicted on Elymas, also, would be highly emblematic of the darkness and perverseness of his conduct.

Not seeing the sun for a season - For how long a time this blindness was to continue is nowhere specified. It was, however, in mercy ordained that the blindness should not be permanent and final; and though it was a punishment, it was at the same time benevolent, for nothing would be more likely to lead him to reflection and repentance than such a state of blindness. It was such a manifest proof that God was opposed to him it was such a sudden divine judgment; it so completely cut him off from all possibility of practicing his arts of deception, that it was adapted to bring him to repentance. Accordingly there is a tradition in the early church that he became a Christian. Origen says that "Paul, by a word striking him blind, by anguish converted him to godliness" (Clark).

A mist - The word used here properly denotes "a darkness or obscurity of the air; a cloud," etc. But it also denotes "an extinction of sight by the drying up or disturbance of the tumors of the eye" (Hippocrates, as quoted by Schleusner).

And a darkness - Blindness, night. What was the precise cause or character of this miracle is not specified.

And he went about … - This is a striking account of the effect of the miracle. The change was so sudden that he knew not where to go. He sought someone to guide him in the paths with which he had before been familiar. How soon can God bring down the pride of man, and make him as helpless as an infant! How easily can He touch our senses, the organs of our most exquisite pleasures, and wither away all our enjoyments! How dependent are we upon Him for the inestimable blessing of sight! And how easily can He annihilate all the sinner's pleasures, break up all his plans, and humble him in the dust! Sight is his gift; and it is a mercy unspeakably great that He does not overwhelm us in thick darkness, and destroy forever all the pleasure that through this organ is conveyed to the soul.

Verse 12

Then the deputy … believed - Was convinced that Elymas was an impostor, and that the doctrine of Paul was true. There seems no reason to doubt that his faith was what is connected with eternal life; and if so, it is an evidence that the gospel was not always confined to the poor, and to those in obscure ranks of life.

At the doctrine of the Lord - The word "doctrine" here seems to denote, not the "teaching" or "instruction," but the wonderful effects which were connected with the doctrine. It was particularly the miracle with which he was astonished; but he might have been also deeply impressed and amazed at the purity and sublimity of the truths which were now expanded to his view. We learn nothing further respecting him in the New Testament.

Verse 13

Paul and his company - Those with him - Barnabas and John - and perhaps others who had been converted at Paphos; for it was common for many of the converts to Christianity to attend on the apostles in their travels. See Acts 9:3 O.

Loosed from Paphos - Departed from Paphos. See the notes on Acts 13:6.

They came to Perga in Pamphylia - Pamphylia was a province of Asia Minor, lying over against Cyprus, having Cilicia east, Lycia west, Pisidia north, and the Mediterranean south. Perga was the metropolis of Pamphylia, and was situated, not on the seacoast, but on the river Cestus, at some distance from its mouth. There was on a mountain near it a celebrated temple of Diana.

And John departing from them … - Why he departed from them is unknown. It might have been from fear of danger; or from alarm in traveling so far into unknown regions. But it is plain from Acts 15:38, that it was from some cause which was deemed blameworthy, and that his conduct now was such as to make Paul unwilling again to have him as a companion.

Verse 14

They came to Antioch in Pisidia - Pisidia was a province of Asia Minor, and was situated north of Pamphylia. Antioch was not in Pisidia, but within the limits of Phrygia; but it belonged to Pisadia, and was called Antioch of Pisidia to distinguish it from Antioch in Syria - Pliny, Nat. Hist., 5,27; Strabo, 12, p. 577 (Kuinoel; Robinson‘s Calmet). The city was built by Seleucus, the founder of the Antioch in Syria, and was called after the name of his father, Antiochus. He is said to have built 16 cities of that name ("Life and Epistles of Paul," vol. 1, p. 122).

Went into the synagogue - Though Paul and Barnabas were on a special mission to the Gentiles, yet they availed themselves of every opportunity to offer the gospel to the Jews first.

Verse 15

And after the reading of the law and the prophets - See notes on Luke 4:16.

The rulers of the synagogue - Those were persons who had the general charge of the synagogue and its service, to keep everything in order, and to direct the affairs of public worship. They designated the individuals who were to read the Law; and called on those whom they pleased to address the people, and had the power also of inflicting punishment, and of excommunicating, etc. (Schleusner), Mark 5:22, Mark 5:35-36, Mark 5:38; Luke 8:49; Luke 13:14; Acts 18:8, Acts 18:17. Seeing that Paul and Barnabas were Jews, though strangers, they sent to them, supposing it probable that they would wish to address their brethren.

Men and brethren - An affectionate manner of commencing a discourse, recognizing them as their own countrymen, and as originally of

the same religion.

Say on - Greek: “speak!”

Verse 16

Men of Israel - Jews. The design of this discourse of Paul was to introduce to them the doctrine that Jesus was the Messiah. To do this, he evinced his usual wisdom and address. To have commenced at once on this would have probably excited their prejudice and rage. He therefore pursued a train of argument which showed that he was a firm believer in the Scriptures; that he was acquainted with the history and promises of the Old Testament; and that he was not disposed to call in question the doctrines of their fathers. The passage which had been read had probably given occasion for him to pursue this train of thought. By going over, in a summary way, their history, and recounting the former dealings of God with them, he showed them that he believed the Scriptures; that a promise had been given of a Messiah; and that he had actually come according to the promise.

Ye that fear God - Probably proselytes of the gate, who had not yet been circumcised, but who had renounced idolatry, and were accustomed to worship with them in their synagogues.

Give audience - Hear.

Verse 17

The God of this people - Who has manifested himself as the special friend and protector of this nation. This implied a belief that he had been particularly their God; a favorite doctrine of the Jews, and one that would conciliate their favor toward Paul.

Of Israel - The Jews.

Chose our fathers - Selected the nation to be a chosen and special people to himself, Deuteronomy 7:6-7.

And exalted the people - Raised them up from a low and depressed state of bondage, to freedom, and to special privileges as a nation.

When they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt - ἐν τῇ παροικίᾳ en tē paroikiaThis properly refers to their dwelling there as foreigners. They were always strangers there in a strange land. It was not their home. They never mingled with the people; never became constituent parts of the government; never used their language; never united with their usages and laws. They were a strange, separate, depressed people there; not less so than Africans are strangers and foreigners a depressed and degraded people in

this land (America), Genesis 36:7; Exodus 6:4; Exodus 22:21; Exodus 23:9; Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19.

And with an high arm - This expression denotes "great power." The arm denotes "strength," as that by which we perform anything. A high arm, an arm lifted up, or stretched out, denotes that "strength exerted to the utmost." The children of Israel are represented as having been delivered with an "outstretched arm," Deuteronomy 26:8; Exodus 6:6. "With a strong hand," Exodus 6:1. Reference is made in these places to the plagues inflicted on Egypt, by which the Israelites were delivered; to their passage through the Red Sea; to their victories over their enemies, etc.

Verse 18

And about the time of forty years - They were this time going from Egypt to the land of Canaan. Exodus 16:35; Numbers 33:38.

Suffered he their manners - This passage has been very variously rendered. See the margin. Syriac, "He nourished them," etc. Arabic, "He blessed them, and nourished them," etc. The Greek word is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. It properly means to tolerate, or endure the conduct of anyone, implying that that conduct is evil, and tends to provoke to punishment. This is doubtless its meaning here. Probably Paul referred to the passage in Deuteronomy 1:31, "The Lord thy God bare thee." But instead of this word, ἐτροποφόρησεν etropophorēsento bear with, many mss. read ἐτροφοφόρησεν etrofoforēsen), "he sustained or nourished." This reading was followed by the Syriac, Arabic, and has been admitted by Griesbach into the text. This is also found in the Septuagint, in Deuteronomy 1:31, which place Paul doubtless referred to. This would well suit the connection of the passage; and a change of a single letter might easily have occurred in a ms. It adds to the probability that this is the true reading, that it accords with Deuteronomy 1:31; Numbers 11:12; Deuteronomy 32:10. It is furthermore not probable that Paul would have commenced a discourse by reminding them of the obstinacy and wickedness of the nation. Such a course would rather tend to exasperate than to conciliate; but by reminding them of the mercies of God to them, and showing them that He had been their protector, he was better fitting them for his main purpose - that of showing them the kindness of the God of their fathers in sending to them a Saviour.

In the wilderness - The desert through which they passed in going from Egypt to Canaan.

Verse 19

And when he had destroyed - Subdued, cast out, or extirpated them as nations. It does not mean that all were put to death, for many of them were left in the land; but that they were subdued as nations, they were broken up and overcome, Deuteronomy 7:1, "And hath cast out many nations before them," etc.

Seven nations - The Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, Deuteronomy 7:1; Joshua 3:10; Nehemiah 9:8.

In the land of Canaan - The whole land Was called by the name of one of the principal nations. This was the promised land; the holy land, etc.

He divided … - See an account of this in Acts 1:26.

Verse 20

He gave unto them judges - Men who were raised up in an extraordinary manner to administer the affairs of the nation, to defend it from enemies, etc. See Judges 2:16.

About the space of four hundred and fifty years - This is a most difficult passage, and has exercised all the ingenuity of chronologists. The ancient versions agree with the present Greek text. The difficulty has been to reconcile it with what is said in 1 Kings 6:1, "And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel … he began to build the house of the Lord." Now if to the 40 years that the children of Israel were in the wilderness there be added the 450 said in Acts to have been passed under the administration of the judges, and about 17 years of the time of Joshua, 40 years for Samuel and the reign of Saul together, and 40 years for the reign of David, and three years of Solomon before he began to build the temple, the sum will be 590 years, a period greater by 110 years than that mentioned in 1 Kings 6:1. Various ways have been proposed to meet the difficulty. Doddridge renders it, "After these transactions, (which lasted) 450 years, he gave them a series of judges," etc., reckoning from the birth of Isaac, and supposing that Paul meant to refer to this whole time. But to this there are serious objections:

(1) It is a forced and constrained interpretation, and one manifestly made to meet a difficulty.

(2) there is no propriety in commencing this period at the birth of Isaac. That was in no manner remarkable, so far as Paul‘s narrative was concerned; and Paul had not even referred to it. This same solution is offered also by Calovius, Mill, and DeDieu. Luther and Beza think it should be read 300 instead of 400. But this is a mere conjecture, without any authority from mss. Vitringa and some others suppose that the text has been corrupted by some transcriber, who has inserted this without authority. But there is no evidence of this; and the mss. and ancient versions are uniform. None of these explanations are satisfactory. In the solution of the difficulty we may remark:

(1) That nothing is more perplexing than the chronology of ancient facts. The difficulty is found in all writings; in profane as well as sacred. Mistakes are so easily made in transcribing numbers, where letters are used instead of writing the words at length, that we are not to wonder at such errors.

(2) Paul would naturally use the chronology which was in current, common use among the Jews. It was not his business to settle such points; but he would speak of them as they were usually spoken of, and refer to them as others did.

(3) there is reason to believe that what is mentioned here was the common chronology of his time. It accords remarkably with that which is used by Josephus. Thus, (*Antiq.*, book 7, chapter 3, section 1), Josephus says expressly that Solomon “began to build the temple in the fourth year of his reign, 592 years after the exodus out of Egypt,” etc. This would allow 40 years for their being in the wilderness, 17 years for Joshua, 40 for Samuel and Saul, 40 for the reign of David, and 452 years for the time of the judges and the times of anarchy that intervened. This remarkable coincidence shows that this was the chronology which was then used, and which Paul had in view.

(4) this chronology has the authority, also, of many eminent names. See Lightfoot and Boyle‘s Lectures, Acts 20. In what way this computation of Josephus and the Jews originated it is not necessary here to inquire. It is a sufficient solution of the difficulty that Paul spake in their usual manner, without departing from his regular object by settling a point of chronology.

Verse 21

And afterward they desired a king - See 1 Samuel 8:5; Hosea 13:10. It was predicted that they would have a king, Deuteronomy 17:14-15.

Saul, the son of Cis - is the Greek mode of writing the Hebrew name Kish. In the Old Testament it is uniformly written as "Kish," and it is to be regretted that this has not been retained in the New Testament. See 1 Samuel 9:1.

By the space of forty years - During forty years. The Old Testament has not mentioned the time during which Saul reigned. Josephus says (*Antiq.*, book 6, chapter 14, section 9) that he reigned for 18 years while Samuel was alive, and 22 years after his death. But Dr. Doddridge (note in loco) has shown that this cannot be correct, and that he probably reigned, as some copies of Josephus have it, but two years after the death of Samuel. Many critics suppose that the term of 40 years mentioned here includes also the time in which Samuel judged the people. This supposition does not violate the text in this place, and may be probable. See Doddridge and Grotius on the place.

Verse 22

And when he had removed him - This was done because he rebelled against God in sparing the sheep and oxen and valuable property of Amalek, together with Agag the king, when he was commanded to destroy all, 1 Samuel 31:1-6. The phrase "when he removed him" refers probably to his rejection as a king, and not to his death; for David was anointed king before the death of Saul, and almost immediately after the rejection of Saul on account of his rebellion in the business of Amalek. See 1 Samuel 16:12-13.

He gave testimony - He bore witness, 1 Samuel 13:14.

I have found David … - This is not quoted literally, but contains the substance of what is expressed in various places. Compare 1 Samuel 13:14, with Psalm 89:20, and 1 Samuel 16:1, 1 Samuel 16:12.

A man after mine own heart - This expression is found in 1 Samuel 13:14. The connection shows that it means simply a man who would not be rebellious and disobedient as Saul was, but would do the will of God and keep his commandments. This refers, doubtless, rather to the public than to the private character of David; to his character as a king. It means that he would make the will of God the great rule and law of his reign, in

contradistinction from Saul, who, as a king, had disobeyed God. At the same time it is true that the prevailing character of David, as a pious, humble, devoted man, was that he was a man after God‘s own heart, and was beloved by him as a holy man. He had faults; he committed sin; but who is free from it? He was guilty of great offences; but he also evinced, in a degree equally eminent, repentance (see 1 Kings 14:8-9, “And thou Jeroboam hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes,” etc., 1 Kings 15:3, 1 Kings 15:5.

Verse 23

Of this man‘s seed - Of his posterity.

According to his promise - See the notes on Acts 2:30.

Raised unto Israel - See the notes on Acts 2:30.

A Saviour, Jesus - See the notes on Matthew 1:21.

Verse 24

When John had first preached … - After John had preached and prepared the way, Matthew 3:

Verse 25

And as John fulfilled his course - As he was engaged in completing his work. His ministry is called a course or race, that which was to be run, or completed.

He said … - These are not the precise words which the evangelists have recorded, but the sense is the same. See the John 1:20 note; Matthew 3:11 note.

Verse 26

Men and brethren - Paul now exhorts them to embrace the Lord Jesus as the Messiah. He uses, therefore, the most respectful and fraternal language.

Children of the stock of Abraham - Descendants of Abraham; you who regard Abraham as your ancestor. He means here to address particularly the native-born Jews; and this appellation is used because they valued themselves highly on account of their descent from Abraham (see the notes on Matthew 3:9); and because the promise of the Messiah had been specially given to him.

And whosoever … - Proselytes. See the notes on Acts 13:16.

Is the word of this salvation sent - This message of salvation. It was sent particularly to the Jewish people. The Saviour was sent to that nation

Matthew 15:24; and the design was to offer to them first the message of life. See the notes on Acts 13:46.

Verse 27

Because they knew him not - The statement in this verse is designed, not to reproach the Jews at Jerusalem, but to introduce the fact that Jesus had died, and had risen again. With great wisdom and tenderness, Paul speaks of the murderers of the Saviour in such a manner as not to exasperate, but, as far as possible, to mitigate their crime. There was sufficient guilt in the murder of the Son of God to fill the nation with alarm, even after all that could be said to mitigate the deed. See Acts 2:23, Acts 2:36-37. When Paul says, "They knew him not," he means that they did not know him to be the Messiah (see 1 Corinthians 2:8); they were ignorant of the true meaning of the prophecies of the Old Testament; they regarded him as an impostor. See the notes on Acts 3:17.

Nor yet the voices of the prophets - The meaning of the predictions of the Old Testament respecting the Messiah. They expected a prince and a conqueror, but did not expect a Messiah that was poor and despised; that was a man of sorrows and that was to die on a cross.

Which are read every sabbath-day - In the synagogues. Though the Scriptures were read so constantly, yet they were ignorant of their true meaning. They were blinded by pride, and prejudice, and preconceived opinions. People may often in this way read the Bible a good part of their lives and never understand it.

They have fulfilled them … - By putting him to death they have accomplished what was foretold.

Verse 28

And though they found … - They found no crime which deserved death. This is conclusively shown by the trial itself. After all their efforts; after the treason of Judas; after their employing false witnesses; still no crime was laid to his charge. The Sanhedrin condemned him for blasphemy; and yet they knew that they could not substantiate the charge before Pilate, and they therefore endeavored to procure his condemnation on the ground of sedition. Compare Luke 22:70-71, with Luke 23:1-2.

Yet desired they Pilate … - Matthew 27:1-2; Luke 23:4-5.

Verse 29

They took him down … - That is, it was done by the Jews. Not that it was done by those who put him to death, but by Joseph of Arimathea, and

by Nicodemus, who were Jews. Paul is speaking of what was done to Jesus by the Jews at Jerusalem; and he does not affirm that the same persons put him to death and laid him in a tomb, but that all this was done by Jews. See John 19:38-39.

Verse 30

But God raised him … - See the notes on Acts 2:23-24.

Verse 31

And he was seen - See the notes at the end of Matthew.

Many days - Forty days, Acts 1:3.

Of them which came up - By the apostles particularly. He was seen by others; but they are especially mentioned as having been chosen for this object, to bear witness to him, and as having been particularly qualified for it.

Verse 32

And we - We who are here present. Paul and Barnabas.

Declare unto you glad tidings - We preach the gospel the good news. To a Jew, nothing could be more grateful intelligence than that the Messiah had come; to a sinner convinced of his sins nothing can be more cheering than to hear of a Saviour.

The promise … - The promise here refers to all that had been spoken in the Old Testament respecting the advent, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Verse 33

God hath fulfilled - God has completed or carried into effect by the resurrection of Jesus. He does not say that every part of the promise had reference to his resurrection; but his being raised up completed or perfected the fulfillment of the promises which had been made respecting him.

In the second psalm - Acts 13:7.

Thou art my Son - This psalm has been usually understood as referring to the Messiah. See the notes on Acts 4:25.

This day have I begotten thee - It is evident that Paul uses the expression here as implying that the Lord Jesus is called the Son of God because he raised him up from the dead, and that he means to imply that it was for this reason that he is so called. This interpretation of an inspired apostle fixes the meaning of this passage in the psalm, and proves that it is not there used with reference to the doctrine of eternal generation, or to his incarnation, but that he is called his Son because he was raised from the

dead. And this interpretation accords with the scope of the psalm. In Acts 13:1-3 the psalmist records the combination of the rulers of the earth against the Messiah, and their efforts to cast off his reign. This was done, and the Messiah was rejected. All this pertains, not to his previous existence, but to the Messiah on the earth. In Acts 13:4-5, the psalmist shows that their efforts would not be successful; that God would laugh at their designs; that is, that their plans should not succeed.

In Acts 13:6-7, he shows that the Messiah would be established as a king; that this was the fixed decree, and that he had been begotten for this. All this is represented as subsequent to the raging of the pagan, and to the counsel of the kings against him, and must, therefore, refer, not to his eternal generation or his incarnation, but to something succeeding his death; that is, to his resurrection, and his establishment as King at the right hand of God. This interpretation by the apostle Paul proves, therefore, that this passage is not to be used to establish the doctrine of the eternal generation of Christ. Christ is called the Son of God for various reasons. In Luke 1:35, because he was begotten by the Holy Spirit. In this place, on account of his resurrection. In Romans 1:4 it is also said that he was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead. See the notes on that place. The resurrection from the dead is represented as in some sense the beginning of life, and it is with reference to this that the terms "Son," and "begotten from the dead," are used, as the birth of a child is the beginning of life. Thus, Christ is said, Colossians 1:18, to be "the first-born from the dead"; and thus, in Revelation 1:5; he is called "the firsthegotten of the dead"; and with reference to this renewal or beginning of life he is called a Son. In whatever other senses he is called a Son in the New Testament, yet it is here proved:

(1) That he is called a Son from his resurrection; and,

(2) That this is the sense in which the expression in the psalm is to be used.

This day - The words "this day" would naturally, in the connection in which they are found, refer to the time when the "decree" was made. The purpose was formed before Christ came into the world; it was executed or carried into effect by the resurrection from the dead. See the notes on Psalm 2:7.

Have I begotten thee - This evidently cannot be understood in a literal sense. It literally refers to the relation of an earthly father to his children; but in no such sense can it be applied to the relation of God the Father to the Son. It must, therefore, be figurative. The word sometimes figuratively means "to produce, to cause to exist in any way"; 2 Timothy 2:23, "Unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender (beget) strifes." It refers also to the labors of the apostles in securing the conversion of sinners to the gospel: 1 Corinthians 4:15, "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel"; Philemon 1:10, Whom (Onesimus) I have begotten in my bonds. It is applied to Christians: John 1:13, "Which were born (begotten), not of blood, etc., but of God"; John 3:3, Except a man be born (begotten) again," etc. In all these places it is used in a figurative sense to denote "the commencement of spiritual life by the power of God; so raising up stoners from the death of sin, or so producing spiritual life that they should sustain to him the relation of sons." Thus, he raised up Christ from the dead, and imparted life to his body; and hence, he is said figuratively to have begotten him from the dead, and thus sustains toward the risen Saviour the relation of father. Compare Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5; Hebrews 1:5.

Verse 34

And as concerning - In further proof of this. To show that he actually did it, he proceeds to quote another passage of Scripture.

No more to return to corruption - The word "corruption" is usually employed to denote "putrefaction, or the mouldering away of a body in the grave; its returning to its native dust." But it is certain (Acts 13:35. See the notes on Acts 2:27) that the body of Christ never in this sense saw corruption. The word is therefore used to denote "death, or the grave, the cause and place of corruption." The word is thus used in the Septuagint. It means here simply that he should not die again.

He said on this wise - He said thus ὅυτως houtōsI will give you - This quotation is made from Isaiah 55:3. It is quoted from the Septuagint, with a change of but one word, not affecting the sense. In Isaiah the passage does not refer particularly to the resurrection of the Messiah, nor is it the design of Paul to affirm that it does. His object in this verse is not to prove that he would rise from the dead, but that, being risen, he would not again die. That the passage in Isaiah refers to the Messiah there can be no doubt, Acts 13:1, Acts 13:4. The passage here quoted is an address to the people, an

assurance to them that the promise made to David would be performed, a solemn declaration that he would make an everlasting covenant with them through the Messiah, the promised descendant of David.

The sure mercies of David - The word "mercies" here refers to the promise made to David; the mercy or favor shown to him by promising to him a successor that should not fail to sit on his throne, 2 Samuel 7:16; Psalm 89:4-5; Psalm 132:11-12. These mercies and promises are called "sure," as being true or unfailing; they would certainly be accomplished. Compare 2 Corinthians 1:20. The word "David" here does not refer, as many have supposed, to the Messiah, but to the King of Israel. God made to David a promise, a certain pledge; he bestowed on him this special mercy, in promising that he should have a successor who should sit forever on his throne. This promise was understood by the Jews, and is often referred to in the New Testament, as relating to the Messiah. Paul here says that that promise is fulfilled. The only question is how it refers to the subject on which he was discoursing. The point was not mainly to prove his resurrection, but to show particularly that he would never die again, or that he would forever live and reign. And the argument is, that as God had promised that David should have a successor who should sit forever on his throne, and as this prediction now terminated in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, it followed that, as that promise was sure and certain, he would never die again. He must live if the promise was fulfilled. And though he had been put to death, yet under that general promise there was a certainty that he would live again. It was impossible, the meaning is, that the Messiah, the promised successor of David, the perpetual occupier of his throne, should remain under the power of death. Under this assurance the church now reposes its hopes. Zion's King now lives, ever able to vindicate and save his people.

Verse 35

Wherefore - Διὸ DioTo the same intent or end. In proof of the same thing - that he must rise and live forever.

He saith - God says by David, or David spake the promises made by God.

In another psalm - Psalm 16:10.

Thou wilt not suffer … - See this explained in the notes on Acts 2:27.

Verse 36

For David … - This verse is designed to show that the passage in Psalm 16:1-11; could not refer to David, and must therefore relate to some other person. In Acts 13:37 it is affirmed that this could refer to no one, in fact, but to the Lord Jesus.

After he had served his own generation - See the margin. Syriac, "David in his own generation having served the will of God, and slept," etc. Arabic, "David served in his own age, and saw God." The margin probably most correctly expresses the sense of the passage. To serve a generation, or an age, is an unusual and almost unintelligible expression.

Fell on sleep - Greek: "slept," that is, "died." This is the usual word to denote "the death of saints." It is used of David in 1 Kings 2:10. See notes on Matthew 27:52.

And was laid unto … - And was buried with his fathers, etc., 1 Kings 2:10.

And saw corruption - Remained in the grave, and returned to his native dust. See this point argued more at length by Peter in Acts 2:29-31, and explained in the notes on that place.

Verse 37

But he, whom God raised again - The Lord Jesus.

Saw no corruption - Was raised without undergoing the usual change that succeeds death. As David had returned to corruption, and the Lord Jesus had not, it followed that this passage in Psalm 16:1-11 referred to the Messiah.

Verse 38

Be it known … - Paul, having proved his resurrection, and shown that he was the Messiah, now states the benefits that were to be derived from his death.

Through this man - See the notes on Luke 24:47.

Verse 39

And by him - By means of him; by his sufferings and death.

All that believe - See the notes on Mark 16:16.

Are justified - Are regarded and treated as if they were righteous. They are pardoned, and admitted to the favor of God, and treated as if they had not offended. See this point explained in the notes on Romans 1:17; Romans 3:24-25; Romans 4:1-8.

From all things - From the guilt of all offences.

From which ye could not … - The Law of Moses commanded what was to be done. It appointed sacrifices and offerings as typical of a greater sacrifice. But those sacrifices could not take away sin. See the notes on Hebrews 9:7-14; Hebrews 10:1-4, Hebrews 10:11. The design of the Law was not to reveal a way of pardon. That was reserved to be the unique purpose of the gospel.

The law of Moses - The commands and institutions which he, under the direction of God, established.

Verse 40

Beware, therefore - Avoid what is threatened. It will come on some; and Paul exhorted his hearers to beware lest it should come on them. It was the more important to caution them against this danger, as the Jews held that they were safe.

Lest that come - That calamity; that threatened punishment.

In the prophets - In that part of the Scriptures called "the Prophets." The Jews divided the Old Testament into three parts, of which "the Book of the Prophets" was one. See the notes on Luke 24:44. The place where this is recorded is Habakkuk 1:5. It is not taken from the Hebrew, but substantially from the Septuagint. The original design of the threatening was to announce the destruction that would come upon the nation by the Chaldeans. The original threatening was fulfilled. But it was as applicable to the Jews in the time of Paul as in the time of Habakkuk. The principle of the passage is, that if they held in contempt the doings of God, they would perish. The work which God was to do by means of the Chaldeans was so fearful, so unusual, and so remarkable, that they would not believe it in time to avoid the calamity. In the same way, the manner in which God gave the Messiah was so little in accordance with their expectation, that they might see it, yet disbelieve it; that they might have the fullest proof, and yet despise it; that they might wonder, and be amazed and astonished, and yet refuse to believe it, and be destroyed.

Verse 41

Behold, ye despisers - Hebrew, "Behold, ye among the pagan." The change from this expression to "ye despisers" was made by the Septuagint translators by a very slight alteration in the Hebrew word - probably from a variation in the copy which they used. It arose from reading בוגדים bowgadiyminstead of בגוים bagowyimThe Syriac, the Arabic, as well as the Septuagint, follow this reading.

And wonder - Hebrew, "And regard, and wonder marvelously."

And perish - Thin is not in the Hebrew, but is in the Septuagint and the Arabic. The word means literally "to be removed from the sight; to disappear; and then to corrupt, defile, destroy," Matthew 6:16, Matthew 6:19. The word, however, may mean "to be suffused with shame; to be overwhelmed and confounded" (Schleusner); and it may perhaps have this meaning here, corresponding to the Hebrew. The word used here is not what is commonly employed to denote "eternal perdition," though Paul seems to use it with reference to their destruction for rejecting the gospel.

For I work a work - I do a thing. The thing to which the prophet Habakkuk referred was, that God would bring upon them the Chaldeans, that would destroy the temple and nation. In like manner Paul says that God in that time might bring upon the nation similar calamities. By rejecting the Messiah and his gospel, and by persevering in wickedness, they would bring upon themselves the destruction of the temple, the city, and the nation. It was this threatened destruction doubtless to which the apostle referred.

Which ye shall in no wise believe - Which you will not believe. So remarkable, so unusual, so surpassing anything which had occurred. The original reference in Habakkuk is to the destruction of the temple by the Chaldeans; a thing which the Jews would not suppose could happen. The temple was so splendid; it had been so manifestly built by the direction of God; it had been so long under his protection, that they would suppose that it could not be given into the hands of their enemies to be demolished; and even though it were predicted by a prophet of God, still they would not believe it. The same feelings the Jews would have respecting the temple and city in the time of Paul. Though it was foretold by the Messiah, yet they were so confident that it was protected by God, that they would not believe that it could possibly be destroyed. The same infatuation seems to have possessed them during the siege of the city by the Romans.

Though a man … - Though it be plainly predicted. We may learn:

(1) That people may be greatly amazed and impressed by the doings or works of God, and yet be destroyed.

(2) there may be a prejudice so obstinate that even a divine revelation will not remove it.

(3) the fancied security of sinners will not save them.

(4) there are people who will not believe in the possibility of their being lost, though it be declared by prophets, by apostles, by the Saviour, and by God. They will still remain in fancied security, and suffer nothing to alarm or rouse them. But,

(5) As the fancied security of the Jew furnished no safety against the Babylonians or the Romans, so it is true that the indifference and unconcern of sinners will not furnish any security against the dreadful wrath of God. Yet there are multitudes who live amidst the displays of God‘s power and mercy in the redemption of sinners, and who witness the effects of his goodness and truth in revivals of religion, who live to despise it all; who are amazed and confounded by it; and who perish.

Verse 42

And when the Jews … - There is a great variety in the mss. on this verse, and in the ancient versions. Griesbach and Knapp read it, “And when they were gone out, they besought them that these words might be spoken, etc.” The Syriac reads it, “When they departed from them, they sought from them that these words might be spoken to them on another Sabbath.” The Arabic, “Some of the synagogue of the Jews asked of them that they would exhort the Gentiles with them, etc.” If these readings be correct, then the meaning is, that some of the Jews exhorted the apostles to proclaim these truths at some other time, particularly to the Gentiles. The mss. greatly vary in regard to the passage, and it is, perhaps, impossible to determine the true reading. If the present reading in the English translation is to be regarded as genuine of which, however, there is very little evidence the meaning is, that a part of the Jews, perhaps a majority of them, rejected the message, and went out, though many of them followed Paul and Barnabas, Acts 13:43.

The Gentiles besought - This expression is missing in the Vulgate, Coptic, Arabic, and Syriac versions, and in a great many mss. (Mill). It is omitted by Griesbach, Knapp, and others, and is probably spurious. Among other reasons which may be suggested why it is not genuine, this is one, that it is not probable that the Gentiles were in the habit of attending the synagogue. Those who attended there were called “proselytes.” The

expression, if genuine, might mean either that the Gentiles besought, or that they besought the Gentiles. The latter would be the more probable meaning.

The next sabbath - The margin has probably the correct rendering of the passage. The meaning of the verse is, that a wish was expressed that these doctrines might be repeated to them in the intermediate time before the next Sabbath.

Verse 43

When the congregation - Greek: when the synagogue was dissolved.

Broken up - Dismissed. It does not mean that it was broken up by violence or disorder. It was dismissed in the usual way.

Many of the Jews - Probably the majority of them rejected the message. See Acts 13:45. Still a deep impression was made on many of them.

And religious proselytes - See Acts 13:16. Compare the notes on Matthew 23:15. Greek: proselytes worshipping.

Persuaded them to continue … - It would appear from this that they professedly received the truth and embraced the Lord Jesus. This success was remarkable, and shows the power of the gospel when it is preached faithfully to people.

In the grace of God - In his favor - in the faith, and prayer, and obedience which would be connected with his favor. The "gospel" is called the grace (favor) of God and they were exhorted to persevere in their attachment to it.

Verse 44

And the next sabbath-day - This was the regular day for worship, and it was natural that a greater multitude should convene on that day than on the other days of the week.

Came almost the whole city - Whether this was in the synagogue is not affirmed; but it is probable that that was the place where the multitude convened. The news of the presence of the apostles, and of their doctrines, had been circulated, doubtless, by the Gentiles who had heard them, and curiosity attracted the multitude to hear them. Compare the notes on Acts 13:7.

Verse 45

They were filled with envy - Greek: "zeal." The word here denotes "wrath in dignation," that such multitudes should be disposed to hear a message which they rejected, and which threatened to overthrow their religion.

Spake against - Opposed the doctrine that Jesus was the Messiah; that the Messiah would be humble, lowly, despised, and put to death.

Contradicting - Contradicting the apostles. This was evidently done in their presence, Acts 13:46, and would cause great tumult and disorder.

And blaspheming - See the notes on Matthew 9:3. The sense evidently is, that they reproached and vilified Jesus of Nazareth; they spake of him with contempt and scorn. To speak thus of him is denominated blasphemy, Luke 22:65. When people are enraged, they have little regard for the words which they utter, and care little how they may be regarded by God. When people attached themselves to a sect or a party, in religion or politics, and they have no good arguments to employ, they attempt to overwhelm their adversaries by bitter and reproachful words. People in the heat of strife, and in professed zeal for special doctrines, more frequently utter blasphemy than they are aware. Precious and pure doctrines are often thus vilified fled because we do not believe them; and the heart of the Saviour is pierced anew, and his cause bleeds, by the wrath and wickedness of his professed friends. Compare Acts 18:6.

Verse 46

Waxed bold - Became bold; spake boldly and openly. They were not terrified by their strife, or alarmed by their opposition. The contradictions and blasphemies of sinners often show that their consciences are alarmed; that the truth has taken effect; and then is not the time to shrink, but to declare more fearlessly the truth.

It was necessary - It was so designed; so commanded. They regarded it as their duty to offer the gospel first to their own countrymen. See the notes on Luke 24:47.

Ye put it from you - You reject it.

And judge yourselves - By your conduct, by your rejecting it, you declare this. The word "judge" here does not mean they "expressed such an opinion," or that "they regarded themselves" as unworthy of eternal life - for they thought just the reverse; but that by their conduct they condemned themselves. By such conduct they did, in fact, pass sentence on themselves, and show that they were unworthy of eternal life, and of having the offer of salvation any further made to them. Sinners by their conduct do, in fact, condemn themselves, and show that they are not only unfit to be saved, but that they have advanced so far in wickedness that there is no hope of their

salvation, and no propriety in offering them, any further, eternal life. See the notes on Matthew 7:6.

Unworthy … - Unfit to be saved. They had deliberately and solemnly rejected the gospel, and thus shown that they were not suited to enter into everlasting life. We may remark here:

(1) When people, even but once, deliberately and solemnly reject the offers of God‘s mercy, it greatly endangers their salvation. The probability is, that they then put the cup of salvation forever away from themselves.

(2) the gospel produces an effect wherever it is preached.

(3) when sinners are hardened, and spurn the gospel, it may often be the duty of ministers to turn their efforts toward others where they may have more prospect of success. A man will not long labor on a rocky, batten, sterile soil, when there is near him a rich and fertile valley that will abundantly reward the pains of cultivation.

Lo, we turn … - We shall offer the gospel to them, and devote ourselves to seeking their salvation.

Verse 47

For so … - Paul, as usual, appeals to the Scriptures to justify his course. Here he appeals to the Old Testament rather than to the command of the Saviour, because the Jews recognized the authority of their own Scriptures, while they would have turned in scorn from the command of Jesus of Nazareth.

I have set thee … - I have constituted or appointed thee. This passage is found in Isaiah 49:6. See the notes on Isaiah 49:1-6.

To be a light - See the notes on John 1:4.

Of the Gentiles - This was in accordance with the uniform doctrines of Isaiah, Isaiah 42:1; Isaiah 54:3; Isaiah 60:3, Isaiah 60:5, Isaiah 60:16; Isaiah 61:6, Isaiah 61:9; Isaiah 62:2; Isaiah 66:12; compare Romans 15:9-12.

For salvation - To save sinners.

Unto the ends of the earth - To all lands; in all nations. See the notes on Acts 1:8.

Verse 48

When the Gentiles heard this - Heard that the gospel was to be preached to them. The doctrine of the Jews had been that salvation was

confined to themselves. The Gentiles rejoiced that from the mouths of Jews themselves they now heard a different doctrine.

They glorified the word of the Lord - They honored it as a message from God; they recognized and received it as the Word of God. The expression conveys the idea of praise on account of it, and of reverence for the message as the Word of God.

And as many as were ordained - ὅσοι ἦσαν τεταγμένοι hosoi ēsan tetagmenoiSyriac, "Who were destined," or constituted. Vulgate, "As many as were foreordained (quotquot erant praeordinati) to eternal life believed." There has been much difference of opinion in regard to this expression. One class of commentators has supposed that it refers to the doctrine of election - to God's ordaining people to eternal life, and another class to their being disposed themselves to embrace the gospel - to those among them who did not reject and despise the gospel, but who were disposed and inclined to embrace it. The main inquiry is, what is the meaning of the word rendered "ordained"? The word is used only eight times in the New Testament: Matthew 28:16, "Into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them"; that is, previously appointed - before his death; Luke 7:8, "For I also am a man set under authority"; appointed, or designated as a soldier, to be under the authority of another; Acts 15:2, "They determined that Paul and Barnabas, etc., should go to Jerusalem"; Acts 22:10, "It shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do"; Acts 23:23, "And when they appointed him a day," etc.: Romans 13:1, "the powers that be are ordained of God; 1 Corinthians 16:15, They have addicted themselves to the ministry of saints." The word τάσσω tassōproperly means "to place" - that is, to place in a certain rank or order. Its meaning is derived from arranging or disposing a body of soldiers in regular military order. In the places which have been mentioned above, the word is used to denote the following things:

(1) To command, or to designate, Matthew 28:16; Acts 22:10; Acts 28:23.

(2) to institute, constitute, or appoint, Romans 13:1; compare 2 Samuel 8:11; 1 Samuel 22:7.

(3) to determine, to take counsel, to resolve, Acts 15:2.

(4) to subject to the authority of another, Luke 7:8.

(5) to addict to; to devote to, 1 Corinthians 16:15. The meaning may be thus expressed:

(1) The word is never used to denote an internal disposition or inclination arising from one‘s own self. It does not mean that they disposed themselves to embrace eternal life.

(2) it has uniformly the notion of an ordering, disposing, or arranging from without; that is, from some other source than the individual himself; as of a soldier, who is arranged or classified according to the will of the proper officer. In relation to these persons it means, therefore, that they were disposed or inclined to this from some other source than themselves.

(3) it does not properly refer to an eternal decree, or directly to the doctrine of election - though that may be inferred from it; but it refers to their being then in fact disposed to embrace eternal life. They were then inclined by an influence from without themselves, or so disposed as to embrace eternal life. That this was done by the influence of the Holy Spirit is clear from all parts of the New Testament, Titus 3:5-6; John 1:13. It was not a disposition or arrangement originating with themselves, but with God.

(4) this implies the doctrine of election. It was, in fact, that doctrine expressed in an act. It was nothing but God‘s disposing them to embrace eternal life. And that he does this according to a plan in his own mind a plan which is unchangeable as he himself is unchangeable is clear from the Scriptures. Compare Acts 18:10; Romans 8:28-30; Romans 9:15-16, Romans 9:21, Romans 9:23; Ephesians 1:4-5, Ephesians 1:11. The meaning may be expressed in few words - who were then disposed, and in good earnest determined, to embrace eternal life, by the operation of the grace of God upon their hearts.

Eternal life - Salvation. See the notes on John 3:36.

Verse 50

But the Jews stirred up - Excited opposition.

Honourable women - See the notes on Mark 15:43. Women of influence, and connected with families of rank. Perhaps they were

proselytes, and were connected with the magistrates of the city.

And raised persecution - Probably on the ground that they produced disorder. The aid of "chief men" has often been called into oppose revivals of religion, and to put a period, if possible, to the spread of the gospel.

Out of their coasts - Out of the regions of their country; out of their province.

Verse 51

But they shook off the dust … - See the notes on Matthew 10:14.

And came unto Iconium - This was the capital of Lycaonia. It is now called Konieh, and is the capital of Caramania. "Konieh extends to the east and south over the plain far beyond the walls, which are about two miles in circumference … Mountains covered with snow rise on every side, excepting toward the east, where a plain, as flat as the desert of Arabia, extends far beyond the reach of the eye" (Capt. Kinnear). "Little, if anything, remains of Greek or Roman Iconium, if we except the ancient inscriptions and the fragments of sculptures which are built into the Turkish walls." "The city wall is said to have been erected by the Seljukian sultans: it seems to have been built from the ruins of more ancient buildings, as broken columns, capitals, pedestals, bas-reliefs, and other pieces of sculpture contribute toward its construction. It has 80 gates, of a square form, each known by a separate name, and, as well as most of the towers, embellished with Arabic inscriptions … I observed a few Greek characters on the walls, but they were in so elevated a situation that I could not decipher them" (Capt. Kinneir). See Colonel Leake's description; and also the work of Col. Chesney (1850) on the Euphrates Expedition, vol. i, p. 348,349.

Verse 52

And the disciples - The disciples in Antioch.

Were filled with joy - This happened even in the midst of persecution, and is one of the many evidences that the gospel is able to fill the soul with joy even in the severest trials.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Verse 1

In Iconium - See the notes on Acts 13:51. In this place, and in Antioch and Lystra, Timothy became acquainted with Paul and his manner of life, 2 Timothy 3:10-11.

So spake - Spake with such power - their preaching was attended so much with the influence of the Spirit.

And also of the Greeks - Probably proselytes from the Greeks, who were in the habit of attending the synagogue.

Verse 2

But the unbelieving Jews … - See the notes on Acts 13:50.

And made their minds evil-affected - Irritated, or exasperated them.

Against the brethren - One of the common appellations by which Christians were known.

Verse 3

Long time therefore - It seems probable that there were here no forcible or public measures to expel them, as there had been at Antioch Acts 13:50, and they therefore regarded it as their duty to remain. God granted them here also great success, which was the main reason for their continuing a long time. Persecution and opposition may be attended often with signal success to the gospel.

Spake boldly in the Lord - In the cause of the Lord Jesus, or in his name and by his authority. Perhaps, also, the expression includes the idea of their trusting in the Lord.

Which gave testimony - Bore witness to the truth of their message by working miracles, etc. Compare Mark 16:20. This was evidently the Lord Jesus to whom reference is here made, and it shows that he was still, though bodily absent from them, clothed with power, and still displayed that power in the advancement of his cause. The conversion of sinners accomplished by him is always a testimony as decided as it is cheering to the labors and messages of his servants.

Unto the word of his grace - His gracious word, or message.

And granted signs … - Miracles. See the notes on Acts 2:22.

Verse 4

Was divided - Into parties. Greek: there was a schism - Ἐσχίσθη EschisthēAnd part held with the Jews - Held to the doctrines of the Jews, in

opposition to the apostles. A revival of religion often produces excitement by the bad passions of opposers. The enemies of the truth form parties, and organize opposition. It is no uncommon thing even now for such parties to be formed; but the fault is not in Christianity. It lies with those who form a party against religion, and who confederate themselves, as was done here, to oppose it.

Verse 5

An assault made - Greek: a "rush" - ὁρμή hormēIt denotes "an impetuous excitement and aggression; a rush to put them to death." It rather describes a popular tumult than a calm and deliberate purpose. There was a violent, tumultuous excitement.

Both of the Gentiles … - Of that part of them which was opposed to the apostles.

To use them despitefully - See the notes on Matthew 5:44. To reproach them; to bring contempt upon them; to injure them.

And to stone them - To put them to death by stoning; probably as blasphemers, Acts 7:57-59.

Verse 6

They were ware of it - They were in some way informed of the excitement and of their danger.

And fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia - Lycaonia was one of the provinces of Asia Minor. It had Galatia north, Pisidia south, Cappadocia east, and Phrygia west. It was formerly within the limits of Phrygia, but was erected into a separate province by Augustus. "The district of Lycaonia extends from the ridges of Mount Taurus and the borders of Cilicia on the south, to the Cappadocian hills on the north. It is a bare and dreary region, unwatered by streams, though in parts liable to occasional inundations. Strabo mentions one place where water was even sold for money. Across some portion of this plain Paul and Barnabas traveled both before and after their residence in Iconium. After leaving the high land to the northwest, during a journey of several hours before arriving at the city, the eye ranges freely over a vast expanse of level ground to the south and the east, The two most eminent objects in the view are the snowy summits of Mount Argaeus, rising high above all the intervening hills in the direction of Armenia, and the singular mountain mass called the ‹Kara-Dagh,‘ or ‹Black Mount,‘ southeastward in the direction of Cilicia. And still these features continue to be conspicuous after Iconium is left behind, and the

traveler moves on over the plain toward Lystra and Derbe. Mount Argaeus still rises far to the northeast, at the distance of 150 miles.

The Black Mountain is gradually approached, and discovered to be an isolated mass, with reaches of the plain extending round it like channels of the sea. The cities of Lystra and Derbe were somewhere about the bases of the Black Mountain." The exact position of Lystra and Derbe is still subject to some uncertainty. In 1824, Col. Leake wrote thus: "Nothing can more strongly show the little progress that has hitherto been made in a knowledge of the ancient geography of Asia Minor, than that, of the cities which the journey of Paul has made so interesting to us, the site of one only (Iconium) is yet certainly known. Perga, Antioch of Pisidia, Lystra, and Derbe, remain to be discovered." The situation of the first two of these towns has been since that fully identified, and some ruins have been found which have been supposed to mark the place of Lystra and Derbe, though not with entire certainty.

And unto the region … - The adjacent country. Though persecuted, they still preached; and though driven from one city, they fled into another. This was the direction of the Saviour, Matthew 10:23.

Verse 8

And there sat - There dwelt, Matthew 9:16; Acts 18:11 (margin). The word "sat," however, indicates his usual posture, his helpless condition. Such persons commonly sat by the wayside, or in some public place, to ask for alms, Mark 10:46.

Impotent in his feet - ἀδύνατος adunatosWithout any power. Entirely deprived of the use of his feet.

Being a cripple - Lame.

Who never had walked - The miracle, therefore, would be more remarkable, as the man would be well known. As they were persecuted from place to place, and opposed in every manner, it was desirable that a signal miracle should be performed to carry forward and establish the work of the gospel.

Verse 9

Who stedfastly beholding him - Fixing his eyes intently on him. See the notes on Acts 1:10.

And perceiving - How he perceived this is not said. Perhaps it was indicated by the ardor, humility, and strong desire depicted in his countenance. He had heard Paul, and perhaps the apostle had dwelt

particularly on the miracles with which the gospel had been attested. The miracles performed also in Icontium had doubtless also been heard of in Lystra.

Had faith to be healed - Compare Matthew 9:21-22, Matthew 9:28-29; Luke 7:50; Luke 17:19; Luke 18:42.

Verse 10

Said with a loud voice - See the notes on John 11:43.

And he leaped - See the notes on Acts 3:8. Compare Isaiah 35:6.

Verse 11

They lifted up their voices - They spoke with astonishment, such as might be expected when it was supposed that the gods had come down.

In the speech of Lycaonia - What this language was has much perplexed commentators. It was probably a mixture of the Greek and Syriac. In that region generally the Greek was usually spoken with more or less purity; and from the fact that it was not far from the regions of Syria, it is probable that the Greek language was corrupted with this foreign admixture.

The gods … - All the region was idolatrous. The gods which were worshipped there were those which were worshipped throughout Greece.

Are come down - The miracle which Paul had performed led them to suppose this. It was evidently beyond human ability, and they had no other way of accounting for it than by supposing that their gods had personally appeared.

In the likeness of men - Many of their gods were heroes, whom they worshipped after they were dead. It was a common belief among them that the gods appeared to people in human form. The poems of Homer, of Virgil, etc., are filled with accounts of such appearances, and the only way in which they supposed the gods to take knowledge of human affairs, and to help people, was by their personally appearing in this form. See Homer‘s *Odyssey*, xvii. 485; Catullus, 64,384; Ovid‘s Metamorph., i. 212 (Kuinoel). Thus, Homer says:

“For in similitude of strangers oft.
The gods, who can with ease all shapes assume,
Repair to populous cities, where they mark.

Th‘ outrageous and the righteous deeds of men.”
Cowper.

Verse 12

And they called Barnabas, Jupiter - Jupiter was the most powerful of all the gods of the ancients. He was represented as the son of Saturn and Ops, and was educated in a cave on Mount Ida, in the island of Crete. The worship of Jupiter was almost universal. He was the Aremon of Africa, the Belus of Babylon, the Osiris of Egypt. His common appellation was, The Father of gods and men. He was usually represented as sitting upon a golden or an ivory throne, holding in one hand a thunderbolt, and in the other a scepter of cypress. His power was supposed to extend over other gods; and everything was subservient to his will except the Fates. There is the most abundant proof that he was worshipped in the region of Lycaonia and throughout Asia Minor. There was, besides, a fable among the inhabitants of Lycaonia that Jupiter and Mercury had once visited that place, and had been received by Philemon. The whole fable is related by Ovid, "Metam.," 8,611, etc.

And Paul, Mercurius - Mercury, called by the Greeks Hermes, was a celebrated god of antiquity. No less than five of this name are mentioned by Cicero. The most celebrated was the son of Jupiter and Maia. He was the messenger of the gods, and of Jupiter in particular; he was the patron of travelers and shepherds; he conducted the souls of the dead into the infernal regions; he presided over orators, and declaimers, and merchants; and he was also the god of thieves, pickpockets, and all dishonest persons. He was regarded as the god of eloquence; and as light, rapid, and quick in his movements. The conjecture of Chrysostom is, that Barnabas was a large, athletic man, and was hence taken for Jupiter; and that Paul was small in his person, and was hence supposed to be Mercury.

Because he was the chief speaker - The office of Mercury was to deliver the messages of the gods; and as Paul only had been discoursing, he was supposed to be Mercury.

Verse 13

Then the priest of Jupiter - He whose office it was to conduct the worship of Jupiter by offering sacrifices, etc.

Which was before their city - The word "which" here refers not to the priest, but to Jupiter. The temple or image of Jupiter was in front of their city, or near the gates. Ancient cities were supposed to be under the protection of particular gods; and their image, or a temple for their worship, was placed commonly in a conspicuous place at the entrance of the city.

Brought oxen - Probably brought two one to be sacrificed to each. It was common to sacrifice bullocks to Jupiter.

And garlands - The victims of sacrifice were usually decorated with ribbons and chaplets of flowers. See Kuinoel.

Unto the gates - The gates of the city, where were the images or temple of the gods.

Would have done sacrifice - Would have offered sacrifice to Barnabas and Paul. This the priest deemed a part of his office. And here we have a remarkable and most affecting instance of the folly and stupidity of idolatry.

Verse 14

Which, when the apostles - Barnabas is called an apostle because he was sent forth by the church on a particular message (Acts 13:3; compare Acts 14:26), not because he had been chosen to the special work of the apostleship - to Dear witness to the life and resurrection of Christ. See the notes on Acts 1:22.

They rent their clothes - As an expression of their abhorrence of what the people were doing, and of their deep grief that they should thus debase themselves by offering worship to human beings. See the notes on Matthew 26:65.

Verse 15

And saying, Sirs - Greek: Men.

Why do ye these things? - This is an expression of solemn remonstrance at the folly of their conduct in worshipping those who were human. The abhorrence which they evinced at this may throw strong light on the rank and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. When an offer was made to worship Paul and Barnabas, they shrank from it with strong expressions of aversion and indignation. Yet when similar worship was offered to the Lord Jesus; when he was addressed by Thomas in the language of worship, "My Lord and my God" John 20:28, he uttered not the slightest reproof. Nay, he approved it, and expressed his approbation of others who should also do it, John 20:29. Compare John 5:23. How can this difference be accounted for except on the supposition that the Lord Jesus was divine? Would he, if a mere man, receive homage as God, when his disciples rejected it with horror?

Of like passions with you - We are human beings like yourselves. We have no claim, no pretensions to anything more. The word "passions" here means simply that they had the common feelings and propensities of people

- the nature of people; the affections of people. It does not mean that they were subject to any improper passions, to ill temper, etc., as some have supposed; but that they did not pretend to be gods. "We need food and drink; we are exposed to pain, and sickness, and death." The Latin Vulgate renders it, "We are mortal like yourselves." The expression stands opposed to the proper conception of God, who is not subject to these affections, who is most blessed and immortal. Such a Being only is to be worshipped; and the apostles remonstrated strongly with them on the folly of paying religious homage to beings like themselves. Compare James 5:17, "Elias (Elijah) was a man subject to like passions as we are, etc."

That ye should turn from these vanities - That you should cease to worship idols. Idols are often called vanities, or vain things, Deuteronomy 32:21; 2 Kings 17:15; 1 Kings 16:13, 1 Kings 16:26; Jeremiah 2:5; Jeremiah 8:19; Jeremiah 10:8; Jonah 2:8. They are called vanities, a lie, or lying vanities, as opposed to the living and true God, because they are unreal; because they have no power to help: because confidence in them is vain.

Unto the living God - 1 Thessalonians 1:9. He is called the living God to distinguish him from idols. See the notes on Matthew 16:16.

Which made heaven … - Who thus showed that he was the only proper object of worship. This doctrine, that there is one God who has made all things, was new to them. They worshipped multitudes of divinities; and though they regarded Jupiter as the father of gods and human beings, yet they had no conception that all things had been created by the will of one Infinite Being.

Verse 16

Who in times past - Previous to the gospel; in past ages.

Suffered all nations - Permitted all nations; that is, all Gentiles, Acts 17:30. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at."

To walk in their own ways - To conduct themselves without the restraints and instructions of a written law. They were permitted to follow their own reason and passions, and their own system of religion. God gave them no written laws, and sent to them no messengers. Why he did this we cannot determine. It might have been, among other reasons, to show to the world conclusively:

(1) The insufficiency of reason to guide people in the matters of religion. The experiment was made under the most favorable circumstances. The

most enlightened nations, the Greeks and Romans, were left to pursue the inquiry, and failed no less than the most degraded tribes of people. The trial was made for four thousand years, and attended with the same results everywhere.

(2) it showed the need of revelation to guide man.

(3) it evinced, beyond the possibility of mistake, the depravity of man. In all nations, in all circumstances, people had shown the same alienation from God. By suffering them to walk in their own ways, it was seen that those ways were sin, and that some power more than human was necessary to bring people back to God.

Verse 17

Nevertheless - Though he gave them no revelation.

He left not himself without witness - He gave demonstration of his existence and of his moral character.

In that he did good - By doing good. The manner in which he did it, Paul immediately specifies. Idols did not do good; they conferred no favors, and were, therefore, unworthy of confidence.

And gave us rain from heaven - Rain from above - from the clouds, Mark 8:11; Luke 9:54; Luke 17:29; Luke 21:11; John 6:31-32. Rain is one of the evidences of the goodness of God. Man could not cause it; and without it, regulated at proper intervals of time and in proper quantities, the earth would soon be one wide scene of desolation. There is scarcely anything which more certainly indicates unceasing care and wisdom than the needful and refreshing showers of rain. The sun and stars move by fixed laws, whose operation we can see and anticipate. The falling of rain is regulated by laws which We cannot trace, and it seems, therefore, to be poured, as it were, directly from God‘s hollow hand, Psalm 147:8, “Who covereth the heaven with clouds; who prepareth rain for the earth.”

And fruitful seasons - Seasons when the earth produces abundance. It is remarkable, and a striking proof of the divine goodness, that so few seasons are unfruitful. The earth yields her increase; the labors of the farmer are crowned with success; and the goodness of God demands the expressions of praise. God does not forget his ancient covenant Genesis 8:22, though man forgets it, and disregards his great Benefactor.

Filling our hearts with food - The word "hearts" is used here as a Hebraism, to denote "persons" themselves; filling us with food, etc. Compare Matthew 12:40.

Gladness - Joy; comfort the comfort arising from the supply of our constantly returning needs. This is proof of everwatchful goodness. It is a demonstration at once that there is a God, and that he is good. It would be easy for God to withdraw these blessings, and leave us to want. A single word, or a single deviation from the fullness of benevolence, would blast all these comforts, and leave us to lamentation, woe, and death, Psalm 104:27-29; Psalm 145:15-16.

Verse 18

And with these sayings - With these arguments.

Scarce restrained they the people - They were so fully satisfied that the gods had appeared, and were so full of zeal to do them honor.

Verse 19

And there came thither certain Jews - Not satisfied with having expelled them from Antioch and Iconium, they still pursued them. Persecutors often exhibit a zeal and perseverance in a bad cause which it would be well if Christians evinced in a holy cause. Bad people will often travel further to do evil than good people will to do good; and wicked people often show more zeal in opposing the gospel than professed Christians do in advancing it.

Antioch and Iconium - See the notes on Acts 13:14, Acts 13:51.

Who persuaded the people - That they were impostors; and who excited their rage against them.

And having stoned Paul - Whom they were just before ready to worship as a god! What a striking instance of the fickleness and instability of idolaters! And what a striking instance of the instability and uselessness of mere popularity! Just before they were ready to adore him; now they sought to put him to death. Nothing is more fickle than popular favor. The unbounded admiration of a man may soon be changed into unbounded indignation and contempt. It was well for Paul that he was not seeking this popularity, and that he did not depend on it for happiness. He had a good conscience; he was engaged in a good cause; he was under the protection of God; and his happiness was to be sought from a higher source than the applause of people, "fluctuating and uncertain as the waves of the sea." To

this transaction Paul referred when he enumerated his trials in 2 Corinthians 11:25, "Once was I stoned."

Drew him out of the city - Probably in haste, and in popular rage, as if he was unfit to be in the city, and was unworthy of a decent burial; for it does not appear that they contemplated an interment but indignantly dragged him beyond the walls of the city to leave him there. Such sufferings and trials it cost to establish that religion in the world which has shed so many blessings on man; which now crowns us with comfort; which saves us from the abominations and degradations of idolatry here, and from the pains of hell hereafter.

Supposing he had been dead - The next verse shows that he was really not dead, though many commentators, as well as the Jews, have supposed that he was, and was miraculously restored to life. It is remarkable that Barnabas was not exposed to this popular fury. But it is to be remembered that Paul was the chief speaker, and it was his special zeal that exposed him to this tumult.

Verse 20

Howbeit - Notwithstanding the supposition that he was dead.

As the disciples stood round about him - It would seem that they did not suppose I that he was dead; but might be expecting that he would revive.

He rose up … - Most commentators have supposed that this was the effect of a miracle. They have maintained that he could not have risen so soon, and entered into the city, without the interposition of miraculous power (Calvin, Doddridge, Clarke, etc.). But the commentators have asserted what is not intimated by the sacred penman. The probability is that he was stunned by a blow - perhaps a single blow and after a short time recovered from it. Nothing is more common than thus by a violent blow on the head to be rendered apparently lifeless, the effect of which soon is over, and the person restored to strength. Pricaeus and Wetstein suppose that Paul feigned himself to be dead, and when out of danger rose and returned to the city. But this is wholly improbable.

And came into the city - It is remarkable that he should have returned again into the same city. But probably it was only among the new converts that he showed himself. The Jews supposed that he was dead; and it does not appear that he again exposed himself to their rage.

And the next day … - The opposition here was such that it was vain to attempt to preach there any longer. Having been seen by the disciples after his supposed death, their faith was confirmed, and he departed to preach in another place.

To Derbe - Acts 14:6.

Verse 21

Had taught many - Or, rather, had made many disciples (margin).

To Lystra - Acts 14:6.

And to Iconium - Acts 14:1. We have here a remarkable instance of the courage of the apostles. In these very places they had been persecuted and stoned, and yet in the face of danger they ventured to return. The welfare of the infant churches they deemed of more consequence than their own safety; and they threw themselves again into the midst of danger, to comfort and strengthen those just converted to God. There are times when ministers should not count their own lives. dear to them Acts 20:24, but when they should fearlessly throw themselves into the midst of danger, confiding only in the protecting care of their God and Saviour.

Verse 22

Confirming - "strengthening" ἐπιστηρίζοντες epistērizontesThe expression "to confirm" as in some churches a technical signification, denoting "to admit to the full privileges of a Christian by the imposition of hands" (Johnson). It is scarcely necessary to say that the word here refers to no such rite. It has no relation to an imposition of hands, or to the thing which is usually supposed to be denoted by the rite of "confirmation." It means simply that they established, strengthened, made firm, or encouraged by the presentation of truth and by the motives of the gospel. Whether the rite of confirmation, as practiced by some churches, be founded on the authority of the New Testament or not, it is certain that it can receive no support from this passage. The truth was, that these were young converts; that they were surrounded by enemies, and exposed to temptations and to dangers; that they had as yet but a slight acquaintance with the truths of the gospel, and that it was therefore important that they should be further instructed in the truth, and established in the faith of the gospel. This was what Paul and Barnabas returned to accomplish. There is not the slightest evidence that they had not been admitted to the full privileges of the church before; or that any ceremony was now performed in confirming or strengthening them.

The souls - The minds, the hearts, or the disciples themselves.

Disciples - They were as yet scholars, or learners, and the apostles returned to instruct them further in the doctrines of Christ.

And exhorting them … - Acts 13:43.

In the faith - In the belief of the gospel.

And that we must - καὶ ὅτι δεῖ kai hoti deiThat it is fit or proper that we should. Not that it is fixed by any fatal necessity, but that we are not to expect that it will be otherwise. We are to calculate on it when we become Christians. Why it is proper, or fit, the apostle did not state. But we may remark that it is proper:

(1) Because such is the opposition of the world to pure religion that it cannot be avoided. Of this they had had striking demonstration in Lystra and Iconium.

(2) it is necessary to reclaim us from wandering, and to keep us in the path of duty, Psalm 119:67, Psalm 119:71.

(3) it is necessary to wean us from the world; to keep before our minds the great truth that we have here "no continuing city and no abiding place." Trial here makes us pant for a world of rest. The opposition of sinners makes us desire that world where "the wicked shall cease from troubling," and where there shall be eternal friendship and peace.

(4) when we are persecuted and afflicted, we may remember that it has been the lot of Christians from the beginning. We tread a path that has been watered by the tears of the saints, and rendered sacred by the shedding of the best blood on the earth. The Saviour trod that path; and it is enough that the "disciple be as his master, and the servant as his lord," Matthew 10:24-25.

Through much tribulation - Through many afflictions.

Enter into the kingdom of God - Be saved. Enter into heaven. See the notes on Matthew 3:2.

Verse 23

And widen they had ordained - χειροτονήσαντες cheirotonēsantesThe word "ordain" we now use in an ecclesiastical sense, to denote "a setting apart to an office by the imposition of hands." But it is evident that the word here is not employed in that sense. That imposition of hands might have

occurred in setting apart afterward to this office is certainly possible, but it is not implied in the word employed here, and did not take place in the transaction to which this word refers. The word occurs in only one other place in the New Testament, 2 Corinthians 8:19, where it is applied to Luke, and translated, "who was also chosen of the church (that is, appointed or elected by suffrage by the churches) to travel with us, etc." The verb properly denotes "to stretch out the hand"; and as it was customary to elect to office, or to vote, by stretching out or elevating the hand, so the word simply means "to elect, appoint, or designate to any office." The word here refers simply to an "election" or "appointment" of the elders. It is said, indeed, that Paul and Barnabas did this. But probably all that is meant by it is that they presided in the assembly when the choice was made. It does not mean that they appointed them without consulting the church; but it evidently means that they appointed them in the usual way of appointing officers, by the suffrages of the people. See Schleusner, and the notes of Doddridge and Calvin.

Ordained them - Appointed for the disciples, or for the church. It is not meant that the elders were ordained for the apostles.

Elders - Greek: presbyters. Literally, this word refers to the aged. See the notes on Acts 11:30. But it may also be a word relating to office, denoting those who were more experienced than others, and who were chosen to preside over and to instruct the rest. What was the nature of this office, and what was the design of the appointment, is not intimated in this word. All that seems to be implied is, that they were to take the charge of the churches during the absence of the apostles. The apostles were about to leave them. They were just organized into churches: they were inexperienced; they needed counsel and direction; they were exposed to dangers; and it was necessary, therefore, that persons should be designated to watch over the spiritual interests of the brethren. The probability is, that they performed all the functions that were required in the infant and feeble churches; in exhorting, instructing; governing, etc. The more experienced and able would be most likely to be active in exhorting and instructing the brethren; and all would be useful in counseling and guiding the flock. The same thing occurred in the church at Ephesus. See the notes on Acts 20:17-28. It is not improbable that the business of instructing, or teaching, would be gradually confined to the more talented and able of the elders, and that

the others would be concerned mainly in governing and directing the general affairs of the church.

In every church - It is implied here that there were elders in each church; that is, that in each church there was more than one. See Acts 15:21, where a similar phraseology occurs, and where it is evident that there was more than one reader of the Law of Moses in each city. Compare Titus 1:5, "I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst … ordain elders in every city"; Acts 20:17, "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church." It could not mean, therefore, that they appointed a single minister or pastor to each church, but they committed the whole affairs of the church to a bench of elders.

And had prayed with fasting - With the church. They were about to leave them. They had entrusted the interests of the church to a body of men chosen for this purpose; and they now commended the church and its elders together to God. Probably they had no prospect of seeing them again, and they parted as ministers and people should part, and as Christian friends should part, with humble prayer, commending themselves to the protecting care of God.

They commended them … - They committed the infant church to the guardianship of the Lord. They were feeble, inexperienced, and exposed to dangers; but in his hands they were safe.

To the Lord … - The Lord Jesus. The connection shows that he is particularly referred to. In his hands the redeemed are secure. When we part with Christian friends, we may, with confidence, leave them in his holy care and keeping.

Verse 24

Throughout Pisidia - See the note at Acts 13:14.

They came to Pamphylia - See the notes on Acts 13:13. These places they had visited before.

Verse 25

In Perga - See the notes on Acts 13:13.

They went down into Attalia - "Attalia had something of the same relation to Perga which Cadiz has to Seville. In each case the latter city is approached by a river voyage, and the former is more conveniently placed on the open sea. Attalus Philadelphus, king of Pergamus, whose dominions extended from the northwestern corner of Asia Miner to the Sea of Pamphylia, had built this city in a convenient position for commanding the

trade of Syria or Egypt. When Alexander the Great passed this way, no such city was in existence; but since the days of the kings of Pergamus, who inherited a fragment of his vast empire, Attalia has always existed and flourished, retaining the name of the monarch who built it. Its ancient site is not now certainly known" (Life and Epistles of Paul, vol. i. pp. 200,201). It is probable that it is the modern Satalia.

Verse 26

And thence sailed to Antioch - See the note at Acts 11:19.

From whence they had been recommended … - Where they had been appointed to this missionary tour by the church, Acts 13:1-4.

To the grace of God - His favor and protection had been implored for them in their perilous undertaking.

For the work which they fulfilled - This shows conclusively:

(1) That they had accomplished fully the work which was originally contemplated. It was strictly a missionary tour among the Gentiles. It was an important and hazardous enterprise, and was the first in which the church formally engaged. Hence, so much importance is attached to it, and so faithful a record of it is preserved.

(2) it shows that the act by which they were set apart to this Acts 13:1-3 was not an ordination to the ministerial office. It was an appointment to a missionary tour.

(3) it shows that the act was not an appointment to the apostleship. Paul was an apostle before by the express appointment of the Saviour; and Barnabas was never an apostle in the original and proper sense of the term. It was a designation to a temporary work, which was now fulfilled.

We may remark, also, in regard to this missionary tour:

(1) That the work of missions is one which early engaged the attention of Christians.

(2) it entered into their plans, and was one in which the church was deeply interested.

(3) the work of missions is attended with danger. People are now no less hostile to the gospel than they were in Lystra and Iconium.

(4) Missionaries should be sustained by the prayers of the church. And,

(5) In the conduct of Paul and Barnabas we have an example for missionaries in founding churches, and in regard to their own trials and persecutions. If they were persecuted, missionaries may be now; and if the grace of Christ was sufficient to sustain them, it is not the less sufficient to sustain those of our own times amidst all the dangers attending the preaching of the cross in pagan lands.

Verse 27

They rehearsed … - Acts 11:4. They related what had happened; their dangers and their success. This they did because they had been sent out by the church, and it was proper that they should give an account of their work; and because it furnished a suitable occasion of gratitude to God for his mercy.

All that God had done … - In protecting, guarding them, etc. All was traced to God.

Had opened the door of faith - Had furnished an opportunity of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, 1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 2:12.

Verse 28

And there they abode - At Antioch.

Long time - How long is not intimated; but we hear no more of them until the council at Jerusalem, mentioned in the next chapter. If the transactions recorded in this chapter occurred, as is supposed, about 45 a.d. or 46 a.d., and the council at Jerusalem assembled 51 a.d. or 53 a.d., as is supposed, then here is an interval of from five to eight years in which we have no account of them. Where they were, or what was their employment in this interval, the sacred historian has not informed us. It is certain, however, that Paul made several journeys of which we have no particular record in the New Testament, and it is possible that some of those journeys occurred during this interval. Thus, he preached the gospel as far as Illyricum, Romans 15:19. And in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, there is an account of trials and persecutions, of many of which we have no distinct record, and which might have occurred during this interval. We may be

certain that these holy men were not idle. From the example of Paul and Barnabas as recorded in this chapter, we may learn to bear all persecutions and trials without a complaint, and to acknowledge the good hand of God in our preservation in our travels; in our defense when we are persecuted; in all the opportunities which may be open before us to do good; and in all the success which may attend our efforts. Christians should remember that it is God who opens doors of usefulness; and they should regard it as a matter of thanksgiving that such doors are opened, and that they are permitted to spread the gospel, whatever toil it may cost, whatever persecution they may endure, whatever perils they may encounter.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Verse 1

And certain men - These were undoubtedly men who had been Jews, but who were now converted to Christianity. The fact that they were willing to refer the matter in dispute to the apostles and elders Acts 15:2 shows that they had professedly embraced the Christian religion. The account which follows is a record of the first internal dissension which occurred in the Christian church. Hitherto the church had been struggling against external foes. Violent persecutions had raged, and had fully occupied the attention of Christians. But now the churches were at peace. They enjoyed great external prosperity in Antioch, and the great enemy of souls took occasion then, as he has often done in similar circumstances since, to excite contentions in the church itself, so that when external violence could not destroy it, an effort was made to secure the same object by internal dissension and strife. This history, therefore, is particularly important, as it is the record of the first unhappy debate which arose in the bosom of the church. It is further important, as it shows the manner in which such controversies were settled in apostolic times, and as it established some very important principles respecting the perpetuity of the religious rites of the Jews.

Came down from Judea - To Antioch, and to the regions adjacent, which had been visited by the apostles, Acts 15:23. Judea was a high and hilly region, and going from that toward the level countries adjacent to the sea was represented to be descending, or going down.

Taught the brethren - That is, Christians. They endeavored to convince them of the necessity of keeping the laws of Moses.

Except ye be circumcised - This was the leading or principal rite of the Jewish religion. It was indispensable to the name and privileges of a Jew. Proselytes to their religion were circumcised as well as native-born Jews, and they held it to be indispensable to salvation. It is evident from this that Paul and Barnabas had dispensed with this rite in regard to the Gentile converts, and that they intended to found the Christian church on the principle that the Jewish ceremonies were to cease. When, however, it was necessary to conciliate the minds of the Jews and to prevent contention, Paul did not hesitate to practice circumcision, Acts 16:3.

After the manner of Moses - According to the custom which Moses commanded; according to the Mosaic ritual.

Ye cannot be saved - The Jews regarded this as indispensable to salvation. The grounds on which they would press it on the attention of Gentile converts would be very plausible, and such as would produce much embarrassment. For:

(1) It would be maintained that the laws of Moses were the laws of God, and were therefore unchangeable; and,

(2) It would doubtless be maintained that the religion of the Messiah was only a completing and perfecting of the Jewish religion that it was designed simply to carry out its principles according to the promises, and not to subvert and destroy anything that had been established by divine authority. It is usually not difficult to perplex and embarrass young converts with questions of modes, and rites, and forms of religion; and it is not uncommon that a revival is followed by some contention just like this. Opposing sects urge the claims of their special rites, and seek to make proselytes, and introduce contention and strife into an otherwise peaceful and happy Christian community.

Verse 2

Had no small dissension an disputation - The word rendered "dissension" στάσις stasisdenotes sometimes "sedition" or "intestine war," and sometimes "earnest and violent disputation or controversy," Acts 23:7, Acts 23:10. In this place it clearly denotes that there was earnest and warm discussion; but it is not implied that there was any improper heat or temper on the part of Paul and Barnabas. Important principles were to be settled in regard to the organization of the church. Doctrines were advanced by the Judaizing teachers which were false, and which tended to produce great disorder in the church. Those doctrines were urged with zeal, were declared to be essential to salvation, and would therefore tend to distract the minds of Christians, and to produce great anxiety. It became, therefore, necessary to meet them with a determined purpose, and to establish the truth on an immovable basis. And the case shows that it is right to "contend earnestly for the faith" Jude 1:3; and, when similar cases occur, that it is proper to resist the approach of error with all the arguments which may be at our command, and with all the weapons which truth can furnish. It is further

implied here that it is the duty of the ministers of the gospel to defend the truth and to oppose error. Paul and Barnabas regarded themselves as set for this purpose (compare Philemon 1:17, "Knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel"); and Christian ministers should be qualified to defend the truth, and should be willing with a proper spirit and with great earnestness to maintain the doctrines revealed.

They determined - There was no prospect that the controversy would be settled by contention and argument. It would seem, from this statement, that those who came down from Judea were also willing that the whole matter should be referred to the apostles at Jerusalem. The reason for this may have been:

(1) That Jerusalem would be regarded by them as the source of authority in the Christian church, as it had been among the Jews.

(2) most of the apostles and the most experienced Christians were there. They had listened to the instructions of Christ himself; had been long in the church; and were supposed to be better acquainted with its design and its laws.

(3) those who came from Judea would not be likely to acknowledge the authority of Paul as an apostle: the authority of those at Jerusalem they would recognize.

(4) they might have had a very confident expectation that the decision there would be in their favor. The question had not been agitated there. They had all been Jews, and it is certain that they continued as yet to attend in the temple service, and to conform to the Jewish customs. They might have expected, therefore, with great confidence, that the decision would be in their favor, and they were willing to refer it to those who resided at Jerusalem.

Certain other of them - Of the brethren; probably of each party. They did not go to debate, or to give their opinion, or to vote in the ease themselves, but to lay the question fairly before the apostles and elders.

Unto the apostles - The authority of the apostles in such a case would be acknowledged by all. They had been immediately instructed by the Saviour, and had the promise of infallible guidance in the organization of the church. See the notes on Matthew 16:19; Matthew 18:18.

And elders - See the note at Acts 11:30. Greek: presbyters. See the notes on Acts 14:23. Who these were, or what was their office and authority, is not easy now to determine. It may refer either to the aged men in the church at Jerusalem, or to those who were appointed to rule and to preach in connection with the apostles. As in the synagogue it was customary to determine questions by the advice of a bench of elders, there is no improbability in the supposition that the apostles would imitate that custom, and appoint a similar arrangement in the Christian church (Grotius). It is generally agreed that this is the journey to which Paul refers in Galatians 2:1-10. If so, it happened fourteen years after his conversion, Galatians 2:1. It was done in accordance with the divine command, "by revelation," Galatians 2:2. Among those who went with him was Titus, who was afterward so much distinguished as his companion, Galatians 2:3.

About this question - The question whether the ceremonial laws of Moses were binding on Christian converts. In regard to the nature and design of this council at Jerusalem, see the notes on Acts 15:30-31.

Verse 3

And being brought on their way by the church - Being attended and conducted by the Christian brethren. See the notes on Romans 15:24. It was customary for the Christians to attend the apostles in their travels. Compare 1 Corinthians 16:6, 1 Corinthians 16:11; 3 John 1:6.

Through Phenice - See the note at Acts 11:19.

And Samaria - These places were directly on their route to Jerusalem.

Declaring the conversion … - Of the Gentiles in Antioch, and in the regions in Asia Minor through which they had traveled. These remarkable events they would naturally communicate with joy to the Christians with whom they would have contact in their journey.

Caused great joy - At the news of the extensive spread of the gospel. It was an indication of their deep feeling in the interests of religion that they thus rejoiced. Where Christians are themselves awake, and engaged in the service of Christ, they rejoice at the news of the conversion of sinners. Where they are cold, they hear such news with indifference, or with the utmost unconcern. One way of testing our feelings on the subject of religion is by the emotions which we have when we hear of extensive and glorious revivals of religion. Compare the notes on Acts 8:8.

Verse 4

They were received of the church - By the church, in a hospitable and friendly manner. They were acknowledged as Christian brethren, and received with Christian kindness. See Galatians 2:9.

And they declared - Paul and Barnabas, and those with them. That is, they stated the case; the remarkable conversion of the Gentiles, the evidence of their piety, and the origin of the present dispute.

Verse 5

But there rose up … - It has been doubted whether these are the words of Paul and Barnabas, relating what occurred at Antioch, or whether they are the words of Luke recording what took place at Jerusalem. The correct exposition is probably what refers it to the latter. For:

(1) This seems to be the most obvious interpretation.

(2) the use of the words "rose up" implies that. Those who disturbed the church at Antioch are said to have come down from Judea Acts 15:1, and if this place referred to that occurrence, the same words would have been retained.

(3) the particular specification here of "the sect of the Pharisees" looks as if this was an occurrence taking place at Jerusalem. No such specification exists respecting those who came down to Antioch; but it would seem here as if this party in Jerusalem resolved still to abide by the Law, and to impose those rites on the Christian converts. However, this interpretation is by no means certain.

Which believed - Who maintained or taught.

That it was needful … - See the notes on Acts 15:1.

Verse 6

And the apostles and elders … - They came together in accordance with the authority in Matthew 18:19-20. It would seem, also, that the whole church was convened on this occasion, and that the church concurred, at least, in the judgment expressed in this case. See Acts 15:12, Acts 15:22-23.

For to consider of this matter - Not to decide it arbitrarily, or even by authority, without deliberation; but to compare their views, and to express the result of the whole to the church at Antioch. It was a grave and difficult question, deeply affecting the entire constitution of the Christian church, and they therefore solemnly engaged in deliberation on the subject.

Verse 7

Much disputing - Or rather, much inquiry or deliberation. With our word disputing we commonly connect the idea of heat and anger. This is not necessarily implied in the word used here. It might have been calm, solemn, deliberate inquiry; and there is no evidence that it was conducted with undue warmth or anger.

Peter rose up and said - Peter was probably the most aged, and was most accustomed to speak, Acts 2:14, etc.; Acts 3:6, Acts 3:12. Besides, there was a particular reason for his speaking here, as he had been engaged in similar scenes, and understood the case, and had had evidence that God had converted sinners without the Mosaic rites, and knew that it would have been inexpedient to have imposed these rites on those who had thus been converted.

A good while ago - See Matthew 16:18, with Acts 10.

That the Gentiles - Cornelius, and those who were assembled with him at Caesarea. This was the first case that had occurred, and therefore it was important to appeal to it.

Verse 8

And God, which knoweth the hearts - Acts 1:24. God thus knew whether they were true converts or not, and gave a demonstration that he acknowledged them as his.

Giving them the Holy Ghost … - Acts 10:45-46.

Verse 9

And put no difference … - Though they had not been circumcised, and though they did not conform to the Law of Moses. Thus, God showed that the observance of these rites was not necessary in order to the true conversion of people, and to acceptance with him. He did not give us, who are Jews, any advantage over them, but justified and purified all in the same manner.

Purifying their hearts - Thus, giving the best evidence that he had renewed them, and admitted them to favor with him.

By faith - By believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. This demonstrated that the plan on which God was now about to show favor to people was not by external rites and ceremonies, but by a scheme which required faith as the only condition of acceptance. It is further implied here that there is no true faith which does not purify the heart.

Verse 10

Why tempt ye God? - Why provoke him to displeasure? Why, since he has shown his determination to accept them without such rites, do you provoke him by attempting to impose on his own people rites without his authority, and a against his manifest will? The argument is, that God had already accepted them. To attempt to impose these rites would be to provoke him to anger; to introduce observances which he had shown it was his purpose should now be abolished.

To put a yoke - That which would be burdensome and oppressive, or which would infringe on their just freedom as the children of God. It is called in Galatians 5:1, "a yoke of bondage." Compare the notes on Matthew 23:4. A "yoke" is an emblem of slavery or bondage 1 Timothy 6:1; or of affliction Lamentations 3:27; or of punishment Lamentations 1:14; or of oppressive and burdensome ceremonies, as in this place, or of the restraints of Christianity, Matthew 11:29-30. In this place those rites are called a yoke, because:

(1) They were burdensome and oppressive; and,

(2) Because they would be an infringement of Christian freedom. One design of the gospel was to set people free from such rites and ceremonies.

Which neither our fathers … - Which have been found burdensome at all times. They were expensive, and painful, and oppressive; and as they had been found to be so, it was not proper to impose them on the Gentile converts, but should rather rejoice at any evidence that the people of God might be delivered from them.

Were able to bear - Which are found to be oppressive and burdensome. They were attended with great inconvenience and many transgressions, as the consequence.

Verse 11

But we believe - We apostles, who have been with them, and have seen the evidences of their acceptance with God.

Through the grace … - By the grace or mercy of Christ alone, without any of the rites and ceremonies of the Jews.

We shall be saved, even as they - In the same manner, by the mere grace of Christ. So far from being necessary to their salvation, they are really of no use in ours. We are to be saved, not by these ceremonies, but by the mere mercy of God in the Redeemer. They should not, therefore, be imposed on others.

Verse 12

Then all the multitude - Evidently the multitude of private Christians who were assembled on this occasion. That it does not refer to a synod of ministers and elders merely is apparent:

(1) Because the church, the brethren, are represented as having been present, and as concurring in the final opinion Acts 15:22-23; and,

(2) Because the word "multitude" τὸ πλῆθος to plēthoswould not have been used in describing the collection of apostles and elders merely. Compare Luke 1:10-11, Luke 1:13; Luke 5:6; Luke 6:17; Luke 19:37; John 5:3; John 21:6; Acts 4:32; Acts 6:2; Matthew 3:7.

Gave audience - Heard, listened attentively to.

Barnabas and Paul - They were deeply interested in it, and they were qualified to give a fair statement of the facts as they had occurred.

Declaring what miracles and wonders … - The argument here evidently is, that God had approved their work by miracles; that he gave evidence that what they did had his approbation; and that as all this was done without imposing on them the rites of the Jews, so it would follow that those were not now to be commanded.

Verse 13

James answered - James the Less, son of Alpheus. See the notes on Acts 12:1.

Hearken unto me - This whole transaction shows that Peter had no such authority in the church as the papists pretend, for otherwise his opinion would have been followed without debate. James had an authority not less than that of Peter. It is possible that he might have been next in age (compare 1 Corinthians 15:7); and it seems morally certain that he remained for a considerable part of his life in Jerusalem, Acts 12:17; Acts 21:18; Galatians 1:19; Galatians 2:9, Galatians 2:12.

Verse 14

Simeon - This is a Hebrew name. The Greek mode of writing it commonly was Simon. It was one of the names of Peter, Matthew 4:18.

To take out of them a people - To choose from among the Gentries those who should be his friends.

Verse 15

The words of the prophets - Amos 9:11-12. It was a very material point with them, as Jews, to inquire whether this was in accordance with the

predictions of the Scriptures. The most powerful revivals of religion, and the most striking demonstrations of the divine presence, will be in accordance with the Bible, and should be tested by them. This habit was always manifested by the apostles and early Christians, and should be followed by Christians at all times. Unless a supposed work of grace accords with the Bible, and can be defended by it, it must be false, and should be opposed. Compare Isaiah 8:20.

Verse 16

After this - This quotation is not made literally either from the Hebrew or the Septuagint, which differs also from the Hebrew. The 17th verse is quoted literally from the Septuagint, but in the 16th the general sense only of the passage is retained. The main point of the quotation, as made by James, was to show that, according to the prophets, it was contemplated that the Gentiles should be introduced to the privileges of the children of God; and on this point the passage has a direct bearing. The prophet Amos Amos 9:8-10 had described the calamities which would come upon the nation of the Jews by their being scattered and driven away. This implied that the city of Jerusalem, the temple, and the walls of the city would be destroyed. But after that (Heb: "on that day," Amos 9:11, that is, the day when he should revisit them and recover them) he would restore them to their former privileges - would rebuild their temple, their city, and their walls, Amos 9:11. And not only so, not only would the blessing descend on the Jews, but it would also be extended to others. The "remnant of Edom," "the pagan upon whom" his "name would be called" Amos 9:12, would also partake of the mercy of God, and be subject to the Jewish people, and a time of general prosperity and of permanent blessings would follow, Amos 9:13-15. James understands this as referring to the times of the Messiah, and to the introduction of the gospel to the Gentiles. And so the passage Amos 9:12 is rendered in the Septuagint. See ver. 17.

I will return - When the people of God are subjected to calamities and trials, it is often represented as if God had departed from them. His returning, therefore, is an image of their restoration to his favor and to prosperity. This is not, however, in the Hebrew, in Amos 9:11.

I will build again - In the calamities that would come upon the nation Amos 9:8, it is implied that the temple and the city would be destroyed. To build them again would be a proof of his returning favor.

The tabernacle of David - The tent of David. Here it means the house or royal residence of David and the kings of Israel. That is, he would restore them to their former glory and splendor as his people. The reference here is not to the temple, which was the work of Solomon, but to the magnificence and splendor of the dwelling-place of David; that is, to the full enjoyment of their former high privileges and blessings.

Which is fallen down - Which would be destroyed by the King of Babylon, and by the long neglect and decay resulting from their being carried to a distant land,

The ruins thereof - Heb. "close up the breaches thereof." That is, it would be restored to its former prosperity and magnificence; an emblem of the favor of God, and of the spiritual blessings that would in future times descend on the Jewish people.

Verse 17

That the residue of men - This verse is quoted literally from the Septuagint, and differs in some respects from the Hebrew. The phrase, "the residue of men," here is evidently understood, both by the Septuagint and by James, as referring to others than Jews, to the Gentiles the rest of the world - implying that many of them would be admitted to the friendship and favor of God. The Hebrew is, "that they may possess the remnant of Edom." This change is made in the Septuagint by a slight difference in the reading of two Hebrew words. The Septuagint, instead of the Hebrew וירשו w-y-r-sh-wshall inherit, read ודרשו w-d-r-sh-wshall seek of thee; and instead of אדום 'd-w-mEdom, they read אדם -mman, or mankind; that is, people. Why this variation occurred cannot be explained; but the sense is not materially different. In the Hebrew the word "Edom" has undoubted reference to another nation than the Jewish nation; and the expression means that, in the great prosperity of the Jews after their return, they would extend the influence of their religion to other nations; that is, as James applies it, the Gentiles might be brought to the privileges of the children of God.

And all the Gentiles - Heb. all the pagan; that is, all who were not Jews. This was a clear prediction that other nations were to be favored with the true religion, and that without any mention of their conforming to the rites of the Jewish people.

Upon whom my name is called - Who are called by my name, or who are regarded as my people.

Who doeth all these things - That is, who will certainly accomplish this in its time.

Verse 18

Known unto God … - See the notes on Acts 1:24. The meaning of this verse, in this connection, is this. God sees everything future; he knows what he will accomplish; he has a plan; all his works are so arranged in his mind that he sees everything distinctly and clearly. As he foretold these, it was a part of his plan; and as it was a part of his plan long since foretold, it should not be opposed and resisted by us.

Verse 19

My sentence - Greek: I judge κρίνω krinōthat is, I give my opinion. It is the usual language in which a judge delivers his opinion; but it does not imply here that James assumed authority to settle the case, but merely that he gave his opinion, or counsel.

That we trouble not them - That we do not molest, disturb, or oppress them by imposing on them unnecessary fires and ceremonies.

Verse 20

That we write unto them - Expressing our judgment, or our views of the case.

That they abstain - That they refrain from these things, or wholly avoid them.

Pollutions of idols - The word rendered "pollutions" means any kind of "defilement." But here it is evidently used to denote the flesh of those animals that were offered in sacrifice to idols. See Acts 15:29. That flesh, after being offered in sacrifice, was often exposed for sale in the markets, or was served up at feasts, 1 Corinthians 10:25-29. It became a very important question whether it was right for Christians to partake of it. The Jews would contend that it was, in fact, partaking of idolatry. The Gentile converts would allege that they did not eat it as a sacrifice to idols, or lend their countenance in any way to the idolatrous Worship where it had been offered. See this subject discussed at length in 1 Corinthians 8:4-13. As idolatry was forbidden to the Jews in every form, and as partaking even of the sacrifices of idols in their feasts might seem to countenance idolatry, the Jews would be utterly opposed to it; and for the sake of peace, James advised that the Christians at Antioch be recommended to abstain from this. To partake of that food might not be morally wrong 1 Corinthians 8:4, but it

would give occasion for scandal and offence; and, therefore, as a matter of expediency, it was advised that they should abstain from it.

And from fornication - The word used here πορνεία porneiais applicable to "all illicit sexual intercourse," and may refer to adultery, incest, or licentiousness in any form. There has been much diversity of opinion in regard to this expression. Interpreters have been greatly perplexed to understand why this violation of the moral law has been introduced amidst the violations of the ceremonial law, and the question is naturally asked whether this was a sin about which there could be any debate between the Jewish and Gentile converts? Were there any who would practice it, or plead that it was lawful? If not, why is it prohibited here? Various explanations of this have been proposed. Some have supposed that James refers here to the offerings which harlots would make of their gains to the service of religion, and that James would prohibit the reception of it. Beza, Selden, and Schleusner suppose the word is taken for idolatry, as it is often represented in the Scriptures as consisting in unfaithfulness to God, and as it is often called adultery. Heringius supposes that marriage between idolaters and Christians is here intended. But, after all, the usual interpretation of the word, as referring to illicit sexual intercourse of the sexes of any kind, is undoubtedly here to be retained. If it be asked, then, why this was particularly forbidden, and was introduced in this connection, we may reply:

(1) That this vice prevailed everywhere among the Gentiles, and was that to which all were particularly exposed.

(2) that it was not deemed by the Gentiles disgraceful. It was practiced without shame and without remorse. (Terence, Adelphi, 1,2,21. See Grotius.) It was important, therefore, that the pure laws of Christianity on this subject should be known, and that special pains should be taken to instruct the early converts from paganism in those laws. The same thing is necessary still in pagan lands.

(3) this crime was connected with religion. It was the practice not only to introduce indecent pictures and emblems into their worship, but also for females to devote themselves to the service of particular temples, and to devote the avails of indiscriminate prostitution to the service of the god, or the goddess. The vice was connected with no small part of the pagan

worship; and the images, the emblems, and the customs of idolatry everywhere tended to sanction and promote it. A mass of evidence on this subject which sickens the heart, and which would be too long and too indelicate to introduce here, may be seen in Tholuck‘s Nature and Moral Influence of Paganism, in the Biblical Repository for July, 1832, p. 441-464. As this vice was almost universal; as it was practiced without shame or disgrace; as there were no laws among the pagan to prevent it; as it was connected with all their views of idol worship and of religion, it was important for the early Christians to frown upon and to oppose it, and to set a special guard against it in all the churches. It was the sin to which, of all others, they were the most exposed, and which was most likely to bring scandal on the Christian religion. It is for this cause that it is so often and so pointedly forbidden in the New Testament Romans 1:29; 1 Corinthians 6:13, 1 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

And from things strangled - That is, from animals or birds that were killed without shedding their blood. The reason why these were considered by the Jews unlawful to. be eaten was, that thus they would be under a necessity of eating blood, which was positively forbidden by the Law. Hence, it was commanded in the Law that when any beast or fowl was taken in a snare, the blood should be poured out before it was lawful to be eaten, Leviticus 17:13.

And from blood - The eating of blood was strictly forbidden to the Jews. The reason of this was that it contained the life, Leviticus 17:11, Leviticus 17:14. See notes on Romans 3:25. The use of blood was common among the Gentiles. They drank it often at their sacrifices, and in making covenants or compacts. To separate the Jews from them in this respect was one design of the prohibition. See Spencer, De Ley Hebrae., p. 144,145,169,235,377,381,594, edit. 1732. See also this whole passage examined at length in Spencer, p. 588-626. The primary reason of the prohibition was, that it was thus used in the feasts and compacts of idolaters. That blood was thus drank by the pagans, particularly by the Sabians, in their sacrifices, is fully proved by Spencer, De Leg., p. 377-380 But the prohibition specifies a higher reason, that the life is in the blood, and that therefore it should not be eaten. On this opinion see the notes on Romans 3:25. This reason existed before any ceremonial law; it is founded in the nature of things; it has no particular reference to any custom of the

Jews; and it is as forcible in any other circumstances as in theirs. It was proper, therefore, to forbid it to the early Christian converts; and for the same reason, its use should be abstained from everywhere. It adds to the force of these remarks when we remember that the same principle was settled before the laws of Moses were given, and that God regarded the fact that the life was in the blood as of so much importance as to make the shedding of it worthy of death, Genesis 9:4-6. It is supposed, therefore, that this law is still obligatory. Perhaps, also, there is no food more unwholesome than blood; and it is a further circumstance of some moment that all people naturally revolt from it as an article of food.

Verse 21

For Moses - The meaning of this verse is, that the Law of Moses, prohibiting these things, was read in the synagogues constantly. As these commands wore constantly read, and as the Jewish converts would not soon learn that their ceremonial law had ceased to be binding, it was deemed to be a matter of expediency that no needless offence should be given to them. For the sake of peace, it was better that they should abstain from meat offered to idols than to give offence to the Jewish converts. Compare 1 Corinthians 8:10-13.

d **Of old time -** Greek: from ancient generations. It is an established custom, and therefore his laws are well known, and have, in their view, not only the authority of revelation, but the venerableness of antiquity.

In every city - Where there were Jews. This was the case in all the cities to which the discussion here had reference.

Them that preach him - That is, by reading the Law of Moses. But, in addition to reading the Law, it was customary also to offer an explanation of its meaning. See the notes on Luke 4:16-22.

Verse 22

Then pleased it - It seemed fit and proper to them.

The apostles and elders - To whom the business had been particularly referred, Acts 15:2. Compare Acts 16:4.

With the whole church - All the Christians who were there assembled together. They concurred in the sentiment, and expressed their approbation in the letter that was sent, Acts 15:23. Whether they were consulted does not particularly appear. But as it is not probable that they would volunteer an opinion unless they were consulted, it seems most reasonable to suppose that the apostles and elders submitted the case to them for their approbation.

It would seem that the apostles and elders deliberated on it, and decided it; but still, for the sake of peace and unity, they also took measures to ascertain that their decision agreed with the sentiment of the church.

Chosen men - Men chosen for this purpose.

Of their own company - From among themselves. Greater weight and authority would thus be attached to their message.

Judas surnamed Barsabas - Possibly the same who was nominated to the vacant place in the apostleship, Acts 1:23. But Grotius supposes that it was his brother.

And Silas - He was afterward the traveling companion of Paul, Acts 15:40; Acts 16:25, Acts 16:29; Acts 17:4, Acts 17:10, Acts 17:15. He is also the same person, probably, who is mentioned by the name of Silvanus, 2 Corinthians 1:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Peter 5:12.

Chief men among the brethren - Greek: leaders. Compare Luke 22:26. Men of influence, experience, and authority in the church. Judas and Silas are said to have been prophets, Acts 15:32. They had, therefore, been engaged as preachers and rulers in the church at Jerusalem.

Verse 23

And wrote letters - Greek: "Having written." It does not mean that they wrote more than one epistle.

By them - Greek: by their hand."

After this manner - Greek: these things.

Send greeting - A word of salutation, expressing their desire of the happiness (χαίρειν chairein) of the persons addressed. Compare Matthew 26:49; Matthew 27:29; Luke 1:28; John 19:3.

In Antioch - Where the difficulty first arose.

And Syria - Antioch was the capital of Syria, and it is probable that the dispute was not confined to the capital.

And Cilicia - See the notes on Acts 6:9. Cilicia was adjacent to Syria. Paul and Barnabas had traveled through it, and it is probable that the same difficulty would exist there which had disturbed the churches in Syria.

Verse 24

Forasmuch - Since we have heard.

That certain - That some, Acts 15:1.

Have troubled you with words - With doctrines. They have disturbed your minds, and produced contentions.

Subverting your souls - The word used here occurs nowhere else in the New Testament ἀνασκευάζοντες anaskeuazontesIt properly means "to collect together the vessels used in a house the household furniture - for the purpose of removing it." It is applied to marauders, robbers, and enemies who remove and bear off property, thus producing distress, confusion, and disorder. It is thus used in the sense of disturbing or destroying, and here denotes that they "unsettled their minds" - that they produced anxiety, disturbance, and distress by these doctrines about Moses.

To whom we gave no such commandment - They went, therefore, without authority. Self-constituted and self-sent teachers not infrequently produce disturbance and distress. Had the apostles been consulted on this subject, the difficulty would have been avoided. By thus saying that they had not given them a command to teach these things, they practically assured the Gentile converts that they did not approve of the course which those who went from Judea had taken.

Verse 26

Men that have hazarded their lives … - See Acts 14: This was a noble testimony to the character of Barnabas and Paul. It was a commendation of them to the confidence of the churches, and an implied expression that they wished their authority to be regarded in the establishment and organization of the church.

For the name - In the cause of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 27

The same things - The same things that we wrote to you They will confirm all by their own statements.

Verse 28

For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost - This is a strong and undoubted claim to inspiration. It was with special reference to the organization of the church that the Holy Spirit had been promised to them by the Lord Jesus, Matthew 18:18-20; John 14:26.

No greater burden - To impose no greater restraints to enjoin no other observances. See the notes on Acts 15:10.

Than these necessary things - Necessary:

(1) In order to preserve the peace of the church.

(2) to conciliate the minds of the Jewish converts, Acts 15:21.

(3) in their circumstances particularly, because the crime which is specified - licentiousness was one to which all early converts were especially exposed. See the notes on Acts 15:20.

Verse 29

From meats offered to idols - This explains what is meant by "pollutions of idols," Acts 15:20.

Ye shall do well - You will do what ought to be done in regard to the subjects of dispute.

Verse 31

They rejoiced for the consolation - They acquiesced in the decision of the apostles and elders, and rejoiced that they were not to be subjected to the burdensome rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion. This closes the account of the first Christian council. It was conducted throughout on Christian principles; in a mild, kind, conciliatory spirit, and is a model for all similar assemblages. It came together, not to promote, but to silence disputation; not to persecute the people of God, but to promote their peace; not to be a scene of harsh and angry recrimination, but to be an example of all that was mild, and tender, and kind. Those who composed it came together, not to carry a point, not to overreach their adversaries, not to be party people, but to mingle their sober counsels, to inquire what was right, and to express, in a Christian manner, what was proper to be done. Great and important principles were to be established in regard to the Christian church, and they engaged in their work evidently with a deep sense of their responsibility, and with a just view of their dependence on the aid of the Holy Spirit. How happy Would it have been if this spirit had been possessed by all professedly Christian councils; if all had really sought the peace and harmony of the churches; if none had ever been convened to kindle the fires of persecution, or to rend and destroy the church of God!

This council has been usually appealed to as the authority for councils in the church as a permanent arrangement, and especially as an authority for courts of appeal and control. But it establishes neither, and should be brought as authority for neither. For:

(1) It was not a court of appeal in any intelligible sense. It was an assembly convened for a special purpose; designed to settle an inquiry

which arose in a particular part of the church, and which required the collected wisdom of the apostles and elders.

(2) it had none of the marks or appendages of a court. The term "court," or judicature, is nowhere applied to it, nor to any assembly of Christian people in the New Testament. Nor should these terms be used now in the churches. courts of judicature imply a degree of authority which cannot be proved from the New Testament to have been conceded to any ecclesiastical body of people.

(3) there is not the slightest intimation that anything like permanency was to be attached to this council, or that it would be periodically or regularly repeated. It proves, indeed, that, when cases of difficulty occur - when Christians are perplexed and embarrassed, or when contentions arise - it is proper to refer to Christian people for advice and direction. Such was the case here, and such a course is obviously proper. If it should be maintained that it is well that Christian ministers and laymen should assemble periodically, at stated intervals, on the supposition that such cases may arise, this is conceded; but the example of the apostles and elders should not be pleaded as making such assemblies of divine right and authority, or as being essential to the existence of a church of God. Such an arrangement has been deemed to be so desirable by Christians, that it has been adopted by Episcopalians in their regular annual and triennial Conventions; by Methodists in their conferences; by Presbyterians in their General Assembly; by Friends in their Yearly Meetings; by Baptists and congregationalists in their Associations, etc.; but the example of the council summoned on a special emergency at Jerusalem should not be pleaded as giving divine authority to these periodical assemblages. They are wise and prudent arrangements, contributing to the peace of the church, and the example of the council at Jerusalem can be adduced as furnishing as reach divine authority for one as for another; that is, it does not make all or either of them of divine authority, or obligatory on the church of God.

(4) it should be added that a degree of authority (compare Acts 16:4) would, of course, be attached to the decision of the apostles and elders at that time which cannot be to any body of ministers and laymen now. Besides, it should never be forgotten - what, alas! it seems to have been the

pleasure and the interest of ecclesiastics to forget that neither the apostles nor elders asserted any jurisdiction over the churches of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia; that they did not claim a right to have these cases referred to them; that they did not attempt to "lord it" over their faith or their consciences. The case was a single, specific, definite question referred to them, and they decided it as such. They asserted no abstract right of such jurisdiction; they sought not to intermeddle With the case; they enjoined no future reference of such cases to them, to their successors, or to any ecclesiastical tribunal. They evidently regarded the churches as blessed with the most ample freedom, and contemplated no arrangement of a permanent character asserting a right to legislate on articles of faith, or to make laws for the direction of the Lord's freemen.

Verse 32

Being prophets - See the notes on Acts 11:27. This evidently implies that they had been preachers before they went to Antioch. What was the precise nature of the office of a prophet in the Christian church it is not easy to ascertain. Possibly it may imply that they were teachers of unusual or remark able ability. Compare the notes on Romans 12:6.

Confirmed them - Strengthened them; that is, by their instructions and exhortations. See the notes on Acts 14:22.

Verse 33

A space - For some time.

They were let go in peace - An expression implying that they departed with the affectionate regard of the Christians to whom they had ministered, and with their highest wishes for their prosperity, 1 Corinthians 16:11; 2 John 1:10.

Unto the apostles - At Jerusalem. Many mss., however, instead of "unto the apostles," read "unto those who had sent them." The sense is not materially different.

Verse 34

Notwithstanding … - This whole verse is missing in many mss.; in the Syriac, Arabic, and Coptic versions; and is regarded as spurious by Mill, Griesbach, and by other critics. It was probably introduced by some early transcriber, who judged it necessary to complete the narrative. The Latin Vulgate reads, "It seemed good to Silas to remain, but Judas went alone to Jerusalem."

Verse 35

Paul also, and Barnabas, continued in Antioch - How long a time is unknown. It is probable that at this time the unhappy incident occurred between Paul and Peter which is recorded in Galatians 2:11-14.

Verse 36

Let us go again and visit our brethren - That is, in the churches which they had established in Asia Minor, Acts 13:14. This was a natural wish, and was an enterprise that might be attended with important advantages to those feeble churches.

Verse 37

And Barnabas determined - Greek: willed, or was disposed to (ἐβουλεύσαντο ebouleusanto).

John … - See the notes on Acts 12:12. He had been with them before as a traveling companion, Acts 12:25; Acts 13:5. He was the son of a sister of Barnabas Colossians 4:10, and it is probable that Barnabas‘ affection for his nephew was the main reason for inducing him to wish to take him with him in the journey.

Verse 38

But Paul thought not good - Did not think it proper. Because he could not confide in his perseverance with them in the toils and perils of their journey.

Who departed from them … - Acts 13:13. Why he did this is not known. It was evidently, however, for some cause which Paul did not consider satisfactory, and which, in his view, disqualified him from being their attendant again.

To the work - Of preaching the gospel.

Verse 39

And the contention was so sharp - The word used here παροξυσμός paroxusmosis that from which our word “paroxysm” is derived. It may denote “any excitement of mind,” and is used in a good sense in Hebrews 10:24. It here means, however, “a violent altercation” that resulted in their separation for a time, and in their engaging in different spheres of labor.

And sailed into Cyprus - This was the native place of Barnabas. See the notes on Acts 4:36.

Verse 40

Being recommended - Being commended by prayer to God. See notes on Acts 14:26.

Verse 41

Syria and Cilicia - These were countries lying near to each other, which Paul, in company with Barnabas, had before visited.

Confirming the churches - Strengthening them by instruction and exhortation. It has no reference to the rite of confirmation. See the notes on Acts 14:22.

In regard to this unhappy contention between Paul and Barnabas, and their separation from each other, we may make the following remarks:

(1) That no apology or vindication of it is offered by the sacred writer. It was undoubtedly improper and evil. It was a melancholy instance in which even apostles evinced an improper spirit, and engaged in improper strife.

(2) in this contention it is probable that Paul was, in the main, right. Barnabas seems to have been influenced by attachment to a relative; Paul sought a helper who would not shrink from duty and danger. It is clear that Paul had the sympathies and prayers of the church in his favor Acts 15:40, and it is more than probable that Barnabas departed without any such sympathy, Acts 15:39.

(3) there is reason to think that this contention was overruled for the furtherance of the gospel. They went to different places, and preached to different people. It often happens that the unhappy and wicked strifes of Christians are the means of exciting their mutual zeal, and of extending the gospel, and of establishing churches. But no thanks to their contention; nor is the guilt of their anger and strife mitigated by this.

(4) this difference was afterward reconciled, and Paul and Barnabas again became traveling companions, 1 Corinthians 9:6; Galatians 2:9.

(5) there is evidence that Paul also became reconciled to John Mark, Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24; 2 Timothy 4:11. How long this separation continued is not known; but perhaps in this journey with Barnabas John gave such evidence of his courage and zeal as induced Paul again to admit him to his confidence as a traveling companion, and as to become a profitable fellow-laborer. See 2 Timothy 4:11, “Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”

(6) this account proves that there was no collusion or agreement among the apostles to impose upon mankind. Had there been such an agreement, and had the books of the New Testament been an imposture, the apostles would have been represented as perfectly harmonious, and as united in all their views and efforts. What impostor would have thought of the device of representing the early friends of the Christian religion as divided, and contending, and separating from each other? Such a statement has an air of candor and honesty, and at the same time is apparently so much against the truth of the system, that no impostor would have thought of resorting to it.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Verse 1

Then came he - That is, Paul in company with Silas. Luke does not give us the history of Barnabas, but confines his narrative to the journey of Paul.

To Derbe and Lystra - See the notes on Acts 14:6.

And behold, a certain disciple named Timotheus - It was to this disciple that Paul afterward addressed the two epistles which bear his name. It is evident that he was a native of one of these places, but whether of Derbe or Lystra it is impossible to determine.

The son of a certain woman … - Her name was Eunice, 2 Timothy 1:5.

And believed - And was a Christian. It is stated also that her mother was a woman of distinguished Christian piety, 2 Timothy 1:5. It was not lawful for a Jew to marry a woman of another nation, or to give his daughter in marriage to a Gentile, Ezra 9:12. But it is probable that this law was not regarded very strictly by the Jews who lived in the midst of pagan nations. It is evident that Timothy, at this time, was very young; for when Paul besought him to abide at Ephesus, to take charge of the church there 1 Timothy 1:3, he addressed him then as a young man, 1 Timothy 4:12, "Let no man despise thy youth."

But his father was a Greek - Evidently, a man who had not been circumcised, for had he been Timothy would have been also.

Verse 2

Which - That is, Timothy. The connection requires us to understand this of him. Of the character of his father nothing is known.

Was well reported of - Was esteemed highly as a young man of piety and promise. Compare the notes on Acts 6:3. Compare 1 Timothy 5:10. Timothy had been religiously educated. He was carefully trained in the knowledge of the holy Scriptures, and was therefore the better qualified for his work, 2 Timothy 3:15.

Verse 3

Him would Paul have … - This was an instance of Paul's selecting young men of piety for the holy ministry. It shows:

(1) That he was disposed to look up and call forth the talent in the church that might be usefully employed. It is quite evident that Timothy would not have thought of this had it not been suggested by Paul. The same thing education societies are attempting now to accomplish.

(2) that Paul sought proper qualifications, and valued them. Those were:

(a)That he had a good reputation for piety, etc., Acts 16:2. This he demanded as an indispensable qualification for a minister of the gospel 1 Timothy 3:7, "Moreover he (a bishop) must have a good report of them which are without." Compare Acts 22:12.

(b)Paul esteemed him to be a young man of talents and prudence. His admitting him to a partnership in his labors, and his entrusting to him the affairs of the church at Ephesus, prove this.

(c)He had been carefully trained in the holy Scriptures. A foundation was thus laid for usefulness. And this qualification seems to have been deemed by Paul of indispensable value for the right discharge of his duties in this holy office.

And took and circumcised him - This was evidently done to avoid the opposition and reproaches of the Jews. It was a measure not binding in itself (compare Acts 15:1, Acts 15:28-29), but the neglect of which would expose to contention and opposition among the Jews, and greatly retard or destroy his usefulness. It was an act of expediency for the sake of peace, and was in accordance with Paul's uniform and avowed principle of conduct, 1 Corinthians 9:20, "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews." Compare Acts 21:23-26.

Verse 4

And as they went through the cities - The cities of Syria, Cilicia, etc.

They delivered them - Paul and Silas delivered to the Christians in those cities.

The decrees - τὰ δόγματα ta dogmataThe decrees in regard to the four things specified in Acts 15:20, Acts 15:29. The word translated "decrees" occurs in Luke 2:1, "A decree from Caesar Augustus"; in Acts 17:7 "The decrees of Caesar"; in Ephesians 2:15; and in Colossians 2:14. It properly means a law or edict of a king or legislature. In this instance it Was the decision of the council in a case submitted to it, and implied an obligation on the Christians to submit to that decision, since they had submitted the matter to them. The same principles, also, would be applicable everywhere, and the decision, therefore, at Jerusalem became conclusive. It is probable that a correct and attested copy of the letter Acts 15:23-29 would be sent to the various churches of the Gentiles.

To keep - To obey, or to observe.

That were ordained - Greek: that were adjudged or determined.

Verse 5

Established in the faith - Confirmed in the belief of the gospel The effect of the wise and conciliatory measure was to increase and strengthen the churches.

Verse 6

Throughout Phrygia - This was the largest province of Asia Minor. It had Bithynia north; Pisidia and Lycia south; Galatia and Cappadocia east; and Lydia and Mysia west.

And the region of Galatia - This province was directly east of Phrygia. The region was formerly conquered by the Gauls. They settled in it, and called it, after their own name, Galatia. The Gauls invaded the country at different times, and no less than three tribes or bodies of Gauls had possession of it. Many Jews were also settled there. It was from this cause that so many parties could be formed there, and that so much controversy would arise between the Jewish and Gentile converts. See the Epistle to the Galatians.

And were forbidden - Probably by a direct revelation. The reason of this was, doubtless, that it was the intention of God to extend the gospel further into the regions of Greece than would have been done if they had remained in Asia Minor. This prohibition was the means of the first introduction of the gospel into Europe.

In Asia - See the notes on Acts 2:9. This was doubtless the region of proconsular Asia. It was also called Ionia. Of this region Ephesus was the capital; and here were situated also the cities of Smyrna, Thyatira, Philadelphia, etc., within which the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 13 were established. Cicero speaks of proconsular Asia as containing the provinces of Phrygia, Mysia, Carla, and Lydia. In all this region the gospel was afterward preached with great success. But now a more important and a wider field was opened before Paul and Barnabas in the extensive country of Macedonia.

Verse 7

Mysia - This was a province of Asia Minor, having Propontis on the north, Bithynia on the east, Lydia on the south, and the Aegean Sea on the west.

They assayed - They endeavored; they attempted.

Into Bithynia - A province of Asia Minor lying east of Mysia.

Verse 8

Came down to Troas - This was a city of Phrygia or Mysia, on the Hellespont, between Troy north, and Assos south. Sometimes the name Troas or Troad, is used to denote the whole country of the Trojans, the province where the ancient city of Troy had stood. This region was much celebrated in the early periods of Grecian history. It was here that the events recorded in the Iliad of Homer are supposed to have occurred. The city of Troy has long since been completely destroyed. Troas is several times mentioned in the New Testament, 2 Corinthians 2:12; 2 Timothy 4:13; Acts 20:5.

Verse 9

And a vision - See the notes on Acts 9:10.

There stood a man - etc. The appearance of a man who was known to be of Macedonia, probably by his dress and language. Whether this was in a dream, or whether it was a representation made to the senses while awake, it is impossible to tell. The will of God was at different times made known in both these ways. Compare Matthew 2:12; note, Acts 10:3. Grotius supposes that this was the guardian angel of Macedonia, and refers for illustration to Daniel 10:12-13, Daniel 10:20-21. But there seems to be no foundation for this opinion.

Of Macedonia - This was an extensive country of Greece, having Thrace on the north, Thessaly south, Epirus west, and the Aegean Sea east. It is supposed that it was populated by Kittim, son of Javan, Genesis 10:4. The kingdom rose into celebrity chiefly under the reign of Philip and his son, Alexander the Great. It was the first region in Europe in which we have any record that the gospel was preached.

And help us - That is, by preaching the gospel. This was a call to preach the gospel in an extensive pagan land, amid many trials and dangers. To this call, notwithstanding all this prospect of danger, Paul and Silas cheerfully responded, and gave themselves to the work. Their conduct was thus an example to the church. From all portions of the earth a similar call is now coming to the churches. Openings of a similar character for the introduction of the gospel are presented in all lands. Appeals are coming from every quarter, and all that seems now necessary for the speedy conversion of the world is for the church to enter into these vast fields with the self-denial, the spirit, and the zeal which characterized the apostle Paul.

Verse 10

We endeavored - This is the first instance in which Luke refers to himself as being in company with Paul. It is hence probable that he joined Paul and Silas about this time, and it is evident that he attended Paul in his travels, as recorded throughout the remainder of the Acts.

Assuredly gathering - Being certainly convinced.

Verse 11

Loosing from Troas - Setting sail from this place.

To Samothracia - This was an island in the Aegean Sea not far from Thrace. It was populated by inhabitants from Samos and from Thrace, and hence called Samothracia. It was about 20 miles in circumference, and was an asylum for fugitives and criminals.

And the next day to Nepalese - This was a maritime city of Macedonia, near the borders of Thrace. It was about 10 miles from Philippi.

Verse 12

And from thence to Philippi - The former name of this city was Dathos. It was repaired and adorned by Philip, the father of Alexander the Great, and after him was called Philippi. It was famous for having been the place where several battles were fought during the civil wars of the Romans, and, among others, for the decisive battle between Brutus and Antony. At this place Brutus killed himself. To the church in this place Paul afterward wrote the Epistle which bears its name.

Which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia - This whole region had been conquered by the Romans under Paulus Aemilius. By him it was divided into four parts or provinces (Livy). The Syriac version renders it "a city of the first part of Macedonia," and there is a medal extant which also describes this region by this name. It has been proposed, therefore, to alter the Greek text in accordance with this, since it is known that Amphipolis was made the chief city by Paulus Aemilius. But it may be remarked that, although Amphipolis was the chief city in the time of Paulus Aemilius, it may have happened that in the lapse of 220 years from that time Philippi might have become the most extensive and splendid city. The Greek here may also mean simply that this was the first city to which they arrived in their travels.

And a colony - This is a Latin word, and means that this was a Roman colony. The word denotes "a city or province" which was planted or occupied by Roman citizens. It is a strong confirmation of the fact here stated by Luke, that Philippi had the rank and dignity of a Roman colony, as

coins are still extant, in which Philippi is distinctly referred to as a colony. Such coins exist from the reign of Augustus to the reign of Caracalla.

Certain days - Some days.

Verse 13

And on the sabbath - There is no doubt that in this city there were Jews; In the time of the apostles they were scattered extensively throughout the known world.

By a river side - What river this was is not known. It is known, however, that the Jews were accustomed to provide water, or to build their synagogues and oratories near water, for the convenience of the numerous washings before and during their religious services.

Where prayer - Where there was a place of prayer, or where prayer was commonly offered. The Greek will bear either, but the sense is the same. Places for prayer were erected by the Jews in the vicinity of cities and towns, and particularly where there were not Jewish families enough, or where they were forbidden by the magistrate to erect a synagogue. These proseuchoe, or places of prayer, were simple enclosures made of stones, in a grove or under a tree, where there would be a retired and convenient place for worship.

Was wont - Was accustomed to be offered, or where it was established by custom.

And spake unto the women … - This was probably before the regular service of the place commenced.

Verse 14

A seller of purple - Purple was a most valuable color, obtained usually from shellfish. It was chiefly worn by princes and by the rich, and the traffic in it might be very profitable. Compare the Isaiah 1:18 note; Luke 16:19 note.

The city of Thyatira - This was a city of Lydia, in Asia Minor, now called Akhisar. The art of dyeing was early cultivated in the neighborhood of Thyatira, as we learn from Homer (*Iliad*, iv. 141), and as is confirmed by inscriptions found in that city - a circumstance which may be referred to as confirming the veracity of the statements of Luke even in his casual allusions. Several of these inscriptions have been published. See the Life and Epistles of Paul, i. 295.

Which worshipped God - A religious woman, a proselyte. See the note at Acts 13:16.

Whose heart the Lord opened - See the note at Luke 24:45.

Verse 15

And when she was baptized - Apparently without any delay. Compare Acts 2:41; Acts 8:38. It was usual to be baptized immediately on believing.

And her household - Greek: her house ὁ οἶκος ἀυτῆς ho oikos autēsher family. No mention is made of their having believed, and the case is one that affords a strong presumptive proof that this was an instance of household or infant baptism. Because:

(1) Her believing is particularly mentioned.

(2) it is not intimated that they believed.

(3) it is manifestly implied that they were baptized because she believed. It was the offering of her family to the Lord. It is just such an account as would now be given of a household or family that were baptized upon the faith of the parent.

If ye have judged me to be faithful - If you deem me a Christian or a believer.

And she constrained us - She urged us. This was an instance of great hospitality, and also an evidence of her desire for further instruction in the doctrines of religion.

Verse 16

As we went to prayer - Greek: as we were going to the proseuche, ‹the place of prayer, Acts 16:13. Whether this was on the same day in which the conversion of Lydia occurred, or at another time, is not mentioned by the historian.

A certain damsel - A maid, a young woman.

Possessed with a spirit of divination - Greek: Python. See the margin. Python, or Pythios, was one of the names of Apollo, the Grecian god of the fine arts, of music, poetry, medicine, and eloquence. Of these he was esteemed to have been the inventor. He was reputed to be the third son of Jupiter and Latona. He had a celebrated temple and oracle at Delphi, which was resorted to from all parts of the world, and which was perhaps the only oracle that was in universal repute. The name Python is said to have been given him because, as soon as he was born, he destroyed with arrows a serpent of that name, that had been sent by Juno to persecute Latona; hence, his common name was the Pythian Apollo. He had temples on Mount

Parnassus, at Delphi, Delos, Claros, Tenedos, etc., and his worship was almost universal. In the celebrated oracle at Delphi, the priestess of Apollo pretended to be inspired; became violently agitated during the periods of pretended inspiration; and during those periods gave such responses to inquirers as were regarded as the oracles of the god. Others, it is probable, would also make pretensions to such inspiration; and the art of fortune-telling, or of jugglery, was extensively practiced, and was the source of much gain. See the notes on Acts 8:8-10. What was the cause of this extensive delusion in regard to the oracle at Delphi it is not necessary now to inquire. It is plain that Paul regarded this as a case of demoniacal possession, and treated it accordingly.

Her masters - Those in whose employ she was.

By soothsaying - Pretending to foretell future events.

Verse 17

The same followed Paul … - Why she did this, or under what presence, the sacred writer has not informed us. It may have been:

(1)That as she prophesied for gain, she supposed that Paul and Silas would reward her if she publicly proclaimed that they were the servants of God. Or,

(2)Because she was conscious that an evil spirit possessed her, and she feared that Paul and Silas would expel that spirit, and by proclaiming them to be the servants of God she hoped to conciliate their favor. Or,

(3)More probably it was because she saw evident tokens of their being sent from God, and that their doctrine would prevail; and by proclaiming this she hoped to acquire more authority, and a higher reputation for being herself inspired. Compare Mark 5:7.

Verse 18

But Paul, being grieved - Being molested, troubled, offended. Paul was grieved, probably:

(1)Because her presence was troublesome to him;

(2)Because it might be said that he was in alliance with her, and that his pretensions were just like hers;

(3)Because what she did was for the sake of gain, and was a base imposition;

(4)Because her state was one of bondage and delusion, and it was proper to free her from this demoniacal possession; and,

(5)Because the system under which she was acting was a part of a scheme of delusion and imposture, which had spread over a large portion of the pagan world, and which was then holding it in bondage.

Throughout the Roman empire the inspiration of the priestesses of Apollo was believed in, and temples were everywhere reared to perpetuate and celebrate the delusion. Against this extensive system of imposture and fraud Christianity must oppose itself; and this was a favorable instance to expose the delusion, and to show the power of the Christian religion over all the arts and powers of imposture. The mere fact that in a very few instances - of which this was one - they spoke the truth, did not make it improper for Paul to interpose. That fact would only tend to perpetuate the delusion, and to make his interposition more proper and necessary. The expulsion of the evil spirit would also afford a signal proof of the fact that the apostles were really from God a far better proof than her noisy and troublesome proclamation of it would furnish.

In the name of Jesus Christ - Or, by the authority of Jesus Christ. See the notes on Acts 3:6.

Verse 19

The hope of their gains was gone - It was this that troubled and enraged them. Instead of regarding the act as proof of divine power, they were intent only on their profits. Their indignation furnishes a remarkable illustration of the fixedness with which people will regard wealth; of the fact that the love of it will blind them to all the truths of religion, and all the proofs of the power and presence of God; and of the fact that any interposition of divine power that destroys their hopes of gain, fills them with wrath, and hatred, and complaining. Many a man has been opposed to God and his gospel because, if religion should be extensively prevalent, his hopes of gain would be gone. Many a slave-dealer, and many a trafficker in ardent spirits, and many a man engaged in other unlawful modes of gain, has been unwilling to abandon his employments simply because his hopes of gain would be destroyed. No small part of the opposition to the gospel arises from the fact that, if embraced, it would strike at so much of the

dishonorable employments of people, and make them honest and conscientious.

The market-place - The court or forum. The market-place was a place of concourse, and the courts were often held in or near those places.

The rulers - The term used here refers commonly to civil magistrates.

Verse 20

And brought them to the magistrates - To the military rulers στρατηγοῖς stratēgoisor praetors. Philippi was a Roman colony, and it is probable that the officers of the army exercised the double function of civil and military rulers.

Do exceedingly trouble our city - In what way they did it they specify in the next verse. The charge which they wished to substantiate was that of being disturbers of the public peace. All at once they became conscientious. They forgot the subject of their gains, and were greatly distressed about the violation of the laws. There is nothing that will make people more hypocritically conscientious than to denounce, and detect, and destroy their unlawful and dishonest practices. People who are thus exposed become suddenly filled with reverence for the Law or for religion, and they who have heretofore cared nothing for either become greatly alarmed lest the public peace should be disturbed. People slumber quietly in sin, and pursue their wicked gains; they hate or despise all law and all forms of religion; but the moment their course of life is attacked and exposed, they become full of zeal for laws that they Would not themselves hesitate to violate, and for the customs of religion which in their hearts they thoroughly despise. Worldly-minded people often thus complain that their neighborhoods are disturbed by revivals of religion; and the preaching of the truth, and the attacking of their vices, often arouses this hypocritical conscientiousness, and makes them alarmed for the laws, and for religion, and for order, which they at other times are the first to disturb and disregard.

Verse 21

And teach customs - The word "customs" here ἔθη ethērefers to "religious rites or forms of worship." See the notes on Acts 6:14. They meant to charge the apostles with introducing a new religion which was unauthorized by the Roman laws. This was a cunning and artful accusation. It is perfectly evident that they cared nothing either for the religion of the Romans or of the Jews. Nor were they really concerned about any change of religion. Paul had destroyed their hopes of gain; and as they Could not

prevent that except by securing his punishment or expulsion, and as they had no way of revenge except by endeavoring to excite indignation against him and Silas for violating the laws, they endeavored to convict thorn of such violation. This is one among many instances, Where wicked and unprincipled people will endeavor to make religion the means of promoting their own interest. If they can make money by it, they will become its professed friends or if they can annoy Christians, they will at once have remarkable zeal for the laws and for the purity of religion. Many a man opposes revivals of religion, and the real progress of evangelical piety from professed zeal for truth and order.

Which are not lawful for us to receive - There were laws of the Roman empire under which they might shield themselves in this charge, though it is evident that their zeal was; not because they loved the laws more, but because they loved Christianity less. Thus, Servius on Virgil, Aeneid, viii. 187, says, "care was taken among the Athenians and the Romans that no one should introduce new religions. It was on this account that Socrates was condemned, and the Chaldeans or Jews were banished from the city." Cicero ("DeLegibus," ii. 8) says, "No person shall have any separate gods, or new ones; nor shall he privately worship any strange gods, unless they be publicly allowed." Wetstein (in loco) says, "The Romans would indeed allow foreigners to worship their own god, but not unless it were done secretly, so that the Worship of foreign gods would not interfere with the allowed worship of the Romans, and so that occasion for dissension and controversy might be avoided. Neither was it lawful among the Romans to recommend a new religion to the citizens, contrary to what was confirmed and established by the public authority, and to call off the people from that. It was on this account that there was such a hatred of the Romans against the Jews" (Kuinoel). Tertullian says that "there was a decree that no god should be consecrated unless approved by the senate" (Grotius). See many other authorities quoted in Dr. Watson's "Apology (Defense) for Christianity."

To observe - To do.

Being Romans - Having the privileges of Roman citizens. See the notes on Acts 16:12.

Verse 22

And the multitude … - It is evident that this was done in a popular tumult, and without even the form of law. Of this Paul afterward justly

complained, as it was a violation of the privileges of a Roman citizen, and contrary to the laws. See the notes on Acts 16:37. It was one instance in which people affect great zeal for the honor of the Law, and yet are among the first to disregard it.

And the magistrates - Acts 16:20. They who should have been their protectors until they had had a fair trial according to law.

Rent off their clothes - This was always done when one was to be scourged or whipped. The criminal was usually stripped entirely naked. Livy says (ii. 5), "The lictors, being sent to inflict punishment, beat them with rods, being naked." Cicero, against Verres, says, "He commanded the man to be seized, and to be stripped naked in the midst of the forum, and to be bound, and rods to be brought."

And commanded to beat them - ῥαβδίζειν rabdizeinTo beat them with rods. This was done by lictors, whose office it was, and was a common mode of punishment among the Romans. Probably Paul alludes to this as one of the instances which occurred in his life of his being publicly scourged, when he says 2 Corinthians 11:25, "Thrice was I beaten with rods."

Verse 23

And when they had laid many stripes on them - The Jews were by law prohibited from inflicting more than 40 stripes, and usually inflicted but 39, 2 Corinthians 11:24. But there was no such law among the Romans. They were unrestricted in regard to the number of lashes, and probably inflicted many more. Perhaps Paul refers to this when he says 2 Corinthians 11:23, "In stripes above measure." that is, beyond the usual measure among the Jews, or beyond moderation.

They cast them into prison - The magistrates did this partly as a punishment, and partly with a view hereafter of taking vengeance on them more according to the forms of law.

Verse 24

Thrust them into the inner prison - Into the most retired and secure part of the prison. The cells in the interior of the prison would be regarded as more safe, being doubtless more protected, and the difficulty of escape would be greater.

And made their feet fast in the stocks - Greek: and made their feet secure to wood. The word "stocks," with us, denotes a machine made of two pieces of timber between which the feet of criminals are placed, and in

which they are thus made secure. The account here does not imply necessarily that they were secured precisely in this way, but that they were fastened or secured by the feet, probably by cords, to a piece or beam of wood, so that they could not escape. It is probable that the legs of the prisoners were bound to large pieces of wood which not only encumbered them, but which were so placed as to extend their feet to a considerable distance. In this condition it might be necessary for them to lie on their backs; and if this, as is probable, was on the cold ground, after their severe scourging, their sufferings must have been very great. Yet in the midst of this they sang praises to God.

Verse 25

And at midnight - Probably their painful posture, and the sufferings of their recent scourging, prevented their. sleeping. Yet, though they had no repose, they had a quiet conscience, and the supports of religion.

Prayed - Though they had suffered much, yet they had reason to apprehend more. They sought, therefore, the sustaining grace of God.

And sang praises - Compare the notes on Job 35:10. Nothing but religion would have enabled them to do this. They had endured much, but they had cause still for gratitude. The Christian may find more true joy in a prison than the monarch on his throne.

And the prisoners heard them - And doubtless with astonishment. Prayer and praise are not common in a prison. The song of rejoicing and the language of praise is not usual among men lying bound in a dungeon. From this narrative we may learn:

(1) That the Christian has the sources of his happiness within him. External circumstances cannot destroy his peace and joy. In a dungeon he may find as real happiness as on a throne. On the cold earth, beaten and bruised, he may be as truly happy as on a bed of down.

(2) the enemies of Christians cannot destroy their peace. They may incarcerate the body, but they cannot bind the spirit, They may exclude from earthly comforts, but they cannot shut them out from the presence and sustaining grace of God.

(3) we see the value of a good conscience. Nothing else can give peace; and amidst the wakeful hours of the night, whether in a dungeon or on a bed of sickness, it is of more value than all the wealth of the world.

(4) we see the inestimable worth of the religion of Christ. It fits for all scenes; supports in all trials; upholds by day or by night; inspires the soul with confidence in God; and puts into the lips the songs of praise and thanksgiving.

(5) we have here a sublime and holy scene which sin and infidelity could never furnish. What more sublime spectacle has the earth witnessed than that of scourged and incarcerated men, suffering from unjust and cruel inflictions, and anticipating still greater sorrows; yet, with a calm mind, a pure conscience, a holy joy, pouring forth their desires and praises at midnight, into the ear of the God who always hears prayer! The darkness, the stillness, the loneliness, all gave sublimity to the scene, and teach us how invaluable is the privilege of access to the throne of mercy in this suffering world.

Verse 26

And suddenly - While they were praying and singing.

A great earthquake - Matthew 28:2. An earthquake, in such circumstances, was regarded as a symbol of the presence of God, and as an answer to prayer. See the notes on Acts 4:31. The design of this was, doubtless, to furnish them proof of the presence and protection of God, and to provide a way for them to escape. It was one among the series of wonders by which the gospel was established, and the early Christians protected amidst their dangers.

And immediately all the doors were opened - An effect that would naturally follow from the violent concussion of the earthquake. Compare Acts 5:19.

Everyone‘s bands were loosed - This was evidently a miracle. Some have supposed that their chains were dissolved by electric fluid; but the narrative gives no account of any such fluid, even supposing such an effect to be possible. It was evidently a direct interposition of divine power. But for what purpose it was done is not recorded. Grotius supposes that it was that they might know that the apostles might be useful to them and to others, and that by them their spiritual bonds might be loosed. Probably the design was to impress all the prisoners with the conviction of the presence and power of God, and thus to prepare them to receive the message of life

from the lips of his servants Paul and Silas. They had just before heard them singing and praying; they were aware, doubtless, of the cause for which they were imprisoned; they saw evident tokens that they were the servants of the Most High, and under his protection; and their own minds were impressed and awed by the terrors of the earthquake, and by the fact of their own liberation. It renders this scene the more remarkable, that though the doors were opened, and the prisoners loosed, yet no one made any attempt to escape.

Verse 27

Would have killed himself - This was done in the midst of agitation and alarm. He supposed that the prisoners had fled. He presumed that their escape would be charged on him. It was customary to hold a jailor responsible for the safe keeping of prisoners, and to subject him to the punishment due them if he suffered them to escape. See Acts 12:19. It should be added that it was common and approved among the Greeks and Romans for a man to commit suicide when he was encompassed with dangers from which he could not escape. Thus, Cato was guilty of self-murder in Utica; and thus, at this very place - Philippi - Brutus and Cassius, and many of their friends, fell on their own swords, and ended their lives by suicide. The custom was thus sanctioned by the authority and example of the great; and we are not to wonder that the jailor, in a moment of alarm, should also attempt to destroy his own life. It is not one of the least benefits of Christianity that it has proclaimed the evil of self-murder, and has done so much to drive it from the world.

Verse 28

Do thyself no harm - This is the solemn command of religion in his case, and in all others. It enjoins upon people to do themselves no harm by self-murder, whether by the sword, the pistol, the halter; by intemperance, by lust, or by dissipation. In all cases, Christianity seeks the true welfare of man. In all cases, if it were obeyed, people would do themselves no harm. They would promote their own best interests here, and their eternal welfare hereafter.

Verse 29

Then he called for a light - Greek: lights, in the plural. Probably several torches were brought by his attendants.

And came trembling - Alarmed at the earthquake; amazed that the prisoners were still there; confounded at the calmness of Paul and Silas and

overwhelmed at the proof of the presence of God. Compare Jeremiah 5:22, "Fear ye not me, saith the Lord? will ye not tremble at my presence? etc."

And fell down - This was an act of profound reverence. See the notes on Matthew 2:11. It is evident that he regarded them as the favorites of God, and was con strained to recognize them as religious teachers.

Verse 30

And brought them out - From the prison.

Sirs - Greek: κύριοι kurioilords - an address of respect; a title usually given to masters or owners of slaves.

What must I do to be saved? - Never was a more important question asked than this. It is clear that by the question he did not refer to any danger to which he might be exposed from what had happened. For:

(1) The apostles evidently understood him as referring to his eternal salvation, as is manifest from their answer, since to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ would have no effect in saving him from any danger of punishment to which he might be exposed from what had occurred.

(2) he could scarcely now consider himself as exposed to punishment by the Romans. The prisoners were all safe; none had escaped, or showed any disposition to escape; and besides, for the earthquake and its effects he could not be held responsible. It is not improbable that there was much confusion in his mind. There would be a rush of many thoughts; a state of agitation, alarm, and fear; and in view of all, he would naturally ask those whom he now saw to be men sent by God, and under his protection, what he should do to obtain the favor of that great Being under whose protection he saw that they manifestly were. Perhaps the following thoughts might have tended to produce this state of agitation and alarm:

(1) They had been designated by the Pythoness Acts 16:17 as religious teachers sent from God, and appointed to "show the way of salvation," and in her testimony he might have been disposed to put confidence, or it might now be brought fresh to his recollection.

(2) he manifestly saw that they were under the protection of God. A remarkable interposition - an earthquake - an event which all the pagan regarded as ominous of the presence of the divinity - had showed this.

(3) the guilt of their imprisonment might rush upon his mind; and he might suppose that he, the agent of the imprisonment of the servants of God, would be exposed to his displeasure.

(4) his guilt in attempting his own life might overwhelm him with alarm.

(5) the whole scene was suited to show him the need of the protection and friendship of the God that had thus interposed. In this state of agitation and alarm, the apostles directed him to the only source of peace and safety - the blood of the atonement. The feelings of an awakened sinner are often strikingly similar to those of this jailor. He is agitated, alarmed, and fearful; he sees that he is a sinner, and trembles; the sins of his life rush over his memory, and fill him with deep anxiety, and he inquires what he must do to be saved. Often too, as here, the providence of God is the means of awakening the sinner, and of leading to this inquiry. Some alarming dispensation convinces him that God is near, and that the soul is in danger. The loss of health, or property, or of a friend, may thus alarm the soul; the ravages of the pestilence, or any fearful judgment, may arrest the attention, and lead to the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" Reader, have you ever made this inquiry? Have you ever, like the pagan jailor at Philippi, seen yourself to be a lost sinner, and been willing to ask the way to life?

In this narrative we see the contrast which exists in periods of distress and alarm between Christians and sinners. The guilty jailor was all agitation, fear, distress, and terror; the apostles, all peace, calmness, joy. The one was filled with thoughts of self-murder; the others, intent on saving life and doing good. This difference is to be traced to religion. It was confidence in God that gave peace to them; it was the want of what led to agitation and alarm in him It is so still. In the trying scenes of this life the same difference is seen. In bereavement, in sickness, in times of pestilence, in death, it is still so. The Christian is calm; the sinner is agitated and alarmed. The Christian can pass through such scenes with peace and joy; to the sinner, they are scenes of terror and of dread. And thus it will be beyond the grave. In the morning of the resurrection, the Christian will rise with joy and triumph; the sinner, with fear and horror. And thus at the judgment seat. Calm and serene, the saint shall witness the solemnities of that day, and triumphantly hail the Judge as his friend; fearful and trembling, the sinner

shall look on these solemnities with a soul filled with horror as he listens to the sentence that consigns him to eternal woe! With what solicitude, then, should we seek, without delay, an interest in that religion which alone can give peace to the soul!

Verse 31

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ - This was a simple, a plain, and an effectual direction. They did not direct him to use the means of grace, to pray, or to continue to seek for salvation. They did not advise him to delay, or to wait for the mercy of God. They told him to believe at once; to commit his agitated, and guilty, and troubled spirit to the Saviour, with the assurance that he should find peace. They presumed that he would understand what it was to believe, and they commanded him to do the thing. And this was the uniform direction which the early preachers gave to those inquiring the way to life. See the notes on Matthew 16:16. Compare the notes on Acts 8:22.

And thy house - And thy family. That is, the same salvation is equally adapted to, and offered to your family. It does not mean that his family would be saved simply by his believing, but that the offers had reference to them as well as to himself; that they might be saved as well as he. His attention was thus called at once, as every man‘s should be, to his family. He was reminded that they needed salvation, and he was presented with the assurance that they might unite with him in the peace and joy of redeeming mercy. Compare the notes on Acts 2:39. It may be implied here that the faith of a father may be expected to be the means of the salvation of his family. It often is so in fact; but the direct meaning is, that salvation was offered to his family as well as himself, implying that if they believed they should also be saved.

Verse 32

To all that were in his house - Old and young. They instructed them in the doctrines of religion, and doubtless in the nature of the ordinances of the gospel, and then baptized the entire family.

Verse 33

And he took them - To a convenient place for washing. It is evident from this that, though the apostles had the gift of miracles, they did not exercise it in regard to their own sufferings or to heal their own wounds. They restored others to health, not themselves.

And washed their stripes - The wounds which had been inflicted by the severe scourging which they had received the night before. We have here a remarkable instance of the effect of religion in producing humanity and tenderness. This same man, a few hours before, had thrust them into the inner prison, and made them fast in the stocks. He evidently had then no concern about their stripes or their wounds. But no sooner was he converted than one of his first acts was an act of humanity. He saw them suffering; he pitied them, and hastened to minister to them and to heal their wounds. Until the time of Christianity there never had been a hospital or an almshouse. Nearly all the hospitals for the sick since have been reared by Christians. They who are most ready to minister to the sick and dying are Christians. They who are most willing to encounter the pestilential damps of dungeons to aid the prisoner are, like Howard, Christians. Who ever saw an infidel attending a dying bed if he could help it? and where has infidelity ever reared a hospital or an almshouse, or made provision for the widow and the fatherless? Often one of the most striking changes that occurs in conversion is seen in the disposition to be kind and humane to the suffering. Compare James 1:27.

And was baptized - This was done straightway; that is, immediately. As it is altogether improbable that either in his house or in the prison there would be water sufficient for immersing them, there is every reason to suppose that this was performed in some other mode. All the circumstances lead us to suppose that it was not by immersion. It was at the dead of night; in a prison; amidst much agitation; and was evidently performed in haste.

Verse 34

He set meat before them - Food. Greek: "he placed a table." The word "meat" formerly meant "food" of all kinds.

And rejoiced - This was the effect of believing. Religion produces joy. See the notes on Acts 8:8. He was free from danger and alarm; he had evidence that his sins were forgiven, and that he was now the friend of God. The agitating and alarming scenes of the night had passed away; the prisoners were safe; and religion, with its peace, and pardon, and rejoicings, had visited himself and his family. What a change to be produced in one night! What a difference between the family when Paul was thrust into prison, and when he was brought out and received as an honored guest at the very table of the renovated jailor! Such a change would Christianity

produce in every family, and such joy would it diffuse through every household.

With all his house - With all his family. Whether they believed before they were baptized or after is not declared. But the whole narrative would lead us to suppose that, as soon as the jailor believed, he and all his family were baptized. It is subsequently added that they believed also. The joy arose from the fact that they all believed the gospel; the baptism appears to have been performed on account of the faith of the head of the family.

Verse 35

And when it was day … - It is evident from the narrative that it was not contemplated at first to release them so soon, Acts 16:22-24. But it is not known what produced this change of purpose in the magistrates. It is probable, however, that they had been brought to reflection, somewhat as the jailor had, by the earthquake, and that their consciences had been troubled by the fact, that in order to please the multitude, they had caused strangers to be beaten and imprisoned without trial and contrary to the Roman laws. An earthquake is always suited to alarm the guilty; and among the Romans it was regarded as an omen of the anger of the gods, and was therefore adapted to produce agitation and remorse. The agitation and alarm of the magistrates were shown by the fact that they sent the officers as soon as it was day. The judgments of God are eminently suited to alarm sinners. Two ancient mss. read this, "The magistrates who were alarmed by the earthquake, sent, etc." (Doddridge). Whether this reading be genuine or not, it doubtless expresses the true cause of their sending to release the apostles.

The serjeants - ῥαβδούχους rabdouchousLiterally, those having rods; the lictors. These were public officers who walked before magistrates with the emblems of authority. In Rome they bore before the senators the fasces; that is, a bundle of rods with an axe in its center, as a symbol of office. They performed somewhat the same office as a beadle in England, or as a constable in our courts (America).

Verse 37

They have beaten us openly uncondemned - There are three aggravating circumstances mentioned, of which Paul complains:

(1) That they had been beaten contrary to the Roman laws.

(2) that it had been public; the disgrace had been in the presence of the people, and the reparation ought to be as public.

(3) that it had been done without a trial, and while they were uncondemned, and therefore the magistrates ought themselves to come and release them, and thus publicly acknowledge their error. Paul knew the privileges of a Roman citizen, and at proper times, when the interests of justice and religion required it, he did not hesitate to assert them. In all this, he understood and accorded with the Roman laws. The Valerian law declared that if a citizen appealed from the magistrate to the people, it should not be lawful for magistrate to beat him with rods, or to behead him (Plutarch, Life of P. Valerius Publicola; Livy, ii. 8). By the Porcian law it was expressly forbidden that a citizen should be beaten (Livy, iv. 9). Cicero says that the body of every Roman citizen was inviolable. "The Porcian law," he adds, "has removed the rod from the body of every Roman citizen." And in his celebrated oration against Verres, he says, A Roman citizen was beaten with rods in the forum, O judges; where, in the meantime, no groan, no other voice of this unhappy man, was heard except the cry, ‹I am a Roman citizen‘! Take away this hope," he says, "take away this defense from the Roman citizens, let there be no protection in the cry I am a Roman citizen, and the praetor can with impunity inflict any punishment on him who declares himself a citizen of Rome, etc."

Being Romans - Being Romans, or having the privilege of Roman citizens. They were born Jews, but they claimed that they were Roman citizens, and had a right to the privileges of citizenship. On the ground of this claim, and the reason why Paul claimed to be a Roman citizen, see the notes on Acts 22:28.

Privily - Privately. The release should be as public as the unjust act of imprisonment. As they have publicly attempted to disgrace us, so they should as publicly acquit us. This was a matter of mere justice; and as it was of great importance to their character and success, they insisted on it.

Nay, verily; but let them come … - It was proper that they should be required to do this:

(1) Because they had been illegally imprisoned, and the injustice of the magistrates should be acknowledged.

(2) because the Roman laws had been violated, and the majesty of the Roman people insulted, and honor should be done to the laws.

(3) because injustice had been done to Paul and Silas, and they had a right to demand just treatment and protection.

(4) because such a public act on the part of the magistrates would strengthen the young converts, and show them that the apostles were not guilty of a violation of the laws.

(5) because it would tend to the honor and to the furtherance of religion. It would be a public acknowledgement of their innocence, and would go far toward lending to them the sanction of the laws as religious teachers. We may learn from this also:

(1) That though Christianity requires meekness in the reception of injuries, yet that there are occasions on which Christians may insist on their rights according to the laws. Compare John 18:23.

(2) that this is to be done particularly where the honor of religion is concerned, and where by it the gospel will be promoted. A Christian may bear much as a man in a private capacity, and may submit, without any effort to seek reparation; but where the honor of the gospel is concerned; where submission, without any effort to obtain justice, might be followed by disgrace to the cause of religion, a higher obligation may require him to seek a vindication of his character, and to claim the protection of the laws. His name, and character, and influence belong to the church. The laws are designed as a protection to an injured name, or of violated property and rights, and of an endangered life. And when that protection can be had only by an appeal to the laws, such an appeal, as in the case of Paul and Silas, is neither vindictive nor improper. My private interests I may sacrifice, if I choose; my public name, and character, and principles belong to the church and the world, and the laws, if necessary, may be called in for their protection.

Verse 38

They feared when they heard … - They were apprehensive of punishment for having imprisoned them in violation of the laws of the empire. To punish unjustly a Roman citizen was deemed an offence to the majesty of the Roman people, and was severely punished by the laws.

Dionysius Hal. (*Ant. Rom.*, ii.) says, "The punishment appointed for those who abrogated or transgressed the Valerian law was death, and the confiscation of his property." The emperor Claudius deprived the inhabitants of Rhodes of freedom for having crucified some Roman citizens (*Dio Cass.*, lib. 60). See Kuinoel and Grotius.

Verse 39

And they came and besought them - A most humiliating act for Roman magistrates, but in this case it was unavoidable. The apostles had them completely in their power, and could easily effect their disgrace and ruin. Probably they besought them by declaring them innocent; by affirming that they were ignorant that they were Roman citizens, etc.

And desired them to depart … - Probably:

(1) To save their own character, and be secure from their taking any further steps to convict the magistrates of violating the laws; and,

(2) To evade any further popular tumult on their account. This advice Paul and Silas saw fit to comply with, after they had seen and comforted the brethren, Acts 16:40. They had accomplished their main purpose in going to Philippi; they had preached the gospel; they had laid the foundation of a flourishing church (compare the Epistle to the Philippians); and they were now prepared to prosecute the purpose of their agency into surrounding regions. Thus, the opposition of the people and the magistrates at Philippi was the occasion of the founding of the church there, and thus their unkind and inhospitable request that they should leave them was the means of the extension of the gospel into adjacent regions.

sa40

Verse 40

They comforted them - They exhorted them, and encouraged them to persevere, notwithstanding the opposition and persecution which they might meet with.

And departed - That is, Paul and Silas departed. It would appear probable that Luke and Timothy remained in Philippi, or, at least, did not attend Paul and Silas. For Luke, who, in Acts 16:10, uses the first person, and speaks of himself as with Paul and Silas, speaks of them now in the third person, implying that he was not with them until Paul had arrived at Troas, where Luke joined him from Philippi, Acts 20:5-6. In Acts 17:14, also, Timothy is mentioned as being at Berea in company with Silas, from

which it appears that he did not accompany Paul and Silas to Thessalonica. Compare Acts 17:1, Acts 17:4. Paul and Silas, when they departed from Philippi, went to Thessalonica, Acts 17:1.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Verse 1

Amphipolis - This was the capital of the eastern province of Macedonia. It was originally a colony of the Athenians, but under the Romans it was made the capital of that part of Macedonia. It was near to Thrace, and was situated not far from the mouth of the river Strymon, which flowed around the city, and thus occasioned its name, around the city. The distances laid down in the Itineraries in regard to these places are as follows: Philippi to Amphipolis, 33 miles; Amphipolis to Apollonia, 30 miles; Apollonia to Thessalonica, 37 miles. "These distances are evidently such as might have been traversed each in one day; and since nothing is said of any delay on the road, but everything to imply that the journey was rapid, we conclude (unless, indeed, their recent sufferings made rapid traveling impossible) that Paul and Silas rested one night at each of the intermediate places, and thus our notice of their journey is divided into three parts. The position of Amphipolis is one of the most important in Greece. It stands in a pass which Traverses the mountains bordering the Strymonic Gulf, and it commands the only easy communication from the coast of that gulf into the great Macedonian plains, which extend, for 60 miles, from beyond Meleniko to Philippi. The ancient name of the place was ‹Nine Ways,' from the great number of Thracian and Macedonian roads which met at this point. The Athenians saw the importance of the position, and established a colony there, which they called Amphipolis, because the river surrounded it.

And Apollonia - This city was situated between Amphipolis and Thessalonica, and was formerly much celebrated for its trade.

They came to Thessalonica - This was a seaport of the second part of Macedonia. It is situated at the head of the Bay Thermaicus. It was made the capital of the second division of Macedonia by Aemilius Paulus, when he divided the country into four districts. It was formerly called Therma, but afterward received the name of Thessalonica, either from Cassander, in honor of his wife Thessalonica, the daughter of Philip, or in honor of a victory which Philip obtained over the armies of Thessaly. It was inhabited by Greeks, Romans, and Jews. It is now called Saloniki, and, from its situation, must always be a place of commercial importance. It is situated on the inner bend of the Thermaic Gulf, halfway between the Adriatic and

the Hellespont, on the sea margin of a vast plain, watered by several rivers, and was evidently designed for a commercial emporium. It has a population at present of 60,000 or 70,000, about half of whom are Jews. They are said to have 36 synagogues, "none of them remarkable for their neatness or elegance of style." In this place a church was collected, to which Paul afterward addressed the two epistles to the Thessalonians.

Where was a synagogue - Greek: where was the synagogue (ἡ συναγωγὴ hē sunagōgē) of the Jews. It has been remarked by Grotius and Kuinoel that the article used here is emphatic, and denotes that there was probably no synagogue at Amphipolis and Apollonia. This was the reason why they passed through those places without making any delay.

Verse 2

His manner was - His custom was to attend on the worship of the synagogue, and to preach the gospel to his countrymen first, Acts 9:20; Acts 13:5, Acts 13:14.

Reasoned with them - Discoursed to them, or attempted to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. The word used here (διελέγετο dielegeto) often means no more than "to make a public address or discourse." See the notes on Acts 24:25.

Out of the scriptures - By many critics this is connected with the following verse, "Opening and alleging from the scriptures that Christ must needs have suffered, etc." The sense is not varied materially by the change.

Verse 3

Opening - διανοίγων dianoigōnSee Luke 24:32. The word means to explain or to unfold. It is usually applied to what is shut, as the eye, etc. Then it means to explain what is concealed or obscure. It means here that he explained the Scriptures in their true sense.

And alleging - παρατιθέμενος paratithemenosLaying down the proposition; that is, maintaining that it must be so.

That Christ must needs have suffered - That there was a fitness and necessity in his dying, as Jesus of Nazareth had done. The sense of this will be better seen by retaining the word "Messiah." "That there was a fitness or necessity that the Messiah expected by the Jews, and predicted in their Scriptures, should suffer." This point the Jews were unwilling to admit; but it was essential to his argument in proving that Jesus was the Messiah to show that it was foretold that he should die for the sins of people. On the necessity of this, see the notes on Luke 24:26-27.

Have suffered - That he should die.

And that this Jesus - And that this Jesus of Nazareth, who has thus suffered and risen, whom, said he, I preach to you, is the Messiah.

The arguments by which Paul probably proved that Jesus was the Messiah were:

(1) That he corresponded with the prophecies respecting him in the following particulars:

(a)He was born at Bethlehem, Micah 5:2.

(b)He was of the tribe of Judah, Genesis 49:10.

(c)He was descended from Jesse, and of the royal line of David, Isaiah 11:1, Isaiah 11:10.

(d)He came at the time predicted, Daniel 9:24-27.

(e)His appearance, character, work, etc., corresponded with the predictions, Isaiah 53:1-12.

(2) his miracles proved that he was the Messiah, for he professed to be, and God would not work a miracle to confirm the claims of an impostor.

(3) for the same reason, his resurrection from the dead proved that he was the Messiah.

Verse 4

And consorted - Literally, had their lot with Paul and Silas; that is, they united themselves to them, and became their disciples. The word is commonly applied to those who are partakers of an inheritance.

And of the devout Greeks - Religious Greeks; or, of those who worshipped God. Those are denoted who had renounced the worship of idols, and who attended on the worship of the synagogue, but who were not fully admitted to the privileges of Jewish proselytes. They were called, by the Jews, proselytes of the gate.

And of the chief women - See the notes on Acts 13:50.

Verse 5

Moved with envy - That they made so many converts, and met with such success.

Certain lewd fellows of the baser sort - This is an unhappy translation. The word "lewd" is not in the original. The Greek is, "And having taken

certain wicked people of those who were about the forum," or market-place. The forum, or market-place, was the place where the idle assembled, and where those were gathered together that wished to be employed, Matthew 20:3. Many of these would be of abandoned character, the idle, the dissipated, and the worthless, and, therefore, just the materials for a mob. It does not appear that they felt any particular interest in the subject; but they were, like other mobs, easily excited, and urged on to any acts of violence. The pretence on which the mob was excited was, that they had everywhere produced disturbance, and that they violated the laws of the Roman emperor, Acts 17:6-7. It may be observed, however, that a mob usually regards very little the cause in which they are engaged. They may be roused either for or against religion, and become as full of zeal for the insulted honor of religion as against it. The profane, the worthless, and the abandoned thus often become violently enraged for the honor of religion, and full of indignation and tumult against those who are accused of violating public peace and order.

The house of Jason - Where Paul and Silas were, Acts 17:7. Jason appears to have been a relative of Paul, and for this reason it was probable that he lodged with him, Romans 16:21.

Verse 6

These that have turned the world upside down - That have excited commotion and disturbance in other places. The charge has been often brought against the gospel that it has been the occasion of confusion and disorder.

Verse 7

Whom Jason hath received - Has received into his house, and entertained kindly.

These all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar - The charge against them was that of sedition and rebellion against the Roman emperor. Grotius on this verse remarks that the Roman people, and after them the emperors, would not permit the name of king to be mentioned in any of the vanquished provinces except by their permission.

Saying that there is another king - This was probably a charge of mere malignity. They probably understood that when the apostles spoke of Jesus as a king, they did not do it as of a temporal prince. But it was easy to pervert their words, and to give plausibility to the accusation. The same thing had occurred in regard to the Lord Jesus himself, Luke 23:2.

Verse 8

And they troubled the people - They excited the people to commotion and alarm. The rulers feared the tumult that was excited, and the people feared the Romans, when they heard the charge that there were rebels against the government in their city. It does not appear that there was a disposition in the rulers or the people to persecute the apostles; but they were excited and alarmed by the representations of the Jews, and by the mob that they had collected.

Verse 9

And when they had taken security of Jason - This is an expression taken from courts, and means that Jason and the other gave satisfaction to the magistrates for the good conduct of Paul and Silas, or became responsible for it. Whether it was by depositing a sum of money, and by thus giving bail, is not quite clear. The sense is, that they did it in accordance with the Roman usages, and gave sufficient security for the good conduct of Paul and Silas. Heuman supposes that the pledge given was that they should leave the city. Michaelis thinks that they gave a pledge that they would no more harbor them; but if they returned again to them, they would deliver them to the magistrates.

And of the other - The other brethren Acts 17:6 who had been drawn to the rulers of the city.

Verse 10

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas - Compare Acts 9:25. They did this for their safety. Yet this was not done until the gospel had taken deep root in Thessalonica. Having preached there, and laid the foundation of a church; having thus accomplished the purpose for which they went there, they prepared to leave the city.

Unto Berea - This was a city of Macedonia, near Mount Cithanes. "Bercea is on the eastern slope of the Olympian range, and commands an extensive view of the plain which is watered by the Haliacmon and Axius. It has many natural advantages, and is now considered one of the most agreeable towns in Rumili. Plane trees spread a grateful shade over its gardens. Streams of water are in every street. Its ancient name is said to have been derived from the abundance of its waters; and the name still survives in the modern Verria, or Kara-Verria. It is situated o the left of the Haliacmon, about 5 miles from the point where that river breaks through an immense rocky ravine from the mountains to the plain. A few insignificant

ruins of the Greek and Roman periods may yet be noticed. It still boasts of 18,000 or 20,000 inhabitants, and is placed in the second rank of the cities of European Turkey" - Life and Epistles of Paul.

Verse 11

These were more noble - εὐγενέστεροι eugenesteroiThis literally means more noble by birth; descended from more illustrious ancestors. But here the word is used to denote a quality of mind and heart. They were more generous, liberal, and noble in their feelings; more disposed to inquire candidly into the truth of the doctrines advanced by Paul and Silas. It is always proof of a noble, liberal, and ingenuous disposition to be willing to examine into the truth of any doctrine presented. The writer refers here particularly to the Jews.

In that - Because.

They received the word … - They listened attentively and respectfully to the gospel. They did not reject and spurn it as unworthy of examination. This is the first particular in which they were more noble than those in Thessalonica.

And searched the scriptures - That is, the Old Testament. See the notes on John 5:39. The apostles always affirmed that the doctrines which they maintained respecting the Messiah were in accordance with the Jewish scriptures. The Bereans made diligent and earnest inquiry in respect to this, and were willing to ascertain the truth.

Daily - Not only on the Sabbath, and in the synagogue, but they made it a daily employment. It is evident from this that they had the Scriptures; and this is one proof that Jewish families would, if possible, obtain the oracles of God.

Whether those things were so - Whether the doctrines stated by Paul and Silas were in accordance with the Scriptures. The Old Testament they received as the standard of truth, and whatever could be shown to be in accordance with that, they received. On this verse we may remark:

(1) That it is proof of true nobleness and liberality of mind to be willing to examine the proofs of the truth of religion. What the friends of Christianity have had most cause to lament and regret is, that so many are unwilling to examine its claims; that they spurn it as unworthy of serious thought, and condemn it without hearing.

(2) the Scriptures should be examined daily. If we wish to arrive at the truth, they should be the object of constant study. That man has very little reason to expect that he will grow in knowledge and grace who does not peruse, with candor and with prayer, a portion of the Bible every day.

(3) the constant searching of the Scriptures is the best way to keep the mind from error. He who does not do it daily may expect to "be carried about with every wind of doctrine," and to have no settled opinions.

(4) the preaching of ministers should be examined by the Scriptures. Their doctrines are of no value unless they accord with the Bible. Every preacher should expect his doctrines to be examined in this way, and to be rejected if they are not in accordance with the Word of God. The church, in proportion to its increase in purity and knowledge, will feel this more and more; and it is an indication of advance in piety when people are increasingly disposed to examine everything by the Bible. How immensely important, then, is it that the young should be trained up to diligent habits of searching the Word of God. And how momentous is the obligation of parents, and of Sunday school teachers, to inculcate just views of the interpretation of the Bible, and to form the habits of the rising generation, so that they shall be disposed and enabled to examine every doctrine by the sacred oracles. The purity of the church depends on the extension of the spirit of the nobleminded Bereans, and that spirit is to be extended in a very considerable degree by the instrumentality of Sunday schools.

Verse 12

Therefore many of them believed - As the result of their examination. This result will commonly follow when people search the Scriptures. Much is gained when people can be induced to examine the Bible. We may commonly take it for granted that such an examination will result in their conviction of the truth. The most prominent and usual cause of infidelity is found in the fact that people will not investigate the Scriptures. Many infidels have confessed that they had never carefully read the New Testament. Thomas Paine confessed that he wrote the first part of the *Age of Reason* without having a Bible at hand, and without its being possible to procure one where he then was (in Paris). "I had," says he, "neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, though I was writing against both; nor could I

procure an" (*Age of Reason*, p. 65, ed. 1831; also p. 33). None, it may safely be affirmed, have ever read the Scriptures with candor, and with the true spirit of prayer, who have not been convinced of the truth of Christianity, and been brought to submit their souls to its influence and its consolations. The great thing which Christians desire their fellow-men to do is candidly to search the Bible, and when this is done they confidently expect that they will be truly converted to God.

Of honourable women - See the notes on Acts 13:50.

Verse 13

Stirred up the people - The word used here σαλεύειν saleueindenotes properly "to agitate" or "excite," as the waves of the sea are agitated by the wind. It is with great beauty used to denote the "agitation and excitement of a popular tumult," from its resemblance to the troubled waves of the ocean. The figure is often employed by the Classic writers, and also occurs in the Scriptures. See Psalm 65:7; Isaiah 17:12-13; Jeremiah 46:7-8.

Verse 14

The brethren - Those who were Christians.

Sent away Paul - In order to secure his safety. A similar thing had been done in Thessalonica, Acts 17:10. The tumult was great; and there was no doubt, such was the hostility of the Jews, that the life of Paul would be endangered, and they there fore resolved to secure his safety.

As it were - Rather, "even to the sea," for that is its signification. It does not imply that there was any feint or sleight in the case, as if they intended to deceive their pursuers. They took him to the seacoast, not far from Berea, and from that place he probably went by sea to Athens.

Verse 15

Unto Athens - This was the first visit of Paul to this celebrated city; and perhaps the first visit of a Christian minister. His success in this city, for some cause, was not great, but his preaching was attended with the conversion of some individuals. See Acts 17:34. Athens was the most celebrated city of Greece, and was distinguished for the military talents, the learning, the eloquence, and the politeness of its inhabitants. It was founded by Cecrops and an Egyptian colony about 1556 years before the Christian era. It was called "Athens" in honor of Minerva, who was chiefly worshipped there, and to whom the city was dedicated. The city, at first, was built on a rock in the midst of a spacious plain; but in process of time the whole plain was covered with buildings, which were called the lower

city. No city of Greece, or of the ancient world, was so much distinguished for philosophy, learning, and the arts.

The most celebrated warriors, poets, statesmen, and philosophers were either born or flourished there. The most celebrated models of architecture and statuary were there; and for ages it held its preeminence in civilization, arts, and arms. The city still exists, though it has been often subject to the calamities of war, to a change of masters, and to the mouldering hand of time. It was twice burnt by the Persians; destroyed by Philip II of Macedon; again by Sylla; was plundered by Tiberius; desolated by the Goths in the reign of Claudius; and the whole territory ravaged and ruined by Alarie. From the reign of Justinian to the thirteenth century the city remained in obscurity, though it continued to be a town at the head of a small state. It was seized by Omar, general of Muhammed the Great, in 1455; was sacked by the Venetians in 1464; and was taken by the Turks again in 1688. In 1812 the population was 12,000; but it has since been desolated by the sanguinary contests between the Turks and the Greeks, and left almost a mass of ruins. It is now free; and efforts are making by Christians to restore it to its former elevation in learning and importance, and to impart to it the blessings of the Christian religion. In the revolutions of ages it has been ordered that people should bear the torch of learning to Athens from a land unknown to its ancient philosophers, and convey the blessings of civilization to them by that gospel which in the time of Paul they rejected and despised.

And receiving a commandment - They who accompanied Paul received his commands to Silas and Timothy.

With all speed - As soon as possible. Perhaps Paul expected much labor and success in Athens, and was therefore desirous of securing their aid with him in his work.

Verse 16

Now while Paul waited - How long he was there is not intimated; but doubtless some time would elapse before they could arrive. In the meantime Paul had ample opportunity to observe the state of the city.

His spirit was stirred in him - His mind was greatly excited. The word used here (παρωξύνετο parōxuneto) denotes "any excitement, agitation, or paroxysm of mind," 1 Corinthians 13:5. It here means that the mind of Paul was greatly concerned, or agitated, doubtless with pity and distress at their folly and danger.

The city wholly given to idolatry - Greek: κατείδωλον kateidōlonIt is well translated in the margin, "or full of idols." The word is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. That this was the condition of the city is abundantly testified by profane writers. Thus, Pausanias (in Attic. 1 Corinthians 1:24) says, "the Athenians greatly surpassed others in their zeal for religion." Lucian (t. i. Prometh. p. 180) says of the city of Athens, "On every side there are altars, victims, temples, and festivals." Livy (45,27) says that Athens "was full of the images of gods and men, adorned with every variety of material, and with all the skill of art." And Petronius (Sat. xvii.) says humorously of the city, that "it was easier to find a god than a man there." See Kuinoel. In this verse we may see how a splendid idolatrous city will strike a pious mind. Athens then had more that was splendid in architecture, more that was brilliant in science, and more that was beautiful in the arts, than any other city of the world; perhaps more than all the rest of the world united.

Yet there is no account that the mind of Paul was filled with admiration; there is no record that he spent his time in examining the works of art; there is no evidence that he forgot his high purpose in an idle and useless contemplation of temples and statuary. His was a Christian mind; and he contemplated all this with a Christian heart. That heart was deeply affected in view of the amazing guilt of a people who were ignorant of the true God, who had filled their city with idols reared to the honor of imaginary divinities, and who, in the midst of all this splendor and luxury, were going down to destruction. So should every pious man feel who treads the streets of a splendid and guilty city. The Christian will not despise the productions of art, but he will feel, deeply feel, for the unhappy condition of those who, amidst wealth, and splendor, and outward adoring, are withholding their affections from the living God, and who are going unredeemed to eternal woe. Happy would it be if every Christian traveler who visits cities of wealth and splendor would, like Paul, be affected in view of their crimes and dangers; stud happy if, like him, people could cease their unbounded admiration of magnificence and splendor in temples, and palaces, and statuary, to regard the condition of mind, not perishable like marble of the soul, more magnificent even in its ruins than all the works of Phidias or Praxiteles.

Verse 17

Therefore disputed he - Or reasoned. He engaged in an argument with them.

With the devout persons - Those worshipping God after the manner of the Jews. They were Jewish proselytes, who had renounced idolatry, but who had not been fully admitted to the privileges of the Jews. See the notes on Acts 10:2.

And in the market - In the forum. It was not only the place where provisions were sold, but was also a place of great public concourse. In this place the philosophers were not infrequently found engaged in public discussion.

Verse 18

Then certain philosophers - Athens was distinguished, among all the cities of Greece and the world, for the cultivation of a subtle and refined philosophy. This was their boast, and the object of their constant search and study, 1 Corinthians 1:22.

Of the Epicureans - This sect of philosophers was so named from Epicurus, who lived about 300 years before the Christian era. They denied that the world was created by God, and that the gods exercised any care or providence over human affairs, and also the immortality of the soul. Against these positions of the sect Paul directed his main argument in proving that the world was created and governed by God. One of the distinguishing doctrines of Epicurus was that pleasure was the summum bonum, or chief good, and that virtue was to be practiced only as it contributed to pleasure. By pleasure, however, Epicurus did not mean sensual and groveling appetites and degraded vices, but rational pleasure, properly regulated and governed. See Good‘s “Book of Nature.” But whatever his views were, it is certain that his followers had embraced the doctrine that the pleasures of sense were to be practiced without restraint. Both in principle and practice, therefore, they devoted themselves to a life of gaiety and sensuality, and sought happiness only in indolence, effeminacy, and voluptuousness. Confident in the belief that the world was not under the administration of a God of justice, they gave themselves up to the indulgence of every passion the infidels of their time, and the exact example of the frivolous and fashionable multitudes of all times, that live without God, and that seek pleasure as their chief good.

And of the Stoics - This was a sect of philosophers, so named from the Greek στοά stoaa porch or portico, because Zeno, the founder of the sect,

held his school and taught in a porch, in the city of Athens. Zeno was born in the island of Cyprus, but the greater part of his life was spent at Athens in teaching philosophy. After having taught publicly 48 years, he died at the age of 96, that is, 264 years before Christ. The doctrines of the sect were, that the universe was created by God; that all things were fixed by Fate; that even God was under the dominion of fatal necessity; that the Fates were to be submitted to; that the passions and affections were to be suppressed and restrained; that happiness consisted in the insensibility of the soul to pain; and that a man should gain an absolute mastery over all the passions and affections of his nature. They were stern in their views of virtue, and, like the Pharisees, prided themselves on their own righteousness. They supposed that matter was eternal, and that God was either the animating principle or soul of the world, or that all things were a part of God. They fluctuated much in their views of a future state; some of them holding that the soul would exist only until the destruction of the universe, and others that it would finally be absorbed into the divine essence and become a part of God. It will be readily seen, therefore, with what pertinency Paul discoursed to them. The leading doctrines of both sects were met by him.

Encountered him - Contended with him; opposed themselves to him.

And some said - This was said in scorn and contempt. He had excited attention; but they scorned such doctrines as they supposed would be delivered by an unknown foreigner from Judea.

What will this babbler say? - Margin, "base fellow." Greek: σπερμολόγος spermologosThe word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means "one who collects seeds," and was applied by the Greeks to the poor persons who collected the scattered grain in the fields after harvest, or to gleaners; and also to the poor who obtained a precarious subsistence around the markets and in the streets. It was also applied to birds that picked up the scattered seeds of grain in the field or in the markets. The word came hence to have a twofold signification:

(1) It denoted the poor, the needy, and the vile the refuse and offscouring of society; and,

(2) From the birds which were thus employed, and which were troublesome by their continual unmusical sounds, it came to denote those who were talkative, garrulous, and opinionated those who collected the opinions of others, or scraps of knowledge, and retailed them fluently,

without order or method. It was a word, therefore, expressive of their contempt for an unknown foreigner who should pretend to instruct the learned men and philosophers of Greece. Doddridge renders it "retailer of scraps." Syriac, "collector of words."

Other some - Others.

He seemeth to be a setter forth - He announces or declares the existence of strange gods. The reason why they supposed this was, that he made the capital points of his preaching to be Jesus and the resurrection, which they mistook for the names of divinities.

Of strange gods - Of foreign gods, or demons. They worshipped many gods themselves, and as they believed that every country had its own special divinities, they supposed that Paul had come to announce the existence of some such foreign, and to them unknown gods. The word translated "gods" (δαιμονίων daimoniōn) denotes properly "the genii, or spirits who were superior to human beings, but inferior to the gods." It is, however, often employed to denote the gods themselves, and is evidently so used here. The gods among the Greeks were such as were supposed to have that rank by nature. The demons were such as had been exalted to divinity from being heroes and distinguished men.

He preached unto them Jesus - He proclaimed him as the Messiah. The mistake which they made by supposing that Jesus was a foreign divinity was one which was perfectly natural for minds degraded like theirs by idolatry. They had no idea of a pure God; they knew nothing of the doctrine of the Messiah; and they naturally supposed, therefore, that he of whom Paul spoke so much must be a god of some other nation, of a rank similar to their own divinities.

And the resurrection - The resurrection of Jesus, and through him the resurrection of the dead. It is evident, I think, that by the resurrection τὴν ἀνάστασιν tēn anastasinthey understood him to refer to the name of some goddess. Such was the interpretation of Chrysostom. The Greeks had erected altars to Shame, and Famine, and Desire (Paus., i. 17), and it is probable that they supposed "the resurrection," or the Anastasis, to be the name also of some unknown goddess who presided over the resurrection. Thus, they regarded him as a setter forth of two foreign or strange gods, Jesus, and the Anastasis, or resurrection.

Verse 19

And brought him unto Areopagus - Margin, or "Mars' hill." This was the place or court in which the Areopagites, the celebrated supreme judges of Athens, assembled. It was on a hill almost in the middle of the city; but nothing now remains by which we can determine the form or construction of the tribunal. The hill is almost entirely a mass of stone, and is not easily accessible, its sides being steep and abrupt. On many accounts this was the most celebrated tribunal in the world. Its decisions were distinguished for justice and correctness; nor was there any court in Greece in which so much confidence was placed. This court took cognizance of murders, impieties, and immoralities; they punished vices of all kinds, including idleness; they rewarded the virtuous; they were especially attentive to blasphemies against the gods, and to the performance of the sacred mysteries of religion. It was, therefore, with the greatest propriety that Paul was brought before this tribunal, as being regarded as a setter forth of strange gods, and as being supposed to wish to Introduce a new mode of worship. See Potter's "Antiquities of Greece," book 1, chapter 19; and Travels of Anacharsis, vol. i. 136,185; ii. 292-295.

May we know - We would know. This seems to have been a respectful inquiry; and it does not appear that Paul was brought there for the sake of trial. There are no accusations; no witnesses; none of the forms of trial. They seem to have resorted thither because it was the place where the subject of religion was usually discussed, and because it was a place of confluence for the citizens, and judges, and wise men of Athens, and of foreigners. The design seems to have been, not to try him, but fairly to canvass the claims of his doctrines. See Acts 17:21. It was just an instance of the inquisitive spirit of the people of Athens, willing to hear before they condemned, and to examine before they approved.

Verse 20

Certain strange things - Literally, something pertaining to a foreign country or people. Here it means something unusual or remarkable - something different from what they had been accustomed to hear from their philosophers.

What these things mean - We would understand more clearly what is affirmed respecting Jesus and the resurrection.

Verse 21

For all the Athenians - This was their general character.

And strangers which were there - Athens was greatly distinguished for the celebrity of its schools of philosophy. It was at that time at the head of the literary world. Its arts and its learning were celebrated in all lands. It is known, therefore, that it was the favorite resort of people of other nations, who came there to become acquainted with its institutions and to listen to its sages.

Spent their time in nothing else - The learned and subtle Athenians gave themselves much to speculation, and employed themselves in examining the various new systems of philosophy that were proposed. Strangers and foreigners who were there, having much leisure, would also give themselves to the same inquiries.

But either to tell or to hear some new thing - Greek: "something newer" - καινότερον kainoteronThe latest news; or the latest subject of inquiry proposed. This is well known to have been the character of the people of Athens at all times. "Many of the ancient writers I bear witness to the garrulity, and curiosity, and intemperate desire of novelty among the Athenians, by which they inquired respecting all things, even those in which they had no interest, whether of a public or private nature (Kuinoel). Thus, Thucydides (3,38) says of them, "You excel in suffering yourselves to be deceived with novelty of speech." On which the old scholiast makes this remark, almost in the words of Luke: "He (Thucydides) here blames the Athenians, who care for nothing else but to tell or to hear something new." Thus, Aelian (5,13) says of the Athenians that they are versatile in novelties. Thus, Demosthenes represents the Athenians "as inquiring in the place of public resort if there were any news" - τι νεώτερον ti neōteronMeurslus has shown, also, that there were more than 300 public places in Athens of public resort, where the principal youth and reputable citizens were accustomed to meet for the purpose of conversation and inquiry.

Verse 22

Then Paul - This commences Paul's explanation of the doctrines which he had stated. It is evident that Luke has recorded but a mere summary or outline of the discourse; but it is such as to enable us to see clearly his course of thought, and the manner in which he met the two principal sects of their philosophers.

In the midst of Mars' hill - Greek: Areopagus. This should have been retained in the translation.

Ye men of Athens - This language was perfectly respectful, notwithstanding his heart had been deeply affected by their idolatry. Everything about this discourse is calm, grave, cool, argumentative. Paul understood the character of his auditors, and did not commence his discourse by denouncing them, nor did he suppose that they would be convinced by mere dogmatical assertion. No happier instance can be found of cool, collected argumentation than is furnished in this discourse.

I perceive - He perceived this by his observations of their forms of worship in passing through their city, Acts 17:23.

In all things - In respect to all events.

Ye are too superstitious - δεισιδαιμονεστέρους deisidaimonesterousThis is a most unhappy translation. We use the word "superstitious" always in a bad sense, to denote being "over-scrupulous and rigid in religious observances, particularly in smaller matters, or a zealous devotion to rites and observances which are not commanded." But the word here is designed to convey no such idea. It properly means "reverence for the gods." It is used in the Classic writers in a good sense, to denote "piety toward the gods, or suitable fear and reverence for them"; and also in a bad sense, to denote "improper fear or excessive dread of their anger"; and in this sense it accords with our word "superstitious." But it is altogether improbable that Paul would have used it in a bad sense. For:

(1) It was not his custom needlessly to blame or offend his auditors.

(2) it is not probable that he would commence his discourse in a manner that would only excite prejudice and opposition.

(3) in the thing which he specifies Acts 17:23 as proof on the subject, he does not introduce it as a matter of blame, but rather as a proof of their devotedness to the cause of religion and of their regard for God.

(4) the whole speech is calm, dignified, and argumentative - such as became such a place, such a speaker, and such an audience. The meaning of the expression is, therefore, "I perceive that you are greatly devoted to reverence for religion; that it is a characteristic of the people to honor the gods, to rear altars to them, and to recognize the divine agency in times of trial." The proof of this was the altar reared to the unknown God; its bearing

on his purpose was, that such a state of public sentiment must be favorable to an inquiry into the truth of what he was about to state.

Verse 23

For as I passed by - Greek: "For I, coming through, and seeing, etc."

And beheld - Diligently contemplated; attentively considered ἀναθεωρῶν anatheōrōnThe worship of an idolatrous people will be an object of intense and painful interest to a Christian.

Your devotions - τὰ σεβάσματα ta sebasmataOur word devotions refers to the "act of worship" - to prayers, praises, etc. The Greek word used here means properly any sacred thing; any object which is worshipped, or which is connected with the place or rites of worship. Thus, it is applied either to the gods themselves, or to the temples, altars, shrines, sacrifices, statues, etc., connected with the worship of the gods. This is its meaning here. It does not denote that Paul saw them engaged in the act of worship, but that he was struck with the numerous temples, altars, statues, etc., which were reared to the gods, and which indicated the state of the people. Syriac, "the temple of your gods." Vulgate, "your images." Margin, "gods that ye worship."

I found an altar - An altar usually denotes "a place for sacrifice." Here, however, it does not appear that any sacrifice was offered; but it was probably a monument of stone, reared to commemorate a certain event, and dedicated to the unknown God.

To the unknown God - ἀγνώστῳ Θεῷ agnōstō TheōWhere this altar was reared, or on what occasion, has been a subject of much debate with expositors. That there was such an altar in Athens, though it may not have been specifically mentioned by the Greek writers, is rendered probable by the following circumstances:

(1) It was customary to rear such altars. Minutius Felix says of the Romans, "They build altars to unknown divinities."

(2) the term "unknown God" was used in relation to the worship of the Athenians. Lucian, in his Philopatris, uses this form of an oath: "I swear by the unknown God at Athens," the very expression used by the apostle. And again he says (chapter xxix. 180), "We have found out the unknown God at Athens, and worshipped him with our hands stretched up to heaven, etc."

(3) there were altars at Athens inscribed to the unknown gods. Philostratus says (in Vita Apol., Romans 6:3), "And this at Athens, where there are even altars to the unknown gods." Thus, Pausanius (in Attic., chapter i.) says, that "at Athens there are altars of gods which are called the unknown ones." Jerome, in his commentary Titus 1:12, says that the whole inscription was, "To the gods of Asia, Europe, and Africa; to the unknown and strange gods."

(4) there was a remarkable altar raised in Athens in a time of pestilence, in honor of the unknown god which had granted them deliverance. Diogenes Laertius says that Epimenides restrained the pestilence in the following manner: "Taking white and black sheep, he led them to the Areopagus, and there permitted them to go where they would, commanding those who followed them to sacrifice τῶ προσήχοντι θεῷ tōprosēkontitheōto the god to whom these things pertained or who had the power of averting the plague, whoever he might be, without adding the name and thus to allay the pestilence. From which it has arisen that at this day, through the villages of the Athenians, altars are found without any name" (Diog. Laert., book i, section 10). This took place about 600 years before Christ, and it is not improbable that one or more of those altars remained until the time of Paul. It should be added that the natural inscription on those altars would be, "To the unknown God." None of the gods to whom they usually sacrificed could deliver them from the pestilence. They therefore reared them to some unknown Being who had the power to free them from the plague.

Whom therefore - The true God, who had really delivered them from the plague.

Ye ignorantly worship - Or worship without knowing his name. You have expressed your homage for him by rearing to him an altar.

Him declare I unto you - I make known to you his name, attributes, etc. There is remarkable tact in Paul's seizing on this circumstance; and yet it was perfectly fair and honest. Only the true God could deliver in the time of the pestilence. This altar had, therefore, been really reared to him, though his name was unknown. The same Being who had interposed at that time, and whose interposition was recorded by the building of this altar, was He who had made the heavens; who ruled over all; and whom Paul was now about to make known to them. There is another feature of skill in the allusion to this altar. In other circumstances it might seem to be

presumptuous for an unknown Jew to at tempt to instruct the sages of Athens. But here they had confessed and proclaimed their ignorance. By rearing this altar they acknowledged their need of instruction. The way was, therefore, fairly open for Paul to address even these philosophers, and to discourse to them on a point on which they acknowledged their ignorance.

Verse 24

God that made the world - The main object of this discourse of Paul is to convince them of the folly of idolatry Acts 17:29, and thus to lead them to repentance. For this purpose he commences with a statement of the true doctrine respecting God as the Creator of all things. We may observe here:

(1) That he speaks here of God as the Creator of the world, thus opposing indirectly their opinions that there were many gods.

(2) he speaks of him as the Creator of the world, and thus opposes the opinion that matter was eternal; that all things were controlled by Fate; and that God could be confined to temples. The Epicureans held that matter was eternal, and that the world was formed by a fortuitous concourse of atoms. To this opinion Paul opposed the doctrine that all things were made by one God. Compare Acts 14:15.

Seeing that … - Greek: "He being Lord of heaven and earth."

Lord of heaven and earth - Proprietor and Ruler of heaven and earth. It is highly absurd, therefore, to suppose that he who is present in heaven and in earth at the same time, and who rules over all, should be confined to a temple of an earthly structure, or dependent on man for anything.

Dwelleth not … - See the notes on Acts 7:48.

Verse 25

Neither is worshipped with men's hands - The word here rendered "worshipped" (θεραπέυεται therapeuetai) denotes to "serve"; to wait upon; and then to render religious service or homage. There is reference here, undoubtedly, to a notion prevalent among the pagan, that the gods were fed or nourished by the offerings made to them. The idea is prevalent among the Hindus that the sacrifices which are made, and which are offered in the temples, are consumed by the gods themselves. Perhaps, also, Paul had reference to the fact that so many persons were employed in their temples in serving them with their hands; that is, in preparing sacrifices and feasts in their honor. Paul affirms that the great Creator of all things cannot be thus

dependent on his creatures for happiness, and consequently, that that mode of worship must be highly absurd. The same idea occurs in Psalm 50:10-12;

For every beast of the forest is mine;
And the cattle upon a thousand hills.
I know all the fowls of the mountain;

And the wild beasts of the field are mine.

If I were hungry, I would not tell thee;
For the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.

Seeing he giveth - Greek: he having given to all, etc.

Life - He is the source of life, and therefore he cannot be dependent on that life which he has himself imparted.

And breath - The power of breathing, by which life is sustained. He not only originally gave life, but he gives it at each moment; he gives the power of drawing each breath by which life is supported. It is possible that the phrase "life and breath may be the figure hendyades, by which one thing is expressed by two words. It is highly probable that Paul here had reference to Genesis 2:7; "And the Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." The same idea occurs in Job 12:10;

In whose hand is the life (margin) of every living thing;
And the breath of all mankind.

And all things - All things necessary to sustain life. We may see here how dependent man is on God. There can be no more absolute dependence than that for every breath. How easy it would be for God to suspend our breathing! How incessant the care, how unceasing the providence, by which, whether we sleep or wake - whether we remember or forget him, he heaves our chest, fills our lungs, restores the vitality of our blood, and infuses vigor into our frame! Compare the notes on Romans 11:36.

Verse 26

And hath made of one blood - All the families of mankind are descended from one origin or stock. However different their complexion, features, or language, yet they are derived from a common parent. The word blood is often used to denote "race, stock, kindred." This passage affirms that all the human family are descended from the same ancestor; and that, consequently, all the variety of complexion, etc., is to be traced to some other cause than that they were originally different races created. See

Malachi 2:10. The design of the apostle in this affirmation was probably to convince the Greeks that he regarded them all as brethren; that, although he was a Jew, yet he was not enslaved to any narrow notions or prejudices in reference to other people. It follows from the truth here stated that no one nation, and no individual, can claim any pre-eminence over others in virtue of birth or blood. All are in this respect equal; and the whole human family, however they may differ in complexion, customs, and laws, are to be regarded and treated as brethren. It follows, also, that no one part of the race has a right to enslave or oppress any other part, on account of difference of complexion. No one has a right because:

He finds his fellow guilty of a skin
Not colored like his own; and having power
T‘ enforce the wrong, for such a worthy cause to
Doom and devote him as his lawful prey.

For to dwell … - To cultivate and until the earth. This was the original command Genesis 1:28; and God, by his providence, has so ordered it that the descendants of one family have found their way to all lands, and have become adapted to the climate where he has placed them.

And hath determined - Greek: ὁρίσας horisasHaving fixed, or marked out a boundary. See the notes on Romans 1:4. The word is usually applied to a field. It means here that God “marked out,” or “designated in his purpose,” their future abodes.

The times before appointed - This evidently refers to the dispersion and migration of nations. And it means that God had, in his plan, fixed the times when each country should be settled, and the rise, the prosperity, and the fall of each nation. The different continents and islands have not, therefore, been settled by chance, but by a wise rule, and in accordance with God‘s arrangement and design.

And the bounds of their habitation - Their limits and boundaries as a people. By customs, laws, inclinations, and habits he has fixed the boundaries of their habitations, and disposed them to dwell there. We may learn:

(1)That the revolutions and changes of nations are under the direction of infinite wisdom;

(2)That people should not be restless and dissatisfied with the place where God has located them;

(3)That God has given sufficient limits to all, so that it is not needful to invade others; and,

(4)That wars of conquest are evil.

God has given to people their places of abode, and we have no right to disturb those abodes, or to attempt to displace them in a violent manner. This strain of remark by the apostle was also opposed to all the notions of the Epicurean philosophers, and yet so obviously true and just that they could not gainsay or resist it.

Verse 27

That they should seek the Lord - Greek: to seek the Lord. The design of thus placing them on the earth - of gang them their habitation among his works - was, that they should contemplate his wisdom in his works, and thus come to a knowledge of his existence and character. All nations, though living in different regions and climates, have thus the opportunity of becoming acquainted with God, Romans 1:19-20. The fact that the nations did not thus learn the character of the true God shows their great stupidity and wickedness. The design of Paul in this was doubtless to reprove the idolatry of the Athenians. The argument is this: "God has given to each nation its proper opportunity to learn his character. Idolatry, therefore, is folly and wickedness, since it is possible to find out the existence of the one God from his works."

If haply - εἰ ἄρα γε ei ara geIf perhaps - implying that it was possible to find God, though it might be attended with some difficulty. God has placed us here that we may make the trial, and has made it possible thus to find him.

They might feel after him - The word used here ψηλαφήσειαν psēlaphēseianmeans properly "to touch, to handle" Luke 24:39; Hebrews 12:18, and then to ascertain the qualities of an object by the sense of touch. And as the sense of touch is regarded as a certain way of ascertaining the existence and qualities of an object, the word means "to search diligently, so that we may know distinctly and certainly." The word has this sense here. It means "to search diligently and accurately for God, to learn his existence and perfections." The Syriac renders it, "That they may seek for God, and find him from his creatures."

And find him - Find the proofs of his existence. Become acquainted with his perfections and laws.

Though he be not far … - This seems to be stated by the apostle to show that it was possible to find him; and that even those who were without a revelation need not despair of becoming acquainted with his existence and perfections. He is near to us:

(1) Because the proofs of his existence and power are round about us everywhere, Psalm 19:1-6.

(2) because he fills all things in heaven and earth by his essential presence, Psalm 139:7-10; Jeremiah 23:23-24; Amos 9:2-4; 1 Kings 8:27. We should learn then:

(1) To be afraid of sin. God is present with us, and sees all.

(2) he can protect the righteous. He is always with them.

(3) he can detect and punish the wicked. He sees all their plans and thoughts, and records all their doings.

(4) we should seek him continually. It is the design for which he has made us; and he has given us abundant opportunities to learn his existence and perfections.

Verse 28

For in him we live - The expression "in him" evidently means by him; by his originally forming us, and continually sustaining us. No words can better express our constant dependence on God. He is the original fountain of life, and he upholds us each moment. A similar sentiment is found in Plautus (5,4,14): "O Jupiter, who dost cherish and nourish the race of man; by whom we live, and with whom is the hope of the life of all men" (Kuinoel). It does not appear, however, that Paul designed this as a quotation; yet he doubtless intended to state a sentiment with which they were familiar, and with which they would agree.

And move - κινούμεθα kinoumethaDoddridge translates this, "And are moved." It may, however, be in the middle voice, and be correctly rendered as in our version. It means that we derive strength to move from him; an expression denoting "constant and absolute dependence." There is no idea

of dependence more striking than that we owe to him the ability to perform the slightest motion.

And have our being - καὶ ἐσμέν kai esmenAnd are. This denotes that our "continued existence" is owing to Him. That we live at all is his gift; that we have power to move is his gift; and our continued and prolonged existence is his gift also. Thus, Paul traces our dependence on him from the lowest pulsation of life to the highest powers of action and of continued existence. It would be impossible to express in more emphatic language our entire dependence On God.

As certain also - As some. The sentiment which he quotes was found substantially in several Greek poets.

Of your own poets - He does not refer particularly here to poets of Athens, but to Greek poets who had written in their language.

For we are also his offspring - This precise expression is found in Aratus ("Phaenom.," v. 5), and in Cleanthus in a hymn to Jupiter. Substantially the same sentiment is found in several other Greek poets. Aratus was a Greek poet of Cilicia the native place of Paul, and flourished about 277 years before Christ. As Paul was a native of the same country it is highly probable he was acquainted with his writings. Aratus passed much of his time at the court of Antigonus Gonatas, king of Macedonia. His principal work was the "Phoenomena," which is here quoted, and was so highly esteemed in Greece that many learned men wrote commentaries on it. The sentiment here quoted was directly at variance with the views of the Epicureans; and it is proof of Paul's address and skill, as well as his acquaintance with his auditors and with the Greek poets, that he was able to adduce a sentiment so directly in point, and that had the concurrent testimony of so many of the Greeks themselves. It is one instance among thousands where an acquaintance with profane learning may be of use to a minister of the gospel.

Verse 29

Forasmuch then - Admitting or assuming this to be true. The argument which follows is drawn from the concessions of their own writers.

We ought not to think - It is absurd to suppose. The argument of the apostle is this: "Since we are formed by God; since we are like him, living and intelligent beings; since we are more excellent in our nature than the most precious and ingenious works of art, it is absurd to suppose that the original source of our existence can be like gold, and silver, and stone. Man

himself is far more excellent than an image of wood and stone; how much more excellent still must be the great Fountain and Source of all our wisdom and intelligence." See this thought pursued at length in Isaiah 40:18-23.

The Godhead - The divinity (τὸ Θεῖον to Theion), the divine nature, or essence. The word used here is an adjective employed as a noun, and does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament.

Is like unto gold … - All these things were used in making images or statues of the gods. It is absurd to think that the source of all life and intelligence resembles a lifeless block of wood or stone. Even degraded pagan, one would think, might see the force of an argument like this.

Graven - Sculptured; made into an image.

Verse 30

And the times of this ignorance - The long period when people were ignorant of the true God, and when they worshipped stocks and stones. Paul here refers to the times preceding the gospel.

God winked at - ὑπεριδὼν huperidōnOverlooked; connived at; did not come forth to punish. In Acts 14:16 it is expressed thus: "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways" The sense is, he passed over those times without punishing them, as if he did not see them. For wise purposes he suffered them to walk in ignorance that there might be a fair experiment to show what people would do, and how much necessity there was for a revelation to instruct them in the true know edge of God. We are not to suppose that God regarded idolatry as innocent, or the crimes and vices to which idolatry led as of no importance; but their ignorance was a mitigating circumstance, and he suffered the nations to live without coming forth in direct judgment against them. Compare the notes on Acts 3:17; Acts 14:16.

But now commandeth - By the gospel, Luke 24:47.

All men - Not Jews only, who had been favored with special privileges, but all nations. The barrier was broken down, and the call to repentance was sent abroad into all the earth.

To repent - To exercise sorrow for their sins, and to forsake them. If God commands all people to repent, we may observe:

(1) That it is their duty to do it. There is no higher obligation than to obey the command of God.

(2) it can be done. God would not command an impossibility.

(3) it is binding on all. The rich, the learned, the great, the frivolous, are as much bound as the beggar and the slave.

(4) it must be done, or the soul lost. It is not safe to neglect a plain Law of God. It will not be well to die reflecting that we have all our life despised his commands.

(5) we should send the gospel to the pagan. God calls on the nations to repent, and to be saved. It is the duty of Christians to make known to them the command, and to invite them to the blessings of pardon and heaven.

Verse 31

Because he hath appointed a day - This is given as a reason why God commands people to repent. They must be judged; and if they are not penitent and pardoned, they must be condemned. See the notes on Romans 2:16.

Judge the world - The whole world - Jews and Gentiles.

In righteousness - According to the principles of strict justice.

Whom he hath ordained - Or whom he has constituted or appointed as judge. See the Acts 10:42 notes; John 5:25 notes.

Hath given assurance - Has afforded evidence of this. That evidence consists:

(1) In the fact that Jesus declared that he would judge the nations John 5:25-26; Matthew 25; and,

(2) God confirmed the truth of his declarations by raising him from the dead, or gave his sanction to what the Lord Jesus had said, for God would nor work a miracle in favor of an impostor.

Verse 32

Some mocked - Some of the philosophers derided him. The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was believed by none of the Greeks; it seemed incredible; and they regarded it as so absurd as not to admit of an argument, It has nor been uncommon for even professed philosophers to mock at the doctrines of religion, and to meet the arguments of Christianity with a sneer.

The Epicureans particularly would be likely to deride this, as they denied altogether any future state. It is not improbable that this derision by the Epicureans produced such a disturbance as to break off Paul‘s discourse, as that of Stephen had been by the clamor of the Jews, Acts 7:54.

And others said - Probably some of the Stoics. The doctrine of a future state was not denied by them; and the fact, affirmed by Paul, that one had been raised up from the dead, would appear more plausible to them, and it might be a matter worth inquiry to ascertain whether the alleged fact did not furnish a new argument for their views. They therefore proposed to examine this further at some future time. That the inquiry was prosecuted any further does not appear probable, for:

(1) No church was organized at Athens.

(2) there is no account of any future interview with Paul.

(3) he departed almost immediately from them, Acts 18:1. People who defer inquiry on the subject of religion seldom find the favorable period arrive. Those who propose to examine its doctrines at a future time often do it to avoid the inconvenience of becoming Christians now, and as a plausible and easy way of rejecting the gospel altogether, without appearing to be rude, or to give offence.

Verse 33

So Paul departed - Seeing there was little hope of saving them. It was not his custom to labor long in a barren field, or to preach where there was no prospect of success.

Verse 34

Clave unto him - Adhered to him firmly; embraced the Christian religion.

Dionysius - Nothing more is certainly known of this man than is here stated.

The Areopagite - Connected with the court of Areopagus, but in what way is not known. It is probable that he was one of the judges. The conversion of one man was worth the labor of Paul, and that conversion might have had an extensive influence on others.

In regard to this account of the visit of Paul to Athens probably the only one which he made to that splendid capital - we may remark:

(1) That he was indefatigable and constant in his great work.

(2) Christians, amidst the splendor and gaieties of such cities, should have their hearts deeply affected in view of the moral desolations of the people.

(3) they should be willing to do their duty, and to bear witness to the pure and simple gospel in the presence of the great and the noble.

(4) they should not consider it their main business to admire splendid temples, statues, and paintings - the works of art; but their main business should be to do good as they may have opportunity.

(5) adiscourse, even in the midst of such wickedness and idolatry, may be calm and dignified; not an appeal merely to the passions, but to the understanding. Paul reasoned with the philosophers of Athens; he did not denounce them; he endeavored calmly to convince them, not harshly to censure them.

(6) the example of Paul is a good one for all Christians. In all places cities, towns, or country; amidst all people - philosophers, the rich, the poor; among friends and countrymen, or among strangers and foreigners, the great object should be to do good, to instruct mankind, to seek to elevate the human character, and to promote human happiness by diffusing the pare precepts of the gospel of Christ.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Verse 1

After these things - After what occurred at Athens, as recorded in the previous chapter.

Came to Corinth - Corinth was the capital of Achaia, called anciently Ephyra, and was seated on the isthmus which divides the Peloponnesus from Attica. The city itself stood on a little island; it had two ports, Lecheeum on the west, and Cenchrea on the east. It was one of the most populous and wealthy cities of Greece, and at the same time one of the most luxurious, effeminate, ostentatious, and dissolute. Lasciviousness here was not only practiced and allowed, but was consecrated by the worship of Venus; and no small part of the wealth and splendor of the city arose from the offerings made by licentious passion in the very temples of this goddess. No city of ancient times was more profligate. It was the Paris of antiquity; the seat of splendor, and show, and corruption. Yet even here, notwithstanding all the disadvantages of splendor, gaiety, and dissoluteness, Paul entered on the work of rearing a church; and here he was eminently successful. The two epistles which he afterward wrote to this church show the extent of his success; and the well-known character and propensities of the people will account for the general drift of the admonitions and arguments in those epistles. Corinth was destroyed by the Romans 146 years before Christ; and during the conflagration several metals in a fused state, running together, produced the composition known as Corinthian brass. It was afterward restored by Julius Caesar, who planted in it a Roman colony. It soon regained its ancient splendor, and relapsed into its former dissipation and licentiousness. Paul arrived there in 52 or 53 ad.

Verse 2

And found a certain Jew - Aquila is mentioned elsewhere as the friend of Paul, Romans 16:3; 2 Timothy 4:19; 1 Corinthians 16:19. Though a Jew by birth, yet it is evident that he became a convert to the Christian faith.

Born in Pontus - See the notes on Acts 2:9.

Lately come from Italy - Though the command of Claudius extended only to Rome, yet it was probably deemed not safe to remain, or it might have been difficult to procure occupation in any part of Italy.

Because that Claudius - Claudius was the Roman emperor. He commenced his reign 41 a.d., and was poisoned 54 a.d. At what time in his

reign this command was issued is not certainly known.

Had commanded … - This command is not mentioned by Josephus, but it is recorded by Suetonius, a Roman historian ("Life of Claudius," chapter 25), who says that "he expelled the Jews from Rome, who were constantly exciting tumults under their leader, Chrestus." Who this Chrestus was is not known. It might have been a foreign Jew, who raised tumults on some occasion of which we have no knowledge, as the Jews in all pagan cities were greatly prone to excitements and insurrections. Or it may be that Suetonius, little acquainted with Jewish affairs, mistook this for the name Christ, and supposed that he was the leader of the Jews. This explanation has much plausibility; for:

(1) Suetonius could scarcely be supposed to be intimately acquainted with the affairs of the Jews.

(2) there is every reason to believe that, before this, the Christian religion was preached at Rome.

(3) it would produce there, as everywhere else, great tumult and contention among the Jews.

(4) Claudius, the emperor, might suppose that such tumults endangered the peace of the city, and resolve to remove the cause at once by the dispersion of the Jews.

(5) aRoman historian might easily mistake the true state of the case; and while they were contending about Christ, he might suppose that it was under him, as a leader, that these tumults were excited. All that is material, however, here, is the fact, in which Luke and Suetonius agree, that the Jews were expelled from Rome during his reign.

Verse 3

The same craft - Of the same trade or occupation.

And wrought - And worked at that occupation. Why he did it the historian does not affirm; but it seems pretty evident that it was because he had no other means of maintenance. He also labored for his own support in Ephesus Acts 20:34 and at Thessalonica, 2 Thessalonians 3:9-10. The apostle was not ashamed of honest industry for a livelihood; nor did he

deem it any disparagement that a minister of the gospel should labor with his own hands.

For by their occupation - By their trade; that is, they had been brought up to this business. Paul had been designed originally for a lawyer, and had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. But it was a regular custom among the Jews to train up their sons to some useful employment, that they I might have the means of an honest livelihood. Even though they were instructed in the liberal sciences, yet they deemed a handicraft trade, or some honorable occupation, an indispensable part of education. Thus, Maimonides (in the Tract Talin. Torah, chapter i., section 9) says, "the wise generally practice some of the arts, lest they should be dependent on the charity of others." See Grotius. The wisdom of this is obvious; and it is equally plain that a custom of this kind now might preserve the health and lives of many professional people, and save from ignoble dependence or vice, in future years, many who are trained up in the lap of indulgence and wealth.

They were tentmakers - σκηνοποιοὶ skēnopoioiThere have been various opinions about the meaning of this word. Many have supposed that it denotes "a weaver of tapestry." Luther so translated it. But it is probable that it denotes, as in our translation, "a manufacturer of tents, made of skin or cloth." In Eastern countries, where there was much travel, where there were no inns, and where many were shepherds, such a business might be useful, and a profitable source of living. It was an honorable occupation, and Paul was not ashamed to be employed in it.

Verse 4

And he reasoned … - See the notes on Acts 17:2.

Verse 5

And when Silas and Timotheus … - They came to Paul according to the request which he had sent by the brethren who accompanied him from Thessalonica, Acts 17:15.

Paul was pressed - Was urged; was borne away by an unusual impulse. It was deeply impressed on him as his duty.

In spirit - In his mind; in his feelings. His love to Christ was so great, and his conviction of the truth so strong, that he labored to make known to them the truth that Jesus Was the Messiah.

That Jesus was Christ - That Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. Compare Acts 17:16. The presence of Silas and Timothy animated him; and

the certainty of aid in his work urged him to zeal in making known the Saviour.

Verse 6

And when they opposed themselves - To him and his message.

And blasphemed - See the notes on Acts 13:45.

He shook his raiment - As an expressive act of shaking off the guilt of their condemnation. Compare Acts 13:45. He shook his raiment to show that he was resolved henceforward to have nothing to do with them; perhaps, also, to express the fact that God would soon slake them off, or reject them (Doddridge).

Your blood … - The guilt of your destruction is your own. You only are the cause of the destruction that is coming upon you. See the notes on Matthew 27:25.

I am clean - I am not to blame for your destruction. I have done my duty. The gospel had been fairly offered and deliberately rejected; and Paul was not to blame for their ruin, which he saw was coming upon them.

I will go … - See Acts 13:46.

Verse 7

A certain man‘s house - Probably he had become a convert to the Christian faith.

Joined hard - Was near to the synagogue.

Verse 8

And Crispus - He is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14 as having been one of the few whom Paul baptized with his own hands. The conversion of such a man must have tended greatly to exasperate the other Jews, and to further the progress of the Christian faith among the Corinthians.

With all his house - With all his family, Acts 10:2.

And many of the Corinthians - Many even in this voluptuous and wicked city. Perhaps the power of the gospel was never more signal than in converting sinners in Corinth, and rearing a Christian church in a place so dissolute and abandoned. If it was adapted to such a place as Corinth; if a church, under the power of Christian truth, could be organized there, it is adapted to any city, and there is none so corrupt that the gospel cannot change and purify it.

Verse 9

By a vision - Compare the notes on Acts 9:10; Acts 16:9.

Be not afraid - Perhaps Paul might have been intimidated by the learning, refinement, and splendor of Corinth; perhaps embarrassed in view of his duty of addressing the rich, the polite, and the great. To this he may allude in 1 Corinthians 2:3; "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." In such circumstances it pleased God to meet him, and disarm his fears. This he did by assuring him of success. The fact that God had much people in that city Acts 18:10 was employed to remove his apprehensions. The prospect of success in the ministry, and the certainty of the presence of God, will take away the fear of the rich, the learned, and the great.

Verse 10

For I am with thee - I will attend, bless, and protect you. See the notes on Matthew 28:20.

No man shall set on thee - No one who shall rise up against thee will be able to hurt thee. His life was in God's hands, and he would preserve him in order that his people might be collected into the church.

For I have - Greek: there is to me; that is, I possess, or there belongs to me.

Much people - Many who should be regarded as his true friends, and who should be saved.

In this city - In that very city that was so voluptuous, so rich, so effeminate, and where there had been already so decided opposition shown to the gospel. This passage evidently means that God had a design or purpose to save many of that people, for it was given to Paul as an encouragement to him to labor there, evidently meaning that God would grant him success in his work. It cannot mean that the Lord meant to say that the great mass of the people, or that the moral and virtuous part, if there were any such, was then regarded as his people; but that he intended to convert many of those guilty and profligate Corinthians to himself, and to gather a people for his own service there. We may learn from this:

(1) That God has a purpose in regard to the salvation of sinners.

(2) that that purpose is so fixed in the mind of God that he can say that those in relation to whom it is formed are his.

(3) this is the ground of encouragement to the ministers of the gospel. Had God no purpose to save sinners, they could have no hope in their work.

(4) this plan may have reference to the most frivolous, the most guilty, and the most abandoned, and ministers should not be deterred by the amount or the degree of wickedness from attempting to save them.

(5) there may be more hope of success among a dissolute and profligate population, than among proud, cold, and skeptical philosophers. Paul had little success in philosophic Athens; he had great success in dissolute Corinth. There is often more hope of converting a man openly dissolute and abandoned, than one who prides himself on his philosophy, and is confident in his own wisdom.

Verse 11

And he continued … - Paul was not accustomed to remain long in a place. At Ephesus, indeed, he remained three years Acts 20:31; and his stay at Corinth was caused by his success, and by the necessity of placing a church, collected out of such corrupt and dissolute materials, on a firm foundation.

Verse 12

And Gallio - After the Romans had conquered Greece they reduced it to two provinces, Macedonia and Achaia, which were each governed by a proconsul. Gallio was the brother of the celebrated philosopher Seneca, and was made proconsul of Achaia in 53 a.d. His proper name was Marcus Annaeus Novatus, but, having been adopted into the family of Gallio, a rhetorician, he took his name. He is mentioned by ancient writers as having been of a remarkably mild and amiable disposition. His brother Seneca ("Praef. Quest." Nat. 4) describes him as being of the most lovely temper: "No mortal," says he, "was ever so mild to anyone as he was to all: and in him there was such a natural power of goodness, that there was no semblance of art or dissimulation."

Was the deputy - See this word explained in the notes on Acts 13:7. It means here proconsul.

Of Achaia - This word, in its largest sense, comprehended the whole of Greece. Achaia proper, however, was a province of which Corinth was the capital. It embraced that part of Greece lying between Thessaly and the southern part of the Peloponnesus.

The Jews made insurrection - Excited a tumult, as they had in Philippi, Antioch, etc.

And brought him to the judgment seat - The tribunal of Gallio; probably intending to arraign him as a disturber of the peace.

Verse 13

Contrary to the law - Evidently intending contrary to all law - the laws of the Romans and of the Jews. It was permitted to the Jews to worship God according to their own views in Greece; but they could easily pretend that Paul had departed from that mode of worshipping God. It was easy for them to maintain that he taught contrary to the laws of the Romans and their acknowledged religion; and their design seems to have been to accuse him of teaching people to worship God in an unlawful and irregular way, a way unknown to any of the laws of the empire.

Verse 14

About to open his mouth - In self-defense, ever ready to vindicate his conduct.

A matter of wrong - Injustice, or crime, such as could be properly brought before a court of justice.

Or wicked lewdness - Any flagrant and gross offence. The word used here occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It denotes properly an act committed by him who is skilled, facile, or an adept in iniquity an act of a veteran offender. Such crimes Gallio was willing to take cognizance of.

Reason would … - Greek: "I would bear with you according to reason." There would be propriety or fitness in my hearing and trying the case. Thai is, it would fall within the sphere of my duty, as appointed to guard the peace, and to punish crimes.

Verse 15

Of words - A dispute about words, for such he would regard all their controversies about religion to be.

And names - Probably he had heard something of the nature of the controversy, and understood it to be a dispute about names; that is, whether Jesus was to be called the Messiah or not. To him this would appear as a matter pertaining to the Jews alone, and to be ranked with their other disputes arising from the difference of sect and name.

Of your law - A question respecting the proper interpretation of the Law, or the rites and ceremonies which it commanded. The Jews had many

such disputes, and Gallio did not regard them as coming under his cognizance as a magistrate.

Look ye to it - Judge this among yourselves; settle the difficulty as you can. Compare John 18:31.

For I will be no judge … - I do not regard such questions as pertaining to my office, or deem myself called on to settle them.

Verse 16

And he drave them … - He refused to hear and decide the controversy. The word used here does not denote that there was any violence used by Gallio, but merely that he dismissed them in an authoritative manner.

Verse 17

Then all the Greeks - The Greeks who had witnessed the persecution of Paul by the Jews, and who had seen the tumult which they had excited.

Took Sosthenes … - As he was the chief ruler of the synagogue, he had probably been a leader in the opposition to Paul, and in the prosecution. Indignant at the Jews; at their bringing such questions before the tribunal; at their bigotry, and rage, and contentious spirit, they probably fell upon him in a tumultuous and disorderly manner as he was leaving the tribunal. The Greeks would feel no small measure of indignation at these disturbers of the public peace, and they took this opportunity to express their rage.

And beat him - ἔτυπτον etuptonThis word is not what is commonly used to denote a judicial act of scourging. It probably means that they fell upon him and beat him with their fists, or with whatever was at band,

Before the judgment seat - Probably while leaving the tribunal. Instead of "Greeks" in this verse, some mss. read "Jews," but the former is probably the true reading. The Syriac, Arabic, and Coptic read it "the Gentiles." It is probable that this Sosthenes afterward became a convert to the Christian faith, and a preacher of the gospel. See 1 Corinthians 1:1-2, "Paul, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth."

And Gallio cared … - This has been usually charged on Gallio as a matter of reproach, as if he were wholly indifferent to religion. But the charge is unjustly made, and his name is often most improperly used to represent the indifferent, the worldly, the careless, and the skeptical. By the testimony of ancient writers he was a most mild and amiable man, arid an upright and just judge. There is not the least evidence that he was

indifferent to the religion of his country, or that he was of a thoughtless and skeptical turn of mind. All that this passage implies is:

(1) That he did not deem it to be his duty, or a part of his office, to settle questions of a theological nature that were started among the Jews.

(2) that he was unwilling to make this subject a matter of legal discussion and investigation.

(3) that he would not interfere, either on one side or the other, in the question about proselytes either to or from Judaism. So far, certainly, his conduct was exemplary and proper.

(4) that he did not choose to interpose, and rescue Sosthenes from the hands of the mob. From some cause he was willing that he should feel the effects of the public indignation. Perhaps it was not easy to quell the riot; perhaps he was not unwilling that he who had joined in a furious and unprovoked persecution should feel the effect of it in the excited passions of the people. At all events, he was but following the common practice among the Romans, which was to regard the Jews with contempt, and to care little how much they were exposed to popular fury and rage. In this he was wrong; and it is certain, also, that he was indifferent to the disputes between Jews and Christians; but there is no propriety in defaming his name, and making him the type and representative of all the thought less and indifferent on the subject of religion in subsequent times. Nor is there propriety in using this passage as a text as applicable to this class of people.

Verse 18

And sailed thence into Syria - Or set sail for Syria. His design was to go to Jerusalem to the festival which was soon to occur, Acts 18:21.

Having shorn his head - Many interpreters have supposed that this refers to Aquila, and not to Paul. But the connection evidently requires us to understand it of Paul, though the Greek construction does not with certainty determine to which it refers. The Vulgate refers it to Aquila, the Syriac to Paul.

In Cenchrea - Cenchrea was the eastern port of Corinth. A church was formed in that place, Romans 16:1.

For he had a vow - A "vow" is a solemn promise made to God respecting anything. The use of vows is observable throughout the Scripture. Jacob, going into Mesopotamia, vowed one-tenth of his estate, and promised to offer it at Bethel to the honor of God, Genesis 28:22. Moses made many regulations in regard to vows. A man might devote himself or his children to the Lord. He might devote any part of his time or property to his service. The vow they were required sacredly to observe Deuteronomy 23:21-22, except in certain specified cases they were permitted to redeem what had been thus devoted. The most remarkable vow among the Jews was that of the Nazarite, by which a man made a solemn promise to God to abstain from wine, and from all intoxicating liquors, to let the hair grow, not to enter any house polluted by having a dead body in it, or to attend any funeral. This vow generally lasted eight days, sometimes a month, sometimes during a definite period fixed by themselves, and sometimes during their whole lives. When the vow expired, the priest made an offering of a he-lamb for a burnt-offering, a she-lamb for an expiatory sacrifice, and a ram for a peace-offering. The priest then, or some other person, shaved the head of the Nazarite at the door of the tabernacle, and burnt the hair on the fire of the altar. Those who made the vow out of Palestine, and who could not come to the temple when the vow was expired, contented themselves with observing the abstinence required by the Law, and cutting off the hair where they were. This I suppose to have been the case with Paul. His hair he cut off at the expiration of the vow at Cenchrea, though he delayed to perfect the vow by the proper ceremonies until he reached Jerusalem, Acts 21:23-24. Why Paul made this vow, or on what occasion, the sacred historian has not informed us, and conjecture, perhaps, is useless. We may observe, however:

(1) That if was common for the Jews to make such vows to God, as an expression of gratitude or of devotedness to his service, when they had been raised up from sickness, or delivered from danger or calamity. See Josephus, i. 2,15. Vows of this nature were also made by the Gentiles on occasions of deliverance from any signal calamity (Juvenal, Sat., 12,81). It is possible that Paul may have made such a vow in consequence of signal deliverance from some of the numerous perils to which he was exposed. But,

(2) There is reason to think that it was mainly with a design to convince the Jews that he did not despise their law, and was not its enemy. See Acts 21:22-24. In accordance with the custom of the nation, and in compliance with a law which was not wrong in itself, he might have made this vow, not for a time-serving purpose, but in order to conciliate them, and to mitigate their anger against the gospel. See 1 Corinthians 9:19-21. But where nothing is recorded, conjecture is useless. Those who wish to see the subject discussed may consult Grotius and Kuinoel in loco; Spencer, De Legibus Hebrae., p. 862; and Calmet's Dictionary, "Nazarite."

Verse 19

And he came to Ephesus - See the notes on Revelation 2:1-5. This was a celebrated city in Ionia, in Asia Minor, about 40 miles south of Smyrna. It was chiefly famous for the Temple of Diana, usually reckoned one of the seven wonders of the world. Pliny styles this city the ornament of Asia. In the times of the Romans it was the metropolis of the province of Asia. This city is now under the dominion of the Turks, and is almost in a state of ruin. Dr. Chandler, in his Travels in Asia Mirror, says: "The inhabitants are a few Greek peasants, living in extreme wretchedness, dependence, and insensibility; the representatives of an illustrious people, and inhabiting the wreck of their greatness; some in the substructions of the glorious edifices which they raised; some beneath the vaults of the stadium, once the crowded scene of their diversions; and some in the sepulchres which received their ashes" (Travels, p. 131, Oxford, 1775). The Jews, according to Josephus, were very numerous in Ephesus, and had obtained the privilege of citizenship.

Left them there - That is, Aquila and Priscilla, Acts 18:24-26.

Reasoned with the Jews - See the notes on Acts 17:2.

Verse 21

Keep this feast - Probably the Passover is here referred to. Why he was so anxious to celebrate that feast at Jerusalem, the historian has not informed us. It is probable, however, that he wished to meet as many of his countrymen as possible, and to remove, if practicable, the prejudices which had everywhere been raised against him, Acts 21:20-21. Perhaps, also, he supposed that there would be many Christian converts present, whom he might meet also.

But I will return … - This he did Acts 19:1, and remained there three years, Acts 20:31.

Verse 22

At Cesarea - See the notes on Acts 8:40.

And gone up - From the ship.

And saluted the church - The church at Jerusalem. This was Paul's main design; and though it is not distinctly specified, yet the whole narrative implies that he went there before returning to Antioch. The word saluted implies that he expressed for them his tender affection and regard.

To Antioch - In Syria. See the notes on Acts 11:19.

Verse 23

The country of Galatia and Phrygia - He had been over these regions before, preaching the gospel, Acts 16:6.

Strengthening - Establishing them by exhortation and counsel. See the notes on Acts 14:22.

Verse 24

And a certain Jew named Apollos - Apollos afterward became a distinguished and successful preacher of the gospel, 1 Corinthians 1:12; 1 Corinthians 3:5-6; 1 Corinthians 4:6; Titus 3:13. Nothing more is known of him than is stated in these passages.

Born at Alexandria - Alexandria was a celebrated city in Egypt, founded by Alexander the Great. There were large numbers of Jews resident there. See the notes on Acts 6:9.

An eloquent man - Alexandria was famous for its schools, and it is probable that Apollos, in addition to his natural endowments, had enjoyed the benefit of these schools.

Mighty in the scriptures - Well instructed, or able in the Old Testament. The foundation was thus laid for future usefulness in the Christian church. See the notes on Luke 24:19.

Verse 25

This man was instructed - Greek: was catechised. He was instructed, in some degree, into the knowledge of the Christian religion. By whom this was done we have no information.

In the way of the Lord - The word "way" often refers to doctrine, Matthew 21:32. It means here that he had been correctly taught in regard to the Messiah, yet his knowledge was imperfect, Acts 18:26. The amount of his knowledge seems to have been:

(1) He had correct views of the Messiah to come - views which he had derived from the study of the Old Testament. He was expecting a Saviour that would be humble, obscure, and a sacrifice, in opposition to the prevailing notions of the Jews.

(2) he had heard of John; had embraced his doctrine; and probably had been baptized with reference to him that was to come. Compare Matthew 3:2; Acts 19:4. But it is clear that he had not heard that Jesus was the Messiah. With his correct views in regard to the coming of the Messiah he was endeavoring to instruct and reform his countrymen. He was just in the state of mind to welcome the announcement that the Messiah had come, and to embrace Jesus of Nazareth as the hope of the nation.

Being fervent in the spirit - Being zealous and ardent. See the notes on Romans 12:11.

Taught diligently - Defended with zeal and earnestness his views of the Messiah.

The things of the Lord - The doctrines pertaining to the Messiah as far as he understood them.

Knowing only the baptism of John - Whether he had himself heard John, and been baptized by him. has been made a question which cannot now be decided. It is not necessary, however, to suppose this, as it seems that the knowledge of John‘s preaching and baptism had been propagated extensively in other nations beside Judea, Acts 19:1-3. The Messiah was expected about that time. The foreign Jews would be waiting for him; and the news of John‘s ministry, doctrine, and success would be rapidly propagated from synagogue to synagogue in the surrounding nations. John preached repentance, and baptized with reference to him that was to come after him Acts 19:4, and this doctrine Apollos seems to have embraced.

Verse 26

And expounded - Explained.

The way of God - Gave him full and ample instructions respecting the Messiah as having already come, and respecting the nature of his work.

Verse 27

Into Achaia - See the notes on Acts 18:12.

The brethren wrote - The brethren at Ephesus. Why he was disposed to go into Achaia the historian does not inform us. But he had heard of the success of Paul there; of the church which he had established; of the

opposition of the Jews; and it was doubtless with a desire to establish that church, and with a wish to convince his unbelieving countrymen that their views of the Messiah were erroneous, and that Jesus of Nazareth corresponded with the predictions of the prophets, that he went there. Many of the Greeks at Corinth were greatly captivated with his winning eloquence 1 Corinthians 1:12; 1 Corinthians 3:4-5, and his going there was the occasion of some unhappy divisions that sprung up in the church. But in all this he retained the confidence and love of Paul, 1 Corinthians 1:3. It was thus shown that Paul was superior to envy, and that great success by one minister need not excite the envy, or alienate the confidence and good will of another.

Helped them much - Strengthened them, and aided them in their controversies with the unbelieving Jews.

Which had believed through grace - The words "through grace" may either refer to Apollos, or to the Christians who had believed. If to him, it means that he was enabled by grace to strengthen the brethren there; if to them, it means that they had been led to believe by the grace or favor of God. Either interpretation makes good sense. Our translation has adopted what is most natural and obvious.

Verse 28

For he mightily convinced the Jews - He did it by strong arguments; he bore down all opposition, and effectually silenced them.

And that publicly - In his public preaching in the synagogue and elsewhere.

Showing by the scriptures - Proving from the Old Testament. Showing that Jesus of Nazareth corresponded with the account of the Messiah given by the prophets. See the notes on John 5:39.

That Jesus was Christ - See the margin. That Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Verse 1

While Apollos was at Corinth - It is probable that he remained there a considerable time.

Paul, having passed through the upper coasts - The upper, or more elevated regions of Asia Minor. The writer refers here particularly to the provinces of Phrygia and Galatia, Acts 18:23. These regions were called upper, because they were situated on the high table-land in the interior of Asia Minor, while Ephesus was in the low maritime regions, and called the low country.

Came to Ephesus - Agreeably to his promise, Acts 18:21.

And finding certain disciples - Certain persons who had been baptized into John‘s baptism, and who had embraced John‘s doctrine that the Messiah was soon to appear, Acts. Acts 19:3-4. It is very clear that they had not yet heard that he had come, or that the Holy Spirit was given. They were evidently in the same situation as Apollos. See the notes on Acts 18:25.

Verse 2

Have ye received the Holy Spirit? - Have ye received the extraordinary effusions and miraculous influences of the Holy Spirit? Paul would not doubt that, if they had “believed,” they had received the ordinary converting influences of the Holy Spirit - for it was one of his favorite doctrines that the Holy Spirit renews the heart. But, besides this, the miraculous influences of the Spirit were conferred on many societies of believers. The power of speaking with tongues, or of working miracles, was imparted as an evidence of the presence of God, and of their acceptance with him, Acts 10:45-46; Acts 19:4-5.

(3) it is not remarkable, therefore, that they had no clear conceptions of the character and operations of the Holy Spirit. Yet,

(4) They were just in that state of mind that they were willing to embrace the doctrine when it was proclaimed to them, thus showing that they were really under the influence of the Holy Spirit. God may often produce important changes in the hearts and lives of sinners, even where they have no clear and systematic views of religious doctrines. In all such

cases, however, there will be a readiness of heart to embrace the truth where it is made known.

Verse 3

Unto what - Unto what faith or doctrine. What did you profess to believe when you were baptized?

Unto John‘s baptism - See the notes on Acts 18:25.

Verse 4

John verily baptized - John did indeed baptize.

With the baptism of repentance - Having special reference to repentance, or as a profession that they did repent of their sins. See the notes on Matthew 3:6.

Saying unto the people - The design of his preaching was to tarn the people from their sins, and to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah. He therefore directed their attention principally to him that was to come, John 1:15, John 1:22-27.

That is, on Christ Jesus - These are the words of Paul, explaining what John taught. John taught them to believe in the Messiah, and Paul now showed them that the Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth. The argument of Paul is, that it was highly proper for them now to profess publicly that Saviour to whom John had borne such explicit testimony. “Jesus is the Messiah for whom John came to prepare the way; and as you have em braced John‘s doctrine, you ought now publicly to acknowledge that Redeemer by baptism in his name.

Verse 5

When they heard this - When they heard what Paul had said respecting the nature of John‘s baptism.

They were baptized … - As there is no other instance in the New Testament of any persons having been rebaptized, it has been made a question by some critics whether it was done here; and they have supposed that all this is the narrative of Luke respecting what took place under the ministry of John: to wit, that he told them to believe on Christ Jesus, and then baptized them in his name. But this is a most forced construction; and it is evident that these persons were rebaptized by the direction of Paul. For:

(1) This is the obvious interpretation of the passage - what would strike all persons as correct, unless there were some previous theory to support.

(2) it was not a matter of fact that John baptized in the name of Christ Jesus. His was the baptism of repentance; and there is not the slightest evidence that he ever used the name of Jesus in the form of baptism.

(3) if it be the sense of the passage that John baptized them in the name of Jesus, then this verse is a mere repetition of Acts. Acts 19:4; a tautology of which the sacred writers would not be guilty.

(4) it is evident that the persons on whom Paul laid his hands Acts. Acts 19:6, and those who were baptized, were the same. But these were the persons who heard Acts. Acts 19:5 what was said. The narrative is continuous, all parts of it cohering together as relating to a transaction that occurred at the same time. If the obvious interpretation of the passage be the true one, it follows that the baptism of John was not strictly Christian baptism. It was the baptism of repentance; a baptism designed to prepare the way for the introduction of the kingdom of the Messiah. It will not follow, however, from this that Christian baptism is now ever to be repeated. For this there is no warrant in the New Testament. There is no command to repeat it, as in the case of the Lord‘s Supper; and the nature and design of the ordinance evidently supposes that it is to be performed but once. The disciples of John were rebaptized, not because baptism is designed to be repeated, but because they never had been, in fact, baptized in the manner prescribed by the Lord Jesus.

In the name of the Lord Jesus - See the notes on Acts 2:38.

Verse 6

And when Paul laid his hands … - See the notes on Acts 8:17.

And they spake with tongues - See the notes on Acts 2:4; Acts 10:46.

And prophesied - See the notes on Acts 2:17; Acts 11:27.

Verse 7

And all the men - The whole number.

Verse 8

Persuading the things - Endeavoring to persuade them of the truth of what was affirmed respecting the kingdom of God.

Verse 9

But when divers - When some were hardened.

Were hardened - When their hearts were hardened, and they became violently opposed to the gospel. When the truth made no impression on

them. The word "harden," as applied to the heart, is often used to denote "insensibility, and opposition to the gospel."

But spake evil of that way - Of the gospel - the way, path, or manner in which God saves people. See Acts 16:17; Acts 18:26; Matthew 7:13-14.

Separated the disciples - Removed them from the influence and society of those who were seeking to draw them away from the faith. This is often the best way to prevent the evil influence of others. Christians, if they wish to preserve their minds calm and peaceful; if they wish to avoid the agitations of conflict, and the temptations of those who would lead them astray, should withdraw from their society, and seek the fellowship of their Christian brethren.

Disputing daily - This is not a happy translation. The word used here διαλεγόμενος dialegomenosdoes not of necessity denote "disputation or contention," but is often used in a good sense of "reasoning" Acts 17:2; Acts 18:4, Acts 18:19; Acts 24:25, or of "public preaching," Acts 20:7, Acts 20:9. It is used in this sense here, and denotes that Paul taught publicly, or reasoned on the subject of religion in this place.

In the school of one Tyrannus - Who this Tyrannus was is not known. It is probable that he was a Jew, who was engaged in this employment, and who might not be unfavorably disposed toward Christians. In his school, or in the room which he occupied for teaching, Paul instructed the people when he was driven from the synagogue. Christians at that time had no churches, and they were obliged to assemble in any place where it might be convenient to conduct public worship.

Verse 10

This continued - This public instruction.

By the space … - For two whole years.

So that all - That is, the great mass of the people.

Which dwelt in Asia - In that province of Asia Minor of which Ephesus was the principal city. The name Asia was used sometimes to denote that single province. See the notes on Acts 2:9. Ephesus was the capital; and there was, of course, a constant and large influx of people there for the purposes of commerce and worship.

Heard the word of the Lord Jesus - Heard the doctrine respecting the Lord Jesus.

Verse 11

Special miracles - Miracles that were remarkable; that were not common, or that were very unusual (οὐ τὰς τυχών ou tas tuchōn). This expression is Classical Greek. Thus, Longinus says of Moses that he was no common man - οὐχ᾽ ὁ τύχων ἀνήρ ouch ho tuchōn anērf0.

Verse 12

So that from his body - That is, those handkerchiefs which had been applied to his body, which he had used, or which he had touched. An instance somewhat similar to this occurs in the case of the woman who was healed by touching the hem of the Saviour‘s garment, Matthew 9:20-22.

d **Unto the sick -** The sick who were at a distance, and who were unable to go where he was. If it be asked why this was done, it may be observed:

(1) That the working of miracles in that region would greatly contribute to the spread of the gospel.

(2) we are not to suppose that there was any efficacy in the aprons thus brought, or in the mere fact that they had touched the body of Paul, anymore than there was in the hem of the Saviour‘s garment which the woman touched, or in the clay which he made use of to open the eyes of the blind man, John 8:6.

(3) in this instance, the fact that the miracles were performed in this manner by garments which had touched his body, was a mere sign, or an evidence to the persons concerned, that it was done by the instrumentality of Paul, as the fact that the Saviour put his fingers into the ears of a deaf man, and spit and touched his tongue Mark 7:33, was an evidence to those who saw it that the power of healing came from him. The bearing of these aprons to the sick was, therefore, merely evidence to all concerned that miraculous power was given to Paul.

Handkerchiefs - The word used here σουδάρια soudariais of Latin origin, and properly denotes “a piece of linen” with which sweat was wiped from the face; and then “any piece of linen used for tying up or containing anything.” In Luke 19:20, it denotes the “napkin” in which the talent of the unprofitable servant was concealed; in John 11:44; John 20:7, the “napkin” which was used to bind up the face of the dead applied to Lazarus and to our Saviour.

Or aprons - σιμικίνθια simikinthiaThis is also Latin word, and means literally a half girdle, or covering half the person a piece of cloth which was girded round the waist to preserve the clothes of those who were engaged in any kind of work. The word "aprons" expresses the idea.

And the diseases departed - The sick were healed.

And the evil spirits - See the notes on Matthew 4:24. It is evident that this power of working miracles would contribute greatly to Paul's success among the people.

Verse 13

The vagabond Jews - Greek: Jews going about - περιερχομένων perierchomenōnThe word "vagabond" with us is now commonly used in a bad sense, to denote "a vagrant; a man who has no home; an idle, worthless fellow." The word, however, properly means "one wandering from place to place, without any settled habitation, from whatever cause it may be." Here it denotes "those Jews who wandered from place to place, practicing exorcism."

Exorcists - ἐξορκιστῶν exorkistōnThis word properly denotes "those who went about pretending to be able to expel evil spirits, or to cure diseases by charms, incantations," etc. The word is derived from ὁρκίζω horkizō"to bind with an oath." It was applied in this sense, because those who pretended to be able to expel demons used the formula of an oath, or adjured them, to compel them to leave the possessed persons. Compare Matthew 12:27. They commonly used the name of God, or called on the demons in the name of God to leave the person. Here they used the name Jesus to command them to come out. Such wanderers and pretenders are common in Oriental countries now. See Land and the Book, vol. i. 224,510.

To call over them - To name, or to use his name as sufficient to expel the evil spirit.

The name of the Lord Jesus - The reasons why they attempted this were:

(1) That Jesus had expelled many evil spirits; and,

(2) That it was in his name that Paul had performed his miracles. Perhaps they supposed there was some charm in this name to expel them.

We adjure you - We bind you by an oath; we command you as under the solemnity of an oath, Mark 5:7; 1 Thessalonians 5:27. It is a form of putting one under oath, 1 Kings 2:43; Genesis 24:37; 2 Kings 11:4;

Nehemiah 13:25 (Septuagint). That this art was practiced then, or attempted, is abundantly proved from Irenaeus, Origen, and Josephus (*Antiq.*, book 8, chapter 2, section 5). See Doddridge. The common name which was used was the incommunicable name of God, Yahweh, by pronouncing which, in a special way, it was pretended they had the power of expelling demons.

Verse 14

One Sceva - Sceva is a Greek name, but nothing more is known of him.

Chief of the priests - This cannot mean that he was high priest among the Jews, as it is wholly improbable that his sons would be wandering exorcists. But it denotes that he was of the sacerdotal order. He was a Jewish chief priest; a priest of distinction, and had held the office of a ruler. The word "chief priest," in the New Testament, usually refers to men of the sacerdotal order who were also rulers in the Sanhedrin.

Verse 15

Jesus I know - His power to cast out devils I know. Compare Matthew 8:29.

Paul I know - Paul's power to cast out devils, Acts. Acts 19:12.

But who are ye? - What power have you over evil spirits? By what right do you attempt to expel them? The meaning is, "You belong neither to Jesus nor Paul, and you have no right or authority to at tempt to work miracles in the name of either."

Verse 16

Leaped on them - Several such instances are recorded of the extraordinary power and rage of those who were possessed with evil spirits, Mark 5:3; Mark 9:29; Luke 9:42.

Verse 17

The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified - Acquired increasing honor. The transaction showed that the miracles performed in the name of the Lord Jesus by Paul were real, and were performed in attestation of the truth of the doctrine which he taught. Impostors could not work such miracles; and they who pretended to be able to do it only exposed themselves to the rage of evil spirits. It was thus shown that there was a real, vital difference between Paul and these impostors, and their failure only served to extend his reputation and the power of the gospel.

Verse 18

Their deeds - Their actions; their evil course of life. The direct reference here is to the magical arts which had been used, but the word may also be designed to denote "iniquity" in general. They who make a profession of religion will be willing to confess their transgressions, and no man can have evidence that he is truly renewed who is not willing to confess as well as to forsake his sins, Romans 10:10; Proverbs 28:13, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy."

Verse 19

Curious arts - Arts or practices requiring skill, address, cunning. The word used here (περίεργα perierga) denotes properly "those things that require care or skill," and was thus applied to the arts of "magic, jugglery, and sleight of hand" that were practiced so extensively in Eastern countries. That such arts were practiced at Ephesus is well known. The Ephesian letters, by which incantations and charms were supposed to be produced, were much celebrated. They seem to have consisted of certain combinations of letters or words, which, by being pronounced with certain intonations of voice, were believed to be effectual in expelling diseases, or evil spirits; or which, by being written on parchment and worn, were supposed to operate as amulets, or charms, to guard from evil spirits or from danger. Thus, Plutarch (Sympos., 7) says, "The magicians compel those who are possessed with a demon to recite and pronounce the Ephesian letters, in a certain order, by themselves." Thus, Clemens Alex. (Strom. ii.) says, "Androcydes, a Pythagorean, says that the letters which are called Ephesian, and which are so celebrated, are symbols, etc." Erasmus says (*Adagg. Cent.*, 2) that there were certain marks and magical words among the Ephesians, by using which they succeeded in every undertaking. Eustath. a.d. Homer, *Odyssey* τ , says "that those letters were incantations which Croesus used when on the funeral pile, and which greatly befriended him." He adds that, in the war between the Milesians and Ephesians, the latter were thirteen times saved from ruin by the use of these letters. See Grotius and Kuinoel.

Brought their books - Books which explained the arts, or which contained the magical forms and incantations - perhaps pieces of parchment, on which were written the letters which were to be used in the incantations and charms.

And burned them before all men - Publicly. Their arts and offences had been public, and they sought now to undo the evil, as much as lay in their power, as extensively as they had done it.

And they counted - The price was estimated. By whom this was done does not appear. Probably it was not done by those who had been engaged in this business, and who had suffered the loss, but by the people, who were amazed at the sacrifice, and who were astonished at their folly in thus destroying their own property.

Fifty thousand pieces of silver - What coin the word ἀργυρίου argurioühere translated "silver" denotes, it is impossible to tell, and consequently the precise value of this sacrifice cannot be ascertained. If it refers to the Jewish shekel, the sum would be 25,000 (about 5,420 British pounds), since the shekel was worth about half a dollar (circa 1880's). If it refers to Grecian or Roman coin - which is much more probable, as this was a pagan country, where the Jewish coin would not, probably, be much used the value would be much less. Probably, however, it refers to the Attic drachma, which was a silver coin worth about 9d. sterling, or not far from 17 cents, and then the value would be about 8,500 (1,875 British pounds). The precise value is not material. It was a large sum; and it is recorded to show that Christianity had power to induce people to forsake arts that were most lucrative, and to destroy the means of extending and perpetuating those arts, however valuable in a pecuniary point of view they might be. We are to remember, however, that this was not the intrinsic value of these books, but only their value as books of incantation. In themselves they might have been of very little worth. The universal prevalence of Christianity would make much that is now esteemed valuable pro, retry utterly worthless, as, for example, all that is used in gambling, in fraud, in counterfeiting, in distilling ardent spirits for drink, in the slave-trade, and in attempts to impose on and defraud mankind.

Verse 20

So mightily grew the word of God - So powerfully. It had such efficacy and power in this wicked city. That power must have been mighty which would thus make them willing not only to cease to practice imposition, but to give up all hopes of future gains, and to destroy their property. On this instructive narrative we may remark:

(1) That religion has power to break the hold of sinners on unjust and dishonest means of living.

(2) that those who have been engaged in an unchristian and dishonorable practice will abandon it when they become Christians.

(3) that their abhorrence of their former course will be, and ought to be, expressed as publicly as was the offence.

(4) that the evil practice will be abandoned at any sacrifice, however great. The question will be, what is right; not what will it cost. Property, in the view of a converted man, is nothing when compared with a good conscience.

(5) this conduct of those who had used curious arts shows us what ought to be done by those who have been engaged in any evil course of life and who are then converted. If what they did when they were converted was right - and who can doubt it? - it settles a great principle on which young converts should act. If a man has been engaged in the slave-trade, he will abandon it, and his duty will not be to sell his ship to one who he knows will continue the traffic. His property should be withdrawn from the business publicly, either by being destroyed, or by being converted to a useful purpose. If a man has been a distiller of ardent spirits as a drink, his duty will be to forsake his evil course. Nor will it be his duty to sell his distillery to one who will continue the business, but to withdraw his property from it publicly, either by destroying it, or converting it to some useful purpose. If a man has been engaged in the traffic in ardent spirits, his duty is not to sell his stock to those who will continue the sale of the poison, but to withdraw it from public use - converting it to some useful purpose, if he can; if not, by destroying it. All that has ever been said by money-loving distillers, or venders of ardent spirits, about the loss which they would sustain by abandoning the business, might have been said by these practitioners of curious arts in Ephesus. And if the excuses of rumselling people are valid, their conduct was folly; and they should either have continued the business of practicing “curious arts” after they were converted, or should have sold their “books” to those who would have continued it. For assuredly it was not worse to practice jugglery and fortune-telling than it is to destroy the bodies and souls of people by the traffic in ardent spirits. And yet, how few people there are in Christian lands

who practice on the principle of these honest, but comparatively unenlightened men at Ephesus.

Verse 21

After these things were ended - After the gospel was firmly established at Ephesus, so that his presence there was no longer necessary.

Purposed in the spirit - Resolved in his mind.

When he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia - In these places he had founded flourishing churches. It is probable that his main object in this visit was to take up a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem. See the notes on Romans 15:25-26.

To go to Jerusalem - To bear the contribution of the Gentile churches to the poor and oppressed Christians in Judea.

I must also see Rome - See the notes on Romans 15:24. He did go to Rome, but he went in chains, as a prisoner.

Verse 22

Timotheus - Timothy. He was a proper person to send there to visit the churches, as he had been there before with Paul, when they were established, Acts 16:3; Acts 17:14.

And Erastus - Erastus was chamberlain of Corinth (Romans 16:23), or, more properly, the treasurer of the city (see the notes on that place), and he was, therefore, a very proper person to be sent with Timothy for the purpose of making the collection for the poor at Jerusalem. Paul had wisdom enough to employ a man accustomed to monied transactions in making a collection. On this collection his heart was intent, and he afterward went up with it to Jerusalem. See 2 Corinthians 8:9, and notes on Romans 15:25-26.

Stayed in Asia - At Ephesus.

For a season - How long is uncertain. He waited for a convenient opportunity to follow them, probably intending to do it as soon as they had fully prepared the way for the collection. See Paley‘s Horae Paulinae, p. 1, chapter 2.

Verse 23

No small stir - No little excitement, disturbance, or tumult τάραχος tarachosCompare Acts 17:4-5. “About that way.” Respecting the doctrines of Christianity which Paul preached. See the notes on Acts 9:2; Acts 18:26; Acts 19:9.

Verse 24

A silversmith - The word used here denotes "one who works in silver" in any way, either in making money, in stamping silver, or in forming utensils from it. It is probable that the employment of this man was confined to the business here specified, that of making shrines, as his complaint Acts. Acts 19:26-27 implied that destroying this would be sufficient to throw them out of all employment. Silver shrines ναοὺς naousTemples. The word "shrine" properly means "a case, small chest, or box"; particularly applied to a box in which sacred things are deposited. Hence, we hear of the shrines for relics (Webster). The word "shrines" here denotes "small portable temples, or edifices," made of silver, so as to represent the temple of Diana, and probably containing a silver image of the goddess. Such shrines would be purchased by devotees and by worshippers of the goddess, and by strangers, who would be desirous of possessing a representation of one of the seven wonders of the world. See the notes on Acts 19:27. The great number of persons that came to Ephesus for her worship would constitute an ample sale for productions of this kind, and make the manufacture a profitable employment. It is well known that pagans everywhere are accustomed to carry with them small images, or representations of their gods, as an amulet or charm. The Romans had such images in all their houses, called penates, or household gods. A similar thing is mentioned as early as the time of Laban Genesis 31:19, whose images Rachel had stolen and taken with her. Compare Judges 17:5, "The man Micah had an house of gods"; 1 Samuel 19:13; Hosea 3:4. These images were usually enclosed in a box, case, or chest, made of wood, iron, or silver; and probably, as here, usually made to resemble the temple where the idol was worshipped.

Diana - This was a celebrated goddess of the pagan, and one of the twelve superior deities. In the heavens she was Luna, or Meui (the moon); on earth, Diana; and in hell, Hecate. She was sometimes represented with a crescent on her head, a bow in her hand, and dressed in a hunting habit; at other times with a triple face, and with instruments of torture. She was commonly regarded as the goddess of hunting. She was also worshipped under the various names of Lucina, Proserpine, Trivia, etc. She was also represented with a great number of breasts, to denote her as being the fountain of blessings, or as distributing her benefits to each in their proper station. She was worshipped in Egypt, Athens, Cilicia, and among pagan

nations generally; but the most celebrated place of her worship was Ephesus, a city especially dedicated to her.

Unto the craftsmen - To the laborers employed under Demetrius in the manufacture of shrines.

Verse 25

With the workmen of like occupation - Those who were in his employ, and all others engaged in the same business. As they would be all affected in the same way, it was easy to produce an excitement among them all.

Sirs - Greek: Men.

By this craft - By this business or occupation. This is our trade.

Our wealth - Greek: our acquisition; our property. We are dependent on it for a living. It does not mean that they were rich, but that they relied on this for a subsistence. That it was a lucrative business is apparent, but it is not affirmed that they were in fact rich.

Verse 26

Ye see and hear - You see at Ephesus, and you hear the same in other places.

Throughout all Asia - All Asia Minor; or perhaps the province of which Ephesus was the capital. See the notes on Acts 2:9.

This Paul hath persuaded - We have here the noble testimony of a pagan to the zeal and success of the ministry of Paul. It is an acknowledgment that his labors had been most strikingly successful in turning the people from idolatry.

Saying that they be no gods … - See the notes on Acts 14:14-15.

Verse 27

So that not only … - The grounds of the charge which Demetrius made against Paul were two: first, that the business of the craftsmen would be destroyed usually the first thing that strikes the mind of a sinner who is influenced By self-interest alone; and, second, that the worship of Diana would cease if Paul and his fellow-laborers were suffered to continue their efforts.

This our craft - This business in which we are engaged, and on which we are dependent. Greek: this part τὸ μέρος to meroswhich pertains to us.

To be set at nought - To be brought into contempt. It will become so much an object of ridicule and contempt that we shall have no further employment. Greek: "Is in danger of coming into refutation" εἰς ἀπελεγμὸν

eis apelegmonSince what is refuted by argument is deemed useless, so the word comes also to signify what is useless, or which is an object of contempt or ridicule. We may here remark:

(1) That the extensive prevalence of the Christian religion would destroy many kinds of business in which people now engage. It would put an end to all that now ministers to the pride, vanity, luxury, vice, and ambition of people. Let religion prevail, and wars would cease, and all the preparations for war which now employ so many hearts and hands would be useless. Let religion prevail, and temperance would prevail also; and consequently all the capital and labor now employed in distilling and vending ardent spirits would be withdrawn, and the business be broken up. Let religion prevail, and licentiousness would cease, and all the arts which minister to it would be useless. Let Christianity prevail, and all that goes now to minister to idolatry, and the corrupt passions of people, would be destroyed. No small part of the talent, also, that is now worse than wasted in corrupting others by ballads and songs, by fiction and licentious tales, would be withdrawn. A vast amount of capital and talent would thus be at once set at liberty, to be employed in nobler and better purposes.

(2) the effect of religion is often to bring the employments of people into shame and contempt. A revival of religion often makes the business of distilling an object of abhorrence. It pours shame on those who are engaged in ministering to the vices and luxuries of the world. Religion reveals the evil of such a course of life, and those vices are banished by the mere prevalence of better principles. Yet,

(3) The talent and capital thins disengaged is not rendered useless. It may be directed to other channels and other employment. Religion does not make people idle. It leads people to devote their talents to useful employments, and opens fields in which all may toil usefully to themselves and to their fellow-men. If all the capital, the genius, and the learning which are now wasted, and worse than wasted, were to be at once withdrawn from their present pursuits, they might be profitably employed. There is not now a useless man who might, not be useful; there is not a cent wasted which might not be employed to advantage in the great work of making the world better and happier.

But also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised - This temple, so celebrated, was regarded as one of the seven wonders of the world. It was 220 years in building before it was brought to perfection. It was built at the expense of all Asia Minor. The original object of worship among the Ephesians was a small statue of Diana, made of wood, but of what kind of wood is unknown. Pliny says that the temple was made of cedar, but that it was doubtful of what kind of wood the image was made. Some have said that it was of ebony. Mucian, who was three times consul, says that the Image was made of vine, and was never changed, though the temple was rebuilt seven times (Pliny, 16:79). See Vitruvius, ii. 9. It was merely an Egyptian hieroglyphic, with many breasts, representing the goddess of Nature - under which idea Diana was probably worshipped at Ephesus. Since the original figure became decayed by age, it was propped up by two rods of iron like spits, which were carefully copied in the image which was afterward made in imitation of the first.

A temple, most magnificent in structure, was built to contain the image of Diana, which was several times built and rebuilt. The first is said to have been completed in the reign of Servius Tullius, at least 570 b.c. Another temple is mentioned as having been designed by Ctesiphon, 540 years before the Christian era, and which was completed by Daphnis of Miletus and a citizen of Ephesus. This temple was partially destroyed by fire on the very day on which Socrates was poisoned, in 400 b.c., and again in 356 b.c., by the philosopher Herostratus, on the day on which Alexander the Great was born. He confessed, upon being put to the torture, that the only motive he had was to immortalize his name. The four walls, and a few columns only, escaped the flames. The temple was repaired, and restored to more than its former magnificence, in which, says Pliny (lib. xxxvi. c. 14), 220 years were required to bring it to completion.

It was 425 feet in length, 220 in breadth, and was supported by 127 pillars of Parian marble, each of which was 60 feet high. These pillars were furnished by as many princes, and 36 of them were curiously carved, and the rest were finely polished. Each pillar, it is supposed, with its base, contained 150 tons of marble. The doors and panelling were made of cypress wood, the roof of cedar, and the interior was rendered splendid by decorations of gold, and by the finest productions of ancient artists. This celebrated edifice, after suffering various partial demolitions, was finally

burned by the Goths, in their third naval invasion, in 260 a.d. Travelers are now left to conjecture where its site was. Amidst the confused ruins of ancient Ephesus, it is now impossible to tell where this celebrated temple was, once one of the wonders of the world. "So passes away the glory of this world." See the Edinburgh Encyclopedia's "Ephesus" also Anacharsis' Travels, vol. vi. p. 188; Ancient Universal Hist., vol. vii. p. 416; and Pococke's Travels.

And her magnificence - Her majesty and glory; that is, the splendor of her temple and her worship.

Whom all Asia - All Asia Minor.

And the world - Other parts of the world. The temple had been built by contributions from a great number of princes, and doubtless multitudes from all parts of the earth came to Ephesus to pay their homage to Diana.

Verse 28

Were full of wrath - Were greatly enraged - probably at the prospect of losing their gains.

Great is Diana … - The term "great" was often applied by the Greeks to Diana. Thus, in Xenophon (Ephes. i.), he says, "I adjure you by your own goddess, the great (τὴν μεγάλην tēn megalēn) Diana of the Ephesians." The design of this clamor was doubtless to produce a persecution against Paul, and thus to secure a continuance of their employment. Often, when people have no arguments, they raise a clamor; when their employments are in danger of being ruined, they are filled with rage. We may learn, also, that when people's pecuniary interests are affected, they often show great zeal for religion, and expect by clamor in behalf of some doctrine to maintain their own interest, and to secure their own gains.

Verse 29

Confusion - Tumult; disorder.

Gaius - He had lived at Corinth, and had kinky entertained Paul at his house, 1 Corinthians 1:14; Romans 16:23.

Aristarchus - He attended Paul to Rome, and was there a prisoner with him, Colossians 4:10.

With one accord - Tumultuously; or with one mind or purpose.

Into the theatre - The theaters of the Greeks were not only places for public exhibitions, but also for holding assemblies, and often for courts, elections, etc. The people, therefore, naturally rushed there, as being a suitable place to decide this matter.

Verse 30

Would have entered in unto the people - Probably to have addressed them, and to defend his own cause.

Verse 31

Certain of the chief of Asia - τῶν Ἀσιαρχῶν tōn AsiarchōnOf the Asiarchs. These were persons who presided over sacred things and over the public games. It was their business to see that the proper services of religion were observed, and that proper honor was rendered to the Roman emperor in the public festivals, at the games, etc. They were annually elected, and their election was confirmed at Rome before it was valid They held a common council at the principal city within their province, as at Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis, etc., to consult and deliberate about the interests committed to their charge in their various provinces (Kuinoel and Schleusner). Probably they were assembled on such an occasion now; and during their remaining there they had heard Paul preach, and were friendly to his views and doctrines.

Which were his friends - It does not appear from ibis that they were Christian converts; but they probably had feelings of respect toward him, and were disposed to defend him and his cause. Perhaps, also, there might have existed a personal acquaintance and attachment.

Would not adventure - Would not risk his life in the tumult, and under the excited feelings of the multitude.

Verse 32

Some therefore cried one thing … - This is an admirable description of a mob, assembled for what purpose they knew not; but agitated by passions, and strifes, and tumults.

And the more part knew not … - The greater part did not know. They had been drawn together by the noise and excitement, and but a small part would know the real cause of the commotion. This is usually the case in tumultuous meetings.

Verse 33

And they drew Alexander - Who this Alexander was is not known. Grotius supposes that it was "Alexander the coppersmith, who had in some way done Paul much harm 2 Timothy 4:14; and whom, with Philetus, Paul had excommunicated. He supposes that it was a device of the Jews to put forward one who had been of the Christian party, in order to accuse Paul, and to attempt to cast the odium of the tumult on him. But it is not clear that

the Alexander whom Paul had excommunicated was the person concerned in this transaction. All that appears in this narrative is, that Alexander was one who was known to be a Jew, and who wished to defend the Jews from being regarded as the authors of this tumult. It would be supposed by the pagan that the Christians Were only a sect of the Jews, and the Jews wished, doubtless, to show that they had not been concerned in giving occasion to this tumult, but that it was to be traced wholly to Paul and his friends.

The Jews putting him forward - That he might have a convenient opportunity to speak to the people.

Would have made his defence - Our translation, by the phrase "his defense," would seem to imply that he was personally accused. But it was not so. The Greek is simply, "was about to apologize to the people"; that is, to make a defense, not of himself particularly, but of the Jews in general. The translation should have been "a defense."

Verse 34

But when they knew - When they perceived or ascertained.

That he was a Jew - There was a general prejudice against the Jews. They were disposed to charge the whole difficulty on Jews - esteeming Christians to be but a sect of the Jews. They were, therefore, indiscriminate in their wrath, and unwilling to listen to any defense.

With one voice - Unitedly, in one continued shout and clamor.

About the space of two hours - The day, from sunrise to sunset, among the Greeks and Romans, was divided into twelve equal parts, John 11:9. An hour, therefore, did not differ materially from an hour with us. It is not at all improbable that the tumult would continue for so long a time, before it would be possible to allay the excitement.

Cried out … - This they at first did to silence Alexander. The shouting, however, was continued in order to evince their attachment to Diana, as would be natural in an excited and tumultuous mob of pagan worshippers.

Verse 35

And when the town-clerk - ὁ γραμματεύς ho grammateusThe scribe; the secretary. This word is often used in the Bible, and is commonly translated "scribe," and is applied to "public notaries in the synagogues; to clerks; to those who transcribed books, and hence, to men skilled in the law or in any kind of learning." Compare 2 Samuel 8:17; 2 Kings 12:11; Ezra 7:6, Ezra 7:11-12; Matthew 5:20; Matthew 12:38; Matthew 13:52; Matthew 15:1; Matthew 23:34; 1 Corinthians 1:20. It is, however, nowhere else

applied to a pagan magistrate. It probably denoted "a recorder; or a transcriber of the laws; or a chancellor" (Kuinoel, Doddridge). This officer had a seat in their deliberative assemblies, and on him it seems to have devolved to keep the peace. The Syriac, "Prince of the city." The Vulgate and Arabic, "Scribe."

Had appeased the people - καταστείλας katasteilasHaving restrained, quieted, tranquillized, so as to be able to address them.

What man is there - Who is there that can deny this? It is universally known and admitted. This is the language of strong confidence, of reproof, and of indignation. It implied that the worship of Diana was so well established that there was no danger that it could be destroyed by a few Jews, and he therefore reproved them for what he deemed their unreasonable fears. But he little knew the power of that religion which had been the innocent cause of all this tumult; nor that, at no very distant period, this despised religion would overturn not only the worship of Diana at Ephesus, but the splendid idolatry of the mighty Roman empire.

Is a worshipper - νεωκόρον neōkoronMargin, temple-keeper. The word used here does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It is derived from νεὼς neōsfor ναὸς naosa temple, and κορέω koreōto sweep, to cleanse. But among the ancients, the office of keeping their temples was by no means as humble as that of sexton is with us. It was regarded as an office of honor and dignity to have charge of the temples of the gods, and to keep them in order. The term was also given to the cities that were regarded as the special patrons or worshippers of certain gods and goddesses. They esteemed it an honor to be regarded as the special keepers of their temples and images, or as having adopted them as their tutelar divinities. Such was Ephesus in regard to Diana. It was considered to be a high honor that the city was everywhere regarded as being entrusted with the worship of Diana, or with keeping the temple regarded by the whole world as especially her own. See Schleusner on this word.

And of the image - A special guardian of the image, or statue of Diana.

Which fell down … - Which was reigned or believed to have been sent down from heaven. See the notes on Acts 19:27. It is probable that the image was so ancient that the maker of it was unknown, and it was therefore reigned to have fallen from heaven. It was for the interest of the priest to keep up this impression. Many cities pretended to have been favored in a similar manner with images or statues of the gods, sent directly

from heaven. The safety of Troy was supposed to depend on the Palladium, or image of Pallas Minerva, which was believed to have fallen from heaven. Numa pretended that the ancilia, or sacred shields, had descended from heaven. Herodian expressly affirms that "the Phoenicians had no statue of the sun polished by the hand, but only a certain large stone, circular below, and terminated acutely above in the figure of a cone, of a black color, and that they believed it to have fallen from heaven." The same thing was affirmed of the ancient Minerva of the Athenian Acropolis (Paus., Att. 26); of the Paphian Venus, and the Ceres of Sicily (Cic. in Verr., v. 187). It has been supposed by some that this image at Ephesus was merely a conical or pyramidal stone which fell from the clouds - a meteorite - and that it was regarded with superstitious reverence, as having been sent from heaven. See the Edinburgh Encyclopedia's article, "Meteorites."

From Jupiter - See the notes on Acts 14:12.

Verse 36

Seeing then … - Since no one can call in question the zeal of the Ephesians on this subject, or doubt the sincerity of their belief, and since there can be no danger that this well-established worship is to be destroyed by the efforts of a few evil-disposed Jews, there is no occasion for this tumult.

Be quiet - Be appeased. The same Greek word which is used in Acts. Acts 19:35, "had appeased the people."

To do nothing rashly - To do nothing in a heated, inconsiderate manner. There is no occasion for tumult and riot. The whole difficulty can be settled in perfect consistency with the maintenance of order.

Verse 37

For ye … - Demetrius and his friends. The blame was to be traced to them.

Which are neither robbers of churches - The word "churches" we now apply to edifices reared for purposes of Christian worship. Since no such churches had then been built, this translation is unhappy, and is not at all demanded by the original. The Greek word ἱεροσύλους hierosulousis applied properly to those who commit sacrilege; who plunder temples of their sacred things. The meaning here is that Paul and his companions had not been guilty of robbing the temple of Diana, or any other temple. The charge of sacrilege could not be brought against them. Though they had preached against idols and idol worship, yet they had offered no violence to

the temples of idolaters, nor had they attempted to strip them of the sacred utensils employed in their service. What they had done, they had done peaceably.

Nor yet blasphemers of your goddess - They had not used harsh or reproachful language of Diana. This had not been charged on them, nor is there the least evidence that they had done it. They had opposed idolatry; had reasoned against it; and had endeavored to turn the people from it. But there is not the least evidence that they had ever done it in harsh or reproachful language. This shows that people should employ reason, and not harsh or reproachful language against a pervading evil; and that the way to remove it is to enlighten the minds of people, and to convince them of the error of their ways. People gain nothing by bitter and reviling words; and it is much to obtain the testimony of even the enemies of religion as Paul did of the chancellor of Ephesus - that no such words had been used in describing their crimes and follies.

Verse 38

Have a matter against any man - Have a complaint of injury; if injustice has been done them by anyone.

The law is open - See the margin. Ἀγόραιοι Agoraioi ἄγονται agontaithat is, ἡμέραι . There are court-days; days which are open, or appointed for judicial trials, where such matters can be determined in a proper manner. Perhaps the courts were then held, and the matter might be immediately determined.

And there are deputies - Roman proconsuls. See the notes on Acts 13:7. The cause might be brought before them with the certainty that it would be heard and decided. The Syriac reads this in the singular number "Lo, the proconsul is in the city."

Let them implead one another - Let them accuse each other in the court. The laws are equal, and impartial justice will be done.

Verse 39

But if we inquire - If you seek to determine any other matters than that pertaining to the alleged wrong which Demetrius has suffered in his business.

Other matters - Anything respecting public affairs; anything pertaining to the government and the worship of Diana.

In a lawful assembly - In an assembly convened, not by tumult and riot, but in conformity to law. This was a tumultuous assemblage, and it was

proper in the public officer to demand that they should disperse; and that, if there were any public grievances to be remedied, it should be done in an assembly properly convened. It may be remarked here that the original word rendered assembly is what is usually in the New Testament rendered church - ἐκκλησία ekklēsiaIt is properly rendered by the word "assembly" - not denoting here "a mixed or tumultuous assemblage, but one called out, or convened in the legal manner." The proper meaning of the word is "what is called out." "The church, the Christian assembly ἐκκλησία ekklēsiaof the faithful," is made up of those who are called out from the world.

Verse 40

To be called in question - By the government; by the Roman authority. Such a tumult, continued for so long. a time, would be likely to attract the attention of the magistrates, and expose them to their displeasure. Popular commotions were justly dreaded by the Roman government; and such an assembly as this, convened without any good cause, would not escape their notice. There was a Roman law which made it capital for anyone to be engaged in promoting a riot. Sui coetum, et concursum fecerit, capite puniatur: "He who raises a mob, let him be punished with death."

Verse 41

Dismissed the assembly - τὴν ἐκκλησίαν tēn ekklēsianThe word usually translated "church." Here it is applied to the irregular and tumultuous "assemblage" which had convened in a riotous manner.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Verse 1

The uproar - The tumult excited, by Demetrius and the workmen. After it had been quieted by the town-clerk, Acts 19:40-41.

Embraced them - Saluted them; gave them parting expressions of kindness. Compare the Luke 7:45 note; Romans 16:16 note; 1 Corinthians 16:20 note; 2 Corinthians 13:12 note; 1 Thessalonians 5:26 note; 1 Peter 5:14 note. The Syriac translates this, "Paul caned the disciples, and consoled them, and kissed them."

To go into Macedonia - On his way to Jerusalem, agreeably to his purpose, as recorded in Acts 19:21.

Verse 2

Over those parts - The parts of country in and near Macedonia. He probably went to Macedonia by Troas, where he expected to find Titus 2 Corinthians 2:12; but, not finding him there, he went by himself to Philippi, Thessalonica, etc., and then returned to Greece proper.

Into Greece - Into Greece proper, of which Athens was the capital. While in Macedonia he had great anxiety and trouble, but was at length comforted by the coming of Titus, who brought him intelligence of the liberal disposition of the churches of Greece in regard to the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, 2 Corinthians 7:5-7. It is probable that the Second Epistle to the Corinthians was written during this time in Macedonia, and sent to them by Titus.

Verse 3

And there abode - Why he remained here is unknown. It is probable that while in Greece he wrote the Epistle to the Romans. Compare Romans 15:25-27.

And when the Jews laid wait for him - There was a design formed against him by the Jews, which they sought to execute. Why they formed this purpose the historian has not informed us.

As he was about to sail - It would seem from this, that the design of the Jews was to attack the ship in which he was about to sail, or to arrest him on shipboard. This fact determined him to take a much more circuitous route by land, so that the churches of Macedonia were favored with another visit from him.

Into Syria - On his way to Jerusalem.

He purposed … - He resolved to avoid the snare which they had laid for him, and to return by the same way in which he had come into Greece.

Verse 4

And there accompanied him - It was usual for some of the disciples to attend the apostles in their journeys.

Into Asia - It is not meant that they attended him from Greece through Macedonia, but that they went with him to Asia, having gone before him, and joined him at Troas.

Sopater of Berea - Perhaps the same person who, in Romans 16:21, is called Sosipater, and who is there said to have been a kinsman of Paul.

Aristarchus - Acts 19:29.

Gaius of Derbe - See the notes on Acts 19:29.

Tychicus - This man was high in the confidence and affection of Paul. In Ephesians 6:21-22 he styles him "a beloved brother, and faithful minister in the Lord."

And Trophimus - Trophimus was from Ephesus, Acts 20:29. When Paul wrote his Second Epistle to Timothy he was at Miletum, sick, 2 Timothy 4:20.

Verse 5

These going before - Going before Paul and Luke. Dr. Doddridge supposes that only Tychicus and Trophimus went before the others. Perhaps the Greek most naturally demands this interpretation.

Tarried for us - The word "us," here, shows that Luke had again joined Paul as his companion. In Acts 16:12 it appears that Luke was in Philippi, in the house of Lydia. Why he remained there, or why he did not attend Paul in his journey to Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, etc., is not known. It is evident, however, that he here joined him again.

At Troas - See the notes on Acts 16:8.

Verse 6

After the days of unleavened bread - After the seven days of the Passover, during which they ate only unleavened bread. See Acts 16:11-12; but the navigation of the sea is uncertain, and they were now probably hindered by contrary winds.

Verse 7

And upon the first day of the week - Showing thus that this day was then observed by Christians as holy time. Compare 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10.

To break bread - Evidently to celebrate the Lord‘s Supper. Compare Acts 2:46. So the Syriac understands it, by translating it, “to break the eucharist”; that is, the eucharistic bread. It is probable that the apostles and early Christians celebrated the Lord‘s Supper on every Lord‘s day.

And continued his speech until midnight - The discourse of Paul continued until the breaking of day, Acts 20:11. But it was interrupted about midnight by the accident that occurred to Eutychus. The fact that Paul was about to leave them on the next day, probably to see them no more, was the principal reason why his discourse was so long continued. We are not to suppose, however, that it was one continued or set discourse. No small part of the time might have been passed in hearing and answering questions, though Paul was the chief speaker. The case proves that such seasons of extraordinary devotion may, in special circumstances, be proper. Occasions may arise where it will be proper for Christians to spend a much longer time than usual in public worship. It is evident, however, that such seasons do not often occur.

Verse 8

And there were many lights - Why this circumstance is mentioned is not apparent. It, however, meets one of the slanders of the early enemies of Christianity, that the Christians in their assemblies were accustomed to extinguish all the lights, and to commit every kind of abomination. Perhaps the mention of many lights here is designed to intimate that it was a place of public worship, as not only the Jews, but the Gentiles were accustomed to have many lights burning in such places.

In the upper chamber - See the notes on Acts 1:13.

Verse 9

And there sat in a window - The window was left open, probably to avoid the malice of their enemies, who might be disposed otherwise to charge them with holding their assemblies in darkness for purposes of iniquity. The window was probably a mere opening in the wall to let in light, as glass was not common at that time. As the shutters of the window were not closed, there was nothing to prevent Eutychus from falling down.

The third loft - The third story.

And was taken up dead - Some have supposed that he was merely stunned with the fall, and that he was still alive. But the obvious meaning is, that he was actually killed by the fall, and was miraculously restored to life. This is an instance of sleeping in public worship that has some apology. The

late hour of the night, and the length of the services, were the excuse. But, though the thing is often done now, yet how seldom is a sleeper in a church furnished with an excuse for it. No practice is more shameful, disrespectful, and abominable than that so common of sleeping in the house of God.

Verse 10

And fell on him … - Probably stretching himself on him as Elisha did on the Shunammite‘s son, 2 Kings 4:33-35. It was an act of tenderness and compassion, evincing a strong desire to restore him to life.

Trouble not yourselves - They would doubtless be thrown into great consternation by such an event. Paul therefore endeavoured to compose their minds by the assurance that he would live.

For his life is in him - He is restored to life. This has all the appearance of having been a miracle. Life was restored to him as Paul spoke.

Verse 11

Come up again - To the upper room, Acts 20:8.

And had broken bread, and eaten - Had taken refreshment. As this is spoken of Paul only, it is evidently distinguished from the celebration of the Lord‘s Supper.

Verse 12

Not a little comforted - By the fact that he was alive; perhaps also strengthened by the evidence that a miracle had been performed.

Verse 13

Sailed unto Assos - There were several cities of this name. One was in Lycia; one in the territory of Eolis; one in Mysia; one in Lydia; and another in Epirus. The latter is the one intended here. It was between Troas and Mitylene. The distance to it from Troas by land was about 20 miles, while the voyage round Cape Lecture was nearly twice as far, and accordingly Paul chose to go to it on foot.

Minding himself - Choosing or preferring to go on foot. Most of his journeys were probably performed in this way.

Verse 14

Came to Mitylene - This was the capital of the island of Lesbos. It was distinguished by the beauty of its situation, and the splendor and magnificence of its edifices. The island on which it stood, Lesbos, was one of the largest in the Aegean Sea, and the seventh in the Mediterranean. It is a few miles distant from the coast of Aeolia, and is about 168 miles in circumference. The name of the city now is Castro.

Verse 15

Over against Chios - Opposite to. Into the neighborhood of; or near to it. Chios, called also Coos, is an island in the Archipelago, between Lesbos and Samos. It is on the coast of Asia Minor, and is now called Scio. It will long be remembered as the seat of a dreadful massacre of almost all its inhabitants by the Turks in 1823.

At Samos - This was also an island of the Archipelago, lying off the coast of Lydia, from which it is separated by a narrow strait. These islands were celebrated among the ancients for their extraordinary wines.

Trogyllium - This was the name of a town and promontory of Ionia in Asia Minor, between Ephesus and the mouth of the river Meander, opposite to Samos. The promontory is a spur of Mount Mycale.

Miletus - Called also Mileturn. It was a city and seaport, and the ancient capital of Ionia. It was originally composed of a colony of Cretans. It became extremely powerful, and sent out colonies to a great number of cities on the Euxine Sea. It was distinguished for a magnificent temple dedicated to Apollo. It is now called by the Turks Melas. It was the birthplace of Thales, one of the seven wise men of Greece. It was about 40 or 50 miles from Ephesus.

Verse 16

To sail by Ephesus - The word "by" in our translation is ambiguous. We say to go by a place, meaning either to take it in our way and to go to it, or to go past it. Here it means the latter. He intended to sail past Ephesus without going to it.

For he hasted … - Had he gone to Ephesus, he would probably have been so delayed in his journey that he could not reach Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost.

The day of Pentecost - See the notes on Acts 2:1.

Verse 17

He sent to Ephesus - Perhaps a distance of twenty or thirty miles.

The elders of the church - Who had been appointed while he was there to take charge of the church. See the notes on Acts 15:2.

Verse 18

And when they were come to him - The discourse which follows is one of the most tender, affectionate, and eloquent which is anywhere to be found. It is strikingly descriptive of the apostle's manner of life while with them; evinces his deep concern for their welfare; is full of tender and kind

admonition; expresses the firm purpose of his soul to live to the glory of God, and his expectation to be persecuted still; and is a most affectionate and solemn farewell. No man can read it without being convinced that it came from a heart full of love and kindness; and that it evinces a great and noble purpose to be entirely employed in one great aim and object - the promotion of the glory of God, in the face of danger and of death.

Ye know - From your own observation. He had been with them three years, and could make this solemn appeal to themselves that he had led a faithful and devoted life. How happy is it when a minister can thus appeal to those with whom he has labored in proof of his own sincerity and fidelity! How comforting to himself, and how full of demonstration to a surrounding world, of the truth and power of the gospel which is preached! We may further remark that this appeal furnishes strong proof of the purity and holiness of Paul‘s life. The elders at Ephesus must have had abundant opportunity to know him. They had seen him, and heard him publicly, and in their private dwellings. A man does not make such an appeal unless he has a consciousness of integrity, nor unless there is conclusive proof of his integrity. It is strong evidence of the holiness of the character of the apostles, and proof that they were not impostors, that they could thus appeal with the utmost assurance to those who had every opportunity of knowing them.

From the first day - He was with them three years, Acts 20:31.

Into Asia - Asia Minor. They would probably know not only how he had demeaned himself while with them, but also how he had conducted in other places near them.

After what manner I have been with you - How I have lived and acted. What has been my manner of life. What had been his mode of life he specifies in the following verses.

At all seasons - At all times.

Verse 19

Serving the Lord - In the discharge of the appropriate duties of his apostolic office, and in private life. To discharge aright our duties in any vocation is serving the Lord. Religion is often represented in the Bible as a service rendered to the Lord.

With all humility - Without arrogance, pride, or a spirit of dictation; without a desire to “lord it over God‘s heritage”; without being elated with the authority of the apostolic office, the variety of the miracles which he

was enabled to perform, or the success which attended his labors. What an admirable model for all who are in the ministry; for all who are endowed with talents and learning; for all who meet with remarkable success in their work! The proper effect of such success, and of such talent, will be to produce true humility. The greatest endowments are usually connected with the most simple and childlike humility.

And with many tears - Paul not infrequently gives evidence of the tenderness of his heart, of his regard for the souls of people, and of his deep solicitude for the salvation of sinners, Acts 20:31; Philemon 3:18; 2 Corinthians 2:4. The particular thing, however, here specified as producing weeping was the opposition of the Jews. But it cannot be supposed that those tears were shed from an apprehension of personal danger. It was rather because the opposition of the Jews impeded his work, and retarded his progress in winning souls to Christ. A minister of the gospel will:

(1) Feel, and deeply feel for the salvation of his people. He will weep over their condition when he sees theta going astray, and in danger of perishing. He will,

(2) Be specially affected with opposition, because it will retard his work, and prevent the progress and the triumph of the gospel. It is not because it is a personal concern, but because it is the cause of his Master.

And temptations - Trials arising from their opposition. We use the word "temptation" in a more limited sense, to denote inducements offered to one to lead him into sin. The word in the Scriptures most commonly denotes "trials" of any kind.

Which befell me - Which happened to me; which I encountered.

By the lying in wait … - By their snares and plots against my life. Compare Acts 20:3. Those snares and plans were designed to blast his reputation and to destroy his usefulness.

Verse 20

I kept back nothing … - No doctrine, no admonition, no labor. Whatever he judged would promote their salvation, he faithfully and fearlessly delivered. A minister of the gospel must be the judge of what will be profitable to the people of his charge. His aim should be to promote their real welfare to preach what will be profitable. His object will not be to please their fancy, to gratify their taste, to flatter their pride, or to promote his own popularity. "All Scripture is profitable" 2 Timothy 3:16; and it will

be his aim to declare that only which will tend to promote their real welfare. Even if it be unpalatable; if it be the language of reproof and admonition; if it be doctrine to which the heart is by nature opposed; if it run counter to the native prejudices and passions of people; yet, by the grace of God, it should be, and will be delivered. No doctrine that will be profitable should be kept back; no labor that may promote the welfare of the flock should be withheld.

But have showed you - Have announced or declared to you. The word here used ἀναγγεῖλαι anangeilaiis most commonly applied to "preaching in public assemblies, or in a public manner."

Have taught you publicly - In the public assembly; by public preaching.

And from house to house - Though Paul preached in public, and though his time was much occupied in manual labor for his own support Acts 20:34, yet he did not esteem his public preaching to be all that was required of him, nor his daily occupation to be an excuse for not visiting from house to house. We may observe here:

(1) That Paul's example is a warrant and an implied injunction for family visitation by a pastor. If proper in Ephesus, it is proper still. If practicable in that city, it is in other cities. If it was useful there, it will be elsewhere. If it furnished to him consolation in the retrospect when he came to look over his ministry, and if it was one of the things which enabled him to say, "I am pure from the blood of all men," it will be so in other cases.

(2) the design for which ministers should visit should be a religious design. Paul did not visit for mere ceremony; for idle gossip, or chit-chat; or to converse on the news or politics of the day. His aim was to show the way of salvation, and to teach in private what he taught in public.

(3) how much of this is to be done is, of course, to be left to the discretion of every minister. Paul, in private visiting, did not neglect public instruction. The latter he evidently considered to be his main or chief business. His high views of preaching are evinced in his life, and in his letters to Timothy and Titus. Yet, while public preaching is the main, the prime, the leading business of a minister, and while his first efforts should be directed to preparation for that, he may and should find time to enforce his public instructions by going from house to house; and often he will find

that his most immediate and apparent success will result from such family instructions.

(4) if it is his duty to visit, it is the duty of is people to receive him as becomes an ambassador of Christ. They should be willing to listen to his instructions; to treat him with kindness, and to aid his endeavours in bringing a family under the influence of religion.

Verse 21

Testifying - Bearing witness to the necessity of repentance toward God. Or teaching them the nature of repentance, and exhorting them to repent and believe. Perhaps the word "testifying" includes both ideas of giving evidence, and of urging with great earnestness and affection that repentance and faith were necessary. See 1 Timothy 5:21; 2 Timothy 2:14; where the word used here, and here translated "testify," is there translated correctly, "charge," in the sense of "strongly urging, or entreating with great earnestness."

And also to the Greeks - To all who were not Jews. "The Greeks" properly denoted "those who lived in Greece, and who spoke the Greek language." But the phrase, "Jews and Greeks," among the Hebrews, denoted "the whole human race." He urged the necessity of repentance and faith in all. Religion makes no distinction, but regards all as sinners, and as needing salvation by the blood of the Redeemer.

Repentance toward God - See the notes on Matthew 3:2. Repentance is to be exercised "toward God," because:

(1)Sin has been committed against him, and it is proper that we express our sorrow to the Being whom we have offended; and,

(2)Because only God can pardon. Sincere repentance exists only where there is a willingness to make acknowledgment to the very Being whom we have offended or injured.

And faith - See the notes on Mark 16:16.

Toward - εἰς eisIn regard to; in; confidence in the work and merits of the Lord Jesus. This is required, because there is no other one who can save from sin. See the notes on Acts 4:12.

Verse 22

Bound in the spirit - Strongly urged or constrained by the influences of the Holy Spirit on my mind. Not by any desire to see the place where my

fathers worshipped, and not urged merely by reason, but by the convictions and mighty promptings of the Holy Spirit to do my duty in this case. The expression "bound in the spirit" δεδεμένος τῷ πνεύματι dedemenos tō pneumatiis one of great strength and emphasis. The word δέω deō"to bind," is usually applied to "confinement by cords, fetters, or bands" Matthew 13:30; Matthew 14:3; Matthew 21:2; and then it denotes "any strong obligation" Romans 7:2, or "anything that strongly urges or impels," Matthew 21:2. When we are strongly urged by the convictions of duty, by the influences of the Holy Spirit, we should not shrink from danger or from death. Duty is to be done at all hazards. It is ours to follow the directions of God; results we may safely and confidently leave with him.

Not knowing the things that shall befall me there - He knew that calamities and trials of some kind awaited him Acts 20:23, but he did not know:

(1)Of what particular kind they would be; nor,

(2)Their issue, whether it would be life or death.

We should commit our way unto God, not knowing what trials may be before us in life; but knowing that, if we are found faithful at the post of duty, we have nothing to fear in the result.

Verse 23

Save that - Except that. This was all that he knew, that bonds and afflictions were to be his portion.

The Holy Ghost witnesseth - Either by direct revelation to him, or by the predictions of inspired men whom Paul might meet. An instance of the latter mode occurs in Acts 21:11. It is probable that the meaning here is that the Holy Spirit had deeply impressed the mind of Paul by his direct influences, and by his experience in every city, that bonds and trials were to be his portion. Such had been his experience in every city where he had preached the gospel by the direction of the Holy Spirit, that he regarded it as his certain portion that he was thus to be afflicted.

In every city - In almost every city where Paul had been, he had been subjected to these trials. He had been persecuted, stoned, and scourged. So uniform was this, so constant had been his experience in this way, that he regarded it as his certain portion to be thus afflicted, and he approached Jerusalem, and every other city, with a confident expectation that such trials awaited him there.

Saying - In his experience, by direct revelation, and by the mouth of prophets, Acts 21:11. When Paul was called to the apostleship it was predicted that he would suffer much, Acts 9:16.

Bonds - Chains. That I would be bound, as prisoners are who are confined.

Abide me - See the margin. They remain or wait for me; that is, I must expect to suffer them.

Verse 24

Move me - Alarm me, or deter me from my purpose. Greek: "I make an account of none of them." I do not regard them as of any moment, or as worth consideration in the great purpose to which I have devoted my life.

Neither count I my life - I do not consider my life as so valuable as to be retained by turning away from bonds and persecutions. I am certain of bonds and afflictions; I am willing also, if it be necessary, to lay down my life in the prosecution of the same purpose.

Dear unto myself - So precious or valuable as to be retained at the sacrifice of duty. I am willing to sacrifice it if it be necessary. This was the spirit of the Saviour, and of all the early Christians. Duty is of more importance than life; and when either duty or life is to be sacrificed, life is to be cheerfully surrendered.

So that - This is my main object, to finish my course with joy. It is implied here:

(1) That this was the great purpose which Paul had in view.

(2) that if he should even lay down his life in this cause, it would be a finishing his course with joy. In the faithful discharge of duty, he had nothing to fear. Life would be ended with peace whenever God should require him to finish his course.

Finish my course - Close my career as an apostle and a Christian. Life is thus represented as a course, or race that is to be run, 2 Timothy 4:7; Hebrews 12:1; 1 Corinthians 9:24; Acts 13:25.

With joy - With the approbation of conscience and of God, with peace in the recollection of the past. Man should strive so to live that he will have nothing to regret when he lies on a bed of death. It is a glorious privilege to finish life with joy. It is most sad when the last hours are embittered with the reflection that life has been wasted. The only way in which life may be

finished with joy is by meeting faithfully every duty, and encountering, as Paul did, every trial, with a constant desire to glorify God.

And the ministry - That I may fully discharge the duty of the apostolic office, the preaching of the gospel. In 2 Timothy 4:5, he charges Timothy to make full proof of his ministry. He here shows that this was the ruling principle of his own life.

Which I have received of the Lord Jesus - Which the Lord Jesus has committed to me, Acts 9:15-17. Paul regarded his ministry as an office entrusted to him by the Lord Jesus himself. On this account he deemed it to be especially sacred, and of high authority, Galatians 1:12. Every minister has been entrusted with an office by the Lord Jesus. He is not his own; and his great aim should be to discharge fully and entirely the duties of that office.

To testify the gospel - To bear witness to the good news of the favor of God. This is the great design of the ministry. It is to bear witness to a dying world of the good news that God is merciful, and that his favor may be made manifest to sinners. From this verse we may learn:

(1) That we all have a course to run, a duty to perform. Ministers have an allotted duty; and so have men in all ranks and professions.

(2) we should not be deterred by danger, or the fear of death, from the discharge of that duty. We are safe only when we are doing the will of God. We are really in danger only when we neglect our duty, and make the great God our enemy.

(3) we should so live as that the end of our course may be joy. It is, at best, a solemn thing to die; but death may be a scene of triumph and of joy.

(4) it matters little when, or where, or how we die if we die in the discharge of our duty to God. He will order the circumstances of our departure, and He can sustain us in the last conflict. Happy is that life which is spent in doing the will of God, and peaceful that death which closes a life of toil and trial in the service of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 25

I know that ye all - Perhaps this means simply, “I have no expectation of seeing you again; I have every reason to suppose that this is my final

interview with you." He expected to visit Ephesus no more. The journey to Jerusalem was dangerous. Trials and persecutions he knew awaited him. Besides, it is evident that he designed to turn his attention to other countries, and to visit Rome; and probably he had already formed the purpose of going into Spain. See Acts 19:21; compare Romans 15:23-28. From all these considerations it is evident that he had no expectation of being again at Ephesus. It is probable, however, that he did again return to that city. See the notes on Acts 28:31.

Among whom I have gone preaching - Among whom I have preached. The parting of a minister and people is among the most tender and affecting of the separations that occur on earth.

The kingdom of God - Making known the nature of the reign of God on earth by the Messiah. See the notes on Matthew 3:2.

Verse 26

Wherefore - In view of the past, of my ministry and labors among you, I appeal to your own selves to testify that I have been faithful.

I take you to record - Greek: I call you to witness. If any of you are lost; if you prove unfaithful to God, I appeal to yourselves that the fault is not mine. It is well when a minister can make this appeal, and call his hearers to bear testimony to his own faithfulness. Ministers who preach the gospel with fidelity may thus appeal to their hearers; and in the day of judgment may call on themselves to witness that the fault of the ruin of the soul is not to be charged to them.

That I am pure - I am not to be charged with the guilt of your condemnation, as owing to my unfaithfulness. This does not mean that he set up a claim to absolute perfection; but that, in the matter under consideration, he had a conscience void of offence.

The blood of all men - The word "blood" is often used in the sense of "death, of bloodshed"; and hence, of the "guilt or crime of putting one to death," Matthew 23:35; Matthew 27:25; Acts 5:28; Acts 18:6. It here means that if they should die the second death; if they should be lost forever, he would not be to blame. He had discharged his duty in faithfully warning and teaching them; and now, if they were lost, the fault would be their own, not his.

All men - All classes of people - Jews and Gentiles. He had warned and instructed all alike. Ministers may have many fears that their hearers will be lost. Their aim, however, should be:

(1)To save them, if possible; and,
(2)If they are lost, that it should be by no neglect or fault of theirs.

Verse 27

For - This verse contains a reason for what had been said in the previous verse. It shows why Paul regarded himself as innocent if they should be lost.

I have not shunned - I have not kept back; I have not been deterred by fear, by the desire of popularity, by the fact that the doctrines of the gospel are unpalatable to people, from declaring them fully. The proper meaning of the word translated here, "I have not shunned" ὑπεστειλάμην hupesteilamēnis "to disguise any important truth; to withdraw it from public view; to decline publishing it from fear, or an apprehension of the consequences." Paul means that he had not disguised any truth; he had not withdrawn or kept it from open view, by any apprehension of the effect which it might have on their minds. Truth may be disguised or kept back:

(1)By avoiding the subject altogether from timidity, or from an apprehension of giving offence if it is openly proclaimed; or,

(2)By giving it too little prominency, so that it shall be lost in the multitude of other truths; or,

(3)By presenting it amidst a web of metaphysical speculations, and entangling it with other subjects; or,

(4)By making use of other terms than the Bible does, for the purpose of involving it in a mist, so that it cannot be understood.

People may resort to this course:

(1)Because the truth itself is unpalatable;

(2)Because they may apprehend the loss of reputation or support;

(3)Because they may not love the truth them selves, and choose to conceal its prominent and offensive points;

(4)Because they may be afraid of the rich, the great, and the frivolous, and apprehend that they shall excite their indignation; and,

(5)By a love of metaphysical philosophy, and a constant effort to bring everything to the test of their own reason. People often preach a philosophical explanation of a doctrine instead of the doctrine itself They deserve the credit of ingenuity, but not that of being open and bold proclaimers of the truth of God.

All the counsel - πᾶσαν τὴν βουλὴν pasan tēn boulēnThe word "counsel" (βουλὴ boulē) denotes properly "consolation, deliberation," and then "will or purpose," Luke 23:51; Acts 2:23. It means here the will or purpose of God, as revealed in regard to the salvation of people. Paul had made a full statement of that plan of the guilt of people, of the claims of the Law, of the need of a Saviour, of the provisions of mercy, and of the state of future rewards and punishments. Ministers ought to declare all that counsel, because God commands it; because it is needful for the salvation of people; and because the message is not theirs, but God's, and they have no right to change, to disguise, or to withhold it. And if it is the duty of ministers to declare that counsel, it is the duty of a people to listen to it with respect and candor, and with a desire to know the truth, and to be saved by it. Declaring the counsel of God will do no good unless it is received into honest and humble hearts, and with a disposition to know what God has revealed for salvation.

Verse 28

Take heed, therefore - Attend to; be on your guard against the dangers which beset you, and seek to discharge your duty with fidelity.

Unto yourselves - To your own piety, opinions, and mode of life. This is the first duty of a minister; for without this all his preaching will be vain. Compare Colossians 4:17; 1 Timothy 4:14. Ministers are beset with unique dangers and temptations, and against them they should be on their guard. In addition to the temptations which they have in common with other people, they are exposed to those special to their office - arising from flattery, and ambition, and despondency, and worldly-mindedness. And just in proportion to the importance of their office is the importance of the injunction of Paul, to take heed to themselves.

And to all the flock - The church; the charge entrusted to them. The church of Christ is often compared to a flock. See the John 21:15-17 notes. The word "flock" here refers particularly to the church, and not to the congregation in general, for it is represented to be what was purchased with the blood of the atonement. The command here is:

(1) To take heed to the church; that is, to instruct, teach, and guide it; to guard it from enemies Acts 20:29, and to make it their special object to promote its welfare.

(2) to take heed to all the flock the rich and the poor, the bond and the free, the old and the young. It is the duty of ministers to seek to promote the welfare of each individual of their charge not to pass by the poor because they are poor, and not to be afraid of the rich because they are rich. A shepherd regards the I interest of the tenderest of the fold as much as the strongest; and a faithful minister will seek to advance the interest of all. To do this he should know all his people; should be acquainted, as far as possible, with their unique needs, character, and dangers, and should devote himself to their welfare as his first and main employment.

Over the which the Holy Ghost - Though they had been appointed, doubtless, by the church, or by the apostles, yet it is here represented as having been done by the Holy Spirit. It was by him:

(1)Because he had called and qualified them for their work; and,

(2)Because they had been set apart in accordance with his direction and will.

Overseers - ἐπισκόπους episkopous"Bishops." The word properly denotes those who are appointed "to oversee or inspect anything." This passage proves that the name "bishop" was applicable to elders; that in the time of the apostles, the name "bishop" and "presbyter," or "elder," was given to the same class of officers, and, of course, that there was no distinction between them. One term was originally used to denote "office," the other term denotes "age," and both words were applied to the same persons in the congregation. The same thing occurs in Titus 1:5-7, where those who in Titus 1:5 are called "elders," are in Titus 1:7 called "bishops." See also 1 Timothy 3:1-10; Philemon 1:1.

To feed - ποιμαίνειν poimaineinThis word is properly applied to the care which a shepherd exercises over his flock. See the notes on John 21:15-16. It is applicable not only to the act of feeding a flock, but also to that of protecting, guiding, and guarding it. It here denotes not merely the "duty" of instructing the church, but also of "governing" it; of "securing" it from enemies Acts 20:29, and of "directing" its affairs so as to promote its edification and peace.

The church of God - This is one of three passages in the New Testament in regard to which there has been a long controversy among critics, which is not yet determined. The controversy is, whether is this the correct and genuine reading. The other two passages are, 1 Timothy 3:16, and 1 John 5:7. The mss. and versions here exhibit three readings: "the church of God" τοῦ Θεός tou Theosthe church of the Lord τοῦ Κυρίου tou Kuriouand the church of the Lord and God Κυρίος καὶ Θεός . The Latin Vulgate reads it "God." The Syriac, "the Lord." The Arabic, "the Lord God." The Ethiopic, "the Christian family of God." The reading which now occurs in our text is found in no ancient mss. except the Vatican Codex, and occurs nowhere among the writings of the fathers except in Athanasius, in regard to whom also there is a various reading.

It is retained, however, by Beza, Mill, and Whitby as the genuine reading. The most ancient mss., and the best, read "the church of the Lord," and this probably was the genuine text. It has been adopted by Griesbach and Wetstein; and many important reasons may be given why it should be retained. See those reasons stated at length in Kuinoel "in loco"; see also Griesbach and Wetstein. It may be remarked, that a change from Lord to God might easily be made in the transcribing, for in ancient mss. the words are not written at length, but are abbreviated. Thus, the name Christ Χριστός Christosis written ChoS; the name God θεός theosis written ThoS; the name Lord κύριος kuriosis written KOS; and a mistake, therefore, of a single letter would lead to the variations observable in the manuscripts. Compare in this place the note of Mill in his Greek Testament. The authority for the name "God" is so doubtful that it should not be used as a proof text on the divinity of Christ, and is not necessary, as there are so many undisputed passages on that subject.

Which he hath purchased - The word used here περιεποιήσατο periepoiēsatooccurs but in one other place in the New Testament - 1 Timothy 3:13, "For they that have used the office of deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith." The word properly means "to acquire or gain anything; to make it ours." This may be done by a price, or by labor, etc. The noun (περιποίησις peripoiēsis) derived from this verb is used several times in the New Testament, and denotes "acquisition:" 1 Thessalonians 5:9, God hath appointed us "to obtain" (unto the obtaining or acquisition of) salvation"; 2 Thessalonians 2:14, "Whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory

of our Lord Jesus Christ"; 1 Peter 2:9; Titus 2:14; Ephesians 1:14. In this place it means that Christ had "acquired, gained, or procured," the church for himself by paying his own life as the price. The church is often represented as having thus been bought with a price, 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Corinthians 7:23; 2 Peter 2:1.

With his own blood - With the sacrifice of his own life; for blood is often put for life, and to shed the blood is equivalent to faking the life. See the notes on Romans 3:25. The doctrines taught here are:

(1) That the death of Christ was an atoning sacrifice; that he offered himself to purchase a people to his own service.

(2) that the church is, therefore, of special value a value to be estimated by the price paid for it. Compare 1 Peter 1:18-19.

(3) that this fact should make the purity and salvation of the church an object of special solicitude with ministers of the gospel. They should be deeply affected in view of that blood which has been shed for the church; and they should guard and defend it as having been bought with the highest price in the universe. The chief consideration that will make ministers faithful and self-denying is, that the church has been bought with a price. If the Lord Jesus so loved it; if he gave himself for it, they should be willing to deny themselves; to watch, and toil, and pray, that the great object of his death the purity and the salvation of that church - may be obtained.

Verse 29

For I know this - By what he had seen in other places; by his knowledge of human nature, and of the dangers to which they were exposed; and by the guidance of inspiration.

After my departure - His presence had been the means of guarding the church, and preserving it from these dangers. Now that the founder and guide of the church was to be removed, they would be exposed to dissensions and dangers.

Grievous wolves - Heavy βαρεῖς bareisstrong, mighty, dangerous wolves - so strong that the feeble flock would not be able to resist them. The term "wolves" is used to denote "the enemies of the flock - false, and hypocritical, and dangerous teachers." Compare Matthew 10:16.

Enter in among you - From abroad; doubtless referring particularly to the Jews, who might be expected to distract and divide them.

Not sparing the flock - Seeking to destroy the church. The Jews would regard it with special hostility, and would seek to destroy it in every way. Probably they would approach them with great professed friendship for them, and expressing a desire only to defend the laws of Moses.

Verse 30

Also of your own selves - From your own church; from those who profess to. be Christians.

Speaking perverse things - Crooked, perverted, distracting doctrines διεστραμμένα diestrammenaCompare the notes on Acts 13:10. They would proclaim doctrines tending to distract and divide the church. The most dangerous enemies which the church has had have been nurtured in its own bosom, and have consisted of those who have perverted the true doctrines of the gospel. Among the Ephesians, as among the Corinthians 1 Corinthians 1:11-13, there might be parties formed; there might be people influenced by ambition, like Diotrephes 3 John 1:9, or like Phygellus or Hermogenes 2 Timothy 1:15, or like Hymeneus and Alexander, 1 Timothy 1:20. Men under the influence of ambition, or from the love of power or popularity, form parties in the church, produce divisions and distractions, and greatly retard its internal prosperity, and mar its peace. The church of Christ would have little to fear from external enemies if it nurtured no foes in its own bosom; and all the power of persecutors is not so much to be dreaded as the plans, the parties, the strifes, the heart burnings, and the contentions which are produced by those who love and seek power, among the professed friends of Christ.

Verse 31

Therefore watch - Matthew 24:42. In view of the dangers which beset yourselves Acts 20:28, the danger from people not connected with the church Acts 20:29, and the danger which will arise from the love of power among yourselves Acts 20:30, be on your guard. Observe the approach of danger, and set yourselves against it.

Remember - Recall my counsels and admonitions in reference to these dangers.

By the space of three years - In Acts 19:10, we are told that Paul spent two years in the school of Tyrannus. In Acts 19:8, it is said that he was teaching in the synagogue at Ephesus three months. In addition to this, it is

not improbable that he spent some months more in Ephesus in instructing the church in other places. Perhaps, however, by the phrase three years, he meant to use merely a round number, denoting about three years; or, in accordance with the Jewish custom, part of each of the three years one whole year, and a considerable portion of the two others. Compare the notes on Matthew 12:40.

I ceased not - I continued to do it.

To warn - To admonish; to place before the mind νουθετῶν nouthetōnsetting the danger and duty of each individual before him.

Everyone - He had thus set them an example of what he had enjoined, Acts 20:28. He had admonished each individual, whatever was his rank or standing. It is well when a minister can refer to his own example as an illustration of what he meant by his precepts.

Night and day - Continually; by every opportunity.

With tears - Expressive of his deep feeling, and his deep interest in their welfare. See the notes on Acts 20:19.

Verse 32

And now, brethren - About to leave them, probably to see them no more, he committed them to the faithful care and keeping of God Amidst all the dangers of the church, when human strength fails or is withdrawn, we may commit that church to the safe keeping and tender care of God.

I commend you - I commit you; I place you παρατίθεμαι paratithemaiin his hands and under his protection. See the notes on Acts 14:23.

And to the word of his grace - That is, to his gracious word; to his merciful promise. Paul refers, doubtless, to the gospel, including its promises of support, its consoling truths, and its directions to seek all needful help and comfort in God.

Which is able - Which has power. Τῷ δυναμένῳ Tō dunamenōWhich word, or gospel, has power to build you up, Hebrews 4:12, "For the Word of God is quick (living, life-giving, ζῶν zōn), and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, etc." Compare Isaiah 49:2; Jeremiah 23:29, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" It is implied here that the gospel is not a dead letter; that it has power to accomplish a great work; that it is adapted to the end in view, the conversion and sanctification of the soul. There is no danger in representing the gospel as mighty, and as suited by infinite wisdom to

secure the renovation and salvation of man. Compare Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 10:4.

To build you up - The word used here is properly applied to a house which is raised and completed by slow degrees, and by toil. It here means to establish, make firm, or permanent, and hence, to instruct, to establish in doctrine and in hope. The idea is, that the Word of God was able to confirm and establish them, amidst the dangers to which they would be exposed.

And to give you an inheritance - To make you heirs, or to make you joint partakers with the saints of the blessings in reserve for the children of God. Those blessings are often represented as an inheritance, or heirship, which God will confer on his adopted children, Matthew 19:29; Matthew 25:34; Mark 10:17; Hebrews 6:12; Revelation 21:7; Ephesians 1:11; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 1:12; Colossians 3:24; Romans 8:17; Galatians 3:29.

Among all them which are sanctified - With all who are holy; with an the saints. See the notes on John 10:36. Those who shall be saved are made holy. They who receive a part in the inheritance beyond the grave will have it only among the sanctified and the pure. They must, therefore, be pure themselves, or they can have no part in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Verse 33

I have coveted - I have not desired. I have not made it an object of my living among you to obtain your property. Thus, 2 Corinthians 12:14 he says, "I seek not yours, but you." Paul had power to demand support in the, ministry as the reward of his labor, 1 Corinthians 9:13-14. Yet he did not choose to exercise it, lest it should bring the charge of avarice against the ministry, 1 Corinthians 9:12, 1 Corinthians 9:15. He also had power in another respect. He had a vast influence over the people. The early Christians were disposed to commit their property to the disposal of the apostles. See Acts 4:34-35, Acts 4:37. The pagan had been accustomed to devote their property to the support of religion. Of this propensity, if the object of Paul had been to make money, he might have availed himself, and have become enriched. Deceivers often thus impose upon people for the purpose of amassing wealth; and one of the incidental but striking proofs of the truth of the Christian religion is here furnished in the appeal which the apostle Paul made to his hearers, that this had not been his motive. If it had been, how easy would it have been for them to have contradicted him! And who, in such circumstances, would have dared to make such an appeal? The

circumstances of the case, therefore, prove that the object of the apostle was not to amass wealth. And this fact is an important proof of the truth of the religion which he defended. What should have induced him to labor and toil in this manner but a conviction of the truth of Christianity? And if he really believed it was true, it is, in his circumstances, a strong proof that this religion is from heaven. See this proof stated in Faber‘s “Difficulties of Infidelity,” and in Lord Lyttleton‘s “Letter on the Conversion of Paul.”

Or apparel - Raiment. Changes of raiment among the ancients, as at present among the Orientals, constituted an important part of their property. See the notes on Matthew 6:19.

Verse 34

Yea, ye yourselves know - By your own acquaintance with my manner of life. In Corinth he had lived and labored with Apollos (note, Acts 18:3); and he refers elsewhere to the fact that he had supported himself, in part at least, by his own labor, 1 Corinthians 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8. We may hence learn that it is no discredit to a minister to labor. Whatever it may be to a people who put him under a necessity to toil for his support, yet the example of Paul shows that a man should rejoice in the privilege of preaching the gospel, even if it is done while he is obliged to resort to labor for his daily bread. It is well when a minister of the gospel can make an appeal to his people like this of Paul, and say, “I have coveted no man‘s gold, or silver, or apparel.” Every minister should so live that he can make this appeal to their own consciences of the sincerity and disinterestedness of his labors from the pulpit; or when called to separate from them as Paul did; or when on a dying bed. Every minister of the gospel, when be comes to lie down to die, will desire to be able to make this appeal, and to leave a solemn testimony there, that it was not for gold, or ease, or fame, that he toiled in the ministerial office. How much more influence will such a man have than he who has been worldly-minded; he who has sought to become rich; and he, the only memorials of whose life is, that he has sought “the fleece, not the flock” - that he has gained the property, not the souls of people.

Verse 35

I have showed you - I have taught you by instruction and example. I have not merely discoursed about it, but have showed you how to do it.

All things - Or, in respect to all things. In everything that respects preaching and the proper mode of life, I have for three years set you an

example, illustrating the design, nature, and duties of the office by my own self-denials and toil.

How that - Or, that - ὅτι hotiI have showed you that ye should by so laboring support the weak.

So labouring - Laboring as I have done. Setting this example, and ministering in this way to the needs of others.

To support the weak - To provide for the needs of the sick and feeble members of the flock, who are unable to labor for themselves. "The weak" here denotes "the poor, the needy, the infirmed."

And to remember - To call to mind for encouragement, and with the force of a command,

The words of the Lord Jesus - These words are nowhere recorded by the evangelists. But they did not pretend to record all his sayings and instructions. Compare John 21:25. There is the highest reason to suppose that many of his sayings which are not recorded would be treasured up by those who heard them; would be transmitted to others; and would be regarded as a precious part of his instructions. Paul evidently addresses the elders of Ephesus as if they had heard this before, and were acquainted with it. Perhaps he had himself reminded them of it. This is one of the Redeemer's most precious sayings; and it seems even to have a special value from the fact that it is not recorded in the regular and professed histories of his life. It comes to us recovered, as it were, from the great mass of his unrecorded sayings; rescued from that oblivion to which it was hastening if left to mere tradition, and placed in permanent form in the sacred writings by the act of an apostle who had never seen the Saviour before his crucifixion. It is a precious relic - a memento of the Saviour - and the effect of it is to make us regret that more of his words were not recovered from an uncertain tradition, and placed in a permanent form by an inspired penman. God, however, who knows what is requisite to guide us, has directed the words which are needful for the welfare of the church, and has preserved by inspiration the doctrines which are adapted to convert and bless man.

It is more blessed to give - It is a higher privilege; it tends more to the happiness of the individual and of the world. The giver is more blessed or happy than the receiver. This appears:

(1) Because it is a condition for which we should be thankful when we are in a situation to promote the happiness of others.

(2) because it tends to promote the happiness of the benefactor himself. There is pleasure in the act of giving when it is done with pure motives. It promotes our own peace; is followed by happiness in the recollection of it; and will be followed by happiness forever. That is the most truly happy man who is most benevolent. He is the most miserable who has never known the luxury of doing good, but who lives to gain all he can, and to hoard all he gains.

(3) it is blessed in the reward that shall result from it. Those who give from a pure motive God will bless. They will be rewarded, not only in the peace which they shall experience in this life, but in the higher bliss of heaven, Matthew 25:34-36. We may also remark that this is a sentiment truly great and noble. It is worthy of the Son of God. It is that on which he himself acted when he came to give pardon to the guilty, comfort to the disconsolate and the mourner, peace to the anxious sinner, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, life to the dead, and heaven to the guilty and the lost. Acting on this, he gave his own tears to weep over human sorrows and human guilt; his own labors and toils to instruct and save man; his own life a sacrifice for sin on the cross. Loving to give, he has freely given us all things. Loving to give, he delights in the same character in his followers, and seeks that they who have wealth, and strength, and influence should be willing to give all to save the world. Imitating his great example, and complying with his command, the church shall yet learn more and more to give its wealth to bless the poor and needy; its sons and its daughters to bear the gospel to the benighted pagan; its undivided and constant efforts to save a lost world. Here closes this speech of Paul; an address of inimitable tenderness and beauty. Happy would it be if every minister could bid such an adieu to his people, when called to part from them; and happy if, at the close of life, every Christian could leave the world with a like consciousness that he had been faithful in the discharge of his duty. Thus dying, it will be blessed to leave the world; and thus would the example of the saints live in the memory of survivors long after they themselves have ascended to their rest.

Verse 36

He kneeled down - The usual attitude of prayer. It is the proper posture of a suppliant. It indicates reverence and humility; and is represented in the Scriptures as the usual attitude of devotion, 2 Chronicles 6:13; Daniel 6:10; Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60; Acts 9:40; Acts 21:5; Romans 11:4; Philemon 2:10; Ephesians 3:14; Mark 1:40.

Verse 37

Wept sore - Wept much. Greek: "There was a great weeping of all."

And fell on Paul's neck - Embraced him, as a token of tender affection. The same thing Joseph did when he met his aged father Jacob, Genesis 46:29.

And kissed him - This was the common token of affection. See the Matthew 26:48 note; Luke 15:20 note; Romans 16:16 note; 1 Corinthians 16:20 note.

Verse 38

Sorrowing most of all … - This was a most tender and affectionate parting scene. It can be more easily imagined than described. We may learn from it:

(1) That the parting of ministers and people is a most solemn event, and should be one of much tenderness and affection.

(2) the effect of true religion is to make the heart more tender; to make friendship more affectionate and sacred; and to unite more closely the bonds of love.

(3) ministers of the gospel should be prepared to leave their people with the same consciousness of fidelity and the same kindness and love which Paul evinced. They should live such lives as to be able to look back upon their whole ministry as pure and disinterested, and as having been employed in guarding the flock, and in making known to them the whole counsel of God. So parting, they may separate in peace; and so living and acting, they will be prepared to give up their account with joy, and not with grief. May God grant to every minister the spirit which Paul evinced at Ephesus, and enable each one, when called to leave his people by death or otherwise, to do it with the same consciousness of fidelity which Paul evinced when he left his people to see their face no more.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Verse 1

After we were gotten from them - After we had left the elders at Miletus, Acts 20:38. They were on their way to Jerusalem.

Unto Coos - This was a small island in the Grecian Archipelago, a short distance from the southwestern point of Asia Minor. It is now called "Stan-co." It was celebrated for its fertility, and for the wine and silk-worms which it produced. It was about 40 miles south of Miletus.

Unto Rhodes - This was also an island in the Grecian Archipelago. On the island was a city of the same name, which was principally distinguished for its brass Colossus, which was built by Chares of Lyndus. It stood across the mouth of the harbor, and was so high that vessels could pass between its legs. It stood for 56 years, and was then thrown down by an earthquake. It was reckoned as one of the seven wonders of the world. When the Saracens took possession of this island they sold this prostrate image to a Jew, who loaded 900 camels with the brass from it. This was 600 a.d., about 900 years after it had been thrown down. The ancient name of the island was Asteria. Its name, Rhodes, was given from the great quantity of roses which it produced.

Unto Patara - This was a maritime city of Lycia, in Asia Minor, over against Rhodes.

Verse 2

Unto Phenicia - See the notes on Acts 11:19. Phoenicia was on their way to Jerusalem.

Set forth - Sailed.

Verse 3

Had discovered Cyprus - See the notes on Acts 4:36.

Into Syria - See the notes on Matthew 4:24.

And landed at Tyre - See the notes on Matthew 11:21.

To unlade her burden - Her cargo. Tyre was formerly one of the most commercial cities of the world; and it is probable that in the time of Paul its commercial importance had not entirely ceased.

Verse 4

And finding disciples - Christians. This is the first mention of there being Christians at Tyre, but there is no improbability in supposing that the

gospel had been preached there, though it is not expressly recorded by Luke.

Who said to Paul - Compare Acts 21:12. Their deep interest in his welfare, and their apprehension of his danger, was the reason why they admonished him not to go.

Through the Spirit - There is some difficulty in understanding this. In solving this difficulty, we may remark:

(1) That it is evident that the Holy Spirit is meant, and that Luke means to say that this was spoken by his inspiration. The Holy Spirit was bestowed on Christians at that time in large measures, and many appear to have been under his inspiring guidance.

(2) it was not understood by Paul as a positive command that he should not go up to Jerusalem; for had it been, it would not have been disobeyed. He evidently understood it as expressive of their earnest wish that he should not go, as apprising him of danger, and as a kind expression in regard to his own welfare and safety. Compare Acts 21:13. Paul was in better circumstances to understand this than we are, and his interpretation was doubtless correct.

(3) it is to be understood, therefore, simply as an inspired prophetic warning, that if he went, he went at the risk of his life a prophetic warning, joined with their individual personal wishes that he would not expose himself to this danger. The meaning evidently is that they said by inspiration of the Spirit that he should not go unless he was willing to encounter danger, for they foresaw that the journey would be attended with the hazard of his life. Grotius renders it, "That he should not go unless he was willing to be bound." Michaelis and Stolzius; "They gave him prophetic warrant that he should not go to Jerusalem." Doddridge, "If he tendered his own liberty and safety, not to go up to Jerusalem, since it would certainly expose him to very great hazard." The inspiration in the case was that of admonition and warning, not of positive command. Paul was simply apprised of the danger, and was then left to the free determination of his own will. He chose to encounter the danger of which he was thus apprised. He did not despise the intimations of the Spirit, but he judged that his duty to God called him thus to meet the perils of the journey. We may be apprised of danger in a certain course, either by our friends or

by the Word of God, and still it may be our duty to meet it. Our duty is not to be measured by the fact that we shall experience danger, in whatever way that may be made known to us. Duty consists in following the will of God, and encountering whatever trials may be in our way.

Verse 5

Had accomplished those days - When those days were passed.

They all brought us on our way - They attended us. See the Acts 15:3 note; Romans 15:24 note; 1 Corinthians 16:6, 1 Corinthians 16:11 notes; 3 John 1:6 note. This was an expression of tender attachment, and of a deep interest in the welfare of Paul and his fellow-travelers.

We kneeled down - See the notes on Acts 20:36.

On the shore - Any place may be proper for prayer. See the notes on John 4:21-24. God is everywhere, and can as easily hear prayer on the seashore as in the most magnificent temple. This is an instance, as well as that in Acts 20:36, where the apostle evidently prayed with the church without a form of prayer. No man can believe that he thus poured forth the desires of his heart at parting, and commended them to God in a prescribed form of words. Scenes like this show more clearly than abstract arguments could do that such a form was not needed, and would not be used. Paul and his fellow-Christians, on the sand of the sea-shore, would pour forth the gushing emotions of their souls in language such as their circumstances would suggest, and no man can read this narrative in a dispassionate manner without believing that they offered an extempore prayer.

Verse 7

We came to Ptolemais - This was a city situated on the coast of the Mediterranean, on the north angle of a bay which extends, in a semicircle of three leagues, as far as the point of Mount Carmel. At the south and west sides the city was washed by the sea, and was surrounded by triple walls. It was in the tribe of Asher Judges 1:31, and was originally called Accho; but was called Ptolemais in honor of one of the Ptolemies, who beautified and adorned it. The Christian crusaders gave it the name of Acre, or John of Acre, from a magnificent church which was built in it, and which was dedicated to the apostle John. It is still called Akha by the Turks. The Syriac and Arabic render it Accho in this place. It sustained several sieges during the Crusades, and was the last fortified place wrested from the Christians by the Turks. It sustained a memorable siege under Bonaparte, and since then it

has been much increased and strengthened. Its present population is estimated at from 18,000 to 20,000.

And saluted the brethren - Embraced them; gave them expressions of affection and regard.

Verse 8

We that were of Paul‘s company - From this it would appear that they had been attended thus far by some persons who were going only to Ptolemais. This clause, however, is missing in many mss., and has been omitted by Bengel, Griesbach, Knapp, and others as spurious. It is also missing in the Syriac and the Vulgate.

Unto Cesarea - See the notes on Acts 8:40.

Into the house of Philip - One of the seven deacons, Acts 6:5. After his conversation with the eunuch of Ethiopia, he went to Caesarea, and probably there abode.

The evangelist - This word properly means one who announces good news. In the New Testament it is applied to a preacher of the gospel, or one who declares the glad tidings of salvation. It occurs only in two other places, Ephesians 4:1; 2 Timothy 4:5. What was the precise rank of those who bore this title in the early Christian church cannot perhaps be determined. It is evident, however, that it is used to denote the office of preaching the gospel; and as this title is applied to Philip, and not to any other of the seven deacons, it would seem probable that he had been entrusted with a special commission to preach, and that preaching did not pertain to him as a deacon, and does not properly belong to that office. The business of a deacon was to take care of the poor members of the church, Acts 6:1-6. The office of preaching was distinct from this, though, as in this case, it might be conferred on the same individual.

Verse 9

Which did prophesy - See the notes on Acts 2:17; Acts 11:27. That females sometimes partook of the prophetic influence, and foretold future events, is evident from various places in the New Testament. See the notes on Acts 2:17.

Verse 10

There came down - See the notes on Acts 15:1.

Named Agabus - See the notes on Acts 11:28.

Verse 11

He took Paul‘s girdle - The loose, flowing robes, or outer garments, which were worn in Eastern countries, were bound by a girdle, or sash, around the body when they ran, or labored, or walked. Such a girdle was therefore an indispensable part of dress.

And bound his own hands and feet - As emblematic of what would be done by the Jews to Paul. It was common for the prophets to perform actions which were emblematic of the events which they predicted. The design was to make the prediction more forcible and impressive by representing it to the eye. Thus, Jeremiah was directed to bury his girdle by the Euphrates, to denote the approaching captivity of the Jews, Jeremiah 13:4. Thus, he was directed to make bands and yokes, and to put them around his neck, as a sign to Edom and Moab, etc., Jeremiah 27:2-3. Thus, the act of the potter was emblematic of the destruction that was coming upon the nation of the Jews, Jeremiah 18:4. So Isaiah walked naked and barefoot as a sign of the captivity of Egypt and Ethiopia, Isaiah 20:3-4. Compare Ezekiel 4:12, etc.

So shall the Jews … - This was fulfilled. See Acts 21:33, and Acts 24.

Into the hands of the Gentiles - To be tried; for the Romans then had jurisdiction over Judea.

Verse 13

What mean ye - Greek: What do ye. A tender and affectionate, but firm reproach.

To weep and to break mine heart? - To afflict me, and distract my mind by alarms, and by the expressions of tenderness. His mind was fixed on going to Jerusalem; and he felt that he was prepared for whatever awaited him. Expressions of tenderness among friends are proper. Tears may be inevitable at parting from those whom we love. But such expressions of love ought not to be allowed to interfere with the convictions of duty in their minds. If they have made up their minds that a certain course is proper, and have resolved to pursue it, we ought neither to attempt to divert them from it, nor to distract their minds by our remonstrances or our tears. We should resign them to their convictions of what is demanded of them with affection and prayer, but with cheerfulness. We should lend them all the aid in our power, and then commend them to the blessing and protection of God. These remarks apply especially to those who are engaged in the missionary enterprise.

It is trying to part with a son, a daughter, or a beloved friend, in order that they may go to proclaim the gospel to the benighted and dying pagan. The act of parting - for life, and the apprehension of the perils which they may encounter on the ocean, and in pagan lands, may be painful; but if they, like Paul, have looked at it calmly, candidly, and with much prayer; if they have come to the deliberate conclusion that it is the will of God that they should devote their lives to this service, we ought not to weep and to break their hearts. We should cheerfully and confidently commit them to the protection of the God whom they serve, and remember that the parting of Christians, though for life, will be short. Soon, in a better world, they will be united again, to part no more; and the blessedness of that future meeting will be greatly heightened by all the sorrows and self-denials of separation here, and by all the benefits which such a separation may be the means of conveying to a dying world. That mother will meet, with joy, in heaven, the son from whom, with many tears, she was sundered when he entered on a missionary life; and, surrounded with many ransomed pagan, heaven will be made more blessed and eternity more happy.

But also to die - This was the true spirit of a martyr. This spirit reigned in the hearts of all the early Christians.

For the name of the Lord Jesus - For his sake; in making his name known.

Verse 14

Would not be persuaded - To remain. He was resolved to go.

We ceased - We ceased remonstrating with him, and urging him to remain.

The will of the Lord be done - They were now assured that it was the will of God that he should go, and they were now ready to submit to that will. This is an instance and an evidence of true piety. It was the expression of a wish that whatever God might judge to be necessary for the advancement of his cause might take place, even though it should be attended with many trials. They commended their friend to the protection of God, confident that whatever should occur would be right. Compare the notes on Matthew 6:10; Matthew 26:42.

Verse 15

After those days - After what had occurred, as related in the previous verses.

We took up our carriages - This is a most unhappy translation. The word carriage we apply now exclusively to a vehicle for conveying anything as a coach, chariot, gig, cannon carriage, etc. The original word means simply that they prepared themselves; made themselves ready; put their baggage in order, etc. ἀποσκευασάμενοι aposkeuasamenoiThey prepared for the journey. The English word carriage was formerly used in the sense of what is carried, baggage, burden, vessels, furniture, etc. Thus, it was used in the time that our translation was made; and in this sense it is to be understood in 1 Samuel 17:22, "And David left his carriage (baggage) in the hand of the keeper of the carriage," etc. See Acts 21:20, margin; Isaiah 10:28, "At Michmash he hath laid up his carriages" (his baggage, etc.).

Verse 16

One Mnason of Cyprus - The original in this place would be better translated, "And brought us to Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple," etc. It is evident that, though Mnason was originally of Cyprus, yet he was now an inhabitant of Jerusalem, and was well known to the disciples at Caesarea. It is possible that he might have been at Caesarea, and accompanied Paul to Jerusalem; but the more correct interpretation of the passage is, that Paul and his fellow-travelers were conducted to his house in Jerusalem, and that he was not with them in the journey.

Of Cyprus - See the notes on Acts 4:36.

An old disciple - An early convert to Christianity - perhaps one who was converted before the crucifixion of the Saviour.

With whom we should lodge - In whose house we were to take up our abode. The rites of hospitality were shown in a distinguished manner by the early Christians.

Verse 17

The brethren - Christians.

Received us gladly - They had been long absent. They had been into distant regions, and had encountered many dangers. It was a matter of joy that they had now returned in safety.

Verse 18

Unto James - James the Less. See the notes on Acts 15:13. He resided at Jerusalem. Compare Galatians 1:19. It is not improbable that he was the only one of the apostles then at Jerusalem; and there is reason to believe that the church at Jerusalem was left under his particular care. It was natural, therefore, that Paul and his companions should take an early

opportunity to see him. James was the cousin of our Lord, and in Galatians 1:19 he is called the Lord‘s brother. On all accounts, therefore, he was entitled to, and would receive, particular respect from the early disciples.

Verse 19

Had saluted them - With the usual tokens of respect and affection.

He declared particularly … - As an evidence that God had been with him. It is not improbable that there might have been some suspicion in regard to Paul among the disciples at Jerusalem, and he might have heard that they were prejudiced against him. This prejudice would be removed by his stating what had actually occurred under his ministry.

Verse 20

They glorified the Lord - They gave praise to the Lord for what he had done. They saw new proofs of his goodness and mercy, and they rendered him thanks for all that had been accomplished. There was no jealousy that it had been done by the instrumentality of Paul. True piety will rejoice in the spread of the gospel, and in the conversion of sinners, by whatever instrumentality it may be effected.

Thou seest, brother - The language of tenderness in this address, recognizing Paul as a fellow-laborer and fellow-Christian, implies a wish that Paul would do all that could be done to avoid giving offence, and to conciliate the favor of his countrymen.

How many thousands - The number of converts at this time must have been very great. Twenty-five years before this, 3,000 had been converted at one time Acts 4:4. The assertion that there were then “many thousands,” implies that the work so signally begun on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem had not ceased, and that many more had been converted to the Christian faith.

Which believe - Who are Christians. They are spoken of as believers, or as having faith in Christ, in contradistinction from those who rejected him, and whose characteristic trait it was that they were unbelievers.

And they are all zealous of the law - They still observe the Law of Moses. The reference here is to the law respecting circumcision, sacrifices, distinctions of meats and days, festivals, etc. It may seem remarkable that they should still continue to observe those rites, since it was the manifest design of Christianity to abolish them. But we are to remember:

(1) That those rites had been appointed by God, and that they were trained to their observance.

(2) that the apostles conformed to them while they remained at Jerusalem, and did not deem it best to set themselves violently against them, Acts 3:1; Luke 24:53.

(3) that the question about their observance had never been agitated at Jerusalem. It was only among the Gentile converts that the question had risen, and there it must arise, for if they were to be observed, they must have been imposed upon them by authority.

(4) the decision of the council Acts 15 related only to the Gentile converts. It did not touch the question whether those rites were to be observed by the Jewish converts.

(5) it was to be presumed that as the Christian religion became better understood - that as its large, free, and catholic nature became more and more developed, the special institutions of Moses would be laid aside of course, without agitation and without tumult. Had the question been agitated at Jerusalem, it would have excited tenfold opposition to Christianity, and would have rent the Christian church into factions, and greatly retarded the advance of the Christian doctrine. We are to remember also:

(6) That, in the arrangement of Divine Providence, the time was drawing near which was to destroy the temple, the city, and the nation, which was to put an end to sacrifices, and effectually to close forever the observance of the Mosaic rites. As this destruction was so near, and as it would be so effectual an argument against the observance of the Mosaic rites, the Great Head of the church did not suffer the question of their obligation to be needlessly agitated among the disciples at Jerusalem.

Verse 21

And they are informed of thee - Reports respecting the conduct of Paul would be likely to be in circulation among all at Jerusalem. His remarkable conversion, his distinguished zeal, his success among the Gentiles, would make his conduct a subject of special interest. Evil-minded men among the Jews, who came up to Jerusalem from different places where he had been,

would be likely to represent him as the decided enemy of the laws of Moses, and these reports would be likely to reach the ears of the Jewish converts. The reports, as they gained ground, would be greatly magnified, until suspicion might be excited among the Christians at Jerusalem that he was, as he was reputed to be, the settled foe of the Jewish rites and customs.

That thou teachest all the Jews … - From all the evidence which we have of his conduct, this report was incorrect and slanderous. The truth appears to have been, that he did not enjoin the observance of those laws on the Gentile converts; that the effect of his ministry on them was to lead them to suppose that their observance was not necessary - contrary to the doctrines of the Judaizing teachers (see Acts 6:14. The word "customs" denotes "the rites of the Mosaic economy the offering of sacrifices, incense, the oblations, anointings, festivals, etc., which the Law of Moses prescribed."

Verse 22

What is it therefore? - What is to be done? What is it proper to do to avoid the effects of the evil report which has been circulated? What they deemed it proper to do is suggested in the following verses.

The multitude - The multitude of Jews.

Must needs come together - There will be inevitably a tumultuous assemblage. It will be impossible to prevent that. The reasons were, because the minds of the Jews were exceedingly agitated that one of their own countrymen had, as they understood, been advising apostasy from the religion of their fathers; because this had been extensively done in many parts of the world, and with great success; and because Paul, having, as they believed, himself apostatized from the national religion, had become very conspicuous, and his very presence in Jerusalem, as in other places, would be likely to excite a tumult. It was, therefore, the part of friendship to him and to the cause to devise some proper plan to prevent, if possible, the anticipated excitement.

Verse 23

We have four men - There are with us four men. It is evident that James and the elders meant to say that these men were connected with them in the Christian church; and the fact shows that the Christians at Jerusalem did not disregard the institutions of Moses, and had not been so far enlightened in the doctrines of Christianity as to forsake yet the ceremonial rites of the Jews.

Which have a vow on them - Which have made a vow. See the notes on Acts 18:18. From the mention of shaving the head (in Acts 21:24), it is evident that the vow which they had taken was that of the Nazarite; and that as the time of their vow was about expiring, they were about to be shaven, in accordance with the custom usual on such occasions. See the notes on Acts 18:18. These persons Paul could join, and thus show decisively that he did not intend to undervalue or disparage the laws of Moses when those laws were understood as mere ceremonial observances.

Verse 24

Them take - Take with you. Join yourself with them.

And purify thyself with them - Join them in observing the forms of purification prescribed by the Law of Moses in the observance of the vow of the Nazarite. The purifying here refers to the vows of sanctity which the Nazarites were to observe. They were to abstain from wine and strong drink; they were to eat no grapes, moist or dried; they were to come near no dead body, nor to make themselves "unclean" for their father, mother, brother, or sister, when they died Numbers 6:3-7; and they were to present an offering when the days of the vow were completed, Numbers 6:8.

And be at charges with them - Share with them the expense of the offerings required when the vow is completed. Those offerings were a ram of a year old for a burnt-offering, a sheep of the same age for a sin-offering, a ram for a thank-offering, a basket of unleavened cakes, and a libation of wine. See Numbers 6:13-20.

That they may shave their heads - The shaving of the head, or the cutting off the hair which had been suffered to grow during the continuance of the vow Numbers 6:5, was an observance indicating that the vow had been performed. Paul was requested to join with them in the expense of the offerings, that thus, the whole of the ceremonies having been observed, their heads might be shaved as an indication that every part of the vow had been complied with.

And all may know - By the fact of your observance of one of the rites of the Mosaic religion, all may have evidence that it is not your purpose or practice to speak contemptuously of those rites, or to undervalue the authority of Moses.

Are nothing - Are untrue, or without any foundation.

Walkest orderly - That you live in accordance with the real requirements of the Law of Moses. To walk, in the Scriptures, often denotes

"to live, to act, to conduct in a certain manner." All, probably, that they wished Paul to show by this was, that he was not an enemy of Moses. They who gave this counsel were Christians, and they could not wish him to do anything which would imply that he was not a Christian.

Verse 25

As touching the Gentiles - In regard to the Gentile converts. It might be expedient for Paul to do what could not be enjoined on the Gentiles. They could not command the Gentile converts to observe those ceremonies, while yet it might be proper, for the sake of peace, that the converts to Christianity from among the Jews should regard them. The conduct of the Christians at Jerusalem in giving this advice, and of Paul in following it, may be easily vindicated. If it be objected, as it has been by infidels, that it looks like double-dealing; that it was designed to deceive the Jews in Jerusalem, and to make them believe that Paul actually conformed to the ceremonial law, when his conduct among the Gentiles showed that he did not, we may reply:

(1)That the observance of that law was not necessary in order to salvation;

(2)That it would have been improper to have enjoined its observance on the Gentile converts as necessary, and therefore it was never done;

(3)That when the Jews urged its observance as necessary to justification and salvation, Paul strenuously opposed this view of it everywhere;

(4)Yet that, as a matter of expediency, he did not oppose its being observed either by the Jews, or by the converts made among the Jews.

In fact, there is other evidence besides the case before us that Paul himself continued to observe some, at least, of the Jewish rites, and his conduct in public at Jerusalem was in strict accordance with his conduct in other places. See Acts 18:18. The sum of the whole matter is this, that when the observance of the Jewish ceremonial law was urged as necessary to justification and acceptance with God, Paul resisted it; when it was demanded that its observance should be enjoined on the Gentiles, he opposed it; in all other cases he made no opposition to it, and was ready himself to comply with it, and willing that others should also.

We have written - Acts 15:20, Acts 15:29.

Verse 26

Then Paul took the men - Took them to himself; united with them in observing the ceremonies connected with their vow. To transactions like this he refers in 1 Corinthians 9:20; "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the Law, as under the Law, that I might gain them that are under the Law." Thus, it has always been found necessary, in propagating the gospel among the pagan, not to offend them needlessly, but to conform to their innocent customs in regard to dress, language, modes of traveling, sitting, eating, etc. Paul did nothing more than this. He violated none of the dictates of honesty and truth.

Purifying himself with them - Observing the ceremonies connected with the rite of purification. See the notes on Acts 21:24. This means evidently that he entered on the ceremonies of the separation according to the law of the Nazarite.

To signify - Greek: signifying or making known. That is, he announced to the priests in the temple his purpose of observing this vow with the four men, according to the law respecting the Nazarite. It was proper that such an announcement should be made beforehand, in order that the priests might know that all the ceremonies required had been observed.

The accomplishment … - The fulfilling, the completion. That is, he announced to them his purpose to observe all the days and all the rites of purification required in the Law, in order that an offering might be properly made. It does not mean that the days had been accomplished, but that it was his intention to observe them, so that it would be proper to offer the usual sacrifice. Paul had not, indeed, engaged with them in the beginning of their vow of separation, but he might come in with hearty intention to share with them. It cannot be objected that he meant to impose on the priests, and to make them believe that he had observed the whole vow with them, for it appears from their own writings (Bereshith Rabba, 90, and Koheleth Rabba, 7) that in those instances where the Nazarites had not sufficient property to enable them to meet the whole expense of the offerings, other persons, who possessed more, might become sharers of it, and thus be made parties to the vow. See Jahn's Archaeology, §395. This circumstance will vindicate Paul from any intention to take an improper advantage, or to impose on the priests or the Jews. All that he announced was his intention to share with the four men in the offering which they were required to make, and thus to show his approval of the thing, and his accordance with the law which made such a vow proper.

Until that an offering … - The sacrifices required of all those who had observed this vow. See the notes on Acts 21:24. Compare Numbers 6:13. It is a complete vindication of Paul in this case that he did no more here than he had done in a voluntary manner Acts 18:18, and as appears then in a secret manner, showing that he was still in the practice of observing this rite of the Mosaic institution. Nor can it be proved that Paul ever, in any way, or at any time, spoke against the vow of the Nazarite, or that a vow of a similar kind in spirit would be improper for a Christian in any circumstances.

Verse 27

And when the seven days were almost ended - Greek: as the seven days were about to be fulfilled - ἔμελλον συντελεῖσθαι emellon sunteleisthaiThe seven days which were to complete the observance of the vow, Acts 21:26. Perhaps the whole observance in this case was intended to be but seven days, as the time of such a vow was voluntary. The translation, "were almost ended," is not quite correct. The Greek implies no more than that the period of the seven days was about to be accomplished, without implying that it was near the close of them when he was seized. By comparing the following places, Acts 21:18, Acts 21:26; Acts 22:30; Acts 23:12, Acts 23:32; Acts 24:1, Acts 24:11, it appears that the time of his seizure must have been near the beginning of those days (Doddridge).

The Jews which were of Asia - Who resided in Asia Minor, but who had come up to Jerusalem for purposes of worship. Compare the notes on Acts 2.

Verse 28

Men of Israel - Jews. All who are the friends of the Law of Moses.

This is the man … - This implies that they had before given information to the Jews at Jerusalem that there was such a man, and they now exulted in the fact that they had found him. They therefore called on all these to aid in securing and punishing him.

That teacheth … - See the notes on Acts 6:13-14.

Against the people - The people of the Jews. That is, they pretended that he taught that the customs and laws of the Jewish nation were not binding, and endeavored to prejudice all people against them.

And the law - The Law of Moses.

And this place - The temple. Everything against the Law would be interpreted also as being against the temple, as most of the ceremonies

required in the Law were celebrated there. It is possible also that Paul might have declared that the temple was to be destroyed. Compare Acts 6:13-14.

And further, brought Greeks … - The temple was surrounded by various areas called courts. See the notes on Matthew 21:12. The outermost of these courts was called the court of the Gentiles, and into that it was lawful for the Gentiles to enter. But the word "temple" here refers, doubtless, to the parts of the area appropriated especially to the Israelites, and which it was unlawful for a Gentile to enter. These parts are marked "GGGG" in the plan of the temple. See the notes at Matthew 21:12.

And hath polluted … - He has defiled the temple by thus introducing a Gentile. No greater defilement, in their view, could scarcely be conceived. No more effective appeal could be made to the passions of the people than this.

Verse 29

In the city - In Jerusalem. As he was with Paul, it was inferred that he would attend him everywhere.

Trophimus - He had accompanied Paul on his way from Ephesus, Acts 20:4.

Whom they supposed … - This is a most striking illustration of the manner in which accusations are often brought against others. They had seen him with Paul in the city; they inferred, therefore, that he had been with him in the temple. They did not even pretend that they had seen him in the temple; but the inference was enough to inflame the angry and excitable passions of the multitude. So in the accusations which people now often make of others. They see one thing, they infer another; they could testify to one thing, but they conclude that another thing will also be true, and that other thing they charge on them as the truth. If people would state facts as they are, no small part of the slanderous accusations against others would cease. An end would be made of the most of the charges of falsehood, error, heresy, dishonesty, double-dealing, and immorality. If a statement is made, it should be of the thing as it was. If we attempt to say what a man has done, it should not be what we suppose he has done. If we attempt to state what he believes, it should not be what we suppose he believes.

Verse 30

The city was moved - Was agitated; was thrown into commotion.

Drew him out of the temple - Under the pretence that he had defiled it. The evident design was to put him to death, Acts 21:31.

The doors were shut - The doors leading into the courts of the temple.

Verse 31

And as they went about to kill him - Greek: they seeking to kill him. This was evidently done in a popular tumult, as had been done in the case of Stephen, Matthew 27:65-66; John 18:12; Acts 5:26. The word translated "chief captain" denotes properly "one who commanded 1,000 men." The band σπεῖρα speirawas the tenth part of a legion, and consisted sometimes of four hundred and twenty-five soldiers, at others of five hundred, and at others of six hundred, according to the size of the legion. The name of this captain was Claudius Lysias, Acts 23:26.

In an uproar - That the whole city was in commotion.

Verse 32

Centurions - Captains of 100 men.

Verse 33

To be bound with two chains - To show to the enraged multitude that he did not intend to rescue anyone from justice, but to keep the peace. Paul's Being thus bound would convince them of his determination that justice should be done in the case. Probably he was bound between two soldiers, his right arm to the left arm of the one, and his left arm to the right arm of the other. See the notes on Acts 12:6. Or, if his hands and feet were bound, it is evident that it was so done that he was able still to walk, Acts 21:37-38. This was in accordance with the prediction of Agabus, Acts 21:11.

Verse 34

Into the castle - The castle of Antonia, where the guard was kept. See the notes on Acts 21:31. Compare Acts 23:10, Acts 23:16.

Verse 35

Upon the stairs - The stairs which led from the temple to the castle of Antonia. Josephus says (*Jewish Wars*, book 5, chapter 5, section 8), that the castle of Antonia "was situated at the corner of two cloisters of the temple, of that on the west, and of that on the north; it was erected on a rock of 50 cubits (75 feet) in height, and was on a great precipice. On the corner where it joined to the two cloisters of the temple, it had passages down to them both, through which the guards went several ways among the cloisters with their arms, on the Jewish festivals, etc." It was on these stairs, as the soldiers were returning, that the tumult was so great, or the crowd so dense, that they were obliged to hear Paul along to rescue him from their violence.

The violence of the people - The rush of the multitude.

Verse 36

Away with him! - That is, to death. Compare Luke 23:18.

Verse 37

May I speak unto thee? - May I have the privilege of making my defense before thee; or of stating the case truly; the cause of my accusation; of this tumult, etc.

Canst thou speak Greek? - Implying that if he could, he might be permitted to speak to him. The Greek language was what was then almost universally spoken, and it is not improbable that it was the native tongue of the chief captain. It is evident that he was not a Roman by birth, for he says Acts 22:28 that he had obtained the privilege of citizenship by paying a great sum. The language which the Jews spoke was the Syro-Chaldaic; and as he took Paul to be an Egyptian Jew Acts 21:38, he supposed, from that circumstance also, that he was not able to speak the Greek language.

Verse 38

Art not thou that Egyptian? - That Egyptian was probably a Jew who resided in Egypt. Josephus has given an account of this Egyptian which strikingly accords with the statement here recorded by Luke. See Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 8, section 6, and *Jewish Wars*, book 2, chapter 13, section 5. The account which he gives is, that this Egyptian, whose name he does not mention, came from Egypt to Jerusalem, and said that he was a prophet, and advised the multitude of the common people to go with him to the Mount of Olives. He said further that he would show them from thence how the walls of Jerusalem would fall down: and he promised them that he would procure for them an entrance through those walls when they were fallen down. Josephus adds (*Jewish Wars*) that he got together 30,000 men that were deluded by him; "these he led round about from the wilderness to the mount which was called the Mount of Olives, and was ready to break into Jerusalem by force from that place. But Felix, who was apprised of his movements, marched against him with the Roman soldiers, and defeated him, and killed 400 of them, and took 200 alive. But the Egyptian escaped himself out of the fight, but did not appear anymore." It was natural that the Roman tribune should suppose that Paul was this Egyptian, and that his return had produped this commotion and excitement among the people.

Madest an uproar - Producing a sedition, or a rising among the people. Greek: "That Egyptian, who before these days having risen up."

Into the wilderness - This corresponds remarkably with the account of Josephus. He indeed mentions that he led his followers to the Mount of Olives, but he expressly says that "he led them round about from the wilderness." This wilderness was the wild and uncultivated mountainous tract of country lying to the east of Jerusalem, and between it and the river Jordan. See the notes on Matthew 3:1. It is also another striking coincidence showing the truth of the narrative, that neither Josephus nor Luke mention the name of this Egyptian, though he was so prominent and acted so distinguished a part.

Four thousand men - There is here a remarkable discrepancy between the chief captain and Josephus. The latter says that there were 30,000 men. In regard to this, the following remarks may be made:

(1) This cannot be alleged to convict Luke of a false statement, for his record is, that the chief captain made the statement, and it cannot be proved that Luke has put into his mouth words which he did not utter. All that he is responsible for is a correct report of what the Roman tribune said, not the truth or falsehood of his statement. It is certainly possible that that might have been the common estimate of the number then, and that the account given by Josephus might have been made from more correct information. Or it is possible, certainly, that the statement by Josephus is incorrect.

(2) if Luke were to be held responsible for the statement of the number, yet it remains to be shown that he is not as credible a historian as Josephus. Why should Josephus be esteemed infallible, and Luke false? Why should the accuracy of Luke be tested by Josephus, rather than the accuracy of Josephus by Luke? Infidels usually assume that profane historians are infallible, and then endeavor to convict the sacred writers of falsehood.

(3) the narrative of Luke is the more probable of the two. It is more probable that the number was only 4,000 than that it was 30,000 thousand; for Josephus says that 400 were killed and 200 were taken prisoners, and that thus they were dispersed. Now, it is scarcely credible that an army of 30,000 desperadoes and cut-throats would be dispersed by so small a slaughter and captivity. But if the number was originally only 4,000, it is entirely credible that the loss of 600 would discourage and dissipate the remainder.

(4) it is possible that the chief captain refers only to the organized Sicarii, or murderers that the Egyptian led with him, and Josephus to the multitude that afterward joined them the rabble of the discontented and disorderly that followed them on their march. Or,

(5) There may have been an error in transcribing Josephus. It has been supposed that he originally wrote four thousand, but that ancient copyists, mistaking the (Δ D) delta, four, for (Λ L) lambda, thirty, wrote 30,000 instead of 4,000. Which of these solutions is adopted is not material.

That were murderers - Greek: men of the Sicarii - τῶν σικαρίων tōn sikariōnThis is originally a Latin word, and is derived from sica, a short sword, sabre, or crooked knife, which could be easily concealed under the garment. Hence, it came to denote "assassins," and to be applied to "banditti, or robbers." It does not mean that they had actually committed murder, but that they were desperadoes and banditti, and were drawn together for purposes of plunder and of blood. This class of people was exceedingly numerous in Judea. See the notes on Luke 10:30.

Verse 39

A Jew of Tarsus - A Jew by birth.

Of no mean city - Not obscure, or undistinguished. He could claim an honorable birth, so far as the place of his nativity was concerned. See the notes on Acts 9:11. Tarsus was much celebrated for its learning, and was at one time the rival of Alexandria and Athens. Xenophon calls it a great and flourishing city. Josephus (*Antiq.*, book 2, chapter 6, section 6) says that it was the metropolis, and most renowned city among them (the Cilicians).

Verse 40

Licence - Liberty; permission.

On the stairs - See the notes on Acts 21:35.

Beckoned with the hand - Waving the hand as a sign that he was about to address them, and to produce silence and attention. See Acts 12:17.

In the Hebrew tongue - The language which was spoken by the Jews, which was then a mixture of the Chaldee and Syriac, called Syro-Chaldaic. This language he doubtless used on this occasion in preference to the Greek, because it was understood better by the multitude, and would tend to conciliate them if they heard him address them in their own tongue. The following chapter should have been connected with this. The division here is unnatural.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 22

Verse 1

Men, brethren, and fathers - This defense was addressed to the Jews, and Paul commenced it with an expression of sincere respect for them. Stephen began his defense with the same form of address. See the notes on Acts 7:2.

My defence - Against the charges brought against me. Those charges were, that he had endeavored to prejudice people everywhere against the Jews, the Law, and the temple, Acts 21:28. In order to meet this charge, Paul stated:

(1)That he was a Jew by birth, and had enjoyed all the advantages of a Jewish education, Acts 22:3;

(2)He recounted the circumstances of his conversion, and the reason why he believed that he was called to preach the gospel, Acts 22:4-16;

(3)He proceeded to state the reasons why he went among the Gentiles, and evidently intended to vindicate his conduct there, Acts 22:17-21; but at this point, at the name Gentiles, his defense was interrupted by the enraged multitude, and he was not permitted to proceed.

What would have been his defense, therefore, had he been suffered to finish it, it is impossible to know with certainty. On another occasion, however, he was permitted to make a similar defense, and perhaps to complete the train of thought which he had purposed to pursue here. See Acts 22.

Verse 2

The Hebrew tongue - See the notes on Acts 21:40.

Verse 3

Born in Tarsus - See the notes on Acts 9:11.

Brought up in this city - In Jerusalem, sent there for the advantage of more perfect instruction in the Law.

At the feet of Gamaliel - As a scholar or disciple of Gamaliel. The phrase to sit at the feet of one is expressive of the condition of a disciple or learner. Compare Deuteronomy 33:3; Luke 10:39. It is probable that the expression arose from the fact that the learners occupied a lower place or seat than the teacher. On the character and rank of Gamaliel, see the notes on Acts 5:34. Paul mentions his having been instructed in this manner in

order to show that he was entitled to the full privileges of a Jew, and that he had had every opportunity to become fully acquainted with the nature of the Law.

According to the perfect manner - κατὰ ἀκρίβειαν kata akribeianBy strict diligence or exact care; or in the utmost rigor and severity of that instruction. No pains were Spared to make him understand and practice the Law of Moses.

The law of the fathers - The law of our fathers; that is, the law which they received and handed down to us. Paul was a Pharisee, and the law in which he had been taught was not only the written Law of Moses, but the traditional law which had been handed down from former times. See the notes on Matthew 3:6.

And was zealous toward God - Galatians 1:14. He had a constant burning zeal for God and His Law, which was expressed not only by scrupulous adherence to its forms, but by persecuting all who opposed it, Acts 22:4-5.

Verse 4

And I persecuted - Acts 8:3.

This way - Those who were of this mode of worshipping God; that is, Christians. See the notes on Acts 9:2.

Unto the death - Intending to put them to death. He did not probably put any to death himself, but he committed them to prison; he sought their lives; he was the agent employed in arresting them; and when they were put to death, he tells us that he gave his voice against them Acts 26:10; that is, he joined in, and approved of their condemnation.

Delivering into prisons … - Acts 8:3.

Verse 5

As also the high priest … - See the notes on Acts 9:2.

All the estate of the elders - Greek: all the presbytery; that is, the whole body of the Sanhedrin, or Great Council of the nation.

Unto the brethren - The Jewish brethren who were at Damascus. Paul here speaks as a Jew, and regards his countrymen as his brethren.

Verses 6-11

See the notes on Acts 9:3-7.

Acts 22:6

As I made my journey - As I was on my journey.

About noon - Acts 26:13, "at mid-day." This circumstance is omitted by Luke in his account in Acts 22:11

The glory of that light - The splendor, the intense brilliancy of the light. See this and its effects explained in the notes on Acts 9:8.

Verse 12-13

See the notes on Acts 9:17-18.

Verse 14

Shouldest know his will - His will in the plan of salvation, and in regard to your future life.

And see that Just One - The Messiah. See the notes on Acts 3:14. As Paul was to be an apostle, and as it was the special office of an apostle to bear witness to the person and deeds of the Lord Jesus (see the notes on Acts 1:21-22), it was necessary that he should see him, that thus he might be a competent witness of his resurrection.

Shouldest hear the voice of his mouth - Shouldst hear and obey his commands.

Verse 15

For thou shalt be his witness … - As an apostle - to testify to all people that the Messiah has come, that he has died, that he has risen, and that he is the Saviour of the world.

Of what thou hast seen and heard - Of the remarkable proof which has been furnished you of the divine mission and character of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 16

And now why tarriest thou? - Why dost thou delay, or wait any longer? These words are not recorded by Luke in Hebrews 10:22. Sinners are represented in the Scriptures as defiled or polluted by sin. "To wash away the sins" denotes "the purifying of the soul from this polluted influence," 1 Corinthians 6:11; Revelation 1:5; Revelation 7:14; Isaiah 1:16; Psalm 51:2, Psalm 51:7.

Calling on the name of the Lord - For pardon and sanctification, Romans 10:13, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." It was proper that this calling on the name of the Lord should be connected with the ordinance of baptism. That ordinance was emblematic of a purifying which the Lord only could produce. It is proper that the rite of baptism should be attended with extraordinary prayer; that he who is to be baptized should make it the occasion of special and very solemn

religious exercises. The external rite will avail nothing without the pardoning mercy of God.

Verse 17

When I was come again to Jerusalem - That is, three years after his conversion. See Galatians 1:17-18.

While I prayed in the temple - Paul, like other converts to Christianity from among the Jews, would naturally continue to offer his devotions in the temple. We meet with repeated instances of their continuing to comply with the customs of the Jewish people.

I was in a trance - Greek: ecstasy. See the notes on Acts 10:10. It is possible that he may here refer to what he elsewhere mentions 2 Corinthians 12:1-5 as "visions and revelations of the Lord." In that place he mentions his being "caught up to the third heaven" 2 Corinthians 12:2 and "into paradise," where he heard words which it was "not lawful (marg. possible) for a man to utter," 2 Corinthians 12:4. It is not certain, however, that he alludes in this place to that remarkable occurrence. The narrative would rather imply that the Lord Jesus appeared to him in the temple in a remarkable manner, in a vision, and gave him a special command to go to the Gentiles. Paul had now stated the evidence of his conversion, which appears to have been satisfactory to them - at least they made no objection to his statement; he had shown, by his being in the temple, his respect for their institutions; and he now proceeds to show that in his other conduct he had been directed by the same high authority by which he had been called into the ministry, and that the command had been given to him in their own temple and in their own city.

Verse 18

And saw him - Evidently, the Lord Jesus, Acts 22:14. He had received his commission from him, and he now received a distinct command to go to the Gentiles.

For they will not receive - The inhabitants of Jerusalem, probably including both Jews and Christians. The Jews would not listen to him because he had become, in their view, an apostate, and they would hate and persecute him. The Christians would not be likely to receive him, for they would remember his former persecutions, and would be suspicious of him because he had been so long in Arabia, and had not sooner connected himself with them. See the notes on Acts 9:26, "And when Saul was come

to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple."

Verse 19

And I said, Lord - This shows that it was the Lord Jesus whom Paul saw in a trance in the temple. The term "Lord" is usually applied to him in the Acts. See the notes on Acts 1:24.

They know - Christians know; and they will therefore be not likely to receive to their fellowship their former enemy and persecutor.

Beat in every synagogue - Beating, or scourging, was often done in the synagogue. See the notes on Matthew 10:17. Compare Acts 26:11. It was customary for those who were converted to Christianity still to meet with the Jews in their synagogues, and to join with them in their worship.

Verse 20

The blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed - See Acts 7:58; Acts 8:1.

I also was standing by - Acts 7:58.

And consenting unto his death - Acts 8:1.

And kept the raiment - The outer robes or garments, which were usually laid aside when they engaged in running or labor. See Acts 7:58. All this showed that, though Paul was not engaged in stoning Stephen, yet he was with them in spirit, and fully accorded with what they did. These circumstances are mentioned here by him as reasons why he knew that he would not be received by Christians as one of their number, and why it was necessary, therefore, for him to turn to the Gentile world.

Verse 21

And he said unto me, Depart - Because the Christians at Jerusalem would not receive him.

Far hence - Paul traveled far in the pagan nations. A large part of his ministry was spent in remote countries, and in the most distant regions then known. See Romans 15:19.

Verse 22

And they gave him audience - They heard him patiently.

Unto this word - The word "Gentile."

Away with such a fellow - Greek: "take such a man from the earth," that is, "put him to death." It is language of strong indignation and abhorrence. The reasons of their induction were, not that they supposed that the Gentiles could not be brought into covenant with God, for they would themselves compass sea and land to make one proselyte, but:

(1)That they believed that Paul taught that they might be saved without conforming to the Law of Moses; and,

(2)His speech implied that the Jews were more hardened than the Gentiles, and that he had a greater prospect of success in bringing them to God than he had in regard to the Jews.

Verse 23

Cast off their clothes - Their outer garments. Probably they did it now intending to stone him, Acts 7:58.

And threw dust into the air - As expressive of them abhorrence and indignation. This was a striking exhibition of rage and malice. Paul was guarded by Roman soldiers so that they could not injure him; and their only way of expressing their wrath was by menaces and threats, and by these tokens of furious indignation. Thus, Shimei expressed his indignation against David by cursing him, throwing stones at him, and casting dust, 2 Samuel 16:13.

Verse 24

The castle - The castle of Antonia. He would be there removed entirely from the wrath of the Jews.

Should be examined - ἀνετάζεσθαι anetazesthaiThe word "examine" with us commonly means "to inquire, to question, to search for, to look carefully into a subject." The word used here is commonly applied to metals whose nature is tested, or examined by fire; and then it mean to subject to torture or torments, in order to extort a confession where persons were accused of crime. It was often resorted to among the ancients. A common mode has been by the rack, but various kinds of torments have been invented in order to extort confessions of guilt from those who were accused. The whole practice has been one of the most flagrant violations of justice, and one of the foulest blots on human nature. In this case, the tribune saw that Paul was accused violently by the Jews; he was probably ignorant of the Hebrew language, and had not understood the address of Paul; he supposed from the extraordinary excitement that Paul must have been guilty of some flagrant offence, and he therefore resolved to subject him to torture to extort from him a confession.

By scourging - By the scourge or whip. Compare Hebrews 11:36. This was one mode of torture, in order to extort a secret from those who were accused.

Verse 25

Bound him with thongs - With cords, preparatory to scourging.

Is it lawful … - It was directly contrary to the Roman law to bind and scourge a Roman citizen. See the notes on Acts 16:36-37.

Verse 28

With a great sum obtained I this freedom - The freedom or privilege of Roman citizenship. From this it would seem that the privilege of being a Roman citizen might be purchased, unless perhaps he refers to the expenses which were necessarily attendant in passing through the proper forms of becoming a Roman citizen. The argument of the tribune in this case is this: "I obtained this privilege at a great price. Whence did you, Paul, thus poor and persecuted, obtain the means of becoming a Roman citizen?" Paul had informed him that he was a native of Tarsus Acts 21:39; and the chief captain supposed that that was not a free city, and that Paul could not have derived the privilege of citizenship from his birth.

But I was free born - I was born a Roman citizen, or I am such in virtue of my birth. Various opinions have been formed on the question in what way or for what reasons Paul was entitled to the privileges of a Roman citizen. Some have supposed that Tarsus was a Roman colony, and that he thus became a Roman citizen. But of this there does not appear to be sufficient proof. Pliny says (Acts 21:27) that it was a free city. Appian says that it was endowed with the privileges of a free city by Augustus Caesar after it had been greatly afflicted and oppressed by wars. Dio Chrysost. says to the people of Tarsus, "He (Augustus) has conferred on you everything which anyone could bestow on his friends and companions, a country (that is, a free country), laws, honor, authority over the river (Cydranus) and the neighboring sea." Free cities were permitted in the Roman empire to use their own laws, customs, and magistrates, and they were free from being subject to Roman guards. They were required only to acknowledge the supremacy and authority of the Roman people, and to aid them in their wars. Such a city was Tarsus; and, having been born there, Paul was entitled to these privileges of a free man. Many critics have supposed that this privilege of Roman citizenship had been conferred on some of the ancestors of Paul in consequence of some distinguished military service. Such a conferring of the rights of citizenship was not unusual, and possibly might have occurred in this case. But there is no direct historical proof of it; and

the former fact that he was born in a free city, will amply account for his affirmation that he was free born. Compare the notes on Acts 16:37.

Verse 29

Then straightway - Immediately. They saw that by scourging him they would have Violated the Roman law, and exposed themselves to its penalty.

Which should have examined him - Who were about to torture him by scourging him, Acts 22:24.

Because he had bound him - Preparatory to scourging him. The act of binding a Roman citizen with such an intent, untried and uncondemned, was unlawful. Prisoners Who were to be scourged were usually bound by the Romans to a pillar or post; and a Similar custom prevailed among the Jews. That it was unlawful to bind a man with this intent, who was uncondemned, appears from an express declaration in Cicero (against Verres): "It is a heinous sin to bind a Roman citizen; it is wickedness to beat him; it is next to parricide to kill him, and what Shall I say to crucify him?"

Verse 30

On the morrow - After he had arrested Paul. Paul was still a prisoner; and if suffered to go at liberty among the Jews, his life would have been in danger.

And commanded the chief priests … - Summoned a meeting of the Sanhedrin, or Great Council of the nation. He did this, as he was prevented from scourging Paul, in order to know what he had done, and that he might learn from the Jews themselves the nature of the charge against him. This was necessary for the safety of Paul and for the ends of justice. This should have been done without any attempt to torture him in order to extort a confession.

And brought Paul down - From the elevated castle of Antonia. The council assembled commonly in the house of the high priest.

And set him before them - He brought the prisoner to their bar, that they might have have an opportunity to accuse him, and that thus the chief captain might learn the real nature of the charge against him.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 23

Verse 1

And Paul, earnestly beholding - ἀτενίσας atenisasFixing his eyes intently on the council. The word denotes "a fixed and earnest gazing; a close observation." See Luke 4:20. Compare the notes on Acts 3:4. Paul would naturally look with a keen and attentive observation on the council. He was arraigned before them, and he would naturally observe the appearance, and endeavor to ascertain the character of his judges. Besides, it was by this council that he had been formerly commissioned to persecute the Christians, Acts 9:1-2. He had not seen them since that commission was given. He would naturally, therefore, regard them with an attentive eye. The result shows, also, that he looked at them to see what was the character of the men there assembled, and what was the proportion of Pharisees and Sadducees, Acts 23:6.

The council - Greek: the Sanhedrin, Acts 22:30. It was the great council, composed of seventy elders, to whom was entrusted the affairs of the nation. See the notes on Matthew 1:4.

Men and brethren - Greek: "Men, brethren"; the usual form of beginning an address among the Jews. See Acts 2:29. He addressed them still as his brethren.

I have lived in all good conscience - I have conducted myself so as to maintain a good conscience. I have done what I believed to be right. This was a bold declaration, after the tumult, and charges, and accusations of the previous day Acts 26:9, "I verily thought with myself," says he, "that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Of his conscientiousness and fidelity in their service they could bear witness. Of his conscientiousness since, he could make a similar declaration. He doubtless meant to say that as he had been conscientious in persecution, so he had been in his conversion and in his subsequent course. And as they knew that his former life had been with a good conscience, they ought to presume that he had maintained the same character still. This was a remarkably bold appeal to be made by an accused man, and it shows the strong consciousness which Paul had of his innocence. What would have been the drift of his discourse in proving this we can only Conjecture. He was interrupted Acts 23:2; but there can be no doubt that he would have pursued such a course of argument as would tend to establish his innocence.

Before God - Greek: to God - τῷ Θεῷ tō TheōHe had lived to God, or with reference to his commands, so as to keep a conscience pure in his sight. The same principle of conduct he states more at length in Acts 24:16; "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men."

Until this day - Including the time before his conversion to Christianity, and after. In both conditions he was conscientious; in one, conscientious in persecution and error, though he deemed it to be right; in the other, conscientious in the truth. The mere fact that a man is conscientious does not prove that he is right or innocent. See the note on John 16:2.

Verse 2

And the high priest Ananias - This Ananias was doubtless the son of Nebedinus (Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 5, section 3), who was high priest when Quadratus, who preceded Felix, was president of Syria. He was sent bound to Rome by Quadratus, at the same time with Ananias, the prefect of the temple, that they might give an account of their conduct to Claudius Caesar (Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 6, section 2). But in consequence of the intercession of Agrippa the younger, they were dismissed and returned to Jerusalem. Ananias, however, was not restored to the office of high priest. For, when Felix was governor of Judea, this office was filled by Jonathan, who succeeded Ananias I (Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 10). Jonathan was slain in the temple itself, by the instigation of Felix, by assassins who had been hired for the purpose. This murder is thus described by Josephus (*Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 8, section 5): "Felix bore an ill-will to Jonathan, the high priest, because he frequently gave him admonitions about governing the Jewish affairs better than he did, lest complaints should be made against him, since he had procured of Caesar the appointment of Felix as procurator of Judea. Accordingly, Felix contrived a method by which he might get rid of Jonathan, whose admonitions had become troublesome to him. Felix persuaded one of Jonathan's most faithful friends, of the name Doras, to bring the robbers upon him, and to put him to death."

This was done in Jerusalem. The robbers came into the city as if to worship God, and with daggers, which they had concealed under their garments, they put him to death. After the death of Jonathan, the office of high priest remained vacant until King Agrippa appointed Ismael, the son of Fabi, to the office (Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 8, section 8). It was

during this interval, while the office of high priest was vacant, that the events which are here recorded took place. Ananias was then at Jerusalem; and as the office of high priest was vacant, and as he was the last person who had borne the office, it was natural that he should discharge, probably by common consent, its duties, so far, at least, as to preside in the Sanhedrin. Of these facts Paul would be doubtless apprised; and hence, what he said Acts 23:5 was strictly true, and is one of the evidences that Luke‘s history accords precisely with the special circumstances which then existed. When Luke here calls Ananias "the high priest," he evidently intends not to affirm that he was actually such, but to use the word, as the Jews did, as applicable to one who had been in that office, and who, on that occasion, when the office was vacant, performed its duties.

To smite him on the mouth - To stop him from speaking; to express their indignation at what he had said. The anger of Ananias was aroused because Paul affirmed that all he had done had been with a good conscience. Their feelings had been excited to the utmost; they regarded him as certainly guilty; they regarded him as an apostate; and they could not bear it that he, with such coolness and firmness, declared that all his conduct had been under the direction of a good conscience. The injustice of the command of Ananias is apparent to all. A similar instance of violence occurred on the trial of the Saviour, John 18:22.

Verse 3

God shall smite thee - God shall punish thee. God is just; and he will not suffer such a manifest violation of all the laws of a fair trial to pass unavenged. This was a remarkably bold and fearless declaration. Paul was surrounded by enemies. They were seeking his life. He must have known that such declarations would only excite their wrath and make them more thirsty for his blood. That he could thus address the president of the council was not only strongly characteristic of the man, but was also a strong proof that he was conscious of innocence, and that justice was on his side. This expression of Paul, "God shall smite thee," is not to be regarded in the light of an imprecatio, or as an expression of angry feeling, but of a prediction, or of a strong conviction on the mind of Paul that a man so hypocritical and unjust as Ananias was could not escape the vengeance of God. Ananias was slain, with Hezekiah his brother, during the agitation that occurred in Jerusalem when the robbers, or Sicarii, under their leader, Manahem, had taken possession of the city. He attempted to conceal himself in an

aqueduct, but was drawn forth and killed. See Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, book 2, chapter 17, section 8. Thus, Paul's prediction was fulfilled.

Thou whited wall - This is evidently a proverbial expression, meaning thou hypocrite. His hypocrisy consisted in the fact that while he pretended to sit there to do justice, he commanded the accused to be smitten in direct violation of the Law, thus showing that his character was not what he professed it to be, but that of one determined to carry the purposes of his party and of his own feelings. Our Saviour used a similar expression to describe the hypocritical character of the Pharisees Matthew 23:27, when he compares them to whited sepulchres. A whited wall is a wall or enclosure that is covered with lime or gypsum, and that thus appears to be different from what it is, and thus aptly describes the hypocrite. Seneca (De Providentia, chapter 6) uses a similar figure to describe hypocrites: "They are sordid, base, and like their walls adorned only externally." See also Seneca, Epis. 115.

For sittest thou … - The Law required that justice should be done, and in order to that, it gave every man an opportunity of defending himself. See the note, John 7:51. Compare Proverbs 18:13; Leviticus 19:15-16; Exodus 23:1-2; Deuteronomy 19:15, Deuteronomy 19:18.

To judge me after the law - As a judge, to hear and decide the case according to the rules of the Law of Moses.

Contrary to the law - In violation of the Law of Moses Leviticus 19:35, "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment."

Verse 4

Revilest thou … - Dost thou reproach or abuse the high priest of God? is remarkable that they, who knew that he was not the high priest, should have offered this language. He was, however, in the place of the high priest, and they might have pretended that respect was due to the office.

Verse 5

Then said Paul, I wist not - I know not; I was ignorant of the fact that he was high priest. Interpreters have been greatly divided on the meaning of this expression. Some have supposed that Paul said it in irony, as if he had said, "Pardon me, brethren, I did not consider that this was the high priest. It did not occur to me that a man who could conduct thus could be God's highest. Others have thought (as Grotius) that Paul used these words for the purpose of mitigating their wrath, and as an acknowledgment that he had spoken hastily, and that it was contrary to his usual habit, which was not to

speak evil of the ruler of the people. As if he had said, "I acknowledge my error and my haste. I did not consider that I was addressing him whom God had commanded me to respect." But this interpretation is not probable, for Paul evidently did not intend to retract what he had said.

Dr. Doddridge renders it, "I was not aware, brethren, that it was the high priest," and regards it as an apology for having spoken in haste. But the obvious reply to this interpretation is, that if Ananias was the high priest, Paul could not but be aware of it. Of so material a point it is hardly possible that he could be ignorant. Others suppose that, as Paul had been long absent from Jerusalem, and had not known the changes which had occurred there, he was a stranger to the person of the high priest. Others suppose that Ananias did not occupy the usual seat which was appropriated to the high priest, and that he was not clothed in the usual robes of office, and that Paul did not recognize him as the high priest. But it is wholly improbable that on such an occasion the high priest, who was the presiding officer in the Sanhedrin, should not be known to the accused. The true interpretation, therefore, I suppose, is what is derived from the fact that Ananias was not then properly the high priest; that there was a vacancy in the office, and that he presided by courtesy, or in virtue of his having been formerly invested with that office.

The meaning then will be: "I do not regard or acknowledge him as the high priest, or address him as such, since that is not his true character. Had he been truly the high priest, even if he had thus been guilty of manifest injustice, I would not have used the language which I did. The office, if not the man, would have claimed respect. But as he is not truly and properly clothed with that office, and as he was guilty of manifest injustice, I did not believe that he was to be shielded in his injustice by the Law which commands me to show respect to the proper ruler of the people." If this be the true interpretation, it shows that Luke, in this account, accords entirely with the truth of history. The character of Ananias as given by Josephus, the facts which he has stated in regard to him, all accord with the account here given, and show that the writer of the "Acts of the Apostles" was acquainted with the history of that time, and has correctly stated it.

For it is written - Exodus 22:28. Paul adduces this to show that it was his purpose to observe the Law; that he would not intentionally violate it;

and that, if he had known Ananias to be high priest, he would have been restrained by his regard for the Law from using the language which he did.

Of the ruler of thy people - This passage had not any special reference to the high priest, but it inculcated the general spirit of respect for those in office, whatever that office was. As the office of high priest was one of importance and authority, Paul declares here that he would not be guilty of showing disrespect for it, or of using reproachful language in regard to it.

Verse 6

But when Paul perceived - Probably by his former acquaintance with the men who composed the council. As he had been brought up in Jerusalem, and had been before acquainted with the Sanhedrin Acts 9:2, he would have an acquaintance, doubtless, with the character of most of those present, though he had been absent from them for fourteen years, Galatians 2:1.

The one part … - That the council was divided into two parts, Pharisees and Sadducees. This was commonly the case, though it was uncertain which had the majority. In regard to the opinions of these two sects, see the notes on Matthew 3:7.

He cried out … - The reasons why Paul resolved to take advantage of their difference of opinion were, probably:

(1) That he saw that it was impossible to expect justice at their hands, and he therefore regarded it as prudent and proper to consult his own safety. He saw, from the conduct of Ananias, and from the spirit manifested Acts 23:4, that they, like the other Jews, had prejudged the case, and were driven on by blind rage and fury.

(2) his object was to show his innocence to the chief captain. To ascertain that was the purpose for which he had been arraigned. Yet that, perhaps, could be most directly and satisfactorily shown by bringing out, as he knew he could do, the real spirit which actuated the whole council, as a spirit of party strife, contention, and persecution. Knowing, therefore, how sensitive they were on the subject of the resurrection, he seems to have resolved to do what he would not have done had they been disposed to hear him according to the rules of justice - to abandon the direct argument for his defense, and to enlist a large part, perhaps a majority of the council, in his favor. Whatever may be thought of the propriety of this course, it cannot be

denied that it was a masterstroke of policy, and that it evinced a profound knowledge of human nature.

I am a Pharisee - That is, I was of that sect among the Jews. I was born a Pharisee, and I ever continued while a Jew to be of that sect. In the main he agreed with them still. He did not mean to deny that he was a Christian, but that, so far as the Pharisees differed from the Sadducees, he was with the former. He agreed with them, not with the Sadducees, in regard to the doctrine of the resurrection, and the existence of angels and spirits.

The son of a Pharisee - What was the name of his father is not known. But the meaning is, simply, that he was entitled to all the immunities and privileges of a Pharisee. He had, from his birth, belonged to that sect, nor had he ever departed from the great cardinal doctrine which distinguished that sect - the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Compare Philemon 3:5.

Of the hope and resurrection of the dead - That is, of the hope that the dead will be raised. This is the real point of the opposition to me.

I am called in question - Greek: I am judged; that is, I am persecuted, or brought to trial. Orobio charges this upon Paul as an artful manner of declining persecution, unworthy the character of an upright and honest man. Chubb, a British Deist of the seventeenth century, charges it upon Paul as an act of gross "dissimulation, as designed to conceal the true ground of all the troubles that he had brought upon himself, and as designed to deceive and impose upon the Jews." He affirms also that "Paul probably invented this pretended charge against himself to draw over a party of the unbelieving Jews unto him." See Chubb's Posthumous Works, vol. ii. p. 238. Now, in reply to this, we may observe:

(1) That there is not the least evidence that Paul denied that he had been, or was then, a Christian. An attempt to deny this, after all that they knew of him, would have been vain; and there is not the slightest hint that he attempted it.

(2) the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was the main and leading doctrine which he had insisted on, and which had been to him the cause of much of his persecution. See Acts 17:31-32; Acts 13:34; Acts 26:6-7, Acts 26:23, Acts 26:25.

(3) Paul defended this by an argument which he deemed invincible; and which constituted, in fact, the principal evidence of its truth - the fact that the Lord Jesus had been raised. That fact had fully confirmed the doctrine of the Pharisees that the dead would rise. As Paul had everywhere proclaimed the fact that Jesus had been raised up, and as this had been the occasion of his being opposed, it was true that he had been persecuted on account of that doctrine.

(4) the real ground of the opposition Which the Sadducees made to him, and of their opposition to his doctrine, was the additional zeal with which he urged this doctrine, and the additional argument which he brought for the resurrection of the dead. Perhaps the cause of the opposition of this great party among the Jews the Sadducees - to Christianity, was the strong confirmation which the resurrection of Christ gave to the doctrine which they so much hated - the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. It thus gave a triumph to their opponents among the Pharisees, and Paul, as a leading and zealous advocate of that doctrine, would excite their special hatred.

(5) all that Paul said, therefore, was strictly true. It was because he advocated this doctrine that he was opposed. That there were other causes of opposition to him might be true also; but still this was the main and prominent cause of the hostility.

(6) with great propriety, therefore, he might address the Pharisees and say, “Brethren, the doctrine which has distinguished you from the Sadducees is at stake. The doctrine which is at the foundation of all our hopes - the resurrection of the dead; the doctrine of our fathers, of the Scriptures, of our sect, is in danger. Of that doctrine I have been the advocate. I have never denied it. I have everywhere defended it, and have devoted myself to the work of putting it on an imperishable basis among the Jews and the Gentiles. For my zeal in that I have been opposed. I have excited the ridicule of the Gentile and the hatred of the Sadducee. I have thus been persecuted and arraigned; and for my zeal in urging the argument in defense of it which I have deemed most irrefragable the resurrection of the Messiah - I have been arraigned, and now cast myself on your protection against the mad zeal of the enemies of the doctrine of our

fathers." Not only, therefore, was this an act of policy and prudence in Paul, but what he affirmed was strictly true, and the effect was as he had anticipated.

Verse 7

A dissension - A dispute, or difference.

And the multitude - The council. Compare Acts 14:4. The Pharisees embraced, as he desired and expected, his side of the question, and became his advocates, in opposition to the Sadducees, who were arrayed against him.

Verse 8

For the Sadducees say - They believe.

No resurrection - Of the dead. By this doctrine they also understood that there was no future state, and that the soul did not exist after death. See the notes on Matthew 22:23.

Neither angel - That there are no angels. They deny the existence of good or bad angels. See the notes on Matthew 3:7.

Nor spirit - Nor soul. That there is nothing but matter. They were materialists, and supposed that all the operations which we ascribe to mind could be traced to some modification of matter. The Sadducees, says Josephus (*Jewish Wars*, book ii. chapter 8, section 14), "take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades." "The doctrine of the Sadducees is this," says he (*Antiq.*, book 18, chapter 1, section 4), "that souls die with the bodies." The opinion that the soul is material, and that there is nothing but matter in the universe, has been held by many philosophers, ancient and modern, as well as by the Sadducees.

Confess both - Acknowledge, or receive both as true; that is, that there is a future state, and that there are spirits distinct from matter, as angels, and the disembodied souls of people. The two points in dispute were:

(1)Whether the dead would be raised and exist in a future state; and,

(2)Whether mind was distinct from matter. The Sadducees denied both, and the Pharisees believed both. Their belief of the Latter point was, that spirits existed in two forms - that of angels, and that of souls of people distinct from the body.

Verse 9

A great cry - A great clamor and tumult.

The scribes - The learned men. They would naturally be the chief speakers.

Of the Pharisees‘ part - Who were Pharisees, or who belonged to that party. The scribes were not a distinct sect, but might be either Pharisees or Sadducees.

We find no evil in this man - No opinion which is contrary to the Law of Moses; no conduct in spreading the doctrine of the resurrection which we do not approve. The importance of this doctrine, in their view, was so great as to throw into the background all the other doctrines that Paul might hold; and, provided this were propagated, they were willing to vindicate and sustain him. A similar testimony was offered to the innocence of the Saviour by Pilate, John 19:6.

But if a spirit or an angel … - They here referred, doubtless, to what Paul had said in Acts 22:17-18. He had declared that he had gone among the I Gentiles in obedience to a command which he received in a vision in the temple. As the Pharisees held to the belief of spirits and angels, and to the doctrine that the will of God was often delivered to people by their agency, they were ready now to admit that he had received such a communication, and that he had gone among the Gentiles in obedience to it, to defend their great doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. We are not to suppose that the Pharisees had become the friends of Paul or of Christianity. The true solution of their conduct doubtless is, that they were so inflamed with hatred against the Sadducees that they were willing to make use of any argument against their doctrine. As the testimony of Paul might be turned to their account, they were willing to vindicate him. It is remarkable, too, that they perverted the statement of Paul in order to oppose the Sadducees. Paul had stated distinctly Acts 22:17-18 that he had been commanded to go by the Lord, meaning the Lord Jesus. He had said nothing of “a spirit or an angel.” Yet they would unite with the Sadducees so far as to maintain that he had received no such command from the Lord Jesus. But they might easily vary his statements, and suppose that an “angel or a spirit” had spoken to him, and thus make use of his conduct as an argument against the Sadducees. Men are not always very careful about the exact correctness of their statements when they wish to humble a rival.

Let us not fight against God - See the notes on Acts 5:39. These words are missing in many mss. and in some of the ancient versions. The Syriac

reads it, “If a spirit or an angel have spoken to him, what is there in this?” that is, what is there unusual or wrong?

Verse 10

A great dissension - A great tumult, excitement, or controversy.

Into the castle - See the notes on Acts 21:34.

Verse 11

The Lord stood by him - Evidently the Lord Jesus. See the notes on Acts 1:24. Compare Acts 22:18. The appearance of the Lord in this case was a proof that he approved the course which Paul had taken before the Sanhedrin.

Be of good cheer - It would not be remarkable if Paul, by these constant persecutions, should be dejected in mind. The issue of the whole matter was as yet doubtful. In these circumstances, it must have been especially consoling to him to hear these words of encouragement from the Lord Jesus, and this assurance that the object of his desires would be granted, and that he would be permitted to bear the same witness of him in Rome. Nothing else can comfort and sustain the soul in trials and persecutions but evidence of the approbation of God, and the promises of his gracious aid.

Bear witness also at Rome - This had been the object of his earnest wish Romans 1:10; Romans 15:23-24, and this promise of the Lord Jesus was fulfilled, Acts 28:30-31. The promise which was here made to Paul was not directly one of deliverance from the present persecution, but it implied that, and made it certain.

Verse 12

Certain of the Jews - Some of the Jews. They were more than forty in number, Acts 23:13.

Banded together - Made an agreement or compact. They conspired to kill him.

And bound themselves under a curse - See the margin. The Greek is, “they anathematized themselves”; that is, they bound themselves by a solemn oath. They invoked a curse on themselves, or devoted themselves to destruction, if they did not do it. Lightfoot remarks, however, that they could be absolved from this vow by the rabbis if they were unable to execute it. Under various pretences they could easily be freed from such oaths, and it was common to take them; and if there was any difficulty in fulfilling them, they could easily apply to their religious teachers and be absolved.

That they would neither eat nor drink - That is, that they would do it as soon as possible. This was a common form of an oath, or curse, among the Jews. Sometimes they only vowed abstinence from particular things, as from meat, or wine. But in this case, to make the oath more certain and binding, they vowed abstinence from all kinds of food and drink until they had killed him. Who these were - whether they were Sadducees or not - is not mentioned by the sacred writer. It is evident, however, that the minds of the Jews were greatly inflamed against Paul; and as they saw him in the custody of the Roman tribune, and as there was no prospect that he would punish him, they resolved to take the matter into their own hands. Michaelis conjectures that they were of the number of the Sicarii, or cutthroats, with which Judea then abounded. See the notes on Acts 21:38. It is needless to remark that this was a most wicked oath. It was a deliberate purpose to commit murder; and it shows the desperate state of morals among the Jews at that time, and the infuriated malice of the people against the apostle, that such an oath could have been taken.

Verse 13

Which had made this conspiracy - This oath συνωμοσίαν sunōmosianthis agreement, or compact. This large number of desperate men, bound by so solemn an oath, would be likely to be successful, and the life of Paul was therefore in special danger. The manner in which they purposed to accomplish their design is stated in Acts 23:15.

Verse 14

And they came … - Probably by a deputation.

To the chief priests and elders - The members of the Great Council, or Sanhedrin. It is probable that the application was made to the party of the Sadducees, as the Pharisees had shown their determination to defend Paul. They would have had no prospect of success had they attacked the castle, and they therefore devised this mode of obtaining access to Paul, where they might easily despatch him.

Under a great curse - Greek: "We have anathematized ourselves with an anathema." We have made the vow as solemn as possible.

Verse 15

Ye, with the council - With the concurrence or request of the Sanhedrin. It was only by such a request that they had any hope that the chief captain would remove Paul from the castle.

Signify to the chief captain - Send a message or request to him.

That he bring him down unto you - That he bring him from the castle to the usual place of the meeting of the Sanhedrin. As this was at some distance from the castle of Antonia, where Paul was, they supposed it would be easy to waylay him and take his life.

To-morrow - This is missing in the Syriac, Vulgate, and Ethiopic versions. It is, however, probably the correct reading of the text, as it would be necessary to convene the council, and make the request of the tribune, which might require the whole of one day.

As though ye would inquire … - This request appeared so reasonable that they did not doubt that the tribune would grant it to the council. And though it was obviously a false and wicked pretence, yet these conspirators knew the character of the persons to whom they addressed themselves so well that they did not doubt that they would prevail on the council to make the request. Public justice must have been deeply fallen when it was known that such an iniquitous request could be made with the certain prospect of success.

Or ever he come near - Before he comes near to the Sanhedrin. The Great Council will thus not be suspected of being privy to the deed. We will waylay him, and murder him in the way. The plan was well laid; and nothing but the interposition of Providence could have prevented its execution.

Verse 16

Paul‘s sister‘s son - This is all that we know of the family of Paul. Nor do we know for what purpose he was at Jerusalem. It is possible that Paul might have a sister residing there; though, as Paul himself had been sent there formerly for his education, it seems more probable that this young man was sent there for the same purpose.

Entered into the castle - Paul had the privileges of a Roman citizen, and as no well-founded charge had been laid against him, it is probable that he was not very closely confined, and that his friends might have free access to him.

Verse 17

Called one of the centurions - Who might at that time have had special charge of the castle, or been on guard. Paul had the most positive divine assurance that his life would be spared, and that he would yet see Rome; but he always understood the divine promises and purposes as being consistent with his own efforts, and with all proper measures of prudence and

diligence in securing his own safety. He did not rest merely on the divine promises without any effort of his own, but he took encouragement from those promises to put forth his own exertions for security and for salvation.

Verse 18

And prayed me - And asked me.

Verse 19

Took him by the hand - As an expression of kindness and civility. He did it to draw him aside from the multitude, that he might communicate his message privately.

Verse 20

And he said … - In what way this young man had received intelligence of this, we can only conjecture. It is not improbable that he was a student under some one of the Jewish teachers, and that he might have learned it of him. It is not at all probable that the purpose of the 40 men would be very closely kept. Indeed, it is evident that they were not themselves very anxious about concealing their oath, as they mentioned it freely to the chief priests and elders, Acts 23:14.

Verse 21

Looking for a promise from thee - Waiting for your consent to bring him down to them.

Verse 23

And he called unto him two centurions … - Each centurion had under him 100 men. The chief captain resolved to place Paul beyond the power of the Jews, and to protect him as became a Roman citizen.

Two hundred soldiers - These foot soldiers were designed only to guard Paul until he was safely out of Jerusalem. The horsemen only were intended to accompany him to Caesarea. See Acts 23:32.

And horsemen - These were commonly attached to foot soldiers. In this case, however, they were designed to attend Paul to Caesarea.

And spearmen - δεξιολάβους dexiolabousThis word is found nowhere else in the New Testament, and occurs in no Classical writer. It properly means those who take, or apprehend by the right hand; and might be applied to those who apprehend prisoners, or to those who hold a spear or dart in the right hand for the purpose of throwing it. Some have conjectured that it should be read δεξιοβόλους dexiobolous- those who cast or throw (a spear) with the right hand. So the Vulgate, the Syriac, and the Arabic

understand it. They were probably those who were armed with spears or darts, and who attended on the tribune as a guard.

At the third hour of the night - At nine o'clock. This was in order that it might be done with secrecy, and to elude the band of desperadoes that had resolved to murder Paul. If it should seem that this guard was very numerous for one man, it should be remembered:

(1)That the number of those who had conspired against him was also large; and,

(2)That they were men accustomed to scenes of blood; men of desperate characters who had solemnly sworn that they would take his life.

In order, therefore, to deter them effectually from attacking the guard, it was made very numerous and strong. Nearly 500 men were appointed to guard Paul as he left Jerusalem.

Verse 24

And provide them beasts - One for Paul, and one for each of his attendants. The word translated "beasts" κτήνη ktēnēis of a general character, and may be applied either to horses, camels, or donkeys. The latter were most commonly employed in Judea.

Unto Felix the governor - The governor of Judea. His place of residence was Caesarea, about 60 miles from Jerusalem. See the notes on Acts 8:40. His name was Antonius Felix. He was a freedman of Antonia, the mother of the Emperor Claudius. He was high in the favor of Claudius, and was made by him governor of Judea. Josephus calls him Claudius Felix. He had married three wives in succession that were of royal families, one of whom was Drusilla, afterward mentioned in Acts 24:24, who was sister to King Agrippa. Tacitus (History, v. 9) says that he governed with all the authority of a king, and the baseness and insolence of a slave. "He was an unrighteous governor, a base, mercenary, and bad man" (Clarke). See his character further described in the notes on Acts 24:25.

Verse 26

Unto the most excellent governor Felix - The most honored, etc. This was a mere title of office.

Greeting - A term of salutation in an epistle wishing health, joy, and prosperity.

Verse 27

Should have been killed of them - Was about to be killed by them. The life of Paul had been twice endangered in this manner, Acts 21:30; Acts

23:10.

With an army - With a band of soldiers, Acts 23:10.

Verse 29

Questions of their law - So he understood the whole controversy to be.

Worthy of death - By the Roman law. He had been guilty of no crime against the Roman people.

Or of bonds - Of chains, or of confinement.

Verse 31

To Antipatris - This town was anciently called Cafar-Saba. Josephus says (*Antiq.*, Acts 13:23) that it was about 17 miles from Joppa. It was about 26 miles from Caesarea, and, of course, about 35 miles from Jerusalem. Herod the Great changed its name to Antipatris, in honor of his father Antipater. It was situated in a fine plain, and watered with many springs and fountains. Eli Smith, late missionary to Palestine, who took a journey from Jerusalem to Joppa for the purpose of ascertaining Paul‘s route, supposes that the site of Antipatris is the present Kefr Saba. Of this village he gives the following description in the Bibliotheca Sacra for 1843: “It is a Muslim village of considerable size, and wholly like the most common villages of the plain, being built entirely of mud. We saw but one stone building, which was apparently a mosque, but without a minaret. No old ruins, nor the least relic of antiquity, did we anywhere discover. A well by which we stopped, a few rods east of the houses, exhibits more signs of careful workmanship than anything else. It is walled with hewn stone, and is 57 feet deep to the water. The village stands upon a slight circular eminence near the western hills, from which it is actually separated, however, by a branch of the plain.”

Verse 32

They left the horsemen - As they were then beyond the danger of the conspirators, the soldiers who had guarded them thus far returned to Jerusalem.

Verse 34

Of what province he was - Greek: of what heparchy ἐπαρχίας eparchiashe was. He knew from the letter of Lysias that he was a Roman, but he was not informed of what place or province he was. This he doubtless did in order to ascertain whether he properly belonged to his jurisdiction. Roman provinces were districts of country which were entrusted to the jurisdiction of procurators. How far the jurisdiction of Felix

extended is not certainly known. It appears, however, that it included Cilicia.

Was of Cilicia - Tarsus, the birthplace of Paul, was in this province, Acts 21:39.

Verse 35

In Herod's judgment hall - Greek: in the praetorium of Herod. The word used here denoted formerly "the tent of the Roman praetor"; and since that was the place where justice was administered, it came to be applied to "halls (courts) of justice." This had been raised probably by Herod the Great as his palace, or as a place for administering justice. It is probable, also, that prisons, or places of security, would be attached to such places.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 24

Verse 1

And after five days - This time was occupied, doubtless, in their receiving the command to go to Caesarea, and in making the necessary arrangements. This was the twelfth day after Paul‘s arrival at Jerusalem. See Acts 24:11.

Ananias, the high priest - See the notes on Acts 23:2.

Descended - Came down from Jerusalem. This was the usual language when a departure from Jerusalem was spoken of. See the notes on Acts 15:1.

With a certain orator named Tertullus - Appointed to accuse Paul. This is a Roman name, and this man was doubtless a Roman. As the Jews were, to a great extent, ignorant of the Roman laws, and of their mode of administering justice, it is not improbable that they were in the habit of employing Roman lawyers to plead their causes.

Who informed the governor against Paul - Who acted as the accuser, or who managed their cause before the governor.

Verse 2

And when he was called forth - When Paul was called forth from prison. See Acts 23:35.

We enjoy great quietness - This was said in the customary style of flatterers and orators, to conciliate the favor of the judge, and is strikingly in contrast with the more honest and straight forward introduction in reply of Paul, Acts 24:10. Though it was said for flattery, and though Felix was in many respects an unprincipled man, yet it was true that his administration had been the means of producing much peace and order in Judea, and that he had done many things that tended to promote the welfare of the nation. In particular, he had arrested a band of robbers, with Eleazar at their head, whom he had sent to Rome to be punished (Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 8); he had arrested the Egyptian false prophet who had led out 4,000 men into the wilderness, and who threatened the peace of Judea (see the note on Acts 21:38); and he had repressed a sedition which arose between the inhabitants of Caesarea and of Syria (Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, book 2, chapter 13, section 2).

Very worthy deeds - Acts that tended much to promote the peace and security of the people. He referred to those which have just been mentioned

as having been accomplished by Felix, particularly his success in suppressing riots and seditions; and as, in the view of the Jews, the case of Paul was another instance of a similar kind, he appealed to him with the more confidence that he would suppress that also.

By thy providence - By thy foresight," skill, vigilance, prudence.

Verse 3

We accept it always - We admit that it is owing to your vigilance, and we accept your interposition to promote peace with gratitude.

Always, and in all places - Not merely in your presence, but we always acknowledge that it is owing to your vigilance that the land is secure. "What we now do in your presence, we do also in your absence; we do not commend you merely when you are present" (Wetstein).

Most noble Felix - This was the title of office.

With all thankfulness - In this there was probably sincerity, for there was no doubt that the peace of Judea was owing to Felix. But at the same time that he was an energetic and vigilant governor, it was also true that he was proud, avaricious, and cruel. Josephus charges him with injustice and cruelty in the case of Jonathan, the high priest (*Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 8, section 5), and Tacitus (History, book 5, chapter 9) and Suetonius (Life of Claudius, chapter 28) concur in the charge.

Verse 4

Be not further tedious unto thee - By taking up your time with an introduction and with commendation.

Verse 5

We have found this man a pestilent fellow - λοιμὸν loimonThis word is commonly applied to a plague or pestilence, and then to a man who corrupts the morals of others, or who is turbulent, and an exciter of sedition. Our translation somewhat weakens the force of the original expression. Tertullus did not say that he was a pestilent fellow, but that he was the very pestilence itself. In this he referred to their belief that he had been the cause of extensive disturbances everywhere among the Jews.

And a mover of sedition - An exciter of tumult. This they pretended he did by preaching doctrines contrary to the laws and customs of Moses, and exciting the Jews to tumult and disorder.

Throughout the world - Throughout the Roman empire, and thus leading the Jews to violate the laws, and to produce tumults, riots, and disorder.

And a ringleader - πρωτοστάτην prōtostatēnThis word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is properly a military word, and denotes "one who stands first in an army, a standard-bearer, a leader, a commander." The meaning is, that Paul had been so active, and so prominent in preaching the gospel, that he had been a leader, or the principal person in extending the sect of the Nazarenes.

Of the sect - The original word here αἱρέσεως haireseōsis the word from which we have derived the term "heresy." It is, however, properly translated "sect, or party," and should have been so translated in Acts 24:14. See the notes on Acts 5:17.

Of the Nazarenes - This was the name usually given to Christians by way of contempt. They were so called because Jesus was of Nazareth.

Verse 6

Who also hath gone about - Who has endeavored.

To profane the temple - This was a serious, but unfounded charge. It arose from the gross calumny of the Jews, when they pretended that he had introduced Greeks into that sacred place, Acts 21:28. To this charge he replies in Acts 24:18.

And would have judged - That is, would have condemned and punished.

According to our law - Their law, which forbade the introduction of strangers into the temple.

Verse 7

But the chief captain … - Tertullus pretends that they would have judged Paul righteously if Lysias had not interposed; but the truth was, that, without regard to law or justice, they would have murdered him on the spot.

Verse 8

Commanding his accusers … - Acts 23:30.

By examining of whom - That is, the Jews who were then present. Tertullus offered them as his witnesses of the truth of what he had said. It is evident that we have here only the summary or outline of the speech which he made It is incredible that a Roman rhetorician would have on such an occasion delivered an address so brief, so meagre, and so destitute of display as this. But it is doubtless a correct summary of his address, and contains the leading points of the accusation. It is customary for the sacred writers, as for other writers, to give only the outline of discourses and

arguments. Such a course was inevitable, unless the New Testament had been swelled to wholly undue proportions.

Verse 9

And the Jews also assented - The Jews who had accompanied Tertullus to Caesarea. They had gone as the accusers of Paul, and they bore testimony, when called upon, to the truth of all that the orator had said. Whether they were examined individually or not is not declared. In whatever way their testimony was arrived at, they confirmed unanimously the accusation which he had brought against Paul.

Verse 10

Had beckoned unto him to speak - Either by a nod or by the hand,

Hast been of many years - Felix and Cumanus had been joint governors of Judea; but after Cumanus had been condemned for his bad administration of affairs, the government fell entirely into the hands of Felix. This was about seven years before Paul was arraigned, and might be called many years, as he had been long enough there to become acquainted with the customs and habits of the Jews; and it might also be called long in comparison with the short time which his immediate predecessors had held the office. See Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 20, chapters 7 and 7.

A judge - This word is evidently used here in the sense of magistrate, or one appointed to administer the affairs of government. To determine litigated matters was, however, one part of his office. It is remarkable that Paul did not begin his speech, as Tertullus had done, by any flattering address, or by any of the arts of rhetoric. He founded his plea on the justice of his cause, and on the fact that Felix had had so much experience in the affairs of Judea that he was well qualified to understand the merits of the case, and to judge impartially. Paul was well acquainted with his character (see the notes on Acts 24:25), and would not by flattering words declare what was not strictly true.

I do the more cheerfully … - Since you are so well acquainted with the customs and habits of the Jews, I the more readily submit the case to your disposal. This address indicated great confidence in the justice of his cause, and was the language of a man bold, fearless, and conscious of innocence.

Verse 11

Because that thou mayest understand - Greek: "Thou being able to know." That is, he could understand or know by taking the proper evidence. Paul does not mean to say that Felix could understand the case because he

had been many years a judge of that nation. That fact would qualify him to judge correctly, or to understand the customs of the Jews. But the fact that he himself had been but twelve days in Jerusalem, and had been orderly and peaceable there, Felix could ascertain only by the proper testimony. The first part of Paul‘s defense Acts 24:11-13 consists in an express denial of what they alleged against him.

Are yet but twelve days - Beza reckons these twelve days in this manner: The first was that on which he came to Jerusalem, Acts 21:15. The second he spent with James and the apostles, Acts 21:18. Six days were spent in fulfilling his vow, Acts 21:21, Acts 21:26. On the ninth day the tumult arose, being the seventh day of his vow, and on this day he was rescued by Lysias, Acts 21:27; Acts 22:29. The tenth day he was before the Sanhedrin, Acts 22:30; Acts 23:10. On the eleventh the plot was laid to take his life, and on the same day, at evening, he was removed to Caesarea. The days on which he was confined at Caesarea are not enumerated, since his design in mentioning the number of days was to show the improbability that in that time he had been engaged in producing a tumult; and it would not be pretended that he had been so engaged while confined in a prison at Caesarea. The defense of Paul here is, that but twelve days elapsed from the time that he went to Jerusalem until he was put under the custody of Felix; and that during so short a time it was wholly improbable that he would have been able to excite sedition.

For to worship - This further shows that the design of Paul was not to produce sedition. He had gone up for the peaceful purpose of devotion, and not to produce riot and disorder. That this was his design in going to Jerusalem, or at least a part of his purpose, is indicated by the passage in Acts 20:16. It should be observed, however, that our translation conveys an idea which is not necessarily in the Greek that this was the design of his going to Jerusalem. The original is, “Since I went up to Jerusalem worshipping” προσκυνήσων proskunēsōnthat is, he was actually engaged in devotion when the tumult arose. But his main design in going to Jerusalem was to convey to his suffering countrymen there the benefactions of the Gentile churches. See Acts 24:17; Romans 15:25-26.

Verse 12

And they neither found me … - The first charge of Tertullus against Paul was Acts 24:5 that he was “a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition.” The charge of his being a Test was so general that Paul did not

think it necessary to attempt to refute it. To the specification that he was a mover of sedition, he replies by a firm denial, and by a solemn declaration that they had not found him in any synagogue, or in the city, or in the temple, either disputing or exciting a tumult. Pits conduct there had been entirely peaceable, and they had no right to suppose that it had been otherwise anywhere.

Verse 13

Neither can they prove the things … - That is, that I am a mover of sedition, or a disturber of the peace of the people. This appeal he boldly makes; he challenges investigation; and as they did not offer to specify any acts of disorder or tumult excited by him, this charge falls of course.

Verse 14

But this I confess … - The next specification in the charge of Tertullus was Acts 24:5 that he was "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." To this, Paul replies in this and the two following verses. Of this reply we may observe:

(1) That he does not stoop to notice the contempt implied in the use of the word "Nazarenes." He was engaged in a more important business than to contend about the name which they chose to give to Christians.

(2) he admits that he belonged to that sect or class of people. That he was a Christian he neither denied, nor was disposed to deny.

(3) he maintains that in this way he was still worshipping the God of his fathers. Of this, the fact that he was engaged in worship in the temple was sufficient proof.

(4) he shows them that he believed only what was written in the Law and the prophets; that this involved the main doctrine of their religion the hope of the resurrection of the dead, Acts 24:15; and that it was his constant and earnest desire to keep a pure conscience in all things, Acts 24:16. These are the points of his defense to the second charge, and we shall see that they fully meet and dispose of the accusation.

After the way - After the manner or mode of worship.

Which they call heresy - This translation does not express to us the force of the original. We have attached to the word "heresy" an idea which is not conveyed by the Greek word, since we now commonly understand by

it error of doctrine. In Paul‘s answer here, there is an explicit reference to their charge which does not appear in our version. The charge of Tertullus was, that he was the ringleader of the sect (τῆς αἱρέσεως tēs haireseōs) of the Nazarenes, Acts 24:5. To this Paul replies, “After the way which they call “sect” ἁιρεσιν hairesinnot error of doctrine, but after a way which they affirm is producing division or schism), so worship I the God of my fathers.” Paul was hot ashamed to be called a follower of that sect or party among the Jewish people. Nor should we be ashamed to worship God in a mode that is called heresy or schism, if we do it in obedience to conscience and to God.

So worship I - I continue to worship. I have not departed from the characteristic of the Jewish people, the proper and public acknowledgment of the God of the Jews.

The God of my fathers - My father‘s God, Yahweh; the God whom my Jewish ancestors adored. There is something very touching in this, and suited to find its way to the heart of a Jew. He had introduced no new object of worship (compare Deuteronomy 13:1-5); he had not become a follower of a false or foreign God; and this fact was really a reply to their charge that he was setting up a new sect in religion. The same thing Paul affirms of himself in 2 Timothy 1:3; “I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience.”

Believing all things … - Particularly respecting the Messiah. So he more fully explains his meaning in his speech before King Agrippa, Acts 26:23.

In the law and in the prophets - Commanded in the Law of Moses, and foretold by the prophets. That Paul had ever disbelieved any of these things they could not prove; and his whole course had shown that he fully credited the sacred records. Most of his arguments in defending Christianity had been drawn from the Jewish writings.

Verse 15

And have hope toward God - Having a hope of the resurrection of the dead, which arises from the promises of God.

Which they themselves … - That is, the Pharisees. Perhaps he designated in this remark the Pharisees who were present. He held nothing in this great cardinal point which they did not also hold. For the reasons why he introduced this point so prominently, and the success of thus introducing it, see the notes on Acts 23:1-9.

Both of the just and unjust - Of the righteous and the wicked; that is, of all the race. As they held this, they could not arraign him for holding it also.

Verse 16

And herein - In this, or for this purpose.

Do I exercise myself - ἀσκῶ askōI accustom or employ myself; I make it my constant aim. Paul often appeals to his conscientiousness as the leading habit of his life. Even before his conversion he endeavored to act according to the dictates of conscience. See Acts 26:9; compare Philemon 3:5-6.

To have always a conscience … - To do what is right, so that my conscience shall never reproach me.

Void of offence - ἀπρόσκοπον aproskoponThat which is inoffensive, or which does not cause one to stumble or fall. He means that he endeavored to keep his conscience so enlightened and pure in regard to duty, and that he acted according to its dictates in such a way that his conduct should not be displeasing to God or injurious to man. To have such a conscience implies two things:

(1)That it be enlightened or properly informed in regard to truth and duty; and,

(2)That what is made known to be right should be honestly and faithfully performed. Without these two things no man can have a conscience that will be inoffensive and harmless.

Toward God - In an honest endearour to discharge the duties of public and private worship, and to do constantly what he requires believing all that he has spoken; doing all that he requires; and offering to him the service which he approves.

Toward men - In endeavoring to meet all the demands of justice and mercy; to advance their knowledge, happiness, and salvation; living so that I may look back on my life with the reflection that I have done all that I ought to have done, and all that I could do to promote the welfare of the whole human family. What a noble principle of conduct was this! How elevated and how pure! How unlike the conduct of those who live to gratify debasing sensual appetites, or for gold or honor; of those who pass their lives in such a manner as to offer the grossest offence to God and to do the most injury to man. The great and noble aim of Paul was to be pure; and no slander of his enemies, no trials, persecutions, perils, or pains of dying

could take away the approving voice of conscience. Alike in his travels and in his persecutions; among friends and foes; when preaching in the synal gogue, the city, or the desert; or when defending himself before governors and kings, he had this testimony of a self-approving mind. Happy they who thus frame their lives. And happy will be the end of a life where this has been the grand object of the journey through this world.

Verse 17

Now after many years - After many years‘ absence. Paul here commences a reply to the charge of Tentullus, that he had endeavored to profane the temple, Acts 24:6. He begins by saying that his design in coming up to Jerusalem was to bring to his countrymen needed aid in a time of distress. It would be absurd to suppose, therefore, that his object in coming was to violate the customs of the temple, and to defile it.

I came to bring - See Acts 11:29-30; compare the notes on Romans 15:25-26.

Alms - Charities; the gift of the churches.

To my nation - Not to all the nation, but to the poor saints or Christians who were in Judea, and who were suffering much by persecutions and trials.

And offerings - The word used here properly denotes “an offering or gift” of any kind; but it is usually applied to an oblation or offering made to God in the temple - “a thank-offering, a sacrifice.” This is probably its meaning here. He came to bring aid to his needy countrymen, and an offering to God; and it was, therefore, no part of his purpose to interfere with, or to profane the worship of the temple.

Verse 18

Certain Jews from Asia - Acts 21:27.

Found me purified in the temple - Acts 21:26-27. They found me engaged in the sacred service of completing the observance of my vow.

Neither with multitude - Not having introduced a multitude with me - in a quiet and peaceful manner.

Verse 19

Who ought to have been here … - They were the proper witnesses, and as they had staid away it showed that they were not prepared to undergo a strict examination. They alone could testify as to anything that occurred in the temple; and as they were not present, that charge ought to be dismissed.

Verse 20

Or else - Since they are not here to witness against me in regard to what occurred in the temple, let these here present bear witness against me, if they can, in regard to any other part of my conduct. This was a bold appeal, and it showed his full consciousness of innocence.

Let these same here say - The Jews who are here present.

Any evil doing - Any improper conduct, or any violation of the Law.

While I stood before the council - The Sanhedrin, Acts 23:1-10. As they were present there, Paul admits that they were competent to bear witness to his conduct on that occasion, and calls upon them to testify, if they could, to any impropriety in his conduct.

Verse 21

Except it be for this one voice - For this one expression or declaration. This was what Paul had said before the council - the main thing on which he had insisted, and he calls on them to testify to this, and to show, if they could, that in this declaration he had been wrong. Chubb and other infidels have supposed that Paul here acknowledges that he was wrong in the declaration which he made when he said that he was called in question for the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead Acts 23:6, and that his conscience reproached him for appearing to be time-serving, for concealing the true cause of offence against him, and for attempting to take advantage of their divisions of sentiment, thus endeavoring to produce discord in the council. But against this supposition we may urge the following considerations:

(1) Paul wished to fix their attention on the main thing which he had said before the council.

(2) it was true, as has been shown on the passage (Acts 23:1-10), that this was the principal doctrine which Paul had been defending.

(3) if they were prepared to witness against him for holding and teaching the resurrection of the dead as a false or evil doctrine, he called on them to do it. As this had been the only thing which they had witnessed before the council, he calls on them to testify to what they knew only, and to show, if they could, that this was wrong.

Touching the resurrection … - Respecting the resurrection, Acts 23:6.

Verse 22

Having more perfect knowledge of that way - Our translation of this verse is very obscure, and critics are divided about the proper interpretation of the original. Many (Erasmus, Luther, Michaelis, Morus, etc.) render it, "Although he had a more perfect knowledge of the Christian doctrine than Paul's accusers had, yet he deferred the hearing of the cause until Lysias had come down." They observe that he might have obtained this knowledge not only from the letter of Lysias, but from public rumour, as there were doubtless Christians at Caesarea. They suppose that he deferred the cause either with the hope of receiving a bribe from Paul (compare Acts 24:26), or to gratify the Jews with his being longer detained as a prisoner. Others, among whom are Beza, Grotius, Rosenmuller, and Doddridge, suppose that it should be rendered, "He deferred them, and said, after I have been more accurately informed concerning this way, when Lysias has come down, I will hear the cause." This is doubtless the true interpretation of the passage, and it is rendered more probable by the fact that Felix sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith of Christ Acts 24:24, evidently with the design to make himself better acquainted with the charges against him, and the nature of his belief.

Of that way - Of the Christian religion. This expression is repeatedly used by Luke to denote the Christian doctrine. See the notes on Acts 9:2.

He deferred them - He put them off; he postponed the decision of the case; he adjourned the trial.

When Lysias … - Lysias had been acquainted with the excitement and its causes, and Felix regarded him as an important witness in regard to the true nature of the charges against Paul.

I will know the uttermost … - I shall be fully informed, and prepared to decide the cause.

Verse 23

And he commanded … - It is evident from this verse that Felix was disposed to show Paul all the favors that were consistent with his safe keeping. He esteemed him to be a persecuted man, and doubtless regarded the charges against him as entirely malicious. What was Felix's motive in this cannot be certainly known. It is not improbable, however, that he detained him:

(1)To gratify the Jews by keeping him in custody as if he were guilty, and,

(2)That he hoped the friends of Paul would give him money to release him. Perhaps it was for this purpose that he gave orders that his friends should have free access to him, that thus Paul might be furnished with the means of purchasing his freedom.

Verse 24

Felix came with his wife Drusilla - Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa the elder, and was engaged to be married to Epiphanes, the son of King Antiochus, on condition that he would embrace the Jewish religion; but as he afterward refused to do that, the contract was broken off. Afterward she was given in marriage, by her brother Agrippa the younger, to Azizus, king of Emesa, upon his consent to be circumcised. When Felix was governor of Judea, he saw Drusilla and fell in love with her, and sent to her Simon, one of his friends, a Jew, by birth a Cyprian, who pretended to be a magician, to endearour to persuade her to forsake her husband and to marry Felix. Accordingly, in order to avoid the envy of her sister Bernice, who treated her ill on account of her beauty, "she was prevailed on," says Josephus, "to transgress the laws of her forefathers, and to marry Felix" (Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 7, sections 1 and 2). She was, therefore, living in adultery with him, and this was probably the reason why Paul dwelt in his discourse before Felix particularly on "temperance," or chastity. See the notes on Acts 24:25.

He sent for Paul, and heard him - Perhaps he did this in order to be more fully acquainted with the case which was submitted to him. It is possible, also, that it might have been to gratify his wife, who was a Jewess, and who doubtless had a desire to be acquainted with the principles of this new sect. It is certain, also, that one object which Felix had in this was to let Paul see how dependent he was on him, and to induce him to purchase his liberty.

Concerning the faith in Christ - Concerning the Christian religion. Faith in Christ is often used to denote the whole of Christianity, as it is the leading and characteristic feature of the religion of the gospel.

Verse 25

And as he reasoned - Greek: "And he discoursing" - διαλεγομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ dialegomenou de autouNo argument should be drawn from the word that is used here to prove that Paul particularly appealed to reason, or that his discourse was argumentative. That it was so is, indeed, not improbable,

from all that we know of the man, and from the topics on which he discoursed. But the word used here means simply as he discoursed, and is applied usually to making a public address, to preaching, etc., in whatever way it is done, Acts 17:2; Acts 18:4, Acts 18:19; Acts 19:8-9; Acts 24:12. Felix and Drusilla intended this as a matter of entertainment or amusement. Paul readily obeyed their summons, since it gave him an opportunity to preach the gospel to them; and as they desired his sentiments in regard to the faith in Christ, he selected those topics which were adapted to their condition, and stated those principles of the Christian religion which were suited to arrest their attention, and to lead them to repentance. Paul seized every opportunity of making known the gos pel; and whether a prisoner or at liberty; whether before princes, governors, kings, or common people, he was equally prepared to defend the pure and holy doctrines of the cross. His boldness in this instance is the more remarkable, as he was dependent on Felix for his release. A time-server or an impostor would have chosen such topics as would have conciliated the favor of the judge, and procured his discharge from custody. He would have flattered his vanity or palliated his vices. But such an idea never seems to have occurred to Paul. His aim was to defend the truth, and to save, if possible, the souls of Drusilla and of Felix.

Of righteousness - περὶ δικαιοσύνης peri dikaiosunēsOf justice. Not of the justice of God particularly, but of the nature and requirements of justice in the relations of life the relations which we sustain to God and to man. This was a proper topic with which to introduce his discourse, as it was the office of Felix to dispense justice between man and man, and as his administration was not remarkable for the exercise of that virtue. It is evident that he could be influenced by a bribe Acts 24:26, and it was proper for Paul to dwell on this, as designed to show him the guilt of his life, and his danger of meeting the justice of a Being who cannot be bribed, but who will dispense equal justice alike to the great and the mean. That Paul dwelt also on the justice of God, as the moral governor of the world, may also be presumed. The apprehension of that justice, and the remembrance of his own guilty life, tended to produce the alarm of Felix, and to make him tremble.

Temperance - ἐγκρατείας egkrateiasThe word “temperance” we now use commonly to denote “moderation or restraint” in regard to eating and drinking, particularly to abstinence from the use of ardent spirits. But this is

not its meaning here. There is no reason to suppose that Felix was intemperate in the use of intoxicating liquors. The original word here denotes a restraint of all the passions and evil inclinations, and may be applied to prudence, chastity, and moderation in general. The particular thing in the life of Felix which Paul had probably in view was the indulgence of licentious desires, or incontinence. He was living in adultery with Drusilla, and for this Paul wished doubtless to bring him to repentance.

And judgment to come - The universal judgment that was to come on all transgressors. On this topic Paul also dwelt when he preached on Mars' Hill at Athens, Acts 17:31. These topics were admirably adapted to excite the alarm of both Felix and Drusilla. It evinced great boldness and faithfulness in Paul to select them, and the result showed that he correctly judged of the kind of truth which was adapted to alarm the fears of his guilty auditor.

Felix trembled - In view of his past sins, and in the apprehension of the judgment to come. The Greek ἔμφοβος emphobosdoes not denote that his body was agitated or shaken, but only that he was alarmed or terrified. That such fear usually shakes the frame, we know; but it is not certain that the body of Felix was thus agitated. He was alarmed and terrified, and looked with deep apprehension to the coming judgment. This was a remarkable instance of the effect of truth on the mind of a man unaccustomed to such alarms, and unused to hear such truth. It shows the power of conscience when thus, under the preaching of a prisoner, the judge is thrown into violent alarm.

And answered, Go thy way … - How different is this answer from that of the jailor of Philippi when alarmed in a similar manner! He asked, "What must I do to be saved?" and was directed to him in whom he found peace from a troubled conscience, Acts 16:30-31. Felix was troubled; but instead of asking what he should do, he sent the messenger of God away. He was evidently not prepared to break off his sins and turn to God. He sought peace by sending away his reprover, and manifestly intended then to banish the subject from his mind. Yet, like others, he did not intend to banish it altogether. He looked forward to a time when he would be more at leisure; when the cares of office would press less heavily on his attention; or when he would be more disposed to attend to it. Thus, multitudes, when they are alarmed, and see their guilt and danger, resolve to defer it to a more convenient time.

One man is engaged in a career of pleasure, and it is not now a convenient time to attend to his soul‘s salvation. Another is pressed with business; with the cares of life; with a plan of gain; with the labors of office or of a profession, and it is not now a convenient time for him to attend to religion. Another supposes that his time of life is not the most convenient. His youth he desires to spend in pleasure, and waits for a more convenient time in middle age. His middle life he spends in business, and this is not a convenient time. Such a period he expects then to find in old age. But as age advances he finds an increasing disposition to defer it; he is still indisposed to attend to it; still in love with the world. Even old age is seldom found to be a convenient time to prepare for heaven; and it is deferred from one period of life to another, until death closes the scene. It has been commonly supposed and said that Felix never found that more convenient time to call for Paul. That he did not embrace the Christian religion, and forsake his sins, is probable, nay, almost certain. But it is not true that he did not take an opportunity of hearing Paul further on the subject; for it is said that he sent for him often, and communed with him. But, though Felix found this opportunity, yet:

(1) We have no reason to suppose that the main thing - the salvation of his soul - ever again occupied his attention. There is no evidence that he was again alarmed or awakened, or that he had any further solicitude on the subject of his sins. He had passed forever the favorable time - the golden moments when he might have secured the salvation of his soul.

(2) others have no right to suppose that their lives will be lengthened out that they may have any further opportunity to attend to the subject of religion.

(3) when a sinner is awakened, and sees his past sins, if he rejects the appeal to his conscience then, and defers it to a more convenient opportunity, he has no reason to expect that his attention will ever be again called with deep interest to the subject. He may live, but he may live without the strivings of the Holy Spirit. When a man has once deliberately rejected the offers of mercy; when he has trifled with the influences of the Spirit of God, he has no right or reason to expect that that Spirit will ever strive with him again. Such, we have too much reason to fear, was the case

with Felix. Though he often saw Paul again, and "communed with him," yet there is no statement that he was again alarmed or awakened. And thus sinners often attend on the means of grace after they have grieved the Holy Spirit; they listen to the doctrines of the gospel, they hear its appeals and its warnings, but they have no feeling, no interest, and die in their sins.

A convenient season - Greek: "taking time." I will take a time for this.

I will call for thee - To hear thee further on this subject. This he did, Acts 24:26. It is remarkable that Drusilla was not alarmed. She was as much involved in guilt as Felix; but she, being a Jewess, had been accustomed to hear of a future judgment until it caused in her mind no alarm. Perhaps also she depended on the rites and ceremonies of her religion as a sufficient expiation for her sins. She might have been resting on those false dependencies which go to free the conscience from a sense of guilt, and which thus beguile and destroy the soul.

Verse 26

He hoped also - He thought that by giving him access to his friends, and by often meeting him himself, and showing kindness, Paul might be induced to attempt to purchase his freedom with a bribe.

That money should have been given him of Paul - That Paul would give him money to procure a release. This shows the character of Felix. He was desirous of procuring a bribe. Paul had proved his innocence, and should have been at once discharged. But Felix was influenced by avarice, and he therefore detained Paul in custody with the hope that, wearied with confinement, he would seek his release by a bribe. But Paul offered no bribe. He knew what was justice, and he would not be guilty, therefore, of attempting to purchase what was his due, or of gratifying a man who prostituted his high office for the purposes of gain. The Roman governors in the provinces were commonly rapacious and avaricious, like Felix. They usually took the office for its pecuniary advantage, and they consequently usually disregarded justice, and made the procuring of money their leading object.

He sent for him the oftener - It may seem remarkable that he did not fear that he would again become alarmed. But the hope of money overcame all this. Having once resisted the reasoning of Paul, and the strivings of the Spirit of God, he seems to have had no further alarm or anxiety. He could again hear the same man, and the same truth, unaffected. When sinners have once grieved God's Spirit, they often sit with unconcern under the same

truth which once alarmed them, and become entirely hardened and unconcerned.

And communed with him - And conversed with him.

Verse 27

But after two years - Paul was unjustly detained during all this time. The hope of Felix seems to have been to weary his patience, and induce him to purchase his freedom.

Came into Felix‘ room - As governor.

And Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure - Desirous of pleasing them, even at the expense of justice, This shows the principle on which he acted.

Left Paul bound - Left him in custody to the charge of his successor. His object in this was to conciliate the Jews; that is, to secure their favor, and to prevent them, if possible, from accusing him for the evils of his administration before the emperor. The account which Luke gives here coincides remarkably with what Josephus has given. He says that Porcius Festus was sent as successor to Felix by Nero. He does not, indeed, mention Paul, or say that Felix sought to conciliate the favor of the Jews, but he gives such an account as to make the statement by Luke perfectly consistent with his character while in office. He informs us that Felix was unpopular, and that there was reason to apprehend that the Jews would accuse him before the emperor; and, therefore, the statement in the Acts that he would be willing to show the Jews a favor, is in perfect keeping with his character and circumstances, and is one of those undesigned coincidences which show that the author of the Acts was fully acquainted with the circumstances of the time and that his history is true.

The account in Josephus is, that “when Porcius Festus was sent as successor to Felix by Nero, the principal inhabitants of Caesarea went up to Rome to accuse Felix; and he had been certainly brought to punishment unless Nero had yielded to the importunate solicitations of his brother Palias, who was at that time had in the greatest honor by him” (*Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 8, section 9). The plan of Felix, therefore, in suppressing the enmity of the Jews, and conciliating their favor by injustice to Paul, did not succeed, and is one of those instances, so numerous in the world, where a man gains nothing by wickedness. He sought money from Paul by iniquity, and failed; he sought by injustice to obtain the favor of the Jews, and failed in that also. And the inference from the whole transaction is, that “honesty

is the best policy," and that men in any office should pursue a course of firm, constant, and undeviating integrity.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 25

Verse 1

Now when Festus was come - See the notes on Acts 24:27.

Into the province - The province of Judea; for Judea at that time was a Roman province.

After three days - Having remained three days at Caesarea.

He ascended - This was the usual language in describing a journey to Jerusalem. Thus, the English people speak of going up to London, because it is the capital. See the notes on Acts 15:1.

To Jerusalem - The governors of Judea at this time usually resided at Caesarea; but as Jerusalem had been the former capital; as it was still the seat of the religious solemni ties; as the Sanhedrin held its meetings there; and as the great, and rich, and learned men, and the priests resided there, it is evident that a full knowledge of the state of the province could be obtained only there. Festus, therefore, having entered upon the duties of his office, early went to Jerusalem to make himself acquainted with the affairs of the nation.

Verse 2

Then the high priest - The high priest at this time was Ismael, the son of Fabi. He had been promoted to that office by Agrippa (Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 8, section 8). It is probable, however, that the person here intended was Ananias, who had been high priest, and who would retain the name. See the notes on Acts 23:2. Some mss. read "high priests" here in the plural number, and this reading is approved by Mill and Griesbach. There is, however, no improbability in supposing that the high priest Ismael might have been also as much enraged against Paul as the others.

Informed him against Paul - Informed him of the accusation against him, and doubtless endeavored to prejudice the mind of Festus against him. They thus showed their unrelenting disposition. It might have been supposed that after two years this unjust prosecution would be abandoned and forgotten. But malice does not thus forget its object, and the spirit of persecution is not thus satisfied. It is evident that there was here every probability that injustice would be done to Paul, and that the mind of Festus would be biased against him. He was a stranger to Paul, and to the embittered feelings of the Jewish character. He would wish to conciliate their favor upon entering into the duties of his office. A strong

representation, therefore, made by the chief men of the nation, would be likely to prejudice him violently against Paul, and to unfit him for the exercise of impartial justice.

Verse 3

And desired favour against him - Desired the favor of Festus, that they might accomplish their wicked purpose on Paul.

Would send for him to Jerusalem - Probably under a pretence that he might be tried by the Sanhedrin; or perhaps they wished Festus to hear the cause there, and to decide it while he was at Jerusalem. Their real motive is immediately stated.

Laying wait in the way to kill him - That is, they would lie in wait, or they would employ a band of Sicarii, or assassins, to take his life on the journey. See the notes on Acts 21:38; Acts 23:12. It is altogether probable that if this request had been granted, Paul would have been killed. But God had promised him that he should bear witness to the truth at Rome Acts 23:11, and his providence was remarkable in thus influencing the mind of the Roman governor, and defeating the plans of the Jewish council.

Verse 4

But Festus answered … - What induced Festus to refuse their request is not known. It is probable, however, that he was apprised that Paul was a Roman citizen, and that his case could not come before the Jewish Sanhedrin, but must be heard by himself. As Caesarea was also at that time the residence of the Roman governor, and the place of holding the courts, and as Paul was lodged there safely, there did not appear to be any sufficient reason for removing him to Jerusalem for trial. Festus, however, granted them all that they could reasonably ask, and assured them that he should have a speedy trial.

Verse 5

Which among you are able - Enjoy all the advantages of just trial, and exhibit your accusations with all the learning and talent in your power. This was all that they could reasonably ask at his hands.

Verse 6

More than ten days - See the margin. The Syriac reads it, “eight or ten.” The Vulgate, “not more than eight or ten.” The Coptic, “eight or ten.” Griesbach supposes this to be the true reading, and has admitted it into the text.

Sitting in the judgment seat - On the tribunal; or holding a court for the trial of Paul.

Commanded Paul to be brought - To be brought up for trial. He had been secured, but was placed in the care of a soldier, who was commanded to let him have all the freedom that was consistent with his security.

Verse 7

Grievous complaints - Heavy accusations. Doubtless the same with which they had charged him before Felix, Acts 24:5-6. Compare Acts 25:19.

Which they could not prove - Acts 24:13, Acts 24:19.

Verse 8

While he answered … - See this answer more at length in Acts 24:10-21. As the accusations against him were the same now as then, he made to them the same reply.

Verse 9

But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure - Desirous of securing their favor, as he had just entered on his administration. Compare Acts 24:27. In this he evinced rather a desire of popularity than an inclination to do justice. Had he been disposed to do right at once, he would have immediately discharged Paul. Festus perceived that the case was one that did not come fairly within the jurisdiction of a Roman magistrate; that it pertained solely to the customs and questions among the Jews Acts 25:18-20; and he therefore proposed that the case should be tried before him at Jerusalem. It is remarkable, however, that he had such a sense of justice and law as not to suffer the case to go out of his own hands. He proposed still to hear the cause, but asked Paul whether he was willing that it should be tried at Jerusalem. As the question which he asked Paul was one on which he was at liberty to take his own course, and as Paul had no reason to expect that his going to Jerusalem would facilitate the cause of justice, it is not remarkable that he declined the offer, as perhaps Festus supposed he would.

Verse 10

Then said Paul … - The reasons why Paul declined the proposal to be tried at Jerusalem are obvious. He had experienced so much violent persecution from his countrymen, and their minds were so full of prejudice, misconception, and enmity, that he had neither justice nor favor to hope at them hands. He knew, too, that they had formerly plotted against his life, and that he had been removed to Caesarea for the purpose of safety. It would be madness and folly to throw himself again into their hands, or to

give them another opportunity to form a plan against his life. As he was, therefore, under no obligation to return to Jerusalem, and as Festus did not propose it because it could be supposed that justice would be promoted by it, but to gratify the Jews, Paul prudently declined the proposal, and appealed to the Roman emperor.

I stand at Caesar‘s judgment seat - The Roman emperors after Julius Caesar were all called “Caesar”; thus, Augustus Caesar, Claudius Caesar, etc., as all the kings of Egypt were called “Pharaoh,” though they each had his proper name, as Pharaoh Necho, etc. The emperor at this time (60 a.d.) was Nero, one of the most cruel and impious men that ever sat on a throne. It was under him that Paul was afterward beheaded. When Paul says, “I stand at Caesar‘s judgment seat,” he means to say that he regarded the tribunal before which he then stood, and on which Festus sat, as really the judgment seat of Caesar. The procurator, or governor, held his commission from the Roman emperor, and it was, in fact, his tribunal. The reason why Paul made this declaration may be thus expressed: “I am a Roman citizen. I have a right to justice. I am under no obligation to put myself again in the hands of the Jews. I have a right to a fair and impartial trial; and I claim the protection and privileges which all Roman citizens have before their tribunals - the right of a fair and just trial.” It was, therefore, a severe rebuke of Festus for proposing to depart from the known justice of the Roman laws, and, for the sake of popularity, proposing to him to put himself in the hands of his enemies.

Where I ought to be judged - Where I have a right to demand and expect justice. I have a right to be tried where courts are usually held, and according to all the forms of equity which are usually observed.

Have I done no wrong - I have not injured their persons, property, character, or religion. This was a bold appeal, which his consciousness of innocence and the whole course of proceedings enabled him to make without the possibility of their gainsaying it.

As thou very well knowest - Festus knew, probably, that Paul had been tried by Felix, and that nothing was proved against him. He had now seen the spirit of the Jews, and the cause why they arraigned him. He had given Paul a trial, and had called on the Jews to adduce their “able” men to accuse him, and after all nothing had been proved against him. Festus knew, therefore, that he was innocent. This abundantly appears also from his own confession, Acts 25:18-19. As he knew this, and as Festus was proposing to

depart from the regular course of justice for the sake of popularity, it was proper for Paul to use the strong language of rebuke, and to claim what he knew Festus did not dare to deny him, the protection of the Roman laws. Conscious innocence may be bold; and Christians have a right to insist on impartial justice and the protection of the laws. Alas! how many magistrates there have been like Festus, who, when Christians have been arraigned before them, have been fully satisfied of their innocence, but who, for the sake of popularity, have departed from all the rules of law and all the claims of justice.

Verse 11

For if I be an offender - If I have injured the Jews so as to deserve death. If it can be proved that I have done injury to anyone.

I refuse not to die - I have no wish to escape justice. I do not wish to evade the laws, or to take advantage of any circumstances to screen me from just punishment. Paul‘s whole course showed that this was the noble spirit which actuated him. No true Christian wishes to escape from the laws. He will honor them, and not seek to evade them. But, like other people, he has rights; and he may and should insist that justice should be done.

No man may deliver me unto them - No man shall be allowed to do it. This bold and confident declaration Paul could make, because he knew what the law required, and he knew that Festus would not dare to deliver him up contrary to the law. Boldness is not incompatible with Christianity; and innocence, when its rights are invaded, is always bold. Jesus firmly asserted his rights when on trial John 18:23, and no man is under obligation to submit to be trampled on by an unjust tribunal in violation of the laws.

I appeal unto Caesar - I appeal to the man emperor, and carry my cause directly before him. By the Valerian, Porcian, and Sempronian laws, it had been enacted that if any magistrate should be about to beat, or to put to death any Roman citizen, the accused could appeal to the Roman people, and this appeal carried the cause to Rome. The law was so far changed under the emperors that the cause should be carried before the emperor instead of the people. Every citizen had the right of this appeal; and when it was made, the accused was sent to Rome for trial. Thus, Pliny Romans 1:9-11. For this he had prayed long Romans 1:10; Romans 15:23-24, and now at length this purpose was to be fulfilled. God answers prayer, but it is often in a way which we little anticipate. He so orders the train of events; he so places us amidst a pressure of circumstances, that the desire is granted in a

way Which we could never have anticipated, but which shows in the best manner that he is a hearer of prayer.

Verse 12

When he had conferred with the council - With his associate judges, or with those who were his counselors in the administration of justice. They were made up of the chief persons, probably military as well as civil, who were about him, and who were his assistants in the administration of the affairs of the province.

Unto Caesar shalt thou go - He was willing in this way to rid himself of the trial, and of the vexation attending it. He did not dare to deliver him to the Jews in violation of the Roman laws, and he was not willing to do justice to Paul, and thus make himself unpopular with the Jews. He was, therefore, probably rejoiced at the opportunity of thus freeing himself from all the trouble in the case in a manner against which none could object.

Verse 13

After certain days, king Agrippa - This Agrippa was the son of Herod Agrippa Acts 12:1, and great-grandson of Herod the Great. His mother‘s name was Cypros (Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, book 2, chapter 11, section 6). When his father died he was at Rome with the Emperor Claudius. Josephus says that the emperor was inclined to bestow upon him all his father‘s dominions, but was dissuaded by his ministers. The reason of this was, that it was thought imprudent to bestow so large a kingdom on so young a man, and one so inexperienced. Accordingly, Claudius sent Cuspius Fadus to be procurator of Judea and of the entire kingdom (Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 19, chapter 9, section 2). When Herod, the brother of his father, Agrippa the Great, died in the eighth year of the reign of Claudius, his kingdom - the kingdom of Chalcis - was bestowed by Claudius on Agrippa (Josephus, *Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 5, section 2). Afterward, he bestowed on him the tetrarchy of Philip and Batanea, and added to it Trachonitis with Abila (*Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 7, section 1). After the death of Claudius, Nero, his successor, added to his dominions Julias in Perea and a part of Galilee. Agrippa had been brought up at Rome, and was strongly attached to the Romans. When the troubles commenced in Judea which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem, he did all that he could to preserve peace and order, but in vain. He afterward joined his troops with those of the Romans, and assisted them at the destruction of Jerusalem. After the captivity of that city he went to Rome with his sister Bernice, where he ended his days. He

died at the age of seventy years, about 90 a.d. His manner of living with his sister gave occasion to reports respecting him very little to his advantage.

And Bernice - She was sister of Agrippa. She had been married to Herod, king of Chalcis, her own uncle by her father‘s side. After his death she proposed to Polemon, king of Pontus and part of Cilicia, that if he would become circumcised she would marry him. He complied, but she did not continue long with him. After she left him she returned to her brother Agrippa, with whom she lived in a manner such as to excite scandal. Josephus directly charges her with incest with her brother Agrippa (*Antiq.*, book 20, chapter 7, section 3).

To salute Festus - To show him respect as the governor of Judea.

Verse 14

Festus declared Paul‘s cause - He did this, probably, because Agrippa, being a Jew, would be supposed to he interested in the case. It was natural that this trial should be a topic of conversation, and perhaps Festus might be disposed to ask what was proper to be done in such cases.

Left in bonds - Greek: “a prisoner” - δέσμιος desmiosHe was left in custody, probably in the keeping of a soldier, Acts 24:23, Acts 24:27.

Verse 15

About whom … - See Acts 25:1-5.

To have judgment against him - To have him condemned.

Verse 16

It is not the manner … - He here states the reasons which he gave the Jews for not delivering Paul into their hands. In Acts 25:4-5, we have an account of the fact that he would not accede to the requests of the Jews; and he here states that the reason of his refusal was that it was contrary to the Roman law. Appian, in his Roman History, says, “It is not their custom to condemn men before they are heard.” Philo (DePraesi. Rom.) says the same thing. In Tacitus (History, ii.) it is said, “A defendant is not to be prohibited from adducing all things by which his innocence may be established.” It was for this that the equity of the Roman jurisprudence was celebrated throughout the world. We may remark that it is a subject of sincere gratitude to the God of our nation that this privilege is enjoyed in the highest perfection in this land. It is a right which every man has: to be heard; to know the charges against him; to be confronted with the witnesses; to make his defense; and to be tried by the laws, and not by the passions and caprices of people. In this respect our jurisprudence surpasses all that Rome

ever enjoyed, and is not inferior to that of the most favored nation of the earth.

To deliver - To give him up as a favor χαρίζεσθαι charizesthaito popular clamor and caprice. Yet our Saviour, in violation of the Roman laws, was thus given up by Pilate, Matthew 27:18-25.

Have the accusers face to face - That he may know who they are and hear their accusations. Nothing contributes more to justice than this. Tyrants permit people to be accused without knowing who the accusers are, and without an opportunity of meeting the charges. It is one great principle of modern jurisprudence that the accused may know the accusers, and be permitted to confront the witnesses, and to adduce all the testimony possible in his own defense.

And have licence - Greek: "place of apology" - may have the liberty of defending himself.

Verse 17

Therefore when they were come hither … - See Acts 25:6.

Verse 18

None accusation … - No charge as I expected of a breach of the peace; of a violation of the Roman law; of atrocious crime. It was natural that Festus should suppose that they would accuse Paul of some such offence. He had been arraigned before Felix; had been two years in custody; and the Jews were exceedingly violent against him. All this, Festus would presume, must have arisen from some flagrant and open violation of the laws.

Verse 19

But had certain questions - Certain inquiries, or litigated and disputed subjects; certain points of dispute in which they differed - ζητήματα τινα zētēmata tinaOf their own superstition - δεισιδαιμονίας deisidaimoniasThis word properly denotes "the worship or fear of demons"; but it was applied by the Greeks and Romans to the worship of their gods. It is the same word which is used in Acts 17:22, where it is used in a good sense. See the notes on that place. There are two reasons for thinking that Festus used the word here in a good sense, and not in the sense in which we use the word "superstition":

(1) It was the word by which the worship of the Greeks and Romans, and, therefore, of Festus himself, was denoted, and he would naturally use it in a similar sense in applying it to the Jews. He would describe their

worship in such language as he was accustomed to use when speaking of religion.

(2) he knew that Agrippa was a Jew. Festus would not probably speak of the religion of his royal guest as superstition, but would speak of it with respect. He meant, therefore, to say simply that they had certain inquiries about their own religion, but accused him of no crime against the Roman laws.

And of one Jesus, which was dead - Greek: "of one dead Jesus." It is evident that Festus had no belief that Jesus had been raised up, and in this he would expect that Agrippa would concur with him. Paul had admitted that Jesus had been put to death, but he maintained that he had been raised from the dead. As Festus did not believe this, he spoke of it with the utmost contempt. "They had a dispute about one dead Jesus, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." In this manner a Roman magistrate could speak of this glorious truth of the Christian religion, and this shows the spirit with which the great mass of philosophers and statesmen regarded its doctrines.

Verse 20

And because I doubted of such manner of questions - See the margin. Because I hesitated about the right way of disposing of them; because I was ignorant of their nature and bearing, I proposed to go to Jerusalem, that the matter might be there more fully investigated. It is obvious, that if Paul was not found guilty of any violation of the laws, he should have been at once discharged. Some interpreters understand this as affirming that he was not satisfied about the question of Paul‘s innocence, or certain whether he ought to be set at liberty or not.

Verse 21

But when he had appealed - Acts 25:11.

To be reserved - To be kept; not to be tried at Jerusalem, but to be sent to Rome for trial.

Unto the hearing - Margin, "the judgment." That Augustus might hear and decide the cause.

Of Augustus - The reigning emperor at this time was Nero. The name Augustus Σεβαστός Sebastosproperly denotes "what is venerable, or worthy of honor and reverence." It was first applied to Caesar Octavianus, who was the Roman emperor in the time when our Saviour was born, and who is usually nailed Augustus Caesar. But the title continued to be used of his

successors in office, as denoting the veneration or reverence which was due to the rank of emperor.

Verse 22

Then Agrippa said … - Agrippa doubtless had heard much of the fame of Jesus, and of the new sect of Christians, and probably he was induced by mere curiosity to hear what Paul could say in explanation and defense of Christianity. This wish of Agrippa gave occasion to the noblest defense which was ever made before any tribunal, and to as splendid eloquence as can be found in any language. See Acts 26:23.

Verse 23

With great pomp - Greek: "with much phantasy" φαντασίας phantasiaswith much show, parade, and splendor. It was an occasion on which he could exhibit much of the splendor of royalty, and he chose to do it.

Into the place of hearing - The court-room, or the place where the judges heard and tried causes.

With the chief captains - Greek: the chiliarchs; the commanders of 1,000 men. It means here that the military officers were assembled. "The principal men of the city." The civil officers, or the men of reputation and influence.

Verse 24

Have dealt with me - Have appeared before me, desiring me to try him. They have urged me to condemn him.

Crying … - Compare Acts 22:22. They had sought that he should be put to death.

Verse 26

Of whom - Respecting his character, opinions, and manner of life; and respecting the charges against him.

No certain thing - Nothing definite and well established. They had not accused Paul of any crime against the Roman laws; and Festus professes himself too ignorant of the customs of the Jews to inform the emperor distinctly of the nature of the charges and the subject of trial.

Unto my lord - To the emperor - to Caesar. This name Lord the Emperors Augustus and Tiberius had rejected, and would not suffer it to be applied to them. Suetonius (Life of Augustus, v. 53) says "the appellation of Lord he always abhorred as abominable and execrable." See also Suetonius' Life of Tiberius, v. 27. The emperors that succeeded them, however,

admitted the title, and suffered themselves to be called by this name. Nothing would be more satisfactory to Nero, the reigning emperor, than this title.

I might have somewhat to write - As Agrippa was a Jew, and was acquainted with the customs and doctrine of the Jews, Festus supposed that, after hearing Paul, he would be able to inform him of the exact nature of these charges, so that he could present the case intelligibly to the emperor.

Verse 27

For it seemeth to me unreasonable - Festus felt that he was placed in an embarrassing situation. He was about to send a prisoner to Rome who had been tried by himself, and who had appealed from his jurisdiction, and yet he was ignorant of the charges against him, and of the nature of his offences, if any had been committed. When prisoners were thus sent to Rome to be tried before the emperor, it would be proper that the charges should be all specified, and the evidence stated by which they were supported, Yet Festus could do neither, and it is not wonderful that he felt himself perplexed and embarrassed, and that he was glad to avail himself of the desire which Agrippa had expressed to hear Paul, that he might be able to specify the charges against him.

Withal - Also; at the same time.

To signify - To specify, or make them know. In concluding this chapter, we may observe:

(1) That in the case of Agrippa, we have an instance of the reasons which induce many people to hear the gospel. He had no belief in it; he had no concern for its truth or its promises; but he was led by curiosity to desire to hear a minister of the gospel of Christ. Curiosity thus draws multitudes to the sanctuary. In many instances they remain unaffected and unconcerned. They listen, and are unmoved, and die in their sins. In other instances, like Agrippa, they are almost persuaded to be Christians, Acts 26:28. But, like him, they resist the appeals, and die uninterested in the plan of salvation. In some instances they are converted, and their curiosity, like that of Zacchaeus, is made the means of their embracing the Saviour, Luke 19:1-9. Whatever may be the motive which induces people to desire to hear, it is the duty of the ministry cheerfully and thankfully, like Paul, to state the truth, and to defend the Christian religion.

(2) in Festus we have a specimen of the manner in which the great, and the rich, and the proud usually regard Christianity. They esteem it to be a subject in which they have no interest a question about "one dead Jesus," whom Christians affirm to be alive. Whether he be alive or not; whether Christianity be true or false, they suppose is a question which does not pertain to them. Strange that it did not occur to Festus that if he was alive, his religion was true; and that it was possible that it might be from God. And strange that the people of this world regard the Christian religion as a subject in which they have no personal interest, but as one concerning which Christians only should inquire, and in which they alone should feel any concern.

(3) in Paul we have the example of a man unlike both Festus and Agrippa. He felt a deep interest in the subject a subject which pertained as much to them as to him. He was willing not only to look at it, but to stake his life, his reputation, his all, on its truth. He was willing to defend it everywhere, and before any class of people. At the same time that he urged his rights as a Roman citizen, yet it was mainly that he might preach the gospel. At the same time that he was anxious to secure justice to himself, yet his chief anxiety was to declare the truth of God. Before any tribunal; before any class of people; in the presence of princes, nobles, and kings, of Romans and of Jews, he was ready to pour forth irresistible eloquence and argument in defense of the truth. Who would not rather be Paul than either Festus or Agrippa? Who would not rather be a prisoner. like him, than invested with authority like Festus, or clothed in splendor like Agrippa? And who would not rather be a believer of the gospel like Paul, than, like them, to be cold contemners or neglecters of the God that made them, and of the Saviour that died and rose again?

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 26

Verse 1

Then Paul stretched forth the hand - See the notes on Acts 21:40. This was the usual posture of orators or public speakers. The ancient statues are commonly made in this way, with the right hand extended. The dress of the ancients favored this. The long and loose robe, or outer garment, was fastened usually with a hook or clasp on the right shoulder, and thus left the arm at full liberty.

And answered for himself - It cannot be supposed that Paul expected that his defense would be attended with a release from confinement, for he had himself appealed to the Roman emperor, Acts 25:11. His design in speaking before Agrippa was, doubtless:

(1)To vindicate his character, and obtain Agrippa‘s attestation to his innocence, that thus he might allay the anger of the Jews;

(2)To obtain a correct representation of the case to the emperor, as Festus had desired this in order that Agrippa might enable him to make a fair statement of the case Acts 25:26-27; and,

(3)To defend his own conversion, and the truth of Christianity, and to preach the gospel in the hearing of Agrippa and his attendants, with a hope that their minds might be impressed by the truth, and that they might be converted to God.

Verse 2

I think myself happy - I esteem it a favor and a privilege to be permitted to make my defense before one acquainted with Jewish customs and opinions. His defense, on former occasions, had been before Roman magistrates, who had little acquaintance with the opinions and customs of the Jews; who were not disposed to listen to the discussion of the points of difference between him and them, and who looked upon all their controversies with contempt. See Acts 24:25. They were, therefore, little qualified to decide a question which was closely connected with the Jewish customs and doctrines; and Paul now rejoiced to know that he was before one who, from his acquaintance with the Jewish customs and belief, would be able to appreciate his arguments. Paul was not now on his trial, but he was to defend himself, or state his cause, so that Agrippa might be able to

aid Festus in transmitting a true account of the case to the Roman emperor. It was his interest and duty, therefore, to defend himself as well as possible, and to put him in possession of all the facts in the case. His defense is, consequently, made up chiefly of a most eloquent statement of the facts just as they had occurred.

I shall answer - I shall be permitted to make a statement, or to defend myself.

Touching … - Respecting.

Whereof I am accused of the Jews - By the Jews. The matters of the accusation were his being a mover of sedition, a ringleader of the Christians, and a profaner of the temple, Acts 24:5-6.

Verse 3

To be expert - To be skilled or well acquainted.

In all customs - Rites, institutions, laws, etc. Everything pertaining to the Mosaic ritual, etc.

And questions - Subjects of debate, and of various opinions. The inquiries which had existed between the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, etc. Paul could say this of Agrippa without falsehood or flattery. Agrippa was a Jew; he had passed much of his time in the kingdom over which he presided; and though he had spent the early part of his life chiefly at Rome, yet it was natural that he should make himself acquainted with the religion of his fathers. Paul did not know how to flatter people, but he was not unwilling to state the truth, and to commend people as far as truth would permit.

Wherefore - On this account; because you are acquainted with those customs. The Romans, who regarded those customs as superstitious, and those questions as matters to be treated with contempt, could not listen to their discussion with patience. Agrippa, who knew their real importance, would be disposed to lend to all inquiries respecting them a patient attention.

Verse 4

My manner of life - My opinions, principles, and conduct.

From my youth - Paul was born in Tarsus; but at an early period he had been sent to Jerusalem for the purpose of education in the school of Gamaliel, Acts 22:3.

Which was at the first - Which was from the beginning; the early part of which; the time when the opinions and habits are formed.

Know all the Jews - It is not at all improbable that Paul was distinguished in the school of Gamaliel for zeal in the Jewish religion. The fact that he was early entrusted with a commission against the Christians Philemon 3:4-6. He might appeal to them, therefore, in regard to the early part of his life, and, doubtless, to the very men who had been his violent accusers.

Verse 5

Which knew me - Who were well acquainted with me.

From the beginning - ἄνωθεν anōthenFormerly; or from the very commencement of my career. Who were perfectly apprised of my whole course.

If they would testify - If they would bear witness to what they know.

That after the most straitest - The most rigid; the most strict, not only in regard to the written Law of God, but to the traditions of the elders. Paul himself elsewhere testifies Philemon 3:4-6 that he had enjoyed all the advantages of birth and training in the Jewish religion, and that he had early distinguished himself by his observance of its rites and customs.

Sect - Division or party.

I lived a Pharisee - I lived in accordance with the rules and doctrines of the Pharisees. See the notes on Matthew 3:7. The reasons why Paul here refers to his early life are:

(1) As he had lived during the early period of his life without crime; as his principles had been settled by the instruction of the most able of their teachers, it was to be presumed that his subsequent life had been of a similar character.

(2) as he, at that period of his life, evinced the utmost zeal for the laws and customs of his country, it was to be presumed that he would not be found opposing or reviling them at any subsequent period. From the strictness and conscientiousness of his past life, he supposed that Agrippa might argue favorably respecting his subsequent conduct. A virtuous and religious course in early life is usually a sure pledge of virtue and integrity in subsequent years.

Verse 6

And now I stand - I stand before the tribunal. I am arraigned.

And am judged - Am tried with reference to being judged. I am undergoing a trial on the point in which all my nation are agreed.

For the hope - On account of the hope; or because, in common with my countrymen, I had entertained this hope, and now believe in its fulfillment.

Of the promise … - See the references in the margin. It is not quite certain whether Paul refers here to the promise of the Messiah or to the hope of the resurrection of the dead. When he stood before the Jewish Sanhedrin Acts 23:6, he said that he was called in question on account of holding the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. But it may be observed that in his view the two things were closely united. He hoped that the Messiah would come, and he hoped therefore for the resurrection of the dead. He believed that he had come, and had risen, and therefore he believed that the dead would rise. He argued the one from the other. And as he believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he had risen from the dead, and that he had thus furnished a demonstration that the dead would rise, it was evident that the subject of controversy between him and the Jews involved everything that was vital to their opinions and their hopes. See Acts 26:8.

Made of God - Made by God. See the marginal references. The promises had been made to the fathers of a Messiah to come, and that embraced the promise of a future state, or of the resurrection of the dead. It will help us to understand the stress which Paul and the other apostles laid on the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead to remember that it involved the whole doctrine of the separate existence of the soul and of a future state. The Sadducees denied all this; and when the Pharisees, the Saviour, and the apostles opposed them, they did it by showing that there would be a future state of rewards and punishments. See the argument of the Saviour with the Sadducees explained in the notes on Matthew 22:23-32.

Unto our fathers - Our ancestors, the patriarchs, etc.

Verse 7

Unto which promise - To the fulfillment of which promise they hope to come; that is, they hope and believe that the promise will be fulfilled, and that they will partake of its benefits.

Our twelve tribes - This was the name by which the Jews were designated. The ancient Jewish nation had hoped to come to that promise; it had been the hope and expectation of the nation. Long before the coming of the Messiah, ten of the twelve tribes had been carried captive to Assyria,

and had not returned, leaving but the two tribes of Benjamin and Judah. But the name, "the twelve tribes," as used to designate the Jewish people, would be still retained. Compare James 1:1. Paul here says that the hope referred to had been that of the Jewish nation. Except the comparatively small portion of the nation, the Sadducees, the great mass of the nation had held to the doctrine of a future state. This Agrippa would know well.

Instantly - Constantly; with intensity ἐν en ἐκτένεια ekteneiawith zeal. This was true, for, amidst all the sins of the nation, they observed with punctuality and zeal the outward forms of the worship of God.

Serving God - In the ordinances and observances of the temple. As a nation they did not serve him in their hearts, but they kept up the outward forms of religious worship.

Day and night - With unwearied zeal; with constancy and ardor, Luke 2:37. The ordinary Jewish services and sacrifices were in the morning and evening, and might be said to be performed day and night. Some of their services, as the Paschal supper, were prolonged usually until late at night. The main idea is, that they kept up the worship of God with constant and untiring zeal and devotion.

For which hope's sake - On account of my cherishing this hope in common with the great mass of my countrymen. See Acts 23:6. If Paul could convince Agrippa that the main point of his offence was what had been the common belief of his countrymen, it would show to his satisfaction that he was innocent. And on this ground he put his defense - that he held only what the mass of the nation had believed, and that he maintained this in the only consistent and defensible manner that God had, in fact, raised up the Messiah, and had thus given assurance that the dead would rise.

Verse 8

Why should it be thought … - The force of this question will be better seen by an exclamation point after why τί ti"What! is it to be thought a thing incredible?" etc. It intimates surprise that it should be thought incredible, or implies that no reason could be given why such a doctrine should be unworthy of belief.

A thing incredible - A doctrine which cannot be credited or believed. Why should it be regarded as absurd?

With you - This is in the plural number, and it is evident that Paul here addressed, not Agrippa alone, but those who sat with him. There is no

evidence that Agrippa doubled that the dead could be raised, but Festus, and those who were with him, probably did, and Paul, in the ardor of his speech, turned and addressed the entire assembly. It is very evident that we have only an outline of this argument, and there is every reason to suppose that Paul would dwell on each part of the subject at greater length than is here recorded.

That God should raise the dead - Why should it be regarded as absurd that God - who has all power, who is the creator of all, who is the author of the human frame should again restore man to life and continue his future existence? The resurrection is no more incredible than the original creation of the body, and it is attended with no greater difficulties. And as the perfections of God will be illustrated by his raising up the dead; as the future state is necessary to the purposes of justice in vindicating the just and punishing the unjust, and as God is a righteous moral governor, it should not be regarded as an absurdity that he will raise up those who have died, and bring them to judgment.

Verse 9

I verily thought - I indeed μὲν mensupposed. Paul here commences the account of his conversion, and states the evidence on which he judged that he was called of God to do what he had done. He begins by saying that it was not because he was originally disposed to be a Christian, but that he was violently and conscientiously opposed to Jesus of Nazareth, and had been converted when in the full career of opposition to him and his cause.

With myself - I thought to myself; or, I myself thought. He had before stated the hopes and expectations of his countrymen, Acts 26:6-8. He now speaks of his own views and purposes. "For myself, I thought," etc.

That I ought to do - That I was bound, or that it was a duty incumbent on me - δεῖν dein"I thought that I owed it to my country, to my religion, and to my God, to oppose in every manner the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah." We here see that Paul was conscientious, and that a man may be conscientious even when engaged in enormous wickedness. It is no evidence that one is right because he is conscientious. No small part of the crimes against human laws, and almost all the cruel persecutions against Christians, have been carried on under the plea of conscience. Paul here refers to his conscientiousness in persecution to show that it was no slight matter which could have changed his course. As he was governed in persecution by conscience, it could have been only by a force of

demonstration, and by the urgency of conscience equally clear and strong, that he could ever have been induced to abandon this course and to become a friend of that Saviour whom he had thus persecuted.

Many things - As much as possible. He was not satisfied with a few things a few words, or purposes, or arguments; but he felt bound to do as much as possible to put down the new religion.

Contrary to the name … - In opposition to Jesus himself, or to his claims to be the Messiah. The "name" is often used to denote the "person" himself, Acts 3:6.

Verse 10

Which thing I also did … - Acts 8:3.

And many of the saints … - Many Christians, Acts 8:3.

And when they were put to death - In the history of those transactions, there is no account of any Christian being put to death except Stephen, Acts 22:20. The Syriac renders it, "I joined with those who condemned them." It is evident, also, that Paul instigated them in this persecution, and urged them on to deeds of blood and cruelty.

Verse 11

And I punished them oft … - See Acts 22:19.

And compelled them to blaspheme - To blaspheme the name of Jesus by denying that he was the Messiah, and by admitting that he was an impostor. This was the object which they had in view in the persecution. It was not to make them blaspheme or reproach God, but to deny that Jesus was the Messiah, and to reproach him as a deceiver and an impostor. It is not necessarily implied in the expression, "and compelled them to blaspheme," that he succeeded in doing it, but that he endeavored to make them apostatize from the Christian religion and deny the Lord Jesus. It is certainly not impossible that a few might thus have been induced by the authority of the Sanhedrin and by the threats of Paul to do it, but it is certain that the great mass of Christians adhered firmly to their belief that Jesus was the Messiah.

And being exceedingly mad - Nothing could more forcibly express his violence against the Christians. He raged like a madman; he was so ignorant that he laid aside all appearance of reason; with the fury and violence of a maniac, he endeavored to exterminate them from the earth. None but a madman will persecute people on account of their religious opinions; and

all persecutions have been conducted like this, with the violence, the fury, and the ungovernable temper of maniacs.

Unto strange cities - Unto foreign cities; cities out of Judea. The principal instance of this was his going to Damascus; but there is no evidence that he did not intend also to visit other cities out of Judea and bring the Christians there, of he found any, to Jerusalem.

Verses 12-15

See this passage explained in the notes on Acts 9:5, etc.

Verse 16

But rise … - The particulars mentioned in this verse and the two following are not recorded in the account of Paul‘s conversion in Acts 22:15.

Which thou hast seen - On the road to Damascus; that is, of the Lord Jesus, and of the fact that he was risen from the dead.

And of those things … - Of those further manifestations of my person, purposes, and will, which I will yet make to you. It is evident from this that the Lord Jesus promised to manifest himself to Paul in his ministry, and to make to him still further displays of his will and glory. Compare Acts 22:17-18. This was done by his rescuing him from destruction and danger; by inspiration; by the growing and expanding view which Paul was permitted to take of the character and perfections of the Lord Jesus. In this we see that it is the duty of ministers to bear witness not only to the truth of religion in general, or of that which they can demonstrate by argument, but more especially of that which they experience in their own hearts, and which they understand by having themselves been the subjects of it. No man is qualified to enter the ministry who has not a personal saving view of the glory and perfections of the Lord Jesus, and who does not go to his work as a witness of those things which he has felt; and no man enters the ministry with these feelings who has not, as Paul had, a promise that he shall see still brighter displays of the perfections of the Saviour, and be permitted to advance in the knowledge of him and of his work. The highest personal consolation in this work is the promise of being admitted to ever-growing and expanding views of the glory of the Lord Jesus, and of experiencing his presence, guidance, and protection.

Verse 17

Delivering thee from the people - From the Jewish people. This implied that he would be persecuted by them, and that the Lord Jesus would

interpose to rescue him.

And from the Gentiles - This also implied that he would be persecuted and opposed by them - a prospect which was verified by the whole course of his ministry. Yet in all he experienced, according to the promise, the support and the protection of the Lord Jesus. This was expressed in a summary manner in Luke 9:16.

Unto whom now I send thee - Acts 22:21. As the opposition of the Jews arose mainly from the fact that he had gone among the Gentiles, it was important to bring this part of his commission into full view before Agrippa, and to show that the same Saviour who had miraculously converted him had commanded him to go and preach to them.

Verse 18

To open their eyes - To enlighten or instruct them. Ignorance is represented by the eyes being closed, and the instruction of the gospel by the opening of the eyes. See Ephesians 1:18.

And to turn them from darkness to light - From the darkness of paganism and sin to the light and purity of the gospel. Darkness is an emblem of ignorance and of sin, and the pagan nations are often represented as sitting in darkness. Compare the Matthew 4:16 note; John 1:4-5 notes.

And from the power of Satan - From the dominion of Satan. Compare Colossians 1:13; 1 Peter 2:9. See the notes on John 12:31; John 16:11. Satan is thus represented as the prince of this world, the ruler of the darkness of this world, the prince of the power of the air, etc. The pagan world, lying in sin and superstition, is represented as under his control; and this passage teaches, doubtless, that the great mass of the people of this world are the subjects of the kingdom of Satan, and are led captive by him at his will.

Unto God - To the obedience of the one living and true God.

That they may receive forgiveness of sins - Through the merits of that Saviour who died - that thus the partition wall between the Jews and the Gentiles might be broken down, and all might be admitted to the same precious privileges of the favor and mercy of God. Compare the notes on Acts 2:38.

And inheritance - An heirship, or lot κλῆρον klēronthat they might be entitled to the privileges and favors of the children of God. See the notes on Acts 20:32.

Which are sanctified - Among the saints; the children of God. See the notes on Acts 20:32.

Verse 19

Whereupon - Whence ὅθεν hothenSince the proof of his being the Messiah, of his resurrection, and of his calling me to this work, was so clear and plain, I deemed it my duty to engage without delay in the work.

I was not disobedient - I was not incredulous or unbelieving; I yielded myself to the command, and at once obeyed. See Acts 9:6; compare Galatians 1:16.

Unto the heavenly vision - To the celestial appearance, or to the vision which appeared to me from heaven. I did not doubt that this splendid appearance Acts 26:13 was from heaven, and I did not refuse to obey the command of him who thus appeared to me. He knew it was the command of God his Saviour, and he gave evidence of repentance by yielding obedience to it at once.

Verse 20

See Acts 9:20-23. The 20th verse contains a summary of his labors in obedience to the command of the Lord Jesus. His argument is that the Lord Jesus had from heaven commanded him to do this, and that he had done no more than to obey his injunction. The word "then" in this verse is supplied by our translators, and is not necessary to the proper explanation of the passage. It would seem from that word that he had not preached "to the Gentiles" until after he had preached "at Jerusalem and throughout all the coasts of Judea," whereas, in fact, he had, as we have reason to believe (see the notes on Acts 9:23), before then "preached" to the Gentiles in Arabia. The statement here, in the original, is a general statement that he had preached at Damascus and at Jerusalem, and in all the coasts of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, but without specifying the exact order in which it was done.

Verse 21

Caught me in the temple - Acts 21:30.

And went about … - Endeavored to put me to death.

Verse 22

Having therefore obtained help of God - Paul had seen and felt his danger. He had known the determined malice of the Jews, and their efforts to take his life. He had been rescued by Lysias, and had made every effort himself to avoid the danger and to save his life; and at the end of all; he

traced his safety entirely to the help of God. It was not by any power of his own that he had been preserved; it was because God had interposed and rescued him. Those who have been delivered from danger, if they have just views, will delight to trace it all to God. They will recognize his hand, and will feel that whatever wisdom they may have had, or whatever may have been the kindness of their friends to them, yet that all this also is to be traced to the superintending providence of God.

Witnessing - Bearing testimony to what he had seen, according to the command of Christ, Acts 26:16.

To small - To those in humble life; to the poor, the ignorant, and the obscure. Like his Master, he did not despise them, but regarded it as his duty and privilege to preach the gospel to them.

And great - The rich and noble; to kings, princes, and governors. He had thus stood on Mars' Hill at Athens; he had declared the same gospel before Felix, Festus, and now before Agrippa. He offered salvation to all. He passed by none because they were poor; and he was not deterred by the fear of the rich and the great from making known their sins and calling them to repeatance. What an admirable illustration of the proper duties of a minister of the gospel!

Saying none other things … - Delivering no new doctrine, but maintaining only that the prophecies had been fulfilled. As he had done this only, there was no reason for the opposition and persecution of the Jews.

Should come - Should come to pass, or should take place. Paul here evidently means to say that the doctrine of the atonement, and of the resurrection of Christ, is taught in the Old Testament.

Verse 23

That Christ - That the Messiah expected by the Jews should be a suffering Messiah.

Should suffer - Should lead a painful life, and be put to death. See the notes on Acts 17:3; compare Daniel 9:27; Isaiah 53:1-12.

And that he should be the first … - This declaration contains two points:

(1) That it was taught in the prophets that the Messiah Would rise from the dead. On this, see the proof alleged in Acts 2:24-32; Acts 13:32-37.

(2) that he would be the first that should rise. This cannot mean that the Messiah would be the first dead person who should be restored to life, for

Elijah had raised the son of the Shunammite, and Jesus himself had raised Lazarus, and the widow‘s son at Nain. It does not mean that he would be the first in the order of time that should rise, but first in eminence; the most distinguished, the chief, the head of those who should rise from the dead - πρῶτος ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν prōtos ex anastaseōs nekrōnIn accordance with this he is called Colossians 1:18 “the beginning, the first-born from the dead,” having among all the dead who should be raised up the pre-eminence of primogeniture, or what pertained to the first-born. In 1 Corinthians 15:20 he is called “the first fruits of them that slept. This declaration is therefore made of him by way of eminence:

(1)As being chief, a prince among those raised from the dead;

(2)As being raised by his own power John 10:18;

(3)As, by his rising, securing a dominion over death and the grave 1 Corinthians 15:25-26; and,

(4)As bringing, by his rising, life and immortality to light. He rose to return to death no more. And he thus secured an ascendency over death and the grave, and was thus, by way of eminence, first among those raised from the dead.

And should show light unto the people - To the Jews. Would be their instructor and prophet. This Moses had predicted, Deuteronomy 18:15.

And to the Gentiles - This had often been foretold by the prophets, and particularly by Isaiah, Isaiah 9:1-2; compare Matthew 4:14-16; Isaiah 11:10; Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 54:3; Isaiah 60:3, Isaiah 60:5, Isaiah 60:11; Isaiah 61:6; Isaiah 62:2; Isaiah 66:12.

Verse 24

Festus said with a loud voice - Amazed at the zeal of Paul. Paul doubtless evinced deep interest in the subject, and great earnestness in the delivery of his defense.

Thou art beside thyself - Thou art deranged; thou art insane. The reasons why Festus thought Paul mad were, probably:

(1) His great earnestness and excitement on the subject.

(2) his laying such stress on the gospel of the despised Jesus of Nazareth, as if it were a matter of infinite moment. Festus despised it; and

he regarded it as proof of derangement that so much importance was attached to it.

(3) Festus regarded, probably, the whole story of the vision that Paul said had appeared to him as the effect of an inflamed and excited imagination, and as a proof of delirium. This is not an uncommon charge against those who are Christians, and especially when they evince unusual zeal. Sinners regard them as under the influence of delirium and fanaticism; as terrified by imaginary and superstitious fears; or as misguided by fanatical leaders. Husbands often thus think their wives to be deranged, and parents perceive their children that, and wicked people assume the ministers of the gospel to be crazy. The frivolous think it proof of derangement that others are serious, anxious, and prayerful; the rich, that others are willing to part with their property to do good; the ambitious and worldly, that others are willing to leave their country and home to go among the Gentiles to spend their lives in making known the unsearchable riches of Christ. The really sober and rational part of the world they who fear God and keep his commandments; they who believe that eternity is before them, and who strive to live for it - are thus charged with insanity by those who are really deluded, and who are thus living lives of madness and folly. The tenants of a madhouse often think all others deranged but themselves; but there is no madness so great, no delirium so awful, as to neglect the eternal interest of the soul for the sake of the pleasures and honors which this life can give.

Much learning - It is probable that Festus was acquainted with the fact that Paul was a learned man. Paul had not, while before him, manifested particularly his learning. But Festus, acquainted in some way with the fact that he was well-educated, supposed that his brain had been turned, and that the effect of it was seen by devotion to a fanatical form of religion. The tendency of long-continued and intense application to produce mental derangement is everywhere known.

Doth make thee mad - Impels, drives, or excites thee περιτρέπει peritrepeito madness.

Verse 25

I am not mad - I am not deranged. There are few more happy turns than what Paul gives to this accusation of Festus. He might have appealed to the course of his argument; he might have dwelt on the importance of the subject, and continued to reason; but he makes an appeal at once to

Agrippa, and brings him in for a witness that he was not deranged. This would be far more likely to make an impression on the mind of Festus than anything that Paul could say in self-defense. The same reply, "I am not mad," can be made by all Christians to the charge of derangement which the world brings against them. They have come, like the prodigal son Luke 15:17, to their right mind; and by beginning to act as if there were a God and Saviour, as if they were to die, as if there were a boundless eternity before them, they are conducting according to the dictates of reason. And as Paul appealed to Agrippa, who was not a Christian, for the reasonableness and soberness of his own views and conduct, so may all Christians appeal to sinners themselves as witnesses that they are acting as immortal beings should act. All people know that if there is an eternity, it is right to prepare for it; if there is a God, it is proper to serve him; if a Saviour died for us, we should love him; if a hell, we should avoid it; if a heaven, we should seek it. And even when they charge us with folly and derangement, we may turn at once upon them, and appeal to their own consciences, and ask them if all our anxieties, and prayers, and efforts, and self-denials are not right? One of the best ways of convicting sinners is to appeal to them just as Paul did to Agrippa. When so appealed to, they will usually acknowledge the force of the appeal, and will admit that the solicitude of Christians for their salvation is according to the dictates of reason.

Most noble Festus - This was the usual title of the Roman governor. Compare Acts 24:3.

Of truth - In accordance with the predictions of Moses and the prophets, and the facts which have occurred in the death and resurrection of the Messiah. In proof of this he appeals to Agrippa, Acts 26:26-27. Truth here stands opposed to delusion, imposture, and fraud.

And soberness - Soberness σωφροσύνη sōphrosunēwisdom) stands opposed here to madness or derangement, and denotes "sanity of mind." The words which I speak are those of a sane man, conscious of what he is saying, and impressed with its truth. They were the words, also, of a man who, under the charge of derangement, evinced the most perfect self-possession and command of his feelings, and who uttered sentiments deep, impressive, and worthy the attention of all mankind.

Verse 26

For the king - King Agrippa.

Knoweth - He had been many years in that region, and the fame of Jesus and of Paul‘s conversion were probably well known to him.

These things - The things pertaining to the early persecutions of Christians; the spread of the gospel; and the remarkable conversion of Paul. Though Agrippa might not have been fully informed respecting these things, yet he had an acquaintance with Moses and the prophets; he knew the Jewish expectation respecting the Messiah; and he could not be ignorant respecting the remarkable public events in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and of his having been put to death by order of Pontius Pilate on the cross.

I speak freely - I speak openly - boldly. I use no disguise; and I speak the more confidently before him, because, from his situation, he must be acquainted with the truth of what I say. Truth is always bold and free, and it is an evidence of honesty when a man is willing to declare everything without reserve before those who are qualified to detect him if he is an impostor. Such evidence of truth and honesty was given by Paul.

For I am persuaded - I am convinced; I doubt not that he is well acquainted with these things.

Are hidden from him - That he is unacquainted with them.

For this thing - The thing to which Paul had mainly referred in this defense, his own conversion to the Christian religion.

Was not done in a corner - Did not occur secretly and obscurely, but was public, and was of such a character as to attract attention. The conversion of a leading persecutor, such as Paul had been, and in the manner in which that conversion had taken place, could not but attract attention and remark; and although the Jews would endeavor as much as possible to conceal it, yet Paul might presume that it could not be entirely unknown to Agrippa.

Verse 27

King Agrippa - This bold personal address is an instance of Paul‘s happy manner of appeal. He does it to bring in the testimony of Agrippa to meet the charge of Festus that he was deranged.

Believest thou the prophets? - The prophecies respecting the character, the sufferings, and the death of the Messiah.

I know that thou believest - Agrippa was a Jew; and, as such, he of course believed the prophets. Perhaps, too, from what Paul knew of his personal character, he might confidently affirm that he professed to be a believer. Instead, therefore, of waiting for his answer, Paul anticipated it,

and said that he knew that Agrippa professed to believe all these prophecies respecting the Messiah. His design is evident. It is:

(1) To meet the charge of derangement, and to bring in the testimony of Agrippa, who well understood the subject, to the importance and the truth of what he was saying.

(2) to press on the conscience of his royal hearer the evidence of the Christian religion, and to secure, if possible, his conversion. "Since thou believest the prophecies, and since I have shown that they are fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth; that he corresponds in person, character, and work, with the prophets, it follows that his religion is true." Paul lost no opportunity in pressing the truth on every class of people. He had such a conviction of the truth of Christianity that he was deterred by no rank, station, or office; by no fear of the rich, the great, and the learned; but everywhere urged the evidence of that religion as indisputable. In this lay the secret of no small part of his success. A man who really believes the truth will be ready to defend it. A man who truly loves religion will not be ashamed of it anywhere.

Verse 28

Then Agrippa said unto Paul - He could not deny that he believed the prophecies in the Old Testament. He could not deny that the argument was a strong one that they had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. He could not deny that the evidence of the miraculous interposition of God in the conversion of Paul was overwhelming; and instead, therefore, of charging him, as Festus had done, with derangement, he candidly and honestly avows the impression which the proof had made on his mind.

Almost - Except a very little - ἐν ὀλίγῳ en oligōThou hast nearly convinced me that Christianity is true, and persuaded me to embrace it. The arguments of Paul had been so rational; the appeal which he had made to his belief of the prophets had been so irresistible, that he had been nearly convinced of the truth of Christianity. We are to remember:

(1) That Agrippa was a Jew, and that he would look on this whole subject in a different manner from the Roman Festus.

(2) that he does not appear to have partaken of the violent passions and prejudices of the Jews who had accused Paul.

(3) pits character, as given by Josephus, is that of a mild, candid, and ingenuous man. He had no particular hostility to Christians; he knew that they were not justly charged with sedition and crime; and he saw the conclusion to which a belief of the prophets inevitably tended. Yet, as in thousands of other cases, he was not quite persuaded to be a Christian. What was included in the "almost"; what prevented his being quite persuaded, we know not. It may have been that the evidence was not so clear to his mind as he would profess to desire; or that he was not willing to give up his sins; or that he was too proud to rank himself with the followers of Jesus of Nazareth; or that, like Felix, he was willing to defer it to a more convenient season. There is every reason to believe that he was never quite persuaded to embrace the Lord Jesus, and that he was never nearer the kingdom of heaven than at this moment. It was the crisis, the turning-point in Agrippa's life, and in his eternal destiny; and, like thousands of others, he neglected or refused to allow the full conviction of the truth on his mind, and died in his sins.

Thou persuadest me - Thou dost convince me of the truth of the Christian religion, and persuadest me to embrace it.

To be a Christian - On the name Christian, see the notes on Acts 11:26. On this deeply interesting case we may observe:

(1) That there are many in the same situation as Agrippa- many who are almost, but not altogether, persuaded to be Christians. They are found among:

(a)Those who have been religiously educated;

(b)Those who are convinced by argument of the truth of Christianity;

(c)Those whose consciences are awakened, and who feel their guilt, and the necessity of some better portion than this world can furnish.

(2) such persons are deterred from being altogether Christians by the following, among other causes:

(a)By the love of sin - the love of sin in general, or some particular sin which they are not willing to abandon;

(b)By the fear of shame, persecution, or contempt, if they become Christians;

(c)By the temptations of the world - its cares, vanities, and allurements- which are often presented most strongly in just this state of mind;

(d)By the love of office, the pride of rank and power, as in the case of Agrippa;

(e)By a disposition, like Felix, to delay to a more favorable time the work of religion, until life has wasted away, and death approaches, and it is too late, and the unhappy man dies almost a Christian.

(3) this state of mind is one of special interest and special danger. It is not one of safety, and it is not one that implies any certainty that the "almost Christian" will ever be saved. There is no reason to believe that Agrippa ever became fully persuaded to become a Christian. To be almost persuaded to do a thing which we ought to do, and yet not to do it, is the very position of guilt and danger. And it is no wonder that many are brought to this point - the turning-point, the crisis of life - and then lose their anxiety, and die in their sins. May the God of grace keep us from resting in being almost persuaded to be Christians! May every one who shall read this account of Agrippa be admonished by his convictions, and be alarmed by the fact that he then paused, and that his convictions there ended! And may every one resolve by the help of God to forsake every thing that prevents his becoming an entire believer, and without delay embrace the Son of God as his Saviour!

Verse 29

I would to God - I pray to God; I earnestly desire it of God. This shows:

(1) Paul's intense desire that Agrippa, and all who heard him, might be saved.

(2) his steady and constant belief that none but God could incline people to become altogether Christians. Paul knew well that there was nothing that would overcome the reluctance of the human heart to be an entire Christian but the grace and mercy of God. He had addressed to his hearers the convincing arguments of religion, and he now breathed forth his earnest prayer to God that those arguments might be effectual. So prays every faithful minister of the cross.

All that hear me - Festus, and the military and civil officers who had been assembled to hear his defense, Acts 25:23.

Were both almost, and altogether … - Paul had no higher wish for them than that they might have the faith and consolations which he himself enjoyed. He had so firm a conviction of the truth of Christianity, and had experienced so much of its supports amidst his persecutions and trials, that his highest desire for them was that they might experience the same inexpressibly pure and holy consolations. He well knew that there was neither happiness nor safety in being almost a Christian; and he desired, therefore, that they would give themselves, as he had done, entirely and altogether to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Except these bonds - These chains. This is an exceedingly happy and touching appeal. Probably Paul, when he said this, lifted up his arm with the chain attached to it. His wish was that in all respects they might partake of the effects of the gospel, except those chains. Those he did not wish them to bear. The persecutions, the unjust trials, and the imprisonments which he had been called to suffer in the cause, he did not desire them to endure. True Christians wish others to partake of the full blessings of religion. The trials which they themselves experienced from without in unjust persecutions, ridicule, and slander, they do not wish them to endure. The trials which they themselves experience from an evil heart, from corrupt passions, and from temptations, they do not wish others to experience. But even with these, religion confers infinitely more pure joy than the world can give; and even though others should be called to experience severe trials for their religion, still Christians wish that all should partake of the pure consolations which Christianity alone can furnish in this world and the world to come. Compare Mark 10:30.

Verse 31

This man doeth nothing worthy of death - This was the conclusion to which they had come after hearing all that the Jews had to allege against him. It was the result of the whole investigation; and we have, therefore, the concurring testimony of Claudius Lysias Acts 23:29, of Felix Acts 25:26-27, and of Agrippa, as to the innocence of Paul. More honorable and satisfactory testimony of his innocence he could not have desired. It was a full acquittal from all the charges against him; and though he was to be sent to Rome, yet he went there with every favorable prospect of being acquitted there also.

Verse 32

Then said Agrippa unto Festus … - This is a full declaration of the conviction of Agrippa, before whom the cause had been heard, that Paul was innocent. It is an instance, also, where boldness and fidelity will be attended with happy results. Paul had concealed nothing of the truth. He had made a bold and faithful appeal Acts 26:27 to Agrippa himself for the truth of what he was saying. By this appeal Agrippa had not been offended. It had only served to impress him more with the innocence of Paul. It is an instance which shows that religion may be so commended to the conscience and reason of princes, kings, and judges that they will see its truth. It is an instance which shows that the most bold and faithful appeals may be made by the ministers of religion to their hearers for the truth of what they are saying. And it is a full proof that the most faithful appeals, if respectful, may be made without offending people, and with the certainty that they will feel and admit their force. All preachers should be as faithful as Paul; and whatever may be the rank and character of their auditors, they should never doubt that they have truth and God on their side, and that their message, when most bold and faithful, will commend itself to the consciences of mankind.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 27

Verse 1

And when it was determined - By Festus Acts 25:12, and when the time was come when it was convenient to send him.

That we should sail - The use of the term "we" here shows that the author of this book, Luke, was with Paul. He had been his traveling companion, and though he had not been accused, yet it was resolved that he should still accompany him. Whether he went at his own expense, or whether he was sent at the expense of the Roman government, does not appear. There is a difference of reading here in the ancient versions. The Syriac reads it, "And thus Festus determined that he (Paul) should be sent to Caesar in Italy," etc. The Latin Vulgate and the Arabic also read "he" instead of "we." But the Greek manuscripts are uniform, and the correct reading is doubtless what is in our version.

Into Italy - The country still bearing the same name, of which Rome was the capital.

And certain other prisoners - Who were probably also sent to Rome for a trial before the emperor. Dr. Lardner has proved that it was common to send prisoners from Judea and other provinces to Rome (Credibility, part i. chapter 10, section 10, pp. 248,249).

A centurion - A commander of 100 men.

Of Augustus' band - For the meaning of the word "band," see the Matthew 27:27 note; Acts 10:1 note. It was a division in the Roman army consisting of from 400 to 600 men. This was called "Augustus' band" in honor of the Roman emperor Augustus (see the notes on Acts 25:21), and was probably distinguished in some way for the care in enlisting or selecting them. The Augustine cohort or band is mentioned by Suetonius in his *Life of Nero*, 20.

Verse 2

A ship of Adramyttium - A maritime town of Mysia, in Asia Minor, opposite to the island of Lesbos. This was a ship which had been built there, or which sailed from that port, but which was then in the port of Caesarea. It is evident, from Acts 27:6, that this ship was not expected to sail to Italy, but that the centurion expected to find some other vessel into which he could put the prisoners to take them to Rome.

We launched - We loosed from our anchorage, or we set sail. See Acts 13:13.

By the coasts of Asia - Of Asia Minor. Probably the owners of the ship designed to make a coasting voyage along the southern part of Asia Minor, and to engage in traffic with the maritime towns and cities.

One Aristarchus, a Macedonian - This man is mentioned as Paul's companion in travel in Acts 19:29. He afterward attended him to Macedonia, and returned with him to Asia, Acts 20:4. He now appears to have attended him, not as a prisoner, but as a voluntary companion, choosing to share with him his dangers, and to enjoy the benefit of his society and friendship. He went with him to Rome, and was a fellow-prisoner with him there Colossians 4:10, and is mentioned Philemon 1:24 as Paul's fellow-laborer. It was doubtless a great comfort to Paul to have with him two such valuable friends as Luke and Aristarchus; and it was an instance of great affection for him that they were not ashamed of his bonds, but were willing to share his dangers, and to expose themselves to peril for the sake of accompanying him to Rome.

Verse 3

We touched at Sidon - See the notes on Matthew 11:21. Sidon was about 67 miles north of Caesarea, and the passage could be easily accomplished, under favorable circumstances, in 24 hours. It is probable that the vessel, being a "coaster," put in there for purposes of trade. Sidon is the last city on the Phoenician coast in which the presence of the apostle can be traced.

And Julius courteously entreated Paul - Treated him kindly or humanely.

And gave him liberty … - The same thing had been done by Felix, Acts 24:23.

Unto his friends - In Sidon. Paul had frequently traveled in that direction in going to and returning from Jerusalem, and it is not improbable, therefore, that he had friends in all the principal cities.

To refresh himself - To enjoy the benefit of their care; to make his present situation and his voyage as comfortable as possible. It is probable that they would furnish him with many supplies which were needful for his long and perilous voyage.

Verse 4

We sailed under Cyprus - For an account of Cyprus, see the notes on Acts 4:36. By sailing "under Cyprus" is meant that they sailed along its coasts; they kept near to it; they thus endeavored to break off the violent winds. Instead of steering a direct course in the open sea, which would have exposed them to violent opposing winds, they kept near this large island, so that it was between them and the westerly winds. The force of the wind was thus broken, and the voyage was rendered less difficult and dangerous. They went between Cyprus and Asia Minor, leaving Cyprus to the left. A sailor would express the idea by saying that they sailed under the lee of Cyprus. Had it not been for the strong western winds, they would have left it on the right.

The winds were contrary - Were from the west, or southwest, which thus prevented their pursuing a direct course.

Verse 5

The sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia - The sea which lies off the, coast from these two regions. For their situation, see the notes on Acts 6:9, and Acts 13:13.

We came to Myra, a city of Lycia - Lycia was a province in the southwestern part of Asia Minor, having Phrygia and Pisidia on the north, the Mediterranean on the south, Pamphylia on the east, and Carla on the west.

Verse 6

A ship of Alexandria - A ship belonging to Alexandria. Alexandria was in Egypt, and was founded by Alexander the Great. It appears from Acts 27:38 that the ship was laden with wheat. It is well known that great quantities of wheat were imported from Egypt to Rome, and it appears that this was one of the large ships which were employed for that purpose. Why the ship was on the coast of Asia Minor is not known But it is probable that it had been driven out of its way by adverse winds or tempests.

Verse 7

Had sailed slowly - By reason of the prevalence of the western winds, Acts 27:4.

Over against Cnidus - This was a city standing on a promontory of the same name in Asia Minor, in the part of the province of Caria called Doris, and a little northwest of the island of Rhodes.

The wind not suffering us - The wind repelling us in that direction; not permitting us to hold on a direct course, we were driven off near to Crete.

We sailed under Crete - See Acts 27:4. We lay along near to Crete, so as to break the violence of the wind. For the situation of Crete, see the notes on Acts 2:11.

Over against Salmone - Near to Salmone. This was the name of the promontory which formed the eastern extremity of the island of Crete.

Verse 8

And, hardly passing it - Scarcely being able to pass by it without being wrecked. Being almost driven on it. They passed round the east end of the island because they had been unable to sail directly forward between the island and the mainland,

The fair havens - This was on the southeastern part of the island of Crete. It was probably not so much a harbor as an open roadstead, which afforded good anchorage for a time. It is called by Stephen, the geographer, "the fair shore." It still retains the name which it formerly had. It is called in ancient Dutch and French Sailing Directions "the beautiful bay."

Nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea - There was no town or city at the "Fair Havens," but the city of Lasea seems to have been well known, and it is mentioned here to identify the place.

Verse 9

When much time was spent - In sailing along the coast of Asia; in contending with the contrary winds. It is evident that when they started they had hoped to reach Italy before the dangerous time of navigating the Mediterranean should arrive. But they had been detained and embarrassed contrary to their expectation, so that they were now sailing in the most dangerous and tempestuous time of the year.

Because the fast was now already past - By the "fast" here is evidently intended the fast which occurred among the Jews on the great day of atonement. That was on the tenth of the month Tisri, which answers to a part of September and part of October. It was, therefore, the time of the autumnal equinox, and when the navigation of the Mediterranean was esteemed to be particularly dangerous, from the storms which usually occurred about that time. The ancients regarded this as a dangerous time to navigate the Mediterranean. See the proofs in Kuinoel on this place.

Paul admonished them - Paul exhorted, entreated, or persuaded them. He was somewhat accustomed to the navigation of that sea, and endeavored to persuade them not to risk the danger of sailing at that season of the year.

Verse 10

Sirs - Greek: Men.

I perceive - It is not certain that Paul understood this by direct inspiration. He might have perceived it from his own knowledge of the danger of navigation at the autumnal equinox, and from what he saw of the ship as unsuited to a dangerous navigation. But there is nothing that should prevent our believing also that he was guided to this conclusion by the inspiration of the Spirit of God. Compare Acts 27:23-24.

Will be with hurt - With injury or hazard. It is not meant that their lives would be lost, but that they would be jeoparded.

The lading - The freight of the ship. It was laden with wheat, Acts 27:38. Paul evidently, by this, intended to suggest the propriety of remaining where they were until the time of dangerous navigation was past.

Verse 11

The master - The person who is here meant was the helmsman, who occupied in ancient ships a conspicuous place on the stern, and steered the ship, and gave directions to the crew.

The owner of the ship - Probably a different person from "the master." He had the general command of the ship as his own property, but had employed "the master," or the pilot, to direct and manage it. His counsel in regard to the propriety of continuing the voyage would be likely to be followed.

Verse 12

The haven - The fair havens, Acts 27:8.

Was not commodious to winter in - Not safe or convenient to remain there. Probably it furnished rather a safe anchorage ground in time of a storm than a convenient place for a permanent harbor.

The more part - The greater part of the crew.

To Phenice - In the original this is Phoenix - Φοῖνιξ FoinixSo it is written by Strabo. The name was probably derived from the palmtrees which were common in Crete. This was a port or harbor on the south side of Crete, and west of the fair havens. It was a more convenient harbor, and was regarded as more safe. It appears, therefore, that the majority of persons on board concurred with Paul in the belief that it was not advisable to attempt the navigation of the sea until the dangers of the winter had passed by.

And lieth toward - Greek: looking toward; that is, it was open in that direction.

The southwest - κατὰ λίβα kata libaToward Libya, or Africa. That country was situated southwest of the mouth of the harbor. The entrance of the harbor was in a southwest direction.

And northwest - κατὰ χῶρον kata chōronThis word denotes "a wind blowing from the northwest." The harbor was doubtless curved. Its entrance was in a southwest direction. It then turned so as to lie in a direction toward the northwest. It was thus rendered perfectly safe from the winds and heavy seas; and in that harbor they might pass the winter in security. It is sometimes called "Lutro." Of this harbor Mr. Urquhart, in a letter to James Smith, Esq., whose work on this voyage of Paul has obtained so wide a reputation, says, "Lutro is an admirable harbor. You open it like a box; unexpectedly the rocks stand apart, and the town appears within … We thought we had cut him off, and that we were driving him right upon the rocks. Suddenly he disappeared - and, rounding in after him, like a change of scenery, the little basin, its shipping, and the town presented themselves … Excepting Lutro, all the roadsteads looking to the southward are perfectly exposed to the south or east."

Verse 13

The south wind - The wind before had probably been a head-wind, blowing from the west. When it veered round to the south, and when it blew gently, though not entirely favorable, yet it was so that they supposed they could sail along the coast of Crete.

Had obtained their purpose - The object of their desire; that is, to sail safely along the coast of Crete.

Loosing thence - Setting sail from the fair havens.

Close by Crete - Near the shore. It is evident that they designed, if possible, to make the harbor of Phenice to winter there. They weighed anchor and passed around Cape Matala. The distance to this point is four or five miles; the bearing west by south. With a gentle southerly wind, the vessel would be able to weather the cape, and then the wind was fair to Phoenix or Phenice (Lutro), which was 35 miles distant from the cape, and bore from thence about west-northwest.

Verse 14

Arose - Beat violently.

Against it - Against the vessel. Greek: seizing her, and whirling her around.

A tempestuous wind - Turbulent - violent - strong.

Called Euroclydon - Εὐροκλύδων EurokludōnInterpreters have been much perplexed about the meaning of this word, which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The most probable supposition is, that it denotes "a wind not blowing steadily from any quarter, but a hurricane, or wind veering about to different quarters." Such hurricanes are known to abound in the Mediterranean, and are now called Levanters, deriving their name from blowing chiefly in the Levant, or eastern part of the Mediterranean. The name euroclydon is derived probably from two Greek words, εὖρος euros"wind," and κλύδων kludōn"a wave"; so called from its agitating and exciting the waves. It thus answers to the usual effects of a hurricane, or of a wind rapidly changing its points of compass.

Verse 15

The ship was caught - By the wind. It came suddenly upon them as a tempest.

Could not bear up … - Could not resist its violence, or the helmsman could not direct the ship. It was seized by the wind, and driven with such violence, that it became unmanageable.

We let her drive - We suffered the ship to be borne along by the wind without attempting to control it.

Verse 16

And running under - Running near to an island. They ran near to it, where the violence of the wind was probably broken by the island,

Which is called Clauda - This is a small island about 20 miles southwest of Crete.

We had much work - Much difficulty; we were scarcely able to do it.

To come by the boat - This does not mean that they attempted here to land in the boat, but they had much difficulty in saving the small boat attached to the ship by lifting it into the ship. The importance of securing the small boat is known by all seamen.

Verse 17

Which when they had taken up - When they had raised up the boat into the ship, so as to secure it.

They used helps - They used ropes, cables, stays, or chains, for the purpose of securing the ship. The danger was that the ship would be destroyed, and they therefore made use of such aids as would prevent its loss.

Undergirding the ship - The ancients were accustomed to pass cables or strong ropes around a vessel to keep the planks from springing or starting by the action of the sea. This is now called "frapping" a vessel. The operation of "frapping" a vessel is thus described in Falconer's Marine Dictionary. "To frap a ship is to pass four or five turns of a large cable-laid rope round the hull or frame of a ship to support her in a great storm, or otherwise, when it is apprehended that she is not strong enough to resist the violent efforts of the sea." An instance of this kind is mentioned in Lord Anson's voyage round the world. Speaking of a Spanish man-of-war in a storm, he says, "They were obliged to throw overboard all their upper-deck guns, and take six turns of the cable round the ship to prevent her opening."

Lest they should fall into the quicksands - There were two celebrated syrtes, or quicksands, on the coast of Africa, called the greater and lesser. They were vast beds of sand driven up by the sea, and constantly shifting their position, so that it could not be known certainly where the danger was. As they were constantly changing their position, they could not be accurately laid down in a chart. The sailors were afraid, therefore, that they should be driven on one of those banks of sand, and thus be lost.

Strake sail - Or, rather, lowered or took down the mast, or the yards to which the sails were attached. There has been a great variety of interpretations proposed on this passage. The most probable is that they took down the mast, by cutting or otherwise, as is now done in storms at sea, to save the ship. They were at the mercy of the wind and waves, and their only hope was by taking away their sails.

And so were driven - By the wind and waves. The ship was unmanageable, and they suffered it to be driven before the wind.

Verse 18

They lightened the ship - By throwing out a part of the cargo.

Verse 19

The tackling of the ship - The anchors, sails, cables, baggage, etc. That is, everything that was not indispensable to its preservation, for it seems still Acts 27:29 that they retained some of their anchors on board.

Verse 20

Neither sun nor stars … - As they could see neither san nor stars, they could make no observations; and as they had no compass, they would be totally ignorant of their situation, and they gave up all as lost.

Verse 21

But after long abstinence - By the violence of the storm, by their long continued labor, and by their apprehension of danger, they had a long time abstained from food.

And to have gained this harm - To have procured this harm, or have subjected yourselves to it. Had you remained there you would have been safe. It seems to be bad English to speak of gaining a loss, but it is a correct translation of the original κερδῆσαί kerdēsaiwhich expresses the idea of acquiring or procuring, whether good or evil. See Acts 27:9-10.

Verse 22

There shall be no loss - This must have been cheering news to those who had given up all for lost. As Patti had manifested great wisdom in his former advice to them, they might be now more disposed to listen to him. The reason why he believed they would be safe, he immediately states.

Verse 23

There stood by me - There appeared to me.

The angel of God - The messages of God were often communicated by angels. See Hebrews 1:14. This does not mean that there was any particular angel, but simply an angel.

Whose I am - Of the God to whom I belong. This is an expression of Paul‘s entire devotedness to him.

Whom I serve - In the gospel. To whom and to whose cause I am entirely devoted.

Verse 24

Fear not, Paul - Do not be alarmed with the danger of the loss of life.

Thou must be brought … - And therefore thy life will be spared.

God hath given thee all … - That is, they shall all be preserved with thee. None of their lives shall be lost. This does not mean that they would be converted, but that their lives would be preserved. It is implied here that it was for the sake of Paul, or that the leading purpose of the divine interposition in rescuing them from danger was to save his life. The wicked often derive important benefits from being connected with Christians, and God often confers important favors on them in his general purpose to save his own people. The lives of the wicked are often spared because God interposes to save the righteous.

Verse 26

Howbeit - Nevertheless.

Upon a certain island - Malta. See Acts 28:1.

Verse 27

The fourteenth night - From the time when the tempest commenced.

In Adria - In the Adriatic Sea. This sea is situated between Italy and Dalmatia, now called the Adriatic Gulf. But among the ancients the name was given not only to that gulf, but to the whole sea lying between Greece, Italy, and Africa, including the Sicilian and Ionian Sea. It is evident from the narrative that they were not in the Adriatic Gulf, but in the vicinity of Malta.

Deemed - Judged. Probably by the appearance of the sea.

Verse 28

And sounded - To sound is to make use of a line and lead to ascertain the depth of water.

Twenty fathoms - A fathom is six feet, or the distance from the extremity of the middle finger on one hand to the extremity of the other, when the arms are extended. The depth, therefore, was about 120 feet.

Fifteen fathoms - They knew, therefore, that they were drawing near to shore.

Verse 29

They cast four anchors - On account of the violence of the storm and waves, to make, if possible, the ship secure.

And wished for the day - To discern more accurately their situation and danger.

Verse 30

The shipmen - The sailors, leaving the prisoners.

Under colour - Under pretence. They pretended that it was necessary to get into the boat, and carry the anchors ahead of the ship so as to make it secure, but with a real intention to make for the shore.

Out of the foreship - From the prow, so as to make the fore-part of the ship secure. The reason why they did this was probably that they expected the ship would go to pieces; and, since all on board could not be saved in one small boat, they resolved to escape to a place of safety as soon as possible.

Verse 31

Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers - The centurion had, it appears, the general direction of the ship, Acts 27:11. Perhaps it had been pressed into the service of the government.

Except these - These seamen. The soldiers and the centurion were unqualified to manage the ship, and the presence of the sailors was therefore indispensable to the preservation of any.

Abide in the ship - Remain on board.

Ye cannot be saved - You cannot be preserved from death. You will have no hope of managing the ship. It will be remembered that Paul had been informed by the angel, and had assured them Acts 27:22-24 that no lives would be lost; but it was only in the use of the proper means that their lives would be safe. Though it had been determined, and though Paul had the assurance that their lives would be safe, yet this did not, in his view, prevent the use of the proper means to secure it. From this we may learn:

(1) That the certainty of an event does not render it improper to use means to obtain it.

(2) that, though the event may be determined, yet the use of means may be indispensable to secure it. The event is not more certainly ordained than the means requisite to accomplish it.

(3) that the doctrine of the divine purposes or decrees, making certain future events, does not make the use of man‘s agency unnecessary or improper. The means are determined as well as the end, and the one will not be secured without the other.

(4) the same is true in regard to the decrees respecting salvation. The end is not determined without the means; and as God has resolved that his people shall be saved, so he has also determined the means. He has ordained that they shall repent, shall believe, shall be holy, and shall thus be saved.

(5) we have in this case a full answer to the objection that a belief in the decrees of God will make people neglect the means of salvation, and lead to licentiousness. It has just the contrary tendency. Here is a case in which Paul certainly believed in the purpose of God to save these people; in which he was assured that it was fully determined; and yet the effect was not to produce indolence and unconcern, but to prompt him to use strenuous efforts to accomplish the very effect which God had determined should take place. So it is always. A belief that God has purposes of mercy; that he

designs, and has always designed, to save some, will prompt to the use of all proper means to secure it. If we had no such evidence that God had any such purpose, effort would be vain. Where we have such evidence, it operates, as it did in the case of Paul, to produce great and strenuous endeavors to secure the object.

Verse 32

Cut off the ropes … - It is evident that the mariners had not yet got on board the boat. They had let it down into the sea Acts 27:30, and were about to go on board. By thus cutting the ropes which fastened the boat to the ship, and letting it go, all possibility of their fleeing from the ship was taken away, and they were compelled to remain on board.

Verse 33

And while the day was coming on - At daybreak. It was before they had sufficient light to discern what they should do.

To take meat - Food. The word "meat" was formerly used to denote "food" of any kind.

That ye have tarried - That you have remained or been fasting.

Having taken nothing - No regular meal. It cannot mean that they had lived entirely without food, but that they had been in so much danger, were so constantly engaged, and had been so anxious about their safety, that they had taken no regular meal, or that what they had taken had been at irregular intervals, and had been a scanty allowance. "Appian speaks of an army which for 20 days together had neither food nor sleep; by which he must mean that they neither made full meals nor slept whole nights together. The same interpretation must be given to this phrase" (Doddridge). The effect of this must have been that they would be exhausted, and little able to endure the fatigues which yet remained.

Verse 34

Not a hair fall from the head … - A proverbial expression, denoting "that they would be preserved safe; that none of them would be lost, and that "in their persons they should not experience the least damage," 1 Kings 1:52; 1 Samuel 14:45.

Verse 35

And gave thanks … - This was the usual custom among the Hebrews. See the notes on Matthew 14:19. Paul was among those who were not Christians; but he was not ashamed of the proper acknowledgment of God,

and was not afraid to avow his dependence on him, and to express his gratitude for his mercy.

Verse 38

They lightened the ship - By casting the wheat into the sea. As they had no hope of saving the cargo, and had no further use for it, they hoped that by throwing the wheat overboard the ship would draw less water, and that thus they would be able to run the vessel on the shore.

Verse 39

They knew not the land - They had been driven with a tempest, without being able to make any observation, and it is probable that they were entire strangers to the coast and to the whole island,

A certain creek with a shore - Greek: a certain bosom κόλπος kolposor bay. By its having a shore is probably meant that it had a level shore, or one that was convenient for landing. It was not a high bluff of rocks, but was accessible. Kuinoel thinks that the passage should be construed, "they found a certain shore, having a bay," etc.

Were minded - Were resolved.

Verse 40

Had taken up the anchors - The four anchors with which they had moored the ship, Acts 27:29. See the margin. The expression may mean that they slipped or cut their cables, and that thus they left the anchors in the sea. This is the most probable interpretation.

And loosed the rudder bands - The rudder, in navigation, is that by which a ship is steered. It is that part of the helm which consists of a piece of timber, broad at the bottom, which enters the water, and is attached by hinges to the stern-post on which it turns (Webster). But what was the precise form of the rudder among the ancients is not certainly known. Sometimes a vessel might be steered by oars. Most ships appear to have had a rudder at the prow as well as at the stern. In some instances, also, they had them on the sides. The word used here in the Greek is in the plural τῶν πηδαλίον tōn pēdalionand it is evident that they had in this ship more than one rudder. The bands mentioned here were probably the cords or fastenings by which the rudder could be made secure to the sides of the ship, or could be raised up out of the water in a violent storm, to prevent its being carried away. And as, in the tempest, the rudders had become useless Acts 27:15, Acts 27:17, they were probably either raised out of the water, or

made fast. Now that the storm was past, and they could be used again, they were loosed, and they endeavored to direct the vessel into port.

The mainsail - ἀρτέμωνα artemōnaThere have been various explanations of this word. Luther translates it as "the mast." Erasmus: "the yards." Grotius, who supposes that the mainmast had been cast away Acts 27:17, thinks that this must mean "the foremast" or "the bowsprit." The word usually means the "mainsail." The Syriac and Arabic understand it of a "small sail," that was hoisted for a temporary purpose. Mr. Smith, in his work on this voyage of Paul, supposes that it was "the foresail." Others translate it "a jib." "The mainsail (foresail) being hoisted showed good judgment, though the distance was so small, as it would not only enable them to steer more correctly than without it, but would press the ship farther on upon the land, and thus enable them the more easily to get to the shore" (Penrose).

Verse 41

And falling - Being carried by the wind and waves.

Into a place where two seas met - Greek: into a place of a double sea - διθάλασσον dithalassonThat is, a place which was washed on both sides by the sea. It refers properly to an isthmus, tongue of land, or a sand-bar stretching out from the mainland, and which was washed on both sides by the waves. It is evident that this was not properly an isthmus that was above the waves, but was probably a long sand-bank that stretched far out into the sea, and which they did not perceive. In endeavoring to make the harbor, they ran into this bar (sand-bank).

They ran the ship aground - Not designedly, but in endeavoring to reach the harbor, Acts 27:39.

d **The hinder part was broken -** The stern was broken or staved in. By this means the company was furnished with boards, etc., on which they were safely conveyed to shore, Acts 27:44.

Verse 42

And the soldiers‘ counsel … - Why they gave this advice is not known. It was probably, however, because the Roman military discipline was very strict, and if they escaped it would be charged on them that it had been done by the negligence and unfaithfulness of the soldiers. They therefore proposed to kill them, though contrary to all humanity, justice, and laws; presuming, probably, that it would be supposed that they had perished in the

wreck. This is a remarkable proof that people can be cruel even when experiencing the tender mercy of God, and that the most affecting scenes of divine goodness will not mitigate the natural ferocity and cruelty of those who delight in blood.

Verse 43

But the centurion, willing to save Paul - He had at first been disposed to treat Paul with kindness, Acts 27:3. And his conduct on board the ship; the wisdom of his advice Acts 27:10; the prudence of his conduct in the agitation and danger of the tempest; and not improbably the belief that he was under the divine protection and blessing, disposed him to spare his life.

Kept them from their purpose - Thus, for the sake of this one righteous man, the lives of all were spared. The instance here shows:

(1) That it is possible for a pious man, like Paul, so to conduct in the various trying scenes of life - the agitations, difficulties, and temptations of this world - as to conciliate the favor of the people of this world; and.(2) That important benefits often result to sinners from the righteous. Paul‘s being on board was the means of saving the lives of many prisoners; and God often confers important blessings on the wicked for the sake of the pious relatives, friends, and neighbors with whom they are connected. Ten righteous men would have saved Sodom Genesis 18:32; and Christians are in more ways than one the salt of the earth, and the light of the world, Matthew 5:13-14. It is a privilege to be related to the friends of God - to be the children of pious parents, or to be connected with pious partners in life. It is a privilege to be connected with the friends of God in business; or to dwell near them; or to be associated with them in the various walks and dangers of life. The streams of blessings which flow to fertilize their lands, flow also to bless others; the dews of heaven which descend on their habitations, descend on all around; and the God which crowns them with loving-kindness, often fills the abodes of their neighbors and friends with the blessings of peace and salvation.

And commanded - Probably they were released from their chains.

Verse 44

And the rest - Those who could not swim.

They escaped all safe to land - According to the promise which was made to Paul, Acts 27:22. This was done by the special providence of God. It was a remarkable instance of divine interposition to save so many through so long-continued dangers; and it shows that God can defend in any

perils, and can accomplish all his purposes. On the ocean or the land we are safe in his keeping, and he can devise ways that shall fulfill all his purposes, and that can protect his people from danger.

ACTS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 28

Verse 1

They knew - Either from their former acquaintance with the island, or from the information of the inhabitants.

Was called Melita - Now called "Malta." It was celebrated formerly for producing large quantities of honey, and is supposed to have been called Melita from the Greek word signifying honey. It is about 20 miles in length from east to west, and 12 miles in width from north to south, and about 60 miles in circumference. It is about 60 miles from the coast of Sicily. The island is an immense rock of white soft freestone, with a covering of earth about one foot in depth, which has been brought from the island of Sicily. There was also another island formerly called "Melita," now called "Meleda," in the Adriatic Sea, near the coast of Illyricum, and some have supposed that Paul was shipwrecked on that island. But tradition has uniformly said that it was on the island now called "Malta." Besides, the other "Melita" would have been far out of the usual track in going to Italy; and it is further evident that Malta was the place, because from the place of his shipwreck he went directly to Syracuse, Rhegium, and Puteoli, thus sailing in a direct course to Rome. In sailing from the other Melita to Rhegium, Syracuse would be far out of the direct course.

Verse 2

And the barbarous people - See the notes on Romans 1:14. The Greeks regarded all as barbarians who did not speak their language, and applied the name to all other nations but their own. It does not denote, as it does sometimes with us, "people of savage, uncultivated, and cruel habits, but simply those whose speech was unintelligible." See 1 Corinthians 14:11. The island is supposed to have been populated at first by the Phoecians, afterward by the Phoenicians, and afterward by a colony from Carthage. The language of the Maltese was that of Africa, and hence it was called by the Greeks the language of "barbarians." It was a language which was unintelligible to the Greeks and Latins.

The rain - The continuance of the storm.

And … of the cold - The exposure to the water in getting to the shore, and probably to the coldness of the weather. It was now in the month of October.

Verse 3

Had gathered a bundle of sticks - For the purpose of making a fire.

There came a viper - A poisonous serpent. See the notes on Matthew 3:7. The viper was doubtless in the bundle of sticks or limbs of trees which Paul had gathered, but was concealed, and was torpid. But when the bundle was laid on the fire, the viper became warmed by the heat, and came out and fastened on the hand of Paul.

And fastened on his hand - καθῆψεν kathēpsenThis word properly means to join oneself to; to touch; to adhere to. It might have been by coiling around his hand and arm, or by fastening its fangs in his hand. It is not expressly affirmed that Paul was bitten by the viper, yet it is evidently implied; and it is wholly incredible that a viper, unless miraculously prevented, should fasten himself to the hand without biting.

Verse 4

The venomous beast - The English word "beast" we usually apply to an animal of larger size than a viper. But the original θηρίον thērionis applicable to animals of any kind, and was especially applied by Greek writers to serpents. See Schleusner.

No doubt - The fact that the viper had fastened on him; and that, as they supposed, he must now certainly die, was the proof from which they inferred his guilt.

Is a murderer - Why they thought he was a murderer rather than guilty of some other crime is not known. It might have been:

(1) Because they inferred that he must have been guilty of some very atrocious crime, and as murder was the highest crime that man could commit, they inferred that he had been guilty of this. Or,

(2) More probably, they had an opinion that when divine vengeance overtook a man, he would be punished in a manner similar to the offence; and as murder is committed usually with the hand, and as the viper had fastened on the hand of Paul, they inferred that he had been guilty of taking life. It was supposed among the ancients that persons were often punished by divine vengeance in that part of the body which had been the instrument of the sin.

Whom, though he hath escaped the sea - They supposed that vengeance and justice would still follow the guilty; that, though he might escape one form of punishment, yet he would be exposed to another. And this, to a certain extent, is true. These barbarians reasoned from great

original principles, written on the hearts of all people by nature, that there is a God of justice, and that the guilty will be punished. They reasoned incorrectly, as many do, only because that they supposed that every calamity is a judgment for some particular sin. People often draw this conclusion, and suppose that suffering is to be traced to some particular crime, and to be regarded as a direct judgment from heaven. See the notes on John 9:1-3. The general proposition that all sin will be punished at some time is true, but we are not qualified to affirm of particular calamities always that they are direct judgments for sin. In some cases we may. In the case of the drunkard, the gambler, and the profligate, we cannot doubt that the loss of property, health, and reputation is the direct result of specific crime. In the ordinary calamities of life, however, it requires a more profound acquaintance with the principles of divine government than we possess to affirm of each instance of suffering that it is a particular judgment for some crime.

Yet vengeance - ἡ δίκη hē dikē"Justice" was represented by the pagan as a goddess, the daughter of Jupiter, whose office it was to take vengeance, or to inflict punishment for crimes.

Suffereth not to live - They regarded him as already a dead man. They supposed the effect of the bite of the viper would be so certainly fatal that they might speak of him as already, in effect, dead (Beza).

Verse 5

And he shook off … - In this was remarkably fulfilled the promise of the Saviour Mark 16:18; "They shall take up serpents," etc.

Verse 6

When he should have swollen - When they expected that he would have swollen from the bite of the viper. The poison of the viper is rapid, and they expected that he would die soon. The word rendered "swollen" πίμπρασθαι pimprasthaimeans properly "to burn; to be inflamed," and then "to be swollen from inflammation." This was what they expected here, that the poison would produce a violent inflammation.

Or fallen down dead suddenly - As is sometimes the case from the bite of the serpent when a vital part is affected.

They changed their minds - They saw that he was uninjured, and miraculously preserved; and they supposed that none but a god could be thus kept from death.

That he was a god - That the Maltese were idolaters there can be no doubt; but what gods they worshipped is unknown, and conjecture would be useless. It was natural that they should attribute such a preservation to the presence of a divinity. A similar instance occurred at Lystra. See the notes on Acts 14:11.

Verse 7

In the same quarters - In that place, or that part of the island,

Possessions - Property. His place of residence.

The chief man - Greek: the first man. Probably he was the governor of the island,

Verse 8

A bloody flux - Greek: dysentery.

And laid his hands on him … - In accordance with the promise of the Saviour, Mark 16:18. This miracle was a suitable return for the hospitality of Publius, and would serve to conciliate further the kindness of the people, and prepare the way for Paul‘s usefulness.

Verse 10

Who also honoured us - As people who were favored by heaven, and who had been the means of conferring important benefits on them in healing the sick, etc. Probably the word “honors” here means “gifts, or marks of favor.”

They laded us - They gave us, or conferred on us. They furnished us with such things as were necessary for us on our journey.

Verse 11

And after three months - Probably they remained there so long because there was no favorable opportunity for them to go to Rome. If they arrived there, as is commonly supposed, in October, they left for Rome in January.

In a ship of Alexandria - See the notes on Acts 27:6.

Whose sign - Which was ornamented with an image of Castor and Pollux. It was common to place on the prow of the ship the image of some person or god, whose name the ship bore. This custom is still observed.

Castor and Pollux - These were two semi-deities. They were reputed to be twin brothers, sons of Jupiter and Leda, the wife of Tyndarus, king of Sparta. After their death, they are fabled to have been transported to heaven, and made constellations under the name of Gemini, or the Twins. They then received divine honors, and were called the sons of Jupiter. They were

supposed to preside over sailors, and to be their protectors; hence it was not uncommon to place their image on ships. Compare Lempriere‘s Dictionary.

Verse 12

And landing at Syracuse - Syracuse was the capital of the island of Sicily, on the eastern coast. It was in the direct course from Malta to Rome. It contains about 18,000 inhabitants.

Verse 13

We fetched a compass - We coasted about; or we sailed along the eastern side of Sicily.

And came to Rhegium - This was a city of Italy, in the kingdom of Naples, on the coast near the southwest extremity of Italy. It was nearly opposite to Messina, in Sicily. It is now called “Reggio.”

The south wind - A wind favorable for their voyage.

To Puteoli - The wells. This place was celebrated for its warm baths, and from these and its springs it is supposed to have derived its name of The Wells. It is now called “Pozzuoli,” and is in the campania of Naples, on the north side of the bay, and about 8 miles northwest from Naples. The town contains at present (circa 1880‘s) about 10,000 inhabitants.

Verse 14

Brethren - Christian brethren. But by whom the gospel had been preached there is unknown.

Verse 15

And from thence - From Puteoli.

When the brethren heard of us - The Christians who wore at Rome.

As far as the Appii Forum - This was a city about 56 miles from Rome. The remains of an ancient city are still seen there. It is on the borders of the Pontine Marshes. The city was built on the celebrated Appian Way, or the road from Rome to Capua. The road was made by Appius Claudius, and probably the city was founded by him also. It was called the forum or market-place of Appius, because it was a convenient place for travelers on the Appian Way to stop for purposes of refreshment. It was also a famous resort for peddlers and merchants. See Horace, book i. Sat. 5,3.

And the Three Taverns - This place was about 8 or 10 miles nearer Rome than the Appii Forum (Cicero, a.d. Art., ii. 10). It undoubtedly received its name because it was distinguished as a place of refreshment on the Appian Way. Probably the greater part of the company of Christians remained at this place while the remainder went forward to meet Paul, and

to attend him on his way. The Christians at Rome had doubtless heard much of Paul. His Epistle to them had been written about the year of our Lord 57 a.d., or at least five years before this time. The interest which the Roman Christians felt in the apostle was thus manifested by their coming so far to meet him, though he was a prisoner.

He thanked God - He had long ardently desired to see the Christians of Rome, Romans 1:9-11; Romans 15:23, Romans 15:32. He was now grateful to God that the object of his long desire was at least granted, and that he was permitted to see them, though in bonds.

And took courage - From their society and counsel. The presence and counsel of Christian brethren is often of inestimable value in encouraging and strengthening us in the toils and trials of life.

Verse 16

The captain of the guard - The commander of the Praetorian cohort, or guard. The custom was, that those who were sent from the provinces to Rome for trial were delivered to the custody of this guard. The name of the prefect or captain of the guard at this time was Burrhus Afranius (Tacitus, History, 12,42,1).

But Paul was suffered … - Evidently by the permission of the centurion, whose favor he had so much conciliated on the voyage. See Acts 27:43.

With a soldier that kept him - That is, in the custody of a soldier to whom he was chained, and who, of course, constantly attended him. See Acts 24:23; Acts 12:6.

Verse 17

Paul called the chief of the Jews - He probably had two objects in this: one was to vindicate himself from the suspicion of crime, or to convince them that the charges alleged against him were false; and the other, to explain to them the gospel of Christ. In accordance with his custom everywhere, he seized the earliest opportunity of making the gospel known to his own countrymen; and he naturally supposed that charges highly unfavorable to his character had been sent forward against him to the Jews at Rome by those in Judea.

Against the people - Against the Jews, Acts 24:12.

Or customs … - The religious rites of the nation. See the notes on Acts 6:14.

Was I delivered prisoner … - By the Jews, Acts 21:33, etc.

Verse 18

When they had examined me … - Acts 26:31-32.

No cause of death - No crime worthy of death.

Verse 19

The Jews spake against it - Against my being set at liberty.

I was constrained - By a regard to my own safety and character.

To appeal unto Caesar - See the notes on Acts 25:11.

Not that I had aught … - I did it for my own preservation and safety, not that I wished to accuse my countrymen. Paul had been unjustly accused and injured; yet, with the true spirit of the Christian religion, he here says that he cherished no unkind feelings toward those who had done him wrong.

Verse 20

Because that for the hope of Israel - On account of the hope which the Jews cherish of the coming of the Messiah; of the resurrection; and of the future state. See this explained in the notes on Acts 23:6.

I am bound with this chain - See the notes on Acts 26:29. Probably he was attached constantly to a soldier by a chain.

Verse 21

We neither received letters … - Why the Jews in Judea had not forwarded the accusation against Paul to their brethren at Rome, that they might continue the prosecution before the emperor, is not known. It is probable that they regarded their cause as hopeless, and chose to abandon the prosecution. Paul had been acquitted successively by Lysias, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa; and as they had not succeeded in procuring his condemnation before them, they saw no prospect of doing it at Rome, and resolved, therefore, not to press the prosecution any further.

Neither any of the brethren that came - Any of the Jews. There was a very constant contact between Judea and Rome, but it seems that the Jews who had come before Paul had arrived had not mentioned his case, so as to prejudice them against him.

Verse 22

What thou thinkest - What your belief is; or what are the doctrines of Christians respecting the Messiah.

This sect - The sect of Christians.

Spoken against - Particularly by Jews. This was the case then, and, to a great extent, is the case still. It has been the common lot of the followers of

Christ to be spoken "against." Compare Acts 24:5.

Verse 23

Appointed him a day - A day when they would hear him.

Into his lodging - To the house where he resided, Acts 28:30.

He expounded - He explained or declared the principles of the Christian religion.

And testified the kingdom of God - Bore witness to, or declared the principles and doctrines of the reign of the Messiah. See the notes on Matthew 3:2.

Persuading them concerning Jesus - Endeavoring to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah.

Both out of the law of Moses - Endeavoring to convince them that he corresponded with the predictions respecting the Messiah in the books of Moses, and with the types which Moses had instituted to prefigure the Messiah.

And out of the prophets - Showing that he corresponded with the predictions of the prophets. See the notes on Acts 17:3.

From morning till evening - An instance of Paul's indefatigable toil in endeavoring to induce his countrymen to believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

Verse 24

And some believed … - See the notes on Acts 14:4.

Verse 25

Had spoken one word - One solemn declaration, reminding them that it was the characteristic of the nation to reject the testimony of God, and that it was to be expected. It was the last warning which we know Paul to have delivered to his countrymen the Jews.

Well spake - Or he spoke the truth; he justly described the character of the Jewish people. The passage here quoted was as applicable in the time of Paul as of Isaiah.

The Holy Ghost - A full proof of the inspiration of Isaiah.

By Esaias - By Isaiah, Isaiah 6:9-10.

Verse 26-27

Saying … - See this passage explained in the Matthew 13:14 note, and John 12:39-40 notes.

Verse 28

The salvation of God - The knowledge of God's mode of saving people.

Is sent unto the Gentiles - Since you have rejected it, it will be offered to them. See the notes on Acts 13:46.

And that they will hear it - They will embrace it. Paul was never discouraged. If the gospel was rejected by one class of people he was ready to offer it to another. If his own countrymen despised it, he never allowed himself to suppose that Christ had died in vain, but believed that others would embrace its saving benefits. How happy would it be if all Christians had the same unwavering faith and zeal as Paul.

Verse 29

And had great reasoning - Great discussion or debates. That is, the part which believed that Jesus was the Messiah Acts 28:24 discussed the subject warmly with those who did not believe. This whole verse is missing in the Syriac version, and in some Greek mss., and is supposed by Mill and Griesbach to be spurious.

Verse 30

Paul dwelt two whole years - Doubtless in the custody of the soldiers. Why he was not prosecuted before the emperor during this time is not known. It is evident, however Acts 28:21, that the Jews were not disposed to carry the case before Nero, and the matter, during this time, was suffered quietly to sleep. There is great probability that the Jews did not dare to prosecute him before the emperor. It is clear that they had never been in favor of the appeal to Rome, and that they had no hope of gaining their cause. Probably they might remember the former treatment of their people by the emperor (see the notes on Acts 18:2); they might remember that they were despised at the Roman capital, and not choose to encounter the scorn and indignation of the Roman court; and as there was no prosecution, Paul was suffered to live in quietness and safety. Lardner, however, supposed (vol. v. p. 528,529, ed. 8vo, London, 1829) that the case of Paul was soon brought before Nero and decided, and that the method of confinement was ordered by the emperor himself. Lightfoot also supposes that Paul‘s “accusers, who had come from Judea to lay their charge against him, would be urgent to get their business despatched, that they might be returning to their own home again, and so would bring him to trial as soon as they could.” But nothing certainly is known on the subject. It is evident, indeed, from 2 Timothy 4:16, that he was at some time arraigned before the emperor; but when it was, or what was the decision or why he was at last set at liberty, are all involved in impenetrable obscurity.

In his own hired house - In a house which he was permitted to hire and occupy as his own. Probably in this he was assisted by the kindness of his Roman friends.

And received all … - Received all hospitably and kindly who came to him to listen to his instructions. It is evident from this that he was still a prisoner, and was not permitted to go at large.

Verse 31

Preaching the kingdom of God - See the notes on Acts 20:25.

With all confidence - Openly and boldly, without anyone to hinder him. It is known also that Paul was not unsuccessful even when a prisoner at Rome. Several persons were converted by his preaching, even in the court of the emperor. The things which had happened to him, he says Philemon 1:12-14, had fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel, so that his bonds in Christ were manifested in all the palace, and in all other places; and many brethren in the Lord, says he, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the Word without fear. In this situation he was remembered with deep interest by the church at Philippi, who sent Epaphroditus to him with a contribution to supply his needs. Of their kindness he speaks in terms of the tenderest gratitude in Philemon 2:25; Philemon 4:18. During his confinement also, he was the means of the Conversion of Onesimus, a runaway servant of Philemon, of Colosse in Phrygia Philemon 1:10, whom he sent back to his master with a letter to himself, and with an epistle to the church at that place. See the Epistle to the Colossians, Colossians 4:8-9, Colossians 4:18. During this imprisonment, he wrote, according to Lardner, the following epistles, in the order and time mentioned, namely,:

d Ephesians, April of61 a.d.

d

d 2Timothy, May of61 a.d.

d

d Philippians, before the end of62 a.d.

d

d Colossians62 a.d.

d

d Philemon62 a.d.

d

d Hebrews, the spring of63 a.d.

d

d

Here closes the inspired account of the propagation of Christianity; of the organization of the Christian church, and of the toils and persecutions of the apostle Paul. Who can but be deeply affected when he comes to the conclusion of this inspired book recording the history of the spread of the Christian religion, and the labors and trials of that wonderful man, the apostle Paul. Who can help heaving a sigh of regret that the historian did not carry forward the history of Paul until his death, and that henceforward, in the history of the church, we want this faithful, inspired guide; and that, from the close of this book, everything becomes at once so involved in obscurity and uncertainty? Instead, however, of pouring forth unavailing regrets that the sacred historian has carried us no further onward, we should rather employ the language of praise that God inspired the writer of this book to give a history of the church for 30 years after the ascension of the Saviour; that he has recorded the accounts of the first great revivals of religion; that he has presented us the examples of the early missionary zeal; that he has informed us how the early Christians endured persecution and toil; that he has conducted us from land to land, and from city to city, showing us everywhere how the gospel was propagated, until we are led to the seat of the Roman power, and see the great apostle of Christianity there

proclaiming, in that mighty capital of the world, the name of Jesus as the Saviour of people.

Perhaps there could be no more appropriate close to the book of the inspired history than thus to have conducted the apostle of the Gentiles to the capital of the Roman world, and to leave the principal agent in the establishment of the Christian religion in that seat of intelligence, influence, and power. It is the conducting of Christianity to the very height of its earthly victories; and having shown its power in the provinces of the empire, it was proper to close the account with the record of its achievements in the capital.

Why Luke closed his history here is not known. It may have been that he was not afterward the companion of Paul; or that he might have been himself removed by death. It is agreed on all hands that he did not attend Paul in his subsequent travels; and we should infer from the conclusion of this book that he did not survive the apostle, as it is almost incredible, if he did, that he did not mention his release and death. It is the uniform account of antiquity that Luke, after the transactions with which the Acts of the Apostles closes, passed over into Achaia, where he lived a year or two, and there died at the age of 84 years.

Everything in regard to the apostle Paul, after the account with which Luke closes this book, is involved in doubt and uncertainty. By what means he was set at liberty is not known; and there is a great contradiction of statements in regard to his subsequent travels, and even in regard to the time of his death. It is generally agreed, indeed, that he was set at liberty in the year of our Lord 63 a.d. After this some of the fathers assert that he traveled over Italy and passed into Spain. But this account is involved in great uncertainty. Lardner, who has examined all the statements with care, and than whom no one is better qualified to pronounce an opinion on these subjects, gives the following account of the subsequent life of Paul (Works, vol. v. pp. 331-336, London edition, 1829). He supposes that after his release he went from Rome to Jerusalem as soon as possible; that he then went to Ephesus, and from thence to Laodicea and Colosse; and that he returned to Rome by Troas, Philippi, and Corinth. The reason why he returned to Rome, Lardner supposes, was that he regarded that city as

opening before him the widest and most important field of labor, and that, therefore, he proposed there to spend the remainder of his life.

In the year of our Lord 64 a.d., a dreadful fire happened at Rome which continued for six or seven days. It was generally supposed that the city had been set on fire by order of the Emperor Nero. In order to divert the attention of the people from this charge against himself, he accused the Christians of having been the authors of the conflagration, and excited against them a most furious and bloody persecution. In this persecution it is generally supposed that Paul and Peter suffered death, the former by being beheaded, and the latter by crucifixion. Paul is supposed to have been beheaded rather than crucified, because he was a Roman citizen, and because it was unlawful to put a Roman citizen to death on a cross. Lardher thinks that this occurred in the year 65. Where Paul was beheaded is not certainly known. It is generally supposed to have occurred at a place called the Salvian Waters, about 3 miles from Rome, and that he was buried in the Ostian Way, where a magnificent church was afterward built. But of this there is no absolute certainty.

It is far more important and interesting for us to be assured from the character which he evinced, and from the proofs of his zeal and toil in the cause of the Lord Jesus, that his spirit rested in the bosom of his Saviour and his God. Wherever he died, his spirit, we doubt not, is in heaven. And where that body rested at last, which he labored "to keep under," and which he sought to bring "into subjection" 1 Corinthians 9:27, and which was to him so much the source of conflict and of sin Romans 7:5, Romans 7:23, is a matter of little consequence. It will be guarded by the eye of that Saviour whom he served, and will be raised up to eternal life. In his own inimitable language, it was "sown in corruption, it shall be raised in incorruption; it was sown in dishonor, it shall be raised in glory; it was sown in weakness, it shall be raised in power; it was sown a natural body, it shall be raised a spiritual body," 1 Corinthians 15:42-44. And in regard to him, and to all other saints, "when that corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and that mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory," 1 Corinthians 15:54.

To Paul now, what are all his sorrows, and persecutions, and toils in the cause of his Master? What but a source of thanksgiving that he was permitted thus to labor to spread the gospel through the world? So may we live - imitating his life of zeal, and self-denial, and faithfulness, that when we rise from the dead we may participate with him in the glories of the resurrection of the just.

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Contents

ROMANS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Romans

This Epistle has been, with great uniformity, attributed to the apostle Paul and received as a part of the sacred canon. In the church it has never been called into question as a genuine, inspired book, except by three of the ancient sects deemed heretical - the Ebionites, the Encratites, and Cerinthians. However, even they did not deny that it was written by the apostle Paul. They rejected it because they could not make its doctrines harmonize with their views of other parts of the Scriptures. Their rejecting it, therefore, does not militate against its genuineness. That is a question to be settled historically, like the genuineness of any other ancient writing. On this point the testimony of antiquity is uniform. The proof on this subject may be seen at length in Lardner‘s works. The internal evidence that this was written by Paul is stated in a most ingenious and masterly manner by Dr. Paley in his Horae Pauline.

It is agreed by all, that this Epistle was written in Greek. Though addressed to a people whose language was Latin, yet this Epistle to them, like those to other churches, was in Greek. On this point, there is also no debate. The reasons why this language was chosen were probably the following:

(1) The Epistle was designed doubtless to be read by other churches as well as the Roman congregation; compare Colossians 4:16. Yet the Greek language, being more generally known and spoken, was more adapted for this purpose than the Latin tongue.

(2) the Greek language was then understood at Rome and extensively spoken. It was a part of polite education to learn it. The Roman youth were taught it; and it was the fashion of the times to study it, even so much so as to make it a matter of complaint that the Latin was neglected for it by the Roman youth. Thus, Cicero (Pro Arch.) says, “The Greek language is spoken in almost all nations; the Latin is confined to our comparatively narrow borders.” Tacitus (Orator 29) says, “An infant born now is committed to a Greek nurse.” Juvenal (vi. 185) speaks of its being considered as an indispensable part of polite education, to be acquainted with the Greek.

(3) it is not impossible that the Jews at Rome, who constituted a separate colony, were better acquainted with the Greek than the Latin. They had a Greek translation (the Septuagint), but no Latin translation of the Scriptures (as yet), and it is very possible that they used the language in which they were accustomed to read their Scriptures and which was extensively spoken by their brethren throughout the world.

(4) the apostle was himself probably more familiar with the Greek than the Latin. He was a native of Cilicia, where the Greek was doubtless spoken, and he not infrequently quotes the Greek poets in his addresses and epistles Acts 21:37; Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12; 1 Corinthians 15:33.

This Epistle is placed first among Paul‘s epistles, not because it was the first written, but because of the length and importance of the Epistle itself, as well as the importance of the church in the imperial city. It has uniformly had this place in the sacred canon, though there is reason to believe that the Epistle to the Galatians, the first to the Corinthians, and perhaps the two letters to the Thessalonians were written before this.

Of the time when it was written, there can be little doubt. About the year 52 or 54 a.d. the Emperor Claudius banished all Jews from Rome. In Acts 18:2, we have an account of the first acquaintance of Paul with Aquila and Priscilla who had departed from Rome in consequence of that decree. This acquaintance was formed in Corinth; and we are told that Paul stayed with them and worked at the same occupation Acts 18:3. In Romans 16:3-4, Paul directs the church to greet Priscilla and Aquila, who had for his life laid down their own necks. This service which they rendered to Paul must have been therefore after the decree of Claudius; and of course the Epistle must have been written after the year 52 ad.

In Acts 18:19, we are told that Paul left Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus. Paul made a journey through the neighboring regions, and then returned to Ephesus Acts 19:1. Paul remained at Ephesus at least two years Acts 19:8, Acts 19:9, Acts 19:10, and while here probably wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians. In that Epistle 1 Corinthians 16:19 he sends the salutation of Priscilla and Aquila, who were, of course, still at Ephesus. The Epistle to

the Romans, therefore, in which Paul sends his salutation to Aquila and Priscilla, as being then at Rome, could not be written until after they had left Ephesus and returned to Rome; that is, until three years at least after the decree of Claudius in 52 or 54 ad.

Still further, when Paul wrote this Epistle of Romans, he was about to depart for Jerusalem to convey a collection which had been made for the poor saints there, by the churches in Macedonia and Achaia; Romans 15:25-26. When he had done this, he intended to go to Rome; Romans 15:28. Now, by looking at the Acts of the Apostles, we can determine when this occurred. At this time, he sent Timothy and Erastus ahead of him into Macedonia, while he remained in Asia for a season Acts 19:22. After this Acts 20:1-2, Paul himself went into Macedonia, passed through Greece, and remained about three months there. In this journey it is almost certain that Paul went to Corinth, the capital of Achaia, at which time it is supposed that Romans was written. From this place he set out for Jerusalem where he was made a prisoner, and after remaining a prisoner for two years Acts 24:27, he was sent to Rome about 60 a.d. Allowing for the time of his traveling and his imprisonment, it must have been about three years from the time that he purposed to go to Jerusalem; that is, from the time that he finished Romans Romans 15:25-29 to the time when he actually reached Rome, and thus the Epistle to the Romans must have been written about 57 ad.

It is clear also, that the Epistle to the Romans was written from Corinth. In Romans 16:1, Phoebe, a member of the church at Cenchrea, is commended to the Roman Christians. She probably had charge of the letter, or she accompanied those who had it. Cenchrea was the port of the city of Corinth, about seven or eight miles from the city. In Romans 16:23, Gaius is spoken of as the host of Paul, or he of whose hospitality Paul partook, but Gaius was baptized by Paul at Corinth, and Corinth was manifestly his place of residence; 1 Corinthians 1:14. Erastus is also mentioned as the chamberlain of the city where the Epistle to the Romans was written; but this Erastus is mentioned as having his home at Corinth; 2 Timothy 4:20. From all this it is manifest that Romans was written at Corinth about the year 57 ad.

Concerning the state of the church at Rome at that time, it is not easy to form a precise opinion. From this Epistle it is evident that it was composed of Jews and Gentiles and that one purpose of writing to it was to reconcile their jarring opinions, particularly about the obligation of the Jewish law, the advantage of the Jew, and the way of justification. It is probable that the two parties in the church were endeavoring to defend each their special opinions, and that the apostle took this opportunity and mode to state to his converted countrymen the great doctrines of Christianity, and the relation of the Law of Moses to the Christian system. The Epistle itself is full proof that the church to whom it was addressed was composed of Jews and Gentiles. No small part of it is an argument expressly with the Jews; Acts 6:9. From that large number of Jews, together with those converted from the Gentiles, the church at Rome was collected, and it is easy to see that in that church there would be a great diversity of sentiment, and, no doubt, warm discussions about the authority of the Mosaic Law.

At what time, or by whom, the gospel was first preached at Rome has been a matter of controversy. The Roman Catholic Church has always maintained that it was founded by Peter, and they have thence drawn an argument for their high claims and infallibility. On this subject they make a confident appeal to some of the fathers. There is strong evidence to be derived from this Epistle itself, and from the Acts, that Paul did not regard Peter as having any such primacy and ascendency in the Roman church as are claimed for him by the Papists.

(1) in this whole Epistle, there is no mention of Peter at all! It is not suggested that he had been or was then in Rome. If he had been, and the church had been founded by him, it is incredible that Paul did not make mention of that fact. This is the more striking, as it was done in other cases where churches had been founded by other men; see 1 Corinthians 1:12-15. Peter (Cephas) is especially mentioned repeatedly by the apostle Paul in his other epistles 1 Corinthians 3:22; 1 Corinthians 9:5; 1 Corinthians 15:5; Galatians 2:9; Galatians 1:18; Galatians 2:7-8, Galatians 2:14. In these places Peter is mentioned in connection with the churches at Corinth and Galatia, yet never there as appealing to his authority, but in regard to the latter, expressly calling it into question. Now, it is incredible that if Peter had been then at Rome, and had founded the church there, and was regarded

as invested with any unique authority over it, that Paul would never once have even suggested Peter‘s name!

(2) it is clear that Peter was not there when Paul wrote this Epistle. If he had been, he could not have failed to have sent him a salutation, amid the numbers that he saluted in Acts 12:3-4, we have an account of his having been imprisoned by Herod Agrippa near the close of his reign (compare Acts 5:23). This occurred about the third or fourth year of the reign of Claudius, who began to reign 41 a.d. It is altogether improbable that he had been at Rome before this. Claudius had not reigned more than three years, and all the testimony that the church fathers give is that Peter came to Rome sometime during Claudius‘ reign.

(4) Peter was still in Jerusalem in the 9th or 10th year of the reign of Claudius; Acts 15:6, etc. Nor is there any mention made then of his having been at Rome.

(5) Paul went to Rome about 60 a.d. There is no mention made then of Peter‘s being with him or being there. If he had been, it could hardly have failed to have been recorded. This is especially remarkable when Paul‘s meeting with the brethren is expressly mentioned Acts 28:14-15, and when it is recorded that he met the Jews, and stayed with them, and spent no less than two years in Rome. If Peter had been there, such a fact could not fail to have been recorded or alluded to, either in the Book of Acts or in the Epistle to the Romans.

(6) the Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, to Philemon, and the Second Epistle to Timothy (Lardner, vi. 235) were written from Rome during the residence of Paul as a prisoner; and the Epistle to the Hebrews probably also while he was still in Italy. In none of these epistles is there any hint that Peter was then or had been at Rome; a fact that cannot be accounted for if Peter were truly regarded as the founder of that church, and especially if he were then in that city. Yet in those epistles there are the salutations of a number to those churches. In particular, Epaphras, Luke the beloved physician Colossians 4:12, Colossians 4:14, and the saints of the household of Caesar are mentioned Philemon 4:22. In 2 Timothy 4:11, Paul

expressly affirms that only Luke was with him, a declaration utterly irreconcilable with the supposition that Peter was then in Rome.

(7) if Peter was ever in Rome, therefore, of which indeed there is no reason to doubt, he must have come there after Paul; at what time is unknown. That he was there cannot be doubted without calling into question the truth of all history.

When or by whom the gospel was preached first at Rome, it is not easy, perhaps not possible, to determine. In the account of the day of Pentecost Acts 2:10, we find, among others, that there were present strangers of Rome, and it is not improbable that they carried back the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and they became the founders of the Roman congregation. One design and effect of that miracle was doubtless to spread the knowledge of the Saviour among all nations; see the notes at Romans 16:7, he designates Andronicus and Junia, his kinsmen and fellow-prisoners who were distinguished among the apostles and who had been converted before Paul, that is, before 34 a.d., at least eight years before it was ever pretended that Peter was in Rome. Other persons are also mentioned as distinguished, and it is not improbable that they were the early founders of the church at Rome (Romans 16:12-13, etc.)

That the church at Rome was founded early is evident from the celebrity status which it had acquired. At the time when Paul wrote this Epistle (57 a.d.), their faith was spoken of throughout the world Romans 1:8. The character of the church at Rome cannot be clearly ascertained. Yet it is clear that it was not made up merely of the lower classes of the community. In Philemon 4:22, it appears that the gospel had made its way into the family of Caesar, and that a part of his household had been converted to the Christian faith. Some of the church fathers affirm that Nero himself in the beginning of his reign was favorably impressed with regard to Christianity, and it is possible that this might have been through the instrumentality of his family. But little on this subject can be known. While it is probable that the great mass of believers in all the early churches was of obscure and plebeian origin, it is also certain that some who were rich, and noble, and learned, became members of the church of Christ (see 1 Timothy 2:9; 1 Peter 3:3; 1 Timothy 6:20; Colossians 2:8; 1 Corinthians 1:26; Acts 17:34).

This Epistle has been usually deemed the most difficult of interpretation of any part of the New Testament; and no small part of the controversies in the Christian church have grown out of discussions about its meaning. Early in the history of the church, even before the death of the apostles, we learn from 2 Peter 3:16, that the writings of Paul were some of them regarded as being "hard to be understood"; and that "the unlearned and unstable wrested them to their own destruction." It is probable that Peter has reference here to the high and mysterious doctrines about justification and the sovereignty of God, and the doctrines of election and decrees. From the Epistle of James, it would seem probable also, that already the apostle Paul's doctrine of justification by faith had been perverted and abused. It seems to have been inferred that good works were unnecessary; and here was the beginning of the cheerless and withering system of Antinomianism - than which a more destructive or pestilential heresy never found its way into the Christian church. Several reasons might be assigned for the controversies which have grown out of this Epistle:

(1) The very structure of the argument, and the uniqueness of the apostle's manner of writing. Paul is rapid, mighty, profound, often involved, readily following a new thought, leaving the regular subject, and returning again after a considerable interval. Hence, his writings abound with parentheses and with complicated paragraphs.

(2) objections are often introduced, so that it requires close attention to determine their precise bearing. Though Paul employs no small part of the Epistle in answering objections, yet an objector is never once formally introduced or mentioned.

(3) many of Paul's expressions and phrases are liable to be misunderstood, and capable of perversion. Of this class are such expressions as "the righteousness of faith," "the righteousness of God," etc.

(4) the doctrines themselves are high and mysterious. They are those subjects upon which the most profound minds have been in all ages exercised in vain. On them there has been, and always will be a difference of opinion. Even with the most honest intentions that people ever have, they

find it difficult or impossible to approach the investigation of them without the bias of early education or the prejudice of previous opinion. In this world, it is not given to human beings to fully understand these great doctrines. And it is not wonderful that the discussion of them has given rise to endless controversies: and that they who have:

Reasoned high.
Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate;
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
Have found no end, in wandering mazes lost.

(5) It cannot be denied that one reason why the epistles of Paul have been regarded as so difficult has been an unwillingness to admit the truth of the plain doctrines which he teaches. The heart is by nature opposed to them and comes to believe them with great reluctance. This feeling will account for no small part of the difficulties felt in regard to this Epistle. There is one great maxim in interpreting the Scriptures that can never be departed from. It is, that people can never understand them aright, until they are willing to allow them to speak out their fair and proper meaning. When people are determined not to find certain doctrines in the Bible, nothing is more natural than that they should find difficulties in it, and complain much of its great obscurity and mystery. I add,

(6) That one principal reason why so much difficulty has been felt here, has been an unwillingness to stop where the apostle does. People have desired to advance further, and penetrate the mysteries which the Spirit of inspiration has not disclosed. Where Paul states a simple fact, people often advance a theory. The fact may be clear and plain; their theory is obscure, involved, mysterious, or absurd. By degrees they learn to unite the fact and the theory. They regard their explanation as the only possible one; and, since the fact in question has the authority of divine revelation, so they insensibly come to regard their theory in the same light; and the one who calls into question their speculation about the cause, or the mode, is set down as heretical, and as denying the doctrine of the apostle. A melancholy instance of this we have in the account which the apostle gives Romans 5 about the effect of the sin of Adam. The simple fact is stated that that sin was followed by the sin and ruin of all his posterity.

Yet he offers no explanation of the fact. He leaves it as indubitable; and as not demanding an explanation in his argument - perhaps as not admitting

it. This is the whole of his doctrine on that subject. Yet people have not been satisfied with that. They have sought for a theory to account for it. And many suppose that they have found it in the doctrine that the sin of Adam is imputed, or set over by an arbitrary arrangement to Beings otherwise innocent, and that they are held to be responsible for a deed committed by a man thousands of years before they were born. This is the theory; and people insensibly forget that it is mere theory, and they blend that and the fact which the apostle states together; and deem the denial of the one, heresy as much as the denial of the other, i. e., they make it as impious to call into question their philosophy, as to doubt the facts stated on the authority of the apostle Paul. If people desire to understand the epistles of Paul, and avoid difficulties, they should be willing to leave it where he does; and this single rule would have made useless several years and entire volumes of controversy.

Perhaps, on the whole, there is no book of the New Testament that demands more a humble, docile, and prayerful disposition in its interpretation than this Epistle. Its profound doctrines, its abstruse inquiries, and the opposition of many of those doctrines to the views of the unrenewed and unsubdued heart of man, make a spirit of docility and prayer especially necessary in its investigation. No one has ever understood the reasonings and views of the apostle Paul except under the influence of elevated piety. No one has ever found opposition to his doctrines recede, and difficulties vanish, who did not bring the mind in an humble frame to receive all that has been revealed; and that, in a spirit of humble prayer, did not purpose to lay aside all bias and open the heart to the full influence of the elevated truths which the apostle Paul inculcates. Where there is a willingness that God should reign and do all His pleasure, this Epistle to the Romans may, in its general character, be easily understood. Where this is something lacking, it will appear full of mystery and perplexity; the mind will be embarrassed, and the heart dissatisfied with its doctrines; and the unhumbled spirit will rise from its study only confused, irritated, perplexed, and dissatisfied.

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

Paul - The original name of the author of this Epistle was "Saul." Acts 7:58; Acts 7:1; Acts 8:1, etc. This was changed to Paul (see the note at Acts 13:9), and by this name he is generally known in the New Testament. The reason why he assumed this name is not certainly known. It was, however, in accordance with the custom of the times; see the note at Acts 13:9. The name Saul was Hebrew; the name Paul was Roman. In addressing a letter to the Romans, he would naturally make use of the name to which they were accustomed, and which would excite no prejudice among them. The ancient custom was to begin an epistle with the name of the writer, as Cicero to Varro, etc. We record the name at the end. It may be remarked, however, that the placing the name of the writer at the beginning of an epistle was always done, and is still, when the letter was one of authority, or when it conferred any special privileges. Thus, in the proclamation of Cyrus Ezra 1:2, "Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia," etc.; see also Ezra 4:11; Ezra 7:12. "Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest," etc. Daniel 4:1. The commencement of a letter by an apostle to a Christian church in this manner was especially proper as indicating authority.

A servant - This name was what the Lord Jesus himself directed His disciples to use, as their general appellation; Matthew 10:25; Matthew 20:27; Mark 10:44. And it was the customary name which they assumed; Galatians 1:10; Colossians 4:12; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1:1; Acts 4:29; Titus 1:1; James 1:1. The proper meaning of this word servant, δοῦλος doulosis slave, one who is not free. It expresses the condition of one who has a master, or who is at the control of another. It is often, however, applied to courtiers, or the officers that serve under a king: because in an eastern monarchy the relation of an absolute king to his courtiers corresponded nearly to that of a master and a slave. Thus, the word is expressive of dignity and honor; and the servants of a king denote officers of a high rank and station. It is applied to the prophets as those who were honored by God, or especially entrusted by him with office; Deuteronomy 34:5; Joshua 1:2; Jeremiah 25:4. The name is also given to the Messiah, Isaiah 42:1, "Behold my servant in whom my soul delighteth," etc.; Isaiah 53:11, "shall my righteous servant justify many." The apostle uses it here evidently to denote his acknowledging Jesus Christ as his master; as indicating his dignity, as

especially appointed by him to his great work; and as showing that in this Epistle he intended to assume no authority of his own, but simply to declare the will of his master, and theirs.

Called to be an apostle - This word called means here not merely to be invited, but has the sense of appointed. It indicates that he had not assumed the office himself, but that he was set apart to it by the authority of Christ himself. It was important for Paul to state this,

(1)Because the other apostles had been called or chosen to this work John 15:16, John 15:19; Matthew 10:1; Luke 6:13; and,

(2)Because Paul was not one of those originally appointed.

It was of consequence for him therefore, to affirm that he had not taken this high office to himself, but that he had been called to it by the authority of Jesus Christ. His appointment to this office he not infrequently takes occasion to vindicate; 1 Corinthians 9:1, etc.: Galatians 1:12-24; 2 Corinthians 12:12; 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11; Romans 11:13.

An apostle - One sent to execute a commission. It is applied because the apostles were sent out by Jesus Christ to preach his gospel, and to establish his church; Matthew 10:2 note; Luke 6:13 note.

Separated - The word translated "separated unto," ἀφορίζω aphorizōmeans to designate, to mark out by fixed limits, to bound as a field, etc. It denotes those who are "separated," or called out from the common mass; Acts 19:9; 2 Corinthians 6:17. The meaning here does not materially differ from the expression, "called to be an apostle," except that perhaps this includes the notion of the purpose or designation of God to this work. Thus, Paul uses the same word respecting himself; Galatians 1:15, "God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace," that is, God designated me; marked me out; or designed that I should be an apostle from my infancy. In the same way Jeremiah was designated to be a prophet; Jeremiah 1:5.

Unto the gospel of God - Designated or designed by God that I should make it "my business" to preach the gospel. Set apart to this, as the special, great work of my life; as having no other object for which I should live. For the meaning of the word "gospel," see the note at Matthew 1:1. It is called the gospel of God because it is his appointment; it has been originated by him, and has his authority. The function of an apostle was to preach the gospel Paul regarded himself as separated to this work. It was not to live in splendor, wealth, and ease, but to devote himself to this great business of

proclaiming good news, that God was reconciled to people in his Son. This is the sole business of all ministers of "religion."

Verse 2

Which he had promised afore - Which gospel, or which doctrines, he had before announced.

By the prophets - The word "prophets" here is used to include those who wrote as well as those who spake. It included the teachers of the ancient Jews generally.

In the holy scriptures - In the writings of the Old Testament. They were called holy because they were inspired by the Holy Spirit, and were regarded as separated from all other writings, and worthy of all reverence. The apostle here declares that he was not about to advance anything new. His doctrines were in accordance with the acknowledged oracles of God. Though they might appear to be new, yet he regarded the gospel as entirely consistent with all that had been declared in the Jewish dispensation; and not only consistent, but as actually promised there. He affirms, therefore:

(1) That all this was promised, and no small part of the Epistle is employed to show this.

(2) that it was confirmed by the authority of holy and inspired men.

(3) that it depended on no vague and loose tradition, but was recorded, so that people might examine for themselves.

The reason why the apostle was so anxious to show that his doctrine coincided with the Old Testament was because the church at Rome was made up in part of Jews. He wished to show them, and the remainder of his countrymen, that the Christian religion was built on the foundation of their prophets, and their acknowledged writings. So doing, he would disarm their prejudice, and furnish a proof of the truth of religion. It was a constant position with the apostle that he advanced nothing but what was maintained by the best and holiest men of the nation. Acts 26:22-23, "saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come," etc. There was a further reason here for his appealing so much to the Old Testament. He had never been at Rome. He was therefore personally a stranger, and it was proper for him then especially to show his regard for the doctrines of the prophets. Hence, he appeals here so often to the Old

Testament; and defends every point by the authority of the Bible. The particular passages of the Old Testament on which he relied will come before us in the course of the Epistle. See particularly Romans 3;4; 9; 10; 11. We may see here,

(1)The reverence which Paul showed for the Old Testament. He never undervalued it. He never regarded it as obsolete, or useless. He manifestly studied it; and never fell into the impious opinion that the Old Testament is of little value.

(2)if these things were promised - predicted in the Old Testament, then Christianity is true. Every passage which he adduces is therefore proof that it is from God.

Verse 3

Concerning his Son - This is connected with the first verse, with the word "gospel." The gospel of God concerning his Son. The design of the gospel was to make a communication relative to his Son Jesus Christ. This is the whole of it. There is no "good news" to man respecting salvation except what comes by Jesus Christ.

Which was made - The word translated "was made" means usually "to be," or "to become." It is used, however, in the sense of being born. Thus, Galatians 4:4, "God sent forth his Son made of a woman," born of a woman. John 8:58, "before Abraham was (born), I am." In this sense it seems to be used here, who was born, or descended from the seed of David.

Of the seed of David - Of the posterity or lineage of David. He was a descendant of David. David was perhaps the most illustrious of the kings of Israel. The promise to him was that there should not fail a man to sit on this throne; 1 Kings 2:4; 1 Kings 8:25; 1 Kings 9:5; 2 Chronicles 6:16. This ancient promise was understood as referring to the Messiah, and hence, in the New Testament he is called the descendant of David, and so much pains is taken to show that he was of his line; Luke 1:27; Matthew 9:27; Matthew 15:22; Matthew 12:23; Matthew 21:9, Matthew 21:15; Matthew 22:42, Matthew 22:45; John 7:42; 2 Timothy 2:8. As the Jews universally believed that the Messiah would be descended from David John 7:42, it was of great importance for the sacred writers to make it out clearly that Jesus of Nazareth was of that line and family. Hence, it happened, that though our Saviour was humble, and poor, and obscure, yet he had that on which no small part of the world have been accustomed so much to pride themselves,

an illustrious ancestry. To a Jew there could be scarcely any honor so high as to be descended from the best of their kings; and it shows how little the Lord Jesus esteemed the honors of this world, that he could always evince his deep humility in circumstances where people are usually proud; and that when he spoke of the honors of this world, and told how little they were worth, he was not denouncing what was not within his reach.

According to the flesh - The word "flesh," σάρξ sarxis used in the Scriptures in a great variety of significations.

(1) it denotes, as with us, the flesh literally of any living being; Luke 24:39, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones," etc.

(2) the animal system, the body, including flesh and bones, the visible part of man, in distinction from the invisible, or the soul; Acts 2:31, "Neither did his flesh (his body) "see corruption." 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Corinthians 15:39.

(3) the man, the whole animated system, body and soul; Romans 8:3, "In the likeness of sinful flesh. 1 Corinthians 15:50; Matthew 16:17; Luke 3:6.

(4) human nature. As a man. Thus, Acts 2:30, "God hath sworn with an oath that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, that is, in his human nature, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." Romans 9:5, "whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever." The same is its meaning here. He was a descendant of David in his human nature, or as a man. This implies, of course, that he had another nature besides his human, or that while he was a man he was also something else; that there was a nature in which he was not descended from David.

That this is its meaning will still further appear by the following observations.

(1) the apostle expressly makes a contrast between his condition according to the flesh, and that according to the spirit of holiness.

(2) the expression "according to the flesh" is applied to no other one in the New Testament but to Jesus Christ. Though the word "flesh" often occurs, and is often used to denote man, yet the special expression, "according to the flesh" occurs in no other connection.

In all the Scriptures it is never said of any prophet or apostle, any lawgiver or king, or any man in any capacity, that he came in the flesh, or that he was descended from certain ancestors according to the flesh. Nor is such an expression ever used any where else. If it were applied to a mere man, we should instantly ask in what other way could he come than in the flesh? Has he a higher nature? Is he an angel, or a seraph? The expression would be unmeaningful. And when, therefore, it is applied to Jesus Christ, it implies, if language has any meaning, that there was a sense in which Jesus was not descended from David. What that was, appears in the next verse.

Verse 4

And declared - In the margin, "determined." Τοῦ ὁρισθέντος Tou horisthentosThe ancient Syriac has, "And he was known to be the Son of God by might and by the Holy Spirit, who rose from the house of the dead." The Latin Vulgate, "Who was "predestinated" the Son of God," etc. The Arabic, "The Son of God destined by power special to the Holy Spirit," etc. The word translated "declared to be" means properly "to bound, to fix limits to," as to a field, to determine its proper limits or boundaries, to "define," etc. Acts 17:26, "and hath determined the bounds of their habitation." Hence, it means to determine, constitute; ordain, decree; i, e. to fix or designate the proper boundaries of a truth, or a doctrine; to distinguish its lines and marks from error; or to show, or declare a thing to be so by any action. Luke 22:22, "the Son of man goeth as it was determined, as it was fixed; purposed, defined, in the purpose of God, and declared in the prophets. Acts 2:23, "him being delivered by the determinate counsel, the definite. constituted will, or design, of God. Acts 11:29; Hebrews 4:7, "he limiteth a certain day," fixes it, defines it. In this sense it is clearly used in this place. The act of raising him from the dead designated him, or constituted him the Son of God. It was such an act as in the circumstances of the case showed that he was the Son of God in regard to a nature which was not "according to the flesh." The ordinary resurrection of a man, like that of Lazarus, would not show that he was the Son of God; but

in the circumstances of Jesus Christ it did; for he had claimed to be so; he had taught it; and God now attested the truth of his teaching by raising him from the dead.

The Son of God - The word "son" is used in a great variety of senses, denoting literally a son, then a descendant, posterity near or remote, a disciple or ward, an adopted son, or one that imitates or resembles another; see the note at Matthew 1:1. The expression "sons of God," or "son of God," is used in an almost equal latitude of signification. It is:

(1) Applied to Adam, as being immediately created by God without an earthly father; Luke 3:38.

(2) it is applied to saints or Christians, as being adopted into his family, and sustaining to him the relation of children; John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:1-2, etc. This name is given to them because they resemble him in their moral character; Matthew 5:45.

(3) it is given to strong men as resembling God in strength; Genesis 6:2, "The sons of God saw the daughters of men," etc. Here these men of violence and strength are called sons of God, just as the high hills are called hills of God, the lofty trees of Lebanon are called cedars of God, etc.

(4) kings are sometimes called his sons, as resembling him in dominion and power, Psalm 82:6.

(5) the name is given to angels because they resemble God; because he is their Creator and Father, etc., Job 1:6; Job 2:1; Daniel 3:25.

But the name the "Son of God" is in the New Testament given by way of eminence to the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the common and favorite name by which the apostles designated him. The expression "Son of God" is applied to him no less than 27 times in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, and 15 times in the Epistles and the Revelation The expression my Son, and his Son, thy Son, etc. is applied to him in his special relation to God, times almost without number. The other most common appellation which is given to him is "Son of man." By this name he commonly designated himself. There can be no doubt that that was assumed to denote that he was a man, that he sustained a special relation to man, and that he

chose to speak of himself as a man. The first, the most obvious, impression on the use of the name "Son of man" is that he was truly a man, and was used doubtless to guard against the impression that one who manifested so many other qualities, and did so many things like a celestial being, was not truly human being.

The phrase "Son of God" stands in contrast with the title "Son of man," and as the natural and obvious import of that is that he was a man, so the natural and obvious import of the title "Son of God" is that he was divine; or that he sustained relations to God designated by the name Son of God, corresponding to the relations which he sustained to man designated by the name Son of Man. The natural idea of the phrase, "Son of God," therefore is, that he sustained a relation to God in his nature which implied more than was human or angelic; which implied equality with God. Accordingly, this idea was naturally suggested to the Jews by his calling God his Father; John 5:18, "But said also that God was his Father, "making himself equal with God." This idea Jesus immediately proceeded to confirm; see the note at John 5:19-30. The same idea is also suggested in John 10:29-31, John 10:33, John 10:36, "Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest: "because I said I am the Son of God?" There is in these places the fullest proof that the title suggested naturally the idea of equality with God; or the idea of his sustaining a relation to God corresponding to the relation of equality to man suggested by the title Son of man.

This view is still further sustained in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Romans 1:1-2, "God hath spoken unto us by His Son." He is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, Romans 1:3. He is higher than the angels, and they are required to worship him, Romans 1:4-6. He is called "God," and his throne is forever and ever, Romans 1:8. He is "the Creator of the heavens and the earth," and is immutably the same, Romans 1:10-12. Thus, the rank or title of the "Son of God" suggests the ideas and attributes of the Divinity. This idea is sustained throughout the New Testament. See John 14:9, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" Romans 1:23, "That all men shall honor the Son even as they honor the Father;" Colossians 1:19, "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" Colossians 2:9, "For in him dwelleth all the

fulness of the Godhead bodily:" Philemon 2:2-11; Revelation 5:13-14; Revelation 2:23. It is not affirmed that this title was given to the second person of the Trinity before he became incarnate; or to suggest the idea of any derivation or extraction before he was made flesh. There is no instance in which the appellation is not conferred to express his relation after he assumed human flesh. Of any derivation from God, or emanation from him in eternity, the Scriptures are silent. The title is conferred on him, it is supposed, with reference to his condition in this world, as the Messiah. And it is conferred, it is believed, for the following reasons, or to denote the following things, namely.

(1) to designate his unique relation to God, as equal with him, John 1:14, John 1:18; Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22; Luke 3:22; 2 Peter 1:17, or as sustaining a most intimate and close connection with him, such as neither man nor angels could do, an acquaintance with his nature Matthew 11:27, plans, and counsels, such as no being but one who was equal with God could possess. In this sense, I regard it as conferred on him in the passage under consideration.

(2) it designates him as the anointed king, or the Messiah. In this sense it accords with the use of the word in Psalm 82:6. See Matthew 16:16, "Thou art "the Christ, the Son of the living God." Matthew 26:63, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether "thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Mark 14:61; Luke 22:70; John 1:34; Acts 9:20, "he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God."

(3) it was conferred on him to denote his miraculous conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Luke 1:35, "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, therefore διό dioalso that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the "Son of God."

(It is readily admitted, that on the subject of the "eternal Sonship" very much has been said of an unintelligible kind. Terms applicable only to the relation as it exists among people have been freely applied to this mystery. But whatever may be thought of such language as "the eternal generation," "the eternal procession," and "the subordination" of the Son; the doctrine itself, which this mode of speaking was invented to illustrate, and has

perhaps served to obscure, is in no way affected. The question is not, Have the friends of the doctrine at all times employed judicious illustration? but, What is the "Scripture evidence" on the point? If the eternal Sonship is to be discarded on such grounds, we fear the doctrine of the Trinity must share a similar fate. Yet, those who maintain the divinity of Christ, and notwithstanding deny the eternal Sonship, seem generally to found their objections on these incomprehensible illustrations, and from thence leap to the conclusion that the doctrine itself is false.

That the title Son of God, when applied to Jesus, denotes a natural and not merely an official Sonship, a real and not a figurative relation; in other words, that it takes origin from the divine nature, is the view which the Catholic Church has all along maintained on this subject: no explanation which falls short of divinity will exhaust the meaning of the title. Christ is indeed called the Son of God on account of his miraculous conception; "That holy thing," said the angel to the Virgin, "which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of the Highest." But the creation of Adam, by the immediate power of God, without father or mother, would constitute him the Son of God, in a sense equally or even more exalted than that in which the title is applied to Jesus, if the miraculous conception were allowed to exhaust its meaning. Nor will an appeal to the resurrection of Christ serve the purpose of those who deny the divine origin of the title, since that is assigned as the evidence only, and not the ground of it.

The Redeemer was not constituted, but declared or evidenced to be, "the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." In the search for a solution short of divine Sonship, recourse is next had to the office of Christ as Mediator. Yet though the appellation in question be frequently given in connection with the official character of Jesus, a careful examination of some of these passages will lead to the conclusion, that "though the Son of God hold the office, yet the office does not furnish the reason or ground of the title." The name is given to distinguish Jesus from all others who have held office, and "in such a way as to convince us that the office is rendered "honorable" by the exalted personage discharging its duties, and not that the person merits the designation in virtue of the office." "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman," etc. "God so loved the world that he gave his "only begotten

Son," etc. Now the glory of the mission in the first of these passages, and the greatness of the gift in the second, is founded on the original dignity of the person sent and given. But if the person derive his title from the office only, there would seem to be comparatively little grandeur in the mission, and small favor in the gift. The passages quoted would more readily prove that God had bestowed favor on Jesus, by giving him an office from which he derived so much "personal dignity!"

The following are some of the passages in which the appellation "Son of God" is found connected with the office of Christ. "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, (an official term signifying "anointed Saviour"), the Son of God;" "He answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ (the official designation) is the Son of God;" "Whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" Now it is reasonable to suppose, that these declarations and confessions concerning the person of Christ, contain not only an acknowledgment of his official character, but also of his personal dignity. "Thou art Jesus the Christ," is the acknowledgment of his office, and "thou art the Son of God," is an acknowledgment of his natural dignity. The confession of the Ethiopian eunuch, and of Peter, would be incomplete on any other supposition. It should be borne in mind also, that the question of Christ to Peter was not, What office do ye suppose I hold? but, "Whom say ye that I am?" See Haldane on Romans 1:4.

If, then, the miraculous conception, the resurrection, and the office of Christ, do not all of them together exhaust the meaning of the appellation, we must seek for its origin higher still - we must ascend to the divine nature. We may indeed take one step more upward before we reach the divine nature, and suppose, with Professor Stuart and others, that the name denotes "the complex person of the Saviour," as God and man, or in one word, "Mediator." Comment on Heb. Exe. 2. But this is just the old resolution of it into official character, and is therefore liable to all the objections stated above. For while it is admitted by those who hold this view, that Christ is divine, it is distinctly implied, that the title Son of God would not have been his but for his office.

In the end therefore we must resolve the name into the divine nature. That it implies equality with God is clearly proved in this commentary. So the Jews understood it, and the Saviour tacitly admitted that their construction was right. And as there is no equality with God without divinity, the title clearly points to such a distinction in the Godhead as is implied in the relative terms, Father and Son. Indeed it is not easy to understand how the doctrine of the Trinity can be maintained apart from that of the eternal Sonship. If there be in the Godhead a distinction of persons, does not that distinction belong to the nature of the Godhead, independent of any official relations. Or will it be maintained, that the distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, arises entirely from the scheme of redemption, and did not exist from eternity? We may find fault with Dr Owen, and others, who speak of a "hypostatical subordination of persons in the Godhead." Prof. Stuart, Com. Heb. Exe. 1. Yet, the distinction itself, through we cannot explain it, "must" be allowed to exist.

The remaining evidence of the eternal Sonship may be thus stated.

1. Christ is called God‘s "own Son," his "beloved," and "well beloved," and "only begotten Son.‘ So strong and special adjuncts seem intended to prevent any such idea as that of figurative Sonship. If these do not express the natural relationship, it is beyond the power of language to do it. Moreover, correct criticism binds us to adopt the natural and ordinary signification of words, unless in such cases as plainly refuse it,

2. In a passage already quoted, God is said "to have sent forth His Son to redeem us," etc. And there are many passages to the same effect, in which is revealed, not only the pre-existence of Christ, but the capacity in which he originally moved, and the rank which he held in heaven. "God sent forth his Son," implies that he held that title prior to his mission. This at least is the most obvious sense of the passage, and the sense which an ordinary reader would doubtless affix to it. The following objection, however, has been supposed fatal to this argument: "The name Son of God is indeed used, when speaking of him previous to his having assumed human nature, but so are the names of Jesus and the Christ, which yet we know properly to belong to him, only as united to humanity." It is readily allowed that the simple fact of the name being given prior to the incarnation

proves nothing of itself. But the case is altered when this fact is viewed in connection with the difficulty or impossibility of resolving the Sonship into an official relation. No such difficulty exists in regard to the terms "Jesus" and "Christ," for they are plainly official names, signifying "anointed Saviour."

3. Romans 1:3-4. If in this passage we understand the apostle to declare, that Christ was of the seed of David, according to his human nature, the rule of antithesis demands, that we understand him next to assert what he was according to his divine nature, namely, the Son of God.

The views given in this Note are those adopted by the most eminent orthodox divines. The language of the Westminster divines is well known; "The only Redeemer of the covenant of grace is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God, of one substance etc." "Larger Catechism." Mr. Scott "is decidedly of opinion, that Christ is called the only Son of God in respect of his divine nature." Commentary, Hebrews 1:3-4." The late Principal Hill, in his Theological System, having exposed what he deemed erroneous views on this subject, adds, "there is a more ancient and a more exalted title to this name (Son of God), which is inseparable from the nature" of Christ. "3rd edition, vol. i., page 363.)"

With power - ἐν δυνάμει en dunameiBy some this expression has been supposed to mean in power or authority, after his resurrection from the dead. It is said, that he was before a man of sorrows; now he was clothed with power and authority. But I have seen no instance in which the expression in power denotes office, or authority. It denotes physical energy and might, and this was bestowed on Jesus before his resurrection as well as after; Acts 10:38, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit, and with power; Romans 15:19; 1 Corinthians 15:43. With such power Jesus will come to judgment: Matthew 24:30. If there is any passage in which the word "power" means authority, office, etc., it is Matthew 28:18, "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me." But this is not a power which was given unto him after his resurrection, or which he did not possess before. The same authority to commission his disciples he had exercised before this on the same ground, Matthew 10:7-8. I am inclined to believe, therefore, that the expression means "powerfully, efficiently;" he was with great power, or conclusiveness, shown to be the Son of God by his resurrection

from the dead. Thus, the phrase "in power" is used to qualify a verb in Colossians 1:29, "Which worketh in me mightily," "Greek," in power, that is, operating in me effectually, or powerfully. The ancient versions seem to have understood it in the same way. "Syriac," "He was known to be the Son of God by power, and by the Holy Spirit." "AEthiopic," "Whom he declared to be the Son of God by his own power, and by his Holy Spirit," etc. "Arabic," "Designated the Son of God by power appropriate to the Holy Spirit."

According to the spirit of holiness - κατά πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης kata pneuma hagiōsunēsThis expression has been variously understood. We may arrive at its meaning by the following considerations.

(1) it is not the third person in the Trinity that is referred to here. The designation of that person is always in a different form. It is "the Holy Spirit," the Holy Ghost, πνεῦμα ἅγιον pneuma hagionor τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον to pneuma to hagionnever "the spirit of holiness."

(2) it stands in contrast with the flesh; Romans 1:3, "According to the flesh, the seed of David: according to the spirit of holiness, the Son of God." As the former refers doubtless to his human nature, so this must refer to the nature designated by the title Son of God, that is, to his superior or divine nature.

(3) the expression is altogether unique to the Lord Jesus Christ. No where in the Scriptures, or in any other writings, is there an affirmation like this. What would be meant by it if affirmed of a mere man?

(4) it cannot mean that the Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity, showed that Jesus was the Son of God by raising him from the dead because that act is no where attributed to him. It is uniformly ascribed either to God, as God Acts 2:24, Acts 2:32; Acts 3:15, Acts 3:26; Acts 4:10; Acts 5:30; Acts 10:40; Acts 13:30, Acts 13:33-34; Acts 17:31; Romans 10:9; Ephesians 1:20, or to the Father Romans 6:4, or to Jesus himself John 10:18. In no instance is this act ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

(5) it indicates a state far more elevate than any human dignity, or honor In regard to his earthly descent, he was of a royal race; in regard to the Spirit of holiness, much more than that, he was the Son of God.

(6) the word "Spirit" is used often to designate God, the holy God, as distinguished from all the material forms of idol worship, John 4:24.

(7) the word "Spirit" is applied to the Messiah, in his more elevated or divine nature. 1 Corinthians 15:45, "the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:17, "now the Lord (Jesus) is that Spirit." Hebrews 9:14, Christ is said to have offered himself through the eternal Spirit. 1 Peter 3:18, he is said to have been "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." 1 Timothy 3:16, he is said to have been "justified in the Spirit." In most of these passages there is the same contrast noticed between his flesh, his human nature, and his other state, which occurs in Romans 1:3-4. In all these instances, the design is, doubtless, to speak of him as a man, and as something more than a man: he was one thing as a man; he was another thing in his other nature. In the one, he was of David; was put to death, etc. In the other, he was of God, he was manifested to be such, he was restored to the elevation which he had sustained before his incarnation and death, John 17:1-5; Philemon 2:2-11. The expression, "according to the Spirit of holiness," does not indeed of itself imply divinity. It denotes that holy and more exalted nature which he possessed as distinguished from the human. What that is, is to be learned from other declarations. "This expression implies simply that it was such as to make proper the appellation, the Son of God." Other places, as we have seen, show that that designation naturally implied divinity. And that this was the true idea couched under the expression, according to the Spirit of holiness, appears from those numerous texts of scripture which explicitly assert his divinity; see John 1:1, etc., and the note on that place.

By the resurrection from the dead - This has been also variously understood. Some have maintained that the word "by," ἐξ exdenotes after. He was declared to be the Son of God in power after he rose from the dead; that is, he was solemnly invested with the dignity that became the Son of God after he had been so long in a state of voluntary humiliation. But to this view there are some insuperable objections.

(1) it is not the natural and usual meaning of the word "by."

(2) it is not the object of the apostle to state the time when the thing was done, or the order, but evidently to declare the fact, and the evidence of the

fact. If such had been his design, he would have said that previous to his death he was shown to be of the seed of David, but afterward that he was invested with power.

(3) though it must be admitted that the preposition "by, ἐξ exsometimes means after (Matthew 19:20; Luke 8:27; xxiii. 8, etc.), yet its proper and usual meaning is to denote the efficient cause, or the agent, or origin of a thing, Matthew 1:3, Matthew 1:18; Matthew 21:25; John 3:5; Romans 5:16; Romans 11:36, "OF him are all things." 1 Corinthians 8:6, "one God, the Father, of whom are all things," etc. In this sense, I suppose it is used here; and that the apostle means to affirm that he was clearly or decisively shown to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead.

But here will it be asked, how did his resurrection show this? Was not Lazarus raised from the dead? And did not many saints rise also after Jesus? And were not the dead raised by the apostles; by Elijah, by the bones of Elisha, and by Christ himself? And did their being raised prove that they were the sons of God? I answer that the mere fact of the resurrection of the body proves nothing in itself about the character and rank of the being that is raised. But in the circumstances in which Jesus was placed it might show it conclusively. When Lazarus was raised, it was not in attestation of anything which he had taught or done. It was a mere display of the power and benevolence of Christ. But in regard to the resurrection of Jesus, let the following circumstances be taken into the account.

(1) he came as the Messiah.

(2) he uniformly taught that he was the Son of God.

(3) he maintained that God was his Father in such a sense as to imply equality with him, John 5:17-30; John 10:36.

(4) he claimed authority to abolish the laws of the Jews, to change their customs, and to be himself absolved from the observance of those laws, even as his Father was, Mark 2:28.

(5) when God raised him up therefore, it was not an ordinary event. It was "a public attestation, in the face of the universe, of the truth of his claims to be the Son of God." God would not sanction the doings and doctrines of an impostor. And when, therefore he raised up Jesus, he, by this act, showed the truth of his claims, that he was the Son of God.

Further, in the view of the apostles, the resurrection was intimately connected with the ascension and exaltation of Jesus. The one made the other certain. And it is not improbable that when they spoke of his resurrection, they meant to include, not merely that single act, but the entire series of doings of which that was the first, and which was the pledge of the elevation and majesty of the Son of God. Hence, when they had proved his resurrection, they assumed that all the others would follow. That involved and supposed all. And the series, of which that was the first, proved that he was the Son of God; see Acts 17:31, "He will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance to all people, "in that he hath raised him from the dead." The one involves the other; see Acts 1:6. Thus, Peter Acts 2:22-32 having proved that Jesus was raised up, adds, Acts 2:33, "therefore, being by the right hand exalted, he hath shed forth this," etc.; and Acts 2:36, "therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

This verse is a remarkable instance of the "apostle" Paul's manner of writing. Having mentioned a subject, his mind seems to catch fire; he presents it in new forms, and amplifies it, until he seems to forget for a time the subject on which he was writing. It is from this cause that his writings abound so with parentheses, and that there is so much difficulty in following and understanding him.

Verse 5

By whom - The apostle here returns to the subject of the salutation of the Romans, and states to them his authority to address them. That authority he had derived from the Lord Jesus, and not from man. On this fact, that he had received his apostolic commission, not from man, but by the direct authority of Jesus Christ, Paul not infrequently insisted. Galatians 1:12, "for

I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ;" 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Ephesians 3:1-3.

We - The plural here is probably put for the singular; see Colossians 4:3; compare Ephesians 6:19-20. It was usual for those who were clothed with authority to express themselves in this manner. Perhaps here, however, he refers to the general nature of the apostolic office, as being derived from Jesus Christ, and designs to assure the Romans that "he" had received the apostolic commission as the others had. ‹We," the apostles, have received the appointment from Jesus Christ. ‹

Grace and apostleship - Many suppose that this is a figure of speech, "hendiadys," by which one thing is expressed by two words, meaning the grace or favor of the apostolic office. Such a figure of speech is often used. But it may mean, as it does probably here, the two things, grace, or the favor of God to his own soul, as a personal matter; and the apostolic office as a distinct thing. He often, however, speaks of the office of the apostleship as a matter of special favor, Romans 15:15-16; Galatians 2:9; Ephesians 3:7-9.

For obedience to the faith - In order to produce, or promote obedience to the faith; that is, to induce them to render that obedience to God which faith produces. There are two things therefore implied.

(1) that the design of the gospel and of the apostleship is to induce men to obey God.

(2) that the tendency of faith is to produce obedience. There is no true faith which does not produce that. This is constantly affirmed in the New Testament, Romans 15:18; Romans 16:19; 2 Corinthians 7:15; Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-19. This was the special commission which Paul received when he was converted, Acts 9:15. It was important to show that the commission extended thus far, as he was now addressing a distant church which he had not seen.

For his name - This means probably "on his account," that is, on account of Christ, John 14:13-14; John 16:23-24. The design of the apostleship was to produce obedience to the gospel among all nations, that thus the name of Jesus might be honored. Their work was not one in which they were seeking to honor themselves, but it was solely for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ. For him they toiled, they encountered perils, they laid down their lives, because by so doing they might bring people to obey the gospel, and thus Jesus Christ might wear a brighter crown and be attended

by a longer and more splendid train of worshippers in the kingdom of his glory.

Verse 6

Among whom - That is, among the Gentiles who had become obedient to the Christian faith in accordance with the design of the gospel, Romans 1:8. This proves that the church at Rome was made up partly at least, if not mainly, of Gentiles or pagans. This is fully proved in the xvith. chapter by the names of the persons whom Paul salutes.

The called of Jesus Christ - Those whom Jesus Christ has called to be his followers. The word "called" (see Romans 1:1) denotes not merely an external invitation to privilege, but it also denotes the "internal" or "effectual" call which secures conformity to the will of him who calls, and is thus synonymous with the name Christians, or believers. That true Christians are contemplated by this address, is clear from the whole scope of the Epistle; see particularly Philemon 3:14; Hebrews 3:1.

Verse 7

To all that be in Rome - That is, to all who bear the Christian name. Perhaps he here included not only the church at Rome, but all who might have been there from abroad. Rome was a place of vast concourse for foreigners; and Paul probably addressed all who happened to be there.

Beloved of God - Whom God loves. This is the privilege of all Christians. And this proves that the persons whom Paul addressed were "not" those merely who had been invited to the external privileges of the gospel. The importance of this observation will appear in the progress of these notes.

Called to be saints - So called, or influenced by God who had called them, as to become saints. The word "saints," ἅγιοι hagioimeans those who are holy, or those who are devoted or consecrated to God. The radical idea of the word is what is separated from a common to a sacred use, and answers to the Hebrew word, קדוֹשׁ qadowshIt is applied to any thing that is set apart to the service of God, to the temple, to the sacrifices, to the utensils about the temple, to the garments, etc. of the priests, and to the priests themselves. It was applied to the Jews as a people separated from other nations, and devoted or consecrated to God, while other nations were devoted to the service of idols. It is also applied to Christians, as being a people devoted or set apart to the service of God. The radical idea then, as applied to Christians, is, that "they are separated from other men, and other

objects and pursuits, and consecrated to the service of God." This is the special characteristic of the saints. And this characteristic the Roman Christians had shown. For the use of the word, as stated above, see the following passages of scripture; Luke 2:23; Exodus 13:2, Romans 11:16; Matthew 7:6; 1 Peter 1:16; Acts 9:13; 1 Peter 2:5; Acts 3:21, Ephesians 3:5; 1 Peter 2:9; Philemon 2:15; 1 John 3:1-2.

Grace - This word properly means "favor." It is very often used in the New Testament, and is employed in the sense of benignity or benevolence; felicity, or a prosperous state of affairs; the Christian religion, as the highest expression of the benevolence or favor of God; the happiness which Christianity confers on its friends in this and the future life; the apostolic office; charity, or alms; thanksgiving; joy, or pleasure; and the benefits produced on the Christian's heart and life by religion - the grace of meekness, patience, charity, etc., "Schleusner." In this place, and in similar places in the beginning of the apostolic epistles, it seems to be a word including all those blessings that are applicable to Christians in common; denoting an ardent wish that all the mercies and favors of God for time and eternity, blended under the general name grace, may be conferred on them. It is to be understood as connected with a word implying invocation. I pray, or I desire, that grace, etc. may be conferred on you. It is the customary form of salutation in nearly all the apostolic epistles; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philemon 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; Philemon 1:3.

And peace - Peace is the state of freedom from war. As war conveys the idea of discord and numberless calamities and dangers, so peace is the opposite, and conveys the idea of concord, safety, and prosperity. Thus, to wish one peace was the same as to wish him all safety and prosperity. This form of salutation was common among the Hebrews. Genesis 43:23, "peace to you! fear not;" Judges 6:23; Judges 19:20; Luke 24:36. But the word "peace" is also used in contrast with that state of agitation and conflict which a sinner has with his conscience. and with God. The sinner is like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, Isaiah 57:20. The Christian is at peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, Romans 5:1. By this word, denoting reconciliation with God, the blessings of the Christian religion are often described in the scriptures, Romans 8:6; Romans 14:17; Romans 15:13; Galatians 5:22; Philemon 4:7. A prayer for peace, therefore, in the epistles, is not a mere formal salutation, but has a special reference to those

"spiritual" blessings which result from reconciliation with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

From God our Father - The Father of all Christians. He is the Father of all his creatures, as they are his offspring, Acts 17:28-29. He is especially the Father of all Christians, as they have been "begotten by him to a lively hope," have been adopted into his family, and are like him; Matthew 5:45; 1 Peter 1:3; 1 John 5:1; 1 John 3:1-2. The expression here is equivalent to a prayer that God the Father would bestow grace and peace on the Romans. It implies that these blessings proceed from God, and are to be expected from him.

And the Lord Jesus Christ - From him. The Lord Jesus Christ is especially regarded in the New Testament as the Source of peace, and the Procurer of it; see Luke 2:14; Luke 19:38, Luke 19:42; John 14:27; John 16:33; Acts 10:36; Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:17. Each of these places will show with what propriety peace was invoked from the Lord Jesus. From thus connecting the Lord Jesus with the Father in this place, we may see,

(1)That the apostle regarded him as the source of grace and peace as really as he did the Father.

(2)he introduced them in the same connection, and with reference to the bestowment of the same blessings.

(3)if the mention of the Father in this connection implies a prayer to him, or an act of worship, the mention of the Lord Jesus implies the same thing, and was an act of homage to him.

(4)all this shows that his mind was familiarized to the idea that he was divine.

No man would introduce his name in such connections if he did not believe that he was equal with God; compare Philemon 2:2-11. It is from this incidental and unstudied manner of expression, that we have one of the most striking proofs of the manner in which the sacred writers regarded the Lord Jesus Christ.

These seven verses are one sentence. They are a striking instance of the manner of Paul. The subject is simply a salutation to the Roman church. But at the mention of some single words, the mind of Paul seems to catch fire, and go burn and blaze with signal intensity. He leaves the immediate subject before him, and advances some vast thought that awes us, and fixes

us in contemplation, and involves us in difficulty about his meaning, and then returns to his subject. This is the characteristic of his great mind; and it is this, among other things, that makes it so difficult to interpret his writings.

Verse 8

First - In the first place, not in point of importance, but before speaking of other things, or before proceeding to the main design of the Epistle.

I thank my God - The God, whom I worship and serve. The expression of thanks to God for his mercy to them was suited to conciliate their feelings, and to prepare them for the truths which he was about to communicate to them. It showed the deep interest which he had in their welfare; and the happiness it would give him to do them good. It is proper to give thanks to God for his mercies to others as well as to ourselves. We are members of one great family, and we should make it a subject of thanksgiving that he confers any blessings, and especially the blessing of salvation, on any mortals.

Through Jesus Christ - The duty of presenting our thanks to God "through" Christ is often enjoined in the New Testament, Ephesians 5:20; Hebrews 13:15; compare John 14:14. Christ is the mediator between God and human beings, or the medium by which we are to present our prayers and also our thanksgivings. We are not to approach God directly, but through a mediator at all times, depending on him to present our cause before the mercy-seat; to plead for us there; and to offer the desires of our souls to God. It is no less proper to present thanks in his name, or through him, than it is prayer. He has made the way to God accessible to us, whether it be by prayer or praise; and it is owing to "his" mercy and grace that "any" of our services are acceptable to God.

For you all - On account of you all, that is, of the entire Roman church. This is one evidence that that church then was remarkably pure. How few churches have there been of whom a similar commendation could be expressed.

That your faith - "Faith" is put here for the whole of religion, and means the same as your piety. Faith is one of the principal things of religion; one of its first requirements; and hence, it signifies religion itself. The readiness with which the Romans had embraced the gospel, the firmness with which they adhered to it, was so remarkable, that it was

known and celebrated everywhere. The same thing is affirmed of them in Romans 16:19, "For your obedience is come abroad unto all men."

Is spoken of - Is celebrated, or known. They were in the capital of the Roman Empire; in a city remarkable for its wickedness; and in a city whose influence extended everywhere. It was natural, therefore, that their remarkable conversion to God should be celebrated everywhere. The religious or irreligious influence of a great city will be felt far and wide, and this is one reason why the apostles preached the gospel so much in such places.

Throughout the whole world - As we say, everywhere; or throughout the Roman Empire. The term "world" is often thus limited in the scriptures; and here it denotes those parts of the Roman Empire where the Christian church was established. All the churches would hear of the work of God in the capital, and would rejoice in it; compare Colossians 1:6, Colossians 1:23; John 12:19. It is not improper to commend Christians, and to remind them of their influence; and especially to call to their mind the great power which they may have on other churches and people. Nor is it improper that great displays of divine mercy should be celebrated everywhere, and excite in the churches praise to God.

Verse 9

For God is my witness - The reason of this strong appeal to God is, to show to the Romans the deep interest which he felt in their welfare This interest was manifested in his prayers, and in his earnest desires to see them. A deep interest shown in this way was well suited to prepare them to receive what he had to say to them.

Whom I serve - See Romans 1:1; compare Acts 17:23. The expression denotes that he was devoted to God in this manner; that he obeyed him; and had given himself to do his will in making known his gospel.

With my spirit - Greek, ἐν enin my spirit, that is, with my "heart." It is not an external service merely; it is internal, real, sincere. He was really and sincerely devoted to the service of God.

In the gospel of his Son - In making known the gospel, or as a minister of the gospel.

That without ceasing - ἀδιαλείπτως adialeiptōsThis word means constantly, always, without intermission. It was not only once, but repeatedly. It had been the burden of his prayers. The same thing he also

mentions in regard to other churches, 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

I make mention - I call you to remembrance, and present your case before God. This evinced his remarkable interest in a church which he had never seen, and it shows that Paul was a man of prayer; praying not for his friends and kindred only, but for those whom he had never seen. If with the same intensity of prayer all Christians, and Christian ministers, would remember the churches, what a different aspect would the Christian church soon assume!

Always - This word should be connected with the following verse, "Always making request," etc.

Verse 10

Making request - It was his earnest desire to see them, and he presented the subject before God.

If by any means - This shows the earnest desire which he had to see them, and implies that be had designed it, and had been hindered; see Romans 1:13.

Now at length - He had purposed it a long time, but had been hindered. He doubtless cherished this purpose for years. The expressions in the Greek imply an earnest wish that this long-cherished purpose might be accomplished before long.

A prosperous journey - A safe, pleasant journey. It is right to regard all success in traveling as depending on God, and to pray for success and safety from danger. Yet all such prayers are not answered according to the letter of the petition. The prayer of Paul that be might see the Romans was granted, but in a remarkable way. He was persecuted by the Jews, and arraigned before King Agrippa. He appealed to the Roman emperor, and was taken there in chains as a prisoner. Yet the journey might in this way have a more deep effect on the Romans, than if he had gone in any other way. In so mysterious a manner does God often hear the prayers of his people; and though their prayers are answered, yet it is in his own time and way; see the last chapters of the Acts.

By the will of God - If God shall grant it; if God will by his mercy grant me the great favor of my coming to you. This is a proper model of a prayer; and is in accordance with the direction of the Bible; see James 4:14-15.

Verse 11

For I long to see you - I earnestly desire to see you; compare Romans 15:23, Romans 15:32.

That I may impart - That I may "give," or communicate to you.

Some spiritual gift - Some have understood this as referring to "miraculous gifts," which it was supposed the apostles had the power of conferring on others. But this interpretation is forced and unnatural. There is no instance where this expression denotes the power of working miracles. Besides, the apostle in the next verse explains his meaning, "That I may be comforted together by the mutual faith," etc. From this it appears that he desired to be among them to exercise the office of the ministry, to establish them in the gospel and to confirm their hopes. He expected that the preaching of the gospel would be the means of confirming them in the faith; and he desired to be the means of doing it. It was a wish of benevolence, and accords with what he says respecting his intended visit in Romans 15:29, "And I am sure that when I come, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." To make known to them more fully the blessings of the gospel, and thus to impart spiritual gifts, was the design he had in view.

To the end … - With the design, or purpose.

Ye may be established - That is, that they might be "confirmed" in the truths of the gospel. This was one design of the ministry, that Christians may be established, or strengthened, Ephesians 4:13. It is not to have dominion ever their faith, but to be "helpers of their joy," 2 Corinthians 1:24. Paul did not doubt that this part of his office might be fulfilled among the Romans, and he was desirous there also of making full proof of his ministry. His wish was to preach not simply where he must, but where he might. This is the nature of this work.

Verse 12

That I may be comforted … - It was not merely to confirm them that Paul wished to come. He sought the communion of saints; he expected to be himself edified and strengthened; and to be comforted by seeing their strength of faith, and their rapid growth in grace. We may remark here,

(1) That one effect of religion is to produce the desire of the communion of saints. It is the nature of Christianity to seek the society of those who are the friends of Christ.

(2) nothing is better suited to produce growth in grace than such communion. Every Christian should have one or more Christian friends to

whom he may unbosom himself. No small part of the difficulties which young Christians experience would vanish, if they should communicate their feelings and views to others. Feelings which they suppose no Christians ever had, which greatly distress them, they will find are common among those who are experienced in the Christian life.

(3) there is nothing better suited to excite the feelings, and confirm the hopes of Christian ministers, than the firm faith of young converts, of those just commencing the Christian life, 3 John 1:4.

(4) the apostle did not disdain to be taught by the humblest Christians. He expected to be strengthened himself by the faith of those just beginning the Christian life. "There is none so poor in the church of Christ, that he cannot make some addition of importance to our stores," Calvin.

Verse 13

That oftentimes I purposed - See Romans 1:10. How often he had purposed this we have no means of ascertaining. The fact, however, that he had done it, showed his strong desire to see them, and to witness the displays of the grace of God in the capital of the Roman world; compare Romans 15:23-24. One instance of his having purposed to go to Rome is recorded in Acts 19:21, "After these things were ended (namely, at Ephesus), Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia to go to Jerusalem; saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome." This purpose expressed in this manner in the Epistle, and the Acts of the Apostles, has been shown by Dr. Paley (Horae Paulinae on Romans 1:13) to be one of those undesigned coincidences which strongly show that both books are genuine; compare Romans 15:23-24, with Acts 19:21. A forger of these books would not have thought of such a contrivance as to feign such a purpose to go to Rome at that time, and to have mentioned it in that manner. Such coincidences are among the best proofs that can be demanded, that the writers did not intend to impose on the world; see Paley.

But was let hitherto - The word "let" means to "hinder," or to "obstruct." In what way this was done we do not know, but it is probable that he refers to the various openings for the preaching of the gospel where

he had been, and to the obstructions of various kinds from the enemies of the gospel to the fulfillment of his purposes.

That I might have some fruit among you - That I might be the means of the conversion of sinners and of the edification of the church in the capital of the Roman Empire. It was not curiosity to see the splendid capital of the world that prompted this desire; it was not the love of travel, and of roaming from clime to clime; it was the specific purpose of doing good to the souls of human beings. To "have fruit" means to obtain success in bringing men to the knowledge of Christ. Thus, the Saviour said John 15:16," I have chosen you, and ordained you that you should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

Verse 14-15

I am debtor - This does not mean that they had conferred any favor on him, which bound him to make this return, but that he was under obligation to preach the gospel to all to whom it was possible. This obligation arose from the favor that God had shown him in appointing him to this work. He was specially chosen as a vessel to bear the gospel to the Gentiles Acts 9:15; Romans 11:13, and he did not feel that he had discharged the obligation until he had made the gospel known as far as possible among all the nations of the earth.

To the Greeks - This term properly denotes "those who dwelt in Greece." But as the Greeks were the most polished people of antiquity, the term came to be synonymous with the polished, the refined, the wise, as opposed to barbarians. In this place it doubtless means the same as "the wise," and includes the Romans also, as it cannot be supposed that Paul would designate the Romans as barbarians. Besides, the Romans claimed an origin from Greece, and Dionysius Halicarnassus (book i.) shows that the Italian and Roman people were of Greek descent.

Barbarians - All who were not included under the general name of Greeks. Thus, Ammonius says that "all who were not Greeks were barbarians." This term "barbarian," Βάρβαρος Barbarosproperly denotes one who speaks a foreign language, a foreigner, and the Greeks applied it to all who did not use their tongue; compare 1 Corinthians 14:11, "I shall be unto him that speaketh, a barbarian, etc. that is, I shall speak a language which he cannot understand. The word did not, therefore, of necessity denote any rusticity of manners, or any lack of refinement.

To the wise - To those who esteemed themselves to be wise, or who boasted of their wisdom. The term is synonymous with "the Greeks," who prided themselves much in their wisdom. 1 Corinthians 1:22, "the Greeks seek after wisdom;" compare 1 Corinthians 1:19; 1 Corinthians 3:18-19; 1 Corinthians 4:10; 2 Corinthians 11:19.

Unwise - Those who were regarded as the ignorant and unpolished part of mankind. The expression is equivalent to ours, ‹to the learned and the unlearned.' It was an evidence of the proper spirit to be willing to preach the gospel to either. The gospel claims to have power to instruct all mankind, and they who are called to preach it, should be able to instruct those who esteem themselves to be wise, and who are endowed with science, learning, and talent; and they should be willing to labor to enlighten the most obscure, ignorant, and degraded portions of the race. This is the true spirit of the Christian ministry.

So, as much as in me is - As far as opportunity may be offered, and according to my ability.

I am ready … - I am prepared to preach among you, and to show the power of the gospel, even in the splendid metropolis of the world. He was not deterred by any fear; nor was he indifferent to their welfare; but he was under the direction of God. and as far as he gave him opportunity, he was ready to make known to them the gospel, as he had done at Antioch, Ephesus, Athens, and Corinth.

This closes the introduction or preface to the Epistle. Having shown his deep interest in their welfare, he proceeds in the next verse to state to them the great doctrines of that gospel which he was desirous of proclaiming to them.

Verse 16

For I am not ashamed … - The Jews had cast him off, and regarded him as an apostate; and by the wise among the Gentiles he had been persecuted, and despised, and driven from place to place, and regarded as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things 1 Corinthians 4:13, but still he was not ashamed of the gospel. He had so firm a conviction of its value and its truth; he had experienced so much of its consolations; and had seen so much of its efficacy; that he was so far from being ashamed of it that he gloried in it as the power of God unto salvation. People should be ashamed of crime and folly. They are ashamed of their own offences, and of

the follies of their conduct, when they come to reflect on it. But they are not ashamed of what they feel to be right, and of what they know will contribute to their welfare, and to the benefit of their fellow-men. Such were the views of Paul about the gospel; and it is one of his favorite doctrines that they who believe on Christ shall not be ashamed, Romans 10:11; Romans 5:5; 2 Corinthians 7:14; 2 Timothy 1:12; Philemon 1:20; Romans 9:33; 2 Timothy 1:8; compare Mark 8:38; 1 Peter 4:16; 1 John 2:28.

Of the gospel - This word means the "good news," or the glad intelligence; see the note at Mark 1:1. It is so called because it contains the glad annunciation that sin may be pardoned, and the soul saved.

Of Christ - The good news respecting the Messiah; or which the Messiah has brought. The expression probably refers to the former, the good news which relates to the Messiah, to his character, advent, preaching, death, resurrection, and ascension. Though this was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness," yet he regarded it as the only hope of salvation, and was ready to preach it even in the rich and splendid capital of the world.

The power of God - This expression means that it is the way in which God exerts his power in the salvation of people. It is the efficacious or mighty plan, by which power goes forth to save, and by which all the obstacles of man's redemption are taken away. This expression implies,

(1) That it is God's plan, or his appointment. It is not the device of man.

(2) it is adapted to the end. It is suited to overcome the obstacles in the way. It is not merely the instrument by which God exerts his power, but it has an inherent adaptedness to the end, it is suited to accomplish salvation to man so that it may be denominated power.

(3) it is mighty, hence, it is called power, and the power of God. If is not a feeble and ineffectual instrumentality, but it is "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds," 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. It has shown its power as applicable to every degree of sin, to every combination of wickedness. It has gone against the sins of the world, and evinced its power to save sinners of all grades, and to overcome and subdue every mighty form of iniquity, compare Jeremiah 23:29, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" 1 Corinthians 1:18, "the

preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness, but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God."

Unto salvation - This word means complete deliverance from sin and death, and all the foes and dangers that beset man. It cannot imply anything less than eternal life. If a man should believe and then fall away, he could in no correct sense be said to be saved. And hence, when the apostle declares that it is the power of God unto salvation "to everyone that believeth," it implies that all who become believers "shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (see 1 Peter 1:5), and that none shall ever fall away and be lost. The apostle thus commences his discussion with one of the important doctrines of the Christian religion, the final preservation of the saints. He is not defending the gospel for any temporary object, or with any temporary hope. He looks through the system, and sees in it a plan for the complete and eternal recovery of all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. When he says it is the power of God unto salvation, he means that it is the power of God for the attainment of salvation. This is the end, or the design of this exertion of power.

To everyone that believeth - Compare Mark 16:16-17. This expresses the condition, or the terms, on which salvation is conferred through the gospel. It is not indiscriminately to all people, whatever may be their character. It is only to those who confide or trust in it; and it is conferred on all who receive it in this manner. If this qualification is possessed, it bestows its blessings freely and fully. All people know what "faith" is. It is exercised when we confide in a parent, a friend, a benefactor. It is such a reception of a promise, a truth, or a threatening, as to suffer it to make its appropriate impression on the mind, and such as to lead us to act under its influence, or to act as we should on the supposition that it is true. Thus, a sinner credits the threatenings of God, and fears. This is faith. He credits his promises, and hopes. This is faith. He feels that he is lost, and relies on Jesus Christ for mercy. This is faith. And, in general, faith is such an impression on the mind made by truth as to lead us to feel and act as if it were true; to have the appropriate feelings, and views, and conduct under the commands, and promises, and threatenings of God; see the note at Mark 16:16.

To the Jew first - First in order of time, Not that the gospel was any more adapted to Jews than to others; but to them had been committed the oracles of God; the Messiah had come through them; they had had the Law,

the temple, and the service of God, and it was natural that the gospel should be proclaimed to them before it was to the Gentiles. This was the order in which the gospel was actually preached to the world, first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. Compare Matthew 10:6; Luke 24:49; Acts 13:46, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Compare Matthew 21:43.

And also to the Greek - To all who were nor Jews, that is, to all the world. It was nor confined in its intention or efficacy to any class or nation of people. It was adapted to all, and was designed to be extended to all.

Verse 17

For - This word implies that he is now about to give a "reason" for what he had just said, a reason why he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. That reason is stated in this verse. It embodies the substance of all that is contained in the Epistle. It is the doctrine which he seeks to establish; and there is not perhaps a more important passage in the Bible than this verse; or one more difficult to be understood.

Therein - In it, ἐν οὕτῳ en houtōthat is, in the gospel.

Is the righteousness of God - δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ dikaiosunē TheouThere is not a more important expression to be found in the Epistle than this. It is capable of only the following interpretations.

(1) some have said that it means that the attribute of God which is denominated righteousness or justice, is here displayed. It has been supposed that this was the design of the gospel to make this known; or to evince his justice in his way of saving people. There is an important sense in which this is true Romans 3:26. But this does not seem to be the meaning in the passage before us. For,

(a)The leading design of the gospel is not to evince the justice of God, or the attribute of justice, but the love of God; see John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; 1 John 4:8.

(b)The attribute of justice is not what is principally evinced in the gospel. It is rather mercy, "or mercy in a manner consistent with justice," or that does not interfere with justice.

(c)The passage, therefore, is not designed to teach simply that the righteousness of God, as an attribute, is brought forth in the gospel, or that the main idea is to reveal his justice.

(2) asecond interpretation which has been affixed to it is, to make it the same as goodness, the benevolence of God is revealed, etc. But to this there are still stronger objections. For.

(a)It does not comport with the design of the apostle‘s argument.

(b)It is a departure from the established meaning of the word “justice,” and the phrase “the righteousness of God.”

(c)If this had been the design, it is remarkable that the usual words expressive of goodness or mercy had not been used. Another meaning, therefore, is to be sought as expressing the sense of the phrase.

(3) the phrase “righteousness of God” is equivalent to God‘s “plan of justifying people; his scheme of declaring them just in the sight of the Law; or of acquitting them from punishment, and admitting them to favor.” In this sense it stands opposed to man‘s plan of justification, that is, by his own works: God‘s plan is by faith. The way in which that is done is revealed in the gospel. The object contemplated to be done is to treat people as if they were righteous. Man attempted to accomplish this by obedience to the Law. The plan of God was to arrive at it by faith. Here the two schemes differ; and the great design of this Epistle is to show that man cannot be justified on his own plan, to wit, by works; and that the plan of God is the only way, and a wise and glorious way of making man just in the eye of the Law. No small part of the perplexity usually attending this subject will be avoided if it is remembered that the discussion in this Epistle pertains to the question, “how can mortal man be just with God?” The apostle shows that it cannot be by works; and that it “can be” by faith. This latter is what he calls the “righteousness of God” which is revealed in the gospel.

To see that this is the meaning, it is needful only to look at the connection; and at the usual meaning of the words. The word to “justify,” δικαιόω dikaioōmeans properly “to be just, to be innocent, to be righteous.” It then means to “declare,” or treat as righteous; as when a man is charged with an offence. and is acquitted. If the crime alleged is not proved against him, he is declared by the Law to be innocent. It then means to “treat as if innocent, to regard as innocent;” that is, to pardon, to forgive, and consequently to treat as if the offence had not occurred. It does not mean that the man did not commit the offence; or that the Law might not have held him answerable for it; but that the offence is forgiven; and it is consistent to receive the offender into favor, and treat him as if he had not

committed it. In what way this may be done rests with him who has the pardoning power. And in regard to the salvation of man, it rests solely with God. and must be done in that way only which he appoints and approves. The design of Paul in this Epistle is to show how this is done, or to show that it is done by faith. It may be remarked here that the expression before us does not imply any particular manner in which it is done; it does not touch the question whether it is by imputed righteousness or not; it does not say that it is on legal principles; it simply affirms "that the gospel contains God's plan of justifying people by faith."

The primary meaning of the word is, therefore, "to be innocent, pure, etc." and hence, the name means "righteousness" in general. For this use of the word, see Matthew 3:15; Matthew 5:6, Matthew 5:10, Matthew 5:20; Matthew 21:32; Luke 1:75; Acts 10:35; Acts 13:10; Romans 2:26; Romans 8:4, etc.

In the sense of pardoning sin, or of treating people as if they were innocent, on the condition of faith, it is used often, and especially in this Epistle; see Romans 3:24, Romans 3:26, Romans 3:28, Romans 3:30; Romans 4:5; Romans 5:1; Romans 8:30; Galatians 2:16; Galatians 3:8, Galatians 3:24; Romans 3:21-22, Romans 3:25; Romans 4:3, Romans 4:6, Romans 4:13; Romans 9:30, etc.

It is called "God's" righteousness, because it is God's plan, in distinction from all the plans set up by people. It was originated by him; it differs from all others; and it claims him as its author, and tends to his glory. It is called his righteousness, as it is the way by which he receives and treats people as righteous. The same plan was foretold in various places where the word "righteousness" is nearly synonymous with "salvation;" Isaiah 56:5 "My righteousness is near, my salvation is gone forth;" Isaiah 56:6, "My salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished;" Isaiah 56:1, "My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed;" Daniel 9:24, "To make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."

(There is yet another sense lying on the very surface of the passage, and adopted by nearly all the evangelical expositors, according to which "the righteousness of God" is that righteousness, which Christ worked out in his

active and passive obedience. This is a righteousness which God hath devised, procured, and accepted. It is therefore eminently His. It is imputed to believers, and on account of it they are held righteous in the sight of God. It is of the highest importance that the true meaning of this leading expression be preserved; for if it be explained away, the doctrine of imputed righteousness is materially affected, as will appear in a subsequent note.

That the phrase is to be understood of the righteousness which Christ has procured by his obedience and death, appears from the general sense of the original term δικαιοσύνη dikaiosunēMr. Haldane in a long and elaborate comment on Romans 3:21, has satisfactorily shown that it signifies "righteousness in the abstract, and also conformity to law," and that "Wherever it refers to the subject of man's salvation, and is not merely a personal attribute of Deity, it signifies that righteousness which, in conformity with his justice, God has appointed and provided."

Besides, if the expression be understood of "God's plan of justifying men," we shall have great difficulty in explaining the parallel passages. They will not bend to any such principle of interpretation, In Romans 5:17, this righteousness is spoken of as a "gift" which we "receive," and in the Romans 5:18 and Romans 5:19 verses, the "righteousness of one" and "the obedience of one," are used as convertible terms. Now it is easy to understand how the righteousness which Christ has procured by his obedience, becomes "a gift," but "a plan of justification" is appropriately said to be declared, or promulgated. It cannot be spoken of in the light of a gift received. The same observation applies with still greater force to the passage in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." How would this passage appear, if "plan of justification" were substituted for righteousness of God?

In Philemon 3:9, Paul desires to be found in Christ, "not having his own righteousness, which is of the land, but what is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Is not his own righteousness what he could attain to by his works or obedience, and is not the righteousness of Christ what Jesus had procured by his obedience?

Lastly, in Romans 10:3, the righteousness of God is thus opposed to the righteousness of man, "they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Now what is that righteousness which natural people seek to establish, and which is especially called "their own?" Doubtless it is a righteousness founded on their own works, and therefore what is here properly opposed to it is a righteousness founded on the "work of God. See Haldane, Hodge, Scott, Guyse, etc." This meaning of the term furnishes a key to unlock "all" the passages in which it is used in connection with the sinner's justification, whereas any other sense, however it may suit a few places, will be found generally inapplicable.)

In regard to this plan it may be observed;

(1)That it is not to declare that people are innocent and pure. That would not be true. The truth is just the reverse; and God does not esteem men to be different from what they are.

(2)it is not to take part with the sinner, and to mitigate his offences. It admits them to their full extent; and makes him feel them also.

(3)it is not that we become partakers of the essential righteousness of God. That is impossible.

(4)it is not that his righteousness becomes ours. This is not true; and there is no intelligible sense in which that can be understood.

(It is true indeed that the righteousness of Christ cannot be called ours in the sense of our having actually accomplished it in our own persons. This is a view of imputation easily held up to ridicule, yet there is a sense in which the righteousness of Christ may be ours. Though we have not achieved it, yet it may be so placed to our account that we shall be held righteous, and treated as such. I have said, first, we shall be held righteous, and then treated as such; for God treats none as righteous who in some sense or other are not really so. See the note at Romans 4:3.)

But it is God's plan for pardoning sin, and for treating us as if we had not committed it; that is, adopting us as his children, and admitting us to heaven on the ground of what the Lord Jesus has done in our stead. This is God's plan. People seek to save themselves by their own works. God's plan is to save them by the merits of Jesus Christ.

Revealed - Made known, and communicated. The gospel states the fact that God has such a plan of justification; and shows the way or manner in which it might be done. The fact seems to have been understood by Abraham, and the patriarchs Romans 3:22, Romans 3:30; Romans 9:30; Romans 9:32; Romans 10:6, etc.

(5) the passage which he immediately quotes shows that he did not speak of different degrees of faith, but of the doctrine that people are to be justified by faith.

To faith - Unto those who believe (compare Romans 3:22); or to everyone that believeth, Romans 1:16. The abstract is here put for the concrete. It is designed to express the idea, "that God‘s plan of justifying people is revealed in the gospel, which plan is by faith, and the benefits of which plan shall be extended to all that have faith, or that believe."

As it is written - See Habakkuk 2:4.

The just shall live by faith - The Septuagint translate the passage in Habakkuk, ‹If any man shall draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him, but the just by my faith," or by faith in me, "shall live." The very words are used by them which are employed by the apostle, except they add the word "my," μοῦ moumy faith. The Syriac renders it in a similar manner, "The just by faith shall live." The meaning of the Hebrew in Habakkuk is the same. It does not refer originally to the doctrine of justification by faith; but its meaning is this, "The just man, or the righteous man, shall live by his confidence in God." The prophet is speaking of the woes attending the Babylonish captivity. The Chaldeans were to come upon the land and destroy it, and remove the nation, Romans 1:6-10. But this was not to be perpetual. It should have an end Romans 2:3, and they who had confidence in God should live Romans 1:4; that is, should be restored to their country, should be blessed and made happy. Their confidence in God should sustain them, and preserve them. This did not refer primarily to the doctrine of justification by faith, nor did the apostle so quote it, but it expressed a general principle that those who had confidence in God should be happy, and be preserved and blessed. This would express the doctrine which Paul was defending. It was not by relying on his own merit that the Israelite would be delivered, but it was by confidence in God, by his strength and mercy. On the same principle would men be saved under the gospel. It was not by reliance on their own works or merit; it was by confidence in God, by faith, that they were to live.

Shall live - In Habakkuk this means to be made happy, or blessed; shall find comfort, and support, and deliverance. So in the gospel the blessings of salvation are represented as life, eternal life. Sin is represented as death, and man by nature is represented as dead in trespasses and sins, Ephesians 2:1. The gospel restores to life and salvation, John 3:36; John 5:29, John 5:40; John 6:33, John 6:51, John 6:53; John 20:31; Acts 2:28; Romans 5:18; Romans 8:6. This expression, therefore, does not mean, as it is sometimes supposed, the "justified by faith" shall live; but it is expressive of a general principle in relation to people, that they shall be defended, preserved, made happy, not by their own merits, or strength, but by confidence in God. This principle is exactly applicable to the gospel plan of salvation. Those who rely on God the Saviour shall be justified, and saved.

Verse 18

For - This word denotes that the apostle is about to give a reason for what he had just said. This verse commences the argument of the Epistle. an argument designed to establish the proposition advanced in Romans 1:17. The proposition is, that God's plan of justification is revealed in the gospel. To show this, it was necessary to show that all other plans had failed; and that there was need of some new plan or scheme to save people. To this he devotes this and the two following chapters. The design of this argument is, to show that people were sinners. And in order to make this out, it was necessary to show that they were under law. This was clear in regard to the Jews. They had the Scriptures; and the apostle in this chapter shows that it was equally clear in regard to the Gentiles, and then proceeds to show that both had failed of obeying the Law. To see this clearly it is necessary to add only, that there can be but two ways of justification conceived of; one by obedience to law, and the other by grace. The former was the one by which Jews and Gentiles had sought to be justified; and if it could be shown that in this they had failed, the way was clear to show that there was need of some other plan.

The wrath of God - ὀργὴ Θεοῦ orgē TheouThe word rendered "wrath" properly denotes that earnest appetite or desire by which we seek anything, or an intense effort to obtain it. And it is particularly applied to the desire which a man has to take vengeance who is injured, and who is enraged. It is thus synonymous with revenge. Ephesians 4:31, "let all bitterness, and wrath, etc.; Colossians 3:8, "anger, wrath, malice," etc.; 1 Timothy 2:8; James 1:19. But it is also often applied to God; and it is clear that when we

think of the word as applicable to him, it must be divested of everything like human passion, and especially of the passion of revenge. As he cannot be injured by the sins of people Job 25:6, he has no motive for vengeance properly so called, and it is one of the most obvious rules of interpretation that we are not to apply to God passions and feelings which, among us, have their origin in evil.

In making a revelation, it was indispensable to use words which people used; but it does not follow that when applied to God they mean precisely what they do when applied to man. When the Saviour is said Mark 3:5 to have looked on his disciples with anger (Greek, "wrath," the same word is here), it is not to be supposed that he had the feelings of an implacable man seeking vengeance. The nature of the feeling is to be judged of by the character of the person. So, in this place, the word denotes the "divine displeasure" or "indignation" against sin; the divine purpose to "inflict punishment. It is the opposition of the divine character against sin;" and the determination of the divine mind to express that opposition in a proper way, by excluding the offender from the favors which he bestows on the righteous. It is not an unamiable, or arbitrary principle of conduct. We all admire the character of a father who is opposed to disorder, and vice, and disobedience in his family, and who expresses his opposition in a proper way.

We admire the character of a ruler who is opposed to all crime in the community, and who expresses those feelings in the laws. And the more he is opposed to vice and crime, the more we admire his character and his laws; and why shall we be not equally pleased with God, who is opposed to all crime in all parts of the universe, and who determines to express it in the proper way for the sake of preserving order and promoting peace? The phrase "divine displeasure" or "indignation," therefore, expresses the meaning of this phrase; see Matthew 3:7; Luke 3:7; Luke 21:23; John 3:36; Romans 2:5, Romans 2:8; Romans 3:5; Romans 4:15; Romans 5:9; Romans 9:22; Romans 12:19; Romans 13:4-5; Ephesians 2:3; Ephesians 5:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:16, etc. The word occurs 35 times in the New Testament.

Is revealed - That is, revealed to the Jews by their Law; and to the Gentiles in their reason, and conscience, as the apostle proceeds to show.

From heaven - This expression I take to mean simply that the divine displeasure against sin is made known by a divine appointment; by an arrangement of events, communications, and arguments, which evince that they have had their origin in heaven; or are divine. How this is, Paul proceeds to state, in the works of creation, and in the Law which the Hebrews had. A variety of meanings have been given to this expression, but this seems the most satisfactory. It does not mean that the wrath will be sent from heaven; or that the heavens declare his wrath; or that the heavenly bodies are proofs of his wrath against sin; or that Christ, the executioner of wrath, will be manifest from heaven (Origen, Cyril, Beza, etc.); or that it is from God who is in heaven; but that it is by an arrangement which shows that it had its origin in heaven. or has proofs that it is divine.

Against all ungodliness - This word properly means "impiety" toward God, or neglect of the worship and honor due to him. ἀσέβειαν asebeianIt refers to the fact that people had failed to honor the true God, and had paid to idols the homage which was due to him. Multitudes also in every age refuse to honor him, and neglect his worship, though they are not idolaters. Many people suppose that if they do not neglect their duty to their fellow-men, if they are honest and upright in their dealings, they are not guilty, even though they are not righteous, or do not do their duty to God; as though it were a less crime to dishonor God than man; and as though it were innocence to neglect and disobey our Maker and Redeemer. The apostle here shows that the wrath of God is as really revealed against the neglect of God as it is against positive iniquity; and that this is an offence of so much consequence as to be placed "first," and as deserving the divine indignation more than the neglect of our duties toward people; compare Romans 11:26; 2 Timothy 2:16; Titus 2:12; Jude 1:15, Jude 1:18. The word does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament.

Unrighteousness of men - Unrighteousness, or iniquity toward people. All offences against our neighbor, our parents. our country, etc. The word "ungodliness" includes all crimes against God; this, all crimes against our fellow-men. The two words express what comprehends the violation of all the commands of God; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, etc. and thy neighbor as thyself," Matthew 22:37-40. The wrath of God is thus revealed against all human wickedness.

Who hold the truth - Who "keep back," or "restrain" the truth. The word translated "hold" here, sometimes means to "maintain," to "keep," to

"observe" 1 Corinthians 7:30; 2 Corinthians 6:12; but it also means to "hold back, to detain, to hinder." Luke 4:42, "the people sought him (Jesus), and came to him, and stayed him." (Greek, the same as here.) Philemon 1:13, "whom I would have "retained" with me," etc.; 2 Thessalonians 2:6, "and now ye know what "withholdeth," etc. In this place it means also that they held back, or restrained the truth, by their wickedness.

The truth - The truth of God, in whatever way made known, and particularly, as the apostle goes on to say, what is made known by the light of nature. The truth pertaining to his perfections, his Law, etc. They hold it back. or restrain its influence.

In unrighteousness - Or rather, by their iniquity. Their wickedness is the cause why the truth had had so little progress among them, and had exerted so little influence. This was done by their yielding to corrupt passions and propensities, and by their being therefore unwilling to retain the knowledge of a pure and holy God, who is opposed to such deeds, and who will punish them. As they were determined to practice iniquity, they chose to exclude the knowledge of a pure God, and to worship impure idols, by which they might give a sanction to their lusts. Their vice and tendency to iniquity was, therefore, the reason why they had so little knowledge of a holy God; and by the love of this, they held back the truth from making progress, and becoming diffused among them.

The same thing is substantially true now. People hold back or resist the truth of the gospel by their sins in the following ways.

(1) people of influence and wealth employ both, in directly opposing the gospel.

(2) people directly resist the doctrines of religion. since they know they could not hold to those doctrines without abandoning their sins.

(3) people who resolve to live in sin, of course, resist the gospel, and endeavor to prevent its influence.

(4) pride, and vanity, and the love of the world also resist the gospel, and oppose its advances.

(5) Unlawful business - business that begins in evil, and progresses, and ends in evil - has this tendency to hold back the gospel. Such is the effect of the traffic in ardent spirits, in the slave-trade, etc. They begin in the love of money, the root of all evil 1 Timothy 6:10; they progress in the tears and sorrows of the widow, the orphan, the wife, the sister, or the child; and they end in the deep damnation of multitudes in the world to come. Perhaps there has been nothing that has so much held back the influence of truth, and of the gospel, as indulgence in the vice of intemperance, and traffic in liquid fire.

(6) Indulgence in vice, or wickedness of any kind, holds back the truth of God. People who are resolved to indulge their passions will not yield themselves to this truth. And hence, all the wicked, the proud, and vain, and worldly are responsible, not only for their own sins directly, but for hindering, by their example and their crimes, the effect of religion on others. They are answerable for standing in the way of God and his truth; and for opposing him in the benevolent design of doing good to all people. There is nothing that prevents the universal spread and influence of truth but sin. And people of wickedness are answerable for all the ignorance and wo which are spread over the community, and which have extended themselves over the world.

Verse 19

Because - The apostle proceeds to show how it was that the pagan hindered the truth by their iniquity. This he does by showing that the truth might be known by the works of creation; and that nothing but their iniquity prevented it.

That which may be known of God - That which is "knowable" concerning God. The expression implies that there may be many things concerning God which cannot be known. But there are also many things which may be ascertained. Such are his existence, and many of his attributes, his power, and wisdom, and justice, etc. The object of the apostle was not to say that every thing pertaining to God could be known by them, or that they could have as clear a view of him as if they had possessed a revelation. We must interpret the expression according to the object which he had in view. That was to show that so much might be known of God as to prove that they had no excuse for their crimes; or that God would be just

in punishing them for their deeds. For this, it was needful only that his existence and his justice, or his determination to punish sin, should be known; and this, the apostle affirms, was known among them, and had been from the creation of the world. This expression. therefore, is not to be pressed as implying that they knew all that could be known about God, or that they knew as much as they who had a revelation; but that they knew enough to prove that they had no excuse for their sins.

Is manifest - Is known; is understood.

In them - "Among" them. So the preposition "in" is often used. It means that they had this knowledge; or it had been communicated to them. The great mass of the pagan world was indeed ignorant of the true God; but their leaders, or their philosophers, had this knowledge; see the note at Romans 1:21. But this was not true of the mass, or body of the people. Still it was true that this knowledge was in the possession of man, or was "among" the pagan world. and would have spread, had it not been for the love of sin.

God hath showed it to them - Compare John 1:9. He had endowed them with reason and conscience Romans 2:14-15; he had made them capable of seeing and investigating his works; he had spread before them the proofs of his wisdom, and goodness, and power, and had thus given them the means of learning his perfections and will.

Verse 20

For the invisible things of him - The expression "his invisible things" refers to those things which cannot be perceived by the senses. It does not imply that there are any things pertaining to the divine character which may be seen by the eye; but that there are things which may be known of him, though not discoverable by the eye. We judge of the objects around us by the senses, the sight, the touch, the ear, etc. Paul affirms, that though we cannot judge thus of God, yet there is a way by which we may come to the knowledge of him. What he means by the invisible things of God he specifies at the close of the verse, "his eternal power and Godhead." The affirmation extends only to that; and the argument implies that that was enough to leave them without any excuse for their sins.

From the creation of the world - The word "creation" may either mean the "act" of creating, or more commonly it means "the thing created," the world, the universe. In this sense it is commonly used in the New Testament; compare Mark 10:6; Mark 13:19; Mark 16:5; Romans 1:25; 2

Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Colossians 1:15, Colossians 1:23; Hebrews 4:13; Hebrews 9:11; 1 Peter 2:13; 2 Peter 3:4; Revelation 3:14. The word "from" may mean "since," or it may denote "by means of." And the expression here may denote that, as an historical fact, God "has been" "known" since the act of creation; or it may denote that he is known "by means of" the material universe which he has formed. The latter is doubtless the true meaning. For,

(1)This is the common meaning of the word "creation;" and,

(2)This accords with the design of the argument.

It is not to state an historical fact, but to show that they had the means of knowing their duty within their reach, and were without excuse. Those means were in the wisdom, power, and glory of the universe, by which they were surrounded.

Are clearly seen - Are made manifest; or may be perceived. The word used here does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament.

Being understood - His perfections may be investigated, and comprehended by means of his works. They are the evidences submitted to our intellects, by which we may arrive at the true knowledge of God.

Things that are made - By his works; compare Hebrews 11:3. This means, not by the original "act" of creation, but by the continual operations of God in his Providence, by his doings, ποιήμασιν poiēmasinby what he is continually producing and accomplishing in the displays of his power and goodness in the heavens and the earth. What they were capable of understanding, he immediately adds, and shows that he did not intend to affirm that everything could be known of God by his works; but so much as to free them from excuse for their sins.

His eternal power - Here are two things implied.

(1)that the universe contains an exhibition of his power, or a display of that attribute which we call "omnipotence;" and,

(2)That this power has existed from eternity, and of course implies an eternal existence in God.

It does not mean that this power has been exerted or put forth from eternity, for the very idea of creation supposes that it had not, but that there is proof, in the works of creation, of power which must have existed from eternity, or have belonged to an eternal being. The proof of this was clear, even to the pagan, with their imperfect views of creation and of astronomy; compare Psalm 19:1-14. The majesty and grandeur of the heavens would

strike their eye, and be full demonstration that they were the work of an infinitely great and glorious God. But to us, under the full blaze of modern science, with our knowledge of the magnitude, and distances, and revolutions of the heavenly bodies, the proof of this power is much more grand and impressive. We may apply the remark of the apostle to the present state of the science, and his language will cover all the ground, and the proof to human view is continually rising of the amazing power of God, by every new discovery in science, and especially in astronomy. Those who wish to see this object presented in a most impressive view, may find it done in Chalmer‘s Astronomical Discourses, and in Dick‘s Christian Philosopher. Equally clear is the proof that this power must have been eternal. If it had not always existed, it could in no way have been produced. But it is not to be supposed that it was always exerted, any more than it is that God now puts forth all the power that he can, or than that we constantly put forth all the power which we possess. God‘s power was called forth at the creation. He showed his omnipotence; and gave, by that one great act, eternal demonstration that he was almighty; and we may survey the proof of that, as clearly as if we had seen the operation of his hand there. The proof is not weakened because we do not see the process of creation constantly going on. It is rather augmented by the fact that he sustains all things, and controls continually the vast masses of matter in the material worlds.

Godhead - His deity; divinity; divine nature, or essence. The word is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. Its meaning cannot therefore be fixed by any parallel passages. It proves the truth that the supremacy, or supreme divinity of God, was exhibited in the works of creation, or that he was exalted above all creatures and things. It would not be proper, however, to press this word as implying that all that we know of God by revelation was known to the pagan; but that so much was known as to show his supremacy; his right to their homage; and of course the folly and wickedness of idolatry. This is all that the argument of the apostle demands, and, of course, on this principle the expression is to be interpreted.

So that they are without excuse - God has given them so clear evidence of his existence and claims, that they have no excuse for their idolatry, and for hindering the truth by their iniquity. It is implied here that in order that people should be responsible, they should have the means of knowledge; and that he does not judge them when their ignorance is involuntary, and the means of knowing the truth have not been

communicated. But where people have these means within their reach, and will not avail themselves of them, all excuse is taken away. This was the case with the Gentile world. They had the means of knowing so much of God, as to show the folly of worshipping dumb idols; compare Isaiah 44:8-10. They had also traditions respecting his perfections; and they could not plead for their crimes and folly that they had no means of knowing him. If this was true of the pagan world then, how much more is it true of the world now?

And especially how true and fearful is this, respecting that great multitude in Christian lands who have the Bible, and who never read it; who are within the reach of the sanctuary, and never enter it; who are admonished by friends, and by the providences of God, and who regard it not; and who look upon the heavens, and even yet see no proof of the eternal power and Godhead of him who made them all! Nay, there are those who are apprized of the discoveries of modern astronomy, and who yet do not seem to reflect that all these glories are proof of the existence of an eternal God; and who live in ignorance of religion as really as the pagan, and in crimes as decided and malignant as disgraced the darkest ages of the world. For such there is no excuse, or shadow of excuse, to be offered in the day of doom. And there is no fact more melancholy in our history, and no one thing that more proves the stupidity of people, than this sad forgetfulness of Him that made the heavens, even amid all the wonders and glories that have come fresh from the hand of God, and that everywhere speak his praise.

Verse 21

Because that - The apostle here is showing that it was right to condemn people for their sins. To do this it was needful to show them that they had the knowledge of God, and the means of knowing what was right; and that the true source of their sins and idolatries was a corrupt and evil heart.

When they knew God - Greek, "knowing God." That is, they had an acquaintance with the existence and many of the perfections of one God. That many of the philosophers of Greece and Rome had a knowledge of one God, there can be no doubt. This was undoubtedly the case with Pythagoras, who had traveled extensively in Egypt, and even in Palestine; and also with Plato and his disciples. This point is clearly shown by Cudworth in his Intellectual System, and by Dr. Warburton in the *Divine*

Legation of Moses. Yet the knowledge of this great truth was not communicated to the people. It was confined to the philosophers; and not improbably one design of the mysteries celebrated throughout Greece was to keep up the knowledge of the one true God. Gibbon has remarked that "the philosophers regarded all the popular superstitions as equally false: the common people as equally true; and the politicians as equally useful." This was probably a correct account of the prevalent feelings among the ancients. A single extract from "Cicero" (de Natura Deorum, lib. ii. c. 6) will show that they had the knowledge of one God. "There is something in the nature of things, which the mind of man, which reason, which human power cannot effect; and certainly what produces this must be better than man. What can this be called but "God?" Again (c. 2), "What can be so plain and manifest, when we look at heaven, and contemplate heavenly things, as that there is some divinity of most excellent mind, by which these things are governed?"

They glorified him not as God - They did not "honor" him as God. This was the true source of their abominations. To glorify him "as God" is to regard with proper reverence all his perfections and laws; to venerate his name, his power, his holiness, and presence, etc. As they were not inclined to do this, so they were given over to their own vain and wicked desires. Sinners are not willing to give honor to God, as God. They are not pleased with his perfections; and therefore the mind becomes fixed on other objects, and the heart gives free indulgence to its own sinful desires. A willingness to honor God as God - to reverence, love, and obey him, would effectually restrain people from sin.

Neither were thankful - The obligation to be "thankful" to God for his mercies, for the goodness which we experience, is plain and obvious. Thus, we judge of favors received of our fellow-men. the apostle here clearly regards this unwillingness to render gratitude to God for his mercies as one of the causes of their subsequent corruption and idolatry. The reasons of this are the following.

(1) the effect of ingratitude is to render the heart hard and insensible.

(2) people seek to forget the Being to whom they are unwilling to exercise gratitude.

(3) to do this, they fix their affections on other things; and hence, the pagan expressed their gratitude not to God, but to the sun, and moon, and

stars, etc., the mediums by which God bestows his favors upon people. And we may here learn that an unwillingness to thank God for his mercies is one of the most certain causes of alienation and hardness of heart.

But became vain - To "become vain," with us, means to be elated, or to be self-conceited, or to seek praise from others. The meaning here seems to be, they became foolish, frivolous in their thoughts and reasonings. They acted foolishly; they employed themselves in useless and frivolous questions, the effect of which was to lead the mind further and further from the truth respecting God.

Imaginations - This word means properly "thoughts," then "reasonings," and also "disputations." Perhaps our word, "speculations," would convey its meaning here. It implies that they were unwilling to honor God, and being unwilling to honor him, they commenced those speculations which resulted in all their vain and foolish opinions about idols, and the various rites of idolatrous worship. Many of the speculations and inquiries of the ancients were among the most vain and senseless which the mind can conceive.

And their foolish heart - The word "heart" is not infrequently used to denote the mind, or the understanding. We apply it to denote the affections. But such was not its common use, among the Hebrews. We speak of the head when we refer to the understanding, but this was not the case with the Hebrews. They spoke of the heart in this manner, and in this sense it is clearly used in this place; see Ephesians 1:18; Romans 2:15; 2 Corinthians 4:6; 2 Peter 1:19. The word "foolish" means literally what is without "understanding;" Matthew 15:16.

Was darkened - Was rendered obscure, so that they did not perceive and comprehend the truth. The process which is stated in this verse is,

(1)That people had the knowledge of God.

(2)that they refused to honor him when they knew him, and were opposed to his character and government.

(3)that they were ungrateful.

(4)that they then began to doubt, to reason, to speculate, and wandered far into darkness.

This is substantially the process by which people wander away from God now. They have the knowledge of God, but they do not love him; and

being dissatisfied with his character and government, they begin to speculate, fall into error, and then "find no end in wandering mazes lost," and sink into the depths of heresy and of sin.

Verse 22

Professing themselves to be wise - This was the common boast of the philosophers of antiquity. The very word by which they chose to be called, "philosophers," means literally "lovers of wisdom." That it was their boast that they were wise, is well known; compare Romans 1:14; 1 Corinthians 1:19, 1 Corinthians 1:20, 1 Corinthians 1:22; 1 Corinthians 3:19; 2 Corinthians 11:19.

They became fools - Compare Jeremiah 8:8-9. They became really foolish in their opinions and conduct. There is something particularly pungent and cutting in this remark, and as true as it is pungent. In what way they evinced their folly, Paul proceeds immediately to state. Sinners of all kinds are frequently spoken of as fools in the Scriptures. In the sense in which it is thus used, the word is applied to them as void of understanding or moral sense; as idolaters, and as wicked; Psalm 14:1; Proverbs 26:4; Proverbs 1:17, Proverbs 1:22; Proverbs 14:8-9. The senses in which this word here is applied to the pagan are,

(1)That their speculations and doctrines were senseless; and,

(2)That their conduct was corrupt.

Verse 23

And changed - This does not mean that they literally "transmuted" God himself; but that in their views they exchanged him; or they changed him "as an object of worship" for idols. They produced, of course, no real change in the glory of the infinite God, but the change was in themselves. They forsook him of whom they had knowledge Romans 1:21, and offered the homage which was due to him, to idols.

The glory - The majesty, the honor, etc. This word stands opposed here to the "degrading" nature of their worship. Instead of adoring a Being clothed with majesty and honor, they bowed down to reptiles, etc. They exchanged a glorious object of worship for what was degrading and humiliating. The glory of God, in such places as this, means his essential honor, his majesty, the concentration and expression of his perfections, as the glory of the sun, 1 Corinthians 15:41 means his shining, or his splendor; compare Jeremiah 2:11; Psalm 106:20.

The uncorruptible God - The word "uncorruptible" is here applied to God in opposition to "man." God is unchanging, indestructible, immortal. The word conveys also the idea that God is eternal. As he is incorruptible, he is the proper object of worship. In all the changes of life, man may come to him, assured that he is the same. When man decays by age or infirmities, he may come to God, assured that he undergoes no such change, but is the same yesterday, today, and forever; compare 1 Timothy 1:17.

Into an image - An image is a representation or likeness of anything, whether made by painting, or from wood, stone, etc. Thus, the word is applied to "idols," as being "images" or "representations" of heavenly objects; 2 Chronicles 33:7; Daniel 3:1; Revelation 11:4, etc. See instances of this among the Jews described in Isaiah 40:18-26, and Ezekiel 8:10.

To corruptible man - This stands opposed to the "incorruptible" God. Many of the images or idols of the ancients were in the forms of men and women. Many of their gods were heroes and benefactors, who were deified, and to whom temples, altars, and statues were erected. Such were Jupiter, and Hercules, and Romulus, etc. The worship of these heroes thus constituted no small part of their idolatry, and their images would be of course representations of them in human form. It was proof of great degradation, that they thus adored human beings with like passions as themselves; and attempted to displace the true God from the throne, and to substitute in his place an idol in the likeness of men.

And to birds - The "ibis" was adored with special reverence among the Egyptians, on account of the great benefits resulting from its destroying the serpents which, but for this, would have overrun the country. The hawk was also adored in Egypt, and the eagle at Rome. As one great principle of pagan idolatry was to adore all objects from which important benefits were derived, it is probable that all birds would come in for a share of pagan worship, that rendered service in the destruction of noxious animals.

And fourfooted beasts - Thus, the ox, under the name "apis," was adored in Egypt; and even the dog and the monkey. In imitation of the Egyptian ox, the children of Israel made their golden calf, Exodus 22:4. At this day, two of the most sacred objects of worship in Hindostan are the cow and the "monkey."

And creeping things - Reptiles. "Animals that have no feet, or such short ones that they seem to creep or crawl on the ground." "(Calmet.)" Lizards, serpents, etc. come under this description. The "crocodile" in

Egypt was an object of adoration, and even the serpent so late as the second century of the Christian era, there was a sect in Egypt, called "Ophites" from their worshipping a serpent, and who ever claimed to be Christians, (Murdock's Mosheim, vol. i. p. 180,181). There was scarcely an object, animal or vegetable, which the Egyptians did not adore. Thus, the leek, the onion, etc. were objects of worship, and people bowed down and paid adoration to the sun and moon, to animals, to vegetables, and to reptiles. Egypt was the source of the views of religion that pervaded other nations, and hence, their worship partook of the same wretched and degrading character. (See "Leland's" "Advantage and Necessity of Revelation.")

Verse 24

Wherefore - That is, because they were unwilling to retain him in their knowledge, and chose to worship idols. Here is traced the practical tendency of paganism; not as an innocent and harmless system, but as resulting in the most gross and shameless acts of depravity.

God gave them up - He abandoned them, or he ceased to restrain them, and suffered them to act out their sentiments, and to manifest them in their life. This does not imply, that he exerted any positive influence in inducing them to sin, any more than it would if we should seek, by argument and entreaty, to restrain a headstrong youth, and when neither would prevail, should leave him to act out his propensities. and to go as he chose to ruin. It is implied in this,

(1)That the tendency of man was to these sins;

(2)That the tendency of idolatry was to promote them; and,

(3)That all that was needful, in order that people should commit them, was for God to leave him to follow the devices and desires of his own heart; compare Psalm 81:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:10, 2 Thessalonians 2:12.

To uncleanness - To impurity, or moral defilement; particularly to those impurities which he proceeds to specify, Romans 1:26, etc.

Through the lusts of their own hearts - Or, in consequence of their own evil and depraved passions and desires. He left them to act out, or manifest, their depraved affections and inclinations.

To dishonour - To disgrace; Romans 1:26-27.

Between themselves - Among themselves; or mutually. They did it by unlawful and impure connections with one another.

Verse 25

Who changed the truth of God - This is a repetition of the declaration in Romans 1:23, in another form. The phrase, "the truth of God" is a Hebrew phrase, meaning "the true God." In such a case, where two nouns come together, one is employed as an adjective to qualify the other. Most commonly the latter of two nouns is used as the adjective, but sometimes it is the former, as in this case. God is called "the true God" in opposition to idols, which are called false gods. There is but one real or true God, and all others are false.

Into a lie - Into idols, or false gods. Idols are not infrequently called falsehood and lies, because they are not true representations of God; Jeremiah 13:25; Isaiah 28:15; Jeremiah 10:14; Psalm 40:4.

The creature - Created things, as the sun, moon, animals, etc.

Who is blessed forever - It was not uncommon to add a doxology, or ascription of praise to God, when his name was mentioned; see Romans 9:5; 2 Corinthians 11:31; Galatians 1:5. The Jews also usually did it. In this way they preserved veneration for the name of God, and accustomed themselves to speak of him with reverence. "The Muslims also borrowed this custom from the Jews, and practice it to a great extent. Tholuck mentions an Arabic manuscript in the library at Berlin which contains an account of heresies in respect to Islamism, and as often as the writer has occasion to mention the name of a new heretical sect, he adds, ‹God be exalted above all which they say‘" (Stuart).

Amen - This is a Hebrew word denoting strong affirmation. So let it be. It implies here the solemn assent of the writer to what was just said; or his strong wish that what he had said might be - that the name of God might be esteemed and be blessed forever. The mention of the degrading idolatry of the pagans was strongly calculated to impress on his mind the superior excellency and glory of the one living God. It is mentioned respecting the honorable Robert Boyle, that he never mentioned the name of God without a solemn pause, denoting his profound reverence. Such a practice would tend eminently to prevent an unholy familiarity and irreverence in regard to the sacred name of the Most High; compare Exodus 20:7.

Verse 26

For this cause - On account of what had just been specified; to wit, that they did not glorify him as God, that they were unthankful, that they became polytheists and idolaters. In the previous verses he had stated their

speculative belief. He now proceeds to show its practical influences on their conduct.

Vile affections - Disgraceful passions or desires. That is, to those which are immediately specified. The great object of the apostle here, it will be remembered, is to shew the state of the pagan world, and to prove that they had need of some other way of justification than the law of nature. For this purpose, it was necessary for him to enter into a detail of their sins. The sins which he proceeds to specify are the most indelicate, vile, and degrading which can be charged on man. But this is not the fault of the apostle. If they existed, it was necessary for him to charge them on the pagan world. His argument would not be complete without it. The shame is not in specifying them, but in their existence; not in the apostle, but in those who practiced them, and imposed on him the necessity of accusing them of these enormous offences. It may be further remarked, that the mere fact of his charging them with these sins is strong presumptive proof of their being practiced. If they did not exist, it would be easy for them to deny it, and put him to the proof of it. No man would venture charges like these without evidence; and the presumption is, that these things were known and practiced without shame. But this is not all. There is still abundant proof on record in the writings of the pagan themselves, that these crimes were known and extensively practiced.

For even their women … - Evidence of the shameful and disgraceful fact here charged on the women is abundant in the Greek and Roman writers. Proof may be seen, which it would not be proper to specify, in the lexicons, under the words τριζὰς ὄλισβον trizas olisbonand ἑταιρίστης hetairistēsSee also Seneca, epis. 95; Martial, epis. i. 90. Tholuck on the State of the pagan World, in the Biblical Repository, vol. ii.; Lucian, Dial. Meretric. v.; and Tertullian de Pallio.

Verse 27

And likewise the men … - The sin which is here specified is what was the shameful sin of Sodom, and which from that has been called sodomy. It would scarcely be credible that man had been guilty of a crime so base and so degrading, unless there was ample and full testimony to it. Perhaps there is no sin which so deeply shows the depravity of man as this; none which would so much induce one “to hang his head, and blush to think himself a man.” And yet the evidence that the apostle did not bring a railing accusation against the pagan world; that he did not advance a charge which

was unfounded, is too painfully clear. It has been indeed a matter of controversy whether paederastry, or the love of boys, among the ancients was not a pure and harmless love, but the evidence is against it. (See this discussed in Dr. Leland‘s Advantage and Necessity of Revelation, vol. i. 49-56.) The crime with which the apostle charges the Gentiles here was by no means confined to the lower classes of the people.

It doubtless pervaded all classes, and we have distinct specifications of its existence in a great number of cases. Even Virgil speaks of the attachment of Corydon to Alexis, without seeming to feel the necessity of a blush for it. Maximus Tyrius (Diss. 10) says that in the time of Socrates, this vice was common among the Greeks; and is at pains to vindicate Socrates from it as almost a solitary exception. Cicero (Tuscul. Ques. iv. 34) says, that “Dicearchus had accused Plato of it, and probably not unjustly.” He also says (Tuscul. Q. iv. 33), that the practice was common among the Greeks, and that their poets and great men, and even their learned men and philosophers, not only practiced, but gloried in it. And he adds, that it was the custom, not of particular cities only, but of Greece in general. (Tuscul. Ques. v. 20.) Xenophon says, that “the unnatural love of boys is so common, that in many places it is established by the public laws.”

He particularly alludes to Sparta. (See Leland‘s Advantage, etc. i. 56.) Plato says that the Cretans practiced this crime, and justified themselves by the example of Jupiter and Ganymede. (Book of Laws, i.) And Aristotle says, that among the Cretans there was a law encouraging that sort of unnatural love. (Aristotle, *Politic*. b. ii. chapter 10.) Plutarch says, that this was practiced at Thebes, and at Elis. He further says, that Solon, the great lawgiver of Athens, “was not proof against beautiful boys, and had not courage to resist the force of love.” (Life of Solon.) Diogenes Laertius says that this vice was practiced by the Stoic Zeno. Among the Romans, to whom Paul was writing, this vice was no less common. Cicero introduces, without any mark of disapprobation, Cotta, a man of the first rank and genius, freely and familiarly owning to other Romans of the same quality, that this worse than beastly vice was practiced by himself, and quoting the authority of ancient philosophers in vindication of it. (De Natura Deorum, b. i. chapter 28.) It appears from what Seneca says (epis. 95) that in his time it was practiced openly at Rome, and without shame.

He speaks of flocks and troops of boys, distinguished by their colors and nations; and says that great care was taken to train them up for this detestable employment. Those who may wish to see a further account of the morality in the pagan world may find it detailed in Tholuck‘s “Nature and moral Influence of Heathenism,” in the Biblical Repository, vol. ii., and in Leland‘s Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation. There is not the least evidence that this abominable vice was confined to Greece and Rome. If so common there, if it had the sanction even of their philosophers, it may be presumed that it was practiced elsewhere, and that the sin against nature was a common crime throughout the pagan world. Navaratte, in his account of the empire of China (book ii. chapter 6), says that it is extremely common among the Chinese. And there is every reason to believe, that both in the old world and the new, this abominable crime is still practiced. If such was the state of the pagan world, then surely the argument of the apostle is well sustained, that there was need of some other plan of salvation than was taught by the light of nature.

That which is unseemly - That which is shameful, or disgraceful.

And receiving in themselves … - The meaning of this doubtless is, that the effect of such base and unnatural passions was, to enfeeble the body, to produce premature old age, disease, decay, and an early death. That this is the effect of the indulgence of licentious passions, is amply proved by the history of man. The despots who practice polygamy, and keep harems in the East, are commonly superannuated at forty years of age; and it is well known, even in Christian countries, that the effect of licentious indulgence is to break down and destroy the constitution. How much more might this be expected to follow the practice of the vice specified in the verse under examination! God has marked the indulgence of licentious passions with his frown. Since the time of the Romans and the Greeks, as if there had not been sufficient restraints before, he has originated a new disease, which is one of the most loathsome and distressing which has ever afflicted man, and which has swept off millions of victims. But the effect on the body was not all. It tended to debase the mind; to sink man below the level of the brute; to destroy the sensibility; and to “sear the conscience as with a hot iron.” The last remnant of reason and conscience, it would seem, must be extinguished it those who would indulge in this unnatural and degrading vice. See Suetonius‘ Life of Nere, 28.

Verse 28

And even as they did not like … - This was the true source of their crimes. They did not choose to acknowledge God. It was not because they could not, but because they were displeased with God, and chose to forsake him, and follow their own passions and lusts.

To retain God … - To think of him, or to serve and adore him. This was the first step in their sin. It was not that God compelled them; or that he did not give them knowledge; nor even is it said that he arbitrarily abandoned them as the first step; but they forsook him, and as a consequence he gave them up to a reprobate mind.

To a reprobate mind - A mind destitute of judgment. In the Greek the same word is used here, which, in another form, occurs in the previous part of the verse, and which is translated "like." The apostle meant doubtless to retain a reference to that in this place. "As they did not approve, ἐδοκιμασαν edokimasanor choose to retain God, etc. he gave them up to a mind disapproved, rejected, reprobate," ἀδοκιμον adokimonand he means that the state of their minds was such that God could not approve it. It does not mean that they were reprobate by any arbitrary decree; but that as a consequence of their headstrong passions, their determination to forget him, he left them to a state of mind which was evil, and which he could not approve.

Which are not convenient - Which are not fit or proper; which are disgraceful and shameful; to wit, those things which he proceeds to state in the remainder of the chapter.

Verse 29

Being filled - That is, the things which he specifies were common or abounded among them. This is a strong phrase, denoting that these things were so often practiced as that it might be said they were full of them. We have a phrase like this still, when we say of one that he is full of mischief, etc.

Unrighteousness - ἀδικία adikiaThis is a word denoting injustice, or iniquity in general. The particular specifications of the iniquity follow.

Fornication - This was a common and almost universal sin among the ancients, as it is among the moderns. The word denotes all illicit sexual intercourse. That this was a common crime among the ancient pagan, it would be easy to show, were it proper, even in relation to their wisest and most learned men. They who wish to see ample evidence of this charge may

find it in Tholuck‘s “Nature and Moral Influence of Heathenism,” in the Biblical Repository, vol. ii. p. 441-464.

Wickedness - The word used here denotes a desire of injuring others; or, as we should express it, malice. It is that depravity and obliquity of mind which strives to produce injury on others. (Calvin.)

Covetousness - Avarice, or the desire of obtaining what belongs to others. This vice is common in the world; but it would be particularly so where the other vices enumerated here abounded, and people were desirous of luxury, and the gratification of their senses. Rome was particularly desirous of the wealth of other nations, and hence, its extended wars, and the various evils of rapine and conquest.

Licentiousness - κακία kakiaThis word denotes evil in general; rather the act of doing wrong than the desire which was expressed before by the word “wickedness.”

Full of envy - “Pain, uneasiness, mortification, or discontent, excited by another‘s prosperity, accompanied with some degree of hatred or malignity, and often with a desire or an effort to depreciate the person, and with pleasure in seeing him depressed” (Webster). This passion is so common still, that it is not necessary to attempt to prove that it was common among the ancients. It seems to be natural to the human heart. It is one of the most common manifestations of wickedness, and shows clearly the deep depravity of man. Benevolence rejoices at the happiness of others, and seeks to promote it. But envy exists almost everywhere, and in almost every human bosom:

“All human virtue, to its latest breath,
Finds envy never conquered but by death.”
Pope.

Murder - “The taking of human life with premeditated malice by a person of a sane mind.” This is necessary to constitute murder now, but the word used here denotes all manslaughter, or taking human life, except what occurs as the punishment of crime. It is scarcely necessary to show that this was common among the Gentiles. It has prevailed in all communities, but it was particularly prevalent in Rome. It is necessary only to refer the reader to the common events in the Roman history of assassinations, deaths by poison, and the destruction of slaves. But in a special manner the charge was properly alleged against them, on account of the inhuman contests of the gladiators in the amphitheaters. These were common at Rome, and

constituted a favorite amusement with the people. Originally captives, slaves, and criminals were trained up for combat; but it afterward became common for even Roman citizens to engage in these bloody combats, and Nero at one show exhibited no less than four hundred senators and six hundred knights as gladiators.

The fondness for this bloody spectacle continued until the reign of Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor, by whom they were abolished about six hundred years after the original institution. "Several hundred, perhaps several thousand, victims were annually slaughtered in the great cities of the empire." Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chapter xxx. 404 a.d. As an instance of what might occur in this inhuman spectacle, we may refer to what took place on such an occasion in the reign of Probus (281 a.d.). During his triumph, near 700 gladiators were reserved to shed each other's blood for the amusement of the Roman people. But "disdaining to shed their blood for the amusement of the populace, they killed their keepers, broke from their place of confinement, and filled the streets of Rome with blood and confusion." Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chapter 12. With such views and with such spectacles before them, it is not wonderful that murder was regarded as a matter of little consequence, and hence, this crime prevailed throughout the world.

Debate - Our word debate does not commonly imply evil. It denotes commonly discussion for elucidating truth; or for maintaining a proposition, as the debates in Parliament, etc. But the word in the original meant also contention, strife, altercation, connected with anger and heated zeal; Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 1:11; 1 Corinthians 3:3; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:20; Philemon 1:15; 1 Timothy 6:4; Titus 3:9. This contention and strife would, of course, follow from malice and covetousness, etc.

Deceit - This denotes fraud, falsehood, etc. That this was common is also plain. The Cretans are testified by one of the Greek poets to have been always liars. Titus 1:12. Juvenal charges the same thing on the Romans. (Sat. iii. 41.) "What," says he, "should I do at Rome? I cannot lie." Intimating that if he were there, it would follow, of course, that he would be expected to be false. The same thing is still true. Writers on India tell us that the word of a Hindu even under oath is not to be regarded; and the same thing occurs in most pagan countries.

Malignity - This word signifies here, not malignity in general, but that particular species of it which consists in misinterpreting the words or

actions of others, or putting the worst construction on their conduct.

Whisperers - Those who secretly, and in a sly manner, by hints and inuendoes, detract from others, or excite suspicion of them. It does not mean those who openly calumniate, but that more dangerous class who give hints of evil in others, who affect great knowledge, and communicate the evil report under an injunction of secrecy, knowing that it will be divulged. This class of people abounds everywhere, and there is scarcely any one more dangerous to the peace or happiness of society.

Verse 30

Backbiters - Those Who calumniate, slander, or speak ill of those who are absent. Whisperers declare secretly, and with great reserve, the supposed faults of others. Backbiters proclaim them publicly and avowedly.

Haters of God - There is no charge which can be brought against people more severe than this. It is the highest possible crime; yet it is a charge which the conduct of people will abundantly justify, and the truth of which all those experience who are brought to see their true character. To an awakened sinner there is often nothing more plain and painful than that he is a hater of God. His heart rises up against Him, and his Law, and his plan of saving people; and he deeply feels that nothing can subdue this but the mighty power of the Holy One. This is a charge which is not unfrequently brought against people in the Bible; see John 7:7; John 15:18, John 15:24-25; John 3:19-20. Surely, if this be the native character of man, then it is "far gone from original righteousness." No more striking proof of depravity could be given; and in no creed or confession of faith is there a more painful and humiliating representation given of human wickedness, than in this declaration of an inspired apostle, that people are by nature haters of God.

Despiteful - This word denotes those who abuse, or treat with unkindness or disdain, those who are present. Whisperers and backbiters are those who calumniate those who are absent.

Proud - Pride is well understood. It is an inordinate self-esteem; an unreasonable conceit of one's superiority in talents, beauty, wealth, accomplishments, etc. (Webster). Of the existence of this everywhere, there is abundant proof. And it was particularly striking among the ancients. The sect of the Stoics was distinguished for it, and this was the general character of their philosophers. People will be proud where they suppose none are superior; and it is only the religion that reveals a great and infinite God, and

that teaches that all blessings are his gift, and that he has given us the station which we occupy, that will produce true humility. We may add, that the system of paganism did not disclose the wickedness of the heart, and that rids was a main reason why they were elevated in self-esteem.

Boasters - Those who arrogate to themselves what they do not possess, and glory on it. This is closely connected with pride. A man who has an inordinate self-conceit, will not be slow to proclaim his own merits to those around him.

Inventors of evil things - This doubtless refers to their seeking to find out new arts or plans to practice evil; new devices to gratify their lusts and passions; new forms of luxury, and vice, etc. So intent were they on practicing evil, so resolved to gratify their passions, that the mind was excited to discover new modes of gratification. In cities of luxury and vice, this has always been done. Vices change their form, people become satiated, and they are obliged to resort to some new form. The passions cease to be gratified with old forms of indulgence, and consequently people are obliged to resort to new devices to pamper their appetites, and to rekindle their dying passions to a flame. This was eminently true of ancient Rome; a place where all the arts of luxury, all the devices of passion, all the designs of splendid gratification, were called forth to excite and pamper the evil passions of people. Their splendid entertainments, their games, their theaters, their sports - cruel and bloody - were little else than new and ever-varying inventions of evil things to gratify the desires of lust and of pride.

Disobedient to parents - This expresses the idea that they did not show to parents that honor, respect, and attention which was due. This has been a crime of paganism in every age; and though among the Romans the duty of honoring parents was enjoined by the laws, yet it is not improbable that the duty was often violated, and that parents were treated with great neglect and even contempt. “Disobedience to parents was punished by the Jewish Law with death, and with the Hindus it is attended with the loss of the child‘s inheritance. The ancient Greeks considered the neglect of it to be extremely impious, and attended with the most certain effects of divine vengeance. Solon ordered all persons who refused to make due provision for their parents to be punished with infamy, and the same penalty was incurred for personal violence toward them.” Kent‘s Commentaries on American Law, vol. ii. p. 207; compare Virg. *AEniad*, ix. 283. The feelings of pride and haughtiness would lead to disregard of parents. It might also be felt that to

provide for them when aged and infirm was a burden; and hence, there would arise disregard for their wants, and probably open opposition to their wishes, as being the demands of petulance and age. It has been one characteristic of paganism every where, that it leaves children to treat their parents with neglect. Among the Sandwich islanders it was customary, when a parent was old, infirm, and sick beyond the hope of recovery, for his own children to bury him alive; and it has been the common custom in India for children to leave their aged parents to perish on the banks of the Ganges.

Verse 31

Without understanding - Inconsiderate, or foolish; see Romans 1:21-22.

Covenant breakers - Perfidious; false to their contracts.

Without natural affections - This expression denotes the lack of affectionate regard toward their children. The attachment of parents to children is one of the strongest in nature, and nothing can overcome it but the most confirmed and established wickedness. And yet the apostle charges on the pagan generally the lack of this affection. He doubtless refers here to the practice so common among pagans of exposing their children, or putting them to death. This crime, so abhorrent to all the feelings of humanity, was common among the pagan, and is still. The Canaanites, we are told Psalm 106:37-38, "sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan." Manasseh among the Jews imitated their example, and introduced the horrid custom of sacrificing children to Moloch, and set the example by offering his own; 2 Chronicles 33:6.

Among the ancient Persians it was a common custom to bury children alive. In most of the Grecian states, infanticide was not merely permitted, but actually enforced by law. The Spartan lawgiver expressly ordained that every child that was born should be examined by the ancient men of the tribe, and that if found weak or deformed, should be thrown into a deep cavern at the foot of Mount Taygetus. Aristotle, in his work on government, enjoins the exposure of children that are naturally feeble and deformed, in order to prevent an excess of population. But among all the nations of antiquity, the Romans were the most unrelenting in their treatment of infants. Romulus obliged the citizens to bring up all their male children, and the oldest of the females, proof that the others were to be destroyed. The

Roman father had an absolute right over the life of his child, and we have abundant proof that that right was often exercised.

Romulus expressly authorized the destruction of all children that were deformed, only requiring the parents to exhibit them to their five nearest neighbors, and to obtain their consent to their death. The law of the Twelve Tables enacted in the 301st year of Rome, sanctioned the same barbarous practice. Minucius Felix thus describes the barbarity of the Romans in this respect: "I see you exposing your infants to wild beasts and birds, or strangling them after the most miserable manner." (chapter xxx.) Pliny the older defends the right of parents to destroy their children, upon the ground of its being necessary in order to preserve the population within proper bounds. Tertullian, in his apology, expresses himself boldly on this subject. "How many of you (addressing himself to the Roman people, and to the governors of cities and provinces) might I deservedly charge with infant murder; and not only so, but among the different kinds of death, for choosing some of the cruelest for their own children, such as drowning, or starving with cold or hunger, or exposing to the mercy of dogs; dying by the sword being too sweet a death for children."

Nor was this practice arrested in the Roman government until the time of Constantine, the first Christian prince. The Phoenicians and Carthaginians were in the habit of sacrificing infants to the gods. It may be added that the crime is no less common among modern pagan nations. No less than 9000 children are exposed in Pekin in China annually. Persons are employed by the police to go through the city with carts every morning to pick up all the children that may have been thrown out during the night. The bodies are carried to a common pit without the walls of the city, into which all, whether dead or living, are promiscuously thrown. (Barrow's Travels in China, p. 113, Amos ed.) Among the Hindus the practice is perhaps still more common. In the provinces of Cutch and Guzerat alone the number of infantile murders amounted, according to the lowest calculation in 1807, to 3,000 annually; according to another calculation, to 30,000.

Females are almost the only victims. (Buchanan's Researches in Asia, Eng. ed. p. 49. Ward's View of the Hindus.) In Otaheite, previously to the conversion of the people to Christianity. it was estimated that at least two-

thirds of the children were destroyed. (Turnbull‘s Voyage round the World in 1800,2,3, and 4.) The natives of New South Wales were in the habit of burying the child with its mother, if she should happen to die. (Collins‘ Account of the Colony of New South Wales, p. 124,125.) Among the Hottentots, infanticide is a common crime. “The altars of the Mexicans were continually drenched in the blood of infants.” In Peru, no less than two hundred infants were sacrificed on occasion of the coronation of the Inca. The authority for these melancholy statements may be seen in Beck‘s Medical Jurisprudence, vol. i. 18-197, ed. 1823; see also Robertson‘s History of America, p. 221, ed. 1821. This is a specimen of the views and feelings of the pagan world; and the painful narrative might be continued to almost any length. After this statement, it cannot surely be deemed a groundless charge when the apostle accused them of being destitute of natural affection.

Implacable - This word properly denotes those who will not be reconciled where there is a quarrel; or who pursue the offender with unyielding revenge. It denotes an unforgiving temper; and was doubtless common among the ancients, as it is among all pagan people. The aborigines of America have given the most striking manifestation of this that the world has known. It is well known that among them, neither time nor distance will obliterate the memory of an offence; and that the avenger will pursue the offender over hills and streams, and through heat or snow, happy if he may at last, though at the expiration of years, bury the tomahawk in the head of his victim, though it may be at the expense of his own life. See Robertson‘s America, book iv. Section lxxiii. - lxxxi.

Unmerciful - Destitute of compassion. As a proof of this, we may remark that no provisions for the poor or the infirm were made among the pagan. The sick and the infirm were cast out, and doomed to depend on the stinted charity of individuals. Pure religion, only, opens the heart to the appeals of want; and nothing but Christianity has yet expanded the hearts of people to make public provisions for the poor, the ignorant, and the afflicted.

Verse 32

Who knowing - That the Gentiles had a moral sense, or were capable of knowing the will of God in this case, is clear from Romans 2:14-15. The means which they had of arriving at the knowledge of God were, their own reason, their conscience, and an observation of the effects of depravity.

The judgment of God - The word "judgment" here denotes the declared sentiment of God that such things deserved death. It does not mean his inflictions, or his statutes or precepts; but it means that God thought or judged that they which did such things ought to die. As they were aware of this, it showed their guilt in still persevering in the face of his judgments, and his solemn purpose to inflict punishment.

Were worthy of death - The word "death" in the Scriptures is often used to denote punishment. But it does not mean here that these deserved capital punishment from the civil magistrate, but that they knew they were evil, and offensive to God, and deserving of punishment from his hand; see John 8:51; Romans 5:12-19.

Have pleasure … - They delight in those who commit sin; and hence, encourage them in it, and excite them to it. This was a grievous aggravation of the offence. It greatly heightens guilt when we excite others to do it, and seduce them from the ways of innocence. That this was the case with the pagan there can be no doubt. People do not commit sin often alone. They need the countenance of others. They "join hand in hand," and become confederate in iniquity. All social sins are of this class; and most of those which the apostle mentioned were sins of this character.

If this revolting and melancholy picture of the pagan world was a true representation, then it was clear that there was need of some other plan of religion. And that it was true has already in part been seen. In the conclusion of this chapter we may make a few additional observations.

1. The charges which the apostle makes here were evidently those which were well known. He does not even appeal to their writings, as he does on some other occasions, for proof; compare Titus 1:12. So well known were they, that there was no need of proof. A writer would not advance charges in this manner unless he was confident that they were well-founded, and could not be denied.

2. They are abundantly sustained by the pagan writers themselves. This we have in part seen In addition we may adduce the testimony of two Roman writers respecting the state of things at Rome in the time of the apostle. Livy says of the age of Augustus, in some respects the brightest period of the Roman history, "Rome has increased by her virtues until now, when we can neither bear our vices nor their remedy." Preface to his

History. Seneca, one of the purest moralists of Rome, who died in 65 a.d., says of his own time, “All is full of criminality and vice; indeed much more of these is committed than can be remedied by force. A monstrous contest of abandoned wickedness is carried on. The lust of sin increases daily; and shame is daily more and more extinguished. Discarding respect for all that is good and sacred, lust rushes on wherever it will. Vice no longer hides itself. It stalks forth before all eyes. So public has abandoned wickedness become, and so openly does it flame up in the minds of all, that innocence is no longer seldom, but has wholly ceased to exist.” Seneca de Ira, ii. 8. Further authorities of this kind could be easily given, but these will show that the apostle Paul did not speak at random when he charged them with these enormous crimes.

3. If this was the state of things, then it was clear that there was need of another plan of saving people. It will be remembered that, in these charges, the apostle speaks of the most enlightened and refined nations of antiquity; and especially that he speaks of the Romans at the very height of their power, intelligence, and splendor. The experiment whether man could save himself by his own works, had been fairly made. After all that their greatest philosophers could do, this was the result, and it is clear that there was need of some better plan than this. More profound and laborious philosophers than had arisen, the pagan world could not hope to see; more refinement and civilization than then existed, the world could not expect to behold under paganism. At this time, when the experiment had been made for four thousand years, and when the inefficacy of all human means, even under the most favorable circumstances, to reform mankind, had been tried, the gospel was preached to people. It disclosed another plan; and its effects were seen at once throughout the most abandoned states and cities of the ancient world.

4. If this was the state of things in the ancient pagan world, the same may be expected to be the state of paganism still. And it is so. The account given here of ancient pagans would apply substantially still to the pagan world. The same things have been again and again witnessed in China, and Hindostan, and Africa, the Sandwich islands, and in aboriginal America. It would be easy to multiply proofs almost without end of this: and to this day

the pagan world is exhibiting substantially the same characteristics that it was in the time of Paul.

5. There was need of some better religion than the pagan. After all that infidels and deists have said of the sufficiency of natural religion, yet here is the sad result. This shows what man can do, and these facts will demonstrate forever that there was need of some other religion than that furnished by the light of nature.

6. The account in this chapter shows the propriety of missionary exertions. So Paul judged; and so we should judge still. If this be the state of the world, and if Christianity, as all Christians believe, contains the remedy for all these evils, then it is wisdom and benevolence to send it to them. And it is not wisdom or benevolence to withhold it from them. Believing as they do, Christians are bound to send the gospel to the pagan world. It is on this principle that modern missions to the pagan are established; and if the toils of the apostles were demanded to spread the gospel, then are the labors of Christians now. If it was right, and wise, and proper for them to go to other lands to proclaim "the unsearchable riches of Christ," then it is equally proper and wise to do it now. If there was danger that the pagan world then would perish without the gospel, there is equal danger that the pagan world will perish now.

7. If it should be said that many of these things are practiced now in nations which are called Christian, and that, therefore, the charge of the apostle that this was the effect of paganism could not be well-founded, we may reply,

(1) That this is true, too true. But this very fact shows the deep and dreadful depravity of human nature. If such things exist in lands that have a revelation, what mush have been the state of those countries that had none of its restraints and influences? But,

(2) These things do not exist where religion exerts its influence. They are not in the bosom of the Christian church. They are not practiced by Christians. And the effect of the Christian religion, so far as it has influence, is to call off people from such vices, and to make them holy and pure in

their life. Let religion exert its full influence on any nominally Christian nation, and these things would cease. Let it send its influence into other lands, and the world, the now polluted world, would become pure before God.

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Verse 1

Therefore - Διὸ DioThe force of this word here has been the subject of much discussion. The design of this and the following chapter is to show that the Jews were no less guilty that the Gentiles, and that they needed the benefit of the same salvation. This the apostle does by showing that they had greater light than the Gentiles; and yet that they did the same things. Still they were in the habit of accusing and condemning the Gentiles as wicked and abandoned; while they excused themselves on the ground that they possessed the Law and the oracles of God, and were his favorite people. The apostle here affirms that they were inexcusable in their sins, that they must be condemned in the sight of God, on the same ground on which they condemned the Gentiles; to wit, that they had light and yet committed wickedness. If the Gentiles were without excuse Romans 1:20 in their sins, much more would the Jew, who condemned them, be without excuse on the same ground. The word therefore, I suppose, refers not to any particular word in the previous chapter, or to any particular verse, but to the general considerations which were suggested by a view of the whole case. And its sense might be thus expressed. "Since you Jews condemn the Gentiles for their sins, on the ground that they have the means of knowing their duty, therefore, you who are far more favored than they, are entirely without an excuse for the same things."

Thou art inexcusable - This does not mean that they were inexcusable for judging others; but that they had no excuse for their sins before God; or that they were under condemnation for their crimes, and needed the benefits of another plan of justification. As the Gentiles whom they judged were condemned, and were without excuse Romans 1:20, so were the Jews who condemned them without excuse on the same principle; and in a still greater degree.

O man - This address is general to any man who should do this. But it is plain, from the connection, that he means especially the Jews. The use of this word is an instance of the apostle's skill in argument. If he had openly named the Jews here, it would have been likely to have excited opposition from them. He therefore approaches the subject gradually, affirms it of man in general, and then makes a particular application to the Jews. This he does not do, however, until he has advanced so far in the general principles of his

argument that it would be impossible for them to evade his conclusions; and then he does it in the most tender, and kind, as well as convincing manner, Romans 2:17, etc.

Whosoever thou art that judgest - The word "judgest" (κρίνεις krineis) here is used in the sense of condemning. It is not a word of equal strength with what is rendered "condemnest" (κατακρίνεις katakrineis). It implies, however, that they were accustomed to express themselves freely and severely of the character and doom of the Gentiles. And from the New Testament, as well as from their own writings, there can be no doubt that such was the fact; that they regarded the entire Gentile world with abhorrence, considered them as shut out from the favor of God, and applied to them terms expressive of the utmost contempt. Compare Matthew 15:27.

For wherein - For in the "same thing." This implies that substantially the same crimes which were committed among the pagan were also committed among the Jews.

Thou judgest another - The meaning of this clearly is, "for the same thing for which you condemn the pagan, you condemn yourselves."

Thou that judgest - You Jews who condemn other nations.

Doest the same things - It is clearly implied here, that they were guilty of offences similar to those practiced by the Gentiles. It would not be a just principle of interpretation to press this declaration as implying that precisely the same offences, and to the same extent, were chargeable on them. Thus, they were not guilty, in the time of the apostle, of idolatry; but of the other crimes enumerated in the first chapter, the Jews might be guilty. The character of the nation, as given in the New Testament, is that they were "an evil and adulterous generation" (Matthew 12:39; compare John 8:7); that they were a "generation of vipers" Matthew 3:7; Matthew 12:34; that; they were wicked Matthew 12:45; that they were sinful Mark 8:38; that they were proud, haughty, hypocritical, etc.; John 8:1, etc. Thus, David readily condemned the supposed act of injustice mentioned by Nathan; 2 Samuel 12:1-6. Thus, also kings and emperors have enacted severe laws against the very crimes which they have constantly committed themselves. Nero executed the laws of the Roman Empire against the very crimes which he was constantly committing; and it was a common practice for Roman masters to commit offences which they punished with death in their slaves. (See instances in Grotius on this place.)

(3) Remarkable zeal against sin may be no proof of innocence; compare Matthew 7:3. The zeal of persecutors, and often of pretended reformers, may be far from proof that they are free from the very offences which they are condemning in others. It may all be the work of the hypocrite to conceal some base design; or of the man who seeks to show his hostility to one kind of sin, in order to be a salvo to his conscience for committing some other.

(4) the heart is deceitful. When we judge others we should make it a rule to examine ourselves on that very point. Such an examination might greatly mitigate the severity of our judgment; or might turn the whole of our indignation against ourselves.

Verse 2

But we are sure - Greek, "We know." That is, it is the common and admitted sentiment of mankind. It is known and believed by people generally that God will punish such crimes. It is implied in this declaration that this was known to the Jews, and it was particularly to the purpose of the apostle so to express himself as to include the Jews. They knew it because it was everywhere taught in the Old Testament, and it was the acknowledged doctrine of the nation. The design of the apostle here, says Calvin, is to take away the subterfuges of the hypocrite, lest he should pride himself if he obtained the praise of human beings, for a far more important trial awaited him at the bar of God. Outwardly he might appear well to people; but God searched the heart, and saw the secret as well as the open deeds of people, and they who practiced secretly what they condemned openly, could not expect to escape the righteous judgment of God. God, without respect of persons would punish wickedness, whether it was open, as among the Gentiles, or whether it was concealed under the guise of great regard for religion, as among the Jews.

The judgment of God - That God condemns it, and will punish it. He regards those who do these things as guilty, and will treat them accordingly.

According to truth - This expression is capable of two meanings. The Hebrews sometimes use it to denote truly or certainly. God will certainly judge and punish such deeds. Another meaning, which is probably the correct one here, is that God will judge those who are guilty of such things, not according to appearance, but in integrity, and with righteousness. He will judge people according to the real nature of their conduct, and not as

their conduct may appear to people. The secret, as well as the open sinner therefore; the hypocrite, as well as the abandoned profligate, must expect to be judged according to their true character. This meaning comports with the design of the apostle, which is to show that the Jew, who secretly and hypocritically did the very things which he condemned in the Gentile, could not escape the righteous judgment of God.

Against him - That is, against every man, no matter of what age or nation.

Which commit such things - The crimes enumerated in Matthew 5:28. When people desire to do evil, and are prevented by the providence of God, it is right to punish them for their evil intentions. The fact that God, prevents them from carrying their evil purposes into execution, does not constitute a difference between their real character and the character of those who are suffered to act out their wicked designs.

Verse 3

And thinkest thou … - This is an appeal to their common sense, to their deep and instinctive conviction of what was right. If they condemned those who practiced these things; if, imperfect and obscure as their sense of justice was; if, unholy as they were, they yet condemned those who were guffey of these offences, would not a holy and just God be far more likely to pronounce judgment? And could they escape who had themselves delivered a similar sentence? God is of "purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity, Habakkuk 1:13. And if people condemned their fellow-men, how much more would a pure and holy God condemn iniquity. This appeal is evidently directed against the Jew. It was doubtless a prevalent sentiment among them, that provided they adhered to the rites of their religion, and observed the ceremonial law, God would not judge them with the same severity as he would the abandoned and idolatrous Gentiles: compare Matthew 3:9; John 8:33. The apostle shows them that crime is crime, wherever committed: that sin does not lose its essential character by being committed in the midst of religious privileges; and that those who professed to be the people of God have no special license to sin. Antinomians in all ages, like the Jews, have supposed that they, being the friends of God, have a right to do many things which would not be proper in others; that what would be sin in others, they may commit with impunity; and that God will not be strict to mark the offences of his people. Against all this Paul is directly opposed, and the Bible uniformly teaches that the

most aggravated sins among people are those committed by the professed people of God; compare Isaiah 1:11-17; Isaiah 65:2-5; Revelation 3:16.

Verse 4

Or despisest - This word properly means to contemn, or to treat with neglect. It does not mean here that they professedly treated God‘s goodness with neglect or contempt; but that they perverted and abused it; they did not make a proper use of it; they did not regard it as suited to lead them to repentance; but they derived a practical impression, that because God had not come forth in judgment and cut them off, but had continued to follow them with blessings, that therefore he did not regard them as sinners, or they inferred that they were innocent and safe. This argument the Jews were accustomed to use (compare Luke 13:1-5; John 9:2); and thus sinners still continue to abuse the goodness and mercy of God.

The riches of his goodness - This is a Hebrew mode of speaking, for "his rich goodness," that is, for his abundant or great goodness. Riches denote superfluity, or what abounds, or which exceeds a man‘s present desires; and hence, the word in the New Testament is used to denote abundance; or what is very great and valuable; see the note at Romans 9:23; compare Romans 11:12, Romans 11:33; 2 Corinthians 8:2; Ephesians 1:7, Ephesians 1:18; Ephesians 3:8, Ephesians 3:16; Colossians 1:27; Ephesians 2:4. The word is used here to qualify each of the words which follow it, his rich goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering.

Goodness - Kindness, benignity.

Forbearance - ἀνοχῆς anochēsLiterally, his holding-in or restraining his indignation; or forbearing to manifest his displeasure against sin.

Long-suffering - This word denotes his slowness to anger; or his suffering them to commit sins long without punishing them. It does not differ essentially from forbearance. This is shown by his not coming forth, at the moment that sin is committed, to punish it. He might do it justly, but he spares people from day to day, and year to year, to give them opportunity to repent, and be saved. The way in which people despise or abuse the goodness of God is to infer that He does not intend to punish sin; that they may do it safely; and instead of turning from it, to go on in committing it more constantly, as if they were safe. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil," Ecclesiastes 8:11. The same thing was true in the time of Peter; 2 Peter 3:3-4. And the same thing is true of wicked people in

every age; nor is there a more decisive proof of the wickedness of the human heart, than this disposition to abuse the goodness of God, and because he shows kindness and forbearance, to take occasion to plunge deeper into sin, to forget his mercy, and to provoke him to anger.

Not knowing - Not considering. The word used here, ἀγνοῶν agnoōnmeans not merely to be ignorant of, but it denotes such a degree of inattention as to result in ignorance. Compare Hosea 2:8. In this sense it denotes a voluntary, and therefore a criminal ignorance.

Leadeth thee … - Or the tendency, the design of the goodness of God is to induce people to repent of their sins, and not to lead them to deeper and more aggravated iniquity. The same sentiment is expressed in 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." See also Isaiah 30:18, "And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you;" Hosea 5:15; Ezekiel 18:23, Ezekiel 18:32.

Repentance - Change of mind, and purpose, and life. The word here evidently means, not merely sorrow, but a forsaking of sin, and turning from it. The tendency of God's goodness and forbearance to lead people to repentance, is manifest in the following ways.

(1) it shows the evil of transgression when it is seen to be committed against so kind and merciful a Being.

(2) it is suited to melt and soften the heart. Judgments often harden the sinner's heart, and make him obstinate. But if while he does evil God is as constantly doing him good; if the patience of God is seen from year to year, while the man is rebellious, it is adapted to melt and subdue the heart.

(3) the great mercy of God in this often appears to people to be overwhelming; and so it would to all, if they saw it as it is. God bears with people from childhood to youth; from youth to manhood; from manhood to old age; often while they violate every law, contemn his mercy, profane his name, and disgrace their species; and still, notwithstanding all this, his anger is turned away, and the sinner lives, and "riots in the beneficence of God." If there is anything that can affect the heart of man, it is this; and when he is brought to see it, and contemplate it, it rushes over the soul and overwhelms it with bitter sorrow.

(4) the mercy and forbearance of God are constant. The manifestations of his goodness come in every form; in the sun, and light, and air; in the rain, the stream, the dew-drop; in food, and raiment, and home; in friends, and liberty, and protection; in health, and peace; and in the gospel of Christ, and the offers of life; and in all these ways God is appealing to his creatures each moment. and setting before them the evils of ingratitude, and beseeching them to turn and live.

And from this passage, we cannot but remark,

(1)That the most effectual preaching is what sets before people most of the goodness of God.

(2)every man is under obligation to forsake his sins, and turn to God. There is no man who has not seen repeated proofs of his mercy and love.

(3)sin is a stubborn and an amazing evil.

Where it can resist all the appeals of God‘s mercy; where the sinner can make his way down to hell through all the proofs of God‘s goodness; where he can refuse to hear God speaking to him each day, and each hour, it shows an amazing extent of depravity to resist all this, and still remain a sinner. Yet there are thousands and millions who do it; and who can be won by no exhibition of love or mercy to forsake their sins, and turn to God. Happy is the man who is melted into contrition by the goodness of God, and who sees and mourns over the evil of sinning against so good a Being as is the Creator and Parent of all.

Verse 5

But after thy hardness - The word “after” here κατά katameans in respect to, or you act according to the direct tendency of a hard heart in treasuring up wrath. The word “hardness” is used to denote insensibility of mind. It properly means what is insensible to the touch, or on which no impression is made by contact, as a stone, etc. Hence, it is applied to the mind, to denote a state where no motives make an impression; which is insensible to all the appeals made to it; see Matthew 25:24; Matthew 19:8; Acts 19:9. And here it expresses a state of mind where the goodness and forbearance of God have no effect. The man still remains obdurate, to use a word which has precisely the meaning of the Greek in this place. It is implied in this expression that the direct tendency, or the inevitable result, of that state of mind was to treasure up wrath, etc.

Impenitent heart - A heart which is not affected with sorrow for sin, in view of the mercy and goodness of God. This is an explanation of what he meant by hardness.

Treasurest up - To treasure up, or to lay up treasure, commonly denotes a laying by in a place of security of property that may be of use to us at some future period. In this place it is used, however, in a more general sense, to accumulate, to increase. It still has the idea of hoarding up, carries the thought beautifully and impressively onward to future times. Wrath, like wealth treasured up, is not exhausted at present, and hence, the sinner becomes bolder in sin. But it exists, for future use; it is kept in store (compare 2 Peter 3:7) against future times; and the man who commits sin is only increasing this by every act of transgression. The same sentiment is taught in a most solemn manner in Deuteronomy 32:34-35. It may be remarked here, that most people have an immense treasure of this kind in store, which eternal ages of pain will not exhaust or diminish! Stores of wrath are thus reserved for a guilty world, and in due time it "will come upon man to the uttermost," 1 Thessalonians 2:16.

Unto thyself - For thyself, and not for another; to be exhausted on thee, and not on your fellow-man. This is the case with every sinner, as really and as certainly as though he were the only solitary mortal in existence.

Wrath - Note, Romans 1:18.

Day of wrath - The day when God shall show or execute his wrath against sinners; compare Revelation 6:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; John 3:36; Ephesians 5:6.

And revelation - On the day when the righteous judgment of God will be revealed, or made known. Here we learn:

(1) That the punishment of the wicked will be just. It will not he a judgment of caprice or tyranny, but a righteous judgment, that is, such a judgment as it will be right to render, or as ought to be rendered, and therefore such as God will render, for he will do right; 2 Thessalonians 1:6.

(2) the punishment of the wicked is future. It is not exhausted in this life. It is treasured up for a future day, and that day is a day of wrath. How contrary to this text are the pretences of those who maintain that all punishment is executed in this life.

(3) how foolish as well as wicked is it to lay up such a treasure for the future; to have the only inheritance in the eternal world, an inheritance of wrath and wo!

Verse 6

Who will render - That is, who will make retribution as a righteous Judge; or who will give to every man as he deserves.

To every man - To each one. This is a general principle, and it is clear that in this respect God would deal with the Jew as he does with the Gentile. This general principle the apostle is establishing, that he may bring it to bear on the Jew, and to show that he cannot escape simply because he is a Jew.

According to his deeds - That is, as he deserves; or God will be just, and will treat every man as he ought to be treated, or according to his character. The word "deeds" (ἔργα erga)is sometimes applied to the external conduct. But it is plain that this is not its meaning here. It denotes everything connected with conduct, including the acts of the mind, the motives, the principles, as well as the mere external act. Our word character more aptly expresses it than any single word. It is not true that God will treat people according to their external conduct: but the whole language of the Bible implies that he will judge people according to the whole of their conduct, including their thoughts, and principles, and motives; that is, as they deserve. The doctrine of this place is abundantly taught elsewhere in the Bible, Proverbs 24:12; Matthew 16:27; Revelation 20:12; Jeremiah 32:19. It is to be observed here that the apostle does not say that people will be rewarded for their deeds, (compare Luke 17:10,) but according to κατά katatheir deeds. Christians will be saved on account of the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, Titus 3:5, but still the rewards of heaven will be according to their works; that is, they who have labored most, and been most faithful, shall receive the highest reward, or their fidelity in their Master‘s service shall be the measure or rule according to which the rewards of heaven shall be distributed, Matthew 25:14-29. Thus, the ground or reason why they are saved shall be the merits of the Lord Jesus. The measure of their happiness shall be according to their character and deeds. On what principle God will distribute his rewards the apostle proceeds immediately to state.

Verse 7

To them - Whoever they may be.

Patient continuance - Who by perseverance in well doing, or in a good work. It means that they who so continue, or persevere, in good works as to evince that they are disposed to obey the Law of God. It does not mean those who perform one single act, but those who so live as to show that this is their character to obey God. It is the uniform doctrine of the Bible that none will be saved but those who persevere in a life of holiness, Revelation 2:10; Matthew 10:22; Hebrews 10:38-39. No other conduct gives evidence of piety but what continues in the ways of righteousness. Nor has God ever promised eternal life to people unless they so persevere in a life of holiness as to show that this is their character, their settled and firm rule of action. The words well doing here denote such conduct as shall be conformed to the Law of God; not merely external conduct, but that which proceeds from a heart attached to God and his cause.

Seek for - This word properly denotes the act of endeavoring to find any thing that is lost, Matthew 18:12; Luke 2:48-49. But it also denotes the act when one earnestly strives, or desires to obtain anything; when he puts forth his efforts to accomplish it. Thus, Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," etc. Acts 16:10; 1 Corinthians 10:24; Luke 13:24. In this place it denotes an earnest and intense desire to obtain eternal life. It does not mean simply the desire of a sinner to be happy, or the efforts of those who are not willing to forsake their sins and yield to God, out the intense effort of those who are willing to forsake all their crimes, and submit to God and obey his laws.

Glory and honour and immortality - The three words used here, denote the happiness of the heavenly world. They vary somewhat in their meaning, and are each descriptive of something in heaven, that renders it an object of intense desire. The expressions are cumulative, or they are designed to express the happiness of heaven in the highest possible degree. The word "glory" δόξαν doxandenotes properly praise, celebrity, or anything distinguished for beauty, ornament, majesty, splendor, as of the sun, etc.; and then it is used to denote the highest happiness or felicity, as expressing everything that shall be splendid, rich, and grand. It denotes that there will be an absence of every thing mean, grovelling, obscure. The word "honor" (τιμὴν timēn) implies rather the idea of reward, or just retribution - the honor and reward which shall be conferred in heaven on the friends of

God. It stands opposed to contempt, poverty, and want among people. Here they are despised by people; there, they shall be honored by God.

Immortality - That which is not corruptible or subject to decay. It is applied to heaven as a state where there shall be no decay or death, in strong contrast with our present condition, where all things are corruptible, and soon vanish away. These expressions are undoubtedly descriptive of a state of things beyond the grave. They are never applied in the Scriptures to any condition of things on the earth. This consideration proves, therefore, that the expressions in the next verse, indignation, etc. apply to the punishment of the wicked beyond the grave.

Eternal life - That is, God will "render" eternal life to those who seek it in this manner. This is a great principle; and this shows that the apostle means by "their deeds" Romans 2:6, not merely their external conduct, but their inward thoughts, and efforts evinced by their seeking for glory, etc. For the meaning of the expression "eternal life," see the note at John 5:24.

Verse 8

Who are contentious - This expression usually denotes those who are of a quarrelsome or litigious disposition; and generally has reference to controversies among people. But here it evidently denotes a disposition toward God, and is of the same signification as rebellious, or as opposing God. They who contend with the Almighty; who resist his claims, who rebel against his laws, and refuse to submit to his requirements, however made known. The Septuagint use the verb to translate the Hebrew word מרה maarahin Deuteronomy 21:20. One striking characteristic of the sinner is, that he contends with God, that is, that he opposes and resists his claims. This is the case with all sinners; and it was particularly so with the Jews, and hence, the apostle used the expression here to characterize them particularly. His argument he intended to apply to the Jews, and hence he used such an expression as would exactly describe them. This character of being a rebellious people was one which was often charged on the Jewish nation, Deuteronomy 9:7, Deuteronomy 9:24; Deuteronomy 31:27; Isaiah 1:2; Isaiah 30:9; Isaiah 65:2; Jeremiah 5:23; Ezekiel 2:8, Ezekiel 2:5.

Do not obey the truth - Compare Romans 1:18. The truth here denotes the divine will, which is alone the light of truth (Calvin). It means true doctrine in opposition to false opinions; and to refuse to obey it is to regard it as false, and to resist its influence. The truth here means all the correct representations which had been made of God, and his perfections, and law,

and claims, whether by the light of nature or by revelation. The description thus included Gentiles and Jews, but particularly the latter, as they had been more signally favored with the light of truth. It had been an eminent characteristic of the Jews that they had refused to obey the commands of the true God, Joshua 5:6; Judges 2:2; Judges 6:10; 2 Kings 18:12; Jeremiah 3:13, Jeremiah 3:25; Jeremiah 42:21; Jeremiah 43:4, Jeremiah 43:7; Jeremiah 9:13.

But obey unrighteousness - The expression means that they yielded themselves to iniquity, and thus became the servants of sin, Romans 6:13, Romans 6:16-17, Romans 6:19. Iniquity thus may be said to reign over people, as they follow the dictates of evil, make no resistance to it, and implicitly obey all its hard requirements.

Indignation and wrath - That is, these shall be rendered to those who are contentious, etc. The difference between indignation and wrath, says Ammonius, is that the former is of short duration, but the latter is a long continued remembrance of evil. The one is temporary, the other denotes continued expressions of hatred of evil. Eustathius says that the word "indignation" denotes the internal emotion, but wrath the external manifestation of indignation. (Tholuck.) Both words refer to the opposition which God will cherish and express against sin in the world of punishment.

Verse 9

Tribulation - This word commonly denotes affliction, or the situation of being pressed down by a burden, as of trials, calamities, etc.; and hence, to be pressed down by punishment or pain inflicted for sins. As applied to future punishment, it denotes the pressure of the calamities that will come upon the soul as the just reward of sin.

And anguish - στενοχωρία stenochōriaThis noun is used in but three other places in the New Testament; Romans 8:35; 2 Corinthians 6:4; 2 Corinthians 12:10. The verb is used in 2 Corinthians 4:8; 2 Corinthians 6:12. It means literally narrowness of place, lack of room, and then the anxiety and distress of mind which a man experiences who is pressed on every side by afflictions, and trials, and want, or by punishment, and who does not know where he may turn himself to find relief. (Schleusner.) It is thus expressive of the punishment of the wicked. It means that they shall be compressed with the manifestations of God's displeasure, so as to be in deep distress, and so as not to know where to find relief. These words affliction and anguish are often connected; Romans 8:35.

Upon every soul of man - Upon all people. In Hebrew the word "soul" often denotes the man himself. But still, the apostles, by the use of this word here, meant perhaps to signify that the punishment should not be corporeal, but afflicting the soul. It should be a spiritual punishment, a punishment of mind. (Ambrose. See Tholuck.)

Of the Jew first - Having stated the general principle of the divine administration, he comes now to make the application. To the principle there could be no objection. And the apostle now shows that it was applicable to the Jew as well as the Greek, and to the Jew pre-eminently. It was applicable first, or in an eminent degree, to the Jew, because,

(1)He had been especially favored with light and knowledge on all these subjects.

(2)these principles were fully stated in his own Law, and were in strict accordance with all the teaching of the prophets; see the note at Romans 2:6; also Psalm 7:11; Psalm 9:17; Psalm 139:19; Proverbs 14:32.

Of the Gentile - That is, of all who were not Jews. On what principles God will inflict punishment on them, he states in Romans 2:12-16. It is clear that this refers to the future punishment of the wicked, for,

(1) It stands in contrast with the eternal life of those who seek for glory Romans 2:7. If this description of the effect of sin refers to this life, then the effects spoken of in relation to the righteous refer to this life also. But in no place in the Scriptures is it said that people experience all the blessings of eternal life in this world; and the very supposition is absurd.

(2) it is not true that there is a just and complete retribution to every man, according to his deeds, in this life. Many of the wicked are prospered in life, and "there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm;" Psalm 73:4. Many of the righteous pine in poverty and want and affliction, and die in the flames of persecution. Nothing is more clear than there is not in this life a full and equitable distribution of rewards and punishments; and as the proposition, of the apostle here is, that God will render to every man according to his deeds Romans 2:6, it follows that this must be accomplished in another world.

(3) the Scriptures uniformly affirm, that for the very things specified here, God will consign people to eternal death; 2 Thessalonians 1:8, "In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey

not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction," etc.; 1 Peter 4:17. We may remark also, that there could be no more alarming description of future suffering than is specified in this passage. It is indignation; it is wrath; it is tribulation; it is anguish which the sinner is to endure forever. Truly people exposed to this awful doom should be alarmed, and should give diligence to escape from the woe which is to come.

Verse 11

For - This particle is used here to confirm what is said before, particularly that this punishment should be experienced by the Jew as well as the Gentile. For God would deal with both on the principles of justice.

Respect of persons - The word thus rendered means "partiality," in pronouncing judgment, in favoring one party or individual more than another, not because his cause is more just, but on account of something personal - on account of his wealth, or rank, or function, or influence, or by personal friendship, or by the fear of him. It has special reference to a judge who pronounces judgment between parties at law. The exercise of such partiality was strictly and often forbidden to the Jewish magistrates; Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:17; Proverbs 24:23; James 2:1, James 2:3, James 2:9. In his capacity as a Judge, it is applied often to God. It means that he will not be influenced in awarding the retributions of eternity, in actually pronouncing and executing sentence, by any partiality, or by regard to the wealth, function, rank, or appearance of people. He will judge righteous judgment; he will judge people as they ought to be judged; according to their character and deserts; and not contrary to their character, or by partiality.

The connection here demands that this affirmation should be limited solely to his dealing with people as their judge. And in this sense, and this only, this is affirmed often of God in the Scriptures; Deuteronomy 10:17; 2 Chronicles 19:7; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25; Galatians 6:7-8; 1 Peter 1:17; Acts 10:34. It does not affirm that he must make all his creatures equal in talent, health, wealth, or privilege; it does not imply that, as a sovereign, he may not make a difference in their endowments, their beauty, strength, or graces; it does not imply that he may not bestow his favors where he pleases where all are undeserving, or that he may not make a difference in the characters of people by his providence, and by the agency

of his Spirit. All these are actually done, done not out of any respect to their persons, to their rank, function, or wealth, but according to his own sovereign good pleasure; 1 John 2:1-2.

Verse 12

For - This is used to give a reason for what he had just said, or to show on what principles God would treat man, so as not to be a respecter of persons.

As many - Whosoever. This includes all who have done it, and evidently has respect to the Gentile world. It is of the more importance to remark this, because he does not say that it is applicable to a few only, or to great and incorrigible instances of pagan wickedness, but it is a universal, sweeping declaration, obviously including all.

Have sinned - Have been guilty of crimes of any kind toward God or man. Sin is the transgression of a rule of conduct, however made known to mankind.

Without law - ἀνόμως anomōsThis expression evidently means without revealed or written law, as the apostle immediately says that they had a law of nature, Romans 2:14-15. The word "law," νόμος nomosis often used to denote the revealed Law of God, the Scriptures, or revelation in general; Matthew 12:5; Luke 2:23-24; Luke 10:26; John 8:5, John 8:17.

Shall also perish - ἀπολοῦνται apolountaiThe Greek word used here occurs frequently in the New Testament. It means to destroy, to lose, or to corrupt, and is applied to life, Matthew 10:39; to a reward of labor, Matthew 10:42; to wisdom 1 Corinthians 1:19; to bottles, Matthew 9:17. It is also used to denote future punishment, or the destruction of soul and body in hell, Matthew 10:28; Matthew 18:14; John 3:15, where it is opposed to eternal life, and therefore denotes eternal death; Romans 14:15; John 17:12. In this sense the word is evidently used in this verse. The connection demands that the reference should be to a future judgment to be passed on the pagan. It will be remarked here that the apostle does not say they shall be saved without law. He does not give even an intimation respecting their salvation. The strain of the argument, as well as this express declaration, shows that they who had sinned - and in the first chapter he had proved that all the pagan were sinners - would be punished. If any of the pagan are saved, it will be, therefore, an exception to the general rule in regard to them. The apostles evidently believed that the great mass of them

would be destroyed. On this ground they evinced such zeal to save them; on this ground the Lord Jesus commanded the gospel to be preached to them; and on this ground Christians are now engaged in the effort to bring them to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. It may be added here, that all modern investigations have gone to confirm the position that the pagan are as degraded now as they were in the time of Paul.

Without law - That is, they shall not be judged by a law which they have not. They shall not be tried and condemned by the revelation which the Jews had. They shall be condemned only according to the knowledge and the Law which they actually possess. This is the equitable rule on which God will judge the world. According to this, it is not to be apprehended that they will suffer as much as those who have the revealed will of God; compare Matthew 10:15; Matthew 11:24; Luke 10:12.

Have sinned in the law - Have sinned having the revealed will of God, or endowed with greater light and privileges than the pagan world. The apostle here has undoubted reference to the Jews, who had the Law of God, and who prided themselves much on its possession.

Shall be judged by the law - This is an equitable and just rule; and to this the Jews could make no objection. Yet the admission of this would have led directly to the point to which Paul was conducting his argument, to show that they also were under condemnation, and needed a Saviour. It will be observed here, that the apostle uses a different expression in regard to the Jews from what he does of the Gentiles. He says of the former, that they "shall be judged;" of the latter, that they "shall perish." It is not certainly known why he varied this expression. But if conjecture may be allowed, it may have been for the following reasons.

(1) if he had a affirmed of the Jews that they should perish, it would at once have excited their prejudice, and have armed them against the conclusion to which he was about to come. Yet they could bear the word to be applied to the pagan, for it was in accordance with their own views and their own mode of speaking, and was strictly true.

(2) the word "judged" is apparently more mild, and yet really more severe. It would arouse no prejudice to say that they would be judged by their Law. It was indeed paying a sort of tribute or regard to that on which they prided themselves so much, the possession of the Law of God. Still, it was a word. implying all that he wished to say, and involving the idea that

they would be punished and destroyed. If it was admitted that the pagan would perish; and if God was to judge the Jews by an unerring rule, that is, according to their privileges and light; then it would follow that they would also be condemned, and their own minds would come at once to the conclusion. The change of words here may indicate, therefore, a nice tact, or delicate address in argument, urging home to the conscience an offensive truth rather by the deduction of the mind of the opponent himself than by a harsh and severe charge of the writer. In instances of this, the Scriptures abound; and it was this especially that so eminently characterized the arguments of our Saviour.

Verse 13

For not the hearers … - The same sentiment is implied in James 1:22; Matthew 7:21, Matthew 7:24; Luke 6:47. The apostle here doubtless designed to meet an objection of the Jews; to wit, that they had the Law, that they manifested great deference for it, that they heard it read with attention, and professed a willingness to yield themselves to it. To meet this, he states a very plain and obvious principle, that this was insufficient to justify them before God, unless they rendered actual obedience.

Are just - Are justified before God, or are personally holy. Or, in other words, simply hearing the Law is not meeting all its requirements, and making people holy. If they expected to be saved by the Law, it required something more than merely to hear it. It demanded perfect obedience.

But the doers of the law - They who comply entirely with its demands; or who yield to it perfect and perpetual obedience. This was the plain and obvious demand, not only of common sense, but of the Jewish Law itself; Deuteronomy 4:1; Leviticus 18:5; compare Romans 10:9.

Shall be justified - This expression is evidently synonymous with that in Leviticus 18:5, where it is said that "he shall live in them." The meaning is, that it is a maxim or principle of the Law of God, that if a creature will keep it, and obey it entirely, he shall not be condemned, but shall be approved and live forever. This does not affirm that anyone ever has thus lived in this world, but it is an affirmation of a great general principle of law, that if a creature is justified by the Law, the obedience must be entire and perpetual. If such were the case, as there would be no ground of condemnation, man would be saved by the Law. If the Jews, therefore, expected to be saved by their Law, it must be, not by hearing the Law, nor

by being called a Jew, but by perfect and unqualified obedience to all its requirements. This passage is designed, doubtless, to meet a very common and pernicious sentiment of the Jewish teachers, that all who became hearers and listeners to the Law would be saved. The inference from the passage is, that no man can be saved by his external privileges, or by an outward respectful deference to the truths and ordinances of religion.

Verse 14

For when - The apostle, in Romans 2:13, had stated a general principle, that the doers of the Law only can be justified, if justification is attempted by the Law. In this verse and the next, he proceeds to show that the same principle is applicable to the pagan; that though they have not the written Law of God, yet that they have sufficient knowledge of his will to take away every excuse for sin, and consequently that the course of reasoning by which he had come to the conclusion that they were guilty, is well founded. This verse is not to be understood as affirming, as an historical fact, that any of the pagan ever did perfectly obey the Law which they had, any more than the previous verse affirms it of the Jews, The main point in the argument is, that if people are justified by the Law, their obedience must be entire and perfect; that this is not to be external only, or to consist in hearing or in acknowledging the justice of the Law; and that the Gentiles had an opportunity of illustrating this principle as well as the Jews, since they also had a law among themselves. The word "when" ὅταν hotandoes not imply that the thing shall certainly take place, but is one form of introducing a supposition; or of stating the connection of one thing with another, Matthew 5:11; Matthew 6:2, Matthew 6:5-6, Matthew 6:16; Matthew 10:19. It is, however, true that the main things contained in this verse, and the next, actually occurred, that the Gentiles did many things which the Law of God required.

The Gentiles - All who were not Jews.

Which have not the law - Who have net a revelation, or the written word of God. In the Greek the article is omitted, "who have not law," that is, any revealed law.

By nature - By some, this phrase has been supposed to belong to the previous member of the sentence, "who have not the law by nature." But our translation is the more natural and usual construction. The expression means clearly by the light of conscience and reason, and whatever other helps they may have without revelation. It denotes simply, in that state

which is without the revealed will of God. In that condition they had many helps of tradition, conscience, reason, and the observation of the dealings of divine Providence, so that to a considerable extent they knew what was right and what was wrong.

Do the things - Should they not merely understand and approve, but actually perform the things required in the Law.

Contained in the law - Literally, the things of the Law, that is, the things which the Law requires. Many of those things might be done by the pagan, as, e. g., respect to parents. truth, justice, honesty, chastity. So far as they did any of those things, so far they showed that they had a law among themselves. And wherein they failed in these things they showed that they were justly condemned. "Are a law unto themselves." This is explained in the following verse. It means that their own reason and conscience constituted, in these things, a law, or prescribed that for them which the revealed law did to the Jews.

Verse 15

Which show - Who thus evince or show.

The work of the law - The design, purpose, or object which is contemplated by the revealed Law; that is, to make known to man his duty, and to enforce the obligation to perform it. This does not mean, by any means, that they had all the knowledge which the Law would impart, for then there would have been no need of a revelation, but that, as far as it went, as far as they had a knowledge of right and wrong, they coincided with the revealed will of God. In other words, the will of God, whether made known by reason or revelation, will be the same so far as reason goes. The difference is that revelation goes further than reason; sheds light on new duties and doctrines; as the information given by the naked eye and the telescope is the same, except, that the telescope carries the sight forward, and reveals new worlds to the sight of man.

Written in their hearts - The revealed Law of God was written on tables of stone, and then recorded in the books of the Old Testament. This law the Gentiles did not possess, but, to a certain extent, the same requirements were written on their hearts. Though not revealed to them as to the Jews, yet they had obtained the knowledge of them by the tight of nature. The word "hearts" here denotes the mind itself, as it does also frequently in the Sacred Scriptures; not the heart, as the seat of the affections. It does not mean that they loved or even approved of the Law,

but that they had knowledge of it; and that that knowledge was deeply engraved on their minds.

Their conscience - This word properly means the judgment of the mind respecting right and wrong; or the judgment which the mind passes on the morality or immorality of its own actions, when it instantly approves or condemns them. It has usually been termed the moral sense, and is a very important principle in a moral government. Its design is to answer the purposes of an ever attendant witness of a man‘s conduct; to compel him to pronounce on his own doings, and thus to excite him to virtuous deeds, to give comfort and peace when he does right, to deter from evil actions by making him, whether he will or no, his own executioner: see John 8:9; Acts 23:1; Acts 24:16; Romans 9:1; 1 Timothy 1:5. By nature every man thus approves or condemns his own acts; and there is not a profounder principle of the divine administration, than thus compelling every man to pronounce on the moral character of his own conduct. Conscience may be enlightened or unenlightened; and its use may be greatly perverted by false opinions. Its province is not to communicate any new truth, it is simply to express judgment, and to impart pleasure or inflict pain for a man‘s own good or evil conduct. The apostle‘s argument, does not require him to say that conscience revealed any truth, or any knowledge of duty, to the Gentiles, but that its actual exercise proved that they had a knowledge of the Law of God. Thus, it was a witness simply of that fact.

Bearing witness - To bear witness is to furnish testimony, or proof. And the exercise of the conscience here showed or proved that they had a knowledge of the Law. The expression does not mean that the exercise of their conscience bore witness of anything to them, but that its exercise may be alleged as a proof that they were not without some knowledge of the Law.

And their thoughts - The word “thoughts” (λογισμῶν logismōn) means properly reasonings, or opinions, sentiments, etc. Its meaning here may be expressed by the word “reflections.” Their reflections on their own conduct would be attended with pain or pleasure. It differs from conscience, inasmuch as the decisions of conscience are instantaneous, and without any process of reasoning. This supposes subsequent reflection, and it means that such reflections would only deepen and confirm the decisions of conscience.

The mean while - Margin, "Between themselves." The rendering in the margin is more in accordance with the Greek. The expression sometimes means, in the mean time, or at the same time; and sometimes afterward, or subsequently. The Syriac and Latin Vulgate render this mutually. They seem to have understood this as affirming that the pagan among themselves, by their writings, accused or acquitted one another.

Accusing - If the actions were evil.

Excusing - That is, if their actions were good.

One another - The margin renders this expression in connection with the adverb, translated "in the mean while," "between themselves." This view is also taken by many commentators, and this is its probable meaning. If so, it denotes the fact that in their reflections, or their reasonings, or discussions, they accused each other of crime, or acquitted one another; they showed that they had a law; that they acted on the supposition that they had. To show this was the design of the apostle; and there was no further proof of it needed than what he here adduced.

(1)They had a conscience, pronouncing on their own acts; and,

(2)Their reasonings, based on the supposition of some such common and acknowledged standard of accusing or acquitting, supposed the same thing. If, therefore, they condemned or acquitted themselves; if in these reasonings and reflections, they proceeded on the principle that they had some rule of right and wrong, then the proposition of the apostle was made out that it was right for God to judge them, and to destroy them; Romans 2:8-12.

Verse 16

In the day - This verse is doubtless to be connected with Romans 2:12, and the intermediate verses are a parenthesis, and it implies that the pagan world, as well as the Jews, will be arraigned at the bar of judgment. At that time God will judge all in righteousness, the Jew by the Law which he had, and the pagan by the Law which he had.

When God shall judge - God is often represented as the Judge of mankind; Deuteronomy 32:36; Psalm 50:4; 1 Samuel 2:10; Ecclesiastes 3:17; Romans 3:6; Hebrews 13:4. But this does not militate against the fact that he will do it by Jesus Christ. God has appointed his Son to administer judgment; and it will be not by God directly, but by Jesus Christ that it will be administered.

The secrets of men - See Luke 8:17; Ecclesiastes 12:14, "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing," etc., Matthew 10:26; 1 Corinthians 4:5. The expression denotes the hidden desires, lusts, passions, and motives of people; the thoughts of the heart, as well as the outward actions of the life. It will be a characteristic of the day of judgment, that all these will he brought out, and receive their appropriate reward. The propriety of this is apparent, for,

(1)It is by these that the character is really determined. The motives and principles of a man constitute his character, and to judge him impartially, these must be known.

(2)They are not judged or rewarded in this life. The external conduct only can be seen by people, and of course that only can be rewarded or punished here.

(3)People of pure motives and pure hearts are often here basely aspersed and calumniated. They are persecuted, traduced, and often overwhelmed with ignominy. It is proper that the secret motives of their conduct should be brought out and approved.

On the other hand, people of base motives, people of unprincipled character, and who are corrupt at the heart, are often lauded, flattered, and exalted into public estimation. It is proper that their secret principles should be detected, and that they should take their proper place in the government of God. In regard to this expression, we may further remark,

(1) That the fact that all secret thoughts and purposes will be brought into judgment, invests the judgment with an awful character. Who should not tremble at the idea that the secret plans and desires of his soul, which he has so long and so studiously concealed, should be brought out into noon-day in the judgment? All his artifices of concealment shall be then at an end. He will be able to practice disguise no longer. He will be seen as he is; and he will receive the doom he deserves. There will be one place, at least, where the sinner shall be treated as he ought.

(2) to execute this judgment implies the power of searching the heart; of knowing the thoughts; and of developing and unfolding all the purposes and plans of the soul. Yet this is intrusted to Jesus Christ, and the fact that he will exercise this, shows that he is divine.

Of men - Of all people, whether Jew or Gentile, infidel or Christian. The day of judgment, therefore, may be regarded as a day of universal development of all the plans and purposes that have ever been entertained in this world.

By Jesus Christ - The fact that Jesus Christ is appointed to judge the world is abundantly taught in the Bible, Acts 17:31; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5; John 5:22, John 5:27; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; Acts 17:31; 2 Timothy 4:8. This does not mean that the gospel which he preached would be the rule by which God would judge all mankind, for he had just said that the pagan world would be judged by a different rule, Romans 2:12. But it means that he was intrusted with the gospel to make it known; and that one of the great and prime articles of that gospel was, that God would judge the world by Jesus Christ. To make this known he was appointed; and it could be called his gospel only as being a part of the important message with which he was intrusted.

Verse 17

Behold - Having thus stated the general principles on which God would judge the world; having shown how they condemned the Gentiles; and having removed all objections to them, he now proceeds to another part of his argument, to show how they applied to the Jews. By the use of the word "behold," he calls their attention to it, as to an important subject; and with great skill and address, he states their privileges, before he shows them how those privileges might enhance their condemnation. He admits all their claims to pre-eminence in privileges, and then with great faithfulness proceeds to show how, if abused, these might deepen their final destruction. It should be observed, however, that the word rendered "behold" is in many manuscripts written in two words, ἔι δὲ ei deinstead of ἴδε ideIf this, as is probable, is the correct reading there, it should be rendered, "if now thou art," etc. Thus, the Syriac, Latin, and Arabic read it.

Thou art called - Thou art named Jew, implying that this name was one of very high honor. This is the first thing mentioned on which the Jew would be likely to pride himself.

A Jew - This was the name by which the Hebrews were at that time generally known; and it is clear that they regarded it as a name of honor, and valued themselves much on it; see Galatians 2:15; Revelation 2:9. Its origin is not certainly known. They were called the children of Israel until the time of Rehoboam. When the ten tribes were carried into captivity, but

two remained, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The name Jews was evidently given to denote those of the tribe of Judah. The reasons why the name of Benjamin was lost in that of Judah, were probably,

(1)because the tribe of Benjamin was small, and comparatively without influence or importance.

(2)The Messiah was to be of the tribe of Judah Genesis 49:10; and that tribe would therefore possess a consequence proportioned to their expectation of that event.

The name of Jews would therefore be one that would suggest the facts that they were preserved from captivity, that they had received remarkably the protection of God, and that the Messiah was to be sent to that people. Hence, it is not wonderful that they should regard it as a special favor to be a Jew, and particularly when they added to this the idea of all the other favors connected with their being the special people of God. The name "Jew" came thus to denote all the peculiarities and special favors of their religion.

And restest in the law - The word "rest" here is evidently used in the sense of trusting to, or leaning upon. The Jew leaned on, or relied on the Law for acceptance or favor; on the fact that he had the Law, and on his obedience to it. It does not mean that he relied on his own works, though that was true, but that he leaned on the fact that he had the Law, and was thus distinguished above others. The Law here means the entire Mosaic economy; or all the rules and regulations which Moses had given. Perhaps also it includes, as it sometimes does, the whole of the Old Testament.

Makest thy boast in God - Thou dost boast, or glory, that thou hast the knowledge of the true God, while other nations are in darkness. On this account the Jew felt himself far elevated above all other people, and despised them. It was true that they only had the true knowledge of God, and that he had declared himself to be their God, Deuteronomy 4:7; Psalm 147:19-20; but this was not a ground for boasting, but for gratitude. This passage shows us that it is much more common to boast of privileges than to be thankful for them, and that it is no evidence of piety for a man to boast of his knowledge of God. An humble, ardent thankfulness that we have that knowledge a thankfulness which leads us not to despise others, but to desire that they may have the same privilege - is an evidence of piety.

Verse 18

And knowest his will - The will or commands of God. This knowledge they obtained from the Scriptures; and of course in this they were distinguished from other nations.

And approvest - The word used here is capable of two interpretations. It may mean either to distinguish, or to approve. The word is properly and usually applied to the process of testing or trying metals by fire. Hence, it comes to be used in a general sense to try or to distinguish anything; to ascertain its nature, quality, etc.; Luke 12:56. This is probably its meaning here, referring rather to the intellectual process of discriminating, than to the moral process of approving. It could not, perhaps, be said with propriety, at least the scope of the passage does not properly suppose this, that the Jew approved or loved the things of God: but the scope of the passage is, that the Jew valued himself on his knowledge of what was conformable to the will of God; see the notes at Romans 14.

The things that are more excellent - The word translated here "more excellent" denotes properly the things that differ from others, and then also the things that excel. It has an ambiguity similar to the word translated "approved." If the interpretation of that word above given is correct, then this word here means those things that differ from others. The reference is to the rites and customs, to the distinctions of meats and days, etc., prescribed by the Law of Moses. The Jew would pride himself on the fact that he had been taught by the Law to make these distinctions, while all the pagan world had been left in ignorance of them. This was one of the advantages on which he valued himself and his religion.

Being instructed … - That is, in regard to the one God, his will, and the distinguishing rites of his worship.

Verse 19

And art confident - This expression denotes the full assurance of the Jew that he was superior in knowledge to all other people. It is a remarkable fact that the Jews put the fullest confidence in their religion. Though proud, wicked, and hypocritical, yet they were not speculative infidels. It was one of their characteristics, evinced through all their history, that they had the fullest assurance that God was the author of their institutions, and that their religion was his appointment.

A guide of the blind - A guide of the blind is a figurative expression to denote an instructor of the ignorant. The blind here properly refers to the Gentiles, who were thus regarded by the Jews. The meaning is, that they

esteemed themselves qualified to instruct the pagan world; Matthew 15:14; Matthew 23:15.

A light - Another figurative expression to denote a teacher; compare Isaiah 49:6; John 1:4-5, John 1:8-9.

In darkness - A common expression to denote the ignorance of the Gentile world; see the note at Matthew 4:16.

Verse 20

Of the foolish - The word "foolish" is used in the Scriptures in two significations: to denote those who are void of understanding, and to denote the wicked. Here it is clearly used in the former sense, signifying that the Jew esteemed himself qualified to instruct those without knowledge.

Of babes - This is the literal meaning of the original word. The expression is figurative, and denotes those who were as ignorant as children - an expression which they would be likely to apply to all the Gentiles. It is evident that the character bare given by Paul to the Jews is one which they claimed, and of which they were proud. They are often mentioned as arrogating this prerogative to themselves, of being qualified to be guides and teachers of others; Matthew 15:14; Matthew 23:2, Matthew 23:16, Matthew 23:24. It will be remembered, also, that the Jews considered themselves to be qualified to teach all the world, and hence evinced great zeal to make proselytes. And it is not improbable (Tholuck) that their Rabbies were accustomed to give the names "foolish" and "babes" to the ignorant proselytes which they had made from the pagan.

Which hast the form of knowledge - The word translated here as "form" properly denotes a delineations or picturing of a thing. It is commonly used to denote also the appearance of any object; what we see, without reference to its internal character; the external figure. It sometimes denotes the external appearance as distinguished from what is internal; or a hypocritical profession of religion without its reality; 2 Timothy 3:5. "Having the form of godliness, but denying its power." It is sometimes used in a good, and sometimes in a bad sense. Here it denotes that in their teaching they retained the semblance, sketch, or outline of the true doctrines of the Old Testament. They had in the Scriptures a correct delineation of the truth. Truth is the representation of things as they are; and the doctrines which the Jews had in the Old Testament were a correct representation or delineation of the objects of knowledge; compare 2 Timothy 1:13.

In the law - In the Scriptures of the Old Testament. In these verses the apostle concedes to the Jews all that they would claim. Having made this concession of their superior knowledge, he is prepared with the more fidelity and force to convict them of their deep and dreadful depravity in sinning against the superior light and privileges which God had conferred on them.

Verse 21

Thou therefore … - He who is a teacher of others may be expected to be learned himself. They ought to be found to be possessed of superior knowledge; and by this question the apostle impliedly reproves them for their ignorance. The form of a question is chosen because it conveys the truth with greater force. He puts the question as if it were undeniable that they were grossly ignorant; compare Matthew 23:3, "They say, and do not," etc.

That preachest - This word means to proclaim in any manner, whether in the synagogue, or in any place of public teaching.

Dost thou steal? - It cannot be proved, perhaps, that the Jews were extensively guilty of this crime. It is introduced partly, no doubt, to make the inconsistency of their conduct mere apparent. We expect a man to set an example of what he means by his public instruction.

Verse 22

Dost thou commit adultery? - There is no doubt that this was a crime very common among the Jews; see the Matthew 12:39 note; John 8:1-11 notes. The Jewish Talmud accuses some of the most celebrated of their Rabbies, by name, of this vice. (Grotius.) Josephus also gives the same account of the nation.

Thou that abhorrest idols - It was one of the doctrines of their religion to abhor idolatry. This they were everywhere taught in the Old Testament; and this they doubtless inculcated in their teaching. It was impossible that they could recommend idolatry.

Dost thou commit sacrilege? - Sacrilege is the crime of violating or profaning sacred things; or of appropriating to common purposes what has been devoted to the service of religion. In this question, the apostle shows remarkable tact and skill. He could not accuse them of idolatry, for the Jews, after the Babylonish captivity, had never fallen into it. But then, though they had not the form, they might have the spirit of idolatry. That spirit consisted in withholding from the true God what was his due, and

bestowing the affections upon something else. This the Jews did by perverting from their proper use the offerings which were designed for his honor; by withholding what he demanded of tithes and offerings; and by devoting to other uses what was devoted to him, and which properly belonged to his service. That this was a common crime among them is apparent from Malachi 1:8, Malachi 1:12-14; Malachi 3:8-9. It is also evident from the New Testament that the temple was in many ways desecrated and profaned in the time of our Saviour; notes, Matthew 21:12-13.

Verse 23

Makest thy boast … - To boast in the Law implied their conviction of its excellence and obligation, as a man does not boast of what he esteems to be of no value.

Dishonourest thou God - By boasting of the Law, they proclaimed their conviction that it was from God. By breaking it, they denied it. And as actions are a true test of man‘s real opinions, their breaking the Law did it more dishonor than their boasting of it did it honor. This is always the case. It matters little what a man‘s speculative opinions may be; his practice may do far more to disgrace religion than his profession does to honor it. It is the life and conduct, and not merely the profession of the lips, that does real honor to the true religion. Alas, with what pertinency and force may this question be put to many who call themselves Christians!

Verse 24

The name of God - The name and character of the true God.

Is blasphemed - Note, Matthew 9:3. That is, your conduct is such as to lead the pagan world to blaspheme and reproach both your religion and its Author. By your hypocrisy and crimes the pagan world is led to despise a religion which is observed to have no effect in purifying and restraining its professors; and of course the reproach will terminate on the Author of your religion - that is, the true God. A life of purity would tend to honor religion and its Author; a life of impurity does the reverse. There is no doubt that this was actually the effect of the deportment of the Jews. They were scattered everywhere; everywhere they were corrupt and wicked; and everywhere they and their religion were despised.

Among the Gentiles - In the midst of whom many Jews lived.

Through you - By means of you, or as the result of your conduct. It may mean, that you Jews do it, or profane the name of God; but the

connection seems rather to require the former sense.

As it is written - To what place the apostle has reference, cannot be certainly determined. There are two passages in the Old Testament; which will bear on the case, and perhaps he had them both in his view; Isaiah 52:5; Ezekiel 36:22-23. The meaning is not that the passages in the Old Testament, referred to by the phrase, "as it is written," had any particular reference to the conduct of the Jews in the time of Paul, but that this had been the character of the people, and the effect of their conduct as a nation, instances of which had been before observed and recorded by the prophets. The same thing has occurred to a most melancholy extentin regard to professed Christian nations. For purposes of commerce, and science, and war, and traffic, people from nations that are nominally Christian have gone into almost every part of the pagan world. But they have not often been real Christians. They have been intent on gain; and have to a melancholy extent been profane, and unprincipled, and profligate people. Yet the pagan have regarded them as Christians; as fair specimens of the effect of the religion of Christ. They have learned therefore, to abuse the name of Christian, and the Author of the Christian religion, as encouraging and promoting profligacy of life. Hence, one reason, among thousands, of the importance of Christian missions to the pagan. It is well to disabuse the pagan world of their erroneous opinions of the tendency of Christianity. It is well to teach them that we do not regard these people as Christians. As we have sent to them the worst part of our population, it is well to send them holy men, who shall exhibit to them the true nature of Christianity, and raise our character in their eyes as a Christian people. And were there no other result of Christian missions, it would be worth all the expense and toil attending them, to raise the national character in the view of the pagan world.

Verse 25

For circumcision - John 7:22 note; Acts 7:8 note. This was the special rite by which the relation to the covenant of Abraham was recognised; or by which the right to all the privileges of a member of the Jewish commonwealth was acknowledged. The Jews of course affixed a high importance to the rite.

Verily profiteth - Is truly a benefit; or is an advantage. The meaning is, that their being recognised as members of the Jewish commonwealth, and introduced to the privileges of the Jew, was an advantage; see Romans 3:1-2. The apostle was not disposed to deny that they possessed this advantage,

but he tells them why it was a benefit, and how it might fail of conferring any favor.

If thou keep the law - The mere sign can be of no value, The mere fact of being a Jew is not what God requires. It may be a favor to have his Law, but the mere possession of the Law cannot entitle to the favor of God. So it is a privilege to be born in a Christian land; to have had pious parents; to be amidst the ordinances of religion; to be trained in Sundayschools; and to be devoted to God in baptism: for all these are favorable circumstances for salvation. But none of them entitle to the favor of God; and unless they are improved as they should be, they may be only the means of increasing our condemnation; 2 Corinthians 2:16.

Thy circumcision is made uncircumcision - Thy circumcision, or thy being called a Jew, is of no value. It will not distinguish you from those who are not circumcised. You will be treated as a pagan. No external advantages, no name, or rite, or ceremony will save you. God requires the obedience of the heart and of the life. Where there is a disposition to render that, there is an advantage in possessing the external means of grace. Where that is missing, no rite or profession can save. This applies with as much force to those who have been baptized in infancy, and to those who have made a profession of religion in a Christian church, as to the Jew.

Verse 26

Therefore, if the uncircumcision - If those who are not circumcised, that is, the pagan.

Keep the righteousness of the law - Keep what the Law of Moses commands. It could not be supposed that a pagan would understand the requirements of the ceremonial law; but reference is had here to the moral law. The apostle does not expressly affirm that this was ever done; but he supposes the case, to show the true nature and value of the rites of the Jews.

Shall not his uncircumcision - Or, shall the fact that he is uncircumcised stand in the way of the acceptance of his services? Or, shall he not as certainly and as readily be accepted by God as if he were a Jew? Or in other words, the apostle teaches the doctrine that acceptance with God does not depend on a man‘s external privileges, but on the state of the heart and life.

Be counted for circumcision - Shall he not be treated as if he were circumcised? Shall his being uncircumcised be any barrier in the way of his acceptance with God? The word rendered “be counted,” is what is

commonly rendered “to reckon, to impute”; and its use here shows that the Scripture use of the word is not to transfer, or to charge with what is not deserved, or not true. It means simply that a man shall be treated as if it were so; that this lack of circumcision shall be no bar to acceptance. There is nothing set over to his account; nothing transferred; nothing reckoned different from what it is. God judges things as they are; and as the man, though uncircumcised, who keeps the Law, ought to be treated as if he had been circumcised, so he who believes in Christ agreeably to the divine promise, and trusts to his merits alone for salvation, ought to be treated as if he were himself righteous, God judges the thing as it is, and treats people as it is proper to treat them, as being pardoned and accepted through his Son.

Verse 27

Which is by nature - Which is the natural state of man; his condition before he is admitted to any of the unique rites of the Jewish religion.

If it fulfil the law - If they who are uncircumcised keep the Law.

Judge thee - Condemn thee as guilty. As we say, the conduct of such a man condemns us. He acts so much more consistently and uprightly than we do, that we see our guilt. For a similar mode of expression, see Matthew 12:41-42.

Who by the letter … - The translation here is certainly not happily expressed. It is difficult to ascertain its meaning. The evident meaning of the original is, “Shall not a pagan man who has none of your external privileges, if he keeps the law, condemn you who are Jews; who, although you have the letter and circumcision, are nevertheless transgressors of the law? ‹

The letter - The word “letter” properly means the mark or character from which syllables and words are formed. It is also used in the sense of writing of any kind Luke 16:6-7; Acts 28:21; Galatians 6:11, particularly the writings of Moses, denoting, by way of eminence, the letter, or the writing; Romans 7:6; 2 Timothy 3:15.

Verse 28

For he is not a Jew … - He who is merely descended from Abraham, and is circumcised, and externally conforms to the Law only, does not possess the true character, and manifest the true spirit, contemplated by the separation of the Jewish people. Their separation required much more.

Neither is that circumcision … - Neither does it meet the full design of the rite of circumcision, that it is externally performed. It contemplated

much more; see Romans 2:29.

Verse 29

But he is a Jew - He comes up to the design of the Jewish institution; he manifests truly what it is to be a Jew.

Which is one inwardly - Who is "in heart" a Jew. Who has the true spirit, and fulfils the design of their being separated as a special people. This passage proves that the design of separating them was not merely to perform certain external rites, or to conform to external observances, but to be a people holy in heart and in life. It cannot be denied that this design was not generally understood in the time of the apostles; but it was abundantly declared in the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 6:5; Deuteronomy 10:12-13, Deuteronomy 10:20; Deuteronomy 30:14; Isaiah 1:11-20; Micah 6:8; Psalm 51:16-17; 50:7-23.

And circumcision is that of the heart - That is, that circumcision which is acceptable to God. and which meets the design of the institution, is what is attended with holiness of heart; with the cutting off of sins; and with a pure life. The design of circumcision was to be a sign of separation from the pagan world, and of consecration to the holy God. And this design implied the renunciation and forsaking of all sins; or the cutting off of everything that was offensive to God. This was a work especially of the heart. This design was often stated and enforced in the writings of the Old Testament; Deuteronomy 10:16, "Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked;" Jeremiah 4:4; Deuteronomy 30:6.

In the spirit - This is an expression explaining further what he had just said. It does not mean by the Holy Spirit, but that the work was to take place in the soul, and not in the body only. It was to be an internal, spiritual work, and not merely an external service.

And not in the letter - That is, not only according to the literal, external command,

Whose praise … - Whose object is not to secure the praise of human beings. One of the main characteristics of the Jews in the time of Christ was, a desire to secure honor among men, as being exactly scrupulous in the performance of all the duties of their religion. They prided themselves on their descent from Abraham, and on their regular conformity to the precepts of the Law of Moses; Matthew 3:9; Matthew 6:2, Matthew 6:5; Luke 18:10-12; Matthew 23:23.

But of God - "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart;" 1 Samuel 16:7. The praise of God can be bestowed only on those who conform really, and not externally only, to his requirements.

The remarks which are made here respecting the Jews, are also strictly applicable to professing Christians, and we may learn,

1.That the external rites of religion are of much less importance than the state of the heart.

2.That the only value of those rites is to promote holiness of heart and life.

3.That the mere fact that we are born of pious ancestors will not save us.

4.That the fact that we were dedicated to God in baptism will not save us.

5.That a mere profession of religion, however orthodox may be our creed, will not save us.

6.That the estimate which people may put on our piety is not the proper measure of our true character and standing.

7.It is an inexpressible privilege to be in possession of the Word of God, and to know our duty. It may, if improved, conduce to our elevation in holiness and happiness here, and to our eternal felicity hereafter.

8.It is also a fearful thing to neglect the privileges which we enjoy. We shall be judged according to the light which we have; and it will be an awful event to go to eternity from a Christian land unprepared.

9.Whatever may be the destiny of the pagan, it is our duty to make preparation to meet God. The most wicked of the pagan may meet a far milder doom than many who are externally moral, or who profess religion in Christian lands. Instead, therefore, of speculating on what may be their destiny, it is the duty of every individual to be at peace himself with God, and to flee from the wrath to come.

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

What advantage … - The design of the first part of this chapter is to answer some of the objections which might be offered by a Jew to the statements in the last chapter. The first objection is stated in this verse. A Jew would naturally ask, if the view which the apostle had given were correct, what special benefit could the Jew derive from his religion? The objection would arise particularly from the position advanced Romans 2:25-26, that if a pagan should do the things required by the Law, he would be treated as "if" he had been circumcised. Hence, the question, "what profit is there of circumcision?"

Verse 2

Much every way - Or, in every respect. This is the answer of the apostle to the objection in Romans 3:1.

Chiefly - That is, this is the principal advantage, and one including all others. The main benefit of being a Jew is, to possess the sacred Scriptures and their instructions.

Unto them were committed - Or were intrusted, were confided. The word translated "were committed," is what is commonly employed to express "faith" or "confidence," and it implied "confidence" in them on the part of God in intrusting his oracles to them; a confidence which was not misplaced, for no people ever guarded a sacred trust or deposit with more fidelity, than the Jews did the Sacred Scriptures.

The oracles - The word "oracle" among the pagan meant properly the answer or response of a god, or of some priest supposed to be inspired, to an inquiry of importance, usually expressed in a brief sententious way, and often with great ambiguity. The place from which such a response was usually obtained was also called an oracle, as the oracle at Delphi, etc. These oracles were frequent among the pagan, and affairs of great importance were usually submitted to them. The word rendered "oracles" occurs in the New Testament but four times, Acts 7:38; Hebrews 5:12; 1 Peter 4:11; Romans 3:2. It is evidently used here to denote the Scriptures, as being what was spoken by God, and particularly perhaps the divine promises. To possess these was of course an eminent privilege, and included all others, as they instructed them in their duty, and were their guide in everything that pertained to them in this life and the life to come.

They contained, besides, many precious promises respecting the future dignity of the nation in reference to the Messiah. No higher favor can be conferred on a people than to be put in possession of the sacred Scriptures. And this fact should excite us to gratitude, and lead us to endeavor to extend them also to other nations; compare Deuteronomy 4:7-8; Psalm 147:19-20.

Verse 3

For what if some did not believe? - This is to be regarded as another objection of a Jew. "What then? or what follows? if it be admitted that some of the nation did not believe, does it not follow that the faithfulness of God in his promises will fail?" The points of the objection are these:

(1)The apostle had maintained that the nation was sinful Matthew 13:23; 2 Timothy 3:10; Hosea 2:20.

Of none effect - Destroy it; or prevent him from fulfilling his promises. The meaning of the objection is, that the fact supposed, that the Jews would become unfaithful and be lost, would imply that God had failed to keep his promises to the nation; or that he had made promises which the result showed he was not able to perform.

Verse 4

God forbid - Greek. Let not this be. The sense is, "let not this by any means be supposed." This is the answer of the apostle, showing that no such consequence followed from his doctrines; and that "if" any such consequence should follow, the doctrine should be at once abandoned, and that every man, no matter who, should be rather esteemed false than God. The veracity of God was a great first principle, which was to be held, whatever might be the consequence. This implies that the apostle believed that the fidelity of God could be maintained in strict consistency with the fact that any number of the Jews might be found to be unfaithful, and be cast off. The apostle has not entered into an explanation of this, or shown how it could be, but it is not difficult to understand how it was. The promise made to Abraham, and the fathers, was not unconditional and absolute, that all the Jews should be saved. It was implied that they were to be obedient; and that if they were not, they would be cast off; Genesis 18:19. Though the apostle has not stated it here, yet he has considered it at length in another part of this Epistle, and showed that it was not only consistent with the original promise that a part of the Jews should be found unfaithful, and be east off, but that it had actually occurred according to the prophets; Romans

10:16-21; 11. Thus, the fidelity of God was preserved; at the same time that it was a matter of fact that no small part of the nation was rejected and lost.

Let God be true - Let God be esteemed true and faithful, whatever consequence may follow. This was a first principle, and should be now, that God should be believed to be a God of truth, whatever consequence it might involve. How happy would it be, if all people would regard this as a fixed principle, a matter not to be questioned in their hearts, or debated about, that God is true to his word! How much doubt and anxiety would it save professing Christians; and how much error would it save among sinners! Amidst all the agitations of the world, all conflicts, debates, and trials, it would be a fixed position where every man might find rest, and which would do more than all other things to allay the tempests and smooth the agitated waves of human life.

But every man a liar - Though every man and every other opinion should be found to be false. Of course this included the apostle and his reasoning; and the expression is one of those which show his magnanimity and greatness of soul. It implies that every opinion which he and all others held; every doctrine which had been defended; should be at once abandoned, if it implied that God was false. It was to be assumed as a first principle in all religion and all reasoning, that if a doctrine implied that God was not faithful, it was of course a false doctrine. This showed his firm conviction that the doctrine which he advanced was strictly in accordance with the veracity of the divine promise. What a noble principle is this! How strikingly illustrative of the humility of true piety, and of the confidence which true piety places in God above all the deductions of human reason! And if all people were willing to sacrifice their opinions when they appeared to impinge on the veracity of God; if they started back with instinctive shuddering at the very supposition of such a lack of fidelity in him; how soon would it put an end to the boastings of error, to the pride of philosophy, to lofty dictation in religion! No man with this feeling could be for a moment a universalist; and none could be an infidel.

As it is written - Psalm 51:4. To confirm the sentiment which he had just advanced and to show that it accorded with the spirit of religion as expressed in the Jewish writings, the apostle appeals to the language of David, uttered in a state of deep penitence for past transgressions. Of all quotations ever made, this is one of the most beautiful and most happy. David was overwhelmed with grief; he saw his crime to be awful; he feared

the displeasure of God, and trembled before him. Yet "he held it as a fixed, indisputable principle that" God was right. This he never once thought of calling in question. He had sinned against God, God only; and he did not once think of calling in question the fact that God was just altogether in reproving him for his sin, and in pronouncing against him the sentence of condemnation.

That thou mightest be justified - That thou mightest be regarded as just or right, or, that it may appear that God is not unjust. This does not mean that David had sinned against God for the purpose of justifying him, but that he now clearly saw that his sin had been so directly against him, and so aggravated, that God was right in his sentence of condemnation.

In thy sayings - In what thou hast spoken; that is, in thy sentence of condemnation; in thy words in relation to this offence. It may help us to understand this, to remember that the psalm was written immediately after Nathan, at the command of God, had gone to reprove David for his crime; (see the title of the psalm.) God, by the mouth of Nathan, had expressly condemned David for his crime. To this expression of condemnation David doubtless refers by the expression "in thy sayings;" see 2 Samuel 12:7-13.

And mightest overcome - In the Hebrew, "mightest be pure," or mightest be esteemed pure, or just. The word which the Septuagint and the apostle have used, "mightest overcome," is sometimes used with reference to litigations or trials in a court of justice. He that was accused and acquitted, or who was adjudged to be innocent, might be said to overcome, or to gain the cause. The expression is thus used here. As if there were a trial between David and God, God would overcome; that is, would be esteemed pure and righteous in his sentence condemning the crime of David.

When thou art judged - The Hebrew is, "when thou judgest;" that is, in thy judgment pronounced on this crime. The Greek may also be in the middle voice as well as the passive, and may correspond, therefore, in meaning precisely with the Hebrew. So the Arabic renders it. The Syriac renders it, "when they (that is, people) shall judge thee." The meaning, as expressed by David, is, that God is to be esteemed right and just in condemning people for their sins, and that a true penitent, that is, a man placed in the best circumstances to form a proper estimate of God, will see this, though it should condemn himself. The meaning of the expression in the connection in which Paul uses it, is, that it is to be held as a fixed,

unwavering principle, that God is right and true, whatever consequences it may involve; whatever doctrine it may overthrow; or whatever man it may prove to be a liar.

Verse 5

But if our unrighteousness - If our sin. The particular sin which had been specified Romans 3:3 was "unbelief." But the apostle here gives the objection a general form. This is to be regarded as an objection which a Jew might make. The force of it is this:

(1)It had been conceded that some had not believed; that is, had sinned.

(2)but God was true to his promises. Notwithstanding their sin, God's character was the same. Nay,

(3)In the very midst of sin, and as one of the results of it, the character of God, as a just Being, shone out illustriously. The question then was,

(4)If his glory resulted from it; if the effect of all was to show that his character was pure; how could he punish that sin from which his own glory resulted? And this is a question which is often asked by sinners.

Commend - Recommend; show forth; render illustrious.

The righteousness of God - His just and holy character. This was the effect on David's mind, that he saw more clearly the justice of God in his threatenings against sin, in consequence of his own transgression. And if this effect followed, if honor was thus done to God, the question was, how he could consistently punish what tended to promote his own glory?

What shall we say? - What follows? or, what is the inference? This is a mode of speech as if the objector hesitated about expressing an inference which would seem to follow, but which was horrible in its character.

Is God unrighteous? - The meaning of this would be better expressed thus: "Is "not" God unrighteous in punishing? Does it not follow that if God is honored by sin, that it would be wrong for him to inflict punishment?"

Who taketh vengeance - The meaning of this is simply, "who inflicts punishment." The idea of vengeance is not necessarily in the original ὀργήν orgēnIt is commonly rendered "wrath," but it often means simply "punishment," without any reference to the state of the mind of him who inflicts it, Matthew 3:7; Luke 3:7; Luke 21:23; John 3:36. Notes, Romans 1:18; Romans 4:15.

I speak as a man - I speak after the manner of human beings. I speak as appears to be the case to human view; or as would strike the human mind. It does not mean that the language was such as wicked people were accustomed to use; but that the objector expressed a sentiment which to human view would seem to follow from what had been said. This I regard as the language of an objector. It implies a degree of reverence for the character of God, and a seeming unwillingness to state an objection which seemed to be dishonorable to God, but which nevertheless pressed itself so strong on the mind as to appear irresistible. No way of stating the objection could have been more artful or impressive.

Verse 6

God forbid - Note, Romans 3:4.

For then - If it be admitted that it would be unjust for God to inflict punishment.

How shall God … - How will it be right or consistent for him to judge the world.

Judge - To "judge" implies the possibility and the correctness of "condemning" the guilty; for if it were not right to condemn them, judgment would be a farce. This does not mean that God would condemn all the world; but that the fact of judging people implied the possibility and propriety of condemning those who were guilty. It is remarkable that the apostle does not attempt to explain how it could be that God could take occasion from the sins of people to promote his glory; nor does he even admit the fact; but he meets directly the objection. To understand the force of his answer, it must be remembered that it was an admitted fact, a fact which no one among the Jews would call in question, that God would judge the world. This fact was fully taught in their own writings, Genesis 18:25; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Ecclesiastes 11:9. It was besides an admitted point with them that God would condemn the pagan I world; and perhaps the term "world" here refers particularly to them.

But how could this be if it were not right for God to inflict punishment at all? The inference of the objector, therefore, could not be true; though the apostle does not tell us how it was consistent to inflict punishment for offences from which God took occasion to promote his glory. It may be remarked, however, that God will judge offences, not from what he may do in overruling them, but from the nature of the crime itself. The question is not, what good God may bring out of it, but what does the crime itself

deserve? what is the character of the offender? what was his intention? It is not what God may do to overrule the offence when it is committed. The just punishment of the murderer is to be determined by the Law, and by his own desert; and not from any reputation for integrity and uprightness which the judge may manifest on his trial; or from any honor which may accrue to the police for detecting him; or any security which may result to the commonwealth from his execution; or from any honor which the Law may gain as a just law by his condemnation. Nor should any of these facts and advantages which may result from his execution, be pleaded in bar of his condemnation. So it is with the sinner under the divine administration. It is indeed a truth Psalm 76:10 that the wrath of man shall praise God, and that he will take occasion from people‘s wickedness to glorify himself as a just judge and moral governor; but this will be no ground of acquittal for the sinner.

Verse 7

For if … - This is an objection similar to the former. It is indeed but another form of the same.

The truth of God - His truth or faithfulness in adhering to his threatenings. God threatened to punish the guilty. By their guilt he will take occasion to show his own truth; or their crime will furnish occasion for such an exhibition.

Hath more abounded - Has been more striking, or more manifest. His “truth” will be shown by the fulfillment of all his promises to his people, and of all his predictions. But it will also be shown by fulfilling his threatenings on the guilty. It will, therefore, more abound by their condemnation; that is, their condemnation will furnish new and striking instances or his truth. Every lost sinner will be, therefore, an eternal monument of the truth of God.

Through my lie - By means of my lie, or as one of the results of my falsehood. The word “lie” here means falsehood, deceitfulness, “unfaithfulness.” If by the unfaithfulness of the Jewish people to the covenant, occasion should be given to God to glorify himself, how could they be condemned for it?

Unto his glory - To his praise, or so as to show his character in such a way as to excite the praise and admiration of his intelligent creation.

Why yet am I … - How can that act be regarded as evil, which tends to promote the glory of God? The fault in the reasoning of the objector is this, that he takes for granted that the direct tendency of his conduct is to promote God‘s glory, whereas it is just the reverse; and it is by God‘s reversing that tendency, or overruling it, that he obtains his glory. The tendency of murder is not to honor the Law, or to promote the security of society, but just the reverse. Still, his execution shall avert the direct tendency of his crime, and do honor to the law and the judge, and promote the peace and security of the community by restraining others.

Verse 8

And not rather - This is the answer of the apostle. He meets the objection by showing its tendency if carried out, and if it were made a principle of conduct. The meaning is, “If the glory of God is to be promoted by sin, and if a man is not therefore to be condemned, or held guilty for it; if this fact absolves man from crime, “why not carry the doctrine out, and make it a principle of conduct, and do all the evil we can, in order to promote his glory.” This was the fair consequence of the objection. And yet this was a result so shocking and monstrous, that all that was necessary in order to answer the objection was merely to state this consequence. Every man‘s moral feelings would revolt at the doctrine; everyman would know that it could not be true; and every man, therefore, could see that the objection was not valid.

As we - This refers, doubtless, to the apostles, and to Christians generally. It is unquestionable, that this accusation was often brought against them.

Slanderously reported - Greek, As we are “blasphemed.” This is the legitimate and proper use of the word “blaspheme,” to speak of one in a reproachful and calumnious manner.

As some affirm … - Doubtless Jews. Why they should affirm this, is not known. It was doubtless, however, some perversion of the doctrines that the apostles preached. The doctrines which were thus misrepresented and abused, were probably these: the apostles taught that the sins of people were the occasion of promoting God‘s glory in the plan of salvation. That “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound;” Romans 5:20. That God, in the salvation of people, would be glorified just in proportion to the depth and pollution of the guilt which was forgiven. This was true; but how easy was it to misrepresent this as teaching that people ought to sin in order to

promote God‘s glory! and instead of stating it as an inference which they drew from the doctrine, to state it as what the apostles actually taught. This is the common mode in which charges are brought against others. People draw an inference themselves, or suppose that the doctrine leads to such an inference, and then charge it on others as what they actually hold and teach. There is one maxim which should never be departed from: “That a man is not to be held responsible for the inferences which we may draw from his doctrine; and that he is never to be represented as holding and teaching what we suppose follows from his doctrine.” He is answerable only for what he avows.

Let us do evil - That is, since sin is to promote the glory of God, let us commit as much as possible.

That good may come - That God may take occasion by it to promote his glory.

Whose damnation is just - Whose “condemnation;” see the note at Romans 14:23. This does not necessarily refer to future punishment, but it means that the conduct of those who thus slanderously perverted the doctrines of the Christian religion, and accused the apostles of teaching this doctrine, was deserving of condemnation or punishment. Thus, he expressly disavows, in strong language, the doctrine charged on Christians. Thus, he silences the objection. And thus he teaches, as a great fundamental law, “that evil is not to be done that good may come.” This is a universal rule. And this is in no case to be departed from. Whatever is evil is not to be done under any pretence. Any imaginable good which we may think will result from it; any advantage to ourselves or to our cause; or any glory which we may think may result to God, will not sanction or justify the deed. Strict, uncompromising integrity and honesty is to be the maxim of our lives; and in such a life only can we hope for success, or for the blessing of God.

Verse 9

What then? - This is another remark supposed to be made by a Jewish objector. “What follows? or are we to infer that we are better than others?

Are we better than they? - Are we Jews better than the Gentiles? Or rather, have we any preference, or advantage as to character and prospects, over the Gentiles? These questions refer only to the great point in debate, to wit, about justification before God. The apostle had admitted Romans 3:2 that the Jews had important advantages in some respects, but he now

affirms that those advantages did not make a difference between them and the Gentiles about justification.

No, in no wise - Not at all. That is, the Jews have no preference or advantage over the Gentiles in regard to the subject of justification before God. They have failed to keep the Law; they are sinners; and if they are justified, it must be in the same way as the rest of the world.

We have before proved … - Romans 1:21-32; 2.

Under sin - Sinners. Under the power and dominion of sin.

Verse 10

As it is written - The apostle is reasoning with Jews; and he proceeds to show from their own Scriptures, that what he had affirmed was true. The point to be proved was, that the Jews, in the matter of justification, had no advantage or preference over the Gentiles; that the Jew had failed to keep the Law which had been given him, as the Gentile had failed to keep the Law which had been given him; and that both, therefore, were equally dependent on the mercy of God, incapable of being justified and saved by their works. To show this, the apostle adduces texts to show what was the character of the Jewish people; or to show that according to their own Scriptures, they were sinners no less than the Gentiles. The point, then, is to prove the depravity of the Jews, not that of universal depravity. The interpretation should be confined to the bearing of the passages on the Jews, and the quotations should not be adduced as directly proving the doctrine of universal depravity. In a certain sense, which will be stated soon, they may be adduced as bearing on that subject. But their direct reference is to the Jewish nation. The passages which follow, are taken from various parts of the Old Testament. The design of this is to show, that this characteristic of sin was not confined to any particular period of the Jewish history, but pertained to them as a people; that it had characterised them throughout their existence as a nation. Most of the passages are quoted in the language of the Septuagint. The quotation in Romans 3:10-12, is from Psalm 14:1-3; and from Psalm 53:1-3. Psalm 53:1-6 is the same as Psalm 14:1-7, with some slight variations.

(Yet if we consult Psalm 14:1-7 and Psalm 53:1-6, from which the quotations in Romans 3:10-12 are taken, we shall be constrained to admit that their original application is nothing short of universal. The Lord is represented as looking down from heaven, (not upon the Jewish people only, but upon the “children of men” at large, “to see if there were any that

did understand and seek God);" and declaring, as the result of his unerring scrutiny, "there is "none" that doeth good, no, not one."

That the apostle applies the passages to the case of the Jews is admitted, yet it is evident more is contained in them than the single proof of Jewish depravity. They go all the length of proving the depravity of mankind, and are cited expressly with this view. "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles," says Paul in Romans 3:9, "that they are all under sin." Immediately on this, the quotations in question are introduced with the usual formula, "as it is written," etc. Now since the apostle adduces his Scripture proofs, to establish the doctrine that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin," we cannot reasonably decide against him by confining their application to the Jews only.

In Romans 3:19 Paul brings his argument to bear directly on the Jews. That they might not elude his aim, by interpreting the universal expressions he had introduced, of all the pagan only, leaving themselves favorably excepted; he reminds them that" whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that were under it." Not contented with having placed them alongside of the Gentiles in Romans 3:9; by this second application of the general doctrine of human depravity, to their particular case, he renders escape or evasion impossible. The scope of the whole passage then, is, that all people are depraved, and that the Jews form no exception. This view is further strengthened by the apostle's conclusion in Romans 3:20. "Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his (God's) sight."

"If the words," says President Edwards, "which the apostle uses, do not most fully and determinately signify an universality, no words ever used in the Bible are sufficient to do it. I might challenge any man to produce any one paragraph in the scriptures, from the beginning to the end, where there is such a repetition and accumulation of terms, so strongly, and emphatically, and carefully, to express the most perfect and absolute universality, or any place to be compared to it." - "Edwards on Original Sin, - Haldane's Commentary."

There is none righteous - The Hebrew Psalm 14:1 is, there is none that doeth good. The Septuagint has the same. The apostle quotes according to the sense of the passage. The design of the apostle is to show that none

could be justified by the Law. He uses an expression, therefore, which is exactly conformable to his argument, and which accords in meaning with the Hebrew, "there is none just," δίκαιος dikaiosNo, not one - This is not in the Hebrew, but is in the Septuagint. It is a strong universal expression, denoting the state of almost universal corruption which existed in the time of the psalmist. The expression should not be interpreted to mean that there was not literally "one pious man" in the nation; but that the characteristic of the nation was, at that time, that it was exceedingly corrupt. Instead of being righteous, as the Jew claimed, because they were Jews, the testimony of their own Scriptures was, that they were universally wicked.

(The design of the apostle, however, is not to prove that there were few or none pious. He is treating of the impossibility of justification by works, and alleges in proof that, according to the judgment of God in the Psalm 14:1 Psalm, there were none righteous, etc., in regard to their natural estate, or the condition in which man is, previous to his being justified. In this condition, all are deficient in righteousness, and have nothing to commend them to the divine favor. What people may afterward become by grace is another question, on which the apostle does not, in this place, enter. Whatever number of pious people, therefore, there might be in various places of the world, the argument of the apostle is not in the least affected. It will hold good even in the millennium!)

Verse 11

There is none that understandeth - In the Hebrew Psalm 14:2, God is represented as looking down from heaven to see, that is, to make investigation, whether there were any that understood or sought after him. This circumstance gives not only high poetic beauty to the passage, but deep solemnity and awfulness. God, the searcher of hearts, is represented as making investigation on this very point. He looks down from heaven for this very purpose, to ascertain whether there were any righteous. In the Hebrew it is not asserted, though it is clearly and strongly implied, that none such were found. That fact the apostle "states." If, as the result of such an investigation, none were found; if God did not specify that there were any such; then it follows that there were none. For none could escape the notice of his eye; and if there had been any, the benevolence of his heart would have led him to record it. To understand is used in the sense of being wise; or of having such a state of moral feeling as to dispose them to serve

and obey God. The word is often used in the Bible, not to denote a mere intellectual operation of the mind, but the state of the heart inclining the mind to obey and worship God; Psalm 107:43; Psalm 119:27, Psalm 119:100; Proverbs 5:5; Isaiah 6:10; "Lest they should understand with their heart," etc.

That seeketh after God - That endeavors to know and do his will, and to be acquainted with his character. A disposition not to seek after God, that is, to neglect and forget him, is one of the most decided proofs of depravity. A righteous man counts it his highest privilege and honor to know God, and to understand his will. A man can indulge in wickedness only by forgetting God. Hence, a disposition "not" to seek God is full proof of depravity.

Verse 12

They have all gone out of the way - They have "declined" from the true path of piety and virtue.

They are together - They have at the same time; or they have equally become unprofitable. They are as one; they are joined, or united in this declension. The expression denotes union, or similarity.

Become unprofitable - This word in Hebrew means to become "putrid" and "offensive," like fruit that is spoiled. In Arabic, it is applied to "milk" that becomes sour. Applied to moral subjects, it means to become corrupt and useless. They are of no value in regard to works of righteousness.

There is none … - This is taken literally from the Hebrew.

Verse 13

Their throat … - This expression is taken from Psalm 5:9, literally from the Septuagint. The design of the psalm is to reprove those who were false, traitorous, slanderous, etc. Psalm 5:6. The psalmist has the sin of deceit, and falsehood, and slander particularly in his eye. The expressions here are to be interpreted in accordance with that. The sentiment here may be, as the grave is ever open to receive all into it, that is, into destruction, so the mouth or the throat of the slanderer is ever open to swallow up the peace and happiness of all. Or it may mean, as from an open sepulchre there proceeds an offensive and pestilential vapor, so from the mouths of slanderous persons there proceed noisome and ruinous words. "(Stuart.)" I think the connection demands the former interpretation.

With their tongues … - In their conversation, their promises, etc., they have been false, treacherous, and unfaithful.

The poison of asps - This is taken literally from the Septuagint of Psalm 140:3. The asp, or adder, is a species of serpent whose poison is of such active operation that it kills almost the instant that it penetrates, and that without remedy. It is small, and commonly lies concealed, often in the "sand" in a road, and strikes the traveler before he sees it. It is found chiefly in Egypt and Lybia. It is said by ancient writers that the celebrated Cleopatra, rather than be carried a captive to Rome by Augustus, suffered an asp to bite her in the arm, by which she soon died. The precise species of serpent which is here meant by the psalmist, however, cannot be ascertained. All that is necessary to understand the passage is, that it refers to a serpent whose bite was deadly, and rapid in its execution.

Is under their lips - The poison of the serpent is contained in a small bag which is concealed at the root of the tooth. When the tooth is struck into the flesh, the poison is pressed out, through a small hole in the tooth, into the wound. Whether the psalmist was acquainted with that fact, or referred to it, cannot be known: his words do not of necessity imply it. The sentiment is, that as the poison of the asp is rapid, certain, spreading quickly through the system, and producing death; so the words of the slanderer are deadly, pestiferous, quickly destroying the reputation and happiness of man. They are as subtle, as insinuating, and as deadly to the reputation, as the poison of the adder is to the body. Wicked people in the Bible are often compared to serpents; Matthew 23:33; Genesis 49:17.

Verse 14

Whose mouth - Psalm 10:7. The apostle has not quoted this literally, but has given the sense. David in the psalm is describing his bitter enemies.

Cursing - Reproachful and opprobrious language, such as Shimei used in relation to David; 2 Samuel 16:5, 2 Samuel 16:7-8.

Bitterness - In the psalm, deceits. The word "bitterness" is used to denote severity, harshness, cruelty; reproachful and malicious words.

Verse 15

Their feet … - The quotation in this and the two following verses, is abridged or condensed from Isaiah 59:7-8. The expressions occur in the midst of a description of the character of the nation in the time of the prophet. The apostle has selected a few expressions out of many, rather making a reference to the entire passage, than a formal quotation. The expression, "their feet are swift," etc., denotes the eagerness of the nation to commit crime, particularly deeds of injustice and cruelty. They thirsted for

the blood of innocence, and hasted to shed it, to gratify their malice, or to satisfy their vengeance.

Verse 16

Destruction - That is, they "cause" the destruction or the ruin of the reputation, happiness, and peace of others.

Misery - Calamity, ruin.

In their ways - Wherever they go. This is a striking description not only of the wicked then, but of all times. The tendency of their conduct is to destroy the virtue, happiness, and peace of all with whom they come in contact.

Verse 17

And the way of peace … - What tends to promote their own happiness, or that of others, they do not regard. Intent on their plans of evil, they do not know or regard what is suited to promote the welfare of themselves or others. This is the case with all who are selfish, and who seek to gain their own purposes of crime and ambition.

Verse 18

There is no fear of God - Psalm 36:1. The word "fear" here denotes "reverence, awe, veneration." There is no such regard or reverence for the character, authority, and honor of God as to restrain them from crime. Their conduct shows that they are not withheld from the commission of iniquity by any regard to the fear or favor of God. The only thing that will be effectual in restraining people from sin, will be a regard to the honor and Law of God.

In regard to these quotations from the Old Testament, we may make the following remarks.

(1) they fully establish the position of the apostle, that the nation, as such, was far from being righteous, or that they could be justified by their own works. By quotations from no less than six distinct places in their own writings, referring to different periods of their history, he shows what the character of the nation was. And as this was the characteristic of those times. it followed that a Jew could not hope to be saved simply because he was a Jew. He needed, as much as the Gentile, the benefit of some other plan of salvation.

(2) these passages show us how to use the Old Testament, and the facts of ancient history. They are to be adduced not as showing directly what the character of man is, now, but to show what human nature is. They demonstrate what man is when under the most favorable circumstances; in different situations; and at different periods of the world. The concurrence of past facts shows what the race is. And as past facts are uniform; as man thus far, in the most favorable circumstances, has been sinful; it follows that this is the characteristic of man everywhere. It is settled by the facts of the world, just as any other characteristic of man is settled by the uniform occurrence of facts in all circumstances and times. Ancient facts, and quotations of Scripture, therefore, are to be adduced as proofs of the tendency of human nature. So Paul used them, and so it is lawful for us to use them.

(3) it may be observed further, that the apostle has given a view of human depravity which is very striking. He does not confine it to one faculty of the mind, or to one set of actions; he specifies each member and each faculty as being perverse, and inclined to evil. The depravity extends to all the departments of action. The tongue, the mouth, the feet, the "lips," are all involved in it; all are perverted, and all become the occasion of the commission of sin. The entire man is corrupt; and the painful description extends to every department of action.

(4) if such was the character of the Jewish nation under all its advantages, what must have been the character of the pagan? We are prepared thus to credit all that is said in Rom. i., and elsewhere, of the sad state of the pagan world.

(5) what a melancholy view we have thus of human nature. From whatever quarter we contemplate it, we come to the same conclusion. Whatever record we examine; whatever history we read; whatever time or period we contemplate; we find the same facts, and are forced to the same conclusion. All are involved in sin, and are polluted, and ruined, and helpless. Over these ruins we should sit down and weep, and lift our eyes with gratitude to the God of mercy, that he has pitied us in our low estate, and has devised a plan by which "these ruins may be built again," and lost, fallen man be raised up to forfeited "glory, honor, and immortality."

Verse 19

Now we know - We all admit. It is a conceded plain point.

What things soever - Whether given as precepts, or recorded as historical facts. Whatever things are found in the Law. "The law saith." This means here evidently the Old Testament. From that the apostle had been drawing his arguments, and his train of thought requires us here to understand the whole of the Old Testament by this. The same principle applies, however, to all law, that it speaks only to those to whom it is expressly given.

It saith to them … - It speaks to them for whom it was expressly intended; to them for whom the Law was made. The apostle makes this remark in order to prevent the Jew from evading the force of his conclusion. He had brought proofs from their own acknowledged laws, from writings given expressly for them, and which recorded their own history, and which they admitted to be divinely inspired. These proofs, therefore, they could not evade.

That every mouth may be stopped - This is perhaps, a proverbial expression, Job 5:15; Psalm 107:42. It denotes that they would be thoroughly convinced; that the argument would be so conclusive as that they would have nothing to reply; that all objections would be silenced. Here it denotes that the argument for the depravity of the Jews from the Old Testament was so clear and satisfactory, that nothing could be alleged in reply. This may be regarded as the conclusion of his whole argument, and the expressions may refer not to the Jews only, but to all the world. Its meaning may, perhaps, be thus expressed, "The Gentiles are proved guilty by their own deeds, and by a violation of the laws of nature. They sin against their own conscience; and have thus been shown to be guilty before God Romans 1. The Jews have also been shown to be guilty; all their objections have been silenced by an independent train of remark; by appeals to their own Law; by arguments drawn from the authority which they admit. Thus, the mouths of both are stopped. Thus, the whole world becomes guilty before God." I regard, therefore, the word "that" here ἵνα hinaas referring, not particularly to the argument from the Law of the Jews, but to the whole previous train of argument, embracing both Jews and Gentiles. His conclusion is thus general or universal, drawn from arguments adapted to the two great divisions of mankind.

And all the world - Both Jews and Gentiles, for so the strain of the argument shows. That is, all by nature; all who are out of Christ; all who are not pardoned. All are guilty where there is not some scheme contemplating forgiveness, and which is not applied to purify them. The apostle in all this argument speaks of what man is, and ever would be, without some plan of justification appointed by God.

May become - May "be." They are not made guilty by the Law; but the argument from the Law, and from fact, proves that they are guilty.

Guilty before God - ὑπόδικος τῷ Θεῷ hupodikos tō TheōMargin, "subject to the judgment of God." The phrase is taken from courts of justice. It is applied to a man who has not vindicated or defended himself; against whom therefore the charge or the indictment is found true; and who is in consequence subject to punishment. The idea is that of subjection to punishment; but always because the man personally deserves it, and because being unable to vindicate himself, he ought to be punished. It is never used to denote simply an obligation to punishment, but with reference to the fact that the punishment is personally deserved." This word, rendered "guilty," is not used elsewhere in the New Testament, nor is it found in the Septuagint. The argument of the apostle here shows,

(1)That in order to guilt, there must be a law, either that of nature or by revelation Romans 1; 2; 3; and,

(2)That in order to guilt, there must be a violation of that law which may be charged on them as individuals, and for which they are to be held personally responsible.

Verse 20

By the deeds of the law - By works; or by such deeds as the Law requires. The word "Law" has, in the Scriptures, a great variety of significations. Its strict and proper meaning is, a rule of conduct prescribed by superior authority. The course of reasoning in these chapters shows the sense in which the apostle uses it here. He intends evidently to apply it to those rules or laws by which the Jews and Gentiles pretended to frame their lives; and to affirm that people could be justified by no conformity to those laws. He had shown Romans 1:26, Romans 1:29-31; Romans 2:28-29. The conclusion is therefore a general one, that by no law, made known either by reason, conscience, tradition, or revelation, could man be justified; that

there was no form of obedience which could be rendered, that would justify people in the sight of a holy God.

There shall no flesh - No man; no human being, either among the Jews or the Gentiles. It is a strong expression, denoting the absolute universality of his conclusion; see the note at Romans 1:3.

Be justified - Be regarded and treated as righteous. None shall be esteemed as having kept the Law, and as being entitled to the rewards of obedience; see the note at Romans 1:17.

In his sight - Before him. God sits as a Judge to determine the characters of people, and he shall not adjudge any to have kept the Law.

For by the law - That is, by all law. The connection shows that this is the sense. Law is a rule of action. The effect of applying a rule to our conduct is to show us what sin is. The meaning of the apostle clearly is, that the application of a law to try our conduct, instead of being a ground of justification, will be merely to show us our own sinfulness and departures from duty. A man may esteem himself to be very right and correct, until he compares himself with a rule, or law; so whether the Gentiles compared their conduct with their laws of reason and conscience, or the Jew his with his written law, the effect would be to show them how far they had departed. The more closely and faithfully it should be applied, the more they would see it. So far from being justified by it, they would be more and more condemned; compare Romans 7:7-10. The same is the case now. This is the way in which a sinner is converted; and the more closely and faithfully the Law is preached, the more will it condemn him, and show him that he needs some other plan of salvation.

Verse 21

But now - The apostle, having shown the entire failure of all attempts to be justified by the "Law," whether among Jews or Gentiles, proceeds to state fully the plan of justification by Jesus Christ in the gospel. To do this, was the main design of the Epistle, Romans 1:17. He makes, therefore, in the close of this chapter, an explicit statement of the nature of the doctrine; and in the following parts of the Epistle he fully proves it, and illustrates its effects.

The righteousness of God - God's plan of justifying people; see the note at Romans 1:17.

Without the law - In a way different from personal obedience to the Law. It does not mean that God abandoned his Law; or that Jesus Christ did

not regard the Law, for he came to "magnify" it Isaiah 42:21; or that sinners after they are justified have no regard to the Law; but it means simply what the apostle had been endeavoring to show, that justification could not be accomplished by personal obedience to any law of Jew or Gentile, and that it must be accomplished in some other way.

Being witnessed - Being borne witness to. It was not a new doctrine; it was found in the Old Testament. The apostle makes this observation with special reference to the Jews. He does not declare any new thing, but that which was rally declared in their own sacred writings.

By the law - This expression here evidently denotes, as it did commonly among the Jews, the five books of Moses. And the apostle means to say that this doctrine was found in those books; not that it was in the Ten Commandments, or in the Law, strictly so called. It is not a part of "law" to declare justification except by strict and perfect obedience. That it was found "in" those books; the apostle shows by the case of Abraham; Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 30:12-14, in Romans 10:5-11; compare Exodus 34:6-7.

And the prophets - Generally, the remainder of the Old Testament. The phrase "the Law and the prophets" comprehended the whole of the Old Testament; Matthew 5:17; Matthew 11:13; Matthew 22:40; Acts 13:15; Acts 28:23. That this doctrine was contained in the prophets, the apostle showed by the passage quoted from Habakkuk 2:4, in Romans 1:17, "The just shall live by faith." The same thing he showed in Romans 10:11, from Isaiah 28:16; Isaiah 49:23; Romans 4:6-8, from Psalm 32:1-11. The same thing is fully taught in Isaiah 53:11; Daniel 9:24. Indeed, the general tenor of the Old Testament - the appointment of sacrifices, etc. taught that man was a sinner, and that he could not be justified by obedience to the moral law.

Verse 22

Even the righteousness of God - The apostle, having stated that the design of the gospel was to reveal a new plan of becoming just in the sight of God, proceeds here more fully to explain it. The explanation which he offers, makes it plain that the phrase so often used by him, "righteousness of God," does not refer to an attribute of God, but to his plan of making people righteous. Here he says that it is by faith in Jesus Christ; but surely an attribute of God is not produced by faith in Jesus Christ. It means God's mode of regarding people as righteous through their belief in Jesus Christ.

(That the “righteousness of God” cannot be explained of the attribute of justice, is obvious enough. It cannot be said of divine justice, that it is “unto and upon all them that believe.” But we are not reduced to the alternative of explaining the phrase, either of God‘s justice, or God‘s plan of justifying people. Why may we not understand it of that righteousness which Yahweh devised, Jesus executed, and the Spirit applies; and which is therefore justly denominated the righteousness of God? It consists in that conformity to law which Jesus manifested in his atoning death, and meritorious obedience. His death, by reason of his divine nature, was of infinite value. And when he voluntarily submitted to yield a life that was forfeited by no transgression of his own, the Law, in its penal part, was more magnified than if every descendant of Adam had sunk under the weight of its vengeance.

Nor was the preceptive part of the Law less honored, in the spotless obedience of Christ. He abstained from every sin, fulfilled every duty, and exemplified every virtue. Neither God nor man could accuse him of failure in duty. To God he gave his piety, to man his glowing love, to friends his heart, to foes his pity and his pardon. And by the obedience of the Creator in human form, the precept of the Law was more honored than if the highest angels had come down to do reverence to it, in presence of people. Here then is a righteousness worthy of the name, divine, spotless, broad, lasting - beyond the power of language to characterize. It is that everlasting righteousness which Daniel predicted the Messiah should bring in. Adam‘s righteousness failed and passed away. That of once happy angels perished too, but this shall endure. “The heavens,” says Yahweh,” shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner, but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished,” This righteousness is broad enough to cover every sinner and every sin. It is pure enough to meet the eye of God himself. It is therefore the sinner‘s only shield. See the note at Romans 1:17, for the true meaning of the expression “righteousness of God.”)

By faith of Jesus Christ - That is, by faith in Jesus Christ. Thus, the expression, Mark 11:22, “Have the faith of God” (margin), means, have faith in God. So Acts 3:16, the “faith of his name” “(Greek),” means, faith in his name. So Galatians 2:20, the “faith of the Son of God” means, faith in the Son of God. This cannot mean that faith is the meritorious cause of

salvation, but that it is the instrument or means by which we become justified. It is the state of mind, or condition of the heart, to which God has been pleased to promise justification. (On the nature of faith see the note at Mark 16:16.) God has promised that they who believe in Christ shall be pardoned and saved. This is his plan in distinction from the plan of those who seek to be justified by works.

Unto all and upon all - It is evident that these expressions are designed to be emphatic, but why both are used is not very apparent. Many have supposed that there was no essential difference in the meaning. If there be a difference, it is probably this: the first expression, "unto all" εἰς πᾶς eis pasmay denote that this plan of justification has come "(Luther)" unto all men, to Jews and Gentiles; that is, that it has been provided for them, and offered to them without distinction. The plan was ample for all, was suited for all, was equally necessary for all, and was offered to all. The second phrase, "upon all" ἐπὶ πᾶντας epi pantasmay be designed to guard against the supposition that all therefore would be benefited by it, or be saved by the mere fact that the announcement had come to all. The apostle adds therefore, that the benefits of this plan must actually come upon all, or must be applied to all, if they would be justified. They could not be justified merely by the fact that the plan was provided, and that the knowledge of it had come to all, but by their actually coming under this plan, and availing themselves of it. Perhaps there is reference in the last expression, "upon all," to a robe, or garment, that is placed upon one to hide his nakedness, or sin; compare Isaiah 64:6, also Philemon 3:9.

For there is no difference - That is, there is no difference in regard to the matter under discussion. The apostle does not mean to say that there is no difference in regard to the talents, dispositions, education, and property of people; but there is no distinction in regard to the way in which they must be justified. All must be saved, if saved at all, in the same mode, whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, rich or poor, learned or ignorant. None can be saved by works; and all are therefore dependent on the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

Verse 23

For all have sinned - This was the point which he had fully established in the discussion in these chapters.

Have come short - Greek, "Are deficient in regard to;" are lacking, etc. Here it means, that they had failed to obtain, or were destitute of.

The glory of God - The praise or approbation of God. They had sought to be justified, or approved, by God; but all had failed. Their works of the Law had not secured his approbation; and they were therefore under condemnation. The word "glory" (δόξα doxa) is often used in the sense of praise, or approbation, John 5:41, John 5:44; John 7:18; John 8:50, John 8:54; John 12:43.

Verse 24

Being justified - Being treated as if righteous; that is, being regarded and treated as if they had kept the Law. The apostle has shown that they could not be so regarded and treated by any merit of their own, or by personal obedience to the Law. He now affirms that if they were so treated, it must be by mere favor, and as a matter not of right, but of gift. This is the essence of the gospel. And to show this, and the way in which it is done, is the main design of this Epistle. The expression here is to be understood as referring to all who are justified; Romans 3:22. The righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ, is "upon all who believe," who are all "justified freely by his grace."

Freely - δωρεὰν dōreanThis word stands opposed to what is purchased, or which is obtained by labor, or which is a matter of claim. It is a free, undeserved gift, not merited by our obedience to the Law, and not that to which we have any claim. The apostle uses the word here in reference to those who are justified. To them it is a mere undeserved gift, It does not mean that it has been obtained, however, without any price or merit from anyone, for the Lord Jesus has purchased it with his own blood, and to him it becomes a matter of justice that those who were given to him should be justified, 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Corinthians 7:23; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 Peter 2:9. (Greek). Acts 20:28; Isaiah 53:11. We have no offering to bring, and no claim. To us, therefore, it is entirely a matter of gift.

By his grace - By his favor; by his mere undeserved mercy; see the note at Romans 1:7.

Through the redemption - διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως dia tēs apolutrōseōsThe word used here occurs only 10 times in the New Testament, Luke 21:28; Romans 3:24; Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:7, Ephesians 1:14; Ephesians 4:30; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 11:35. Its root (λύτρον lutron) properly denotes the price which is paid for a prisoner of war; the ransom, or stipulated purchase-money, which being paid, the captive is set free. The word used here is then

employed to denote liberation from bondage, captivity, or evil of any kind, usually keeping up the idea of a price, or a ransom paid, in consequence of which the delivery is effected. It is sometimes used in a large sense, to denote simple deliverance by any means, without reference to a price paid, as in Luke 21:28; Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:14. That this is not the sense here, however, is apparent. For the apostle in the next verse proceeds to specify the price which has been paid, or the means by which this redemption has been effected. The word here denotes that deliverance from sin, and from the evil consequences of sin, which has been effected by the offering of Jesus Christ as a propitiation; Romans 3:25.

That is in Christ Jesus - Or, that has been effected by Christ Jesus; that of which he is the author and procurer; compare John 3:16.

Verse 25

Whom God hath set forth - Margin, "Fore-ordained" (προέθετο proetheto). The word properly means, "to place in public view;" to exhibit in a conspicuous situation, as goods are exhibited or exposed for sale, or as premiums or rewards of victory were exhibited to public view in the games of the Greeks. It sometimes has the meaning of decreeing, purposing, or constituting, as in the margin (compare Romans 1:13; Ephesians 1:9); and many have supposed that this is its meaning here. But the connection seems to require the usual signification of the word; and it means that God has publicly exhibited Jesus Christ as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of people. This public exhibition was made by his being offered on the cross, in the face of angels and of people. It was not concealed; it was done openly. He was put to open shame; and so put to death as to attract toward the scene the eyes of angels, and of the inhabitants of all worlds.

To be a propitiation - ἱλαστήριον hilastērionThis word occurs but in one other place in the New Testament. Hebrews 9:5, "and over it (the ark) the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat. It is used here to denote the lid or cover of the ark of the covenant. It was made of gold, and over it were the cherubim. In this sense it is often used by the Septuagint Exodus 25:17, "And thou shalt make a propitiatory ἱλαστήριον hilastērionof gold," Exodus 30:6; Exodus 31:7; Exodus 35:11; Exodus 37:6-9; Exodus 40:18; Leviticus 16:2, Leviticus 16:13. The Hebrew name for this was כפרת kaphorethfrom the verb כפר kaaphar"to cover" or "to conceal." It was from this place that God was represented as speaking to the children of Israel. Exodus 25:22, "and I will speak to thee from above the Hilasterion, the

propitiatory, the mercy-seat. Leviticus 16:2, “For I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat.” This seat, or cover, was covered with the smoke of the incense, when the high priest entered the most holy place, Leviticus 16:13.

And the blood of the bullock offered on the great day of atonement, was to be sprinkled “upon the mercy-seat,” and “before the mercy-seat,” “seven times,” Leviticus 16:14-15. This sprinkling or offering of blood was called making “an atonement for the holy place because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel,” etc. Leviticus 16:16. It was from this mercy-seat that God pronounced pardon, or expressed himself as reconciled to his people. The atonement was made, the blood was sprinkled, and the reconciliation thus effected. The name was thus given to that cover of the ark, because it was the place from which God declared himself reconciled to his people. Still the inquiry is, why is this name given to Jesus Christ? In what sense is he declared to be a propitiation? It is evident that it cannot be applied to him in any literal sense. Between the golden cover of the ark of the covenant and the Lord Jesus, the analogy must be very slight, if any such analogy can be perceived. We may observe, however,

(1) That the main idea, in regard to the cover of the ark called the mercy-seat, was that of God‘s being reconciled to his people; and that this is the main idea in regard to the Lord Jesus whom “God hath set forth.”

(2) this reconciliation was effected then by the sprinkling of blood on the mercy-seat, Leviticus 16:15-16. The same is true of the Lord Jesus - by blood.

(3) in the former case it was by the blood of atonement; the offering of the bullock on the great day of atonement, that the reconciliation was effected, Leviticus 16:17-18. In the case of the Lord Jesus it was also by blood; by the blood of atonement. But it was by his own blood. This the apostle distinctly states in this verse.

(4) in the former case there was a sacrifice, or expiatory offering; and so it is in reconciliation by the Lord Jesus. In the former, the mercy-seat was the visible, declared place where God would express his reconciliation with

his people. So in the latter, the offering of the Lord Jesus is the manifest and open way by which God will be reconciled to people.

(5) in the former, there was joined the idea of a sacrifice for sin, Leviticus 17:11, “the life of the flesh is in the blood.” Hence, they were commanded not to eat blood. Genesis 9:4, “but flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.” Leviticus 19:26; Deuteronomy 12:23; 1 Samuel 14:34. This doctrine is contained uniformly in the Sacred Scriptures. And it has been also the opinion of not a few celebrated physiologists, as well in modern as in ancient times. The same was the opinion of the ancient Parsees and Hindus. Homer thus often speaks of blood as the seat of life, as in the expression πορφυρεος θανατος porphureos thanatosor “purple death.” And Virgil speaks of “purple life,”

Purpuream vomit ille animam.

AEniad, ix. 349.

Empedocles and Critias among the Greek philosophers, also embraced this opinion. Among the moderns, Harvey, to whom we are indebted for a knowledge of the circulation of the blood, fully believed it. Hoffman and Huxham believed it Dr. John Hunter has fully adopted the belief, and sustained it, as he supposed, by a great variety of considerations. See Good‘s Book of Nature, pp. 102,108, New York edition, 1828. This was undoubtedly the doctrine of the Hebrews; and hence, with them to shed the blood was a phrase signifying to kill; hence, the efficacy of their sacrifices was supposed to consist in the blood, that is, in the life of the victim. Hence, it was unlawful to eat it, as it were the life, the seat of vitality; the more immediate and direct gift of God. When, therefore, the blood of Christ is spoken of in the New Testament, it means the offering of his life as a sacrifice, or his death as an expiation. His life was given to make atonement. See the word “blood” thus used in Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12, Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 13:12; Revelation 1:5; 1 Peter 1:19; 1 John 1:7. By faith in his death as a sacrifice for sin; by believing that he took our sins; that he died in our place; by thus, in some sense, making his offering ours; by approving it, loving it, embracing it, trusting it, our sins become pardoned, and our souls made pure.

To declare - εἰς ἔνδειξις eis endeixisFor “the purpose” of showing, or exhibiting; to present it to man. The meaning is, that the plan was adopted; the Saviour was given; he suffered and died: and the scheme is proposed to

people, for the purpose of making a full manifestation of his plan, in contradistinction from all the plans of people.

His righteousness - His plan of justification. The method or scheme which he has adopted, in distinction from that of man; and which he now exhibits, or proffers to sinners. There is great variety in the explanation of the word here rendered "righteousness." Some explain it as meaning veracity; others as holiness; others as goodness; others as essential justice. Most interpreters, perhaps, have explained it as referring to an attribute of God. But the whole connection requires us to understand it here as in Romans 1:17, not of an attribute of God, but of his "plan" of justifying sinners. He has adopted and proposed a plan by which people may become just by faith in Jesus Christ, and not by their own works. His acquitting people from sin; his regarding them and treating them as just, is set forth in the gospel by the offering of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice on the cross. (For the true meaning of this phrase, see the note at Romans 1:17; Romans 3:22.)

For the remission of sins - Margin, "Passing over." The word used here πάρεσιν paresinoccurs no where else in the New Testament, nor in the Septuagint. It means "passing by," as not noticing, and hence, forgiving. A similar idea occurs in 2 Samuel 24:10, and Micah 7:18. "Who is a God like unto thee, that passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance?" In Romans it means for the "pardoning," or in order to pardon past transgression.

That are past - That have been committed; or that have existed before. This has been commonly understood to refer to past generations, as affirming that sins under all dispensations of the world are to be forgiven in this manner, through the sacrifice of Christ. And it has been supposed that all who have been justified, have received pardon by the merits of the sacrifice of Christ. This may be true; but there is no reason to think that this is the idea in this passage. For,

(1) The scope of the passage does not require it. The argument is not to show how people had been justified, but how they might be. It is not to discuss an historical fact, but to state the way in which sin was to be forgiven under the gospel.

(2) the language has no immediate or necessary reference to past generations. It evidently refers to the past lives of the individuals who are justified, and not to the sins of former times. All that the passage means,

therefore, is, that the plan of pardon is such as completely to remove all the former sins of the life, not of all former generations. If it referred to the sins of former times, it would not be easy to avoid the doctrine of universal salvation.

(The design of the apostle is to showy the alone ground of a sinner‘s justification. That ground is “the righteousness of God.” To manifest this righteousness, Christ had been set forth in the beginning of the gospel age as a propitiatory sacrifice. But though at this time manifested or declared, it had in reality been the ground of justification all along. Believers in every past dispensation, looking forward to the period of its revelation, had built their hopes on it, and been admitted into glory.

The idea of manifestation in gospel times, seems most intimately connected with the fact that in past ages, the ground of pardon had been hidden, or at best but dimly seen through type and ceremony. There seems little doubt that these two things were associated in the apostle‘s mind. Though the ground of God‘s procedure in remitting the sins of his people, during the former economy, had long been concealed, it was now gloriously displayed before the eyes of the universe. Paul has the very same idea in Hebrews 9:15, “And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” It may be noticed also that the expression in Hebrews 9:20, “at this time,” that is, in the gospel age, requires us to understand the other clause, “sins that are past,” as pointing to sin committed under former dispensations. Nor is there any fear of lending support to the doctrine of universal salvation. if we espouse this view. the sins remitted in past ages being obviously those of believers only. The very same objection might be urged against the parallel passage in Hebrews 9:15.)

Through the forbearance of God - Through his patience, his long-suffering. That is, he did not come forth in judgment when the sin was committed; he spared us, though deserving of punishment; and now he comes forth completely to pardon those sins concerning which he has so long and so graciously exercised forbearance. This expression obviously refers not to the remission of sins, but to the fact that they were committed

while he evinced such long-suffering; compare Acts 17:30. I do not know better how to show the practical value and bearing of this important passage of Scripture, than by transcribing a part of the affecting experience of the poet Cowper. It is well known that before his conversion he was oppressed by a long and dreadful melancholy; that this was finally heightened to despair; and that he was then subjected to the kind treatment of Dr. Cotton in Alban‘s, as a melancholy case of derangement.

His leading thought was that he was doomed to inevitable destruction, and that there was no hope. From this he was roused only by the kindness of his brother, and by the promises of the gospel; (see Taylor‘s Life of Cowper). The account of his conversion I shall now give in his own words. “The happy period, which was to shake off my fetters, and afford me a clear discovery of the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus, was now arrived. I flung myself into a chair near the window, and seeing a Bible there, ventured once more to apply to it for comfort and instruction. The first verse I saw was Romans 3:25; “Whom God hath set forth, etc.” Immediately I received strength to believe, and the full beam of the Sun of righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement he had made for my pardon and justification. In a moment I believed, and received the peace of the gospel. Unless, the Almighty arm had been under me, I think I should have been overwhelmed with gratitude and joy. My eyes filled with tears, and my voice choked with transport. I could only look up to heaven in silent fear, overwhelmed with love and wonder. How glad should I now have been to have spent every moment in prayer and thanksgiving. I lost no opportunity of repairing to a throne of grace; but flew to it with an earnestness irresistible, and never to be satisfied.”

Verse 26

At this time - The time now since the Saviour has come, now is the time when he manifests it.

That he might be just - This verse contains the substance of the gospel. The word “just” here does not mean benevolent, or merciful, though it may sometimes have that meaning; see the Matthew 1:19 note, also John 17:25 note. But it refers to the fact that God had retained the integrity of his character as a moral governor; that he had shown a due regard to his Law, and to the penalty of the Law by his plan of salvation. Should he forgive sinners without an atonement, justice would be sacrificed and abandoned.

The Law would cease to have any terrors for the guilty, and its penalty would be a nullity. In the plan of salvation, therefore, he has shown a regard to the Law by appointing his Son to be a substitute in the place of sinners; not to endure its precise penalty, for his sufferings were not eternal, nor were they attended with remorse of conscience, or by despair, which are the proper penalty of the Law; but he endured so much as to accomplish the same ends as if those who shall be saved by him had been doomed to eternal death.

That is, he showed that the Law could not be violated without introducing suffering; and that it could not be broken with impunity. He showed that he had so great a regard for it, that he would not pardon one sinner without an atonement. And thus he secured the proper honor to his character as a lover of his Law, a hater of sin, and a just God. He has shown that if sinners do not avail themselves of the offer of pardon by Jesus Christ, they must experience in their own souls forever the pains which this substitute for sinners endured in behalf of people on the cross. Thus, no principle of justice has been abandoned; no threatening has been modified; no claim of his Law has been let down; no disposition has been evinced to do injustice to the universe by suffering the guilty to escape. He is, in all this great Transaction, a just moral governor, as just to his Law, to himself, to his Son, to the universe, when he pardons, as he is when he sends the incorrigible sinner down to hell. A full compensation, an equivalent, has been provided by the sufferings of the Saviour in the sinner‘s stead, and the sinner may be pardoned.

And the justifier of him … - Greek, “Even justifying him that believeth, etc.” This is the uniqueness and the wonder of the gospel. Even while pardoning, and treating the ill-deserving as if they were innocent, he can retain his pure and holy character. His treating the guilty with favor does not show that be loves guilt and pollution, for he has expressed his abhorrence of it in the atonement. His admitting them to friendship and heaven does not show that he approves their past conduct and character, for he showed how much he hated even their sins by giving his Son to a shameful death for them. When an executive pardons offenders, there is an abandonment of the principles of justice and law. The sentence is set aside; the threatenings of the law are departed from; and it is done without compensation. It is declared that in certain cases the law may be violated, and its penalty “not” be inflicted. But not so with God. He shows no less

regard to his law in pardoning than in punishing. This is the grand, glorious, special feature of the gospel plan of salvation.

Him which believeth in Jesus - Greek, "Him who is of the faith of Jesus;" in contradistinction from him who is of the works of the Law; that is, who depends on his own works for salvation.

Verse 27

Where is boasting then? - Where is there ground or occasion of boasting or pride? Since all have sinned, and since all have failed of being able to justify themselves by obeying the Law, and since all are alike dependent on the mere mercy of God in Christ, all ground of boasting is of course taken away. This refers particularly to the Jews, who were much addicted to boasting of their special privileges; See the note at Romans 3:1, etc.

By what law? - The word "law "here is used in the sense of "arrangement, rule, or economy." By what arrangement, or by the operation of what rule, is boasting excluded? "(Stuart)." See Galatians 3:21; Acts 21:20.

Of works - The Law which commands works, and on which the Jews relied. If this were complied with, and they were thereby justified, they would have had ground of self-confidence, or boasting, as being justified by their own merits. But a plan which led to this, which ended in boasting, and self-satisfaction, and pride, could not be true.

Nay - No.

The law of faith - The rule, or arrangement which proclaims that we have no merit; that we are lost sinners; and that we are to be justified only by faith.

Verse 28

Therefore - As the result of the previous train of argument.

That a man - That all who are justified; that is, that there is no other way.

Is justified by faith - Is regarded and treated as righteous, by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Without the deeds of the law - Without works as a meritorious ground of justification. The apostle, of course, does not mean that Christianity does not produce good works, or that they who are justified will not obey the Law, and be holy; but that no righteousness of their own will be the ground of their justification. They are sinners; and as such can have no claim to he

treated as righteous. God has devised a plan by which, they may be pardoned and saved; and that is by faith alone. This is the grand uniqueness of the Christian religion. This was the special point in the reformation from popery. Luther often called this doctrine of justification by faith the article upon which the church stood or fell - articulus stantis, vel cadentis ecclesiae - and it is so. If this doctrine is held entire, all others will be held with it. If this is abandoned, all others will fall also. It may be remarked here, however, that this doctrine by no means interferes with the doctrine that good works are to be performed by Christians. Paul urges this as much as any other writer in the New Testament. His doctrine is, that they are not to be relied on as a ground of justification; but that he did not mean to teach that they are not to be performed by Christians is apparent from the connection, and from the following places in his epistles: Romans 2:7; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Timothy 2:10; 1 Timothy 5:10, 1 Timothy 5:25; 1 Timothy 6:18; 2 Timothy 3:17; Titus 2:7, Titus 2:14; Titus 3:8; Hebrews 10:24. That we are not justified by our works is a doctrine which he has urged and repeated with great power and frequency. See Romans 4:2, Romans 4:6; Romans 9:11, Romans 9:32; Romans 11:6; Galatians 2:16; Galatians 3:2, Galatians 3:5, Galatians 3:10; Ephesians 2:9; 2 Timothy 1:9.

Verse 29-30

Is he the God … - The Jews supposed that he was the God of their nation only, that they only were to be admitted to his favor. In these verses Paul showed that as all had alike sinned, Jews and Gentiles; and as the plan of salvation by faith was adapted to sinners, without any special reference to Jews; so God could show favors to all, and all might be admitted on the same terms to the benefits of the plan of salvation.

It is one God - The same God, there is but one, and his plan is equally suited to Jews and Gentiles.

The circumcision - Those who are circumcised - the Jews.

The uncircumcision - Gentiles; all who were not Jews.

By faith … through faith - There is no difference in the meaning of these expressions. Both denote that faith is the instrumental cause of justification, or acceptance with God.

Verse 31

Do we then make void the law - Do we render it vain and useless; do we destroy its moral obligation; and do we prevent obedience to it, by the

doctrine of justification by faith? This was an objection which would naturally be made; and which has thousands of times been since made, that the doctrine of justification by faith tends to licentiousness. The word "law" here, I understand as referring to the moral law, and not merely to the Old Testament. This is evident from Romans 3:20-21, where the apostle shows that no man could be justified by deeds of law, by conformity with the moral law. See the note.

God forbid - By no means. Note, Romans 3:4. This is an explicit denial of any such tendency.

Yea, we establish the law - That is, by the doctrine of justification by faith; by this scheme of treating people as righteous, the moral law is confirmed, its obligation is enforced, obedience to it is secured. This is done in the following manner:

(1) God showed respect to it, in being unwilling to pardon sinners without an atonement. He showed that it could not be violated with impunity; that he was resolved to fulfil its threatenings.

(2) Jesus Christ came to magnify it, and to make it honorable. He showed respect to it in his life; and he died to show that God was determined to inflict its penalty.

(3) the plan of justification by faith leads to an observance of the Law. The sinner sees the evil of transgression. He sees the respect which God has shown to the Law. He gives his heart to God, and yields himself to obey his Law. All the sentiments that arise from the conviction of sin; that flow from gratitude for mercies; that spring from love to God; all his views of the sacredness of the Law, prompt him to yield obedience to it. The fact that Christ endured such sufferings to show the evil of violating the Law, is one of the strongest motives prompting to obedience. We do not easily and readily repeat what overwhelms our best friends in calamity; and we are brought to hate what inflicted such woes on the Saviour's soul. The sentiment recorded by Watts is as true as it is beautiful:

"'Twas for my sins my dearest Lord.
Hung on the cursed tree.
And groan'd away his dying life,
For thee, my soul, for thee.
"O how I hate those lusts of mine.

That crucified my Lord;
Those sins that pierc‘d and nail‘d his flesh.
Fast to the fatal wood.
“Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die,
My heart hath so decreed;
Nor will I spare the guilty things.
That made my Saviour bleed.”

This is an advantage in moral influence which no cold, abstract law always has over the human mind. And one of the chief glories of the plan of salvation is, that while it justifies the sinner, it brings a new set of influences from heaven, more tender and mighty than can be drawn from any other source, to produce obedience to the Law of God.

(This is indeed a beautiful and just view of the moral influence of the gospel, and especially of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. It may be questioned, however, whether the apostle in this place refers chiefly, or even at all, to the sanctifying tendency of his doctrine. This he does very fully in the 6th Rom.; and therefore, if another and consistent sense can be found, we need not resort to the supposition that he now anticipates what he intended, in a subsequent part of his epistle, more fully to discuss. In what other way, then, does the apostle‘s doctrine establish the Law? How does he vindicate himself from the charge of making it void? In the preceding chapter he had pointed out the true ground of pardon in the “righteousness of God.” He had explained that none could be justified but they who had by faith received it. “Do we then,” he asks in conclusion,” make void the Law by maintaining thus, that no sinner can be accepted who does not receive a righteousness commensurate with all its demands?.” “Yea, we establish the law,” is the obvious answer. Jesus has died to satisfy its claims, and lives to honor its precepts. Thus, he hath brought in “righteousness,” which, being imputed to them that believe, forms such a ground of pardon and acceptance, as the Law cannot challenge.

Calvin, in his commentary on the passage, though he does not exclude the idea of sanctification, yet gives prominence to the view now stated. “When,” says he, “we come to Christ, the exact righteousness of the Law is first found in him, which also becomes ours by imputation; in the next place sanctification is acquired,” etc.)

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

The main object of this chapter is to show that the doctrine of justification by faith, which the apostle was defending, was found in the Old Testament. The argument is to be regarded as addressed particularly to a Jew, to show him that no new doctrine was advanced. The argument is derived, first, from the fact that Abraham was so justified, Romans 4:1-5; Secondly, from the fact that the same thing is declared by David Romans 4:6-8.

A question might still be asked, whether this justification was not in consequence of their being circumcised, and thus grew out of conformity to the Law? To answer this, the apostle shows Romans 4:9-12 that Abraham was justified by faith before he was circumcised, and that even his circumcision was in consequence of his being justified by faith, and a public seal or attestation of that fact.

Still further, the apostle shows that if people were to be justified by works, faith would be of no use; and the promises of God would have no effect. The Law works wrath Romans 4:13-14, but the conferring of the favor by faith is demonstration of the highest favor of God Romans 4:16. Abraham, moreover, had evinced a strong faith; he had shown what it was; he was an example to all who should follow. And he had thus shown that as he was justified before circumcision, and "before" the giving of the Law, so the same thing might occur in regard to those who had never been circumcised. In Romans 2; 3, the apostle had shown that all had failed of keeping the Law, and that there was no other way of justification but by faith. To the salvation of the pagan, the Jew would have strong objections. He supposed that none could be saved but those who had been circumcised, and who were Jews. This objection the apostle meets in this chapter by showing that Abraham was justified in the very way in which he maintained the pagan might be; that Abraham was justified by faith without being circumcised. If the father of the faithful, the ancestor on whom the Jews so much prided themselves, was thus justified, then Paul was advancing no new doctrine in maintaining that the same thing might occur now. He was keeping strictly within the spirit of their religion in maintaining that the Gentile world might also be justified by faith. This is the outline of the

reasoning in this chapter. The reasoning is such as a serious Jew must feel and acknowledge. And keeping in mind the main object which the apostle had in it, there will be found little difficulty in its interpretation.

Verse 1

What shall we say then? - See Romans 3:1. This is rather the objection of a Jew. "How does your doctrine of justification by faith agree with what the Scriptures say of Abraham? Was the Law set aside in his case? Did he derive no advantage in justification from the rite of circumcision, and from the covenant which God made with him?" The object of the apostle now is to answer this inquiry.

That Abraham our father - Our ancestor; the father and founder of the nation; see the note at Matthew 3:9 The Jews valued themselves much on the fact that he was their father; and an argument, drawn from his example or conduct, therefore, would be especially forcible.

As pertaining to the flesh - This expression is one that has been much controverted. In the original, it may refer either to Abraham as their father "according to the flesh," that is, their natural father, or from whom they were descended; or it may be connected with "hath found." "What shall we say that Abraham our father hath found in respect to the flesh?" κατὰ σάρκα kata sarkaThe latter is doubtless the proper connection. Some refer the word "flesh" to external privileges and advantages; others to his own strength or power (Calvin and Grotius); and others make it refer to circumcision. This latter I take to be the correct interpretation. It agrees best with the connection, and equally well with the usual meaning of the word. The idea is, "If people are justified by faith; if works are to have no place; if, therefore, all rites and ceremonies, all legal observances, are useless in justification; what is the advantage of circumcision? What benefit did Abraham derive from it? Why was it appointed? And why is such an importance attached to it in the history of his life." A similar question was asked in Romans 3:1.

Hath found - Hath obtained. What advantage has he derived from it?

Verse 2

For if Abraham … - This is the answer of the apostle. If Abraham was justified on the ground of his own merits, he would have reason to boast, or to claim praise. He might regard himself as the author of it, and take the praise to himself; see Romans 4:4. The inquiry, therefore, was, whether in

the account of the justification of Abraham, there was to be found any such statement of a reason for self-confidence and boasting.

But not before God - In the sight of God. That is, in his recorded judgment, he had no ground of boasting on account of works. To show this, the apostle appeals at once to the Scriptures, to show that there was no such record as that Abraham could boast that he was justified by his works. As God judges right in all cases, so it follows that Abraham had no just ground of boasting, and of course that he was not justified by his own works. The sense of this verse is well expressed by Calvin. "If Abraham was justified by his works, he might boast of his own merits. But he has no ground of boasting before God. Therefore he was not justified by works."

Verse 3

For what saith the Scripture? - The inspired account of Abraham's justification. This account was final, and was to settle the question. This account is found in Genesis 15:6.

Abraham believed God - In the Hebrew, "Abraham believed Yahweh." The sense is substantially the same, as the argument turns on the act of believing. The faith which Abraham exercised was, that his posterity should be like the stars of heaven in number. This promise was made to him when he had no child, and of course when he had no prospect of such a posterity. See the strength and nature of this faith further illustrated in Romans 4:16-21. The reason why it was counted to him for righteousness was, that it was such a strong, direct, and unwavering act of confidence in the promise of God.

And it - The word "it" here evidently refers to the act of believing It does not refer to the righteousness of another - of God, or of the Messiah; but the discussion is solely of the strong act of Abraham's faith. which in some sense was counted to him for righteousness. In what sense this was, is explained directly after. All that is material to remark here is, that the act of Abraham, the strong confidence of his mind in the promises of God, his unwavering assurance that what God had promised he would perform, was reckoned for righteousness. The same thing is more fully expressed in Romans 4:18-22. When therefore it is said that the righteousness of Christ is accounted or imputed to us; when it is said that his merits are transferred and reckoned as ours; whatever may be the truth of the doctrine, it cannot be defended by "this" passage of Scripture.

Faith is uniformly an act of the mind. It is not a created essence which is placed within the mind. It is not a substance created independently of the soul, and placed within it by almighty power. It is not a principle, for the expression a principle of faith, is as unmeaningful as a principle of joy, or a principle of sorrow, or a principle of remorse. God promises; the man believes; and this is the whole of it.

(A principle is the "element or original cause," out of which certain consequences arise, and to which they may be traced. And if faith be the root of all acceptable obedience, then certainly, in this sense, it is a principle. But whatever faith be, it is not here asserted that it is imputed for, or instead of, righteousness. See the note above.)

While the word "faith" is sometimes used to denote religious doctrine, or the system that is to be believed (Acts 6:7; Acts 15:9; Romans 1:5; Romans 10:8; Romans 16:26; Ephesians 3:17; Ephesians 4:5; 1 Timothy 2:7, etc.); yet, when it is used to denote that which is required of people, it always denotes an acting of the mind exercised in relation to some object, or some promise, or threatening, or declaration of some other being; see the note at Mark 16:16.

Was counted - ἐλογίσθη elogigisthēThe same word in Romans 4:22, is is rendered "it was imputed." The word occurs frequently in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament, the verb חשב chaashabwhich which is translated by the word λογίζομαι logizomaimeans literally, "to think, to intend," or "purpose; to imagine, invent," or "devise; to reckon," or "account; to esteem; to impute," that is, to impute to a man what belongs to himself, or what "ought" to be imputed to him. It occurs only in the following places: Psalm 32:2; Psalm 35:4; Isaiah 10:7; Job 19:11; Job 33:10; Genesis 16:6; Genesis 38:15; 1 Samuel 1:13; Psalm 52:4; Jeremiah 18:18; Zechariah 7:10; Job 6:26; Job 19:16; Isaiah 13:17; 1 Kings 10:21; Numbers 18:27, Numbers 18:30; Psalm 88:4; Isaiah 40:17; Lamentations 4:2; Isaiah 40:15; Genesis 31:16. I have examined all the passages, and as the result of my examination have come to the conclusion, that there is not one in which the word is used in the sense of reckoning or imputing to a man what does not strictly belong to him; or of charging on him what ought not to be charged on him as a matter of personal right. The word is never used to denote imputing in the sense of transferring, or of charging that on one which does

not properly belong to him. The same is the case in the New Testament. The word occurs about forty times (see "Schmidius' Concord)," and, in a similar signification. No doctrine of transferring, or of setting over to a man what does not properly belong to him, be it sin or holiness, can be derived, therefore, from this word. Whatever is meant by it here, it evidently is declared that the act of believing is what is intended, both by Moses and by Paul.

For righteousness - In order to justification; or to regard and treat him in connection with this as a righteous man; as one who was admitted to the favor and friendship of God. In reference to this we may remark,

(1) That it is evidently not intended that the act of believing, on the part of Abraham, was the meritorious ground of acceptance; for then it would have been a work. Faith was as much his own act, as any act of obedience to the Law.

(2) the design of the apostle was to show that by the Law, or by works, man could not be justified; Romans 3:28; Romans 4:2.

(3) faith was not what the Law required. It demanded complete and perfect obedience; and if a man was justified by faith, it was in some other way than by the Law.

(4) as the Law did not demand this; and as faith was something different from the demand of the Law; so if a man were justified by that, it was on a principle altogether different from justification by works. It was not by personal merit. It was not by complying with the Law. It was in a mode entirely different.

(5) in being justified by faith, it is meant, therefore, that we are treated as righteous; that we are forgiven; that we are admitted to the favor of God, and treated as his friends.

(6) in this act, faith, is a mere instrument, an antecedent, a "sine qua non," what God has been pleased to appoint as a condition on which men may be treated as righteous. It expresses a state of mind which is demonstrative of love to God; of affection for his cause and character; of

reconciliation and friendship; and is therefore that state to which he has been graciously pleased to promise pardon and acceptance.

(7) since this is not a matter of law; since the Law could not be said to demand it; as it is on a different principle; and as the acceptance of faith, or of a believer, cannot be a matter of merit or claim, so justification is of grace, or mere favor. It is in no sense a matter of merit on our part, and thus stands distinguished entirely from justification by works, or by conformity to the Law. From beginning to end, it is, so far as we are concerned, a matter of grace. The merit by which all this is obtained, is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom this plan is proposed, and by whose atonement alone God can consistently pardon and treat as righteous those who are in themselves ungodly; see Romans 4:5. In this place we have also evidence that faith is always substantially of the same character. In the case of Abraham it was confidence in God and his promises. All faith has the same nature, whether it be confidence in the Messiah, or in any of the divine promises or truths. As this confidence evinces the same state of mind, so it was as consistent to justify Abraham by it, as it is to justify him who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ under the gospel; see Hebrews 11.

Verse 4

Now to him that worketh … - This passage is not to be understood as affirming that any actually have worked out their salvation by conformity to the Law so as to be saved by their own merits; but it expresses a general truth in regard to works. On that plan, if a man were justified by his works, it would be a matter due to him. It is a general principle in regard to contracts and obligations, that where a man fulfils them he is entitled to the reward as what is due to him, and which he can claim. This is well understood in all the transactions among people. Where a man has fulfilled the terms of a contract, to pay him is not a matter of favor; he has earned it; and we are bound to pay him. So says the apostle, it would be, if a man were justified by his works. He would have a claim on God. It would be wrong not to justify him. And this is an additional reason why the doctrine cannot be true; compare Romans 11:6.

The reward - The pay, or wages. The word is commonly applied to the pay of soldiers, day-laborers, etc.; Matthew 20:8; Luke 10:7; 1 Timothy 5:18; James 5:4. It has a similar meaning here.

Reckoned - Greek, Imputed. The same word which, in Romans 4:3, is rendered "counted," and in Romans 4:22, imputed. It is used here in its strict and proper sense, to reckon that as belonging to a man which is his own, or which is due to him; see the note at Romans 4:3.

Of grace - Of favor; as a gift.

Of debt - As due; as a claim; as a fair compensation according to the contract.

Verse 5

But to him that worketh not - Who does not rely on his conformity to the Law for his justification; who does not depend on his works; who seeks to be justified in some other way. The reference here is to the Christian plan of justification.

But believeth - Note, Romans 3:26.

On him - On God. Thus, the connection requires; for the discussion has immediate reference to Abraham, whose faith was in the promise of God.

That justifieth the ungodly - This is a very important expression. It implies,

(1) That people are sinners, or are ungodly.

(2) that God regards them as such when they are justified. He does not justify them because he sees them to be, or regards them to be righteous; but knowing that they are in fact polluted. He does not first esteem them, contrary to fact, to be pure; but knowing that they are polluted, and that they deserve no favor, he resolves to forgive them, and to treat them as his friends.

(3) in themselves they are equally undeserving, whether they are justified or not. Their souls have been defiled by sin; and that is known when they are pardoned. God judges things as they are; and sinners who are justified, he judges not as if they were pure, or as if they had a claim; but he regards them as united by faith to the Lord Jesus; and in this relation he judges that they should be treated as his friends, though they have been, are, and always will be, personally undeserving. It is not meant that the righteousness of Christ is transferred to them, so as to become personally theirs - for moral character cannot be transferred; nor that it is infused into them, making them personally meritorious - for then they could not be spoken of as ungodly; but that Christ died in their stead, to atone for their

sins, and is regarded and esteemed by God to have died; and that the results or benefits of his death are so reckoned or imputed to believers as to make it proper for God to regard and treat them as if they had themselves obeyed the Law; that is, as righteous in his sight; see the note at Romans 4:3.

Verse 6

Even as David - The apostle having adduced the example of Abraham to show that the doctrine which he was defending was not new, and contrary to the Old Testament, proceeds to adduce the case of David also; and to show that he understood the same doctrine of justification without works.

Describeth - Speaks of.

The blessedness - The happiness; or the desirable state or condition.

Unto whom God imputeth righteousness - Whom God treats as righteous, or as entitled to his favor in a way different from his conformity to the Law. This is found in Psalm 32:1-11. And the whole scope and design of the psalm is to show the blessedness of the man who is forgiven, and whose sins are not charged on him, but who is freed from the punishment due to his sins. Being thus pardoned, he is treated as a righteous man. And it is evidently in this sense that the apostle uses the expression "imputeth righteousness," that is, he does not impute, or charge on the man his sins; he reckons and treats him as a pardoned and righteous man; Psalm 32:2. See the note at Romans 4:3. He regards him as one who is forgiven and admitted to his favor, and who is to be treated henceforward as though he had not sinned. That is, he partakes of the benefits of Christ's atonement, so as not henceforward to be treated as a sinner, but as a friend of God.

Verse 7

Blessed - Happy are they: they are highly favored; see the note at Matthew 5:3.

Whose sins are covered - Are concealed; or hidden from the view. On which God will no more look, and which he will no more remember. "By these words," says Calvin (in loco), "we are taught that justification with Paul is nothing else but pardon of sin." The word "cover" here has no reference to the atonement, but is expressive of hiding, or concealing that is, of forgiving sin.

Verse 8

Will not impute sin - On whom the Lord will not charge his sins; or who shall not be reckoned or regarded as guilty. This shows clearly what the apostle meant by imputing faith without works. It is to pardon sin, and to treat with favor; not to reckon or charge a man‘s sin to him; but to treat him, though personally undeserving and ungodly Romans 4:5, as though the sin had not been committed. The word “impute” here is used in its natural and appropriate sense, as denoting to charge on man what properly belongs to him. See the note at Romans 4:3.

Verse 9

Cometh … - The apostle has now prepared the way for an examination of the inquiry whether this came in consequence of obedience to the Law? or whether it was without obedience to the Law? Having shown that Abraham was justified by faith in accordance with the doctrine which he was defending, the only remaining inquiry was whether it was after he was circumcised or before; whether in consequence of his circumcision or not. If it was after his circumcision. the Jew might still maintain that it was by complying with the works of the Law; but if it was before, the point of the apostle would be established, that it was without the works of the Law. Still further, if he was justified by faith before he was circumcised. then here was an instance of justification and acceptance without conformity to the Jewish Law; and if the father of the Jewish nation was so justified, and reckoned as a friend of God, without being circumcised, that is, in the condition in which the pagan world then was, then it would follow that the Gentiles might be justified in a similar way now. It would not be departing, therefore, from the spirit of the Old Testament itself, to maintain, as the apostle had done Romans 3, that the Gentiles who had not been circumcised might obtain the favor of God as well as the Jew; that is, that it was independent of circumcision, and might be extended to all.

This blessedness - This happy state or condition. This state of being justified by God, and of being regarded as his friends. This is the sum of all blessedness; the only state that can be truly pronounced happy.

Upon the circumcision only - The “Jews” alone, as “they” pretended.

Or upon the uncircumcision also - The “Gentiles” who believed, as the “apostle” maintained.

For we say - We all admit. It is a conceded point. It was the doctrine of the apostle, as well as of the Jews; and as much theirs as his. With this, then, as a conceded point, what is the fair inference to be drawn from it?

Verse 10

How - In what circumstances, or time.

When he was in circumcision … - Before or after he was circumcised? This was the very point of the inquiry. For if he was justified by faith after he was circumcised, the Jew might pretend that it was in virtue of his circumcision; that even his faith was acceptable, because he was circumcised. But if it was before he was circumcised, this plea could not be set up; and the argument of the apostle was confirmed by the case of Abraham, the great father and model of the Jewish people, that circumcision and the deeds of the Law did not conduce to justification; and that as Abraham was justified without those works, so might others be, and the pagan, therefore, might be admitted to similar privileges.

Not in circumcision - Not being circumcised, or after he was circumcised, but before. This was the record in the case; Genesis 15:6; Compare Genesis 17:10.

Verse 11

And he received the sign … - A sign is that by which any thing is shown, or represented. And circumcision thus showed that there was a covenant between Abraham and God; Genesis 17:1-10. It became the public mark or token of the relation which he sustained to God.

A seal - See the note at John 3:33. A seal is that mark of wax or other substance, which is attached to an instrument of writing, as a deed, etc., to confirm, ratify it, or to make it binding. Sometimes instruments were sealed, or made authentic by stamping on them some word, letter, or device, which had been engraved on silver, or on precious stones. The seal or stamp was often worn as an ornament on the finger; Esther 8:8; Genesis 41:42; Genesis 38:18; Exodus 28:11, Exodus 28:36; Exodus 29:6 To affix the seal, whether of wax, or otherwise, was to confirm contract or an engagement. In allusion to this, circumcision is called a seal of the covenant which God had made with Abraham. That is, he appointed this as a public attestation to the fact that he had previously approved of Abraham, and had made important promises to him.

Which he had, yet being circumcised - He believed Genesis 15:5; was accepted, or justified; was admitted to the favor of God, and favored with clear and remarkable promises Genesis 15:18-21; Genesis 17:1-9, before he was circumcised. Circumcision, therefore, could have contributed neither to his justification, nor to the premises made to him by God.

That he might be the father … - All this was done that Abraham might be held up as an example, or a model, of the very doctrine which the apostle was defending. The word "father" here is used evidently in a spiritual sense, as denoting that he was the ancestor of all true believers; that he was their model, and example. They are regarded as his children because they are possessed of his spirit; are justified in the same way, and are imitators of his example; see the note at Matthew 1:1. In this sense the expression occurs in Luke 19:9; John 8:33; Galatians 3:7, Galatians 3:29.

Though they be not circumcised - This was stated in opposition to the opinion of the Jews that all ought to be circumcised. As the apostle had shown that Abraham enjoyed the favor of God previous to his being circumcised, that is, without circumcision; so it followed that others might on the same principle also. This instance settles the point; and there is nothing which a Jew can reply to this.

That righteousness … - That is, in the same way, by faith without works: that they might be accepted, and treated as righteous.

Verse 12

And the father of circumcision - The father, that is, the ancestor, exemplar, or model of those who are circumcised, and who possess the same faith that he did. Not only the father of all believers Romans 4:11, but in a special sense the father of the Jewish people. In this, the apostle intimates that though all who believed would be saved as he was, yet the Jews had a special proprietorship in Abraham; they had special favors and privileges from the fact that he was their ancestor.

Not of the circumcision only - Who are not merely circumcised, but who possess his spirit and his faith. Mere circumcision would not avail; but circumcision connected with faith like his, showed that they were especially his descendants; see the note at Romans 2:25.

Who walk in the steps … - Who imitate his example; who imbibe his spirit; who have his faith.

Being yet uncircumcised - Before he was circumcised. Compare Genesis 15:6, with Genesis 17.

Verse 13

For the promise … - To show that the faith of Abraham, on which his justification depended, was not by the Law, the apostle proceeds to show that the promise concerning which his faith was so remarkably evinced was before the Law was given. If this was so, then it was an additional

important consideration in opposition to the Jew, showing that acceptance with God depended on faith, and not on works.

That he should be heir of the world - An heir is one who succeeds, or is to succeed to an estate. In this passage, the world, or the entire earth, is regarded as the estate to which reference is made, and the promise is that the posterity of Abraham should succeed to that, or should possess it as their inheritance. The precise expression used here, "heir of the world," is not found in the promises made to Abraham Those promises were that God would make of him a great nation Genesis 12:2; that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed Genesis 12:3; that his posterity should be as the stars for multitude Genesis 15:5; and that he should be a father of many nations Genesis 17:5. As this latter promise is one to which the apostle particularly refers (see Romans 4:17), it is probable that he had this in his eye. This promise had, at first, respect to his numerous natural descendants, and to their possessing the land of Canaan. But it is also regarded in the New Testament as extending to the Messiah Galatians 3:16 as his descendant, and to all his followers as the spiritual seed of the father of the faithful. When the apostle calls him "the heir of the world," he sums up in this comprehensive expression all the promises made to Abraham, intimating that his spiritual descendants, that is, those who possess his faith, shall yet be so numerous as to possess all lands.

Or to his seed - To his posterity, or descendants.

Through the law - By the observance of the Law; or made in consequence of observing the Law; or depending on the condition that he should observe the Law. The covenant was made before the law of circumcision was given; and long before the Law of Moses (compare Galatians 3:16-18), and was independent of both.

But through … - In consequence of or in connection with the strong confidence which he showed in the promises of God, Genesis 15:6.

Verse 14

For if they which are of the law - Who seek for justification and acceptance by the Law.

Faith is made void - Faith would have no place in the scheme; and consequently the strong commendations bestowed on the faith of Abraham, would be bestowed without any just cause. If people are justified by the Law, they cannot be by faith, and faith would be useless in this work.

And the promise … - A promise looks to the future. Its design and tendency is to excite trust and confidence in him who makes it. All the promises of God have this design and tendency; and consequently, as God has given many promises, the object is to call forth the lively and constant faith of people, all going to show that in the divine estimation, faith is of inestimable value. But if people are justified by the Law; if they are rendered "acceptable" by conformity to the institutions of Moses; then they cannot depend for acceptance on any promise made to Abraham, or his seed. They cut themselves off from that promise, and stand independent of it. That promise, like all other promises, was made to excite faith. If, therefore, the Jews depended on the Law for justification, they were cut off from all the promises made to Abraham; and if they could be justified by the Law, the promise was useless. This is as true now as it was then. If people seek to be justified by their morality or their forms of religion, they cannot depend on any promise of God; for he has made no promise to any such attempt. They stand independently of any promise, covenant, or compact, and are depending on a scheme of their own; a scheme which would render his plan vain and useless; which would render his promises, and the atonement of Christ, and the work of the Spirit of no value. It is clear, therefore, that such an attempt at salvation cannot be successful.

Verse 15

Because the law - All law. It is the tendency of law.

Worketh wrath - Produces or causes wrath. While man is fallen, and a sinner, its tendency, so far from justifying him, and producing peace, is just the reverse. It condemns, denounces wrath, and produces suffering. The word "wrath" here is to be taken in the sense of punishment. Romans 2:8. And the meaning is, that the Law of God, demanding perfect purity, and denouncing every sin condemns the sinner, and consigns him to punishment. As the apostle had proved Romans 1; 2; 3 that all were sinners, so it followed that if any attempted to be justified by the Law, they would be involved only in condemnation and wrath.

For where no law is … - This is a general principle; a maxim of common justice and of common sense. Law is a rule of conduct. If no such rule is given and known, there can be no crime. Law expresses what may be done, and what may not be done. If there is no command to pursue a certain course, no injunction to forbid certain conduct, actions will be innocent. The connection in which this declaration is made here, seems to imply that

as the Jews had a multitude of clear laws, and as the Gentiles had the laws of nature, there could be no hope of escape from the charge of their violation. Since human nature was depraved, and people were prone to sin, the more just and reasonable the laws, the less hope was there of being justified by the Law, and the more certainty was there that the Law would produce wrath and condemnation.

Verse 16

Therefore - In view of the course of reasoning which has been pursued. We have come to this conclusion.

It is of faith - Justification is by faith; or the plan which God has devised of saving people is by faith, Romans 3:26.

That it might be by grace - As a matter of mere undeserved mercy. If people were justified by law, it would be by their own merits; now it is of mere unmerited favor.

To the end - For the purpose, or design.

The promise … - Romans 4:13.

Might be sure - Might be firm, or established. On any other ground, it could not be established. If it had depended on entire conformity to the Law, the promise would never have been established, for none would have yielded such obedience. But now it may be secured to all the posterity of Abraham.

To all the seed - Romans 4:13.

Not to that only - Not to that part of his descendants alone who were Jews, or who had the Law.

But to that … - To all who should possess the same faith as Abraham. The father of us all. Of all who believe, whether they be Jews or Gentiles.

Verse 17

As it is written - Genesis 17:5.

I have made thee - The word used here in the Hebrew Genesis 17:5 means literally, to give, to grant; and also, to set, or constitute. This is also the meaning of the Greek word used both by the Septuagint and the apostle. The quotation is taken literally from the Septuagint. The argument of the apostle is founded in part on the fact that the past tense is used - I have made thee - and that God spoke of a thing as already done, which he had promised or purposed to do. The sense is, he had, in his mind or purpose, constituted him the father of many nations; and so certain was the

fulfillment of the divine purposes, that he spoke of it as already accomplished.

Of many nations - The apostle evidently understands this promise as referring, not to his natural descendants only, but to the great multitude who should believe as he did.

Before him - In his view, or sight; that is, God regarded him as such a father.

Whom he believed - Whose promise he believed; or in whom he trusted.

Who quickeneth the dead - Who gives life to the dead, Ephesians 2:1, Ephesians 2:5. This expresses the power of God to give life. But why it is used here has been a subject of debate. I regard it as having reference to the strong natural improbability of the fulfillment of the prophecy when it was given, arising from the age of Abraham and Sarah, Romans 4:19. Abraham exercised power in the God who gives life, and who gives it as he pleases. It is one of his prerogatives to give life to the dead (νεκρους nekrous), to raise up those who are in their graves; and a power similar to that, or strongly reminding of that, was manifested in fulfilling the promise to Abraham. The giving of this promise, and its fulfillment, were such as strongly to remind us that God has power to give life to the dead.

And calleth … - That is, those things which he foretels and promises are so certain, that he may speak of them as already in existence. Thus, in relation to Abraham, God, instead of simply promising that he would make him the father of many nations, speaks of it as already done, "I have made thee," etc. In his own mind, or purpose, he had so constituted him, and it was so certain that it would take place, that he might speak of it as already done.

Verse 18

Who against hope - Who against all apparent or usual ground of hope. He refers here to the prospect of a posterity; see Romans 4:19-21.

Believed in hope - Believed in what was promised to excite his hope. Hope here is put for the object of his hope - what was promised.

According to what was spoken - Genesis 15:5.

So shall thy seed be - That is, as the stars in heaven for multitude. Thy posterity shall be very numerous.

Verse 19

And being not weak in faith - That is, having strong faith.

He considered not - He did not regard the fact that his body was now dead, as any obstacle to the fulfillment of the promise. He did not suffer that fact to influence him, or to produce any doubt about the fulfillment. Faith looks to the strength of God, not to second causes, or to difficulties that may appear formidable to man.

Now dead - Aged; dead as to the purpose under consideration; compare Hebrews 11:12, "As good as dead." That is, he was now at an age when it was highly improbable that he would have any children; compare Genesis 17:17.

Deadness … - Hebrews 11:11, "When she was past age;" compare Genesis 18:11.

Verse 20

He staggered not - He was not moved, or agitated; he steadily and firmly believed the promise.

Giving glory to God - Giving honor to God by the firmness with which he believed his promises. His conduct was Such as to honor God; that is, to show Abraham's conviction that he was worthy of implicit confidence and trust. In this way all who believe in the promises of God do honor to him. They bear testimony to him that he is worthy of confidence. They become so many witnesses in his favor; and furnish to their fellow-men evidence that God has a claim on the credence and trust of mankind.

Verse 21

And being fully persuaded - Thoroughly or entirely convinced; Luke 1:1; Romans 14:5; 2 Timothy 4:5, 2 Timothy 4:17.

He was able - Compare Genesis 18:14. This was not the only time in which Abraham evinced this confidence. His faith was equally implicit and strong when he was commanded to sacrifice his promised son; Hebrews 11:19.

Verse 22

And therefore - His faith was so implicit, and so unwavering, that it was a demonstration that he was the firm friend of God. He was tried, and he had such confidence in God that he showed that he was supremely attached to him, and would obey and serve him. This was reckoned as a full proof of friendship; and he was recognised and treated as righteous; that is, as the friend of God. (The true sense of faith being imputed for righteousness is given in a note at the beginning of the chapter.) See the note at Romans 4:3,5.

Verse 23

Now it was not written - The record of this extraordinary faith was not made on his account only; but it was made to show the way in which men may be regarded and treated as righteous by God. If Abraham was so regarded and treated, then, on the same principle, all others may be. God has but one mode of justifying people.

Imputed - Reckoned; accounted. He was regarded and treated as the friend of God.

Verse 24

But for us also - For our use; (compare Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11), that we might have an example of the way in which people may be accepted of God. It is recorded for our encouragement and imitation, to show that we may in a similar manner be accepted and saved.

If we believe on him … - Abraham showed his faith in God by believing just what God revealed to him. This was his faith, and it might be as strong and implicit as could be exercised under the fullest revelation. Faith, now, is belief in God just so far as he has revealed his will to us. It is therefore the same in principle, though it may have reference to different objects. It is confidence in the same God, according to what we know of his will. Abraham showed his faith mainly in confiding in the promises of God respecting a numerous posterity. This was the leading truth made known to him, and this he believed.

(The promise made to Abraham was, "in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed," on which we have the following inspired commentary: "And the scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the pagan through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed," Galatians 3:8. It would seem, then, that this promise, like that made immediately after the fall, contained the very germ and principles of the gospel. So that after all there is not so great difference between the object of Abraham's faith, and that of ours. Indeed the object in both cases is manifestly the same.)

The main or leading truths that God has made known to us are, that he has given his Son to die; that he has raised him up; and that through him he is ready to pardon. To put confidence in these truths is to believe now. Doing this, we believe in the same God that Abraham did; we evince the same spirit; and thus show that we are the friends of the same God, and may

be treated in the same manner. This is faith under the gospel (compare the notes at Mark 16:16), and shows that the faith of Abraham and of all true believers is substantially the same, and is varied only by the difference of the truths made known.

Verse 25

Who was delivered - To death; compare the notes at Acts 2:23.

For our offences - On account of our crimes. He was delivered up to death in order to make expiation for our sins.

And was raised again - From the dead.

For our justification - On account of our justification. In order that we may be justified. The word "justification" here seems to be used in a large sense, to denote acceptance with God; including not merely the formal act by which God pardons sins, and by which we become reconciled to him, but also the completion of the work - the treatment of us as righteous, and raising us up to a state of glory. By the death of Christ an atonement is made for sin. If it be asked how his resurrection contributes to our acceptance with God, we may answer,

(1) It rendered his work complete. His death would have been unavailing, his work would have been imperfect, if he had not been raised up from the dead. He submitted to death as a sacrifice, and it was needful that he should rise, and thus conquer death and subdue our enemies, that the work which he had undertaken might be complete.

(2) his resurrection was a proof that his work was accepted by the Father. What he had done, in order that sinners might be saved, was approved. Our justification, therefore, became sure, as it was for this that he had given himself up to death.

(3) his resurrection is the main-spring of all our hopes, and of all our efforts to be saved. Life and immortality are thus brought to light, 2 Timothy 1:10. God "hath begotten us again to a lively hope (a living, active, real hope), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," 1 Peter 1:3. Thus, the fact that he was raised becomes the ground of hope that we shall be raised and accepted of God. The fact that he was raised, and that all who love him shall be raised also, becomes one of the most efficient motives to us to seek to be justified and saved. There is no higher motive that can be

presented to induce man to seek salvation than the fact that he maybe raised up from death and the grave, and made immortal. There is no satisfactory proof that man can be thus raised up, but the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In that resurrection we have a pledge that all his people will rise. “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him,” 1 Thessalonians 4:14. “Because I live,” said the Redeemer, “ye shall live also,” John 14:19; compare 1 Peter 1:21.

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

The design of Romans 5:12-21, is evidently to show the results or benefits of the doctrine of justification by faith. That doctrine the apostle had now fully established. He had shown in the previous chapters,

(1)That people were under condemnation for sin;

(2)That this extended alike to the Jews and the Gentiles;

(3)That there was no way of escape now but by the doctrine of pardon, not by personal merit, but by grace;

(4)That this plan was fully made known by the gospel of Christ; and,

(5)That this was no new doctrine, but was in fact substantially the same by which Abraham and David had been accepted before God.

Having thus stated and vindicated the doctrine, it was natural to follow up the demonstration, by stating its bearing and its practical influence. This he does by showing that its immediate effect is to produce peace, Romans 5:1. It gives us the privilege of access to the favor of God, Romans 5:2. But not only this, we are in a world of affliction. Christians, like others, are surrounded with trials; and a very important question was, whether this doctrine would have an influence in supporting the soul in those trials. This question the apostle discusses in Romans 5:3-11. He shows that in fact Christians glory in tribulation, and that the reasons why they do so are,

(1)That the natural effect of tribulations under the gospel was to lead to hope, Romans 5:3-4.

(2)that the cause of this was, that the love of God was shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

This doctrine he further confirms by showing the consolation which would be furnished by the fact that Christ had died for them. This involved a security that they would be sustained in their trials, and that a victory would be given them. For,

(1)It was the highest expression of love that he should die for enemies, Romans 5:6-8.

(2)It followed that if he was given for them when they were enemies, it was much more probable, it was certain, that all needful grace would be

furnished to them now that they were reconciled, Romans 5:9-11.

But there was another very material inquiry. People were not only exposed to affliction, but they were in the midst of "a wreck of things - of a fallen world - of the proofs and memorials of sin everywhere." The first man had sinned, and the race was subject to sin and death. The monuments of death and sin were everywhere. It was to be expected that a remedy from God would have reference to this universal state of sin and woe; and that it would tend to meet and repair these painful and wide spread ruins. The apostle then proceeds to discuss the question, how the plan of salvation which involved justification by faith was adapted to meet these universal and distressing evils, Romans 5:12-21. The design of this part of the chapter is to show that the blessings procured by the redemption through Christ, and the plan of justification through him, greatly exceed all the evils which had come upon the world in consequence of the apostasy of Adam. And if this was the case, the scheme of justification by faith was complete. It was adapted to the condition of fallen and ruined man; and was worthy of his affection and confidence. A particular examination of this argument of the apostle will occur in the notes at Romans 5:12-21.

Verse 1

Therefore - οὖν ounSince we are thus justified, or as a consequence of being justified, we have peace.

Being justified by faith - See the notes at Romans 1:17; Romans 3:24; Romans 4:5.

We - That is, all who are justified. The apostle is evidently speaking of true Christians.

Have peace with God - see the note at John 14:27. True religion is often represented as peace with God; see Acts 10:36; Romans 8:6; Romans 10:15; Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22; see also Isaiah 32:17.

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace,

And the effect of righteousness.

Quietness and assurance forever:"

This is called peace, because,

(1)The sinner is represented as the enemy of God, Romans 8:7; Ephesians 2:16; James 4:4; John 15:18, John 15:24; John 17:14; Romans 1:30.

(2)the state of a sinner's mind is far from peace. He is often agitated, alarmed, trembling. He feels that he is alienated from God. For,

"The wicked are like the troubled sea.
For it never can be at rest;
Whose waters cast up mire and dirt."
Isaiah 57:20.

The sinner in this state regards God as his enemy. He trembles when he thinks of his Law; fears his judgments; is alarmed when he thinks of hell. His bosom is a stranger to peace. This has been felt in all lands, alike under the thunders of the Law of Sinai among the Jews; in the pagan world; and in lands where the gospel is preached. It is the effect of an alarmed and troubled conscience.

(3) the plan of salvation by Christ reveals God as willing to be reconciled. He is ready to pardon, and to be at peace. If the sinner repents and believes, God can now consistently forgive him, and admit him to favor. It is therefore a plan by which the mind of God and of the sinner can become reconciled, or united in feeling and in purpose. The obstacles on the part of God to reconciliation, arising from his justice and Law, have been removed, and he is now willing to be at peace. The obstacles on the part of man, arising from his sin, his rebellion, and his conscious guilt, may be taken away, and he can now regard God as his friend.

(4) the effect of this plan, when the sinner embraces it, is to produce peace in his own mind. He experiences peace; a peace which the world gives not, and which the world cannot take away, Philemon 4:7; 1 Peter 1:8; John 16:22. Usually in the work of conversion to God, this peace is the first evidence that is felt of the change of heart. Before, the sinner was agitated and troubled. But often suddenly, a peace and calmness is felt, which is before unknown. The alarm subsides; the heart is calm; the fears die away, like the waves of the ocean after a storm. A sweet tranquillity visits the heart - a pure shining light, like the sunbeams that break through the opening clouds after a tempest. The views, the feelings, the desires are changed; and the bosom that was just before filled with agitation and alarm, that regarded God as its enemy, is now at peace with him, and with all the world.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ - By means of the atonement of the Lord Jesus. It is his mediation that has procured it.

Verse 2

We have access - See the note at John 14:6, "I am the way," etc. Doddridge renders it, "by whom we have been introduced," etc. It means, "by whom we have the privilege of obtaining the favor of God which we enjoy when we are justified." The word rendered "access" occurs but in two other places in the New Testament, Ephesians 2:18; Ephesians 3:12. By Jesus Christ the way is opened for us to obtain the favor of God.

By faith - By means of faith, Romans 1:17.

Into this grace - Into this favor of reconciliation with God.

Wherein we stand - In which we now are in consequence of being justified.

And rejoice - Religion is often represented as producing joy, Isaiah 12:3; Isaiah 35:10; Isaiah 52:9; Isaiah 61:3, Isaiah 61:7; Isaiah 65:14, Isaiah 65:18; John 16:22, John 16:24; Acts 13:52; Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22; 1 Peter 1:8. The sources or steps of this joy are these:

(1) We are justified, or regarded by God as righteous.

(2) we are admitted into his favor, and abide there.

(3) we have the prospect of still higher and richer blessings in the fulness of his glory when we are admitted to heaven.

In hope - In the earnest desire and expectation of obtaining that glory. Hope is a complex emotion made up of a desire for an object; and an expectation of obtaining it. Where either of these is lacking, there is not hope. Where they are mingled in improper proportions, there is not peace. But where the desire of obtaining an object is attended with an expectation of obtaining it, in proportion to that desire, there exists that peaceful, happy state of mind which we denominate hope And the apostle here implies that the Christian has an earnest desire for that glory; and that he has a confident expectation of obtaining it. The result of that he immediately states to be, that we are by it sustained in our afflictions.

The glory of God - The glory that God will bestow on us. The word "glory" usually means splendor, magnificence, honor; and the apostle here refers to that honor and dignity which will be conferred on the redeemed when they are raised up to the full honors of redemption; when they shall triumph in the completion of the work: and be freed from sin, and pain, and tears, and permitted to participate in the full splendors that shall encompass

the throne of God in the heavens; see the note at Luke 2:9; compare Revelation 21:22-24; Revelation 22:5; Isaiah 60:19-20.

Verse 3

And not only so - We not only rejoice in times of prosperity, and of health. Paul proceeds to show that this plan is not less adapted to produce support in trials.

But we glory - The word used here is the same that is in Romans 5:2, translated, "we rejoice" καυχώμεθα kauchōmethaIt should have been so rendered here. The meaning is, that we rejoice not only in hope; not only in the direct results of justification, in the immediate effect which religion itself produces; but we carry our joy and triumph even into the midst of trials. In accordance with this, our Saviour directed his followers to rejoice in persecutions, Matthew 5:11-12. Compare James 1:2, James 1:12.

In tribulations - In afflictions. The word used here refers to all kinds of trials which people are called to endure; though it is possible that Paul referred particularly to the various persecutions and trials which they were called to endure as Christians.

Knowing - Being assured of this. Paul's assurance might have arisen from reasoning on the nature of religion, and its tendency to produce comfort; or it is more probable that he was speaking here the language of his own experience. He had found it to be so. This was written near the close of his life, and it states the personal experience of a man who endured, perhaps, as much as anyone ever did, in attempting to spread the gospel; and far more than commonly falls to the lot of mankind. Yet he, like all other Christians, could leave his deliberate testimony to the fact that Christianity was sufficient to sustain the soul in its severest trials; see 2 Corinthians 1:3-6; 2 Corinthians 11:24-29; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.

Worketh - Produces; the effect of afflictions on the minds of Christians is to make them patient. Sinners are irritated and troubled by them; they complain, and become more and more obstinate and rebellious. They have no sources of consolation; they deem God a hard master; and they become fretful and rebellions just in proportion to the depth and continuance of their trials. But in the mind of a Christian, who regards his Father's hand in it; who sees that he deserves no mercy; who has confidence in the wisdom and goodness of God; who feels that it is necessary for his own good to be afflicted; and who experiences its happy, subduing, and mild effect in restraining his sinful passions, and in weaning him from the world the effect

is to produce patience. Accordingly, it will usually be found that those Christians who are longest and most severely afflicted are the most patient. Year after year of suffering produces increased peace and calmness of soul; and at the end of his course the Christian is more willing to be afflicted, and bears his afflictions more calmly, than at the beginning. He who on earth was most afflicted was the most patient of all sufferers; and not less patient when he was "led as a lamb to the slaughter," than when he experienced the first trial in his great work.

Patience - "A calm temper, which suffers evils without murmuring or discontent" (Webster).

Verse 4

And patience, experience - Patient endurance of trial produces experience. The word rendered "experience" (δοκιμήν dokimēn) means trial, testing, or that thorough examination by which we ascertain the quality or nature of a thing, as when we test a metal by fire, or in any other way, to ascertain that it is genuine. It also means approbations, or the result of such a trial; the being approved, and accepted as the effect of a trying process. The meaning is, that long afflictions borne patiently show a Christian what he is; they test his religion, and prove that it is genuine. Afflictions are often sent for this purpose, and patience in the midst of them shows that the religion which can sustain them is from God.

And experience, hope - The result of such long trial is to produce hope. They show that religion is genuine; that it is from God; and not only so, but they direct the mind onward to another world; and sustain the soul by the prospect of a glorious immortality there. The various steps and stages of the benefits of afflictions are thus beautifully delineated by the apostle in a manner which accords with the experience of all the children of God.

Verse 5

And hope maketh not ashamed - That is, this hope will not disappoint, or deceive. When we hope for an object which we do not obtain, we are conscious of disappointment; perhaps sometimes of a feeling of shame. But the apostle says that the Christian hope is such that it will be fulfilled; it will not disappoint; what we hope for we shall certainly obtain; see Philemon 1:20. The expression used here is probably taken from Psalm 22:4-5;

Our fathers trusted in thee;
They trusted; and thou didst deliver them.
They cried unto thee,

And were delivered;

They trusted in thee,
And were not confounded (ashamed).

Because the love of God - Love toward God. There is produced an abundant, an overflowing love to God.

Is shed abroad - Is diffused; is poured out; is abundantly produced ἐκκέχυται ekkechutaiThis word is properly applied to water, or to any other liquid that is poured out, or diffused. It is used also to denote imparting, or communicating freely or abundantly, and is thus expressive of the influence of the Holy Spirit poured down, or abundantly imparted to people; Acts 10:45. Here it means that love toward God is copiously or abundantly given to a Christian; his heart is conscious of high and abundant love to God, and by this he is sustained in his afflictions.

By the Holy Ghost - It is produced by the influence of the Holy Spirit. All Christian graces are traced to his influence; Galatians 5:22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy," etc.

Which is given unto us - Which Spirit is given or imparted to us. The Holy Spirit is thus represented as dwelling in the hearts of believers; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16. In all these places it is meant that Christians are under his sanctifying influence; that he produces in their hearts the Christian graces; and fills their minds with peace, and love, and joy.

Verse 6

For when … - This opens a new view of the subject, or it is a new argument to show that our hope will not make ashamed, or will not disappoint us. The first argument he had stated in the previous verse, that the Holy Spirit was given to us. The next, which he now states, is, that God had given the most ample proof that he would save us by giving his Son when we were sinners; and that he who had done so much for us when we were enemies, would not now fail us when we are his friends; Romans 5:6-10. He has performed the more difficult part of the work by reconciling us when we were enemies; and he will not now forsake us, but will carry forward and complete what he has begun.

We were yet without strength - The word used here ἀσθενῶν asthenōnis usually applied to those who are sick and feeble, deprived of

strength by disease; Matthew 25:38; Luke 10:9; Acts 4:9; Acts 5:15. But it is also used in a moral sense, to denote inability or feebleness with regard to any undertaking or duty. Here it means that we were without strength "in regard to the case which the apostle was considering;" that is, we had no power to devise a scheme of justification, to make an atonement, or to put away the wrath of God, etc. While all hope of man's being saved by any plan of his own was thus taken away; while he was thus lying exposed to divine justice, and dependent on the mere mercy of God; God provided a plan which met the case, and secured his salvation. The remark of the apostle here has reference only to the condition of the race before an atonement is made. It does not pertain to the question whether man has strength to repent and to believe after an atonement is made, which is a very different inquiry.

In due time - Margin "According to the time" κατὰ καιρὸν kata kaironIn a timely manner; at the proper time; Galatians 4:4, "But when the fulness of time was come," etc. This may mean,

(1) That it was a fit or proper time. All experiments had failed to save people. For four thousand years the trial had been made under the Law among the Jews: and by the aid of the most enlightened reason in Greece and Rome; and still it was in vain. No scheme had been devised to meet the maladies of the world, and to save people from death. It was then time that a better plan should be presented to people.

(2) it was the time fixed and appointed by God for the Messiah to come; the time which had been designated by the prophets; Genesis 49:10; Daniel 9:24-27; see John 13:1; John 17:1.

(3) it was a most favorable time for the spread of the gospel. The world was expecting such an event; was at peace; and was subjected mainly to the Roman power; and furnished facilities never before experienced for introducing the gospel rapidly into every land; see the notes at Matthew 2:1-2.

For the ungodly - Those who do not worship God. It here means sinners in general, and does not differ materially from what is meant by the word translated "without strength;" see the note at Romans 4:5.

Verse 7

For scarcely … - The design of this verse and the following is, to illustrate the great love of God by comparing it with what man was willing to do. “It is an unusual occurrence, an event which is all that we can hope for from the highest human benevolence and the purest friendship, that one would be willing to die for a good man. There are none who would be willing to die for a man who was seeking to do us injury, to calumniate our character, to destroy our happiness or our property. But Christ was willing to die for bitter foes.”

Scarcely - With difficulty. It is an event which cannot be expected to occur often. There would scarcely be found an instance in which it would happen.

A righteous man - A just man; a man distinguished simply for integrity of conduct; one who has no remarkable claims for amiableness of character, for benevolence, or for personal friendship. Much as we may admire such a man, and applaud him, yet he has not the characteristics which would appeal to our hearts to induce us to lay down our lives for him. Accordingly, it is not known that any instance has occurred where for such a man one would be willing to die.

For a righteous man - That is, in his place, or in his stead. A man would scarcely lay down his own life to save that of a righteous man.

Will one die - Would one be will. ing to die.

Yet peradventure - Perhaps; implying that this was an event which might be expected to occur.

For a good man - That is, not merely a man who is coldly just; but a man whose characteristic is that of kindness, amiableness, tenderness. It is evident that the case of such a man would be much more likely to appeal to our feelings, than that of one who is merely a man of integrity. Such a man is susceptible of tender friendship; and probably the apostle intended to refer to such a case - a case where we would be willing to expose life for a kind, tender, faithful friend.

Some would even dare to die - Some would have courage to give his life. Instances of this kind, though not many, have occurred. The affecting case of Damon and Pythias is one. Damon had been condemned to death by the tyrant Dionysius of Sicily, and obtained leave to go and settle his domestic affairs on promise of returning at a stated hour to the place of execution. Pythias pledged himself to undergo the punishment if Damon should not return in time, and deliver himself into the hands of the tyrant.

Damon returned at the appointed moment, just as the sentence was about to be executed on Pythias; and Dionysius was so struck with the fidelity of the two friends, that he remitted their punishment, and entreated them to permit him to share their friendship; (Val. Max. 4. 7.) This case stands almost alone. Our Saviour says that it is the highest expression of love among people. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends;" John 15:13. The friendship of David and Jonathan seems also to have been of this character, that one would have been willing to lay down his life for the other.

Verse 8

But God commendeth … - God has exhibited or showed his love in this unusual and remarkable manner.

His love - His kind feeling; his beneficence; his willingness to submit to sacrifice to do good to others.

While we were yet sinners - And of course his enemies. In this, his love surpasses all that has ever been manifested among people.

Christ died for us - In our stead; to save us from death. He took our place; and by dying himself on the cross, saved us from dying eternally in hell.

Verse 9

Much more, then - It is much more reasonable to expect it. There are fewer obstacles in the way. If, when we were enemies, he overcame all that was in the way of our salvation; much more have we reason to expect that he will afford us protection now that we are his friends. This is one ground of the hope expressed in Romans 5:5.

Being now justified - Pardoned; accepted as his friends.

By his blood - By his death; Note, Romans 3:25. The fact that we are purchased by his blood, and sanctified by it, renders us sacred in the eye of God; bestows a value on us proportionate to the worth of the price of our redemption; and is a pledge that he will keep what has been so dearly bought.

Saved from wrath - From hell; from the punishment due to sin; Note, Romans 2:8.

Verse 10

For if - The idea in this verse is simply a repetition and enlargement of that in Romans 5:9. The apostle dwells on the thought, and places it in a new light, furnishing thus a strong confirmation of his position.

When we were enemies - The work was undertaken while we were enemies. From being enemies we were changed to friends by that work. Thus, it was commenced by God; its foundation was laid while we were still hostile to it; it evinced, therefore, a determined purpose on the part of God to perform it; and he has thus given a pledge that it shall be perfected.

We were reconciled - Note, Matthew 5:24. We are brought to an agreement; to a state of friendship and union. We became his friends, laid aside our opposition, and embraced him as our friend and portion. To effect this is the great design of the plan of salvation; Colossians 1:21; Ephesians 2:16. It means that there were obstacles existing on both sides to a reconciliation; and that these have been removed by the death of Christ; and that a union has thus been effected. This has been done in removing the obstacles on the part of God - by maintaining the honor of his Law; showing his hatred of sin; upholding his justice, and maintaining his truth, at the same time that he pardons; Note, Romans 3:26. And on the part of man, by removing his unwillingness to be reconciled; by subduing, changing, and sanctifying his heart; by overcoming his hatred of God, and of his Law; and bringing him into submission to the government of God. So that the Christian is in fact reconciled to God; he is his friend; he is pleased with his Law, his character, and his plan of salvation. And all this has been accomplished by the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus as an offering in our place.

Much more - It is much more to be expected; there are still stronger and more striking considerations to show it.

By his life - We were reconciled by his death. Death may include possibly his low, humble, and suffering condition. Death has the appearance of great feebleness; the death of Christ had the appearance of the defeat of his plans. His enemies triumphed and rejoiced over him on the cross, and in the tomb. Yet the effect of this feeble, low, and humiliating state was to reconcile us to God. If in this state, when humble, despised, dying, dead, he had power to accomplish so great a work as to reconcile us to God, how much more may we expect that he will be able to keep us now that he is a living, exalted, and triumphant Redeemer. If his fainting powers in dying were such as to reconcile us, how much more shall his full, vigorous powers as an exalted Redeemer, be sufficient to keep and save us. This argument is but an expansion of what the Saviour himself said; John 14:19, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Verse 11

And not only so - The apostle states another effect of justification.

We also joy in God - In Romans 5:2, he had said that we rejoice in tribulations, and in hope of the glory of God. But he here adds that we rejoice in God himself; in his existence; his attributes; his justice, holiness, mercy, truth, love. The Christian rejoices that God is such a being as he is; and glories that the universe is under his administration. The sinner is opposed to him; he finds no pleasure in him; he fears or hates him; and deems him unqualified for universal empire. But it is one characteristic of true piety, one evidence that we are truly reconciled to God, that we rejoice in him as he is; and find pleasure in the contemplation of his perfections as they are revealed in the Scriptures.

Through our Lord … - By the mediation of our Lord Jesus, who has revealed the true character of God, and by whom we have been reconciled to him.

The atonement - Margin, or reconciliation. This is the only instance in which our translators have used the word "atonement" in the New Testament. The word frequently occurs in the Old, Exodus 29:33, Exodus 29:36-37; Exodus 30:10, Exodus 30:15-16, etc. As it is now used by us, it commonly means the ransom, or the sacrifice by means of which reconciliation is effected between God and man. But in this place it has a different sense. It means the reconciliation itself between God and man; not the means by which reconciliation is effected. It denotes not that. we have received a ransom, or an offering by which reconciliation might be effected; but that in fact we have become reconciled through him. This was the ancient meaning of the English word atonement - at one ment - being at one, or reconciled.

- He seeks to make atonement.

Between the duke of Glo'ster and your brothers.

- *Shakespeare.*

The Greek word which denotes the expiatory offering by which a reconciliation is effected, is different from the one here; see the note at Romans 3:25. The word used here καταλλαγὴ katallagēis never used to denote such an offering, but denotes the reconciliation itself.

Verses 12-21

Romans 5:12-21 has been usually regarded as the most difficult part of the New Testament. It is not the design of these notes to enter into a minute criticism of contested points like this. They who wish to see a full

discussion of the passage, may find it in the professedly critical commentaries; and especially in the commentaries of Tholuck and of Professor Stuart on the Romans. The meaning of the passage in its general bearing is not difficult; and probably the whole passage would have been found far less difficult if it had not been attached to a philosophical theory on the subject of man‘s sin, and if a strenuous and indefatigable effort had not been made to prove that it teaches what it was never designed to teach. The plain and obvious design of the passage is this, to show one of the benefits of the doctrine of justification by faith. The apostle had shown,

(1)That that doctrine produced peace, Romans 5:1.

(2)That it produces joy in the prospect of future glory, Romans 5:2.

(3)That it sustained the soul in afflictions;

(a)by the regular tendency of afflictions under the gospel, Romans 5:3-4; and,

(b)by the fact that the Holy Spirit was imparted to the believer.

(4)That this doctrine rendered it certain that we should be saved, because Christ had died for us, Romans 5:6; because this was the highest expression of love, Romans 5:7-8; and because if we had been reconciled when thus alienated, we should be saved now that we are the friends of God, Romans 5:9-10.

(5)That it led us to rejoice in God himself; produced joy in his presence, and in all his attributes.

He now proceeds to show the bearing on that great mass of evil which had been introduced into the world by sin, and to prove that the benefits of the atonement were far greater than the evils which had been introduced by the acknowledged effects of the sin of Adam. “The design is to exalt our views of the work of Christ, and of the plan of justification through him, by comparing them with the evil consequences of the sin of our first father, and by showing that the blessings in question not only extend to the removal of these evils, but far beyond this, so that the grace of the gospel has not only abounded, but superabounded.” (Prof. Stuart.) In doing this, the apostle admits, as an undoubted and well-understood fact:

1. That sin came into the world by one man, and death as the consequence. Romans 5:12.

2. That death had passed on all; even on those who had not the light of revelation, and the express commands of God, Romans 5:13-14.

3. That Adam was the figure, the type of him that was to come; that there was some sort of analogy or resemblance between the results of his act and the results of the work of Christ. That analogy consisted in the fact that the effects of his doings did not terminate on himself, but extended to numberless other persons, and that it was thus with the work of Christ, Romans 5:14. But he shows,

4. That there were very material and important differences in the two cases. There was not a perfect parallelism. The effects of the work of Christ were far more than simply to counteract the evil introduced by the sin of Adam. The differences between the effect of his act and the work of Christ are these.

(1)The sin of Adam led to condemnation. The work of Christ has an opposite tendency, Romans 5:15.

(2)The condemnation which came from the sin of Adam was the result of one offence. The work of Christ was to deliver from many offences, Romans 5:16.

(3)The work of Christ was far more abundant and overflowing in its influence. It extended deeper and further. It was more than a compensation for the evils of the fall, Romans 5:17.

5. As the act of Adam threw its influence over all people to secure their condemnation, so the work of Christ was suited to affect all people, Jews and Gentiles, in bringing them into a state by which they might be delivered from the fall, and restored to the favor of God. It was in itself adapted to produce far more and greater benefits than the crime of Adam had done evil; and was thus a glorious plan, just suited to meet the actual condition of a world of sin; and to repair the evils which apostasy had introduced. It had thus the evidence that it originated in the benevolence of God, and that it was adapted to the human condition, Romans 5:18-21.

(The learned author denies the doctrine of imputed sin, and labors to prove that it is not contained in Romans 5:12, Romans 5:19. The following introductory note is intended to exhibit the orthodox view of the subject, and meet the objections which the reader will find in the Commentary. The very first question that demands our attention is, What character did Adam

sustain under the covenant of works, that of a single and independent individual. or that of the representative of the human kind?

This is one of the most important questions in Theology, and according to the answer we may be prepared to give, in the affirmative or negative, will be almost the entire complexion of our religious views. If the question be resolved in the affirmative, then what Adam did must be held as done by us, and the imputation of his guilt would seem to follow as a necessary consequence.

1. That Adam sustained the character of representative of the human race; in other words, that he was the federal as well as natural head of his descendants, is obvious from the circumstances of the history in the book of Genesis. It has been said indeed, that in the record of the threatening no mention is made of the posterity of Adam, and that on this account, all idea of federal headship or representation must be abandoned, as a mere theological figment, having no foundation in Scripture. But if God regarded Adam only in his individual capacity, when be said unto him "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," then, the other addresses of God to Adam, which form part of the same history, must be construed in the same way. And was it to Adam only, and not to the human kind at large, viewed in him, that God said, "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth?" Was it to Adam in his individual capacity, that God gave the grant of the earth, with all its rich and varied productions? Or was it to mankind at large? Was it to Adam alone that God said, "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground," etc.? The universal infliction of the penalty shows, that the threatening was addressed to Adam as the federal head of the race. All toil, and sweat, and die. Indeed, the entire history favors the conclusion, that God was dealing with Adam, not in his individual, but representative capacity; nor can its consistency be preserved on any other principle.

2. Moreover, there are certain facts connected with the moral history of mankind, which present insuperable difficulties, if we deny the doctrines of representation and imputed sin. "How shall we on any other principle account for the universality of death, or rather of penal evil?" It can be traced back beyond all personal guilt. Its origin is higher. Antecedent to all actual transgression, man is visited with penal evil. He comes into the world

under a necessity of dying. His whole constitution is disordered. His body and his mind bear on them the marks of a blighting curse. It is impossible on any theory to deny this. And why is man thus visited? Can the righteous God punish where there is no guilt? We muss take one side or other of the alternative, that God inflicts punishment without guilt, or that Adam‘s sin is imputed to his posterity. If we take the latter branch of the alternative, we are furnished with the ground of the divine procedure, and freed from many difficulties that press upon the opposite view.

It may be noticed in this place also, that the death of infants is a striking proof of the infliction of penal evil, prior to personal or actual sin. Their tender bodies are assailed in a multitude of instances by acute and violent diseases, that call for our sympathy the more that the sufferers cannot disclose or communicate the source of their agony. They labor with death and struggle hard in his hands, until they resign the gift of life they had retained for so short a while. It is said, indeed, that the case of infants is not introduced in Scripture in connection with this subject, and our author tells us, that they are not at all referred to in any part of this disputed passage, nor included in the clause, “death reigned, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam‘s transgression.” On this, some observations will be found in the proper place. Meanwhile, there is the fact itself, and with it we are concerned now. “Why do infants die?” Perhaps it will be said that though they have committed no actual sin, yet they have a depraved nature; but this cedes the whole question, for that depraved nature is just a part of the penal evil, formerly noticed. Why are innocent infants visited with what entails death on them? One answer only can be given, and no ingenuity can evade the conclusion, “in Adam all die.” The wonder is, that this doctrine should ever have been denied. On the human family at large, on man and woman, on infant child, and hoary sire, on earth and sky, are traced the dismal effects of the first sin.

3. The parallelism between Adam and Christ is another branch of evidence on this subject. That they bear a striking resemblance to each other is allowed on all hands. Hence, Christ is styled, in Romans 5:1-11, the apostle had fully enlarged on these benefits, and there is no evidence that Romans 5:12, Romans 5:19, are a continuation of the same theme. On the contrary, there is obviously a break in the discourse at Romans 5:12, where

the apostle, recalling the discussion, introduces a new illustration of his principal point, namely, justification through the righteousness of Christ. On this the apostle had discouraged largely in Romans 5:12. Before, however, carrying out the comparison, the apostle stops to establish his position, that all people are regarded, and treated as sinners on account of Adam. His proof is this. The infliction of a penalty implies the transgression of a law, since sin is not imputed where there is no law, Romans 5:13. All mankind are subject to death or penal evils, therefore all people are regarded as transgressors of a law, Romans 5:13. The Law or covenant which brings death on all people, is not the Law of Moses, because multitudes died before that Law was given, Romans 5:14.

Nor is it the law of nature, since multitudes die who have never violated even that law, Romans 5:14. Therefore, we must conclude, that people are subject to death on account of Adam; that is, it is for the offence of one that many die, Romans 5:13-14. Adam is, therefore, a type of Christ. Yet the cases are not completely parallel. There are certain points of dissimilarity, Romans 5:15, Romans 5:17. Having thus limited and illustrated the analogy, the apostle resumes, and carries the comparison fully out in Romans 5:18-19. "Therefore as on account of one man." etc. Prof. Hodge.)

Romans 5:12

Wherefore, - διὰ τοῦτο dia toutoOn this account. This is not an inference from what has gone before, but I a continuance of the design of the apostle to show the advantages of the plan of justification by faith; as if he had said, "The advantages of that plan have been seen in our comfort and peace, and in its sustaining power in afflictions. Further, the advantages of the plan are seen in regard to this, that it is applicable to the condition of man in a world where the sin of one man has produced so much wo and death. "On this account" also it is a matter of joy. It meets the ills of a fallen race; and it is therefore a plan adapted to man." Thus understood, the connection and design of the passage is easily explained. In respect to the state of things into which man is fallen, the benefits of this plan may be seen, as adapted to heal the maladies, and to be commensurate with the evils which the apostasy of one man brought upon the world. This explanation is not what is usually given to this place, but it is what seems to me to be demanded by the strain of the apostle's reasoning. The passage is

elliptical, and there is a necessity of supplying something to make out the sense.

As - ὥσπερ hōsperThis is the form of a comparison. But the other part of the comparison‘s deferred to Romans 5:18. The connection evidently requires us to understand the other part of the comparison of the work of Christ. In the rapid train of ideas in the mind of the apostle, this was deferred to make room for explanations Romans 5:13-17. “As by one man sin entered into the world, etc., so by the work of Christ a remedy has been provided, commensurate with the evils. As the sin of one man had such an influence, so the work of the Redeemer has an influence to meet and to counteract those evils.” The passage in Romans 5:13-17 is therefore to be regarded as a parenthesis thrown in for the purpose of making explanations, and to show how the cases of Adam and of Christ differed from each other.

By one man … - By means of one man; by the crime of one man. His act was the occasion of the introduction of all sin into all the world. The apostle here refers to the well known historical fact Genesis 3:6-7, without any explanation of the mode or cause, of this. He adduced it as a fact that was well known; and evidently meant to speak of it not for the purpose of explaining the mode, or even of making this the leading or prominent topic in the discussion. His main design is not to speak of the manner of the introduction of sin, but to show that the work of Christ meets and removes well-known and extensive evils. His explanations, therefore, are chiefly confined to the work of Christ. He speaks of the introduction, the spread, and the effects of sin, not as having any theory to defend on that subject, not as designing to enter into a minute description of the case, but as it was manifest on the face of things, as it stood on the historical record, and as it was understood and admitted by mankind.

Great perplexity has been introduced by forgetting the scope of the apostle‘s argument here, and by supposing that he was defending a special theory on the subject of the introduction of sin; whereas, nothing is more foreign to his design. He is showing how the plan of justification “meets well understood and acknowledged universal evils.” Those evils he refers to just as they were seen, and admitted to exist. All people see them, and feel them, and practically understand them. The truth is, that the doctrine of the fall of man, and the prevalence of sin and death, do not belong especially to Christianity any more than the introduction and spread of disease does to the science of the healing art. Christianity did not introduce sin; nor is it

responsible for it The existence of sin and we belongs to the race; appertains equally to all systems of religion, and is a part of the melancholy history of man, whether Christianity be true or false.

The existence and extent of sin and death are not affected if the infidel could show that Christianity was an imposition. They would still remain. The Christian religion is just "one mode of proposing a remedy for well-known and desolating evils;" just as the science of medicine proposes a remedy for diseases ‹which it did not introduce, and which could not be stayed in their desolations, or modified, if it could be shown that the whole science of healing was pretension and quackery. Keeping this design of the apostle in view, therefore, and remembering that he is not defending or stating a theory about the introduction of sin, but that he is explaining the way in which the work of Christ delivers from a deep-felt universal evil, we shall find the explanation of this passage disencumbered of many of the difficulties with which it has been thought usually to be invested.

By one man - By Adam; see Romans 5:14. It is true that sin was literally introduced by Eve, who was first in the transgression; Genesis 3:6; 1 Timothy 2:14. But the apostle evidently is not explaining the precise mode in which sin was introduced, or making this his leading point. He therefore speaks of the introduction of sin in a popular sense, as it was generally understood. The following reasons may be suggested why the man is mentioned rather than the woman as the cause of the introduction of sin:

(1) It was the natural and usual way of expressing such an event. We say that man sinned, that man is redeemed, man dies, etc. We do not pause to indicate the sex in such expressions. So in this, he undoubtedly meant to say that it was introduced by the parentage of the human race.

(2) the name Adam in Scripture was given to the created pair, the parents of the human family, a name designating their earthly origin; Genesis 5:1-2, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam." The name Adam, therefore, used in this connection Romans 5:14, would suggest the united parentage of the human family.

(3) in transactions where man and woman are mutually concerned, it is usual to speak of the man first, on account of his being constituted superior in rank and authority.

(4) the comparison on the one side, in the apostle‘s argument, is of the man Christ Jesus; and to secure the fitness, the congruity (Stuart) of the comparison, he speaks of the man only in the previous transaction.

(5) the sin of the woman was not complete in its effects without the concurrence of the man. It was their uniting in it which was the cause of the evil. Hence, the man is especially mentioned as having reordered the offence what it was; as having completed it, and entailed its curses on the race. From these remarks it is clear that the apostle does not refer to the man here from any idea that there was any particular covenant transaction with him, but that he means to speak of it in the usual, popular sense; referring to him as being the fountain of all the woes that sin has introduced into the world.

“In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” Genesis 2:17. This is an account of the first great covenant transaction between God and man. It carries us back to the origin of mankind, and discloses the source of evil, about which so much has been written and spoken in vain. That God entered into covenant with Adam in innocence, is a doctrine, with which the Shorter Catechism has made us familiar from our infant years. Nor is it without higher authority. It would be improper, indeed, to apply to this transaction everything that may be supposed essential to a human compact or bargain. Whenever divine things are represented by things analogous among men, care must be taken to exclude every idea that is inconsistent with the dignity of the subject. If the analogy be pressed beyond due bounds, the subject is not illustrated, but degraded. For example, in the present case, we must not suppose that because in human covenants, the consent of parties is essential, and both are at full liberty to receive or reject the proposed terms as they shall see fit; the same thing holds true in the case of Adam. He indeed freely gave his consent to the terms of the covenant, as a holy being could not fail to do, but he was not at liberty to withhold that consent. He was a creature entirely at the divine disposal, whose duty from the moment of his being was implicit obedience. He had no power either to

dictate or reject terms, The relation of parties in this covenant, renders the idea of power to withhold consent, inadmissible.

But, because the analogy cannot be pressed beyond certain limits, must we therefore entirely abandon it? Proceeding on this principle, we should speedily find it impossible to retain any term or figure, that had ever been employed about religious subjects. The leading essentials of a covenant are found in this great transaction, and no more is necessary to justify the appellation which orthodox divines have applied to it. "A covenant is a contract, or agreement, between two or more parties, on certain terms." It is commonly supposed to imply the existence of parties, a promise, and a condition. All these constituent parts of a covenant meet in the case under review. The parties are God and man, God and the first parent of the human race; the promise is life, which though not expressly stated, is yet distinctly implied in the penalty; and the condition is obedience to the supreme will of God. In human covenants no greater penalty is incurred than the forfeiture of the promised blessing, and therefore the idea of penalty is not supposed essential to a covenant. In every case of forfeited promise, however, there is the infliction of penalty, to the exact amount of the value of the blessing lost. We cannot think of Adam losing life without the corresponding idea of suffering death. So that, in fact, the loss of the promise, and the infliction of the penalty, are nearly the same thing.

It is no valid objection to this view, that the word "covenant," as our author tells us, (p. 137,) "is not applied in the transaction in the Bible," for there are many terms, the accuracy of which is never disputed, that are no more to be found in the Scriptures than this. Where do we find such terms as "the fall," and "the Trinity," and many others that might be mentioned? The mere name, in, deed, is not a matter of very great importance, and if we allow that in the transaction itself, there were parties, and a promise, and a condition, (which cannot easily he denied,) it is of less moment whether we call it a covenant, or with our author and others, "a divine constitution." It is obvious to remark, however, that this latter title is just as little to be found "applied in the transaction in the Bible," as the former, and besides is more "liable to be misunderstood;" being vague and indefinite, intimating only, that Adam was under a divine law, or constitution; whereas the word

“covenant” distinctly expresses the kind or form of law, and gives definite character to the whole transaction.

But although the doctrine of the covenant of works is independent of the occurrence of the name in the Scriptures, even this narrow ground of objection is not so easily maintained as some imagine. In Hosea 6:7, it is said (according to the marginal reading, which is in strict accordance with the original Hebrew,) they like Adam: כאדם k'-‘Aadamhave transgressed the covenant. And in that celebrated passage in the Epistle to the Galatians, Galatians 4:24, when Paul speaks of “the two covenants,” he alludes, in the opinion of some of the highest authorities, to the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. This opinion is espoused, and defended with great ability by the late Mr. Bell of Glasgow, one of the most distinguished theologians of his times, in a learned dissertation on the subject: Bell on the Covenants p. 85. Scripture authority, then, would seem not to be entirely lacking, even for the name.

This doctrine of the covenant is intimately connected with that of imputed sin, for if there were no covenant, there could be no covenant or representative head; and if there were no covenant head, there could be no imputation of sin. Hence, the dislike to the name.)

Sin entered into the world - He was the first sinner of the race. The word “sin” here evidently means the violation of the Law of God He was the first sinner among people, and in consequence all others became sinners. The apostle does not here refer to Satan, the tempter, though he was the suggester of evil; for his design was to discuss the effect of the plan of salvation in meeting the sins and calamities of our race. This design, therefore, did not require him to introduce the sin of another order of beings. He says, therefore, that Adam was the first sinner of the race, and that death was the consequence.

Into the world - Among mankind; John 1:10; John 3:16-17. The term “world” is often thus used to denote human beings, the race, the human family. The apostle here evidently is not discussing the doctrine of original sin, but he is stating a simple fact, intelligible to all: “The first man violated the Law of God, and, in this way, sin was introduced among human beings.” In this fact - this general, simple declaration - there is no mystery.

And death by sin - Death was the consequence of sin; or was introduced because man sinned. This is a simple statement of an obvious and well-known fact. It is repeating simply what is said in Genesis 3:19, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return into the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The threatening was Genesis 2:17, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." If an inquiry be made here, how Adam would understand this; I reply, that we have no reason to think he would understand it as referring to anything more than the loss of life as an expression of the displeasure of God. Moses does not intimate that he was learned in the nature of laws and penalties; and his narrative would lead us to suppose that this was all that would occur to Adam. And indeed, there is the highest evidence that the case admits of, that this was his understanding of it.

For in the account of the infliction of the penalty after the Law was violated; in God's own interpretation of it, in Genesis 3:19, there is still no reference to anything further. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Now it is incredible that Adam should have understood this as referring to what has been called "spiritual death," and to" eternal death," when neither in the threatening, nor in the account of the infliction of the sentence, is there the slightest recorded reference to it. People have done great injury in the cause of correct interpretation by carrying their notions of doctrinal subjects to the explanation of words and phrases in the Old Testament. They have usually described Adam as endowed with all the refinement, and possessed of all the knowledge, and adorned with all the metaphysical acumen and subtility of a modern theologian. They have deemed him qualified in the very infancy of the world, to understand and discuss questions, which, under all the light of the Christian revelation, still perplex and embarrass the human mind. After these accounts of the endowments of Adam, which occupy so large a space in books of theology, one is surprised, on opening the Bible, to find how unlike all this, is the simple statement in Genesis. And the wonder cannot be suppressed that people should describe the obvious infancy of the race as superior to its highest advancement; or that the first man, just looking upon a world of wonders, imperfectly acquainted with law, and moral relations, and the effects of transgression, should be represented as endowed with knowledge

which four thousand years afterward it required the advent of the Son of God to communicate!

The account in Moses is simple. Created man was told not to violate a simple law, on pain of death. He did it; and God announced to him that the sentence would be inflicted, and that he should return to the dust whence he was taken. What else this might involve, what other consequences sin might introduce, might be the subject of future developments and revelations. It is absurd to suppose that all the consequences of the violation of a law can be foreseen, or must necessarily be foreseen, in order to make the law and the penalty just. It is sufficient that the law be known; that its violation be forbidden; and what the consequences of that violation will be, must be left in great part to future developments. Even we, yet know not half the results of violating the Law of God. The murderer knows not the results fully of taking a man‘s life. He breaks a just law, and exposes himself to the numberless unseen woes which may flow from it.

We may ask, therefore, what light subsequent revelations have east on the character and result of the first sin? and whether the apostle here meant to state that the consequences of sin were in fact as limited as they must have appeared to the mind of Adam? or had subsequent developments and revelations, through four thousand years, greatly extended the right understanding of the penalty of the law? This can be answered only by inquiring in what sense the apostle Paul here uses the word “death.” The passage before us shows in what sense he intended here to use the word. In his argument it stands opposed to “the grace of God, and the gift by grace,” Romans 5:15; to “justification,” by the forgiveness of “many offences,” Romans 5:16; to the reign of the redeemed in eternal life, Romans 5:17; and to” justification of life,” Romans 5:18. To all these, the words “death‘ Romans 5:12, Romans 5:17 and “judgment” Romans 5:16, Romans 5:18 stand opposed.

These are the benefits which result from the work of Christ; and these benefits stand opposed to the evils which sin has introduced; and as it cannot be supposed that these benefits relate to temporal life, or solely to the resurrection of the body, so it cannot be that the evils involved in the words “death,” “judgment,” etc., relate simply to temporal death. The

evident meaning is, that the word "death," as used here by the apostle, refers to the train of evils which have been introduced by sin. It does not mean simply temporal death; but that group and collection of woes, including temporal death, condemnation, and exposure to eternal death, which is the consequence of transgression. The apostle often uses the word "death," and "to die," in this wide sense, Romans 1:32; Romans 6:16, Romans 6:23; Romans 7:5, Romans 7:10, Romans 7:13, Romans 7:24; Romans 8:2, Romans 8:6, Romans 8:13; 2 Corinthians 2:16; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Hebrews 2:14. In the same sense the word is often used elsewhere, John 8:51; John 11:26; 1 John 5:16-17; Revelation 2:11; Revelation 20:6, etc. etc.

In contrasting with this the results of the work of Christ, he describes not the resurrection merely, nor deliverance from temporal death, but eternal life in heaven; and it therefore follows that he here intends by death that gloomy and sad train of woes which sin has introduced into the world. The consequences of sin are, besides, elsewhere specified to be far more than temporal death, Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 2:8-9, Romans 2:12. Though therefore Adam might not have foreseen all the evils which were to come upon the race as the consequence of his sin, yet these evils might nevertheless follow. And the apostle, four thousand years after the reign of sin had commenced, and under the guidance of inspiration, had full opportunity to see and describe that train of woes which he comprehends under the name of death. That train included evidently temporal death, condemnation for sin, remorse of conscience, and exposure to eternal death, as the penalty of transgression.

And so - Thus. In this way it is to be accounted for that death has passed upon all people, to wit, because all people have sinned. As death followed sin in the first transgression, so it has in all; for all have sinned. There is a connection between death and sin which existed in the case of Adam, and which subsists in regard to all who sin. And as all have sinned, so death has passed upon all people.

Death passed upon - διῆλθεν diēlthenPassed through; pervaded; spread over the whole race, as pestilence passes through, or pervades a nation. Thus, death, with its train of woes, with its withering and blighting influence, has passed through the world, laying prostrate all before it.

Upon all men - Upon the race; all die.

For that - ἐφ᾽ ᾧ eph'hōThis expression has been greatly controverted; and has been very variously translated. Elsner renders it, "on account of whom." Doddridge, "unto which all have sinned." The Latin Vulgate renders it, "in whom (Adam) all have sinned." The same rendering has been given by Augustine, Beza, etc. But it has never yet been shown that our translators have rendered the expression improperly. The old Syriac and the Arabic agree with the English translation in this interpretation. With this agree Calvin, Vatablus, Erasmus, etc. And this rendering is sustained also by many other considerations.

(1) if ῳ ōbe a relative pronoun here, it would refer naturally to death, as its antecedent, and not to man. But this would not make sense.

(2) if this had been its meaning, the preposition ἐν enwould have been used; see the note of Erasmus on the place.

(3) it comports with the apostle‘s argument to state a cause why all died, and not to state that people sinned in Adam. He was inquiring into the cause why death was in the world; and it would not account or that to say that all sinned in Adam. It would require an additional statement to see how that could be a cause.

(4) as his posterity had not then an existence, they could not commit actual transgression. Sin is the transgression of the Law by a moral agent; and as the interpretation "because all have sinned" meets the argument of the apostle, and as the Greek favors that certainly as much as it does the other, it is to be preferred.

All have sinned - To sin is to transgress the Law of God; to do wrong. The apostle in this expression does not say that all have sinned in Adam, or that their nature has become corrupt, which is true, but which is not affirmed here; nor that the sin of Adam is imputed to them; but simply affirms that all people have sinned. He speaks evidently of the great universal fact that all people are sinners, He is not settling a metaphysical difficulty; nor does he speak of the condition of man as he comes into the world. He speaks as other men would; he addresses himself to the common sense of the world; and is discoursing of universal, well-known facts. Here is the fact - that all people experience calamity, condemnation, death. How is this to be accounted for? The answer is, "All have sinned." This is a

sufficient answer; it meets the case. And as his design cannot be shown to be to discuss a metaphysical question about the nature of man, or about the character of infants, the passage should be interpreted according to his design, and should not be pressed to bear on that of which he says nothing, and to which the passage evidently has no reference. I understand it, therefore, as referring to the fact that people sin in their own persons, sin themselves - as, indeed, how can they sin in an other way? - and that therefore they die. If people maintain that it refers to any metaphysical properties of the nature of man, or to infants, they should not infer or suppose this, but should show distinctly that it is in the text. Where is there evidence of any such reference?

(The following note on Romans 5:12, is intended to exhibit its just connection and force. It is the first member of a comparison between Adam and Christ, which is completed in Romans 5:18-19. "As by one man," etc. The first point which demands our attention, is the meaning of the words, "By one man sin entered into the world." Our author has rendered them, "He was the first sinner;" and in this he follows Prof. Stewart and Dr. Taylor; the former of whom gives this explanation of the clause; that Adam "began transgression," and the latter interprrets it by the word "commence." It is, however, no great discovery, that sin commenced with one man, or that Adam was the first sinner. If sin commenced at all, it must have commenced with some one. And If Adam sinned at all, while yet he stood alone in the world, he must have been the first sinner of the race! President Edwards, in his reply to Dr. Taylor of Norwich, has the following animadversions on this view: "That the world was full of sin, and full of death, were too great and notorious, deeply affecting the interests of mankind; and they seemed very wonderful facts, drawing the attention of the more thinking part of mankind everywhere, who often asked this question, ‹whence comes this evil,‘ moral and natural evil? (the latter chiefly visible in death.) It is manifest the apostle here means to tell us how these came into the world, and prevail in it as they do. But all that is meant, according to Dr Tay or‘s interpretation, is ‹he began transgression,‘ as if all the apostle meant, was to tell us who happened to sin first, not how such a malady came upon the world, or how anyone in the world, besides Adam himself, came by such a distemper." - *Orig. Sin,* p. 270.

The next thing that calls for remark in this verse, is the force of the connecting words “and so” καὶ οὕτως kai houtōsThey are justly rendered “in this way,.”” in this manner,” “in consequence of which.” And therefore, the meaning of the first three clauses of the first verse is, that by one man sin entered into the world. and death by sin, in consequence of which sin of this one man, death passed upon all people.

It will not do to render “and so” by “in like manner,” as Prof. Stewart does, and then explain with our author, “there is a connection between death and sin. which existed in the case of Adam, and which subsists in regard to all who sin.” This is quite contrary to the acknowledged force of καὶ οὕτως kai houtōsand besides, entirely destroys the connection which the apostle wishes to establish between the sin of the one man, and the penal evil, or death, that is in the world. It, in effect, says there is no connection whatever between those things although the language may seem to imply it and so large a portion of Christian readers in every age have understood it in this way. Adam sinned and he died, other people have sinned and they died! And yet this verse is allowed to be the first member of a comparison between Adam and Christ! Shall we supply then the other branch of the comparison, thus: Christ was righteous and lived, other people are righteous and they live? If we destroy the connection in the one case, how do we maintain it in the other? See the supplementary note.

The last clause “for that all have sinned,” is to be regarded as explanatory of the sentiment, that death passed on all, in consequence of the sin of the one man. Some have translated ἐφ᾽ ᾧ eph'hōin whom; and this, indeed, would assign the only just reason, why all are visited with penal evil on account of Adam‘s sin. All die through him, because in him all have sinned. But the translation is objectionable, on account of the distance of the antecedent. However, the common rendering gives precisely the same sense, “for that,” or “because that” all have sinned, that is, according to an explanation in Bloomfield‘s Greek Testament, “are considered guilty in the sight of God on account of Adam‘s fall. Thus, the expression may be considered equivalent to ἁμαρτωλοὶ κατεστάθησαν hamartōloi katestathēsanat Romans 5:19.” There can be no doubt that ἡμαρτον hēmartondoes bear this sense, Genesis 44:32; Genesis 43:9. Moreover, the other rendering “because all have sinned personally,” is inconsistent with

fact. Infants have not sinned in this way, therefore, according to this view, their death is left unaccounted for, and so is all that evil comprehended in the term "death," that comes upon us antecedent to actual sin. See the supplementary note.

Lastly, this interpretation would render the reasoning of the apostle inconclusive. "If," observes Witsius, "we must understand this of some personal sin of each, the reasoning would not have been just, or worthy of the apostle. For his argument would be thus: that by the one sin of one, all were become guilty of death, because each in particular had besides this one and first sin, his own personal sin, which is inconsequential." That people are punished for personal or actual transgression is true. But it is not the particular truth Paul seeks here to establish, any more than he seeks to prove in the previous part of his epistle, that people are justified on account of personal holiness, which is clearly no part of his design.)

Romans 5:13

For until the law … - This verse, with the following verses to the 17th, is usually regarded as a parenthesis. The Law here evidently means the Law given by Moses. "Until the commencement of that administration, or state of things under the law." To see the reason why he referred to this period between Adam and the Law, we should recall the design of the apostle, which is, to show the exceeding grace of God in the gospel, abounding, and superabounding, as a complete remedy for all the evils introduced by sin. For this purpose he introduces three leading conditions, or states, where people sinned, and where the effects of sin were seen; in regard to each and all of which the grace of the gospel superabounded. The first was that of Adam, with its attendant train of ills Romans 5:12, which ills were all met by the death of Christ, Romans 5:15-18. The second period or condition was that long interval in which men had only the light of nature, that period occurring between Adam and Moses. This was a fair representation of the condition of the world without revelation, and without law, Romans 5:13-14. Sin then reigned - reigned everywhere where there was no law. But the grace of the gospel abounded over the evils of this state of man. The third was under the Law, Romans 5:20. The Law entered, and sin was increased, and its evils abounded. But the gospel of Christ abounded even over this, and grace triumphantly reigned. So that the plan of justification met all the evils of sin, and was adapted to remove them; sin and its consequences as

flowing from Adam; sin and its consequences when there was no written revelation; and sin and its consequences under the light and terrors of the Law.

Sin was in the world - People sinned. They did what was evil.

But sin is not imputed - Is not charged against people, or they are not held guilty of it where there is no law. This is a self-evident proposition, for sin is a violation of law; and if there is no law, there can be no wrong. Assuming this as a self-evident proposition, the connection is, that there must have been a law of some kind; a "law written on their hearts," since sin was in the world, and people could not be charged with sin, or treated as sinners, unless there was some law. The passage here states a great and important principle, that people will not be held to be guilty unless there is a law which binds them of which they are apprized, and which they voluntarily transgress; see the note at Romans 4:15. This verse, therefore, meets an objection that might be started from what had been said in Romans 4:15. The apostle had affirmed that "where no law is there is no transgression." He here stated that all were sinners. It might be objected, that as during this long period of time they had no law, they could not be stoners. To meet this, he says that people were then in fact sinners, and were treated as such, which showed that there must have been a law.

Verse 14

Nevertheless - Notwithstanding that sin is not imputed where there is no law, yet death reigned.

Death reigned - People died; they were under the dominion of death in its various melancholy influences. The expression "death reigned" is one that is very striking. It is a representation of death as a monarch; having dominion over all that period, and overall those generations. Under his dark and withering reign people sank down to the grave. We have a similar expression when we represent death as "the king of terrors." It is a striking and affecting personification, for.

(1) His reign is absolute. He strikes down whom he pleases, and when he pleases.

(2) there is no escape. All must bow to his sceptre, and be humbled beneath his hand,

(3) it is universal. Old and young alike are the subjects of his gloomy empire.

(4) It would be an eternal reign if itwere not for the gospel.

It would shed unmitigated woes upon the earth; and the silent tread of this terrific king would produce only desolation and tears forever.

From Adam to Moses - From the time when God gave one revealed law to Adam, to the time when another revealed Law was given to Moses. This was a period of 2500 years; no inconsiderable portion of the history of the world. Whether people were regarded and treated as sinners then, was a very material inquiry in the argument of the apostle. The fact that they died is alleged by him as full proof that they were sinners; and that sin had therefore scattered extensive and appalling woes among people.

Even over them - Over all those generations. The point or emphasis of the remark here is, that it reigned over those that had sinned under a different economy from that of Adam. This was what rendered it so remarkable; and which showed that the withering curse of sin had been felt in all dispensations, and in all times.

After the similitude … - In the same way; in like manner. The expression "after the similitude" is an Hebraism, denoting in like manner, or as. The difference between their case and that of Adam was plainly that Adam had a revealed and positive law. They had not. They had only the law of nature, or of tradition. The giving of a law to Adam, and again to the world by Moses, were two great epochs between which no such event had occurred. The race wandered without revelation. The difference contemplated is not that Adam was an actual sinner, and that they had sinned only by imputation. For,

(1)The expression "to sin by imputation" is unintelligible, and conveys no idea.

(2)The apostle makes no such distinction, and conveys no such idea.

(3)His very object is different. It is to show that they were actual sinners; that they transgressed law; and the proof of this is that they died.

(4)It is utterly absurd to suppose that people from the time of Adam to Moses were sinners only by imputation. All history is against it; nor is there

the slightest ground of plausibility in such a supposition.

Of Adam‘s transgression - When he broke a plain, positive revealed law. This transgression was the open violation of a positive precept; theirs the violation of the laws communicated in a different way; by tradition, reason, conscience, etc. Many commentators have supposed that infants are particularly referred to here. Augustine first suggested this, and he has been followed by many others. But probably in the whole compass of the expositions of the Bible, there is not to be found a more unnatural and forced construction than this. For,

(1) The apostle makes no mention of infants. He does not in the remotest form allude to them by name, or give any intimation that he had reference to them.

(2) the scope of his argument is against it. Did infants only die? Were they the only persons that lived in this long period? His argument is complete without supposing that he referred to them. The question in regard to this long interval was, whether people were sinners? Yes, says the apostle. They died. Death reigned; and this proves that they were sinners. If it should be said that the death of infants would prove that they were sinners also, I answer,

(a)That this was an inference which the apostle does not draw, and for which he is not responsible. It is not affirmed by him.

(b)If it did refer to infants, what would it prove? Not that the sin of Adam was imputed, but that they were personally guilty, and transgressors. For this is the only point to which the argument tends.

The apostle here says not one word about imputation. He does not even refer to infants by name; nor does he here introduce at all the doctrine of imputation. All this is mere philosophy introduced to explain difficulties; but whether true or false, whether the theory explains or embarrasses the subject, it is not needful here to inquire.

(3) the very expression here is against the supposition that infants are intended. One form of the doctrine of imputation as held by Edwards, Starter, etc. has been that there was a constituted oneness or personal identity between Adam and his posterity; and that his sin was regarded as truly and properly theirs; and they as personally blameworthy or ill-deserving for it, in the same manner as a man at 40 is answerable for his crime committed at 20. If this doctrine be true, then it is certain that they

not only had “sinned after the similitude of Adam‘s transgression,” but had committed the very identical sin, and that they were answerable for it as their own. But this doctrine is now abandoned by all or nearly all who profess to be Calvinists; and as the apostle expressly says that they had not sinned after the similitude of Adam‘s transgression, it cannot be intended here.

(4) the same explanation of the passage is given by interpreters who nevertheless held to the doctrine of imputation. Thus, Calvin says on this passage, “Although this passage is understood commonly of infants, who, being guilty of no actual sin, perish by original depravity, yet I prefer that it should be interpreted generally of those who have not the Law. For this sentiment is connected with the preceding words, where it is said that sin is not imputed where there is no law. For they had not sinned according to the similitude of Adam‘s transgression, because they had not as he had the will of God revealed. For the Lord forbid Adam to touch the fruit (of the tree) of the knowledge of good and evil; but to them he gave no command but the testimony of conscience.” Calvin, however, supposes that infants are included in the “universal catalogue” here referred to. Turretine also remarks that the discussion here pertains to all the adults between Adam and Moses. Indeed, it is perfectly manifest that the apostle here has no particular reference to infants; nor would it have ever been supposed, but for the purpose of giving support to the mere philosophy of a theological system.

(According to our author, the disputed clause in Romans 5:14, “even over them,” etc., is to be understood of those who had not sinned against “a revealed or positive law.” Many eminent critics have explained the phrase in the same way, and yet arrived at a very different conclusion from that stated in the commentary, namely, that people die simply on account of actual or personal sin. - Bloomfield Crit. Dig. vol. v. p. 520. There are, however, very strong objections against this interpretation.

1. It is not consistent with the scope of the passage. The apostle had asserted in Romans 5:12, that all die in consequence of the sin of the one man (see the supplementary note). And in Romans 5:13-14 proceeds to prove his position thus: People universally die; they must, therefore, have

transgressed some law; not the Law of Moses, for people died before that was in being. Death absolutely reigned between Adam and Moses, even over them who had not broken a revealed law. therefore, people have died, in consequence of the sin of the one man. But in this chain of reasoning there is a link awanting. The conclusion does not follow; for though the persons in question had not broken a positive law, they had yet broken the law of nature, written on the heart, and might, therefore, have been condemned on account of a breach of it, Romans 2:12. But if we explain the clause under discussion, of infants who have not personally sinned like Adam against any law whatever, we ascend at once to the conclusion, that all die on account of Adam‘s sin.

2. The particle “even,” καί kaiseems to intimate, that a new class different from that before mentioned, or at all events a subdivision of it, is now to be introduced. None of all the multitudes that lived between Adam and Moses, had sinned against a positive or revealed law. To avoid an unmeaningful tautology therefore, some other sense must be attached to the clause. It is vain to affirm that the particle “even” simply lays “emphasis” on the fact, that they die who had not sinned against a positive law, since were we to admit this forced construction, we should still ask, to what purpose is the emphasis? The fact to which it is supposed to draw attention, as has been noticed already, falls short of proving the apostle‘s point.

3. Moreover, since “the similitude,” etc. is quite a general expression containing no particular intimation in itself, as to that, in which the likeness consists, we are just as much at liberty to find the resemblance in personal transgression, as others, in transgression against revealed laws. To sin personally is to sin like Adam. Nay, the resemblance in this case is complete; in the other view it is imperfect, scarcely deserving to be called a resemblance at all. For they who have no revealed law, may yet be said to sin like Adam in some very important respects. They sin wilfully and presumptuously against the law written in their hearts, in spite of the remonstrances of conscience, etc. The only difference in fact, lies in the mode or manner of revelation. But if we suppose the likeness to lie in personal sin, we can find a class who have not sinned like Adam in any way whatever. And why this class should be supposed omitted, in an argument to

prove that all people die in consequence of Adam‘s sin, it is difficult to conceive.

What though infants are not “alluded to by name?” No one has ever asserted it. Had this been the case, there could have been no dispute on the point. To say, however, that the apostle “does not give any intimation that he had reference to infants,” is just a begging of the question, a taking for granted what requires to be proved. Perhaps, as Edwards suggests, “such might be the state of language among Jews and Christians at that day, that the apostle might have no phrase more aptly to express this meaning. The manner in which the epithets personal and actual, are used and applied now in this case, is probably of later date, and more modern use,” p. 312, Orig. Sin.

The learned author of this commentary objects further, to the opinion that infants who have not sinned personally are embraced in the clause under discussion; that “to sin by imputation is unintelligible, and conveys no idea.” It is his own language, and he alone is responsible for it. He tells us also, that “it is utterly absurd, to suppose that people, from the time of Adam to Moses, were sinners only by imputation.” No one ever supposed so, nor does the view, to which he objects, at all involve any such consequence. Again he affirms, “that the scope of the apostle‘s argument is against the application of the clause to infants;” and asks, for what purpose we cannot divine: “Did infants only die?” The answer is obvious. No! Death reigned over all who lived from Adam to Moses, even over that class who had not sinned personally. As to the true scope of the passage, and the view that is most consonant to it, enough has been said already.)

Who is the figure - τύπος tupos“Type.” This word occurs sixteen times in the New Testament, John 20:25 (twice); Acts 7:43-44; Acts 23:25; Romans 5:14; Romans 6:17; 1 Corinthians 10:6, 1 Corinthians 10:11; Philemon 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 3:9; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7; Hebrews 8:5; 1 Peter 5:3. It properly means,

(1)Any impression, note, or mark, which is made by percussion, or in any way, John 20:25, “the print (type) of the nails.”

(2)an effigy or image which is made or formed by any rule; a model, pattern. Acts 7:43, “ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of your god Remphan, figures (types) which ye had made.” Acts 7:44, “that he

should make it (the tabernacle) according to the fashion (type) which he had seen," Hebrews 8:5.

(3)abrief argument, or summary, Acts 23:25.

(4)arule of doctrine, or a law or form of doctrine, Romans 6:17.

(5)an example or model to be imitated; an example of what we ought to be, Philemon 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 3:9; 1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7; 1 Peter 5:3; or an example which is to be avoided, an example to warn us, 1 Corinthians 10:6, 1 Corinthians 10:11.

In this place it is evidently applied to the Messiah. The expression "he who was to come" is often used to denote the Messiah. As applied to him, it means that there was in some respects a similarity between the results of the conduct of Adam and the effects of the work of Christ. It does not mean that Adam was constituted or appointed a type of Christ, which would convey no intelligible idea; but that a resemblance may be traced between the effects of Adam's conduct and the work of Christ. It does not mean that the person of Adam was typical of Christ; but that between the results of his conduct and the work of Christ, there may be instituted a comparison, there may be traced some resemblance. What that is, is stated in the following verses. It is mainly by way of contrast that the comparison is instituted, and may be stated as consisting in the following points of resemblance or contrast.

(1) Contrast.

(a)By the crime of one, many are dead; by the work of the other, grace will much more abound, Romans 5:15.

(b)In regard to the acts of the two. In the case of Adam, one offence led on the train of woes; in the case of Christ, his work led to the remission of many offences, Romans 5:16.

(c)In regard to the effects. Death reigned by the one; but life much more over the other.

(2) Resemblance. By the disobedience of one, many were made sinners; by the obedience of the other, many shall be made righteous, Romans 5:18-19. It is clear, therefore, that the comparison which is instituted is rather by way of antithesis or contrast, than by direct resemblance. "The main design

is to show that greater benefits have resulted from the work of Christ, than evils from the fall of Adam." A comparison is also instituted between Adam and Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:22, 1 Corinthians 15:45. The reason is, that Adam was the first of the race; he was the fountain, the head, the father; and the consequences of that first act could be seen everywhere. By a divine constitution the race was so connected with him, that it was made certain that, if he fell, all would come into the world with a nature depraved, and subject to calamity and death, and would be treated as if fallen, and his sin would thus spread crime, and woe, and death everywhere. The evil effects of the apostasy were everywhere seen; and the object of the apostle was to show that the plan of salvation was adapted to meet and more than counterveil the evil effects of the fall. He argued on great and acknowledged facts - that Adam was the first sinner, and that from him, as a fountain, sin and death had flowed through the world. Since the consequences of that sin had been so disastrous and widespread, his design is to show that from the Messiah effects had flowed more beneficent than the former were ruinous.

"In him the tribes of Adam boast.
More blessings than their father lost."
Watts.

Verse 15

But not as the offence - This is the first point of contrast between the effect of the sin of Adam and of the work of Christ. The word "offence" means properly a fall, where we stumble over anything lying in our way It then means sin in general, or crime Matthew 6:14-15; Matthew 18:35. Here it means the fall, or first sin of Adam. We use the word "fall" as applied to Adam, to denote his first offence, as being that act by which he fell from an elevated state of obedience and happiness into one of sin and condemnation.

So also - The gift is not in its nature and effects like the offence.

The free gift - The favor, benefit, or good bestowed gratuitously on us. It refers to the favors bestowed in the gospel by Christ. These are free, that is, without merit on our part, and bestowed on the undeserving.

For if … - The apostle does not labor to prove that this is so. This is not the point of his argument, He assumes that as what was seen and known everywhere. His main point is to show that greater benefits have resulted from the work of the Messiah than evils from the fall of Adam.

Through the offence of one - By the fall of one. This simply concedes the fact that it is so. The apostle does not attempt an explanation of the mode or manner in which it happened. He neither says that it is by imputation, nor by inherent depravity, nor by imitation. Whichever of these modes may be the proper one of accounting for the fact, it is certain that the apostle states neither. His object was, not to explain the manner in which it was done, but to argue from the acknowledged existence of the fact. All that is certainly established from this passage is, that as a certain fact resulting from the transgression of Adam, "many" were "dead." This simple fact is all that can be proved from this passage. Whether it is to be explained by the doctrine of imputation, is to be a subject of inquiry independent of this passage. Nor have we a right to assume that this teaches the doctrine of the imputation of the sin of Adam to his posterity. For,

(1)The apostle says nothing of it.

(2)that doctrine is nothing but an effort to explain the manner of an event which the apostle Paul did not think it proper to attempt to explain.

(3)that doctrine is in fact no explanation.

It is introducing all additional difficulty. For to say that I am blameworthy, or ill-deserving for a sin in which I had no agency, is no explanation, but is involving me in an additional difficulty still more perplexing, to ascertain how such a doctrine can possibly be just. The way of wisdom would be, doubtless, to rest satisfied with the simple statement of a fact which the apostle has assumed, without attempting to explain it by a philosophical theory. Calvin accords with the above interpretation. "For we do not so perish by his (Adam's) crime, as if we were ourselves innocent; but Paul ascribes our ruin to him because his sin is the cause of our sin."

(This is not a fair quotation from Calvin. It leaves us to infer, that the Reformer affirmed, that Adam's sin is the cause of actual sin in us, on account of which last only we are condemned. Now under the twelfth verse Calvin says, "The inference is plain, that the apostle does not treat of actual sin, for if every person was the cause of his own guilt, why should Paul compare Adam with Christ?" If our author had not stopt short in his quotation, he would have found immediately subjoined, as an explanation: "I call that our sin, which is inbred, and with which we are born." Our being born with this sin is a proof of our guilt in Adam. But whatever opinion

may he formed of Calvin‘s general views on this subject, nothing is more certain, than that he did not suppose the apostle treated of actual sin in these passages.

Notwithstanding of the efforts that are made to exclude the doctrine of imputation from this chapter, the full and varied manner in which the apostle expresses it, cannot be evaded. “Through the offence of one many be dead” - “the judgment was by one to condemnation” - “By one man‘s offence death reigned by one” - “By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation” - “By one man‘s disobedience, many were made sinners,” etc.

It is vain to tell us, as our author does” under each of these clauses respectively, that the apostle simply states the fact, that the sin of Adam has involved the race in condemnation, without adverting to the manner; for Paul does more than state the fact. He intimates that we are involved in condemnation in a way that bears a certain analogy to the manner in which we become righteous. And on this last, he is, without doubt, sufficiently explicited See a former supplementary note.

In Romans 5:18-19 the apostle seems plainly to affirm the manner of the fact “as by the offence of one,” etc., “Even so,” etc. “As by one man‘s disobedience,” etc., “so,” etc. There is a resemblance in the manner of the two things compared. It we wish to know how guilt and condemnation come by Adam, we have only to inquire, how righteousness and justification come by Christ. “So,” that is, in this way, not in like manner. It is not in a manner that has merely some likeness, but it is in the very same manner, for although there is a contrast in the things, the one being disobedience and the other obedience, yet there is a perfect identity in the manner. - Haldane.

It is somewhat remarkable, that while our author so frequently affirms, that the apostle states the fact only, he himself should throughout assume the manner. He will not allow the apostle to explain the manner, nor any one who has a different view of it from himself. Yet he tells us, it is not by imputation that we become involved in Adam‘s guilt; that people “sin in their own persons, and that therefore they die.” This he affirms to be the

apostle‘s meaning. And is this not an explanation of the manner. Are we not left to conclude, that from Adam we simply derive a corrupt nature, in consequence of which we sin personally, and therefore die?)

Many - Greek, “The many.” Evidently meaning all; the whole race; Jews and Gentiles. That it means all here is proved in Romans 5:18. If the inquiry be, why the apostle used the word “many” rather than all, we may reply, that the design was to express an antithesis, or contrast to the cause - one offence. One stands opposed to many, rather than to all.

Be dead - See the note on the word “death,” Romans 5:12. The race is under the dark and gloomy reign of death. This is a simple fact which the apostle assumes, and which no man can deny.

Much more - The reason of this “much more” is to be found in the abounding mercy and goodness of God. If a wise, merciful, and good Being has suffered such a train of woes to be introduced by the offence of one, have we not much more reason to expect that his grace will superabound?

The grace of God - The favor or kindness of God We have reason to expect under the administration of God more extensive benefits, than we have ills, flowing from a constitution of things which is the result of his appointment.

And the gift by grace - The gracious gift; the benefits flowing from that grace. This refers to the blessings of salvation.

Which is by one man - Standing in contrast with Adam. His appointment was the result of grace; and as he was constituted to bestow favors, we have reason to expect that they will superabound.

Hath abounded - Has been abundant, or ample; will be more than a counterbalance for the ills which have been introduced by the sin of Adam.

Unto many - Greek, Unto the many. The obvious interpretation of this is, that it is as unlimited as “the many” who are dead. Some have supposed that Adam represented the whole of the human race, and Christ a part, and that “the many” in the two members of the verse refer to the whole of those who were thus represented. But this is to do violence to the passage; and to introduce a theological doctrine to meet a supposed difficulty in the text. The obvious meaning is - one from which we cannot depart without doing violence to the proper laws of interpretation - that “the many” in the two cases are co-extensive; and that as the sin of Adam has involved the race - the many - in death; so the grace of Christ has abounded in reference to the

many, to the race. If asked how this can be possible, since all have not been, and will not be savingly benefitted by the work of Christ, we may reply,

(1) That it cannot mean That the benefits of the work of Christ should be literally co-extensive with the results of Adam‘s sin, since it is a fact that people have suffered, and do suffer, from the effects of that fall. In order that the Universalist may draw an argument from this, he must show that it was the design of Christ to destroy all the effects of the sin of Adam. But this has not been in fact. Though the favors of that work have abounded, yet people have suffered and died. And though it may still abound to the many, yet some may suffer here, and suffer on the same principle forever.

(2) though people are indubitably affected by the sin of Adam, as e. g., by being born with a corrupt disposition; with loss of righteousness, with subjection to pain and woe; and with exposure to eternal death; yet there is reason to believe that all those who die in infancy are, through the merits of the Lord Jesus, and by an influence which we cannot explain, changed and prepared for heaven. As nearly half the race die in infancy, therefore there is reason to think that, in regard to this large portion of the human family, the work of Christ has more than repaired the evils of the fall, and introduced them into heaven, and that his grace has thus abounded unto many. In regard to those who live to the period of moral agency, a scheme has been introduced by which the offers of salvation may be made to them, and by which they may be renewed, and pardoned, and saved. The work of Christ, therefore, may have introduced advantages adapted to meet the evils of the fall as man comes into the world; and the original applicability of the one be as extensive as the other. In this way the work of Christ was in its nature suited to abound unto the many.

(3) the intervention of the plan of atonement by the Messiah, prevented the immediate execution of the penalty of the Law, and produced all the benefits to all the race, resulting from the sparing mercy of God. In this respect it was co-extensive with the fall.

(4) he died for all the race, Hebrews 2:9; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 John 2:2. Thus, his death, in its adaptation to a great and glorious result, was as extensive as the ruins of the fall.

(5) the offer of salvation is made to all, Revelation 22:17; John 7:37; Matthew 11:28-29; Mark 16:15. Thus, his grace has extended unto the many - to all the race. Provision has been made to meet the evils of the fall; a provision as extensive in its applicability as was the ruin.

(6) more will probably be actually saved by the work of Christ, than will be finally ruined by the fall of Adam. The number of those who shall be saved from all the human race, it is to be believed, will yet be many more than those who shall be lost. The gospel is to spread throughout the world. It is to be evangelized. The millennial glory is to rise upon the earth; and the Saviour is to reign with undivided empire. Taking the race as a whole, there is no reason to think that the number of those who shall be lost, compared with the immense multitudes that shall be saved by the work of Christ, will be more than are the prisoners in a community now, compared with the number of peaceful and virtuous citizens. A medicine may be discovered that shall be said to triumph over disease, though it may have been the fact that thousands have died since its discovery, and thousands yet will not avail themselves of it; yet the medicine shall have the properties of universal triumph; it is adapted to the many; it might be applied by the many; where it is applied, it completely answers the end. Vaccination is adapted to meet the evils of the small-pox everywhere; and when applied, saves people from the ravages of this terrible disease, though thousands may die to whom it is not applied. It is a triumphant remedy. So of the plan of salvation. Thus, though all shall not be saved, yet the sin of Adam shall be counteracted; and grace abounds unto the many. All this fulness of grace the apostle says we have reason to expect from the abounding mercy of God.

(The "many" in the latter clause of this verse, cannot be regarded as co-extensive with the "many" that are said to be dead through the offence of Adam. Very much is affirmed of the "many to whom grace abounds," that cannot, "without doing violence to the whole passage," be applied to all mankind. They are said to "receive the gift of righteousness," and to "reign in life." They are actually "constituted righteous," Romans 5:19 and these things cannot be said of all people in any sense whatever. The only way of explaining the passage, therefore, is to adopt that view which our author has introduced only to condemn, namely, "that Adam represented the whole of

the human race, and Christ a part, and that ‹the many in the two members of the verse, refers to the whole of those who were thus represented."

The same principle of interpretation must be adopted in the parallel passage, "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." It would be preposterous to affirm, that "the all" in the latter clause is co-extensive with "the all" in the former. The sense plainly is, that all whom Christ represented should be made alive in him. even as all mankind, or all represented by Adam, had died in him.

It is true indeed that all mankind are in some sense benefitted on account of the atonement of Christ: and our author has enlarged on several things of this nature, which yet fall short of "saving benefit." But will it be maintained, that the apostle in reality affirms no more than that the many to, whom grace abounds, participate in certain benefits, short of salvation? If so, what becomes of the comparison between Adam and Christ? If "the many" in the one branch of the comparison are only benefitted by Christ in a way that falls short of saving benefit, then "the many" in the other branch must be affected by the fall of Adam only in the same limited way, whereas the apostle affirms that in consequence of it they are really "dead."

"The principal thing," says Mr. Scott, "which renders the expositions generally given of these verses perplexed and unsatisfactory, arises from an evident misconception of the apostle‘s reasoning, in supposing that Adam and Christ represented exactly the same company; whereas Adam was the surety of the whole human species, as his posterity; Christ, only of that chosen remnant, which has been, or shall be one with him by faith, who alone ‹are counted to him for a generation.‘ If we exclusively consider the benefits which believers derive from Christ as compared with the loss sustained in Adam by the human race, we shall then see the passage open most perspicuously and gloriously to our view." - Commentary, Romans 5:15, Romans 5:19.

But our author does not interpret this passage upon any consistent principle. For "the many" in Romans 5:15, to whom "grace abounded" are obviously the same with those in Romans 5:17, who are said to receive abundance of grace, etc., and yet he interprets the one of all mankind, and

the other of believers only. What is asserted in Romans 5:17, he says, "is particularly true of the redeemed, of whom the apostle in this verse is speaking.")

Verse 16

And not … - This is the second point in which the effects of the work of Christ differ from the sin of Adam The first part Romans 5:15 was, that the evil consequences flowed from the sin of one man, Adam; and that the benefits flowed from the work of one man, Jesus Christ. The point in this verse is, that the evil consequences flowed from one crime, one act of guilt; but that the favors had respect to many acts of guilt. The effects of Adam's sin, whatever they were, pertained to the one sin; the effects of the work of Christ, to many sins.

By one that sinned - δι᾽ ἑνὸς ἁμαρτήσαντος di' henos hēmartēsantosBy means of one (man) sinning; evidently meaning by one offence, or by one act of sin. So the Vulgate, and many manuscripts. And the connection shows that this is the sense.

The gift - The benefits resulting from the work of Christ.

The judgment - The sentence; the declared penalty. The word expresses properly the sentence which is passed by a judge. Here it means the sentence which God passed, as a judge, on Adam for the one offence, involving himself and his posterity in ruin, Genesis 2:17; Genesis 3:17-19.

Was by one - By one offence; or one act of sin.

Unto condemnation - Producing condemnation; or involving in condemnation. It is proved by this, that the effect of the sin of Adam was to involve the race in condemnation, or to secure this as a result that all mankind would be under the condemning sentence of the Law, and be transgressors. But in what way it would have this effect, the apostle does not state. He does not intimate that his sin would be imputed to them; or that they would be held to be personally guilty for it. He speaks of a broad, everywhere perceptible fact, that the effect of that sin had been somehow to overwhelm the race in condemnation. In what mode this was done is a fair subject of inquiry; but the apostle does not attempt to explain it.

The free gift - The unmerited favor, by the work of Christ.

Is of many offences - In relation to many sins. It differs thus from the condemnation. That had respect to one offence; this has respect to many crimes. Grace therefore abounds.

Unto justification - Note, Romans 3:24. The work of Christ is designed to have reference to many offences, so as to produce pardon or justification in regard to them all. But the apostle here does not intimate how this is done. He simply states the fact, without attempting in this place to explain it; and as we know that that work does not produce its effect to justify without some act on the part of the individual, are we not hence, led to conclude the same respecting the condemnation for the sin of Adam? As the work of Christ does not benefit the race unless it is embraced, so does not the reasoning of the apostle imply, that the deed of Adam does not involve in criminality and ill-desert unless there be some voluntary act on the part of each individual? However this may be, it is certain that the apostle has in neither case here explained the mode in which it is done. He has simply stated the fact, a fact which he did not seem to consider himself called on to explain. Neither has he affirmed that in the two cases the mode is the same. On the contrary, it is strongly implied that it is not the same, for the leading object here is to present, not an entire resemblance, but a strong contrast between the effects of the sin of Adam and the work of Christ.

Verse 17

For if - This verse contains the same idea as before presented, but in a varied form. It is condensing the whole subject, and presenting it in a single view.

By one man‘s offence - Or, by one offence. Margin. The reading of the text is the more correct. “If, under the administration of a just and merciful Being, it has occurred, that by the offence of one, death hath exerted so wide a dominion; we have reason much more to expect under that administration, that they who are brought under his plan of saving mercy shall be brought under a dispensation of life.”

Death reigned - Note, Romans 5:14.

By one - By means of one man.

Much more - We have much more reason to expect it. It evidently accords much more with the administration of a Being of infinite goodness.

They which receive abundance of grace - The abundant favor; the mercy that shall counterbalance and surpass the evils introduced by the sin of Adam. That favor shall be more than sufficient to counterbalance all those evils. This is particularly true of the redeemed, of whom the apostle in this verse is speaking. The evils which they suffer in consequence of the sin

of Adam bear no comparison with the mercies of eternal life that shall flow to them from the work of the Saviour.

The gift of righteousness - This stands opposed to the evils introduced by Adam. As the effect of his sin was to produce condemnation, so here the gift of righteousness refers to the opposite, to pardon, to justification, to acceptance with God. To show that people were thus justified by the gospel, was the leading design of the apostle; and the argument here is, that if by one man‘s sin, death reigned over those who were under condemnation in consequence of it, we have much more reason to suppose that they who are delivered from sin by the death of Christ, and accepted of God, shall reign with him in life.

Shall reign - The word “reign” is often applied to the condition of saints in heaven, 2 Timothy 2:12, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him;” Revelation 5:10; Revelation 20:6; Revelation 22:5. It means that they shall be exalted to a glorious state of happiness in heaven; that they shall be triumphant over all their enemies; shall gain an ultimate victory; and shall partake with the Captain of their salvation in the splendors of his dominion above, Revelation 3:21; Luke 22:30.

In life - This stands opposed to the death that reigned as the consequence of the sin of Adam. It denotes complete freedom from condemnation; from temporal death; from sickness, pain, and sin. It is the usual expression to denote the complete bliss of the saints in glory; Note, John 3:36.

By one, Jesus Christ - As the consequence of his work. The apostle here does not state the mode or manner in which this was done; nor does he say that it was perfectly parallel in the mode with the effects of the sin of Adam. He is comparing the results or consequences of the sin of the one and of the work of the other. There is a similarity in the consequences. The way in which the work of Christ had contributed to this he had stated in Romans 3:24, Romans 3:28.

Verse 18

Therefore - Wherefore (Ἄρα οὖν ara oun). This is properly a summing up, a recapitulation of what had been stated in the previous verses. The apostle resumes the statement or proposition made in Romans 5:12, and after the intermediate explanation in the parenthesis Romans 5:13-17, in this verse and the following, sums up the whole subject. The explanation,

therefore, of the previous verses is designed to convey the real meaning of Romans 5:18-19.

As by the offence of one - Admitting this as an undisputed and everywhere apparent fact, a fact which no one can call in question.

Judgment came - This is not in the Greek, but it is evidently implied, and is stated in Romans 5:16. The meaning is, that all have been brought under the reign of death by one man.

Upon all men - The whole race. This explains what is meant by "the many" in Romans 5:15.

To condemnation - Romans 5:16.

Even so - In the manner explained in the previous verses. With the same certainty, and to the same extent. The apostle does not explain the mode in which it was done, but simply scares the fact.

By the righteousness of one - This stands opposed to the one offence of Adam, and must mean, therefore, the holiness, obedience, purity of the Redeemer. The sin of one man involved people in ruin; the obedience unto death of the other Philemon 2:8 restored them to the favor of God.

Came upon all men - (εἰς παντας ἀνθρώπους eis pantas anthrōpousWas with reference to all people; had a bearing upon all people; was originally adapted to the race. As the sin of Adam was of such a nature in the relation in which he stood as to affect all the race, so the work of Christ in the relation in which he stood was adapted also to all the race. As the tendency of the one was to involve the race in condemnation, so the tendency of the other was to restore them to acceptance with God. There was an original applicability in the work of Christ to all people - a richness, a fulness of the atonement suited to meet the sins of the entire world, and restore the race to favor.

Unto justification of life - With reference to that justification which is connected with eternal life. That is, his work is adapted to produce acceptance with God, to the same extent as the crime of Adam has affected the race by involving them in sin and misery The apostle does not affirm that in fact as many will be affected by the one as by the other; but that it is suited to meet all the consequences of the fall; to be as wide-spread in its effects; and go be as salutary as that had been ruinous. This is all that the argument requires. Perhaps there could not be found a more striking declaration any where, that the work of Christ had an original applicability to all people; or that it is in its own nature suited to save all. The course of

argument here leads inevitably to this; nor is it possible to avoid it without doing violence to the obvious and fair course of the discussion.

It does not prove that all will in fact be saved, but that the plan is suited to meet all the evils of the fall. A certain kind of medicine may have an original applicability to heal all persons under the same disease; and may be abundant and certain, and yet in fact be applied to few. The sun is suited to give light to all, yet many may be blind, or may voluntarily close their eyes. Water is adapted to the needs of all people, and the supply may be ample for the human family, yet in fact, from various causes, many may be deprived of it. So of the provisions of the plan of redemption. They are adapted to all; they are ample, and yet in fact, from causes which this is not the place to explain, the benefits, like those of medicine, water, science, etc. may never be enjoyed by all the race. Calvin concurs in this interpretation, and thus shows, that it is one which commends itself even to the most strenuous advocates of the system which is called by his name. He says, "He (the apostle) makes the grace common to all, because it is offered to all, not because it is in fact applied to all. For although Christ suffered for the sins or the whole world (nam etsi passus est Christus pro peccatis totius mundi), and it is offered to all without distinction (indifferenter), yet all do not embrace it." See Cal. *Commentary* on this place.

Verse 19

For … - This verse is not a mere repetition of the former, but it is an explanation. By the former statements it might perhaps be inferred that people were condemned without any guilt or blame of theirs. The apostle in this verse guards against this, and affirms that they are in fact sinners. He affirms that those who are sinners are condemned, and that the sufferings brought in on account of the sin of Adam, are introduced because many were made sinners. Calvin says," Lest anyone should arrogate to himself innocence, (the apostle) adds, that each one is condemned because he is a sinner."

(The same objection which was stated against a previous quotation from Calvin applies here. The reformer does not mean that each is condemned because he is actually a sinner. He affirms that the ground of condemnation lies in something with which we are born, which belongs to us antecedent to actual transgression.)

By one man‘s disobedience - By means of the sin of Adam. This affirms simply the fact thai such a result followed from the sin of Adam. The word by διά diais used in the Scriptures as it is in all books and in all languages. It may denote the efficient cause; the instrumental cause; the principal cause; the meritorious cause; or the chief occasion by which a thing occurred. (See Schleusner.) It does not express one mode, and one only, in which a thing is done; but that one thing is the result of another. When we say that a young man is ruined in his character by another, we do not express the mode, but the fact. When we say that thousands have been made infidels by the writings of Paine and Voltaire, we make no affirmation about the mode, but about the fact. In each of these, and in all other cases, we should deem it most inconclusive reasoning to attempt to determine the mode by the preposition by; and still more absurd if it were argued from the use of that preposition that the sins of the seducer were imputed to the young man; or the opinions of Paine and Voltaire imputed to infidels.

(What is here said of the various significations of διά diais true. Yet it will not be denied, that in a multitude of instances it points to the real cause or ground of a thing. The sense is to be determined by the connection. “We have in this single passage no less than three cases, Romans 5:12, Romans 5:18-19, in which this preposition with the genitive indicates the ground or reason on account of which something is given or performed. All this is surely sufficient to prove that it may, in the case before us, express the ground why the sentence of condemnation has passed upon all men.” To draw an illustration from the injury inflicted by Voltaire and Paine, will not serve the author‘s purpose, until he can prove, that they stand in a relation, to those whom they have injured, similar to what Adam bears to the human family. When we say that thousands have been ruined by Voltaire, it is true we can have no idea of imputation: yet we may fairly entertain such an idea when it is said, “all man. kind have been ruined by Adam.”)

Many - Greek, The many, Romans 5:15. “Were made” (κατεσταθησαν katestathēsan). The verb used here, occurs in the New Testament in the following places: Matthew 24:45, Matthew 24:47; Matthew 25:21, Matthew 25:23; Luke 12:14, Luke 12:42, Luke 12:44; Acts 6:3; Acts 7:10, Acts 7:27, Acts 7:35; Acts 17:15; Romans 5:19; Titus 1:5; Hebrews 2:7; Hebrews 5:1; Hebrews 7:28; Hebrews 8:3; James 3:6; James 4:4; 2 Peter 1:8. It usually means to constitute, set, or appoint. In the New Testament it has two leading significations.

(1) to appoint to an office, to set over others (Matthew 24:45, Matthew 24:47; Luke 12:42, etc.); and,

(2) It means to become, to be in fact, etc.; James 3:6, "so is the tongue among our members," etc.

That is, it becomes such; James 4:4, "The friendship of the world is enmity with God; it becomes such; it is in fact thus, and is thus to be regarded. The word is, in no instance, used to express the idea of imputing that to one which belongs to another. It here either means that this was by a constitution of divine appointment that they in fact became sinners, or simply declares that they were so in fact. There is not the slightest intimation that it was by imputation. The whole scope of the argument is, moreover, against this; for the object of the apostle is not to show that they were charged with the sin of another, but that they were in fact sinners themselves. If it means that they were condemned for his act, without any concurrence of their own will, then the correspondent part will be true, that all are constituted righteous in the same way; and thus the doctrine of universal salvation will be inevitable. But as none are constituted righteous who do not voluntarily avail themselves of the provisions of mercy, so it follows that those who are condemned, are not condemned for the sin of another without their own concurrence; nor unless they personally deserve it.

Sinners - Transgressors; those who deserve to be punished. It does not mean those who are condemned for the sin of another; but those who are violators of the Law of God. All who are condemned are sinners. They are not innocent persons condemned for the crime of another. People may be involved in the consequences of the sins of others without being to blame. The consequences of the crimes of a murderer, a drunkard, a pirate may pass over from them, and affect thousands, and overwhelm them in ruin. But this does not prove that they are blameworthy. In the divine administration none are regarded as guilty who are not guilty; none are condemned who do not deserve to be condemned. All who sink to hell are sinners.

By the obedience of one - Of Christ. This stands opposed to the disobedience of Adam, and evidently includes the entire work of the

Redeemer which has a bearing on the salvation of people; Philemon 2:8, "He … became obedient unto death."

Shall many - Greek, The many; corresponding to the term in the former part of the verse, and evidently commensurate with it; for there is no reason for limiting it to a part in this member, any more than there is in the former.

Be made - The same Greek word as before be appointed, or become. The apostle has explained the mode in which this is done; Romans 1:17; Romans 3:24-26; Romans 4:1-5. That explanation is to limit the meaning here. No more are considered righteous than become so in that way. And as all do not become righteous thus, the passage cannot be adduced to prove the doctrine of universal salvation.

The following remarks may express the doctrines which are established by this much-contested and difficult passage.

(1) Adam was created holy; capable of obeying law; yet free to fall.

(2) alaw was given him, adapted to his condition - simple, plain, easy to be obeyed, and suited to give human nature a trial in circumstances as favorable as possible.

(3) its violation exposed him to the threatened penalty as he had understood it, and to all the collateral woes which it might carry in its train - involving, as subsequent developments showed, the loss of God‘s favor; his displeasure evinced in man‘s toil, and sweat, and sickness, and death; in hereditary depravity, and the curse, and the pains of hell forever.

(4) Adam was the head of the race; he was the fountain of being; and human nature was so far tried in him, that it may be said he was on trial not for himself alone, but for his posterity, inasmuch as his fall would involve them in ruin. Many have chosen to call this a covenant, and to speak of him as a federal head; and if the above account is the idea involved in these terms, the explanation is not exceptionable. As the word "covenant," however, is not applied in the transaction in the Bible, and as it is liable to be misunderstood, others prefer to speak of it as a law given to Adam, and as a divine constitution, under which he was placed.

(5) “his posterity are, in consequence of his sin, subjected to the same train of ills as if they had been personally the transgressors.” Not that they are regarded as personally ill-deserving, or criminal for his sin, God reckons things as they are, and not falsely, (see the note at Romans 4:3), and his imputations are all according to truth. He regarded Adam as standing at the head of the race; and regards and treats all his posterity as coming into the world subject to pain, and death, and depravity, as a consequence of his sin; see the note. This is the Scripture idea of imputation; and this is what has been commonly meant when it has been said that “the guilt of his first sin” - not the sin itself - “is imputed to his posterity.”

(6) there is something antecedent to the moral action of his posterity, and growing out of the relation which they sustain to him, which makes it certain that they will sin as soon as they begin to act as moral agents. What this is, we may not be able to say; but we may be certain that it is not physical depravity, or any created essence of the soul, or anything which prevents the first act of sin from being voluntary. This hereditary tendency to sin has been usually called “original sin;” and this the apostle evidently teaches.

(7) as an infant comes into the world with a certainty that he will sin as soon as he becomes a moral agent here, there is the same certainty that, if he were removed to eternity, he would sin there also, unless he were changed. There is, therefore, need of the blood of the atonement and of the agency of the Holy Spirit, that an infant may be saved.

(8) the facts here stated accord with all the analogy in the moral government of God. The drunkard secures as a result commonly, that his family will be reduced to beggary, want, and woe. A pirate, or a traitor, will overwhelm not himself only, but his family in ruin. Such is the great law or constitution on which society is now organized; and we are not to be surprised that the same principle occurred in the primary organization of human affairs.

(9) as this is the fact everywhere, the analogy disarms all objections which have been made against the scriptural statements of the effects of the sin of Adam. If just now, it was just then. If it exists now, it existed then.

(10) the doctrine should be left, therefore, simply as it is in the Scriptures. It is there the simple statement of a fact, without any attempt at explanation. That fact accords with all that we see and feel. It is a great principle in the constitution of things, that the conduct of one man may pass over in its effects on others, and have an influence on their happiness. The simple fact in regard to Adam is, that he sinned; and that such is the organization of the great society of which he was the head and father, that his sin has secured as a certain result that all the race will be sinners also. How this is, the Bible has not explained. It is a part of a great system of things. That it is unjust no man can prove, for none can show that any sinner suffers more than he deserves. That it is wise is apparent, for it is attended with numberless blessings. It is connected with all the advantages that grow out of the social organization.

The race might have been composed of independent individuals, where the conduct of an individual, good or evil, might have affected no one but himself. But then society would have been impossible. All the benefits of organization into families, and communities, and nations would have been unknown. Man would have lived alone; wept alone; rejoiced alone; died alone. There would have been no sympathy; no compassion; no mutual aid. God has therefore grouped the race into separate communities. He has organized society. He has constituted families, tribes, clans, nations; and though on the general principle the conduct of one may overwhelm another in misery, yet the union, the grouping, the constitution, is the source of most of the blessings which man enjoys in this life, and may be of numberless mercies in regard to what is to come. If it was the organization on which the race might be plunged into sin, it is also the organization on which it may be raised to life eternal. If, on the one hand, it may be abused to produce misery, it may, on the other, be improved to the advancement of peace, sympathy, friendship, prosperity, salvation. At all events, such is the organization in common life and in religion, and it becomes man not to complain, but to act on it, and to endeavor, by the tender mercy of God, to turn it to his welfare here and hereafter. As by this organization, through Adam, he has been plunged into sin, so by the same organization, he shall, through “the second Adam,” rise to life, and ascend to the skies.

Verse 20

Moreover - But. What is said in this verse and the following, seems designed to meet the Jew, who might pretend that the Law of Moses was intended to meet the evils of sin introduced by Adam, and therefore that the scheme defended by the apostle was unnecessary. He therefore shows them that the effect of the Law of Moses was to increase rather than to diminish the sins which had been introduced into the world. And if such was the fact, it could not be pled that it was adapted to overcome the acknowledged evils of the apostasy.

The law - The Mosaic laws and institutions. The word seems to be used here to denote all the laws which were given in the Old Testament.

Entered - This word usually means to enter secretly or surreptitiously. But it appears to be used here simply in the sense that the Law came in, or was given. It came in addition to, or it supervened the state before Moses, when people were living without a revelation.

That sin … - The word "that" ἵνα hinain this place does not mean that it was the design of giving the Law that sin might abound or be increased, but that such was in fact the effect. It had this tendency, not to restrain or subdue sin, but to excite and increase it. That the word has this sense may be seen in the lexicons. The way in which the Law produces this effect is stated more fully by the apostle in Romans 7:7-11. The Law expresses the duty of man; it is spiritual and holy; it is opposed to the guilty passions and pleasures of the world; and it thus excites opposition, provokes to anger, and is the occasion by which sin is called into exercise, and shows itself in the heart. All law, where there is a disposition to do wrong, has this tendency. A command given to a child that is disposed to indulge his passions, only tends to excite anger and opposition. If the heart was holy, and there was a disposition to do right, law would have no such tendency. See this subject further illustrated in the notes at Romans 7:7-11.

The offence - The offence which had been introduced by Adam, that is, sin. Compare Romans 5:15.

Might abound - Might increase; that is, would be more apparent, more violent, more extensive. The introduction of the Mosaic Law, instead of diminishing the sins of people, only increases them.

But where sin abounded - Alike in all dispensations - before the Law, and under the Law. In all conditions of the human family before the gospel, it was the characteristic that sin was prevalent.

Grace - Favor; mercy.

Did much more abound - Superabounded. The word is used no where else in the New Testament, except in 2 Corinthians 7:4. It means that the pardoning mercy of the gospel greatly triumphed over sin, even over the sins of the Jews, though those sins were greatly aggravated by the light which they enjoyed under the advantages of divine revelation.

Verse 21

That as sin hath reigned - Note, Romans 5:14.

Unto death - Producing or causing death.

Even so - In like manner, also. The provisions of redemption are in themselves ample to meet all the ruins of the fall.

Might grace reign - Might mercy be triumphant; see John 1:17, "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Through righteousness - Through, or by means of, God's plan of justification; Note, Romans 1:17.

Unto eternal life - This stands opposed to "death" in the former part of the verse, and shows that there the apostle had reference to eternal death. The result of God's plan of justification shall be to produce eternal life. The triumphs of the gospel here celebrated cannot refer to the number of the subjects, for it has not actually freed all people from the dominion of sin. But the apostle refers to the fact that the gospel is able to overcome sin of the most malignant form, of the most aggravated character, of the longest duration. Sin in all dispensations and states of things can be thus overcome; and the gospel is more than sufficient to meet all the evils of the apostasy, and to raise up the race to heaven.

This chapter is a most precious portion of divine revelation. It brings into view the amazing evils which have resulted from the apostasy. The apostle does not attempt to deny or palliate those evils; he admits them fully; admits them in their deepest, widest, most melancholy extent; just as the physician admits the extent and ravages of the disease which he hopes to cure. At the same time, Christianity is not responsible for those evils. It did not introduce them. It finds them in existence, as a matter of sober and melancholy fact, pertaining to all the race. Christianity is no more answerable for the introduction and extent of sin, than the science of medicine is responsible for the introduction and extent of disease. Like that science, it finds a state of wide-spread evils in existence; and like that science, it is strictly a remedial system. And whether true or false, still the

evils of sin exist, just as the evils of disease exist, whether the science of medicine be wellfounded or not.

Nor does it make any difference in the existence of these evils, whether Christianity be true or false. If the Bible could be proved to be an imposition, it would not prove that people are not sinners. If the whole work of Christ could be shown to be imposture, still it would annihilate no sin, nor would it prove that man has not fallen. The fact would still remain - a fact certainly quite as universal, and quite as melancholy, as it is under the admitted truth of the Christian revelation - and a fact which the infidel is just as much concerned to account for as is the Christian. Christianity proposes a remedy; and it is permitted to the Christian to rejoice that that remedy is ample to meet all the evils; that it is just suited to recover our alienated world; and that it is destined yet to raise the race up to life, and peace, and heaven. In the provisions of that scheme we may and should triumph; and on the same principle as we may rejoice in the triumph of medicine over disease, so may we triumph in the ascendancy of the Christian plan over all the evils of the fall And while Christians thus rejoice, the infidel, the deist, the pagan, and the scoffer shall contend with these evils which their systems cannot alleviate or remove, and sink under the chilly reign of sin and death; just as people pant, and struggle, and expire under the visitations of disease, because they will not apply the proper remedies of medicine, but choose rather to leave themselves to its unchecked ravages, or to use all the nostrums of quackery in a vain attempt to arrest evils which are coming upon them.

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Introduction

The argument commenced in this chapter is continued through the two following. The general design is the same - "to show that the scheme of justification which God had adopted does not lead people to sin, but on the contrary to holiness." This is introduced by answering an objection, Romans 6:1. The apostle pursues this subject by various arguments and illustrations, all tending to show that the design and bearing of the scheme of justification was to produce the hatred of sin, and the love and practice of holiness. In this chapter, the argument is mainly drawn from the following sources:

(1) From the baptism of Christians, by which they have professed to be dead to sin, and to be bound to live to God, Romans 6:2-13.

(2) from the fact that they were now the servants of God, and under obligation, by the laws of servitude, to obey him, Romans 6:15-20.

(3) from their former experience of the evil of sin, from its tendency to produce misery and death, and from the fact that by the gospel they had been made ashamed of those things, and had now given themselves to the pure service of God. By these various considerations, he repels the charge that the tendency of the doctrine was to produce licentiousness, but affirms that it was a system of purity and peace. The argument is continued in the two following chapters, showing still further the purifying tendency of the gospel.

Verse 1

What shall we say then? - This is a mode of presenting an objection. The objection refers to what the apostle had said in Romans 5:20. What shall we say to such a sentiment as that where sin abounded grace did much more abound?

Shall we continue in sin? … - If sin has been the occasion of grace and favor, ought we not to continue in it, and commit as much as possible, in order that grace might abound? This objection the apostle proceeds to answer. He shows that the consequence does not follow; and proves that the doctrine of justification does not lead to it.

Verse 2

God forbid - By no means. Greek, It may not be; Note, Romans 3:4. The expression is a strong denial of what is implied in the objection in Romans 6:1.

How shall we? … - This contains a reason of the implied statement of the apostle, that we should not continue in sin. The reason is drawn from the fact that we are dead in fact to sin. It is impossible for these who are dead to act as if they were alive. It is just as absurd to suppose that a Christian should desire to live in sin as that a dead man should put forth the actions of life.

That are dead to sin - That is, all Christians. To be dead to a thing is a strong expression denoting that it has no influence over us. A man that is dead is uninfluenced and unaffected by the affairs of this life. He is insensible to sounds, and tastes, and pleasures; to the hum of business, to the voice of friendship, and to all the scenes of commerce, gaiety, and ambition. When it is said, therefore, that a Christian is dead to sin, the sense is, that it has lost its influence ever him; he is not subject to it; he is in regard to that, as the man in the grave is to the busy scenes and cares of this life. The expression is not infrequent in the New Testament; Galatians 2:19, "For I … am dead to the law;" Colossians 3:3, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God;" 1 Peter 2:24, "Who … bare our sins … that we, being dead to sin," etc. The apostle does not here attempt to prove that Christians are thus dead, nor to state in what way they become so. He assumes the fact without argument. All Christians are thus in fact dead to sin. They do not live to sin; nor has sin dominion over them. The expression used here by the apostle is common in all languages. We familiarly speak of a man's being dead to sensual pleasures, to ambition, etc., to denote that they have lost their influence over him.

Live any longer therein - How shall we, who have become sensible of the evil of sin, and who have renounced it by solemn profession, continue to practice it? It is therefore abhorrent to the very nature of the Christian profession. It is remarkable that the apostle did not attempt to argue the question on metaphysical principles. He did not attempt to show by abstruse argument that this consequence did not follow; but he appeals at once to Christian feeling, and shows that the supposition is abhorrent to that. To convince the great mass of people, such an appeal is far better than labored metaphysical argumentation. All Christians can understand that; but few

would comprehend an abstruse speculation. The best way to silence objections is, sometimes, to show that they violate the feelings of all Christians, and that therefore the objection must be wrong.

(Considerable difficulty exists in regard to the meaning of the expression "dead to sin? Certainly the most obvious interpretation is that given above in the Commentary, namely, that Christians are insensible to sin, as dead persons to the charms and pleasures of life. It has, however, been objected to this view, that it is inconsistent with fact, since Christians, so far from being insensible to sin, are represented in the next chapter as carrying on a perpetual struggle with it. The corrupt nature, though weakened, is not eradicated, and too frequently occasions such mournful falls, as leave little doubt concerning its existence and power. Mr. Scott seems to have felt this difficulty, for, having explained the phrase of "separation from iniquity, as a dead man ceases from the actions of life," he immediately adds, "not only ought this to be the believer's character, but in a measure it actually is so." It is not probable. however, that the apostle meant by the strong expression under discussion, that believers were not altogether "dead to sin," but only in a measure.

Perhaps we shall arrive at a more satisfactory meaning of the words by looking at the analogous expression in the context, used in reference to Christ himself. He also, in the 10th verse, is said to have "died unto sin," and the believer, in virtue of union with Christ, is regarded as" dead with him," Romans 6:8; and, in consequence of this death with Christ, is moreover freed, or rather justified, δεδίκαιωται dedikaiōtaifrom sin, Romans 6:7. Now it cannot be said of Christ that he died unto sin, in the sense of becoming dead to its charms. for it was never otherwise with him. The believer, therefore, cannot be dead with Christ in this way; nor on this ground, can he be justified from sin, since justification proceeds upon something very different from our insensibility to sinful pleasures. What then is the meaning of the language when applied to Christ? Sin is here supposed to be possessed of certain power. That power or strength the apostle tells us elsewhere is derived from the Law. "The strength of sin is the law," which demands satisfaction to its injured honor, and insists on the infliction of its penalty. Though then Jesus had no sin of his own, yet when he voluntarily stood in the room of sinners, sin, or its strength, namely, the Law, had power over him, until he died, and thus paid the penalty. His death

cancelled every obligation. Henceforth, sin had no more power to exact anything at his hands.

Now Christians are one with Christ. When he died unto sin, they are regarded as having died unto it also, and are therefore, equally with their covenant head, justified from it. Sin, or its strength, the Law, has from the moment of the saint‘s union with Christ, no more power to condemn him, than human laws have to condemn one over again who had already died to answer the demands of justice. “The law has dominion over a man so long only as he liveth.” On the whole, then, the expression “dead to sin,” is to be regarded as entirely parallel with that other expression in the seventh chapter, “dead to the law,” that is, completely delivered from its authority as a covenant of works, and more especially from its power to condemn.

This view exercises a decided influence an the believer‘s sanctification. “How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” The two things are incompatible. If in virtue of union with Christ, we are dead with him, and freed from the penalty of sin, shall not the same union secure our deliverance from its dominion? “If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.”

The whole argument, from the 1st to the 11th verse, proceeds upon the fact of the saint‘s union with Christ.)

Verse 3

Know ye not - This is a further appeal to the Christian profession, and the principles involved in it, in answer to the objection. The simple argument in this verse and the two following is, that by our very profession made in baptism, we have renounced sin, and have pledged ourselves to live to God.

So many of us … - All who were baptized; that is, all professed Christians. As this renunciation of sin had been thus made by all who professed religion, so the objection could not have reference to Christianity in any manner.

Were baptized - The act of baptism denotes dedication to the service of him in whose name we are baptized. One of its designs is to dedicate or consecrate us to the service of Christ: Thus 1 Corinthians 10:2, the Israelites

are said to have been "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;" that is, they became consecrated, or dedicated, or bound to him as their leader and lawgiver. In the place before us, the argument of the apostle is evidently drawn from the supposition that we have been solemnly consecrated by baptism to the service of Christ; and that to sin is therefore a violation of the very nature of our Christian profession.

Into - εἰς eisThis is the word which is used in Matthew 28:19, "Teach all nations, baptizing them into εἰς eisthe name of the Father," etc. It means, being baptized unto his service; receiving him as the Saviour and guide, devoting all unto him and his cause.

Were baptized unto his death - We were baptized with special reference to his death. Our baptism had a strong resemblance to his death. By that he became insensible to the things of the world; by baptism we in like manner become dead to sin. Further, we are baptized with particular reference to the design of his death, the great leading feature and purpose of his work. That was, to expiate sin; to free people from its power; to make them pure. We have professed our devotion to the same cause; and have solemnly consecrated ourselves to the same design - to put a period to the dominion of iniquity.

Verse 4

Therefore we are buried … - It is altogether probable that the apostle in this place had allusion to the custom of baptizing by immersion. This cannot, indeed, be proved, so as to be liable to no objection; but I presume that this is the idea which would strike the great mass of unprejudiced readers. But while this is admitted, it is also certain that his main scope and intention was not to describe the mode of baptism; nor to affirm that that mode was to be universal. The design was very different. It was to show that by the solemn profession made at our baptism, we had become dead to sin, as Christ was dead to the living world around him when he was buried; and that as he was raised up to life, so we should also rise to a new life. A similar expression occurs in Colossians 2:12, "Buried with him in baptism," etc. See the Editors' Notes at Matthew 3:6, Matthew 3:16.

Into death - εἰς eisUnto death; that is, with a solemn purpose to be dead to sin and to the world. Grotius and Doddridge, however, understand this as referring to the death of Christ - in order to represent the death of Christ - or to bring us into a kind of fellowship with his death.

That like as - In a similar manner. Christ rose from death in the sepulchre; and so we are bound by our vows at baptism to rise to a holy life.

By the glory of the Father - Perhaps this means, amidst the glory, the majesty and wonders evinced by the Father when he raised him up; Matthew 28:2-3. Or possibly the word "glory" is used here to denote simply his power, as the resurrection was a signal and glorious display of his omnipotence.

Even so - As he rose to new life, so should we. As he rose from death, so we, being made dead to sin and the world by that religion whose profession is expressed by baptism, should rise to a new life, a life of holiness.

Should walk - Should live, or conduct. The word "walk" is often used to express the course of a man's life, or the tenor of his conduct; Romans 4:12; Romans 8:1 notes; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Corinthians 10:3 notes; Ephesians 2:10; Ephesians 4:1 notes, etc.

In newness of life - This is a Hebraism to denote new life. We should rise with Christ to a new life; and having been made dead to sin, as he was dead in the grave, so should we rise to a holy life, as he rose from the grave. The argument in this verse is, therefore, drawn from the nature of the Christian profession. By our very baptism, by our very profession, we have become dead to sin, as Christ became dead; and being devoted to him by that baptism, we are bound to rise, as he did, to a new life.

While it is admitted that the allusion here was probably to the custom of immersion in baptism, yet the passage cannot be adduced as an argument that that is the only mode, or that it is binding on all Christians in all places and ages, for the following reasons:

(1) The scope or design of the apostle is not to discuss the mode of baptism, Or to state any doctrine on the subject. It is an incidental allusion in the course of an argument, without stating or implying that this was the universal mode even then, still less that it was the only possible mode. His main design was to state the obligation of Christians to be holy, from the nature of their profession at baptism - an obligation just as impressive, and as forcible, from the application of water in any other mode as by immersion. It arises from the fact of baptism, not from the mode. It is just as true that they who are baptized by affusion, or by sprinkling, are baptised into his death; become professedly dead to sin and the world, and under

obligations to live to God, as those who are immersed. It results from the nature of the ordinance, not from the mode.

(2) if this was the mode commonly, it does not follow that it was the only mode, nor that it was to be universally observed; There is no command that this should be the only mode. And the simple fact that it was usually practiced in a warm climate, where ablutions were common, does not prove that it is to be observed amidst polar snows and ice, and in infancy, and age, and feebleness, and sickness; see the note at Acts 8:38-39.

(3) if this is to be pressed literally as a matter of obligation, why should not also the following expression, "If we have been planted together," etc., be pressed literally, and it be demanded that Christians should somehow be "planted" as well as "buried?" Such an interpretation only shows the absurdity of insisting on a literal interpretation of the Scriptures in cases of simple allusion, or where the main scope is illustration by figurative language.

Verse 5

For if we have been planted together - The word used here σύμφυτος sumphutosdoes not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It properly means sown or planted at the same time; what sprouts or springs up together; and is applied to plants and trees that are planted at the same time, and that sprout and grow together. Thus, the name would be given to a field of grain that was sown at the same time, and where the grain sprung up and grew simultaneously. Hence, it means intimately connected, or joined together. And here it denotes that Christians and the Saviour have been united intimately in regard to death; as he died and was laid in the grave, so have they by profession died to sin. And it is therefore natural to expect, that, like grain sown at the same time, they should grow up in a similar manner, and resemble each other.

We shall be also - We shall be also fellow-plants; that is, we shall resemble him in regard to the resurrection. As he rose from the grave, so shall we rise from sin. As he lived a new life, being raised up, so shall we live a new life. The propriety of this figure is drawn from the doctrine often referred to in the New Testament, of a union between Christ and his people. See this explained in the notes at John 15:1-10. The sentiment here inferred

is but an illustration of what was said by the Saviour John 14:19, "Because I live, ye shall live also." There is perhaps not to be found a more beautiful illustration than that employed here by the apostle of seed sown together in the earth, sprouting together, growing together, and ripening together for the harvest. Thus, the Saviour and his people are united together in his death, start up to life together in his resurrection, and are preparing together for the same harvest of glory in the heavens.

In the likeness of his resurrection - This does not mean that we shall resemble him when we are raised up at the last day - which may be, however, true - but that our rising from sin will resemble his resurrection from the grave. As he rose from the tomb and lived, so shall we rise from sin and live a new life.

Verse 6

Knowing this - We all knowing this. All Christians are supposed to know this. This is a new illustration drawn from the fact that by his crucifixion our corrupt nature has been crucified also, or put to death; and that thus we should be free from the servitude of sin.

Our old man - This expression occurs also in Ephesians 4:22, "That ye put off … the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Colossians 3:9, "lie not to one another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." From these passages it is evident that Paul uses the expression to denote our sinful and corrupt nature; the passions and evil propensities that exist before the heart is renewed. It refers to the love of sin, the indulgence of sinful propensities, in opposition to the new disposition which exists after the soul is converted, and which is called "the new man."

Is crucified - Is put to death, as if on a cross. In this expression there is a personification of the corrupt propensities of our nature represented as "our old man," our native disposition, etc. The figure is here carried out, and this old man, this corrupt nature, is represented as having been put to death in an agonizing and torturing manner. The pains of crucifixion were perhaps the most torturing of any that the human frame could bear. Death in this manner was most lingering and distressing. And the apostle here by the expression "is crucified" doubtless refers to the painful and protracted struggle which everyone goes through when his evil propensities are subdued; when his corrupt nature is slain; and when, a converted sinner, he gives himself up to God. Sin dies within him, and he becomes dead to the

world, and to sin; "for as by the cross death is most lingering and severe, so that corrupt nature is not subdued but by anguish." (Grotius.) All who have been born again can enter into this description. They remember "the wormwood and the gall." They remember the anguish of conviction; the struggle of corrupt passion for the ascendency; the dying convulsions of sin in the heart; the long and lingering conflict before it was subdued, and the soul became submissive to God. Nothing will better express this than the lingering agony of crucifixion: and the argument of the apostle is, that as sin has produced such an effect, and as the Christian is now free from its embrace and its power, he will live to God.

With him - The word "with" σύν sunhere is joined to the verb "is crucified" and means "is crucified as he was."

That the body of sin - This expression doubtless means the same as that which he had just used, "our old man," But why the term "body" is used, has been a subject in which interpreters have not been agreed. Some say that it is a Hebraism, denoting mere intensity or emphasis. Some that it means the same as flesh, that is, denoting our sinful propensities and lusts. Grotius thinks that the term "body" is elegantly attributed to sin, because the body of man is made up of many members joined together compactly, and sin also consists of numerous vices and evil propensities joined compactly, as it were, in one body. But the expression is evidently merely another form of conveying the idea contained in the phrase "our old man" - a personification of sin as if it had a living form, and as if it had been put to death on a cross. It refers to the moral destruction of the power of sin in the heart by the gospel, and not to any physical change in the nature or faculties of the soul; compare Colossians 2:11.

Might be destroyed - Might be put to death; might become inoperative and powerless. Sin becomes enervated, weakened, and finally annihilated, by the work of the Cross.

We should not serve - Should not be the slave of sin δουλεύειν douleueinThat we should not be subject to its control. The sense is, that before this we were slaves of sin (compare Romans 6:17,) but that now we are made free from this bondage, because the moral death of sin has freed us from it.

Sin - Sin is here personified as a master that had dominion over us, but is now dead.

Verse 7

For he that is dead - This is evidently an expression having a proverbial aspect, designed to illustrate the sentiment just expressed. The Rabbis had an expression similar to this, "When one is dead he is free from commands." (Grotius.) So says Paul, when a man dies he is exempt from the power and dominion of his master, of him who reigned over him. The Christian had been subject to sin before his conversion. But he has now become dead to it. And as when a servant dies, he ceases to be subject to the control of his master, so the Christian being now dead to sin, on the same principle, is released from the control of his former master, sin. The idea is connected with Romans 6:6, where it is said that we should not be the slaves of sin any more. The reason of this is assigned here, where it is said that we are freed from it as a slave is freed when he dies. Of course, the apostle here is saying nothing of the future world. His whole argument has respect to the state of the Christian here; to his being freed from the bondage of sin. It is evident that he who is not freed from this bondage here, will not be in the future world. But the argument of the apostle has no bearing on that point.

Is freed - Greek, Is justified. The word here is used clearly in the sense of setting at liberty, or destroying the power or dominion. The word is often used in this sense; compare Acts 13:38-39; compare a similar expression in 1 Peter 4:1, "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." The design of the apostle is not to say that the Christian is perfect, but that sin has ceased to have dominion over him, as a master ceases to have power over a slave when he is dead. That dominion may be broken, so that the Christian may not be a slave to sin, and yet he may be conscious of many failings and of much imperfection; see Romans 7.

Verses 8-11

This passage is a confirmation and illustration of what the apostle had said before, Romans 6:5-7. The argument is, that as Christ was once dead but now lives to God, and will no more die, so we, being dead to sin, but living unto God, should not obey sin, but should live only to God.

Romans 6:8

Now if we be dead with Christ - If we be dead in a manner similar to what he was; if we are made dead to sin by his work, as he was dead in the grave; see the note at Romans 6:4.

We believe - All Christians. It is an article of our faith. This does not refer to the future world so much as to the present. It becomes an article of

our belief that we are to live with Christ.

That we shall also live with him - This does not refer primarily to the resurrection, and to the future state, but to the present. "We hold it as an article of our faith, that we shall be alive with Christ." As he was raised up from death, so we shall be raised from the death of sin. As he lives, so we shall live in holiness. We are in fact raised up here, and, as it were, made alive to him. This is not confined, however, to the present life, but as Christ lives forever, so the apostle goes on to show that we shall.

Romans 6:9

Knowing - As we all know. This is assumed as an undoubted article of belief.

Dieth no more - Will never die again. He will have occasion to make no other atonement for sin; for what he has made is sufficient for all. He is beyond the dominion of death, and will live forever, Revelation 1:18, "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore." This is not only a consolation to the Christian, but it is an argument why he should be holy.

No more dominion - No rule; no lordship; no power. He is free from its influence; and the king of terrors cannot reach his throne; compare Hebrews 9:25-28; Hebrews 10:12.

Romans 6:10

For in that he died - For in respect to the design of his death.

He died unto sin - His death had respect to sin. The design of his death was to destroy sin; to make an atonement for it, and thus to put it away. As his death was designed to effect this, so it follows that Christians being baptized into his death, and having it as their object to destroy sin, should not indulge in it. The whole force of the motive; therefore, drawn from the death of Christ, is to induce Christians to forsake sin; compare 2 Corinthians 5:15, "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth, live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again."

Once - ἐφάπαξ ephapaxOnce only; once for all. This is an adverb denying a repetition (Schleusner), and implies that it will not be done again; compare Hebrews 7:27; Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 10:10. The argument of the apostle rests much on this, that his death was once for all; that it would not be repeated.

In that he liveth - The object, the design of his living. He aims with his living power to promote the glory of God.

Unto God - He seeks to promote his glory. The argument of Paul is this: Christians by their profession are united to him. They are bound to imitate him. As he now lives only to advance the glory of God; as all his mighty power, now that he is raised from the dead, and elevated to his throne in heaven, is exerted to promote his glory; so should their powers, being raised from the death of sin, be exerted to promote the glory of God.

Romans 6:11

Likewise - In like manner. This is an exhortation drawn from the argument in the previous verses. It shows the design and tendency of the Christian scheme.

Reckon ye yourselves - Judge, or esteem yourselves.

To be dead indeed unto sin - So that sin shall have no influence or control ever you, any more than the objects of this world have ever the dead in their graves; see the note at Romans 6:2.

But alive unto God - Bound to live to promote his glory; to make this the great and sole object of your living.

Through Jesus Christ - By means of the death, and resurrection, and example of Jesus Christ. The apostle regards all our disposition to live to God as resulting from the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 12

Let not sin therefore - This is a conclusion drawn from the previous train of reasoning. The result of all these considerations is, that sin should not be suffered to reign in us.

Reign - Have dominion; obtain the ascendency, or rule.

In your mortal body - In you. The apostle uses the word "mortal" here, perhaps, for these reasons,

(1)To remind them of the tendency of the flesh to sin and corruption, as equivalent to "fleshly," since the flesh is often used to denote evil passions and desires (compare Romans 7:5, Romans 7:23; Romans 8:3, Romans 8:6); and,

(2)To remind them of their weakness, as the body was mortal, was soon to decay, and was therefore liable to be overcome by temptation. Perhaps, also, he had his eye on the folly of suffering the "mortal body" to overcome the immortal mind, and to bring it into subjection to sin and corruption.

That ye should obey it - That sin should get such an ascendency as to rule entirely over you, and make you the slave.

In the lusts thereof - In its desires, or propensities.

Verse 13

Neither yield ye your members - Do not give up, or devote, or employ your members, etc. The word "members" here refers to the members of the body - the hands, feet, tongue, etc. It is a specification of what in Romans 6:12 is included under the general term "body;" see Romans 7:5, Romans 7:23; 1 Corinthians 6:15; 1 Corinthians 12:12, 1 Corinthians 12:18, 1 Corinthians 12:20.

As instruments - This word ὁπλα hoplaproperly signifies "arms;" or implements of war; but it also denotes an instrument of any kind which we use for defense or aid. Here it means that we should not devote our members - our hands, tongue, etc., as if under the direction of sinful passions and corrupt desires, to accomplish purposes of iniquity. We should not make the members of our bodies the slaves of sin reigning within us.

Unto sin - In the service of sin; to work iniquity.

But yield yourselves … - Give or devote yourselves to God.

That are alive - Romans 6:11.

And your members … - Christians should devote every member of the body to God and to his service. Their tongue should be consecrated to his praise, and to the office of truth, and kindness, and benevolence; their hands should be employed in useful labor for him and his cause; their feet should be swift in his service, and should not go in the paths of iniquity; their eyes should contemplate his works to excite thanksgiving and praise; their ears should not be employed to listen to words of deceit, or songs of dangerous and licentious tendency, or to persuasion that would lead astray, but should be open to catch the voice of God as he utters his will in the Book of truth, or as he speaks in the gale, the zephyr, the rolling thunder, the ocean, or in the great events of his providence. He speaks to us every day, and we should hear him; he spreads his glories before us, and we should survey them to praise him; he commands, and our hands, and heart, and feet should obey.

Verse 14

For sin … - The propensity or inclination to sin.

Shall not have dominion - Shall not reign, Romans 5:12; Romans 6:6. This implies that sin ought not to have this dominion; and it also expresses

the conviction of the apostle that it would not have this rule over Christians.

For we are not under law - We who are Christians are not subject to that law where sin is excited, and where it rages unsubdued. But it may be asked here, What is meant by this declaration? Does it mean that Christians are absolved from all the obligations of the law? I answer,

(1)The apostle does not affirm that Christians are not bound to obey the moral law. The whole scope of his reasoning shows that he maintains that they are. The whole structure of Christianity supposes the same thing; compare Matthew 5:17-19.

(2)the apostle means to say that Christians are not under the law as legalists, or as attempting to be justified by it. They seek a different plan of justification altogether: and they do not attempt to be justified by their own obedience. The Jews did; they do not.

(3)it is implied here that the effect of an attempt to be justified by the Law was not to subdue sins, but to excite them and to lead to indulgence in them.

Justification by works would destroy no sin, would check no evil propensity, but would leave a man to all the ravages and riotings of unsubdued passion. If, therefore, the apostle had maintained that people were justified by works, he could not have consistently exhorted them to abandon their sins. He would have had no powerful motives by which to urge it; for the scheme would not lead to it. But he here says that the Christian was seeking justification on a plan which contemplated and which accomplished the destruction of sin; and he therefore infers that sin should not have dominion over them.

But under grace - Under a scheme of mercy, the design and tendency of which is to subdue sin, and destroy it. In what way the system of grace removes and destroys sin, the apostle states in the following verses.

Verse 15

What then? shall we sin … - The apostle proceeds to notice an objection which might be suggested. "If Christians are not under the law, which forbids all sin, but are under grace, which pardons sin, will it not follow that they will feel themselves released from obligation to be holy? Will they not commit sin freely, since the system of grace is one which contemplates pardon, and which will lead them to believe that they may be forgiven to any extent?" This Consequence has been drawn by many

professing Christians; and it was well therefore, for the apostle to guard against it.

God forbid - Note, Romans 3:4.

Verse 16

Know ye not … - The objection noticed in Romans 6:15, the apostle answers by a reference to the known laws of servitude or slavery, Romans 6:16-20, and by showing that Christians, who had been the slaves of sin, have now become the servants of righteousness, and were therefore bound by the proper laws of servitude to obey their new master: as if he had said, "I assume that you know: you are acquainted with the laws of servitude; you know what is required in such cases." This would be known to all who had been either masters or slaves, or who had observed the usual laws and obligations of servitude.

To whom ye yield yourselves - To whom ye give up yourselves for servitude or obedience. The apostle here refers to voluntary servitude; but where this existed, the power of the master over the time and services of the servant was absolute. The argument of the apostle is, that Christians had become the voluntary servants of God, and were therefore bound to obey him entirely. Servitude among the ancients, whether voluntary or involuntary, was rigid, and gave the master an absolute right over his slave, Luke 17:9; John 8:34; John 15:15. To obey. To be obedient; or for the purpose of obeying his commands.

To whom ye obey - To whom ye come under subjection. That is, you are bound to obey his requirements.

Whether of sin - The general law of servitude the apostle now applies to the case before him. If people became the servants of sin, if they gave themselves to its indulgence, they would obey it, let the consequences be what they might. Even with death, and ruin, and condemnation before them; they would obey sin. They give indulgence to their evil passions and desires, and follow them as obedient servants even if they lead them down to hell. Whatever be the consequences of sin. yet he who yields to it must abide by them, even if it leads him down to death and eternal woe.

Or of obedience … - The same law exists in regard to holiness or obedience. The man who becomes the servant of holiness will feel himself bound by the law of servitude to obey, and to pursue it to its regular consequences.

Unto righteousness - Unto justification; that is, unto eternal life. The expression stands contrasted with "death," and doubtless means that he who thus becomes the voluntary servant of holiness, will feel himself bound to obey it, unto complete and eternal justification and life; compare Romans 6:21-22. The argument is drawn from what the Christian would feel of the nature of obligation. He would obey him to Whom he had devoted himself.

(This would seem to imply that justification is the effect of obedience. Δικαιοσυνη Dikaiosunēhowever, does not signify justification, but righteousness, that is, in this case, personal holiness. The sense is, that while the service of sin leads to death, that of obedience issues in holiness or righteousness. It is no objection to this view that it does not preserve the antithesis, since "justification" is not the opposite of "death," any more than holiness. "There is no need," says Mr. Haldane, "that there should be such an exact correspondence in the parts of the antithesis, as is supposed. And there is a most obvious reason why it could not be so. Death is the wages of sin, but life is not the wages of obedience.")

Verse 17

But God be thanked - The argument in this verse is drawn from a direct appeal to the feelings of the Roman Christians themselves. From their experience, Paul was able to draw a demonstration to his purpose, and this was with him a ground of gratitude to God.

That ye were … - The sense of this passage is plain. The ground Of the thanksgiving was not that they had been the slaves of sin; but it is, that notwithstanding this, or although they had been thus, yet that they were now obedient. To give thanks to God that people were sinners, would contradict the whole spirit of this argument, and of the Bible. But to give thanks that although people had been sinners, yet that now they had become obedient; that is, that great sinners had become converted, is in entire accordance with the spirit of the Bible, and with propriety. The word "although" or "whereas," understood here, expresses the sense, "But thanks unto God, that whereas ye were the servants of sin," etc. Christians should thank God that they themselves, though once great sinners, have become converted; and when others who are great sinners are converted, they should praise him.

The servants of sin - This is a strong expression implying that they had been in bondage to sin; that they had been completely its slaves.

From the heart - Not in external form only; but as a cordial, sincere, and entire service. No other obedience is genuine.

That form of doctrine - Greek, type; see the note at Romans 5:14. The form or type of doctrine means that shape or model of instruction which was communicated. It does not differ materially from the doctrine itself, "you have obeyed that doctrine," etc. You have yielded obedience to the instructions, the rules, the tenor of the Christian revelation. The word "doctrine" does not refer to an abstract dogma, but means instruction, that which is taught. And the meaning of the whole expression is simply, that they had yielded a cheerful and hearty obedience to what had been communicated to them by the teachers of the Christian religion; compare Romans 1:8.

Which was delivered you - Margin, "Whereto ye were delivered." This is a literal translation of the Greek; and the sense is simply in which you have been instructed.

Verse 18

"Being then made free from sin." That is, as a master. You are not under its dominion; you are no longer its slaves. They were made free, as a servant is who is set at liberty, and who is, therefore, no longer under obligation to obey.

Ye became the servants … - You became voluntarily under the dominion of righteousness; you yielded yourselves to it; and are therefore bound to be holy; compare the note at John 8:32.

Verse 19

I speak after the manner of men - I speak as people usually speak; or I draw an illustration from common life, in order to make myself better understood.

Because of the infirmity of your flesh - The word "infirmity" means weakness, feebleness; and is opposed to vigor and strength. The word "flesh" is used often to denote the corrupt passions of people; but it may refer here to their intellect, or understanding; "Because of your imperfection of spiritual knowledge; or incapacity to discern arguments and illustrations that would be more strictly spiritual in their character." This dimness or feebleness had been caused by long indulgence in sinful passions, and by the blinding influence which such passions have on the mind. The sense here is, "I use an illustration drawn from common affairs, from the well-known relations of master and slave, because you will better see the force

of such an illustration with which you have been familiar, than you would one that would be more abstract, and more strictly spiritual." It is a kind of apology for drawing an illustration from the relation of master and slave.

For as ye have yielded - Note, Romans 6:13. Servants to uncleanness. Have been in bondage to impurity. The word "uncleanness" here refers to impurity of life in any form; to the degraded passions that were common among the heathen; see Romans 1.

And to iniquity - Transgression of law.

Unto iniquity - For the purpose of committing iniquity. It implies that they had done it in an excessive degree. It is well for Christians to be reminded of their former lives, to awaken repentance, to excite gratitude, to produce humility and a firmer purpose to live to the honor of God. This is the use which the apostle here makes of it.

Unto holiness - In order to practice holiness. Let the surrender of your members to holiness be as sincere and as unqualified as the surrender was to sin. This is all that is required of Christians. Before conversion they were wholly given to sin; after conversion they should be wholly given to God. If all Christians would employ the same energies in advancing the kingdom of God that they have in promoting the kingdom, of Satan, the church would rise with dignity and grandeur, and every continent and island would soon feel the movement. No requirement is more reasonable than this; and it should be a source of lamentation and mourning with Christians that it is not so; that they have employed so mighty energies in the cause of Satan, and do so little in the service of God. This argument for energy in the divine life, the apostle proceeds further to illustrate by comparing the rewards obtained in the two kinds of servitude, that of the world, and of God.

Verse 20

Ye were free from righteousness - That is, in your former state, you were not at all under the influence of righteousness. You were entirely devoted to sin; a strong expression of total depravity. It settles the question; and proves that they had no native goodness. The argument which is implied here rather than expressed is, that now they ought to be equally free from sin, since they had become released from their former bondage, and had become the servants of another master.

Verse 21

What fruit, then … - What reward, or what advantage. This is an argument drawn from the experience of Christians respecting the

indulgence of sinful passions. The question discussed throughout this chapter is, whether the gospel plan of justification by faith leads to indulgence in sin? The argument here is drawn from the past experience which Christians have had in the ways of transgression. They have tried it; they know its effects; they have tasted its bitterness; they have reaped its fruits. It is implied here that having once experienced these effects, and knowing the tendency of sin, they will not indulge in it now; compare Romans 7:5.

Whereof ye are now ashamed - Having seen their nature and tendency, you are now ashamed of them; compare Ephesians 5:12, "For it is a shame to speak of those things which are done of them in secret," 2 Corinthians 4:2; Jude 1:13; Philemon 3:19.

For the end - The tendency; the result. Those things lead to death.

Is death - Note, Romans 6:22.

Verse 22

But now - Under the Christian plan of justification.

Being made free from sin - Being delivered from its dominion, and from bondage; in the same manner as before conversion they were free from righteousness, Romans 6:20.

Ye have your fruit unto holiness - The fruit or result is holiness. This service produces holiness, as the other did sin. It is implied here, though not expressly affirmed, that in this service which leads to holiness, they received important benefits, as in the service of sin they had experienced many evils.

And the end - The final result - the ultimate consequence will be. At present this service produces holiness; hereafter it will terminate in everlasting life. By this consideration the apostle states the tendency of the plan of justification, and urges on them the duty of striving after holiness.

Everlasting life - Note, John 3:36. This stands in contrast with the word "death" in Romans 6:21, and shows its meaning. "One is just as long in duration as the other;" and if the one is limited, the other is. If those who obey shall be blessed with life forever, those who disobey will be cursed with death forever. Never was there an antithesis more manifest and more clear. And there could not be a stronger proof that the word "death" in Romans 6:21, refers not to temporal death, but to eternal punishment. For what force would there be in the argument on the supposition that temporal death only is meant? The argument would stand thus: "The end of those

sins is to produce temporal death; the end of holiness is to produce eternal life!" Will not temporal death be inflicted, it would be immediately asked, at any rate? Are Christians exempt from it? And do not people suffer this, whether they become Christians or not? How then could this be an argument bearing on the tenor of the apostle's reasoning? But admit the fair and obvious construction of the passage to be the true one, and it becomes plain. They were pursuing a course tending to everlasting ruin; they are now in a path that shall terminate in eternal life. By this weighty consideration, therefore, they are urged to be holy.

Verse 23

For the wages of sin - The word translated here "wages" ὀψώνια opsōniaproperly denotes what is purchased to be eaten with bread, as fish, flesh, vegetables, etc. (Schleusner); and thence, it means the pay of the Roman soldier, because formerly it was the custom to pay the soldier in these things. It means hence, what a man earns or deserves; what is his proper pay, or what he merits. As applied to sin, it means that death is what sin deserves; what will be its proper reward. Death is thus called the wages of sin, not because it is an arbitrary, undeserved appointment, but

(1) Because it is its proper desert. Not a pain will be inflicted on the sinner which he does not deserve. Not a sinner will die who ought not to die. Sinners even in hell will be treated just as they deserve to be treated; and there is not to man a more fearful and terrible consideration than this. No man can conceive a more dreadful doom than for himself to be treated forever just as he deserves to be. But,

(2) This is the wages of sin, because, like the pay of the soldier, it is just what was threatened, Ezekiel 18:4, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." God will not inflict anything more than was threatened, and therefore it is just.

Is death - This stands opposed here to eternal life, and proves that one is just as enduring as the other.

But the gift of God - Not the wages of man; not what is due to him; but the mere gift and mercy of God. The apostle is careful to distinguish, and to specify thai this is not what man deserves, but what is gratuitously conferred on him; Note, Romans 6:15.

Eternal life - The same words which in Romans 6:22 are rendered "everlasting life." The phrase is opposed to death; and proves incontestably that that means eternal death. We may remark, therefore,

(1) That the one will be as long as the other.

(2) as there is no doubt about the duration of life, so there can be none about the duration of death. The one will be rich, blessed, everlasting; the other sad, gloomy, lingering, awful, eternal.

(3) if the sinner is lost, he will deserve to die. He will have his reward. He will suffer only what shall be the just due of sin. He will not be a martyr in the cause of injured innocence. He will not have the compassion of the universe in his favor. He will have no one to take his part against God. He will suffer just as much, and just as long, as he ought to suffer. He will suffer as the culprit pines in the dungeon, or as the murderer dies on the gibbet, because this is the proper reward of sin.

(4) they who are saved will be raised to heaven, not because they merit it, but by the rich and sovereign grace of God. All their salvation will be ascribed to him; and they will celebrate his mercy and grace forever.

(5) it becomes us, therefore, to flee from the wrath to come. No man is so foolish and so wicked as he who is willing to reap the proper wages of sin. None so blessed as he who has part in the mercy of God, and who lays hold on eternal life.

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Introduction

Few chapters in the bible have been the subject of more decidedly different interpretations than this. And after all that has been written on it by the learned, it is still made a matter of discussion, whether the apostle has reference in the main scope of the chapter to his own experience before he became a Christian; or to the conflicts in the mind of a man who is renewed. Which of these opinions is the correct one I shall endeavor to state in the notes at the particular verses in the chapter. The main design of the chapter is not very difficult to understand. It is, evidently, to show the insufficiency of the Law to produce peace of mind to a troubled sinner. In the previous chapters he had shown that it was incapable of producing justification, Romans 3:21-31; Romans 6:7-14.

I regard this chapter as not referring exclusively to Paul in a state of nature, or of grace. The discussion is conducted without particular reference to that point. It is rather designed to group together the actions of a man‘s life, whether in a state of conviction for sin, or in a state of grace, and to show that the effect of the Law is everywhere substantially the same. It equally fails everywhere in producing peace and sanctification. The argument of the Jew respecting the efficacy of the Law, and its sufficiency for the condition of man, is thus overthrown by a succession of proofs relating to justification, to pardon, to peace, to the evils of sin, and to the agitated and conflicting moral elements in man‘s bosom. The effect is everywhere the same. The deficiency is apparent in regard to all the great interests of man. And having shown this, the apostle and the reader are prepared for the language I of triumph and gratitude, that deliverance from all these evils is to be traced to the gospel of Jesus Christ the Lord; Romans 7:25; Romans 8.

Verse 1

Know ye not - This is an appeal to their own observation respecting the relation between husband and wife. The illustration Romans 7:2-3 is designed simply to show that as when a man dies, and the connection between him and his wife is dissolved, his Law ceases to be binding on her, so also a separation has taken place between Christians and the Law, in which they have become dead to it, and they are not now to attempt to draw

their life and peace from it, but from that new source with which they are connected by the gospel, Romans 7:4.

For I speak to them … - Probably the apostle refers here more particularly to the Jewish members of the Roman church, who were qualified particularly to understand the nature of the Law, and to appreciate the argument. That there were many Jews in the church at Rome has been shown (see Introduction); but the illustration has no exclusive reference to them. The Law to which he appeals is sufficiently general to make the illustration intelligible to all people.

That the law - The immediate reference here is probably to the Mosaic Law. But what is here affirmed is equally true of all laws.

Hath dominion - Greek, Rules; exercises lordship. The Law is here personified, and represented as setting up a lordship over a man, and exacting obedience.

Over a man - Over the man who is under it.

As long as he liveth - The Greek here may mean either "as he liveth," or" as it liveth," that is, the law. But our translation has evidently expressed the sense. The sense is, that death releases a man from the laws by which he was bound in life. It is a general principle, relating to the laws of the land, the law of a parent, the law of a contract, etc. This general principle the apostle proceeds to apply in regard to the Law of God.

Verse 2

For the woman - This verse is a specific illustration of the general principle in Romans 7:1, that death dissolves those connections and relations which make law binding in life. It is a simple illustration; and if this had been kept in mind, it would have saved much of the perplexity which has been felt by many commentators, and much of their wild vagaries in endeavoring to show that "men are the wife, the law of the former husband, and Christ the new one;" or that "the old man is the wife, sinful desires the husband, sins the children." Beza. (See Stuart.) Such expositions are sufficient to humble us, and to make us mourn over the puerile and fanciful interpretations which even wise and good people often give to the Bible.

Is bound by the law … - See the same sentiment in 1 Corinthians 7:39.

To her husband - She is united to him; and is under his authority as the head of the household. To him is particularly committed the headship of the

family, and the wife is subject to his law, in the Lord, Ephesians 5:23, Ephesians 5:33.

She is loosed … - The husband has no more authority. The connection from which obligation resulted is dissolved.

Verse 3

So then if … - compare Matthew 5:32.

She shall be called - She will be. The word used here χρηματίσει chrēmatiseiis often used to denote being called by an oracle or by divine revelation. But it is here employed in the simple sense of being commonly called, or of being so regarded.

Verse 4

Wherefore - This verse contains an application of the illustration in the two preceding. The idea there is, that death dissolves a connection from which obligation resulted. This is the single point of the illustration, and consequently there is no need of inquiring whether by the wife the apostle meant to denote the old man, or the Christian, etc. The meaning is, as death dissolves the connection between a wife and her husband, and of course the obligation of the law resulting from that connection, so the death of the Christian to the Law dissolves that connection, so far as the scope of the argument here is concerned, and prepares the way for another union, a union with Christ, from which a new and more efficient obligation results. The design is to show that the new connection would accomplish more important effects than the old.

Ye also are become dead to the law - Notes, Romans 6:3-4, Romans 6:8. The connection between us and the Law is dissolved, so far as the scope of the apostle‘s argument is concerned. He does not say that we are dead to it, or released from it as a rule of duty, or as a matter of obligation to obey it; for there neither is, nor can be, any such release, but we are dead to it as a way of justification and sanctification. In the great matter of acceptance with God, we have ceased to rely on the Law, having become dead to it, and having embraced another plan.

By the body of Christ - That is, by his body crucified; or in other words, by his death; compare Ephesians 2:15, “Having abolished in his flesh the enmity,” etc. that is, by his death. Colossians 1:22, “in the body of his flesh through death,” etc. Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24, “who bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” The sense, is, therefore, that by the death of Christ as an atoning sacrifice; by his suffering for us what would be

sufficient to meet the demands of the Law; by his taking our place, he has released us from the Law as a way of justification; freed us from its penalty; and saved us from its curse. Thus released, we are at liberty to be united to the law of him who has thus bought us with his blood.

That ye should be married to another - That you might be united to another, and come under his law. This is the completion of the illustration in Romans 7:2-3. As the woman that is freed from the law of her husband by his death, when married again comes under the authority of another, so we who are made free from the Law and its curse by the death of Christ, are brought under the new law of fidelity and obedience to him with whom we are thus united. The union of Christ and his people is not unfrequently illustrated by the most tender of all earthly connections, that of a husband and wife, Ephesians 5:23-30; Revelation 21:9. "I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife," Revelation 19:7.

Even to him who is raised … - See the force of this explained, Romans 6:8.

That we should bring forth fruit unto God - That we should live a holy life. This is the point and scope of all this illustration. The new connection is such as will make us holy. It is also implied that the tendency of the Law was only to bring forth fruit unto death Romans 7:5, and that the tendency of the gospel is to make man holy and pure; compare Galatians 5:22-23.

Verse 5

For when … - The illustration in this verse and the following is designed to show more at length the effect of the Law, whenever and whereever applied; whether in a state of nature or of grace. It was always the same. It was the occasion of agitation and conflict in a man's own mind. This was true when a sinner was under conviction; and it was true when a man was a Christian. In all circumstances where the Law was applied to the corrupt mind of man, it produced this agitation and conflict. Even in the Christian's mind it produced this agitation Romans 7:14-24, as it had done and would do in the mind of a sinner under conviction Romans 7:7-12, and consequently there was no hope of release but in the delivering and sanctifying power of the gospel Romans 7:25; Romans 8:1-3.

In the flesh - Unconverted; subject to the controlling passions and propensities of a corrupt nature; compare Romans 8:8-9. The connection shows that this must be the meaning here, and the design of this illustration

is to show the effect of the Law before a man is converted, Romans 7:5-12. This is the obvious meaning, and all the laws of interpretation require us so to understand it.

The motions of sins - (τα παθήματα ta pathēmataThis translation is unhappy. The expression "motions of sins" conveys no idea. The original means simply the passions, the evil affections, the corrupt desires; see the margin. The expression, passions of sins, is a Hebraism meaning sinful passions, and refers here to the corrupt propensities and inclinations of the unrenewed heart.

Which were by the law - Not that they were originated or created by the Law; for a law does not originate evil propensities, and a holy law would not cause sinful passions; but they were excited, called up, inflamed by the Law, which forbids their indulgence.

Did work in our members - In our body; that is, in us. Those sinful propensities made use of our members as instruments, to secure gratification; Note, Romans 6:12-13; compare Romans 6:23.

To bring forth fruit unto death - To produce crime, agitation, conflict, distress, and to lead to death. We were brought under the dominion of death; and the consequence of the indulgence of those passions would be fatal; compare the note at Romans 6:21.

Verse 6

But now - Under the gospel. This verse states the consequences of the gospel, in distinction from the effects of the Law. The way in which this is accomplished, the apostle illustrates more at length in Romans 7:5, of the effects of the Law; and after having shown that its effects always were to increase crime and distress, he is prepared in Romans 7:4.

Wherein we were held - That is, as captives, or as slaves. We were held in bondage to it; Romans 7:1.

That we should serve - That we may now serve or obey God.

In newness of spirit - In a new spirit; or in a new and spiritual manner. This is a form of expression implying,

(1)That their service under the gospel was to be of a new kind, differing from that under the former dispensation.

(2)that it was to be of a spiritual nature, as distinguished from that practiced by the Jews; compare 2 Corinthians 3:6; Note, Romans 2:28-29.

The worship required under the gospel is uniformly described as that of the spirit and the heart, rather than that of form and ceremony; John 4:23,

"The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; Philemon 3:3.

And not in the oldness of the letter - Not in the old letter. It is implied here in this,

(1)That the form of worship here described pertained to an old dispensation that had now passed away; and,

(2)That that was a worship that was in the letter.

To understand this, it is necessary to remember that the Law which prescribed the forms of worship among the Jews, was regarded by the apostle as destitute of that efficacy and power in renewing the heart which he attributed to the gospel. It was a service consisting in external forms and ceremonies; in the offering of sacrifices and of incense, according to the literal requirements of the Law rather than the sincere offering of the heart; 2 Corinthians 3:6, "The letter killeth; the spirit giveth life;" John 6:63; Hebrews 10:1-4; Hebrews 9:9-10. It is not to be denied that there were many holy persons under the Law, and that there were many spiritual offerings presented, but it is at the same time true that the great mass of the people rested in the mere form; and that the service offered was the mere service of the letter, and not of the heart. The main idea is, that the services under the gospel are purely and entirely spiritual, the offering of the heart, and not the service rendered by external forms and rites.

(But the contrast here is not between services required under the legal and gospel dispensations respectively, but between service yielded in the opposite states of nature and grace. In the former state, we are "under the law" though we live in gospel times, and in the latter, we are "delivered from the law" as a covenant of works, or of life, just as pious Jews might be though they lived under the dispensation of Moses. The design of God in delivering us from the Law, is, that we might "serve him in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter," that is, in such a spiritual way as the new state requires, and from such spiritual motives and aids as it furnishes; and not in the manner we were accustomed to do, under our old condition of subjection to the Law, in which we could yield only an external and forced obedience. "It is evident," says Prof. Hodge that the clause "in the oldness of the letter is substituted by the apostle, for ‹under the law‘ and ‹in the flesh;‘ all which he uses to describe the legal and corrupt condition of people, prior to the believing reception of the gospel.")

Verse 7

What shall we say then? - The objection which is here urged is one that would very naturally rise, and which we may suppose would be urged with no slight indignation. The Jew would ask, "Are we then to suppose that the holy Law of God is not only insufficient to sanctify us, but that it is the mere occasion of increased sin? Is its tendency to produce sinful passions, and to make people worse than they were before?" To this objection the apostle replies with great wisdom, by showing that the evil was not in the Law, but in man; that though these effects often followed, yet that the Law itself was good and pure.

Is the law sin? - Is it sinful? Is it evil? For if, as it is said in Romans 7:5, the sinful passions were "by the law," it might naturally be asked whether the Law itself was not an evil thing?

God forbid - Note, Romans 3:4.

Nay, I had not known sin - The word translated "nay" ἀλλὰ allameans more properly but; and this would have more correctly expressed the sense, "I deny that the Law is sin. My doctrine does not lead to that; nor do I affirm that it is evil. I strongly repel the charge; but, notwithstanding this, I still maintain that it had an effect in exciting sins, yet so as that I perceived that the Law itself was good;" Romans 7:8-12. At the same time, therefore, that the Law must be admitted to be the occasion of exciting sinful feelings, by crossing the inclinations of the mind, yet the fault was not to be traced to the Law. The apostle in these verses refers, doubtless, to the state of his mind before he found that peace which the gospel furnishes by the pardon of sins.

But by the law - Romans 3:20. By "the law" here, the apostle has evidently in his eye every law of God, however made known. He means to say that the effect which he describes attends all law, and this effect he illustrates by a single instance drawn from the Tenth Commandment. When he says that he should not have known sin, he evidently means to affirm, that he had not understood that certain things were sinful, unless they had been forbidden; and having stated this, he proceeds to another thing, to show the effect of their being thus forbidden on his mind. He was not merely acquainted abstractly with the nature and existence of sin, with what constituted crime because it was forbidden, but he was conscious of a certain effect on his mind resulting from this knowledge, and from the effect of strong, raging desires when thus restrained, Romans 7:8-9.

For I had not known lust - I should not have been acquainted with the nature of the sin of covetousness. The desire might have existed, but he would not have known it to be sinful, and he would not have experienced that raging, impetuous, and ungoverned propensity which he did when he found it to be forbidden. Man without law might have the strong feelings of desire He might covet what others possessed. He might take property, or be disobedient to parents; but he would not know it to be evil. The Law fixes bounds to his desires, and teaches him what is right and what is wrong. It teaches him where lawful indulgence ends, and where sin begins. The word "lust" here is not limited as it is with us. It refers to all covetous desires; to all wishes for what is forbidden us.

Except the law had said - In the tenth commandment; Exodus 20:17.

Thou shalt not covet - This is the beginning of the command, and all the rest is implied. The apostle knew that it would be understood without repeating the whole. This particular commandment he selected because it was more pertinent than the others to his purpose. The others referred particularly to external actions. But his object was to show the effect of sin on the mind and conscience. He therefore chose one that referred particularly to the desires of the heart.

Verse 8

But sin - To illustrate the effect of the Law on the mind, the apostle in this verse depicts its influence in exciting to evil desires and purposes. Perhaps no where has he evinced more consummate knowledge of the human heart than here. He brings an illustration that might have escaped most persons, but which goes directly to establish his position that the Law is insufficient to promote the salvation of man. Sin here is personified. It means not a real entity; not a physical subsistence; not something independent of the mind, having a separate existence, and lodged in the soul, but it means the corrupt passions, inclinations, and desires of the mind itself. Thus, we say that lust burns, and ambition rages, and envy corrodes the mind, without meaning that lust, ambition, or envy are any independent physical subsistences, but meaning that the mind that is ambitious, or envious, is thus excited.

Taking occasion - The word "occasion" ἀφορμὴν aphormēnproperly denotes any material, or preparation for accomplishing anything; then any opportunity, occasion, etc. of doing it. Here it means that the Law was the exciting cause of sin; or was what called the sinful principle of the heart

into exercise. But for this, the effect here described would not have existed. Thus, we say that a tempting object of desire presented is the exciting cause of covetousness. Thus, an object of ambition is the exciting cause of the principle of ambition. Thus, the presentation of wealth, or of advantages possessed by others which we have not, may excite covetousness or envy. Thus, the fruit presented to Eve was the exciting cause of sin; the wedge of gold to Achan excited his covetousness. Had not these objects been presented, the evil principles of the heart might have slumbered, and never have been called forth. And hence, no one understand the full force of their native propensities until some object is presented that calls them forth into decided action. The occasion which called these forth in the mind of Paul was the Law crossing his path, and irritating and exciting the native strong inclinations of the mind.

By the commandment - By all law appointed to restrain and control the mind.

Wrought in me - Produced or worked in me. The word used here means often to operate in a powerful and efficacious manner. (Doddridge.)

All manner of - Greek, "All desire." Every species of unlawful desire. It was not confined to one single desire, but extended to everything which the Law declared to be wrong.

Concupiscence - Unlawful or irregular desire. Inclination for unlawful enjoyments. The word is the same which in Romans 7:7 is rendered "lust." If it be asked in what way the Law led to this, we may reply, that the main idea here is, that opposition by law to the desires and passions of wicked men only tends to inflame and exasperate them. This is the case with regard to sin in every form. An attempt to restrain it by force; to denounce it by laws and penalties; to cross the path of wickedness; only tends to irritate, and to excite into living energy, what otherwise would be dormant in the bosom. This it does, because,

(1) It crosses the path of the sinner, and opposes his intention, and the current of his feelings and his life.

(2) the Law acts the part of a detector, and lays open to view that which was in the bosom, but was concealed.

(3) such is the depth and obstinacy of sin in man, that the very attempt to restrain often only serves to exasperate, and to urge to greater deeds of

wickedness. Restraint by law rouses the mad passions; urges to greater deeds of depravity; makes the sinner stubborn, obstinate, and more desperate. The very attempt to set up authority over him throws him into a posture of resistance, and makes him a party, and excites all the feelings of party rage. Anyone may have witnessed this effect often on the mind of a wicked and obstinate child.

(4) this is particularly true in regard to a sinner. He is calm often, and apparently tranquil. But let the Law of God be brought home to his conscience, and he becomes maddened and enraged. He spurns its authority, yet his conscience tells him it is right; he attempts to throw it off, yet trembles at its power; and to show his independence, or his purpose to sin, he plunges into iniquity, and becomes a more dreadful and obstinate sinner. It becomes a struggle for victory; in the controversy with God he re solves not to be overcome. It accordingly happens that many a man is more profane, blasphemous, and desperate when under conviction for sin than at other times. In revivals of religion it often happens that people evince violence, and rage, and cursing, which they do not in a state of spiritual death in the church; and it is often a very certain indication that a man is under conviction for sin when he becomes particularly violent, and abusive, and outrageous in his opposition to God.

(5) the effect here noticed by the apostle is one that has been observed at all times, and by all classes of writers. Thus, Cato says (Livy, xxxiv. 4,) "Do not think, Romans, that it will be hereafter as it was before the Law was enacted. It is more safe that a bad man should not be accused, than that he should be absolved; and luxury not excited would be more tolerable than it will be now by the very chains irritated and excited as a wild beast." Thus, Seneca says (de Clementia, i. 23,) "Parricides began with the law." Thus, Horace (*Odes*, i. 3,) "The human race, bold to endure all things, rushes through forbidden crime." Thus, Ovid (*Amor*. iii. 4,) "We always endeavour to obtain what is forbidden, and desire what is denied." (These passages are quoted from Tholuck.) See also Proverbs 9:17, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." If such be the effect of the Law, then the inference of the apostle is unavoidable, that it is not adapted to save and sanctify man.

For without the law - Before it was given; or where it was not applied to the mind.

Sin was dead - It was inoperative, inactive, unexcited. This is evidently in a comparative sense. The connection requires us to under stand it only so far as it was excited by the Law. People‘s passions would exist; but without law they would not be known to be evil, and they would not be excited into wild and tumultuous raging.

Verse 9

For I - There seems to be no doubt that the apostle here refers to his own past experience. Yet in this he speaks the sentiment of all who are unconverted, and who are depending on their own righteousness.

Was alive - This is opposed to what he immediately adds respecting another state, in which he was when he died. It must mean, therefore, that he had a certain kind of peace; he deemed himself secure; he was free from the convictions of conscience and the agitations of alarm. The state to which he refers here must be doubtless that to which he himself alludes elsewhere, when he deemed himself to be righteous, depending on his own works, and esteeming himself to be blameless, Philemon 3:4-6; Acts 23:1; Acts 26:4-5. It means that he was then free from those agitations and alarms which he afterward experienced when he was brought under conviction for sin. At that time, though he had the Law, and was attempting to obey it, yet he was unacquainted with its spiritual and holy nature. He aimed at external conformity. Its claims on the heart were unfelt. This is the condition of every self-confident sinner, and of everyone who is unawakened.

Without the law - Not that Paul was ever really without the Law, that is, without the Law of Moses; but he means before the Law was applied to his heart in its spiritual meaning, and with power.

But when the commandment came - When it was applied to the heart and conscience. This is the only intelligible sense of the expression; for it cannot refer to the time when the Law was given. When this was, the apostle does not say. But the expression denotes whenever it was so applied; when it was urged with power and efficacy on his conscience, to control, restrain, and threaten him, it produced this effect. We are unacquainted with the early operations of his mind, and with his struggles against conscience and duty. We know enough of him before conversion, however, to be assured that he was proud, impetuous, and unwilling to be restrained; see Romans 7:8, but was now quickened into new life. The word

is usually applied to a renewal of life, Romans 14:19; Luke 15:24, Luke 15:32, but here it means substantially the same as the expression in Romans 7:8, "Sin … wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." The power of sin, which was before dormant, became quickened and active.

I died - That is, I was by it involved in additional guilt and misery. It stands opposed to "I was alive," and must mean the opposite of that; and evidently denotes that the effect of the commandment was to bring him under what he calls death, (compare Romans 5:12, Romans 5:14-15;) that is, sin reigned, and raged, and produced its withering and condemning effects; it led to aggravated guilt and misery. It may also include this idea, that before, he was self-confident and secure, but that by the commandment he was stricken down and humbled, his self-confidence was blasted, and his hopes were prostrated in the dust. Perhaps no words would better express the humble, subdued, melancholy, and helpless state of a converted sinner than the expressive phrase "I died." The essential idea here is, that the Law did not answer the purpose which the Jew would claim for it, to sanctify the soul and to give comfort, but that all its influence on the heart was to produce aggravated, unpardoned guilt and woe.

Verse 10

And the commandment - The Law to which he had referred before.

Which was ordained to life - Which was intended to produce life, or happiness. Life here stands opposed to death, and means felicity, peace, eternal bliss; Note, John 3:36. When the apostle says that it was ordained to life, he probably has reference to the numerous passages in the Old Testament which speak of the Law in this manner, Leviticus 18:5, "Ye shall keep my statutes and my judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them," Ezekiel 20:11, Ezekiel 20:13, Ezekiel 20:21; Ezekiel 18:9, Ezekiel 18:21. The meaning of these passages, in connection with this declaration of Paul, may be thus expressed:

(1)The Law is good; it has no evil, and is itself suited to produce no evil.

(2)if man was pure, and it was obeyed perfectly, it would produce life and happiness only. On those who have obeyed it in heaven, it has produced only happiness.

(3)for this it was ordained; it is adapted to it; and when perfectly obeyed, it produces no other effect. But,

(4)Man is a sinner; he has not obeyed it; and in such a case the Law threatens woe.

It crosses the inclination of man, and instead of producing peace and life, as it would on a being perfectly holy, it produces only woe and crime. The law of a parent may be good, and may be appointed to promote the happiness of his children; it may be admirably suited to it if all were obedient; yet in the family there may be one obstinate, self-willed, and stubborn child, resolved to indulge his evil passions, and the results to him would be woe and despair. The commandment, which was ordained for the good of the family, and which would be adapted to promote their welfare, he alone, of all the number, would find to be unto death.

I found - It was to me. It produced this effect.

Unto death - Producing aggravated guilt and condemnation, Romans 7:9.

Verse 11

For sin - This verse is a repetition, with a little variation of the sentiment in Romans 7:8.

Deceived me - The word used here properly means to lead or seduce from the right way; and then to deceive, solicit to sin, cause to err from the way of virtue, Romans 16:18; 1 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 11:3, "The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty," 2 Thessalonians 2:3. The meaning here seems to be, that his corrupt and rebellious propensities, excited by the Law, led him astray; caused him more and more to sin; practiced a species of deception on him by urging him on headlong, and without deliberation, into aggravated transgression. In this sense, all sinners are deceived. Their passions urge them on, deluding them, and leading them further and further from happiness, and involving them, before they are aware, in crime and death. No being in the universe is more deladed than a sinner in the indulgence of evil passions. The description of Solomon in a particular case will apply to all, Proverbs 7:21-23.

"With much fair speech she caused him to yield,
With the flattering of her lips she forced him.
He goeth after her straightway,

As an ox goeth to the slaughter,

Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;

Till a dart strike through his liver,
As a bird hasteth to the snare."

By it - By the Law, Romans 7:8.

Slew me - Meaning the same as "I died," Romans 7:8.

Verse 12

Wherefore - So that. The conclusion to which we come is, that the Law is not to be blamed, though these are its effects under existing circumstances. The source of all this is not the Law, but the corrupt nature of man. The Law is good; and yet the position of the apostle is true, that it is not adapted to purify the heart of fallen man. Its tendency is to excite increased guilt, conflict, alarm, and despair. This verse contains an answer to the question in Romans 7:7, "Is the law sin?"

Is holy - Is not sin; compare Romans 7:7. It is pure in its nature.

And the commandment - The word "commandment" is here synonymous with the Law. It properly means what is enjoined.

Holy - Pure.

Just - Righteous in its claims and penalties. It is not unequal in its exactions.

Good - In itself good; and in its own nature tending to produce happiness. The sin and condemnation of the guilty is not the fault of the Law. If obeyed, it would produce happiness everywhere. See a most beautiful description of the law of God in Psalm 19:7-11.

Verse 13

Was then that which is good … - This is another objection which the apostle proceeds to answer. The objection is this, "Can it be possible that what is admitted to be good and pure, should be changed into evil? Can what tends to life, be made death to a man?" In answer to this, the apostle repeats that the fault was not in the Law, but was in himself, and in his sinful propensities.

Made death - Romans 7:8, Romans 7:10.

God forbid - Note, Romans 3:4.

But sin - This is a personification of sin as in Romans 7:8.

That it might appear sin - That it might develope its true nature, and no longer be dormant in the mind. The Law of God is often applied to a man's conscience, that he may see how deep and desperate is his depravity.

No man knows his own heart until the Law thus crosses his path, and shows him what he is.

By the commandment - Note, Romans 7:8.

Might become exceeding sinful - In the original this is a very strong expression, and is one of those used by Paul to express strong emphasis, or intensity καθ᾽ ὑπερβολὴν kath huperbolēnby hyperboles. In an excessive degree; to the utmost possible extent, 1 Corinthians 12:31; 2 Corinthians 1:8; 2 Corinthians 4:7; 2 Corinthians 12:7; Galatians 1:13. The phrase occurs in each of these places. The sense here is, that by the giving of the command, and its application to the mind, sin was completely developed; it was excited, inflamed, aggravated, and showed to be excessively malignant and deadly. It was not a dormant, slumbering principle; but it was awfully opposed to God and His Law. Calvin has well expressed the sense: "It was proper that the enormity of sin should be revealed by the Law; because unless sin should break forth by some dreadful and enormous excess (as they say,) it would not be known to be sin. This excess exhibits itself the more violently, while it turns life into death." The sentiment of the whole is, that the tendency of the Law is to excite the dormant sin of the bosom into active existence, and to reveal its true nature. It is desirable that that should be done, and as that is all that the Law accomplishes, it is not adapted to sanctify the soul. To show that this was the design of the apostle, it is desirable that sin should be thus seen in its true nature, because,

(1)Man should be acquainted with his true character. He should not deceive himself.

(2)because it is one part of God‘s plan to develope the secret feelings of the heart, and to show to all creatures what they are.

(3)because only by knowing this, will the sinner be induced to take a remedy, and strive to be saved. So God often allows people to plunge into sin; to act out their nature, so that they may see themselves, and be alarmed at the consequences of their own crimes.

Verse 14

The remainder of this chapter has been the subject of no small degree of controversy. The question has been whether it describes the state of Paul before his conversion, or afterward. It is not the purpose of these notes to enter into controversy, or into extended discussion. But after all the

attention which I have been able to give to this passage, I regard it as describing the state of a man under the gospel, as descriptive of the operations of the mind of Paul subsequent to his conversion. This interpretation is adopted for the following reasons:

(1) Because it seems to me to be the most obvious. It is what will strike plain people as being the natural meaning; people who do not have a theory to support, and who understand language in its usual sense.

(2) because it agrees with the design of the apostle, which is to show that the Law is not adapted to produce sanctification and peace. This he had done in regard to a man before he was converted. If this relates to the same period, then it is a useless discussion of a point already discussed, If it relates to that period also, then there is a large field of action, including the whole period after a man‘s conversion to Christianity, in which the question might still be unsettled, whether the Law there might not be adapted to sanctify. The apostle therefore makes thorough work with the argument, and shows that the operation of the Law is everywhere the same.

(3) because the expressions which occur are such as cannot be understood of an impenitent sinner; see the notes at Romans 7:15, Romans 7:21.

(4) because it accords with parallel expressions in regard to the state of the conflict in a Christian‘s mind.

(5) because there is a change made here from the past tense to the present. In Romans 7:7, etc. he had used the past tense, evidently describing some former state. In Romans 7:14 there is a change to the present, a change inexplicable, except on the supposition that he meant to describe some state different from that before described. That could be no other than to carry his illustration forward in showing the inefficacy of the Law on a man in his renewed state; or to show that such was the remaining depravity of the man, that it produced substantially the same effects as in the former condition.

(6) because it accords with the experience of Christians, and not with sinners. It is just such language as plain Christians, who are acquainted with

their own hearts, use to express their feelings. I admit that this last consideration is not by itself conclusive; but if the language did not accord with the experience of the Christian world, it would be a strong circumstance against any proposed interpretation. The view which is here expressed of this chapter, as supposing that the previous part Romans 7:7-13 refers to a man in his unregenerate state, and that the remainder describes the effect of the Law on the mind of a renewed man, was adopted by studying the chapter itself, without aid from any writer. I am happy, however, to find that the views thus expressed are in accordance with those of the late Dr. John P. Wilson, than whom, perhaps, no man was ever better quailfled to interpret the Scriptures. He says, "In the fourth verse, he (Paul) changes to the first person plural, because he intended to speak of the former experience of Christians, who had been Jews. In the seventh verse, he uses the first person singular, but speaks in the past tense, because he describes his own experience when he was an uncoverted Pharisee. In the fourteenth verse, and unto the end of the chapter, he uses the first person singular, and the present tense, because he exhibits his own experience since he became a Christian and an apostle."

We know - We admit. It is a conceded, well understood point.

That the law is spiritual - This does not mean that the Law is designed to control the spirit, in contradistinction from the body, but it is a declaration showing that the evils of which he was speaking were not the fault of the Law. That was not, in its nature, sensual, corrupt, earthly, carnal; but was pure and spiritual. The effect described was not the fault of the Law, but of the man, who was sold under sin. The word "spiritual" is often thus used to denote what is pure and hoy, in opposition to that which is fleshly or carnal; Romans 8:5-6; Galatians 5:16-23. The flesh is described as the source of evil passions and desires; The spirit as the source of purity; or as what is agreeable to the proper influences of the Holy Spirit.

But I am - The present tense shows that he is describing himself as he was at the time of writing. This is the natural and obvious construction, and if this be not the meaning, it is impossible to account for his having changed the past tense Romans 7:7 to the present.

Carnal - Fleshly; sensual; opposed to spiritual. This word is used because in the Scriptures the flesh is spoken of as the source of sensual passions and propensities, Galatians 5:19-21. The sense is, that these corrupt passions still retained a strong and withering and distressing

influence over the mind. The renewed man is exposed to temptations from his strong native appetites; and the power of these passions, strengthened by long habit before he was converted, has traveled over into religion, and they continue still to influence and distress him. It does not mean that he is wholly under their influence; but that the tendency of his natural inclinations is to indulgence.

Sold under sin - This expression is often adduced to show that it cannot be of a renewed man that the apostle is speaking. The argument is, that it cannot be affirmed of a Christian that he is sold under sin. A sufficient answer to this might be, that in fact, this is the very language which Christians often now adopt to express the strength of that native depravity against which they struggle, and that no language would better express it. It does not, mean that they choose or prefer sins. It strongly implies that the prevailing bent of their mind is against it, but that such is its strength that it brings them into slavery to it. The expression used here, "sold under sin," is "borrowed from the practice of selling captives taken in war, as slaves." (Stuart.) It hence, means to deliver into the power of anyone, so that he shall be dependent on his will and control. (Schleusner.) The emphasis is not on the word "sold," as if any act of selling had taken place, but the effect was as if he had been sold; that is, he was subject to it, and under its control, and it means that sin, contrary to the prevailing inclination of his mind Romans 7:15-17, had such an influence over him as to lead him to commit it, and thus to produce a state of conflict and grief; Romans 7:19-24. The verses which follow this are an explanation of the sense, and of the manner in which he was "sold under sin."

Verse 15

For that which I do - That is, the evil which I do, the sin of which I am conscious, and which troubles me.

I allow not - I do not approve; I do not wish it; the prevailing bent of my inclinations and purposes is against it. Greek, "I know not;" see the margin. The word "know," however, is sometimes used in the sense of approving, Revelation 2:24, "Which have not known (approved) the depths of Satan;" compare Psalm 101:4, I will not know a wicked person." Jeremiah 1:5.

For what I would - That which I approve; and which is my prevailing and established desire. What I would wish always to do.

But what I hate - What I disapprove of: what is contrary to my judgment; my prevailing inclination; my established principles of conduct.

That do I - Under the influence of sinful propensities, and carnal inclinations and desires. This represents the strong native propensity to sin; and even the power of corrupt propensity under the restraining influence of the gospel. On this remarkable and important passage we may observe,

(1) That the prevailing propensity; the habitual fixed inclination of the mind of the Christian, is to do right. The evil course is hated, the right course is loved. This is the characteristic of a pious mind. It distinguishes a holy man from a sinner.

(2) the evil which is done is disapproved; is a source of grief; and the habitual desire of the mind is to avoid it, and be pure. This also distinguishes the Christian from the sinner.

(3) there is no need of being embarrassed here with any metaphysical difficulties or inquiries how this can be; for.

(a) it is in fact the experience of all Christians. The habitual, fixed inclination and desire of their minds is to serve God. They have a fixed abhorrence of sin; and yet they are conscious of imperfection, and error, and sin, that is the source of uneasiness and trouble. The strength of natural passion may in an unguarded moment overcome them. The power of long habits of previous thoughts may annoy them. A man who was an infidel before his conversion, and whose mind was filled with scepticism, and cavils, and blasphemy, will find the effect of his former habits of thinking lingering in his mind, and annoying his peace for years. These thoughts will start up with the rapidity of lightning. Thus, it is with every vice and every opinion. It is one of the effects of habit. “The very passage of an impure thought through the mind leaves pollution behind it,” and where sin has been long indulged, it leaves its withering, desolating effect on the soul long after conversion, and produces that state of conflict with which every Christian is familiar.

(b) An effect somewhat similar is felt by all people. All are conscious of doing that, under the excitement of passion and prejudice, which their conscience and better judgment disapprove. A conflict thus exists, which is

attended with as much metaphysical difficulty as the struggle in the Christian‘s mind referred to here.

(c) The same thing was observed and described in the writings of the heathen. Thus, Xenophon (Cyrop. vi. 1), Araspes, the Persian, says, in order to excuse his treasonable designs," Certainly I must have two souls; for plainly it is not one and the same which is both evil and good; and at the same time wishes to do a thing and not to do it. Plainly then, there are two souls; and when the good one prevails, then it does good; and when the evil one predominates, then it does evil." So also Epictetus (*Enchixid*. ii. 26) says, "He that sins does not do what he would, but what he would not, that he does." With this passage it would almost seem that Paul was familiar, and had his eye on it when he wrote. So also the well-known passage from Ovid, *Meta*. vii. 9.

Aliudque Cupido,
Mens aliud suadet. Video meliora, proboque,
Deteriora sequor.

"Desire prompts to one thing, but the mind persuades to another. I see the good, and approve it, and yet pursue the wrong." - See other passages of similar import quoted in Grotius and Tholuck.

Verse 16

I consent unto the law - The very struggle with evil shows that it is not loved, or approved, but that the Law which condemns it is really loved. Christians may here find a test of their piety. The fact of struggling against evil, the desire to be free from it, and to overcome it, the anxiety and grief which it causes, is an evidence that we do not love it, and that there. fore we are the friends of God. Perhaps nothing can be a more decisive test of piety than a long-continued and painful struggle against evil passions and desires in every form, and a panting of the soul to be delivered from the power and dominion of sin.

Verse 17

It is no more I that do it - This is evidently figurative language, for it is really the man that sins when evil is committed. But the apostle makes a distinction between sin and what he intends by the pronoun "I". By the former he evidently means his corrupt nature. By the latter he refers to his renewed nature, his Christian principles. He means to say that he does not approve or love it in his present state, but that it is the result of his native

propensities and passions. In his heart, and conscience, and habitual feeling, he did not choose to commit sin, but abhorred it. Thus, every Christian can say that he does not choose to do evil, but would wish to be perfect; that he hates sin, and yet that his corrupt passions lead him astray.

But sin - My corrupt passions and native propensities.

That dwelleth in me - Dwelling in me as its home. This is a strong expression, denoting that sin had taken up its habitation in the mind, and abode there. It had not been yet wholly dislodged. This expression stands in contrast with another that occurs, where it is said that "the Spirit of God dwells" in the Christian, Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16. The sense is, that he is strongly influenced by sin on the one hand, and by the Spirit on the other. From this expression has arisen the phrase so common among Christians, in-dwelling sin.

Verse 18

For I know - This is designed as an illustration of what he had just said, that sin dwelt in him.

That is, in my flesh - In my unrenewed nature; in my propensities and inclinations before conversion. Does not this qualifying expression show that in this discussion he was speaking of himself as a renewed man? Hence, he is careful to imply that there was at that time in him something that was right or acceptable with God, but that that did not pertain to him by nature.

Dwelleth - His soul was wholly occupied by what was evil. It had taken entire possession.

No good thing - There could not be possibly a stronger expression of belief of the doctrine of total depravity. It is Paul's own representation of himself. It proves that his heart was wholly evil. And if this was true of him, it is true of all others. It is a good way to examine ourselves, to inquire whether we have such a view of our own native character as to say that we know that in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing. The sense here is, that so far as the flesh was concerned, that is, in regard to his natural inclinations and desires, there was nothing good; all was evil. This was true in his entire conduct before conversion, where the desires of the flesh reigned and rioted without control; and it was true after conversion, so far as the natural inclinations and propensities of the flesh were concerned. All those operations in every stake were evil, and not the less evil because they are experienced under the light and amidst the influences of the gospel.

To will - To purpose or intend to do good.

Is present with me - I can do that. It is possible; it is in my power. The expression may also imply that it was near to him παράκειται parakeitaithat is, it was constantly before him; it was now his habitual inclination and purpose of mind. It is the uniform, regular, habitual purpose of the Christian‘s mind to do right.

But how - The sense would have been better retained here if the translators had not introduced the word “how.” The difficulty was not in the mode of performing it, but to do the thing itself.

I find not - I do not find it in my power; or I find strong, constant obstacles, so that I fail of doing it. The obstacles are not natural, but such as arise from long indulgence in sin; the strong native propensity to evil.

Verse 19

For the good … - This is substantially a repetition of what is said in Romans 7:15. The repetition shows how full the mind of the apostle was of the subject; and how much inclined he was to dwell upon it, and to place it in every variety of form. It is not uncommon for Paul thus to express his intense interest in a subject, by placing it in a great variety of aspects, even at the hazard of much repetition.

Verse 20

Now if I do … - This verse is also a repetition of what was said in Romans 7:16-17.

Verse 21

I find then a law - There is a law whose operation I experience whenever I attempt to do good. There have been various opinions about the meaning of the word “law” in this place. It is evident that it is used here in a sense somewhat unusual. But it retains the notion which commonly attaches to it of what binds, or controls. And though this to which he refers differs from a law, inasmuch as it is not imposed by a superior, which is the usual idea of a law, yet it has so far the sense of law that it binds, controls, influences, or is that to which he was subject. There can be no doubt that he refers here to his carnal and corrupt nature; to the evil propensities and dispositions which were leading him astray. His representing this as a law is in accordance with all that he says of it, that it is servitude, that he is in bondage to it, and that it impedes his efforts to be holy and pure. The meaning is this, “I find a habit, a propensity, an influence of corrupt passions and desires, which, when I would do right, impedes my progress,

and prevents my accomplishing what I would." Compare Galatians 5:17. Every Christian is as much acquainted with this as was the apostle Paul.

Do good - Do right. Be perfect.

Evil - Some corrupt desire, or improper feeling, or evil propensity.

Is present with me - Is near; is at hand. It starts up unbidden, and undesired. It is in the path, and never leaves us, but is always ready to impede our going, and to turn us from our good designs; compare Psalm 65:3, "Iniquities prevail against me.' The sense is, that to do evil is agreeable to our strong natural inclinations and passions.

Verse 22

For I delight - The word used here Συνήδομαι Sunēdomaioccurs no where else in the New Testament. It properly means to rejoice with anyone; and expresses not only approbation of the understanding, as the expression, "I consent unto the law," in Romans 7:16, but more than that it denotes sensible pleasure in the heart. It indicates not only intellectual assent, but emotion, an emotion of pleasure in the contemplation of the Law. And this shows that the apostle is not speaking of an unrenewed man. Of such a man it might be said that his conscience approved the Law; that his understanding was convinced that the Law was good; but never yet did it occur that an impenitent sinner found emotions of pleasure in the contemplation of the pure and spiritual Law of God. If this expression can be applied to an unrenewed man, there is, perhaps, not a single mark of a pious mind which may not with equal propriety be so applied. It is the natural, obvious, and usual mode of denoting the feelings of piety, an assent to the divine Law followed with emotions of sensible delight in the contemplation. Compare Psalm 119:97, "O how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day." Psalm 1:2, "but his delight is in the law of the Lord." Psalm 19:7-11; Job 23:12.

In the law of God - The word "law" here is used in a large sense, to denote all the communications which God had made to control man. The sense is, that the apostle was pleased with the whole. One mark of genuine piety is to be pleased with the whole of the divine requirements.

After the inward man - In respect to the inward man. The expression "the inward man" is used sometimes to denote the rational part of man as opposed to the sensual; sometimes the mind as opposed to the body (compare 2 Corinthians 4:16; 1 Peter 3:4). It is thus used by the Greek classic writers. Here it is used evidently in opposition to a carnal and

corrupt nature; to the evil passions and desires of the soul in an unrenewed state; to what is called elsewhere "the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Ephesians 4:22. The "inward man" is called elsewhere "the new man" Ephesians 4:24; and denotes not the mere intellect, or conscience, but is a personification of the principles of action by which a Christian is governed; the new nature; the holy disposition; the inclination of the heart that is renewed.

Verse 23

But I see another law - Note, Romans 7:21.

In my members - In my body; in my flesh; in my corrupt and sinful propensities; Note, Romans 6:13; compare 1 Corinthians 6:15; Colossians 3:5. The body is composed of many members; and as the flesh is regarded as the source of sin Romans 7:18, the law of sin is said to be in the members, that is, in the body itself.

Warring against - Fighting against; or resisting.

The law of my mind - This stands opposed to the prevailing inclinations of a corrupt nature. It means the same as was expressed by the phrase "the inward man," and denotes the desires and purposes of a renewed heart.

And bringing me into captivity - Making me a prisoner, or a captive. This is the completion of the figure respecting the warfare. A captive taken in war was at the disposal of the victor. So the apostle represents himself as engaged in a warfare; and as being overcome, and made an unwilling captive to the evil inclinations of the heart. The expression is strong; and denotes strong corrupt propensities. But though strong, it is believed it is language which all sincere Christians can adopt of themselves, as expressive of that painful and often disastrous conflict in their bosoms when they contend against the native propensities of their hearts.

Verse 24

O wretched man that I am! - The feeling implied by this lamentation is the result of this painful conflict; and this frequent subjection to sinful propensities. The effect of this conflict is,

(1) To produce pain and distress. It is often an agonizing struggle between good and evil; a struggle which annoys the peace, and renders life wretched.

(2) it tends to produce humility. It is humbling to man to be thus under the influence of evil passions. It is degrading to his nature; a stain on his glory; and it tends to bring him into the dust, that he is under the control of such propensities, and so often gives indulgence to them. In such circumstances, the mind is overwhelmed with wretchedness, and instinctively sighs for relief. Can the Law aid? Can man aid? Can any native strength of conscience or of reason aid? In vain all these are tried, and the Christian then calmly and thankfully acquiesces in the consolations of the apostle, that aid can be obtained only through Jesus Christ.

Who shall deliver me - Who shall rescue me; the condition of a mind in deep distress, and conscious of its own weakness, and looking for aid.

The body of this death - Margin, "This body of death." The word "body" here is probably used as equivalent to flesh, denoting the corrupt and evil propensities of the soul; Note, Romans 7:18. It is thus used to denote the law of sin in the members, as being that with which the apostle was struggling, and from which he desired to be delivered. The expression "body of this death" is a Hebraism, denoting a body deadly in its tendency; and the whole expression may mean the corrupt principles of man; the carnal, evil affections that lead to death or to condemnation. The expression is one of vast strength, and strongly characteristic of the apostle Paul. It indicates,

(1)That it was near him, attending him, and was distressing in its nature.

(2)an earnest wish to be delivered from it.

Some have supposed that he refers to a custom practiced by ancient tyrants, of binding a dead body to a captive as a punishment, and compelling him to drag the cumbersome and offensive burden with him wherever he went. I do not see any evidence that the apostle had this in view. But such a fact may be used as a striking and perhaps not improper illustration of the meaning of the apostle here. No strength of words could express deeper feeling; none more feelingly indicate the necessity of the grace of God to accomplish that to which the unaided human powers are incompetent.

Verse 25

I thank God - That is, I thank God for effecting a deliverance to which I am myself incompetent. There is a way of rescue, and I trace it altogether to his mercy in the Lord Jesus Christ. What conscience could not do, what the Law could not do, what unaided human strength could not do, has been

accomplished by the plan of the gospel; and complete deliverance can be expected there, and there alone. This is the point to which all his reasoning had tended; and having thus shown that the Law was insufficient to effect this deliverance. he is now prepared to utter the language of Christian thankfulness that it can be effected by the gospel. The superiority of the gospel to the Law in overcoming all the evils under which man labors, is thus triumphantly established; compare 1 Corinthians 15:57.

So then - As the result of the whole inquiry we have come to this conclusion.

With the mind - With the understanding, the conscience, the purposes, or intentions of the soul. This is a characteristic of the renewed nature. Of no impenitent sinner could it be ever affirmed that with his mind he served the Law of God.

I myself - It is still the same person, though acting in this apparently contradictory manner.

Serve the law of God - Do honor to it as a just and holy law Romans 7:12, Romans 7:16, and am inclined to obey it, Romans 7:22, Romans 7:24.

But with the flesh - The corrupt propensities and lusts, Romans 7:18,

The law of sin - That is, in the members. The flesh throughout, in all its native propensities and passions, leads to sin; it has no tendency to holiness; and its corruptions can be overcome only by the grace of God. We have thus,

(1)A view of the sad and painful conflict between sin and God. They are opposed in all things.

(2)we see the raging, withering effect of sin on the soul. In all circumstances it tends to death and woe.

(3)we see the feebleness of the Law and of conscience to overcome this. The tendency of both is to produce conflict and woe. And,

(4)We see that the gospel only can overcome sin. To us it should be a subject of everincreasing thankfulness, that what could not be accomplished by the Law, can be thus effected by the gospel; and that God has devised a plan that thus effects complete deliverance, and which gives to the captive in sin an everlasting triumph.

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Introduction

This chapter is one of the most interesting and precious portions of the Sacred Scriptures. Some parts of it are attended with great difficulties; but its main scope and design is apparent to all. It is a continuation of the subject discussed in the previous chapter, and is intended mainly to show that the gospel could effect what the Law was incapable of doing. In that chapter the apostle had shown that the Law was incapable of producing sanctification or peace of mind. He had traced its influence on the mind in different conditions, and shown that equally before regeneration and afterward, it was incapable of producing peace and holiness. Such was man, such were his propensities, that the application of law only tended to excite, to irritate, to produce conflict. The conscience, indeed, testified to the Law that it was good; but still it had shown that it was not adapted to produce holiness of heart and peace, but agitation, conflict, and a state of excited sin. In opposition to this, he proceeds to show in this chapter the power of the gospel to produce what the Law could not. In doing this, he illustrates the subject by several considerations.

(1) the gospel does what the Law could not do in giving life, and delivering from condemnation, Romans 8:1-13.

(2) it produces a spirit of adoption, and all the blessings which result from the filial confidence with which we can address God as our Father, in opposition to the Law which produced only terror and alarm, Romans 8:14-17.

(3) it sustains the soul amidst its captivity to sin, and its trials, with the hope of a future deliverance - a complete and final redemption, of the body from all the evils of this life, Romans 8:18-25.

(4) it furnishes the aid of the Holy Spirit to sustain us in our trials and infirmities, Romans 8:26-27.

(5) it gives the assurance that all things shall work together for good, since all things are connected with the purpose of God, and all that can occur to a Christian comes in as a part of the plan of him who has resolved to save him, Romans 8:28-30.

(6) it ministers consolation from the fact that everything that can affect the happiness of man is on the side of the Christian, and will cooperate in his favor; as, e. g.,

(a)God, in giving his Son, and in justifying the believer, Romans 8:31-33.

(b)Christ, in dying, and rising, and interceding for Christians, Romans 8:34.

(c)The love of a Christian to the Saviour is in itself so strong, that nothing can separate him from it, Romans 8:35-39.

By all these considerations the superiority of the gospel to the Law is shown, and assurance is given to the believer of his final salvation. By this interesting and conclusive train of reasoning, the apostle is prepared for the triumphant language of exultation with which he closes this most precious portion of the Word of God.

Verse 1

There is, therefore, now - This is connected with the closing verses of Romans 7:23-25. It is implied here that there was condemnation under the Law, and would be still, but for the intervention of the gospel.

No condemnation - This does not mean that sin in believers is not to be condemned as much as any where, for the contrary is everywhere taught in the Scriptures; but it means,

(1) That the gospel does not pronounce condemnation like the Law. Its function is to pardon; the function of the law is to condemn. The one never affords deliverance, but always condemns; the object of the other is to free from condemnation, and to set the soul at liberty.

(2) there is no final condemnation under the gospel. The function, design, and tendency of the gospel is to free from the condemning sentence of law. This is its first and its glorious announcement, that it frees lost and ruined people from a most fearful and terrible condemnation.

(The first verse of this chapter seems to be an inference from the whole preceding discussion. The apostle having established the doctrine of justification, and answered the objections commonly urged against it, now asserts his triumphant conclusion, “There is therefore, etc.; that is to say, it

follows from all that has been said concerning the believer‘s justification by the righteousness of Christ, and his complete deliverance from the Law as a covenant, that to him there can be no condemnation. The design of Paul is not so much to assert the different functions of the Law and the gospel, as simply to state the fact in regard to the condition of a certain class, namely, those who are in Christ. To them there is no condemnation whatever; not only no final condemnation, but no condemnation now, from the moment of their union to Christ, and deliverance from the curse of the Law. The reason is this: that Christ hath endured the penalty, and obeyed the precept of the Law in their stead.

“Here,” says Mr. Haldane on the passage, “it is often remarked that the apostle does not say, that there is in them (believers) neither matter of accusation, nor cause of condemnation; and yet this is all included in what he does say. And afterward, in express terms, he denies that they can be either accused or condemned, which they might be, were there any ground for either. All that was condemnable in them, which was sin, has been condemned in their Surety, as is shown in the third verse.”)

Which are in Christ Jesus - Who are united to Christ. To be in him is an expression not seldom used in the New Testament, denoting close and intimate union. Philemon 1:1; Philemon 3:9; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 16:7-11. The union between Christ and his people is compared to that between the vine and its branches John 15:1-6, and hence, believers are said to be in him in a similar sense, as deriving their support from him, and as united in feeling, in purpose, and destiny. (See the supplementary note at Romans 8:10.) Who walk. Who conduct, or live. Note, Romans 4:12. Not after the flesh. Who do not live to gratify the corrupt desires and passions of the flesh; Note, Romans 7:18. This is a characteristic of a Christian. What it is to walk after the flesh may be seen in Galatians 5:19-21. It follows that a man whose purpose of life is to gratify his corrupt desires, cannot be a Christian. Unless he lives not to gratify his flesh, he can have no evidence of piety. This is a test which is easily applied; and if every professor of religion were honest, there could be no danger of mistake, and there need be no doubts about his true character.

But after the Spirit - As the Holy Spirit would lead or prompt. What the Spirit produces may be seen in Galatians 5:22-23. If a man has these

fruits of the Spirit, he is a Christian; if not, he is a stranger to religion, whatever else he may possess. And this test also is easily applied.

Verse 2

For the law - The word "law" here means that "rule, command, or influence" which "the Spirit of life" produces. That exerts a control which is here called a law, for a law often means anything by which we are ruled or governed; see the notes at Romans 7:21, Romans 7:23. Of the Spirit. I see no reason to doubt here that this refers to the Holy Spirit. Evidently, at the close of Romans 8:1, the word has this reference. The phrase "the Spirit of life" then means the Holy Spirit producing or giving life; that is, giving peace, joy, activity, salvation; in opposition to the law spoken of in John 16:7-14. The Spirit is sent by Christ; his influence is a part of the Christian scheme; and his power accomplishes what the Law could not do.

Hath made me free - That is, has delivered me from the predominating influence and control of sin. He cannot mean that he was perfect, for the whole tenor of his reasoning is opposed to that. But the design, the tendency, and the spirit of the gospel was to produce this freedom from what the Law could not deliver; and he was now brought under the general power of this scheme. In the former state he was under a most bitter and galling bondage; Romans 7:7-11. Now, he was brought under the influence of a scheme which contemplated freedom, and which produced it.

The law of sin and death - The controlling influence of sin, leading to death and condemnation; Romans 7:5-11.

Verse 3

For what the law could not do - The Law of God, the moral law. It could not free from sin and condemnation. This the apostle had fully shown in Romans 7:12, but it was owing to the strength of the natural passions and the sinfulness of the unrenewed heart; see Romans 7:7-11, where this influence is fully explained.

God, sending his own Son - That is, God did, or accomplished, that, by sending his Son, which the Law could not do. The word did, or accomplished, it is necessary to understand here, in order to complete the sense.

d **In the likeness of sinful flesh -** That is, he so far resembled sinful flesh that he partook of flesh, or the nature of man, but without any of its sinful propensities or desires. It was not human nature; not, as the Docetae

taught, human nature in appearance only; but it was human nature Without any of its corruptions.

And for sin - Margin, "By a sacrifice for sin." The expression evidently means, by an Offering for sin, or that he was given as a Sacrifice on account of sin. His being given had respect to sin.

d **Condemned sin in the flesh -** The flesh is regarded as the source of sin; Note, Romans 7:18. The flesh being the seat and origin of transgression, the atoning sacrifice was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, that thus he might meet sin, as it were, on its own ground, and destroy it. He may be said to have condemned sin in this manner,

(1) Because the fact that he was given for it, and died on its account, was a condemnation of it. If sin had been approved by God he would not have made an atonement to secure its destruction. The depth and intensity of the woes of Christ on its account show the degree of abhorrence with which it is regarded by God.

(2) the word "condemn" may be used in the sense of destroying, overcoming, or subduing; 2 Peter 2:6, "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow." In this sense the sacrifice of Christ has no; only condemned sin as being evil, but has weakened its power and destroyed its influence, and will finally annihilate its existence in all who are saved by that death.

(By the sacrifice of Christ, God indeed showed his abhorrence of sin, and secured its final overthrow. It is not, however, of the sanctifying influence of this sacrifice, that the apostle seems here to speak, but of its justifying power. The sense, therefore, is that God passed a judicial sentence on sin, in the person of Christ, on account of which, that has been effected which the Law could not effect, (justification namely). Sin being condemned in the human nature of Christ, cannot be condemned and punished in the persons of those represented by him. They must be justified.

This view gives consistency to the whole passage, from the first verse to the fourth inclusive. The apostle clearly begins with the subject of justification, when, in the first verse, he affirms, that to them who are in Christ Jesus, there is no condemnation. If the question be put, Why is this?

the second verse gives for answer, that believers are delivered from the Law as a covenant of works. (See the foregoing supplementary note). If the question again be put, Whence this deliverance? the third verse points to the sacrifice of Christ, which, the fourth verse assures us, was offered with the very design "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." This clause, according to the principle of interpretation laid down above, does not relate to the believer's obedience to the righteous requirements of the Law. The apostle has in view a more immediate design of the sacrifice of Christ. The right or demand of the Law δικαίωμα dikaiōmawas satisfaction to its injured honor. Its penalty must be borne, as well as its precept obeyed. The sacrifice of Christ answered every claim. And as believers are one with him, the righteousness of the Law has been "fulfilled in them."

The whole passage is thus consistently explained of justification.)

Verse 4

That the righteousness of the law - That we might be conformed to the Law, or be obedient to its requirements, and no longer under the influence of the flesh and its corrupt desires.

Might be fulfilled - That we might be obedient, or comply with its demands.

Who walk - Note, Romans 8:1.

Verse 5

For they that are after the flesh - They that are under the influence of the corrupt and sinful desires of the flesh; Galatians 5:19-21. Those who are unrenewed.

Do mind the things of the flesh - They are supremely devoted to the gratification of their corrupt desires.

But they that are after the Spirit - Who are under its influence; who are led by the Spirit.

The things of the Spirit - Those things which the Spirit produces, or which he effects in the mind, Galatians 5:21-23. This verse is for the purpose of illustration, and is designed to show that the tendency of religion is to produce as entire a devotedness to the service of God as people had before rendered to sin; that is, that they Would be fully engaged in that to which they had devoted themselves. As the Christian therefore, had devoted himself to the service of the Spirit, and had been brought under his

influence, it was to be expected that he would make it his great and only object to cherish and cultivate the graces which that Spirit would produce.

Verse 6

For to be carnally minded - Margin, "The minding of the flesh." The sense is, that to follow the inclinations of the flesh, or the corrupt propensities of our nature, leads us to condemnation and death. The expression is one of great energy, and shows that it not only leads to death, or leads to misery, but that it is death itself; there is woe and condemnation in the very act and purpose of being supremely devoted to the corrupt passions, Its only tendency is condemnation and despair.

Is death - The penalty of transgression; condemnation and eternal ruin; Note, Romans 5:12.

But to be spiritually minded - Margin, "The minding of the Spirit." That is, making it the object of the mind, the end and aim of the actions, to cultivate the graces of the Spirit, and to submit to his influence. To be spiritually minded is to seek those feelings and views which the Holy Spirit produces, and to follow his leadings.

Is life - This is opposed to death in Romans 8:5. It tends to life, and is in fact real life. For to possess and cultivate the graces of the spirit, to be led where he would guide us, is the design of our existence, and is the only path of happiness.

And peace - Note, Romans 6.

Verse 7

Because - This is given as a reason for what is said in Romans 8:6. In that verse the apostle had affirmed that to be carnally minded was death, but he had not stated why it was. He now explains it by saying that it is enmity against God, and thus involves a sinner in conflict with him, and exposes to his condemnation.

The carnal mind - This is the same expression as occurs in Romans 8:6 τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκός to phronēma tēs sarkosIt does not mean the mind itself, the intellect, or the will; it does not suppose that the mind or soul is physically depraved, or opposed to God; but it means that the minding of the things of the flesh, giving to them supreme attention, is hostility against God; and involves the sinner in a controversy with him, and hence, leads to death and woe. This passage should not be alleged in proof that the soul is physically depraved, but merely that where there is a supreme regard to the flesh there is hostility to God. It does not directly prove the doctrine of

universal depravity; but it proves only that where such attention exists to the corrupt desires of the soul, there is hostility to God. It is indeed implied that that supreme regard to the flesh exists everywhere by nature, but this is not expressly affirmed. For the object of the apostle here is not to teach the doctrine of depravity, but to show that where such depravity in fact exists, it involves the sinner in a fearful controversy with God.

Is enmity - Hostility; hatred. It means that such a regard to the flesh is in fact hostility to God, because it is opposed to his Law, and to his plan for purifying the soul; compare James 4:4; 1 John 2:15. The minding of the things of the flesh also leads to the hatred of God himself, because he is opposed to it, and has expressed his abhorrence of it.

Against God - Toward God; or in regard to him. It supposes hostility to him.

For it - The word "it" here refers to the minding of the things of the flesh. It does not mean that the soul itself is not subject to his Law, but that the minding of those things is hostile to his Law. The apostle does not express any opinion about the metaphysical ability of man, or discuss that question at all. The amount of his affirmation is simply, that the minding of the flesh, the supreme attention to its dictates and desires, is not and cannot be subject to the Law of God. They are wholly contradictory and irreconcilable, just as much as the love of falsehood is inconsistent with the laws of truth; as intemperance is inconsistent with the law of temperance; and as adultery is a violation of the seventh commandment. But whether the man himself might not obey the Law, whether he has, or has not, ability to do it, is a question which the apostle does not touch, and on which this passage should not be adduced. For whether the law of a particular sin is utterly irreconcilable with an opposite virtue, and whether the sinner is able to abandon that sin and pursue a different path, are very different inquiries.

Is not subject - It is not in subjection to the command of God. The minding of the flesh is opposed to that law, and thus shows that it is hostile to God.

Neither indeed can be - This is absolute and certain. It is impossible that it should be. There is the utmost inability in regard to it. The things are utterly irreconcilable. But the affirmation does not mean that the heart of the sinner might not be subject to God; or that his soul is so physically depraved that he cannot obey, or that he might not obey the law. On that, the apostle here expresses no opinion. That is not the subject of the discussion.

It is simply that the supreme regard to the flesh, t the minding of that, is utterly irreconcilable with the Law of God. They are different things, and can never be made to harmonize; just as adultery cannot be chastity; falsehood cannot be truth; dishonesty cannot be honesty; hatred cannot be love. This passage, therefore, should not be adduced to prove the doctrine of man‘s inability to love God, for it does not refer to that, but it proves merely that a supreme regard to the things of the flesh is utterly inconsistent with the Law of God; can never be reconciled with it; and involves the sinner in hostility with his Creator.

(Calvinists have been loudly accused of “taking an unfair advantage of this language, for the support of their favorite doctrine of the utter impotency of the unregenerate man, in appreciating, much less conforming to the divine injunctions.” It is alleged that φρονημα της σαρκος phronēma tēs sarkosrefers to the disposition of the mind, and is properly translated, “the minding of the flesh.” Therefore, it is this disposition or affection, and not the mind itself, that is enmity against God. But the meaning of the passage is not affected by this change in the translation. For the apostle affirms that this minding of the flesh is the uniform and prevailing disposition of unregenerate people. “They that are after the flesh,” that is, unregenerate people,” do mind the things of the flesh.” This is their character without exception. Now, if the natural mind be uniformly under the influence of this depraved disposition, is it not enmity to God. Thus, in point of fact, there is no difference between the received and the amended translation. To affirm that the mind itself is not hostile to God, and that its disposition alone is so, is little better than metaphysical trifling, and deserves no more regard than the plea which any wicked man might easily establish, by declaring that his disposition only, and not himself, was hostile to the laws of religion and morals. On the whole, it is not easy to conceive how the apostle could more forcibly have affirmed the enmity of the natural mind against God. He first describes unrenewed people by their character or bent, and then asserts that this bent is the very essence of enmity against God - enmity in the abstract.

To anyone ignorant of the subtleties of theological controversy, the doctrine of moral inability would seem a plain consequence from this view of the natural mind. “It is,” says Mr Scott, on the passage “morally unable to do anything but revolt against the divine Law, and refuse obedience to

it." We are told, however, that the passage under consideration affirms only, that unregenerate people, while they continue in that state, cannot please God, or yield obedience to his Law, and leaves untouched the other question. concerning the power of the carnal mind to throw off the disposition of enmity, and return to subjection. But if it be not expressly affirmed by the apostle here, that the carnal mind has not this power, it would seem at least to be a plain enough inference from his doctrine. For if the disposition of the unregenerate man be enmity against God: whence is the motive to arise that shall make him dislike that disposition, and throw it aside, and assume a better in its stead? From within it cannot come, because, according to the supposition, there is enmity only; and love cannot arise out of hatred. If it come from without, from the aids and influences of the Spirit, the question is ceded, and the dispute at an end.

A very common way of casting discredit on the view which Calvinists entertain of the doctrine of man's inability, is to represent it as involving some natural or physical disqualification. Nothing can be more unfair. There is a wide difference between natural and moral inability. The one arises from "some defect or obstacle extrinsic to the will, either in the understanding, constitution of the body, or external objects:" the other from "the want of inclination, or the strength of a contrary inclination." Now the Scriptures no where assert, nor have rational Calvinists ever maintained, that there is any physical incapacity of this kind, apart from the corrupt bias and inclination of the will, on account of which, the natural man cannot be subject to the Law of God. But on the other hand, the Scriptures are full of evidence on the subject of moral inability. Even were we to abandon this passage, the general doctrine of revelation is, that unregenerate people are dead in trespasses and in sins; and the entire change that takes place in regeneration and sanctification, is uniformly ascribed not to the "man himself," but to the power of the Spirit of God. Not only is the change carried on and perfected, but begun by him.

Verse 8

So then - It follows; it leads to this conclusion.

They that are in the flesh - They who are unrenewed sinners; who are following supremely the desires of the flesh; Romans 7:18. Those are meant

here who follow fleshly appetites and desires, and who are not led by the Spirit of God.

Cannot please God - That is, while they are thus in the flesh; while they thus pursue the desires of their corrupt nature, they cannot please God. But this affirms nothing respecting their ability to turn from this course, and to pursue a different mode of life. That is a different question. A child may be obstinate, proud, and disobedient; and while in this state, it may be affirmed of him that he cannot please his parent. But whether he might not cease to be obstinate, and become obedient, is a very different inquiry; and the two subjects should never be be confounded. It follows from this,

(1)That those who are unrenewed are totally depraved, since in this state they cannot please God.

(2)that none of their actions while in this state can be acceptable to him, since he is pleased only with those who are spiritually minded.

(3)that those who are in this state should turn from it without delay; as it is desirable that every man should please God.

(4)that if the sinner does not turn from his course, he will be ruined.

With his present character he can never please him; neither in health nor sickness; neither in life nor death; neither on earth nor in hell. He is engaged in hostility against God; and if he does not himself forsake it, it will be endless, and involve his soul in all the evils of a personal, and direct, and eternal warfare with the Lord Almighty.

Verse 9

But ye - You who are Christians. This is the opposite character to what he had been describing, and shows the power of the gospel.

Not in the flesh - Not under the full influence of corrupt desires and passions.

But in the Spirit - That is, you are spiritually minded; you are under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God - The Holy Spirit.

Dwell in you - The Holy Spirit is often represented as dwelling in the hearts of Christians (compare 1 Corinthians 2:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21-22; Galatians 4:6); and the meaning is not that there is a personal or physical indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but that he influences, directs, and guides Christians, producing meekness, love, joy,

peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, etc. Galatians 5:22-23. The expression, to dwell in one, denotes intimacy of connection, and means that those things which are the fruits of the Spirit are produced in the heart. (See the supplementary note at Romans 8:10.)

Have not the Spirit of Christ - The word "Spirit" is used in a great variety of significations in the Scriptures. It most commonly in the New Testament refers to the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. But the expression "the Spirit of Christ" is not, I believe, any where applied to him, except it may be 1 Peter 1:11. He is called often the Spirit of God Matthew 3:16; Matthew 12:28; 1 Corinthians 2:11, 1 Corinthians 2:14; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 4:30, but not the Spirit of the Father. The word "spirit" is often used to denote the temper, disposition; thus we say, a man of a generous spirit, or of a revengeful spirit, etc. It may possibly have this meaning here, and denotes that he who has not the temper or disposition of Christ is not his, or has no evidence of piety. But the connection seems to demand that it should be understood in a sense similar to the expression "the Spirit of God," and "the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus" Romans 8:11; and if so, it means the Spirit which Christ imparts, or sends to accomplish his work John 14:26, the Holy Spirit, sent to make us like Christ, and to sanctify our hearts. And in this sense it evidently denotes the Spirit which Christ would send to produce in us the views and feelings which he came to establish, and which shall assimilate us to himself. If this refers to the Holy Spirit, then we see the manner in which the apostle spoke of the Saviour. He regarded "the Spirit" as equally the Spirit of God and of Christ, as proceeding from both; and thus evidently believed that there is a union of nature between the Father and the Son. Such language could never be used except on the supposition that the Father and Son are one; that is, that Christ is divine.

Is none of his - Is not a Christian. This is a test of piety that is easily applied; and this settles the question. If a man is not influenced by the meek, pure, and holy spirit of the Lord Jesus, if he is not conformed to his image, if his life does not resemble that of the Saviour, he is a stranger to religion. No test could be more easily applied, and none is more decisive. It matters not what else he may have. He may be loud in his professions, amiable in his temper, bold in his zeal, or active in promoting the interests of his own party or denomination in the church; but if he has not the temper of the Saviour, and does not manifest his Spirit, it is as sounding brass or a

tinkling cymdal. May all who read this, honestly examine themselves; and may they have what is the source of the purest felicity, the spirit and temper of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 10

And if Christ be in you - This is evidently a figurative expression, where the word "Christ" is used to denote his spirit, his principles; that is, he influences the man. Literally, he cannot be in a Christian; but the close connection between him and Christians, and the fact that they are entirely under his influence, is expressed by this strong figurative language. It is language which is not infrequently used; compare Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27.

(The union between Christ and his people is sometimes explained of a merely relative in opposition to a real union. The union which subsists between a substitute, or surety, and the persons in whose room he has placed himself, is frequently offered in explanation of the Scripture language on the subject. In this view, Christ is regarded as legally one with his people, inasmuch, as what he has done or obtained, is held as done and obtained by them. Another relative union, employed to illustrate that which subsists between Christ and believers, is the union of a chief and his followers, which is simply a union of design, interest, sentiment, affection, destiny, etc. Now these representations are true so far as they go; and furnish much interesting and profitable illustration. They fall short, however, of the full sense of Scripture on the point. That there is a real or vital union between Christ and his people, appears from the language of the inspired writers in regard to it.

The special phraseology which they employ, cannot well be explained of any relative union At all events, it is as strong as they could have employed, on the supposition, that they had wished to convey the idea of the most intimate possible connection. Christ is said to be "in them," and they are represented as "in him." He "abides in them, and they in him." They "dwelt" in each other; John 14:20; John 15:4; 1 John 3:24; 1 John 4:12. Moreover, the Scripture illustrations of the subject furnish evidence to the same effect. The mystical union, as it has been called, is compared to the union of stones in a building, branches in a vine, members in a human body, and even to what subsists between the Father and the Son; 1 Peter 2:4; Ephesians 2:20, Ephesians 2:22; John 15:1-8; John 17:20-23. Now if all

these are real unions, is not this union real also? If not, where is the propriety or justice of the comparisons? Instead of leading us to form accurate notions on the subject, they would seem calculated to mislead.

This real and vital union is formed by the one Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit pervading the Head and the members of the mystical body; 1 Corinthians 6:17; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 1 John 3:24; 1 John 4:13. It is true, indeed, that the essential presence of Christ‘s Spirit is everywhere, but he is present in Christ‘s members, in a special way, as the fountain of spiritual influence. This spiritual presence, which is the bond of union, is manifested immediately upon a man‘s reception of Christ by faith. From that hour he is one with Christ, because the same Spirit lives in both. Indeed this union is the foundation of all the relative unions which have been employed to illustrate the subject; without it, we could have no saving relation to Christ whatever. That it is mysterious cannot be denied. The apostle himself affirms as much, Ephesians 5:32; Colossians 1:27. Although we know the fact, we cannot explain the manner of it, but must not on this account reject it, any more than we would the doctrine of the Spirit‘s essential presence, because we do not understand it.)

The body is dead - This passage has been interpreted in very different ways. Some understand it to mean that the body is dead in respect to sin; that is, that sin has no more power to excite evil passions and desires; others, that the body must die on account of sin but that the spiritual part shall live, and even the body shall live also in the resurrection. Thus, Calvin, Beza, and Augustine. Doddridge understands it thus: Though the body is to die on account of the first sin that entered into the world, yet the spirit is life, and shall continue to live on forever, through that righteousness which the second Adam has introduced.” To each of these interpretations there are serious objections, which it is not necessary to urge. I understand the passage in the following manner: The body refers to that of which the apostle had said so much in the previous chapters - the flesh, the man before conversion. It is subject to corrupt passions and desires, and may be said thus to be dead, as it has none of the elements of spiritual life. It is under the reign of sin and death. The word μέν menindeed, or truly, has been omitted in our translation, and the omission has obscured the sense. The expression is an admission of the apostle, or a summary statement of what had before been shown. “It is to be admitted, indeed, or it is true, that the unrenewed

nature, the man before conversion, under the influence of the flesh, is spiritually dead. Sin has its seat in the fleshly appetites; and the whole body may be admitted thus to be dead or corrupt."

Because of sin - Through sin δὶ ἁμαρτία di'hamartiaby means of sinful passions and appetites.

But the spirit - This stands opposed to the body; and it means that the soul, the immortal part, the renovated man, was alive, or was under the influence of living principles. It was imbued with the life which the gospel imparts and had become active in the service of God. The word "spirit" here does not refer to the Holy Spirit, but to the spirit of man, the immortal part, recovered, renewed, and imbued with life under the gospel.

Because of righteousness - Through righteousness διὰ δικαιοσύνην dia dikaiosunēnThis is commonly interpreted to mean, with reference to righteousness, or that it may become righteous. But I understand the expression to be used in the sense in which the word is so frequently used in this Epistle, as denoting God's plan of justification; see the note at Romans 1:17. "The spirit of man has been recovered and made alive through his plan of justification. It communicates life, and recovers man from his death in sin to life."

The "body" in this passage has generally been understood in the literal sense, which, doubtless, ought not to be rejected without some valid reason. There is nothing in the connection that demands the figurative sense. The apostle admits that, notwithstanding of the indwelling of the Spirit, the body must die. "It indeed (μεν men) is dead because of sin." The believer is not delivered from temporal death. Yet there are two things which may well reconcile him to the idea of laying aside for a while the clay tabernacle. The "mortal body," though it now die, is not destined to remain forever under the dominion of death, but shall be raised again incorruptible and glorious, by the power of the same Spirit that raised up Jesus from the dead. Meanwhile, "the spirit, or soul, is life, because of righteousness." In consequence of that immaculate righteousness, of which Paul had had said so much in the previous part of this Epistle, the souls of believers, even now, enjoy spiritual life, which shall issue in eternal life and glory.

Those who understand σῶμα sōmafiguratively in the 10th verse, insist, indeed, that the resurrection in the 11th, is figurative also. But "the best commentators" says Bloomfield, "both ancient and modern, with reason

prefer the literal view, especially on account of the phrase θνητα thnēta σῶματα sōmatawhich seems to confine it to this sense.")

Verse 11

But if the Spirit of him … - The Holy Spirit, Romans 8:9.

He that raised up Christ … - He that had power to restore him to life, has power to give life to you. He that did, in fact, restore him to life, will also restore you. The argument here seems to be founded, first, on the power of God; and, secondly, on the connection between Christ and his people; compare John 14:19, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Shall also quicken - Shall make alive.

Your mortal bodies - That this does not refer to the resurrection of the dead seems to be apparent, because that is not attributed to the Holy Spirit. I understand it as referring to the body, subject to carnal desires and propensities; by nature under the reign of death, and therefore mortal; that is, subject to death. The sense is, that under the gospel, by the influence of the Spirit, the entire man will be made alive in the service of God. Even the corrupt, carnal, and mortal body, so long under the dominion of sin, shall be made alive and recovered to the service of God. This will be done by the Spirit that dwells in us, because that Spirit has restored life to our souls, abides with us with his purifying influence, and because the design and tendency of his indwelling is to purify the entire man, and restore all to God. Christians thus in their bodies and their spirits become sacred. For even their body, the seat of evil passions and desires, shall become alive in the service of God.

Verse 12

We are debtors - We owe it as a matter of solemn obligation. This obligation arises,

(1)From the fact that the Spirit dwells in us;

(2)Because the design of his indwelling is to purify us;

(3)Because we are thus recovered from the death of sin to the life of religion; and he who has imparted life, has a right to require that it be spent in his service.

To the flesh - To the corrupt propensities and passions. We are not bound to indulge them because the end of such indulgence is death and ruin; Romans 7:21-22. But we are bound to live to God, and to follow the

leadings of his Spirit, for the end is life and peace; Romans 7:22-23. The reason for this is stated in the following verse.

Verse 13

For if you live … - If you live to indulge your carnal propensities, you will sink to eternal death; Romans 7:23.

Through the Spirit - By the aid of the Spirit; by cherishing and cultivating his influences. What is here required can be accomplished only by the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Do mortify - Do put to death; do destroy. Sin is mortified when its power is destroyed, and it ceases to be active.

The deeds of the body - The corrupt inclinations and passions; called deeds of the body, because they are supposed to have their origin in the fleshly appetites.

Ye shall live - You shall be happy and saved. Either your sins must die, or you must. If they are suffered to live, you will die. If they are put to death, you will be saved. No man can be saved in his sins. This closes the argument of the apostle for the superiority of the gospel to the Law in promoting the purity of man. By this train of reasoning, he has shown that the gospel has accomplished what the Law could not do - the sanctification of the soul, the destruction of the corrupt passions of our nature, and the recovery of man to God.

Verse 14

For as many - Whosoever; all who are thus led. This introduces a new topic, illustrating the benefits of the gospel, to wit, that it produces a spirit of adoption, Romans 8:14-17.

As are led - As submit to his influence and control. The Spirit is represented as influencing, suggesting, and controlling. One evidence of piety is, a willingness to yield to that influence, and submit to him. One decided evidence of the lack of piety is, where there is an unwillingness to submit to that influence, but where the Holy Spirit is grieved and resisted. All Christians submit to his influence; all sinners decidedly reject it and oppose it. The influence of the Spirit, if followed, would lead every man to heaven. But when neglected, rejected, or despised, man goes down to hell. The glory belongs to the conducting Spirit when man is saved; the fault is man‘s when he is lost. The apostle here does not agitate the question how it is that the people of God are led by the Spirit, or why they yield to it when

others resist it. His design is simply to state the fact, that they who are thus led are the sons of God, or have evidence of piety.

Are the sons of God - Are adopted into his family, and are his children. This is a name of endearment, meaning that they sustain to him this relation; that they are his friends, disciples, and imitators; that they are parts of the great family of the redeemed, of whom he is the Father and Protector. It is often applied to Christians in the Bible; Job 1:6; John 1:12; Philemon 2:15; 1 John 3:1-2; Matthew 5:9, Matthew 5:45; Luke 6:35. This is a test of piety which is easily applied.

(1) are we conscious that an influence from above has been drawing us away from the corrupting passions and vanities of this world? This is the work of the Spirit.

(2) are we conscious of a desire to yield to that influence, and to be conducted in the path of purity and life? This is an evidence that we are the sons of God.

(3) do we offer no resistance; do we follow cheerfully, and obey this pure influence, leading us to mortify pride, subdue passion, destroy lust, humble ambition, and annihilate the love of wealth and of the world? If so, we are his children. God will not lead us astray; and our peace and happiness consists only in yielding ourselves to this influence entirely, and in being willing to be conducted by this unseen hand "beside the still waters of salvation."

Verse 15

The spirit of bondage - The spirit that binds you; or the spirit of a slave, that produces only fear. The slave is under constant fear and alarm. But the spirit of religion is that of freedom and of confidence; the spirit of children, and not of slaves; compare the note at John 8:32-36.

Again to fear - That you should again be afraid, or be subjected to servile fear - This implies that in their former state under the Law, they were in a state of servitude, and that the tendency of it was merely to produce alarm. Every sinner is subject to such fear. He has everything of which to be alarmed. God is angry with him; his conscience will trouble him; and he has everything to apprehend in death and in eternity. But it is not so with the Christian; compare 2 Timothy 1:7.

The spirit of adoption - The feeling of affection, love, and confidence which pertains to children; not the servile, trembling spirit of slaves, but the temper and affectionate regard of sons. Adoption is the taking and treating a stranger as one‘s own child. It is applied to Christians because God treats them as his children; he receives them into this relation, though they were by nature strangers and enemies. It implies,

(1)That we by nature had no claim on him;

(2)That therefore, the act is one of mere kindness - of pure, sovereign love;

(3)That we are now under his protection and care; and,

(4)That we are bound to manifest toward him the spirit of children, and yield to him obedience. See the note at John 1:12; compare Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5. It is for this that Christians are so often called the sons of God.

Whereby we cry - As children who need protection and help. This evinces the habitual spirit of a child of God; a disposition,

(1)To express toward him the feelings due to a father;

(2)To call upon him; to address him in the language of affection and endearing confidence;

(3)To seek his protection and aid.

AbbaThis word is Chaldee (אבא abba), and means “father.” Why the apostle repeats the word in a different language, is not known. The Syriac reads it. “By which we call the Father our Father.” It is probable that the repetition here denotes merely intensity, and is designed to denote the interest with which a Christian dwells on the name, in the spirit of an affectionate, tender child. It is not unusual to repeat such terms of affection; compare Matthew 7:22; Psalm 8:1. This is an evidence of piety that is easily applied. He that can in sincerity, and with ardent affection apply this term to God, addressing him with a filial spirit as his Father, has the spirit of a Christian. Every child of God has this spirit; and he that has it not is a stranger to piety.

Verse 16

The Spirit - The Holy Spirit. That the Holy Spirit here is intended, is evident,

(1)Because this is the natural meaning of the expression;

(2)Because it is of the Holy Spirit that the apostle is mainly treating here;

(3)Because it would be an unnatural and forced construction to say of the temper of adoption that it bore witness.

Beareth witness - Testifies, gives evidence.

With our spirit - To our minds. This pertains to the adoption; and it means that the Holy Spirit furnishes evidence to our minds that we are adopted into the family of God. This effect is not infrequently attributed to the Holy Spirit, 2 Corinthians 1:22; 1 John 5:10-11; 1 Corinthians 2:12. If it be asked how this is done, I answer, it is not by any revelation of new truth; it is not by inspiration; it is not always by assurance; it is not by a mere persuasion that we are elected to eternal life; but it is by producing in us the appropriate effects of his influence. It is his to renew the heart; to sanctify the soul; to produce "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," Galatians 5:22-23. If a man has these, he has evidence of the witnessing of the Spirit with his spirit. If not, he has no such evidence. And the way, therefore, to ascertain whether we have this witnessing of the Spirit, is by an honest and prayerful inquiry whether these fruits of the Spirit actually exist in our minds. If they do, the evidence is clear. If not, all vain confidence of good estate; all visions, and raptures, and fancied revelations, will be mere delusions. It may be added, that the effect of these fruits of the Spirit an the mind is to produce a calm and heavenly frame; and in that frame, when attended with the appropriate fruits of the Spirit in a holy life, we may rejoice as an evidence of piety.

That we are the children of God - That we are adopted into his family.

Verse 17

And if children - If adopted into his family.

Then heirs - That is, he will treat us as sons. An heir is one who succeeds to an estate. The meaning here is, that if we sustain the relation of sons to God, that we shall be treated as such, and admitted to share his favors. An adopted son comes in for a part of the inheritance, Philemon 2:8-9; Hebrews 2:9-10. The connection between Christ and Christians is often referred to in the New Testament. The fact that they are united here is often alleged as a reason why they will be in glory, John 14:19, "Because I live, ye shall live also," 2 Timothy 2:11-12; "For if we be dead with him, we

shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with him, Revelation 3:21; "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne," etc., John 17:22-24.

If so be - If this condition exist; We shall not be treated as co-heirs with him, unless we here give evidence that we are united to him.

That we suffer with him - Greek, "If we suffer together, that we may also be glorified together." If we suffer in his cause; bear afflictions as he did; are persecuted and tried for the same thing; and thus show that we are united to him. It does not mean that we suffer to the same extent that he did, but we may imitate him in the kind of our sufferings, and in the spirit with which they are borne; and thus show that we are united to him.

That we may be also glorified together - If united in the same kind of sufferings, there is propriety in being united in destiny beyond the scenes of all suffering, the kingdom of blessedness and love.

Verse 18

For I reckon - I think; I judge. This verse commences a new division of the subject, which is continued to Romans 8:25. Its design is to show the power of the gospel in sustaining the soul in trials; a very important; and material part of the scheme. This had been partially noticed before Romans 5:3-5, but its full power to support the soul in the prospect of a glorious immortality had not been fully discussed. This topic seems here to have been suggested by what is said of adoption. The mind of the apostle instantly adverted to the effects or benefits of that adoption; and one of the most material of those benefits was the sustaining grace which the gospel imparted in the midst of afflictions. It should be borne in mind that the early Christians were comparatively few and feeble, and exposed to many trials, and that this topic would be often, therefore, introduced into the discussions about their privileges and condition.

The sufferings - The afflictions; the persecutions, sicknesses, etc. The expression evidently includes not only the special trials of Christians at that time, but all that believers are ever called to endure.

Of this present time - Probably the apostle had particular reference to the various calamities then endured. But the expression is equally applicable to afflictions of all times and in all places.

Are not worthy to be compared - Are nothing in comparison; the one is far more than an equivalent. in compensation for the other.

With the glory - The happiness; the honor in heaven.

Which shall be revealed in us - That shall be disclosed to us; or of which we shall be the partakers in heaven. The usual representation of heaven is that of glory, splendor, magnificence, or light; compare Revelation 21:10, Revelation 21:23-24; Revelation 22:5. By this, therefore, Christians maybe sustained. Their sufferings may seem great; but they should remember that they are nothing in comparison with future glory. They are nothing in degree. For these are light compared with that "eternal weight of glory" which they shall "work out." 2 Corinthians 4:17. They are nothing in duration. For these sufferings are but for a moment; but the glory shall be eternal. These will soon pass away; but that glory shall never become dim or diminished; it will increase and expand forever and ever.

In us - Unto us εἰς ἡμᾶς eis hēmasf0.

Verse 19

For the earnest expectation - ἀποκαραδοκία apokaradokiaThis word occurs only here and in Philemon 1:20, "According to my earnest expectation and my hope," etc. It properly denotes a state of earnest desire to see any object when the head is thrust forward; an intense anxiety; an ardent wish; and is thus well employed to denote the intense interest with which a Christian looks to his future inheritance.

Of the creature - τῆς κτίσεως tēs ktiseōsPerhaps there is not a passage in the New Testament that has been deemed more difficult of interpretation than this Romans 8:19-23; and after all the labors bestowed on it by critics, still there is no explanation proposed which is perfectly satisfactory, or in which commentators concur. The object here will be to give what appears to the writer the true meaning, without attempting to controvert the opinions of critics. The main design of the passage is, to show the sustaining power of the gospel in the midst of trials, by the prospect of the future deliverance and inheritance of the sons of God. This scope of the passage is to guide us in the interpretation. The following are, I suppose, the leading points in the illustration.

(1) the word "creature" refers to the renewed nature of the Christian, or to the Christian as renewed.

(2) he is waiting for his future glory; that is, desirous of obtaining the full development of the honors that await him as the child of God; Romans 8:19.

(3) he is subjected to a state of trial and vanity, affording comparatively little comfort and much disquietude.

(4) this is not in accordance with the desire of his heart, "not willingly," but is the wise appointment of God; Romans 8:20.

(5) in this state there is the hope of deliverance into glorious liberty; Romans 8:21.

(6) this condition of things does not exist merely in regard to the Christian, but is the common condition of the world. It all groans, and is in trial, as much as the Christian. He therefore should not deem his condition as especially trying. It is the common lot of all things here; Romans 8:22, But,

(7) Christians only have the prospect of deliverance. To them is held out the hope of final rescue, and of an eternal inheritance beyond all these sufferings. They wait, therefore, for the full benefits of the adoption; the complete recovery even of the body from the effects of sin, and the toils and trials of this live; and thus they are sustained by hope, which is the argument which the apostle has in view; Romans 8:23-24. With this view of the general scope of the passage, we may examine the particular phrases.

(The opinion which is perhaps most generally adopted of this difficult passage, is what explains κτίσις ktisisof the whole irrational creation. According to this view, the apostle, having adverted to the glory that awaited the Christian, as a ground of joy and comfort under present sufferings, exalts our idea of it still higher by representing the external world as participating in, and waiting for it. "This interpretation is suitable to the design of the apostle. Paul's object is not to confirm the certainty of a future state, but to produce a strong impression of its glorious character. Nothing could be better adapted to this object, than the grand and beautiful figure of the whole creation waiting and longing for the glorious revelation of the Son of God, and the consummation of his kingdom." Hodge. In the original it is the same word that is rendered alternately "creature" and "creation."

And the meaning of the passage depends, in great measure, on the sense of this single word. Generally speaking, it signifies anything created. The particular kind of creation is determined by the context alone. Of course, whatever sense we may attach to it, must be continued throughout the whole passage, as we cannot suppose the apostle uses the same word in two different senses, in one place, without any intimation of the change. To what then does κτίσις ktisisrefer? It is maintained by those who adopt the view noticed above, that it cannot refer to angels, either elect or fallen, since the former have never been subject to the bondage of corruption, and the latter are not waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God; that it cannot allude to wicked people, for neither do they anxiously look out for this manifestation; that it can no more refer to saints or renewed people, since these are expressly distinguished as a separate class in Romans 8:23; and that, therefore, it must be understood of the whole manimate and irrational creation.

It is further argued, that every part of the context may be explained consistently with this view. The passage is supposed to present a very bold and beautiful instance of the figure called prosopopoeia, by which things inanimate are invested with life and feeling, a figure which is indeed very common in Scripture, and which we need not be surprised to find in this place, amid so much that is grand and elevating; Joel 1:10, Joel 1:20; Jeremiah 12:4; Isaiah 24:4, Isaiah 24:7. According to this interpretation of κτίσις ktisisthen, the general sense of the apostle may be thus given. The whole irrational creation is interested in the future glory of the sons of God, and is anxiously waiting for it. For then the curse will be removed from the very ground, and the lower animals relieved from oppression and cruelty. The very creation, on account of the sin of man, has been subjected to the curse, and has become "vain" or useless in regard to the original design of it, having been made subservient to the evil purposes and passions of man.

This state of subjection to vanity is not willing, but by restraint. Violence is imposed, as it were, on external nature. But this shall not continue. There is hope in the heart of the subject world, that ὅτι hotiit shall be delivered from this bondage, and participate in the liberty of the children of God. This representation may seem strange and unusual, but "we know" certainly, adds the apostle, that it is so; that "the whole creation πᾶσα ἡ

κτίσις pasa hē ktisisgroaneth and travaileth in pain throughout every part. Even we, who are saints of God, and have been favored with the earnests of future bliss, feel the general oppression, and groan within ourselves, while we wait for the period of deliverance, in which the very body shall be ransomed from the grave and fashioned like unto Christ‘s glorious body.)

Of the creature - The word here rendered “creature” κτίσις ktisisoccurs in the New Testament nineteen times, and is used in the following senses:

(1)Creation; the act of creating; Romans 1:20,

(2)The creature; what is created or formed; the universe; Mark 10:6; Mark 13:19; 2 Peter 3:4; Romans 1:25; Romans 8:39.

(3)the rational creation; man as a rational being; the world of mankind; Mark 16:15; Colossians 1:23; 1 Peter 2:13.

(4)perhaps the church, the new creation of God taken collectively; Colossians 1:15; Revelation 3:14.

(5)the Christian, the new creation, regarded individually; the work of the Holy Spirit on the renewed heart; the new man.

After all the attention which I can give to this passage, I regard this to be the meaning here, for the following reasons, namely.

(1) because this alone seems to me to suit the connection, and to make sense in the argument. If the word refers, as has been supposed by different interpreters; either to angels, or to the bodies of people, or to the material creation, or to the rational creation - to people (mankind); it is difficult to see what connection either would have with the argument. The apostle is discoursing of the benefits of the gospel to Christians in time of trial; and the bearing of the argument requires us to understand this illustration of them, unless we are compelled not to understand it thus by the proper laws of interpreting words.

(2) the word “creature” is used in a similar sense by the same apostle. Thus, 2 Corinthians 5:17, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” καινὴ κτίσις kainē ktisis Galatians 6:15, “for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.”

(3) the verb create is thus used. Thus, Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Ephesians 2:15, "having abolished in his flesh the enmity … for to make in himself of twain one new man:" Greek, "That he might create κτίσῃ ktisēthe two into one newman." Ephesians 4:24, "the new man, which is created in righteousness," etc.

(4) nothing was more natural than for the sacred writers thus to speak of a Christian as a new creation, a new creature. The great power of God involved in his conversion, and the strong resemblance between the creation and imparting spiritual life, led naturally to this use of the language.

(5) language similar to this occurs in the Old Testament, and it was natural to transfer it to the New. The Jewish people were represented as made or created by God for his service, and the phrase, therefore, might come to designate those who were thus formed by him to his service. Deuteronomy 32:6, "hath he not made thee, and established thee?" Isaiah 43:7, " … Everyone that is called by my name; for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." Isaiah 43:21, "this people have I formed for myself." From all which reasons, it seems to me that the expression here is used to denote Christians, renewed people. Its meaning, however, is varied in Romans 8:22.

Waiteth for - Expects; is not in a state of possession, but is looking for it with interest.

The manifestation of the sons of God - The full development of the benefits of the sons of God; the time when they shall be acknowledged, and received into the full privileges of sons. Here Christians have some evidence of their adoption. But they are in a world of sin; they are exposed to trials; they are subject to many calamities; and though they have evidence here that they are the sons of God, yet they wait for that period when they shall be fully delivered from all these trials, and be admitted to the enjoyment of all the privileges of the children of the Most High. The time when this shall take place will be at the day of Judgment, when they shall be fully acknowledged in the presence of an assembled universe as his children. All Christians are represented as in this posture of waiting for the full possession of their privileges as the children of God. 1 Corinthians 1:7, "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thessalonians 3:5;

Galatians 5:5, "for we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." 1 Thessalonians 1:10.

Verse 20

For the creature - The renewed creature; the Christian mind. This is given as a reason for its aspiring to the full privileges of adoption, that the present state is not one of choice, or one which is preferred, but one to which it has been subjected for wise reasons by God.

Subject to vanity - The word "subject to" means placed in such a state; subjected to it by the appointment of another, as a soldier has his rank and place assigned him in an army. The word "vanity" here ματαιότης mataiotēsis descriptive of the present condition of the Christian, as frail and dying; as exposed to trials, temptations, and cares; as in the midst of conflicts, and of a world which may be emphatically pronounced vanity. More or less, the Christian is brought under this influence; his joys are marred; his peace is discomposed; his affections wander; his life is a life of vanity and vexation.

Not willingly - Not voluntarily. It is not a matter of choice. It is not what is congenial to his renewed nature. That would aspire to perfect holiness and peace. But this subjection is one that is contrary to it, and from which he desires to be delivered. This describes substantially the same condition as Romans 7:15-24.

But by reason - By him διά diaIt is the appointment of God, who has chosen to place his people in this condition; and who for wise purposes retains them in it.

Who hath subjected the same - Who has appointed his people to this condition. It is his wise arrangement. Here we may observe,

(1) That the instinctive feelings of Christians lead them to desire a purer and a happier world, Philemon 1:23.

(2) that it is not what they desire, to be subjected to the toils of this life, and to the temptations and vanities of this world. They sigh for deliverance.

(3) their lot in life; their being subjected to this state of vanity, is the arrangement of God. Why it is, he has not seen fit to inform us fully. He might have taken his people at once to heaven as soon as they are converted. But though we know not all the reasons why they are continued here in this state of vanity, we can see some of them:

(a)Christians are subjected to this state to do good to their fellow sinners. They remain on earth for this purpose: and this should be their leading aim.

(b)By their remaining here the power of the gospel is shown in overcoming their sin; in meeting their temptations; in sustaining them in trial; and in thus furnishing living evidence to the world of the power and excellency of that gospel. This could not be attained if they were removed at once to heaven.

(c)It furnishes occasion for some interesting exhibitions of character - for hope, and faith, and love, and for increasing and progressive excellence.

(d)It is a proper training for heaven. It brings out the Christian character, and fits it for the skies. There may be inestimable advantages, all of which we may not see, in subjecting the Christian to a process of training in overcoming his sins, and in producing confidence in God, before he is admitted to his state of final rest.

(e)It is fit and proper that he should engage here in the service of Him who has redeemed him. He has been ransomed by the blood of Christ, and God has the highest claim on him in all the conflicts and toils, in all the labors and services to which he may be subjected in this life.

In hope - See the note at Romans 5:4. Hope has reference to the future; and in this state of the Christian, he sighs for deliverance, and expects it.

Verse 21

Because - This is the ground of his hope, and this sustains him now. It is the purpose of God that deliverance shall be granted, and this supports the Christian amidst the trials to which he is subjected here. The hope is, that this same renewed man shall be delivered from all the toils, and cares, and sins of this state.

The creature itself - The very soul that is renewed; the ransomed man without essential change. It will be the same being, though purified; the same man, possessed of the same body and soul, though freed from all the corruptions of humanity, and elevated above all the degradations of the present condition. The idea is everywhere presented, that the identical person shall be admitted to heaven without essential change, 1 Corinthians

15:35-38, 1 Corinthians 15:42-44. That this is the hope of all Christians, see 2 Peter 3:13.

From the bondage of corruption - This does not differ materially from "vanity," Romans 8:20. It implies that this state is not a willing state, or not a condition of choice, but is one of bondage or servitude (see Romans 7:15-24); and that it is a corrupt, imperfect, perishing condition. It is one that leads to sin, and temptation, and conflict and anxiety. It is a condition often which destroys the peace, mars the happiness, dims the hope, enfeebles the faith, and weakens the love of Christians, and this is called the bondage of corruption. It is also one in which temporal death has dominion, and in the bondage of which, believers as well as unbelievers shall be held. Yet from all this bondage the children of God shall be delivered.

The glorious liberty - Greek, The freedom of the glory of the children of God. This is,

(1) "Liberty." It is freedom from the bondage under which the Christian groans. It will be freedom from sin; from corruption; from evil desires; from calamity; from death. The highest "freedom "in the universe is that which is enjoyed in heaven, where the redeemed are under the sovereignty and government of their king, but where they do that, and that only, which they desire. All is slavery but the service of God; all is bondage but that law which accords with the supreme wish of the soul, and where commands accord with the perfect desires of the heart.

(2) this is glorious liberty. It is encompassed with majesty; attended with honor; crowned with splendor. The heavenly world is often described as a state of glory; Note, Romans 2:10.

Of the children of God - That the children of God shall enjoy.

Verse 22

For we know - The sentiment of this verse is designed as an illustration of what had just been said.

That the whole creation - Margin, "every creature." This expression has been commonly understood as meaning the same as "the creature" in Romans 8:20-21. But I understand it as having a different signification; and as being used in the natural and usual signification of the word "creature," or "creation." It refers, as I suppose, to the whole animate creation; to all living beings; to the state of all created things here, as in a condition of pain and disorder, and groaning and death. Everything which we see; every

creature which lives, is thus subjected to a state of servitude, pain, vanity, and death. The reasons for supposing that this is the true interpretation, are,

(1)That the apostle expressly speaks of "the whole creation, of every creature, qualifying the phrase by the expression "we know," as if he was drawing an illustration from a well-understood, universal fact.

(2)this interpretation makes consistent sense, and makes the verse have a direct bearing on the argument. "It is just an argument from analogy."

He had Romans 8:20-21 said that the condition of a Christian was one of bondage and servitude. It was an imperfect, humiliating state; one attended with pain, sorrow, and death. This might be regarded as a melancholy description, and the question might arise, why was not the Christian at once delivered from this? The answer is in this verse. "It is just the condition of everything." It is the manifest principle on which God governs the world. The whole creation is in just this condition; and we are not to be surprised, therefore, if it is the condition of the believer. It is a part of the universal system of things; it accords with everything we see; and we are not to be surprised that the church exists on the same principle of administration; in a state of bondage, imperfection, sorrow, and sighing for deliverance.

Groaneth - Greek, Groans together. All is united in a condition of sorrow. The expression denotes mutual and universal grief. It is one wide and loud lamentation, in which a dying world unites; and in which it has united "until now."

And travaileth in pain together - This expression properly denotes the extreme pain of parturition. It also denotes any intense agony, or extreme suffering; and it means here that the condition of all things has been that of intense, united, and continued suffering; in other words, that we are in a world of misery and death. This has been united; all have partaken of it: it has been intense; all endure much: it has been unremitted; every age has experienced the repetition of the same thing.

Until now - Until the time when the apostle wrote. It is equally true of the time since he wrote. It has been the characteristic of every age. It is remarkable that the apostle does not here say of "the whole creation," that it had any hope of deliverance; an additional consideration that shows that the interpretation above suggested is correct, Romans 8:20-21, Romans 8:23. Of the sighing and suffering universe, he says nothing with respect to its future state. He does not say that the suffering brutal creation shall be compensated, or shall be restored or raised up. He simply adverts to the fact

that it suffers, as an illustration that the condition of the Christian is not singular and special. The Scriptures say nothing of the future condition of the brutal creation.

Verse 23

And not only they - Not only the creation in general. "But ourselves also." Christians.

Which have the first-fruits of the Spirit - The word used ἀπαρχὴ aparchēdenotes properly the first-fruits of the harvest, the portion that was first collected and consecrated to God as an offering of gratitude, Deuteronomy 26:2; Exodus 23:19; Numbers 18:13. Hence, the word means what is first in order of time. Here it means, as I suppose, that the Christians of whom Paul was speaking had partaken of the first influences of the Spirit, or had been among the first partakers of his influences in converting sinners. The Spirit had been sent down to attend the preaching of the gospel, and they were among the first who had partaken of those influences. Some, however, have understood the word to mean a pledge, or earnest, or foretaste of joys to come. This idea has been attached to the word because the first-fruits of the harvest were a pledge of the harvest, an evidence that it was ripe, etc. But the word does not seem to be used in this sense in the New Testament. The only places where it occurs are the following; Romans 8:23; Romans 11:16; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Corinthians 16:15; James 1:18; Revelation 14:4.

Groan within ourselves - We sigh for deliverance. The expression denotes strong internal desire; the deep anguish of spirit when the heart is oppressed with anguish, and earnestly wishes for succor.

Waiting for the adoption - Waiting for the full blessings of the adoption. Christians are adopted when they are converted Romans 8:15, but they have not been yet admitted to the full privileges of their adoption into the family of God. Their adoption when they are converted is secret, and may at the time be unknown to the world. The fullness of the adoption, their complete admission to the privileges of the sons of God, shall be in the day of judgment, in the presence of the universe, and amidst the glories of the final consummation of all things. This adoption is not different from the first, but is the completion of the act of grace when a sinner is received into the family of God.

The redemption of the body - The complete recovery of the body from death and corruption. The particular and striking act of the adoption in the

day of judgment will be the raising up of the body from the grave, and rendering it immortal and eternally blessed. The particular effects of the adoption in this world are on the soul. The completion of it on the last day will be seen particularly in the body; and thus the entire man shall be admitted into the favor of God, and restored from all his sins and all the evil consequences of the fall. The apostle here speaks the language of every Christian. The Christian has joys which the world does not know; but he has also sorrows; he sighs over his corruption; he is in the midst of calamity; he is going to the grave; and he looks forward to that complete deliverance, and to that elevated state, when, in the presence of an assembled universe, he shall be acknowledged as a child of God. This elevated privilege gives to Christianity its high value; and the hope of being acknowledged in the presence of the universe as the child of God - the hope of the poorest and the humblest believer - is of infinitely mere value than the prospect of the most princely inheritance, or of the brightest crown that a monarch ever wore.

Verse 24

For we are saved by hope - It cannot be said that hope is the instrument or condition of salvation. Most commentators have understood this as meaning that we have as yet attained salvation only in hope; that we have arrived only to a condition in which we hope for future glory; and that we are in an attitude of waiting for the future state of adoption. But perhaps the word "saved" may mean here simply, we are kept, preserved, sustained in our trials, by hope. Our trials are so great that nothing but the prospect of future deliverance would uphold us; and the prospect is sufficient to enable us to bear them with patience. This is the proper meaning of the word "save"; and it is often thus used in the New Testament; see Matthew 8:25; Matthew 16:25; Mark 3:4; Mark 8:35. The Syriac renders this, "For by hope we live." The Arabic, "We are preserved by hope." Hope thus sustains the soul in the midst of trims, and enables it to bear them without a complaint.

But hope that is seen - Hope is a complex emotion, made up of an earnest desire, and an expectation of obtaining an object. It has reference, therefore, to what is at present unseen. But when the object is seen, and is in our possession, it cannot be said to be an object of hope. The Word hope here means the object of hope, the thing hoped for.

What a man seeth - The word "seeth" is used here in the sense of possessing, or enjoying. What a man already possesses, he cannot be said to

hope for.

Why - How. What a man actually possesses, how can he look forward to it with anticipation?

Verse 25

But if we hope … - The effect here stated is one which exists everywhere. Where there is a strong desire for an object, and a corresponding expectation of obtaining it - which constitutes true hope - then we can wait for it with patience. Where there is a strong desire without a corresponding expectation of obtaining it, there is impatience. As the Christian has a strong desire of future glory, and as he has an expectation of obtaining it just in proportion to that desire, it follows that he may bear trials and persecutions patiently in the hope of his future deliverance. Compared with our future glory, our present sufferings are light, and but for a moment; 2 Corinthians 4:17. In the hope of that blessed eternity which is before him, the Christian can endure the severest trial, and bear the intensest pain without a complaint.

Verse 26

Likewise the Spirit - This introduces a new source of consolation and support, what is derived from the Spirit. It is a continuation of the argument of the apostle, to show the sustaining power of the Christian religion. The "Spirit" here undoubtedly refers to the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, and who strengthens us.

Helpeth - This word properly means, to sustain with us; to aid us in supporting. It is applied usually to those who unite in supporting or carrying a burden. The meaning may be thus expressed: "he greatly assists or aids us."

Our infirmities - Assists us in our infirmities, or aids us to bear them. The word "infirmities" refers to the weaknesses to which we are subject, and to our various trials in this life. The Spirit helps us in this,

(1)By giving us strength to bear them;

(2)By exciting us to make efforts to sustain them;

(3)By ministering to us consolations, and truths, and views of our Christian privileges, that enable us to endure our trials.

For we know not … - This is a specification of the aid which the Holy Spirit, renders us. The reasons why Christians do not know what to pray for may be,

(1)That they do not know what would be really best for them.
(2)they do not know what God might be willing to grant them.

(3)they are to a great extent ignorant of the character of God, the reason of his dealings, the principles of his government, and their own real needs.

(4)they are often in real, deep perplexity. They are encompassed with trials, exposed to temptations, feeble by disease, and subject to calamities. In these circumstances, if left alone, they would neither be able to bear their trials, nor know what to ask at the hand of God.

But the Spirit itself - The Holy Spirit; Romans 8:9-11.

Maketh intercession - The word used here ὑπερεντυνγχάνει huperentungchaneioccurs no where else in the New Testament. The word ἐντυνγχάνω entungchanōhowever, is used several times. It means properly to be present with anyone for the purpose of aiding, as an advocate does in a court of justice; hence, to intercede for anyone, or to aid or assist in any manner. In this place it simply means that the Holy Spirit greatly assists or aids us; not by praying for us, but in our prayers and infirmities.

With groanings - With sighs, or that deep feeling and intense anxiety which exists in the oppressed and burdened heart of the Christian.

Which cannot be uttered - Or rather, perhaps, which is not uttered; those emotions which are too deep for utterance, or for expression in articulate language. This does not mean that the Spirit produces these groanings; but that in these deep-felt emotions, when the soul is oppressed and overwhelmed, he lends us his assistance and sustains us. The phrase may be thus translated: "The Spirit greatly aids or supports us in those deep emotions, those intense feelings, those inward sighs which cannot be expressed in language, but which he enables us to bear, and which are understood by Him that searcheth the hearts."

Verse 27

And he that searcheth the hearts - God. To search the heart is one of his attributes which cannot be communicated to a creature; Jeremiah 17:10.

Knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit - Knows the desires which the Holy Spirit excites and produces in the heart. He does not need that those deep emotions should be expressed in words; he does not need the eloquence of language to induce him to hear; but he sees the anxious feelings of the soul, and is ready to aid and to bless.

Maketh intercession for the saints - Aids and directs Christians.

According to the will of God - Greek, "According to God." It is according to his will in the following respects:

(1) The Spirit is given according to his will. It is his gracious purpose to grant his aid to all who truly love him.

(2) the desires which he excites in the heart of the Christian are those which are according to his will; they are such as God wishes to exist; the contrite, humble, and penitent pleading of sinners for mercy.

(3) he superintends and guards Christians in their prayers.

It is not meant that they are infallible, or that they never make an improper petition, or have an improper desire; but that he has a general superintendence over their minds, and that so far as they will yield themselves to his direction, they shall not be led into error That man is most safe who yields himself most entirely to the influence of the Holy Spirit. And the doctrine here stated is one that is full of consolation to the Christian. We are poor, and needy, and ignorant, and blind; we are the creatures of a day, and are crushed before the moth. But in the midst of our feebleness we may look to God for the aid of his Spirit, and rejoice in his presence, and in his power to sustain us in our sighings, and to guide us in our wanderings.

Verse 28

And we know - This verse introduces another source of consolation and support, drawn from the fact that all flyings are under the direction of an infinitely wise Being, who has purposed the salvation of the Christian, and who has so appointed all things that they shall contribute to it.

All things - All our afflictions and trials; all the persecutions and calamities to which we are exposed. Though they are numerous and long-continued yet they are among the means that are appointed for our welfare.

Work together for good - They shall cooperate; they shall mutually contribute to our good. They take off our affections from this world; they teach us the truth about our frail, transitory, and lying condition; they lead us to look to God for support, and to heaven for a final home; and they produce a subdued spirit. a humble temper, a patient, tender, and kind

disposition. This has been the experience of all saints; and at the end of life they have been able to say it was good for them to be afflicted; Psalm 119:67, Psalm 119:71; Jeremiah 31:18-19; Hebrews 12:11.

For good - For our real welfare; for the promotion of true piety, peace, and happiness in our hearts.

To them that love God - This is a characteristic of true piety. To them, afflictions are a blessing. To others, they often prove otherwise. On others they are sent as chastisements; and they produce complaining, instead of peace; rebellion, instead of submission; and anger, impatience, and hatred, instead of calmness, patience, and love. The Christian is made a better man by receiving afflictions as they should be received, and by desiring that they should accomplish the purpose for which they are sent; the sinner is made more hardened by resisting them, and refusing to submit to their obvious intention and design.

To them who are the called - Christians are often represented as called of God. The word κλητός klētosis sometimes used to denote an external invitation, offer, or calling; Matthew 20:16; Matthew 22:14. But excepting in these places, it is used in the New Testament to denote those who had accepted the call, and were true Christians; Romans 1:6-7; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 1 Corinthians 1:24; Revelation 17:14. It is evidently used in this sense here - to denote those who were true Christians. The connection as well as the usual meaning of the word, requires us thus to understand it. Christians are said to be called because God has invited them to be saved, and has sent into their heart such an influence as to make the call effectual to their salvation. In this way their salvation is to be traced entirely to God.

According to his purpose - The word here rendered "purpose" πρόθεσις prothesismeans properly a proposition, or a laying down anything in view of others; and is thus applied to the bread that was laid on the table of show-bread; Matthew 12:4; Mark 2:26; Luke 6:4. Hence, it means, when applied to the mind, a plan or purpose of mind. It implies that God had a plan, purpose, or intention, in regard to all who became Christians. They are not saved by chance or hap-hazard. God does not convert people without design; and his designs are not new, but are eternal. What he does. he always meant to do. What it is right for him to do, it was right always to intend to do. What God always meant to do, is his purpose or plan. That he has such a purpose in regard to the salvation of his people, is often

affirmed; Romans 9:11; Ephesians 1:11; Ephesians 3:11; 2 Timothy 1:9; Jeremiah 51:29. This purpose of saving his people is,

(1)One over which a creature can have no control; it is according to the counsel of his own will; Ephesians 1:11.

(2)it is without any merit on the part of the sinner - a purpose to save him by grace; 2 Timothy 1:9.

(3)it is eternal; Ephesians 3:11.

(4)it is such as should excite lively gratitude in all who have been inclined by the grace of God to accept the offers of eternal life. They owe it to the mere mercy of God, and they should acknowledge him as the fountain and source of all their hopes of heaven.

Verse 29

For whom he did foreknow - The word used here προέγνω proegnōhas been the subject of almost endless disputes in regard to its meaning in this place. The literal meaning of the word cannot be a matter of dispute. It denotes properly to "know beforehand;" to be acquainted with future events. But whether it means here simply to know that certain persons would become Christians; or to ordain, and constitute them to be Christians, and to be saved, has been a subject of almost endless discussion. Without entering at large into an investigation of the word, perhaps the following remarks may throw light on it.

(1) it does not here have reference to all the human family; for all are not, and have not, been conformed to the image of his Son. It has reference therefore only to those who would become Christians, and be saved.

(2) it implies "certain knowledge." It was certainly foreseen, in some way, that they would believe, and be saved. There is nothing, therefore, in regard to them that is contingent, or subject to doubt in the divine Mind, since it was certainly foreknown.

(3) the event which was thus foreknown must have been, for some cause, certain and fixed; since an uncertain event could not be possibly foreknown. To talk of a foreknowing a contingent event, that is, of

foreknowing an event as certain which may or may not exist, is an absurdity.

(4) in what way such an event became certain is not determined by the use of this word. But it must have been somehow in connection with a divine appointment or arrangement, since in no other way can it be conceived to be certain. While the word used here, therefore, does not of necessity mean to decree, yet its use supposes that there was a purpose or plan; and the phrase is an explanation of what the apostle had just said, that it was "according to the purpose of God" that they were called. This passage does not affirm why, or how, or, "on what grounds" God foreknew that some of the human family would be saved. It simply affirms the fact; and the mode in which those who will believe were designated, must be determined from other sources. This passage simply teaches that he knew them; that his eye was fixed on them; that he regarded them as to be conformed to his Son; and that, thus knowing them, he designated them to eternal life. The Syriac renders it in accordance with this interpretation: "And from the beginning he knew them, and sealed them with the image of his Son," etc. As, however, none would believe but by the influences of his Spirit, it follows that they were not foreknown on account of any faith which they would themselves exercise, or any goodworks which they would themselves perform, but according to the purpose or plan of God himself.

He also did predestinate - See the meaning of the original of this word explained in the notes at Romans 1:4; see also the Acts 4:28 note; and 1 Corinthians 2:7 note. In these places the word evidently means to determine, purpose, or decree beforehand; and it must have this meaning here. No other idea could be consistent with the proper meaning of the word, or be intelligible. It is clear also that it does not refer to external privileges, but to real conversion and piety; since that to which they were predestinated was not the external privilege of the gospel, but conformity to his Son, and salvation; see Romans 8:30. No passage could possibly teach in stronger language that it was God's purpose to save those who will be saved. Ephesians 1:5, "having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself." Ephesians 1:11, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

To be conformed to the image of his Son - To resemble his Son; to be of like form with the image of his Son. We may learn here,

(1) That God does not determine to save people, whatever their character may be. The decree is not to save them in their sins, or whether they be sinful or holy. But it has primary respect to their char acter. It is that they "should be" holy; and, as a consequence of this, that they should be saved.

(2) the only evidence which we can have that we are the subjects of his gracious purpose is, that we are "in fact" conformed to the Lord Jesus Christ. For this was the design of the decree. This is the only satisfactory proof of piety; and by this alone can we determine that we are interested in his gracious plan of saving people.

That he might be the first-born - The first-born among the Hebrews had many special privileges. The idea here is,

(1)That Christ might be pre-eminent as the model and exemplar; that he might be clothed with special honors, and be so regarded in his church; and yet,

(2)That he might still sustain a fraternal relation to them; that he might be one in the same great family of God where all are sons; compare Hebrews 2:12-14.

Many brethren - Not a few. The purpose of God is that many of the human family shall be saved.

Verse 30

Moreover … - In this verse, in order to show to Christians the true consolation to be derived from the fact that they are predestinated, the apostle states the connection between that predestination and their certain salvation. The one implied the other.

Whom he did predestinate - All whom he did predestinate.

Them he also called - Called by his Spirit to become Christians. He called, not merely by an external invitation, but in such a way as that they in fact were justified. This cannot refer simply to an external call of the gospel, since those who are here said to be called are said also to be justified and glorified. The meaning is, that there is a certain connection between the predestination and the call, which will be manifested in due time. The connection is so certain that the one infallibly secures the other.

He justified - See the note at Romans 3:24. Not that he justified them from eternity, for this was not true; and if it were, it would also follow that he glorified them from eternity, which would be an absurdity. It means that there is a regular sequence of events - the predestination precedes and secures the calling; and the calling precedes and secures the justification. The one is connected in the purpose of God with the other; and the one, in fact, does not take place without the other. The purpose was in eternity. The calling and justifying in time.

Them he also glorified - This refers probably to heaven. It means that there is a connection between justification and glory. The one does not exist without the other in its own proper time; as the calling does not subsist without the act of justification. This proves, therefore, the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. There is a connection infallible and ever existing between the predestination and the final salvation. They who are subjects of the one are partakers of the other. That this is the sense is clear,

(1)Because it is the natural and obvious meaning of the passage.

(2)because this only would meet the design of the argument of the apostle. For how would it be a source of consolation to say to them that whom God foreknew he predestinated, and whom he predestinated he called, and whom he called he justified, and whom he justified "might fall away and be lost forever?"

Verse 31

What shall we then say … - What fairly follows from the facts stated? or what conclusion shall we draw in regard to the power of the Christian religion to support us in our trials from the considerations which have been stated? What the influence is he proceeds to state.

If God be for us - Be on outside, or is our friend, as he has shown himself to be by adopting us Romans 8:15, by granting to us his Spirit Romans 8:16-17, Romans 8:26-27, and by his gracious purpose to save us, Romans 8:29-30).

Who can be against us? - Who can injure or destroy us? Sinners may be against us, and so may the great enemy of our souls, but their power to destroy us is taken away. God is more mighty than all our foes; and he can defend and save us; see Psalm 118:6. "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear what man can do unto me." The proposition advanced in this verse,

Paul proceeds to illustrate by various specifications, which continue to the end of the chapter.

Verse 32

He that spared not - Who did not retain, or keep from suffering and death.

His own Son - Who thus gave the highest proof of love that a father could give, and the highest demonstration of his willingness to do good to those for whom he gave him.

But delivered him up - Gave him into the hands of men, and to a cruel death; Note, Acts 2:23.

For us all - For all Christians. The connection requires that this expression should be understood here with this limitation. The argument for the security of all Christians is here derived from the fact, that God had shown them equal love in giving his Son for them. It was not merely for the apostles; not only for the rich, and the great; but for the most humble and obscure of the flock of Christ. For them he endured as severe pangs, and expressed as much love, as for the rich and the great that shall be redeemed. The most humble and obscure believer may derive consolation from the fact that Christ died for him, and that God has expressed the highest love for him which we can conceive to be possible.

How shall he not - His giving his Son is a proof that he will give to us all things that we need. The argument is from the greater to the less. He that has given the greater gift will not withhold the less.

All things - All things that may be needful for our welfare. These things he will give freely; without money and without price. His first great gift, that of his Son, was a free gift; and all others that we may need will be given in a similar manner. It is not by money, nor by our merit, but it is by the mere mercy of God; so that from the beginning to the end of the work it is all of grace. We see here,

(1)The privilege of being a Christian. He has the friendship of God; has been favored with the highest proofs of divine love; and has assurance that he shall receive all that he needs.

(2)he has evidence that God will continue to be his friend. He that has given his Son to die for his people will not withdraw the lesser mercies that may be necessary to secure their salvation. The argument of the apostle here, therefore, is one that strongly shows that God will not forsake his children, but will keep them to eternal life.

Verse 33

Who shall lay anything to the charge - This expression is taken from courts of law, and means, who shall accuse, or condemn, or so charge with crime before the tribunal of God as to cause their condemnation?

God‘s elect - His chosen people. Those who have been chosen according to his eternal purpose; Note, Romans 8:28. As they are the chosen of God, they are dear to him; and as he purposed to save them, he will do it in such a way as that none can bring against them a charge that would condemn them.

It is God that justifieth - That is, who has pardoned them, and admitted them to his favor; and pronounced them just in his sight; Notes, Romans 1:17; Romans 3:24. It would be absurd to suppose that he would again condemn them. The fact that he has justified them is, therefore, a strong proof that they will be saved. This may be read with more force as a question, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God‘s elect? Shall God who justifieth?” The Greek will bear either mode of rendering. The passage implies that there would be a high degree of absurdity in supposing that the same being would both justify and condemn the same individual. The Christian, therefore, is secure.

Verse 34

Who is he that condemneth? - Who shall pass sentence of condemnation, and consign to perdition? The function of passing sentence of condemnation on people shall pertain to Christ, the judge of quick and dead, and the apostle proceeds to say that it was certain that he would not condemn the elect of God. They were therefore secure.

It is Christ that died - Or as it may be rendered, “Shall Christ who has died, condemn them?” The argument here is, that as Christ died to save them, and not to destroy them, he will not condemn them. His death for them is a security that he will not condemn them. As he died to save them, and as they have actually embraced his salvation, there is the highest security that he will not condemn them. This is the first argument for their security from the death of Christ.

Yea rather, that is risen again - This is a second consideration for their security from his work. “He rose for their justification” (Note, Romans 4:25); and as this was the object which he had in view, it follows that he will not condemn them.

Who is even at the right hand of God - Invested with power, and dignity, and authority in heaven. This is a third consideration to show that Christ will not condemn us, and that Christians are secure. He is clothed with power; he is exalted to honor; he is placed at the head of all things. And this solemn enthronement and investiture with power over the universe, is with express reference to the salvation of his church and people; Matthew 28:18-19; John 17:2; Ephesians 1:20-23. The Christian is, therefore, under the protection of Christ, and is secure from being condemned by him.

Who also maketh intercession for us - Note, Romans 8:26. Who pleads our cause; who aids and assists us; who presents our interests before the mercy-seat in the heavens. For this purpose he ascended to heaven; Hebrews 7:25. This is the fourth consideration which the apostle urges for the security of Christians drawn from the work of Christ. By all these, he argues their complete security from being subject to condemnation by him who shall pronounce the doom of all mankind, and therefore their complete safety in the day of judgment. Having the Judge of all for our friend, we are safe.

Verse 35

Who shall separate us - That is, finally or entirely separate us. This is a new argument of the apostle, showing his strong confidence in the safety of the Christian.

From the love of Christ - This expression is ambiguous; and may mean either our love to Christ or his love to us. I understand it in the former sense, and suppose it means, "Who shall cause us to cease to love the Saviour?" In other words, the love which Christians have for their Redeemer is so strong, that it will surmount and survive all opposition and all trials. The reason for so understanding the expression is, that it is not conceivable how afflictions, etc. should have any tendency to alienate Christ's love "from us;" but their supposed tendency to alienate "our love" from him might be very strong. They are endured in his cause. They are caused, in a good degree, by professed attachment to him. The persecutions and trials to which Christians are exposed on account of their professed attachment to him, might be supposed to make them weary of a service that involved so many trials. But no, says the apostle. Our love for him is so strong that we are willing to bear all; and nothing that these foes of our peace can do, can alienate us from him and from his cause. The argument,

therefore, is drawn from the strong love of a Christian to his Saviour; and from the assurance that nothing would be able to separate him from that love.

On the other hand, it is alleged that "the object of the apostle is to assure us, not so immediately of our love to God, as of his love to us, by directing our attention to his predestinating, calling, justifying, and glorifying us, and not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up for us; that in addition to this it contributes more to our consolation, to have our minds fixed upon God's love to us, than upon our love to him, which is subject to so many failings and infirmities." Haldane.

Indeed the whole of this passage proceeds, in its triumphing strain, on the ground of what God and Christ have done "for us," and not on the ground of anything belonging to us. It is therefore improbable, that the apostle, in the midst of such a strain, should introduce the love of the creature to God, as a just reason for such unparalleled confidence. It is more natural to the Christian to triumph in the love of Christ to him, than in any return he can make. He can glory in the strength of the former, while he mourns over the weakness of the latter. As to the objection that afflictions can have no tendency to alienate Christ's love, these are the "very things" that alienate people from us. There are persons who are called "summer friends" because they desert us in the winter of adversity. But the love of Christ is greatly exalted by the fact, that none of all possible adverse circumstances, of which the apostle enumerates not a few, shall ever change his love.

Shall tribulation - θλίψις thlipsisNote, Romans 2:9. The word properly refers to pressure from without; affliction arising from external causes. It means, however, not infrequently, trial of any kind.

Or distress - στενοχωρία stenochōriaThis word properly means "narrowness of place;" and then, great anxiety and distress of mind, such as arises when a man does not know where to turn himself or what to do for relief. It refers, therefore, to distress or anxiety "of mind," such as the early Christians were often subject to from their trials and persecutions; 2 Corinthians 7:5," Without were fightings, "within were fears;" see the note at Romans 2:9.

Or persecutions - Note, Matthew 5:11. To these the early Christians were constantly exposed.

Or famine - To this they were also exposed as the natural result of being driven from home, and of being often compelled to wander amidst strangers, and in deserts and desolate places.

Or peril - Danger of any kind.

Or sword - The sword of persecution; the danger of their lives to which they were constantly exposed. As all these things happened to them in consequence of their professed attachment to Christ, it might be supposed that they would tend to alienate their minds from him. But the apostle was assured that they had not this power, but that their love to the Saviour was so strong as to overcome all, and to bind them unalterably to his cause in the midst of the deepest trials. The fact is, that the more painful the trials to which they are exposed on his account, the more strong and unwavering is their love to him, and their confidence in his ability to save.

Verse 36

As it is written - Psalm 44:22. This passage the apostle quotes not as having originally reference to Christians, but as "aptly descriptive" of their condition. The condition of saints in the time of the psalmist was similar to that of Christians in the time of Paul. The same language would express both.

For thy sake - In thy cause; or on account of attachment to time.

We are killed - We are subject to, or exposed to death. We endure sufferings equivalent to dying; compare 1 Corinthians 4:9, "God hath set forth us the apostles last, "as it were appointed to death."

All the day long - Continually; constantly. There is no intermission to our danger, and to our exposure to death.

We are accounted - We are reckoned; we are regarded, or dealt with. That is, our enemies judge that we ought to die, and deem us the appropriate subjects of slaughter, with as little concern or remorse as the lives of sheep are taken.

Verse 37

Nay - But. Notwithstanding our severe pressures and trials.

In all these things - In the very midst of them; while we are enduring them we are able to triumph; compare 1 Corinthians 15:57.

We are more than conquerors - We gain the victory. That is, they have not power to subdue us; to alienate our love and confidence; to produce apostasy. We are the victors, not they. Our faith is not destroyed; our love is not diminished; our hope is not blasted. But it is not simple victory; it is not

mere life, and continuance of what we had before; it is more than simple triumph; it augments our faith, increases our strength, expands our love to Christ. The word used here is a strong, emphatic expression, such as the apostle Paul often employs (compare 2 Corinthians 4:17), and which is used with great force and appropriateness here.

Through him … - Not by their own strength or power. It was by the might of the Saviour, and by his power pledged to them, and confirmed by the love evinced when he gave himself for them; compare Philemon 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

Verse 38

For I am persuaded - I have a strong and unwavering confidence. Latin Vulgate, "I am certain." The expression here implies unwavering certainty.

Neither death - Neither the fear of death, nor all the pains and tortures of the dying scene, even in the most painful trials of persecution; death in no form.

Nor life - Nor the hope of life; the love of life; the offer of life made to us by our persecutors, on condition of abjuring our Christian faith. The words evidently refer to times of persecution; and it was not uncommon for persecutors to offer life to Christians, on condition of their renouncing attachment to the Saviour, and offering sacrifice to idols. All that was demanded in the times of persecution under the Roman emperors was, that they should throw a few grains of incense on the altar of a pagan god, as expressive of homage to the idol. But even this they would not do. The hope of life on so very easy terms would not, could not alienate them from the love of Christ.

Nor angels - It seems to be apparent that "good angels" cannot be intended here. The apostle was saying that nothing would separate Christians from the love of Christ. Of course, it would be implied that the things which he specifies might be supposed to have some power or tendency to do it. But it is not conceivable that good angels, who are "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" Hebrews 1:14, should seek to alienate the minds of Christians from the Saviour, or that their influence should have any such tendency. It seems to be clear, therefore, that he refers to the designs and temptations of evil spirits. The word "angels" is applied to evil spirits in Matthew 25:41; 1 Corinthians 6:3.

Nor principalities - (ἀρχαὶ archai). This word usually refers to magistrates and civil rulers. But it is also applied to evil angels, as having

dominion over people; Ephesians 6:12, "For we wrestle against … principalities;" Colossians 2:15, "And having spoiled principalities:" 1 Corinthians 15:24, "When he shall have put down all rule;" Greek, ἀρχήν archēnSome have supposed that it refers here to magistrates and those in authority who persecuted Christians; but the connection of the word with angels seems to require us to understand it of evil spirits.

Nor powers - This word δυνάμεις dunameisis often applied to magistrates; but it is also applied to evil spirits that have dominion over men; 1 Corinthians 15:24. The ancient Rabbis also give the name powers to evil angels. (Schleusner.) There can be no doubt that the Jews were accustomed to divide the angels of heaven into various ranks and orders, traces of which custom we find often in the Scriptures. And there is also reason to suppose that they made such a division with reference to evil angels, regarding Satan as their leader, and other evil spirits, divided into various ranks, as subordinate to him; see Matthew 25:41; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 2:15. To such a division there is probably reference here; and the meaning is, that no order of evil angels, however powerful, artful, or numerous, would be able to alienate the hearts of Christians from their Redeemer.

Nor things present - Calamities and persecutions to which we are now subject.

Nor things to come - Trials to which we may be yet exposed. It evinced strong confidence to say that no possible trials should be sufficient to destroy their love for Christ.

Verse 39

Nor height - This has been variously understood. Some have regarded it as referring to evil spirits in the air; others, to high and lofty speculation in doctrine; others, to heaven - to all that is in heaven. I regard it here as a synonymous with prosperity, honor, elevation in this life. The meaning is, that "no possible circumstances" in which Christians could be placed, though surrounded with wealth, honor, splendor, and though elevated to rank and function, could alienate them from the love of Christ. The tendency of these things to alienate the mind, to engross the affections, and to occupy the time, all know; but the apostle says that even these would not be sufficient to withdraw their strong love from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nor depth - Nor the lowest circumstances of depression, poverty, contempt, and want; the very lowest rank of life.

Nor any other creature - Nor any other created thing; any other thing in the universe; anything that can occur. This expresses the most unwavering confidence that all who were Christians would certainly continue to love the Lord Jesus, and be saved.

Shall be able - Shall have power to do it. The love to Christ is stronger than any influence which they can exert on the mind.

The love of God - The love which we have to God.

Which is in Christ Jesus - Which is produced and secured by his work. Of which he is the bond, the connecting link. It was caused by his mediation; it is secured by his influence; it is in and through him, and him alone, that people love God. There is no true love of God which is not produced by the work of Christ. There is no man who truly loves the Father, who does not do it in, and by the Son.

Perhaps there is no chapter in the Bible on the whole so interesting and consoling to the Christian as this; and there certainly is not to be found any where a specimen of more elevated, animated, and lofty eloquence and argumentation. We may remark in view of it,

(1)That it is the highest honor that can be conferred on mortal man to be a Christian.

(2)our trials in this life are scarcely worth regarding in comparison with our future glory.

(3)calamities should be borne without a complaint; nay, without a sigh.

(4)the Christian has every possible security for his safety. The purposes of God, the work of Christ, the aid of the Holy Spirit, and the tendency of all events under the direction of his Father and Friend, conspire to secure his welfare and salvation.

(5)with what thankfulness, then, should we approach the God of mercy.

In the gospel, we have a blessed and cheering hope which nothing else can produce, and which nothing can destroy. Safe in the hands of God our Redeemer, we may commit our way to him, whether it lead through persecutions, or trials, or sickness, or a martyr‘s grave: and triumphantly we may wait until the day of our complete adoption, the entire redemption of soul and body, shall fully come.

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Introduction

This chapter opens in some degree a new train of thought and argumentation. Its main design probably was to meet objections which would be alleged against the positions advanced and defended in the previous parts of the Epistle. In the previous chapters, Paul had defended the position that the barrier between the Jews and Gentiles had been removed; that the Jews could not be saved by any external advantages which they possessed; that all were alike guilty before God; and that there was but one way for Jews and Gentiles of salvation - by faith in Jesus Christ; Romans 9:1-5.

(2)he shows them from their own writings that the principle of election had existed in former times - in the case of Isaac Romans 9:7-13; in the writings of Moses Romans 9:15; in the case of Pharaoh Romans 9:17; and in the prophecies of Hosea and Isaiah Romans 9:25-29.

(3)he takes occasion throughout the chapter to vindicate this principle of the divine administration; to answer objections; and to show that, on the acknowledged principles of the Old Testament, a part of the Jewish nation might be rejected; and that it was the purpose of God to call others to the privileges of the people of God; Romans 9:16, Romans 9:19-23, Romans 9:25-26, Romans 9:29-33.

The chapter, therefore, has not reference to national election, or to choice to external privileges, but has direct reference to the doctrine of the election to salvation which had been stated in Romans 8. To suppose that it refers merely to external privileges and national distinctions, makes the whole discussion unconnected, unmeaningful, and unnecessary.

Verse 1

I say the truth - In what I am about to affirm respecting my attachment to the nation and people.

In Christ - Most interpreters regard this as a form of an oath, as equivalent to calling Christ to witness. It is certainly to be regarded, in its obvious sense, as an appeal to Christ as the searcher of the heart, and as the judge of falsehood. Thus, the word translated “in” ἐν enis used in the form of an oath in Matthew 5:34-36; Revelation 10:6, Greek. We are to remember that the apostle was addressing those who had been Jews; and the

expression has all the force of an oath "by the Messiah." This shows that it is right on great and solemn occasions, and in a solemn manner, and thus only, to appeal to Christ for the sincerity of our motives, and for the truth of what we say. And it shows further, that it is right to regard the Lord Jesus Christ as present with us, as searching the heart, as capable of detecting insincerity, hypocrisy, and perjury, and as therefore divine.

My conscience - Conscience is that act or judgment of the mind by which we decide on the lawfulness or unlawfulness of our actions, and by which we instantly approve or condemn them. It exists in every man, and is a strong witness to our integrity or to our guilt.

Bearing me witness - Testifying to the truth of what I say.

In the Holy Ghost - He does not say that he speaks the truth by or in the Holy Spirit, as he had said of Christ; but that the conscience pronounced its concurring testimony by the Holy Spirit; that is, conscience as enlightened and influenced by the Holy Spirit. It was not simply natural conscience, but it was conscience under the full influence of the Enlightener of the mind and Sanctifier of the heart. The reasons of this solemn asseveration are probably the following:

(1) His conduct and his doctrines had led some to believe that he was an apostate, and had lost his love for his countrymen. He had forsaken their institutions, and devoted himself to the salvation of the Gentiles. He here shows them that it was from no lack of love to them.

(2) the doctrines which he was about to state and defend were of a similar character; he was about to maintain that no small part of his own countrymen, notwithstanding their privileges, would be rejected and lost. In this solemn manner, therefore, he assures them that this doctrine had not been embraced because he did not love them, but because it was solemn, though most painful truth. He proceeds to enumerate their privileges as a people, and to show to them the strength and tenderness of his love.

Verse 2

Great heaviness - Great grief.

Continual sorrow - The word rendered "continual" here must be taken in a popular sense. Not that he was literally all the time pressed down with this sorrow, but that whenever he thought on this subject, he had great grief; as we say of a painful subject, it is a source of constant pain. The cause of

this grief, Paul does not expressly mention, though it is implied in what he immediately says. It was the fact that so large a part of the nation would be rejected, and cast off.

Verse 3

For I could wish … - This passage has been greatly controverted. Some have proposed to translate it, "I did wish," as referring to a former state, when he renounced Christ, and sought to advance the interests of the nation by opposing and defying him. But to this interpretation there are insuperable objections.

(1) the object of the apostle is not to state his former feelings, but his present attachment to his countrymen, and willingness to suffer for them.

(2) the proper grammatical construction of the word used here is not I did wish, but I could desire; that is, if the thing were possible. It is not I do wish, or did wish, but I could desire ἠυχόμην ēuchomēnimplying that he was willing now to endure it; that his present love for them was so strong, that he would, if practicable, save them from the threatened ruin and apostasy.

(3) it is not true that Paul ever did wish before his conversion to be accursed by Christ, that is, by the Messiah. He opposed Jesus of Nazareth; but he did not believe that he was the Messiah. At no time would he have wished to be devoted to destruction "by the Messiah," or "by Christ." Nothing would have been more terrible to a Jew; and Saul of Tarsus never doubted that he was the friend of the promised Messiah, and was advancing the true interests of his cause, and defending the hopes of his nation against an impostor. The word, therefore, expresses a feeling which the apostle had, when writing this Epistle, in regard to the condition and prospects of the nation.

Were accursed from Chest - Might be anathema by Christ ἀνάθεμα εἶναι ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ anathema einai apo tou ChristouThis passage has been much controverted. The word rendered "accursed" (anathema) properly means,

(1) Anything that was set up, or "set apart," or consecrated to the gods in the temples, as spoils of war, images, statues, etc. This is its Classical Greek meaning. It has a similar meaning among the Hebrews, It denoted what was set apart or consecrated to the service of God, as sacrifices or offerings of

any kind. In this respect it is used to express the sense of the Hebrew word חרם cherem"anything devoted to Yahweh, without the possibility of redemption." Leviticus 27:21; Leviticus 27:29; Numbers 18:14; Deuteronomy 7:26; Joshua 6:17-18; Joshua 7:1; 1 Samuel 15:21; Ezekiel 44:29.

(2) as what was thus dedicated to Yahweh was alienated from the use of him who devoted it, and was either burnt or slain and devoted to destruction as an offering, the word came to signify a devotion of any thing to destruction, or to complete ruin. And as whatever is devoted to destruction may be said to be subject to a curse, or to be accursed, the word comes to have this signification; 1 Kings 20:42; Isaiah 34:5. But in none of these cases does it denote eternal death. The idea, therefore, in these places is simply, "I could be willing to be destroyed, or devoted, to death, for the sake of my countrymen." And the apostle evidently means to say that he would be willing to suffer the bitterest evils, to forego all pleasure, to endure any privation and toil, nay, to offer his life, so that he might be wholly devoted to sufferings, as an offering, if he might be the means of benefiting and saving the nation. For a similar case, see Exodus 32:32. This does not mean that Paul would be willing to be damned forever. For,

(1)The words do not imply that, and will not bear it.

(2)such a destruction could in no conceivable way benefit the Jews.

(3)such a willingness is not and cannot be required. And,

(4)It would be impious and absurd. No man has a right to be willing to be the "eternal enemy" of God; and no man ever yet was, or could be willing to endure everlasting torments.

From Christ - By Christ. Grotius thinks it means from the church of Christ. Others think it means "after the example of Christ;" and others, from Christ forever. But it evidently means that he was willing to be devoted by Christ; that is, to be regarded by him, and appointed by him, to suffering and death, if by that means he could save his countrymen. It was thus the highest expression of true patriotism and benevolence. It was an example for all Christians and Christian ministers. They should be willing to be devoted to pain, privation, toil, and death, if by that they could save others from ruin.

My kinsmen … - My countrymen; all of whom he regarded as his kinsmen, or relations, as descended from the same ancestors.

According to the flesh - By birth. They were of the same blood and parentage, though not now of the same religious belief.

Verse 4

Who are Israelites - Descended from Israel, or Jacob; honored by having such an ancestor, and by bearing a name so distinguished as that of his descendants. It was formerly the honorable appellation of the people of God.

To whom pertaineth - To whom it belongs. It was their elevated external privilege.

The adoption - Of the nation into the family of God, or to be regarded as His special people; Deuteronomy 7:6.

And the glory - The symbol of the divine presence that attended them from Egypt, and that finally rested over the ark in the first temple - "the Shechinah;" Exodus 13:21-22; Exodus 25:22.

And the covenants - The various compacts or promises which had been made from time to time with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and with the nation; the pledges of the divine protection.

The giving of the law - On Mount Sinai; Psalm 147:19.

And the service of God - The temple service; regarded by them as the pride and ornament of their nation.

And the promises - Of the Messiah; and of the spread of the true religion from them as a nation.

Verse 5

Whose are the fathers - Who have been honored with so illustrious an ancestry. Who are descended from Abraham, Isaac, etc. On this they highly valued themselves, and in a certain sense not unjustly; compare Matthew 3:9.

Of whom - Of whose nation. This is placed as the crowning and most exalted privilege, that their nation had given birth to the long-expected Messiah, the hope of the world.

As concerning the flesh - So far as his human nature was concerned. The use of this language supposes that there was a higher nature in respect to which he was not of their nation; see the note at Romans 1:3.

Christ came - He had already come; and it was their high honor that he was one of their nation.

Who is over all - This is an appellation that belongs only to the true God. It implies supreme divinity; and is full proof that the Messiah is divine: Much effort has been made to show that this is not the true rendering, but without success. There are no various readings in the Greek manuscripts of any consequence; and the connection here evidently requires us to understand this of a nature that is not "according to the flesh," i. e., as the apostle here shows, of the divine nature.

God blessed forever - This is evidently applied to the Lord Jesus; and it proves that he is divine. If the translation is fairly made, and it has never been proved to be erroneous, it demonstrates that he is God as well as man. The doxology "blessed forever" was usually added by the Jewish writers after the mention of the name God, as an expression of reverence. (See the various interpretations that have been proposed on this passage examined in Prof. Stuart's Notes on this verse.)

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Verse 6

Not as though … - Not as though the promise of God had entirely failed. Though I grieve thus Romans 9:2-3, though I am deeply apprehensive for the nation, yet I do not affirm that all the nation is to be destroyed. The promise of God will not entirely fail.

Not all Israel - Not all the descendants of Jacob have the true spirit of Israelites, or are Jews in the scriptural sense of the term; see the note at Romans 2:28-29.

Verse 7

Are they all children - Adopted into the true family of God. Many of the descendants of Abraham were rejected.

But in Isaac - This was the promise; Genesis 21:12.

Shall thy seed … - Thy true people. This implied a selection, or choice; and therefore the doctrine of election was illustrated in the very commencement of the history of the nation; and as God had then made such a distinction, he might still do it. As he had then rejected a part of the natural descendants of Abraham, so he might still do it. This is the argument which the apostle is pursuing.

Verse 8

They which are the children of the flesh - The natural descendants.

These are not the children of God - Are not of necessity the adopted children of God; or are not so in virtue of their descent merely. This was in

opposition to one of the most settled and deeply cherished opinions of the Jews. They supposed that the mere fact of being a Jew, entitled a man to the blessings of the covenant, and to be regarded as a child of God. But the apostle shows them that it was not by their natural descent that these spiritual privileges were granted; that they were not conferred on people simply from the fact that they were Jews; and that consequently those who were not Jews might become interested in those spiritual blessings.

But the children of the promise - The descendants of Abraham on whom the promised blessings would be bestowed. The sense is, that God at first contemplated a distinction among the descendants of Abraham, and intended to confine his blessings to such as he chose; that is, to those to whom the promise particularly appertained, to the descendants of Isaac. The argument of the apostle is, that "the principle" was thus established that a distinction might be made among those who were Jews; and as that distinction had been made in former times, so it might be under the Messiah.

Are counted - Are regarded, or reckoned. God reckons things as they are; and therefore designed that they should be his true children.

As the seed - The spiritual children of God; the partakers of his mercy and salvation. This refers, doubtless, to spiritual privileges and to salvation; and therefore has relation not to nations as such, but to individuals.

Verse 9

For this is the word of promise - This is the promise made to Abraham. The design of the apostle, in introducing this, is doubtless to show to whom the promise appertained; and by specifying this, he shows that it had not reference to Ishmael, but to Isaac.

At this time - Greek, According to this time; see Genesis 18:10, Genesis 18:14. Probably it means at the exact time promised; I will fulfil the prediction at the very time; compare 2 Kings 4:16.

Verse 10

And not only this - Not only is the principle of making a distinction among the natural descendants of Abraham thus settled by the promise, but it is still further seen and illustrated in the birth of the two sons of Isaac. He had shown that the principle of thus making a distinction among the posterity of Abraham was recognised in the original promise, thus proving that all the descendants of Abraham were not of course to be saved; and he now proceeds to show that the principle was recognised in the case of his

posterity in the family of Isaac. And he shows that it is not according to any natural principles that the selection was made; that he not only made a distinction between Jacob and Esau, but that he did it according to his good pleasure, choosing the younger to be the object of his favor, and rejecting the older, who, according to the custom of the times, was supposed to be entitled to special honor and rights. And in order to prove that this was done according to his own pleasure, he shows that the distinction was made before they were born; before they had formed any character; and, consequently, in such a way that it could not be pretended that it was in consequence of any works which they had performed.

But when Rebecca - The wife of Isaac; see Genesis 25:21, Genesis 25:23.

Verse 11

For the children being not yet born - It was not, therefore, by any works of theirs. It was not because they had formed a character and manifested qualities which made this distinction proper. It was laid back of any such character, and therefore had its foundation in the purpose or plan of God.

Neither having done any good or evil - That is, when the declaration Romans 9:12 was made to Rebecca. This is a very important passage in regard to the question about the purposes of God.

(1) they had done nothing good or bad; and when that is the case, there can be, properly speaking, no moral character, for "a character is not formed when the person has not acquired stable and distinctive qualities." Webster.

(2) that the period of moral agency had not yet commenced; compare Genesis 25:22-23. When that agency commences, we do not know; but here is a case of which it is alarmed that it had not commenced.

(3) the purpose of God is antecedent to the formation of character, or the performance of any actions, good or bad.

(4) it is not a purpose formed because he sees anything in the individuals as a ground for his choice, but for some reason which he has not explained, and which in the Scripture is simply called purpose and good pleasure; Ephesians 1:5.

(5) if it existed in this case, it does in others. If it was right then, it is now. And if God then dispensed his favors on this principle, he will now. But,

(6) This affirmation respecting Jacob and Esau does not prove that they had not a nature inclined to evil; or a corrupt and sensual propensity; or that they would not sin as soon as they became moral agents. It proves merely that they had not yet committed actual sin. That they, as well as all others, would certainly sin as soon as they committed moral acts at all, is proved everywhere in the Sacred Scriptures.

The purpose of God - Note, Romans 8:28.

According to election - To dispense his favors according to his sovereign will and pleasure. Those favors were not conferred in consequence of the merits of the individuals; but according to a wise plan "lying back" of the formation of their characters, and before they had done good or evil. The favors were thus conferred according to his choice, or election.

Might stand - Might be confirmed; or might be proved to be true. The case shows that God dispenses his favors as a sovereign. The purpose of God was thus proved to have been formed without respect to the merits of either.

Not of works - Not by anything which they had done either to merit his favor or to forfeit it. It was formed on other principles than a reference to their works. So it is in relation to all who shall be saved. God has good reasons for saving those who shall be saved. What the reasons are for choosing some to life, he has not revealed; but he has revealed to us that it is not on account of their works, either performed or foreseen.

But of him that calleth - According to the will and purpose of him that chooses to dispense those favors in this manner. It is not by the merit of man, but it is by a purpose having its origin with God, and formed and executed according to his good pleasure. It is also implied here that it is formed in such a way as to secure his glory as the primary consideration.

Verse 12

It was said unto her - By Yahweh; see Genesis 25:23.

The elder - The oldest son, which was Esau. By the law of primogeniture among the Hebrews, he would have been entitled to special

honors and privileges. But it was said that in his case this custom should be reversed, and that he should take the rank of the younger.

Should serve - Shall be subject to; shall not have the authority and priority, but should be inferior to. The passage in Genesis Genesis 25:23 shows that this had reference particularly to the posterity of Esau, and not to him as an individual. The sense is, that the descendants of Esau, who were Edomites, should be inferior to, and subject to the descendants of Jacob. Jacob was to have the priority; the promised land; the promises; and the honor of being regarded as the chosen of God. There was reference here, therefore, to the whole train of temporal and spiritual blessings which were to be connected with the two races of people. If it be asked how this bears on the argument of the apostle, we may reply,

(1) That it settles "the principle" that God might make a distinction among people, in the same nation, and the same family, without reference to their works or character.

(2) that he might confer his blessings on such as he pleased.

(3) if this is done in regard to nations, it may be in regard to individuals. The principle is the same, and the justice the same. If it be supposed to be unjust in God to make such a distinction in regard to individuals, it is surely not less so to make a distinction in nations. The fact that numbers are thus favored, does not make it the more proper, or remove any difficulty.

(4) if this distinction may be made in regard to temporal things, why not in regard to spiritual things? The principle must still be the same. If unjust in one case, it would be in the other. The fact that it is done in one case proves also that it will be in the other; for the same great principle will run through all the dealings of the divine government. And as people do not and cannot complain that God makes a distinction among them in regard to talents, health, beauty, prosperity, and rank, neither can they complain if he acts also as a sovereign in the distribution of his spiritual favors. They, therefore, who regard this as referring only to temporal and national privileges, gain no relief in respect to the real difficulty in the case, for the unanswerable question would still be asked, why has not God made all people equal in everything? Why has he made any distinction among

people? The only reply to all such inquiries is, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight;" Matthew 11:26.

Verse 13

As it is written - Malachi 1:2-3. That is, the distribution of favors is on the principle advanced by the prophet, and is in accordance with the declaration that God had in fact loved the one and hated the other.

Jacob - This refers, doubtless, to the posterity of Jacob.

Have I loved - I have shown affection for that people; I have bestowed on them great privileges and blessings, as proofs of attachment. I have preferred Jacob to Esau.

Esau - The descendants of Esau, the Edomites; see Malachi 1:4.

Have I hated - This does not mean any positive hatred; but that he had preferred Jacob, and had withheld from Esau those privileges and blessings which he had conferred on the posterity of Jacob. This is explained in Malachi 1:3," And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness;" compare Jeremiah 49:17-18; Ezekiel 35:6. It was common among the Hebrews to use the terms "love" and "hatred" in this comparative sense, where the former implied strong positive attachment, and the latter, not positive hatred, but merely a less love, or the withholding of the expressions of affection; compare Genesis 29:30-31; Proverbs 13:24, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes;" Matthew 6:24, "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other," etc.; Luke 14:26, "if any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, etc."

Verse 14

What shall we say then? - What conclusion shall we draw from these acknowledged facts, and from these positive declarations of Scripture.

Is there unrighteousness with God? - Does God do injustice or wrong? This charge has often been brought against the doctrine here advanced. But this charge the apostle strongly repels. He meets it by further showing that it is the doctrine explicitly taught in the Old Testament Romans 9:15, Romans 9:17, and that it is founded on the principles of equity, and on just views of the sovereignty of God; Romans 9:19-23.

God forbid - Note, Romans 3:4.

Verse 15

For he saith to Moses - Exodus 33:19.

I will have mercy - This is said by God when he declared expressly that he would make all his goodness pass before Moses Exodus 33:19, and when, therefore, it was regarded, not as a proof of stern and inexorable justice, but as "the very proof of his benevolence," and the highest which he thought proper to exhibit. When people, therefore, under the influence of an unrenewed and hosthe heart, charge this as an unjust and arbitrary proceeding, they are resisting and perverting what God regards as the very demonstration of his benevolence. The sense of the passage clearly is, that he would choose the objects of his favor, and bestow his mercies as he chose. None of the human race deserved his favor; and he had a right to pardon whom he pleased, and to save people on his own terms, and according to his sovereign will and pleasure.

On whom I will have mercy - On whom I choose to bestow mercy. The mode he does not explain. But there could not be a more positive declaration of these truths,

(1)That he does it as a sovereign, without giving an account of the reason of his choice to any.

(2)that he does it without regard to any claim on the part of man; or that man is regarded as destitute of merit, and as having no right to his mercy.

(3)that he will do it to any extent which he pleases, and in whatever time and manner may best accord with his own good pleasure.

(4)that he has regard to a definite number and that on that number he intends to bestow eternal life; and,

(5)That no one has a right to complain.

It is proof of his benevolence that any are saved; and where none have a claim, where all are justly condemned, he has a right to pardon whom he pleases. The executive of a country may select any number of criminals whom he may see fit to pardon, or who may be forgiven in consistency with the supremacy of the laws and the welfare of the community and none has a right to complain, but every good citizen should rejoice that any may be pardoned with safety. So in the moral world, and under the administration of its holy Sovereign, it should be a matter of joy that any can be pardoned and saved; and not a subject of murmuring and complaint that those who shall finally deserve to die shall be consigned to woe.

Verse 16

So then - It follows as a consequence from this statement of God to Moses. Or it is a doctrine established by that statement.

Not of him that willeth - This does not mean that he that becomes a Christian, and is saved, does not choose eternal life; or is not made willing; or that he is compelled to enter heaven against his own choice. It is true that people by nature have no desire of holiness, and do not choose eternal life. But the effect of the influences of God‘s Spirit on the heart is to make it "willing in the day of his power;" Psalm 110:3. The meaning here is evidently, that eternal life is not bestowed because man had any original willingness or disposition to be saved; it is not because he commences the work, and is himself disposed to it; but it is because God inclines him to it, and disposes him to seek for mercy, and then confers it in his own way. The word "willeth" here denotes wish or desire.

Nor of him that runneth - This denotes "strenuous, intense effort," as when a man is anxious to obtain an object, or hastens from danger. The meaning is not that the sinner does not make an effort to be saved; nor that all who become Christians do not "in fact" strive to enter into the kingdom, or earnestly desire salvation, for the Scriptures teach the contrary; Luke 16:16; Luke 13:24. There is no effort more intense and persevering, no struggle more arduous or agonizing, than when a sinner seeks eternal life. Nor does it mean that they who strive in a proper way, and with proper effort, shall not obtain eternal life; Matthew 7:7. But the sense is,

(1)That the sinner would not put forth any effort himself. If left to his own course, he would never seek to be saved.

(2)that he is pardoned, not "on account" of his effort; not because he makes an exertion; but because God chooses to pardon him.

There is no merit in his anxiety, and prayers, and agony, on account of which God would forgive him; but he is still dependent on the mere mercy of God to save or destroy him at his will. The sinner, however anxious he may be, and however much or long he may strive, does not bring God under an obligation to pardon him any more than the condemned criminal, trembling with the fear of execution, and the consciousness of crime, lays the judge or the jury under an obligation to acquit him. This fact, it is of great importance for an awakened sinner to know. Deeply anxious he should be, but there is no merit in his distress. Pray he should, but there is no merit in his prayers. Weep and strive he may, but in this there is no

ground of claim on God for pardon; and, after all, he is dependent on his mere sovereign mercy, as a lost, ruined, and helpless sinner, to be saved or lost at his will.

But of God that showeth mercy - Salvation in its beginning, its progress, and its close, is of him. He has a right, therefore, to bestow it when and where he pleases. All our mercies flow from his mere love and compassion, and not from our deserts. The essential idea here is, that God is the original fountain of all the blessings of salvation.

Verse 17

For the Scripture saith - Exodus 9:16. That is, God saith to Pharaoh in the Scriptures; Galatians 3:8, Galatians 3:22. This passage is designed to illustrate the doctrine that God shows mercy according to his sovereign pleasure by a reference to one of the most extraordinary cases of hardness of heart which has ever occurred. The design is to show that God has a right to pass by those to whom he does not choose to show mercy; and to place them in circumstances where they shall develope their true character, and where in fait they shall become more hardened and be destroyed; Romans 9:18.

Unto Pharaoh - The haughty and oppressive king of Egypt; thus showing that the most mighty and wicked monarchs are at his control; compare Isaiah 10:5-7.

For this same purpose - For the design, or with the intent that is immediately specified. This was the leading purpose or design of his sustaining him.

Have I raised thee up - Margin in Exodus 9:16, "made thee stand," that is, sustained thee. The Greek word used by the apostle (ἐξήγειρα exēgeira), means properly, I "have excited, roused, or stirred" thee up. But it may also have the meaning, "I have sustained or supported thee." That is, I have kept thee from death; I have preserved thee from ruin; I have ministered strength to thee, so that thy full character has been developed. It does not mean that God had infused into his mind any positive evil, or that by any direct influence he had excited any evil feelings, but that he had kept him in circumstances which were suited to develope his true character. The meaning of the word and the truth of the case may be expressed in the following particulars:

(1) God meant to accomplish some great purposes by his existence and conduct.

(2) he kept him, or sustained him, with reference to that.

(3) he had control over the haughty and wicked monarch. He could take his life, or he could continue him on earth. As he had control over all things that could affect the pride, the feelings, and the happiness of the monarch, so he had control over the monarch himself.

(4) "he placed him in circumstances just suited to develope his character." He kept him amidst those circumstances until his character was fully developed.

(5) he did not exert a positive evil influence on the mind of Pharaoh; for,

(6) In all this the monarch acted freely. He did what he chose to do. He pursued his own course. He was voluntary in his schemes of oppressing the Israelites. He was voluntary in his opposition to God. He was voluntary when he pursued the Israelites to the Red sea. In all his doings he acted as he chose to do, and with a determined "choice of evil," from which neither warning nor judgment would turn him away. Thus, he is said to have hardened his own heart; Exodus 8:15.

(7) neither Pharaoh nor any sinner can justly blame God for placing them in circumstances where they shall develope their own character, and show what they are. It is not the fault of God, but their own fault. The sinner is not compelled to sin; nor is God under obligation to save him contrary to the prevalent desires and wishes of the sinner himself.

My power in thee - Or by means of thee. By the judgments exerted in delivering an entire oppressed people from thy grasp. God's most signal acts of power were thus shown in consequence of his disobedience and rebellion.

My name - The name of Yahweh, as the only true God, and the deliverer of his people.

Throughout all the earth - Or throughout all the land of Egypt; Note, Luke 2:1. We may learn here,

(1)That a leading design of God in the government of the world is to make his power, and name, and character known.

(2)that this is often accomplished in a most signal manner by the destruction of the wicked.

(3)that wicked people should be alarmed, since their arm cannot contend with God, and since his enemies shall be destroyed.

(4)it is right that the incorrigibly wicked should be cut off. When a man‘s character is fully developed; when he is fairly tried; when in all circumstances, he has shown that he will not obey God, neither justice nor mercy hinders the Almighty from cutting him down and consigning him to death.

Verse 18

Therefore hath he mercy … - This is a conclusion stated by the apostle as the result of all the argument.

Whom he will he hardeneth - This is not stated in what the Scripture said to Pharaoh, but is a conclusion to which the apostle had arrived, in view of the case of Pharaoh. The word “hardeneth” means only to harden in the manner specified in the case of Pharaoh. It does not mean to exert a positive influence, but to leave a sinner to his own course, and to place him in circumstances where the character will be more and more developed; see the note at John 12:40. It implies, however, an act of sovereignty on the part of God in thus leaving him to his chosen course, and in not putting forth that influence by which he could be saved from death. Why this is, the apostle does not state. We should, however, not dispute a fact everywhere prevalent; and should have sufficient confidence in God to believe that it is in accordance with infinite wisdom and rectitude.

Verse 19

Thou wilt say then unto me - The apostle here refers to an objection that might be made to his argument. If the position which he had been endeavoring to establish were true; if God had a purpose in all his dealings with people; if all the revolutions among people happened according to his decree, so that he was not disappointed, or his plan frustrated; and if his own glory was secured in all this, why could he blame people?

Why doth he yet find fault? - Why does he blame people, since their conduct is in accordance with his purpose, and since he bestows mercy according to his sovereign will? This objection has been made by sinners in

all ages. It is the standing objection against the doctrines of grace. The objection is founded,

(1)On the difficulty of reconciling the purposes of God with the free agency of man.

(2)it assumes, what cannot be proved, that a plan or purpose of God must destroy the freedom of man.

(3)it is said that if the plan of God is accomplished, then what is best to be done is done, and, of course, man cannot be blamed. These objections are met by the apostle in the following argument.

Who hath resisted his will? - That is, who has "successfully opposed" his will, or frustrated his plan? The word translated "resist" is commonly used to denote the resistance offered by soldiers or armed men. Thus, Ephesians 6:13, "Take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand (resist or successfully oppose) in the evil day:" see Luke 21:15, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist;" see also Acts 7:10; Acts 13:8, "But Elymas … withstood them, etc." The same Greek word, Romans 13:2; Galatians 2:11. This does not mean that no one has offered resistance or opposition to God, but that no one has done it successfully. God had accomplished his purposes "in spite of" their opposition. This was an established point in the sacred writings, and one of the admitted doctrines of the Jews. To establish it had even been a part of the apostle's design; and the difficulty now was to see how, this being admitted, people could be held chargeable with crime. That it was the doctrine of the Scriptures, see 2 Chronicles 20:6, "In thine hand "is there not" power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?" Daniel 4:35, "he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" See also the case of Joseph and his brethren, Genesis 50:20, "As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good."

Verse 20

Nay but, O man … - To this objection the apostle replies in two ways; first, by asserting the sovereignty of God, and affirming that he had a right to do it Romans 9:20-21; and secondly, by showing that he did it according to the principles of justice and mercy, or that it was involved of necessity in his dispensing justice and mercy to mankind; Romans 9:22-24.

Who art thou … - Paul here strongly reproves the impiety and wickedness of arraigning God. This impiety appears,

(1) Because man is a creature of arraigning God. This impiety appears, Because man is a creature of God, and it is improper that he should arraign his Maker.

(2) he is unqualified to understand the subject. "Who art thou?" What qualifications has a creature of a day, a being just in the infancy of his existence; of so limited faculties; so perverse, blinded, and interested as man, to sit in judgment on the doings of the Infinite Mind? Who gave him the authority, or invested him with the prerogatives of a judge over his Maker's doings?

(3) even if man were qualified to investigate those subjects, what right has he to reply against God, to arraign him, or to follow out a train of argument tending to involve his Creator in shame and disgrace? No where is there to be found a more cutting or humbling reply to the pride of man than this. And on no subject was it more needed. The experience of every age has shown that this has been a prominent topic of objection against the government of God; and that there has been no point in the Christian theology to which the human heart has been so ready to make objections as to the doctrine of the sovereignty of God.

Repliest against God - Margin, "Answerest again; or, disputest with God." The passage conveys the idea of answering again; or of arguing to the dishonor of God. It implies that when God declares his will, man should be still. God has his own plans of infinite wisdom, and it is not ours to reply against him, or to arraign him of injustice, when we cannot see the reason of his doings.

Shall the thing formed … - This sentiment is found in Isaiah 29:16; see also Isaiah 45:9. It was especially proper to adduce this to a Jew. The objection is one which is supposed to be made by a Jew, and it was proper to reply to him by a quotation from his own Scriptures. Any being has a right to fashion his work according to his own views of what is best; and as this right is not denied to people, we ought not to blame the infinitely wise God for acting in a similar way. They who have received every blessing they enjoy from him, ought not to blame him for not making them different.

Verse 21

Hath not the potter … - This same sovereign right of God the apostle proceeds to urge from another illustration, and another passage from the Old Testament; Isaiah 64:8, "But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." This passage is preceded in Isaiah by one declaring "the depravity of man;" Isaiah 64:6, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." As they were polluted with sin, as they had transgressed the Law of God, and had no claim and no merit, God might bestow his favors as he pleased, and mould them as the potter did the clay. He would do no injury to those who were left, and "who had no claim to his mercy," if he bestowed favors on others, any more than the potter would do injustice to one part of the mass, if he put it to an ignoble use, and moulded another part into a vessel of honor.

This is still the condition of sinful people. God does no injustice to a man if he leaves him to take his own course to ruin, and makes another, equally undeserving, the recipient of his mercy. He violated none of my rights by not conferring on me the talents of Newton or of Bacon; or by not placing me in circumstances like those of Peter and Paul. Where all are undeserving, the utmost that can be demanded is that he should not treat them with injustice. And this is secured even in the case of the lost. No man will suffer more than he deserves; nor will any man go to perdition feeling that he has "a claim" to better treatment than he receives. The same sentiment is found in Jeremiah 18:6, "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, etc."

The passage in Isaiah proves that God has the right of a sovereign over guilty individuals; that in Jeremiah, that he has the same right over nations; thus meeting the whole case as it was in the mind of the apostle. These passages, however, assert only the right of God to do it, without affirming anything about the manner in which it is done. In fact, God bestows his favors in a mode very different from that in which a potter moulds his clay. God does not create holiness by a mere act of power, but he produces it in a manner consistent with the moral agency of people; and bestows his favors not to compel people, but to incline them to be willing to receive them;

Psalm 110:3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." It should be further remarked, that the argument of the apostle here does not refer to "the original creation" of people, as if God had then made them one for honor and another for dishonor. He refers to man as fallen and lost. His argument is this: "Man is in ruins: he is fallen; he has no claim on God; all deserve to die; on this mass, where none have any claim, he may bestow life on whom he pleases, without injury to others; he may exercise the right of a sovereign to pardon whom he pleases; or of a potter to mould any part of the useless mass to purposes of utility and beauty."

Potter - One whose occupation it is to make earthen vessels.

Power - This word denotes here not merely "physical power," but authority, right; see Matthew 7:29, translated "authority;" Matthew 21:23; 2 Thessalonians 3:9; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24, "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, etc."

Lump - Mass. It denotes anything that is reduced to a fine consistency, and mixed, and made soft by water; either clay, as in this place, or the mass produced of grain pounded and mixed with water; Romans 11:16, "If the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy;" 1 Corinthians 5:6, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"

One vessel - A cup, or other utensil, made of clay.

Unto honour - Fitted to an honorable use, or designed for a more useful and refined purpose.

Unto dishonour - To a meaner service, or more common use. This is a common mode of expression among the Hebrews. The lump here denotes the mass of people, sinners, having no claim on God. The potter illustrates God's right over that mass, to dispose of it as seems good in his sight. The doctrine of the passage is, that people have no right to complain if God bestows his blessings where and when he chooses.

Verse 22-23

What if God … - If God does what the apostle supposes, what then? Is it not right? This is the second point in the answer to the objection in Romans 9:19. The answer has respect to the "two classes" of people which actually exist on the earth - the righteous and the wicked. And the question is, whether "in regard to these two classes God does in fact do wrong?" If he does not, then the doctrine of the apostle is established, and the objection is not valid. It is assumed here, as it must be, that the world is "in fact"

divided into two classes - saints and sinners. The apostle considers the case of sinners in Romans 9:22.

Willing - Being disposed; having an inclination to. It denotes an inclination of mind toward the thing proposed. If the thing itself was right; if it was proper to "show his wrath," then it was proper to be willing to do it. If it is right to do a thing, it is right to purpose or intend to do it.

His wrath - τὴν ὀργὴν tēn orgēnThis word occurs thirty-five times in the New Testament. Its meaning is derived from the idea of earnestly desiring or reaching for an object, and properly denotes, in its general sense, a vehement desire of attaining anything. Hence, it comes to denote an earnest desire of revenge, or of inflicting suffering on those who have injured us; Ephesians 4:31, "Let all bitterness and wrath, etc." Colossians 3:8; 1 Timothy 2:8. Hence, it denotes indignation in general, which is not joined with a desire of revenge; Mark 3:5, "He looked round about on them with anger." It also denotes punishment for sin; the anger or displeasure of God against transgression; Note, Romans 1:18; Luke 3:7; Luke 21:23, etc. In this place it is evidently used to denote "severe displeasure against sin."sin is an evil of so great magnitude, "it is right" for God to be willing to evince his displeasure against it; and just in proportion to the extent of the evil. This displeasure, or wrath, it is proper that God should always be willing to show; nay, it would not be right for him not to show it, for that would be the same thing as to be indifferent to it, or to approve it. In this place, however, it is not affirmed,

(1)That God has any pleasure in sin, or its punishment; nor,

(2)That he exerted any agency to compel man to sin. It affirms only that God is willing to show his hatred of incorrigible and long-continued wickedness when it actually exists.

To make his power known - This language is the same as what was used in relation to Pharaoh; Romans 9:17; Exodus 9:16. But it is not probable that the apostle intended to confine it to the Egyptians only. In the following verse he speaks of "the vessels of mercy prepared "unto glory;" which cannot be supposed to be language adapted to the temporal deliverance of the Jews. The case of Pharaoh was "one instance, or illustration" of the general principle on which God would deal with people. His government is conducted on great and uniform principles; and the case of Pharaoh was a development of the great laws on which he governs the universe.

Endured - Bore with; was patient, or forbearing; Revelation 2:3. "And hast borne, and hast patience, etc." 1 Corinthians 13:7, "charity, (love) beareth all things." Luke 18:7, "will not God avenge his elect. though he bear long with theme?"

With much long-suffering - With much patience. He suffered them to live while they deserved to die. God bears with all sinners with much patience; he spares them amid all their provocations, to give them opportunity of repentance; and though they are suited for destruction, yet he prolongs their lives, and offers them pardon, and loads them with benefits. This fact is a complete vindication of the government of God from the aspersions of all his enemies.

Vessels of wrath - The word "vessel" means a cup, etc. made of earth. As the human body is frail, easily broken and destroyed, it comes to signify also the body. 2 Corinthians 4:7; "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." 1 Thessalonians 4:4, "that everyone of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor" - that everyone should keep his body from the indulgence of unlawful passions; compare Romans 9:3. Hence, also it means "the man himself." Acts 9:15, "he is a chosen vessel unto me, etc." compare Isaiah 13:5. In this place there is doubtless, allusion to what he had just said of clay in the hands of the potter. The phrase "vessels of wrath" denotes wicked people against whom it is fit or proper that wrath should be shown; as Judas is called "the son of perdition," see the note at John 17:12. This does not mean that people by their very creation, or their physical nature, are thus denominated; but people who, from long continuance in iniquity, deserve to experience wrath; as Judas was not called "son of perdition" by any arbitrary appointment, or as an original designation, but because in consequence of his avarice and treason this was the name which "in fact" actually described him, or suited his case.

Fitted - κατηρτισμένα katērtismenaThis word properly means to "restore; to place in order; to render complete; to supply a defect; to fit to, or adapt to, or prepare for;" see Matthew 4:21, "Were mending their nets." Galatians 6:1, "restore such an one, etc." In this place it is a participle, and means those who are suited for or "adapted to" destruction; those whose characters are such as to deserve destruction, or as to make destruction proper. See the same use of the word in Hebrews 11:3, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed" - beautifully suited up in proper proportions, one part adapted to another - "by the Word of God." Hebrews

10:5, “a body hast thou prepared for me;” suited, or adapted to me; compare Psalm 68:10; Psalm 74:16. In this place there is not the semblance of a declaration that “God had prepared them, or fitted them for destruction.” It is a simple declaration that they were in fact suited for it, without making an affirmation about the manner in which they became so.

A reader of the English Bible may, perhaps, sometimes draw the impression that God had suited them for this. But this is not affirmed; and there is an evident design in not affirming it, and a distinction made between them and the vessels of mercy which ought to be regarded. In relation to the latter it is expressly affirmed that God suited or prepared them for glory; see Romans 9:23, “Which he had afore prepared unto glory.” The same distinction is remarkably striking in the account of the last judgment in Matthew 25:34, Matthew 25:41. To the righteous, Christ will say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, etc.” To the wicked, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;” not said to have been originally prepared “for them.” It is clear, therefore, that God intends to keep the great truth in view, that he prepares his people “by direct agency” for heaven; but that he exerts “no such agency” in preparing the wicked for destruction.

For destruction - εἰς ἀπώλειαν eis apōleianThis word occurs in the New Testament no less than 20 times; Matthew 7:13, “Which leadeth to destruction.” John 17:12, “son of perdition.” Acts 8:20, “thy money perish with thee;” Greek, be for destruction with thee, Acts 25:16; Philemon 1:28, “Token of perdition.” Philemon 3:19, “whose end is destruction.” 2 Thessalonians 2:3, “the son of perdition.” 1 Timothy 5:9, “which drown men in destruction and perdition.” Hebrews 10:39, “which draw back into perdition; see also 2 Peter 2:1, 2 Peter 2:3; 2 Peter 3:7, 2 Peter 3:16, etc. In these places it is clear that the reference is to the future punishment of wicked people, and in “no instance” to national calamities. No such use of the word is to be found in the New Testament; and this is further clear from the contrast with the word “glory” in the next verse. We may remark here, that if people are suited or prepared for destruction; if future torment is adapted to them, and they to it; if it is fit that they should be subjected to it; then God will do what is fit or right to be done, and, unless they repent, they must perish. Nor would it be right for God to take them to heaven as they are; to a place for which they are not suited, and which is not adapted to their feelings, their character, or their conduct.

Romans 9:23

And that he might make known - That he might manifest or display. The apostle had shown (in Romans 9:22) that the dealings of God toward the wicked were not liable to the objection made in Romans 9:19. In this verse he proceeds to show that the objection could not lie against his dealings with the other class of people - the righteous. If his dealings toward neither were liable to the objection, then he has "met the whole case," and the divine government is vindicated. This he proves by showing that for God to show the riches of his glory toward those whom he has prepared for it, cannot be regarded as unjust.

The riches of his glory - This is a form of expression common among the Hebrews, meaning the same as his rich or "his abundant glory." The same expression occurs in Ephesians 1:18.

On the vessels of mercy - People toward whom his mercy was to be displayed (see Romans 9:22); that is, on those toward whom he has purposed to display his mercy.

Mercy - Favor, or pity shown to the miserable. Grace is favor to the undeserving; mercy, favor to those in distress. This distinction is not, however, always strictly observed by the sacred writers.

Which he had afore prepared - We are here brought to a remarkable difference between God's mode of dealing with them and with the wicked. Here it is expressly affirmed that God himself had prepared them for glory. In regard to the wicked, it is simply affirmed that they "were fitted" for destruction, without affirming anything of the agency by which it was done. That God prepares his people for glory - commences and continues the work of their redemption - is abundantly taught in the Scriptures; 1 Thessalonians 5:9, "God hath appointed us, to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Timothy 1:9, "who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." See also Ephesians 1:4-5, Ephesians 1:11; Romans 8:28-30; Acts 13:48; John 1:13. As the renewing of the heart and the sanctifying of the soul is an act of goodness, it is worthy of God, and of course no objection could lie against it. No man could complain of a course of dealings designed to make people better; and as this is the sole design of the electing love of God, his deal, ings with this class of people are easily vindicated. No Christian can complain that God has chosen him, renewed him, and made him pure and

happy. And as this was an important part of the plan of God, it is easily defended from the objection in Romans 9:19.

Unto glory - To happiness; and especially to the happiness of heaven Hebrews 2:10, "It became him, in bringing many sons unto glory, etc." Romans 5:2, "we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." 2 Corinthians 4:17, "our light affliction worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 5:4. This eternal state is called "glory," because it blends together everything that constitutes honor, dignity, purity, love, and happiness. All these significations are in various places attached to this word, and all mingle in the eternal state of the righteous. We may remark here,

(1) That this word "glory" is not used in the Scriptures to denote any "external national privileges;" or to describe any external call of the gospel. No such instance is to be found. Of course the apostle here by vessels of mercy meant individuals destined to eternal life, and not nations externally called to the gospel. No instance can be found where God speaks of nations called to external privileges, and speaks of them as "prepared unto glory."

(2) as this word refers to the future state of individuals, it shows what is meant by the word "destruction" in Romans 9:22. That term stands contrasted with glory; and describes, therefore, the future condition of individual wicked people. This is also its uniform meaning in the New Testament.

On this vindication of the apostle we may observe:

(1) That all people will be treated as they ought to be treated. People will be dealt with according to their characters at the end of life.

(2) if people will suffer no injustice, then this is the same as saying that they will be treated justly. But what is this? That the wicked shall be treated as they deserve. What they deserve God has told us in the Scriptures. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment."

(3) God has a right to bestow his blessings as he chooses. Where all are undeserving, where none have any claim, he may confer his favors on whom he pleases.

(4) he actually does deal with people in this way. The apostle takes this for granted. He does not deny it. He most evidently believes it, and labors to show that it is right to do so. If he did not believe it, and meant to teach it, he would have said so. It would have met the objection at once, and saved all argument. He reasons as if he did believe it; and this settles the question that the doctrine is true.

Verse 24

Even us … - See Romans 1:16; Romans 2:10; Romans 3:29-30. To prove that the Gentiles might be called as well as the Jews, was a leading design of the Epistle.

Us - Christians, selected from both Jews and Gentiles. This proves that he did not refer to nations primarily, but to individuals chosen out of nations. Two things are established here.

(1) that the grace of God was not confined to the Jewish people, as they supposed, so that it could be conferred on no others.

(2) that God was not bound to confer grace on all the descendants of Abraham, as he bestowed it on those selected from the mass, according to his own will, and not of necessity "on the mass" itself.

Verse 25

As he saith also - The doctrine which he had established, he proceeds now to confirm by quotations from the writings of Jews, that he might remove every objection. The doctrine was,

(1)That God intended to call his people from the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

(2)that he was bound by no promise and no principle of obligation to bestow salvation on all the Jews.

(3)that, therefore, it was right for him to reject any or all of the Jews, if he chose, and cut them off from their privileges as a people and from salvation.

In Osee - This is the Greek form of writing the Hebrew word Hosea. It means in the book of Hosea, as "in David" means in the book of David, or by David, Hebrews 4:7. The passage is found in Hosea 2:23. This quotation

is not made according to the letter, but the sense of the prophet is preserved. The meaning is the same in Hosea and in this place, that God would bring those into a covenant relation to himself, who were before deemed outcasts and strangers. Thus, he supports his main position that God would choose his people from among the Gentiles as well as the Jews, or would exercise toward both his right as a sovereign, bestowing or withholding his blessings as he pleases.

Verse 26

And it shall come to pass - It shall happen, or take place. This is a continuation of the quotation from the prophet Hosea Hosea 1:10, designed to confirm the doctrine which he was establishing. Both these quotations have the same design, and are introduced for the same end. In Hosea they did not refer to the calling of the Gentiles, but to the recalling the rejected Jews. God says, after the Jews had been rejected and scattered for their idolatry; after they had forfeited his favor, and been cast off as if they were not his people; he would recall them, and bestow on them again the appellation of sons. The apostle does not quote this as having original reference to the Gentiles, but for the following purposes:

(1) If God formerly purposed to recall to himself a people whom he had rejected; if he bestowed favors on his own people after they had forfeited his favor, and ceased to be entitled to the name of "his people:" then the same thing was not to be regarded as absurd if he dealt in a similar manner with the Gentiles - also a part of his original great family, the family of man, but long since rejected and deemed strangers.

(2) the dealings of God toward the Jews in the time of Hosea settled "a general principle of government." His treatment of them in this manner was a part of his great plan of governing the world. On the same plan he now admitted the Gentiles to favor. And as this "general principle" was established; as the history of the Jews themselves was a precedent in the case, it ought not to be objected in the time of Paul that the "same principle" should be carried out to meet the case also of the Gentiles.

In the place - The place where they may be scattered, or where they may dwell. Or rather, perhaps, in those nations which were not regarded as the people of God, there shall be a people to whom this shall apply.

Where it was said unto them - Where the proper appellation of the people was, that they were not the people of God; where they were

idolatrous, sinful, aliens, strangers; so that they had none of the marks of the children of God.

Ye are not my people - People in covenant with God; under his protection, as their Sovereign, and keeping his laws.

There shall they be called - That is, there they "shall be." The verb to call in the Hebrew writings means often the same as "to be." It denotes that this shall be the appellation which properly expresses their character. It is a figure perhaps almost unique to the Hebrews; and it gives additional interest to the case. Instead of saying coldly and abstractedly, "they are such," it introduces also the idea that such is the "favorable judgment" of God in the case; see Matthew 5:9, "Peace-makers … shall be called the children of God;" see the note on that place; also Romans 9:19; Matthew 21:13, "My house shall "be called" the house of prayer;" Mark 11:17; Luke 1:32, Luke 1:35, Luke 1:76; Isaiah 56:7.

The children of … - Greek, Sons; see the note at Matthew 1:1.

Living God - Called living God in opposition to dead idols; see the Matthew 16:16 note; also Matthew 26:63 note; John 6:69 note; Acts 14:15 note; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 is a most honorable and distinguished appellation. No higher favor can be conferred on mortals than "to be" the sons of the living God; members of his family; entitled to his protection; and secure of his watch and care. This was an object of the highest desire with the saints of old; see Psalm 42:2; Psalm 84:2," My soul thirsteth for God, the living God;" "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God."

Verse 27-28

Esaias - The Greek way of writing the word "Isaiah."

Crieth - Isaiah 10:22-23. Exclaims, or speaks aloud or openly: compare John 1:15. Isaiah brings forth the doctrine fully, and without any concealment or disguise. This doctrine related to the rejection of the Jews; a far more difficult point to establish than was that of the calling of the Gentiles. It was needful, therefore, to fortify it by some explicit passage of the Scriptures.

Concerning Israel - Concerning "the Jews." It is probable that Isaiah had reference primarily to the Jews of his own time; to that wicked generation that God was about to punish, by sending them captive into other lands. The case was one, however, which settled a "general principle of the Jewish government;" and, therefore, it was applicable to the case before the apostle. If the thing for which he was contending - that the Jews might be

rejected existed in the time of Isaiah, and was settled then as a precedent, it might exist also in his time, and under the gospel.

As the sand of the sea - This expression is used to denote an indefinite or an innumerable multitude. It often occurs in the sacred writings. In the infancy of society, before the art of numbering was carried to a great extent, people were obliged to express themselves very much in this manner, Genesis 22:17, "I will multiply thy seed … as the sand which is upon the seashore;" Isaiah 32:12, Isaiah doubtless had reference to this promise; "Though all that was promised to Abraham shall be fulfilled, and his seed shall be as numerous as God declared, yet a remnant only, etc." The apostle thus shows that his doctrine does not conflict at all with the utmost expectation of the Jews drawn from the promises of God; see a similar use of the term "sand" in Judges 7:12; 1 Samuel 13:5; 2 Samuel 17:11, etc. In the same manner great numbers were denoted by the stars of heaven, Genesis 22:17; Genesis 15:5.

A remnant shall be saved - Meaning a remnant only. This implies that great multitudes of them would be "cast off," and "be not saved." If only a remnant was to be saved, many must be lost; and this was just the point which the apostle was endeavoring to establish. The word "remnant" means what is left, particularly what may remain after a battle or a great calamity, 2 Kings 19:31; 2 Kings 10:11; Judges 5:11; Isaiah 14:22. In this place, however, it means a small part or portion. Out of the great multitude there shall be so few left as to make it proper to say that it was a mere remnant. This implies, of course, that the great mass should be cast away or rejected. And this was the use which the apostle intended to make of it; compare the Wisdom of Sirach, xliv. 17, "Noah … was left unto the earth as a remnant when the flood came."

Shall be saved - Shall be preserved or kept from destruction. As Isaiah had reference to the captivity of Babylon. this means that only a remnant should return to their native land. The great mass should be rejected and cast off. This was the case with the ten tribes, and also with many others who chose to remain in the land of their captivity The use which the apostle makes of it is this: In the history of the Jews, by the testimony of Isaiah, a large part of the Jews of that time were rejected, and cast off from being the special people of God. It is clear, therefore, that God has brought himself under no obligation to save all the descendants of Abraham. This case settles the principle. If God did it then, it was equally consistent for him to

do it in the time of Paul, under the gospel. The conclusion, therefore, to which the apostle came, that it was the intention of God to reject and cast off the Jews as a people, was in strict accordance with their own history and the prophecies. It was still true that a remnant was to be saved, while the great mass of the people was rejected. The apostle is not to be understood here as affirming that the passage in Isaiah had reference to the gospel, but only that "it settled one great principle of the divine administration in regard to the Jews, and that their rejection under the gospel was strictly in accordance with that principle."

Romans 9:28

He will finish the work - This is taken from the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 10:23. The Hebrew is, "The Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land." Or, as it may be rendered, "Destruction is decreed which shall make justice overflow; yea, destruction is verily determined on; the Lord Yahweh will execute it in the midst of all the land." (Stuart.) The Septuagint and the apostle adhere to "the sense" of the passage, but do not follow the words. The phrase, "will finish the work," means "he will bring the thing to an end," or will accomplish it. It is an expression applicable to a firm purpose to accomplish an object. It refers here to his threat of cutting off the people; and means that he will fulfil it.

Cut it short - This word here means to "execute it speedily." The destruction shall not be delayed.

In righteousness - So as to manifest his own justice. The work, though apparently severe, yet shall be a just expression of God's abhorrence of the sins of the people.

Because a short work - The word here rendered "short" means properly that which is "determined on or decreed." This is the sense of the Hebrew; and the phrase here denotes "the purpose which was determined on" in relation to the Jews.

Upon the earth - Upon the land of Israel; see the notes at Matthew 5:4; Matthew 4:8. The design for which the apostle introduces this passage is to show that God of old destroyed many of the Jews for their sin; and that, therefore, the doctrine of the apostle was no new thing, that "the Jews" might be excluded from the special privileges of the children of God.

Verse 29

And as Esaias said - Isaiah 1:9.

Before - The apostle had just cited one prediction from the tenth chapter of Isaiah. He now says that Isaiah had affirmed the same thing in a previous part of his prophecy.

Except the Lord of Sabaoth - In Isaiah, the Lord of Hosts. The word "Sabaoth" is the Hebrew word rendered "hosts" (armies). It properly denotes armies or military hosts organized for war. Hence, it denotes the "hosts of heaven," and means:

(1) "The angels" who are represented as marshalled or arranged into military orders; Ephesians 1:21; Ephesians 3:10; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 1:16; Colossians 2:15; Jude 1:6; 1 Kings 22:19, "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him;" Psalm 103:21; Psalm 148:2.

(2) the stars; Jeremiah 33:22, "As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, etc." Isaiah 40:26; Deuteronomy 4:19, etc. God is called the Lord of hosts, as being at the head of all these armies; their King and their Commander. It is a phrase properly expressive of his majesty and power, and is appropriately introduced here, as the "act of saving" "the seed" was a signal "act of power" in the midst of great surrounding wickedness.

Had left - Had preserved, or kept from destruction. Here their preservation is ascribed to God, and it is affirmed that if God had not interposed, "the whole nation" would have been cut off. This fully establishes the doctrine of the apostle, that God might cast off the Jews, and extend the blessings to the Gentiles.

A seed - The Hebrew in Isaiah means "one surviving or escaping," corresponding with the word "remnant." The word "seed" commonly means in the Scriptures "descendants, posterity." In this place it means "a part, a small portion; a remnant," like the small portion of the harvest which is reserved for sowing.

We had been as Sodoma - The nation was so wicked, that unless God had preserved a small number who were pious from the general corruption of the people, they would have been swept off by judgment, like Sodom and Gomorrah. We are told that ten righteous men would have saved Sodom; Genesis 18:32. Among the Israelites, in a time of great general depravity, a small number of holy men were found who preserved the nation. The design of the apostle here was the same as in the previous verses - to show that it was settled in the Jewish history that God might cast off the people,

and reject them from enjoying the special privileges of his friends. It is true that in Isaiah he has reference to the temporal punishments of the Jews. But it settles "a great principle," for which Paul was contending, that God might cast off the nation consistently with his promises and his plans. We may learn here,

(1)That the existence of religion among a people is owing to the love of God. "Except the Lord "had left us, etc."

(2)it is owing to his mercy that "any men" are kept from sin, and any nation from destruction.

(3)we see the value of religion and of pious people in a nation. Ten such would have saved Sodom; and a few such saved Judea; compare Matthew 5:13-14.

(4)God has aright to withdraw his mercies from any other people, however exalted their privileges, and leave them to ruin; and we should not be high-minded, but fear; Rom, Matthew 10:20.

Verse 30

What shall we say then? - What conclusion shall we draw from the previous train of remarks? To what results have we come by the passages adduced from the Old Testament? This question is asked preparatory to his summing up the argument; and he had so stated the argument that the conclusion which he was about to draw was inevitable.

The Gentiles - That many of the Gentiles; or that the way was open for them, and many of them "had actually" embraced the righteousness of faith. This Epistle was written as late as the year 57 (see Introduction), and at that time multitudes of pagans had embraced the Christian religion.

Which followed not after righteousness - The apostle does not mean that none of the pagans had any solicitude about right and wrong, or that there were no anxious inquiries among them; but he intends particularly to place them in contrast with the Jew. They had not made it their main object to justify themselves; they were not filled with prejudice and pride as the Jews were, who supposed that they had complied with the Law, and who felt no need of any other justification; they were sinners, and they felt it, and had no such mighty obstacle in a system of self-righteousness to overcome as the Jew had. Still it was true that they were excessively

wicked, and that the prevailing characteristic among them was that they did not follow after righteousness; see Romans 1:17.

Verse 31

But Israel - The Jews. The apostle does not mean to affirm that none of the Jews had obtained mercy, but that "as a people," or acting according to the prevalent principles of the nation to work out their own righteousness, they had not obtained it.

Which followed after the law of righteousness - The phrase, "the law of righteousness," means the law of justice, or "the just law." That Law demands perfect purity; and even its external observance demanded holiness. The Jews supposed that they rendered such obedience to that Law as to constitute "a meritorious" ground of justification. This they had "followed after," that is, pursued zealously and unremittingly. The reason why they did not obtain justification in that way is fully stated in Philemon 3:4-9; it follows, that all similar experiments must fail, and that none now can be justified by the Law.

(3)thousands fail in the same attempt.

They seek to justify themselves before God. They attempt to weave a righteousness of their own. The moral man does this. The immoral man attempts it as much as the moral man, and is as confident in his own righteousness. The troubled sinner does this; and this it is which keeps him so long from the cross of Christ. All this must be renounced; and man must come as a poor, lost, ruined sinner, and throw himself upon the mere mercy of God in Christ for justification and life.

Verse 32

Wherefore? - Why? The apostle proceeds to state the reason why so uniform and remarkable a result happened. "They sought it not by faith, etc." They depended on their own righteousness, and not on the mercy of God to be obtained by faith.

By the works of the law - By complying with all the demands of the Law so that they might merit salvation. Their attempted obedience included their prayers, fastings, sacrifices, etc., as well as compliance with the demands of the moral law. It may be asked here, perhaps, how the Jews could know any better than this? how should they know anything about justification by faith? To this I answer:

(1) That the doctrine was stated in the Old Testament; see Habakkuk 2:4; compare Romans 1:17; Psalm 32:1-11; Psalm 130:1-8; Psalm 14:1-7;

compare Job 9:2.

(2) the sacrifices had reference to a future state of things, and were doubt less so understood; see the Epistle to the Hebrews.

(3) the "principle" of justification, and of living by faith, had been fully brought out in the lives and experience of the saints of old; see Romans 4 and Hebrews 11.

They stumbled - They fell; or failed; or "this was the cause why they" did not obtain it.

At that stumbling-stone - To wit, at what he specifies in the following verse. "A stumbling-stone" is a stone or impediment in the path over which people may fall. Here it means "that obstacle which prevented their attaining the righteousness of faith; and which was the occasion of their fall, rejection, and ruin." That was the rejection and the crucifixion of their own Messiah; their unwillingness to be saved by him; their contempt of him and his message. For this God withheld from them the blessings of justification, and was about to cast them off as a people. This also the apostle proceeds to prove was foretold by the prophets.

Verse 33

As it is written - see Isaiah 8:14; Isaiah 28:16. The quotation here is made up of both these passages, and contains the substance of both; compare also Psalm 118:22; 1 Peter 2:6.

Behold I lay in Sion - Mount Sion was the hill or eminence in Jerusalem, over-against Mount Moriah, on which the temple was built. On this was the palace of David, and this was the residence of the court; 1 Chronicles 11:5-8. Hence, the whole city was often called by that name; Psalm 48:12; Psalm 69:35; Psalm 87:2. Hence, also it came to signify the capital, the glory of the people of God, the place of solemnities; and hence, also the church itself; Psalm 2:6; Psalm 51:18; Psalm 102:13; Psalm 137:3; Isaiah 1:27; Isaiah 52:1; Isaiah 59:20, etc. In this place it means the church. God will place or establish in the midst of that church.

A stumblingstone and rock of offence - Something over which people shall fall; see the note at Matthew 5:29. This is by Paul referred to the Messiah. He is called rock of stumbling, not because it was the design of sending him that people should fall, but because such would be the result. The application of the term "rock" to the Messiah is derived from the

custom of building, as he is the "cornerstone" or the "immovable foundation" on which the church is to be built. It is not on human merits, but by the righteousness of the Saviour, that the church is to be reared; see 1 Peter 2:4," I lay in Sion "a chief cornerstone;" Psalm 118:22, "The stone which the builders rejected, is become the head stone of the corner;" Ephesians 2:20, "Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." This rock, designed as a corner stone to the church, became, by the wickedness of the Jews, the block over which they fall into ruin; 1 Peter 2:8.

Shall not be ashamed - This is taken substantially from the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 28:16, though with some variation. The Hebrew is, "shall not make haste," as it is in our English version. This is the literal meaning of the Hebrew word; but it means also "to be afraid;" as one who makes haste often is; to be agitated with fear or fright; and hence, it has a signification nearly similar to that of shame. It expresses the substance of the same thing, namely, "failure of obtaining expected success and happiness." The meaning here is, that the man who believes shall not be agitated, or thrown into commotion, by fear of want or success: shall not be disappointed in his hopes; and, of course, he shall never be ashamed that he became a Christian. They who do not believe in Christ shall be agitated, fall, and sink into eternal shame and contempt. Daniel 12:2. They who do believe shall be confident; shall not be deceived, but shall obtain the object of their desires. It is clear that Paul regarded the passage in Isaiah as referring to the Messiah. The same also is the case with the other sacred writers who have quoted it; 1 Peter 2:5-8; see also Matthew 21:42; Luke 20:17-18; Luke 2:34. The ancient Targum of Jonathan translates the passage, Isaiah 28:16, "Lo, I will place in Zion a king, a king strong, mighty and terrible;" referring doubtless to the Messiah. Other Jewish writings also show that this interpretation was formerly given by the Jews to the passage in Isaiah.

In view of this argument of the apostle, we may remark,

(1) That God is a sovereign, and has a right to dispose of people as he pleases.

(2) the doctrine of election was manifest in the case of the Jews as an established principle of the divine government, and is therefore true.

(3) it argues great lack of proper feeling to be opposed to this doctrine. It is saving, in other words, that we have not confidence in God; or that we do not believe that he is qualified to direct the affairs of his own universe as well as we.

(4) the doctrine of election is a doctrine which is not arbitrary; but which will yet be seen to be wise, just, and good. It is the source of all the blessings that any mortals enjoy; and in the case before us, it can be seen to be benevolent as well as just. It is better that God should cast off a part of the small nation of the Jews, and extend these blessings to the Gentiles, than that they should always have been confined to Jews. The world is better for it, and more good has come out of it.

(5) the fact that the gospel has been extended to all nations, is proof that it is from heaven. To a Jew there was no motive to attempt to break down all the existing institutions of his nation, and make the blessings of religion common to all nations, unless he knew that the gospel system was true. Yet the apostles were Jews; educated with all the prejudices of the Jewish people.

(6) the interests of Christians are safe. They shall not be ashamed or disappointed. God will keep them, and bring them to his kingdom.

(7) people still are offended at the cross of Christ. They contemn and despise him. He is to them as a root out of dry ground, and they reject him, and fall into ruin. This is the cause why sinners perish; and this only. Thus, as the ancient Jews brought ruin on themselves and their country, so do sinners bring condemnation and woe on their souls. And as the ancient despisers and crucifiers of the Lord Jesus perished, so will all those who work iniquity and despise him now.

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Verse 1

Brethren - This expression seems intended particularly for the Jews, his ancient friends, fellow-worshippers, and kinsmen, but who had embraced the Christian faith. It is an expression of tenderness and affection, denoting his deep interest in their welfare.

My heart‘s desire - The word “desire” εὐδοκία eudokiameans benevolence, and the expression, “my heart‘s desire,” means my earnest and sincere wish.

Prayer to God - He not only cherished this feeling but he expressed in a desire to God. He had no desire that his kinsmen should be destroyed; no pleasure in the appalling doctrine which he had been defending. He still wished their welfare; and could still pray for them that they might return to God. Ministers have no pleasure in proclaiming the truth that people must be lost. Even when they declare the truths of the Bible that some will be lost; when they are constrained by the unbelief and wickedness of people to proclaim it of them, they still can sincerely say that they seek their salvation.

For Israel - For the Jewish nation.

That they might be saved - This clearly refers to salvation from the sin of unbelief; and the consequences of sin in hell. It does not refer to the temporal calamities which were coming upon them, but to preservation from the eternal anger of God; compare Romans 11:26; 1 Timothy 2:4. The reasons why the apostle commences this chapter in this tender manner are the following.

(1) because he had stated and defended one of the most offensive doctrines that could be preached to a Jew; and he was desirous to show them that it was not from any lack of affection for them, but that he was urged to it by the pressure of truth.

(2) he was regarded by them as an apostate. He had abandoned them when bearing their commission, and while on his way to execute their favorite purposes, and had preached the doctrine which they had sent him to destroy; compare Romans 10:2.

(3) he was aware of the deep and dreadful condemnation that was coming on them. In view of that he expressed his tender regard for their welfare, and his earnest prayer to God for their salvation. And we see here the proper feelings of a minister of the gospel when declaring the most terrible of the truths of the Bible. Paul was tender, affectionate, kind; convincing by cool argument, and not harshly denouncing; stating the appalling truth, and then pouring out his earnest desires to God that he would avert the impending doom. So should the awful doctrines of religion be preached by all the ambassadors of God.

Verse 2

For I bear them record - To bear record means to be a witness; to give evidence. This, Paul was well qualified to do. He had been a Jew of the strictest order Acts 26:5; Philemon 3:5, and he well knew the extraordinary exertions which they put forth to obey the commands of the Law.

A zeal of God - A zeal for God. Thus, John 2:17," The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;" an earnest desire for the honor of the sanctuary has wholly absorbed my attention; compare Psalm 69:9; Acts 21:20, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law;" Acts 22:3, "And was zealous toward God as ye all are this day." Zeal for God here means passionate ardor in the things pertaining to God, or in the things of religion. In this they were, doubtless, many of them sincere; but sincerity does not of itself constitute true piety; John 16:2, "The time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." This would be an instance of extraordinary zeal, and in this they would be sincere; but persecution to death of apostles cannot be true religion; see also Matthew 23:15; Acts 26:9, "I thought that I ought to do," etc. So many persons suppose that, provided they are sincere and zealous, they must of course be accepted of God. But the zeal which is acceptable is what aims at the glory of God, and which is founded on true benevolence to the universe; and which does not aim primarily to establish a system of self-righteousness, as did the Jew, or to build up our own sect, as many others do. We may remark here, that Paul was not insensible to what the Jews did, and was not unwilling to give them credit for it. A minister of the gospel should not be blind to the amiable qualities of people or to their zeal; and should be willing to speak of it tenderly, even when he

is proclaiming the doctrine of depravity, or denouncing the just judgments of God.

Not according to knowledge - Not an enlightened, discerning, and intelligent zeal. Not what was founded on correct views of God and of religious truth. Such zeal is enthusiasm, and often becomes persecuting. Knowledge without zeal becomes cold, abstract, calculating, formal; and may be possessed by devils as well as human beings. It is the union of the two - the action of the man called forth to intense effort by just views of truth and by right feeling - that constitutes true religion. This was the zeal of the Saviour and of the apostles.

Verse 3

For they being ignorant - The ignorance of the Jews was voluntarily, and therefore criminal. The apostle does not affirm that they could not have known what the plan of God was; for he says Romans 10:18-21 that they had full opportunity of knowing. An attentive study of their own Scriptures would have led them to the true knowledge of the Messiah and his righteousness; see John 5:39; compare Isaiah 53:1-12, etc. Yet the fact that they were ignorant, though not an excuse, is introduced here, doubtless, as a mild and mitigating circumstance, that should take off the severity of what he might appear to them to be saying; 1 Timothy 1:13, "But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly, in unbelief;" Luke 23:34, "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" Acts 7:60. Involuntary ignorance excuses from guilt; but ignorance produced by our sin or our indolence is no excuse for crime.

Of God's righteousness - Not of the personal holiness of God, "but of God's plan of justifying people, or of declaring them righteous by faith in his Son;" see the note at Romans 1:17. Here God's plan stands opposed to their efforts to make themselves righteous by their own works.

And seeking to establish … - Endeavoring to confirm or make valid their own righteousness; to render it such as to constitute a ground of justification before God; or to make good their own claims to eternal life by their merits. This stands opposed to the justification by grace, or to God's plan. And they must ever be opposed. This was the constant effort of the Jews; and in this they supposed they had succeeded. see Paul's experience in Philemon 3:4-6; Acts 26:5. Instances of their belief on this subject occur in all the gospels, where our Saviour combats their notions of their own righteousness. See particularly their views and evasions exposed in

Matthew 5:20, etc.; Matthew 6:2-5. It was this which mainly opposed the Lord Jesus and his apostles; and it is this confidence in their own righteousness, which still stands in the way of the progress of the gospel among people.

Have not submitted themselves - Confident in their own righteousness. they have nor yielded their hearts to a plan which requires them to come confessing that they have no merit, and to be saved by the merit of another. No obstacle to salvation by grace is so great as the self-righteousness of the sinner.

Righteousness of God - His plan or scheme of justifying people.

Verse 4

For Christ - This expression implies faith in Christ. This is the design of the discussion, to show that justification cannot be obtained by our own righteousness, but by faith in Christ. As no direct benefit results to people from Christ unless they believe on him, faith in him is implied where the word occurs in this connection.

Is the end of the law - The word translated "end" means what completes a thing, or renders it perfect; also the boundary, issue, or termination of anything, as the end of life, the result of a prophecy, etc.; John 13:1; Luke 22:37. It also means the design or object which is had in view; the principal purpose for which it was undertaken; 1 Timothy 1:5," The end of the commandment is charity;" the main design or purpose of the command is to produce love; 1 Peter 1:9, "The end of your faith, the salvation of your souls;" the main design or purpose of faith is to secure salvation; Romans 14:9, "To this end Christ both died," etc. For this design or purpose. This is doubtless its meaning here. "The main design or object which the perfect obedience of the Law would accomplish, is accomplished by faith in Christ." That is, perfect obedience to the Law would accomplish justification before God, secure his favor and eternal life. The same end is now accomplished by faith in Christ. The great design of both is the same; and the same great end is finally gained. This was the subject of discussion between the apostle and the Jews; and this is all that is necessary to understand in the case. Some have supposed that the word "end" refers to the ceremonial law; that Christ fulfilled it, and brought it to an end. Others, that he perfectly fulfilled the moral law. And others, that the Law in the end leads us to Christ, or that its design is to point us to him. All this is true, but not the truth taught in this passage. That is simple and plain, that by faith in

Christ the same end is accomplished in regard to our justification, that would be by perfect obedience to the moral law.

For righteousness - Unto justification with God.

To every … - See the note at Romans 1:17.

Verse 5

For Moses describeth … - This is found in Leviticus 18:5, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, which if a man do he shall live in them." This appeal is made to Moses, both in regard to the righteousness of the Law and that of faith, in accordance with the usual manner of Paul to sustain all his positions by the Old Testament, and to show that he was introducing no new doctrine. He was only affirming that which had been long before taught in the writings of the Jews themselves. The word "describeth" is literally writes γράφει grapheia word often used in this sense.

The righteousness … - The righteousness which a perfect obedience to the Law of God would produce. That consisted in perfectly doing all that the Law required.

The man which doeth these things - The man who shall perform or obey what was declared in the previous statutes. Moses here had reference to all the commandments which God had given, moral and ceremonial. And the doctrine of Moses is what pertains to all laws, that he who shall render perfect and continued compliance with all the statutes made known, shall receive the reward which the Law promises. This is a first principle of all law; for all law holds a man to be innocent, and, of course, entitled to whatever immunities and rewards it has to confer, until he is proved to be guilty. In this case, however, Moses did not affirm that in fact any one either had yielded or would yield perfect obedience to the Law of God. The Scriptures abundantly teach elsewhere that it never has been done.

Doeth - Obeys, or yields obedience. So also Matthew 5:19, "Shall do and teach them." Matthew 7:24, Matthew 7:26, "whosoever heareth these sayings … and doeth them." Matthew 23:3; Mark 3:35; Mark 6:20; Luke 6:46-47, Luke 6:49.

Shall live - Shall obtain felicity. Obedience shall render him happy, and entitled to the rewards of the obedient. Moses doubtless referred here to all the results which would follow obedience. The effect would be to produce happiness in this life and in the life to come. The principle on which happiness would be conferred, would be the same whether in this world or

the next. The tendency and result of obedience would be to promote order, health, purity, benevolence; to advance the welfare of man, and the honor of God, and thus must confer happiness. The idea of happiness is often in the Scriptures represented by the word "life"; see the note at John 5:24. It is evident moreover that the Jews understood Moses here as referring to more than temporal blessings. The ancient Targum of Onkelos renders the passage in Leviticus thus: "The man who does these things shall live in them to eternal life." So the Arabic version is, "The retribution of him who works these things is that he shall live an eternal life."

By them - ἐν αὐτοῖς en autoisIn them. In their observance he shall find happiness. Not simply as a result, or reward, but the very act of obeying shall carry its own reward. This is the case with all true religion. This declaration of Moses is still true. If perfect obedience were rendered, it would, from the nature of the case, confer happiness and life as long as the obedience was rendered. God would not punish the innocent. But in this world it never has been rendered, except in the case of the Lord Jesus; and the consequence is, that the course of man has been attended with pain, sorrow, and death.

Verse 6

But the righteousness which is of faith - It is observable here that Paul does not affirm that Moses describes any where the righteousness by faith, or the effect of the scheme of justification by faith. His object was different, to give the Law, and state its demands and rewards. Yet though he had not formally described the plan of justification by faith, yet he had used language which would fitly express that plan. The scheme of justification by faith is here personified, as if it were living and describing its own effects and nature. One describing it would say, Or the plan itself speaks in this manner. The words here quoted are taken from Deuteronomy 30:11-14. The original meaning of the passage is this: Moses, near the end of his life, having given his commandments to the Israelites exhorts them to obedience. To do this, he assures them that his commands are reasonable, plain, intelligible, and accessible.

They did not require deep research, long journeys, or painful toil. There was no need of crossing seas, and going to other lands, of looking into the profound mysteries of the high heavens, or the deep abyss; but they were near them, had been plainly set before them, and were easily understood. To see the excellency of this characteristic of the divine Law, it may be

observed, that among the ancients, it was not uncommon for legislators and philosophers to travel to distant countries in pursuit of knowledge. They left their country, encountered dangers on the sea and land, to go to distant regions that had the reputation of wisdom. Egypt was especially a land of such celebrity; and in subsequent times Pythagoras, and the principal philosophers of Greece, traveled into that country to converse with their priests, and to bear the fruits of their wisdom to benefit their native land. And it is not improbable that this had been done to some extent even in or before the time of Moses. Moses says that his precepts were to be obtained by no such painful and dangerous journeys. They were near them, plain, and intelligible. This is the general meaning of this passage Moses dwells on the thought, and places it in a variety of forms by the questions, "who shall go up to heaven for us, etc.;" and Paul regards this as appropriately describing the language of Christian faith; but without affirming that Moses himself had any reference in the passage to the faith of the gospel.

On this wise - In this manner.

Say not in thine heart - The expression to say in the heart is the same as to think. Do not think, or suppose, that the doctrine is so difficult to be understood, that one must ascend to heaven in order to understand it.

Who shall ascend into heaven? - This expression was used among the Jews to denote any difficult undertaking. To say that it was high as heaven, or that it was necessary to ascend to heaven to understand it, was to express the highest difficulty. Thus, Job 11:7, "Canst thou by searching find out God? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? etc." Moses says it was not so with his doctrine. It was not impossible to be understood, but was plain and intelligible.

That is, to bring Christ … - Paul does not here affirm that it was the original design of Moses to affirm this of Christ. His words related to his own doctrine. Paul makes this use of the words because,

(1)They appropriately expressed the language of faith.

(2)if this might be affirmed of the doctrines of Moses, much more might it of the Christian religion. Religion had no such difficult work to do as to ascend to heaven to bring down a Messiah. That work was already accomplished when God gave his Son to become a man, and to die.

To save man it was indeed indispensable that Christ should have come down from heaven. But the language of faith was that this had already been

done. Probably the word "Christ" here includes all the benefits mentioned in Romans 10:4 as resulting from the work of Christ.

Verse 7

Or who shall descend into the deep? - These words are also a part of the address of Moses, Deuteronomy 30:13. But it is not literally quoted. The Hebrew is, "Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldst say, Who shall go over the sea for us, etc." The words of the quotation are changed, but not the sense; and it is to be remembered that Paul is not professing to quote the words of Moses, but to "express the language of faith;" and this he does mainly by words which Moses had used, which also expressed his meaning. The words as used by Moses refer to what is remote, and therefore difficult to be obtained. To cross the sea in the early times of navigation involved the highest difficulty, danger, and toil. The sea which was in view was doubtless the Mediterranean, but the crossing of that was an enterprise of the greatest difficulty, and the regions beyond that were regarded as being at a vast distance.

Hence, it is spoken of as being the widest object with which they were acquainted, and the fairest illustration of infinity, Job 11:9. In the same sense Paul uses the word "deep," ἄβυσσον abusson- "the abyss." This word is applied to anything the depth or bottom of which is not known. It is applied to the ocean (in the Septuagint), Job 41:31, "He maketh the deep to boil as a pot." Isaiah 44:27, "that saith to the deep, Be dry, etc." Genesis 7:11; Genesis 8:2; to a broad place Job 36:16; and to the abyss before the world was formed, Genesis 1:2. In the New Testament it is not applied to the ocean, unless in the passage Luke 8:31 (see the note on that place), but to the abode of departed spirits; and particularly to the dark, deep, and bottomless pit, where the wicked are to dwell forever. Revelation 9:1-2, "and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit;" Greek, "The pit of the abyss."

Revelation 11:7; Revelation 17:8; Revelation 20:1, Revelation 20:3. In these places the word means the deep, awful regions of the nether world. The word stands opposed to heaven; as deep as that is high; as dark as that is light; while the one is as vast as the other. In the place before us it is opposed to heaven; and to descend there to bring up one, is supposed to be as impossible as to ascend to heaven to bring one down. Paul does not affirm that Christ descended to those regions; but he says that there is no

such difficulty in religion as if one were required to descend into those profound regions to call back a departed spirit. That work was in fact done, when Jesus was recalled from the dead, and now the work of salvation is easy. The word "abyss" here, therefore, corresponds to Hades, or the dark regions of departed spirits.

That is, to bring up Christ … - Justification by faith had no such difficult and impossible work to perform as would be an attempt for man to raise the dead. That would be impossible; but the work of religion is easy. "Christ, the ground of hope, is not by our efforts to be brought down from heaven to save us, for that is done; nor by our efforts to be raised from the dead, for that is done; and what remains for us, that is to believe, is easy, and is near us." This is the meaning of the whole passage.

Verse 8

But what saith it? - That is, what is the language of the doctrine of justification by faith? Or what is to be done according to that doctrine?

The word is nigh thee - This is still a use of the language of Moses. Deuteronomy 30:14. The meaning is, the doctrine is not difficult to be understood and embraced. What is nigh us may be easily obtained. What is remote, with difficulty. The doctrine of Moses and of the gospel was nigh; that is, it was easily obtained, embraced, and understood.

In thy mouth - This is taken from the Septuagint. Deuteronomy 30:14. The meaning is, that the doctrine was already so familiar, and so well understood, that it was actually in their mouth, that is, their language, their common conversation. Moses had so often inculcated it, that it was understood and talked about by the people, so that there was no need to search in distant climes to obtain it. The same was true of the gospel. The facts were so well known by the preaching of the apostles, that they might be said to be "in every man's mouth."

In thy heart - The word "heart" is very variously used in the sacred Scriptures. As used by Moses in this place, it evidently means that his doctrines were in their mind, or were a subject of meditation and reflection. They already possessed them, and talked and thought about them: so that there was no need of going to distant places to learn them. The same was true of the doctrine requiring faith in Christ. It was already among them by the preaching of the apostles, and was a subject of conversation and of thought.

That is - This is the use which the apostle makes of it; not that Moses referred to the gospel. His language conveys the main idea which Paul wished to do, that the doctrine was plain and intelligible.

The word of faith - The doctrine which requires faith, that is, the gospel; compare 1 Timothy 4:6. The gospel is called the Word of faith, the Word of God, as being what was spoken, or communicated by God to man. Romans 10:17; Hebrews 6:5; Hebrews 11:3.

Which we preach - Which is proclaimed by the apostles, and made known to Jews and Gentiles. As this was now made known to all, as the apostles preached it everywhere, it could be said to be nigh them; there was no need of searching other lands for it, or regarding it as a hidden mystery, for it was plain and manifest to all. Its simplicity and plainness he proceeds immediately to state.

Verse 9

That if thou shalt confess - The word here rendered "confess" ὁμολογέω homologeōis often rendered "profess"; Matthew 7:23, "Then will I profess to them, I never knew you;" Titus 1:16; Titus 3:14; Romans 1:22; 1 Timothy 2:10; 1 Timothy 6:12-13, 1 Timothy 6:21; Hebrews 3:1, etc. It properly means to "speak what agrees with something which others speak or maintain." Thus, confession or profession expresses our "agreement or concord with what God holds to be true, and what he declares to be true." It denotes a public declaration or assent to that, here expressed by the words "with thy mouth." A profession of religion then denotes a public declaration of our agreement with what God has declared, and extends to all his declarations about our lost estate, our sin, and need of a Saviour; to his doctrines about his own nature, holiness, and law; about the Saviour and the Holy Spirit; about the necessity of a change of heart and holiness of life; and about the grave and the judgment; about heaven and hell. As the doctrine respecting a Redeemer is the main and leading doctrine, it is put here by way of eminence, as in fact involving all others; and publicly to express our assent to this, is to declare our agreement with God on all kindred truths.

With thy mouth - To profess a thing with the mouth is to speak of it; to declare it; to do it openly and publicly.

The Lord Jesus - Shalt openly acknowledge attachment to Jesus Christ. The meaning of it may be expressed by regarding the phrase "the Lord" as the predicate; or the thing to be confessed is, that he is Lord; compare Acts

2:36; Philemon 2:11, "And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Here it means to acknowledge him as Lord, that is, as having a right to rule over the soul.

Shalt believe in thy heart - Shalt sincerely and truly believe this, so that the external profession shall correspond with the real, internal feelings. Where this is not the case, it would be hypocrisy; where this is the case, there would be the highest sincerity, and this religion requires.

That God hath raised him - This fact, or article of Christian belief, is mentioned here because of its great importance, and its bearing on the Christian system. If this be true, then all is true. Then it is true that he came forth from God; that he died for sin; and that God approved and accepted his work. Then it is true that he ascended to heaven, and is exalted to dominion over the universe, and that he will return to judge the quick and the dead. For all this was professed and taught; and all this was regarded as depending on the truth of his having been raised from the dead; see Philemon 2:8-11; Ephesians 1:21; Acts 2:24, Acts 2:32-33; Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 4:14; 1 Corinthians 15:13-20. To profess this doctrine was, therefore, virtually to profess all the truths of the Christian religion. No man could believe this who did not also believe all the truths dependent on it. Hence, the apostles regarded this doctrine as so important, and made it so prominent in their preaching. See the note at Acts 1:3.

Thou shalt be saved - From sin and hell. This is the doctrine of the gospel throughout; and all this shows that salvation by the gospel was easy.

Verse 10

For with the heart - Not with the understanding merely, but with such a faith as shall be sincere, and shall influence the life. There can be no other genuine faith than what influences the whole mind.

Believeth unto righteousness - Believes so that justification is obtained. (Stuart.) In God's plan of justifying people, this is the way by which we may be declared just or righteous in his sight. The moment a sinner believes, therefore, he is justified; his sins are pardoned; and he is introduced into the favor of God. No man can be justified without this; for this is God's plan, and he will not depart from it.

With the mouth confession is made … - That is, confession or profession is so made as to obtain salvation. He who in all appropriate ways professes his attachment to Christ shall be saved. This profession is to be made in all the proper ways of religious duty; by an avowal of our

sentiments; by declaring on all proper occasions our belief of the truth; and by an unwavering adherence to them in all persecutions, oppositions, and trials. He who declares his belief makes a profession. He who associates with Christian people does it. He who acts with them in the prayer meeting, in the sanctuary, and in deeds of benevolence, does it. He who is baptized, and commemorates the death of the Lord Jesus, does it. And he who leads an humble, prayerful, spiritual life, does it. He shows his regard to the precepts and example of Christ Jesus; his regard for them more than for the pride, and pomp, and allurements of the world. All these are included in a profession of religion. In whatever way we can manifest attachment to it, it must be done. The reason why this is made so important is, that there can be no true attachment to Christ which will not manifest itself in the life. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. It is impossible that there should be true belief in the heart of man, unless it should show itself in the life and conversation. This is the only test of its existence and its power; and hence it is made so important in the business of religion. And we may here learn,

(1) That a profession of religion is, by Paul, made as really indispensable to salvation as believing. According to him it is connected with salvation as really as faith is with justification; and this accords with all the declarations of the Lord Jesus; Matthew 10:32; Matthew 25:34-46; Luke 12:8.

(2) there can be no religion where there is not a willingness to confess the Lord Jesus. There is no true repentance where we are not willing to confess our faults. There is no true attachment to a father or mother or friend, unless we are willing on all proper occasions to avow it. And so there can be no true religion where there is too much pride, or vanity, or love of the world, or fear of shame to confess it.

(3) those who never profess any religion have none: and they are not safe. To deny God the Saviour before people is not safe. They who do not profess religion, profess the opposite. The real feelings of the heart will be expressed in the life. And they who profess by their lives that they have no regard for God and Christ, for heaven and glory, must expect to be met in the last day, as those who deny the Lord that bought them, and who bring upon themselves quick destruction; 2 Peter 1:2.

Verse 11

For the Scripture saith … - Isaiah 28:16. This was the uniform doctrine of the Scripture, that he who holds an opinion on the subject of religion will not be ashamed to avow it. This is the nature of religion, and without this there can be none; see this passage explained in Romans 9:33.

Verse 12

For there is no difference - In the previous verse Paul had quoted a passage from Isaiah 28:16, which says that "everyone" (Greek, πᾶς pas) that believeth shall not be ashamed; that is, everyone of every nation and kindred. This implies that it was not to be confined to the Jews. This thought he now further illustrates and confirms by expressly declaring that there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek. This doctrine it was one main design of the Epistle to establish, and it is fully proved in the course of the argument in Romans 3:26-30. When the apostle says there is no difference between them, he means in regard to the subject under discussion. In many respects there might be a difference; but not in the way of justification before God. There all had sinned; all had failed of obeying the Law; and all must be justified in the same way, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The word "difference" διαστολὴ diastolēmeans "distinction, diversity." It also means "eminence, excellence, advantage." There is no eminence or advantage which the Jew has over the Greek in regard to justification before God.

The Jew - That portion of mankind which professed to yield obedience to the Law of Moses.

The Greek - Literally, those who dwelt in Greece, or those who spoke the Greek language. As the Jews, however, were acquainted chiefly with the Greeks, and knew little of other nations, the name Greek among them came to denote all who were not Jews; that is, the same as the Gentiles. The terms "Jew and Greek," therefore, include all mankind. There is no difference among people about the terms of salvation; they are the same to all. This truth is frequently taught. It was a most important doctrine, especially in a scheme of religion that was to be preached to all people. It was very offensive to the Jews, who had always regarded themselves as a especially favored people. Against this, all their prejudices were roused, as it completely overthrew all their own views of national eminence and pride, and admitted despised Gentiles to the same privileges with the long favored

and chosen people of God. The apostles, therefore, were at great pains fully to establish it; see Acts 10:9; Galatians 3:28.

For the same Lord over all … - For there is the same Lord of all; that is, the Jews and Gentiles have one common Lord; compare Romans 3:29-30. The same God had formed them, and ruled them; and God now opened the same path to life. See this fully presented in Paul‘s address to the people of Athens, in Acts 17:26-30; see also 1 Timothy 2:5. As there was but one God; as all, Jews and Gentiles, were his creatures; as one law was applicable to all; as all had sinned; and as all were exposed to wrath; so it was reasonable that there should be the same way of return - through the mere mercy of God. Against this the Jew ought not to object; and in this he and the Greek should rejoice.

Is rich unto all - πλουτῶν εἰς παντάς ploutōn eis pantasThe word "rich" means to have abundance, to have in store much more than is needful for present or personal use. It is commonly applied to wealth. But applied to God, it means that he abounds in mercy or goodness toward others. Thus, Ephesians 2:4, "God, who is rich in mercy," etc.; 1 Timothy 6:17-18, "charge them that are rich in this world … that they be rich in good works." James 2:5, "God hath chosen the poor … rich in faith;" that is, abounding in faith and good works, etc. Thus, God is said to be rich toward all, as he abounds in mercy and goodness toward them in the plan of salvation.

That call upon him - This expression means properly to supplicate, to invoke, as in prayer. As prayer constitutes no small part of religion; and as it is a distinguishing characteristic of those who are true Christians (Acts 11:11, "Behold he prayeth;") to call on the name of the Lord is put for religion itself, and is descriptive of acts of devotion toward God; 1 Peter 1:17, "And if ye call on the Father, etc.;" Acts 2:21; Acts 9:14," he hath authority … to bind all that call on thy name;" Acts 7:59; Acts 22:16; Genesis 4:26, "Then began men to call on the name of the Lord."

Verse 13

For whosoever shall call … - This sentiment is found substantially in Joel 2:32, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." This is expressly applied to the times of the gospel, by Peter, in Acts 2:21; see the note on that place. To call on the name of the Lord is the same as to call on the Lord himself. The word "name" is often used in this manner. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, etc.;" Proverbs 18:10. "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee;"

Psalm 20:1. That is, God himself is a strong tower, etc. It is clear from what follows, that the apostle applies this to Jesus Christ; and this is one of the numerous instances in which the writers of the New Testament apply to him expressions which in the Old Testament are applicable to God; see 1 Corinthians 1:2.

Shall be saved - This is the uniform promise; see Acts 2:21; Acts 22:16, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." This is proper and indispensable because,

(1)We have sinned against God, and it is right that we should confess it.

(2)because he only can pardon us, and it is fit, that if we obtain pardon, we should ask it of God.

(3)to call upon him is to acknowledge him as our Sovereign, our Father, and our Friend; and it is right that we render him our homage.

It is implied in this, that we call upon him with right feelings; that is, with a humble sense of our sinfulness and our need of pardon, and with a willingness to receive eternal life as it is offered us in the gospel. And if this be done, this passage teaches us that all may be saved who will do it. He will cast none away who come in this manner. The invitation and the assurance extend to all nations and to people of all times.

Verse 14

How then shall they call. … - The apostle here adverts to an objection which might be urged to his argument. His doctrine was, that faith in Christ was essential to justification and salvation; and that this was needful for all; and that, without this, man must perish. The objection was, that they could not call on him in whom they had not believed; that they could not believe in him of whom they had not heard; and that this was arranged by God himself, so that a large part of the world was destitute of the gospel, and in fact did not believe; Romans 10:16-17. The objection had particular reference to the Jews; and the ground of injustice which a Jew would complain of, would be, that the plan made salvation dependent on faith, when a large part of the nation had not heard the gospel, and had had no opportunity to know it. This objection the apostle meets, so far as it was of importance to his argument, in Romans 10:18-21. The first part of the objection is, that they could "not call on him in whom they had not believed." That is, how could they call on one in whose existence, ability, and willingness to help, they did not believe? The objection is, that in order

to our calling on one for help, we must be satisfied that there is such a being, and that he is able to aid us. This remark is just, and every man feels it. But the point of the objection is, that "sufficient evidence of the divine mission and claims of Jesus Christ had not been given to authorize the doctrine that eternal salvation depended on belief in him, or that it would be right to suspend the eternal happiness of few and Gentile on this."

How shall they believe in him … - This position is equally undeniable, that people could not believe in a being of whom they had not heard. And the implied objection was, that people could not be expected to believe in one of whose existence they knew nothing, and, of course, that they could not be blamed for not doing it. It was not right, therefore, to make eternal life depend, both among Jews and Gentiles, on faith in Christ.

And how shall they hear … - How can people hear, unless some one proclaim to them, or preach to them what is to be heard and believed? This is also true. The objection thence derived is, that it is not right to condemn people for not believing what has never been proclaimed to them; and, of course, that the doctrine that eternal life is suspended on faith cannot be just and right.

Verse 15

And how shall they preach - In what way shall there be preachers, unless they are commissioned by God? The word "how" does not refer to the manner of preaching, but to the fact that there would be no preachers at all unless they were sent forth. To preach means to proclaim in a public manner, as a crier does. In the Scriptures it means to proclaim the gospel to people.

Except they be sent - That is, except they are divinely commissioned, and sent forth by God. This was an admitted doctrine among the Jews, that a proclamation of a divine message must be made by one who was commissioned by God for that purpose; Jeremiah 23:21; Jeremiah 1:7; Jeremiah 14:14-15; Jeremiah 7:25. He who sends a message to people can alone designate the proper persons to bear it. The point of the objection, therefore, was this: People could not believe unless the message was sent to them; yet God had not actually sent it to all people: it could not, therefore, be just to make eternal life depend on so impracticable a thing as faith, since people had not the means of believing.

As it is written - In Isaiah 52:7.

How beautiful … - The reason why this passage is introduced here is, that it confirms what had just been advanced in the objection - the "importance and necessity" of there being messengers of salvation. That importance is seen in the high encomium which is passed on them in the Sacred Scriptures. They are regarded as objects especially attractive; their necessity is fully recognised; and a distinguished rank is given to them in the oracles of God - How beautiful. How attractive, how lovely. This is taken from the Hebrew, with a slight variation. In the Hebrew, the words "upon the mountains" occur, which makes the passage more picturesque, though the sense is retained by Paul. The image in Isaiah is that of a herald seen at first leaping or running on a distant hill, when he first comes in sight, with tidings of joy from a field of battle, or from a distant land. Thus, the appearance of such a man to those who were in captivity, would be an image full of gladness and joy.

Are the feet - Many have supposed that the meaning of this expression is this: The feet of a herald, naked and dusty from traveling, would be naturally objects of disgust. But what would be naturally disagreeable is thus made pleasant by the joy of the message. But this explanation is far fetched, and wants parallel instances. Besides, it is a violation of the image which the apostle had used. That was a distant object - a herald running on the distant hills; and it supposes a picture too remote to observe distinctly the feet, whether attractive or not. The meaning of it is clearly this: "how beautiful is the coming or the running of such a herald." The feet are emblematic of his coming. Their rapid motion would be seen; and their rapidity would be beautiful from the desire to hear the message which he brought. The whole meaning of the passage, then, as applied to ministers of the gospel, is, that their coming is an attractive object, regarded with deep interest, and productive of joy - an honored and a delightful employment.

That preach … - Literally, "that evangelize peace. That proclaim the good news of peace; or bring the glad message of peace.

And bring glad tidings … - Literally, "and evangelize good things;" or that bring the glad message of good things. Peace here is put for good of any kind; and as the apostle uses it, for the news of reconciliation with God by the gospel. Peace, at the end of the conflicts, distresses, and woes of war, is an image of all blessings. Thus, it is put to denote the blessings when a sinner ceases to be the enemy of God, obtains pardon, and is admitted to the joys of those who are his children and friends. The coming of those

messengers who proclaim it is joyful to the world. It fills the bosom of the anxious sinner with peace; and they and their message will be regarded with deep interest, as sent by God, and producing joy in an agitated bosom, and peace to the world. This is an illustration of the proper feeling with which we should regard the ministers of religion. This passage in Isaiah is referred by the Jews themselves to the times of the gospel (Rosenmuller).

Verse 16

But they have not all obeyed the gospel - It is not easy to see the connection of this; and it has been made a question whether this is to be regarded as a continuation of the objection of the Jew, or as a part of the answer of the apostle. After all the attention which I have been able to give it, I am inclined to regard it as an admission of the apostle, as if he had said, "It must be admitted that all have not obeyed the gospel. So far as the objection of the Jew arises from that fact, and so far as that fact can bear on the case, it is to be conceded that all have not yielded obedience to the gospel. For this was clearly declared even by the prophet;" compare Acts 28:24; Hebrews 4:2.

For Esaias saith - Isaiah 53:1.

Who hath believed our report? - That is, Isaiah complains that his declarations respecting the Messiah had been rejected by his countrymen. The form of expression, "Who hath believed?" is a mode of saying emphatically that few or none had done it. The great mass of his countrymen had rejected it. This was an example to the purpose of the apostle. In the time of Isaiah this fact existed; and it was not a new thing that it existed in the time of the gospel. "Our report." Our message; or what is delivered to be heard and believed. It originally means the doctrine which Isaiah delivered about the Messiah; and implies that the same thing would occur when the Messiah should actually come. Hence, in the fifty-third chapter he proceeds to give the reasons why the report would not be credited. and why the Messiah would be rejected. It would be because he was a root out of a dry ground; because he was a man of sorrows. etc. And this actually took place. Because he did not come with splendor and pomp, as a temporal prince, he was rejected, and put to death. On substantially the same grounds he is even yet rejected by thousands. The force of this verse, perhaps, may be best seen by including it in a parenthesis, "How beautiful are the feet, etc." how important is the gospel ministry - (although it must

be admitted, that all have not obeyed, for this was predicted also by Isaiah, etc.)

Verse 17

So then faith cometh … - This I take to be clearly the language of the objector. As if he had said, by the very quotation which you have made from Isaiah, it appears that a report was necessary. He did not condemn people for not believing what they had not heard; but he complains of those who did not believe a message actually delivered to them. Even by this passage, therefore, it seems that a message was necessary, that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the divine message. It could not be right, therefore, to condemn those who had not obeyed the gospel because they had not heard it; and hence, not right to make salvation dependent on a condition which was, by the arrangement of God, put beyond their power. The very quotation from Isaiah, therefore, goes to confirm the objection in Romans 10:14;15.

By hearing - Our translation has varied the expression here, which is the same in two places in the Greek: "Isaiah said, Who hath believed our report τῇ ἀκοῇ tē akoēSo then, you must admit that faith comes by that report ἐξ ἀκοῆς ex akoēsand therefore this report or message is necessary." When it is said that faith cometh by hearing, it is not meant that all who hear actually believe, for that is not true; but that faith does not exist unless there is a message, or report, to be heard or believed. It cannot come otherwise than by such a message; in other words, unless there is something made known to be believed. And this shows us at once the importance of the message, and the fact that people are converted by the instrumentality of truth, and of truth only.

And hearing - And the report, or the message (ἡ ἀκοὴ hē akoē), is by the Word of God; that is, the message is sent by the command of God. It is his word, sent by his direction, and therefore if withheld by him, those who did not believe could not be blamed. The argument of the objector is, that God could not justly condemn people for not believing the gospel.

Verse 18

But I say - But to this objection, I, the apostle, reply. The objection had been carried through the previous verses. The apostle comes now to reply to it. In doing this, he does not deny the principle contained in it, that the gospel should be preached in order that people might be justly condemned for not believing it; not that the messengers must be sent by God, not that

faith comes by hearing. All this he fully admits. But he proceeds to show, by an ample quotation from the Old Testament, that this had been actually furnished to the Jews and to the Gentiles, and that they were actually in possession of the message, and could not plead that they had never heard it. This is the substance of his answer.

Have they not heard? - A question is often, as it is here, an emphatic way of affirming a thing. The apostle means to affirm strongly that they had heard. The word "they," in this place, I take to refer to the Gentiles. What was the fact in regard to Israel, or the Jew, he shows in the next verses. One main design waste show that the same scheme of salvation extended to both Jews and Gentiles. The objection was, that it had not been made known to either, and that therefore it could not be maintained to be just to condemn those who rejected it. To this the apostle replies that then it was extensively known to both; and if so, then the objection in Romans 10:14-15, was not well founded, for in fact the thing existed which the objector maintained to be necessary, to wit, that they had heard, and that preachers had been sent to them.

Yes, verily - In the original, a single word, μενοῦνγε menoungecompounded of μέν menand οὖν ounand γέ geAn intense expression, denoting strong affirmation.

Their sound went … - These words are taken in substance from Psalm 19:4. The psalmist employs them to show that the works of God, the heavens and the earth, proclaim his existence everywhere. By using them here, the apostle does not affirm that David had reference to the gospel in them, but he uses them to express his own meaning; he makes an affirmation about the gospel in language used by David on another occasion, but without intimating or implying that David had such a reference. In this way we often quote the language of others as expressing in a happy way our own thoughts, but without supposing that the author had any such reference. The meaning here is, that that may be affirmed in fact of the gospel which David affirmed of the works of God, that their sound had gone into all the earth.

Their sound - Literally, the sound or tone which is made by a stringed instrument (φθόγγος phthongos). Also a voice, a report. It means here they have spoken, or declared truth. As applied to the heavens, it would mean that they speak, or proclaim, the wisdom or power of God. As used by Paul, it means that the message of the gospel had been spoken, or proclaimed, far

and wide. The Hebrew, is “their line, etc.” The Septuagint translation is the same as that of the apostle - their voice ὁ φθόγγος αὐτῶν ho phthoggos autōnThe Hebrew word may denote the string of an instrument, of a harp, etc. and then the tone or sound produced by it; and thus was understood by the Septuagint. The apostle, however, does not affirm that this was the meaning of the Hebrew; but he conveyed his doctrine in language which aptly expressed it.

Into all the earth - In the psalm, this is to be taken in its utmost signification. The works of God literally proclaim his wisdom to all lands and to all people. As applied to the gospel, it means that it was spread far and wide, that it had been extensively preached in all lands.

Their words - In the psalm, the heavens are represented as speaking, and teaching people the knowledge of the true God. But the meaning of the apostle is, that the message of the gospel had sounded forth; and he referred doubtless to the labors of the apostles in proclaiming it to the pagan nations. This Epistle was written about the year 57. During the time which had elapsed after the ascension of Christ, the gospel had been preached extensively in all the known nations; so that it might be said that it was proclaimed in those regions designated in the Scripture as the uttermost parts of the earth. Thus, it had been proclaimed in Jerusalem, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Rome, Arabia, and in the islands of the Mediterranean. Paul, reasoning before Agrippa, says, that he could not be ignorant of those things, for they had not been done in a corner; Acts 26:26. In Colossians 1:23, Paul says that the gospel had been preached to every creature which is under heaven; see Colossians 1:6. Thus, the great facts and doctrines of the gospel had in fact been made known; and the objection of the Jew was met. It would be sufficiently met by the declaration of the psalmist that the true God was made known by his works, and that therefore they were without excuse (compare Romans 1:20); but in fact the gospel had been preached, and its great doctrine and duties had been proclaimed to all nations far and near.

Verse 19

But I say … - Still further to meet the objection, he shows that the doctrine which he was maintaining was actually taught in the Old Testament.

Did not Israel know? - Did not the Jews understand. Is it not recorded in their books, etc. that they had full opportunity to be acquainted with this

truth? This question is an emphatic way of affirming that they did know. But Paul does not here state what it was that they knew. That is to be gathered from what he proceeds to say. From that it appears that he referred to the fact that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles, and that the Jews were to be cast off. This doctrine followed from what he had already maintained in Romans 10:12-13, that there was no difference in regard to the terms of salvation, and that the Jew had no particular privileges. If so, then the barrier was broken down; and if the Jews did not believe in Jesus Christ, they must be rejected. Against this was the objection in Romans 10:14-15, that they could not believe; that they had not heard; and that a preacher had not been sent to them. If, now, the apostle could show that it was an ancient doctrine of the Jewish prophets that the Gentiles should believe, and that the Jews would not believe, the whole force of the objection would vanish. Accordingly he proceeds to show that this doctrine was distinctly taught in the Old Testament.

First - First in order; as we say, in the first place.

I will provoke you - These words are taken from Deuteronomy 32:21. In that place the declaration refers to the idolatrous and wicked conduct of the Jews. God says that they had provoked him, or excited his indignation, by worshipping what was not God, that is, by idols; and he, in turn, would excite their envy and indignation by showing favors to those who were not regarded as a people; that is, to the Gentiles. They had shown favor, or affection, for what was not God, and by so doing had provoked him to anger; and he also would show favor to those whom they regarded as no people, and would thus excite their anger. Thus, he would illustrate the great principle of his government in 2 Samuel 22:26-27, "With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with the pure, thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself unsavory," that is, froward. Psalm 18:26. In this passage the great doctrine which Paul was defending is abundantly established - that the Gentiles were to be brought into the favor of God; and the cause also is suggested to be the obstinacy and rebellion of the Jews. It is not clear that Moses had particularly in view the times of the gospel; but he affirms a great principle which is applicable to those times - that if the Jews should be rebellious, and prove themselves unworthy of his favor, that favor would be withdrawn, and conferred on other nations. The effect of this would be, of course, to excite their indignation. This principle

the apostle applies to his own times; and affirms that it ought to have been understood by the Jews themselves.

That are no people - That is, those whom you regard as unworthy the name of a people. Those who have no government, laws, or regular organization; who wander in tribes and clans, and who are under no settled form of society. This was the case with most barbarians; and the Jews, evidently regarded all ancient nations in this light, as unworthy the name of a people.

A foolish nation - The word "fool" means one void of understanding. But it also means one who is wicked, or idolatrous; one who contemns God. Psalm 14:1, "the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." Proverbs 1:7, "fools despise wisdom and instruction." Here it means a nation who had no understanding of the true God ἀσυνέτῳ asunetōI will anger - My bestowing favors on them will excite your anger. We may remark here,

(1)That God is a sovereign, and has a right to bestow his favors on whom he pleases.

(2)that when people abuse his mercies, become proud, or cold, or dead in his service, he often takes away their privileges, and bestows them on others.

(3)that the effect of his sovereignty is to excite people to anger.

Proud and wicked people are always enraged that he bestows his favors on others; and the effect of his sovereign dealings is, to provoke to anger the very people who by their sins have rejected his mercy. Hence, there is no doctrine that proud man hates so cordially as he does the doctrine of divine sovereignty; and none that will so much test the character of the wicked.

Verse 20

But Esaias - Isaiah 65:1-2.

Is very bold - Expresses the doctrine openly, boldly, without any reserve. The word ἀποτολμάω apotolmaōmeans to dare, to be venturesome, to be bold. It means here that however unpopular the doctrine might be, or however dangerous it was to avow that the Jews were extremely wicked, and that God for their wickedness would cast them off, yet that Isaiah had long since done it. This was the point which Paul was establishing; and against this, the objection was urged, and all the Jewish prejudices excited. This is the reason why he so much insists on it, and is so anxious to defend

every part by the writings of acknowledged authority among the Jews - the Old Testament. The quotation is made from the Septuagint, with only a slight change in the order of the phrases. The meaning is, that God was found, or the true knowledge of him was obtained, by those who had not sought after him; that is, by the Gentiles, who had worshipped idols, and who had not sought for the true God. This does not mean that we are to expect to find God if we do not seek for him; or that in fact any become Christians who do not seek for it, and make an effort. The contrary is abundantly taught in the Scriptures; Hebrews 11:6; 1 Chronicles 28:8-9; Matthew 6:33; Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9. But it means that the Gentiles, whose characteristic was not that they sought God, would have the gospel sent to them, and would embrace it. The phrase, "I was found," in the past tense here, is in the present in the Hebrew, intimating that the time would come when God would say this of himself; that is, that the time would come when the Gentiles would be brought to the knowledge of the true God. This doctrine was one which Isaiah had constantly in his eye, and which he did not fear to bring openly before the Jews.

Verse 21

But to Israel he saith - The preceding quotation established the doctrine that the Gentiles were to be called. But there was still an important part of his argument remaining - that the Jews were to be rejected. This he proceeds to establish; and he here, in the language of Isaiah Isaiah 65:2, says that while the Gentiles would be obedient, the character of the Jews was, that they were a disobedient and rebellious people.

All day long - Continually, without intermission; implying that their acts of rebellion were not momentary; but that this was the established character of the people.

I have stretched forth my hands - This denotes an attitude of entreaty; a willingness and earnest desire to receive them to favor; to invite and entreat; Proverbs 1:24.

A disobedient - In the Hebrew, rebellious, contumacious. The Greek answers substantially to that; disbelieving, not confiding or obeying.

Gain-saying - Speaking against; resisting, opposing. This is not in the Hebrew, but the substance of it was implied. The prophet Isaiah proceeds to specify in what this rebellion consisted, and to show that this was their character; Isaiah 65:2-7. The argument of the apostle is this; namely, the ancient character of the people was that of wickedness; God is represented

as stretching out his hands in vain; they rejected him, and he was sought and found by others. It was implied, therefore, that the rebellious Jews would be rejected; and, of course, the apostle was advancing and defending no doctrine which was not found in the writings of the Jews themselves. And thus, by a different course of reasoning, he came to the same conclusion which he had arrived at in the first four chapters of the Epistle, that the Gentiles and Jews were on the same level in regard to justification before God.

In the closing part of this chapter, the great doctrine is brought forth and defended that the way of salvation is open for all the world. This, in the time of Paul, was regarded as a novel doctrine. Hence, he is at so much pains to illustrate and defend it. And hence, with so much zeal and self-denial, the apostles of the Lord Jesus went and proclaimed it to the nations. This doctrine is not the less important now. And from this discussion we may learn the following truths:

(1) The pagan world is in danger without the gospel. They are sinful, polluted, wretched. The testimony of all who visit pagan nations accords most strikingly with that of the apostles in their times. Nor is there any evidence that the great mass of pagan population has changed for the better.

(2) the provisions of the gospel are ample for them - for all. Its power has been tried on many nations; and its mild and happy influence is seen in meliorated laws, customs, habits; in purer institutions; in intelligence and order; and in the various blessings conferred by a pure religion. The same gospel is suited to produce on the wildest and most wretched population, the same comforts which are now experienced in the happiest part of our own land,

(3) the command of Jesus Christ remains still the same, to preach the gospel to every creature. That command has never been repealed or changed. The apostles met the injunction, and performed what they could. It remains for the church to act as they did, to feel as they did, and put forth their efforts as they did, in obeying one of the most plain and positive laws of Jesus Christ.

(4) if the gospel is to be proclaimed everywhere, people must be sent forth into the vast field. Every nation must have an opportunity to say, “How beautiful are the feet of him that preaches the gospel of peace.” Young men, strong and vigorous in the Christian course, must give themselves to this work, and devote their lives in an enterprise which the apostles regarded as honorable to them; and which infinite Wisdom did not regard as unworthy the toils, and tears, and self-denials of the Son of God.

(5) the church, in training young men for the ministry, in fitting her sons for these toils, is performing a noble and glorious work; a work which contemplates the triumph of the gospel among all nations. Happy will it be when the church shall feel the full pressure of this great truth, that the gospel may be preached to every son and daughter of Adam; and when every man who enters the ministry shall count it, not self-denial, but a glorious privilege to be permitted to tell dying pagan people that a Saviour bled for all sinners. And happy that day when it can be said with literal truth that their sound has gone out into all the earth; and that as far as the sun in his daily course sheds his beams, so far the Sun of righteousness sheds also his pure and lovely rays into the abodes of human beings. And we may learn, also, from this,

(6) That God will withdraw his favors from those nations that are disobedient and rebellions. Thus, he rejected the ancient Jews; and thus also he will forsake all who abuse his mercies; who become proud, luxurious, effeminate and wicked. In this respect it becomes the people of this favored land to remember the God of their fathers; and not to forget, too, that national sin provokes God to withdraw, and that a nation that forgets God must be punished.

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Verse 1

I say then - This expression is to be regarded as conveying the sense of an objection. Paul, in the previous chapters, had declared the doctrine that all the Jews were to be rejected. To this a Jew might naturally reply, Is it to be believed, that God would cast off his people whom he had once chosen; to whom pertained the adoption, and the promises, and the covenant, and the numerous blessings conferred on a favorite people? It was natural for a Jew to make such objections. And it was important for the apostle to show that his doctrine was consistent with all the promises which God had made to his people. The objection, as will be seen by the answer which Paul makes, is formed on the supposition that God had rejected "all his people," or "cast them off entirely." This objection he answers by showing,

(1)That God had saved him, a Jew, and therefore that he could not mean that God had east off all Jews Romans 11:1;

(2)That now, as in former times of great declension, God had reserved a remnant Romans 11:2-5;

(3)That it accorded with the Scriptures that a part should be hardened Romans 11:6-10;

(4)That the design of the rejection was not final, but was to admit the Gentiles to the privileges of Christianity Romans 11:11-24;

(5)That the Jews should yet return to God, and be reinstated in his favor: so that it could not be objected that God had finally and totally cast off his people, or that he had violated his promises.

At the same time, however, the doctrine which Paul had maintained was true, that God had taken away their exclusive and special privileges, and had rejected a large part of the nation.

Cast away - Rejected, or put off. Has God so renounced them that they cannot be any longer his people.

His people - Those who have been long in the covenant relation to him: that is, the Jews.

God forbid - Literally, it may not or cannot be. This is an expression strongly denying that this could take place; and means that Paul did not

intend to advance such a doctrine; Luke 20:16; Romans 3:4, Romans 3:6, Romans 3:31; Romans 6:2, Romans 6:15; Romans 7:7, Romans 7:13.

For I am also an Israelite - To show them that he did not mean to affirm that all Jews must of necessity be cast off, he adduces his own case. He was a Jew; and yet he looked for the favor of God, and for eternal life. That favor he hoped now to obtain by being a Christian; and if he might obtain it, others might also. "If I should say that all Jews must be excluded from the favor of God, then I also must be without hope of salvation, for I am a Jew."

Of the seed of Abraham - Descended from Abraham. The apostle mentions this to show that he was a Jew in every respect; that he had a title to all the privileges of a Jew, and must be exposed to all their liabilities and dangers. If the seed of Abraham must of necessity be cut off, he must be himself rejected. The Jews valued themselves much on having been descended from so illustrious an ancestor as Abraham Matthew 3:9; and Paul shows them that he was entitled to all the privileges of such a descent; compare Philemon 3:4-5.

Of the tribe of Benjamin - This tribe was one that was originally located near Jerusalem. The temple was built on the line that divided the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. It is not improbable that it was regarded as a special honor to have belonged to one of those tribes. Paul mentions it here in accordance with their custom; for they regarded it as of great importance to preserve their genealogy, and to be able to state not only that they were Jews, but to designate the tribe and family to which they belonged.

Verse 2

God hath set cast away - This is an explicit denial of the objection.

Which he foreknew - The word "foreknew" is expressive not merely of foreseeing a thing, but implies in this place a previous purpose or plan; see the note at Romans 8:29. The meaning of the passage is simply, God has not cast off those whom he had before purposed or designed to be his people. It is the declaration of a great principle of divine government that God is not changeable: and that he would not reject those whom he had purposed should be his people. Though the mass of the nation, therefore, should be cast off, yet it would not follow that God had violated any promise or compact; or that he had rejected any whom he had foreknown as his true people. God makes no covenant of salvation with those who are in their sins; and if the unbelieving and the wicked, however many external

privileges they may have enjoyed, are rejected, it does not follow that he has been unfaithful to one whom he had foreknown or designated as an heir of salvation. It follows from this, also, that it is one principle of the divine government that God will not reject those who are foreknown or designated as his friends. It is a part of the plan, therefore, that those who are truly renewed shall persevere, and obtain eternal life.

Wot ye not - Know ye not.

What the Scripture saith? - The passage here quoted is found in 1 Kings 19:10-18.

Of Elias - Of Elijah. Greek, "Elijah" ἐν Ἠλιᾳ en HēliaThis does not mean that it was said about Elijah, or concerning him; but the reference is to the usual manner of quoting the Scriptures among the Jews. The division into chapters and verses was to them unknown. (See the Introduction to the notes on Matthew.) Hence, the Old Testament was divided into portions designated by subjects. Thus, Luke 20:37; Mark 12:26, "At the bush," means the passage which contains the account of the burning bush; (see the notes on those places.) Here it means, in that passage or portion of Scripture which gives an account of Elijah.

He maketh intercession to God against Israel - The word translated "maketh intercession" ἐντυγχάνει entungchaneimeans properly to come to the aid of anyone; to transact the business of anyone; especially to discharge the function of an advocate, or to plead one's cause in a court of justice. In a sense similar to this it is applied to Christ in his function of making intercession for us in heaven; Hebrews 7:25; Isaiah 53:12. In the English language, the word is constantly used in a good sense, to plead for one; never, to plead against one; but the Greek word may imply either. It expresses the function of one who manages the business of another; and hence, one who manages the business of the state against a criminal; and when followed by the preposition for, means to intercede or plead for a person; when followed by against κατά katait means to accuse or arraign. This is its meaning here. He accuses or arraigns the nation of the Jews before God; he charges them with crime; the crime is specified immediately.

Verse 3

Lord, they have killed … - This is taken from 1 Kings 19:10. The quotation is not literally made, but the sense is preserved. This was a charge which Elijah brought against the whole nation; and the act of killing the

prophets he regarded as expressive of the character of the people, or that they were universally given to wickedness. The fact was true that they had killed the prophets, etc.; 1 Kings 18:4, 1 Kings 18:13; but the inference which Elijah seems to have drawn from it, that there were no pious people in the nation, was not well founded.

And digged down - Altars, by the Law of Moses, were required to be made of earth or unhewn stones; Exodus 20:24-25. Hence, the expression to dig them down means completely to demolish or destroy them.

Thine altars - There was one great altar in the front of the tabernacle and the temple, on which the daily sacrifices of the Jews were to be made. But they were not forbidden to make altars also elsewhere; Exodus 20:25. And hence they are mentioned as existing in other places; 1 Samuel 7:17; 1 Samuel 16:2-3; 1 Kings 18:30, 1 Kings 18:32. These were the altars of which Elijah complained as having been thrown down by the Jews; an act which was regarded as expressive of signal impiety.

I am left alone - I am the only prophet which is left alive. We are told that when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took a hundred of them and hid them in a cave; 1 Kings 18:4. But it is not improbable that they had been discovered and put to death by Ahab. The account which Obadiah gave Elijah when he met him 1 Kings 18:13 seems to favor such a supposition.

Seek my life - That is, Ahab and Jezebel seek to kill me. This they did because he had overcome and slain the prophets of Baal; 1 Kings 19:1-2. There could scarcely be conceived a time of greater distress and declension in religion than this. It has not often happened that so many things that were disheartening have occurred to the church at the same period of time. The prophets of God were slain; but one lonely man appeared to have zeal for true religion; the nation was running to idolatry; the civil rulers were criminally wicked, and were the leaders in the universal apostasy; and all the influences of wealth and power were setting in against the true religion to destroy it. It was natural that the solitary man of God should feel disheartened and lonely in this universal guilt; and should realize that he had no power to resist this tide of crime and calamities.

Verse 4

The answer of God - ὁ χρηματισμός ho chrēmatismosThis word is used no where else in the New Testament. It means an oracle, a divine response. It does not indicate the manner in which it was done, but implies only that it

was an oracle, or answer made to his complaint by God. Such an answer, at such a time, would be full of comfort, and silence every complaint. The way in which this answer was in fact given, was not in a storm, or an earthquake, but in a still, small voice; 1 Kings 19:11-12.

I have reserved - The Hebrew is, "I have caused to remain," or to be reserved. This shows that it was of God that this was done. Amidst the general corruption and idolatry he had restrained a part, though it was a remnant. The honor of having done it he claims for himself, and does not trace it to any goodness or virtue in them. So in the case of all those who are saved from sin and ruin, the honor belongs not to man, but to God.

To myself - For my own service and glory. I have kept them steadfast in my worship, and have not suffered them to become idolaters.

Seven thousand men - Seven is often used in the Scriptures to denote an indefinite or round number. Perhaps it may be so here, to intimate that there was a considerable number remaining. This should lead us to hope that even in the darkest times in the church, there may be many more friends of God than we suppose. Elijah supposed he was alone; and yet at that moment there were thousands who were the true friends of God; a small number, indeed, compared with the multitude of idolaters; but large when compared with what was supposed to be remaining by the dejected and disheartened prophet.

Who have not bowed the knee - To bow or bend the knee is an expression denoting worship; Philemon 2:10; Ephesians 3:14; Isaiah 45:23.

To Baal - The word "Baal" in Hebrew means Lord, or Master. This was the name of an idol of the Phenicians and Canaanites, and was worshipped also by the Assyrians and Babylonians under the name of Bel; (compare the Book of Bel in the Apocrypha.) This god was represented under the image of a bull, or a calf; the one denoting the Sun, the other the Moon. The prevalent worship in the time of Elijah was that of this idol.

Verse 5

At this present time - In the time when the apostle wrote. Though the mass of the nation was to be rejected, yet it did not follow that all were to be excluded from the favor of God. As in the time of Elijah, when all appeared to be dark, and all the nation, except one, seemed to have become apostate, yet there was a considerable number of the true friends of God; so in the time of Paul, though the nation had rejected their Messiah, though, as a consequence, they were to be rejected as a people: and though they were

eminently wicked and corrupt, yet it did not follow that all were cast off, or that any were excluded on whom God had purposed to bestow salvation.

A remnant - That which is left or reserved; Romans 9:27. He refers here doubtless, to that part of the nation which was truly pious, or which had embraced the Messiah.

According to the election of grace - By a gracious or merciful choosing, or election; and not by any merit of their own. As in the tinge of Elijah, it was because God had reserved them unto himself that any were saved from idolatry, so now it was by the same gracious sovereignty that any were saved from the prevalent unbelief. The apostle here does not specify the number, but there can be no doubt that a multitude of Jews had been saved by becoming Christians, though compared with the nation - the multitude who rejected the Messiah it was but a remnant. The apostle thus shows that neither all the ancient people of God were cast way, nor that any whom he foreknew were rejected. And though he had proved that a large part of the Jews were to be rejected and though infidelity was prevalent, yet still there were some who had been Jews who were truly pious, and entitled to the favor of God. Nor should they deem this state of things remarkable, for a parallel case was recorded in their own Scriptures. We may learn from this narrative,

(1) That it is no unparalleled thing for the love of many to wax cold, and for iniquity to abound.

(2) the tendency of this is to produce deep feeling and solicitude among the true friends of God. Thus, David says, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes because they keep not thy law;" Psalm 119:136; compare Jeremiah 9:1; Luke 19:41.

(3) that in these darkest times we should not be discouraged. There may be much more true piety in the world than in our despondency we may suppose. We should take courage in God, and believe that he will not forsake any that are his true friends, or on whom he has purposed to bestow eternal life.

(4) it is of God that all are not corrupt and lost. It is owing only to the election of grace, to his merciful choosing, that any are saved. And as in the darkest times he has reserved a people to himself, so we should believe that

he will still meet abounding evil, and save those whom he has chosen from eternal death.

Verse 6

And if grace … - If the fact that any are reserved be by grace, or favor, then it cannot be as a reward of merit. Paul thus takes occasion incidentally to combat a favorite notion of the Jews, that we are justified by obedience to the Law. He reminds them that in the time of Elijah it was because God had reserved them; that the same was the case now; and therefore their doctrine of merit could not be true; see Romans 4:4-5; Galatians 5:4; Ephesians 2:8-9.

Otherwise grace … - If people are justified by their works, it could not be a matter of favor, but was a debt. If it could be that the doctrine of justification by grace could be held and yet at the same time that the Jewish doctrine of merit was true, then it would follow that grace had changed its nature, or was a different thing from what the word properly signified. The idea of being saved by merit contradicts the very idea of grace. If a man owes me a debt, and pays it, it cannot be said to be done by favor, or by grace. I have a claim on him for it, and there is no favor in his paying his just dues.

But if it be of works … - "Works" here mean conformity to the Law; and to be saved by works would be to be saved by such conformity as the meritorious cause. Of course there could be no grace or favor in giving what was due: if there was favor, or grace, then works would lose their essential characteristic, and cease to be the meritorious cause of procuring the blessings. What is paid as a debt is not conferred as a favor.

And from this it follows that salvation cannot be partly by grace and partly by works. It is not because people can advance any claims to the favor of God; but from his mere unmerited grace. He that is not willing to obtain eternal life in that way, cannot obtain it at all. The doctrines of election, and of salvation by mere grace, cannot be more explicitly stated than they are in this passage.

Verse 7

What then? - What is the proper conclusion from this argument? "Israel hath not obtained." That is, the Jews as a people have not obtained what they sought. They sought the favor of God by their own merit; and as it was

impossible to obtain it in that manner, they have, as a people, failed of obtaining his favor at all, and will be rejected.

That which he seeketh for - To wit, salvation by their own obedience to the Law.

The election hath - The purpose of choosing on the part of God has obtained, or secured, what the seeking on the part of the Jews could not secure. Or the abstract here may be put for the concrete, and the word "election" may mean the same as the elect. The elect, the reserved, the chosen part of the people, have obtained the favor of God.

Hath obtained it - That is, the favor, or mercy, of God.

The rest - The great mass of the people who remained in unbelief, and had rejected the Messiah.

Were blinded - The word in the original means also were hardened ἐπωρώθησαν epōrōthēsanIt comes from a word which signifies properly to become hard, as bones do which are broken and are then united; or as the joints sometimes do when they become callous or stiff. It was probably applied also to the formation of a hard substance in the eye, a cataract; and then means the same as to be blinded. Hence, applied to the mind, it means what is "hard, obdurate, insensible, stupid." Thus, it is applied to the Jews, and means that they were blind and obstinate; see Mark 6:52, "Their heart was hardened;" Mark 8:17; John 12:40. The word does not occur in any other place in the New Testament. This verse affirms simply that "the rest were hardened," but it does not affirm anything about the mode by which it was done. In regard to "the election," it is affirmed that it was of God; Romans 11:4. Of the remainder, the fact of their blindness is simply mentioned, without affirming anything of the cause; see Romans 11:8.

Verse 8

According as it is written - That is, they are blinded in accordance with what is written. The fact and the manner accord with the ancient declaration. This is recorded in Isaiah 29:10, and in Deuteronomy 29:4. The same sentiment is found also substantially in Isaiah 6:9-10. The principal place referred to here, however, is doubtless Isaiah 29:10, "For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes; the prophets and your rulers hath he covered." The quotation is not however literally made either from the Hebrew or the Septuagint; but the sense is preserved. The phrase "according as" means upon the same principle, or in the same manner.

God hath given - Expressions like this are common in the Scriptures, where God is represented as having an agency in producing the wickedness and stupidity of sinners; see Romans 9:17-18; see the Matthew 13:15 note; Mark 4:11-12 note; see also 2 Thessalonians 2:11. This quotation is not made literally. The Hebrew in Isaiah is, God has poured upon them the spirit of slumber. The sense, however, is retained.

The spirit of slumber - The spirit of slumber is not different from slumber itself. The word "spirit" is often used thus. The word "slumber" here is a literal translation of the Hebrew. The Greek word, however κατανύξεως katanuxeōsimplies also the notion of compunction, and hence in the margin it is rendered "remorse." It means any emotion, or any influence whatever, that shall benumb the faculties, and make them insensible. Hence, it here means simply insensibility.

Eyes that they should not see … - This expression is not taken literally from any single place in the Old Testament; but expresses the general sense of several passages; Isaiah 6:10; Deuteronomy 29:4. It denotes a state of mind not different from a spirit of slumber. When we sleep, the eyes are insensible to surrounding objects, and the ear to sounds. Though in themselves the organs may be perfect, yet the mind is as though they were not; and we have eyes which then do not see, and ears which do not hear. Thus, with the Jews. Though they had all the proper faculties for understanding and receiving the gospel, yet they rejected it. They were stupid and insensible to its claims and its truths.

Unto this day - Until the day that Paul wrote. The characteristic of the Jews that existed in the time of Isaiah. existed also in the time of Paul. It was a trait of the people; and their insensibility to the demands of the gospel developed nothing new in them.

Verse 9-10

And David saith … - This quotation is made from Psalm 69:22-23. This Psalm is repeatedly quoted as having reference to the events recorded in the New Testament. (See the note at Acts 1:2.) This quotation is introduced immediately after one that undoubtedly refers to the Lord Jesus. Psalm 69:21, "they gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." The passage here quoted immediately follows as an imprecation of vengeance for their sins. "Let their table," etc. The quotation is not made, however, either literally from the Hebrew or from the Septuagint, but the sense only is retained. The Hebrew is, "Let their table

before them be for a snare, and for those at peace, let it be for a gin." The Septuagint is, "Let their table before them be for a snare, and for a stumbling-block, and for an offence." The ancient Targum is, "Let their table which they had prepared before me be for a snare, and their sacrifices be for an offence."

The meaning is this. The word "table" denotes food. In this they expected pleasure and support. David prays that even this, where they expected joy and refreshment, might prove to them the means of punishment and righteous retribution. A snare is that by which birds or wild beasts were taken. They are decoyed into it, or walk or fly carelessly into it, and it is sprung suddenly on them. So of the Jews. The petition is, that while they were seeking refreshment and joy, and anticipating at their table no danger, it might be made the means of their ruin. The only way in which this could be done would be, that their temporal enjoyments would lead them away from God, and produce stupidity and indifference to their spiritual interests. This is often the result of the pleasures of the table, or of seeking sensual gratifications. The apostle does not say whether this prayer was right or wrong. The use which he seems to make of it is this, that David's imprecation was to be regarded in the light of a prophecy; that what he prayed for would come to pass; and that this had actually occurred in the time of the apostle; that their very enjoyments, their national and private privileges, had been the means of alienating them from God; had been a snare to them; and was the cause of their blindness and infidelity. This also is introduced in the psalm as a punishment for giving him vinegar to drink; and their treatment of the Messiah was the immediate cause why all this blindness had come upon the Jews.

A trap - This properly means anything by which wild beasts are taken in hunting. The word "snare" more properly refers to birds.

And a stumbling-block - Anything over which one stumbles or falls. Hence, anything which occasions us to sin, or to ruin ourselves.

And a recompense - The Hebrew word translated "what should have been for their welfare," is capable of this meaning, and may denote their recompense, or what is appropriately rendered to them. It means here that their ordinary comforts and enjoyments, instead of promoting their permanent welfare, may be the occasion of their guilt and ruin. This is often the effect of earthly comforts. They might lead us to God, and should excite our gratitude and praise; but they are often abused to our spiritual slumber

and guilt, and made the occasion of our ruin. The rich are thus often most forgetful of God; and the very abundance of their blessings made the means of darkness of mind, ingratitude, prayerlessness, and ruin. Satisfied with them, they forget the Giver; and while they enjoy many earthly blessings, God sends barrenness into their souls. This was the guilt of Sodom, "pride, and fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness," Ezekiel 16:49; and against this Moses solemnly warned the Jews; Deuteronomy 6:11-12; Deuteronomy 8:10-12. This same caution might be extended to the people of this land, and especially to those who are rich, and are blessed with all that their hearts have wished. From the use which the apostle makes of this passage in the Psalms, it is clear that he regarded it rather as a prophetic denunciation for their sins - a prediction of what would be - than as a prayer. In his time it had been fulfilled; and the very national privileges of the Jews, on which they so much prided themselves, and which might have been so great blessings, were the occasion of their greater sin in rejecting the Messiah, and of their greater condemnation. Thus, their table was made a trap, etc.

Romans 11:10

Let their eyes be darkened - This is taken literally from the psalm, and was evidently the main part of the passage which the apostle had in his eye. This was fulfilled in the insensibility and blindness of the Jews. And the apostle shows them that it was long ago predicted, or invoked, as a punishment on them for giving the Messiah vinegar to drink; Psalm 69:21, Psalm 69:23.

And bow down their back alway - The Hebrew Psalm 69:23 is, "Let their loins totter or shake," that is, as one does when he has on him a heavy burden. The apostle has retained this sense. It means, let them be called to bear heavy and oppressive burdens; let them be subjected to toil or servitude, as a reward for their sins. That this had come upon the Jews in the time of Paul is clear; and it is further clear that it came upon them, as it was implied in the psalm, in consequence of their treatment of the Messiah. Much difficulty has been felt in reconciling the petitions in the psalms for calamities on enemies, with the spirit of the New Testament. Perhaps they cannot all be thus reconciled; and it is not at all improbable that many of those imprecations were wrong. David was not a perfect man; and the Spirit of inspiration is not responsible for his imperfections. Every doctrine

delivered by the sacred writers is true; every fact recorded is recorded as it was.

But it does not follow that all the men who wrote, or about whom a narrative was given, were perfect. The reverse is the fact. And it does not militate against the inspiration of the Scriptures that we have a record of the failings and imperfections of those men. When they uttered improper sentiments, when they manifested improper feelings, when they performed wicked actions, it is no argument against the inspiration of the Scriptures that they were recorded. All that is done in such a case, and all that inspiration demands, is that they be recorded as they are. We wish to see human nature as it is; and one design of making the record of such failings is to show what man is, even under the influence of religion; not as a perfect being, for that would not be true; but as he actually exists mingled with imperfection. Thus, many of the wishes of the ancient saints, imperfect as they were, are condemned as sinful by the spirit of the Christian religion.

They were never commended or approved, but they are recorded just to show us what was in fact the character of man, even partially under the influence of religion. Of this nature probably, were many of the petitions in the Psalms; and the Spirit of God is no more answerable for the feeling because it is recorded, than he is for the feelings of the Edomites when they said, "Rase it, rase it to the foundation" Psalm 137:7. Many of those prayers, however, were imprecations on his enemies as a public man, as the magistrate of the land. As it is right and desirable that the robber and the pirate should be detected and punished; as all good people seek it, and it is indispensable for the welfare of the community, where is the impropriety of praying that it may be done? Is it not right to pray that the laws may be executed; that justice may be maintained; and that restraint should be imposed on the guilty? Assuredly this may be done with a very different spirit from that of revenge. It may be the prayer of the magistrate that God will help him in what he is appointed to do, and in what ought to be done. Besides, many of these imprecations were regarded as simply predictions of what would be the effect of sin; or of what God would do to the guilty. Such was the case we are now considering, as understood by the apostle. But in a prediction there can be nothing wrong.

Verse 11

Have they stumbled that they should fall? - This is to be regarded as an objection, which the apostle proceeds to answer. The meaning is, is it the design of God that the Jews should totally and irrecoverably be cast off? Even admitting that they are now unbelieving, that they have rejected the Messiah, that they have stumbled, is it the purpose of God finally to exclude them from mercy? The expression to stumble is introduced because he had just mentioned a stumbling-stone. It does not mean to fall down to the ground, or to fall so that a man may not recover himself; but to strike the foot against an obstacle, to be arrested in going, and to be in danger of falling. Hence, it means to err, to sin, to be in danger. To fall expresses the state when a man pitches over an obstacle so that he cannot recover himself, but falls to the ground. Hence, to err, to sin, or to be cast off irrecoverably. The apostle shows that this last was not the way in which the Jews had fallen that they were not to be cast off forever, but that occasion was taken by their fall to introduce the Gentiles to the privileges of the gospel, and then they should be restored.

God forbid - By no means; see Romans 11:1.

But rather through their fall - By means of their fall. The word "fall" here refers to all their conduct and doom at the coming of the Messiah, and in the breaking up of their establishment as a nation. Their rejection of the Messiah; the destruction of their city and temple; the ceasing of their ceremonial rites; and the rejection and dispersion of their nation by the Romans, all enter into the meaning of the word "fall" here, and were all the occasion of introducing salvation to the Gentiles.

Salvation - The Christian religion, with all its saving benefits. It does not mean that all the Gentiles were to be saved, but that the way was open; they might have access to God, and obtain his favor through the Messiah.

The Gentiles - All the world that were not Jews. The rejection and fall of the Jews contributed to the introduction of the Gentiles in the following manner:

(1) It broke down the harrier which had long subsisted between them.

(2) it made it consistent and proper, as they had rejected the Messiah, to send the knowledge of him to others.

(3) it was connected with the destruction of the temple, and the rites of the Mosaic Law; and taught them, and all others, that the worship of God

was not to be confined to any single place.

(4) the calamities that came upon the Jewish nation scattered the inhabitants of Judea, and with the Jews also those who had become Christians, and thus the gospel was carried to other lands.

(5) these calamities, and the conduct of the Jews, and the close of the Jewish economy, were the means of giving to apostles and other Christians right views of the true design of the Mosaic institutions. If the temple had remained; if the nation had continued to flourish; it would have been long before they would have been effectually detached from those rites. Experience showed even as it was, that they were slow in learning that the Jewish ceremonies were to cease. Some of the most agitating questions in the early church pertained to this; and if the temple had not been destroyed, the contest would have been much longer and more difficult.

For to provoke them to jealousy - According to the prediction of Moses; Deuteronomy 32:21; see Romans 10:19.

Verse 12

If the fall of them - If their lapse, or falling. If their temporal rejection and being cast off for a time has already accomplished so much.

Be the riches of the world - The word "riches" means wealth, abundance of property; more than is necessary to the supply of our needs. Hence, it means also anything that may promote our comfort or happiness, as wealth is the means of securing our welfare. The gospel is called riches, as it is the means of our highest enjoyment, and eternal welfare. It is the means of conferring numberless spiritual blessings on the Gentile world; and as this was done by the fall of the Jews, so it could be said that their fall was the riches of the world. It was the occasion or means without which the blessings of the gospel could not be conferred on the world.

The diminishing of them - Margin, "Decay." "Loss" ἥττημα hēttēmaThis word means diminution, defect, what is lacked or missing. Hence, also judgment, condemnation. Here it means their degradation; the withdrawing of their special privileges; their rejection. It stands opposed to "their fulness."

The riches of the Gentiles - The means of conferring important blessings on the Gentiles.

How much more their fulness - The word "fulness" πλήρωμα plērōmameans what fills up, or completes anything. Thus, it is applied to what fills a vessel or cup; also to the piece of cloth which is put in to fill up the rent in a garment; Matthew 9:16. To the fragments which were left when Christ had fed the five thousand; Mark 8:20; Romans 13:10. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," that is, it is the filling up of the law, or what renders the obedience complete; see Galatians 5:14. Here it stands opposed to their fall, and their diminution, and evidently means their complete restoration to the favor of God; their recovery from unbelief and apostasy. That there will be such a recovery, the apostle proceeds to show. The sentiment of the passage then is, If their rejection and punishment; their being cut off from the favor of God, an event apparently so unlikely to promote the spread of true religion, if their being withrawn from all active influence in spreading the true knowledge of God, be yet the occasion of so many blessings to mankind as have attended the spread of the gospel in consequence of it; how much more shall we expect when they shall be restored; when the energy and zeal of the Jewish nation shall unite with the efforts of others in spreading the knowledge of the true Messiah. In what way, or when, this shall be, we know not. But it is easy to see, that if the Jewish people should be converted to the Christian faith, they would have facilities for spreading the truth, which the church has never had without them.

(1) they are scattered in all nations, and have access to all people.

(2) their conversion, after so long unbelief, would have all the power and influence of a miracle performed in view of all nations. It would be seen why they had been preserved, and their conversion would be a most striking fulfillment of the prophecies.

(3) they are familiar with the languages of the world, and their conversion would at once establish many Christian missionaries in the heart of all the kingdoms of the world. It would be kindling at once a thousand lights in all the dark parts of the earth.

(4) the Jews have shown that they are eminently suited to spread the true religion. It was by Jews converted to Christianity, that the gospel was first spread. Each of the apostles was a Jew; and they have lost none of the ardor, enterprise, and zeal that always characterized their nation. Their conversion

would be, therefore, to give to the church a host of missionaries prepared for their work, familiar with all customs, languages, and climes, and already in the heart of all kingdoms, and with facilities for their work in advance, which others must gain only by the slow toil of many years.

Verse 13

For I speak to you Gentiles - What I am saying respecting the Jews, I say with reference to you who are Gentiles, to show you in what manner you have been admitted to the privileges of the people of God; to excite your gratitude; to warn you against abusing those mercies. etc. As Paul also was appointed to preach to them, he had a right to speak to them with authority.

I am the apostle of the Gentiles - The apostle of the Gentiles, not because other apostles did not preach to Gentiles, for they all did, except perhaps James; nor because Paul did not himself preach occasionally among the Jews; but because he was especially called to carry the gospel to the Gentiles, and that this was his original commission Acts 9:15; because he was principally employed in collecting and organizing churches in pagan lands; and because the charge of the Gentile churches was especially intrusted to him, while that of the Jewish churches was especially intrusted to Peter; see Galatians 1:16; Ephesians 3:8; Galatians 2:7-8. As Paul was especially appointed to this function, he claimed special authority to address those who were gathered into the Christian church from pagan lands.

I magnify mine office - I honor δοξάζω doxazōmy ministry. I esteem it of great importance; and by thus showing that the gospel is to be preached to the Gentiles, that the barrier between them and the Jews is to be broken down, that the gospel may be preached to all people, I show that the office which proclaims this is one of signal honor. A minister may not magnify himself, but he may magnify his office. He may esteem himself as less than the least of all saints, and unworthy to be called a servant of God Ephesians 3:8, yet he may feel that he is an ambassador of Christ, intrusted with a message of salvation, entitled to the respect due to an ambassador, and to the honor which is appropriate to a messenger of God To unite these two things constitutes the dignity of the Christian ministry.

Verse 14

If by any means - If even by stating unpleasant truths, if by bringing out all the counsel of God, even what threatens their destruction, I may

arrest their attention, and save them.

I may provoke to emulation - I may awaken up to zeal, or to an earnest desire to obtain the like blessings. This was in accordance with the prediction of Moses, that the calling in of the Gentiles would excite their attention, and provoke them to deep feeling; Note, Romans 10:19. The apostle expected to do this by calling their attention to the ancient prophecies; by alarming their fears about their own danger; and by showing them the great privileges which Gentiles might enjoy under the gospel; thus appealing to them by every principle of benevolence, by all their regard for God and man, to excite them to seek the same blessings.

My flesh - My countrymen. My kinsmen, Those belonging to the same family or nation; Romans 9:3; Genesis 29:14; Judges 9:2; 2 Samuel 5:1; Isaiah 58:7.

And save some of them - This desire the apostle often expressed; (see Romans 9:2-3; Romans 10:1-2.) We may see here:

(1) That it is the earnest wish of the ministry to save the souls of men.

(2) that they should urge every argument and appeal with reference to this.

(3) that even the most awful and humbling truths may have this tendency. No truth could be more likely to irritate and offend than that the Jews would be cast off; and yet the apostle used this so faithfully, and yet so tenderly, that he expected and desired it might be the means of saving the souls of his countrymen. Truth often irritates, enrages, and thus excites the attention. Thought or inquiry, however it may be excited, may result in conversion. And thus, even restlessness, and vexation, and anger, may be the means of leading a sinner to Jesus Christ. It should be no part of a minister‘s object, however, to produce anger. It is a bad emotion; in itself it is evil; and if people can be won to embrace the Saviour without anger, it is better. No wise man would excite a storm and tempest that might require infinite power to subdue, when the same object could be gained with comparative peace, and under the mild influence of love.

(4) it is right to use all the means in our power, not absolutely wicked, to save people. Paul was full of devices; and much of the success of the

ministry will depend on a wise use of plans, that may, by the divine blessing, arrest and save the souls of people.

Verse 15

For if the casting away of them - If their rejection as the special people of God - their exclusion from their national privileges, on account of their unbelief. It is the same as "the fall of them;" Romans 11:12.

Be the reconciling of the world - The word "reconciliation" καταλλαγή katallagēdenotes commonly a pacification of contending parties; a removing the occasion of difference, so as again to be united; 1 Corinthians 7:11, "Let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband." It is commonly applied to the reconciliation, or pacification, produced between man and God by the gospel. They are brought to union, to friendship, to peace, by the intervention of the Lord Jesus Christ; Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19," God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." Hence, the ministry is called the "ministry of reconciliation;" 2 Corinthians 5:18. And hence, this word is used to express the atonement; Romans 5:11, "By whom we have now received the atonement" (the reconciliation). In this place it means that many of the Gentiles - the world - had become reconciled to God as the result of the casting off of the Jews. By their unbelief, the way had been opened to preach the gospel to the Gentiles; it was the occasion by which God sent it to the nations of the earth; compare Acts 13:46.

The receiving of them - The same as was denoted Romans 11:12 by their fulness. If the casting them off, an event so little likely, apparently, to produce any good effect, was nevertheless overruled so as to produce important benefits in the spread of the gospel, how much more may we expect will be accomplished by their conversion and return; an event suited in itself to produce an important influence on mankind. One would have supposed that their rejection of the Messiah would have been an important obstacle in the way of the gospel. It was overruled, however, to promote its increase. Their return will have a direct tendency to spread it. How much more, therefore, may we expect to be accomplished by that?

But life from the dead - This is an instance of the special, glowing, and vigorous manner of the apostle Paul. His mind catches at the thought of what may be produced by the recovery of the Jews, and no ordinary language would convey his idea. He had already exhausted the usual forms

of speech by saying that even their rejection had reconciled the world, and that it was the riches of the Gentiles. To say that their recovery - a striking and momentous event; an event so much better suited to produce important results - would be attended by the conversion of the world, would be insipid and tame. He uses, therefore, a most bold and striking figure. The resurrection of the dead was an image of the most vast and wonderful event that could take place. This image, therefore, in the apostle‘s mind, was a striking illustration of the great change and reformation which should take place when the Jews should be restored, and the effect should be felt in the conversion also of the Gentile world.

Some have supposed that the apostle here refers to a literal resurrection of the dead, as the conversion of the Jews. But there is not the slightest evidence of this. He refers to the recovery of the nations from the death of sin which shall take place when the Jews shall be converted to the Christian faith. The prophet Ezekiel Ezekiel 37:1-14 has also used the same image of the resurrection of the dead to denote a great moral change among a people. It is clear here that the apostle fixed his eye on a future conversion of the Jews to the gospel, and expected that their conversion would precede the universal conversion of the Gentiles to the Christian faith, There could be no event that would make so immediate and decided an impression on the pagan world as the conversion of the Jews. They are scattered everywhere; they have access to all people; they understand all languages; and their conversion would be like kindling up thousands of lights at once in the darkness of the pagan world.

Verse 16

For if the first-fruit be holy - The word “first-fruit” ἀπαρχή aparchēused here denotes the firstling of fruit or grain which was separated from the mass and presented as an offering to God. The Jews were required to present such a portion of their harvest to God, as an expression of gratitude and of their sense of dependence; Numbers 15:19-21. Until this was done, it was not lawful to partake of the harvest. The offering of this was regarded as rendering the mass holy, that is, it was lawful then to partake of it. The first-fruits were regarded as among the best portions of the harvest; and it was their duty to devote to God that which would be the best expression of their thanksgiving. This was the general practice in relation to all that the land produced. The expression here, however, has

reference to the small portion of dough or kneaded meal that was offered to God; and then the mass or lump φύραμα phuramawas left for the use of him who made the offering; Numbers 15:20.

Be holy - Be set apart, or consecrated to God, as he commanded.

The lump - The mass. It refers here properly to the dough of which a part had been offered. The same was true also in relation to the harvest, after the waive-sheaf had been offered; of the flock, after the first male had been offered, etc.

Is also holy - It is lawful then for the owner to partake of it. The offering of a part has consecrated the whole. By this illustration Paul doubtless means to say that the Jewish nation, as a people, were set apart to the service of God, and were so regarded by him. Some have supposed that by the first-fruit here the apostle intends to refer to the early converts, made to the Christian faith in the first preaching of the gospel. But it is more probable that he refers to the patriarchs, the pious people of old, as the first-fruits of the Jewish nation; see Romans 11:28. By their piety the nation was, in a manner, sanctified, or set apart to the service of God; implying that yet the great mass of them would be reclaimed and saved.

If the root be holy - This figure expresses the same thing as is denoted in the first part of the verse. The root of a tree is the source of nutritious juices necessary for its growth, and gives its character to the tree. If that be sound, pure, vigorous, we expect the same of the branches. A root bears a similar relation to the tree that the first-fruit does to the mass of bread. Perhaps there is allusion here to Jeremiah 11:16, where the Jewish nation is represented under the image of "a green olivetree, fair, and of goodly fruit." In this place the reference is doubtless to Abraham and the patriarchs, as the root or founders of the Jewish nation. If they were holy, it is to be expected that the distant branches, or descendants, would also be so regarded. The mention of the root and branches of a tree gives the apostle occasion for an illustration of the relation at that time of the Jews and Gentiles to the church of Christ.

Verse 17

If some of the branches - The illustration here is taken from the practice of those who ingraft trees. The useless branches, or those which bear poor fruit, are cut off, and a better kind inserted. "If some of the natural descendants of Abraham, the holy root, are cast off because they are unfruitful, that is, because of unbelief and sin."

And thou - The word "thou" here is used to denote the Gentile, whom Paul was then particularly addressing.

Being a wild olive-tree - From this passage it would seem that the olive-tree was sometimes cultivated, and that cultivation was necessary in order to render it fruitful. The cultivated olive-tree is "of the a moderate height, its trunk knotty, its bark smooth and ash-colored, its wood is solid and yellowish, the leaves are oblong, and almost like those of the willow, of a green color, etc. The wild olive is smaller in all its parts." (Calmet.) The wild olive was unfruitful, or its fruit very imperfect and useless. The ancient writers explain this word by "unfruitful, barren." (Sehleusner.) This was used, therefore, as the emblem of unfruitfulness and barrenness, while the cultivated olive produced much fruit. The meaning here is, that the Gentiles had been like the wild olive, unfruitful in holiness; that they had been uncultivated by the institutions of the true religion, and consequently had grown up in the wildness and sin of nature. The Jews had been like a cultivated olive, long under the training and blessing of God.

Wert grafted in - The process of grafting consists in inserting a scion or a young shoot into another tree. To do this, a useless limb is removed; and the ingrafted limb produces fruit according to its new nature or kind, and not according to the tree in which it is inserted. In this way a tree which bears no fruit, or whose branches are decaying, may be recovered, and become valuable. The figure of the apostle is a very vivid and beautiful one. The ancient root or stock, that of Abraham, etc. was good. The branches - the Jews in the time of the apostle - had become decayed and unfruitful, and broken off. The Gentiles had been grafted into this stock, and had restored the decayed vigor of the ancient people of God; and a fruitless church had become vigorous and flourishing. But the apostle soon proceeds to keep the Gentiles from exaltation on account of this.

Among them - Among the branches, so as to partake with them of the juices of the root.

Partakest of the root - The ingrafted limb would derive nourishment from the root as much as though it were a natural branch of the tree. The Gentiles derived now the benefit of Abraham's faith and holy labors, and of the promises made to him and to his seed.

Fatness of the olive-tree - The word "fatness" here means "fertility, fruitfulness" - the rich juices of the olive producing fruit; see Judges 9:9.

Verse 18

Boast not … - The tendency of people is to triumph over one that is fallen and rejected. The danger of pride and boasting on account of privileges is not less in the church than elsewhere. Paul saw that some of the Gentiles might be in danger of exultation over the fallen Jews, and therefore cautions them against it. The ingrafted shoot, deriving all its vigor and fruitfulness from the stock of another tree, ought not to boast against the branches.

But if thou boast - If thou art so inconsiderate and wicked, so devoid of humility, and lifted up with pride, as to boast, yet know that there is no occasion for it. If there were occasion for boasting, it would rather be in the root or stock which sustains the branches; least of all can it be in those which were grafted in, having been before wholly unfruitful.

Thou bearest not the root - The source of all your blessings is in the ancient stock. It is clear from this, that the apostle regarded the church as one; and that the Christian economy was only a prolongation of the ancient dispensation. The tree, even with a part of the branches removed. and others ingrafted, retains its identity, and is never regarded as a different tree.

Verse 19

Thou wilt say then - Thou who art a Gentile.

The branches were broken off … - The Jews were rejected in order that the gospel might be preached to the Gentiles. This would seem to follow from what the apostle had said in Romans 11:11-12. Perhaps it might be said that there was some ground of exultation from the fact that God had rejected his ancient people for the sake of making a way open to admit the Gentiles to the church. The objection is, that the branches were broken off in order that others might be grafted in. To this Paul replies in the next verse, that this was not the reason why they were rejected, but their unbelief was the cause.

Verse 20

Well - True. It is true they were broken off; but in order to show that there was no occasion for boasting, he adds that they were not rejected in order to admit others, but because of their unbelief, and that their fate should have a salutary impression on those who had no occasion for boasting, but who might be rejected for the same cause. This is an instance of remarkable tact and delicacy in an argument, admitting the main force of the remark, but giving it a slight change in accordance with the truth, so as

to parry its force, and give it a practical bearing on the very point which he wished to enforce.

Thou standest by faith - The continuance of these mercies to you depends on your fidelity. If you are faithful, they will be preserved; if, like the Jews, you become unbelieving and unfruitful, like them you will be also rejected. This fact should repress boasting, and excite to anxiety and caution.

Be not high-minded - Do not be elated in the conception of your privileges, so as to produce vain self-confidence and boasting.

But fear - This fear stands opposed to the spirit of boasting and self-confidence, against which he was exhorting them. It does not mean terror or horror, but it denotes humility, watchfulness, and solicitude to abide in the faith. Do not be haughty and high-minded against the Jew, who has been cast off, but "demean yourself as a humble believer, and one who has need to be continually on his guard, and to fear lest he may fall through unbelief, and be cast off." (Stuart.) We may here learn,

(1)That there is danger lest those who are raised to eminent privileges should become unduly exalted in their own estimation, and despise others.

(2)the tendency of faith is to promote humility and a sense of our dependence on God.

(3)the system of salvation by faith produces that solicitude, and careful guarding, and watchfulness, which is necessary to preserve us from apostasy and ruin.

Verse 21

For if God … - If God did not refrain from rejecting the Jews who became unbelievers, assuredly he will not refrain from rejecting you in the same circumstances. It may be supposed that he will be quite as ready to reject the ingrafted branches, as to cast off those which belonged to the parent stock. The situation of the Gentiles is not such as to give them any security over the condition of the rejected Jew.

Verse 22

Behold, therefore … - Regard, or contemplate, for purposes of your own improvement and benefit, the dealings of God. We should look on all his dispensations of judgment or of mercy, and derive lessons from all to promote our own steadfast adherence to the faith of the gospel.

The goodness - The benevolence or mercy of God toward you in admitting you to his favor. This calls for gratitude, love, confidence. It demands expressions of thanksgiving. It should be highly prized, in order that it may excite to diligence to secure its continuance.

The severity of God - That is, toward the Jews. The word "severity" now suggests sometimes the idea of harshness, or even of cruelty. (Webster.) But nothing of this kind is conveyed in the original word here. It properly denotes "cutting off," ἀποτομίαν apotomianfrom ἀποτέμνω **apotemnōto cut off; and is commonly applied to the act of the gardener or vine-dresser in trimming trees or vines, and cutting off the decayed or useless branches. Here it refers to the act of God in cutting off or rejecting the Jews as useless branches; and conveys no idea of injustice, cruelty, or harshness. It was a just act, and consistent with all the perfections of God. It indicated a purpose to do what was right, though the inflictions might seem to be severe, and though they must involve them in many heavy calamities.**

On them which fell, severity - On the Jews, who had been rejected because of their unbelief.

But towards thee, goodness - Toward the Gentile world, benevolence. The word "goodness" properly denotes benignity or benevolence. Here it signifies the kindness of God in bestowing these favors on the Gentiles.

If thou continue in his goodness - The word "his" is not in the original. And the word "goodness" may denote integrity, probity, uprightness, as well as favor; Romans 3:12, "There is none that doeth good." The Septuagint often thus uses the word; Psalm 13:1, Psalm 13:3, etc. This is probably the meaning here; though it may mean "if thou dost continue in a state of favor;" that is, if your faith and good conduct shall be such as to make it proper for God to continue his kindness toward you. Christians do not merit the favor of God by their faith and good works; but their obedience is an indispensable condition on which that favor is to be continued. It is thus that the grace of God is magnified, at the same time that the highest good is done to man himself.

Otherwise thou also shalt be cut off - Compare John 15:2. The word "thou" refers here to the Gentile churches. In relation to them the favor of God was dependent on their fidelity. If they became disobedient and unbelieving, then the same principle which led him to withdraw his mercy from the Jewish people would lead also to their rejection and exclusion.

And on this principle, God has acted in numberless cases. Thus, his favor was withdrawn from the seven churches of Asia Revelation 13, from Corinth, from Antioch, from Philippi, and even from Rome itself.

Verse 23

And they also - The Jews.

If they bide not … - If they do not continue in willful obstinacy and rejection of the Messiah. As their unbelief was the sole cause of their rejection, so if that be removed, they may be again restored to the divine favor.

For God is able … - He has,

(1)Power to restore them, to bring them back and replace them in his favor.

(2)he has not bound himself utterly to reject them, and forever to exclude them.

In this way the apostle reaches his purpose, which was to show them that God had not cast away his people or finally rejected the Jewish nation; Romans 11:1-2. That God has this power, the apostle proceeds to show in the next verse.

Verse 24

For if thou - If you who are Gentiles.

Wert cut out of - Or, if thou wert of the cutting of the wild olive-tree.

Which is wild by nature - Which is uncultivated and unfruitful. That is, if you were introduced into a state of favor with God from a condition which was one of enmity and hostility to him. The argument here is, that it was in itself as difficult a thing to reclaim them, and change them from opposition to God to friendship, as it would seem difficult or impossible to reclaim and make fruitful the wild olive-tree.

And were graffed contrary to nature - Contrary to your natural habits, thoughts, and practices. There was among the Gentiles no inclination or tendency toward God. This does not mean that they were physically depraved, or that their disposition was literally like the wild olive; but it is used, for the sake of illustration, to show that their moral character and habits were unlike those of the friends of God.

How much more … - The meaning of this whole verse may be thus expressed; "If God had mercy on the Gentiles, who were outcasts from his favor, shall he not much rather on those who were so long his people, to whom had been given the promises, and the covenants, and the Law, whose

ancestors had been so many of them his friends, and among whom the Messiah was born?" In some respects, there are facilities among the Jews for their conversion, which had not existed among the Gentiles. They worship one God; they admit the authority of revelation; they have the Scriptures of the Old Testament; they expect a Messiah; and they have a habit of professed reverence for the will of God.

Verse 25

Ignorant of this mystery - The word "mystery" means properly what is "concealed, hidden, or unknown." And it especially refers, in the New Testament, to the truths or doctrines which God had reserved to himself, or had not before communicated. It does not mean, as with us often, that there was anything unintelligible or inscrutible in the nature of the doctrine itself, for it was commonly perfectly plain when it was made known. Thus, the doctrine, that the division between the Jews and the Gentiles was to be broken down, is called a mystery, because it had been, to the times of the apostles, concealed, and was then revealed fully for the first time; Romans 16:25; Colossians 1:26-27; compare 1 Corinthians 15:51; Mark 4:11; Ephesians 1:9; Ephesians 3:3. Thus, the doctrine which the apostle was stating was one that until then had been concealed, or had not been made known. It does not mean that there was anything unintelligible or incomprehensive in it, but until then it had not been made known.

Lest ye should be wise in your own conceits - Paul communicated the truth in regard to this, lest they should attempt to inquire into it; should speculate about the reason why God had rejected the Jews; and should he elated with the belief that they had, by their own skill and genius, ascertained the cause. Rather than leave them to vain speculations and self-gratulation, he chose to cut short all inquiry, by stating the truth about; their present and future state.

Blindness - Or hardness; see Romans 11:7.

In part - Not totally, or entirely. They are not absolutely or completely blinded. This is a qualifying expression; but it does not denote what part or portion, or for what time it is to continue. It means that the blindness in respect to the whole nation was only partial. Some were then enlightened, and had become Christians; and many more would he.

To Israel - To the Jews.

Until the fulness of the Gentiles … - The word "fulness" in relation to the Jews is used in Romans 11:12. It means until the abundance or the great

multitude of the Gentiles shall be converted. The word is not used elsewhere in respect to the Gentiles; and it is difficult to fix its meaning definitely. It doubtless refers to the future spread of the Gospel among the nations; to the time when it may be said that the great mass, the abundance of the nations, shall be converted to God. At present, they are, as they were in the times of the apostle, idolators, so that the mass of mankind are far from God. But the Scriptures have spoken of a time when the gospel shall spread and prevail among the nations of the earth; and to this the apostle refers. He does not say, however, that the Jews may not be converted until all the Gentiles become Christians; for he expressly supposes Romans 11:12-15 that the conversion of the Jews will have an important influence in extending the gospel among the Gentiles. Probably the meaning is, that this blindness is to continue until great numbers of the Gentiles shall be converted; until the gospel shall be extensively spread; and then the conversion of the Jews will be a part of the rapid spread of the gospel, and will be among the most efficient and important aids in completing the work. If this is the case, then Christians may labor still for their conversion. They may seek that in connection with the effort to convert the pagan; and they may toil with the expectation that the conversion of the Jews and Gentiles will not be separate, independent, and distinct events; but will be intermingled, and will be perhaps simultaneous. The word "fulness" may denote such a general turning to God, without affirming that each individual shall be thus converted to the Christian faith.

Verse 26

And so - That is, in this manner; or when the great abundance of the Gentiles shall be converted, then all Israel shall be saved.

All Israel - All the Jews. It was a maxim among the Jews that "every Israelite should have part in the future age." (Grotius.) The apostle applies that maxim to his own purpose; and declares the sense in which it would be true. He does not mean to say that every Jew of every age would be saved; for he had proved that a large portion of them would be, in his time, rejected and lost. But the time would come when, as a people, they would be recovered; when the nation would turn to God; and when it could be said of them that, as a nation, they were restored to the divine favor. It is not clear that he means that even then every individual of them would be saved, but the body of them; the great mass of the nation would be. Nor is it said when this would be. This is one of the things which "the Father hath put in

his own power;" Acts 1:7. He has given us the assurance that it shall be done to encourage us in our efforts to save them; and he has concealed the time when it shall be, lest we should relax our efforts, or feel that no exertions were needed to accomplish what must take place at a fixed time.

Shall be saved - Shall be recovered from their rejection; be restored to the divine favor; become followers of the Messiah, and thus be saved as all other Christians are.

As it is written - Isaiah 59:20. The quotation is not literally made, but the sense of the passage is preserved. The Hebrew is, "There shall come to Zion a Redeemer, and for those who turn from ungodliness in Jacob." There can be no doubt that Isaiah refers here to the times of the gospel.

Out of Zion - Zion was one of the bills of Jerusalem. On this was built the city of David. It came thus to denote, in general, the church, or people of God. And when it is said that the Redeemer should come out of Zion, it means that he should arise among that people, be descended from themselves, or should not be a foreigner. The Septuagint, however render it, "the Redeemer shall come on account of Zion." So the Chaldee paraphrase, and the Latin Vulgate.

And shall turn away … - The Hebrew is, "to those forsaking un godliness in Jacob." The Septuagint has rendered it in the same manner as the apostle.

Verse 27

For this is my covenant … - This expression is found immediately following the other in Isaiah 59:21. But the apostle connects with it a part of another promise taken from Jeremiah 31:33-34; or rather he abridges that promise, and expresses its substance, by adding "when I shall take away their sins." It is clear that he intended to express the general sense of the promises, as they were well known to the Jews, and as it was a point concerning which he did not need to argue or reason with them, that God had made a covenant with them, and intended to restore them if they were cast off, and should then repent and turn to him. The time and manner in which this shall be, is not revealed. It may be remarked, however, that that passage does not mean that the Redeemer shall come personally and preach to them, or re-appear for the purpose of recalling them to himself; nor does it mean that they will be restored to the land of their fathers. Neither of these ideas is contained in the passage. God will doubtless convert the Jews, as he does the Gentiles, by human means, and in connection with the

prayers of his people; so that the Gentiles shall yet repay the toil and care of the ancient Jews in preserving the Scriptures, and preparing the way for the Messiah; and both shall rejoice that they were made helps in spreading the knowledge of the Messiah.

Verse 28

As concerning the gospel - So far as the gospel is concerned; or, in order to promote its extension and spread through the earth.

They are enemies - The word "enemies" here stands opposed to "beloved;" and as in one respect, to wit, on account of "election," they were still beloved, that is, beloved by God, so in another respect they were his enemies, i. e., opposed to him, or cast off from him. The enemies of God denote all who are not his true friends; Colossians 1:21; Romans 5:10; compare Romans 11:8. The word here is applied to the Jews because they had rejected the Messiah; had become opposed to God; and were therefore rejected by him.

For your sakes - For your advantage. Their rejection has become the occasion by which the gospel has been preached to you; compare Romans 11:11, Romans 11:19-20.

As touching the election - So far as the purpose of election is concerned. That is, the election of their fathers and of the nation to be the special people of God.

They are beloved - God still regards them with interest; has purposes of mercy toward them; intends still to do them good. This does not, mean that he approved of their conduct or character, or that he had for them the same kind of affection which he would have had if they had been obedient. God does not love a sinful character; but he may have still purposes of mercy, and regard people with deep interest on whom he intends yet to bestow mercy.

For the fathers' sakes - Compare Deuteronomy 10:15. He had chosen their fathers to be His special people. He had made many promises to Abraham respecting his seed, and extended these premises to his remotest posterity. Though salvation is by grace, and not from human merit, yet God has respect to his covenant made with the fathers, and will not forget his promises. It is not on account of any merit of the fathers or of ancient saints, but solely because God had made a covenant with them; and this purpose of election would be manifest to their children in the latest times. As those contemplated in the covenant made with Abraham, God retained for them

feelings of special interest; and designed their recovery to himself. It is clear here that the word "election" does not refer to external privileges; for Paul is not teaching the doctrine that they shall be restored to the external privileges of Jews, but that they shall be truly converted to God. Yet this should not be abused by others to lead them to security in sin. No man has any security of happiness, and of the favor of God, but he who complies with the terms of his mercy. His commands are explicit to repent and believe, nor can there be safety except in entire compliance with the terms on which he is willing to bestow eternal life.

Verse 29

For the gifts - The favors or benefits which God bestows on men. The word χάρισμα charismaproperly denotes any benefit which is conferred on another as a mere matter of favor, and not of reward; see Romans 5:15-16; Romans 6:23. Such are all the favors which God bestows on sinners including pardon, peace, joy, sanctification, and eternal life.

And calling of God - The word "calling" κλῆσις klēsishere denotes that act of God by which he extends an invitation to people to come and partake of his favors, whether it be by a personal revelation as to the patriarchs, or by the promises of the gospel, or by the influences of his Spirit. All such invitations or callings imply a pledge that he will bestow the favor, and will not repent, or turn from it. God never draws or invites sinners to himself without being willing to bestow pardon and eternal life. The word "calling" here, therefore, has not respect to external privileges, but to that choosing of a sinner, and influencing him to come to God, which is connected with eternal life.

Without repentance - This does not refer to man, but to God. It does not mean that God confers his favors on man without his exercising repentance, but that God does not repent, or change, in his purposes of bestowing his gifts on man. What he promises he will fulfil; what he purposes to do, he will not change from or repent of. As he made promises to the fathers, he will not repent of them, and will not depart from them; they shall all be fulfilled; and thus it was certain that the ancient people of God, though many of them had become rebellious, and had been cast off, should not be forgotten and abandoned. This is a general proposition respecting God, and one repeatedly made of him in the Scriptures; see Numbers 23:19, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he not said, and shall he not do it? hath he

spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Ezekiel 24:14; 1 Samuel 15:29; Psalm 89:35-36; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18; James 1:17. It follows from this,

(1) That all the promises made to the people of God shall be fulfilled.

(2) that his people need not be discouraged or desponding, in times of persecution and trial.

(3) that none who become his true friends will be forsaken, or cast off. God does not bestow the gift of repentance and faith, of pardon and peace, on people, for a temporary purpose; nor does he capriciously withdraw them, and leave the soul to ruin. When he renews a soul, it is with reference to his own glory; and to withdraw those favors, and leave such a soul once renewed to go down to hell, would be as much a violation of all the principles of his nature as it would be to all the promises of the Scripture.

(4) for God to forsake such a soul, and leave it to ruin, would imply that he did repent. It would suppose a change of purpose and of feeling. It would be the character of a capricious being, with no settled plan or principles of action; no confidence could be reposed in him, and his government would be unworthy the affections and trust of his intelligent creation.

Verse 30

For as ye - You who were Gentiles.

In times past - Before the gospel was preached. This refers to the former idolatrous and sinful state of the pagan world; compare Ephesians 2:2; Acts 14:16.

Have not believed God - Or have not obeyed God. This was the character of all the pagan nations.

Yet have now obtained mercy - Have been pardoned and admitted to the favor of God.

Through their unbelief - By means of the unbelief and rejection of the Jews; see the note at Romans 11:11.

Verse 31

Even so have these … - That is, the Jews.

That through your mercy … - The immediate effect of the unbelief of the Jews was to confer salvation on the Gentiles, or to open the way for the preaching of the gospel to them. But its remote effect would be to secure

the preaching of the gospel again to the Jews. Through the mercy, that is, the compassion or deep feeling of the converted Gentiles; through the deep and tender pity which they would feel for the blinded and degraded Jews: the gospel should be again carried to them, and they should be recalled to the long lost favor of God. Each party should thus cause salvation to come to the other - the Jews to the Gentiles by their unbelief; but the Gentiles, in their turn, to the Jews by their belief. We may here learn,

(1)That the Jews are to be converted by the instrumentality of the Gentiles. It is not to be by miracle, but by the regular and common way in which God blesses people.

(2)that this is to be done by the mercy, or compassion of the Gentiles; by their taking pity on the lost and wretched condition of the Jewish people.

(3)it is to be when the abundance of the Gentiles - that is, when great numbers of the Gentiles - shall be called in.

It may be asked here whether the time is not approaching for the Gentiles to make efforts to bring the Jews to the knowledge of the Messiah. Hitherto those efforts have been unsuccessful; but it will not always be so; the time is coming when the promises of God in regard to them shall be fulfilled. Christians shall be moved with deep compassion for the degraded and forsaken Jews, and they shall be called into the kingdom of God, and made efficient agents in extending the gospel through the whole world. May the time soon come when they shall feel as they should, for the rejected and forsaken children of Abraham, and when their labors for their conversion shall be attended with success.

Verse 32

For God hath concluded … - The word translated here "concluded" sunekleise, is rendered in the margin "shut them all up together." It is properly used in reference to those who are shut up in prison, or to those in a city who are shut up by a besieging army; Joshua 6:6; Isaiah 45:1. It is used in the New Testament of fish taken in a net; Luke 5:6, "They enclosed a great multitude of fishes;" Galatians 3:22, "But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise, etc." In this place the Scripture is declared to have shut them up under sin, that is, declared them to be sinners; gave no hope of rescue by any works of their own; and thus kept them Romans 11:23 "shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed." All are represented, therefore, as in prison, enclosed or confined

by God, and to be liberated only in his own way and time. In regard to the agency of God in this, we may remark:

(1) That the word does not mean that God compelled them to disbelieve the gospel. When, in Galatians 3:22, the Scripture is said to have included all under sin, it is not meant that the Scripture compelled them not to believe.

(2) the word does not imply that the sin and unbelief for which they were shut up were not voluntary. Even when a man is committed to prison, the crime which brought him there is voluntary, and for it he is responsible.

(3) the keeper of a prison does no wrong in confining a criminal; or the judge in condemning him; or the executioner in fulfilling the sentence of the Law. So of God. What he does is not to compel people to remain under unbelief, but to declare that they are so; so to encompass them with the proof of it that they shall realize that there is no escape from the evidence of it, and thus to press on them the evidence of their need of a Saviour. This he does in relation to all sinners who ever become converted.

(4) yet God permitted this; suffered Jews and Gentiles to fall into unbelief, and to be concluded under it, because he had a special purpose to answer in leaving man to the power of sin and unbelief. One of those purposes was, doubtless, to manifest the power of his grace and mercy in the plan of redemption.

(5) in all this, and in all other sin man is voluntary. He chooses his course of evil; and God is under no obligation to compel him to do otherwise. Being under unbelief, God declares the fact, and avails himself of it, in the plan of salvation by grace.

Them all - Both Jews and Gentiles.

In unbelief - εἰς eis"Unto unbelief." He has delivered them over unto unbelief, as a man is delivered over into prison. This is the literal meaning of the expression.

That he might have mercy upon all - Mercy is favor shown to the undeserving. It could not have been shown to the Jews and the Gentiles unless it was before proved that they were guilty. For this purpose proof was furnished that they were all in unbelief. It was clear, therefore, that if

favor was shown to either, it must be on the same ground, that of mere undeserved mercy. Thus, all people were on a level; and thus all might be admitted to heaven without any invidious distinctions, or any dealings that were not in accordance with mercy and love. "The emphasis in this verse is on the word "mercy." It signifies that God is under obligation to no one, and therefore that all are saved by grace, because all are equally ruined." (Calvin.) It does not prove that all people will be saved; but that those who are saved shall be alike saved by the mercy of God; and that He intends to confer salvation on Jews and Gentiles on the same terms. This is properly the close of the argument of this Epistle. By several independent trains of reasoning, the apostle had come to the same conclusion, that the Jews had no special privileges in regard to religion, that all people were on a level, and that there was no hope of salvation for any but in the mercy of a sovereign God. This conclusion, and the wonderful train of events which had led to this state of things, give rise to the exclamations and ascriptions of praise with which the chapter closes.

Verse 33

O the depth … - This passage should have been translated "O the depth of the riches, and of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God." The apostle has three subjects of admiration. Our translation, by the word "both" introduced here, confines it to two. The apostle wishes to express his admiration of the riches and the wisdom, and the knowledge of God. So the Syriac, Arabic, etc. Our translation has followed the Latin Vulgate. The word "depth" is applied in the Scriptures to anything vast and incomprehensible. As the abyss or the ocean is unfathomable, so the word comes to denote what words cannot express, or what we cannot comprehend; Psalm 36:6, "Thy judgments are a great deep;" 1 Corinthians 2:10," The Spirit searcheth … the deep things of God;" Revelation 2:24, "The depths of Satan" - the deep, profound, cunning, and wicked plans of Satan.

Riches - See the note at Romans 11:12. The word denotes the abundant blessings and mercies which had been conferred on sinful people by the gospel. These were vast and wonderful. The pardon of sin; the atonement; the hope of heaven; the peace of the gospel; all bestowed on the sinful, the poor, the wretched, and the dying; all bespeak the great mercy and rich grace of God. So every pardoned sinner may still exclaim. The grace of God which pardons him is felt to be indeed wonderful, and past

comprehension. It is beyond the power of language to express; and all that the Christian can do, is to follow the example of the apostle, and sit down in profound admiration of the rich grace of God. The expression "the depth of the riches" is a Hebraism, meaning the deep or profound riches.

The wisdom - Wisdom is the choice of the best means to accomplish the best ends. The end or design which God had in view was to bestow mercy on all; i. e., to save people by grace, and not by their own works; Romans 11:32. He intended to establish a glorious system that should present his mercy as the prominent attribute, standing out in living colors in all the scheme of salvation. This was to be alike shown in relation to Jews and Gentiles. The wonderful wisdom with which this was done, is the object of the apostle's profound admiration. This wisdom was seen,

(1) In adapting the plan to the condition of man. All were sinners. The apostle in this Epistle has fully shown that all had come short of the glory of God. Man had no power to save himself by his own wisdom. The Jews and Gentiles in different ways had sought to justify themselves, and had both failed God had suffered both to make the experiment in the most favorable circumstances. He had left the world for four thousand years to make the trial, and then introduced the plan of divine wisdom, just so as to meet the manifest wants and woes of people.

(2) this was shown in his making the Jews the occasion of spreading the system among the Gentiles. They were cast off, and rejected; but the God of wisdom had made even this an occasion of spreading his truth.

(3) the same wisdom was yet to be seen in his appointing the Gentiles to carry the gospel back to the Jews. Thus, they were to be mutual aids; until all their interests should be blended, and the entire race should be united in the love of the same gospel, and the service of the same God and Saviour. When, therefore, this profound and wonderful plan is contemplated, and its history traced from the commencement to the end of time, no wonder that the apostle was fixed in admiration at the amazing wisdom of him who devised it, and who has made all events subservient to its establishment and spread among people.

And knowledge - That is, foreknowledge, or omniscience. This knowledge was manifest,

(1)In the profound view of man, and acquaintance with all his wants and woes.

(2)in a view of the precise scheme that would be suited to recover and save.

(3)in a view of the time and circumstances in which it would be best to introduce the scheme.

(4)in a discernment of the effect of the rejection of the Jews, and of the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles.

Who but God could see that such effects would follow the rejection of the Jews? Who but he could know that the gospel should yet prevail among all the nations? We have only to think of the changes in human affairs; the obstacles to the gospel; the difficulties to be surmounted; and the vast work yet to be done, to be amazed at the knowledge which can adapt such a scheme to people, and which can certainly predict its complete and final spread among all the families of man.

How unsearchable - The word "unsearchable" means what cannot be investigated or fully understood.

His judgments - This word in this place evidently means his arrangement, his plan, or proceeding. It sometimes refers to laws; at other times to the decision or determination of God; at others to the inflictions of his justice. In this last sense it is now commonly used. But in the case before us, it means his arrangements for conferring the gospel on people compare Psalm 36:7," His judgments are a great deep."

His ways - The word rendered "ways" properly denotes a path, or road on which one travels. Hence, it comes also to denote the course or manner of life in which one moves; or his principles, or morals; his doctrine, or teaching, etc. Applied to God, it denotes his mode or manner of doing things; the order, etc. of his divine Providence; his movements, in his great plans, through the universe; Acts 13:10, "Wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" to oppose, or to render vain, his plan of guiding and saving man; Hebrews 3:10," They have not known my ways;" Psalm 77:19, "Thy way is in the sea, thy footsteps are not known." Here it refers particularly to his way or plan of bringing all nations within the reach of his mercy in the gospel.

Past finding out - Literally, which cannot be tracked or traced out. The footsteps cannot be followed. As if his path were in the sea Psalm 77:19, and the waves closed immediately, leaving no track, it cannot be followed or sought out. It is known that he has passed, but there is no way of tracing his goings. This is a beautiful and striking figure. It denotes that God‘s plans are deep, and beyond our comprehension. We can see the proofs that he is everywhere; but how it is, we cannot comprehend. We are permitted to see the vast movements around us; but the invisible hand we cannot see, nor trace the footsteps of that mighty God who performs his wonders on the ocean and on the land,

Verse 34

For who hath known? … - This verse is a quotation, with a slight change, from Isaiah 40:13, “Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?” It is designed to express the infinite wisdom and knowledge of God, by affirming that no being could teach him, or counsel him. Earthly monarchs have counsellors of state, whom they may consult in times of perplexity or danger. But God has no such council. He sits alone; nor does he call in any or all of his creatures to advise him. All created beings are not qualified to contribute anything to enlighten or to direct him. It is also designed to silence all opposition to his plans, and to hush all murmurings. The apostle had proved that this was the plan of God. However mysterious and inscrutable it might appear to the Jew or the Gentile, yet it was his duty to submit to God, and to confide in his wisdom, though he was not able to trace the reason of his doings.

Verse 35

Or who hath … - The sentiment in this verse is found substantially in Job 41:11. “Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him.” The Hebrew word “prevented” means to anticipate, to go before; and God asks who has anticipated me; who has conferred favors on me before I have on him; who has thus laid me under obligation to him.” This is the sense in which the apostle uses the word here. Who has, by his services, laid God under obligation to recompense or pay him again? It is added in Job, “Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.” Thus Paul, contrary to the prevailing doctrine of the Jews, shows that no one could plead his own merits, or advance with a claim on God. All the favors of salvation must be bestowed by mercy or grace. God owned them all; and he had a right to bestow them

when and where he pleased. The same claim to all things is repeatedly made by God; Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalm 24:1; Psalm 50:12.

Shall be recompensed - Repaid as a matter of debt. None of God's mercies can be conferred in that way; if they could, man could bring God under obligation, and destroy the freeness and benevolence of his favors.

Verse 36

For of him - εξ αὐτοῦ ex autoucompare 1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Corinthians 8:6. This expression doubtless means that he is the original source and fountain of all blessings. He is the Creator of all, the rich "fountain from which all streams of existence take their rise. The design of this verse is to show that no creature has any claim on God. Jews and Gentiles must alike receive salvation on the ground of his mercy. So far from having a claim on God, the apostle here affirms that all things have come from him, and therefore all must be derived to us. Nothing has been produced by chance, or haphazard; nothing by created skill or might. All has been formed by God; and therefore he has a right to dispose of all.

And through him - δἰ αὐτοῦ di autouThat is, by his immediate operating agency. The former expression, "of him," affirmed that he was the original source of all things; this declares that all are by him, or through him, as their immediate cause. It is not merely by his plan or purpose; it is by his agency, by the direct exertion of his power in their creation and bestowment. By his power they are still directed and controlled. Human agency, therefore, could not lay him under any obligation. He does not need the aid of man; and he did not call in that aid in the creation and government of the world. He is the independent Creator and Lord, and on him none can have a claim.

To him - εἰς αὐτὸν eis autosThis expression denotes the final cause, the reason or end for which all things were formed. It is to promote his honor and glory. It is to manifest his praise, or to give a proper putting forth of the glorious attributes of God; that the exceeding greatness, and goodness, and grandeur of his character might be evinced. It is not to promote his happiness, for he was eternally happy; not to add anything to him, for he is infinite; but that he might act as God, and have the honor and praise that is due to God. As this was the design of all things, so it followed that the bestowment of his favors must be in accordance with this in such a way as to promote his glory; and not so as to consult the feelings or views of either Jews or Gentiles.

All things - The universe; the creation, or still more particularly, the things of which the apostle is discoursing. He does not affirm that he is the author of sin or of sinful thoughts; not that he creates evil, or that evil is designed to promote his glory. The apostle is not discoursing of these, but of his method of bestowing his favors; and he says that these are to be conferred in such a way as to promote his honor, and to declare the praise of hint who is the original source, the creator, and the proprietor of all things.

To whom be glory - This ascription of praise is the appropriate close of the argumentative part of the Epistle, as well as appropriate to the train of remarks into which the apostle had fallen. It expresses his hearty amen in concurrence with this view; the deep desire of a pious man that all might be to God‘s glory and honor. He had not merely come to it by reasoning, but it was the sincere desire of his soul that it might be so. The Christian does not merely admit this doctrine; he is not merely driven to it by argument, but it finds a hearty response in his bosom. He rejoices in it; and sincerely desires that all may be to the honor of God. Sinners are often compelled by argument to admit it, but they do not love it. They would rejoice were it otherwise, and be glad if they were permitted rather to seek their own glory than that of the living God.

Glory - Praise, honor.

Forever - Not merely amid transitory events now, but ever onward to eternity. This will be the case. There never will be a time when the affairs of the universe shall not be conducted with reference to the glory of God. That honor and glory shall shine brighter and brighter, and all worlds shall be perfectly adapted to show his praise, and to evince his greatness, goodness, power, and love forever and ever. Thus, let it be, is the language of everyone that truly loves him.

This closes the argumentative part of the Epistle. From the close of this chapter we may make the following observations.

1. God is infinitely wise, and just, and good. This is seen in all his plans and doings, and especially in the glorious plan of saving people.

2. It becomes man to be humble. He can see but few of the reasons of the doings of an infinite God. He is not qualified to sit in judgment on his plans. He is not suited to arraign him. There is nothing more absurd than for a man to contend with God, or to find fault with his plans; and yet there is

nothing more common. Man speaks, and thinks, and reasons on the great things pertaining to the divine mind and plan, as if he were qualified to counsel the being of infinite wisdom, and to arraign at the bar of his own reason the being of infinite goodness.

3. It is our duty to be submissive to God. His plans may often require him to cross the path of our pleasures, or to remove some of our enjoyments. He tries us by requiring us to put confidence in him where we cannot see the reason of his doings, and to believe that he is qualified for universal empire. In all such cases it is our duty to submit to his will. He is seeking a grander and nobler object than our private good. He is seeking the welfare of a vast universe; and he best knows in what way that can be promoted.

4. God is the creator and proprietor of all things. It would be possible to prove this from his works. But his word unequivocally asserts it. He has formed, and he upholds, and he directs all things for his glory. He who formed all has a right to all. He who is the source of life has the right to direct it, or to withdraw the gift. He on whom all depend has a right to homage and praise.

5. He has formed a universe that is eminently adapted to declare his glory. It evinces infinite power in its creation; and it is suited to fill the mind with ever-growing wonder and gladness in its contemplation. The sacred writers were filled with rapture when they contemplated it; and all the discoveries of astronomy, and geology, and science in general, in modern times, are suited to carry forward the wonder, and fill the lips with new expressions of praise. The universe is vast and grand enough to occupy the thoughts forever. How little do we know of the wonders of his creation, even pertaining to this little world; to our own bodies and souls; to the earth, the ocean, the beast and the reptile, the bird and the insect; how much less of that amazing view of worlds and systems which modern astronomy has opened to our view, the vast starry frame which the eye can penetrate for millions and millions of miles, and where it finds world piled on world, and system rising above system, in wonderful order and grandeur, and where the utmost power of the telescore can as yet find no bounds.

6. Equally true is this in his moral government. The system is such as to excite our wonder and praise. The creation and control of free, and active, and mighty minds is as wonderful as the creation and control of matter, even the vast masses of the planetary systems. Creation is filled with minds. God has peopled the worlds with conscious, free, and active intelligences. The wonderful wisdom by which he controls them; the amazing moral power by which he guards and binds them to himself, by which he restrains and awes the rebellious; and the complete subjection by which he will bring all yet at his feet, is as much replete with wonder as the wisdom and skill by which he framed the heavens. To govern mind requires more wisdom and skill than to govern matter. To control angels and human beings evinces more glory than to roll the streams or the ocean, or than to propel and guide the planets. And especially is this true of the plan of salvation. That wondrous scheme is adapted to call forth eternal, praise, and to show forever the wisdom and mercy of God. Without such a plan, we cannot see how the Divinity could be fully manifested; with that, we see God as God, vast, grand, mighty, infinite; but still seeking to do good, and having power to enter any vast mass of iniquity, and to diffuse purity and peace over the face of an alienated and dying world.

7. The salvation of sinners is not to promote their own glory primarily, but that of God. "He is first, and he is last; he is midst, and without end," in their salvation. God seeks his own honor, and seeks it by their return and their obedience. But if they will not promote his glory in that way, they must be made to promote it in their ruin.

8. It is the duty of people to seek the honor of this infinitely wise and holy God. It commends itself to every man's conscience. God has formed us all; and man can have no higher destiny and honor than to be permitted to promote and spread abroad through all the universe the knowledge of a Being whose character is infinitely lovely, whose government is right, and whose presence and favor will diffuse blessings of salvation and eternal peace on all the wide creation that will be obedient to his will.

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

I beseech you - The apostle, having finished the argument of this Epistle, proceeds now to close it with a practical or hortatory application, showing its bearing on the duties of life, and the practical influence of religion. None of the doctrines of the gospel are designed to be cold and barren speculations. They bear on the hearts and lives of people; and the apostle therefore calls on those to whom he wrote to dedicate themselves without reserve unto God.

Therefore - As the effect or result of the argument or doctrine. In other words, the whole argument of the eleven first chapters is suited to show the obligation on us to devote ourselves to God. From expressions like these, it is clear that the apostle never supposed that the tendency of the doctrines of grace was to lead to licentiousness. Many have affirmed that such was the tendency of the doctrines of justification by faith, of election and decrees, and of the perseverance of the saints. But it is plain that Paul had no such apprehensions. After having fully stated and established those doctrines, he concludes that we ought therefore to lead holy lives, and on the ground of them he exhorts people to do it.

By the mercies of God - The word "by" διὰ diadenotes here the reason why they should do it, or the ground of appeal. So great had been the mercy of God, that this constituted a reason why they should present their bodies, etc. see 1 Corinthians 1:10; Romans 15:30. The word "mercies" here denotes favor shown to the undeserving, or kindness, compassion, etc. The plural is used in imitation of the Hebrew word for mercy, which has no singular. The word is not often used in the New Testament; see 2 Corinthians 1:3, where God is called "the Father of mercies;" Philemon 2:1; Colossians 3:12; Hebrews 10:28. The particular mercy to which the apostle here refers, is that shown to those whom he was addressing. He had proved that all were by nature under sin; that they had no claim on God; and that he had showed great compassion in giving his Son to die for them in this state, and in pardoning their sins. This was a ground or reason why they should devote themselves to God.

That ye present - The word used here commonly denotes the action of bringing and presenting an animal or other sacrifice before an altar. It implies that the action was a free and voluntary offering. Religion is free;

and the act of devoting ourselves to God is one of the most free that we ever perform.

Your bodies - The bodies of animals were offered in sacrifice. The apostle specifies their bodies particularly in reference to that fact. Still the entire animal was devoted; and Paul evidently meant here the same as to say, present Yourselves, your entire person, to the service of God; compare 1 Corinthians 6:16; James 3:6. It was not customary or proper to speak of a sacrifice as an offering of a soul or spirit, in the common language of the Jews; and hence, the apostle applied their customary language of sacrifice to the offering which Christians were to make of themselves to God.

A living sacrifice - A sacrifice is an offering made to God as an atonement for sin; or any offering made to him and his service as an expression of thanksgiving or homage. It implies that he who offers it presents it entirely, releases all claim or right to it, and leaves it to be disposed of for the honor of God. In the case of an animal, it was slain, and the blood offered; in the case of any other offering, as the first-fruits, etc., it was set apart to the service of God; and he who offered it released all claim on it, and submitted it to God, to be disposed of at his will. This is the offering which the apostle entreats the Romans to make: to devote themselves to God, as if they had no longer any claim on themselves; to be disposed of by him; to suffer and bear all that he might appoint; and to promote his honor in any way which he might command. This is the nature of true religion.

Living - ζῶσυν zōsunThe expression probably means that they were to devote the vigorous, active powers of their bodies and souls to the service of God. The Jew offered his victim, slew it, and presented it dead. It could not be presented again. In opposition to this, we are to present ourselves with all our living, vital energies. Christianity does not require a service of death or inactivity. It demands vigorous and active powers in the service of God the Saviour. There is something very affecting in the view of such a sacrifice; in regarding life, with all its energies, its intellectual, and moral, and physical powers, as one long sacrifice; one continued offering unto God. An immortal being presented to him; presented voluntarily, with all his energies, from day to day, until life shall close, so that it may he said that he has lived and died an offering made freely unto God. This is religion.

Holy - This means properly without blemish or defect. No other sacrifice could be made to God. The Jews were expressly forbid to offer what was lame, or blind, or in anyway deformed; Deuteronomy 15:21; Leviticus 1:3, Leviticus 1:10; Leviticus 3:1; Leviticus 22:20; Deuteronomy 17:1; compare Malachi 1:8. If offered without any of these defects, it was regarded as holy, that is, appropriately set apart, or consecrated to God. In like manner we are to consecrate to God our best faculties; the vigor of our minds, and talents, and time. Not the feebleness of sickness merely; not old age alone; not time which we cannot otherwise employ, but the first vigor and energies of the mind and body; our youth, and health, and strength. Our sacrifice to God is to be not divided, separate; but it is to be entire and complete. Many are expecting to be Christians in sickness; many in old age; thus purposing to offer unto him the blind and the lame. The sacrifice is to be free from sin. It is not to be a divided, and broken, and polluted service. It is to be with the best affections of our hearts and lives.

Acceptable unto God - They are exhorted to offer such a sacrifice as will be acceptable to God; that is, such a one as he had just specified, one that was living and holy. No sacrifice should be made which is not acceptable to God. The offerings of the pagan; the pilgrimages of the Muslims; the self-inflicted penalties of the Roman Catholics, uncommanded by God, cannot be acceptable to him. Those services will be acceptable to God, and those only, which he appoints; compare Colossians 2:20-23. People are not to invent services; or to make crosses; or to seek persecutions and trials; or to provoke opposition. They are to do just what God requires of them, and that will be acceptable to God. And this fact, that what we do is acceptable to God, is the highest recompense we can have. It matters little what people think of us, if God approves what we do. To please him should be our highest aim; the fact that we do please him is our highest reward.

Which is your reasonable service - The word rendered "service" λατρείαν latreianproperly denotes worship, or the homage rendered to God. The word "reasonable" with us means what is "governed by reason; thinking, speaking, or acting conformably to the dictates of reason" (Webster); or what can be shown to be rational or proper. This does not express the meaning of the original. That word λογικὴν denotes what pertains to the mind, and a reasonable service means what is mental, or pertaining to reason. It stands opposed, nor to what is foolish or

unreasonable, but to the external service of the Jews, and such as they relied on for salvation. The worship of the Christian is what pertains to the mind, or is spiritual; that of the Jew was external. Chrysostom renders this phrase "your spiritual ministry." The Syriac, "That ye present your bodies, etc., by a rational ministry."

We may learn from this verse,

(1)That the proper worship of God is the free homage of the mind. It is not forced or constrained. The offering of ourselves should be voluntary. No other can be a true offering, and none other can be acceptable.

(2)we are to offer our entire selves, all that we have and are, to God. No other offering can be such as he will approve.

(3)the character of God is such as should lead us to that. It is a character of mercy; of long-continued and patient forbearance, and it should influence us to devote ourselves to him.

(4)it should be done without delay. God is as worthy of such service now as he ever will or can be. He has every possible claim on our affections and our hearts.

Verse 2

And be not conformed … - The word rendered "conformed" properly means to put on the form, fashion, or appearance of another. It may refer to anything pertaining to the habit, manner, dress, style of living, etc., of others.

Of this world - τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ tō aiōni toutōThe word which is commonly rendered "world," when applied to the material universe, is κόσμος kosmos"cosmos." The word used here properly denotes an age, or generation of people. It may denote a particular generation, or it may be applied to the race. It is sometimes used in each of these senses. Thus, here it may mean that Christians should not conform to the maxims, habits, feelings, etc., of a wicked, luxurious, and idolatrous age, but should be conformed solely to the precepts and laws of the gospel; or the same principle may be extended to every age, and the direction may be, that Christians should not conform to the prevailing habits, style, and manners of the world, the people who know not God. They are to be governed by the laws of the Bible; to fashion their lives after the example of Christ; and to

form themselves by principles different from those which prevail in the world. In the application of this rule there is much difficulty. Many may think that they are not conformed to the world, while they can easily perceive that their neighbor is. They indulge in many things which others may think to be conformity to the world, and are opposed to many things which others think innocent. The design of this passage is doubtless to produce a spirit that should not find pleasure in the pomp and vanity of the World; and which will regard all vain amusements and gaieties with disgust, and lead the mind to find pleasure in better things.

Be ye transformed - The word from which the expression here is derived means "form, habit" μορφή morphēThe direction is, "put on another form, change the form of the world for that of Christianity." This word would properly refer to the external appearance, but the expression which the apostle immediately uses, "renewing of the mind,." shows that he did not intend to use it with reference to that only, but to the charge of the whole man. The meaning is, do not cherish a spirit. devoted to the world, following its vain fashions and pleasures, but cultivate a spirit attached to God, and his kingdom and cause.

By the renewing - By the making new; the changing into new views and feelings. The Christian is often represented as a new creature; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 4:24; 1 Peter 2:2.

Your mind - The word translated "mind" properly denotes intellect, as distinguished from the will and affections. But here it seems to be used as applicable to the whole spirit as distinguished from the body, including the understanding, will, and affections. As if he had said, Let not this change appertain to the body only, but to the soul. Let it not be a mere external conformity, but let it have its seat in the spirit. All external changes, if the mind was not changed, would be useless, or would be hypocrisy. Christianity seeks to reign in the soul; and having its seat there, the external conduct and habits will be regulated accordingly.

That ye may prove - The word used here δοκιμάζω dokimazōis commonly applied to metals, to the operation of testing, or trying them by the severity of fire, etc. Hence, it also means to explore, investigate, ascertain. This is its meaning here. The sense is, that such a renewed mind is essential to a successful inquiry after the will of God. Having a disposition to obey him, the mind will be prepared to understand his precepts. There will be a correspondence between the feelings of the heart

and his will; a nice tact or taste, which will admit his laws, and see the propriety and beauty of his commands. A renewed heart is the best preparation for studying Christianity; as a man who is temperate is the best suited to understand the arguments for temperance; the man who is chaste, has most clearly and forcibly the arguments for chastity, etc. A heart in love with the fashions and follies of the world is ill-suited to appreciate the arguments for humility, prayer, etc. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God," John 7:17. The reason why the heart is renewed is that we may do the will of God: the heart that is renewed is best suited to appreciate and understand his will.

That good … - This part of the verse might be rendered, that ye may investigate the will of God, or ascertain the Will of God, what is good, and perfect, and acceptable. The will of God relates to his commands in regard to our conduct, his doctrines in regard to our belief, his providential dealings in relation to our external circumstances. It means what God demands of us, in whatever way it may be made known. They do not err from his ways who seek his guidance, and who, not confiding in their own wisdom, but in God, commit their way to him. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way," Psalm 25:9. The word "good" here is not an adjective agreeing with "will," but a noun. "That ye may find the will of God, what is good and acceptable." It implies that that thing which is good is his will; or that we may find his will by finding what is good and perfect. That is good which promotes the honor of God and the interests of his universe.

Perfect - Free from defect, stain, or injury. That which has all its parts complete, or which is not disproportionate. Applied to religion, it means what is consistent, which is carried out; which is evinced in all the circumstances and reactions of life.

Acceptable - That which will be pleasing to God. or which he will approve. There is scarcely a more difficult text in the Bible than this, or one that is more full of meaning. It involves the main duty of religion to be separated from the world; and expresses the way in which that duty may be performed, and in which we may live so as to ascertain and do the will of God. If all Christians would obey this, religion would be everywhere honored. If all would separate from the vices and follies, the amusements and gaieties of the world, Christ would be glorified. If all were truly

renewed in their minds, they would lose their relish for such things, and seeking only to do the will of God, they would not be slow to find it.

Verse 3

For I say - The word "for" shows that the apostle is about to introduce some additional considerations to enforce what he had just said, or to show how we may evince a mind that is not conformed to the world.

Through the grace - Through the favor, or in virtue of the favor of the apostolic office. By the authority that is conferred on me to declare the will of God as an apostle; see the note at Romans 1:5; see also Galatians 1:6, Galatians 1:15; Galatians 2:9; Ephesians 3:8; 1 Timothy 1:14.

Not to think … - Not to over-estimate himself, or to think more of himself than he ought to. What is the true standard by which we ought to estimate ourselves he immediately adds. This is a caution against pride; and an exhortation not to judge of ourselves by our talents, wealth, or function, but to form another standard of judging of ourselves, by our Christian character. The Romans would probably be in much danger from this quarter. The prevailing habit of judging among them was according to rank, or wealth, or eloquence, or function. While this habit of judging prevailed in the world around them, there was danger that it might also prevail in the church. And the exhortation was that they should not judge of their own characters by the usual modes among people, but by their Christian attainments. There is no sin to which people are more prone than an inordinate self-valuation and pride. Instead of judging by what constitutes true excellence of character, they pride themselves on that which is of no intrinsic value; on rank, and titles, and external accomplishments; or on talents, learning, or wealth. The only true standard of character pertains to the principles of action, or to that which constitutes the moral nature of the man; and to that the apostle calls the Roman people.

But to think soberly - Literally, "to think so as to act soberly or wisely." So to estimate ourselves as to act or demean ourselves wisely, prudently, modestly. Those who over-estimate themselves are proud, haughty, foolish in their deportment. Those who think of themselves as they ought, are modest, sober, prudent. There is no way to maintain a wise and proper conduct so certain, as to form a humble and modest estimate of our own character.

According as God hath dealt - As God has measured to each one, or apportioned to each one. In this place the faith which Christians have, is

traced to God as its giver. This act, that God has given it, will be itself one of the most effectual promoters of humility and right feeling. People commonly regard the objects on which they pride themselves as things of their own creation, or as depending on themselves. But let an object be regarded as the gift of God, and it ceases to excite pride, and the feeling is at once changed into gratitude. He, therefore, who regards God as the source of all blessings, and he only, will be an humble man.

The measure of faith - The word "faith" here is evidently put for religion, or Christianity. Faith is a main thing in religion. It constitutes its first demand, and the Christian religion, therefore, is characterized by its faith, or its confidence, in God; see Mark 16:17; compare Hebrews 11; Romans 4. We are not, therefore, to be elated in our view of ourselves; we are not to judge of our own characters by wealth, or talent, or learning, but by our attachment to God, and by the influence of faith on our minds. The meaning is, judge yourselves, or estimate yourselves, by your piety. The propriety of this rule is apparent:

(1) Because no other standard is a correct one, or one of value. Our talent, learning, rank, or wealth, is a very improper rule by which to estimate ourselves. All may be wholly unconnected with moral worth; and the worst as well as the best people may possess them.

(2) God will judge us in the day of judgment by our attachment to Christ and his cause Matthew 25; and that is the true standard by which to estimate ourselves here.

(3) nothing else will secure and promote humility but this. All other things may produce or promote pride, but this will effectually secure humility. The fact that God has given all that we have; the fact that the poor and obscure may have as true an elevation of character as ourselves; the consciousness of our own imperfections and short-comings in the Christian faith; and the certainty that we are soon to be arraigned to try this great question, whether we have evidence that we are the friends of God; will all tend to promote humbleness of mind and to bring down our usual inordinate self-estimation. If all Christians judged themselves in this way, it would remove at once no small part of the pride of station and of life from the world, and would produce deep attachment for those who are blessed with

the faith of the gospel, though they may be unadorned by any of the wealth or trappings which now promote pride and distinctions among men.

Verse 4

For - This word here denotes a further illustration or proof of what he had just before said. The duty to which he was exhorting the Romans was, not to be unduly exalted or elevated in their own estimation. In order to produce proper humility, he shows them that God has appointed certain orders or grades in the church; that all are useful in their proper place; that we should seek to discharge our duty in our appropriate sphere; and thus that due subordination and order would be observed. To show this, he introduces a beautiful comparison drawn from the human body. There are various members in the human frame; all useful and honorable in their proper place; and all designed to promote the order, and beauty, and harmony of the whole. So the church is one body, consisting of many members, and each is suited to be useful and comely in its proper place. The same comparison he uses with great beauty and force in Ephesians 4:25; Ephesians 5:30. In that chapter the comparison is carried out to much greater length, and its influence shown with great force.

Many members - Limbs, or parts; feet, hands, eyes, ears, etc.; 1 Corinthians 12:14-15.

In one body - Constituting one body; or united in one, and making one person. Essential to the existence, beauty, and happiness of the one body or person.

The same office - The same use or design; not all appointed for the same thing; one is to see, another to hear, a third to walk with, etc.; 1 Corinthians 12:14-23.

Verse 5

So we, being many - We who are Christians, and who are numerous as individuals.

Are one body - Are united together, constituting one society, or one people, mutually dependent, and having the same great interests at heart, though to be promoted by us according to our special talents and opportunities. As the welfare of the same body is to be promoted in one manner by the feet, in another by the eye, etc.; so the welfare of the body of Christ is to be promoted by discharging our duties in our appropriate sphere, as God has appointed us.

In Christ - One body, joined to Christ, or connected with him as the head; Ephesians 1:22-23, "And gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body;" compare John 15:1-7. This does not mean that there is any physical or literal union, or any destruction of personal identity, or any thing particularly mysterious or unintelligible. Christians acknowledge him as their head. that is, their Lawgiver; their Counsellor, Guide, and Redeemer. They are bound to him by especially tender ties of affection, gratitude, and friendship; they are united in him, that is, in acknowledging him as their common Lord and Saviour. Any other unions than this is impossible; and the sacred writers never intended that expressions like these should be explained literally. The union of Christians to Christ is the most tender and interesting of any in this world, but no more mysterious than what binds friend to friend, children to parents, or husbands to their wives; compare Ephesians 5:23-33. (See the supplementary note at Romans 8:17.)

And every one members one of another - Compare 1 Corinthians 12:25-26. That is, we are so united as to be mutually dependent; each one is of service to the other; and the existence and function of the one is necessary to the usefulness of the other. Thus, the members of the body may be said to be members one of another; as the feet could not, for example, perform their functions or be of use if it were not for the eye; the ear, the hand, the teeth, etc., would be useless if it were not for the other members, which go to make up the entire person. Thus, in the church, every individual is not only necessary in his place as an individual, but is needful to the proper symmetry and action of the whole. And we may learn here:

(1) That no member of the church of Christ should esteem himself to be of no importance. In his own place he may be of as much consequence as the man of learning, wealth, and talent may be in his.

(2) God designed that there should be differences of endowments of nature and of grace in the church; just as it was needful that there should be differences in the members of the human body.

(3) no one should despise or lightly esteem another. All are necessary. We can no more spare the foot or the hand than we can the eye; though the latter may be much more curious and striking as a proof of divine skill. We do not despise the hand or the foot any more than we do the eye; and in all

we should acknowledge the goodness and wisdom of God. See these thoughts carried out in 1 Corinthians 12:21-25.

Verse 6

Having then gifts - All the endowments which Christians have are regarded by the apostle as gifts. God has conferred them; and this fact, when properly felt, tends much to prevent our thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, Romans 12:3. For the use of the word rendered "gifts," see Romans 1:11; Romans 5:15-16; Romans 6:23; Romans 11:29; 1 Corinthians 7:7; 1 Corinthians 12:4, 1Corinthians 12:9,1 Corinthians 12:28, etc. It may refer to natural endowments as well as to the favors of grace; though in this place it refers doubtless to the distinctions conferred on Christians in the churches.

Differing - It was never designed that all Christians should be equal. God designed that people should have different endowments. The very nature of society supposes this. There never was a state of perfect equality in any thing; and it would be impossible that there should be, and yet preserve society. In this, God exercises a sovereignty, and bestows his favors as he pleases, injuring no one by conferring favors on others; and holding me responsible for the right use of what I have, and not for what may be conferred on my neighbor.

According to the grace - That is, the favor, the mercy that is bestowed on us. As all that we have is a matter of grace, it should keep us from pride; and it should make us willing to occupy our appropriate place in the church. True honor consists not in splendid endowments, or great wealth and function. It consists in rightly discharging the duties which God requires of us in our appropriate sphere. If all people held their talents as the gift of God; if all would find and occupy in society the place for which God designed them, it would prevent no small part of the uneasiness, the restlessness, the ambition, and misery of the world.

Whether prophecy - The apostle now proceeds to specify the different classes of gifts or endowments which Christians have, and to exhort them to discharge aright the duty which results from the rank or function which they held in the church. "The first is prophecy." This word properly means to predict future events, but it also means to declare the divine will; to interpret the purposes of God; or to make known in any way the truth of God, which is designed to influence people. Its first meaning is to predict or

foretell future events; but as those who did this were messengers of God, and as they commonly connected with such predictions, instructions, and exhortations in regard to the sins, and dangers, and duties of people, the word came to denote any who warned, or threatened, or in any way communicated the will of God; and even those who uttered devotional sentiments or praise. The name in the New Testament is commonly connected with teachers; Acts 13:1, "There were in the church at Antioch certain prophets, and teachers, as Barnabas, etc.;" Acts 15:32, "and Judas and Silas, being prophets themselves, etc.;" Acts 21:10, "a certain prophet named Agabus." In 1 Corinthians 12:28-29, prophets are mentioned as a class of teachers immediately after apostles, "And God hath set some in the church; first apostles, secondly prophets; thirdly teachers, etc."

The same class of persons is again mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14:29-32, 1 Corinthians 14:39. In this place they are spoken of as being under the influence of revelation, "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets;" 1 Corinthians 14:39, "Covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues." In this place endowments are mentioned under the name of prophecy evidently in advance even of the power of speaking with tongues. Yet all these were to be subject to the authority of the apostle. 1 Corinthians 14:37. In Ephesians 4:11, they are mentioned again in the same order; "And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors, and teachers, etc." From these passages the following things seem clear in relation to this class of persons:

(1) They were an order of teachers distinct from the apostles, and next to them in authority and rank.

(2) they were under the influence of revelation, or inspiration in a certain sense.

(3) they had power of controlling themselves, and of speaking or keeping silence as they chose. They had the power of using their prophetic gifts as we have the ordinary faculties of our minds, and of course of abusing them also. This abuse was apparent also in the case of those who

had the power of speaking with tongues, 1 Corinthians 14:2, 1Corinthians 14:4,1 Corinthians 14:6, 1 Corinthians 14:11, etc.

(4) they were subject to the apostles.

(5) they were superior to the other teachers and pastors in the church.

(6) the office or the endowment was temporary, designed for the settlement and establishment of the church; and then, like the apostolic office, having accomplished its purpose, to be disused, and to cease. From these remarks, also, will be seen the propriety of regulating this function by apostolic authority; or stating, as the apostle does here, the manner or rule by which this gift was to be exercised.

According to the proportion - This word ἀναλογίαν analogianis no where else used in the New Testament. The word properly applies to mathematics (Scheusner), and means the ratio or proportion which results from comparison of one number or magnitude with another. In a large sense, therefore, as applied to other subjects, it denotes the measure of any thing. With us it means analogy, or the congruity or resemblance discovered between one thing and another, as we say there is an analogy or resemblance between the truths taught by reason and revelation. (See Butler‘s Analogy.) But this is not its meaning here. It means the measure, the amount of faith bestowed on them, for he was exhorting them to Romans 12:3. “Think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” The word “faith” here means evidently, not the truths of the Bible revealed elsewhere; nor their confidence in God; nor their personal piety; but the extraordinary endowment bestowed on them by the gifts of prophecy.

They were to confine themselves strictly to that; they were not to usurp the apostolic authority, or to attempt to exercise their special function; but they were to confine themselves strictly to the functions of their office according to the measure of their faith, that is, the extraordinary endowment conferred on them. The word “faith” is thus used often to denote that extraordinary confidence in God which attended the working of miracles, etc., Matthew 17:26; Matthew 21:21; Luke 17:6. If this be the fair interpretation of the passage, then it is clear that the interpretation which applies it to systems of theology, and which demands that we should

interpret the Bible so as to accord with the system, is one that is wholly unwarranted. It is to be referred solely to this class of religious teachers, without reference to any system of doctrine, or to any thing which had been revealed to any other class of people; or without affirming that there is any resemblance between one truth and another. All that may be true, but it is not the truth taught in this passage. And it is equally clear that the passage is not to be applied to teachers now, except as an illustration of the general principle that even those endowed with great and splendid talents are not to over-estimate them, but to regard them as the gift of God; to exercise them in subordination to his appointment and to seek to employ them in the manner, the place, and to the purpose that shall be according to his will. They are to employ them in the purpose for which God gave them; and for no other.

Verse 7

Or ministry - διακονίαν diakonianThis word properly means service of any kind; Luke 10:40. It is used in religion to denote the service which is rendered to Christ as the Master. It is applied to all classes of ministers in the New Testament, as denoting their being the servants of Christ; and it is used particularly to denote that class who from this word were called deacons, that is, those who had the care of the poor, who provided for the sick, and who watched over the external matters of the church. In the following places it is used to denote the ministry, or service, which Paul and the other apostles rendered in their public work; Acts 1:17, Acts 1:25; Acts 6:4; Acts 12:25; Acts 20:24; Acts 21:19; Romans 11:13; Romans 15:31; 2 Corinthians 5:18; 2 Corinthians 6:3; Ephesians 4:12; 1 Timothy 1:12. In a few places this word is used to denote the function which the deacons fulfilled; Acts 6:1; Acts 11:29; 1 Corinthians 16:15; 2 Corinthians 11:8. In this sense the word "deacon" διάκονος diakonosis most commonly used, as denoting the function which was performed in providing for the poor and administering the alms of the church. It is not easy to say in what sense it is used here. I am inclined to the opinion that he did not refer to those who were appropriately called deacons, but to those engaged in the function of the ministry of the word; whose business it was to preach, and thus to serve the churches. In this sense the word is often used in the New Testament, and the connection seems to demand the same interpretation here.

On our ministering - Let us be wholly and diligently occupied in this. Let this be our great business, and let us give entire attention to it. Particularly the connection requires us to understand this as directing those who ministered not to aspire to the office and honors of those who prophesied. Let them not think of themselves more highly than they ought, but be engaged entirely in their own appropriate work.

He that teacheth - This word denotes those who instruct, or communicate knowledge. It is clear that it is used to denote a class of persons different, in some respects, from those who prophesied and from those who exhorted. But in what this difference consisted, is not clear. Teachers are mentioned in the New Testament in the grade next to the prophets; Acts 13:1; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; Ephesians 4:11. Perhaps the difference between the prophets, the ministers, the teachers, and the exhorters was this, that the first spake by inspiration; the second engaged in all the functions of the ministry properly so called, including the administration of the sacraments; the teachers were employed in communicating instruction simply, teaching the doctrines of religion, but without assuming the function of ministers; and the fourth exhorted, or entreated Christians to lead a holy life, without making it a particular subject to teach, and without pretending to administer the ordinances of religion.

The fact that teachers are so often mentioned in the New Testament, shows that they were a class by themselves. It may be worthy of remark that the churches in New England had, at first, a class of people who were called teachers. One was appointed to this office in every church, distinct from the pastor, whose proper business it was to instruct the congregation in the doctrines of religion. The same thing exists substantially now in most churches, in the appointment of Sunday school teachers, whose main business it is to instruct the children in the doctrines of the Christian religion. It is an office of great importance to the church; and the exhortation of the apostle may be applied to them: that they should be assiduous, constant, diligent their teaching; that they should confine themselves to their appropriate place; and should feel that their office is of great importance in the church of God; and remember that this is his arrangement, designed to promote the edification of his people.

Verse 8

He that exhorteth - This word properly denotes one who urges to the practical duties of religion, in distinction from one who teaches its doctrines. One who presents the warnings and the promises of God to excite men to the discharge of their duty. It is clear that there were persons who were recognised as engaging especially in this duty, and who were known by this appellation, as distinguished from prophets and teachers. How long this was continued, there is no means of ascertaining; but it cannot be doubted that it may still be expedient, in many times and places, to have persons designated to this work. In most churches this duty is now blended with the other functions of the ministry.

He that giveth - Margin, "imparteth." The word denotes the person whose function it was to distribute; and probably designates him who distributed the alms of the church, or him who was the deacon of the congregation. The connection requires that this meaning should be given to the passage: and the word rendered "giveth" may denote one who imparts or distributes that which has been committed to him for that purpose, as well as one who gives out of his private property. As the apostle is speaking here of offices in the church, the former is evidently what is intended. It was deemed an important matter among the early Christians to impart liberally of their substance to support the poor, and provide for the needy: Acts 2:44-47; Acts 4:34-37; Acts 5:1-11; Galatians 2:10; Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 8:8; 2 Corinthians 9:2, 2 Corinthians 9:12. Hence, it became necessary to appoint persons over these contributions, who should be especially charged with the management of them, and who would see that they were properly distributed; Acts 6:1-6. These were the persons who were denominated deacons; Philemon 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8, 1 Timothy 3:12.

With simplicity - see Matthew 6:22, "If thine eye be single," etc.; Luke 11:34. The word "simplicity" ἁπλοτής is used in a similar sense to denote singleness, honesty of aim, purity, integrity, without any mixture of a base, selfish, or sinister end. It requires the bestowment of a favor without seeking any personal or selfish ends; without partiality; but actuated only by the desire to bestow them in the best possible manner to promote the object for which they were given; 2 Corinthians 8:2; 2 Corinthians 9:11, 2 Corinthians 9:13; 2 Corinthians 1:12; Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22. It is plain that when property was intrusted to them, there would be danger that they might be tempted to employ it for selfish and sinister ends, to promote their influence and prosperity; and hence, the apostle exhorted them to do it

with a single aim to the object for which it was given. Well did he know that there was nothing more tempting than the possession of wealth, though given to be appropriated to others. And this exhortation is applicable not only to the deacons of the churches, but to all who in this day of Christian benevolence are intrusted with money to advance the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He that ruleth - This word properly designates one who is set over others, or who presides or rules, or one who attends with diligence and care to a thing. In 1 Thessalonians 5:12, it is used in relation to ministers in general: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord;" 1 Timothy 3:4-5, 1 Timothy 3:12, it is applied to the head of a family, or one who diligently and faithfully performs the duty of a father: "One that ruleth well his own house;" 1 Timothy 5:17, it is applied to "elders" in the church: "Let the elders that rule well, etc." It is not used elsewhere except in Titus 3:8, Titus 3:14, in a different sense, where it is translated "to maintain good works." The prevailing sense of the word, therefore, is to rule, to preside over, or to have the management of. But to what class of persons reference is had here, and what was precisely their duty, has been made a matter of controversy, and it is not easy to determine. Whether this refers to a permanent office in the church, or to an occasional presiding in their assemblies convened for business, etc. is not settled by the use of the word. It has the idea of ruling, as in a family, or of presiding, as in a deliberate assembly; and either of these ideas would convey all that is implied in the original word; compare 1 Corinthians 12:28.

With diligence - This word properly means haste Mark 6:25; Luke 1:39; but it also denotes industry, attention, care; 2 Corinthians 7:11, "What carefulness it wrought in you;" 2 Corinthians 7:12, "That our care for you in the sight of God, etc.;" 2 Corinthians 8:7-8, (Greek) Hebrews 6:11. It means here that they should be attentive to the duties of their vocation, and engage with ardor in what was committed to them to do.

He that showeth mercy - It is probable, says Calvin, that this refers to those who had the care of the sick and infirm, the aged and the needy; not so much to provide for them by charity, as to attend on them in their affliction, and to take care of them. To the deacons was committed the duty of distributing alms, but to others that of personal attendance. This can hardly be called an office, in the technical sense; and yet it is not

improbable that they were designated to this by the church, and requested to perform it. There were no hospitals and no almshouses. Christians felt it was their duty to show personal attention to the infirm and the sick; and so important was their function, that it was deemed worthy of notice in a general direction to the church.

With cheerfulness - The direction given to those who distributed alms was to do it with simplicity, with an honest aim to meet the purpose for which it was intrusted to them. The direction here varies according to the duty to be performed. It is to be done with cheerfulness, pleasantness, joy; with a kind, benign, and happy temper. The importance of this direction to those in this situation is apparent. Nothing tends so much to enhance the value of personal attendance on the sick and afflicted, as a kind and cheerful temper. If any where a mild, amiable, cheerful, and patient disposition is needed, it is near a sick bed, and when administering to the wants of those who are in affliction. And whenever we may be called to such a service, we should remember that this is indispensable. If moroseness, or impatience, or fretfulness is discovered in us, it will pain those whom we seek to benefit, embitter their feelings, and render our services of comparatively little value. The needy and infirm, the feeble and the aged, have enough to bear without the impatience and harshness of professed friends. It may be added that the example of the Lord Jesus Christ is the brightest which the world has furnished of this temper. Though constantly encompassed by the infirm and the afflicted, yet he was always kind, and gentle, and mild, and has left before us exactly what the apostie meant when he said, "he that showeth mercy with cheerfulness." The example of the good Samaritan is also another instance of what is intended by this direction; compare 2 Corinthians 9:7. This direction is particularly applicable to a physician.

We have here an account of the establishment, the order, and the duties of the different members of the Christian church. The amount of it all is, that we should discharge with fidelity the duties which belong to us in the sphere of life in which we are placed; and not despise the rank which God has assigned us; not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought; but to act well our part, according to the station where we are placed, and the talents with which we are endowed. If this were done, it would put an end to discontent, ambition, and strife, and would produce the blessings of universal peace and order.

Verse 9

Let love - The apostle proceeds to specify the duties of Christians in general, that they might secure the beauty and order of the church. The first which he specifies is love. This word here evidently refers to benevolence, or to good-will toward all mankind. In Romans 12:10 he specifies the duty of brotherly love; and there can be no doubt that he here refers to the benevolence which we ought to cherish toward all people. A similar distinction is found in 2 Peter 1:7, "And to brotherly-kindness add charity," that is, benevolence, or good will, and kind feelings to others.

Without dissimulation - Without hypocrisy. Let it be sincere and unfeigned. Let it not consist in words or professions only, but let it be manifested in acts of kindness and in deeds of charity; 1 John 3:18; compare 1 Peter 1:22. Genuine benevolence is not what merely professes attachment, but which is evinced by acts of kindness and affection.

Abhor that which is evil - The word "abhor" means to hate; to turn from; to avoid. The word "evil" here has reference to malice, or unkindness, rather than to evil in general. The apostle is exhorting to love, or kindness; and between the direction to love all people, and the particular direction about brotherly love, he places this general direction to abhor what is evil; what is evil in relation to the subject under discussion, that is, malice or unkindness. The word "evil" is not infrequently used in this limited sense to denote some particular or special evil; Matthew 5:37, Matthew 5:39, etc.; compare Psalm 34:14; 2 Timothy 2:19; Psalm 97:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:22.

Cleave to that which is good - The word rendered "cleave" to denotes properly the act of gluing, or uniting firmly by glue. It is then used to denote a very firm adherence to an object; to be firmly united to it. Here it means that Christians should be firmly attached to what is good, and not separate or part from it. The good here referred to is particularly what pertains to benevolence - to all people, and especially to Christians. It should not be occasional only, or irregular; but it should be constant, active, decided.

Verse 10

Be kindly affectioned - The word used here occurs no where else in the New Testament. It properly denotes tender affection, such as what subsists between parents and children; and it means that Christians should have similar feelings toward each other, as belonging to the same family, and as

united in the same principles and interests. The Syriac renders this, "Love your brethren, and love one another;" compare 1 Peter 2:17.

With brotherly love - Or in love to the brethren. The word denotes the affection which subsists between brethren. The duty is one which is often presented in the New Testament, and which our Saviour intended should be regarded as a badge of discipleship; see the note at John 13:34-35, "By this shall all people know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another;" John 15:12, John 15:17; Ephesians 5:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 2:7-8; 1 John 3:11, 1 John 3:23; 1 John 4:20-21. The apostle Paul in this place manifests his unique manner of writing. He does not simply enjoin brotherly love, but he adds that it should be kindly affectioned. It should be with the tenderness which characterizes the most endearing natural relationship. This he expresses by a word which is made for the occasion (φιλοστοργοὶ philostorgoi), blending love with natural affection, and suffering it to be manifest in your contact with one another.

In honour - In showing or manifesting respect or honor. Not in seeking honor, or striving after respect, but in showing it to one another.

Preferring one another - The word "preferring" means going before, leading, setting an example. Thus, in showing mutual respect and honor, they were to strive to excel; not to see which could obtain most honor, but which could confer most, or manifest most respect; compare 1 Peter 1:5; Ephesians 5:21. Thus, they were to be studious to show to each other all the respect which was due in the various relations of life; children to show proper respect to parents, parents to children, servants to their masters, etc.; and all to strive by mutual kindness to promote the happiness of the Christian community. How different this from the spirit of the world; the spirit which seeks, not to confer honor, but to obtain it; which aims, not to diffuse respect, but to attract all others to give honor to us. If this single direction were to be obeyed in society, it would put an end at once to no small part of the envy, and ambition, and heartburning, and dissatisfaction of the world. It would produce contentment, harmony, love, and order in the community; and stay the progress of crime, and annihilate the evils of strife, and discord, and malice. And especially, it would give order and beauty to the church. It would humble the ambition of those who, like Diotrephes, love to have the pre-eminence 3 John 1:9, and make every man willing to occupy the place for which God has designed him, and rejoice that his brethren may be exalted to higher posts of responsibility and honor.

Verse 11

Not slothful - The word rendered "slothful" refers to those who are slow, idle, destitute of promptness of mind and activity; compare Matthew 25:16.

In business - τῇ σπουδῇ tē spoudēThis is the same word which in Romans 12:8 is rendered "diligence." It properly denotes haste, intensity, ardor of mind; and hence, also it denotes industry, labor. The direction means that we should be diligently occupied in our proper employment. It does not refer to any particular occupation, but is used in general sense to denote all the labor which we may have to do; or is a direction to be faithful and industrious in the discharge of all our appropriate duties; compare Ecclesiastes 9:10. The tendency of the Christian religion is to promote industry:

(1) It teaches the value of time.

(2) presents numerous and important things to be done.

(3) it inclines people to be conscientious in the improvement of each moment.

(4) and it takes away the mind from those pleasures and pursuits which generate and promote indolence.

The Lord Jesus was constantly employed in filling up the great duties of his life, and the effect of his religion has been to promote industry wherever it has spread both among nations and individuals. An idle man and a Christian are names which do not harmonize. Every Christian has enough to do to occupy all his time; and he whose life is spent in ease and in doing nothing, should doubt altogether his religion. God has assigned us much to accomplish; and he will hold us answerable for the faithful performance of it; compare John 5:17; John 9:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:10, 2 Thessalonians 3:12. All that would be needful to transform the idle, and vicious, and wretched, into sober and useful people, would be to give to them the spirit of the Christian religion; see the example of Paul, Acts 20:34-35.

Fervent - This word is usually applied to water, or to metals so heated as to bubble, or boil. It hence is used to denote ardor, intensity, or as we

express it, a glow, meaning intense zeal, Acts 18:25.

In Spirit - In your mind or heart. The expression is used to denote a mind filled with intense ardor in whatever it is engaged. It is supposed that Christians would first find appropriate objects for their labor, and then engage in them with intense ardor and zeal.

Serving - Regarding yourselves as the servants of the Lord. This direction is to be understood as connected with the preceding, and as growing out of it. They were to be diligent and fervid, and in doing so were to regard themselves as serving the Lord, or to do it in obedience to the command of God, and to promote his glory. The propriety of this caution may easily be seen.

(1) the tendency of worldly employments is to take off the affections from God.

(2) people are prone to forget God when deeply engaged in their worldly employments. It is proper to recall their attention to him.

(3) the right discharge of our duties in the various employments of life is to be regarded as serving God. He has arranged the order of things in this life to promote employment. He has made industry essential to happiness and success; and hence, to be industrious from proper motives is to be regarded as acceptable service of God.

(4) he has required that all such employments should be conducted with reference to his will and to his honor, 1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:17, Colossians 3:22-24; 1 Peter 4:11. The meaning of the whole verse is, that Christians should be industrious, should be ardently engaged in some lawful employment, and that they should pursue it with reference to the will of God, in obedience to his commands, and to his glory.

Verse 12

Rejoicing in hope - That is, in the hope of eternal life and glory which the gospel produces; see the notes at Romans 5:2-3.

Patient in tribulation - In affliction patiently enduring all that maybe appointed. Christians may be enabled to do this by the sustaining influence of their hope of future glory; of being admitted to that world where there

shall be no more death, and where all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes, Revelation 21:4; Revelation 7:17; compare James 1:4. See the influence of hope in sustaining us in affliction more fully considered in the notes at Romans 8:18-28.

Continuing instant in prayer - That is, be persevering in prayer; see Colossians 4:2; see the notes at Luke 18:1. The meaning of this direction is, that in order to discharge aright the duties of the Christian life, and especially to maintain a joyful hope, and to be sustained in the midst of afflictions, it is necessary to cherish a spirit of prayer, and to live near to God. How often a Christian should pray, the Scriptures do not inform us. Of David we are told that he prayed seven times a day Psalm 119:164; of Daniel, that he was accustomed to pray three times a day Daniel 6:10; of our Saviour we have repeated instances of his praying mentioned; and the same of the apostles. The following rules, perhaps, may guide us in this.

(1) every Christian should have some time allotted for this service, and some place where he may be alone with God.

(2) it is not easy, perhaps not possible, to maintain a life of piety without regular habits of secret devotion.

(3) the morning, when we have experienced God‘s protecting care, when the mind is fresh, and the thoughts are as yet clear and unoccupied with the world, when we go forth to the duties, trials, and temptations of the day; and the evening, when we have again experienced his goodness, and are about to commit ourselves to his protecting care, and when we need his pardoning mercy for the errors and follies of the day, seem to be times which commend themselves to all as appropriate seasons for private devotion.

(4) every person will also find other times when private prayer will be needful, and when he will be inclined to it. In affliction, in perplexity, in moments of despondency, in danger, and want, and disappointment, and in the loss of friends, we shall feel the propriety of drawing near to God, and of pouring out the heart before him.

(5) besides this, every Christian is probably conscious of times when he feels especially inclined to pray; he feels just like praying; he has a spirit of

supplication; and nothing but prayer will meet the instinctive desires of his bosom. We are often conscious of an earnest desire to see and converse with an absent friend, to have communion with those we love; and we value such fellowship as among the happiest moments of life. So with the Christian. He may have an earnest desire to have communion with God; his heart pants for it; and he cannot resist the propensity to seek him, and pour out his desires before him. Compare the feelings expressed by David in Psalm 42:1-2, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee O God. My soul thirsteth for God for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God;" compare Psalm 63:1. Such seasons should be improved; they are the "spring times" of our piety; and we should expand every sail, that we may be "filled with all the fullness of God." They are happy, blessed moments of our life; and then devotion is sweetest and most pure; and then the soul knows what it is to have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, 1 John 1:3.

(6) in addition to all this, Christians may be in the habit of praying to God without the formality of retirement, God locks upon the heart; and the heart may pour forth its secret desires to Him even when in business, when conversing with a friend, when walking, when alone, and when in society. Thus, the Christian may live a life of prayer; and it shall be one of the characteristics of his life that he prays! By this he shall be known; and in this he shall learn the way to possess peace in religion:

"In every joy that crowns my days,
In every pain I bear.
My heart shall find delight in praise,
Or seek relief in prayer.
"When gladness wings my favou'd hour,
Thy love my thoughts shall fill,
Resign'd when storms of sorrow lower,
My soul shall meet thy will,
"My lifted eye, without a tear.
The gathering storm shall see.
My steadfast heart shall know no fear,
That heart shall rest on thee."

Verse 13

Distributing - The word used here denotes having things in "common" κοινωνοῦντες koinōnountesIt means that they should be communicative, or should regard their property as so far common as to supply the needs of others. In the earliest times of the church, Christians had all things in common (Notes, Acts 2:44), and felt themselves bound to meet all the needs of their brethren. One of the most striking effects of Christianity was to loosen their grasp on property, and dispose them to impart liberally to those who had need. The direction here does not mean that they should literally have all things in common; that is, to go back to a state of savage barbarity; but that they should be liberal, should partake of their good things with those who were needy; compare Galatians 6:6; Romans 15:27; Philemon 4:15; 1 Timothy 6:18.

To the necessity - To the needs. That is, distribute to them such things as they need, food, raiment, etc. This command, of course, has reference to the poor. "Of saints." Of Christians, or the friends of God. They are called saints as being holy (ἅγιοι hagioi), or consecrated to God. This duty of rendering aid to Christians especially, does not interfere with the general love of mankind. The law of the New Testament is Galatians 6:10, "As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith." The Christian is indeed to love all mankind, and to do them good as far as may be in his power, Matthew 5:43-44; Titus 3:8; 1 Timothy 6:18; Hebrews 13:16. But he is to show particular interest in the welfare of his brethren, and to see that the poor members of the church are provided for; for,

(1) They are our brethren; they are of the same family; they are attached to the same Lord; and to do good to them is to evince love to Christ, Matthew 25:40; Mark 9:41.

(2) they are left especially to the care of the church; and if the church neglects them, we may be sure the world will also, Matthew 26:11. Christians, especially in the time of the apostles, had reason to expect little compassion from the people of the world. They were persecuted and oppressed; they would be embarrassed in their business, perhaps thrown out of occupation by the opposition of their enemies; and it was therefore especially incumbent on their Brethren to aid them. To a certain extent it is always true, that the world is reluctant to aid the friends of God; and hence

the poor followers of Christ are in a special manner thrown on the benefactions of the church.

(3) it is not improbable that there might be a special reason at that time for enjoining this on the attention of the Romans. It was a time of persecution, and perhaps of extensive distress. In the days of Claudius (about a.d. 50), there was a famine in Judea which produced great distress, and many of the poor and oppressed might flee to the capital for aid. We know, from other parts of the New Testament, that at that time the apostle was deeply interested in procuring aid for the poor brethren in Judea, Romans 15:25-26; compare Acts 19:21; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7; 2 Corinthians 9:2-4. But the same reasons for aiding the poor followers of Christ will exist substantially in every age; and one of the most precious privileges conferred upon people is to be permitted to assist those who are the friends of God, Psalm 41:1-3; Proverbs 14:21.

Given to hospitality - This expression means that they should readily and cheerfully entertain strangers. This is a duty which is frequently enjoined in the Scriptures, Hebrews 13:2, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby many have entertained angels unawares;" 1 Peter 4:9, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging." Paul makes this especially the duty of a Christian bishop; 1 Timothy 3:2, "A bishop then must … be given to hospitality;" Titus 1:8. Hospitality is especially enjoined by the Saviour, and its exercise commanded; Matthew 10:40, Matthew 10:42, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, etc." The waver of hospitality is one of the charges which the Judge of mankind will allege against the wicked, and on which he will condemn them; Matthew 25:43, "I was a stranger, and ye took me not in." It is especially commended to us by the example of Abraham Genesis 18:1-8, and of Lot Genesis 19:1-2, who thus received angels unawares.

It was one of the virtues on which Job particularly commended himself, and which he had not failed to practice; Job 31:16-17, "If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof, etc." In the time of our Saviour it was evidently practiced in the most open and frank manner; Luke 10:7, "And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give." A remarkable instance is also mentioned in Luke 11:5. This virtue is no less common in eastern nations at

present than it was in the time of Christ. It is eminently the virtue of oriental nations, of their ardent and open temperament. It springs up naturally in countries thinly settled, where the sight of a stranger would be therefore especially pleasant; in countries too, where the occupation was chiefly to attend flocks, and where there was much leisure for conversation; and where the population was too sparse, and the travelers too infrequent, to justify inn-keeping as a business.

From all these causes, it has happened that there are, properly speaking, no inns or taverns in the regions around Palestine. It was customary, indeed, to erect places for lodging and shelter at suitable distances, or by the side of springs or watering places, for travelers to lodge in. But they are built at the public expense, and are unfurnished. Each traveler carries his own bed and clothes and cooking utensils, and such places are merely designed as a shelter for caravans; (see Robinson‘s Calmet, art. Caravanserai.) It is still so; and hence, it becomes, in their view, a virtue of high order to entertain, at their own tables, and in their families, such strangers as may be traveling. Niebuhr says, that “the hospitality of the Arabs has always been the subject of praise; and I believe that those of the present day exercise this virtue no less than the ancients did. There are, in the villages of Tehama, houses which are public, where travelers may lodge and be entertained some days gratis, if they will be content with the fare; and they are much frequented. When the Arabs are at table, they invite those who happen to come to eat with them, whether they be Christians or Muslims, gentle or simple.” - “The primitive Christians,” says Calmet, “considered one principal part of their duty to consist in showing hospitality to strangers. They were in fact so ready in discharging this duty, that the very pagan admired them for it. They were hospitable to all strangers, but especially to those who were of the household of faith. Believers scarcely ever traveled without letters of communion, which testified the purity of their faith, and procured for them a favorable reception wherever the name of Jesus Christ was known;” (Calmet, Dict.) Calmer is also of opinion that the two minor epistles of John may be such letters of recommendation and communion; compare 2 John 1:10.

It may be added that it would be particularly expected of Christians that they should show hospitality to the ministers of religion. They were

commonly poor; they received no fixed salary; they traveled from place to place; and they would be dependent for support on the kindness of those who loved the Lord Jesus Christ. This was particularly intended by our Saviour‘s instructions on the subject, Matthew 10:11-13, Matthew 10:40-42. The duty of hospitality is still binding upon Christians and all people. The law of Christ is not repealed. The customs of society are indeed changed; and one evidence of advancement in commerce and in security, is furnished in the fact that inns are now provided and patronized for the traveler in all Christian lands. Still this does not lessen the obligations to show hospitality. It is demanded by the very genius of the Christian religion; it evinces proper love toward mankind; it shows that there is a feeling of brotherhood and kindness toward others, when such hospitality is shown. It unites society, creates new bonds of interest and affection, to show kindness to the stranger and to the poor. To what extent this is to be done, is one of those questions which are to be left to every man‘s conscience and views of duty. No rule can be given on the subject. Many men have not the means to be extensively hospitable; and many are not placed in situations that require it. No rules could be given that should be applicable to all cases; and hence, the Bible has left the general direction, has furnished examples where it was exercised, has recommended it to mankind, and then has left every man to act on the rule, as he will answer it to God; see Matthew 25:34-46.

Verse 14

Bless them … - see the note at Matthew 5:44; compare Luke 6:28.

Bless, and curse not - Bless only; or continue to bless, however long or aggravated may be the injury. Do not be provoked to anger, or to cursing, by any injury, persecution, or reviling. This is one of the most severe and difficult duties of the Christian religion; and it is a duty which nothing else but religion will enable people to perform. To curse denotes properly to devote to destruction. Where there is power to do it, it implies the destruction of the object. Thus, the fig-tree that was cursed by the Saviour soon withered away: Mark 11:21. Thus, those whom God curses will be certainly destroyed; Matthew 25:41. Where there is not power to do it, to curse implies the invoking of the aid of God to devote to destruction. Hence, it means to imprecate; to implore a curse from God to rest on others; to pray that God would destroy them. In a larger sense still, it means to

abuse by reproachful words; to calumniate; or to express oneself in a violent, profane, and outrageous manner. In this passage it seems to have special reference to this.

Verse 15

Rejoice with them … - This command grows out of the doctrine stated in Romans 12:4-5, that the church is one; that it has one interest; and therefore that there should be common sympathy in its joys and sorrows. Or, enter into the welfare of your fellow-Christians, and show your attachment to them by rejoicing that they are made happy; compare 1 Corinthians 12:26, "And whether … . one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." In this way happiness diffuses and multiplies itself. It becomes expanded over the face of the whole society; and the union of the Christian body tends to enlarge the sphere of happiness and to prolong the joy conferred by religion. God has bound the family of man together by these sympathies, and it is one of the happiest of all devices to perpetuate and extend human enjoyments.

Weep … - See the note at John 11:35. At the grave of Lazarus our Saviour evinced this in a most tender and affecting manner. The design of this direction is to produce mutual kindness and affection, and to divide our sorrows by the sympathies of friends. Nothing is so well suited to do this as the sympathy of those we love. All who are afflicted know how much it diminishes their sorrow to see others sympathizing with them, and especially those who evince in their sympathies the Christian spirit. How sad would be a suffering world if there were none who regarded our griefs with interest or with tears! if every sufferer were left to bear his sorrows unpitied and alone! and if all the ties of human sympathy were rudely cut at once, and people were left to suffer in solitude and unbefriended! It may be added that it is the special duty of Christians to sympathize in each other's griefs:

(1)Because their Saviour set them the example;

(2)Because they belong to the same family;

(3)Because they are subject to similar trials and afflictions; and,

(4)Because they cannot expect the sympathy of a cold and unfeeling world.

Verse 16

Be of the same mind … - This passage has been variously interpreted. "Enter into each other's circumstances, in order to see how you would yourself feel." Chrysostom. "Be agreed in your opinions and views." Stuart. "Be united or agreed with each other." Flatt; compare Philemon 2:2; 2 Corinthians 13:11. A literal translation of the Greek will give somewhat a different sense, but one evidently correct. "Think of, that is, regard, or seek after the same thing for each other; that is, what you regard or seek for yourself, seek also for your brethren. Do not have divided interests; do not be pursuing different ends and aims; do not indulge counter plans and purposes; and do not seek honors, offices, for yourself which you do not seek for your brethren, so that you may still regard yourselves as brethren on a level, and aim at the same object." The Syriac has well rendered the passage: "And what you think concerning yourselves, the same also think concerning your brethren; neither think with an elevated or ambitious mind, but accommodate yourselves to those who are of humbler condition;" compare 1 Peter 3:8.

Mind not high things - Greek, Not thinking of high things. That is, not seeking them, or aspiring after them. The connection shows that the apostle had in view those things which pertained to worldly offices and honors; wealth, and state, and grandeur. They were not to seek them for themselves; nor were they to court the society or the honors of the people in an elevated rank in life. Christians were commonly of the poorer ranks, and they were to seek their companions and joys there, and not to aspire to the society of the great and the rich; compare Jeremiah 45:5, "And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not;" Luke 12:15.

Condescend - συναπαγομενοι sunapagomenoiLiterally, "being led away by, or being conducted by." It does not properly mean to condescend, but denotes a yielding, or being guided and led in the thoughts, feelings, plans, by humble objects. Margin, "Be contented with mean things."

To men of low estate - In the Greek text, the word here is an adjective ταπεινοις tapeinoisand may refer either to "people" or to "things," either in the masculine or neuter gender. The sentiment is not materially changed whichever interpretation is adopted. It means that Christians should seek the objects of interest and companionship, not among the great, the rich, and the noble, but among the humble and the obscure. They should do it because their Master did it before them; because his friends are most

commonly found among those in humble life; because Christianity prompts to benevolence rather than to a fondness for pride and display; and because of the influence on the mind produced by an attempt to imitate the great, to seek the society of the rich, and to mingle with the scenes of gaiety, folly, and ambition.

Be not wise … - Compare Isaiah 5:21, "Wo unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight." See the note at Romans 11:25. The meaning is, do not trust in the conceit of your own superior skill and understanding, and refuse to hearken to the counsel of others.

In your own conceits - Greek, "Among yourselves." Syriac, "In your own opinion." The direction here accords with that just given, and means that they should not be elated with pride above their brethren; or be headstrong and self-confident. The tendency of religion is to produce a low estimate of our own importance and attainments.

Verse 17

Recompense - Render, give, or return; see the note at Matthew 5:39. This is probably one of the most difficult precepts of Christianity; but the law of Christ on the subject is unyielding. It is a solemn demand made on all his followers, and it "must" be obeyed.

Provide - The word rendered "provide" means properly to "think" or "meditate beforehand." Make it a matter of "previous thought," of "settled plan," of "design." This direction would make it a matter of "principle" and fixed purpose to do what is right; and not to leave it to the fluctuations of feeling, or to the influence of excitement. The same direction is given in 2 Corinthians 8:21.

Things honest - Literally, things "beautiful," or "comely." The expression here does not refer to "property," or to "provision" made for a family, etc. The connection requires us to understand it respecting "conduct," and especially our conduct toward those who injure us. It requires us to evince a spirit, and to manifest a deportment in such cases, that shall be lovely and comely in the view of others; such as all people will approve and admire. And the apostle wisely cautions us to "provide" for this, that is, to think of it beforehand, to make it a matter of fixed principle and purpose, so that we shall not be overtaken and excited by passion. If left to the time when the offence shall be given, we may be excited and off our guard, and may therefore evince an improper temper. All persons who have ever been provoked by injury (and who has not been?) will see the

profound wisdom of this caution to "discipline" and "guard" the temper by previous purpose, that we may not evince an improper spirit.

In the sight of all men - Such as all must approve; such that no man can blame; and, therefore, such as shall do no discredit to religion. This expression is taken from Proverbs 3:4. The passage shows that people may be expected to approve a mild, kind, and patient temper in the reception of injuries; and facts show that this is the case. The Christian spirit is one that the world "must" approve, however little it is disposed to act on it.

Verse 18

If it be possible - If it can be done. This expression implies that it could not always be done. Still it should be an object of desire; and we should endeavor to obtain it.

As much as lieth in you - This implies two things:

(1) We are to do our utmost endeavors to preserve peace, and to appease the anger and malice of others.

(2) we are not to "begin" or to "originate" a quarrel.

So far as "we" are concerned, we are to seek peace. But then it does not always depend on us. Others may oppose and persecute us; they will hate religion, and may slander, revile, and otherwise injure us; or they may commence an assault on our persons or property. For "their" assaults we are not answerable; but we are answerable for our conduct toward them; and on no occasion are we to commence a warfare with them. It may not be "possible" to prevent their injuring and opposing us; but it is possible not to begin a contention with them; and "when they" have commenced a strife, to seek peace, and to evince a Christian spirit. This command doubtless extends to everything connected with strife; and means that we are not to "provoke" them to controversy, or to prolong it when it is commenced; see Psalm 34:14; Matthew 5:9, Matthew 5:39-41; Hebrews 12:14. If all Christians would follow this command, if they would never "provoke" to controversy, if they would injure no man by slander or by unfair dealing, if they would compel none to prosecute them in law by lack of punctuality in payment of debts or honesty in business, if they would do nothing to irritate, or to prolong a controversy when it is commenced, it would put an end to no small part of the strife that exists in the world.

Verse 19

Dearly beloved - This expression of tenderness was especially appropriate in an exhortation to peace. It reminded them of the affection and friendship which ought to subsist among them as brethren.

Avenge not yourselves - To "avenge" is to take satisfaction for an injury by inflicting punishment on the offender. To take such satisfaction for injuries done to society, is lawful and proper for a magistrate; Romans 13:4. And to take satisfaction for injuries done by sin to the universe, is the province of God. But the apostle here is addressing private individual Christians. And the command is, to avoid a spirit and purpose of revenge. But this command is not to be so understood that we may not seek for "justice" in a regular and proper way before civil tribunals. If our character is assaulted, if we are robbed and plundered, if we are oppressed contrary to the law of the land, religion does not require us to submit to such oppression and injury without seeking our rights in an orderly and regular manner. If it did, it would be to give a premium to iniquity, to countenance wickedness, and require a man, by becoming a Christian, to abandon his rights.

Besides, the magistrate is appointed for the praise of those who do well, and to punish evil-doers; 1 Peter 2:14. Further, our Lord Jesus did not surrender his rights John 18:23; and Paul demanded that he himself should be treated according to the rights and privileges of a Roman citizen; Acts 16:37. The command here "not to avenge ourselves" means, that we are not to take it out of the hands of God, or the hands of the law, and to inflict it ourselves. It is well known that where there are no laws, the business of vengeance is pursued by individuals in a barbarous and unrelenting manner. In a state of savage society, vengeance is "immediately taken," if possible, or it is pursued for years, and the offended man is never satisfied until he has imbrued his hands in the blood of the offender. Such was eminently the case among the Indians of this country (America). But Christianity seeks the ascendancy of the laws; and in cases which do not admit or require the interference of the laws, in private assaults and quarrels, it demands that we bear injury with patience, and commit our cause unto God; see Leviticus 19:18.

But rather give place unto wrath - This expression has been interpreted in a great variety of ways. Its obvious design is to induce us not to attempt to avenge ourselves, but to leave it with God. To "give place,"

then, is to leave it for God to come in and execute wrath or vengeance on the enemy. Do not execute wrath; leave it to God; commit all to him; leave yourself and your enemy in his hands, assured that he will vindicate you and punish him.

For it is written - Deuteronomy 32:35.

Vengeance is mine - That is, it belongs to me to inflict revenge. This expression implies that it is "improper" for people to interfere with that which properly belongs to God. When we are angry, and attempt to avenge ourselves, we should remember, therefore, that we are infringing on the prerogatives of the Almighty.

I will repay … - This is said in substance, though not in so many words, in Deuteronomy 32:35-36. Its design is to assure us that those who deserve to be punished, shall be; and that, therefore, the business of revenge may be safely left in the bands of God. Though "we" should not do it, yet if it ought to be done, it will be done. This assurance will sustain as, not in the "desire" that our enemy shall be punished, but in the belief that "God" will take the matter into his own hands; that he can administer it better than we can; and that if our enemy "ought" to be punished, he will be. "We," therefore, should leave it all with God. That God will vindicate his people, is clearly and abundantly proved in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Revelation 6:9-11; Deuteronomy 32:40-43.

Verse 20

Therefore, if thine enemy hunger … - This verse is taken almost literally from Proverbs 25:21-22. Hunger and thirst here are put for want in general. If thine enemy is needy in any way, do him good, and supply his needs. This is, in spirit, the same as the command of the Lord Jesus Matthew 5:44, "Do good to them that hate you," etc.

In so doing - It does not mean that we are to do this "for the sake" of heaping coals of fire on him, but that this will be the result.

Thou shalt heap … - Coals of fire are doubtless emblematical of "pain." But the idea here is not that in so doing we shall call down divine vengeance on the man; but the apostle is speaking of the natural effect or result of showing him kindness. Burning coals heaped on a man's head would be expressive of intense agony. So the apostle says that the "effect" of doing good to an enemy would be to produce pain. But the pain will result from shame, remorse of conscience, a conviction of the evil of his conduct, and an apprehension of divine displeasure that may lead to

repentance. To do this, is not only perfectly right, but it is desirable. If a man can be brought to reflection and true repentance, it should be done. In regard to this passage we may remark,

(1) That the way to promote "peace" is to do good even to enemies.

(2) the way to bring a man to repentance is to do him good. On this principle God is acting continually. He does good to all, even to the rebellious; and he designs that his goodness should lead people to repentance; Romans 2:4. People will resist wrath, anger, and power; but "goodness" they cannot resist; it finds its way to the heart; and the conscience does its work, and the sinner is overwhelmed at the remembrance of his crimes.

(3) if people would act on the principles of the gospel, the world would soon be at peace. No man would suffer himself many times to be overwhelmed in this way with coals of fire. It is not human nature, bad as it is; and if Christians would meet all unkindness with kindness, all malice with benevolence, and all wrong with right, peace would soon pervade the community, and even opposition to the gospel might soon die away.

Verse 21

Be not overcome of evil - Be not "vanquished" or "subdued" by injury received from others. Do not suffer your temper to be excited; your Christian principles to be abandoned; your mild, amiable, kind, and benevolent temper to be ruffled by any opposition or injury which you may experience. Maintain your Christian principles amidst all opposition, and thus show the power of the gospel. They are overcome by evil who suffer their temper to be excited, who become enraged and revengeful and who engage in contention with those who injure them; Proverbs 16:22.

But overcome evil with good - That is, subdue or vanquish evil by doing good to others. Show them the loveliness of a better spirit; the power of kindness and benevolence; the value of an amiable, Christian deportment. So doing, you may disarm them of their rage, and be the means of bringing them to better minds.

This is the noble and grand sentiment of the Christian religion. Nothing like this is to be found in the pagan classics; and nothing like it ever existed among pagan nations. Christianity alone has brought forth this lovely and

mighty principle; and one design of it is to advance the welfare of man by promoting peace, harmony, and love. The idea of "overcoming evil with good" never occurred to people until the gospel was preached. It never has been acted on except under the influences of the gospel. On this principle God shows kindness; on this principle the Saviour came, and bled, and died; and on this principle all Christians should act in treating their enemies, and in bringing a world to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. If Christians will show benevolence, if they will send forth proofs of love to the ends of the earth, the evils of the world will be overcome. Nor can the nations be converted until Christians act on this great and most important principle of their religion, "on the largest scale possible," to "overcome evil with good."

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Verse 1

Let every soul - Every person. In the seven first verses of this chapter, the apostle discusses the subject of the duty which Christians owe to civil government; a subject which is extremely important, and at the same time exceedingly difficult. There is no doubt that he had express reference to the special situation of the Christians at Rome; but the subject was of so much importance that he gives it a "general" bearing, and states the great principles on which all Christians are to act. The circumstances which made this discussion proper and important were the following:

(1) The Christian religion was designed to extend throughout the world. Yet it contemplated the rearing of a kingdom amid other kingdoms, an empire amid other empires. Christians professed supreme allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ; he was their Lawgiver, their Sovereign, their Judge. It became, therefore, a question of great importance and difficulty, "what kind" of allegiance they were to render to earthly magistrates.

(2) the kingdoms of the world were then "pagan" kingdoms. The laws were made by pagans, and were adapted to the prevalence of paganism. Those kingdoms had been generally founded in conquest, and blood, and oppression. Many of the monarchs were blood-stained warriors; were unprincipled men; and were polluted in their private, and oppressive in their public character. Whether Christians were to acknowledge the laws of such kingdoms and of such men, was a serious question, and one which could not but occur very early. It would occur also very soon, in circumstances that would be very affecting and trying. Soon the hands of these magistrates were to be raised against Christians in the fiery scenes of persecution; and the duty and extent of submission to them became a matter of very serious inquiry.

(3) many of the early Christians were composed of Jewish converts. Yet the Jews had long been under Roman oppression, and had borne the foreign yoke with great uneasiness. The whole pagan magistracy they regarded as founded in a system of idolatry; as opposed to God and his kingdom; and as abomination in his sight. With these feelings they had become Christians; and it was natural that their former sentiments should exert an influence on

them after their conversion. How far they should submit, if at all, to heathen magistrates, was a question of deep interest; and there was danger that the "Jewish" converts might prove to be disorderly and rebellious citizens of the empire.

(4) nor was the case much different with the "Gentile" converts. They would naturally look with abhorrence on the system of idolatry which they had just forsaken. They would regard all as opposed to God. They would denounce the "religion" of the pagans as abomination; and as that religion was interwoven with the civil institutions, there was danger also that they might denounce the government altogether, and be regarded as opposed to the laws of the land,

(5) there "were" cases where it was right to "resist" the laws. This the Christian religion clearly taught; and in cases like these, it was indispensable for Christians to take a stand. When the laws interfered with the rights of conscience; when they commanded the worship of idols, or any moral wrong, then it was their duty to refuse submission. Yet in what cases this was to be done, where the line was to be drawn, was a question of deep importance, and one which was not easily settled. It is quite probable, however, that the main danger was, that the early Christians would err in "refusing" submission, even when it was proper, rather than in undue conformity to idolatrous rites and ceremonies.

(6) in the "changes" which were to occur in human governments, it would be an inquiry of deep interest, what part Christians should take, and what submission they should yield to the various laws which might spring up among the nations. The "principles" on which Christians should act are settled in this chapter.

Be subject - Submit. The word denotes that kind of submission which soldiers render to their officers. It implies "subordination;" a willingness to occupy our proper place, to yield to the authority of those over us. The word used here does not designate the "extent" of the submission, but merely enjoins it in general. The general principle will be seen to be, that we are to obey in all things which are not contrary to the Law of God.

The higher powers - The magistracy; the supreme government. It undoubtedly here refers to the Roman magistracy, and has relation not so

much to the rulers as to the supreme "authority" which was established as the constitution of government; compare Matthew 10:1; Matthew 28:18.

For - The apostle gives a "reason" why Christians should be subject; and that reason is, that magistrates have received their appointment from God. As Christians, therefore, are to be subject to God, so they are to honor "God" by honoring the arrangement which he has instituted for the government of mankind. Doubtless, he here intends also to repress the vain curiosity and agitation with which men are prone to inquire into the "titles" of their rulers; to guard them from the agitation and conflicts of party, and of contentions to establish a favorite on the throne. It might be that those in power had not a proper title to their office; that they had secured it, not according to justice, but by oppression; but into that question Christians were not to enter. The government was established, and they were not to seek to overturn it.

No power - No office; no magistracy; no civil rule.

But of God - By God's permission, or appointment; by the arrangements of his providence, by which those in office had obtained their power. God often claims and asserts that "He" sets up one, and puts down another; Psalm 75:7; Daniel 2:21; Daniel 4:17, Daniel 4:25, Daniel 4:34-35.

The powers that be - That is, all the civil magistracies that exist; those who have the "rule" over nations, by whatever means they may have obtained it. This is equally true at all times, that the powers that exist, exist by the permission and providence of God.

Are ordained of God - This word "ordained" denotes the "ordering" or "arrangement" which subsists in a "military" company, or army. God sets them "in order," assigns them their location, changes and directs them as he pleases. This does not mean that he "originates" or causes the evil dispositions of rulers, but that he "directs" and "controls" their appointment. By this, we are not to infer:

(1)That he approves their conduct; nor,

(2)That what they do is always right; nor,

(3)That it is our duty "always" to submit to them.

Their requirements "may be" opposed to the Law of God, and then we are to obey God rather than man; Acts 4:19; Acts 5:29. But it is meant that the power is intrusted to them by God; and that he has the authority to remove them when he pleases. If they abuse their power, however, they do

it at their peril; and "when" so abused, the obligation to obey them ceases. That this is the case, is apparent further from the nature of the "question" which would be likely to arise among the early Christians. It "could not be" and "never was" a question, whether they should obey a magistrate when he commanded a thing that was plainly contrary to the Law of God. But the question was, whether they should obey a pagan magistrate at "all." This question the apostle answers in the affirmative, because "God" had made government necessary, and because it was arranged and ordered by his providence. Probably also the apostle had another object in view. At the time in which he wrote this Epistle, the Roman Empire was agitated with civil dissensions. One emperor followed another in rapid succession. The throne was often seized, not by right, but by crime. Different claimants would rise, and their claims would excite controversy. The object of the apostle was to prevent Christians from entering into those disputes, and from taking an active part in a political controversy. Besides, the throne had been "usurped" by the reigning emperors, and there was a prevalent disposition to rebel against a tyrannical government. Claudius had been put to death by poison; Caligula in a violent manner; Nero was a tyrant; and amidst these agitations, and crimes, and revolutions, the apostle wished to guard Christians from taking an active part in political affairs.

Verse 2

Whosoever therefore resisteth … - That is, they who rise up against "government itself;" who seek anarchy and confusion; and who oppose the regular execution of the laws. It is implied, however, that those laws shall not be such as to violate the rights of conscience, or oppose the laws of God.

Resisteth the ordinance of God - What God has ordained, or appointed. This means clearly that we are to regard "government" as instituted by God, and as agreeable to his will. "When" established, we are not to be agitated about the "titles" of the rulers; not to enter into angry contentions, or to refuse to submit to them, because we are apprehensive of a defect in their "title," or because they may have obtained it by oppression. If the government is established, and if its decisions are not a manifest violation of the laws of God, we are to submit to them.

Shall receive to themselves damnation - The word "damnation" we apply now exclusively to the punishment of hell; to future torments. But this is not necessarily the meaning of the word which is used here κρίμα

krimaIt often simply denotes "punishment;" Romans 3:8; 1 Corinthians 11:29; Galatians 5:10. In this place the word implies "guilt" or "criminality" in resisting the ordinance of God, and affirms that the man that does it shall be punished. Whether the apostle means that he shall be punished by "God," or by the "magistrate," is not quite clear. Probably the "latter," however, is intended; compare Romans 13:4. It is also true that such resistance shall be attended with the displeasure of God, and be punished by him.

Verse 3

For rulers - The apostle here speaks of rulers "in general." It may not be "universally" true that they are not a terror to good works, for many of them have "persecuted" the good; but it is generally true that they who are virtuous have nothing to fear from the laws. It is "universally" true that the design of their appointment by God was, not to injure and oppress the good, but to detect and punish the evil. Magistrates, "as such," are not a terror to good works.

Are not a terror … - Are not appointed to "punish the good." Their appointment is not to inspire terror in those who are virtuous and peaceable citizens; compare 1 Timothy 1:9.

But to the evil - Appointed to detect and punish evildoers; and therefore an object of terror to them. The design of the apostle here is evidently to reconcile Christians to submission to the government, from its "utility." It is appointed to protect the good against the evil; to restrain oppression, injustice, and fraud; to bring offenders to justice, and thus promote the peace and harmony of the community. As it is designed to promote order and happiness, it should be submitted to; and so long as "this" object is pursued, and obtained, government should receive the countenance and support of Christians. But if it departs from this principle, and becomes the protector of the evil and the oppressor of the good, the case is reversed, and the obligation to its support must cease.

Wilt thou not … - If you do evil by resisting the laws, and in any other manner, will you not fear the power of the government? Fear is "one" of the means by which men are restrained from crime in a community. On many minds it operates with much more power than any other motive. And it is one which a magistrate must make use of to restrain men from evil.

Do that which is good - Be a virtuous and peaceable citizen; abstain from crime, and yield obedience to all the just laws of the land,

And thou shalt have praise of the same - Compare 1 Peter 2:14-15. You shall be unmolested and uninjured, and shall receive the commendation of being peaceable and upright citizens. The prospect of that protection, and even of that reputation, is not an unworthy motive to yield obedience to the laws. Every Christian should desire the reputation of being a man seeking the welfare of his country, and the just execution of the laws.

Verse 4

The minister of God - The "servant" of God he is appointed by God to do his will, and to execute his purposes. "To thee." For your benefit.

For good - That is, to protect you in your rights; to vindicate your name, person, or property; and to guard your liberty, and secure to you the results of your industry. The magistrate is not appointed directly to "reward" people, but they "practically" furnish a reward by protecting and defending them, and securing to them the interests of justice.

If thou do that … - That is, if any citizen should do evil.

Be afraid - Fear the just vengeance of the laws.

For he beareth not the sword in vain - The "sword" is an instrument of punishment, as well as an emblem of war. Princes were accustomed to wear a sword as an emblem of their authority; and the "sword" was often used for the purpose of "beheading," or otherwise punishing the guilty. The meaning of the apostle is, that he does not wear this badge of authority as an unmeaningful show, but that it will be used to execute the laws. As this is the design of the power intrusted to him, and as he will "exercise" his authority, people should be influenced "by fear" to keep the law, even if there were no better motive.

A revenger … - In Romans 12:19, vengeance is said to belong to God. Yet he "executes" his vengeance by means of subordinate agents. It belongs to him to take vengeance by direct judgments, by the plague, famine, sickness, or earthquakes; by the appointment of magistrates; or by letting loose the passions of people to prey upon each other. When a magistrate inflicts punishment on the guilty, it is to be regarded as the act of God taking vengeance "by him;" and on this principle only is it right for a judge to condemn a man to death. It is not because one man has by nature any right over the life of another, or because "society" has any right collectively which it has not as individuals; but because "God" gave life, and because he has chosen to take it away when crime is committed by the appointment of magistrates, and not by coming forth himself visibly to execute the laws.

Where "human" laws fail, however, he often takes vengeance into his own hands, and by the plague, or some signal judgments, sweeps the guilty into eternity.

To execute wrath - For an explanation of the word "wrath," see the notes at Romans 1:18. It denotes here "punishment," or the just execution of the laws. It may be remarked that this verse is an "incidental" proof of the propriety of "capital punishment." The sword was undoubtedly an instrument for this purpose, and the apostle mentions its use without any remark of "disapprobation." He enjoins subjection to those who "wear the sword," that is, to those who execute the laws "by that;" and evidently intends to speak of the magistrate "with the sword," or in inflicting capital punishment, as having received the appointment of God. The tendency of society now is "not" to too sanguinary laws. It is rather to forget that God has doomed the murderer to death; and though humanity should be consulted in the execution of the laws, yet there is no humanity in suffering the murderer to live to infest society, and endanger many lives, in the place of his own, which was forfeited to justice. Far better that one murderer should die, than that he should be suffered to live, to imbrue his hands perhaps in the blood of many who are innocent. But the authority of God has settled this question Genesis 9:5-6, and it is neither right nor safe for a community to disregard his solemn decisions; see "Blackstone's Commentaries," vol. iv. p. 8, (9.)

Verse 5

Wherefore - διό dioThe "reasons" why we should be subject, which the apostle had given, were two,

(1)That government was appointed by God.

(2)that violation of the laws would necessarily expose to punishment.

Ye must needs be - It is "necessary" ἀναγκή anagkēto be. This is a word stronger than what implies mere "fitness" or propriety. It means that it is a matter of high obligation and of "necessity" to be subject to the civil ruler.

Not only for wrath - Not only on account of the "fear of punishment;" or the fact that wrath will be executed on evil doers.

For conscience' sake - As a matter of conscience, or of "duty to God," because "he" has appointed it, and made it necessary and proper. A good citizen yields obedience because it is the will of God; and a Christian makes it a part of his religion to maintain and obey the just laws of the land; see

Matthew 22:21; compare Ecclesiastes 8:2, "I counsel them to keep the king's commandments, and "that in regard of the oath of God."

Verse 6

For this cause - Because they are appointed by God; for the sake of conscience, and in order to secure the execution of the laws. As they are appointed by God, the tribute which is needful for their support becomes an act of homage to God, an act performed in obedience to his will, and acceptable to him.

Tribute also - Not only be subject Romans 13:5, but pay what may be necessary to support the government. "Tribute" properly denotes the "tax," or annual compensation, which was paid by one province or nation to a superior, as the price of protection, or as an acknowledgment of subjection. The Romans made all conquered provinces pay this "tribute;" and it would become a question whether it was "right" to acknowledge this claim, and submit to it. Especially would this question be agitated by the Jews and by Jewish Christians. But on the principle which the apostle had laid down Romans 13:1-2, it was right to do it, and was demanded by the very purposes of government. In a larger sense, the word "tribute" means any tax paid on land or personal estate for the support of the government.

For they are God's ministers - His servants; or they are appointed by him. As the government is "his" appointment, we should contribute to its support as a matter of conscience, because we thus do honor to the arrangement of God. It may be observed here, also, that the fact that civil rulers are the ministers of God, invests their character with great sacredness, and should impress upon "them" the duty of seeking to do his will, as well as on others the duty of submitting to them.

Attending continually - As they attend to this, and devote their time and talents to it, it is proper that they should receive a suitable support. It becomes then a duty for the people to contribute cheerfully to the necessary expenses of the government. If those taxes should be unjust and oppressive, yet, like other evils, they are to be submitted to, until a remedy can be found in a proper way.

Verse 7

Render therefore … - This injunction is often repeated in the Bible; see the notes at Matthew 22:21; see also Matthew 17:25-27; 1 Peter 2:13-17; Proverbs 24:21. It is one of the most lovely and obvious of the duties of religion. Christianity is not designed to break in upon the proper order of

society, but rather to establish and confirm that order. It does not rudely assail existing institutions: but it comes to put them on a proper footing, to diffuse a mild and pure influence over all, and to secure "such" an influence in all the relations of life as shall tend best to promote the happiness of man and the welfare of the community.

Is due - To whom it properly belongs by the law of the land, and according to the ordinance of God. It is represented here as a matter of "debt," as something which is "due" to the ruler; a fair "compensation" to him for the service which he renders us by devoting his time and talents to advance "our" interests, and the welfare of the community. As taxes are a "debt," a matter of strict and just obligation, they should be paid as conscientiously and as cheerfully as any other just debts, however contracted.

Custom - τέλος telosThe word rendered "tribute" means, as has been remarked, the tax which is paid by a tributary prince or dependent people; also the tax imposed on land or real estate. The word here translated "custom" means properly the revenue which is collected on "merchandise," either imported or exported.

Fear - See Romans 13:4. We should stand in awe of those who wear the sword, and who are appointed to execute the laws of the land. Since the execution of their office is suited to excite "fear," we should render to them that reverence which is appropriate to the execution of their function. It means a solicitous anxiety lest we do anything to offend them.

Honour - The difference between this and "fear" is, that this rather denotes "reverence, veneration, respect" for their names, offices, rank, etc. The former is the "fear" which arises from the dread of punishment. Religion gives to people all their just titles, recognizes their rank and function, and seeks to promote due subordination in a community. It was no part of the work of our Saviour, or of his apostles, to quarrel with the mere "titles" of people, or to withhold from them the customary tribute of respect and homage; compare Acts 24:3; Acts 26:25; Luke 1:3; 1 Peter 2:17. In this verse there is summed up the duty which is owed to magistrates. It consists in rendering to them proper honor contributing cheerfully and conscientiously to the necessary expenses of the government; and in yielding obedience to the laws. These are made a part of the duty which we owe to God, and should be considered as enjoined by our religion.

On the subject discussed in these seven verses, the following "principles" seem to be settled by the authority of the Bible, and are now understood,

(1)That government is essential; and its necessity is recognised by God, and it is arranged by his providence. God has never been the patron of anarchy and disorder.

(2)Civil rulers are dependent on God. He has the entire control over them, and can set them up or put them down when he pleases.

(3)the authority of God is superior to that of civil rulers. They have no right to make enactments which interfere with "his" authority.

(4)it is not the business of civil rulers to regulate or control religion. That is a distinct department, with which they have no concern, except to protect it.

(5)the rights of all people are to be preserved. People are to be allowed to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience, and to be protected in those rights, provided they do not violate the peace and order of the community.

(6)Civil rulers have no right to persecute Christians, or to attempt to secure conformity to their views by force. The conscience cannot be compelled; and in the affairs of religion man must be free.

In view of this subject we may remark,

(1) That the doctrines respecting the rights of civil rulers, and the line which is to be drawn between their powers and the rights of conscience, have been slow to be understood. The struggle has been long; and a thousand persecutions have shown the anxiety of the magistrate to rule the conscience, and to control religion. In pagan countries it has been conceded that the civil ruler had a right to control the "religion" of the people: church and state there have been one. The same thing was attempted under Christianity. The magistrate still claimed this right, and attempted to enforce it. Christianity resisted the claim, and asserted the independent and original rights of conscience. A conflict ensued, of course, and the magistrate resorted to persecutions, to "subdue" by force the claims of the new religion and the rights of conscience. Hence, the ten fiery and bloody persecutions

of the primitive church. The blood of the early Christians flowed like water; thousands and tens of thousands went to the stake, until Christianity triumphed, and the right of religion to a free exercise was acknowledged throughout the empire.

(2) it is matter of devout thanksgiving that the subject is now settled, and the principle is now understood. In our own land (America) there exists the happy and bright illustration of the true principle on this great subject. The rights of conscience are regarded, and the laws peacefully obeyed. The civil ruler understands his province; and Christians yield a cheerful and cordial obedience to the laws. The church and state move on in their own spheres, united only in the purpose to make men happy and good; and divided only as they relate to different departments, and contemplate, the one, the rights of civil society, the other, the interests of eternity. Here, every man worships God according to his own views of duty; and at the same time, here is rendered the most cordial and peaceful obedience to the laws of the land. Thanks should be rendered without ceasing to the God of our fathers for the wondrous train of events by which this contest has been conducted to its issue; and for the clear and full understanding which we now have of the different departments pertaining to the church and the state.

Verse 8

Owe no man anything - Be not "in debt" to anyone. In the previous verse the apostle had been discoursing of the duty which we owe to magistrates. He had particularly enjoined on Christians to pay to "them" their just dues. From this command to discharge fully this obligation, the transition was natural to the subject of debts "in general," and to an injunction not to be indebted to "any one." This law is enjoined in this place:

(1)Because it is a part of our duty as good citizens; and,

(2)Because it is a part of that law which teaches us to love our neighbor, and to "do no injury to him," Romans 13:10.

The interpretation of this command is to be taken with this limitation, that we are not to be indebted to him so as to "injure" him, or to work "ill" to him.

This rule, together with the other rules of Christianity, would propose a remedy for all the evils of bad debts in the following manner.

(1) it would teach people to be "industrious," and this would commonly prevent the "necessity" of contracting debts.

(2) it would make them "frugal, economical," and "humble" in their views and manner of life.

(3) it would teach them to bring up their families in habits of industry. The Bible often enjoins that; see the note at Romans 12:11; compare Philemon 4:8; Proverbs 24:30-34; 1 Thessalonians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; Ephesians 4:25.

(4) Religion would produce sober, chastened views of the end of life, of the great design of living; and would take off the affections from the splendor, gaiety, and extravagances which lead often to the contraction of debts; 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:8; 1 Peter 1:13; 1 Peter 4:7; Titus 2:12; 1 Peter 3:3, 1 Peter 3:5; 1 Timothy 2:9.

(5) Religion would put a period to the "vices" and unlawful desires which now prompt people to contract debts.

(6) it would make them "honest" in paying them. It would make them conscientious, prompt, friends of truth, and disposed to keep their promises.

But to love one another - Love is a debt which "can" never be discharged. We should feel that we "owe" this to all people, and though by acts of kindness we may be constantly discharging it, yet we should feel that it can "never" be fully met while there is opportunity to do good.

For he that loveth … - In what way this is done is stated in Romans 13:10. The law in relation to our neighbor is there said to be simply that we do no "ill" to him. Love to him would prompt to no injury. It would seek to do him good, and would thus fulfil all the purposes of justice and truth which we owe to him. In order to illustrate this, the apostle, in the next verse, runs over the laws of the Ten Commandments in relation to our neighbor, and shows that all those laws proceed on the principle that we are to "love" him, and that love would prompt to them all.

Verse 9

For this - "This" which follows is the sum of the laws. "This" is to regulate us in our conduct toward our neighbor. The word "this" here stands opposed to "that" in Romans 13:11. This law of love would prompt us to seek our neighbor's good; "that" fact, that our salvation is near, would prompt us to be active and faithful in the discharge of all the duties we owe to him.

Thou shalt not commit adultery - All the commands which follow are designed as an illustration of the duty of loving our neighbor; see these commands considered in the notes at Matthew 19:18-19. The apostle has not enumerated "all" the commands of the second table. He has shown generally what they required. The command to honor our parents he has omitted. The reason might have been that it was not so immediately to his purpose when discoursing of love to a "neighbor" - a word which does not immediately suggest the idea of near relatives. The expression, "Thou shalt not bear false witness," is rejected by the best critics as of doubtful authority, but it does not materially affect the spirit of the passage. It is missing in many manuscripts and in the Syriac version.

If there be any other commandment - The law respecting parents; or if there be any duty which does not seem to be "specified" by these laws, it is implied in the command to love our neighbor as ourselves.

It is briefly comprehended - Greek, It may be reduced to "this head;" or it is summed up in this.

In this saying - This word, or command,

Thou shalt love … - This is found in Leviticus 19:18. See it considered in the notes at Matthew 19:19. If this command were fulfilled, it would prevent all fraud, injustice, oppression, falsehood, adultery, murder, theft, and covetousness. It is the same as our Saviour's golden rule. And if every man would do to others as he would wish them to do to him, all the design of the Law would be at once fulfilled.

Verse 10

Love worketh no ill … - Love would seek to do him good; of course it would prevent all dishonesty and crime toward others. It would prompt to justice, truth, and benevolence. If this law were engraved on every man's heart, and practiced in his life, what a change would it immediately produce in society! If all people would at once "abandon" what is suited to "work ill" to others, what an influence would it have on the business and commercial affairs of people. How many plans of fraud and dishonesty

would it at once arrest. How many schemes would it crush. It would silence the voice of the slanderer; it would stay the plans of the seducer and the adulterer; it would put an end to cheating, and fraud, and all schemes of dishonest gain. The gambler desires the property of his neighbor without any compensation; and thus works "ill" to him. The dealer in "lotteries" desires property for which he has never toiled, and which must be obtained at the expense and loss of others. And there are many "employments" all whose tendency is to work "ill" to a neighbor. This is pre-eminently true of the traffic in "ardent spirits." It cannot do him good, and the almost uniform result is to deprive him of his property, health, reputation, peace, and domestic comfort. He that sells his neighbor liquid fire, knowing what must be the result of it, is not pursuing a business which works no ill to him; and love to that neighbor would prompt him to abandon the traffic; see Habakkuk 2:15, "Wo unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drink also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness."

Therefore … - "Because" love does no harm to another, it is "therefore" the fulfilling of the Law, implying that all that the Law requires is to "love" others.

Is the fulfilling - Is the "completion," or meets the requirements of the Law. The Law of God on this "head," or in regard to our duty to our neighbor, requires us to do justice toward him, to observe truth, etc. "All" this will be met by "love;" and if people truly "loved" others, all the demands of the Law would be satisfied.

Of the law - Of the Law of Moses, but particularly the Ten Commandments.

Verse 11

And that - The word "that," in this place, is connected in signification with the word ""this" in Romans 13:9. The meaning may be thus expressed: All the requirements of the Law toward our neighbor may be met by two things: one is Romans 13:9-10 by love; the other is Romans 13:11-14 by remembering that we are near to eternity; keeping a deep sense of "this" truth before the mind. "This" will prompt to a life of honesty, truth, and peace, and contentment, Romans 13:13. The doctrine in these verses Romans 13:11-14, therefore, is, "that a deep conviction of the nearness of eternity will prompt to an upright life in the contact of man with man.

Knowing the time - Taking a proper "estimate" of the time. Taking just views of the shortness and the value of time; of the design for which it was given, and of the fact that it is, in regard to us, rapidly coming to a close. And still further considering, that the time in which you live is the time of the gospel, a period of light and truth, when you are particularly called on to lead holy lives, and thus to do justly to all. The "previous" time had been a period of ignorance and darkness, when oppression, and falsehood, and sin abounded. This, the time of the "gospel," when God had "made known" to people his will that they should be pure.

High time - Greek, "the hour."

To awake … - This is a beautiful figure. The dawn of day, the approaching light of the morning, is the time to arouse from slumber. In the darkness of night, people sleep. So says the apostle. The world has been sunk in the "night" of paganism and sin. At that time it was to be expected that they would sleep the sleep of spiritual death. But now the morning light of the gospel dawns. The Sun of righteousness has arisen. It is "time," therefore, for people to cast off the deeds of darkness, and rise to life, and purity, and action; compare Acts 17:30-31. The same idea is beautifully presented in 1 Thessalonians 5:5-8. The meaning is," Hitherto we have walked in darkness and in sin. Now we walk in the light of the gospel. We know our duty. We are sure that the God of light is around us, and is a witness of all we do. We are going soon to meet him, and it becomes us to rouse, and to do those deeds, and those only, which will bear the bright shining of the light of truth, and the scrutiny of him who is "light, and in whom is no darkness at all;" 1 John 1:5.

Sleep - Inactivity; insensibility to the doctrines and duties of religion. People, by nature, are active only in deeds of wickedness. In regard to religion they are insensible, and the slumbers of night are on their eyelids. Sleep is "the kinsman of death," and it is the emblem of the insensibility and stupidity of sinners. The deeper the ignorance and sin, the greater is this insensibility to spiritual things, and to the duties which we owe to God and man.

For now is our salvation - The word "salvation" has been here variously interpreted. Some suppose that by it the apostle refers to the personal reign of Christ on the earth. (Tholuck, and the Germans generally.) Others suppose it refers to deliverance from "persecutions." Others, to increased "light" and knowledge of the gospel, so that they could more

clearly discern their duty than when they became believers. (Rosenmuller.) It probably, however, has its usual meaning here, denoting that deliverance from sin and danger which awaits Christians in heaven; and is thus equivalent to the expression, "You are advancing nearer to heaven. You are hastening to the world of glory. Daily we are approaching the kingdom of light; and in prospect of that state, we ought to lay aside every sin, and live more and more in preparation for a world of light and glory."

Than when we believed - Than when we "began" to believe. Every day brings us nearer to a world of perfect light.

Verse 12

The night - The word "night," in the New Testament, is used to denote "night" literally (Matthew 2:14, etc.); the starry heavens Revelation 8:12; and then it denotes a state of "ignorance" and "crime," and is synonymous with the word "darkness," as such deeds are committed commonly in the night; 1 Thessalonians 5:5. In this place it seems to denote our present imperfect and obscure condition in this world as contrasted with the pure light of heaven The "night," the time of comparative obscurity and sin in which we live even under the gospel, is far gone in relation to us, and the pure splendors of heaven are at hand,

Is far spent - Literally, "is cut off." It is becoming "short;" it is hastening to a close.

The day - The full splendors and glory of redemption in heaven. Heaven is often thus represented as a place of pure and splendid day; Revelation 21:23, Revelation 21:25; Revelation 22:5. The times of the "gospel" are represented as times of "light" (Isaiah 60:1-2; Isaiah 60:19-20, etc.); but the reference here seems to be rather to the still brighter glory and splendor of heaven, as the place of pure, unclouded, and eternal day.

Is at hand - Is near; or is drawing near. This is true respecting all Christians. The day is near, or the time when they shall be admitted to heaven is not remote. This is the uniform representation of the New Testament; Hebrews 10:25; 1 Peter 4:7; James 5:8; Revelation 22:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-6; Philemon 4:5. That the apostle did not mean, however, that the end of the world was near, or that the day of judgment would come soon, is clear from his own explanations; see 1 Thessalonians 5:2-6; compare Hebrews 12:14.

Cast off - Lay aside, or put away.

The works of darkness - Dark, wicked deeds, such as are specified in the next verse. They are called "works of darkness," because darkness in the Scriptures is an emblem of crime, as well as of ignorance, and because such deeds are commonly committed in the night; 1 Thessalonians 5:7, "They that be drunken, are drunken in the night;" compare John 3:20; Ephesians 5:11-13.

Let us put on - Let us clothe ourselves with.

The armour of light - The word "armor" ὅπλα hoplaproperly means "arms," or instruments of war, including the helmet, sword, shield, etc. Ephesians 6:11-17. It is used in the New Testament to denote the "aids" which the Christian has, or the "means of defense" in his warfare, where he is represented as a soldier contending with his foes, and includes truth, righteousness, faith, hope, etc. as the instruments by which he is to gain his victories. In 2 Corinthians 6:7, it is called "the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." It is called armor of light, because it is not to accomplish any deeds of darkness or of crime; it is appropriate to one who is pure, and who is seeking a pure and noble object. Christians are represented as the "children of light;" 1 Thessalonians 5:5; Note, Luke 16:8. By the armor of light, therefore, the apostle means those graces which stand opposed to the deeds of darkness Romans 13:13; those graces of faith, hope, humility, etc. which shall be appropriate to those who are the children of the day, and which shall be their defense in their struggles with their spiritual foes. see the description in full in Ephesians 4:11-17.

Verse 13

Let us walk - To "walk" is an expression denoting "to live;" let us "live," or "conduct," etc.

Honestly - The word used here means rather in a "decent' or "becoming" manner; in a manner "appropriate" to those who are the children of light.

As in the day - As if all our actions were seen and known. People by day, or in open light, live decently; their foul and wicked deeds are done in the night. The apostle exhorts Christians to live as if all their conduct were seen, and they had nothing which they wished to conceal.

In rioting - Revelling; denoting the licentious conduct, the noisy and obstreperous mirth, the scenes of disorder and sensuality, which attend luxurious living.

Drunkenness - Rioting and drunkenness constitute the "first" class of sins from which he would keep them. It is scarcely necessary to add that these were common crimes among the pagan.

In chambering - "Lewd, immodest behavior." (Webster.) The Greek word includes illicit indulgences of all kinds, adultery, etc. The words chambering and wantonness constitute the "second" class of crimes from which the apostle exhorts Christians to abstain. That these were common crimes among the pagan, it is not necessary to say; see the Ephesians 5:12 note. It is not possible, nor would it be proper, to describe the scenes of licentious indulgence of which all pagans are guilty. Since Christians were to be a special people, therefore the apostle enjoins on them purity and holiness of life.

Not in strife - Strife and envying are the "third" class of sins from which the apostle exhorts them. The word "strife" means "contention, disputes, litigations." The exhortation is that they should live in peace.

Envying - Greek, Zeal. It denotes any intense, vehement, "fervid" passion. It is not improperly rendered here by envying. These vices are properly introduced in connection with the others. They usually accompany each other. Quarrels and contentions come out of scenes of drunkenness and debauchery. But for such scenes, there would be little contention, and the world would be comparatively at peace.

Verse 14

But put ye on - Compare Galatians 3:17. The word rendered "put ye on" is the same used in Romans 13:12, and is commonly employed in reference to "clothing" or "apparel." The phrase to "put on" a person, which seems a harsh expression in our language, was one not infrequently used by Greek writers, and means to imbibe his principles, to imitate his example, to copy his spirit, to become like him. Thus, in Dionysius Halicarnassus the expression occurs, "having put on or clothed themselves with Tarquin;" i. e., they imitated the example and morals of Tarquin. So Lucian says, "having put on Pythagoras;" having received him as a teacher and guide. So the Greek writers speak of putting on Plato, Socrates, etc. meaning to take them as instructors, to follow them as disciples. (See Schleusner.) Thus, to put on the Lord Jesus means to take him as a pattern and guide, to imitate his example, to obey his precepts, to become like him, etc. In "all" respects the Lord Jesus was unlike what had been specified in the previous verse. He was temperate, chaste, pure, peaceable, and meek; and to "put him on" was

to imitate him in these respects; Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22; Isaiah 53:9; 1 John 3:5.

And make not provision - The word "provision" here is what is used to denote "provident care," or preparation for future needs. It means that we should not make it an object to gratify our lusts, or study to do this by laying up anything beforehand with reference to this design.

For the flesh - The word "flesh" is used here evidently to denote the corrupt propensities of the body, or those which he had specified in Romans 13:13.

To fulfil the lusts thereof - With reference to its corrupt desires. The gratification of the flesh was the main object among the Romans. Living in luxury and licentiousness, they made it their great object of study to multiply and prolong the means of licentious indulgence. In respect to this, Christians were to be a separate people, and to show that they were influenced by a higher and purer desire than this grovelling propensity to minister to sensual gratification. It is right, it is a Christian duty, to labor to make provision for all the real needs of life. But the real wants are few; and with a heart disposed to be pure and temperate, the necessary wants of life are easily satisfied; and the mind may be devoted to higher and purer purposes.

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Introduction

Acts 15:1-2, etc.; Galatians 2:3-4. The "subjects" on which questions of this kind would be agitated were, circumcision, days of fasting, the distinction of meats, etc. A part of these only are discussed in this chapter. The views of the apostle in regard to "circumcision" had been stated in Romans 14:2.

(2)the distinctions and observances of the days of Jewish fastings, etc., Romans 14:5-6.

(3)the laws observed by the Jews in relation to animals as "clean" or "unclean;" Romans 14:14.

It is probable that these are mere "specimens" adduced by the apostle to settle "principles" of conduct in regard to the Gentiles, and to show to each party how they ought to act in "all" such questions.

The apostle's design here is to allay all these contentions by producing peace, kindness, charity. This he does by the following considerations, namely:

(1) That we have no right to "judge" another man in this case, for he is the servant of God; Romans 14:3-4.

(2) that whatever course is taken in these questions, it is done conscientiously, and with a desire to glorify God. In such a case there should be kindness and charity; Romans 14:6, etc.

(3) that we must stand at the judgment-seat of Christ, and give an account "there;" and that "we," therefore, should not usurp the function of judging; Romans 14:10-13.

(4) that there is really nothing unclean of itself; Romans 14:14.

(5) that religion consisted in more important matters than "such" questions; Romans 14:17-18.

(6) that we should follow after the things of peace, etc.; Romans 14:19-23.

The principles of this chapter are applicable to all "similar" cases of difference of opinion about rites and ceremonies, and unessential doctrines of religion; and we shall see that if they were honestly applied, they would settle no small part of the controversies in the religious world.

Verse 1

Him that is weak - The design here is to induce Christians to receive to their fellowship those who had scruples about the propriety of certain things, or that might have special prejudices and feelings as the result of education or former habits of belief. The apostle, therefore, begins by admitting that such an one may be "weak," that is, not fully established, or not with so clear and enlarged views about Christian liberty others might have.

In the faith - In believing. This does not refer to "saving faith" in Christ, for he might have that; but to belief in regard "to the things which the apostle specifies," or which would come into controversy. Young converts have often a special delicacy or sensitiveness about the lawfulness of many things in relation to which older Christians may be more fully established. To produce peace, there must be kindness, tenderness, and faithful teaching; not denunciation, or harshness, on one side or the other.

Receive ye - Admit to your society or fellowship: receive him kindly, not meet with a cold and harsh repulse; compare Romans 15:7.

Not to doubtful disputations - The plain meaning of this is, Do not admit him to your society for the purpose of debating the matter in an angry and harsh manner; of repelling him by denunciation; and thus, "by the natural reaction of such a course," confirming him in his doubts. Or, "do not deal with him in such a manner as shall have a tendency to increase his scruples about meats, days, etc." (Stuart.) The "leading" idea here - which all Christians should remember - is, that a harsh and angry denunciation of a man in relation to things not morally wrong, but where he may have honest scruples, will only tend to confirm him more and more in his doubts. To denounce and abuse him will be to confirm him. To receive him affectionately, to admit him to fellowship with us, to talk freely and kindly with him, to do him good, will have a far greater tendency to overcome his

scruples. In questions which now occur about modes of "dress," about "measures" and means of promoting revivals, and about rites and ceremonies, this is by far the wisest course, if we wish to overcome the scruples of a brother, and to induce him to think as we do. Greek, "Unto doubts or fluctuations of opinions or reasonings." Various senses have been given to the words, but the above probably expresses the true meaning.

Verse 2

For one believeth - This was the case with the Gentiles in general, who had none of the scruples of the Jew about the propriety of eating certain kinds of meat. Many of the converts who had been Jews might also have had the same view as the apostle Paul evidently had while the great mass of Jewish converts might have cherished these scruples.

May eat all things - That is, he will not be restrained by any scruples about the lawfulness of certain meats, etc.

Another who is weak - There is reference here, doubt less, to the Jewish convert. The apostle admits that he was "weak," that is, not fully established in the views of Christian liberty. The question with the Jew doubtless was, whether it was lawful to eat the meat which was offered in sacrifice to idols. In those sacrifices a part only of the animal was offered, and the remainder was eaten by the worshippers, or offered for sale in the market like other meat. It became an inquiry whether it was lawful to eat this meat; and the question in the mind of a Jew would arise from the express command of his Law; Exodus 34:15. This question the apostle discussed and settled in 1 Corinthians 10:20-32, which see. In that place the general principle is laid down, that it was lawful to partake of that meat as a man would of any other, "unless it was expressly pointed out to him as having been sacrificed to idols, and unless his partaking of it would be considered as countenancing the idolators in their worship;" Romans 14:28. But with this principle many Jewish converts might not have been acquainted; or what is quite as probable, they might not have been disposed to admit its propriety.

Eateth herbs - Herbs or "vegetables" only; does not partake of meat at all, for "fear" of eating that, inadvertently, which had been offered to idols. The Romans abounded in sacrifices to idols; and it would not be easy to be certain that meat which was offered in the market, or on the table of a friend, had not been offered in this manner. To avoid the possibility of partaking of it, even "ignorantly," they chose to eat no meat at all. The

scruples of the Jews on the subject might have arisen in part from the fact that sins of "ignorance" among them subjected them to certain penalties; Leviticus 4:2-3, etc.; Leviticus 5:15; Numbers 15:24, Numbers 15:27-29. Josephus says (Life, Section 3) that in his time there were certain priests of his acquaintance who "supported themselves with figs and nuts." These priests had been sent to Rome to be tried on some charge before Caesar: and it is probable that they abstained from meat because it might have been offered to idols. It is expressly declared of Daniel when in Babylon, that he lived on pulse and water, that he might not "defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank;" Daniel 1:8-16.

Verse 3

Let not him that eateth - That is, he who has no scruples about eating "meat," etc., who is not restrained by the Law of the Jews respecting the Clean and unclean, or by the fact that meat "may" have been offered to idols.

Despise him - Hold him in contempt, as being unnecessarily scrupulous, etc. The word "despise" here is happily chosen. The Gentile would be very likely to "despise" the Jew as being restrained by foolish scruples and mere distinctions in matters of no importance.

Him that eateth not - Him that is restrained by scruples of conscience, and that will eat only "vegetables;" Romans 14:2. The reference here is doubtless to the "Jew.

Judge him - To "judge" here has the force of "condemn." This word also is very happily chosen. The Jew would not be so likely to "despise" the Gentile for what he did as to "judge" or condemn him. He would deem it too serious a matter for contempt. He would regard it as a violation of the Law of God, and would be likely to assume the right of judging his brother, and pronouncing him guilty. The apostle here has happily met the whole case in all disputes about rites, and dress, and scruples in religious matters that are not essential. One party commonly "despises" the other as being needlessly and foolishly scrupulous; and the other makes it a matter of "conscience," too serious for ridicule and contempt; and a matter, to neglect which, is, in their view, deserving of condemnation. The true direction to be given in such a case is, "to the one party," not to treat the scruples of the other with derision and contempt, but with tenderness and indulgence. Let him have his way in it. If he can be "reasoned" out of it, it is well; but to attempt to "laugh" him out of it is unkind, and will tend only to confirm

him in his views. And "to the other party," it should be said they have no "right" to judge or condemn another. If I cannot see that the Bible requires a particular cut to my coat, or makes it my duty to observe a particular festival, he has no right to judge me harshly, or to suppose that I am to be rejected and condemned for it. He has a right to "his" opinion; and while I do not "despise" him, he has no right to "judge" me. This is the foundation of true charity; and if this simple rule had been followed, how much strife, and even bloodshed, would it have spared in the church. Most of the contentions among Christians have been on subjects of this nature. Agreeing substantially in the "doctrines" of the Bible, they have been split up into sects on subjects just about as important as those which the apostle discusses in this chapter.

For God hath received him - This is the same word that is translated "receive" in Romans 14:1. It means here that God hath received him kindly; or has acknowledged him as his own friend; or he is a true Christian. These scruples, on the one side or the other, are not inconsistent with true piety; and as "God" has acknowledged him as "his," notwithstanding his opinions on these subjects, so "we" also ought to recognise him as a Christian brother. Other denominations, though they may differ from us on some subjects, may give evidence that they are recognised by God as his, and where there is this evidence, we should neither despise nor judge them.

Verse 4

Who art thou … - That is, who gave you this right to sit in judgment on others; compare Luke 12:14. There is reference here particularly to the "Jew," who on account of his ancient privileges, and because he had the Law of God, would assume the prerogative of "judging" in the case, and insist on conformity to his own views; see James 4:12. This is a principle of common sense and common propriety. It is not ours to sit in judgment on the servant of another man. He has the control over him; and if "he" chooses to forbid his doing anything, or to allow him to do anything, it pertains to "his" affairs not ours. To attempt to control him, is to intermeddle improperly, and to become a "busy-body in other men's matters;" 1 Peter 4:15. Thus, Christians are the servants of God; they are answerable to him; and "we" have no right to usurp "his" place, and to act as if we were "lords over his heritage;" 1 Peter 5:3.

To his own master - The servant is responsible to his master only. So it is with the Christian in regard to God.

He standeth or falleth - He shall be approved or condemned. If his conduct is such as pleases his master, he shall be approved; if not, he will be condemned.

Yea, he shall be holden up - This is spoken of the Christian only. In relation to the servant, he might stand or fall; he might be approved or condemned. The master had no power to keep him in a way of obedience, except by the hope of reward, or the fear of punishment. But it was not so in regard to the Christian. The Jew who was disposed to "condemn" the Gentile might say, that he admitted the general principle which the apostle had stated about the servant; that it was just what he was saying, that he might "fall," and be condemned. But no, says the apostle, this does not follow, in relation to the Christian He shall not fall. God has power to make him stand; to hold him; to keep him from error, and from condemnation, and "he shall be holden up." He shall not be suffered to fall into condemnation, for it is the "purpose" of God to keep him; compare Psalm 1:5. This is one of the incidental but striking evidences that the apostle believed that all Christians should be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Is able - See John 10:29. Though a master cannot exert such an influence over a servant as to "secure" his obedience, yet "God" has this power over his people, and will preserve them in a path of obedience.

Verse 5

One man esteemeth - Greek "judgeth" κρίνει krineiThe word is here properly translated "esteemeth;" compare Acts 13:46; Acts 16:15. The word originally has the idea of "separating," and then "discerning," in the act of judging. The expression means that one would set a higher value on one day than on another, or would regard it as more sacred than others. This was the case with the "Jews" uniformly, who regarded the days of their festivals, and fasts, and Sabbaths as especially sacred, and who would retain, to no inconsiderable degree, their former views, even after they became converted to Christianity.

Another "esteemeth - That is, the "Gentile" Christian. Not having been brought up amidst the Jewish customs, and not having imbibed their opinions and prejudices, they would not regard these days as having any special sacredness. The appointment of those days had a special reference "to the Jews." They were designed to keep them as a separate people, and to prepare the nation for the "reality," of which their rites were but the shadow.

When the Messiah came, the passover, the feast of tabernacles, and the other special festivals of the Jews, of course vanished, and it is perfectly clear that the apostles never intended to inculcate their observance on the Gentile converts. See this subject discussed in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians.

Every day alike - The word "alike" is not in the original, and it may convey an idea which the apostle did not design. The passage means that he regards "every day" as consecrated to the Lord; Romans 14:6. The question has been agitated whether the apostle intends in this to include the Christian Sabbath. Does he mean to say that it is a matter of "indifference" whether this day be observed, or whether it be devoted to ordinary business or amusements? This is a very important question in regard to the Lord's day. That the apostle did not mean to say that it was a matter of indifference whether it should be kept as holy, or devoted to business or amusement, is plain from the following considerations.

(1) the discussion had reference only to the special customs of the "Jews," to the rites and practices which "they" would attempt to impose on the Gentiles, and not to any questions which might arise among Christians as "Christians." The inquiry pertained to "meats," and festival observances among the Jews, and to their scruples about partaking of the food offered to idols, etc.; and there is no more propriety in supposing that the subject of the Lord's day is introduced here than that he advances principles respecting "baptism" and "the Lord's supper."

(2) the "Lord's day" was doubtless observed by "all" Christians, whether converted from Jews or Gentiles; see 1 Corinthians 16:2; Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10; compare the notes at John 20:26. The propriety of observing "that day" does not appear to have been a matter of controversy. The only inquiry was, whether it was proper to add to that the observance of the Jewish Sabbaths, and days of festivals and fasts.

(3) it is expressly said that those who did not regard the day regarded it as not to God, or to honor God; Romans 14:6. They did it as a matter of respect to him and his institutions, to promote his glory, and to advance his kingdom. Was this ever done by those who disregard the Christian Sabbath? Is their design ever to promote his honor, and to advance in the knowledge of him, by "neglecting" his holy day? Who knows not that the Christian

Sabbath has never been neglected or profaned by any design to glorify the Lord Jesus, or to promote his kingdom? It is for purposes of business, gain, war, amusement, dissipation, visiting, crime. Let the heart be filled with a sincere desire to "honor the Lord Jesus," and the Christian Sabbath will be reverenced, and devoted to the purposes of piety. And if any man is disposed to plead "this passage" as an excuse for violating the Sabbath, and devoting it to pleasure or gain, let him quote it "just as it is," that is, let "him neglect the Sabbath from a conscientious desire to honor Jesus Christ." Unless this is his motive, the passage cannot avail him. But this motive never yet influenced a Sabbath-breaker.

Let every man … - That is, subjects of this kind are not to be pressed as matters of conscience. Every man is to examine them for himself, and act accordingly. This direction pertains to the subject under discussion, and not to any other. It does not refer to subjects that were "morally" wrong, but to ceremonial observances. If the "Jew" esteemed it wrong to eat meat, he was to abstain from it; if the Gentile esteemed it right, he was to act accordingly. The word "be fully persuaded" denotes the highest conviction, not a matter of opinion or prejudice, but a matter on which the mind is made up by examination; see Romans 4:21; 2 Timothy 4:5. This is the general principle on which Christians are called to act in relation to festival days and fasts in the church. If some Christians deem them to be for edification, and suppose that their piety will be promoted by observing the days which commemorate the birth, and death, and temptations of the Lord Jesus, they are not to be reproached or opposed in their celebration. Nor are they to attempt to impose them on others as a matter of conscience, or to reproach others because they do not observe them.

Verse 6

He that regardeth - Greek, "Thinketh of;" or pays attention to; that is, he that "observes" it as a festival, or as holy time.

The day - Any of the days under discussion; the days that the Jews kept as religious occasions.

Regardeth unto the Lord - Regards it as "holy," or as set apart to the service of God. He believes that he is "required" by God to keep it, that is, that the laws of Moses in regard to such days are binding on him.

He that regardeth not the day - Or who does not observe such distinctions of days as are demanded in the laws of Moses.

To the Lord … - That is, he does not believe that God "requires" such an observance.

He that eateth - The Gentile Christian, who freely eats all kinds of meat; Romans 14:2.

Eateth to the Lord - Because he believes that God does not forbid it; and because he desires, in doing it, to glorify God; 1 Corinthians 10:31. "To eat to the Lord," in this case, is to do it believing that such is his will. In all other cases, it is to do it feeling that we receive our food from him; rendering thanks for his goodness, and desirous of being strengthened that we may do his commands.

He giveth God thanks - This is an incidental proof that it is our duty to give God thanks at our meals for our food. It shows that it was the "practice" of the early Christians, and has the commendation of the apostle. It was, also, uniformly done by the Jews, and by the Lord Jesus; Matthew 14:19; Matthew 26:26; Mark 6:41; Mark 14:22; Luke 9:16; Luke 24:30.

To the Lord he eateth not - He abstains from eating because he believes that God requires him to do it, and with a desire to obey and honor him.

And giveth God thanks - That is, the Jew thanked God for the Law, and for the favor he had bestowed on him in giving him more light than he had the Gentiles. For this privilege they valued themselves highly, and this feeling, no doubt, the converted Jews would continue to retain; deeming themselves as specially favored in having a "special" acquaintance with the Law of God.

Verse 7

For none of us … - Whether by nature Jews or Gentiles. In the great principles of religion we are now united. Where there was evidence of a sincere desire to do the will of God there should be charitable feeling, through there was difference of opinion and judgment in many smaller matters. The meaning of the expression is, that no Christian lives to gratify his own inclinations or appetites. He makes it his great aim to do the will of God; to subordinate all his desires to his Law and gospel; and though, therefore, one should eat flesh, and should feel at liberty to devote to common employments time that another deemed sacred, yet it should not be uncharitably set down as a desire to indulge his sensual appetites, or to become rich. Another motive "may be" supposed, and where there is not positive "proof" to the contrary, "should be" supposed; see the beautiful

illustration of this in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. To live "to ourselves" is to make it the great object to become rich or honored, or to indulge in the ease, comfort, and pleasures of life. These are the aim of all people but Christians; and in nothing else do Christians more differ from the world than in this; see 1 Peter 4:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:15; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Matthew 10:38; Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Mark 10:21; Luke 9:23. On no point does it become Christians more to examine themselves than on this. To "live to ourselves" is an evidence that we are strangers to piety. And if it be the great motive of our lives to live at ease Amos 6:1 - to gratify the flesh, to gain property, or to be distinguished in places of fashion and amusement - it is evidence that we know nothing of the power of that gospel which teaches us "to deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily.

No man - No "one," the same Greek word οὐδείς oudeiswhich is used in the former part of the verse. The word is used only in reference to "Christians" here, and makes no affirmation about other people.

Dieth to himself - See Romans 14:8. This expression is used to denote the "universality" or the "totality" with which Christians belong to God. Every thing is done and suffered with reference to his will. In our conduct, in our property, in our trials, in our death, we are "his;" to be disposed of as he shall please. In the grave, and in the future world, we shall be equally his. As this is the great principle on which "all" Christians live and act, we should be kind and tender toward them, though in some respects they differ from us.

Verse 8

For whether we live - As long as we live.

We live unto the Lord - We live to do his will, and to promote his glory. This is the grand purpose of the life of the Christian. Other people live to gratify themselves; the Christian to do those things which the Lord requires. By "the Lord" here the apostle evidently intends the Lord Jesus, as it is evident from Romans 14:9; and the truth taught here is, that it is the leading and grand purpose of the Christian to do honor to the Saviour. It is this which constitutes his special character, and which distinguishes him from other people.

Whether we die - In the dying state, or in the state of the dead; in the future world. We are "no where" our own. In all conditions we are "his," and bound to do his will. The connection of this declaration with the argument is this: Since we belong to another in every state, and are bound

to do his will, we have no right to assume the prerogative of sitting in judgment on another. "We" are subjects, and are bound to do the will of Christ. All other Christians are subjects in like manner, and are answerable, not to us, but directly to the Lord Jesus, and should have the same liberty of conscience that we have. The passage proves also that the soul does not cease to be conscious at death. We are still the Lord's; his even when the body is in the grave; and his in all the future world: see Romans 14:9.

Verse 9

For to this end - For this purpose or design. The apostle does not say that this was the "only" design of his death, but that it was a main purpose, or an object which he had distinctly in view. This declaration is introduced in order to confirm what he had said in the previous verse, that in all circumstances we are the Lord's. This he shows by the fact that Jesus died "in order" that we "might" be his.

And rose - This expression is rejected by most modern critics. It is wanting in many manuscripts, and has been probably introduced in the text from the margin.

And revived - There is also a variation in the Greek in this place, but not so great as to change the sense materially. It refers to his "resurrection," and means that he was "restored to life" in order that he might exercise dominion over the dead and the living.

That he might be Lord - Greek. That he might "rule over." The Greek word used here implies the idea of his being "proprietor" or "owner" as well as "ruler." It means that he might exercise entire dominion over all, as the sovereign Lawgiver and Lord.

Both of the dead - That is, of those who "are" deceased, or who have gone to another state of existence. This passage proves that those who die are not annihilated; that they do not cease to be conscious; and that they still are under the dominion of the Mediator. Though their bodies moulder in the grave, yet the spirit lives, and is under his control. And though the body dies and returns to its native dust, yet the Lord Jesus is still its Sovereign, and shall raise it up again:

"God our Redeemer lives,
And often from the skies.
Looks down and watches all our dust,
Till he shall bid it rise."

It gives an additional sacredness to the grave when we reflect that the tomb is under the watchful care of the Redeemer. Safe in his hands, the body may sink to its native dust with the assurance that in his own time he will again call it forth, with renovated and immortal powers, to be for ever subject to his will. With this view, we can leave our friends with confidence in his hands when they die, and yield our own bodies cheerfully to the dust when he shall call our spirits hence. But it is not only over the "body" that his dominion is established. This passage proves that the departed souls of the saints are still subject to him; compare Matthew 22:32; Mark 12:27. He not only has "dominion" over those spirits, but he is their protector and Lord. They are safe under his universal dominion. And it does much to alleviate the pains of separation from pious, beloved friends, to reflect that they depart still to love and serve the same Saviour in perfect purity, and unvexed by infirmity and sin. Why should we wish to recall them from his perfect love in the heavens to the poor and imperfect service which they would render if in the land of the living?

And living - To the redeemed, while they remain in this life. He died to "purchase" them to himself, that they might become his obedient subjects; and they are bound to yield obedience by all the sacredness and value of the price which he paid, even his own precious blood; compare 1 Corinthians 6:20, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's;" 1 Corinthians 7:23; Revelation 14:4 (Greek, "bought"); 1 Peter 2:9, (Greek, "purchased"). If it be asked how this "dominion over the dead and the living" is connected with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, we may reply,

(1) That it is secured over Christians from the fact that they are "purchased" or "ransomed" by his precious blood; and that they are bound by this sacred consideration to live to him. This obligation every Christian feels 1 Peter 1:18, and its force is continually resting on him. It was by the love of Christ that he was ever brought to love God at all; and his deepest and tenderest obligations to live to him arise from this source; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15.

(2) Jesus, by his death and resurrection, established a dominion over the grave. He destroyed him that had the power of death, Hebrews 2:14, and triumphed over him; Colossians 2:15. Satan is a humbled foe; and his sceptre over the grave is wrested from his hands. When Jesus rose, in spite

of all the power of Satan and of people, he burst the bands of death, and made an invasion on the dominions of the dead, and showed that he had power to control all.

(3) this dominion of the Lord Jesus is felt by the spirits on high. They are subject to him because he redeemed them; Revelation 5:9.

(4) it is often revealed in the Scriptures that "dominion" was to be given to the Lord Jesus as the reward of his sufferings and death; see the John 17:2, John 17:4-5; 5:26-29 notes; Philemon 2:5-11 notes; Ephesians 1:20-21 notes; Hebrews 2:9-10; Hebrews 12:2 notes. The "extent" of his dominion as mediator is affirmed, in this place, only to be over the dead and the living; that is, over the human race. Other passages of the Scripture, however, seem to imply that it extends over all worlds.

Verse 10

But why … - Since we are all subjects and servants alike, and must all stand at the same tribunal, what right have we to sit in judgment on others?

Thou judge - Thou who art a "Jewish" convert, why dost thou attempt to arraign the "Gentile" disciple, as if he had violated a law of God? compare Romans 14:3.

Thy brother - God has recognised him as his friend Romans 14:3, and he should be regarded by thee as "a brother" in the same family.

Or why dost thou set at nought - Despise Romans 14:3; why dost thou, who art a "Gentile" convert, despise the "Jewish" disciple as being unnecessarily scrupulous and superstitious?

Thy brother - The Jewish convert is now a brother; and all the contempt which you Gentiles once cherished for the Jew should cease, from the fact that "he" is now "a Christian." Nothing will do so much, on the one hand, to prevent a censorious disposition, and on the other, to prevent contempt for those who are in a different rank in life, as to remember that they are "Christians," bought with the same blood, and going to the same heaven as ourselves.

We must all stand … - That is, we must all be tried alike at the same tribunal; we must answer for our conduct, not to our-fellow man, but to Christ; and it does not become us to sit in judgment on each other.

Verse 11

For it is written - This passage is recorded in Isaiah 45:23. It is not quoted literally, but the sense is preserved. In Isaiah there can be no doubt that it refers to Yahweh. The speaker expressly calls himself Yahweh, the name which is appropriate to God alone, and which is never applied to a creature; Romans 14:18. In the place before us, the words are applied by Paul expressly to Christ; compare Romans 14:10. This mode of quotation is a strong incidental proof that the apostle regarded the Lord Jesus as divine. On no other principle could he have made these quotations.

As I live - The Hebrew is, "I have sworn by myself." One expression is equivalent to the other. An "oath" of God is often expressed by the phrase "as I live;" Numbers 14:21; Isaiah 49:18; Ezekiel 5:11; Ezekiel 14:16, etc.

Saith the Lord - These words are not in the Hebrew text, but are added by the apostle to show that the passage quoted was spoken by the Lord, the Messiah; compare Isaiah 45:18, Isaiah 45:22.

Every knee shall bow to me - To bow the knee" is an act expressing homage, submission, or adoration. It means that every person shall acknowledge him as God, and admit his right to universal dominion. The passage in Isaiah refers particularly to the homage which "his own people" should render to him; or rather, it means that all who are saved shall acknowledge "him" as their God and Saviour. The original reference was not to "all men," but only to those who should be saved; Isaiah 45:17, Isaiah 45:21-22, Isaiah 45:24. In this sense the apostle uses it; not as denoting that "all men" should confess to God, but that all "Christians," whether Jewish or Gentile converts, should alike give account to Him. "They" should all bow before their common God, and acknowledge "his" dominion over them. The passage originally did not refer particularly to the day of judgment, but expressed the truth that all believers should acknowledge his dominion. It is as applicable, however, to the judgment, as to any other act of homage which his people will render.

Every tongue shall confess to God - In the Hebrew, "Every tongue shall swear." Not swear "by God," but "to him;" that is, pay to him our vows, or "answer to him on oath" for our conduct; and this is the same as confessing to him, or acknowledging him as our Judge.

Verse 12

So then - Wherefore; or according to the doctrine of the Old Testament.

Every one of us - That is, every Christian; for the connection requires us to understand the argument only of Christians. At the same time it is a

truth abundantly revealed elsewhere, that "all men" shall give account of their conduct to God; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 12:14.

Give account of himself - That is, of his character and conduct; his words and actions; his plans and purposes. In the fearful arraignment of that day every work and purpose shall be brought forth, and tried by the unerring standard of justice. As we shall be called to so fearful an account with God, we should not be engaged in condemning our brethren, but should examine whether we are prepared to give up our account with joy, and not with grief.

To God - The judgment will be conducted by the Lord Jesus; Acts 17:31. All judgment is committed to the Son; John 5:22, John 5:27. Still we may be said to give account to God,

(1)Because He "appointed" the Messiah to be the Judge Acts 17:31; and,

(2)Because the Judge himself is divine.

The Lord Jesus being God as well as man, the account will be rendered directly to the Creator as well as the Redeemer of the world. In this passage there are "two" incidental proofs of the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. "First," the fact that the apostle applies to him language which in the prophecy is expressly spoken by "Yahweh;" and, "Secondly," the fact that Jesus is declared to be the Judge of all. No being that is not "omniscient" can be qualified to judge the secrets of all people. None who has not "seen" human purposes at all times, and in all places; who has not been a witness of the conduct by day and by night; who has not been present with all the race at all times, and who in the great day cannot discern the true character of the soul, can be qualified to conduct the general judgment. Yet none can possess these qualifications but God. The Lord Jesus, "the judge of quick and dead" 2 Timothy 4:1, is therefore divine.

Verse 13

Let us not therefore judge … - Since we are to give account of ourselves at the same tribunal; since we must be there on the same "level," let us not suppose that we have a right here to sit in judgment on our fellow-Christians.

But judge this rather - If disposed to "judge," let us be employed in a better kind of judging; let us come "to a determination" not to injure the cause of Christ. This is an instance of the happy "turn" which the apostle would give to a discussion. Some people have an irresistible propensity to sit in judgment, to pronounce opinions. Let them make good use of that. It

will be well to exercise it on what can do no injury, and which may turn to good account. Instead of forming a judgment about "others," let the man form a determination about his own conduct.

That no man … - A "stumbling-block" literally means anything laid in a man's path, over which he may fall. In the Scriptures, however, the word is used commonly in a figurative sense to denote anything which shall cause him to "sin," as sin is often represented by "falling;" see the note at Matthew 5:29. And the passage means that we should resolve to act so as not "by any means" to be the occasion of leading our brethren into sin, either by our example, or by a severe and harsh judgment, provoking them to anger, or exciting jealousies, and envyings, and suspicions. No better rule than this could be given to promote peace. If every Christian, instead of judging his brethren severely, would resolve that "he" would so live as to promote peace, and so as not to lead others into sin, it would tend more, perhaps, than any other thing to advance the harmony and purity of the church of Christ.

Verse 14

I know - This is an admission made to the "Gentile" convert, who believed that it was lawful to partake of food of every kind. This the apostle concedes; and says he is fully apprized of this. But though he knew this, yet he goes on to say Romans 14:15, that it would be well to regard the conscientious scruples of others on the subject. It may be remarked here that the apostle Paul had formerly quite as many scruples as any of his brethren had then. But his views had been changed.

And am persuaded - Am convinced.

By the Lord Jesus - This does not mean by any "personal" instruction received from the Lord Jesus, but by all the knowledge which he had received by inspiration of the nature of the Christian religion. The gospel of Jesus had taught him that the rites of the Mosaic economy had been abolished, and among those rites were the rules respecting clean and unclean beasts, etc.

There is nothing unclean - Greek "common." This word was used by the Jews to denote what was "unclean," because, in their apprehension, whatever was partaken by the multitude, or all people, must be impure. Hence, the words "common" and "impure" are often used as expressing the same thing. It denotes what was forbidden by the laws of Moses.

To him that esteemeth … - He makes it a matter of conscience. He regards certain meats as forbidden by God; and while he so regards them, it would be wrong for him to partake of them. Man may be in error, but it would not be proper for him to act in violation of what he "supposes" God requires.

Verse 15

But if thy brother … - This address is to the "Gentile" convert. In the previous verse, Paul admitted. that the prejudice of the Jew was not well-founded. But admitting that still the question was, "how" he should be treated while he had that prejudice. The apostle here shows the Gentile that "he" ought not so to act as unnecessarily to wound his feelings, or to grieve him.

Be grieved - Be pained; as a conscientious man always is, when he sees another, and especially a Christian brother, do anything which "he" esteems to be wrong. The "pain" would be real, though the "opinion" from which it arose might not be well founded.

With thy meat - Greek, On account of meat, or food; that is, because "you" eat what he regards as unclean.

Now walkest - To "walk," in the Sacred Scriptures, often denotes to act, or to do a thing; Mark 7:5; Acts 21:21; Romans 6:4; Romans 8:1, Romans 8:4. Here it means that if the Gentile convert persevered in the use of such food, notwithstanding the conscientious scruples of the Jew, he violated the law of love.

Charitably - Greek, According to charity, or love; that is, he would violate that law which required him to sacrifice his own comfort to promote the happiness of his brother; 1 Corinthians 13:5; 1 Corinthians 10:24, 1 Corinthians 10:28-29; Philemon 2:4, Philemon 2:21.

Destroy not him - The word "destroy" here refers, doubtless, to the ruin of the soul in hell. It properly denotes ruin or destruction, and is applied to the ruin or "corruption" of various things, in the New Testament. To life Matthew 10:39; to a reward, in the sense of "losing" it Mark 10:41; Luke 15:4; to food John 6:27; to the Israelites represented as lost or wandering Matthew 10:6; to "wisdom" that is rendered "vain" 1 Corinthians 1:9; to "bottles," rendered "useless" Matthew 9:17, etc. But it is also frequently applied to destruction in hell, to the everlasting ruin of the soul; Matthew 10:28, "Who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell;" Matthew 18:14; John 3:15; Romans 2:12. That "this" is its meaning here is apparent from

the parallel place in 1 Corinthians 8:11, "And through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish." If it be asked how the eating of meat by the Gentile convert could be connected with the perdition of the Jew, I reply, that the apostle supposes that in this way an occasion of stumbling would be afforded to him, and he would come into condemnation. He might be led by example to partake against his own conscience, or he might be excited to anger, disgust, and apostasy from the Christian faith. Though the apostle believed that all who were true Christians would be saved, Romans 8:30-39, yet he believed that it would be brought about by the use of means, and that nothing should be done that would tend to hinder or endanger their salvation; Hebrews 6:4-9; Hebrews 2:1. God does not bring his people to heaven without the use of "means adapted to the end," and one of those means is that employed here to warn professing Christians against such conduct as might jeopard the salvation of their brethren.

For whom Christ died - The apostle speaks here of the possibility of endangering the salvation of those for whom Christ died, just as he does respecting the salvation of those who are in fact Christians. By those for whom Christ died, he undoubtedly refers here to "true Christians," for the whole discussion relates to them, and them only; compare Romans 14:3-4, Romans 14:7-8. This passage should not be brought, therefore, to prove that Christ died for all people, or for any who shall finally perish. Such a doctrine is undoubtedly true (in this sense; that there is in the death of Christ a "sufficiency for all," and that the "offer" is to all.) (compare 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 John 2:2; 2 Peter 2:1), but it is not the truth which is taught here. The design is to show the criminality of a course that would tend to the ruin of a brother. For these weak brethren, Christ laid down his precious life. He loved them; and shall we, to gratify our appetites, pursue a course which will tend to defeat the work of Christ, and ruin the souls redeemed by his blood?

Verse 16

Let not then your good … - That which you esteem to be right, and which may be right in itself. You are not bound by the ceremonial law. You are free from the yoke of bondage This freedom you esteem to be a good - a favor - a high privilege. And so it is; but you should not make such a use of it as to do injury to others.

Be evil spoken of - Greek, Be blasphemed. Do not so use your Christian liberty as to give occasion for railing and unkind remarks from your

brethren, so as to produce contention and strife, and thus to give rise to evil reports among the wicked about the tendency of the Christian religion, as if it were adapted only to promote controversy. How much strife would have been avoided if all Christians had regarded this plain rule. In relation to dress, and rites, and ceremonies in the church, we may be conscious that we are right; but an obstinate adherence to them may only give rise to contention and angry discussions, and to evil reports among men, of the tendency of religion. In such a case we should yield our private, unimportant personal indulgence to the good of the cause of religion and of peace.

Verse 17

For the kingdom of God - For an explanation of this phrase, see the note at Matthew 3:2. Here it means that the uniquenesses of the kingdom of God, or of the Church of Christ on earth, do not consist in observing the distinctions between meats and drinks, it was true that by these things the Jews had been particularly characterized, but the Christian church was to be distinguished in a different manner.

Is not - Does not consist in, or is not distinguished by.

Meat and drink - In observing distinctions between different kinds of food, or making such observances a matter of conscience as the Jews did. Moses did not prescribe any particular drink or prohibit any, but the Nazarites abstained from wine and all kinds of strong liquors; and it is not improbable that the Jews had invented some distinctions on this subject which they judged to be of importance. Hence, it is said in Colossians 2:16, "Let no man judge you in meat or in drink;" compare 1 Corinthians 8:8; 1 Corinthians 4:20.

But righteousness - This word here means "virtue, integrity," a faithful discharge of all the duties which we owe to God or to our fellow-men. It means that the Christian must so live as to be appropriately denominated a righteous man, and not a man whose whole attention is absorbed by the mere ceremonies and outward forms of religion. To produce this, we are told, was the main design, and the principal teaching of the gospel; Titus 2:12; Compare Romans 8:13; 1 Peter 2:11. Thus, it is said 1 John 2:29, "Everyone that doeth righteousness is born of God;" 1 John 3:10, "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God;" compare 1 John 3:7; 1 Corinthians 15:34; 2 Corinthians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 6:7, 2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:9; Ephesians 6:14; 1 Timothy 6:11; 1 Peter 2:24; Ephesians

4:24. He that is a righteous man, whose characteristic it is to lead a holy life, is a Christian. If his great aim is to do the will of God, and if he seeks to discharge with fidelity all his duties to God and man, he is renewed. On that righteousness he will not "depend" for salvation Philemon 3:8-9, but he will regard this character and this disposition as evidence that he is a Christian, and that the Lord Jesus is made unto him" wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" 1 Corinthians 1:30.

And peace - This word, in this place, does not refer to the internal "peace" and happiness which the Christian has in his own mind (compare the notes at Romans 5:1); but to peace or concord in opposition to "contention" among brethren. The tendency and design of the kingdom of God is to produce concord and love, and to put an end to alienation and strife. Even though, therefore, there might be ground for the opinions which some cherished in regard to rites, yet it was of more importance to maintain peace than obstinately to press those matters at the expense of strife and contention. That the tendency of the gospel is to promote peace, and to induce people to lay aside all causes of contention and bitter strife, is apparent from the following passages of the New Testament; 1 Corinthians 7:15; 1 Corinthians 14:33; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:13; 2 Timothy 2:22; James 3:18; Matthew 5:9; Ephesians 4:31-32; Colossians 3:8; John 13:34-35; John 17:21-23. This is the second evidence of piety on which Christians should examine their hearts - a disposition to promote the peace of Jerusalem; Psalm 122:6; Psalm 37:11. A contentious, quarrelsome spirit; a disposition to magnify trifles; to make the Shibboleth of party an occasion of alienation, and heart-burning, and discord; to sow dissensions on account of unimportant points of doctrine or of discipline, is full proof that there is no attachment to Him who is the Prince of peace. Such a disposition does infinite dishonor to the cause of religion, and perhaps has done more to retard its progress than all other causes put together. Contentions commonly arise from some small matter in doctrine, in dress, in ceremonies; and often the smaller the matter the more fierce the controversy, until he spirit of religion disappears, and desolation comes over the face of Zion:

"The Spirit, like a peaceful dove,
Flies from the realms of noise and strife."

And joy - This refers, doubtless, to the "personal" happiness produced in the mind by the influence of the gospel; see the notes at Romans 5:1-5.

In the Holy Ghost - Produced "by" the Holy Spirit; Romans 5:5; compare Galatians 5:22-23.

Verse 18

In these things - In righteousness, peace, and joy.

Serveth Christ - Or obeys Christ, who has commanded them. He receives Christ as his "master" or "teacher" and does his will in regard to them. To do these things is to do honor to Christ, and to show the excellency of his religion.

Is acceptable to God - Whether he be converted from the Jews or the Gentiles.

And approved of men - That is, people will "approve" of such conduct; they will esteem it to be right, and to be in accordance with the spirit of Christianity. He does not say that the wicked world will "love" such a life, but it will commend itself to them as such a life as people ought to lead.

Verse 19

Let us therefore follow … - The object of this verse is to persuade the church at Rome to lay aside their causes of contention, and to live in harmony. This exhortation is founded on the considerations which the apostle had presented, and may be regarded as the conclusion to which the argument had conducted him.

The things which make for peace - The high purposes and objects of the Christian religion, and not those smaller matters which produce strife. If men aim at the great objects proposed by the Christian religion, they will live in peace. If they seek to promote their private ends, to follow their own passions and prejudices, they will be involved in strife and contention. There "are" great common objects before "all" Christians in which they can unite, and in the pursuit of which they will cultivate a spirit of peace. Let them all strive for holiness; let them seek to spread the gospel; let them engage in circulating the Bible, or in doing good in any way to others, and their smaller matters of difference will sink into comparative unimportance, and they will unite in one grand purpose of saving the world. Christians have more things in which they "agree" than in which they differ. The points in which they are agreed are of infinite importance; the points on which they differ are commonly some minor matters in which they may "agree to differ," and still cherish love for all who bear the image of Christ.

And things wherewith … - That is, those things by which we may render "aid" to our brethren; the doctrines, exhortations, counsels, and other

helps which may benefit them in their Christian life.

May edify - The word "edify" means properly to "build," as a house; then to "rebuild" or "reconstruct;" then to adorn or ornament; then to do any thing that will confer favor or advantage, or which will further an object. Applied to the church, it means to do anything by teaching, counsel, advice, etc. which will tend to promote its great object; to aid Christians, to enable them to surmount difficulties, to remove their ignorance, etc.; Acts 9:31; 1 Corinthians 8:1; 1 Corinthians 14:4. In these expressions the idea of a "building" is retained, reared on a firm, tried cornerstone, the Lord Jesus Christ; Ephesians 2:20; Isaiah 28:16. Compare Romans 9:33. Christians are thus regarded, according to Paul's noble idea Ephesians 2:20-22, as one great temple erected for the glory of God, having no separate interest, but as united for one object, and therefore bound to do all that is possible, that each other may be suited to their appropriate place, and perform their appropriate function in perfecting and adorning this temple of God.

Verse 20

For meat - By your obstinate, pertinacious attachment to your own opinions about the distinctions of meat and drinks, do not pursue such a course as to lead a brother into sin, and ruin his soul. Here is a new argument presented why Christians should pursue a course of charity - that the opposite would tend to the ruin of the brother's soul.

Destroy not - The word here is what properly is applied to pulling down an edifice; and the apostle continues the figure which he used in the previous verse. Do not pull down or destroy the "temple" which God is rearing.

The work of God - The work of God is what God does, and here especially refers to his work in rearing "his church." The "Christian" is regarded specially as the work of God, as God renews his heart and makes him what he is. Hence, he is called God's "building" 1 Corinthians 3:9, and his "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" Ephesians 2:10, and is denominated "a new creature;" 2 Corinthians 5:17. The meaning is, "Do not so conduct yourself, in regard to the distinction of meats into clean and unclean, as to cause your brother to sin, and to impair or ruin the work of religion which God is carrying on in his soul." The expression does not refer to "man" as being the work of God, but to the "piety" of the Christian; to what God, by his Spirit, is producing in the heart of the believer.

All things are indeed pure - Compare Romans 14:14. This is a concession to those whom he was exhorting to peace. All things under the Christian dispensation are lawful to be eaten. The distinctions of the Levitical law are not binding on Christians.

But it is evil - Though pure in itself, yet it may become an occasion of sin, if another is grieved by it. It is evil to the man who pursues a course that will give offence to a brother; that will pain him, or tend to drive him off from the church, or lead him any way into sin.

With offence - So as to offend a brother, such as he esteems to be sin, and by which he will be grieved.

Verse 21

It is good - It is right; or it is better. This verse is an explanation or enlarged specification of the meaning of the former.

To eat flesh - That is, such flesh as the "Jewish" convert regarded as unclean; Romans 14:2.

Nor to drink wine - Wine was a common drink among the Jews, and usually esteemed lawful. But the Nazarites were not allowed to drink it Numbers 6:3, and the Rechabites Romans 11:11. It means here that by eating, a Jewish convert might be led to eat also, contrary to his own conviction of what was right, and thus be led into sin.

Or is made weak - That is, shaken, or rendered "less stable" in his opinion or conduct. By being led to imitate the Gentile convert, he would become less firm and established; he would violate his own conscience; his course would be attended with regrets and with doubts about its propriety, and thus he would be made "weak." In this verse we have an eminent instance of the charity of the apostle, and of his spirit of concession and kindness. If this were regarded by all Christians, it would save no small amount of strife, and heart-burnings, and contention. Let a man begin to act on the principle that peace is to be promoted, that other Christians are not to be offended, and what a change would it at once produce in the churches, and what an influence would it exert over the life!

Verse 22

Hast thou faith? - The word "faith" here refers only to the subject under discussion - to the subject of meats, drinks, etc. Do you believe that it is right to eat all kinds of food, etc. The apostle had admitted that this was the true doctrine; but he maintains that it should be so held as not to give offence.

Have it to thyself - Do not obtrude your faith or opinion on others. Be satisfied with cherishing the opinion, and acting on it in private, without bringing it forward to produce disturbance in the church.

Before God - Where God only is the witness. God sees your sincerity, and will approve your opinion. That opinion cherish and act on, yet so as not to give offence, and to produce disturbance in the church. God sees your sincerity; he sees that you are right; and you will not offend him. Your brethren do "not" see that you are right, and they will be offended.

Happy is he … - This state of mind, the apostle says, is one that is attended with peace and happiness; and this is a "further" reason why they should indulge their opinion in private, without obtruding it on others. They were conscious of doing right, and that consciousness was attended with peace. This fact he states in the form of a universal proposition, as applicable not only to "this" case, but to "all" cases; compare 1 John 3:21.

Condemneth not himself - Whose conscience does not reprove him.

In that which he alloweth - Which he "approves," or which he "does." Who has a clear conscience in his opinions and conduct. Many people indulge in practices which their consciences condemn, many in practices of which they are in doubt. But the way to be happy is to have a "clear conscience" in what we do; or in other words, if we have "doubts" about a course of conduct, it is not safe to indulge in that course, but it should be at once abandoned. Many people are engaged in "business" about which they have many doubts; many Christians are in doubt about certain courses of life. But they can have "no doubt" about the propriety of abstaining from them. They who are engaged in the slave-trade; or they who are engaged in the manufacture or sale of ardent spirits; or they who frequent the theater or the ball-room, or who run the round of fashionable amusements, if professing Christians, must often be troubled with "many" doubts about the propriety of their manner of life. But they can have no doubt about the propriety of an "opposite" course. Perhaps a single inquiry would settle all debate in regard to these things: "Did anyone ever become a slave-dealer, or a dealer in ardent spirits, or go to the theater, for engage in scenes of splendid amusements, with any belief that he was imitating the Lord Jesus Christ, or with any desire to honor him or his religion?" But one answer would be given to this question; and in view of it, how striking is the remark of Paul, "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in what he alloweth."

Verse 23

He that doubteth - He that is not fully satisfied in his mind; who does not do it with a clear conscience. The margin has it rendered correctly, "He that discerneth and putteth a difference between meats." He that conscientiously believes, as the Jew did, that the Levitical law respecting the difference between meats was binding on Christians.

Is damned - We apply this word almost exclusively to the future punishment of the wicked in hell. But it is of importance to remember, in reading the Bible, that this is not of necessity its meaning. It means properly to "condemn;" and here it means only that the person who should thus violate the dictates of his conscience would incur guilt, and would be blameworthy in doing it. But it does not affirm that he would inevitably sink to hell. The same construction is to be put on the expression in 1 Corinthians 11:29, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself."

For whatsoever … - "Whatever is not done with a full conviction that it is right, is sinful; whatever is done when a man doubts whether it is right, is sin." This is evidently the fair interpretation of this place. Such the connection requires. It does not affirm that all or any of the actions of impenitent and unbelieving people are sinful, which is true, but not the truth taught here; nor does it affirm that all acts which are not performed by those who have faith in the Lord Jesus, are sinful; but the discussion pertains to Christians; and the whole scope of the passage requires us to understand the apostle as simply saying that a man should not do a thing doubting its correctness; that he should have a strong conviction that what he does is right; and that if he has "not" this conviction, it is sinful. The rule is of universal application. In all cases, if a man does a thing which he does not "believe" to be right, it is a sin, and his conscience will condemn him for it. It may be proper, however, to observe that the converse of this is not always true, that if a man believes a thing to be right, that therefore it is not sin. For many of the persecutors were conscientious John 16:2; Acts 26:9; and the murderers of the Son of God did it ignorantly Acts 3:17; 1 Corinthians 2:8; and yet were adjudged as guilty of enormous crimes; compare Luke 11:50-51; Acts 2:23, Acts 2:37.

In this chapter we have a remarkably fine discussion of the nature of Christian charity. Differences of "opinion" will arise, and people will be divided into various sects; but if the rules which are laid down in this

chapter were followed, the contentions, and altercations, and strifes among Christians would cease. Had these rules been applied to the controversies about rites, and forms, and festivals, that have arisen, peace might have been preserved. Amid all such differences, the great question is, whether there is true love to the Lord Jesus. If there is, the apostle teaches us that we have no right to judge a brother, or despise him, or contend harshly with him. Our object should be to promote peace, to aid him in his efforts to become holy, and to seek to build him up in holy faith.

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Introduction

It may be of importance to state that between the last verse of the preceding chapter and the first verse of Romans 16:25-27. Why this was done, has been a matter of controversy. The discussion, however, is of no practical importance, and most critics concur in the opinion that the present arrangement of the Greek text is genuine.

Verse 1

We then that are strong - The apostle resumes the subject of the preceding chapter; and continues the exhortation to brotherly love and mutual kindness and forbearance. By the "strong" here he means the strong "in faith" in respect to the matters under discussion; those whose minds were free from doubts and perplexities. His own mind was free from doubt, and there were many others, particularly of the Gentile converts, that had the same views. But many also, particularly of the "Jewish" converts, had many doubts and scruples.

Ought to bear - This word bear properly means to "lift up," to "bear away," to "remove." But here it is used in a larger sense; "to bear with, to be indulgent to, to endure patiently, not to contend with;" Galatians 6:2; Revelation 2:2, "Thou canst not bear them that are evil."

And not to please ourselves - Not to make it our main object to gratify our own wills. We should be willing to deny ourselves, if by it we may promote the happiness of others. This refers particularly to "opinions" about meats and drinks; but it may be applied to Christian conduct generally, as denoting that we are not to make our own happiness or gratification the standard of our conduct, but are to seek the welfare of others; see the example of Paul, 1 Corinthians 9:19, 1 Corinthians 9:22; see also Philemon 2:4; 1 Corinthians 13:5, "Love seeketh not her own;" 1 Corinthians 10:24, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth; also Matthew 16:24.

Verse 2

Please his neighbour - That is, all other persons, but especially the friends of the Redeemer. The word "neighbor" here has special reference to the members of the church. It is often used, however, in a much larger sense; see Luke 10:36.

For his good - Not seek to secure for him indulgence in those things which Would be injurious to him, but in all those things whereby his welfare would be promoted.

To edification - See the note at Romans 14:19.

Verse 3

For even Christ - The apostle proceeds, in his usual manner, to illustrate what he had said by the example of the Saviour. To a Christian, the example of the Lord Jesus will furnish the most ready, certain, and happy illustration of the nature and extent of his duty.

Pleased not himself - This is not to be understood as if the Lord Jesus did not voluntarily and cheerfully engage in his great work. He was not "compelled" to come and suffer. Nor is it to be understood as if he did not "approve" the work, or see its propriety and fitness. If he had not, he would never have engaged in its sacrifices and self-denials. But the meaning may be expressed in the following particulars:

(1) He came to do the will or desire of God in "undertaking" the work of salvation. It was the will of God; it was agreeable to the divine purposes, and the Mediator did not consult his own happiness and honor in heaven, but cheerfully came to "do the will" of God; Psalm 40:7-8; compare Hebrews 10:4-10; Philemon 2:6; John 17:5.

(2) Christ when on earth, made it his great object to do the will of God, to finish the work which God had given him to do, and not to seek his own comfort and enjoyment. This he expressly affirms; John 6:38; John 5:30.

(3) he was willing for this to endure whatever trials and pains the will of God might demand, not seeking to avoid them or to shrink from them. See particularly his prayer in the garden; Luke 22:42.

(4) in his life, he did not seek personal comfort, wealth, or friends, or honors. He denied himself to promote the welfare of others; he was poor that they might be rich; he was in lonely places that he might seek out the needy and provide for them. Nay, he did not seek to preserve his own life when the appointed time came to die, but gave himself up for all.

(5) there may be another idea which the apostle had here. He bore with patience the ignorance, blindness, erroneous views, and ambitious projects

of his disciples. He evinced kindness to them when in error; and was not harsh, censorious, or unkind, when they were filled with vain projects of ambition, or perverted his words, or were dull of apprehension. So says the apostle, "we" ought to do in relation to our brethren.

But as it is written - Psalm 69:9. This psalm, and the former part of this verse, is referred to the Messiah; compare Romans 15:21, with Matthew 27:34, Matthew 27:48.

The reproaches - The calumnies, censures, harsh, opprobrious speeches.

Of them that reproached thee - Of the wicked, who vilified and abused the law and government of God.

Fell on me - In other words, Christ was willing to suffer reproach and contempt in order to do good to others. tie endured calumny and contempt all his life, from those who by their lips and lives calumniated God, or reproached their Maker. We may learn here,

(1) That the contempt of Jesus Christ is contempt of him who appointed him.

(2) we may see the kindness of the Lord Jesus in being willing thus to "throw himself" between the sinner and God; to "intercept," as it were, our sins, and to bear the effects of them in his own person. He stood between "us" and God; and both the reproaches and the divine displeasure due to them, "met" on his sacred person, and produced the sorrows of the atonement - his bitter agony in the garden and on the cross. Jesus thus showed his love of God in being willing to bear the reproaches aimed at him; and his love to "men" in being willing to endure the sufferings necessary to atone for these very sins.

(3) if Jesus thus bore reproaches, "we" should be willing also to endure them. We suffer in the cause where be has gone before us, and where he has set us the example; and as "he" was abused and vilified, we should be willing to be so also.

Verse 4

For whatsoever things … - This is a "general" observation which struck the mind of the apostle, from the particular case which he had just specified. He had just made use of a striking passage in the Psalms to his

purpose. The thought seems suddenly to have occurred to him that "all" the Old Testament was admirably adapted to express Christian duties and doctrine, and he therefore turned aside from his direct argument to express this sentiment. It should be read as a parenthesis.

Were written aforetime - That is, in ancient times; in the Old Testament.

For our learning - For our "teaching" or instruction. Not that this was the "only" purpose of the writings of the Old Testament, to instruct Christians; but that all the Old Testament might be useful "now" in illustrating and enforcing the doctrines and duties of piety toward God and man.

Through patience - This does not mean, as our translation might seem to suppose, patience "of the Scriptures," but it means that by patiently enduring sufferings, in connection with the consolation which the Scriptures furnish, we might have hope. The "tendency" of patience, the apostle tells us Romans 5:4, is to produce "hope;" see the notes at this place.

And comfort of the Scriptures - By means of the consolation which the writings of the Old Testament furnish. The word rendered "comfort" means also "exhortation" or "admonition." If this is its meaning here, it refers to the admonitions which the Scriptures suggest, instructions which they impart, and the exhortations to patience in trials. If it means "comfort," then the reference is to the examples of the saints in affliction; to their recorded expressions of confidence in God in their trials, as of Job, Daniel, David, etc. Which is the precise meaning of the word here, it is not easy to determine.

Might have hope - Note, Romans 5:4. We may learn here,

(1)That afflictions may prove to be a great blessing.

(2)that their proper tendency is to produce "hope."

(3)that the way to find support in afflictions is to go to the Bible.

By the example of the ancient saints, by the expression of their confidence in God, by their patience, "we" may learn to suffer, and may not only be "instructed," but may find "comfort" in all our trials; see the example of Paul himself in 2 Corinthians 1:2-11.

Verse 5

Now the God of patience - The God who is "himself" long-suffering, who bears patiently with the errors and faults of his children, and who can

"give" patience, may he give you of his Spirit, that you may bear patiently the infirmities and errors of each other. The example of God here, who bears long with his children, and is not angry soon at their offences, is a strong argument why Christians should bear with each other. If God bears long and patiently with "our" infirmities, "we" ought to bear with each other.

And consolation - Who gives or imparts consolation.

To be like-minded … - Greek To think the same thing; that is, to be united, to keep from divisions and strifes.

According to Christ Jesus - According to the example and spirit of Christ; his was a spirit of peace. Or, according to what his religion requires. The name of Christ is sometimes thus put for his religion; 2 Corinthians 11:4; Ephesians 4:20. If all Christians would imitate the example of Christ, and follow his instructions, there would be no contentions among them. He earnestly sought in his parting prayer their unity and peace; John 17:21-23.

Verse 6

That ye may with one mind - The word used here is translated "with one accord;" Acts 1:14; Acts 2:1; Acts 4:24. It means unitedly, with one purpose, without contentions, and strifes, and jars.

And one mouth - This refers, doubtless, to their prayers and praises. That they might join without contention and unkind feeling, in the worship of God. Divisions, strife, and contention in the church prevent union in worship. Though the "body" may be there, and the church "professedly" engaged in public worship, yet it is a "divided" service; and the prayers of strife and contention are not heard; Isaiah 58:4.

Glorify God - Praise or honor God. This would be done by their union, peace, and harmony; thus showing the tendency of the gospel to overcome the sources of strife and contention among people, and to bring them to peace.

Even the Father … - This is an addition designed to produce love.

(1) he is "a Father;" we then, his children, should regard him as pleased with the union and peace of his family.

(2) he is the Father of our Lord; our "common" Lord; our Lord who has commanded us to be united, and to love one another. By the desire of honoring "such" a Father, we should lay aside contentions, and be united in the bands of love.

Verse 7

Wherefore - In view of all the considerations tending to produce unity and love, which have been presented. He refers to the various arguments in this and the preceding chapter.

Receive ye one another - Acknowledge one another as Christians, and treat one another as such, though you may differ in opinion about many smaller matters; see Romans 14:3.

As Christ also received us - That is, received us as his friends and followers; see Romans 14:3.

To the glory of God - In order to promote his glory. He has redeemed us, and renewed us, in order to promote the honor of God; compare Ephesians 1:6. As Christ has received us in order to promote the glory of God, so ought we to treat each other in a similar manner for a similar purpose. The exhortation in tiffs verse is to those who had been divided on various points pertaining to rites and ceremonies; to those who had been converted from among "Gentiles" and "Jews;" and the apostle here says that Christ had received "both." In order to enforce this, and especially to show the "Jewish" converts that they ought to receive and acknowledge their "Gentile" brethren, he proceeds to show, in the following verses, that Christ had reference to "both" in his work. He shows this in reference to the "Jews" Romans 15:8, and to the "Gentiles" Romans 15:9-12. Thus, he draws all his arguments from the work of Christ.

Verse 8

Now I say - I affirm, or maintain. I, a "Jew," admit that his work had reference to the Jews; I affirm also that it had reference to the Gentiles.

That Jesus Christ - That "the Messiah." The force of the apostle's reasoning would often be more striking if he would retain the word "Messiah," and not regard the word "Christ" as a mere surname. It is the name of his "office;" and to "a Jew" the name "Messiah" would convey much more than the idea of a mere proper name.

Was a minister of the circumcision - Exercized his office - the office of the Messiah - among the Jews, or with respect to the Jews, for the purposes which he immediately specifies. He was born a Jew; was circumcised; came "to" that nation; and died in their midst, without having gone himself to any other people.

For the truth of God - To confirm or establish the truth of the promises of God. He remained among them in the exercise of his ministry, to show that God was "true," who had said that the Messiah should come to them.

To confirm the promises … - To "establish," or to show that the promises were true; see the note at Acts 3:25-26. The "promises" referred to here, are those particularly which related to the coming of the Messiah. By thus admitting that the Messiah was the minister of the circumcision, the apostle conceded all that the Jew could ask, that he was to be peculiarly "their" Messiah; see the note at Luke 24:47.

Verse 9

And that the Gentiles … - The benefits of the gospel were not to be confined to "the Jews;" and as God "designed" that those benefits should be extended to the "Gentiles," so the Jewish converts ought to be willing to admit them and treat them as brethren. That God "did" design this, the apostle proceeds to show.

Might glorify God - Might "praise," or give thanks to God. This implies that the favor shown to them was a "great" favor.

For his mercy - Greek, On account of the mercy shown to them.

As it is written - Psalm 18:49. The expression there is one of David's. He says that he will praise God for his mercies "among" the pagan, or when surrounded "by" the pagan; or that he would confess and acknowledge the mercies of God to him, as we should say, "to all the world." The apostle, however, uses it in this sense, that the "Gentiles" would "participate" with the Jew in offering praise to God, or that they would be united. This does not appear to have been the original design of David in the psalm, but the "words" express the idea of the apostle.

And sing … - Celebrate thy praise. This supposes that "benefits" would be conferred on them, for which they would celebrate his goodness.

Verse 10

And again … - ; Deuteronomy 32:43. In this place the "nations" or Gentiles are called on to rejoice with the Jews, for the interposition of God in their behalf. The design of the quotation is to show that the Old Testament speaks of the Gentiles as called on to celebrate the praises of God; of course, the apostle infers that they are to be introduced to the same privileges as his people.

Verse 11

And again - Psalm 117:1. The object in this quotation is the same as before. The apostle accumulates quotations to show that it was the common language of the Old Testament, and that he was not depending on a single expression for the truth of his doctrine.

All ye Gentiles - In the psalm, "all ye nations;" but the original is the same.

And laud him - "Praise" him. The psalm is directly in point. It is a call on "all" nations to praise God; the very point in the discussion of the apostle.

Verse 12

Esaias saith - Isaiah 11:1, Isaiah 11:10.

There shall be a root - A descendant, or one that should proceed from him when he was dead. When a tree dies, and falls, there may remain a "root" which shall retain life, and which shall send up a sprout of a similar kind. So Job says Job 14:7, "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease." So in relation to Jesse. Though he should fall, like an aged tree, yet his name and family should not be extinct. There should be a descendant who should rise, and reign over the Gentiles. The Lord Jesus is thus called also the "root and the offspring of David;" Revelation 22:16; Revelation 5:5.

Of Jesse - The father of David; 1 Samuel 17:58. The Messiah was thus descended from Jesse.

He that shall rise - That is, as a sprout springs up from a decayed or fallen tree. Jesus thus "rose" from the family of David, that had fallen into poverty and humble life in the time of Mary.

To reign over the Gentiles - This is quoted from the Septuagint of Isaiah 11:10. The Hebrew is, "Which shall stand up for an ensign of the people;" that is, a standard to which they shall flock. Either the Septuagint or the Hebrew would express the idea of the apostle. The "substantial" sense is retained, though it is not literally quoted. The idea of his "reigning" over the Gentiles is one that is fully expressed in the second psalm.

In him … - Hebrew, "To it shall the Gentiles seek." The sense, however, is the same. The design of this quotation is the same as the preceding, to show that it was predicted in the Old Testament that the Gentiles should be made partakers of the privileges of the gospel. The argument of the apostle is, that if this was designed, then converts to Christianity from among the "Jews" should lay aside their prejudices, and "receive" them as their

brethren, entitled to the same privileges of the gospel as themselves. The "fact" that the Gentiles would be admitted to these privileges, the apostle had more fully discussed in Romans 1011.

Verse 13

Now the God of hope - The God who "inspires," or "produces" the Christian hope.

All joy and peace - Romans 14:17. If they were filled with this, there would be no strife and contention.

In believing - The effect of believing is to produce this joy and peace.

That ye may abound … - That your hope may be steadfast and strong.

Through the power … - By means of the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit. It is by his power alone that the Christian has the hope of eternal life; see Ephesians 1:13-14; Romans 8:24.

Verse 14

And I myself also - The apostle here proceeds to show them why he had written this Epistle, and to state his confidence in them. He had exhorted them to peace; he had opposed some of their strongest prejudices; and in order to secure their obedience to his injunctions, he now shows them the deep interest which he had in their welfare, though he had never seen them.

Am persuaded - He had never seen them Romans 1:10-13, but he had full confidence in them. This confidence he had expressed more fully in the first chapter.

Of you - Concerning you. I have full confidence in you.

My brethren - An address of affection; showing that he was not disposed to assume undue authority, or to lord it over their faith.

Are full of goodness - Filled with "kindness" or "benevolence." That is, they were "disposed" to obey any just commands; and that consequently any errors in their opinions and conduct had not been the effect of obstinacy or perverseness. There was indeed danger in the city of Rome of pride and haughtiness; and among the Gentile converts there might have been some reluctance to receive instruction from a foreign Jew. But the apostle was persuaded that all this was overcome by the mild and humbling spirit of religion, and that they were disposed to obey any just commands. He made this observation, therefore, to conciliate respect to his authority as an apostle.

Filled with all knowledge - That is, instructed in the doctrines and duties of the Christian religion. This was true; but there might be still some comparatively unimportant and nonessential points, on which they might not be entirely clear. On these, the apostle had written; and written, not professedly to communicate "new" ideas, but to "remind" them of the great principles on which they were before instructed, Romans 15:15.

Able also … - That is, you are so fully instructed in Christian principles, as to be able to give advice and counsel, if it is needed. From this verse we may learn,

(1)That when it is our duty to give instruction, admonition, or advice, it should be in a kind, conciliating manner; not with harshness, or with the severity of authority. Even "an apostle" did not assume harshness or severity in his instructions.

(2)there is no impropriety in speaking of the good qualities of Christians in their presence; or even of "commending" and "praising" them when they deserve it.

The apostle Paul was as far as possible from always dwelling on the faults of Christians. When it was necessary to reprove them, he did it, but did it with tenderness and tears. When he "could" commend, he preferred it; and never hesitated to give them credit to the utmost extent to which it could be rendered. He did not "flatter," but he told the truth; he did not commend to excite pride and vanity, but to encourage, and to prompt to still more active efforts. The minister who always censures and condemns, whose ministry is made up of complaints and lamentations, who never speaks of Christians but in a strain of fault-finding, is unlike the example of the Saviour and of Paul, and may expect little success in his work; compare Romans 1:8; Romans 16:19; 1 Corinthians 1:5; 2 Corinthians 8:7; 2 Corinthians 9:2; Philemon 1:3-7; Hebrews 6:9; 2 Peter 1:12.

Verse 15

Nevertheless - Notwithstanding my full persuasion of your knowledge and your purpose to do right. Perhaps he refers also to the fact that he was a stranger to them.

The more boldly - More boldly than might have been expected from a stranger. The reason why he showed this boldness in declaring his sentiments, he immediately states - that he had been especially called to the function of instructing the Gentiles.

In some sort - ἀπὸ μέρος apo merosIn part. Some have supposed that he referred to a "party" at Rome - the Gentile party (Whitby). Some refer it to different "parts" of his epistle - on some subjects (Stuart). Probably the expression is designed to qualify the phrase "more boldly." The phrase, says Grotius, "diminishes" that of which it is spoken, as 1 Corinthians 13:9, 1 Corinthians 13:12; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 2 Corinthians 2:5; and means the same as "somewhat more freely;" that is, I have been induced to write the more freely, "partly" because I am appointed to this very office. I write somewhat more freely to a church among the Gentiles than I even should to one among the Jews, "because" I am appointed to this very office.

As putting you in mind - Greek, Calling to your "remembrance," or "reminding" you; compare 2 Peter 1:12-13. This was a delicate way of communicating instruction. The apostles presumed that all Christians were acquainted with the great doctrines of religion; but they did not command, enjoin, or assume a spirit; of dictation. How happy would it be if all teachers would imitate the example of the "apostles" in this, and be as modest and humble "as they were."

Because of the grace … - Because God has conferred the favor on me of appointing me to this function; see the note at Romans 1:5.

Verse 16

The minister - λειτουργὸν leitourgonThis is not the word which is commonly translated "minister" διάκονος diakonosThis word is properly appropriated to those who minister in public offices or the affairs of the state. In the New Testament it is applied mainly to the Levitical priesthood, who ministered and served at the altar; Hebrews 11:11. It is however applied to the ministers of the New Testament, as discharging "substantially" the same offices toward the church which were discharged by the Levitical priesthood; that is, as engaged in promoting the welfare of the church, occupied in holy things, etc.; Acts 13:2, "as they "ministered" to the Lord and fasted," etc. It is still used in a larger sense in Romans 15:27; 2 Corinthians 9:12.

To the Gentiles - Compare Romans 1:5; Acts 9:15.

Ministering - ἱερουργοῦντα hierourgountaPerforming the function of a priest in respect to the gospel of God. The office of a "priest" was to offer sacrifice. Paul here retains the "language," though without affirming or implying that the ministers of the New Testament were literally "priests" to offer sacrifice. The word used here occurs nowhere else in the New

Testament. Its meaning here is to be determined from the connection. The question is, What is the "sacrifice" of which he speaks? It is the "offering up" - the sacrifice of the Gentiles. The Jewish sacrifices were abolished. The Messiah had fulfilled the design of their appointment, and they were to be done away. (See the Epistle to the Hebrews.) There was to be no further "literal" sacrifice. But now the "offerings" of the Gentiles were to be as acceptable as had been the offerings of the Jews. God made no distinction; and in speaking of these offerings, Paul used "figurative" language drawn from the Jewish rites. But assuredly he did not mean that the offerings of the Gentiles were "literal" sacrifices to expiate sins; nor did he mean that there was to be an order of men who were to be called "priests" under the New Testament. If this passage "did" prove that, it would prove that it should be confined to the "apostles," for it is of them only that he uses it. The meaning is this: "Acting in the Christian church substantially as the priests did among the Jews; that is, endeavoring to secure the acceptableness of the offerings which the Gentiles make to God."

That the offering up - The word here rendered "offering up" προσφορά prosphoracommonly means "a sacrifice" or an "expiatory" offering, and is applied to Jewish sacrifices; Acts 21:26; Acts 24:17. It is also applied to the sacrifice which was made by our Lord Jesus Christ when he offered himself on the cross for the sins of people; Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 10:10. It does not always mean "bloody" sacrifices, but is used to denote "any" offering to God; Hebrews 10:5, Hebrews 10:8, Hebrews 10:14, Hebrews 10:18. Hence, it is used in this large sense to denote the "offering" which the Gentiles who were converted to Christianity made of themselves; their "devoting" or dedicating themselves to God. The "language" is derived from the customs of the Jews; and the apostle represents himself "figuratively" as a priest presenting this offering to God.

Might be acceptable - Or, approved by God. This was in accordance with the prediction in Isaiah 66:20, "They shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations," etc. This does not mean that it was by any merit of the apostle that this offering was to be rendered "acceptable"; but that he was appointed to prepare the way, so that "their" offering, as well as that of the "Jews," might come up before God.

Being sanctified - That is, "the offering" being sanctified, or made holy. The sacrifice was "prepared" or made fit "to be" an offering, among the Jews, by salt, oil, or frankincense, according to the nature of the sacrifice;

Leviticus 6:14, etc. In allusion to this, the apostle says that the offering of the Gentiles was rendered "holy," or fit to be offered, by the converting and purifying influences of the Holy Spirit. They were prepared, not by salt and frankincense, but by the cleansing influences of God's Spirit. The same idea, substantially, is expressed by the apostle Peter in Acts 10:46; Acts 11:17.

Verse 17

I have therefore … - I have cause of glorying. I have cause of rejoicing that God has made me a minister to the Gentiles, and that he has given me such success among them. The ground of this he states in Romans 15:18-22.

Glory - Of "boasting" καύχησιν kauchēsinthe word usually rendered "boasting"); James 4:16; Romans 3:27; 2 Corinthians 7:14; 2 Corinthians 8:24; 2 Corinthians 9:3-4; 2 Corinthians 10:15; 2 Corinthians 11:10, 2 Corinthians 11:17. It means also "praise, thanksgiving," and "joy;" 1 Corinthians 15:31; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 2 Corinthians 7:4; 2 Corinthians 8:24; 1 Thessalonians 2:19. This is its meaning here, that the apostle had great cause of "rejoicing" or "praise" that he had been so highly honored in the appointment to this office, and in his success in it.

Through Jesus Christ - By the assistance of Jesus Christ; ascribing his success among the Gentiles to the aid which Jesus Christ had rendered him.

In those things which pertain to God - Compare Hebrews 5:1. The things of religion; the things which God has commanded, and which pertain to his honor and glory. They were not things which pertained to "Paul," but to "God:" not worked by Paul, but by Jesus Christ; yet he might rejoice that he had been the means of diffusing so far those blessings. The success of a minister is not for "his own" praises, but for the honor of God; not by his skill or power, but by the aid of Jesus Christ; yet he may rejoice that "through" him such blessings are conferred upon people.

Verse 18

For I will not dare to speak - I should be restrained; I should be afraid to speak, if the thing were not as I have stated. I should be afraid to set up a claim beyond what is strictly in accordance with the truth.

Which Christ hath not wrought by me - I confine myself "strictly" to what I have done. I do not arrogate to myself what Christ has done by others. I do not exaggerate my own success, or claim what others have accomplished.

To make the Gentiles obedient - To bring them to obey God in the gospel.

By word and deed - By preaching, and by all other means; by miracle, by example, etc. The "deeds," that is, the "lives" of Christian ministers are often as efficacious in bringing people to Christ as their public ministry.

Verse 19

Through mighty signs and wonders - By stupendous and striking miracles; see the note at Acts 2:43. Paul here refers, doubtless, to the miracles which he had himself performed; see Acts 19:11-12, "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul," etc.

By the power of the Spirit of God - This may either be connected with signs and wonders, and then it will mean that those miracles were performed by the power of the Holy Spirit; or it may constitute a new subject, and refer to the gift of prophecy, the power of speaking other languages. Which is its true meaning cannot, perhaps, be ascertained. The interpretations "agree" in this, that he traced his success in "all" things to the aid of the Holy Spirit.

So that from Jerusalem - Jerusalem, as a "center" of his work; the center of all religious operations and preaching under the gospel. This was not the place where "Paul" began to preach Galatians 1:17-18, but it was the place where the "gospel" was first preached, and the apostles began to reckon their success from that as a point; compare the note at Luke 24:49.

And round about - καί κύκλῳ kai kuklōIn a circle. That is, taking Jerusalem as a center, he had fully preached round that center until you come to Illyricum.

Unto Illyricum - Illyricum was a province lying to the northwest of Macedonia, bounded north by a part of Italy and Germany, east by Macedonia, south by the Adriatic, west by Istria. It comprehended the modern Croatia and Dalmatia. So that taking Jerusalem as a center, Paul preached not only in Damascus and Arabia, but in Syria, in Asia Minor, in all Greece, in the Grecian Islands, and in Thessaly and Macedonia. This comprehended no small part of the then known world; "all" of which had heard the gospel by the labors of one indefatigable man There is no where in the Acts express mention of Paul‘s going "into" Illyricum; nor does the expression imply that he preached the gospel "within" it, but only "unto" its borders. It may have been, however, that when in Macedonia, he crossed over into that country; and this is rendered somewhat probable from the fact

that "Titus" is mentioned as having gone into "Dalmatia" 2 Timothy 4:10, which was a part of Illyricum.

I have fully preached - The word used here means properly "to fill up" πεπληρωκέναι peplērōkenai"to complete," and here is used in the sense of "diffusing abroad," or of "filling up" all that region with the gospel; compare 2 Timothy 4:17. It means that he had faithfully diffused the knowledge of the gospel in all that immense country.

Verse 20

Yea, so have I strived - The word used here φιλοτιμούμενον philotimoumenonmeans properly "to be ambitious, to be studious of honor;" and then to "desire" earnestly. In that sense it is used here. He earnestly desired; he made it a point for which he struggled, to penetrate into regions which had not heard the gospel.

Not where Christ was named - Where the gospel had not been before preached.

Lest I should build … - That is, he desired to found churches himself; he regarded himself as particularly called to this. Others might be called to edify the church, but he regarded it as his function to make known the name of the Saviour where it was not before known. This work was particularly adapted to the ardor, zeal, energy, and bravery of such a man as Paul. Every man has his proper gift; and there are some particularly suited to "found" and establish churches; others to edify and comfort them; compare 2 Corinthians 10:13-16. The apostle chose the higher honor, involving most danger and responsibility; but still any office in building up the church is honorable.

Verse 21

But as it is written - Isaiah 52:15. This is not literally quoted, but the sense is retained. The design of quoting it is to justify the principle on which the apostle acted. It was revealed that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles; and he regarded it as a high honor to be the instrument of carrying this prediction into effect.

Verse 22

For which cause - I have been so entirely occupied in this leading purpose of my life, that I have not been able to come to you.

Much hindered - Many ways; not many times. I had so frequent and urgent demands on my time elsewhere, that I could not come to you.

From coming to you - Where the gospel "has been" preached. I have desired to come, but have been unable to leave the vast region where I might preach the gospel to those who had never heard it.

Verse 23

But now … - Having no further opportunity in these regions to preach to those who have never heard the gospel.

In these parts - In the regions before specified. He had gone over them, had established churches, had left them in the care of elders Acts 20:17, and was now prepared to penetrate into some new region, and lay the foundation of other churches.

And having a great desire … - See Romans 1:9-13.

Verse 24

Whensoever I take my journey into Spain - Ancient Spain comprehended the modern kingdoms of Spain and Portugal, or the whole of the Spanish peninsula. It was then subject to the Romans. It is remarkable, even here, that the apostle does not say that his principal object was to visit the church at Rome, much as he desired that, but only to "take it in his way" in the fulfillment of his higher purpose to preach the gospel in regions where Christ was not named. Whether he ever fulfilled his purpose of visiting "Spain" is a matter of doubt. Some of the fathers, Theodoret (on Philemon 1:25; 2 Timothy 4:17) among others, say that after he was released from his captivity when he was brought before Nero, he passed two years in Spain. If he was imprisoned a "second" time at Rome, such a visit is not improbable as having taken place "between" the two imprisonments. But there is no certain evidence of this. Paul probably projected "many" journeys which were never accomplished.

To be brought on my way … - To be assisted by you in regard to this journey; or to be accompanied by you. This was the custom of the churches; Acts 15:3; Acts 17:14-15; Acts 20:38; Acts 21:5; 1 Corinthians 16:6, 1 Corinthians 16:11; 3 John 1:8.

If first … - If on my journey, before I go into Spain.

Somewhat - Greek, "In part." As though he could not be "fully" satisfied with their company, or could not hope to enjoy their society as fully and as long as he could desire. This is a very tender and delicate expression.

Filled - This is a strong expression, meaning to be "satisfied," to enjoy. To be "filled" with a thing is to have great satisfaction and joy in it.

With your company - Greek, With "you;" meaning in your society. The expression "to be filled" with one, in the sense of being "gratified," is sometimes used in the classic writers. (See "Clarke" on this verse.)

Verse 25

But now I go … - I am about to go now. The mention of this intended journey to Jerusalem is introduced in several other places, and is so mentioned that Dr. Paley has derived from it a very strong argument for the genuineness of this Epistle. This intended journey is mentioned in Acts 19:21, "Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying after I have been there, I must also see Rome;" see also Acts 20:2-3. That he "went" to Jerusalem according to his purpose is recorded in his defense before Felix Acts 24:17, "Now after many years, I came to bring alms to my nation and offerings."

To minister to the saints - To supply their necessities by bearing the contribution which the churches have made for them.

Verse 26

For it hath pleased them of Macedonia - That is, they have done it "cheerfully" and "voluntarily." See their liberality and cheerfulness commended by the apostle in 2 Corinthians 8:1-6; 2 Corinthians 9:2. Paul had been at much pains to obtain this collection, but still they did it freely; see 2 Corinthians 9:4-7. It was with reference to this collection that he directed them to lay by for this purpose as God had prospered them on the first day of the week; 1 Corinthians 16:1.

Of Macedonia - That is, the Christians in Macedonia - those who had been Gentiles, and who had been converted to the Christian religion; Romans 15:27. Macedonia was a country of Greece, bounded north by Thrace, south by Thessaly, west by Epirus, and east by the AEgean sea. It was an extensive region, and was the kingdom of Philip, and his son Alexander the Great. Its capital was Philippi, at which place Paul planted a church. A church was also established at Thessalonica, another city of that country; Acts 16:9, etc.; compare Acts 18:5; Acts 19:21; 2 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8; 1 Thessalonians 4:10.

And Achaia - Achaia in the largest sense comprehended "all" ancient Greece. Achaia Proper, however, was a province of Greece embracing the western part of the Peloponnesus, of which Corinth was the capital; see the note at Acts 18:12. This place is mentioned as having been concerned in this collection in 2 Corinthians 9:2.

The poor saints … - The Christians who were in Judea were exposed to special trials. They were condemned by the sanhedrin, opposed by the rulers, and persecuted by the people; see Acts 8:1, etc.; Acts 12:1, etc. Paul sought not only to relieve them by this contribution, but also to promote fellow-feeling between them and the Gentile Christians. And "this" circumstance would tend much to enforce what he had been urging in Romans 14; 15 on the duty of kind feeling between the Jewish and Gentile converts to Christianity. Nothing tends so much to wear off prejudice, and to prevent unkind feeling in regard to others, as to set about some purpose "to do them good," or to unite "with" them in doing good.

Verse 27

Their debtors - The reason he immediately states; compare Romans 1:14.

Of their spiritual things - Have received the gospel by the instrumentality of those who had been Jews; and were admitted now to the same privileges with them.

Carnal things - Things pertaining to the flesh; that is, to this life. On this ground the apostle puts the obligation to support the ministers of the gospel; 1 Corinthians 9:11. It becomes a matter of "debt" where the hearer of the gospel "receives," in spiritual blessings, far more than he confers by supporting the ministry. Every man who contributes his due proportion to support the gospel may receive far more, in return, in his own peace, edification, and in the order and happiness of his family, than his money could purchase in any other way. The "gain" is on his side, and the money is not lost. The minister is not a beggar; and what is necessary to his support is not almsgiving. He has an equitable claim - as much as a physician, or a lawyer, or a teacher of youth has - on the necessaries and comforts of life.

Verse 28

Have sealed to them - That is, have "secured it" to them. To seal an instrument of writing, a contract, deed, etc. is to "authenticate it," to make it "sure." In this sense it is used here. Paul was going himself to see that it was placed "securely" in their hands.

This fruit - This result of the liberality of the Gentile churches - the fruit which their benevolence had produced.

I will come … - This was Paul's full purpose; but it is not clear that he ever accomplished it; Note, Romans 15:24.

By you - Taking Rome in my way.

Verse 29

I am sure - Greek, I know; expressing the fullest confidence, a confidence that was greatly confirmed by the success of his labors elsewhere.

In the fulness of the blessings … - This is a Hebrew mode of expression, where one noun performs the purpose of an adjective, and means "with a full or abundant blessing." This confidence he, expressed in other language in Romans 1:11-12; see the notes.

Of the gospel of Christ - Which the gospel of Christ is suited to impart. Thus, every minister of the gospel should wish to go. This should be his everburning desire in preaching. Paul went to Rome; but he went in bonds; Acts 28:30-31. God may disappoint us in regard to the "mode" in which we purpose to do good; but if we really desire it, he will enable us to do it in "his own way." It "may" be better to preach the gospel in "bonds" than at liberty; it "is" better to do it even in a prison, than not at all. Bunyan wrote the Pilgrim‘s Progress to amuse his heavy hours during a twelve years‘ cruel imprisonment. If he had been at liberty, he probably would not have written it at all. The great desire of his heart was accomplished, but a "prison" was the place in which to do it. Paul preached; but preached in chains.

Verse 30

For the Lord Jesus Christ‘s sake - Greek, By or through διά diaour Lord Jesus Christ; It means probably out of love and regard to him; in order to promote his honor and glory, and to extend his kingdom among people. Paul desired to be delivered from the bands of the Jews, that he might promote the honor of Jesus Christ among the Gentiles.

And for the love of the Spirit - διά diaBy the mutual love and sympathy which the Spirit of God produces in the minds of all who are the friends of God. I beseech you now to manifest that love by praying earnestly for me.

That ye strive together with me - That you unite with me in earnest prayer. The word "strive" denotes intense "agony" or effort, such as was used by the wrestlers in the Greek games; and then the "agony," or strong effort, which a man makes in prayer, who is earnestly desirous to be heard. The use of the word here denotes Paul‘s earnest desire that they should make an "intense" effort in their prayers that he might be delivered. Christians, though at a distance from each other, may unite their prayers for

a common object. Christians everywhere "should" wrestle in prayer for the ministers of the gospel, that they may be kept from temptations; and especially for those who are engaged, as the apostle was, in arduous efforts among the pagan, that they may be kept from the many dangers to which they are exposed in their journeying in pagan lands.

Verse 31

That I may be … - The unbelieving Jews in Judea had been opposed to Paul's conversion. They could not forget that he had borne letters of commission from them to persecute the Christians at Damascus. They regarded him as an apostate. They had heard of his success among the Gentiles; and they had been informed that he "taught all the Jews among the Gentiles to forsake the laws of Moses;" Acts 21:21. Hence, the apostle could not but be aware that in returning to Judea, he exposed himself to special dangers. His fears, as the result showed, were well founded. They evinced all the opposition to him which he had ever anticipated; Acts 21:22-23, Acts 21:26-27.

(2) many of the converts from Judaism might be indisposed to receive an offering made by "Gentiles." They might have retained many of their former feelings - that the Gentiles were polluted, and that they ought to have no fellowship with them. Early opinions and prejudices wear off by slow degrees. Christians retain former notions long after their conversion; and often many years are required to teach them enlarged views of Christian charity. It is not wonderful that the Christians in Judea should have been slow to learn all the ennobling lessons of Christian benevolence, surrounded as they were by the institutions of the Jewish religion, and having been themselves educated in the strictest regard for those institutions.

Verse 32

That I may come to you - That I I may not be impeded in my intended journey by opposition in Judea.

With joy - Joy to myself in being permitted to come; and producing joy to you by my presence.

By the will of God - If God will; if God permit. After all his desires, and all their prayers, it still depended on the will of God; and to that the apostle was desirous to submit. This should be the end of our most ardent desires, and this the object of all our prayers, that the will of God should be

done; compare James 4:14-15. Paul "did" go by the will of God; but he went in bonds.

And be refreshed - Greek, May find "rest" or "solace" with you.

Verse 33

Now the God of peace - God, the author or promoter of peace and union. In Romans 15:13, he is called the God of hope. Here the apostle desires that the God who gives peace would impart to them union of sentiment and feeling, particularly between the Jewish and Gentile Christians - the great object for which he labored in his journey to Judea, and which he had been endeavoring to promote throughout this Epistle; see 1 Corinthians 14:33; Hebrews 13:20.

This is the close of the doctrinal and hortatory parts of this Epistle. The remainder is made up chiefly of salutations. In the verses concluding this chapter, Paul expressed his earnest desire to visit Rome. He besought his brethren to pray that he might be delivered from the unbelievers among the Jews. His main desire was granted. He was permitted to visit Rome; yet the very thing from which he sought to be delivered, the very opposition of the Jews, made it necessary for him to appeal to Caesar, and this was the means of his accomplishing his desire. (See the closing chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.) God thus often grants our "main desire;" he hears our prayer; but he may make use of that from which we pray to be delivered as the "means" of fulfilling our own requests. The Christian prays that he may be sanctified; yet at the same time he may pray to be delivered from affliction. God will hear his main desire, to be made holy; will convert what he fears into a blessing, and make it the means of accomplishing the great end. It is right to express our "desires - all" our desires - to God; but it should be with a willingness that he should choose his own means to accomplish the object of our wishes. Provided the "God of peace" is with us, all is well.

ROMANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Introduction

The Epistle concludes with various salutations. The "names" which occur in this chapter are chiefly "Greek;" and the persons designated had been probably inhabitants of Greece, but had removed to Rome for purposes of commerce, etc. Possibly some of them had been converted under the ministry of the apostle himself during his preaching in Corinth and other parts of Greece. It is remarkable that the name of "Peter" does not occur in this catalogue; which is conclusive evidence, contrary to the Papists, that Peter was not then known by Paul to be in Rome.

Verse 1

I commend - It was common then, as now, to bear letters of introduction to strangers, commending the person thus introduced to the favorable regards and attentions of those to whom the letters were addressed; 2 Corinthians 3:1; Acts 18:27. This Epistle, with the apostle's commendation, was designed thus to introduce its bearer to the Roman Christians. The mention of Phebe in this manner leaves it beyond a doubt that she was either the bearer of this Epistle, or accompanied those who bore it to Rome. The Epistle was therefore written, probably, at Corinth. (See Introduction.)

Our sister - A member of the Christian church.

Which is a servant - Greek," Who is a deaconess." It is clear from the New Testament that there was an order of women in the church known as "deaconesses." Reference is made to a class of females whose duty it was to "teach" other females, and to take the general superintendence of that part of the church, in various places in the New Testament; and their existence is expressly affirmed in early ecclesiastical history. They appear to have been commonly aged and experienced widows, sustaining fair reputation, and suited to guide and instruct those who were young and inexperienced; compare 1 Timothy 5:3, 1 Timothy 5:9-11; Titus 2:4. The Apostolical Constitutions, book iii. say, "Ordain a deaconess who is faithful and holy, for the ministries toward the women." Pliny in his celebrated letter to Trajan, says, when speaking of the efforts which he made to obtain information respecting the opinions and practices of Christians, "I deemed it necessary to put two maidservants who are called "ministrae" (that is

“deaconesses”) to the torture, in order to ascertain what is the truth.” The reasons of their appointment among the Gentiles were these:

(1) The females were usually separate from the men. They were kept secluded, for the most part, and not permitted to mingle in society with men as is the custom now.

(2) it became necessary, therefore, to appoint aged and experienced females to instruct the young, to visit the sick, to provide for them, and to perform for them the services which male deacons performed for the whole church. It is evident, however, that they were confined to these offices, and that they were never regarded as an order of ministers, or suffered “to preach” to congregations; 1 Timothy 2:12; 1 Corinthians 14:34.

Of the church … - This is the only mention which occurs of a church at that place. It was probably collected by the labors of Paul.

At Cenchrea - This was the “sea-port” of Corinth. Corinth was situated on the middle of the isthmus, and had “two” harbors, or ports: “Cenchrea” on the east, about eight or nine miles from the city; and “Lechaeum” on the west. Cenchrea opened into the AEgean sea, and was the principal port. It was on this “isthmus,” between these two ports, that the “Isthmian” games were celebrated, to which the apostle refers so often in his epistles.

Verse 2

That ye receive her … - That you acknowledge her as being in the Lord, or as being a servant of the Lord; that is, as a Christian; compare Romans 14:3; Philemon 2:29.

As becometh saints - As it is proper that Christians should treat their brethren.

She hath been a succourer of many - The word used here προστάτις prostatismeans properly “a patron, a help,” and was applied by the Greeks to one who “presided” over an assembly; to one who became “a patron” of others; who aided or defended them in their cause; and especially to one who undertook to manage the cause of “strangers” and foreigners before the courts. It was, therefore, an honorable appellation. Applied to Phebe, it means probably that she had shown great kindness in various ways to the apostle, and to other Christians; probably by receiving them into her house; by administering to the sick, etc. Such persons have a claim on the respect and Christian attentions of others.

Verse 3

Greet Priscilla and Aquila - Salute; implying the apostle‘s kind remembrance of them, and his wishes for their welfare.

Priscilla - Priscilla was the wife of Aquila. They are mentioned in Acts 18:2, Acts 18:26; 1 Corinthians 16:19. Paul at first found them at Corinth. Aquila was a Jew, born in Pontus, who had resided at Rome, and who had left Rome, and come to Corinth, when Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome; see the notes at Acts 18:2. It is probable that they were converted under the preaching of Paul. Paul lived with them, and they had the advantage of his private instruction; Acts 18:3; compare Acts 18:26. At the death of Claudius, or whenever the decree for the expulsion of the Jews was repealed, it is probable that they returned to Rome.

My helpers - My fellow-workers. They had aided him in his work. A particular instance is mentioned in Acts 18:26. They are mentioned as having been with Paul when he wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians; 1 Corinthians 16:19.

In Christ Jesus - In the Christian cause.

Verse 4

Who have for my life - In order to save my life.

Laid down their own necks - To “lay down the neck” is to lay the head on a block to be cut off with the axe; or to bow down the head as when the neck was exposed to be cut off by the sword of the executioner. The meaning is, that they had hazarded their lives, had exposed themselves to imminent danger, to save the life of Paul. On what occasion this was done, is not known, as it is not referred to in the New Testament elsewhere. As Paul, however, lived with them Acts 18:3, and as he was often persecuted by the Jews, it is probable that he refers to some such period when he was persecuted, when Aquila and Priscilla took him into their house at the imminent hazard of their lives.

All the churches of the Gentiles - All the churches that had been founded by the apostles. They “felt” their deep obligation to them for having saved the life of him who had been their founder, and who was their spiritual father.

Verse 5

The church that is in their house - Aquila and Priscilla are mentioned Acts 18:26 as having received “Apollos” into their family, to instruct him more perfectly. The church in their house is also mentioned 1 Corinthians 16:19. This may mean either the church that was accustomed to assemble

for worship at their hospitable mansion; or it may mean their own family with their guests, regarded as a "church." In those times Christians had no houses erected for public worship, and were therefore compelled to meet in their private dwellings.

Salute - The same word before translated "greet."

Who is the first-fruits - One who first embraced Christianity under my preaching in Achaia. The "first-fruits" were a small part of the harvest, which was first gathered and offered to the Lord; Exodus 22:29; Exodus 23:16; Leviticus 2:12; Deuteronomy 18:4. In allusion to this, Paul calls Epenetus the first-fruits of the great spiritual harvest which had been gathered in Achaia.

Achaia - See the note at Romans 15:26. This name and those which follow are chiefly "Greek," but we know little of the persons mentioned, except what is here recorded.

Verse 6

Who bestowed much labour on us - Who labored much for us. Nothing more is known of her but this honorable mention of her name. It is probable that these persons were formerly residents in Greece, and that the apostle had there become acquainted with them, but that they had now removed to Rome.

Verse 7

My kinsmen - In Romans 9:3, the apostle calls "all" the Jews "his kinsmen," and it has been doubted whether he means anything more here than that they were "fellow Jews." But as many others who were Jews are mentioned here without this appellation, and as he especially designates these persons, and Herodian Romans 16:11, it seems probable that they were remote relatives of the apostle.

My fellow-prisoners - Paul was often in prison; and it is probable that on some of those occasions they had been confined with him; compare 2 Corinthians 11:23, "In prisons more frequent."

Who are of note - The word translated "of note" ἐπίσημοι episēmoidenotes properly those who are "marked," designated, or distinguished in any way, used either in a good or bad sense; compare Matthew 27:16. Here it is used in a good sense.

Among the apostles - This does not mean that they "were" apostles, as has been sometimes supposed. For,

(1) There is no account of their having been appointed as such.

(2) the expression is not one which would have been used if they "had" been. It would have been "who were distinguished apostles;" compare Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Philemon 1:1.

(3) it by no means implies that they were apostles All that the expression fairly implies is, that they were known to the other apostles; that they were regarded by them as worthy of their affection and confidence; that they had been known by them, as Paul immediately adds, before "he" was himself converted. They had been converted "before" he was, and were distinguished in Jerusalem among the early Christians, and honored with the friendship of the other apostles.

(4) the design of the office of "apostles" was to bear "witness" to the life, death, resurrection, doctrines, and miracles of Christ; compare Acts 1:21, Acts 1:26; Acts 22:15. As there is no evidence that they had been "witnesses" of these things; or appointed to it, it is improbable that they were set apart to the apostolic office.

(5) the word "apostles" is used sometimes to designate "messengers" of churches; or those who were "sent" from one church to another on some important business, and "if" this expression meant that they "were" apostles, it could only be in some such sense as having obtained deserved credit and eminence in that business; see Philemon 2:25; 2 Corinthians 8:23.

Who were in Christ … - Who were "converted" before I was. The meaning is clear. The expression, "in Christ," means to be united to him, to be interested in his religion, to be Christians.

Verse 10

Approved in Christ - An approved or tried Christian; approved and beloved by Christ.

Verse 12

Tryphena and Tryphosa - These names, with the participle rendered "who labor," are in the feminine gender, and these were probably two holy women, who performed the function of deaconesses, or who ministered to the sick, and who with Persia, thus by example, and perhaps by instruction, labored to promote the spread of Christianity. Pious females, then, as now,

were able to do much in their proper sphere to extend the truths and blessings of the gospel.

Verse 13

Chosen in the Lord - "Elect" in the Lord; that is, a chosen follower of Christ.

And his mother and mine - "His mother in a literal sense, and mine in a figurative one." An instance of the delicacy and tenderness of Paul; of his love for this disciple and his mother, as if he were of the same family. Religion binds the hearts of all who embrace it tenderly together. It makes them feel that they are one great family, united by tender ties, and joined by special attachments. See what the Lord Jesus declared in Matthew 12:47-50, and his tender address to John when he was on the cross; John 19:26-27.

Verse 16

Salute one another - Greet one another in an affectionate mannner; that is, treat each other with kindness and love, and evince all proper marks of affection.

With an holy kiss - This mode of salutation has been practiced at all times; and particularly in eastern nations. It was even practiced by "men;" see the note at Luke 22:47-48. The use of the word "holy" here serves to denote that Paul intended it as an expression of "Christian" affection; and to guard against all improper familiarity and scandal. It was common, according to Justin Martyr (*Apology*), for the early Christians to practice it in their religious assemblies.

The churches of Christ - That is, the churches in the vicinity of the place where the apostle wrote this Epistle; probably the churches particularly in Achaia.

Verse 17

Now I beseech you - One great object of this Epistle had been to promote "peace" between the Jewish and Gentile converts. So much did this subject press upon the mind of the apostle, that he seems unwilling so leave it. He returns to it again and again; and even after the Epistle is apparently concluded, he returns to it, to give them a new charge on the subject.

Mark them - Observe attentively, cautiously, and faithfully Philemon 3:17; be on your guard against them. Ascertain "who are" the real causes of the divisions that spring up, and avoid them.

Which cause - Who make. Probably he refers here to "Jewish" teachers, or those who insisted strenuously on the observance of the rites of Moses, and who set up a claim for greater purity and orthodoxy than those possessed who received the Gentile converts as Christian brethren. The Jews were perpetually thus recalling the Christian converts to the Law of Moses; insisting on the observance of those rites; troubling the churches, and producing dissensions and strifes; Galatians 3:1; Galatians 5:1-8; Acts 15:1, Acts 15:24.

Divisions - Dissensions; parties; factions; 1 Corinthians 3:3; Galatians 5:20. The very "attempt" to form such parties was evil, no matter what the pretence. They who attempt to form parties in the churches are commonly actuated by some evil or ambitious design.

And offences - Scandals; or that give occasion for others to fall into sin. These two things are different. The first means parties; the other denotes such a course of life as would lead others into sin. The "Jew" would form parties, on the pretence of superior holiness; the Gentiles, or some hold Gentile convert might deride the scrupulous feelings of the Jew, and might thus lead him into "sin" in regard to what his conscience really forbade; see Romans 14:15. These persons on both sides were to he avoided, and they were to refuse to follow them, and to cultivate the spirit of unity and peace.

Contrary to the doctrine - To the "teaching" which you have received in this Epistle and elsewhere; the teaching that these divisions should cease; that the Jewish ceremonies are not binding; that all should lay aside their causes of former difference, and be united in one family; see 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 John 1:10; Galatians 1:8-9. That is, avoid them as "teachers;" do not follow them. It does not mean that they were to be treated harshly; but that they were to be avoided in their "instructions." They were to disregard all that they could say tending to produce alienation and strife; and resolve to cultivate the spirit of peace and union. This would be an admirable rule if always followed. Let people make "peace" their prime object; resolve to love all who "are" Christians, and it will be an infallible guage by which to measure the arguments of those who seek to promote alienations and contentions.

Verse 18

Serve not - Obey not. Though they are professedly, yet they are not his real friends and followers.

But their own belly - Their own "lusts;" their own private interests; they do this to obtain support. The authors of parties and divisions, in church and state, have this usually in view. It is for the indulgence of some earthly appetite; to obtain function or property; or to gratify the love of dominion.

And by good words - Mild, fair, plausible speeches; with an appearance of great sincerity, and regard for the truth; compare Colossians 2:4; 2 Peter 3:3. People who cause divisions commonly make great pretensions to peculiar love of truth and orthodoxy; and put on the appearance of great sincerity, sanctity, and humility.

And fair speeches - Greek εὐλογίας eulogiaseulogy, praise, flattery. This is another very common art. "Flattery" is one of the most powerful means of forming parties in the church; and "a little special attention," or promise of an office, or commendation for talents or acquirements, will secure "many" to the purposes of party whom no regard for truth or orthodoxy could influence a moment.

Deceive the hearts of the simple - The minds of the unsuspecting, or those who are without guile τῶν ἀκάκων tōn akakōnThe apostle means to designate those who are simple-hearted, without any disposition to deceive others themselves, and of course without any suspicions of the "designs" of others. He has thus drawn the art of making parties with the hand of a master. First, there are smooth, plausible pretences, as of great love for truth. Then, an artful mingling of attentions and flatteries; and all this practiced on the minds of the unsuspecting, drawing their "hearts" and "affections" toward themselves. Happy would it have been if the art had been confined to his own times.

Verse 19

For your obedience … - Romans 1:8. Your mild, obedient disposition to learn, and to obey the precepts of the teachers of religion.

I am glad … - I rejoice that you evince such a disposition. But he immediately adds, that "this" was just the temper to be imposed upon, and cautions them against that danger.

Wise unto that which is good - Evince understanding of what is adapted to promote good and worthy ends.

Simple concerning evil - Greek, "harmless." Not disposed to do wrong; having no plan and yielding to none of the allurements of evil. You have shown your wisdom in "obeying" the gospel. I would have you still evince

wisdom toward "every good" design; but to be unacquainted with "any" plan of evil. Do not yield to those plans, or follow those who would lead you into them.

Verse 20

And the God of peace - The God who promotes peace; Romans 15:33.

Will bruise - The "language" here refers to the prediction in Genesis 3:15. It here means to "subdue, to gain the victory over." It denotes Paul's confidence that they "would" gain the victory, and would be able to overcome all the arts of those who were endeavoring to sow discord and contention among them.

Satan - The word "Satan" is Hebrew, meaning originally "an accuser, a calumniator," and then "an enemy." It is given to the prince of evil spirits from this enmity to God and human beings. He is here regarded as the "author" of all attempts to promote discord in the church, by whomsoever those attempts were made. Hence, they who attempt to produce divisions are called "his ministers;" 2 Corinthians 11:15. God would disappoint their malignant purposes, and promote the prevalence of peace.

The grace - The favor; the mercy, etc. The Lord Jesus is the Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6; compare Luke 2:14; John 14:27), and this expression is "a prayer" to him, or an earnest wish expressed, that the design of his coming might be accomplished in promoting the prevalence of order and peace; compare 1 Corinthians 16:23; Revelation 22:21.

Verse 21

Timotheus - Timothy; to whom the Epistles which bear his name were written. He was long the companion of Paul in his labors; Acts 16:1; 1 Corinthians 16:10; 2 Corinthians 1:1, 2 Corinthians 1:19; Philemon 2:29; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; 1 Timothy 1:2; Hebrews 13:23.

And Lucius - He is mentioned in Acts 13:1, as a prophet and teacher, a native of Cyrene. Nothing more is known of him.

My kinsmen - Romans 16:7.

Verse 22

I Tertius - Of Tertius nothing more is known than is mentioned here.

Who wrote this - It is evident that Paul employed an amanuensis to write this Epistle, and perhaps he commonly did it. Tertius, who thus wrote it, joins with the apostle in affectionate salutations to the brethren at Rome. To the Epistle, Paul signed his own name, and added a salutation in his own hand-writing. Colossians 4:18, "The salutation by the hand of me Paul;"

and in 2 Thessalonians 3:17, he says that this was done in every epistle, 1 Corinthians 16:21.

In the Lord - As Christian brethren.

Verse 23

Gaius mine host - Who has received me into his house, and shown me hospitality. The word "host" means one who entertains another at his own house without reward.

And of the whole church - Who has opened his house to entertain "all" Christians; or to show hospitality to them all. He was baptized by Paul himself at Corinth 1 Corinthians 1:14; and was so highly esteemed by the church that John wrote an epistle to him; 3 John 1:1. He was probably a wealthy citizen of Corinth, who freely opened his house to entertain Christians, and for the purpose of religious worship.

Erastus - Erastus is mentioned Acts 19:22 as having been sent by Paul with Timothy into Macedonia. He is also mentioned 2 Timothy 4:20 as having resided at Corinth.

The chamberlain - A chamberlain is properly an officer who has charge of a chamber, or of chambers. In England, the lord chamberlain is the sixth officer of the crown, and has charge of the king's lodgings, and wardrobe, etc. He has also an important rank on days of public solemnities, as the coronation day, etc. The word used here is commonly in the New Testament translated "steward." It properly means one who has charge of domestic affairs, to provide for a family, to pay the servants, etc. In this place it means one who presided over the pecuniary affairs of the "city," and should have been translated "the treasurer; the city treasurer;" an once of trust and of some importance, showing that, "all" who were converted at Corinth were not of the lowest rank. This is implied in 1 Corinthians 1:26, "Not many wise men, not many mighty, not many noble, are called," implying that there were some such.

Quartus a brother - A fellow-Christian.

Verse 25

Now to him - This and the two following verses are found in many manuscripts at the close of Romans 16:20.

Is of power - Greek, Is able; who has power; Ephesians 3:20; Jude 1:24, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling," etc. God only can keep Christians in the path of salvation; and it was well to bring that truth prominently into view at the close of the Epistle.

To establish you - To strengthen and confirm you.

According to my gospel - According to the gospel which I preach; the doctrines which I have been defending in this Epistle. It is called "his" gospel, not because he was the author of it, or because others did not preach it also, but because he had been "particularly" defending it in this Epistle. The doctrines which he had advanced were just those which were suited to strengthen and confirm them, - the doctrine of justification, of election, of perseverance, and of the protection and favor of God to both Jews and Gentiles. These were the doctrines which he had defended; and it might easily be shown that "these" are the doctrines that give stability to the Christian faith, hope, and love.

And the preaching of Jesus Christ - Not his "personal" preaching; but according to that preaching of which Christ is the author and the subject; and particularly, as the following clause shows, to the doctrines by which the partition between the Jews and the Gentiles was broken down, and by which they were admitted to the same privileges and hopes.

According to the revelation - According to the communication of what has been so long concealed, but which is now made manifest. The word "revelation" refers to the "publication" of the plan by the gospel.

Of the mystery - The word "mystery" means properly what is "hidden" or "concealed," and is thus applied to any doctrine which was not before known. It does not mean necessarily what is "unintelligible;" but what had not been before revealed; see the note at Matthew 13:11. The word here seems to refer to the principal doctrines of the gospel; its main truths, which had been concealed, especially from the entire Gentile world, but which were now made known.

Which was kept secret - Which were kept in "silence" (Greek, σεσιγημένου sesigēmenou), were not divulged or proclaimed.

Since the world began - In all past times. This refers particularly to the Gentiles. The Jews had some obscure intimations of these truths, but they were now made known to all the world. The phrase "since the world began" is in Greek, "in eternal times;" that is, in all past times; or, as we should say, they have been "always" concealed.

Verse 26

But now is made manifest - Is revealed, or made known; that which was so long concealed is now divulged, that is, God's plan of saving people is now made known to all nations.

And by the Scriptures … - By the "writings" of the prophets. The prophetic writings contained the doctrines, obscurely indeed, but so as to be an important means of disseminating and confirming the truth that the Gentiles should be made acquainted with the gospel. To those writings the apostle had repeatedly appealed in his defense of the proposition that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentile word; Matthew 28:19; compare Colossians 1:23.

For the obedience of faith - To produce obedience to the requirements of the gospel; see the note at Romans 1:5.

Verse 27

To God only wise - The apostle here resumes the doxology which had been interrupted by the parenthesis. The attribute of "wisdom" is here brought into view, because it had been particularly displayed in this plan which was now revealed. It evinced, in an eminent degree, the "wisdom" of God. That wisdom was evinced in devising the plan; in adapting it to the renewing of the heart; the justification of the sinner; his preservation, guidance, and sanctification; and in the manner in which the divine attributes had all been seen to harmonize. All this the apostle had illustrated in the previous parts of the Epistle; and now, full of the convictions of this wisdom, he desires that all the praise and honor should be to God. The "tendency" of the plan is to promote his glory. The "obligation" on all who are benefitted by it is to give him praise.

Be glory - Praise; honor.

Through Jesus Christ - By means of the work which Jesus Christ has performed; through him now as mediator and intercessor in the heavens.

The subscription, "written to the Romans," etc. is evidently added by some other hand, but by whom is unknown. Paul assuredly would not write this to inform the Romans that it was sent by Phebe, whom he had just commended to their kindness. It has been shown, moreover, that no reliance is to be placed on any of the subscriptions to the Epistles. Some of them are known to be false. By whom they were added is unknown. In this case, however, the fact which it states is correct, that it was written from Corinth and sent by Phoebe.

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Contents

1 CORINTHIANS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to 1Corinthians

Section 1. The Situation of Corinth, and the Character of its Inhabitants

Corinth was properly a small dynasty, or territory in Greece, bounded on the east by the gulf of Saron; on the south by the kingdom of Argos; on the west by Sicyon; and on the north by the kingdom of Megaris, and upper part of the isthmus and bay of Corinth, the latter of which is now called the Golfo de Lepanto, or the gulf of Lepanto. This tract, or region, not large in size, possessed a few rich plains, but was in general uneven, and the soil of an indifferent quality. The city of Corinth was the capital of this region. It stood near the middle of the isthmus, which in the narrowest part was about six miles wide, though somewhat wider where Corinth stood. Here was the natural carrying place, or portage from the Ionian sea on the west, to the Aegean on the east. Many efforts were made by the Greeks, and afterwards by the Romans, to effect a communication between the Aegean and Adriatic seas by cutting across this isthmus; and traces still remain of these attempts. Means were even contrived for transporting vessels across. This isthmus was also particularly important as it was the key of the Peloponnesus, and attempts were often made to fortify it. The city had two harbors, - Lechaeum on the gulf of Corinth, or sea of Crissa on the west, to which it was joined by a double wall, twelve stadia, or about a mile and a half in length; and Cenchrea, or the sea of Saron on the east, distant about 70 stadia, or nearly 9 miles. It was a situation therefore peculiarly favorable for commerce, and highly important in the defense of Greece.

The city is said to have been founded by Sisyphus, long before the siege of Troy, apd was then called Ephyra. The time when it was founded is, however, unknown. The name Corinth, was supposed to have been given to it from Corinthus, who, by different authors, is said to have been the son of Jupiter, of of Marathon, or of Pelops, who is said to have rebuilt and adorned the city.

The city of Corinth was built at the foot of a high hill, on the top of which stood a citadel. This hill, which stood on the south of the city, was its defense in that quarter, as its sides were extremely steep. On the three other sides it was protected by strong and lofty ramparts. The circumference of the city proper was about 40 stadia, or 5 miles. Its situation gave it great

commercial advantages. As the whole of that region was mountainous and rather barren, and as the situation gave the city extraordinary commercial advantages, the inhabitants early turned their attention to commerce, and amassed great wealth. This fact was, to no inconsiderable extent, the foundation of the luxury, effeminacy, and vices for which the city afterwards became so much distinguished.

The merchandise of Italy, Sicily, and the western nations, was landed at Lechaeum on the west; and that of the islands of the Aegean sea, of Asia Minor, and of the Phoenicians, and other oriental nations, at Cenchrea on the east. The city of Corinth thus became the mart of Asia and Europe; covered the sea with its ships, and formed a navy to protect its commerce. It was distinguished by building galleys and ships of a new and improved form; and its naval force procured it respect from other nations. Its population and its wealth was thus increased by the influx of foreigners. It became a city rather distinguished by its wealth, and naval force, and commerce, than by its military achievements, though it produced a few of the most valiant and distinguished leaders in the armies of Greece.

Its population was increased and its character somewhat formed from another circumstance. In the neighborhood of the city the Isthmian games were celebrated, which attracted so much attention, and which drew so many strangers from distant parts of the world. To those games, the apostle Paul not infrequently refers, when recommending Christian energy and activity. See the note, 1 Corinthians 9:24, 1 Corinthians 9:26-27; compare Hebrews 12:1.

From these causes, the city of Corinth became eminent among all ancient cities for wealth, and luxury, and dissipation. It was the mart of the world. Wealth flowed into it from all quarters. Luxury, amusement, and dissipation, were the natural consequents, until it became the most gay and dissolute city of its times, - the Paris of antiquity.

There was another cause which contributed to its character of dissoluteness and corruption. I refer to its religion. The principal deity worshipped in the city was Venus; as Diana was the principal deity worshipped at Ephesus; Minerva at Athens, etc. Ancient cities were devoted

usually to some particular god or goddess, and were supposed to be under their peculiar protection. See the note at Acts 14:13. Corinth was devoted, or dedicated thus to the goddess of love, or licentious passion; and the effect may be easily conceived. The temple of Venus was erected on the north side or slope of the Acrocorinthus, a mountain about half a mile in height on the south of the city, and from the summit of which a magnificent prospect opened on the north to Parnassus and Helicon, to the eastward the island of Aegina and the citadel of Athens, and to the west the rich and beautiful plains of Sicyon. This mountain was covered with temples and splendid houses; but was especially devoted to Venus, and was the plaque of her worship.

Her shrine appeared above those of the other gods; and it was enjoined by law, that 1,000 beautiful females should officiate as courtesans, or public prostitutes, before the altar of the goddess of love. In a time of public calamity and imminent danger, these women attended at the sacrifices, and walked with the other citizens singing sacred hymns. When Xerxes invaded Greece, recourse was had to their intercession to avert the impending calamity. They were supported chiefly by foreigners; and from the avails of their vice a copious revenue was derived to the city. Individuals, in order to ensure success in their undertakings, vowed to present to Venus a certain number of courtesans, which they obtained by sending to distant countries. Foreign merchants were attracted in this way to Corinth; and, in a few days, would be stripped of all their property. It thus became a proverb, “It is not for everyone to go to Corinth,” - (οὐ παντὸς ἀνδρὸς εἰς Κόρινθον ἐστίν ; πλους ou pantas andros eis Korinthon estin plous).

The effect of this on the morals of the city can be easily understood. It became the most frivolous, dissipated, corrupt, and ultimately the most effeminate and feeble portion of Greece. It is necessary to make these statements, because they go to show the exceeding grace of God in collecting a church in such a city, the power of the gospel in overcoming the strongest and most polluted passions of our nature; and because no small part of the irregularities which arose in the church at Corinth, and which gave the apostle occasion to write this Epistle, were produced by this prevailing licentiousness of the people; and by the fact, that gross and licentious passions had received the countenance of law and the patronage

of public opinion. See 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Acts 18:1. He was then on his way from Macedonia to Jerusalem. He had passed some time at Athens, where he had preached the gospel, but not with such success as to warrant him to remain, or to organize a church; see the notes at Acts 17:15; compare Acts 18:5. He came to Corinth alone, but found Aquila and Priscilla there, who had lately come from Rome, and with them he waited the arrival of Silas and Timothy. When they arrived, Paul entered on the great work of preaching the gospel in that splendid and dissipated city, first to the Jews, and when it was rejected by them, then to the Greeks; Acts 18:5-6. His feelings when he engaged in this work, he has himself stated in 1 Corinthians 16:2-5. (See the note at that place.) His embarrassments and discouragements were met by a gracious promise of the Lord that he would be with him, and would not leave him; and that it was his purpose to collect a church there; see the note on Acts 18:9-10. In the city, Paul remained for 18 months Acts 18:11, preaching without no hesitation, until he was opposed by the Jews trader Sosthenes their leader, and brought before Gallio. When Gallio refused to hear the cause, and Paul was discharged, it is said, that he remained there yet "a good while" Acts 18:18, and then sailed into Syria.

Of the size of the church that was first organized there, and of the general character of the converts, we have no other knowledge than that which is contained in the Epistle. There is reason to think that Sosthenes, who was the principal agent of the Jews in arraigning Paul before Gallio, was converted (see 1 Corinthians 1:1), and perhaps some other persons of distinction; but it is evident that the church was chiefly composed of those who were in the more humble walks of life; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 1:26-29. It was a signal illustration of the grace of God, and the power of the gospel, that a church was organized in that city of gayety, fashion, luxury, and licentiousness; and it shows that the gospel is adapted to meet and overcome all forms of wickedness, and to subdue all classes of people to itself. If a church was established in the frivolous and dissolute capital of Achaia then there is not now a city on earth so gay and so profligate that the same gospel may not meet its corruptions, and subdue it to the cross of Christ. Paul subsequently visited Corinth about 58 a.d., or six years after the establishment of the church there. He passed the winter in Greece - doubtless in Corinth and its neighborhood, on his journey from Macedonia

to Jerusalem, the fifth time in which he visited the latter city. During this stay at Corinth he wrote the Epistle to the Romans. See the introduction to the Epistle to the Romans.

Section 3. The Time and Place of Writing the First Epistle to the Corinthians

It has been uniformly supposed that this Epistle was written at Ephesus. The circumstances which are mentioned incidently in the Epistle itself, place this beyond a doubt. The Epistle purports to have been written, not like that to the Romans, without having been at the place to which it was written, but after Paul had been at Corinth. "I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech," etc. 1 Corinthians 2:1. It also purports to have been written when he was about to make another visit to that church; 1 Corinthians 4:19, "But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will." 1 Corinthians 16:5," now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia, for I do pass through Macedonia." Now the history in the Acts of the Apostles informs us, that Paul did in fact visit Achaia and doubtless Corinth twice; see Acts 18:1, etc.; Acts 20:1-3. The same history also informs us that it was from Ephesus that Paul went into Greece; and as the Epistle purports to have been written a short time before that journey, it follows, to be consistent with the history, that the Epistle must have been written while he was at Ephesus. The narrative in the Acts also informs us, that Paul had passed two years in Ephesus before he set out on his second journey into Greece.

With this supposition, all the circumstances relating to the place where the apostle then was which are mentioned in this Epistle agree. "If after the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?" 1 Corinthians 15:32. It is true, as Dr. Paley remarks (Horae Paulinae) that the apostle might say this wherever he was; but it was much more natural, and much more to the purpose to say it, if he was at Ephesus at the time, and in the midst of those conflicts to which the expression relates. "The churches of Asia salute you," 1 Corinthians 16:19. It is evident from this, that Paul was near those churches, and that he had contact with them. But Asia, throughout the Acts of the Apostles, and in the Epistles of Paul, does not mean commonly the whole of Asia, nor the whole of Asia Minor, but a district in the interior of Asia Minor, of which Ephesus was the capital; see the note at Acts 2:9; note at Acts 6:9; note at Acts 16:6; note at Acts 20:16.

"Aquila and Priscilla salute you," 1 Corinthians 16:19. Aquila and Priscilla were at Ephesus during the time in which I shall endeavor to show this Epistle was written, Acts 18:26. It is evident, if this were so, that the Epistle was written at Ephesus. "But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost," 1 Corinthians 16:8. This is almost an express declaration that he was at Ephesus when the Epistle was written. "A great and effectual door is opened to me, and there are many adversaries," 1 Corinthians 16:9. How well this agrees with the history, may be seen by comparing it with the account in Acts, when Paul was at Ephesus. Acts 19:20. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." That there were "many adversaries," may be seen from the account of the same period in Acts 19:9, "But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them and separated the disciples," Compare 1 Corinthians 16:8, that Paul purposed to tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. But this must have been written and sent away before the riot which was raised by Demetrius Acts 20:1-2. The reason why Paul purposed to remain in Ephesus until Pentecost, was, the success which he had met with in preaching the gospel, 1 Corinthians 16:9. But after the riot excited by Demetrius, this hope was in a measure defeated, and he soon left the city. These circumstances serve to fix the time when this Epistle was written to the interval which elapsed between what is recorded in Acts 19:22-23. This occurred about 56 or 57 a.d. Pearson and Mill place the date in the year 57 a.d.; Lardner, in the spring of the year 56 ad.

It has never been doubted that Paul was the author of this Epistle. It bears his name; has internal evidence of having been written by him, and is ascribed to him by the unanimous voice of antiquity. It has been made a question, however, whether this was the first letter which Paul wrote to them: or whether he had previously written an epistle to them which is now lost. This inquiry has been caused by what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:9, "I wrote unto you in an epistle," etc. Whether he there refers to another epistle, which he wrote to them before this, and which they had disregarded; or whether to the previous chapters of this Epistle; or whether to a letter to some other church which they had been expected to read, has been made a question. This question will be considered in the note on that verse.

Section 4. The Occasion on which this Epistle Was Written

It is evident that this Epistle was written in reply to one which had been addressed by the church at Corinth to Paul; 1 Corinthians 7:1, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me," etc. That letter had been sent to Paul while at Ephesus, by the hands of Stephanas, and Fortunatus, and Achaicus, who had come to consult with him respecting the state of the church at Corinth, 1 Corinthians 16:17-18. In addition to this, Paul had heard various reports of certain disorders which had been introduced into the church at Corinth, and which required his attention and correction. Those disorders, it seems, as was natural, had not been mentioned in the letter which they sent to him, but he had heard of them incidentally by some members of the family of Chloe, 1 Corinthians 1:11. They pertained to the following subjects:

(1) The divisions which had arisen in the church by the popularity of a teacher who had excited great disturbance, 1 Corinthians 1:12-13. Probably this teacher was a Jew by birth, and not improbably of the sect of the Sadducees 2 Corinthians 11:22, and his teaching might have been the occasion why in the Epistle Paul entered so largely into the proof of the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. This case was a flagrant violation of the gospel; and yet it is not improbable that it had been palliated, or vindicated by the false teachers; and it is certain that it excited no shame in the church itself. Such cases were not regarded by the dissolute Corinthians as criminal. In a city dedicated to Venus the crimes of licentiousness had been openly indulged, and this was one of the sins to which they were particularly exposed. It became necessary, therefore, for Paul to exert his apostolic authority, and to remove the offender in this case from the communion of the church, and to make him an example of the severity of Christian discipline.

(5) the Corinthians had evinced a litigious spirit, a fondness for going to law, and for bringing their causes before heathen tribunals, to the great scandal of religion, instead of endeavoring to settle their difficulties among themselves. Of this the apostle had been informed, and this called also for his authoritative interposition, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8.

(6) Erroneous views and practices had arisen, perhaps, under the influence of the false teachers, on the subject of temperance, chastity, etc. To the vices of intemperance, licentiousness, and gluttony, the Corinthian

Christians from their former habits, and from the customs of their countrymen, were particularly exposed. Those vices had been judged harmless, and had been freely indulged in, and it is not improbable that the views of the apostle had been ridiculed as unnecessarily stern, and severe, and rigid. It became necessary, therefore, to correct their views, and to state the true nature of the Christian requirements, 1 Corinthians 6:8-20.

(7) the apostle having thus discussed those things of which he had incidentally heard, proceeds to notice particularly the things respecting which they had consulted him by letter. Those were.

(a) Marriage, and the duties in regard to it in their circumstances, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13. In order to enforce his views of what he had said on the duty of abstaining from the use of certain food, if it was the occasion of giving offence, he shows them 1 Corinthians 10:1-12.

These principles he illustrates by a reference to their joining in feasts, and celebrations with idols, and the dangers to which they would subject themselves by so doing; and concludes that it would be proper in those circumstances wholly to abstain from partaking of the meat offered in sacrifice to idols if it were known to be such. This was to be done on the principle that no offence was to be given. And thus the second question referred to him was disposed of, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 shows the inferiority of the highest of these endowments to a kind, catholic spirit - to the prevalence of charity, and thus endeavors to allay all contentions and strifes for ascendancy, by the prevalence of the spirit of love. In connection with this Acts 17:32, and in the Corinthian church it had been either called in question, or greatly perverted, 1 Corinthians 15:12. That the same body would be raised up had been denied, and the doctrine that came to be believed was, probably, simply that there would be a future state, and that the only resurrection was the resurrection of the soul from sin, and that this was past; compare 2 Timothy 2:18. This subject the apostle had not before taken up, probably because he had not been consulted on it, and because it would find a more appropriate place after be had reproved their disorders, and answered their questions. After all those discussions, after examining all the opinions and practices that prevailed among them, it was proper to pierce the great argument for the truth of the religion which they all

professed on a permanent foundation, and to close the Epistle by reminding them, and proving to them that the religion which they professed, and which they had so much abused, was from heaven. The proof of this was the resurrection of the Saviour from the dead. It was indispensable to hold that in its obvious sense, and holding that, the truth of their own resurrection was demonstrated, and the error of those who denied it was apparent.

(9) having finished this demonstration, the apostle closes the Epistle 1 Corinthians 4:17. In the mean time the church at Corinth wrote to him to ascertain his views on certain matters submitted to him 1 Corinthians 7:1, and the reception of this letter gave him occasion to enter at length into the subject of their disorders and difficulties. Yet he wrote the letter under the deepest solicitude about the manner of its reception, and its effect on the church, 2 Corinthians 2:4, "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears," etc. Paul had another object in view which was dear to his heart, and which he was laboring with all diligence to promote, which was the collection which he proposed to take up for the poor and afflicted saints at Jerusalem; see the notes, Romans 15:25-26.

This object he wished to press at this time on the church at Corinth; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4. In order, therefore, to ensure the success of his letter, and to facilitate the collection, he sent Titus with the letter to the church at Corinth, with instructions to have the collection ready, 2 Corinthians 7:7-8, 2 Corinthians 7:13, 2 Corinthians 7:15. This collection, Titus was requested to finish; 2 Corinthians 8:6. With Titus, Paul sent another brother, perhaps a member of the church at Ephesus 2 Corinthians 12:8, a man whose praise, Paul says, was in all the churches, and who had been already designated by the churches to bear the contribution to Jerusalem, 2 Corinthians 8:18-19. By turning to Acts 21:29, we find it incidentally mentioned that "Trophimus an Ephesian" was with Paul in Jerusalem, and undoubtedly this was the person here designated. This is one of the undesigned coincidences between Paul's Epistle and the Acts of the Apostles, of which Dr. Paley has made so much use in his Horae Paulinae in proving the genuineness of these writings. Paul did not deem it necessary or prudent for him to go himself to Corinth, but chose to remain in Ephesus. The letter to Paul 1 Corinthians 7:1 had been brought to him by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus 1

Corinthians 16:17, and it is probable that they accompanied Titus and the other brother with him who bare Paul‘s reply to their inquiries.

The success of this letter was all that Paul could desire. It had the effect to repress their growing strifes, to restrain their disorders, to produce true repentance, and to remove the person who had been guilty of incest in the church. The whole church was deeply affected with his reproofs, and engaged in hearty zeal in the work of reform, 2 Corinthians 7:9-11. The authority of the apostle was recognized, and his Epistle read with fear and trembling, 2 Corinthians 7:15. The act of discipline which he had required on the incestuous person was inflicted by the whole church, 2 Corinthians 2:6. The collection which he had desired 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, and in regard to which he had boasted of their liberality to others, and expressed the utmost confidence that it would be liberal 2 Corinthians 9:2-3, was taken up agreeably to his wishes, and their disposition on the subject was such as to furnish the highest satisfaction to his mind, 2 Corinthians 7:13-14. Of the success of his letter, however, and of their disposition to take up the collection, Paul was not apprised until he had gone into Macedonia, where Titus came to him, and gave him information of the happy state of things in the church at Corinth, 2 Corinthians 7:4-7, 2 Corinthians 7:13. Never was a letter more effectual than this was, and never was authority in discipline exercised in a more happy and successful way.

General Character and Structure of the Epistle.

The general style and character of this Epistle is the same as in the other writings of Paul. See the introduction to the Epistle to the Romans. It evinces the same strong and manly style of argument and language, the same structure of sentences, the same rapidity of conception, the same overpowering force of language and thought, and the same characteristics of temper and spirit in the author. The main difference between the style and manner of this Epistle, and the other epistles of Paul, arises from the scope and design of the argument. In the Epistle to the Romans, his object led him to pursue a close and connected train of argumentation. In this, a large portion of the Epistle is occupied with reproof, and it gives occasion for calling into view at once the authority of an apostle, and the spirit and manner in which reproof is to be administered. The reader of this Epistle

cannot but be struck with the fact, that it was no part of Paul‘s character to show indulgence to sin; that he had no design to flatter; that he neither “cloaked nor concealed transgression;” that in the most open, firm, and manly manner possible, it was his purpose to rebuke them for their disorders, and to repress their growing irregularities. At the same time, however, there is full opportunity for the display of tenderness, kindness, love, charity and for Christian instruction - an opportunity for pouring forth the deepest feelings of the human heart - an opportunity which Paul never allowed to escape unimproved. Amidst all the severity of reproof, there is the love of friendship: amidst the rebukes of an apostle, the entreaties and tears of a father. And we here contemplate Paul, not merely as the profound reasoner, not simply as a man of high intellectual endowments, but as evincing the feelings of the man, and the sympathies of the Christian.

Perhaps there is less difficulty in understanding this Epistle than the Epistle to the Romans. A few passages indeed have perplexed all commentators, and are to this day not understood. See 1 Corinthians 5:9; 1 Corinthians 11:10; 1 Corinthians 15:29. But the general meaning of the Epistle has been much less the subject of difference of interpretation. The reasons have probably been the following.

(1) the subjects here are more numerous, and the discussions more brief. There is, therefore, less difficulty in following the author than where the discussion is protracted, and the manner of his reasoning more complicated.

(2) the subjects themselves are far less abstruse and profound than those introduced into the Epistle to the Romans. There is, therefore, less liability to misconception.

(3) the Epistle has never been made the subject of theological warfare. No system of theology has been built on it, and no attempt made to press it into the service of abstract dogmas. It is mostly of a practical character, and there has been, therefore, less room for contention in regard to its meaning.

(4) no false and unfounded theories of philosophy have been attached to this Epistle, as have been to the Epistle to the Romans. Its simple sense,

therefore, has been more obvious, and no small part of the difficulties in the interpretation of that Epistle are wanting in this.

(5) the apostle‘s design has somewhat varied his style. There are fewer complicated sentences, and fewer parentheses, less that is abrupt and broken, and elliptical, less that is rapid, mighty, and overpowering in argument. We see the point of a reproof at once, but we are often greatly embarrassed in a complicated argument. Psalm 25:9.

1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

Paul, called to be an apostle - See the notes at Romans 1:1.

Through the will of God - Not by human appointment, or authority, but in accordance with the will of God, and His command. That will was made known to him by the special revelation granted to him at his conversion, and call to the apostleship; Galatians 1:11-12; 1 Corinthians 9:1-6; 2 Corinthians 11:22-33; 2 Corinthians 12:1-12. There was a special reason why he commenced this Epistle by referring to the fact that he was divinely called to the apostleship. It arose from the fact that his apostolic authority had been called in question by the false teachers at Corinth. That this was the case is apparent from the general strain of the Epistle, from some particular expressions 2 Corinthians 10:8-10; and from the fact that he is at so much pains throughout the two epistles to establish his divine commission.

And Sosthenes - Sosthenes is mentioned in Acts 18:17, as "the chief ruler of the synagogue" at Corinth. He is there said to have been beaten by the Greeks before the judgment-seat of Gallio because he was a Jew, and because he had joined with the other Jews in arraigning Paul, and had thus produced disturbance in the city; see the note on this place. It is evident that at that time he was not a Christian. When he was converted, or why he left Corinth and was now with Paul at Ephesus, is unknown. Why Paul associated him with himself in writing this Epistle is not known. It is evident that Sosthenes was not an apostle, nor is there any reason to think that he was inspired. Some circumstances are known to have existed respecting Paul's manner of writing to the churches, which may explain it:

(1) He was accustomed to employ an amanuensis (scribe) in writing his epistles, and the copyist frequently expressed his concurrence or approbation in what the apostle had indicted; see the note at Romans 16:22; compare Colossians 4:18. "The salutation by the hand of Paul," 2 Thessalonians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 16:21. It is possible that Sosthenes might have been employed by Paul for this purpose.

(2) Paul not unfrequently associated others with himself in writing his letters to the churches, himself claiming authority as an apostle; and the others expressing their concurrence; 2 Corinthians 1:1. Thus, in Galatians

1:1, “all the brethren” which were with him, are mentioned as united with him in addressing the churches of Galatia; Philemon 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1.

(3) Sosthenes was well known at Corinth. He had been the chief ruler of the synagogue there. His conversion would, therefore, excite a deep interest, and it is not improbable that he had been conspicuous as a preacher. All these circumstances would render it proper that Paul should associate him with himself in writing this letter. It would be bringing in the testimony of one well known as concurring with the views of the apostle, and tend much to conciliate those who were disaffected toward him.

Verse 2

Unto the church of God which is at Corinth - For an account of the time and manner in which the church was established in Corinth, see the introduction, and the notes at Romans 1:7.

In Christ Jesus - That is, “by” ἐν enthe agency of Christ. It was by his authority, his power, and his Spirit, that they had been separated from the mass of pagans around them, and devoted to God; compare John 17:19.

Called to be saints - The word “saints” does not differ materially from the word “sanctified” in the former part of the verse. It means those who are separateD from the world, and set apart to God as holy. The idea which Paul introduces here is, that they became such because they were called to be such. The idea in the former part of the verse is, that this was done “by Christ Jesus;” here he says that it was because they were called to this privilege. He doubtless means to say that it was not by any native tendency in themselves to holiness, but because God had called them to it. And this calling does not refer merely to an external invitation, but it was that which was made effectual in their case, or that on which the fact of their being saints could be predicated; compare 1 Corinthians 1:9; see 2 Timothy 1:9; “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace,” etc.; 1 Peter 1:15; the Romans 1:6-7; Romans 8:28 notes; Ephesians 4:1 note; 1 Timothy 6:12 note; 1 Peter 2:9 note.

With all … - This expression shows:

(1) That Paul had the same feelings of attachment to all Christians in every place; and,

(2) That he expected that this Epistle would be read, not only by the church at Corinth, but also by other churches. That this was the uniform intention of the apostle in regard to his epistles, is apparent from other places; compare 1 Thessalonians 5:27; "I charge you by the Lord that this Epistle be read unto all the holy brethren;" Colossians 4:16; "And when this Epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans." It is evident that Paul expected that his epistles would obtain circulation among the churches; and it was morally certain that they would be soon transcribed, and be extensively read - the ardent feelings of Paul embraced all Christians in every nation. He knew nothing of the narrowness of exclusive attachment to a sect. His heart was full of love, and he loved, as we should, all who bore the Christian name, and who evinced the Christian spirit.

Call upon the name of Jesus Christ - To call upon the name of any person, in Scripture language, is to call on the person himself; compare John 3:18; the note at Acts 4:12. The expression "to call upon the name" ἐπικαλουμένοις epikaloumenoisto invoke the name, implies worship, and prayer; and proves:

(1) That the Lord Jesus is an object of worship; and,

(2) That one characteristic of the early Christians, by which they were known and distinguished, was their calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus, or their offering worship to him. That it implies worship, see the note at Acts 7:59; and that the early Christians called on Christ by prayer, and were distinguished by that, see the note at Acts 7:59, and compare the note at Acts 1:24, also Acts 2:21; Acts 9:13; Acts 22:16; 2 Timothy 2:22.

Both theirs and ours - The Lord of all - both Jews and Gentiles - of all who profess themselves Christians, of whatever country or name they might have originally been. Difference of nation or birth gives no pre-eminence in the kingdom of Christ but all are on a level, having a common Lord and Saviour; compare Ephesians 4:5.

Verse 3

Grace be unto you … - See the note at Romans 1:7.

Verse 4

I thank my God … - No small part of this Epistle is occupied with reproofs for the disorders which had arisen in the church at Corinth. Before

proceeding, however, to the specific statement of those disorders (1 Corinthians 1:10 ff), the apostle commends them for the attainments which they had really made in divine knowledge, and thus shows that he was disposed to concede to them all that he could. It was no part of the disposition of Paul to withhold commendation where it was due. On the contrary, as he was disposed to be faithful in reproving the errors of Christians, he was no less disposed to commend them when it could be done; compare the note at Romans 1:8. A willingness to commend those who do well is as much in accordance with the gospel, as a disposition to reprove where it is deserved; and a minister, or a parent, may frequently do as decided good by judicious commendation as by reproof, and much more than by fault-finding and harsh crimination.

On your behalf - In respect to you; that God has conferred these favors on you.

For the grace of God - On account of the favors which God has bestowed on you through the Lord Jesus. Those favors are specified in the following verses. For the meaning of the word "grace," see the note at Romans 1:7.

Verse 5

That in every thing - In every respect, or in regard to all the favors conferred on any of his people. You have been distinguished by him in all those respects in which he blesses his own children.

Ye are enriched by him; - compare the note at Romans 2:4. The meaning of this expression is, "you abound in these things; they are conferred abundantly upon you." By the use of this word, the apostle intends doubtless to denote "the fact" that these blessings had been conferred on them abundantly; and also that this was a "valuable endowment," so as to be properly called "a treasure." The mercies of God are not only conferred abundantly on his people, but they are a bestowment of inestimable value; compare 2 Corinthians 6:10.

In all utterance - With the power of speaking various languages ἐν παντὶ λόγῳ en panti logōThat this power was conferred on the church at Corinth, and that it was highly valued by them, is evident from 2 Corinthians 8:7. The power of speaking those languages the apostle regarded as a subject of thanksgiving, as it was a proof of the divine favor to them; see 1 Corinthians 14:5, 1 Corinthians 14:22, 1 Corinthians 14:39.

And in all knowledge - In the knowledge of divine truth. They had understood the doctrines which they had heard, and had intelligently embraced them. This was not true of all of them, but it was of the body of the church; and the hearty commendation and thanksgiving of the apostle for these favors, laid the foundation for the remarks which he had subsequently to make, and would tend to conciliate their minds, and dispose them to listen attentively, even to the language of reproof.

Verse 6

Even as - Καθώς KathōsThe force of this expression seems to be this, "The gospel of Christ was at first established among you by means of the miraculous endowments of the Holy Spirit. Those same endowments are still continued among you, and now furnish evidence of the divine favor, and of the truth of the gospel to you, ‹even as‘ - that is, in the same measure as they did when the gospel was first preached." The power to speak with tongues, etc. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; 2 Timothy 1:8.

Was confirmed - Was established, or proved. It was proved to be divine, by the miraculous attestations of the Holy Spirit. It was confirmed, or made certain to their souls by the agency of the Holy Spirit, sealing it on their hearts. The word translated "confirmed" ἐβεβαιώθη ebebaiōthēis used in the sense of establishing, confirming, or demonstrating by miracles, etc.; in Mark 16:20; compare Hebrews 13:9; Philemon 1:7.

In you - ἐν ὑμῖν en huminAmong you as a people, or in your hearts. Perhaps the apostle intends to include both. The gospel had been established among them by the demonstrations of the agency of the Spirit in the gift of tongues, and had at the same time taken deep root in their hearts, and was exerting a practical influence on their lives.

Verse 7

So that - God has so abundantly endowed you with his favors.

Ye come behind - ὑστερεῖσθαι hustereisthaiYou are not missing, or deficient. The word is usually applied to destitution, want, or poverty; and the declaration here is synonymous with what he had said, 1 Corinthians 1:5, that they abounded in everything.

In no gift - In no favor, or gracious endowment. The word used here χάρισμα charismadoes not refer necessarily to extraordinary and miraculous endowments, but includes also all the kindnesses of God toward them in producing peace of mind, constancy, humility, etc. And the apostle meant

evidently to say that they possessed, in rich abundance, all those endowments which were bestowed on Christians.

Waiting for - Expecting, or looking for this coming with glad and anxious desire. This was, certainly, one of the endowments to which he referred, to wit, that they had grace given them earnestly to desire, and to wait for the second appearing of the Lord Jesus. An earnest wish to see him, and a confident expectation and firm belief that he will return, is an evidence of a high state of piety. It demands strong faith, and it will do much to elevate the feelings above the world, and to keep the mind in a state of peace.

The coming … - Greek The revelation - τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν tēn apokalupsin- the manifestation of the Son of God. That is, waiting for his return to judge the world, and for his approbation of his people on that Day. The earnest expectation of the Lord Jesus became one of the marks of early Christian piety. This return was promised by the Saviour to his anxious disciples, when he was about to leave them; John 14:3. The promise was renewed when he ascended to heaven; Acts 1:11. It became the settled hope and expectation of Christians that he would return; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 3:12; Hebrews 9:28. And with the earnest prayer that be would quickly come, John closes the volume of inspiration; Revelation 22:20-21.

Verse 8

Who shall also confirm you - Who shall establish you in the hopes of the gospel. He shall make you "firm" (βεβαιώσει bebaiōsei) amidst all your trials, and all the efforts which may be made to shake your faith, and to remove you from that firm foundation on which you now rest.

Unto the end - That is, to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He would keep them to the end of life in the path of holiness, so that at the coming of the Lord Jesus they might be found blameless; compare John 13:1. The sense is, that they should be kept, and should not be suffered to fall away and perish - and this is one of the many places which express the strong confidence of Paul that those who are true Christians shall be preserved unto everlasting life; compare Philemon 1:6.

That ye may be blameless - The word rendered "blameless" ἀνεγκλήτου anegklētoudoes not mean perfect, but properly denotes those against whom there is no charge of crime; who are unaccused, and against whom there is no ground of accusation. Here it does not mean that they were personally perfect, but that God would so keep them, and enable them

to evince a Christian character, as to give evidence that they were his friends, and completely escape condemnation in the last Day; see the notes at Romans 8:33-34. There is no man who has not his faults; no Christian who is not conscious of imperfection; but it is the design of God so to keep his people, and so to justify and sanctify them through the Lord Jesus, that the church may be presented "a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle" Ephesians 5:27 on the Day of Judgment.

In the day … - On the Day when the Lord Jesus shall come to judge the world; and which will be called his Day, because it will be the Day in which he will be the great and conspicuous object, and which is especially appointed to glorify him; see 2 Thessalonians 1:10, "Who shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

Verse 9

God is faithful - That is, God is true, and constant, and will adhere to his promises. He will not deceive. He will not promise, and then fail to perform; he will not commence anything which he will not perfect and finish. The object of Paul in introducing the idea of the faithfulness of God here, is to show the reason for believing that the Christians at Corinth would be kept unto everlasting life. The evidence that they will persevere depends on the fidelity of God; and the argument of the apostle is, that as they had been called by Him into the fellowship of his Son, his faithfulness of character would render it certain that they would be kept to eternal life. The same idea he has presented in Philemon 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will also perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Ye were called - The word "called" here does not refer merely to "an invitation" or an "offer of life," but to the effectual influence which had been put forth; which had inclined them to embrace the gospel note at Romans 8:30; note at Romans 9:12; see Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32; Galatians 1:6; Galatians 5:8, Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 3:15. In this sense the word often occurs in the Scriptures, and is designed to denote a power, or influence that goes forth "with" the external invitation, and that makes it effectual. That power is the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Unto the fellowship of his Son - To participate with his Son Jesus Christ; to be partakers with him; see the notes at John 15:1-8. Christians participate with Christ:

(1) in his feelings and views; Romans 8:9.

(2) in his trials and sufferings, being subjected to temptations and trials similar to his; 1 Peter 4:13, "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings;" Colossians 1:24; Philemon 3:10.

(3) in his heirship to the inheritance and glory which awaits him; Romans 8:17, "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ;" 1 Peter 1:4.

(4) in his triumph in the resurrection and future glory; Matthew 19:28, "Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel;" John 14:19, "Because I live, ye shall live also;" Revelation 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

(Immediately on our union to Christ, we have fellowship with him, in all the blessings of his purchase. This communion or fellowship with him is the necessary result of our union to him. On the saint's union to Christ, see the supplementary note at Romans 8:10.)

From all this, the argument of the apostle is, that as they partake with Christ in these high privileges, and hopes, and promises, they will be kept by a faithful God unto eternal life. God is faithful to his Son; and will be faithful to all who are united to him. The argument for the perseverance of the saints is, therefore, sure.

Verse 10

Now I beseech you, brethren - In this verse the apostle enters on the discussion respecting the irregularities and disorders in the church at Corinth, of which he had incidentally heard; see 1 Corinthians 1:11. The first of which he had incidentally learned, was that which pertained to the divisions and strifes which had arisen in the church. The consideration of this subject occupies him to 1 Corinthians 1:17; and as those divisions had been caused by the influence of phi osophy, and the ambition for distinction, and the exhibition of popular eloquence among the Corinthian teachers, this fact gives occasion to him to discuss that subject at length 1 Corinthians 1:17-31; in which he shows that the gospel did not depend for its success on the reasonings of philosophy, or the persuasions of eloquence.

This part of the subject he commences with the language of entreaty. "I beseech you, brethren" - the language of affectionate exhortation rather than of stern command. Addressing them as his brethren, as members of the same family with himself, he conjures them to take all proper measures to avoid the evils of schism and of strife.

By the name - By the authority of his name; or from reverence for him as the common Lord of all.

Of our Lord Jesus Christ - The reasons why Paul thus appeals to his name and authority here, may be the following:

(1) Christ should be regarded as the Supreme Head and Leader of all his church. It was improper, therefore, that the church should be divided into portions, and its different parts enlisted under different banners.

(2) "the whole family in heaven and earth should be named" after him Ephesians 3:15, and should not be named after inferior and subordinate teachers. The reference to "the venerable and endearing name of Christ here, stands beautifully and properly opposed to the various human names under which they were so ready to enlist themselves" - Doddridge. "There is scarcely a word or expression that he (Paul) makes use of, but with relation and tendency to his present main purpose; as here, intending to abolish the names of leaders they had distinguished themselves by, he beseeches them by the name of Christ, a form that I do not remember he elsewhere uses" - Locke.

(3) the prime and leading thing which Christ had enjoined upon his church was union and mutual love John 13:34; John 15:17, and for this he had most earnestly prayed in his memorable prayer; John 17:21-23. It was well for Paul thus to appeal to the name of Christ - the sole Head and Lord of his church, and the friend of union, and thus to rebuke the divisions and strifes which had arisen at Corinth.

That ye all speak the same thing - "That ye hold the same doctrine" - Locke. This exhortation evidently refers to their holding and expressing the same religious sentiments, and is designed to rebuke that kind of contention and strife which is evinced where different opinions are held and expressed. To "speak the same thing" stands opposed to speaking different and conflicting things; or to controversy, and although perfect uniformity of opinion cannot be expected among people on the subject of religion any

more than on other subjects, yet on the great and fundamental doctrines of Christianity, Christians may be agreed; on all points in which they differ they may evince a good spirit; and on all subjects they may express their sentiments in the language of the Bible, and thus "speak the same thing."

And that there be no divisions among you - Greek, σχίσματα schismata"schisms." No divisions into contending parties and sects. The church was to be regarded as one and indivisible, and not to be rent into different factions, and ranged under the banners of different leaders; compare John 9:16; 1 Corinthians 11:18; 1 Corinthians 12:25.

But that ye be perfectly joined together - ἦτε δὲ κατηρτισμένοι ēte de katērtismenoiThe word used here and rendered "perfectly joined together," denotes properly to restore, mend, or repair that; which is rent or disordered Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19, to amend or correct that which is morally evil and erroneous Galatians 6:1, to render perfect or complete Luke 6:40, to fit or adapt anything to its proper place so that it shall be complete in all its parts, and harmonious, Hebrews 11:5; and thence to compose and settle controversies, to produce harmony and order. The apostle here evidently desires that they should be united in feeling; that every member of the church should occupy his appropriate place, as every member of a well proportioned body, or part of a machine has its appropriate place and use; see his wishes more fully expressed in Romans 15:5. This cannot mean that they were to be united in precisely the same shades of opinion, which is impossible - but that their minds were to be disposed toward each other with mutual good will, and that they should live in harmony. The word here rendered "mind," denotes not merely the intellect itself, but that which is in the mind - the thoughts, counsels, plans; Romans 11:34; Romans 14:5; 1 Corinthians 2:16; Colossians 2:18. Bretschneider.

And in the same judgment - γνώμη gnōmēThis word properly denotes science, or knowledge; opinion, or sentiment; and sometimes, as here, the purpose of the mind, or will. The sentiment of the whole is, that in their understandings and their volitions, they should be united and kindly disposed toward each other. Union of feeling is possible even where people differ much in their views of things. They may love each other much, even where they do not see alike. They may give each other credit for honesty and sincerity, and may be willing to suppose that others "may be right," and "are honest" even where their own views differ. The foundation of Christian union is not so much laid in uniformity of intellectual perception as in right

feelings of the heart. And the proper way to produce union in the church of God, is not to begin by attempting to equalize all intellects on the bed of Procrustes, but to produce supreme love to God, and elevated and pure Christian love to all who bear the image and the name of the Redeemer.

Verse 11

For it hath been declared unto me - Of the contentions existing in the church at Corinth, it is evident that they had not informed him in the letter which they had sent; see 1 Corinthians 7:1, compare the introduction. He had incidentally heard of their contentions.

My brethren - A token of affectionate regard, evincing his love for them, and his deep interest in their welfare, even when he administered a needed rebuke.

Of the house of Chloe - Of the family of Chloe. It is most probable that Chloe was a member of the church at Corinth, some of whose family had been at Ephesus when Paul was, and had given him information of the state of things there. Who those members of her family were, is unknown. Grotius conjectures that they were Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:17, who brought the letter of the church at Corinth to Paul. But of this there is no certain evidence; perhaps not much probability. If the information had been obtained from them, it is probable that it would have been put in the letter which they bore. The probability is that Paul had received this information before they arrived.

Verse 12

Now this I say - This is what I mean; or, I give this as an instance of the contentions to which I refer.

That every one of you saith - That you are divided into different factions, and ranged under different leaders. The word translated "that" ὅτι hotimight be translated here, "because," or "since," as giving a reason for his affirming 1 Corinthians 1:11 that there were contentions there. "Now I say that there are contentions, because you are ranged under different leaders," etc. - Calvin.

I am of Paul - It has been doubted whether Paul meant to affirm that the parties had actually taken the names which he here specifies, or whether he uses these names as illustrations, or suppositions, to show the absurdity of their ranging themselves under different leaders. Many of the ancient interpreters supposed that Paul was unwilling to specify the real names of the false teachers and leaders of the parties, and that he used these names

simply by way of illustration. This opinion was grounded chiefly on what he says in 1 Corinthians 4:6, "And these things, brethren, I have ‹in a figure‘ transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes," etc. But in this place Paul is not referring so particularly to the factions or parties existing in the church, as he is to the necessity of modesty and humility; and in order to enforce this, he refers to himself and Apollos to show that even those most highly favored should have a low estimate of their importance, since all their success depends on God; see 1 Corinthians 3:4-6.

It can scarcely be doubted that Paul here meant to say that there were parties existing in the church at Corinth, who were called by the names of himself, of Apollos, of Cephas, and of Christ. This is the natural construction; and this was evidently the information which he had received by those who were of the family of Chloe. Why the parties were ranged under these leaders, however, can be only a matter of conjecture. Lightfoot suggests that the church at Corinth was composed partly of Jews and partly of Gentiles; see Galatians 2:7; and this circumstance might give rise to the division. Apollos succeeded Paul in Achaia, and labored successfully there; see Acts 18:27-28. These two original parties might be again sub-divided. A part of those who adhered to Paul and Apollos might regard Saul with chief veneration, as being the founder of the church as the instrument of their conversion, as the chief apostle, as signally pure in his doctrine and manner; and a part might regard Apollos as the instrument of their conversion, and as being distinguished for eloquence. It is evident that the main reason why Apollos was regarded as the head of a faction was on account of his extraordinary eloquence, and it is probable that his followers might seek particularly to imitate him in the graces of popular elocution.

And I of Cephas, Peter; - compare John 1:42. He was regarded particularly as the apostle to the Jews; Galatians 2:7. He had his own speciality of views in teaching, and it is probable that his teaching was not regarded as entirely harmonious with that of Paul; see Galatians 2:11-17. Paul had everywhere among the Gentiles taught that it was not necessary to observe the ceremonial laws of Moses; and, it is probable, that Peter was regarded by the Jews as the advocate of the contrary doctrine. Whether Peter had been at Corinth is unknown. If not, they had heard of his name, and character; and those who had come from Judea had probably reported him as teaching a doctrine on the subject of the observance of Jewish ceremonies unlike that of Paul.

And I of Christ - Why this sect professed to be the followers of Christ, is not certainly known. It probably arose from one of the two following causes:

(1)Either that they had been in Judea and had seen the Lord Jesus, and thus regarded themselves as particularly favored and distinguished: or,

(2)More probably because they refused to call themselves by any inferior leader, and wished to regard Christ alone as their head, and possibly prided themselves on the belief that they were more conformed to him than the other sects.

Verse 13

Is Christ divided? - Paul, in this verse, proceeds to show the impropriety of their divisions and strifes. His general argument is, that Christ alone ought to be regarded as their head and leader, and that his claims, arising from his crucifixion, and acknowledged by their baptism, were so pre-eminent that they could not be divided, and the honors due to him should not be rendered to any other. The apostle, therefore, asks, with strong emphasis, whether Christ was to be regarded as divided? Whether this single Supreme Head and Leader of the church, had become the head of different contending factions? The strong absurdity of supposing that, showed the impropriety of their ranging themselves under different banners and leaders.

Was Paul crucified for you? - This question implies that the crucifixion of Christ had an influence in saving them which the sufferings of no other one could have, and that those sufferings were in fact the speciality which distinguished the work of Christ, and rendered it of so much value. The atonement was the grand, crowning work of the Lord Jesus. It was through this that all the Corinthian Christians had been renewed and pardoned. That work was so pre-eminent that it could not have been performed by another. And as they had all been saved by that alone; as they were alike dependent on his merits for salvation, it was improper that they should be torn into contending factions, and ranged under different leaders. If there is anything that will recall Christians of different names and of contending sects from the heat of strife, it is the recollection of the fact that they have been purchased by the same blood, and that the same Saviour died to redeem them all. If this fact could be kept before their minds, it

would put an end to angry strife everywhere in the church, and produce universal Christian love.

Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul - Or, "into," or "unto" the name of Paul; see the note at Matthew 28:19. To be baptized "into," or "unto" anyone is to be devoted to him, to receive and acknowledge him as a teacher, professing to receive his rules, and to be governed by his authority - Locke. Paul here solemnly reminds them that their baptism was an argument why they should not range themselves under different leaders. By that, they had been solemnly and entirely devoted to the service of the only Saviour. "Did I ever," was the implied language of Paul, "baptize in my own name? Did I ever pretend to organize a sect, announcing myself as a leader? Have not I always directed you to that Saviour into whose name and service you have been baptized?" It is remarkable here, that Paul refers to himself, and not to Apollos or Peter. He does not insinuate that the claims of Apollos or Peter were to be disparaged, or their talents and influence to be undervalued, as a jealous rival would have done; but he numbers himself first, and alone, as having no claims to be regarded as a religious leader among them, or the founder of a sect. Even he, the founder of the church, and their spiritual father, had never desired or intended that they should call themselves by his name; and he thus showed the impropriety of their adopting the name of any man as the leader of a sect.

Verse 14

I thank God … - Why Paul did not himself baptize, see in 1 Corinthians 1:17. To him it was now a subject of grateful reflection that he had not done it. He had not given any occasion for the suspicion that he had intended to set himself up as a leader of a sect or party.

But Crispus - Crispus had been the chief ruler of the synagogue at Corinth; Acts 18:8.

And Gaius - Gaius resided at Corinth, and at his house Paul resided when he wrote the Epistle to the Romans; Romans 16:23. It is also possible that the Third Epistle of John was directed to this man; see 3 John 1:1. And if so, then probably Diotrephes 3 John 1:9, who is mentioned as one who loved "to have the pre-eminence," had been one cause of the difficulties at Corinth. The other persons at Corinth had been probably baptized by Silas and Timothy.

Verse 15

Lest any should say - Lest any of those who had been baptized should pervert his design, and say that Paul had baptized them unto himself; or, lest any others should, with any appearance of truth, say that he had sought to make disciples to himself. The Ethiopic version renders this, "that ye should not say we were baptized in his name." Many of the ancient mss. read this, "test any should say that ‹ye were baptized‘ into my name." Mill.

Verse 16

And I baptized also the household - The family. Whether there were any infants in the family, does not appear. It is certain that the family was among the first converts to Christianity in Achaia, and that it had evinced great zeal in aiding those who were Christians; see 1 Corinthians 16:15 - From the manner in which Paul mentions this, it is probable that Stephanas did not reside at Corinth when he was baptized, though he might have subsequently removed there. "I baptized none ‹of you‘ 1 Corinthians 1:14. - that is, none of those who permanently dwelt at Corinth, or who were members of the original church there, but Crispus and Gaius - but I baptized also the family of Stephanas, ‹now‘ of your number" - Or it may mean, "I baptized none of you ‹who are adult members of the church,‘ but Crispus and Gains, though I also baptized the ‹family‘ of Stephanas. If this be the true interpretation, then it forms an argument to prove that Paul practiced household baptism, or the baptism of the families of those who were themselves believers. Or the expression may simply indicate a recollection of the true circumstances of the case - a species of correction of the statement in 1 Corinthians 1:14, "I recollect now also that I baptized the family of Stephanas."

Household - οἶκον oikonThe house; the family. The word comprises the whole family, including adults, domestics, slaves, and children. It includes:

(1)The men in a house, Acts 7:10; 1 Timothy 3:4-5, 1 Timothy 3:12;

(2)"Domestics," Acts 10:2; Acts 11:14; Acts 16:15, Acts 16:31; 1 Timothy 3:4;

(3)"The family" in general; Luke 10:5; Luke 16:27.

Bretschneider. It was the custom, doubtless, for the apostles to baptize the entire "household," whatever might be the age, including domestics, slaves, and children. The head of a family gave up the entire "household" to God.

(That adult domestics and slaves were baptized without personal profession or other evidence of faith, is incredible. The word οἶκον oikonindeed includes domestics as well as children, out while the latter must have been admitted on the profession of their parents, it is reasonable to suppose that the former would be received solely on their own.)

Of Stephanas - Who Stephanas was, is not known. The Greek commentators say that he was the jailor of Philippi, who, after he had been baptized Acts 16:33, removed with his family to Corinth. But of this there is no certain evidence.

Besides - Besides these.

I know not … - I do not know whether I baptized any others who are now members of that church. Paul would, doubtless, recollect that he had baptized others in other places, but he is speaking here particularly of Corinth. This is not to be urged as an argument against the inspiration of Paul, for:

(1)It was not the design of inspiration to free the memory from defect in ordinary transactions, or in those things which were not to be received for the instruction of the church;

(2)The meaning of Paul may simply be, "I know not who of the original members of the church at Corinth may have removed, or who may have died; I know not who may have removed to Corinth from other places where I have preached and baptized, and consequently I cannot know whether I may not have baptized some others of your present number." It is evident, however, that if he had baptized any others, the number was small.

Verse 17

For Christ sent me not to baptize - That is, not to baptize as my main business. Baptism was not his principal employment, though be had a commission in common with others to administer the ordinance, and occasionally did it. The same thing was true of the Saviour, that he did not personally baptize, John 4:2. It is probable that the business of baptism was entrusted to the ministers of the church of inferior talents, or to those who were connected with the churches permanently, and not to those who were engaged chiefly in traveling from place to place. The reasons of this may have been:

(1) That which Paul here suggests, that if the apostles had themselves baptized, it might have given occasion to strifes, and the formation of

parties, as those who had been baptized by the apostles might claim some superiority over those who were not.

(2) it is probable that the rite of baptism was preceded or followed by a course of instruction adapted to it, and as the apostles were traveling from place to place, this could be better entrusted to those who were to be with them as their ordinary religious teachers. It was an advantage that those who imparted this instruction should also administer this ordinance.

(3) it is not improbable, as Doddridge supposes, that the administration of this ordinance was entrusted to inferiors, because it was commonly practiced by immersion, and was attended with some trouble and inconvenience, while the time of the apostles might be more directly occupied in their main work.

But to preach the gospel - As his main business; as the leading, grand purpose of his ministry. This is the grand object of all ministers. It is not to build up a sect or party; it is not to secure simply the baptism of people in this or that communion; it is to make known the glad tidings of salvation, and call people to repentance and to God.

Not with wisdom of words - (οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου ouk en sophia logou). Not in wisdom of speech, margin. The expression here is a Hebraism, or a form of speech common in the Hebrew writings, where a noun is used to express the meaning of an adjective, and means "not in wise words or discourse." The wisdom mentioned here, refers, doubtless, to that which was common among the Greeks, and which was so highly valued. It included the following things:

(1) Their subtle and learned mode of disputation, or that which was practiced in their schools of philosophy.

(2) agraceful and winning eloquence; the arts by which they sought to commend their sentiments, and to win others to their opinions. On this also the Greek rhetoricians greatly valued themselves, and this, probably, the false teachers endeavored to imitate.

(3) that which is elegant and finished in literature, in style and composition. On this the Greeks greatly valued themselves, as the Jews did on miracles and wonders; compare 1 Corinthians 1:22. The apostle means

to say, that the success of the gospel did not depend on these things; that he had not sought them; nor had he exhibited them in his preaching. His doctrine and his manner had not been such as to appear wise to the Greeks; and he had not depended on eloquence or philosophy for his success. Longinus (on the Sublime) enumerates Paul among people distinguished for eloquence; but it is probable that he was not distinguished for the graces of manner (compare 2 Corinthians 10:1, 2 Corinthians 10:10), so much as the strength and power of his reasoning.

Paul here introduces a new subject of discourse, which he pursues through this and the two following chapters - the effect of philosophy on the gospel, or the estimate which ought to be formed in regard to it. The reasons why he introduces this topic, and dwells upon it at such a length, are not perfectly apparent. They are supposed to have been the following:

(1) He had incidentally mentioned his own preaching, and his having been set apart particularly to that; 1 Corinthians 1:17.

(2) his authority, it is probable, had been called in question by the false teachers at Corinth.

(3) the ground of this, or the reason why they undervalued him, had been probably, that he had not, evinced the eloquence of manner and the graces of oratory on which they so much valued themselves.

(4) they had depended for their success on captivating the Greeks by the charms of graceful rhetoric and the refinements of subtle argumentation.

(5) In every way, therefore, the deference paid to rhetoric and philosophy in the church, had tended to bring the pure gospel into disrepute; to produce faction; and to destroy the authority of the apostle. It was necessary, therefore, thoroughly to examine the subject, and to expose the real influence of the philosophy on which they placed so high a value.

Lest the cross of Christ - The simple doctrine that Christ was crucified to make atonement for the sins of people. This was the speciality of the gospel; and on this doctrine the gospel depended for success in the world.

Should be made of none effect - Should be rendered vain and ineffectual. That is, lest the success which might attend the preaching of the gospel should be attributed to the graces of eloquence, the charms of language, or the force of human argumentation, rather than to its true cause, the preaching of Christ crucified; or lest the attempt to recommend it by the charms of eloquence should divert the attention from the simple doctrines of the cross, and the preaching be really vain. The preaching of the gospel depends for its success on the simple power of its truths, borne by the Holy Spirit to the hearts of people; and not on the power of argumentation, and the charms of eloquence. To have adorned the gospel with the charms of Grecian rhetoric, would have obscured its wisdom and efficacy, just as the gilding of a diamond would destroy its brilliancy. True eloquence, and real learning and sound sense, are not to be regarded as valueless; but their use in preaching is to convey the truth with plainness; to fix the mind on the pure gospel; and to leave the conviction on the heart that this system is the power of God. The design of Paul here cannot be to condemn true eloquence and just reasoning, but to rebuke the vain parade, and the glittering ornaments, and dazzling rhetoric which were objects of so much esteem in Greece. A real belief of the gospel, a simple and natural statement of its sublime truths, will admit of, and prompt to, the most manly and noble kind of eloquence. The highest powers of mind, and the most varied learning, may find ample scope for the illustration and the defense of the simple doctrines of the gospel of Christ. But it does not depend for its success on these, but on its pure and heavenly truths, borne to the mind by the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 18

For the preaching of the cross - Greek, "the word (ὁ λόγος ho logos) of the cross;" that is, the doctrine of the cross; or the doctrine which proclaims salvation only through the atonement which the Lord Jesus Christ made on the cross, This cannot mean that the statement that Christ died "as a martyr" on a cross, appears to be foolishness to people; because, if that was all, there would be nothing that would appear contemptible, or that would excite their opposition more than in the death of any other martyr. The statement that Polycarp, and Ignatius, and Paul, and Cranmer died as martyrs, does not appear to people to be foolishness, for it is a statement of an historical truth, and their death excites the high admiration of all people. And if, in the death of Jesus on the cross, there had been nothing more than

a mere martyr‘s death, it would have been equally the object of admiration to all people. But; the “preaching of the cross” must denote more than that; and must mean:

(1) That Christ died as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of people, and that; it was this which gave its speciality to his sufferings on the cross.

(2) That people can be reconciled to God, pardoned, and saved only by the merits and influence of this atoning sacrifice.

To them that perish - τοις μεν απολλυμενοις tois men apollumenoisTo those who are about to perish, or to those who have a character fitting them for destruction; that is, to the wicked. The expression stands in contrast with those who are “saved,” that is, those who have seen the beauty of the cross of Christ, and who have fled to it for salvation.

Foolishness - Folly. That is, it appears to them to be contemptible and foolish, or unworthy of belief. To the great mass of the Jews, and to the pagan philosophers, and indeed, to the majority of the people of this world, it has ever appeared foolishness, for the following reasons:

(1) The humble origin of the Lord Jesus. They despise him that lived in Nazareth; that was poor; that had no home, and few friends, and no wealth, and little honor among his own countrymen.

(2) they despise him who was put to death, as an impostor, at the instigation of his own countrymen, in an ignominious manner on the cross - the usual punishment of slaves.

(3) they see not why there should be any particular efficacy in his death. They deem it incredible that he who could not save himself should be able to save them; and that glory should come from the ignominy of the cross.

(4) they are blind to the true beauty of his personal character; to the true dignity of his nature; to his power over the sick, the lame, the dying, and the dead; they see not the bearing of the work of atonement on the law and government of God; they believe not in his resurrection, and his present state of exalted glory. The world looks only at the fact, that the despised man of Nazareth was put to death on a cross, and smiles at the idea that such a death could have any important influence on the salvation of man - It is worthy of remark, also, that to the ancient philosophers this doctrine

would appear still more contemptible than it does to the people of these times. Everything that came from Judea, they looked upon with contempt and scorn; and they would spurn above all things else the doctrine that they were to expect salvation only by the crucifixion of a Jew. Besides, the account of the crucifixion has now lost to us no small part of its reputation of ignominy. Even around the cross there is conceived to be no small amount of honor and glory. There is now a sacredness about it from religious associations; and a reverence which people in Christian lands can scarcely help feeling when they think of it. But to the ancients it was connected with every idea of ignominy. It was the punishment of slaves, impostors, and vagabonds; and had even a greater degree of disgrace attached to it than the gallows has with us. With them, therefore, the death on the cross was associated with the idea of all that is shameful and dishonorable; and to speak of salvation only by the sufferings and death of a crucified man, was suited to excite in their bosoms only unmingled scorn.

But unto us which are saved - This stands opposed to "them that perish." It refers, doubtless, to Christians, as being saved from the power and condemnation of sin; and as having a prospect of eternal salvation in the world to come.

It is the power of God - See the note at Romans 1:16. This may either mean that the gospel is called "the power of God," because it is the medium through which God exerts his power in the salvation of sinners; or, the gospel is adapted to the condition of man, and is efficacious in renewing him and sanctifying him. It is not an inert, inactive letter, but is so suited to the understanding, the heart, the hopes, the fears of people, and all their great constitutional principles of action, that it actually overcomes their sin, and diffuses peace through the soul. This efficacy is not unfrequently attributed to the gospel. John 17:17; Hebrews 4:12; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:22-23. When the gospel, however, or the preaching of the cross, is spoken of as effectual or powerful, it must be understood of all the agencies which are connected with it; and does not refer to simple, abstract propositions, but to the truth as it comes attended with the influences which God sends down to accompany it.

It includes, therefore, the promised agency of the Holy Spirit, without which it would not be effectual. But the agency of the Spirit is designed to give efficacy to that which is "really adapted" to produce the effects, and not to act in an arbitrary manner. All the effects of the gospel on the soul -

in regeneration, repentance, faith, sanctification - in hope, love, joy, peace, patience, temperance, purity, and devotedness to God, are only such "as the gospel is suited to produce." It has a set of truths and promises just adapted to each of these effects; just suited to the soul by him who knows it; and adapted to produce just these results. The Holy Spirit secures their influence on the mind: and is the grand living agent of accomplishing just what the truth of God is "suited originally" to produce. Thus, the preaching of the cross is "the power of God;" and every minister may present it with the assurance that he is presenting, not "a cunningly devised fable," but a system "really suited" to save people; and yet, that its reception by the human mind depends on the promised presence of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 19

For it is written - This passage is quoted from Isaiah 29:14. The Hebrew of the passage, as rendered in the English version is, "the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." The version of the Septuagint is, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the understanding of the prudent I will hide" κρύψω krupsōcorresponding substantially with the quotation by Paul. The sense in the Hebrew is not materially different. The meaning of the passage as used by Isaiah is, that such was the iniquity and stupidity of "Ariel" Isaiah 29:1, that is, Jerusalem, that God would so execute his judgments as to confound their wise men, and overwhelm those who boasted of their understanding. Those in whom they had confided, and on whom they relied, should appear to be bereft of their wisdom; and they should be made conscious of their own lack of counsel to meet and remove the impending calamities. The apostle does not affirm that this passage in Isaiah refers to the times of the gospel. The contrary is manifestly true. But it expresses a general principle of the divine administration - "that the coming forth of God is often such as to confound human prudence; in a manner which human wisdom would not have devised; and in such a way as to show that he is not dependent on the wisdom of man." As such, the sentiment is applicable to the gospel; and expresses just the idea which the apostle wished to convey - that the wisdom of the wise should be confounded by the plan of God; and the schemes of human devising be set at naught.

I will destroy - That is, I will abolish; or will not be dependent on it; or will show that my plans are not derived from the counsels of people.

The wisdom of the wise - The professed wisdom of philosophers.

And will bring to nothing - Will show it to be of no value in this matter.

The prudent - The people professing understanding; the sages of the world. We may remark:

(1) That the plan of salvation was not the contrivance of human wisdom.

(2) it is "unlike" what people have themselves devised as systems of religion. It did not occur to the ancient philosophers; nor has it occurred to the modern.

(3) it may be expected to excite the opposition, the contempt, and the scorn of the wise people of this world; and the gospel makes its way usually, not with their friendship, but in the face of their opposition.

(4) its success is such as to confound and perplex them. They despise it, and they see not its secret power; they witness its effects, but are unable to account for them. It has always been a question with philosophers why the gospel met with such success; and the various accounts which have been given of it by its enemies, show how much they have been embarrassed. The most elaborate part of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," is contained in his attempt to state the causes of the early propagation of Christianity, in 1 Corinthians 15:16; and the obvious failure of the account shows how much the mind of the philosophic sceptic was embarrassed by the fact of the spread of Christianity.

(5) the reception of the gospel demands an humble mind; Mark 10:15. People of good sense, of humble hearts, of childlike temper, embrace it; and they see its beauty, and are won by its loveliness, and controlled by its power. They give themselves to it; and find that it is suited to save their souls.

(6) in this, Christianity is like all science. The discoveries in science are such as to confound the wise in their own conceits, and overthrow the opinions of the prudent, just as much as the gospel does, and thus show that both are from the same God - the God who delights to pour such a flood of truth on the mind as to overwhelm it in admiration of himself, and with the

conviction of its own littleness. The profoundest theories in science, and the most subtle speculations of people of genius, in regard to the causes of things, are often overthrown by a few simple discoveries - and discoveries which are at first despised as much as the gospel is. The invention of the telescope by Galileo was to the theories of philosophers and astronomers, what the revelation of the gospel was to the systems of ancient learning, and the deductions of human wisdom. The one confounded the world as much as the other; and both were at first equally the object of opposition or contempt.

Verse 20

Where is the wise? - Language similar to this occurs in Isaiah 33:18, "Where is the scribe? where is the receiver? where is he that counted the towers?" Without designing to quote these words as having an original reference to the subject now under consideration, Paul uses them as any man does language where he finds words with which he or his readers are familiar, that will convey his meaning. A man familiar with the Bible, will naturally often make use of Scripture expressions in conveying his ideas. In Isaiah, the passage refers to the deliverance of the people from the threatened invasion of Sennacherib. The 18th verse represents the people as meditating on the threatened terror of the invasion; and then in the language of exultation and thanksgiving at their deliverance, saying, "where is the wise man that laid the plan of destroying the nation? Where the Inspector General (see my note on the passage in Isaiah), employed in arranging the forces? Where the receiver (margin the "weigher"), the paymaster of the forces? Where the man that counted the towers of Jerusalem, and calculated on their speedy overthrow? All baffled and defeated; and their schemes have all come to nothing." So the apostle uses the same language in regard to the boasted wisdom, of the world in reference to salvation. It is all baffled, and is all shown to be of no value.

The wise - σοφός sophosThe sage. At first the Greek men of learning were called "wise men" σοφοί , like the magicians of the East. They afterward assumed a more modest appellation, and called themselves the "lovers of wisdom" φιλοσοφοι philosophoior "philosophers." This was the name by which they were commonly known in Greece in the time of Paul.

Where is the scribe? - γραμματεὺς grammateusThe scribe among the Jews was a learned man originally employed in transcribing the law, but

subsequently the term came to denote a learned man in general. Among the Greeks the word was used to denote a public notary or a transcriber of the laws; or a secretary. It was a term, therefore nearly synonymous with a man of learning; and the apostle evidently uses it in this sense in this place. Some have supposed that he referred to the Jewish men of learning here; but he probably had reference to the Greeks.

Where is the disputer of this world? - The acute and subtle sophist of this age. The word "disputer" συζητητὴς suzētētēsproperly denotes one who "inquires" carefully into the causes and relations of things; one who is a subtle and abstruse investigator. It was applied to the ancient sophists and disputants in the Greek academics; and the apostle refers, doubtless, to them. The meaning is, that in all their professed investigations, in all their subtle and abstruse inquiries, they had failed of ascertaining the way in which man could be saved; and that God had devised a plan which had baffled all their wisdom, and in which their philosophy was disregarded. The term "world," here αἰῶνος aiōnosrefers, probably, not to the world as a physical structure - though Grotius supposes that it does - but to that "age" - the disputer of that age, or generation - an age eminently wise and learned.

Hath not God made foolish … - That is, has he not by the originality and superior efficacy of his plan of salvation, poured contempt on all the schemes of philosophers, and evinced their folly? Not only without the aid of those schemes of human beings, but in opposition to them, he has devised a plan for human salvation that evinces its efficacy and its wisdom in the conversion of sinners, and in destroying the power of wickedness. Paul here, possibly, had reference to the language in Isaiah 44:25. God "turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish."

Verse 21

For after that - ἐπειδὴ epeidēSince, or seeing that it is true that the world by wisdom knew not God. After all the experience of the world it was ascertained that human beings would never by their own wisdom come to the true knowledge of God, and it pleased him to devise another plan for salvation.

In the wisdom of God - This phrase is susceptible of two interpretations:

(1) The first makes it refer to "the wisdom of God" evinced in the works of creation - the demonstration of his existence and attributes found there, and, according to that, the apostle means to say, that the world by a survey

of the works of God did not know him; or were, notwithstanding those works, in deep darkness. This interpretation is adopted by most commentators - by Lightfoot, Rosenmuller, Grotius, Calvin, etc. According to this interpretation, the word ἐν en(in) is to be translated "by" or "through."

(2) asecond interpretation makes it refer to the wise arrangement or government of God, by which this was permitted. "For when, by the wise arrangement or government of God; after a full and fair trial of the native, unaided powers of man, it was ascertained that the true knowledge of God would not be arrived at by man, it pleased him," etc. This appears to be the correct interpretation, because it is the most obvious one, and because it suits the connection best. It is, according to this, a reason why God introduced a new method of saving people. This may be said to have been accomplished by a plan of God, which was wise, because:

(1) It was desirable that the powers of man should be fully tried before the new plan was introduced, in order to show that it was not dependent on human wisdom, that it was not originated by man, and that there was really need of such an interposition.

(2) because sufficient time had been furnished to make the experiment. An opportunity had been given for four thousand years, and still it had failed.

(3) because the experiment had been made in the most favorable circumstances. The human faculties had had time to ripen and expand; one generation had had an opportunity of profiting by the observation of its predecessor; and the most mighty minds had been brought to boar on the subject. If the sages of the east, and the profound philosophers of the west, had not been able to come to the true knowledge of God, it was in vain to hope that more profound minds could be brought to bear on it, or that more careful investigation would be bestowed on it. The experiment had been fairly made, and the result was before the world; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 1:18.

To save them that believe - That believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; see the note at Mark 16:16. This was the speciality and essence of the plan of

God, and this has appeared to the mass of people to be a plan devoid of wisdom and unworthy of God. The preaching of the cross which is thus esteemed foolishness, is made the means of saving them, because it sets forth God‘s only plan of mercy, and states the way in which lost sinners may become reconciled to God.

Verse 22

For the Jews require a sign - A miracle, a prodigy, an evidence of divine interposition. This was the characteristic of the Jewish people. God had manifested himself to them by miracles and wonders in a remarkable manner in past times, and they greatly prided themselves on that fact, and always demanded it when any new messenger came to them, professing to be sent from God. This propensity they often evinced in their contact with the Lord Jesus; Matthew 12:38; Matthew 16:1; Mark 8:11; Luke 11:16; Luke 12:54-56. Many mss., instead of “sign” here in the singular, read “signs” in the plural; and Griesbach has introduced that reading into the text. The sense is nearly the same, and it means that it was a characteristic of the Jews to demand the constant exhibition of miracles and wonders; and it is also implied here, I think, by the reasoning of the apostle, that they believed that the communication of such signs to them as a people, would secure their salvation, and they therefore despised the simple preaching of a crucified Messiah. They expected a Messiah that should come with the exhibition of some stupendous signs and wonders from heaven (Matthew 12:38, etc., as above); they looked for the displays of amazing power in his coming, and they anticipated that he would deliver them from their enemies by mere power; and they, therefore, were greatly offended 1 Corinthians 1:23, by the simple doctrine of a crucified Messiah.

And the Greeks … - Perhaps this means the pagan in general, in opposition to the Jews; see the note at Romans 1:16. It was, however, especially the characteristic of the Greek philosophers. They seek for schemes of philosophy and religion that shall depend on human wisdom, and they therefore despise the gospel.

Verse 23

But we - We who are Christian preachers make Christ crucified the grand subject of our instructions and our aims in contradistinction from the Jew and the Greek. They seek, the one miracles, the other wisdom, we glory only in the cross.

Christ crucified - The word Christ, the anointed, is the same as the Hebrew name Messiah. The emphasis in this expression is on the word "crucified." The Jews would make the Messiah whom they expected no less an object of glorifying than the apostles, but they spurned the doctrine that he was to be crucified. Yet in that the apostles boasted; proclaiming him crucified, or "having been crucified" as the only hope of man. This must mean more than that Christ was distinguished for moral worth, more than that he died as a martyr; because if that were all, no reason could be given why the cross should be made so prominent an object. It must mean that Christ was crucified for the sins of people, as an atoning sacrifice in the place of sinners. "We proclaim a crucified. Messiah as the only redeemer of lost people."

To the Jews a stumbling-block - The word "stumbling-block" (σκάνδαλον skandalon) means properly anything in the way over which one may fall; then anything that gives offence, or that causes one to fall into sin. Here it means that to the Jews, the doctrine that the Messiah was to be crucified gave great offence; excited, irritated, and exasperated them; that they could not endure the doctrine, and treated it with scorn. Compare the Romans 9:33 note; 1 Peter 2:8 note. It is well known that to the Jews no doctrine was more offensive than this, that the Messiah was to be put to death, and that there was to be salvation in no other way. It was so in the times of the apostles, and it has been so since. They have, therefore, usually called the Lord Jesus, by way of derision, "תלוי Tolwiythe man that was hanged," that is, on a cross; and Christians they have usually denominated, for the same reason, צבדי תלוי 'Abday Tolwiyservants of the man that was hanged." The reasons of this feeling are obvious:

(1) They had looked for a magnificent temporal prince; but the doctrine that their Messiah was crucified, dashed all their expectations. And they regarded it with contempt and scorn, just in proportion as their hopes had been elevated, and these high expectations cherished.

(2) they had the common feelings of all people, the native feelings of pride, and self-righteousness, by which they rejected the doctrine that we are dependent for salvation on one who was crucified.

(3) they regarded Jesus as one given over by God for an enormous attempt at imposition, as having been justly put to death; and the object of

the curse of the Almighty. Isaiah 53:4, "we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God." They endeavored to convince themselves that he was the object of the divine dereliction and abhorrence; and they, therefore, rejected the doctrine of the cross with the deepest feelings of detestation.

To the Greeks - To the Gentiles in general. So the Syriac, the Vulgate, the Arabic, and the Aethiopic versions all read it. The term "Greek" denotes all who were not Jews; thus the phrase, "the Jews and the Greeks" comprehended the whole human family, 1 Corinthians 1:22.

Foolishness - See the note at 1 Corinthians 1:18. They regarded it as folly:

(1)Because they esteemed the whole account a fable, and an imposition;

(2)It did not accord with their own views of the way of elevating the condition of man;

(3)They saw no efficacy in the doctrine, no tendency in the statement that a man of humble birth was put to death in an ignominious manner in Judea, to make people better, or to receive pardon.

(4)they had the common feelings of unrenewed human nature; blind to the beauty of the character of Christ, and blind to the design of his death; and they therefore regarded the whole statement as folly.

We may remark here, that the feelings of the Jews and of the Greeks on this subject, are the common feelings of people. Everywhere sinners have the same views of the cross; and everywhere the human heart, if left to itself, rejects it, as either a stumbling-block or as folly. But the doctrine should be preached, though it is an offence, and though it appears to be folly. It is the only hope of man; and by the preaching of the cross alone can sinners be saved.

Verse 24

But unto them which are called - To all true Christians. See the note at 1 Corinthians 1:9.

Both Jews and Greeks - Whether originally of Jewish or Gentile extraction, they have here a common, similar view of the crucified Saviour.

Christ the power of God - Christ appears to them as the power of God; or it is through him that the power of salvation is communicated to them. See the note at 1 Corinthians 1:18.

And the wisdom of God - The way in which God evinces his wisdom in the salvation of people. They see the plan to be wise. They see that it is adapted to the end. They see it to be suited to procure pardon, and sanctification, and eternal life. It is God‘s wise plan for the salvation of people; and it is seen by those who are Christians, to be adapted to this end. They see that there is a beauty in his character; an excellency in his doctrines; and an efficacy in his atonement, to secure their salvation. - We may remark on this verse:

(1) That when people become Christians, their hearts are changed. The views of Christians are here represented as diametrically opposite to those of other people. To one class, Christ is a stumbling-block; to others, folly; to Christians he is full of beauty. But those views of the Christian, can be obtained only by a change of heart. And the change from regarding an object or being as foolishness to regarding it as full of beauty, must be a radical and a mighty change.

(2) all Christians have similar views of the Saviour. It matters not whether they were Jew or Greek; it matters not whether they were born in a northern or southern clime - “whether an Indian or an African sun has burned upon them;” whether they speak the same or different languages; whether they were born amidst the same or different denominations of Christians; whether in the same or different countries; or whether they are people in the same or different Christian communities, they have the same views of the Saviour. They see him to be the power and the wisdom of God. They are united in him, and therefore united to each other; and should regard themselves as belonging to the same family, and as bound to the same eternal home.

(3) there is real efficacy in the plan of salvation. It is a scheme of power. It is adapted to the end, and is admirably suited to accomplish the great effects which God designs to accomplish. It is not a scheme intended to show its own imbecility, and the need of another and an independent agent to accomplish the work. All the effects which the Holy Spirit produces on the soul, are such, and only such, as the truth of the gospel is adapted to produce in the mind. The gospel is God‘s plan of putting forth power to save people. It seizes upon great elements in human nature; and is adapted to enlist them in the service of God. It is just suited to man as a being

capable of reasoning and susceptible of emotion; as a being who maybe influenced by hope and fear; who may be excited and impelled to duty by conscience, and who may be roused from a state of lethargy and sin by the prospect of eternal life, and the apprehension of eternal death. "As such" it should always be preached - as a system "wise," and "adapted" to the great end in view, as a system most powerful and "mighty to the pulling down of strong holds."

Verse 25

Because the foolishness of God - That which God appoints, requires, commands, does, etc., which appears to people to be foolish. The passage is not to be understood as affirming that it is really foolish or unwise; but that it appears so to people - Perhaps the apostle here refers to those parts of the divine administration where the wisdom of the plan is not seen; or where the reason of what God does is concealed.

Is wiser than men - Is better adapted to accomplish important ends, and more certainly effectual than the schemes of human wisdom. This is especially true of the plan of salvation - a plan apparently foolish to the mass of people - yet indubitably accomplishing more for the renewing of people, and for their purity and happiness, than all the schemes of human contrivance. They have accomplished nothing toward people's salvation; this accomplishes everything. They have always failed; this never fails.

The weakness of God - There is really no weakness in God, any more than there is folly. This must mean, therefore, the things of his appointment which appear weak and insufficient to accomplish the end. Such are these facts - that God should seek to save the world by Jesus of Nazareth, Who was supposed unable to save himself Matthew 27:40-43; and that he should expect to save people by the gospel, by its being preached by people who were without learning, eloquence, wealth, fame, or power. The instruments were feeble; and people judged that this was owing to the weakness or lack of power in the God who appointed them.

Is stronger than men - Is able to accomplish more than the utmost might of man. The feeblest agency that God puts forth - so feeble as to be esteemed weakness - is able to effect more than the utmost might of man. The apostle here refers particularly to the work of redemption; but it is true everywhere. We may remark:

(1) That God often effects his mightiest plans by that which seems to men to be weak and even foolish. The most mighty revolutions arise often from the slightest causes; his most vast operations are often connected with very feeble means. The revolution of empires; the mighty effects of the pestilence; the advancement in the sciences, and arts, and the operations of nature, are often brought about by means apparently as little suited to accomplish the work as those which are employed in the plan of redemption.

(2) God is great. If his feeblest powers put forth, surpass the mightiest powers of man, how great must be his might. If the powers of man who rears works of art; who levels mountains and elevates vales; if the power which reared the pyramids, be as nothing when compared with the feeblest putting forth of divine power, how mighty must be his arm! How vast that strength which made, and which upholds the rolling worlds! How safe are his people in his hand! And how easy for him to crush all his foes in death!

Verse 26

For ye see your calling - You know the general character and condition of those who are Christians among you, that they have not been generally taken from the wise, the rich, and the learned, but from humble life. The design of the apostle here is, to show that the gospel did not depend for its success on human wisdom. His argument is, that "in fact" those who were blessed by it had not been of the elevated ranks of life mainly, but that God had shown his power by choosing those who were ignorant, and vicious, and abandoned, and by reforming and purifying their lives. The verb "ye see" βλέπετε blepeteis ambiguous, and may be either in the indicative mood, as our translators have rendered it, "ye do see; you are well apprised of it, and know it," or it may be in the imperative, "see; contemplate your condition;" but the sense is substantially the same. "Your calling" (τὴν κλῆσιν tēn klēsin) means "those who are called" 1 Corinthians 1:9; as "the circumcision" means those who are circumcised. Romans 3:30. The sense is, "took upon the condition of those who are Christians."

Not many wise men - Not many who are regarded as wise; or who are ranked with philosophers. This supposes that there were some of that description, though the mass of Christians were then, as now, from more humble ranks of life. That there were some of high rank and wealth at

Corinth who became Christians, is well known. Crispus and Sosthenes, rulers of the synagogue there (Acts 28:8, Acts 28:17; Compare 1 Corinthians 1:1); Gaius, a rich, hospitable man Romans 16:23; and Erastus the chancellor of the city of Corinth Romans 16:23, had been converted and were members of the church. Some have supposed ("Macknight") that this should be rendered "not many mighty, wise, etc. ‹call you;' that is, God has not employed the wise and the learned ‹to call' you into his kingdom." But the sense in our translation is evidently the correct interpretation. It is the obvious sense; and it agrees with the design of the apostle, which was to show that God had not consulted the wisdom, and power, and wealth of men in the establishment of his church. So the Syriac and the Vulgate render it.

According to the flesh - According to the maxims and principles of a sensual and worldly policy; according to the views of people when under the influence of those principles; that is, who are unrenewed. The flesh here stands opposed to the spirit; the views of the people of this world in contradistinction from the wisdom that is from above.

Not many mighty - Not many people of power; or men sustaining important "offices" in the state. Comp, Revelation 6:15. The word may refer to those who wield power of any kind, whether derived from office, from rank, from wealth, etc.

Not many noble - Not many of illustrious birth, or descended from illustrious families - εὐγενεῖς eugeneis"well-born." In respect to each of these classes, the apostle does not say that there were no men of wealth, and power, and birth, but that the mass or body of Christians was not composed of such. They were made up of those who were in humble life. There were a few, indeed, of rank and property, as there are now; but then, as now, the great mass was composed of those who were from the lower conditions of society. The reason why God had chosen his people from that rank is stated in 1 Corinthians 1:29. The character of many of those who composed the church at Corinth before the conversion, is stated in 1 Corinthians 6:10-11, which see.

Verse 27

But God hath chosen - The fact of their being in the church at all was the result of his choice. It was owing entirely to his grace.

The foolish things - The things esteemed foolish among people. The expression here refers to those who were destitute of learning, rank, wealth,

and power, and who were esteemed as fools, and were despised by the rich and the great.

To confound - To bring to shame; or that he might make them ashamed; that is, humble them by showing them how little he regarded their wisdom; and how little their wisdom contributed to the success of his cause. By thus overlooking them, and bestowing his favors on the humble and the poor; by choosing his people from the ranks which they despised, and bestowing on them the exalted privilege of being called the sons of God, he had poured dishonor on the rich and the great, and overwhelmed them, and their schemes of wisdom, with shame. It is also true, that those who are regarded as fools by the wise men of the world are able often to confound those who boast of their wisdom; and that the arguments of plain people, though unlearned except in the school of Christ; of people of sound common sense under the influence of Christian principles, have a force which the learning and talent of the people of this world cannot gainsay or resist. They have truth on their side; and truth, though dressed in a humble garb, is more mighty than error, though clothed with the brilliancy of imagination, the pomp of declamation, and the cunning of sophistry.

And the weak things - Those esteemed weak by the people of the world.

The mighty - The great; the noble; the learned.

Verse 28

And base things of the world - Those things which by the world are esteemed ignoble. Literally, those which are not of noble, or illustrious birth τὰ ἀγειῆ ta ageiēThings which are despised - Those which the world regards as objects of contempt; compare Mark 9:12; Luke 18:19; Acts 4:11.

Yea - The introduction of this word by the translators does nothing to illustrate the sense, but rather enfeebles it. The language here is a striking instance of Paul‘s manner of expressing himself with great strength. He desires to convey in the strongest terms, the fact, that God had illustrated his plan by choosing the objects of least esteem among people. He is willing to admit all that could be said on this point. He says, therefore, that he had chosen the things of ignoble birth and rank - the base things of the world; but this did not fully express his meaning. He had chosen objects of contempt among people; but this was not strong enough to express his idea. He adds, therefore, that he had chosen those things which were absolutely

nothing, which had no existence; which could not be supposed to influence him in his choice.

And things which are not - τὰ μὴ ὄντα ta mē ontaThat which is nothing; which is worthless; which has no existence; those flyings which were below contempt itself; and which, in the estimation of the world, were passed by as having no existence; as not having sufficient importance to be esteemed worthy even of the slight notice which is implied in contempt. For a man who despises a thing must at least notice it, and esteem it worth some attention. But the apostle here speaks of things beneath even that slight notice; as completely and totally disregarded, as having no existence. The language here is evidently that of hyperbole (compare the note at John 21:25). It was a figure of speech common in the East, and not unusual in the sacred writings; compare Isaiah 40:17.

All nations before him are as nothing.

And they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity.

See also Romans 4:17, "God, who - calleth those things which be not, as though they were." This language was strongly expressive of the estimate which the Jews fixed on the Gentiles, as being a despised people, as being in fact no people; a people without laws, and organization, and religion, and privileges; see Hosea 1:10; Hosea 2:23; Romans 9:25; 1 Peter 2:10. "When a man of rank among the Hindus speaks of low-caste persons, of notorious profligates, or of those whom he despises, he calls them "alla-tha-varkalthat is, "those who are not." The term does not refer to life or existence, but to a quality or disposition, and is applied to those who are vile and abominable in all things. "My son, my son, go not among them ‹who are not.‘" "Alas! alas! those people are all alla-tha-varkalWhen wicked men prosper, it is said, "this is the time for those ‹who are not.‘" "Have you heard that those ‹who are not‘ are now acting righteously?" Vulgar and indecent expressions are also called, "words that are not." "To address men in the phrase ‹are not,‘ is provoking beyond measure" - Roberts, as quoted in Bush‘s *Illustrations of Scripture*.

To bring to naught - To humble and subdue. To show them how vain and impotent they were.

Things that are - Those who on account of their noble birth, high attainments, wealth, and rank placed a high estimate on themselves and

despised others.

Verse 29

That no flesh - That no person; no class of people. The word "flesh" is often thus used to denote human beings. Matthew 24:22; Luke 3:6; John 17:2; Acts 2:17; 1 Peter 1:24; etc.

Should glory - Should boast; Romans 3:27.

In his presence - Before him. That man should really have nothing of which to boast; but that the whole scheme should be adapted to humble and subdue him. On these verses we may observe:

(1) That it is to be expected that the great mass of Christian converts will be found among those who are of humble life - and it may be observed also, that true virtue and excellence; sincerity and amiableness; honesty and sincerity, are usually found there also.

(2) that while the mass of Christians are found there, there are also those of noble birth, and rank, and wealth, who become Christians. The aggregate of those who from elevated ranks and distinguished talents have become Christians, has not been small. It is sufficient to refer to such names as Pascal, and Bacon, and Boyle, and Newton, and Locke, and Hale, and Wilberforce, to show that religion can command the homage of the most illustrious genius and rank.

(3) the reasons why those of rank and wealth do not become Christians, are many and obvious:

(a)They are beset with special temptations.

(b)They are usually satisfied with rank, and wealth, and do not feel their need of a hope of heaven.

(c)They are surrounded with objects which flatter their vanity, which minister to their pride, and which throw them into the circle of alluring and tempting pleasures.

(d)They are drawn away from the means of grace and the places of prayer, by fashion, by business, by temptation.

(e)There is something about the pride of learning and philosophy, which usually makes those who possess it unwilling to sit at the feet of Christ; to

acknowledge their dependence on any power; and to confess that they are poor, and needy, and blind, and naked before God.

(4) the gospel is designed to produce humility, and to place all people on a level in regard to salvation. There is no royal way to the favor of God. No monarch is saved because he is a monarch; no philosopher because he is a philosopher; no rich man because he is rich; no poor man because he is poor. All are placed on a level. All are to be saved in the same way. All are to become willing to give the entire glory to God. All are to acknowledge him as providing the plan, and as furnishing the grace that is needful for salvation. God‘s design is to bring down the pride of man, and to produce everywhere a willingness to acknowledge him as the fountain of blessings and the God of all.

Verse 30

But of him - That is, by his agency and power. It is not by philosophy; not from ourselves; but by his mercy. The apostle keeps it prominently in view, that it was not of their philosophy, wealth, or rank that they had been raised to these privileges, but of God as the author.

Are ye - Ye are what you are by the mercy of God. 1 Corinthians 15:10. You owe your hopes to him. The emphasis in this verse is to he placed on this expression, “are ye.” You are Christians, not by the agency of man, but by the agency of God.

(See the supplementary note at Romans 8:10.)

In Christ Jesus - See the note at 1 Corinthians 1:4. By the medium, or through the work of Christ, this mercy has been conferred on you.

Who of God - From God ἀπὸ θεοῦ apo theouChrist is given to us by God, or appointed by him to be our wisdom, etc. God originated the scheme, and God gave him for this end.

Wisdom - That is, he is to us the source of wisdom; it is by him that we are made wise. This cannot mean that his wisdom becomes strictly and properly ours; that it is set over to us, and reckoned as our own, for that is not true. But it must mean simply, that Christians have become “truly wise” by the agency, the teaching, and the work of Christ. Philosophers had attempted to become wise by their own investigations and inquiries. But Christians had become wise by the work of Christ; that is, it had been by his instructions that they had been made acquainted with the true character of God; with his law; with their own condition; and with the great truth that there was a glorious immortality beyond the grave. None of these truths had

been obtained by the investigations of philosophers, but by the instructions of Christ. In like manner it was that through him they had been made practically wise unto salvation. Compare Colossians 2:3, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He is the great agent by whom we become truly wise. Christ is often represented as eminently wise, and as the source of all true wisdom to his people. Isaiah 11:1; Matthew 13:54; Luke 2:40, Luke 2:52; 1 Corinthians 1:24; 1 Corinthians 3:10. "Ye are wise in Christ." Many commentators have supposed that the beautiful description of wisdom, in Romans 3:26-27); and,

(2) Because by his influence, and work, and Spirit, and truth, we are made personally holy in the sight of God.

The former is doubtless the thing intended here, as sanctification is specified after. The apostle here refers simply to the fact, without specifying the mode in which it is done. That is to be learned from other parts of the New Testament. Compare the note at Romans 4:25. The doctrine of justification is, that God regards and treats those as righteous who believe on his Son, and who are pardoned on account of what he has done and suffered. The several steps in the process may be thus stated:

(1) The sinner is by nature exposed to the wrath of God. He is lost and ruined. He has no merit of his own. He has violated a holy law, and that law condemns him, and he has no power to make an atonement or reparation. He can never be pronounced a "just" man on his own merits. He can never vindicate his conduct, as a man can do in a court of justice where he is unjustly accused, and so be pronounced just.

(2) Jesus Christ has taken the sinner's place, and died in his stead. He has honored a broken law; he has rendered it consistent for God to pardon. By his dreadful sufferings, endured in the sinner's place, God has shown his hatred of sin, and his willingness to forgive. His truth will be vindicated, and his law honored, and his government secured, if now he shall pardon the offender when penitent. As he endured these sorrows for others, and not for himself, they can be so reckoned, and are so judged by God. All the "benefits" or "results" of that atonement, therefore, as it was made for others, can be applied to them, and all the advantage of such substitution in their place, can be made over to them, as really as when a man pays a note

of hand for a friend; or when he pays for another a ransom. The price is reckoned as paid for them, and the "benefits" flow to the debtor and the captive. It is not reckoned that they paid it, for that is not true; but that it was done for them, and the benefit may be theirs, which is true.

(3) God has been pleased to promise that these benefits may be conferred on him who believes in the Saviour. The sinner is "united" by faith to the Lord Jesus, and is so adjudged, or reckoned. God "esteems" or judges him to be a believer according to the promise. And so believing, and so repenting, he deems it consistent to pardon and justify him who is so united to his Son by faith. He is justified, not by the ACT of faith; not by any merits of his own, but by the merits of Christ. He has no other ground, and no other hope. Thus, he is in fact a pardoned and justified man; and God so reckons and judges. God's law is honored, and the sinner is pardoned and saved; and it is now as consistent for God to treat him as a righteous man, as it would be if he had never sinned - since there is as high honor shown to the law of God, as there would have been had he been personally obedient, or had he personally suffered its penalty. And as, through the death of Christ, the same "results" are secured in upholding God's moral government as would be by his condemnation, it is consistent and proper for God to forgive him and treat him as a righteous man; and to do so accords with the infinite benevolence of his heart.

And sanctification - By him we are sanctified or made holy. This does not mean, evidently, that his personal holiness is reckoned to us, but that by his work applied to our hearts, we become personally sanctified or holy. Compare Ephesians 4:24. This is done by the agency of his Spirit applying truth to the mind John 17:19, by the aid which he furnishes in trials, temptations, and conflicts, and by the influence of hope in sustaining, elevating and purifying the soul. All the truth that is employed to sanctify, was taught primarily by him; and all the means that may be used are the purchase of his death, and are under his direction; and the Spirit by whose agency Christians are sanctified, was sent into the world by him, and in answer to his prayers. John 14:16; John 15:26.

And redemption - ἀπολύτρωσις apolutrōsisFor the meaning of this word, see the note at Romans 3:24. Here it is evidently used in a larger sense than it is commonly in the New Testament. The things which are specified above, "justification and sanctification," are a part of the work of

redemption. Probably the word is used here in a wide sense, as denoting the whole "group," or class of influences by which we are brought at last to heaven; so that the apostle refers not only to his atonement, but to the work by which we are in fact redeemed from death, and made happy in heaven. Thus, in Romans 8:23, the word is applied to the resurrection, "the ‹redemption‘ of the body." The sense is, "it is by Christ that we are redeemed; by him that an atonement is made; by him that we are pardoned; by him that we are delivered from the dominion of sin, and the power of our enemies; and by him that we shall be rescued from the grave, and raised up to everlasting life." Thus, the whole work depends on him; and no part of it is to be ascribed to the philosophy, the talent, or the wisdom of human beings. He does not merely aid us; he does not complete that which is imperfect; he does not come in to do a part of the work, or to supply our defects; but it is all to be traced to him. Colossians 2:10, "and ye are complete in him."

Verse 31

As it is written - This is evidently a quotation made from Jeremiah 9:23-24. It is not made literally; but the apostle has "condensed" the sense of the prophet into a few words, and has retained essentially his idea.

He that glorieth - He that boasts or exults.

In the Lord - Not ascribing his salvation to human abilities, or learning, or rank, but entirely to God. And from this we see:

(1) That the design of the plan of salvation is to exalt God in view of the mind.

(2) that the design is to make us humble; and this is the design also of all his works no less than of the plan of salvation. All just views of the creation tend to produce true humility.

(3) it is an evidence of piety when we are thus disposed to exalt God, and to be humble. It shows that the heart is changed; and that we are truly disposed to honor him.

(4) we may rejoice in God. We have no strength, and no righteousness of which to boast; but we may rejoice in him. He is full of goodness and mercy. He is able to save us. He can redeem us out of the hand of all our enemies. And when we are conscious that we are poor, and feeble, and

helpless; when oppressed with a sense of sin, we may rejoice in him as our God; and exult in him as our Saviour and Redeemer. True piety will delight to come and lay everything at his feet; and whatever may be our rank, or talent, or learning, we shall rejoice to come with the temper of the humblest child of poverty, and sorrow, and lack, and to say, "not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake," Psalm 115:1.

"Not to our names, thou only just and true,
Not to our worthless names is glory due;
Thy power and grace, thy truth and justice claim.

Immortal honours to thy sovereign name."
Watts.

1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

The design of this chapter is the same as the concluding part of 1 Corinthians 1:17-31, to show that the gospel does not depend for its success on human wisdom, or the philosophy of men. This position the apostle further confirms:

(1) 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, By a reference to his own example, as having been successful among them, and yet not endowed with the graces of elocution, or by a commanding address; yet.

(2) Lest it should be thought that the gospel was real folly, and should be contemned, he shows in the remainder of the chapter 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, that it contained true wisdom; that it was a profound scheme - rejected, indeed, by the people of the world, but seen to be wise by those who were made acquainted with its real nature and value, 1 Corinthians 2:5-16.

The first division of the chapter 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, is a continuation of the argument to show that the success of the gospel does not depend on human wisdom or philosophy. This he proves:

(1) By the fact that when he was among them, though his preaching was attended with success, yet he did not come with the attractions of human eloquence, 1 Corinthians 2:1.

(2) this was in accordance with his purpose, not designing to attempt anything like that, but having another object, 1 Corinthians 2:2.

(3) in fact he had not evinced that, but the contrary, 1 Corinthians 2:3-4.

(4) his design was that their conversion should not appear to have been made by human wisdom or eloquence, but to have been manifestly the work of God, 1 Corinthians 2:5.

Verse 1

And I, brethren - Keeping up the tender and affectionate style of address.

When I came unto you - When I came at first to preach the gospel at Corinth. Acts 18:1 ff.

Came not with excellency of speech - Came not with graceful and attractive eloquence. The apostle here evidently alludes to that nice ant studied choice of language; to those gracefully formed sentences, and to that skill of arrangement in discourse and argument which was so much an object of regard with the Greek rhetoricians. It is probable that Paul was never much distinguished for these (compare 2 Corinthians 10:10), and it is certain he never made them an object of intense study and solicitude. Compare 1 Corinthians 2:4, 1 Corinthians 2:13.

Or of wisdom - Of the wisdom of this world; of that kind of wisdom which was sought and cultivated in Greece.

The testimony of God - The testimony or the witnessing which God has borne to the gospel of Christ by miracles, and by attending it everywhere with his presence and blessing. In 1 Corinthians 2:6, the gospel is called "the testimony of Christ;" and here it may either mean the witness which the gospel bears to the true character and plans of God; or the witnessing which God had borne to the gospel by miracles, etc. The gospel contains the testimony of God in regard to his own character and plans; especially in regard to the great plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. Several mss. instead of "testimony of God," here read "the mystery of God." This would accord well with the scope of the argument; but the present reading is probably the correct one. See Mill. The Syriac version has also "mystery."

Verse 2

For I determined - I made a resolution. This was my fixed, deliberate purpose when I came there. It was not a matter of accident, or chance, that I made Christ my great and constant theme, but it was my deliberate purpose. It is to be recollected that Paul made this resolution, knowing the special fondness of the Greeks for subtle disquisitions, and for graceful and finished elocution; that he formed it when his own mind, as we may judge from his writings, was strongly inclined by nature to an abstruse and metaphysical kind of discussion, which could not have failed to attract the attention of the acute and subtle reasoners of Greece; and that he made it when he must have been fully aware that the theme which he had chosen to dwell upon would be certain to excite derision and contempt. Yet he

formed, and adhered to this resolution, though it might expose him to contempt; and though they might reject and despise his message.

Not to know - The word "know" here εἰδέναι eidenaiis used probably in the sense of "attend to, be engaged in, or regard." I resolved not to give my time and attention while among you to the laws and traditions of the Jews; to your orators, philosophers, and poets; to the beauty of your architecture or statuary; to a contemplation of your customs and laws, but to attend to this only - making known the cross of Christ. The word εἰδω eidōto know, is sometimes thus used. Paul says that he designed that this should be the only thing on which his mind should be fixed; the only object of his attention; the only object there upon which he sought that knowledge should be diffused. Doddridge renders it "appear to know."

Anything among you - Anything while I was with you. Or, anything that may exist; among you, and that may be objects of interest to you. I resolved to know nothing of it, whatever it might be. The former is probably the correct interpretation.

Save Jesus Christ - Except Jesus Christ. This is the only thing of which I purposed to have any knowledge among you.

And him crucified - Or, "even καί kaihim that was crucified." He resolved not only to make the "Messiah" the grand object of his knowledge and attention there, but even a "crucified" Messiah; to maintain the doctrine that the Messiah was to be crucified for the sins of the world; and that he who had been crucified was in fact the Messiah. See the note at 1 Corinthians 1:23. We may remark here:

(1) That this should be the resolution of every minister of the gospel. This is his business. It is not to be a politician; not to engage in the strifes and controversies of people; it is not to be a good farmer, or scholar merely; not to mingle with his people in festive circles and enjoyments; not to be a man of taste and philosophy, and distinguished mainly for refinement of manners; not to be a profound philosopher or metaphysician, but to make Christ crucified the grand object of his attention, and seek always and everywhere to make him known.

(2) he is not to be ashamed anywhere of the humbling doctrine that Christ was crucified. In this he is to glory. Though the world may ridicule; though philosophers may sneer; though the rich and the frivilous may

deride it, yet this is to be the grand object of interest to him, and at no time, and "in no society" is he to be ashamed of it!

(3) it matters not what are the amusements of society around him; that fields of science, of gain, or ambition, are open before him, the minister of Christ is to know Christ and him crucified alone. If he cultivates science, it is to be that he may the more successfully explain and vindicate the gospel. If he becomes in any manner familiar with the works of art, and of taste, it is that he may more successfully show to those who cultivate them, the superior beauty and excellency of the cross. If he studies the plans and the employments of people, it is that he may more successfully meet them in those plans, and more successfully speak to them of the great plan of redemption.

(4) the preaching of the cross is the only kind of preaching that will be attended with success. That which has in it much respecting the divine mission, the dignity, the works, the doctrines, the person, and the atonement of Christ, will be successful. So it was in the time of the apostles; so it was in the Reformation; so it was in the Moravian missions; so it has been in all revivals of religion. There is a power about that kind of preaching which philosophy and human reason have not. "Christ is God's great ordinance" for the salvation of the world; and we meet the crimes and alleviate the woes of the world, just in proportion as we hold the cross up as appointed to overcome the one, and to pour the balm of consolation into the other.

Verse 3

And I was with you - Paul continued there at least a year and six months. Acts 18:11.

In weakness - In conscious feebleness; diffident of my own powers, and not trusting to my own strength.

And in fear, and in much trembling - Paul was sensible that he had many enemies to encounter Acts 18:6.; and he was sensible of his own natural disadvantages as a public speaker, 2 Corinthians 10:10. He knew too, how much the Greeks valued a manly and elegant species of oratory; and he, therefore, delivered his message with deep and anxious solicitude as to the success. It was at this time, and in view of these circumstances, that the Lord spoke to him by night in a vision, and said, "be not afraid, but

speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city," Acts 18:9-10. If Paul was conscious of weakness, well may other ministers be; and if Paul sometimes trembled in deep solicitude about the result of his message, well may other ministers tremble also. It was in such circumstances, and with such feelings, that the Lord met him to encourage him - And it is when other ministers feel thus, that the promises of the gospel are inestimably precious. We may add, that it is then, and then only, that they are successful. Notwithstanding all Paul's fears, he was successful there. And it is commonly, perhaps always, when ministers go to their work conscious of their own weakness; burdened with the weight of their message; diffident of their own powers; and deeply solicitous about the result of their labors, that God sends down His Spirit, and converts sinners to God. The most successful ministers have been men who have evinced most of this feeling; and most of the revivals of religion have commenced, and continued, just as ministers have preached, conscious of their own feebleness, distrusting their own powers, and looking to God for aid and strength.

Verse 4

And my speech - The word "speech" here - if it is to be distinguished from "preaching" - refers, perhaps, to his more private reasonings; his preaching to his public discourses.

Not with enticing words - Not with the persuasive reasonings (πειθοῖς λόγοις peithois logois) of the wisdom of men. Not with that kind of oratory that was adapted to captivate and charm; and which the Greeks so much esteemed.

But in demonstration - In the showing ἀποδείξει apodeixeior in the testimony or evidence which the Spirit produced. The meaning is, that the Spirit furnished the evidence of the divine origin of the religion which he preached, and that it did not depend for its proof on his own reasonings or eloquence. The proof, the demonstration which the Spirit furnished was, undoubtedly, the miracles which were performed; the gift of tongues; and the remarkable conversions which attended the gospel - The word "Spirit" here refers, doubtless, to the Holy Spirit; and Paul says that this Spirit had furnished demonstration of the divine origin and nature of the gospel. This had been by the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 1:5-7. Compare 1 Corinthians 2:5; the divine power and efficacy which attended the preaching of the gospel there. Compare 1 Thessalonians 1:5 - The effect of

the gospel is the evidence to which the apostle appeals for its truth. That effect was seen:

(1) In the conversion of sinners to God of all classes, ages, and conditions, when all human means of reforming them was vain.

(2) in its giving them peace, joy, and happiness; and in its transforming their lives.

(3) in making them different people - in making the drunkard sober; the thief honest; the licentious pure; the profane reverent; the indolent industrious; the harsh and unkind, gentle and kind; and the wretched happy.

(4) in its diffusing a mild and pure influence over the laws and customs of society; and in promoting human happiness everywhere - And in regard to this evidence to which the apostle appeals, we may observe:

(1) That is a kind of evidence which anyone may examine, and which no one can deny. It does not need labored, abstruse argumentation, but it is everywhere in society. Every man has witnessed the effects of the gospel in reforming the vicious, and no one can deny that it has this power.

(2) it is a mighty display of the power of God. There is no more striking exhibition of his power over mind than in a revival of religion. There is no where more manifest demonstration of his presence than when, in such a revival, the proud are humbled, the profane are awed, the blasphemer is silenced, and the profligate, the abandoned, and the moral are converted unto God, and are led as lost sinners to the same cross, and find the same peace.

(3) the gospel has thus evidenced from age to age that it is from God. Every converted sinner furnishes such a demonstration; and every instance where it produces peace, hope, joy, shows that it is from heaven.

Verse 5

That your faith - That is, that your belief of the divine origin of the Christian religion.

Should not stand - Greek, “should not be;” that is, should not rest upon this; or be sustained by this. God intended to furnish you a firm and solid demonstration that the religion which you embraced was from Him; and this could not be if its preaching had been attended with the graces of eloquence, or the abstractions of refined metaphysical reasoning. It would then appear to rest upon human wisdom.

In the power of God - In the evidence of divine power accompanying the preaching of the gospel. The power of God would attend the exhibition of truth everywhere; and would be a demonstration that would be irresistible that the religion was not originated by man, but was from heaven. That power was seen in changing the heart; in overcoming the strong propensities of our nature to sin; in subduing the soul; and making the sinner a new creature in Christ Jesus. Every Christian has thus, in his own experience, furnished demonstration that the religion which he loves is from God, and not from man. man could not subdue these sins; and man could not so entirely transform the soul. And although the unlearned Christian may not be able to investigate all the evidences of religion; although he cannot meet all the objections of cunning and subtle infidels, although he may be greatly perplexed and embarrassed by them, yet he may have the fullest proof that he loves God, that he is different from what he once was; and that all this has been accomplished by the religion of the cross.

The blind man that was made to see by the Saviour John 10:25. A man may have no doubt that the sun shines, that the wind blows, that the tides rise, that the blood flows in his veins, that the flowers bloom, and that this could not be except it was from God, while he may have no power to explain these facts; and no power to meet the objections and cavils of those who might choose to embarrass him. So people may know that their hearts are changed; and it is on this ground that no small part of the Christian world, as in everything else, depend for the most satisfactory evidence of their religion. On this ground humble and unlearned Christians have been often willing to go to the stake as martyrs - just as a humble and unlearned patriot is willing to die for his country. He loves it; and he is willing to die for it. A Christian loves his God and Saviour; and is willing to die for his sake.

Verse 6

How be it - But δε deThis commences the "second" head or argument in this chapter, in which Paul shows that if human wisdom is missing in his preaching, it is not devoid of true, and solid, and even divine wisdom - Bloomfield.

We speak wisdom - We do not admit that we utter foolishness. We have spoken of the foolishness of preaching 1 Corinthians 1:21; and of the estimate in which it was held by the world 1 Corinthians 1:22-28; and of our own manner among you as not laying claim to human learning or eloquence; but we do not design to admit that we have been really speaking folly. We have been uttering that which is truly wise, but which is seen and understood to be such only by those who are qualified to judge - by those who may be denominated "perfect," that is, those who are suited by God to understand it. By "wisdom" here, the apostle means that system of truth which he had explained and defended - the plan of salvation by the cross of Christ.

Among them that are perfect - (ἐν τοῖς τελείοις en tois teleios). This word "perfect" is here evidently applied to Christians, as it is in Philemon 3:15, "Let us therefore as many as be perfect, be thus minded." And it is clearly used to denote those who were advanced in Christian knowledge; who were qualified to understand the subject; who had made progress in the knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel; and who thus saw its excellence. It does not mean here that they were sinless, for the argument of the apostle does not bear on that inquiry, but that they were qualified to understand the gospel in contradistinction from the gross, the sensual, and the carnally minded, who rejected it as foolishness. There is, perhaps, here an allusion to the pagan mysteries, where those who had been fully initiated were said to be perfect - fully instructed in those rites and doctrines. And if so, then this passage means, that those only who have been fully instructed in the knowledge of the Christian religion, will be qualified to see its beauty and its wisdom. The gross and sensual do not see it, and those only who are enlightened by the Holy Spirit are qualified to appreciate its beauty and its excellency.

Not the wisdom of the world - Not that which this world has originated or loved.

Nor of the princes of this world - Perhaps intending chiefly here the rulers of the Jews; see 1 Corinthians 2:8. They neither devised it, nor loved it, nor saw its wisdom; 1 Corinthians 2:8.

That come to naught - That is, whose plans fail; whose wisdom vanishes; and who themselves, with all their pomp and splendor, come to nothing in the grave; compare Isaiah 14. All the plans of human wisdom shall fail; and this which is originated by God only shall stand,

Verse 7

But we speak - We who have preached the gospel.

The wisdom of God - We teach or proclaim the wise plan of God for the salvation of people; we make known the divine wisdom in regard to the scheme of human redemption. This plan was of God, in opposition to other plans which were of human beings.

In a mystery, even the hidden wisdom - ἐν μυστηρίῳ τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην en mustēriō tēn apokekrummenēnThe words "even" and "wisdom" in this translation have been supplied by our translators; and the sense would be more perspicuous if they were omitted, and the translation should be literally made, "We proclaim the divine wisdom hidden in a mystery." The apostle does not say that their preaching was mysterious, nor that their doctrine was unintelligible, but he refers to the fact that this wisdom had been "hidden in a mystery" from people until that time, but was then revealed by the gospel. In other words, he does not say that what they then declared was hidden in a mystery, but that they made known the divine wisdom which had been concealed from the minds of people. The word "mystery" with us is commonly used in the sense of that which is beyond comprehension; and it is often applied to such doctrines as exhibit difficulties which we are not able to explain.

But this is not the sense in which it is commonly used in the Scriptures; see the note at Matthew 13:11; compare *Campbell on the Gospels*, Dissertation 9; part 1. The word properly denotes that which is "concealed" or "hidden;" that which has not yet been made known; and is applied to those truths which until the revelation of Jesus Christ were concealed from people, which were either hidden under obscure types and shadows or prophecies, or which had been altogether unrevealed, and unknown to the world. The word stands opposed to that which is revealed, not to that which is in itself plain. The doctrines to which the word relates may be in themselves clear and simple, but they are hidden in mystery until they are revealed. From this radical idea in the word "mystery," however, it came also to be applied not only to those doctrines which had not been made

known, but to those also which were in themselves deep and difficult to that which is enigmatical and obscure; 1 Corinthians 14:2; 1 Timothy 3:16.

It is applied also to the secret designs and purposes of God; Revelation 10:7. The word is most commonly applied by Paul to the secret and long concealed design of God to make known his gospel to the Gentiles; to break down the wall between them and the Jews; and to spread the blessings of the true religion everywhere; Romans 11:25; Romans 16:25; Ephesians 1:9; Ephesians 3:9; Ephesians 6:19. Here, it evidently means the beauty and excellency of the person and plans of Jesus Christ, but which were in fact unknown to the princes of this world. It does not imply, of necessity, that they could not have understood them, nor that they were unintelligible, but that, in fact, whatever was the cause, they were concealed from them. Paul says 1 Corinthians 2:8, that had they known his wisdom, they would not have crucified him - which implies at least that it was not in itself unintelligible; and he further says, that this mystery had been revealed to Christians by the Spirit of God, which proves that he does not here refer to that which is in itself unintelligible; 1 Corinthians 2:10. "The apostle has here especially in view the all-wise counsel of God for the salvation of people by Jesus Christ, in the writings of the Old Testament only obscurely signified, and to the generality of people utterly unknown" - Bloomfield.

Which God ordained - Which plan, so full of wisdom, God appointed in his own purpose before the foundation of the world; that is, it was a plan which from eternity he determined to execute. It was not a new device; it had not been got up to serve an occasion; but it was a plan laid deep in the eternal counsel of God, and on which he had his eye forever fixed. This passage proves, that God had a plan, and that this plan was eternal. This is all that is involved in the doctrine of eternal decrees or purposes. And if God had a plan about this, there is the same reason to think that he had a plan in regard to all things.

Unto our glory - In order that we might be honored or glorified. This may refer either to the honor which was put upon Christians in this life, in being admitted to the privileges of the sons of God; or more probably to that "eternal weight of glory" which remains for them in heaven; 2 Corinthians 4:17. One design of that plan was to raise the redeemed to "glory, and honor, and immortality." It should greatly increase our gratitude to God, that it was a subject of eternal design; that he always has cherished

this purpose; and that he has loved us with such love, and sought our happiness and salvation with such intensity, that in order to accomplish it, he was willing to give his own Son to die on a cross.

Verse 8

Which none of the princes - None of those rulers who were engaged in the crucifixion of the Messiah, referring both to the Jewish rulers, and the Roman governor.

Knew - They did not perceive or appreciate the excellency of his character, the wisdom of his plan, the glory of his scheme of salvation. Their ignorance arose from not understanding the prophecies, and from an unwillingness to be convinced that Jesus of Nazareth had been truly sent by God. In Acts 3:17, Peter says that it was through ignorance that the Jews had put him to death; see the note on this place.

For had they known it - Had they fully understood his character, and seen the wisdom of his plan, and his work, they would not have put him to death; see the note on Acts 3:17. Had they seen the hidden wisdom in that plan - had they understood the glory of his real character, the truth respecting his incarnation, and the fact that he was the long expected Messiah of their nation, they would not have put him to death. It is incredible that they would have crucified their Messiah, knowing and believing him to be such. They might have known it but they were unwilling to examine the evidence. They expected a different Messiah, and were unwilling to admit the claims of Jesus of Nazareth. For This ignorance, however, there was no excuse. If they did not have a full knowledge, it was their own fault. Jesus had performed miracles which were a complete attestation to his divine mission John 5:36; John 10:25; but they closed their eyes on those works, and were unwilling to be convinced - God always gives to people sufficient demonstration of the truth, but they close their eyes, and are unwilling to believe. This is the sole reason why they are not converted to God and saved.

They would not have crucified - It is perfectly manifest that the Jews would not have crucified their own Messiah, "knowing him to be such." He was the hope and expectation of their nation. All their desires were centered in him. And to him they looked for deliverance from all their foes.

The Lord of glory - This expression is a Hebraism, and means "the glorious Lord;" or the "Messiah." Expressions like this, where a noun performs the office of an adjective, are common in the Hebrew language -

Grotius supposes that the expression is taken from that of "the King of glory," in Psalm 24:7-9 -

Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
Be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory?

Jehovah, strong and mighty.

Jehovah, mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates;

Lift them up, ye everlasting doors;

And the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory?
Jehovah of hosts, he is the King of glory.

God is called "the God of glory" in Acts 7:2 - The fact that this appellation is given to Yahweh in the Old Testament, and to the Lord Jesus in the verse before us, is one of those incidental circumstances which show how the Lord Jesus was estimated by the apostles and how familiarly they applied to him names and titles which belong only to God. The foundation of this appellation is laid in his exalted perfections; and in the honor and majesty which he had with the Father before the world was; John 17:1-5.

Verse 9

But as it is written - This passage is quoted from Isaiah 64:4. It is not quoted literally; but the sense only is given. The words are found in the apocryphal books of Elijah; and Origen and Jerome supposed that Paul quoted from those books. But it is evident that Paul had in his eye the passage in Isaiah; and intended to apply it to his present purpose. These words are often applied by commentators and others to the future life, and are supposed by them to be descriptive of the state of the blessed there. But against the supposition that they refer directly to the future state, there are insuperable objections:

(1) The first is, that the passage in Isaiah has no such reference. In that place it is designed clearly to describe the blessedness of those who were admitted to the divine favor; who had communion with God; and to whom God manifested himself as their friend. That blessedness is said to be superior to all that people elsewhere enjoy; to be such as could be found no where else but in God. See Isaiah 64:1, Isaiah 64:4-5, Isaiah 64:8. It is used there, as Paul uses it, to denote the happiness which results from the communication of the divine favor to the soul.

(2) the object of the apostle is not to describe the future state of the redeemed. It is to prove that those who are Christians have true wisdom 1 Corinthians 2:6-7; or that they have views of truth, and of the excellence of the plan of salvation which the world has not, and which those who crucified the Lord Jesus did not possess. The thing which he is describing here, is not merely the happiness of Christians, but their views of the wisdom of the plan of salvation. They have views of that which the eyes of other people have not seen; a view of wisdom, and fitness, and beauty which can be found in no other plan. It is true that this view is attended with a high degree of comfort; but the comfort is not the immediate thing in the eye of the apostle.

(3) the declaration in 1 Corinthians 2:10, is conclusive proof that Paul does not refer to the happiness of heaven. He there says that God has revealed these things to Christians by his Spirit. But if already revealed, assuredly it does not refer to that which is yet to come. But although this does not refer directly to heaven, there may be an application of the passage to a future state in an indirect manner, which is not improper. If there are such manifestations of wisdom in the plan here; if Christians see so much of its beauty here on earth; and if their views so far surpass all that the world sees and enjoys, how much greater and purer will be the manifestations of wisdom and goodness in the world of glory.

Eye hath not seen - This is the same as saying, that no one had ever fully perceived and understood the value and beauty of those things which God has prepared for his people. All the world had been strangers to this until God made a revelation to his people by his Spirit. The blessedness which the apostle referred to had been unknown alike to the Jews and the Gentiles.

Nor ear heard - We learn the existence and quality of objects by the external senses; and those senses are used to denote any acquisition of knowledge. To say that the eye had not seen, nor the ear heard, was, therefore, the same as saying that it was not known at all. All people had been ignorant of it.

Neither have entered into the heart of man - No man has conceived it; or understood it. It is new; and is above all that man has seen, and felt, and known.

The things which God hath prepared - The things which God "has held in reserve" (Bloomfield); that is, what God has appointed in the gospel for his people. The thing to which the apostle here refers particularly, is the wisdom which was revealed in the gospel; but he also intends, doubtless, to include all the provisions of mercy and happiness which the gospel makes known to the people of God. Those things relate to the pardon of sin; to the atonement, and to justification by faith; to the peace and joy which religion imparts; to the complete and final redemption from sin and death which the gospel is suited to produce, and which it will ultimately effect. In all these respects, the blessings which the gospel confers, surpass the full comprehension of people; and are infinitely beyond all that man could know or experience without the religion of Christ. And if on earth the gospel confers such blessings on its friends, how much higher and purer shall be the joys which it shalt bestow in heaven!

Verse 10

But God hath revealed them - That is, those elevated views and enjoyments to which people everywhere else had been strangers, and which have been under all other forms of religion unknown, have been communicated to us by the revelation of God - This verse commences the "third" part of this chapter, in which the apostle shows how these truths, so full of wisdom had been communicated to Christians. It had not been by any native endowments of theirs; not by any strength of faculties, or powers. but solely by revelation from God.

d **Unto us -** That is, first to the apostles; secondly, to all Christians - to the church and the world through their inspired instructors; and third, to all Christians by the illuminating agency of the Spirit on their hearts. The connection shows that he did not mean to confine this declaration to the apostles merely, for his design was to show that all Christians had this knowledge of the true wisdom. It was true that this was revealed in an

eminent manner to the apostles, and through their inspired preaching and writings; but it is also true, that the same truths are communicated by the agency of the same Spirit to all Christians; John 16:12-14. No truth is now communicated to Christians which was not revealed to and by the inspired writers; but the same truths are imparted by means of their writings, and by the illumination of the Spirit to all the true friends of God.

By his Spirit - By the Holy Spirit, that was promised by the Saviour. John 14:26; John 15:26-27; John 16:7-14. This proves:

(1) That people by nature are not able to discover the deep things of God - the truths which are needful to salvation.

(2) that the apostles were inspired by the Holy Spirit; and if so, then the Scriptures are inspired.

(3) that all Christians are the subjects of the teaching of the Holy Spirit; that these truths are made known to them by his illumination; and that but for this, they would remain in the same darkness as other men.

For the Spirit - The Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God; see 1 Corinthians 2:11.

Searcheth - This word does not fully express the force of the original ἐρευνᾷ ereunaIt means to search accurately, diligently, so as fully to understand; such profound research as to have thorough knowledge. So David uses the Hebrew word חקר chaaqarin Psalm 139:1. So the word is used to denote a careful and accurate investigation of secret and obscure things, in 1 Peter 1:11. Compare John 7:52; Romans 8:27; Revelation 2:23, where it is used to denote that profound and accurate search by which the desires and feelings of the heart are known - implying the most profound knowledge of which we can have any conception; see Proverbs 20:27. Here it means, that the Holy Spirit has an intimate knowledge of all things. It is not to be supposed that he searches, or inquires as people do who are ignorant; but that he has an intimate and profound knowledge, such as is usually the result of a close and accurate search. The result is what the apostle means to state - the accurate, profound, and thorough knowledge, such as usually attends research. He does not state the mode in which it is obtained; but the fact. And he uses a word more emphatic than simple knowledge, because he designs to indicate that his knowledge is profound, entire, and thorough.

All things - All subjects; all laws; all events; all beings.

The deep things of God - He has a thorough knowledge of the hidden counsels or purposes of God; of all his plans and purposes. He sees all his designs. He sees all his councils; all his purposes in regard to the government of the universe, and the scheme of salvation. He knows all whom God designs to save; he sees all that they need; and he sees how the plan of God is suited to their salvation - This passage proves:

(1) That the Spirit is, in some respects, distinct from the Father, or from him who is here called God. Else how could he be said to search all things, even the deep purposes of God? To "search" implies "action, thought, personality." An attribute of God cannot be said to search. How could it be said of the justice, the goodness, the power, or the wisdom of God that it "searches," or "acts?" To search, is the action of an intelligent agent, and cannot be performed by an attribute.

(2) the Spirit is omniscient. He searches or clearly understands "all things" - the very definition of omniscience. He understands all the profound plans and counsels of God. And how can there be a higher demonstration of omniscience than to "know God?" - But if omniscient, the Holy Spirit is divine - for this is one of the incommunicable attributes of God; 1 Chronicles 28:9; Psalm 139:1; Jeremiah 17:10.

(3) he is not a distinct being from God. There is a union between him and God, such as may be compared to the union between a man and his soul, 1 Corinthians 2:11. God is one; and though he subsists as Father, Son, and Spirit, yet he is one God, Deuteronomy 6:4 - This passage is, therefore, a very important, and a decisive one in regard to the personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 11

For what man … - The design of this is, to illustrate what he had just said by a reference to the way in which man acquires the knowledge of himself. The purpose is to show that the Spirit has an exact and thorough knowledge of the things of God; and this is done by the very striking thought that no man can know his own mind, his own plans and intentions, but himself - his own spirit. The essential idea is, that no man can know another; that his thoughts and designs can only be known by himself, or by

his own spirit; and that unless he chooses to reveal them to others, they cannot ascertain them. So of God. No man can penetrate his designs; and unless he chooses to make them known by his Spirit, they must forever remain inscrutable to human view.

The things of a man - The "deep things" - the hidden counsels, thoughts, plans, intentions.

Save the spirit of man … - Except his own mind; that is, himself. No other man can fully know them. By the spirit of man here, Paul designs to denote the human soul - or the intellect of man. It is not to be supposed that he here intends to convey the idea that there is a perfect resemblance between the relation which the soul of man bears to the man, and the relation which the Holy Spirit bears to God. The illustration is to be taken in regard to the point immediately before him - which is, that no one could know and communicate the deep thoughts and plans of God except his Spirit - just as no one could penetrate into the intentions of a man, and fully know them, but himself. The passage proves, therefore, that there is a knowledge which the Spirit has of God, which no man, no angel can obtain, just as every man's spirit has a knowledge of his own plans which no other man can obtain; that the Spirit of God can communicate his plans and deep designs, just as a man can communicate his own intentions; and consequently, that while there is a distinction of some kind between the Spirit of God and God, as there is a distinction which makes it proper to say that a man has an intelligent soul, yet there is such a profound and intimate knowledge of God by the Spirit, that he must be equal with him; and such an intimate union, that he can be called "the Spirit of God," and be one with God, as the human soul can be called "the spirit of the man," and be one with him.

In all respects we are not to suppose that there is a similarity. In these points there is - It may be added that the union, the oneness of the Spirit of God with God, is no more absurd or inexplicable than the union of the spirit of man with the man; or the oneness of the complex person made up of body and soul, which we call man. When people have explained all the difficulties about themselves - in regard to their own bodies and spirits, it will be time to advance objections against the doctrines here stated in regard to God.

Even so - To the same extent; in like manner.

The things of God - His deep purposes and plans.

Knoweth no man - Man cannot search into them - any more than one man can search the intentions of another.

Verse 12

Now we have received - We who are Christians; and especially we, the apostles. The following verse shows that he had himself and the other apostles chiefly in view; though it is true of all Christians that they have received, not the spirit of this world, but the spirit which is of God.

Not the spirit of this world - Not the wisdom and knowledge which this world can give - not the learning and philosophy which were so much valued in Greece. The views of truth which we have, are not such as this world gives, but are such as are communicated by the Spirit of God.

But the Spirit which is of God - We are under the teaching‘s and influence of the Holy Spirit.

That we might know - That we might fully understand and appreciate. The Spirit is given to us in order that we might fully understand the favors which God has conferred on us in the gospel. It was not only necessary that God should grant the blessings of redemption by the gift of His Son, but, such was the hardness and blindness of the human heart, it was needful that he should grant His Holy Spirit also, so that people might be brought fully to see and appreciate the value of those favors. For people do not see them by nature; neither does anyone see them who is not enlightened by the Holy Spirit of God.

The things that are freely given us - That are conferred on us as a matter of grace or favor. He here refers to the blessings of redemption - the pardon of sin, justification, sanctification, the divine favor and protection, and the hope of eternal life - These things we Know; they are not matters of conjecture; but are surely and certainly confirmed to us by the Holy Spirit. It is possible for all Christians to know and be fully assured of the truth of those things, and of their interest in them.

Verse 13

Which things we speak - Which great, and glorious, and certain truths, we, the apostles, preach and explain.

Not in the words which man‘s wisdom teacheth - Not such as human philosophy or eloquence would dictate. They do not have their origin in the devices of human wisdom, and they are not expressed in such words of dazzling and attractive rhetoric as would be employed by those who pride themselves on the wisdom of this world.

But which the Holy Ghost teacheth - That is, in the words which the Holy Spirit imparts to us. Locke understands this as referring to the fact that the apostles used "the language and expressions" which the Holy Spirit had taught in the revelations of the Scriptures. But this is evidently giving a narrow view of the subject. The apostle is speaking of the whole course of instruction by which the deep things of God were made known to the Christian church; and all this was not made known in the very words which were already contained in the Old Testament. He evidently refers to the fact that the apostles were themselves under the direction of the Holy Spirit, in the words and doctrines which they imparted; and this passage is a full proof that they laid claim to divine inspiration. It is further observable that he says, that this was done in such "words" as the Holy Spirit taught, referring not to the doctrines or subjects merely, but to the manner of expressing them. It is evident here that he lays claim to an inspiration in regard to the words which he used, or to the manner of his stating the doctrines of revelation. Words are the signs of thoughts; and if God designed that his truth should be accurately expressed in human language, there must have been a supervision over the words used, that such should be employed, and such only, as should accurately express the sense which he intended to convey.

Comparing spiritual things with spiritual - πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες pneumatikois pneumatika sugkrinontesThis expression has been very variously interpreted; and is very difficult of explanation. LeClerc renders it "speaking spiritual things to spiritual men." Most of the fathers rendered it: "comparing the things which were written by the Spirit of the Old Testament with what is now revealed to us by the same Spirit, and confirming our doctrine by them." Calvin renders the word "comparing" by "fitting," or adapting ("aptare"), and says that it means "that he adapted spiritual things to spiritual people, while he accommodated words to the thing; that is he tempered that celestial wisdom of the Spirit with simple language, and which conveyed by itself the native energy of the Spirit." Thus, says he, he reproved the vanity of those who attempted to secure human applause by a turgid and subtle mode of argument.

Grotius accords with the fathers, and renders it, "explaining those things which the prophets spake by the Spirit of God, by those things which Christ has made known to us by his Spirit." Macknight renders it: "explaining spiritual things in words taught by the Spirit." So Doddridge - The word

rendered "comparing" συγκρίνοντες sugkrinontesmeans properly "to collect, join, mingle, unite together"; then "to separate or distinguish parts of things and unite them into one"; then "to judge of the qualities of objects by carefully separating or distinguishing"; then "to compare for the purpose of judging," etc. Since it means to compare one thing with another for the purpose of explaining its nature, it comes to signify to "interpret," to "explain;" and in this sense it is often used by the Septuagint as a translation of the Hebrew word פתר phathar"to open, unfold, explain." (See Genesis 40:8, Genesis 40:16, Genesis 40:22; Genesis 41:12, Genesis 41:15); also of פרשׁ paarash"to explain"; and of the Chaldee peshar Daniel 5:13, Daniel 5:17. See also Daniel 2:4-7, Daniel 2:9, Daniel 2:16, Daniel 2:24, Daniel 2:26, Daniel 2:30, Daniel 2:36, Daniel 2:45; Daniel 4:3-4, Daniel 4:6, Daniel 4:16-17; Daniel 5:7-8, Daniel 5:13, Daniel 5:16, Daniel 5:18, Daniel 5:20; Daniel 7:16, in all which places the noun σύγκρισις sugkrisisis used in the same sense. In this sense the word is, doubtless, used here, and is to be interpreted in the sense of "explaining, unfolding." There is no reason, either in the word used here, or in the argument of the apostle, why the sense of comparing should be retained.

Spiritual things - πνευματικὰ pneumatikaThings, doctrines, subjects that pertain to the teaching of the Spirit. It does not mean things "spiritual" in opposition to "fleshly;" or "intellectual" in opposition to things pertaining to "matter;" but spiritual as the things referred to were such as were performed, and revealed by the Holy Spirit - his doctrines on the subject of religion under the new dispensation, and his influence on the heart.

With spiritual - πνευματικοῖς pneumatikoisThis is an adjective; and may be either masculine or neuter. It is evident, that some noun is understood. That may be either:

(1) ανθρωποις anthrōpois"men" - and then it will mean "to spiritual men" - that is, to people who are enlightened or taught by the Spirit and thus many commentators understand it; or,

(2)It may be λόγοις logois"words" - and then it may mean, either that the "spiritual things" were explained by "words" and illustrations drawn from the writings of the Old Testament, inspired by the Spirit - as most of the fathers, and many moderns understand it; or that the "things spiritual" were explained by-words which the Holy Spirit then communicated, and which were adapted to the subject - simple, pure, elevated; not gross, not

turgid, not distinguished for rhetoric, and not such as the Greeks sought, but such as became the Spirit of God communicating great, sublime, yet simple truths to people.

It will then mean "explaining doctrines that pertain to the Spirit's teaching and influence in words that are taught; by the same Spirit, and that are suited to convey in the most intelligible manner those doctrines to men." Here the idea of the Holy Spirit's present agency is kept up throughout; the idea that he communicates the doctrine, and the mode of stating it to man - The supposition that λόγοις logoiswords, is the word understood here, is favored by the fact that it occurs in the previous part of this verse. And if this be the sense, it means that the words which were used by the apostles were pure, simple, unostentatious, and undistinguished by display - such as became doctrines taught by the Holy Spirit, when communicated in words suggested by the same Spirit.

Verse 14

But the natural man - ψυχικὸς , δὲ ἄνθρωπος psuchikos de anthrōposThe word "natural" here stands opposed evidently to "spiritual." It denotes those who are governed and influenced by the natural instincts; the animal passions and desires, in opposition to those who are influenced by the Spirit of God. It refers to unregenerate people; but it has also not merely the idea of their being unregenerate, but that of their being influenced by the animal passions or desires. See the note on 1 Corinthians 15:44. The word "sensual" would correctly express the idea. The word is used by the Greek writers to denote that which man has in common with the brutes - to denote that they are under the influence of the senses, or the mere animal nature, in opposition to reason and conscience - Bretschneider. See 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Here it denotes that they are under the influence of the senses, or the animal nature, in opposition to being influenced by the Spirit of God. Macknight and Doddridge render it: "the animal man."

Whitby understands by it the man who rejects revelation, the man who is under the influence of carnal wisdom. The word occurs but six times in the New Testament; 1 Corinthians 15:44, 1 Corinthians 15:44, 1 Corinthians 15:46; James 3:15; Jude 1:19. In 1 Corinthians 15:44, 1 Corinthians 15:44, 1 Corinthians 15:46, it is rendered "natural," and is applied to the body as it exists before death, in contradistinction from what shall exist after the resurrection - called a spiritual body. In James 3:15, it is applied to wisdom: "This wisdom - is earthly, sensual, devilish." In Jude 1:19, it is applied to

sensual persons, or those who are governed by the senses in opposition to those who are influenced by the Spirit: “These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.” The word here evidently denotes those who are under the influence of the senses; who are governed by the passions and the animal appetites, and natural desires; and who are uninfluenced by the Spirit of God. And it may be observed that this was the case with the great mass of the pagan world, even including the philosophers.

Receiveth not - οὐ δέχεται ou dechetaidoes not “embrace” or “comprehend” them. That is, he rejects them as folly; he does not perceive their beauty, or their wisdom; he despises them. He loves other things better. A man of intemperance does not receive or love the arguments for temperance; a man of licentiousness, the arguments for chastity; a liar, the arguments for truth. So a sensual or worldly man does not receive or love the arguments for religion.

The things of the Spirit of God - The doctrines which are inspired by the Holy Spirit, and the things which pertain to his influence on the heart and life. The things of the Spirit of God here denote all the things which the Holy Spirit produces.

Neither can he know them - Neither can he understand or comprehend them. Perhaps, also, the word “know” here implies also the idea of “loving,” or “approving” of them, as it often does in the Scripture. Thus, to know the Lord often means to love him, to have a full, practical acquaintance with him. When the apostle says that the animal or sensual man cannot know those things, he may have reference to one of two things. Either:

(1)That those doctrines were not discoverable by human wisdom, or by any skill which the natural man may have, but were to be learned only by revelation. This is the main drift of his argument, and this sense is given by Locke and Whitby. Or,

(2)He may mean that the sensual the unrenewed man cannot perceive their beauty and their force, even after they are revealed to man, unless the mind is enlightened and inclined by the Spirit of God. This is probably the sense of the passage.

This is the simple affirmation of a fact - that while the man remains sensual and carnal, he cannot perceive the beauty of those doctrines. And this is a simple and well known fact. It is a truth - universal and lamentable

- that the sensual man, the worldly man, the proud, haughty, and self-confident man; the man under the influence of his animal appetites - licentious, false, ambitious, and vain - does not perceive any beauty in Christianity. So the intemperate man perceives no beauty in the arguments for temperance; the adulterer, no beauty in the arguments for chastity; the liar, no beauty in the arguments for truth. It is a simple fact, that while he is intemperate, or licentious, or false, he can perceive no beauty in these doctrines.

But this does not prove that he has no natural faculties for perceiving the force and beauty of these arguments; or that he might not apply his mind to their investigation, and be brought to embrace them; or that he might not abandon the love of intoxicating drinks, and sensuality, and falsehood, and be a man of temperance, purity, and truth. He has all the natural faculties which are requisite in the case; and all the inability is his "strong love" of intoxicating drinks, or impurity, or falsehood. So of the sensual sinner. While he thus remains in love with sin, he cannot perceive the beauty of the plan of salvation, or the excellency of the doctrines of religion. He needs just the love of these things, and the hatred of sin. He needs to cherish the influences of the Spirit; to receive what He has taught, and not to reject it through the love of sin; he needs to yield himself to their influences, and then their beauty will be seen.

The passage here proves that while a man is thus sensual, the things of the Spirit will appear to him to be folly; it proves nothing about his ability, or his natural faculty, to see the excellency of these things, and to turn from his sin. It is the affirmation of a simple fact everywhere discernible, that the natural man does not perceive the beauty of these things; that while he remains in that state he cannot; and that if he is ever brought to perceive their beauty, it will be by the influence of the Holy Spirit. Such is his love of sin, that he never will be brought to see their beauty except by the agency of the Holy Spirit. "For wickedness perverts the judgment, and makes people err with respect to practical principles; so that no one can be wise and judicious who is not good." Aristotle, as quoted by Bloomfield.

They are spiritually discerned - That is, they are perceived by the aid of the Holy Spirit enlightening the mind and influencing the heart.

(The expression ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος psuchikos anthrōposhas given rise to much controversy. Frequent attempts have been made to explain it, merely

of the animal or sensual man. If this be the true sense, the doctrine of human depravity, in as far at least as this text may be supposed to bear upon it, is greatly invalidated. The apostle would seem to affirm only, that individuals, addicted to the gross indulgences of sense, are incapable of discerning and appreciating spiritual things. Thus, a large exception would be made in favor of all those who might be styled intellectual and moral persons, living above the inferior appetites, and directing their faculties to the candid investigation of truth. That the phrase, however, is to be explained of the natural or "unregenerate" man, whether distinguished for intellectual refinement, and external regard to morals, or degraded by animal indulgence, will appear evident from an examination of the passage.

The word in dispute comes from ψυχή psuchēwhich though it primarily signify the breath or animal life, is by no means confined to that sense, but sometimes embraces the mind or soul "as distinguished both from man‘s body and from his πνεῦμα pneumaor spirit, breathed into him immediately by God" - See Parkhurst‘s Greek Lexicon. The etymology of the word does not necessarily require us, then, to translate it "sensual." The context therefore alone must determine the matter. Now the "natural man" is there opposed to the spiritual man, the ψυχικὸς psuchikosto the πνευματικὸς pneumatikosand if the latter be explained of "him who is enlightened by the Holy Spirit" - who is regenerate - the former must be explained of him who is not enlightened by that Spirit, who is still in a state of nature; and will thus embrace a class far more numerous than the merely sensual part of mankind.

Farther; the general scope of the passage demands this view. The Corinthians entertained an excessive fondness for human learning and wisdom. They loved philosophical disquisition and oratorical display, and may therefore have been impatient of the "enticing words" of Paul. To correct their mistaken taste, the apostle asserts and proves the utter insufficiency of human wisdom, either to discover spiritual things, or to appreciate them when discovered. He exclaims "where is the ‹wise‘? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" 1 Corinthians 1:17, 1 Corinthians 1:31. Now it would be strange indeed, if in bringing his argument to a conclusion, he should simply assert, that "sensual" people were incapable of spiritual

discernment. So lame and impotent a conclusion is not to be attributed to the apostle. The disputed phrase, therefore, must be understood of all unregenerate persons, however free from gross sin, or eminent in intellectual attainment. Indeed it is the "proud wisdom" of the world, and not its sensuality, that the apostle? throughout has chiefly in view. Add to all this; that the simplicity of the gospel has "in reality" met with more bitter opposition and pointed scorn, from people of worldly wisdom, than from people of the sensual class. Of the former, is it especially true that they have counted the gospel "foolishness" and contemptuously rejected its message.

Of this natural man it is affirmed that he cannot know the things of the Spirit of God. He can know them "speculatively," and may enlarge on them with great accuracy and beauty, but he cannot know them so as to approve and receive. Allowing the incapacity to be moral, not natural or physical, that is to say, it arises from "disinclination or perversion of will:" still the spiritual perception is affected by the fall, and whether that be directly or indirectly through the will, matters not, "as far as the fact is concerned." It remains the same. The mind of man, when applied to spiritual subjects, does not now have the same discernment that it originally had, and as our author remarks, if it is ever brought to perceive their beauty, it must be by the agency of the Spirit. (See the supplementary note on Romans 8:7.)

Verse 15

But he that is spiritual - The man who is enlightened by the Holy Spirit in contradistinction from him who is under the influence of the senses only.

Judgeth - Greek: "Discerns." (margin); the same word as in the previous verse. It means that the spiritual man has a discernment of these truths in regard to which the sensual man was blind and ignorant.

All things - Not absolutely all things; or not that he is omniscient; but that he has a view of those things to which the apostle had reference - that is, to the things which are revealed to man by the Holy Spirit.

Yet he himself is judged - Greek, as in the margin, "is discerned;" that is, his feelings, principles, views, hopes, fears, joys, cannot be fully understood and appreciated by any natural or sensual man. He does not comprehend the principles which actuate him; he does not enter into his joys; he does not sympathize with him in his feelings. This is a matter of

simple truth and universal observation. The reason is added in the following verse, that as the Christian is influenced by the Lord and as the natural man does not know him, so he cannot know him who is influenced by him; that is the Christian.

Verse 16

For who hath known … - This passage is quoted from Isaiah 40:13. The interrogative form is a strong mode of denying that anyone has ever known the mind of the Lord. The argument of Paul is this, "No one can understand God. No one can fully comprehend his plans, his feelings, his views, his designs. No one by nature, under the influence of sense and passion, is either disposed to investigate his truths, or loves them when they are revealed. But the Christian is influenced by God. He has his Spirit. He has the mind of Christ; who had the mind of God. He sympathizes with Christ; he has his feelings, desires, purposes, and plans. And as no one can fully understand God by nature, so neither can he understand him who is influenced by God, and is like him; and it is not to be wondered at that he regards the Christian religion as folly, and the Christian as a fool.

The mind of Christ - The views, feelings, and temper of Christ. We are influenced by his Spirit.

Remarks On 1 Corinthians 2:1. Their aim should be to speak the simple truth, in language pure and intelligible to all. Let it be remembered, that if there ever was any place where it would be proper to seek such graces of eloquence, it was Corinth. If in any city now, or in any refined and genteel society it would be proper, it would have been proper in Corinth. Let this thought rebuke those, who, when they preach to a frivilous and fashionable auditory, seek to fill their sermons with ornament rather than with solid thought; with the tinsel of rhetoric, rather than with pure language. Paul was right in his course; and was wise. True taste abhors meretricious ornaments, as much as the gospel does. And the man who is called to preach in a rich and fashionable congregation, should remember, that he is stationed there not to please the ear, but to save the soul; that his object is not to display his talent or his eloquence, but to rescue his hearers from ruin. This purpose will make the mere ornaments of rhetoric appear small. It will give: seriousness to his discourse; gravity to his diction; unction to his eloquence; heart to his arguments; and success to his ministry.

2. The purpose of every minister should be like that of Paul, to preach Christ and only him crucified. See the note on 1 Corinthians 2:2.

3. If Paul trembled at Corinth in view of dangers and difficulties; if he was conscious of his own weakness and feebleness, then we should learn also to be humble. He is not much in danger of erring who imitates the example of this great apostle. And if he who had received a direct commission from the great Head of the church, and who was endowed with such mighty powers, was modest, unassuming, and diffident, then it becomes ministers of the gospel now, and all others to be humble also. We should not, indeed, be afraid of people; but we should be modest, humble, and lowly; much impressed, as if conscious of our mighty charge; and anxious to deliver just such a message as God will approve and bless.

Would I describe a preacher, such an Paul,
Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own,

Paul should himself direct me. I would trace.

His master-strokes, and draw from his design.

I would express him simple, grave, sincere;

In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain;

And plain in manner, decent, solemn, chaste,

And natural in gesture: much impress‘d.

Himself, an conscious of his awful charge;

And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds.

May feel it too. Affectionate in look,

And tender in address, as well becomes.

A messenger of grace to guilty men.
Task, B.

Our aim should be to commend our message to every man‘s conscience; and to do it with humility toward God, and deep solicitude; with boldness toward our fellow man - respectfully toward them - but still resolved to tell the truth, 1 Corinthians 2:3.

4. The faith of Christians does not stand in the wisdom of man. Every Christian has evidence in his own heart, in his experience, and in the transformation of his character, that none but God could have made the change on his soul. His hopes, his joys, his peace, his sanctification, his love of prayer, of the Bible, of Christians, of God, and of Christ, are all such as nothing could have produced but the mighty power of God. All these bear marks of their high origin. They are the work of God on the soul. And as the Christian is fully conscious that these are not the native feelings, of his heart - that if left to himself he would never have had them; so he has the fullest demonstration that they are to be traced to a divine source. And can he be mistaken about their existence? Can a man doubt whether he has joy, and peace, and happiness? Is the infidel to tell him coolly that he must be mistaken in regard to the existence of these emotions, and that it is all delusion?

Can a child doubt whether it loves a parent? Can a husband doubt whether he loves his wife? Can a friend question whether he loves a friend? Or a man whether he loves his country? And can he doubt whether this emotion produces joy? And can a person doubt whether he loves God? Whether he has different views from what he once had? Whether he has peace and joy in view of the character of God, and the hope of heaven? And by what right shall the infidel tell him that he is mistaken, and that all this is delusion? How can he enter into the soul, and pronounce the man who professes to have these feelings mistaken? What should we think of the man who would tell a wife that she did not love her husband; or a father that he did not love his children? How can he know this? And, in like manner, how can an infidel and a scoffer say to a Christian, that all his hopes and joys, his love and peace are delusion and fanaticism? The truth is, that the great mass of Christians are just as well satisfied of the truth of religion, as they are of their own existence; and that a Christian will die for his love to the Saviour, just as he will die for his wife, and children, and country. Martyrdom in the one case is on the same principle as martyrdom in the

other. Martyrdom in either is noble and honorable, and evinces the highest qualities and principles of the human mind.

5. Christians are influenced by true wisdom, 1 Corinthians 2:6. They are not fools; though they appear to be to their fellow man. They see a real beauty and wisdom in the plan of redemption which the world does not discern. It is not the wisdom of this world; but it is the wisdom which looks to eternity. Is a man a fool who acts with reference to the future? Is he a fool who believes that he shall live to all eternity, and who regards it as proper to make preparation for that eternity? Is he a fool who acts as if he were to die - to be judged - to enter on an unchanging destiny? Folly is manifested in closing the eyes on the reality of the condition; not in looking at it as it is. The man who is sick, and who strives to convince himself that he is well; the man whose affairs are in a state of bankruptcy, and who is unwilling to know it, is a fool. The man who is willing to know all about his situation, and to act accordingly, is a wise man. The one represents the conduct of a sinner, the other that of a Christian. A man who should see his child drowning, or his house on fire, or the pestilence breathing around him, and be unconcerned, or dance amidst such scenes, would be a fool or a madman. And is not the sinner who is frivilous and thoughtless over the grave and over hell equally foolish and mad? And if there is a God, a heaven, a Saviour, and a hell; if people are to die, and to be judged, is he not wise who acts as if it were so, and who lives accordingly? While Christians, therefore, may not be distinguished for the wisdom of this world - while many are destitute of learning, science, and eloquence, they have a wisdom which will survive when all other is vanished away.

6. All the wisdom of this world shall come to nothing, 1 Corinthians 2:6. What will be the value of political sagacity, when all governments shall come to an end but the divine government? What will be the value of eloquence, and graceful diction, when we stand at the judgment seat of Christ? What will be the value of science in this world, when all shall be revealed with the clearness of noonday? How low will all human attainments appear in that world, when the light of eternal day shall be shed over all the works of God? How little can human science do to advance the eternal interests of man? And how shall all fade away in the future world of glory - just as the feeble glimmering of the stars fades away before the light

of the morning sun! How little, therefore, should we pride ourselves on the highest attainments of science, and the most elevated distinctions of learning and eloquence.

7. God has a purpose in regard to the salvation of people, 1 Corinthians 2:7. This scheme was ordained before the world. It was not a new device. It was not the offspring of chance, an accident, or an "after thought." It was because God purposed it from eternity. God has a plan; and this plan contemplates the salvation of his people. And it greatly enhances the value of this benevolent plan in the eyes of his people, that it has been the object of "the eternal earnest desire and purpose of God." How much a gift is enhanced in value from the fact that it has been long the purpose of a parent to bestow it; that he has toiled for it; that he has made arrangements for it; and that this has been the chief object of his efforts and his plan for years. So the favors of eternal redemption are bestowed on Christians as the fruit of the eternal purpose and desire of God. And how should our hearts rise in gratitude to him for his unspeakable gift!

8. One great and prominent cause of sin is the fact that people are blind to the reality and beauty of spiritual objects. So it was with those who crucified the Lord, 1 Corinthians 2:8. Had they seen his glory as it was, they would not have crucified him. And so it is now. When people blaspheme God, they see not his excellency; when they revile religion, they know not its real value; when they break the laws of God, they do not fully discern their purity and their importance. It is true they are willfully ignorant, and their crime is often enhanced by this fact; but it is equally true that "they know not what they do." For such poor, blinded, deluded mortals, the Saviour prayed; and for such we should all pray. The man that curses God, has no just sense of what he is doing. The man who is profane, and a scoffer, and a liar, and an adulterer, has no just sense of the awful nature of his crime; and is an object of commiseration while his Sin should be HAted - and is a proper subject of prayer.

9. People are often committing the most awful crimes when they are unconscious of it 1 Corinthians 2:8. What crime could compare with that of crucifying the only Son of God? And what crime could be attended with more dreadful consequences to its perpetrators? So of sinners now. They

little know what they do; and they little know the consequences of their sins. A man may curse his Maker, and say it is in sport! But how will it be regarded on the Day of Judgment? A person may revile the Saviour! But how will it appear when he dies? It is a solemn thing to trifle with God and with His laws. A man is safer when he plays on top of a volcano, or when he makes a jest of the pestilence or the forked lightnings of heaven, than when he makes fun of religion and God! In a world like this, people should be serious and revere God. A single deed, like that of the crucifixion of Christ, may be remembered, when all the circumstances of sport and mockery shall have passed away - remembered when the world shall be destroyed, and stars and suns shall rush to ruin.

10. Christians have views of the beauties of religion, and have consolations arising from these views, which the world does not have, 1 Corinthians 2:9. They have different views of God, of Christ, of heaven, of eternity. They see a beauty in all these things, and a wisdom in the plan of salvation, which the people of the world do not see. The contemplations of this beauty and wisdom, and the evidence which they have that they are interested in all this, gives them a joy which the world does not possess. They see what the eye has not elsewhere seen; they enjoy what people elsewhere have not enjoyed; and they are elevated to privileges which people elsewhere do not possess. On earth, they partake of happiness which the world never can give, and in heaven they shall partake of the fulness of that joy - of pleasures there which the eye had not before seen, nor the ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived. Who would not want to be a Christian?

11. The Holy Spirit is in some sense distinct from the Father. This is implied in his action as an agent - in searching, knowing, etc. 1 Corinthians 2:10-11. An attribute; a quality, does not search and know.

12. The Holy Spirit is divine. None can know God but one equal to himself. If the Spirit intimately knows the wisdom, the goodness, the omniscience, the eternity, the power of God, he must be divine. No created being can have this intelligence, 1 Corinthians 2:10-11.

13. Christians are actuated by a different Spirit from the people of this world, 1 Corinthians 2:12. They are influenced by a regard to God and His glory. The people of the world are under the influence of pride, avarice, sensuality, ambition, and vain glory.

14. The sinner does not perceive the beauty of the things of religion. To all this beauty, he is blind. This is a sober and a most melancholy fact. Whatever may be the cause of it, the fact is undeniable and sad. It is so with the sensualist; with the people of avarice, pride, ambition, and licentiousness. The gospel is regarded as folly, and is despised and scorned by the people of this world. This is true in all places, among all people, and at all times. To this there are no exceptions in human nature; and over this we should sit down and weep.

15. The reason of this is, that people love darkness. It is not that they are destitute of the natural faculties for loving God, for they have as strong native powers as those who become Christians. It is because they love sin - and this simple fact, carried out into all its bearings, will account for all the difficulties in the way of the sinner‘s conversion. There is nothing else; and,

16. We see here the value of the influences of the Spirit. It is by this Spirit alone that the mind of the Christian is enlightened, sanctified, and comforted. It is by Him alone that he sees the beauty of the religion which he loves; it is by His influence alone that he differs from his fellow man. And no less important is it for the sinner. Without the influences of that Spirit his mind will always be in darkness, and his heart will always hate the gospel. How anxiously, therefore, should he cherish His influences! How careful should he be not to grieve Him away!

17. There is a difference between Christians and other people. One is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the other not; one sees a beauty in religion, to the other it is folly; the one has the mind of Christ, the other has the spirit of the world; the one discerns the excellency of the plan of salvation, to the other all is darkness and folly. How could beings differ more in their moral feelings and views than do Christians and the people of this world?

1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

The design of this chapter is substantially the same as the former. It is to reprove the pride, the philosophy, the vain wisdom on which the Greeks so much rested; and to show that the gospel was not dependent on that for its success, and that that had been the occasion of no small part of the contentions and strifes which had arisen in the church at Corinth. The chapter is occupied mainly with an account of his own ministry with them; and seems designed to meet an objection which either was made, or could have been made by the Corinthians themselves, or by the false teacher that was among them. In 1 Corinthians 2:12-16, he had affirmed that, Christians were in fact under the influence of the Spirit of God; that they were enlightened in a remarkable degree; that they understood all things pertaining to the Christian religion. To this, it either was, or could have been objected that Paul, when among them, had not instructed them fully in the more deep and abstruse points of the gospel; and that he had confined his instructions to the very rudiments of the Christian religion.

Of this, probably the false teachers who had formed parties among them, had taken the advantage, and had pretended to carry the instruction to a much greater length, and to explain many things which Paul had left unexplained. Hence, this division into parties. It became Paul, therefore, to state why he had confined his instructions to the rudiments of the gospel among them - and this occupies the first part of 1 Corinthians 5:1-11. The reason was, that they were not prepared to receive higher instruction, but were carnal, and he could not address them as being prepared to enter fully into the more profound doctrines of the Christian religion. The proof that this was so was found in the fact that they had been distracted with disputes and strifes, which demonstrated that they were not prepared for the higher doctrines of Christianity. He then REproves them for their contentions, on the ground that it was of little consequence by what instrumentality they had been brought to the knowledge of the gospel, and that there was no occasion for their strifes and sects.

all success, whoever was the instrument, was to be traced to God 1 Corinthians 3:5-7, and the fact that one teacher or another had first instructed them, or that one was more eloquent than another, should not be

the foundation for contending sects. God was the source of all blessings. Yet in order to show the real nature of his own work, in order to meet the whole of the objection, he goes on to state that he had done the most important part of the work in the church himself. He had laid the foundation; and all the others were but rearing the superstructure. And much as his instructions might appear to be elementary, and unimportant, yet it had been done with the same skill which an architect evinces who labors that the foundation may be well laid and firm, 1 Corinthians 3:10-11. The others who had succeeded him, whoever they were, were but builders upon this foundation. The foundation had been well laid, and they should be careful how they built on it, 1 Corinthians 3:12-16. The mention of this fact - that he had laid the foundation, and that that foundation was Jesus Christ, and that they had been reared upon that as a church, leads him to the inference 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, that they should be holy as the temple of God; and the conclusion from the whole is:

(1)That no man should deceive himself, of which there was so much danger 1 Corinthians 3:18-20; and,

(2)That no Christian should glory in man, for all things were theirs. It was no matter who had been their teacher on earth, all belonged to God; and they had a common interest in the most eminent teachers of religion, and they should rise above the petty rivalships of the world, and rejoice in the assurance that all things belonged to them, 1 Corinthians 3:21-23.

Verse 1

And I, brethren - See 1 Corinthians 2:1. This is designed to meet an implied objection. He had said 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 that Christians were able to understand all things. Yet, they would recollect that he had not addressed them as such, but had confined himself to the more elementary parts of religion when he came among them. He had not entered upon the abstruse and difficult points of theology - the points of speculation in which the subtle Greeks so much abounded and so much delighted. He now states the reason why he had not done it. The reason was one that was most humbling to their pride; but it was the true reason, and faithfulness demanded that it should be stated. It was, that they were carnal, and not qualified to understand the deep mysteries of the gospel; and the proof of this was unhappily at hand. It was too evident in their contentions and strifes, that they were under the influence of carnal feelings and views.

Could not speak unto you as unto spiritual - "I could not regard you as spiritual - as qualified to enter into the full and higher truths of the gospel; I could not regard you as divested of the feelings which influence carnal people - the people of the world, and I addressed you accordingly. I could not discourse to you as to far-advanced and well-informed Christians. I taught you the rudiments only of the Christian religion." He refers here, doubtless, to his instructions when he founded the church at Corinth. See the note at 1 Corinthians 2:13-15.

But as unto carnal - The word "carnal" here σάρκινοῖς sarkinoisis not the same which in 1 Corinthians 2:14, is translated "natural" ψυχικός psuchikos"That" refers to one who is unrenewed, and who is wholly under the influence of his sensual or animal nature, and is no where applied to Christians. "This" is applied here to Christians - but to those who have much of the remains of corruption, and who are imperfectly acquainted with the nature of religion; babes in Christ. It denotes those who still evinced the feelings and views which pertain to the flesh, in these unhappy contentions, and strifes, and divisions. "The works of the flesh are hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings" Galatians 5:20-21; and these they had evinced in their divisions; and Paul knew that their danger lay in this direction, and he therefore addressed them according to their character. Paul applies the word to himself Romans 7:14, "for I am carnal;" and here it denotes that they were as yet under the influence of the corrupt passions and desires which the flesh produces.

As unto babes in Christ - As unto those recently born into his kingdom, and unable to understand the profounder doctrines of the Christian religion. It is a common figure to apply the term infants and children to those who are feeble in understanding, or unable, from any cause, to comprehend the more profound instructions of science or religion.

Verse 2

I have fed you with milk - Paul here continues the metaphor, which is derived from the custom of feeding infants with the lightest food. Milk here evidently denotes the more simple and elementary doctrines of Christianity - the doctrines of the new birth, of repentance, faith, etc. The same figure occurs in Hebrews 5:11-14; and also in Classical writers. See Wetstein.

And not with meat - "Meat" here denotes the more sublime and mysterious doctrines of religion.

For hitherto - Formerly, when I came among you, and laid the foundations of the church.

Not able to bear it - You were not sufficiently advanced in Christian knowledge to comprehend the higher mysteries of the gospel.

Neither yet now … - The reason why they were not then able he proceeds immediately to state.

Verse 3

For ye are yet carnal - Though you are Christians, and are the friends of God in the main, yet your divisions and strifes show that you are yet, in some degree, under the influence of the principles which govern the people of this world. People who are governed solely by the principles of this world, evince a spirit of strife, emulation and contention; and just so far as you are engaged in strife, just so far do you show that you are governed by their principles and feelings.

For whereas - In proof that you are carnal I appeal to your contentions and strifes.

Envying - ζῆλος zēloszeal; used here in the sense of envy, as it is in James 3:14, James 3:16. It denotes, properly, any "fervour" of mind (from ζέω zeō), and may be applied to any exciting and agitating passion. The envy here referred to, was that which arose from the superior advantages and endowments which some claimed or possessed over others. Envy everywhere is a fruitful cause of strife. Most contentions in the church are somehow usually connected with envy.

And strife - Contention and dispute.

And divisions - Dissensions and quarrels. The margin correctly renders it "factions." The idea is, that they were split up into parties, and that those parties were embittered with mutual recriminations and reproaches, as they always are in a church.

And walk as men - Margin. "according to man." The word "walk" is used often in the Scriptures in the sense of "conduct" or "act." You conduct yourselves as human beings of this earth, that is, as people commonly do; you evince the same spirit that the great mass of mankind does. Instead of being filled with love; of being united and harmonious as the members of the same family ought to be, you are split up into factions as the people of the world are.

Verse 4

For while one saith … ; - See the note at 1 Corinthians 1:12.

Verse 5

Who then is Paul … - See the notes at 1 Corinthians 1:13. Why should a party be formed which should be named after Paul? What has he done or taught that should lead to this? What eminence has he that should induce any to call themselves by his name? He is on a level with the other apostles; and all are but ministers, or servants, and have no claim to the honor of giving names to sects and parties. God is the fountain of all your blessings, and whoever may have been the "instrument" by whom you have believed, it is improper to regard them as, in any sense the fountain of your blessings, or to arrange yourselves under their name.

But ministers - Our word minister, as now used, does not express the proper force of this word. We in applying it to preachers of the gospel do not usually advert to the original sense of the word, and the reasons why it was given to them. The original word διάκονοι diakonoidenotes properly "servants" in contradistinction from "masters" Matthew 20:26; Matthew 23:11; Mark 9:35; Mark 10:43; and denotes those of course who are in an inferior rank of life. They did not have command, or authority, but were subject to the command of others. It is applied to the preachers of the gospel because they are employed in the service of God; because they go at his command, and are subject to his control and direction. They did not have original authority, nor are they the source of influence or power. The idea here is, that they were the mere instruments or servants by whom God conveyed all blessings to the Corinthians; that they as ministers were on a level, were engaged in the same work, and that therefore, it was improper for them to form parties that should be called by their names.

By whom - Through whom δὶ ὧν di' hōnby whose instrumentality. They were not the original source of faith, but were the mere servants of God in conveying to them the knowledge of that truth by which they were to be saved.

Even as the Lord gave to every man - God is the original source of faith; and it is by his influence that anyone is brought to believe; see the note at Romans 12:3, note at Romans 12:6. There were diversities of gifts among the Corinthian Christians, as there are in all Christians. And it is here implied:

(1)That all that anyone had was to be traced to God as its author;

(2)That he is a sovereign, and dispenses his favors to all as he pleases;

(3)That since God had conferred those favors, it was improper for the Corinthians to divide themselves into sects and call themselves by the name of their teachers, for all that they had was to be traced to God alone.

This idea, that all the gifts and graces which Christians had, were to be traced to God alone, was one which the apostle Paul often insisted on; and if this idea had been kept before the minds and hearts of all Christians, it would have prevented no small part of the contentions in the church, and the formation of no small part of the sects in the Christian world.

Verse 6

I have planted - The apostle here compares the establishment of the church at Corinth to the planting of a vine, a tree, or of grain. The figure is taken from agriculture, and the meaning is obvious. Paul established the church. He was the first preacher in Corinth; and if any distinction was due to anyone, it was rather to him than to the teachers who had labored there subsequently; but he regarded himself as worthy of no such honor as to be the head of a party, for it was not himself, but God who had given the increase.

Apollos watered - This figure is taken from the practice of watering a tender plant, or of watering a garden or field. This was necessary in a special manner in Eastern countries. Their fields became parched and dry from their long droughts, and it was necessary to irrigate them by artificial means. The sense here is, that Paul had labored in establishing the church at Corinth; but that subsequently Apollos had labored to increase it, and to build it, up. It is certain that Apollos did not go to Corinth until after Paul had left it; see Acts 18:18; compare Acts 18:27.

God gave the increase - God caused the seed sown to take root and spring up; and God blessed the irrigation of the tender plants as they sprung up, and caused them to grow. This idea is still taken from the farmer. It would be vain for the farmer to sow his seed unless God would give it life. There is no life in the seed, nor is there any inherent power in the earth to make it grow. Only God, the Giver of all life, can quicken the germ in the seed, and make it live. So it would be in vain for the farmer to water his plant unless God would bless it. There is no living principle in the water; no inherent power in the rains of heaven to make the plant grow. It is adapted, indeed, to this, and the seed would not germinate if it was not planted, nor grow if it was not watered; but the life is still from God. He arranged these means, and he gives life to the tender blade, and sustains it. And so it is with

the word of life. It has no inherent power to produce effect by itself. The power is not in the naked word, nor in him that plants, nor in him that waters, nor in the heart where it is sown, but in God. But there is a Fitness of the means to the end. The word is adapted to save the soul. The seed must be sown or it will not germinate. Truth must be sown in the heart, and the heart must be prepared for it - as the earth must be plowed and made mellow, or it will not spring up. It must be cultivated with assiduous care, or it will produce nothing. But still it is all of God - as much so as the yellow harvest of the field, after all the toils of the farmer is of God. And as the farmer who has just views, will take no praise to himself because his grain and his vine start up and grow after all his care, but will ascribe all to God‘s unceasing, beneficent agency; so will the minister of religion, and so will every Christian, after all their care, ascribe all to God.

Verse 7

Anything - This is to he taken comparatively. They are nothing in comparison with God! Their agency is of no importance compared with his: see the note at 1 Corinthians 1:28. It does not mean that their agency ought not to be performed; that it is not important, and indispensable in its place; but that the honor is due to God - Their agency is indispensable. God could make seed or a tree grow if they were not planted in the earth. But He does not do it. The agency of the farmer is indispensable in the ordinary operations of His providence. If he does not plant, God will not make the grain or the tree grow. God blesses his labors; he does not work a miracle. God attends effort with success; God does not interfere in a miraculous manner to accommodate the indolence of people. So in the matter of salvation. The efforts of ministers would be of no avail without God. They could do nothing in the salvation of the soul unless God would give the increase. But their labors are as indispensable and as necessary, as are those of the farmer in the production of a harvest. And as every farmer could say, “my labors are nothing without God, who alone can give the increase,” so it is with every minister of the gospel.

Verse 8

Are one - ἕν εἰσιν hen eisinThey are not the same person; but they are one in the following respects:

(1) They are united in reference to the same work. Though they are engaged in different things - for planting and watering are different kinds of work, yet it is one in regard to the end to be gained. The employments do

not at all clash, but tend to the same end. It is not as if one planted, and the other was engaged in pulling up.

(2) their work is one, because one is as necessary as the other. If the grain was not planted there would be no use in pouring water there; if not watered, there would be no use in planting. The work of one is as necessary, therefore, as the other; and the one should not undervalue the labors of the other.

(3) they are one in regard to God. They are both engaged in performing one work; God is performing another. There are not three parties or portions of the work, but two. They two perform one part of the work; God alone performs the other. Theirs would be useless without him; he would not ordinarily perform his without their performing their part. They could not do his part it they would - as they cannot make a plant grow; he could perform their part - as he could plant and water without the farmer; but it is not in accordance with his arrangements to do it.

And every man - The argument of the apostle here has reference only to ministers; but it is equally true of all people, that they shall receive their proper reward.

Shall receive - On the Day of Judgment, when God decides the destiny of men. The decisions of that Day will be simply determining what every moral agent ought to receive.

His own reward - His fit, or proper (τον ἴδιον ton idion) reward; that which pertains to him, or which shall be a proper expression of the character and value of his labor - The word "reward" μισθὸν misthondenotes properly that which is given by contract for service rendered; an equivalent in value for services or for kindness; see the note at Romans 4:4. In the Scriptures it denotes pay, wages, recompense given to day-laborers, to soldiers, etc. It is applied often, as here, to the retribution which God will make to people on the Day of Judgment; and is applied to the "favors" which he will then bestow on them, or to the "punishment" which he will inflict as the reward of their deeds. Instances of the former sense occur in Matthew 5:12; 6; Luke 6:23, Luke 6:35; Revelation 11:18; of the latter in 2 Peter 2:13, 2 Peter 2:15 - In regard to the righteous, it does not imply merit, or that they deserve heaven; but it means that, God will render to them that which, according to the terms of his new covenant, he

has promised, and which shall be a fit expression of his acceptance of their services. It is proper, according to these arrangements, that they should be blessed in heaven. It would not be proper that they should be cast down to hell - Their original and their sole title to eternal life is the grace of God through Jesus Christ: the "measure," or "amount" of the favors bestowed on them there, shall be according to the services which they render on earth. A parent may resolve to divide his estate among his sons, and their title to any thing may be derived from his mere favor but he may determine that it shall be divided according to their expressions of attachment, and to their obedience to him.

Verse 9

For we are labourers together with God - Θεοῦ γάρ ἐσμεν συνεργοί Theou gar esmen sunergoiWe are God's co-workers. A similar expression occurs in 2 Corinthians 6:1, "We then as workers together with him," etc. This passage is capable of two significations: first, as in our translation, that they were co-workers with God; engaged with him in his work, that he and they cooperated in the production of the effect; or that it was a joint-work; as we speak of a partnercy, or of joint-effort among people. So many interpreters have understood this. If this is the sense of the passage, then it means that as a farmer may be said to be a co-worker with God when he plants and tills his field, or does that without which God would not work in that case, or without which a harvest would not be produced, so the Christian minister cooperates with God in producing the same result. He is engaged in performing that which is indispensable to the end; and God also, by His Spirit, cooperates with the same design. If this is the idea, it gives a special sacredness to the work of the ministry, and indeed to the work of the farmer and the vinedresser. There is no higher honor than for a man to be engaged in doing the same things which God does, and participating with him in accomplishing his glorious plans. But doubts have been suggested in regard to this interpretation:

(1) The Greek does not of necessity imply this. It is literally, not we are his co-partners, but we are his fellow-laborers, that is, fellow-laborers in his employ, under his direction - as we say of servants of the same rank they are fellow-laborers of the same master, not meaning that the master was engaged in working with them, but that they were fellow-laborers one with another in his employment.

(2) there is no expression that is parallel to this. There is none that speaks of God‘s operating jointly with his creatures in producing the same result. They may be engaged in regard to the same end; but the sphere of God‘s operations and of their operations is distinct. God does one thing; and they do another, though they may contribute to the same result. The sphere of God‘s operations in the growth of a tree is totally distinct from that of the man who plants it. The man who planted it has no agency in causing the juices to circulate; in expanding the bud or the leaf; that is, in the proper work of God - In 3 John 1:8, Christians are indeed said to he “fellow-helpers to the truth” συνεργοὶ τῇ ἀληθεία sunergoi tē alētheiathat is, they operate with the truth, and contribute by their labors and influence to that effect. In Mark also Mark 16:20, it is said that the apostles “went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them” (τοῦ κυρίου συνεργοῖντος tou kuriou sunergointos), where the phrase means that the Lord cooperated with them by miracles, etc. The Lord, by his own proper energy, and in his own sphere, contributed to the success of the work in which they were engaged.

(3) the main design and scope of this whole passage is to show that God is all - that the apostles are nothing; to represent the apostles not as joint-workers with God, but as working by themselves, and God as alone giving efficiency to all that was done. The idea is, that of depressing or humbling the apostles, and of exalting God; and this idea would not be consistent with the interpretation that they were joint-laborers with him. While, therefore, the Greek would hear the interpretation conveyed in our translation, the sense may perhaps be, that the apostles were joint-laborers with each other in God‘s service; that they were united in their work, and that God was all in all; that they were like servants employed in the service of a master, without saying that the master participated with them in their work. This idea is conveyed in the translation of Doddridge, “we are the fellow-laborers of God.” So Rosenmuller, Calvin, however, Grotius, Whitby, and Bloomfield, coincide with our version in the interpretation. The Syriac renders it “We work with God.” The Vulgate, “We are the aids of God.”

Ye are God‘s husbandry - (γεώργιον geōrgion); margin, “tillage.” This word occurs no where else in the New Testament. It properly denotes a “tilled” or “cultivated field;” and the idea is, that the church at Corinth was the field on which God had bestowed the labor of tillage, or culture, to

produce fruit. The word is used by the Septuagint in Genesis 26:14, as the translation of צבדה ʿabudaah"For he had ‹possession‘ of flocks," etc.; in Jeremiah 51:23, as the translation of צמד tsemed"a yoke;" and in Proverbs 24:30; Proverbs 31:16, as the translation of שׂדי saadeh"a field;" "I went by the ‹field‘ of the slothful," etc. The sense here is, that all their culture was of God; that as a church they were under his care; and that all that had been produced in them was to be traced to his cultivation.

God‘s building - This is another metaphor. The object of Paul was to show that all that had been done for them had been really accomplished by God. For this purpose he first says that they were God‘s cultivated field; then he changes the figure; draws his illustration from architecture, and says, that they had been built by him as an architect rears a house. It does not rear itself; but it is reared by another. So he says of the Corinthians, "Ye are the building which God erects." The same figure is used in 2 Corinthians 6:16, and Ephesians 2:21; see also Hebrews 3:6; 1 Peter 2:5. The idea is, that God is the supreme agent in the founding and establishing of the church, in all its gifts and graces.

Verse 10

According to the grace of God - By the favor of God which is given to me. All that Paul had done had been by the mere favor of God. His appointment was from him; and all the skill which he had shown, and all the agency which he had employed, had been from him. The architectural figure is here continued with some striking additions and illustrations. By the "grace of God" here, Paul probably means his apostleship to the Gentiles, which had been conferred on him by the mere favor of God, and all the wisdom, and skill, and success which he had evinced in founding the church.

As a wise master-builder - Greek "Architect." The word does not imply that Paul had any pre-eminence over his brethren, but that he had proceeded in his work as a skillful architect, who secures first a firm foundation. Every builder begins with the foundation; and Paul had proceeded in this manner in laying first a firm foundation on which the church could be reared. The word "wise" here means "skillful" or "judicious"; compare Matthew 7:24.

I have laid the foundation - "What" this foundation was, he states in 1 Corinthians 3:11. The meaning here is, that the church at Corinth had been at first established by Paul; see Acts 18:1, etc.

And another - Other teachers. I have communicated to the church the first elements of Christian knowledge. Others follow out this instruction, and edify the church. The discussion here undergoes a slight change. In the former part of the chapter, "Christians" are compared to a building; here the "doctrines" which are taught in the church are compared to various parts of a building. Grotius. See similar instances of translation in 1 Timothy 4:16; and preach "such" doctrine as shall bear the test of the great Day. And from this we learn, that it is important that the church should be built on the true foundation; and that it is scarcely less important that it should be built up in the knowledge of the truth. Vast evils are constantly occurring in the church for the lack of proper instruction to young converts. Many seem to feel that provided the foundation be well laid, that is all that is needed. But the grand thing which is needed at the present time, is, that those who are converted should, as soon as possible, be instructed fully in the nature of the religion which they have embraced. What would be thought of a farmer who should plant a tree, and never water or trim it; who should plant his seed, and never cultivate the grain as it springs up; who should sow his fields, and then think that all is well, and leave it to be overrun with weeds and thorns? Piety is often stunted, its early shootings blighted, its rapid growth checked, for the lack of early culture in the church. And perhaps there is no one thing in which ministers more frequently fail than in regard to the culture which ought to be bestowed upon those who are converted - especially in early life. Our Saviour's views on this were expressed in the admonition to Peter, "Feed my lambs," John 21:15.

Verse 11

For other foundation - It is "implied" by the course of the argument here, that This was the foundation which had been laid at Corinth, and on which the church there had been reared. And it is affirmed that no other foundation can be laid. A foundation is that upon which a building is raised; the foundation of a church is the doctrine on which it is established; that is, the doctrines which its members hold - those truths which lie at the basis of their hopes, and by embracing which they have been converted to God.

Can no man lay - That is, there is no other true foundation.

Which is Jesus Christ - Christ is often called the foundation; the stone; the cornerstone upon which the church is reared; Isaiah 28:16; Matthew 21:42; Acts 4:11; Ephesians 2:20; 2 Timothy 2:19; 1 Peter 2:6. The meaning is, that no true church can be reared which does not embrace and hold the

true doctrines respecting him - those which pertain to his incarnation, his divine nature, his instructions, his example, his atonement, his resurrection, and ascension. The reason why no true church can be established without embracing the truth as it is in Christ is, that it is by him only that people can be saved; and where This doctrine is missing, all is missing that enters into the essential idea of a church. The fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion must be embraced, or a church cannot exist and where those doctrines are denied no association of people can be recognized as a church of God. Nor can the foundation be modified or shaped so as to suit the wishes of people. It must be laid as it is in the Scriptures; and the superstructure must be raised upon that alone.

Verse 12

Now if any man - If any teacher in the doctrines which he inculcates; or any private Christian in the hopes which he cherishes. The main discussion doubtless, has respect to the teachers of religion. Paul carries forward the metaphor in this and the following verses with respect to the building. He supposes that the foundation is laid; that it is a true foundation; that the essential doctrines in regard to the Messiah are the real basis on which the edifice is reared. But, he says, that even admitting that, it is a subject of vast importance to attend to the kind of structure which shall be reared on that; whether it shall be truly beautiful, and valuable in itself, and such as shall abide the trial of the last great Day; or whether it be mean, worthless, erroneous, and such as shall at last be destroyed. There has been some difference of opinion in regard to the interpretation of this passage, arising from the question whether the apostle designed to represent one or two buildings.

The former has been the more common interpretation, and the sense according to that is, “the true foundation is laid; but on that it is improper to place vile and worthless materials. It would be absurd to work them in with those which are valuable; it would be absurd to work in, in rearing a building, wood, and hay, and stubble, with gold, and silver, and precious stones; there would be a lack of concinnity and beauty in this. So in the spiritual temple. There is an impropriety, an unfitness, in rearing the spiritual temple, to interweave truth with error; sound doctrine with false.” See Calvin and Macknight. Grotius renders it, “Paul feigns to himself an edifice, partly regal, and partly rustic. He presents the image of a house whose walls are of marble, whose columns are made partly of gold and

partly of silver, whose beams are of wood, and whose roof thatched with straw." Others, among whom are Wetstein, Doddridge, Rosenmuller, suppose that he refers to two buildings that might be reared on this foundation - either one that should be magnificent and splendid; or one that should be a rustic cottage, or mean hovel, thatched with straw, and made of planks of wood.

Doddridge paraphrases the passage, "‹If any man builds,' I say, ‹upon this foundation,' let him look to the materials and the nature of his work; whether he raise a stately and magnificent temple upon it, adorned as it were like the house of God at Jerusalem, with gold and silver, and large, beautiful, and costly stones; or a mean hovel, consisting of nothing better than planks of wood roughly put together, and thatched with hay and stubble. That is, let him look to it, whether he teach the substantial, vital truths of Christianity, and which it was intended to support and illustrate; or set himself to propagate vain subtilties and conceits on the one hand, or legal rites and Jewish traditions on the other; which although they do not entirely destroy the foundation, disgrace it, as a mean edifice would do a grand and extensive foundation laid with great pomp and solemnity." This probably expresses the correct sense of the passage. The foundation may be well laid; yet on this foundation an edifice may be reared that shall be truly magnificent, or one that shall be mean and worthless. So the true foundation of a church may be laid, or of individual conversion to God, in the true doctrine respecting Christ. That church or that individual may be built up and adorned with all the graces which truth is suited to produce; or there may be false principles and teachings superadded; doctrines that shall delude and lead astray; or views and feelings cultivated as piety, and believed to be piety, which may be no part of true religion, but which are mere delusion and fanaticism.

Gold, silver - On the meaning of these words it is not necessary to dwell; or to lay too much stress. Gold is the emblem of that which is valuable and precious, and may be the emblem of that truth and holiness which shall bear the trial of the great Day. In relation to the figure which the apostle here uses, it may refer to the fact that columns or beams in an edifice might be gilded; or perhaps, as in the temple, that they might be solid gold, so as to bear the action of intense heat; or so that fire would not destroy them - So the precious doctrines of truth, and all the feelings, views,

opinions, habits, practices, which truth produces in an individual or a church, will bear the trial of the last great Day.

Precious stones - By the stones here referred to, are not meant "gems" which are esteemed of so much value for ornaments, but beautiful and valuable marbles. The word "precious" here τιμίους timiousmeans those which are obtained at a "price," which are costly and valuable; and is particularly applicable, therefore, to the costly marbles which were used in building. The figurative sense here does not differ materially from that conveyed by the silver and gold. By this edifice thus reared on the true foundation, we are to understand:

(1)The true doctrines which should be employed to build up a congregation - doctrines which would bear the test of the trial of the last Day; and,

(2)Such views in regard to piety, and to duty; such feelings and principles of action, as should be approved, and seen to be genuine piety in the Day of Judgment.

Wood - That might be easily burned. An edifice reared of wood instead of marble, or slight buildings, such as were often put for up for temporary purposes in the East - as cottages, places for watching their vineyards, etc.; see my note at Isaiah 1:8.

Hay, stubble - Used for thatching the building, or for a roof. Perhaps, also, grass was sometimes employed in some way to make the walls of the building. Such an edifice would burn readily; would be constantly exposed to take fire. By this is meant:

(1)Errors and false doctrines, such as will not be found to be true on the Day of Judgment, and as will then be swept away;

(2)Such practices and mistaken views of piety, as shall grow out of false doctrines and errors - The foundation may be firm.

Those who are referred to may be building on the Lord Jesus, and may be true Christians. Yet there is much error among those who are not Christians. There are many things mistaken for piety which will yet be seen robe false. There is much enthusiasm, wildfire, fanaticism, bigotry; much affected humility; much that is supposed to be orthodoxy; much regard to forms and ceremonies; to "days, and months, and times, and years" Galatians 4:10; much over-heated zeal, and much precision, and solemn sanctimoniousness; much regard for external ordinances where the heart is

missing, that shall be found to be false, and that shall be swept away on the Day of Judgment.

Verse 13

Every man‘s work shall be made manifest - What every man has built on this foundation shall be seen. Whether he has held truth or error; whether he has had correct views of piety or false; whether what he has done has been what he should have done or not.

For the day - The Day of Judgment. The great Day which shall reveal the secrets of all hearts, and the truth in regard to what every man has done. The event will show what edifices on the true foundation are firmly, and what are weakly built. Perhaps the word “day” here may mean time in general, as we say, “time will show” - and as the Latin adage says, *dies docebit*; but it is more natural to refer it to the Day of Judgment.

Because it shall be revealed by fire - The work, the edifice which shall be built on the true foundation shall be made known amidst the fire of the great Day. The “fire” which is here referred to, is doubtless that which shall attend the consummation of all things - the close of the world. That the world shall be destroyed by fire, and that the solemnities of the Judgment shall be ushered in by a universal conflagration, is fully and frequently revealed. See Isaiah 66:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Peter 3:7, 2 Peter 3:10-11. The burning fires of that Day, Paul says, shall reveal the character of every man‘s work, as fire sheds light on all around, and discloses the true nature of things. It may be observed, however, that many critics suppose this to refer to the fire of persecution, etc. Macknight. Whitby supposes that the apostle refers to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem. Others, as Grotius, Rosenmuller, etc. suppose that the reference is to “time” in general; it shall be declared ere long; it shall be seen whether those things which are built on the true foundation, are true by the test of time, etc. But the most natural interpretation is that which refers it to the Day of Judgment.

And the fire shall try every man‘s work - It is the property of fire to test the qualities of objects. Thus, gold and silver, so far from being destroyed by fire, are purified from dross. Wood, hay, stubble, are consumed. The power of fire to try or test the nature of metals, or other objects, is often referred to in the Scripture. Compare Isaiah 4:4; Isaiah 24:15; Malachi 3:2; 1 Peter 1:7. It is not to be supposed here that the material fire of the last Day shall have any tendency to purify the soul, or to remove that which is unsound; but that the investigations and trials of the

Judgment shall remove all that is evil, as fire acts with reference to gold and silver. As they are not burned but purified; as they pass unhurt through the intense heat of the furnace, so shall all that is genuine pass through the trials of the last great Day, of which trials the burning world shall be the antecedent and the emblem. That great Day shall show what is genuine and what is not.

Verse 14

If any man‘s work abide … - If it shall appear that he hast taught the true doctrines of Christianity, and inculcated right practices and views of piety, and himself cherished right feelings: if the trial of the great Day, when the real qualities of all objects shall be known, shall show this.

He shall receive a reward - According to the nature of his work. See the note on 1 Corinthians 3:8. This refers, I suppose, to the proper rewards on the Day of Judgment, and not to the honors and the recompense which he may receive in this world. If all that he has taught and done shall be proved to have been genuine and pure, then his reward shall be in proportion.

Verse 15

If any man‘s work shall be burned - If it shall not be found to hear the test of the investigation of that Day - as a cottage of wood, hay, and stubble would not bear the application of fire. If his doctrines have not been true; if he has had mistaken views of piety; if he has nourished feelings which he thought were those of religion; and inculcated practices which, however well meant, are not such as the gospel produces; if he has fallen into error of opinion, feeling, practice, however conscientious, yet he shall suffer loss.

He shall suffer loss - :

(1) He shall not be elevated to as high a rank and to as high happiness as he otherwise would. That which he supposed would be regarded as acceptable by the Judge, and rewarded accordingly, shall be stripped away, and shown to be unfounded and false; and in consequence, he shall not obtain those elevated rewards which he anticipated. This, compared with what he expected, may be regarded as a loss.

(2) he shall be injuriously affected by this forever. It shall be a detriment to him to all eternity. The effects shall be felt in all his residence in heaven - not producing misery but attending him with the consciousness that he might have been raised to superior bliss in the eternal abode - The phrase

here literally means, “he shall be mulcted.” The word is a legal term, and means that he shall be fined, that is, he shall suffer detriment.

But he himself shall be saved - The apostle all along has supposed that the true foundation was laid 1 Corinthians 3:11, and if that is laid, and the edifice is reared upon that, the person who does it shall be safe. There may be much error, and many false views of religion, and much imperfection, still the man that is building on the true foundation shall be safe. His errors and imperfections shall be removed, and he may occupy a lower place in heaven, but he shall be safe.

Yet so as by fire - ὡς διὰ πυρός hōs dia purosThis passage has greatly perplexed commentators; but probably without any good reason. The apostle does not say that Christians will be doomed to the fires of purgatory; nor that they will pass through fire; nor that they will be exposed to pains and punishment at all; but he “simply carries out the figure” which he commenced, and says that they will be saved, as if the action of fire had been felt on the edifice on which he is speaking. That is, as fire would consume the wood, hay, and stubble, so on the great Day everything that is erroneous and imperfect in Christiana shall be removed, and that which is true and genuine shall be preserved as if it had passed through fire. Their whole character and opinions shall be investigated; and that which is good shall be approved; and that which is false and erroneous be removed.

The idea is not that of a man whose house is burnt over his head and who escapes through the flames, nor that of a man who is subjected to the pains and fires of purgatory; but that of a man who had been spending his time and strength to little purpose; who had built, indeed, on the true foundation, but who had reared so much on it which was unsound, and erroneous, and false, that he himself would be saved with great difficulty, and with the loss of much of that reward which he had expected, as if the fire had passed over him and his works. The simple idea, therefore, is, that that which is genuine and valuable in his doctrines and works, shall be rewarded, and the man shall be saved; that which is not sound and genuine, shall be removed, and he shall suffer loss. Some of the fathers, indeed, admitted that this passage taught that all people would be subjected to the action of fire in the great conflagration with which the world shall close; that the wicked shall be consumed; and that the righteous are to suffer, some more and some less, according to their character. On passages like

this, the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory is based. But we may observe:

(1) That this passage does not necessarily or naturally give any such idea. The interpretation stated above is the natural interpretation, and one which the passage will not only bear, but which it demands.

(2) If this passage would give any countenance to the absurd and unscriptural idea that the souls of the righteous at the Day of Judgment are to be re-united to their bodies, in order to be subjected to the action of intense heat, to be brought from the abodes of bliss and compelled to undergo the burning fires of the last conflagration, still it would give no countenance to the still more absurd and unscriptural opinion that those fires have been and are still burning; that all souls are to be subjected to them; and that they can be removed only by masses offered for the dead, and by the prayers of the living. The idea of danger and peril is, indeed, in this text; but the idea of personal salvation is retained and conveyed.

Verse 16

Know ye not … - The apostle here carries forward and completes the figure which he had commenced in regard to Christians. His illustrations had been drawn from architecture; and he here proceeds to say that Christians are that building (see 1 Corinthians 3:9): that they were the sacred temple which God had reared; and that, therefore, they should be pure and holy. This is a practical application of what he had been before saying.

Ye are the temple of God - This is to be understood of the community of Christians, or of the church, as being the place where God dwells on the earth. The idea is derived from the mode of speaking among the Jews, where they are said often in the Old Testament to be the temple and the habitation of God. And the allusion is probably to the fact that God dwelt by a visible symbol - "the Shechinah" - in the temple, and that His abode was there. As He dwelt there among the Jews; as He had there a temple - a dwelling place, so he dwells among Christians. they are His temple, the place of His abode. His residence is with them; and He is in their midst. This figure the apostle Paul several times uses, 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:20-22. A great many passages have been

quoted by Eisner and Wetstein, in which a virtuous mind is represented as the temple of God, and in which the obligation to preserve that inviolate and unpolluted is enforced. The figure is a beautiful one, and very impressive. A temple was an edifice erected to the service of God. The temple at Jerusalem was not only most magnificent, but was regarded as most sacred:

(1) From the fact that it was devoted to his service; and,

(2) From the fact that it was the special residence of Yahweh.

Among the pagan also, temples were regarded as sacred. They were supposed to be inhabited by the divinity to whom they were dedicated. They were regarded, as inviolable. Those who took refuge there were safe. It was a crime of the highest degree to violate a temple, or to tear a fugitive who had sought protection there from the altar. So the apostle says of the Christian community. They were regarded as his temple - God dwelt among them - and they should regard themselves as holy, and as consecrated to his service. And so it is regarded as a species of sacrilege to violate the temple, and to devote it to other uses, 1 Corinthians 6:19; see 1 Corinthians 3:17.

And that the Spirit of God - The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. This is conclusively proved by 1 Corinthians 6:19, where he is called "the Holy Ghost."

Dwelleth in you - As God dwelt formerly in the tabernacle, and afterward in the temple, so His Spirit now dwells among Christians - This cannot mean:

(1)That the Holy Spirit is "personally united" to Christians, so as to form a personal union; or,

(2)That there is to Christians any communication of his nature or personal qualities; or,

(3)That there is any union of "essence," or "nature" with them, for God is present in all places, and can, as God, be no more present at one place than at another.

The only sense in which he can be especially present in any place is by His "influence," or "agency." And the idea is one which denotes agency, influence, favor, special regard; and in that sense only can he be present with his church. The expression must mean:

(1)That the church is the seat of His operations, the field or abode on which He acts on earth;

(2)That His influences are there, producing the appropriate effects of His agency, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, etc.; Galatians 5:22-23;

(3)that He produces consolations there, that he sustains and guides His people;

(4)That they are regarded as dedicated or consecrated to Him;

(5)That they are especially dear to Him - that He loves them, and thus makes His abode with them. See the note at John 14:23.

("These words import the actual presence and inhabitation of the Spirit himself. The fact is plainly attested, but it is mysterious, and cannot be distinctly explained. In respect of His essence, He is as much present with unbelievers as with believers. His dwelling in the latter must therefore signify, that He manifests himself, in their souls, in a special manner; that He exerts there His gracious power, and produces effects which other people do not experience - We may illustrate His presence with them, as distinguished from His presence with people in general, by supposing the vegetative power of the earth to produce, in the surrounding regions, only common and worthless plants, but to throw out, in a select spot, all the riches and beauty of a cultivated garden" - Dick's *Theology*, Vol. III. p. 287.)

Verse 17

If any man defile … - Or, "destroy, corrupt" (φθείρει phtheirei). The Greek word is the same in both parts of the sentence. "If any man ‹destroy' the temple of God, God shall ‹destroy' him." This is presented in the form of an adage or proverb. And the truth here stated is based on the fact that the temple of God was inviolable. That temple was holy; and if any man subsequently destroyed it, it might be presumed that God would destroy him. The figurative sense is, "If any man by his doctrines or precepts shall pursue such a course as tends to destroy the church, God shall severely punish him.

For the temple of God is holy - The temple of God is to be regarded as sacred and inviolable. This was unquestionably the common opinion among the Jews respecting the temple at Jerusalem; and it was the common

doctrine of the Gentiles respecting their temples. Sacred places were regarded as inviolable; and this general truth Paul applies to the Christian church in general - Locke supposes that Paul had particular reference here to the false teachers in Corinth. But the expression, "if any man," is equally applicable to all other false teachers as to him.

Which temple ye are - This proves that though Paul regarded them as lamentably corrupt in some respects, he still regarded them as a true church - as a part of the holy temple of God.

Verse 18

Let no man deceive himself - The apostle here proceeds to make a practical application of the truths which he had stated, and to urge on them humility, and to endeavor to repress the broils and contentions into which they had fallen. Let no man be puffed up with a vain conceit of his own wisdom, for this had been the real cause of all the evils which they had experienced. Grotius renders this, "See that you do not attribute too much to your wisdom and learning, by resting on it, and thus deceive your own selves." "All human philosophy," says Grotius, "that is repugnant to the gospel is but vain deceit" - Probably there were many among them who would despise this admonition as coming from Paul, but he exhorts them to take care that they did not deceive themselves. We are taught here:

(1) The danger of self-deception - a danger that besets all on the subject of religion.

(2) the fact that false philosophy is the most fruitful source of self-deception in the business of religion. So it was among the Corinthians; and so it has been in all ages since.

If any man among you - Any teacher, whatever may be his rank or his confidence in his own abilities; or any private member of the church.

Seemeth to be wise - Seems to himself; or is thought to be, has the credit, or reputation of being wise. The word "seems" δοκεῖ dokeiimplies this idea - if anyone seems, or is supposed to be a man of wisdom; if this is his reputation; and if he seeks that this should be his reputation among people. See instances of this construction in Bloomfield.

In this world - In this "age," or "world" (ἐν τῷ αἰῶν τούτῳ en tō aiōn toutō). There is considerable variety in the interpretation of this passage among critics. It may be taken either with the preceding or the following words. Origen, Cyprian, Beza, Grotius, Hammond, and Locke adopt the

latter method, and understand it thus: “If any man among you thinks himself to be wise, let him not hesitate to be a fool in the opinion of this age in order that he may be truly wise” - But the interpretation conveyed in our translation, is probably the correct one. “If any man has the reputation of wisdom among the people of this generation, and prides himself on it,” etc. If he is esteemed wise in the sense in which the people of this world are, as a philosopher, a man of science, learning, etc.

Let him become a fool -

(1) Let him be willing to be regarded as a fool.

(2) let him sincerely embrace this gospel, which will inevitably expose him to the charge of being a fool.

(3) let all his earthly wisdom be esteemed in his own eyes as valueless and as folly in the great matters of salvation.

That he may be wise - That he may have true wisdom - that which is of God. It is implied here:

(1) That the wisdom of this world will not make a man truly wise.

(2) that a “reputation” for wisdom may contribute nothing to a man‘s true wisdom, but may stand in the way of it.

(3) that for such a man to embrace the gospel it is necessary that he should be willing to cast away dependence on his own wisdom, and come with the temper of a child to the Saviour.

(4) that to do this will expose him to the charge of folly, and the derision of those who are wise in their own conceit.

(5) that true wisdom is found only in that science which teaches people to live unto God, and to be prepared for death and for heaven - and that science is found only in the gospel.

Verse 19

For the wisdom of this world - That which is esteemed to be wisdom by the people of this world on the subject of religion. It does not mean that true wisdom is foolishness with him. It does not mean that science, and

prudence, and law - that the knowledge of his works - that astronomy, and medicine, and chemistry, are regarded by him as folly, and as unworthy the attention of people. God is the friend of truth on all subjects; and he requires us to become acquainted with his works, and commends those who search them, Psalm 92:4; Psalm 111:2. But the apostle refers here to that which was esteemed to be wisdom among the ancients, and in which they so much prided themselves, their vain, self-confident, and false opinions on the subject of religion; and especially those opinions when they were opposed to the simple but sublime truths of revelation. See the note at 1 Corinthians 1:20-21.

Is foolishness with God - Is esteemed by him to be folly. See the note at 1 Corinthians 1:20-24.

For it is written … - Job 5:13. The word rendered "taketh" here denotes to clench with the fist, gripe, grasp. And the sense is:

(1) However crafty, or cunning, or skillful they may be; however self-confident, yet that they cannot deceive or impose upon God. He can thwart their plans, overthrow their schemes, defeat their counsels, and foil them in their enterprises, Job 5:12.

(2) he does it by their own cunning or craftiness. He allows them to involve themselves in difficulties or to entangle each other. He makes use of even their own craft and cunning to defeat their counsels. He allows the plans of one wise man to come in conflict with those of another, and thus to destroy one another. Honesty in religion, as in everything else, is the best policy; and a man who pursues a course of conscientious integrity may expect the protection of God. But he who attempts to carry his purposes by craft and intrigue - who depends on skill and cunning instead of truth and honesty, will often find that he is the prey of his own cunning and duplicity.

Verse 20

And again, - Psalm 94:11.

The Lord knoweth - God searches the heart. The particular thing which it is here said that he knows, is, that the thoughts of man are vain. They have this quality; and this is that which the psalmist here says that God sees. The affirmation is not one respecting the omniscience of God, but with respect to what God sees of the nature of the thoughts of the wise.

The thoughts of the wise - Their plans, purposes, designs.

That they are vain - That they lack real wisdom; they are foolish; they shall not be accomplished as they expect; or be seen to have that wisdom which they now suppose they possess.

Verse 21

Therefore … - Paul here proceeds to apply the principles which he had stated above. Since all were ministers or servants of God; since God was the source of all good influences; since, whatever might be the pretensions to wisdom among people, it was all foolishness in the sight of God, the inference was clear, that no man should glory in man. They were all alike poor, frail, ignorant, erring, dependent beings. And hence, also, as all wisdom came from God, and as Christians partook Alike of the benefits of the instruction of the most eminent apostles, they ought to regard this as belonging to them in common, and not to form parties with these names at the head.

Let no man glory in men; - See 1 Corinthians 1:29; compare Jeremiah 9:23-24. It was common among the Jews to range themselves under different leaders - as Hillel and Shammai; and for the Greeks, also, to boast themselves to be the followers of Pythagoras, Zeno, Plato, etc. The same thing began to be manifest in the Christian church; and Paul here rebukes and opposes it.

For all things are yours - This is a reason why they should not range themselves in parties or factions under different leaders. Paul specifies what he means by "all things" in the following verses. The sense is, that since they had an interest in all that could go to promote their welfare; as they were common partakers of the benefits of the talents and labors of the apostles; and as they belonged to Christ, and all to God, it was improper to be split up into factions, as if they derived any special benefit; from one set of persons, or one set of objects. In Paul, in Apollos, in life, death, etc. they had a common interest, and no one should boast that he had any special proprietorship in any of these things.

Verse 22

Whether Paul, or Apollos - The sense of this is clear. Whatever advantages result from the piety, self-denials, and labors of Paul, Apollos, or any other preacher of the gospel, are yours - you have the benefit of them. One is as much entitled to the benefit as another; and all partake alike in the results of their ministration. You should therefore neither range yourselves into parties with their names given to the parties, nor suppose

that one has any special interest in Paul, or another in Apollos. Their labors belonged to the church in general. they had no partialities - no rivalship - no desire to make parties. They were united, and desirous of promoting the welfare of the whole church of God. The doctrine is, that ministers belong to the church, and should devote themselves to its welfare; and that the church enjoys, in common, the benefits of the learning, zeal, piety, eloquence, talents, example of the ministers of God. And it may be observed, that it is no small privilege thus to be permitted to regard all the labors of the most eminent servants of God as designed for our welfare; and for the humblest saint to feel that the labors of apostles, the self-denials and sufferings, the pains and dying agonies of martyrs, have been for his advantage.

Or Cephas - Or Peter. John 1:42.

Or the world - This word is doubtless used, in its common signification, to denote the things which God has made; the universe, the things which pertain to this life. And the meaning of the apostle probably is, that all things pertaining to this world which God has made - all the events which are occurring in his providence were so far theirs, that they would contribute to their advantage, and their enjoyment. This general idea may be thus expressed:

(1) The world was made by God their common Father, and they have an interest in it as his children, regarding it as the work of His hand, and seeing Him present in all His works. Nothing contributes so much to the true enjoyment of the world - to comfort in surveying the heavens, the earth, the ocean, hills, vales, plants, flowers, streams, in partaking of the gifts of Providence, as this feeling, that all are the works of the Christian‘s Father, and that they may all partake of these favors as His children.

(2) the frame of the universe is sustained and upheld for their sake. The universe is kept by God; and one design of God in keeping it is to protect, preserve, and redeem his church and people. To this end He defends it by day and night; He orders all things; He keeps it from the storm and tempest; from flood and fire; and from annihilation. The sun, and moon, and stars - the times and seasons, are all thus ordered, that His church may be guarded, and brought to heaven.

(3) the course of providential events are ordered for their welfare also, Romans 8:28. The revolutions of kingdoms - the various persecutions and trials, even the rage and fury of wicked people, are all overruled, to the advancement of the cause of truth, and the welfare of the church.

(4) Christians have the promise of as much of this world as shall be needful for them; and in this sense "the world" is theirs. See Matthew 6:33; Mark 10:29-30; 1 Timothy 4:8, "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." And such was the result of the long experience and observation of David, Psalm 37:25, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." See Isaiah 33:16.

Or life - Life is theirs, because:

(1) They enjoy life. It is real life to them, and not a vain show. They live for a real object, and not for vanity. Others live for parade and ambition - Christians live for the great purposes of life; and life to them has reality, as being a state preparatory to another and a higher world. Their life is not an endless circle of unmeaning ceremonies - of false and hollow pretensions to friendship - of a vain pursuit of happiness, which is never found, but is passed in a manner that is rational, and sober, and that truly deserves to be called life.

(2) the various events and occurrences of life shall all tend to promote their welfare, and advance their salvation.

Death - They have an "interest," or "property" even in death, usually regarded as a calamity and a curse. But it is theirs:

(1) Because they shall have "peace" and support in the dying hour.

(2) because it has no terrors for them. It shall take away nothing which they are not willing to resign.

(3) because it is the avenue which leads to their rest; and it is theirs just in the same sense in which we say that "this is our road" when we have been long absent, and are inquiring the way to our homes.

(4) because they shall triumph over it. It is subdued by their Captain, and the grave has been subjected to a triumph by his rising from its chills

and darkness.

(5) because death is the means - the occasion of introducing them to their rest. It is the "advantageous circumstance" in their history, by which they are removed from a world of ills, and translated to a world of glory. It is to them a source of inexpressible advantage, as it translates them to a world of light and eternal felicity; and it may truly be called theirs.

Or things present, or things to come - Events which are now happening, and all that can possibly occur to us, see the note at Romans 8:38. All the calamities, trials, persecutions - all the prosperity, advantages, privileges of the present time, and all that shall yet take place, shall tend to promote our welfare, and advance the interests of our souls, and promote our salvation.

All are yours - All shall tend to promote your comfort and salvation.

Verse 23

And ye are Christ's - You belong to him; and should not, therefore, feel that you are devoted to any earthly leader, whether Paul, Apollos, or Peter. As you belong to Christ by redemption, and by solemn dedication to his service, so you should feel that you are his alone. You are his property - his people - his friends. You should regard yourselves as such, and feel that you all belong to the same family, and should not, therefore, be split up into contending factions and parties.

Christ is God's - Christ is the Mediator between God and man. He came to do the will of God. He was and is still devoted to the service of his Father. God has a proprietorship in all that he does, since Christ lived, and acted, and reigns to promote the glory of his Father. The argument here seems to be this, "You belong to Christ; and he to God. You are bound therefore, not to devote yourselves to a man, whoever he may be, but to Christ, and to the service of that one true God, in whose service even Christ was employed. And as Christ sought to promote the glory of his Father, so should you in all things." This implies no inferiority of nature of Christ to God. It means only that he was employed in the service of his Father, and sought his glory - a doctrine everywhere taught in the New Testament. But this does not imply that he was inferior in his nature. A son may be employed in the service of his father, and may seek to advance his father's interests. But this does not prove that the son is inferior in nature to his father. It proves only that he is inferior in some respects - in office. So the

Son of God consented to take an inferior office or rank; to become a mediator, to assume the form of a servant, and to be a man of sorrows; but this proves nothing in regard to his original rank or dignity. That is to be learned from the numerous passages which affirm that in nature he was equal with God. See the note at John 1:1.

Remarks On 1 Corinthians 3:1. They are in a new world. They just open their eyes on truth. They see new objects; and have new objects of attachment. They are feeble, weak, helpless. And though they often have high joy, and even great self-confidence, yet they are in themselves ignorant and weak, and in need of constant teaching. Christians should not only possess the spirit, but they should feel that they are like children. They are like them not only in their temper, but in their ignorance, and weakness, and helplessness.

2. The instructions which are imparted to Christians should be adapted to their capacity, 1 Corinthians 3:2. Skill and care should be exercised to adapt that instruction to the needs of tender consciences, and to those who are feeble in the faith. It would be no more absurd to furnish strong food to the new born babe than it is to present some of the higher doctrines of religion to the tender minds of converts. The elements of knowledge must be first learned; the tenderest and most delicate food must first nourish the body - And perhaps in nothing is there more frequent error than in presenting the higher, and more difficult doctrines of Christianity to young converts, and because they have a difficulty in regard to them, or because they even reject them, pronouncing them destitute of piety. Is the infant destitute of life because it cannot digest the solid food which nourishes the man of fifty years? Paul adapted his instructions to the delicacy and feebleness of infant piety; and those who are like Paul will feed with great care the lambs of the flock. All young converts should be placed under a course of instruction adapted to their condition, and should secure the careful attention of the ministers of the churches.

3. Strife and contention in the church is proof that people are under the influence of carnal feelings. No matter what is the cause of the contention, the very fact of the existence of such strife is a proof of the existence of such feelings somewhere, 1 Corinthians 3:3-4. On what side soever the original fault of the contention may be, yet its existence in the church is always proof that some - if not all - of those who are engaged in it are under

the influence of carnal feelings. Christ‘s kingdom is designed to be a kingdom of peace and love; and divisions and contentions are always attended with evils, and with injury to the spirit of true religion.

4. We have here a rebuke to that spirit which has produced the existence of sects and parties, 1 Corinthians 3:4. The practice of naming sects after certain people, we see, began early, and was as early rebuked by apostolic authority. Would not the same apostolic authority rebuke the spirit which now calls one division of the church after the name of Calvin, another after the name of Luther, another after the name of Arminius! Should not, and will not all these divisions yet be merged in the high and holy name of Christian? Our Saviour evidently supposed it possible that his church should be one John 17:21-23; and Paul certainly supposed that the church at Corinth might be so united. So the early churches were; and is it too much to hope that some way may yet be discovered which shall break down the divisions into sects, and unite Christians both in feeling and in name in spreading the gospel of the Redeemer everywhere? Does not every Christian sincerely desire it? And may there not yet await the church such a union as shall concentrate all its energies in saving the world? How much effort, how much talent, how much wealth and learning are now wasted in contending with other denominations of the great Christian family! How much would this wasted - and worse than wasted wealth, and learning, and talent, and zeal do in diffusing the gospel around the world! Whose heart is not sickened at these contentions and strifes; and whose soul will not breathe forth a pure desire to Heaven that the time may soon come when all these contentions shall die away, and when the voice of strife shall be hushed; and when the united host of God‘s elect shall go forth to subdue the world to the gospel of the Saviour?

5. The proper honor should be paid to the ministers of the gospel 1 Corinthians 3:5-7. They should not be put in the place of God; nor should their services, however important, prevent the supreme recognition of God in the conversion of souls. God is to be all and in all - It is proper that the ministers of religion should be treated with respect 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; and ministers have a right to expect and to desire the affectionate regards of those who are blessed by their instrumentality. But Paul - eminent and successful as he was - would do nothing that would diminish

or obscure the singleness of view with which the agency of God should be regarded in the work of salvation. He regarded himself as nothing compared with God; and his highest desire was that God in all things might be honored.

6. God is the source of all good influence, and of all that is holy in the church. Its only gives the increase. Whatever of humility, faith, love, joy, peace, or purity we may have, is all to be traced to him. No matter who plants, or who waters, God gives life to the seed; God rears the stalk; God expands the leaf; God opens the flower and gives it its fragrance; and God forms, preserves, and ripens the fruit. So in religion. No matter who the minister may be; no matter how faithful, learned, pious, or devoted, yet if any success attends his labors, it is all to be traced to God. This truth is never to be forgotten; nor should any talents, or zeal, however great, ever be allowed to dim or obscure its lustre in the minds of those who are converted.

7. Ministers are on a level, 1 Corinthians 3:8-9. Whatever may be their qualifications or their success, yet they can claim no pre-eminence over one another. They are fellow laborers - engaged in one work, accomplishing the same object, though they may be in different parts of the same field. The man who plants is as necessary as he that waters; and both are inferior to God, and neither could do anything without him.

8. Christians should regard themselves as a holy people, 1 Corinthians 3:9. They are the cultivation of God. All that they have is from him. His own agency has been employed in their conversion; his own Spirit operates to sanctify and save them. Whatever they have is to be traced to God; and they should remember that they are, therefore, consecrated to him.

9. No other foundation can be laid in the church except that of Christ, 1 Corinthians 3:10-11. Unless a church is founded on the true doctrine respecting the Messiah, it is a false church, and should not be recognized as belonging to him. There can be no other foundation, either for an individual sinner, or for a church. How important then to inquire whether we are building our hopes for eternity on this tried foundation! How faithfully should we examine this subject lest our hopes should all be swept away in

the storms of divine wrath! Matthew 7:27-28. How deep and awful will be the disappointment of those who suppose they have been building on the true foundation, and who find in the great Day of Judgment that all has been delusion!

10. We are to be tried at the Day of Judgment, 1 Corinthians 3:13-14. All are to be arraigned, not only in regard to the foundation of our hopes for eternal life, but in regard to the superstructure, the nature of our opinions and practices in religion. Everything shall come into judgment.

11. The trial will be such as to test our character. All the trials through which we are to pass are designed to do this. Affliction, temptation, sickness, death, are all intended to produce this result, and all have a tendency to this end. But, pre-eminently is this the case with regard to the trial at the great Day of Judgment. Amidst the light of the burning world, and the terrors of the Judgment; under the blazing throne, and the eye of God, every man‘s character shall be seen, and a just judgment shall be pronounced.

12. The trial shall remove all that is impure in Christians, 1 Corinthians 3:14. They shall then see the truth; and in that world of truth, all that was erroneous in their opinions shall be corrected. They shall be in a world where fanaticism cannot be mistaken for the love of truth, and where enthusiasm cannot be substituted for zeal. All true and real piety shall there abide; all which is false and erroneous shall be removed.

13. What a change will then take place in regard to Christians. all probably cherish some opinions which are unsound; all indulge in some things now supposed to be piety, which will not then bear the test. The great change will then take place from impurity to purity; from imperfection to perfection. The very passage from this world to heaven will secure this change; and what a vast revolution will it be thus to be ushered into a world where all shall be pure in sentiment; all perfect in love.

14. Many Christians may be much disappointed in that Day. Many who are now zealous for doctrines, and who pursue with vindictive spirit others who differ from them, shall then “suffer loss,” and find that the persecuted

had more real love of truth than the persecutor. Many who are now filled with zeal, and who denounce the comparatively leaden and tardy pace of others; many whose bosoms glow with rapturous feeling, and burn, as they suppose, with a seraph‘s love, shall find that all this was not piety - that animal feeling was mistaken for the love of God; and that a zeal for sect, or for the triumph of a party, was mistaken for love to the Saviour; and that the kindlings of an ardent imagination had been often substituted for the elevated emotions of pure and disinterested love.

15. Christians, teachers, and people should examine themselves, and see what is the building which they are rearing on the true foundation. Even where the foundation of a building is laid broad and deep, it is of much importance whether a stately and magnificent palace shall he reared on it, suited to the nature of the foundation, or whether a mud-walled and a thatched cottage shall be all. Between the foundation and the edifice in the one case there is the beauty of proportion and fitness; in the other there is incongruity and unfitness. Who would lay such a deep and broad foundation as the basis upon which to raise the hut of the savage or the mud cottage of the Hindu? So in religion. The foundation to all who truly believe in the Lord Jesus is broad, deep, firm, magnificent. But the superstructure - the piety, the advancement in knowledge, the life, is often like the cottage that is reared on the firm basis - that every wind shakes, and that the fire would soon consume. As the basis of the Christian hope is firm, so should the superstructure be large, magnificent, and grand,

16. Christians are to regard themselves as holy and pure, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17. They are the temple of the Lord - the dwelling place of the Spirit. A temple is sacred and inviolable. So should Christians regard themselves. They are dedicated to God. He dwells among them. And they should deem themselves holy and pure; and should preserve their minds from impure thoughts, from unholy purposes, from selfish and sensual desires. They should be in all respects such as will be the fit abode for the Holy Spirit of God. How pure should people be in whom the Holy Spirit dwells! How single should be their aims! How constant their self-denials! How single their desire to devote all to his service, and to live always to his glory! How heavenly should they be in their feelings; and how should pride, sensuality:. vanity, ambition, covetousness, and the love of gaiety, be banished from

their bosoms! Assuredly in God‘s world there should be one place where he will delight to dwell - one place that shall remind of heaven, and that place should be the church which has been purchased with the purest blood of the universe.

17. We see what is necessary if a man would become a Christian, 1 Corinthians 3:18. He must be willing to be esteemed a feel; to be despised; to have his name cast out as evil; and to be regarded as even under delusion and deception. Whatever may be his rank, or his reputation for wisdom, and talent, and learning, he must be willing to be regarded as a fool by his former associates and companions; to cast off all reliance on his own wisdom; and to be associated with the poor, the persecuted, and the despised followers of Jesus. Christianity knows no distinctions of wealth, talent, learning. It points out no royal road to heaven. It describes but one way; and whatever contempt an effort to be saved may involve us in, it requires us to submit to that, and even to rejoice that our names are cast out as evil.

18. This is a point on which people should be especially careful that they are not deceived, 1 Corinthians 3:18. There is nothing on which they are more likely to be than this. It is not an easy thing for a proud man to humble himself; it is not easy for people who boast of their wisdom to be willing that their names should be cast out as evil. And there is great danger of a man‘s flattering himself that he is willing to be a Christian, who would not be willing to be esteemed a fool by the great and the frivilous people of this world. He still intends to be a Christian and be saved; and yet to keep up his reputation for wisdom and prudence. Hence, everything in religion which is not consistent with such a reputation for prudence and wisdom he rejects. Hence, he takes sides with the world. As far as the world will admit that a man ought to attend to religion he will go. Where the world would pronounce anything to be foolish, fanatical, or enthusiastic, he pauses. And his religion is not shaped by the New Testament, but by the opinions of the world - Such a man should be cautious that he is not deceived. All his hopes of heaven are probably built on the sand,

19. We should not overvalue the wisdom of this world, 1 Corinthians 3:18-19. It is folly in the sight of God. And we, therefore, should not over-

estimate it, or desire it, or be influenced by it. True wisdom on any subject we should not despise; but we should especially value that which is connected with salvation.

20. This admonition is of special applicability to ministers of the gospel. They are in special danger on the subject; and it has been by their yielding themselves so much to the power of speculative philosophy, that parties have been formed in the church, and that the gospel has been so much corrupted.

21. These considerations should lead us to live above contention, and the fondness of party. Sect and party in the church are not formed by the love of the pure and simple gospel, but by the love of some philosophical opinion, or by an admiration of the wisdom, talents, learning, eloquence, or success of some Christian teacher. Against this the apostle would guard us; and the considerations presented in this chapter should elevate us above all the causes of contention and the love of sect, and teach us to love as brothers all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

22. Christians have an interest in all things that can go to promote their happiness. Life and death, things present and things to come - all shall tend to advance their happiness, and promote their salvation; 1 Corinthians 3:21-23.

23. Christians have nothing to fear in death. Death is theirs, and shall be a blessing to them. Its sting is taken away; and it shall introduce them to heaven. What have they to fear? Why should they be alarmed? Why afraid to die? Why unwilling to depart and to be with Christ?

24. Christians should regard themselves as devoted to the Saviour. They are his, and he has the highest conceivable claim on their time, their talents, their influence, and their wealth. To him, therefore, let us be devoted, and to him let us consecrate all that we have.

1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

This chapter is a continuation of the subject discussed in those which go before, and of the argument which closes the last chapter. The proper division would have been at 1 Corinthians 4:6. The design of the first six verses is to show the real estimate in which the apostles ought to be held as the ministers of religion. The remainder of the chapter 1 Corinthians 4:7-21 is occupied in setting forth further the claims of the apostles to their respect in contradistinction from the false teachers, and in reproving the spirit of vain boasting and confidence among the Corinthians. Paul 1 Corinthians 4:7 reproves their boasting by assuring them that they had no ground for it, since all that they possessed had been given to them by God. In 1 Corinthians 4:8, he reproves the same spirit with cutting irony, as if they claimed to be eminently wise - Still further to reprove them, he alludes to his own self-denials and sufferings, as contrasted with their ease, and safety, and enjoyment, 1 Corinthians 4:9-14. He then shows that his labors and self-denials in their behalf, laid the foundation for his speaking to them with authority as a father, 1 Corinthians 4:15-16. And to show them that he claimed that authority, over them as the founder of their church, and that he was not afraid to discharge his duty toward them, he informs them that he had sent Timothy to look into their affairs 1 Corinthians 4:17, and; that himself would soon follow; and assures them that he had power to come to them with the severity of Christian discipline, and that it depended on their conduct whether he should come with a rod, or with the spirit of meekness and love, 1 Corinthians 4:21.

Verse 1

Let a man - Let all; let this be the estimate formed of us by each one of you.

So account of us - So think of us, the apostles.

As the ministers of Christ - As the servants of Christ. Let them form a true estimate of us and our office - not as the head of a faction; not as designing to form parties, but as unitedly and entirely the servants of Christ; see 1 Corinthians 3:5.

And stewards - Stewards were those who presided over the affairs of a family, and made provision for it, etc.; see the note at Luke 16:1. It was an office of much responsibility; and the apostle by using the term here seems

to have designed to elevate those whom he seemed to have depreciated in 1 Corinthians 3:5.

Of the mysteries of God - Of the gospel; see the note at 1 Corinthians 2:7. The office of steward was to provide those things which were necessary for the use of a family. And so the office of a minister of the gospel, and a steward of its mysteries, is to dispense such instructions, guidance, counsel, etc., as may be requisite to build up the church of Christ; to make known those sublime truths which are contained in the gospel, but which had not been made known before the revelation of Jesus Christ, and which are, therefore, called "mysteries." It is implied in this verse:

(1) That the office of a minister is one that is subordinate to Christ - they are his servants.

(2) that those in the office should not attempt to be the head of sect or party in the church.

(3) that the office is honorable as that of a steward is; and,

(4) That Christians should endeavor to form and cherish just ideas of ministers; to give them their TRUE honor; but not to overrate their importance.

Verse 2

Moreover … - The fidelity required of stewards seems to be adverted to here, in order to show that the apostles acted from a higher principle than a desire to please man, or to be regarded as at the head of a party; and they ought so to esteem them as bound, like all stewards, to be faithful to the master whom they served.

It is required … - It is expected of them; it is the "main" or "leading" thing in their office. Eminently in that office fidelity is required as an indispensable and cardinal virtue. Fidelity to the master, faithfulness to his trust, as the virtue which by way of eminence is demanded there. In other offices other virtues may be particularly required. But here fidelity is demanded. This is required particularly because it is an office of trust; because the master's goods are at his disposal; because there is so much opportunity for the steward to appropriate those goods to his own use, so that his master cannot detect it. There is a strong similarity between the

office of a steward and that of a minister of the gospel. But it is not needful here to dwell on the resemblance. The idea of Paul seems to be:

(1) That a minister, like a steward, is devoted to his master‘s service, and should regard himself as such.

(2) that he should be faithful to that trust, and not abuse or violate it.

(3) that he should not be judged by his fellow-stewards, or fellow-servants, but that his main desire should be to meet with the approbation of his master - A minister should be faithful for obvious reasons. Because:

(a)He is appointed by Jesus Christ;

(b)Because he must answer to him;

(c)Because the honor of Christ, and the welfare of his kingdom is entrusted to him; and,

(d)Because of the importance of the matter committed to his care; and the importance of fidelity can be measured only by the consequences of his labors to those souls in an eternal heaven or an eternal hell.

Verse 3

But with me - In my estimate; in regard to myself. That is, I esteem it a matter of no concern. Since I am responsible as a steward to my master only, it is a matter of small concern what men think of me, provided I have his approbation. Paul was not insensible to the good opinion of people. He did not despise their favor or court limit contempt. But this was not the principal thing which he regarded; and we have here a noble elevation of purpose and of aim, which shows how direct was his design to serve and please the master who had appointed him to his office.

That I should be judged - The word rendered “judged” here properly denotes to examine the qualities of any person or thing; and sometimes, as here, to express the result of such examination or judgment. Here it means to “blame” or “condemn.”

Of you - By you. Dear as you are to me as a church and a people, yet my main desire is not to secure your esteem, or to avoid your censure, but to please my master, and secure his approbation.

Or of man‘s judgment - Of any man‘s judgment. What he had just said, that he esteemed it to be a matter not worth regarding, whatever might be

their opinion of him, might seem to look like arrogance, or appear as if he looked upon them with contempt. In order to avoid this construction of his language, he here says that it was not because he despised them, or regarded their opinion as of less value than that of others, but that he had the same feelings in regard to all people. Whatever might be their rank, character, talent, or learning, he regarded it as a matter of the least possible consequence what they thought of him. He was answerable not to them, but to his Master; and he could pursue an independent course whatever they might; think of his conduct. This is designed also evidently to reprove them for seeking so much the praise of each other. The Greek here is "of man's day," where "day" is used, as it often is in Hebrew, to denote the day of trial; the Day of Judgment; and then simply Judgment. Thus, the word יום yowm"day" is used in Job 24:1; Psalm 37:13; Joel 1:15; Joel 2:1; Malachi 4:1.

Yea, I judge not my own self - I do not attempt to pronounce a judgment on myself. I am conscious of imperfection, and of being biased by self-love in my own favor. I do not feel that my judgment of myself would be strictly impartial, and in all respects to be trusted. Favorable as may be my opinion, yet I am sensible that I may be biased. This is designed to soften what he had just said about their judging him, and to show further the little value which is to be put on the judgment which man may form "If I do not regard my own opinion of myself as of high value, I cannot be suspected of undervaluing you when I say that I do not much regard your opinion; and if I do not estimate highly my own opinion of myself, then it is not to be expected that I should set a high value on the opinions of others" - God only is the infallible judge; and as we and our fellow-men are liable to be biased in our opinions, from envy, ignorance, or self-love, we should regard the judgment of the world as of little value.

Verse 4

For I know nothing by myself - There is evidently here an ellipsis to be supplied, and it is well supplied by Grotius, Rosenmuller, Calvin, etc. "I am not conscious of evil, or unfaithfulness to myself; that is, in my ministerial life." It is well remarked by Calvin, that Paul does not here refer to the whole of his life, but only to his apostleship. And the sense is, "I am conscious of integrity in this office. My own mind does not condemn me of ambition or unfaithfulness. Others may accuse me, but I am not conscious of that which should condemn me, or render me unworthy of this office."

This appeal Paul elsewhere makes to the integrity and faithfulness of his ministry. So his speech before the elders of Ephesus at Miletus; Acts 20:18-19, Acts 20:26-27; compare 2 Corinthians 7:2; 2 Corinthians 12:17. It was the appeal which a holy and faithful man could make to the integrity of his public life, and such as every minister of the gospel ought to be able to make.

Yet am I not hereby justified - I am not justified because I am not conscious of a failure in my duty. I know that God the judge may see imperfections where I see none. I know that I may be deceived; and therefore, I do not pronounce a judgment on myself as if it were infallible and final. It is not by the consciousness of integrity and faithfulness that I expect to be saved; and it does not follow that I claim to be free from all personal blame. I know that partiality to ourselves will often teach us to overlook many faults that others may discern in us.

He that judgeth me is the Lord - By his judgment I am to abide; and by his judgment I am to receive my eternal sentence, and not by my own view of myself. He searcheth the hearts. He may see evil where I see none. I would not, therefore, be self-confident; but would, with humility, refer the whole case to him. Perhaps there is here a gentle and tender reproof of the Corinthians, who were so confident in their own integrity; and a gentle admonition to them to be more cautious, as it was possible that the Lord would detect faults in them where they perceived none.

Verse 5

Therefore - Inview of the danger of being deceived in your judgment, and the impossibility of certainly knowing the failings of the heart.

Judge nothing - Pass no decided opinion; see the note at Matthew 7:1. The apostle here takes occasion to inculcate on them an important lesson - one of the leading lessons of Christianity - not to pass a harsh opinion on the conduct of any man, since there are so many things that go to make up his character which we cannot know; and so many secret failings and motives which are all concealed from us.

Until the Lord come - The Lord Jesus at the Day of Judgment, when all secrets shall be revealed, and a true judgment shall be passed on all men.

Who both will bring to light; - See Romans 2:10.

The hidden things of darkness - The secret things of the heart which have been hidden as it were in darkness. The subsequent clause shows that this is the sense. He does not refer to the deeds of night, or those things

which were performed in the secret places of idolatry, but to the secret designs of the heart; and perhaps means gently to insinuate that there were many things about the character and feelings of his enemies which would not well bear the revelations of that Day.

The counsels of the hearts - The purposes, designs, and intentions of men. All their plans shall be made known on that Day. And it is a most fearful and alarming truth, that no man can conceal his purposes beyond the Day of Judgment.

And then shall every man have praise of God - The word here rendered "praise" ἔπαινος epainosdenotes in this place reward, or that which is due to him; the just sentence which ought to be pronounced on his character. It does not mean as our translation would imply, that every man will then receive the divine approbation which will not be true; but that every man shall receive what is due to his character, whether good or evil. So Bloomfield and Bretschneider explain it. Hesychius explains it by judgment (κρισις krisis). The word must be limited in its signification according to the subject or the connection. The passage teaches:

(1) That we should not be guilty of harsh judgment of others.

(2) the reason is, that we cannot know their feelings and motives.

(3) that all secret things will be brought forth in the great Day, and nothing be concealed beyond that time.

(4) that every man shall receive justice there. He shall be treated as he ought to be. The destiny of no one will be decided by the opinions of people; but the doom of all will be fixed by God. How important is it, therefore, that we be prepared for that Day; and how important to cherish such feelings, and form such plans, that they may be developed without involving us in shame and contempt!

Verse 6

And these things - The things which I have written respecting religious teachers 1 Corinthians 2:5-6, 1 Corinthians 2:12, and the impropriety of forming sects called after their names.

I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos - The word used here μετεσχημάτισα meteschēmatisadenotes, properly, to put on another

form or figure; "to change" (Philemon 3:21, "who shall change our vile body"); to "transform" (2 Corinthians 11:13, "transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ"); and then to apply in the way of a figure of speech. This may mean that neither Paul, Apollos, or Peter, were set up among the Corinthians as heads of parties, but that Paul here made use of their names to show how improper it would be to make them the head of a party, and hence, how improper it was to make any religious teacher the head of a party; or Paul may mean to say that he had mentioned himself and Apollos particularly, to show the impropriety of what had been done; since, if it was improper to make them heads of parties, it was much more so to make inferior teachers the leaders of factions.

Locke adopts the former interpretation. The latter is probably the true interpretation, for it is evident from 1 Corinthians 1:12-13, that there were parties in the church at Corinth that were called by the names of Paul, and Apollos, and Peter; and Paul's design here was to show the impropriety of this by mentioning himself, Apollos, and Peter, and thus by transferring the whole discussion from inferior teachers and leaders to show the impropriety of it. He might have argued against the impropriety of following other leaders. He might have mentioned their names. But this would have been invidious and indelicate. It would have excited their anger. He therefore says that he had transferred it all to himself and Apollos; and it implied that if it were improper to split themselves up into factions with them as leaders, much more was it improper to follow others; that is, it was improper to form parties at all in the church. "I mention this of ourselves; out of delicacy I forbear to mention the names of others" - And this was one of the instances in which Paul showed great tact in accomplishing his object, and avoiding offence.

For your sakes - To spare your feelings; or to show you in an inoffensive manner what I mean. And particularly by this that you may learn not to place an inordinate value on people.

That ye might learn in us - Or by our example and views.

Not to think … - Since you see the plan which we desire to take; since you see that we who have the rank of apostles, and have been so eminently favored with endowments and success, do not wish to form parties, that you may also have the same views in regard to others.

Above that which is written - Probably referring to what he had said in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, 1 Corinthians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 4:1. Or it may refer

to the general strain of Scripture requiring the children of God to be modest and humble.

That no one of you be puffed up - That no one be proud or exalted in self-estimation above his neighbor. That no one be disposed to look upon others with contempt, and to seek to depress and humble them. They should regard themselves as brethren, and as all on a level. The argument here is, that if Paul and Apollos did not suppose that they had a right to put themselves at the head of parties, much less had any of them a right to do so. The doctrine is:

(1)That parties are improper in the church;

(2)That Christians should regard themselves as on a level; and,

(3)That no one Christian should regard others as beneath him, or as the object of contempt.

Verse 7

For who maketh … - This verse contains a reason for what Paul had just said; and the reason is, that all that any of them possessed had been derived from God, and no endowments whatever, which they had, could be laid as the foundation for self-congratulation and boasting. The apostle here doubtless has in his eye the teachers in the church of Corinth, and intends to show them that there was no occasion of pride or to assume pre-eminence. As all that they possessed had been given of God, it could not be the occasion of boasting or self-confidence.

To differ from another - Who has separateD you from another; or who has made you superior to others. This may refer to everything in which one was superior to others, or distinguished from them. The apostle doubtless has reference to those attainments in piety, talents, or knowledge by which one teacher was more eminent than others. But the same question may be applied to native endowments of mind; to opportunities of education; to the arrangements by which one rises in the world; to health; to property; to piety; to eminence and usefulness in the church. It is God who makes one, in any of these respects, to differ from others; and it is especially true in regard to personal piety. Had not God interfered and made a difference, all would have remained alike under sin. The race would have together rejected his mercy; and it is only by his distinguishing love that any are brought to believe and be saved.

And what hast thou - Either talent, piety, of learning.

That thou didst not receive - From God. By whatever means you have obtained it, it has been the gift of God.

Why dost thou glory … - Why dost thou boast as if it were the result of your own toil, skill or endeavor. This is not designed to discourage human exertion; but to discourage a spirit of vain-glory and boasting. A man who makes the most painful and faithful effort to obtain anything good, will, if successful, trace his success to God. He will still feel that it is God who gave him the disposition, the time, the strength, the success. And he will be grateful that he was enabled to make the effort; not vain, or proud, or boastful, because that he was successful. This passage states a general doctrine, that the reason why one man differs from another is to be traced to God; and that this fact should repress all boasting and glorying, and produce true humility in the minds of Christians. It may be observed, however, that it is as true of intellectual rank, of health, of wealth, of food, of raiment, of liberty, of peace, as it is of religion, that all come from God; and as this fact which is so obvious and well known, does not repress the exertions of people to preserve their health and to obtain property, so it should not repress their exertions to obtain salvation. God governs the world on the same good principles everywhere; and the fact that he is the source of all blessings, should not operate to discourage, but should prompt to human effort. The hope of his aid and blessing is the only ground of encouragement in any undertaking.

Verse 8

Now ye are full - It is generally agreed that this is spoken in irony, and that it is an indignant sarcasm uttered against the false and self-confident teachers in Corinth. The design is to contrast them with the apostles; to show how self-confident and vain the false teachers were, and how laborious and self-denying the apostles were; and to show to them how little claim they had to authority in the church, and the real claim which the apostles had from their self-denials and labors. The whole passage is an instance of most pungent and cutting sarcasm, and shows that there may be occasions when irony may be proper, though it should be rare. An instance of cutting irony occurs also in regard to the priests of Baal, in 1 Kings 18:27. The word translated "ye are full" (κεκορεσμένοι kekoresmenoi) occurs only here, and in Acts 27:38, "And when they had eaten enough." It is usually applied to a feast, and denotes those who are satiated or satisfied.

So here it means, “You think‘ you have enough. You are satisfied with your conviction of your own knowledge, and do not feel your need of anything more.”

Ye are rich - This is presenting the same idea in a different form. “You esteem yourselves to be rich in spiritual gifts, and graces, so that you do not feel the necessity of any more.”

Ye have reigned as kings - This is simply carrying forward the idea before stated; but in the form of a climax. The first metaphor is taken from persons “filled with food;” the second from those who are so rich that they do not feel their lack of more; the third from those who are raised to a throne, the highest elevation, where there was nothing further to be reached or desired. And the phrase means, that they had been fully satisfied with their condition and attainments, with their knowledge and power, that they lived like rich men and princes - revelling, as it were, on spiritual enjoyments, and disdaining all foreign influence, and instruction, and control.

Without us - Without our counsel and instruction. You have taken the whole management of matters on yourselves without any regard to our advice or authority. You did not feel your need of our aid; and you did not regard our authority. You supposed you could get along as well without us as with us.

And I would to God ye did reign - Many interpreters have understood this as if Paul had really expressed a wish that they were literal princes, that they might afford protection to him in his persecution and troubles. Thus, Grotius, Whitby, Locke, Rosemuller, and Doddridge. But the more probable interpretation is, that Paul here drops the irony, and addresses them in a sober, earnest manner. It is the expression of a wish that they were as truly happy and blessed as they thought themselves to be. “I wish that you were so abundant in all spiritual improvements; I wish that you had made such advances that you could be represented as full, and as rich, and as princes, needing nothing, that when I came I might have nothing to do but to partake of your joy.” So Calvin, Lightfoot, Bloomfield. It implies:

(1)A wish that they were truly happy and blessed;

(2)A doubt implied whether they were then so; and,

(3)A desire on the part of Paul to partake of their real and true joy, instead of being compelled to come to them with the language of rebuke

and admonition; see 1 Corinthians 4:19, 1 Corinthians 4:21.

Verse 9

For I think - It seems to me. Grotius thinks that this is to be taken ironically, as if he had said, "It seems then that God has designed that we, the apostles, should be subject to contempt and suffering; and be made poor and persecuted, while you are admitted to high honors and privileges." But probably this is to be taken as a serious declaration of Paul, designed to show their actual condition and trials, while others were permitted to live in enjoyment. Whatever might be their condition, Paul says that the condition of himself and his fellow-laborers was one of much contempt and suffering; and the inference seems to be, that they ought to doubt whether they were in a right state, or had any occasion for their self-congratulation, since they so little resembled those whom God had set forth.

Hath set forth - Has "showed" us; or placed us in public view.

The apostles last - Margin, or, "the last apostles" τοὺς ἀποστόλους ἐσχάτους tous apostolous eschatousGrotius supposes that this means in the lowest condition; the humblest state; a condition like that of beasts. So Tertullian renders it. And this interpretation is the correct one if the passage be ironical. But Paul may mean to refer to the custom of bringing forth those in the amphitheater at the conclusion of the spectacles who were to fight with other men, and who had no chance of escape. These inhuman games abounded everywhere; and an allusion to them would be well understood, and is indeed often made by Paul; compare 1 Corinthians 9:26; 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7; see Seneca Epis. chapter 7. This interpretation receives support from the words which are used here, "God hath exhibited," "spectacle," or "theater," which are all applicable to such an exhibition. Calvin, Locke, and others, however, suppose that Paul refers to the fact that he was the last of the apostles; but this interpretation does not suit the connection of the passage.

As it were - (ὡς hōs). Intimating the certainty of death.

Appointed unto death - ἐπιθανατίους epithanatiousDevoted to death. The word occurs no where else in the New Testament. It denotes the certainty of death, or the fact of being destined to death; and implies that such were their continued conflicts, trials, persecutions, that it was morally certain that they would terminate in their death, and only when they died, as the last gladiators on the stage were destined to contend until they should

die. This is a very strong expression; and denotes the continuance, the constancy, and the intensity of their sufferings in the cause of Christ.

We are made a spectacle - Margin, "theater" θέατρον theatronThe theater, or amphitheater of the ancients was composed of an arena, or level floor, on which the combatants fought, and which was surrounded by circular seats rising above one another to a great height, and capable of containing many thousands of spectators. Paul represents himself as on this arena or stage, contending with foes, and destined to death. Around him and above him are an immense host of human beings and angels, looking on at the conflict, and awaiting the issue. He is not alone or unobserved. He is made public; and the universe gazes on the struggle. Angels and human beings denote the universe, as gazing upon the conflicts and struggles of the apostles. It is a vain inquiry here, whether he means good or bad angels. The expression means that he was public in his trials, and that this was exhibited to the universe. The whole verse is designed to convey the idea that God had, for wise purposes, appointed them in the sight of the universe, to pains, and trials, and persecutions, and poverty, and want, which would terminate only in their death; see Hebrews 12:1, etc. What these trials were he specifies in the following verses.

Verse 10

We are fools - This is evidently ironical. "We are doubtless foolish people, but ye are wise in Christ. We, Paul, Apollos, and Barnabas, have no claims to the character of wise men - we are to be regarded as fools, unworthy of confidence, and unfit to instruct; but you are full of wisdom."

For Christ's sake - διὰ Χριστὸν dia ChristonOn account of Christ; or in reference to his cause, or in regard to the doctrines of the Christian religion.

But ye are wise in Christ - The phrase "in Christ," does not differ in signification materially from the one above; "for Christ's sake." This is wholly ironical, and is exceedingly pungent. "You, Corinthians, boast of your wisdom and prudence. You are to be esteemed very wise. You are unwilling to submit to be esteemed fools. You are proud of your attainments. We, in the meantime, who are apostles, and who have founded your church, are to be regarded as fools, and as unworthy of public confidence and esteem." The whole design of this irony is to show the folly of their boasted wisdom. That they only should be wise and prudent, and the apostles fools, was in the highest degree absurd; and this absurdity the apostle puts in a strong light by his irony.

We are weak - We are timid and feeble, but you are daring, bold and fearless. This is irony. The very reverse was probably true. Paul was bold, daring, fearless in declaring the truth, whatever opposition it might encounter; and probably many of them were timid and time-serving, and endeavoring to avoid persecution, and to accommodate themselves to the prejudices and opinions of those who were wise in their own sight; the prejudices and opinions of the world.

Ye are honourable - Deserving of honor and obtaining it. Still ironical. You are to be esteemed as worthy of praise.

We are despised - ἄτιμοι atimoiNot only actually contemned, but worthy to be so. This was irony also. And the design was to show them how foolish was their self-confidence and self-flattery, and their attempt to exalt themselves.

Verse 11

Even unto this present hour - Paul here drops the irony, and begins a serious recapitulation of his actual sufferings and trials. The phrase used here "unto this present hour" denotes that these things had been incessant through all their ministry. They were not merely at the commencement of their work, but they had continued and attended them everywhere. And even then they were experiencing the same thing. These privations and trials were still continued, and were to be regarded as a part of the apostolic condition.

We both hunger and thirst - The apostles, like their master, were poor, and in traveling about from place to place, it often happened that they scarcely found entertainment of the plainest kind, or had money to purchase it. It is no dishonor to be poor, and especially if that poverty is produced by doing good to others. Paul might have been rich, but he chose to be poor for the sake of the gospel. To enjoy the luxury of doing good to others, we ought to be willing to be hungry and thirsty, and to be deprived of our ordinary enjoyments.

And are naked - In traveling; our clothes become old and worn out, and we have no friends to replace them, and no money to purchase new. It is no discredit to be clad in mean raiment, if that is produced by self-denying toils in behalf of others. There is no, honor in gorgeous apparel; but there is real honor in voluntary poverty and want, when produced in the cause of benevolence. Paul was not ashamed to travel, to preach, and to appear before princes and kings, in a soiled and worn-out garment, for it was worn

out in the service of his Master, and Divine Providence had arranged the circumstances of his life. But how many a minister now would he ashamed to appear in such clothing! How many professed Christians are ashamed to go to the house of God because they cannot dress well, or be in the fashion, or outshine their neighbors! If an apostle was willing to be meanly clad in delivering the message of God, then assuredly we should be willing to preach, or to worship him in such clothing as he provides. We may add here, what a sublime spectacle was here; and what a glorious triumph of the truth. Here was Paul with an impediment in his speech; with a personage small and mean rather than graceful; and in a mean and tattered dress; and often in chains, yet delivering truth before which kings trembled, and which produced everywhere a deep impression on the human mind. Such was the power of the gospel then! And such triumph did the truth then have over men. See Doddridge.

And are buffeted - Struck with the hand; see the note at Matthew 26:67. Probably it is used here to denote harsh and injurious treatment in general; compare 2 Corinthians 12:7.

And have no certain dwelling-place - No fixed or permanent home. They wandered to distant lands; threw themselves on the hospitality of strangers, and even of the enemies of the gospel; when driven from one place they went to another; and thus they led a wandering, uncertain life, amidst strangers and foes. They who know what are the comforts of home; who are surrounded by beloved families; who have a peaceful and happy fireside; and who enjoy the blessings of domestic tranquility, may be able to appreciate the trials to which the apostles were subjected. All this was for the sake of the gospel; all to purchase the blessings which we so richly enjoy.

Verse 12

And labour … - This Paul often did. See the note at Acts 18:3; compare Acts 20:34; 1 Thessalonians 2:9. 2 Thessalonians 3:8.

Being reviled - That they were often reviled or reproached, their history everywhere shows. See the Acts of the Apostles. They were reviled or ridiculed as Jews by the Gentiles; and jeered by all as "Nazarenes," and as deluded followers of Jesus; as the victims of a foolish superstition and enthusiasm.

We bless - We return good for evil. In this they followed the explicit direction of the Saviour; see the note at Matthew 5:44. The main idea in

these passages is, that they were reviled, were persecuted, etc. The other clauses, "we bless," "we suffer it," etc. seem to be thrown in "by the way" to show how they bore this ill treatment. As if he had said "we are reviled; and what is more, we bear it patiently, and return good for evil." At the same time, that he was recounting his trials, he was, therefore, incidentally instructing them in the nature of the gospel, and showing how their sufferings were to be borne; and how to illustrate the excellency of the Christian doctrine.

Being persecuted - See the note at Matthew 5:11.

We suffer it - We sustain it; we do not revenge it; we abstain from resenting or resisting it.

Verse 13

Being defamed - Greek, Blasphemed, that is, spoken of and to, in a harsh, abusive, and reproachful manner. The original and proper meaning of the word is to speak in a reproachful manner of anyone, whether of God or man. It is usually applied to God, but it may also be used of people.

We entreat - Either God in their behalf, praying him to forgive them, or we entreat them to turn from their sins, and become converted to God. Probably the latter is the sense. They besought them to examine more candidly their claims instead of reviling them; and to save their souls by embracing the gospel instead of destroying them by rejecting it with contempt and scorn.

We are made - We became; we are so regarded or esteemed. The word here does not imply that there was any positive agency in making them such, but simply that they were in fact so regarded.

As the filth of the earth - It would not be possible to employ stronger expressions to denote the contempt and scorn with which they were everywhere regarded. The word "filth" περικαθάρματα perikatharmataoccurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly denotes filth, or that which is collected by sweeping a house, or that which is collected and cast away by purifying or cleansing anything; hence, any vile, worthless, and contemptible object. Among the Greeks the word was used to denote the victims which were offered to expiate crimes, and particularly men of ignoble rank, and of a worthless and wicked character, who were kept to be offered to the gods in a time of pestilence, to appease their anger, and to purify the nation. Bretschneider and Schleusner. Hence, it was applied by them to people of the most vile, abject, and worthless

character. But it is not certain that Paul had any reference to that sense of the word. The whole force of the expression may be met by the supposition that he uses it in the sense of that filth or dirt which is collected by the process of cleansing or scouring anything, as being vile, contemptible, worthless. So the apostles were regarded. And by the use of the word "world" here, he meant to say that they were regarded as the most vile and worthless men which the whole world could furnish; not only the refuse of Judea, but of all the nations of the earth. As if he had said "more vile and worthless people could not be found on the face of the earth."

And are the off-scouring of all things - This word (περίψημα peripsēma) occurs no where else in the New Testament. It does not differ materially from the word rendered "filth." It denotes that which is rubbed off by scouring or cleaning anything; and hence, anything vile or worthless; or a vile and worthless man. This term was also applied to vile and worthless people who were sacrificed or thrown into the sea as an expiatory offering, as it were to purify the people. Suidas remarks that; they said to such a man, "be then our περίψημα peripsēmaour redemption, and then flung him into the sea as a sacrifice to Neptune. See Whitby, Calvin, Doddridge.

Unto this day - Continually. We have been constantly so regarded. See 1 Corinthians 4:11.

Verse 14

To shame you - It is not my design to put you to shame by showing you how little you suffer in comparison with us. This is not our design, though it may have this effect. I have no wish to make you ashamed, to appear to triumph over you or merely to taunt you. My design is higher and nobler than this.

But as my beloved sons - As my dear children. I speak as a father to his children, and I say these things for your good. No father would desire to make his children ashamed. In his counsels, entreaties, and admonitions, he would have a higher object than that.

I warn you - I do not say these things in a harsh manner, with a severe spirit of rebuke; but in order to admonish you, to suggest counsel, to instil wisdom into the mind. I say these things not to make, you blush, but with the hope that they may be the means of your reformation, and of a more holy life. No man, no minister, ought to reprove another merely to overwhelm him with shame, but the object should always be to make a

brother better; and the admonition should be so administered as to have this end, not sourly or morosely, but in a kind, tender, and affectionate manner.

Verse 15

For though ye have ten thousand instructors - Though you may have or though you should have. It matters not how many you have, yet it is still true that I only sustain the relation to you of spiritual father, and whatever respect it is proper for you to have toward them, yet there is a special right which I have to admonish you, and a special deference which is due to me, from my early labors among you, and from the fact that you are my spiritual children.

Instructers - Greek: pedagogues; or those who conducted children to school, and who superintended their conduct out of school hours. Hence, those who had the care of children, or teachers (in general). It is then applied to instructors of any kind.

In Christ - In the Christian system or doctrine. The authority which Paul claims here, is that which a father has in preference to such an instructor.

Not many fathers - Spiritual fathers. That is, you have but one. You are to remember that however many teachers you have, yet that I alone am your spiritual father.

In Christ Jesus - By the aid and authority of Christ. I have begotten you by preaching his gospel and by his assistance.

I have begotten you - I was the instrument of your conversion.

Through the gospel - By means of the gospel; by preaching it to you, that is, by the truth.

Verse 16

Wherefore - Since I am your spiritual father.

Be ye followers of me - Imitate me; copy my example; listen to my admonitions. Probably Paul had particularly in his eye their tendency to form parties; and here admonishes them that he had no disposition to form sects, and entreats them in this to imitate his example. A minister should always so live as that he can, without pride or ostentation, point to his own example; and entreat his people to imitate him. He should have such a confidence in his own integrity; he should lead such a blameless life; and "he should be assured that his people have so much evidence of his integrity," that he can point them to his own example, and entreat them to live like himself. And to do this, he should live a life of piety, and should

furnish such evidence of a pure conversation, that his people may have reason to regard him as a holy man.

Verse 17

For this cause - In order to remind you of my doctrines and my manner of life. Since I am hindered from coming myself, I have sent a fellow laborer as my messenger, well acquainted with my views and feelings, that he might do what I would do if I were present.

Have I sent unto you Timotheus - Timothy, the companion and fellow laborer of Paul. This was probably when Paul was at Ephesus. He sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia, probably with instruction to go to Corinth if convenient. Yet it was not quite certain that Timothy would come to them, for in 1 Corinthians 16:10, he expresses a doubt whether he would. Paul was probably deeply engaged in Asia, and did not think it proper then for him to leave his field of labor. He probably supposed also, that Timothy, as his ambassador, would be able to settle the difficulties in Corinth as well as if he were himself present.

My beloved son - In the gospel. See Acts 16:1-3; 1 Timothy 1:2. He supposed, therefore, that they would listen to him with great respect.

And faithful in the Lord - A true Christian and a faithful servant of Christ; and who is, therefore, worthy of your confidence.

Of my ways - My doctrine, my teaching, my mode of life.

Which be in Christ - That is, my Christian life; my ministry; or my conduct as a Christian and a follower of the Saviour.

As I teach everywhere … - This was designed probably to show them that he taught them no new or special doctrines; he wished them simply to conform to the common rules of the churches, and to be like their Christian brethren everywhere. The Christian church is founded every where on the same doctrines; is bound to obey the same laws; and is suited to produce and cherish the same spirit. The same spirit that was required in Ephesus or Antioch, was required at Corinth; the same spirit that was required at Corinth, at Ephesus, or at Antioch, is required now.

Verse 18

Now some are puffed up - They are puffed up with a vain confidence; they say that I would not dare to come; that I would be afraid to appear among them, to administer discipline, to rebuke them, or to supersede their authority. Probably he had been detained by the demand on his services in other places, and by various providential hinderances from going there,

until they supposed that he stayed away from fear. And possibly he might apprehend that they would think he had sent Timothy because he was afraid to come himself. Their conduct was an instance of the haughtiness and arrogance which people will assume when they suppose they are in no danger of reproof or punishment.

Verse 19

But I will come - It is from no fear of them that I am kept away; and to convince them of this I will come to them speedily.

If the Lord will - If the Lord permit; if by his providence he allows me to go. Paul regarded the entering on a journey as dependent on the will of God; and felt that God had all in his hand. No purpose should be formed without a reference to his will; no plan without feeling that he can easily frustrate it and disappoint us; see James 4:15.

And will know - I will examine; I will put to the test; I will fully understand,

Not the speech … - Not their vain and empty boasting; not their confident assertions, and their self-complacent views.

But the power - Their real power. I will put their power to the proof: I will see whether they are able to effect what they affirm; whether they have more real power than I have. I will enter fully into the work of discipline, and will ascertain whether they have such authority in the church, such a power of party and of combination, that they can resist me, and oppose my administration of the discipline which the church needs. "A passage," says Bloomfield, "which cannot, in nerve and rigor, or dignity and composed confidence, be easily paralleled, even in Demosthenes himself."

Verse 20

For the kingdom of God - The reign of God in the church (see the note at Matthew 3:2); meaning here, probably, the power or authority which was to be exercised in the government and discipline of the church. Or it may refer to the manner in which the church had been established. "It has not been set up by empty boasting; by pompous pretensions; by confident assertions. Such empty boasts would do little in the great work of founding, governing, and preserving the church and unless people have some higher powers than this they are not qualified to be religious teachers and guides."

But in power -

(1) In the miraculous power by which the church was established - the power of the Saviour and of the apostles in working miracles.

(2) in the power of the Holy Spirit in the gift of tongues, and in his influence on the heart in converting people; see the note at 1 Corinthians 1:18.

(3) in the continual power which is needful to protect, defend, and govern the church. Unless teachers showed that they had such power, they were not qualified for their office.

Verse 21

What will ye - It depends on yourselves how I shall come. If you lay aside your contentions and strifes; if you administer discipline as you should; if you give yourselves heartily and entirely to the work of the Lord, I shall come, not to reprove or to punish, but as a father and a friend. But if you do not heed my exhortations or the labors of Timothy; if you still continue your contentions, and do not remove the occasions of offence, I shall come with severity and the language of rebuke.

With a rod - To correct and punish.

In the spirit of meekness - Comforting and commending instead of chastising. Paul intimates that this depended on themselves. They had the power, and it was their duty to administer discipline; but if they would not do it, the task would devolve on him as the founder and father of the church, and as entrusted with power by the Lord Jesus to administer the severity of Christian discipline, or to punish those who offended by bodily suffering; see 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Corinthians 11:30. See also the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1 ff), and of Elymas the sorcerer. Acts 13:10-11.

Remarks On 1 Corinthians 4:1. We should regard ministers as the servants of Jesus Christ, and honor them for their Master‘s sake; and esteem them also in proportion to their fidelity. They are entitled to respect as the ambassadors of the Son of God; but that respect also should be in proportion to their resemblance of him and their faithfulness in their work. They who love the ministers of Christ, who are like him, and who are faithful, love the Master that sent them; they who hate and despise them despise him; see Matthew 10:40-42.

2. Ministers should be faithful; 1 Corinthians 4:2. They are the stewards of Christ. They are appointed by him. They are responsible to him. They

have a most important trust - more important than any other stewards, and they should live in such a manner as to receive the approbation of their master.

3. It is of little consequence what the world thinks of us; 1 Corinthians 4:3. A good name is on many accounts desirable; but it should not be the leading consideration; nor should we do anything merely to obtain it. Desirable as is a fair reputation, yet the opinion of the world is not to be too highly valued; because -

(1)It often misjudges;

(2)It is prejudiced for or against us;

(3)It is not to decide our final destiny;

(4) To desire that simply, is a selfish and base passion.

4. The esteem even of friends is not to be the leading object of life; 1 Corinthians 4:2. This is valuable, but not so valuable as the approbation of God. Friends are partial, and even where they do not approve our course, if we are conscientious, we should be willing to bear with their disapprobation. A good conscience is everything. The approbation even of friends cannot help us on the Day of Judgment.

5. We should distrust ourselves; 1 Corinthians 4:3-4. We should not pronounce too confidently on our motives or our conduct. We may be deceived. There may be much even in our own motives that may elude our most careful inquiry. This should teach us humility, self-distrust, and charity. Knowing our own liableness to misjudge ourselves, we should look with kindness on the faults and failings of others.

6. We see here the nature of the future Judgment; 1 Corinthians 4:5;

(1) The hidden things of darkness will be brought out - all the secret crimes, and plans, and purposes of people will be developed. All that has been done in secret, in darkness, in the night, in palaces and in prisons, will be developed. What a development will take place in the great Day when the secret crimes of a world shall be revealed; and when all that has now escaped the notice of people, and the punishment of courts, shall be brought out!

(2) every person‘s secret thoughts shall be revealed. There will be no concealment then. All that we have devised or desired; all the thoughts that we have forgotten, shall there be brought out to noon-day. How will the sinner tremble when all his thoughts are made known! Suppose, unknown to him, some person had been writing down all that a man has thought for a day, a week, or a year, and should begin to read it to him. Who is there that would not hang his head with shame, and tremble at such a record? Yet at the Day of Judgment the thoughts of “the whole life” will be revealed.

(3) every man shall be judged as he ought to be. God is impartial. The man that ought to be saved will be; the man that ought not will not be. How solemn will be the “impartial trial of the world!” Who can think of it but with alarm!

7. We have no occasion for pride or vain-boasting; 1 Corinthians 4:7. All that we have of beauty, health, wealth, honor, grace, has been given to us by God. For what he has given us we should be grateful; but it should not excite pride. It is, indeed, valuable because God gives it, and we should remember his mercies, but we should not boast. We have nothing to boast of. Had we our deserts, we should be driven away in his wrath, and made wretched. That any are out of hell is matter of thankfulness; that one possesses more than another proves that God is a sovereign, and not that we are more worthy than another, or that there is by nature any ground of preference which one has over another.

8. Irony and sarcasm are sometimes lawful and proper; 1 Corinthians 4:8-10. But it is not often as safe as it was in the hands of the apostle Paul. Few people can regulate the talent properly; few should allow themselves to indulge in it. It is rarely employed in the Bible; and it is rarely employed elsewhere where it does not do injury. The cause of truth can be usually sustained by sound argument; and that which cannot be thus defended is not worth defense. Deep wounds are often made by the severity of wit and irony; and an indulgence in this usually prevents a man from having a single friend.

9. We see from this chapter what religion has cost; 1 Corinthians 4:9-13. Paul states the sufferings that he and the other apostles endured in order to establish it. They were despised, and persecuted, and poor, and regarded as the refuse of the world. The Christian religion was founded on the blood of its author, and has been reared amidst the sighs and tears of its friends. All its early advocates were subjected to persecution and trial; and to engage in this work involved the certainty of being a martyr. We enjoy not a blessing which has not thus been purchased; and which has not come to us through the self-denials and toils of the best people that the earth has known. Persecution raged around all the early friends of the church; and it rose and spread while the fire of martyrdom spread, and while its friends were everywhere cast out as evil, and called to bleed in its defense.

10. We have here an illustrious instance of the manner in which reproach, and contempt, and scorn should be borne; 1 Corinthians 4:12-13. The apostles imitated the example of their Master and followed his precepts. They prayed for their enemies, persecutors, and slanderers. There is nothing but religion that can produce this spirit; and this can do it always. The Saviour evinced it; his apostles evinced it; and all should evince it, who profess to be its friends - We may remark:

(1) This is not produced by nature. It is the work ot grace alone.

(2) it is the very spirit and genius of Christianity to produce it.

(3) nothing but religion will enable a man to bear it, and will produce this temper and spirit.

(4) we have an instance here of what all Christians should evince. All should be in this like the apostles. All should be like the Saviour himself.

11. We have an argument here for the truth of the Christian religion. The argument is founded on the fact that the apostles were willing to suffer so much in order to establish it - They professed to have been eye-witnesses of what they affirmed. They had nothing to gain by spreading it if it was not true. They exposed themselves to persecution on this account, and became

willing to die rather than deny its truth - Take, for example, the case of the apostle Paul:

(1) He had every prospect of honor and of wealth in his own country. He had been liberally educated, and had the confidence of his countrymen. He might have risen to the highest station of trust or influence. He had talents which would have raised him to distinction anywhere.

(2) he could not have been mistaken in regard to the events connected with his conversion; Acts 9. The scene, the voice, the light, the blindness, were all things which could not have been counterfeited. They were open and public. They did not occur "in a corner."

(3) he had no earthly motive to change his course. Christianity was despised when he embraced it; its friends were few and poor; and it had no prospect of spreading through the world. It conferred no wealth; bestowed no diadem; imparted no honors; gave no ease; conducted to no friendship of the great and the mighty. It subjected its friends to persecution, and tears, and trials, and death. What should induce such a man to make such a change? Why should Paul have embraced this, but from a conviction of its truth? How could he be convinced of that truth except by some argument that should be so strong as to overcome his hatred to it, make him willing to renounce all his prospects for it; to encounter all that the world could heap upon him, and even death itself, rather than deny it? But such a religion had a higher than any earthly origin, and must have been from God.

12. We may expect to suffer reproach. It has been the common lot of all, from the time of the Master himself to the present. Jesus was reproached; the apostles were reproached; the martyrs were reproached, and we are not to be surprised that ministers and Christians are called to similar trials now. It is enough "for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord."

1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

This chapter is entirely occupied with a notice of an offence which existed in the church at Corinth and with a statement of the measures which the apostle expected them to pursue in regard to it. Of the existence of this offence he had been informed, probably by "those of the house of Chloe," 1 Corinthians 1:11, and there is reason to suppose that they had not even alluded to it in the letter which they had sent to him asking advice; see 1 Corinthians 7:1; compare the Introduction. The apostle 1 Corinthians 5:1 reproves them for tolerating a species of licentiousness which was not tolerated even by the pagans; he reproves them 1 Corinthians 5:2 for being puffed up with pride even while this scandal existed in their church; he ordered them immediately to purify the church by removing the incestuous person 1 Corinthians 5:4-5; and exhorted them to preserve themselves from the influence which a single corrupt person might have, operating like leaven in a mass; 1 Corinthians 5:6-7. Then, lest they should mistake his meaning, and suppose that by commanding them not to keep company with licentious persons 1 Corinthians 5:9, he meant to say, that they should withdraw from all contact with the pagans who were known to be idolaters and corrupt, he says that that former command was not designed to forbid all contact with them, 1 Corinthians 5:9-12; but that he meant his injunction now to extend particularly to such as were professed members of the church; that they were not to cut off all contact with society at large because it was corrupt; that if any person professed to be a Christian and yet was guilty of such practices they were to disown him 1 Corinthians 5:11; that it was not his province, nor did he assume it, to judge the pagan world which was without the church 1 Corinthians 5:12; but that this was entirely consistent with the view that he had a right to exercise discipline within the church, on such as professed to be Christians; and that therefore, they were bound to put away that wicked person.

Verse 1

It is reported - Greek It is heard. There is a rumor. That rumor had been brought to Paul, probably by the members of the family of Chloe, 1 Corinthians 1:11.

Commonly - Ὅλως HolōsEverywhere. It is a matter of common fame. It is so public that it cannot be concealed; and so certain that it cannot be

denied. This was all offence, he informs us, which even the pagan would not justify or tolerate; and, therefore, the report had spread not only in the churches, but even among the pagan, to the great scandal of religion - When a report obtains such a circulation, it is certainly time to investigate it, and to correct the evil.

That there is fornication - See the note at Acts 15:20. The word is here used to denote incest, because the apostle immediately explains the nature of the offence.

And such fornication … - An offence that is not tolerated or known among the pagan. This greatly aggravated the offence, that in a Christian church a crime should be tolerated among its members which even gross pagans would regard with abhorrence. That this offence was regarded with abhorrence by even the pagans has been abundantly proved by quotations from classic writers. See Wetstein, Bloomfield, and Whitby. Cicero says of the offence, expressly, that "it was an incredible and unheard of crime." Pro Cluen. 5. 6 - When Paul says that it was not "so much as named among the Gentiles," he doubtless uses the word (ὀνομάζεται onomazetai) in the sense of "named with approbation, tolerated," or "allowed." The crime was known in a few instances, but chiefly of those who were princes and rulers; but it was no where regarded with approbation, but was always treated as abominable wickedness. All that the connection requires us to understand by the word "named" here is, that it was not tolerated or allowed; it was treated with abhorrence, and it was therefore, more scandalous that it was allowed in a Christian church - Whitby supposes that this offence that was tolerated in the church at Corinth gave rise to the scandals that were circulated among the pagan respecting the early Christians, that they allowed of licentious contact among the members of their churches. This reproach was circulated extensively among the pagan, and the primitive Christians were at much pains to refute it.

That one should have - Probably as his wife; or it may mean simply that he had criminal contact with her. Perhaps some man had parted with his wife, on some account, and his son had married her, or maintained her for criminal contact. It is evident from 2 Corinthians 7:12, that the person who had suffered the wrong, as well as he who had done it, was still alive - Whether this was marriage or concubinage, has been disputed by commentators, and it is not possible, perhaps, to determine. See the subject discussed in Bloomfield.

Verse 2

And ye are puffed up - See the note at 1 Corinthians 4:18. You are filled with pride, and with a vain conceit of your own wisdom and purity, notwithstanding the existence of this enormous wickedness in your church. This does not mean that they were puffed up, or proud on account of the existence of this wickedness, but they were filled with pride notwithstanding, or in spite of it. They ought to have been a humbled people. They should have mourned; and should have given their first attention to the removal of the evil. But instead of this, they had given indulgence to proud feeling, and had become elated with a vain confidence in their spiritual purity. People are always elated and proud when they have the least occasion for it.

And have not rather mourned … - Have not rather been so afflicted and troubled as to take the proper means for removing the offence. The word "mourn" here is taken in that large sense. Ye have not been "so much" afflicted - so troubled with the existence of this wickedness, as to take the proper measures to remove the offender - Acts of discipline in the church should always commence with mourning that there is occasion for it. It should not be anger, or pride, or revenge, or party feeling, which prompt to it. It should be deep grief that there is occasion for it; and tender compassion for the offender.

Might be taken away - By excommunication. He should not, while he continues in this state, be allowed to remain in your communion.

Verse 3

For I verily - But I, whatever it may cost me; however you may esteem my interference; and whatever personal ill-will may be the result toward me, have adjudged this case to be so flagrant as to demand the exercise of discipline, and since the church to whom it belongs have neglected it, I use the authority of an apostle, and of a spiritual father, in directing it to take place. This was not a formal sentence of excommunication; but it was the declared opinion of an apostle that such a sentence should be passed, and an injunction on the church to exercise this act of discipline.

As absent in body - Since I am not personally present with you, I express my opinion in this manner. I am absent in body from you, and cannot, therefore, take those steps in regard to it which I could were I present.

But present in spirit - My heart is with you; my feelings are with you; I have a deep and tender interest in the case; and I judge as if I were personally present. Many suppose that Paul by this refers to a power which was given to the apostles, though at a distance, to discern the real circumstances of a case by the gift of the Spirit. Compare Colossians 2:5; 2 Kings 5:26; 2 Kings 6:12. (Whitby, Doddridge, etc.) But the phrase does not demand this interpretation. Paul meant, probably, that though he was absent, yet his mind and attention had been given to this subject; he felt as deeply as though he were present, and would act in the same way. He had, in some way, been fully apprized of all the circumstances of the case, and he felt it to be his duty to express his views on the subject.

Have judged already - Margin, "Determined" κέκρικα kekrikaI have made up my mind; have decided, and do decide. That is, he had determined what ought to be done in the case. It was a case in which the course which ought to be pursued was plain, and on this point his mind was settled. What that course should be he states immediately.

As though I were present - As though I had a personal knowledge of the whole affair, and were with you to advise - We may be certain that Paul had the fullest information as to this case; and that the circumstances were well known. Indeed, it was a case about the facts of which there could be no doubt. They were everywhere known 1 Corinthians 5:1, and there was no need, therefore, to attempt to establish them by formal proof.

Verse 4

In the name … - By the authority; or in the behalf; or acting by his commission or power. 2 Corinthians 2:10. See the note at Acts 3:6. This does not refer to Paul alone in declaring his opinion, but means that they were to be assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus, and that they were to proceed to exercise discipline by his authority. The idea is, that the authority to administer discipline is derived from the Lord Jesus Christ, and is to be exercised in his name, and to promote his honor.

When ye are gathered together - Or, "You being assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus." This is to be connected with the previous words, and means:

(1) That they were to be assembled for the purpose of administering discipline; and,

(2) That this was to be done in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

And my spirit - 1 Corinthians 5:3. As if I were with you; that is, with my declared opinion; knowing what I would advise, were I one of you; or, I being virtually present with you by having delivered my opinion. It cannot mean that Paul‘s soul would be really present with them, but that, knowing his views and feelings, and what he would do, and knowing his love for them, they could act as if he were there. This passage proves that discipline belongs to the church itself; and so deep was Paul‘s conviction of this, that even he would not administer it, without their concurrence and action. And if Paul would not do it, and in a case too where bodily pains were to be inflicted by miraculous agency, assuredly no other ministers have a right to assume the authority to administer discipline without the action and the concurrence of the church itself.

(The general doctrine of the New Testament is that the government of the church is invested, not in the people or church members at large, but in certain rulers or office-bearers, 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Timothy 5:17. We find these elders or rulers existing in every church to which our attention is directed, while the people are continually exhorted to yield a willing submission to their authority. Now the passage under review must be explained in consistency with the analogy of truth, or the general scope of Scripture on the subject. It is unwise to build our conclusion on an insulated text. But, in reality, the language of the apostle, in this place, when fairly examined, gives no countenance to the idea that the judicial power of the church resides in the people. The case of the incestuous man was “judged by the apostle himself” previous to the transmission of his letter to the Corinthian church, which was therefore enjoined, not to adjudicate on the matter, but simply to give effect to the decision of Paul. “I verily ‹have judged already‘ concerning him who hath done this deed; in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” etc. If it be still demanded why then were the people to assemble? the answer is obvious. It was necessary that the sentence should be published, where the crime had been committed, that the members of the church might concur in it, and withdraw from the society of the guilty person. The simple fact of the people being assembled is no proof that they were judges.

Yet candor requires us to state that the words in the third verse, ἤδη κεκρίκα ēdē kekrika(I have already judged) are supposed by some to intimate, not the delivering of an authoritative sentence, but the simple expression of an opinion in regard to what ought to be done. This, however, seems neither consistent with the scope of the passage, nor with just ideas of apostolical authority. The apostles had "the care of all the churches, with power to settle matters of faith and order, to determine controversies, and exercise the rod of discipline on all offenders, whether pastors or flock; 1 Corinthians 5:3-6; 2 Corinthians 10:8; 2 Corinthians 13:10.")

With the power … - This phrase is to be connected with the following verse. "I have determined what ought to be done. The sentence which I have passed is this. You are to be assembled in the name and authority of Christ. I shall be virtually present. And you are to deliver such a one to Satan, ‹by the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.‘" That is, it is to be done by you; and the miraculous power which will be evinced in the case will proceed from the Lord Jesus. The word "power" δύναμις dunamisis used commonly in the New Testament to denote some miraculous and extraordinary power; and here evidently means that the Lord Jesus would put forth such a power in the infliction of pain and for the preservation of the purity of his church.

Verse 5

To deliver - This is the sentence which is to be executed. You are to deliver him to Satan, etc.

Unto Satan - Beza, and the Latin fathers, suppose that this is only an expression of excommunication. They say, that in the Scriptures there are but two kingdoms recognized - the kingdom of God, or the church, and the kingdom of the world, which is regarded as under the control of Satan; and that to exclude a man from one is to subject him to the dominion of the other. There is some foundation for this opinion; and there can be no doubt that excommunication is here intended, and that, by excommunication, the offender was in some sense placed under the control of Satan. It is further evident that it is here supposed that by being thus placed under him the offender would be subject to corporal inflictions by the agency of Satan, which are here called the "destruction of the flesh." Satan is elsewhere referred to as the author of bodily diseases. Thus, in the case of Job, Job 2:7. A similar instance is mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20, where Paul says he had delivered Hymeneus and Alexander to "Satan, that they might learn not

to blaspheme." It may be observed here that though this was to be done by the concurrence of the church, as having a right to administer discipline, yet it was directed by apostolic authority; and there is no evidence that this was the usual form of excommunication, nor ought it now to be used. There was evidently miraculous power evinced in this case, and that power has long since ceased in the church.

For the destruction of the flesh - We may observe here:

(1) That this does not mean that the man was to die under the infliction of the censure, for the object was to recover him; and it is evident that, whatever he suffered as the consequence of this, he survived it, and Paul again instructed the Corinthians to admit him to their fellowship, 2 Corinthians 2:7.

(2) it was designed to punish him for licentiousness of life - often called in the Scriptures one of the sins, or works of the flesh Galatians 5:19, and the design was that the punishment should follow "in the line of the offence," or be a just retribution - as punishment often does. Many have supposed that by the "destruction of the flesh" Paul meant only the destruction of his fleshly appetites or carnal affections; and that he supposed that this would be effected by the act of excommunication. But it is very evident from the Scriptures that the apostles were imbued with the power of inflicting diseases or bodily calamities for crimes. See Acts 13:11; 1 Corinthians 11:30. What this bodily malady was we have no means of knowing. It is evident that it was not of very long duration, since when the apostle exhorts them 2 Corinthians 2:7 again to receive him, there is no mention made of his suffering then under it - This was an extraordinary and miraculous power. It was designed for the government of the church in its infancy, when everything was suited to show the direct agency of God; and it ceased, doubtless, with the apostles. The church now has no such power. It cannot now work miracles; and all its discipline now is to be moral discipline, designed not to inflict bodily pain and penalties, but to work a moral reformation in the offender.

That the spirit may be saved - That his soul might be saved; that he might be corrected, humbled, and reformed by these sufferings, and recalled to the paths of piety and virtue. This expresses the true design of the discipline of the church, and it ought never to be inflicted but with a direct intention to benefit the offender, and to save the soul. Even when he is cut

off and disowned, the design should not be vengeance, or punishment merely, but it should be to recover him and save him from ruin.

In the day of the Lord Jesus - The Day of Judgment when the Lord Jesus shall come, and shall collect his people to himself.

Verse 6

Your glorying - Your boasting; or confidence in your present condition, as if you were eminent in purity and piety.

Is not good - Is not well, proper, right. Boasting is never good; but it is especially wrong when, as here, there is an existing evil that is likely to corrupt the whole church. When people are disposed to boast, they should at once make the inquiry whether there is not some sin indulged in, on account of which they should be humbled and subdued. If all individual Christians, and all Christian churches, and all people of every rank and condition, would look at things as they are, they would never find occasion for boasting. It is only when we are blind to the realities of the ease, and overlook our faults, that we are disposed to boast. The reason why this was improper in Corinth, Paul states - that any sin would tend to corrupt the whole church, and that therefore they ought not to boast until that was removed.

A little leaven … - A small quantity of leaven or yeast will pervade the entire mass of flour, or dough, and diffuse itself through it all. This is evidently a proverbial saying. It occurs also in Galatians 5:9. Compare the note at Matthew 13:33. A similar figure occurs also in the Greek classic writers - By leaven the Hebrews metaphorically understood whatever had the power of corrupting, whether doctrine, or example, or anything else. See the note at Matthew 16:6. The sense here is plain. A single sin indulged in, or allowed in the church, would act like leaven - it would pervade and corrupt the whole church, unless it was removed. On this ground, and for this reason, discipline should be administered, and the corrupt member should be removed.

Verse 7

Purge out therefore … - Put away; free yourselves from.

The old leaven - The apostle here takes occasion, from the mention of leaven, to exhort the Corinthians to put away vice and sin. The figure is derived from the custom of the Jews in putting away leaven at the celebration of the passover. By the OLD leaven he means vice and sin; and also here the person who had committed the sin in their church. As the

Jews, at the celebration of the passover, gave all diligence in removing leaven from their houses - searching every part of their dwellings with candles, that they might remove every particle of leavened bread from their habitations - so the apostle exhorts them to use all diligence to search out and remove all sin.

That ye may be a new lump - That you may be like a new mass of flour, or dough, before the leaven is put into it. That you may be pure, and free from the corrupting principle.

As ye are unleavened - That is, as ye are bound by your Christian profession to be unleavened, or to be pure. Your very profession implies this, and you ought, therefore, to remove all impurity, and to become holy. Let there be no impurity, and no mixture inconsistent with that holiness which the gospel teaches and requires. The apostle here does not refer merely to the case of the incestuous person, but he takes occasion to exhort them to put away all sin. Not only to remove this occasion of offence, but to remove all impurity, that they might become entirely and only holy. The doctrine is, that Christians are by their profession holy, and that therefore they ought to give all diligence to remove everything that is impure.

For even Christ … - As the Jews, when their paschal lamb was slain, gave great diligence to put away all leaven from their dwellings, so we Christians, since our passover is slain, ought to give the like diligence to remove all that is impure and corrupting from our hearts - There can be no doubt here that the paschal lamb was a type of the Messiah; and as little that the leaven was understood to be emblematic of impurity and sin, and that their being required to put it away was intended to be an emblematic action designed to denote that all sin was to be removed and forsaken.

Our passover - Our "paschal lamb," for so the word πάσχα paschausually signifies. The sense is, "We Christians have a paschal lamb; and that lamb is the Messiah. And as the Jews, when their paschal lamb was slain, were required to put away all leaven from their dwellings, so we, when our paschal lamb is slain, should put away all sin from our hearts and from our churches." This passage proves that Paul meant to teach that Christ had "taken the place" of the paschal lamb - that that lamb was designed to adumbrate or typify him - and that consequently when he was offered, the paschal offering was designed to cease. Christ is often in the Scriptures compared to a lamb. See Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 5:6, Revelation 5:12.

Is sacrificed for us - Margin, Or "slain" (ἐτυθη etuthē). The word θύω thuōmay mean simply to slay or kill; but it is also used often in the sense of making a sacrifice as an expiation for sin; Acts 14:13, Acts 14:18; 1 Corinthians 10:20; compare Genesis 31:54; Genesis 45:1; Exodus 3:18; Exodus 5:3, Exodus 5:8, Exodus 5:17; Exodus 8:8, Exodus 8:25-29; Exodus 13:15; Exodus 20:24; 2 Chronicles 15:16, where it is used as the translation of the word זבח zaabach"to sacrifice." It is used as the translation of this word no less than 98 times in the Old Testament, and perhaps always in the sense of a "sacrifice," or bloody offering. It is also used as the translation of the Hebrew word טבח Taabachand שׁחט shaachatto slay, to kill, etc. in Exodus 12:21; 1 Kings 11:19; 2 Kings 25:7; 2 Chronicles 29:22, etc.; in all in eleven places in the Old Testament. It is used in a similar sense in the New Testament, in Matthew 22:4; Luke 15:23, Luke 15:27, Luke 15:30; John 10:10; Acts 10:13; Acts 11:7. It occurs no where else in the New Testament than in the places which have been specified - The true sense of the word here is, therefore, to be found in the doctrine respecting the passover. That that was intended to be a sacrifice for sin is proved by the nature of the offering, and by the account which is everywhere given of it in the Old Testament. The paschal lamb was slain as a sacrifice. It was slain in the temple; its blood was poured out as an offering; it was sprinkled and offered by the priests in the same way as other sacrifices; see Exodus 23:18; Exodus 34:25; 2 Chronicles 30:15-16. And if so, then this passage means that Christ was offered "as a sacrifice for sin" - in accordance with the numerous passages of the New Testament, which speak of his death in this manner (see the note at Romans 3:25); and that his offering was designed to take the place of the paschal sacrifice, under the ancient economy.

For us - For us who are Christians. He died in our stead; and as the Jews, when celebrating their paschal feast, put away all leaven, so we, as Christians, should put away all evil from our hearts, since that sacrifice has now been made once for all.

Verse 8

Let us keep the feast - Margin, "Holy day" ἑορτάζωμεν heortazōmenThis is language drawn from the paschal feast, and is used by Paul frequently to carry out and apply his illustration. It does not mean literally the paschal supper here - for that had ceased to be observed by Christians - nor the Lord's Supper particularly; but the sense is "As the Jews when they celebrated the paschal supper, on the slaying and sacrifice

of the paschal lamb, put away all leaven - as emblematic of sin - so let us, in the slaying of our sacrifice, and in all the duties, institutions and events consequent thereon, put away all wickedness from our hearts as individuals, and from our societies and churches. Let us engage in the service of God putting away by all evil."

Not with the old leaven - Not under the influence, or in the indulgence of the feelings of corrupt and unrenewed human nature - The word "leaven" is very expressive of that former or "old" condition, and denotes the corrupt and corrupting passions of our nature before it is renewed.

The leaven of malice - Of unkindness and evil - which would diffuse itself, and pervade the mass of Christians. The word "malice" (κακίας kakias) denotes "evil" in general.

And wickedness - Sin; evil. There is a particular reference here to the case of the incestuous person. Paul means that all wickedness should be put away from those who had been saved by the sacrifice of their "Passover," Christ; and, therefore, this sin in a special manner.

But with the unleavened bread … - That is, with sincerity and truth. Let us be sincere, and true, and faithful; as the Jews partook of bread unleavened, which was emblematic of purity, so let us be sincere and true. It is implied here that this could not be done unless they would put away the incestuous person - No Christians can have, or give evidence of sincerity, who are not willing to put away all sin.

Verse 9

I wrote unto you - I have written ἔγραψα egrapsaThis word may either refer to this Epistle, or to some former epistle. It simply denotes that he had written to them, but whether in the former part of this, or in some former epistle which is now lost, cannot be determined by the use of this word.

In an epistle - ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ en tē epistolēThere has been considerable diversity of opinion in regard to this expression. A large number of commentators as Chrysostom, Theodoret, Oecumenius, most of the Latin commentators, and nearly all the Dutch commentators suppose that this refers to the same Epistle (our 1Corinthians), and that the apostle means to say that in the former part of this Epistle 1 Corinthians 5:2 he had given them this direction. And in support of this interpretation they say that τῇ tēhere is used for ταυτῇ tautēand appeal to the kindred passages in Romans 16:2; Colossians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 2 Thessalonians 3:3-4. Many others - as Grotius, Doddridge, Rosenmuller, etc. - suppose it to refer to

some other epistle which is now lost, and which had been sent to them before their messengers had reached him. This Epistle might have been very brief, and might have contained little more than this direction. That this is the correct opinion, may appear from the following considerations, namely:

(1) It is the natural and obvious interpretation - one that would strike the great mass of people. It is just such an expression as Paul would have used on the supposition that he had written a previous epistle.

(2) it is the very expression which he uses in 2 Corinthians 7:8, where he is referring to this Epistle as one which he had sent to them.

(3) it is not true that Paul had in any former part of this Epistle given this direction. He had commanded them to remove an incestuous person, and such a command might seem to imply that they ought not to keep company with such a person; but it was not a general command not to have contact with them.

(4) it is altogether probable that Paul would write more letters than we have preserved. We have but fourteen of his remaining. Yet he labored many years; founded many churches; and had frequent occasion to write to them.

(5) we know that a number of books have been lost which were either inspired or which were regarded as of authority by inspired men. Thus, the books of Jasher, of Iddo the seer, etc., are referred to in the Old Testament, and there is no improbability that similar instances may have occurred in regard to the writers of the New Testament.

(6) in 1 Corinthians 5:11, he expressly makes a distinction between the Epistle which he was then writing and the former one. “But now,” that is, in this Epistle, “I have written (ἔγραψα egrapsa) to you,” etc. an expression which he would not use if 1 Corinthians 5:9, referred to the same epistle. These considerations seem to me to be unanswerable, and to prove that Paul had sent another epistle to them in which he had given this direction.

(7) this opinion accords with that of a very large number of commentators. As an instance, Calvin says, “The Epistle of which he here

speaks, is not now extant. Nor is it to be doubted that many others have perished; but it is sufficient that these survive to us which the Lord saw to be needful." If it be objected that this may affect the doctrine of the inspiration of the New Testament, since it is not to be supposed that God would suffer the writings of inspired men to be lost, we may reply:

(a) That there is no evidence that these were inspired. Paul often makes a distinction in regard to his own words and doctrines, as inspired or uninspired (see John 21:25, have been lost. And why should it be deemed any more wonderful that inspired books should be lost than inspired oral teaching? Why more wonderful that a brief letter of Paul should be destroyed than that numerous discourses of him "who spake as never man spake," should be lost to the world?

(e) We should be thankful for the books that remain, and we may be assured that all the truth that is needful for our salvation has been preserved and is in our bands. That any inspired hooks have been preserved amidst the efforts which have been made to destroy them all, is more a matter of wonder than that a few have been lost, and should rather lead us to gratitude that we have them than to grief that a few, probably relating to local and comparatively unimportant matters, have been destroyed.

Not to company … - Not to associate with; see Ephesians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:14. This, it seems, was a general direction on the subject. It referred to all who had this character. But the direction which he now 1 Corinthians 5:11 proceeds to give, relates to a different matter - the proper degree of contact with those who were "in the church."

Verse 10

Yet not altogether … - In my direction not "to company" with them, I did not mean that you should refuse all kinds of contact with them; that you should not treat them with civility, or be engaged with them in any of the transactions of life, or in the ordinary contact of society between man and man, for this would be impossible - but that you should not so associate with them as to be esteemed to belong to them, or so as to be corrupted by their example. You are not to make them companions and friends.

With the fornicators - Most pagans were of this description, and particularly at Corinth. See the introduction to this Epistle.

Of this world - Of those who are out of the church; or who are not professed Christians.

Or with the covetous - The avaricious; those greedy of gain. Probably his direction in the former epistle had been that they should avoid them.

Or extortioners - Rapacious persons; greedy of gain, and oppressing the poor, the needy, and the fatherless, to obtain money.

Or an idolater - All the Corinthians before the gospel was preached there worshipped idols.

Then must ye needs … - It would be necessary to leave the world. The world is full of such persons. You meet them everywhere. You cannot avoid them in the ordinary transactions of life, unless you either destroy yourselves, or withdraw wholly from society. This passage shows:

(1) That that society was full of the licentious and the covetous, of idolaters and extortioners. (Compare the notes at Romans 1.)

(2) that it is not right either to take our own lives to avoid them, or to withdraw from society and become monks; and therefore, that the whole monastic system is contrary to Christianity; and,

(3) That it is needful we should have some contact with the people of the world; and to have dealings with them as neighbors, and as members of the community. "How far" we are to have contact with them is not settled here. The general principles may be:

(1) That it is only so far as is necessary for the purposes of good society, or to show kindness to them as neighbors and as members of the community.

(2) we are to deal justly with them in all our transactions.

(3) we may be connected with them in regard to the things which "we have in common" - as public improvements, the business of education, etc.

(4) we are to endeavor to do them good, and for that purpose we are not to shun their society. But,

(5) We are not to make them our companions; or to associate with them in their wickedness, or as idolaters, or covetous, or licentious; we are not to be known as partakers with them in these things. And for the same reason we are not to associate with the frivilous in their gaiety; with the proud in their pride; with the fashionable in their regard to fashion; with the friends of the theater, the ballroom, or the splendid party, in their attachment to these amusements. In all these things we are to be separate; and are to be connected with them only in those things which we may have "in common" with them; and which are not inconsistent with the holy rules of the Christian religion.

(6) we are not so to associate with them as to be corrupted by their example; or so as to be led by that example to neglect prayer and the sanctuary, and the deeds of charity, and the effort to do good to the souls of people. We are to make it a great point that our piety is not to suffer by that contact; and we are never to do anything, or conform to any custom, or to have any such contact with them as to lessen our growth in grace; to divert our attention from the humble duties of religion; or to mar our Christian enjoyment.

Verse 11

"But now." In this Epistle. This shows that he had written a former letter.

I have written to you. - Above. I have designed to give this injunction that you are to be entirely separated from one who is a professor of religion and who is guilty of these things.

Not to keep company - To be wholly separated and withdrawn from such a person. Not to associate with him in any manner.

If any man that is called a brother - Any professing Christian; any member of the church.

Be a fornicator … - Like him who is mentioned, 1 Corinthians 5:1.

Or an idolater - This must mean those persons who, while they professed Christianity, still attended the idol feasts, and worshipped there. Perhaps a few such may have been found who had adopted the Christian profession hypocritically.

Or a railer - A reproachful man; a man of coarse, harsh, and bitter words; a man whose characteristic it was to abuse others; to vilify their

character, and wound their feelings. It is needless to say how much this is contrary to the spirit of Christianity, and to the example of the Master, "who when he was reviled, reviled not again."

Or a drunkard - Perhaps there might have been some then in the church, as there are now, who were addicted to this vice. It has been the source of incalculable evils to the church; and the apostle, therefore, solemnly enjoins on Christians to have no fellowship with a man who is intemperate.

With such an one no not to eat - To have no contact or fellowship with him of any kind; not to do anything that would seem to acknowledge him as a brother; with such an one not even to eat at the same table. A similar course is enjoined by John; 2 John 1:10-11. This refers to the contact of common life, and not particularly to the communion. The true Christian was wholly to disown such a person, and not to do anything that would seem to imply that he regarded him as a Christian brother. It will be seen here that the rule was much more strict in regard to one who professed to be a Christian than to those who were known and acknowledged pagans. The reasons may have been:

(1) The necessity of keeping the church pure, and of not doing anything that would seem to imply that Christians were the patrons and friends of the intemperate and the wicked.

(2) in respect to the pagan, there could be no danger of its being supposed that Christians regarded them as brethren, or showed to them any more than the ordinary civilities of life; but in regard to those who professed to be Christians, but who were drunkards, or licentious, if a man was on terms of intimacy with them, it would seem as if he acknowledged them as brethren and recognized them as Christians.

(3) this entire separation and withdrawing from all communion was necessary in these times to save the church from scandal, and from the injurious reports which were circulated. The pagan accused Christians of all manner of crime and abominations. These reports were greatly injurious to the church. But it was evident that currency and plausibility would be given to them if it was known that Christians were on terms of intimacy and good fellowship with pagans and intemperate persons. Hence, it became necessary to withdraw wholly from them to withhold even the ordinary

courtesies of life; and to draw a line of total and entire separation. Whether this rule in its utmost strictness is demanded now, since the nature of Christianity is known, and since religion cannot be in "so much" danger from such reports, may be made a question. I am inclined to the opinion that the ordinary civilities of life may be shown to such persons; though certainly nothing that would seem to recognize them as Christians. But as neighbors and relatives; as those who may be in distress and want, we are assuredly not forbidden to show toward them the offices of kindness and compassion. Whitby and some others, however, understand this of the communion of the Lord's Supper and of that only.

Verse 12

For what have I to do … - I have no authority over them; and can exercise no jurisdiction over them. All my rules, therefore, must have reference only to those who are within the church.

To judge - To pass sentence upon; to condemn; or to punish. As a Christian apostle I have no jurisdiction over them.

Them also that are without - Without the pale of the Christian church; pagans; people of the world; those who did not profess to be Christians.

Do not ye judge … - Is not your jurisdiction as Christians confined to those who are within the church, and professed members of it? ought you not to exercise discipline there, and inflict punishment on its unworthy members? Do you not in fact thus exercise discipline, and separate from your society unworthy persons - and ought it not to be done in this instance, and in reference to the offender in your church?

Verse 13

But them … - They who are unconnected with the church are under the direct and special government of God. They are indeed sinners, and they deserve punishment for their crimes. But it is not ours to pronounce sentence upon them, or to inflict punishment. God will do that. our province is in regard to the church. We are to judge these; and these alone. All others we are to leave entirely in the hands of God.

Therefore - Greek "And" (καὶ kai). "Since it is yours to judge the members of your own society, do you exercise discipline on the offender and put him away?"

Put away from among yourselves - Excommunicate him; expel him from your society. This is the utmost power which the church has; and this

act the church is bound to exercise upon all those who have openly offended against the laws of Jesus Christ.

Remarks On 1 Corinthians 5:1.

2. People are often filled with pride when they have least occasion for it; 1 Corinthians 5:2. This is the case with individuals - who are often elated when their hearts are full of sin - when they are indulging in iniquity; and it is true of churches also, that they are most proud when the reins of discipline are relaxed, and their members are cold in the service of God, or when they are even living so as to bring scandal and disgrace on the gospel.

3. We see in what way the Christian church should proceed in administering discipline; 1 Corinthians 5:2. It should not be with harshness, bitterness, revenge, or persecution. It should be with mourning that there is necessity for it; with tenderness toward the offender; with deep grief that the cause of religion has been injured; and with such grief at the existence of the offence as to lead them to prompt and decided measures to remove it.

4. The exercise of discipline belongs to the church itself; 1 Corinthians 5:4. The church at Corinth was to be assembled with reference to this offence, and was to remove the offender. Even Paul, an apostle, and the spiritual father of the church, did not claim the authority to remove an offender except through the church. The church was to take up the case; to act on it; to pass the sentence; to excommunicate the man. There could scarcely be a stronger proof that the power of discipline is in the church, and is not to be exercised by any independent individual, or body of people, foreign to the church, or claiming an independent right of discipline. If "Paul" would not presume to exercise such discipline independently of the church, assuredly no minister, and no body of ministers have any such right now. Either by themselves in a collective congregational capacity, or through their representatives in a body of elders, or in a committee appointed by them; every church is itself originate and execute all the acts of Christian discipline over its members. (See the supplementary note on 1 Corinthians 5:4.)

5. We see the object of Christian discipline; 1 Corinthians 5:5. It is not revenge, hatred, malice, or the more exercise of power that is to lead to it; it is "the good of the individual" that is to be pursued and sought. While the

church endeavors to remain pure, its aim and object should be mainly to correct and reform the offender, that his spirit may be saved. When discipline is undertaken from any other motive than this; when it is pursued from private pique or rivalship, or ambition, or the love of power; when it seeks to overthrow the influence or standing of another, it is wrong. The salvation of the offender and the glory of God should prompt to all the measures which should be taken in the case.

6. We see the danger of indulging in any sin - both in reference to ourselves as individuals, or to the church; 1 Corinthians 5:6. The smallest sin indulged in will spread pollution through the whole body, as a little leaven will effect the largest mass.

7. Christians should be pure; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8. Their Saviour - their paschal lamb, was pure; and he died that they might be pure. He gave himself that his people might be holy; and by all the purity of his character; by all the labors and self-denials of his life; by all his sufferings and groans in our behalf, are we called on to be holy.

8. We are here presented with directions in regard to our contact with those who are not members of the church; 1 Corinthians 5:10. There is nothing that is more difficult to be understood than the duty of Christians respecting such contact. Christians often feel that they are in danger from it, and they are disposed to withdraw almost entirely from the world. And they ask with deep solicitude often, what course they are to pursue? Where shall the line be drawn? How far shall they go? And where shall they deem the contact with the world unlawful or dangerous? - A few remarks here as rules may aid us in answering these questions.

(I) Christians are not wholly to withdraw from contact with the people of this world. This was the error of the monastic system, and this error has been the occasion of innumerable corruptions and abominations in the papal church - They are not to do this because:

(a)It is impossible. They must needs then, says Paul, go out of the world.

(b)Because religion is not to be regarded as dissocial, and gloomy, and unkind.

(c)Because they have many interests in common with those who are unconnected with the church, and they are not to abandon them. The interests of justice, and liberty, and science, and morals, and public improvements, and education, are all interests in which they share in common with others.

(d)Many of their best friends - a father, a mother, a son, a daughter, may be outside of the church, and religion does not sever those ties, but binds them more tenderly and closely.

(e)Christians are inevitably connected in commercial dealings with those who are not members of the church; and to cease to have any connection with them would be to destroy their own business, and to throw themselves out of employment and to break up society.

(f)It would prevent the possibility of doing much good either to the bodies or the souls of people. The poor, the needy, and the afflicted are, many of them, out of the church, and they have a claim on the friends of Christ, and on their active beneficence.

(g)It would break up and destroy the church altogether. Its numbers are to be increased and replenished from age to age by the efforts of Christians; and this demands that Christians should have some contact with the people of the world whom they hope to benefit.

(h)An effort to withdraw wholly from the world injures religion. It conveys the impression that religion is morose, severe, misanthropic; and all such impressions do immense injury to the cause of God and truth.

(II) The principles on which Christians should regulate their contact with the world, are these:

(a)They are not to be conformed to the world; they are not to do any thing that shall countenance the views, feelings, principles of the world “as such,” or as distinguished from religion. They are not to do anything that would show that they approve of the special fashions, amusements, opinions of the people of the world; or to leave the impression that they belong to the world.

(b)They are to do justice and righteousness to every man, whatever may be his rank, character, or views. They are not to do anything that will be calculated to give an unfavorable view of the religion which they profess to the people of the world.

(c)They are to discharge with fidelity all the duties of a father, husband, son, brother, friend, benefactor, or recipient of favors, toward those who are out of the church; or with whom they may be connected.

(d)They are to do good to all people - to the poor, the afflicted, the needy, the widow, the fatherless.

(e)They are to endeavor so to live and act - so to converse, and so to form their plans as to promote the salvation of all others. They are to seek their spiritual welfare; and to endeavor by example, and by conversation; by exhortation and by all the means in their power to bring them to the knowledge of Christ. For this purpose they are kept on the earth instead of being retrieved to heaven; and to this object they should devote their lives.

9. We see from this chapter who are not to be regarded as Christians, whatever may be their professions; 1 Corinthians 5:11. A person who is:

(1)afornicator: or,

(2)covetous; or,

(3)an idolater; or,

(4)a“railer;” or,

(5)adrunkard; or,

(6)an “extortioner,” is not to be owned as a Christian brother.

Paul has placed the covetous man, and the railer, and extortioners, in most undesirable company. They are ranked with fornicators and drunkards. And yet how many such persons there are in the Christian church - and many, too, who would regard it as a special insult to be ranked with a drunkard or an adulterer. But in the eye of God both are alike unfit for his kingdom, and are to be regarded as having no claims to the character of Christians.

10. God will judge the world, 1 Corinthians 5:12-13. The world that is outside the congregation - the mass of people that make no profession of piety, must give an account to God. They are traveling to His bar; and judgment in regard to them is taken into God‘s own hands, and He will pronounce their doom. It is a solemn thing “to be judged” by a holy God; and they who have no evidence that they are Christians, should tremble at the prospect of being soon arraigned at His bar.

1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Introduction

The main design of this chapter is to reprove the Corinthians for the practice of going to law before pagan courts, or magistrates, instead of settling their differences among themselves. It seems that after their conversion they were still in the habit of carrying their causes before pagan tribunals, and this the apostle regarded as contrary to the genius and spirit of the Christian religion, and as tending to expose religion to contempt in the eyes of the people of the world. He, therefore, 1 Corinthians 6:1-7, reproves this practice, and shows them that their differences should be settled among themselves. It seems also that the spirit of litigation and of covetousness had led them in some instances to practice fraud and oppression of each other, and he, therefore, takes occasion 1 Corinthians 6:8-11 to show that this was wholly inconsistent with the hope of heaven and the nature of Christianity.

It would seem, also, that some at Corinth had not only indulged in these and kindred vices, but had actually defended them. This was done by plausible, but sophistical arguments, drawn from the strong passions of people; from the fact that the body was made for eating and drinking, etc. To these arguments the apostle replies in the close of the chapter, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, and especially considers the sin of fornication, to which they were particularly exposed in Corinth, and shows the heinousness of it, and its entire repugnance to the pure gospel of Christ.

Verse 1

Dare any of you - The reasons why the apostle introduced this subject here may have been:

(1)That he had mentioned the subject of judging 1 Corinthians 5:13, and that naturally suggested the topic which is here introduced; and,

(2)This might have been a prevailing evil in the church of Corinth, and demanded correction. The word "dare" here implies that it was inconsistent with religion, and improper. "can you do it; is it proper or right; or do you presume so far to violate all the principles of Christianity as to do it."

Having a matter - A subject of litigation; or a suit. There may be differences between people in regard to property and right, in which there shall be no blame on either side. They may both be desirous of having it

equitably and amicably adjusted. It is not a difference between people that is in itself wrong, but it is the spirit with which the difference is adhered to, and the unwillingness to have justice done that is so often wrong.

Against another - Another member of the congregation. A Christian brother. The apostle here directs his reproof against the "plaintiff," as having the choice of the tribunal before which he would bring the cause.

Before the unjust - The pagan tribunals; for the word "unjust" here evidently stands opposed to the saints. The apostle does not mean that they were always unjust in their decisions, or that equity could in no case be hoped from them, but that they were classed in that division of the world which was different from the saints, and is synonymous with unbelieveRS, as opposed to believers.

And not before the saints - Before Christians. Can you not settle your differences among yourselves as Christians, by leaving the cause to your brethren, as arbitrators, instead of going before pagan magistrates? The Jews would not allow any of their causes to be brought before the Gentile courts. Their rule was this, "He that tries a cause before the judges of the Gentiles, and before their tribunals, although their judgments are as the judgments of the Israelites, so this is an ungodly man," etc. Maimon, Hilch, Sanhedrin, chapter 26 section 7. They even looked upon such an action as bad as profaning the name of God.

Verse 2

Do ye not know … - The object of this verse is evidently to show that Christians were qualified to determine controversies which might arise among themselves. This the apostle shows by reminding them that they shall be engaged in determining matters of much more moment than those which could arise among the members of a church on earth; and that if qualified for that, they must be regarded as qualified to express a judgment on the questions which might arise among their brethren in the churches.

The saints - "Christians," for the word is evidently used in the same sense as in 1 Corinthians 6:1. The apostle says that they knew this, or that this was so well established a doctrine that none could doubt it. It was to be admitted on all hands.

Shall judge the world - A great variety of interpretations has been given to this passage. Grotius supposes it means that they shall be first judged by Christ, and then act as assessors to him in the judgment, or join with him in condemning the wicked; and he appeals to Matthew 19:28;

Luke 22:30, where Christ says that they which have followed him should "sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." See the note at Matthew 19:28. Whitby supposes that it means that Christians are to judge or condemn the world by their example, or that there shall be Christian magistrates, according to the prophecy of Isaiah Isaiah 49:23, and Daniel Daniel 7:18 - Rosenmuller supposes it means that Christians are to judge the errors and sins of people pertaining to religion, as in 1 Corinthians 2:13, 1 Corinthians 2:16; and that they ought to be able, therefore, to judge the smaller matters pertaining to this life. Bloomfield, and the Greek fathers, and commentators, suppose that this means, that the saints will furnish matter to condemn the world; that is, by their lives and example they shall be the occasion of the greater condemnation of the world. But to this there are obvious objections:

(1) It is an unusual meaning of the word "judge."

(2) it does not meet the case before us.

The apostle is evidently saying that Christians will occupy so high and important a station in the work of judging the world that they ought to be regarded as qualified to exercise judgment on the things pertaining to this life; but the fact that their holy lives shall be the occasion of the deeper condemnation of the world does not seem to furnish any plain reason for this - To the opinion, also, of Whitby, Lightfoot, Vitringa, etc. that it refers to the fact that Christians would be magistrates, and governors, etc. according to the predictions of Isaiah and Daniel, there are obvious objections:

(1) The judgment to which Paul in this verse refers is different from that pertaining to things of this life 1 Corinthians 6:3, but the judgment which Christian magistrates would exercise, as such, would relate to them.

(2) it is not easy to see in this interpretation how, or in what sense, the saints shall judge the angels, 1 Corinthians 6:3, the common interpretation, that of Grotius, Beza, Calvin, Doddridge, etc. is that it refers to the future judgment, and that Christians will on that day be employed in some manner in judging the world.

That this is the true interpretation, is apparent for the following reasons:

(1) It is the obvious interpretation - that which will strike the great mass of people, and is likely, therefore, to be the true one.

(2) it accords with the account in Matthew 19:28, and Luke 22:30.

(3) it is the only one which gives a fair interpretation to the declaration that the saints should judge angels in 1 Corinthians 6:3. If asked "in what way" this is to be done, it may be answered, that it may be meant simply that Christians shall be exalted to the right hand of the Judge, and shall encompass his throne; that they shall assent to, and approve of his judgment, that they shall be elevated to a post of honor and favor, as if they were associated with him in the Judgment. They shall then he regarded as his friends, and express their approbation, and that "with a deep sense of its justice," of the condemnation of the wicked. Perhaps the idea is, not that they shall "pronounce" sentence, which will be done by the Lord Jesus, but that they shall then be qualified to see the justice of the condemnation which shall be passed on the wicked; they shall have a clear and distinct view of the case; they shall even see the propriety of their everlasting punishment, and shall not only approve it, but be qualified to enter into the subject, and to pronounce upon it intelligently. And the argument of the apostle is, that if they would be qualified to pronounce on the eternal doom of men and angels; if they had such views of justice and right, and such integrity as to form an opinion and express it in regard to the everlasting destiny of an immense host of immortal beings, assuredly they ought to be qualified to express their sense of the smaller transactions in this life, and pronounce an opinion between man and man.

Are ye unworthy - Are you disqualified.

The smallest matters - Matters of least consequence - matters of little moment, scarcely worth naming compared with the great and important realities of eternity. The "smallest matters" here mean, the causes, suits, and litigations relating to property, etc.

Verse 3

Shall judge angels - All the angels that shall be judged, good or bad. Probably the reference is to fallen angels, as there is no account that holy angels will then undergo a trial. The sense is, "Christians will be qualified

to see the justice of even the sentence which is pronounced on fallen angels. They will be able so to embrace and comprehend the nature of law, and the interests of justice, as to see the propriety of their condemnation. And if they can so far enter into these important and eternal relations, assuredly they ought to be regarded as qualified to discern the nature of justice ‹among men,‘ and to settle the unimportant differences which may arise in the church.” Or, perhaps, this may mean that the saints shall in the future world be raised to a rank in some respects more elevated than even the angels in heaven. (Prof. Stuart.) In what respects they will be thus elevated, if this is the true interpretation, can be only a matter of conjecture. It may be supposed that it will be because they have been favored by being interested in the plan of salvation - a plan that has done so much to honor God; and that “to have been” thus saved by the “immediate and painful” intervention of the Son of God, will be a higher honor than all the privileges which beings can enjoy who are innocent themselves.

Verse 4

Ye have judgments - Causes; controversies; suits.

Things pertaining to this life - Property, etc.

Set them to judge … - The verb translated set καθίζετε kathizetemay be either in the imperative mood, as in our translation, and then it will imply a command; or it may be regarded as in the indicative, and to be rendered interrogatively, “Do ye set or appoint them to judge who are of little repute for their wisdom and equity?” that is, pagan magistrates. The latter is probably the correct rendering, as according to the former no good reason can be given why Paul should command them to select as judges those who had little repute for wisdom in the church. Had he designed this as a command, he would doubtless have directed them to choose their most aged, wise and experienced men, instead of those “least esteemed.” It is manifest, therefore, that this is to he read as a question: “Since you are abundantly qualified yourselves to settle your own differences, do you employ the pagan magistrates, in whom the church can have little confidence for their integrity and justice?” It is designed, therefore, as a severe reproof for what they had been accustomed to do; and an implied injunction that they should do it no more.

Who are least esteemed - (ἐξουθενημένους exouthenēmenous). Who are “contemned,” or regarded as of no value or worth; in whose judgment and integrity you can have little or no confidence. According to the

interpretation given above of the previous part of the verse this refers to the pagan magistrates - to people in whose virtue, piety and qualifications for just judgment Christians could have little confidence; and whose judgment must be regarded as in fact of very little value, and as very little likely to be correct. That the pagan magistrates were in general very corrupt, there can be no doubt. Many of them were people of abandoned character, of dissipated lives, men who were easily bribed, and people, therefore, in whose judgment Christians could repose little confidence. Paul reproves the Corinthians for going before them with their disputes when they could better settle them themselves. Others, however, who regard this whole passage as an instruction to Christians to appoint those to determine their controversies who were least esteemed, suppose that this refers to the "lowest orders" of judges among the Hebrews; to those who were least esteemed, or who were almost despised; and that Paul directs them to select even them in preference to the pagan magistrates. See Lightfoot. But the objection to this is obvious and insuperable. Paul would not have recommended this class of people to decide their causes, but would have recommended the selection of the most wise and virtuous among them. This is proved by 1 Corinthians 6:5, where, in directing them to settle their matters among themselves, he asks whether there is not a "wise man" among them, clearly proving that he wished their difficulties adjusted, not by the most obscure and the least respected members of the church, but by the most wise and intelligent members.

In the church - By the church. That is, the pagan magistrates evince such a character as not to be worthy of the confidence of the church in settling matters of controversy.

Verse 5

I speak to your shame - I declare that which is a reproach to you, that your matters of dispute are carried before pagan tribunals.

Is it so … - Can it be that in the Christian church - the church collected in refined and enlightened Corinth - there is not a single member so wise, intelligent and prudent that his brethren may have confidence in him, and refer their causes to him? Can this be the case in a church that boasts so much of its wisdom, and that prides itself so much in the number and qualifications of its intelligent members?

Verse 6

But brother … - One Christian goes to law with another. This is designed as a reproof. This was wrong:

(1)Because they ought rather to take wrong and suffer themselves to be injured 1 Corinthians 6:7;

(2)Because they might have chosen some persons to settle the matter by arbitration without a formal trial; and,

(3)Because the civil constitution would have allowed them to have settled all their differences without a lawsuit.

Josephus says that the Romans (who were now masters of Corinth) permitted the Jews in foreign countries to decide private affairs, where nothing capital was in question, among themselves. And Dr. Lardner observes, that the Christians might have availed themselves of this permission to have settled their disputes in the same manner. Credibility, vol. 1:p. 165.

Verse 7

There is utterly a fault - There is ALtogether a fault; or you are entirely wrong in this thing.

That ye go to law … - That is, in the sense under discussion, or before pagan magistrates. This was the point under discussion, and the interpretation should be limited to this. Whatever may be the propriety or impropriety of going to law before Christian magistrates, yet the point which the apostle refers to was that of going to law before pagans. The passage, therefore, should not be interpreted as referring to all litigation, but only of that which was the subject of discussion. The apostle says that that was wholly wrong; that they ought by no means to go with their causes against their fellow Christians before pagan magistrates; that whoever had the right side of the question, and whatever might be the decision, "the thing itself" was unChristian and wrong; and that rather than dishonor religion by a trial or suit of this kind they ought to be willing to take wrong, and to suffer any personal and private injustice. The argument is, that greater evil would be done to the cause of Christ by the fact of Christians appearing before a pagan tribunal with their disputes than could result to either party from the injury done by the other - And this is probably always the case; so that although the apostle refers here to pagan tribunals the same reasoning, on the principle, would apply to Christians carrying their causes into the courts at all.

Why do ye not rather take wrong? - Why do ye not suffer yourself to be injured rather than to dishonor the cause of religion by your litigations? They should do this:

(1) Because religion requires its friends to be willing to suffer wrong patiently; Proverbs 20:22; Matthew 5:39-40; Romans 12:17, Romans 12:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:15.

(2) because great injury results to the cause of religion from such trials. The private wrong which an individual would suffer, in perhaps all cases, would be a less evil on the whole than the public injury which is done to the cause of piety by the litigations and strifes of Christian brethren before a civil court.

(3) the differences among Christians could be adjusted among themselves, by a reference to their brethren. In 99 cases out of 100, the decision would be more likely to be just and satisfactory to all parties from an amicable reference, than from the decisions of a civil court. In "the very few" cases where it would be otherwise, it would be better for the individual to suffer, than for the cause of religion to suffer. Christians ought to love the cause of their Master more than their own individual interest. They ought to be more afraid that the cause of Jesus Christ would be injured than that they should be a few pounds poorer from the conduct of others, or than that they should individually suffer in their character from the injustice of others.

To be defrauded? - Receive injury; or suffer a loss of property. Grotius thinks that the word "take wrong" refers to personal insult; and the word "defrauded" refers to injury in property. Together, they are probably designed to refer to all kinds of injury and injustice. And the apostle means to say, that they had better submit to any kind of injustice than carry the cause against a Christian brother before a pagan tribunal. The doctrine here taught is that Christians ought by no means to go to law with each other before a pagan tribunal; that they ought to be willing to suffer any injury from a Christian brother rather than do it. And by implication the same thing is taught in regard to the duty of all Christians, "that they ought to suffer any injury to their persons and property rather than dishonor religion by litigations before civil magistrates." It may be asked then whether law suits are never proper; or whether courts of justice are never to be resorted

to by Christians to secure their rights? To this question we may reply, that the discussion of Paul relates only to Christians, when both parties are Christians, and that it is designed to prohibit such an appeal to courts by them. If ever lawful for Christians to depart from this rule, or for Christians to appear before a civil tribunal, it is conceived that it can be only in circumstances like the following:

(1) Where two or more Christians may have a difference, and where they know not what is right, and what the law is in a case. In such instances there may be a reference to a civil court to determine it - to have what is called “an amicable suit,” to ascertain from the proper authority what the law is, and what is justice in the case.

(2) when there are causes of difference between Christians and the people of the world. As the people of the world do not acknowledge the propriety of submitting the matter to the church, it may be proper for a Christian to carry the matter before a civil tribunal. Evidently, there is no other way, in such cases, of settling a cause; and this mode may be resorted to not with a spirit of revenge, but with a spirit of love and kindness. Courts are instituted for the settlement of the rights of citizens, and people by becoming Christians do not alienate their rights as citizens. Even these cases, however, might commonly be adjusted by a reference to impartial people. better than by the slow, and expensive, and tedious, and often irritating process of carrying a cause through the courts.

(3) Where a Christian is injured in his person, character, or property, he has a right to seek redress. Courts, are instituted for the protection and defense of the innocent and the peaceable against the fraudulent, the wicked, and the violent. And a Christian owes it to his country, to his family, and to himself, that the man who has injured him should receive the proper punishment. The peace and welfare of the community demand it. If a man murders my wife or child, I owe it to the laws and to my country, to justice and to God, to endeavor to have the law enforced. So if a man robs my property, or injures my character, I may owe it to others as well as to myself that the law in such a case should be executed, and the rights of others also be secured. But in all these cases, a Christian should engage in such prosecutions not with a desire of revenge, not with the love of litigation, but with the love of justice, and of God, and with a mild, tender,

candid and forgiving temper, with a real desire that the opponent may be benefited, and that all his rights also should be secured; compare the notes on Romans 13.

Verse 8

Nay, ye do wrong … - Instead of enduring wrong patiently and cheerfully. they were themselves guilty oi injustice and fraud.

And that your brethren - Your fellow Christians. As if they had injured those of their own family - those to whom they ought to be attached by most tender ties. The offence in such cases is aggravated, not because it is in itself any worse to injure a Christian than another man, but because it shows a deeper depravity, when a man overcomes all the ties of kindness and love, and injures those who are near to him, than it does where no such ties exist. It is for this reason that parricide, infanticide, etc. are regarded everywhere as crimes of special atrocity, because a child or a parent must have severed all the tenderest cords of virtue before it could be done.

Verse 9

Know ye not … - The apostle introduces the declaration in this verse to show the evil of their course, and especially of the injustice which they did one to another, and their attempt to enforce and maintain the evil by an appeal to the pagan tribunals. He assures them, therefore, that the unjust could not be saved.

The unrighteous - The unjust ἄδικοι adikoi- such as he had just mentioned - they who did injustice to others, and attempted to do it under the sanction of the courts.

Shall not inherit - Shall not possess; shall not enter into. The kingdom of heaven is often represented as an "inheritance;" Matthew 19:29; Matthew 25:34; Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25; Luke 18:18; 1 Corinthians 15:50; Ephesians 1:11, Ephesians 1:14; Ephesians 5:5.

The kingdom of God - Cannot be saved; cannot enter into heaven; see the note at Matthew 3:2. This may refer either to the kingdom of God in heaven; or to the church on earth - most probably the former. But the sense is the same essentially, whichever is meant. The man who is not fit to enter into the one is not fit to enter into the other. The man who is fit to enter the kingdom of God on earth, shall also enter into that in heaven.

Be not deceived - A most important direction to be given to all. It implies:

(1) That they were in danger of being deceived:
(a)Their own hearts might have deceived them.
(b)They might be deceived by their false opinions on these subjects.

(c)They might be in danger of being deceived by their leaders, who perhaps held the opinion that some of the persons who practiced these things could be saved.

(2) it implies, that there was "no necessity" of their being deceived. They might know the truth. They might easily understand these matters. It might be plain to them that those who indulged in these things could not be saved.

(3) it implies that it was of high importance that they should not be deceived. For:
(a)The soul is of infinite value.
(b)To lose heaven - to be disappointed in regard to that, will be a tremendous loss.

(c)To inherit hell and its woes will be a tremendous curse. O how anxious should all be that they he not deceived, and that while they hope for life they do not sink down to everlasting death!

Neither fornicators - See Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:4-5; Hebrews 12:14; Hebrews 13:4. See the note at Romans 1:29.

Nor effeminate - μαλακοὶ malakoiThis word occurs in Matthew 11:8, and Luke 7:25, where it is applied to clothing, and translated "soft raiment;" that is, the light, thin garments worn by the rich and great. It occurs no where else in the New Testament except here. Applied to morals, as it is here, it denotes those who give themselves up to a soft, luxurious, and indolent way of living; who make self-indulgence the grand object of life; who can endure no hardship, and practice no self-denial in the cause of duty and of God. The word is applied in the classic writers to the Cinaedi, the Pathics, or Catamites; those who are given up to wantonness and sensual pleasures, or who are kept to be prostituted to others. Diog. Laer. Luke 7:5, Luke 7:4. Xenoph. Mem. Luke 3:7. 1. Ovid Fast. 4:342. The connection here seems to demand such an interpretation, as it occurs in the description of vices of the same class - sensual and corrupt indulgences - It is well known that this vice was common among the Greeks - and particularly prevailed at Corinth.

Abusers of themselves with mankind - ἀρσενοκοῖτοι arsenokoitoiPaederastae or Sodomites. Those who indulged in a vice that was common among all the pagan; see the notes at Romans 1:27.

Verse 10

Nor covetous; - See the note at 1 Corinthians 5:10. It is remarkable that the apostle always ranks "the covetous" with the most abandoned classes of people.

Nor revilers - The same word which in 1 Corinthians 5:11, is rendered railer; see the note at that place.

Nor extortioners - See the note at 1 Corinthians 5:11.

Shall inherit - Shall enter; shalt be saved, 1 Corinthians 6:9.

Verse 11

And such - Such drunkards, lascivious, and covetous persons. This shows:

(1) The exceeding grace of God that could recover even such persons from sins so debasing and degrading.

(2) it shows that we are not to despair of reclaiming the most abandoned and wretched people.

(3) it is well for Christians to look back on what they once were. It will produce:

(a)humility,

(b)gratitude,

(c)adeep sense of the sovereign mercy of God,

(d)an earnest desire that others may be recovered and saved in like manner; compare Ephesians 2:1, Ephesians 2:2; Ephesians 5:8; Colossians 3:7; Titus 3:3, Titus 3:6 - The design of this is to remind them of what they were, and to show them that they were now under obligation to lead better lives - by all the mercy which God had shown in recovering them from sins so degrading, and from a condition so dreadful.

But ye are washed - Hebrews 10:22. Washing is an emblem of purifying. They had been made pure by the Spirit of God. They had been, indeed, baptized, and their baptism was an emblem of purifying, but the thing here particularly referred to is not baptism, but it is something that had been done by the Spirit of God, and must refer to his agency on the

heart in cleansing them from these pollutions. Paul here uses three words, "washed, sanctified, justified," to denote the various agencies of the Holy Spirit by which they had been recovered from sin. The first, that of washing, I understand of that work of the Spirit by which the process of purifying was commenced in the soul, and which was especially signified in baptism - the work of regeneration or conversion to God. By the agency of the Spirit the defilement of these pollutions had been washed away or removed - as filth is removed by ablution - The agency of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is elsewhere represented by washing, Titus 3:5," The washing of regeneration." compare Hebrews 10:22.

Ye are sanctified - This denotes the progressive and advancing process of purifying which succeeds regeneration in the Christian. Regeneration is the commencement of it - its close is the perfect purity of the Christian in heaven; see the note at John 17:17. It does not mean that they were perfect - for the reasoning of the apostle shows that this was far from being the case with the Corinthians; but that the work was advancing, and that they were in fact under a process of sanctification.

But ye are justified - Your sins are pardoned, and you are accepted as righteous, and will be treated as such on account of the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ; see the note at Romans 1:17; note at Romans 3:25-26; note at Romans 4:3. The apostle does not say that this was last in the order of time, but simply says that this was done to them. People are justified when they believe, and when the work of sanctification commences in the soul.

In the name of the Lord Jesus - That is, by the Lord Jesus; by his authority, appointment, influence; see the note at Acts 3:6. All this had been accomplished through the Lord Jesus; that is, in his name forgiveness of sins had been proclaimed to them Luke 24:47; and by his merits all these favors had been conferred on them.

And by the Spirit of our God - The Holy Spirit. All this had been accomplished by his agency on the heart - This verse brings in the whole subject of redemption, and states in a most emphatic manner the various stages by which a sinner is saved, and by this single passage, a man may obtain all the essential knowledge of the plan of salvation. All is condensed here in few words:

(1) He is by nature a miserable and polluted sinner - without merit, and without hope.

(2) he is renewed by the Holy Spirit, and washed by baptism.

(3) he is justified, pardoned, and accepted as righteous, through the merits of the Lord Jesus alone.

(4) he is made holy - becomes sanctified - and more and more like God, and fit for heaven.

(5) all this is done by the agency of the Holy Spirit.

(6) the obligation thence results that be should lead a holy life, and forsake sin in every form.

Verse 12

All things are lawful unto me - The apostle here evidently makes a transition to another subject from that which he had been discussing - a consideration of the propriety of using certain things which had been esteemed lawful. The expression, "all things are lawful," is to be understood as used by those who palliated certain indulgences, or who vindicated the vices here referred to, and Paul designs to reply to them. His reply follows. He had been reproving them for their vices, and had specified several. It is not to be supposed that they would indulge in them without some show of defense; and the declaration here has much the appearance of a proverb, or a common saying - that all things were lawful; that is, "God has formed all things for our use, and there can be no evil if we use them." By the phrase "all things" here, perhaps, may be meant many things; or things in general; or there is nothing in itself unlawful.

That there were many vicious persons who held this sentiment there can be no doubt; and though it cannot be supposed that there were any in the Christian church who would openly advocate it, yet the design of Paul was to "cut up" the plea altogether "wherever it might be urged," and to show that it was false and unfounded. The particular flyings which Paul here refers to, are those which have been called "adiaphoristic," or indifferent; that is, pertaining to certain meats and drinks, etc. With this Paul connects also the subject of fornication - the subject particularly under discussion. This was defended as "lawful," by many Greeks, and was practiced at Corinth; and was the vice to which the Corinthian Christians were

particularly exposed. Paul designed to meet all that could be said on this subject; and to show them that these indulgences could not be proper for Christians, and could not in any way be defended - We are not to understand Paul as admitting that fornication is in any case lawful; but he designs to show that the practice cannot possibly be defended in any way, or by any of the arguments which had been or could be used. For this purpose, he observes:

(1)That admitting that all things were lawful, there were many things which ought not to be indulged;

(2)That admitting that they were lawful, yet a man ought not to be under the power of any improper indulgence, and should abandon any habit when it had the mastery.

(3)that fornication was positively wrong, and against the very nature and essence of Christianity, 1 Corinthians 6:13-20.

Are not expedient - This is the first answer to the objection. Even should we admit that the practices under discussion are lawful, yet there are many things which are not expedient; that is, which do not profit, for so the word συμφέρει sumphereiproperly signifies; they are injurious and hurtful. They might injure the body; produce scandal; lead others to offend or to sin. Such was the case with regard to the use of certain meats, and even with regard to the use of wine. Paul‘s rule on this subject is stated in 1 Corinthians 8:13. That if these things did injury to others, he would abandon them forever; even though they were in themselves lawful; see the Romans 14:14-23 notes. There are many customs which, perhaps, cannot be strictly proved to be unlawful or sinful, which yet do injury in some way if indulged in; and which as their indulgence can do no good, should be abandoned. Anything that does evil - however small - and no good, should be abandoned at once.

All things are lawful - Admitting this; or even on the supposition that all things are in themselves right.

But I will not be brought under the power - I will not be subdued by it; I will not become the “slave” of it.

Of any - Of any custom, or habit, no matter what it is. This was Paul‘s rule; the rule of an independent mind. The principle was, that even admitting that certain things were in themselves right, yet his grand purpose was “not to be the slave of habit,” not to be subdued by any practice that

might corrupt his mind, fetter his energies, or destroy his freedom as a man and as a Christian. We may observe:

(1) That this is a good rule to act on. It was Paul‘s rule 1 Corinthians 9:27, and it will do as well for us as for him.

(2) it is the true rule of an independent and noble mind. It requires a high order of virtue; and is the only way in which a man may be useful and active.

(3) it may be applied to “many things” now. Many a Christian and Christian minister “is a slave;” and is completely under the power of some habit that destroys his usefulness and happiness. He is the slave of indolence, or carelessness, or of some vile habit - as the use of tobacco, or of wine. He has not independence enough to break the cords that bind him; and the consequence is, that life is passed in indolence, or in self-indulgence, and time, and strength, and property are wasted, and religion blighted, and souls ruined.

(4) the man that has not courage and firmness enough to act on this rule should doubt his piety. If he is a voluntary slave to some idle and mischievous habit, how can he be a Christian! If he does not love his Saviour and the souls of people enough to break off from such habits which he knows are doing injury, how is he fit to be a minister of the self-denying Redeemer?

Verse 13

Meats for the belly … - This has every appearance of being an adage or proverb. Its meaning is plain. “God has made us with appetites for food; and he has made food adapted to such appetites, and it is right, therefore, to indulge in luxurious living.” The word “belly” here κοιλία koiliadenotes the “stomach;” and the argument is, that as God had created the natural appetite for food, and had created food, it was right to indulge in eating and drinking to any extent which the appetite demanded. The word “meats” here βρώματα brōmatadoes not denote animal food particularly, or flesh, but “any kind” of food. This was the sense of the English word formerly. Matthew 3:4; Matthew 6:25; Matthew 9:10; Matthew 10:10; Matthew 14:9, etc.

But God shall destroy - This is the reply of Paul to the argument. This reply is, that as both are so soon to be destroyed, they were unworthy of the care which was bestowed on them, and that attention should be directed to better things. It is unworthy the immortal mind to spend its time and thought in making provision for the body which is soon to perish. And especially a man should be willing to abandon indulgences in these things when they tended to injure the mind, and to destroy the soul. It is unworthy a mind that is to live forever, thus to be anxious about that which is so soon to be destroyed in the grave We may observe here:

(1) This is the great rule of the mass of the world. The pampering of the appetites is the great purpose for which they live, and the only purpose.

(2) it is folly. The body will soon be in the grave; the soul in eternity. How low and grovelling is the passion which leads the immortal mind always to anxiety about what the body shall eat and drink!

(3) people should act from higher motives. They should be thankful for appetites for food; and that God provides for the needs of the body; and should eat to obtain strength to serve him, and to discharge the duties of life. Man often degrades himself below - far below - the brutes in this thing. they never pamper their appetites, or "create artificial" appetites. Man, in death, sinks to the same level; and all the record of his life is, that "he lived to eat and drink, and died as the brute dieth." How low human nature has fallen! How sunken is the condition of man!

Now the body is not … - "But δέ dethe body is not designed for licentiousness, but to be devoted to the Lord." The remainder of this chapter is occupied with an argument against indulgence in licentiousness - a crime to which the Corinthians were particularly exposed. See the Introduction to this Epistle. It cannot be supposed that any members of the church would indulge in this vice, or would vindicate it; but it was certain:

(1)That it was the sin to which they were particularly exposed;

(2)That they were in the midst of a people who did both practice and vindicate it; compare Revelation 2:14-15.

Hence, the apostle furnished them with arguments against it, as well to guard them from temptation, as to enable them to meet those who did defend it, and also to settle the morality of the question on an immovable foundation. The first argument is here stated, that the body of man was

designed by its Maker to be devoted to him, and should be consecrated to the purposes of a pure and holy life. We are, therefore, bound to devote our animal as well as our rational powers to the service of the Lord alone.

And the Lord for the body - "The Lord is in an important sense for the body, that is, he acts, and plans, and provides for it. He sustains and keeps it; and he is making provision for its immortal purity and happiness in heaven. It is not right, therefore, to take the body, which is nourished by the kind and constant agency of a holy God, and to devote it to purposes of pollution." That there is a reference in this phrase to the resurrection, is apparent from the following verse. And as God will exert his mighty power in raising up the body, and will make it glorious, it ought not to be prostituted to purposes of licentiousness.

Verse 14

And God hath both raised up … - This is the "second" argument against indulgences in this sin. It is this. "We are united to Christ. God has raised him from the dead, and made his body glorified. Our bodies will be like his (compare Philemon 3:21); and since our body is to be raised up by the power of God; since it is to be perfectly pure and holy, and since this is to be done by his agency, it is wrong that it should be devoted to purposes of pollution and lust." It is unworthy:

(1) Of our connection with that pure Saviour who has been raised from the dead - the image of our resurrection from the death and defilements of sin (compare the notes at Romans 6:1-12); and,

(2) Unworthy of the hope that our bodies shall be raised up to perfect and immortal purity in the heavens. No argument could be stronger. A deep sense of our union with a pure and risen Saviour, and a lively hope of immortal purity, would do more than all other things to restrain from licentious indulgences.

Verse 15-16

Know ye not … - This is the third argument against licentiousness. It is, that we as Christians are united to Christ (compare the notes at John 15:1 ff); and that it is abominable to take the members of Christ and subject them to pollution and sin. Christ was pure - wholly pure. We are professedly united to him. We are bound therefore to be pure, as he was. Shall that

which is a part, as it were, of the pure and holy Saviour, be prostituted to impure and unholy embraces?

God forbid! - See the note at Romans 3:4. This expresses the deep abhorrence of the apostle at the thought. It needed not argument to show it. The whole world revolted at the idea; and language could scarcely express the abomination of the very thought.

Know ye not … - This is designed to confirm and strengthen what he had just said.

He which is joined - Who is attached to; or who is connected with.

Is one body - That is, is to he regarded as one; is closely and intimately united. Similar expressions occur in Classic writers. See Grotius and Bloomfield.

For two, saith he … - This Paul illustrates by a reference to the formation of the marriage connection in Ger. Romans 2:14. He cannot be understood as affirming that that passage had original reference to illicit connections; but be uses it for purposes of illustration. God had declared that the man and his wife became one; in a similar sense in unlawful connections the parties became one.

Verse 17

But he that is joined to the Lord - The true Christian, united by faith to the Lord Jesus; see John 15:1 ff.

Is one spirit - That is, in a sense similar to that in which a man and his wife are one body. It is not to be taken literally; but the sense is, that there is a close and intimate union; they are united in feeling, spirit, intention, disposition. The argument is beautiful. It is, "As the union of souls is more important than that of bodies; as that union is more lasting, dear, and enduring than any union of body with body can be, and as our union with him is with a Spirit pure and holy, it is improper that we should sever that tie, and break that sacred bond, by being joined to a harlot. The union with Christ is more intimate, entire, and pure than that can be between a man and woman; and that union should be regarded as sacred and inviolable." O, if all Christians felt and regarded this as they should, how would they shrink from the connections which they often form on earth! Compare Ephesians 4:4.

Verse 18

Flee fornication - A solemn command of God - as explicit as any that thundered from Mount Sinai. None can disregard it with impunity - none

can violate it without being exposed to the awful vengeance of the Almighty. There is force and emphasis in the word "flee" φεύγατε pheugateMan should escape from it; he should not stay to reason about it; to debate the matter; or even to contend with his propensities, and to try the strength of his virtue. There are some sins which a man can resist; some about which he can reason without danger of pollution. But this is a sin where a man is safe only when he flies; free from pollution only when he refuses to entertain a thought of it; secure when he seeks a victory by flight, and a conquest by retreat. Let a man turn away from it without reflection on it and he is safe. Let him think, and reason, and he may be ruined. "The very passage of an impure thought through the mind leaves pollution behind it." An argument on the subject often leaves pollution; a description ruins; and even the presentation of motives against it may often fix the mind with dangerous inclination on the crime. There is no way of avoiding the pollution but in the manner prescribed by Paul; there is no man safe who will not follow his direction. How many a young man would be saved from poverty, want, disease, curses, tears, and hell, could these two words be made to blaze before him like the writing before the astonished eyes of Belshazzar Daniel 5, and could they terrify him from even the momentary contemplation of the crime.

Every sin … - This is to be taken comparatively. Sins in general; the common sins which people commit do not immediately and directly affect the body, or waste its energies, and destroy life. Such is the case with falsehood, theft, malice, dishonesty, pride, ambition, etc. They do not immediately and directly impair the constitution amid waste its energies.

Is without the body - Does not immediately and directly affect the body. The more immediate effect is on the mind; but the sin under consideration produces an immediate and direct effect on the body itself.

Sinneth against his own body - This is the FourTH argument against indulgence in this vice; and it is more striking and forcible. The sense is, "It wastes the bodily energies; produces feebleness, weakness, and disease; it impairs the strength, enervates the man, and shortens life." Were it proper, this might be proveD to the satisfaction of every man by an examination of the effects of licentious indulgence. Those who wish to see the effects stated may find them in Dr. Rush on the *Diseases of the Mind*. Perhaps no single sin has done so much to produce the most painful and dreadful diseases, to weaken the constitution, and to shorten life as this. Other vices, as gluttony

and drunkenness, do this also, and all sin has some effect in destroying the body, but it is true of this sin in an eminent degree.

Verse 19

What! know ye not … - This is the fifth argument against this sin. The Holy Spirit dwells in us; our bodies are his temples; and they should not be defiled and polluted by sin; see the note at 1 Corinthians 3:16-17. As this Spirit is in us, and as it is given us by God, we ought not to dishonor the gift and the giver by pollution and vice.

And ye are not your own - This is the sixth argument which Paul uses. We are purchased; we belong to God; we are his by redemption; by a precious price paid; and we are bound, therefore, to devote ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, as he directs, to the glory of his name, not to the gratification of the flesh; see the note at Romans 14:7-8.

Verse 20

For ye are bought - Ye Christians are purchaseD; and by right of purchase should therefore be employed as he directs. This doctrine is often taught in the New Testament, and the argument is often urged that, therefore, Christians should be devoted to God; see 1 Corinthians 7:23; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 2:1; Revelation 5:9; see the note at Acts 20:28.

With a price - τίμῃ timēA price is that which is paid for an article, and which, in the view of the seller, is a fair compensation, or a valuable consideration why he should part with it; that is the price paid is as valuable to him as the thing itself would be. It may not be the same thing either in quality or quantity, but it is that which to him is a sufficient consideration why he should part with his property. When an article is bought for a valuable consideration, it becomes wholly the property of the purchaser. He may keep it, direct it, dispose of it. Nothing else is to be allowed to control it without his consent - The language here is figurative. It does not mean that there was strictly a commercial transaction in the redemption of the church, a literal "quid pro quo," for the thing spoken of pertains to moral government, and not to commerce. It means:

(1) That Christians have been redeemed, or recovered to God;

(2) that this has been done by a "valuable consideration," or that which, in his view, was a full equivalent for the sufferings that they would have endured if they had suffered the penalty of the law;

(3) That this valuable consideration was the blood of Jesus, as an atoning sacrifice, an offering, a ransom, which "would accomplish the same great ends in maintaining the truth and honor of God, and the majesty of his law, as the eternal condemnation of the sinner would have done;" and which, therefore, may be called, figuratively, the price which was paid. For if the same ends of justice could be accomplished by his atonement which would have been by the death of the sinner himself, then it was consistent for God to pardon him.

(4) nothing else could or would have done this. There was no price which the sinner could pay, no atonement which he could make; and consequently, if Christ had not died, the sinner would have been the slave of sin, and the servant of the devil forever.

(5) as the Christian is thus purchased, ransomed, redeemed, he is bound to devote himself to God only, and to keep his commands, and to flee from a licentious life.

Glorify God - Honor God; live to him; see the Matthew 5:16 note; John 12:28; John 17:1 notes.

In your body … - Let your entire person be subservient to the glory of God. Live to him; let your life tend to his honor. No stronger arguments could be adduced for purity of life, and they are such as all Christians must feel.

Remarks On 1 Corinthians 6:1-8. the evils of lawsuits, and of contentions among Christians. Every lawsuit between Christians is the means of greater or less dishonor to the cause of religion. The contention and strife; the time lost and the money wasted; the hard feelings engendered, and bitter speeches caused; the ruffled temper, and the lasting animosities that are produced, always injure the cause of religion, and often injure it for years. Probably no lawsuit was ever engaged in by a Christian that did not do some injury to the cause of Christ. Perhaps no lawsuit; was ever conducted between Christians that ever did any good to the cause of Christ.

2. A contentious spirit, a fondness for the agitation, the excitement, and the strife of courts, is inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel. Religion is

supposed to be retiring, peaceful, and calm. It seeks the peace of all, and it never rejoices in contentions.

3. Christians should do nothing that will tend to injure the cause of religion in the eye of the world, 1 Corinthians 6:7-8. How much better is it that I should lose a few pounds, than that my Saviour should lose his honor! How much better that my purse should be empty of glittering dust, even by the injustice of others, than that a single gem should be taken from his diadem! And how much better even that I should lose all, than that "my" hand should be reached out to pluck away one jewel, by my misconduct, from his crown! Can silver, can gold, can diamonds be compared in value to the honor of Christ and of his cause?

4. Christians should seldom go to law, even with others; never, if they can avoid it. Every other means should be tried first, and the law should be resorted to only when all else fails. How few lawsuits there would be if man had no bad passions! How seldom is the law applied to from the simple love of justice; how seldom from pure benevolence; how seldom foe the glory of God! In nearly all cases that occur between men, a friendly reference to others would settle all the difficulty; always if there were a right spirit between the parties. Comparatively few suits at law will be approved of, when people come to die; and the man who has had the least to do with the law, will have the least, usually, to regret when he enters the eternal world.

5. Christians should be honest - strictly honest - always honest, 1 Corinthians 6:8. They should do justice to all; they should defraud none. Few things occur that do more to disgrace religion than the suspicions of fraud, and overreaching, and deception, that often rest on professors of religion. How can a man be a Christian, and not be an honest man? Every man who is not strictly honest and honorable in his dealings, should be regarded, whatever may be his pretensions, as an enemy of Christ and his cause.

6. The unholy cannot be saved, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. So God has determined; and this purpose cannot be evaded or escaped. It is fixed; and men may think of it as they please, still it is true that there are large classes

of people who, if they continue such, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The fornicator, the idolater, the drunkard, and the covetous, cannot enter heaven. So the Judge of all has said, and who can unsay it? So he has decreed, and who can change his fixed decree? And so it should be. What a place would heaven be if the drunkard, and the adulterer, and the idolater were there! How impure and unholy would it be! How would it destroy all our hopes, dim all our prospects, mar all our joys, if we were told that they should sit down with the just in heaven! Is it not one of our fondest hopes that heaven will be pure, and that all its inhabitants shall be holy? And can God admit to his eternal embrace, and treat as his eternal friend, the man who is unholy; whose life is stained with abomination; who loves to corrupt others; and whose happiness is found in the sorrows, and the wretchedness, and vices of others? No, true religion is pure, and heaven is pure; and whatever people may think. Of one thing they may be assured, that the fornicator, and the drunkard, and the reviler shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

7. If none of these can be saved as they are, what a host are traveling down to hell! How large a part of every community is made up of such persons! How vast is the number of drunkards that are known! How vast the host of extortioners, and of covetous people, and revilers of all that is good! How many curse their God and their fellow man! How difficult to turn the corner of a street without hearing an oath! How necessary to guard against the frauds and deceptions of others! How many men and women are known to be impure in their lives! In all communities how much does this sin abound! and how many shall be revealed at the great Day as impure, who are now unsuspected! how many disclosed to the universe as all covered with pollution, who now boast even of purity, and who are received into the society of the virtuous and the lovely! Verily, the broad road to hell is thronged! And verily, the earth is pouring into hell a most dense and wretched population, and rolling down a tide of sin and misery that shall fill it with groans and gnashing of teeth forever.

8. It is well for Christians to reflect on their former course of life, as contrasted with their present mercies, 1 Corinthians 6:11. Such were they, and such they would still have been but for the mercy of God. Such as is the victim of uncleanness and pollution, such as is the profane man and the

reviler, such we should have been but for the mercy of God. That alone has saved us, and that only can keep us. How should we praise God for his mercy, and how are we bound to love and serve him for his amazing compassion in raising us from our deep pollution, and saving us from hell?

9. Christians should be pure; 1 Corinthians 6:11-19. They should be above suspicion. They should avoid the appearance of evil. No Christian can be too pure; none can feel too much the obligation to he holy. By every sacred and tender consideration God urges it on us; and by a reference to our own happiness as well as to his own glory, he calls on us to be holy in our lives.

10. May we remember that we are not our own; 1 Corinthians 6:20. We belong to God. We have been ransomed by sacred blood. By a reference to the value of that blood; by all its preciousness and worth; by all the sighs, and tears, and groans that bought us; by the agonies of the cross, and the bitter pains of the death of God‘s own Son, we are bound to live to God, and to him alone. When we are tempted to sin, let us think of the cross. When Satan spreads out his allurements, let us recall the remembrance of the sufferings of Calvary, and remember that all these sorrows were endured so that we might be pure. O how would sin appear were we beneath the cross, and did we feel the warm blood from the Saviour‘s open veins trickle upon us? Who would dare indulge in sin there? Who could do otherwise than devote himself, body, and soul, and spirit, unto God?

1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Introduction

This chapter commences the second part or division of this Epistle, or, "the discussion of those points which had been submitted to the apostle in a letter from the church at Corinth, for his instruction and advice." See the Introduction to the Epistle. The letter in which they proposed the questions which are here discussed, has been lost. It is manifest that, if we now had it, it would throw some light on the answers which Paul has given to their inquiries in this chapter. The first question which is discussed 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 is, whether it were lawful and proper to enter into the marriage relation. How this question had arisen, it is not now possible to determine with certainty. It is probable, however, that it arose from disputes between those of Jewish extraction, who held not only the lawfulness but the importance of the marriage relation, according to the doctrines of the Old Testament, and certain followers or friends of some Greek philosophers, who might have been the advocates of celibacy.

But "why" they advocated that doctrine is unknown. It is known, however, that many even of the Greek philosophers, among whom were Lycurgus, Thales, Antiphanes, and Socrates (see Grotius), thought that, considering "the untractable tempers of women, and how troublesome and fraught with danger was the education of children," it was the part of wisdom not to enter into the marriage relation. From them may have been derived the doctrine of celibacy in the Christian church; a doctrine that has been the cause of so much corruption in the monastic system, and in the celibacy of the clergy among the papists. The Jews, however, everywhere defended the propriety and duty of marriage. They regarded it as an ordinance of God. And to this day, they hold that a man who has arrived to the age of twenty years, and who has not entered into this relation, unless prevented by natural defects, or by profound study of the law, sins against God. Between these two classes, of those in the church who had been introduced there from these two classes, the question would be agitated whether marriage was lawful and advisable.

Another question which, it seems, had arisen among them was, whether it was proper to continue in the married state in the existing condition of the church, as exposed to trials and persecutions; or whether it was proper for

those who had become converted, to continue their relations in life with those who were unconverted. This the apostle discusses in 1 Corinthians 7:10-24. Probably many supposed that it was unlawful to live with those who were not Christians; and they thence inferred that the relation which subsisted before conversion should be dissolved. And this doctrine they carried to the relation between master and servant, as well as between husband and wife. The general doctrine which Paul states in answer to this is, that the wife was not to depart from her husband 1 Corinthians 7:10; but if she did, she was not at liberty to marry again, since her former marriage was still binding; 1 Corinthians 7:11. He added that a believing man, or Christian, should not put away his unbelieving wife 1 Corinthians 7:12, and that the relation should continue, notwithstanding a difference of religion; and that if a separation ensued, it should be in a peaceful manner, and the parties were not at liberty to marry again; 1 Corinthians 7:13-17. So, also, in regard to the relation of master and slave. It was not to be violently sundered. The relations of life were not to be broken up by Christianity; but every man was to remain in that rank of life in which he was when he was converted, unless it could be changed in a peaceful and lawful manner; 1 Corinthians 7:18-24.

A third subject submitted to him was, whether it was advisable, in existing circumstances, that the unmarried virgins who were members of the church should enter into the marriage relation; 1 Corinthians 7:26.

(2)that marriage tended to an increase of care and anxiety, and it might not be proper then to enter into that relation; 1 Corinthians 7:32-35.

(3)that they should live to God; 1 Corinthians 7:29-31.

(4)that a man should not be oppressive and harsh toward his daughter, or toward one under his care; but that, if it would be severe in him to forbid such a marriage, he should allow it; 1 Corinthians 7:36. And,

(5)That on the whole it was advisable, under existing circumstances, not to enter into the marriage relation; 1 Corinthians 7:38-40.

Verse 1

Now, concerning … - In reply to your inquiries. The first, it seems, was in regard to the propriety of marriage; that is, whether it was lawful and expedient.

It is good - It is well. It is fit, convenient, or, it is suited to the present circumstances, or, the thing itself is well and expedient in certain circumstances. The apostle did not mean that marriage was unlawful, for he says Hebrews 13:4 that "marriage is honorable in all." But he here admits, with one of the parties in Corinth, that it was well, and proper in some circumstances, not to enter into the marriage relation; see 1 Corinthians 7:7-8, 1 Corinthians 7:26, 1 Corinthians 7:28, 1 Corinthians 7:31-32.

Not to touch a woman - Not to be connected with her by marriage. Xenophon (Cyro. b. 1) uses the same word (ἅπτω haptō"to touch") to denote marriage; compare Genesis 20:4, Genesis 20:6; Genesis 26:11; Proverbs 6:29.

Verse 2

Nevertheless - But (δὲ de). Though this is to be admitted as proper where it can be done, when a man has entire control of himself and his passions, and though in present circumstances it would be expedient, yet it may be proper also to enter into the marriage connection.

To avoid fornication - Greek On account of διὰ diafornication. The word fornication is used here in the large sense of licentiousness in general. For the sake of the purity of society, and to avoid the evils of sensual indulgence, and the corruptions and crimes which attend an illicit contact, it is proper that the married state should be entered. To this vice they were particularly exposed in Corinth. See the introduction. Paul would keep the church from scandal. How much evil, how much deep pollution, how many abominable crimes would have been avoided, which have since grown out of the monastic system, and the celibacy of the clergy among the papists, if Paul's advice had been followed by all professed Christians! Paul says that marriage is honorable, and that the relations of domestic life should be formed to avoid the evils which would otherwise result. The world is the witness of the evils which flow from the neglect of his advice. Every community where the marriage tie has been lax and feeble, or where it has been disregarded or dishonored, has been full of pollution, and it will always be. Society is pure and virtuous, just as marriage is deemed honorable, and as its vows are adhered to and preserved.

Let every man … - Let the marriage vow be honored by all.

Have his own wife - And one wife to whom he shall be faithful. Polygamy is unlawful under the gospel; and divorce is unlawful. Let every man and woman, therefore, honor the institution of God, and avoid the evils of illicit indulgence.

Verse 3

Let the husband … - "Let them not imagine that there is any virtue in bring separate from each other, as if they were in a state of celibacy" - "Doddridge." They are bound to each other; in every way they are to evince kindness, and to seek to promote the happiness and purity of each other. There is a great deal of delicacy used here by Paul, and his expression is removed as far as possible from the grossness of pagan writers. His meaning is plain; but instead of using a word to express it which would be indelicate and offensive, he uses one which is not indelicate in the slightest degree. The word which he uses εὔνοιαν eunoianbenevolence") denotes kindness, good-will, affection of mind. And by the use of the word "due" ὀφειλομένην opheilomenēnhe reminds them of the sacredness of their vow, and of the fact that in person, property, and in every respect, they belong to each other. It was necessary to give this direction, for the contrary might have been regarded as proper by many who would have supposed there was special virtue and merit in living separate from each other; as facts have shown that many have imbibed such an idea - and it was not possible to give the rule with more delicacy than Paul has done. Many mss., however, instead of "due benevolence," read ὀφειλὴν opheilēn"a debt, or that which is owed;" and this reading has been adopted by Griesbach in the text. Homer, with a delicacy not unlike the apostle Paul, uses the word φιλότητα *filotēta* "friendship," to express the same idea.

Verse 4

The wife hath not power … - By the marriage covenant that power, in this respect, is transferred to the husband,

And likewise, also, the husband - The equal rights of husband and wife, in the Scriptures, are everywhere maintained. They are to regard themselves as united in most intimate union, and in most tender ties.

Verse 5

Defraud ye not … - Of the right mentioned above. Withdraw not from the society of each other.

Except it be with consent - With a mutual understanding, that you may engage in the extraordinary duties of religion; compare Exodus 19:15.

And come together again … - Even by mutual consent, the apostle would not have this separation to be perpetual, since it would expose them to many of the evils which the marriage relation was designed to avoid.

That Satan … - That Satan take not advantage of you, and throw you into temptation, and fill you with thoughts and passions which the marriage compact was designed to remedy.

Verse 6

But I speak this by permission … - It is not quite certain whether the word "this" (τοῦτο touto), in this verse, refers to what precedes, or to what follows. On this commentators are divided. The more natural and obvious interpretation would be to refer it to the preceding statement. I am inclined to think that the mare natural construction is the true one. and that Paul refers to what he had said in 1 Corinthians 7:5. Most recent commentators, as Macknight and Rosenmuller, however, suppose it refers to what follows, and appeal to similar places in Joel 1:2; Psalm 49:2; 1 Corinthians 10:23. Calvin supposes it refers to what was said in 1 Corinthians 7:1.

By permission - συγγνώμην sungnōmēnThis word means "indulgence," or "permission," and stands opposed to that which is expressly enjoined; compare 1 Corinthians 7:25. "I am ‹allowed‘ to say this; I have no express command on the subject; I give it as my opinion; I do not speak it directly under the influence of divine inspiration;" see 1 Corinthians 7:10, 1 Corinthians 7:25, 1 Corinthians 7:40. Paul here does not claim to be under inspiration in these directions which he specifics. But this is no argument against his inspiration in general, but rather the contrary. For:

(1) It shows that he was an honest man, and was disposed to state the exact truth. An impostor, pretending to inspiration, would have claimed to have been always inspired. Who ever heard of a pretender to divine inspiration admitting that in any thing he was not under divine guidance? Did Mahomet ever do this? Do impostors now ever do it?

(2) it shows that in other cases, where no exception is made, he claimed to be inspired. These few exceptions, which he expressly makes, prove that in everywhere else he claimed to be under the influence of inspiration.

(3) we are to suppose, therefore, that in all his writings where he makes no express exceptions, (and the exceptions are very few in number,) Paul

claimed to be inspired. Macknight, however, and some others, understand this as mere adVice, as an inspired man, though not as a command,

Not of commandment - Not by express instruction from the Lord; see 1 Corinthians 7:25. I do not claim in this to be under the influence of inspiration; and my counsel here may be regarded, or not, as you may be able to receive it.

Verse 7

For I would … - I would prefer.

That all men … - That Paul was unmarried is evident from 1 Corinthians 9:5. But he does not refer to this fact here. When he wishes that all people were like himself, he evidently does not intend that he would prefer that all should be unmarried, for this would be against the divine institution, and against his own precepts elsewhere. But he would be glad if all people had control over their passions and propensities as he had; had the gift of continence, and could abstain from marriage when circumstances of trial, etc., would make it proper. We may add, that when Paul wishes to exhort to anything that is difficult, he usually adduces "his own example" to show that "it may be done;" an example which it would be well for all ministers to be able to follow.

But every man hath his proper gift - Every man has his own special talent, or excellence. One man excels in one thing, and another in another. One may not have this particular virtue, but he maybe distinguished for another virtue quite as valuable. The doctrine here is, therefore, that we are not to judge of others by ourselves, or measure their virtue by ours. We may excel in some one thing, they in another. And because they have not our special virtue, or capability, we are not to condemn or denounce them; compare Matthew 19:11, Matthew 19:12.

Of God - Bestowed by God either in the original endowments and faculties of body or mind, or by his grace. In either case it is the gift of God. The virtue of continence is his gift as well as any other; and Paul had reason, as any other man must have, to be thankful that God had conferred it on him. So if a man is naturally amiable, kind, gentle, large-hearted, tender, and affectionate, he should regard it as the gift of God, and be thankful that he has not to contend with the evils of a morose, proud, haughty, and severe temper. It is true, however, that all these virtues may be greatly strengthened by discipline, and that religion gives vigor and comeliness to them all. Paul's virtue in this was strengthened by his

resolution; by his manner of life; by his frequent fastings and trials, and "by the abundant employment" which God gave him in the apostleship. And it is true still, that if a man is desirous to overcome the lusts of the flesh, industry, and hardship, and trial, and self-denial will enable him, by the grace of God, to do it. idleness is the cause of no small part of the corrupt desires of people; and God kept Paul from these:

(1)By giving him enough to do; and,

(2)By giving him enough to suffer.

Verse 8

It is good for them - It may be advisable, in the present circumstances of persecution and distress, not to be encumbered with the cares and anxieties of a family; see 1 Corinthians 7:26, 1 Corinthians 7:32-34. The word unmarried (ἀγάμοις agamois) may refer either to those who had never been married, or to widowers. It here means simply those who were at that time unmarried, and his reasoning applies to both classes.

And to widows - The apostle specifies these, though he had not specified "widowers" particularly. The reason of this distinction seems to be, that he considers more particularly the case of those females who had never been married, in the close of the chapter, 1 Corinthians 7:25.

That they abide - That they remain, in the present circumstances, unmarried; see 1 Corinthians 7:26.

Verse 9

But if they cannot contain - If they have not the gift of continence; if they cannot be secure against temptation; if they have not strength of virtue enough to preserve them from the danger of sin, and of bringing reproach and scandal on the church.

It is better - It is to be preferred.

Than to burn - The passion here referred to is often compared to a fire; see Virgil, *Aeneas* 4:68. It is better to marry, even with all the inconveniences attending the marriage life in a time of distress and persecution in the church 1 Corinthians 7:26, than to be the prey of raging, consuming, and exciting passions.

Verse 10

And unto the married - This verse commences the second subject of inquiry; to wit, whether it was proper, in the existing state of things, for those who were married to continue this relation, or whether they ought to

separate. The reasons why any may have supposed that it was best to separate, may have been:

(1)That their troubles and persecutions might be such that they might judge it best that families should be broken up; and,

(2)Probably many supposed that it was unlawful for a Christian wife or husband to be connected at all with a pagan and an idolater.

I command, yet not I, but the Lord - Not I so much as the Lord. This injunction is not to be understood as adVice merely, but as a solemn, divine command, from which you are not at liberty to depart. Paul here professes to utter the language of inspiration, and demands obedience. The express command of "the Lord" to which he refers, is probably the precept recorded in Matthew 5:32, and Matthew 19:3-10. These precepts of Christ asserted that the marriage tie was sacred and inviolable.

Let not the wife depart … - Let her not prove faithless to her marriage vows; let her not, on any pretence, desert her husband. Though she is a Christian. and he is not, yet let her not seek, on that account, to be separate from him - The law of Moses did not permit a wife to divorce herself from her husband, though it was sometimes done (compare Matthew 10:12); but the Greek and Roman laws allowed it - Grotius. But Paul here refers to a formal and legal separation before the magistrates, and not to a voluntary separation, without intending to be formally divorced. The reasons for this opinion are:

(1) That such divorces were known and practiced among both Jews and pagans.

(2) it was important to settle the question whether they were to be allowed in the Christian church.

(3) the claim would be set up, probably, that it might be done.

(4) the question whether a "voluntary separation" might not be proper, where one party was a Christian, and the other not, he discusses in the following verses, 1 Corinthians 7:12-17. Here, therefore, he solemnly repeats the law of Christ, that divorce, under the Christian economy, was not to be in the power either of the husband or wife.

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Verse 11

But and if she depart - If she have withdrawn by a rash and foolish act; if she has attempted to dissolve the marriage vow, she is to remain unmarried, or be reconciled. She is not at liberty to marry another. This may refer, I suppose, to instances where wives, ignorant of the rule of Christ, and supposing that they had a right to separate themselves from their husbands, had rashly left them, and had supposed that the marriage contract was dissolved. Paul tells them that this was impossible; and that if they had so separated from their husbands, the pure laws of Christianity, did not recognize this right, and they must either be reconciled to their husbands, or remain alone. The marriage tie was so sacred that it could not be dissolved by the will of either party.

Let her remain unmarried - That is, let her not marry another.

Or be reconciled to her husband - Let this be done, if possible. If it cannot be, let her remain unmarried. It was a duty to be reconciled if it was possible. If not, she should not violate her vows to her husband so far as to marry another. It is evident that this rule is still binding, and that no one who has separated from her husband, whatever be the cause, unless there be a regular divorce, according to the law of Christ Matthew 5:32, can be at liberty to marry again.

And let not the husband - See the note at Matthew 5:32. This right, granted under the Jewish law, and practiced among all the pagan, was to be taken away wholly under the gospel. The marriage tie was to be regarded as sacred; and the tyranny of man over woman was to cease.

Verse 12

But to the rest - "I have spoken in regard to the duties of the unmarried, and the question whether it is right and advisable that they should marry, 1 Corinthians 7:1-9. I have also uttered the command of the Lord in regard to those who are married, and the question whether separation and divorce were proper. Now in regard to "the rest of the person's and cases" referred to, I will deliver my opinion." "The rest," or remainder, here referred to, relates particularly to the cases in which one party was a Christian and the other not. In the previous verses he had delivered the solemn, explicit law of Christ, that divorce was to take place on neither side, and in no instance, except agreeably. to the law of Christ; Matthew 5:32. That was settled by divine authority. In the subsequent verses he discusses a different question; whether a "voluntary separation" was not advisable and proper when the

one party was a Christian and the other not. The word "rest" refers to these instances, and the questions which would arise under this inquiry.

Not the Lord - See the note at 1 Corinthians 7:6. "I do not claim, in this advice, to be under the influence of inspiration; I have no express command on the subject from the Lord; but I deliver my opinion as a servant of the Lord 1 Corinthians 7:40, and as having a right to offer advice, even when I have no express command from God, to a church which I have founded, and which has consulted me on the subject." This was a case in which both he and they were to follow the principles of Christian prudence and propriety, when there was no express commandment. Many such cases may occur. But few, perhaps none, can occur, in which some Christian principle shall not be found, that will be sufficient to direct the anxious inquirer after truth and duty.

If any brother - Any Christian.

That believeth not - That is not a Christian; one who is a pagan.

And if she be pleased - If it seems best to her; if she consents; approves of living together still. There might be many cases where the wife or the husband, that was not a Christian, would be so opposed to Christianity, and so violent in their opposition, that they would not be willing to live with a Christian. When this was the case, the Christian husband or wife could not prevent the separation. When this was not the case, they were not to seek a separation themselves.

To dwell with him - To remain in connection with him as his wife, though they differed on the subject of religion.

Let him not put her away - Though she is a pagan, though opposed to his religion, yet the marriage vow is sacred and inviolable. It is not to be sundered by any change which can take place in the opinions of either party. It is evident that if a man were at liberty to dissolve the marriage tie, or to discard his wife when his own opinions were changed on the subject of religion, that it would at once destroy all the sacredness of the marriage union, and render it a nullity. Even, therefore, when there is a difference of opinion on the vital subject of religion, the tie is not dissolved; but the only effect of religion should be, to make the converted husband or wife more tender, kind, affectionate, and faithful than they were before; and all the more so as their partners are without the hopes of the gospel, and as they may be won to love the Saviour, 1 Corinthians 7:16.

Verse 13

Let her not leave him - A change of phraseology from the last verse, to suit the circumstances. The wife did not have power to "put away" the husband, and expel him from his own home; but she might think it her duty to be separated from him. The apostle counsels her not to do this; and this advice should still be followed. She should still love her husband and seek his welfare; she should be still a kind, affectionate, and faithful wife; and all the more so that she may show him the excellence of religion, and win him to love it. She should even bear much, and bear it long; nor should she leave him unless her life is rendered miserable, or in danger; or unless he wholly neglects to make provision for her, and leaves her to suffering, to want, and to tears. In such a case no precept of religion forbids her to return to her father's house, or to seek a place of safety and of comfort. But even then it is not to be a separation on account of a difference of religious sentiment, but for brutal treatment. Even then the marriage tie is not dissolved, and neither party is at liberty to marry again.

Verse 14

For the unbelieving husband - The husband that is not a Christian; who still remains a pagan, or an impenitent man. The apostle here states reasons why a separation should not take place when there was a difference of religion between the husband and the wife. The first is, that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife. And the object of this statement seems to be, to meet an objection which might exist in the mind, and which might, perhaps, be urged by some. "Shall I not be polluted by such a connection? Shall I not be defiled, in the eye of God, by living in a close union with a pagan, a sinner, an enemy of God, and an opposer of the gospel?" This objection was natural, and is, doubtless, often felt. To this the apostle replies, "No; the contrary may he true. The connection produces a species of sanctification, or diffuses a kind of holiness over the unbelieving party by the believing party, so far as to render their children holy, and therefore it is improper to seek for a separation."

Is sanctified - ἡγίασται hēgiastaiThere has been a great variety of opinions in regard to the sense of this word. It does not comport with my design to state these opinions. The usual meaning of the word is, to make holy; to set apart to a sacred use; to consecrate, etc; see the note at John 17:17. But the expression cannot mean here:

(1) That the unbelieving husband would become holy, or be a Christian, "by the mere fact" of a connection "with" a Christian, for this would be to

do violence to the words, and would be contrary to facts everywhere; nor,

(2) That the unbelieving husband had been sanctified by the Christian wife (Whitby), for this would not be true in all cases; nor,

(3) That the unbelieving husband would gradually become more favorably inclined to Christianity, by observing its effects on the wife (according to Semler); for, though this might be true, yet the apostle was speaking of something then, and which rendered their children at that time holy; nor,

(4) That the unbelieving husband might more easily be sanctified, or become a Christian, by being connected with a Christian wife (according to Rosenmuller and Schleusner), because he is speaking of something in the connection which made the children holy; and because the word ἁγιάζω hagiazōis not used in this sense elsewhere. But it is a good rule of interpretation, that the words which are used in any place are to be limited in their signification by the connection; and all that we are required to understand here is, that the unbelieving husband was sanctified "in regard to the subject under discussion;" that is, in regard to the question whether it was proper for them to live together, or whether they should be separated or not. And the sense may be, "They are by the marriage tie one flesh. They are indissolubly united by the ordinance of God. As they are one by his appointment, as they have received his sanction to the marriage union, and as one of them is holy, so the other is to be regarded as sanctified, or made so holy by the divine sanction to the union, that it is proper for them to live together in the marriage relation." And in proof of this, Paul says if it were not so, if the connection was to he regarded as impure and abominable, then their children were to be esteemed as illegitimate and unclean. But now they were not so regarded, and could not so be; and hence, it followed that they might lawfully continue together. So Calvin, Beza, and Doddridge interpret the expression.

Else were your children unclean - (ἀκάθαρτα akatharta). Impure; the opposite of what is meant by holy. Here observe:

(1)That this is a reason why the parents, one of whom was a Christian and the other not, should not be separated; and,

(2)The reason is founded on the fact, that if they were separated, the offspring of such a union must be regarded as illegitimate, or unholy; and,

(3)It must be improper to separate in such a way, and for such a reason, because even they did not believe, and could not believe, that their children were defiled, and polluted, and subject to the shame and disgrace attending illegitimate children.

This passage has often been interpreted, and is often adduced to prove that children are "federally holy," and that they are entitled to the privilege of baptism on the ground of the faith of one of the parents. But against this interpretation there are insuperable objections:

(1) The phrase "federally holy" is unintelligible, and conveys no idea to the great mass of people. It occurs no where in the Scriptures, and what can be meant by it?

(2) it does not accord with the scope and design of the argument. There is not one word about baptism here; not one allusion to it; nor does the argument in the remotest degree hear upon it. The question was not whether children should be baptized, but it was whether there should be a separation between man and wife, where the one was a Christian and the other not. Paul states, that if such a separation should take place, it would imply that the marriage was improper; and of course the children must be regarded as unclean. But how would the supposition that they were federally holy, and the proper subjects of baptism, bear on this? Would it not be equally true that it was proper to baptize the children whether the parents were separated or not? Is it not a doctrine among Pedobaptists everywhere, that the children are entitled to baptism upon the faith of either of the parents, and that that doctrine is not affected by the question here agitated by Paul? Whether it was proper for them to live together or not, was it not equally true that the child of a believing parent was to be baptized? But,

(3) The supposition that this means that the children would be regarded as illegitimate if such a separation should take place, is one that accords with the whole scope and design of the argument. "When one party is a Christian and the other not shall there be a separation?" This was the question. "No," says Paul; if there is such a separation, it must be because the marriage is improper; because it would be wrong to live together in such

circumstances. What would follow from this? Why, that all the children that have been born since the one party became a Christian, must be regarded as having been born while a connection existed that was improper, and unChristian, and unlawful, and of course they must be regarded as illegitimate. But, says he, you do not believe this yourselves. It follows, therefore, that the connection, even according to your own views, is proper.

(4) this accords with the meaning of the word unclean (ἀκάθαρτα akatharta). It properly denotes that which is impure, defiled, idolatrous, unclean:

(a)In a Levitical sense; Leviticus 5:2.

(b)In a moral sense. Acts 10:28; 2 Corinthians 6:17; Ephesians 5:5.

The word will appropriately express the sense of illegitimacy; and the argument, I think, evidently requires this. It may be summed up in a few words. "Your separation would be a proclamation to all that you regard the marriage as invalid and improper. From this it would follow that the offspring of such a marriage would be illegitimate. But you are not prepared to admit this; you do not believe it. Your children which you esteem to be legitimate, and they are so. The marriage tie, therefore, should be regarded as binding, and separation unnecessary and improper." See, however, Doddridge and Bloomfield for a different view of this subject - I believe infant baptism to be proper and right, and an inestimable privilege to parents and to children. But a good cause should not be made to rest on feeble supports, nor upon forced and unnatural interpretations of the Scriptures. And such I regard the usual interpretation placed on this passage.

But now are they holy - Holy in the same sense as the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife; for different forms of the same word are usual. That is, they are legitimate. They are not to be branded and treated as bastards, as they would be by your separation. You regard them as having been born in lawful wedlock, and they are so; and they should be treated as such by their parents, and not be exposed to shame and disgrace by your separation.

The note of Dr. Doddridge, to which the author has candidly referred his readers, is here subjoined: "On the maturest and most impartial consideration of this text, I must judge it to refer to infant baptism. Nothing can be more apparent, than that the word "holy" signifies persons who

might be admitted to partake of the distinguishing rites of God‘s people; compare Exodus 19:6; Deuteronomy 7:6; Deuteronomy 14:2; Deuteronomy 26:19; Deuteronomy 33:3; Ezra 9:2, with Isaiah 35:8; Isaiah 52:1; Acts 10:28. And as for the interpretation which so many of our brethren, the Baptists, have contended for, that “holy” signifies “legitimate,” and “unclean, illegitimate” (not to urge that this seems an unscriptural sense of the word,) nothing can be more evident than that the argument will by no means bear it; for it would be proving a thing by itself “idem peridem” to argue, that the converse of the parent‘s was lawful because the children were not bastards, whereas all who thought the converse of the parents unlawful, must think that the children were illegitimate.”

The sense of the passage seems to be this: Christians are not to separate from their unconverted partners, although the Jews were commanded to put away their strange or pagan wives; because the unbelieving party is so far sanctified by the believing party, that the marriage connection is quite “lawful for Christians. There is nothing in the Christian religion that forbids it.” Otherwise, argues the Apostle, your children would be unclean, just as the offspring of unequal and forbidden marriages among the Jews, was unclean, and therefore denied the privilege of circumcision; whereas your infants, as appears from their right to baptism, acknowledged in all the churches, are holy, just as the Jewish children who had a right to circumcision were holy, not “internally” but externally and legally, in consequence of their covenant relation to God. Or briefly thus - Do not separate. The marriage is quite lawful for Christians, otherwise your children could not be reckoned holy, in the sense of having a right to the seal of the covenant, that is, baptism. The argument for infant baptism is indeed incidental, but not the less strong on that account. And to say there is no allusion whatever to that subject is a mere begging of the question.

To evade this conclusion in favor of infant baptism, the Baptists have strenuously contended, that the proper sense of “holy” is legitimate or lawfully born. But,

1. The word in the original (ἅγιος hagios) does not in a single instance bear this sense. The question is not what sense may possibly be attached to

the term, but what is its real meaning. It is on the other hand, very frequently used in the sense assigned to it by Doddridge and others.

2. According to this view (namely, of legitimacy), the apostle is made gravely to tell the Corinthians, that the marriage, in the supposed case, was lawful in a "civil sense," a thing which they could not possibly doubt, and which must have been "equally true if both parties had been unbelieving." It is incredible that the Corinthians should wish or need to be informed on any such point? But if we call to mind what has been noticed above, concerning the command, binding the Jews to dissolve their unequal marriages, and to treat the offspring of them as unclean Ezra 10:3, we can easily imagine the Corinthians anxious to ascertain whether the Christian religion had retained any such injunction. No, says the apostle, you see your children are holy, as the children of equal or allowed marriage among the Jews were. Therefore you need have no scruples on the point; you require not to separate. Any obscurity that rests on the passage arises from inattention to the Jewish laws, and to the senses in which the Jews used the words "unclean" and "holy." In primitive times these terms, applied to children, would be readily understood, without any explanation such as is needed now.

3. As Doddridge in the above note has acutely remarked, the supposition that the apostle proves the lawfulness of the marriage in a civil sense, from the legitimacy of the children, makes him argue in a circle. The thing to be proven, and the proof, are in reality one and the same. If the Corinthians knew that their children were legitimate, how could they think of applying to Paul on a subject so simple as the legality of of their marriages. It is as if they had said, "We know that our children are legitimate. Inform us if our marriages are legal!

Verse 15

But if the unbelieving depart - If they choose to leave you.

Let him depart - You cannot prevent it, and you are to submit to it patiently, and bear it as a Christian.

A brother or a sister is not under bondage … - Many have supposed that this means that they would be at liberty to marry again when the unbelieving wife or husband had gone away; as Calvin, Grotius, Rosenmuller, etc. But this is contrary to the strain of the argument of the

apostle. The sense of the expression "is not bound," etc. is, that if they forcibly depart, the one that is left is not bound by the marriage tie to make provision for the one that departed; to do acts that might be prejudicial to religion by a violent effort to compel the departing husband or wife to live with the one that is forsaken; but is at liberty to live separate, and should regard it as proper so to do.

God hath called us to peace - Religion is peaceful. It would prevent contentions and broils. This is to be a grand principle. If it cannot be obtained by living together, there should be a peaceful separation; and "where" such a separation has taken place, the one which has departed should be suffered to remain separate in peace. God has called us to live in peace with all if we can. This is the general principle of religion on which we are always to act. In our relation to our partners in life, as well as in all other relations and circumstances, this is to guide us. Calvin supposes that this declaration pertains to the former part of this verse; and that Paul means to say, that if the unbelieving depart, he is to be suffered to do so peaceably rather than to have contention and strife, for God has called us to a life of peace.

Verse 16

For what knowest thou … - The apostle here assigns a reason why the believing party should not separate from the other needlessly, or why he should not desire to be separated. The reason is, the possibility, or the probability, that the unbelieving party might be converted by the example and entreaties of the other.

Whether then … - How do you know "but" this may be done? Is there not a possibility, nay a probability of it, and is not this a sufficient reason for continuing together?

Save thy husband - Gain him over to the Christian faith; be the means of his conversion and salvation. compare Romans 11:26. We learn from this verse:

(1) That there is a possibility that an unbelieving partner in life may be converted by the example of the other.

(2) That this should be an object of intense interest to the Christian husband or wife, because:

(a)It will promote the happiness of the other;

(b)It will promote their usefulness;

(c)It will be the means of blessing their family, for parents should be united on the subject of religion, and in their example and influence in training up their sons and daughters; and,

(d)Because the salvation of a beloved husband or wife should be an object of intense interest,

(3) This object is of so much importance that the Christian should be willing to submit to much, to bear much, and to bear long, in order that it may be accomplished. Paul said that it was desirable even to live with a pagan partner to do it; and so also it is desirable to bear much, very much, with even an unkind and fretful temper, with an unfaithful and even an intemperate husband, or with a perverse and peevish wife, if there is a prospect that they may be converted.

(4) this same direction is elsewhere given; 1 Peter 3:1-2.

(5) it is often done. It is not hopeless. Many a wife has thus been the means of saving a husband; many a husband has been the means of the salvation of the wife - In regard to the means by which this is to be hoped for, we may observe that it is not by a harsh, fretful, complaining temper; it is to be by kindness, and tenderness, and love. It is to be by an exemplification of the excellency of religion by example; by patience when provoked, meekness when injured, love when despised, forbearance when words of harshness and irritation are used, and by showing how a Christian can live, and what is the true nature of religion; by kind and affectionate conversation when alone, when the heart is tender, when calamities visit the family, and when the thoughts are drawn along by the events of Providence toward death. Not by harshness or severity of manner, is the result to be hoped for, but by tender entreaty, and mildness of life, and by prayer. Pre eminently this is to be used. When a husband will not hear, God can hear; when he is angry, morose, or unkind, God is gentle, tender, and kind; and when a husband or a wife turn away from the voice of gentle entreaty, God‘s ear is open, and God is ready to hear and to bless. Let one thing guide the life. We are never to cease to set a Christian example; never to cease to live as a Christian should live; never to cease to pray fervently to the God of grace, that the partner of our lives may be brought under the full influence of Christian truth, and meet us in the enjoyments of heaven.

Verse 17

But as God hath distributed … - As God hath divided (ἐμέρισεν emerisen); that is, given, imparted to anyone. As God has given grace to everyone. The words εἰ μὴ ei mēdenote simply but in the beginning of this verse. The apostle here introduces a new subject; or an inquiry varying somewhat from that preceding, though of the same general nature. He had discussed the question whether a husband and wife ought to be separated on account of a difference in religion. He now says that the general principle there stated ought to rule everywhere; that people who become Christians ought not to seek to change their condition or calling in life, but to remain in that situation in which they were when they became Christians, and show the excellence of their religion in that particular calling. The object of Paul, therefore, is to preserve order, industry, faithfulness in the relations of life, and to show that Christianity does not design to break up the relations of social and domestic contact. This discussion continues to 1 Corinthians 7:24. The phrase "as God hath distributed" refers to the condition in which people are placed in life, whether as rich or poor, in a state of freedom or servitude, of learning or ignorance, etc. And it implies that God appoints the lot of people, and orders the circumstances of their condition; that religion is not designed to interfere directly with this; and that people should seek to show the real excellence of religion in the particular sphere in which they may have been placed by divine providence before they became converted.

As the Lord hath called everyone - That is, in the condition or circumstances in which anyone is when he is called by the Lord to be a Christian.

So let him walk - In that sphere of life; in that calling 1 Corinthians 7:20; in that particular relation in which he was, let him remain, unless he can consistently change it for the better, and there let him illustrate the true beauty and excellence of religion. This was designed to counteract the notion that the fact of embracing a new religion dissolved the relations of life which existed before. This idea probably prevailed extensively among the Jews. Paul's object is to show that the gospel, instead of dissolving those relations, only strengthened them, and enabled those who were converted the better to discharge the duties which grow out of them.

And so ordain I … - This is no unique rule for you Corinthians. It is the universal rule which I everywhere inculcated. It is not improbable that there was occasion to insist everywhere on this rule, and to repress disorders

which might have been attempted by some who might suppose that Christianity dissolved the former obligations of life.

Verse 18

Is any man called? - Does anyone become a Christian? See the note at 1 Corinthians 1:26.

Being circumcised - Being a native-born Jew, or having become a Jewish proselyte, and having submitted to the initiatory rite of the Jewish religion.

Let him not become uncircumcised - This could not be literally done. But the apostle refers here to certain efforts which were made to remove the marks of circumcision which were often attempted by those who were ashamed of having been circumcised. The practice is often alluded to by Jewish writers, and is described by them; compare 1Mac. 1 Corinthians 1:15. It is not decorous or proper here to show how this was done. The process is described in Cels. de Med. 7:25; see Grotuns and Bloomfield.

Is any called in uncircumcision? - A Gentile, or one who had not been circumcised.

Let him not be circumcised - The Jewish rites are not binding, and are not to be enjoined on those who have been converted from the Gentiles; see the notes at Romans 2:27-30.

Verse 19

Circumcision is nothing … - It is of no consequence in itself. It is not that which God requires now. And the mere external rite can be of no consequence one way or the other. The heart is all; and that is what God demands; see the notes at Romans 2:29.

But the keeping of the commandments of God - Is something, is the main thing, is everything; and this can be done whether a man is circumcised or not.

Verse 20

Let every man abide - Let him remain or continue.

In the same calling - The same occupation, profession, rank of life. We use the word "calling" in the same sense to denote the occupation or profession of a man. Probably the original idea which led people to designate a profession as a CallinG was the belief that God called every man to the profession and rank which he occupies; that is, that it is by his "arrangement, or providence," that he occupies that rank rather than another. In this way every man has a Call to the profession in which he is

engaged as really as ministers of the gospel; and every man should have as clear evidence that "God has called" him to the sphere of life in which he moves as ministers of the gospel should have that God has called them to their appropriate profession. This declaration of Paul, that everyone is to remain in the same occupation or rank in which he was when he was converted, is to he taken in a general and not in an unqualified sense. It does not design to teach that a man is in no situation to seek a change in his profession when he becomes pious. But it is intended to show that religion was the friend of order; that it did not disregard or disarrange the relations of social life; that it was suited to produce contentment even in an humble walk, and to prevent repinings at the lot of those who were more favored or happy. That it did not design to prevent all change is apparent from the next verse, and from the nature of the case. some of the circumstances in which a change of condition, or of calling, may be proper when a man is converted, are the following:

(1) When a man is a slave, and he can obtain his freedom, 1 Corinthians 7:21.

(2) when a man is pursuing a wicked calling or course of life when he was converted, even if it is lucrative, he should abandon it as speedily as possible. Thus, if a man is engaged, as John Newton was, in the slave-trade, he should at once abandon it. If he is engaged in the manufacture or sale of ardent spirits, he should at once forsake the business, even at great personal sacrifice, and engage in a lawful and honorable employment; see the note at Acts 19:19. No considerations can justify a continuance in a course of life like this after a man is converted. No consideration can make a business which is "evil, and only evil, and that continually," proper or right.

(3) where a man can increase his usefulness by choosing a new profession. Thus, the usefulness of many a man is greatly promoted by his leaving an agricultural, or mechanical employment; or by his leaving the bar, or the mercantile profession, and becoming a minister of the gospel. In such situations, religion not only permits a man to change his profession, but it demands it; nor will God smile upon him, or bless him, unless the change is made. An opportunity to become more useful imposes an obligation to change the course of life. And no man is permitted to waste his

life and talents in a mere scheme of money-making, or in self-indulgence, when by changing his calling he can do more for the salvation of the world.

Verse 21

Being a servant - (δοῦλος doulos). A slave. Slaves abounded in Greece and in every part of the pagan world. Athens, e. g., had, in her best days, 20,000 freemen, and 400,000 slaves. See the condition of the pagan world on this subject illustrated at length, and in a very learned manner, by B. B. Edwards, in the Bib. Repository for October, 1835, pp. 411-436. It was a very important subject to inquire what ought to be done in such instances. Many slaves who had been converted might argue that the institution of slavery was contrary to the rights of man; that it destroyed their equality with other people; that it was cruel, and oppressive, and unjust in the highest degree; and that therefore they ought not to submit to it, but that they should burst their bonds, and assert their rights as freemen. In order to prevent restlessness, uneasiness, and insubordination; in order to preserve the peace of society, and to prevent religion from being regarded as disorganizing and disorderly, Paul here states the principle on which the slave was to act. And by referring to this case, which was the strongest which could occur, he designed doubtless to inculcate the duty of order, and contentment in general in all the other relations in which people might be when they were converted.

care not for it - Let it not be a subject of deep anxiety and distress; do not deem it to be disgraceful; let it not affect your spirits; but be content in the lot of life where God has placed you. If you can in a proper way obtain your freedom, do it; if not let it not be a subject of painful reflection. In the sphere of life where God by his providence has placed you, strive to evince the Christian spirit, and show that you are able to bear the sorrows and endure the toils of your humble lot with submission to the will of God, and so as to advance in that relation the interest of the true religion. in that calling do your duty, and evince always the spirit of a Christian. This duty is often enjoined on those who were servants, or slaves; Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22; 1 Timothy 6:1; Titus 2:9; 1 Peter 2:18. This duty of the slave, however, does not make the oppression of the master right or just, any more than the duty of one who is persecuted or reviled to be patient and meek makes the conduct of the persecutor or reviler just or right; nor does it prove that the master has a right to hold the slave as property, which can

never be right in the sight of God; but it requires simply that the slave should evince, even in the midst of degradation and injury, the spirit of a Christian, just as it is required of a man who is injured in any way, to bear it as becomes a follower of the Lord Jesus. Nor does this passage prove that a slave ought not to desire freedom if it can be obtained, for this is supposed in the subsequent clause. Every human being has a right to desire to be free and to seek liberty. But it should be done in accordance with the rules of the gospel; so as not to dishonor the religion of Christ, and so as not to injure the true happiness of others, or overturn the foundations of society.

But if thou mayest be free - If thou canst (δύνασαι dunasai), if it is in your power to become free. That is, if your master or the laws set you free; or if you can purchase your freedom; or if the laws can be changed in a regular manner. If freedom can be obtained in "any" manner that is not sinful. In many cases a Christian master might set his slaves free; in others, perhaps, the laws might do it; in some, perhaps, the freedom of the slave might be purchased by a Christian friend. In all these instances it would be proper to embrace the opportunity of becoming free. The apostle does not speak of insurrection, and the whole scope of the passage is against an attempt on their part to obtain freedom by force and violence. He manifestly teaches them to remain in their condition, to bear it patiently and submissively, and in that relation to bear their hard lot with a Christian spirit, unless their freedom could be obtained without "violence and bloodshed." And the same duty is still binding. Evil as slavery is, and always evil, and only evil, yet the Christian religion requires patience, gentleness, forbearance; not violence, war, insurrection, and bloodshed. Christianity would teach masters to be kind, tender, and gentle; to liberate their slaves, and to change the laws so that it may be done; to be "just" toward those whom they have held in bondage. It would not teach the slave to rise on his master, and imbrue his hands in his blood; to break up the relations of society by violence; or to dishonor his religion by the indulgence of the feelings of revenge and by murder.

Use it rather - Avail yourselves of the privilege if you can, and be a freeman. There are disadvantages attending the condition era slave, and if you can escape from them in a proper manner, it is your privilege and your duty to do it.

Verse 22

For he that is called in the Lord - He that is called by the Lord; he that becomes a Christian.

Being a servant - A slave when he is converted.

Is the Lord‘s freeman - Margin, “Made free” (ἀπελεύθερος apeleutheros). Is manumitted, made free, endowed with liberty by the Lord. This is designed evidently to comfort the heart of the slave, and to make him contented with his condition; and it is a most delicate, happy, and tender argument. The sense is this. “You are blessed with freedom from the bondage of sin by the Lord. You were formerly a slave to sin, but now you are liberated. that bondage was far more grievous, and far more to be lamented than the bondage of the body. But from that long, grievous, and oppressive servitude you are now free. Your condition, even though you are a slave, is far better than it was before; nay, you are now the true freeman, the freeman of the Lord. Your spirit is free; while those who are not slaves, and perhaps your own masters, are even now under a more severe and odious bondage than yours. You should rejoice, therefore, in deliverance from the greater evil, and be glad that in the eye of God you are regarded as his freeman, and endowed by him with more valuable freedom than it would be to be delivered from the bondage under which you are now placed. Freedom from sin is the highest blessing that can be conferred upon people; and if that is yours, you should little regard your external circumstances in this life. You will soon be admitted to the eternal liberty of the saints in glory, and will forget all your toils and privations in this world.”

Is Christ‘s servant - Is the “slave” (δοῦλος doulos) of Christ; is bound to obey law, and to submit himself, as you are, to the authority of another. This too is designed to promote contentment with his lot, by the consideration that all are bound to obey law; that there is no such thing as absolute independence; and that, since law is to be obeyed, it is not degradation and ignominy to submit to those which God has imposed on us by His providence in an humble sphere of life. Whether a freeman or a slave, we are bound to yield obedience to law, and everywhere must obey the laws of God. It is not, therefore, degradation to submit to his laws in a state of servitude, though these laws come to us through an earthly master. In this respect, the slave and the freeman are on a level, as both are required to submit to the laws of Christ; and, even if freedom could be obtained, there is no such thing as absolute independence. This is a very beautiful,

delicate and happy argument, and perhaps no consideration could be urged that would be more adapted to produce contentment.

Verse 23

Ye are bought with a price - Though you are slaves to people, yet you have been purchased for God by the blood of His Son; see the note at 1 Corinthians 6:20. You are, therefore, in his sight of inestimable worth, and are bound to be His.

Be not ye the servants of men - That is, "Do not regard yourselves as the slaves of men. Even in your humble relation of life, even as servants under the laws of the land, regard yourselves as the servants of God, as obeying and serving him "even in this relation," since all those who are bought with a price - all Christians, whether bond or free - are in fact the servant (slaves, δοῦλοι douloi) of God, 1 Corinthians 7:22. in this relation, therefore, esteem yourselves as the servants of God, as bound by his laws, as subject to him, and as really serving him, while you yield all proper obedience to your master." Rosenmuller, Grotius, and some others, however, think that this refers to Christians in general; and that the apostle means to caution them against subjecting themselves to needless rites and customs which the false teachers would impose on them. Others have supposed (as Doddridge) that it means that they should not sell themselves into slavery; but assuredly a caution of this kind was not needful. The view given above I regard as the interpretation demanded by the connection. And in this view it would promote contentment, and would even prevent their taking any improper measures to disturb the relations of social life, by the high and solemn consideration that even in that relation they were in common with all Christians, the true and real servants of God. They belonged to God, and they should serve Him. In all things which their masters commanded, that were in accordance with the will of God, and that could be done with a quiet conscience, they were to regard themselves as serving God; if at any time they were commanded to do that which God had forbidden, they were to remember that they were the servants of God, and that he was to be obeyed rather than man.

Verse 24

Brethren … - ; see the note at 1 Corinthians 7:20.

Verse 25

Not concerning virgins - This commences the "third" subject on which the opinion of Paul seems to have been asked by the church at Corinth -

whether it was proper that those who had unmarried daughters, or wards, should give them in marriage. The reason why this question was proposed may have been, that many in the church at Corinth were the advocates of celibacy, and this, perhaps, on two grounds:

(1) Some may have supposed that in the existing state of things - the persecutions and trials to which Christians were exposed - it would be advisable that a man who had unmarried daughters, or wards, should keep them from the additional cares and trials to which they would be exposed with a family; and,

(2) Some may have already been the advocates for celibacy, and have maintained that that state was more favorable to piety, and was altogether to be preferred. It is known that that opinion had an early prevalence, and gave rise to the establishment of "nunneries" in the papal church; an opinion that has everywhere been attended with licentiousness and corruption. It is not improbable that there may have been advocates for this opinion even in the church of Corinth; and it was well, therefore, that the authority of an apostle should be employed to sanction and to honor the marriage union.

I have no commandment … - No positive, express revelation; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 7:6, 1 Corinthians 7:10.

Yet I give my judgment - I give my opinion, or advice; see the note at 1 Corinthians 7:6.

As one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord - As a Christian; one who has been pardoned, whose mind has been enlightened, and who has been endued with the grace of God.

To be faithful - Faithful to my God. As one who would not give advice for any selfish, or mercenary, or worldly consideration; as one known to act from a desire to honor God, and to seek the best interests of the church, even though there is no explicit command. The advice of "such" a man - a devoted, faithful, self-denying, experienced Christian - is entitled to respectful deference, even where there is no claim to inspiration. Religion qualifies to give advice; and the advice of a man who has no selfish ends to gratify, and who is known to seek supremely the glory of God, should not be disregarded or slighted. Paul had a special claim to give this advice, because he was the founder of the congregation at Corinth.

Verse 26

I suppose - I think; I give the following advice.

For the present distress - In the present state of trial. The word "distress" (ἀνάγκην anagkēnnecessity) denotes calamity, persecution, trial, etc.; see Luke 21:23. The word rendered "present" (ἐνεστῶσαν enestōsan) denotes that which "urges on," or that which at that time presses on, or afflicts. Here it is implied:

(1)That at that time they were subject to trials so severe as to render the advice which he was about to give proper; and,

(2)That he by no means meant that this should be a "permanent arrangement" in the church, and of course it cannot be urged as an argument for the monastic system.

What the "urgent distress" of this time was, is not certainly known. If the Epistle was written about 59 a.d. (see the introduction), it was in the time of Nero; and probably he had already begun to oppress and persecute Christians. At all events, it is evident that the Christians at Corinth were subject to some trials which rendered the cares of the marriage life undesirable.

It is good for a man so to be - The emphasis here is on the word "so" οὕτως houtōsthat is, it is best for a man to conduct "in the following manner;" the word so referring to the advice which follows. "I advise that he conduct in the following manner, to wit." Most commentators suppose that it means "as he is:" that is, unmarried; but the interpretation proposed above best suits the connection. The advice given is in the following verses.

Verse 27

Art thou bound unto a wife? - Art thou already married? Marriage is often thus represented as a "tie," a "bond," etc.; see the note at Romans 7:2.

Seek not to be loosed - Seek not a "dissolution" (λύσιν lusin) of the connection, either by divorce or by a separation from each other; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 7:10-17.

Art thou loosed from a wife? - Art thou unmarried? It should have been rendered "free from" a wife; or art thou single? It does not imply of necessity that the person had been married, though it may have that meaning, and signify those who had been separated from a wife by her death. There is no necessity of supposing that Paul refers to persons who had divorced their wives. So Grotius, Schleusner, Doddridge, etc.

Verse 28

Thou hast not sinned - There is no express command of God on this subject. The counsel which I give is mere advice, and it may be observed or

not as you shall judge best. Marriage is honorable and lawful; and though there may be circumstances where it is advisable not to enter into this relation, yet there is no law which prohibits it. The same advice would be proper now, if it were a time of persecution; or if a man is poor, and cannot support a family; or if he has already a dependent mother and sisters to be supported by him, it would be well to follow the advice of Paul. So also when the cares of a family would take up a man‘s time and efforts; when but for this he might give himself to a missionary life, the voice of wisdom may be in accordance with that of Paul; that a man may be free from these cares, and may give himself with more undivided interest and more successful toil to the salvation of man.

Such shall have trouble in the flesh - They shall have anxiety, care; solicitude, trials. Days of persecution are coming on, and you may be led to the stake, and in those fiery trials your families may be torn asunder, and a part be put to death. Or you may be poor, and oppressed, and driven from your homes, and made wanderers and exiles, for the sake of your religion.

But I spare you - I will not dwell on the melancholy theme. I will not pain your hearts by describing the woes that shall ensue. I will not do anything to deter you from acting as you deem right. If you choose to marry, it is lawful; and I will not imbitter your joys and harrow up your feelings by the description of your future difficulties and trials. The word “flesh” here denotes outward circumstances in contradistinction from the mind. They might have peace of mind, for religion would furnish that; but they would be exposed to poverty, persecution, and calamity.

Verse 29

But this I say - Whether you are married or not, or in whatever condition of life you may be, I would remind you that life hastens to a close, and that its grand business is to be prepared to die. It matters little in what condition or rank of life we are, if we are ready to depart to another and a better world.

The time is short - The time is “contracted,” “drawn into a narrow space” (συνεσταλμένος sunestalmenos). The word which is used here is commonly applied to the act of “furling” a sail, that is, reducing it into a narrow compass; and is then applied to anything that is reduced within narrow limits. Perhaps there was a reference here to the fact that the time was “contracted,” or made short, by their impending persecutions and trials. But it is always equally true that time is short. It will soon glide away, and

come to a close. The idea of the apostle here is, that the plans of life should all be formed in view of this truth, that time is short. No plan should be adopted which does not contemplate this; no engagement of life made when it will not be appropriate to think of it; no connection entered into when the thought "time is short," would be an unwelcome intruder; see 1 Peter 4:7; 2 Peter 3:8-9.

It remaineth - (τὸ λοιπόν to loipon). The remainder is; or this is a consequence from this consideration of the shortness of time.

Both they that have wives … - This does not mean that they are to treat them with unkindness or neglect, or fail in the duties of love and fidelity. It is to be taken in a general sense, that they were to live above the world; that they were not to be unduly attached to them that they were to be ready to part with them; and that they should not suffer attachment to them to interfere with any duty which they owed to God. They were in a world of trial; and they were exposed to persecution; and as Christians they were bound to live entirely to God, and they ought not, therefore, to allow attachment to earthly friends to alienate their affections from God, or to interfere with their Christian duty. In one word, they ought to be "just as faithful to God," and "just as pious," in every respect, as if they had no wife and no earthly friend. Such a consecration to God is difficult, but not impossible. Our earthly attachments and cares draw away our affections from God, but they need not do it. Instead of being the occasion of alienating our affections from God, they should be, and they might be, the means of binding us more firmly and entirely to him and to his cause. But alas, how many professing Christians live for their wives and children only, and not for God in these relations! how many suffer these earthly objects of attachment to alienate their minds from the ways and commandments of God, rather than make them the occasion of uniting them more tenderly to him and his cause!

Verse 30

And they that weep - They who are afflicted.

As though they wept not - Restraining and moderating their grief by the hope of the life to come. "The general idea in all these expressions is, that in whatever situation Christians are, they should be dead to the world, and not improperly affected by passing events." It is impossible for human nature not to feel when persecuted, maligned, slandered, or when near earthly friends are taken away. But religion will calm the troubled spirit;

pour oil on the agitated waves; light up a smile in the midst of tears; cause the beams of a calm and lovely morning to rise on the anxious heart; silence the commotions of the agitated soul, and produce joy even in the midst of sorrow. Religion will keep us from immoderate grief, and sustain the soul even when in distress nature forces us to shed the tear of mourning. Christ sweat great drops of blood, and Christians often weep; but the heart may be calm, peaceful, elevated, confident in God in the darkest night and the severest tempest of calamity.

And they that rejoice - They that are happy; they that are prospered; that have beloved families around them; that are blessed with success, with honor, with esteem, with health. They that have occasion of rejoicing and gratitude.

As though they rejoiced not - Not rejoicing with excessive or immoderate joy. Not with riot or unholy mirth. Not satisfied with these things; though they may rejoice in them. Not forgetting that they must soon be left; but keeping the mind in a calm, serious, settled, thoughtful state, in view of the fact that all these things must soon come to an end. O how would this thought silence the voice of unseemly mirth; How would it produce calmness, serenity, heavenly joy, where is now often unhallowed riot; and true peace, where now there is only forced and boisterous revelry!

As though they possessed not - It is right to buy and to obtain property. But it should be held with the conviction that it; is by an uncertain tenure, and must soon be left. People may give a deed that shall secure from their fellow man; but no man can give a title that shall not be taken away by death. Our lands and houses, our stocks and bonds and mortgages, our goods and chattels, shall soon pass into other hands. Other people will plow our fields, reap our harvests, work in our shops, stand at our counters, sit down at our firesides, eat on our tables, lie upon our beds. Others will occupy our places in society, have our offices, sit in our seats in the sanctuary. Others will take possession of our gold, and appropriate it to their own use; and we shall have no more interest in it, and no more control over it, than our neighbor has now, and no power to eject the man that has taken possession of our houses and our lands. Secure therefore as our titles are safe as are our investments, yet how soon shall we lose all interest in them by death; and how ought this consideration to induce us to live above the world, and to secure a treasure in that world where no thief approaches, and no moth corrupts.

Verse 31

And they that use this world - That make a necessary and proper use of it to furnish raiment, food, clothing, medicine, protection, etc. It is right so to use the world, for it was made for these purposes. The word using here refers to the lawful use of it (χρώμενοι chrōmenoi).

As not abusing it - καταχρώμενοι . The preposition κατα katain composition here has the sense of "too much, too freely," and is taken not merely in an intensive sense, but to denote evil, the abuse of the world. It means that we are not to use it to EXCesS; we are not to make it a mere matter of indulgences, or to make that the main object and purpose of our living. We are not to give our appetites to indulgence; our bodies to riot; our days and nights to feasting and revelry.

For the fashion of this world - (τὸ σχῆμα to schēmaThe form, the appearance. In 1 John 2:17, it is said that "the world passeth away and the lust thereof." The worst "fashion" here is probably taken from the shifting scenes of the drama where, when the scene changes, the imposing and splendid pageantry passes off. The form, the fashion of the world is like a splendid, gilded pageant. It is unreal and illusive. It continues but a little time; and soon the scene changes, and the fashion that allured and enticed us now passes away, and we pass to other scenes.

Passeth away - (παράγει paragei). Passes off like the splendid, gaudy, shifting scenes of the stage. What a striking description of the changing, unstable, and unreal pageantry of this world! Now it is frivilous, splendid, gorgeous, lovely; tomorrow it is gone, and is succeeded by new actors and new scenes. Now all is busy with one set of actors; tomorrow a new company appears, and again they are succeeded by another, and all are engaged in scenes that are equally changing, vain, gorgeous, and delusive. A simliar idea is presented in the well known and beautiful description of the great British dramatist:

"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts."

If such be the character of the scenes in which we are engaged, how little should we fix our affections on them, and how anxious should we be to be prepared for the "real and unchanging" scenes of another world!

Verse 32

But I would have you - I would advise you to such a course of life as should leave you without carefulness My advice is regulated by that wish, and that wish guides me in giving it.

Without carefulness - (ἀμερίμνους amerimnous). Without anxiety, solicitude, care; without such a necessary attention to the things of this life as to take off your thoughts and affections from heavenly objects; see the notes on Matthew 6:25-31.

careth for the things that belong to the Lord - Margin, "The things of the Lord;" the things of religion. His attention is not distracted by the cares of this life; his time is not engrossed, and his affections alienated by an attendance on the concerns of a family, and especially by solicitude for them in times of trial and persecution. He can give his main attention to the things of religion. He is at leisure to give his chief thoughts and anxieties to the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Paul's own example showed that this was the course which he preferred; and showed also that in some instances it was lawful and proper for a man to remain unmarried, and to give himself entirely to the work of the Lord. But the divine commandment Genesis 1:28, and the commendation everywhere bestowed upon marriage in the Scriptures, as well as the nature of the case, show that it was not designed that celibacy should be general.

Verse 33

careth for the things of the world - Is under a necessity of giving attention to the things of the world; or cannot give his undivided attention and interest to the things of religion. This would be especially true in times of persecution.

How he may please his wife - How he may gratify her; how he may accommodate himself to her temper and wishes, to make her happy. The apostle here plainly intimates that there would be danger that the man would be so anxious to gratify his wife, as to interfere with his direct religious duties. This may be done in many ways:

(1)The affections may be taken off from the Lord, and bestowed upon the wife. she may become the object of even improper attachment, and may take the place of God in the affections.

(2)the time may be taken up in devotion to her, which should be given to secret prayer, and to the duties of religion.

(3)she may demand his "society and attention" when he ought to be engaged in doing good to others, and endeavoring to advance the kingdom of Christ.

(4)she may be frivilous and fashionable, and may lead him into improper expenses, into a style of living that may be unsuitable for a Christian, and into society where his piety will be injured, and his devotion to God lessened; or,

(5)She may have erroneous opinions on the doctrines and duties of religion; and a desire to please her may lead him insensibly to modify his views, and to adopt more lax opinions, and to pursue a more lax course of life in his religious duties.

Many a husband has thus been injured by a frivilous, thoughtless, and imprudent wife; and though that wife may be a Christian, yet her course may be such as shall greatly retard his growth in grace, and mar the beauty of his piety.

Verse 34

Between a wife and a virgin, - Between a woman that is married and one that is unmarried. The apostle says that a similar difference between the condition of her that is married and her that is unmarried takes place, which had been observed between the married and the unmarried man. The Greek word here (μεμέρισται memeristai) may mean, "is divided," and be rendered, "the wife and the virgin are divided in the same manner;" that is, there is the same difference in their case as exists between the married and the unmarried man.

The unmarried women … - Has more advantages for attending to the things of religion; has fewer temptations to neglect her proper duty to God.

Both in body and in spirit - Entirely holy; that she may be entirely devoted to God. Perhaps in her case the apostle mentions the "body," which he had not done in the case of the man, because her temptation would be principally in regard to that - the danger of endeavoring to decorate and adorn her person to please her husband,

How she may please her husband - The apostle here intends, undoubtedly, to intimate that there were dangers to personal piety in the married life, which would not occur in a state of celibacy; and that the unmarried female would have greater opportunities for devotion and

usefulness than if married. And he intimates that the married female would be in danger of losing her zeal and marring her piety, by attention to her husband, and by a constant effort to please him. Some of the ways in which this might be done are the following:

(1) As in the former case 1 Corinthians 7:33, her affections might be transferred from God to the partner of her life.

(2) her time will be occupied by an attention to him and to his will; and there would be danger that that attention would be allowed to interfere with her hours of secret retirement and communion with God.

(3) her time will be necessarily broken in upon by the cares of a family, and she should therefore guard with special vigilance, that she may redeem time for secret communion with God.

(4) the time which she before gave to benevolent objects, may now be given to please her husband. Before her marriage she may have been distinguished for zeal, and for active efforts in every plan of doing good; subsequently, she may lay aside this zeal, and withdraw from these plans, and be as little distinguished as others.

(5) her piety may be greatly injured by false notions of what should be done to please her husband. If he is a worldly and fashionable man, she may seek to please him by "gold, and pearls, and costly array." Instead of cultivating the ornament of "a meek and quiet spirit," her main wish may be to decorate her person, and render herself attractive by the adorning of her person rather than of her MinD.

(6) if he is opposed to religion, or if he has lax opinions on the subject, or if he is sceptical and worldly, she will be in danger of relaxing in her views in regard to the strictness of Christianity, and of becoming conformed to his. She will insensibly become less strict in regard to Sunday, the Bible, the prayer meeting, the Sunday School, the plans of Christian benevolence, the doctrines of the gospel.

(7) to please him, she will be found in the frivilous circle, perhaps in the assembly room, or even the theater, or amidst companies of gaiety and

amusement, and will forget that she is professedly devoted only to God. And,

(8) She is in danger, as the result of all this, of forsaking her old religious friends, the companions of purer, brighter days, the humble and devoted friends of Jesus; and of seeking society among the frivilous, the rich, the proud, the worldly. Her piety thus is injured; she becomes worldly and vain, and less and less like Christ; until heaven, perhaps, in mercy smites her idol, and he dies and leaves her again to the blessedness of single-hearted devotion to God. O! how many a Christian female has thus been injured by an unhappy marriage with a frivilous and worldly man! How often has the church occasion to mourn over piety that is dimmed, benevolence that is quenched, zeal that is extinguished by devotion to a frivilous and worldly husband! How often does humble piety weep over such a scene! How often does the cause of sacred charity sigh! How often is the Redeemer wounded in the house of his friends! And O how often does it become necessary for God to interpose, and to remove by death the object of the affection of his wandering child, and to clothe her in the habiliments of mourning, and to bathe her cheeks in tears, that "by the sadness of the countenance her heart may be made better." Who can tell how many a widow is made such from this cause; who can tell how much religion is injured by thus stealing away the affections from God?

Verse 35

For your own profit - That you may avail yourselves of all your advantages and privileges, and pursue such a course as shall tend most to advance your personal piety and salvation.

Not that I may cast a snare upon you - The word rendered "snare" (βρόχον brochon) means a cord, a rope, a bond; and the sense is, that Paul would not BinD them by any rule which God had not made; or that he would not restrain them from that which is lawful, and which the welfare of society usually requires. Paul means, that his object in his advice was their welfare; it was not by any means to bind, fetter, or restrain them from any course which would be for their real happiness, but to promote their real and permanent advantage. The idea which is here presented by the word "snare," is usually conveyed by the use of the word "yoke" Matthew 11:29;

Acts 15:10; Galatians 5:1, and sometimes by the word "burden;" Matthew 23:4; Acts 15:28.

But for that which is comely - (εὔσχημον euschēmon). Decorous, fit, proper, noble. For that which is best Fitted to your present condition, and which, on the whole, will be best, and most for your own advantage. There would be a fitness and propriety in their pursuing the course which he recommended.

That ye may attend on the Lord - That you may engage in religious duties and serve God.

Without distraction - Without being drawn away ἀπερισπάστως aperispastōswithout care, interruption, and anxiety. That you may be free to engage with undivided interest in the service of the Lord.

Verse 36

That he behaveth himself uncomely - Acts an unbecoming part, imposes an unnecessary, painful, and improper constraint, crosses her inclinations which are in them selves proper.

Toward his virgin - His daughter, or his ward, or any unmarried female committed to his care.

If she pass the flower of her age - If she pass the marriageable age and remains unmarried. It is well known that in the east it was regarded as especially dishonorable to remain unmarried; and the authority of a father, therefore, might be the means of involving his daughter in shame and disgrace. When this would be the case, it would be wrong to prohibit her marriage.

And need so require - And she ought to be allowed to marry. If it will promote her happiness, and if she would be unhappy, and regarded as dishonored, if she remained in a state of celibacy.

Let him do what he will - He has the authority in the case, for in the east the authority resided with the father. He may either give her in marriage or not, as he pleases. But in this case it is advisable that she should marry.

He sinneth not - He errs not; he will do nothing positively wrong in the case. Marriage is lawful, and in this case it is advisable, and he may consent to it, for the reasons above stated, without error or impropriety.

Verse 37

Nevertheless - But. The apostle in this verse states some instances where it would not be proper to give a daughter in marriage; and the verse

is a kind of summing up of all that be had said on the subject.

That standeth steadfast in his heart … - Most commentators have understood this of the father of the virgin, and suppose that it refers to his purpose of keeping her from the marriage connection. The phrase to stand steadfast, is opposed to a disposition that is vacillating, unsettled, etc., and denotes a man who has command of himself, who adheres to his purpose, a man who has "hitherto" adhered to his purpose, and to whose happiness and reputation it is important that he should be known as one who is not vacillating, or easily moved.

Having no necessity - Where there is nothing in her disposition or inclination that would make marriage necessary, or when there is no "engagement or obligation" that would be violated if she did not marry.

But hath power over his own will - Hath power to do as he pleases; is not bound in the case by another. When there is no "engagement, or contract," made in childhood, or promise made in early life that would bind him. Often daughters were espoused, or promised when they were very young, and in such a case a man would be bound to adhere to his engagement; and much as he might desire the reverse, and her celibacy, yet he would not have power over his own will, or be at liberty to withhold her.

And hath so decreed in his heart - Has so judgeD, determined, resolved.

That he will keep his virgin - His daughter, or ward, in an unmarried state. He has "power and authority" to do it, and if he does it he will not sin.

Doeth well - In either of these cases, he does well. If he has a daughter, and chooses to retain her in an unmarried state, he does well or right.

Verse 38

Doeth well - Does right; violates no law in it, and is not to be blamed for it.

Doeth better - Does that which is on the whole to be preferred, if it can be done. He more certainly, in the present circumstances, consults her happiness by withholding her from the marriage connection than he could by allowing her to enter it.

Verse 39

The wife is bound … - ; see the notes at Romans 7:2.

Only in the Lord - That is, only to one who is a Christian; with a proper sense of her obligations to Christ, and so as to promote his glory. The apostle supposed that could not be done if she were allowed to marry a

pagan, or one of a different religion. The same sentiment he advances in 2 Corinthians 6:14, and it was his intention, undoubtedly, to affirm that it was proper for a widow to marry no one who was not a Christian. The reasons at that time would be obvious:

(1) They could have no sympathy and fellow-feeling on the most important of all subjects, if the one was a Christian and the other a pagan; see 2 Corinthians 6:14-15, etc.

(2) if she should marry a pagan, would it not be showing that she had not as deep a conviction of the importance and truth of her religion as she ought to have? If Christians were required to be "separate," to be "a special people," not "to be conformed to the world," how could these precepts be obeyed if the society of a pagan was voluntarily chosen, and if she became united to him for life?

(3) she would in this way greatly hinder her usefulness; put herself in the control of one who had no respect for her religion, and who would demand her time and attention, and thus interfere with her attendance on the public and private duties of religion, and the offices of Christian charity.

(4) she would thus greatly endanger her piety. There would be danger from the opposition, the taunts, the sneers of the enemy of Christ; from the secret influence of living with a man who had no respect for God; from his introducing her into society that was irreligious, and that would tend to mar the beauty of her piety, and to draw her away from simple-hearted devotion to Jesus Christ. And do not these reasons apply to similar cases now? And if so, is not the law still binding? Do not such unions now, as really as they did then, place the Christian where there is no mutual sympathy on the subject dearest to the Christian heart? Do they not show that she who forms such a union has not as deep a sense of the importance of piety, and of the pure and holy nature of her religion as she ought to have? Do they not take time from God and from charity; break up plans of usefulness, and lead away from the society of Christians, and from the duties of religion? Do they not expose often to ridicule, to reproach, to persecution, to contempt, and to pain? Do they not often lead into society, by a desire to please the partner in life, where there is no religion, where God is excluded, where the name of Christ is never heard, and where the piety is marred, and the beauty

of simple Christian piety is dimmed? and if so, are not such marriages contrary to the law of Christ? I confess, that this verse, to my view, proves that all such marriages are a violation of the New Testament; and if they are, they should not on any plea be entered into; and it will be found, in perhaps nearly all instances, that they are disastrous to the piety of the married Christian, and the occasion of ultimate regret, and the cause of a loss of comfort, peace, and usefulness in the married life.

Verse 40

If she so abide - If she remain a widow even if she could be married to a Christian.

After my judgment - In my opinion; 1 Corinthians 7:25.

And I think also that I have the Spirit of God - Macknight and others suppose that this phrase implies entire certainty; and that Paul means to affirm that in this he was clear that he was under the influence of inspiration. He appeals for the use of the term (δωκῶ dōkō) to Mark 10:32; Luke 8:18; 1 Corinthians 4:9; 1 Corinthians 8:2; 1 Corinthians 11:16; Hebrews 4:1, etc. But the word does not usually express absolute certainty. It implies a doubt; though there may be a strong persuasion or conviction; or the best judgment which the mind can form in the case; see Matthew 6:7; Matthew 26:53; Mark 6:49; Luke 8:18; Luke 10:36; Luke 12:51; Luke 13:24; Luke 22:24; Acts 17:18; Acts 25:27; 1 Corinthians 16:12, 1 Corinthians 16:22, etc. It implies here a belief that Paul was under the influence of the infallible Spirit, and that his advice was such as accorded with the will of God. Perhaps he alludes to the fact that the teachers at Corinth deemed themselves to be under the influence of inspiration, and Paul said that he judged also of himself that he was divinely guided and directed in what he said - "Calvin." And as Paul in this could not be mistaken; as his impression that he was under the influence of that Spirit was, in fact, a claim to divine inspiration, so this advice should be regarded as of divine authority, and as binding on all. This interpretation is further demanded by the circumstances of the case. It was necessary that he should assert divine authority to counteract the teaching of the false instructors in Corinth; and that he should interpose that authority in prescribing rules for the government of the church there in view of the special temptations to which they were exposed.

Remarks On 1 Corinthians 7:1-13. On a most delicate subject Paul has shown a seriousness and delicacy of expression which can be found in no other writings, and which demonstrate how pure his own mind was, and how much it was filled with the fear of God. In all things his aim is to promote purity, and to keep from the Christian church the innumerable evils which everywhere abounded in the pagan world. The marriage connection should be formed in the fear of God. In all that union, the parties should seek the salvation of the soul; and so live as not to dishonor the religion which they profess.

2. The duty of laboring earnestly for the conversion of the party in the marriage connection that may be a stranger to piety; 1 Corinthians 7:16. This object should lie very near the heart; and it should be sought by all the means possible. By a pure and holy life; by exemplifying the nature of the gospel; by tenderness of conversation and of entreaty; and by fidelity in all the duties of life, we should seek the conversion and salvation of our partners in the marriage connection. Even if both are Christians, this great object should be one of constant solicitude - to advance the piety and promote the usefulness of the partner in life.

3. The duty of contentment in the sphere of life in which we are placed; 1 Corinthians 7:18 ff. It is no disgrace to be poor, for Jesus chose to be poor. It is no disgrace, though it is a calamity, to be a slave. It is no disgrace to be in an humble rank of life. It is disgraceful only to be a sinner, and to complain and repine at our allotment. God orders the circumstances of our life; and they are well ordered when under the direction of his hand. The great object should be to do right in the relation which we sustain in life. If poor, to be industrious, submissive, resigned, virtuous; if rich, to be grateful, benevolent, kind. If a slave or a servant, to be faithful, kind, and obedient; using liberty, if it can be lawfully obtained; resigned, and calm, and gentle, if by the providence of God such must continue to be the lot in life.

4. The duty of preserving the order and regularity of society; 1 Corinthians 7:20-23. The design of the gospel is not to produce insubordination or irregularity, it would not break up society; does not dissolve the bonds of social life; but it cements and sanctifies the ties which connect us with those around us. It is designed to promote human

happiness; and that is promoted, not by resolving society into its original elements; not by severing the marriage tie, as atheists would do; not by teaching children to disregard and despise their parents, or the common courtesies of life, but by teaching them to maintain inviolate all these relations. Religion promotes the interests of society; it does not, like infidelity, dissolve them. It advances the cause of social virtue; it does not, like atheism, retard and annihilate it. Every Christian becomes a better parent, a more affectionate child, a kinder friend, a more tender husband or wife, a more kind neighbor, a better member of the community.

5. Change in a man‘s calling should not be made from a slight cause. A Christian should not make it unless his former calling were wrong, or unless he can by it extend his own usefulness. But when that can be done, he should do it, and do it without delay. If the course is wrong, it should be immediately abandoned. No consideration can make it right to continue it for a day or an hour, no matter what may be the sacrifice of property, it should be done. If a man is engaged in the slave-trade, or in smuggling goods, or in piracy, or highway robbery, or in the manufacture and sale of poison, it should be at once and forever abandoned. And in like manner, if a young man who is converted can increase his usefulness by changing his plan of life, it should be done as soon as practicable. If by becoming a minister of the gospel he can be a more useful man, every consideration demands that he should leave any other profession, however lucrative or pleasant, and submit to the self-denials, the cares, the trials, and the toils which attend a life devoted to Christ in the ministry in Christian or pagan lands. Though it should be attended with poverty, want, tears, toil, or shame, yet the single question is, “Can I be more useful to my Master there than in my present vocation?” If he can be, that is an indication of the will of God which he cannot disregard with impunity.

6. We should live above this world; 1 Corinthians 7:29-30. We should partake of all our pleasures, and endure all our sufferings, with the deep feeling that we have here no continuing city and no abiding place. Soon all our earthly pleasures will fade away; soon all our earthly sorrows will be ended. A conviction of the shortness of life will tend much to regulate our desires for earthly comforts, and will keep us from being improperly

attached to them; and it will diminish our sorrows by the prospect that they will soon end.

7. We should not be immoderately affected with grief; 1 Corinthians 7:30. It will all soon end, in regard to Christians. Whether our tears arise from the consciousness of our sins or the sins of others; whether from persecution or contempt of the world; or whether from the loss of health, property, or friends, we should bear it all patiently, for it will soon end; a few days, and all will be over; and the last tear shall fall on our cheeks, and the last sigh be heaved from our bosom.

8. We should not be immoderate in our joy, 1 Corinthians 7:30. Our highest earthly joys will soon cease. Mirth, and the sound of the harp and the viol, the loud laugh and the song will soon close. What a change should this thought make in a world of gaiety, and mirth, and song! It should not make people gloomy and morose; but it should make them serious, calm, thoughtful. O, did all feel that death was near, that the solemn realities of eternity were approaching, what a change would it make in a frivilous and thoughtless world! How would it close the theater and the ball-room; how would it silence the jest, the jeer, and the loud laugh; and how would it diffuse seriousness and calmness over a now frivilous and thoughtless world! "Laughter is mad," says Solomon; and in a world of sin, and sorrow, and death, assuredly seriousness and calm contemplation are demanded by every consideration.

9. What an effect would the thought that "time is short," and that "the fashion of this world passeth away," have on the lovers of wealth! It would:

(1) Teach them that property is of little value.

(2) that the possession of it can constitute no distinction beyond the grave: the rich man is just as soon reduced to dust, and is just as offensive in his splendid mausoleum, as the poor beggar.

(3) aman feeling this, would be led (or should be) to make a good use of his property on earth. See the note at Luke 16:1-9.

(4) he would be led to seek a better inheritance, an interest in the treasures that no moth corrupts, and that never fade away. See the note at Matthew 6:20. This single thought. that the fashion of this world is soon to pass away - an idea which no man can doubt or deny - if allowed to take firm hold of the mind, would change the entire aspect of the world.

10. We should endeavor so to live in all things as that our minds should not be oppressed with undue anxiety and care, 1 Corinthians 7:32. In all our arrangements and plans, and in all the relations of life, our grand object should be to have the mind free for the duties and privileges of religion. We should seek not to be encumbered with care; not to be borne down with anxiety; not to be unduly attached to the things of this life.

11. We should enter into the relations of life so as not to interfere with our personal piety or usefulness, but so as to promote both, 1 Corinthians 7:32-35. All our arrangements should be so formed as that we may discharge our religious duties, and promote our usefulness to our fellow men. But, alas, how many enter into the marriage relation with unChristian companions, whose active zeal is forever quenched by such a connection! How many form commercial connections or partnerships in business with those who are not Christians, where the result is to diminish their zeal for God, and to render their whole lives useless to the church! And how much do the cares of life, in all its relations, interfere with simple-hearted piety, and with the faithful discharge of the duties which we owe to God and to a dying world! May God of his mercy enable us so to live in all the relations of life as that our usefulness shall not be retarded but augmented; and so to live that we can see without one sigh of regret the "fashion of this world pass away;" our property or our friends removed; or even the magnificence of the entire world, with all its palaces, and temples, and "cloudcapped towers," passing away amidst the fires that shall attend the consummation of all things!

1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Introduction

In this chapter another subject is discussed, which had been proposed by the congregation at Corinth for the decision of the apostle. “Whether it was right for Christians to partake of the meat that had been offered in sacrifice to idols?” On this question there would be doubtless a difference of opinion among the Corinthian Christians. When those sacrifices were made to pagan gods, a part of the animal was given to the priest that officiated, a part was consumed on the altar, and a part (probably the principal part) was the property of him who offered it. This part was either eaten by him at home, as food which had been in some sense consecrated or blessed by having been offered to an idol; or it was partaken of at a feast in honor of the idol; or it was in some instances exposed for sale in the market in the same way as other meat. Whether, therefore, it would be right to partake of that food, either when invited to the house of a pagan friend, or when it was exposed for sale in the market, was a question which could not but present itself to a conscientious Christian. The objection to partaking of it would be, that to partake of it either in the temples or at the feasts of their pagan neighbors, would be to lend their countenance to idolatry. On the other hand, there were many who supposed that it was always lawful, and that the scruples of their brethren were needless. Some of their arguments Paul has alluded to in the course of the chapter: they were, that an idol was nothing in the world; that there was but one God, and that everyone must know this; and that, therefore, there was no danger that any worshipper of the, true God could be led into the absurdities of idolatry, 1 Corinthians 8:4-6. To this the apostle replies, that though there might be this knowledge, yet:

(1) Knowledge sometimes puffed up, and made us proud, and that we should be careful lest it should lead us astray by our vain self-confidence, 1 Corinthians 8:1-2, 1 Corinthians 8:7.

(2) that all had not that knowledge 1 Corinthians 8:7; and that they even then, notwithstanding all the light which had been shed around them by Christianity, and notwithstanding the absurdity of idolatry, still regarded an idol as a real existence, as a god, and worshipped it as such; and that it would be highly improper to countenance in any way that idea. He left the

inference, therefore, that it was not proper "from this argument," to partake of the sacrifices to idols.

A second argument in favor of partaking of that food is alluded to in 1 Corinthians 8:8, to wit, that it must be in itself a matter of indifference; that it could make no difference before God, where all depended on moral purity and holiness of heart, whether a man had eaten meat or not; that we were really no better or worse for it; and that, therefore, it was proper to partake of that food. To this Paul replies:

(1)That though this was true, as an abstract proposition, yet it might be the occasion of leading others into sin 1 Corinthians 8:9.

(2)that the effect on a weak brother would be to lead him to suppose that an idol was something, and to confirm him in his supposition that an idol should have some regard, and be worshipped in the temple, 1 Corinthians 8:10.

(3)that the consequence might be, that a Christian of little information and experience might be drawn away and perish, 1 Corinthians 8:11.

(4)that this would be to sin against Christ, if a feeble Christian should be thus destroyed, 1 Corinthians 8:12. And,

(5)That as for himself, if indulgence in meat was in any way the occasion of making another sin, he would eat no meat as long as the world stood 1 Corinthians 8:13; since to abstain from meat was a far less evil than the injury or destruction of an immortal soul.

Verse 1

Now as touching - In regard to; in answer to your inquiry whether it is right or not to partake of those things.

Things offered unto idols - Sacrifices unto idols. Meat that had been offered in sacrifice, and then either exposed to sale in the market, or served up at the feasts held in honor of idols, at their temples, or at the houses of their devotees. The priests, who were entitled to a part of the meat that was offered in sacrifice, would expose it to sale in the market; and it was a custom with the Gentiles to make feasts in honor of the idol gods on the meat that was offered in sacrifice; see 1 Corinthians 8:10, of this chapter,

and 1 Corinthians 10:20-21. Some Christians would hold that there could be no harm in partaking of this meat any more than any other meat, since an idol was nothing; and others would have many scruples in regard to it, since it would seem to countenance idol worship. The request made of Paul was, that he should settle some "general principle" which they might all safely follow.

We know - We admit; we cannot dispute; it is so plain a case that no one can be ignorant on this point. Probably these are the words of the Corinthians, and perhaps they were contained in the letter which was sent to Paul. They would affirm that they were not ignorant in regard to the nature of idols; they were well assured that they were nothing at all; and hence, they seemed to infer that it might be right and proper to partake of this food anywhere and everywhere, even in the idol temples themselves; see 1 Corinthians 8:10. To this Paul replies in the course of the chapter, and particularly in 1 Corinthians 8:7.

That we all have knowledge - That is, on this subject; we are acquainted with the true nature of idols, and of idol worship; we all esteem an idol to be nothing, and cannot be in danger of being led into idolatry, or into any improper views in regard to this subject by participating of the food and feasts connected with idol worship This is the statement and argument of the Corinthians. To this Paul makes two answers:

(1)In a "parenthesis" in 1 Corinthians 8:1-3, to wit, that it was not safe to rely on mere knowledge in such a case, since the effect of mere knowledge was often to puff people up and to make them proud, but that they ought to act rather from "charity," or love; and,

(2)That though the mass of them might have this knowledge, yet that all did not possess it, and they might be injured, 1 Corinthians 8:7.

Having stated this argument of the Corinthians, that all had knowledge, in 1 Corinthians 8:1, Paul then in a parenthesis states the usual effect of knowledge, and shows that it is not a safe guide, 1 Corinthians 8:1-3. In 1 Corinthians 8:4, he "resumes" the statement (commenced in 1 Corinthians 8:1) of the Corinthians, but which, in a mode quite frequent in his writings, he had broken off by his parenthesis on the subject of knowledge; and in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6, he states the argument more at length; concedes that there was to them but one God, and that the majority of them must know that; but states in 1 Corinthians 8:7, that all had not this knowledge, and that

those who had knowledge ought to act so as not to injure those who had not.

Knowledge puffeth up - This is the beginning of the parenthesis. It is the reply of Paul to the statement of the Corinthians, that all had knowledge. The sense is, "Admitting that you all have knowledge; that you know what is the nature of an idol, and of idol worship; yet mere knowledge in this case is not a safe guide; its effect may be to puff up, to fill with pride and self-sufficiency, and to lead you astray. charity or love, as well as knowledge, should be allowed to come in as a guide in such cases, and will be a safer guide than mere knowledge." There had been some remarkable proofs of the impropriety of relying on mere knowledge as a guide in religious matters among the Corinthians, and it was well for Paul to remind them of it. These pretenders to uncommon wisdom had given rise to their factions, disputes, and parties, (see 1 Corinthians 1; 2; 3); and Paul now reminds them that it was not safe to rely on such a guide. And it is no more safe now than it was then. Mere knowledge, or science, when the heart is not right, fills with pride; swells a man with vain self-confidence and reliance in his own powers, and very often leads him entirely astray. Knowledge combined with right feelings, with pure principles, with a heart filled with love to God and human beings, may be trusted: but not mere intellectual attainments; mere abstract science; the mere cultivation of the intellect. Unless the heart is cultivated with that, the effect of knowledge is to make a man a pedant; and to fill him with vain ideas of his own importance; and thus to lead him into error and to sin.

But charity edifieth - Love (ἡ ἀγάπη hē agapē); so the word means; and so it would be well to translate it. Our word "charity" we now apply almost exclusively to alms-giving, or to the favorable opinion which we entertain of others when they seem to be in error or fault. The word in the Scripture means simply "love." See the notes on 1 Corinthians 13. The sense here is, "Knowledge is not a safe guide, and should not be trusted. love to each other and to God, true Christian affection, will be a safer guide than mere knowledge, Your conclusion on this question should not be formed from mere abstract knowledge; but you should ask what love to others - to the peace, purity, happiness, and salvation of your brethren - would demand. If love to them would prompt to this course, and permit you to partake of this food, it should be done; if not, if it would injure them, whatever mere knowledge would dictate, it should not be done." The

doctrine is, that love to God and to each other is a better guide in determining what to do than mere knowledge. And it is so. It will prompt us to seek the welfare of others, and to avoid what would injure them. It will make us tender, affectionate, and kind; and will better tell us what to do, and how to do it in the best way, than all the abstract knowledge that is conceivable. The man who is influenced by love, ever pure and ever glowing, is not in much danger of going astray, or of doing injury to the cause of God. The man who relies on his knowledge is heady, high-minded, obstinate, contentious, vexatious, perverse, opinionated; and most of the difficulties in the church arise from such people. Love makes no difficulty, but heals and allays all; mere knowledge heals or allays none, but is often the occasion of most bitter strife and contention. Paul was wise in recommending that the question should be settled by love; and it would be wise if all Christians would follow his instructions.

Verse 2

And if any think … - The connection and the scope of this passage require us to understand this as designed to condemn that vain conceit of knowledge, or self-confidence, which would lead us to despise others, or to disregard their interests. "If anyone is conceited of his knowledge, is so vain, and proud, and self-confident, that he is led to despise others, and to disregard their true interests, he has not yet learned the very first elements of true knowledge as he ought to learn them, True knowledge will make us humble, modest, and kind to others. It will not puff us up, and it will not lead us to overlook the real happiness of others." See Romans 11:25.

Any thing - Any matter pertaining to science, morals, philosophy, or religion. This is a general maxim pertaining to all pretenders to knowledge.

He knoweth nothing yet … - He has not known what is most necessary to be known on the subject; nor has he known the true use and design of knowledge, which is to edify and promote the happiness of others. If a man has not so learned anything as to make it contribute to the happiness of others, it is a proof that he has never learned the true design of the first elements of knowledge. Paul's design is to induce them to seek the welfare of their brethren. Knowledge, rightly applied, will promote the happiness of all. And it is true now as it was then, that if a man is a miser in knowledge as in wealth; if he lives to accumulate, never to impart; if he is filled with a vain conceit of his wisdom, and seeks not to benefit others by enlightening their ignorance, and guiding them in the way of truth, he has never learned

the true use of science, any more than the man has of wealth who always hoards, never gives. It is valueless unless it is diffused, as the light of heaven would be valueless unless diffused all over the world, and the waters would be valueless if always preserved in lakes and reservoirs, and never diffused over hills and vales to refresh the earth.

Verse 3

But if any man love God - If any man is truly attached to God; if he seeks to serve him, and to promote his glory. The sense seems to be this. "There is no true and real knowledge which is not connected with love to God. This will prompt a man also to love his brethren, and will lead him to promote their happiness. A man's course, therefore, is not to be regulated by mere knowledge, but the grand principle is love to God and love to man. Love edifies; love promotes happiness; love will prompt to what is right; and love will secure the approbation of God." Thus, explained. this difficult verse accords with the whole scope of the parenthesis, which is to show that a man should not be guided in his contact with others by mere knowledge, however great that may be; but that a safer and better principle was "love, charity" (ἀγάπη agapē), whether exercised toward God or man. Under the guidance of this, man would be in little danger of error, Under the direction of mere knowledge he would never be sure of a safe guide; see 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

The same is known of him - The words "is known" (ἔγνωσται egnōstai) I suppose to be taken here in the sense of "is approved by God; is loved by him; meets with his favor, etc." In this sense the word "known" is often used in the Scriptures. See the note at Matthew 7:23. The sense is, "If any man acts under the influence of sacred charity, or love to God, and consequent love to man, he will meet with the approbation of God. He will seek his glory, and the good of his brethren; he will be likely to do right; and God will approve of his intentions and desires, and will regard him as his child. Little distinguished, therefore, as he may be for human knowledge, for that science which puffs up with vain self-confidence, yet he will have a more truly elevated rank, and will meet with the approbation and praise of God. This is of more value than mere knowledge, and this love is a far safer guide than any mere intellectual attainments." So the world would have found it to be if they had acted on it; and so Christians would always find it.

Verse 4

As concerning therefore … - The parenthesis closes with 1 Corinthians 8:3. The apostle now proceeds to the real question in debate, and repeats in this verse the question, and the admission that all had knowledge. The admission that all had knowledge proceeds through 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; and in 1 Corinthians 8:7 he gives the answer to it. In 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 everything is admitted by Paul which they asked in regard to the real extent of their knowledge on this subject; and in 1 Corinthians 8:7 he shows that even on the ground of this admission, the conclusion would not follow that it was right to partake of the food offered in sacrifice in the temple of an idol.

The eating of those things … - Whether it is right to eat them. Here the question is varied somewhat from what it was in 1 Corinthians 8:1, but substantially the same inquiry is stated. The question was, whether it was right for Christians to eat the meat of animals that had been slain in sacrifice to idols.

We know - 1 Corinthians 8:1. We Corinthians know; and Paul seems fully to admit that they had all the knowledge which they claimed, 1 Corinthians 8:7. But his object was to show that even admitting that, it would not follow that it would be right to partake of that meat. It is well to bear in mind that the object of their statement in regard to knowledge was, to show that there could be no impropriety in partaking of the food. This argument the apostle answers in 1 Corinthians 8:7.

That an idol is nothing - Is not the true God; is not a proper object of worship. We are not so stupid as to suppose that the block of wood, or the carved image, or the chiseled marble is a real intelligence and is conscious and capable of receiving worship, or benefiting its volaries. We fully admit, and know, that the whole thing is delusive; and there can be no danger that, by partaking of the food offered in sacrifice to them, we should ever be brought to a belief of the stupendous falsehood that they are true objects of worship, or to deny the true God. There is no doubt that the more intelligent pagan had this knowledge; and doubtless nearly all Christians possessed it, though a few who had been educated in the grosser views of paganism might still have regarded the idol with a superstitious reverence, For whatever might have been the knowledge of statesmen and philosophers on the subject, it was still doubtless true that the great mass of the pagan world did regard the dumb idols as the proper objects of worship, and supposed that they were inhabited by invisible spirits - the gods. For purposes of

state, and policy, and imposition, the lawgivers and priests of the pagan world were careful to cherish this delusion; see 1 Corinthians 8:7.

Is nothing - Is delusive; is imaginary. There may have been a reference here to the name of an idol among the Hebrews. They called idols אלילים (Elilim), or in the singular אליל 'ĕlîyl(Elilvain, null, nothingworth, nothingness, vanity, weakness, etc.; indicating their vanity and powerlessness; Leviticus 26:1; 1 Chronicles 16:26; Isaiah 2:8; Isaiah 10:10; Isaiah 19:11, Isaiah 19:13, Isaiah 19:20; Isaiah 31:7; Psalm 90:5; Ezekiel 30:13; Habakkuk 2:18; Zechariah 11:17, etc.

In the world - It is nothing at all; it has no power over the world; no real existence anywhere. There are no such gods as the pagans pretend to worship. There is but one God; and that fact is known to us all. The phrase "in the world" seems to be added by way of emphasis, to show the utter nothingness of idols; to explain in the most emphatic manner the belief that they had no real existence.

And that there is none other God but one - This was a great cardinal truth of religion; see the note at Mark 12:29; compare Deuteronomy 6:4-5. To keep this great truth in mind was the grand object of the Jewish economy; and this was so plain, and important, that the Corinthians supposed that it must be admitted by all. Even though they should partake of the meat that was offered in sacrifice to idols, yet they supposed it was not possible that any of them could forget the great cardinal truth that there was but one God.

Verse 5

That are called gods - Gods so called. The pagans everywhere worshipped multitudes, and gave to them the name of gods.

Whether in heaven - Residing in heaven, as a part of the gods were supposed to do. Perhaps, there may be allusion here to the sun, moon, and stars; but I rather suppose that reference is made to the celestial deities, or to those who were supposed to reside in heaven, though they were supposed occasionally to visit the earth, as Jupiter, Juno, Mercury, etc.

Or in earth - Upon the earth; or that reigned particularly ever the earth, or sea, as Ceres, Neptune, etc. The ancient pagans worshipped some gods that were supposed to dwell in heaven; others that were supposed to reside on earth; and others that presided over the inferior regions, as Pluto, etc.

As there be gods many - ὥσπερ hōsperetc. As there are, in fact, many which are so called or regarded. It is a fact that the pagans worship many

whom they esteem to be gods, or whom they regard as such. This cannot be an admission of Paul that they were truly gods, and ought to he worshipped; but it is a declaration that they esteemed them to be such, or that a large number of imaginary beings were thus adored. The emphasis should be placed on the word "many;" and the design of the parenthesis is, to show that the number of these that were worshipped was not a few, but was immense; and that they were in fact worshipped as gods, and allowed to have the influence over their minds and lives which they would have if they were real; that is, that the effect of this popular belief was to produce just as much fear, alarm, superstition, and corruption, as though these imaginary gods had a real existence. So that though the more intelligent of the pagan put no confidence in them, yet the effect on the great mass was the same as if they had had a real existence, and exerted over them a real control.

And lords many - (κύριοι πολλοὶ). Those who had a "rule" over them; to whom they submitted themselves; and whose laws they obeyed. This name "lord" was often given to their idol gods. Thus, among the nations of Canaan their idols was called בצל Baʿal("Baal, or lord"), the tutelary god of the Phoenicians and Syrians; Judges 8:33; Judges 9:4, Judges 9:46. It is used here with reference to the IdoLS, and means that the laws which they were supposed to give in regard to their worship had control over the minds of their worshippers.

Verse 6

But to us - Christians. We acknowledge but one God, Whatever the pagan worship, we know that there is but one God; and he alone has a right to rule over us.

One God, the Father - Whom we acknowledge as the Father of all; Author of all things; and who sustains to all his works the relation of a father. The word "Father" here is not used as applicable to the first person of the Trinity, as distinguished from the second, but is applied to God as God; not as the Father in contradistinction from the Son, but to the divine nature as such, without reference to that distinction - the Father as distinguished from his offspring, the works that owe their origin to him. This is manifest:

(1) Because the apostle does not use the correlative term" Son" when he comes to speak of the "one Lord Jesus Christ;" and,

(2) Because the scope of the passage requires it. The apostle speaks of God, of the divine nature, the one infinitely holy Being, as sustaining the relation of Father "to his creatures." He produced them, He provides for them. He protects them, as a father does his children. He regards their welfare; pities them in their sorrows; sustains them in trial; shows himself to be their friend. The name "Father" is thus given frequently to God, as applicable to the one God, the divine Being; Psalm 103:13; Jeremiah 31:9; Malachi 1:6; Malachi 2:10; Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2, etc. In other places it is applied to the first person of the Trinity as distinguished from the second; and in these instances the correlative "Son" is used, Luke 10:22; Luke 22:42; John 1:18; John 3:35; John 5:19-23, John 5:26, John 5:30, John 5:36; Hebrews 1:5; 2 Peter 1:17, etc.

Of whom - ἐξ οὗ ex houFrom whom as a fountain and source; by whose counsel, plan, and purpose. He is the great source of all; and all depend on him. It was by his purpose and power that all things were formed, and to all he sustains the relation of a Father. The agent in producing all things, however, was the Son, Colossians 1:16; see the note at John 1:3.

Are all things - These words evidently refer to the whole work of creation, as deriving their origin from God, Genesis 1:1. Everything has thus been formed in accordance with his plan; and all things now depend on him as their Father.

And we - We Christians. We are what we are by him. We owe our existence to him; and by him we have been regenerated and saved. It is owing to his counsel, purpose, agency, that we have an existence; and owing to him that we have the hope of eternal life. The leading idea here is, probably, that to God Christians owe their hopes and happiness.

In him - (εἰς αὐτόν eis auton); or rather unto him: that is, we are formed for him, and should live to his glory. We have been made what we are, as Christians, that we may promote his honor and glory.

And one Lord … - One Lord in contradistinction from the "many lords" whom the pagans worshipped. The word "Lord" here is used in the sense of proprietor, ruler, governor, or king; and the idea is, that Christians acknowledge subjection to Him alone, and not to many sovereigns, as the pagans did. Jesus Christ is the Ruler and Lord of his people. They acknowledge their allegiance to him as their supreme Lawgiver and King. They do not acknowledge subjection to many rulers, whether imaginary gods or human beings; but receive their laws from him alone. The word

“Lord” here does not imply of necessity any inferiority to God; since it is a term which is frequently applied to God himself. The idea in the passage is, that from God, the Father of all, we derive our existence, and all that we have; and that we acknowledge “immediate and direct” subjection to the Lord Jesus as our Lawgiver and Sovereign. From him Christians receive their laws, and to him they submit their lives. And this idea is so far from supposing inferiority in the Lord Jesus to God, that it rather supposes equality; since a right to give laws to people, to rule their consciences, to direct their religious opinions and their lives, can appropriately pertain only to one who has equality with God.

By whom … - δὶ οὗ di' houBy whose “agency;” or through whom, as the agent. The word “by” (δι᾽ di') stands in contradistinction from “of” (ἐξ ex) in the former part of the verse; and obviously means, that, though “all things” derived their existence from God as the fountain and author, yet it was “by” the agency of the Lord Jesus. This doctrine, that the Son of God was the great agent in the creation of the world, is elsewhere abundantly taught in the Scriptures; see the note at John 1:3.

Are all things - The universe; for so the phrase τὰ πάντα ta pantaproperly means. No words could better express the idea of the universe than these; and the declaration is therefore explicit that the Lord Jesus created all things. Some explain this of the “new creation;” as if Paul had said that all things pertaining to our salvation were from him. But the objections to this interpretation are obvious:

(1) It is not the natural signification.

(2) the phrase “all things” naturally denotes the universe.

(3) the scope of the passage requires us so to understand it. Paul is not speaking of the new creature; but he is speaking of the question whether there is more than one God, one Creator, one Ruler over the wide universe. The pagan said there was; Christians affirmed that there was not. The scope, therefore, of the passage requires us to understand this of the vast material universe; and the obvious declaration here is, that the Lord Jesus was the Creator of all.

And we - We Christians 1 Peter 1:21; or, we as people; we have derived our existence “by” δι᾽ di'or “through” him. The expression will apply either to our original creation, or to our hopes of heaven, as being by him; and is

equally true respecting both. Probably the idea is, that all that we have, as people and as Christians, our lives and our hopes, are through him and by his agency.

By him - δι᾽ αὐτόυ di'autouBy his agency. Paul had said, in respect to God the Father of all, that we were unto εἰς eishim; he here says that in regard to the Lord Jesus, we are by διά diaHim, or by His agency. The sense is, "God is the author, the former of the plan; the Source of being and of hope; and we are to live to Him: but Jesus is the agent by whom all these things are made, and through whom they are conferred on us." Arians and Socinians have made use of this passage to prove that the Son was inferior to God; and the argument is, that the "name" God is not given to Jesus, but another name implying inferiority; and that the design of Paul was to make a distinction between God and the Lord Jesus. It is not the design of these notes to examine opinions in theology; but in reply to this argument we may observe, briefly:

(1) That those who hold to the divinity of the Lord Jesus do not deny that there is a distinction between him and the Father: they fully admit and maintain it, both in regard to his eternal existence (that is, that there is an eternal distinction of persons in the Godhead) and in regard to his office as mediator.

(2) the term "Lord," given here, does not of necessity suppose that he is inferior to God.

(3) the design of the passage supposes that there was equality in some respects. God the Father and the Lord Jesus sustain relations to people that in some sense correspond to the "many gods" and the "many lords" that the pagan adored; but they were equal in nature.

(4) the work of creation is expressly in this passage ascribed to the Lord Jesus. But the work of creation cannot be performed by a creature. There can be no delegated God, and no delegated omnipotence, or delegated infinite wisdom and omnipresence. The work of creation implies divinity; or it is impossible to prove that there is a God; and if the Lord Jesus made "all things," he must be God.

Verse 7

Howbeit - But. In the previous verses Paul had stated the argument of the Corinthians - that they all knew that an idol was nothing; that they worshipped but one God; and that there could be no danger of their falling into idolatry, even should they partake of the meat offered in sacrifice to idols. Here he replies, that though this might be generally true, yet it was not universally; for that some were ignorant on this subject, and supposed that an idol had a real existence, and that to partake of that meat would be to confirm them in their superstition. The inference therefore is, that on their account they should abstain; see 1 Corinthians 8:11-13.

There is not … - There are some who are weak and ignorant; who have still remains of pagan opinions and superstitious feelings.

That knowledge - That there is but one God; and that an idol is nothing.

For some with conscience of the idol - From conscientious regard to the idol; believing that an idol god has a real existence; and that his favor should be sought, and his wrath be deprecated. It is not to be supposed that converted people would regard idols as the only God; but they might suppose that they were intermediate beings, good or bad angels, and that it was proper to seek their favor or avert their wrath. We are to bear in mind that the pagan were exceedingly ignorant; and that their former notions and superstitious feelings about the gods whom their fathers worshipped, and whom they had adored, would not soon leave them even on their conversion to Christianity. This is just one instance, like thousands, in which former erroneous opinions, prejudices, or superstitious views may influence those who are truly converted to God, and greatly mar and disfigure the beauty and symmetry of their religious character.

Eat it as a thing … - As offered to an idol who was entitled to adoration; or as having a right to their homage. They supposed that some invisible spirit was present with the idol; and that his favor should be sought, or his wrath averted by sacrifice.

And their conscience being weak - Being unenlightened on this subject; and being too weak to withstand the temptation in such a case. Not having a conscience sufficiently clear and strong to enable them to resist the temptation; to overcome all their former prejudices and superstitious feelings; and to act in an independent manner, as if an idol were nothing. Or their conscience was morbidly sensitive and delicate on this subject, they might be disposed to do right, and yet not have sufficient knowledge to convince them that an idol was nothing, and that they ought not to regard it.

Is defiled - Polluted; contaminated. By thus countenancing idolatry he is led into sin, and contracts guilt that will give him pain when his conscience becomes more enlightened; 1 Corinthians 8:11, 1 Corinthians 8:13. From superstitious reverence of the idol, he might think that he was doing right; but the effect would be to lead him to conformity to idol worship that would defile his conscience, pollute his mind, and ultimately produce the deep and painful conviction of guilt. The general reply, therefore, of Paul to the first argument in favor of partaking of the meat offered in sacrifice to idols is, that all Christians have not full knowledge on the subject; and that to partake of that might lead them into the sin of idolatry, and corrupt and destroy their souls.

Verse 8

But meat commendeth us not to God - This is to be regarded as the view presented by the Corinthian Christians, or by the advocates for partaking of the meat offered in sacrifice to idols. The sense is, "Religion is of a deeper and more spiritual nature than a mere regard to circumstances like these. God looks at the heart. He regards the motives, the thoughts, the moral actions of people. The mere circumstance of eating ‹meat,‘ or abstaining from it, cannot make a man better or worse in the sight of a holy God. The acceptable worship of God is not placed in such things. It is more spiritual; more deep; more important. And therefore, the inference is, "it cannot be a matter of much importance whether a man eats the meat offered in sacrifice to idols, or abstains." To this argument the apostle replies 1 Corinthians 8:9-13, that, although this might be true in itself, yet it might be the occasion of leading others into sin, and it would then become a matter of great importance in the sight of God, and should be in the sight of all true Christians. The word "commendeth" παράστησι means properly to introduce to the favor of anyone, as a king or ruler; and here means to recommend to the favor of God. God does not regard this as a matter of importance. He does not make his favor depend on unimportant circumstances like this.

Neither if we eat - If we partake of the meat offered to idols.

Are we the better - Margin, "Have we the more." Greek Do we abound περισσεύομεν perisseuomenthat is, in moral worth or excellence of character; see the note at Revelation 14:17.

Are we the worse - Margin, "Have we the less." Greek, Do we lack or want (ὑστερούμεθα husteroumetha); that is, in moral worth or excellence.

Verse 9

But take heed - This is the reply of Paul to the argument of the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 8:8. "Though all that you say should be admitted to be true, as it must be; though a man is neither morally better nor worse for partaking of meat or abstaining from it; yet the grand principle to be observed is, so to act as not to injure your brethren. Though you may be no better or worse for eating or not eating, yet if your conduct shall injure others, and lead them into sin, that is a sufficient guide to determine you what to do in the case. You should abstain entirely. It is of far more importance that your brother should not be led into sin, than it is that you should partake of meat which you acknowledge 1 Corinthians 8:8 is in itself of no importance."

Lest by any means - μή πως mē pōsYou should be careful that by no conduct of yours your brother be led into sin. This is a general principle that is to regulate Christian conduct in all matters that are in themselves indifferent.

This liberty of yours - This which you claim as a right; this power which you have, and the exercise of which is in itself lawful. The "liberty" or power ἐξουσία exousiahere referred to was that of partaking of the meat that was offered in sacrifice to idols; 1 Corinthians 8:8. A man may have a right abstractly to do a thing, but it may not be prudent or wise to exercise it.

Become a stumbling-block - An occasion of sin; see the note at Matthew 5:29; also see the note at Romans 14:13. See that it be not the occasion of leading others to sin, and to abandon their Christian profession; 1 Corinthians 8:10.

To them that are weak - To those professing Christians who are not fully informed or instructed in regard to the true nature of idolatry, and who still may have a superstitious regard for the gods whom their fathers worshipped.

Verse 10

For if any man - Any Christian brother who is ignorant, or anyone who might otherwise become a Christian.

Which hast knowledge - Who are fully informed in regard to the real nature of idol worship. You will be looked up to as an example. You will be presumed to be partaking of this feast in honor of the idol. You will thus

encourage him, and he will partake of it with a conscientious regard to the idol.

Sit at meat - Sitting down to an entertainment in the temple of the idol. Feasts were often celebrated, as they are now among the pagan, in honor of idols. Those entertainments were either in the temple of the idol, or at the house of him who gave it.

Shall not the conscience of him which is weak - Of the man who is not fully informed, or who still regards the idol with superstitious feelings; see 1 Corinthians 8:7.

Be emboldened - Margin, "Edified" οἰκοδομηθήσεται oikodomēthēsetaiConfirmed; established. So the word "edify" is commonly used in the New Testament; Acts 9:31; Romans 14:19; Ephesians 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:11. The sense here is, "Before this he had a superstitious regard for idols. He had the remains of his former feelings and opinions. But he was not established in the belief that an idol was anything; and his superstitious feelings were fast giving way to the better Christian doctrine that they were nothing. But now, by your example, he will be fully confirmed in the belief that an idol is to be regarded with respect and homage. He will see you in the very temple, partaking of a feast in honor of the idol; and he will infer not only that it is right, but that it is a matter of conscience with you, and will follow your example."

Verse 11

And through thy knowledge - Because you knew that an idol was nothing, and that there could be really no danger of falling into idolatry from partaking of these entertainments. You will thus be the means of deceiving and destroying him. The argument of the apostle here is, that if This was to be the result, the duty of those who had this knowledge was plain.

Shall the weak brother - The uninformed and ignorant Christian. That it means real Christian there can be no doubt. Because:

(1) It is the usual term by which Christians are designated - the endearing name of "brother;" and,

(2) The scope of the passage requires it so to be understood; see the note at Romans 14:20.

Perish - Be destroyed; ruined; lost; see the note at John 10:28. So the word ἀπολεῖται apoleitaiproperly and usually signifies. The sense is, that

the tendency of this course would be to lead the weak brother into sin, to apostasy, and to ruin. But this does not prove that any who were truly converted should apostatize and be lost; for:

(1) There may be a tendency to a thing, and yet that thing may never happen. It may be arrested, and the event not occur.

(2) the warning designed to prevent it may be effectual, and be the means of saving. A man in a canoe floating down the Niagara river may have a tendency to go over the falls; but he may be hailed from the shore, and the hailing may be effectual, and he may be saved. The call to him was designed to save him, and actually had that effect. So it may be in the warnings to Christians.

(3) the apostle does not say that any true Christian would be lost. He puts a question; and affirms that if "one" thing was done, "another might" follow. But this is not affirming that anyone would be lost. So I might say that if the man continued to float on toward the falls of Niagara, he would be destroyed. If one thing was done, the other would be a consequence. But this would be very different from a statement that a man "had actually" gone over the falls, and been lost.

(4) it is elsewhere abundantly proved that no one who has been truly converted will apostatize and be destroyed; see the notes at John 10:28; compare the note at Romans 8:29-30.

For whom Christ died - This is urged as an argument why we should not do anything that would tend to destroy the souls of people. And no stronger argument could be used. The argument is, that we should not do anything that would tend to frustrate the work of Christ, that would render the shedding of his blood vain. The possibility of doing this is urged; and that bare possibility should deter us from a course of conduct that might have this tendency. It is an appeal drawn from the deep and tender love, the sufferings, and the dying groans of the Son of God. If He endured so much to save the soul, assuredly we should not pursue a course that would tend to destroy it. If he denied himself so much to redeem, we should not, assuredly, be so fond of self-gratification as to be unwilling to abandon anything that would tend to destroy.

Verse 12

But when ye sin so against the brethren - This is designed further to show the evil of causing others to sin; and hence, the evil which might arise from partaking of the meat offered to idols. The word sin here is to be taken in the sense of "injuring, offending, leading into sin." You violate the law which requires you to love your brethren, and to seek their welfare, and thus you sin against them. Sin is properly against God; but there may be a course of injury pursued against people, or doing them injustice or wrong, and this is sin against them. Christians are bound to do right toward all.

And wound their weak conscience - The word "wound" here (τύπτοντες tuptontes"smiting, beating") is taken in the sense of injure. Their consciences are ill-informed. They have not the knowledge which you have. And by your conduct they are led further into error, and believe that the idol is something, and is to be honored. They are thus led into sin, and their conscience is more and more perverted, and oppressed more and more with a sense of guilt.

Ye sin against Christ - Because:

(1) Christ has commanded you to love them, and seek their good, and not to lead them into sin, and,

(2) Because they are so intimately united to Christ (see the notes at John 15:1 ff) that to offend them is to offend him; to injure the members is to injure the head; to destroy their souls is to pain his heart and to injure his cause; see the note at Matthew 10:40; compare Luke 10:16.

Verse 13

Wherefore - As the conclusion of the whole matter.

If meat … - Paul here proposes his own views and feelings, or tells them how he would act in order to show them how they should act in these circumstances.

Make my brother to offend - Lead him into sin; or shall be the cause of leading him into error and guilt. It does not mean, if the eating of meat should "enrage or irritate" another; but if it is the occasion of his being led into transgression. How this might be done is stated in 1 Corinthians 8:10.

I will eat no flesh … - My eating meat is a matter of comparative unimportance. I can dispense with it It is of much less importance to me than happiness, a good conscience, and salvation are to my brother. And the law of love therefore to him requires me to deny myself rather than to be

the occasion of leading him into sin. This is a noble resolution; and marks a great, disinterested, and magnanimous spirit. It is a spirit that seeks the good of all; that can deny itself; that is supremely anxious for the glory of God and the salvation of man, and that can make personal comfort and gratification subservient to the good of others. It was the principle on which Paul always acted; and is the very spirit of the self-denying Son of God.

While the world standeth - Greek, For ever. The phrase ‹I will never eat meat‘ would express the idea. “Lest I make, etc.” Rather than lead him into sin, by my indulging in eating the meat offered in sacrifice to idols.

Remarks On 1 Corinthians 8:6. This was true of those converted from ancient paganism, and it is true of those who are now converted from paganism, and of all young converts. Former opinions, and prejudices, and even superstitions, abide long in the mind, and cast a long and withering influence ever the regions of Christian piety. The morning dawn is at first very obscure. The change from night to daybreak is at first scarcely perceptible. And so it may be in conversion. The views which a pagan entertained from his childhood could not at once be removed. The influence of corrupt opinions and feelings, which a sinner has long indulged, may “travel over” in his conversion, and may long endanger his piety and destroy his peace. Corrupt and infidel thoughts, associations of pollution, cannot be destroyed at once; and we are not to expect from a child in the Christian life, the full vigor, and the elevated principle, and the strength to resist temptation, which we expect of the man matured in the service of the Lord Jesus. This should lead us to charity in regard to the imperfections and failings of young converts; to a willingness to aid and counsel them; to carefulness not to lead them into sin; and it should lead us not to expect the same amount of piety, zeal, and purity in converts from degraded pagans, which we expect in Christian lands, and where converts have been trained up under all the advantages of Sunday Schools and Bible classes.

2. Our opinions should be formed, and our treatment of others regulated, not by abstract knowledge, but by love, 1 Corinthians 8:1. A man is usually much more likely to act right who is influenced by charity and love, than one who is guided by simple knowledge, or by self-confidence. One is humble, kind, tender toward the frailties of others, sensible himself of infirmity, and is disposed to do right; the other may be vain, harsh, censorious, unkind, and severe. Knowledge is useful; but for the practical purposes of life, in an erring and fallen world, love is more useful; and

while the one often leads astray, the other seldom errs. Whatever knowledge we may have, we should make it a point from which we are never to depart, that our opinions of others, and our treatment of them, should be formed under the influence of love.

3. We should not be self-confident of our wisdom, 1 Corinthians 8:2. Religion produces humility. Mere knowledge may fill the heart with pride and vanity. True knowledge is not inconsistent with humility; but it must be joined with a heart that is right. The people that have been most eminent in knowledge have also been distinguished for humility; but the heart was right; and they saw the folly of depending on mere knowledge.

4. There is but one God, 1 Corinthians 8:4-6. This great truth lies at the foundation of all true religion; and yet is so simple that it may be known by all Christians, however humble, and is to be presumed to be known by all. But though simple, it is a great and glorious truth. To keep this before the minds of people was one great purpose of all God‘s revelations; and to communicate it to people is now the grand object of all missionary enterprises. The world is full of idols and idolaters; but the knowledge of this simple truth would change the moral aspect of the entire globe. To spread this truth should be the great aim and purpose of all true Christians; and when this truth is spread, the idols of the pagan will fall to the dust.

5. Christians acknowledge one and only one Lord, 1 Corinthians 8:6. He rules over them. His laws bind them. He controls them. He has a right to them. He can dispose of them as he pleases. They are not their own; but are bound to live entirely to him, and for the promotion of his cause.

6. It becomes Christians to exercise continual care, lest their conduct, even in things which are in themselves lawful, should be the occasion of leading others into sin, 1 Corinthians 8:9. Christians very often pursue a course of conduct which may not be in itself unlawful, but which may lead others who have not their intelligence, or strength of principle, into error. One man may be safe where another man is in danger. One man may be able to resist temptations which would entirely overcome another. A course of life may, perhaps, be safe for a man of years and of mature judgment, which would he ruinous to a young man. And the grand principle here

should be, not to do that, even though it may be lawful itself, which would he the occasion of leading others into sin.

7. We see here the importance and the power of example, 1 Corinthians 8:10-11. Nothing is of more value than a correct Christian example. And this applies particularly to those who are in the more elevated ranks of life, who occupy stations of importance, who are at the head of families, colleges, and schools. The ignorant will be likely to follow the example of the learned; the poor of the rich; those in humble life will imitate the manners of the great. Even in things, therefore, which may not he in themselves unlawful in these circumstances, they should set an example of self-denial, of plainness, of abstinence, for the sake of those beneath them. They should so live that it would be safe and right for all to imitate their example. Christ, though he was rich, yet so lived that all may safely imitate him; though he was honored of God, and exalted to the highest office as the Redeemer of the world, yet he lived so that all in every rank may follow him; though he had all power, and was worshipped by angels, yet so lived that he might teach the most humble and lowly how to live; and so lived that it is safe and proper for all to live as he did. So should every monarch, and prince, and rich man; every noble, and every learned man; every man of honor and office; every master of a family, and every man of age and wisdom, live that all others may learn of them how to live, and that they may safely walk in their footsteps.

8. We have here a noble instance of the principles on which Paul was willing to act, 1 Corinthians 8:13. He was willing to deny himself of any gratification, if his conduct was likely to be the occasion of leading others into sin. Even from that which was in itself lawful he would abstain forever, if by indulgence he would be the occasion of another‘s falling into transgression. But how rare is this virtue! How seldom is it practiced! How few Christians and Christian ministers are there who deny themselves any gratification in things in themselves right, lest they should induce others to sin! And yet this is the grand principle of Christianity; and this should influence and guide all the professed friends and followers of Christ. This “principle” might be applied to many things in which many Christians now freely indulge; and if applied, would produce great and important changes in society:

(1) Entertainments and feasts which, perhaps, you may be able to "afford" (that is, "afford" in the supposition that what you have is "yours," and not the Lord's), may lead many of those who cannot afford it to imitate you, and to involve themselves in debt, in extravagance, in ruin.

(2) you might possibly be safe at a festival, at a public dinner, or in a large party; but your example would encourage others where they would not be safe; and yet, how could you reply should they say that you were there, and that they were encouraged by you?

(3) on the supposition that the use of wine and other fermented liquors may be in themselves lawful, and that you might be safe in using them, yet others may be led by your example to an improper use of them, or contract a taste for stimulating drinks that may end in their ruin. Would it be right for "you" to continue the use of wine in such circumstances? Would Paul have done it? Would he not have adopted the noble principle in this chapter, that he would not touch it while the world stands, if it led him to sin?

(4) you might be safe in a party of amusement, in the circle of the joyful, and in scenes of merriment and mirth. I say you might be, though the supposition is scarcely possible that Christian piety is ever safe in such scenes, and though it is certain that Paul or the Saviour would not have been found there. But how will it be for the young, and for those of less strength of Christian virtue? Will they be safe there? Will they be able to guard against these allurements as you could? Will they not be led into the love of gaiety, vanity, and folly? And what would Paul have done in such cases? What would Jesus Christ have done? What should Christians now do? This single principle, if fairly applied, would go far to change the aspect of the Christian world. If all Christians had Paul's delicate sensibilities, and Paul's strength of Christian virtue, and Paul's willingness to deny himself to benefit others, the aspect of the Christian world would soon change. How many practices now freely indulged in would be abandoned! And how soon would every Christian be seen to set such an example that all others could safely follow it!

1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Introduction

The apostle had in 1 Corinthians 8:13, mentioned his willingness to deny himself if he might be the means of benefitting others. On this principle he had acted; and on this he purposed to act. The mention of this principle of action seems to have led him to a further illustration of it in his own case, and in the illustration to meet an objection that had been urged against him at Corinth; and the scope of this chapter seems to have been not only to give an "illustration" of this principle (see 1 Corinthians 9:27), but to show that this principle on which he acted would account for his conduct when with them, and would meet all the objections which had been made against his apostleship. These objections seem to have been:

(1) That he had not seen Jesus Christ; and therefore could not be an apostle; 1 Corinthians 9:1.

(2) that he did not live like the other apostles, that he was unmarried, was a solitary man, and a wanderer, and was unlike the other apostles in his mode of life, not indulging as apostles might do in the ordinary comforts of life; 1 Corinthians 9:4-5.

(3) that he and Barnabas were compelled to labor for their support, and were conscious, therefore, that they had no pretensions to the apostolic office; 1 Corinthians 9:6. And,

(4) That the fact that he was unsupplied; that he did not apply to Christians for his maintenance; that he did not urge this as a right, showed that he was conscious that he had no claims to the apostolic character and rank.

To all this he replies in this chapter, and the main drift and design of his reply is, to show that he acted on the principle suggested in 1 Corinthians 8:13, that of denying himself; and consequently, that though he had a right to maintenance, yet that the fact that he did not urge that right was no proof that he was not sent from God, but was rather a proof of his being actuated by the high and truly principles which ought to influence those who were called to this office. In urging this reply, he shows:

(1) That he had seen Jesus Christ, and had this qualification for the office of an apostle; 1 Corinthians 9:1.

(2) that he had the power like others to partake of the common enjoyments of life, and that his "not" doing it was no proof that he was not an apostle; 1 Corinthians 9:4.

(3) that he was not prohibited from entering the domestic relations as others had done, but had the right to enjoy the same privileges if he chose; and that his not doing it was no proof that he was not an apostle, but was an instance of his denying himself for the good of others; 1 Corinthians 9:5.

(4) that he was not under a necessity of laboring with his own hands, but that he might have required support as others did; that his laboring was only another instance of his readiness to deny himself to promote the welfare of others; 1 Corinthians 9:6.

This sentiment he illustrates through the remainder of the chapter by showing that he had a right to support in the work of the apostleship, and that his not insisting on it was an instance of his being willing to deny himself that he might do good to others; that he did not urge this right because to do that might injure the cause 1 Corinthians 9:19, 1 Corinthians 9:15; and that whether he received support or not, he was bound to preach the gospel. In this he shows:

(a) 1 Corinthians 9:7-10, 1 Corinthians 9:13 That God gave him the right to support if he chose to exercise it;

(b)That it was equitable that he should be supported 1 Corinthians 9:11;

(c)That the Lord had ordained this as a general law, that they which preached the gospel should live by it 1 Corinthians 9:14;

(d)That he had not chosen to avail himself of it because it might do injury 1 Corinthians 9:12, 1 Corinthians 9:15;

(e)That necessity was laid upon him at all events to preach the gospel 1 Corinthians 9:16;

(f)That if he did this without an earthly reward, he would be rewarded in heaven in a distinguished manner 1 Corinthians 9:17-18;

(g)That he had made it the grand principle of his life, not to make money, but to save souls, and that he had sought this by a course of continued self-denial 1 Corinthians 9:19-22;

(h)That all this was done for the sake of the gospel 1 Corinthians 9:23; and,

(i)That he had a grand and glorious object in view, which required him, after the manner of the athlete, to keep his body under, to practice self-denial, to be temperate, to forego many comforts of which he might otherwise have partaken, and that the grandeur and glory of this object was enough to justify all his self-denial, and to make all his sacrifices pleasant; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

Thus, the whole chapter is an incidental discussion of the subject of his apostleship, in illustration of the sentiment advanced in 1 Corinthians 8:13, that he was willing to practice self-denial for the good of others; and is one of the most elevated, heavenly, and beautiful discussions in the New Testament, and contains one of the most ennobling descriptions of the virtue of self-denial, and of the principles which should actuate the Christian ministry, anywhere to be found. All classic writings would be searched in vain, and all records of profane history, for an instance of such pure and elevated principle as is presented in this chapter.

Verse 1

Am I not an apostle? - This was the point to be settled; and it is probable that some at Corinth had denied that he could be an apostle, since it was requisite, in order to that, to have seen the Lord Jesus; and since it was supposed that Paul had not been a witness of his life, doctrines, and death.

Am I not free? - Am I not a free man; have I not the liberty which all Christians possess, and especially which all the apostles possess? The "liberty" referred to here is doubtless the privilege or right of abstaining from labor; of enjoying as others did the domestic relations of life; and of a support as a public minister and apostle. Probably some had objected to his

claims of apostleship that he had not used this right, and that he was conscious that he had no claim to it. By this mode of interrogation, he strongly implies that he was a freeman, and that he had this right.

Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? - Here it is implied, and seems to be admitted by Paul, that in order to be an "apostle" it was necessary to have seen the Saviour. This is often declared expressly; see the note at Acts 1:21-22. The reason of this was, that the apostles were appointed to be witnesses of the life, doctrines, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and that in their "being witnesses" consisted the uniqueness of the apostolic office. That this was the case is abundantly manifest from Matthew 28:18-19; Luke 24:48; Acts 1:21-22; Acts 2:32; Acts 10:39-41. Hence, it was essential, in order that anyone should be such a witness, and an apostle, that he should have seen the Lord Jesus. In the case of Paul, therefore, who was called to this office after the death and resurrection of the Saviour, and who had not therefore had an opportunity of seeing and hearing him when living, this was provided for by the fact that the Lord Jesus showed himself to him after his death and ascension, in order that he might have this qualification for the apostolic office, Acts 9:3-5, Acts 9:17. To the fact of his having been thus in a miraculous manner qualified for the apostolic office, Paul frequently appeals, and always with the same view that it was necessary to have seen the Lord Jesus to qualify one for this office, Acts 22:14-15; Acts 26:16; 1 Corinthians 15:8. It follows from this, therefore, that no one was an apostle in the strict and proper sense who had not seen the Lord Jesus. And it follows, also, that the apostles could have no successors in that which constituted the uniqueness of their office; and that the office must have commenced and ended with them.

Are not ye my work in the Lord? - Have you not been converted by my labors, or under my ministry; and are you not a proof that the Lord, when I have been claiminG to be an apostle, has owned me "as an apostle," and blessed me in this work? God would not give his sanction to an impostor, and a false pretender; and as Paul had labored there as an apostle, this was an argument that he had been truly commissioned of God. A minister may appeal to the blessing of God on his labors in proof that he is sent of Him. And one of the best of all arguments that a man is sent from God exists where multitudes of souls are converted from sin, and turned to holiness, by his labors. What better credentials than this can a man need that

he is in the employ of God? What more consoling to his own mind? What more satisfactory to the world?

Verse 2

If I be not an apostle unto others - "If I have not given evidence to others of my apostolic mission; of my being sent by the Lord Jesus, yet I have to you. Assuredly you, among whom I have labored so long and so successfully, should not doubt that I am sent from the Lord. You have been well acquainted with me; you have witnessed my endowments, you have seen my success, and you have had abundant evidence that I have been sent on this great work. It is therefore strange in you to doubt my apostolic commission; and it is unkind in you so to construe my declining to accept your contributions and aid for my support, as if I were conscious that I was not entitled to that."

For the seal of mine apostleship. - Your conversion is the demonstration that I am an apostle. Paul uses strong language. He does not mean to say that their conversion furnished some evidence that he was an apostle; but that it was absolute proof, and unbreakable demonstration, that he was an apostle. A "seal" is that which is affixed to a deed, or other instrument, to make it firm, secure, and indisputable. It is the proof or demonstration of the validity of the conveyance, or of the writing; see the notes at John 3:33; John 6:27. The sense here is, therefore, that the conversion of the Corinthians was a certain demonstration that he was an apostle, and should be so regarded by them, and treated by them. It was such a proof:

(1)Because Paul claimed to be an apostle while among them, and God blessed and owned this claim;

(2)Their conversion could not have been accomplished by man. It was the work of God. It was the evidence then which God gave to Paul and to them, that he was with him, and had sent him.

(3)they knew him, had seen him, heard him, were acquainted with his doctrines and manner of life, and could bear testimony to what he was, and what he taught.

We may remark, that the conversion of sinners is the best evidence to a minister that he is sent of God. The divine blessing on his labors should cheer his heart, and lead him to believe that God has sent and that he approves him. And every minister should so live and labor, should so deny

himself, that he may be able to appeal to the people among whom he labors that he is a minister of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 3

Mine answer - Greek Ἡ ἐμὴ ἀπολογία Hē emē apologiaMy "apology;" my defense. The same word occurs in Acts 22:1; Acts 25:16; 2 Corinthians 7:11; Philemon 1:7, Philemon 1:17; 2 Timothy 4:16; 1 Peter 3:15; see the note at Acts 22:1. Here it means his answer, or defense against those who sat in judgment on his claims to be an apostle.

To them that do examine me. - To those who "inquire" of me; or who "censure" and condemn me as not having any claims to the apostolic office. The word used here ἀνακρίνω anakrinōis properly a forensic term, and is usually applied to judges in courts; to those who sit in judgment, and investigate and decide in litigated cases brought before them; Luke 23:14; Acts 4:9; Acts 12:19; Acts 24:8. The apostle here may possibly allude to the arrogance and pride of those who presumed to sit as judges on his qualification for the apostolic office. It is not meant that this answer had been given by Paul before this, but that this was the defense which he had to offer.

Is this - This which follows; the statements which are made in the following verses. In these statements (1 Corinthians 9:4-6, etc.) he seems to have designed to take up their objections to his apostolic claims one by one, and to show that they were of no force.

Verse 4

Have we not power - (ἐξουσίαν exousian) Have we not the "right." The word "power" here is evidently used in the sense of "right" (compare John 1:12, "margin"); and the apostle means to say that though they had not exercised this "right by demanding" a maintenance, yet it was not because they were conscious that they had no such right, but because they chose to forego it for wise and important purposes.

To eat and to drink - To be maintained at the expense of those among whom we labor. Have we not a right to demand that they shall yield us a proper support? By the interrogative form of the statement, Paul intends more strongly to affirm that they had such a right. The interrogative mode is often adopted to express the strongest affirmation. The objection here urged seems to have been this, "You, Paul and Barnabas, labor with your own hands. Acts 18:3. Other religious teachers lay claim to maintenance, and are supported without personal labor. This is the case with pagan and Jewish

priests, and with Christian teachers among us. You must be conscious, therefore, that you are not apostles, and that you have no claim or right to support." To this the answer of Paul is, "We admit that we labor with our own hands. But your inference does not follow. It is not because we have not a right to such support, and it is not because we are conscious that we have no such claim, but it is for a higher purpose. It is because it will do good if we should not urge this right, and enforce this claim." That they had such a right, Paul proves at length in the subsequent part of the chapter.

Verse 5

Have we not power? - Have we not a right? The objection here seems to have been, that Paul and Barnabas were unmarried, or at least that they traveled without wives. The objectors urged that others had wives, and that they took them with them, and expected provision to be made for them as well as for themselves. They therefore showed that they felt that they had a claim to support for their families, and that they were conscious that they were sent of God. But Paul and Barnabas had no families. And the objectors inferred that they were conscious that they had no claim to the apostleship, and no right to support. To this Paul replies as before, that they had a right to do as others did, but they chose not to do it for other reasons than that they were conscious that they had no such right.

To lead about - To have in attendance with us; to conduct from place to place; and to have them maintained at the expense of the churches amongst which we labor.

A sister, a wife - Margin, "or woman." This phrase has much perplexed commentators. But the simple meaning seems to be, A wife who should be a Christian, and regarded as sustaining the relation of a Christian sister." Probably Paul meant to advert to the fact that the wives of the apostles were and should be Christians; and that it was a matter of course, that if an apostle led about a wife she would be a Christian; or that he would marry no other; compare 1 Corinthians 3:11.

As well as other apostles - It is evident from this that the apostles generally were married. The phrase used here is οἱ λοιποὶ ἀπόστολοι hoi loipoi apostoloi("the remaining apostles," or the other apostles). And if they were married, it is right and proper for ministers to marry now, whatever the papist may say to the contrary. It is safer to follow the example of the apostles than the opinions of the papal church. The reasons why the apostles had wives with them on their journeys may have been various. They may

have been either to give instruction and counsel to those of their own sex to whom the apostles could not have access, or to minister to the needs of their husbands as they traveled. It is to be remembered that they traveled among pagans; they had no acquaintance and no friends there; they therefore took with them their female friends and wives to minister to them, and sustain them in sickness, trial, etc. Paul says that he and Barnabas had a right to do this; but they had not used this right because they chose rather to make the gospel without charge 1 Corinthians 9:18, and that thus they judged they could do more good. It follows from this:

(1) That it is right for ministers to marry, and that the papal doctrine of the celibacy of the clergy is contrary to apostolic example.

(2) it is right for missionaries to marry, and to take their wives with them to pagan lands. The apostles were missionaries, and spent their lives in pagan nations as missionaries do now, and there may be as good reasons for missionaries marrying now as there were then.

(3) yet there are people, like Paul, who can do more good without being married. There are circumstances, like his, where it is not advisable that they should marry, and there can be no doubt that Paul regarded the unmarried state for a missionary as preferable and advisable. Probably the same is to be said of most missionaries at the present day, that they could do more good if unmarried, than they can if burdened with the cares of families.

And as the brethren of the Lord - The brothers of the Lord Jesus, James and Joses, and Simon and Judas, Matthew 13:55. It seems from this, that although at first they did not believe in him John 7:5, and had regarded him as disgraced Mark 3:21, yet that they had subsequently become converted, and were employed as ministers and evangelists. It is evident also from this statement that they were married, and were attended with their wives in their travels.

And Cephas - Peter; see the note at John 1:42. This proves:

(1) as well as the declaration in Matthew 8:14, that Peter had been married.

(2) that he had a wife after he became an apostle, and while engaged in the work of the ministry.

(3) that his wife accompanied him in his travels.

(4) that it is right and proper for ministers and missionaries to be married now.

Is it not strange that the pretended successor of Peter, the pope of Rome, should forbid marriage when Peter himself was married? Is it not a proof how little the papacy regards the Bible, and the example and authority of those from whom it pretends to derive its power? And is it not strange that this doctrine of the celibacy of the clergy, which has been the source of abomination, impurity, and licentiousness everywhere, should have been sustained and countenanced at all by the Christian world? And is it not strange that this, with all the other corrupt doctrines of the papacy, should be attempted to be imposed on the enlightened people of the United States, or of Great Britain, as a part of the religion of Christ?

Verse 6

Or I only and Barnabas - Paul and Barnabas had worked together as tent-makers at Corinth; Acts 18:3. From this fact it had been inferred that they "knew" that they had no claim to a support.

Power to forbear working - To abstain from labor, and to receive support as others do. The question implies a strong affirmation that they had such power. The sense is, ‹Why should I and Barnabas be regarded as having no right to support? Have we been less faithful than others? Have we done less? Have we given fewer evidences that we are sent by the Lord, or that God approves us in our work? Have we been less successful? Why then should we be singled out; and why should it be supposed that we are obliged to labor for our support? "Is there no other conceivable reason" why we should support ourselves than a consciousness that we have no right to support from the people with whom we labor?" It is evident from 1 Corinthians 9:12, that Barnabas as well as Paul relinquished his right to a support, and labored to maintain himself. And it is manifest from the whole passage, that there was some special "spleen" ("Doddridge") against these two ministers of the gospel. What it was we know not. It might have arisen from the enmity and opposition of Judaizing teachers, who were offended at their zeal and success among the Gentiles, and who could find no other

cause of complaint against them than that they chose to support themselves, and not live in idleness, or to tax the church for their support. That must have been a bad cause which was sustained by such an argument.

Verse 7

Who goeth a warfare … - Paul now proceeds to illustrate the right which he knew ministers had to a support 1 Corinthians 9:7-14, and then to show the reason why he had not availed himself of that right; 1 Corinthians 9:15-23. The right he illustrates from the nature of the case 1 Corinthians 9:7, 1 Corinthians 9:11; from the authority of Scripture 1 Corinthians 9:8-10; from the example of the priests under the Jewish law 1 Corinthians 9:18; and from the authority of Jesus Christ; 1 Corinthians 9:14. In this verse (7th) the right is enforced by the nature of the case, and by three illustrations. The first is, the right of a soldier or warrior to his wages. The Christian ministry is compared to a warfare, and the Christian minister to a soldier; compare 1 Timothy 1:18. The soldier had a right to receive pay from him who employed him. He did not go at his own expense. This was a matter of common equity; and on this principle all acted who enlisted as soldiers.

So Paul says it is but equitable also that the soldier of the Lord Jesus should be sustained, and should not be required to support himself. And why, we may ask, should he be, any more than the man who devotes his strength, and time, and talents to the defense of his country? The work of the ministry is as arduous, and as self-denying, and perhaps as dangerous, as the work of a soldier; and common justice, therefore, demands that he who devotes his youth, and health and life to it, for the benefit of others should have a competent support. Why should not he receive a competent support who seeks to save people, as well as he who lives to destroy them? Why not he who endeavors to recover them to God, and make them pure and happy, as well as he who lives to destroy life, and pour out human blood, and to fill the air with the shrieks of new made widows and orphans? Or why not he who seeks, though in another mode, to defend the great interests of his country, and to maintain the interests of justice, truth, and mercy, for the benefit of mankind, as well as he who is willing in the tented field to spend his time, or exhaust his health and life in protecting the rights of the nation?

At his own charges - His own expense. On the meaning of the word "charges" (ὀψωνίοις opsōniois) see the note at Luke 3:14; compare

Romans 6:23; 2 Corinthians 11:8. The word does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament.

Who planteth a vineyard … - This is the second illustration from the nature of the case, to show that ministers of the gospel have a right to support. The argument is this: ‹It is reasonable that those who labor should have a fair compensation. A man who plants a vineyard does not expect to labor for nothing; he expects support from that labor, and looks for it from the vineyard. The vineyard owes its beauty, growth, and productiveness to him. It is reasonable, therefore, that from that vineyard he should receive a support, as a compensation for his toil. So we labor for your welfare. You derive advantage from our toil. We spend our time, and strength, and talent for your benefit; and it is reasonable that we should be supported while we thus labor for your good." The church of God is often compared to "a vineyard;" and this adds to the beauty of this illustration; see Isaiah 5:1-4; see the notes at Luke 20:9-16.

Who feedeth a flock … - This is the third illustration drawn from the nature of the case, to show that ministers have a right to support. The word "feedeth" (ποιμαίνει poimainei) denotes not only to "feed," but to guard, protect, defend, as a shepherd does his flock; see the notes at John 21:15-17. "The wages of the shepherds in the East do not consist of ready money, but in a part of the milk of the flocks which they tend. Thus, Spon says of the shepherds in modern Greece, "These shepherds are poor Albanians, who feed the cattle, and live in huts built of rushes; they have a tenth part of the milk and of the lambs which is their whole wages; the cattle belong to the Turks." The shepherds in Ethiopia, also, according to Alvarez, have no pay except the milk and butter which they obtain from the cows, and on which they and their families subsist" - Rosenmuller. The church is often compared to a flock; see the note at John 10:1 ff.

The argument here is this: "A shepherd spends his days and nights in guarding his folds. He leads his flock to green pastures, he conducts them to still waters (compare Psalm 23:2); he defends them from enemies; he guards the young, the sick, the feeble, etc. He spends his time in protecting it and providing for it. He expects support, when in the wilderness or in the pastures, mainly from the milk which the flock should furnish. He labors for their comfort; and it is proper that he should derive a maintenance from them, and he has a right to it. So the minister of the gospel watches for the good of souls. He devotes his time, strength, learning, talents, to their

welfare. He instructs, guides, directs, defends; he endeavors to guard them against their spiritual enemies, and to lead them in the path of comfort and peace. He lives to instruct the ignorant; to warn and secure those who are in danger; to guide the perplexed; to reclaim the wandering; to comfort; the afflicted; to bind up the broken in heart; to attend on the sick; to be an example and an instructor to the young; and to be a counsellor and a pattern to all. As he labors for their good, it is no more than equal and right that they should minister to his temporal needs, and compensate him for his efforts to promote their happiness and salvation. And can anyone say that this is not right and just?

Verse 8

Say I these things as a man? - Do I speak this on my own authority, or without the sanction of God? Is not this, which appears to be so reasonable and equitable, also supported by the authority of God?

Or saith not the law the same also? - The Law of Moses, to which the "Jewish" part of the church at Corinth - which probably had mainly urged these objections - professed to bow with deference. Paul was accustomed, especially in arguing with the Jews, to derive his proofs from the Old Testament. In the previous verse he had shown that it was equitable that ministers of the gospel should be supported. In this and the following verses he shows that the same principle was recognized and acted on under the Jewish dispensation. He does not mean to say, by this example of the ox treading out the grain, that the law as given by Moses referred to the Christian ministry; but that the principle there was settled that the laborer should have a support, and that a suitable provision should not be withheld even from an ox; and if God so regarded the welfare of a brute when laboring, it was much more reasonable to suppose that he would require a suitable provision to be made for the ministers of religion.

Verse 9

For it is written - Deuteronomy 25:4.

In the law of Moses - See the note at Luke 24:44.

Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth … - To muzzle means, "to bind the mouth; to fasten the mouth to prevent eating or biting" - Webster. This was done either by passing straps around the mouth, or by placing, as is now sometimes done, a small "basket" over the mouth, fastened by straps to the horns of the animal, so as to prevent its eating, but not to impede its

breathing freely. This was an instance of the humanity of the laws of Moses. The idea is, that the ox should not be prevented from eating when it was in the midst of food; and that as it labored for its owner, it was entitled to support; and there was a propriety that it should be permitted to partake of the grain which it was threshing.

That treadeth … - This was one of the common modes of threshing in the east, as it is with us; see the note and illustration on Matthew 3:12.

The corn - The "grain," of any kind; wheat, rye, barley, etc. Maize, to which we apply the word "corn," was then unknown; see the note at Matthew 12:1.

Doth God take care for oxen? - Doth God take care for oxen only? Or is not this rather "a principle" which shows God's care for all that labor, and the humanity and equity of his laws? And if he is so solicitous about the welfare of brutes as to frame an express law in their behalf, is it not to be presumed that the same "principle" of humanity and equity will run through all his dealings and requirements? The apostle does not mean to deny that God does take care for oxen, for the very law was proof that he did; but he means to ask whether it is to be supposed that God would regard the comfort of oxen and not of people also? Whether we are not to suppose that the same principle would apply also to those who labor in the service of God? He uses this passage, therefore, not as originally having reference to people, or to ministers of the gospel, which cannot be; but as establishing a general "principle" in regard to the equity and humanity of the divine laws; and as thus showing that the spirit of the law of God would lead to the conclusion that God intended that the laborer everywhere should have a competent support.

Verse 10

Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? - The word "altogether" (πάντως pantōs) cannot mean that this was the "sole" and "only" design of the law, to teach that ministers of the gospel were entitled to support; for:

(1) This would be directly contrary to the law itself, which had some direct and undoubted reference to oxen;

(2) The scope of the argument here does not require this interpretation, since the whole object will be met by supposing that this settled a "principle" of humanity and equity in the divine law, according to which it was "proper" that ministers should have a support; and,

(3) The word “altogether” (πάντως pantōs) does not of necessity require this interpretation. It may be rendered “chiefly, mainly, principally, or doubtless;” Luke 4:23, “Ye will ‹surely‘ (πάντως pantōscertainly, surely, doubtless) say unto me this proverb,” etc.; Acts 18:21, “I must ‹by all means‘ (πάντως pantōscertainly, surely) keep this feast; Acts 21:22, “The multitude ‹must needs‘ (πάντως pantōswill certainly, surely, inevitably) come together,” etc.; Acts 28:4, “‹No doubt‘ (πάντως pantōs) this man is a murderer,” etc. The word here, therefore, means that the “principle” stated in the law about the oxen was so broad and humane, that it might “certainly, surely, particularly” be regarded as applicable to the case under consideration. An important and material argument might be drawn from it; an argument from the less to the greater. The precept enjoined justice, equity, humanity; and that was more applicable to the case of the ministers of the gospel than to the case of oxen.

For our sakes … - To show that the laws and requirements of God are humane, kind, and equitable; not that Moses had Paul or any other minister in his eye, but the “principle” was one that applied particularly to this case.

That he that ploweth … - The Greek in this place would be more literally and more properly rendered, “For (ὅτι hoti) he that ploweth ought (ὀφείλει opheilei) to plow in hope;” that is, in hope of reaping a harvest, or of obtaining success in his labors; and the sense is, “The man who cultivates the earth, in order that he may be excited to industry and diligence, ought to have a reasonable prospect that he shall himself be permitted to enjoy the fruit of his labors. This is the case with those who do plow; and if this should be the case with those who cultivate the earth, it is as certainly reasonable that those who labor in God‘s husbandry, and who devote their strength to his service, should be encouraged with a reasonable prospect of success and support.”

And that he that thresheth … - This sentence, in the Greek, is very elliptical and obscure; but the sense is, evidently, “He that thresheth ‹ought‘ to partake of his hope;” that is, of the fruits of his hope, or of the result of his labor. It is fair and right that he should enjoy the fruits of his toil. So in God‘s husbandry; it is right and proper that they who toil for the advancement of his cause should be supported and rewarded.” The same sentiment is expressed in 2 Timothy 2:6, “The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits.”

Verse 11

If we have sown unto you spiritual things - If we have been the means of imparting to you the gospel, and bestowing upon you its high hopes and privileges; see the note at Romans 15:27. The figure of "sowing," to denote the preaching of the gospel, is not unfrequently employed in the Scriptures; see John 4:37, and the parable of the sower, Matthew 13:3 ff.

Is it a great thing … - See the note at Romans 15:27. Is it to be regarded as unequal, unjust, or burdensome? Is it to be supposed that we are receiving that for which we have not rendered a valuable consideration? The sense is, "We impart blessings of more value than we receive. We receive a supply of our temporal needs. We impart to you, under the divine blessing, the gospel, with all its hopes and consolations. We make you acquainted with God; with the plan of salvation; with the hope of heaven. We instruct your children; we guide you in the path of comfort and peace; we raise you from the degradations of idolatry and of sin; and we open before you the hope of the resurrection of the just, and of all the bliss of heaven; and to do this, we give ourselves to toil and peril by land and by sea. And can it be made a matter of question whether all these high and exalted hopes are of as much value to dying man as the small amount which shall be needful to minister to the needs of those who are the means of imparting these blessings?" Paul says this, therefore, from the reasonableness of the case. The propriety of support might be further urged:

(1) Because without it the ministry would be comparatively useless. Ministers, like physicians, lawyers, and farmers, should be allowed to attend mainly to the great business of their lives, and to their appropriate work. No physician, no farmer, no mechanic, could accomplish much, if his attention was constantly turned off from his appropriate business to engage in something else. And how can the minister of the gospel, if his time is nearly all taken up in laboring to provide for the needs of his family?

(2) the great mass of ministers spend their early days, and many of them all their property, in preparing to preach the gospel to others. And as the mechanic who has spent his early years in learning a trade, and the physician and lawyer in preparing for their profession, receive support in that calling, why should not the minister of the gospel?

(3) people in other things cheerfully pay those who labor for them. They compensate the schoolmaster, the physician, the lawyer; the merchant, the mechanic; and they do it cheerfully, because they suppose they receive a valuable consideration for their money. But is it not so with regard to ministers of the gospel? Is not a man‘s family as certainly benefited by the labors of a faithful clergyman and pastor, as by the skill of a physician or a lawyer, or by the service of the schoolmaster? Are not the affairs of the soul and of eternity as important to a man‘s family as those of time and the welfare of the body? So the music-master and the dancing master are paid, and paid cheerfully and liberally; and yet can there be any comparison between the value of their services and those of the minister of the gospel?

(4) it might be added, that society is benefited in a “pecuniary” way by the service of a faithful minister to a far greater extent than the amount of compensation which he receives. One drunkard, reformed under his labors, may earn and save to his family and to society as much as the whole salary of the pastor. The promotion of order, peace, sobriety, industry, education, and regularity in business, and honesty in contracting and in paying debts, saves much more to the community at large than the cost of the support of the gospel. In regard to this, any man may make the comparison at his leisure, between those places where the ministry is established, and where temperance, industry, and sober habits prevail, and those places where there is no ministry, and where gambling, idleness, and dissipation abound. It is always a matter of “economy” to a people, in the end, to support schoolmasters and ministers as they ought to be supported.

Reap your carnal things - Partake of those things which relate to the present life; the support of the body, that is, food and raiment.

Verse 12

If others - Other teachers living with you. There can be no doubt that the teachers in Corinth urged this right, and received a support.

Be partakers of this power - Of this right to a support and maintenance.

Are not we rather - We the apostles; we who have labored for your conversion; who have founded your church; who have been the first, and the most laborious in instructing you, and imparting to you spiritual blessings? Have not we a better claim than they?.

Nevertheless we have not used this power - We have not urged this claim; we have chosen to forego this right, and to labor for our own support. The reason why they had done this, he states in the subsequent part of the chapter; see 2 Corinthians 11:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:14; compare Acts 18:3; Acts 20:34-35.

But suffer all things - Endure all privations and hardships; we subject ourselves to poverty, want, hunger, thirst, nakedness, rather than urge a "claim" on you, and thus leave the suspicion that we are actuated by mercenary motives. The word used here (στέγομεν stegomensuffer) means properly "to cover," to keep off, as rain, etc., and then "to contain, to sustain, tolerate, endure." Here it means to bear, or endure all hardships; compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 4:11-13.

Lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ - Paul here states the reason why he had not urged a claim to support in preaching the gospel. It was not because he was not entitled to a full support, but it was that by denying himself of this right he could do good, and avoid some evil consequences which would have resulted if he had strenuously urged it. His conduct therefore in this was just one illustration of the principle on which he said 1 Corinthians 8:13 he would always act; a readiness to deny himself of things lawful, if by that he could promote the welfare of others. The reasons why his urging this claim might have hindered the gospel may have been many:

(1) It might have exposed him and the ministry generally to the charge of being mercenary.

(2) it would have prevented his presenting in bold relief the fact that he was bound to preach the gospel at all events, and that he was actuated in it by a simple conviction of its truth.

(3) it might have alienated many minds who might otherwise have been led to embrace it.

(4) it would have prevented the exercise of self-denial in him, and the benefits which resulted from that self-denial, etc., 1 Corinthians 9:17-18, 1 Corinthians 9:23, 1 Corinthians 9:27.

Verse 13

Do ye not know … - In this verse Paul illustrates the doctrine that the ministers of religion were, entitled to a support from the fact that those who were appointed to offer sacrifice receive a maintenance in their work.

They which minister about holy things - Probably the "Levites." Their office was to render assistance to the priests, to keep guard around the tabernacle, and subsequently around the temple. It was also their duty to see that the temple was kept clean, and to prepare supplies for the sanctuary, such as oil, wine, incense, etc. They had the care of the revenues, and after the time of David were required to sing in the temple, and to play upon instruments. Numbers 4:1, Numbers 4:30, Numbers 4:35, Numbers 4:42; 8:5-22; 1 Chronicles 23:3-5, 1 Chronicles 23:24, 1 Chronicles 23:27; 1 Chronicles 24:20-31.

Live of the things of the temple - Margin, "Feed;" that is, are supported in their work by the offerings of the people, and by the provisions which were made for the temple service; see Numbers 18:24-32.

And they which wait at the altar - Probably the priests who were employed in offering sacrifice.

Are partakers with the altar - That is, a part of the animal offered in sacrifice is burned as an offering to God, and a part becomes the property of the priest for his support; and thus the altar and the priest become joint participators of the sacrifice. From these offerings the priest derived their maintenance; see Numbers 18:8-19; Deuteronomy 18:1, etc. The argument of the apostle here is this: "As the ministers of religion under the Jewish dispensation were entitled to support by the authority and the law of God, that fact settles a general principle which is applicable also to the gospel, that he intends that the ministers of religion should derive their support in their work. If it was reasonable then, it is reasonable now. If God commanded it then, it is to be presumed that he intends to require it now.

Verse 14

Even so - In the same manner, and for the same reasons.

Hath the Lord ordained - Hath the Lord appointed, commanded, "arranged" that it should be so (διέταξε dietaxe). The word here means that he has made this a law, or has required it. The word "Lord" here doubtless refers to the Lord Jesus, who has sent forth his ministers to labor in the great harvest of the world.

That they which preach the gospel - They who are sent forth by him; who devote their lives to this work; who are called and employed by him in

this service. This refers, therefore, not only to the apostles, but to all who are duly called to this work, and who are his ambassadors.

Should live of the gospel - Should be supported and maintained in this work. Paul here probably refers to the appointment of the Lord Jesus, when he sent forth his disciples to preach, Matthew 10:10; Luke 10:8; compare Galatians 6:6. The man may be said to "live in the gospel" who is supported while he preaches it, or wire derives his maintenance in that work. Here we may observe:

(1) That the command is that they shall "live" (ζῆν zēn) of the gospel. It is not that they should grow rich, or lay up treasures, or speculate in it, or become merchants, farmers, teachers, or bookmakers for a living; but it is that they should have such a maintenance as to constitute a livelihood. They should be made comfortable; not rich. They should receive so much as to keep their minds from being harassed with cares, and their families from want not so much as to lead them to forget their dependence on God, or on the people. Probably the true rule is, that they should be able to live as the mass of the people among whom they labor live; that they should be able to receive and entertain the poor, and be willing to do it; and so that the rich also may not despise them, or turn away from their dwelling.

(2) this is a command of the Lord Jesus; and if it is a command, it should be obeyed as much as any other law of the Redeemer. And if this is a command, then the minister is entitled to a support; and then also a people are not at liberty to withhold it. Further, there are as strong reasons why they should support him, as there are why they should pay a schoolmaster, a lawyer, a physician, or a day-laborer. The minister usually toils as hard as others; expends as much in preparing for his work; and does as much good. And there is even a higher claim in this case. God has given an express command in this case; he has not in the others.

(3) the salary of a minister should not be regarded as a "gift" merely, any more than the pay of a congressman, a physician, or a lawyer. He has a claim to it; and God has commanded that it should be paid. It is, moreover, a matter of stipulation and of compact, by which a people agree to compensate him for his services. And yet, is there anything in the shape of "debt" where there is so much looseness as in regard to this subject? Are people usually as conscientious in this as they are in paying a physician or a

merchant? Are not ministers often in distress for that which has been promised them, and which they have a right to expect? And is not their usefulness, and the happiness of the people, and the honor of religion intimately connected with obeying the rule of the Lord Jesus in this respect?

Verse 15

But I have used none of these things - I have not urged and enforced this right. I have chosen to support myself by the labor of my own hands. This had been objected to him as a reason why he could not be an apostle. He here shows that that was not the reason why he had not; urged this claim; but that it was because in this way he could do most to honor the gospel and save the souls of people; compare Acts 20:33; 2 Thessalonians 3:8. The sense is, "Though my right to a support is established, in common with others, both by reason, the nature of the case, the examples in the law, and the command of the Lord Jesus, yet there are reasons why I have not chosen to avail myself of this right, and why I have not urged these claims."

Neither have I written these things … - "I have not presented this argument now in order to induce you to provide for me. I do not intend now to ask or receive a support from you. I urge it to show that I feel that I have a right to it; that my conduct is not an argument that I am conscious I am not an apostle; and that I might urge it were there not strong reasons which determine me not to do it. I neither ask you to send me now a support, nor, if I visit you again, do I expect you will contribute to my maintenance."

For it were better for me to die … - There are advantages growing out of my not urging this claim which are of more importance to me than life. Rather than forego these advantages, it would be better for me - it would be a thing which I would prefer - to pine in poverty and want; to be exposed to peril, and cold, and storms, until life should close. I esteem my "glorying," the advantages of my course, to be of more value than life itself.

Than that any man should make my glorying void - His glorying, or boasting, or "joying," as it may be more properly rendered τὸ καύχημά μου to kauchēma moucompare Philemon 1:26; Hebrews 3:6), was:

(1) that he had preached the gospel without expense to anybody, and had thus prevented the charge of avarice 1 Corinthians 9:18; and,

(2) that he had been able to keep his body under, and pursue a course of self-denial that would result in his happiness and glory in heaven, 1

Corinthians 9:23-27. “Any man” would have made that “void,” if he had supported Paul; had prevented the necessity of his labor, and had thus exposed him to the charge of having preached the gospel for the sake of gain.

Verse 16

For though I preach the gospel … - This, with the two following verses, is a very difficult passage, and has been very variously understood by interpreters. The general scope and purpose of the passage is to show what was the ground of his “glorying,” or of his hope of” reward” in preaching the gospel. In 1 Corinthians 9:15. he had intimated that he had cause of” glorying,” and that that cause was one which he was determined no one should take away. In this passage 1 Corinthians 9:16-18. he states what that was. He says, it was not simply that he preached; for there was a necessity laid on him, and he could not help it; his call was such, the command was such, that his life would be miserable if he did not do it, But all idea of “glorying,” or of “reward,” must be connected with some voluntary service - something which would show the inclination, disposition, desire of the soul. And as that in his case could not be well shown where a “necessity” was laid on him, it could be shown only in his submitting voluntarily to trials; in denying himself; in being willing to forego comforts which he might lawfully enjoy; and in thus furnishing a full and complete test of his readiness to do anything to promote the gospel. The essential idea here is, therefore, that there was such a necessity laid on him in his call to preach the gospel, that his compliance with that call could not be regarded as appropriately connected with reward; and that in his case the circumstance which showed that reward would be proper, was, his denying himself, and making the gospel without charge. This would show that “his heart was in the thing;” that he was was not urged on by necessity; that he loved the work; and that it would be consistent for the Lord to reward him for his self-denials and toils in his service.

I have nothing to glory of - The force of this would be better seen by a more literal translation. “It is not to me glorying;” that is, this is not the cause of my glorying, or rejoicing οὐκ ἔστι μοι καύχημα ouk esti moi kauchēmaIn 1 Corinthians 9:15 he had said that he had a cause of glorying, or of joy (καύχημα kauchēma). He here says that that joy or glorying did not consist in the simple fact that he preached the gospel; for necessity was

laid on him; there was some other cause and source of his joy or glorying than that simple fact; 1 Corinthians 9:18. Others preached the gospel also in common with them, it might be a source of joy to him that he preached the gospel; but it was not the source of his special joy, for he had been called into the apostleship in such a manner as to render it inevitable that he should preach the gospel. his glorying was of another kind.

For necessity is laid upon me. - My preaching is in a manner inevitable, and cannot therefore be regarded as that in which I especially glory. I was called into the ministry in a miraculous manner; I was addressed personally by the Lord Jesus; I was arrested when I was a persecutor; I was commanded to go and preach; I had a direct commission from heaven. There was no room for hesitancy or debate on the subject Galatians 1:16, and I gave myself at once and entirely to the work; Acts 9:6. I have been urged to this by a direct call from heaven; and to yield obedience to this call cannot be regarded as evincing such an inclination to give myself to this work as if the call had been in the usual mode, and with less decided manifestations. We are not to suppose that Paul was compelled to preach, or that he was not voluntary in his work, or that he did not prefer it to any other employment, but he speaks in a popular sense, as saying that he "could not help it;" or that the evidence of his call was irresistible, and left no room for hesitation.

He was free; but there was not the slightest room for debate on the subject. The evidence of his call was so strong that he could not but yield. Probably none now have evidences of their call to the ministry as strong as this. But there are many, very many, who feel that a kind of necessity is laid on them to preach. Their consciences urge them to it. They would be miserable in any other employment. The course of Providence has shut them up to it. Like Saul of Tarsus, they may have been persecutors, or revilers, or "injurious," or blasphemers 1 Timothy 1:13; or they may, like him, have commenced a career of ambition; or they may have been engaged in some scheme of money-making or of pleasure; and in an hour when they little expected it, they have been arrested by the truth of God, and their attention directed to the gospel ministry. Many a minister has, before entering the ministry, formed many other purposes of life; but the providence of God barred his way, hemmed in his goings, and constrained him to become an ambassador of the cross.

Yea, woe is unto me … - I should be miserable and wretched if I did not preach. My preaching, therefore, in itself considered, cannot be a subject of glorying. I am shut up to it. I am urged to it in every way. I should be wretched were I not to do it, and were I to seek any other calling. My conscience would reproach me. My judgment would condemn me. My heart would pain me. I should have no comfort in any other calling; and God would frown upon me. Hence, learn:

(1) That Paul had been converted. Once he had no love for the ministry, but persecuted the Saviour. With the feelings which he then had, he would have been wretched in the ministry; with those which he now had, he would have been wretched out of it. His heart, therefore, had been wholly changed.

(2) all ministers who are duly called to the work can say the same thing. They would be wretched in any other calling. Their conscience would reproach them. They would have no interest in the plans of the world; in the schemes of wealth, and pleasure, and fame. Their heart is in This work, and in this alone. In this, though amidst circumstances of poverty, persecution, nakedness, cold, peril, sickness, they have comfort. In any other calling, though surrounded by affluence, friends, wealth, honors, pleasures, gaiety, fashion, they would be miserable.

(3) aman whose heart is not in the ministry, and who would be as happy in any other calling, is not fit to be an ambassador of Jesus Christ. Unless his heart is there, and he prefers that to any other calling, he should never think of preaching the gospel.

(4) people who leave the ministry, and voluntarily devote themselves to some other calling when they might preach, never had the proper spirit of an ambassador of Jesus. If for the sake of ease or gain; if to avoid the cares and anxieties of the life of a pastor; if to make money, or secure money when made; if to cultivate a farm, to teach a school, to write a book, to live upon an estate, or to "enjoy life," they lay aside the ministry, it is proof that they never had a call to the work. So did not Paul; and so did not Paul's Master and ours. They loved the work, and they left it not till death. Neither for ease, honor, nor wealth; neither to avoid care, toil, pain, or poverty, did they cease in their work, until the one could say, "I have fought a good

fight, "I have finished my course," I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7; and the other, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;" John 17:4.

(5) we see the reason why people are sometimes "miserable" in other callings. They, should have entered the ministry. God called them to it; and they became hopefully pious. But they chose the law, or the practice of medicine, or chose to be farmers, merchants, teachers, professors, or statesmen. And God withers their piety, blights their happiness, follows them with the reproaches of conscience, makes them sad, melancholy, wretched. They do no good; and they have no comfort in life. Ever man should do the will of God, and then every man would be happy.

Verse 17

For if I do this thing willingly - If I preach so as to show that my heart is in it; that I am not compelled, If I pursue such a course as to show that I prefer it to all other employments. If Paul took a compensation for his services, he could not well do this; if he did not, he showed that his heart was in it, and that he preferred the work to all others. Even though he had been in a manner compelled to engage in that work, yet he so acted in the work as to show that it had his hearty preference. This was done by his submitting to voluntary self-denials and sacrifices in order to spread the Saviour's name.

I have a reward - I shall meet with the approbation of my Lord, and shall obtain the reward in the world to come, which is promised to those who engage heartily, and laboriously, and successfully in turning sinners to God; Proverbs 11:30; Daniel 12:3; Matthew 13:43; Matthew 25:21-23; James 5:20.

But if against my will - (ἄκων akōn). "If under a necessity 1 Corinthians 9:16; if by the command of another" (Grotius); if I do it by the fear of punishment, or by any strong necessity which is laid on me.

A dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me - I am entrusted with (πεπίστευμαι pepisteumai) this dispensation, office, economy (οἰκονομίαν oikonomian) of the gospel. It has been laid upon me; I have been called to it; I must engage in this work; and if I do it from mere compulsion or in such a way that my will shall not acquiesce in it, and concur with it, I shall have no distinguished reward. The work must be

done; I must preach the gospel; and it becomes me so to do it as to show that my heart and will entirely concur; that it is not a matter of compulsion, but of choice. This he proposed to do by so denying himself, and so foregoing comforts which he might lawfully enjoy, and so subjecting himself to perils and toils in preaching the gospel, as to show that his heart was in the work, and that he truly loved it.

Verse 18

What is my reward then? - What is the source of my reward? or what is there in my conduct that will show that I am entitled to reward What is there that will demonstrate that my heart is in the work of the ministry; that I am free and voluntary, and that I am not urged by mere necessity? Though I have been called by miracle, and though necessity is laid upon me, so that I cannot but preach the gospel, yet how shall I so do it as to make it proper for God to reward me as a voluntary agent? Paul immediately states the circumstance that showed that he was entitled to the reward, and that was, that he denied himself, and was willing to forego his lawful enjoyments, and even his rights, that he might make the gospel without charge.

I may make the gospel of Christ without charge - Without expense to those who hear it. I will support myself by my own labor, and will thus show that I am not urged to preaching by mere "necessity," but that I love it. Observe here:

(1) That Paul did not give up a support because he was not entitled to it.

(2) he does not say that it would be well or advisable for others to do it.

(3) it is right, and well for a man if he chooses and can do it, to make the gospel without charge, and to support himself.

(4) all that This case proves is, that it would be proper only where a "necessity" was laid on a man, as it was on Paul; when he could not otherwise show that his heart was in the work, and that he was voluntary and loved it.

(5) this passage cannot be urged "by a people" to prove that ministers ought not to have a support. Paul says they have a right to it. A man may forego a right if he pleases. He may choose not to urge it; but no one can

demand of him that he should not urge it; much less have they a right to demand that he should give up his rights.

(6) it is best in general that those who hear the gospel should contribute to its support. It is not only equal and right, but it is best for them, We generally set very little value on that which costs us nothing; and the very way to make the gospel contemptible is, to have it preached by those who are supported by the state, or by their own labor in some other department; or by people who neither by their talents, their learning, nor their industry have any claim to a support. All ministers are not like Paul. They have neither been called as he was; nor have they his talent, his zeal, or his eloquence. Paul‘s example then should not be urged as an authority for a people to withhold from their pastor what is his due; nor, because Paul chose to forego his rights, should people now demand that a minister should devote his time, and health, and life to their welfare for nothing.

That I abuse not my power in the gospel - Paul had a right to a support. This power he might urge. But to urge it in his circumstances would be a hinderance of the gospel. And to do that would be to abuse his power, or to pervert it to purposes for which it was never designed.

Verse 19

For though I be free - I am a freeman. I am under obligation to none. I am not bound to. give them my labors, and at the same time to toil for my own support. I have claims like others, and could urge them; and no man could demand that I should give myself to a life of servitude, and comply with their prejudices and wishes, as if I were a “slave,” in order to their conversion; compare 1 Corinthians 9:1; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 6:12.

From all men - (ἐκ πάντων ek pantōn). This may either refer to all “persons” or to all “things.” The word “men” is not in the original. The connection, however, seems to fix the signification to “persons.” “I am a freeman. And although I have conducted like a slave, yet it has been done voluntarily.”

I have made myself the servant of all - Greek, “I have ‹enslaved myself‘ (ἐμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα emauton edoulōsa) unto all.” That is:

(1) I labor for them, or in their service, and to promote their welfare.

(2) I do it, as the slave does, without reward or hire. I am not paid for it, but submit to the toil, and do it without receiving pay.

(3) like the slave who wishes to gratify his master, or who is compelled from the necessity of the case, I comply with the prejudices, habits, customs, and opinions of others as far as I can with a good conscience. The "slave" is subject to the master's will. That will must be obeyed. The whims, prejudices, caprices of the master must be submitted to, even if they are "mere" caprice, and wholly unreasonable. So Paul says that he had voluntarily put himself into this condition, a condition making it necessary for him to suit himself to the opinions, prejudices, caprices, and feelings of all people, so far as he could do it with a good conscience, in order that he might save them. We are not to understand here that Paul embraced any opinions which were false in order to do this, or that he submitted to anything which is morally wrong. But he complied with their customs, and habits, and feelings, as far as it could lawfully be done. He did not needlessly offend them, or run counter to their prejudices.

That I might gain the more - That I might gain more to Christ; that I might be the means of saving more souls. What a noble instance of self-denial and true greatness is here! How worthy of religion! How elevated the conduct! How magnanimous, and how benevolent! No man would do this who had not a greatness of intellect that would rise above narrow prejudices; and who had not a nobleness of heart that would seek at personal sacrifice the happiness of all people. It is said that not a few early Christians, in illustration of this principle of conduct, actually sold themselves into slavery in order that they might have access to and benefit slaves, an act to which nothing would prompt a man but the religion of the cross; compare the note at Romans 1:14.

Verse 20

And unto the Jews - In this verse, and the two following, Paul states more at length the conduct which he had exhibited, and to which he refers in 1 Corinthians 9:19. He had shown this conduct to all classes of people. He had preached much to his own countrymen, and had evinnced these principles there.

I became as a Jew - I complied with their rites, customs, prejudices, as far as I could with a good conscience. I did not needlessly offend them. I did not attack and oppose their views, when there was no danger that my conduct should be mistaken. For a full illustration of Paul's conduct in this

respect, and the principles which influenced him, see the notes on Acts 16:3; Acts 18:18; Acts 21:21-27; Acts 23:1-6.

To those that are under the law - This I understand as another form of saying that he conformed to the rites, customs, and even prejudices of the Jews. The phrase "under the law" means undoubtedly the law of Moses; and probably he here refers particularly to those Jews who lived in the land of Judea, as being more "immediately and entirely" under the law of Moses, than those who lived among the Gentiles.

As under the law - That is, I conformed to their rites and customs as far as I could do it. I did not violate them unnecessarily. I did not disregard them for the purpose of offending them; nor refuse to observe them when it could be done with a good conscience. There can be no doubt that Paul, when he was in Judea, submitted himself to the laws, and lived in conformity with them.

That I might gain - That I might obtain their confidence and affection. That I might not outrage their feelings, excite their prejudices, and provoke them to anger; and that I might thus have access to their minds, and be the means of converting them to the Christian faith.

Verse 21

To them that are without law - To the Gentiles, who have not the law of Moses; see the note at Romans 2:12, note at Romans 2:14.

As without law - Not practicing the special rites and ceremonies enjoined in the law of Moses. Not insisting on them, or urging them, but showing that the obligation to those rites had been done away; and that they were not binding, though when among the Jews I might still continue to observe them; see the notes at Galatians 2:11-18. I neglected the ceremonial precepts of the Mosaic law, when I was with those who had not heard of the law of Moses, or those who did not observe them, because I knew that the binding obligation of these ceremonial precepts had ceased. I did not, therefore, press them upon the Gentiles, nor did I superstitiously and publicly practice them. In all this, Paul has reference only to those things which he regarded as in themselves indifferent, and not a matter of conscience; and his purpose was not; needlessly to excite the prejudice or the opposition of the world. Nothing is ever gained by provoking opposition for the mere sake of opposition. Nothing tends more to hinder the gospel than that. In all things of conscience and truth a man should be firm, and should lose his life rather than abandon either; in all things of indifference,

of mere custom, of prejudice, he should yield, and accomodate himself to the modes of thinking among people, and adapt himself to their views, feelings, and habits of life, that he may win them to Christ.

Being not without law to God - Not regarding myself as being "absolutely" without law, or as being freed from obligation to obey God. Even in all this, I endeavored so to live as that it might be seen that I felt myself bound by law to God. I was not a despiser, and contemner, and neglector of "law as such," but only regarded myself as not bound by the special ceremonial law of Moses. This is an instance of Paul's conscientiousness. He would not leave room to have it supposed for a moment that he disregarded all law. He was bound to God by law; and in the conduct to which he was referring he felt that he was obeying him. He was bound by higher law than those ceremonial observances which were now to be done away. This passage would destroy all the refuges of the Antinomians. Whatever privileges the gospel has introduced, it has not set us free from the restraints and obligations of law. That is binding still; and no man is at liberty to disregard the moral law of God. Christ came to magnify, strengthen, and to honor the law, not to destroy it.

But under the law to Christ - Bound by the law enjoined by Christ; under the law of affectionate gratitude and duty to him. I obeyed his commands; followed his instructions; sought his honor; yielded to his will. In this he would violate none of the rules of the moral law. And he here intimates, that his grand object was to yield obedience to the law of the Saviour, and that this was the governing purpose of his life. And this would guide a man right. In doing this, he would never violate any of the precepts of the moral law, for Christ obeyed them, and enjoined their observance. He would never feel that he was without law to God, for Christ obeyed God, and enjoined it on all. He would never feel that religion came to set him free from law, or to authorize licentiousness; for its grand purpose and aim is to make people holy, and to bind them everywhere to the observance of the pure law of the Redeemer.

Verse 22

To the weak; - See the note at Romans 15:1. To those weak in faith; scrupulous in regard to certain observances; whose consciences were tender and unenlightened, and who would be offended even by things which might be in themselves lawful. He did not lacerate their feelings, and run counter to their prejudices, for the mere sake of doing it.

Became I as weak - I did not shock them. I complied with their customs. I conformed to them in my dress, habits, manner of life, and even in the services of religion. I abstained from food which they deemed it their duty to abstain from; and where, if I had partaken of it, I should have offended them. Paul did not do this to gratify himself, or them, but to do them good. And Paul‘s example should teach us not to make it the main business of life to gratify ourselves, and it should teach us not to lacerate the feelings of others; not to excite their prejudices needlessly; not to offend them where it will do no good. If truth offends people, we cannot help it. But in matters of ceremony, and dress, and habits, and customs, and forms, we should be willing to conform to them, as far as can be done, and for the sole purpose of saving their souls.

I am made all things to all men - I become all things; that is, I accommodate myself to them in all things, so far as can be done with a good conscience. “That I might by all means” (πάντως pantōs). That I might use every possible endeavor that some at least might be saved. It is implied here that the opposition to the gospel was everywhere great; that people were reluctant to embrace it; that the great mass were going to ruin, and that Paul was willing to make the highest possible exertions, to deny himself, and practice every innocent art, that he might save “a few at least” out of the innumerable multitudes that were going to death and hell. It follows from this:

(1) That people are in danger of ruin.

(2) we should make an effort to save people. We should deny ourselves, and give ourselves to toil and privation, that we may save some at least from ruin.

(3) the doctrine of universal salvation is not true. If it were, what use or propriety would there have been in these efforts of Paul? If all were to be saved, why should he deny himself, and labor, and toil, to save “some?” Why should a man make a constant effort to save “a few at least,” if he well knew that all were to be saved? Assuredly Paul did not “know” or believe that all people would be saved; but if the doctrine is true, he would have been quite as likely to have known it as its modern advocates and defenders.

Verse 23

For the gospel‘s sake - That it may be advanced, and may be successful.

That I might be partaker thereof with you - You hope to be saved. You regard yourselves as Christians; and I wish to give evidence also that “I” am a Christian, and that I shall be admitted to heaven to partake of the happiness of the redeemed. This he did, by so denying himself as to give evidence that he was truly actuated by Christian principles.

Verse 24

Know ye not … - In the remainder of this chapter, Paul illustrates the general sentiment on which he had been dwelling - the duty of practicing self-denial for the salvation of others - by a reference to the well known games which were celebrated near Corinth. Throughout the chapter, his object had been to show that in declining to receive a support for preaching, he had done it, not because he was conscious that he had no claim to it, but because by doing it he could better advance the salvation of people, the furtherance of the gospel, and in his special case 1 Corinthians 9:16-17 could obtain better evidence, and furnish to others better evidence that he was actuated by a sincere desire to honor God in the gospel. He had denied himself. He had voluntarily submitted to great privations. He had had a great object in view in doing it. And he now says, that in the well known athletic games at Corinth, the same thing was done by the “racers” 1 Corinthians 9:24, and by “wrestlers, or boxers”; 1 Corinthians 9:25.

If they had done it, for objects so comparatively unimportant as the attainment of an “earthly” garland, assuredly it was proper for him to do it to obtain a crown which should never fade away. This is one of the most beautiful, appropriate, vigorous, and bold illustrations that can anywhere be found; and is a striking instance of the force with which the most vigorous and self-denying efforts of Christians can be vindicated, and can be urgeD by a reference to the conduct of people in the affairs of this life. By the phrase “know ye not,” Paul intimates that those games to which he alludes were well known to them, and that they must be famillar with their design, and with the manner in which they were conducted. The games to which the apostle alludes were celebrated with extraordinary pomp and splendor, every fourth year, on the isthmus which joined the Peloponnesus to the main land, and on a part of which the city of Corinth stood.

There were in Greece four species of games, the Pythian, or Delphic; the Isthmian, or Corinthian; the Nemean, and the Olympic. On these occasions persons were assembled from all parts of Greece, and the time during which they continued was devoted to extraordinary festivity and amusement. The Isthmian or Corinthian games were celebrated in the narrow part of the Isthmus of Corinth, to the north of the city, and were doubtless the games to which the apostle more particularly alluded, though the games in each of the places were substantially of the same nature, and the same illustration would in the main apply to all. The Nemean game were celebrated at "Nemaea," a town of Argolis, and were instituted by the Argives in honor of Archemorus, who died by the bite of a serpent, but were renewed by Hercules, They consisted of horse races and foot races, of boxing, leaping, running, etc. The conqueror was at first rewarded with a crown of olive, afterward of green parsley.

They were celebrated every third, or, according to others, every fifth year. The "Pythian" games were celebrated every four years at Delphi, in Phocis, at the foot of Mount Parnassus, where was the seat of the celebrated Delphic oracle. These games were of the same character substantially as those celebrated in other places, and attracted persons not only from other parts of Greece, but from distant countries; see Travels of Anacharsis, vol. ii, pp. 375-418. The "Olympic" games were celebrated in Olympia, a town of Elis, on the southern bank of the Alphias river, on the western part of the Peloponnesus. They were on many accounts the most celebrated of any games in Greece. They were said to have been instituted by Hercules, who planted a grove called "Altis," which he dedicated to Jupiter. They were attended not only from all parts of Greece, but, from the most distant countries. These were celebrated every fourth year; and hence, in Grecian chronology, a period of four years was called an Olympiad; see Anacharsis, vol. iii, p. 434ff. It thus happened that in one or more of these places there were games celebrated every year, to which no small part of the inhabitants of Greece were attracted. Though the apostle probably had particular reference to the "Isthmian" games celebrated in the vicinity of Corinth, yet his illustration is applicable to them all; for in all the exercises were nearly the same. They consisted chiefly in leaping, running, throwing the discus or quoit, boxing, wrestling, and were expressed in the following line:

Ἁλυά , ποδωκείην , δίσκον , ἀκοντα , τάλην Aluapodōkeiēndiskonakontatalēn

, “Leaping, running, throwing the quoit, darting, wrestling.” Connected with these were also, sometimes, other exercises, as races of chariots, horses, etc. The apostle refers to but two of these exercises in his illustration.

They which run - This was one of the principal exercises at the games. Fleetness or swiftness was regarded as an extraordinary virtue; and great pains were taken in order to excel in this. Indeed they regarded it so highly that those who prepared themselves for it thought it worth while to use means to burn their spleen, because it was believed to be a hinderance to them, and to retard them in the race. Rob. Cal. Homer tells us that swiftness was one of the most excellent endowments with which a man can be blessed.

“No greater honor e‘er has been attain‘d,
Than what strong hands or nimble feet have gain‘d.”

“One reason” why this was deemed so valuable an attainment among the Greeks, was, that it suited people eminently for war as it was then conducted. It enabled them to make a sudden and unexpected onset, or a rapid retreat. Hence, the character which Homer constantly gives of Achilles is that he was swift of foot. And thus David, in his poetical lamentations over Saul and Jonathan, takes special notice of this qualification of theirs, as preparing them for war.

“They were swifter than eagles,
Stronger than lions.” 2 Samuel 1:23.

For these races they prepared themselves by a long course of previous discipline and exercise; and nothing was left undone that might contribute to secure the victory.

In a race - (ἐν σταδίῳ en stadiō). In the “stadium.” The “stadium,” or running ground, or place in which the boxers contended, and where races were run. At Olympia the stadium was a causeway 604 feet in length, and of proportionable width. Herod. lib. 2. c. 149. It was surrounded by a terrace, and by the seats of the judges of the games. At one end was fixed the boundary or goal to which they ran.

Run all - All run who have entered the lists. Usually there were many racers who contended for the prize.

But one receiveth the prize - The victor, and he alone. The prize which was conferred was a wreath of olive at the Olympic games; a wreath of apple at Delphi; of pine at the Isthmian; and of parsley at the Nemean games - Addison. Whatever the prize was, it was conferred on the successful champion on the last day of the games, and with great solemnity, pomp, congratulation, and rejoicing, "Everyone thronged to see and congratulate them; their relations, friends, and countrymen, shedding tears of tenderness and joy, lifted them on their shoulders to show them to the crowd, and held them up to the applauses of the whole assembly, who strewed handfuls of flowers over them." Anachar. iii, 448. Nay, at their return home, they rode in a triumphal chariot; the walls of the city were broken down to give them entrance; and in many cities a subsistence was given them out of the public treasury, and they were exempted from taxes. Cicero says that a victory at the Olympic games was not much less honorable than a triumph at Rome: see Anachar. iii, 469, and Rob. Cal. art. "Race." When Paul says that the one receives the prize, he does not mean to say that there will be the same small proportion among those who shall enter into heaven, and among Christians. But his idea is, that as they make an effort to obtain the prize, so should we; as many who strive for it then lose it, it is possible that we may; and that therefore we should strive for the crown, and make an effort for it, as if but one out of many could obtain it. This, he says, was the course which he pursued; and it shows, in a most striking manner, the fact that an effort may be made, and should be made to enter into heaven.

So run, that ye may obtain - So run in the Christian race, that you may obtain the prize of glory, the crown incorruptible. So live; so deny yourselves; so make constant exertion, that you may not fail of that prize, the crown of glory, which awaits the righteous in heaven; compare Hebrews 12:1. Christians may do this when:

(1)They give themselves wholly to God, and make this the grand business of life;

(2)"When they lay aside every weight" Hebrews 12:1; and renounce all sin and all improper attachments;

(3)When they do not allow themselves to be "diverted" from the object, but keep the goal constantly in view;

(4)When they do not flag, or grow weary in their course;

(5)When they deny themselves; and,

(6)When they keep their eye fully fixed on Christ Hebrews 12:2 as their example and their strength, and on heaven as the end of their race, and on the crown of glory as their reward.

Verse 25

And every man that striveth for the mastery - (ὁ ἀγωνιζόμενος ho agōnizomenos). That "agonizes;" that is, that is engaged in the exercise of "wrestling, boxing," or pitching the bar or quoit; compare the note at Luke 13:24. The sense is, everyone who endeavors to obtain a victory in these athletic exercises.

Is temperate in all things - The word which is rendered "is temperate" (ἐγκρατευεται egkrateuetai) denotes "abstinence" from all that would excite, stimulate, and ultimately enfeeble; from wine, from exciting and luxurious living, and from licentious indulgences. It means that they did all they could to make the body vigorous, active, and supple. They pursued a course of entire temperate living; compare Acts 24:25; 1 Corinthians 7:9; Galatians 5:23; 2 Peter 1:6. It relates not only to indulgences unlawful in themselves, but to abstinence from many things that were regarded as "lawful," but which were believed to render the body weak and effeminate. The phrase "in all things" means that this course of temperance or abstinence was not confined to one thing, or to one class of things, but to every kind of food and drink, and every indulgence that had a tendency to render the body weak and effeminate. The preparations which those who propose to contend in these games made is well known; and is often referred to by the Classic writers. Epictetus, as quoted by Grotius (in loco), thus speaks of these preparations. "Do you wish to gain the prize at the Olympic games? consider the requisite preparations and the consequence You must observe a strict regimen; must live on food which is unpleasant; must abstain from all delicacies; must exercise yourself at the prescribed times in heat and in cold; you must drink nothing cool (ψυχρὸν psuchron); must take no wine as usual; you must put yourself under a "pugilist," as you would under a physician, and afterward enter the lists." Epict. chapter 35: Horace has described the preparations necessary in the same way.

Qui studet optatam cursn contingere metam.
Multa tulit fecitque puer; sudavit, et alsit,
Abstinuit venere et Baccho.
De Arte Poet. 412
A youth who hopes the Olympic prize to gain,
All arts must try, and every toil sustain;
The extremes of heat and cold must often prove,

And shun the weakening joys of wine and love.
Francis.

To obtain a corruptible crown - A garland, diadem, or civic wreath, that must soon fade away. The garland bestowed on the victor was made of olive, pine, apple, laurel, or parsley. That would soon lose its beauty and fade; of course, it could be of little value. Yet we see how eagerly they sought it; how much self-denial those who entered the lists would practice to obtain it; how long they would deny themselves of the common pleasures of life that they might be successful. So much "temperance" would pagans practice to obtain a fading wreath of laurel, pine, or parsley. Hence, learn:

(1) The duty of denying ourselves to obtain a far more valuable reward, the incorruptible crown of heaven.

(2) the duty of all Christians who strive for that crown to be temperate in all things. If the pagans practiced temperance to obtain a fading laurel, should not we to obtain one that never fades?

(3) how much their conduct puts to shame the conduct of many professing Christians and Christian ministers. they set such a value on a civic wreath of pine or laurel, that they were willing to deny themselves, and practice the most rigid abstinence. they knew that indulgence in wine and in luxurious living unsuited them for the struggle and for victory; they knew that it enfeebled their powers, and weakened their frame; and, like people intent on an object dear to them, they abstained wholly from these things, and embraced the principles of "total abstinence." Yet how many professed Christians, and Christian ministers, though striving for the crown that fadeth not away, indulge in wine, and in the filthy, offensive, and disgusting use of tobacco; and in luxurious living, and in habits of indolence and sloth! How many there are that will not give up these habits,

though they know that they are enfeebling, injurious, offensive, and destructive to religious comfort and usefulness. Can a man be truly in earnest in his professed religion; can he be a sincere Christian, who is not willing to abandon anything and everything that will tend to impair the vigor of his mind, and weaken his body, and make him a stumbling-block to others?

(4) the value of "temperance" is here presented in a very striking and impressive view. When even the pagans wished to accomplish anything that demanded skill, strength, power, vigor of body, they saw the necessity of being temperate, and they were so. And this proves what all experiment has proved, that if people wish to accomplish much, they must be temperate. It proves that people can do more without intoxicating drink than they can with it. The example of these Grecian athletes - their wrestlers, boxers, and racers, is "against" all the farmers, and mechanics, and seamen, and day-laborers, and "gentlemen," and "clergymen," and "lawyers," who plead that stimulating drink is necessary to enable them to bear cold and heat, and toil and exposure. A little "experience" from men like the Grecian wrestlers, who had something that they wished to do, is much better than a great deal of philosophy and sophistical reasoning from people who wish to drink, and to find some argument for drinking that shalt be a salve to their consciences. Perhaps the world has furnished no stronger argument in favor of total abstinence than the example of the Grecian "Athletae." It is certain that their example, the example of people who wished to accomplish much by bodily vigor and health, is an effectual and unbreakable argument against all those who plead that stimulating drinks are desirable or necessary in order to increase the vigor of the bodily frame.

But we - We Christians.

An incorruptible - An incorruptible, an unfading crown. The blessings of heaven that shall be bestowed on the righteous are often represented under the image of a crown or diadem; a crown that is unfading, and eternal; 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4. Revelation 2:10; Revelation 3:11; Revelation 4:4. The doctrine here taught is, the necessity of making an effort to secure eternal life. The apostle never thought of entering heaven by indolence or by inactivity. He urged, by every possible argument, the necessity of making an exertion to secure the rewards of the just. His reasons for this effort are many. Let a few be pondered:

(1) The work of salvation is difficult. The thousand obstacles arising, the love of sin, and the opposition of Satan and of the world, are in the way.

(2) the danger of losing the crown of glory is great. Every moment exposes it to hazard, for at any moment we may die.

(3) the danger is not only great, but it is dreadful. If anything should arouse man, it should be the apprehension of eternal damnation and everlasting wrath.

(4) people in this life, in the games of Greece, in the career of ambition, in the pursuit of pleasure and wealth, make immense efforts to obtain the fading and perishing object of their desires. Why should not a man be willing to make as great efforts at least to secure eternal glory?

(5) the value of the interest at stake. Eternal happiness is before those who will embrace the offers of life. If a man should be influenced by anything to make an effort, should it not be by the prospect of eternal glory? what should influence him if this should not?

Verse 26

I therefore so run - In the Christian race; in my effort to obtain the prize, the crown of immortality. I exert myself to the utmost, that I may not fail of securing the crown.

Not as uncertainly - (οὐκ ἀδήλως ouk adēlōs). This word occurs no where else in the New Testament. It usually means, in the Classic writers, "obscurely." Here it means that he did not run as not knowing to what object he aimed. "I do not run haphazardly; I do not exert myself for nothing; I know at what I aim, and I keep my eye fixed on the object; I have the goal and the crown in view." Probably also the apostle intended to convey this idea, "I so live and act that I am "sure" of obtaining the crown. I make it a great and grand point of my life so to live that there may be no room for doubt or hesitancy about this rustler. I believe it may be obtained; and that by a proper course there may he a constant certainty of securing it; and I so live." O how happy and blessed would it be if all Christians thus lived! How much doubt, and hesitancy, and despondency would it remove from many a Christian's mind! And yet it is morally certain that if ever

Christian were to be only as anxious and careful as were the ancient Grecian wrestlers and racers in the games, they would have the undoubted assurance of gaining the prize. Doddridge and Macknight, however, render this "as not out of view;" or as not distinguished; meaning that the apostle was not "unseen," but that he regarded himself as constantly in the view of the judge, the Lord Jesus Christ. I prefer the other interpretation, however, as best according with the connection and with the proper meaning of the word.

So fight I - οὕτω πυκτεύω houtō pukteuōThis word is applied to the "boxers," or the pugilists, in the Grecian games. The exercise of boxing, or "fighting" with the fist, was a part of the entertainment with which the "enlightened" nations of Greece delighted to amuse themselves.

Not as one that beateth the air - The "phrase" here is taken from the habits of the pugilists or boxers, who were accustomed, before entering the lists, to exercise their limbs with the gauntlet, in order to acquire greater skill and dexterity. There was also, before the real contest commenced, a play with their fists and weapons, by way of show or bravado, which was called σκιᾷμαχία skiamachiaa mock-battle, or a fighting the air. The phrase also is applicable to a "missing the aim," when a blow was struck in a real struggle, and when the adversary would elude the blow, so that it would be spent in the empty air. This last the idea which Paul means to present. He did not miss his aim; he did not exert himself and spend his strength for nothing. Every blow that he struck told; and he did not waste his energies on that which would produce no result. He did not strive with rash, ill-advised, or uncertain blows; but all his efforts were directed, with good account, to the grand purpose or subjugating his enemy - sin - and the corrupt desires of the flesh - and bringing everything into captivity to God Much may be learned from this.

Many an effort of Christians is merely beating the air. The energy is expended for nothing. There is a lack of wisdom, or skill, or perseverance; there is a failure of plan; or there is a mistake in regard to what is to be done, and what should be done. There is often among Christians very little "aim" or object; there is no "plan;" and the efforts are wasted, scattered, inefficient efforts; so that, at the close of life, many a man may say that he has spent his ministry or his Christian course mainly, or entirely, "in beating the air." Besides, many set up a man of straw and fight that. They fancy error and heresy in others and oppose that. They become a "heresy-

hunters;" or they oppose some irregularity in religion that, if left alone, would die of itself; or they fix all their attention upon some minor evil, and they devote their lives to the destruction of that alone. When death comes, they may have never struck a blow at one of the real and dangerous enemies of the gospel; and the simple record on the tombstone of many ministers and many private Christians might he, "Here lies one who spent his life in beating the air."

Verse 27

But I keep under my body - (ὑπωπιάζω hupōpiazō). This word occurs in the New Testament only here and in Luke 18:5, "Lest by her continual coming she ‹weary‘ me." The word is derived probably from ὑπώπιον hupōpionthe part of the face "under the eye" (Passow), and means properly, to strike under the eye, either with the fist or the cestus, so as to render the part livid, or as we say, "black and blue"; or as is commonly termed, "to give anyone a black eye." The word is derived, of course, from the athletic exercises of the Greeks. It then comes to mean, "to treat anyone with harshness, severity, or cruelty;" and thence also, so to treat any evil inclinations or dispositions; or to subject one‘s-self to mortification or self-denial, or to a severe and rigid discipline, that all the corrupt passions might be removed. The word here means, that Paul made use of all possible means to subdue his corrupt and carnal inclinations; to show that he was not under the dominion of evil passions, but was wholly under the dominion of the gospel.

And bring it into subjection - (δουλαγωγῶ doulagōgō). This word properly means, to reduce to servitude or slavery; and probably was usually applied to the act of subduing an enemy, and leading him captive from the field of battle; as the captives in war were regarded as slaves. It then means, effectually and totally to subdue, to conquer, to reduce to bondage and subjection. Paul means by it, the purpose to obtain a complete victory over his corrupt passions and propensities, and a design to gain the mastery over all his natural and evil inclinations.

Lest that by any means - See the note at 1 Corinthians 9:22. Paul designed to make every possible effort to be saved. He did not mean to be lost, but he meant to be saved. He felt that there was danger of being deceived and lost; and he meant by some means to have evidence of piety that would abide the trial of the Day of Judgment.

When I have preached to others - Doddridge renders this, "lest after having served as a herald to others, I should myself be disapproved;" and supposes that there was allusion in this to the Grecian "herald," whose business it was to proclaim the conditions of the games, to display the prizes, etc. In this interpretation, also, Macknight, Rosenmuller, Koppe, and most of the modern interpreters agree. They suppose, therefore, that the allusion to the games is carried through all this description. But there is this difficulty in this interpretation, that it represents the apostle as both a herald and a contender in the games and thus leads to an inextricable confusion of metaphor. Probably, therefore; this is to be taken in the usual sense of the word "preaching" in the New Testament; and the apostle here is to be understood as "dropping" the metaphor, and speaking in the usual manner. He had preached to others, to many others. He had proclaimed the gospel far and near. He had preached to many thousands, and had been the means of the conversion of thousands. The contest, the agony, the struggle in which he had been engaged, was that of preaching the gospel in the most effectual manner. And yet he felt that there was a possibility that even after all this he might be lost.

I myself should be a cast-away. - This word (ἀδόκιμος adokimos) is taken from "bad metals" and properly denotes those which will not bear the "test" that is applied to them; that are found to be base and worthless, and are therefore rejected and cast away. The apostle had subjected himself to trials. He had given himself to self-denial and toil; to persecution and want; to perils, and cold, and nakedness, and hunger. He had done this, among other things, to give his religion a fair trial, to see whether it would bear all these tests; as metal is cast into the fire to see whether it is genuine, or is base and worthless. In doing this, he had endeavored to subdue his corrupt propensities, and bring everything into captivity to the Redeemer, that it might be found that he was a sincere, and humble, and devoted Christian. Many have supposed that the word "cast-away" here refers to those who had entered the lists, and had contended, and who had then been examined as to the manner in which they had conducted the contest, and had been found to have departed from the rules of the games, and who were then rejected. But this interpretation is too artificial and unnatural. The simple idea of Paul is, that he was afraid that he should be disapproved, rejected, cast off; that it would appear, after all, that he had no religion, and would then be cast away as unfit to enter into heaven.

Remarks On 1 Corinthians 9:27.)

5. The fact that a man has preached to many is no certain evidence that he will be saved, 1 Corinthians 9:27. Paul had preached to thousands, and yet he felt that after all this there was a possibility that be might be lost.

6. The fact that a man has been very successful in the ministry is no certain evidence that he will be saved. God converts people; and he may sometimes do it by the instrumentality of those who themselves are deceived, or are deceivers. They may preach much truth; and God may bless that truth, and make it the means of saving the soul. There is no conclusive evidence that a man is a Christian simply because he is a successful and laborious preacher, any more than there is that a man is a Christian because he is a good farmer, and because God sends down the rain and the sunshine on his fields. Paul felt that even his success was no certain evidence that he would be saved. And if Paul felt thus, who should not feel that after the most distinguished success, he may himself be at last a castaway?

7. It will be a solemn and awesome thing for a minister of the gospel, and a "successful" minister, to go down to hell. What more fearful doom can be conceived, than after having led others in the way to life; after having described to them the glories of heaven; after having conducted them to the "sweet fields beyond the swelling flood" of death, he should find himself shut out, rejected, and cast down to hell! What more terrible can be imagined in the world of perdition than the doom of one who was once a minister of God, and once esteemed as a light in the church and a guide of souls, now sentenced to inextinguishable fires, while multitudes saved by him shall have gone to heaven! How fearful is the condition and how solemn the vocation of a minister of the gospel!

8. Ministers should be solicitous about their personal piety. Paul, one might suppose, might have rested contented with the remarkable manner of his conversion. He might have supposed that that put the matter beyond all possible doubt. But be did no such thing. He felt that it was necessary to have evidence day by day that he was then a Christian. Of all people, Paul was perhaps Least disposed to live on past experience, and to trust to such experience. Of all people, he had perhaps most reason to trust to such

experience; and yet how seldom does he refer to it, how little does he regard it! The great question with him was, “Am I now a Christian? am I living as a Christian should now? am I evincing to others, am I giving to myself daily, constant, growing evidence that I am actuated by the pure principles of the gospel, and that that gospel is the object of my highest preference, and my holiest and constant desire? O how holy would be the ministry, if all should endeavor every day to live and act for Christ and for souls with as much steadiness and fidelity as did the apostle Paul!

1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Introduction

In regard to the design of 1 Corinthians 8:1-13. In the close of 1 Corinthians 8:1-13. 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul had stated, when examining the question whether it was right to eat meat offered in sacrifice to idols, that the grand principle on which he acted, and on which they should act, was that of "self-denial." To illustrate this he employs 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; and the design of this chapter is further to explain and enforce the sentiments advanced there, and to settle some other inquiries pertaining to the same general subject.

The first point, therefore, on which he insists is, "the danger of relapsing into idolatry" - a danger which would arise should they be in the habit of frequenting the temples of idols, and of partaking of the meats offered in sacrifice; 1 Corinthians 8:7, 1 Corinthians 8:9-12. This danger he now sets forth by a variety of illustrations. the first shows them that the Jews had been highly favored, had been solemnly consecrated to Moses and to God, and had been under the divine protection and guidance 1 Corinthians 10:1-4; yet that this had not kept them from the displeasure of God when they sinned; 1 Corinthians 10:5. He shows that notwithstanding their privileges, they had indulged in inordinate desires 1 Corinthians 10:6; that they had become idolaters 1 Corinthians 10:7 that they had been guilty of licentiousness 1 Corinthians 10:8; that they had tempted their leader and guide 1 Corinthians 10:9; that they had complained 1 Corinthians 10:10; and that, as a consequence of this, many of them had been destroyed.

In view of all this, Paul cautions the Corinthians not to be self-confident or to feel secure; and not to throw themselves in the way of temptation by partaking of the feasts of idolatry; 1 Corinthians 10:12-14. This danger he further illustrates 1 Corinthians 10:15, 1 Corinthians 10:24 by showing that if they partook of those sacrifices, they in fact became identified with the worshippers of idols. This he proved by showing that in the Christian communion, those who partook of the Lord's Supper were identified with Christians 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; that in the Jewish sacrifices the same thing occurred, and that those who partook of them were regarded as Jews, and as worshippers of the same God with them 1 Corinthians 10:18; and that the same thing must occur, in the suture of the case, by partaking of the

sacrifices offered to idols. They were really partaking of that which had been offered to devilS; and against any such participation Paul would solemnly admonish them; 1 Corinthians 10:19-22. Going on the supposition, therefore, that there was nothing wrong in itself in partaking of the meat that had been thus killed in sacrifice, yet Paul says 1 Corinthians 10:23, that it was not expedient thus to expose themselves to danger; and that the grand principle should be to seek the comfort and edification of others; 1 Corinthians 10:24. Paul thus strongly and decisively admonishes them not to enter the temples of idols to partake of those feasts; not to unite with idolaters in their celebration; not to endanger their piety by these temptations.

There were, however, two other questions on the subject which it was important to decide, and which had probably been submitted to him in the letter which they had sent for counsel and advice. The first was, whether it was right to purchase and eat the meat which had been sacrificed, and which was exposed indiscriminately with other meat in the market; 1 Corinthians 10:25. To this Paul replies, that as no evil could result from this, as it could not be alleged that they purchased it as meat sacrificed to idols, and as all that the earth contained belonged to the Lord, it was not wrong to purchase and to use it. Yet if even this was pointed out to them as having been sacrificed to idols, he then cautioned them to abstain from it; 1 Corinthians 10:28. The other question was, whether it was right for them to accept the invitation of a pagan, and to partake of meat then that had been offered in sacrifice; 1 Corinthians 10:27. To this a similar answer was returned. The general principle was, that no questions were to be asked in regard to what was set before them; but if the food was expressly pointed out as having been offered in sacrifice, then to partake of it would be regarded as a public recognition of the idol; 1 Corinthians 10:28-30. Paul then concludes the discussion by stating the noble rule that is to guide in all this: that everything is to be done to the glory of God 1 Corinthians 10:31; and that the great effort of the Christian should be so to act in all things as to honor his religion, as not to lead others into sin; 1 Corinthians 10:32-33.

Verse 1

Moreover, brethren - But, or now (δε de). This verse, with the following illustrations 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, is properly connected in Paul‘s

argument with the statements which he had made in 1 Corinthians 8:8, etc., and is designed to show the danger which would result from their partaking of the feasts that were celebrated in honor of idols. It is not improbable, as Mr. Locke supposes, that the Corinthians might have urged that they were constantly solicited by their pagan friends to attend those feasts; that in their circumstances it was scarcely possible to avoid it; that there could be no danger of their relapsing into idolatry; and their doing so could not be offensive to God, since they were known to be Christians; since they had been baptized, and purified from sin; since they were devoted to his service; since they knew that an idol was nothing in the world; and since they had been so highly favored, as the people of God, with so many extraordinary endowments, and were so strongly guarded against the possibility of becoming idolaters. To meet these considerations, Paul refers them to the example of the ancient Jews. They also were the people of God. They had been solemnly dedicated to Moses and to God. They had been especially favored with spiritual food from heaven, and with drink miraculously, poured from the rock. Yet notwithstanding this, they had forgotten God, had become idolaters, and had been destroyed. By their example, therefore, Paul would warn the Corinthians against a similar danger.

I would not that ye should be ignorant - A large part of the church at Corinth were Gentiles. It could hardly be supposed that they were well informed respecting the ancient history of the Jews. Probably they had read these things in the Old Testament; but they might not have them distinctly in their recollection. Paul brings them distinctly before their minds, as an illustration and an admonition. The sense is, "I would not have you unmindful or forgetful of these things; I would have you recollect this case, and suffer their example to influence your conduct. I would not have you suppose that even a solemn consecration to God and the possession of distinguished tokens of divine favor are a security against the danger of sin, and even apostasy; since the example of the favored Jews shows that even in such circumstances there is danger."

How that all our fathers - That is, the fathers of the Jewish community; the fathers of us who are Jews. Paul speaks here as being himself a Jew, and refers to his own ancestors as such. The word "all" here seems to be introduced to give emphasis to the fact that even those who were destroyed 1 Corinthians 10:5 also had this privilege. It could not be pretended that they had not been devoted to God, since all of them had been thus

consecrated professedly to his service. The entire Jewish community which Moses led forth from Egypt had thus been devoted to him.

Were under the cloud - The cloud - the "Shechinah" - the visible symbol of the divine presence and protection that attended them out of Egypt. This went before them by day as a cloud to guide them, and by night it became a pillar of fire to give them light; Exodus 13:21-22. In the dangers of the Jews, when closely pressed by the Egyptians, it went beHinD them, and became dark to the Egyptians, but light to the Israelites, thus constituting a defense; Exodus 14:20. In the wilderness, when traveling through the burning desert, it seems to have been expanded over the camp as a covering, and a defense from the intense rays of a burning sun; Numbers 10:34, "And the cloud of Jehovah was upon them by day;" Numbers 14:14, "Thy cloud standeth over them." To this fact the apostle refers here. It was a symbol of the divine favor and protection; comp Isaiah 4:5. It was a guide, a shelter, and a defense. The Jewish Rabbis say that "the cloud encompassed the camp of the Israelites as a wall encompasses a city, nor could the enemy come near them." Pirke Eleazer, chapter 44, as quoted by Gill. The probability is, that the cloud extended over the whole camp of Israel, and that to those at. a distance it appeared as a pillar.

And all passed through the sea - The Red Sea, under the guidance of Moses, and by the miraculous interposition of God; Exodus 14:21-22. This was also a proof of the divine protection and favor, and is so adduced by the apostle. His object is to accumulate the evidences of the divine favor to them, and to show that they had as many securities against apostasy as the Corinthians had, on which they so much relied.

Verse 2

And were all baptized - In regard to the meaning of the word "baptized," see the note at Matthew 3:6. We are not to suppose that the rite of baptism, as we understand it, was formally administered by Moses, or by any other person, to the Jews, for there is not the least evidence that any such rite was then known, and the very circumstances here referred to forbid such an interpretation. They were baptized "in the cloud" and "in the sea," and this cannot be understood as a religious rite administered by the hand of man. It is to be remembered that the word "baptism" has two senses - the one referring to the application of water as a religious rite, in whatever mode it is done; and the other the sense of "dedicating, consecrating, initiating into," or bringing under obligation to. And it is evidently in this

latter sense that the word is used here, as denoting that they were devoted to Moses as a leader, they were brought under his laws, they became bound to obey him, they were placed under his protection and guidance by the miraculous interposition of God. This was done by the fact that their passing through the sea, and under the cloud, in this manner, brought them under the authority and direction of Moses as a leader, and was a public recognition of their being his followers, and being bound to obey his laws.

Unto Moses - (εἰς eis). This is the same preposition which is used in the form of baptism prescribed in Matthew 28:19. See the note at that place. It means that they were thus devoted or dedicated to Moses; they received and acknowledged him as their ruler and guide; they professed subjection to his laws, and were brought under his authority. They were thus "initiated into" his religion, and thus recognized his divine mission, and bound themselves to obey his injunctions - Bloomfield.

In the cloud - This cannot be proved to mean that they were enveloped and, as it were, "immersed" in the cloud, for there is no evidence that the cloud thus enveloped them, or that they were immersed in it as a person is in water. The whole account in the Old Testament leads us to suppose that the cloud either passed before them as a pillar, or that it had the same form in the rear of their camp, or that it was suspended over them, and was thus the symbol of the divine protection. It would be altogether improbable that the dark cloud would pervade the camp. It would thus embarrass their movements, and there is not the slightest intheation in the Old Testament that it did. Nor is there any probability in the supposition of Dr. Gill and others, that the cloud. as it passed from the rear to the front of the camp, "let down a plentiful rain upon them, whereby they were in such a condition as if they had been all over dipped in water." Because:

(1) There is not the slightest intheation of this in the Old Testament.

(2) The supposition is contrary to the very design of the cloud. It was not a natural cloud, but was a symbol of the divine presence and protection. It was not to give rain on the Israelites, or on the land, but it was to guide, and to be an emblem of the care of God.

(3) it is doing violence to the Scriptures to introduce suppositions in this manner without the slightest authority. It is further to be observed, that this supposition does by no means give any aid to the cause of the Baptist after

all. In what conceivable sense were they, even on this supposition, "immersed?" Is it "immersion in water" when one is exposed to a shower of rain? We speak of being "sprinkled or drenched" by rain, but is it not a violation of all propriety of language to say that a man is "immersed" in a shower? If the supposition, therefore, is to be admitted, that rain fell from the cloud as it passed over the Jews, and that this is meant here by "baptism unto Moses," then it would follow that "sprinkling" would be the mode referred to, since this is the only form that has resemblance to a falling shower. But the supposition is not necessary. Nor is it needful to suppose that water was applied to them at all. The thing itself is improbable; and the whole case is met by the simple supposition that the apostle means that they were initiated in this way into the religion of Moses, recognized his divine mission, and under the cloud became his followers and subject to his laws. And if this interpretation is correct, then it follows that the word "baptize" does not of necessity mean to "immerse." (See Editors' Notes on Matthew 3:6 and Matthew 3:16.)

And in the sea - This is another expression that goes to determine the sense of the word "baptize." The sea referred to here is the Red Sea, and the event was the passage through that sea. The fact in the case was, that the Lord caused a strong east wind to blow all night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided Exodus 14:21, and the waters were a wall unto them on the right hand and on the left, Exodus 14:22. From this whole narrative it is evident that they passed through the sea without being "immersed" in it. The waters were driven into high adjacent walls for the very purpose that they might pass between them dry and safe. There is the fullest proof that they were not submerged in the water. Dr. Gill supposes that the water stood up above their heads, and that "they seemed to be immersed in it." This might be true; but this is to give up the idea that the word baptize means always to immerse in water, since it is a fact, according to this supposition, that they were not thus immersed, but only seemed to be. And all that can be meant, therefore, is, that they were in this manner initiated into the religion of Moses, convinced of his divine mission, and brought under subjection to him as their leader, lawgiver, and guide. This passage is a very important one to prove that the word baptism does not necessarily mean entire immersion in water. It is perfectly clear that neither the cloud nor the waters touched them. "They went through the midst of the sea on dry ground." It remains only to be asked whether, if immersion was

the only mode of baptism known in the New Testament, the apostle Paul would have used the word not only so as not necessarily to imply that, but as necessarily to mean something else? (See Editors‘ Notes on Matthew 3:6 and Matthew 3:16.)

Verse 3

And did all eat the same spiritual meat - That is, “manna.” Exodus 16:15, Exodus 16:35; Nehemiah 9:15, Nehemiah 9:20. The word meat here is used in the old English sense of the word, to denote “food” in general. They lived on “manna.” The word “spiritual” here is evidently used to denote that which was given by the Spirit, or by God; that which was the result of his miraculous gift, and which was not produced in the ordinary way, and which was not the gross food on which people are usually supported. It had an excellency and value from the fact that it was the immediate gift of God, and is thus called “angels food.” Psalm 78:25. It is called by Josephus “divine and extraordinary food.” Ant. Psalm 3:1. In the language of the Scriptures, that which is distinguished for excellence, which is the immediate gift of God, which is unlike that which is gross and of earthly origin, is called “spiritual,” to denote its purity, value, and excellence. Compare Romans 7:14; 1 Corinthians 3:1; 1 Corinthians 15:44, 1 Corinthians 15:46; Ephesians 1:3. The idea of Paul here is, that all the Israelites were nourished and supported in this remarkable manner by food given directly by God; that they all had thus the evidence of the divine protection and favor, and were all under his care.

Verse 4

And did all drink the same spiritual drink - The idea here is essentially the same as in the previous verse, that they had been highly favored of God, and enjoyed tokens of the divine care and guardianship. That was manifested in the miraculous supply of water in the desert, thus showing that they were under the divine protection, and were objects of the divine favor. There can be no doubt that by “spiritual drink” here, the apostle refers to the water that was made to gush from the rock that was smitten by Moses. Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:11. Why this is called “spiritual” has been a subject on which there has been much difference of opinion. It cannot be because there was anything special in the nature of the water, for it was evidently real water, suited to allay their thirst. There is no evidence, as many have supposed, that there was a reference in this to the drink used in the Lord‘s Supper. But it must mean that it was bestowed in a

miraculous and supernatural manner; and the word "spiritual" must be used in the sense of supernatural, or that which is immediately given by God. Spiritual blessings thus stand opposed to natural and temporal blessings, and the former denote those which are immediately given by God as an evidence of the divine favor. That the Jews used the word "spiritual" in this manner is evident from the writings of the Rabbis. Thus, they called the manna "spiritual food" (Yade Mose in *Shemor Rabba* fol. 109. 3); and their sacrifices they called "spiritual bread" (Tzeror Hammer, fol. 93. 2). - Gill. The drink, therefore, here referred to was that bestowed in a supernatural manner and as a proof of the divine favor.

For they drank of that spiritual Rock - Of the waters which flowed from that Rock. The Rock here is called "spiritual," not from anything special in the nature of the rock, but because it was the source to them of supernatural mercies, and became thus the emblem and demonstration of the divine favor, and of spiritual mercies conferred upon them by God.

That followed them - Margin. "Went with" ἀκολουθούσης akolouthousēsThis evidently cannot mean that the rock itself literally followed them, any more than that they literally drank the rock, for one is as expressly affirmed, if it is taken literally, as the other. But as when it is said they "drank of the rock," it must mean that they drank of the water that flowed from the rock; so when it is said that the "rock followed" or accompanied them, it must mean that the water that flowed from the rock accompanied them. This figure of speech is common everywhere. Thus, the Saviour said 1 Corinthians 11:25, "This cup is the new testament," that is, the wine in this cup represents my blood, etc.; and Paul says 1 Corinthians 11:25, 1 Corinthians 11:27, "whosoever shall drink this cup of the Lord unworthily," that is, the wine in the cup, etc., and "as often as ye drink this cup," etc., that is, the wine contained in the cup. It would be absurd to suppose that the rock that was smitten by Moses literally followed them in the wilderness; and there is not the slightest evidence in the Old Testament that it did. Water was twice brought out of a rock to supply the needs of the children of Israel. Once at Mount Horeb, as recorded in Exodus 17:6, in the wilderness of Sin, in the first year of their departure from Egypt. The second time water was brought from a rock about the time of the death of Miriam at Kadesh, and probably in the 40th year of their departure from Egypt, Numbers 20:1. It was to the former of these occasions that the apostle evidently refers. In regard to this we may observe:

(1) That there must have been furnished a large quantity of water to have supplied the needs of more than two million people.

(2) it is expressly stated Deuteronomy 9:21), that "the brook נחל nachalstream, torrent, or river, see Numbers 34:5; Joshua 15:4, Joshua 15:47; 1 Kings 8:65; 2 Kings 24:7) descended out of the mount," and was evidently a stream of considerable size.

(3) mount Horeb was higher than the adjacent country, and the water that thus gushed from the rock, instead of collecting into a pool and becoming stagnant, would flow off in the direction of the sea.

(4) the sea to which it would naturally flow would be the Red Sea, in the direction of the Eastern or Elanitic branch of that sea.

(5) the Israelites would doubtless, in their journeyings, be influenced by the natural direction of the water, or would not wander far from it, as it was daily needful for the supply of their needs.

(6) at the end of thirty-seven years we find the Israelites at Ezion-geber, a seaport on the eastern branch of the Red Sea, where the waters probably flowed into the sea; Numbers 33:36. In the 40th year of their departure from Egypt, they left this place to go into Canaan by the country of Edom, and were immediately in distress again by the lack of water. It is thus probable that the water from the rock continued to flow, and that it constituted a stream, or river; that it was near their camp all the time until they came to Ezion-geber; and that thus, together with the daily supply of manna, it was a proof of the protection of God, and an emblem of their dependence. If it be said that there is now no such stream to be found there, it is to be observed that it is represented as miraculous, and that it would be just as reasonable to look for the daily descent of manna there in quantities sufficient to supply more than two million people, as to expect to find the gushing and running river of water. The only question is, whether God can work a miracle, and whether there is evidence that he has done it. This is not the place to examine that question. But the evidence is as strong that he performed this miracle as that he gave the manna, and neither of them is inconsistent with the power, the wisdom, or the benevolence of God.

And that Rock was Christ - This cannot be intended to be understood literally, for it was not literally true. The rock from which the water flowed was evidently an ordinary rock, a part of Mount Horeb; and all that this can mean is, that that rock, with the stream of water thus gushing from it, was a representation of the Messiah. The word was is thus often used to denote similarity or representation, and is not to be taken literally. Thus, in the institution of the Lord‘s Supper, the Saviour says of the bread, “This is my body,” that is, it represents my body. Thus, also of the cup, “This cup is the new testament in my blood,” that is, it represents my blood, 1 Corinthians 11:24-25. Thus, the gushing fountain of water might be regarded as a representation of the Messiah, and of the blessings which result from him. The apostle does not say that the Israelites knew that this was designed to be a representation of the Messiah, and of the blessings which flow from him, though there is nothing improbable in the supposition that they so understood and regarded it, since all their institutions were probably regarded as typical. But he evidently does mean to say that the rock was a vivid and affecting representation of the Messiah; that the Jews did partake of the mercies that flow from him; and that even in the desert they were under his care, and had in fact among them a vivid representation of him in some sense corresponding with the emblematic representation of the same favors which the Corinthian and other Christians had in the Lord‘s Supper. This representation of the Messiah, perhaps, was understood by Paul to consist in the following things:

(1) Christians, like the children of Israel, are passing through the world as pilgrims, and to them that world is a wilderness - a desert.

(2) they need continued supplies, as the Israelites did, in their journey. The world, like that wilderness, does not meet their necessities, or supply their needs.

(3) that rock was a striking representation of the fulness of the Messiah, of the abundant grace which he imparts to his people.

(4) it was an illustration of their continued and constant dependence on him for the daily supply of their needs. It should be observed that many expositors understand this literally. Bloomfield translates it: “and they were supplied with drink from the spiritual Rock which followed them, even

Christ." So Rosenmuller, Calvin, Glass, etc. In defense of this interpretation, it is said, that the Messiah is often called "a rock" in the Scriptures; that the Jews believe that the "angel of Jehovah" who who attended them (Exodus 3:2, and other places) was the Messiah; and that the design of the apostle was, to show that this "attending Rock," the Messiah, was the source of all their blessings, and particularly of the water that gushed from the rock. But the interpretation suggested above seems to me to be most natural. The design of the apostle is apparent. It is to show to the Corinthians, who relied so much on their privileges, and felt themselves so secure, that the Jews had the very same privileges - had the highest tokens of the divine favor and protection, were under the guidance and grace of God, and were partakers constantly of that which adumbrated or typified the Messiah, in a manner as real, and in a form as much suited to keep up the remembrance of their dependence, as even the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper.

Verse 5

But with many of them … - That is, with their conduct. They rebelled and sinned, and were destroyed. The design of the apostle here is, to remind them that although they enjoyed so many privileges, yet they were destroyed; and thus to admonish the Corinthians that their privileges did not constitute an absolute security from danger, and that they should be cautious against the indulgence of sin. The phrase rendered here "with many" ἐν τοῖς πλείων en tois pleiōnshould have been rendered "with most of them," literally" with the many; and it means that with the greater part of them God was not well pleased; that is, he was pleased with but few of them.

Was not well pleased - Was offended with their ingratitude and rebellion.

For they were overthrown … - That is, by the pestilence, by wars, or died by natural and usual diseases, so that they did not reach the land of Canaan. But two men of that generation, Caleb and Joshua, were permitted to enter the land of promise; Numbers 14:29-30.

Verse 6

Now these things - The judgments inflicted on them by God for their sins.

Were our examples - Greek: "types" (τύποι tupoi). Margin, "figures." They were not designed to be types of us, but they are to be held up as furnishing an admonition to us, or a warning that we do not sin in the same way. The same God directs our affairs that ordered theirs; and if we sin as they did, we also must expect to be punished, and excluded from the favor of God, and from heaven.

Lust after evil things - Desire those things which are forbidden, and which would be injurious. They lusted after flesh, and God granted them their desires, and the consequence was a plague, and the destruction of multitudes Exodus 11:4. So Paul infers that the Corinthian Christians should not lust after, or desire the meat offered in sacrifice to idols, lest it should lead them also to sin and ruin.

Verse 7

Neither be ye idolaters - This caution is evidently given in view of the danger to which they would be exposed if they partook of the feasts that were celebrated in honor of idols in their temples. The particular idolatry which is referred to here is, the worship of the golden calf that was made by Aaron Exodus 32:1-5.

As it is written - Exodus 32:6.

The people sat down to eat and to drink - To worship the golden calf. They partook of a feast in honor of that idol. I have already observed that it was common to keep a feast in honor of an idol, and that the food which was eaten on such an occasion was mainly the meat which had been offered in sacrifice to it. This instance was particularly to the apostle's purpose, as he was cautioning the Corinthians against the danger of participating in the feasts celebrated in the pagan temples.

And rose up to play - (παίζειν paizein). The Hebrew word used in Exodus 32:6 (צחק tsaachaq) means "to laugh, to sport, to jest, to mock, to insult" Genesis 21:9; and then to engage in dances accompanied with music, in honor of an idol. This was often practiced, as the worship of idols was celebrated with songs and dances. This is particularly affirmed of this instance of idol worship Exodus 32:19; and this was common among ancient idolaters; and this mode of worship was even adopted by David before the ark of the Lord; 2 Samuel 6:5; 1 Chronicles 13:8; 1 Chronicles 15:29. All that the word "to play" here necessarily implies is, that of choral songs and dances, accompanied with revelry in honor of the idol. It was, however, the fact that such worship was usually accompanied with much

licentiousness; but that is not necessarily implied in the use of the word. Most of the oriental dances were grossly indecent and licentious, and the word here may be designed to include such indelicacy and licentiousness.

Verse 8

Neither let us commit fornication … - The case referred to here was that of the licentious contact with the daughters of Moab, referred to in Numbers 25:1-9.

And fell in one day - Were slain for their sin by the plague that prevailed.

Three and twenty thousand - The Hebrew text in Numbers 25:9, is twenty-four thousand. In order to reconcile these statements, it may be observed that perhaps 23,000 fell directly by the plague, and 1,000 were slain by Phinehas and his companions (Grotius); or it may be that the number was between 23,000 and 24,000, and it might be expressed in round numbers by either - Macknight. At all events, Paul has not exceeded the truth. There were at least 23,000 that fell, though there might have been more. The probable supposition is, that the 23,000 fell immediately by the hand of God in the plague, and the other thousand by the judges; and as Paul‘s design was particularly to mention the proofs of the immediate divine displeasure, he refers only to those who fell by that, in illustration of his subject - There was a particular reason for this caution in respect to licentiousness:

(1) It was common among all idolaters; and Paul in cautioning them against idolatry, would naturally warn them of this danger.

(2) it was common at Corinth. It was the prevalent vice there. To “Corinthianize” was a term synonymous among the ancients with licentiousness.

(3) so common was this at Corinth, that, as we have seen (see the introduction), not less than 1,000 prostitutes were supported in a single temple there; and the city was visited by vast multitudes of foreigners, among other reasons on account of its facilities for this sin. Christians, therefore, were in a special manner exposed to it; and hence, the anxiety of the apostle to warn them against it.

Verse 9

Neither let us tempt Christ … - The word "tempt," when applied to man, means to present motives or inducements to sin; when used with reference to God, it means to try his patience, to provoke his anger, or to act in such a way as to see how much he will bear, and how long he will endure the wickedness and perverseness of people. The Israelites tempted him, or "tried his patience and forbearance," by rebellion, complaining, impatience, and dissatisfaction with his dealings. In what way the Corinthians were in danger of tempting Christ is not known, and can only be conjectured. It may be that the apostle cautions them against exposing themselves to temptation in the idol temples - placing themselves, as it were, under the unhappy influence of idolatry, and thus needlessly trying the strength of their religion, and making an experiment on the grace of Christ, as if he were bound to keep them even in the midst of dangers into which they needlessly ran. They would have the promise of grace to keep them only when they were in the way of their duty, and using all proper precautions. To go beyond this, to place themselves in needless danger, to presume on the grace of Christ to keep them in all circumstances, would be to tempt him, and provoke him to leave them; see the note at Matthew 4:7.

As some of them also tempted - There is evidently here a word to be understood, and it may be either "Christ" or "God." The construction would naturally require the former; but it is not certain that the apostle meant to say that the Israelites tempted Christ. The main idea is that of temptation, whether it is of Christ or of God; and the purpose of the apostle is to caution them against the danger of tempting Christ, from the fact that the Israelites were guilty of the sin of tempting their leader and protector, and thus exposing themselves to his anger. It cannot be denied, however, that the more natural construction of this place is that which supposes that the word "Christ" is understood here rather than "God." In order to relieve this interpretation from the difficulty that the Israelites could not be said with any propriety to have tempted "Christ," since he had not then come in the flesh, two remarks may be made.

First, by the "angel of the covenant," and the "angel of his presence" Exodus 23:20, Exodus 23:23; Exodus 32:34; Exodus 33:2; Numbers 20:16; Isaiah 63:9; Hebrews 11:26, that went with them, and delivered them from Egypt, there is reason to think the sacred writers understood the Messiah to be intended; and that he who subsequently became incarnate was he whom they tempted. And secondly, We are to bear in mind that the term "Christ"

has acquired with us a signification somewhat different from that which it originally had in the New Testament. We use it as "a proper name," applied to Jesus of Nazareth. But it is to be remembered that it is the mere Greek word for the Hebrew "Anointed," or the "Messiah;" and by retaining this signification of the word here, no small part of the difficulty will be avoided; and the expression then will mean simply that the Israelites tempted "the Messiah;" and the idea will be that he who conducted them, and against whom they sinned, and whom they tempted, was "the Messiah," who afterward became incarnate; an idea that is in accordance with the ancient ideas of the Jews respecting this personage, and which is not forbidden, certainly, in any part of the Bible.

And were destroyed of serpents - Fiery serpents; see Numbers 21:6.

Verse 10

Neither murmur ye - Do not repine at the allotments of Providence, or complain of His dealings.

As some of them also murmured - Numbers 14:2. The ground of their complaining was, that they had been disappointed; that they had been brought out of a land of plenty into a wilderness of want; and that instead of being conducted at once to the land of promise, they were left to perish in the desert. They therefore complained of their leaders, and proposed to return again into Egypt.

And were destroyed of the destroyer - That is, they were doomed to die in the wilderness without seeing the land of Canaan; Exodus 14:29. The "destroyer" here is understood by many to mean the "angel of death," so often referred to in the Old Testament, and usually called by the Jews "Sammael." The work of death, however, is attributed to an angel in Exodus 12:23; compare Hebrews 11:28. It was customary for the Hebrews to regard most human events as under the direction of angels. In Hebrews 2:14, he is described as he "that had the power of death;" compare the Book of Wisdom of Solomon 18:22,25. The simple idea here, however, is, that they died for their sin, and were not permitted to enter the promised land,

Verse 11

For ensamples - Greek: "types" (τύποι tupoi). The same word which is used in 1 Corinthians 10:6. This verse is a repetition of the admonition contained in that verse, in order to impress it more deeply on the memory; see the note at 1 Corinthians 10:6. The sense is, not that these things took place simply and solely to be examples, or admonitions, but that their

occurrence illustrated great principles of human nature and of the divine government; they showed the weakness of men, and their liability to fall into sin, and their need of the divine protection, and they might thus be used for the admonition of succeeding generations.

They are written for our admonition - They are recorded in the writings of Moses, in order that we and all others might be admonished not to confide in our own strength. The admonition did not pertain merely to the Corinthians, but had an equal applicability to Christians in all ages of the world.

Upon whom the ends of the world are come - This expression is equivalent to that which so often occurs in the Scriptures, as, "the last time," "the latter day," etc.; see it fully explained in the notes on Acts 2:17. It means the last dispensation; or, that period and mode of the divine administration under which the affairs of the world would be wound up. There would be no mode of administration beyond that of the gospel. But it by no means denotes necessarily that the continuance of this period called "the last times," and "the ends of the world" would be brief, or that the apostle believed that the world would soon come to an end. It might be the last period, and yet be longer than any one previous period, or than all the previous periods put together. There may be a last dynasty in an empire, and yet it may be longer than any previous dynasty, or than all the previous dynasties put together. The apostle Paul was at special pains in 2 Thessalonians 2 to show, that by affirming that the last time had come, he did not mean that the world would soon come to an end.

Verse 12

Wherefore - As the result of all these admonitions. Let this be the effect of all that we learn from the unhappy self-confidence of the Jews, to admonish us not to put reliance on our own strength.

That thinketh he standeth - That supposes himself to be firm in the love of God, and in the knowledge of his truth; that regards himself as secure, and that will be therefore disposed to rely on his own strength.

Take heed lest he fall - Into sin, idolatry, or any other form of iniquity. We learn here:

(1) That a confidence in our own security is no evidence that we are safe.

(2) such a confidence may be one of the strongest evidences that we are in danger. Those are most safe who feel that they are weak and feeble, and who feel their need of divine aid and strength. They will then rely on the true source of strength; and they will be secure.

(3) all professed Christians should be admonished. All are in danger of falling into sin, and of dishonoring their profession; and the exhortation cannot be too often or too urgently pressed, that they should take heed lest they fall into sin. The leading and special idea of the apostle here should not he forgotten or disregarded. It is, that Christians in their favored moments, when they are permitted to approach near to God, and when the joys of salvation fill their hearts, should exercise special caution. For:

(a)Then the adversary will be especially desirous to draw away their thoughts from God, and to lead them into sin, as their fall would most signally dishonor religion;

(b)Then they will be less likely to be on their guard, and more likely to feel themselves strong, and not to need caution and solicitude.

Accordingly, it often happens that Christians, after they have been especially favored with the tokens of the divine favor, soon relapse into their former state, or fall into some sin that grieves the hearts of their brethren, or wounds the cause of religion. So it is in revivals; so it is in individuals. Churches that are thus favored are filled with joy, and love, and peace. Yet they become self-confident and elated; they lose their humility and their sense of their dependence; they cease to be watchful and prayerful, supposing that all is safe; and the result often is, that a season of revival is succeeded by a time of coldness and declension. And thus, too, it is with individuals. Just the opposite effect is produced from what should be, and from what need be. Christians should then be especially on their guard; and if they then availed themselves of their elevated advantages, churches might be favored with continued revivals and ever-growing piety; and individuals might be filled with joy, and peace, and holiness, and ever-expanding and increasing love.

Verse 13

There hath no temptation taken you - What temptation the apostle refers to here is not quite certain. It is probable, however, that he refers to such as would, in their circumstances, have a tendency to induce them to forsake their allegiance to their Lord, and to lead them into idolatry and sin.

These might be either open persecutions, or afflictions on account of their religion; or they might be the various allurements which were spread around them from the prevalence of idolatry. They might be the open attacks of their enemies, or the sneers and the derision of the frivilous and the great. The design of the apostle evidently is, to show them that, if they were faithful, they had nothing to fear from any such forms of temptation, but that God was able to bring them through them all. The sentiment in the verse is a very important one, since the general principle here stated is as applicable to Christians now as it was to the Corinthians.

Taken you - Seized upon you, or assailed you. As when an enemy grasps us, and attempts to hold us fast.

But such as is common to man - εἰ μὴ ἀνθρώπινος ei mē anthrōpinosSuch as is "human." Margin, "Moderate." The sense is evident. It means such as human nature is liable to, and has been often subjected to; such as the human powers, under the divine aid may be able to resist and repel. The temptations which they had been subjected to were not such as would be suited to angelic powers, and such as would require angelic strength to resist; but they were such as human nature had been often subjected to, and such as man had often contended with successfully. There is, therefore, here a recognition of the doctrine that man has natural ability to resist all the temptations to which he is subject; and that consequently, if he yields, he is answerable for it. The "design" of the apostle is to comfort the Corinthians, and to keep their minds from despondency. He had portrayed their danger; he had shown them how others had fallen; and they might be led to suppose that in such circumstances they could not be secure. He therefore tells them that they might still be safe, for their temptations were such as human nature had often been subject to, and God was able to keep them from falling.

But God is faithful - This was the only source of security; and this was enough. If they looked only to themselves, they would fall. If they depended on the faithfulness of God, they would be secure. The sense is, not that God would keep them without any effort of their own; not that he would secure them if they plunged into temptation; but that if they used the proper means, if they resisted temptation, and sought his aid, and depended on his promises, then he would be faithful. This is everywhere implied in the Scriptures; and to depend on the faithfulness of God, otherwise than in

the proper use of means and in avoiding the places of temptation, is to tempt him, and provoke him to wrath; see the notes on Matthew 6:13.

(2) when people are tempted, it is because God suffers or permits it. He Himself does not tempt human beings James 1:13; He does not infuse evil thoughts into the mind; He does not create an object of temptation to place in our way, but He suffers it to be placed there by others. When we are tempted, therefore, we are to remember that it is because He allows or permits it; not because He does it. His agency is that of sufferance, not of creation. We are to remember, too, that there is some good reason why it is thus permitted; and that it may be turned in some way to his glory, and to our advancement in virtue.

(3) there is a certain extent to which we are able to resist temptation. There is a limit to our power. There is a point beyond which we are not able to resist it. We do not have the strength of angels.

(4) that limit will, in all cases, be beyond the point to which we are tempted. If not, there would be no sin in falling, anymore than there is sin in the oak when it is prostrated before the tempest.

(5) if people fall into sin, under the power of temptation, they only are to blame. They have strength to resist all the temptations that assail them, and God has given the assurance that no temptation shall occur which they shall not be able, by His aid, to resist. In all instances, therefore, where people fall into sin; in all the yielding to passion, to allurement, and to vice, man is to blame, and must be responsible to God. And this is especially true of Christians, who, whatever may be said of others, cannot plead that there was not power sufficient to meet the temptation, or to turn aside its power.

But will with the temptation … - He will, at the same time that He allows the trial or temptation to befall us, make a way of deliverance; He will save us from being entirely overcome by it.

That ye may be able to bear it - Or that you may be able to bear up under it, or endure it. God knows what His people are able to endure, and as He has entire control of all that can affect them, He will adapt all trials to their strength, and will enable them to bear all that is appointed to them. This is a general promise, and is as applicable to other Christians as it was

to the Corinthians. It was to them a positive promise, and to all in the same circumstances it may be regarded as such now. It may be used, therefore:

(1) As a ground of encouragement to those who are in temptation and trial. God knows what they are able to endure; and he will sustain them in their temptations. It matters not how severe the trial; or how long it may be continued; or how much they may feel their own feebleness; yet He who has appointed the trial is abundantly able to uphold them. They may, therefore, repose their all upon Him, and trust to His sustaining grace.

(2) it may be used as an argument, that none who are true Christians, and who are thus tried, shall ever fall away, and be lost. The promise is positive and certain, that a way shall be made for their escape, and they shall be able to bear it. God is faithful to them; and though he might suffer them to be tempted beyond what they are able to bear, yet He will not, but will secure an egress from all their trials. With this promise in view, how can it be believed that any true Christians who are tempted will be suffered to fall away and perish? If they do, it must be from one of the following causes; either because God is not faithful; or because He will permit them to be tempted above what they are able to bear; or because He will not make a way for their escape. Since no Christian can believe either of these, it follows that they who are converted shall be kept unto salvation.

Verse 14

Wherefore - In view of the dangers and temptations that beset you; in view of your own feebleness and the perils to which you would be exposed in the idol temples, etc.

Flee from idolatry - Escape from the service of idols; from the feasts celebrated in honor of them; from the temples where they are worshipped. This was one of the dangers to which they were especially exposed; and Paul therefore exhorts them to escape from everything that would have a tendency to lead them into this sin. He had told them, indeed, that God was faithful; and yet he did not expect that God would keep them without any effort of their own. He therefore exhorts them to flee from all approaches to it, and from all the customs which would have a tendency to lead them into idolatrous practices. He returns, therefore, in this verse, to the particular subject discussed in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 - the propriety of partaking of the feasts in honor of idols; and shows the danger which would follow such a

practice. That danger he sets forth in view of the admonitions contained in this chapter, from 1 Corinthians 10:1 to 1 Corinthians 10:12. The remainder of the chapter is occupied with a discussion of the question stated in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, whether it was right for them to partake of the meat which was used in the feasts of idolaters.

Verse 15

I speak as to wise men … - I speak to people qualified to understand the subject; and present reasons which will commend themselves to you. The reasons referred to are those which occupy the remainder of the chapter.

Verse 16

The cup of blessing which we bless - The design of this verse and the following verses seems to be, to prove that Christians, by partaking of the Lord‘s Supper, are solemnly set apart to the service of the Lord Jesus; that they acknowledge Him as their Lord, and dedicate themselves to him, and that as they could not and ought not to be devoted to idols and to the Lord Jesus at the same time, so they ought not to participate in the feasts in honor of idols, or in the celebrations in which idolaters would be engaged; see 1 Corinthians 10:21. He states, therefore:

(1) That Christians are “united” and dedicated to Christ in the communion; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

(2) that this was true of the Israelites, that they were one people, devoted by the service of the altar to the same God, 1 Corinthians 10:18.

(3) that though an idol was nothing, yet the pagan actually sacrificed to devils, and Christians ought not to partake with them; 1 Corinthians 10:19-21. The phrase “cup of blessing” evidently refers to the wine used in the celebration of the Lord‘s Supper. it is called “the cup of blessing” because over it Christians praise or bless God for his mercy in providing redemption. It is not because it is the means of conveying a blessing to the souls of those who partake of it - though that is true - but because thanksgiving, blessing, and praise were rendered to God in the celebration, for the benefits of redemption; see Note, Matthew 26:26. Or it may mean, in accordance with a well known Hebraism, “the blessed cup;” the cup that is blessed. This is the more literal interpretation; and it is adopted by Calvin, Beza, Doddridge, and others.

Which we bless - Grotius, Macknight, Vatablus, Bloomfield, and many of the early church fathers suppose that this means, "over which we bless God;" or, "for which we bless God." But this is to do violence to the passage. The more obvious signification is, that there is a sense in which it may be said that the cup is blessed, and that by prayer and praise it is set apart and rendered in some sense sacred to the purposes of religion. it cannot mean that the cup has undergone any physical change, or that the wine is anything but wine; but that it has been solemnly set apart to the service of religion, and by prayer and praise designated to be used for the purpose of commemorating the Saviour's love. That may be said to be blessed which is set apart to a sacred use (Genesis 2:3; Exodus 20:11); and in this sense the cup may be said to be blessed; see Luke 9:16, "And he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven he blessed them," etc.; compare Genesis 14:9; Genesis 27:23, Genesis 27:33, Genesis 27:41; Genesis 28:1; Leviticus 9:22-23; 2 Samuel 6:18; 1 Kings 8:41.

Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? - Is it not the emblem by which the blood of Christ is exhibited, and the means by which our union through that blood is exhibited? Is it not the means by which we express our attachment to him as Christians; showing our union to him and to each other; and showing that we partake in common of the benefits of his blood? The main idea is, that by partaking of this cup they showed that they were united to him and to each other; and that they should regard themselves as set apart to him. We have communion with one κοινωνία koinōniathat which is in "common," that which pertains to all, that which evinces fellowship) when we partake together; when all have an equal right, and all share alike; when the same benefits or the same obligations are extended to all. And the sense here is, that Christians "partake alike" in the benefits of the blood of Christ; they share the same blessings; and they express this together, and in common, when they partake of the communion.

The bread … - In the communion. It shows, since we all partake of it. that we share alike in the benefits which are imparted by means of the body of the Redeemer. In like manner it is implied that if Christians should partake with idolaters in the feasts offered in honor of idols, that they would be regarded as partaking with them in the services of idols, or as united to them, and therefore such participation was improper.

Verse 17

For we - We Christians. "Being many." Greek "The many" (οἱ πολλοί hoi polloi). This idea is not, as our translation would seem to indicate, that Christians were numerous, but that "all" (for οἱ πολλοί is here evidently used in the sense of παντες , "all") were united, and constituted one society.

Are one bread - One loaf; one cake. That is, we are united, or are one. There is evident allusion here to the fact that the loaf or cake was composed of many separate grains of wheat, or portions of flour united in one; or, that as one loaf was broken and partaken by all, it was implied that they were all one. We are all one society; united as one, and for the same object. Our partaking of the same bread is an emblem of the fact that we are one. In almost all nations the act of eating together has been regarded as a symbol of unity or friendship.

And one body - One society; united together.

For we are all partakers … - And we thus show publicly that we are united, and belong to the same great family. The argument is, that if we partake of the feasts in honor of idols with their worshippers, we shall thus show that we are a part of their society.

Verse 18

Behold Israel - Look at the Jews. The design here is to illustrate the sentiment which he was establishing, by a reference to the fact that among the Jews those who partook of the same sacrifices were regarded as being one people, and as worshipping one God. So, if they partook of the sacrifices offered to idols, they would be regarded also as being fellow-worshippers of idols with them.

After the flesh - See Romans 4:1. The phrase "after the flesh" is designed to denote the Jews who were not converted to Christianity; the natural descendants of Israel, or Jacob.

Are not they which eat of the sacrifices - A portion of the sacrifices offered to God was eaten by the offerer, and another portion by the priests. Some portions of the animal, as the fat, were burnt; and the remainder, unless it was a holocaust, or whole burnt-offering, was then the property of the priests who had officiated, or of the persons who had brought it; Exodus 29:13, Exodus 29:22; Lev, Leviticus 3:4, Leviticus 3:10, Leviticus 3:15; Leviticus 4:9; Leviticus 7:3-4; Leviticus 8:26. The right shoulder and the breast was the part which was assigned to the priests; the remainder belonged to the offerer.

Partakers of the altar - Worshippers of the same God. They are united in their worship, and are so regarded. And in like manner, if you partake of the sacrifices offered to idols, and join with their worshippers in their temples, you will be justly regarded as "united" with them in their worship, and partaking with them in their abominations.

Verse 19

What say I then? - This is in the present tense; τί οὖν φημι ti oun phēmiwhat do I say? What is my meaning? What follows from this? Do I mean to say that an idol is anything; that it has a real existence? Does my reasoning lead to that conclusion; and am I to be understood as affirming that an idol is of itself of any consequence? It must be recollected that the Corinthian Christians are introduced by Paul 1 Corinthians 8:4 as saying that they knew that an idol was nothing in the world. Paul did not directly contradict that; but his reasoning had led him to the necessity of calling the propriety of their attending on the feasts of idols in question; and he introduces the matter now by asking these questions, thus leading the mind to it rather than directly affirming it at once. "Am I in this reasoning to be understood as affirming that an idol is anything, or that the meat there offered differs from other meat? No; you know, says Paul, that this is not my meaning. I admit that an idol in itself is nothing; but I do not admit, therefore, that it is right for you to attend in their temples; for though the "idol" itself - the block of wood or stone - is nothing, yet the offerings are really made to devils; and I would not have you engage in such a service;" 1 Corinthians 10:20-21.

That the idol is anything? - That the block of wood or stone is a real living object of worship, to be dreaded or loved? See the note at 1 Corinthians 8:4.

Or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? - Or that the meat which is offered "differs" from that which is not offered; that the mere act of offering it changes its qualities? I do not admit or suppose this.

Verse 20

But - The negative here is omitted, but is understood. The ellipsis of a negative after an interrogative sentence is common in the Classical writers as well as in the Scriptures. Bloomfield. The sense is, "No; I do not say this, but I say that there are reasons why you should not partake of those sacrifices; and one of those reasons is, that they have been really offered to devils."

They sacrifice to devils - (δαιμονίοις daimoniois“demons”). The pagans used the word demon either in a good or a bad sense. They applied it commonly to spirits that were supposed to be inferior to the supreme God; genii; attending spirits; or, as they called them, divinities, or gods. A part were in their view good, and a part evil. Socrates supposed that such a demon or genius attended him, who suggested good thoughts to him, and who was his protector. As these beings were good and well disposed, it was not supposed to be necessary to offer any sacrifices in order to appease them. But a large portion of those genii were supposed to be evil and wicked, and hence, the necessity of attempting to appease their wrath by sacrifices and bloody offerings. It was therefore true, as the apostle says, that the sacrifices of the pagan were made, usually at least, to devils or to evil spirits.

Many of these spirits were supposed to be the souls of departed people, who were entitled to worship after death, having been enrolled among the gods. The word “demons,” among the Jews, was employed only to designate evil beings. It is not implied in their writings to good angels or to blessed spirits, but to evil angels, to idols, to false gods. Thus, in the Septuagint the word is used to translate אלילים Elilim“idols” Psalm 95:5; Isaiah 65:10; and שׁד shēd*Shaid*, as in Deuteronomy 32:17, in a passage which Paul has here almost literally used, “They sacrificed unto devils, not to God.” No where in the Septuagint is it used in a good sense. In the New Testament the word is uniformly used also to denote “evil spirits,” and those usually which had taken possession of people in the time of the Saviour; Matthew 7:22; Matthew 9:33-34; Matthew 10:8; Matthew 11:18; Mark 1:34, Mark 1:39, et al. See also Campbell on the Gospels, Pre. Dissertation vi. part 1, Section 14-16. The precise force of the original is not, however, conveyed by our translation. It is not true that the pagans sacrificed to “devils,” in the common and popular sense of that word, meaning thereby the apostate angel and the spirits under his direction; for the pagans were as ignorant of their existence as they were of the true God; and it is not true that they designed to worship such beings. But it is true:

(1) That they did not worship the supreme and the true God. They were not acquainted with his existence; and they did not profess to adore him.

(2) they worshipped "demons;" beings that they regarded as inferior to the true God; created spirits, or the spirits of people that had been enrolled among the number of the gods.

(3) it was true that many of these beings were supposed to be malign and evil in their nature, and that their worship was designed to deprecate their wrath. So that, although an idol was nothing in itself, the gold or wood of which it was made was inanimate, and incapable of aiding or injuring them; and although there were no real beings such as the pagans supposed - no genii or inferior gods; yet they "designed" to offer sacrifice to such beings, and to deprecate their wrath. To join them in this, therefore, would be to express the belief that there were such beings, and that they ought to be worshipped, and that their wrath should be deprecated.

I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils - I would not that you should have communion with demons. I would not have you express a belief of their existence; or join in worship to them; or partake of the spirit by which they are supposed to be actuated - a spirit that would be promoted by attendance on their worship. I would not have you, therefore, join in a mode of worship where such beings are acknowledged. You are solemnly dedicated to Christ; and the homage due to him should not be divided with homage offered to devils, or to imaginary beings.

Verse 21

Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord … - This does not mean that they had no physical ability to do this, or that it was a natural impossibility; for they certainly had power to do it. But it must mean that they could not "consistently" do it. It was not fit, proper, decent. They were solemnly bound to serve and obey Christ, they had devoted themselves to him, and they could not, consistently with these obligations, join in the worship of demons. This is a striking instance in which the word "cannot" is used to denote not natural but moral inability.

And the cup of devils - Demons; 1 Corinthians 10:20. In the feasts in honor of the gods, wine was poured out as a libation, or drank by the worshippers; see Virgil, *Aeneas* viii. 273. The custom of drinking "toasts" at feasts and celebrations arose from this practice of pouring out wine, or drinking in honor of the pagan gods; and is a practice that still partakes of the nature of paganism. It was one of the abominations of paganism to suppose that their gods would be pleased with the intoxicating drink. Such a

pouring out of a libation was usually accompanied with a prayer to the idol god, that he would accept the offering; that he would be propitious; and that he would grant the desire of the worshipper. From that custom the habit of expressing a sentiment, or proposing a toast, uttered in drinking wine, has been derived. The toast or sentiment which now usually accompanies the drinking of a glass in this manner, if it means anything, is now also a "prayer." But to whom? To the god of wine? To a pagan deity? Can it be supposed that it is a prayer offered to the true God; the God of purity? Has Yahweh directed that prayer should be offered to Him in such a manner? Can it be acceptable to Him? Either the sentiment is unmeaning, or it is a prayer offered to a pagan god, or it is mockery of Yahweh; and in either case it is improper and wicked. And it may as truly be said now of Christians as in the time of Paul. "Ye cannot consistently drink the cup of the Lord at the communion table, and the cup where a prayer is offered to a false god, or to the dead, or to the air; or when, if it means anything, it is a mockery of Jehovah." Now can a Christian with any more consistency or propriety join in such celebrations, and in such unmeaning or profane libations, than he could go into the temple of an idol, and partake of the idolatrous celebrations there?

And of the table of devils - Demons. It is not needful to the force of this that we should suppose that the word means necessarily evil spirits. They were not God; and to worship them was idolatry. The apostle means that Christians could not consistently join in the worship that was offered to them, or in the feasts celebrated in honor of them.

Verse 22

Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? - That is, shall we, by joining in the worship of idols, "provoke" or "irritate" God, or excite him to anger? This is evidently the meaning of the word παραζηλοῦμεν parazēloumenrendered "provoke to jealousy." The word קנא qaana'usually rendered by this word by the Septuagint, has this sense in Deuteronomy 32:21; 1 Kings 14:22; Ezra 8:3; Psalm 78:58. There is a reference here, doubtless, to the truth recorded in Exodus 20:5. that God "is a jealous God," and that he regards the worship of idols as a direct affront to himself. The sentiment of Paul is, that to join in the worship of idols, or in the observance of their feasts, would be to participate in that which had ever been regarded by God with special abhorrence, and which more than anything else tended to provoke his wrath. We may observe, that any course

of life that tends to alienate the affections from God, and to fix them on other beings or objects, is a sin of the same kind as that referred to here. Any inordinate love of friends, of property, of honor, has substantially the same idolatrous nature, and will tend to provoke him to anger. And it may be asked of Christians now, whether they will by such inordinate attachments provoke the Lord to wrath? whether they will thus excite his displeasure, and expose themselves to his indignation? Very often Christians do thus provoke him. They become unduly attached to a friend, or to wealth, and God in anger takes away that friend by death, or that property by the flames, or they conform to the world, and mingle in its scenes of fashion and gaiety, and forget God; and in displeasure he visits them with judgments, humbles them, and recalls them to Himself.

Are we stronger than he? - This is given as a reason why we should not provoke his displeasure. We cannot contend successfully with Him; and it is therefore madness and folly to contend with God, or to expose ourselves to the effects of His indignation.

Verse 23

All things are lawful for me - See the note at 1 Corinthians 6:12. This is a repetition of what he had said before; and it is here applied to the subject of eating the meat that had been offered to idols. The sense is," Though it may be admitted that it was strictly "lawful" to partake of that meat, yet there were strong reasons why it was inexpedient; and those reasons ought to have the binding force of law."

All things edify not - All things do not tend to build up the church, and to advance the interests of religion; and when they do not have this effect, they are not expedient, and are improper. Paul acted for the welfare of the church. His object was to save souls. Anything that would promote that object was proper; anything which would hinder it, though in itself it might not be strictly unlawful, was in his view improper. This is a simple rule, and might be easily applied by all. If a man has his heart on the conversion of people and the salvation of the world, it will go far to regulate his conduct in reference to many things concerning which there may be no exact and positive law. It will do much to regulate his dress; his style of living; his expenses; his entertainments; his mode of contact with the world. He may not be able to fix his finger on any positive law, and to say that this or that article of dress is improper; that this or that piece of furniture is absolutely forbidden; or that this or that manner of life is contrary to any explicit law

of Yahweh; but he may see that it will interfere with his great and main purpose, "to do good on the widest scale possible;" and therefore to him it will be inexpedient and improper. Such a grand leading purpose is a much better guide to direct a man's life than would be exact positive statutes to regulate everything, even if such minute statutes were possible.

Verse 24

Let no man seek his own - This should be properly interpreted of the matter under discussion, though the direction assumes the form of a general principle. Originally it meant, "Let no man, in regard to the question about partaking of the meat offered in sacrifice to idols, consult his own pleasure, happiness, or convenience; but let him, as the leading rule on the subject, ask what will be for the welfare of others. Let him not gratify his own taste and inclinations, regardless of their feelings, comfort, and salvation; but let him in these things have a primary reference to their welfare." He may dispense with these things without danger or injury; He cannot indulge in them without endangering the happiness or purity of others. His duty therefore requires him to abstain. The injunction, however, has a general form, and is applicable to all Christians, and to all cases "of a similar kind." It does not mean that a man is not in any instance to regard his own welfare, happiness, or salvation; it does not mean that a man owes no duty to himself or family; or that he should neglect all these to advance the welfare of others; but the precept means, that "in cases like that under consideration," when there is no positive law, and when a man's example would have a great influence, he should be guided in his conduct, not by a reference to his own ease, comfort or gratification, but by a reference to the purity and salvation of others. And the observance of this simple rule would make a prodigious change in the church and the world.

But every man another's wealth - The word "wealth" is not in the Greek. Literally, "that which is of another;" the word τὸ toreferring to anything and everything that pertains to his comfort, usefulness, happiness, or salvation - The sentiment of the whole is, "when a man is bound and directed by no positive law, his grand rule should be the comfort and salvation of others." This is a simple rule; it might be easily applied; and this would be a sort of balance-wheel in the various actions and plans of the world. If every man would adopt this rule, he could not be in much danger of going wrong; he would be certain that he would not live in vain.

Verse 25

Whatsoever is sold in the shambles - In the market. The meat of animals offered in sacrifice would be exposed there to sale as well as other meat. The apostle says that it might be purchased, since the mere fact that it had been offered in sacrifice could not change its quality, or render it unfit for use. They were to abstain from attending on the feasts of the idols in the temple, from partaking of meat that had been offered them, and from celebrations observed expressly in honor of idols; but lest they should become too scrupulous, the apostle tells them that if the meat was offered indiscriminately in the market with other meat, they were not to hesitate to purchase it, or eat it.

Asking no question for conscience‘ sake - Not hesitating or doubting, as if it might possibly have been offered in sacrifice. Not being scrupulous, as if it were possible that the conscience should be defiled. This is a good rule still, and may be applied to a great many things. But:

(1) That which is purchased should be in itself lawful and right. It would not be proper for a man to use ardent spirits or any other intoxicating drinks because they were offered for sale, any more than it would be to commit suicide because people offered pistols, and bowie-knives, and halters to sell.

(2) there are many things now concerning which similar questions may be asked; as, e. g. is it right to use the productions of slave-labor, the sugar, cotton, etc., that are the price of blood? Is it right to use that which is known to be made on Sunday; or that which it is known a man has made by a life of dishonesty and crime? The consciences of many persons are tender on all such questions; and the questions are not of easy solution. Some rules may perhaps be suggested arising from the case before us:

(a)If the article is exposed indiscriminately with others in the market, if it be in itself lawfill, if there is no ready mark of distinction, then the apostle would direct as not to hesitate.

(b)If the use and purchase of the article would go directly and knowingly to countenance the existence of slavery, to encourage a breach of Sunday, or to the continuance of a course of dishonest living, then it would seem equally clear that it is not right to purchase or to use it. If a man abhors slavery, and violations of Sunday, and dishonesty, then how can he knowingly partake of that which goes to patronize and extend these abominations?

(c)If the article is expressly pointed out to him as an article that has been made in this manner, and his partaking of it will be construed into a participation of the crime, then he ought to abstain; see 1 Corinthians 10:28. No man is at liberty to patronize slavery, Sunday violations, dishonesty, or licentiousness, in any form. Every man can live without doing it; and where it can be done it should be done. And perhaps there will be no other way of breaking up many of the crimes and cruelties of the earth than for good people to act conscientiously, and to refuse to partake of the avails of sin, and of gain that results from oppression and fraud.

Verse 26

For the earth is the Lord's - This is quoted from Psalm 24:1. The same sentiment is also found in Psalm 50:11, and in Deuteronomy 10:14. It is here urged as a reason why it; is right to partake of the meat offered in the market. It all belongs to the Lord. It does not really belong to the idol, even though it has been offered to it. It may, therefore, be partaken of as his gift, and should be received with gratitude.

And the fulness thereof - All that the earth produces belongs to Him. He causes if to grow; and He has given it to be food for man; and though it may have been devoted to an idol, yet its nature is not changed. It is still the gift of God; still the production of His hand; still the fruit of His goodness and love.

Verse 27

If any of them that believe not - That are not Christians; that are still pagans.

Bid you to a feast - Evidently not a feast in the temple of an idol, but at his own house. If he asks you to partake of his hospitality.

And ye be disposed to go - Greek, "And you will to go." It is evidently implied here that it would be not improper to go. The Saviour accepted such invitations to dine with the Pharisees (see the note at Luke 11:37); and Christianity is not designed to abolish the courtesies of social life; or to break the bonds of contact; or to make people misanthropes or hermits. It allows and cultivates, under proper Christian restraints, the contact in society which will promote the comfort of people, and especially that which may extend the usefulness of Christians. It does not require, therefore, that we should withdraw from social life, or regard as improper the courtesies of society; see the note at 1 Corinthians 5:10.

Whatsoever is set before you … - Whether it has been offered in sacrifice or not; for so the connection requires us to understand it.

Eat - This should be interpreted strictly. The apostle says "eat," not "drink;" and the principle will not authorize us to "drink" whatever is set before us, asking no questions for conscience sake; for while it was matter of indifference in regard to eating, whether the meat had been sacrificed to idols or not, it is not a matter of indifference whether a man may drink intoxicating liquor. That is a point on which the "conscience" should have much to do; and on which its honest decisions, and the will of the Lord, should be faithfully and honestly regarded.

Verse 28

But if any man - If any fellow guest; any scrupulous fellow Christian who may be present. That the word "any" (τις tis) refers to a fellow guest seems evident; for it is not probable that the host would point out any part of the food on his own table, of the lawfulness of eating which he would suppose there was any doubt. Yet there might be present some scrupulous fellow Christian who would have strong doubts of the propriety of partaking of the food, and who would indicate it to the other guests.

For his sake that showed it - Do not offend him; do not lead him into sin;, do not pain and wound his feelings.

And for conscience' sake - Eat not, out of respect to the conscientious scruples of him that told thee that it had been offered to idols. The word "conscience" refers to the conscience of the informer 1 Corinthians 10:29; still he should make it a matter of conscience not to wound his weak brethren, or lead them into sin.

For the earth is the Lord's … - See 1 Corinthians 10:26. These words are missing in many mss. (see Mill's Greek Testament), and in the Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic, and Arabic versions; and are omitted by Griesbach. Grotius says that they should be omitted. There might easily have been a mistake in transcribing them from 1 Corinthians 10:26. The authority of the mss., however, is in favor of retaining them; and they are quoted by the Greek fathers and commentators. If they are to be retained, they are to be interpreted, probably, in this sense; "There is no "necessity" that you should partake of this food. All things belong to God; and he has made ample provision for your needs without subjecting you to the necessity of eating this. Since this is the case, it is best to regard the scruples of those who have doubts of the propriety of eating this food, and to abstain."

Verse 29

Conscience, I say, not thine own - I know that you may have no scruples on the subject. I do not mean that with you this need be a matter of conscience. I do not put it on that; ground, as if an idol were anything, or as if it were in itself wrong, or as if the quality of the meat so offered had been changed; but I put it on the ground of not wounding the feelings of those who are scrupulous, or of leading them into sin.

For why is my liberty … - There is much difficulty in this clause; for as it now stands, it seems to be entirely contradictory to what the apostle had been saying. He had been urging them to have respect to other people‘s consciences, and in some sense to give up their liberty to their opinions and feelings. Macknight and some others understand it as an objection: “Perhaps you will say, But why is my liberty to be ruled by another man‘s conscience?” Doddridge supposes that this and 1 Corinthians 10:30 come in as a kind of parenthesis, to prevent their extending his former caution beyond what he designed. “I speak only of acts obvious to human observation: for as to what immediately lies between God and my own soul, why is my liberty to be judged, arraigned, condemned at the bar of another man‘s conscience?” But it is probable that this is not an objection. The sense may be thus expressed: “I am free; I have “liberty” to partake of that food, if I please; there is no law against it, and it is not morally wrong: but if I do, when it is pointed out to me as having been sacrificed to idols, my liberty - the right which I exercise - will be “misconstrued, misjudged, condemned” (for so the word κρίνεται krinetaiseems to be used here) by others. The weak and scrupulous believer will censure, judge, condemn me as regardless of what is proper, and as disposed to fall in with the customs of idolaters; and will suppose that I cannot have a good conscience. Under these circumstances, why should I act so as to expose myself to this censure and condemnation? It is better for me to abstain, and not to use this liberty in the case, but to deny myself for the sake of others.”

Verse 30

For if I by grace be a partaker - Or rather, “If I partake by grace; if by the grace and mercy of God, I have a right to partake of this; yet why should I so conduct as to expose myself to the reproaches and evil surmises of others? Why should I lay myself open to be blamed on the subject of eating, when there are so many bounties of Providence for which I may be

thankful, and which I may partake of without doing injury, or exposing myself in any manner to be blamed?"

Why am I evil spoken of - Why should I pursue such a course as to expose myself to blame or censure?

For that for which I give thanks - For my food. The phrase "for which I give thanks" seems to be a periphrasis for "food," or for that of which he partook to nourish life. It is implied that he always gave thanks for his food; and that this was with him such a universal custom, that the phrase "for which I give thanks" might be used as convenient and appropriate phraseology to denote his ordinary food. The idea in the verse, then, is this: "By the favor of God, I have a right to partake of this food. But if I did, I should be evil spoken of, and do injury. And it is unnecessary. God has made ample provision elsewhere for my support, for which I may be thankful. I will not therefore expose myself to calumny and reproach, or be the occasion of injury to others by partaking of the food offered in sacrifice to idols."

Verse 31

Whether therefore ye eat or drink - This direction should be strictly and properly applied to the case in hand; that is, to the question about eating and drinking the things that had been offered in sacrifice to idols. Still, however, it contains a general direction that is applicable to eating and drinking at all times; and the phrase "whatsoever ye do" is evidently designed by the apostle to make the direction universal.

Or whatsoever ye do - In all the actions and plans of life; whatever he your schemes, your desires, your doings, let all be done to the glory of God.

Do all to the glory of God - The phrase "the glory of God" is equivalent to the honor of God; and the direction is, that we should so act in all things as to "honor" him as our Lawgiver, our Creator, our Redeemer; and so as to lead others by our example to praise him and to embrace His gospel. A child acts so as to honor a father when he always cherishes reverential and proper thoughts of him; when he is thankful for his favors; when he keeps his laws; when he endeavors to advance his plans and his interests; and when he so acts as to lead all around him to cherish elevated opinions of the character of a father. He "dishonorers" him when he has no respect to his authority; when he breaks his laws; when he leads others to treat him with disrespect. In like manner, we live to the glory of God when we honor him in all the relations which he sustains to us; when we keep his

laws; when we partake of his favors with thankfulness, and with a deep sense of our dependence; when we pray unto him; and when we so live as to lead those around us to cherish elevated conceptions of his goodness, and mercy, and holiness. Whatever plan or purpose will tend to advance His kingdom, and to make him better known and loved, will be to His glory. We may observe in regard to this:

(1) That the rule is "universal." It extends to everything. If in so small matters as eating and drinking we should seek to honor God, assuredly we should in all other things.

(2) it is designed that this should be the constant rule of conduct, and that we should be often reminded of it. The acts of eating and drinking must be performed often; and the command is attached to that which must often occur, that we may be often reminded of it, and that we may be kept from forgetting it.

(3) it is intended that we should honor God in our families and among our friends. We eat with them; we share together the bounties of Providence; and God designs that we should honor Him when we partake of His mercies, and that thus our daily enjoyments should be sanctified by a constant effort to glorify Him.

(4) we should devote the strength which we derive from the bounties of His hand to His honor and in His service. He gives us food; He makes it nourishing; He invigorates our frame; and that strength should not be devoted to purposes of sin, and profligacy, and corruption. it is an act of high dishonor to God, when he gives us strength, that we should at once devote that strength to pollution and to sin.

(5) this rule is designed to be one of the chief directors of our lives. It is to guide all our conduct, and to constitute a "test" by which to try our actions. Whatever can be done to advance the honor of God is right; whatever cannot be done with that end is wrong. Whatever plan a man can form that will have this end is a good plan; whatever cannot be made to have this tendency, and that cannot be commended, continued, and ended with a distinct and definite desire to promote His honor, is wrong, and should be immediately abandoned.

(6) what a change would it make in the world if this rule were every where followed! How differently would even professing Christians live! How many of their plans would they be constrained at once to abandon! And what a mighty revolution would it at once make on earth should all the actions of people begin to be performed to promote the glory of God!

(7) it may be added that sentiments like that of the apostle were found among the Jews, and even among pagans. Thus, Maimonides, as cited by Grotius, says, "Let everything be in the name of Heaven," that is, in the name of God. Capellus cites several of the rabbinical writers who say that all actions, even eating and drinking, should be done "in the name of God." See the "Critici Sacri." Even the pagan writers have something that resembles this. Thus, Arrian Ephesians 1:19 says, "Looking unto God in all things small and great.' Epictetus, too, on being asked how anyone may eat so as to please God, answered, "By eating justly, temperately, and thankfully."

Verse 32

Give none offence - Be inoffensive; that is, do not act so as to lead others into sin; see the note at Romans 14:13.

Neither to the Jews … - To no one, though they are the foes of God or strangers to him. To the Jews be inoffensive, because they think that the least approach to idol worship is to be abhorred. Do not so act as to lead them to think that you connive at or approve idol worship, and so as to prejudice them the more against the Christian religion, and lead them more and more to oppose it. In other words, do not attend the feasts in honor of idols.

Nor to the Gentiles - Greek "Greeks." To the pagans who are unconverted. They are attached to idol worship. They seek every way to justify themselves in it. Do not countenance them in it, and thus lead them into the sin of idolatry.

Nor to the church of God - To Christians. Many of them are weak. They may not be as fully instructed as you are. Your example would lead them into sin. Abstain, therefore, from things which, though they are in themselves strictly "lawful," may yet be the occasion of leading others into sin, and endangering their salvation.

Verse 33

Even as I … - Paul here proposes his own example as their guide. The example which he refers to is that which he had exhibited as described in this and the preceding chapters. His main object had been to please all people; that is, not to alarm their prejudices, or needlessly to excite their opposition (see the note at 1 Corinthians 9:19-23), while he made known to them the truth, and sought their salvation - It is well when a minister can without ostentation appeal to his own example, and urge others to a life of self-denial and holiness, by his own manner of living, and by what he is himself in his daily walk and conversation.

1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Introduction

The first verse in this chapter properly belongs to the preceding, and is the conclusion of the discussion which the apostle had been carrying on in that and the previous chapters. It has been improperly separated from that chapter, and in reading should be read in connection with it. The remainder of the chapter is properly divided into two parts:

I.A discussion respecting the impropriety of a woman‘s praying or prophesying with her head uncovered 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; and,

II.A reproof of their irregularities in the observance of the Lord‘s Supper, 1 Corinthians 11:3-5; that if a woman was not veiled, if she laid aside the appropriate emblem of her sex and of her subordinate condition, she might as well part with her hair, which all knew would be dishonorable and improper 1 Corinthians 11:6; that the woman had been created for a subordinate station, and should observe it 1 Corinthians 11:7-9; that she should have power on her head because of the angels (1 Corinthians 11:10; and yet, lest this should depress her, and seem to convey the idea of her utter inferiority and unimportance, he adds, that in the plan of salvation they are in many respects on an equality with the man, that the same plan was adapted to both, that the same blessings are appointed for both sexes, and the same high hopes are held out to both 1 Corinthians 11:11-12; and that nature on this subject was a good instructor, and showed that it was uncomely for a woman to pray with her head uncovered, that her hair had been given her for an ornament and for beauty, and that, as it would be as improper for her to remove her veil as to cut off her hair, nature itself required that this symbol of her subordination should be laid aside in public, 1 Corinthians 11:13-16.

II. Next, as to the irregularities in the observance of the Lord‘s supper, the apostle observes 1 Corinthians 11:17, that he could not commend them for what he was about to say. There had been and there were irregularities among them, which it was his duty to reprove. In 1 Corinthians 11:18-22, he states what those irregularities were. He then 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 states the true nature and design of the Lord‘s Supper, as it was very evident that they had not understood it, but supposed it was a common feast, such as they had been accustomed to observe in honor of idols. In 1 Corinthians

11:27-29, he states the consequences of observing this ordinance in an improper manner, and the proper way of approaching it; and in 1 Corinthians 11:30-32 observes that their improper mode of observing it was the cause of the punishment which many of them had experienced. He then concludes by directing them to celebrate the Lord‘s Supper “together;” to eat at home when they were hungry; and not to abuse the Lord‘s Supper by making it an occasion of feasting; and assures them that the other matters of irregularity he would set in order when be should come among them.

Verse 1

Be ye followers of me - Imitate my example in the matter now under discussion. As I deny myself; as I seek to give no offence to anyone; as I endeavor not to alarm the prejudices of others, but in all things to seek their salvation, so do you. This verse belongs to the previous chapter, and should not have been separated from it. It is the close of the discussion there.

Even as I also am of Christ - I make Christ my example. He is my model in all things; and if you follow him, and follow me as far as I follow him, you will not err. This is the only safe example; and if we follow this, we can never go astray.

Verse 2

Now I praise you, brethren - Paul always chose to commend Christians when it could be done, and never seemed to suppose that such praise would be injurious to them. See the note at 1 Corinthians 1:4-5. On this occasion he was the more ready to praise them as far as it could be done, because there were some things in regard to them in which he would have occasion to reprove them.

That ye remember me in all things - That you are disposed to regard my authority and seek my direction in all matters pertaining to the good order of the church. There can be little doubt that they had consulted him in their letter (1 Corinthians 7:1) about the proper manner in which a woman ought to demean herself if she was called upon, under the influence of divine inspiration, to utter anything in public. The question seems to have been, whether, since she was inspired, it was proper for her to retain the marks ef her inferiority of rank, and remain covered; or whether the fact of her inspiration did not release her from that obligation, and make it proper that she should lay aside her veil, and appear as public speakers did among people. To this the apostle refers, probably, in the phrase “all things,” that

even in matters of this kind, pertaining to the good order of the church, they were disposed to regard his authority.

And keep the ordinances - Margin, "Traditions" (τὰς παραδώσεις tas paradōseis). The word does not refer to anything that had been delivered down from a former generation, or from former times, as the word "tradition" now usually signifies; but it means that which had been "delivered to them (παραδίδωμι paradidōmi); that is, by the apostles." The apostles had "delivered" to them certain doctrines, or rules, respecting the good order and the government of the church; and they had in general observed them, and were disposed still to do it. For this disposition to regard his authority, and to keep what he had enjoined, he commends them. He proceeds to specify what would be proper in regard to the particular subject on which they had made inquiry.

Verse 3

But I would have you know - "I invite your attention particularly to the following considerations, in order to form a correct opinion on this subject." Paul does not at once answer the inquiry, and determine what ought to be done; but he invites their attention to a series of remarks on the subject, which led them to draw the conclusion which he wished to establish. The phrase here is designed to call the attention to the subject, like that used so often in the New Testament, "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

That the head … - The word "head," in the Scriptures, is designed often to denote "master, ruler, chief." The word ראשׁ ro'shis often thus used in the Old Testament; see Numbers 17:3; Numbers 25:15; Deuteronomy 28:13, Deuteronomy 28:44; Judges 10:18; Judges 11:8, Judges 11:11; 1 Samuel 15:17; 2 Samuel 22:44. In the New Testament the word is used in the sense of Lord, ruler, chief, in Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 4:15; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 2:10. Here it means that Christ is the ruler, director, or Lord of the Christian man. This truth was to be regarded in all their feelings and arrangements, and was never to be forgotten. Every Christian should recollect the relation in which he stands to him, as one that is suited to produce the strictest decorum, and a steady sense of subordination.

Of every man - Every Christian. All acknowledge Christ as their Ruler and Master. They are subject to him; and in all proper ways recognize their subordination to him.

And the head of the woman is the man - The sense is, she is subordinate to him, and in all circumstances - in her demeanor, her dress, her conversation, in public and in the family circle - should recognize her subordination to him. The particular thing here referred to is, that if the woman is inspired, and speaks or prays in public, she should by no means lay aside the usual and proper symbols of her subordination. The danger was, that those who were under the influence of inspiration would regard themselves as freed from the necessity of recognising that, and would lay aside the "veil," the usual and appropriate symbol of their occupying a rank inferior to the man. This was often done in the temples of the pagan deities by the priestesses, and it would appear also that it had been done by Christian females in the churches.

And the head of Christ is God - Christ, as Mediator, has consented to assume a subordinate rank, and to recognize God the Father as superior in office. Hence, he was obedient in all things as a Son; he submitted to the arrangement required in redemption; he always recognized his subordinate rank as Mediator, and always regarded God as the supreme Ruler, even in the matter of redemption. The sense is, that Christ, throughout his entire work, regarded himself as occupying a subordinate station to the Father; and that it was proper from his example to recognize the propriety of rank and station everywhere.

Verse 4

Every man praying or prophesying - The word "prophesying" here means, evidently, "teaching;" or publicly speaking to the people on the subject of religion; see the note at Acts 2:17. See also the subject considered more at length in the notes on 1 Corinthians 11:2; that is, he does not, in his presence and in his service, observe the usual and proper custom by which a subordinate station is recognized, and which indicates respect for a superior. In the presence of a prince or a nobleman, it would be considered as a mark of disrespect should the head be covered. So in the presence of Christ, in whose name he ministers, it is a mark of disrespect if the head is covered. This illustration is drawn from the customs of all times and countries by which respect for a superior is indicated by removing the covering from the head. This is one reason why a man should not cover his head in public worship. Another is given in 1 Corinthians 11:7. Other interpretations of the passage may be seen in Bloomfield's Critical Digest.

Verse 5

But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth - In the Old Testament prophetesses are not unfrequently mentioned. Thus, Miriam is mentioned Exodus 15:20; Deborah Judges 4:4; Huldah 2 Kings 22:14; Noadiah Nehemiah 6:14. So also in the New Testament Anna is mentioned as a prophetess; Luke 2:36. That there were females in the early Christian church who corresponded to those known among the Jews in some measure as endowed with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, cannot be doubted. What was their precise office, and what was the nature of the public services in which they were engaged, is not however known. That they prayed is clear; and that they publicly expounded the will of God is apparent also; see the note on Acts 2:17. As the presumption is, however, that they were inspired, their example is no warrant now for females to take part in the public services of worship, unless they also give evidence that they are under the influence of inspiration, and the more especially as the apostle Paul has expressly forbidden their becoming public teachers; 1 Timothy 2:12.

If it is now pled, from this example, that women should speak and pray in public, yet it should be just so far only as this example goes, and it should be only when they have the qualifications that the early "prophetesses" had in the Christian church. If there are any such; if any are directly inspired by God, there then will be an evident propriety that they should publicly proclaim the will, and not till then. It may be further observed, however, that the fact that Paul here mentions the custom of women praying or speaking publicly in the church, does not prove that it was right or proper. His immediate object now was not to consider whether the practice was itself right, but to condemn the manner of its performance as a violation of all the proper rules of modesty and of subordination. On another occasion, in this very epistle, he fully condemns the practice in any form, and enjoins silence on the female members of the church in public; 1 Corinthians 14:34.

With her head uncovered - That is, with the veil removed which she usually wore. It would seem from this that the women removed their veils, and wore their hair disheveled, when they pretended to be under the influence of divine inspiration. This was the case with the pagan priestesses; and in so doing, the Christian women imitated them. On this account, if on no other, Paul declares the impropriety of this conduct. It was, besides, a custom among ancient females, and one that was strictly enjoined by the

traditional laws of the Jews, that a woman should not appear in public unless she were veiled. See this proved by Lightfoot in loco.

Dishonoureth her head - Shows a lack of proper respect to man, to her husband, to her father, to the sex in general. The veil is a token of modesty and of subordinaion. It is regarded among Jews, and everywhere, as an emblem of her sense of inferiority of rank and station. It is the customary mark of her sex, and that by which she evinces her modesty and sense of subordination. To remove that, is to remove the appropriate mark of such subordination, and is a public act by which she thus shows dishonor to the man. And as it is proper that the grades and ranks of life should be recognized in a suitable manner, so it is improper that, even on pretence of religion, and of being engaged in the service of God, these marks should be laid aside.

For that is even all one as if she were shaven - As if her long hair, which nature teaches her she should wear for a veil (1 Corinthians 11:15, margin,) should be cut off. Long hair is, by the custom of the times, and of nearly all countries, a mark of the sex, an ornament of the female, and judged to be beautiful and comely. To remove that is to appear, in this respect, like the other sex, and to lay aside the badge of her own. This, says Paul, all would judge to be improper. You yourselves would not allow it. And yet to lay aside the veil - the appropriate badge of the sex, and of her sense of subordination - would be an act of the same kind. It would indicate the same feeling, the same forgetfulness of the proper sense of subordination; and if that is laid aside, all the usual indications of modesty and subordination might be removed also. Not even under religious pretences, therefore, are the usual marks of sex, and of propriety of place and rank, to be laid aside. Due respect is to be shown, in dress, and speech, and deportment, to those whom God has placed above us; and neither in language, in attire nor in habit are we to depart from what all judge to he proprieties of life, or from what God has judged and ordained to be the proper indications of the regular gradations in society.

Verse 6

For if the woman be not covered - If her head be not covered with a veil.

Let her also be shorn - Let her long hair be cut off. Let her lay aside all the usual and proper indications of her sex and rank in life. If it is done in one respect, it may with the same propriety be done in all.

But if it be a shame … - If custom, nature, and habit; if the common and usual feelings and views among people would pronounce this to be a shame, the other would be pronounced to be a shame also by the same custom and common sense of people.

Let her be covered - With a veil. Let her wear the customary attire indicative of modesty and a sense of subordination. Let her not lay this aside even on any pretence of religion.

Verse 7

For a man indeed ought not to cover his head - That is, with a veil; or in public worship; when he approaches God, or when in His name he addresses his fellow man. It is not fit and proper that he should be covered. The reason why it is not proper, the apostle immediately states.

Forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God - The phrase "the image of God" refers to the fact that man was made in the likeness of his Maker Genesis 1:27; and proves that, though fallen, there is a sense in which he is still the image of God. It is not because man is truly or pure, and thus resembles his Creator; but it evidently is because he was invested by his Maker with authority and dominion; he was superior to all other creatures; Genesis 1:28. This is still retained; and this the apostle evidently refers to in the passage before us, and this he says should be recognized and regarded. If he wore a veil or turban, it would be a mark of servitude or inferiority. It was therefore improper that he should appear in this manner; but he should he so clad as not to obscure or hide the great truth that he was the direct representative of God on the earth, and had a superiority to all other creatures.

And glory of God - The word "glory" in the classic writers means:

(1)Opinion, sentiment, etc.;

(2)fame, reputation.

Here it means, as it often does, splendor, brightness, or that which stands forth to "represent" God, or by which the glory of God is known. Man was created first; he had dominion given him; by him, therefore, the divine authority and wisdom first shone forth; and this fact should be recognized in the due subordination of rank, and even in the apparel and attire which shall be worn. The impression of his rank and superiority should be everywhere retained.

But the woman is the glory of the man - The honor, the ornament, etc. She was made for him; she was made after he was; she was taken from him,

and was "bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh." All her comeliness, loveliness, and purity are therefore an expression of his honor and dignity, since all that comeliness and loveliness were made of him and for him. This, therefore, ought to be acknowledged by a suitable manner of attire; and in his presence this sense of her inferiority of rank and subordination should be acknowledged by the customary use of the veil. She should appear with the symbol of modesty and subjection, which are implied by the head being covered This sense is distinctly expressed in the following verse.

Verse 8

For the man is not of the woman - The man was not formed from the woman.

But the woman of the man - From his side; Genesis 2:18, Genesis 2:22-23.

Verse 9

Neither was the man created for the woman … - This is a simple statement of what is expressed in Genesis. The woman was made for the comfort and happiness of the man. Not to be a slave, but a help-meet; not to be the minister of his pleasures, but to be his aid and comforter in life; not to be regarded as of inferior nature and rank, but to be his friend, to divide his sorrows, and to multiply and extend his joys; yet still to be in a station subordinate to him. He is to be the head: the ruler; the presider in the family circle; and she was created to aid him in his duties, to comfort him in his afflictions, to partake with him of his pleasures. Her rank is therefore honorable, though it is subordinate. It is, in some respects, the more honorable because it is subordinate and as her happiness is dependent on him, she has the higher claim to his protection and his tender care. The whole of Paul's idea here is, that her situation and rank as subordinate should be recognized by her at all times, and that in his presence it was proper that she should wear the usual symbol of modesty and subordination, the veil.

Verse 10

For this cause … - There is scarcely any passage in the Scriptures which has more exercised the ingenuity of commentators than this verse. The various attempts which have been made to explain it may be seen in Pool, Rosenmuller, Bloomfield, etc. After all the explanations which have been given of it, I confess, I do not understand it. It is not difficult to see

what the connection requires us to suppose in the explanation. The obvious interpretation would be, that a woman should have a veil on her head because of the angels who were supposed to be present, observing them in their public worship; and it is generally agreed that the word "power" (ἐξουσίαν exousian) denotes a veil, or a covering for the head. But the word power does not occur in this sense in any classic writer. Bretschneider understands it of a veil, as being a defense or guard to the face, lest it should be seen by others. Some have supposed that it was the name of a female ornament that was worn on the head, formed of braids of hair set with jewels. Most commentators agree that it means a "veil," though some think (see Bloomfield) that it is called power to denote the veil which was worn by married women, which indicated the superiority of the married woman to the maiden. But it is sufficient to say in reply to this, that the apostle is not referring to married women in contradistinction from those who are unmarried, but is showing that all women who prophecy or pray in public should be veiled. There can, perhaps, be no doubt that the word "power" has reference to a veil, or to a covering for the head; but why it is called power I confess I do not understand; and most of the comments on the word are, in my view, egregious trifling.

Because of the angels - Some have explained this of good angels, who were supposed to be present in their assemblies (see Doddridge); others refer it to evil angels; and others to messengers or spies who, it has been supposed, were present in their public assemblies, and who would report greatly to the disadvantage of the Christian assemblies if the women were seen to be unveiled. I do not know what it means; and I regard it as one of the very few pass ages in the Bible whose meaning as yet is wholly inexplicable. The most natural interpretation seems to me to be this: "A woman in the public assemblies, and in speaking in the presence of people, should wear a veil - the usual symbol of modesty and subordination - because the angels of God are witnesses of your public worship Hebrews 1:13, and because they know and appreciate the propriety of subordination and order in public assemblies."

According to this, it would mean that the simple reason would be that the angels were witnesses of their worship; and that they were the friends of propriety, due subordination, and order; and that they ought to observe these in all assemblies convened for the worship of God - I do not know that this sense has been proposed by any commentator; but it is one which strikes me

as the most obvious and natural, and consistent with the context. The following remarks respecting the ladies of Persia may throw some light on this subject - “The head-dress of the women is simple; their hair is drawn behind the head, and divided into several tresses; the beauty of this head-dress consists in the thickness and length of these tresses, which should fall even down to the heels, in default of which, they lengthen them with tresses of silk. The ends of these tresses they decorate with pearls and jewels, or ornaments of gold or silver. The head is covered, “under” the veil or kerchief “(course chef),” only by the end of a small “bandeau,” shaped into a triangle; this “bandeau,” which is of various colors, is thin and light.

The “bandalette” is embroidered by the needle, or covered with jewelry, according to the quality of the wearer. This is, in, my opinion, the ancient “tiara,” or “diadem,” of the queens of Persia. Only married women wear it; and it is the mark by which it is known that they are under subjection “(oc‘est la la marque a laquelle on reconnoit qu‘ elles sont sous puissanceo-power).” The girls have little “caps,” instead of this kerchief or tiara; they wear no veil at home, but let two tresses of their hair fall under their cheeks. The caps of girls of superior rank are tied with a row of pearls. Girls are not shut up in Persia till they attain the age of six or seven years; before that age they go out of the seraglio, sometimes with their father, so that they may then be seen. I have seen some wonderfully pretty girls. They show the neck and bosom; and more beautiful cannot be seen” - Chardin. “The wearing of a veil by a married woman was a token of her being under power. The Hebrew name of the veil signifies dependence. Great importance was attached to this part of the dress in the East. All the women of Persia are pleasantly apparelled. When they are abroad in the streets, all, both rich and poor, are covered with a great veil, or sheet of very fine white cloth, of which one half, like a forehead cloth, comes down to the eyes, and, going over the head, reaches down to the heels; and the other half muffles up the face below the eyes, and being fastened with a pin to the left side of the head, falls down to their very shoes, even covering their hands, with which they hold that cloth by the two sides, so that, except the eyes, they are covered all over with it. Within doors they have their faces and breasts uncovered; but the Armenian women in their houses have always one half of their faces covered with a cloth, that goes athwart their noses, and hangs

over their chin and breasts, except the maids of that nation, who, within doors, cover only the chin until they are married" - Thevenot.

Verse 11

Nevertheless - Lest the man should assume to himself too much superiority, and lest he should regard the woman as made solely for his pleasure, and should treat her as in all respects inferior, and withhold the respect that is due to her. The design of this verse and the following is to show, that the man and woman are united in the most tender interests; that the one cannot live comfortably without the other; that one is necessary to the happiness of the other; and that though the woman was formed from the man, yet it is also to be remembered that the man is descended from the woman. She should therefore be treated with proper respect, tenderness, and regard.

Neither is the man without the woman … - The man and the woman were formed for union and society. They are not in any respect independent of each other. One is necessary to the comfort of the other; and this fact should be recognized in all their contact.

In the Lord - By the arrangements or direction of the Lord. It is the appointment and command of the Lord that they should be mutual helps, and should each regard and promote the welfare of the other.

Verse 12

As the woman is of the man - In the original creation, she was formed from the man.

So is the man also by the woman - Is born of the woman, or descended from her. The sexes are dependent on each other, and should therefore cultivate an indissoluble union.

But all things of God - All things were created and arranged by him. This expression seems designed to suppress any spirit of complaint or dissatisfaction with this arrangement; to make the woman contented in her subordinate station, and to make the man humble by the consideration that it is all owing to the appointment of God. The woman should therefore be contented, and the man should not assume any improper superiority, since the whole arrangement and appointment is of God.

Verse 13

Judge in yourselves - Or, "Judge among yourselves." I appeal to you. I appeal to your natural sense of what is proper and right. Paul had used

various arguments to show them the impropriety of their females speaking unveiled in public. He now appeals to their natural sense of what was decent and right, according to established and acknowledged customs and habits.

Is it comely … - Is it decent, or becoming? The Grecian women, except their priestesses, were accustomed to appear in public with a veil - Doddridge. Paul alludes to that established and proper habit, and asks whether it does not accord with their own views of propriety that women in Christian assemblies should also wear the same symbol of modesty.

Verse 14

Doth not even nature itself - The word nature (φύσις phusis) denotes evidently that sense of propriety which all men have, and which is expressed in any prevailing or universal custom. That which is universal we say is according to nature. It is such as is demanded by the natural sense of fitness among people. Thus, we may say that nature demands that the sexes should wear different kinds of dress; that nature demands that the female should be modest and retiring; that nature demands that the toils of the chase, of the field, of war - the duties of office, of government and of professional life, should be discharged by people. Such are in general the customs the world over; and if any reason is asked for numerous habits that exist in society, no better answer can be given than that nature, as arranged by God, has demanded it. The word in this place, therefore, does not mean the constitution of the sexes, as Locke, Whitby, and Pierce maintain; nor reason and experience, as Macknight supposes; nor simple use and custom, as Grotius, Rosenmuller, and most recent expositors suppose; but it refers to a deep internal sense of what is proper and right; a sense which is expressed extensively in all nations. showing what that sense is.

No reason can be given, in the nature of things, why the woman should wear long hair and the man not; but the custom prevails extensively everywhere, and nature, in all nations, has prompted to the same course. “Use is second nature;” but the usage in this case is not arbitrary, but is founded in an anterior universal sense of what is proper and right. A few, and only a few, have regarded it as comely for a man to wear his hair long. Aristotle tells us, indeed (Rhet. 1: - see Rosenmuller), that among the Lacedemonians, freemen wore their hair long. In the time of Homer, also, the Greeks were called by him καρηκομόωντες Ἀχαῖοι karēkomoōntes Achaioilong-haired Greeks; and some of the Asiatic nations adopted the

same custom. But the general habit among people has been different. Among the Hebrews, it was regarded as disgraceful to a man to wear his hair long, except he had a vow as a Nazarite, Numbers 6:1-5; Judges 13:5; Judges 16:17; 1 Samuel 1:11. Occasionally, for affectation or singularity, the hair was suffered to grow, as was the case with Absalom 2 Samuel 14:26; but the traditional law of the Jews on the subject was strict. The same rule existed among the Greeks; and it was regarded as disgraceful to wear long hair in the time of Aelian; Hist. lib. 9:c. 14. Eustath. on Hom. 2:v.

It is a shame unto him? - It is improper and disgraceful. It is doing that which almost universal custom has said appropriately belongs to the female sex.

Verse 15

It is a glory unto her - It is an ornament, and adorning. The same instinctive promptings of nature which make it proper for a man to wear short hair, make it proper that the woman should suffer hers to grow long.

For a covering - Margin, "veil." It is given to her as a sort of natural veil, and to indicate the propriety of her wearing a veil. It answered the purposes of a veil when it was allowed to grow long, and to spread over the shoulders and ever parts of the face, before the arts of dress were invented or needed. There may also be an allusion here to the fact that the hair of women naturally grows longer than that of men. See Rosenmuller. The value which eastern females put on their long hair may be learned from the fact that when Ptolemy Euergetes, king of Egypt, was about to march against Seleucus Callinicus, his queen Berenice vowed, as the most precious sacrifice which she could make, to cut off and consecrate her hair if he returned in safety. "The eastern ladies," says Harmer, "are remarkable for the length and the great number of the tresses of their hair. The men there, on the contrary, wear very little hair on their heads." Lady M. W. Montague thus speaks concerning the hair of the women:" Their hair hangs at full length behind, divided into tresses, braided with pearl or riband, which is always in great quantity. I never saw in my life so many fine heads of hair. In one lady's I have counted one hundred and ten of these tresses, all natural; but it must be owned that every kind of beauty is more common here than with us." The men there, on the contrary, shave all the hair off their heads, excepting one lock; and those that wear hair are thought effeminate. Both these particulars are mentioned by Chardin, who says they are agreeable to the custom of the East: "the men are shaved; the women

nourish their hair with great fondness, which they lengthen, by tresses and tufts of silk, down to the heels. The young men who wear their hair in the East are looked upon as effeminate and infamous."

Verse 16

But if any man seem to be contentious - The sense of this passage is probably this: "If any man, any teacher, or others, "is disposed" to be strenuous about this, or to make it a matter of difficulty; if he is disposed to call in question my reasoning, and to dispute my premises and the considerations which I have advanced, and to maintain still that it is proper for women to appear unveiled in public, I would add that in Judea we have no such custom, neither does it prevail among any of the churches. This, therefore, would be a sufficient reason why it should not be done in Corinth, even if the abstract reasoning should not convince them of the impropriety. It would be singular; would be contrary to the usual custom; would offend the prejudices of many and should, therefore, be avoided."

We have no such custom - We the apostles in the churches which we have elsewhere founded; or we have no such custom in Judea. The sense is, that it is contrary to custom there for women to appear in public unveiled. This custom, the apostle argues, ought to be allowed to have some influence on the church of Corinth, even though they should not be convinced by his reasoning.

Neither the churches of God - The churches elsewhere. It is customary there for the woman to appear veiled. If at Corinth this custom is not observed, it will be a departure from what has elsewhere been regarded as proper; and will offend these churches. Even, therefore, if the reasoning is not sufficient to silence all cavils and doubts, yet the propriety of uniformity in the habits of the churches, the fear of giving offence should lead you to discountenance and disapprove the custom of your females appearing in public without their veil.

Verse 17

Now in this that I declare - In this that I am about to state to you; to wit, your conduct in regard to the Lord's Supper. Why this subject is introduced here is not very apparent. The connection may be this. In the subjects immediately preceding he had seen much to commend, and he was desirous of commending them as far as it could be done. In 1 Corinthians 11:2 of this chapter he commends them in general for their regard to the ordinances which he had appointed when he was with them. But while he

thus commended them, he takes occasion to observe that there was one subject on which he could not employ the language of approval or praise. Of their irregularities in regard to the Lord‘s supper he had probably heard by rumor, and as the subject was of great importance, and their irregularities gross and deplorable, he takes occasion to state to them again more fully the nature of that ordinance, and to reprove them for the manner in which they had celebrated it.

That ye come together - You assemble for public worship.

Not for the better, but for the worse - Your meetings, and your observance of the ordinances of the gospel, do not promote your edification, your piety, spirituality, and harmony; but tend to division, alienation, and disorder. You should assemble to worship God, and promote harmony, love, and piety; the actual effect of your assembling is just the reverse. In what way this was done he states in the following verses. These evil consequences were chiefly two, first, divisions and contentions; and, secondly, the abuse and profanation of the Lord‘s Supper.

Verse 18

For first of all - That is, I mention as the first thing to be reproved.

When ye come together in the church - When you come together in a religious assembly; when you convene for public worship. The word “church” here does not mean, as it frequently does with us, a “building.” No instance of such a use of the word occurs in the New Testament; but it means when they came together as a Christian assembly; when they convened for the worship of God. These divisions took place then; and from some cause which it seems then operated to produce alienations and strifes.

I hear - I have learned through some members of the family of Chloe; 1 Corinthians 1:11.

That there be divisions among you - Greek, as in the margin, Schisms. The word properly means a rent, such as is made in cloth Matthew 9:16; Mark 2:21, and then a division, a split, a faction among people; John 7:43; John 9:10; John 10:19. It does not mean here that they had proceeded so far as to form separate churches, but that there was discord and division in the church itself; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 1:10-11.

And I partly believe it - I credit a part of the reports; I have reason to think, that, though the evil may have been exaggerated, yet that it is true at least in part. I believe that there are dissensions in the church that should be reproved.

Verse 19

For there must be - It is necessary (δεῖ dei); it is to he expected; there are reasons why there should be. What these reasons are he states in the close of the verse; compare Matthew 18:7; 2 Peter 2:1; 2 Peter 2:2. The meaning is, not that divisions are inseparable from the nature of the Christian religion, not that it is the design and wish of the Author of Christianity that they should exist, and not that they are physically impossible, for then they could not be the subject of blame; but that such is human nature, such are the corrupt passions of men, the propensity to ambition and strifes, that they are to be expected, and they serve the purpose of showing who are, and who are not, the true friends of God.

Heresies - Margin, "Sects." Greek Αἱρεσεις Haireseissee the note at Acts 24:14. The words "heresy" and "heresies" occur only in these places, and in Galatians 5:20; 2 Peter 2:1. The Greek word occurs also in Acts 5:17 (translated "sect"); Acts 15:5; Acts 24:5; Acts 26:5; Acts 28:22, in all which places it denotes, and is translated, "sect." We now attach to the word usually the idea of a fundamental error in religion, or some "doctrine" the holding of which will exclude from salvation. But there is no evidence that the word is used in this signification in the New Testament. The only place where it can be supposed to be so used, unless this is one, is in Galatians 5:20, where, however, the word "contentions" or "divisions," would be quite as much in accordance with the connection. That the word here does not denote error in doctrine, but schism, division, or "sects," as it is translated in the margin, is evident from two considerations:

(1) It is the proper philological meaning of the word, and its established and common signification in the Bible.

(2) it is the sense which the connection here demands. The apostle had made no reference to error of doctrine, but is discoursing solely of "irregularity" in "conduct;" and the first thing which he mentions, is, that there were schisms, divisions, strifes. The idea that the word here refers to "doctrines" would by no means suit the connection, and would indeed make nonsense. It would then read, "I hear that there are divisions or parties among you, and this I cannot commend you for. For it must he expected that there would be "fundamental errors of doctrine" in the church." But Paul did not reason in this manner. The sense is, "There are divisions among you. It is to be expected: there are causes for it; and it cannot he

avoided that there should be, in the present state of human nature, divisions and sects formed in the church; and this is to be expected in order that those who are true Christians should be separated from those who are not." The foundation of this necessity is not in the Christian religion itself, for that is pure, and contemplates and requires union; but the existence of sects, and denominations, and contentious may be traced to the following causes:

(1) The love of power and popularity. Religion may be made the means of power; and they who have the control of the consciences of people, and of their religious feelings and opinions, can control them altogether.

(2) showing more respect to a religious teacher than to Christ; see Notes on 1 Corinthians 1:12.

(3) the multiplication of tests, and the enlargement of creeds and confessions of faith. The consequence is, that every new doctrine that is incorporated into a creed gives occasion for those to separate who cannot accord with it.

(4) the passions of people - their pride, and ambition, and bigotry, and unenlightened zeal. Christ evidently meant that his church should be one; and that all who were his true followers should be admitted to her communion, and acknowledged everywhere as his own friends. And the time may yet come when this union shall be restored to his long distracted church, and that while there may be an honest difference of opinion maintained and allowed, still the bonds of Christian love shall secure union of "heart" in all who love the Lord Jesus, and union of "effort" in the grand enterprise in which all can unite - that of making war upon sin, and securing the conversion of the whole world to God.

That they which are approved - That they who are approved of God, or who are his true friends, and who are disposed to abide by his laws.

May be made manifest - May be known; recognized; seen. The effect of divisions and separations would be to show who were the friends of order, and peace, and truth. It seems to have been assumed by Paul, that they who made divisions could not be regarded as the friends of order and truth; or that their course could not be approved by God. The effect of these divisions would be to show who they were. So in all divisions, and all

splitting into factions, where the great truths of Christianity are held, and where the corruption of the mass does not require separation, such divisions show who are the restless, ambitious, and dissatisfied spirits; who they are that are indisposed to follow the things that make for peace, and the laws of Christ enjoining union; and who they are who are gentle and peaceful, and disposed to pursue the way of truth, and love, and order, without contentions and strifes. This is the effect of schisms in the church; and the whole strain of the argument of Paul is to reprove and condemn such schisms, and to hold up the authors of them to reproof and condemnation; see Romans 16:17, "Mark them which cause divisions, and avoid them."

Verse 20

When ye come together therefore … - When you are assembled as a church, compare Hebrews 10:25, and see the note on Acts 2:1. Christians were constantly in the habit of assembling for public worship. It is probable that at this early period all the Christians in Corinth were accustomed to meet in the same place. The apostle here particularly refers to their "assembling" to observe the ordinance of the Lord‘s Supper. At that early period it is probable that this was done on every Lord‘s Day.

This is not … - Margin, "Ye cannot eat." The meaning of this expression seems to be this. "Though you come together professedly to worship God, and to partake of the Lord‘s Supper, yet this cannot be the real design which you have in view. It cannot be that such practices as are allowed among you can be a part of the celebration of that supper, or consistent with it. Your greediness 1 Corinthians 11:21; your intemperance 1 Corinthians 11:21; your partaking of the food separately and not in common, cannot be a celebration of the Lord‘s Supper. Whatever, therefore, you may profess to be engaged in, yet really and truly you are not celebrating the Lord‘s Supper."

The Lord‘s supper - That which the Lord Jesus instituted to commemorate his death. It is called "the Lord‘s," because it is his appointment, and is in honor of him; it is called "supper" (δεῖπνον deipnon), because the word denotes the evening repast; it was instituted in the evening; and it is evidently most proper that it should be observed in the after part of the day. With most churches the time is improperly changed to the morning - a custom which has no sanction in the New Testament; and which is a departure from the very idea of a supper.

Verse 21

For in eating - When you eat, having professedly come together to observe this ordinance. In order to understand this, it seems necessary to suppose that they had in some way made the Lord‘s supper either connected with a common feast, or that they regarded it as a mere common festival to be observed in a way similar to the festivals among the Greeks. Many have supposed that this was done by making the observance of the supper follow a festival, or what were afterward called “love feasts” ἀγάπαι agapai- “Agapae”). Many have supposed that that custom was derived from the fact that the Saviour instituted the supper after a festival, a feast in which he had been engaged with his disciples, and that thence the early Christians derived the custom of observing such a festival, or common meal, before they celebrated the Lord‘s Supper. But it may be observed, that the passover was not a mere preliminary festival, or feast.

It had no resemblance to the so called love feasts. It was itself a religious ordinance; a direct appointment of God; and was never regarded as designed to be preliminary to the observance of the Lord‘s Supper, but was always understood as designed to be superseded by that. Besides, I know not that there is the slightest evidence, as has been often supposed, that the observance of the Lord‘s Supper was preceded, in the times of the apostles, by such a festival as a love feast. There is no evidence in the passage before us; nor is any adduced from any other part of the New Testament. To my mind it seems altogether improbable that the disorders in Corinth would assume this form - that they would first observe a common feast, and then the Lord‘s Supper in the regular manner. The statement before us leads to the belief that all was irregular and improper; that they had entirely mistaken the nature of the ordinance, and had converted it into an occasion of ordinary festivity, and even intemperance; that they had come to regard it as a feast in honor of the Saviour on some such principles as they observed feasts in honor of idols, and that they observed it in some such manner; and that all that was supposed to make it unlike those festivals was, that it was in honor of Jesus rather than an idol, and was to be observed with some reference to his authority and name.

Everyone taketh before other his own supper - That is, each one is regardless of the needs of the others; instead of making even a meal in common, and when all could partake together, each one ate by himself, and ate that which he had himself brought. They had not only erred, therefore, by misunderstanding altogether the nature of the Lord‘s supper, and by

supposing that it was a common festival like those which they had been accustomed to celebrate; but they had also entirely departed from the idea that it was a festival to be partaken of in common, and at a common table. It had become a scene where every man ate by himself; and where the very idea that there was anything like a "common" celebration, or a celebration "together," was abandoned. There is allusion here, doubtless, to what was a custom among the Greeks, that when a festival was celebrated, or a feast made, it was common for each person to provide, and carry a part of the things necessary for the entertainment. These were usually placed in common, and were partaken of alike by all the company. Thus, Xenophon (Mem. lib. 3:cap. xiv.) says of Socrates, that he was much offended with the Athenians for their conduct at their common suppers, where some prepared for themselves in a delicate and sumptuous manner, while others were poorly provided for. Socrates endeavored, he adds, to shame them out of this indecent custom by offering his provisions to all the company.

And one is hungry - Is deprived of food. It is all monopolized by others.

And another is drunken - The word used here (μεθύω methuō) means properly to become inebriated, or intoxicated; and there is no reason for understanding it here in any other sense. There can be no doubt that the apostle meant to say, that they ate and drank to excess; and that their professed celebration of the Lord‘s Supper became a mere revel. It may seem remarkable that such scenes should ever have occurred in a Christian church, or that there could have been such an entire perversion of the nature and design of the Lord‘s Supper. But we are to remember the following things:

(1) These persons had recently been pagans, and were grossly ignorant of the nature of true religion when the gospel was first preached among them.

(2) they had been accustomed to such revels in honor of idols under their former modes of worship, and it is the less surprising that they transferred their views to Christianity.

(3) when they had once so far misunderstood the nature of Christianity as to suppose the Lord‘s Supper to be like the feasts which they had formerly celebrated, all the rest followed as a matter of course. The festival

would be observed in the same manner as the festivals in honor of idolaters; and similar scenes of gluttony and intemperance would naturally follow.

(4) we are to bear in mind, also, that they do not seem to have been favored with pious, wise, and prudent teachers.

There were false teachers; and there were those who prided themselves on their wisdom, and who were self-confident, and who doubtless endeavored to model the Christian institutions according to their own views; and they thus brought them, as far as they could, to a conformity with pagan customs and idolatrous rites, We may remark here:

(1) We are not to expect perfection at once among a people recently converted from paganism.

(2) we see how prone people are to abuse even the most holy rites of religion, and hence, how corrupt is human nature.

(3) we see that even Christians, recently converted, need constant guidance and superintendence; and that if left to themselves they soon, like others, fall into gross and scandalous offences.

Verse 22

What! - This whole verse is designed to convey the language of severe rebuke for their having so grossly perverted the design of the Lord‘s Supper.

Have ye not houses … - Do you not know that the church of God is not designed to be a place of feasting and revelry; nor even a place where to partake of your ordinary meals? Can it be, that you will come to the places of public worship, and make them the scenes of feasting and riot? Even on the supposition that there had been no disorder; no revelry; no intemperance; yet on every account it was grossly irregular and disorderly to make the place of public worship a place for a festival entertainment.

Or despise ye the church of God - The phrase “church of God” Grotius understands of the place. But the word church (ἐκκλησία ekklēsia) is believed not to be used in that sense in the New Testament; and it is not necessary to suppose it here. The sense is, that their conduct was such as if

they had held in contempt the whole church of God, in all places, with all their views of the sacredness and purity of the Lord‘s supper.

And shame them that have not - Margin, “Are poor.” Something must here be understood in order to make out the sense. Probably it meant something like “possessions, property, conveniences, accomodations.” The connection would make it most natural to understand “houses to eat and drink in;” and the sense then would be, “Do you thus expose to public shame those who have no accommodations at home; who are destitute and poor? You thus reflect publicly upon their poverty and want, while you bring your own provisions and fare sumptuously, and while those who are thus unable to provide for themselves are thus seen to be poor and needy.” It is hard enough, the idea is, to be poor, and to be destitute of a home. But it greatly aggravates the matter to be “publicly treated” in that manner; to be exposed publicly to the contempt which such a situation implies. Their treatment of the poor in this manner would be a public exposing them to shame; and the apostle regarded this as particularly dishonorable, and especially in a Christian church, where all were professedly on an equality.

What shall I say to you? … - How shall I sufficiently express my surprise at this, and my disapprobation at this course? It cannot be possible that this is right. It is not possible to conceal surprise and amazement that this custom exists, and is tolerated in a Christian church.

Verse 23

For … - In order most effectually to check the evils which existed, and to bring them to a proper mode of observing the Lord‘s Supper, the apostle proceeds to state distinctly and particularly its design. They had mistaken its nature. They supposed it might be a common festival. They had made it the occasion of great disorder. He therefore adverts to the solemn circumstances in which it was instituted; the particular object which it had in view - the commemoration of the death of the Redeemer, and the purpose which it was designed to subserve, which was not that of a festival, but to keep before the church and the world a constant remembrance of the Lord Jesus until he should again return, 1 Corinthians 11:26. By this means the apostle evidently hoped to recall them from their irregularities, and to bring them to a just mode of celebrating this holy ordinance. He did not, therefore, denounce them even for their irregularity and gross disorder; he did not use harsh, violent, vituperative language, but he expected to reform the evil by a

mild and tender statement of the truth, and by an appeal to their consciences as the followers of the Lord Jesus.

I have received of the Lord - This cannot refer to tradition, or mean that it had been communicated to him through the medium of the other apostles; but the whole spirit and scope of the passage seems to mean that he had derived the knowledge of the institution of the Lord‘s supper “directly” from the Lord himself. This might have been when on the road to Damascus, though that does not seem probable, or it may have been among the numerous revelations which at various times had been made to him; compare 2 Corinthians 12:7. The reason why he here says that he had received it directly from the Lord is, doubtless, that he might show them that it was of divine authority. “The institution to which I refer is what I myself received an account of “from personal and direct communication with the Lord Jesus himself, who appointed it.” It is not, therefore, of human authority. It is not of my devising, but is of divine warrant, and is holy in its nature, and is to be observed in the exact manner prescribed by the Lord himself.”

That which also I delivered … - Paul founded the church at Corinth; and of course he first instituted the observance of the Lord‘s Supper there.

The same night in which he was betrayed - By Judas; see Matthew 26:23-25, Matthew 26:48-50. Paul seems to have mentioned the fact that it was on the very night on which he was betrayed, in order to throw around it the idea of greater solemnity. He wished evidently to bring before their minds the deeply affecting circumstances of his death; and thus to show them the utter impropriety of their celebrating the ordinance with riot and disorder, The idea is, that in order to celebrate it in a proper manner, it was needful “to throw themselves as much as possible into the very circumstances in which it was instituted;” and one of these circumstances most suited to affect the mind deeply was the fact that he was betrayed by a professed friend and follower. It is also a circumstance the memory of which is eminently suited to prepare the mind for a proper celebration of the ordinance now.

Took bread - Evidently the bread which was used at the celebration of the paschal supper. He took the bread which happened to be before him - such as was commonly used. It was not a “wafer” such as the papists now use; but was the ordinary bread which was eaten on such occasions; see the note on Matthew 26:26.

Verse 24

And when he had given thanks - See the note on Matthew 26:26. Matthew reads it, "and blessed it." The words used here are, however, substantially the same as there; and this fact shows that since this was communicated to Paul "directly" by the Saviour, and in a manner distinct from that by which Matthew learned the mode of the institution, the Saviour designed that the exact form of the words should be used in its observance, and should thus be constantly borne in mind by his people.

Take eat … - See the note on Matthew 26:26.

Verse 25

After the same manner - In like manner; likewise. With the same circumstances, and ceremonies, and designs. The purpose was the same.

When he had supped - That is, all this occurred after the observance of the usual paschal supper. It could not, therefore, be a part of it, nor could it have been designed to be a festival or feast merely. The apostle introduces this evidently in order to show them that it could not be, as they seemed to have supposed, an occasion of feasting. It was after the supper, and was therefore to be observed in a distinct manner.

Saying, This cup … - See the note at Matthew 26:27-28.

Is the New Testament - The new covenant which God is about to establish with people. The word "testament" with us properly denotes a "will" - an instrument by which a man disposes of his property after his death. This is also the proper classic meaning of the Greek word used here, διαθήκη (diathēkē). But this is evidently not the sense in which the word is designed to be used in the New Testament. The idea of a "will" or "testament," strictly so called, is not that which the sacred writers intend to convey by the word. The idea is evidently that of a compact, agreement, covenant, to which there is so frequent reference in the Old Testament, and which is expressed by the word ברית berîyth(*Berith*), a compact, a covenant, Of that word the proper translation in Greek would have been συνθηκη sunthēkēa covenant, agreement. But it is remarkable that that word never is used by the Septuagint to denote the covenant made between God and man.

That translation uniformly employs for this purpose the word διαθήκη diathēkēa will, or a testament, as a translation of the Hebrew word, where there is a reference to the covenant which God is represented as making with people. The word συνθηκη sunthēkēis used by them but three times

Isaiah 28:15; Isaiah 30:1; Daniel 11:6, and in neither instance with any reference to the covenant which God is represented as making with man. The word διαθήκη diathēkēas the translation of בְּרִית berîyth(*Berith*), occurs more than two hundred times. (See Trommius‘ Concord.) Now this must have evidently been of design. What the reason was which induced them to adopt this can only be conjectured. It may have been that as the translation was to be seen by the Gentiles as well as by the Jews (if it were not expressly made, as has been affirmed by Josephus and others, for the use of Ptolemy), they were unwilling to represent the eternal and infinite Yahweh as entering into a "compact, an agreement" with his creature man. They, therefore, adopted a word which would represent him as expressing "his will" to them in a book of revelation. The version by the Septuagint was evidently in use by the apostles, and by the Jews everywhere. The writers of the New Testament, therefore, adopted the word as they found it; and spoke of the new dispensation as a new "testament" which God made with man. The meaning is, that this was the new compact or covenant which God was to make with man in contradistinction from that made through Moses.

In my blood - Through my blood; that is, this new compact is to be sealed with my blood, in illusion to the ancient custom of sealing an agreement by a sacrifice; see the note at Matthew 26:28.

This do ye - Partake of this bread and wine; that is, celebrate this ordinance.

As oft as ye drink it - Not prescribing any time; and not even specifying the frequency with which it was to be done; but leaving it to themselves to determine how often they would partake of it. The time of the Passover had been fixed by positive statute; the more mild and gentle system of Christianity left it to the followers of the Redeemer themselves to determine how often they would celebrate his death. It was commanded them to do it; it was presumed that their love to him would be so strong as to secure a frequent observance; it was permitted to them, as in prayer, to celebrate it on any occasion of affliction, trial, or deep interest when they would feel their need of it, and when they would suppose that its observance would be for the edification of the Church.

In remembrance of me - This expresses the whole design of the ordinance. It is a simple memorial, or remembrancer; designed to recall in a striking and impressive manner the memory of the Redeemer. It does this by a tender appeal to the senses - by the exhibition of the broken bread, and

by the wine. The Saviour knew how prone people would be to forget him, and he, therefore, appointed this ordinance as a means by which his memory should be kept up in the world. The ordinance is rightly observed when it recalls the memory of the Saviour; and when its observance is the means of producing a deep, and lively, and vivid impression on the mind, of his death for sin. This expression, at the institution of the supper, is used by Luke Luke 22:19; though it does not occur in Matthew, Mark, or John.

Verse 26

For as often - Whenever you do this.

Ye eat this bread - This is a direct and positive refutation of the doctrine of the papists that the bread is changed into the real body of the Lord Jesus. Here it is expressly called "bread" - bread still - bread after the consecration. Before the Saviour instituted the ordinance he took "bread" - it was bread then: it was "bread" which he "blessed" and "broke;" and it was bread when it was given to them; and it was bread when Paul says here that they ate. How then can it be pretended that it is anything else but bread? And what an amazing and astonishing absurdity it is to believe that that bread is changed into the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ (transubstantiation or consubstantiation)!

Ye do show the Lord's death - You set forth, or exhibit in an impressive manner, the fact that he was put to death; you exhibit the emblems of his broken body and shed blood, and your belief of the fact that he died. This shows that the ordinance was to be so far public as to be a proper showing forth of their belief in the death of the Saviour. It should be public. It is one mode of professing attachment to the Redeemer; and its public observance often has a most impressive effect on those who witness its observance.

Till he come - Until he returns to judge the world. This demonstrates:

(1) That it was the steady belief of the primitive church that the Lord Jesus would return to judge the world; and,

(2) That it was designed that this ordinance should be perpetuated, and observed to the end of time. In every generation, therefore, and in every place where there are Christians, it is to be observed, until the Son of God shall return; and the necessity of its observance shall cease only when the whole body of the redeemed shall be permitted to see their Lord, and there

shall be no need of those emblems to remind them of him, for all shall see him as he is.

Verse 27

Wherefore - (ὥστε hōste). So that, or it follows from what has been said. If this be the origin and intention of the Lord‘s Supper, then it follows that whoever partakes of it in an improper manner is guilty of his body and blood. The design of Paul is to correct their improper mode of observing this ordinance; and having showed them the true nature and design of the institution, he now states the consequences of partaking of it in an improper manner.

Shall eat this bread - See 1 Corinthians 11:26. Paul still calls it bread, and shows thus that he was a stranger to the doctrine that the bread was changed into the very body of the Lord Jesus. If the papal doctrine of transubstantiation had been true, Paul could not have called it bread. The Romanists do not believe that it is bread, nor would they call it such; and this shows how needful it is for them to keep the Scriptures from the people, and how impossible to express their dogmas in the language of the Bible. Let Christians adhere to the simple language of the Bible, and there is no danger of their falling into the errors of the papists.

Unworthily - Perhaps there is no expression in the Bible that has given more trouble to weak and feeble Christians than this. It is certain that there is no one that has operated to deter so many from the communion; or that is so often made use of as an excuse for not making a profession of religion. The excuse is, “I am unworthy to partake of this holy ordinance. I shall only expose myself to condemnation. I must therefore wait until I become more worthy, and better prepared to celebrate it.” It is important, therefore, that there should he a correct understanding of this passage. Most persons interpret it as if it were “unworthy,” and not “unworthily,” and seem to suppose that it refers to their personal qualifications, to their “unfitness” to partake of it, rather than to the manner in which it is done. It is to be remembered, therefore. that the word used here is an “adverb,” and not an “adjective,” and has reference to the manner of observing the ordinance, and not to their personal qualifications or fitness. It is true that in ourselves we are all “unworthy” of an approach to the table of the Lord; “unworthy” to be regarded as his followers; “unworthy” of a title to everlasting life: but it does not follow that we may not partake of this ordinance in a worthy,

that is, a proper manner, with a deep sense of our sinfulness, our need of a Saviour, and with some just views of the Lord Jesus as our Redeemer. Whatever may be our consciousness of personal unworthiness and unfitness - and that consciousness cannot be too deep - yet we may have such love to Christ, and such a desire to be saved by him, and such a sense of his worthiness, as to make it proper for us to approach and partake of this ordinance. The term "unworthily" (ἀναξίως anaxiōs) means properly "in an unworthy or improper" manner "in a manner unsuitable to the purposes for which it was designed or instituted;" and may include the following things, namely:

(1) Such an irregular and indecent observance as existed in the church of Corinth, where even gluttony and intemperance prevailed under the professed design of celebrating the Lord's Supper.

(2) an observance of the ordinance where there should be no distinction between it and common meals (Note on 1 Corinthians 11:29); where they did not regard it as designed to show forth the death of the Lord Jesus. It is evident that where such views prevailed, there could be no proper qualification for this observance; and it is equally clear that such ignorance can hardly be supposed to prevail now in those lands which are illuminated by Christian truth.

(3) when it is done for the sake of mockery, and when the purpose is to deride religion, and to show a marked contempt for the ordinances of the gospel. It is a remarkable fact that many infidels have been so full of malignity and bitterness against the Christian religion as to observe a mock celebration of the Lord's Supper. There is no profounder depth of depravity than this; there is nothing that can more conclusively or painfully show the hostility of man to the gospel of God. It is a remarkable fact, also, that not a few such persons have died a most miserable death. Under the horrors of an accusing conscience, and the anticipated destiny of final damnation, they have left the world as frightful monuments of the justice of God. It is also a fact that not a few infidels who have been engaged in such unholy celebrations have been converted to that very gospel which they were thus turning into ridicule and scorn. Their consciences have been alarmed; they have shuddered at the remembrance of the crime; they have been overwhelmed with the consciousness of guilt, and have found no peace

until they have found it in that blood whose shedding they were thus profanely celebrating.

Shall be guilty - (ἔνοχοι enochoi). This word properly means obnoxious to punishment for personal crime. It always includes the idea of ill-desert, and of exposure to punishment on account of crime or ill-desert; Matthew 5:22; compare Exodus 22:3; Exodus 34:7; Numbers 14:18; Numbers 35:27; Leviticus 20:9; see also Deuteronomy 19:10; Matthew 26:66. "Of the body and blood of the Lord." Commentators have not been agreed in regard to the meaning of this expression. Doddridge renders it, "Shall be counted guilty of profaning and affronting in some measure that which is intended to represent the body and blood of the Lord." Grotius renders it, "He does the same thing as if he should slay Christ." Bretschneider (Lexicon) renders it, "Injuring by crime the body of the Lord." Locke renders it, "Shall be guilty of a misuse of the body and blood of the Lord;" and supposes it means that they should be liable to the punishment due to one who made a wrong use of the sacramental body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Rosenmuller renders it, "He shall be punished for such a deed as if he had affected Christ himself with ignominy."

Bloomfield renders it, "He shall be guilty respecting the body, that is, guilty of profaning the symbols of the body and blood of Christ, and consequently shall be amenable to the punishment due to such an abuse of the highest means of grace." But it seems to me that this does not convey the fulness of the meaning of the passage. The obvious and literal sense is evidently that they should by such conduct be involved in the sin of putting the Lord Jesus to death. The phrase "the body and blood of the Lord," in this connection, obviously, I think, refers to his death, to the fact that his body was broken, and his blood shed, of which the bread and wine were symbols; and to be guilty of that, means to be guilty of putting him to death; that is, to be involved in the crime, or to do a thing which should involve the same criminality as that. To see this, we are to remember:

(1) That the bread and wine were symbols or emblems of that event, and designed to set it forth.

(2) to treat with irreverence and profaneness the bread which was an emblem of his broken body, was to treat with irreverence and profaneness

the body itself; and in like manner the wine, the symbol of his blood.

(3) those, therefore who treated the symbols of his body and blood with profaneness and contempt were "united in spirit" with those who put him to death. They evinced the same feelings toward the Lord Jesus that his murderers did. They treated him with scorn, profaneness, and derision; and showed that with the same spirit they would have joined in the act of murdering the Son of God. They would evince their hostility to the Saviour himself as far as they could do, by showing contempt for the memorials of his body and blood. The apostle does by no means, however, as I understand him, mean to say that any of the Corinthians had been thus guilty of his body and blood. He does not charge on them this murderous intention. But he states what is the fair and obvious construction which is to be put on a wanton disrespect for the Lord's supper. And the design is to guard them, and all others, against this sin. There can be no doubt that those who celebrate his death in mockery and derision are held guilty of his body and blood. They show that they have the spirit of his murderers; they evince it in the most awful way possible; and they who would thus join in a profane celebration of the Lord's Supper would have joined in the cry, "Crucify him, crucify him," For it is a most fearful and solemn act to trifle with sacred things; and especially to hold up to derision and scorn, the bitter sorrows by which the Son of God accomplished the redemption of the world.

Verse 28

But let a man examine himself - Let him search and see if he have the proper qualifications - if he has knowledge to discern the Lord's body (note, 1 Corinthians 11:29); if he has true repentance for his sins; true faith in the Lord Jesus; and a sincere desire to live the life of a Christian, and to be like the Son of God, and be saved by the merits of his blood. Let him examine himself, and see whether he have the right feelings of a communicant, and can approach the table in a proper manner. In regard to this we may observe:

(1) That this examination should include the great question about his personal piety, and about his particular and special fitness for this observance. It should go back into the great inquiry whether he has ever been born again; and it should also have special reference to his immediate

and direct preparation for the ordinance. He should not only be able to say in general that he is a Christian, but he should be able to say that he has then a particular preparation for it. He should be in a suitable frame of mind for it. He should have personal evidence that he is a penitent; that he has true faith in the Lord Jesus; that he is depending on him, and is desirous of being saved by him.

(2) this examination should be minute and particular. It should extend to the words, the thoughts, the feelings, the conduct. We should inquire whether in our family and in our business; whether among Christians, and with the world, we have lived the life of a Christian. We should examine our private thoughts; our habits of secret prayer and of searching the Scriptures. Our examination should be directed to the inquiry whether we are gaining the victory over our easily besetting sins and becoming more and more conformed to the Saviour. It should, in short, extend to all our Christian character; and everything which goes to make up or to mar that character should be the subject of faithful and honest examination.

(3) it should be done because:

(a)It is well to pause occasionally in life, and take an account of our standing in the sight of God. People make advances in business and in property only when they often examnine their accounts, and know just how they stand,

(b)Because the observance of the Lord‘s Supper is a solemn act, and there will be fearful results if it is celebrated in an improper manner.

(c)Because self-examination supposes seriousness and calmness, and prevents precipitation and rashness - states of mind entirely unfavorable to a proper observance of the Lord‘s Supper.

(d)Because by self-examination one may search out and remove those things that are offensive to God, and the sins which so easily beset us may be known and abandoned.

(e)Because the approach to the table of the Lord is a solemn approach to the Lord himself; is a solemn profession of attachment to him; is an act of consecration to his service in the presence of angels and of people; and this

should be done in a calm, deliberate and sincere manner; such a manner as may be the result of a prayerful and honest self-examination.

And so let him eat … - And as the result of such examination, or after such an examination; that is, let the act of eating that bread always be preceded by a solemn self-examination. Bloomfield renders it, "and then, only then." The sense is plain, that the communion should always be preceded by an honest and prayerful self-examination.

Verse 29

For he that eateth … - In order to excite them to a deeper reverence for this ordinance, and to a more solemn mode of observing it, Paul in this verse states another consequence of partaking of it in an improper and irreverent manner; compare 1 Corinthians 11:27.

Eateth and drinketh damnation - This is evidently a figurative expression, meaning that by eating and drinking improperly he incurs condemnation; which is here expressed by eating and drinking condemnation itself. The word "damnation" we now apply, in common language, exclusively to the future and final punishment of the wicked in hell. But the word used here does not of necessity refer to that; and according to our use of the word now, there is a harshness and severity in our translation which the Greek does not require, and which probably was not conveyed by the word "damnation" when the translation was made. In the margin it is correctly rendered "judgment." The word here used (κρῖμα krima) properly denotes judgment; the result of judging, that is, a sentence; then a sentence by which one is condemned, or condemnation; and then punishment; see Romans 3:8; Romans 13:2. It has evidently the sense of judgment here; and means, that by their improper manner of observing this ordinance, they would expose themselves to the divine displeasure, and to punishment. And it refers, I think, to the punishment or judgment which the apostle immediately specifies, 1 Corinthians 11:30, 1 Corinthians 11:32. It means a manifestation of the divine displeasure which might be evinced in this life; and which, in the case of the Corinthians, was manifested in the judgments which God had brought upon them. It cannot be denied, however, that a profane and intentionally irreverent manner of observing the Lord's Supper will meet with the divine displeasure in the eternal world, and aggravate the doom of those who are guilty of it. But it is clear that this was not the punishment which the apostle had here in his eye. This is apparent:

(1)Because the Corinthians did eat unworthily, and yet the judgments inflicted on them were only temporal, that is, weakness, sickness, and temporal death 1 Corinthians 11:30; and,

(2)Because the reason assigned for these judgments is, that they might not be condemned with the wicked; that is, as the wicked are in hell, 1 Corinthians 11:32. Whitby. Compare 1 Peter 4:17.

Not discerning the Lord‘s body - Not discriminating" μὴ διακρίνων mē diakrinōnbetween the bread which is used on this occasion and common and ordinary food. Not making the proper difference and distinction between this and common meals. It is evident that this was the leading offence of the Corinthians (see the notes at 1 Corinthians 11:20-21), and this is the proper idea which the original conveys. It does not refer to any intellectual or physical power to perceive that that bread represented the body of the Lord; not to any spiritual perception which it is often supposed that piety has to distinguish this; not to any view which faith may be supposed to have to discern the body of the Lord through the elements; but to the fact that they did not "distinguish" or "discriminate" between this and common meals. They did not regard it in a proper manner, but supposed it to be simply an historical commemoration of an event, such as they were in the habit of observing in honor of an idol or a hero by a public celebration. They, therefore, are able to "discern the Lord‘s body" in the sense intended here, who with a serious mind, regard it as an institution appointed by the Lord Jesus to commemorate his death; and who "distinguish" thus between this and ordinary meals and all festivals and feasts designed to commemorate other events. In other words, who deem it to be designed to show forth the fact that his body was broken for sin, and who desire to observe it as such. It is evident that all true Christians may have ability of this kind, and need not incur condemnation by any error in regard to this. The humblest and obscurest follower of the Saviour, with the feeblest faith and love, may regard it as designed to set forth the death of his Redeemer; and observing it thus, will meet with the divine approbation.

Verse 30

For this cause - On account of the improper manner of celebrating the Lord‘s Supper; see 1 Corinthians 11:21.

Many are weak - (ἀσθενεῖς astheneis). Evidently referring to prevailing bodily sickness and disease. This is the natural and obvious interpretation of this passage. The sense clearly is, that God had sent among

them bodily distempers as an expression of the divine displeasure and judgment for their improper mode of celebrating the Lord‘s Supper. That it was not uncommon in those times for God in an extraordinary manner to punish people with calamity, sickness, or death for their sins is evident from the New Testament; see the 1 Corinthians 5:5 note; Acts 5:1-10; Acts 13:11 notes; 1 Timothy 1:20 note; and perhaps 1 John 5:16 note; and James 5:14-15 notes. It may possibly have been the case that the intemperance and gluttony which prevailed on these occasions was the direct cause of no small part of the bodily disease which prevailed, and which in some cases terminated in death.

And many sleep - Have died. The death of Christians in the Scriptures is commonly represented under the image of “sleep;” Dan, 1 Corinthians 12:2; John 11:11-12; 1 Corinthians 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:10. Perhaps it may be implied by the use of this mild term here, instead of the harsher word “death,” that these were true Christians. This sentiment is in accordance with all that Paul states in regard to the church at Corinth. Notwithstanding all their irregularities, he does not deny that they were sincere Christians, and all his appeals and reasonings proceed on that supposition, though there was among them much ignorance and irregularity. God often visits his own people with trial; and though they are his children, yet this does not exempt them from affliction and discipline on account of their imperfections, errors, and sins. The “practical lesson” taught by this is, that Christians should serve God with purity; that they should avoid sin in every form; and that the commission of sin will expose them, as well as others, to the divine displeasure. The reason why this judgment was inflicted on the Corinthians was, that there might be a suitable impression made of the holy nature of that ordinance, and that Christians might be led to observe it in a proper manner. If it be asked whether God ever visits his people now with his displeasure for their improper manner of observing this ordinance, we may reply:

(1)That we have no reason to suppose that he inflicts “bodily” diseases and corporeal punishments on account of it. But,

(2)There is no reason to doubt that the improper observance of the Lord‘s Supper, like the improper observance of any other religious duty, will be followed with the expression of God‘s displeasure, and with a spiritual blightling on the soul. This may be evinced in the following modes:

(a)In hardening the heart by an improper familiarity with the most sacred and solemn ordinances of religion.

(b)Increased coldness and deadness in the service of God. If the ordinances of the gospel are not the means of making us better, they are the means of making us worse.

(c)The loss of the favor of God, or of those pure, and spiritual, and elevated joys which we might have obtained by a proper observance of the ordinance.

There is no reason to doubt that God may make it the occasion of manifesting his displeasure. It may be followed by a lack of spiritual comfort and peace; by a loss of communion with God; and by a withholding of those comforts from the soul which might have been enjoyed, and which are imparted to those who observe it in a proper manner. The general principle is, that an improper discharge of any duty will expose us to his displeasure, and to the certain loss of all those favors which might have resulted from a proper discharge of the duty, and to the tokens of the divine displeasure. And this is as true of prayer, or of any other religious duty, as of an improper observance of the Lord‘s Supper.

Verse 31

For if we would judge ourselves - If we would examine ourselves, 1 Corinthians 11:28; if we would exercise a strict scrutiny over our hearts and feelings, and conduct, and come to the Lord‘s Table with a proper spirit, we should escape the condemnation to which they are exposed who observe it in an improper manner. If we would exercise proper “severity” and “honesty” in determining our own character and fitness for the ordinance, we should not expose ourselves to the divine displeasure.

We should not be judged - We should not be exposed to the expression of God‘s disapprobation. He refers here to the punishment which had come upon the Corinthians for their improper manner of observing the ordinance; and he says that if they had properly examined themselves, and had understood the nature of the ordinance, that they would have escaped the judgments that had come upon them. This is as true now as it was then. If we wish to escape the divine displeasure; if we wish the communion to be followed with joy, and peace, and growth in grace, and not with blighting and spiritual barrenness, we should exercise a severe judgment on our

character, and feelings, and motives; and should come to it with a sincere desire to honor Christ, and to advance in the divine life.

Verse 32

But when we are judged - This is added, evidently, to console those who had been afflicted on account of their improper manner of observing the Lord‘s Supper. The sense is, that though they were thus afflicted by God; though he had manifested his displeasure at the manner in which they had observed the ordinance, yet the divine judgment in the case was not inexorable. They were not regarded by God as wholly strangers to piety, and would not be lost forever. They should not be alarmed, therefore, as if there was no mercy for them; but they should rather regard their calamities as the chastening of the Lord on his own children, and as designed for their salvation.

We are chastened of the Lord - It is “his” act; and it is not vengeance and wrath; but it is to be regarded as the chastisement of a father‘s hand, in order that we should not be condemned with the wicked. “We are under the discipline” (παιδευόμεθα paideuometha) of the Lord; we are dealt with as children, and are corrected as by the hand of a father; compare Hebrews 12:5-10, and 2 Corinthians 6:9. The design of God‘s correcting his children is, that they should be “reclaimed,” and not “destroyed.”

That we should not be condemned with the world - It is implied here:

(1)That the world - those who were not Christians, would be condemned;

(2)That Paul regarded the Corinthians, whom he addressed, and who had even been guilty of this improper manner of observing the Lord‘s Supper, and who had been punished for it as true Christians; and,

(3)That the purpose which God had in view in inflicting these judgments on them was, that they might be purified, and enlightened, and recovered from their errors, and saved. This is the design of God in the calamities and judgments which he brings on his own children - And so now, if he afflicts us, or leaves us to darkness, or follows the communion with the tokens of his displeasure, it is, that we may be recovered to a deeper sense of our need of him; to juster views of the ordinance; and to a more earnest wish to obtain his favor.

Verse 33

When ye come together to eat - Professedly to eat the Lord‘s Supper.

Tarry one for another - Do not be guilty of disorder, intemperance, and gluttony; see the note at 1 Corinthians 11:21. Doddridge understands this of the feast that he supposes to have preceded the Lord‘s Supper. But the more obvious interpretation is, to refer it to the Lord‘s Supper itself; and to enjoin perfect order, respect, and sobriety. The idea is, that the table was common for the rich and the poor; and that the rich should claim no priority or precedence over the poor.

Verse 34

And if any man hunger … - The Lord‘s Supper is not a common feast; it is not designed as a place where a man may gratify his appetite. It is designed as a simple “commemoration,” and not as a “feast.” This remark was designed to correct their views of the supper, and to show them that it was to be distinguished from the ordinary idea of a feast or festival.

That ye come not together unto condemnation - That the effect of your coming together for the observance of the Lord‘s Supper be not to produce condemnation; see the note at 1 Corinthians 11:29.

And the rest will I set in order … - Probably he refers here to other matters on which he had been consulted; or other things which he knew required to be adjusted. The other matters pertaining to the order and discipline of the church I will defer until I can come among you, and personally arrange them. It is evident from this, that Paul at this time purposed soon to go to Corinth; see 2 Corinthians 1:15-16. It was doubtless true that there might be many things which it was desirable to adjust in the church there, which could not be so well done by letter. The main things, therefore, which it was needful to correct immediately, he had discussed in this letter; the other matters he reserved to be arranged by himself when he should go among them. Paul was disappointed in his expectations of returning among them as soon as he had intended (see 2 Corinthians 1:17), and under this disappointment he forwarded to them another epistle. If all Christians would follow implicitly his directions here in regard to the Lord‘s Supper, it would be an ordinance full of comfort. May all so understand its nature, and so partake of it, that they shall meet the approbation of their Lord, and so that it may be the means of saving grace to their souls.

1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Introduction

This chapter commences a new subject, the discussion of which continues to the close of the 1 Corinthians 7:1), requested his counsel on this subject, and asked him to teach them what measure of honor should be given to those who had been thus endowed. This subject, as it was of importance not only for them, but for the church at large in all future times, he proceeds to discuss in this, and the two following chapters; and this discussion closes the second part of the Epistle; see the Introduction. The general scope of these chapters is this:

(1) He shows that all those endowments were conferred by the Holy Spirit, and were all for the use of the church; that the church was one, but that there was a necessity for diversified operations in that church; and that, therefore, no one should value himself on that gift above his brother, and no one should feel himself dishonored because he had not been thus favored. All filled important places in the church, just as the various members and parts of the human system were necessary for its symmetry, action and health; and all therefore, should be willing to occupy the place which God had assigned them, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 he recommends love, or charity, as of more value than all other spiritual gifts put together, and therefore recommends that that should be especially the object of their desire.

(3) in 1 Corinthians 12:1.

(2) he reminds them that they were formerly in a state of ignorance, sin, and idolatry, 1 Corinthians 12:2.

(3) he states one mark of being under the influence of the Spirit of God - that is, that it would lead them to acknowledge and honor Jesus Christ. If the Spirit by which they were influenced led them to this, it was proof that it was the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 12:3. If any "pretenders" to inspiration were in the habit of speaking disrespectfully of Jesus Christ, or of calling him "accursed," it proved that they were not under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

(4) there were "diversities" in the operations of the Spirit, but however various were these operations, they all proceeded from the same agent, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. All were not, therefore, to expect precisely the same influences or operations; nor were they to suppose that because there were various operations, that therefore they were not influenced by the Spirit of God.

(5) Paul states and illustrates the truth that the church is one, 1 Corinthians 12:12. The body has many members, and no members in the body are useless, but all perform important parts, however unimportant they may seem to be; and no one member can say that it has no need of the others. So it is in the church, 1 Corinthians 12:13-27.

(6) this beautiful allegory, drawn from the functions of the various parts of the human body, Paul applies now to the church, and shows 1 Corinthians 12:28-30 that the same thing should be expected in the church of Christ. It followed, therefore, that those who were not as highly favored as others should not regard themselves as useless, and decline their station in the church. It followed also, that those who were in inferior stations should not envy those who had been more highly favored; and that those who were in more elevated stations, and who had been more signally favored, should not look down on those beneath them with contempt. It followed also, that they should regard themselves as one body; and love and cherish each other with constant Christian affection.

(7) Paul tells them that it was not improper to desire the highest endowments, but says that he will propose an object of desire to be preferred to these gifts - and that is love, 1 Corinthians 12:31.

Verse 1

Now concerning - it is now time that I should speak of spiritual endowments. He had no doubt been consulted in regard to them, and probably various questions had been proposed, which he now proceeded to answer.

Spiritual gifts - The word "gifts" is not in the original. The Greek refers to "spiritual" things in general, or to anything that is of a spiritual nature. The whole discussion, however, shows that he refers to the various

endowments, gifts, or graces that had been bestowed in different degrees on the members of the church - including the distinctions in graces, and in degrees of office and rank, which had been made in the Christian church in general 1 Corinthians 10:1. I would not have you ignorant in regard to the nature of those endowments; the spirit with which they should be received; the rules to which they who are thus favored should be subjected; and the feelings and views which should be cherished in all the members of the church in regard to them. Nothing is of more importance in the church than the doctrine respecting the influences and endowments of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 2

Ye know … - This verse is regarded by many as a parenthesis. But it is not necessary to suppose that it is so, or that it does not cohere with that which follows. The design seems to be to remind them of their former miserable condition as idolaters, in order to make them more sensible of their advantages as Christians, and that they might be led more highly to appreciate their present condition. Paul often refers Christians to their former condition, to excite in them gratitude for the mercies that God has conferred on them in the gospel; see the note at 1 Corinthians 6:11, compare Romans 6:17; Ephesians 2:11-12; Titus 3:3.

That ye were Gentiles - Heathen; worshippers of idols. The idea is, that they were pagans; that they had no knowledge of the true God, but were sunk in miserable superstition and idolatry.

Carried away - Led along; that is, deluded by your passions, deluded by your priests, deluded by your vain and splendid rites of worship. The whole system made an appeal to the senses, and "bore along" its votaries as if by a foreign and irresistible impulse. The word which is used ἀπαγόμενοι apagomenoiconveys properly the idea of being carried into bondage, or being led to punishment, and refers here doubtless to the strong means which had been used by crafty politicians and priests in their former state to delude and deceive them.

Unto these dumb idols - These idols which could not speak - an attribute which is often given to them, to show the folly of worshipping them; Psalm 115:5; Psalm 135:15; Habakkuk 2:18-19. The ancient priests and politicians deluded the people with the notion that oracles were uttered by the idols whom they worshipped, and thus they maintained the belief in their divinity. The idea of Patti here seems to be:

(1) That their idols never could have uttered the oracles which were ascribed to them, and consequently that they had been deluded.

(2) that these idols could never have endowed them with such spiritual privileges as they now had, and consequently that their present state was far preferable to their former condition.

Even as ye were led - Were led by the priests in the temples of the idols. They were under strong delusions and the arts of cunning and unprincipled people. The idea is, that they had been under a strong infatuation, and were entirely at the control of their spiritual leaders - a description remarkably applicable now to all forms of imposture in the world, No system of paganism consults the freedom and independence of the mind of man; but it is everywhere characterized as a system of "power," and not of "thought;" and all its arrangements are made to secure that power without an intelligent assent of the understanding and the heart.

Verse 3

Wherefore I give you to understand - I make known to you. The force of this expression is, "I give you this rule to distinguish," or by which you may know what influences and operations are from God. The design of the passage is, to give them some simple general guide by which they could at once recognize the operations of the Spirit of God, and determine whether they who claimed to be under that operation were really so. That rule was, that all who were truly influenced by the Holy Spirit would be disposed to acknowledge and to know Jesus Christ; and where this disposition existed, it was of itself a clear demonstration that it was the operation of the Spirit of God. The same rule substantially is given by John 1 John 4:2, by which to test the nature of the spirit by which people profess to be influenced. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God," compare also the note to Matthew 16:17.

That no man - No one οἰδεὶς oideisIt may refer to a man, or to demons, or to those who pretended to be under inspiration of any kind. And it may refer to the Jews who may have pretended to be under the influence of God‘s Spirit. and who yet anathematized and cursed the name of Jesus. Or it may be intended simply as a general rule; meaning that "if anyone," whoever he might be, should blaspheme the name of Jesus, whatever were his pretensions, whether professing to be under the influence of the Holy

Spirit among the Jews, or to be inspired among the Gentiles, it was full proof that he was an impostor. The argument is, that the Holy Spirit in all instances would do honor to Jesus Christ, and would prompt all who were under his influence to love and reverence his name.

Speaking by the Spirit of God - Under the influence of inspiration.

Calleth - Says, or would say; that is, no such one would use the language of anathema in regard to him.

Accursed - Margin, "Anathema" (ἀνάθημα anathēma); see the Acts 23:14 note; Romans 9:3 note; compare 1 Corinthians 16:22; Galatians 1:8-9. The word is one of execration, or cursing; and means, that no one under the influence of the Holy Spirit could curse the name of Jesus, or denounce him as execrable and as an impostor. The effect of the influences of the Spirit would be in all instances to inspire reverence for his name and work. It is probable that the Jews were here principally intended, since there is a bitterness and severity in the language which accords with all their expressions of feeling toward Jesus of Nazareth. It is possible, also, and indeed probable, that the priests and priestesses of the pagan gods who pretended to be under the influence of inspiration might denounce the name of Jesus, because they would all be opposed to the purity of his religion.

And that no man can say … - That is, that it cannot occur, or even happen, that anyone will acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah who is not influenced by the Holy Spirit. The meaning is, not that no one has physical ability to say that Jesus is Lord unless aided by the Holy Spirit, since all people can say this; but that no one will be disposed heartily to say it; no one will acknowledge him as their Lord; it can never happen that anyone will confess him as the true Messiah who has not been brought to this state by the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Is the Lord - Is the Messiah; or shall acknowledge him as their Lord.

But by the Holy Ghost - Unless he is influenced by the Holy Spirit. This is a very important verse, not only in regard to the particular subject under consideration in the time of Paul, but also in its practical bearing at present. We may learn from it:

(1) That it is a proof that any man is under the influence of the Holy Spirit who is heartily disposed to honor the name and work of Jesus Christ.

(2) those forms and modes of religion; those religious opinions and practices, will be most in accordance with the designs of the Spirit of God,

which do most to honor the name and work of Jesus Christ.

(3) it is true that no man will ever cherish a proper regard for Jesus Christ, nor love his name and work, unless he is influenced by the Holy Spirit. No man loves the name and work of the Redeemer by following simply the inclinations of his own corrupt heart. In all instances of those who have been brought to a willingness to honor him, it has been by the agency of the Holy Spirit.

(4) if any man, in any way, is disposed to disparage the work of Christ, to speak lightly of his person or his name; or holds doctrines that infringe on the fulness of the truth respecting his divine nature, his purity, his atonement, it is proof that he is not under the influence of the Spirit of God. Just in proportion as he shall disparage that work or name, just in that proportion does he give evidence that he is not influenced by the Divine Spirit; but by proud reason, or by imagination, or by a heart that is not reconciled to God.

(5) all true religion is the production of the Holy Spirit. For religion consists essentially in a willingness to honor, and love, and serve the Lord Jesus Christ; and where that exists, it is produced by the Holy Spirit.

(6) the influence of the Holy Spirit should be cherished. To grieve away that Spirit is to drive all proper knowledge of the Redeemer from the soul; to do this is to leave the heart to coldness, and darkness, and barrenness, and spiritual death.

Verse 4

Now there are diversities of gifts - There are different endowments conferred on Christians. For the meaning of the word "gifts," see the note at Romans 1:11; compare Romans 5:15-16; Romans 6:23; Romans 11:29; Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 1:7; 1 Corinthians 7:7.

But the same Spirit - Produced by the same Spirit - the Holy Spirit. What those diversities of gifts are, the apostle enumerates in 1 Corinthians 12:8-11. The design for which he refers to these various endowments is evidently to show those whom he addressed, that since they are all produced by the same Holy Spirit, have all the same divine origin, and are

all intended to answer some important purpose and end in the Christian church, that, therefore, none are to be despised; nor is one man to regard himself as authorized to treat another with contempt. The Spirit has divided and conferred those gifts according to his sovereign will; and his arrangements should be regarded with submission, and the favors which he confers should be received with thankfulness. That the Holy Spirit - the third person of the adorable Trinity - is here intended by the word "Spirit," seems to be manifest on the face of the passage, and has been the received interpretation of the church until it was called in question by some recent German commentators, at the head of whom was Eichhorn. It is not the design of these notes to go into an examination of questions of criticism, such as an inquiry like this would involve. Nor is it necessary. Some of the arguments by which the common interpretation is defended are the following:

(1) It is the obvious interpretation. It is that which occurs to the great mass of readers, as the true and correct exposition.

(2) it accords with the usual meaning of the word Spirit. No other intelligible sense can be given to the word here. To say, with Eichhorn, that it means "nature," that there are the same natural endowments, though cultivated in various measures by art and education, makes manifest nonsense, and is contrary to the whole structure and scope of the passage.

(3) it accords with all the other statements in the New Testament, where the endowments here referred to "wisdom," "knowledge," "faith," "working of miracles," etc., are traced to the Holy Spirit, and are regarded as his gift.

(4) the harmony, the concinnity of the passage is destroyed by supposing that it refers to anything else than the Holy Spirit. In this verse the agency of the Spirit is recognized, and his operations on the mind referred to; in the next verse the agency of the Son of God (see the note on the verse) is referred to; and in the following verse, the agency of God - evidently the Father - is brought into view; and thus the entire passage 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 presents a connected view of the operations performed by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the work of redemption. To deny that this verse refers to the Holy Spirit is to break up the harmony of the whole passage, and to render it in no small degree unmeaning. But if this refers to the Holy

Spirit, then it is an unanswerable argument for his personality, and for his being on an equality with the Father and the Son.

Verse 5

Of administrations - Margin, "Ministries." The word properly denotes "ministries;" so that there are different ranks and grades in the ministries which Christ has appointed, to wit, those specified in 1 Corinthians 12:9-10, 1 Corinthians 12:28.

But the same Lord - This refers evidently to the Lord Jesus, by whom these various orders of ministers were appointed, and under whose control they are; see the note at Acts 1:24; compare Ephesians 4:5. The term "Lord," when it stands by itself in the New Testament, usually refers to the Lord Jesus, the name by which he was commonly known by the disciples; see John 20:25. The fact also that this stands between the mention of the work of the Spirit 1 Corinthians 12:4 and the work of God 1 Corinthians 12:6, and the fact that to the Lord Jesus appertained the appointment of these various grades of officers in the church (compare Matthew 10:1 ff, and Luke 10:1 ff), is further proof that this refers to him. The design of the verse is, to show that all these offices had their appointment from him; and that since all were his appointment, and all were necessary, no one should be proud of an elevated station; no one should be depressed, or feel himself degraded, because he had been designated to a more humble office.

Verse 6

Of operations - Of works; to wit, of miracles, such as God produces in the church, in the establishment and defense of his religion. There are different operations on the mind and heart; and different powers given to man, or different qualifications in building up and defending his cause. Or it may be, possibly, that Paul here refers to the works of God mainly for mere "illustration," and by the word "operations" means the works which God has performed in creation and providence. His works are various. They are not all alike, though they come from the same hand. The sun, the moon, the stars, the earth are different; the trees of the forest, the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the inhabitants of the deep are different; the flowers, and shrubs, and herbs are different from each other; yet. however much they may vary, they are formed by the same hand. are the productions of the same God, are to be regarded as proofs of the same wisdom and power. The

same thing should be expected in his church; and we should anticipate that the endowments of its members would be various.

But it is the same God - The same Father; all these operations are produced by the same God. They should not, therefore, be undervalued or despised; nor should anyone be unduly elated, or pride himself on what has been conferred by God alone.

All in all - All these operations are to be traced to him. His agency is everywhere. It is as really seen in the insect‘s wing as in the limbs of the mammoth; as really in the humblest violet as in the loftiest oak of the forest. All, therefore, should regard themselves as under his direction, and should submit to his arrangements. If people regard their endowments as the gift of God, they will be thankful for them, and they will not be disposed to despise or undervalue others who have been placed in a more humble condition and rank in the church.

Verse 7

But the manifestation of the Spirit - The word “manifestation” (φανέρωτις fanerōtis) means properly that which makes manifest, conspicuous, or plain; that which illustrates, or makes any thing seen or known. Thus, conduct manifests the state of the heart; and the actions are a manifestation, or “showing forth” of the real feelings. The idea here is, that there is given to those referred to, such gifts. endowments, or graces as shall “manifest” the work and nature of the Spirit‘s operations on the mind; such endowments as the Spirit makes himself known by to people. All that he produces in the mind is a manifestation of his character and work, in the same way as the works of God in the visible creation are a manifestation of his perfections.

Is given to every man - To every man whose case is here under consideration. The idea is not at all that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to all people indiscriminately, to pagans, and infidels, and scoffers as well as to Christians. The apostle is discoursing only of those who are Christians, and his declaration should be confined to them alone. Whatever may be true of other people, this statement should be confined wholly to Christians, and means simply that the Spirit of God gives to each Christian such graces and endowments as he pleases; that he distributes his gifts to all, not equally, but in a manner which he shall choose; and that the design of this is, that all Christians should use his endowments for the common good. This passage, therefore, is very improperly adduced to prove that the

gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit are conferred alike on all people, and that pagans, and blasphemers, and sinners in general are under his enlightening influences. It has no reference to any such doctrine, but should be interpreted as referring solely to Christians, and the various endowments which are conferred on them.

To profit withal - (πρὸς τὸ συμθέρον pros tosumtheron). Unto profit; that is, for utility, or use; or to be an advantage to the church; for the common good of all. This does not mean that each one must cultivate and improve his graces and gifts, however true that may be, but that they are to be used for the common good of the church; they are bestowed "for utility," or "profit;" they are conferred in such measures and in such a manner as are best adapted to be useful, and to do good. They are bestowed not on all equally, but in such a manner as shall best subserve the interests of piety and the church, and as shall tend harmoniously to carry on the great interests of religion, and further the welfare of the whole Christian body. The doctrine of this verse is, therefore:

(1)That the Holy Spirit bestows such endowments on all Christians as he pleases; and,

(2)That the design is, in the best manner to promote the common welfare - the peace and edification of the whole church.

It follows from this:

(1)That no Christian should be unduly elated, as if he were more worthy than others, since his endowments are the simple gift of God;

(2)That no Christian should be depressed and disheartened, as if he occupied an inferior or unimportant station, since his place has also been assigned him by God;

(3)That all should be contented, and satisfied with their allotments in the church, and should strive only to make the best use of their talents and endowments; and,

(4)That all should employ their time and talents for the common utility; for the furtherance of the common welfare, and the advancement of the kingdom of Christ on earth.

Verse 8

For to one is given - In order to show what endowments he refers to, the apostle here particularizes the various gifts which the Holy Spirit imparts in the church.

By the Spirit - By the Holy Spirit; by his agency on the mind and heart.

The word of wisdom - One he has endowed with wisdom, or has made distinguished for wise, and prudent, and comprehensive views of the scheme of redemption, and with a faculty of clearly explaining it to the apprehension of people. It is not certain that the apostle meant to say that this was the most important or most elevated endowment because he places it first in order. His design does not seem to be to observe the order of importance and value, but to state, as it occurred to him, the fact that these various endowments had been conferred on different people in the church. The sense is, that one man would be prominent and distinguished as a wise man - a prudent counsellor, instructor, and adviser.

To another the word of knowledge - Another would be distinguished for knowledge. He would be learned; would have a clear view of the plan of salvation, and of the doctrines and duties of religion. The same variety is observed in the ministry at all times. One man is eminent as a wise man; another as a man of intelligence and knowledge; and both may be equally useful in their place in the church.

By the same Spirit - All is to be traced to the same Spirit; all, therefore, may be really useful and necessary; and the one should not pride himself in his endowments above the other.

Verse 9

To another faith - Another shall he distinguished for simple confidence in God; and his endowment is also given by the same Spirit. Many of the most useful people in the church are distinguished mainly for their simple confidence in the promises of God; and often accomplish more by prayer and by their faith in God than others do who are distinguished for their wisdom and learning. Humble piety and reliance in the divine promises, and that measure of ardor, fearlessness, and zeal which result from such confidence; that belief that all obstacles must be and will be overcome that oppose the gospel; and that God will secure the advancement of his cause, will often do infinitely more in the promotion of his kingdom than the most splendid endowments of learning and talent. Indeed, if a man were disposed to do good on the widest scale possible, to do the utmost that he possibly could in saving people, he would best accomplish it by seeking simple

“faith” in God‘s aid and promises, and then under the influence of this, engage with ardor in doing what he could. Faith is one of the highest endowments of the Christian life; and yet, though all may obtain it, it is one of the rarest endowments. Perhaps by many it is despised, because it may be obtained by all; because it is a grace in which the poor and the humble may be as much distinguished as the man of splendid talents and profound learning.

To another the gifts of healing - See Mark 16:18. This was promised to the disciples of the Saviour; and in the early church was conferred on many; compare Acts 5:12, Acts 5:15-16; Acts 19:12. It would seem from this passage that the gift of healing was conferred on some in a more eminent degree than on others.

Verse 10

To another the working of miracles - Commentators have felt some perplexity in distinguishing this from what is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:9, of the gift of healing. it is evident that the apostle there refers to the power of working miracles in healing inveterate and violent diseases. The expression used here, “working of miracles” (ἐνεργήματα δυναμέων energēmata dunameōn) refers probably to the more “extraordinary” and “unusual” kinds of miracles; to those which were regarded as in advance of the power of healing diseases. It is possible that it may denote what the Saviour had reference to in Mark 16:18, where he said they should take up serpents, and if they drank any deadly thing it should not hurt them; and possibly also to the power of raising up the dead. That this power was possessed by the apostles is well known; and it is possible that it was possessed by others also of the early Christians. It is clear from all this that there was a difference even among those who had the power of working miracles, and that this power was conferred in a more eminent degree on some than on others. Indeed, the “extraordinary” endowments conferred on the apostles and the early Christians, seem to have been regulated to a remarkable degree in accordance with the rule by which “ordinary” endowments are conferred upon people. Though all people have understanding, memory, imagination, bodily strength, etc., yet one has these in a more eminent degree than others; and one is characterized for the possession of one of those qualities more than for another. Yet all are bestowed by the same God. So it was in regard to the extraordinary

endowments conferred on the early Christians; compare 1 Corinthians 14:32.

To another prophecy; - See the note at Romans 12:6.

To another discerning of spirits - compare 1 John 4:1. This must refer to some power of searching into the secrets of the heart; of knowing what were a man‘s purposes. views, and feelings. It may relate either to the power of determining by what spirit a man spoke who pretended to be inspired, whether he was truly inspired or whether he was an impostor; or it may refer to the power of seeing whether a man was sincere or not in his Christian profession That the apostles had this power, is apparent from the case of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1-10, and from the case of Elymas, Acts 13:9-11. It is evident that where the gift of prophecy and inspiration was possessed, and where it would confer such advantages on those who possessed it, there would be many pretenders to it; and that it would be of vast importance to the infant church, in order to prevent imposition, that there should be a power in the church of detecting the imposture.

To another divers kinds of tongues - The power of speaking various languages; see Acts 2:4, Acts 2:7-11. This passage also seems to imply that the extraordinary endowments of the Holy Spirit were not conferred on all alike.

To another the interpretation of tongues - The power of interpreting foreign languages; or of interpreting the language which might be used by the “prophets” in their communications; see the note at 1 Corinthians 14:27. This was evidently a faculty different from the power of speaking a foreign language; and yet it might be equally useful. It would appear possible that some might have had the power of speaking foreign languages who were not themselves apprized of the meaning, and that interpreters were needful in order to express the sense to the hearers. Or it may have been that in a promiscuous assembly, or in an assembly made up of those who spoke different languages, a part might have understood what was uttered, and it was needful that an interpreter should explain it to the other portion; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 14:28.

Verse 11

But all these - All these various endowments.

Worketh - Produces. All these are to be traced to him.

That one and the self-same Spirit - The Holy Spirit, Acts 2. They were all, though so different in themselves, to be traced to the Holy Spirit, just as

all the natural endowments of people - their strength, memory, judgment, etc. - though so various in themselves are to be traced to the same God.

Dividing to every man severally - Conferring on each one as he pleases. He confers on each one that which he sees to be best, and most wise, and proper.

As he will - As he chooses or as in his view seems best. Dr. Doddridge remarks, that this word does "not so much express arbitrary pleasure, as a determination founded on "wise" counsel." It implies, however, that he does it as a sovereign; as he sees to be right and best. He distributes these favors as to him seems best adapted to promote the welfare of the whole church and to advance his cause. Some of the doctrines which are taught by this verse are the following:

(1) The Holy Spirit is a "person." For, he acts as a person; distributes favors, confers endowments and special mercies "as he will." This proves that he is, in some respects, distinguished from the Father and the Son. It would be absurd to say of an "attribute" of God, that it confers favors, and distributes the various endowments of speaking with tongues, and raising the dead. And if so, then the Holy Spirit is "not" an attribute of God.

(2) he is a sovereign. He gives to all as he pleases. In regard to spiritual endowments of the highest order, he deals with people as he does in the common endowments bestowed upon people, and as he does in temporal blessings. He does not bestow the same blessings on all, nor make all alike. He dispenses his favors by a rule which he has not made known, but which, we may be assured, is in accordance with wisdom and goodness. He wrongs no one; and he gives to all the favors which might be connected with eternal life.

(3) no man should be proud of his endowments. Whatever they may be, they are the gifts of God, bestowed by his sovereign will and mercy. But assuredly we should not be proud of that which is the mere "gift" of another, and which has been bestowed, not in consequence of any merit of ours, but according to his mere sovereign will.

(4) no man should be depressed, or should despise his own gifts, however humble they may be. In their own place, they may be as important as the higher endowments of others. That God has placed him where he is,

or has given less splendid endowments than he has to others, is no fault of his. There is no crime in it; and he should, therefore, strive to improve his "one talent," and to make himself useful in the rank where he is placed. And,

(5) No man should despise another because be is in a more bumble rank, or is less favored than himself. God has made the difference, and we should respect and honor his arrangements, and should show that "respect" and "honor" by regarding with kindness, and treating as fellow laborers with us, all who occupy a more humble rank than we do.

Verse 12

For as the body is one - The general sentiment which the apostle had been illustrating and enforcing was, that all the endowments which were possessed in the church were the work of the same Holy Spirit, and that they ought to be appropriately cherished and prized, as being all useful and valuable in their places. This sentiment he now illustrates 1 Corinthians 12:27, meaning that it is one, and that he sustains to it the relation of Head; compare Ephesians 1:22-23. As the "head" is the most important part of the body, it may be put for the whole body; and the name "Christ" here, the head of the church, is put for the whole body of which he is the head; and means here the Christian society, or the church. This figure, of a part for the whole, is one that is common in all languages; see the note at Romans 12:4-5.

Verse 13

For by one Spirit - That is, by the agency or operation of the same Spirit, the Holy Spirit, we have been united into one body. The idea here is the same as that presented above 1 Corinthians 12:7, 1 Corinthians 12:11, by which all the endowments of Christians are traced to the same Spirit. Paul here says, that that Spirit had so endowed them as to fit them to constitute one body, or to be united in one, and to perform the various duties which resulted from their union in the same Christian church. The idea of its having been done by one and the same Spirit is kept up and often presented, in order that the endowments conferred on them might be duly appreciated.

Are we all - Every member of the church, whatever may be his rank or talents, has received his endowments from the same Spirit.

Baptized into one body - Many suppose that there is reference here to the ordinance of baptism by water. But the connection seems rather to require us to understand it of the baptism of the Holy Spirit Matthew 3:11; and if so, it means, that by the agency of the Holy Spirit, they had all been suited, each to his appropriate place, to constitute the body of Christ - the church. If, however, it refers to the ordinance of baptism, as Bloomfield, Calvin, Doddridge, etc. suppose, then it means, that by the very profession of religion as made at baptism, by there being but one baptism Ephesians 4:5, they had all professedly become members of one and the same body. The former interpretation, however, seems to me best to suit the connection.

Whether we be Jews or Gentiles - There is no difference. All are on a level. In regard to the grand point, no distinction is made, whatever may have been our former condition of life.

Bond or free - It is evident that many who were slaves were converted to the Christian faith. Religion, however, regarded all as on a level; and conferred no favors on the free which it did not on the slave. It was one of the happy lessons of Christianity, that it taught people that in the great matters pertaining to their eternal interests they were on the same level. This doctrine would tend to secure, more than anything else could, the proper treatment of those who were in bondage, and of those who were in humble ranks of life. At the same time it would not diminish, but would increase their real respect for their masters, and for those who were above them, if they regarded them as fellow Christians, and destined to the same heaven; see the note at 1 Corinthians 7:22.

And have been all made to drink … - This probably refers to their partaking together of the cup in the Lord‘s Supper. The sense is, that by their drinking of the same cup commemorating the death of Christ, they had partaken of the same influences of the Holy Spirit, which descend alike on all who observe that ordinance in a proper manner. They had shown also, that they belonged to the same body, and were all united together; and that however various might be their graces and endowments, yet they all belonged to the same great family.

Verse 14

For the body … - The body is made up of many members, which have various offices. So it is in the church. We are to expect the same variety there; and we are not to presume either that all will be alike, or that any member that God has placed there will be useless.

Verse 15

If the foot shall say … - The same figure and illustration which Paul here uses occurs also in pagan writers. It occurs in the apologue which was used by Menenius Agrippa, as related by Livy (lib. 2: cap. 32), in which he attempted to repress a rebellion which had been excited against the nobles and senators, as useless and cumbersome to the state. Menenius, in order to show the folly of this, represents the different members of the body as conspiring against the stomach, as being inactive, and as refusing to labor, and consuming everything. The consequence of the conspiracy which the feet, and hands, and mouth entered into, was a universal wasting away of the whole frame for lack of the nutriment which would have been supplied from the stomach. Thus, he argued it would be by the conspiracy against the nobles, as being inactive, and as consuming all things. The representation had the desired effect, and quelled the rebellion. The same figure is used also by Aesop. The idea here is, that as the foot and the ear could not pretend that they were not parts of the body, and even not important, because they were not the eye, etc.; that is, were not more honorable parts of the body; so no Christian, however humble his endowments, could pretend that he was useless because he was not more highly gifted and did not occupy a more elevated rank.

Verse 17

If the whole body … - The idea in this verse is, that all the parts of the body are useful in their proper place, and that it would be as absurd to require or expect that all the members of the church should have the same endowments, as it would be to attempt to make the body "all eye." If all were the same; if all had the same endowments, important offices which are now secured by the other members would be unknown. All, therefore, are to be satisfied with their allotment; all are to be honored in their appropriate place.

Verse 18

Hath God set the members … - God has formed the body, with its various members, as he saw would best conduce to the harmony and usefulness of all.

Verse 19

And if all were one member - If there were nothing but an eye, an ear, or a limb, there would be no body The idea which this seems intended to illustrate is, that if there was not variety of talent and endowment in the

church, the church could not itself exist. If, for example, there were nothing but apostles, or prophets, or teachers; if there were none but those who spoke with tongues or could interpret them, the church could not exist. A variety of talents and attainments in their proper places is as useful as are the various members of the human body.

Verse 21

And the eye cannot say unto the hand … - The hand in its place is as needful as the eye; and the feet as the head. Nay, the eye and the head could not perform their appropriate functions, or would be in a great measure useless but for the aid of the hands and feet. Each is useful in its proper place. So in the church. Those that are most talented and most richly endowed with gifts, cannot say to those less so, that there is no need of their aid. All are useful in their place. Nay, those who are most richly endowed could very imperfectly perform their duties without the aid and cooperation of those of more humble attainments.

Verse 22

Which seem to be more feeble - Weaker than the rest; which seem less able to bear fatigue and to encounter difficulties; which are more easily injured, and which become more easily affected with disease. It is possible that Paul may here refer to the brain, the lungs, the heart, etc., as more feeble in their structure, and more liable to disease than the hands and the feet, etc., and in reference to which disease is more dangerous and fatal.

Are more necessary - The sense seems to be this. A man can live though the parts and members of his body which are more strong were removed; but not if those parts which are more feeble. A man can live if his arm or his leg be amputated; but not if his brain, his lungs or his heart be removed. So that, although these parts are more feeble, and more easily injured, they are really more necessary to life, and therefore more useful than the more vigorous portions of the frame. Perhaps the idea is - and it is a beautiful thought - that those members of the church which are most retiring and feeble apparently which are concealed from public view, unnoticed and unknown - the humble. the meek, the peaceful, and the prayerful - are often more necessary to the true welfare of the church than those who are eminent for their talent and learning. And it is so. The church can better spare many a man, even in the ministry, who is learned, and eloquent, and popular, than some obscure and humble Christian, that is to the church what the heart and the lungs are to the life. the one is strong.

vigorous, active, like the hands or the feet, and the church often depends on them; the other is feeble, concealed, yet vital, like the heart or the lungs. The vitality of the church could be continued though the man of talent and learning should be removed; as the body may live when the arm or the leg is amputated; but that vitality could not continue if the saint of humble and retiring piety, and of fervent prayerfulness, were removed, any more than the body can live when there is no heart and no lungs.

Verse 23

We bestow more abundant honour - Margin, "Put on." The words rendered "abundant honor" here, refer to clothing. We bestow upon them more attention and honor then we do on the face that is deemed comely, and that is not covered and adorned as the other parts of the body are.

More abundant comeliness - We adorn and decorate the body with frivilous apparel. Those parts which decency requires us to conceal we not only cover, but we endeavor as far as we can to adorn them. The face in the mean time we leave uncovered. The idea is, that, in like manner, we should not despise or disregard those members of the church who are of lower rank, or who are less favored than others with spiritual endowments.

Verse 24

For our comely parts - The face, etc. "Have no need." No need of clothing or ornament.

But God hath tempered the body together - Literally, "mingled" or mixed; that is, has made to coalesce, or strictly and closely joined. He has formed a strict union; he has made one part dependent on another, and necessary to the harmony and proper action of another. Every part is useful, and all are suited to the harmonious action of the whole. God has so arranged it, in order to produce harmony and equality in the body, that those parts which are less comely by nature should be more adorned and guarded by apparel.

Having given more abundant honour … - By making it necessary that we should labor in order to procure for it the needful clothing; thus making it more the object of our attention and care. We thus bestow more abundant honor upon those parts of the body which a suitable protection from cold, and heat, and storms, and the sense of comeliness, requires us to clothe and conceal. The "more abundant honor," therefore, refers to the greater attention, labor, and care which we bestow on those parts of the body.

Verse 25

That there should be no schism - Margin, "Division;" see note on 1 Corinthians 11:18. The sense here is, that the body might be united, and be one harmonious whole; that there should be no separate interests; and that all the parts should be equally necessary, and truly dependent on each other; and that no member should be regarded as separated from the others, or as needless to the welfare of all. The sense to be illustrated by this is, that no member of the church, however feeble, or illiterate, or obscure, should be despised or regarded as unnecessary or valueless; that all are needful in their places; and that it should not be supposed that they belonged to different bodies, or that they could not associate together, any more than the less honorable and comely parts of the body should be regarded as unworthy or unfit to be united to the parts that were deemed to be more beautiful or honorable.

Should have the same care - Should care for the same thing; should equally regard the interests of all, as we feel an equal interest in all the members and parts of the body, and desire the preservation, the healthy action, and the harmonious and regular movement of the whole. Whatever part of the body is affected with disease or pain, we feel a deep interest in its preservation and cure. The idea is, that no member of the church should be overlooked or despised; but that the whole church should feel a deep interest for, and exercise a constant solicitude over, all its members.

Verse 26

And whether one member suffer - One member, or part of the body.

All the members suffer with it - This, we all know, is the case with the body. A pain in the foot, the hand, or the head excites deep solicitude. The interest is not confined to the part affected; but we feel that we ourselves are affected, and that our body, as a whole, demands our care. The word "suffer" here refers to disease, or sickness. It is true also that not only we feel an "interest" in the part that is affected, but that disease in any one part tends to diffuse itself through, and to affect the whole frame. If not arrested, it is conveyed by the blood through all the members until life itself is destroyed. It is not by mere interest, then, or sympathy, but it is by the natural connection and the inevitable result that a diseased member tends to affect the whole frame. There is not, indeed, in the church the same "physical" connection and "physical" effect, but the union is really not less close and important, nor is it the less certain that the conduct of one member will affect all. It is implied here also, that we should feel a deep

interest in the welfare of all the members of the body of Christ. If one is tempted or afflicted, the other members of the church should feel it, and "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil his law." If one is poor, the others should aid him, and supply his needs; if one is persecuted and opposed for righteousness' sake, the others should sympathize with him, and make common cause with him. In all things pertaining to religion and to their mutual welfare, they should feel that they have a common cause, and regard it as a privilege to aid one another. Nor should a man regard it as any more a burden and hardship to aid a poor or afflicted brother in the church, than it should be deemed a hardship that the head, and the heart, and the hands should sympathize when any other member of the body is diseased.

Or one member be honoured - If applied to the body, this means, if one member or part be regarded and treated with special care; be deemed honorable; or be in a sound, healthy, and vigorous condition. If applied to the church, it means, if one of its members should be favored with extraordinary endowments; or be raised to a station of honor and influence above his brethren.

All the members rejoice with it - That is, in the body, all the other members partake of the benefit and honor. If one member be sound and healthy, the benefit extends to all. If the hands, the feet, the heart, the lungs, the brain be in a healthy condition, the advantage is felt by all the members, and all derive advantage from it. So in the church. If one member is favored with remarkable talent, or is raised to a station of influence, and exerts his influence in the cause of Christ, all the members of the church partake of the benefit. It is for the common good; and all should rejoice in it. This consideration should repress envy at the elevation of others, and should lead all the members of a church to rejoice when God, by his direct agency, or by the arrangements of his providence, confers extraordinary endowments, or gives opportunity for extended usefulness to others.

Verse 27

Now ye - Ye Christians of Corinth, as a part of the whole church that has been redeemed.

Are the body of Christ - The allusion to the human body is here kept up. As all the members of the human body compose one body, having a common head, so it is with all the members and parts of the Christian church. The specific idea is, that Christ is the Head of the whole church; that he presides over all; and that all its members sustain to each other the

relation of fellow-members in the same body, and are subject to the same head; compare the note at 1 Corinthians 11:3. The church is often called the body of Christ; Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 1:18, Colossians 1:24.

And members in particular - You are, as individuals, members of the body of Christ; or each individual is a member of that body.

Verse 28

And God hath set - That is, has appointed, constituted, ordained. He has established these various orders or ranks in the church. The apostle, having illustrated the main idea that God had conferred various endowments on the members of the church, proceeds here to specify particularly what he meant, and to refer more directly to the various ranks which existed in the church.

Some in the church - The word "some," in this place ὅυς housseems to mean rather whom, "and whom God hath placed in the church," or, they whom God hath constituted in the church in the manner above mentioned are, first, apostles, etc.

First, apostles - In the first rank or order; or as superior in honor and in office. He has given them the highest authority in the church; he has more signally endowed them and qualified them than he has others.

Secondarily, prophets - As second in regard to endowments and importance. For the meaning of the word "prophets," see the note on Romans 12:6.

Thirdly, teachers - As occupying the third station in point of importance and valuable endowments. On the meaning of this word, and the nature of this office, see the note on Romans 12:7.

After that, miracles - Power. (δυνάμεις dunameis). Those who had the power of working miracles; referred to in 1 Corinthians 12:10.

Then gifts of healing - The power of healing those who were sick; see note on 1 Corinthians 12:9; compare James 5:14-15.

Helps - (ἀντιλήμψεις antilēmpseis). This word occurs no where else in the New Testament. It is derived from ἀντιλαμβάνω antilambanōand denotes properly, "aid, assistance, help;" and then those who render aid, assistance, or help; helpers. Who they were is not known. They might have been those to whom was entrusted the care of the poor, and the sick, and strangers, widows, and orphans, etc.; that is, those who performed the office of deacons. Or they may have been those who attended on the apostles to aid them in their work, such as Paul refers to in Romans 16:3. "Greet

Priscilla, and Aquilla, my "helpers" in Christ Jesus;" and in 1 Corinthians 12:9," Salute Urbane our helper in Christ;" see note on Romans 16:3. It is not possible, perhaps, to determine the precise meaning of the word, or the nature of the office which they discharged; but the word means, in general, those who in any way aided or rendered assistance in the church, and may refer to the temporal affairs of the church, to the care of the poor, the distribution of charity and alms, or to the instruction of the ignorant, or to aid rendered directly to the apostles. There is no evidence that it refers to a distinct and "permanent" office in the church; but may refer to aid rendered by any class in any way. Probably many persons were profitably and usefully employed in various ways as aids in promoting the temporal or spiritual welfare of the church.

Governments - (κυβερνήσεις kubernēseis). This word is derived from κυβεριάω kuberiaō"to govern;" and is usually applied to the government or "steering" of a ship. The word occurs no where else in the New Testament, though the word κυβερνήτης kubernētēs("governor") occurs in Acts 27:11, rendered "master," and in Revelation 18:17, rendered "shipmaster." It is not easy to determine what particular office or function is here intended. Doddridge, in accordance with Amyraut, supposes that distinct offices may not be here referred to, but that the same persons may be denoted in these expressions as being distinguished in various ways; that is, that the same persons were called helpers in reference to their skill in aiding those who were in distress, and governments in regard to their talent for doing business, and their ability in presiding in councils for deliberation, and in directing the affairs of the church.

There is no reason to think that the terms here used referred to permanent and established ranks and orders in the ministry and in the church; or in permanent offices which were to continue to all times as an essential part of its organization. It is certain that the "order" of "apostles" has ceased, and also the "order" of "miracles," and the order of "healings," and of "diversity of tongues." And it is certain that in the use of these terms of office, the apostle does not affirm that they would be permanent, and essential to the very existence of the church; and from the passage before us, therefore, it cannot be argued that there was to be an order of men in the church who were to be called "helps," or "governments." The truth probably was, that the circumstances of the primitive churches required the

aid of many persons in various capacities which might not be needful or proper in other times and circumstances.

Whether, therefore, this is to be regarded as a permanent arrangement that there should be "governments" in the church, or an order of men entrusted with the sole office of governing, is to be learned not from this passage, but from other parts of the New Testament. Lightfoot contends that the word which is used here and translated "governments" does not refer to the power of ruling, but to a person endued with a deep and comprehensive mind, one who is wise and prudent; and in this view Mesheim, Macknight, and Horsley coincide. Calvin refers it to the elders to whom the exercise of discipline was entrusted. Grotius understands it of the pastors Ephesians 4:1, or of the elders who presided over particular churches; Romans 12:8. Locke supposes that they were the same as those who had the power of discerning spirits. The simple idea, however, is that of ruling, or exercising government; but whether this refers to a permanent office, or to the fact that some were specially qualified by their wisdom and prudence, and in virtue of this usually regulated or directed the affairs of the church by giving counsel, etc., or whether they were "selected" and appointed for this purpose for a time; or whether it refers to the same persons who might also have exercised other functions, and this in addition, cannot be determined from the passage before us. All that is clear is, that there were those who administered government in the church. But the passage does not determine the form, or manner; nor does it prove - whatever may be true - that such an office was to be permanent in the church.

(There can be little doubt that the κυβερνησεις kubernēseisor governments, refer to offices of rule and authority in the church. Two things, therefore, are plain from this text:

1. That in the primitive church there were rulers distinct from the people or church members, to whom these were bound to yield obedience.

2. That these rulers were appointed of God. "God set them in the church." As to the question of "permanence," on which our author thinks this passage affirms nothing: a distinction must be made between these offices which were obviously of an extraordinary kind, and which therefore

must cease; and those of an ordinary kind, which are essential to the edification of the church in all ages. “The universal commission which the apostles received from their Master to make disciples of all nations, could not be permanent as to the extent of it, because it was their practice to ordain elders in every city, and because the course of human affairs required, that after Christianity was established, the teachers of it should officiate in particular places. The infallible guidance of the Spirit was not promised in the same measure to succeeding teachers. But being, in their case, vouched by the power of working miracles, it directed the Christians of their day, to submit implicitly to their injunctions and directions; and it warrants the Christian world, in all ages, to receive with entire confidence, that system of faith and morality which they were authorised to deliver in the name of Christ. But as all protestants hold that this system was completed when the canon of scripture was closed - it is admitted by them, that a great part of the apostolical powers ceased with those to whom Jesus first committed them.

Amongst the “ordinary” functions belonging to their office as teachers, are to be ranked not only preaching the word, and dispensing the sacraments, but also that rule and government over Christians as such, which is implied in the idea of the church as a society” - Hill‘s Lectures, vol. ii, p. 479. Now, though these extraordinary offices and functions have ceased with the age of the apostles, and of miraculous influence; it by no means follows, that the ordinary offices of teaching and ruling have ceased also. What was plainly of a “peculiar kind,” and could not possibly be “imitated” after the withdrawment of miraculous power, is quite distinct from that which, not depending on such power, is suited to the condition of the church always. Proceeding on any other principle, we should find it impossible to argue at all on what ought to be the constitution of the church, from any hints we find in the New Testament. What is extraordinary cannot be permanent, but what is ordinary must be so. See the supplementary note on 1 Corinthians 5:4.)

Diversities of tongues - Those endowed with the power of speaking various languages; see the note on 1 Corinthians 12:10.

Verse 29-30

Are all apostles? … - These questions imply, with strong emphasis, that it could not be, and ought not to be, that there should be perfect equality of

endowment. It was not a matter of fact that all were equal, or that all were qualified for the offices which others sustained. Whether the arrangement was approved of or not, it was a simple matter of fact that some were qualified to perform offices which others were not; that some were endowed with the abilities requisite to the apostolic office, and others not; that some were endowed with prophetic gifts, and others were not; that some had the gift of healing, or the talent of speaking different languages, or of interpreting and that others had not.

Verse 31

But covet earnestly - Greek "Be zealous for" Ζηλοῦτε ZēlouteThis word, however, may be either in the indicative mood (ye do covet earnestly), or in the imperative, as in our translation. Doddridge contends that it should be rendered in the indicative mood, for he says it seems to be a contradiction that after the apostle had been showing that these gifts were not at their own option, and that they ought not to emulate the gifts of another, or aspire to superiority, to undo all again, and give them such contrary advice. The same view is given by Locke, and so Macknight. The Syriac renders it, "Because you are zealous of the best gifts, I will show to you a more excellent way." But there is no valid objection to the common translation in the imperative, and indeed the connection seems to demand it. Grotius renders it, "Pray to God that you may receive from him the best, that is, the most useful endowments."

The sense seems to be this, "I have proved that all endowments in the church are produced by the Holy Spirit; and that he confers them as he pleases. I have been showing that no one should be proud or elated on account of extraordinary endowments; and that, on the other hand, no one should he depressed, or sad, or discontented, because he has a more humble rank. I have been endeavoring to repress and subdue the spirit of discontent, jealousy, and ambition; and to produce a willingness in all to occupy the station where God has placed you. But, I do not intend to deny that it is proper to desire the most useful endowments; that a man should wish to be brought under the influence of the Spirit, and qualified for eminent usefulness. I do not mean to say that it is wrong for a man to regard the higher gifts of the Spirit as valuable and desirable, if they may be obtained; nor that the spirit which seeks to excel in spiritual endowments and in usefulness, is improper.

Yet all cannot be apostles; all cannot be prophets. I would not have you, therefore, seek such offices, and manifest a spirit of ambition. I would seek to regulate the desire which I would not repress as improper; and in order to that, I would show you that, instead of aspiring to offices and extraordinary endowments which are beyond your grasp, there is a way, more truly valuable, that is open to you all, and where all may excel." Paul thus endeavors to give a practicable and feasible turn to the whole subject, and further to repress the longings of ambition and the contentions of strife, by exciting emulation to obtain that which was accessible to them all, and "which, just in the proportion in which it was obtained," would repress discontent, and strife, and ambition, and produce order, and peace, and contentedness with their endowments and their lot, the main thing which he was desirous of producing in this chapter. This, therefore, is one of the "happy turns" in which the writings of Paul abounds. He did not denounce their zeal as wicked. He did not attempt at once to repress it. He did not say that it was wrong to desire high endowments. But he showed them an endowment which was more valuable than all the others; which was accessible to all; and which, if possessed, would make them contented, and produce the harmonious operation of all the parts of the church. That endowment was love.

A more excellent way - See the next chapter. "I will show you a more excellent way of evincing your "zeal" than by aspiring to the place of apostles, prophets, or rulers, and that is by cultivating universal charity or love."

1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Introduction

This chapter 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 is a continuation of the subject commenced in 1 Corinthians 12:31 he had said that it was lawful for them to desire the most eminent of the gifts conferred by the Spirit; and yet says that there was "one" endowment that was more valuable than all others, and that might be obtained by all, and that he proposed to recommend to them. That was love; and to illustrate its nature, excellency, and power, is the design of this exquisitely beautiful and tender chapter. In doing this, he dwells particularly on three points or views of the excellency of love; and the chapter may be regarded as consisting of three portions.

I.The excellency of love above the power of speaking the languages of men and of angels; above the power of understanding all mysteries; above all faith, even of the highest kind; and above the virtue of giving all one's goods to feed the poor, or one's body to be burned. All these endowments would be valueless without love, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

II.A statement of the characteristics of love; or its happy influences on the mind and heart, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

III.A comparison of love with the gift of prophecy, and with the power of speaking foreign languages, and with knowledge, 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. In this portion of the chapter, Paul shows that love is superior to them all. It will live in heaven; and will constitute the chief glory of that world of bliss.

Verse 1

Though I speak with the tongues of men - Though I should be able to speak all the languages which are spoken by people. To speak foreign languages was regarded then, as it is now, as a rare and valuable endowment; compare Virgil, *Aeneas* vi. 625ff. The word "I" here is used in a popular sense, and the apostle designs to illustrate, as he often does, his idea by a reference to himself, which, it is evident, he wishes to be understood as applying to those whom he addressed. It is evident that among the Corinthians the power of speaking a foreign language was regarded as a signally valuable endowment; and there can be no doubt that some of the leaders in that church valued themselves especially on it; see 2 Corinthians 12:4, where he says that when he was caught up into paradise,

he heard unspeakable words which it was not possible for a man to utter. To this higher, purer language of heaven he may refer here by the language of the angels. It was not with him mere "conjecture" of what that language might be; it was language which he had been permitted himself to hear. Of that scene he would refain a most deep and tender recollection; and to that language he now refers, by saying that even that elevated language would be valueless to a creature if there were not love.

And have not charity - (ἀγάπην δὲ μὴ ἔχω agapēn de mē echōAnd have not love. This is the proper and usual meaning of the Greek word. The English word charity is used in a great variety of senses; and some of them cannot be included in the meaning of the word here. It means:

(1) In a general sense, love, benevolence, good-will;

(2) In theology, it includes supreme love to God and universal good-will to mankind;

(3) In a more particular sense, it denotes the love and kindness which springs from the natural relations, as the "charities" of father, son, brother;

(4) Liberality to the poor, to the needy, and to objects of beneficence, as we speak commonly of "charity," meaning almsgiving, and of charitable societies;

(5) "Candor" liberality in judging of people's actions indulgence to their opinions; attributing to them good motives and intentions; a disposition to judge of them favorably, and to put on their words and actions the best construction. This is a very common signification of the word in our language now, and this is one modification of the word "love," as all such charity is supposed to proceed from "love" to our neighbor, and a desire that he should have a right to his opinions as well as we to ours. The Greek word ἀγάπη agapēmeans properly "love," affection, regard, good-will, benevolence. It is applied:

(a)To love in general;

(b)To the love of God and of Christ;

(c)The love which God or Christ exercises toward Christians, Romans 5:5; Ephesians 2:4; 2 Thessalonians 3:5;

(d)The effect, or proof of beneficence, favor conferred: Ephesians 1:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:10; 1 John 3:1. Robinson, *Lexicon*.

In the English word "charity," therefore, there are now some ideas which are not found in the Greek word, and especially the idea of "almsgiving," and the common use of the word among us in the sense of "candor" or "liberality in judging." Neither of these ideas, perhaps, are to be found in the use of the word in the chapter before us; and the more proper translation would have been, in accordance with the usual mode of translation in the New Testament, love. Tyndale in his translation, renders it by the word "love." The "love" which is referred to in this chapter, and illustrated, is mainly "love to man" 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; though there is no reason to doubt that the apostle meant also to include in the general term love to God, or love in general. His illustrations, however, are chiefly drawn from the effects of love toward people. It properly means love to the whole church, love to the whole world; love to all creatures which arises from true piety, and which centers ultimately in God - Doddridge. It is this love whose importance Paul, in this beautiful chapter, illustrates as being more valuable than the highest possible endowments without it. It is not necessary to suppose that anyone had these endowments, or had the power of speaking with the tongues of human beings and angels; or had the gift of prophecy, or had the highest degree of faith who had no love. The apostle supposes a case; and says that if it were so, if all these were possessed without love, they would be comparatively valueless; or that love was a more valuable endowment than all the others would be without it.

I am become - I am. I shall be.

As sounding brass - Probably a "trumpet." The word properly means brass; then that which is made of brass; a trumpet, or wind instrument of any kind made of brass or copper. The sense is that of a sounding or resounding instrument, making a great noise, apparently of great importance, and yet without vitality; a mere instrument; a base metal that merely makes a sound. Thus, noisy, valueless, empty, and without vitality would be the power of speaking all languages without love.

Or a tinkling cymbal - A cymbal giving a clanging, clattering sound. The word rendered "tinkling" (ἀλαλάζον alalazonfrom ἄλαλή or αλαλα alalaa "war-cry") properly denotes a loud cry, or shout, such as is used in battle; and then also a loud cry or mourning, cries of lamentation or grief;

the loud "shrick" of sorrow, Mark 5:38, "Them that wept and wailed greatly." It then means a clanging or clattering sound, such as was made on a cymbal. The cymbal is a well-known instrument, made of two pieces of brass or other metal, which, being struck together, gives a tinkling or clattering sound. Cymbals arc commonly used in connection with other music. They make a tinkling, or clanging, with very little variety of sound. The music is little adapted to produce emotion, or to excite feeling. There is no melody and no harmony. They were, therefore, well adapted to express the idea which the apostle wished to convey. The sense is, "If I could speak all languages, yet if I had not love, the faculty would be like the clattering. clanging sound of the cymbal, that contributes nothing to the welfare of others. It would all be hollow, vain, useless. It could neither save me nor others, any more than the notes of the trumpet, or the jingling of the cymbal, would promote salvation. "Love" is the vital principle; it is that without which all ether endowments are useless and vain."

Verse 2

And though I have the gift of prophecy - See the note at 1 Corinthians 12:10; note at 1 Corinthians 14:1.

And understand all mysteries - On the meaning of the word "mystery" see note, 1 Corinthians 2:7. This passage proves that it was one part of the prophetic office, as referred to here, to be able to understand and explain the "mysteries" of religion; that is, the things that were before unknown, or unrevealed. It does not refer to the prediction of future events, but to the great and deep truths connected with religion; the things that were unexplained in the old economy, the meaning of types and emblems; and the obscure portions of the plan of redemption. All these might be plain enough if they were revealed; but there were many things connected with religion which God had not chosen to reveal to people.

And all knowledge - See the note at 1 Corinthians 12:8. Though I knew every thing. Though I were acquainted fully with all the doctrines of religion; and were with all sciences and arts.

And though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains - Thould I should have the highest kind of faith. This is referred to by the Saviour Matthew 17:20, as the highest kind of faith; and Paul here had this fact doubtless in his eye.

I am nothing - All would be of no value. it would not save me. I should still be an unredeemed, unpardoned sinner. I should do good to no one; I

should answer none of the great purposes which God has designed; I should not by all this secure my salvation. All would be in vain in regard to the great purpose of my existence. None of these things could be placed before God as a ground of acceptance in the Day of Judgment. Unless I should have love, I should still be lost. A somewhat similar idea is expressed by the Saviour, in regard to the Day of Judgment, in Matthew 7:22-23, "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Verse 3

And though I bestow - The Greek word used here ψωμίσω psōmisōfrom ψάω psaōto break off) meant properly to break off, and distribute in small portions; to feed by morsels; and may be applicable here to distributing one's property in small portions. Charity or alms to the poor, was usually distributed at one's gate Luke 16:20, or in some public place. Of course, if property was distributed in this manner, many more would be benefitted than if all were given to one person. There would be many more to be thankful, and to celebrate one's praises. This was regarded as a great virtue; and was often performed in a most ostentatious manner. It was a gratification to wealthy men who desired the praise of being benevolent, that many of the poor flocked daily to their houses to be fed; and against this desire of distinction, the Saviour directed some of his severest reproofs; see Matthew 6:1-4. To make the case as strong as possible, Paul says that if all that a man had were dealt out in this way, in small portions, so as to benefit as many as possible, and yet were not attended "with true love toward God and toward man," it would be all false, hollow, hypocritical, and really of no value in regard to his own salvation. It would profit nothing. It would not be such an act as God would approve; it would be no evidence that the soul would be saved. Though good might be done to others, yet where the "motive" was wrong, it could not meet with the divine approbation, or be connected with his favor.

And though I give my body to be burned - Evidently as a martyr, or a witness to the truth of religion. Though I should be willing to lay down my life in the most painful manner, and have not charity, it would profit me nothing. Many of the ancient prophets were called to suffer martyrdom, though there is no evidence that any of them were burned to death as

martyrs. Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego were indeed thrown into a fiery furnace, because they were worshippers of the true God; but they were not consumed in the flame, Daniel 3:19-26; compare Hebrews 11:34. Though Christians were early persecuted, yet there is no evidence that they were burned as martyrs as early as this Epistle was written. Nero is the first who is believed to have committed this horrible act; and under his reign, and during the persecution which he excited, Christians were covered with pitch, and set on fire to illuminate his gardens. It is possible that some Christians had been put to death in this manner when Paul wrote this Epistle; but it is more probable that he refers to this as "the most awful kind of death," rather than as anything which had really happened. Subsequently, however, as all know, this was often done, and thousands, and perhaps tens of thousands, of Christians have been called to evince their attachment to religion in the flames.

And have not charity - Have no love to God, or to people; have no true piety. If I do it from any selfish or sinister motive; if I do it from fanaticism, obstinacy, or vain-glory; if I am deceived in regard to my character, and have never been born again. It is not necessary to an explanation of this passage to suppose that this ever had been done, for the apostle only puts a supposable case. There is reason, however, to think that it has been done frequently; and that when the desire of martyrdom became the popular passion, and was believed to be connected infallibly with heaven, not a few have been willing to give themselves to the flames who never knew anything of love to God or true piety. Grotius mentions the instance of Calanus, and of Peregrinus the philosopher, who did it. Although this was not the common mode of martyrdom in the time of Paul, and although it was then perhaps unknown, it is remarkable that he should have referred to that which in subsequent times became the common mode of death on account of religion. In his time, and before, the common mode was by stoning, by the sword, or by crucifixion. Subsequently, however, all these were laid aside, and burning became the common way in which martyrs suffered. So it was, extensively, under Nero: and so it was, exclusively, under the Inquisition; and so it was in the persecutions in England in the time of Mary. Paul seems to have been directed to specify this rather than stoning, the sword, or crucifixion, in order that, in subsequent times, martyrs might be led to examine themselves, and to see whether they were actuated by true love to God in being willing to be consumed in the flames.

It profiteth me nothing - If there is no true piety, there can be no benefit in this to my soul. It will not save me. If I have no true love to God, I must perish, after all. "Love," therefore, is more valuable and precious than all these endowments. Nothing can supply its place; nothing can be connected with salvation without it.

Verse 4

Charity suffereth long - Paul now proceeds to illustrate the "nature" of love, or to show how it is exemplified. His illustrations are all drawn from its effect in regulating our conduct toward others, or our contact with them. The "reason" why he made use of this illustration, rather than its nature as evinced toward "God," was, probably, because it was especially necessary for them to understand in what way it should be manifested toward each other. There were contentions and strifes among them; there were of course suspicions, and jealousies, and heart-burnings; there would be unkind judging, the imputation of improper motives, and selfishness; there were envy, and pride, and boasting, all of which were inconsistent with love; and Paul therefore evidently designed to correct these evils, and to produce a different state of things by showing them what would be produced by the exercise of love. The word used here μακροθυμεῖ makrothumeidenotes "longanimity," slowness to anger or passion; longsuffering, patient endurance, forbearance. It is opposed to haste; to passionate expressions and thoughts, and to irritability. It denotes the state of mind which can bear long when oppressed, provoked, calumniated, and when one seeks to injure us; compare Romans 2:4; Romans 9:22; 2 Corinthians 6:6; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:12; 1 Timothy 1:16; 2 Timothy 3:10; 2 Timothy 4:2; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:15.

And is kind - The word used here denotes to be good-natured, gentle, tender, affectionate. Love is benignant. It wishes well. It is not harsh, sour, morose, ill-natured. Tyndale renders it, "is courteous." The idea is, that under all provocations and ill-usage it is gentle and mild. "Hatred" prompts to harshness, severity, unkindness of expression, anger, and a desire of revenge. But love is the reverse of all these. A man who truly loves another will be kind to him, desirous of doing him good; will be "gentle," not severe and harsh; will be "courteous" because he desires his happiness, and would not pain his feelings. And as religion is love, and prompts to love, so it follows that it requires courtesy or true politeness, and will secure it; see 1 Peter 3:8. If all people were under the influence of true religion, they would

always be truly polite and courteous; for true politeness is nothing more than an expression of benignity, or a desire to promote the happiness of all around us.

Envieth not - οὐ ζηλόι ou zēloiThis word properly means to be "zealous" for or against any person or thing; that is, to be eager for, or anxious for or against anyone. It is used often in a good sense (1 Corinthians 12:31; See the 1 Corinthians 14:1, 1 Corinthians 14:39 notes; 2 Corinthians 11:2 note, etc.); but it may be used in a bad sense - to be zealous "against" a person; to be jealous of; to envy. Acts 7:9; Acts 17:5; James 4:2, "ye kill and envy." It is in this sense, evidently, that it is used here, - as denoting zeal, or ardent desire "against" any person. The sense is, love does not envy others the happiness which they enjoy; it delights in their welfare; and as their happiness is increased by their endowments, their rank, their reputation, their wealth, their health, their domestic comforts, their learning etc., those who are influenced by love "rejoice" in all this. They would not diminish it; they would not embarrass them in the possession; they would not detract from that happiness; they would not complain or repine that they themselves are not so highly favored - To envy is to feel uneasiness, mortification, or discontent at the sight of superior happiness, excellence or reputation enjoyed by another; to repine at another's prosperity; and to fret oneself on account of his real or fancied superiority.

Of course, it may be excited by anything in which another excels, or in which he is more favored than we are. It may be excited by superior wealth, beauty, learning, accomplishment, reputation, success. It may extend to any employment, or any rank in life. A man may be envied because he is happy while we are miserable; well, while we are sick; caressed, while we are neglected or overlooked; successful, while we meet with disappointment; handsome, while we are ill-formed; honored with office, while we are overlooked. He may be envied because he has a better farm than we have, or is a more skillful mechanic, or a more successful physician, lawyer, or clergyman. "Envy commonly lies in the same line of business, occupation, or rank." We do not, usually envy a monarch, a conqueror, or a nobleman, unless we are "aspiring" to the same rank. The farmer does not usually envy the blacksmith, but another farmer; the blacksmith does not usually envy the schoolmaster, or the lawyer, but another man in the same line of business with himself.

The physician envies another physician more learned or more successful; the lawyer envies another lawyer; the clergyman is jealous of another clergyman. The fashionable female who seeks admiration or flattery on account of accomplishment or beauty envies another who is more distinguished and more successful in those things. And so the poet envies a rival poet and the orator, a rival orator; and the statesman, a rival statesman. The correction of all these things is "love." If we loved others; if we rejoiced in their happiness, we should not envy them. "They are not to blame" for these superior endowments; but if those endowments are the direct gift of God, we should he thankful that he has made others happy; if they are the fruit of their own industry, and virtue, and skill and application, we should esteem them the more, and value them the more highly. They have not injured us; and we should not be unhappy, or seek to injure them, because God has blessed them, or because they have been more industrious, virtuous, and successful than we have.

Every person should have his own level in society, and we should rejoice in the happiness of all - Love will produce another effect. We should not "envy" them, because he that is under the influence of Christian love is more happy than those in the world who are usually the objects of envy. There is often much wretchedness under a clothing "of purple and fine linen." There is not always happiness in a splendid mansion; in the caresses of the great; in a post of honor; in a palace, or on a throne. Alexander the Great wept on the throne of the world. Happiness is in the heart; and contentment, and the love of God, and the hope of heaven produce happiness which rank, and wealth, and fashion, and earthly honor cannot purchase. And could the sad and heavy hearts of those in elevated ranks of life be always seen; and especially could their end be seen, there would be no occasion or disposition to envy them.

Lord, what a thoughtless wretch was I,
To mourn, and murmur, and repine,
To see the wicked placed on high,
In pride and robes of honour shine!
But oh! their end, their dreadful end!
Thy sanctuary taught me so;
On slipp'ry rocks I see them stand,

And fiery billows roll below.
Now let them boast how tall they are,
I‘ll never envy them again;
There they may stand with haughty eyes,
Till they plunge deep in endless pain.
Their fancied joys how fast they flee,
Like dreams as fleeting and as vain;
Their songs of softest harmony.
Are but a prelude to their pain,
Now I esteem their mirth and wine.
Too dear to purchase with my blood;
Lord, ‹tis enough that thou art mine,
My life, my portion, and my God.

Vaunteth not itself - (περπερευεται perpereuetaifrom περπερος perperosa boaster, braggart. *Robinson*.) The idea is that of boasting, bragging, vaunting. The word occurs no where else in the New Testament. Bloomfield supposes that it has the idea of acting precipitously, inconsiderately, incautiously; and this idea our translators have placed in the margin, “he is not rash.” But most expositors suppose that it has the notion of boasting, or vaunting of one‘s own excellencies or endowments. This spirit proceeds from the idea of “superiority” over others; and is connected with a feeling of contempt or disregard for them. Love would correct this, because it would produce a desire that they should be happy - and to treat a man with contempt is not the way to make him happy; love would regard others with esteem - and to boast over them is not to treat them with esteem; it would teach us to treat them with affectionate regard - and no man who has affectionate regard for others is disposed to boast of his own qualities over them. Besides, love produces a state of mind just the opposite of a disposition to boast. It receives its endowments with gratitude; regards them as the gift of God; and is disposed to employ them not in vain boasting, but in purposes of utility, in doing good to all others on as wide a scale as possible. The boaster is not a man who does good. To “boast” of talents is not to employ them to advantage to others. It will be of no account in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, comforting the sick and afflicted, or in saving the world. Accordingly, the man who does the most good is the least accustomed to boast; the man who boasts may be regarded as doing nothing else.

Is not puffed up - (φυσιοῦται phusioutai). This word means to blow, to puff, to paint; then to inflate with pride, and vanity, and self-esteem. See the word explained in the note on 1 Corinthians 8:1. It perhaps differs from the preceding word, inasmuch as that word denotes the expression of the feelings of pride, vanity, etc., and this word the feeling itself. A man may be very proud and vain, and not express it in the form of boasting. That state is indicated by this word. If he gives expression to this feeling, and boasts of his endowments, that is indicated by the previous word. Love would prevent this, as it would the former. It would destroy the feeling, as well as the expression of it. It would teach a man that others had good qualities as well as he; that they had high endowments as well as he; and would dispose him to concede to them full credit for all that they have, and not to be vain-glorious of his own. Besides, it is not the "nature" of love to fill the mind in this manner. Pride, vanity, and even knowledge 1 Corinthians 8:1, may swell the mind with the conviction of self-importance; but love is humble, meek, modest, unobtrusive. A brother that loves a sister is not filled with pride or vanity on account of it; a man that loves the whole world, and desires its salvation, is not filled with pride and vanity on account of it. Hence, the Saviour, who had "most" love for the human race, was at the farthest possible remove from pride and vanity.

Verse 5

Doth not behave itself unseemly - (οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ ouk aschēmonei). This word occurs in 1 Corinthians 7:36. See the note on that verse. It means to conduct improperly, or disgracefully, or in a manner to deserve reproach. Love seeks that which is proper or becoming in the circumstances and relations of life in which we are placed. It prompts to the due respect for superiors, producing veneration and respect for their opinions; and it prompts to a proper regard for inferiors, not despising their rank, their poverty, their dress, their dwellings, their pleasures, their views of happiness; it prompts to the due observance of all the "relations" of life, as those of a husband, wife, parent, child, brother, sister, son, daughter, and produces a proper conduct and deportment in all these relations. The proper idea of the phrase is, that it prompts to all that is fit and becoming in life; and would save from all that is unfit and unbecoming.

There may be included in the word also the idea that it would prevent anything that would be a violation of decency or delicacy. It is well known that the Cynics were in the habit of setting at defiance all the usual ideas of

decency; and indeed this was, and is, commonly done in the temples of idolatry and pollution everywhere. Love would prevent this, because it teaches to promote the "happiness" of all, and of course to avoid everything that would offend purity of taste and mar enjoyment. In the same way it prompts to the fit discharge of all the relative duties, because it leads to the desire to promote the happiness of all. And in the same manner it would lead a man to avoid profane and indecent language, improper allusions, double meanings and inuendoes, coarse and vulgar expressions, because such things pain the ear, and offend the heart of purity and delicacy. There is much that is indecent and unseemly still in society that would be corrected by Christian love. What a change would be produced if, under the influence of that love, nothing should be said or done in the various relations of life but what would be "seemly, fit, and decent!" And what a happy influence would the prevalence of this love have on the contact of mankind!

Seeketh not her own - There is, perhaps, not a more striking or important expression in the New Testament than this; or one that more beautifully sets forth the nature and power of that love which is produced by true religion. Its evident meaning is, that it is not selfish; it does not seek its own happiness exclusively or mainly; it does not seek its own happiness to the injury of others. This expression is not, however, to be pressed as if Paul meant to teach that a man should not regard his own welfare at all; or have no respect to his health, his property, his happiness, or his salvation. Every man is bound to pursue such a course of life as will ultimately secure his own salvation. But it is not simply or mainly that he may be happy that he is to seek it. It is, that he may thus glorify God his Saviour; and accomplish the great design which his Maker has had in view in his creation and redemption.

If his happiness is the main or leading thing, it proves that he is supremely selfish; and selfishness is not religion. The expression used here is "comparative," and denotes that this is not the main, the chief, the only thing which one who is under the influence of love or true religion will seek. True religion, or love to others, will prompt us to seek their welfare with self-denial, and personal sacrifice and toil. Similar expressions, to denote comparison, occur frequently in the sacred Scriptures. Thus, where it is said (Hosea 7:6; compare Micah 6:8; Matthew 9:13), "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice;" it is meant, "I desired mercy more than I desired

sacrifice; I did not wish that mercy should be forgotten or excluded in the attention to the mere ceremonies of religion." The sense here is, therefore, that a man under the influence of true love or religion does not make his own happiness or salvation the main or leading thing; he does not make all other things subservient to this; he seeks the welfare of others, and desires to promote their happiness and salvation, even at great personal sacrifice and self-denial.

It is the "characteristic" of the man, not that he promotes his own worth, health, happiness, or salvation, but that he lives to do good to others. Love to others will prompt to that, and that alone. There is not a particle of selfishness in true love. It seeks the welfare of others, and of all others. That true religion will produce this, is evident everywhere in the New Testament; and especially in the life of the Lord Jesus, whose whole biography is comprehended in one expressive declaration, "who went about doinG good;" Acts 10:38. It follows from this statement:

(1) That no man is a Christian who lives for himself alone; or who makes it his main business to promote his own happiness and salvation.

(2) no man is a Christian who does not deny himself; or no one who is not willing to sacrifice his own comfort, time, wealth, and ease, to advance the welfare of mankind.

(3) it is this principle which is yet to convert the world. Long since the whole world would have been converted, had all Christians been under its influence. And when all Christians make it their grand object "not" to seek their own, but the good of others; when true charity shall occupy its appropriate place in the heart of every professed child of God, then this world will be speedily converted to the Saviour. Then there will he no lack of funds to spread Bibles and tracts; to sustain missionaries, or to establish colleges and schools; then there will be no lack of people who shall be willing to go to any part of the earth to preach the gospel; and then there will be no lack of prayer to implore the divine mercy on a ruined and perishing world. O may the time soon come when all the selfishness in the human heart shall be dissolved, and when the whole world shall be embraced in the benevolence of Christians, and the time, and talent, and

wealth of the whole church shall be regarded as consecrated to God, and employed and expended under the influence of Christian love! Compare the note at 1 Corinthians 10:24.

Is not easily provoked - (παροξύνεται paroxunetai). This word occurs in the New Testament only in one other place. Acts 17:16, "his spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." See the note on that place. The word properly means to sharpen by, or with, or on anything (from ὀξύς oxussharp), and may be applied to the act of sharpening a knife or sword; then it means to sharpen the mind, temper, courage of anyone; to excite, impel, etc. Here it means evidently to rouse to anger; to excite to indignation or wrath. Tyndale renders it, "is not provoked to anger." Our translation does not exactly convey the sense. The word "easily" is not expressed in the original. The translators have inserted it to convey the idea that he who is under the influence of love, though he may he provoked, that is, injured, or though there might be incitements to anger, yet that he would not be roused, or readily give way to it.

The meaning of the phrase in the Greek is, that a man who is under the influence of love or religion is not "prone" to violent anger or exasperation; it is not his character to be hasty, excited, or passionate. He is calm, serious, patient. He looks soberly at things; and though he may be injured, yet he governs his passions, restrains his temper, subdues his feelings. This, Paul says, would be produced by love. And this is apparent. If we are under the influence of benevolence, or love to anyone, we shall not give way to sudden bursts of feeling. We shall look kindly on his actions; put the best construction on his motives; deem it possible that we have mistaken the nature or the reasons of his conduct; seek or desire explanation Matthew 5:23-24; wait till we can look at the case in all its bearings; and suppose it possible that he may be influenced by good motives, and that his conduct will admit a satisfactory explanation. That true religion is designed to produce this, is apparent everywhere in the New Testament, and especially from the example of the Lord Jesus; that it actually does produce it, is apparent from all who come under its influence in any proper manner. The effect of religion is no where else more striking and apparent than in changing a temper naturally quick, excitable, and irritable, to one that is calm, and gentle, and subdued. A consciousness of the presence of God will do much to produce this state of mind; and if we truly loved all people, we should be soon angry with none.

Thinketh no evil - That is, puts the best possible construction on the motives and the conduct of others. This expression also is "comparative." It means that love, or that a person under the influence of love, is not malicious, censorious, disposed to find fault, or to impute improper motives to others. It is not only "not easily provoked," not soon excited, but it is not disposed to "think" that there was any evil intention even in cases which might tend to irritate or exasperate us. It is not disposed to think that there was any evil in the case; or that what was done was with any improper intention or design; that is, it puts the best possible construction on the conduct of others, and supposes, as far as can be done, that it was in consistency with honesty, truth, friendship, and love. The Greek word (λογίζεται logizetai) is that which is commonly rendered "impute," and is correctly rendered here "thinketh." It means, does not reckon, charge, or impute to a man any evil intention or design. We desire to think well of the man whom we love; nor will we think ill of his motives, opinions, or conduct until we are compelled to do so by the most unbreakable evidence. True religion, therefore, will prompt to charitable judging; nor is there a more striking evidence of the destitution of true religion than a disposition to impute the worst motives and opinions to a man.

Verse 6

Rejoiceth not in iniquity - Does not rejoice over the "vices" of other people; does not take delight when they are guilty of crime, or when, in any manner, they fall into sin. It does not find pleasure in hearing others accused of sin, and in having it proved that they committed it. It does not find a malicious pleasure in the "report" that they have done wrong; or in following up that report, and finding it established. Wicked people often find pleasure in this Romans 1:32, and rejoice when others have fallen into sin, and have disgraced and ruined themselves. People of the world often find a malignant pleasure in the report, and in the evidence that a member of the Church has brought dishonor on his profession. A man often rejoices when an enemy, a persecutor, or a slanderer has committed some crime, and when he has shown an improper spirit, uttered a rash expression, or taken some step which shall involve him in ignominy. But love does none of these things. It does not desire that an enemy, a persecutor, or a slanderer should do evil, or should disgrace and ruin himself. It does not rejoice, but grieves, when a professor of religion, or an enemy of religion - when a personal friend or foe has done anything wrong. It neither loves the wrong, nor the

fact that it has been done. And perhaps there is no greater triumph of the gospel than in its enabling a man to rejoice that even his enemy and persecutor in any respect does well; or to rejoice that he is in any way honored and respected among people. Human nature, without the gospel, manifests a different feeling; and it is only as the heart is subdued by the gospel, and filled with universal benevolence, that it is brought to rejoice when all people do well.

Rejoiceth in the truth - The word "truth" here stands opposed to "iniquity," and means virtue, piety, goodness. It does not rejoice in the "vices," but in the "virtues" of others. It is pleased, it rejoices when they "do well." It is pleased when those who differ from us conduct themselves in any manner in such a way as to please God, and to advance their own reputation and happiness. They who are under the influence of that love rejoice that good is done, and the truth defended and advanced, whoever may be the instrument; rejoice that others are successful in their plans of doing good, though they do not act with us; rejoice that other people have a reputation well earned for virtue and purity of life, though they may differ from us in opinion, and may be connected with a different denomination. They do not rejoice when other denominations of Christians fall into error; or when their plans are blasted; or when they are calumniated, and oppressed, and reviled.

By whomsoever good is done, or wheresoever, it is to them a matter of rejoicing; and by whomsoever evil is done, or wheresoever, it is to them a matter of grief; see Philemon 1:14-18. The "reason" of this is, that all sin, error, and vice will ultimately ruin the happiness of anyone; and as love desires their happiness, it desires that they should walk in the ways of virtue, and is grieved when they do not. What a change would the prevalence of this feeling produce in the conduct and happiness of mankind! How much ill-natured joy would it repress at the faults of others? How much would it do to repress the pains which a man often takes to circulate reports disadvantageous to his adversary; to find out and establish some flaw in his character; to prove that he has said or done something disgraceful and evil! And how much would it do even among Christians, in restraining them from rejoicing at the errors, mistakes, and improprieties of the friends of revivals of religion, and in leading them to mourn over their errors in secret, instead of taking a malicious pleasure in promulgating them to the world! This would be a very different world if there were none to

rejoice in iniquity; and the church would be a different church if there were none in its bosom but those who rejoiced in the truth, and in the efforts of humble and self-denying piety.

Verse 7

Beareth all things - Compare the note at 1 Corinthians 9:12. Doddridge renders this, "covers all things." The word used here (στέγει stegei) properly means to "cover" (from στέγη stegēa covering, roof; Matthew 8:8; Luke 7:6); and then to "hide," "conceal," not to make known. If this be the sense here, then it means that love is disposed to hide or conceal the faults and imperfections of others; not to promulgate or blazon them abroad, or to give any undue publicity to them. Benevolence to the individual or to the public would require that these faults and errors should be concealed. If this is the sense, then it accords nearly with what is said in the previous verse. The word may also mean, to forbear, bear with, endure. Thus, it is used in 1 Thessalonians 3:1, 1 Thessalonians 3:5. And so our translators understand it here, as meaning that love is patient, long-suffering, not soon angry not disposed to revenge. And if this is the sense, it accords with the expression in 1 Corinthians 13:4, "love suffers long." The more usual classic meaning is the former; the usage in the New Testament seems to demand the latter. Rosenmuller renders it, "bears all things;" Bloomfield prefers the other interpretation. Locke and Macknight render it "cover." The "real" sense of the passage is not materially varied, whichever interpretation is adopted. It means, that in regard to the errors and faults of others, there is a disposition "not" to notice or to revenge them. There is a willingness to conceal, or to bear with them patiently.

All things - This is evidently to be taken in a popular sense, and to he interpreted in accordance with the connection. All universal expressions of this kind demand to be thus limited. The meaning must be, "as far as it can consistently or lawfully be done." There are offences which it is not proper or right for a man to conceal, or to suffer to pass unnoticed. Such are those where the laws of the land are violated, and a man is called on to testify, etc. But the phrase here refers to private matters; and indicates a disposition "not" to make public or to avenge the faults committed by others.

Believeth all things - The whole scope of the connection and the argument here requires us to understand this of the conduct of others. It cannot mean, that the man who is under the influence of love is a man of

“universal credulity;” that he makes no discrimination in regard to things to be believed; and is as prone to believe a falsehood as the truth; or that he is at no pains to inquire what is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong. But it must mean, that in regard to the conduct of others, there is a disposition to put the best construction on it; to believe that they may be actuated by good motives, and that they intend no injury; and that there is a willingness to suppose, as far as can be, that what is done is done consistently with friendship, good feeling, and virtue. Love produces this, because it rejoices in the happiness and virtue of others, and will not believe the contrary except on irrefragable evidence.

Hopeth all things - Hopes that all will turn out well. This must also refer to the conduct of others; and it means, that however dark may be appearances; how much soever there may be to produce the fear that others are actuated by improper motives or are bad people, yet that there is a “hope” that matters may be explained and made clear; that the difficulties may he made to vanish; and that the conduct of others may be made to “appear” to be fair and pure. Love will “hold on to this hope” until all possibility of such a result has vanished and it is compelled to believe that the conduct is not susceptible of a fair explanation. This hope will extend to “all things” - to words and actions, and plans; to public and to private contact; to what is said and done in our own presence, and to what is said and done in our absence. Love will do this, because it delights in the virtue and happiness of others, and will not credit anything to the contrary unless compelled to do so.

Endureth all things - Bears up under, sustains, and does not complain. Bears up under all persecutions at the hand of man; all efforts to injure the person, property, or reputation; and hears all that may be laid upon us in the providence and by the direct agency of God; compare Job 13:15. The connection requires us to understand it principally of our treatment at the hands of our fellow-men.

Verse 8

Charity never faileth - Paul here proceeds to illustrate the value of love, from its “permanency” as compared with other valued endowments. It is valuable, and is to be sought because it will always abide; may be always exercised; is adapted to all circumstances, and to all worlds in which we may be placed, or in which we may dwell. The word rendered “faileth” (ἐκπίπτει ekpiptei) denotes properly to fall out of, to fall from or off; and

may be applied to the stars of heaven falling Mark 13:25, or to flowers that fall or fade James 1:11; 1 Peter 1:24, or to chains falling from the hands, etc.; Acts 12:7. Here it means to fall away, to fail; to be without effect, to cease to be in existence. The expression may mean that it will be adapted to all the situations of life, and is of a nature to be always exercised; or it may mean that it will continue to all eternity, and he exercised in heaven forever. The connection demands that the latter should be regarded as the true interpretation; see 1 Corinthians 13:13. The sense is, that while other endowments of the Holy Spirit must soon cease and he valueless, love would abide, and would always exist. The "argument" is, that we ought to seek that which is of enduring value; and that, therefore, love should be preferred to those endowments of the Spirit on which so high a value had been set by the Corinthians.

But whether there be prophecies - That is, the "gift" of prophecy, or the power of speaking as a prophet; that is, of delivering the truth of God in an intelligible manner under the influence of inspiration; the gift of being a public speaker, of instructing and edifying the church, and foretelling future events; see the note at 1 Corinthians 14:1.

They shall fail - The gift shall cease to be exercised; shall be abolished, come to nothing. There shall be no further use for this gift in the light and glory of the world above, and it shall cease. God shall be the teacher there. And as there will be no need of confirming the truth of religion by the prediction of future events, and no need of warning against impending dangers there, the gift of foretelling future events will be of course unknown. In heaven, also, there will be no need that the faith of God's people shall be encouraged, or their devotions excited, by such exhortations and instructions as are needful now; and the endowment of prophecy will be, therefore, unknown.

There be tongues - The power of speaking foreign languages.

They shall cease - Macknight supposes this means that they shall cease in the church after the gospel shall have been preached to all nations. But the more natural interpretation is, to refer it to the future life; since the main idea which Paul is urging here is the value of love above all other endowments, from the fact that it would be "abiding," or permanent - an idea which is more certainly and fully met by a reference to the future world than by a reference to the state of things in the church on earth. If it refers to heaven, it means that the power of communicating thoughts there

will not be by the medium of learned and foreign tongues. What will be the mode is unknown. But as the diversity of tongues is one of the fruits of sin 1 Corinthians 14:8. This refers, I think, to knowledge as "we now possess it." It cannot mean that there will be no knowledge in heaven; for there must be a vast increase of knowledge in that world among all its inhabitants. The idea in the passage here, I think, is, "All the knowledge which we now possess, valuable as it is, will be obscured and lost, and rendered comparatively valueless, in the fuller splendors of the eternal world; as the feeble light of the stars, beautiful and valuable as it is, "vanishes," or is lost in the splendors of the rising sun. The knowledge which we now have is valuable, as the gift of prophecy and the power of speaking foreign languages is valuable, but it will be lost in the brighter visions of the world above." That this is the sense is evident from what Paul says in illustration of the sentiment in 1 Corinthians 13:9-10. "Now" we know in part. What we deem ourselves acquainted with, we imperfectly understand. There are many obscurities and many difficulties. But in that future world we shall know distinctly and clearly 1 Corinthians 13:12; and then the knowledge which we now possess will appear so dim and obscure, that it will seem to have vanished away and disappeared,

"As a dim candle dies at noon."

Macknight and others understand this of the knowledge of the mysteries of the Old Testament, or "the inspired knowledge of the ancient revelations, which should be abolished when the church should have attained its mature state;" a most meagre, jejune, and frigid interpretation. It is true, also, that not only shall our imperfect knowledge seem to have vanished in the superior light and glory of the eternal world but that much of that which here passes for knowledge shall be then unknown. Much of that which is called "science" is "falsely so called;" and much that is connected with literature that has attracted so much attention, will be unknown in the eternal world. It is evident that much that is connected with criticism, and the knowledge of language, with the different systems of mental philosophy which are erroneous; perhaps much that is connected with anatomy, physiology, and geology; and much of the science which now is connected with the arts, and which is of use only as tributary to the arts, will be then unknown. Other subjects may rise into importance which are now unknown; and possibly things connected with science which are now regarded as of the least importance will then become objects of great

moment, and ripen and expand into sciences that shall contribute much to the eternal happiness of heaven. The essential idea in this passage is, that all the knowledge which we now possess shall lose its effulgence, be dimmed and lost in the superior light of heaven. But love shall live there; and we should, therefore, seek that which is permanent and eternal.

Verse 9

For we know in part - Compare the note on 1 Corinthians 12:27. This expression means "only in part;" that is, "imperfectly." Our knowledge here is imperfect and obscure. It may, therefore, all vanish in the eternal world amidst its superior brightness; and we should not regard that as of such vast value which is imperfect and obscure; compare the note at 1 Corinthians 8:2. This idea of the obscurity and imperfection of our knowledge, as compared with heaven, the apostle illustrates 1 Corinthians 13:11 by comparing it with the knowledge which a child has, compared with that in maturer years and 1 Corinthians 13:12 by the knowledge which we have in looking through a glass - an imperfect medium - compared with that which we have in looking closely and directly at an object without any medium.

And we prophesy in part - This does not mean that we partly "know" the truths of religion, and partly "conjecture" or "guess" at them; or that we know only a part of them, and "conjecture" the remainder. But the apostle is showing the imperfection of the prophetic gift; and he observes, that there is the same imperfection which attends knowledge. It is only in part; it is imperfect; it is indistinct, compared with the full view of truth in heaven; it is obscure, and all that is imparted by that gift will soon become dim and lost in the superior brightness and glory of the heavenly world. The "argument" is, that we ought not to seek so anxiously that which is so imperfect and obscure, and which must soon vanish away; but we should rather seek that love which is permanent, expanding, and eternal.

Verse 10

But when that which is perfect is come - Does come; or shall come. This proposition is couched in a general form. It means that when anything which is perfect is seen or enjoyed, then that which is imperfect is forgotten, laid aside, or vanishes. Thus, in the full and perfect light of day, the imperfect and feeble light of the stars vanishes. The sense here is, that "in heaven" - a state of absolute perfection - that which is "in part," or which is imperfect, shall be lost in superior brightness. All imperfection will vanish. And all that we here possess that is obscure shall be lost in the

superior and perfect glory of that eternal world. All our present unsatisfactory modes of obtaining knowledge shall be unknown. All shall be clear, bright, and eternal.

Verse 11

When I was a child - The idea here is, that the knowledge which we now have, compared with that which we shall have in heaven, is like that which is possessed in infancy compared with that we have in manhood; and that as, when we advance in years, we lay aside, as unworthy of our attention, the views, feelings, and plans which we had in boyhood, and which we then esteemed to be of so great importance, so, when we reach heaven, we shall lay aside the views, feelings, and plans which we have in this life, and which we now esteem so wise and so valuable. The word "child" here (νήπιος nēpios) denotes properly a baby, an infant, though without any definable limitation of age. It refers to the first periods of existence; before the period which we denominate boyhood, or youth. Paul here refers to a period when he could "speak," though evidently a period when his speech was scarcely intelligible - when he first began to articulate.

I spake as a child - Just beginning to articulate, in a broken and most imperfect manner. The idea here is, that our knowledge at present, compared with the knowledge of heaven, is like the broken and scarcely intelligible efforts of a child to speak compared with the power of utterance in manhood.

I understood as a child - My understanding was feeble and imperfect. I had narrow and imperfect views of things. I knew little. I fixed my attention on objects which I now see to be of little value. I acquired knowledge which has vanished, or which has sunk in the superior intelligence of riper years. "I was affected as a child. I was thrown into a transport of joy or grief on the slightest occasions, which manly reason taught me to despise" - Doddridge.

I thought as a child - Margin, "Reasoned." The word may mean either. I thought, argued, reasoned in a weak and inconclusive manner. My thoughts, and plans, and argumentations were puerile, and such as I now see to be short-sighted and erroneous. Thus, it will be with our thoughts compared to heaven. There will be, doubtless, as much difference between our present knowledge, and plans, and views, and those which we shall have in heaven, as there is between the plans and views of a child and those of a man. Just before his death, Sir Isaac Newton made this remark: "I do

not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself by now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me" - Brewster's Life of Newton, pp. 300,301. Ed. New York, 1832.

Verse 12

For now we see through a glass - Paul here makes use of another illustration to show the imperfection of our knowledge here. Compared with what it will be in the future world, it is like the imperfect view of an object which we have in looking through an obscure and opaque medium compared with the view which we have when we look at it "face to face." The word "glass" here (ἐσοπτρον esoptron) means properly a mirror, a looking-glass. The mirrors of the ancients were usually made of polished metal; Exodus 38:8; Job 37:18. Many have supposed (see Doddridge, in loc. and Robinson's Lexicon) that the idea here is that of seeing objects by reflection from a mirror, which reflects only their imperfect forms. But this interpretation does not well accord with the apostle's idea of seeing things obscurely. The most natural idea is that of seeing objects by an imperfect medium, by looking "through" something in contemplating them.

It is, therefore, probable that he refers to those transparent substances which the ancients had, and which they used in their windows occasionally; such as thin plates of horn, transparent stone, etc. Windows were often made of the "lapis specularis" described by Plint (xxxvi. 22), which was pellucid, and which admitted of being split into thin "laminae" or scales, probably the same as mica. Humboldt mentions such kinds of stone as being used in South America in church windows - Bloomfield. It is not improbable, I think, that even in the time of Paul the ancients had the knowledge of glass, though it was probably at first very imperfect and obscure. There is some reason to believe that glass was known to the Phenicians, the Tyrians, and the Egyptians. Pliny says that it was first discovered by accident. A merchant vessel, laden with nitre or fossil alkali, having been driven on shore on the coast of Palestine near the river Belus, the crew went in search of provisions, and accidentally supported the kettles on which they dressed their food upon pieces of fossil alkali.

The river sand above which this operation was performed was vitrified by its union with the alkali, and thus produced glass - See Edin.

Encyclopedia, "Glass." It is known that glass was in quite common use about the commencement of the Christian era. In the reign of Tiberius an artist had his house demolished for making glass malleable. About this time drinking vessels were made commonly of glass; and glass bottles for holding wine and flowers were in common use. That glass was in quite common use has been proved by the remains that have been discovered in the ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii. There is, therefore, no impropriety in supposing that Paul here may have alluded to the imperfect and discolored glass which was then in extensive use; for we have no reason to suppose that it was then as transparent as that which is now made. It was, doubtless, an imperfect and obscure medium, and, therefore, well adapted to illustrate the nature of our knowledge here compared with what it wilt be in heaven.

Darkly - Margin, "In a riddle" (ἐν αἰνίγματι en ainigmati). The word means a riddle; an enigma; then an obscure intimation. In a riddle a statement is made with some resemblance to the truth; a puzzling question is proposed, and the solution is left to conjecture. Hence, it means, as here, obscurely, darkly, imperfectly. Little is known; much is left to conjecture; a very accurate account of most of that which passes for knowledge. Compared with heaven, our knowledge here much resembles the obscure intimations in an enigma compared with clear statement and manifest truth.

But then - In the fuller revelations in heaven.

Face to face - As when one looks upon an object openly, and not through an obscure and dark medium. It here means, therefore, "clearly, without obscurity."

I know in part - 1 Corinthians 13:9.

But then shall I know - My knowledge shall be clear and distinct. I shall have a clear view of those objects which are now so indistinct and obscure. I shall be in the presence of those objects about which I now inquire; I shall "see" them; I shall have a clear acquaintance with the divine perfections, plans, and character. This does not mean that he would know "everything," or that he would be omniscient; but that in regard to those points of inquiry in which he was then interested, he would have a view that would be distinct and clear - a view that would be clear, arising from the fact that he would be present with them, and permitted to see them, instead of surveying them at a distance, and by imperfect mediums.

Even as also I am known - "In the same manner" (καθὼς kathōs), not "to the same extent." It does not mean that he would know God as clearly and as fully as God would know him; for his remark does not relate to the "extent," but to the "manner" and the comparative "clearness" of his knowledge. He would see things as he was now seen and would be seen there. It would be face to face. He would be in their presence. It would not be where he would be seen clearly and distinctly, and himself compelled to look upon all objects confusedly and obscurely, and through an imperfect medium. But he would he with them; would see them face to face; would see them without any medium; would see them "in the same manner" as they would see him. Disembodied spirits, and the inhabitants of the heavenly world, have this knowledge; and when we are there, we shall see the truths, not at a distance and obscurely, but plainly and openly.

Verse 13

And now abideth - "Remains" (μένει menei). The word means properly to remain, continue, abide; and is applied to persons remaining in a place, in a state or condition, in contradistinction from removing or changing their place, or passing away. Here it must be understood to be used to denote "permanency," when the other things of which he had spoken had passed away; and the sense is, that faith, hope, and love would "remain" when the gift of tongues should cease, and the need of prophecy, etc.; that is, these should survive them all. And the connection certainly requires us to understand him as saying that faith, hope, and love would survive "all" those things of which he had been speaking, and must, therefore, include knowledge 1 Corinthians 13:8-9,, as well as miracles and the other endowments of the Holy Spirit. They would survive them all; would be valuable when they should cease; and should, therefore, be mainly sought; and of these the greatest and most important is love.

Most commentators have supposed that Paul is speaking here only of this life, and that he means to say that in this life these three exist; that "faith, hope, and charity exist in this scene "only," but that in the future world faith and hope will be done away, and therefore the greatest of these is charity" - Bloomfield. See also Doddridge, Macknight, Rosenmuller, Clarke, etc. But to me it seems evident that Paul means to say that faith, hope, and love will survive "all" those other things of which he had been speaking; that "they" would vanish away, or be lost in superior attainments and endowments; that the time would come when they would be useless;

but that faith, hope, and love would then remain; but of “these,” for important reasons, love was the most valuable. Not because it would “endure” the longest, for the apostle does not intimate that, but because it is more important to the welfare of others, and is a more eminent virtue than they are.

As the strain of the argument requires us to look to another state, to a world where prophecy shall cease and knowledge shall vanish away, so the same strain of argumentation requires us to understand him as saying that faith, and hope, and love will subsist there; and that there, as here, love will be of more importance than faith and hope. It cannot be objected to this view that there will be no occasion for faith and hope in heaven. That is assumed without evidence, and is not affirmed by Paul. He gives no such intimation. Faith is “confidence” in God and in Christ; and there will be as much necessity of “confidence” in heaven as on earth. Indeed, the great design of the plan of salvation is to restore “confidence” in God among alienated creatures; and heaven could not subsist a moment without “confidence;” and faith, therefore, must be eternal. No society - be it a family, a neighborhood, a church, or a nation; be it mercantile, professional, or a mere association of friendship - can subsist a moment without mutual “confidence” or faith, and in heaven such confidence in God must subsist forever.

And so of hope. It is true that many of the objects of hope will then be realized, and will be succeeded by possession. But will the Christian have nothing to hope for in heaven? Will it be nothing to expect and desire greatly augmented knowledge, eternal enjoyment; perfect peace in all coming ages, and the happy society of the blessed forever? All heaven cannot be enjoyed at once; and if there is anything “future” that is an object of desire, there will be hope. Hope is a compound emotion, made up of a “desire” for an object and an “expectation” of obtaining it. But both these will exist in heaven. It is folly to say that a redeemed saint will not “desire” there eternal happiness; it is equal folly to say that there will be no strong expectation of obtaining it. All that is said, therefore, about faith as about to cease, and hope as not having an existence in heaven, is said without the authority of the Bible, and in violation of what must be the truth, and is contrary to the whole scope of the reasoning of Paul here.

But the greatest of these is charity - Not because it is to "endure" the longest, but because it is the more important virtue; it exerts a wider influence; it is more necessary to the happiness of society; it overcomes more evils. It is the great principle which is to bind the universe in harmony, which unites God to his creatures, and his creatures to himself, and which binds and confederates all holy beings with each other. It is therefore more important, because it pertains to society to the great kingdom of which God is the head, and because it enters into the very conception of a holy and happy organization. Faith and hope rather pertain to individuals; love pertains to society, and is that without which the kingdom of God cannot stand. Individuals may be saved by faith and hope; but the whole immense kingdom of God depends on love. It is, therefore, of more importance than all other graces and endowments; more important than prophecy and miracles, and the gift of tongues and knowledge, because it will survive them all; more important than faith and hope, because, although it may co-exist with them, and though they all shall live forever, yet love enters into the very nature of the kingdom of God; binds society together; unites the Creator and the creature; and blends the interests of all the redeemed, and of the angels, and of God, into one.

1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Introduction

This chapter is a continuation of the subject commenced in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. In 1Cor. 12Paul had entered on the discussion of the various endowments which the Holy Spirit confers on Christians, and had shown that these endowments were bestowed in a different degree on different individuals, and yet so as to promote in the best way the edification of the church. It was proper, he said 1 Corinthians 12:31, to desire the more eminent of these endowments, and yet there was one gift of the Spirit of more value than all others, which might be obtained by all, and which should be an object of desire to all. That was love; and to show the nature, power, and value of this, was the design of the thirteenth chapter, certainly one of the most tender and beautiful portions of the Bible. In this chapter the subject is continued with special reference to the subject of "prophecy," as being the most valuable of the miraculous endowments, or the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit.

In doing this, it was necessary to correct an erroneous estimate which they had placed on the power of speaking foreign languages. They had prized this, perhaps, because it gave them importance in the eyes of the pagan. And in proportion as they valued this, they undervalued the gift of being able to edify the church by speaking in a known and intelligible language. To correct this misapprehension; to show the relative value of these endowments, and especially to recommend the gift of "prophecy" as the more useful and desirable of the gifts of the Spirit, was the leading design of this chapter. In doing this, Paul first directs them to seek for charity. He also recommends to them, as in 1 Corinthians 12:31, to desire spiritual endowments, and of these endowments especially to desire prophecy; 1 Corinthians 14:1. He then proceeds to set forth the advantage of speaking in intelligible language, or of speaking so that the church may be edified, by the following considerations, which comprise the chapter:

1.The advantage of being understood, and of speaking for the edification of the church; 1 Corinthians 14:2-5.

2.No man could be useful to the church except he delivered that which was understood, any more than the sound of a trumpet in times of war would be useful, unless it were so sounded as to be understood by the army; 1 Corinthians 14:6-11.

3.It was the duty of all to seek to edify the church; and if a man could speak in an unknown tongue, it was his duty also to seek to be able to interpret what he said; 1 Corinthians 14:12-15.

4.The use of tongues would produce embarrassment and confusion, since those who heard them speak would be ignorant of what was said, and be unable to join in the devotions; 1 Corinthians 14:16-17.

5.Though Paul himself was more signally endowed than any of them, yet he prized far more highly the power of promoting the edification of the church, though he uttered but five words, if they were understood, than all the power which he possessed of speaking foreign languages; 1 Corinthians 14:18-19.

6.This sentiment illustrated from the Old Testament; 1 Corinthians 14:20-21.

7.The real use of the power of speaking foreign languages was to be a sign to unbelievers, an evidence that the religion was from God, and not to be used among those who were already Christians; 1 Corinthians 14:22.

8.The effect of their all speaking with tongues would be to produce confusion and disorder, and disgust among observers, and the conviction that they were deranged; but the effect of order, and of speaking intelligibly, would be to convince and convert them; 1 Corinthians 14:23-25.

9.The apostle then gives rules in regard to the proper conduct of those who were able to speak foreign languages; 1 Corinthians 14:26-32.

10.The great rule was, that order was to be observed, and that God was the author of peace; 1 Corinthians 14:33.

11.The apostle then gives a positive direction that on no pretence are women to be allowed to speak in the church, even though they should claim to be inspired; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

12.He then required all to submit to his authority, and to admit that what he had spoken was from the Lord; 1 Corinthians 14:36-37. And then,

13.Concludes with directing them to desire to prophesy, and not to forbid speaking with tongues on proper occasions, but to do all things in decency and order; 1 Corinthians 14:38-40,

Verse 1

Follow after charity - Pursue love 1 Corinthians 13:1; that is, earnestly desire it; strive to possess it; make it the object of your anxious and constant solicitude to obtain it, and to be influenced by it always. Cultivate it in your own hearts, as the richest and best endowment of the Holy Spirit, and endeavor to diffuse its happy influence on all around you.

And desire spiritual gifts - I do not forbid you, while you make the possession of love your great object, and while you do not make the desire of spiritual gifts the occasion of envy or strife, to desire the miraculous endowments of the Spirit and to seek to excel in those endowments which he imparts; see the note at 1 Corinthians 12:31. The main thing was to cultivate a spirit of love. Yet it was not improper also to desire to be so endowed as to promote their highest usefulness in the church. On the phrase "spiritual gifts," see the note at 1 Corinthians 12:1.

But rather that ye may prophesy - But especially, or particularly desire to be qualified for the office of prophesying. The apostle does not mean to say that prophecy is to be preferred to love or charity; but that, of the spiritual gifts which it was proper for them to desire and seek, prophecy was the most valuable. That is, they were not most earnestly and especially to desire to be able to speak foreign languages or to work miracles; but they were to desire to be qualified to speak in a manner that would be edifying to the church. They would naturally, perhaps, most highly prize the power of working miracles and of speaking foreign languages. The object of this chapter is to show them that the ability to speak in a plain, clear, instructive manner, so as to edify the church and convince sinners, was a more valuable endowment than the power of working miracles, or the power of speaking foreign languages.

On the meaning of the word "prophesy," see the note at Romans 11:6. To what is said there on the nature of this office, it seems necessary only to add an idea suggested by Prof. Robinson (Greek and English Lexicon,

under the article, Προφήτης Prophētēs), that the prophets were distinguished from the teachers (διδάσκαλοι didaskaloi), "in that, while the latter spoke in a calm, connected, didactic discourse adapted to instruct and enlighten the hearers, the prophet spoke more from the impulse of sudden inspiration, from the light of a sudden revelation at the moment (1 Corinthians 14:30, ἀποκάλυφθη apokalupthē), and his discourse was probably more adapted, by means of powerful exhortation, to awaken the feelings and conscience of the hearers." The idea of speaking from "revelation," he adds, seems to be fundamental to the correct idea of the nature of the prophecy here referred to. Yet the communications of the prophets were always in the vernacular tongue, and were always in intelligible language, and in this respect different from the endowments of those who spoke foreign languages.

The same truth might be spoken by both; the influence of the Spirit was equally necessary in both; both were inspired; and both answered important ends in the establishment and edification of the church. The gift of tongues, however, as it was the most striking and remarkable, and probably the most rare, was most highly prized and coveted. The object of Paul here is, to show that it was really an endowment of less value, and should be less desired by Christians than the gift of prophetic instruction, or the ability to edify the church in language intelligible and understood by all, under the immediate influences of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 2

For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue - This verse is designed to show that the faculty of speaking intelligibly, and to the edification of the church, is of more value than the power of speaking a foreign language. The reason is, that however valuable may be the endowment in itself, and however important the truth which he may utter, yet it is as if he spoke to God only. No one could understand him.

Speaketh not unto men - Does not speak so that people can understand him. His address is really not made to people, that is, to the church. He might have this faculty without being able to speak to the edification of the church. It is possible that the power of speaking foreign languages and of prophesying were sometimes united in the same person; but it is evident

that the apostle speaks of them as different endowments, and they probably were found usually in different individuals.

But unto God - It is as if he spoke to God. No one could understand him but God. This must evidently refer to the addresses "in the church," when Christians only were present, or when those only were present who spoke the same language, and who were unacquainted with foreign tongues. Paul says that "there" that faculty would be valueless compared with the power of speaking in a manner that should edify the church. He did not undervalue the power of speaking foreign languages when foreigners were present, or when they went to preach to foreigners; see 1 Corinthians 14:22. It was only when it was needless, when all present spoke one language, that he speaks of it as of comparatively little value.

For no man understandeth him - That is, no man in the church, since they all spoke the same language, and that language was different from what was spoken by him who was endowed with the gift of tongues. As God only could know the import of what he said, it would be lost upon the church, and would be useless.

Howbeit in the Spirit - Although, by the aid of the Spirit, he should, in fact, deliver the most important and sublime truths. This would doubtless be the case, that those who were thus endowed would deliver most important truths, but they would be "lost" upon those who heard them, because they could not understand them. The phrase "in the Spirit," evidently means "by the Holy Spirit," that is, by his aid and influence. Though he should be "really" under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and though the important truth which he delivers should be imparted by his aid, yet all would be valueless unless it were understood by the church.

He speaketh mysteries - For the meaning of the word "mystery," see Note, 1 Corinthians 2:7. The word here seems to be synonymous with sublime and elevated truth; truth that was not before known, and that might be of the utmost importance.

Verse 3

But he that prophesieth - See the note at 1 Corinthians 14:1. He that speaks under the influence of inspiration in the common language of his hearers. This seems to be the difference between those who spoke in foreign languages and those who prophesied. Both were under the influence of the Holy Spirit; both might speak the same truths; both might occupy an equally important and necessary place in the church; but the language of the

one was intelligible to the church, the other not; the one was designed to edify the church, the other to address those who spoke foreign tongues, or to give demonstration, by the power of speaking foreign languages, that the religion was from God.

Speaketh unto men - So as to be understood by those who were present.

To edification - See the note at 1 Corinthians 10:8, note at 1 Corinthians 10:23. Speaks so as to enlighten and strengthen the church.

And exhortation - See the note at Romans 12:8. He applies and enforces the practical duties of religion, and urges motives for a holy life.

And comfort - Encouragement. That is, he presents the promises and the "hopes" of the gospel; the various considerations adapted to administer comfort in the time of trial. The other might do this, but it would be in a foreign language, and would be useless to the church.

Verse 4

Edifieth himself - That is, the truths which are communicated to him by the Spirit, and which he utters in an unknown language, may be valuable, and may be the means of strengthening his faith, and building him up in the hopes of the gospel, but they can he of no use to others. His own holy affections might be excited by the truths which he would deliver, and the consciousness of possessing miraculous powers might excite his gratitude. And yet, as Doddridge has well remarked, there might be danger that a man might be injured by this gift when exercised in this ostentatious manner.

Verse 5

I would that ye all spake with tongues - "It is an important endowment, and is not, in its place, to be undervalued. It maybe of great service in the cause of truth, and if properly regulated, and not abused, I would rejoice if these extraordinary endowments were conferred on all. I have no envy against anyone who possesses it; no opposition to the endowment; but I wish that it should not be overvalued; and would wish to exalt into proper estimation the more useful but humble gift of speaking for the edification of the church."

Greater is he that prophesieth - This gift is of more value, and he really occupies a more elevated rank in the church. He is more "useful." The idea here is, that talents are not to he estimated by their "brilliancy," but by their "usefulness." The power of speaking in an unknown tongue was certainly a more striking endowment than that of speaking so as simply to

be “useful,” and yet the apostle tells us that the latter is the more valuable. So it is always. A man who is useful, however humble and unknown he may be, really occupies a more elevated and venerable rank than the man of most splendid talents and dazzling eloquence, who accomplishes nothing in saving the souls of people.

Except he interpret - However important and valuable the truth might he which he uttered, it would be useless to the church, unless he should explain it in language which they could understand. In that case, the apostle does not deny that the power of speaking foreign languages was a higher endowment and more valuable than the gift of prophecy. That the man who spoke foreign languages had the power of interpreting, is evident from this verse. From 1 Corinthians 14:27, it appears that the office of interpreting was sometimes performed by others.

Verse 6

Now, brethren, if I come unto you … - The truth which the apostle had been illustrating in an abstract manner, he proceeds to illustrate by applying it to himself. If he should come among them speaking foreign languages, it could be of no use unless it were interpreted to them.

Speaking with tongues - Speaking foreign languages; that is, speaking them “only,” without any interpreter. Paul had the power of speaking foreign languages 1 Corinthians 14:18; but he did not use this power for ostentation or display, but merely to communicate the gospel to those who did not understand his native tongue.

Either by revelation - Macknight renders this, “speak intelligibly;” that is, as he explains it, “by the revelation peculiar to an apostle.” Doddridge, “by the revelation of some gospel doctrine and mystery.” Locke interprets it, that you might understand the revelation, or knowledge,” etc.; but says in a note, that we cannot now certainly understand the difference between the meaning of the four words here used. “It is sufficient,” says he, “to know that these reruns stand for some intelligible discourse tending to the edification of the church.” Rosenmuller supposes the word “revelation” stands for some “clear and open knowledge of any truth arising from meditation.” It is probable that the word here does not refer to divine inspiration, as it usually does, but that it stands opposed to that which is unknown and unintelligible, as that which is “revealed” ἀποκαλύψις apokalupsisstands opposed to what is unknown, concealed, “hidden,” obscure. Here, therefore, it is synonymous, perhaps, with “explained.”

“What shall it profit, unless that which I speak be brought out of the obscurity and darkness of a foreign language, and uncovered or explained!” The original sense of the word “revelation” here is, I suppose, intended ἀποκαλύψις apokalupsisfrom ἀποκαλύπτω apokaluptō“to uncover”), and means that the sense should be uncovered, that is, explained or what was spoken could not be of value.

Or by knowledge - By making it intelligible. By so explaining it as to make it understood. Knowledge here stands opposed to the “ignorance” and “obscurity” which would attend a communication in a foreign language.

Or by prophesying - See the note at 1 Corinthians 14:1. That is, unless it be communicated, through interpretation, in the manner in which the prophetic teachers spoke; that is, made intelligible, and explained, and actually brought down to the usual characteristics of communications made in their own language.

Or by doctrine - By teaching (διδαχῇ didachē). By instruction; in the usual mode of plain and familiar instruction. The sense of this passage, therefore, is clear. Though Paul should utter among them, as he had abundant ability to do, the most weighty and important truths, yet, unless he interpreted what he said in a manner clear from obscurity, like “revelation;” or intelligibly, and so as to constitute “knowledge;” or in the manner that the prophets spoke, in a plain and intelligible manner; or in the manner usual in simple and plain “instruction,” it would be useless to them. The perplexities of commentators may be seen stated in Locke, Bloomfield, and Doddridge.

Verse 7

Things without life - Instruments of music.

Whether pipe - This instrument (αὐλὸς aulos) was usually made of reeds, and probably had a resemblance to a flageolet.

Or harp - This instrument (κιθάρα kithara) was a stringed instrument, and was made in the same way as a modern harp. It usually had ten strings, and was struck with the plectrum, or with a key. It was commonly employed in praise.

Except they give a distinction in the sounds - Unless they give a difference in the “tones,” such as are indicated in the gamut for music.

How shall it be known … - That is, there would be no time, no music. Nothing would be indicated by it. It would not be suited to excite the emotions of sorrow or of joy. All music is designed to excite emotions; but

if there be no difference in the tones, no emotion would be produced. So it would be in words uttered. Unless there was something that was suited to excite thought or emotion; unless what was spoken was made "intelligible," no matter how important in itself it might be, yet it would be useless.

Verse 8

For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound - The trumpet was used commonly in war. It is a well-known wind instrument, and was made of brass, silver, etc. It was used for various purposes in war - to summon the soldiers; to animate them in their march; to call them forth to battle; to sound a retreat; and to signify to them what they were to do in battle, whether to charge, advance, or retreat, etc. It therefore employed a "language" which was intelligible to an army. An uncertain sound was one in which none of these things were indicated, or in which it could not be determined what was required.

Who shall prepare himself … - The apostle selects a single instance of what was indicated by the trumpet, as an illustration of what he meant. The idea is, that foreign tongues spoken in their assembly would be just as useless in regard to their duty, their comfort, and edification, as would be the sound of a trumpet when it gave one of the usual and intelligible sounds by which it was known what the soldiers were required to do. Just as we would say, that the mere beating on a drum would he useless, unless some tune was played by which it was known that the soldiers were summoned to the parade, to advance, or to retreat.

Verse 9

So likewise ye … - To apply the case. If you use a foreign language, how shall it be known what is said, or of what use will it be, unless it is made intelligible by interpretation?

Utter by the tongue - Unless you speak.

Words easy to be understood - Significant words (margin), words to which your auditors are accustomed.

For ye shall speak into the air - You will not speak so as to be understood; and it will be just the same as if no one was present, and you spoke to the air. We have a proverb that resembles this: "You may as well speak to the winds:" that is, you speak where it would not be understood, or where the words would have no effect. It may he observed here, that the practice of the papists accords with what the apostle here condemns, where worship is conducted in a language not understood by the people; and that

there is much of this same kind of speaking now, where unintelligible terms are used, or words are employed that are above the comprehension of the people; or where doctrines are discussed which are unintelligible, and which are regarded by them without interest. All preaching should be plain, simple, perspicuous, and adapted to the capacity of the hearers.

Verse 10

There are it may be … - There has been considerable variety in the interpertation of this expression. Rosenmuller renders it, "for the sake of example." Grotius supposes that Paul meant to indicate that there were, perhaps, or might be, as many languages as the Jews supposed, to wit, seventy. Beza and others suppose it means, that there may he as many languages as there are nations of people. Bloomfield renders it, "Let there he as many kinds of languages as you choose." Macknight, "There are, no doubt, as many kinds of languages in the world as ye speak." Robinson (Lexicon) renders it, "If so happen, it may be; perchance, perhaps;" and says the phrase is equivalent to "for example," The sense is, "There are perhaps, or for example, very many kinds of voices in the world; and all are significant. None are used by those who speak them without meaning; none speak them without designing to convey some intelligible idea to their hearers." The "argument" is, that as "all" the languages that are in the world, however numerous they are, are for "utility," and as none are used for the sake of mere display, so it should be with those who had the power of speaking them in the Christian church. They should speak them only when and where they would be understood.

Voices - Languages.

Verse 11

The meaning of the voice - Of the language that is uttered, or the sounds that are made.

I shall be unto him … - What I say will be unintelligible to him, and what he says will be unintelligible to me. We cannot understand one another any more than people can who speak different languages.

A barbarian - See the note at Romans 1:14. The word means one who speaks a different, or a foreign language.

Verse 12

Even so ye - Since you desire spiritual gifts, I may urge it upon you to seek to he able to speak in a clear and intelligible manner, that you may

edify the church. This is one of the most valuable endowments of the Spirit; and this should be earnestly desired.

Forasmuch as ye are zealous - Since you earnestly desire; See the note at 1 Corinthians 12:31.

Spiritual gifts - The endowments conferred by the Holy Spirit; See the note at 1 Corinthians 12:1.

Seek that ye may excel … - Seek that you may be able to convey truth in a clear and plain manner; seek to be distinguished for that. It is one of the most rare and valuable endowments of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 13

Pray that he may interpret - Let him ask of God ability that he may explain it clearly to the church. It would seem probable that the power of speaking foreign languages, and the power of conveying truth in a clear and distinct manner, were not always found in the same person, and that the one did not of necessity imply the other. The truth seems to have been, that these extraordinary endowments of the Holy Spirit were bestowed upon people in some such way as "ordinary" talents and mental powers are now conferred; and that they became in a similar sense the "characteristic mental endowments of the individual," and of course were subject to the same laws, and liable to the same kinds of abuse, as mental endowments are now. And as it now happens that one man may have a special faculty for acquiring and expressing himself in a foreign language who may not be by any means distinguished for clear enunciation, or capable of conveying his ideas in an interesting manner to a congregation, so it was then.

The apostle, therefore, directs such, if any there were, instead of priding themselves on their endowments, and instead of always speaking in an unknown tongue, which would he useless to the church, to "pray" for the more useful gift of being able to convey their thoughts in a clear and intelligible manner in their vernacular tongue. This would be useful. The truths, therefore, that they had the power of speaking with eminent ability in a foreign language, they ought to desire to be able to "interpret" so that they would be intelligible to the people whom they addressed in the church. This seems to me to be the plain meaning of this passage, which has given so much perplexity to commentators. Macknight renders it, however, "Let him who prayeth in a foreign language, pray so as some one may interpret;" meaning that he who prayed in a foreign language was to do it by two or three sentences at a time, so that he might be followed by an interpreter. But

this is evidently forced. In order to this, it is needful to suppose that the phrase ὁ λαλῶν ho lalōn"that speaketh," should be rendered, contrary to its obvious and usual meaning, "who prays," and to supply τις tis"someone," in the close of the verse. The obvious interpretation is that which is given above; and this proceeds only on the supposition that the power of speaking foreign languages and the power of interpreting were not always united in the same person - a supposition that is evidently true, as appears from 1 Corinthians 12:10.

Verse 14

For if I pray … - The reference to prayer here, and to singing in 1 Corinthians 14:15, is designed to illustrate the propriety of the general sentiment which he is defending, that public worship should be conducted in a language that would be intelligible to the people. However well meant it might be, or however the "heart" might be engaged in it, yet unless it was intelligible, and the understanding could join in it, it would be vain and profitless.

My spirit prayeth - The word spirit here (πνεῦμα pneuma) has been variously understood. Some have understood it of the Holy Spirit - the Spirit by which Paul says he was actuated. Others of the "spiritual gift," or that spiritual influence by which he was endowed. Others of the mind itself. But it is probable that the word "spirit" refers to the "will;" or to the mind, as the seat of the affections and emotions; that is, to the heart, desires, or intentions. The word "spirit" is often used in the Scriptures as the seat of the affections, and emotions, and passions of various kinds; see Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" Luke 10:21, "Jesus rejoiced in spirit." So it is the seat of ardor or fervor Luke 1:17; Acts 18:25; Romans 12:11; of grief or indignation; Mark 3:12; John 11:33; John 13:21; Acts 17:16. It refers also to feelings, disposition, or temper of mind, in Luke 9:55; Romans 8:15. Here it refers, it seems to me. to the heart, the will, the disposition, the feelings, as contradistinguished from the understanding; and the sense is, "My feelings find utterance in prayer; my heart is engaged in devotion; my prayer will be acceptable to God, who looks upon the feelings of the heart, and I may have true enjoyment; but my understanding will be unfruitful, that is, will not profit others. What I say will not he understood by them; and of course, however much benefit I might derive from my devotions, yet they would be useless to others."

But my understanding - (ὁ δὲ νοῦς μου ho de nous mou). My intellect, my mind; my mental efforts and operations.

Is unfruitful - Produces nothing that will be of advantage to them. It is like a barren tree; a tree that bears nothing that can be of benefit to others. They cannot understand what I say, and of course, they cannot be profited by what I utter.

Verse 15

What is it then? - What shall I do? What is the proper course for me to pursue? What is my practice and my desire; see the same form of expression in Romans 3:9, and Romans 6:15. It indicates the "conclusion" to which the reasoning had conducted him, or the course which he would pursue in view of all the circumstances of the case.

I will pray with the spirit … - I will endeavor to "blend" all the advantages which can be derived from prayer; I will "unite" all the benefits which "can" result to myself and to others. I deem it of vast importance to pray with the spirit in such a way that the "heart" and the "affections" may be engaged, so that I may myself derive benefit from it; but I will also unite with that, utility to others; I will use such language that they may understand it, and be profited.

And I will pray with the understanding also - So that others may understand me. I will make the appropriate use of the intellect, so that it may convey ideas, and make suitable impressions on the minds of others.

I will sing with the spirit - It is evident that the same thing might take place in singing which occurred in prayer. It might be in a foreign language, and might be unintelligible to others. The affections of the man himself might be excited, and his heart engaged in the duty, but it would be profitless to others. Paul, therefore, says that he would so celebrate the praises of God as to excite the proper affections in his own mind, and so as to be intelligible and profitable to others. This passage proves:

(1)That the praises of God are to be celebrated among Christians, and that it is an important part of worship;

(2)That the heart should be engaged in it, and that it should be so performed as to excite proper affections in the hearts of those who are engaged in it; and,

(3)That it should be so done as to be "intelligible" and edifying to others.

The words should be so uttered as to be distinct and understood. There should be clear enunciation as well as in prayer and preaching, since the design of sacred music in the worship of God is not only to utter praise, but it is to impress the sentiments which are sung on the heart by the aid of musical sounds and expression more deeply than could otherwise be done. If this is not done, the singing might as well be in a foreign language. Perhaps there is no part of public worship in which there is greater imperfection than in the mode of its psalmody. At the same time, there is scarcely any part of the devotions of the sanctuary that may be made more edifying or impressive. It has the "advantage" - an advantage which preaching and praying have not - of using the sweet tones of melody and harmony to "impress" sentiment on the heart and it should be done.

Verse 16

Else - (Ἐπεί Epei). Since; if this is not done; if what is said is not intelligible, how shall the unlearned be able appropriately to express his assent, and join in your devotions?

When thou shalt bless - When thou shalt bless God, or give thanks to him. If thou shalt lead the devotions of the people in expressing thanksgiving for mercies and favors. This may refer to a part of public worship, or to the thanks which should be expressed at table, and the invocation of the divine blessing to attend the bounties of his providence. Paul had illustrated his subject by prayer and by singing; be now does it by a reference to the important part of public worship expressed in giving thanks.

With the spirit - In the manner referred to above; that is, in an unknown tongue, in such a way that your own "heart" may be engaged in it, but which would be unintelligible to others.

He that occupieth the room - Is in the place, or the seat of the unlearned; that is, he who is unlearned. On the meaning of the word "room," see the note at Luke 14:8. To "fill" a place means to occupy a station, or to be found in a slate or condition.

Of the unlearned - (τοῦ ἰδιώτου tou idiōtouOn the meaning of this word, see the note at Acts 4:13. Here it means one who was unacquainted with the foreign language spoken by him who gave thanks. It properly denotes a man in "private," in contradistinction from a man in "public" life; and hence, a man who is ignorant and unlettered, as such people generally were.

Say Amen - This word means "truly, verily;" and is an expression of affirmation John 3:5 or of assent. Here it means assent. How can he pronounce "the" Amen; how can he express his assent; how can he join in the act of devotion? This "might" have been, and probably "was," expressed aloud; and there is no impropriety in it. It "may," however, be "mental" - a silent assent to what is said, and a silent uniting in the act of thanksgiving. In one way or the other, or in both, the assent should always be expressed by those who join in acts of public worship.

Verse 17

For thou verily givest thanks well - That is, even if you use a foreign language. You do it with the heart; and it is accepted by God as your offering; but the other, who cannot understand it, cannot be benefited by it.

Verse 18

I thank my God - Paul here shows that he did not undervalue or despise the power of speaking foreign languages. It was with him a subject of thanksgiving that he could speak so many; but he felt that there were more valuable endowments than this; see the next verse.

With tongues more than ye all - I am able to speak more foreign languages than all of you. "How many" languages Paul could speak, he has no where told us. It is reasonable, however, to presume that he was able to speak the language of any people to whom God in his providence, and by his Spirit, called him to preach. He had been commissioned to preach to the "Gentiles," and it is probable that he was able to speak the languages of all the nations among whom he ever traveled. There is no account of his being under a necessity of employing an interpreter wherever he preached.

Verse 19

Yet in the church - In the Christian assembly. The word "church" does not refer to the "edifice" where Christians worshipped, but to the organized body of Christians.

I had rather … - It is probable that in the Christian assembly, usually, there were few who understood foreign languages. Paul, therefore, would not speak in a foreign language when its only use would be mere display.

With my understanding - So as to be intelligible to others; so that I might understand it, and so that at the same time others might be benefitted.

Verse 20

Brethren, be not children in understanding - Be not childish; do not behave like little children. They admire, and are astonished at what is

striking, novel, and what may be of no real utility. They are pleased with anything that will amuse them, and at little things that afford them play and pastime. So your admiration of a foreign language and of the ability to speak it, is of as little solid value as the common sports and plays of boys. This, says Doddridge, is an admirable stroke of oratory, and adapted to bring down their pride by showing them that those things on which they were disposed to value themselves were "childish." It is sometimes well to appeal to Christians in this manner, and to show them that what they are engaged in is "unworthy" the dignity of the understanding - unfit to occupy the time and attention of an immortal mind. Much, alas! very much of that which engages the attention of Christians is just as unworthy of the dignity of the mind, and of their immortal nature, as were the aims and desires which the apostle rebuked among the Christians at Corinth. Much that pertains to dress, to accomplishment, to living, to employment, to amusement, to conversation, will appear, when we come to die, to have been like the playthings of "children;" and we shall feel that the immortal mind has been employed, and the time wasted, and the strength exhausted in that which was foolish and puerile.

Howbeit in malice be ye children - This is one of Paul's most happy turns of expression and of sentiment. He had just told them that in one respect they ought not to be children. Yet, as if this would appear to be speaking lightly of children - and Paul would not speak lightly of anyone, even of a child - he adds, that in "another" respect it would be well to be like them - nay, not only like children, but like "infants." The phrase "be ye children," here, does not express the force of the original νηπιάζετε nēpiazeteIt means, "be infants," and is emphatic, and was used, evidently, by the apostle of design. The meaning may be thus expressed. "Your admiration of foreign languages is like the sports and plays of "childhood." In this respect be not children (παιδίᾳ paidia); be men! Lay aside such childish things. Act worthy of the "understanding" which God has given you. I have mentioned children. Yet I would not speak unkindly or with contempt even of them. "In one respect" you may imitate them. Nay, you should not only be like "children," that are somewhat advanced in years, but like "infants." Be as free from malice, from any ill-will toward others, from envy, and every improper passion, as they are." This passage, therefore, accords with the repeated declaration of the Saviour, that in order

to enter into heaven, it was needful that we should become as little children; Matthew 18:3.

Be men - Margin, "Perfect, or of a riper age" (τέλειοι teleioi). The word means full-grown men. Act like them whose understandings are mature and ripe.

Verse 21

In the law it is written - This passage is found in Isaiah 38:11-12. The word "law" here seems to mean the same as revelation; or is used to denote the Old Testament in general. A similar use occurs in John 10:34, and John 15:25.

With men of other tongues … - This passage, where it occurs in Isaiah, means, that God would teach the rebellious and refractory Jews submission to himself, by punishing them amidst a people of another language, by removing them to a land - the land of Chaldea - where they would hear only a language that to them would be unintelligible and barbarous. Yet, notwithstanding this discipline, they would be still, to some extent, a rebellious people. The passage in Isaiah has no reference to the miraculous gift of tongues. and cannot have been used by the apostle as containing any intimation that such miraculous gifts would be imparted. It seems to have been used by Paul, because the "words" which occurred in Isaiah would "appropriately express" the idea which he wished to convey (see the note at Matthew 1:23), that God would make use of foreign languages for some "valuable purpose." But he by no means intimates that Isaiah had any such reference; nor does he quote this as a fulfillment of the prophecy; nor does he mean to say, that God would accomplish "the same purpose" by the use of foreign languages, which was contemplated in the passage in Isaiah. The sense is, as God accomplished an important purpose by the use of a foreign language in regard to his ancient people, as recorded in Isaiah, so he will make use of foreign languages to accomplish important purposes still. They shall be used in the Christian church to effect important objects, though not in the same manner, nor for the same end, as in the time of the captivity. What the design of making use of foreign languages was, in the Christian church, the apostle immediately states; 1 Corinthians 14:22-23.

Yet for all that … - Notwithstanding all this chastisement that shall be inflicted on the Jews in a distant land, and among a people of a different language, they will still be a rebellious people. This is the sense of the passage, as it is used by Isaiah; see Isaiah 28:12. It is not quoted literally by

the apostle, but the main idea is retained. He does not appear to design to apply this to the Corinthians, unless it may be to intimate that the power of speaking foreign languages did not of necessity secure obedience. It might he that this power might be possessed, and yet they be a sinful people; just as the Jews were admonished by the judgments of God, inflicted by means of a people speaking a foreign language, and yet were not reformed or made holy.

Verse 22

Wherefore - Thus, (Ὥστε Hōste), or wherefore. The apostle does not mean to say that what he was about to state was a direct conclusion from the passage of Scripture which he had quoted, but that it followed from all that he had said, and from the whole view of the subject. "The true statement or doctrine is, that tongues are for a sign," etc.

Tongues - The power of speaking foreign languages.

Are for a sign - An "indication," an evidence, or a proof that God has imparted this power, and that he attends the preaching of the gospel with his approbation. It is a "sign," or a "miracle," which, like all other miracles, may be designed to convince the unbelieving world that the religion is from God.

Not to them that believe - Not to Christians. They are already convinced of the truth of religion, and they would not be benefited by that which was spoken in a language which they could not understand,

But to them that believe not - It is a miracle designed to convince them of the truth of the Christian religion. God alone could confer the power of thus speaking; and as it was conferred expressly to aid in the propagation of the gospel, it proved that it was from God; see the note on Acts 2:1-15.

But prophesying - Speaking in a calm, connected, didactic manner, in language intelligible to all under the influence of inspiration; see notes on 1 Corinthians 14:1.

For them that believe not - Is not particularly intended for them; but is intended mainly for the edifying of the church. It is not so striking, so replete with proofs of the divine presence and power as the gift of tongues. Though it may be really under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and may be really by inspiration, yet it is not so evidently such as is the power of speaking foreign languages. It was, therefore, better adapted to edify the church than to convince gainsayers. At the same time the "truths" conveyed by it, and the consolations administered by it, might be as clear evidence to

the church of the attending power, and presence, and goodness of God, as the power of speaking foreign languages might be to infidels.

Verse 23

Be come together into one place - For public worship.

And all speak with tongues - All speak with a variety of unknown tongues; all speak foreign languages. The idea is, that the church would usually speak the same language with the people among whom they dwelt; and if they made use of foreign languages which were unintelligible to their visitors, it would leave the impression that the church was a bedlam.

And there come in - those that are "unlearned." Those that are unacquainted with foreign languages, and to whom, therefore, what was said would be unintelligible.

Or unbelievers - Heathen, or Jews, who did not believe in Christ. It is evident from this that such persons often attended on the worship of Christians. Curiosity might have led them to it; or the fact that they had relatives among Christians might have caused it.

That ye are mad - They will not understand what is said; it will be a confused jargon; and they will infer that it is the effect of insanity. Even though it might not, therefore, be in itself improper, yet a regard to the honor of Christianity should have led them to abstain from the use of such languages in their worship when it was needless. The apostles were charged, from a similar cause, with being intoxicated; see Acts 2:13.

Verse 24

But if all prophesy - See the note at 1 Corinthians 14:1. If all, in proper order and time, shall utter the truths of religion in a language intelligible to all.

Or one unlearned - One unacquainted with the nature of Christianity, or the truths of the gospel.

He is convinced of all - He will be convinced by all that speak. He will understand what is said; he will see its truth and force, and be will be satisfied of the truth of Christianity. The word here rendered "convinced" (ἐλέγχετἀι elengchetai) is rendered "reprove" in John 16:8, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin," etc. Its proper meaning is to "convict," to show one to be wrong; and then to rebuke, reprove, admonish, etc. Here it means, evidently, that the man would be convicted, or convinced of his error and of his sin; he would see that his former opinions and practice had been wrong; he would see and acknowledge the force and

truth of the Christian sentiments which should be uttered, and would acknowledge the error of his former opinions and life. The following verse shows that the apostle means something more than a mere convincing of the understanding, or a mere conviction that his opinions had been erroneous. He evidently refers to what is now known also as "conviction" for sin; that is, a deep sense of the depravity of the heart, of the errors and follies of the past life, accompanied with mental anxiety, distress, and alarm. The force of truth, and the appeals which should be made, and the observation of the happy effects of religion, would convince him that he was a sinner, and show him also his need of a Saviour.

He is judged by all - By all that speak; by all that they say. The "effect" of what they say shall be, as it were, to pass a "judgment" on his former life; or to condemn him. What is said will be approved by his own conscience, and will have the effect to condemn him in his own view as a lost sinner. This is now the effect of faithful preaching, to produce deep self-condemnation in the minds of sinners.

Verse 25

And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest - Made manifest to himself in a surprising and remarkable manner. He shall be led to see the "real" designs and motives of his heart. His conscience would be awakened; he would recall his former course of life; he would see that it was evil; and the present state of his heart would be made known to himself. It is possible that he would "suppose that the speaker was aiming directly at him, and "revealing" his feelings to others; for such an effect is often produced. The convicted sinner often supposes that the preacher particularly intends "him," and wonders that he has such an acquaintance with his feelings and his life; and often supposes that he is designing to disclose his feelings to the congregation. It is possible that Paul here may mean that the prophets, by inspiration, would be able to reveal some secret facts in regard to the stranger; or to state the ill design which he might have had in coming into the assembly; or to state some things in regard to him which could be known only to himself; as was the case with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1, seq.); but perhaps it is better to understand this in a more general sense, as describing the proper and more common effect of truth, when it is applied by a man's own conscience. Such effects are often witnessed now; and such effects show the truth of religion; its adaptedness to people; the

omniscience and the power of God; the design of the conscience, and its use in the conversion of sinners.

And so falling down on his face - The usual posture of worship or reverence in eastern countries. It was performed by sinking on the knees and hands, and then placing the face on the ground. This might be done publicly; or the apostle may mean to say that it would lead him to do it in private.

He will worship God - He will be converted, and become a Christian.

And report that God … - Will become your friend, and an advocate for the Christian religion. An enemy will be turned to a friend. Doubtless this was often done. It is now often done. Paul‘s argument is, that they should so conduct their public devotions as that they should be adapted to produce this result.

Verse 26

How is it then, brethren? - See the note at 1 Corinthians 14:15. What is the fact? What actually occurs among you? Does that state of things exist which I have described? Is there that order in your public worship which is demanded and proper? It is implied in his asking this question that there might be some things among them which were improper, and which deserved reproof.

When ye come together - For worship.

Everyone of you … - That is, all the things which are specified would be found among them. It is, evidently, not meant that all these things would be found in the same person, but would all exist at the same time; and thus confusion and disorder would be inevitable. Instead of waiting for an intimation from the presiding officer in the assembly, or speaking in succession and in order, each one probably regarded himself as under the influence of the Holy Spirit; as having an important message to communicate, or as being called on to celebrate the praises of God; and thus confusion and disorder would prevail. Many would be speaking at the same time, and a most unfavorable impression would be made on the minds of the strangers who should be present, 1 Corinthians 14:23. This implied reproof of the Corinthians is certainly a reproof of those public assemblies where many speak at the same time; or where a portion are engaged in praying, and others in exhortation. Nor can it be urged that in such cases those who engage in these exercises are under the influence of the Holy Spirit; for, however true that may be, yet it is no more true than it was in

Corinth, and yet the apostle reproved the practice there. The Holy Spirit is the author of order, and not of confusion 1 Corinthians 14:33; and true religion prompts to peace and regularity, and not to discord and tumult.

Hath a psalm - Is disposed to sing; is inclined to praise; and, however irregular or improper, expresses his thanks in a public manner, see the note at 1 Corinthians 14:15.

Hath a doctrine - Has some religious truth on his mind which be deems it of special importance to inculcate, see the note at 1 Corinthians 14:6.

Hath a tongue - Has something made known to him in a foreign language, or has a power of speaking a foreign language, and exercises it, though it produces great confusion.

Hath a revelation - Some truth which has been particularly revealed to him; perhaps an explanation of some mystery (Doddridge); or a revelation ot some future event (Macknight); or a prophecy (Bloomfield); or a power of explaining some of the truths couched in the types and figures of the Old Testament. Grotius.

Hath an interpretation - An explanation of something that has been uttered by another in a foreign language; See the note at 1 Corinthians 12:10.

Let all things … - Let this be the great principle, to promote the edification of the church; See the note at 1 Corinthians 14:12. If this rule were followed, it would prevent confusion and disorder.

Verse 27

Let it be by two, or at the most by three - That is, two, or at most three in one day, or in one meeting. So Grotius, Rosenmuller, Doddridge, Bloomfield, and Locke, understand it. It is probable that many were endowed with the gift of tongues; and it is certain that they were disposed to exercise the gift even when it could be of no real advantage, and when it was done only for ostentation. Paul had shown to them 1 Corinthians 14:22, that the main design of the gift of tongues was to convince unbelievers; he here shows them that if that gift was exercised in the church, it should be in such a way as to promote edification. They should not speak at the same time; nor should they regard it as necessary that all should speak at the same meeting. It should not be so as to produce disorder and confusion nor should it be so as to detain the people beyond a reasonable time. The speakers, therefore, in any one assembly should not exceed two or three.

And that by course - Separately; one after another. They should not all speak at the same time.

And let one interpret - One who has the gift of interpreting foreign languages, (Note, 1 Corinthians 12:10), so that they may be understood, and the church be edified.

Verse 28

But if there be no interpreter - If there be no one present who has the gift of interpretation.

And let him speak to himself and to God - See the note at 1 Corinthians 14:2, note at 1 Corinthians 14:4. Let him commune with himself, and with God; let him meditate on the truths which are revealed to him, and let him in secret express his desires to God.

Verse 29

Let the prophets - See the note at 1 Corinthians 14:1.

Speak two or three - On the same days, or at the same meeting; see the note at 1 Corinthians 14:27.

And let the other judge - The word "other" (οἱ ἄλλοι hoi alloi"the others"), Bloomfield supposes refers to the other prophets; and that the meaning is, that they should decide whether what was said was dictated by the Holy Spirit, or not. But the more probable sense, I think, is that which refers it to the rest of the congregation, and which supposes that they were to compare one doctrine with another, and deliberate on what was spoken, and determine whether it had evidence of being in accordance with the truth. It may be that the apostle here refers to those who had the gift of discerning spirits, and that he meant to say that they were to determine by what spirit the prophets who spoke were actuated. It was possible that those who claimed to be prophets might err, and it was the duty of all to examine whether that which was uttered was in accordance with truth. And if this was a duty then, it is a duty now; if it was proper even when the teachers claimed to be under divine inspiration, it is much more the duty of the people now. No minister of religion has a right to demand that all that he speaks shall be regarded as truth, unless he can give good reasons for it: no man is to be debarred from the right of canvassing freely, and comparing with the Bible, and with sound reason, all that the minister of the gospel advances. No minister who has just views of his office, and a proper acquaintance with the truth, and confidence in it, would desire to prohibit the people from the most full and free examination of all that he utters. It

may be added, that the Scripture everywhere encourages the most full and free examination of all doctrines that are advanced; and that true religion advances just in proportion as this spirit of candid, and earnest, and prayerful examination prevails among a people; see the note at Acts 17:11; compare 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

Verse 30

If anything be revealed to another - If, while one is speaking, an important truth is revealed to another, or is suggested to his mind by the Holy Spirit, which he feels it to be important to communicate.

Let the first hold his peace - That is, let him that was speaking conclude his discourse, and let there not be the confusion arising from two persons speaking. at the same time. Doddridge understands this as meaning, that he to whom the revelation was made should sit still, until the other was done speaking, and not rise and rudely interrupt him. But this is to do violence to the language. So Macknight understands it, that the one who was speaking was first to finish his discourse, and be silent. before the other began to speak. But this is evidently a forced construction. Locke understands it as meaning, that if, while one was speaking, the meaning of what he said was revealed to another, the first was to cease speaking until the other had interpreted or explained it. But the obvious meaning of the passage is, that the man that was speaking was to close his discourse and be silent. It does not follow, however, that he was to be rudely interrupted. He might close his discourse deliberately, or perhaps by an intimation from the person to whom the revelation was made. At any rate, two were not to speak at the same time, but the one who was speaking was to conclude before the other addressed the assembly.

Verse 31

For ye may all prophecy … - There is time enough for all; there is no need of speaking in confusion and disorder. Every person may have an opportunity of expressing his sentiments at the proper time.

That all may learn - In such a manner that there may be edification. This might be done if they would speak one at a time in their proper order.

Verse 32

And the spirits of the prophets - See in 1 Corinthians 14:1 for the meaning of the word prophets. The evident meaning of this is, that they were able to control their inclination to speak; they were not under a necessity of speaking, even though they might be inspired. There was no

need of disorder. This verse gives confirmation to the supposition, that the extraordinary endowments of the Holy Spirit were subjected to substantially the same laws as a man‘s natural endowments. They were conferred by the Holy Spirit; but they were conferred on free agents, and did not interfere with their free agency. And as a man, though of the most splendid talents and commanding eloquence, has “control” over his own mind, and is not “compelled” to speak, so it was with those who are here called prophets. The immediate reference of the passage is to those who are called “prophets” in the New Testament: and the interpretation should be confined to them.

It is not improbable, however, that the same thing was true of the prophets of the Old Testament; and that it is really true as a general declaration of all the prophets whom God has inspired, that they had control over their own minds, and could speak or be silent at pleasure. In this the spirit of true inspiration differed essentially from the views of the pagan, who regarded themselves as driven on by a wild, controlling influence, that compelled them to speak even when they were unconscious of what they said. Universally, in the pagan world, the priests and priestesses supposed or feigned that they were under an influence which was incontrollable; which took away their powers of self-command, and which made them the mere organs or unconscious instruments of communicating the will of the gods. The Scripture account of inspiration is, however, a very different thing. In whatever way the mind was influenced, or whatever was the mode in which the truth was conveyed, yet it was not such as to destroy the conscious powers of free agency, nor such as to destroy the individuality of the inspired person, or to annihilate what was special in his mode of thinking, his style, or his customary manner of expression.

Verse 33

God is not the author of confusion - Margin, “Tumult,” or “unquietness.” His religion cannot tend to produce disorder. He is the God of peace; and his religion will tend to promote order. It is calm, peaceful, thoughtful. It is not boisterous and disorderly.

As in all churches of the saints - As was everywhere apparent in the churches. Paul here appeals to them, and says that this was the fact wherever the true religion was spread, that it tended to produce peace and order. This is as true now as it was then. And we may learn, therefore:

(1) That where there is disorder, there is little religion. Religion does not produce it; and the tendency of tumult and confusion is to drive religion away.

(2) true religion will not lead to tumult, to outcries, or to irregularity. It will not prompt many to speak or pray at once; nor will it justify tumultuous and noisy assemblages.

(3) Christians should regard God as the author of peace. They should always in the sanctuary demean themselves in a reverent manner, and with such decorum as becomes people when they are in the presence of a holy and pure God, and engaged in his worship.

(4) all those pretended conversions, however sudden and striking they may be, which are attended with disorder, and confusion, and public outcries, are to be suspected. Such excitement may be connected with genuine piety, but it is no part of pure religion. That is calm, serious, orderly, heavenly. No person who is under its influence is disposed to engage in scenes of confusion and disorder. Grateful he may be, and he may and will express his gratitude; prayerful he will be, and he will pray; anxious for others he will be, and he will express that anxiety; but it will be with seriousness, tenderness, love; with a desire for the order of God‘s house, and not with a desire to break in upon and disturb all the solemnities of public worship.

Verse 34

Let your women keep silence … - This rule is positive, explicit, and universal. There is no ambiguity in the expressions; and there can be no difference of opinion, one would suppose, in regard to their meaning. The sense evidently is, that in all those things which he had specified, the women were to keep silence; they were to take no part. He had discoursed of speaking foreign languages, and of prophecy; and the evident sense is, that in regard to all these they were to keep silence, or were not to engage in them. These pertained solely to the male portion of the congregation. These things constituted the business of the public teaching; and in this the female part of the congregation were to be silent. “They were not to teach the people, nor were they to interrupt those who were speaking” - Rosenmuller.

It is probable that, on pretence of being inspired, the women had assumed the office of public teachers.

In 1 Corinthians 11:4, and he had shown, that "on that account," and "in that manner," it was improper for them to assume the office of public teachers, and to conduct the devotions of the church. The force of the argument in 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

To be under obedience - To be subject to their husbands; to acknowledge the superior authority of the man; see the note at 1 Corinthians 11:3.

As also saith the law - Genesis 3:16, "And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

Verse 35

And if they will learn anything - If anything has been spoken which they do not understand; or if on any particular subject they desire more full information, let them inquire of their husbands in their own dwelling. They may there converse freely; and their inquiries will not be attended with the irregularity and disorder which would occur should they interrupt the order and solemnity of public worship.

For it is a shame - It is disreputable and shameful; it is a breach of propriety. Their station in life demands modesty, humility, and they should be free from the ostentation of appearing so much in public as to take part in the public services of teaching and praying. It does not become their rank in life; it is not fulfilling the object which God evidently intended them to fill. He has appointed people to rule; to hold offices; to instruct and govern the church; and it is improper that women should assume that office upon themselves. This evidently and obviously refers to the church assembled for public worship, in the ordinary and regular acts of devotion. There the assembly is made up of males and females, of old and young, and there it is improper for them to take part in conducting the exercises. But this cannot be interpreted as meaning that it is improper for females to speak or to pray in meetings of their own sex, assembled for prayer or for benevolence; nor that it is improper for a female to speak or to pray in a Sunday School. Neither of these come under the apostle's idea of a church. And in such meetings, no rule of propriety or of the Scriptures is violated in their speaking for the edification of each other, or in leading in social prayer. It may be added here, that on this subject the Jews were very strenuous, and their laws were very strict. The Rabbis taught that a woman should know

nothing but the use of the distaff, and they were specially prohibited from asking questions in the synagogue, or even from reading. See Lightfoot. The same rule is still observed by the Jews in the synagogues.

Verse 36

What! came the word of God out from you? - The meaning of this is, "Is the church at Corinth the "mother church?" Was it first established; or has it been alone in sending forth the Word of God? You have adopted customs which are unusual. You have permitted women to speak in a manner unknown to other churches; see 1 Corinthians 11:16. You have admitted irregularity and confusion unknown in all the others. You have allowed many to speak at the same time, and have tolerated confusion and disorder. Have you any "right" thus to differ from others? Have you any authority, as it were, to dictate to them, to teach them, contrary to their uniform custom, to allow these disorders? Should you not rather be conformed to them, and observe the rules of the churches which are older than yours?" The "argument" here is, that the church at Corinth was "not" the first that was established; that it was one of the "last" that had been founded; and that it could, therefore, claim no right to differ from others, or to prescribe to them. The same argument is employed in 1 Corinthians 11:16; see Note.

Or came it unto you only? - As you are not the first of those who believed, neither are you the only ones. God has sent the same gospel to others, and it is traveling over the world. Others, therefore, have the same right as you to originate customs and special habits; and as this would be attended with confusion and disorder, you should all follow the same rule, and the customs which do not prevail in other churches should not be allowed in yours.

Verse 37

If any man think himself to be a prophet - See the note at 1 Corinthians 14:1. If any man claim to be divinely endowed. Macknight renders it, "be really a prophet." But the more correct meaning here is, doubtless, "If any man "profess" to be a prophet; or is "reputed" to be a prophet." Bloomfield. The proper meaning of the word δοκέω dokeōis to seem to oneself; to be of opinion, to suppose, believe, etc.; and the reference here is to one who should "regard himself," or who should believe and profess to be thus endowed.

Or spiritual - Regarding himself as under the extraordinary influence of the Spirit.

Let him acknowledge … - He will show that he is truly under the influence of the Holy Spirit, by acknowledging my authority, and by yielding obedience to the commands which I utter in the name and by the authority of the Lord. All would probably be disposed to acknowledge the right of Paul to speak to them; all would regard him as an apostle; and all would show that God had influenced their hearts, if they listened to his commands, and obeyed his injunctions. I do not speak by my own authority, or in my own name, says Paul. I speak in the name of the Lord; and to obey the commands of the Lord is a proof of being influenced by his Spirit. True religion everywhere, and the most ardent and enthusiastic zeal that is prompted by true religion, will show their genuineness and purity by a sacred and constant regard for the commands of the Lord. And that zeal which disregards those commands, and which tramples down the authority of the Scriptures and the peace and order of the church, gives demonstration that it is not genuine. It is false zeal, and, however ardent, will not ultimately do good to the cause.

Verse 38

But if any be ignorant … - If anyone affects to be ignorant of my authority, or whether I have a right to command. If he affects to doubt whether I am inspired, and whether what I utter is in accordance with the will of God.

Let him be ignorant - At his own peril, let him remain so, and abide the consequences. I shall not take any further trouble to debate with him. I have stated my authority. I have delivered the commands of God. And now, if he disregards them, and still doubts whether all this is said by divine authority, let him abide the consequences of rejecting the law of God. I have given full proof of my divine commission. I have nothing more to say on that head. And now, if he chooses to remain in ignorance or incredulity, the fault is his own, and he must answer for it to God.

Verse 39

Covet to prophesy - See the note at 1 Corinthians 14:1. This is the "summing up" of all that he had said. It was "desirable" that a man should wish to be able to speak, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, in such a manner as to edify the church.

And forbid not … - Do not suppose that the power of speaking foreign languages is useless, or is to be despised, or that it is to be prohibited. "In its own place" it is a valuable endowment; and on proper occasions the talent should be exercised; see in 1 Corinthians 14:22.

Verse 40

Let all things be done decently and in order - Let all things be done in an "appropriate" and "becoming" manner; "decorously," as becomes the worship of God. Let all be done in "order, regularly;" without confusion, discord, tumult. The word used here (κατὰ τάξιν kata taxin) is properly a military term, and denotes the order and regularity with which an army is drawn up. This is a general rule, which was to guide them. It was simple, and easily applied. There might be a thousand questions started about the modes and forms of worship, and the customs in the churches, and much difficulty might occur in many of these questions; but here was a simple and plain rule, which might be easily applied. Their good sense would tell them what became the worship of God; and their pious feelings would restrain them from excesses and disorders. This rule is still applicable, and is safe in guiding us in many things in regard to the worship of God. There are many things which cannot be subjected to "rule," or exactly prescribed; there are many things which may and must be left to pious feeling, to good sense, and to the views of Christians themselves, about what will promote their edification and the conversion of sinners. The rule in such questions is plain. Let all be done "decorously," as becomes the worship of the great and holy God; let all be without confusion, noise, and disorder.

In view of this chapter, we may remark:

(1) That public worship should be in a language understood by the people; the language which they commonly employ. Nothing can be clearer than the sentiments of Paul on this. The whole strain of the chapter is to demonstrate this, in opposition to making use of a foreign and unintelligible language in any part of public worship. Paul specifics in the course of the discussion every part of public worship; "public preaching" 1 Corinthians 14:2-3, 1Corinthians 14:5,1 Corinthians 14:13, 1 Corinthians 14:19; "prayer" 1 Corinthians 14:14-15; "singing" 1 Corinthians 14:15; and insists that all should be in a language that should be understood by the people. It would almost seem that he had anticipated the sentiments and practice of the Roman Catholic denomination. It is remarkable that a practice should

have grown up, and have been defended, in a church professedly Christian, so directly in opposition to the explicit meaning of the New Testament. Perhaps there is not even in the Roman Catholic denomination, a more striking instance of a custom or doctrine in direct contradiction to the Bible. If anything is plain and obvious, it is that worship, in order to be edifying, should be in a language that is understood by the people.

Nor can that service be accepable to God which is not understood by those who offer it; which conveys no idea to their minds, and which cannot, therefore, be the homage of the heart. Assuredly, God does not require the offering of unmeaningful words. Yet, this has been a grand device of the great enemy of man. It has contributed to keep the people in ignorance and superstition; it has prevented the mass of the people from seeing how utterly unlike the New Testament are the sentiments of the papists; and it has, in connection with the kindred doctrine that the Scripture should be withheld from the people, contributed to perpetuate that dark system, and to bind the human mind in chains. Well do the Roman Catholics know, that if the Bible were given to the people, and public worship conducted in a language which they could understand, the system would soon fall. It could not live in the midst of light. It is a system which lives and thrives only in darkness.

(2) preaching should be simple and intelligible. There is a great deal of preaching which might as well be in a foreign tongue as in the language which is actually employed. It is dry, abstruse, metaphysical, remote from the common manner of expression, and the common habits of thought among people. It may be suited to schools of philosophy, but it cannot be suited to the pulpit. The preaching of the Lord Jesus was simple, and intelligible even to a child. And nothing can be a greater error, than for the ministers of the gospel to adopt a dry and metaphysical manner of preaching. The most successful preachers have been those who have been most remarkable for their simplicity and clearness. Nor is simplicity and intelligibleness of manner inconsistent with bright thought and profound sentiments. A diamond is the most pure of all minerals; a river may be deep, and yet its water so pure that the bottom may be seen at a great depth; and glass in the window is most valuable the clearer and purer it is, when it is itself least seen, and when it gives no obstruction to the light. If the purpose

is that the glass may be itself an ornament, it may be well to stain it; if to give light, it should be pure. A very shallow stream may be very muddy; and because the bottom cannot be seen, it is no evidence that it is deep. So it is with style. If the purpose is to convey thought, to enlighten and save the soul, the style should be plain, simple, pure. If it be to bewilder and confound, or to be admired as unintelligible, or perhaps as profound, then an abstruse and metaphysical, or a flowery manner may be adopted in the pulpit.

(3) we should learn to value "useful" talent more than that which is splendid and showy; 1 Corinthians 14:3. The whole scope of this chapter goes to demonstrate that we should more highly prize and desire that talent which may be "useful" to the church, or which may be useful in convincing unbelievers 1 Corinthians 14:24-25, than that which merely dazzles, or excites admiration. Ministers of the gospel who preach as they should do, engage in their work to win souls to Christ, not to induce them to admire eloquence; they come to teach people to adore the great and dreadful God, not to be loud in their praises of a mortal man.

(4) ministers of the gospel should not aim to be admired. They should seek to be useful. Their aim should not be to excite admiration of their acute and profound talent for reasoning; of their clear and striking power of observation; of their graceful manner; of their glowing and fervid eloquence; of the beauty of their words, or the eloquence of their well-turned periods. They should seek to build up the people of God in holy faith, and so to present truth as that it shall make a deep impression on mankind. No work is so important, and so serious in its nature and results, as the ministry of the gospel; and in no work on earth should there be more seriousness, simplicity, exactness, and correctness of statement, and invincible and unvarying adherence to simple and unvarnished truth. Of all places, the pulpit is the last, in which to seek to excite admiration, or where to display profound learning, or the powers of an abstract and subtle argumentation, "for the sake" of securing a reputation. Cowper has drawn the character of what a minister of the gospel should be. in the wellknown and most beautiful passage in the "Task."

Would I describe a preacher, such as Paul.
Were he on earth, would hear, approve, and own,

Paul should himself direct me. I would trace.

His master-strokes, and draw from his design.

I would express him simple, grave, sincere;

In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain;

And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste,

And natural in gesture; much impress‘d.

Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,

And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds.

May feel it too; affectionate in look,

And tender in address, as well becomes.

A messenger of grace to guilty men.
He stablishes the strong, restores the weak,
Reclaims the wanderer, binds the broken heart,
And, arm‘d himself in panoply complete.

Of heavenly temper, furnishes with arms,

Bright as his own, and trains, by every rule.

Of holy discipline, to glorious war,
The sacramental host of God‘s elect.

1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Introduction

This important and deeply interesting chapter, I have spoken of as the "third" part of the Epistle. See the introduction. It is more important than any other portion of the Epistle, as it contains a connected, and labored, and unanswerable argument for the main truth of Christianity, and, consequently, of Christianity itself; and it is more interesting to us as mortal beings, and as having an instinctive dread of death, than any other portion of the Epistle. It has always, therefore, been regarded with deep interest by expositors, and it is worthy of the deepest attention of all. If the argument in this chapter is solid, then Christianity is true; and if true, then this chapter unfolds to us the most elevated and glorious prospect which can be exhibited to dying, yet immortal man.

There were, probably, two reasons why the apostle introduced here this discussion about the resurrection:

First, it was desirable to introduce a condensed and connected statement of the main argument for the truth of Christianity. The Corinthians had been perplexed with subtle questions, and torn by sects and parties, and it was possible that in their zeal for sect and party, they would lose their hold on this great and vital argument for the truth of religion itself. It might. be further apprehended, that the enemies of the gospel, from seeing the divisions and strifes which existed there, would take advantage of these contentions, and say that a religion which produced such fruits could not be from God. It was important, therefore, that they should have access to an argument plain, clear, and unanswerable, for the truth of Christianity; and that thus the evil effects of their divisions and strifes might be counteracted.

Secondly. It is evident from 1 Corinthians 15:12, that the important doctrine of the resurrection of the dead had been denied at Corinth, and that this error had obtained a footing in the church itself. On what grounds, or by what portion or party it was denied is unknown. It may have been that the influence of some Sadducean teacher may have led to the rejection of the doctrine; or it may have been the effect of philosophy. From Acts 17:32, we know that among some of the Greeks, the doctrine of the resurrection was regarded as ridiculous; and from 2 Timothy 2:18, we learn that it was

held by some that the resurrection was passed already, and, consequently, that there was nothing but a spiritual resurrection. To counteract these errors, and to put the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead on a firm foundation, and thus to furnish a demonstration of the truth of Christianity, was the design of this chapter.

The chapter may be regarded as divided into four parts, and four questions in regard to the resurrection are solved:

1.Whether there is any resurrection of the dead? 1 Corinthians 15:51-54.

4.What are the practical bearings of this doctrine? 1 Corinthians 15:55-58.

I. The dead will be raised; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11;

(a) From the Scripture; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

(b) From the testimony of eyewitnesses; 1 Corinthians 15:5-11.

(2) by showing the absurdity of the contrary doctrine; 1 Corinthians 15:13.

(b) If Christ is not risen, he is preached in vain, and faith is reposed in him for nothing; 1 Corinthians 15:14.

(c) It would follow that the apostles would be false witnesses and wicked people; whereas, the Corinthians had abundant reason to know the contrary;

(d) The faith of the Corinthians must be vain if he was not risen, and they must regard themselves as still unpardoned sinners, since all their hope of pardon must arise from the fact that his work was accepted, and that he was raised up; 1 Corinthians 15:16-17.

(e) If Christ was not risen, then all their pious friends who had believed in him must be regarded as lost; 1 Corinthians 15:18.

(f) It would follow that believers in Christ would be in a more miserable condition than any others, if there was no resurrection; 1 Corinthians 15:19.

(g) Baptism for the resurrection of the dead would be absurd and in vain, unless the dead arose; it would be vain to be baptized with the belief,

and on the ground of the belief that Christ rose, and on the ground of the hope that they would rise; 1 Corinthians 15:29.

(h) It would be in vain that the apostles and others had suffered so many toils and persecutions, unless the dead should rise; 1 Corinthians 15:30-32.

In the course of this part of his argument 1 Corinthians 15:20-28 Paul introduces an "illustration" of the doctrine, or a statement of an important fact in regard to it, thus "separating" the argument in 1 Corinthians 15:19 from the next, which occurs in 1 Corinthians 15:29. Such interruptions of a train of thinking are not uncommon in the writings of Paul, and indicate the "fullness" and "richness" of his conceptions, when some striking thought occurs, or some plausible objection is to be met, and when he suspends his argument in order to state it. This interjected portion consists of the following items:

(1) A triumphant and joyful assurance that Christ "had in fact risen;" as if his mind was full, and he was impatient of the delay caused by the necessity of slow argumentation; 1 Corinthians 15:19-20.

(2) he "illustrates" the doctrine, or shows that it is "reasonable" that the certainty of the resurrection should be demonstrated by one in human nature, since death had been introduced by man; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22. This is an argument from "analogy," drawn from the obvious propriety of the doctrine that man should be raised up in a manner somewhat similar to the mode in which he had been involved in ruin.

(3) he states the "order" in which all this should be done; 1 Corinthians 15:23-28. It is possible that some may have held that the resurrection must have been already passed, since it depended so entirely and so closely on the resurrection of Christ; compare 2 Timothy 2:18. Paul, therefore, meets this objection; and shows that it must take place in a regular order; that Christ rose first, and that they who were his friends should rise at his coming. He then states what would take place at that time, when the work of redemption should have been consummated by the resurrection of the dead, and the entire recovery of all the redeemed to God, and the subjection of every foe.

II. What will be the nature of the bodies that shall be raised up? 1 Corinthians 15:36-38.

(2) by a reference to the fact that there are different kinds of flesh; 1 Corinthians 15:39.

(3) by a reference to the fact that there are celestial bodies and earthly bodies; 1 Corinthians 15:40.

(4) by the fact that there is a difference between the sun, and moon, and stars; 1 Corinthians 15:41,

(5) By a "direct statement," for which the mind is prepared by these illustrations, of the important changes which the body of man must undergo, and of the nature of that body which he will have in heaven; 1 Corinthians 15:42-50. It is:

(a) Incorruptible; 1 Corinthians 15:42.

(b) Glorious; 1 Corinthians 15:43,

(c) Powerful; 1 Corinthians 15:43.

(d) A spiritual body; 1 Corinthians 15:44.

(e) It is like the body of the second man, the Lord from heaven; 1 Corinthians 15:45-50.

III. What will become of those who shall be alive when the Lord Jesus shall return to raise the dead?

Answer: They shall be changed instantly, and suited for heaven, and made like the glorified saints that shall be raised from the dead; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54.

IV. The practical consequences or influences of this doctrine; 1 Corinthians 15:55-58;

(1)The doctrine is glorious and triumphant; it overcame all the evils of sin, and should fill the mind with joy; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57.

(2)It should lead Christians to diligence, and firmness of faith, and patience, since their labor was not to be in vain; 1 Corinthians 15:58.

Verse 1

Moreover - But (δὲ de). In addition to what I have said, or in that which I am now about to say, I make known the main and leading truth of

the gospel. The particle δὲ deis "strictly adversative, but more frequently denotes transition and conversion, and serves to introduce something else, whether opposite to what precedes, or simply continuative or explanatory" - Robinson. Here it serves to introduce another topic that was not properly a continuation of what he had said, but which pertained to the same general subject, and which was deemed of great importance.

I declare unto you - (Γνωρίζω Gnōrizō). This word properly means to make known, to declare, to reveal Luke 2:15; Romans 9:22-23; then to tell, narrate, inform Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7, Colossians 4:9; and also to put in mind of, to impress, to confirm; see the note at 1 Corinthians 12:3. Here it does not mean that he was communicating to them any new truth, but he wished to remind them of it; to state the arguments for it, and to impress it deeply on their memories. There is an abruptness in our translation which does not exist in the original. Bloomfield.

The gospel - See the note at Mark 1:1. The word here means the "glad announcement," or the "good news" about the coming of the Messiah, his life, and sufferings, and death, and especially his resurrection. The main subject to which Paul refers in this chapter is the resurrection, but he includes in the word gospel. Here, the doctrine that he died for sins, and was buried, as well as the doctrine of his resurrection; see 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.

Which I preached unto you - Paul founded the church at Corinth; Acts 18:1 ff. It was proper that he should remind them of what he had taught them at first; of the great elementary truths on which the church had been established, but from which their minds had been diverted by the other subjects that had been introduced as matters of debate and strife. It was fair to presume that they would regard with respect the doctrines which the founder of their church had first proclaimed, if they were reminded of them; and Paul, therefore, calls their attention to the great and vital truths by which they had been converted, and by which the church had thus far prospered. It is well, often, to remind Christians of the truths which were preached to them when they were converted, and which were instrumental in their conversion. When they have gone off from these doctrines, when they had given their minds to speculation and philosophy, it has a good effect to "remind" them that they were converted by the simple truths, that Christ died, and was buried, and rose again from the dead. The argument of Paul here is, that they owed all the piety and comfort which they had to

these doctrines; and that, therefore, they should still adhere to them as the foundation of all their hopes.

Which also ye have received - Which you embraced; which you all admitted as true; which were the means of your conversion. I would remind you, that, however that truth may now be denied by you, it was once received by you, and you professed to believe in the fact that Christ rose from the dead, and that the saints would rise.

And wherein ye stand - By which your church was founded, and by which all your piety and hope has been produced, and which is at the foundation of all your religion. You were built up by this, and by this only can you stand as a Christian church. This doctrine was vital and fundamental. This demonstrates that the doctrines that Christ died "for sins," and rose from the dead, are fundamental truths of Christianity. They enter into its very nature; and without them there can be no true religion.

Verse 2

By which also ye are saved - On which your salvation depends; the belief of which is indispensable to your salvation; see the note on Mark 16:16. The apostle thus shows the "importance" of the doctrine. In every respect it demanded their attention. It was that which was first preached among them; that which they had solemnly professed; that by which they had been built up; and that which was connected with their salvation. It does not mean simply that by this they were brought into a salvable state (Clarke, Macknight, Whitby, Bloomfield, etc.), but it means that their hopes of eternal life rested on this; and by this they were then "in fact" saved from the condemnation of sin, and were in the possession of the hope of eternal life.

If ye keep in memory - Margin, as in the Greek, "if ye hold fast." The idea is, that they were saved by this, or would be, if they faithfully retained or held the doctrine as he delivered it; if they observed it, and still believed it, notwithstanding all the efforts of their enemies, and all the arts of false teaching to wrest it from them. There is a doubt delicately suggested here, whether they did in fact still adhere to his doctrine, or whether they had not abandoned it in part for the opposite.

Unless ye have believed in vain - You will be saved by it, if you adhere to it, unless it shall turn out that it was vain to believe, and that the doctrine was false. That it was "not" false, he proceeds to demonstrate. Unless all your trials, discouragements, and hopes were to no purpose, and all have

been the result of imposture; and unless all your profession is false and hollow, you will be saved by this great doctrine which I first preached to you.

Verse 3

For I delivered unto you - See the note at 1 Corinthians 11:23. "First of all." Among the first doctrines which I preached. As the leading and primary doctrines of Christianity.

That which I also received - Which had been communicated to me. Not doctrines of which I was the author, or which were to be regarded as my own. Paul here refers to the fact that he had received these doctrines from the Lord Jesus by inspiration; compare the 1 Corinthians 10:23, note; Galatians 1:2, note. This is one instance in which he claims to be under the divine guidance, and to have received his doctrines from God.

How that Christ died for our sins - The Messiah, The Lord Jesus, died as an expiatory offering on account of our sins. They caused his death; for them he shed his blood; to make expiation for them, and to wipe them away, he expired on the cross. This passage is full proof that Christ did not die merely as a martyr, but that his death was to make atonement for sin. That he died as an atoning sacrifice, or as a vicarious offering, is here declared by Paul to be among the "first" things that he taught; and the grand fundamental truth on which the church at Corinth had been founded, and by which it had been established, and by which they would be saved. It follows that there can be no true church, and no wellfounded hope of salvation, where the doctrine is not held that Christ died for sin.

According to the Scriptures - The writings of the Old Testament; See the note at John 5:39. It is, of course, not certain to what parts of the Old Testament Paul here refers. He teaches simply that the doctrine is contained there that the Messiah would die for sin; and, in his preaching, he doubtless adduced and dwelt upon the particular places. Some of the places where this is taught are the following: Isaiah 53:1-12; Daniel 9:26; Zechariah 12:10; compare Luke 24:26, Luke 24:46. See also Hengstenberg's Christology of the Old Testament, vol. 1:pp. 187,216, translated by Keith.

Verse 4

And that he was buried - That is, evidently according to the Scriptures; see Isaiah 53:9.

And that he rose again the third day … - That is, that he should rise from the dead was foretold in the Scriptures. It is not of necessity implied

that it was predicted that he should rise "on the third day," but that he should rise from the dead. See the argument for this stated in the discourse of Peter, in Acts 2:24-32. The particular passage which is there urged in proof of his resurrection is derived from Psalm 16:1-11.

Verse 5

And that he was seen of Cephas - Peter; See the note at John 1:42. The resurrection of Christ was A fact to be proved, like all other facts, by competent and credible witnesses. Paul, therefore, appeals to the witnesses who had attested, or who yet lived to attest, the truth of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and shows that it was not possible that so many witnesses should have been deceived. As this was not the first time in which the evidence had been stated to them, and as his purpose was merely to remind them of what they had heard and believed, he does not adduce all the witnesses to the event, but refers only to the more important ones. He does not, therefore, mention the woman to whom the Saviour first appeared, nor does he refer to all the times when the Lord Jesus manifested himself to his disciples. But he does not refer to them in general merely, but mentions "names," and refers to persons who "were then alive," who could attest the truth of the resurrection. It may be observed, also, that Paul observes probably the exact "order" in which the Lord Jesus appeared to the disciples, though he does not mention all the instances. For an account of the persons to whom the Lord Jesus appeared after his resurrection, and the order in which it was done, see the notes on the Gospels.

Then of the twelve - The apostles; still called "the twelve," though Judas was not one of them. It was common to call the apostles "the twelve." Jesus appeared to the apostles at one time in the absence of Thomas John 20:19, John 20:24; and also to them when Thomas was present, John 20:24-29. Probably Paul here refers to the latter occasion, when all the surviving apostles were present.

Verse 6

Above five hundred brethren at once - More than 500 Christians or followers of Jesus at one time. This was probably in Galilee, where the Lord Jesus had spent the greater part of his public ministry, and where he had made most disciples. The place, however, is not designated, and, of course, cannot be known. It is remarkable that this fact is omitted by all the evangelists; but why they should have omitted so remarkable a proof of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, is unknown. There is a slight circumstance

hinted at in Matthew 28:10, which may throw some light on this passage. After his resurrection, Jesus said to the women who were at the sepulchre, "Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." And in 1 Corinthians 15:16 it is said, "The eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them." Jesus had spent most of his public life in Galilee. He had made most of his disciples there.

It was proper, therefore, that those disciples, who would, of course, hear of his death, should have some public confirmation of the fact that he had risen. It is very probable, also, that the eleven who went down into Galilee after he rose would apprize the brethren there of what had been said to them, that Jesus would meet them on a certain mountain; and it is morally certain that they who had followed him in so great numbers in Galilee would be drawn together by the report that the Lord Jesus, who had been put to death, was about to be seen there again alive. Such is human nature, and such was the attachment of these disciples to the Lord Jesus, that it is morally certain a large concourse would assemble on the slightest rumor that such an occurrence was to happen. Nothing more would be necessary anywhere to draw a concourse of people than a rumor that one who was dead would appear again; and in this instance, where they ardently loved him, and when, perhaps, many believed that he would rise, they would naturally assemble in great numbers to see him once more. One thing is proved by this, that the Lord Jesus had many more disciples than is generally supposed. If there were five hundred who could be assembled at once in a single part of the land where he had preached, there is every reason to suppose that there were many more in other parts of Judea.

The greater part remain unto this present - Are now alive, and can be appealed to, in proof that they saw him. What more conclusive argument for the truth of his resurrection could there be than that 500 persons had seen him, who had been intimately acquainted with him in his life, and who had become his followers? If the testimony of 500 could not avail to prove his resurrection, no number of witnesses could. And if 500 people could thus be deceived, any number could; and it would be impossible to substantiate any simple matter of fact by the testimony of eye-witnesses.

But some are fallen asleep - Have died. This is the usual expression employed in the Scripture to describe the death of saints. It denotes:

(1)The calmness and peace with which, they die, like sinking into a gentle sleep;

(2)The hope of a resurrection, as we sink to sleep with the expectation of again awaking; see the John 11:11 note; 1 Corinthians 11:30 note.

Verse 7

After that, he was seen of James - This appearance is not recorded by the evangelists. It is mentioned in the fragment of the apocryphal Gospel according to the Hebrews, which is, however, of no authority. It is probable that the Lord Jesus appeared often to the disciples, since he was 40 days on earth after his resurrection, and the evangelists have only mentioned the more prominent instances, and enough to substantiate the fact of his resurrection. This James, the fathers say, was James the Less, the brother or cousin-german of the Lord Jesus. The other James was dead (see Acts 12:1) when this Epistle was written. This James, the author of the Epistle that bears his name, was stationed in Jerusalem. When Paul went there, after his return from Arabia, he had an interview with James (see Galatians 1:19, "But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother"), and it is highly probable that Paul would state to him the vision which he had of the Lord Jesus on his way to Damascus, and that James also would state to Paul the fact that he had seen him after he rose. This may be the reason why Paul here mentions the fact, because he had it from the lips of James himself.

Then of all the apostles - By all the apostles. Perhaps the occasion at the sea of Galilee, recorded in John 21:14. Or it is possible that he frequently met the apostles assembled together, and that Paul means to say, that during the forty days after his resurrection he was often seen by them.

Verse 8

And last of all - After all the other times in which he appeared to people; after he had ascended to heaven. This passage proves that the apostle Paul saw the same Lord Jesus, the same "body" which had been seen by the others, or else his assertion would be no proof that he was risen from the dead. It was not a fancy, therefore, that he had seen him; it was not the work of imagination; it was not even a "revelation" that he had risen; it was a real vision of the ascended Redeemer.

He was seen of me also - On the way to Damascus, see Acts 9:3-6, Acts 9:17.

As of one born out of due time - Margin, Or, "an abortive." Our translation, to most readers, probably, would not convey the real meaning of

this place. The expression, "as of one born out of due time," would seem to imply that Paul meant to say that there was some unfitness "as to the time" when he saw the Lord Jesus; or that it was "too late" to have as clear and satisfactory a view of him as those had who saw him before his ascension. But this is by no means the idea in the passage. The word used here (ἔκτρωμα ektrōma) properly means an abortion, one born prematurely. It is found no where else in the New Testament; and here it means, as the following verse shows, one that was "exceedingly unworthy;" that was not worth regard; that was unfit to be employed in the service of the Lord Jesus; that had the same relation to that which was worthy of the apostolic office which an abortion has to a living child. The word occurs (in the Septuagint) in Job 3:16; Ecclesiastes 6:3, as the translation of נפל nephelan abortion, or untimely birth. The expression seems to be proverbial, and to denote anything that is vile, offensive, loathsome, unworthy; see Numbers 12:11. The word, I think, has no reference to the mode of "training" of the apostle, as if he had not had the same opportunity as the others had, and was therefore, compared with their advantages, like an untimely child compared with one that had come to maturity before its birth, as Bloomfield supposes; nor does it refer to his diminutive stature, as Wetstein supposes; but it means that he felt himself "vile," guilty, unworthy, abominable as a persecutor, and as unworthy to be an apostle. The verse following shows that this is the sense in which the word is used.

Verse 9

For - A reason for the appellation which he had given to himself in 1 Corinthians 15:8.

I am the least of the apostles - Not on account of any defect in his commission, or any lack of qualification to bear witness in what he saw, but on account of the great crime of his life, the fact that he had been a persecutor. Paul could never forget that; as a man who has been profane and a scoffer, when he becomes converted, can never forget the deep guilt of his former life. The effect will be to produce humility, and a deep sense of unworthiness, ever onward.

Am not meet to be called an apostle - Am not fit to be regarded as a follower of the Lord Jesus, and as appointed to defend his cause, and to bear his name among the Gentiles. Paul had a deep sense of his unworthiness; and the memory of his former life tended ever to keep him humble. Such should be, and such will be, the effect of the remembrance of

a life of sin on those who become converted to the gospel, and especially if they are entrusted with the high office of the ministry, and occupy a station of importance in the church of God.

Because I persecuted the church of God - See Acts 9:19.

Verse 10

But by the grace of God I am what I am - By the "favor" or mercy of God. What I have is to be traced to him, and not to any native tendency to goodness, or any native inclination to his service, or to any merit of my own. All my hopes of heaven; all my zeal; all my success; all my piety; all my apostolic endowments, are to be traced to him. Nothing is more common in the writings of Paul, than a disposition to trace all that he had to the mere mercy and grace of God. And nothing is a more certain indication of true piety than such a disposition. The reason why Paul here introduces the subject seems to be this. He had incidentally, and undesignedly, introduced a comparison in one respect between himself and the other apostles. He had not had the advantages which they had. Most of all, he was overwhelmed with the recollection that he had been a persecutor. He felt, therefore, that there was a special obligation resting on him to make up by diligence for the lack of their advantages of an early personal conversation with the Lord Jesus, and to express his gratitude that so great a sinner had been made an apostle. He, therefore, says, that he had not been idle. He had been enabled by the grace of God, to labor more than all the rest, and he had thus shown that he had not been insensible of his obligations.

But I laboured more abundantly … - I was more diligent in preaching; I encountered more perils; I have exerted myself more. The records of his life, compared with the records of the other apostles, fully show this.

Yet not I - I do not attribute it to myself. I would not boast of it. The fact is plain, and undeniable, that I have so labored. But I would not attribute it to myself. I would not be proud or vain. I would remember my former state; would remember that I was a persecutor; would remember that all my disposition to labor, and all my ability, and all my success, are to be traced to the mere favor and mercy of God. So every man who has just views feels who has been favored with success in the ministry. If a man has been successful as a preacher; if he has been self-denying, laborious, and the instrument of good, he cannot be insensible to the fact, and it would be foolish affectation to pretend ignorance of it. But he may feel that it is all

owing to the mere mercy of God; and the effect will be to produce humility and gratitude, not pride and self-complacency.

Verse 11

Therefore, whether it were I or they - I or the other apostles. It is comparatively immaterial by whom it was done. The establishment of the truth is the great matter; and the question by whom it is done is one of secondary importance.

So we preach - So we all preach. We all defend the same great doctrines; we all insist on the fact that the Lord Jesus died and rose; and this doctrine you all have believed. This doctrine is confirmed by all who preach; and this enters into the faith of all who believe. The design of Paul is to affirm that the doctrines which he here refers to were great, undeniable, and fundamental doctrines of Christianity; that they were proclaimed by "all" the ministers of the gospel, and believed by all Christians. They were, therefore, immensely important to all; and they must enter essentially into the hopes of all.

Verse 12

Now if Christ … - Paul, having 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 stated the direct evidence for the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, proceeds here to demonstrate that the dead would rise, by showing how it followed from the fact that the Lord Jesus had risen, and by showing what consequences would follow from denying it. The whole argument is based on the fact that the Lord Jesus had risen. If that was admitted, he shows that it must follow that his people would also rise.

Be preached - The word "preached" here seems to include the idea of so preaching as to be believed; or so as to demonstrate that he did rise. If this was the doctrine on which the church was based, that the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, how could the resurrection of the dead be denied?

How say - How can any say; how can it be maintained?

Some among you - See the introduction to Acts 17:32); or they may have been some followers of Sadducean teachers; or it may be that the Gnostic philosophy had corrupted them. It is most probable, I think, that the denial of the resurrection was the result of reasoning after the manner of the Greeks, and the effect of the introduction of philosophy into the church. This has been the fruitful source of most of the errors which have been introduced into the church.

That there is no resurrection of the dead - That the dead cannot rise. How can it be held that there can be no resurrection, while yet it is admitted that Christ rose? The argument here is twofold:

(1) That Christ rose was one "instance" of a fact which demonstrated that there "had been" a resurrection, and of course that it was possible.

(2) that such was the connection between Christ and his people that the admission of this fact involved also the doctrine that all his people would also rise. This argument Paul states at length in the following verses. It was probably held by them that the resurrection was "impossible." To all this, Paul answers in accordance with the principles of inductive philosophy as now understood, by demonstrating A fact, and showing that such an event had occurred, and that consequently all the difficulties were met. Facts are unanswerable demonstrations; and when a fact is established, all the obstacles and difficulties in the way must be admitted to be overcome. So philosophers now reason; and Paul, in accordance with these just principles, labored simply to establish the fact that one had been raised, and thus met at once all the objections which could be urged against the doctrine. It would have been most in accordance with the philosophy of the Greeks to have gone into a metaphysical discussion to show that it was not impossible or absurd, and this might have been done. It was most in accordance with the principles of true philosophy, however, to establish the fact at once, and to argue from that, and thus to meet all the difficulties at once. The doctrine of the resurrection, therefore, does not rest on a metaphysical subtilty; it does not depend on human reasoning; it does not depend on analogy; it rests just as the sciences of astronomy, chemistry, anatomy, botany, and natural philosophy do, "on well ascertained facts;" and it is now a well understood principle of all true science that no difficulty, no obstacle, no metaphysical subtilty; no embarrassment about being able to see how it is, is to be allowed to destroy the conviction in the mind which the facts are suited to produce.

Verse 13

But if there be no resurrection of the dead - If the whole subject is held to be impossible and absurd, then it must follow that Christ is not "risen," since there were the same difficulties in the way of raising him up which will exist in any case. He was dead and was buried. He had lain in

the grave three days. His human soul had left the body. His frame had become cold and stiff. The blood had ceased to circulate, and the lungs to heave. In his case there was the same difficulty in raising him up to life that there is in any other; and if it is held to be impossible and absurd that the dead should rise, then it must follow that Christ has not been raised. This is the first consequence which Paul states as resulting from the denial of this doctrine, and this is inevitable. Paul thus shows them that the denial of the doctrine, or the maintaining the general proposition "that the dead would not rise," led also to the denial of the fact that the Lord Jesus had risen, and consequently to the denial of Christianity altogether, and the annihilation of all their hopes. There was, moreover, such a close connection between Christ and his people, that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus made their resurrection certain. See 1 Thessalonians 4:14; see the note on John 14:19.

Verse 14

And if Christ is not risen, then is our preaching vain - Another consequence which must follow if it be held that there was no resurrection, and consequently that Christ was not risen. it would be vain and useless to preach. The substance of their preaching was that Christ was raised up; and all their preaching was based on that. If that were not true, the whole system was false, and Christianity was an imposition. The word vain here seems to include the idea of useless, idle, false. It would be "false" to affirm that the Christian system was from heaven; it would be useless to proclaim such a system, since it could save no one.

And your faith is also vain - It is useless to believe. It can be of no advantage. If Christ was not raised, he was an impostor, since he repeatedly declared that he would rise Matthew 16:21; Matthew 18:22-23; Luke 9:22, and since the whole of his religion depended on that. The system could not be true unless Christ had been raised, as he said he would be; and to believe a false system could be of no use to any man. The argument here is one addressed to all their feelings, their hopes, and their belief. It is drawn from all their convictions that the system was true. Were they, could they be prepared to admit a doctrine which involved the consequence that all the evidences which they had that the apostles preached the truth were delusive, and that all the evidences of the truth of Christianity which had affected their minds and won their hearts were false and deceptive? If they were not prepared for this, then it followed that they should not abandon or doubt the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

Verse 15

Yea, and we are found - We are; or we shall be proved to be. It will follow, if the Lord Jesus was not raised up, that we have been false witnesses.

Of God - Respecting God. It will be found that we have affirmed that which is not true of God; or have said that he has done that which he has not done. Nothing could be regarded as a greater crime than this, whatever might be the immediate subject under consideration. To bear false witness of a man, or to say that a man has done what he has not done, is regarded as a grievous crime. How much more so to bear false testimony of God!

Because we have testified of God - Or rather "against" God (κάτα τοῦ θεοῦ kata tou theou). Our evidence has been "against" him. We have affirmed that which is not true; and this is "against" God. It is implied here that it would be a "crime" to testify that God had raised up the Lord Jesus if he had not done it; or that it would be affirming that of God which would be "against" his character, or which it would be improper for him to do. This would be so:

(1)Because it would he wrong to bear any false witness of God, or to affirm that he had done what he had not done;

(2)Because "if" the Lord Jesus had not been raised up, it would prove that he was an "impostor," since he had declared that he would be raised up; and to affirm of God that he had raised up an impostor would be against him, and would be highly dishonorable to him.

If the dead rise not - If there is, and can be no resurrection. If this general proposition is true that there can be no resurrection, then it will apply to Christ as well as any others, and must prove that he did not rise. The "argument" in this verse is this:

(1) If it was denied that Christ was raised, it would prove that all the apostles were false witnesses of the worst character; false witnesses against God.

(2) this the apostle seems to have presumed they "could not" believe. They had had too many evidences that they spoke the truth; they had seen their uniform respect for God, and desire to bear witness of him and in his favor; they had had too conclusive evidence that they were inspired by him, and had the power of working miracles; they were too fully convinced of their honesty, truth, and piety, ever to believe that they could be false

witnesses against God. They had had ample opportunity to know whether God did raise up the Lord Jesus; and they were witnesses who had no inducement to bear a false witness in the case.

Verse 16

For if the dead rise not … - This is a repetition of what is said in 1 Corinthians 15:13. It is repeated here, evidently, because of its importance. It was a great and momentous truth which would "bear" repetition, that if there was no resurrection, as some held, then it would follow that the Lord Jesus was not raised up.

Verse 17

Your faith is vain, - 1 Corinthians 15:14. The meaning of this passage here is, that their faith was vain, "because," if Christ was not raised up, they were yet unpardoned sinners. The pardon of sin was connected with the belief of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and, if he was not raised, they were still in a state of sin.

Ye are yet in your sins - Your sins are yet unpardoned. They can be forgiven only by faith in him, and by the efficacy of his blood. But if he was not raised, he was an impostor; and, of course, all your hopes of pardon by him, and through him, must be vain. The argument in this verse consists in an appeal to their Christian experience and their hopes. It may be thus expressed:

(1) You have reason to believe that your sins are forgiven. You cherish that belief on evidence that is satisfactory to you. But if Christ is not raised, that cannot be true. He was an impostor, and sins cannot be forgiven by him. As you are not, and cannot be prepared to admit that your sins are not forgiven, you cannot admit a doctrine which involves that.

(2) you have evidence that you are not under the dominion of sin. You have repented of it; have forsaken it; and are leading a holy life. You know that, and cannot be induced to doubt this fact. But all that is to be traced to the doctrine that the Lord Jesus rose from the dead. It is only by believing that, and the doctrines which are connected with it, that the power of sin in the heart has been destroyed. And as you "cannot" doubt that under the influence of "that truth" you have been enabled to break off from your sins, so you cannot admit a doctrine which would involve it as a consequence that you are yet under the condemnation and the dominion of sin. You must

believe, therefore, that the Lord Jesus rose; and that, if he rose, others will also. This argument is good also now, just so far as there is evidence that, through the belief of a risen Saviour, the dominion of sin has been broken; and every Christian is, therefore, in an important sense, a witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, a living proof that a system which can work so great changes, and produce such evidence that sins are forgiven as are furnished in the conversion of sinners, must be from God; and, of course, that the work of the Lord Jesus was accepted, and that he was raised up from the dead.

Verse 18

Then they also … - This verse contains a statement of another consequence which must follow from the denial of the resurrection - that all Christians who had died had failed of salvation, and were destroyed.

Which are fallen asleep in Christ - Which have died as Christians; 1 Corinthians 15:6 note; 1 Thessalonians 4:15 note.

Are perished - Are destroyed; are not saved. They hoped to have been saved by the merits of the Lord Jesus; they trusted to a risen Saviour, and fixed all their hopes of heaven there; but if he did not rise, of course the whole system was delusion, and they have failed of heaven, and been destroyed. Their bodies lie in the grave, and return to their native dust without the prospect of a resurrection, and their souls are destroyed. The "argument" here is mainly an appeal to their feelings: "Can you believe it possible that the good people who have believed in the Lord Jesus are destroyed? Can you believe that your best friends, your kindred, and your fellow Christians who have died, have gone down to perdition? Can you believe that they will sink to woe with the impenitent, and the polluted, and abandoned? If you cannot, then it must follow that they are saved. And then it will follow that you "cannot" embrace a doctrine which involves this consequence."

And this argument is a sound one still. There are multitudes who are made good men by the gospel. They are holy, humble, self-denying, and prayerful friends of God. "They have become such by the belief of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Can it be believed that they will be destroyed? That they will perish with the profane, and licentious, and unprincipled? That they will go down to dwell with the polluted and the wicked? "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Genesis 18:25. If it

“cannot” be so believed, then they will be saved; and “if” saved it follows that the system is true which saves them, and, of course, that the Lord Jesus rose from the dead. We may remark here, that a denial of the truth of Christianity involves the belief that its friends will perish with others; that all their hopes are vain; and that their expectations are delusive. He, therefore, who becomes an infidel “believes” that his pious friends - his sainted father, his holy mother, his lovely Christian sister or child, is deluded and deceived; that they will sink down to the grave to rise no more; that their hopes of heaven will all vanish, and that they will be destroyed with the profane, the impure, and the sensual.

And if infidelity demands “this” faith of its votaries, it is a system which strikes at the very happiness of social life, and at all our convictions of what is true and right. It is a system that is withering and blighting to the best hopes of people. “Can” it be believed that God will destroy those who are living to his honor; who are pure in heart, and lovely in life, “and who have been made such by the Christian religion?” If it cannot, then every man knows that Christianity is not false, and that infidelity is not true.

Verse 19

If in this life only we have hope in Christ - If our hope in Christ shall not be followed by the resurrection of the dead and future glory, and if all our hopes shall be disappointed.

We are … - Doddridge, Macknight, Grotius, and some others, suppose that this refers to the apostles only, and that the sense is, that if there was no resurrection, they, of all people would be most to be pitied, since they had exposed themselves to such a variety of dangers and trials, in which nothing could sustain them but the hope of immortality. If they failed in that they failed in everything. They were regarded as the most vile of the human family; they suffered more from persecution, poverty, and perils than other people; and if, after all, they were to be deprived of all their hopes, and disappointed in their expectation of the resurrection, their condition would be more deplorable than that of any other people. But there is no good reason for supposing that the word “we,” here, is to be limited to the apostles. For:

(1)Paul had not mentioned the apostles particularly in the previous verses; and,

(2)The argument demands that it should be understood of all Christians, and the declaration is as true, substantially, of all Christians as it was of the apostles.

Of all men most miserable - More to be pitied or commiserated than any other class of people. The word used here (ἐληνότεροι elēinoteroi) means, properly, more deserving of pity, more pitiable. It may mean sometimes, more wretched or unhappy; but this is not necessarily its meaning, nor is it its meaning here. It refers rather to their condition and hopes than to their personal feeling; and does not mean that Christians are unhappy, or that their religion does not produce comfort, but that their condition would be most deplorable; they would be more deserving of pity than any other class of people. This would be:

(1) Because no other people had so elevated hopes, and, of course, no others could experience so great disappointment.

(2) they were subjected to more trials than any other class of people. They were persecuted and reviled, and subjected to toil, and privation, and want, on account of their religion; and if, after all, they were to be disappointed, their condition was truly deplorable.

(3) they do not indulge in the pleasures of this life; they do not give themselves, as ethers do, to the enjoyments of this world. They voluntarily subject themselves to trial and self-denial; and if they are not admitted to eternal life, they are not only disappointed in this but they are cut off from the sources of happiness which their fellow-men enjoy in this world - Calvin.

(4) on the whole, therefore, there would be disappointed hopes, and trials, and poverty, and want, and all for nothing; and no condition could be conceived to be more deplorable than where a man was looking for eternal life, and for it subjecting himself to a life of want, and poverty, persecution, and tears, and should be finally disappointed. This passage, therefore, does not mean that virtue and piety are not attended with happiness; it does not mean that, even if there were no future state, a man would not be more happy if he walked in the paths of virtue than if he lived a life of sin; it does not mean that the Christian has no happiness in “religion itself” - in the love of God, and in prayer, and praise, and in purity of life. In all this he has

enjoyment and even if there were no heaven, a life of virtue and piety would be more happy than a life of sin. But it means that the condition of the Christian would be more "deplorable" than that of other people; he would be more to be pitied. All his high hopes would be disappointed. Other people have no such hopes to be dashed to the ground; and, of course, no other people would be such objects of pity and compassion. The "argument" in this verse is derived from the high hopes of the Christian. "Could they believe that all their hopes were to be frustrated? Could they subject themselves to all these trials and privations, without believing that they would rise from the dead? Were they prepared, by the denial of the doctrine of the resurrection, to put themselves in the condition of the most miserable and wretched of the human family - to "admit" that they were in a condition most to be deplored?

Verse 20

But now is Christ risen … - This language is the bursting forth of a full heart and of overpowering conviction. It would seem as if Paul were impatient of the slow process of argument; weary of meeting objections, and of stating the consequences of a denial of the doctrine; and longing to give utterance to "what he knew," that Christ was risen from the dead. That was a point on which he was certain. He had seen him after he was risen; and he could no more doubt this "fact" than he could any other which he had witnessed with his own eyes. He makes, therefore, this strong affirmation; and in doing it, he at the same time affirms that the dead will also rise, since he had shown 1 Corinthians 15:12-18 that all the objection to the doctrine of the resurrection was removed by the fact that Christ had risen, and had shown that his resurrection involved the certainty that his people also would rise. There is special force in the word "now" in this verse. The meaning may be thus expressed: "I have showed the consequences which would follow from the supposition that Christ was not raised up. I have shown how it would destroy all our hopes, plunge us into grief, annihilate our faith, make our preaching vain, and involve us in the belief that our pious friends have perished, and that we are yet in our sins. I have shown how it would produce the deepest disappointment and misery. But all this was mere supposition. There is no reason to apprehend any such consequences, or to be thus alarmed. "Christ" is "risen." Of that there is no doubt. That is not to be called in question. It is established by irrefragable

testimony; and consequently our hopes are not vain, our faith is not useless, our pious friends have not perished, and we shall not be disappointed."

And become the first-fruits - The word rendered "first-fruits" (ἀπαρχὴ aparchē) occurs in the New Testament in the following places; Romans 8:23 (see the note on this place); Romans 11:16; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Corinthians 16:15; James 1:18; Revelation 14:4. It occurs often in the Septuagint as the translations of חלב cheleb"fat," or "fatness" Numbers 18:12, Numbers 18:29-30, Numbers 18:32; as the translation of מעשׂרה maʿasrah"the tenth" or "the tithe" Deuteronomy 12:6; of עון ʿawon"iniquity" Numbers 18:1; of ראשׁית rē'shiyt"the beginning, the commencement, the first" (Exodus 23:19; Leviticus 23:1; Numbers 15:18-19, etc.): of תרמה teruwmah"oblation, offering; lifting up; of that which is lifted up or waved as the first sheaf of the harvest," etc. Exodus 25:2-3; Exodus 35:5; Numbers 5:9; Numbers 18:8, etc. The first-fruits, or the first sheaf of ripe grain was required to be offered to the Lord, and was waved before him by the priest, as expressing the sense of gratitude by the husbandman, and his recognition of the fact that God had a right to all that he had; Leviticus 23:10-14. The word, therefore, comes to have two:

(1)That which is "first," the beginning, or that which has the priority of time; and,

(2)That which is apart and portion of the whole which is to follow, and which is the earnest or pledge of that; as the "first" sheaf of ripe grain was not only the first in order of time, but was the earnest or pledge of the entire harvest which was soon to succeed.

In allusion to this, Paul uses the word here. It was not merely or mainly that Christ was the first in order of time that rose from the dead, for Lazarus and the widow's son had been raised before him; but it was that he was chief in regard to the dignity, value, and importance of his rising; he was connected with all that should rise, as the first sheaf of the harvest was with the crop; he was a "part" of the mighty harvest of the resurrection, and his rising was a "portion" of that great rising, as the sheaf was a portion of the harvest itself; and he was so connected with them all, and their rising so depended on his, that his resurrection was a demonstration that they would rise. It may also be implied here, as Grotius and Schoettgen have remarked, that he is the first of those who were raised so as not to die again; and that, therefore, those raised by Elisha and by the Saviour himself do not come into the account. They all died again; but the Saviour will not die, nor will

those whom he will raise up in the resurrection die any more. He is, therefore, the first of those that thus rise, and a portion of that great host which shall be raised to die no more. May there not be another idea? The first sheaf of the harvest was consecrated to God, and then all the harvest was regarded as consecrated to him. May it not be implied that, by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, all those of whom he speaks are regarded as sacred to God, and as consecrated and accepted by the resurrection and acceptance of him who was the first-fruits?

Of them that slept - Of the pious dead; see the note on 1 Corinthians 15:6.

Verse 21

For since by man came death - By Adam, or by means of his transgression; see 1 Corinthians 15:22. The sense is, evidently, that in consequence of the sin of Adam all people die, or are subjected to temporal death. Or, in other words, man would not have died had it not been for the crime of the first man; see the note on Romans 5:12. This passage may be regarded as proof that death would not have entered the world had it not been for transgression; or, in other words, if man had not sinned, he would have remained immortal on the earth, or would have been translated to heaven, as Enoch and Elijah were, without seeing death. The apostle here, by "man," undoubtedly refers to Adam; but the particular and specific idea which he intends to insist on is, that, as death came by human nature, or by a human being, by a man, so it was important and proper that immortality, or freedom from death, should come in the same way, by one who was a man. Man introduced death; man also would recover from death. The evil was introduced by one man; the recovery would be by another man.

By man came also - By the Lord Jesus, the Son of God in human nature. The resurrection came by him, because he first rose - first of those who should not again die; because he proclaimed the doctrine, and placed it on a firm foundation; and because by his power the dead will be raised up. Thus, he came to counteract the evils of the fall, and to restore man to more than his primeval dignity and honor. The resurrection through Christ will be with the assurance that all who are raised up by him shall never die again.

Verse 22

For as in Adam - (ἐν τῳ Ἀδαμ en tō Adam). By Adam; by the act, or by means of Adam; as a consequence of his act. His deed was the procuring cause, or the reason, why all are subjected to temporal death; see Genesis

3:19. It does not mean that all people became actually dead when he sinned, for they had not then an existence; but it must mean that the death of all can be traced to him as the procuring cause, and that his act made it certain that all that came into the world would be mortal. The sentence which went forth against him Genesis 3:19 went forth against all; affected all; involved all in the certainty of death; as the sentence that was passed on the serpent Genesis 3:14 made it certain that all serpents would he "cursed above all cattle," and be prone upon the earth; the sentence that was passed upon the woman Genesis 3:16 made it certain that all women would be subjected to the same condition of suffering to which Eve was subjected; and the sentence that was passed on man Genesis 3:17 that he should cultivate the ground in sorrow all the days of his life, that it should bring forth thistles and thorns to him 1 Corinthians 15:18, that he should eat bread in the sweat of his brow 1 Corinthians 15:19, made it certain that this would be the condition of all people as well as of Adam. It was a blow at the head of the human family, and they were subjected to the same train of evils as he was himself. In like manner they were subjected to death. It was done in Adam, or by Adam, in the same way as it was in him, or by him, that they were subjected to toil and to the necessity of procuring food by the sweat of the brow; see the notes on Romans 5:12-19; see 1 Corinthians 15:47-48.

All die - All mankind are subjected to temporal death; or are mortal. This passage has been often adduced to prove that all mankind became sinful in Adam, or in virtue of a covenant transaction with him; and that they are subjected to spiritual death as a punishment for his sins. But, whatever may he the truth on that subject, it is clear that this passage does not relate to it, and should not he adduced as a proof text. For:

(1) The words "die" and "dieth" obviously and usually refer to temporal death; and they should be so understood, unless there is something in the connection which requires us to understand them in a figurative and metaphorical sense. But there is, evidently, no such necessity here.

(2) the context requires us to understand this as relating to temporal death. There is not here, as there is in Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29.

(3) the form of the passage requires us to understand the word "all" in the same sense in both members, unless there be some indispensable necessity for limiting the one or the other.

(4) the argument of the apostle requires this. For his object is to show that the effect of the sin of Adam, by introducing "temporal" death, will be counteracted by Christ in raising up all who die; which would not be shown if the apostle meant to say that only a part of those who had died in consequence of the sin of Adam would he raised up. The argument would then be inconclusive. But now it is complete if it be shown that all shall be raised up, whatever may become of them afterward. The sceptre of death shall be broken, and his dominion destroyed, by the fact that all shall be raised up from the dead.

Be made alive - Be raised from the dead; be made alive, in a sense contradistinguished from that in which he here says they were subjected to death, by Adam. If it should be held that that means that all were made sinners by him, then this means, as has been observed, that all shall be made righteous, and the doctrine of universal salvation has an unanswerable argument; if it means, as it obviously does, that all were subjected to temporal death by him, then it means that all shall be raised from the dead by Christ.

Verse 23

But every man - Everyone, including Christ as well as others.

In his own order - In his proper order, rank, place, time. The word τάγμα tagmausually relates to military order or array; to the arrangement of a cohort, or band of troops; to their being properly marshalled with the officers at the head, and every man in His proper place in the ranks. Here it means that there was a proper "order" to be observed in the resurrection of the dead. And the design of the apostle is, probably, to counteract the idea that the resurrection was passed already, or that there was no future resurrection to be expected. The "order" which is here referred to is, doubtless, mainly that of "time;" meaning that Christ would be first, and then that the others would follow. But it also means that Christ would be first, because it was "proper" that he should be first. He was first in rank, in dignity, and in honor; he was the leader of all others, and their resurrection depended on his. And as it was proper that a leader or commander should have the first place in a march, or in an enterprise involving peril or glory, so it was proper that Christ should be first in the resurrection, and that the others should follow on in due order and time.

Christ the first-fruits - Christ first in time, and the pledge that they should rise; see the note on 1 Corinthians 15:20.

Afterward - After he has risen. Not before, because their resurrection depended on him.

They that are Christ's - They who are Christians. The apostle, though in 1 Corinthians 15:22 he had stated the truth that "all" the dead would rise, yet here only mentions Christians, because to them only would the doctrine be of any consolation, and because it was to them particularly that this whole argument was directed.

At his coming - When he shall come to judge the world, and to receive his people to himself. This proves that the dead will not be raised until Christ shall re-appear. He shall come for that purpose; and he shall assemble all the dead, and shall take his people to himself; see 2 Timothy 2:18.

Verse 24

Then cometh the end - Then is the end; or then "is" the consummation. It does not mean that the end, or consummation is to "follow" that event; but that this "will" be the ending, the winding up, the consummation of the affairs under the mediatorial reign of Christ. The word "end" (τέλος telos) denotes properly a limit, termination, completion of anything. The proper and obvious meaning of the word here is, that then shall be the end or completion of the work of redemption. That shall have been done which was intended to be done by the incarnation and the work of the atonement; the race shall be redeemed; the friends of God shall be completely recovered; and the administration of the affairs of the universe shall be conducted as they were before the incarnation of the Redeemer. Some understand the word "end" here, however, as a metaphor, meaning "the "last," or the rest of the dead;" but this is a forced and improbable interpretation. The word end here may refer to the end of human affairs, or the end of the kingdoms of this world, or it may refer to the ends of the mediatorial kingdom of the Redeemer; the consummation of his special reign and work resulting in the surrender of the kingdom to the Father. The connection demands the last interpretation, though this involves also the former.

When he shall have delivered up - (παραδῷ). This word means properly to give "near, with," or "to" anyone; to give over, to deliver up - Robinson. It is applied to the act of delivering up "persons" to the power or

authority of others, as e. g. to magistrates for trial, and condemnation, Matthew 5:25; Mark 15:1; Luke 20:20; to lictors, or soldiers, for punishment Matthew 18:24; or to one‘s enemies, Matthew 26:15. It is applied also to persons or things delivered over or surrendered to do or suffer anything, Acts 15:26; 1 Corinthians 13:3; Ephesians 4:19. It is also applied to persons or things delivered over to the care, charge, or supervision of anyone, in the sense of giving up, entrusting, committing, Matthew 11:27; Matthew 25:14; Luke 4:6, Luke 4:10, Luke 4:22. Here the obvious sense is that of surrendering, giving back, delivering up, rendering up that which had been received, implying that an important trust had been received, which was now to be rendered back. And according to this interpretation, it means:

(1)That the Lord Jesus had received or been entrusted with an important power or office as mediator; compare the note on Matthew 18:18.

(2)that he had executed the purpose implied in that trust or commission; and,

(3)That he was now rendering back to God that office or authority which he had received at his hands.

As the work had been accomplished which had been contemplated in his design; as there would be no further necessity for mediation when redemption should have been made, and his church recovered from sin and brought to glory; there would be no further need of that special arrangement which had been implied in the work of redemption, and, of course, all the entrustment of power involved in that would be again restored to the hands of God. The idea, says Grotius, is, that he would deliver up the kingdom as the governors of provinces render again or deliver up their commission and authority to the Caesars who appointed them. There is no absurdity in this view. For “if” the world was to be redeemed, it was necessary that the Redeemer should be entrusted with power sufficient for his work. When that work was done, and there was no further need of that special exercise of power, then it would be proper that it should be restored, or that the government of God should be administered as it was before the work of redemption was undertaken; that the Divinity, or the Godhead, as such, should preside over the destinies of the universe. Of course, it will not follow that the Second Person of the Trinity will surrender “all” power, or “cease” to exercise government. It will be that power only which he had as

Mediator; and whatever part in the administration of the government of the universe he shared as divine before the incarnation, he will still share, with the additional "glory" and "honor" of having redeemed a world by his death.

The kingdom - This word means properly dominion, reign, the exercise of kingly power. In the New Testament it means commonly the reign of the Messiah, or the dominion which God would exercise through the Messiah; the reign of God over people by the laws and institutions of the Messiah; see the note on Matthew 3:2. Here it means, I think, evidently, dominion in general. It cannot denote the peculiar administration over the world involved in the work of mediation, for that will be ended; but it means that the empire, the sovereignty, shall have been delivered up to God. His enemies shall have been subdued. His power shall have been asserted. The authority of God shall have been established, and the kingdom, or the dominion, shall be in the hands of God himself; and he shall reign, not in the special form which existed in the work of mediation, but absolutely, and as he did over obedient minds before the incarnation.

To God - To God "as" God; to the Divinity. The Mediator shall have given up the special power and rule as Mediator, and it shall be exercised by God as God.

Even the Father - And (καὶ kai) the Father. The word "Father," as applied to God in the Scriptures, is used in two senses - to designate "the" Father, the first person of the Trinity as distinguished from the Son; and in a broader, wider sense, to denote God as sustaining the relation of a Father to his creatures; as the Father of all. Instances of this use are too numerous to be here particularly referred to. It is in this latter sense, perhaps, that the word is used here - not to denote that the second person of the Trinity is to surrender all power into the hands of the first, or that he is to cease to exercise dominion and control; but that the power is to be yielded into the hands of God as God, that is, as the universal Father, as the Divinity, without being exercised in any special and special manner by the different persons of the Godhead, as had been done in the work of redemption. At the close of the work of redemption this "peculiar" arrangement would cease; and God, as the universal Father and Ruler of all, would exercise the government of the world; see, however, see the note on 1 Corinthians 15:28.

When he shall have put down - When he shall have "abolished," or brought to nothing, all that opposed the reign of God.

All rule … - All those mighty powers that opposed God and resisted his reign. The words used here do not seem intended to denote the several departments or forms of opposition, but to be general terms, meaning that whatever opposed God should be subdued. They include, of course, the kingdoms of this world; the sins, pride, and corruption of the human heart; the powers of darkness - the spiritual dominions that oppose God on earth, and in hell; and death and the grave. All shalt be completely subdued, and cease to interpose any obstacles to the advancement of his kingdom and to his universal reign. A monarch reigns when all his enemies are subdued or destroyed; or when they are prevented from opposing his will, even though all should not voluntarily submit to his will. The following remarks of Prof. Bush present a plausible and ingenious view of this difficult passage, and they are, therefore, subjoined here. "If the opinion of the eminent critic, Storr, may be admitted, that the kingdom here said to be delivered up to the Father is not the kingdom of Christ, but the rule and dominion of all adverse power - an opinion rendered very probable by the following words: "when he shall have "put down" (Greek: "done away, abolished") all rule, and all authority and power," and 1 Corinthians 15:25, "till he hath put all "enemies" under his feet" - then is the passage of identical import with Revelation 11:15, referring to precisely the same period: "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever. It is, therefore, we conceive, but a special mode of denoting the "transfer," the "making over" of the kingdoms of this world from their former despotic and antichristian rulers to the sovereignty of Jesus Christ, the appointed heir and head of all things, whose kingdom is to be everlasting.

If this interpretation be correct, we are prepared to advance a step further, and suggest that the phrase, "he shall have delivered up" (Greek, παραδῷ paradō), be understood as an instance of the idiom in which the verb is used without any personal nominative, but has reference to the "purpose of God as expressed in the Scriptures;" so that the passage may be read," Then cometh the end (that is, not the close, the final winding up, but the perfect development, expansion, completion, consummation of the divine plans in regard to this world), when the prophetic announcements of

the Scriptures require the delivering up (that is, the making over) of all adverse dominion into the hands of the Messiah, to whose supremacy we are taught to expect that everything will finally be made subject" - "*Illustrations of Scripture*." A more extended examination of this difficult passage may be seen in Storr's Opuscula, vol. i. pp. 274-282. See also Biblical Repository, vol. 3:pp. 748-755.

Verse 25

For he must reign - It is fit, or proper (δει dei), that he should reign until this is accomplished. It is proper that the mediatorial kingdom should continue till this great work is effected. The word "must" here refers to the propriety of this continuance of his reign, and to the fact that this was contemplated and predicted as the work which he would accomplish. He came to subdue all his enemies; see Psalm 2:6-10; or Psalm 110:1, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Paul, doubtless, had this passage in his eye as affirming the necessity that he should reign until all his foes should be subdued. That this refers to the Messiah is abundantly clear from Matthew 22:44-45.

Verse 26

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death - The other foes of God should be subdued "before" the final resurrection. The enmity of the human heart should be subdued by the triumphs of the gospel. The scepter of Satan should be broken and wrested from him. The false systems of religion that had tyrannized over people should be destroyed. The gospel should have spread everywhere, and the world be converted to God. And nothing should remain but to "subdue" or destroy death, and that would be by the resurrection. It would be:

(1) because the resurrection would be a triumph over death, showing that there was one of greater power, and that the sceptre would be wrested from the hands of death.

(2) because death would cease to reign. No more would ever die. All that should be raised up would live forever; and the effects of sin and rebellion in this world would be thus forever ended, and the kingdom of God restored. Death is here personified as a tyrant, exercising despotic power over the human race; and "he" is to be subdued.

Verse 27

For he hath put - God has put by promise, purpose, or decree.

All things under his feet - He has made all things subject to him; or has appointed him to be head over all things; compare Matthew 28:18; John 17:2; Ephesians 1:20-22. It is evident that Paul here refers to some promise or prediction respecting the Messiah, though he does not expressly quote any passage, or make it certain to what he refers. The "words" "hath put all things under his feet" are found in Psalm 8:6, as applicable to "man," and as designed to show the dignity and dominion of man. Whether the psalm has any reference to the Messiah, has been made a question. Those who are disposed to see an examination of this question, may find it in Stuart on the Hebrews, on Hebrews 2:6-8; and in Excurses ix. of the same work, pp. 568-570. Ed. 1833. In the passage before us, it is not "necessary" to suppose that Paul meant to say that the psalm had a particular reference to the Messiah. All that is implied is, that it was the intention of God to subdue all things to him; this was the general strain of the prophecies in regard to him; this was the purpose of God; and this idea is accurately expressed in the words of the psalm; or these words will convey the "general sense" of the prophetic writings in regard to the Messiah. It may be true, also, that although the passage in Psalm 8:1-9 has no immediate and direct reference to the Messiah, yet it includes him as one who possessed human nature.

The psalm may be understood as affirming that all things were subjected to "human nature;" that is, human nature had dominion and control over all. But this was more particularly and eminently true of the Messiah than of any other man. In all other cases, great as was the dignity of man, yet his control over "all things" was limited and partial. In the Messiah it was to be complete and entire. His dominion, therefore, was a complete fulfillment, that is, "filling up" (πλήρωμα plērōma) of the words in the psalm. Under him alone was there to be an entire accomplishment of what is there said; and as that psalm was to be fulfilled, as it was to be true that it might be said of man that all things were subject to him, it was to be fulfilled mainly in the person of the Messiah, whose human nature was to be exalted above all things; compare Hebrews 2:6-9

But when he saith - When God says, or when it is said; when that promise is made respecting the Messiah.

It is manifest - It must be so; it must be so understood and interpreted.

That he is excepted … - That God is excepted; that it cannot mean that the appointing power is to be subject to him. Paul may have made this remark for several reasons. Perhaps:

(1) To avoid the possibility of cavil, or misconstruction of the phrase, "all things," as if it meant that God would be included, and would be subdued to him; as among the pagan, Jupiter is fabled to have expelled his father Saturn from his throne and from heaven.

(2) it might be to prevent the supposition, from what Paul had said of the extent of the Son's dominion, that he was in any respect superior to the Father. It is implied by this exception here, that when the necessity for the special mediatorial kingdom of the Son should cease, there would be a resuming of the authority and dominion of the Father, in the manner in which it subsisted before the incarnation.

(3) the expression may also be regarded as intensive or emphatic; as denoting, in the most absolute sense, that there was nothing in the universe, but God, which was not subject to him. God was the only exception; and his dominion, therefore, was absolute over all other beings and things.

Verse 28

And when … - In this future time, when this shall be accomplished. This implies that the time has not yet arrived, and that his dominion is now exercised, and that he is carrying forward his plans for the subjugation of all things to God.

Shall be subdued unto him - Shall be brought under subjection. When all his enemies shall be overcome and destroyed; or when the hearts of the redeemed shall be entirely subject to God. When God's kingdom shall be fully established over the universe. It shall then be seen that he is Lord of all. In the previous verses he had spoken of the promise that all things should be subjected to God; in this, he speaks of its being actually done.

Then shall the Son also himself be subject … - It has been proposed to render this, "even then shall the Son," etc.; implying that he had been all along subject to God; had acted under his authority; and that this subjection would continue even then in a sense similar to that in which it had existed; and that Christ would then continue to exercise a delegated authority over his people and kingdom. See an article "on the duration of Christ's

kingdom," by Prof. Mills, in Bib. Rep. vol. iii. p. 748ff. But to this interpretation there are objections:

(1) It is not the obvious interpretation.

(2) it does not seem to comport with the design and scope of the passage, which most evidently refers to some change, or rendering back of the authority of the Messiah; or to some resumption of authority by the Divinity, or by God as God, in a different sense from what existed under the Messiah.

(3) such a statement would be unnecessary and vain. Who could reasonably doubt that the Son would be as much subject to God when all things had been subdued to him as he was before?

(4) it is not necessary to suppose this in order to reconcile the passage with what is said of the perpetuity of Christ's kingdom and his eternal reign. That he would reign; that his kingdom would be perpetual, and that it would be unending, was indeed clearly predicted; see 2 Samuel 7:16; Psalm 45:6; Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 2:44; Daniel 7:14; Luke 1:22-23; Hebrews 1:8. But these predictions may be all accomplished on the supposition that the special mediatorial kingdom of the Messiah shall be given up to God, and that he shall be subject to him. For:

(a)His kingdom will be perpetual, in contradistinction from the kingdoms of this world. They are fluctuating, changing, short in their duration. His shall not cease, and shall continue to the end of time.

(b)His kingdom shall be perpetual, because those who are brought under the laws of God by him shall remain subject to those laws forever. The sceptre never shall be broken, and the kingdom shall abide to all eternity.

(c)Christ, the Son of God, in his divine nature, as God, shall never cease to reign.

As Mediator, he may resign his commission and his special office, having made an atonement, having recovered his people, having protected and guided them to heaven. Yet as one with the Father; as the "Father of the everlasting age" Isaiah 9:6, he shall not cease to reign. The functions of a special office may have been discharged, and delegated power laid down, and that which appropriately belongs to him in virtue of his own nature and

relations may be resumed and executed forever; and it shall still be true that the reign of the Son of God, in union, or in oneness with the Father, shall continue forever.

(5) the interpretation which affirms that the Son shall then be subject to the Father in the sense of laying down his delegated authority, and ceasing to exercise his mediatorial reign, has been the common interpretation of all times. This remark is of value only, because, in the interpretation of plum words, it is not probable that people of all classes and ranks in different ages would err.

The Son also himself - The term "Son of God" is applied to the Lord Jesus with reference to his human nature, his incarnation by the Holy Spirit, and his resurrection from the dead; see the note on Romans 1:4. (For the evidence of the eternal sonship, see the Supplementary Note on the same passage.) It refers, I apprehend, to that in this place. It does not mean that the second person in the Trinity, as such, should be subject to the first; but it means the Incarnate Son, the Mediator, the man that was born and that was raised from the dead, and to whom this wide dominion had been given, should resign that dominion, and that the government should be re-assumed by the Divinity as God. As man, he shall cease to exercise any distinct dominion. This does not mean, evidently, that the union of the divine and human nature will be dissolved; nor that important purposes may not be answered by that continued union forever; nor that the divine perfections may not shine forth in some glorious way through the man Christ Jesus; but that the purpose of government shall no longer be exercised in that way; the mediatorial kingdom, as such, shall no longer be continued, and power shall be exercised by God as God. The redeemed will still adore their Redeemer as their incarnate God, and dwell upon the remembrance of his work and upon his perfections Revelation 1:5-6; Revelation 5:12; Revelation 11:15; but not as exercising the special power which he now has, and which was needful to effect their redemption.

That God may be all in all - That God may be supreme; that the Divinity, the Godhead, may rule; and that it may be seen that he is the Sovereign over all the universe. By the word "God" (ὁ Θεὸς ho Theos), Whitby and Hammond, I think correctly, understand the Godhead, the Divine Nature, the Divinity, consisting of the three persons, without respect to any special office or kingdom.

Verse 29

Else what shall they do … - The apostle here resumes the argument for the resurrection which was interrupted at 1 Corinthians 15:19. He goes on to state further consequences which must follow from the denial of this doctrine, and thence infers that the doctrine must be true. There is, perhaps, no passage of the New Testament in respect to which there has been a greater variety of interpretation than this; and the views of expositors now by no means harmonize in regard to its meaning. It is possible that Paul may here refer to some practice or custom which existed in his time respecting baptism, the knowledge of which is now lost. The various opinions which have been entertained in regard to this passage, together with an examination of them, may be seen in Pool‘s Synopsis, Rosenmuller, and Bloomfield. It may be not useless just to refer to some of them, that the perplexity of commentators may be seen:

(1) It has been held by some that by “the dead” here is meant the Messiah who was put to death, the plural being used for the singular, meaning “the dead one.”

(2) by others, that the word “baptized” here is taken in the sense of washing, cleansing, purifying, as in Matthew 8:4; Hebrews 9:10; and that the sense is, that the dead were carefully washed and purified when buried, with the hope of the resurrection, and, as it were, preparatory to that.

(3) by others, that to be “baptized for the dead” means to be baptized as dead, being baptized into Christ, and buried with him in baptism, and that by their immersion they were regarded as dead.

(4) by others, that the apostle refers to a custom of vicarious baptism, or being baptized for those who were dead, referring to the practice of having some person baptized in the place of one who had died without baptism. This was the opinion of Grotius, Michaelis, Tertullian, and Ambrose. Such was the estimate which was formed, it is supposed, of the importance of baptism, that when one had died without being baptized, some other person was baptized over his dead body in his place. That this custom prevailed in the church after the time of Paul, has been abundantly proved by Grotius, and is generally admitted. But the objections to this interpretation are obvious:

(a)There is no evidence that such a custom prevailed in the time of Paul.

(b)It cannot be believed that Paul would give countenance to a custom so senseless and so contrary to the Scripture, or that he would make it the foundation of a solemn argument.

(c)It does not accord with the strain and purpose of his argument. If this custom had been referred to, his design would have led him to say, "What will become of them for whom others have been baptized? Are we to believe that they have perished?"

(d)It is far more probable that the custom referred to in this opinion arose from an erroneous interpretation of this passage of Scripture, than that it existed in the time of Paul.

(5) there remain two other opinions, both of which are plausible, and one of which is probably the true one. One is, that the word baptized is used here as it is in Matthew 20:22-23; Mark 10:39; Luke 12:50, in the sense of being overwhelmed with calamities, trials, and sufferings; and as meaning that the apostles and others were subjected to great trials on account of the dead, that is, in the hope of the resurrection; or with the expectation that the dead would rise. This is the opinion of Lightfoot, Rosenmuller, Pearce, Homberg, Krause, and of Prof. Robinson (see the Lexicon article Βαπτίζω Baptizō), and has much that is plausible. That the word is thus used to denote a deep sinking into calamities, there can be no doubt. And that the apostles and early Christians subjected themselves, or were subjected to great and overwhelming calamities on account of the hope of the resurrection, is equally clear. This interpretation, also, agrees with the general tenor of the argument; and is an argument for the resurrection. And it implies that this was the full and constant belief of all who endured these trials, that there would be a resurrection of the dead. The argument would be, that they should be slow to adopt an opinion which would imply that all their sufferings were endured for nothing, and that God had supported them in this in vain; that God had plunged them into all these sorrows, and had sustained them in them only to disappoint them. That this view is plausible, and that it suits the strain of remark in the following verses, is evident. But there are objections to it:

(a)It is not the usual and natural meaning of the word "baptize."

(b)A metaphorical use of a word should not be resorted to unless necessary.

(c)The literal meaning of the word here will as well meet the design of the apostle as the metaphorical.

(d)This interpretation does not relieve us from any of the difficulties in regard to the phrase “for the dead;” and,

(e)It is altogether more natural to suppose that the apostle would derive his argument from the baptism of all who were Christians, than from the figurative baptism of a few who went into the perils of martyrdom - The other opinion, therefore, is, that the apostle here refers to baptism as administered to all believers.

This is the most correct opinion; is the most simple, and best meets the design of the argument. According to this, it means that they had been baptized with the hope and expectation of a resurrection of the dead. They had received this as one of the leading doctrines of the gospel when they were baptized. It was a part of their full and firm belief that the dead would rise. The argument according to this interpretation is, that this was an essential article of the faith of a Christian; that it was embraced by all; that it constituted a part of their very profession; and that for anyone to deny it was to deny that which entered into the very foundation of the Christian faith.

If they embraced a different doctrine, if they denied the doctrine of the resurrection, they struck a blow at the very nature of Christianity, and dashed all the hopes which had been cherished and expressed at their baptism. And what could they do? What would become of them! What would be the destiny of all who were thus baptized? Was it to be believed that all their hopes at baptism were vain and that they would all perish? As such a belief could not be entertained, the apostle infers that, if they held to Christianity at all, they must hold to this doctrine as a part of their very profession. According to this view, the phrase “for the dead” means, with reference to the dead; with direct allusion to the condition of the dead, and their hopes; with a belief that the dead will rise. It is evident that the passage is elliptical, and this seems to be as probable as any interpretation which has been suggested. Mr. Locke says, frankly, “What this baptizing for the dead was, I know not; but it seems, by the following verses, to be something wherein they exposed themselves to the danger of death.” Tyndal

translates it, "over the dead." Doddridge renders it, "in the room of the dead, who are just fallen in the cause of Christ, but are yet supported by a succession of new converts, who immediately offer themselves to fill up their places, as ranks of soldiers that advance to the combat in the room of their companions who have just been slain in their sight."

Verse 30

And why stand we in jeopardy - Why do we constantly risk our lives, and encounter danger of every kind? This refers particularly to Paul himself and the other apostles, who were constantly exposed to peril by land or by sea in the arduous work of making known the gospel. The argument here is plain. It is, that such efforts would be vain, useless, foolish, unless there was to be a glorious resurrection. They had no other object in encountering these dangers than to make known the truths connected with that glorious future state; and if there were no such future state, it would be wise for them to avoid these dangers. "It would not be supposed that we would encounter these perils constantly, unless we were sustained with the hope of the resurrection, and unless we had evidence which convinced our own minds that there would be such a resurrection."

Every hour - Constantly; compare 2 Corinthians 11:26. So numerous were their dangers, that they might be said to occur every hour. This was particularly the case in the instance to which he refers in Ephesus, 1 Corinthians 15:32.

Verse 31

I protest - (νὴ nē). This is a particle of swearing, and denotes a strong asseveration. The subject was important; it deeply interested his feelings; and he makes in regard to it a strong protestation; compare John 3:5. "I solemnly affirm, or declare."

By your rejoicing - Many manuscripts here read "by our rejoicing, but the correct reading is doubtless that which is in the present Greek text, by your rejoicing. The meaning of the phrase, which is admitted by all to be obscure, is probably, "I protest, or solemnly declare by the glorying or exultation which I have on your account; by all my ground of glorying in you; by all the confident boasting and expectation which I have of your salvation." He hoped for their salvation. He had labored for that. He had boasted of it, and confidently believed that they would be saved. Regarding that as safe and certain, he says it was just as certain that he died daily on

account of the hope and belief of the resurrcction. “By our hopes and joys as Christians; by our dearest expectations and grounds of confidence I swear, or solemnly declare, that I die daily.” People swear or affirm by their objects of dearest affection and desire; and the meaning here is, “So certainly as I confidently expect your salvation, and so certainly as we look to eternal life, so certain is it that I am constantly exposed to die, and suffer that which may he called a daily death.”

Which I have in Christ Jesus - The rejoicing, boasting, glorying in regard to you which I am permitted to cherish through the grace and favor of the Saviour. His boasting, or confident expectation in regard to the Corinthians, he enjoyed only by the mercy of the Lord Jesus, and he delighted to trace it to him.

I die daily - compare Romans 8:36. I endure so many sufferings and persecutions, that it may be said to be a daily dying. I am constantly in danger of my life; and my sufferings each day are equal to the pains of death. Probably Paul here referred particularly to the perils and trials which he then endured at Ephesus; and his object was to impress their minds with the firmness of his belief in the certainty of the resurrection, on account of which he suffered so much, and to show them that all their hopes rested also on this doctrine.

Verse 32

If after the manner of men - Margin, “To speak after the manner of men” (κατὰ ἄνθρωπον kata anthrōpon). There has been a great difference of opinion in regard to the meaning of these words. The following are some of the interpretations proposed:

(1) If I have fought after the manner of people, who act only with reference to this life, and on the ordinary principles of human conduct, as people fought with wild beasts in the amphitheater.

(2) or if, humanly speaking, or speaking after the manner of people, I have fought, referring to the fact that he had contended with mcn who should be regarded as wild beasts.

(3) or, that I may speak of myself as people speak, that I may freely record the events of my life, and speak of what has occurred.

(4) or, I have fought with wild beasts as far as it was possible for man to do it while life survived.

(5) or, as much as was in the power of man, who had destined me to this; if, so far as depended on man‘s will, I fought, supposing that the infuriated multitude demanded that I should be thus punished. So Chrysostom understands it.

(6) or, that Paul actually fought with wild beasts at Ephesus.

(7) others regard this as a supposable case; on the supposition that I had fought with wild beasts at Ephesus. Amidst this variety of interpretation, it is not easy to determine the true sense of this difficult passage.

The following thoughts, however, may perhaps make it clear:

(1) Paul refers to some real occurrence at Ephesus. This is manifest from the whole passage. It is not a supposable case.

(2) it was some one case when his life was endangered, and when it was regarded as remarkable that he escaped and survived; compare 2 Corinthians 1:8-10.

(3) it was common among the Romans, and the ancients generally, to expose criminals to fight with wild beasts in the amphitheater for the amusement of the populace.

In such cases it was but another form of dooming them to certain death, since there was no human possibility of escape; see Adam‘s Rom. Ant., p. 344. That this custom prevailed at the East, is apparent from the following extract front Rosenmuller; and there is no improbability in the supposition that Paul was exposed to this - “The barbarous custom of making men combat with wild beasts has prevailed in the East down to the most modern times. Jurgen Andersen, who visited the states of the Great Mogul in 1646, gives an account in his Travels of such a combat with animals, which he witnessed at Agra, the residence of the Great Mogul. His description affords a lively image of those bloody spectacles in which ancient Rome took so

much pleasure, and to which the above words of the apostle refer. Alumardan-chan, the governor of Cashmire, who sat among the chans, stood up, and exclaimed, ‹It is the will and desire of the great mogul, Schah Choram, that if there are any valiant heroes who will show their bravery by combating with wild beasts, armed with shield and sword, let them come forward; if they conquer, the mogul will load them with great favor, and clothe their countenance with gladness.‘ Upon this three persons advanced, and offered to undertake the combat.

Alamardan-charn again cried aloud, ‹None should have any other weapon than a shield and a sword; and whosoever has any breastplate under his clothes should lay it aside, and fight honorably.‘ Hereupon a powerful lion was let into the garden, and one of the three men above mentioned advanced against him; the lion, upon seeing his enemy, ran violently up to him; the man, however, defended himself bravely, and kept off the lion for a good while, until his arms grew tired; the lion then seized the shield with one paw, and with the other his antagonist‘s right arm, so that he was not able to use his weapon; the latter, seeing his life in danger, took with his left hand his Indian dagger, which he had sticking in his girdle, and thrust it as far as possible into the lion‘s mouth; the lion then let him go; the man, however, was not idle, but cut the lion almost through with one stroke, and after that entirely to pieces.

Upon this victory the common people began to shout, and call out, ‹Thank God. he has conquered.‘ But the mogul said, smiling, to this conqueror, ‹Thou art a brave warrior, and hast fought admirably! But did I not command to fight honorably only with shield and sword? But, like a thief, thou hast stolen the life of the lion with thy dagger.‘ And immediately he ordered two men to rip up his belly, and to place him upon an elephant, and, as an example to others, to lead him about, which was done on the spot. Soon after, a tiger was set loose; against which a tall, powerful man advanced with an air of defiance, as if he would cut the tiger up. The tiger, however, was far too sagacious and active, for, in the first attack, he seized the combatant by the neck, tore his throat, and then his whole body in pieces. This enraged another good fellow, but little, and of ordinary appearance, from whom one would not have expected it: he rushed forward like one mad, and the tiger on his part undauntedly flew at his enemy; but

the man at the first attack cut off his two fore paws; so that he fell, and the man cut his body to pieces.

Upon this the king cried, ‹What is your name?‘ He answered, ‹My name is Geyby.‘ Soon after one of the king‘s servants came and brought him a piece of gold brocade, and said, ‹Geyby, receive the robe of honor with which the mogul presents you.‘ He took the garment with great reverence, kissed it three times, pressing it each time to his eyes and breast, then held it up, and in silence put up a prayer for the health of the mogul; and when he concluded it, he cried, ‹May God let him become as great as Tamerlane, from whom he is descended. May he live 700 years, and his house continue to eternity!‘ Upon this he was summoned by a chamberlain to go from the garden up to the king; and when he came to the entrance, he was received by two chans, who conducted him between them to kiss the mogul‘s feet. And when he was going to retire, the king said to him, ‹Praised be thou, Geyby-chan, for thy valiant deeds, and this name shalt thou keep to eternity. I am your gracious master, and thou art my slave‘“ - Bush‘s Illustrations.

(4) it is the most natural interpretation to suppose that Paul, on some occasion, had such a contest with a wild beast at Ephesus. It is that which would occur to the great mass of the readers of the New Testament as the obvious meaning of the passage.

(5) the state of things in Ephesus when Paul was there 2 Corinthians 11:24-27, that there must have been many dangers which Paul encountered which are not referred to by Luke. It must have happened, also, that many important events must have taken place during Paul‘s abode at Ephesus which are not recorded by Luke; 2 Corinthians 11:24-27, mention particularly this contest with a wild beast at Ephesus. His statement there is general. He does not descend into particulars. Yet, in 2 Corinthians 11:23, he says that he was “in deaths oft,” - a statement which is in accordance with the supposition that in Ephesushe may have been exposed to death in some cruel manner.

(7) the phrase κατὰ ἄνθρωπον kata anthrōponas a “man,” may mean, that, “to human appearance,” or so far as man was concerned, bad it not been for some divine interposition, he would have been a prey to the wild

beasts. Had not God interposed and kept him from harm, as in the case of the viper at Melita Acts 28:5, he would have been put to death. He was sentenced to this; was thrown to the wild beast; had every human prospect of dying; it was done on account of his religion; and but for the interposition of God, he would have died. This I take to be the fair and obvious meaning of this passage, demanded alike by the language which is used and by the tenor of the argument in which it is found.

What advantageth it me? - What benefit shall I have? Why should I risk my life in this manner? see the note on 1 Corinthians 15:19.

Let us eat and drink - These words are taken from Isaiah 22:13. In their original application they refer to the Jews when besieged by Sennacherib and the army of the Assyrians. The prophet says, that instead of weeping, and fasting, and humiliation, as became them in such circumstances, they had given themselves up to feasting and revelry, and that their language was, Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die that is, there is no use in offering resistance, or in calling upon God. We must die; and we may as well enjoy life as long as it lasts, and give ourselves up to unrestrained indulgence. Paul does not quote these words as having any original reference to the subject of the resurrection, but as language appropriately expressing the idea, that if there is no future state; if no resurrection of the dead; if no happy result of toils and sufferings in the future world, it is vain and foolish to subject ourselves to trials and privations here. We should rather make the most of this life; enjoy all the comfort we can; and make pleasure our chief good, rather than look for happiness in a future state. This seems to be the language of the great mass of the world. They look to no future state. They have no prospect, no desire of heaven; and they, therefore, seek for happiness here, and give themselves up to unrestrained enjoyment in this life.

Tomorrow - Very soon. We have no security of life; and death is so near that it may be said we must die tomorrow.

We die - We must die. The idea here is, "We must die, without the prospect of living again, unless the doctrine of the resurrection be true."

Verse 33

Be not deceived - By your false teachers, and by their smooth and plausible arguments. This is an exhortation. He had thus far been engaged in an argument on the subject. He now entreats them to beware lest they be deceived - a danger to which they were very liable from their

circumstances. There was, doubtless, much that was plausible in the objections to the doctrine of the resurrection; there was much subtilty and art in their teachers, who denied this doctrine; perhaps, there was something in the character of their own minds, accustomed to subtle and abstruse inquiry rather than to an examination of simple facts, that exposed them to this danger.

Evil communications - The word rendered "communications" means, properly, a being together; companionship; close contact; converse. It refers not to discourse only, but to contact, or companionship. Paul quotes these words from Menander (in Sentent. Comicor. Greek p. 248, ed. Steph.), a Greek poet. He thus shows that he was, in some degree at least, familiar with the Greek writers; compare the note on Acts 17:28. Menander was a celebrated comic poet of Athens, educated under Theophrastus. His writings were replete with elegance, refined wit, and judicious observations. Of one hundred and eight comedies which he wrote, nothing remains but a few fragments. He is said to have drowned himself, in the 52nd year of his age, 293 b.c., because the compositions of his rival Philemon obtained more applause than his own. Patti quoted this sentiment from a Greek poet, perhaps, because it might be supposed to have weight with the Greeks. It was a sentiment of one of their own writers, and here was an occasion in which it was exactly applicable. It is implied in this, that there were some persons who were endeavoring to corrupt their minds from the simplicity of the gospel. The sentiment of the passage is, that the contact of evil-minded men, or that the close friendship and conversation of those who hold erroneous opinions, or who are impure in their lives, tends to corrupt the morals, the heart, the sentiments of others. The particular thing to which Paul here applies it is the subject of the resurrection. Such contact would tend to corrupt the simplicity of their faith, and pervert their views of the truth of the gospel, and thus corrupt their lives. It is always true that such contact has a pernicious effect on the mind and the heart. It is done:

(1) By their direct effort to corrupt the opinions, and to lead others into sin.

(2) by the secret, silent influence of their words, and conversation, and example. We have less horror at vice by becoming familiar with it; we look with less alarm on error when we hear it often expressed; we become less watchful and cautious when we are constantly with the frivilous, the

worldly, the unprincipled, and the vicious. Hence, Christ sought that there should be a pure society, and that his people should principally seek the friendship and conversation of each other, and withdraw from the world. It is in the way that Paul here refers to, that Christians embrace false doctrines; that they lose their spirituality, love of prayer, fervor of piety, and devotion to God. It is in this way that the simple are beguiled, the young corrupted, and that vice, and crime, and infidelity spread over the world.

Verse 34

Awake to righteousness - See the note on Romans 13:11. The word here translated "awake" denotes, properly, to awake up from a deep sleep or torpor; and is usually applied to those who awake, or become sober after drunkenness. The phrase "to righteousness" (δικαίως dikaiōs) may mean either "rouse to the ways of righteousness; to a holy life; to sound doctrine," etc.; or it may mean "as it is right and just that you should do." Probably the latter is the correct idea, and then the sense will be, "Arouse from stupidity on this subject; awake from your conscious security; be alarmed, as it is right and proper that you should do, for you are surrounded by dangers, and by those who would lead you into error and vice; rouse from such wild and delusive opinions as these persons have, and exercise a constant vigilance as becomes those who are the friends of God and the expectants of a blessed resurrection."

And sin not - Do not err; do not depart from the truth and from holiness; do not embrace a doctrine which is not only erroneous, but the tendency of which is to lead into sin. It is implied here, that if they suffered themselves to embrace a doctrine which was a denial of the resurrection, the effect would be that they would fall into sin or that a denial of that doctrine led to a life of self-indulgence and transgression. This truth is everywhere seen and against this effect Paul sought to, guard them. He did not regard the denial of the doctrine of the resurrection as a harmless speculation, but as leading to most dangerous consequences in regard to their manner of life or their conduct.

For some have not - Some among you. You are surrounded by strangers to God; you have those among you who would lead you into error and sin.

I speak this to your shame - To your shame as a church; because you have had abundant opportunities to know the truth, and because it is a subject of deep disgrace that there are any in your bosom who deny the

doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and who are strangers to the grace of God.

Verse 35

But some man will say - An objection will be made to the statement that the dead will be raised. This verse commences the second part of the chapter, in which the apostle meets the objections to the argument. and shows in what manner the dead will be raised. See the Analysis. That objections were made to the doctrine is apparent from 1 Corinthians 15:12.

How are the dead raised up? - (Πῶς PōsIn what way or manner; by what means. This I regard as the first objection which would be made, or the first inquiry on the subject which the apostle answers. The question is one which would be likely to be made by the subtle and doubting Greeks. The apostle, indeed, does not draw it out at length, or state it fully, but it may be regarded probably as substantially the same as that which has been made in all ages. "How is it possible that the dead should be raised? They return to their native dust. They become entirely disorganized. Their dust may be scattered; how shall it be re-collected? Or they may be burned at the stake, and how shall the particles which composed their bodies be recollected and re-organized? Or they may be devoured by the beasts of the field, the fowls of heaven, or the fishes of the sea, and their flesh may have served to constitute the food of other animals, and to form their bodies; how can it be re-collected and re-organized? Or it may have been the food of plants, and like other dust have been used to constitute the leaves or the flowers of plants, and the trunks of trees; and how can it be remoulded into a human frame?" This objection the apostle answers in 1 Corinthians 15:36-38.

And with what body do they come? - This is the second objection or inquiry which he answers. It may be understood as meaning, "What will be the form, the shape, the size, the organization of the new body? Are we to suppose that all the matter which at any time entered into its composition here is to be recollected, and to constitute a colossal frame? Are we to suppose that it will be the same as it is here, with the same organization, the same necessities, the same needs? Are we to suppose that the aged will be raised as aged, and the young as young, and that infancy will be raised in the same state, and remain such for ever? Are we to suppose that the bodies will be gross, material, and needing support and nourishment, or, that there will be a new organization?" All these and numerous other questions have

been asked, in regard to the bodies at the resurrection; and it is by no means improbable that they were asked by the subtle and philosophizing Greeks, and that they constituted a part of the reasoning of those who denied the doctrine of the resurrection. This question, or objection, the apostle answers 1 Corinthians 15:39-50. It has been doubted, indeed, whether he refers in this verse to two inquiries - to the possibility of the resurrection, and to the kind of bodies that should be raised; but it is the most obvious interpretation of the verse, and it is certain that in his argument he discusses both these points.

Verse 36

Thou fool - Foolish, inconsiderate man! The meaning is, that it was foolish to make this objection, when the same difficulty existed in an undeniable fact which fell under daily observation. A man was a fool to urge that as an objection to religion which must exist in the undeniable and everyday facts which they witnessed. The idea is, "The same difficulty may be started about the growth of grain. Suppose a man who had never seen it, were to be told that it was to be put into the earth; that it was to die; to be decomposed; and that from the decayed kernel there should be seen to start up first a slender, green, and tender spire of grass, and that this was to send up a strong stalk, and was to produce hundreds of similar kernels at some distant period. These facts would be as improbable to him as the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. When he saw the kernel laid in the ground; when he saw it decay; when apparently it was returning to dust, he would ask, How can these be connected with the production of similar grain? Are not all the indications that it will be totally corrupted and destroyed?"

Yet, says Paul, this is connected with the hope of the harvest, and this fact should remove all the objection which is derived from the fact that the body returns to its native dust. The idea is, that there is an analogy, and that the main objection in the one case would lie equally well against the acknowledged and indisputable fact in the other. It is evident, however, that this argument is of a popular character, and is not to be pressed to the quick; nor are we to suppose that the resemblance will be in all respects the same. It is to be used as Paul used it. The objection was, that the body died, and returned to dust, and could not, therefore, rise again. The reply of Paul is, "You may make the same objection to grain that is sown. That dies also. The main body of the kernel decays. In itself there is no prospect that it will spring up. Should it stop here, and had you never seen a grain of wheat

grow; had you only seen it in the earth, as you have seen the body in the grave, there would be the same difficulty as to how it would produce other grains, which there is about the resurrection of the body."

Is not quickened - Does not become alive; does not grow.

Except it die - See the note on John 12:24. The main body of the grain decays that it may become food and nourishment to the tender germ. Perhaps it is implied here also that there was a fitness that people should die in order to obtain the glorious body of the resurrection, in the same way as it is fit that the kernel should die, in order that there may be a new and beautiful harvest.

Verse 37

And that which thou sowest - The seed which is sown.

Not that body that shall be - You sow one kernel which is to produce many others. They shall not be the same that is sown. They will be new kernels raised from that; of the same kind, indeed, and showing their intimate and necessary connection with that which is sown. It is implied here that the body which will be raised will not be the same in the sense that the same particles of matter shall compose it, but the same only in the sense that it will have sprung up from that; will constitute the same order, rank, species of being, and be subject to the same laws, and deserve the same course of treatment as that which died; as the grain produced is subject to the same laws, and belongs to the same rank, order, and species as that which is sown. And as the same particles of matter which are sown do not enter into that which shall be in the harvest, so it is taught that the same particles of matter which constitute the body when it dies, do not constitute the new body at the resurrection.

But bare grain - Mere grain; a mere kernel, without any husk, leaf, blade, or covering of any kind. Those are added in the process of reproduction. The design of this is to make it appear more remarkable, and to destroy the force of the objection. It was not only not the grain that should be produced, but it was without the appendages and ornaments of blade, and flower, and beard of the new grain. How could anyone tell but what it would be so in the resurrection? How could any know but what there might be appendages and ornaments there, which were not connected with the body that died?

It may chance of wheat … - For example; or suppose it be wheat or any other grain. The apostle adduces this merely for an example; not to

intimate that there is any chance about it.

Verse 38

But God giveth it a body … - God gives to the seed sown its own proper body, formation, and growth. The word body here, as applied to grain, seems to mean the whole system, or arrangement of roots, stalks, leaves, flowers, and kernels that start out of the seed that is sown The meaning is, that such a form is produced from the seed sown as God pleases. Paul here traces the result to God, to show that there is no chance, and that it did not depend on the nature of things, but was dependent on the wise arrangement of God. There was nothing in the decaying kernel itself that would produce this result; but God chose that it should be so. There is nothing in the decaying body of the dead which in itself should lead to the resurrection; but God chose it should be so.

As it hath pleased him - As he chose. It is by his arrangement and agency. Though it is by regular laws, yet it is as God pleases. He acts according to his own pleasure, in the formation of each root, and stalk, and kernel of grain. It is, probably, here intimated that God would give to each one of the dead at the resurrection such a body as he should choose, though it will be, doubtless, in accordance with general laws.

And to every seed his own body - That which appropriately belongs to it; which it is suited to produce; which is of the same kind. He does not cause a stalk of rye to grow from a kernel of wheat; nor of maize from barley; nor of hemp from lenthes. He has fixed proper laws, and he takes care that they shall be observed. So it will be in the resurrection. Everyone shall have his own, that is, his proper body - a body which shall belong to him, and be suited to him. The wicked shall not rise with the body of the just, or with a body adapted to heaven; nor shall the saint rise with a body adapted to perdition. There shall be a fitness or appropriateness in the new body to the character of him who is raised. The argument here is designed to meet the inquiry how should the body be raised, and it is that there is nothing more remarkable and impossible in the doctrine of the resurrection, than in the fact constantly before us, that grain that seems to rot sends up a shoot or stalk, and is reproduced in a wonderful and beautiful manner. In a manner similar to this, the body will be raised; and the illustration of Paul meets all the difficulties about the fact of the resurrection. It cannot be shown that one is more difficult than the other; and as the facts of vegetation are constantly passing before our eyes, we ought not to deem it

strange if similar facts shall take place hereafter in regard to the resurrection of the dead.

Verse 39

All flesh is not the same flesh - This verse and the following are designed to answer the question 1 Corinthians 15:35, "with what bodies do they come?" And the argument here is, that there are many kinds of bodies; that all are not alike; that while they are bodies, yet they partake of different qualities, forms, and properties; and that, therefore, it is not absurd to suppose that God may transform the human body into a different form, and cause it to be raised up with somewhat different properties in the future world. Why, the argument is, why should it be regarded as impossible? Why is it to be held that the human body may not undergo a transformation, or that it will be absurd to suppose that it may be different in some respects from what it is now? Is it not a matter of fact that there is a great variety of bodies even on the earth? The word flesh here is used to denote body, as it often is. 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 4:11; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Philemon 1:22, Philemon 1:24; Colossians 2:5; 1 Peter 4:6.

The idea here is, that although all the bodies of animals may be composed essentially of the same elements, yet God has produced a wonderful variety in their organization, strength, beauty, color, and places of abode, as the air, earth, and water. It is not necessary, therefore, to suppose that the body that shall be raised shall be precisely like that which we have here. It is certainly possible that there may be as great a difference between that and our present body, as between the most perfect form of the human frame here and the lowest repthe. It would still be a body, and there would be no absurdity in the transformation. The body of the worm; the chrysalis, and the butterfly is the same. It is the same animal still. Yet how different the gaudy and frivilous butterfly from the creeping and offensive caterpillar! So there may be a similar change in the body of the believer, and yet be still the same. Of a sceptic on this subject we would ask, whether, if there had been a revelation of the changes which a caterpillar might undergo before it became a butterfly - a new species of existence adapted to a new element, requiring new food, and associated with new and other beings - if he had never seen such a transformation, would it not be attended with all the difficulty which now encompasses the doctrine of the resurrection? The sceptic would no more have believed it on the authority of revelation than he will believe the doctrine of the resurrection of the

dead. And no infidel can prove that the one is attended with any more difficulty or absurdity than the other.

Verse 40

There are also celestial bodies - The planets; the stars; the host of heaven; see 1 Corinthians 15:41.

And bodies terrestrial - On earth; earthly. He refers here to the bodies of human beings, beasts, birds, etc.; perhaps, also, of trees and vegetables. The sense is, "There is a great variety of bodies. Look upon the heavens, and see the splendor of the sun, the moon, and the stars. And then look upon the earth, and see the bodies there - the bodies of people, and brutes, and insects. You see here two entire classes of bodies. You see how they differ. Can it be deemed strange if there should be a difference between our bodies when on earth and when in heaven? Do we not, in fact, see a vast difference between what strikes our eye here on earth and in the sky? And why should we deem it strange that between bodies adapted to live here and bodies adapted to live in heaven, there should be a difference, like that which is seen between the objects which appear on earth and those which appear in the sky?" The argument is a popular one; but it is striking, and meets the object which he has in view.

The glory of the celestial is one - The splendor, beauty, dignity, magnificence of the heavenly bodies differs much from those on earth. That is one thing; the beauty of earthly objects is another and a different thing. Beautiful as may be the human frame; beautiful as may be the plumage of birds; beautiful as may be the flower, the fossil, the mineral, the topaz, or the diamond; yet they differ from the heavenly bodies, and are not to be compared with them. Why should we deem it strange that there may be a similar difference between the body as adapted to its residence here and as adapted to its residence in heaven?

Verse 41

There is one glory of the sun … - The sun has one degree of splendor, and the moon another, and so also the stars. They differ from each other in magnitude, in brightness, in beauty. The idea in this verse differs from that in the former. In that 1 Corinthians 15:40 Paul says, that there was a difference between the different classes of bodies; between those in heaven and those on earth. He here says, that in the former class, in the heavenly bodies themselves, there was a difference. They not only differed from

those on earth, but they differed from each other. The sun was more splendid than the moon, and one star more beautiful than another. The idea here is, therefore, not only that the bodies of the saints in heaven shall differ from those on earth, but that they shall differ among themselves, in a sense somewhat like the difference of the splendor of the sun, the moon, and the different stars. Though all shall be unlike what they were on earth, and all shall be glorious, yet there may be a difference in that splendor and glory. The argument is, since we see so great differences in fact in the works of God, why should we doubt that he is able to make the human body different from what it is now, and to endow it with immortal and eternal perfection?

Verse 42

So also is the resurrection - In a manner similar to the grain that is sown, and to the different degrees of splendor and magnificence in the bodies in the sky and on the earth. The dead shall be raised in a manner analogous to the springing up of grain; and there shall be a difference between the body here and the body in the resurrection.

It is sown - In death. As we sow or plant the kernel in the earth.

In corruption - In the grave; in a place where it shall be corrupt; in a form tending to putrefaction, disorganization, and dust.

It is raised in incorruption - It will be so raised. In the previous verses 1 Corinthians 15:36-41 he had reasoned from analogy, and had demonstrated that it was possible that the dead should rise, or that there was no greater difficulty attending it than actually occurred in the events which were in fact constantly taking place. He here states positively what would be, and affirms that it was not only possible, but that such a resurrection would actually occur. They body would be raised "in incorruption," "uncorruptible" 1 Corinthians 15:52; that is, no more liable to decay, sickness, disorganization, and putrefaction. This is one characteristic of the body that shall be raised, that it shall be no more liable, as here, to wasting sickness, to disease, and to the loathsome corruption of the grave. That God can form a body of that kind, no one can doubt; that he actually will, the apostle positively affirms. That such will be the bodies of the saints is one of the most cheering prospects that can be presented to those who are here wasted away by sickness, and who look with dread and horror on the loathsome putrefaction of the tomb.

Verse 43

It is sown in dishonour - In the grave, where it is shut out from human view; hurried away from the sight of friends; loathsome and offensive as a mass turning to decay. There is, moreover, a kind of disgrace and ignominy attending it here, as under the curse of God, and, on account of sin, sentenced to the offensiveness of the grave.

It is raised in glory - In honor; in beauty; honored by God by the removal of the curse, and in a form and manner that shall be glorious. This refers to the fact that everything like dishonor, vileness, ignominy, which attends it here shall be removed there, and that the body shall bear a resemblance to the glorified body of Jesus Christ, Ephesians 3:21. It shall be adapted to a world of glory; and everything which here rendered it vile, valueless, cumbersome, offensive, or degraded, shall be there removed. Of course, every idea which we can get from this is chiefly negative, and consists in denying that the body will have there the qualities which here render it vile or loathsome. The word "glory" (δόξα doxa) means dignity, splendor, honor, excellence, perfection; and is used here as denoting the combination of all those things which shall rescue it from ignominy and disgrace.

It is sown in weakness - Weak, feeble, liable to decay. Here disease prostrates the strength, takes away its power, consigns it to the dust. It denotes the many weaknesses, frailties, and liabilities to sickness, to which we are here exposed, Its feeble powers are soon prostrate; its vital functions soon cease in death.

It is raised in power - This does not denote power like that of God, nor like the angels. It does not affirm that it shall be endued with remarkable and enormous physical strength, or that it shall have the power of performing what would now be regarded as miraculous. It is to be regarded as the opposite of the word "weakness," and means that it shall be no longer liable to disease; no more overcome by the attacks of sickness; no more subject to the infirmities and weaknesses which it here experiences. It shall not be prostrate by sickness, nor overcome by fatigue. It shall be capable of the service of God without weariness and languor; it shall need no rest as it does here (see Revelation 7:15; compare Revelation 22:5); but it shall be in a world where there shall be no fatigue, lassitude, disease; but where there shall be ample power to engage in the service of God forever. There is, however, no improbability in supposing that the physical powers of man, as

well as his intellectual, may be greatly augmented in heaven. But on this point there is no revelation.

Verse 44

It is sown a natural body - (σῶμα ψυχικὸν sōma psuchikon). This word, "natural," denotes properly that which is endowed with "animal" life, having breath, or vitality. The word from which it is derived (ψυχή psuchē) denotes properly the breath; vital breath; the soul, as the vital principle; the animal soul, or the vital spirit; the soul, as the seat of the sentient desires, passions, and propensities; and then a living thing, an animal. It may be applied to any animal, or any living thing, whether brutes or men. It is distinguished from the soul or spirit (Πνεῦμα Pneuma), inasmuch as that more commonly denotes the rational spirit, the immortal soul, that which thinks, reasons, reflects, etc. The word "natural" here, therefore, means that which has "animal" life; which breathes and acts by the laws of the animal economy; that which draws in the breath of life; which is endowed with senses, and which has need of the supports of animal life, and of the refreshments derived from food, exercise, sleep, etc.

The apostle here, by affirming that the body will be spiritual, intends to deny that it will need that which is now necessary to the support of the animal functions; it will not be sustained in that way; it will lay aside these special animal organizations, and will cease to convey the idea which we now attach to the word animal, or to possess that which we now include under the name of vital functions. Here the body of man is endowed simply with animal functions. It is the dwelling-place indeed of an immortal mind; but as a body it has the properties of animal life, and is subject to the same laws and inconveniences as the bodies of other animals. It is sustained by breath, and food, and sleep; it is endowed with the organs of sense, the eye, the ear, the smell, the touch, by which alone the soul can hold communication with the external world; it is liable to disease, languor, decay, death. These animal or vital functions will cease in heaven, and the body be raised in a different mode of being, and where all the inconveniences of this mere animal life shall be laid aside.

It is raised a spiritual body - Not a mere spirit, for then it would not be a body. The word spiritual (πνευματικόν pneumatikon) here stands opposed to the word natural, or animal. it will not be a body that is subject to the laws of the vital functions, or organized or sustained in that way. It will still be a "body" (σῶμα sōma), but it will have so far the nature of spirit as to be

without the vital functions which here control the body. This is all that the word here means. It does not mean refined, sublimated, or transcendental; it does not mean that it will be without shape or form; it does not mean that it will not be properly a body. The idea of Paul seems to be this: "We conceive of soul or spirit as not subject to the laws of vital or animal agency. It is independent of them. It is not sustained or nourished by the functions of the animal organization. It has an economy of its own; living without nourishment; not subject to decay; not liable to sickness, pain, or death. So will be the body in the resurrection. It will not be subject to the laws of the vital organization. It will be so much like a spirit as to be continued without food or nutriment; to be destitute of the special physical organization of flesh, and blood, and bones; of veins, and arteries, and nerves, as here 1 Corinthians 15:50.; and it will live in the manner in which we conceive spirits to live; sustained, and exercising its powers, without waste, weariness, decay, or the necessity of having its powers recruited by food and sleep." All, therefore, that has been said about a refined body, a body that shall be spirit, a body that shall be pure, etc., whatever may be its truth, is not sustained by this passage. It will be a body without the vital functions of the animal economy; a body sustained in the manner in which we conceive the spirit to be.

There is a natural body - This seems to be added by Paul in the way of strong affirmation arising from earnestness, and from a desire to prevent misconception. The affirmation is, that there is a natural body; that is apparent: it is everywhere seen. No one can doubt it. So, with equal certainty, says Paul, there is a spiritual body. It is just as certain and indisputable. This assertion is made, not because the evidence of both is the same, but is made on his apostolic authority, and is to be received on that authority. That there was an animal body was apparent to all; that there was a spiritual body was a position which he affirmed to be as certain as the other. The only proof which he alleges is in 1 Corinthians 15:45, which is the proof arising from revelation.

Verse 45

And so it is written, - Genesis 2:7. It is only the first part of the verse which is quoted.

The first man Adam was made a living soul - This is quoted exactly from the translation by the Septuagint, except that the apostle has added the words "first" and "Adam." This is done to designate whom he meant. The

meaning of the phrase "was made a living soul" (ἐγένετο εις ψυκὴν ζωσαν egeneto eis psuchēn zōsan- in Hebrew, נפשׁ חיה nephesh chayaahis, became a living, animated being; a being endowed with life. The use of the word "soul" in our translation, for ψυχὴ psuchēand נפשׁ nepheshdoes not quite convey the idea. We apply the word "soul," usually, to the intelligent and the immortal part of man; that which reasons, thinks, remembers, is conscious, is responsible, etc. The Greek and Hebrew words, however, more properly denote that which is alive, which is animated, which breathes, which has an animal nature, see the note on 1 Corinthians 15:44. And this is precisely the idea which Paul uses here, that the first man was made an animated being by having breathed into him the breath of life Genesis 2:7, and that it is the image of this animated or vital being which we bear, 1 Corinthians 15:48. Neither Moses nor Paul deny that in addition to this, man was endowed with a rational soul, an immortal nature; but that is not the idea which they present in the passage in Genesis which Paul quotes.

The last Adam - The second Adam, or the "second man," 1 Corinthians 15:47. That Christ is here intended is apparent, and has been usually admitted by commentators. Christ here seems to be called Adam because he stands in contradistinction from the first Adam; or because, as we derive our animal and dying nature from the one, so we derive our immortal and undying bodies from the other. From the one we derive an animal or vital existence; from the other we derive our immortal existence, and resurrection from the grave. The one stands at the head of all those who have an existence represented by the words, "a living soul;" the other of all those who shall have a spiritual body in heaven. He is called "the last Adam;" meaning that there shall be no other after him who shall affect the destiny of man in the same way, or who shall stand at the head of the race in a manner similar to what had been done by him and the first father of the human family. They sustain special relations to the race; and in this respect they were "the first" and "the last" in the special economy. The name "Adam" is not elsewhere given to the Messiah, though a comparison is several times instituted between him and Adam. (See the Supplementary Note on 1 Corinthians 15:22; also Romans 5:12, note.)

A quickening spirit - (εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν eis pneuma zōopoiounA vivifying spirit; a spirit giving or imparting life. Not a being having mere vital functions, or an animated nature, but a being who has the power of

imparting life. This is not a quotation from any part of the Scriptures, but seems to be used by Paul either as affirming what was true on his own apostolic authority, or as conveying the substance of what was revealed respecting the Messiah in the Old Testament. There may be also reference to what the Saviour himself taught, that he was the source of life; that he had the power of imparting life, and that he gave life to all whom he pleased: see the note at John 1:4; note at John 5:26, "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." 1 Corinthians 15:21, "for as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will."

The word "spirit," here applied to Christ, is in contradistinction from "a living being," as applied to Adam, and seems to be used in the sense of spirit of life, as raising the bodies of his people from the dead, and imparting life to them. He was constituted not as having life merely, but as endowed with the power of imparting life; as endowed with that spiritual or vital energy which was needful to impart life. All life is the creation or production of "spirit" (Πνεῦμα Pneuma); as applied to God the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit. Spirit is the source of all vitality. God is a spirit, and God is the source of all life. And the idea here is, that Christ had such a spiritual existence such power as a spirit; that he was the source of all life to his people. The word "spirit" is applied to his exalted spiritual nature, in distinction from his human nature, in Romans 1:4; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 3:18. The apostle does not here affirm that he had not a human nature, or a vital existence as a man; but that his main characteristic in contradistinction from Adam was, that he was endowed with an elevated spiritual nature, which was capable of imparting vital existence to the dead.

Verse 46

Howbeit - There is a due order observed, 1 Corinthians 15:23. The decaying, the dying, the weak, the corruptible, in the proper order of events, was first. This order was necessary, and this is observed everywhere. It is seen in the grain that dies in the ground, and in the resurrection of man. The imperfect is succeeded by the perfect; the impure by the pure; the vile and degraded by the precious and the glorious. The idea is, that there is a tendency toward perfection, and that God observes the proper order by which that which is most glorious shall be secured. It was not his plan that all things in the beginning should be perfect; but that perfection should be

the work of time, and should be secured in an appropriate order of events. The design of Paul in this verse seems to be to vindicate the statement which he had made, by showing that it was in accordance with what was everywhere observed, that the proper order should be maintained. This idea is carried through the following verses.

Verse 47

The first man - Adam.

Is of the earth - Was made of the dust; see Genesis 2:7.

Earthy - Partaking of the earth; he was a mass of animated clay, and could be appropriately called "dust;" Genesis 3:19. Of course, he must partake of a nature that was low, mean, mortal, and corruptible.

The second man - Christ; see the note on 1 Corinthians 15:45. He is called the second man, as being the second who sustained a relation to people that was materially to affect their conduct and destiny; the second and the last 1 Corinthians 15:45, who should sustain a special headship to the race.

The Lord from heaven - Called in 1 Corinthians 2:8, the "Lord of glory;" see note on that place. This expression refers to the fact that the Lord Jesus had a heavenly origin, in contradistinction from Adam, who was formed from the earth. The Latin Vulgate renders this, "the second man from heaven is heavenly;" and this idea seems to accord with the meaning in the former member of the verse. The sense is, evidently, that as the first man had an earthly origin, and was, therefore, earthy, so the second man being from heaven, as his proper home, would have a body adapted to that abode; unlike that which was earthy, and which would be suited to his exalted nature, and to the world where he would dwell. And while, therefore, the phrase "from heaven" refers to his heavenly origin, the essential idea is, that he would have a body that was adapted to such an origin and such a world - a body unlike that which was earthy. That is, Christ had a glorified body to which the bodies of the saints must yet be made like.

Verse 48

As is the earthy - Such as Adam was.

Such are they also … - Such are all his descendants; all who derive their nature from him. That is, they are frail, corruptible, mortal; they live in an animal body as he did, and like him, they are subject to corruption and decay.

And as is the heavenly - As is he who was from heaven; as is the Lord Jesus now in is glorified body. "Such are they also, etc." Such will they be also. They will be like him; they will have a body like his. This idea is more fully expressed in Philemon 3:21, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

Verse 49

And as we have borne the image of the earthy - As like our first father, we are frail, decaying, dying; as we are so closely connected with him as to be like him. This does not refer, mainly, to one bearing his moral character, but to the fact that we are, like him, subject to sickness, frailty, sorrow, and death.

We shall also bear the image of the heavenly - The Lord Jesus Christ, who was from heaven, and who is in heaven. As we are so closely connected with Adam as to resemble him. so by the divine arrangement, and by faith in the Lord Jesus, we are so closely connected with him that we shall resemble him in heaven. And as he is now free from frailty, sickness. pain, sorrow, and death, and as he has a pure and spiritual body, adapted to a residence in heaven, so shall we be in that future world. The argument here is, that the connection which is formed between the believer and the Saviour is as close as that which subsisted between him and Adam; and as that connection with Adam involved the certainty that he would be subjected to pain, sin, sickness, and death, so the connection with Christ involves the certainty that he will like him be free from sin, sickness, pain, and death, and like him will have a body that is pure, incorruptible, and immortal.

Verse 50

Now this I say, brethren - "I make this affirmation in regard to this whole subject. I do it as containing the substance of all that I have said. I do it in order to prevent all mistake in regard to the nature of the bodies which shall be raised up." This affirmation is made respecting all the dead and all the living, that there must be a material and important change in regard to them before they can be prepared for heaven. Paul had proved in the previous verses that it was possible for God to give us bodies different from those which we now possess; he here affirms, in the most positive manner, that it was indispensable that we should have bodies different from what we now have.

Flesh and blood - Bodies organized as ours now are. "Flesh and blood" denotes such bodies as we have here, bodies that are fragile. weak, liable to disease, subject to pain and death. They are composed of changing particles; to be repaired and strengthened daily; they are subject to decay, and are wasted away by sickness, and of course they cannot be suited to a world where there shall be no decay and and no death.

Cannot inherit - Cannot be admitted as heir to the kingdom of God. The future world of glory is often represented as an heirship; see the note on Romans 8:17.

The kingdom of God - Heaven; appropriately called his kingdom, because he shall reign there in undivided and perfect glory forever.

Neither doth corruption … - Neither can that which is in its nature corruptible, and liable to decay, be adapted to a world where all is incorruptible. The apostle here simply states the fact. He does not tell us why it is impossible. It may be because the mode of communication there is not by the bodily senses; it may be because such bodies as ours would not be suited to relish the pure and exalted pleasures of an incorruptible world; it may be because they would interfere with the exalted worship, the active service, and the sleepless employments of the heavenly world; it may be because such a body is constituted to derive pleasure from objects which shall not be found in heaven. It is adapted to enjoyment in eating and drinking, and the pleasures of the eye, the ear, the taste, the touch; in heaven the soul shall be awake to more elevated and pure enjoyments than these, and, of course, such bodies as we here have would impede our progress and destroy our comforts, and be ill adapted to all the employments and enjoyments of that heavenly world.

Verse 51

Behold I show you - This commences the third subject of inquiry in the chapter, the question, what will become of those who are alive when the Lord Jesus shall return to raise the dead? This was an obvious inquiry, and the answer was, perhaps, supposed to be difficult. Paul answers it directly, and says that they will undergo an instantaneous change, which will make them like the dead that shall be raised.

A mystery - On the meaning of this word, see the note on 1 Corinthians 2:7. The word here does not mean anything which was in its nature unintelligible, but that which to them had been hitherto unknown. "I now communicate to you a truth which has not been brought into the discussion,

and in regard to which no communication has been made to you." On this subject there had been no revelation. Though the Pharisees held that the dead would rise, yet they do not seem to have made any statement in regard to the living who should remain when the dead should rise. Nor, perhaps, had the subject occupied the attention of the apostles; nor had there been any direct communication on it from the Lord Jesus himself. Paul then here says, that he was about to communicate a great truth which till then had been unknown, and to resolve a great inquiry on which there had as yet been no revelation.

We shall not all sleep - We Christians; grouping all together who then lived and should live afterward, for his discussion has relation to them all. The following remarks may, perhaps, remove some of the difficulty which attends the interpretation of this passage. The objection which is made to it is, that Paul expected to live until the Lord Jesus should return; that he, therefore, expected that the world would soon end, and that in this he was mistaken, and could not be inspired. To this, we may reply:

(1) He is speaking of Christians as such - of the whole church that had been redeemed - of the entire mass that should enter heaven; and he groups them all together, and connects himself with them, and says, "We shall not die; we Christians, including the whole church, shall not all die," etc. That he did not refer only to those whom he was then addressing, is apparent from the whole discussion. The argument relates to Christians - to the church at large; and the affirmation here has reference to that church considered as one church that was to be raised up on the last Day.

(2) that Paul did not expect that the Lord Jesus would soon come, and that the world would soon come to an end, is apparent from a similar place in the Epistle to the Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians 4:15, he uses language remarkably similar to that which is used here: "We which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord," etc. This language was interpreted by the Thessalonians as teaching that the world would soon come to an end, and the effect had been to produce a state of alarm. Paul was, therefore, at special pains to show in his Second Epistle to them, that he did not mean any such thing. He showed them 1 John 2:18 says, "It is the last time;" compare Hebrews 1:2. But the meaning of this is not that the world would soon come to an end. The prophets spoke of a period which they called "the last days" (Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:1; in Hebrew, "the after

days”), as the period in which the Messiah would live and reign. By it they meant the dispensation which should be the last; that under which the world would close; the reign of the Messiah, which would be the last economy of human things. But it did not follow that this was to be a short period; or that it might not be longer than any one of the former, or than all the former put together. This was that which John spoke of as the last time.

(4) I do not know that the proper doctrine of inspiration suffers, if we admit that the apostles were ignorant of the exact time when the world would close; or even that in regard to the precise period when that would take place, they might be in error. The following considerations may be suggested on this subject, showing that the claim to inspiration did not extend to the knowledge of this fact:

(a) That they were not omniscient, and there is no more absurdity in supposing that they were ignorant on this subject than in regard to any other.

(b) Inspiration extended to the order of future events, and not to the thees. There is in the Scriptures no statement of the time when the world would close. Future events were made to pass before the minds of the prophets, as in a landscape. The order of the images may be distinctly marked, but the times may not be designated. And even events which may occur in fact at distant periods, may in vision appear to be near each other; as in a landscape, objects which are in fact separated by distant intervals, like the ridges of a mountain, may appeal to lie close to each other.

(c) The Saviour expressly said, that it was not designed that they should know when future events would occur. Thus, after his ascension, in answer to an inquiry whether he then would restore the kingdom to Israel, he said Acts 1:7, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power.” See the note on that verse.

(d) The Saviour said that even he himself, as man, was ignorant in regard to the exact time in which future events would occur. “But of that day, and that hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father;” Mark 13:32.

(e) The apostles were in fact ignorant, and mistaken in regard to, at least, the time of the occurrence of one future event, the death of John; John 21:23. There is, therefore, no departure from the proper doctrine of inspiration, in supposing that the apostles were not inspired on these subjects, and that they might be ignorant like others. The proper order of events they state truly and exactly; the exact time God did not, for wise reasons, intend to make known.

Shall not all sleep - Shall not all die; see the note at 1 Corinthians 11:30.

But we shall all be changed - There is considerable variety in the reading of this passage. The Vulgate reads it, "We shall all indeed rise, but we shall not all be changed." Some Greek manuscripts read it, "We shall all sleep, but we shall not all be changed." Others, as the Vulgate, "We shall all rise, but we shall not all be changed." But the present Greek text contains, doubtless, the true reading; and the sense is, that all who are alive at the coming of the Lord Jesus shall undergo such a change as to fit them for their new abode in heaven; or such as shall make them like those who shall be raised from the dead. This change will be instantaneous 1 Corinthians 15:52, for it is evident that God can as easily change the living as he can raise the dead; and as the affairs of the world will then have come to an end, there will be no necessity that those who are then alive should be removed by death; nor would it be proper that they should go down to lie any time in the grave. The ordinary laws, therefore, by which people are removed to eternity, will not operate in regard to them, and they will be removed at once to their new abode.

Verse 52

In a moment - (ἐν ἀτόμῳ en atomō). In an "atom," scil. of time; a point of time which cannot be cut or divided (α athe alpha privative ("not") and τομη tomēfrom τέμνω temnō"to cut"). A single instant; immediately. It will be done instantaneously.

In the twinkling of an eye - This is an expression also denoting the least conceivable duration of time. The suddenness of the coming of the Lord Jesus is elsewhere compared to the coming of a thief in the night; 2 Peter 3:10. The word rendered "twinkling" (ῥιπῇ ripēfrom ῥίπτω rhiptō"to throw, cast") means "a throw, cast, jerk," as of a stone; and then "a jerk of the eye," that is, "a wink" - Robinson.

At the last trump - When the trumpet shall sound to raise the dead. The word "last" here does not imply that any trumpet shall have been before sounded at the resurrection, but is a word denoting that this is the consummation or close of things; it will end the economy of this world; it will be connected with the last state of things.

For the trumpet shall sound - See the note at Matthew 24:31.

And the dead shall be raised - See the note at John 5:25.

Verse 53

For this corruptible … - It is necessary that a change should take place, either by dying and then being raised, or by being changed without seeing death; for we cannot enter heaven as we are now.

Must put on - The word used here (ἐνδύνω endunō) properly means to go in, to envelope, to put on as a garment; and then to put on any thing; as the soul is, as it were, clothed with, or invested with a body; and here it means, must be endued with, or furnished with. It is equivalent to saying that this corruptible become incorruptible, and this mortal must become immortal. We must cease to be corruptible and mortal, and must become incorruptible and immortal. The righteous who remain till the coming of Christ shall be at once changed, and invested, as Enoch and Elijah were, with incorruption and immortality.

Verse 54

So when … - In that future glorious world, when all this shall have been accomplished.

Then shall be brought to pass - Then shall be fully accomplished; these words shall then receive their entire fulfillment; or this event shall meet all that is implied in these words.

The saying that is written - What is written, or the record which is made. These words are quoted from Isaiah 25:8; and the fact that Paul thus quotes them, and the connection in which they stand, prove that they had reference to the times of the gospel, and to the resurrection of the dead. Paul does not quote directly from the Hebrew, or from the Septuagint, but gives the substance of the passage.

Death - Referring here, undoubtedly, to death in the proper sense; death as prostrating the living, and consigning them to the grave.

Is swallowed up - Κατεπόθη Katepothē(from katapinōto drink down, to swallow down) means to absorb Revelation 12:16; to overwhelm, to drown Hebrews 11:29; and then to destroy or remove. The idea may be taken from

a whirlpool, or maelstrom, that absorbs all that comes near it; and the sense is, that he will abolish or remove death; that is, cause it to cease from its ravages and triumphs.

In victory - (εἰς νῖκος eis nikosUnto victory; so as to obtain a complete victory. The Hebrew Isaiah 25:8 is לנצח laanetsachThe Septuagint often renders the word נצח drow netsachwhich properly means "splendor, purity, trust, perpetuity, eternity, perfection," by νῖκος nikos"victory"; Job 36:7; Lamentations 3:18; Lamentations 5:20; Amos 1:1-15; Amos 8:7. The Hebrew word here may be rendered either "unto the end, that is," to completeness or perfection, or unto victory, with triumph. It matters little which is the meaning, for they both come to the same thing. The idea is, that the power and dominion of death shall be entirely destroyed, or brought to an end.

Verse 55

"O death." This triumphant exclamation is the commencement of the fourth division of the chapter, the practical consequences of the doctrine. It is such an exclamation as every man with right feelings will be disposed to make, who contemplates the ravages of death; who looks upon a world where in all forms he has reigned, and who then contemplates the glorious truth, that a complete and final triumph has been obtained over this great enemy of the happiness of man, and that man would die no more. It is a triumphant view which bursts upon the soul as it contemplates the fact that the work of the second Adam has repaired the ruins of the first, and that man is redeemed; his body will be raised; not another human being should die, and the work of death should be ended. Nay, it is more. Death is not only at an end; it shall not only cease, but its evils shall be repaired; and a glory and honor shall encompass the body of man, such as would have been unknown had there been no death. No commentary can add to the beauty and force of the language in this verse; and the best way to see its beauty, and to enjoy it, is to sit down and think of death; of what death has been, and has done; of the millions and millions that have died; of the earth strewn with the dead, and "arched with graves;" of our own death; the certainty that we must die, and our parents, and brothers, and sisters, and children, and friends; that all, all must die; and then to suffer the truth, in its full-orbed splendor, to rise upon us, that the time will come when death shall be at an end. Who, in such contemplation, can refrain from the language of triumph, and from hymns of praise?

Where is thy sting? - The word which is here rendered sting (κέντρον kentron) denotes properly a prick, a point, hence, a goad or stimulus; that is, a rod or staff with an iron point, for goading oxen; (see the note on Acts 9:5); and then a sting properly, as of scorpions, bees, etc. It denotes here a venomous thing, or weapon, applied to death personified, as if death employed it to destroy life, as the sting of a bee or a scorpion is used. The idea is derived from the venomous sting of serpents, or other reptiles, as being destructive and painful. The language here is the language of exultation, as if that was taken away or destroyed.

O grave - ᾅδη hadēHades, the place of the dead. It is not improperly rendered, however, grave. The word properly denotes a place of darkness; then the world, or abodes of the dead. According to the Hebrews, Hades, or Sheol, was a vast subterranean receptacle, or abode, where the souls of the dead existed. It was dark, deep, still, awful. The descent to it was through the grave; and the spirits of all the dead were supposed to be assembled there; the righteous occupying the upper regions, and the wicked the lower; see the note on Isaiah 14:9; compare Lowth, *Lectures on Hebrew Poetry*, vii; Campbell, *Prel. Diss.* vi. part 2,2. It refers here to the dead; and means that the grave, or Hades, should no longer have a victory.

Thy victory - Since the dead are to rise; since all the graves are to give up all that dwell in them; since no man will die after that, where is its victory? It is taken away. It is despoiled. The power of death and the grave is vanquished, and Christ is triumphant over all. It has been well remarked here, that the words in this verse rise above the plain and simple language of prose, and resemble a hymn, into which the apostle breaks out in view of the glorious truth which is here presented to the mind. The whole verse is indeed a somewhat loose quotation from Hosea 13:14, which we translate,

"O death, I will be thy plagues;
O grave, I will be thy destruction."

But which the Septuagint renders:

"O death, where is thy punishment?
O grave, where is thy sting?"

Probably Paul did not intend this as a direct quotation; but he spoke as a man naturally does who is familiar with the language of the Scriptures, and used it to express the sense which he intended, without meaning to make a direct and literal quotation. The form which Paul uses is so poetic in its

structure that Pope has adopted it, with only a change in the location of the members, in the "Dying Christian:"

"O grave, where is thy victory?
O death, where is thy sting?"

Verse 56

The sting of death - The sting which death bears; that with which he effects his purpose; that which is made use of to inflict death; or that which is the cause of death. There would be no death without sin. The apostle here personifies death, as if it were a living being, and as making use of sin to inflict death, or as being the sting, or envenomed instrument, with which he inflicts the mortal agony. The idea is, that sin is the cause of death. It introduced it; it makes it certain; it is the cause of the pain, distress, agony, and horror which attends it. If there had been no sin, people would not have died. If there were no sin, death would not be attended with horror or alarm. For why should innocence be afraid to die? What has innocence to fear anywhere in the universe of a just God? The fact, therefore, that people die, is proof that they are sinners; the fact that they feel horror and alarm, is proof that they feel themselves to be guilty, and that they are afraid to go into the presence of a holy God. If this be taken away, if sin be removed, of course the horror, and remorse, and alarm which it is suited to produce will be removed also.

Is sin - Sin is the cause of it; see the note at Romans 5:12.

The strength of sin - Its power over the mind; its terrific and dreadful energy; and especially its power to produce alarm in the hour of death.

Is the law - The pure and holy law of God. This idea Paul has illustrated at length in Romans 7:9-13; see the notes on that passage. He probably made the statement here in order to meet the Jews, and to show that the law of God had no power to take away the fear of death; and that, therefore, there was need of the gospel, and that this alone could do it. The Jews maintained that a man might be justified and saved by obedience to the law. Paul here shows that it is the law which gives its chief vigor to sin, and that it does not tend to subdue or destroy it; and that power is seen most strikingly in the pangs and horrors of a guilty conscience on the bed of death. There was need, therefore, of the gospel, which alone could remove the cause of these horrors, by taking away sin, and thus leaving the pardoned man to die in peace; compare the note on Romans 4:15.

Verse 57

But thanks be to God; - See the notes at Romans 7:25.

Which giveth us the victory - Us who are Christians; all Christians. The victory over sin, death, and the grave. God alone is the author of this victory. He formed the plan; he executed it in the gift of his Son; and he gives it to us personally when we come to die.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ - By his death, thus destroying the power of death; by his resurrection and triumph over the grave; and by his grace imparted to us to enable us to sustain the pains of death, and giving to us the hope of a glorious resurrection; compare the note at Romans 7:25; Romans 8:37.

Verse 58

Therefore, my beloved brethren - In view of the great and glorious truths which have been revealed to us respecting the resurrection, Paul closes the whole of this important discussion with an exhortation to that firmness in the faith which ought to result from truths so glorious, and from hopes so elevated as these truths are suited to impart. The exhortation is so plain, that it needs little explanation; it so obviously follows from the argument which Paul had pursued, that there is little need to attempt to enforce it.

Be ye steadfast - ἑδραῖοι hedraioifrom ἕδρα . Seated, sedentary (Robinson); perhaps with an allusion to a statue (Bloomfield); or perhaps to wrestling, and to standing one‘s ground (Wolf). Whatever may be the allusion, the sense is clear. Be firm, strong, confident in the faith, in view of the truth that you will be raised up. Be not shaken or agitated with the strifes, the temptations, and the cares of life. Be fixed in the faith, and let not the power of sin, or the sophistry of pretended philosophy, or the arts of the enemy of the soul seduce you from the faith of the gospel.

Unmovable - Firm, fixed, stable, unmoved. This is probably a stronger expression than the former, though meaning substantially the same thing - that we are to be firm and unshaken in our Christian hopes, and in our faith in the gospel.

Always abounding in the work of the Lord - Always engaged in doing the will of God; in promoting his glory, and advancing his kingdom. The phrase means not only to be engaged in this, but to be engaged diligently, laboriously; excelling in this. The “work of the Lord” here means that which the Lord requires; all the appropriate duties of Christians. Paul

exhorts them to practice every Christian virtue, and to do all that they could do to further the gospel among people.

Forasmuch as ye know - Greek "Knowing." You know it by the arguments which have been urged for the truth of the gospel; by your deep conviction that that gospel is true.

Your labour is not in vain - It will be rewarded. It is not as if you were to die and never live again. There will be a resurrection, and you will be suitably recompensed then What you do for the honor of God will not only be attended with an approving conscience, and with happiness here, but will be met with the glorious and eternal rewards of heaven.

In the Lord - This probably means, "Your labor or work in the Lord, that is, in the cause of the Lord, will not be in vain." And the sentiment of the whole verse is, that the hope of the resurrection and of future glory should stimulate us to great and self-denying efforts in honor of Him who has revealed that doctrine, and who purposes graciously to reward us there. Other people are influenced and excited to great efforts by the hope of honor, pleasure, or wealth. Christians should be excited to toil and self-denial by the prospect of immortal glory; and by the assurance that their hopes are not in vain, and will not deceive them.

Thus, closes this chapter of inimitable beauty, and of unequalled power of argumentation. Such is the prospect which is before the Christian. He shall indeed die like other people. But his death is a sleep - a calm, gentle, undisturbed sleep, in the expectation of being again awaked to a brighter Day, 1 Corinthians 15:6. He has the assurance that his Saviour rose, and that his people shall therefore also rise, 1 Corinthians 15:12-20. He encounters peril, and privation, and persecution he may be ridiculed and despised; he may be subjected to danger, or doomed to fight with wild beasts, or to contend with people who resemble wild beasts; he may be doomed to the pains and terrors of a martyrdom at the stake, but he has the assurance that all these are of short continuance, and that before him there is a world of eternal glory; 1 Corinthians 15:29-32. He may be poor, unhonored, and apparently without an earthly friend or protector; but his Saviour and Redeemer reigns; 1 Corinthians 15:25.

He may be opposed by wicked people, and his name slandered, and body tortured, and his peace marred, but his enemies shall all be subdued; 1 Corinthians 15:26-27. He will himself die, and sleep in his grave, but he

shall live again; 1 Corinthians 15:22-23. He has painful proof that his body is corruptible, but it will be incorruptible; that it is now vile, but it will be glorious; that it is weak, frail, feeble, but it will yet be strong, and no more subject to disease or decay; 1 Corinthians 15:42-43. And he will be brought under the power of death. but death shall be robbed of its honors, and despoiled of its triumph. Its sting from the saint is taken away. and it is changed to a blessing. It is now not the dreaded monster, the king of terrors it is a friend that comes to remove him from a world of toil to a world of rest; from a life of sin to a life of glory. The grave is not to him the gloomy abode, the permanent resting-place of his body; it is a place of rest for a little time; grateful like the bed of down to a wearied frame, where he may lie down and repose after the fatigues of the day, and gently wait for the morning.

He has nothing to fear in death; nothing to fear in the dying pang, the gloom, the chill, the sweat, the paleness, the fixedness of death; nothing to fear in the chilliness, the darkness, the silence, the corruption of the grave. All this is in the way to immortality, and is closely and indissolubly connected with immortality; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57. And in view of all this, we should be patient, faithful, laborious, self-denying; we should engage with zeal in the work of the Lord; we should calmly wait till our change come; 1 Corinthians 15:58. No other system of religion has any such hopes as this; no other system does anything to dispel the gloom, or drive away the horrors of the grave. How foolish is the man who rejects the gospel - the only system which brings life and immortality to light! How foolish to reject the doctrine of the resurrection, and to lie down in the grave without peace, without hope, without any belief that there will be a world of glory; living without God, and dying like the brute.

And yet infidelity seeks and claims its chief triumphs in the attempt to convince poor dying man that he has no solid ground of hope; that the universe is “without a Father and without a God;” that the grave terminates the career of man forever; and that in the grave he sinks away to eternal annihilation. Strange that man should seek such degradation! Strange that all people, conscious that they must die, do not at once greet Christianity as their best friend, and hail the doctrine of the future state, and of the resurrection, as that which is adapted to meet the deeply-felt evils of this

world; to fill the desponding mind with peace; and to sustain the soul in the temptations and trials of life, and in the gloom and agony of death!

1 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Introduction

The doctrinal part of this Epistle was closed at the end of 1 Corinthians 16:1. This subject he had suggested to them when he was with them, and they had expressed, some time before, the utmost readiness to make the collection, and Paul had commended their readiness when he was urging the same subject in Macedonia; see 2 Corinthians 9:1-15. It is evident, however, that for some cause, perhaps owing to the divisions and contentions in the church, this collection had not yet been made. Paul, therefore, calls their attention to it, and urges them to make it, and to forward it either by him alone, or with others, whom they might designate, to Judea; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4.

In connection with this, he expresses his intention of coming to Corinth, and perhaps of passing the winter with them. He was then in Ephesus. He was expecting to go to Macedonia, probably on the business of the collection. He purposed not to visit them on his way to Macedonia, but on his return. He had formerly intended to pass through Corinth on his way to Macedonia, and had perhaps given them such an intheation of his purpose; 2 Corinthians 1:16-17. But from some cause (see the notes on 2 Corinthians 1:15-23), he tells the Corinthians that he had abandoned the purpose of seeing them on the way to Macedonia, though he still intended to go to Macedonia, and would see them on his return; 1 Corinthians 16:5-7. At that time there was a state of things in Ephesus which required his presence. His labors were greatly blessed; and, as a consequence which often attends the successful preaching of the gospel, there was much opposition.

He had resolved, therefore, to remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; 1 Corinthians 16:8-9. In the meantime, to show them his deep interest in them, he informed them that Timothy was coming among them, for whom he asked a kind and cordial reception, and assured them that he had endeavored to persuade Apollos to visit them, but was not able; 1 Corinthians 16:10-12. Paul then urges them to watch, and be firm, and live in love 1 Corinthians 16:13-14; and then besought them to show particular attention to the family of Stephanas, the first-fruits of Achaia 1 Corinthians 16:15-16; and expresses his gratitude that Stephanas, and Fortunatus, and Achaicus had come to him at Ephesus; 1 Corinthians 16:17-18. They were

probably the persons by whom the Corinthians had sent their letter 1 Corinthians 8:1, and by whom Paul sent this Epistle. He then closes the whole epistle with Christian salutations; with an expression of regard in his own handwriting; with a solemn charge to love the Lord Jesus Christ, as the great thing to be done, and with the assurance that, if not done, it would expose the soul to a dreadful curse when the Lord should come; with an invocation of the grace of the Lord Jesus to be with them; and with a tender expression of his own love to them all; 1 Corinthians 16:19-24.

Verse 1

Now concerning the collection for the saints - The use of the article here shows that he had mentioned it to them before, and that it was a subject which they would readily understand. It was not new to them, but it was needful only to give some instructions in regard to the manner in which it should be done, and not in regard to the occasion for the collection, or the duty of making it. Accordingly, all his instructions relate simply to the manner in which the collection should be made. The word rendered "collection" (λογία) does not occur anywhere else in the New Testament, and is not found in the classic writers. It is from λέγω legōto collect, and, undoubtedly, here refers to a contribution, or collection of money for a charitable purpose. The word "saints" (ἁγίους hagious) here refers, doubtless, to "Christians;" to the persecuted Christians in Judea. There were many there; and they were generally poor, and exposed to various trials. In regard to the meaning of this word, and the circumstances and occasion of this collection; see the notes on Romans 15:25-26.

As I have given order - (διέταξα dietaxa). As I have directed, enjoined, commanded, arranged. It does not mean that he had assumed the authority to tax them, or that he had commanded them to make a collection, but that he had left directions as to the best manner and time in which it should be done. The collection was voluntary and cheerful in all the churches Romans 15:26-27; 2 Corinthians 9:2; and Paul did not assume authority to impose it on them as a tax. Nor was it necessary. Self-denial and liberality were among the distinguishing virtues of the early Christians; and to be a Christian then implied that a man would freely impart of his property to aid the poor and the needy. The order related solely to the manner of making the collection; and as Paul had suggested one mode to the churches in Galatia, he recommended the same now to the Corinthians.

To the churches of Galatia - Galatia was a province in Asia Minor. On its situation, see the note on Acts 16:6. There were evidently several churches planted in that region; see Galatians 1:2. At what time he gave this order to the churches there is not mentioned; though it was doubtless on occasion of a visit to the churches there; see Acts 16:6.

Verse 2

Upon the first day of the week - Greek, "On one of the Sabbaths." The Jews, however, used the word Sabbath to denote the week; the period of seven days; Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:9; Luke 18:12; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, John 20:19; compare Leviticus 23:15; Deuteronomy 16:9. It is universally agreed that this here denotes the first day of the week, or the Lord's Day.

Let every one of you - Let the collection be universal. Let each one esteem it his duty and his privilege to give to this object. It was not to be confined to the rich only, but was the common duty of all. The poor, as well as the rich, were expected to contribute according to their ability.

Lay by him in store - (παρ᾽ ἑαυτῷ τιθέτω θησαυρίζων par' heautō tithetō thēsaurizōn). Let him lay up at home, treasuring up as he has been prospered. The Greek phrase, "by himself," means, probably, the same as at home. Let him set it apart; let him designate a certain portion; let him do this by himself, when he is at home, when he can calmly look at the evidence of his prosperity. Let him do it not under the influence of pathetic appeals, or for the sake of display when he is with others; but let him do it as a matter of principle, and when he is by himself. The phrase in Greek, "treasuring up," may mean that each one was to put the part which he had designated into the common treasury. This interpretation seems to be demanded by the latter part of the verse. They were to lay it by, and to put it into the common treasury, that there might be no trouble of collecting when he should come. Or it may, perhaps, mean that they were individually to treasure it up, having designated in their own mind the sum which they could give, and have it in readiness when he should come. This was evidently to be done not on one Sunday only, but was to be done on each Lord's Day until he should come.

As God hath prospered him - The word "God" is not in the original, but it is evidently understood, and necessary to the sense. The word rendered "hath prospered" (εὐοδῶται euodōtai) means, properly, to set forward on one's way; to prosper one's journey; and then to prosper, or be prospered. This is the rule which Paul lays down here to guide the

Christians at Corinth in giving alms, a rule that is as applicable now, and as valuable now, as it was then.

That there be no gatherings when I come - No collections λογίαι logiai 1 Corinthians 16:1). The apostle means that there should be no trouble in collecting the small sums; that it should all be prepared; that each one might have laid by what he could give; and that all might be ready to be handed over to him, or to whomsoever they might choose to send with it to Jerusalem; 1 Corinthians 16:3 - In view of this important verse, we may remark:

(1) That there is here clear proof that the first day of the week was observed by the church at Corinth as holy time. If it was not, there can have been no propriety in selecting that day in preference to any other in which to make the collection. It was the day which was set apart to the duties of religion, and therefore an appropriate day for the exercise of charity and the bestowment of alms. There can have been no reason why this day should have been designated except that it was a day set apart to religion, and therefore deemed a proper day for the exercise of benevolence toward others.

(2) this order extended also to the churches in Galatia, proving also that the first day of the week was observed by them, and was regarded as a day proper for the exercise of charity toward the poor and the afflicted. And if the first day of the week was observed, by apostolic authority, in those churches, it is morally certain that it was observed by others. This consideration, therefore, demonstrates that it was the custom to observe this day, and that it was observed by the authority of the early founders of Christianity.

(3) Paul intended that they should be systematic in their giving, and that they should give from principle, and not merely under the impulse of feeling.

(4) Paul designed that the habit of doing good with their money should be constant. He, therefore, directed that it should be on the return of each Lord‘s Day, and that the subject should be constantly before their minds.

(5) it was evident that Paul in this way would obtain more for his object than he would if he waited that they should give all at once. He therefore directed them honestly to lay by each week what they could then give, and to regard it as a sacred treasure. How much would the amount of charities in the Christian churches be swelled if this were the practice now, and if all Christians would lay by in store each week what they could then devote to sacred purposes.

(6) the true rule of giving is, "as the Lord hath prospered us." If he has prospered us, we owe it to him as a debt of gratitude. And according to our prosperity and success, we should honestly devote our property to God.

(7) it is right and proper to lay by of our wealth for the purposes of benevolence on Sunday. It is right to do good then Matthew 12:12; and one of the appropriate exercises of religion is to look at the evidence of our prosperity with a view to know what we may be permitted to give to advance the kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

(8) if every Christian would honestly do this every week, it would do much to keep down the spirit of worldliness that now prevails everywhere in the Christian church; and if every Christian would conscientiously follow the direction of Paul here, there would be no lack of funds for any well-directed plan for the conversion of the world.

Verse 3

Whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters - There has been great variety of opinion in regard to the proper construction of this verse. Macknight supposes that the "letters" here referred to were not letters either to or from the apostle, but letters signed and sent by the congregation at Corinth, designating their appointment and their authority. With this interpretation Doddridge coincides; and this is required by the usual pointing of the Greektext, where the comma is inserted after the word letters, as in our translation. But a different interpretation has been proposed by inserting the comma after the word "approve," so that it shall read, "Whom you approve, or designate, them I will send with letters to convey your charity to Jerusalem." This is followed by Griesbach, Locke, Rosenmuller, Bloomfield, Beza, Hammond, Grotius, Whitby, etc. Certainly

this accords better with the design of the passage. For it is evident (see 1 Corinthians 16:4) that, though Paul was willing to go, yet he was not expecting to go. If he did not go, what was more natural than that he should offer to give them letters of commendation to his brethren in Judea? Mill has doubted whether this construction is in accordance with Greek usage, but the names above cited are sufficient authority on that subject. The proper construction, therefore, is, that Paul would give them letters to his friends in Jerusalem, and certify their appointment to dispense the charity, and commend the persons sent to the favor and hospitality of the church there. "Your liberality." Margin, "Gift." Your donation; your alms. The Greek word χάριν charinusually signifies grace, or favor. Here it means an act of grace or favor; kindness; a favor conferred; benefaction: compare 2 Corinthians 8:4, 2 Corinthians 8:6-7, 2 Corinthians 8:19.

Verse 4

And if it be meet … - If it be judged desirable and best. If my presence can further the object; or will satisfy you better; or will be deemed necessary to guide and aid those who may be sent, I will be willing to go also. For some appropriate and valuable remarks in regard to the apostle Paul's management of pecuniary matters, so as not to excite suspicion, and to preserve a blameless reputation, see Paley's Horae Paulinae, chapter iv. No. 1,3. Note.

Verse 5

Now I will come unto you - I purpose to come unto you. He had expected to see them on his way to Macedonia, but, on some account, had been induced to abandon that design. See the notes at 2 Corinthians 1:15-17.

When I shall pass through Macedonia - When I shall have passed through Macedonia. He proposed to go to Macedonia first, and, having passed through that country, visiting the churches, to go to Corinth. For the situation of Macedonia, see the notes at Acts 16:9.

For I do pass through Macedonia - I design to do it. It is my present intention. Though he had abandoned, from some cause, the design of passing through Corinth on his way to Macedonia, yet he had not given up the design itself. It was still his intention to go there.

Verse 6

That ye may bring me on my journey - That you may accompany me, or aid me, and furnish me the means of going on my journey. It was

customary for the apostles to be attended by some members of the churches and friends in their travels. See the note at Acts 10:23.

On my journey … - Probably to Judea. This was evidently his intention. But wherever he should go, it would be gratifying to him to have their aid and companionship.

Verse 7

For I will not see you now by the way - On the way to Macedonia. Something had occurred to change his mind, and to induce him to go to Macedonia by another way.

But I trust to tarry a while with you - That is, on my return from Macedonia, 1 Corinthians 16:5. Greek, "I hope to remain with you a little while.

If the Lord permit - The apostle did not use the language of certainty and of confidence. He felt his dependence on God, and regarded all as under his direction; see the same form of expression in 1 Corinthians 4:19, and the note on that place.

Verse 8

But I will tarry at Ephesus - This passage proves that this letter was written from Ephesus. It is by such indications as this usually that we are able to determine the place where the Epistles were written. In regard to the situation of Ephesus, see the note on Acts 18:19.

Until Pentecost - This was a Jewish festival occurring fifty days after the Passover, and hence called the Pentecost. See the note at Acts 2:1. As there were Jews at Corinth, and doubtless in the church, they would understand the time which Paul referred to; and as he was a Jew, he naturally used their mode of reckoning time where it would be understood. Doubtless the great festivals of the Jews were well known among most of the cities of Greece, as there were Jews in them all who were scrupulous in their observances. It is no improbable supposition, also, that Christians everywhere regarded this day with deep interest, as being the day on which the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles and on the people of Jerusalem, Acts 2.

Verse 9

For a great door - There is abundant opportunity for usefulness. The word "door" is used evidently to denote an occasion or an opportunity for doing anything. It is the means by which we have entrance or access; and

hence denotes facility in doing anything when there is no obstruction; see Acts 14:27; 2 Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4:3.

And effectual - That is, effective, or adapted to success; presenting opportunity for great effects. There is abundant opportunity to preach the gospel; there is attention to what is spoken, and great interest in it; there is great encouragement to labor. It is possible that this was one of the reasons why Paul had changed his mind about Macedonia. It would require time to visit Corinth, as he would wish to remain there; and an unexpected opportunity having arisen for doing good, he judged it best to remain at Ephesus as long as practicable, and then to go at once to Macedonia.

And there are many adversaries - Many opposers; many who resist the gospel. These were doubtless in part Jews who excited opposition to him, and in part the friends of Demetrius; see Acts 19. That Paul had great success in Ephesus, and that his labors were attended with a great revival of religion there, is manifest from that chapter. We may remark here:

(1) That such a work of grace, such a setting open a great and effectual door, is often the occasion of increased opposition to the gospel. It is no uncommon thing that the adversaries of Christ should be excited at such times; and we are not to be surprised if the same thing should occur now which occurred in the time of Paul.

(2) this was regarded by Paul as no reason why he should leave Ephesus, but rather as a reason why he should remain there. It was regarded by him as an evidence that the Holy Spirit was there. It was proof that the enemies of God were alarmed, and that the kingdom of Christ was advancing. His presence, also, would be needed there, to encourage and strengthen the young converts who would be attacked and opposed; and he deemed it his duty to remain. A minister should never wish to make enemies to the gospel, nor seek to excite them to make opposition; but such opposition is often evidence that the Spirit of God is among a people; that the consciences of sinners are aroused and alarmed; and that the great enemy of God and man is making, as he was at Ephesus, a desperate effort to preserve his kingdom from being destroyed.

(3) aminister should regard it as his duty in a special manner to be among his people when there is such opposition excited. His presence is needed to comfort and encourage the church; and when the minds of people

are excited, it is often the best time to present truth, and to defend successfully the great doctrines of the Bible.

(4) ministers should not be discouraged because there is opposition to the gospel. It is one ground of encouragement. It is an indication of the presence of God in awakening the conscience. And it is far more favorable as a season to do good than a dead calm, and when there is universal stagnation and unconcern.

Verse 10

Now if Timotheus come - Paul had sent Timothy to them (see the note at 1 Corinthians 4:17-18), but as he had many churches to visit, it was not absolutely certain that he would go to Corinth.

May be with you without fear - Let him be received kindly and affectionately. Timothy was then a young man; Acts 16:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:12. There might be some danger that he might feel himself embarrassed among the rich, the frivilous, and the great. Paul, therefore, asks them to encourage him, to receive him kindly, and not to embarrass him. Perhaps, also, there may be some reference to the false teachers whom Timothy might be called on to oppose. They were powerful, and they might endeavor to intimidate and alarm him. Paul, therefore, asks the church to sustain him in his efforts to defend the truth.

For he worketh the work of the Lord - He is engaged in the service of the Lord; and he is worthy of your confidence, and worthy to be sustained by you.

Verse 11

Let no man, therefore, despise him - Let no one despise him on account of his youth and inexperience. It is probable that some of the more wealthy and proud, some who valued themselves on their wisdom and experience, would be disposed to look upon him with contempt. On another occasion, he directed Timothy so to live as that no one should have occasion to despise him on account of his youth 1 Timothy 4:12; and he here urges on the Corinthians, that they should not despise him because be was a young man, and comparatively inexperienced. A minister of the gospel, though young, should receive the respect that is due to his office; and if he conducts himself in accordance with his high calling, his youth should be no barrier to the confidence and affection of even aged and

experienced Christians. It should be rather a reason why they should treat him with affection, and encourage him in his work.

But conduct him forth in peace - That is, when he leaves you. Attend him on his way, and help him forward on his journey to me; see the note on 1 Corinthians 16:6.

For I look for him with the brethren - Erastus accompanied Timothy in this journey Acts 19:22, and probably there were others with him. Titus also had been sent to Corinth 2 Corinthians 12:17-18, and it is not improbable that Paul had desired Titus to bring with him to Ephesus some of the Corinthian brethren, as he might need their assistance there - Grotius.

Verse 12

As touching our brother Apollos - Tyndale renders this, "To speak of brother Apollo." In regard to Apollos, see the note at 1 Corinthians 1:12.

His will was not at all to come at this time - It is probable that there were matters which detained him, or which required his presence in Ephesus. It is not known why Apollos had left Corinth, but it has been supposed that it was on account of the dissensions which existed there. For the same reason he might not be induced to return there while those dissensions lasted and there might be employment which he had where he then was which rendered his presence there important. The Latin fathers say that Apollos did after this return to Corinth, when the religious differences had been settled - Bloomfield. It is probable that the Corinthians had requested, by the messengers who carried their letter to Paul, that either he or Apollos would come and visit them. Paul states, in reply, that he had endeavored to prevail on Apollos to go, but had not succeeded.

He will come when he shall have convenient thee - The Greek word means, when he should have leisure, or a good opportunity. He might then be engaged; or he might be unwilling to go while their contentions lasted. They had probably 1 Corinthians 1:12 endeavored to make him the head of a party, and on that account he might have been unwilling to return at present among them. But Paul assures them that he designed to come among them at some future time. This was said probably to show them that he still retained his affection for them, and had a tender solicitude for their peace and prosperity. Had this not been said, they might, perhaps, have inferred that he was offended, and had no desire to come among them.

Verse 13

Watch ye - The exhortation in this and the following verse is given evidently in view of the special dangers and temptations which surrounded them. The word used here (Γρηγορεῖτε Grēgoreite) means, to keep awake, to be vigilant, etc.; and this may, perhaps, be a military metaphor derived from the duty of those who are stationed as sentinels to guard a camp, or to observe the motions of an enemy. The term is frequently used in the New Testament, and the duty frequently enjoined; Matthew 24:41-42; Matthew 25:13; Mark 13:35; Luke 21:36; Acts 20:31; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; 2 Timothy 4:5. The sense here is, that they were to watch, or be vigilant, against all the evils of which he had admonished them, the evils of dissension, or erroneous doctrines, of disorder, of false teachers, etc. They were to watch lest their souls should be ruined, and their salvation endangered; lest the enemies of the truth and of holiness should steal silently upon them, and surprise them. They were to watch with the same vigilance that is required of a sentinel who guards a camp, lest an enemy should come suddenly upon them, and surprise the camp when the army was locked in sleep.

Stand fast in the faith - Be firm in holding and defending the truths of the gospel. Do not yield to any foe, but maintain the truth, and adhere to your confidence in God and to the doctrines of the gospel with unwavering constancy; see the note at 1 Corinthians 15:1. Be firm in maintaining what you believe to be true, and in holding on to your personal confidence in God, notwithstanding all the arts, insinuations, and teachings of seducers and the friends of false doctrine.

Quit you like men - (ἀνδρίζεσθε andrizesthefrom ἀνήρ anēra man). The word occurs no where else in the New Testament. In the Septuagint it occurs in Joshua 1:6-7, Joshua 1:9, Joshua 1:18; 1 Chronicles 28:20; 2 Chronicles 32:7; Nehemiah 2:1; and in 18 other places. See Trommius' Concordance. It occurs also in the classic authors; see Xenophon, Oec. Nehemiah 5:4. It means, to render one manly or brave; to show oneself a man; that is, not to be a coward, or timid, or alarmed at enemies, but to be bold and brave. We have a similar phrase in common use: "Be a man," or "Show yourself a man;" that is, be not mean, or be not cowardly.

Be strong - Be firm, fixed, steadfast; compare Ephesians 6:10, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

Verse 14

Let all your things … - All that you do. This direction is repeated on account of its great importance, and because it is a summing up of all that he had said in this Epistle; see 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 1 Corinthians 14:1. Here he says, that charity, or love, was to regulate all that they did. This was a simple rule; and if this was observed, every thing would be done well.

Verse 15

I beseech you, brethren - The construction here is somewhat involved, but the sense is plain. The words, "I beseech you," in this verse, are evidently to be taken in connection with 1 Corinthians 16:16, "I beseech you that ye submit yourselves unto such," etc. The design is to exhort them to pay proper deference to Stephanas, and to all who sustained the same rank and character; and the remainder of 1 Corinthians 16:15 is designed to state the reason why they should show respect and kindness to the household of Stephanas.

Ye know the house - You are acquainted with the household, or family. Probably a considerable portion, or all, of the family of Stephanas had been converted to the Christian faith.

Of Stephanas - See the note at 1 Corinthians 1:16. Paul there says that he had baptized his family. That it is the first-fruits of Achaia. They were the first converted to the Christian religion in Achaia; see the note at Romans 16:5. Respecting Achaia, see the note at Acts 18:12.

That they have addicted themselves … - That they have devoted themselves to the service of Christians. That is, by aiding the ministry; by showing hospitality; by providing for their needs; by attending and aiding the apostles in their journeys, etc.

Verse 16

That ye submit yourselves … - The word used here means evidently that you would show them proper deference and regard; that you would treat them with distinguished respect and honor for what they have done.

And to everyone that helpeth with us … - Everyone who aids us in the ministry, or provides for our needs, etc. It is possible that Stephanas lived among them at this time (Note, 1 Corinthians 1:16), though he had been converted in Achaia; and it is probable that, as Corinth was a central place and a thoroughfare, others might come among them who were the personal friends of Paul, and who had aided him in the ministry. Towards all such he bespeaks their kind, and tender, and respectful regards.

Verse 17

I am glad of the coming - That is, I am glad that they have come to me at Ephesus. I rejoice that he who was converted by my ministry in Achaia, and who has so long shown himself to be a personal friend to me, and an aid in my work, came where I am.

Stephanas - The same person evidently mentioned in the previous verses. Probably he, as one of the oldest and most respected members of the church, had been selected to carry the letter of the Corinthians 1 Corinthians 7:1 to Paul, and to consult with him respecting the affairs of the church there.

Fortunatus and Achaieus - These persons are not referred to anywhere else in the New Testament. It appears that Fortunatus survived Paul, for he was subsequently the messenger of the church at Corinth to that at Rome, and bore back to the Corinthians the Epistle which Clement of Rome sent to them. See that epistle, Section 59.

For that which was lacking … - The word which is used here, and rendered "that which was lacking" (ὑστέρημα husterēma), does not occur in the Classic writers. It means properly that which is missing, want, lack - Robinson. It may be used to denote a want or lack of any kind, whether of support, sustenance, aid, consolation, information, or counsel; see Luke 21:4; Philemon 2:30; 1 Thessalonians 3:10. What this was which the Corinthians had neglected or failed to furnish Paul, and which had been supplied by the presence of these persons, can be only a matter of conjecture; and different commentators have supposed different things. It might be a neglect to provide for his needs, or a defect of informing him about their affairs in the letter which they had sent him; or it might be that these persons had furnished, by their presence and conversation, those consolations and friendly offices which the church at Corinth would have rendered had they been all present; and Paul may mean to say, that he had enjoyed with them that friendly contact and Christian communion which he had desired with them, but which was lacking, that is, which he had not been permitted to enjoy by reason of his absence. This is the view which is given by Rosenmuller, Doddridge, Bloomfield; and as Paul does not seem here inclined to blame them, this view is most in accordance with the general strain of the passage.

Verse 18

For they have refreshed my spirit - By their presence and conversation. They have given me information respecting the state of things

in the church; and their society has been with me of the most gratifying and cheering kind.

And yours - "By removing," says Locke, "those suspicions and fears that were on both sides." "By thus supplying your absence, they have benefited us both. For Paul gained information of those absent, and they gained in the counsel afforded to them by the apostle" - Bloomfield. "For they refreshed my spirit by their obliging behavior and edifying conversation, as, I doubt not, they have often refreshed yours by their ministrations among you" - Doddridge. The sense seems to be, that their visit to him would be a benefit to both; would result in imparting comfort, a good understanding, an increase of their mutual attachment, and ultimately a large accession to their mutual joy when they should again meet.

Therefore acknowledge ye them that are such - Receive affectionately; recognize as brethren; cherish, treat kindly all that evince such a spirit; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 16:15-16. The apostle here designs, evidently, that the Corinthians should receive them kindly on their return, and regard with deference and respect the counsel which they might offer, and the message which they might bear from him.

Verse 19

The churches of Asia - The word "Asia" in the New Testament usually denotes Asia Minor in general; see the note on Acts 2:9. It was sometimes used in a more limited sense, to denote the region around Ephesus, and of which Ephesus was the center and capital; see note, Acts 16:6. This is the region undoubtedly which is intended here.

Salute you - Greet you; send respectful and affectionate Christian regards; see the note at Romans 16:3.

Aquila and Priscilla - See the note on Acts 18:26.

Much in the Lord - With affectionate Christian salutations; or as Christians. Wishing the blessing and favor of the Lord.

With the church that is in their house - See the note at Romans 16:5.

Verse 20

All the brethren … - All the Christians with whom Paul was connected in Ephesus. They felt a deep interest in the church at Corinth, and sent to them Christian salutations. "With a holy kiss; see the note on Romans 16:16.

Verse 21

The salutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand - It is evident that Paul was accustomed to employ an amanuensis (copyist) in penning his epistles (see the note on Romans 16:22), though he signed his own name, and expressed his Christian salutation in every epistle, 2 Thessalonians 3:17; compare Colossians 4:18. This gave a sanction to what was written; was a proof that it was his own, and was a valuable token of affectionate regard. It was a proof that there was no fraud or imposition. Why he employed an amanuensis is not known.

Verse 22

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ - This is a most solemn and affecting close of the whole epistle. It was designed to direct them to the great and essential matter of religion, the love of the Lord Jesus; and was intended, doubtless, to turn away their minds from the subjects which had agitated them, the disputes and dissensions which had rent the church into factions, to the great inquiry whether they truly loved the Saviour. It is implied that there was danger, in their disputes and strifes about minor matters, of neglecting the love of the Lord Jesus, or of substituting attachment to a party in the place of that love to the Saviour which alone could be connected with eternal life.

Let him be anathema - On the meaning of the word anathema, see the note at 1 Corinthians 12:3. The word properly means accursed, or devoted to destruction; and the idea here is, that he who did not believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him, would be, and ought to be, devoted to destruction, or accursed of God. It expresses what ought to be done; it expresses a truth in regard to God‘s dealings, not the desire of the apostle. No matter what any man‘s endowments might be; no matter what might be his wealth, his standing, or his talent; no matter if he were regarded as a ruler in the church, or at the head of a party; yet if he had not true love to the Lord Jesus, he could not be saved. This sentiment is in accordance with the declaration of the Scripture everywhere. See particularly, John 3:31; Micah 6:16, and the note on the latter place.

Maran-atha - These are Syriac words, Moran Etho - “the Lord comes;” that is, will come. The reason why this expression is added may be:

(1) To give the greater solemnity to the declaration of the apostle; that is, to give it an emphatic form.

(2) to intimate that, though there were no earthly power to punish a lack of love to the Saviour; though the state could not, and ought not to punish it; and though the church could not exclude all who did not love the Lord Jesus from its bosom, yet they could not escape. For, the Lord would himself come to take vengeance on his enemies; and no one could escape. Though, therefore, those who did not love the Lord Jesus could not be punished by people, yet they could not escape divine condemnation. The Lord would come to execute vengeance himself, and they could not escape. It is probable (see Lightfoot in loco) that the Jews were accustomed to use such a form in their greater excommunication, and that they meant by it, that the person who was thus devoted to destruction, and excommunicated, must be destroyed; for the Lord would come to take vengeance on all his enemies. "It certainly was not now, for the first time, used as a new kind of cursing by the apostle; but was the application of a current mode of speech to the purpose he had in contemplation. Perhaps, therefore, by inspecting the manners of the East, we may illustrate the import of this singular passage. The nearest approach to it that I have been able to discover is in the following extract from Mr. Bruce; and though, perhaps, this does not come up to the full power of the apostle‘s meaning, yet, probably, it gives the idea which was commonly attached to the phrase among the public. Mr. Bruce had been forced by a pretended saint, in Egypt, to take him on board his vessel, as if to carry him to a certain place - whereas, Mr. Bruce meant no such thing; but, having set him on shore at some little distance from whence he came, ‹we slacked our vessel down the stream a few yards, filling our sails, and stretching away.

On seeing this, our saint fell into a desperate passion, cursing, blaspheming, and stamping with his feet; at every word crying "Shar Ullah!" that is, "May God send and do justice!" This appears to be the strongest execration this passionate Arab could use, that is, To punish you adequately is out of my power: I remit you to the vengeance of God.‘ Is not this the import of anathema maranatha?" - Taylor in Calmet. This solemn declaration, or denunciation, the apostle wrote with his own hand, as the summary of all that he had said, in order that it might be attentively regarded. There is not a more solemn declaration in the Bible; there is not a more fearful denunciation; there is no one that will be more certainly executed. No matter what we may have - be it wealth, or beauty, or vigor, or

accomplishment, or adorning, or the praise and flattery of the world; no matter if we are elevated high in office and in rank; no matter if we are honored by the present age, or gain a reputation to be transmitted to future times; yet if we have not love to the Saviour, we cannot be saved.

We must be devoted to the curse; and the Lord Jesus will soon return to execute the tremendous sentence on a guilty world. How important then to ask whether we have that love? Whether we are attached to the Lord Jesus in such a manner as to secure his approbation? Whether we so love him as to be prepared to hail his coming with joy, and to be received into his everlasting kingdom - In the close of the notes on this Epistle, I may ask anyone who shall read these pages whether he has this love? And I may press it upon the attention of each one, though I may never see their faces in the flesh, as the great inquiry which is to determine their everlasting destiny. The solemn declaration stands here, that if they do not love the Lord Jesus, they will be, and they ought to be, devoted to destruction. The Lord Jesus will soon return to make investigation, and to judge the world. There will be no escape; and no tongue can express the awful horrors of an eternal curse pronounced by the lips of the Son of God!

Verse 23

The grace … - See the note at Romans 16:20.

Verse 24

In Christ Jesus - Through Christ Jesus; or in connection with your love to him; that is, as Christians. This is an expression of tender regard to them as Christian brethren; of his love for the church; and his earnest desire for their welfare. It is in accordance with the usual manner in which he closes his epistles; and it is especially tender, affectionate, and beautiful here, when we consider the manner in which he had been treated by many of the Corinthians; and as following the solemn declaration in 1 Corinthians 16:22. Paul loved them; loved them intensely, and was ever ready to express his affectionate regard for them all, and his earnest desire for their salvation.

The subscription to the Epistle, "The first epistle to the Corinthians," etc., was evidently written by some other hand than that of Paul, and has no claim to be regarded as inspired. Probably these subscriptions were added a considerable time after the Epistles were first written; and in some instances

evidently by some person who was not well informed on the subject; see the note at the end of the Epistle to the Romans. In this instance, the subscription is evidently in its main statement false. The Epistle bears internal marks that it was written from Ephesus, though there is every probability that it was sent by three of the persons who are mentioned here. It is absurd, however, to suppose that Timothy was concerned in bearing the Epistle to them, since it is evident that when it was written he was already on a visit to the churches, and on his way to Corinth; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 16:10-11; 1 Corinthians 4:17. There is not the slightest internal evidence that it was written from Philippi; but everything in the Epistle concurs in the supposition that it was sent from Ephesus. See the introduction to that Epistle. There is, however, a considerable variety among the manuscripts in regard to the subscription; and they are evidently none of them of any authority, and as these subscriptions generally mislead the reader of the Bible, it would have been better had they been omitted.

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2 Corinthians

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Contents

2 CORINTHIANS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to 2 Corinthians

Section 1. The Design of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians

In the Introduction to the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the situation and character of the city of Corinth, the history of the church there, and the design which Paul had in view in writing to them at first, have been fully stated. In order to a full understanding of the design of this Epistle, those facts should be borne in distinct remembrance, and the reader is referred to the statement there made as material to a correct understanding of this Epistle. It was shown there that an important part of Paul‘s design at that time was to reprove the irregularities which existed in the church at Corinth. This he had done with great fidelity. He had not only answered the inquiries which they proposed to him, but he had gone with great particularity into an examination of the gross disorders of which he had learned by some members of the family of Chloe. A large part of the Epistle, therefore, was the language of severe reproof. Paul felt its necessity; and he had employed that language with unwavering fidelity to his Master.

Yet it was natural that he should feel great solicitude in regard to the reception of that letter, and to its influence in accomplishing what he wished. That letter had been sent from Ephesus, where Paul proposed to remain until after the succeeding Pentecost 1 Corinthians 16:8; evidently hoping by that time to hear from them, and to learn what had been the manner of the reception of his Epistle. He proposed then to go to Macedonia, and from that place to go again to Corinth 1 Corinthians 16:5-7; but he was evidently desirous to learn in what manner his First Epistle had been received, and what was its effect, before he visited them. He sent Timothy and Erastus before him to Macedonia and Achaia Acts 19:22; 1 Corinthians 16:10, intending that they should visit Corinth, and commissioned Timothy to regulate the disordered affairs in the church there. It would appear also that he sent Titus to the church there in order to observe the effect which his Epistle would produce, and to return and report to him, 2 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 7:6-16.

Evidently, Paul felt much solicitude on the subject; and the manner in which they received his admonitions would do much to regulate his own future movements. An important case of discipline; his authority as an

apostle; and the interests of religion in an important city, and in a church which he had himself founded, were all at stake. In this state of mind he himself left Ephesus, and went to Troas on his way to Macedonia, where it appears he had appointed Titus to meet him, and to report to him the manner in which his First Epistle had been received; see the note at 2 Corinthians 2:13. Then his mind was greatly agitated and distressed because he did not meet Titus as he had expected, and in this state of mind he went forward to Macedonia. There he had a direct interview with Titus 2 Corinthians 7:5-6, and learned from him that his First Epistle had accomplished all which he had desired, 2 Corinthians 7:7-16. The act of discipline which he had directed had been performed; the abuses had been in a great measure corrected, and the Corinthians had been brought to a state of true repentance for their former irregularities and disorders. The heart of Paul was greatly comforted by this intelligence, and by the signal success which had attended this effort to produce reform. In this state of mind, he wrote to them this second letter.

Titus had spent some time in Corinth. He had had an opportunity of learning the views of the parties, and of ascertaining the true condition of the church. This Epistle is designed to meet some of the prevailing views of the party which was opposed to him there, and to refute some of the prevailing slanders in regard to himself. The Epistle, therefore, is occupied to a considerable extent in refuting the slanders which bad been heaped upon him, and in vindicating his own character. This letter also he sent by the hands of Titus, by whom the former had been sent, and he designed doubtless that the presence of Titus should aid in accomplishing the objects which he had in view in the Epistle; see 2 Corinthians 8:17-18.

Section 8:17-18.

2. The Subjects Treated in this Epistle

It has been generally admitted that this Epistle is written without much definite arrangement or plan. It treats on a variety of topics mainly as they occurred to the mind of the apostle at the time, and perhaps without having formed any definite arrangement before he commenced writing it. Those subjects are all important, and are all treated in the usual manner of Paul, and are all useful and interesting to the church at large; but we shall not find in this Epistle the same systematic arrangement which is apparent in the

Epistle to the Romans, or which occurs in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Some of the subjects of which it treats are the following:

(1) He mentions his own sufferings, and particularly his late trials in Asia. For deliverance from these trials, he expresses his gratitude to God; and states the design for which God called him to endure such trials to have been, that he might be better qualified to comfort others who might be afflicted in a similar manner. 2 Corinthians 1:1-12.

(2) he vindicates himself from one of the accusations which his enemies had brought against him, that he was unstable and fickle-minded. He had promised to visit them; and he had not yet fulfilled his promise. They took occasion, therefore, to say that he was unstable, and that he was afraid to visit them. He shows to them, in reply, the true reason why he had not come to them, and that his real object; in not doing it, had been "to spare" them, 2 Corinthians 1:13-24.

(3) the case of the unhappy individual who had been guilty of incest, had deeply affected his mind. In the First Epistle, he had treated of this case at large, and had directed that discipline should be exercised. He had felt deep solicitude in regard to the manner in which his commands on that subject should be received, and had judged it best not to visit them until he should be informed of the manner in which they had complied with his directions. Since they had obeyed him, and had inflicted discipline on him, he now exhorts them to forgive the unhappy man, and to receive him again to their fellowship, 2 Corinthians 2:1-11.

(4) he mentions the deep solicitude which he had on this subject, and his disappointment when he came to Troas and did not meet with Titus as he had expected, and had not been informed as he hoped to have been of the manner in which his former Epistle had been received, 2 Corinthians 2:12-17. In view of the manner in which they had received his former Epistle, and of the success of his efforts, which he learned when he reached Macedonia, he gives thanks to God that all his efforts to promote the welfare of the church had been successful, 2 Corinthians 2:14-17.

(5) Paul vindicates his character, and his claims to be regarded as an apostle. he assures them that he does not need letters of commendation to

them, since they were fully acquainted with his character, 2 Corinthians 3:1-6. This subject leads him into an examination of the nature of the ministry and its importance, which he illustrates by showing the comparative obscurity of the Mosaic ministrations, and the greater dignity, and permanency of the gospel, 2 Corinthians 3:7-18.

(6) in 2 Corinthians 6:1-10.

(8) having in this manner pursued a course of remark that was calculated to conciliate their regard, and to show his affection for them, he exhorts them 2 Corinthians 6:11-18, to avoid those connections which would injure their piety, and which were inconsistent with the gospel which they professed to love. The connections to which he particularly referred were, improper marriages and ruinous alliances with idolaters, to which they were particularly exposed.

(9) in 2 Corinthians 8:1-14; 2 Corinthians 9:2), and was sent by Titus to the church at Corinth. If so, it was written probably about a year after the former Epistle. Paul was on his way to Corinth, and was expecting to go there soon. He had left Ephesus, where he was when he wrote the First Epistle, and had gone to Troas, and from thence to Macedonia, where he had met with Titus, and had from him learned what was the effect of his First Epistle. In the overflowing of his heart with gratitude for the success of that letter, and with a desire to carry forward the work of reformation in the church, and completely to remove all the objections which had been made to his apostolic authority, and to prepare for his own welcome reception when he went there, he wrote this letter - a letter which we cannot doubt was as kindly received as the former, and which Like that accomplished the objects which he had in view.

2 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This chapter 2 Corinthians 1:1-2. This is found in all the epistles of Paul, and was at once an affectionate salutation and an appropriate expression of his interest in their welfare, and also an appropriate mode of commencing an address to them by one who claimed to be inspired and sent from God.

2. He refers to the consolation which he had had in his heavy trials, and praises God for that consolation, and declares that the reason for which he was comforted was, that he might be qualified to administer consolation to others in the same or in similar circumstances, 2 Corinthians 1:3-7.

3. He informs them of the heavy trials which he was called to experience when he was in Ephesus, and of his merciful deliverance from those trials, 2 Corinthians 1:8-12. He had been exposed to death, and had despaired of life, 2 Corinthians 1:8-9; yet he had been delivered 2 Corinthians 1:10; he desired them to unite with him in thanksgiving on account of it 2 Corinthians 1:11; and in all this he had endeavored to keep a good conscience, and had that testimony that he had endeavored to maintain such a conscience toward all, and especially toward them, 2 Corinthians 1:12.

4. He refers to the design which he had in writing the former letter to them, 2 Corinthians 1:13-14. He had written to them only such things as they admitted to be true and proper; and such as he was persuaded they would always admit. They had always received his instructions favorably and kindly; and he had always sought their welfare.

5. In this state of mind, Paul had designed to have paid them a second visit, 2 Corinthians 1:15-16. But he had not done it yet, and it appears that his enemies had taken occasion from this to say that he was inconstant and fickle-minded. He, therefore, takes occasion to vindicate himself, and to convince them that he was not faithless to his word and purposes, and to show them the true reason why he had not visited them, 2 Corinthians 1:17-24. He states, therefore, that his real intentions had been to visit them 2 Corinthians 1:15-16; that his failure to do so had not proceeded from either levity or falsehood 2 Corinthians 1:17; as they might have known from the

uniform doctrine which he had taught them, in which he had inculcated the necessity of a strict adherence to promises, from the veracity of Jesus Christ his great example 2 Corinthians 1:18-20; and from the fact that God had given to him the Holy Spirit, and anointed him 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; and he states, therefore, that the true reason why he had not come to them was, that he wished to spare them 2 Corinthians 1:23-24; he was willing to remain away from them until they should have time to correct the evils which existed in their church, and prevent the necessity of severe discipline when he should come.

Verse 1

Paul an apostle … - ; see the Romans 1:1 note, and 1 Corinthians 1:1 note.

By the will of God - Through, or agreeably to the will of God; note, 1 Corinthians 1:1.

And Timothy our brother - Paul was accustomed to associate some other person or persons with him in writing his epistles. Thus, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Sosthenes was associated with him. For the reasons of this, see the note on 1 Corinthians 1:1. The name of Timothy is associated with his in the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians. From the former Epistle to the Corinthians 1 Corinthians 16:10, we learn that Paul had sent Timothy to the church at Corinth, or that he expected that he would visit them. Paul had sent him into Macedonia in company with Erastus Acts 19:21-22, intending himself to follow them, and expecting that they would visit Achaia. From the passage before us, it appears that Timothy had returned from this expedition, and was now with Paul. The reason why Paul joined Timothy with him in writing this Epistle may have been the following:

(1) Timothy had been recently with them, and they had become acquainted with him, and it was not only natural that he should express his friendly salutations, but his name and influence among them might serve in some degree to confirm what Paul wished to say to them; compare note, 1 Corinthians 1:1.

(2) Paul may have wished to give as much influence as possible to Timothy. he designed that he should be his fellow-laborer; and as Timothy was much younger than himself, he doubtless expected that he would

survive him, and that he would in some sense succeed him in the care of the churches. He was desirous, therefore, of securing for him all the authority which he could, and of letting it be known that he regarded him as abundantly qualified for the great work with which he was entrusted.

(3) the influence and name of Timothy might be supposed to have weight with the party in the church that had slandered Paul, by accusing him of insincerity or instability in regard to his purposed visit to them. Paul had designed to go to them directly from Ephesus, but he had changed his mind, and the testimony of Timothy might be important to prove that it was done from motives purely conscientious. Timothy was doubtless acquainted with the reasons; and his testimony might meet and rebut a part of the charges against him; see 2 Corinthians 1:13-16.

Unto the church of God … - see the note, 1 Corinthians 1:2.

With all the saints which are in all Achaia - Achaia, in the largest sense, included the whole of Greece. Achaia proper, however, was the district or province of which Corinth was the capital. It comprehended the part of Greece lying between Thessaly and the southern part of the Peloponnesus, embracing the whole western part of the Peloponnesus. It is probable that there were not a few Christians scattered in Achaia, and not improbably some small churches that had been established by the labors of Paul or of others. From Romans 16:1, we know that there was a church at Cenchrea, the eastern port of Corinth, and it is by no means improbable that there were other churches in that region. Paul doubtless designed that copies of this Epistle should be circulated among them.

Verse 2

Grace be to you … - This is the usual Christian salutation; see the Romans 1:7 note; 1 Corinthians 1:3 note.

Verse 3

Blessed be God - This is the commencement properly of the Epistle, and it is the language of a heart that is full of joy, and that bursts forth with gratitude in view of mercy. It may have been excited by the recollection that he had formerly written to them, and that during the interval which had elapsed between the time when the former Epistle was written and when this was penned, he had been called to a most severe trial, and that from that trial he had been mercifully delivered. With a heart full of gratitude and joy for this merciful interposition, he commences this Epistle. It is remarked by

Doddridge, that 11 out of the 13 epistles of Paul, begin with exclamations of praise, joy, and thanksgiving. Paul had been afflicted, but he had also been favored with remarkable consolations, and it was not unnatural that he should allow himself to give expression to his joy and praise in view of all the mercies which God had conferred on him. This entire passage is one that is exceedingly valuable, as showing that there may be elevated joy in the midst of deep affliction, and as showing what is the reason why God visits his servants with trials. The phrase "blessed be God," is equivalent to "praised be God;" or is an expression of thanksgiving. It is the usual formula of praise (compare Ephesians 1:3); and shows his entire confidence in God, and his joy in him, and his gratitude for his mercies. it is one of innumerable instances which show that it is possible and proper to bless God in view of the trials with which he visits his people, and of the consolations which he causes to abound.

The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ - God is mentioned here in the relation of the "Father of the Lord Jesus," doubtless because it was through the Lord Jesus, and him alone, that He had imparted the consolation which he had experienced, 2 Corinthians 1:5. Paul knew no other God than the "Father of the Lord Jesus;" he knew no other source of consolation than the gospel; he knew of no way in which God imparted comfort except through his Son. That is genuine Christian consolation which acknowledges the Lord Jesus as the medium by whom it is imparted; that is proper thanksgiving to God which is offered through the Redeemer; that only is the proper acknowledgment of God which recognizes him as the "Father of the Lord Jesus."

The Father of mercies - This is a Hebrew mode of expression, where a noun performs the place of an adjective. and the phrase is synonymous nearly with "merciful Father." The expression has however somewhat more energy and spirit than the simple phrase "merciful Father." The Hebrews used the word "father" often to denote the author, or source of anything; and the idea in phraseology like this is, that mercy proceeds from God, that he is the source of it, and that it is his nature to impart mercy and compassion, as if he originated it; or was the source and fountain of it - sustaining a relation to all true consolation analogous to that which a father sustains to his offspring. God has the paternity of all true joy. It is one of his special and glorious attributes that he thus produces consolation and mercy.

And the God of all comfort - The source of all consolation. Paul delighted, as all should do, to trace all his comforts to God; and Paul, as all Christians have, had sufficient reason to regard God as the source of true consolation. There is no other real source of happiness but God; and he is able abundantly, and willing to impart consolation to his people.

Verse 4

Who comforteth us - Paul here doubtless refers primarily to himself and his fellow apostles as having been filled with comfort in their trials; to the support which the promises of God gave; to the influences of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter; and to the hopes of eternal life through the gospel of the Redeemer.

That we may be able to comfort … - Paul does not say that this was the only design which God had in comforting them that they might be able to impart comfort to others; but he does say that this is an important and main purpose. It is an object which he seeks, that his people in their afflictions should be supported and comforted; and for this purpose he fills the hearts of his ministers with consolation; gives them personal experience of the sustaining power of graco in their trials; and enables them to speak of what they have felt in regard to the consolations of the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

By the comfort … - By the same topics of consolation; by the same sources of joy which have sustained us. They would have experience; and by that experience they would be able to minister consolation to those who were in any manner afflicted. It is only by personal experience that we are able to impart consolation to others. Paul refers here undoubtedly to the consolations which are produced by the evidence of the pardon of sin, and of acceptance with God, and the hope of eternal life. These consolations abounded in him and his fellow apostles richly; and sustained by them he was able also to impart like consolation to others who were in similar circumstances of trial.

Verse 5

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us - As we are called to experience the same sufferings which Christ endured; as we are called to suffer in his cause, and in the promotion of the same object. The sufferings which they endured were in the cause of Christ and his gospel; were endured in endeavoring to advance the same object which Christ sought to promote; and were substantially of the same nature. They arose from

opposition, contempt, persecution, trial, and want, and were the same as the Lord Jesus was himself subjected to during the whole of his public life; compare Colossians 1:24. Thus, Peter says 1 Peter 4:13 of Christians that they were "partakers of Christ's sufferings."

So our consolation also aboundeth by Christ - By means of Christ, or through Christ, consolation is abundantly imparted to us. Paul regarded the Lord Jesus as the source of consolation, and felt that the comfort which he imparted, or which was imparted through him, was more than sufficient to overbalance all the trials which he endured in this cause. The comforts which he derived from Christ were those, doubtless, which arose from his presence, his supporting grace, from his love shed abroad in the heart; from the success which he gave to his gospel, and from the hope of reward which was held out to him by the Redeemer, as the result of all his sufferings. And it may he observed as an universal truth, that if we suffer in the cause of Christ, if we are persecuted, oppressed, and calumniated on his account, he will take care that cur hearts shall be filled with consolation.

Verse 6

And whether we be afflicted - If we are afflicted; or, our affliction is for this purpose. This verse is designed to show one of the reasons of the sufferings which the apostles had endured; and it is a happy specimen of Paul's skill in his epistles. He shows that all his trials were for their welfare and would turn to their benefit. He suffered that they might be comforted; he was afflicted for their advantage. This assurance would tend to conciliate their favor, and strengthen their affection for him, as it would show them that he was disinterested. We are under the deepest obligations of gratitude to one who suffers for us; and there is nothing that will bind us more tenderly to anyone than the fact that he has been subjected to great calamity and trial on our account. This is one of the reasons why the Christian feels so tenderly his obligation to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is for your consolation and salvation - It will be useful for your consolation; or it is endured in order to secure your com fort, and promote your salvation. Paul had suffered in Ephesus, and it is to this that he here particularly refers. He does not mean to say that his sufferings there were particularly for the comfort of the Corinthians; but that they had been endured in the general purpose of promoting the salvation of people, and that they, together with others, would reap the benefit of his trials. He endured them in order to spread the true religion, and they would be

benefitted by that, and be sides, he would be the better able by his trials to administer to them the true consolations of the gospel in their sufferings; and his example, and experience, and counsel, would enable them to bear up under their own trials in a proper manner.

Which is effectual … - Margin, "wrought." The Greek word ἐνεργουμένης energoumenēsdenotes here "efficacious, operating to, producing;" and the phrase denotes that their salvation would be effected, worked out, or secured by the patient endurance of such sufferings. Those sufferings were necessary; and a patient endurance of them would tend to promote their salvation. The doctrine that the patient endurance of affliction tends to promote salvation, is every where taught in the Bible; see the notes on Romans 5:3-5.

In the enduring - By your enduring; or by your patience in such sufferings. You are called to endure the same kind of sufferings; and patience in such trials will tend to promote your salvation.

Or whether we be comforted … - One design of our being comforted is, that we may be able to impart consolation to you in the times of similar trial and calamity; see 2 Corinthians 1:4. The sentiment of the whole passage is, that their eternal welfare would be promoted by the example of the apostles in their trials, and by the consolations which they would be able to impart as the result of their afflictions.

Verse 7

And our hope of you is steadfast - We have a firm and unshaken hope in regard to you; we have a confident expectation that you will be saved. We believe that you will be enabled so to bear trial as to show that you are sustained by the Christian hope; and so as to advance your own piety, and confirm your prospect of heaven.

As ye are partakers of the sufferings - It is evident from this, that the Corinthians had been subjected to trials similar to those which the apostle had endured. It is not known to what afflictions they were then subjected; but it is not improbable that they were exposed to some kind of persecution and opposition. Such trials were common in all the early churches; and they served to unite all the friends of the Redeemer in common bonds, and to make them feel that they were one. They had united sorrows; and they had united joys; and they felt they were tending to the same heaven of glory. United sorrows and united consolations tend more than anything else to

bind people together. We always have a "brotherly" feeling for one who suffers as we do; or who has the same kind of joy which we have.

Verse 8

For we would not have you ignorant - We wish you to be fully informed; see the notes, 1 Corinthians 10:1; 1 Corinthians 12:1. The object of Paul here is, to give a full explanation of the nature of his trials, to which he had referred in 2 Corinthians 1:4. He presumed that the Corinthians would feel a deep interest in him and in his trials; that they would sympathize with him, and would pray that those sufferings, and that this deliverance might be attended with a blessing 2 Corinthians 1:11; and perhaps he wished also to conciliate their kindness toward himself by mentioning more at length the nature of the trials which he had been called to endure on account of the Christian religion, of which they were reaping so material benefits.

Of our trouble which came to us in Asia - The term "Asia" is often used to denote that part of Asia Minor of which Ephesus was the capital; see the note, Acts 2:9. There has been considerable diversity of opinion as to the "troubles" to which Paul here refers. Some have supposed that he refers to the persecutions at Lystra Acts 14:6, Acts 14:19-20, from which he had been recovered as it were by miracle; but as that happened so long before this, it seems improbable that he should here refer to it. There is every mark of freshness and recentness about this event; and Paul evidently referred to some danger from which he had been lately delivered, and which made a deep impression on his mind when he wrote this Epistle. Semler supposes that he refers to the lying in wait of the Jews for him when he was about to go to Macedonia, mentioned in Acts 20:3. Most commentators have supposed that be refers to the disturbances which were made at Ephesus by Demetrius and his friends, mentioned in Acts 19:31, he incurred no such risk of his life as to justify the strong expressions mentioned in 2 Corinthians 1:9-10. They suppose, therefore, that he refers to the danger to which he was exposed in Ephesus on another occasion, when he was compelled to fight there with wild beasts; see 1 Corinthians 15:32. But nearly all these opinions may be reconciled, perhaps, by supposing that he refers to the group of calamities to which he had been exposed in Asia, and from which he had just escaped by going to Macedonia - referring perhaps more particularly to the conflict which he had been compelled to have with the wild beasts there. There was the riot excited by Demetrius 1 Corinthians

15:32), which perhaps had occurred but just before; and there were the plots of the Jews against him Acts 20:3, from which, also, he had just been delivered. By these trials, his life had been endangered, perhaps, more than once, and he had been called to look death calmly in the face, and to anticipate the probability that he might soon die. Of these trials; of all these trials, he would not have the Corinthians ignorant; but desired that they should be fully apprized of them, that they might sympathize with him, and that through their prayers they might be turned to his benefit.

That we were pressed out of measure - see Romans 7:13; Galatians 1:13; 2 Corinthians 4:17.

Above strength - Beyond our strength. More than in ourselves we were able to bear.

Insomuch that we despaired even of life - Either expecting to be destroyed by the wild beasts with which he had to contend, or to be destroyed by the people. This was one of the instances undoubtedly, to which he refers in 2 Corinthians 11:23, where he says he had been "in death oft." And this was one of the many cases in which Paul was called on to contemplate death as near. It was doubtless one cause of his fidelity, and of his great success in his work, that he was thus called to regard death as near at hand, and that, to use the somewhat unpoetical, but deeply affecting lines of Baxter, expressing a sentiment which guided all his ministry, and which was one source of his eminent success,

He preach'd as though he ne'er would preach again,
As a dying man to dying men.

Verse 9

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves - Margin, "answer." The word rendered "sentence" (ἀπόκριμα apokrima) means properly an answer, judicial response, or sentence; and is here synonymous with verdict. It means that Paul felt that he was condemned to die; that he felt as if he were under sentence of death and with no hope of acquittal; he was called to contemplate the hour of death as just before him. The words "in ourselves," mean, against ourselves; or, we expected certainly to die. This seems as if he had been condemned to die, and may either refer to some instance when the popular fury was so great that he felt it was determined he should die; or more probably to a judicial sentence that he should be cast to the wild beasts, with the certain expectation that he would be destroyed,

as was always the case with those who were subjected to the execution of such a sentence.

That we should not trust in ourselves - This is an exceedingly beautiful and important sentiment. It teaches that in the time to which Paul refers, he was in so great danger, and had so certain a prospect of death, that he could put no reliance on himself. He felt that he must die; and that human aid was vain. According to every probability he would die; and all that he could do was to cast himself on the protection of that God who had power to save him even then, if he chose, and who, if he did it, would exert power similar to that which is put forth when the dead are raised. The effect, therefore, of the near prospect of death was to lead him to put increased confidence in God. He felt that God only could save him; or that God only could sustain him if he should die. Perhaps also he means to say that the effect of this was to lead him to put increased confidence in God after his deliverance; not to trust in his own plans, or to confide in his own strength; but to feel that all that he had was entirely in the hands of God. This is a common, and a happy effect of the near prospect of death to a Christian; and it is well to contemplate the effect on such a mind as that of Paul in the near prospect of dying, and to see how instinctively then it clings to God. A true Christian in such circumstances will rush to His arms and feel that there he is safe.

But in God which raiseth the dead - Intimating that a rescue in such circumstances would be like raising the dead. It is probable that on this occasion Paul was near dying; that he had given up all hope of life - perhaps, as at Lystra Acts 14:19, he was supposed to be dead. He felt, therefore, that he was raised up by the immediate power of God, and regarded it as an exertion of the same power by which the dead are raised. Paul means to intimate that so far as depended on any power of his own, he was dead. He had no power to recover himself, and but for the gracious interposition of God he would have died.

Verse 10

Who delivered us from so great a death - From a death so terrible, and from a prospect so alarming. It is intimated here by the word which Paul uses, that the death which he apprehended was one of a character especially terrific - probably a death by wild beasts; note, 2 Corinthians 1:8. He was near to death; he had no hope of rescue; and the manner of the death which was threatened was especially frightful. Paul regarded rescue from such a

death as a kind of resurrection: and felt that he owed his life to God as if he had raised him from the dead. All deliverance from imminent peril, and from dangerous sickness, whether of ourselves or our friends, should be regarded as a kind of resurrection from the dead. God could with infinite ease have taken away our breath, and it is only by his merciful interposition that we live.

And doth deliver - Continues yet to deliver us; or preserve us - intimating perhaps that danger had continued to follow him after the signal deliverance to which he particularly refers, and that he had continued to be in similar peril of his life. Paul was daily exposed to danger; and was constantly preserved by the good providence of God. In what manner he was rescued from the peril to which he was exposed he has no where intimated. It is implied, however, that it was by a remarkable divine interposition; but whether by miracle, or by the ordinary course of providence, he no where intimates. Whatever was the mode, however, Paul regarded God as the source of the deliverance, and felt that his obligations were due to him as his kind Preserver.

In whom we trust that he will yet deliver us - That he will continue to preserve us. We hope; we are accustomed to cherish the expectation that he will continue to defend us in the perils which we shall yet encounter. Paul felt that he was still exposed to danger. Everywhere he was liable to be persecuted (compare note, Acts 20:23), and everywhere he felt that his life was in peril. Yet he had been thus far preserved in a most remarkable manner; and he felt assured that God would continue to interpose in his behalf, until his great purpose in regard to him should be fully accomplished, so that at the close of life he could look to God as his Deliverer, and feel that all along his perilous journey he had been his great Protector.

Verse 11

Ye also helping together by prayer for us - Tyndale renders this in connection with the close of the previous verse; "we trust that yet hereafter he will deliver us, by the help of your prayer for us." The word rendered "helping together," means cooperating, aiding, assisting; and the idea is, that Paul felt that his trials might be turned to good account, and give occasion for thanksgiving; and that this was to be accomplished by the aid of the prayers of his fellow Christians. He felt that the church was one, and that Christians should sympathize with one another. He evinced deep

humility and tender regard for the Corinthians when he called on them to aid him by their prayers. Nothing would be better calculated to excite their tender affection and regard than thus to call on them to sympathize with him in his trials, and to pray that those trials might result in thanksgiving throughout the churches.

That for the gift bestowed upon us - The sentence which occurs here is very perplexing in the original, and the construction is difficult. But the main idea is not difficult to he seen. The "gift" here referred to (τὸ χάρισμα to charisma) means doubtless the favor shown to him in his rescue from so imminent a peril; and he felt that this was owing to the prayers of many persons on his behalf He believed that he had been remembered in the petitions of his friends and fellow Christians, and that his deliverance was owing to their supplications.

By the means of many persons - Probably meaning that the favor referred to had been imparted by means of the prayers of many individuals who had taken a deep interest in his welfare. But it may also imply perhaps that he had been directly assisted, and had been rescued from the impending danger by the interposition of many friends who had come to his relief. The usual interpretation is, however, that it was by the prayers of many in his behalf.

Thanks may be given by many on our behalf - Many may be induced also to render thanks for my deliverance. The idea is, that as he had been delivered from great peril by the prayers of many persons, it was proper also that thanksgiving should be offered by as many in his behalf, or on account of his deliverance. "Mercies that have been obtained by prayer should be acknowledged by praise" - Doddridge. God had mercifully interposed in answer to the prayers of his people; and it was proper that his mercy should be as extensively acknowledged. Paul was desirous that God should not be forgotten: and that those who had sought his deliverance should render praise to God, perhaps intimating here that those who had obtained mercies by prayer are prone to forget their obligation to return thanks to God for his gracious and merciful interposition.

Verse 12

For our rejoicing is this - The source or cause of our rejoicing. "I have a just cause of rejoicing, and it is, that I have endeavored to live a life of simplicity and godly sincerity, and have not been actuated by the principles of worldly wisdom." The connection here is not very obvious, and it is not

quite easy to trace it. Most expositors, as Doddridge, Locke, Macknight, Bloomfield, etc., suppose that he mentions the purity of his life as a reason why he had a right to expect their prayers, as he had requested in 2 Corinthians 1:11. They would not doubt, it is supposed, that his life had been characterized by great simplicity and sincerity, and would feel, therefore, a deep interest in his welfare, and be disposed to render thanks that be had been preserved in the day of peril. But the whole context and the scope of the passage is rather to be taken into view. Paul had been exposed to death.

He had no hope of life. Then the ground of his rejoicing, and of his confidence, was that he had lived a holy life. He had not been actuated by "fleshly wisdom," but he had been animated and guided by "the grace of God." His aim had been simple, his purpose holy, and he had the testimony of his conscience that his motives had been right, and he had, therefore, no concern about the result. A good conscience, a holy life through Jesus Christ, will enable a man always to look calmly on death. What has a Christian to fear in death? Paul had kept a good conscience toward all; but he says that he had special and unique joy that he had done it toward the Corinthians. This he says, because many there had accused him of fickleness, and of disregard for their interests. He declares, therefore, that even in the prospect of death he had a consciousness of rectitude toward them, and proceeds to show 2 Corinthians 1:13-23 that the charge against him was not well founded. I regard this passage, therefore, as designed to express the fact that Paul, in view of sudden death, had a consciousness of a life of piety, and was comforted with the reflection that he had not been actuated by the "fleshly wisdom" of the world.

The testimony of our conscience - An approving conscience. It does not condemn me on the subject. Though others might accuse him, though his name might be calumniated, yet he had comfort in the approval which his own conscience gave to his course. Paul‘s conscience was enlightened, and its decisions were correct. Whatever others might charge him with he knew what had been the aim and purpose of his life; and the consciousness of upright aims, and of such plans as the "grace of God" would prompt to, sustained him. An approving conscience is of inestimable value when we are calumniated; and when we draw near to death.

That in simplicity - (ἐν ἁπλότητι en haplotētiTyndale renders this forcibly "without doubleness." The word means sincerity, candor, probity,

plain-heartedness, Christian simplicity, frankness, integrity; see 2 Corinthians 11:3. It stands opposed to double-dealings and purposes; to deceitful appearances, and crafty plans; to mere policy, and craftiness in accomplishing an object. A man under the influence of this, is straightforward, candid, open, frank; and he expects to accomplish his purpose by integrity and fair-dealing, and not by stratagem and cunning. Policy, craft, artful plans, and deep-laid schemes of deceit belong to the world; simplicity of aim and purpose are the true characteristics of a real Christian.

And godly sincerity - Greek "sincerity of God." This may be a Hebrew idiom, by which the superlative degree is indicated, when, in order to express the highest degree, they added the name of God, as in the phrases "mountains of God," signifying the highest mountains, or "cedars of God," denoting lofty cedars. Or it may mean such sincerity as God manifests and approves such as he, by his grace, would produce in the heart; such as the religion of the gospel is suited to produce. The word used here, εἰλικρινεία heilikrineiaand rendered sincerity, denotes. properly, clearness, such as is judged of or discerned in sunshine (from εἵλη heilēand κρίνω krinō), and thence pureness, integrity. It is most probable that the phrase here denotes that sincerity which God produces and approves; and the sentiment is, that pure religion, the religion of God, produces entire sincerity in the heart. Its purposes and aims are open and manifest, as if seen in the sunshine. The plans of the world are obscure, deceitful, and dark, as if in the night.

Not with fleshly wisdom - Not with the wisdom which is manifested by the people of this world; not by the principles of cunning, and mere policy, and expediency, which often characterize them. The phrase here stands opposed to simplicity and sincerity, to openness and straightforwardness. And Paul means to disclaim for himself, and for his fellow-laborers, all that carnal policy which distinguishes the mere people of the world. And if Paul deemed such policy improper for him, we should deem it improper for us; if he had no plans which he wished to advance by it, we should have none; if he would not employ it in the promotion of good plans, neither should we. It has been the curse of the church and the bane of religion; and it is to this day exerting a withering and blighting influence on the church. The moment that such plans are resorted to, it is proof that the vitality of religion is gone, and any man who feels that his purposes cannot be accomplished but by

such carnal policy, should set it down as full demonstration that his plans are wrong, and that his purpose should be abandoned.

But by the grace of God - This phrase stands opposed, evidently, to "fleshly wisdom." It means that Paul had been influenced by such sentiments and principles as would be suggested or prompted by the influence of his grace. Locke renders it, "by the favor of God directing me." God had shown him favor; God had directed him; and he had kept him from the crooked and devious ways of mere worldly policy. The idea seems to be not merely that he had pursued a correct and upright course of life, but that he was indebted for this to the mere grace and favor of God, an idea which Paul omitted no opportunity of acknowledging.

We have had our conversation - We have conducted ourselves ἀναστράφημεν anastraphēmenThe word used here means literally, "to turn up, to overturn"; then "to turn back, to return," and in the middle voice, "to turn oneself around, to turn oneself to anything, and, also, to move about in, to live in, to be conversant with, to conduct oneself." In this sense it seems to be used here; compare Hebrews 10:33; Hebrews 13:18; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 1:17. The word "conversation," we usually apply to oral discourse, but in the Scriptures, it means "conduct," and the sense of the passage is, that Paul had conducted himself in accordance with the principles of the grace of God, and had been influenced by that.

In the world - Everywhere; whereever I have been. This does not mean in the world as contradistinguished from the church, but in the world at large, or wherever he had been, as contradistinguished from the church at Corinth. It had been his common and universal practice.

And more abundantly to you-ward - Especially toward you. This was added doubtless because there had been charges against him in Corinth, that he had been crafty, cunning, deceitful, and especially that he had deceived them (see 2 Corinthians 1:17), in not visiting them as he had promised. He affirms, therefore, that in all things he had acted in the manner to which the grace of God prompted, and that his conduct, in all respects, had been that of entire simplicity and sincerity.

Verse 13

For we write none other things … - There has been much variety in the interpretation of this passage; and much difficulty felt in determining what it means. The sense seems to me to be this. Paul had just declared that he had been actuated by pure intentions and by entire sincerity, and had in

all things been influenced by the grace of God. This he had shown everywhere, but more particularly among them at Corinth. That they fully knew. In making this affirmation they had full evidence from what they had known of him in former times that such had been his course of life; and he trusted that they would be able to acknowledge the same thing to the end, and that they would never have any occasion to form a different opinion of him. It will be recollected that it is probable that some at Corinth had charged him with insincerity; and some had accused him of fickleness in having promised to come to Corinth and then changing his mind, or had charged him with never having intended to come to them.

His object in this verse is to refute such slanders, and he says, therefore, that all that he affirmed in his writings about the sincerity and simplicity of his aims, were such as they knew from their past acquaintance with him to be true; and that they knew that he was a man who would keep his promises. It is an instance of a minister who was able to appeal to the people among whom he had lived and labored in regard to the general sincerity and uprightness of his character - such an appeal as every minister ought to be able to make to refute all slanders; and such as he will be able to make successfully, if his life, like that of Paul, is such as to warrant it. Such seems to me to be the sense of the passage. Beza, however, renders it," I write no other things than what ye read, or may understand," and so Rosenmuller, Wetstein, Macknight, and some others interpret it; and they explain it as meaning, "I write nothing secretly, nothing ambiguously, but I express myself clearly, openly, plainly, so that I may be read and understood by all."

Macknight supposes that they had charged him with using ambiguous language, that he might afterward interpret it to suit his own purpose. The objection to this is, that Paul never adverts to the obscurity or perspicuity of his own language. It was his conduct that was the main subject on which he was writing, and the connection seems to demand that we understand him as affirming that they had abundant evidence that what he affirmed of his simplicity of aim, and integrity of life, was true. Than what ye read (ἀναγινώσκετε anaginōskete). This word properly means to know accurately; to distinguish; and in the New Testament usually to know by reading. Doddridge remarks, that the word is ambiguous, and may signify either to acknowledge, to know, or to read. He regards it as used here in the

sense of knowing. It is probably used here in the sense of knowing accurately, or surely; of recognizing from their former acquaintance with him. They would see that the sentiments which he now expressed were such as accorded with his character and uniform course of life. "Or acknowledge" (ἐπιγινώσκετε epiginōskete). The preposition ἐπί epiin composition here is intensive, and the word denotes to know fully; to receive full knowledge of; to know well; or to recognize. It here means that they would fully recognize, or know entirely to their satisfaction, that the sentiments which he here expressed were such as accorded with his general manner of life. From what they knew of him, they could not but admit that he had been influenced by the principles stated.

And I trust ye shall acknowledge - I trust that my conduct will be such as to convince you always that I am actuated by such principles. I trust you will never witness any departure from them - the language of a man of settled principle, and of fixed aims and honesty of life. An honest man can always use such language respecting himself.

Even to the end - To the end of life; always. "We trust that you will never have occasion to think dishonorably of us; or to reflect on any inconsistency in our behavior" - Doddridge.

Verse 14

As also ye have acknowledged us - You have had occasion to admit my singleness of aim, and purity of intention and of life by your former acquaintance with me; and you have cheerfully done it. "In part" (ἀπὸ μέρους apo merous). Tyndale renders this: "as ye have found us partly." The sense seems to be, "as part of you acknowledge;" meaning that a portion of the church was ready to concede to him the praise of consistency and uprightness, though there was a faction, or a part that denied it.

That we are your rejoicing - That we are your joy, and your boasting. That is, you admit me to be an apostle. You regard me as your teacher, and guide. You recognize my authority, and acknowledge the benefits which you have received through me.

Even as ye also are ours - Or, as you will be our rejoicing in the day when the Lord Jesus shall come to gather his people to himself. Then it will be seen that you were saved by our ministry; and then it will be an occasion of abundant and eternal thanksgiving to God that you were converted by our labors. And as you now regard it as a matter of congratulation and thanksgiving that you have such teachers as we are, so shall we regard it as

a matter of congratulation and thanksgiving - as our chief joy - that we were the instruments of saving such a people. The expression implies that there was mutual confidence, mutual love, and mutual cause of rejoicing. It is well when ministers and people have such confidence in each other, and have occasion to regard their connection as a mutual cause of rejoicing and of καύχημα kauchēmaor boasting.

Verse 15

And in his confidence - In this confidence of my integrity, and that you had this favorable opinion of me, and appreciated the principles of my conduct. I did not doubt that you would receive me kindly, and would give me again the tokens of your affection and regard. In this Paul shows that however some of them might regard him, yet that he had no doubt that the majority of the church there would receive him kindly.

I was minded - I willed (ἐβουλόμην eboulomēn); it was my intention.

To come unto you before - Tyndale renders this: "the other time." Paul refers doubtless to the time when he wrote his former Epistle, and when it was his serious purpose, as it was his earnest wish, to visit them again; see 1 Corinthians 16:5. In this purpose he had been disappointed, and he now proceeds to state the reasons why he had not visited them as he had purposed, and to show that it did not arise from any fickleness of mind. His purpose had been at first to pass through Corinth on his way to Macedonia, and to remain some time with them; see 2 Corinthians 1:16. compare 1 Corinthians 16:5-6. This purpose he had now changed; and instead of passing through Corinth on his way to Macedonia, he had gone to Macedonia by the way of Troas 2 Corinthians 2:12; and the Corinthians having, as it would seem, become acquainted with this fact, had charged him with insincerity in the promise, or fickleness in regard to his plans. Probably it had been said by some of his enemies that he had never intended to visit them.

That ye might have a second benefit - Margin, grace. The word used here χάρις charisis that which is commonly rendered grace, and means probably favor, kindness, good-will, beneficence; and especially favor to the undeserving. Here it is evidently used in the sense of gratification, or pleasure. And the idea is, that they had been formerly gratified and benefitted by his residence among them; he had been the means of conferring important favors on them, and he was desirous of being again with them, in order to gratify them by his presence, and that he might be the

means of imparting to them other favors. Paul presumed that his presence with them would be to them a source of pleasure, and that his coming would do them good. It is the language of a man who felt assured that he enjoyed, after all, the confidence of the mass of the church there, and that they would regard his being with them as a favor. He had been with them formerly almost two years. His residence there had been pleasant to them and to him; and had been the occasion of important benefits to them. He did not doubt that it would be so again. Tyndale renders this: "that ye might have had a double pleasure." It may be remarked here that several mss. instead of χάριν charin"grace," read χαράν , "joy."

Verse 16

And to pass by you - Through δι᾽ di'you; that is, through your city, or province; or to take them, as we say, in his way. His design was to pass through Corinth and Achaia on his journey. This was not the direct way from Ephesus to Macedonia. An inspection of a map will show at one view that the direct way was that which he concluded finally to take - that by Troas. Yet he had designed to go out of his way in order to make them a visit; and intended also, perhaps, to make them also a longer visit on his return. The former part of the plan he had been induced to abandon.

Into Macedonia - A part of Greece having Thrace on the north, Thessaly south, Epirus west and the AEgean Sea east; see the note, Acts 16:9.

And of you to be brought on my way - By you; see the note, 1 Corinthians 16:6.

Toward Judea - His object in going to Judea was to convey the collection for the poor saints which he had been at so much pains to collect throughout the churches of the Gentiles; see the notes, Romans 15:25-26; compare 1 Corinthians 16:3-4.

Verse 17

When I therefore was thus minded - When I formed this purpose; when I willed this, and expressed this intention.

Did I use lightness? - The word ἐλαφρια elaphria(from ἐλαφρός elaphros) means properly lightness in weight. Here it is used in reference to the mind; and in a sense similar to our word levity, as denoting lightness of temper or conduct; inconstancy, changeableness, or fickleness. This charge had been probably made that he had made the promise without any due consideration, or without any real purpose of performing, it; or that he had

made it in a trifling and thoughtless manner. By the interrogative form here, he sharply denies that it was a purpose formed in a light and trifling manner.

Do I purpose according to the flesh - In such a manner, as may suit my own convenience and carnal interest. Do I form plans adapted only to promote my own ease and gratification, and to be abandoned when they are attended with inconvenience? The phrase "according to the flesh" here seems to mean "in such a way as to promote my own ease and gratification; in a manner such as the people of the world form; such as would be formed under the influence of earthly passions and desires, and to be forsaken when those plans would interfere with such gratifications." Paul denies in a positive manner that he formed such plans; and they should have known enough of his manner of life to be assured that that was not the nature of the schemes which he had devised? Probably no man ever lived who formed his plans of life less for the gratification of the flesh than Paul.

That with me there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay? - There has been a great variety in the interpretation of this passage; see Bloomfield, Critical Digest in loco. The meaning seems to be, "that there should be such inconstancy and uncertainty in my counsels and actions, that no one could depend on me, or know what they had to expect from me." Bloomfield supposes that the phrase is a proverbial one, and denotes a headstrong, self-willed spirit which will either do things, or not do them as pleases, without giving any reasons. He supposes that the repetition of the words "yea and nay" is designed to denote positiveness of assertion - such positiveness as is commonly shown by such persons, as in the phrases, "what I have written I have written," "what I have done I have done." It seems more probable, however, that the phrase is designed to denote the ready compliance which an inconstant and unsettled man is accustomed to make with the wishes of others; his expressing a ready assent to what they propose; falling in with their views; readily making promises; and instantly, through some whim, or caprice, or wish of others, saying "yea, nay," to the same thing; that is, changing his mind, and altering his purpose without any good reason, or in accordance with any fixed principle or settled rule of action. Paul says that this was not his character. He did not affirm a thing at one time and deny it at another; he did not promise to do a thing one moment and refuse to do it the next.

Verse 18

But as God is true - Tyndale renders this in accordance more literally with the Greek, "God is faithful; for our preaching unto you was not yea and nay." The phrase seems to have the form of an oath, or to be a solemn appeal to God as a Witness, and to be equivalent to the expression "the Lord liveth," or "as the Lord liveth." The idea is," God is faithful and true. He never deceives; never promises that which he does not perform. So true is it that I am not fickle and changing in my purposes." This idea of the faithfulness of God is the argument which Paul urges why he felt himself bound to be faithful also. That faithful God he regarded as a witness, and to that God he could appeal on the occasion.

Our word - Margin, "preaching" (ὁ λόγος ho logosThis may refer either to his preaching, to his promises of visiting them, or his declarations to them in general on any subject. The particular subject under discussion was the promise which he had made to visit them. But he here seems to make his affirmation general, and to say universally of his promises, and his teaching, and of all his communications to them, whether orally or in writing, that they were not characterized by inconstancy and changeableness. It was not his character to be fickle, unsettled, and vacillating.

Verse 19

For the Son of God - In this verse, and the following, Paul states that he felt himself bound to maintain the strictest veracity for two reasons; the one, that Jesus Christ always evinced the strictest veracity 2 Corinthians 1:19; the other, God was always true to all the promises that He made 2 Corinthians 1:20; and as he felt himself to be the servant of the Saviour and of God, he was bound by the most sacred obligations also to maintain a character irreproachable in regard to veracity on the meaning of the phrase "Son of God," see the note, Romans 1:4.

Jesus Christ - It is agreed, says Bloomfield, by the best commentators, ancient and modern, that by Jesus Christ is here meant his doctrine. The sense is, that the preaching respecting Jesus Christ, did not represent him as fickle, and changeable; as unsettled, and as unfaithful; but as true, consistent, and faithful. As that had been the regular and constant representation of Paul and his fellow-laborers in regard to the Master whom they served, it was to be inferred that they felt themselves bound sacredly to observe the strictest constancy and veracity.

By us … - Silvanus, mentioned here, is the same person who in the Acts of the Apostles is called Silas. He was with Paul at Philippi, and was imprisoned there with him Acts 18:5. Paul was so much attached to him, and had so much confidence in him, that he joined his name with his own in several of his epistles; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1.

Was not yea and nay - Our representation of him was not that he was fickle and changeable.

But in him was yea - Was not one thing at one time, and another at another. He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. All that he says is true; all the promises that he makes are firm; all his declarations are faithful. Paul may refer to the fact that the Lord Jesus when on earth was eminently characterized by truth. Nothing was more striking than his veracity. He called himself "the truth," as being eminently true in all his declarations. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life;" John 14:6; compare Revelation 3:7. And thus Revelation 3:14 he is called "the faithful and true witness." In all his life he was eminently distinguished for that. His declarations were simple truth; his narratives were simple, unvarnished, uncolored, unexaggerated statements of what actually occurred. He never disguised the truth; never prevaricated; never had any mental reservation; never deceived; never used any word, or threw in any circumstance, that was suited to lead the mind astray. He himself said that this was the great object which he had in view in coming into the world. "To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth;" John 18:37. As Jesus Christ was thus distinguished for simple truth, Paul felt that he was under sacred obligations to imitate him, and always to evince the same inviolable fidelity. The most deeply felt obligation on earth is that which the Christian feels to imitate the Redeemer.

Verse 20

For all the promises of God in him - All the promises which God has made through him. This is another reason why Paul felt himself bound to maintain a character of the strictest veracity. The reason was, that God always evinced that; and that since none of His promises failed, he felt himself sacredly bound to imitate Him, and to adhere to all His. The promises of God which are made through Christ, relate to the pardon of sin to the penitent; the sanctification of his people: support in temptation and trial; guidance in perplexity; peace in death, and eternal glory beyond the

grave. All of these are made through a Redeemer, and none of these shall fail.

Are yea - Shall all be certainly fulfilled. There shall be no vacillation on the part of God; no fickleness; no abandoning of his gracious intention.

And in him amen - In Revelation 3:14, the Lord Jesus is called the "Amen." The word means true, faithful, certain. And the expression here means that all the promises which are made to people through a Redeemer shall be certainly fulfilled. They are promises which are confirmed and established, and which shall by no means fail.

Unto the glory of God by us - Either by us ministers and apostles; or by us who are Christians. The latter, I think, is the meaning; and Paul means to say, that the fulfillment of all the promises which God has made to His people shall result in His glory and praise as a God of condescension and veracity. The fact that He has made such promises is an act that tends to His own glory - since it was of His mere grace that they were made; and the fulfillment of these promises in and through the church, shall also tend to produce elevated views of His fidelity and goodness.

Verse 21

Now he which stablisheth us - He who makes us firm (ὁ βέβαιῶν ἡμᾶς ho bebaiōn hēmas); that is, he who has confirmed us in the hopes of the gospel, and who gives us grace to be faithful, and firm in our promises. The object of this is to trace all to God, and to prevent the appearance of self-confidence, or of boasting. Paul had dwelt at length on his own fidelity and veracity. He had taken pains to prove that he was not inconstant and fickle-minded. Here he says, that this was not to be traced to himself, or to any native goodness, but was all to be traced to God. It was God who had given them all confident hope in Christ; and it was God who had given him grace to adhere to His promises, and to maintain a character for veracity. The first "us," in this verse refers probably to Paul himself; the second includes also the Corinthians, as being also anointed and sealed.

And hath anointed us - Us who are Christians. It was customary to anoint kings, prophets, and priests on their entering on their office as a part of the ceremony of inauguration. The word "anoint" is applied to a priest, Exodus 28:41; Exodus 40:15; to a prophet, 1 Kings 19:16; Isaiah 61:1; to a king, 1 Samuel 10:1; 1 Samuel 15:1; 2 Samuel 2:4; 1 Kings 1:34. It is applied often to the Messiah as being set apart, or consecrated to his office as prophet, priest, and king - that is, as appointed by God to the highest

office ever held in the world. It is applied also to Christians as being consecrated, or set apart to the service of God by the Holy Spirit - a use of the word which is derived from the sense of consecrating, or setting apart to the service of God. Thus, in 1 John 2:20, it is said, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One and know all things." So in 1 John 2:27, "But the anointing which ye have received abideth in you," etc. The anointing which was used in the consecration of prophets, priests, and kings, seems to have been designed to be emblematic of the influences of the Holy Spirit, who is often represented as poured upon those who are under his influence Proverbs 1:23; Isaiah 43:4; Joel 2:28-29; Zechariah 12:10; Acts 10:45, in the same way as water or oil is poured out. And as Christians are everywhere represented as being under the influence of the Holy Spirit, as being those on whom the Holy Spirit is poured, they are represented as "anointed." They are in this manner solemnly set apart, and consecrated to the service of God.

Is God - God has done it. All is to be traced to him. It is not by any native goodness which we have, or any inclination which we have by nature to his service. This is one of the instances which abound so much in the writings of Paul, where he delights to trace all good influences to God.

Verse 22

Who hath also sealed us - The word used here (from σφραγίζω sphragizō) means to seal up; to close and make fast with a seal, or signet; as, e. g., books, letters, etc. that they may not be read. It is also used in the sense of setting a mark on anything, or a seal, to denote that it is genuine, authentic, confirmed, or approved, as when a deed, compact, or agreement is sealed. it is thus made sure; and is confirmed or established. Hence, it is applied to persons, as denoting that they are approved, as in Revelation 7:3; "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads;" compare Ezekiel 9:4; see the note, John 6:27, were it is said of the Saviour, "for him hath God the Father sealed;" compare John 3:33. In a similar manner Christians are said to be sealed; to be sealed by the Holy Spirit Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 4:30; that is, the Holy Spirit is given to them to confirm them as belonging to God. He grants them His Spirit. He renews and sanctifies them. He produces in their hearts those feelings, hopes, and desires which are an evidence that they are approved by God; that they are regarded as his adopted children; that their hope is genuine, and that their redemption and salvation are sure - in the

same way as a seal makes a will or an agreement sure. God grants to them His Holy Spirit as the certain pledge that they are His, and shall be approved and saved in the last day. In this there is nothing miraculous, or in the nature of direct revelation. It consists of the ordinary operations of the Spirit on the heart, producing repentance, faith, hope, joy, conformity to God, the love of prayer and praise, and the Christian virtues generally; and these things are the evidences that the Holy Spirit has renewed the heart, and that the Christian is sealed for the day of redemption.

And given the earnest of the Spirit - The word used here (ἀῤῥαβών arrabōnfrom the Hebrew צרבון ʿarabownmeans properly a pledge given to ratify a contract; a part of the price, or purchase money; a first payment; that which confirms the bargain, and which is regarded as a pledge that all the price will be paid. The word occurs in the Septuagint and Hebrew, in Genesis 38:17-18; Genesis 38:20. In the New Testament it occurs only in this place, and in 2 Corinthians 5:5, and Ephesians 1:14, in each place in the same connection as applied to the Holy Spirit, and his influences on the heart. It refers to those influences as a pledge of the future glories which await Christians in heaven. In regard to the "earnest," or the part of a price which was paid in a contract, it may be remarked:

(1)That it was of the same nature as the full price, being regarded as a part of it;

(2)It was regarded as a pledge or assurance that the full price would be paid. So the "earnest of the Spirit," denotes that God gives to his people the influences of his Spirit: his operation on the heart as a part or pledge that all the blessings of the covenant of redemption shall be given to them.

And it implies:

(1) That the comforts of the Christian here are of the same nature as they will be in heaven. Heaven will consist of like comforts; of love, and peace, and joy, and purity begun here, and simply expanded there to complete and eternal perfection. The joys of heaven differ only in degree, not in kind, from those of the Christian on earth. That which is begun here is perfected there; and the feelings and views which the Christian has here, if expanded and carried out, would constitute heaven.

(2) these comforts, these influences of the Spirit, are a pledge of heaven. They are the security which God gives us that we shall be saved. If we are brought under the renewing influences of the Spirit here; if we are made

meek, and humble, and prayerful by his agency; if we are made to partake of the joys which result from pardoned sin; if we are filled with the hope of heaven, it is all produced by the Holy Spirit, and is a pledge, or earnest of our future inheritance; as the first sheaves of a harvest are a pledge of a harvest; or the first payment under a contract a pledge that all will be payed. God thus gives to his people the assurance that they shall be saved; and by this "pledge" makes their title to eternal life sure.

Verse 23

Moreover, I call God for a record upon my soul - It is well remarked by Rosenmuller, that the second chapter should have commenced here, since there is here a transition in the subject more distinct than where the second chapter is actually made to begin. Here Tyndale commences the second chapter. This verse, with the subsequent statements, is designed to show them the true reason why he had changed his purpose, and had not visited them according to his first proposal. And that reason was not that he was fickle and inconstant; but it was that he apprehended that if he should go to them in their irregular and disorderly state, he would be under a necessity of resorting to harsh measures, and to a severity of discipline that would be alike painful to them and to him. Dr. Paley has shown with great plausibility, if not with moral certainty, that Paul's change of purpose about visiting them was made before he wrote his First Epistle; that he had at first resolved to visit them, but that on subsequent reflection, he thought it would be better to try the effect of a faithful letter to them, admonishing them of their errors, and entreating them to exercise proper discipline themselves on the principal offender; that with this feeling he wrote his First Epistle, in which he does not state to them as yet his change of purpose, or the reason of it; but that now after he had written that letter, and after it had had all the effect which he desired, he states the true reason why he had not visited them.

It was now proper to do it; and that reason was, that he desired to spare them the severity of discipline, and had resorted to the more mild and affectionate measure of sending them a letter, and thus not making it necessary personally to administer discipline; see Paley's Horae Paulinae, on 2Corinthians, Numbers 4 and 5. The phrase, "I call God for a record upon my soul," is in the Greek, "I call God for a witness against my soul." It is a solemn oath, or appeal to God; and implies, that if he did not in that

case declare the truth, he desired that God would be a witness against him, and would punish him accordingly. The reason why he made this solemn appeal to God was, the importance of his vindicating his own character before the church, from the charges which had been brought against him.

That to spare you - To avoid the necessity of inflicting punishment on you; of exercising severe and painful discipline. If he went among them in the state of irregularity and disorder which prevailed there, he would feel it to be necessary to exert his authority as an apostle, and remove at once the offending members from the church. He expected to avoid the necessity of these painful acts of discipline, by sending to them a faithful and affectionate epistle, and thus inducing them to reform, and to avoid the necessity of a resort to that which would have been so trying to him and to them. It was not, then, a disregard for them, or a lack of attachment to them, which had led him to change his purpose, but it was the result of tender affection. This cause of the change of his propose, of course, he would not make known to them in his First Epistle, but now that that letter had accomplished all he had desired, it was proper that they should be apprized of the reason why he had resorted to this instead of visiting them personally.

Verse 24

Not for that we have dominion … - The sense of this passage I take to be this: "The course which we have pursued has been chosen not because we wish to lord it over your faith, to control your belief, but because we desired to promote your happiness. Had the former been our object, had we wished to set up a lordship or dominion over you, we should have come to you with our apostolical authority, and in the severity of apostolic discipline. We had power to command obedience, and to control your faith. But we chose not to do it. Our object was to promote your highest happiness. We, therefore, chose the mildest and gentlest manner possible; we did not exercise authority in discipline, we sent an affectionate and tender letter." While the apostles had the right to prescribe the articles of belief, and to propound the doctrines of God, yet they would not do even that in such a manner as to seem to "lord it over God's heritage" (οὐκ κυριευομεν); they did not set up absolute authority, or prescribe the things to be believed in a lordly and imperative manner; nor would they make use of the severity of power to enforce what they taught. They appealed to reason; they employed persuasion; they made use of light and love to accomplish their desires.

Are helpers of your joy - This is our main object, to promote your joy. This object we have pursued in our plans, and in order to secure this. we forbore to come to you, when, if we did come at that time, we should have given occasion perhaps to the charge that we sought to lord it over your faith.

For by faith ye stand - see the note, 1 Corinthians 15:1. This seems to be a kind of proverbial expression, stating a general truth, that it was by faith that Christians were to be established or confirmed. The connection here requires us to understand this as a reason why he would not attempt to lord it over their faith; or to exercise dominion over them. That reason was, that thus far they had stood firm, in the main, in the faith 1 Corinthians 15:1; they had adhered to the truths of the gospel, and in a special manner now, in yielding obedience to the commands and entreaties of Paul in the First Epistle, they had showed that they were in the faith, and firm in faith. It was not necessary or proper, therefore, for him to attempt to exercise lordship over their belief, but all that was needful was to help forward their joy, for they were firm in the faith. We may observe:

(1) That it is a part of the duty of ministers to help forward the joy of Christians.

(2) this should be the object even in administering discipline and reproof.

(3) if even Paul would not attempt to lord it over the faith of Christians, to establish a domination over their belief, how absurd and wicked is it for uninspired ministers now, for individual ministers, for conferences, conventions, presbyteries, synods, councils, or for the pope, to attempt to establish a spiritual dominion in controlling the faith of people. The great evils in the church have arisen from their attempting to do what Paul would not do; from attempting to establish a dominion which Paul never sought, and which Paul would have abhorred. Faith must be free, and religion must be free, or they cannot exist at all.

Remarks

In view of this chapter we may remark:

1. God is the only true and real Source of comfort in times of trial, 2 Corinthians 1:3. It is from Him that all real consolation must come, and he only can meet and sustain the soul when it is borne down with calamity. All

persons are subjected to trial, and at some periods of their lives, to severe trial. Sickness is a trial; the death of a friend is a trial; the loss of property or health, disappointment, and reproach, and slander, and poverty, and want, are trials to which we are all more or less exposed. In these trials, it is natural to look to some source of consolation; some way in which they may be borne. Some seek consolation in philosophy, and endeavor to blunt their feelings and destroy their sensibilities, as the ancient stoics did. But "to destroy sensibility is not to produce comfort" - Dr. Mason. Some plunge deep into pleasures, and endeavor to drown their sorrows in the intoxicating draught; but this is not to produce comfort to the soul, even were it possible in such pleasures to forget their sorrows. Such were the ancient Epicureans. Some seek consolation in their surviving friends, and look to them to comfort and sustain the sinking heart. But the arm of an earthly friend is feeble, when God lays His hand upon us. It is only the hand that smites that can heal; only the God that sends the affliction, that can bind up the broken spirit. He is the "Father of mercies," and He is "the God of all consolation;" and in affliction there is no true comfort except in Him.

2. This consolation in God is derived from many sources:

(a)He is the "Father of mercies," and we may be assured, therefore, that He does nothing inconsistent with mercy.

(b)We may be assured that He is right - always right, and that He does nothing but right. We may not be able to see the reason of His actions, but we may have the assurance that it is all right, and will yet be seen to be right.

(c)There is comfort in the fact, that our afflictions are ordered by an intelligent Being, by One who is all-wise, and all-knowing.

They are not the result of blind chance; but they are ordered by One who is wise to know what ought to be done; and who is so fair that he will do nothing wrong. There could be no consolation in the feeling that mere chance directed our trials; nor can there be consolation except in the feeling that a being of intelligence and goodness directs and orders all. The true comfort, therefore, is to be found in religion, not in atheism and philosophy.

3. It is possible to bless God in the midst of trials, and as the result of trial. It is possible so clearly to see His hand, and to be so fully satisfied with His wisdom and goodness of His dealings even when we are severely

afflicted, as to see that He is worthy of our highest confidence and most exalted praise, 2 Corinthians 1:3. God may be seen, then, to be the "Father of mercies;" and He may impart, even then, a consolation which we never experience in the days of prosperity. Some of the purest and most elevated joys known upon earth, are experienced in the very midst of outward calamities, and the most sincere and elevated thanksgivings which are offered to God, are often those which are the result of sanctified afflictions. It is when we are brought out from such trials, where we have experienced the rich consolations and the sustaining power of the gospel, that we are most disposed to say with Paul, "Blessed be God;" and can most clearly see that he is the "Father of mercies." No Christian will ever have occasion to regret the trials through which God has brought him. I never knew a sincere Christian who was not finally benefitted by trials.

4. Christian joy is not apathy, it is comfort; 2 Corinthians 1:4-5. It is not insensibility to suffering; it is not stoical indifference. The Christian feels his sufferings as keenly as others. The Lord Jesus was as sensitive to suffering as any one of the human family ever was; he was as susceptible of emotion from reproach, contempt, and scorn, and he as keenly felt the pain of the scourge, the nails, and the cross, as any one could. But there is positive joy, there is true and solid comfort. There is substantial, pure, and elevated happiness. Religion does not blunt the feelings, or destroy the sensibility, but it brings in consolations which enable us to bear our pains, and to endure persecution without complaining. In this, religion differs from all systems of philosophy. The one attempts to blunt and destroy our sensibilities to suffering; the other, while it makes us more delicate and tender in our feelings, gives consolation adapted to that delicate sensibility, and suited to sustain the soul, notwithstanding the acuteness of its sufferings.

5. Ministers of the gospel may expect to be especially tried and afflicted; 2 Corinthians 1:5. So it was with Paul and his fellow-apostles; and so it has been since. They are the special objects of the hatred of sinners, as they stand in the way of the sinful pursuits and pleasures of the world; and they are, like their Master, especially hated by the enemy of souls. Besides, they are, by their office, required to minister consolation to others who are afflicted; and it is so ordered in the providence of God, that they are

subjected to special trials often, in order that they may be able to impart special consolations. They are to be the examples and the guides of the church of God; and God takes care that they shall be permitted to show by their example, as well as by their preaching, the supporting power of the gospel in times of trial.

6. If we suffer much in the cause of the Redeemer, we may also expect much consolation; 2 Corinthians 1:5. Christ will take care that our hearts shall be filled with joy and peace. As our trials in his cause are, so shall our consolations be. If we suffer much, we shall enjoy much; if we are persecuted much, we shall have much support; if our names are cast out among people for his sake, we shall have increasing evidence that they are written in his Book of Life. There are things in the Christian religion which can be learned only in the furnace of affliction; and he who has never been afflicted on account of his attachment to Christ, is a stranger yet to much, very much of the fullness and beauty of that system of religion which has been appointed by the Redeemer, and to much, very much, of the beauty and power of the promises of the Bible. No one will ever understand all the Bible who is not favored with much persecution and many trials.

7. We should be willing to suffer; 2 Corinthians 1:3-5. If we are willing to be happy, we should also be willing to suffer. If we desire to be happy in religion, we should be willing to suffer. If we expect to be happy, we should also be willing to endure much. Trials suit us for enjoyment here, as well as for heaven hereafter.

8. One great design of the consolation which is imparted to Christians in the time of affliction is, that they may be able to impart consolation also to others; 2 Corinthians 1:4, 2 Corinthians 1:6-7. God designs that we should thus be mutual aids. And He comforts a minister in his trials, that he may, by his own experience, be able to minister consolation to the people of his charge he comforts a parent, that he may administer consolation to his children; a friend, that he may comfort a friend. He who attempts to administer consolation should be able to speak from experience: and God, therefore, afflicts and comforts all His people, that they may know how to administer consolation to those with whom they are connected.

9. If we have experienced special consolations ourselves in times of trial, we are under obligations to seek out and comfort others who are afflicted. So Paul felt. We should feel that God has qualified us for this work; and having qualified us for it, that He calls on us to do it. The consolation which God gives in affliction is a rich treasure which we are bound to impart to others; the experience which we have of the true sources of consolation is an inestimable talent which we are to use for the promotion of his glory. No man has a talent for doing more direct good than he who can go to the afflicted, and bear testimony, from his own experience, to the goodness of God. And every one who can testify that God is good, and is able to support the soul in times of trial - and what Christian cannot do it who has ever been afflicted? - should regard himself as favored with a special talent for doing good, and should rejoice in the privilege of using it to the glory of God. For there is no talent more honorable than that of being able to promote the divine glory, to comfort the afflicted, or to be able from personal experience, to testify that God is good - always good. "The power of doing good, always implies an obligation to do it" - Cotton Mather.

10. In this chapter, we have a case of a near contemplation of death. 2 Corinthians 1:8-9. Paul expected soon to die. He had the sentence of death in himself. He saw no human probability of escape. He was called, therefore, calmly to look death in the face, and to contemplate it as an event certain and near. Such a condition is deeply interesting, it is the important crisis of life. And yet it is an event which all must soon contemplate. We all, in a short period, each one for himself, must look upon death as certain. and as near to us; as an event in which we are personally interested, and from which we cannot escape. Much as we may turn away from it in health, and unanxious as we may be then in regard to it, yet by no possibility can we long avert our minds from the subject. It is interesting, then, to inquire how Paul felt when he looked at death; how we should feel; and how we actually shall feel when we come to die.

11. A contemplation of death as near and certain, is suited to lead us to trust in God. This was the effect in the case of Paul; 2 Corinthians 1:9. He had learned in health to put his trust in Him, and now, when the trial was apparently near, he had no where else to go, and he confided in him alone.

He felt that if he was rescued, it could be only by the interposition of God; and that there was none but God who could sustain him if he should die. And what event can there be that is so well fitted to lead us to trust in God as death? And where else can we go in view of that dark hour? For:

(a) We know not what death is. We have not tried it; nor do we know what grace may be necessary for us in those unknown pangs and sufferings; in that deep darkness, and that sad gloom.

(b) Our friends cannot help us then. They will, they must, then, give us the parting hand; and as we enter the shades of the dark valley, they must bid us farewell. The skill of the physician will fall then. Our worldly friends will forsake us when we come to die. They do not love to be in the room of death, and they can give us no consolation if they are there. Our pious friends cannot attend us far in the dark valley. They may pray, and commend us to God, but even they must leave us to die alone. Who but God can attend us? Who but He can support us then?

(c) Only God knows what is beyond death. How do we know the way to His bar, to His presence, to His heaven? How can we direct our own steps in that dark and unknown world? None but God our Saviour can guide us there; no one else can conduct us to His abode.

(d) None but God can sustain us in the pain, the anguish, the feebleness, the sinking of the powers of body and of mind in that distressing hour. He can uphold us then; and it is an unspeakable privilege to be permitted then, "when heart and flesh faint," to say of him, "God is the strength of" our "heart, and" our "portion forever;" Psalm 73:26.

12. We should regard a restoration from dangerous sickness, and from imminent peril of death as a kind of resurrection. So Paul regarded it; 2 Corinthians 1:9. We should remember how easy it would have been for God to have removed us; how rapidly we were tending to the grave; how certainly we should have descended there but for his interposition. We should feel, therefore, that we owe our lives to Him as really and entirely as though we had been raised up from the dead; and that the same kind of power and goodness have been evinced as would have been had God given

us life anew. Life is God‘s gift; and every instance of recovery from peril, or from dangerous illness, is as really an interposition of his mercy as though we had been raised up from the dead.

13. We should, in like manner, regard a restoration of our friends from dangerous sickness, or peril of any kind, as a species of resurrection from the dead. When a parent, a husband, a wife or a child has been dangerously ill, Or exposed to some imminent danger, and has been recovered, we cannot but feel that the recovery is entirely owing to the interposition of God. With infinite ease He could have consigned them to the grave; and had He not mercifully interposed, they would have died. As they were originally his gift to us, so we should regard each interposition of that kind as new gift, and receive the recovered and restored friend as a fresh gift from His hand,

14. We should feel that lives thus preserved and thus recovered from danger, belong to God. He has preserved them. In the most absolute sense they belong to Him, and to Him they should be consecrated. So Paul felt; and his whole life shows how entirely he regarded himself as bound to devote a life often preserved in the midst of peril, to the service of his kind Benefactor. There is no claim more absolute than that which God has on those whom He has preserved from dangerous situations, or whom He has raised up from the borders of the grave. All the strength which He has imparted, all the talent, learning, skill, which He has thus preserved, should be regarded in the most absolute sense as His, and should be honestly and entirely consecrated to Him. But for Him we should have died; and He has a right to our services and obedience which is entire, and which should be felt to be perpetual. And it may be added, that the right is not less clear and strong to the service of those whom He keeps without their being exposed to such peril, or raised up from such beds of sickness. Only a very few of the interventions of God on our behalf are seen by us. A small part of the perils to which we may be really exposed are seen. And it is no less owing to His preserving care that we are kept in health, and strength, and in the enjoyment of reason, than it is that we are raised up from dangerous sickness. Man is as much bound to devote himself to God for preserving him from sickness and danger as He is for raising him up when he has been sick, and defending him in danger.

15. We have here an instance of the principle on which Paul acted, 2 Corinthians 1:12. In his aims, and in the manner of accomplishing his aims, He was guided only by the principles of simplicity and sincerity, and by the grace of God. He had no sinister and worldly purpose; he had no crooked and subtle policy by which to accomplish his purposes. He sought simply the glory of God and the salvation of man; and he sought this in a manner plain, direct, honest, and straightforward. He admitted none of the principles of worldly policy which have been so often acted on since in the church; he knew nothing of "pious frauds," which have so often disgraced the professed friends of the Redeemer; he admitted no form of deception and delusion, even for the promotion of objects which were great, and good, and desirable. He knew that all that ought to be done could be accomplished by straightforward and simple-hearted purposes; and that a cause which depended on the carnal and crooked policy of the world was a bad cause; and that such policy would ultimately ruin the best of causes. How happy would it have been if these views had always prevailed in the church!

16. We see the value of a good conscience, 2 Corinthians 1:12. Paul had the testimony of an enlightened conscience to the correctness and uprightness of his course of life everywhere. He felt assured that his aims had been right; and that he had endeavored in all simplicity and sincerity to pursue a course of life which such a conscience would approve. Such a testimony, such an approving conscience is of inestimable value. It is worth more than gold, and crowns, and all that the earth can give. When like Paul we are exposed to peril, or trial, or calamity, it matters little, if we have an approving conscience. When like him we are persecuted, it matters little if we have the testimony of our own minds that we have pursued an upright and an honest course of life. When like him we look death in the face, and feel that we "have the sentence of death in ourselves," of what inestimable value then will be an approving conscience! How unspeakable the consolation if we can look back then on a life spent in conscious integrity; a life spent in endeavoring to promote the glory of God and the salvation of the world!

17. Every Christian should feel himself sacredly bound to maintain a character of veracity, 2 Corinthians 1:19-20. Christ was always true to his

word; and all that God has promised shall be certainly fulfilled. And as a Christian is a professed follower of him who was “the Amen and the true Witness,” he should feel himself bound by the most sacred obligations to adhere to all his promises, and to fulfill all His word. No man can do any good who is not a man of truth; and in no way can Christians more dishonor their profession, and injure the cause of the Redeemer, than by a lack of character for unimpeachable veracity. If they make promises which are never fulfilled; if they state that as true which is not true; if they overload their narratives with circumstances which had no existence; if they deceive, and defraud others; and if they are so loose in their statements that no one believes them, it is impossible for them to do good in their Christian profession. Every Christian should have - as he easily may have - such a character for veracity that every person shall put implicit confidence in all His promises and statements; so implicit that they shall deem his word as good as an oath; and His promise as certain as though it were secured by notes and bonds in the most solemn manner. The word of a Christian should need no strengthening by oaths and bonds; it should be such that it could really not be strengthened by anything that notes and bonds could add to it.

18. All Christians should regard themselves as consecrated to God, 2 Corinthians 1:21. They have been anointed, or set apart to his service. They should feel that they are as really set apart to His service as the ancient prophets, priests, and kings were to their appropriate offices by the ceremony of anointing. They belong to God, and are under every sacred and solemn obligation to live to Him, and Him alone.

19. It is an inestimable privilege to be a Christian, 2 Corinthians 1:21-22. It is regarded as a privilege to be an heir to an estate, and to have an assurance that it will be ours. But the Christian has an “earnest,” a pledge that heaven is his. He is anointed by God; he is sealed for heaven. Heaven is his home; and God is giving to him daily evidence in his own experience that he will soon be admitted to its pure and blissful abodes.

20. The joys of the Christian on earth are of the same nature as the joys of heaven. These comforts are an “earnest‘ of the future inheritance; a part of that which the Christian is to enjoy forever. His joys on earth are “heaven begun;” and all that is needful to constitute heaven is that these joys should

he expanded and perpetuated. There will be no other heaven than that which would be constituted by the expanded joys of a Christian.

21. No one is a Christian, no one is suited for heaven, who has not such principles and joys as being fully expanded and developed would constitute heaven. The joys of heaven are not to be created for us as some new thing; they are not to be such as we have had no foretaste, no conception of; but they are to be such as will be produced of necessity by removing imperfection from the joys and feelings of the believer, and carrying them out without alloy, and without interruption, and without end. The man, therefore, who has such a character, that if fairly developed would not constitute the joys of heaven, is not a Christian. He has no evidence that he has been born again; and all his joys are fancied and delusive.

22. Christians should be careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit; compare Ephesians 4:30. It is by that Spirit that they are "anointed" and "sealed," and it is by his influences that they have the "earnest" of their future inheritance. All good influences on their minds proceed from that Spirit; and it should be their high and constant aim not to grieve him. By no course of conduct, by no conversation, by no impure thought, should they drive that Spirit from their minds. All their peace and joy is dependent on their cherishing his sacred influences; and by all the means in their power they should strive to secure his constant agency on their souls.

2 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

In this chapter 2Cor. 2Paul continues the discussion of the subject which had been introduced in the previous chapter. At the close of that chapter, he had stated the reasons why he had not visited the church at Corinth; see the notes on 2 Corinthians 1:23-24. The main reason was, that instead of coming to them in that disordered, and irregular state, he had preferred to send them an affectionate letter. Had he come to them personally he would have felt himself called on to exercise the severity of discipline. He chose, therefore, to try what the effect would be of a faithful and kind epistle. In this chapter, he prosecutes the same subject. He states, therefore, more at length, the reason why he had not come to them, 2 Corinthians 2:1-5. The reason was, that he resolved not to come to them, if he could avoid it, with severity; that his heart was pained even with the necessity of sending such a letter; that he wrote it with much anguish of spirit; yet that he cherished toward them the most tender love.

In his former Epistle 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 he had directed them to exercise discipline on the offending person in the church. This had been done according to his direction; and the offender had been suitably punished for his offence. He had been excommunicated; and it would seem that the effect on him had been to induce him to forsake his sin, and probably to put away his father‘s wife, and he had become a sincere penitent. Paul, therefore, in the next place 2 Corinthians 2:6-11, exhorts them to receive him again into fellowship with the church. The punishment be says had been sufficient 2 Corinthians 2:6; they ought now to be kind and forgiving to him lest he should be overwhelmed with his sorrow 2 Corinthians 2:7; he says, that he had forgiven him, so far as he was concerned, and he entreated them to do the same 2 Corinthians 2:10; and says that they ought, by all means, to pursue such a course that Satan could get no advantage of them, 2 Corinthians 2:11.

Paul then states the disappointment which he had had at Troas in not seeing Titus, from whom he had expected to learn what was the state of the church at Corinth, and what was the reception of his letter there; but that not seeing him there, he had gone on to Macedonia, 2 Corinthians 2:12-13. There, it would seem, he met Titus, and learned that his letter had had all

the success which he could have desired. It had been kindly received; and all that he had wished in regard to discipline had been performed, 2 Corinthians 2:14. The hearing of this success gives him occasion to thank God for it, as one among many instances in which his efforts to advance His cause had been crowned with success. God had made him successful everywhere; and God had made him triumph in Christ in every place. This fact gives him occasion 2 Corinthians 2:15-16 to state the general effect of his preaching and his labors. His efforts, he says, were always acceptable to God - though he could not be ignorant that in some cases the gospel which he preached was the occasion of the aggravated condemnation of those who heard and rejected it. Yet he had the consolation of reflecting that it was by no fault of his, 2 Corinthians 2:17. It was not because he had corrupted the Word of God; it was not because he was unfaithful; it was not because he was not sincere. He had a good conscience - a conscience which assured him that he spoke in sincerity and as in the sight of God - though the unhappy effect might be that many would perish from under his ministry.

Verse 1

But I determined this with myself - I made up my mind on this point; I formed this resolution in regard to my course.

That I would not come again to you in heaviness - In grief (ἐνη λύπ enē lup). "I would not come, if I could avoid it, in circumstances which must have grieved both me and you. I would not come while there existed among you such irregularities as must have pained my heart, and as must have compelled me to resort to such acts of discipline as would be painful to you. I resolved, therefore, to endeavor to remove these evils before I came, that when I did come, my visit might be mutually agreeable to us both. For that reason I changed my purpose about visiting you, when I heard of those disorders, and resolved to send an epistle. If that should be successful, then the way would be open for an agreeable visit to you." This verse, therefore, contains the statement of the principal reason why he had not come to them as he had at first proposed. It was really from no fickleness, but it was from love to them, and a desire that his visit should be mutually agreeable, compare the notes, 2 Corinthians 1:23.

Verse 2

For if I make you sorry - "If when I should come among you, I should be called on to inflict sorrow by punishing your offending brethren by an

act of severe discipline as soon as I came, who would there be to give me comfort but those very persons whom I had affected with grief? How little prepared would they be to make me happy, and to comfort me, amidst the deep sorrow which I should have caused by an act of severe discipline. After such an act - an act that would spread sorrow through the whole church, how could I expect that comfort which I should desire to find among you. The whole church would be affected with grief; and though I might be sustained by the sound part of the church, yet my visit would be attended with painful circumstances. I resolved, therefore, to remove all cause of difficulty, if possible, before I came, that my visit might be pleasant to us all." The idea is, that there was such a sympathy between him and them; that he was so attached to them, that he could not expect to be happy unless they were happy; that though he might be conscious he was only discharging a duty, and that God would sustain him in it, yet that it would mar the pleasure of his visit, and destroy all his anticipated happiness by the general grief.

Verse 3

And I wrote this same unto you - The words "this same" (τοῦτο αὐτὸ (touto auto) refer to what he had written to them in the former Epistle, particularly to what he had written in regard to the incestuous person, requiring them to excommunicate him. Probably the expression also includes the commands in his former Epistle to reform their conduct in general, and to put away the abuses and evil practices which prevailed in the church there.

Lest when I came … - Lest I should be obliged if I came personally to exercise the severity of discipline, and thus to diffuse sorrow throughout the entire church.

I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice - Lest I should have grief in the church. Lest the conduct of the church, and the abuses which prevail in it should give me sorrow. I should be grieved with the existence of these evils; and I should be obliged to resort to measures which would be painful to me, and to the whole church. Paul sought to avoid this by persuading them before he came to exercise the discipline themselves, and to put away the evil practices which prevailed among them.

Having confidence in you all - Having confidence that this is your general character, that whatever adds to my joy, or promotes my happiness, would give joy to you all. Paul had enemies in Corinth; he knew that there

were some there whose minds were alienated from him, and who were endeavoring to do him injury. Yet he did not doubt that it was the general character of the church that they wished him well, and would desire to make him happy; that what would tend to promote his happiness would also promote theirs; and therefore, that they would be willing to do anything that would make his visit agreeable to him when he came among them. He was, therefore, persuaded that if he wrote them an affectionate letter, they would listen to his injunctions, that thus all that was painful might be avoided when he came among them.

Verse 4

For out of much affliction - Possibly Paul‘s enemies had charged him with being harsh and overbearing. They may have said that there was much needless severity in his letter. He here meets that, and says, that it was with much pain and many tears that he was constrained to write as he did. He was pained at their conduct, and at the necessity which existed for such an epistle. This is an eminently beautiful instance of Paul‘s kindness of heart, and his susceptibility to tender impressions. The evil conduct of others gives pain to a good man; and the necessity of administering reproof and discipline is often as painful to him who does it, as it is to those who are the subjects of it.

And anguish of heart - The word rendered “anguish” (συνοχὴ sunochē) means, properly, “a holding together or shutting up”; and then, “pressure, distress, anguish” - an affliction of the heart by which one feels tightened or constrained; such a pressure as great grief causes at the heart.

I wrote unto you with many tears - With much weeping and grief that I was constrained to write such a letter. This was an instance of Paul‘s great tenderness of heart - a trait of character which, he uniformly evinced. With all his strength of mind, and all His courage and readiness to face danger, Paul was not ashamed to weep; and especially if he had any occasion of censuring his Christian brethren, or administering discipline; compare Philemon 3:18; Acts 20:31. This is also a specimen of the manner in which Paul met the faults of his Christian brethren. It was not with bitter denunciation. It was not with sarcasm and ridicule. It was not by emblazoning those faults abroad to others. It was not with the spirit of rejoicing that they had committed errors, and had been guilty of sin. It was not as if he was glad of the opportunity of administering rebuke, and took pleasure in denunciation and in the language of reproof. All this is often

done by others; but Paul pursued a different course. He sent an affectionate letter to the offenders themselves; and he did it with many tears. it was done weeping. Admonition would always be done right if it was done with tears. Discipline would always be right, and would be effectual, if it were administered with tears. Any man will receive an admonition kindly, if he who administers it does it weeping; and the heart of an offender will be melted, if he who attempts to reprove him comes to him with tears. How happy would it be if all who attempt to reprove should do it with Paul‘s spirit. How happy, if all discipline should be administered in the church in his manner. But, we may add, how seldom is this done! How few are there who feel themselves called on to reprove an offending brother, or to charge a brother with heresy or crime, that do it with tears!

Not that ye should be grieved - It was not my object to give you pain.

But that ye might know the love … - This was one of the best evidences of his great love to them which he could possibly give. It is proof of genuine friendship for another, when we faithfully and affectionately admonish him of the error of his course; it is the highest proof of affection when we do it with tears. It is cruelty to suffer a brother to remain in sin unadmonished; it is cruel to admonish him of it in a harsh, severe, and authoritative tone; but it is proof of tender attachment when we go to him with tears, and entreat him to repent and reform. No one gives higher proof of attachment to another than he who affectionately admonishes him of his sin and danger.

Verse 5

If any have caused grief - There is doubtless here an allusion to the incestuous person. But it is very delicately done. He does not mention him by name. There is not anywhere an allusion to his name; nor is it possible now to know it. Is this not a proof that the names of the offending brethren in a church should not be put on the records of sessions, and churches, and presbyteries, to be handed down to posterity? Paul does not here either expressly refer to such a person. He makes his remark general, that it might be as tender and kind to the offending brother as possible. They would know whom he meant, but they had already punished him, as Paul supposed, enough, and note all that he said in regard to him was as tender as possible, and suited, as much as possible, to conciliate his feelings and allay his grief. He did not harshly charge him with sin; he did not use any abusive

or severe epithets; but he gently insinuates that he "had caused grief;" he had pained the hearts of his brethren.

He hath not grieved me, but in part - He has not particularly offended or grieved me. He has grieved me only in common with others, and as a part of the church of Christ. All have common cause of grief; and I have no interest in it which is not common to you all. I am but one of a great number who have felt the deepest concern on account of his conduct.

That I may not overcharge you all - That I may not bear hard (ἐπιβαρῶ epibarō) on you all; that I may not accuse you all of having caused me grief. The sense is, "Grief has been produced. I, in common with the church, have been pained, and deeply pained, with the conduct of the individual referred to; and with that of his abettors and friends. But I would not charge the whole church with it; or seem to bear hard on them, or overcharge them with lack of zeal for their purity, or unwillingness to remove the evil." They had shown their willingness to correct the evil by promptly removing the offender when he had directed it. The sense of this verse should be connected with the verse that follows; and the idea is, that they had promptly administered sufficient discipline, and that they were not now to be charged severely with having neglected it. Even while Paul said he had been pained and grieved, he had seen occasion not to bear hard on the whole church, but to be ready to commend them for their promptness in removing the cause of the offence.

Verse 6

Sufficient to such a man - The incestuous person who had been by Paul's direction removed from the church. The object of Paul here is to have him again restored. For that purpose he says that the punishment which they had inflicted on him was "sufficient." It was:

(1)A sufficient expression of the evil of the offence, and of the readiness of the church to preserve itself pure; and,

(2)It was a sufficient punishment to the offender.

It had accomplished all that he had desired. It had humbled him, and brought him to repentance; and doubtless led him to put away his "wife"; compare note, 1 Corinthians 5:1. As that had been done, it was proper now that he should be again restored to the privileges of the church. No evil would result from such a restoration, and their duty to their penitent brother demanded it. Mr. Locke has remarked that Paul conducts this subject here with very great tenderness and delicacy. The entire passage from 2

Corinthians 2:5 to 2 Corinthians 2:10 relates solely to this offending brother, yet he never once mentions his name, nor does he mention his crime. He speaks of him only in the soft terms of "such a one" and "any one:" nor does he use an epithet which would be calculated to wound his feelings, or to transmit his name to posterity, or to communicate it to other churches. So that though this Epistle should be read, as Paul doubtless intended, by other churches, and be transmitted to future times, yet no one would ever be acquainted with the name of the individual. How different this from the temper of those who would emblazon abroad the names of offenders, or make a permanent record to carry them down with dishonor to posterity?

Which was inflicted of many - By the church in its collective capacity; see the note on 1 Corinthians 5:4. Paul had required the church to administer this act of discipline, and they had promptly done it. It is evident that the whole church was concerned in the administration of the act of discipline; as the words "of many" (ἀπὸ τῶν πλείονων apo tōn pleionōnare not applicable either to a single" bishop, or a single minister, or a presbytery, or a bench of elders: nor can they be so regarded, except by a forced and unnatural construction. Paul had directed it to be done by the assembled church 1 Corinthians 5:4, and this phrase shows that they had followed his instructions. Locke supposes that the phrase means, "by the majority;" Macknight renders it, "by the greater number;" Bloomfield supposes that it means that the "punishment was carried into effect by all." Doddridge paraphrases it, "by the whole body of your society." The expression proves beyond a doubt that the whole body of the society was concerned in the act of the excommunication, and that is a proper way of administering discipline. Whether it proves, however, that that is the mode which is to be observed in all instances, may admit of a doubt, as the example of the early churches, in a particular case, does not prove that that mode has the force of a binding rule on all.

(It cannot fairly be argued from this verse, that the "many" or the whole congregation, were judicially concerned in the act of excommunication; yet as their concurrence was essential, in order to carry the sentence into effect, it was "inflicted of many" in a most emphatic sense. The refusal, on the part of the members of the church, to have any more social contact with the incestuous man, carried into effect what the apostle had judicially pronounced. See the supplementary note on 1 Corinthians 5:4.)

Verse 7

So that contrariwise - On the other hand: on the contrary. That is, instead of continuing the punishment. Since the punishment was sufficient, and has answered all the purpose of bearing your testimony against the offence, and of bringing him to repentance, you ought again to admit him to your communion.

Ye ought rather to forgive him - Rather than continue the pain and disgrace of excommunication. It follows from this:

(1)That the proper time for restoring an offender is only when the punishment has answered the purpose for which it was designed; that is, has shown the just abhorrence of the church against the sin, and has reformed the offender; and,

(2)That when that is done the church ought to forgive the offending brother, and admit him again to their fellowship.

When it can be ascertained that the punishment has been effectual in reforming him, may depend somewhat on the nature of the offence. In this case, it was sufficiently shown by his putting away his wife, and by the manifestations of sorrow. So in other cases, it may be shown by a man‘s abandoning a course of sin, and reforming his life. If he has been unjust, by his repairing the evil; if he has been pursuing an unlawful business, by abandoning it; if he has pursued a course of, vice; by his forsaking it, and by giving satisfactory evidences of sorrow and of reformation, for a period sufficiently long to show his sincerity. The time which will be required in each case, must depend, of course, somewhat on the nature of the offence, the previous character of the individual, the temptations to which he may be exposed, and the disgrace which he may have brought on his Christian calling. It is to be observed, also, that then his restoration is to be regarded as an act of “forgiveness,” a favor (χαρίσασθαι charisasthaithat is, χαρις charisfavor, grace) on the part of the church. It is not a matter of justice, or of claim on his part for having once dishonored his calling, he has forfeited his right to a good standing among Christians; but it is a matter of favor, and he should be willing to humble himself before the church, and make suitable acknowledgment for his offences.

And comfort him - There is every reason to think that this man became a sincere penitent. If so, he must have been deeply pained at the remembrance of his sin, and the dishonor which he had brought on his

profession, as well as at the consequences in which he had been involved. In this deep distress, Paul tells them that they ought to comfort him. They should receive him kindly, as God receives to his favor a penitent sinnor. They should not cast out his name as evil; they should not reproach him for his sins; they should not harrow up his recollection of the offence by often referring to it; they should be willing to bury it in lasting forgetfulness, and treat him now as a brother. It is a duty of a church to treat with kindness a true penitent, and receive him to their affectionate embrace. The offence should be forgiven and forgotten. The consolations of the gospel, adapted to the condition of penitents, should be freely administered; and all should be done that can be, to make the offender, when penitent, happy and useful in the community.

Lest perhaps such a one - Still forbearing to mention his name; still showing toward him the utmost tenderness and delicacy.

Should be swallowed up … - Should be overcome with grief, and should be rendered incapable of usefulness by his excessive sorrow. This is a strong expression, denoting intensity of grief. We speak of a man‘s being drowned in sorrow; or overwhelmed with grief; of grief preying upon him. The figure here is probably taken from deep waters, or from a whirlpool which seems to swallow up anything that comes within reach. Excessive grief or calamity, in the Scriptures, is often compared to such waters; see Psalm 124:2-5. “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us; then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul; then the proud waters had gone over our soul;” see Psalm 69:1. “Save me, O God, for the waters are come into my soul.” Paul apprehended that by excessive grief, the offending brother would be destroyed. His life would waste away under the effect of his excommunication and disgrace, and the remembrance of his offence would prey upon him, and sink him to the grave.

Verse 8

Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him - The word rendered here as “confirm” (κυρῶσαι kurōsai) occurs in the New Testament only here and in Galatians 3:15. It means to give authority, to establish as valid, to confirm; and here means that they should give strong expressions and assurances of their love to him; that they should pursue such a course as would leave no room for doubt in regard to it.

Tyndale has well rendered it: “Wherefore I exhort you that love may halve strength over him.” Paul referred, doubtless, here to some public act of the church by which the sentence of excommunication might be removed, and by which the offender might have a public assurance of their favor.

Verse 9

For to this end also did I write - The apostle did not say that this was the only purpose of his writing, to induce them to excommunicate the offender. He does not say that he wished in an arbitrary manner to test their willingness to obey him, or to induce them to do a thing in itself wrong, in order to try their obedience. But the meaning is this: This was the main reason why he wrote to them, rather than to come personally among them. The thing ought to have been done; the offender ought to be punished; and Paul says that he adopted the method of writing to them rather than of coming among them in person, in order to give them an opportunity to show whether they were disposed to be obedient. And the sense is, “You may now forgive him. He has not only been sufficiently punished, and he has not only evinced suitable penitence, but also another object which I had in view has been accomplished. I desired to see whether you were, as a church, disposed to be obedient. That object, also, has been accomplished. And now, since everything aimed at in the case of discipline has been secured, you may forgive him, and should, without hesitation, again receive him to the bosom of the church.”

Verse 10

To whom ye forgive anything - The sense here is, “I have confidence in you as a Christian society and such confidence, that if you forgive an offence in one of your members, I shall approve the act, and shall also be ready to forgive.” He refers, doubtless, to this particular case; but he makes his remark general. It is implied here, I think, that the Corinthians were disposed to forgive the offending brother; and Paul here assures them that they had his hearty assent to this, and that if they did forgive him, he was ready to join them in the act, and to forgive him also.

For if I forgave anything - If I forgive anything; if I remit any of the punishments which have been inflicted by my authority.

For your sakes - It is not on account of the offender alone; it is in order to promote the happiness and purity of the church.

In the person of Christ - Locke paraphrases this, “By the authority, and in the name of Christ.” Doddridge,” As in the person of Christ, and by the

high authority with which he has been pleased to invest me." Tyndale, "In the room of Christ." The word rendered "person" (Margin, "sight," πρόσωπον prosōponfrom πρός prosand ὤψ ōps), means properly the part toward, at, and around the eye - Robinson. Then it means the face, visage, countenance; then the presence, person, etc. Here it probably means, in the presence of Christ; with his eye upon me, and conscious that I am acting before him, and must give account to him. It implies, undoubtedly, that Paul acted by his authority, and felt that he was doing that which Christ would approve.

Verse 11

Lest Satan - The devil. The name Satan denotes an adversary, an accuser, an enemy. It is the usual proper name which is given to the devil, the great adversary of God and man.

Should get an advantage of us - The literal translation of the Greek would be, "That we may not be defrauded by Satan." (Ἵνα μὴ πλεονεκτηθῶμεν ὑπὸ τοῦ Σατανᾶ Hina mē pleonektēthōmen hupo Satana). The verb used here denotes to have more than another; then to gain, to take advantage of one, to defraud. And the idea is, that they should at once re-admit the penitent offender to their communion, lest if they did not do it, Satan would take advantage of it to do injury to him and them. It is a reason given by Paul why they should lose no time in restoring him to the church. What the advantage was which Satan might gain, Paul does not specify. It might be this: That under pretence of duty, and seeking the purity of the church, Satan would tempt them to harsh measures; to needless severity of discipline; to an unkind and unforgiving spirit; and thus, at the same time, injure the cause of religion, and ruin him who had been the subject of discipline.

For we are not ignorant of his devices - We know his plans, his thoughts, his cunning, his skill. We are not ignorant of the great number of stratagems which he is constantly using to injure us, and to destroy the souls of people. He is full of wiles; and Paul had had abundant occasion to be acquainted with the means which he had used to defeat his plans and to destroy the church. The church, at all times, has been subjected to the influence of those wiles, as well as individual Christians. And the church, therefore, as well as individual Christians, should be constantly on its guard against those snares. Even the best and purest efforts of the church are often perverted, as in the case of administering discipline, to the worst results;

and by the imprudence and lack of wisdom; by the rashness or overheated zeal; by the pretensions to great purity and love of truth; and by a harsh, severe, and censorious spirit, Satan often takes advantage of the church, and advances his own dark and mischievous designs.

Verse 12

Furthermore - But (δὲ de). This particle is properly adversative; but frequently denotes transition, and serves to introduce something else, whether opposite to what precedes, or simply continuative or explanatory. Here, it is designed to continue or explain the statement before made of his deep affection for the church, and his interest in its affairs. He therefore tells them that when he came to Troas, and was favored there with great success, and was engaged in a manner most likely of all others to interest his feelings and to give him joy, yet he was deeply distressed because he had not heard, as he expected, from them; but so deep was his anxiety that he left Troas and went into Macedonia.

When I came to Troas - This was a city of Phrygia, or Mysia, on the Hellespont, between Troy on the north, and Assos on the south; see note on Acts 16:8. It was on the regular route from Ephesus to Macedonia. Paul took that route because on his journey to Macedonia he had resolved, for the reasons above stated, not to go to Corinth.

To preach Christ's gospel - Greek. "For (εἰς eis) the gospel of Christ;" that is, on account of his gospel; or to promote it. Why he selected Troas, or the region of the Troad (note, Acts 16:8), as the field of his labors, he does not say. It is probable that he was waiting there to hear from Corinth by Titus, and while there he resolved not to be idle, but to make known as much as possible the gospel.

And a door was opened unto me - see the note, 1 Corinthians 16:9. There was an opportunity of doing good, and the people were disposed to hear the gospel. This was a work in which Paul delighted to engage, and in which he usually found his highest comfort. It was of all things the most adapted to promote his happiness.

Verse 13

I had no rest in my spirit - I was disappointed, sad, deeply anxious. Though the work in which I was engaged was that which usually gives me my highest joy, yet such was my anxiety to learn the state of things in Corinth, and the success of my letter, and to see Titus, whom I was expecting, that I had comparatively no peace, and no comfort.

But taking my leave of them - Though so many considerations urged me to stay; though there was such a promising field of labor, yet such was my anxiety to hear from you, that I left them.

I went from thence into Macedonia - see the note, Acts 16:9. I went over where I expected to find Titus, and to learn the state of your affairs. This is one of the few instances in which Paul left an inviting field of labor, and where there was a prospect of signal success, to go to another place. It is adduced here to show the deep interest which he had in the church at Corinth, and his anxiety to learn what was their condition. It shows that there may be cases where it is proper for ministers to leave a field of great and inviting usefulness, to go to another field and to engage in another part of the great vineyard.

Verse 14

Now thanks be unto God … - There seem to have been several sources of Paul‘s joy on this occasion. The principal was, his constant and uniform success in endeavoring to advance the interests of the kingdom of the Redeemer. But in particular he rejoiced;

(1)Because Titus had come to him there, and had removed his distress; compare 2 Corinthians 2:13.

(2)because he learned from him that his efforts in regard to the church at Corinth had been successful, and that they had hearkened to his counsels in his first letter; and,

(3)Because he was favored with signal success in Macedonia. His being compelled, therefore, to remove from Troas and to go to Macedonia had been to him ultimately the cause of great joy and consolation. These instances of success Paul regarded as occasions of gratitude to God.

Which always causeth us - Whatever may be our efforts, and wherever we are. Whether it is in endeavoring to remove the errors and evils existing in a particular church, or whether it be in preaching the gospel in places where it has been unknown, still success crowns our efforts, and we have the constant evidence of divine approbation. This was Paul‘s consolation in the midst of his many trials; and it proves that, whatever may be the external circumstances of a minister, whether poverty, want, persecution, or distress, he will have abundant occasion to give thanks to God if his efforts as a minister are crowned with success.

To triumph in Christ. - To triumph through the aid of Christ, or in promoting the cause of Christ. Paul had no joy which was not connected with Christ, and he had no success which he did not trace to him. The word which is rendered here as "triumph" (θριαμβευοντι thriambeuontifrom θριαμβέυω thriambeuō) occurs in no other place in the New Testament, except in Colossians 2:15. It is rendered there as "triumphing over them in it," that is, triumphing over the principalities and powers which he had spoiled, or plundered; and it there means that Christ led them in triumph after the manner of a conqueror. The word is used here in a causative sense - the sense of the Hebrew Hiphil conjugation. It properly refers to a triumph; or a triumphal procession. Originally the word θριαμβος thriambosmeant a hymn which was sung in honor of Bacchus; then the tumultuous and noisy procession which constituted the worship of the god of wine; and then any procession of a similar kind. - Passow. It was particularly applied among both the Greeks and the Romans to a public and solemn honor conferred on a victorious general on a return from a successful war in which he was allowed a magnificent entrance into the capital.

In these triumphs, the victorious commander was usually preceded or attended by the spoils of war; by the most valuable and magnificent articles which he had captured; and by the princes, nobles, generals, or people whom he had subdued. The victor was drawn in a magnificent chariot, usually by two white horses. Other animals were sometimes used. "When Pompey triumphed over Africa, his chariot was drawn by elephants; that of Mark Antony was drawn by lions; that of Heliogabalus pulled by tigers; and that of Aurelius drawn by deer" - Clark. The people of Corinth were not unacquainted with the nature of a triumph. About 147 years before Christ, Lucius Mummius, the Roman consul, had conquered all Achaia, and had destroyed Corinth, Thebes, and Colchis, and by order of the Roman Senate was favored with a triumph, and was surnamed Achaicus. Tyndale renders this place: "Thanks be unto God which always giveth us the victory in Christ." Paul refers here to a victory which he had, and a triumph with which he was favored by the Redeemer. It was a victory over the enemies of the gospel; it was success in advancing the interests of the kingdom of Christ; and he rejoiced in that victory, and in that success, with more solid and substantial joy than a Roman victor ever felt on returning from his conquests over nations, even when attended with the richest spoils of

victory, and by humbled princes and kings in chains, and when the assembled thousands shouted Io triumphe!

And maketh manifest - Makes known; spreads abroad - as a pleasant fragrance is diffused through the air.

The savor - (ὀσμὴν osmēn). The smell; the fragrance. The word in the New Testament is used to denote a pleasant or fragrant odor, as of incense, or aromatics; John 12:3 see Ephesians 5:2; Philemon 4:18. There is an allusion here doubtless to the fact that in the triumphal processions fragrant odors were diffused around; flowers, diffusing a grateful smell, were scattered in the way; and on the altars of the gods incense was burned during the procession, and sacrifices offered, and the whole city was filled with the smoke of sacrifices, and with perfumes. So Paul speaks of knowledge - the knowledge of Christ. In his triumphings, the knowledge of the Redeemer was diffused abroad, like the odors which were diffused in the triumphal march of the conqueror. And that odor or savor was acceptable to God - as the fragrance of aromatics and of incense was pleasant in the triumphal procession of the returning victor. The phrase "makes manifest the savor of his knowledge," therefore, means, that the knowledge of Christ was diffused everywhere by Paul, as the grateful smell of aromatics was diffused all around the triumphing warrior and victor. The effect of Paul's conquests everywhere was to diffuse the knowledge of the Saviour - and this was acceptable and pleasant to God - though there might be many who would not avail themselves of it, and would perish; see 2 Corinthians 2:15.

Verse 15

For we are unto God - We who are his ministers, and who thus triumph. It is implied here that Paul felt that ministers were laboring for God, and felt assured that their labors would be acceptable to him. The object of Paul in the statement, in this and in the following verses, is undoubtedly to meet the charges of his detractors and enemies. He says, therefore, that whatever was the result of his labors in regard to the future salvation of people; yet, that his well-meant endeavors, and labors, and self-denials in preaching the gospel, were acceptable to God. The measure of God's approbation in the case was not his success, but his fidelity, his zeal, his self-denial, whatever might be the reception of the gospel among those who heard it.

A sweet savor - Like the smell of pleasant incense, or of grateful aromatics, such as were burned in the triumphal processions of returning conquerors. The meaning is, that their labors were acceptable to God; he was pleased with them, and would bestow on them the smiles and proofs of his approbation. The word rendered here as "sweet savor" (εὐωδία euōdia) occurs only in this place, and in Ephesians 5:2; Philemon 4:18; and is applied to persons or things well-pleasing to God. It properly means good odor, or fragrance, and in the Septuagint it is frequently applied to the incense that was burnt in the public worship of God and to sacrifices in general; Genesis 8:21; Exodus 29:18, Exodus 29:25, Exodus 29:41; Leviticus 1:9, Leviticus 1:13, Leviticus 1:17; Leviticus 2:2, Leviticus 2:9, Leviticus 2:12; Leviticus 3:5, Leviticus 3:16; Leviticus 4:31, etc. Here it means that the services of Paul and the other ministers of religion were as grateful to God as sweet incense, or acceptable sacrifices.

Of Christ - That is, we are Christ's sweet savor to God: we are that which he has appointed, and which he has devoted and consecrated to God; we are the offering, so to speak, which he is continually making to God.

In them that are saved - In regard to them who believe the gospel through our ministry and who are saved. Our labor in carrying the gospel to them, and in bringing them to the knowledge of the truth, is acceptable to God. Their salvation is an object of his highest desire, and he is gratified with our fidelity, and with our success. This reason why their work was acceptable to God is more fully stated in the following verse, where it is said that in reference to them they were the "savor of life unto life." The word "saved" here refers to all who become Christians, and who enter heaven; and as the salvation of people is an object of such desire to God, it cannot but be that all who bear the gospel to people are engaged in an acceptable service, and that all their efforts will be pleasing to him, and approved in his sight In regard to this part of Paul's statement, there can be no difficulty.

And in them that perish - In reference to them who reject the gospel, and who are finally lost. It is implied here:

(1) That some would reject the gospel and perish, with whatever fidelity and self-denial the ministers of religion might labor.

(2) that though this would be the result, yet the labors of the ministers of religion would be acceptable to God. This is a fearful and awful declaration,

and has been thought by many to be attended with difficulty. A few remarks may present the true sense of the passage, and remove the difficulty from it:

(a)It is not affirmed or implied here that the destruction of those who would reject the gospel, and who would perish, was desired by God or would be pleasing to him. This is nowhere affirmed or implied in the Bible.

(b)It is affirmed only that the labors of the ministers of religion in endeavoring to save them would be acceptable and pleasing to God. Their labors would be in order to save them, not to destroy them.

Their desire was to bring all to heaven - and this was acceptable to God. Whatever might be the result, whether successful or not, yet God would be pleased with self-denial, and toil, and prayer that was honestly and zealously put forth to save others from death. They would be approved by God in proportion to the amount of labor, zeal, and fidelity which they evinced.

(3) it would be by no fault of faithful ministers that people would perish. Their efforts would be to save them, and those efforts would be pleasing to God.

(4) it would be by no fault of the gospel that people would perish. The regular and proper tendency of the gospel is to save, not to destroy men; as the tendency of medicine is to heal them, of food to support the body, of air to give vitality, of light to give pleasure to the eye, etc. It is provided for all, and is adapted to all. There is a sufficiency in the gospel. for all people, and in its nature it is as really suited to save one as another. Whatever may be the manner in which it is received, it is always in itself the same pure and glorious system; full of benevolence and mercy. The bitterest enemy of the gospel cannot point to one of its provisions that is adapted or designed to make people miserable, and to destroy them. All its provisions are adapted to salvation; all its arrangements are those of benevolence; all the powers and influences which it originates, are those which are suited to save, not to destroy people. The gospel is what it is in itself - a pure, holy, and benevolent system, and is answerable only for effects which a pure, holy, and benevolent system is suited to produce. To use the beautiful language of Theodoret, as quoted by Bloomfield: “We indeed bear the sweet odor of Christ‘s gospel to all; but all who participate in it do not experience its salutiferous effects. Thus, to diseased eyes even the light of heaven is noxious; yet the sun does not bring the injury. And to those in a fever, honey

is bitter; yet it is sweet nevertheless. Vultures too, it is said, fly away from sweet odors of myrrh; yet myrrh is myrrh though the vultures avoid it, Thus, if some be saved, though others perish, the gospel retains its own virtue, and we the preachers of it remain just as we are; and the gospel retains its odorous and salutiferous properties, though some may disbelieve and abuse it, and perish." Yet:

(5) It is implied that the gospel would be the occasion of heavier condemnation to some, and that they would sink into deeper ruin in consequence of its being preached to them. This is implied in the expression in 2 Corinthians 2:16, "to the one we are a savor of death unto death." In the explanation of this, we may observe:

(a) That those who perish would have perished at any rate. All were under condemnation whether the gospel had come to them or not. None will perish in consequence of the gospel's having been sent to them who would not have perished had it been unknown. People do not perish because the gospel is sent to them, but for their own sins.

(b) It is in fact by their own fault that people reject the gospel, and that they are lost. They are voluntary in this; and, whatever is their final destiny, they are not under compulsion. The gospel compels no one against his will either to go to heaven, or to hell.

(c) People under the gospel sin against greater light than they do without it. They have more to answer for. It increases their responsibility. If, therefore, they reject it, and go down to eternal death, they go from higher privileges; and they go, of course, to meet a more aggravated condemnation. For condemnation will always be in exact proportion to guilt; and guilt is in proportion to abused light and privileges.

(d) The preaching of the gospel, and the offers of life, are often the occasion of the deeper guilt of the sinner. Often he becomes enraged. He gives vent to the deep malignity of his soul. He opposes the gospel with malice and infuriated anger, His eye kindles with indignation, and his lip curls with pride and scorn. He is profane and blasphemous; and the offering of the gospel to him is the occasion of exciting deep and malignant passions

against God, against the Saviour, against the ministers of religion. Against the gospel, people often manifest the same malignity and scorn which they did against the Saviour himself. Yet this is not the fault of the gospel, nor of the ministers of religion. It is the fault of sinners themselves; and while there can be no doubt that such a rejection of the gospel will produce their deeper condemnation, and that it is a savor of death unto death unto them; still the gospel is good and benevolent, and still God will be pleased with those who faithfully offer its provisions, and who urge it on the attention of people.

Verse 16

To the one - To those who perish.

We are the savour of death unto death - We are the occasion of deepening their condemnation, and of sinking them lower into ruin. The expression used here means literally, "to the one class we bear a death-conveying odor leading to their death" - a savor, a smell which, under the circumstances, is destructive to life, and which leads to death. Mr. Locke renders this: "To the one my preaching is of ill savor, unacceptable and offensive, by their rejecting whereof they draw death on themselves." Grateful as their labors were to God, and acceptable as would be their efforts, whatever might be the results, yet Paul could not be ignorant that the gospel would in fact be the means of greater condemnation to many; see the notes on 2 Corinthians 2:15. It was indeed by their own fault; yet wherever the gospel was preached, it would to many have this result. It is probable that the language here used is borrowed from similar expressions which were common among the Jews. Thus, in Debarim Rabba, sec. 1, fol. 248, it is said, "As the bee brings home honey to the owner, but stings others, so it is with the words of the Law." "They (the words of the Law) are a savor of life to Israel, but a savor of death to the people of this world."

Thus, in Taarieth, fol. 7,1, "Whoever gives attention to the Law on account of the Law itself, to him it becomes an aromatic of life (סם חיים cam chayiym), but to him who does not attend to the Law on account of the Law itself, to him it becomes an aromatic of death (סם מות cam mowt) " - the idea of which is, that as medicines skillfully applied will heal, but if unskillfully applied will aggravate a disease, so it is with the words of the Law. Again, "The word of the Law which proceeds out of the mouth of God is an odor of life to the Israelites, but an odor of death to the Gentiles;" see

Rosenmuller, and Bloomfield. The sense of the passage is plain, that the gospel, by the willful rejection of it, becomes the means of the increased guilt and condemnation of many of those who hear it.

And to the other - To those who embrace it, and are saved.

The savor of life - An odor, or fragrance producing life, or tending to life. It is a living, or life-giving savor. it is in itself grateful and pleasant.

Unto life - Tending to life; or adapted to produce life. The word "life" here, as often elsewhere, is used to denote salvation. It is:

(1)Life in opposition to the death in sin in which all are by nature;

(2)In opposition to death in the grave - as it leads to a glorious resurrection;

(3)In opposition to eternal death; to the second dying, as it leads to life and peace and joy in heaven; see the words "life" and "death" explained in the notes on Romans 6:23. The gospel is "the savor of life unto life," because:

(a)It is its nature and tendency to produce life and salvation. It is adapted to that; and is designed to that end.

(b)Because it actually results in the life and salvation of those who embrace it. It is the immediate and direct cause of their salvation; of their recovery from sin; of their glorious resurrection; of their eternal life in heaven.

And who is sufficient for these things? - For the arduous and responsible work of the ministry; for a work whose influence must be felt either in the eternal salvation, or the eternal ruin of the soul. Who is worthy of so important a charge? Who can undertake it without trembling? Who can engage in it without feeling that he is in himself unfit for it, and that he needs constant divine grace? This is an exclamation which anyone may well make in view of the responsibilites of the work of the ministry. And we may remark:

(1) If Paul felt this, assuredly others should feel it also. If, With all the divine assistance which he had; all the proofs of the unique presence of God, and all the mighty miraculous powers conferred on him, Paul had such a sense of unfitness for this great work, then a consciousness of unfitness, and a deep sense of responsibility, may well rest on all others.

(2) it was this sense of the responsibility of the ministry which contributed much to Paul‘s success. It was a conviction that the results of his work must be seen in the joys of heaven, or the woes of hell, that led him to look to God for aid, and to devote himself so entirely to his great work. People will not feel much concern unless they have a deep sense of the magnitude and responsibility of their work. People who feel as they should about the ministry will look to God for aid, and will feel that he alone can sustain them in their arduous duties.

Verse 17

For we are not as many - This refers doubtless to the false teachers at Corinth; and to all who mingled human philosophy or tradition with the pure word of truth. Paul‘s design in the statement in this verse seems to be to affirm that he had such a deep sense of the responsibility of the ministerial office, and of its necessary influence on the eternal destiny of man, that it led him to preach the simple gospel, the pure word of God. He did not dare to dilute it with any human mixture. He did not dare to preach philosophy, or human wisdom. He did not dare to mingle with it the crude conceptions of man. He sought to exhibit the simple truth as it was in Jesus; and so deep was his sense of the responsibility of the office, and so great was his desire on the subject, that he had been enabled to do it. and to triumph always in Christ. So that, although he was conscious that he was in himself unfit for these things, yet by the grace of God he had been able always to exhibit the simple truth, and his labors had been crowned with constant and signal success.

Which corrupt the word of God - Margin, “deal deceitfully with.” The word used here (καπηλεύοντες kapēleuontes) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and does not occur in the Septuagint. The word is derived from κάπηλος *kapēlos* which signifies properly a huckster, or a retailer of wine, a petty chapman; a man who buys up articles for the purpose of selling them again. It also means sometimes a vintner, or an innkeeper. The proper idea is that of a small dealer and especially in wine. Such persons were notorious, as they are now, for diluting their wines with water (compare the Septuagint in Isaiah 1:22); and for compounding wines of other substances than the juice of the grape for purposes of gain. Wine, of all substances in trade, perhaps, affords the greatest facilities for such dishonest tricks; and, accordingly, the dealers in that article have generally

been most distinguished for fraudulent practices and corrupt and diluted mixtures. Hence, the word comes to denote to adulterate; to corrupt, etc. It is here applied to those who adulterated or corrupted the pure word of God in any way, and for any purpose. It probably has particular reference to those who did it either by Judaizing opinions, or by the mixtures of a false and deceitful philosophy. The latter mode would be likely to prevail among the subtle and philosophizing Greeks. It is in such ways that the gospel has been usually corrupted:

(1) It is done by attempting to attach a philosophical explanation to the facts of revelation, and making the theory as important as the fact.

(2) by attempting to explain away the offensive points of revelation by the aid of philosophy.

(3) by attempting to make the facts of Scripture accord with the prevalent notions of philosophy, and by applying a mode of interpretation to the Bible which would fritter away its meaning, and make it mean anything or nothing at pleasure. In these, and in various other ways, people have corrupted the Word of God; and of all the evils which Christianity has ever sustained in this world, the worst have been those which it has received from philosophy, and from those teachers who have corrupted the Word of God. The fires of persecution it could meet, and still be pure; the utmost efforts of princes, and monarchs, and of Satan to destroy it, it has outlived, and has shone purely and brightly amidst all these efforts; but, when corrupted by philosophy, and by "science falsely so called," it has been dimmed in its luster, paralyzed in its aims, and shorn of its power, and has ceased to be mighty in pulling down the strong holds of Satan‘s kingdom. Accordingly, the enemy of God has ceased to excite persecution, and now aims in various ways to corrupt the gospel by the admixture of philosophy, and of human opinions. Tyndale renders this passage, "For we are not as many are which choppe and change with the word of God" - an idea which is important and beautiful - but this is one of the few instances in which he mistook the sense of the original text. In general, the accuracy of his translation and his acquaintance with the true sense of the Greek text are very remarkable.

But as of sincerity - Sincerely; actuated by unmingled honesty and simplicity of aim; see the note on 2 Corinthians 1:12.

As of God - As influenced by him; as under his control and direction; as having been sent by him; as acting by his command; see the note, 2 Corinthians 1:12.

In the sight of God - As if we felt that his eye was always on us. Nothing is better suited to make a person sincere and honest, than this.

Speak we in Christ - In the name, and in the service of Christ. We deliver our message with a deep consciousness that the eye of the all-seeing God is on us; that we can conceal nothing from Him; and that we must soon give up our account to Him.

Remarks

1. In this chapter, and in the management of the whole case to which Paul here refers, we have an instance of his tenderness in administering discipline. This tenderness was manifested in many ways:

(1) He did nothing to wound the feelings of the offending party.

(2) he did nothing in the way of punishment which a stern sense of duty did not demand,

(3) he did it all with many tears. He wept at the necessity of administering discipline at all. He wept over the remissness of the church. He wept over the fall of the offending brother.

(4) he did not mention even the name of the offender. He did not emblazon his faults abroad; nor has he left any clue by which it can be known; nor did he take any measures which were suited to pain, unnecessarily, the feelings of his friends. If all discipline in the church were conducted in this manner, it would probably always be effectual and successful, 2 Corinthians 2:1-10.

2. We ought cordially to receive and forgive an offending brother, as soon as he gives evidence of repentance. We should harbor no malice against him; and if, by repentance, he has put away his sins, we should hasten to forgive him. This we should do as individuals, and as churches. God cheerfully forgives us, and receives us into favor on our repentance; and we should hail the privilege of treating all our offending brethren in the same manner, 2 Corinthians 2:7-8.

3. Churches should be careful that Satan should not get an advantage over them, 2 Corinthians 2:11. In every way possible he will attempt it; and perhaps in few modes is it more often done than in administering discipline. In such a case, Satan gains an advantage over a church in the following ways.

(1) in inducing it to neglect discipline. This occurs often because an offender is rich, or talented, or is connected with influential families; because there is a fear of driving off such families from the church; because the individual is of elevated rank, and the church suffers him to remain in her bosom. The laws of the church, like other laws are often like cobwebs: Large flies break through, and the smaller ones are caught. The consequence is, that Satan gains an immense advantage. Rich and influential offenders remain in the church; discipline is relaxed; the cause of Christ is scandalized; and the church at large feels the influence, and the work of God declines.

(2) Satan gains an advantage in discipline, sometimes, by too great severity of discipline. If he cannot induce a church to relax altogether, and to suffer offenders to remain, then he excites them to improper and needless severity. He drives them on to harsh discipline for small offences. He excites a spirit of persecution. He enkindles a false zeal on account of the Shibboleth of doctrine. He excites a spirit of party, and causes the church to mistake it for zeal for truth. He excites a spirit of persecution against some of the best people in the church, on account of pretended errors in doctrine, and kindles the flames of intestine war; and breaks the church up into parties and fragments. Or he urges on the church, even in cases where discipline is proper, to needless and inappropriate severity; drives the offender from its bosom; breaks his spirit; and prevents ever-onward his usefulness, his return, and his happiness. One of the chief arts of Satan has been to cause the church in cases of discipline to use severity instead of kindness; to excite a spirit of persecution instead of love. Almost all the evils which grow out of attempts at discipline might have been prevented by a spirit of love.

(3) Satan gains an advantage in cases of discipline, when the church is unwilling to re-admit to fellowship an offending but a penitent member. His

spirit is broken; his usefulness is destroyed. The world usually takes sides with him against the church, and the cause of religion bleeds.

4. Individual Christians, as well as churches, should be careful that Satan does not get an advantage over them, 2 Corinthians 2:11. Among the ways in which he does this are the following:

(1) By inducing them to conform to the world. This is done under the plea that religion is not gloomy, and morose, and ascetic. Thence he often leads professors into all the gaieties, and amusements, and follies of which the world partake. Satan gains an immense advantage to his cause when this is done - for all the influence of the professed Christian is with him.

(2) by producing laxness of opinion in regard to doctrine. Christ intends that his cause shall advance by the influence of truth; and that his church shall be the witness of the truth. The cause of Satan advances by error and falsehood; and when professed Christians embrace falsehood, or are indifferent to truth, their whole influence is on the side of Satan, and his advantage is immense when they become the advocates of error.

(3) by producing among Christians despondency, melancholy, and despair. Some of the best people are often thus afflicted and thrown into darkness, as Job was; Job 23:8-9. Indeed, it is commonly the best members of a church that have doubts in this manner, and that fall into temptation, and that are left to the buffetings of Satan. Your frivolous, and worldly, and fashionable Christians have usually no such troubles - except when they lie on a bed of death. They are not in the way of Satan. They do not oppose him, and he will not trouble them. It is your humble, praying, self-denying Christians that he dreads and hates; and it is these that he is suffered to tempt, and to make sad, and to fill with gloom and doubt. And when this is done, it is an immense advantage to his cause. It produces the impression that religion is nothing but gloom and melancholy, and the people of the world are easily led to hate and avoid it. Christians, therefore, should be cheerful, and benevolent, and happy - as they may be - lest Satan should get an advantage over them.

(4) by fanaticism. For when Satan finds that he can get no advantage over Christians by inducing them to do nothing, or to do anything positively wrong or immoral, he drives them on with over-heated and ill-timed zeal; he makes them unreasonably strenuous for some single opinion or measure; he disposes them to oppose and persecute all who do not fall into their views, and feel as they feel.

(5) by contentions and strifes. Satan often gets an advantage in that way. No matter what the cause may be, whether it be for doctrines, or for any other cause, yet the very fact that there are contentions among the professed followers of "the Prince of peace" does injury, and gives Satan an advantage. No small part of his efforts, therefore, have been to excite contentions among Christians, an effort in which he has been, and is still, eminently successful.

5. Satan gets an advantage over sinners, and they should be on their guard. He does it:

(1) By producing a sense of security in their present condition; and by leading them to indifference in regard to their eternal condition. In this he is eminently successful; and when this is gained, all is gained that his cause demands. It is impossible to conceive of greater success in anything than Satan has in producing a state of indifference to the subject of religion among people.

(2) by inducing them to defer attention to religion to some future time. This is an advantage, because:

(a)It accomplishes all he wishes at present;

(b)Because it is usually successful altogether. It is usually the same thing as resolving not to attend to religion at all.

(3) by producing false views of religion. He represents it at one time as gloomy, sad, and melancholy; at another, as so easy, that it may be obtained, whenever they please; at another, by persuading them that their sins are so great that they cannot be forgiven. One great object of Satan is to blind the minds of sinners to the true nature of religion; and in this he is usually successful.

(4) he deludes the aged by telling them it is too late; and the young by telling them that now is the time for mirth and pleasure, and that religion may be attended to at some future period of life.

(5) he gains an advantage by plunging the sinner deeper and deeper in sin; inducing him to listen to the voice of temptation; by making him the companion of the wicked; and by deluding him with the promises of pleasure, honor, and gain in this world until it is too late, and he dies.

6. Ministers of the gospel may have occasion to triumph in the success of their work. Paul always met with success of some kind; always had some cause of triumph. In all his trials, he had occasion of rejoicing, and always was assured that he was pursuing that course which would lead him ultimately to triumph, 2 Corinthians 2:14.

7. The gospel may be so preached as to be successful, 2 Corinthians 2:14. In the hands of Paul it was successful. So it was with the other apostles. So it was with Luther, Knox, Calvin. So it was with Whitefield, Edwards Wesley, and Payson. If ministers are not successful, it is not the fault of the gospel. It is adapted to do good, and to save people; and it may be so preached as to accomplish those great ends. If all ministers were as self-denying, and laborious, and prayerful as were these people, the gospel would be as successful now as it has ever been.

(There is much truth in this representation. Certainly no great revival of religion can rationally be expected when the ministers of the gospel are not self-denying laborious, and prayerful. Yet we cannot certainly pronounce, that equal diligence in the use of means will in every case be attended with equal success. Allowance must be made for God‘s sovereignty, in dispensing his grace. Otherwise, wherever the word was preached under most favorable circumstances, as far as excellence of means is concerned, there also, we should expect, and find most success. But it has not been so in reality. Never did hearers enjoy a more favorable opportunity of conversion, than when more than the eloquence of angels fell from the lips of Jesus, and he taught the people as one having authority and not as the scribes. Yet comparatively few, a solitary one here and there, listened to the voice of the charmer, though he charmed so wisely. Was it that he did not

display the gospel in all its fullness, sufficiency, and loveliness? Was there any lack of moral persuasion, powerful argument, strung motive, touching appeal, in the Saviour‘s addresses? No! Yet immediately after the ascension of Jesus, the Word of God subdued thousands on thousands, although employed by apostles only, whose ministrations, considered apart, must have been immeasurably inferior to those of Jesus. The same Jews that persisted in their unbelief, under the ministry of Christ, were disarmed of their prejudice, under the preaching of Peter! Whence the difference of efficacy? Whence the lack of success, where most we should have expected to find it, and the command of it, where least we could have looked for it? One sentence solves the difficulty. “The Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.”

Similar comparisons might he made between the ministrations of different individuals now. People of the highest abilities, persevering diligence, and elevated piety, have been left to complain of comparative barrenness in the sphere which they occupied, while humbler instruments, in a field no way more promising, have been blessed with the harvest of souls. The comparison might even be made of different periods of the same ministry. All other circumstances being equal, or differing so slightly as not to affect the argument, the word spoken at one time seems to fall powerless to the ground, as the arrow on the breast of steel. No shaft hits the mark, no sinner retires like the stricken deer to bleed alone. At another time, the people are made willing in the day of power. Conviction spreads with the rapidity of contagion, and the Lord daily adds to his people such as shall be saved. Now this difference cannot be explained but by referring it to the different measures in which God is pleased to communicate his spirit.)

8. Much of the work of the ministry is pleasant and delightful. It is the savor of life unto life, 2 Corinthians 2:15-16. There is no joy on earth of a higher and purer character than that which the ministers of the gospel have in the success of their work. There is no work more pleasant than that of imparting the consolations of religion to the sick, and the afflicted; than that of directing inquiring sinners to the Lamb of God; no joy on earth so pure and elevated as that which a pastor has in a revival of religion. In the evidence that God accepts his labors, and that to many his message is a savor of life unto life, there is a joy which no other pursuit can furnish; a

joy, even on earth, which is more than a compensation for all the toils, self-denials, and trials of the ministry.

9. In view of the happy and saving results of the work of the ministry, we see the importance of the work. Those results are to be seen in heaven. They are to enter into the eternal destiny of the righteous. They are to be seen in the felicity and holiness of those who shall be redeemed from death. The very happiness of heaven, therefore, is dependent on the fidelity and success of the ministry. This work stretches beyond the grave. It reaches into eternity. It is to be seen in heaven. Other plans and labors of people terminate at death. But the work of the ministry reaches in its results into the skies; and is to be seen ever onward in eternity. Well might the apostle ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

10. The ministers of the gospel will be accepted of God, if faithful, whatever may be the result of their labors; whether seen in the salvation, or the augmented condemnation of those who hear them, 2 Corinthians 2:15. They are a sweet savor to God. Their acceptance with him depends not on the measure of their success; but on their fidelity. If people reject the gospel, and make it the occasion of their greater condemnation, the fault is not that of ministers, but is their own. If people are faithful, God accepts their efforts; and even if many reject the message and perish, still a faithful ministry will not be to blame. That such results should follow from their ministry, indeed, increases their responsibility, and makes their office more awful, but it will not render them less acceptable in their labors in the sight of God.

11. We are to anticipate that the ministry will be the means of the deeper condemnation of many who hear the gospel, 2 Corinthians 2:16. The gospel is to them a savor of death unto death. We are to expect that many will reject and despise the message, and sink into deeper sin, and condemnation, and woe. We are not to be disappointed, therefore, when we see such effects follow, and when the sinner sinks into a deeper hell from under the ministry of the gospel. It always has been the case, and we have reason to suppose it always will be. And painful as is the fact, yet ministers must make up their minds to witness this deeply painful result of their work.

12. The ministry is a deeply and awfully responsible work, 2 Corinthians 2:16. It is connected with the everlasting happiness, or the deep and eternal condemnation of all those who hear the gospel. Every sermon that is preached is making an impression that will never be obliterated, and producing an effect that will never terminate. Its effects will never all be seen until the day of judgment, and in the awful solemnities of the eternal world. Well might Paul ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

13. It is a solemn thing to hear the gospel. If it is solemn for a minister to dispense it, it is not less solemn to hear it. It is connected with the eternal welfare of those who hear. And thoughtless as are multitudes who hear it, yet it is deeply to affect them hereafter. If they ever embrace it, they will owe their eternal salvation to it; if they continue to neglect it, it will sink them deep and forever in the world of woe. Every individual, therefore, who hears the gospel dispensed, no matter by whom, should remember that he is listening to God's solemn message to mankind; and that it will and must exert a deep influence on his eternal doom.

14. A people should pray much for a minister. Paul often entreated the churches to which he wrote to pray for him. If Paul needed the prayers of Christians, assuredly Christians now do. Prayer for a minister is demanded because:

(1) He has the same infirmities, conflicts, and temptations which other Christians have.

(2) he has those which are special, and which grow out of the very nature of his office; for the warfare of Satan is carried on mainly with the leaders of the army of God.

(3) he is engaged in a great and most responsible work - the greatest work ever committed to mortal man.

(4) his success will be generally in proportion as a people pray for him. The welfare of a people, therefore, is identified with their praying for their minister. He will preach better, and they will hear better, just in proportion as they pray for him. His preaching will be dull, dry, heavy; will be without

unction, spirituality, and life, unless they pray for him; and their hearing will be dull, lifeless, and uninterested, unless they pray for him. No people will hear the gospel to much advantage who do not feel anxiety enough about it to pray for their minister.

15. The interview between a minister and his people in the day of judgment will be a very solemn one. Then the effect of his ministry will be seen. Then it will be known to whom it was a savor of life unto life, and to whom it was a savor of death unto death. Then the eternal destiny of all will be settled. Then the faithful minister will be attended to heaven by all to whom his ministry has been a savor of life unto life; and then he will part forever with all whom he so often warned and entreated in vain. In distant worlds - worlds forever separated - shall be experienced the result of his labors. O! how solemn must be the scene when he must give up his account for the manner in which he has preached; and they, for the manner in which they attended on his ministry!

16. Let all ministers, then, be careful that they do not corrupt the word of God, 2 Corinthians 2:17. Let them preach it in simplicity and in truth. Let them not preach philosophy, or metaphysics, or their own fancy, or the tradition of human beings, or the teaching of the schools, but the simple truth as it is in Jesus. Let them preach as sent by God; as in the sight of God; as commissioned by Christ to deliver a simple, plain, pure message to mankind, whether they will hear or forbear. Their success will be in proportion to the simplicity and purity of the gospel which they present; their peace and joy in death and in heaven will be just as they shall have evidence then that in simplicity and sincerity they have endeavored to present everywhere, and to all, the pure and simple gospel of Jesus Christ. As ministers, therefore, desire acceptance with God and success in the work let them preach the pure gospel; not adulterating it with foreign admixtures; not endeavoring to change it so as to be palatable to the carnal mind; not substituting philosophy for the gospel, and not withholding anything in the gospel because people do not love it; and let the people of God everywhere sustain the ministry by their prayers, and aid them in their work by daily commending them to the God of grace. So shall they be able to perform the solemn functions of their office to divine acceptance; and so shall ministers and people find the gospel to be “a savor of life unto life.”

2 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

This chapter 2 Corinthians 2:14, that he had always occasion to triumph in the success which he had, and that God always blessed his labors; and especially had spoken, in the close of the previous chapter 2 Corinthians 2:17, of his sincerity as contrasted with the conduct of some who corrupted the Word of God. This might appear to some as if he designed to commend himself to them, or that he had said this for the purpose of securing their favor. It is probable also, that the false teachers at Corinth had been introduced there by letters of recommendation, perhaps from Judea. In reply to this, Paul intimates 2 Corinthians 3:1 that this was not his design; 2 Corinthians 3:2 that he had no need of letters of recommendation to them, since 2 Corinthians 3:2-3 they were his commendatory epistle; they were themselves the best evidence of his zeal, fidelity, and success in his labors. He could appeal to them as the best proof that he was qualified for the apostolic office. His success among them, he says 2 Corinthians 3:4, was a ground of his trusting in God, an evidence of his acceptance. Yet, as if he should seem to rely on his own strength, and to boast of what he had done, he says 2 Corinthians 3:5 that his success was not owing to any strength which he had, or to any skill of his own, but entirely to the aid which he had received from God. It was God. he says 2 Corinthians 3:6, who had qualified him to preach, and had given him grace to be an able minister of the New Testament.

It is not improbable that the false teachers, being of Jewish origin, in Corinth, had commended the laws and institutions of Moses as being of superior clearness, and even as excelling the gospel of Christ. Paul takes occasion, therefore 2 Corinthians 3:7-11, to show that the laws and institutions of Moses were far inferior in this respect to the gospel. His was a ministration of death 2 Corinthians 3:7; though glorious it was to be done away 2 Corinthians 3:7; the ministration of the Spirit was therefore to be presumed to be far more glorious 2 Corinthians 3:8; the one was a ministration to condemnation, the other of righteousness 2 Corinthians 3:9; the one had comparatively no glory, being so much surpassed by the other 2 Corinthians 3:10; and the former was to be done away, while the latter was to remain, and was therefore far more glorious, 2 Corinthians 3:11.

This statement of the important difference between the laws of Moses and the gospel, is further illustrated by showing the effect which the institutions of Moses had had on the Jews themselves, 2 Corinthians 3:12-15. That effect was to blind them. Moses had put a veil over his face 2 Corinthians 3:13; and the effect had been that the nation was blinded in reading the Old Testament, and had no just views of the true meaning of their own Scriptures, 2 Corinthians 3:14-15.

Yet, Paul says, that that veil should be taken away, 2 Corinthians 3:16-18. It was the intention of God that it should be removed. When that people should turn again to the Lord, it should be taken away, 2 Corinthians 3:16. It was done where the Spirit of the Lord was, 2 Corinthians 3:17. It was done in fact in regard to all true Christians, 2 Corinthians 3:18. They were permitted to behold the glory of the Lord as in a glass, and they were changed into the same image. The same subject is continued in 2 Corinthians 4, where Paul illustrates the effect of this clear revelation of the gospel as compared with the institutions of Moses, on the Christian ministry.

Verse 1

Do we begin again - This is designed evidently to meet an objection. He had been speaking of his triumph in the ministry 2 Corinthians 2:14, and of his sincerity and honesty, as contrasted with the conduct of many who corrupted the Word of God, 2 Corinthians 2:17. It might be objected that he was magnifying himself in these statements, and designed to commend himself in this manner to the Corinthians. To this he replies in the following verses.

To commend ourselves? - To recommend ourselves; do we speak this in our own praise, in order to obtain your favor.

Or need we, as some others - Probably some who had brought letters of recommendation to them from Judea. The false teachers at Corinth had been originally introduced there by commendatory letters from abroad. These were letters of introduction, and were common among the Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews, as they are now. They were usually given to persons who were about to travel, as there were no inns. and as travelers were dependent on the hospitality of those among whom they traveled.

Of commendation from you - To other congregations. It is implied here by Paul, that he sought no such letter; that he traveled without them; and that he depended on his zeal, and self-denial, and success to make him known, and to give him the affections of those to whom he ministered - a much better recommendation than mere introductory letters. Such letters were, however, sometimes given by Christians, and are by no means improper, Acts 18:27. Yet, they do not appear to have been sought or used by the apostles generally. They depended on their miraculous endowments, and on the attending grace of God to make them known.

Verse 2

Ye are our epistle - compare 1 Corinthians 9:2. This is a most beautiful and happy turn given to the whole subject. The sense is plain. It is, that the conversion of the Corinthians, under the faithful labors of the apostle, was a better testimonial of his character and fidelity than any letters could be. To see the force of this, it must be remembered:

(1)That Corinth was an exceedingly dissolute and abandoned place (see the introduction to the First Epistle);

(2)That a large number of them had been converted, and a church organized;

(3)That their conversion, and the organization of a church in such a city were events that would be known abroad; and,

(4)That it had been accomplished entirely under the labor of Paul and his companions.

To their knowledge of him, therefore, and to his success there, he could confidently appeal as a testimonial of his character. The characteristics of this commendatory epistle, he proceeds immediately to state. The general sense is, that they were the letter of recommendation which God had given to him; and that their conversion under his ministry was the public testimonial of his character which all might see and read.

Written in our hearts - A few mss. and versions read thus, "your hearts;" and Doddridge has adopted this reading, and supposes that it means that the change produced not only in their external conduct, but in their inward temper, was so great, that all must see that it was an unanswerable attestation to his ministry. But there is not sufficient authority for changing the text; nor is it necessary. The sense is, probably, that this letter was. as it

were, written on his heart. It was not merely that Paul had a tender affection for them, as Clarke supposes; nor was it that he regarded them as "a copy of the letter of recommendation from Christ written in his heart," according to the fanciful conceit of Macknight; but Paul's idea seems to have been this. He is speaking of the testimonial which he had from God. That testimonial consisted in the conversion of the Corinthians. This he says was written on his heart. It was not a cold letter of introduction, but it was such as, while it left him no room to doubt that God had sent him, also affected his feelings, and was engraved on his soul. It was to him, therefore, far more valuable than any mere letter of commendation or of introduction could be. It was a direct testimonial from God to his own heart of his approbation, and of his having appointed him to the apostolic office. All the difficulty, therefore, which has been felt by commentators in this passage, may be obviated by supposing that Paul here speaks of this testimonial or epistle as addressed to himself, and as satisfactory to him, In the other characteristics which he enumerates, he speaks of it as suited to be a letter commendatory of himself to others.

Known and read of all men - Corinth was a large, splendid, and dissipated city. Their conversion, therefore, would be known afar. All people would hear of it; and their reformation, their subsequent life under the instruction of Paul, and the attestation which God had given among them to his labors, was a sufficient testimonial to the world at large, that God had called him to the apostolic office.

Verse 3

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared - You are made manifest as the epistle of Christ; or you, being made manifest, are the epistle, etc. They had been made manifest to be such by their conversion. The sense is, it is plain, or evident, that ye are the epistle of Christ.

To be the epistle of Christ - That which Christ has sent to be our testimonial. He has given this letter of recommendation. He has converted you by our ministry, and that is the best evidence which we can have that we have been sent by him, and that our labor is accepted by him. Your conversion is his work, and it is his public attestation to our fidelity in his cause.

Ministered by us - The idea here is, that Christ had employed their ministry in accomplishing this. They were Christ's letter, but it had been prepared by the instrumentality of the apostles. It had not been prepared by

him independently of their labors, but in connection with, and as the result of those labors. Christ, in writing this epistle, so to speak, has used our aid; or employed us as amanuenses (copyists).

Written not with ink - Paul continues and varies the image in regard to this "epistle," so that he may make the testimony borne to his fidelity and success more striking and emphatic. He says, therefore, that that it was not written as letters of introduction are, with ink - by traces drawn on a lifeless substance, and in lines that easily fade, or that may become easily illegible, or that can be read only by a few, or that may be soon destroyed.

But with the Spirit of the living God - In strong contrast thus with letters written with ink. By the Spirit of God moving on the heart, and producing that variety of graces which constitute so striking and so beautiful an evidence of your conversion. If written by the Spirit of the living God, it was far more valuable, and precious, and permanent than any record which could be made by ink. Every trace of the Spirit's influences on the heart was an undoubted proof that God had sent the apostles; and was a proof which they would much more sensibly and tenderly feel than they could any letter of recommendation written in ink.

Not in tables of stone - It is generally admitted that Paul here refers to the evidences of the divine mission of Moses which was given by the Law engraved on tablets of stone, compare 2 Corinthians 3:7. Probably those who were false teachers among the Corinthians were Jews, and had insisted much on the divine origin and permanency of the Mosaic institutions. The Law had been engraved on stone by the hand of God himself; and had thus the strongest proofs of divine origin, and the divine attestation to its pure and holy nature. To this fact the friends of the Law, and the advocates for the permanency of the Jewish institutions, would appeal. Paul says, on the other hand, that the testimonials of the divine favor through him were not on tablets of stone. They were frail, and easily broken. There was no life in them (compare 2 Corinthians 3:6 and 2 Corinthians 3:7); and valuable and important as they were, yet they could not be compared with the testimonials which God had given to those who successfully preached the gospel.

But in fleshly tables of the heart - In truths engraved on the heart. This testimonial was of more value than an inscription on stone, because:

(1) No hand but that of God could reach the heart, and inscribe these truths there.

(2) because it would be attended with a life-giving and living influence. It was not a mere dead letter.

(3) because it would be permanent. Stones, even where laws were engraved by the finger of God, would moulder and decay, and the inscription made there would be destroyed. But not so with that which was made on the heart. It would live forever. It would abide in other worlds. It would send its influence into all the relations of life; into all future scenes in this world; and that influence would be seen and felt in the world that shall never end. By all these considerations, therefore, the testimonials which Paul had of the divine approbation were more valuable than any mere letters of introduction, or human commendation could have been; and more valuable even than the attestation which was given to the divine mission of Moses himself.

Verse 4

And such trust have we - Such confidence have we that we are appointed by God, and that he accepts our work. Such evidence have we in the success of our labors; such irrefragable proof that God blesses us; that we have trust, or confidence, that we are sent by God, and are owned by him in our ministry. His confidence did not rest on letters of introduction from people, but in the evidence of the divine presence, and the divine acceptance of his work.

Through Christ - By the agency of Christ. Paul had no success which he did not trace to him; he had no joy of which he was not the source; he had no confidence, or trust in God of which Christ was not the author; he had no hope of success in his ministry which did not depend on him.

To God-ward - Toward God; in regard to God (πρὸς τὸν Θεόν pros ton Theon). Our confidence relates to God. It is confidence that he has appointed us, and sent us forth; and confidence that he will still continue to own and to bless us.

Verse 5

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves - This is evidently designed to guard against the appearance of boasting, or of self-confidence. He had spoken of his confidence; of his triumph; of his success; of his undoubted evidence that God had sent him. He here says, that he did not mean to be

understood as affirming that any of his success came from himself, or that he was able by his own strength to accomplish the great things which had been effected by his ministry. He well knew that he had no such self-sufficiency; and he would not insinuate, in the slightest manner, that he believed himself to be invested with any such power, compare note on John 15:5.

To think anything - (λογίσασθαι τι logisasthai ti). The word used here means properly to reason, think, consider; and then to reckon, count to, or impute to anyone. It is the word which is commonly rendered impute; see it explained more fully in the note on Romans 4:5. Robinson (*Lexicon*) renders it in this place, "to reason out, to think out, to find out by thinking." Doddridge renders it, "to reckon upon anything as from ourselves." Whitby renders it, "to reason; as if the apostle had said, We are unable by any reasoning of our own to bring people to conversion. Macknight gives a similar sense. Locke renders it, "Not as if I were sufficient of myself, to reckon upon anything as from myself:" and explains it to mean that Paul was not sufficient of himself by any strength of natural parts to attain the knowledge of the gospel truths which he preached. The word may be rendered here, to reckon, reason, think, etc.; but it should be confined to the immediate subject under consideration. It does not refer to thinking in general; or to the power of thought on any, and on all subjects - however true it may be in itself but to the preaching the gospel. And the expression may be regarded as referring to the following points, which are immediately under discussion:

(1) Paul did not feel that he was sufficient of himself to have reasoned or thought out the truths of the gospel. They were communicated by God.

(2) he had no power by reasoning to convince or convert sinners. That was all of God.

(3) he had no right to reckon on success by any strength of his own. All success was to be traced to God. It is, however, also true, that all our powers of thinking and reasoning are from God; and that we have no ability to think clearly, to reason calmly, closely, and correctly, unless he shall preside over our minds and give us clearness of thought. How easy is it for God to disarrange all our faculties, and produce insanity! How easy to suffer our minds to become unsettled, bewildered, and distracted with a multiplicity of

thoughts! How easy to cause every thing to appear cloudy, and dark, and misty! How easy to affect our bodies with weakness, langor, disease, and through them to destroy all power of close and consecutive thought! No one who considers on how many things the power of close thinking depends, can doubt that all our sufficiency in this is from God; and that we owe to him every clear idea on the subjects of common life, and on scientific subjects, no less certainly than we do in the truths of religion, compare the case of Bezaleel and Aholiab in common arts, Exodus 31:1-6, and Job 32:8.

Verse 6

Who also hath made us able ministers … - This translation does not quite meet the force of the original. It would seem to imply that Paul regarded himself and his fellowlaborers as people of talents, and of signal ability; and that he was inclined to boast of it. But this is not the meaning. It refers properly to his sense of the responsibility and difficulty of the work of the ministry; and to the fact that he did not esteem himself to be sufficient for this work in his own strength 2 Corinthians 2:16; 2 Corinthians 3:5; and he here says that God had made him sufficient: not able, talented, learned, but sufficient ἱκάνωσεν ἡμᾶς hikanōsen hēmashe has supplied our deficiency; he has rendered us competent, or fit; if a word may be coined after the manner of the Greek here, "he has sufficienced us for this work." There is no assertion, therefore, here, that they were people of talents, or special ability, but only that God had qualified them for their work, and made them by his grace sufficient to meet the toils and responsibilites of this arduous office.

Of the New Testament - Of the new covenant (note, Matthew 26:28), in contradistinction from the old covenant, which was established through Moses. They were appointed to go forth and make the provisions of that new covenant known to a dying world.

Not of the letter - Not of the literal, or verbal meaning, in contradistinction from the Spirit; see the notes on Romans 2:27, Romans 2:29; Romans 7:6. This is said, doubtless, in opposition to the Jews, and Jewish teachers. They insisted much on the letter of the Law, but entered little into its real meaning. They did not seek out the true spiritual sense of the Old Testament; and hence, they rested on the mere literal observance of the rites and ceremonies of religion without understanding their true nature and design. Their service, though in many respects conformed to the letter

of the Law, yet became cold, formal, and hypocritical; abounding in mere ceremonies, and where the heart had little to do. Hence, there was little pure spiritual worship offered to God; and hence also they rejected the Messiah whom the old covenant prefigured, and was designed to set forth.

For the letter killeth - compare notes on Romans 4:15; Romans 7:9-10. The mere letter of the Law of Moses. The effect of it was merely to produce condemnation; to produce a sense of guilt, and danger, and not to produce pardon, relief, and joy. The Law denounced death; condemned sin in all forms; and the effect of it was to produce a sense of guilt and condemnation.

But the spirit giveth life - The spirit, in contradistinction from the mere literal interpretation of the Scriptures. The Spirit, that is, Christ, says Locke, compare 2 Corinthians 3:17. The spirit here means, says Bloomfield, that new spiritual system, the gospel. The Spirit of God speaking in us, says Doddridge. The spirit here seems to refer to the New Testament, or the new dispensation in contradistinction from the old. That was characterized mainly by its strictness of Law, and by its burdensome rites, and by the severe tone of its denunciation for sin. It did not in itself provide a way of pardon and peace. Law condemns; it does not speak of forgiveness. On the contrary, the gospel, a spiritual system, is designed to impart life and comfort to the soul. It speaks peace. It comes not to condemn, but to save. It discloses a way of mercy, and it invites all to partake and live. It is called "spirit," probably because its consolations are imparted and secured by the Spirit of God - the source of all true life to the soul. It is the dispensation of the Spirit; and it demands a spiritual service - a service that is free, and elevated, and tending eminently to purify the heart, and to save the soul; see the note on 2 Corinthians 3:17.

Verse 7

But if the ministration of death - In the previous verses, Paul had referred incidentally to the institutions of Moses, and to the superiority of the gospel. He had said that the former were engraved on stones, but the latter on the heart 2 Corinthians 3:3; that the letter of the former tended to death, but the latter to life 2 Corinthians 3:6. This sentiment he proceeds further to illustrate, by showing in what the superior glory of the gospel consisted. The design of the whole is, to illustrate the nature, and to show the importance of the ministerial office; and the manner in which the duties of that office were to be performed. That the phrase "ministration of death"

refers to the Mosaic institutions, the connection sufficiently indicates, 2 Corinthians 3:13-15. The word "ministration" (διακονία diakonia) means, properly, ministry; the office of ministering in divine things. It is usually applied to the officers of the church in the New Testament, Acts 1:17, Acts 1:25; Romans 11:13; 1 Corinthians 12:5.

The word here, however, seems to refer to the whole arrangement under the Mosaic economy, by which his laws were promulgated, and perpetuated. The expression "a ministration - written and engraved on stone," is somewhat harsh; but the sense evidently is, the ministration of a covenant, or of laws written on stones. The word "ministration "there refers to the arrangement, office, etc. by which the knowledge of these laws was maintained; the ministering under a system like that of the Jewish; or, more strictly, the act and occasion on which Moses himself ministered, or promulgated that system to the Jews, and when the glory of the work was irradiated even from His countenance. And the purpose of the apostle is to show that the ministry of the gospel is more glorious than even the ministry of Moses, when he was admitted near to God on the holy mountain; and when such a glory attended his receiving and promulgating the Law. It is called the "ministration of death," because it tended to condemnation; it did not speak of pardon; it was suited only to deepen the sense of sin, and to produce alarm and dread; see the note on 2 Corinthians 3:6.

Written and engraven in stones - The Ten Commandments - the substance of all the Mosaic institutes, and the principal laws of his economy - were written or engraved on tables of stone.

Was glorious - Was attended with magnificence and splendor. The glory here referred to, consisted in the circumstance of sublimity and grandeur in which the Law of Moses was given, It was:

(1)The glory of God as he was manifested on Mount Sinai, as the Lawgiver and Ruler of the people.

(2)the glory of the attending circumstances, of thunder, fire, etc. in which God appeared. The Law was given in these circumstances. Its giving - called here the "ministration" - was amidst such displays of the glory of God. It was,

(3)A high honor and glory for Moses to be permitted to approach so near to God; to commune with him; and to receive at his hand the Law for his people, and for the world. These were circumstances of imposing majesty

and grandeur, which, however, Paul says were eclipsed and surpassed by the ministry of the gospel.

So that the children of Israel … - In Exodus 34:29-30, it is said, that "When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone, while He talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him." The word rendered "steadfastly behold" (ἀτενίσαι atenisai), means to gaze intently upon; to look steadily, or constantly, or fixedly; see the note on Acts 1:10. There was a dazzling splendor, an irradiation; a diffusion of light, such that they could not look intently and steadily upon it - as we cannot look steadily at the sun. How this was produced, is not known. It cannot be accounted for from natural causes, and was doubtless designed to be to the Israelites an attestation that Moses had been with God, and was commissioned by him. They would see:

(1)That it was unnatural, such as no known cause could produce; and,

(2)Not improbably they would recognize a resemblance to the manner in which God usually appeared - the glory of the Shechinah in which he so frequently manifested himself to them. It would be to them, therefore, a demonstration that Moses had been with God.

Which glory was to be done away - The splendor of that scene was transitory. It did not last. It was soon destroyed (τὴν καταργουμένην tēn katargoumenēnIt was not adapted or designed long to continue. This does not mean, as Doddridge supposes, "soon to be abolished in death;" or, as others, "ceasing with youth;" but it means, that the shining or the splendor was transitory; it was soon to cease; it was not designed to be permanent. Neither the wonderful scenes accompanying the giving of the Law on Sinai, nor the shining on the countenance of Moses, was designed to abide. The thunders of Sinai would cease to roll; the lightenings to play; the visible manifestations of the presence of God would all be gone; and the supernatural illumination of the face of Moses also would soon cease - perhaps as Macknight, Bloomfield, and others suppose, as a prefiguration of the abrogation of the glory of the whole system of the Levitical law. Paul certainly means to say, that the glory of Moses, and of his dispensation, was a fading glory; but that the glory of the gospel would be permanent, and increasing forever.

Verse 8

How shall not the ministration of the Spirit - This is an argument from the less to the greater. Several things in it are worthy of notice:

(1) The proper contrast to the "ministration of death" 2 Corinthians 3:7, would have been ‹ministration of life.‘ But Paul chose rather to call it the ‹ministration of the spirit;‘ as the source of life; or as conferring higher dignity on the gospel than to have called it simply the ministration of life.

(2) by the "Spirit" here is manifestly meant the Holy Spirit; and the whole phrase denotes the gospel, or the preaching of the gospel, by which eminently the Holy Spirit is imparted.

(3) it is the high honor of the gospel ministry, that it is the means by which the Holy Spirit is imparted to human beings. It is designed to secure the salvation of people by his agency; and it is through the ministry that the Holy Spirit is imparted, the heart renewed, and the soul saved. The work of the ministry is, therefore, the most important and honorable in which man can engage.

Be rather glorious -

(1) Because that of Moses tended to death; this to life.

(2) because that was engraved on stone; this is engraved on the heart.

(3) because that was the mere giving of a law; this is connected with the renovating influences of the Holy Spirit.

(4) because that was soon to pass away. All the magnificence of the scene was soon to vanish. But this is to remain. Its influence and effect are to he everlasting. It is to stretch into eternity; and its main glory is to be witnessed in souls renewed and saved; and amidst the splendors of heaven. "The work of the Spirit of God on the heart of a rational being, is much more important than any dead characters which can be engraved on insensible stones" - Doddridge.

Verse 9

For if the ministration of condemnation - Of Moses in giving the Law, the effect of which is to produce condemnation. Law condemns the

guilty; it does not save them. It denounces punishment; it contains no provisions of pardon. To pardon is to depart from the Law; and must be done under the operation of another system - since a law which contains a provision for the pardon of offenders, and permits them to escape, would be a burlesque in legislation. The tendency of the Mosaic institutions, therefore, was to produce a sense of condemnation. And so it will be found by all who attempt to be justified by the Law. It will tend to, and result in, their condemnation.

Be glory - Be glorious; or be glory itself - It was glorious as a manifestation of the holiness and justice of God; and glorious in the attending circumstances. No event in our world has been more magnificent in the circumstances of external majesty and splendor than the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai.

The ministration of righteousness - The gospel; the promulgation of the plan of mercy. It is called "the ministration of righteousness," in contradistinction from the Law of Moses, which was a "ministration of condemnation." The word "righteousness," however, does not exactly express the force of the original word. That word is δικαιοσύνης dikaiosunēsand it stands directly opposed to the word κατακρισεως katakriseōs"condemnation." It should be rendered ‹the ministration of justification;' the plan by which God justifies people; see the note, Romans 1:17. The Law of Moses condemns; the gospel is the plan by which man is justified. And if that which condemns could be glorious, much more must that be by which people can be justified, acquitted, and saved. The superior glory of the gospel, therefore, consists in the fact that it is a scheme to justify and save lost sinners. And this glory consists:

(1) In the fact that it can be done when all law condemns.

(2) in the showing forth of the divine character while it is done, as just, and merciful, and benevolent in doing it - blending all his great and glorious attributes together - while the Law disclosed only one of His attributes - His justice.

(3) in the manner in which it is done. It is by the incarnation of the Son of God - a far more glorious manifestation of deity than was made on Mount Sinai. It is by the toils, and sufferings, and death of him who made the atonement, and by the circumstances of awful and imposing grandeur

which attended his death, when the sun was darkened. and the rocks were rent - far more grand and awful scenes than occurred when the Law was given. It is by the resurrection and ascension of the Redeemer - scenes far more sublime than all the external glories of Sinai when the Law was given.

(4) in the effects, or results. The one condemns; the other justifies and saves. The effect of the one is seen in the convictions of conscience, in alarm, in a sense of guilt, in the conscious desert of condemnation, and in the apprehension of eternal punishment. The other is seen in sins forgiven; in peace of conscience; in the joy of pardon; in the hope of heaven; in comfort and triumph on the bed of death, and amidst the glories of heaven.

Verse 10

For even that which was made glorious - (τὸ δεδοξασμένον to dedoxasmenon). That was splendid, excellent, or glorious. This refers doubtless, to the laws and institutions of Moses, especially to the primary giving of the Law. Paul does not deny that it had an honor and majesty such, in some respects, as the Jews claimed for it. It was glorious in the manner in which it was given; it was glorious in the purity of the Law itself; and it was glorious, or splendid in the magnificent and imposing ritual in which the worship of God was celebrated. But all this was surpassed in the brighter glory of the gospel.

Had no glory - Greek: "Was not glorious, or splendid" (οὐδὲ δεδόξασται oude deoxastaiIt had comparatively no glory or splendor. Its glory was all eclipsed. It was like the splendor of the moon and stars compared with the bright light of the sun.

By reason of the glory that excelleth - In the gospel; in the incarnation, life, sufferings, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus; in the pardon of sin; in the peace and joy of the believer; and in the glories of the heavenly world to which the gospel elevates dying men.

Verse 11

For if that which is done away … - The splendor that attended the giving of the Law; the bright shining of the face of Moses; and the ritual institutions of his religion. It was to be done away. It was never designed to be permanent. Everything in it had a transient existence, and was so designed. Yet it was attended, Paul admits, with much that was magnificent, and splendid. He had, in the previous verses, stated several important

differences between the Law and the gospel. He here states another. The Law he calls τὸ καταργόυμενον to katargoumenonthe thing which was to be made to cease; to be put an end to; to be done away with; to be abolished. It had no permanency; and it was designed to have none. Its glory, therefore, great as in many respects it might be, could not be compared with that which was to be permanent - as the light of the stars fades away at the rising sun. It is implied here, that it was originally designed that the Mosaic institutions should not be permanent; that they should be mere shadows and types of better things; and that when the things which they adumbrated should appear, the shadows would vanish of course. This idea is one which prevails everywhere in the New Testament, and which the sacred writers are often at great pains to demonstrate.

Was glorious - Greek "By glory" (διὰ δόξης dia doxēsThat is, it was attended by glory; it was introduced by glory, it was encompassed with glory when it was established The idea here is, not that it was glorious in itself, but that it was accompanied with splendor and majesty.

That which remaineth - The gospel τὸ μένον to menonThe thing that is to remain; that is permanent, abiding, perpetual; that has no principle of decay, and whose characteristic it is, that it is everlasting. The gospel is permanent, or abiding:

(1) Because it is designed to remain immutable through the remotest ages. It is not to be superseded by any new economy, or institution. It is the dispensation under which the affairs of the world are to be wound up, and under which the world is to close; see the note, 1 Corinthians 15:51.

(2) its effects on the heart are permanent. It is complete in itself. It is not to be succeeded by any other system, and it looks to no other system in order to complete or perfect its operations on the soul.

(3) its effects are to abide forever. They will exist in heaven. They are to be seen in the soul that shall be recovered from sin, and that shall be glorious in the bosom of God forever and ever. The Mosaic system - glorious as it was - shall be remembered as introducing the gospel; the gospel shall be remembered as directly fitting for heaven. Its most great and glorious results shall be seen in the permanent and eternal joys of heaven. The gospel contemplates a great, permanent, and eternal good, adapted to all ages, all climes, all people, and all worlds. It is, therefore, so much more

glorious than the limited, temporary, and partial good of the Mosaic system, that that may be said in comparison to have had no glory.

Verse 12

Seeing then that we have such hope - Hope properly is a compound emotion, made up of a desire for an object, and an expectation of obtaining it. If there is no desire for it; or if the object is not pleasant and agreeable, there is no hope, though there may be expectation - as in the expectation of the pestilence, of famine, or sickness, or death. If there is no expectation of it, but a strong desire, there is no hope, as in cases where there is a strong desire of wealth, or fame, or pleasure; or where a man is condemned for murder, and has a strong desire but no prospect of pardon; or where a man is shipwrecked, and has a strong desire, but no expectation of again seeing his family and friends. In such cases, despondency or despair are the results. It is the union of the two feelings in proper proportions which constitutes hope. There has been considerable variety of views among expositors in regard to the proper meaning of the word in this place. Mr. Locke supposes that Paul here means the honorable employment of an apostle and minister of the gospel, or the glory belonging to the ministry in the gospel; and that his calling it "hope," instead of "glory," which the connection would seem to demand, is the language of modesty. Rosenmuller understands it of the hope of the perpetual continuance of the gospel dispensation. Macknight renders it" persuasion," and explains it as meaning the full persuasion or assurance that the gospel excels the Law in the manner of its introduction; its permanency, &c, A few remarks may, perhaps, make it clear:

(1) It refers primarily to Paul, and the other ministers of the gospel. It is not properly the Christian hope as such to which he refers, but it is that which the ministers of the gospel had.

(2) it refers to all that he had said before about the superiority of the gospel to the Law; and it is designed to express the result of all that on his mind, and on the minds of his fellow-laborers.

(3) It refers to the prospect, confidence, persuasion, anticipation which he had as the effect of what he had just said. It is the prospect of eternal life; the clear expectation of acceptance, and the anticipation of heaven, based on the fact that this was a ministry of the Spirit 2 Corinthians 3:8; that it

was a ministry showing the way of justification 2 Corinthians 3:9; and that it was never to be done away, but to abide forever 2 Corinthians 3:11. On all these this strong hope was founded; and in view of these, Paul expressed himself clearly, not enigmatically; and not in types and figures, as Moses did. Everything about the gospel was clear and plain; and this led to the confident expectation and assurance of heaven. The word "hope," therefore, in this place will express the effect on the mind of Paul in regard to the work of the ministry, produced by the group of considerations which he had suggested, showing that the gospel was superior to the Law; and that it was the ground of more clear and certain confidence and hope than anything which the Law could furnish.

We use - We employ; we are accustomed to. He refers to the manner in which he preached the gospel.

Great plainness of speech - Margin, boldness. We use the word "plainness" as applied to speech chiefly in two senses:

(1)To denote boldness, faithfulness, candor; in opposition to trimming, timidity, and unfaithfulness; and,

(2)To denote clearness, intelligibleness, and simplicity, in opposition to obscurity, mist, and highly-worked and labored forms of expression.

The connection here shows that the latter is the sense in which the phrase here is to be understood: see 2 Corinthians 3:13. It denotes openness, simplicity, freedom from the obscurity which arises from enigmatical and parabolical, and typical modes of speaking. This stands in opposition to figure, metaphor, and allegory - to an affected and labored concealment of the idea in the manner which was common among the Jewish doctors and pagan philosophers, where their meaning was carefully concealed from the common, and from all except the initiated. It stands opposed also to the necessary obscurity arising from typical institutions like those of Moses. And the doctrine of the passage is, that such is the clearness and fulness of the Christian revelation, arising from the fact, that it is the last economy, and that it does not look to the future, that its ministers may and should use clear and intelligible language. They should not use language abounding in metaphor and allegory. They should not use unusual terms. They should not draw their words and illustrations from science. They should not use mere technical language. They should not attempt to veil or cloak their meaning. They should not seek a refined and overworked style. They should use expressions which other people use; and express themselves as far as

possible in the language of common life. What is preaching worth that is not understood? Why should a man talk at all unless he is intelligible? Who was ever more plain and simple in his words and illustrations than the Lord Jesus?

Verse 13

And not as Moses - Our conduct is not like that of Moses. We make no attempt to conceal anything in regard to the nature, design, and duration of the gospel. We leave nothing designedly in mystery.

Which put a vail over his face - That is, when he came down from Mount Sinai, and when his face shone. Exodus 34:33, "and until Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face." He put off this veil whenever he went to speak with God, but put on again when he delivered his commands to the people, What was the design of this, Moses has not himself declared. The statement which he makes in Exodus would lead us to suppose that it was on account of the exceeding brightness and dazzling splendor which shone around him, and which made it difficult to look intently upon him; and that this was in part the reason, even Paul himself seems to intimate in 2 Corinthians 3:7. He, however, in this verse intimates that there was another design, which was that he might be, as Doddridge expresses it, "a kind of type and figure of his own dispensation."

That the children of Israel - Mr. Locke understands this of the apostles, and supposes that it means, "We do not veil the light, so that the obscurity of what we deliver should hinder the children of Israel from seeing in the Law which was to be done away, Christ who is the end of the Law." But this interpretation is forced and unnatural. The phrase rendered "that" πρός τὸ pros toevidently connects what is affirmed here with the statement about Moses; and shows that the apostle means to say that Moses put the veil on his face in order that the children of Israel should not be able to see to the end of his institutions. That Moses had such a design, and that the putting on of the veil was emblematic of the nature of his institutions, Paul here distinctly affirms. No one can prove that this was not his design; and in a land and time when types, and emblems, and allegorical modes of speech were much used, it is highly probable that Moses meant to intimate that the end and full purpose of his institutions were designedly concealed.

Could not stedfastly look - Could not gaze intently upon (ἀτενίσαι atenisai); see the note on 2 Corinthians 3:7. They could not clearly discern it; there was obscurity arising from the fact of the designed concealment.

He did not intend that they should clearly see the full purport and design of the institutions which he established.

To the end - (εἰς τὸ τέλος eis to telos). Unto the end, purpose, design, or ultimate result of the Law which he established. A great many different interpretations have been proposed of this. The meaning seems to me to be this: There was a glory and splendor in that which the institutions of Moses typified, which the children of Israel were not permitted then to behold. There was a splendor and luster in the face of Moses, which they could not gaze upon, and therefore he put a veil over it to diminish its intense brightness. In like manner there was a glory and splendor in the ultimate design and scope of his institutions, in that to which they referred, which they were not then "able," that is, prepared to look on, and the exceeding brightness of which he of design concealed. This was done by obscure types and figures, that resembled a veil thrown over a dazzling and splendid object.

The word "end," then, I suppose, does not refer to termination, or close, but to the "design, scope, or purpose" of the Mosaic institutions; to that which they were intended to introduce and adumbrate. that end was the Messiah, and the glory of his institutions; see the note on Romans 10: "Christ is the end of the Law." And the meaning of Paul, I take to be, is, that there was a splendor and a glory in the gospel which the Mosaic institutions were designed to typify, which was so great that the children of Israel were not fully prepared to see it, and that he designedly threw over that glory the veil of obscure types and figures; as he threw over his face a veil that partially concealed its splendor. Thus, interpreted there is a consistency in the entire passage, and very great beauty. Paul, in the following verses, proceeds to state that the veil to the view of the Jews of his time was not removed; that they still looked to the obscure types and institutions of the Mosaic Law rather than on the glory which they were designed to adumbrate; as if they should choose to look upon the veil on the face of Moses rather than on the splendor which it concealed.

Of that which is abolished - Or rather to be abolished, τοῦ καταργουμένου to katargoumenou), whose nature, design, and intention it was that it should be abolished. It was never designed to be permanent; and Paul speaks of it here as a thing that was known and indisputable that the Mosaic institutions were designed to be abolished.

Verse 14

But their minds were blinded - The word used here (πωρόω pōroō) means rather to harden; to make hard like stone; and then to make dull or stupid. It is applied to the heart, in Mark 6:52; Mark 8:17; to persons, in Romans 11:7; and to the eyes, in Job 17:7. Paul refers here to the fact that the understandings of the Jews were stupid, dull, and insensible, so that they did not see clearly the design and end of their own institutions. He states simply the fact; he does not refer to the cause of it. The fact that the Jews were thus stupid and dull is often affirmed in the New Testament.

For until this day … - The sense of this is, that even to the time when Paul wrote, it was a characteristic of the great mass of the Jewish people, that they did not understand the true sense of their own Scriptures. They did not understand its doctrines in regard to the Messiah. A veil seems to be thrown over the Old Testament when they read it, as there was over the face of Moses, so that the glory of their own Scriptures is concealed from their view, as the glory of the face of Moses was hidden.

Of the Old Testament - Greek, "of the old covenant." See this word "testament," or covenant, explained in the notes on 1 Corinthians 11:25. This, I believe, is the only instance in which the Scriptures of the Jews are called the "Old Testament," or covenant, in the Bible. It was, of course, not a name which they used, or would use; but it is now with Christians the common appellation. No doubt can be entertained but that Paul uses the terms in the same manner in which we now do, and refers to all the inspired writings of the Jews.

Which vail is done away in Christ - In the manifestation, or appearance of Jesus the Messiah, the veil is removed. The obscurity which rested on the prophecies and types of the former dispensation is withdrawn; and as the face of Moses could have been distinctly seen if the veil on his face had been removed, so it is in regard to the true meaning of the Old Testament by the coming of the Messiah. What was obscure is now made clear; and the prophecies are so completely fulfilled in him, that his coming has removed the covering, and shed a clear light over them all. Many of the prophecies, for example, until the Messiah actually appeared, appeared obscure, and almost contradictory. Those which spoke of him, for illustration, as man and as God; as suffering, and yet reigning; as dying, and yet as ever-living; as a mighty Prince, a conqueror, and a king, and yet as a man of sorrows; as humble, and yet glorious: all seemed difficult to be reconciled until they were seen to harmonize in Jesus of Nazareth. Then

they were plain, and the veil was taken away. Christ is seen to answer all the previous descriptions of him in the Old Testament; and his coming casts a clear light on all which was before obscure.

Verse 15

But even unto this day - To the time when Paul wrote this Epistle, about 30 years after Christ was put to death. But it is still as true as it was in the time of Paul; and the character and conduct of the Jews now so entirely accords with the description which he gives of them in his time, as to show that he drew from nature, and as to constitute one of the strong incidental proofs that the account in the New Testament is true. Of no other people on earth, probably, would a description be accurate eighteen hundred years after it was made.

When Moses is read - When the five books of Moses are read, as they were regularly and constantly in their synagogues; see the note on Luke 4:16.

The vail is upon their heart - They do not see the true meaning and beauty of their own Scriptures - a description as applicable to the Jews now as it was to those in the time of Paul.

Verse 16

Nevertheless - This is not always to continue. The time is coming when they shall understand their own Scriptures, and see their true beauty.

When it shall turn to the Lord - When the Jewish people shall be converted. The word "it" here refers undoubtedly to "Israel" in 2 Corinthians 3:13; and the sense is, that their blindness is not always to remain; there is to be a period when they shall turn to God, and shall understand his promises, and become acquainted with the true nature of their own religion. This subject the apostle has discussed at much greater length in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; see the notes on that chapter.

The vail shall be taken away - They shall then understand the true meaning of the prophecies, and the true nature of their own institutions. They shall see that they refer to the Lord Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, and the true Messiah. The genuine sense of their sacred oracles shall break upon their view with full and irresistible light. There may be an allusion in the language here to the declaration in Isaiah 25:7, "And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations." This verse teaches:

(1) That the time will come when the Jews shall be converted to Christianity; expressed here by their turning unto the Lord, that is, the Lord Jesus; see the note, Acts 1:24.

(2) it seems to be implied that their conversion will be a conversion of "the people" at large; a conversion that shall be nearly simultaneous; a conversion "en masse." Such a conversion we have reason to anticipate of the Jewish nation.

(3) the effect of this will be to make them acquainted with the true sense of their own Scriptures, and the light and beauty of the sayings of their own prophets, Now they are in deep darkness on the sub ject; then they will see how entirely they meet and harmonize in the Lord Jesus.

(4) the true and only way of having a correct and full meaning of the Bible is by turning unto God. Love to Him, and a disposition to do His will, is the best means of interpreting the Bible.

Verse 17

Now the Lord is that Spirit - The word "Lord" here evidently refers to the Lord Jesus; see 2 Corinthians 3:16. It may be observed in general in regard to this word, that where it occurs in the New Testament unless the connection require us to understand it of God, it refers to the Lord Jesus. It was the common name by which he was known; see John 20:13; John 21:7, John 21:12; Ephesians 4:1, Ephesians 4:5. The design of Paul in this verse seems to be to account for the "liberty" which he and the other apostles had, or for the boldness, openness, and plainness 2 Corinthians 3:12 which they evinced in contradistinction from the Jews. who so little understood the nature of their institutions. He had said 2 Corinthians 3:6, that he was a minister "not of the letter, but of the Spirit;" and he had stated that the Old Testament was not understood by the Jews who adhered to the literal interpretation of the Scriptures. He here says, that the Lord Jesus was "the Spirit" to which he referred, and by which he was enabled to understand the Old Testament so as to speak plainly, and without obscurity. The sense is, that Christ was the Spirit; that is, the sum, the substance of the Old Testament. The figures, types, prophecies, etc. all centered in him, and he was the end of all those institutions. If contemplated as having reference to

him, it was easy to understand them. This I take to be the sentiment of the pas sage, though expositors have been greatly divided in regard to its meaning. Thus explained, it does not mean absolutely and abstractly that the Lord Jesus was "a Spirit," but that he was the sum, the essence, the end, and the purport of the Mosaic rites, the spirit of which Paul had spoken in 2 Corinthians 3:6, as contradistinguished from the letter of the Law.

And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty - This is a general truth designed to illustrate the particular sentiment which he had just advanced. The word "liberty" here (ἐλευθερία eleutheria) refers, I think, to freedom in speaking; the power of speaking openly, and freely, as in 2 Corinthians 3:12. It states the general truth, that the effect of the Spirit of God was to give light and clearness of view; to remove obscurity from a subject, and to enable one to see it plainly. This would be a truth that could not be denied by the Jews, who held to the doctrine that the Spirit of God revealed truth, and it must be admitted by all. Under the influence of that Spirit, therefore, Paul says, that he was able to speak with openness, and boldness; that he had a clear view of truth, which the mass of the Jews had not; and that the system of religion which he preached was open, plain, and clear. The word "freedom," would perhaps, better convey the idea. "There is freedom from the dark and obscure views of the Jews; freedom from their prejudices, and their superstitions; freedom from the slavery and bondage of sin; the freedom of the children of God, who have clear views of him as their Father and Redeemer and who are enabled to express those views openly and boldly to the world."

Verse 18

But we all - All Christians. The discussion in the chapter has related mainly to the apostles; but this declaration seems evidently to refer to all Christians, as distinguished from the Jews.

With open face - compare note on 1 Corinthians 13:12. Tyndale renders this: "and now the Lord's glory appeareth in us all as in a glass." The sense is, "with unveiled face," alluding to the fact 2 Corinthians 3:13 that the face of Moses was veiled, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look on it. In contradistinction from that, Paul says that Christians are enabled to look upon the glory of the Lord in the gospel without a veil - without any obscure intervening medium.

Beholding as in a glass - On the word "glass, and the sense in which it is used in the New Testament, see the note on 1 Corinthians 13:12. The

word used here κατοπτριζόμενοι katoptrizomenoihas been very variously rendered. Macknight renders it, “we all reflecting as mirrors the glory of the Lord.” Doddridge, “beholding as by a glass.” Locke, “with open countenances as mirrors, reflecting the glory of the Lord.” The word κατοπτρίζω *katoptrizō* occurs no where else in the New Testament. It properly means to look in a mirror; to behold as in a mirror. The mirrors of the ancients were made of burnished metal, and they reflected images with great brilliancy and distinctness. And the meaning is, that the gospel reflected the glory of the Lord; it was, so to speak, the mirror - the polished, burnished substance in which the glory of the Lord shone, and where that glory was irradiated and reflected so that it might be seen by Christians. There was no veil over it; no obscurity; nothing to break its dazzling splendor, or to prevent its meeting the eye. Christians, by looking on the gospel, could see the glorious perfections and plans of God as bright, and clear, and brilliant as they could see a light reflected from the burnished surface of the mirror. So to speak, the glorious perfections of God shone from heaven; beamed upon the gospel, and were thence reflected to the eye and the heart of the Christian, and had the effect of transforming them into the same image. This passage is one of great beauty, and is designed to set forth the gospel as being “the reflection” of the infinite glories of God to the minds and hearts of people.

The glory of the Lord - The splendor, majesty, and holiness of God as manifested in the gospel, or of the Lord as incarnate. The idea is, that God was clearly and distinctly seen in the gospel. There was no obscurity, no veil, as in the case of Moses. In the gospel they were permitted to look on the full splendor of the divine perfections - the justice, goodness, mercy, and benevolence of God - to see him as he is with undimmed and unveiled glory. The idea is, that the perfections of God shine forth with splendor and beauty in the gospel, and that we are permitted to look on them clearly and openly.

Are changed into the same image - It is possible that there may be an allusion here to the effect which was produced by looking into an ancient mirror. Such mirrors were made of burnished metal, and the reflection from them would be intense. If a strong light were thrown on them, the rays would be cast by reflection on the face of him who looked on the mirror, and it would be strongly illuminated. And the idea may be, that the glory of God, the splendor of the divine perfections, was thrown on the gospel, so to

speak like a bright light on a polished mirror; and that that glory was reflected from the gospel on him who contemplated it, so that he appeared to be transformed into the same image. Locke renders it: “We are changed into his very image by a continued succession of glory, as it were, streaming upon us from the Lord.” The figure is one of great beauty; and the idea is, that by placing ourselves within the light of the gospel; by contemplating the glory that shines there, we become changed into the likeness of the same glory, and conformed to that which shines there with so much splendor.

By contemplating the resplendent face of the blessed Redeemer, we are changed into something of the same image. It is a law of our nature that we are moulded, in our moral feelings, by the persons with whom we associate, and by the objects which we contemplate. We become insensibly assimilated to those with whom we have social contact, and to the objects with which we are familiar. We imbibe the opinions, we copy the habits, we imitate the manners, we fall into rite customs of those with whom we have daily conversation, and whom we make our companions and friends. Their sentiments insensibly become our sentiments, and their ways our ways. It is thus with the books with which we are familiar. We are insensibly, but certainly moulded into conformity to the opinions, maxims, and feelings which are there expressed. Our own sentiments undergo a gradual change, and we are likened to those with which in this manner we are conversant.

So it is in regard to the opinions and feelings which from any cause we are in the habit of bringing before our minds. It is the way by which people become corrupted in their sentiments and feelings, in their contact with the world; it is the way in which amusements, and the company of the frivolous and the dissipated possess so much power; it is the way in which the young and inexperienced are beguiled and ruined; and it is the way in which Christians dim the luster of their piety, and obscure the brightness of their religion by their contact with the “happy and fashionable world. And it is on the same great principle that Paul says that by contemplating the glory of God in the gospel, we become insensibly, but certainly conformed to the same image, and made like the Redeemer. His image will be reflected on us. We shall imbibe his sentiments, catch his feelings, and be moulded into the image of his own purity. Such is the great and wise law of our nature;

and it is on this principle, and by this means, that God designs we should be "made" pure on earth, and "kept" pure in heaven forever.

From glory to glory - From one degree of glory to another. "The more we behold this brilliant and glorious light, the more do we reflect back its rays; that is, the more we contemplate the great truths of the Christian religion, the more do our minds become imbued with its spirit" - Bloomfield. This is said in contradistinction probably to Moses. The splendor on his face gradually died away. But not so with the light reflected from the gospel. It becomes deeper and brighter constantly. This sentinient is parallel to that expressed by the psalmist; "They go from strength to strength" Psalm 84:7; that is, they go from one degree of strength to another, or one degree of holiness to another, until they come to the full vision of God himself in heaven. The idea in the phrase before us is; that there is a continual increase of moral purity and holiness under the gospel until it results in the perfect glory of heaven. The "doctrine" is, that Christians advance in piety; and that this is done by the contemplation of the glory of God as it is revealed in the gospel.

As by the Spirit of the Lord - Margin, "Of the Lord of the Spirit." Greek "As from the Lord the Spirit." So Beza, Locke, Wolf, Rosenmuller, and Doddridge render it. The idea is, that it is by the Lord Jesus Christ, the spirit of the law, the spirit referred to by Paul above, 2 Corinthians 3:6, 2 Corinthians 3:17. It is done by the Holy Spirit procured or imparted by the Lord Jesus. This sentiment is in accordance with that which prevails everywhere in the Bible, that it is by the Holy Spirit alone that the heart is changed and purified. And the "object" of the statement here is, doubtless, to prevent the supposition that the change from "glory to glory" was produced in any sense by the "mere" contemplation of truth, or by any physical operation of such contemplation on the mind. It was by the Spirit of God alone that the heart was changed even under the gospel, and amidst the full blaze of its truth, Were it not for his agency, even the contemplation of the glorious truths of the gospel would be in vain, and would produce no saving effect on the human heart.

Remarks

1. The best of all evidences of a call to the office of the ministry is the divine blessing resting on our labors 2 Corinthians 3:1-2. If sinners are converted; if souls are sanctified; if the interests of pure religion are advanced; if by humble, zealous, and self-denying efforts, a man is enabled

so to preach as that the divine blessing shall rest constantly on his labors, it is among the best of all evidences that he is called of God, and is approved by him. And though it may be true, and is true, that people who are self-deceived, or are hypocrites, are sometimes the means of doing good, yet it is still true, as a general rule, that eminent, and long-continued success in the ministry is an evidence of God‘s acceptance, and that he has called a minister to this office. Paul felt this, and often appealed to it; and why may not others also?

2. A minister may appeal to the effect of the gospel among his own people as a proof that it is from God, 2 Corinthians 3:2-3. Nothing else would produce such effects as were produced at Corinth, but the power of God. If the wicked are reclaimed; if the in temperate and licentious are made temperate and pure; if the dishonest are made honest; and the scoffer learns to pray, under the gospel, it proves that it is from God. To such effects a minister may appeal as proof that the gospel which he preaches is from heaven. A system which will produce these effects must be true.

3. A minister should so live among a people as to be able to appeal to them with the utmost confidence in regard to the purity and integrity of his own character, 2 Corinthians 3:1-2. He should so live, and preach, and act, that he will be under no necessity of adducing testimonials from abroad in regard to his character. The effect of his gospel, and the tenor of his life, should be his best testimonial; and to that he should be able to appeal. A man who is under a necesity, constantly, or often, of defending his own character; of bolstering it up by testimonials from abroad; who is obliged to spend much of his time in defending his reputation, or who chooses to spend much of his time in defending it, has usually a character and reputation “not worth defending.” Let a man live as he ought to do, and he will, in the end, have a good reputation. Let him strive to do the will of God, and save souls, and he will have all the reputation which he ought to have. God will take care of his character; and will give him just as much reputation as it is desirable that he should have; see Psalm 37:5-6.

4. The church is, as it were, an epistle sent by the Lord Jesus, to show his character and will, 2 Corinthians 3:3. It is his representative on earth. It holds his truth. It is to imitate his example. It is to show how he lived. And it is to accomplish that which he would accomplish were he personally on

earth, and present among people - as a letter is designed to accomplish some important purpose of the writer when absent. The church, therefore, should be such as shall appropriately express the will and desire of the Lord Jesus. It should resemble him. It should hold his truth; and it should devote itself with untiring diligence to the great purpose of advancing his designs, and spreading his gospel around the world.

5. Religion has its seat in the heart, 2 Corinthians 3:3. It is engraved there. It is written not with ink, or engraved on stone, but it is written by the Spirit of God on the heart. That professed religion, therefore, which does not reach the heart, and which is not felt there, is false and delusive. There is no true religion which does not reach and affect the heart.

6. We should feel our dependence on God in all things, 2 Corinthians 3:5. We are dependent on him:

(1) For revelation itself. Man had no power of originating the truths which constitute revelation. They are the free and pure gift of God.

(2) for success in saving souls. God only can change the heart. It is not done by human reasoning; by any power of man; by any eloquence of persuasion. It is by the power of God; and if a minister of religion meets with any success, it will be by the presence and by the power of God alone.

(3) we are dependent on him for the power of thought at all; for clearness of intellect; for such a state of bodily health as to permit us to think; for bright conceptions; for ability to arrange our thoughts; for the power of expressing them clearly; for such a state of mind as shall be free from vain fancies, and vagaries, and eccentricities; and for such a state as shall mark our plans as those of common sense and prudence. On such plans much of the comfort of life depends; and on such plans depends also nearly all the success which people ever meet with in any virtuous and honorable calling. And if people “felt,” as they should do, how much they are dependent on God for the power of “clear thinking,” and for the characteristics of sound sense in their schemes, they would pray for it more than they do; and would be more grateful that such a rich blessing is so extensively conferred upon people.

7. Religion has a living power, 2 Corinthians 3:6. It is not the letter, but the spirit. It is not made up of forms and ceremonies. It does not consist in cold, external rites, however regular they may be; nor in formal prayer, or in stated seasons of devotion. All these will be dead and vain unless the heart is given to God, and to his service. If these are all, there is no religion. And if we have no better religion than that, we should at once abandon our hopes, and seek for that which does not kill, but which makes alive.

8. The office of the ministers of the gospel is glorious, and most honorable, 2 Corinthians 3:7-9. It is "far more" honorable than was the office of Moses; and their work is far more glorious than was his. his consisted in giving the Law on tables of stone; in the external splendor which attended its promulgation; and in introducing a system which must be soon done away. His was a ministry "of death" and of "condemnation." theirs is a ministration by which the Holy Spirit is communicated to people - through them as channels, or organs by which the saving grace of that Spirit is imparted; it is a work by which people are made righteous, justified, and accepted; it is a work whose effects are never to fade away, but which are to live amidst the splendors of heaven.

9. The responsibility and solemnity of the work of the ministry. It was a solemn and responsible work for Moses to give the Law amidst the thunders of Sinai to the children of Israel. It is much more solemn to be the medium by which the eternal truths of the gospel are made known to people. The one, imposing as it was, was designed to be temporary, and was soon to pass away. The other is to be eternal in its effects, and is to enter vitally and deeply into the eternal destiny of man. The one pertained to laws written on stone; the other to influences that are deeply and forever to affect the heart. No work can be more solemn and responsible than that through which the Holy Spirit, with renewing and sanctifying power, is conveyed to man; that which is connected with the justification of sinners; and that which in its effects is to be permanent as the soul itself, and to endure as long as God shall exist.

10. We see the folly of attempting to be justified by the Law, 2 Corinthians 3:7, 2 Corinthians 3:9. It is the ministration of death and of

condemnation. It speaks only to condemn. Law knows nothing of pardon. It is not given for that purpose; and no perfect law can contain within itself provisions for pardon. Besides, no one has ever complied with all the demands of the Law; no one ever will. All have sinned. But if all the demands of the Law be not complied with, it speaks only to condemn, James 2:10. If a man in other respects has been ever so good a citizen, and yet has committed murder, he must die. So says the Law. If a man has been ever so valiant, and fought ever so bravely, and yet is guilty of an act of treason, he must die. The question is not what he has been in in other respects, or what else he may, or may not have done, but has he committed This offence? If he has, the Law knows no forgiveness; and pronounces his condemnation. If pardoned, it must be by some other system than by the regular operation of Law. So with the sinner against God. If the Law is violated, it speaks only to condemn. If he is pardoned, it can be only by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

11. The danger of grieving the Holy Spirit, 2 Corinthians 3:8. The gospel is the field of the operations of the Holy Spirit in our world. It is the ministration of the Spirit. It is the channel by which his influences descend on man. To reject that gospel is to reject Him, and to cut off the soul from all possibility of being brought under his saving influence and power forever." He strives with people only in connection with the gospel; and all hope, therefore, of being brought under his saving power, is in attending to that gospel, and embracing its provisions. The multitudes, therefore, who are rejecting or neglecting that gospel, are throwing themselves beyond his saving influences; and placing themselves beyond the possibility of salvation.

12. We see the "guilt" of neglecting or rejecting the gospel. It is the scheme, and the only scheme for pardon, 2 Corinthians 3:8-10. It is a far more glorious manifestation of the goodness of God than the Law of Moses. It is the glorious and benevolent manifestation of God through the incarnation, the sufferings, and the death of his Son. It is the only plan of pardoning mercy that has been, or that will be revealed. If people are not pardoned through that, they are not pardoned at all. If they are not saved by that, they must die forever. What guilt is there, therefore, in neglecting and

despising it! What folly is there in turning away from its provisions of mercy, and neglecting to secure an interest in what it provides!

13. The gospel is to spread around the world, and endure to the end of time, 2 Corinthians 3:11. It is not like the institutions of Moses, to endure for a limited period, and then to be done away. The cloud and tempest; the thunder and lightning on Mount Sinai which attended the giving of the Law, soon disappeared. The unusual and unnatural splendor on the countenance of Moses soon vanished away. All the magnificence of the Mosaic ritual also soon faded away. But not so the gospel. That abides. That is the "last" dispensation; the "permanent" economy: that under which the affairs of the world are to be brought to an end. That is to pervade all lands; to bless all people; to survive all revolutions; to outlive all the magnificence of courts, and all the splendor of mighty dynasties, and is to endure until this world shall come to an end, and live in its glorious effects forever and ever. It is, therefore, to be the fixed principle on which all Christians are to act, that the gospel is to be permanent, and is to spread over all lands, and yet fill all nations with joy. And if so, how fervent and unceasing should be their prayers and efforts to accomplish this great and glorious result!

14. We learn from this chapter the duty of preaching in a plain, simple, intelligible manner, 2 Corinthians 3:12. Preaching should always be characterised indeed by good sense, and ministers should show that they are not fools, and their preaching should be such as to interest thinking people - for there is no folly or nonsense in the Bible. But their preaching should not be obscure, metaphysical, enigmatical, and abstruse. It should be so simple that the unlettered may learn the plan of salvation; so plain that no one shall mistake it except by his own fault. The "hopes" of the gospel are so clear that there is no need of ambiguity or enigma; no need of abstruse metaphysical reasoning in the "pulpit." Nor should there be an attempt to "appear" wise or profound, by studying a dry, abstruse, and cold style and manner. The preacher should be open, plain, simple, sincere; he should "testify" what he feels; should be able to speak as himself animated by "hope," and to tell of a world of glory to which he is himself looking forward with unspeakable joy.

15. It is the privilege of the Christian to look on the unveiled and unclouded glory of the gospel, 2 Corinthians 3:12-13. He does not look at it through types and shadows. He does not contemplate it when a veil of obscurity is drawn designedly over it. He sees it in its true beauty and splendor. The Messiah has come, and he may contemplate openly and plainly his glory, and the grandeur of his work. The Jews looked upon it in the light of "prophecy;" to us it is history. They saw it only through obscure shadows, types, and figures; we see it in open day, may survey at leisure its full beauty, and contemplate in the fullness of its splendor the gospel of the blessed God. For this we cannot be too thankful; nor can we be too anxious lest we undervalue our privileges, and abuse the mercies that we enjoy.

16. In reading the Old Testament, we see the importance of suffering the reflected light of the New Testament to be thrown upon it, in order correctly to understand it, 2 Corinthians 3:13-14. It is our privilege to "know" what the institutions of Moses meant; to see the "end" which he contemplated. And it is our privilege to see what they referred to, and how they prefigured the Messiah, and his gospel. In reading the Old Testament, therefore, there is no reason why we should not take with us the knowledge which we have derived from the New Testament, respecting the character, work, and doctrines of the Messiah; and to suffer them to influence our understanding of the laws and institutions of Moses. Thus shall we treat the Bible "as a whole," and allow one part to throw light on another - a privilege which we always concede to any book. There is no reason why Christians in reading the Old Testament should remain in the same darkness as the ancient, or the modern Jews.

17. Thus read, the Old Testament will be to us of inestimable value, 2 Corinthians 3:14. It is of value not only as introducing the gospel; as furnishing predictions whose fulfillment are full demonstration of the truth of religion; as containing specimens of the sublimest and purest poetry in the world; but it is of value as embodying, though amidst many types and shadows and much obscurity, all the great doctrines of the true religion. Though to the Jews, and to the world, there is a veil cast over it; yet to the Christian there is a beauty and splendor on all its pages - for the coming of Christ has removed that veil, and the sense of those ancient writings is now fully seen. True piety will value the Old Testament, and will find there, in

the sweetest poetry in the world, the expression of feelings which the religion of the Messiah only can produce; and pure and elevated thoughts which could have been originated by nothing but his anticipated coming: It is no mark of piety or of wisdom to disparage the Jewish Scriptures. But the higher the attainments in Christian feeling, the more will the writings of Moses and the prophets be loved.

18. People may have the Bible, and may read it for a long time, and often, and yet not understand it, 2 Corinthians 3:15. So it was, and is with the Jews. The Scriptures were attentively read by them, and yet they did not understand them. So it is still. There is a veil upon their heart, and they are blinded. So it is often now with others. People often read the Bible and see little beauty in it. They read, and they do not understand it. The reason is, the heart is not right. There should be a correspondence of feeling between the heart and the Bible, or a congeniality of view in order to appreciate its value and its truth. No man can understand or appreciate Milton or Cowper who has not a taste like theirs. No man can understand and appreciate a poem or an essay on patriotism, who is not a lover of his country; or on chastity, who is impure; or on temperance, who is intemperate; or on virtue in general, who is a stranger to virtue in every form. And so in reading the Bible. To appreciate and understand fully the writings of David, Isaiah, Paul, or John, we must have their feelings: our hearts must glow with their love to God and the Redeemer; we must feel as they did the guilt and burden of sin; and we must rejoice as they did in the hope of deliverance, and in the prospect of heaven. Until people have these feelings, they are not to wonder that the Bible is to them a dead letter, or a sealed book, and that they do not understand it, or see any beauty in its pages.

19. This chapter furnishes an argument for the fidelity and truth of the statement of Paul, 2 Corinthians 3:15. The argument is, that his description is as applicable to the Jews now as it was in his own time - and that, therefore, it must have been drawn from nature. The same veil is on their hearts now as in his time; there is the same blindness and darkness in regard to the true meaning of their Scriptures. The language of Paul will accurately express that blindness now; and his description, therefore, is not drawn from fancy, but from fact. It is true now in regard to that singular people, and it was true in his own time; and the lapse of 1,800 years (circa 1880‘s)

has only served to confirm the truth of his description in regard to the people of his own nation and time.

20. That veil is to be removed only by their turning to God, 2 Corinthians 3:16. It is only by true conversion that the mind can be brought to a full and clear understanding of the Scriptures; and that event will yet take place in regard to the Jews. They will still be converted to the Messiah whom their fathers killed, and whom they have so long rejected; and when that event shall occur, they will see the beauty of their own Scriptures, and rejoice in the promises and glorious hopes which they hold out to the view.

21. The duty of "meditating" much on the glory of the gospel, 2 Corinthians 3:18. It is by that we are purified. It is by keeping it constantly before the mind; dwelling on it splendor; thinking of its glorious truths, that we become transformed into the same image, and made like God. If the character is formed by the objects which we contemplate, and with which we are familiar; if we are insensibly moulded in our feelings and principles by that with which we constantly associate, then we should "think" much of the truths of the gospel. We should pray much - for thus we come in contact with God and his truth. We should read the Scripture much. We should commune with the good and the pure. We should make our companions of those who most love the Lord Jesus, and most decidedly bear his image. We should think much of a pure heaven. Thus shall we be moulded, insensibly it may be, but certainly, into the image of a holy God and Saviour, and be prepared for a pure and truly heaven.

2 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

This chapter 2 Corinthians 3:9, and of the Spirit 2 Corinthians 3:8, and was a ministration where they were permitted to look upon the unveiled and unclouded glories of God, 2 Corinthians 3:18. In this chapter he states some of the "consequences," or "results" of their being called to this ministry; and the design is, to magnify the office of the ministry; to show the sustaining power of the truths which they preached; the interest which the Corinthian Christians and all other Christians had in the ministry, and this to conciliate their favor; and to show what there was to comfort them in the various trials to which as ministers they were exposed. Paul states therefore in this chapter:

1. That these clear and elevated views of the gospel sustained him; kept him from fainting; preserved him from deceit and all improper acts; made him open and honest; since he had no necessity for craft and guilt, but proclaimed a system of religion which could be commended to every man's conscience, and be seen to be true, 2 Corinthians 4:1-2.

2. That if any persons were lost, it was not the fault of the gospel, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. That was clear, open, plain, glorious, and might be understood; and if they were lost, it was to be traced to the malign influence of the god of this world, and not to the gospel.

3. That the great purpose of Paul and his associates was to make known this clear and glorious truth of the gospel, and that, therefore, the apostles did not preach themselves, but Christ Jesus, the revealer and source of all this glory. 2 Corinthians 4:5-6. Their sole object was to show forth this pure and glorious light of the gospel.

4. That it was so arranged by God's appointment and providence that all the glory of the results of the ministry should be his, 2 Corinthians 4:7-11. He had taken special care that they should have no cause of self-exultation or glorying in preaching the gospel; and had taken effectual means that they should be humbled, and not lifted up with pride, from the fact that they were commissioned to make known such glorious truths, and had a ministry more honorable than that of Moses. He had, therefore, committed the

treasure to earthen vessels; to frail, weak, dying people, and to people in humble life 2 Corinthians 4:7, and he had called them to submit to constant trials of persecution, poverty, peril, and want, in order that they might be humbled, and that God might manifestly have all the glory, 2 Corinthians 4:8-11.

5. All this was for the sake of the church, a fact which was adapted to conciliate the favor of Christians and excite their sympathy in the sufferings of the apostles, and to lead them to honor the ministry in a proper manner, 2 Corinthians 4:12-15. It was not for their own welfare, happiness, honor. or emolument that they endured these trials in the ministry; it was that the church might be benefitted, and thus abundant praise redound to God.

6. These considerations sustained them in their trials, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. They had comfort in all their afflictions. They felt that they were doing and suffering these things for the salvation of souls, and the glory of God, 2 Corinthians 4:16; they had inward strength given them every day, though the outward man perished 2 Corinthians 4:16; they knew that the result of this would be an eternal weight of glory 2 Corinthians 4:17; and they were enabled to look to another and a better world; to keep the eye on heaven, and to contemplate by faith the things which were unseen and eternal, 2 Corinthians 4:18. These things supported them; and thus upheld, they went cheerfully to their great work, and met with calmness and joy all the trials which it involved.

Verse 1

Therefore - Διὰ τοῦτο Dia toutoOn account of this. That is, because the light of the gospel is so clear; because it reveals so glorious truths, and all obscurity is taken away, and we are permitted to behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, 2 Corinthians 3:18. Since the glories of the gospel dispensation are so great, and its effects on the heart are so transforming and purifying. The object is, to show the "effect" of being entrusted with such a ministry, on the character of his preaching.

Seeing we have this ministry - The gospel ministry, so much more glorious than that of Moses 2 Corinthians 3:6; which is the ministry by which the Holy Spirit acts on the hearts of people 2 Corinthians 3:8; which is the ministry of that system by which people are justified 2 Corinthians

3:9; and which is the ministry of a system so pure and unclouded, 2 Corinthians 3:9-11, 2 Corinthians 3:18.

As we have received mercy - Tyndale renders this: "even as mercy is sure in us." The idea is, that it was by the mere mercy and favor of God, that he had been entrusted with the ministry, and the object of Paul is doubtless to prevent the "appearance" of arrogance and self-confidence by stating that it was to be traced entirely to God that he was put into the ministry. He doubtless had his eye on the fact that he had been a persecutor and blasphemer; and that it was by the mere favor of God that he had been converted and entrusted with the ministry, 1 Timothy 1:13. Nothing will more effectually humble a minister, and prevent his assuming any arrogant and self-confident airs, than to look over his past life; especially if his life was one of blasphemy, vice, or infidelity; and to remember that it is by the mere mercy of God that he is entrusted with the high office of an ambassador of Jesus Christ. Paul never forgot to trace his hope, his appointment to the ministerial office, and his success, to the mere grace of God.

We faint not - This is one of the effects of being entrusted with such a ministry. The word used here (ἐκκακοῦμεν ekkakoumen) means, properly, to turn out a coward; to lose one's courage; then to be fainthearted, to faint, to despond, in view of trial, difficulty, etc. - Robinson. Here it means, that by the mercy of God, he was not disheartened by the difficulties which he met; his faith and zeal did not flag; he was enabled to be faithful, and laborious, and his courage always kept up, and his mind was filled with cheerfulness; see note on 2 Corinthians 2:14. He was deterred by no difficulties; embarrassed by no opposition; driven from his purpose by no persecution; and his strength did not fail under any trials. The consciousness of being entrusted with "such" a ministry animated him; and the mercy and grace of God sustained him.

Verse 2

But have renounced - (ἀπειπάμεθα apeipamethafrom ἀπὸ apoand εἶπον eipon). The word means properly to speak out or off; to refuse or deny; to interdict or forbid. Here it means, to renounce, or disown; to spurn, or scorn with aversion. It occurs no where else in the New Testament; and the sense here is, that the apostles had such a view of the truth of religion, and the glory of the Christian scheme 2 Corinthians 3:13-18, as to lead them to discard everything that was disguised, and artful, and crafty;

everything like deceit and fraud. The religions of the pagan were made up mainly of trick, and were supported by deception practiced on the ignorant, and on the mass of people. Paul says, that he and his fellow-laborers had such views of the truth, and glory, and holiness of the Christian scheme, as to lead them solemnly to abjure and abhor all such dishonest tricks and devices. Truth never needs such arts; and no cause will long succeed by mere trick and cunning.

The hidden things of dishonesty - Margin, "shame." The Greek word most commonly means shame, or disgrace. The hidden things of shame here mean disgraceful conduct; clandestine and secret arts, which were in themselves shameful and disgraceful. They denote all "underhanded" dealings; all dishonest artifices and plans, such as were common among the pagan, and such probably as the false teachers adopted in the propagation of their opinions at Corinth. The expression here does not imply that the apostles ever had anything to do with such arts; but that they solemnly abjured and abhorred them. Religion is open, plain, straightforward. It has no alliance with cunning, and trick, and artifice. It should be defended openly; stated clearly; and urged with steady argument. It is a work of light, and not of darkness.

Not walking in craftiness - Not acting craftily; not behaving in a crafty manner. The word used here πανουργία (panourgiafrom πᾶν , "all," ἔργον , "work," that is, doing every thing, or capable of doing anything) denotes shrewdness, cunning, and craft. This was common; and this was probably practiced by the false teachers in Corinth. With this Paul says he had nothing to do. He did not adopt a course of carnal wisdom and policy (note, 2 Corinthians 1:12); he did not attempt to impose upon them, or to deceive them; or to make his way by subtile and deceitful arts. True religion can never be advanced by trick and craftiness.

Nor handling the word of God deceitfully - (δολοῦντες dolountes). Not falsifying; or deceitfully corrupting or disguising the truth of God, The phrase seems to be synonymous with that used in 2 Corinthians 2:17, and rendered "corrupt the word of God;" see the note on that verse. It properly means to falsify, adulterate, corrupt, by Jewish traditions, etc. (Robinson, Bloomfield, Doddridge, etc.); or it may mean, as in our translation, to handle in a deceitful manner; to make use of trick and art in propagating and defending it. Tyndale renders it: "neither corrupt we the Word of God."

But by manifestation of the truth - By making the truth manifest; that is, by a simple exhibition of the truth. By stating it just as it is, in an undisguised and open manner. Not by adulterating it with foreign mixtures; not by mingling it with philosophy, or traditions; not by blunting its edge, or concealing anything, or explaining it away; but by an open, plain, straightforward exhibition of it as it is in Jesus. Preaching should consist in a simple exhibition of the truth. There is no deceit in the gospel itself; and there should be none in the manner of exhibiting it. It should consist of a simple statement of things as they are. The whole design of preaching is, to make known the truth. And this is done in an effectual manner only when it is simple, open, undisguised, without craft, and without deceit.

Commending ourselves to every man‘s conscience - That is, so speaking the truth that every man‘s conscience shall approve it "as" true; every man shall see it to be true, and to be in accordance with what he knows to be right. Conscience is that faculty of the mind which distinguishes between right and wrong, and which prompts us to choose the former and avoid the latter; John 8:9; Romans 2:15 note; 1 Corinthians 10:25, 1 Corinthians 10:27-29 notes; 2 Corinthians 1:12 note. It is implied here:

(1) That a course of life, and a manner of preaching that shall be free from dishonesty, and art, and trick, will be such as the consciences of people will approve. Paul sought such a course of life as should accord with their sense of "right," and thus serve to commend the gospel to them.

(2) that the gospel may be so preached as to be seen by men to be true; so as to be approved as right; and so that every man‘s conscience shall bear testimony to its truth. People do not "love" it, but they may see that it is "true;" they may hate it, but they may see that the truth which condemns their practices is from heaven. This is an exceedingly important principle in regard to preaching, and vastly momentous in its bearing on the views which ministers should have of their own work. The gospel is reasonable. It may be seen to be true by every man to whom it is preached. And it should be the aim of every preacher so to preach it, as to enlist the consciences of his hearers in his layout. And it is a very material fact that when so preached the conscience and reason of every man is in its favor, and they know that it is true even when it pronounces their own condemnation, and

denounces their own sins. This passage proves, therefore, the following things:

(1) That the gospel may be so preached as to be seen to be true by all people. People are capable of seeing the truth, and even when they do not love it; they can perceive that it has demonstration that it is from God. It is a system so reasonable; so well established by evidence; so fortified by miracles, and the fulfillment of prophecies; so pure in its nature; so well-adapted to man; so suited to his condition, and so well designed to make him better; and so happy in its influence on society, that people may be led to see that it is true. And this I take to be the case with almost all those people who habitually attend on the preaching of the gospel. Infidels do not often visit the sanctuary; and when they are in the habit of doing it, it is a fact that they gradually come to the conviction that the Christian religion is true. It is rare to find professed infidels in our places of worship; and the great mass of those who attend on the preaching of the gospel may be set down as speculative believers in the truth of Christianity.

(2) the consciences of people are on the side of truth, and the gospel may be so preached as to enlist their consciences in its favor. Conscience prompts to do right, and condemns us if we do wrong. It can never be made to approve of wrong, never to give a man peace if he does that which he knows to be evil. By no art or device; by no system of laws, or bad government; by no training or discipline, can it be made the advocate of sin. In all lands, at all times, and in all circumstances, it prompts a man to do what is right, and condemns him if he does wrong. It may be silenced for a time; it may be "seared as with a hot iron," and for a time be insensible, but if it speak at all, it speaks to prompt a man to do what he believes to be right, and condemns him if he does that which is wrong. The consciences of people are on the side of the gospel; and it is only their hearts which are opposed to it. Their consciences are in favor of the gospel in the following, among other respects:

(a) They approve of it as a just, pure, holy, and reasonable system; as in accordance with what they feel to be right; as recommending that which ought to be done, and forbidding that which ought not to be done.

(b) In its special requirements on themselves. Their consciences tell them that they ought to love God with all the heart; to repent of their sins; to trust in that Saviour who died for them; and to lead a life of prayer and of devotedness to the service of God; that they ought to be sincere and humble Christians, and prepare to meet God in peace.

(c) Their consciences approve the truth that condemns them. No matter how strict it may seem to be; no matter how loud its denunciation against their sins; no matter how much the gospel may condemn their pride, avarice, sensuality, levity, dishonesty, fraud, intemperance, profaneness, biasphemy, or their neglect of their soul, yet their consciences approve of it as right, and proclaim that these things ought to be condemned, and ought to be abandoned. The heart may love them, but the conscience cannot be made to approve them. And the minister of the gospel may "always" approach his people, or an individual man, with the assurance that however much they may "love" the ways of sin, yet that he has their consciences in his favor, and that in urging the claims of God on them, their "consciences" will always coincide with his appeals.

(3) the "way" in which a minister is to commend himself to the consciences of people, is that which was pursued by Paul. He must:

(a) Have a clear and unwavering conviction of the truth himself. On this subject he should have no doubt. He should be able to look on it as on a burnished mirror (note, 2 Corinthians 3:18); and to see its glory as with open face.

(b) It should be by the simple statement of the truth of the gospel. Not by preaching philosophy, or metaphysics, or the traditions of man, or the sentiments of theologians, but the simple truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. People may be made to see that these are truths, and God will take care that the reason and consciences of people shall be in their favor.

(c) By the absence of all trick and cunning, and disguised and subtle arts. The gospel has nothing of these in itself, and it will never approve of them, nor will God bless them. A minister of Jesus should be frank, open, undisguised, and candid. He should make a sober and elevated appeal to the

reason and conscience of man. The gospel is not "a cunningly devised fable;" it has no trick in itself, and the ministers of religion should solemnly abjure all the hidden things of dishonesty.

In the sight of God - As in the immediate presence of God. We act as if we felt that His eye was upon us; and this consideration serves to keep us from the hidden things of dishonesty, and from improper arts in spreading the true religion; see the note on 2 Corinthians 2:17.

Verse 3

But if our gospel be hid - Paul here calls it his gospel, because it was that which he preached, or the message which he bore; see note, Romans 16:25. The sense here is, "if the gospel which I preach is not understood; if its meaning is obscure or hidden; if its glory is not seen." It is "implied" here, that to many the beauty and glory of the gospel was not perceived. This was undeniable, notwithstanding the plainness and fullness with which its truths were made known. The "object" of Paul here is, to state that this fact was not to be traced to any lack of clearness in the gospel itself, but to other causes, and thus probably to meet an objection which might be made to his argument about the clearness and fullness of the revelation in the gospel. In the language which Paul uses here, there is undoubted allusion to what he had said respecting Moses, who put a veil upon his face, 2 Corinthians 3:13. He had hid, or concealed his face, as emblematic of the nature of his institutions (note, 2 Corinthians 3:14); and here Paul says that it was not to be denied that the gospel was "veiled" also to some. But it was not from the nature of the gospel. It was not because God had purposely concealed its meaning. It was not from any lack of clearness in itself. It was to be traced to other causes.

It is hid to them that are lost - On the meaning of the word rendered here as "lost;" see the note, 2 Corinthians 2:15, rendered there as "perish." It is hid among them who are about to perish; who are perishing (ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις en tois apollumenois); those who deserve to perish. It is concealed only among that class who may be designated as the perishing, or as the lost. Grotins explains this, "those who deserve to perish, who foster their vices, and will not see the truth which condemns those vices." And he adds, that this might very well be, for, "however conspicuous the gospel was in itself, yet like the sun it would not be visible to the blind." The cause was not in the gospel, but in themselves. This verse teaches, therefore:

(1) That the beauty of the gospel may be hidden from many of the human family. This is a matter of simple fact. There are thousands and million to whom it is preached who see no beauty in it, and who regard it as foolishness.

(2) that there is a class of people who may be called, even now, "the lost." They are lost to virtue, to piety, to happiness, to hope. They deserve to perish; and they are hastening to merited ruin. This class in the time of Paul was large; and it is large now. It is composed of those to whom the gospel is hidden, or to whom it appears to be veiled, and who see no beauty in it. It is made up indeed of all the profane, polluted, and vile; but their "characteristic" feature is, that the gospel is hidden from them, and that they see no beauty and glory in it.

(3) this is not the fault of the gospel. It is not the fault of the sun when people shut their eyes and will not see it. It is not the fault of a running stream, or a bubbling fountain, if people will not drink of it, but rather choose to die of thirst. The gospel does not obscure and conceal its own glory anymore than the sun does. It is in itself a clear and full revelation of God and his grace; and that glory is adapted to shed light upon the benighted minds of people.

Verse 4

In whom - In respect to whom; among whom; or in whose hearts. The design of this verse is to account for the fact that the glory of the gospel was not seen by them. It is to be traced entirely to the agency of him whom Paul here calls "the god of this world."

The god of this world - There can be no doubt that Satan is here designated by this appellation; though some of the fathers supposed that it means the true God, and Clarke inclines to this opinion. In John 12:31, he is called "the prince of this world." In Ephesians 2:2, he is called "the prince of the power of the air." And in Ephesians 6:12, the same bad influence is referred to under the names of "principalities, and powers," "the rulers of the darkness of this world," and "spiritual wickedness in high places." The name "god" is here given to him, not because he has any divine attributes, but because he actually has the homage of the people of this world as their god, as the being who is really worshipped, or who has the affections of

their hearts in the same way as it is given to idols. By "this world" is meant the wicked world; or the mass of people. He has dominion over the world. They obey his will; they execute his plans; they further his purposes, and they are his obedient subjects. He has subdued the world to himself, and was really adored in the place of the true God; see the note on 1 Corinthians 10:20. "They sacrificed to devils and not to God." Here it is meant by the declaration that Satan is the god of this world:

(1) That the world at large was under his control and direction. He secured the apostasy of man, and early brought him to follow his plans; and he has maintained his scepter and dominion since. No more abject submission could be desired by him than has been rendered by the mass of people.

(2) the idolatrous world particularly is under his control, and subject to him; 1 Corinthians 10:20. He is worshipped there; and the religious rites and ceremonies of the pagan are in general just such as a mighty being who hated human happiness, and who sought pollution, obscenity, wretchedness, and blood would appoint; and over all the pagan world his power is absolute. In the time of Paul all the world, except the Jews and Christians, was sunk in pagan degradation.

(3) he rules in the hearts and lives of all wicked people - and the world is full of wicked people. They obey him, and submit to his will in executing fraud, and rapine, and piracy, and murder, and adultery, and lewdness; in wars and fightings; in their amusements and pastimes; in dishonesty and falsehood. The dominion of Satan over this world has been, and is still almost universal and absolute; nor has the lapse of 1,800 years rendered the appellation improper as descriptive of his influence, that he is the god of this world. The world pursues his plans; yields to his temptations; neglects, or rejects the reign of God as he pleases; and submits to his scepter, and is still full of abomination cruelty, and pollution, as he desires it to be.

Hath blinded the minds of them which believe not - Of all who discern no beauty in the gospel, and who reject it. It is implied here:

(1) That the minds of unbelievers are blinded; that they perceive no beauty in the gospel. This is often affirmed of those who reject the gospel, and who live in sin; see the 2 Corinthians 2:13 note; Matthew 23:16-17, Matthew 23:26 notes; Luke 4:18 note; John 9:39; John 12:40 notes;

Romans 11:7 note. The sense is, that they did not see the spiritual beauty and glory of the plan of redemption. They act in reference to that as they would in reference to this world, if a bandage were over their eyes, and they saw not the light of the sun, the beauty of the landscape, the path in which they should go, or the countenance of a friend. All is dark, and obscure, and destitute of beauty to them, however much beauty may be seen in all these objects by others.

(2) that this is done by the agency of Satan; and that his dominion is secured by keeping the world in darkness. The affirmation is direct and positive, that it is by his agency that it is done. Some of the "modes" in which it is done are the following:

(a) By a direct influence on the minds of people. I do not know why it is absurd to suppose that one intellect may, in some way unknown to us, have access to another, and have power to influence it; nor can it be proved that Satan may not have power to pervert the understanding; to derange its powers; to distract its attention; and to give in view of the mind a wholly delusive relative importance to objects. In the time of the Saviour it cannot be doubted that in the numerous cases of demoniacal possessions, Satan directly affected the minds of people; nor is there any reason to think that he has ceased to delude and destroy them.

(b) By the false philosophy which has prevailed - a large part of which seems to have been contrived as if on purpose to deceive the world, and destroy the peace and happiness of people.

(c) By the systems of superstition and idolatry. All these seem to be under the control of one Master Mind. They are so well conceived and adapted to prostrate the moral powers; to fetter the intellect; to pervert the will; to make people debased, sunken, polluted, and degraded; and they so uniformly accomplish this effect, that they have all the marks of being under the control of one mighty Mind, and of having been devised to accomplish His purposes over people.

(d) By producing in the minds of people a wholly disproportionate view of the value of objects. "A very small object held before the eye will shut

out the light of the sun." A piece of money of the smallest value laid on the eye will make everything appear dark, and prevent all the glory of mid-day from reaching the seat of vision. And so it is with the things of this world. They are placed directly before us, and are placed directly between us and the glory of the gospel. And the trifles of wealth and of fashion; the objects of pleasure and ambition, are made to assume an importance in view of the mind which wholly excludes the glory of the gospel, and shuts out all the realities of the eternal world. And he does it:

(e) By the blinding influence of passion and vice. Before a vicious mind all is dark and obscure. There is no beauty in truth, in chastity, or honesty, or in the fear and love of God. Vice always renders the mind blind. and the heart hard, and shrouds everything in the moral world in midnight. And in order to blind the minds of people to the glory of the gospel, Satan has only to place splendid schemes of speculation before people; to tempt them to climb the steeps of ambition; to entice them to scenes of gaiety; to secure the erection of theaters, and gambling houses, and houses of infamy and pollution; to fill the cities and towns of a land with taverns and dram-shops; and to give opportunity everywhere for the full play and unrestrained indulgence of passion; and the glory of the gospel will be as effectually unseen as the glory of the sun is in the darkest night.

Lest the light … - This passage states the design, for which Satan blinds the minds of people. It is because he "hates" the gospel, and wishes to prevent its influence and spread in the world Satan has always hated and opposed it, and all his arts have been employed to arrest its diffusion on earth. The word "light" here means excellence, beauty, or splendor. Light is the emblem of knowledge, purity, or innocence; and is here and elsewhere applied to the gospel, because it removes the errors, and sins, and wretchedness of people, as the light of the sun scatters the shades of night. This purpose of preventing the light of the gospel shining on people, Satan will endeavor to accomplish by all the means in his power. It is his "grand" object in this world, because it is by the gospel only that people can be saved; by that that God is glorified on earth more than by anything else; and because, therefore, if he can prevent sinners from embracing that, he will secure their destruction, and most effectually show his hatred of God. And it is to Satan a matter of little importance what people "may be," or "are," provided they are not Christians. They may be amiable, moral,

accomplished, rich, honored, esteemed by the world, because in the possession of all these he may be equally sure of their ruin, and because, also, these things may contribute somewhat to turn away their minds from the gospel. Satan, therefore, will not oppose plans of gain or ambition; he will not oppose purposes of fashion and amusement; he may not oppose schemes by which we desire to rise in the world; he will not oppose the theater, the ballroom, the dance, or the song; he will not oppose thoughtless mirth; but the moment the gospel begins to shine on the benighted mind, that moment he will make resistance, and then all his power will be concentrated.

The glorious gospel - Greek ‹The gospel of the glory of Christ,‘ a Hebraism for the glorious gospel. Mr. Locke renders it, “the glorious brightness of the light of the gospel of Christ,” and supposes it means the brightness, or clearness, of the doctrine wherein Christ is manifested in the gospel. It is all light, and splendor, and beauty, compared with the dark systems of philosophy and paganism. It is glorious, for it is full of splendor; makes known the glorious God; discloses a glorious plan of salvation; and conducts ignorant, weak, and degraded man to a world of light. No two words in our language are so full of rich and precious meaning, as the phrase “glorious gospel.”

Who is the image of God - Christ is called the image of God:

(1)In respect to his divine nature, his exact resemblance to God in his divine attributes and perfections; see Colossians 1:15; and Hebrews 1:3; and,

(2)In his moral attributes as Mediator, as showing forth the glory of the Father to people. He “resembles” God, and in him we see the divine glory and perfections embodied, and shine forth.

It is from his “resemblance” to God in all respects that he is called his image; and it is through him that the divine perfections are made known to people. It is an object of special dislike and hatred to Satan that the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on people, and fill their hearts. Satan hates that image; he hates that people should become like God; and he hates all that has a resemblance to the great and glorious Yahweh.

Verse 5

For we preach not ourselves - The connection here is not very apparent, and the design of this verse has been variously understood. The

connection seems to me to be this. Paul gives here a reason for what he had said in the previous parts of the Epistle respecting his conduct in the ministry. He had said that his course had been open, and pure, and free from all dishonest arts and tricks, and that he had not corrupted the Word of God, or resorted to any artifice to accomplish his designs; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Corinthians 4:1-2. The "reason" of this he here says is, that he had not preached himself, or sought to advance his own interest. He regarded himself as sent to make known a Saviour; himself as bound by all means to promote his cause, and to imitate him. Other people - the false teachers, and the cunning priests of the pagan religion - sought to advance their own interest, and to perpetuate a system of delusion that would be profitable to themselves; and they therefore resorted to all arts, and stratagems, and cunning devices to perpetuate their authority, and extend their influence. But the fact that Paul and his associates went forth to make known the Lord Jesus, was a reason why they avoided all such dishonest arts and artifices. "We are merely the "ambassadors" of another. We are not "principals" in this business, and do not despatch it as a business of our own, but we transact it as the "agents" for another, that is, for the Lord Jesus, and we feel ourselves bound, therefore, to do it as he would have done it himself; and as he was free from all trick, and dishonest art, we feel bound to be also." This seems to me to be the design of this passage. Ministers may be said to preach themselves in the following ways:

(1) When their preaching has a primary reference to their own interest; and when they engage in it to advance their reputation, or to secure in some way their own advantage. When they aim at exalting their authority, extending their influence, or in any way promoting their own welfare.

(2) when they proclaim their own opinions and not the gospel of Christ; when they derive their doctrines from their own reasonings, and not from the Bible.

(3) when they put themselves forward; speak much of themselves; refer often to themselves; are vain of their powers of reasoning, of their eloquence, and of their learning, and seek to make these known rather than the simple truths of the gospel. In one word, when self is primary, and the gospel is secondary; when they prostitute the ministry to gain popularity; to live a life of ease; to be respected; to obtain a livelihood: to gain influence;

to rule over a people; and to make the preaching of the gospel merely an occasion of advancing themselves in the world. Such a plan, it is implied here, would lead to dishonest arts and devices, and to trick and stratagem to accomplish the end in view. And it is implied here, also, that to avoid all such tricks and arts the true way is not to preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ.

But Christ Jesus the Lord - This Paul states to be the only purpose of the ministry. It is so far the sole design of the ministry that had it not been to make known the Lord Jesus, it would never have been established; and whatever other objects are secured by its appointment, and whatever other truths are to be illustrated and enforced by the ministry, yet, if this is not the primary subject, and if every other object is not made subservient to this, the design of the ministry is not secured. The word "Christ" properly means the anointed that is, the Messiah, the anointed of God for this great office (see the note, Matthew 1:1); but it is used in the New Testament as a proper name, the name that was appropriate to "Jesus." Still it may be used with a reference to the fact of the Messiahship, and not merely as a proper name, and in this place it may mean that they preached Jesus as the Messiah, or the Christ and defended his claims to that high appointment. The word "Lord" also is used to designate him Mark 11:3; John 20:25; and when it stands by itself in the New Testament, it denotes the Lord Jesus (note, Acts 1:24); but it properly denotes one who has rule or authority, or proprietorship; and it is used here not merely as a part of the appropriate title of the Saviour, but with reference to the fact that he had the supreme headship, or lordship over the church and the world. This important passage, therefore, means, that they made it their sole business to make known Jesus the Messiah, or the Christ, as the supreme head and Lord of people that is, to set forth the Messiahship and the lordship of Jesus of Nazareth appointed to these high offices by God. To do this, or to preach Jesus Christ the Lord, implies the following things:

(1) To prove that he is the Messiah so often predicted in the Old Testament, and so long expected by the Jewish people. To do this was a very vital part of the work of the ministry in the time of the apostles, and was essential to their success in all their attempts to convert the Jews; and to do this will be no less important in all attempts to bring the Jews now or in future times to the knowledge of the truth. No man can be successful among them who is not able to prove that Jesus is the Messiah. It is not indeed so vital and leading a point now in reference to those to whom the

ministers of the gospel usually preach; and it is probable that the importance of this argument is by many overlooked, and that it is not urged as it should be by those who "preach Christ Jesus the Lord." It involves the whole argument for the truth of Christianity. It leads to all the demonstrations that this religion is from God; and the establishment of the proposition that Jesus is the Messiah, is one of the most direct and certain ways of proving that his religion is from heaven. Because:

(a)It contains the argument from the fulfillment of the prophecies - one of the main evidences of the truth of revelation; and,

(b)It involves an examination of all the evidences that Jesus gave that he was the Messiah sent from God, and of course an examination of all the miracles that he performed in attestation of his divine mission.

The first object of a preacher, therefore, is to demonstrate that Jesus is sent from God in accordance with the predictions of the prophets.

(2) to proclaim the truths that he taught. To make known his sentiments, and his doctrines, and not our own. This includes, of course, all that he taught respecting God, and respecting man; all that he taught respecting his own nature, and the design of his coming; all that he taught respecting the character of the human heart, and about human obligation and duty; all that he taught respecting death, the judgment, and eternity - respecting an eternal heaven, and an eternal hell. To explain, enforce, and vindicate his doctrines, is one great design of the ministry; and were there nothing else, this would be a field sufficiently ample to employ the life; sufficiently glorious to employ the best talents of man. The minister of the gospel is to teach the sentiments and doctrines of Jesus Christ, in contradistinction from all his own sentiments, and from all the doctrines of mere philosophy. He is not to teach science, or mere morals, but he is to proclaim and defend the doctrines of the Redeemer.

(3) he is to make known the facts of the Saviour‘s life. He is to show how he lived - to hold up his example in all the trying circumstances in which he was placed. For he came to show by his life what the Law required; and to show how people should live. And it is the office of the Christian ministry, or a part of their work in preaching "Christ Jesus the Lord," to show how he lived, and to set forth his self-denial, his meekness, his purity, his blameless life, his spirit of prayer, his submission to the divine will, his patience in suffering, his forgiveness of his enemies, his

tenderness to the afflicted, the weak, and the tempted; and the manner of his death. Were "this" all, it would be enough to employ the whole of a minister's life, and to command the best talents of the world. For he was the only perfectly pure model; and his example is to be followed by all his people, and his example is designed to exert a deep and wide influence on the world. Piety flourishes just in proportion as the pure example of Jesus Christ is kept before a people; and the world is made happier and better just as that example is kept constantly in view. To the frivolous and the thoughtless, the ministers of the gospel are to show how serious and calm was the Redeemer; to the worldly-minded, to show trow he lived above the world; to the avaricious, how benevolent he was; to the profane and licentious, how pure he was; to the tempted, how he endured temptation; to the afflicted, how patient and resigned; to the dying, how he died: to all, to show how holy, and heavenly-minded, and prayerful, and pure he was; in order that they may be won to the same purity, and be prepared to dwell with him in his kingdom.

(4) to set forth the design of his death. To show why he came to die; and what was the great object to be effected by his sufferings and death. To exhibit, therefore, the sorrows of his life; to describe his many trials; to dwell upon his sufferings in the Garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross. To show why he died, and what was to be the influence of his death on the destiny of man. To Show how it makes an atonement for sin; how it reconciles God to man; how it is made efficacious in the justification and the sanctification of the sinner. And were there nothing else, this would be sufficient to employ all the time, and the best talents in the ministry. For the salvation of the soul depends on the proper exhibition of the design of the death of the Redeemer. There is no salvation but through his blood; and hence, the nature and design of his atoning sacrifice is to be exhibited to every man, and the offers of mercy through that death to be pressed upon the attention of every sinner.

(5) to set forth the truth and the design of his resurrection. To prove that he rose from the dead, and that he ascended to heaven; and to show the influence of his resurrection on our hopes and destiny. The whole structure of Christianity is dependent on making out the fact that he rose; and if he rose, all the difficulties in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead are

removed at once, and his people will also rise. The influence of that fact, therefore, on our hopes and on our prospects for eternity, is to be shown by the ministry of the gospel; and were there nothing else, this would be ample to command all the time, and the best talents of the ministry.

(6) to proclaim him as "Lord." This is expressly specified in the passage before us. "For we preach Christ Jesus the Lord;" we proclaim him as the Lord. That is, he is to be preached as having dominion over the conscience; as the Supreme Ruler in his Church; as above all councils, and synods, and conferences, and all human authority; as having a right to legislate for his people; a right to prescribe their mode of worship; a right to define and determine the doctrines which they shall believe. He is to be proclaimed also as ruling over all, and as exalted in his mediatorial character over all worlds, and as having all things put beneath his feet; Psalm 2:6; Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 28:18; John 17:2; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 2:8.

And ourselves your servants … - So far as we make any mention of ourselves, it is to declare that we are your servants, and that we are bound to promote your welfare in the cause and for the sake of the Redeemer. That is, they were their servants in all things in which they could advance the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom among them. The doctrine is, that they regarded themselves as under obligation not to seek their own interest, or to build up their own reputation and cause, but to seek the welfare of the church; and promote its interests, as a servant does that of his master. They should not seek to lord it over God's heritage, and to claim supreme and independent authority. They were not masters but servants. The church at large was the master, and they were its servants. This implies the following things:

(1) That the "time" of ministers belongs to the church, and should be employed in its welfare. It is not their own; and it is not to be employed in farming, or in speculating, or in doing business, or in idleness, or in lounging, or in unprofitable visiting, or in mere science, or in reading or making books that will not advance the interests of the church. The time of the ministry is not for ease, or ambition, or self-indulgence, but is to promote the interests of the body of Christ. So Paul felt, and so he lived.

(2) their "talents" belong to the church. All their original talents, and all that they can acquire, should be honestly devoted to the welfare of the

church of the Redeemer.

(3) their best efforts and plans, the avails of their best thoughts and purposes, belong to the church, and should be honestly devoted to it. Their strength and vigor, and influence should be devoted to it, as the vigor, and strength, and talent, and skill of a servant belong to the master; see Psalm 137:5-6. The language of the ministry, as of every Christian, should be:

I love thy church, O God,
Her walls before thee stand,
Dear as the apple of thine eye,
And graven on thy hand,
If e‘er to bless thy sons.
My voice or hands deny,
These hands let useful skill forsake,
This voice in silence die.
If e‘er my heart forget.
Her welfare or her wo,
Let every joy this heart forsake,
And every grief o‘erflow.
For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend,
To her my cares and toils be given,
Until toils and cares shall end.

And it implies:

(4) That they are the servants of the church in time of trial, temptation, and affliction. They are to devote themselves to the comfort of the afflicted. They are to be the guide to the perplexed. They are to aid the tempted. They are to comfort those that mourn, and they are to sustain and console the dying. They are to regard themselves as the servants of the church to accomplish these great objects; and are to be willing to deny themselves, and to take up their cross, and to consecrate their time to the advancement of these great interests. And they are, in all respects, to devote their time, and talents, and influence to the welfare of the church, with as much single-mindedness as the servant is to seek the interest of his master. It was in this way eminently that Paul was favored with the success with which God blessed him in the ministry; and so every minister will be successful, just in

proportion to the single-mindedness with which he devotes himself to the work of preaching Jesus Christ the Lord.

Verse 6

For God, who commanded … - The design of this verse seems to be, to give a reason why Paul and his fellow-apostles did not preach themselves, but Jesus Christ the Lord, 2 Corinthians 4:5. That reason was, that their minds had been so illuminated by that God who had commanded the light to shine out of darkness, that they had discerned the glory of the divine perfections shining in and through the Redeemer, and they therefore gave themselves. to the work of making him known among people. The doctrines which they preached they had not derived from people in any form. They had not been elaborated by human reasoning or science, nor had they been imparted by tradition. They had been communicated directly by the source of all light - the true God - who had shined into the hearts that were once benighted by sin. Having been thus illuminated, they had felt themselves bound to go and make known to others the truths which God had imparted to them.

Who commanded the light … - Genesis 1:3. God caused it to shine by his simple command. He said, "let there be light, and there was light." The fact that it was produced by "his saying so" is referred to here by Paul by his use of the phrase (ὁ εἰπὼν ho eipōn) "Who saying," or speaking the light to shine from darkness. The passage in Genesis is adduced by Longinus as a striking instance of the sublime.

Hath shined in our hearts - Margin, "It is he who hath." This is more in accordance with the Greek, and the sense is, "The God who at the creation bade the light to shine out of darkness, is he who has shined into our hearts; or it is the same God who has illuminated us, who commanded the light to shine at the creation." "Light" is every where in the Bible the emblem of knowledge, purity, and truth; as darkness is the emblem of ignorance, error, sin, and wretchedness. See note, John 1:4-5. And the sense here is, that God had removed this ignorance, and poured a flood of light and truth on their minds. This passage teaches, therefore, the following important truths in regard to Christians - since it is as applicable to all Christians, as it was to the apostles:

(1) That the mind is by nature ignorant and benighted - to an extent which may be properly compared with the darkness which prevailed before

God commanded the light to shine. Indeed, the darkness which prevailed before the light was formed, was a most striking emblem of the darkness which exists in the mind of man before it is enlightened by revelation, and by the Holy Spirit. For:

(a)In all minds by nature there is deep ignorance of God, of His Law, and His requirements; and,

(b) This is often greatly deepened by the course of life which people lead; by their education; or by their indulgence in sin, and by their plans of life; and especially by the indulgence of evil passions.

The tendency of man if left to himself is to plunge into deeper darkness, and to involve his mind more entirely in the obscurity of moral midnight. "Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil," John 3:19.

(2) this verse teaches the fact, that the minds of Christians are illuminated. They are enabled to see things as they are. This fact is often taught in the Scriptures; see 1 John 2:20; 1 Corinthians 2:12-15. They have different views of things from their fellow-men, and different from what they once had. They perceive a beauty in religion which others do not see, and a glory in truth, and in the Saviour, and in the promises of the gospel, which they did not see before they were converted. This does not mean:

(a)That they are superior in their powers of understanding to other people - for the reverse is often the fact; nor,

(b)That the effect of religion is at once to enlarge their own intellectual powers, and make them different from what they were before in this respect.

But it means that they have clear and consistent views; they look at things as they are; they perceive a beauty in religion and in the service of God which they did not before. They see a beauty in the Bible, and in the doctrines of the Bible, which they did not before, and which sinners do not see. The temperate man will see a beauty in temperance, and in an argument for temperance, which the drunkard will not; the benevolent man will see a beauty in benevolence which the churl will not: and so of honesty, truth, and chastity. And especially will a man who is reformed from intemperance, impurity, dishonesty, and avarice, see a beauty in a virtuous life which he did not before see. There is indeed no immediate and direct enlargement of the intellect; but there is an effect on the heart which produces an appropriate and indirect effect on the understanding.

It is at the same time true, that the practice of virtue, that a pure heart, and that the cultivation of piety all tend to regulate, strengthen, and expand the intellect, as the ways of vice and the indulgence of evil passions and propensities tend to enfeeble, paralyze, darken, and ruin the understanding; so that, other things being equal, the man of most decided virtue, and most calm and elevated piety, will be the man of the clearest and best regulated mind. His powers will be the most assiduously, carefully, and conscientiously cultivated and he will feel himself bound to make the most of them. The influence of piety in giving light to the mind is often strikingly manifested among unlettered and ignorant Christians. It often happens, as a matter of fact, that they have by far clearer, and more just and elevated views of truth than people of the most mighty intellects, and most highly cultivated by science and adorned with learning. but who have no piety; and a practical acquaintance with their own hearts, and a practical experience of the power of religion in the days of temptation and trial is a better enlightener of the mind on the subject of religion than all the learning of the schools.

(3) this verse teaches, that it is the "same God" who enlightens the mind of the Christian that commanded the light at first to shine. He is the source of all light. He formed the light in the natural world; he gives all light and truth on all subjects to the understanding; and he imparts all correct views of truth to the heart. Light is not originated by man; and man on the subject of religion no more creates the light which beams upon his benighted mind than he created the light of the sun when it first shed its beams over the darkened earth. "All truth is from the sempiternal source of light divine;" and it is no more the work of man to enlighten the mind. and dissipate the darkness from the soul of a benighted sinner, than it was of man to scatter the darkness that brooded over the creation, or than he can now turn the shades of midnight to noonday. All this work lies beyond the proper province of man; and is all to be traced to the agency of God - the great fountain of light.

(4) it is taught here that it is the "same power" that gives light to the mind of the Christian which at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness. It requires the exertion of the same Omnipotence; and the change is often as remarkable, and surprising. Nothing can be conceived to be more

grand than the first creation of light - when by one word the whole solar system was in a blaze. And nothing in the moral world is more grand than when by a word God commands the light to beam on the soul of a benighted sinner. Night is at once changed to day; and all things are seen in a blaze of glory. The works of God appear different; the Word of God appears different; and a new aspect of beauty is diffused over all things. If it be asked in what way God thus imparts light to the mind, we may reply:

(a)By his written and preached word. All spiritual and saving light to the minds of people has come through his revealed truth. Nor does the Spirit of God now give or reveal any light to the mind which is not to be found in the Word of God. and which is not imparted through that medium.

(b)God makes use of his providential dealings to give light to the minds of people. They are then, by sickness, disappointment, and pain, made to see the folly and vanity of the things of this world, and to see the necessity of a better portion.

(c)It is done especially and mainly by the influences of the Holy Spirit. It is directly by his agency that the heart becomes affected, and the mind enlightened.

It is his province in the world to prepare the heart to receive the truth; to dispose the mind to attend to it: to remove the obstructions which existed to its clear perception; to enable the mind clearly to see the beauty of truth, and of the plan of salvation through a Redeemer. And whatever may be the means which may be used, it is still true that it is only by the Spirit of God that people are ever brought to see the truth clearly and brightly. The same Spirit that inspired the prophets and apostles also illuminates the minds of people now, removes the darkness from their minds, and enables them clearly to discover the truth as it is in Jesus. See the notes, 1 Corinthians 2:10-15.

To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God - This shows the "object," or the "effect" of enlightening the mind. It is that Christians may behold the divine glory. The meaning is, that it is for the purpose of enlightening and instructing them concerning the knowledge of the glory of God - Bloomfield. Doddridge renders it, "the luster of the knowledge of God's glory." Tyndale, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glorious God." The sense is, that the purpose of his shining into their hearts was to give light (πρὸς pros φωτισμὸν) that is, unto the enlightening; and the

purpose of that light was to acquaint them with the knowledge of the divine glory.

In the face of Jesus Christ - That is, that they might obtain the knowledge of the divine glory as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ; or as it is reflected on the face, or the person of the Redeemer. There is undoubted allusion here to what is said of Moses 2 Corinthians 3:13 when the divine glory was reflected on his face, and produced such a splendor and magnificence that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look upon it. The sense here is, that in the face or the person of Jesus Christ the glory of God shone clearly, and the divinity appeared without a veil. The divine perfections, as it were, illuminated him, as the face of Moses was illuminated; or they shone forth through him, and were seen in him. The word rendered "face" here (προσώπον prosōpon) may mean either face or person; see the note, 2 Corinthians 2:10. The sense is not materially affected which ever translation is preferred. It is, that the divine perfections shone in and through the Redeemer. This refers doubtless to the following truths:

(1)That the glory of the divine "nature" is seen in him, since he is "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." Hebrews 1:3. And it is in and through him that the glory of the divine perfections are made known,

(2)That the glory of the divine "attributes" are made known through him, since it is through him that the work of creation was accomplished John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; and it is by him that the mercy and goodness of God have been manifested to people.

(3)that the glory of the divine "moral character" is seen through him, since when on earth he manifested the embodied divine perfections; he showed what God is when incarnate; he lived as became the incarnate God - he was as pure and holy in human nature as God is in the heavens.

And there is not, that we know of, one of the divine attributes or perfections which has not at some period, or in some form, been evinced by Jesus Christ. If it be the prerogative of God to be eternal, he was eternal; Isaiah 9:6; Revelation 1:8, Revelation 1:18. If it be the prerogative of God to be the creator, he was also the creator John 1:3; if to be omniscient, he was omniscient Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22; if to be omnipresent, he is omnipresent Matthew 18:20; if to be almighty, he was almighty Isaiah 9:6; if to raise the dead, to give life, he did it (John 5:21; John 12:43-44; if to

still waves and tempests, he did it Mark 4:39; if to be full of benevolence, to be perfectly holy, to be without a moral stain or spot, then all this is found in Jesus Christ. And as the wax bears the perfect image of the seal - perfect not only in the outline, and in the general resemblance, but in the filling up - in all the lines, and features, and letters on the seal, so it is with the Redeemer. There is not one of the divine perfections which has not the counterpart in him, and if the glory of the divine character is seen at all, it will be seen in and through him.

Verse 7

But we have this treasure - The treasure of the gospel; the rich and invaluable truths which they were called to preach to others. The word "treasure" is applied to those truths on account of their inestimable worth. Paul in the previous verses had spoken of the gospel, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, as full of glory, and infinitely precious. This rich blessing had been committed to him and his fellow-laborers, to dispense it to others, and to diffuse it abroad. His purpose in this and the following verses is, to show that it had been so entrusted to them as to secure all the glory of its propagation to God, and so also as to show its unspeakable value. For this purpose, he not only affirms that it is a treasure, but says that it had been so entrusted to them as to show the power of God in its propagation; that it had showed its value in sustaining them in their many trials; and "they" had showed their sense of its worth by being willing to endure all kinds of trial in order to make it everywhere known, 2 Corinthians 4:8-11. The expression here is similar to that which the Saviour uses when he calls the gospel "the pearl of great price," Matthew 13:46.

In earthen vessels - This refers to the apostles and ministers of religion, as weak and feeble; as having bodies decaying and dying; as fragile, and liable to various accidents, and as being altogether unworthy to hold a treasure so invaluable; as if valuable diamonds and gold were placed in vessels of earth of coarse composition, easily broken, and liable to decay. The word "vessel" (σκεῦος skeuos) means properly any utensil or instrument; and is applied usually to utensils of household furniture, or hollow vessels for containing things, Luke 8:16; John 19:29. It is applied to the human body, as made of clay, and therefore frail and feeble, with reference to its "containing" anything, as, e. g., treasure; compare note on Romans 9:22-23. The word rendered "earthen," (ὀστρακίνοις ostrakinois) means that which is made of shells (from ὄστρακινον), and then burnt clay,

probably because vessels were at first made of burnt shells. It is suited well to represent the human body; frail, fragile, and easily reduced again to dust. The purpose of Paul here is, to show that it was by no excellency of his nature that the gospel was originated; it was in virtue of no vigor and strength which he possessed that it was propagated; but that it had been, of design, committed by God to weak, decaying, and crumbling instruments, in order that it might "be seen" that it was by the power of God that such instruments were sustained in the trials to which they were exposed, and in order that it might be manifest to all that it was not originated and diffused by the power of those to whom it was entrusted. The idea is, that they were altogether insufficient of their own strength to accomplish what was accomplished by the gospel. Paul uses a metaphor similar to this in 2 Timothy 2:20.

That the excellency of the power - An elegant expression, denoting the exceeding great power. The great power referred to here was that which was manifested in connection with the labors of the apostles - the power of healing the sick, raising the dead, and casting out devils; the power of bearing persecution and trial, and the power of carrying the gospel over sea and land, in the midst of danger, and in spite of all the opposition which people could make, whether as individuals or as combined; and especially the power of converting the hearts of sin ners, of humbling the proud, and leading the guilty to the knowledge of God, and the hope of heaven. The idea is, that all this was manifestly beyond human strength; and that God had of design chosen weak and feeble instruments "in order" that it might be everywhere seen that it was done not by human power but by his own. The instrumentality employed was altogether "disproportionate" in its nature to the effect produced.

May be of God - May evidently appear to be of God; that it may be manifest to all that it is God's power and not ours. It was one great purpose of God that this should be kept clearly in view. And it is still done. God takes care that this shall be apparent. For:

(1) It is "always" true, whoever is employed, and however great may be the talents, learning, or zeal of those who preach, that it is by the power of God that people are converted. Such a work cannot be accomplished by man. It is not by might or by strength; and between the conversion of a proud, haughty, and abandoned sinner, and the power of him who is made the instrument, there is such a manifest disproportion, that it is evident it is

the work of God. The conversion of the human heart is not to be accomplished by man.

(2) ministers are frail, imperfect, and Sinful, as they were in the time of Paul. When the imperfections of ministers are considered; when their frequent errors, and their not unfrequent moral obliquities are contemplated; when it is remembered how far many of them live from what they ought to do, and how few of them live in any considerable degree as becometh the followers of the Redeemer, it is wonderful that God blesses their labor as he does; and the matter of amazement is not that no more are converted under their ministry, but it is that so many are converted, or that any are converted; and it is manifest tidal it is the mere power of God.

(3) he often makes use of the most feeble, and unlearned, and weak of his servants to accomplish the greatest effects. It is not splendid talents, or profound learning, or distinguished eloquence, that is always or even commonly most successful. Often the ministry of such is entirely barren; while some humble and obscure man shall have constant success, and revivals shall attend him wherever he goes. It is the man of faith, and prayer, and self-denial, that is blessed; and the purpose of God in the ministry, as in everything else, is to "stain the pride of all human glory," and to show that he is all in all.

Verse 8

We are troubled - We the apostles. Paul here refers to some of the trials to which he and his fellow laborers were subjected in making known the gospel. The "design" for which he does it seems to be to show them:

(1)What they endured in preaching the truth;

(2)To show the sustaining power of that gospel in the midst of afflictions; and,

(3)To conciliate their favor, or to remind them that they had endured these things on their account, 2 Corinthians 4:12-15.

Perhaps one leading design was to recover the affections of those of the Corinthians whose heart had been alienated from him, by showing them how much he had endured on their account. For this purpose he freely opens his heart to them, and tenderly represents the many and grievous

pressures and hardships to which love to souls, and theirs among the rest, had exposed him - Doddridge. The whole passage is one of the most pathetic and beautiful to be found in the New Testament. The word rendered "troubled" (θλιβόμενοι thlibomenoifrom θλίβω thlibō) may have reference to wrestling, or to the contests in the Grecian games. It properly means, to press, to press together; then to press as in a crowd where there is a throng Mark 3:9; then to compress together Matthew 7:14; and then to oppress, or compress with evils, to distress, to afflict, 2 Thessalonians 1:6; 2 Corinthians 1:6. Here it may mean, that he was encompassed with trials, or placed in the midst of them so that they pressed upon him as persons do in a crowd, or, possibly, as a man was close pressed by an adversary in the games. He refers to the fact that he was called to endure a great number of trials and afflictions. Some of those trials he refers to in 2 Corinthians 7:5. "When we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears."

On every side - In every respect. In every way. We are subjected to all kinds of trim and affliction.

Yet not distressed - This by no means expresses the force of the original; nor is it possible perhaps to express it in a translation. Tyndale renders it, "yet we are not without our shift." The Greek word used here (στενοχωρούμενοι stenochōroumenoi) has a relation to the word which is rendered "troubled." It properly means "to crowd into a narrow place; to straiten as to room; to be so straitened as not to be able to turn oneself." And the idea is, that though he was close pressed by persecutions and trials, yet he was not so hemmed in that he had no way to turn himself; his trials did not wholly prevent motion and action. He was not so closely pressed as a man would be who was so straitened that he could not move his body, or stir hand or foot. He had still resources; he was permitted to move; the energy of his piety, and the vigor of his soul could not be entirely cramped and impeded by the trials which encompassed him. The Syriac renders it: "In all things we are pressed, but are not suffocated." The idea is, he was not wholly discouraged, and disheartened, and overcome. He had resources in his piety which enabled him to bear up under these trials, and still to engage in the work of preaching the gospel.

We are perplexed - (ἀπορούμενοι aporoumenoi). This word (from ἄπορος aporos"without resource," which is derived from α athe alpha privative ("not"), and πόρος , way, or exit) means to be without resource; to

know not what to do; to hesitate; to be in doubt and anxiety, as a traveler is, who is ignorant of the way, or who has not the means of prosecuting his journey. It means here, that they were often brought into circumstances of great embarrassment, where they hardly knew what to do, or what course to take. They were surrounded by foes; they were in want; they were in circumstances which they had not anticipated, and which greatly perplexed them.

But not in despair - In the margin, "not altogether without help or means." Tyndale renders this: "We are in poverty, but not utterly without somewhat." In the word used here, (ἐξαπορούμενοι exaporoumenoi) the preposition is intensive or emphatic, and means "utterly, quite." The word means to be utterly without resource; to despair altogether; and the idea of Paul here is, that they were not left "entirely" without resource. Their needs were provided for; their embarrassments were removed; their grounds of perplexity were taken away; and unexpected strength and resources were imparted to them. When they did not know what to do; when all resources seemed to fail them, in some unexpected manner they would be relieved and saved from absolute despair. How often does this occur in the lives of all Christians! And how certain is it, that in all such cases God will interpose by his grace, and aid his people, and save them from absolute despair.

Verse 9

Persecuted - Often persecuted, persecuted in all places. The Book of Acts shows how true this was.

But not forsaken - Not deserted; nor left by God Though persecuted by people, yet they experi enced the fulfillment of the divine promise that he would never leave nor forsake them. God always interposed to aid them; always saved them from the power of their enemies; always sustained them in the time of persecution. It is still true. His people have been often persecuted. Yet God has often interposed to save them from the hands of their enemies; and where he has not saved them from their hands, and preserved their lives, yet he has never left them, but has sustained, upheld, and comforted them even in the dreadful agonies of death.

Cast down - Thrown down by our enemies, perhaps in allusion to the contests of wrestlers, or of gladiators.

But not destroyed - Not killed. They rose again; they recovered their strength; they were prepared for new conflicts. They surmounted every

difficulty, and were ready to engage in new strifes, and to meet new trials and persecutions.

Verse 10

Always bearing about in the body - The expression used here is designed to show the great perils to which Paul was exposed. And the idea is, that he had on his body the marks, the stripes and marks of punishment and persecution, which showed that he was exposed to the same violent death which the Lord Jesus himself endured; compare Galatians 6:17; "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." It is a strong energetic mode of expression, to denote the severity of the trials to which he was exposed, and the meaning is, that his body bore the marks of his being exposed to the same treatment as the Lord Jesus was; and evidence that he was probably yet to die in a similar manner under the hands of persecutors; compare Colossians 1:24.

The dying of the Lord Jesus - The death; the violent death. A death similar to that of the Lord Jesus. The idea is, that he was always exposed to death, and always suffering in a manner that was equivalent to dying. The expression is parallel to what he says in 1 Corinthians 15:31. "I die daily;" and in 2 Corinthians 11:23, where he says, "in deaths oft." It does not mean that he bore about literally the dying of the Lord Jesus, but that he was exposed to a similar death. and had marks on his person which showed that he was always exposed to the same violent death. This did not occur once only, or at distant intervals, but it occurred constantly, and wherever he was it was still true that he was exposed to violence, and liable to suffer in the same manner that the Lord Jesus did.

That the life also of Jesus … - This passage has received a considerable variety of interpretation. Grotius renders it, "such a life as was that of Christ, immortal, blessed, heavenly." Locke, "That also the life of Jesus, risen from the dead, may be made manifest by the energy that accompanies my preaching in this frail body." Clarke supposes that it means, that he might be able in this manner to show that Christ was risen from the dead. But perhaps, Paul does not refer to one single thing in the life of the Lord Jesus, but means that he did this in order that in all things the same life, the same kind of living which characterized the Lord Jesus might be manifested in him; or that he resembled him in his sufferings and trials, in order that in all things he might have the same life in his body.

Perhaps, therefore, it may include the following things as objects at which the apostle aimed:

(1) A desire that his "life" might resemble that of the Lord Jesus. That there might be the same self-denial; the same readiness to suffer; the same patience in trials; the same meekness, gentleness, zeal, ardor, love to God, and love to people evinced in his body which was in that of the Lord Jesus. Thus understood, it means that he placed the Lord Jesus before him as the model of his life, and deemed it an object to be attained even by great self-denial and sufferings to be conformed to him.

(2) adesire to attain to the same life in the resurrection which the Lord Jesus had attained to. A desire to be made like him, and that in his body which bore about the dying of the Lord Jesus, he might again live after death as the Lord Jesus did. Thus understood, it implies an earnest wish to attain to the resurrection of the dead, and accords with what he says in Philemon 3:8-11, which may perhaps be considered as Paul's own commentary on this passage, which has been so variously, and so little understood by expositors. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ. That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead;" compare Colossians 1:24. It intimates Paul's earnest desire and longing to be made like Christ in the resurrection (compare Philemon 3:21); his longing to rise again in the last day (compare Acts 26:7); his sense of the importance of the doctrine of the resurrection and his readiness to suffer anything if he might at last attain to the resurrection of the just, and be ready to enter with the Redeemer into a world of glory. The attainment of this is the high object before the Christian, and to be made like the Redeemer in heaven, to have a body like his, is the grand purpose for which they should live; and sustained by this hope they should be willing to endure any trials, and meet any sufferings, if they may come to that same "life" and blessedness above.

Verse 11

For we which live - Those of us, the apostles and ministers of the Redeemer who still survive. James the brother of John had been put to

death Acts 12:2; and it is probable also that some other of the apostles had been also. This verse is merely explanatory of the previous verse.

Are alway delivered unto death - Exposed constantly to death. This shows what is meant in 2 Corinthians 4:10, by bearing about in the body the dying the Lord Jesus; see the note on 1 Corinthians 15:31.

In our mortal flesh - In our body. In our life on earth; and in our glorified body in heaven; see the note on 2 Corinthians 4:10.

Verse 12

So then death worketh in us - We are exposed to death. The preaching of the gospel exposes us to trials which may be regarded as death working in us. Death has an energy over us (ἐνεργεῖται energeitaiis at work, is active, or operates); it is constantly employed in inflicting pains on us, and subjecting us to privation and trials. This is a strong and emphatic mode of saying that they were always exposed to death. We are called to serve and glorify the Redeemer, as it were, by repeated deaths and by constantly dying.

But life in you - You live as the effect of our being constantly exposed to death. You reap the advantage of all our exposure to trials, and of all our sufferings. You are comparatively safe; are freed from this exposure to death; and will receive eternal life as the fruit of our toils, and exposures. Life here may refer either to exemption from danger and death; or it may refer to the life of religion; the hopes of piety; the prospect of eternal salvation. To me it seems most probable that Paul means to use it in the latter sense, and that he designs to say that while he was exposed to death and called to endure constant trial, the effect would be that they would obtain, in consequence of his sufferings, the blessedness of eternal life; compare 2 Corinthians 4:15. Thus understood, this passage means, that the sufferings and self-denials of the apostles were for the good of others, and would result in their benefit and salvation; and the design of Paul here is to remind them of his sufferings in their behalf, in order to conciliate their favor and bind them more closely to him by the remembrance of his sufferings on their account.

Verse 13

We having the same spirit of faith - The same spirit that is expressed in the quotation which he is about to make; the same faith which the psalmist had. We have the very spirit of faith which is expressed by David. The sense is, we have the same spirit of faith which he had who said, “I

believed," etc. The phrase, "spirit of faith," means substantially the same as faith itself; a believing sense or impression of the truth.

According as it is written - This passage is found in Psalm 116:10. When the psalmist uttered the words, he was greatly afflicted; see Psalm 116:3, Psalm 116:6-8. In these circumstances, he prayed to God, and expressed confidence in him, and placed all his reliance on him. In his affliction he spoke to God; he spoke of his confidence in him; he proclaimed his reliance on him; and his having spoken in this manner was the result of his belief, or of his putting confidence in God. Paul, in quoting this, does not mean to say that the psalmist had any reference to the preaching of the gospel; nor does he mean to say that his circumstances were in all respects like those of the psalmist. The circumstances resembled each other only in these respects:

(1)That Paul, like the psalmist, was in circumstances of trial and affliction; and,

(2)That the language which both used was that which was prompted by faith - faith, which led them to give utterance to the sentiments of their hearts; the psalmist to utter his confidence in God, and the holms by which he was sustained, and Paul to utter his belief in the glorious truths of the gospel; to speak of a risen Saviour, and to show forth the consolations which were thus set before people in the gospel.

The sentiments of both were the language of faith. Both, in afflictions, uttered the language of faith; and Paul uses here, as he often does, the language of the Old Testament, as exactly expressing his feelings, and the principles by which he was actuated.

We also believe … - We believe in the truths of the gospel; we believe in God, in the Saviour, in the atonement, in the resurrection, etc. The sentiment is, that they had a firm confidence in these things, and that, as the result of that confidence they boldly delivered their sentiments. It prompted them to give utterance to their feelings. "Out of the abundance of the heart," said the Saviour, "the mouth speaketh," Matthew 12:34. No man should attempt to preach the gospel who has not a firm belief of its truths; and he who does believe its truths will be prompted to make them known to his fellow-men. All successful preaching is the result of a firm and settled conviction of the truth of the gospel; and when such a conviction exists, it is natural to give utterance to the belief, and such an expression will be

attended with happy influences on the minds of other people; see the note on Acts 4:20.

Verse 14

Knowing - Being fully confident; having the most entire assurance. It was the assured hope of the resurrection which sustained them in all their trials. This expression denotes the full and unwavering belief, in the minds of the apostles, that the doctrines which they preached were true. They knew that they were revealed from heaven, and that all the promises of God would be fulfilled.

Shall raise up us also - All Christians. In the hope of the resurrection they were ready to meet trials, and even to die. Sustained by this assurance, the apostles went forth amidst persecutions and opposition, for they knew that their trials would soon end, and that they would be raised up in the morning of the resurrection, to a world of eternal glory.

By Jesus - By the power or the agency of Jesus. Christ will raise up the dead from their graves, John 5:25-29.

And shall present us with you - Will present us before the throne of glory with exceeding joy and honor. He will present us to God as those who have been redeemed by his blood. He will present us in the courts of heaven, before the throne of the eternal Father, as his ransomed people; as recovered from the ruins of the fall; as saved by the merits of his blood. They shall not only be raised up from the dead; but they shall be publicly and solemnly presented to God as his, as recovered to his service, and as having a title in the covenant of grace to the blessedness of heaven.

Verse 15

For all things are for your sakes - All these things; these glorious hopes, and truths, and prospects; these self-denials of the apostles, and these provisions of the plan of mercy.

For your sakes - On your account. They are designed to promote your salvation. They are not primarily for the welfare of those who engage in these toils and self-denials; but the whole arrangement and execution of the plan of salvation, and all the self-denial evinced by those who are engaged in making that plan known, are in order that you might be benefitted. One object of Paul in this statement, doubtless, is, to conciliate their favor, and remove the objections which had been made to him by a faction in the church at Corinth.

That the abundant grace - Grace abounding, or overflowing. The rich mercy of God that should be manifested by these means. It is implied here, that grace would abound by means of these labors and self-denials of the apostles. The grace referred to here is that which would be conferred on them in consequence of these labors.

Through the thanksgiving of many - That many may have occasion of gratitude to God; that by these labors more persons may be led to praise him. It was an object with Paul so to labor that as many as possible might be led to praise God, and have occasion to thank him to all eternity.

Redound to the glory of God - That God may have augmented praise; that his glory in the salvation of people may abound. The sentiment of the passage is, that it would be for the glory of God that as many as possible should be brought to give praise and thanksgivings to him; and that, therefore, Paul endeavored to make as many converts as possible. He denied himself; he welcomed toil; he encountered enemies; he subjected himself to dangers; and he sought by all means possible to bring as many as could be brought to praise God. The word "redound" (περισσεύῃ perisseuē) here means abound, or be abundant; and the sense is, that the overflowing grace thus evinced in the salvation of many would so abound as to promote the glory of God.

Verse 16

For which cause - With such an object in view, and sustained by such elevated purposes and desires. The sense is, that the purpose of trying to save as many as possible would make toil easy, privations welcome, and would be so accompanied by the grace of God, as to gird the soul with strength, and fill it with abundant consolations.

We faint not - For an explanation of the word used here, see the note on 2 Corinthians 4:1. We are not exhausted, desponding, or disheartened. We are sustained, encouraged, emboldened by having such an object in view.

But though our outward man perish - By outward man, Paul evidently means the body. By using the phrases, "the outward man," and the "inward man," he shows that he believed that man was made up of two parts, body and soul. He was no materialist. He has described two parts as constituting man, so distinct: that while the one perishes, the other is renewed; while the one is enfeebled, the other is strengthened; while the one grows old and decays, the other renews its youth and is invigorated. Of course, the soul is not dependent on the body for its vigor and strength,

since it expands while the body decays; and of course the soul may exist independently of the body, and in a separate state.

Perish - Grows old; becomes weak and feeble; loses its vigor and elasticity under the many trials which we endure, and under the infirmities of advancing years. It is a characteristic of the "outer man," that it thus perishes. Great as may be its vigor, yet it must decay and die. It cannot long bear up under the trials of life, and the wear and tear of constant action, but must soon sink to the grave.

Yet the inward man - The soul; the undecaying, the immortal part.

Is renewed - Is renovated, strengthened, invigorated. His powers of mind expanded; his courage became bolder; he had clearer views of truth; he had more faith in God. As he drew nearer to the grave and to heaven, his soul was more raised above the world, and he was more filled with the joys and triumphs of the gospel. The understanding and the heart did not sympathize with the suffering and decaying body; but, while that became feeble, the soul acquired new strength, and was fitting for its flight to the eternal world. This verse is an ample refutation of the doctrine of the materialist, and proves that there is in man something that is distinct from decaying and dying matter, and that there is a principle which may gain augmented strength and power, while the body dies; compare note, Romans 7:22.

Day by day - Constantly. There was a daily and constant increase of inward vigor. God imparted to him constant strength in his trials, and sustained him with the hopes of heaven, as the body was decaying, and tending to the grave. The sentiment of this verse is, that in an effort to do good, and to promote the salvation of man, the soul will be sustained in trials, and will be comforted and invigorated even when the body is weary, grows old, decays, and dies. It is the testimony of Paul respecting his own experience; and it is a fact which has been experienced by thousands in their efforts to do good, and to save the souls of people from death.

Verse 17

For our light affliction - This verse, with the following, is designed to show further the sources of consolation and support which Paul and his fellow-laborers had in their many trials. Bloomfield remarks on this passage, that "in energy and beauty of expression, it is little inferior to any in Demosthenes himself, to whom, indeed, and to Thucydides in his orations, the style of the apostle, when it rises to the oratorical, bears no

slight resemblance." The passage abounds with intensive and emphatic expressions, and manifests that the mind of the writer was laboring to convey ideas which language, even after all the energy of expression which he could command, would very imperfectly communicate. The trials which Paul endured, to many persons would have seemed to be anything else but light. They consisted of want, and danger, and contempt, and stoning, and toil, and weariness, and the scorn of the world, and constant exposure to death by land or by sea; see 2 Corinthians 4:7-10, compare 2 Corinthians 11:23-27. Yet these trials, though continued through many years, and constituting, as it were, his very life, he speaks of as the lightest conceivable thing when compared with that eternal glory which awaited him. He strives to get an expression as emphatic as possible, to show that in his estimation they were not worthy to be named in comparison with the eternal weight of glory. It is not sufficient to say that the affliction was "light" or was a mere trifle; but he says that it was to endure but for a moment. Though trials had followed him ever since he began to make known the Redeemer, and though he had the firmest expectation that they would follow him to the end of life and everywhere Acts 20:23, yet all this was a momentary trifle compared with the eternal glory before him. The word rendered "light" (ἐλαφρὸν elaphron) means that which is easy to bear, and is usually applied to a burden; see Matthew 11:30, compare 2 Corinthians 1:17.

Which is but for a moment - The Greek word used here (παραυτίκα parautika) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is an adverb, from αὐτίκα autika αὐτός autosand means properly, "at this very instant; immediately." Here it seems to qualify the word "light," and to be used in the sense of momentary, transient. Bloomfield renders it, "for the at present lightness of our affliction." Doddridge, "for this momentary lightness of our affliction, which passes off so fast, and leaves so little impression that it may be called levity itself." The apostle evidently wished to express two ideas in as emphatic a manner as possible; first, that the affliction was light, and, secondly, that it was transient, momentary, and soon passing away. His object is to contrast this with the glory that awaited him, as being heavy, and as being also eternal.

Worketh for us - see the note, 2 Corinthians 4:12. Will produce, will result in. The effect of these afflictions is to produce eternal glory. This they do:

(1)By their tendency to wean us from the world;

(2)To purify the heart, by enabling us to ‹break off from the sins on account of which God afflicts us;

(3)By disposing us to look to God for consolation and support in our trials;

(4)By inducing us to contemplate the glories of the heavenly world, and thus winning us to seek heaven as our home; and,

(5)Because God has graciously promised to reward his people in heaven as the result of their bearing trials in this life.

It is by affliction that he purifies them Isaiah 48:10; and by trial that he takes their affections from the objects of time and sense, and gives them a relish for the enjoyments which result from the prospect of perfect and eternal glory.

A far more exceeding - καθ᾽ ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν kath'huperbolēn eis huperbolēnThere is not to be found any where a more energetic expression than this. The word (ὑπερβολή huperbolē), used here (whence our word "hyperbole") means properly a throwing, casting, or throwing beyond. In the New Testament it means excess, excellence, eminence; see 2 Corinthians 4:7. "The excellency of the power." The phrase καθ᾽ ὑπερβολὴν kath'huperbolēnmeans exceedingly, supereminently, Romans 7:13; 1 Corinthians 12:31; 2 Corinthians 1:8; Galatians 1:13. This expression would have been by itself intensive in a high degree. But this was not sufficient to express Paul‘s sense of the glory which was laid up for Christians. It was not enough for him to use the ordinary highest expression for the superlative to denote the value of the object in his eye. He therefore coins an expression, and adds εἰς ὑπερβολὴν eis huperbolēnIt is not merely eminent; but it is eminent unto eminence; excess unto excess; a hyperbole unto hyperbole - one hyperbole heaped upon another; and the expression means that it is "exceeding exceedingly" glorious; glorious in the highest possible degree - Robinson. Mr. Slade renders it, "infinitely exceeding." The expression is the Hebrew form of denoting the highest superlative; and it means that all hyperboles fail of expressing that eternal glory which remains for the just. It is infinite and boundless. You may pass from one degree to another; from one sublime height to another; but still an infinity

remains beyond. Nothing can describe the uppermost height of that glory; nothing can express its infinitude.

Eternal - This stands in contrast with the affliction that is for a moment (παραυτίκα parautika). The one is momentary, transient; so short, even in the longest life, that it may be said to be an instant; the other has no limits to its duration. It is literally everlasting.

Weight - βάρος (baros). This stands opposed to the (ἐλαφρὸν elaphron) light affliction. That was so light that it was a trifle. It was easily borne. It was like the most light and airy objects, which constitute no burden. It is not even here called a burden, or said to be heavy in any degree. This is so heavy as to be a burden. Grotins thinks that the image is taken from gold or silver articles, that are solid and heavy, compared with those that are mixed or plated. But why may it not refer to the insignia of glory and honor; a robe heavy with gold, or a diadem or crown, heavy with gold or diamonds: glory so rich, so profuse as to be heavy? The affliction was light; but the crown, the robe, the adornings in the glorious world were not trifles, or baubles, but solid, substantial, weighty. We apply the word weighty now to that which is valuable and important, compared with that which is of no value, probably because the precious metals and jewels are heavy; and it is by them that we usually estimate the value of objects.

Of glory - (δόξης doxēs). The Hebrew word כבוד kabowddenotes weight as well as glory. And perhaps Paul had that use of the word in his eye in this strong expression. It refers here to the splendor, magnificence, honor, and happiness of the eternal world. In this exceedingly interesting passage, which is worthy of the deepest study of Christians, Paul has set in most beautiful and emphatic contrast the trials of this life and the glories of heaven. It may be profitable to contemplate at a single glance the view which he had of them, that they may be brought distinctly before the mind.

The one is:

1.Affliction, θλίψις thlipsis*Light*, ἐλαφρὸν elaphronFor a moment, παραυτίκα parautikaother is, by contrast,

(1)Glory, δόξή doxaWeight, βάρος barosEternal, αἰώνιον aiōnionEminent, or excellent, καθ᾽ ὑπερβολὴν kath' huperbolēnInfinitely excellent, eminent in the highest degree, εἰς ὑπερβολὴν eis huperbolēnthe account stands in the view of Paul; and with this balance in favor of the eternal glory, he regarded afflictions as mere trifles, and made it the grand

purpose of his life to gain the glory of the heavens. What wise man, looking at the account, would not do likewise?

Verse 18

While we look … - Or, rather, we not looking at the things which are seen. The design of this is, to show in what way the afflictions which they endured became in their view light and momentary. It was by looking to the glories of the future world, and thus turning away the attention from the trials and sorrows of this life. If we look directly at our trials; if the mind is fixed wholly on them, and we think of nothing else, they often appear heavy and long. Even comparatively light and brief sufferings will appear to be exceedingly difficult to bear. But if we can turn away the mind from them and contemplate future glory; if we can compare them with eternal blessedness, and feel that they will introduce us to perfect and everlasting happiness, they will appear to be transitory, and will be easily borne. And Paul here has stated the true secret of bearing trials with patience. It is to look at the things which are unseen. To anticipate the glories of the heavenly world. To fix the eye on the eternal happiness which is beyond the grave; and to reflect how short these trials are, compared with the eternal glories of heaven; and how short they will seem to be when we are there.

The things which are seen - The things here below; the things of this life - poverty, want, care, persecution, trial, etc.

The things which are not seen - The glories of heaven, compare Hebrews 11:1.

The things which are seen are temporal - This refers particularly to the things which they suffered. But it is as true of all things here below. Wealth, pleasure, fame, the three idols which the people of this world adore, are all to endure but for a little time. They will all soon vanish away. So it is with pain, and sorrow, and tears. All that we enjoy, and all that we suffer here, must soon vanish and disappear. The most splendid palace will decay; the most costly pile will moulder to dust; the most magnificent city will fall to ruins; the most exquisite earthly pleasures will soon come to an end; and the most extended possessions can be enjoyed but a little time. So the acutest pain will soon be over; the most lingering disease will soon cease; the evils of the deepest poverty, want, and suffering will soon be passed. There is nothing on which the eye can fix, nothing that the heart can desire here, which will not soon fade away; or, if it survives, it is temporary in regard to us. We must soon leave it to others; and if enjoyed, it will be

enjoyed while our bodies are slumbering in the grave, and our souls engaged in the deep solemnities of eternity. How foolish then to make these our portion, and to fix our affections supremely on the things of this life? How foolish also to be very deeply affected by the trials of this life, which at the furthest can be endured but a little longer before we shall be forever beyond their reach!

The things which are not seen are eternal - Everything which pertains to that state beyond the grave:

(1) God is eternal; not to leave us as our earthly friends do.

(2) the Saviour is eternal - to be our everlasting friend.

(3) the companions and friends there are eternal. The angels who are to be our associates, and the spirits of the just with whom we shall live, are to exist forever. The angels never die; and the pious dead shall die no more. There shall be then no separation, no death-bed, no grave, no sad vacancy and loss caused by the removal of a much-loved friend.

(4) the joys of heaven are eternal; There shall be no interruption; no night; no cessation; no end. Heaven and all its joys shall be everlasting; and he who enters there shall have the assurance that those joys shall endure and increase while eternal ages shall roll away.

(5) it may be added, also, that the woes of hell shall be eternal. They are now among the things which to us "are not seen;" and they, as well as the joys of heaven, shall have no end. Sorrow there shall never cease; the soul shall there never die; the body that shall be raised up "to the resurrection of damnation" shall never again expire. And when all these things are contemplated, well might Paul say of the things of this life - the sorrows, trials, privations, and persecutions which he endured, that they were light, and were for a moment." How soon will they pass away; how soon shall we all be engaged amidst the unchanging and eternal realities of the things which are not seen!

Remarks

1. Ministers of the gospel have no cause to faint or to be discouraged, 2 Corinthians 4:1. Whatever may be the reception of their message, and whatever the trials to which they may be subjected, yet there are abundant

sources of consolation and support in the gospel which they preach. They have the consciousness that they preach a system of truth; that they are proclaiming that which God has revealed; and, if they are faithful, that they have his smiles and approbation. Even, therefore, if people reject, and despise their message, and if they are called to endure many privations and trials, they should not faint. It is enough for them that they proclaim the truth which God loves, and that they meet with his approbation and smiles. Trials will come in the ministry as every where else, but there are also special consolations. There may be much opposition and resistance to the message, but we should not faint or be discouraged. We should do our duty, and commit the result to God.

2. The gospel should be embraced by those to whom it comes, 2 Corinthians 4:2. If it has their reason and conscience in its favor, then they should embrace it without delay. They are under the most sacred obligation to receive it, and to become decided Christians. Every man is bound, and may be urged to pursue, that course which his conscience approves; and the gospel may thus be pressed on the attention of all to whom it comes.

3. If people wish peace of conscience, they should embrace the gospel, 2 Corinthians 4:2. They can never find it elsewhere. No man‘s conscience is at peace from the fact that he does not repent, and love God and obey the gospel. His heart may love sin; but his conscience cannot approve it. That is at peace only in doing the work of God; and that can find self-approbation only when it submits to him, and embraces the gospel of his Son. Then the conscience is at ease. No man ever yet had a troubled conscience from the fact that he had embraced the gospel, and was an humble and decided Christian. Thousands and million have had a troubled conscience from the fact that they have neglected it. No man on a death-bed ever had a troubled conscience because he embraced religion too early in life. Thousands and million have been troubled when they came to die, because they neglected it so long, or rejected it altogether. No man when death approaches has a troubled conscience because he has lived too much devoted to God the Saviour, and been too active as a Christian. But O how many have been troubled then because they have been worldly-minded, and selfish, and vain, and proud? The conscience gives peace just in proportion as we serve God faithfully; nor can all the art of man or Satan give peace to one conscience in the ways of sin, and in the neglect of the soul.

4. Ministers should preach the truth - the simple truth - and nothing but the truth, 2 Corinthians 4:2. They should make use of no false art, no deception, no trick, no disguise. They should be open, sincere, plain, pure in all their preaching, and in their manner of life. Such was the course of the Saviour; such the course of Paul; and such a course only will God approve and bless.

5. This is a deluded world, 2 Corinthians 4:4. It is blinded and deceived by him who is here called the "god of this world." Satan rules in the hearts of people; and he rules by deceiving them, and in order to deceive them. Everything which operates to prevent people from embracing the gospel has a tendency to blind the mind. The man who is seeking wealth as his only portion, is blinded and deceived in regard to its value. The man who is pursuing the objects of ambition as his main portion, is deceived in regard to the true value of things. And he, or she, who pursues pleasure as the main business of life, is deceived in regard to the proper value of objects. It is impossible to conceive of a world more deluded than this. We can conceive of a world more sinful, and more miserable, and such is hell; but there is no delusion and deception there. Things are seen as they are; and no one is deceived in regard to his character or prospects there. But here, every impenitent man is deceived and blinded. He is deceived about his own character; about the relative value of objects; about his prospects for eternity; about death, the judgment, heaven, hell. On none of these points has he any right apprehension; and on none is it possible for any human power to break the deep delusion, and to penetrate the darkness of his mind.

6. People are in danger, 2 Corinthians 4:4. They are under deep delusion, and they tread unconcerned near to ruin. They walk in darkness - blinded by the god of this world, and are very near a precipice, and nothing will rouse them from their condition. It is like children gathering flowers near a deep gulf, when the pursuit of one more flower may carry them too far, and they will fall to rise no more. The delusion rests on every unsanctified mind; and it needs to remain but a little longer, and the soul will be lost. That danger deepens every day and every hour. If it is continued but a little longer it will be broken in upon by the sad realities of death, judgment, and hell. But then it will be too late. The soul will be lost -

deluded in the world of probation; sensible of the truth only in the world of despair.

7. Satan will practice every device and art possible to prevent the gospel from shining upon the hearts of people. That light is painful and hateful to his eyes, and he will do all that can be done to prevent its being diffused. Every art which long-tried ingenuity and skill can devise, will be resorted to; every power which he can put forth will be exerted. If he can blind the minds of people, he will do it. If people can be hoodwinked, and gulled, it will be done. If error can be made to spread, and be embraced - error smooth, plausible, cunning - it will be diffused. Ministers will be raised up to preach it; and the press will be employed to accomplish it. If sinners can be deceived, and made to remain at ease in their sins, by novels and seductive poetry; by books false in sentiments, and perverse in morals, the press will be made to groan under the works of fiction. If theaters are necessary to cheat and beguile people, they will be reared; and the song, and the dance, the ball, and the splendid party will alike contribute to divert the attention from the cross of Christ, the worth of the soul, and the importance of a preparation to die. No art has been spared, or will be spared to deceive people; and the world is full of the devices of Satan to hoodwink and blind the perishing, and lead them down to hell.

8. Yet, Satan is not alone to blame for this. He does all he can, and he has consummate skill and art. Yet, let not the deluded sinner take comfort to himself because Satan is the tempter, and because he is deluded. The bitterness of death is not made sweet to a young man because he has been deluded by the arts of the veteran in temptation; and the fires of hell will not burn any the less fiercely because the sinner suffered himself to be deluded, and chose to go there through the ballroom or the theater. The sinner is, after all, voluntary in his delusions. He does, or he might, know the truth. He goes voluntarily to the place of amusement; voluntarily forms the plans of gain and ambition which deceive and ruin the soul; goes voluntarily to the theater, and to the haunts of vice; and chooses this course in the face of many warnings, and remonstrances. Who is to blame if he is lost! Who but himself?

9. Sinners should be entreated to rouse from this delusive and false security. They are now blinded, and deceived. Life is too short and too uncertain to be playing such a game as the sinner does. There are too many realities here to make it proper to pass life amidst deceptions and delusions. Sin is real, and danger is real, and death is real, and eternity is real; and man should rouse from his delusions, and look upon things as they are. Soon he will be on a bed of death, and then he will look over the follies of his life. Soon he will be at the judgment bar, and from that high and awful place look on the past and the future, and see things as they are. But, alas, it will be too late then to repair the errors of a life; and amidst the realities of those scenes, all that he may be able to do, will be to sigh unavailingly that he suffered himself to be deluded, deceived, and destroyed in the only world of probation, by the trifles and baubles which the great deceiver placed before him to beguile him of heaven, and to lead him down to hell!

10. The great purpose of the ministry is to make known in any and every way the Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:5. To this, the ministers of the gospel are to devote themselves. It is not to cultivate farms; to engage in traffic; to shine in the social circle; to be distinguished for learning; to become fine scholars; to be profoundly versed in science; or to be distinguished as authors, that they are set apart; but it is in every way possible to make known the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever other people do, or not do; however the world may choose to be employed, their work is simple and plain, and it is not to cease or be intermitted until death shall close their toils. Neither by the love of ease, of wealth, or pleasure are they to turn aside from their work, or to forsake the vocation to which God has called them.

11. We see the responsibility of the ministry, 2 Corinthians 4:5. On the ministry devolves the work of making the Saviour known to a dying world. If they will not do it, the world will remain in ignorance of the Redeemer and will perish. If there is one soul to whom they might make known the Saviour, and to whom they do not make him known, that soul will perish, and the responsibility will rest on the minister of the Lord Jesus. And, O how great is this responsibility! And who is sufficient for these things?

12. Ministers of the gospel should submit to any self-denial in order that they may do good. Their Master did; and Paul and the other apostles did. It is sufficient for the disciple that he be as the master; and the ministers of the gospel should regard themselves as set apart to a work of self-denial, and called to a life of toil, like their Lord. Their rest is in heaven, and not on the earth. Their days of leisure and repose are to be found in the skies when their work is done, and not in a world perishing in sin.

13. The ministry is a glorious work, 2 Corinthians 4:5. What higher honor is there on earth than to make known a Redeemer? What pleasure more exquisite can there be than to speak of pardon to the guilty? What greater comfort than to go to the afflicted and bind up their hearts; to pour the balm of peace into the wounded spirit, and to sustain and cheer the dying? The ministry has its own consolations amidst all its trials; its own honor amidst the contempt and scorn with which it is often viewed by the world.

14. The situation of man would have been dreadful and awful had it not been for the light which is imparted by revelation, and by the Holy Spirit, 2 Corinthians 4:6. Man would have ever remained like the dark night before God said, "Let there be light;" and his condition would have been thick darkness, where not a ray of light would have beamed on his benighted way. Some idea of what this was, and would have continued to be, we have now in the pagan world, where thick darkness reigns over nations, though it has been somewhat broken in upon by the dim light which tradition has diffused there.

15. God has power to impart light to the most dark and benighted mind. There is no one to whom he cannot reveal himself and make his truth known, 2 Corinthians 4:6. With as much ease as he commanded light to shine out of darkness at first can he command the pure light of truth to shine on the minds of people; and on minds most beclouded by sin he can cause the sun of righteousness to shine with healing in his beams.

16. We should implore the enlightening influence of the Spirit of truth, 2 Corinthians 4:6. If God is the source of light, we should seek it at his hands. Nothing to man is so valuable as the light of truth; nothing of so much

worth as the knowledge of the true God; and with the deepest solicitude, and the most fervent prayer, should we seek the enlightening influences of his Spirit, and the guidance of his grace.

17. There is no true knowledge of God except that which shines in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 4:6. He came to make known the true God. He is the exact image of God. He resembles him in all things. And he who does not love the character of Jesus Christ, therefore, does not love the character of God; he who does not seek to be like Jesus Christ, does not desire to be like God. He who does not bear the image of the Redeemer, does not bear the image of God. To be a moral man merely, therefore, is not to be like God. To be amiable, and honest, merely, is not to be like God. Jesus Christ, the image of God, was more than this. He was religious. He was holy. He was, as a man, a man of prayer, and filled with the love of God, and was always submissive to his holy will. He sought his honor and glory: and he made it the great purpose of his life and death to make known his existence, perfections, and name. To imitate him in this is to have the knowledge of the glory of God; and no man is like God who does not bear the image of the Redeemer. No man is like God, therefore, who is not a Christian. Of course, no man can be prepared for heaven who is not a friend and follower of Jesus Christ.

18. God designs to secure the promotion of his own glory in the manner in which religion is spread in the world, 2 Corinthians 4:7. For this purpose, and with this view, he did not commit it to angels, nor has he employed people of rank, or wealth, or profound scientific attainments to be the chief instruments in its propagation. He has committed it to frail, mortal people; and often to people of humble rank, and even humble attainments - except attainments in piety. In fitting them for their work his grace is manifest; and in all the success which attends their labors it is apparent that it is by the mere grace and mercy of God that it is done.

19. We see what our religion has cost, 2 Corinthians 4:8-9. Its extension in the world has been everywhere connected with sufferings, and toil, and tears. It began in the labors, sorrows, self-denials, persecutions, and dying agonies of the Son of God; and to introduce it to the world cost his life. It was spread by the toils, and sacrifices, and sufferings of the apostles. It was

kept up by the dying groans of martyrs. It has been preserved and extended on earth by the labors and prayers of the Reformers, and amidst scenes of persecution everywhere, and it is now extending through the earth by the sacrifices of those who are willing to leave country and home; to cross oceans and deserts; and to encounter the perils of barbarous climes, that they may make it known to distant lands. If estimated by what it has cost, assuredly no religion, no blessing is so valuable as Christianity. It is above all human valuation: and it should be a matter of unfeigned thankfulness to us that God has been pleased to raise up people who have been willing to suffer so much that it might be perpetuated and extended on the earth; and we should be willing also to imitate their example, and deny ourselves, that we may make its inestimable blessings known to those who are now destitute. To us, it is worth all it has cost - all the blood of apostles and martyrs; to others, also, it would be worth all that it would cost to send it to them. How can we better express our sense of its worth, and our gratitude to the dying Redeemer, and our veneration for the memory of self-denying apostles and martyrs, than by endeavoring to diffuse the religion for which they died all over the world?

20. We have in this chapter an illustration of the sustaining power of religion in trials, 2 Corinthians 4:8-9. The friends of Christianity have been called to endure every form of suffering. Poverty, want, tears, stripes, imprisonments, and deaths have been their portion. They have suffered under every form of torture which people could inflict on them. And yet the power of religion has never failed them. It has been amply tried; and has shown itself able to sustain them always, and to enable them always to triumph. Though troubled, they have not been so close pressed that they had no room to turn; though perplexed, they have not been without some resource; though persecuted by people, they have not been forsaken by God; though thrown down in the conflict, yet they have recovered strength, and been prepared to renew the strife, and to engage in new contentions with the foes of God. Who can estimate the value of a religion like this? Who does not see that it is adapted to man in a state of trial, and that it furnishes him with just what he needs in this world?

21. Christianity will live, 2 Corinthians 4:8-9. Nothing can destroy it. All the power that could be brought to bear on it to blot it from the earth has

been tried, and yet it survives. No new attempt to destroy it can prevail; and it is now settled that this religion is to live to the end of time. It has cost much to obtain this demonstration; but it is worth all it has cost, and the sufferings of apostles and martyrs, therefore, have not been for nothing.

22. Christians should be willing to endure anything in order that they may become like Christ on earth, and be like him in heaven, 2 Corinthians 4:10. It is worth all their efforts, and all their self-denials. It is the grand object before us; and we should deem no sufferings too severe, no self-denial or sacrifice too great, if we may become like him here below, and may live with him above, 2 Corinthians 4:10-11.

23. In order to animate us in the work to which God has called us; to encourage us in our trials; and to prompt us to a faithful discharge of our duties, especially those who like Paul are called to preach the gospel, we should have, like him, the following views and feelings - views and feelings adapted to sustain us in all our trials, and to uphold us in all the conflicts of life:

(1) A firm and unwavering belief of the truth of the religion which we profess, and of the truth which we make known to others, 2 Corinthians 4:12. No man can preach successfully, and no man can do much good, whose mind is vacillating and hesitating; who is filled with doubts, and who goes timidly to work, or who declares that of which he has no practical acquaintance, and no deep-felt conviction, and who knows not whereof he affirms. A man to do good must have a faith which never wavers; a conviction of truth which is constant; a belief settled like the everlasting hills, which nothing can shake or overturn. With such a conviction of the truth of Christianity, and of the great doctrines which it inculcates, he cannot but speak of it, and make known his convictions. He that believes that people are in fact in danger of hell, will tell them of it; he that believes there is an awful bar of judgment, will tell them of it; he that believes that the Son of God became incarnate and died for people, will tell them of it; he that believes that there is a heaven, will invite them to it. And one reason why professing Christians are so reluctant to speak of these things, is, that they have no very settled and definite conviction of their truth, and no correct view of their relative importance.

(2) we should have a firm assurance that God has raised up the Lord Jesus, and that we also shall be raised from the dead, 2 Corinthians 4:14. The hope and expectation of the resurrection of the dead was one of the sustaining principles which upheld Paul in his labors, and to attain to this was one of the grand objects of his life, Acts 23:6; Philemon 3:11. Under the influence of this hope and expectation, he was willing to encounter any danger, and to endure any trial. The prospect of being raised up to eternal life and glory was all that was needful to make trials welcome, and to uphold him in the midst of privations and toils. And so we, if we are assured of this great truth, shall welcome trial also, and shall be able to endure afflictions and persecutions. They will soon be ended, and the eternal glory in the morning of the resurrection shall be more than a compensation for all that we shall endure in this life.

(3) we should have a sincere desire to promote the glory of God, and to bring as many as possible to join in his praise, and to celebrate his saving mercy, 2 Corinthians 4:15. It was this which sustained and animated Paul; and a man who has this as the leading objector his life, and his great purpose and aim, will be willing to endure much trial, to suffer much persecution, and to encounter many dangers. No object is so noble as that of endeavoring to promote the divine glory; and he who is influenced by that will care little how many sufferings he is called to endure in this life.

24. Christians should have such a belief of the truth of their religion as to be willing to speak of it at all times, and in all places, 2 Corinthians 4:13. If we have such a belief we shall be willing to speak of it. We cannot help it. We shall so see its value. and so love it, and our hearts will be so full of it, and we shall see so much the danger of our fellow-men, that we shall be instinctively prompted to go to them and warn them of their danger, and tell them of the glories of the Redeemer.

25. Christians may expect to be supported and comforted in the trials and toils of life, 2 Corinthians 4:16. The “outward man” will indeed perish and decay. The body will become feeble, weary, jaded, decayed, decrepit. It will be filled with pain, and will languish under disease, and will endure the mortal agony, and will be corrupted in the tomb. But the “inward man” will

be renewed. The faith will be invigorated, the hope become stronger, the intellect brighter, the heart better, the whole soul be more like God. While the body, therefore, the less important part, decays and dies, the immortal part shall live and ripen for glory. Of what consequence is it, therefore, how soon or how much the body decays; or when, and where, and how it dies? Let the immortal part be preserved, let that live, and all is well. And while this is done, we should not, we shall not "faint." We shall be sustained; and shall find the consolations of religion to be suited to all our needs, and adapted to all the necessities of our condition as weak, and frail, and dying creatures.

26. We learn from this chapter how to bear affliction in a proper manner, 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. It is by looking at eternity and comparing our trials with the eternal weight of glory that awaits us. In themselves afflictions often seem heavy and long. Human nature is often ready to sink under them. The powers of the body fail, and the mortal frame is crushed. The day seems long while we suffer; and the night seems often to be almost endless, Deuteronomy 28:67. But compared with eternity how short are all these trials! Compared with the weight of glory which awaits the believer, what a trifle are the severest sufferings of this life. Soon the ransomed spirit will be released, and will be admitted to the full fruition of the joys of the world above. In that world all these sorrows will seem like the sufferings of childhood, that we have now almost forgotten, and that now seem to us like trifles.

27. We should not look to the things which are seen as our portion, 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. They are light in their character, and are soon to fade away. Our great interests are beyond the grave. There all is weighty, and momentous, and eternal. Whatever great interests we have are there. Eternity is stamped upon all the joys and all the sorrows which are beyond this life. here all is temporary, changing, decaying, dying. There all is fixed, settled, unchanging, immortal. It becomes us then as rational creatures to look to that world, to act with reference to it, to feel and act as if we felt that all our interests were there. Were this life all, everything in relation to us would be trifling. But when we remember that there is an eternity; that we are near it; and that our conduct here is to determine our character and destiny there, life becomes invested with infinite importance. Who can

estimate the magnitude of the interests at stake? Who can appreciate aright the importance of every step we take, and every plan we form?

28. All here below is temporary, decaying, dying; 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. Afflictions are temporary. They are but for a moment, and will soon be passed away. Our sorrows here will soon be ended. The last sigh on earth will soon be heaved; the last tear will have fallen on the cheek; the last pain will have shot across the seat of life! The last pangs of parting with a beloved friend will soon have been endured; and the last step which we are to take in "the valley of the shadow of death," will soon have been trod. And in like manner we shall soon have tasted the last cup of earthly joy. All our comforts here below will soon pass from us. Our friends will die. Our sources of happiness will be dried up. Our health will fail, and darkness will come over our eyes, and we shall go down to the dead. All our property must be left, and all our honors be parted with forever. In a little time - O, how brief! we shall have gone from all these, and shall be engaged in the deep and awful solemnities of the unchanging world. How vain and foolish, therefore, the attachment to earthly objects! How important to secure an interest in that future inheritance which shall never fade away!

29. Let it not be inferred, however, that all affliction shall be light, and for a moment, or that all earthly trial shall of course work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. There are sorrows beyond the grave compared with which the most heavy and most protracted woes this side ‹the tomb, are "light," and are "but for a moment." And there are sorrows in this life, deep and prolonged afflictions - which by no means tend to prepare the soul for the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Such are those afflictions where there is no submission to the will of God; where there is complaining, repining, impatience, and increased rebellion; where there is no looking to God for comfort, and no contemplation of eternal glory. Such are those afflictions where people look to philosophy, or to earthly friends to comfort them; or where they plunge deeper into the business, the gaiety, or the vices of the world, to drown their sorrows and to obliterate the sense of their calamities. This is "the sorrow of the world, which worketh death," 2 Corinthians 7:10. In afflictions, therefore, it should be to us a matter of deep and anxious solicitude to know whether we have the right feelings, and whether we are seeking the right sources of

consolation. And in such seasons it shall be the subject of our deep and earnest prayer to God that our trials may, by his grace, be made to work out for us “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” All are afflicted; all suffer in various ways; and all may find these trials terminate in eternal blessedness beyond the grave.

2 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

This chapter 2 Corinthians 4:1-3; the trials and dangers which they encountered in the work of the ministry 2 Corinthians 4:7-12; and the consolations and supports which they had in its various trials, 2 Corinthians 4:13-18. This chapter contains a continuation of the same subject, and a further statement of the motives which prompted them to their work, and of the supports which upheld them in the arduous duties to which they were called. It is a chapter full of exquisite beauties of sentiment and of language, and as well adapted to give consolation and support to all Christians now as it is to ministers; and the sentiments are as well adapted to sustain the humblest believer in his trials as they were to sustain the apostles themselves. The following are the points of consolation and support, and reasons for their zeal and self-denial, to which the apostle refers.

1. They had the assured prospect of the resurrection, and of eternal life, 2 Corinthians 5:1-4. The body might decay, and be worn out; it might sigh and groan, but they had a better home, a mansion of eternal rest in the heavens. It was their earnest desire to reach heaven; though not such a desire as to make them unwilling to endure the toils and trials which God should appoint to them here below, but still an earnest, anxious wish to reach safely their eternal home in the skies. In the prospect of their heavenly home, and their eternal rest, they were willing to endure all the trials which were appointed to them.

2. God had appointed them to this; he had suited them for these trials; he had endowed them with the graces of his Spirit; and they were, therefore, willing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord; 2 Corinthians 5:5-8. They had such a view of heaven as their home that they were willing at any time to depart and enter the world of rest, and they did not, therefore, shrink from the trials and dangers which would be likely soon to bring them there.

3. They had a deep and constant conviction that they must soon appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; 2 Corinthians 5:9-11. They labored that they might be accepted by him 2 Corinthians 5:9; they knew that they must give a solemn account to him 2 Corinthians 5:10; they had a clear view, and

a deep impression of the awful terrors of that day, and they labored, therefore, to save as many as possible from the condemnation of the great Judge of all, and endeavored to "persuade" them to be prepared for that scene; 2 Corinthians 5:11.

4. Though to some they might appear to be under the influence of improper excitement, and even to be deranged 2 Corinthians 5:14, yet they were acting only under the proper influence of the love of Christ; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. They were constrained and urged on by his love; they knew that he had died for all, and that all people were dead in sin; and they felt themselves the constraining influence of that love prompting them to deny themselves, and to devote their all to his service and cause.

5. Their views of all things had been changed; 2 Corinthians 5:16-17. They had ceased to act under the influences which govern other people; but their own hearts had been changed, and they had become new creatures in Christ, and in their lives they evinced the spirit which should govern those who were thus renewed.

6. They had been solemnly commissioned by God as his ambassadors in this cause. They had been sent to make known the terms and the way of reconciliation, and they felt it to be their duty to proclaim those terms on as wide a scale as possible, and with the utmost zeal and self-denial. It was God's glorious plan of reconciliation; and on the ground of the atonement made by the Redeemer, they could now offer salvation to all mankind, and as all might be saved, they felt themselves bound to offer the terms of salvation to as many as possible; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. The grand argument for urging sinners to be reconciled to God, is the fact that Christ has died for their sins, and, therefore, the apostles apprized of this fact, sought to urge as many as possible to become his friends; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Verse 1

For we know - We who are engaged in the work of the gospel ministry. Paul is giving a reason why he and his fellow-laborers did not become weary and faint in their work. The reason was, that they knew that even if their body should die, they had an inheritance reserved for them in heaven.

The expression "we know" is the language of strong and unwavering assurance. They had no doubt on the subject. And it proves that there may be the assurance of eternal life; or such evidence of acceptance with God as to leave no doubt of a final admission into heaven. This language was often used by the Saviour in reference to the truths which he taught John 3:11; John 4:22; and it is used by the sacred writers in regard to the truths which they recorded, and in regard to their own personal piety; John 21:24; 1 John 2:3, 1John 2:5,1 John 2:18; 1 John 3:2, 1 John 3:14, 1 John 3:19, 1 John 3:24; 1 John 4:6, 1 John 4:13; 1 John 5:2, 1 John 5:15, 1 John 5:19-20.

That if our earthly house - The word "earthly" here (ἐπιγειος epigeios) stands opposed to "heavenly," or to the house eternal (ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς en tois ouranois) in the heavens." The word properly means "upon earth, terrestrial, belonging to the earth, or on the earth," and is applied to bodies 1 Corinthians 15:40; to earthly things John 3:12; to earthly, or worldly wisdom, James 3:15. The word "house" here refers doubtless to the body, as the habitation, or the dwelling-place of the mind or soul. The soul dwells in it as we dwell in a house, or tent.

Of this tabernacle - This word means a booth, or tent - a movable dwelling. The use of the word here is not a mere redundancy, but the idea which Paul designs to convey is, doubtless, that the body - the house of the soul - was not a permanent dwelling-place, but was of the same nature as a booth or tent, that was set up for a temporary purpose, or that was easily taken down in migrating from one place to another. It refers here to the body as the frail and temporary abode of the soul. It is not a permanent dwelling; a fixed habitation, but is liable to be taken down at any moment, and was suited up with that view. Tyndale renders it, "if our earthly mansion wherein we now dwell." The Syriac renders it, "for we know that if our house on earth, which is our body, were dissolved." The idea is a beautiful one, that the body is a mere unfixed, movable dwelling. place; liable to be taken down at any moment, and not designed, anymore than a tent is, to be a permanent habitation.

Were dissolved - (καταλυθῇ kataluthē). This word means properly to disunite the parts of anything; and is applied to the act of throwing down, or destroying a building. It is applied here to the body, regarded as a temporary dwelling that might be taken down, and it refers, doubtless, to the dissolution of the body in the grave. The idea is, that if this body should moulder back to dust, and be resolved into its original elements; or if by

great zeal and, labor it should be exhausted and worn out. Language like this is used by Eliphaz, the Temanite, in describing the body of man. "How much less in those that dwell in houses of clay," etc.; Job 4:19; compare 2 Peter 1:13-14.

We have a building of God - Robinson (Lexicon) supposes that it refers to "the future spiritual body as the abode of the soul." Some have supposed that it refers to some "celestial vehicle" with which God invests the soul during the intermediate state. But the Scripture is silent about any such celestial vehicle. It is not easy to tell what was the precise idea which Paul here designed to convey. Perhaps a few remarks may enable us to arrive at the meaning:

(1) It was not to be temporary; not a tent or tabernacle that could be taken down.

(2) it was to be eternal in the heavens.

(3) it was to be such as to constitute a dwelling; a clothing, or such a protection as should keep the soul from being "naked."

(4) it was to be such as should constitute "life" in contradistinction from "mortality." These things will better agree with the supposition of its referring to the future body of the saints than any thing else; and probably the idea of Paul is, that the body there will be incorruptible and immortal. When he says it is a "building of God" (ἐκ Θεοῦ ek Theou), he evidently means that it is made by God; that he is the architect of that future and eternal dwelling. Macknight and some others, however, understood this of the mansions which God has prepared for His people in heaven, and which the Lord Jesus has gone to prepare for them; compare John 14:2. But see the note on 2 Corinthians 5:3.

An house - A dwelling; an abode; that is, according to the interpretation above, a celestial, pure, immortal body; a body that shall have God for its immediate author, and that shall be suited to dwell in heaven forever.

Not made with hands - Not constructed by man; a habitation not like those which are made by human skill, and which are therefore easily taken down or removed, but one that is made by God himself. This does not imply that the "earthly house" which is to be superseded by that in heaven is made with hands, but the idea is, that the earthly dwelling has things about it

which resemble that which is made by man, or as if it were made with hands; that is it is temporary, frail, easily taken down or removed. But that which is in heaven is permanent, fixed, eternal, as if made by God.

Eternal in the heavens - Immortal; to live forever. The future body shall never be taken down or dissolved by death. It is eternal, of course, only in respect to the future, and not in respect to the past. And it is not only eternal, but it is to abide forever in the heavens - in the world of glory. It is never to be subjected to a dwelling on the earth; never to be in a world of sin, suffering, and death.

Verse 2

For in this - In this tent, tabernacle, or dwelling. In our body here.

We groan - compare note, Romans 8:22. The sense is, that we are subjected to so many trials and afflictions in the present body; that the body is subjected to so many pains and to so much suffering, as to make us earnestly desire to be invested with that body which shall be free from all susceptibility to suffering.

Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house … - There is evidently here a change of the metaphor which gives an apparent harshness to the construction. One idea of the apostle is, that the body here, and the spiritual body hereafter, is a house or a dwelling. Here he speaks of it as a garment which may be put on or laid off and of himself as earnestly desiring to put on the immortal clothing or vestment which was in heaven. Both these figures are common in ancient writings, and a change in this manner in the popular style is not unusual. The Pythagoreans compared the body to a tent, or hut, for the soul; the Platonists liken it to a vestment - Bloomfield. The Jews speak of a vestment to the soul in this world and the next. They affirm that the soul had a covering when it was under the throne of God, and before it was clothed with the body. This vestment they say was "the image of God" which was lost by Adam. After the fall, they say Adam and all his posterity were regarded as naked.

In the future world they say the good will be clothed with a vestment for the soul which they speak of as lucid and radiant, and such as no one on earth can attain - Schoettgen. But there is no reason to think that Paul referred to any such trifles as the Jews have believed on this subject. He evidently regarded man as composed of body and soul. The soul was the more important part, and the body constituted its mere habitation or dwelling. Yet a body was essential to the idea of the complete man; and

since this was frail and dying, he looked forward to a union with the body that should be eternal in the heavens, as a more desirable and perfect habitation of the soul. Mr. Locke has given an interpretation of this in which he is probably alone, but which has so much appearance of plausibility that it is not improper to refer to it. He supposes that this whole passage has reference to the fact that at the coming of the Redeemer the body will be changed without experiencing death; (compare 1 Corinthians 15:51-52); that Paul expected that this might soon occur; and that he earnestly desired to undergo this transformation without experiencing the pains of dying. He therefore paraphrases it, "For in this tabernacle I groan, earnestly desiring, without putting off this mortal, earthly body by death, to have that celestial body superinduced, if so be the coming of Christ shall overtake me in this life, before I put off this body."

With our house - The phrase "to be clothed upon with our house" seems to be harsh and unusual. The sense is plain, however, that Paul desired to be invested with that pure, spiritual, and undecaying body which was to be the eternal abode of his soul in heaven. That he speaks of as a house (οἰκητήριον oikētērion), a more permanent and substantial dwelling than a tent, or tabernacle.

Verse 3

If so be that being clothed - This passage has been interpreted in a great many different ways. The view of Locke is given above. Rosenmuller renders it, "For in the other life we shall not be wholly destitute of a body, but we shall have a body." Tyndale renders it, "If it happen that we be found clothed, and not naked." Doddridge supposes it to mean, "since being so clothed upon, we shall not be found naked, and exposed to any evil and inconvenience, how entirely soever we may be stripped of everything we can call our own here below." Hammond explains it to mean, "If, indeed, we shall, happily, be among the number of those faithful Christians, who will be found clothed upon, not naked." Various other expositions may be seen in the larger commentaries. The meaning is probably this:

(1) The word "clothed" refers to the future spiritual body of believers; the eternal habitation in which they shall reside.

(2) the expression implies an earnest desire of Paul to be thus invested with that body.

(3) it is the language of humility and of deep solicitude, as if it were possible that they might fail, and as if it demanded their utmost care and anxiety that they might thus be clothed with the spiritual body in heaven.

(4) it means that in that future state, the soul will not be naked; that is, destitute of any body, or covering. The present body will be laid aside. It will return to corruption, and the disembodied Spirit will ascend to God and to heaven. It will be disencumbered of the body with which it has been so long clothed. But we are not thence to infer that it will be destitute of a body; that it will remain a naked soul. It will be clothed there in its appropriate glorified body; and will have an appropriate habitation there. This does not imply, as Bloomfield supposes, that the souls of the wicked will be destitute of any such habitation as the glorified body of the saints; which may be true - but it means simply that the soul shall not be destitute of an appropriate body in heaven, but that the union of body and soul there shall be known as well as on earth.

Verse 4

For we - We who are Christians. All Christians.

That are in this tabernacle - This frail and dying body; note, 2 Corinthians 5:1.

Do groan - see 2 Corinthians 5:2. This is a further explanation of what is said in 2 Corinthians 5:2. It implies an ardent and earnest desire to leave a world of toil and pain, and to enter into a world of rest and glory.

Being burdened - Being borne down by the toils, and trials, and calamities of this life; see the note, 2 Corinthians 3:7-10.

Not for that we would be unclothed - Not that we are impatient, and unwilling to bear these burdens as long as God shall appoint. Not that we merely wish to lay aside this mortal body. We do not desire to die and depart merely because we suffer much, and because the body here is subjected to great trials. This is not the ground of our wish to depart. We are willing to bear trials. We are not impatient under afflictions. The sentiment here is, that the mere fact that we may be afflicted much and long, should not be the principal reason why we should desire to depart. We should be willing to bear all this as long as God shall choose to appoint. The anxiety of Paul to enter the eternal world was from a higher motive than a mere desire to get away from trouble.

But clothed upon - To be invested with our spiritual body. We desire to be clothed with that body. We desire to be in heaven, and to be clothed with immortality. We wish to have a body that shall be pure, undecaying, ever glorious. It was not, therefore, a mere desire to be released from sufferings; it was an earnest wish to be admitted to the glories of the future world, and partake of the happiness which we would enjoy there. This is one of the reasons why Paul wished to be in heaven. Other reasons he has stated elsewhere. Thus, in Philemon 1:23, he says he had "a desire to depart and to be with Christ." So in 2 Corinthians 5:8 of this chapter, he says he was "willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." In 2 Timothy 4:6-8, he speaks of the "crown of righteousness" laid up for him as a reason why he was willing to die.

That mortality might be swallowed up of life - On the meaning of the word rendered "swallowed up" (καταποθῇ katapothē); see the note on 1 Corinthians 15:54. The meaning here is, that it might be completely absorbed; that it might cease to be; that there might be no more mortality, but that he might pass to the immortal state - to the condition of eternal life in the heavens. The body here is mortal; the body there will be immortal; and Paul desired to pass away from the mortal state to one that shall be immortal, a world where there shall be no more death; compare 1 Corinthians 15:53.

Verse 5

Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing - The phrase "self-same thing" here means this very thing, that is, the thing to which he had referred - the preparation for heaven, or the heavenly dwelling. The word "wrought" here (κατεργασάμενος katergasamenos) means that God had formed or made them for this; that is, he had by the influences of the Spirit, and by his agency on the heart, created them, as it were, for this, and adapted them to it. God has destined us to this change from corruption to incorruption; he has adapted us to it; he has formed us for it. It does not refer to the original creation of the body and the soul for this end, but it means that God, by his own renewing, and sanctifying, and sustaining agency, had formed them for this, and adapted them to it. The object of Paul in stating that it was done by God, is to keep this truth prominently before the mind. It was not by any native inclination, or strength, or power which they had, but it was all to be traced to God; compare Ephesians 2:10.

Who also hath given - In addition to the fitting for eternal glory he has given us the earnest of the Spirit to sustain us here. We are not only prepared to enter into heaven, but we have here also the support produced by the earnest of the Spirit.

The earnest of the Spirit - On the meaning of this, see the note on 2 Corinthians 1:22. He has given to us the Holy Spirit as the pledge or assurance of the eternal inheritance.

Verse 6

Therefore we are always confident - The word used here (θαῤῥοῦντες tharrountes) means to be of good cheer. To have good courage, to be full of hope. The idea is, that Paul was not dejected, cast down, disheartened, discouraged. He was cheerful and happy. He was patient in his trials, and diligent in his calling. He was full of hope, and of the confident expectation of heaven; and this filled him with cheerfulness and with joy. Tyndale renders it: "we are always of goud cheere." And this was not occasional and transitory, it was constant, it was uniform, it always (πάντοτε pantote) existed. This is an instance of the uniform cheerfulness which will be produced by the assured prospect of heaven. It is an instance too when the hope of heaven will enable a man to face danger with courage; to endure toil with patience; and to submit to trials in any form with cheerfulness.

Knowing - see 2 Corinthians 5:1. This is another instance in which the apostle expresses undoubted assurance.

While we are at home in the body - The word used here (ἐνδημοῦντες endēmountes) means literally to be among one's own people, to be at home; to be present at any place. It is here equivalent to saying, "while we dwell in the body;" see 2 Corinthians 5:1. Doddridge renders it, "sojourning in the body;" and remarks that it is improper to render it "at home in the body," since it is the apostle's design to intimate that this is not our home. But Bloomfield says that the word is never used in the sense of sojourning. The idea is not that of being "at home" - for this is an idea which is the very opposite of that which the apostle wishes to convey. His purpose is not at all to represent the body here as our home, and the original word does not imply that. It means here simply to be in the body; to be present in the body; that is, while we are in the body.

We are absent from the Lord - The Lord Jesus; see the notes, Acts 1:24; compare Philemon 1:23. Here he was in a strange world, and among strangers. His great desire and purpose was to be with the Lord; and hence,

he cared little how soon the frail tabernacle of the body was taken down, and was cheerful amidst all the labors and sufferings that tended to bring it to the grave, and to release him to go to his eternal home where he would be present forever with the Lord.

Verse 7

For we walk - To walk, in the Scriptures often denotes to live, to act, to conduct in a certain way; see the notes on Romans 4:12; Romans 6:4. It has reference to the fact that life is a journey, or a pilgrimage, and that the Christian is traveling to another country. The sense here is, that we conduct ourselves in our course of life with reference to the things which are unseen, and not with reference to the things which are seen.

By faith - In the belief of those things which we do not see. We believe in the existence of objects which are invisible, and we are influenced by them. To walk by faith, is to live in the confident expectation of things that are to come; in the belief of the existence of unseen realities; and suffering them to influence us as if they were seen. The people of this world are influenced by the things that are seen. They live for wealth, honor, splendor, praise, for the objects which this world can furnish, and as if there were nothing which is unseen, or as if they ought not to be influenced by the things which are unseen. The Christian, on the contrary, has a firm conviction of the reality of the glories of heaven; of the fact that the Redeemer is there; of the fact that there is a crown of glory; and he lives, and acts as if that were all real, and as if he saw it all. The simple account of faith, and of living by faith is, that we live and act as if these things were true, and suffer them to make an impression on our mind according to their real nature; see the note on Mark 16:16.

It is contradistinguished from living simply under the influence of things that are seen. God is unseen - but the Christian lives, and thinks, and acts as if there were a God, and as if he saw him. Christ is unseen now by the bodily eye; but the Christian lives and acts as if he were seen, that is, as if his eye were known to be upon us, and as if he was now exalted to heaven and was the only Saviour. The Holy Spirit is unseen; but he lives, and acts as if there were such a Spirit, and as if his influences were needful to renew, and purify the soul. Heaven is unseen; but the Christian lives, and thinks, and acts as if there were a heaven, and as if he now saw its glories. He has confidence in these, and in kindred truths, and he acts as if they were real. Could man see all these; were they visible to the naked eye as they are to

the eye of faith, no one would doubt the propriety of living and acting with reference to them.

But if they exist, there is no more impropriety in acting with reference to them than if they were seen. Our seeing or not seeing them does not alter their nature or importance, and the fact that they are not seen does not make it improper to act with reference to them. There are many ways of being convinced of the existence and reality of objects besides seeing them; and it may be as rational to be influenced by the reason, the judgment, or by strong confidence, as it is to be influenced by sight. Besides, all people are influenced by things which they have not seen. They hope for objects that are future. They aspire to happiness which they have not yet beheld. They strive for honor and wealth which are unseen, and which is in the distant future. They live, and act - influenced by strong faith and hope - as if these things were attainable; and they deny themselves, and labor, and cross oceans and deserts, and breathe in pestilential air to obtain those things which they have not seen, and which to them are in the distant future.

And why should not the Christian endure like labor, and be willing to suffer in like manner, to gain the unseen crown which is incorruptible, and to acquire the unseen wealth which the moth does not corrupt? And further still, the people of this world strive for those objects which they have not beheld, without any promise or any assurance that they shall obtain them. No being able to grant them has promised them; no one has assured them that their lives shall be lengthened out to obtain them. In a moment they may be cut off and all their plans frustrated; or they may be utterly disappointed and all their plans fail; or if they gain the object, it may be unsatisfactory, and may furnish no pleasure such as they had anticipated. But not so the Christian. He has:

(1) The promise of life.

(2) he has the assurance that sudden death cannot deprive him of it. It at once removes him to the object of pursuit, not from it.

(3) he has the assurance that when obtained, it shall not disgust, or satiate, or decay, but that it shall meet all the expectations of the soul, and

shall be eternal.

Not by sight - This may mean either that we are not influenced by a sight of these future glories, or that we are not influenced by the things which we see. The main idea is, that we are not influenced and governed by the sight. We are not governed and controlled by the things which we see, and we do not see those things which actually influence and control us. In both it is faith that controls us, and not sight.

Verse 8

We are confident - 2 Corinthians 5:6. We are cheerful, and courageous, and ready to bear our trial. Tyndale renders it: "we are of good comfort."

And willing rather to be absent from the body - We would prefer to die. The same idea occurs in Philemon 1:23. "Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better." The sense is, that Paul would have preferred to die, and to go to heaven; rather than to remain in a world of sin and trial.

To be present with the Lord - The Lord Jesus; see the note on Acts 1:24; compare Philemon 1:23. The idea of Paul is, that the Lord Jesus would constitute the main glory of heaven, and that to be with him was equivalent to being in a place of perfect bliss. He had no idea of any heaven where the Lord Jesus was not; and to be with him was to be in heaven. That world where the Redeemer is, is heaven. This also proves that the spirits of the saints, when they depart, are with the Redeemer; that is, are at once taken to heaven. It demonstrates:

(1)That they are not annihilated.

(2)that they do not sleep, and remain in an unconscious state, as Dr. Priestley supposes.

(3)that they are not in some intermediate state, either in a state of purgatory, as the Papists suppose, or a state where all the souls of the just and the unjust are assembled in a common abode, as many Protestants have supposed; but,

(4)That they dwell with Christ; they are with the Lord (πρὸς τὸν Κυρίον pros ton Kurion). They abide in his presence; they partake of his joy and his glory; they are permitted to sit with him in his throne; Revelation 3:21.

The same idea the Saviour expressed to the dying thief, when he said, "today shalt thou be with me in paradise;" Luke 23:43.

Verse 9

Wherefore - (Διὸ Dio). In view of the facts stated above. Since we have the prospect of a resurrection and of future glory; since we have the assurance that there is a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; and since God has given to us this hope, and has granted to us the earnest of the Spirit, we make it our great object so to live as to be accepted by him.

We labor - The word used here (φιλοτιμούμεθα philotimoumethafrom φίλος and τιμὴ timēloving honor) means properly to love honor; to be ambitious. This is its usual Classical signification. In the New Testament, it means to be ambitious to do anything; to exert oneself; to strive, as if from a love or sense of honor. As in English, to make it a point of honor to do so and so - Robinson (Lexicon); see Romans 15:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:1 l. It means here, that Paul made it a point of constant effort; it was his leading and constant aim to live so as to be acceptable to God, and to meet his approbation wherever he was.

Whether present or absent - Whether present with the Lord 2 Corinthians 5:8, or absent from him 2 Corinthians 5:6; that is, whether in this world or the next; whether we are here, or removed to heaven. Wherever we are, or may be, it is, and will be our main purpose and object so to live as to secure his favor. Paul did not wish to live on earth regardless of his favor or without evidence that he would be accepted by him. He did not make the fact that he was absent from him, and that he did not see him with the physical eye, an excuse for walking in the ways of ambition, or seeking his own purposes and ends. The idea is, that so far as this point was concerned, it made no difference with him whether he lived or died; whether he was on earth or in heaven; whether in the body or out of the body; it was the great fixed principle of his nature so to live as to secure the approbation of the Lord. And this is the true principle on which the Christian should act, and will act. The fact that he is now absent from the Lord will be to him no reason why he should lead a life of sin and self-indulgence, anymore than he would if he were in heaven; and the fact that he is soon to be with him is not the main reason why he seeks to live so as to please him. It is because this has become the fixed principle of the soul; the very purpose of the life; and this principle and this purpose will adhere to him, and control him wherever he may be placed, or in whatever world he may dwell.

We may be accepted of him - The phrase used here εὐάρεστοι εἶναι euarestoi einaimeans to be well-pleasing; and then to be acceptable, or approved; Romans 12:1; Romans 14:18; Ephesians 5:10; Philemon 4:18; Titus 2:9. The sense here is, that Paul was earnestly desirous of so living as to please God, and to receive from him the tokens and marks of his favor. And the truth taught in this verse is, that this will be the great purpose of the Christian‘s life, and that it makes no difference as to the existence and operation of this principle whether a man is on earth or in heaven. He will equally desire it, and strive for it; and this is one of the ways in which religion makes a man conscientious and holy, and is a better guard and security for virtue than all human laws, and all the restraints which can be imposed by man.

Verse 10

For we must - (δεῖ dei). It is proper, fit, necessary that we should all appear there. This fact, to which Paul now refers, is another reason why it was necessary to lead a holy life, and why Paul gave himself with so much diligence and self-denial to the arduous duties of his office. There is a necessity, or a fitness that we should appear there to give up our account, for we are here on trial: we are responsible moral agents; we are placed here to form characters for eternity. Before we receive our eternal allotment it is proper that we should render our account of the manner in which we have lived, and of the manner in which we have improved our talents and privileges. In the nature of things, it is proper that we should undergo a trial before we receive our reward, or before we are punished; and God has made it necessary and certain, by his direct and positive appointment, that we should stand at the bar of the final judge; see Romans 14:10.

All - Both Jews and Gentiles; old and young; bond and free; rich and poor; all of every class, and every age, and every nation. None shall escape by being unknown; none by virtue of their rank, or wealth; none because they have a character too pure to be judged. All shall be arranged in one vast assemblage, and with reference to their eternal doom; see Revelation 20:12. Rosenmuller supposes that the apostle here alludes to an opinion that was common among the Jews that the Gentiles only would be exposed to severe judgments in the future world, and that the Jews would be saved as a matter of course. But the idea seems rather to be, that as the trial of the great day was the most important that man could undergo, and as all must

give account there, Paul and his fellow-laborers devoted themselves to untiring diligence and fidelity that they might be accepted in that great day.

Appear - (φανερωθῆναι phanerōthēnai). This word properly means, to make apparent, manifest, known; to show openly, etc. Here it means that we must be manifest, or openly shown; that is, we must be seen there, and be publicly tried. We must not only stand there, but our character will be seen, our desert will be known, our trial will be public. All will be brought, from their graves, and from their places of concealment, and will be seen at the judgment-seat. The secret things of the heart and the life will all be made manifest and known.

The judgment-seat of Christ - The tribunal of Christ, who is appointed to be the judge of quick and dead; see the John 5:25 note; Acts 10:42; Acts 17:31 notes. Christ is appointed to judge the world; and for this purpose he will assemble it before him, and assign to all their eternal allotments; see Luke 7:37; to acquire, to obtain, to receive. This is the sense here. Every individual shall take, receive, or bear away the appropriate reward for the transactions of this life of probation; see Ephesians 6:8; Colossians 3:25.

The things - The appropriate reward of the actions of this life. "done in his body." Literally, "the things by or through (διὰ dia) the body." Tyndale renders it: "the works of his body." The idea is, that every man shall receive an appropriate reward for the actions of this life. Observe here:

(1) That it is the works done in or through the body; not which the body itself has done. It is the mind, the man that has lived in the body, and acted by it, that is to be judged.

(2) it is to be for the deeds of this life; not for what is done after death. People are not to be brought into judgment for what they do after they die. All beyond the grave is either reward or punishment; it is not probation. The destiny is to be settled forever by what is done in this world of probation.

(3) it is to be for all the deeds done in the body; for all the thoughts, plans, purposes, words, as well as for all the outward actions of the man. All that has been thought or done must come into review, and man must give an account for all.

According to that he hath done - As an exact retribution for all that has been done. It is to be a suitable and proper recompence. The retribution is to be measured by what has been done in this life. Rewards shall be

granted to the friends, and punishments to the foes of God, just in proportion to, or suitably to their deeds in this life. Every man shall receive just what, under all the circumstances, he ought to receive, and what will be impartial justice in the case. The judgment will be such that it will be capable of being seen to be right; and such as the universe at large, and as the individuals themselves will see ought to be rendered.

Whether it be good or bad - Whether the life has been good or evil. The good will have no wish to escape the trial; the evil will not be able. No power of wickedness, however great, will be able to escape from the trial of that day; no crime that has been concealed in this life will be concealed there; no transgressor of law who may have long escaped the punishment due to his sins, and who may have evaded all human tribunals, will be able to escape there.

Verse 11

Knowing therefore - We who are apostles, and who are appointed to preach the gospel, having the fullest assurance of the terrors of the day of judgment, and of the wrath of God, endeavor to persuade people to be prepared to meet Him, and to give up their account.

The terror of the Lord - This is, of the Lord Jesus, who will be seated on the throne of judgment, and who will decide the destiny of all people, 2 Corinthians 5:10; compare Luke 19:41. But they who fill their sermons with the denunciations of wrath; who dwell on the words "hell" and "damnation," for the purpose of rhetoric or declamation, to round a period, or merely to excite alarm; and who "deal damnation around the land" as if they rejoiced that people were to be condemned, and in a tone and manner as if they would be pleased to execute it, have yet to learn the true nature of the way to win people to God, and the proper effect of those awful truths on the mind. The true effect is, to produce tenderness, deep feeling, and love; to prompt to the language of persuasion and of tender entreaty; to lead people to weep over dying sinners rather than to denounce them; to pray to God to have mercy on them rather than to use the language of severity, or to assume tones as if they would be pleased to execute the awful wrath of God.

But we are made manifest unto God - The meaning of this is, probably, that God sees that we are sincere and upright in our aims and purposes. He is acquainted with our hearts. All our motives are known to him, and he sees that it is our aim to promote his glory, and to save the souls

of people. This is probably said to counteract the charge which might have been brought against him by some of the disaffected in Corinth, that he was influenced by improper motives and aims. To meet this, Paul says, that God knew that he was endeavoring to save souls, and that he was actuated by a sincere desire to rescue them from the impending terrors of the day of judgment.

And I trust also … - And I trust also you are convinced of our integrity and uprightness of aim. The same sentiment is expressed in other words in 2 Corinthians 4:2. It is an appeal which he makes to them, and the expression of an earnest and confident assurance that they knew and felt that his aim was upright, and his purpose sincere.

Verse 12

For we commend not ourselves again unto you - This refers to what he had said in the previous verse. He had there said that he had such a consciousness of integrity that he could appeal to God, and that he was persuaded that the Corinthians also approved his course, or admitted that he was influenced by right motives. He here states the reason why he had said this. It was not to commend himself to them. It was not to boast of his own character, nor was it in order to secure their praise or favor. Some might be disposed to misrepresent all that Paul said of himself, and to suppose that it was said for mere vain-glory, or the love of praise. He tells them, therefore, that his sole aim was necessary self-defense, and in order that they might have the fullest evidence that he, by whom they had been converted, was a true apostle; and that he whom they regarded as their friend and father in the gospel was a man of whom they need not be ashamed.

But give you occasion - This is a very happy turn of expression. The sense is, "You have been converted under my labors. You profess to regard me as your spiritual father and friend. I have no reason to doubt of your attachment to me. Yet you often hear my name slandered, and hear me accused of wanting the evidence of being an apostle, and of being vain-glorious, and self-seeking. I know your desire to vindicate my character, and to show that you are my friends. I, therefore, say these things in regard to myself in order that you may be thus able to show your respect for me, and to vindicate me from the false and slanderous accusations of my enemies. Thus doing, you will be able to answer them; to show that the man whom you thus respect is worthy of your confidence and esteem."

On your behalf - For your own benefit, or as it were in self-vindication for adhering to me, and evincing attachment to me.

That ye may have somewhat to answer them - That you may be furnished with a ready reply when you are charged with adhering to a man who has no claims to the apostleship, or who is slandered in any other way.

Which glory in appearance - The false teachers in Corinth. Probably they boasted of their rank, their eloquence, their talents, their external advantages; but not in the qualities of the heart - in sincerity, honesty, real love for souls. Their consciences would not allow them to do this; and they knew themselves that their boasting was mere vain pretence, and that there was no real and solid ground for it. The margin is, "in the face." The meaning is, probably, that their ground of boasting was external, and was such as can be seen of people, and was not rather the secret consciousness of right, which could exist only in the conscience and the heart. Paul, on the other hand, gloried mainly in his sincerity, his honesty, his desire for their salvation; in his conscious integrity before God; and not in any mere external advantages or professions, in his rank, eloquence, or talent. Accordingly, all his argument here turns on his sincerity, his conscious uprightness, and his real regard for their welfare. And the truth taught here is, that sincerity and conscious integrity are more valuable than any or all external advantages and endowments.

Verse 13

For whether we be beside ourselves - This is probably designed to meet some of the charges which the false teachers in Corinth brought against him, and to furnish his friends there with a ready answer, as well as to show them the true principles on which he acted, and his real love for them. It is altogether probable that he was charged with being deranged; that many who boasted themselves of prudence, and soberness, and wisdom, regarded him as acting like a madman. It has not been uncommon, by any means, for the cold and the prudent; for formal professors and for hypocrites to regard the warm-hearted and zealous friends of religion as maniacs. Festus thought Paul was deranged, when he said, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad," Acts 26:24; and the Saviour himself was regarded by his immediate relatives and friends as beside himself, Mark 3:21. And at all times there have been many, both in the church and out of it, who have regarded the friends of revivals, and of missions, and all those who have evinced any extraordinary zeal in religion,

as deranged. The object of Paul here is to show, whatever might be the appearance or the estimate which they affixed to his conduct, what were the real principles which actuated him. These were zeal for God, love to the church, and the constraining influences of the love of Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15. The word rendered here as "be beside ourselves" (ἐξέστημεν exestēmenfrom ἐξίστημι) means properly, to put out of place; to be put out of place; and then to be put out of oneself, to astonish, to fill with wonder; Luke 24:22; Acts 8:9, Acts 8:11; and then to be out of one's mind, to be deranged. Here it means that they were charged with being deranged, or that others esteemed, or professed to esteem Paul and his fellow-laborers deranged.

It is to God - It is in the Cause of God, and from love to him. It is such a zeal for him; such an absorbing interest in his cause; such love prompting to so great self-denial, and teaching us to act so much unlike other people as to lead them to think that we are deranged. The doctrine here is, that there may be such a zeal for the glory of God, such an active and ardent desire to promote his honor, as to lead others to charge us with derangement. It does not prove however that a man is deranged on the subject of religion because he is unlike others, or because he pursues a course of life that differs materially from that of other professors of religion, and from the man of the world. He may be the truly sane man after all; and all the madness that may exist may be where there is a profession of religion without zeal; a professed belief in the existence of God and in the realities of eternity, that produces no difference in the conduct between the professor and other people; or an utter unconcern about eternal realities when a man is walking on the brink of death and of hell. There are a few people that become deranged by religion; there are millions who have no religion who act as madmen. And the highest instances of madness in the world are those who walk over an eternal hell without apprehension or alarm.

Or whether we be sober - Whether we are sane, or of sound mind; compare Mark 5:15. Tyndale renders this whole passage: "For if we be too fervent, to God we are too fervent; if we keep measure, for our cause keep we measure." The sense seems to be, "if we are esteemed to be sane, and sober-minded, as we trust you will admit us to be, it is for your sake. Whatever may be the estimate in which we are held, we are influenced by love to God, and love to man. In such a cause, we cannot but evince zeal and self-denial which may expose us to the charge of mental derangement;

but still we trust that by you we shall be regarded as influenced by a sound mind. We seek your welfare. We labor for you. And we trust that you will appreciate our motives, and regard us as truly sober-minded."

Verse 14

For the love of Christ - In this verse, Paul brings into view the principle which actuated him; the reason of his extraordinary and disinterested zeal. That was, that he was influenced by the love which Christ had shown in dying for all people, and by the argument which was furnished by that death respecting the actual character and condition of man (in this verse); and of the obligation of those who professed to be his true friends 2 Corinthians 5:15. The phrase "the love of Christ" (ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ agapē tou Christou) may denote either the love which Christ bears toward us, and which he has manifested, or our love toward him. In the former sense the phrase "the love of God" is used in Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 13:13, and the phrase "love of Christ" in Ephesians 3:14. The phrase is used in the latter sense in John 15:9-10, and Romans 8:35. It is impossible to determine the sense with certainty, and it is only by the view which shall be taken of the connection and of the argument which will in any way determine the meaning. Expositors differ in regard to it. It seems to me that the phrase here means the love which Christ had toward us. Paul speaks of his dying for all as the reason why he was urged on to the course of self-denial which he evinced. Christ died for all. All were dead. Christ evinced his great love for us, and for all, by giving himself to die; and it was this love which Christ had shown that impelled Paul to his own acts of love and self-denial. He gave himself to his great work impelled by that love which Christ had shown; by the view of the ruined condition of man which that work furnished; and by a desire to emulate the Redeemer, and to possess the same spirit which he evinced.

Constraineth us - (συνέχει sunechei). This word (συνέχω sunechō) properly means, to hold together, to press together, to shut up; then to press on, urge, impel, or excite. Here it means, that the impelling, or exciting motive in the labors and self-denials of Paul, was the love of Christ - the love which he had showed to the children of men. Christ so loved the world as to give himself for it. His love for the world was a demonstration that people were dead in sins. And we, being urged by the same love, are prompted to like acts of zeal and self-denial to save the world from ruin.

Because we thus judge - Greek "We judging this;" that is, we thus determine in our own minds, or we thus decide; or this is our firm conviction and belief - we come to this conclusion.

That if one died for all - On the supposition that one died for all; or taking it for granted that one died for all, then it follows that all were dead. The "one" who died for all here is undoubtedly the Lord Jesus. The word "for" (ὑπὲρ huper) means in the place of, instead of; see Philemon 2:13 and 2 Corinthians 5:20. It means that Christ took the place of sinners, and died in their stead; that he endured what was an ample equivalent for all the punishment which would be inflicted if they were to suffer the just penalty of the Law; that he endured so much suffering, and that God by his great substituted sorrows made such an expression of his hatred of sin, as to answer the same end in expressing his sense of the evil of sin, and in restraining others from transgression, as if the guilty were personally to suffer the full penalty of the Law. If this was done, of course, the guilty might be par doned and saved, since all the ends which could be accomplished by their destruction have been accomplished by the substituted sufferings of the Lord Jesus; see the notes on Romans 3:25-26, where this subject is considered at length.

The phrase "for all," (ὑπὲρ πάντων huper pantōn) obviously means for all mankind; for every man. This is an exceedingly important expression in regard to the extent of the atonement which the Lord Jesus made, and while it proves that his death was vicarious, that is, in the place of others, and for their sakes, it demonstrates also that the atonement was general, and had, in itself considered, no limitation, and no particular reference to any class or condition of people; and no particular applicability to one class more than to another. There was nothing in the nature of the atonement that limited it to anyone class or condition; there was nothing in the design that made it, in itself, anymore applicable to one portion of mankind than to another. And whatever may be true in regard to the fact as to its actual applicability, or in regard to the purpose of God to apply it, it is demonstrated by this passage that his death had an original applicability to all, and that the merits of that death were sufficient to save all. The argument in favor of the general atonement, from this passage, consists in the following points:

(1) That Paul assumes this as a matter that was well known, indisputable, and universally admitted, that Christ died for all. He did not

deem it necessary to enter into the argument to prove it, nor even to state it formally. It was so well known, and so universally admitted, that he made it a first principle - an elementary position - a maxim on which to base another important doctrine - to wit, that all were dead. It was a point which he assumed that no one would call in question; a doctrine which might be laid down as the basis of an argument, like one of the first principles or maxims in science.

(2) it is the plain and obvious meaning of the expression - the sense which strikes all people, unless they have some theory to support to the contrary; and it requires all the ingenuity which people can ever command to make it appear even plausible, that this is consistent with the doctrine of a limited atonement; much more to make it out that it does not mean all. If a man is told that all the human family must die, the obvious interpretation is, that it applies to every individual. If told that all the passengers on board a steamboat were drowned, the obvious interpretation is, that every individual was meant. If told that a ship was wrecked, and that all the crew perished, the obvious interpretation would be that none escaped. If told that all the inmates of an hospital were sick, it would be understood that there was not an individual that was not sick. Such is the view which would be taken by 999 persons out of 1,000, if told that Christ died for all; nor could they conceive how this could be consistent with the statement that he died only for the elect, and that the elect was only a small part of the human family.

(3) this interpretation is in accordance with all the explicit declarations on the design of the death of the Redeemer. Hebrews 2:9, “that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man;” compare John 3:16, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” 1 Timothy 2:6, “who gave himself a ransom for all.” See Matthew 20:28,” The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many.” 1 John 2:2,” and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

(4) the fact also that on the ground of the atonement made by the Redeemer, salvation is offered to all people by God, is a proof that he died for all. The apostles were directed to go “into all the world and to preach the

gospel to every creature," with the assurance that "he that believeth and is baptized shall he saved;" Mark 16:15-16; and everywhere in the Bible the most full and free offers of salvation are made to all mankind; compare Isaiah 55:1; John 7:37; Revelation 22:17. These offers are made on the ground that the Lord Jesus died for people; John 3:16. They are offers of salvation through the gospel, of the pardon of sin, and of eternal life to be made "to every creature." But if Christ died only for a part, if there is a large portion of the human family for whom he died in no sense whatever; if there is no provision of any kind made for them, then God must know this, and then the offers cannot be made with sincerity, and God is tantalizing them with the offers of that which does not exist, and which he knows does not exist. It is of no use here to say that the preacher does not know who the elect are, and that he is obliged to make the offer to all in order that the elect may be reached. For it is not the preacher only who offers the gospel. It is God who does it, and he knows who the elect are, and yet he offers salvation to all. And if there is no salvation provided for all, and no possibility that all to whom the offer comes should be saved, then God is insincere; and there is no way possible of vindicating his character.

(5) if this interpretation is not correct, and if Christ did not die for all, then the argument of Paul here is a non sequitur, and is worthless. The demonstration that all are dead, according to him is, that Christ died for all. But suppose that he meant, or that he knew, that Christ died only for a part, for the elect, then how would the argument stand, and what would be its force? "Christ died only for a portion of the human race, therefore all are sinners. Medicine is provided only for a part of mankind, therefore all are sick. Pardon is offered to part only, therefore all are guilty." But Paul never reasoned in this way. He believed that Christ died for all mankind, and on the ground of that he inferred at once that all needed such an atonement; that all were sinners, and that all were exposed to the wrath of God. And the argument is in this way, and in this way only, sound. But still it may be asked, What is the force of this argument? How does the fact that Christ died for all, prove that all were sinners, or dead in sin? I answer:

(a) In the same way that to provide medicine for all, proves that all are sick, or liable to be sick; and to offer pardon to all who are in a prison, proves that all there are guilty. What insult is it to offer medicine to a man

in health; or pardon to a man who has violated no law! And there would be the same insult in offering salvation to a man who was not a sinner, and who did not need forgiveness.

(b) The dignity of the sufferer, and the extent of his sufferings, prove that all were under a deep and dreadful load of guilt. Such a being would not have come to die unless the race had been apostate; nor would he have endured so great sorrows unless a deep and dreadful malady had spread over the world. The deep anxiety; the tears; the toils; the sufferings, and the groans of the Redeemer, show what was his sense of the condition of man, and prove that he regarded them as degraded, fallen, and lost. And if the Son of God, who knows all hearts, regarded them as lost, they are lost. He was not mistaken in regard to the character of man, and he did not lay down his life under the influence of delusion and error. If to the view which has been taken of this important passage it be objected that the work of the atonement must have been to a large extent in vain; that it has actually been applied to but comparatively a small portion of the human family, and that it is unreasonable to suppose that God would suffer so great sorrows to be endured for nothing, we may reply:

(1) That it may not have been in vain, though it may have been rejected by a large portion of mankind. There may have been other purposes accomplished by it besides the direct salvation of people. It was doing much when it rendered it consistent for God to offer salvation to all; it is much that God could be seen to be just and yet pardoning the sinner; it was much when his determined hatred of sin, and His purpose to honor His Law, was evinced; and in regard to the benevolence and justice of God to other beings and to other worlds, much, very much was gained, though all the human race had rejected the plan and been lost, and in regard to all these objects, the plan was not in vain, and the sufferings of the Redeemer were not for nothing. But,

(2) It is in accordance with what we see everywhere, when much that God does seems to our eyes, though not to his, to be in vain. How much rain falls on ever sterile sands or on barren rocks, to our eyes in vain! What floods of light are poured each day on barren wastes, or untraversed oceans, to our eyes in vain! How many flowers shed forth their fragrance in the

wilderness, and ‹waste their sweetness on the desert air," to us apparently for nothing! How many pearls lie useless in the ocean; how much gold and silver in the earth; how many diamonds amidst rocks to us unknown, and apparently in vain! How many lofty trees rear their heads in the untraversed wilderness, and after standing for centuries fall on the earth and decay, to our eyes in vain! And how much medicinal virtue is created by God each year in the vegetable world that is unknown to man, and that decays and is lost without removing any disease, and that seems to be created in vain! And how long has it been before the most valuable medicines have been found out, and applied to alleviating pain, or removing disease! Year after year, and age after age, they existed in a suffering world, and people died perhaps within a few yards of the medicine which would have relieved or saved them, but it was unknown, or if known disregarded. But times were coming when their value would he appreciated, and when they would be applied to benefit the sufferer. So with the plan of salvation. It may be rejected, and the sufferings of the Redeemer may seem to have been for nothing. But they will yet be of value to mankind; and when the time shall come for the whole world to embrace the Saviour, there will be found no lack of sufficiency in the plan of redemption, and in the merits of the Redeemer to save all the race.

(A measure of truth is, doubtless, involved in this controversy concerning the universality of atonement; and the discussion of the subject in America, and more recently in this country, cannot fail ultimately to produce the most beneficial results. Yet we must express our conviction, that the seeming difference of opinion among evangelical people, has arisen from mutual misunderstanding, and that misunderstanding from the use of ambiguous phraseology. One says, Christ died for all people. No, says another, for the elect only. The dispute goes on and on, until at last the discovery is made, that while the same words were used by the disputants, each attached his own meaning to them. This ambiguity is painfully felt in the treatise of a distinguished writer, who has recently appeared on the limited side of the question. He does not explain, until he has advanced very far in the discussion, what sense be attaches to the common phraseology of "Christ dying for all men."

He tells us afterward, however, that he understands it in the highest sense of securing salvation for them; when we are convinced, that much of the argument might have been spared, or at all events better directed, than against a position which few or none maintain. The author is himself sensible of this. “The question,” says he, “might, perhaps, have been settled at the outset by a careful definition of terms; but I have purposely deferred doing so, judging, that it might be done with better effect as the discussion proceeded. In speaking of the Saviour‘s dying for people, or dying for sinners, I have used the expression in what I conceive to be the strict and proper meaning, namely, as signifying his dying with an intention to save them. This, however, is not the only meaning the expression will bear, For all people, for sinners in general, the Saviour died. He died in their nature, he died in their stead, he died doing honor to the Law which they had violated; in other words, he died removing every legal obstruction that lay in the way of their obtaining life.”

The Death of Christ the Redemption of his People, p. 70. Now, it is only in this last sense, that any rational advocate of general aspect in the atonement will maintain that Christ died for all people. Nor could he desire better language in which to express his views, than that which is furnished in the above quotation. That the atonement has certain general aspects is now nearly admitted on all hands. “General it must be in some sense,” says the author already quoted, “if in some sense it be applicable to all, and that this is the case the foregoing statement undeniably proves,” p. 68. The general aspect of the atonement is argued, from those well-known passages in which it is declared to have a reference to people, all people, the world, and the whole world. The reader will find some of these passages quoted above in the commentary. Of this universal phraseology various explanations have been given.

Some have supplied the qualifying adjective “elect” in these places, where the design of atonement is said to embrace the “world.” Modern writers of the highest name, however, and on both sides of the question, have vied with each other in their indignant repudiation of any such expletive. “I have felt myself,” says Dr. Wardlaw, “far from satisfied with a common way of interpreting some of those texts which express the extent of the atonement in universal terms by means of a convenient supplement.

According to this method of explanation, the world is, in such occurrences of it, made to signify the ‹elect world,‘ the word ‹elect‘ being inserted as a supplement, conceived to be necessary for the consistency of scripture. An ‹elect world‘ indeed, has become a phrase in common use with a particular class of commentators and divines; being employed with as much matter of course freedom, as if it had actually had the sanction of ordinary usage in the sacred volume; but it is not to be found there.”

And subjoins Dr. Marshall, writing on the limited side of the question, “It certainly is not to be found there, and with every word of this well-deserved censure I cordially agree.” Here then is one principle of interpretation fairly exploded, and few nowadays will have the hardihood to espouse it. Again, the phraseology has been explained of the world of Jews and Gentiles indiscriminately, Gentiles as well as Jews; and those who adopt this view tell us, that the Jewish system was narrow and exclusive, embracing only one people, the progeny of Abraham; that it was the design of God, in the fullness of time, to enlarge his church and to receive within her ample arms people of all nations, Jew and Gentile, Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free; that the death of Christ was at once the fulfillment and abrogation of the typical system with all its special and exclusive rites; that by it the middle wall of partition between the Jew and the rest of the world was thrown down; that, therefore, it was natural to represent it as having a reference to all people and to the world, even when absolute universality was not and could not be intended. Such a vast enlargement of the scale on which spiritual blessings were now to be conferred, in consequence of the death of Christ, could not well have been expressed, it is alleged, in any other or in less universal terms. See this view of the subject well exhibited in Hill‘s System, vol. ii., John 3:16-17, “that the ‹world‘ means Jews and Gentiles, still if it is not any definite number of Jews and Gentiles, it is Jews and Gentiles as together composing the world of mankind.”

That the atonement, indeed, has a certain benign aspect toward all people, appears from its very nature. The exact equivalent view, as it has been not inappropriately termed, is now nearly abandoned. Rarely do we find any one affirming, that Christ endured exactly what the elect would have suffered and deserved, and that, therefore, there can be sufficiency in

his death for that favored number and for none besides. What then is the light in which the atonement of Christ ought to be viewed? We think the only rational and scriptural account of it, is that which regards it as a great remedial scheme, which rendered it consistent with the divine honor and all the interests of the divine administration, to extend mercy to guilty people at large, and which would have been equally requisite, had there been an intention to save one only, or a million; numbers indeed not forming any part of the question. Here then is something done, which removes legal obstructions and thereby opens the way to heaven for all. And if any do not enter in, their inability is moral, and lies not in any insufficiency of the divine provision. This view, however, seems to furnish a just foundation for the universality of gospel invitations, while it fastens the guilt of rejecting gospel provision on the sinner himself.

Thus far we feel disposed to agree with our author in his commentary, or rather dissertation on the verse and the subject it involves. We maintain, however, that the atonement has a special as well as a general aspect; that while it is gloriously true that it looks to all people, it has at the same time a special regard to some. We object, therefore, to the statement, "that the atonement in itself considered had no limitation and no particular reference to any class or condition of people, and no particular applicability to one class more than to another." This is similar to certain rash assertions that have recently been current in our own country; as that "while the atonement opens the door of mercy to all, it secures salvation to none;" that "Christ died as much for those who perish, as for those who are saved." We cannot envy that reputation for acuteness which may be gained by the free use of such language.

Is it not God‘s design to save his people? Is not the atonement the means by which he does so, the means by which the purpose of electing love is fulfilled? And yet has that atonement no special reference to the elect? Further, if it be the means of saving them, does it not secure their salvation? Certainly, among people, if any effectual means were devised to accomplish a particular end, that end would be said to be secured by such means. The writer is aware of the ingenious evasion, that it is God‘s gracious purpose to apply the atonement, and not the atonement itself, that connects it with the elect, and secures their salvation. We are told, moreover, that we should

look on the atonement by itself, and consider it in a philosophical way. The purpose to apply is an after arrangement. But first, a purpose to apply the atonement to a special class, differs in nothing from an original design to save such class by it, for that purpose must have been present to the mind of God in determining on atonement. To say that God saves a certain number by the atonement, and that yet in making it he had no special design in their favor, however it may recommend itself to philosophical refinement, will always be rejected by the common sense of mankind. Second. If we must consider the atonement apart from any special purpose connected with it, why not divest it also of any general purpose, that we may look on it steadily per se, and in this way reduce it to a mere abstraction, about which nothing could be either affirmed or denied?

The advocates of universal atonement, or some of the more forward among them, have recently carried out their views so far, as to deny that God in providing the atonement, or Christ in making it, had any special love to the elect. An eminent writer on that side, however, to whom reference has already been made, while he goes the length of denying special design, maintains the existence of special love, and administers a reproof to those of his own party, who go to this extreme. This is indeed an important concession, for special love is not very different from special design, nor is it easy to see how, in the mind of God, the one could subsist with out the other. “The love of the Father is the same thing as election. Election is nothing but the love of the Father formed into a purpose” - Marshall. Or the point may be put in this way. Had God in providing the atonement special love to the elect? Where is the proof of it? Doubtless in that very provision. But if God in making it had no design to save them by it, the proof is not only weakened but destroyed. Special love, therefore, necessarily involves special design.

To do away with anything like speciality of design, much has been said on the order of the divine decrees, especially as to whether the decree of atonement, or that of election, be first in order of nature. If that of atonement be first, it is asserted speciality is out of the question, as that is secured only by election, which is a posterior arrangement. On this subject it is more easy to darken counsel by words without knowledge, than to speak intelligibly. It may be fairly questioned, if those who have written

most on it, fully understand themselves. Nor can we help lamenting, that so great a part of the controversy should have been made to turn on this point, which has hitherto eluded the grasp of the most profound, and drawn the controvertists into regions of thought, too high for the boldest flights of human intellect. After all that can be said on the subject, it must be allowed that the whole arrangement connected with the salvation of man, existed simultaneously in the mind of God, nor will anyone rise much wiser from inquiries into which was first and which last.

The truth on the whole subject, then, seems to be, that while the atonement has a general reference toward all, it has at the same time a special reference to the elect of God, or as it is well expressed in a recent synodical decision, "The Saviour in making the atonement bore special covenant relation to the elect; had a special love to them, and infallibly secured their everlasting salvation, while his obedience unto death, afforded such a satisfaction to the justice of God, as that on the ground of it, in consistency with his character and law, the door of mercy is open to all people, and a full and free salvation is presented for their acceptance." The special aspect, indeed, ought no more to be denied than the general. It rests on a large number of what may be called special texts; as, "Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it," etc. "For the transgression of my people was he stricken." "I lay down my life for the sheep," Ephesians 5:25; Isaiah 53:8; John 10:15.

Nor will it do to say of this numerous class of passages, that they find a sufficient explanation in the purpose of application, which is connected with the remedy for sin, since most of them are of a kind that connect the salvation of the elect directly with the atonement itself, and not with any after design of applying it. This idea seems but an ingenious shift to sustain a favorite theory. How direct, for example, is this connection in the following passage: "who loved me and gave himself for me." No one who had not a theory to support, would ever think of introducing an after design of application to explain this. Indeed, as an able reviewer in one of our periodicals observes of the scheme that excludes a special design, "it separates too much the atonement from the salvation of man. It does not connect those that are saved, those that are regenerated by divine grace, at all specially with the sacrifice of Christ." Another important branch of

evidence on this point, lies in the special relation which Christ in dying sustained toward his people, as that of shepherd, husband, surety, etc., and which cannot be explained on any other principle than that of special design.

If the question were put, how we preserve our consistency, in thus maintaining both the general and special view, we reply, first, that if both views are found in scripture, it matters not whether we can explain the consistency between them or no. But second, it is not so difficult as some would imagine, to conceive of God appointing a remedy with a general aspect toward the race, but specially intended to secure the salvation of his chosen people.)

Then were all dead - All dead in sin; that is, all were sinners. The fact that he died for all proves that all were transgressors. The word "dead" is not unfrequently used in the scriptures to denote the condition of sinners; see Ephesians 2:1. It means not that sinners are in all senses, and in all respects like a lifeless corpse, for they are not. They are still moral agents, and have a conscience. and are capable of thinking, and speaking, and acting. It does not mean that they have no more power than one in the grave, for they have more power. But it means that there is a striking similarity, in some respects, between one who is dead and a sinner. That similarity does not extend to everything, but in many respects it is very striking.

(1) the sinner is as insensible to the glories of the heavenly world, and the appeals of the gospel, as a corpse is to what is going on around or above it. The body that lies in the grave is insensible to the voice of friendship, and the charms of music, and the hum of business, and the plans of gain and ambition; and so the sinner is insensible to all the glories of the heavenly world, and to all the appeals that are made to him, and to all the warnings of God. He lives as though there were no heaven and no hell; no God and no Saviour.

(2) there is need of the same divine power to convert a sinner which is needful to raise up the dead. The same cause does not exist, making the existence of that power necessary, but it is a fact that a sinner will no more be converted by his own power than a dead man will rise from the grave by his own power. No man ever yet was converted without direct divine

agency, anymore than Lazarus was raised without divine agency. And there is no more just or melancholy description which can be given of man, than to say that he is dead in sins. He is insensible to all the appeals that God makes to him; he is insensible to all the sufferings of the Saviour, and to all the glories of heaven; he lives as though these did not exist, or as though he had no concern in them; his eyes see no more beauty in them than the sightless eyeballs of the dead do in the material world; his ear is as inattentive to the calls of God and the gospel as the ear of the dead is to the voice of friendship or the charms of melody; and in a world that is full of God, and that might be full of hope, he is living without God and without hope.

Verse 15

And that he died for all … - This verse is designed still further to explain the reasons of the conduct of the apostle. He had not lived for himself. He had not lived to amass wealth, or to enjoy pleasure, or to obtain a reputation. He had lived a life of self-denial, and of toil; and he here states the reason why he had done it. It was because he felt that the great purpose of the death of the Redeemer was to secure this result. To that Saviour, therefore, who died for all, he consecrated his talents and his time, and sought in every way possible to promote his glory.

That they which live - They who are true Christians, who are made alive unto God as the result of the dying love of the Redeemer. Sinners are dead in sins. Christians are alive to the worth of the soul, the presence of God, the importance of religion, the solemnities of eternity; that is, they act and feel as if these things had a real existence and as if they should exert a constant influence upon the heart and life.

("They which live." This spiritual life, doubtless, implies that a man is alive to the worth of the soul, the presence of God, etc.; but it intimates something deeper too, which is the foundation of those things, and without which they could not exist. Scott paraphrases thus, "were quickened and pardoned, and so passed from death to life;" and Guyse still more explicitly, "were made supernaturally alive by his quickening spirit and by faith in him." This is the root; the things mentioned in the comment, the fruit; this the cause, these only the effects.)

It is observable that Paul makes a distinction here between those for whom Christ died and those who actually "live," thus demonstrating that there may be many for whom he died who do not live to God, or who are not savingly benefitted by his death. The atonement was for all, but only a part are actually made alive to God. Multitudes reject it; but the fact that he died for all; that he tasted death for every man, that he not only died for the elect but for all others, that his benevolence was so great as to embrace the whole human family in the design of his death, is a reason why they who are actually made alive to God should consecrate themselves entirely to his service. The fact that he died for all evinced such unbounded and infinite benevolence that it should induce us who are actually benefitted by his death, and who have any just views of it, to devote all that we have to his service.

Should not henceforth live unto themselves - Should not seek our own ease and pleasure; should not make it our great object to promote our own interest, but should make it the grand purpose of our lives to promote his honor, and to advance his cause. This is a vital principle in religion, and it is exceedingly important to know what is meant by living to ourselves, and whether we do it. It is done in the following, and perhaps in some other ways:

(1) When people seek pleasure, gain, or reputation as the controlling principle of their lives.

(2) when they are regardless of the rights of others, and sacrifice all the claims which others have on them in order to secure the advancement of their own purposes and ends.

(3) when they are regardless of the needs of others, and turn a deaf ear to all the appeals which charity makes to them, and have no time to give to serve them, and no money to spare to alleviate their needs; and especially when they turn a deaf ear to the appeals which are made for the diffusion of the gospel to the benighted and perishing.

(4) when their main purpose is the aggrandizement of their own families, for their families are but a diffusion of self. And,

(5) When they seek their own salvation only from selfish motives, and not from a desire to honor God. Multitudes are selfish even in their religion; and the main purpose which they have in view, is to promote their own objects, and not the honor of the Master whom they profess to serve. They seek and profess religion only because they desire to escape from wrath, and to obtain the happiness of heaven, and not from any love to the Redeemer or any desire to honor him, Or they seek to build up the interests of their own church and party, and all their zeal is expended on that and that alone, without any real desire to honor the Saviour. Or though in the church, they are still selfish, and live wholly to themselves. They live for fashion, for gain, for reputation. They practice no self-denial; they make no effort; to advance the cause of God the Saviour.

But unto him … - Unto the Lord Jesus Christ. To live to him is the opposite to living unto ourselves. It is to seek his honor; to feel that we belong to him; that all our time and talents; all our strength of intellect and body; all the avails of our skill and toil, all belong to him, and should be employed in his service. If we have talents by which we can influence other minds, they should be employed to honor the Saviour. If we have skill, or strength to labor by which we can make money, we should feel that it all belongs to him, and should be employed in his service. If we have property, we should feel that it is his, and that he has a claim upon it all, and that it should be honestly consecrated to his cause. And if we are endowed with a spirit of enterprise, and are suited by nature to encounter perils in distant and barbarious climes, as Paul was, we should feel like him that we are bound to devote all entirely to his service, and to the promotion of his cause.

A servant, a slave, does not live to himself but to his master. His person, his time, his limbs, his talents, and the avails of his industry are not regarded as his own. He is judged incapable of holding any property which is not at the disposal of his master. If he has strength, it is his master‘s. If he has skill, the avails of it are his master‘s. If he is an ingenious mechanic, or labors in any department; if he is amiable, kind, gentle, and faithful, and adapted to be useful in an eminent degree, it is regarded as all the property of his master. He is bound to go where his master chooses; to execute the task which he assigns; to deny himself at his master‘s will; and to come and lay the avails of all his toil and skill at his master‘s feet. He is regarded as having been purchased with money; and the purchase money is supposed to

give a right to his time, his talents, his services, and his soul. Such as the slave is supposed to become by purchase, and by the operation of human laws, the Christian becomes by the purchase of the Son of God, and by the voluntary recognition of him as the master, and as having a right to all that we have and are. To him all belongs; and all should be employed in endeavoring to promote his glory, and in advancing his cause.

Which died for them, and rose again - Paul here states the grounds of the obligation under which he felt himself placed, to live not unto himself but unto Christ.

(1) the first is, the fact that Christ had died for him, and for all his people. The effect of that death was the same as a purchase. It was a purchase; see the note, 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Corinthians 7:23; compare 1 Peter 1:18-19.

(2) the second is, that he had risen again from the dead. To this fact Paul traced all his hopes of eternal life, and of the resurrection from the dead; see Romans 4:25. As we have the hope of the resurrection from the dead only from the fact that he rose; as he has "brought life and immortality to light," and hath in this way "abolished death" 2 Timothy 1:10; as all the prospect of entering a world where there is no death and no grave is to be traced to the resurrection of the Saviour, so we are bound by every obligation of gratitude to devote ourselves without any reserve to him. To him, and him alone should we live; and in his cause our lives should be, as Paul's was, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in his sight.

Verse 16

Wherefore henceforth - In view of the fact that the Lord Jesus died for all people, and rose again. The effect of that has been to change all our feelings, and to give us entirely new views of people, of ourselves, and of the Messiah, so that we have become new creatures. The word "henceforth" (ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν apo tou nun) means properly from the present time; but there is no impropriety in supposing that Paul refers to the time when he first obtained correct views of the Messiah, and that he means from that time. His mind seems to have been thrown back to the period when these new views burst upon his soul; and the sentiment is, that from the time when he obtained those new views, he had resolved to know no one after the flesh.

Know we no man - The word “know” here (οἴδαμεν oidamen) is used in the sense of, we form our estimate of; we judge; we are influenced by. Our estimate of man is formed by other views than according to the flesh.

After the flesh - A great many different interpretations have been proposed of this expression, which it is not needful here to repeat. The meaning is, probably, that in his estimate of people he was not influenced by the views which are taken by those who are unrenewed, and who are unacquainted with the truths of redemption. It may include a great many things, and perhaps the following:

(1) He was not influenced in his estimate of people by a regard to their birth, or country. He did not form an attachment to a Jew because he was a Jew, or to a Gentile because he was a Gentile. He had learned that Christ died for all, and he felt disposed to regard all alike.

(2) he was not influenced in his estimate of people by their rank, and wealth, and office. Before his conversion he had been, but now he learned to look on their moral character, and to regard that as making the only permanent, and really important distinction among people. He did not esteem one man highly because he was of elevated rank, or of great wealth, and another less because he was of a different rank in life.

(3) it may also include the idea, that he had left his own kindred and friends on account of superior attachment to Christ. He had parted from them to preach the gospel. He was not restrained by their opinions; he was not kept from going from land to land by love to them. It is probable that they remained Jews. It may be, that they were opposed to him, and to his efforts in the cause of the Redeemer. It may be that they would have dismissed him from a work so self-denying, and so arduous, and where he would be exposed to so much persecution and contempt. It may be that they would have set before him the advantages of his birth and education; would have reminded him of his early brilliant prospects; and would have used all the means possible to dissuade him from embarking in a cause like that in which he was engaged. The passage here means that Paul was influenced by none of these considerations.

In early life he had been. He had prided himself on rank, and on talent. He was proud of his own advantages as a Jew; and he estimated worth by

rank, and by national distinction, Philemon 3:4-6. He had despised Christians on account of their being the followers of the man of Nazareth: and there can be no reason to doubt that he partook of the common feelings of his countrymen and held in contempt the whole Gentile world. But his views were changed - so much changed as to make it proper to say that he was a new creature, 2 Corinthians 5:17. When converted, he did not confer with flesh and blood Galatians 1:16; and in the school of Christ, he had learned that if a man was his disciple, he must be willing to forsake father and mother. and sister and brother, and to hate his own life that he might honor him, Luke 14:26. He had formed his principle of action now from a higher standard than any regard to rank, or wealth, or national distinction; and had risen above them all, and now estimated people not by these external and factitious advantages, but by a reference to their personal character and moral worth.

Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh - Though in common with the Jewish nation we expected a Messiah who would be a temporal prince, and who would be distinguished for the distinctions which are valued among people, yet we have changed our estimate of him, and judge of him in this way no longer. There can be no doubt that Paul, in common with his countrymen, had expected a Messiah who would be a magnificent temporal prince and conqueror, one who they supposed would be a worthy successor of David and Solomon. The coming of such a prince, Paul had confidently expected. He expected no other Messiah. He had fixed his hopes on that. This is what is meant by the expression ‹to know Christ after the flesh.‘ It does not mean that he had seen him in the flesh, but that he had formed, so to speak, carnal views of him, and such as people of this world regard as grand and magnificent in a monarch and conqueror. He had had no correct views of his spiritual character, and of the pure and holy purposes for which he would come into the world.

Yet now henceforth know we him no more - We know him no more in this manner. Our conceptions and views of him are changed. We no more regard him according to the flesh; we no longer esteem the Messiah who was to come as a temporal prince and warrior; but we look on him as a spiritual Saviour, a Redeemer from sin. The idea is, that his views of him had been entirely changed. It does not mean, as our translation would seem to imply, that Paul would have no further acquaintance with Christ, but it means that from the moment of his conversion he had laid aside all his

views of his being a temporal sovereign, and all his feelings that he was to be honored only because he supposed that he would have an elevated rank among the monarchs of the earth. Locke and Macknight, it seems to me, have strangely mistaken this passage. The former renders it, "For if I myself have gloried in this, that Christ was himself circumcised as I am, and was of my blood and nation, I do so now no more any longer," The same substantially is the view of Macknight. Clarke as strangely mistakes it, when he says that it means that Paul could not prize now a man who was a sinner because he was allied to the royal family of David, nor prize a man because he had seen Christ in the flesh.

The correct view, as it seems to me, is given above. And the doctrine which is taught here is, that at conversion, the views are essentially changed, and that the converted man has a view of the Saviour entirely different from what he had before. He may not, like Paul, have regarded him as a temporal prince; he may not have looked to him as a mighty monarch, but his views in regard to his person, character, work, and loveliness will be entirely changed. He will see a beauty in his character which he never saw before. Before, he regarded him as a root out of dry ground; as the despised man of Nazareth; as having nothing in his character to be desired, or to render him lovely Isaiah 53:1-12; but at conversion the views are changed. He is seen to be the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely; as pure, and holy, and benevolent; as mighty, and great, and glorious; as infinitely benevolent; as lovely in his precepts, lovely in his life, lovely in his death, lovely in his resurrection, and as most glorious as he is seated on the right hand of God. He is seen to be a Saviour exactly adapted to the condition and needs of the soul; and the soul yields itself to him to be redeemed by him alone.

There is no change of view so marked and decided as that of the sinner in regard to the Lord Jesus Christ at his conversion; and it is a clear proof that we have never been born again if our views in reference to him have never undergone any change. "What think ye of Christ?" is a question the answer to which will determine any man‘s character, and demonstrate whether he is or is not a child of God. Tyndale has more correctly expressed the sense of this than our translation." Though we have known Christ after the flesh, now henceforth know we him so no more."

Verse 17

Therefore if any man be in Christ - The phrase to "be in Christ," evidently means to be united to Christ by faith; or to be in him as the branch is in the vine - that is, so united to the vine, or so in it, as to derive all its nourishment and support from it, and to be sustained entirely by it. John 15:2, "every branch in me." John 15:4, "abide in me, and I in you." "The branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in me." See also John 15:5-7, see the note on John 15:2. To be "in Christ" denotes a more tender and close union; and implies that all our support is from him. All our strength is derived from him; and denotes further that we shall partake of his fullness, and share in his felicity and glory, as the branch partakes of the strength and vigor of the parent vine. The word "therefore" (Ὥστε Hōste) here implies that the reason why Paul infers that anyone is a new creature who is in Christ is that which is stated in the previous verse; to wit, the change of views in regard to the Redeemer to which he there refers, and which was so great as to constitute a change like a new creation. The affirmation here is universal, "if any man be in Christ;" that is, all who become true Christians - undergo such a change in their views and feelings as to make it proper to say of them that they are new creatures. No matter what they have been before, whether moral or immoral; whether infidels or speculative believers; whether amiable, or debased, sensual and polluted yet if they become Christians they all experience such a change as to make it proper to say they are a new creation.

A new creature - Margin, "Let him be." This is one of the instances in which the margin has given a less correct translation than is in the text. The idea evidently is, not that he ought to be a new creature, but that he is in fact; not that he ought to live as becomes a new creature - which is true enough - but that he will in fact live in that way, and manifest the characteristics of the new creation. The phrase "a new creature" καινὴ κτίσις kainē ktisis) occurs also in Galatians 6:15. The word rendered "creature" (κτίσις ktisis) means properly in the New Testament, creation. It denotes:

(1)The act of creating Romans 1:20;

(2)A created thing, a creature Romans 1:25; and refers:

(a)To the universe, or creation in general; Mark 10:6; Mark 13:9-11; 1 Peter 3:4.

(b)To man, mankind; Mark 16:15; Colossians 1:23.

Here it means a new creation in a moral sense, and the phrase new creature is equivalent to the expression in Ephesians 4:24, "The new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." It means, evidently, that there is a change produced in the renewed heart of man that is equivalent to the act of creation, and that bears a strong resemblance to it - a change, so to speak, as if the man was made over again, and had become new. The mode or manner in which it is done is not described, nor should the words be pressed to the quick, as if the process were the same in both cases - for the words are here evidently figurative. But the phrase implies evidently the following things:

(1)That there is an exertion of divine power in the conversion of the sinner as really as in the act of creating the world out of nothing, and that this is as indispensable in the one case as in the other.

(2)that a change is produced so great as to make it proper to say that he is a new man. He has new views, new motives, new principles, new objects and plans of life. He seeks new purposes, and he lives for new ends.

If a drunkard becomes reformed, there is no impropriety in saying that he is a new man. If a man who was licentious becomes pure, there is no impropriety in saying that he is not the same man that he was before. Such expressions are common in all languages, and they are as proper as they are common. There is such a change as to make the language proper. And so in the conversion of a sinner. There is a change so deep, so clear, so entire, and so abiding, that it is proper to say, here is a new creation of God - a work of the divine power as decided and as glorious as when God created all things out of nothing. There is no other moral change that takes place on earth so deep, and radical, and thorough as the change at conversion. And there is no other where there is so much propriety in ascribing it to the mighty power of God.

Old things are passed away - The old views in regard to the Messiah, and in regard to people in general, 2 Corinthians 5:16. But Paul also gives this a general form of expression, and says that old things in general have passed away - referring to everything. It was true of all who were converted that old things had passed away. And it may include the following things:

(1) In regard to the Jews - that their former prejudices against Christianity, their natural pride, and spirit of seducing others; their attachment to their rites and ceremonies, and dependence on them for

salvation had all passed away. They now renounced that independence, relied on the merits of the Saviour, and embraced all as brethren who were of the family of Christ.

(2) in regard to the Gentiles - their attachment to idols, their love of sin and degradation, their dependence on their own works, had passed away, and they had renounced all these things, and had come to mingle their hopes with those of the converted Jews, and with all who were the friends of the Redeemer.

(3) in regard to all, it is also true that old things pass away. Their former prejudices, opinions, habits, attachments pass away. Their supreme love of self passes away. Their love of sins passes away. Their love of the world passes away. Their supreme attachment to their earthly friends rather than God passes away. Their love of sin, their sensuality, pride, vanity, levity, ambition, passes away. There is a deep and radical change on all these subjects - a change which commences at the new birth; which is carried on by progressive sanctification; and which is consummated at death and in heaven.

Behold, all things are become new - That is, all things in view of the mind. The purposes of life, the feelings of the heart, the principles of action, all become new. The understanding is consecrated to new objects, the body is employed in new service, the heart forms new attachments. Nothing can be more strikingly. descriptive of the facts in conversion than this; nothing more entirely accords with the feelings of the newborn soul. All is new. There are new views of God, and of Jesus Christ; new views of this world and of the world to come; new views of truth and of duty; and everything is seen in a new aspect and with new feelings. Nothing is more common in young converts than such feelings, and nothing is more common than for them to say that all things are new. The Bible seems to be a new book, and though they may have often read it before, yet there is a beauty about it which they never saw before, and which they wonder they have not before perceived. The whole face of nature seems to them to be changed, and they seem to be in a new world. The hills, and vales, and streams; the sun, the stars, the groves, the forests, seem to be new. A new beauty is spread over them all; and they now see them to be the work of God, and his glory is spread over them all, and they can now say:

"My Father made them all."

The heavens and the earth are filled with new wonders, and all things seem now to speak forth the praise of God. Even the very countenances of friends seem to be new; and there are new feelings toward all people; a new kind of love to kindred and friends; and a love before unfelt for enemies; and a new love for all mankind.

Verse 18

And all things are of God - This refers particularly to the things in question, the renewing of the heart, and the influences by which Paul had been brought to a state of willingness to forsake all, and to devote his life to the self-denying labors involved in the purpose of making the Saviour known. He makes the statement general, however, showing his belief that not only these things were produced by God, but that all things were under his direction, and subject to his control. Nothing that he had done was to be traced to his own agency or power, but God was to be acknowledged everywhere. This great truth Paul never forgot; and he never suffered himself to lose sight of it. It was in his view a cardinal and glorious truth; and he kept its influence always before his mind and his heart. In the important statement which follows, therefore, about the ministry of reconciliation, he deeply feels that the whole plan, and all the success which has attended the plan, was to be traced not to his zeal, or fidelity, or skill, but to the agency of God; see the note on 1 Corinthians 3:6-7.

Who hath reconciled us to himself - The word "us" here includes, doubtless, all who were Christians - whether Jews or Gentiles, or whatever was their rank. They had all been brought into a state of reconciliation, or agreement with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Before they were opposed to God. They had violated His laws. They were his enemies. But by the means of the plan of salvation they had been brought into a state of agreement, or harmony, and were united in feeling and in aim with him. Two people who have been alienated by prejudice, by passion, or by interest, are reconciled when the cause of the alienation is removed, on whichever side it may have existed, or if on both sides, and when they lay aside their enmity and become friends. Thenceforward they are agreed, and live together without alienation, heart-burnings, jealousies, and strife. So between God and man. There was a variance; there was an alienation.

Man was alienated from God. He had no love for Him. He disliked His government and laws. He was unwilling to be restrained. He sought his own pleasure. He was proud, vain, self-confident. He was not pleased with the character of God, or with his claims, or his plans. And in like manner, God was displeased with the pride, the sensuality, the rebellion, the haughtiness of man. He was displeased that His Law had been violated, and that man had cast off his government. Now reconciliation could take place only when these causes of alienation should be laid aside, and when God and man should be brought to harmony; when man should lay aside his love of sin, and should be pardoned, and when, therefore, God could consistently treat him as a friend. The Greek word which is used here (καταλλάσσω katallassō) means properly to change against anything; to exchange for anything, for money, or for any article - Robinson. In the New Testament it means to change one person toward another; that is, to reconcile to anyone; see the note on Romans 5:10.

It conveys the idea of producing a change so that one who is alienated should be brought to friendship. Of course, all the change which takes place must be on the part of man, for God will not change, and the purpose of the plan of reconciliation is to effect such a change in man as to make him in fact reconciled to God, and at agreement with him. There were indeed obstacles to reconciliation on the part of God, but they did not arise from any unwillingness to be reconciled; from any reluctance to treat his creature as his friend; but they arose from the fact that man had sinned, and that God was just; that such is the perfection of God that He cannot treat the good and evil alike; and that, therefore, if He should treat man as His friend, it was necessary that in some proper way He should maintain the honor of His Law, and show His hatred of sin, and should secure the conversion and future obedience of the offender.

All this God proposed to secure by the atonement made by the Redeemer, rendering it consistent for him to exercise the benevolence of his nature, and to pardon the offender. But God is not changed. The plan of reconciliation has made no change in his character. It has not made him a different being from what he was before. There is often a mistake on this subject; and people seem to suppose that God was originally stern, and unmerciful, and inexorable, and that he has been made mild and forgiving

by the atonement. But it is not so. No change has been made in God; none needed to be made; none could be made. He was always mild, and merciful, and good; and the gift of a Saviour and the plan of reconciliation is just an expression of his original willingness to pardon. When a father sees a child struggling in the stream, and in danger of drowning, the peril and the cries of the child make no change in the character of the father, but such was his former love for the child that he would plunge into the stream at the hazard of his own life to save him. So it is with God. Such was his original love for man, and his disposition to show mercy, that he would submit to any sacrifice, except that of truth and justice, in order that he might save him. Hence, he sent his only Son to die - not to change his own character; not to make himself a different being from what he was, but in order to show his love and his readiness to forgive when it could be consistently done. "God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son," John 3:16.

By Jesus Christ - By the agency, or medium of Jesus Christ. He was the mediator to interpose in the work of reconciliation. And he was abundantly qualified for this work, and was the only being that has lived in this world who was qualified for it. Because:

(1) He was endowed with a divine and human nature - the nature of both the parties at issue - God and man, and thus, in the language of Job, could "lay his hand upon both," Job 9:33.

(2) he was intimately acquainted with both the parties, and knew what was needful to be done. He knew God the Father so well that he could say, "No man knoweth the Father but the Son," Matthew 11:27. And he knew man so well that it could be said of him, he "needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man," John 2:25. No one can be a mediator who is not acquainted with the feelings, views, desires, claims, or prejudices of both the parties at issue.

(3) he was the friend of both the parties. He loved God. No man ever doubted this, or had any reason to call it in question, and he was always desirous of securing all that God claimed, and of vindicating him, and he never abandoned anything that God had a right to claim. And he loved man. He showed this in all his life. He sought his welfare in every way possible, and gave himself for him. Yet no one is qualified to act the mediator's part

who is not the common friend of both the parties at issue, and who will not seek the welfare, the right, or the honor of both.

(4) he was willing to suffer anything from either party in order to produce reconciliation. From the hand of God he was willing to endure all that he deemed to be necessary, in order to show his hatred of sin by his vicarious sufferings, and to make an atonement; and from the hand of man he was willing to endure all the reproach, and contumely, and scorn which could be possibly involved in the work of inducing man to be reconciled to God. And,

(5) He has removed all the obstacles which existed to a reconciliation. On the part of God, he has made it consistent for him to pardon. He has made an atonement, so that God can be just while he justifies the sinner. He has maintained His truth, and justice, and secured the stability of His moral government while He admits offenders to His favor. And on the part of man, He, by the agency of His Spirit, overcomes the unwillingness of the sinner to be reconciled, humbles his pride, shows him his sin, changes his heart, subdues his enmity against God, and secures in fact a harmony of feeling and purpose between God and man, so that they shall be reconciled forever.

And hath given to us - To us the apostles and our fellow-laborers.

The ministry of reconciliation - That is, of announcing to people the nature and the conditions of this plan of being reconciled. We have been appointed to make this known, and to press its acceptation on people; see 2 Corinthians 5:20.

Verse 19

To wit - (Greek, Ὡς ὅτι Hōs oti), namely This verse is designed further to state the nature of the plan of reconciliation, and of the message with which they were entrusted. It contains an abstract, or an epitome of the whole plan; and is one of those emphatic passages in which Paul compresses into a single sentence the substance of the whole plan of redemption.

That God was in Christ - That God was by Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ en Christō), by means of Christ; by the agency, or mediatorship of Christ. Or it may mean that God was united to Christ, and manifested himself by him.

So Doddridge interprets it. Christ was the mediator by means of whom God designed to accomplish the great work of reconciliation.

Reconciling the world unto himself - The world here evidently means the human race generally, without distinction of nation, age, or rank. The whole world was alienated from him, and he sought to have it reconciled. This is one incidental proof that God designed that the plan of salvation should be adapted to all people; see the note on 2 Corinthians 5:14. It may be observed further, that God sought that the world should be reconciled. Man did not seek it. He had no plan for it, he did not desire it. He had no way to effect it. It was the offended party, not the offending, that sought to be reconciled; and this shows the strength of his love. It was love for enemies and alienated beings, and love evinced to them by a most earnest desire to become their friend, and to be at agreement with them; compare note on Romans 5:8. Tyndale renders this very accurately: "For God was in Christ, and made agreement between the world and himself, and imputed not their sins unto them."

Not imputing their trespasses - Not reckoning their transgressions to them; that is, forgiving them, pardoning them. On the meaning of the word impute, see the note, Romans 4:3. The idea here is, that God did not charge on them with inexorable severity and stern justice their offences, but graciously provided a plan of pardon, and offered to remit their sins on the conditions of the gospel. The plan of reconciliation demonstrated that he was not disposed to impute their sins to them, as he might have done, and to punish them with unmitigated severity for their crimes, but was more disposed to pardon and forgive. And it may be here asked, if God was not disposed to charge with unrelenting severity their own sins to their account, but was rather disposed to pardon them, can we believe that he is disposed to charge on them the sin of another? If he does not charge on them with inexorable and unmitigated severity their own transgressions, will he charge on them with unrelenting severity - or at all - the sin of Adam? see the note on Romans 5:19. The sentiment here is, that God is not disposed or inclined to charge the transgressions of people upon them; he has no pleasure in doing it; and therefore he has provided a plan by which they may be pardoned. At the same time it is true that unless their sins are pardoned, justice will charge or impute their sins to them, and will exact punishment to the uttermost.

And hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation - Margin," put in us." Tyndale renders this: "and hath committed unto us the preaching of the atonement." The meaning is, that the office of making known the nature of this plan, and the conditions on which God was willing to be reconciled to man, had been committed to the ministers of the gospel.

Verse 20

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ - We are the ambassadors whom Christ has sent forth to negotiate with people in regard to their reconciliation to God, Tyndale renders this: "Now then are we messengers in the room of Christ." The word used here πρεσβεύομεν presbeuomenfrom πρέσβυς presbusan aged man, an elder, and then an ambassador) means to act as an ambassador, or sometimes merely to deliver a message for another, without being empowered to do any thing more than to explain or enforce it - Bloomfield. See Thucydides 7,9. An ambassador is a minister of the highest rank, employed by one prince or state at the court of another, to manage the concerns of his own prince or state, and representing the dignity and power of his sovereign - Webster. He is sent to do what the sovereign would himself do were he present. They are sent to make known the will of the sovereign, and to negotiate matters of commerce, of war, or of peace, and in general everything affecting the interests of the sovereign among the people to whom they are sent.

At all times, and in all countries, an ambassador is a sacred character, and his person is regarded as inviolable. He is bound implicitly to obey the instructions of his sovereign, and as far as possible to do only what the sovereign would do were he himself present. Ministers are ambassadors for Christ, as they are sent to do what he would do were he personally present. They are to make known, and to explain, and enforce the terms on which God is willing to be reconciled to people. They are not to negotiate on any new terms, nor to change those which God has proposed, nor to follow their own plans or devices, but they are simply to urge, explain, state, and enforce the terms on which God is willing to be reconciled. Of course they are to seek the honor of the sovereign who has sent them forth, and to seek to do only his will. They go not to promote their own welfare; not to seek honor, dignity, or emolument; but they go to transact the business which the Son of God would engage in were he again personally on the earth. It follows that their office is one of great dignity, and great responsibility, and

that respect should be showed them as the ambassadors of the King of kings.

As though God did beseech you by us - Our message is to be regarded as the message of God. It is God who speaks. What we say to you is said in his name and on his authority, and should be received with the respect which is due to a message directly from God. The gospel message is God speaking to people through the ministry, and entreating them to be reconciled. This invests the message which the ministers of religion bear with infinite dignity and solemnity; and it makes it a fearful and awful thing to reject it.

We pray you in Christ's stead - (ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ huper Christou). In the place of Christ; or doing what he did when on earth, and what he would do were he where we are.

Be ye reconciled to God - This is the sum and burden of the message which the ministers of the gospel bear to their fellow-men; see the note on 2 Corinthians 5:19. It implies that man has something to do in this work. He is to be reconciled to God. He is to give up his opposition. He is to submit to the terms of mercy. All the change in the case is to be in him, for God cannot change. God has removed all the obstacles to reconciliation which existed on his part. He has done all that he will do, all that needed to be done, in order to render reconciliation easy as possible. And now it remains that man should lay aside his hostility, abandon his sins, embrace the terms of mercy, and become in fact reconciled to God. And the great object of the ministers of reconciliation is to urge this duty on their fellow-men. They are to do it in the name of Christ. They are to do it as if Christ were himself present, and were himself urging the message. They are to use the arguments which he would use; evince the zeal which he would show; and present the motives which he would present to induce a dying world to become in fact reconciled to God.

Verse 21

For he hath made him to be sin for us - The Greek here is, ‹for him who knew no sin, he hath made sin, or a sin-offering for us.' The design of this very important verse is, to urge the strongest possible reason for being reconciled to God. This is implied in the word (γὰρ gar) "for." Paul might have urged other arguments, and presented other strong considerations. But he chooses to present this fact, that Christ has been made sin for us, as embodying and concentrating all. It is the most affecting of all arguments; it

is the one that is likely to prove most effectual. It is not indeed improper to urge on people every other consideration to induce them to be reconciled to God. It is not improper to appeal to them by the conviction of duty; to appeal to their reason and conscience; to remind them of the claims, the power, the goodness, and the fear of the Creator; to remind them of the awful consequences of a continued hostility to God; to persuade them by the hope of heaven, and by the fear of hell 2 Corinthians 5:1 l to become his friends: but, after all, the strongest argument, and that which is most adapted to melt the soul, is the fact that the Son of God has become incarnate for our sins, and has suffered and died in our stead. When all other appeals fail this is effectual; and this is in fact the strong argument by which the mass of those who become Christians are induced to abandon their opposition and to become reconciled to God.

To be sin - The words ‹to be‘ are not in the original. Literally, it is, ‹he has made him sin, or a sin-offering‘ ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν hamartian epoiēsenBut what is meant by this? What is the exact idea which the apostle intended to convey? I answer, it cannot be:

(1)That he was literally sin in the abstract, or sin as such. No one can pretend this. The expression must be, therefore, in some sense, figurative. Nor,

(2)Can it mean that he was a sinner, for it is said in immediate connection that he "knew no sin," and it is everywhere said that he was holy, harmless, undefiled. Nor,

(3)Can it mean that he was, in any proper sense of the word, guilty, for no one is truly guilty who is not personally a transgressor of the Law; and if he was, in any proper sense, guilty, then he deserved to die, and his death could have no more merit than that of any other guilty being; and if he was properly guilty it would make no difference in this respect whether it was by his own fault or by imputation: a guilty being deserves to be punished; and where there is desert of punishment there can be no merit in sufferings.

But all such views as go to make the Holy Redeemer a sinner, or guilty, or deserving of the sufferings which he endured, border on blasphemy, and are abhorrent to the whole strain of the Scriptures. In no form, in no sense possible, is it to be maintained that the Lord Jesus was sinful or guilty. It is a corner stone of the whole system of religion, that in all conceivable senses of the expression he was holy, and pure, and the object of the divine

approbation. And every view which fairly leads to the statement that he was in any sense guilty, or which implies that he deserved to die, is "prima facie" a false view, and should be at once abandoned. But,

(4) If the declaration that he was made "sin" (ἁμαρτίαν hamartian) does not mean that he was sin itself, or a sinner, or guilty, then it must mean that he was a sin-offering - an offering or a sacrifice for sin; and this is the interpretation which is now generally adopted by expositors; or it must be taken as an abstract for the concrete, and mean that God treated him as if he were a sinner. The former interpretation, that it means that God made him a sin-offering, is adopted by Whitby, Doddridge, Macknight, Rosenmuller, and others; the latter, that it means that God treated him as a sinner, is adopted by Vorstius, Schoettgen, Robinson (Lexicon), Dr. Bull, and others. There are many passages in the Old Testament where the word "sin" (ἁμαρτία hamartia) is used in the sense of sin-offering, or a sacrifice for sin. Thus, Hosea 4:8, "They eat up the sin of my people;" that is, the sin-offerings; see Ezekiel 43:22, Ezekiel 43:25; Ezekiel 44:29; Ezekiel 45:22-23, Ezekiel 45:25.

See Whitby's note on this verse. But whichever meaning is adopted, whether it means that he was a sacrifice for sin, or that God treated him as if he were a sinner, that is, subjected him to sufferings which, if he had been personally a sinner, would have been a proper expression of his hatred of transgression, ands proper punishment for sin, in either case it means that he made an atonement; that he died for sin; that his death was not merely that of a martyr; but that it was designed by substituted sufferings to make reconciliation between man and God. Locke renders this: probably expressing the true sense, "For God hath made him subject to suffering and death, the punishment and consequence of sin, as if he had been a sinner, though he were guilty of no sin." To me, it seems probable that the sense is, that God treated him as if he had been a sinner; that he subjected him to such pains and woes as would have been a proper punishment if he had been guilty; that while he was, in fact, in all senses perfectly innocent, and while God knew this, yet that in consequence of the voluntary assumption of the place of man which the Lord Jesus took, it pleased the Father to lay on him the deep sorrows which would be the proper expression of his sense of the evil of sin; that he endured so much suffering, as would answer the same great ends in maintaining the truth, and honor, and justice of God, as

if the guilty had themselves endured the penalty of the Law. This, I suppose, is what is usually meant when it is said "our sins were imputed to him;" and though this language is not used in the Bible, and though it is liable to great misapprehension and perversion, yet if this is its meaning, there can be no objection to it.

(Certainly Christ's being made sin, is not to be explained of his being made sin in the abstract, nor of his having actually become a sinner; yet it does imply, that sin was charged on Christ, or that it was imputed to him, and that he became answerable for it. Nor can this idea be excluded, even if we admit that "sin-offering" is the proper rendering of ἁμαρτία hamartiain the passage. "That Christ," says an old divine commenting on this place, "was made sin for us, because he was a sacrifice for sin, we confess; but therefore was he a sacrifice for sin because our sins were imputed to him, and punished in him." The doctrine of imputation of sin to Christ is here, by plain enough inference at least. The rendering in our Bibles, however, asserts it in a more direct form. Nor, after all the criticism that has been expended on the text, does there seem any necessity for the abandonment of that rendering, on the part of the advocate of imputation. For first ἁμαρτία hamartiain the Septuagint, and the corresponding אשם 'aashaamin the Hebrew, denote both the sin and the sin-offering, the peculiar sacrifice and the crime itself. Second, the antithesis in the passage, so obvious and beautiful, is destroyed by the adoption of "sin-offering." Christ was made sin, we righteousness.

There seems in our author's comment on this place, and also at Isaiah 53:6.)

Who knew no sin - He was not guilty. He was perfectly holy and pure. This idea is thus expressed by Peter 1 Peter 2:22; "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" and in Hebrews 7:26, it is said he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." In all respects, and in all conceivable senses, the Lord Jesus was pure and holy. If he had not been, he would not have been qualified to make an atonement. Hence, the sacred writers are everywhere at great pains to keep this idea prominent, for on this depends the whole superstructure of the plan of salvation. The phrase "knew no sin," is an expression of great beauty and dignity. It indicates his entire and perfect purity. He was altogether unacquainted with sin; he was a

stranger to transgression; he was conscious of no sin; he committed none. He had a mind and heart perfectly free from pollution, and his whole life was perfectly pure and holy in the sight of God.

That we might be made the righteousness of God - This is a Hebraism, meaning the same as divinely righteous. It means that we are made righteous in the sight of God; that is, that we are accepted as righteous, and treated as righteous by God on account of what the Lord Jesus has done. There is here an evident and beautiful contrast between what is said of Christ, and what is said of us. He was made sin; we are made righteousness; that is, he was treated as if he were a sinner, though he was perfectly holy and pure; we are treated as if we were righteous, though we are defiled and depraved. The idea is, that on account of what the Lord Jesus has endured in our behalf we are treated as if we had ourselves entirely fulfilled the Law of God, and bad never become exposed to its penalty. In the phrase "righteousness of God," there is a reference to the fact that this is his plan of making people righteous, or of justifying them.

They who thus become righteous, or are justified, are justified on his plan, and by a scheme which he has devised. Locke renders this: "that we, in and by him, might be made righteous, by a righteousness imputed to us by God." The idea is, that all our righteousness in the sight of God we receive in and through a Redeemer. All is to be traced to him. This verse contains a beautiful epitome of the whole plan of salvation, and the uniqueness of the Christian scheme. On the one hand, one who was perfectly innocent, by a voluntary substitution, is treated As if he were guilty; that is, is subjected to pains and sorrows which if he were guilty would be a proper punishment for sin: and on the other, they who are guilty and who deserve to be punished, are treated, through his vicarious sufferings, as if they were perfectly innocent; that is, in a manner which would be a proper expression of God‘s approbation if he had not sinned. The whole plan, therefore, is one of substitution; and without substitution, there can be no salvation. Innocence voluntarily suffers for guilt, and the guilty are thus made pure and holy, and are saved. The greatness of the divine compassion and love is thus shown for the guilty; and on the ground of this it is right and proper for God to call on people to be reconciled to him. It is the strongest argument that can be used. When God has given his only Son to the bitter suffering of death on the cross in order that we may be

reconciled, it is the highest possible argument which can be used why we should cease our opposition to him, and become his friends.

(See the supplementary notes on Romans 1:17; note at Romans 3:21. See also the additional note above on the first clause of the verse. The "righteousness of God," is doubtless that righteousness which the divine Saviour worked out, in his active and passive obedience, and if ever any of the guilty race of Adam are "treated as righteous" by God, it must be solely on the ground of its imputation.)

Remarks

1. It is possible for Christians to have the assurance that they shall enter into heaven, 2 Corinthians 5:1. Paul said that he knew this; John knew this (see the note on 2 Corinthians 5:1), and there is no reason why others should not know it. If a man hates sin he may know that as well as anything else; if he loves God, why should he not know that as well as to know that he loves an earthly friend? If he desires to be holy, to enter heaven, to be eternally pure, why should we have any doubt about that? If he loves to pray, to read the Bible, to converse of heaven - if his heart is truly in these things, he may know it, as well as know anything else about his own character of feelings.

2. If a Christian may know it, he should know it. No other knowledge is so desirable as this. Nothing will produce so much comfort as this. Nothing will contribute so much to make him firm, decided, and consistent in his Christian walk as this. No other knowledge will give him so much support in temptation; so much comfort in trial; so much peace in death. And if a man is a Christian, he should give himself no rest until he obtains assurance on this subject; if he is not a Christian be cannot know that too soon, or take too early measures to flee from the wrath to come.

3. The body will soon be dissolved in death, 2 Corinthians 5:1. It is a frail crumbling, decaying dwelling, that must soon be taken down. It has none of the properties of a permanent abode. it can be held together but a little time. It is like a hut or cottage, that is shaken by every gust of wind: like a tent when the pins are loose, and the cords unstranded, or rotten, and when the wind will soon sweep it away. And since this is the fact, we may as well know it, and not attempt to conceal it from the mind. All truth may be looked at calmly, and should be, and a man who is residing in a frail and

shattered dwelling, should be looking out for one that is more permanent and substantial. Death should be looked at. The fact that this tabernacle shall be taken down should be looked at; and every man should be asking with deep interest the question whether there is not a more permanent dwelling for him in a better world.

4. This life is burdened, and is full of cares, 2 Corinthians 5:2, 2 Corinthians 5:4. It is such as is suited to make us desire a better state. We groan here under sin, amidst temptation, encompassed by the cares and toils of life. We are burdened with duties, and we are oppressed by trials; and under all we are sinking to the grave. Soon, under the accumulated burdens, the body will be crushed, and sink back to the dust. Man cannot endure the burden long, and he must soon die. These accumulated trials and cares are such as are adapted to make him desire a better inheritance, and to look forward to a better world. God designs that this shall be a world of care and anxiety, in order that we may be led to seek a better portion beyond the grave.

5. The Christian has a permanent home in heaven, 2 Corinthians 5:1-2, 2 Corinthians 5:4. There is a house not made with hands; an eternal home; a world where mortality is unknown. There is his home; that is his eternal dwelling. Here he is a stranger, among strangers, in a strange world. In heaven is his home. The body here may be sick, feeble, dying; there it shall be vigorous, strong, immortal. He may have no comfortable dwelling here; he may be poor, and afflicted; there he shall have an undecaying dwelling, an unchanging home. Who in a world like this should not desire to be a Christian? What other condition of life is so desirable as that of the man who is sure that after a few more days he shall be admitted to an eternal home in heaven, where the body never dies, and where sin and sorrow are known no more?

6. The Christian should be willing to bear all the pain and sorrow which God shall appoint, 2 Corinthians 5:1-4. Why should he not? He knows not only that God is good in all this; but he knows that it is but for a moment; that he is advancing toward heaven, and that he will soon be at home. Compared with that eternal rest what trifles are all the sufferings of this mortal life!

7. We should not desire to die merely to get rid of pain, or to be absent from the body, 2 Corinthians 5:4. It is not merely in order that we may be "unclothed," or that we may get away from a suffering body, that we should be willing to die. Many a sinner suffers so much here that he is willing to plunge into an awful eternity, as he supposes, to get rid of pain, when, alas, he plunges only into deeper and eternal woe. We should be willing to bear as much pain, and to bear it as long as God shall be pleased to appoint. We should submit to all without a complaint. We should be anxious to be relieved only when God shall judge it best for us to be away from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

8. In a mere readiness to die there is no evidence that we are prepared for heaven; compare 2 Corinthians 5:4. Many a man supposes that because he is ready to die, that, therefore, he is prepared. Many a one takes comfort because a dying friend was ready and willing to die. But in a mere willingness to die there is no evidence of a preparation for death, because 100 causes may conspire to produce this besides piety. And let us not be deceived by supposing that because we have no alarm about death, and are willing to go to another world, that therefore we are prepared. It may be either stupidity, or insensibility; it may be a mere desire to get rid of suffering; it may be because we are cherishing a hope of heaven which is altogether vain and illusive.

9. The Christian should, and may desire to depart and to be in heaven, 2 Corinthians 5:2. Heaven is his home; and it is his privilege to desire to be there. Here he is in a world of trial and of sin. There he shall be in a world of joy and of holiness. Here he dwells in a frail, suffering, decaying body. There he shall be clothed with immortality. It is his privilege, therefore, to desire, as soon as it shall be the will of God, to depart, and to enter on his eternal inheritance in heaven. He should have a strong, fixed, firm desire for that world; and should be ready at the shortest notice to go and to be forever with the Lord.

10. The hopes and joys of Christians, and all their peace and calmness in the prospect of death, are to be traced to God, 2 Corinthians 5:5. It is not that they are not naturally as timid and fearful of dying as others; it is not

that they have any native courage or strength, but it is to be traced entirely to the mercy of God, and the influence of his Spirit, that they are enabled to look calmly at death, at the grave, at eternity. With the assured prospect of heaven, they have nothing to fear in dying; and if we have the "earnest of the Spirit" - the pledge that heaven is ours - we have nothing to fear in the departure from this world.

11. The Christian should be, and may be, always cheerful, 2 Corinthians 5:6. Paul said that he was always confident, or cheerful. Afflictions did not depress him; trials did not cast him down. He was not disheartened by opposition; he did not lose his courage by being reviled and persecuted. In all this he was cheerful and bold. There is nothing in religion to make us melancholy and sad. The assurance of the favor of God, and the hope of heaven, should have, and will have, just the opposite effect. A sense of the presence of God, a conviction that we are sinners, a deep impression of the truth that we are to die, and of the infinite interest of the soul at stake, will indeed make us serious and solemn, and should do so. But this is not inconsistent with cheerfulness, but is rather suited to produce it. It is favorable to a state of mind where all irritability is suppressed, and where the mind is made calm and settled; and this is favorable to cheerfulness. Besides, there is much, very much in religion to prevent sadness, and to remove gloom from the soul. The hope of heaven, and the prospect of dwelling with God and with holy beings forever, is the best means of expelling the gloom which is caused by the disappointments and cares of the world. And much as many persons suppose that religion creates gloom, it is certain that nothing in this world has done so much to lighten care, to break the force of misfortune and disappointment, to support in times of trial, and to save from despair, as the religion of the Redeemer. And it is moreover certain that there are no persons so habitually calm in their feelings, and cheerful in their tempers, as consistent and devout Christians. If there are some Christians, like David Brainerd, who are melancholy and sad, as there are undoubtedly, it should be said:

(1)That they are few in number;

(2)That their gloom is to be traced to constitutional propensity, and not to religion;

(3)That they have, even with all their gloom, joys which the world never experiences, and which can never be found in sin; and,

(4) That their gloom is not produced by religion, but by the lack of more of it.

12. It is noble to act with reference to things unseen and eternal, 2 Corinthians 5:7. It elevates the soul; lifts it above the earth; purifies the heart; and gives to man a new dignity. It prevents all the grovelling effect of acting from a view of present objects, and with reference to the things which are just around us. "Whatever withdraws us," says Dr. Johnson, "from the power of our senses; whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future, predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings" - Tour to the Hebrides, p. 322, ed. 2 Corinthians 5:8. He rushes, as it were instinctively, to his presence, and casts himself at his feet. He has no other home than where the Saviour is; he thinks of no future joy or glory but that which is to be enjoyed with him. Why then should we fear death? Lay out of view, as we may, the momentary pang, the chilliness, and the darkness of the grave, and think of that which will be the moment after death - the view of the Redeemer, the sight of the splendors of the heavenly world, the angels, the spirits of the just made perfect, the river of the paradise of God, and the harps of praise, and what has man to fear in the prospect of dying?

Why should I shrink at pain or woe,
Or feel at death dismay?
I've Canaan's goodly land in view,
And realms of endless day.
Apostles, martyrs, prophets there,
Around my Saviour stand;
And soon my friends in Christ below.
Will join the glorious band,
Jerusalem! my happy home!
My soul still pants for thee;
When shall my labors have an end.
In joy, and peace, and thee!
- *Charles Wesley.*

14. We should act feeling that we are in the immediate presence of God and so as to meet his acceptance and approbation, whether we remain on

earth, or whether we are removed to eternity, 2 Corinthians 5:9. The prospect of being with him, and the consciousness that his eye is fixed upon us, should make us diligent, humble, and laborious. It should be the great purpose of our lives to secure his favor, and meet with his acceptance; and it should make no difference with us in this respect, where we are - whether on earth or in heaven; with the prospect of long life, or of an early death; in society or in solitude; at home or abroad; on the land or on the deep; in sickness or in health; in prosperity or in adversity, it should be our great aim so to live as to be "accepted of him." And the Christian will so act. To act in this manner is the very nature of true piety; and where this desire does not exist, there can be no true religion.

15. We must appear before the judgment-seat, 2 Corinthians 5:10. We must all appear there. This is inevitable. There is not one of the human family that can escape. Old and young; rich and poor; bond and free; all classes, all conditions, all nations must stand there, and give an account for all the deeds done in the body, and receive their eternal doom. How solemn is the thought of being arraigned! How deeply affecting the idea that on the issue of that one trial will depend our eternal weal or woe! How overwhelming the reflection that from that sentence there can be no appeal; no power of reversing, it; no possibility of afterward changing our destiny!

16. We shall soon be there, 2 Corinthians 5:10. No one knows when he is to die; and death when it comes will remove us at once to the judgment-seat. A disease that may carry us off in a few hours may take us there; or death that may come in an instant shall bear us to that awful bar. How many are stricken down in a moment; how many are hurried without any warning to the solemnities of the eternal world! So we may die. No one can insure our lives; no one can guard us from the approach of the invisible king of terrors.

17. We should be ready to depart If we must stand at the awful bar; and if we may be summoned there any moment, assuredly we should lose no time in being ready to go. It is our great business in life; and it should claim our first attention, and all other things should be postponed that we may be ready to die. It should be the first inquiry every morning, and the last subject of thought every evening - for who knows when he rises in the morning but that before night he may stand at the judgment-seat! Who,

when he lies down on his bed at night, knows but that in the silence of the night-watches he may be summoned to go alone - to leave his family and friends, his home and his bed, to answer for all the deeds done in the body?

18. We should endeavor to save others from eternal death, 2 Corinthians 5:11. If we have ourselves any just views of the awful terrors of the day of judgment, and if we have any just views of the wrath of God, we should endeavor "to persuade" others to flee from the wrath to come. We should plead with them; we should entreat them; we should weep over them; we should pray for them, that they may be saved from going up to meet the awful wrath of God. If our friends are unprepared to meet God; if they are living in impenitence and sin, and if we have any influence over others in any way, we should exert it all to induce them to come to Christ, and to save themselves from the awful terrors of that day. Paul deemed no self-denial and no sacrifice too great, if he might persuade them to come to God, and to save their souls. And who that has any just views of the awful terrors of the day of judgment; of the woes of an eternal hell, and of the glories of an eternal heaven; can deem that labor too great which shall be the means of saving immortal souls? Not to frighten them should we labor, not to alarm them merely should we plead with them, but we should endeavor by all means to persuade them to come to the Redeemer. We should not use tones of harshness and denunciation; we should not speak of hell as if we would rejoice to execute the sentence, but we should speak with tenderness, earnestness, and with tears (compare Acts 20:31), that we may induce our friends and fellow-sinners to be reconciled to God.

19. We should not deem it strange or remarkable if we are charged with being deranged for being active and zealous in the subject of religion, 2 Corinthians 5:13. There will always be enough, both in the church and out of it, to charge us with over-heated zeal; with lack of prudence; or with decided mental alienation. But we are not to forget that Paul was accused of being "mad;" and even the Redeemer was thought to be "beside himself." "It is sufficient for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his Lord;" and if the Redeemer was charged with derangement on account of his special views and his zeal, we should not suppose that any strange thing had happened to us if we are accused in like manner.

20. The gospel should be offered to all people, 2 Corinthians 5:14. If Christ died for all, then salvation is provided for all; and then it should be offered to all freely and fully. It should be done without any mental reservation, for God has no such mental reservation; without any hesitation or misgiving; without any statements that would break the force, or weaken the power of such an offer on the consciences of people. If they reject it, they should be left to see that they reject that which is in good faith offered to them, and that for this they must give an account to God. Every man who preaches the gospel should feel that he is not only permitted but required to preach the gospel "to every creature;" nor should he embrace any opinion whatever which will in form or in fact cramp him or restrain him in thus offering salvation to all mankind. The fact that Christ died for all, and that all may be saved, should be a fixed and standing point in all systems of theology, and should be allowed to shape every other opinion, and to shed its influence over every other view of truth.

21. All people by nature are dead in sins, 2 Corinthians 5:14. They are insensible to their own good; to the appeals of God; to the glories of heaven, and to the terrors of hell. They do not act for eternity; they are without concern in regard to their everlasting destiny. They are as insensible to all these things, until aroused by the Spirit of God, as a dead man in his grave is to surrounding objects. And there is nothing that ever did arouse such a man, or ever could, but the same power that made the world, and the same voice that raised Lazarus from his grave. This melancholy fact strikes us everywhere; and we should be deeply humbled that it is our condition by nature, and should mourn that it is the condition of our fellowmen everywhere.

22. We should form our estimate of objects and of their respective value and importance by other considerations than those which are derived from their temporal nature, 2 Corinthians 5:16. It should not be simply according to the flesh. It should not be as they estimate them who are living for this world. It should not be by their rank, their splendor, or their fashion. It should be by their reference to eternity, and their bearing on the state of things there.

23. It should be with us a very serious inquiry whether our views of Christ are such as they have who are living after the flesh, or such only as the unrenewed mind takes, 2 Corinthians 5:16. The carnal mind has no just views of the Redeemer. To every impenitent sinner he is "a root out of a day ground." There is no beauty in him. And to every hypocrite, and every deceived professor of religion, there is really no beauty seen in him. There is no spontaneous, elevated, glowing attachment to him. It is all forced and unnatural. But to the true Christian there is a beauty seen in his character that is not seen in any other; and the whole soul loves him, and embraces him. His character is seen to be most pure and lovely; his benevolence boundless; his ability and willingness to save, infinite. The renewed soul desires no other Saviour; and rejoices that he is just what he is - rejoices in his humiliation as well as his exaltation; in his poverty as well as his glory; rejoices in the privilege of being saved by him who was spit upon, and mocked, and crucified, as well as by him who is at the right hand of God. One thing is certain, unless we have just views of Christ we can never be saved.

24. The new birth is a great and most important change, 2 Corinthians 5:17. It is not in name or in profession merely, but it is a deep and radical change of the heart. It is so great that it may be said of each one that he is a new creation of God; and in relation to each one, that old things are passed away, and all things are become new. How important it is that we examine our hearts and see whether this change has taken place, or whether we are still living without God and without hope. It is indispensable that we be born again; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. There is no other office of the same importance; there is no situation in which man can be placed more solemn than that of making known the terms on which God is willing to bestow favor on apostate man.

26. How amazing is the divine condescension, that God should have ever proposed such a plan of reconciliation, 2 Corinthians 5:20-21. That he should not only have been willing to be reconciled, but that he should have sought, and have been so anxious for it as to be willing to send his own Son to die to secure it! It was pure, rich, infinite benevolence. God was not to be benefitted by it. He was infinitely blessed and happy even though man should have been lost. He was pure, and just, and holy, and it was not

necessary to resort to this in order to vindicate his own character. He had done man no wrong: and if man had perished in his sins, the throne of God would have been pure and spotless. It was love; mere love. It was pure, holy, disinterested, infinite benevolence. It was worthy of a God; and it has a claim to the deepest gratitude of man.

Let us then, in view of this whole chapter, seek to be reconciled to God. Let us lay aside all our opposition to him. Let us embrace his plans. Let us be willing to submit to him, and to become his eternal friends. Let us seek to heaven to which he would raise us; and though our earthly house of this tabernacle must be dissolved, let us be prepared, as we may be, for that eternal habitation which he has prepared for all who love him in the heavens.

2 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Introduction

This chapter 2 Corinthians 6:1-2.

II. He enumerates the labors and self-denials of the ministry. He refers to their sincerity, zeal, and honesty of life. He shows how much they had been willing to endure in order to convey the gospel to others, and how much they had in fact endured, and how much they had benefitted others. He speaks of their afflictions in a most tender and beautiful manner, and of the happy results which had followed from their self-denying labors, 2 Corinthians 6:3-10. The design of this is, evidently, to remind them of what their religion had cost, and to appeal to them in view of all this to lead holy and pure lives.

III. Paul expresses his ardent attachment for them, and says that if they were straitened - if they did not live as they should do, it was not because he and his fellow-laborers had not loved them, and sought their welfare, but from a defect in themselves, 2 Corinthians 6:11-12.

IV. As a reward for all that he had done and suffered for them, he now asked only that they should live as became Christians, 2 Corinthians 6:13-18. He sought not silver, or gold, or apparel. He had not labored as he had done with any view to a temporal reward. And he now asked simply that they should come out from the world, and be dissociated from everything that was evil. He demanded that they should be separated from all idolatry, and idolatrous practices; assures them that there can be no union between light and darkness; righteousness and unrighteousness; Christ and Belial; that there can be no agreement between the temple of God and idols; reminds them of the fact that they are the temple of God; and encourages them to do this by the assurance that God would be their God, and that they should be his adopted sons and daughters. The chapter is one of great beauty; and the argument for a holy life among Christians is one that is exceedingly forcible and tender.

Verse 1

We then, as workers together with him - On the meaning of this expression, see the note, 1 Corinthians 3:9. The Greek here is (

συνεργοῦντες sunergountes) "working together," and may mean either that the apostles and ministers to whom Paul refers were joint-laborers in entreating them not to receive the grace of God in vain; or it may mean that they cooperated with God, or were engaged with him in endeavoring to secure the reconciliation of the world to himself. Tyndale renders it: "we as helpers." Doddridge, "we then as the joint-laborers of God." Most expositors have concurred in this interpretation. The word properly means, to work together; to cooperate in producing any result. Macknight supposes that the word here is in the vocative, and is an address to the fellow-laborers of Paul, entreating them not to receive the grace of God in vain. In this opinion he is probably alone, and has manifestly departed from the scope and design of the passage. Probably the most obvious meaning is that of our translators, who regard it as teaching that Paul was a joint-worker with God in securing the salvation of people.

That ye receive not the grace of God in vain - The "grace of God" here means evidently the gracious offer of reconciliation and pardon. And the sense is, "We entreat you not to neglect or slight this offer of pardon, so as to lose the benefit of it, and be lost. It is offered freely and fully. It may be partaken of by all, and all may be saved. But it may also be slighted, and all the benefits of it will then be lost." The sense is, that it was possible that this offer might be made to them, they might hear of a Saviour, be told of the plan of reconciliation and have the offers of mercy pressed on their attention and acceptance, and yet all be in vain. They might notwithstanding all this be lost, for simply to hear of the plan of salvation or the offers of mercy, will no more save a sinner than to hear of medicine will save the sick. It must be embraced and applied, or it will be in vain. It is true that Paul probably addressed this to those who were professors of religion; and the sense is, that they should use all possible care and anxiety lest these offers should have been made in vain. They should examine their own hearts; they should inquire into their own condition; they should guard against self-deception. The same persons 2 Corinthians 5:20 Paul had exhorted also to be reconciled to God; and the idea is, that he would earnestly entreat even professors of religion to give all diligence to secure an interest in the saving mercy of the gospel, and to guard against the possibility of being self-deceived and ruined.

Verse 2

For he saith - see Isaiah 49:8. In that passage the declaration refers to the Messiah, and the design is there to show that God would be favorable to him; that he would hear him when he prayed, and would make him the medium of establishing a covenant with his own people, and of spreading the true religion around the earth; see my note on that place. Paul quotes the passage here not as affirming that he used it in exactly the sense, or with reference to the same design for which it was originally spoken, but as expressing the idea which he wished to convey, or in accordance with the general principle implied in its use in Isaiah. The general idea there, or the principle involved, was, that under the Messiah God would be willing to hear; that is, that he would be disposed to show mercy to the Jew and to the Gentile. This is the main idea of the passage as used by Paul. Under the Messiah, it is said by Isaiah, God would be willing to show mercy. That would be an acceptable time. That time says Paul, has arrived. The Messiah has come, and now God is willing to pardon and save. And the doctrine in this verse is, that under the Messiah, or in the time of Christ, God is willing to show mercy to people. In him alone is the throne of grace accessible, and now that he has come, God is willing to pardon, and people should avail themselves of the offers of mercy.

I have heard thee - The Messiah. I have listened to thy prayer for the salvation of the pagan world. The promise to the Messiah was, that the pagan world should be given to him; but it was a promise that it should be in answer to his prayers and intercessions. "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the pagan for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession;" Psalm 2:8. The salvation of the pagan world, and of all who are saved, is to be in answer to the prevalent intercession of the Lord Jesus.

In a time accepted - In Isaiah, "in an acceptable time." The idea is, that he had prayed in a time when God was disposed to show mercy; the time when in his wise arrangements he had designed that his salvation should be extended to the world. It is a time which he had fixed as the appropriate period for extending the knowledge of his truth and his salvation; and it proves that there was to be a period which was the favorable period of salvation, that is, which God esteemed to be the proper period for making his salvation known to people. At such a period the Messiah would pray, and the prayer would be answered.

In the day of salvation - In the time when I am disposed to show salvation.

Have I succored thee - The Messiah. I have sustained thee, that is, in the effort to make salvation known. God here speaks of there being an accepted time, a limited period, in which petitions in favor of the world would be acceptable to him. That time Paul says had come; and the idea which he urges is, that people should avail themselves of that, and embrace now the offers of mercy.

Behold, now is the accepted time … - The meaning of this passage is, the "Messiah is come. The time referred to by Isaiah has arrived. It is now a time when God is ready to show compassion, to hear prayer, and to have mercy on mankind. Only through the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, does he show mercy, and people should therefore now embrace the offers of pardon." The doctrine taught here, therefore. is, that through the Lord Jesus, and where he is preached, God is willing to pardon and save people; and this is true wherever he is preached, and as long as people live under the sound of the gospel. The world is under a dispensation of mercy, and God is willing to show compassion, and while this exists, that is, while people live, the offers of salvation are to he freely made to them. The time will come when it will not be an acceptable time with God. The day of mercy will be closed; the period of trial will be ended; and people will be removed to a world where no mercy is shown, and where compassion is unknown. This verse, which should be read as a parenthesis, is designed to be connected with the argument which the apostle is urging, and which he presented in the previous chapter. The general doctrine is, that people should seek reconciliation with God. To enforce that, he here says, that it was now the acceptable time, the time when God was willing to be reconciled to human beings. The general sentiment of this passage may be thus expressed:

(1) Under the gospel it is an acceptable time, a day of mercy, a time when God is willing to show mercy to people.

(2) there may be special seasons which may be especially called the acceptable, or accepted time:

(a)When the gospel is pressed on the attention by the faithful preaching of his servants, or by the urgent entreaties of friends;

(b)When it is brought to our attention by any striking dispensation of Providence;

(c)When the Spirit of God strives with us, and brings us to deep reflection, or to conviction for sin;

(d)In a revival of religion, when many are pressing into the kingdom - it is at all such seasons an accepted time, a day of salvation. a day which we should improve. It is "now" such a season, because:

(i)The time of mercy will pass by, and God will not be willing to pardon the sinner who goes unprepared to eternity.

(ii)Because we cannot calculate on the future. We have no assurance, no evidence that we shall live another day, or hour.

(iii)It is taught here, that the time will come when it will not be an accepted time. Now is the accepted time; at some future period it will not be.

If people grieve away the Holy Spirit; if they continue to reject the gospel; if they go unprepared to eternity, no mercy can be found. God does not design to pardon beyond the grave. He has made no provision for forgiveness there; and they who are not pardoned in this life, must be unpardoned forever.

Verse 3

Giving no offence in anything - We the ministers of God, 2 Corinthians 6:1. The word rendered "offence" means, properly, stumbling; then offence, or cause of offence, a falling into sin. The meaning here is, "giving no occasion for contemning or rejecting the gospel;" and the idea of Paul is, that he and his fellow-apostles so labored as that no one who saw or knew them, should have occasion to reproach the ministry, or the religion which they preached; but so that in their pure and self-denying lives, the strongest argument should be seen for embracing it; compare Matthew 10:16; 1 Corinthians 8:13; 1 Corinthians 10:32-33. See the Philemon 2:15 note; 1 Thessalonians 2:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:22 notes. How they conducted so as to give no offence he states in the following verses.

That the ministry be not blamed - The phrase, "the ministry," refers here not merely to the ministry of Paul, that is, it does not mean merely that he would be subject to blame and reproach, but that the ministry itself which the Lord Jesus had established would be blamed, or would be reproached by the improper conduct of anyone who was engaged in that work. The idea is, that the misconduct of one minister of the gospel would bring a reproach upon the profession itself, and would prevent the usefulness and success of others, just as the misconduct of a physician

exposes the whole profession to reproach, or the bad conduct of a lawyer reflects itself in some degree on the entire profession. And it is so everywhere. The errors, follies, misconduct, or bad example of one minister of the gospel brings a reproach upon the sacred calling itself, and prevents the usefulness of many others. Ministers do not stand alone. And though no one can be responsible for the errors and failings of others, yet no one can avoid suffering in regard to his usefulness by the sins of others. Not only, therefore, from a regard to his personal usefulness should every minister be circumspect in his walk, but from respect to the usefulness of all others who sustain the office of the ministry, and from respect to the success of religion all over the world. Paul made it one of the principles of his conduct so to act that no man should have cause to speak reproachfully of the ministry on his account. In order to this, he felt; it to be necessary not only to claim and assert honor for the ministry, but to lead such a life as should deserve the respect of people. If a man wishes to secure respect for his calling, it must be by living in the manner which that calling demands, and then respect and honor will follow as a matter of course; see Calvin.

Verse 4

But in all things - In every respect. In all that we do. In every way, both by words and deeds. How this was done, Paul proceeds to state in the following verses.

Approving ourselves as the ministers of God - Margin, "Commending." Tyndale renders it, "In all things let us behave ourselves as the ministers of God." The idea is, that Paul and his fellowlaborers endeavored to live as became the ministers of God, and so as to commend the ministry to the confidence and affection of people. They endeavored to live as was appropriate to those who were the ministers of God, and so that the world would be disposed to do honor to the ministry.

In much patience - In the patient endurance of afflictions of all kinds. Some of his trials he proceeds to enumerate. The idea is, that a minister of God, in order to do good and to commend his ministry, should set an example of patience. He preaches this as a duty to others; and if, when he is poor, persecuted, oppressed, calumniated, or imprisoned, he should complain, or be insubmissive, the consequence would be that he would do little good by all his preaching. And no one can doubt, that God often places his ministers in circumstances of special trial, among other reasons, in order that they may illustrate their own precepts by their example, and show to

their people with what temper and spirit they may and ought to suffer. Ministers often do a great deal more good by their example in suffering than they do in their preaching. It is easy to preach to others; it is not so easy to manifest just the right spirit in time of persecution and trial. People too can resist preaching, but they cannot resist the effect and power of a good example in times of suffering. In regard to the manner in which Paul says that the ministry may commend itself, it may be observed, that he groups several things together; or mentions several classes of influences or means. In this and the next verse he refers to various kinds of afflictions. In the following verses he groups several things together, pertaining to a holy life, and a pure conversation.

In afflictions - In all our afflictions; referring to all the afflictions and trials which they were called to bear. The following words, in the manner of a climax, specify more particularly the kinds of trials which they were called to endure.

In necessities - This is a stronger term than afflictions, and denotes the distress which arose from want. He everywhere endured adversity. It denotes unavoidable distress and calamity.

In distresses - The word used here (στενοχωρία stenochōria) denotes properly straitness of place, lack of room; then straits, distress, anguish. It is a stronger word than either of those which he had before used. See it explained in the notes on Romans 2:9. Paul means that in all these circumstances he had evinced patience, and had endeavored to act as became a minister of God.

Verse 5

In stripes - In this verse, Paul proceeds to specifications of what he had been called to endure. In the previous verse, he had spoken of his afflictions in general terms. In this expression, he refers to the fact that he and his fellow-laborers were scourged in the synagogues and cities as if they had been the worst of people. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-25, Paul says that he had been scourged five times by the Jews, and had been thrice beaten with rods. See the notes on that place.

In imprisonments - As at Philippi; Acts 16:24 ff. It was no uncommon thing for the early preachers of Christianity to be imprisoned.

In tumults - Margin, "Tossing to and fro." The Greek word (ἀκαταστασία akatastasia) denotes properly "instability," thence disorder, tumult, commotion. Here it means that in the various tumults and

commotions which were produced by the preaching of the gospel, Paul endeavored to act as became a minister of God. Such tumults were excited at Corinth Acts 18:6; at Philippi Acts 16:19-20; at Lystra and Derbe Acts 14:19; at Ephesus 2 Corinthians 11:27.

In fastings - Referring probably not only to the somewhat frequent fasts to which he voluntarily submitted as acts of devotion, but also to the fact that in his travels, when abroad and among strangers, he was often destitute of food. To such trials, those who traveled as Paul did, among strangers, and without property, would be often compelled to submit; and such trials, almost without number, the religion which we now enjoy has cost. It at first cost the painful life, the toils, the anxieties, and the sufferings of the Redeemer; and it has been propagated and perpetuated amidst the deep sorrows, the sacrifices, and the tears and blood of those who have contributed to perpetuate it on earth. For such a religion, originated, extended, and preserved in such a manner, we can never express suitable gratitude to God. Such a religion we cannot overestimate in value; and for the extension and perpetuity of such a religion, we also should be willing to practice unwearied self denial.

Verse 6

By pureness - Paul, having in the previous verses, grouped together some of the sufferings which he endured and by which he had endeavored to commend and extend the true religion, proceeds here to group together certain other influences by which he had sought the same object. The substance of what he here says is, that it had not only been done by sufferings and trials, but by a holy life, and by entire consecration to the great cause to which he had devoted himself. He begins by stating that it was by pureness, that is, by integrity, sanctity, a holy and pure life. All preaching, and all labors would have been in vain without this; and Paul well knew that if he succeeded in the ministry, he must be a good man. The same is true in all other professions. One of the essential requisites of an orator, according to Quintilian, is, that he must be a good man; and no man may expect ultimately to succeed in any calling of life unless he is pure. But however this may be in other callings, no one will doubt it in regard to the ministry of the gospel.

By knowledge - Interpreters have differed much in the interpretation of this. Rosenmuller and Schleusner understand by it prudence. Grotius interprets it as meaning a knowledge of the Law. Doddridge supposes that it

refers to a solicitude to improve in the knowledge of those truths which they were called to communicate to others. Probably the idea is a very simple one. Paul is showing how he endeavored to commend the gospel to others, 2 Corinthians 6:4. He says, therefore, that one way was by communicating knowledge, true knowledge. He proclaimed that which was true, and which was real knowledge, in opposition to the false science of the Greeks, and in opposition to those who would substitute declamation for argument, and the mere ornaments of rhetoric for truth. The idea is, that the ministry should not be ignorant, but that if they wished to commend their office, they should be well informed, and should be people of good sense. Paul had no belief that an ignorant ministry was preferable to one that was characterized by true knowledge; and he felt that if he was to be useful it was to be by his imparting to others truth that would be useful. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge;" Malachi 2:7.

By long-suffering - By patience in our trials, and in the provocations which we meet with. We endeavor to obtain and keep a control over our passions, and to keep them in subjection. See this word explained in the notes on 1 Corinthians 13:4.

By kindness - see the note, 1 Corinthians 13:4. By gentleness of manner, of temper, and of spirit. By endeavoring to evince this spirit to all, whatever may be their treatment of us, and whatever may be our provocations. Paul felt that if a minister would do good he must be kind, and gentle to all.

By the Holy Ghost - By the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. By those graces and virtues which it is his office especially to produce in the heart; compare Galatians 5:22-23. Paul here evidently refers not to the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, but he is referring to the Spirit which he and his fellow-ministers manifested, and means here, doubtless, that they evinced such feelings as the Holy Spirit produced in the hearts of the children of God.

By love unfeigned - Sincere, true, ardent love to all. By undissembled, pure, and genuine affection for the souls of people. What good can a minister do if he does not love his people, and the souls of people? The prominent characteristic in the life of the Redeemer was love - love to all. So if we are like him, and if we do any good, we shall have love to people. No man is useful without it; and ministers, in general, are useful just in proportion as they have it. It will prompt to labor, self-denial, and toil; it

will make them patient, ardent, kind; it will give them zeal, and will give them access to the heart; it will accomplish what no eloquence, labor, or learning will do without it. He who shows that he loves me has access at once to my heart; he who does not, cannot make a way there by any argument, eloquence, denunciation, or learning. No minister is useful without it; no one with it can be otherwise than useful.

Verse 7

By the word of truth - That is, by making known the truths of the gospel. It was his object to make known the simple truth. He did not corrupt it by false mixtures of philosophy and human wisdom, but communicated it as it had been revealed to him. The object of the appointment of the Christian ministry is to make known the truth, and when that is done it cannot but be that they will commend their office and work to the favorable regards of people.

By the power of God - By the divine power which attended the preaching of the gospel. Most of the ancient commentators explain this of the power of working miracles - Bloomfield. But it probably includes all the displays of divine power which attended the propagation of the gospel, whether in the working of miracles, or in the conversion of people. If it be asked how Paul used this power so as to give no offence in the work of the ministry, it may be replied, that the miraculous endowments bestowed upon the apostles, the power of speaking foreign languages, etc., seem to have been bestowed upon them to be employed in the same way as were their natural faculties; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 14:32. The idea here is, that they used the great powers entrusted to them by God, not as impostors would have done, for the purposes of gain and ambition, or for vain display, but solely for the furtherance of the true religion, and the salvation of people. They thus showed that they were sent from God, as well by the nature of the powers with which they were entrusted, as by the manner in which they used them.

By the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left - Interpreters bare varied much in the exposition of this passage; and many have run into utter wildness. Grotius says, that it refers to the manner in which the ancient soldiers were armed. They bore a spear in their right hand, and a shield in the left. With the former they attacked their foes, with the later they made defense. Some have supposed that it refers to the fact that they were taught to use the sword with the left hand as well as with the

right. The simple idea is, that they were completely armed. To be armed on the right hand and on the left is to be well armed, or entirely equipped. They went forth to conflict. They met persecution, opposition, and slander. As the soldier went well armed to battle, so did they. But the armor with which they met their foes, and which constituted their entire panoply, was a holy life. With that they met all the assaults of their enemies; with that all slander and persecution. That was their defense, and by that they hoped and expected to achieve their conquests. They had no swords, and spears, and helmets, and shields; no carnal weapons of offence and defense; but they expected to meet all their assaults, and to gain all their victories, by an upright and holy life.

Verse 8

By honor and dishonor - The apostle is still illustrating the proposition that he and his fellow-laborers endeavored to give no offence 2 Corinthians 6:3, and to commend themselves as the ministers of God, 2 Corinthians 6:4. He here 2 Corinthians 6:8-10 introduces another group of particulars in which it was done. The main idea is, that they endeavored to act in a manner so as to commend the ministry and the gospel, whether they were in circumstances of honor or dishonor, whether lauded or despised by the world. The word rendered "by" (διὰ dia) does not here denote the means by which they commended the gospel, but the medium. In the midst of honor and dishonor; whatever might be the esteem in which they were held by the world, they gave no offence. The first is, "by honor." They were not everywhere honored, or treated with respect. Yet they were sometimes honored by people. The churches which they founded would honor them, and as the ministers of religion they would be by them treated with respect.

Perhaps occasionally also they might be treated with great attention and regard by the people of the world on account of their miraculous powers; compare Acts 28:7. So now, ministers of the gospel are often treated with great respect and honor. They are beloved and venerated; caressed and flattered, by the people of their charge. As ministers of God, as exercising a holy function, their office is often treated with great respect by the world. If they are eloquent or learned, or if they are eminently successful they are often highly esteemed and loved. It is difficult in such circumstances to "commend themselves as the ministers of God." Few are the people who are not injured by honor; few who are not corrupted by flattery. Few are the ministers who are proof against this influence, and who in such

circumstances can honor the ministry. If done, it is by showing that they regard such things as of little moment; by showing that they are influenced by higher considerations than the love of praise; by not allowing this to interfere with their duties, or to make them less faithful and laborious; but rather by making this the occasion of increased fidelity and increased zeal in their master‘s cause.

Most ministers do more to “give offence” in times when they are greatly honored by the world than when they are despised. Yet it is possible for a minister who is greatly honored to make it the occasion of commending himself more and more as a minister of God. And he should do it; as Paul said he did. The other situation was “in dishonor.” It is needless to say, that the apostles were often in situations where they had opportunity thus to commend themselves as the ministers of God. If sometimes honored, they were often dishonored. If the world sometimes flattered and caressed them, it often despised them, and cast out their names as evil; see the note, 1 Corinthians 4:13. And perhaps it is so substantially now with those who are faithful. In such circumstances, also, Paul sought to commend himself as a minister of God. It was by receiving all expressions of contempt with meekness; by not suffering them to interfere with the faithful discharge of his duties; by rising above them, and showing the power of religion to sustain him; and by returning good for evil, prayers for maledictions, blessings for curses, and by seeking to save, not injure and destroy those who thus sought to overwhelm him with disgrace. It may be difficult to do this, but it can be done; and when done, a man always does good.

By evil report - The word used here (δυσφημία dusphēmia), means, properly, ill-omened language, malediction, reproach, contumely. It refers to the fact that they were often slandered and calumniated. Their motives were called in question, and their names aspersed. They were represented as deceivers and impostors, etc. The statement here is, that in such circumstances, and when thus assailed and reproached, they endeavored to commend themselves as the ministers of God. Evidently they endeavored to do this by not slandering or reviling in return; by manifesting a Christian spirit; by living down the slanderous accusation, and by doing good if possible even to their calumniators. It is more difficult, says Chrysostom, to bear such reports than it is pain of body; and it is consequently more difficult to evince a Christian spirit then. To human nature it is trying to

have the name slandered and cast out as evil when we are conscious only of a desire to do good. But it is sufficient for the disciple that he be as his master, and if they called the master of the house Beelzebub, we must expect they will also those of his household. It is a fine field for a Christian minister, or any other Christian, to do good when his name is unjustly slandered. It gives him an opportunity of showing the true excellency of the Christian spirit; and it gives him the inexpressible privilege of being like Christ - like him in his suffering and in the moral excellence of character. A man should be willing to be anything if it will make him like the Redeemer - whether it be in suffering or in glory; see Philemon 3:10; 1 Peter 4:13.

And good report - When people speak well of us; when we are commended, praised, or honored. To honor the gospel then, and to commend the ministry, is:

(1)To show that the heart is not set on this, and does not seek it;

(2)To keep the heart from being puffed up with pride and self-estimation;

(3)Not to suffer it to interfere with our fidelity to others and with our faithfully presenting to them the truth.

Satan often attempts to bribe people by praise, and to neutralize the influence of ministers by flattery. It seems hard to go and proclaim to people painful truths who are causing the incense of praise to ascend around us. And it is commonly much easier for a minister of the gospel to commend himself as a minister of God when he is slandered than when he is praised, when his name is cast out as evil than when the breezes of popular favor are wafted upon him. Few people can withstand the influence of flattery, but many people can meet persecution with a proper spirit; few people comparatively can always evince Christian fidelity to others when they live always amidst the influence of "good report," but there are many who can be faithful when they are poor, and despised, and reviled. Hence, it has happened, that God has so ordered it that his faithful servants have had but little of the "good report" which this world can furnish, but that they have been generally subjected to persecution and slander.

As deceivers - That is, we are regarded and treated as if we were deceivers, and as if we were practicing an imposition on mankind, and as if we would advance our cause by any trick or fraud that would be possible. We are regarded and treated as deceivers. Perhaps this refers to some

charges which had been brought against them by the opposing faction at Corinth (Locke), or perhaps to the opinion which the Jewish priests and pagan philosophers entertained of them. The idea is, that though they were extensively regarded and treated as impostors, yet they endeavored to live as became the ministers of God. They bore the imputation with patience, and they applied themselves diligently to the work of saving souls. Paul seldom turned aside to vindicate himself from such charges, but pursued his master‘s work, and evidently felt that if he had a reputation that was worth anything, or deserved any reputation, God would take care of it; compare Psalm 37:1-4. A man, especially a minister, who is constantly endeavoring to vindicate his own reputation, usually has a reputation which is not worth vindicating. A man who deserves a reputation will ultimately obtain just as much as is good for him, and as will advance the cause in which he is embarked.

And yet true - We are not deceivers and impostors. Though we are regarded as such, yet we show ourselves to be true and faithful ministers of Christ.

Verse 9

As unknown - As those who are deemed to be of an obscure and ignoble rank in life, unknown to the great, unknown to fame. The idea, I think, is, that they went as strangers, as persons unknown, in preaching the gospel. Yet, though thus unknown they endeavor to commend themselves as the ministers of God. Though among strangers; though having no introduction from the great and the noble, yet they endeavored so to act as to convince the world that they were the ministers of God. This could he done only by a holy life, and by the evidence of the divine approbation which would attend them in their work. And by this, the ministers of religion, if they are faithful, may make themselves known even among those who were strangers, and may live so as to “give no offence.” Every minister and every Christian, even when they are “unknown” and when among strangers, should remember their high character as the servants of God, and should so live as to commend the religion which they profess to love, or which they are called on to preach. And yet how often is it that ministers when among strangers seem to feel themselves at liberty to lay aside their ministerial character, and to engage in conversation, and even partake of amusements which they themselves would regard as wholly improper if it were known that they were the ambassadors of God! And how

often is it the case that professing Christians when traveling, when among strangers, when in foreign lands, forget their high calling, and conduct in a manner wholly different from what they did when surrounded by Christians; and when restrained by the sentiments and by the eyes of a Christian community!

And yet well known - Our sentiments and our principles are well known. We have no concealments to make. We practice no disguise. We attempt to impose on no one. Though obscure in our origin; though without rank, of wealth, or power, or patronage, to commend ourselves to favor, yet we have succeeded in making ourselves known to the world. Though obscure in our origin, we are not obscure now. Though suspected of dark designs, yet our principles are all well known to the world. No people of the same obscurity of birth ever succeeded in making themselves more extensively known than did the apostles. The world at large became acquainted with them; and by their self-denial, zeal, and success, they extended their reputation around the globe.

As dying - That is, regarded by others as dying. As condemned often to death; exposed to death; in the midst of trials that expose us to death, and that are ordinarily followed by death; see the note on 1 Corinthians 15:31, on the phrase, "I die daily." They passed through so many trials that it might he said that they were constantly dying. "And, behold, we live." Strange as it may seem, we still survive. Through all our trials we are preserved, and though often exposed to death, yet we still live. The idea here is, that in all these trials, and in these exposures to death, they endeavored to commend themselves as the ministers of God. They bore their trials with patience; submitted to these exposures without a complaint; and ascribed their preservation to the interposition of God.

As chastened - The word "chastened" (παιδευόμενοι paideuomenoi) means corrected, "chastised." It is applied to the chastening which God causes by afflictions and calamities; 1 Corinthians 11:32; Revelation 3:19; Hebrews 12:6. It refers here, not to the scourgings to which they were subjected in the synagogues and elsewhere, but to the chastisements which God inflicted; the trials to which he subjected them. And the idea is, that in the midst of these trials, they endeavored to act as became the ministers of God. They bore them with patience. They submitted to them as coming from his hand. They felt that they were right; and they submitted without a complaint.

And not killed - Though severely chastened, yet we are not put to death. We survive them - preserved by the interposition of God.

Verse 10

As sorrowful - (λυπούμενοι lupoumenoi). Grieving, afflicted, troubled, sad. Under these sufferings we seem always to be cast down and sad. We endure afflictions that usually lead to the deepest expressions of grief. If the world looks only upon our trials, we must be regarded as always suffering, and always sad. The world will suppose that we have cause for continued lamentation (Doddridge), and they will regard us as among the most unhappy of mortals. Such, perhaps, is the estimate which the world usually affixes to the Christian life. They regard it as a life of sadness and of gloom; of trial and of melancholy. They see little in it that is cheerful, and they suppose that a heavy burden presses constantly on the heart of the Christian. Joy they think pertains to the gaieties and pleasures of this life; sadness to religion. And perhaps a more comprehensive statement of the feelings with which the frivolous people of the world regard Christians cannot be found than in this expression, "as sorrowful." True, they are not free from sorrow. They are tried like others. They have special trials arising from persecution, opposition, contempt, and from the conscious and deep-felt depravity of their hearts. They are serious; and their seriousness is often interpreted as gloom. But there is another side to this picture, and there is much in the Christian character and feelings unseen or unappreciated by the world. For they are.

Alway rejoicing - So Paul was, notwithstanding the fact that he always appeared to have occasion for grief. Religion had a power not only to sustain the soul in trial, but to fill it with positive joy. The sources of his joy were doubtless the assurances of the divine favor and the hopes of eternal glory. And the same is true of religion always. There is an internal peace and joy which the world may not see or appreciate, but which is far more than a compensation for all the trials which the Christian endures.

As poor - The idea is, we are poor, yet in our poverty we endeavor "to give no offence, and to commend ourselves as the ministers of God." This would be done by their patience and resignation; by their entire freedom from everything dishonest and dishonorable, and by their readiness, when necessary. to labor for their own support. There is no doubt that the apostles were poor; compare Acts 3:6. The little property which some of them had, had all been forsaken in order that they might follow the Saviour, and go

and preach his gospel. And there is as little doubt that the mass of ministers are still poor, and that, God designs and desires that they should be. It is in such circumstances that he designs they should illustrate the beauty and the sustaining power of religion, and be examples to the world.

Yet making many rich - On the meaning of the word rich see the note, Romans 2:4. Here the apostle means that he and his fellow-laborers, though poor themselves, were the instruments of conferring durable and most valuable possessions on many persons. They had bestowed on them the true riches. They had been the means of investing them with treasures infinitely more valuable than any which kings and princes could bestow. They to whom they ministered were made partakers of the treasure where the moth doth not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

As having nothing - Being utterly destitute. Having no property. This was true, doubtless, in a literal sense, of most of the apostles. "And yet possessing all things." That is:

(1) Possessing a portion of all things that may be necessary for our welfare, as far as our heavenly Father shall deem to be necessary for us.

(2) possessing an interest in all things, so that we can enjoy them. We can derive pleasure from the works of God - the heavens, the earth, the hills, the streams, the cattle on the mountains or in the vales, as the works of God. We have a possession in them so that we can enjoy them as his works, and can say, "Our Father made them all." They are given to man to enjoy. They are a part of the inheritance of man. And though we cannot call them our own in the legal sense, yet we can call them ours in the sense that we can derive pleasure from their contemplation, and see in them the proofs of the wisdom and the goodness of God. The child of God that looks upon the hills and vales; upon an extensive and beautiful farm or landscape, may derive more pleasure from the contemplation of them as the work of God and his gift to people, than the real owner does, if irreligious, from contemplating all this as his own. And so far as mere happiness is concerned, the friend of God who sees in all this the proofs of God's beneficence and wisdom, may have a more valuable possession in those things than he who holds the title-deeds.

(3) Heirs of all things. We have a title to immortal life - a promised part in all that the universe can furnish that can make us happy.

(4) in the possession of pardon and peace; of the friendship of God and the knowledge of the Redeemer, we have the possession of all things. This comprises all. He that has this, what need has he of more? This meets all the desires; satisfies the soul; makes the man happy and blessed. He that has God for his portion, may be said to have all things, for he is "all in all." He that has the Redeemer for his friend has all things that he needs, for "he that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32.

Verse 11

O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you - We speak freely, and fully. This is an affectionate address to them, and has reference to what he had just said. It means that, when the heart was full on the subject, words would flow freely, and that he had given vent to the fervid language which he had just used because his heart was full. He loved them; he felt deeply; and he spoke to them with the utmost freedom of what he had thought, and purposed, and done.

Our heart is enlarged - We have deep feelings, which naturally vent themselves in fervent and glowing language. The main idea here is, that he had a strong affection for them; a heart which embraced and loved them all, and which expressed itself in the language of deep emotion. He had loved them so that he was willing to be reproached, and to be persecuted, and to be poor, and to have his name cast out as evil. "I cannot be silent. I conceal or dissemble nothing. I am full of ardent attachment, and that naturally vents itself in the strong language which I have used." True attachment will find means of expressing itself. A heart full of love will give vent to its feelings. There will be no dissembling and hypocrisy there. And if a minister loves the souls of his people he will pour out the affections of his heart in strong and glowing language.

Verse 12

Ye are not straitened in us - That is, you do not possess a narrow or contracted place in our affections. We love you fully, ardently, and are ready to do all that can be done for your welfare. There is no lack of room in our affections toward you. It is not narrow, confined, pent up. It is ample and free.

But ye are straitened in your own bowels - That is, in the affections of your hearts. The word used here (σπλάγχνα splangchna) commonly means in the Bible the tender affections. The Greek word properly denotes the upper viscera; the heart, the lungs, the liver. It is applied by Greek writers to denote those parts of victims which were eaten during or after the sacrifice - Robinson (Lexicon). Hence, it is applied to the heart, as the seat of the emotions and passions; and especially the gentler emotions, the tender affections, compassion, pity, love, etc. Our word "bowels" is applied usually to the lower viscera, and by no means expresses the idea of the word which is used in Greek. The idea here is, that they were straitened, or were confined in their affections for him. It is the language of reproof, meaning that he had not received from them the demonstrations of attachment which he had a right to expect, and which was a fair and proportionate return for the love bestowed on them. Probably he refers to the fact that they had formed parties; had admitted false teachers; and had not received his instructions as implicitly and as kindly as they ought to have done.

Verse 13

Now for a recompence in the same - "By way of recompence, open your hearts in the same manner toward me as I have done toward you. It is all the reward or compensation which I ask of you; all the return which I desire. I do not ask silver or gold, or any earthly possessions. I ask only a return of love, and a devotedness to the cause which I love, and which I endeavor to promote."

I speak as unto my children - I speak as a parent addressing his children. I sustain toward you the relation of a spiritual father, and I have a right to require and expect a return of affection.

Be ye also enlarged - Be not straitened in your affections. Love me as I love you. Give to me the same proofs of attachment which I have given you. The idea in this verse is, that the only compensation or remuneration which he expected for all the love which he had shown them, and for all his toils and self-denials in their behalf 2 Corinthians 6:4-5, was, that they would love him, and yield obedience to the laws of the gospel requiring them to be separate from the world, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. One ground of the claim which he had to their affection was, that he sustained toward them the relation of a father, and that he had a right to require and to expect such a return of love. The Syriac renders it well: "Enlarge your love toward me."

Tyndale renders it: “I speak unto you as unto children, which have like reward with us; stretch yourselves therefore out; bear not the yoke with unbelievers.”

Verse 14

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers - This is closely connected in sense with the previous verse. The apostle is there stating the nature of the remuneration or recompence which he asks for all the love which he had shown to them. He here says, that one mode of remuneration would be to yield obedience to his commands, and to separate themselves from all improper alliance with unbelievers. “Make me this return for my love. Love me as a proof of your affection, be not improperly united with unbelievers. Listen to me as a father addressing his children, and secure your own happiness and piety by not being unequally yoked with those who are not Christians.” The word which is used here (ἑτεροζυγέω heterozugeō) means properly, to bear a different yoke, to be yoked heterogeneously - Robinson (Lexicon). It is applied to the custom of yoking animals of different kinds together (Passow); and as used here means not to mingle together, or be united with unbelievers.

It is implied in the use of the word that there is a dissimilarity between believers and unbelievers so great that it is as improper for them to mingle together as it is to yoke animals of different kinds and species. The ground of the injunction is, that there is a difference between Christians and those who are not, so great as to render such unions improper and injurious. The direction here refers doubtless to all kinds of improper connections with those who were unbelievers. It has been usually supposed by commentators to refer particularly to marriage. But there is no reason for confining it to marriage. It doubtless includes that, but it may as well refer to any other intimate connection, or to intimate friendships, or to participation in their amusements and employments, as to marriage. The radical idea is, that they were to abstain from all connections with unbelievers - with infidels, and pagans, and those who were not Christians, which would identify them with them; or they were to have no connection with them in anything as unbelievers, pagans, or infidels; they were to partake with them in nothing that was special to them as such.

They were to have no part with them in their paganism unbelief, and idolatry, and infidelity; they were not to be united with them in any way or

sense where it would necessarily be understood that they were partakers with them in those things. This is evidently the principle here laid down, and this principle is as applicable now as it was then. In the remainder of this verse and the following verses 2 Corinthians 6:15-16, he states reasons why they should have no such contact. There is no principle of Christianity that is more important than that which is here stated by the apostle; and none in which Christians are more in danger of erring, or in which they have more difficulty in determining the exact rule which they are to follow. The questions which arise are very important. Are we to have no contact with the people of the world? Are we cut loose from all our friends who are not Christians? Are we to become monks, and live a recluse and unsocial life? Are we never to mingle with the people of the world in business, in innocent recreation, or in the duties of citizens, and as neighbors and friends? It is important, therefore, in the highest degree, to endeavor to ascertain what are the principles on which the New Testament requires us to act in this matter. And in order to a correct understanding of this, the following principles may be suggested:

I. There is a large field of action, pursuit, principle, and thought, over which infidelity, sin, paganism, and the world as such, have the entire control. It is wholly without the range of Christian law, and stands opposed to Christian law. It pertains to a different kingdom; is conducted by different principles, and tends to destroy and annihilate the kingdom of Christ. It cannot be reconciled with Christian principle, and cannot be conformed to but in entire violation of the influence of religion. Here the prohibition of the New Testament is absolute and entire. Christians are not to mingle with the people of the world in these things; and are not to partake of them. This prohibition, it is supposed, extends to the following, among other things:

(1) To idolatry. This was plain. On no account or pretence were the early Christians to partake of that, or to countenance it. In primitive times, during the Roman persecutions, all that was asked was that they should cast a little incense on the altar of a pagan god. They refused to do it, and because they refused to do it, thousands perished as martyrs. They judged rightly; and the world has approved their cause.

(2) sin, vice, licentiousness. This is also plain. Christians are in no way to patronise them, or to lend their influence to them, or to promote them by their name, their presence, or their property. “Neither be partakers of other people‘s sins;” 1 Timothy 5:22; 2 John 1:11.

(3) arts and acts of dishonesty, deception, and fraud in traffic and trade. Here the prohibition also must be absolute. No Christian can have a right to enter into partnership with another where the business is to be conducted on dishonest and unchristian principles, or where it shall lead to the violation of any of the laws of God. If it involves deception and fraud in the principles on which it is conducted; if it spreads ruin and poverty - as the distilling and vending of ardent spirits does; if it leads to the necessary violation of the Christian Sabbath, then the case is plain. A Christian is to have no “fellowship with such unfruitful works of darkness, but is rather to reprove them;” Ephesians 5:11.

(4) the amusements and pleasures that are entirely worldly, and sinful in their nature; that are wholly under worldly influence, and which cannot be brought under Christian principles. Nearly all amusements are of this description. The true principle here seems to be, that if a Christian in such a place is expected to lay aside his Christian principles, and if it would be deemed indecorous and improper for him to introduce the subject of religion, or if religion would be regarded is entirely inconsistent with the nature of the amusement then he is not to be found there. The world reigns there, and if the principles of his Lord and Master would be excluded, he should not be there. This applies of course to the theater, the circus, the ballroom, and to large and splendid parties of pleasure. We are not to associate with idolaters in their idolatry; nor with the licentious in their licentiousness; nor with the infidel in his infidelity; nor with the proud in their pride; nor with the frivolous in their gaiety; nor with the friends of the theater, or the ballroom, or the circus in their attachment to these places and pursuits. And whatever other connection we are to have with them as neighbors, citizens, or members of our families, we are not to participate with them in these things. Thus far all seems to be clear; and the rule is a plain one whether it applies to marriage, or to business, or to religion, or to pleasure; compare note, 1 Corinthians 5:10.

II. There is a large field of action, thought, and plan which may be said to be common with the Christian and the world; that is, where the Christian is not expected to abandon his own principles, and where there will be, or need be, no compromise of the sternest views of truth, or the most upright, serious, and holy conduct. He may carry his principles with him; may always manifest them if necessary; and may even commend them to others. A few of these may be referred to.

(1) Commercial transactions and professional engagements that are conducted on honest and upright principles, even when those with whom we act are not Christians.

(2) Literary and scientific pursuits, which never, when pursued with a right spirit, interfere with the principles of Christianity, and never are contrary to it.

(3) the love and affection which are due to relatives and friends. Nothing in the Bible assuredly will prohibit a pious son from uniting with one who is not pious in supporting an aged and infirm parent, or a much loved and affectionate sister. The same remark is true also respecting the duty which a wife owes to a husband, a husband to a wife, or a parent to a child, though one of them should not be a Christian. And the same observation is true also of neighbors, who are not to be prohibited from uniting as neighbors in social contact, and in acts of common kindness and charity, though all not Christians.

(4) as citizens. We owe duties to our country, and a Christian need not refuse to act with others in the elective franchise, or in making or administering the laws. Here, however, it is clear that he is not at liberty to violate the laws and the principles of the Bible. He cannot be at liberty to unite with them in political schemes that are contrary to the Law of God, or in elevating to office people whom he cannot vote for with a good conscience as qualified for the station.

(5) in plans of public improvement, in schemes that go to the advancement of the public welfare, when the schemes do not violate the laws of God. But if they involve the necessity of violating the Sabbath, or

any of the laws of God, assuredly he cannot consistently participate in them.

(6) in doing good to others. So the Saviour was with sinners; so he ate, and drank, and conversed with them. So we may mingle with them, without partaking of their wicked feelings and plans, so far as we can do them good, and exert over them a holy and saving influence. In all the situations here referred to, and in all the duties growing out of them, the Christian may maintain his principles, and may preserve a good conscience. Indeed the Saviour evidently contemplated that his people would have such contact with the world, and that in it they would do good. But in none of these is there to be any compromise of principle; in none to be any yielding to the opinions and practices that are contrary to the laws of God.

III. There is a large field of action, conduct, and plan, where Christians only will act together. These relate to the special duties of religion - to prayer, Christian fellowship, the ordinances of the gospel, and most of the plans of Christian beneficence. Here the world will not intrude; and here assuredly there will be no necessity of any compromise of Christian principle.

For what fellowship - Paul proceeds here to state reasons why there should be no such improper connection with the world. The main reason, though under various forms, is that there can be no fellowship, no communion, nothing in common between them; and that therefore they should be separate. The word "fellowship" (μέτοχὴ metochē) means partnership, participation. What is there in common; or how can the one partake with the other? The interrogative form here is designed to be emphatic, and to declare in the strongest terms that there can be no such partnership.

Righteousness - Such as you Christians are required to practice; implying that all were to be governed by the stern and uncompromising principles of honesty and justice.

With unrighteousness - Dishonesty, injustice, sin; implying that the world is governed by such principles.

And what communion - (κοινωνία koinōnia). Participation; communion; that which is in common. What is there in common between

light and darkness? What common principle is there of which they both partake? There is none. There is a total and eternal separation.

Light - The emblem of truth, virtue, holiness; see the Matthew 4:16; Matthew 5:16 notes; John 1:4 note; Romans 2:19 note; 2 Corinthians 4:4, 2 Corinthians 4:6 notes. It is implied here that Christians are enlightened, and walk in the light. Their principles are pure and holy - principles of which light is the proper emblem.

Darkness - The emblem of sin, corruption, ignorance; implying that the world to which Paul refers was governed and influenced by these. The idea is, that as there is an entire separation between light and darkness in their nature; as they have nothing in common, so it is and should be, between Christians and sinners. There should be a separation. There can be nothing in common between holiness and sin; and Christians should have nothing to do "with the unfruitful works of darkness:" Ephesians 5:11.

Verse 15

And what concord - (συμφώνησις sumphōnēsis). Sympathy, unison. This word refers properly to the unison or harmony produced by musical instruments, where there is a chord. What accordance, what unison is there; what strings are there which being struck will produce a chord or harmony? The idea is, then, there is as much that is discordant between Christ and Belial as there is between instruments of music that produce only discordant and jarring sounds.

Hath Christ - What is there in common between Christ and Belial, implying that Christians are governed by the principles, and that they follow the example of Christ.

Belial - Βελίαλ Belialor Βελίαρ Beliaras as it is found in some of the late editions. The form Beliar is Syriac. The Hebrew word בליעל beliyaʿalmeans literally without profit; worthlessness; wickedness. It is here evidently applied to Satan. The Syriac translates it "Satan." The idea is, that the persons to whom Paul referred, the pagan, wicked, unbelieving world, were governed by the principles of Satan, and were "taken captive by him at his will" (2 Timothy 2:26 compare John 8:44), and that Christians should be separate from the wicked world, as Christ was separate from all the feelings, purposes, and plans of Satan. He had no participation in them; he formed no union with them; and so it should be with the followers of the one in relation to the followers of the other.

Or what part - (μερὶς meris). Portion, share, participation, fellowship. This word refers usually to a division of an estate; Luke 10:42; Acts 8:21 note; Colossians 1:12 note. There is no participation; nothing in common.

He that believeth - A Christian; a man the characteristic of whom it is that he believes on the Lord Jesus.

With an infidel - A man who does not believe - whether a pagan idolater, a profane man, a scoffer, a philosopher, a man of science, a moral man, or a son or daughter of gaiety. The idea is, that on the subject of religion there is no union; nothing in common; no participation. They are governed by different principles; have different feelings; are looking to different rewards; and are tending to a different destiny. The believer, therefore, should not select his partner in life and his chosen companions and friends from this class, but from those with whom he has sympathy, and with whom he has common feelings and hopes.

Verse 16

And what agreement - (συγκατάθεσις sugkatathesis). Assent, accord, agreement. what putting or laying down together is there? What is there in one that resembles the other?

The temple of God - What has a temple of God to do with idol worship? It is erected for a different purpose, and the worship of idols in it would not be tolerated. It is implied here that Christians are themselves the temple of God, a fact which Paul proceeds immediately to illustrate; and that it is as absurd for them to mingle with the infidel world as it would be to erect the image of a pagan god in the temple of Yahweh. This is strong language, and we cannot but admire the energy and copiousness of the expressions used by Paul, "which cannot," says Bloomfield, "be easily paralleled in the best Classical writers."

With idols - Those objects which God hates, and on which he cannot look but with abhorrence. The sense is, that for Christians to mingle with the sinful world; to partake of their pleasures, pursuits, and follies, is as detestable and hateful in the sight of God as if his temple were profaned by erecting a deformed, and shapeless, and senseless block in it as an object of worship. And, assuredly, if Christians had such a sense of the abomination of mingling with the world, they would feel the obligation to be separate and pure.

For ye are the temple of the living God - see this explained in the notes on 1 Corinthians 3:16-17. The idea is, that as God dwells with his

people, they ought to be separated from a sinful and polluted world.

As God hath said - The words here quoted are taken substantially from Exodus 29:45; Leviticus 26:12; Ezekiel 37:27. They are not literally quoted, but Paul has thrown together the substance of what occurs in several places. The sense, however, is the same as occurs in the places referred to.

I will dwell in them - (ἐνοικήτω enoikētō). I will take up my indwelling in them. There is an allusion doubtless to the fact that he would be present among his people by the Sechinah, or the visible symbol of his presence; see the note on 1 Corinthians 3:16-17. It implies, when used with reference to Christians, that the Holy Spirit would abide with them, and that the blessing of God would attend them; see Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 1:14.

And walk in them - That is, I will walk among them. I will be one of their number. He was present among the Jews by the public manifestation of his presence by a symbol; he is present with Christians by the presence and guidance of his Holy Spirit.

And I will be their God - Not only the God whom they worship, but the God who will protect and bless them. I will take them under my special protection, and they shall enjoy my favor. This is certainly as true of Christians as it was of the Jews, and Paul has not departed from the spirit of the promise in applying it to the Christian character. His object in quoting these passages is, to impress on Christians the solemnity and importance of the truth that God dwelt among them and with them; that they were under his care and protection; that they belonged to him, and that they therefore should be separate from the world.

Verse 17

Wherefore - Since you are a special people. Since God, the holy and blessed God, dwells with you and among you.

Come out from among them - That is, from among idolaters and unbelievers; from a frivolous and vicious world. These words are taken, by a slight change, from Isaiah 3:11. They are there applied to the Jews in Babylon, and are a solemn call which God makes on them to leave the place of their exile, to come out from among the idolaters of that city and return to their own land; see my note on that place. Babylon, in the Scriptures, is the emblem of whatever is proud, arrogant, wicked, and opposed to God; and Paul, therefore, applies the words here with great beauty and force to

illustrate the duty of Christians in separating themselves from a vain, idolatrous, and wicked world.

And be ye separate - Separate from the world, and all its corrupting influences.

Saith the Lord - see Isaiah 3:11. Paul does not use this language as if it had original reference to Christians, but he applies it as containing an important principle that was applicable to the case which he was considering, or as language that would appropriately express the idea which he wished to convey. The language of the Old Testament is often used in this manner by the writers of the New.

And touch not the unclean thing - In Isaiah, "touch no unclean thing;" that is, they were to be pure, and to have no connection with idolatry in any of its forms. So Christians were to avoid all unholy contact with a vain and polluted world. The sense is, "Have no close connection with an idolater, or an unholy person. Be pure; and feel that you belong to a community that is under its own laws, and that is to be distinguished in moral purity from all the rest of the world."

And I will receive you - That is, I will receive and recognize you as my friends and my adopted children. This could not be done until they were separated from an idolatrous and wicked world. The fact of their being received by God, and recognized as his children, depended on their coming out from the world. These words with the verses following, though used evidently somewhat in the form of a quotation, yet are not to be found in any single place in the Old Testament In 2 Samuel 7:14, God says of Solomon, "I will be his Father, and he shall be my son." In Jeremiah 31:9, God says, "For I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born." It is probable that Paul had such passages in his eye, yet he doubtless designed rather to express the general sense of the promises of the Old Testament than to quote any single passage. Or why may it not be that we should regard Paul here himself as speaking as an inspired man directly, and making a promise then first communicated immediately from the Lord? Paul was inspired as well as the prophets; and it may be that he meant to communicate a promise directly from God. Grotius supposes that it was not taken from any particular place in the Old Testament, but was a part of a hymn that was in use among the Hebrews.

Verse 18

And will be a Father unto you - A father is the protector, counselor, and guide of his children. He instructs them, provides for them, and counsels them in time of perplexity. No relation is more tender than this. In accordance with this, God says, that he will be to his people their protector, counsellor, guide, and friend. He will cherish toward them the feeling of a father; he will provide for them, he will acknowledge them as his children. No higher honor can be conferred on mortals than to be adopted into the family of God, and to be permitted to call the Most High our Father. No rank is so elevated as that of being the sons and the daughters of the Lord Almighty. Yet this is the common appellation by which God addresses his people; and the most humble in rank, the most poor and ignorant of his friends on earth, the most despised among people, may reflect that they are the children of the ever-living God, and have the Maker of the heavens and the earth as their Father and their eternal Friend. How poor are all the honors of the world compared with this!

The Lord Almighty - The word used here (παντοκράτωρ pantokratōr) occurs nowhere except in this place and in the book of Revelation; Revelation 1:8; Revelation 4:8; Revelation 11:17; Revelation 15:3; Revelation 16:7, Revelation 16:14; Revelation 19:6, Revelation 19:16; Revelation 21:22. It means one who has all power; and is applied to God in contradistinction from idols that are weak and powerless. God is able to protect his people, and they who put their trust in him shall never be confounded. What has he to fear who has a friend of almighty power?

Remarks

1. It is right and proper to exhort Christians not to receive the grace of God in vain, 2 Corinthians 6:1. Even they sometimes abuse their privileges; become neglectful of the mercy of God; undervalue the truths of religion, and do not make as much as they should do of the glorious truths that are suited to sanctify and to save. Every Christian should endeavor to make just as much as possible of his privileges, and to become just as eminent as he can possibly be in his Christian profession.

2. The benefits of salvation to this world come through the intercession of Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 6:2. It is because God is pleased to hear him; because he calls on God in an accepted time that we have any hope of pardon. The sinner enjoys no offer of mercy, and no possibility of pardon except what he owes to Jesus Christ. Should he cease to plead for people,

the offers of salvation would be withdrawn, and the race would perish forever.

3. The world is under a dispensation of mercy, 2 Corinthians 6:2. People may be saved: God is willing to show compassion, and to rescue them from ruin.

4. How important is the present moment! 2 Corinthians 6:2. How important is each moment! It may be the last period of mercy. No sinner can calculate with any certainty on another instant of time. God holds his breath, and with, infinite ease he can remove him to eternity. Eternal results hang on the present - the fleeting moment, and yet how unconcerned are the mass of people about their present condition; how unanxious about what may possibly or probably occur the next moment! Now, the sinner may be pardoned. The next moment he may be beyond the reach of forgiveness. This instant, the bliss of heaven is offered him; the next, he may be solemnly excluded from hope and heaven!

5. The ministers of the gospel should give no occasion of offence to any one, 2 Corinthians 6:3. On each one of them depends a portion of the honor of the ministry in this world, and of the honor of Jesus Christ among people. How solemn is this responsibility! How pure, and holy, and unblameable should they be!

6. Ministers and all Christians should be willing to suffer in the cause of the Redeemer, 2 Corinthians 6:4-5. If the early ministers and other Christians were called to endure the pains of imprisonment and persecution for the honor of the gospel, assuredly we should be willing also to suffer. Why should there be anymore reason for their suffering than for ours?

7. We see what our religion has cost, 2 Corinthians 6:4-5. It has come down to us through suffering. All the privileges that we enjoy have been the fruit of toil, and blood, and tears, and sighs. The best blood in human veins has flowed to procure these blessings; the holiest people on earth have wept, and been scourged, and tortured, that we might possess these privileges. What thanks should we give to God for all this! How highly should we prize the religion that has cost so much!

8. In trial we should evince such a spirit as not to dishonor, but to honor our religion, 2 Corinthians 6:3-5. This is as incumbent on all Christians as it is on ministers of the gospel. It is in such scenes that the reality of religion is tested. It is then that its power is seen. It is then that its value may be known. Christians and Christian ministers often do good in circumstances of poverty, persecution, and sickness, which they never do in health, and in popular favor, and in prosperity. And God often places his people in trial that they may do good then, expecting that they will accomplish more then than they could in prosperous circumstances They whose aim it is to do good have often occasion to bless God that they were subjected to trial. Bunyan wrote the "Pilgrim's Progress" in a dungeon; and almost all the works of Baxter were written when he was suffering under persecution, and forbidden to preach the gospel. The devil is often foiled in this way. He persecutes and opposes Christians; and on the rack and at the stake they do most to destroy his kingdom; he throws them into dungeons, and they make books which go down even to the millennium, making successful war on the empire of darkness. Christians, therefore, should esteem it a privilege to be permitted to suffer on account of Christ; Philemon 1:29.

9. If ministers and other Christians do any good they must be pure, 2 Corinthians 6:6-7. The gospel is to be commended by pureness, and knowledge, and the word of truth, and the armor of righteousness. It is in this way that they are to meet opposition; in this way that they are to propagate their sentiments. No man need expect to do good in the ministry or as a private Christian, who is not a holy man. No man who is a holy man can help doing good. It will be a matter of course that he will shed a healthful moral influence around him. And he will no more live without effect than the sun sheds its steady beams on the earth without effect. His influence may be very noiseless and still, like the sunbeams or the dew, but it will be felt in the world. Wicked people can resist anything else better than they can a holy example. They can make a mock of preaching; they can deride exhortation; they can throw away a tract; they can burn the Bible; but what can they do against a holy example? No more than they can against the vivifying and enlightening beams of the sun; and a man who leads a holy life cannot help doing good, and cannot be prevented from doing good.

10. They who are Christians must expect to meet with much dishonor, and to be subjected often to the influence of evil report, 2 Corinthians 6:8. The world is unfriendly to religion, and its friends must never be surprised if their motives are impeached, and their names calumniated.

11. Especially is this the case with ministers, 2 Corinthians 6:8. They should make up their minds to it, and they should not suppose that any strange thing had happened to them if they are called thus to suffer.

12. They who are about to make a profession of religion, and they who are about entering on the work of the ministry, or who are agitating the question whether they should be ministers, should ask themselves whether they are prepared for this. They should count the cost; nor should they either make a profession of religion or think of the ministry as a profession, unless they are willing to meet with dishonor, and to go through evil report; to be poor 2 Corinthians 6:10, and to be despised and persecuted, or to die in the cause which they embrace.

13. Religion has power to sustain the soul in trials, 2 Corinthians 6:10. Why should he be sad who has occasion to rejoice always? Why should he deem himself poor, though he has slender earthly possessions, who is able to make many rich? Why should he be melancholy as if he had nothing, who has Christ as his portion, and who is an heir of all things? Let not the poor, who are rich in faith, despond as though they had nothing. They have a treasure which gold cannot purchase, and which will be of infinite value when all other treasure fails. He that has an everlasting inheritance in heaven cannot be called a poor man. And he that can look to such an inheritance should not be unwilling to part with his earthly possessions. Those who seem to be most wealthy are often the poorest of mortals; and those who seem to be poor, or who are in humble circumstances, often have an enjoyment of even this world which is unknown in the palaces and at the tables of the great. They look on all things as the work of their Father; and in their humble dwellings, and with their humble fare, they have an enjoyment of the bounties of their heavenly Benefactor, which is not experienced often in the dwellings of the great and the rich.

14. A people should render to a minister and a pastor a return of love and confidence that shall be proportionate to the love which is shown to them, 2 Corinthians 6:12. This is but a reasonable and fair requital, and this is necessary not only to the comfort, but to the success of a minister. What good can he do unless he has the affections and confidence of his people?

15. The compensation or recompence which a minister has a right to expect and require for arduous toil is, that his people should be "enlarged" in love toward him, and that they should yield themselves to the laws of the Redeemer, and be separate from the world, 2 Corinthians 6:13. And this is an ample reward. It is what he seeks, what he prays for, what he most ardently desires. If he is worthy of his office, he will seek not theirs but them 2 Corinthians 12:14, and he will be satisfied for all his toils if he sees them walking in the truth 3 John 1:4, and showing in their lives the pure and elevated principles of the gospel which they profess to love.

16. The welfare of religion depends on the fact that Christians should be separate from a vain, and frivolous, and wicked world, 2 Corinthians 6:14-16. Why should they partake of those things in which they can, if Christians, have nothing in common? Why attempt to mingle light with darkness? to form a compact between Christ and Belial? or to set up a polluted idol in the temple of the living God? The truth is, there are great and eternal principles in the gospel which should not be surrendered, and which cannot be broken down. Christ intended to set up a kingdom that should be unlike the kingdoms of this world. And he designed that his people should be governed by different principles from the people of this world.

17. They who are about to make a profession of religion should resolve to separate themselves from the world, 2 Corinthians 6:14-15. Religion cannot exist where there is no such separation, and they who are unwilling to forsake infidel companions and the frivolous amusements and vanities of life, and to find their chosen friends and pleasures among the people of God, can have no evidence that they are Christians. The world with all its wickedness and its frivolous pleasures must be forsaken, and there must be an effectual line drawn between the friends of God and the friends of sin.

Let us, then, who profess to be the friends of the Redeemer remember how pure and holy we should be. It should not be indeed with the spirit of the Pharisee; it should not be with a spirit that will lead us to say, "stand by, for I am holier than thou;" but it should be, while we discharge all our duties to our impenitent friends, and while in all our contacts with the world we should be honest and true, and while we do not refuse to mingle with them as neighbors and citizens as far as we can without compromising Christian principles, still our chosen friends and our dearest friendships should be with the people of God. For, his friends should be our friends; our happiness should be with them, and the world should see that we prefer the friends of the Redeemer to the friends of gaiety, ambition, and sin.

18. Christians are the holy temple of God, 2 Corinthians 6:16. How pure should they be! How free should they be from sin! How careful to maintain consciences void of offence!

19. What an inestimable privilege it is to be a Christian! 2 Corinthians 6:18; to be a child of God! to feel that he is a Father and a Friend! to feel that though we may be forsaken by all others; though poor and despised, yet there is one who never forsakes; one who never forgets that he has sons and daughters dependent on him, and who need his constant care. Compared with this, how small the honor of being permitted to call the rich our friends, or to be regarded as the sons or daughters of nobles and of princes! Let the Christian then most highly prize his privileges, and feel that he is raised above all the elevations of rank and honor which this world can bestow. All these shall fade away, and the highest and the lowest shall meet on the same level in the grave, and alike return to dust. But the elevation of the child of God shall only begin to be visible and appreciated when all other honors fade away.

20. Let all seek to become the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Let us aspire to this rather than to earthly honors; let us seek this rather than to be numbered with the rich and the great. All cannot be honored in this world, and few are they who can be regarded as belonging to elevated ranks here. But all may be the children of the living God, and be permitted to call the Lord Almighty their Father and their Friend. O! if people could as easily be permitted to call themselves the sons of monarchs and princes; if they

could as easily be admitted to the palaces of the great and sit down at their tables as they can enter heaven, how greedily would they embrace it! And yet how poor and paltry would be such honor and pleasure compared with that of feeling that we are the adopted children of the great and the eternal God!

2 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Introduction

The first verse of this chapter 2 Corinthians 7:2-3, he entreats the Corinthians, in accordance with the wish which he had expressed in 2 Corinthians 6:13, to receive him as a teacher and a spiritual father; as a faithful apostle of the Lord Jesus. To induce them to do this, he assures them that he had given them, at no time, any occasion of offence. He had injured no man; he had wronged no man. Possibly some might suppose that he had injured them by the sternness of his requirements in forbidding them to contract friendships and alliances with infidels; or in the case of discipline in regard to the incestuous person. But he assures them that all his commands had been the fruit of most tender love for them, and that he was ready to live and die with them.

The remainder of the chapter 2 Corinthians 7:4-15 is occupied mainly in stating the joy which he had at the evidence which they had given that they were ready to obey his commands. He says, therefore 2 Corinthians 7:4, that he was full of comfort and joy; and that in all his tribulation, the evidence of their obedience had given him great and unfeigned satisfaction. In order to show them the extent of his joy, he gives a pathetic description of the anxiety of mind which he had on the subject; his troubles in Macedonia, and particularly his distress on not meeting with Titus as he had expected, 2 Corinthians 7:5. But this distress had been relieved by his coming, and by the evidence which was furnished through him that they were ready to yield obedience to his commands, 2 Corinthians 7:6-7. This joy was greatly increased by his hearing from Titus the effect which his former Epistle to them had produced, 2 Corinthians 7:8-13.

He had felt deep anxiety in regard to that. He had even regretted, it would seem 2 Corinthians 7:8, that he had sent it. He had been deeply pained at the necessity of giving them pain, 2 Corinthians 7:8. But the effect had been all that he had desired; and when he learned from Titus the effect which it had produced - the deep repentance which they had evinced, and the thorough reformation which had occurred 2 Corinthians 7:9-11, he had great occasion to rejoice that he had sent the Epistle to them. This new and distinguished instance of their obedience had given him great joy, and confirmed him in the proof that they were truly attached to him. The apostle

adds, in the conclusion of the chapter, that his joy was greatly increased by the joy which Titus manifested. and his entire satisfaction in the conduct of the Corinthians and the treatment which he had received from them 2 Corinthians 7:13, so that though he, Paul, had often had occasion to speak in the kindest terms of the Corinthians, all that he had ever said in their favor Titus had realized in his own case 2 Corinthians 7:14, and the affection of Titus for them had been greatly increased by his visit to them, 2 Corinthians 7:15. The whole chapter, therefore, is eminently adapted to produce good feeling in the minds of the Corinthians toward the apostle, and to strengthen the bonds of their mutual attachment.

Verse 1

Having therefore these promises - The promises referred to in 2 Corinthians 6:17-18; the promise that God would be a Father, a protector, and a friend The idea is, that as we have a promise that God would dwell in us, that he would be our God, that he would be to us a Father, we should remove from us whatever is offensive in his sight, and become perfectly holy.

Let us cleanse ourselves - Let us purify ourselves. Paul was not afraid to bring into view the agency of Christians themselves in the work of salvation. He, therefore, says, ‹let us purify ourselves,‘ as if Christians had much to do; as if their own agency was to be employed; and as if their purifying was dependent on their own efforts. While it is true that all purifying influence and all holiness proceeds from God, it is also true that the effect of all the influences of the Holy Spirit is to excite us to diligence to purify our own hearts, and to urge us to make strenuous efforts to overcome our own sins. He who expects to be made pure without any effort of his own, will never become pure; and he who ever becomes holy will become so in consequence of strenuous efforts to resist the evil of his own heart, and to become like God. The argument here is, that we have the promises of God to aid us. We do not go about the work in our own strength. It is not a work in which we are to have no aid. But it is a work which God desires, and where he will give us all the aid which we need.

From all filthiness of the flesh - The noun used here (μολυσμὸς molusmos) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The verb occurs in 1 Corinthians 8:7; Revelation 3:4; Revelation 14:4, and means to stain, defile, pollute, as a garment; and the word used here means a soiling, hence,

defilement, pollution, and refers to the defiling and corrupting influence of fleshly desires and carnal appetites. The filthiness of the flesh here denotes evidently the gross and corrupt appetites and passions of the body, including all such actions of all kinds as are inconsistent with the virtue and purity with which the body, regarded as the temple of the Holy Spirit, should be kept holy - all such passions and appetites as the Holy Spirit of God would not produce.

And spirit - By "filthiness of the spirit," the apostle means, probably, all the thoughts or mental associations that defile the man. Thus, the Saviour Matthew 15:19 speaks of evil thoughts, etc. that proceed out of the heart, and that pollute the man. And probably Paul here includes all the sins and passions which pertain particularly to mind or to the soul rather than to carnal appetites, such as the desire of revenge, pride, avarice, ambition, etc. These are in themselves as polluting and defiling as the gross sensual pleasures. They stand as much in the way of sanctification, they are as offensive to God, and they prove as certainly that the heart is depraved as the grossest sensual passions. The main difference is, that they are more decent in the external appearance; they can be better concealed; they are usually indulged by a more elevated class in society; but they are not the less offensive to God. It may be added, also, that they are often conjoined in the same person; and that the man who is defiled in his "spirit" is often a man most corrupt and sensual in his" flesh." Sin sweeps with a desolating influence through the whole frame, and it usually leaves no part unaffected, though some part may be more deeply corrupted than others.

Perfecting - This word (ἐπιτελοῦντες epitelountes) means properly to bring to an end, to finish, complete. The idea here is, that of carrying it out to the completion. Holiness had been commenced in the heart, and the exhortation of the apostle is, that they should make every effort that it might be complete in all its parts. He does not say that this work of perfection had ever been accomplished - nor does he say that it had not been. He only urges the obligation to make an effort to be entirely holy; and this obligation is not affected by the inquiry whether anyone has been or has not been perfect. It is an obligation which results from the nature of the Law of God and his unchangeable claims on the soul. The fact that no one has been perfect does not relax the claim; the fact that no one will be in this life does not weaken the obligation. It proves only the deep and dreadful depravity of the human heart, and should humble us under the stubbornness of guilt.

The obligation to be perfect is one that is unchangeable and eternal; see Matthew 5:48; 1 Peter 1:15. Tyndale renders this: "and grow up to full holiness in the fear, of God." The unceasing and steady aim of every Christian should be perfection - perfection in all things - in the love of God, of Christ, of man; perfection of heart, and feeling, and emotion; perfection in his words, and plans, and dealings with people; perfection in his prayers, and in his submission to the will of God. No man can be a Christian who does not sincerely desire it. and who does not constantly aim at it. No man is a friend of God who can acquiesce in a state of sin, and who is satisfied and contented that he is not as holy as God is holy. And any man who has no desire to be perfect as God is, and who does not make it his daily and constant aim to be as perfect as God, may set it down as demonstrably certain that he has no true religion, How can a man be a Christian who is willing to acquiesce in a state of sin, and who does not desire to be just like his Master and Lord?

In the fear of God - Out of fear and reverence of God. From a regard to his commands, and a reverence for his name. The idea seems to be, that we are always in the presence of God; we are professedly under His Law; and we should be awed and restrained by a sense of his presence from the commission of sin, and from indulgence in the pollutions of the flesh and spirit. There are many sins that the presence of a child will restrain a man from committing; and how should the conscious presence of a holy God keep us from sin! If the fear of man or of a child will restrain us, and make us attempt to be holy and pure, how should the fear of the all-present and the all-seeing God keep us not only from outward sins, but from polluted thoughts and unholy desires!

Verse 2

Receive us - Tyndale renders this: "understand us." The word used here (χωρήσατε chōrēsate) means properly, give space, place, or room; and it means here evidently, make place or room for us in your affections; that is, admit or receive us as your friends. It is an earnest entreaty that they would do what he had exhorted them to do in 2 Corinthians 6:13; see the note on that verse. From that he had digressed in the close of the last chapter. He here returns to the subject and asks an interest in their affections and their love.

We have wronged no man - We have done injustice to no man. This is given as a reason why they should admit him to their full confidence and

affection. It is not improbable that he had been charged with injuring the incestuous person by the severe discipline which he had found it necessary to inflict on him; note, 1 Corinthians 5:5. This charge would not improbably be brought against him by the false teachers in Corinth. But Paul here says, that whatever was the severity of the discipline, he was conscious of having done injury to no member of that church. It is possible, however, that he does not here refer to any such charge, but that he says in general that he had done no injury, and that there was no reason why they should not receive him to their entire confidence. It argues great consciousness of integrity when a man who has spent a considerable time, as Paul had, with others, is able to say that he had wronged no man in any way. Paul could not have made this solemn declaration unless he was certain he had lived a very blameless life; compare Acts 20:33.

We have corrupted no man - This means that he had corrupted no man in his morals, either by his precept or his example. The word (φθείρω phtheirō) means in general to bring into a worse state or condition, and is very often applied to morals. The idea is, here, that Paul had not by his precept or example made any man the worse. He had not corrupted his principles or his habits, or led him into sin.

We have defrauded no man - We have taken no man‘s property by cunning, by trick, or by deception. The word πλεονεκτέω pleonekteōmeans literally to have more than another, and then to take advantage, to seek unlawful gain, to circumvent, defraud, deceive. The idea is, that Paul had taken advantage of no circumstances to extort money from them, to overreach them, or to cheat them. It is the conviction of a man who was conscious that he had lived honestly, and who could appeal to them all as full proof that his life among them had been blameless.

Verse 3

I speak not this to condemn you - I do not speak this with any desire to reproach you. I do not complain of you for the purpose of condemning, or because I have a desire to find fault, though I am compelled to speak in some respect of your lack of affection and liberality toward me. It is not because I have no love for you, and wish to have occasion to use words implying complaint and condemnation.

For I have said before - 2 Corinthians 7:11-12.

That ye are in our hearts - That is, we are so much attached to you; or you have such a place in our affections.

To die and live with you - If it were the will of God, we would be glad to spend our lives among you, and to die with you; an expression denoting most tender attachment. A similar well-known expression occurs in Horace:

Tecum vivere amem. tecum obeam libens.

Odes, B. III. IX. 24.

With the world I live, with the world I die.

This was an expression of the tenderest attachment. It was true that the Corinthians had not shown themselves remarkably worthy of the affections of Paul, but from the beginning he had felt toward them the tenderest attachment. And if it had been the will of God that he should cease to travel, and to expose himself to perils by sea and land to spread the knowledge of the Saviour, he would gladly have confined his labors to them, and there have ended his days.

Verse 4

Great is my boldness of speech toward you - This verse seems designed to soften the apparent harshness of what he had said 2 Corinthians 6:12, when he intimated that there was a lack of love in them toward him (Bloomfield), as well as to refer to the plainness which he had used all along in his letters to them. He says, therefore, that he speaks freely; he speaks as a friend; he speaks with the utmost openness and frankness; he conceals nothing from them. He speaks freely of their faults, and he speaks freely of his love to them; and he as frankly commends them and praises them. It is the open, undisguised language of a friend, when he throws open his whole soul and conceals nothing.

Great is my glorying of you - I have great occasion to commend and praise you, and I do it freely. He refers here to the fact that he had boasted of their liberality in regard to the proposed collection for the poor saints of Judea 2 Corinthians 9:4; that he had formerly boasted much of them to Titus, and of their readiness to obey his commands 2 Corinthians 7:14; and that now he had had abundant evidence, by what he had heard from Titus (verses 5ff), that they were disposed to yield to his commands, and obey his injunctions. He had probably often had occasion to boast of their favorable regard for him.

I am filled with comfort - That is, by the evidence which I have received of your readiness to obey me.

I am exceeding joyful - I am overjoyed. The word used here occurs nowhere else in the New Testament except in Romans 5:20. It is not found

in the classic writers; and is a word which Paul evidently compounded (from ὑπὲρ huperand περισσεύω perisseuō), and means to superabound over, to superabound greatly, or exceedingly. It is a word which would be used only when the heart was full, and when it would be difficult to find words to express its conceptions. Paul's heart was full of joy; and he pours forth his feelings in the most fervid and glowing language. I have joy which cannot be expressed.

In all our tribulation - see the note, 2 Corinthians 1:4.

Verse 5

For when we were come into Macedonia - For the reasons which induced Paul to go into Macedonia; see the notes on 2 Corinthians 1:16; compare the notes, 2 Corinthians 2:12-13.

Our flesh had no rest - We were exceedingly distressed and agitated. We had no rest. The causes of his distress he immediately states.

But we were troubled on every side - In every way. We had no rest in any quarter. We were obliged to enter into harassing labors and strifes there, and we were full of anxiety in regard to you.

Without were fightings - Probably he here refers to fierce opposition, which he met with in prosecuting his work of preaching the gospel. He met there, as he did everywhere, with opposition from Pagans, Jews, and false brethren. Tumults were usually excited wherever he went; and he preached the gospel commonly amidst violent opposition.

Within were fears - Referring probably to the anxiety which he had in regard to the success of the Epistle which he had sent to the church at Corinth. He felt great solicitude on the subject. He had sent Titus there to see what was the state of the church and to witness the effect of his instructions. Titus had not come to him as he had expected, at Troas 2 Corinthians 2:13, and he felt the deepest anxiety in regard to him and to the success of his Epistle. His fears were probably that they would be indisposed to exercise the discipline on the offender; or lest the severity of the discipline required should alienate them from him; or lest the party under the influence of the false teachers should prevail. All was uncertainty, and his mind was filled with the deepest apprehension.

Verse 6

God that comforteth those that are cast down - Whose characteristic is, that be gives consolation to those who are anxious and depressed. All his consolation was in God; and by whatever instrumentality comfort was

administered, he regarded and acknowledged God as the author; see the note, 2 Corinthians 1:4.

By the coming of Titus - To Macedonia. He rejoiced not only in again seeing him, but especially in the intelligence which he brought respecting the success of his Epistle, and the conduct of the church at Corinth.

Verse 7

And not by his coming only - Not merely by the fact that be was restored to me, and that my anxieties in regard to him were now dissipated. It is evident that Paul, not having met with Titus as he had expected, at Troas, had felt much anxiety on his account, perhaps apprehending that he was sick, or that he had died.

But by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you - Titus was satisfied and delighted with his interview with you. He had been kindly treated, and he had seen all the effect produced by the letter which he had desired. He had, therefore, been much comforted by his visit to Corinth, and this was a source of additional joy to Paul. He rejoiced at what he had witnessed among you, and he imparted the same joy to me also. The joy of one friend will diffuse itself through the heart of another. Joy is diffusive, and one Christian cannot well be happy without making others happy also.

When he told us of your earnest desire - Either to rectify what was amiss (Doddridge, Clarke); or to see me - Macknight, Rosenmuller, Bloomfied. It seems to me that the connection requires us to understand it of their desire, their anxiety to comply with his commands. and to reform the abuses which existed in the church, and which had given him so much pain.

Your mourning - Produced by the Epistle. Your deep repentance over the sins which had prevailed in the church.

Your fervent mind toward me - Greek, ‹Your zeal for me.‘ It denotes that they evinced great ardor of attachment to him, and an earnest desire to comply with his wishes.

So that I rejoiced the more - I not only rejoiced at his coming, but I rejoiced the more at what he told me of you. Under any circumstances the coming of Titus would have been an occasion of joy; but it was especially so from the account which he gave me of you.

Verse 8

For though I made you sorry … - That is, in the First Epistle which he had sent to them. In that Epistle he had felt it necessary to reprove them for

their dissensions and other disorders which had occurred and which were tolerated in the church. That Epistle was suited to produce pain in them - as severe and just reproof always does; and Paul felt very anxious about its effect on them. It was painful to him to write it, and he was well aware that it must cause deep distress among them to be thus reproved.

I do not repent - I have seen such happy effects produced by it; it has so completely answered the end which I had in view; it was so kindly received, that I do not regret now that I wrote it. It gives me no pain in the recollection, but I have occasion to rejoice that it was done.

Though I did repent - Doddridge renders this: "however anxious I may have been." The word used here does not denote repentance in the sense in which that word is commonly understood, as if any wrong had been done. It is not the language of remorse. It can denote here nothing more than "that uneasiness which a good man feels, not from the consciousness of having done wrong, but from a tenderness for others, and a fear lest that which, prompted by duty, he had said, should have too strong an effect upon them." - Campbell, diss. vi. part iii. section 9. See the meaning of the word further illustrated in the same dissertation. The word (μεταμέλομαι metamelomai) denotes properly to change one's purpose or mind after having done anything (Robinson); or an uneasy feeling of regret for what has been done without regard either to duration or effects - Campbell. Here it is not to be understood that Paul meant to say he had done anything wrong.

He was an inspired man, and what he had said was proper and right. But he was a man of deep feeling, and of tender affections. He was pained at the necessity of giving reproof. And there is no improbability in supposing that after the letter had been sent off, and he reflected on its nature and on the pain which it would cause to those whom he tenderly loved, there might be some misgiving of heart about it, and the deepest anxiety, and regret at the necessity of doing it. What parent is there who has not had the same feeling as this? He has felt it necessary to correct a beloved child, and has formed the purpose, and has executed it. But is there no misgiving of heart? No question asked whether it might not have been dispensed with? No internal struggle; no sorrow; no emotion which may be called regret at the resolution which has been taken? Yet there is no repentance as if the parent had done wrong. He feels that he has done what was right and necessary. He approves his own course, and has occasion of rejoicing at the good effects which follow. Such appears to have been the situation of the apostle

Paul in this case; and it shows that he, had a tender heart, that he did not delight in giving pain, and that he had no desire to overwhelm them with grief. When the effect was seen, he was not unwilling that they should be apprized of the pain which it had cost him. When a parent has corrected a child, no injury is done if the child becomes acquainted with the strugglings which it has cost him, and the deep pain and anxiety caused by the necessity of resorting to chastisement.

For I perceive … - I perceive the good effect of the Epistle. I perceive that it produced the kind of sorrow in you which I desired. I see that it has produced permanent good results. The sorrow which it caused in you is only for a season; the good effects will be abiding. I have, therefore, great occasion to rejoice that I sent the Epistle. It produced permanent repentance and reformation 2 Corinthians 7:9, and thus accomplished all that I wished or desired.

Verse 9

Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry … - I have no pleasure in giving pain to anyone, or in witnessing the distress of any. When people are brought to repentance under the preaching of the gospel, the ministers of the gospel do not find pleasure in their grief as such. They are not desirous of making people unhappy by calling them to repentance, and they have no pleasure in the deep distress of mind which is often produced by their preaching, in itself considered. It is only because such sorrow is an indication of their return to God, and will be followed by happiness and by the fruits of good living, that they find any pleasure in it, or that they seek to produce it.

But that ye sorrowed to repentance - It was not mere grief; it was not sorrow producing melancholy, gloom, or despair; it was not sorrow which led you to be angry at him who had reproved you for your errors - as is sometimes the case with the sorrow that is produced by reproof; but it was sorrow that led to a change and reformation. It was sorrow that was followed by a putting away of the evil for the existence of which there had been occasion to reprove you. The word rendered here as "repentance" (μετάνοιαν metanoian) is a different word from that which, in 2 Corinthians 7:8, is rendered "I did repent," and indicates a different state of mind. It properly means a change of mind or purpose; compare Hebrews 12:7. It denotes a change for the better; a change of mind that is durable and productive in its consequences; a change which amounts to a permanent

reformation; see Campbell's Diss. ut supra. The sense here is, that it produced a change, a reformation. It was such sorrow for their sin as to lead them to reform and to put away the evils which had existed among them. It was this fact, and not that they had been made sorry, that led Paul to rejoice.

After a godly manner - Margin, "according to God;" see the note on the next verse.

That ye might receive damage by us in nothing - The Greek word rendered "receive damage" (ζημιωθῆτε zēmiōthēte) means properly to bring loss upon anyone; to receive loss or detriment; see the note on 1 Corinthians 3:15; compare Philemon 3:8. The sense here seems to be, "So that on the whole no real injury was done you in any respect by me. You were indeed put to pain and grief by my reproof. You sorrowed. But it has done you no injury on the whole. It has been a benefit to you. If you had not reformed, if you had been pained without putting away the sins for which the reproof was administered, if it had been mere grief without any proper fruit, you might have said that you would have suffered a loss of happiness, or you might have given me occasion to inflict severer discipline. But now you are gainers in happiness by all the sorrow which I have caused." Sinners are gainers in happiness in the end by all the pain of repentance produced by the preaching of the gospel. No man suffers loss by being told of his faults if he repents; and people are under the highest obligations to those faithful ministers and other friends who tell them of their errors, and who are the means of bringing them to true repentance.

Verse 10

For godly sorrow - "Sorrow according to God" (Ἡ γὰρ κατὰ Θεὸν λύπη Hē gar kata Theon lupē). That is, such sorrow as has respect to God, or is according to his will, or as leads the soul to him. This is a very important expression in regard to true repentance, and shows the exact nature of that sorrow which is connected with a return to God. The phrase may be regarded as implying the following things:

(1) Such sorrow as God approves, or such as is suitable to. or conformable to his will and desires. It cannot mean that it is such sorrow or grief as God has, for he has none; but such as shall be in accordance with what God demands in a return to him. It is a sorrow which his truth is suited to produce on the heart; such a sorrow as shall appropriately arise from viewing sin as God views it; such sorrow as exists in the mind when our views accord with his in regard to the existence, the extent, the nature, and

the ill-desert of sin. Such views will lead to sorrow that it has ever been committed; and such views will be "according to God."

(2) such sorrow as shall be exercised toward God in view of sin; which shall arise from a view of the evil of sin as committed against a holy God. It is not mainly that it will lead to pain; that it will overwhelm the soul in disgrace; that it will forfeit the favor or lead to the contempt of man; or that it will lead to an eternal hell; but it is such as arises from a view of the evil of sin as committed against a holy and just God, deriving its main evil from the fact that it is an offence against his infinite Majesty. Such sorrow David had Psalm 2:4, when he said, "against thee, thee only have I sinned;" when the offence regarded as committed against, man, enormous as it was, was lost and absorbed in its greater evil when regarded as committed against God. So all true and genuine repentance is that which regards sin as deriving its main evil from the fact that it is committed against God.

(3) that which leads to God. It leads to God to obtain forgiveness; to seek for consolation. A heart truly contrite and penitent seeks God, and implores pardon from him. Other sorrow in view of sin than that which is genuine repentance, leads the person away from God. He seeks consolation in the world; he endeavors to drive away his serious impressions or to drown them in the pleasures and the cares of life. But genuine sorrow for sin leads the soul to God, and conducts the sinner, through the Redeemer, to him to obtain the pardon and peace which he only can give to a wounded spirit. In God alone can pardon and true peace be found; and godly sorrow for sin will seek them there.

Worketh repentance - Produces a change that shall be permanent; a reformation. It is not mere regret; it does not soon pass away in its effects, but it produces permanent and abiding changes. A man who mourns over sin as committed against God, and who seek to God for pardon, will reform his life and truly repent. He who has grief for sin only because it will lead to disgrace or shame, or because it will lead to poverty or pain, will not necessarily break off from it and reform. It is only when it is seen that sin is committed against God and is evil in his sight, that it leads to a change of life.

Not to be repented of - (ἀμεταμέλητον ametamelēton); see the note on 2 Corinthians 7:8. Not to be regretted. It is permanent and abiding. There is

no occasion to mourn over such repentance and change of life. It is that which the mind approves, and which it will always approve. There will be no reason for regretting it, and it will never be regretted. And it is so. Who ever yet repented of having truly repented of sin? Who is there, who has there ever been, who became a true penitent, and a true Christian, who ever regretted it? Not an individual has ever been known who regretted his having become a Christian. Not one who regretted that he had become one too soon in life, or that he had served the Lord Jesus too faithfully or too long.

But the sorrow of the world - All sorrow which is not toward God, and which does not arise from just views of sin as committed against God, or lead to God. Probably Paul refers here to the sorrow which arises from worldly causes and which does not lead to God for consolation. Such may be the sorrow which arises from the loss of friends or property; from disappointment, or from shame and disgrace, Perhaps it may include the following things:

(1) Sorrow arising from losses of property and friends, and from disappointment.

(2) sorrow for sin or vice when it overwhelms the mind with the consciousness of guilt, and when it does not lead to God, and when there is no contrition of soul from viewing it as an offence against God. Thus, a female who has wandered from the paths of virtue, and involved her family and herself in disgrace; or a man who has been guilty of forgery, or perjury, or any other disgraceful crime, and who is detected; a man who has violated the laws of the land, and who has involved himself and family in disgrace, will often feel regret, and sorrow, and also remorse, but it arises wholly from worldly considerations, and does not lead to God.

(3) when the sorrow arises from a view of worldly consequences merely, and when there is no looking to God for pardon and consolation. Thus, people, when they lose their property or friends, often pine in grief without looking to God. Thus, when they have wandered from the path of virtue and have fallen into sin, they often look merely to the disgrace among people, and see their names blasted, and their comforts gone, and pine away in grief. There is no looking to God for pardon or for consolation. The sorrow arises from this world, and it terminates there. It is the loss of what they

valued pertaining to this world, and it is all which they had, and it produces death. It is sorrow such as the people of this world have, begins with this world, and terminates with this world.

Worketh death - Tends to death, spiritual, temporal, and eternal. It does not tend to life.

(1) it produces distress only. It is attended with no consolation.

(2) it tends to break the spirit, to destroy the peace, and to mar the happiness.

(3) it often leads to death itself. The spirit is broken, and the heart pines away under the influence of the unalleviated sorrow; or under its influence people often lay violent hands on themselves and take their lives. Life is often closed under the influence of such sorrow.

(4) it tends to eternal death. There is no looking to God; no looking for pardon. It produces murmuring, repining, complaining, fretfulness against God, and thus leads to his displeasure and to the condemnation and ruin of the soul.

Verse 11

For behold this self-same thing - For see in your own case the happy effects of godly sorrow. See the effects which it produced; see an illustration of what it is suited to produce. The construction is, "For lo! this very thing, to wit, your sorrowing after a godly manner, wrought carefulness, clearing of yourselves," etc. The object of Paul is to illustrate the effects of godly sorrow, to which he had referred in 2 Corinthians 7:10. He appeals, therefore, to their own case, and says that it was beautifully illustrated among themselves.

What carefulness - (σπουδήν spoudēn). This word properly denotes "speed, haste;" then diligence, earnest effort, forwardness. Here it is evidently used to denote the diligence and the great anxiety which they manifested to remove the evils which existed among them. They went to work to remove them. They did not sit down to mourn over them merely, nor did they wait for God to remove them, nor did they plead that they could do nothing, but they set about the work as though they believed it might be done. When people are thoroughly convinced of sin, they will set

about removing it with the utmost diligence. They will feel that this can be done, and must be done, or that the soul will be lost.

What clearing of yourselves - (ἀπολογίαν apologian). Apology. This word properly means a plea or defense before a tribunal or elsewhere; Acts 22:1; 2 Timothy 4:16. Tyndale renders it, "Yea, it caused you to clear yourselves." The word here properly means "apology" for what had been done; and it probably refers here to the effort which would be made by the sounder part of the church to clear themselves from blame in what had occurred. It does not mean that the guilty, when convicted of sin, will attempt to vindicate themselves and to apologize to God for what they had done; but it means that the church at Corinth were anxious to state to Titus all the mitigating circumstances of the case: they showed great solicitude to free themselves, as far as could be done, from blame; they were anxious, as far as could be, to show that they had not approved of what had occurred, and perhaps that it had occurred only because it could not have been prevented. We are not to suppose that all the things here referred to occurred in the same individuals, and that the same persons precisely evinced diligence, and made the apology, etc. It was done by the church; all evinced deep feeling; but some manifested it in one way, and some in another. The whole church was roused, and all felt, and all endeavored in the proper way to free themselves from the blame, and to remove the evil from among them.

Yea, what indignation - Indignation against the sin, and perhaps against the persons who had drawn down the censure of the apostle. One effect of true repentance is to produce decided hatred of sin. It is not mere regret, or sorrow, it is positive hatred. There is a deep indignation against it as an evil and a bitter thing.

Yea, what fear - Fear lest the thing should be repeated. Fear lest it should not be entirely removed. Or it may possibly mean fear of the displeasure of Paul, and of the punishment which would be inflicted if the evil were not removed. But it more probably refers to the anxious state of mind that the whole evil might be corrected, and to the dread of having any vestige of the evil remaining among them.

Yea, what vehement desire - This may either mean their fervent wish to remove the cause of complaint, or their anxious desire to see the apostle. It is used in the latter sense in 2 Corinthians 7:7, and according to Doddridge and Bloomfield this is the meaning here. Locke renders it,

"desire of satisfying me." It seems to me more probable that Paul refers to their anxious wish to remove the sin, since this is the topic under consideration. The point of his remarks in this verse is not so much their affection for him as their indignation against their sin, and their deep grief that sin had existed and had been tolerated among them.

Yea, what zeal - Zeal to remove the sin, and to show your attachment to me. They set about the work of reformation in great earnest.

Yea, what revenge! - Tyndale renders this: "it caused punishment." The idea is, that they immediately set about the work of inflicting punishment on the offender. The word used here (ἐκδίκησις ekdikēsis) probably denotes "maintenance of right, protection;" then it is used in the sense of avengement, or vengeance; and then of penal retribution or punishment; see Luke 21:22; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 2:14.

In all things … - The sense of this is, "You have entirely acquitted yourselves of blame in this business." The apostle does not mean that none of them had been to blame, or that the church had been free from fault, for a large part of his former Epistle is occupied in reproving them for their faults in this business, but he means that by their zeal and their readiness to take away the cause of complaint, they had removed all necessity of further blame, and had pursued such a course as entirely to meet his approbation. They had cleared themselves of any further blame in this business, and had become, so far as this was concerned, "clear" (ἁγνοὺς hagnous) or pure.

Verse 12

Wherefore, though I wrote unto you … - In this verse Paul states the main reason why he had written to them on the subject. It was not principally on account of the man who had done the wrong, or of him who had been injured; but it was from tender anxiety for the whole church, and in order to show the deep interest which he had in their welfare.

Not for his cause that had done the wrong - Not mainly, or principally on account of the incestuous person; 1 Corinthians 5:1. It was not primarily with reference to him as an individual that I wrote, but from a regard to the whole church.

Nor for his cause that suffered wrong - Not merely that the wrong which he had suffered might be rectified, and that his rights might be restored, valuable and desirable as was that object. The offence was that a man had taken his father's wife as his own 1 Corinthians 5:1, and the

person injured, therefore, was his father. It is evident from this passage, I think, that the father was living at the time when Paul wrote this Epistle.

But that our care … - I wrote mainly that I might show the deep interest which I had in the church at large, and my anxiety that it might not suffer by the misconduct of any of its members. It is from a regard to the welfare of the whole earth that discipline should be administered, and not simply with reference to an individual who has done wrong, or an individual who is injured. In church discipline such private interests are absorbed in the general interest of the church at large.

Verse 13

Therefore we were comforted in your comfort - The phrase "your comfort," here seems to mean the happiness which they had, or might reasonably be expected to have in obeying the directions of Paul, and in the repentance which they had manifested. Paul had spoken of no other consolation or comfort than this; and the idea seems to be that they were a happy people, and would be happy by obeying the commands of God. This fact gave Paul additional joy, and he could not but rejoice that they had removed the cause of the offence, and that they would not thus be exposed to the displeasure of God. Had they not repented and put away the evil, the consequences to them must have been deep distress. As it was, they would be blessed and happy.

And exceedingly the more … - Titus had been kindly received, and hospitably entertained, and had become much attached to them. This was to Paul an additional occasion of joy; see 2 Corinthians 7:7.

Verse 14

For if I have boasted anything to him … - This seems to imply that Paul had spoken most favorably to Titus of the Corinthians before he went among them. He had probably expressed his belief that he would be kindly received; that they would be disposed to listen to him, and to comply with the directions of the apostle; perhaps he had spoken to him of what he anticipated would be their liberality in regard to the collection which he was about to make for the poor saints at Jerusalem.

I am not ashamed - It has all turned out to be true. He has found it as I said it would be. All my expectations are realized; and you have been as kind, and hospitable, and benevolent as I assured him you would be.

As we spake all things to you in truth - Everything which I said to you was said in truth. All my promises to you, and all my commands, and all my

reasonable expectations expressed to you, were sincere. I practiced no disguise, and all that I have said thus far turned out to be true.

Even so our boasting … - My boasting of your character, and of your disposition to do right, which I made before Titus has turned out to be true. It was as I said it would be. I did not commend you too highly to him, as I did not overstate the matter to you in my Epistle.

Verse 15

And his inward affection … - He has become deeply and tenderly attached to you. His affectionate regard for you has been greatly increased by his visit. On the meaning of the word here rendered "inward affection" (σπλάγχια splangchiaMargin, bowels) see the note on 2 Corinthians 6:12. It denotes here: deep, tender attachment, or love.

How with fear and trembling ye received him - With fear of offending, and with deep apprehension of the consequences of remaining in sin. He saw what a fear there was of doing wrong, and what evidence there was, therefore, that you were solicitous to do right.

Verse 16

I rejoice, therefore, that I have confidence … - I have had the most ample proof that you are disposed to obey God, and to put away everything that is offensive to him. The address of this part of the Epistle, says Doddridge, is wonderful. It is designed, evidently, not merely to commend them for what they had done, and to show them the deep attachment which he had for them, but in a special manner to prepare them for what he he was about to say in the following chapter, respecting the collection which he had so much at heart for the poor saints at Jerusalem. What he here says was admirably adapted to introduce that subject. They had thus far showed the deepest regard for him. They had complied with all his directions. All that he had said of them had proved to be true. And as he had boasted of them to Titus 2 Corinthians 7:14, and expressed his entire confidence that they would comply with his requisitions, so he had also boasted of them to the churches of Macedonia and expressed the utmost confidence that they would be liberal in their benefactions, 2 Corinthians 9:2. All that Paul here says in their favor, therefore, was eminently adapted to excite them to liberality, and prepare them to comply with his wishes in regard to that contribution.

Remarks

1. Christians are bound by every solemn and sacred consideration to endeavor to purify themselves, 2 Corinthians 7:1. They who have the promises of eternal life, and the assurance that God will be to them a father, and evidence that they are his sons and daughters, should not indulge in the filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

2. Every true Christian will aim at perfection, 2 Corinthians 7:1. He will desire to be perfect; he will strive for it; he will make it a subject of unceasing and constant prayer. No man can be a Christian to whom it would not be a pleasure to be at once as perfect as God. And if any man is conscious that the idea of being made at once perfectly holy would be unpleasant or painful, he may set it down as certain evidence that he is a stranger to religion.

3. No man can be a Christian who voluntarily indulges in sin, or in what he knows to be wrong, 2 Corinthians 7:1. A man who does that cannot be aiming at perfection. A man who does that shows that he has no real desire to be perfect.

4. How blessed will be heaven, 2 Corinthians 7:1. There we shall be perfect. And the crowning glory of heaven is not that we shall be happy, but that we shall be holy. Whatever there is in the heart that is good shall there be perfectly developed; whatever there is that is evil shall be removed, and the whole soul will be like God. The Christian desires heaven because he will be there perfect. He desires no other heaven. He could be induced to accept no other if it were offered to him. He blesses God day by day that there is such a heaven, and that there is no other: that there is one world which sin does not enter, and where evil shall be unknown.

5. What a change will take place at death, 2 Corinthians 7:1. The Christian will be there made perfect. How this change will be there produced we do not know. Whether it will be by some extraordinary influence of the Spirit of God on the heart, or by the mere removal from the body, and from a sinful world to a world of glory, we know not. The fact seems to be clear, that at death the Christian will be made at once as holy as God is holy, and that he will ever continue to be in the future world.

6. What a desirable thing it is to die, 2 Corinthians 7:1. Here, should we attain to the age of the patriarchs, like them we should continue to be imperfect. Death only will secure our perfection; and death, therefore, is a desirable event. The perfection of our being could not be attained but for death; and every Christian should rejoice that he is to die. It is better to be in heaven than on earth; better to be with God than to be away from him; better to be made perfect than to be contending here with internal corruption, and to struggle with our sins. "I would not live always," was the language of holy Job; "I desire to depart and to be with Christ," was the language of holy Paul.

7. It is often painful to be compelled to use the language of reproof, 2 Corinthians 7:8. Paul deeply regretted the necessity of doing it in the case of the Corinthians, and expressed the deepest anxiety in regard to it. No man, no minister, parent, or friend can use it but with deep regret that it is necessary. But the painfulness of it should not prevent our doing it. It should be done tenderly but faithfully. If done with the deep feeling, with the tender affection of Paul, it will be done right; and when so done, it will produce the desired effect, and do good. No man should use the language of reproof with a hard heart, or with severity of feeling. If he is, like Paul, ready to weep when he does it, it will do good. If he does it because he delights in it, it will do evil.

8. It is a subject of rejoicing where a people exercise repentance, 2 Corinthians 7:8. A minister has pleasure not in the pain which his reproofs cause; not in the deep anxiety and distress of the sinner, and not in the pain which Christians feel under his reproofs, but he has joy in the happy results or the fruits which follow from it. It is only from the belief that those tears will produce abundant joy that he has pleasure in causing them, or in witnessing them.

9. The way to bring people to repentance is to present to them the simple and unvarnished truth, 2 Corinthians 7:8-9. Paul stated simple and plain truths to the Corinthians. He did not abuse them; he did not censure them in general terms; he stated things just as they were, and specified the things on account of which there was occasion for repentance. So if ministers wish to excite repentance in others, they must specify the sins over which others

should weep; if we wish, as individuals, to feel regret for our sins, and to have true repentance toward God, we must dwell on those particular sins which we have committed, and should endeavor so to reflect on them that they may make an appropriate impression on the heart. No man will truly repent by general reflections on his sin; no one who does not endeavor so to dwell on his sins as that they shall make the proper impression which each one is suited to produce on the soul. Repentance is that state of mind which a view of the truth in regard to our own depravity is suited to produce.

10. There is a great difference between godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world, 2 Corinthians 7:10. All people feel sorrow. All people, at some period of their lives, grieve over their past conduct. Some in their sorrow are pained because they have offended God, and go to God, and find pardon and peace in him. That sorrow is unto salvation. But the mass do not look to God. They turn away from him even in their disappointments, and in their sorrows, and in the bitter consciousness of sin. They seek to alleviate their sorrows in worldly company, in pleasure, in the intoxicating bowl; and such sorrow works death. It produces additional distress, and deeper gloom here, and eternal woe hereafter.

11. We may learn what constitutes true repentance, 2 Corinthians 7:11. There should be. and there will be, deep feeling. There will be "carefulness," deep anxiety to be freed from the sin; there will be a desire to remove it; "indignation" against it; "fear" of offending God; "earnest desire" that all that has been wrong should be corrected; "zeal" that the reformation should be entire; and a wish that the appropriate "revenge," or expression of displeasure, should be excited against it. The true penitent hates nothing so cordially as he does his sin. He hates nothing but sin. And his warfare with that is decided, uncompromising, inexorable, and eternal.

12. It is an evidence of mercy and goodness in God that the sorrow which is felt about sin may be made to terminate in our good, and to promote our salvation, 2 Corinthians 7:10-11. If sorrow for sin had been suffered to take its own course, and had proceeded unchecked, it would in all cases have produced death. If it had not been for the merciful interposition of Christianity, by which even sorrow might be turned to joy, this world would have been everywhere a world of sadness and of death.

Man would have suffered. Sin always produces, sooner or later, woe. Christianity has done nothing to make people wretched, but it has done everything to bind up broken hearts. It has revealed a way by which sorrow may be turned into joy, and the bitterness of grief may be followed by the sweet calm and sunshine of peace.

13. The great purpose of Christian discipline is to benefit the whole church, 2 Corinthians 7:12. It is not merely on account of the offender, nor is it merely that the injured may receive a just recompense. it is primarily that the church may be pure, and that the cause of religion may not be dishonored. When the work of discipline is entered on from any private and personal motives, it is usually attended with bad feeling, and usually results in evil. When it is entered on with a desire to honor God, and to promote the purity of the church, when the whole aim is to deliver the church from opprobrium and scandal, and to have just such a church as Jesus Christ desires, then it will be prosecuted with good temper, and with right feeling, and then it will lead to happy results. Let no man institute a process of discipline on an offending brother from private, personal, and revengeful feelings. Let him first examine his own heart, and let him be sure that his aim is solely the glory of Christ, before he attempts to draw down the censure of the church on an offending brother. How many cases of church discipline would be arrested if this simple rule were observed! And while the case before us shows that it is important in the highest degree that discipline should be exercised on an offending member of the church; while no consideration should prevent us from exercising that discipline; and while every man should feel desirous that the offending brother should be reproved or punished, yet this case also shows that it should be done with the utmost tenderness, the most strict regard to justice, and the deepest anxiety that the general interests of religion should not suffer by the manifestation of an improper spirit, or by improper motives in inflicting punishment on an offending brother.

2 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Introduction

In the previous chapter 1 Corinthians 16:1 ff; compare Romans 15:26. This collection he had given Titus direction to take up when he went to Corinth; see 2 Corinthians 7:6-17 of this chapter. But from some cause it had not been completed, 2 Corinthians 7:10-11. What that cause was, is not stated, but it may have been possibly the disturbances which had existed there, or the opposition of the enemies of Paul, or the attention which was necessarily bestowed in regulating the affairs of the church. But in order that the contribution might be made, and might be a liberal one, Paul presses on their attention several considerations designed to excite them to give freely. The chapter is, therefore, of importance to us, as it is a statement of the duty of giving liberally to the cause of benevolence, and of the motives by which it should be done. In the presentation of this subject, Paul urges upon them the following considerations.

He appeals to the very liberal example of the churches of Macedonia, where, though they were exceedingly poor, they had contributed with great cheerfulness and liberality to the object, 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.

From their example he had been induced to desire Titus to lay the subject before the church at Corinth, and to finish the collection which he had begun, 2 Corinthians 8:6.

He directs them to abound in this, not as a matter of commandment, but excited by the example of others, 2 Corinthians 8:7-8.

He appeals to them by the love of the Saviour; reminds them that though he was rich yet he became poor, and that they were bound to imitate his example, 2 Corinthians 8:9.

He reminds them of their intention to make such a contribution, and of the effort which they had made a year before; and though they had been embarrassed in it, and might find it difficult still to give as much as they had intended, or as much as they would wish, still it would be acceptable to God. For if there was a willing mind, God accepted the offering, 2 Corinthians 8:10-12.

He assures them that it was not his wish to burden or oppress them. All that he desired was that there should be an equality in all the churches, 2 Corinthians 8:13-15.

To show them how much he was interested in this, he thanks God that he had put it into the heart of Titus to engage in it. And in order more effectually to secure it, he says that he had sent with Titus a brother who was well known, and whose praise was in all the churches. He had done this in order that the churches might have entire confidence that the contribution would be properly distributed. Paul did not wish it to be entrusted to himself. He would leave no room for suspicion in regard to his own character; he would furnish the utmost security to the churches that their wishes were complied with. He desired to act honestly not only in the sight of the Lord, but to furnish evidence of his entire honesty to people, 2 Corinthians 8:16-21.

To secure the same object he had also sent another brother, and these three brethren he felt willing to recommend as faithful and tried; as people in whom the church at Corinth might repose the utmost confidence, 2 Corinthians 8:22-24.

Verse 1

Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit - We make known to you; we inform you. The phrase "we do you to wit," is used in Tyndale's translation, and means "we cause you to know." The purpose for which Paul informed them of the liberality of the churches of Macedonia was to excite them to similar liberality.

Of the grace of God … - The favor which God had shown them in exciting a spirit of liberality, and in enabling them to contribute to the fund for supplying the needs of the poor saints at Jerusalem. The word "grace" (χάρις charis) is sometimes used in the sense of gift, and the phrase "gift of God" some have supposed may mean very great gift, where the words "of God" may be designed to mark anything very eminent or excellent, as in the phrase "cedars of God," "mountains of God," denoting very great cedars, very great mountains. Some critics (as Macknight, Bloomfield, Locke, and others) have supposed that this means that the churches of Macedonia had

been able to contribute largely to the aid of the saints of Judea. But the more obvious and correct interpretation, as I apprehend, is that which is implied in the common version, that the phrase "grace of God," means that God had bestowed on them grace to give according to their ability in this cause. According to this it is implied:

(1) That a disposition to contribute to the cause of benevolence is to be traced to God. He is its author. He excites it. It is not a plant of native growth in the human heart, but a large and liberal spirit of benevolence is one of the effects of his grace, and is to be traced to him.

(2) it is a favor bestowed on a church when God excites in it a spirit of benevolence. It is one of the evidences of his love. And indeed there cannot be a higher proof of the favor of God than when by his grace he inclines and enables us to contribute largely to meliorate the condition, and to alleviate the needs of our fellowmen. Perhaps the apostle here meant delicately to hint this. He did not therefore say coldly that the churches of Macedonia had contributed to this object, but he speaks of it as a favor shown to them by God that they were able to do it. And he meant, probably, gently to intimate to the Corinthians that it would be an evidence that they were enjoying the favor of God if they should contribute in like manner.

The churches of Macedonia - Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea. For an account of Macedonia, see the Acts 16:9 note; Romans 15:26 note. Of these churches, that at Philippi seems to have been most distinguished for liberality Philemon 4:10, Philemon 4:15-16, Philemon 4:18, though it is probable that other churches contributed according to their ability, as they are commended (compare 2 Corinthians 9:2) without distinction.

Verse 2

How that, in a great trial of affliction - When it might be supposed they were unable to give; when many would suppose they needed the aid of others; or when it might be supposed their minds would be wholly engrossed with their own concerns. The trial to which the apostle here refers was doubtless some persecution which was excited against them, probably by the Jews; see Acts 16:20; Acts 17:5.

The abundance of their joy - Their joy arising from the hopes and promises of the gospel. Notwithstanding their persecutions, their joy has abounded, and the effect of their joy has been seen in the liberal contribution which they have made. Their joy could not be repressed by

their persecution, and they cheerfully contributed largely to the aid of others.

And their deep poverty - Their very low estate of poverty was made to contribute liberally to the needs of others. It is implied here:

(1)That they were very poor - a fact arising probably from the consideration that the poor generally embraced the gospel first, and also because it is probable that they were molested and stripped of their property in persecutions (compare Heb). Acts 10:34);

(2)That notwithstanding this they were enabled to make a liberal contribution - a fact demonstrating that a people can do much even when poor if all feel disposed to do it, and that afflictions are favorable to the effort; and,

(3)That one cause of this was the joy which they had even in their trials.

If a people have the joys of the gospel; if they have the consolations of religion themselves, they will somehow or other find means to contribute to the welfare of others. They will be willing to labor with reference to it, or they will find something which they can sacrifice or spare. Even their deep poverty will abound in the fruits of benevolence.

Abounded - They contributed liberally. Their joy was manifested in a large donation, notwithstanding their poverty.

Unto the riches of their liberality - Margin, "Simplicity." The word (ἁπλότης haplotēs) used here means properly sincerity, candor, probity; then Christian simplicity, integrity; then liberality; see Romans 12:8 (Margin,); 2 Corinthians 9:11, 2 Corinthians 9:13. The phrase "riches of liberality," is a Hebraism, meaning rich, or abundant liberality. The sense is, their liberality was much greater than could be expected from persons so poor; and the object of the apostle is, to excite the Corinthians to give liberally by their example.

Verse 3

For to their power - To the utmost of their ability.

I bear record - Paul had founded those churches and had spent much time with them. He was therefore well qualified to bear testimony in regard to their condition.

Yea, and beyond their power - Beyond what could have been expected; or beyond what it would have been thought possible in their condition. Doddridge remarks that this is a noble hyperbole, similar to that

used by Demosthenes when he says, "I have performed all, even with an industry beyond my power." The sense is, they were willing to give more than they were well able. It shows the strong interest which they had in the subject, and the anxious desire which they had to relieve the needs of others.

Of themselves - (αὐθαίρεται authairetai). Acting from choice, self-moved, voluntarily, of their own accord. They did not wait to be urged and pressed to do it. They rejoiced in the opportunity of doing it. They came forward of their own accord and made the contribution. "God loveth a cheerful giver" 2 Corinthians 9:7; and from all the accounts which we have of these churches in Macedonia it is evident that they were greatly distinguished for their cheerful liberality.

Verse 4

Praying us with much entreaty - Earnestly entreating me to receive the contribution and convey it to the poor and afflicted saints in Judea.

And take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints - Greek, "that we would take the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." They asked of us to take part in the labor of conveying it to Jerusalem. The occasion of this distress which made the collection for the saints of Judea necessary, was probably the famine which was predicted by Agabus, and which occurred in the time of Claudius Caesar; see note on Acts 11:28. Barnabas was associated with Paul in conveying the contribution to Jerusalem; Acts 6:30. Paul was unwilling to do it unless they particularly desired it, and he seems to have insisted that some person should be associated with him; 2 Corinthians 8:20; 1 Corinthians 16:3-4.

Verse 5

And this they did … - They did not give what we expected only. We knew their poverty, and we expected only a small sum from them.

Not as we hoped - Not according to the utmost of our hopes. We were greatly disappointed in the amount which they gave, and in the manner in which it was done.

But first gave their ownselves to the Lord - They first made an entire consecration of themselves and all that they had to the Lord. They kept nothing back. They felt that all they had was his. And where a people honestly and truly devote themselves to God, they will find no difficulty in having the means to contribute to the cause of charity.

And unto us by the will of God - That is, they gave themselves to us to be directed in regard to the contribution to be made. They complied with our wishes and followed our directions. The phrase "by the will of God," means evidently that God moved them to this, or that it was to be traced to his direction and providence. It is one of the instances in which Paul traces everything that is right and good to the agency and direction of God.

Verse 6

Insomuch - The sense of this passage seems to be this, "We were encouraged by this unexpected success among the Macedonians. We were surprised at the extent of their liberality. And encouraged by this, we requested Titus to go among you and finish the collection which you had proposed and which you had begun. Lest you should be outstripped in liberality by the comparatively poor Macedonian Christians, we were anxious that you should perform what you had promised and contemplated, and we employed Titus, therefore, that he might go at once and finish the collection among you."

The same grace also - Margin, "Gift;" see the note on 2 Corinthians 8:1. The word refers to the contribution which he wished to be made.

Verse 7

Therefore as ye abound in everything - see the note, 1 Corinthians 1:5. Paul never hesitated to commend Christians where it could be done with truth; and the fact that they were eminent in some of the Christian duties and graces, he makes the ground of the exhortation that they would abound in all. From those who had so many eminent characteristics of true religion he had a right to expect much; and he therefore exhorts them to manifest a symmetry of Christian character.

In faith - In the full belief of the truth and obligation of the gospel.

And utterance - In the ability to instruct others; perhaps referring to their power of speaking foreign languages; 2 Corinthians 7:4, 2 Corinthians 7:6-7, 2 Corinthians 7:11, 2 Corinthians 7:16.

See that ye abound in this grace also - The idea here is, that eminence in spiritual endowments of any kind, or in any of the traits of the Christian character should lead to great benevolence, and that the character is not complete unless benevolence be manifested toward every good object that may be presented.

Verse 8

I speak not by commandment - This does not mean that he had no express command of God in the case, but that he did not mean to command them; he did not speak authoritatively; he did not intend to prescribe what they should give. He used only moral motives, and urged the considerations which he had done to persuade rather than to command them to give; see 2 Corinthians 8:10. He was endeavoring to induce them to give liberally, not by abstract command and law, but by showing them what others had given who had much less ability and much fewer advantages than they had. People cannot be induced to give to objects of charity by command, or by a spirit of dictation and authority. The only successful, as well as the only lawful appeal, is to their hearts and consciences, and sober judgments. And if an apostle did not take upon himself the language of authority and command in matters of Christian benevolence, assuredly ministers and ecclesiastical bodies now have no right to use any such language.

But by occasion of the forwardness of others - I make use of the example of the churches of Macedonia as an argument to induce you to give liberally to the cause.

And to prove the sincerity of your love - The apostle does not specify here what "love" he refers to, whether love to God, to Christ, to himself, or to the church at large. It may be that he designedly used the word in a general sense, to denote love to any good object; and that he meant to say that liberality in assisting the poor and afflicted people of God would be the best evidence of the sincerity of their love to God, to the Redeemer, to him, and to the church. Religion is love; and that love is to be manifested by doing good to all people as we have opportunity. The most substantial evidence of that love is when we are willing to part with. our property, or with whatever is valuable to us, to confer happiness and salvation on others.

Verse 9

For ye know … - The apostle Paul was accustomed to illustrate every subject, and to enforce every duty where it could be done, by a reference to the life and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. The design of this verse is apparent. It is, to show the duty of giving liberally to the objects of benevolence, from the fact that the Lord Jesus was willing to become poor in order that he might benefit others. The idea is, that he who was Lord and proprietor of the universe, and who possessed all things, was willing to leave his exalted station in the bosom of the Father and to become poor, in order that we might become rich in the blessings of the gospel, in the means

of grace, and as heirs of all things; and that we who are thus benefitted, and who have such an example, should be willing to part with our earthly possessions in order that we may benefit others.

The grace - The benignity, kindness, mercy, goodness. His coming in this manner was a proof of the highest benevolence.

Though he was rich - The riches of the Redeemer here referred to, stand opposed to that poverty which he assumed and manifested when he dwelt among people. It implies:

(1) His pre-existence, because he became poor. He had been rich. Yet not in this world. He did not lay aside wealth here on earth after he had possessed it, for he had none. He was not first rich and then poor on earth, for he had no earthly wealth. The Socinian interpretation is, that he was "rich in power and in the Holy Spirit;" but it was not true that he laid these aside, and that he became poor in either of them. He had power, even in his poverty, to still the waves, and to raise the dead, and he was always full of the Holy Spirit. His family was poor; and his parents were poor; and he was himself poor all his life. This then must refer to a state of antecedent riches before his assumption of human nature; and the expression is strikingly parallel to that in Philemon 2:6 ff. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation," etc.

(2) he was rich as the Lord and proprietor of all things. He was the Creator of all John 1:3; Colossians 1:16, and as Creator he had a right to all things, and the disposal of all things. The most absolute right which can exist is that acquired by the act of creation; and this right the Son of God possessed over all gold, and silver, and diamonds, and pearls; over all earth and lands; over all the treasures of the ocean, and over all worlds. The extent and amount of his riches, therefore, is to be measured by the extent of his dominion over the universe; and to estimate his riches, therefore, we are to conceive of the scepter which he sways over the distant worlds. What wealth has man that can compare with the riches of the Creator and Proprietor of all? How poor and worthless appears all the gold that man can accumulate compared with the wealth of him whose are the silver, and the gold, and the cattle upon a thousand hills?

Yet for your sakes - That is, for your sakes as a part of the great family that was to be redeemed. In what respect it was for their sake, the apostle

immediately adds when he says, it was that they might be made rich. It was not for his own sake, but it was for ours.

He became poor - In the following respects:

(1) He chose a condition of poverty, a rank of life that was usually that of poverty. He "took upon himself the form of a servant;" Philemon 2:7.

(2) he was connected with a poor family. Though of the family and lineage of David Luke 2:4, yet the family had fallen into decay, and was poor. In the Old Testament he is beautifully represented as a shoot or sucker that starts up from the root of a decayed tree; see my note on Isaiah 11:1.

(3) his whole life was a life of poverty. He had no home; Luke 9:58. He chose to be dependent on the charity of the few friends that he drew around him, rather than to create food for the abundant supply of his own needs. He had no farms or plantations; he had no splendid palaces; he had no money hoarded in useless coffers or in banks; he had no property to distribute to his friends. His mother he commended when he died to the charitable attention of one of his disciples John 19:27, and all his personal property seems to have been the raiment which he wore, and which was divided among the soldiers that crucified him. Nothing is more remarkable than the difference between the plans of the Lord Jesus and those of many of his followers and professed friends. He formed no plan for becoming rich, and he always spoke with the deepest earnestness of the dangers which attend an effort to accumulate property. He was among the most poor of the sons of people in his life; and few have been the people on earth who have not had as much as he had to leave to surviving friends, or to excite the cupidity of those who should fall heirs to their property when dead.

(4) he died poor. He made no will in regard to his property, for he had none to dispose of. He knew well enough the effect which would follow if he had amassed wealth, and had left it to be divided among his followers. They were very imperfect; and even around the cross there might have been anxious discussion, and perhaps strife about it, as there is often now over the coffin and the unclosed grave of a rich and foolish father who has died. Jesus intended that his disciples should never be turned away from the great work to which he called them by any wealth which he would leave them;

and he left them not even a keepsake as a memorial of his name. All this is the more remarkable from two considerations:

(a) That he had it in his power to choose the manner in which he would come. He might have come in the condition of a splendid prince. He might have rode in a chariot of ease, or have dwelt in a magnificent palace. He might have lived with more than the magnificence of an oriental prince, and might have bequeathed treasures greater than those of Croesus or Solomon to his followers. But he chose not to do it.

(b) It would have been as right and proper for him to have amassed wealth, and to have sought princely possessions, as for any of his followers. What is right for them would have been right for him. People often mistake on this subject; and though it cannot be demonstrated that all his followers should aim to be as poor as he was, yet it is undoubtedly true that he meant that his example should operate constantly to check their desire of amassing wealth. In him it was voluntary; in us there should be always a readiness to be poor if such be the will of God; nay, there should he rather a preference to be in moderate circumstances that we may thus be like the Redeemer.

That ye through his poverty might be rich - That is, might have durable and eternal riches, the riches of God‘s everlasting favor. This includes:

(1) The present possession of an interest in the Redeemer himself. “Do you see these extended fields?” said the owner of a vast plantation to a friend. “They are mine. All this is mine.” “Do you see yonder poor cottage?” was the reply of the friend as he directed his attention to the abode of a poor widow. “She has more than all this. She has Christ as her portion; and that is more than all.” He who has an interest in the Redeemer has a possession that is of more value than all that princes can bestow.

(2) the heirship of an eternal inheritance, the prospect of immortal glory; Romans 8:17.

(3) everlasting treasures in heaven. Thus, the Saviour compares the heavenly blessings to treasures; Matthew 6:20. Eternal and illimitable wealth is theirs in heaven; and to raise us to that blessed inheritance was the design of the Redeemer in consenting to become poor. This, the apostle

says, was to he secured by his poverty. This includes probably the two following things, namely,

(a) That it was to be by the moral influence of the fact that he was poor that people were to be blessed he designed by his example to counteract the effect of wealth; to teach people that this was not the thing to be aimed at; that there were more important purposes of life than to obtain money; and to furnish a perpetual reproof of those who are aiming to amass riches. The example of the Redeemer thus stands before the whole church and the world as a living and constant memorial of the truth that people need other things than wealth; and that there are objects that demand their time and influence other than the accumulation of property. It is well to have such an example; well to have before us the example of one who never formed any plan for gain, and who constantly lived above the world. In a world where gain is the great object, where all people are forming plans for it, it is well to have one great model that shall continually demonstrate the folly of it, and that shall point to better things.

(b) The word "poverty" here may include more than a mere lack of property. It may mean all the circumstances of his low estate and humble condition; his sufferings and his woes. The whole train of his privations was included in this; and the idea is, that he gave himself to this lowly condition in order that by his sufferings he might procure for us a part in the kingdom of heaven. His poverty was a part of the sufferings included in the work of the atonement. For it was not the sufferings of the garden merely, or the pangs of the cross, that constituted the atonement; it was the series of sorrows and painful acts of humiliation which so thickly crowded his life. By all these he designed that we should be made rich; and in view of all these the argument of the apostle is, we should be willing to deny ourselves to do good to others.

Verse 10

And herein I give my advice - Not undertaking to command them, or to prescribe how much they should give. Advice will go much further than commands on the subject of charities.

For this is expedient for you - (συμφέρει sumpherei). That is, this will be of advantage to you; it will be profitable; it will be becoming. The idea

is, that they were bound by a regard to consistency and to their own welfare, to perform what they had purposed. It became them; it was proper, and was demanded; and there would have been manifest disadvantages if it had not been done.

Who have begun before - Who commenced the collection a year before; see 2 Corinthians 8:6. It had been commenced with fair prospects of success, but had been interrupted probably by the dissensions which arose in the church there.

Not only to do - Not merely to accomplish it as if by constraint, or as a matter of compulsion and drudgery.

But also to be forward - Margin, "Willing." So the Greek τὸ θέλειν to theleinThey were voluntary in this, and they set about it with vigorous and determined zeal and courage. There was a resolute determination in the thing, and a willingness and heartiness in it which showed that they were actuated by Christian principle. Consistency, and their own reputation and advantage, now demanded that they should complete what they had begun.

Verse 11

As there was a readiness to will - Now accomplish the thing, and be not satisfied with having begun it. Do not suppose that the intention was sufficient, or that you are now released from the obligation. A year indeed has elapsed; but the necessity of the aid for the poor has not ceased. The sentiment here is, that if we have felt it our duty to aid in a cause of benevolence, and have commenced it, and have then been interrupted in executing our purpose, we should seize the first favorable opportunity to accomplish what we had designed. We should not regard ourselves as released from our obligation, but should, from a regard to consistency and our obligation to God, accomplish what we had intended.

Out of that which ye have - According to your ability; see 2 Corinthians 8:12. It should be in proportion to your means.

Verse 12

For if there be first a willing mind - If there is a "readiness" (προθυμία prothumia), a disposition to give; if the heart is in it, then the offering will be acceptable to God, whether you be able to give much or little. A willing mind is the first consideration. No donation, however large, can be acceptable where that does not exist; none, however small, can be otherwise than acceptable where that is found. This had relation as used by Paul to the duty of almsgiving; but the principle is as applicable to

everything in the way of duty. A willing mind is the first and main thing. it is that which God chiefly desires, and that without which everything else will be offensive, hypocritical, and vain; see the note, 2 Corinthians 9:7.

It is accepted - Doddridge, Rosenmuller, Macknight, and some others apply this to the person, and render it," he is accepted;" but the more usual, and the more natural interpretation is to apply it to the gift - it is accepted. God will approve of it, and will receive it favorably.

According to that a man hath … - He is not required to give what he has not. His obligation is proportioned to his ability. His offering is acceptable to God according to the largeness and willingness of his heart, and not according to the narrowness of his fortune - Locke. If the means are small, if the individual is poor, and if the gift shall be, therefore, small in amount, yet it may be proof of a larger heart and of more true love to God and his cause than when a much more ample benefaction is made by one in better circumstances. This sentiment the Saviour expressly stated and defended in the case of the poor widow; Mark 12:42-44; Luke 21:1-4. She who had cast in her two mites into the treasury had put in more than all which the rich people had contributed, for they had given of their abundance, but she had cast in all that she had, even all her living. The great and obviously just and equal principle here stated, was originally applied by Paul to the duty of giving alms. But it is equally true and just as applied to all the duties which we owe to God. He demands:

(1) A willing mind, a heart disposed to yield obedience. He claims that our service should be voluntary and sincere, and that we should make an unreserved consecration of what we have.

(2) secondly, he demands only what we have power to render. He requires a service strictly according to our ability, and to be measured by that. He demands no more than our powers are suited to produce; no more than we are able to render. Our obligations in all cases are limited by our ability. This is obviously the rule of equity, and this is all that is anywhere demanded in the Bible, and this is everywhere demanded. Thus, our love to him is to be in proportion to our ability, and not to be graduated by the ability of angels or other beings. "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength;" Mark 12:30. Here the obligation is limited by the ability, and the love is to be commensurate with the ability. So of repentance, faith, and

of obedience in any form. None but a tyrant ever demands more than can be rendered; and to demand more is the appropriate description of a tyrant, and cannot pertain to the ever-blessed God.

(3) thirdly, if there is any service rendered to God, according to the ability, it is accepted of him. It may not be as much or as valuable as may be rendered by beings of higher powers; it may not be as much as we would desire to render, but it is all that God demands, and is acceptable to him. The poor widow was not able to give as much as the rich man; but her offering was equally acceptable, and might be more valuable, for it would be accompanied with her prayers. The service which we can render to God may not be equal to that which the angels render; but it may be equally appropriate to our condition and our powers, and may be equally acceptable to God. God may be as well pleased with the sighings of penitence as the praises of angels; with the offerings of a broken and a contrite heart as with the loud hallelujahs of unfallen beings in heaven.

Verse 13

For I mean not that other men be eased … - I do not intend that others should be eased in order to relieve you. Literally, "Not that there should be rest (ἄνεσις anesisa letting loose; remission, relaxation) to others, but affliction (θλίψις thlipsis) to you." Probably the Corinthians were able to contribute more than many other churches, certainly more than the churches of Macedonia 2 Corinthians 8:2, and Paul therefore presses upon them the duty of giving according to their means, yet he by no means intended that the entire burden should come on them.

Verse 14

But by an equality - On just and equal principles. "That now at this time," etc. That at the present time your abundance may be a supply for their needs, so that at some future time, if there should be occasion for it, their abundance may be a supply for your needs. The idea is this. Corinth was then able to give liberally, but many of the other churches were not. They were poor, and perhaps persecuted and in affliction. But there might be great reverses in their condition. Corinth might be reduced from its affluence, and might itself from its affluence, and might itself become dependent on the aid of others, or might be unable to contribute any considerable amount for the purposes of charity. The members of the church

in Corinth, therefore, should so act in their circumstances of prosperity, that others would be disposed to aid them should their condition ever be such as to demand it. And the doctrine here taught is:

(1) That the support of the objects of benevolence should be on equal principles. The rich should bear an equal and fair proportion, and if more frequent demands are made on their benefaction than on others they should not complain.

(2) Christians should contribute liberally while they have the means. In the vicissitudes of life no one can tell how soon he may be unable to contribute, or may even be dependent on the charity of others himself. A change in the commercial world; losses by fire or at sea; lack of success in business; loss of health, and the failure of his plans, may soon render him unable to aid the cause of benevolence. While he is prospered he should embrace every opportunity to do good to all. Some of the most painful regrets which people ever have, arise from the reflection that when prospered they were indisposed to give to benefit others, and when their property is swept away they become unable. God often sweeps away the property which they were indisposed to contribute to aid others, and leaves them to penury and want. Too late they regret that they were not the liberal patrons of the objects of benevolence when they were able to be.

That there may be equality - That all may be just and equal. That no unjust burden should be borne by anyone portion of the great family of the redeemed. Every Christian brother should bear his due proportion.

Verse 15

As it is written - see Exodus 16:18.

He that had gathered much … - This passage was originally applied to the gathering of manna by the children of Israel. The manna which fell around the camp of Israel was gathered every morning. All that were able were employed in gathering it; and when it was collected it was distributed in the proportion of an omer, or about five pints to each man. Some would be more active and more successful than others. Some by age or infirmity would collect little; probably many by being confined to the camp would collect none. They who had gathered more than an omer, therefore, would in this way contribute to the needs of others, and would be constantly manifesting a spirit of benevolence. And such was their willingness to do good in this way, such their readiness to collect more than they knew would

be demanded for their own use, and such the arrangement of Providence in furnishing it, that there was no want; and there was no more gathered than was needful to supply the demands of the whole.

Paul applies this passage, therefore, in the very spirit in which it was originally penned. He means to say that the rich Christians at Corinth should impart freely to their poorer brethren. They had gathered more wealth than was immediately necessary for their families or themselves. They should, therefore, impart freely to those who had been less successful. Wealth, like manna, is the gift of God. It is like that spread by his hand around us every day. Some are able to gather much more than others. By their skill, their health, their diligence, or by providential arrangements, they are eminently successful. Others are feeble, or sick, or aged, or destitute of skill, and are less successful. All that is obtained is by the arrangement of God. The health, the strength, the skill, the wisdom by which we are enabled to obtain it, are all his gift. That which is thus honestly obtained, therefore, should be regarded as his bounty, and we should esteem it a privilege daily to impart to others less favored and less successful.

Thus, society will be bound more closely together. There will be, as there was among the Israelites, the feelings of universal brotherhood. There will be on the one hand the happiness flowing from the constant exercise of the benevolent feelings; on the other the strong ties of gratitude. On the one hand the evils of poverty will be prevented, and on the other the not less. though different evils resulting from superabundant wealth. Is it a forced and unnatural analogy also to observe, that wealth, like manna, corrupts by being kept in store? manna if kept more than a single day became foul and loathsome. Does not wealth hoarded up when it might be properly employed; wealth that should have been distributed to relieve the needs of others, become corrupting in its nature, and offensive in the sight of holy and benevolent minds? Compare James 5:2-4. Wealth, like manna, should be employed in the service which God designs - employed to diffuse everywhere the blessings of religion, comfort, and peace.

Verse 16

But thanks be to God - Paul regarded every right feeling, and every pure desire; every inclination to serve God or to benefit a fellow mortal, as

the gift of God. He, therefore, ascribes the praise to him that Titus was disposed to show an interest in the welfare of the Corinthians.

The same earnest care - The earnest care here referred to was that the Corinthians might complete the collection, and finish what they had proposed. Titus was willing to undertake this, and see that it was done.

For you - For your completing the collection. Paul represents it as being done for them, or for their welfare. The poor saints in Judea indeed were to have the immediate benefit of the contribution, but it was a privilege for them to give, and Paul rejoiced that they had that privilege. A man who presents to Christians a feasible object of benevolence, and who furnishes them an opportunity of doing good to others, is doing good to them, and they should esteem it an act of kindness done to them.

Verse 17

For indeed he accepted the exhortation - He cheerfully complied with the exhortation which I gave him, to wit, to visit you, and excite you to this good work.

But being more forward - More disposed to do this than I had supposed. The idea here is, that he was very ready to engage in this; he was more ready to engage in it than Paul was to exhort him to it; he anticipated his request; he had already resolved to engage in it.

Of his own accord he went … - He went voluntarily and without urging. The ground of Paul‘s thankfulness here seems to have been this, He apprehended probably some difficulty in obtaining the collection there, He was acquainted with the distracted state of the church, and feared that Titus might have some reluctance to engage in the service. He was therefore very agreeably surprised when he learned that Titus was willing to make another journey to Corinth and to endeavor to complete the collection.

Verse 18

And we have sent with him the brother - It has been generally supposed that this anonymous brother was Luke. Some have supposed however that it was Mark, others that it was Silas or Barnabas. It is impossible to determine with certainty who it was; nor is it material to know. Whoever it was, it was some one well known, in whom the church at Corinth could have entire confidence. It is remarkable that though Paul mentions him again 2 Corinthians 12:18, he does it also in the same manner, without specifying his name. The only circumstances that can throw any light on this are:

(1) That Luke was the companion and intimate friend of Paul, and attended him in his travels. From Acts 16:10-11, where Luke uses the term "we," it appears that he was with Paul when he first went into Macedonia, and from Acts 16:15 it is clear that he went with Paul to Philippi. From Acts 17:1, where Luke alters his style and uses the term "they," it is evident that he did not accompany Paul and Silas when they went to Thessalonica, but either remained at Philippi or departed to some other place. He did not join them again until they went to Troas on the way to Jerusalem; Acts 20:5. In what manner Luke spent the interval is not known. Macknight supposes that it might have been in multiplying copies of his gospel for the use of the churches. Perhaps also he might have been engaged in preaching, and in services like that in the case before us.

(2) it seems probable that Luke is the person referred to by the phrase "whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches." This would be more likely to be applied to one who had written a gospel, or a life of the Redeemer that had been extensively circulated, than to any other person. Still it is by no means certain that he is the person here referred to, nor is it of material consequence.

Whose praise - Who is well known and highly esteemed.

Is in the gospel - Either for writing the gospel, or for preaching the gospel. The Greek will bear either construction. In some way he was celebrated for making known the truths of the gospel.

Verse 19

And not that only - Not only is he esteemed on account of other services which he has rendered by his preaching and writings; but he has had a new mark of the confidence of the churches in being appointed to convey the collection to Jerusalem.

Chosen of the churches - Chosen by the churches. Many concurred in the choice, showing that they had entire confidence in him. Paul had been unwilling to have charge of this contribution alone (1 Corinthians 16:3-4; compare 2 Corinthians 8:20), and he had procured the appointment of some one to undertake it. Probably he expected that the church at Corinth would concur in this appointment.

With this grace - Margin, "Gift;" see 2 Corinthians 8:1. The word here refers to the alms, or the collection which had been made.

Which is administered by us - That is, which is undertaken by us. Paul had been the instrument of procuring it.

To the glory of the same Lord - The Lord of us all. The design was to promote the glory of the Lord by showing the influence of religion in producing true benevolence.

And declaration of your ready mind - That is, to afford you an opportunity of evincing your readiness to do good to others, and to promote their welfare.

Verse 20

Avoiding this - That is, I intend to prevent any blame from being cast upon me in regard to the management of these funds. For this purpose Paul had refused to have the entire management of the funds (see 1 Corinthians 12:3-4), and had secured the appointment of one who had the entire confidence of all the churches.

That no man should blame us - That no one should have any occasion to say that I had appropriated it to my own use or contrary to the will of the donors. Paul felt how dangerous it was for ministers to have much to do with money matters. He had a very deep impression of the necessity of keeping his own character free from suspicion on this subject. He knew how easy it might be for his enemies to raise the charge that he had embezzled the funds and appropriated them to his own use. He therefore insisted on having associated with him some one who had the entire confidence of the churches, and who should be appointed by them, and thus he was certain of being forever free from blame on the subject. A most important example for all ministers in regard to the pecuniary benefactions of the churches.

In this abundance … - In this large amount which is contributed by the churches and committed to our disposal. Large sums of money are in our time committed to the ministers of the gospel in the execution of the objects of Christian benevolence. Nothing can be more wise than the example of Paul here, that they should have associated with them others who have the entire confidence of the churches, that there may not be occasion for slander to move her poisonous tongue against the ministers of religion.

Verse 21

Providing for honest things - The expression used here occurs in Romans 12:17; see the note on that place. In that place, however, it refers to the manner in which we are to treat those who injure us; here it refers to the

right way of using property; and it seems to have been a kind of maxim by which Paul regulated his life, a “vade mecum” that was applicable to everything. The sentiment is, that we are to see to it beforehand that all our conduct shall be comely or honest. The word rendered “providing for” (προνωύμενοι pronōumenoi) means foreseeing, or perceiving beforehand; and the idea is, that we are to make it a matter of previous calculation, a settled plan, a thing that is to be attended to of set design. In the middle voice, the form in which it occurs here, it means to provide for in one‘s own behalf; to apply oneself to anything; to practice diligently - Robinson. The word rendered “things honest” (καλὰ kala) means properly beautiful, or comely.

The idea which is presented here is, that we are to see beforehand, or we are to make it a matter of set purpose that what we do shall be comely, that is, just, honorable, correct, not only in the sight of the Lord, but in the sight of mankind. Paul applies this in his own case to the alms which were to be entrusted to him. His idea is, that he meant so to conduct in the whole transaction as that his conduct should be approved by God, but that it should also be regarded as beautiful or correct in the sight of people. He knew how much his own usefulness depended on an irreproachable character. He, therefore, procured the appointment of one who had the entire confidence of the churches to travel with him. But there is no reason for confining this to the particular case under consideration. It seems to have been the leading maxim of the life of Paul, and it should be of ours. The maxim may be applied to everything which we have to do; and should constantly regulate us.

It may be applied to the acquisition and use of property; to the discharge of our professional duties; to our contact with others; to our treatment of inferiors and dependents; to our charities, etc. - in all of which we should make it a matter of previous thought, of earnest diligence, that our conduct should be perfectly honest and comely before God and man. Let us learn from this verse also, that ministers of the gospel should be especially careful that their conduct in money matters. and especially in the appropriation of the charities of the church, should be above suspicion. Much is often entrusted to their care, and the churches and individual Christians often commit much to their discretion. Their conduct in this should be without reproach; and in order to this, it is well to follow the

example of Paul, and to insist that others who have the entire confidence of the churches should be associated with them. Nothing is easier than to raise a slanderous report against a minister of the gospel; and nothing gratifies a wicked world more than to be able to do it - and perhaps especially if it pertains to some improper use of money. It is not easy to meet such reports when they are started; and a minister, therefore, should be guarded, as Paul was, at every possible point, that he may be freed from that "whose breath outvenoms all the worms of Nile" - Slander.

Verse 22

And we have sent with them our brother - Who this was is wholly unknown; and conjecture is useless. Some have supposed that it was Apollos, others Silas, others Timothy. But there are no means of ascertaining who it was; nor is it material. It was some one in whom Paul had entire confidence.

Whom we have oftentimes proved diligent - Of whom we have evidence that he has been faithful. It is evident, therefore, that he had been the companion and fellow-laborer of Paul.

But now much more diligent … - Who will now prove himself much more diligent than ever before.

Upon the confidence … - Margin, "he hath." The margin is doubtless the more correct reading here. The idea is, that this brother had great confidence in the Corinthians that they would give liberally, and that he would, therefore, evince special diligence in the business.

Verse 23

Whether any do inquire of Titus - It is to be observed that the words "any do inquire" are not in the original; nor is it clear that these are the most proper words to be introduced here. The Greek may mean either, "if any do inquire about Titus," or it may mean "if anything is to be said about Titus." The sense of the passage may either be, that some of the faction at Corinth might be disposed to inquire about the authority of Titus to engage in this work, or that Paul having said so much in commendation of the persons who went with Titus, it seemed proper also to say something in his favor also. The idea is, "If any inquiry is made from any quarter about him, or if it is necessary from any cause to say any thing about him, I would say he is my partner," etc.

He is my partner … - He partakes with me in preaching the gospel, and in establishing and organizing churches; compare Titus 1:5. To the Corinthians this fact would be a sufficient commendation of Titus.

Or our brethren be inquired of - That is, the brethren who accompanied Titus. If any inquiry was made about their character, or if it was necessary to say anything in regard to them.

They are the messengers of the churches - They have the entire confidence of the churches, having been selected and appointed by them to a work of labor and responsibility; compare Philemon 2:25. The words here rendered "messengers of the churches," are in the original "apostles of the churches," (ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν apostoloi ekklēsiōn). The word "apostles" here is used evidently in its proper sense, to denote one who is sent out to transact any business for others, or as an agent or legate. These persons were not apostles in the technical sense, and this is an instance where the word is applied in the New Testament to those who had no claim to the apostolic office. It is also applied in a similar way to Apollos and Barnabas, though neither, strictly speaking, were apostles.

And the glory of Christ - That is, they have a character so well known and established for piety; they are so eminent Christians and do such honor to the Christian name and calling, that they may be called the glory of Christ. It is an honor to Christ that he has called such persons into his church, and that he has so richly endowed them. Every Christian should so live as that it would appear to all the world that it was an honor and glory to the Redeemer that he had such followers; an honor to his gospel that it had converted such and brought them into his kingdom. It is sufficient honor, moreover, to any man to say that he is "the glory of Christ." Such a character should be, and will be, as it was here, a recommendation sufficient for any to secure them the confidence of others.

Verse 24

Wherefore show ye to them … - By a liberal contribution in the cause in which they are engaged and for which they have come among you now, furnish the evidence that you love me and the Christian cause, and show that I have not boasted of you in vain.

The proof of your love - Your love to me, to God, to the cause of religion; see the note on 2 Corinthians 8:8.

And of our boasting … - My boasting that you would give liberally to the object; see the note, 2 Corinthians 7:14. Let it now be seen that my

boasting was well founded, and that I properly understood your character, and your readiness to contribute to the objects of Christian benevolence.

Remarks

1. Let us bear in mind that a disposition to be liberal proceeds only from God, 2 Corinthians 8:1. The human heart is by nature selfish, and indisposed to benevolence. It is only by the grace of God that people are excited to liberality; and we should therefore pray for this as well as for all other graces. We should beseech God to remove selfishness from our minds; to dispose us to feel as we should feel for the needs of others, and to incline us to give just what we ought to give to relieve them in trouble, and to promote their temporal and eternal welfare.

2. It is an inestimable blessing when God gives a spirit of liberality to the church, 2 Corinthians 8:1. It should be regarded as a proof of his special favor; and as an evidence of the prevalence of the principles of true religion.

3. People are often most liberal when in circumstances of distress, perplexity, and affliction, 2 Corinthians 8:2. Prosperity often freezes the heart, but adversity opens it. Success in life often closes the hand of benevolence, but adversity opens it. We are taught to feel for the sufferings of others by suffering ourselves; and in the school of adversity we learn invaluable lessons of benevolence which we should never acquire in prosperity. If you lack the tear of sympathy: if you want aid in a good cause, go to a man in affliction, and his heart is open. And hence, it is that God often suffers his people to pass through trials in order that they may possess the spirit of large and active benevolence.

4. If Christians desire to be generous, they must first devote themselves to God, 2 Corinthians 8:5. If this is not done they will have no heart to give, and they will not give. They will have a thousand excuses ready, and there will be no ground of appeal which we can make to them. True liberality is always based on the fact that we have given ourselves wholly to God.

5. When Christians have honestly devoted themselves to God, it will be easy to contribute liberally to the cause of benevolence, 2 Corinthians 8:5. They will find something to give; or if they have nothing now they will labor and deny themselves in order that they may have something to give. If

every professed Christian on earth had honestly given himself to God, and should act in accordance with this, the channels of benevolence Would never be dry.

6. We should compare ourselves in the matter of benevolence with the churches here referred to, 2 Corinthians 8:3. They were poor; they were in deep affliction, and yet they contributed all in their power, and beyond their power. Do we do this? Do we give according to our ability? Do we deny ourselves of one comfort? withhold one gratification? curtail one expense which fashion demands, in order that we may have the means of doing good? O! if every Christian would give according to his ability to the sacred cause of charity, how soon would the means be ample to place the Bible in every family on the globe, to preach the gospel in every country, and to maintain all the institutions which the cause of humanity needs in this and in other lands.

7. The Christian character is incomplete unless there is a spirit of large and liberal beneficence, 2 Corinthians 8:7. This is indispensable to the proper symmetry of the Christian graces, and this should be cultivated in order to give beauty and completeness to the whole. Yet it cannot be denied that there are true Christians where this is lacking. There are those who give every other evidence of piety; who are people of prayer, and who evince humility, and who are submissive in trials, and whose conversation is that of Christians, who are yet sadly deficient in this virtue. Either by an original closeness of disposition, or by a defect of education, or by lack of information in regard to the objects of Christian benevolence, they are most stinted in their benefactions, and often excite the amazement of others that they give so little to the cause of benevolence. Such persons should be entreated to carry out their Christian character to completion. As they abound in other things, they should abound in this grace also. They are depriving themselves of much comfort, and are bringing much injury on the cause of the Redeemer while they refuse to sustain the great objects of Christian charity. No Christian character is symmetrical or complete unless it is crowned with the spirit of large and comprehensive benevolence toward every object that tends to promote the temporal and eternal welfare of man.

8. The sincerity of our love should be tested, and will be, by our readiness to deny ourselves to do good to others, 2 Corinthians 8:8. The love of the Lord Jesus was tested in that way; and there can be no true love to God or man where there is not a readiness to contribute of our means for the welfare of others. If we love the Redeemer. we shall devote all to his service; if we love our fellow-men we shall evince our "sincerity" by being willing to part with our earthly substance to alleviate their woes, enlighten their ignorance, and save their souls.

9. Let us imitate the example of the Lord Jesus, 2 Corinthians 8:9. He was rich, yet he became poor; and, o how poor! Let the rich learn to copy his example, and be willing to part with their abundant and superfluous wealth in order that they may relieve and benefit others. That man is most happy as well as most useful, who most resembles the Redeemer; that man will be most happy who stoops from the highest earthly elevation to the lowest condition that he may minister to the welfare of others.

10. Charity should be voluntary, 2 Corinthians 8:12. It should be the free and spontaneous offering of the heart; and the first promptings of the heart, before the pleadings of avarice come in, and the heart grows cold by the influence of returning covetousness, are likely to be the most correct.

11. Charity should be in an honest proportion to our means, 2 Corinthians 8:12. It should be according to what a man hath. God hath left the determination of this proportion to every individual, responsible to him alone. He has not told us how much we shall give, or in what proportion we shall give; but he has left it for every individual to decide what he may give, and what he ought to give.

12. If people do not give according to their means they must answer for it to God. Every man may have opportunity to contribute to relieve others if he will open his heart and ears to the cries of a suffering and a dying world. No man can complain that he has no opportunity to give; or that he may not procure for his own soul all the blessings which can be produced by the most large and liberal benevolence.

13. People have no excuse for being lost, 2 Corinthians 8:12. If God required more of them than they could render they would have excuse. They would not be to blame. They might be sufferers and martyrs in hell, but no one would blame them. But the sinner can never have any such excuse. God never required anymore of him than he had power to render; and if he dies it will be his own fault, and the throne of God will still be spotless and pure.

14. God‘s government is an equal, and just, and good government, 2 Corinthians 8:12. What can be more equitable than the principle that a man is accepted according to what he has? What ground of complaint can the sinner have in regard to this administration?

15. The churches should bear their just proportion in the cause of Christian beneficence, 2 Corinthians 8:13-15. There are great interests of charity which must be sustained. The world cannot do without them. Not only must the poor be provided for, but the cause of temperance, and of Sunday schools, and of missions must be sustained. Bibles must be distributed, and people must be educated for the ministry, and the widow and the fatherless must be the objects of Christian benevolence. These burdens, if they are burdens, should be equally distributed. The rich should furnish their fair proportion in sustaining them; and those in more moderate circumstances must do their fair proportion also in sustaining them. If this were done, all the objects of Christian benevolence could be sustained, and they would in fact not be burdensome to the churches. With infinite ease all might be contributed that is necessary to send the gospel around the world.

16. Ministers of the gospel should have as little as possible to do with money matters, 2 Corinthians 8:19-21. While they should be willing, if it is necessary, to be the almoners of the churches, and should esteem it a privilege to he the means of conveying to the poor and needy, and to the great cause of benevolence, what the churches may choose to commit to them, yet they should not covet this office; they should not show any particular desire for it; nor should they do it unless, like Paul, they have the most ample security that the voice of slander can never be raised in regard to their management. Let them see to it that they have persons associated with them who have the entire confidence of the churches; people who will

be responsible also, and who will be competent witnesses of the manner in which they discharge their duty. In all things ministers should be pure. On few points is there more danger that the enemy will endeavor to take advantage, and to injure their character, than in regard to their abuse of.

17. Let all Christians so live that it may be honestly said of them they are "the glory of Christ," 2 Corinthians 8:23. Let them aim so to live that it will be esteemed to be an honor to the Redeemer that he called them into his kingdom, and that he so richly endowed them by his grace. This would be a commendation to all people where they might go; to say this is enough to say of any man. None can have a higher character than to have it said with truth of him "he is the glory of Christ; he is an honor to his Redeemer and to his cause."

2 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Introduction

In this chapter 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 the apostle continues the subject which he had discussed in 2 Corinthians 9:1-2. The argument here is, that Paul‘s veracity and their own character were at stake and depended on their now giving liberally.

(2) he had sent the brethren to them in order that there might by no possibility be a failure, 2 Corinthians 9:3-5. Though he had the utmost confidence in them, and fully believed that they were disposed to give liberally, yet he knew also that something might prevent it unless messengers went to secure the contributions, and that the consequence might be, that he and they would be “ashamed” that he had boasted so much of their readiness to give.

(3) to excite them to give liberally, Paul advances the great principles that the reward in heaven will be in proportion to the liberality evinced on earth, and that God loves one who gives cheerfully, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7. By the prospect, therefore, of an ample reward, and by the desire to meet with the approbation of God, he calls upon them to contribute freely to aid their afflicted Christian brethren.

(4) he further excites them to liberal giving by the consideration that if they contributed liberally, God was able to furnish them abundantly with the means of doing good on a large scale in time to come, 2 Corinthians 9:8-11. In this way he would enable them to do good hereafter in proportion as they were disposed to do good now, and the result of all would be, that abundant thanks would be rendered to God - thanks from those who were aided, and thanks from those who had aided them that they had been enabled to contribute to supply their needs.

(5) as a final consideration inducing them to give, the apostle states that not only would they thus do good, but would show the power of the gospel, and the affection which they had for the Jewish converts, and would thus contribute much in promoting the glory of God. The Jewish converts would see the power of the gospel on their Gentile brethren; they would feel that they now pertained to one great family; they would praise God for

imparting his grace in this manner; and they would be led to pray much for those who had thus contributed to alleviate their needs, 2 Corinthians 9:12-14.

(6) Paul closes the whole chapter, and the whole discussion respecting the contribution about which he had felt so deep an interest, by rendering thanks to God for his "unspeakable gift," Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 9:15. Paul was ever ready, whatever was the topic before him, to turn the attention to him. He here evidently regards him as the author of all liberal feeling, and of all true charity; and seems to imply that all that they could give would he small compared with the "unspeakable gift" of God, and that the fact that God had imparted such a gift. to the world was a reason why they should be willing to devote all they had to his service.

Verse 1

For as touching the ministering to the saints - In regard to the collection that was to be taken up for the aid of the poor Christians in Judea; see the notes on Romans 15:26; 1 Corinthians 16:1; 2 Corinthians 8.

It is superfluous … - It is needless to urge that matter on you, because I know that you acknowledge the obligation to do it, and have already purposed it.

For me to write to you - That is, to write more, or to write largely on the subject. It is unnecessary for me to urge arguments why it should be done; and all that is proper is to offer some suggestions in regard to the manner in which it shall be accomplished.

Verse 2

For I know the forwardness of your mind - I know your promptitude, or your readiness to do it; see 2 Corinthians 8:10. Probably Paul here means that he had had opportunity before of witnessing their readiness to do good, and that he had learned in particular of Titus that they had formed the plan to aid in this contribution.

For which I boast of you to them of Macedonia - To the church in Macedonia; see 2 Corinthians 8:1. So well assured was he that the church at Corinth would make the collection as it had proposed, that he boasted of it to the churches of Macedonia as if it were already done, and made use of this as an argument to stimulate them to make an effort.

That Achaia was ready a year ago - Achaia was that part of Greece of which Corinth was the capital; see the note, Acts 18:12. It is probable that there were Christians in other parts of Achaia besides Corinth, and indeed it is known that there was a church in Cenchrea (see Romans 16:1). which was one of the ports of Corinth. Though the contribution would be chiefly derived from Corinth, yet it is probable that the others also would participate in it. The phrase "was ready" means that they had been preparing themselves for this collection, and doubtless Paul had stated that the collection was already made and was waiting. He had directed them 1 Corinthians 16:1 to make it on the first day of the week, and to lay it by in store, and he did not doubt that they had complied with his request.

And your zeal - Your ardor and promptitude. The readiness with which you entered into this subject, and your desire to relieve the needs of others.

Hath provoked - Has roused, excited, impelled to give. We use the word "provoke" commonly now in the sense of to irritate, but in the Scriptures it is confined to the signification of exciting, or rousing. The ardor of the Corinthians would excite others not only by their promptitude, but because Corinth was a splendid city, and their example would be looked up to by Christians at a distance. This is one instance of the effect which will be produced by the example of a church in a city.

Verse 3

Yet have I sent the brethren - The brethren referred to in 2 Corinthians 8:18, 2 Corinthians 8:22-23.

Lest our boasting of you - That you were disposed to contribute, and that you were already prepared, and that the contribution was ready.

Should be in vain - Lest anything should have occurred to prevent the collection. I have sent them that they may facilitate it, and that it may be secure and certain.

In this behalf - In this respect. That is, lest our boasting of you, in regard to your readiness to contribute to relieve the needs of others, should be found to have been ill-grounded.

Verse 4

Lest haply if they of Macedonia - If any of the Macedonians should happen to come with me, and should find that you had done nothing. He does not say that they would come with him, but it was by no means improbable that they would. It was customary for some of the members of the churches to travel with Paul from place to place, and the conversation

was constant between Macedonia and Achaia. Paul had, therefore, every reason to suppose that some of the Macedonians would accompany him when he should go to Corinth. At all events it was probable that the Macedonians would learn from some quarter whether the Corinthians were or were not ready when Paul should go to them.

should be ashamed … (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed … - "In this," says Bloomfield, "one cannot but recognize a most refined and delicate turn, inferior to none of the best Classical writers." Paul had boasted confidently that the Corinthians would be ready with their collection. He had excited and stimulated the Macedonians by this consideration. He had induced them in this way to give liberally, 2 Corinthians 8:1-4. If now it should turn out after all that the Corinthians had given nothing, or had given stintedly, the character of Paul would suffer. His veracity and his judgment would be called in question, and he would be accused of trick, and artifice, and fraud in inducing them to give. Or if he should not be charged with dishonesty, yet he would be humbled and mortified himself that he had made representations which had proved to be so unfounded. But this was not all. The character of the Corinthians was also at stake. They had purposed to make the collection. They had left the impression in the mind of Paul that it would be done. They had hitherto evinced such a character as to make Paul confident that the collection would be made. If now by any means this should fail, their character would suffer, and they would have occasion to be ashamed that they had excited so confident expectations of what they would do.

Verse 5

Therefore I thought it necessary … - In order to secure the collection, and to avoid all unpleasant feeling on all hands.

That they would go before unto you - Before I should come.

And make up beforehand your bounty - Prepare it before I come. The word "bounty" is in the margin, rendered "blessing." The Greek (εὐλογία eulogia) means properly commendation, eulogy. Then it means blessing, praise applied to God. Then that which blesses - a gift, donation, favor, bounty - whether of God to human beings, or of one man to another. Here it refers to their contribution as that which would be adapted to confer a blessing on others, or suited to produce happiness.

That the same might be ready as a matter of bounty - That it may truly appear as a liberal and voluntary offering; as an act of generosity and

not as wrung or extorted from you. That it may be truly a blessing - a thank-offering to God and adapted to do good to people.

And not as of covetousness - "And not like a sort of extortion, wrung from you by mere dint of importunity" - Doddridge. The word used here (πλεονεξία pleonexia) means usually covetousness, greediness of gain, which leads a person to defraud others. The idea here is, that Paul would have them give this as an act of bounty, or liberality on their part, and not as an act of covetousness on his part, not as extorted by him from them.

Verse 6

But this I say - This I say in order to induce you to give liberally. This I say to prevent your supposing that because it is to be a voluntary offering you may give only from your superfluity, and may give sparingly.

He which soweth sparingly - This expression has all the appearance of a proverb, and doubtless is such. It does not occur indeed elsewhere in the Scriptures, though substantially the same sentiment exciting to liberality often occurs; see Psalm 12:1-3; Proverbs 11:24-25; Proverbs 19:17; Proverbs 22:9. Paul here says that it is in giving as it is in agriculture. A man that sows little must expect to reap little. If he sows a small piece of land he will reap a small harvest; or if he is niggardly in sowing and wishes to save his seed and will not commit it to the earth, he must expect to reap little. So it is in giving. Money given in alms, money bestowed to aid the poor and needy, or to extend the influence of virtue and pure religion, is money bestowed in a way similar to the act of committing seed to the earth. It will be returned again in some way with an abundant increase. It shall not be lost. The seed may be buried long.

It may lie in the ground with no indication of a return or of increase. One who knew not the arrangements of Providence might suppose it was lost and dead. But in due time it shall spring up and produce an ample increase. So with money given to objects of benevolence. To many it may seem to be a waste, or may appear to be thrown away. But in due time it will be repaid in some way with abundant increase. And the man who wishes to make the most out of his money for future use and personal comfort will give liberally to deserving objects of charity - just as the man who wishes to make the most out of his grain will not suffer it to lie in his granary, but will commit the seed to the fertile earth. "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it again after many days" Ecclesiastes 11:1; that is, when the waters as of the Nile have overflown the banks and

flooded the whole adjacent country, then is the time to cast abroad thy seed. The waters will retire, and the seed will sink into the accumulated fertile mud that is deposited, and will spring up in an abundant harvest. So it is with that which is given for objects of benevolence.

Shall reap also sparingly - Shall reap in proportion to what he sowed. This everyone knows is true in regard to grain that is sowed. It is also no less true in regard to deeds of charity. The idea is, that God will bestow rewards in proportion to what is given. These rewards may refer to results in this life, or to the rewards in heaven, or both. All who have ever been in the habit of giving liberally to the objects of benevolence can testify that they have lost nothing, but have reaped in proportion to their liberality. This follows in various ways.

(1) in the comfort and peace which results from giving. If a man wishes to purchase happiness with his gold, he can secure the most by bestowing it liberally on objects of charity. It will produce him more immediate peace than it would to spend it in sensual gratifications, and far more than to hoard it up useless in his coffers.

(2) in reflection on it hereafter. It will produce more happiness in remembering that he has done good with it, and promoted the happiness of others, than it will to reflect that he has hoarded up useless wealth, or that he has squandered it in sensual gratification. The one will be unmingled pleasure when he comes to die; the other will be unmingled self-reproach and pain.

(3) in subsequent life, God will in some way repay to him far more than he has bestowed in deeds of charity. By augmented prosperity, by health and future comfort, and by raising up for us and our families, when in distress and want, friends to aid us, God can and often does abundantly repay the liberal for all their acts of kindness and deeds of beneficence.

(4) God can and will reward his people in heaven abundantly for all their kindness to the poor, and all their self-denials in endeavoring to diffuse the influence of truth and the knowledge of salvation. Indeed the rewards of heaven will be in no small degree apportioned in this manner, and determined by the amount of benevolence which we have shown on earth; see Matthew 25:34-40. On all accounts, therefore, we have every

inducement to give liberally. As a farmer who desires an ample harvest scatters his seed with a liberal hand; as he does not grudge it though it falls into the earth; as he scatters it with the expectation that in due time it will spring up and reward his labors, so should we give with a liberal hand to aid the cause of benevolence, nor should we deem what we give to be lost or wasted though we wait long before we are recompensed, or though we should be in no other way rewarded than by the comfort which arises from the act of doing good.

Verse 7

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart … - The main idea in this verse is, that the act of giving should be voluntary and cheerful. It should not seem to be extorted by the importunity of others 2 Corinthians 9:6; nor should it be given from urgent necessity, but it should be given as an offering of the heart. On this part of the verse we may remark:

(1) That the heart is usually more concerned in the business of giving than the head. If liberality is evinced, it will be the heart which prompts to it; if it is not evinced, it will be because the heart has some bad passions to gratify, and is under the influence of avarice, or selfishness, or some other improper attachment. Very often a man is convinced he ought to give liberally, but a narrow heart and a parsimonious spirit prevents it.

(2) we should follow the dictates of the heart in giving. I mean that a man will usually give more correctly who follows the first promptings of his heart when an object of charity is presented, than he will if he takes much time to deliberate. The instinctive prompting of a benevolent heart is to give liberally. And the amount which should be given will usually be suggested to a man by the better feelings of his heart. But if he resolves to deliberate much, and if he suffers the heart to grow cold, and if he defers it, the pleadings of avarice will como in, or some object of attachment or plan of life will rise to view, or he will begin to compare himself with others. and he will give much less than he would have done if he had followed the first impulse of feeling. God implanted the benevolent feelings in the bosom that they should prompt us to do good; and he who acts most in accordance with them is most likely to do what he ought to do; and in general it is the safest and best rule for a man to give just what his heart prompts him to give when an object of charity is presented. Man at best is too selfish to be likely to

give too much or to go beyond his means; and if in a few instances it should be done, more would be gained in value in the cultivation of benevolent feeling than would be lost in money. I know of no better rule on the subject, than to cultivate as much as possible the benevolent feelings, and then to throw open the soul to every proper appeal to our charity, and to give just according to the instinctive prompting of the heart.

(3) giving should be voluntary and cheerful. It should be from the heart. Yet there is much, very much that is not so, and there is, therefore, much benevolence that is spasmodic and spurious; that cannot be depended on, and that will not endure. No dependence can be placed on a man in regard to giving who does not do it from the steady influences of a benevolent heart. But there is much obtained in the cause of benevolence that is produced by a kind of extortion It is given because others give, and the man would be ashamed to give less than they do. Or, it is given because he thinks his rank in life demands it, and he is prompted to do it by pride and vanity. Or, he gives from respect to a pastor or a friend, or because he is warmly importuned to give; or because he is shut up to a kind of necessity to give, and must give or he would lose his character and become an object of scorn and detestation. In all this there is nothing cheerful and voluntary; and there can be nothing in it acceptable to God. Nor can it be depended on permanently. The heart is not in it, and the man will evade the duty as soon as he can, and will soon find excuses for not giving at all.

Not grudgingly - Greek, "Not of grief" (μὴ ἐκ λύπης mē ek lupēs). Not as if be were sorry to part with his money. Not as if he were constrained to do a thing that was extremely painful to him. "Or of necessity." As if he were compelled to do it. Let him do it cheerfully.

For God loveth a cheerful giver - And who does not? Valuable as any gift may be in itself, yet if it is forced and constrained; if it can be procured only after great importunity and persevering effort, who can esteem it as desirable? God desires the heart in every service. No service that is not cheerful and voluntary; none that does not arise from true love to him can be acceptable in his sight. God loves it because it shows a heart like his own - a heart disposed to give cheerfully and do good on the largest scale possible; and because it shows a heart attached from principle to his service and cause. The expression here has all the appearance of a proverb, and expressions similar to this occur often in the Scriptures. In an uninspired

writer, also, this idea has been beautifully expanded. “In all thy gifts show a cheerful countenance, and dedicate thy tithes with gladness. Give unto the Most High according as he hath enriched thee: and as thou hast gotten give with a cheerful eye. For the Lord recompenseth, and will give thee seven times as much” - Wisdom of the Son of Sirach 35:9-11. In nothing, therefore, is it more important than to examine the motives by which we give to the objects of benevolence. However liberal may be our benefactions, yet God may see that there is no sincerity, and may hate the spirit with which it is done.

Verse 8

And God is able … - Do not suppose that by giving liberally you will be impoverished and reduced to want. You should rather confide in God, who is able to furnish you abundantly with what is needful for the supply of your necessities. Few persons are ever reduced to poverty by liberality. Perhaps in the whole circle of his acquaintance it would be difficult for an individual to point out one who has been impoverished or made the poorer in this way. Our selfishness is generally a sufficient guard against this; but it is also to be added, that the divine blessing rests upon the liberal man, and that God keeps him from want. But in the meantime there are multitudes who are made poor by the lack of liberality. They are parsimonious in giving but they are extravagant in dress, and luxury, and in expenses for amusement or vice, and the consequence is poverty and want. “There is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty;” Proverbs 11:24. The divine blessing rests upon the liberal: and while every person should make a proper provision for his family, every one should give liberally, confiding in God that he will furnish the supplies for our future needs. Let this maxim be borne in mind, that no one is usually made the poorer by being liberal.

All grace - All kinds of favor. He is able to impart to you those things which are needful for your welfare.

That ye always … - The sense is, “If you give liberally you are to expect that God will furnish you with the means, so that you will be able to abound more and more in it.” You are to expect that he will abundantly qualify you for doing good in every way, and that he will furnish you with all that is needful for this. The man who gives, therefore, should have faith in God. He should expect that God will bless him in it; and the experience

of the Christian world may be appealed to in proof that people are not made poor by liberality.

Verse 9

As it is written - Psalm 112:9. The idea is, "in this way will the saying in the Scriptures be verified, or the promise confirmed." The psalmist is describing the character of the righteous man. One of his characteristics, he says, is, that he has scattered abroad, he has given liberally to the poor. On such a man a blessing is pronounced Psalm 112:1; and one of the blessings will be that he shall be prospered. Some difficulty has been felt by commentators to see how the quotation here made sustains the position of Paul that the liberal man would be blessed of God, and would receive an increase according to his liberality. In order to this, they have supposed (see Doddridge, Bloomfield, and Clarke) that the word "righteousness" means the same as almsgiving, or that "he would always have something to bestow." But I would suggest that perhaps Paul quoted this, as quotations are frequently made in the Scriptures, where a passage was familiar. He quotes only a part of the passage, meaning that the whole passage confirms the point under consideration. Thus, the whole passage in the psalm is, "He hath dispersed; he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth forever; his horn shall be exalted with honor;" that is, he shall be abundantly blessed with prosperity and with the favor of God. Thus, the entire promise sustains the position of Paul, that the liberal man would be abundantly blessed. The phrase "he hath dispersed" Ἐσκόρπισεν Eskorpisenmay refer either to the act of sowing, as a man scatters seed on the earth; or there may be an allusion to the oriental custom of scattering money among an assembled company of paupers; compare Proverbs 11:24.

His righteousness - His deeds of beneficence.

Remaineth - In its fruits and consequences; that is, either in its effects on others, or on himself. It may mean that the sums so distributed will remain with him forever inasmuch as he will be supplied with all that is needful to enable him to do good to others. This interpretation accords with the connection.

Verse 10

Now he that ministereth seed to the sower - This is an expression of an earnest wish. In the previous verses he had stated the promises, or had shown what we had a right to expect as a consequence of liberality. He here unites the expression of an earnest desire that they might experience this

themselves. The allusion is to the act of sowing seed. The idea is, that when a man scatters seed in his field God provides him with the means of sowing again. He not only gives him a harvest to supply his needs, but he blesses him also in giving him the ability to sow again. Such was the benevolent wish of Paul. He desired not only that God would supply their returning needs, but he desired also that he would give them the ability to do good again; that he would furnish them the means of future benevolence. He acknowledges God as the source of all increase, and wishes that they may experience the results of such increase. Perhaps in this language there is an allusion to Isaiah 4:10; and the idea is, that it is God who furnishes by his providence the seed to the sower. In like manner he will furnish you the means of doing good.

Minister bread for your food - Furnish you with an ample supply for your needs.

Multiply your seed sown - Greatly increase your means of doing good; make the result of all your benefactions so to abound that you may have the means of doing good again, and on a larger scale, as the seed sown in the earth is so increased that the farmer may have the means of sowing more abundantly again.

And increase the fruits of your righteousness - This evidently means, the results and effects of their benevolence. The word "righteousness" here refers to their liberality; and the wish of the apostle is, that the results of their beneficence might greatly abound, that they might have the means of doing extensive good, and that they might be the means of diffusing happiness from afar.

Verse 11

Being enriched in everything … - In all respects your riches are conferred on you for this purpose. The design of the apostle is to state to them the true reason why wealth was bestowed. It was not for the purposes of luxury and self-gratification; not to be spent in sensual enjoyment, not for parade and display; it was that it might be distributed to others in such a way as to cause thanksgiving to God. At the same time, this implies the expression of an earnest wish on the part of Paul. He did not desire that they should be rich for their own gratification or pleasure; he desired it only as the means of their doing good to others. Right feeling will desire property only as the means of promoting happiness and producing thanksgiving to God. They who truly love their children and friends will wish them to be

successful in acquiring wealth only that they may have the means and the disposition to alleviate misery, and promote the happiness of all around them. No one who has true benevolence will desire that anyone in whom he feels an interest should be enriched for the purpose of living amidst luxury, and encompassing himself with the indulgences which wealth can furnish. If a man has not a disposition to do good with money, it is not true benevolence to desire that he may not possess it.

To all bountifulness - Margin, Simplicity, or liberality. The word (ἁπλότης haplotēs) means properly sincerity, candor, probity; then also simplicity, frankness, fidelity, and especially as manifesting itself in liberality; see Romans 12:8; 2 Corinthians 8:2. Here it evidently means "liberality," and the idea is, that property is given for this purpose, in order that there may be liberality evinced in doing good to others.

Which causeth through us … - That is, we shall so distribute your alms as to cause thanksgiving to God. The result will be that by our instrumentality, thanks will be given to the great Source and Giver of all wealth. Property should always be so employed as to produce thanksgiving. If it is made to contribute to our own support and the support of our families, it should excite thanksgiving. If it is given to others, it should be so given, if it is possible, that the recipient should be more grateful to God than to us; should feel that though we may be the honored instrument in distributing it, yet the true benefactor is God.

Verse 12

For the administration of this service - The distribution of this proof of your liberality. The word "service" here, says Doddridge, intimates that this was to be regarded not merely as an act of humanity, but religion.

The want of the saints - Of the poor Christians in Judea on whose behalf it was contributed.

But is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God - Will abound unto God in producing thanksgivings. The result will be that it will produce abundant thanksgiving in their hearts to God.

Verse 13

Whiles by the experiment … - Or rather, by the experience of this ministration; the proof (δοκιμῆς dokimēs), the evidence here furnished of your liberality. They shall in this ministration have experience or proof of your Christian principle.

They glorify God - They will praise God as the source of your liberality, as having given you the means of being liberal, and having inclined your hearts to it.

For your professed subjection … - Literally, "For the obedience of your profession of the gospel." It does not imply merely that there was a profession of religion, but that there was a real subjection to the gospel which they professed. This is not clearly expressed in our translation. Tyndale has expressed it better, "Which praise God for your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ." There was a real and sincere submission to the gospel of Christ, and that was manifested by their giving liberally to supply the needs of others. The doctrine is, that one evidence of true subjection to the gospel; one proof that our profession is sincere and genuine, is a willingness to contribute to relieve the needs of the poor and afflicted friends of the Redeemer. And unto all people. That is, all others whom you may have the opportunity of relieving.

Verse 14

And by their prayer for you - On the grammatical construction of this difficult verse, Doddridge and Bloomfield may be consulted. It is probably to be taken in connection with 2 Corinthians 9:12, and 2 Corinthians 9:13 is a parenthesis. Thus interpreted, the sense will be, "The administration of this service 2 Corinthians 9:12 will produce abundant thanks to God. It will also 2 Corinthians 9:14 produce another effect. It will tend to excite the prayers of the saints for you, and thus produce important benefits to yourselves. They will earnestly desire your welfare, they will anxiously pray to be united in Christian friendship with those who have been so signally endowed with the grace of God." The sentiment is, that charity should be shown to poor and afflicted Christians because it will lead them to pray for us and to desire our welfare. The prayers of the poorest Christian for us are worth more than all we usually bestow on them in charity; and he who has secured the pleadings of a child of God, however humble, in his behalf, has made a good use of his money.

Which long after you - Who earnestly desire to see and know you. Who will sincerely desire your welfare, and who will thus be led to pray for you.

For the exceeding grace of God in you - On account of the favor which God has shown to you: the strength and power of the Christian principle, manifesting itself in doing good to those whom you have never

seen. The apostle supposes that the exercise of a charitable disposition is to be traced entirely to God. God is the author of all grace; he alone excites in us a disposition to do good to others.

Verse 15

Thanks be unto God - Whitby supposes that this refers to the charitable disposition which they had manifested, and that the sense is, that God was to be adored for the liberal spirit which they were disposed to manifest, and the aid which they were disposed to render to others. But this, it is believed, falls far below the design of the apostle. The reference is rather to the inexpressible gift which God had granted to them in bestowing his Son to die for them; and this is one of the most striking instances which occur in the New Testament, showing that the mind of Paul was full of this subject; and that wherever he began, he was sure to end with a reference to the Redeemer. The invaluable gift of a Saviour was so familiar to his mind, and he was so accustomed to dwell on that in his private thoughts, that the mind naturally and easily glanced on that whenever anything occurred that by the remotest allusion would suggest it. The idea is, "Your benefactions are indeed valuable; and for them, for the disposition which you have manifested, and for all the good which you will be enabled thus to accomplish, we are bound to give thanks to God. All this will excite the gratitude of those who shall be benefitted. But how small is all this compared with the great gift which God has imparted in bestowing a Saviour! That is unspeakable. No words can express it, no language convey an adequate description of the value of the gift, and of the mercies which result from it."

His unspeakable gift - The word used here ἀνεκδιηγήτῳ anekdiēgētōmeans, what cannot be related, unutterable. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The idea is, that no words can properly express the greatness of the gift thus bestowed on man. It is higher than the mind can conceive; higher than language can express. On this verse we may observe:

(1) That the Saviour is a gift to mankind. So he is uniformly represented; see John 3:16; Galatians 1:4; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 1:22; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:14. Man had no claim on God. He could not compel him to provide a plan of salvation; and the whole arrangement - the selection of the Saviour, the sending him into the world, and all the benefits resulting from his work, are all an undeserved gift to man.

(2) this is a gift unspeakably great, whose value no language can express, no heart fully conceive. It is so because:

(a)Of his own greatness and glory;

(b)Because of the inexpressible love which he evinced;

(c)Because of the unutterable sufferings which he endured;

(d)Because of the inexpressibly great benefits which result from his work. No language can do justice to this work in either of these respects; no heart in this world fully conceives the obligation which rests upon man in virtue of his work.

(3) thanks should be rendered to God for this. We owe him our highest praises for this. This appears:

(a) Because it was mere benevolence in God. We had no claim; we could not compel him to grant us a Saviour. The gift might have been withheld, and his throne would have been spotless, We owe no thanks where we have a claim; where we deserve nothing, then he who benefits us has a claim on our thanks.

(b) Because of the benefits which we have received from him. Who can express this? All our peace and hope; all our comfort and joy in this life; all our prospect of pardon and salvation; all the offers of eternal glory are to be traced to him. Man has no prospect of being happy when he dies but in virtue of the "unspeakable gift" of God. And when he thinks of his sins, which may now be freely pardoned; when he thinks of an agitated and troubled conscience, which may now be at peace; when he thinks of his soul, which may now be unspeakably and eternally happy; when he thinks of the hell from which he is delivered, and of the heaven to whose eternal glories he may now be raised up by the gift of a Saviour, his heart should overflow with gratitude, and the language should be continually on his lips and in his heart, "thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." Every other mercy should seem small compared with this; and every manifestation of right feeling in the heart should lead us to contemplate the source of it, and to feel, as Paul did, that all is to be traced to the unspeakable gift of God.

Remarks

1. This chapter, with the preceding, derives special importance from the fact that it contains the most extended discussion of the principles of Christian charity which occurs in the Bible. No one can doubt that it was

intended by the Redeemer that his people should be distinguished for benevolence. It was important, therefore, that there should be some portion of the New Testament where the principles on which charity should be exercised, and the motives by which Christians should be induced to give, should be fully stated. Such a discussion we have in these chapters; and they therefore demand the profound and prayerful attention of all who love the Lord Jesus.

2. We have here a striking specimen of the manner in which the Bible is written. Instead of abstract statements and systematic arrangement, the principles of religion are brought out in connection with a case that actually occurred. But it follows that it is important to study the Bible attentively, and to be familiar with every part of it. In some part of the Scriptures, statements of the principles which should guide us in given circumstances will be found; and Christians should, therefore, be familiar with every part of the Bible.

3. These chapters are of special importance to the ministers of religion, and to all whose duty it is to press upon their fellow Christians the duty of giving liberally to the objects of benevolence. The principles on which it should be done are fully developed here. The motives which it is lawful to urge are urged here by Paul. It may be added, also, that the chapters are worthy of our profound study on account of the admirable tact and address which Paul evinces in inducing others to give. Well he knew human nature. Well he knew the motives which would influence others to give. And well he knew exactly how to shape his arguments and adapt his reasoning to the circumstances of those whom he addressed.

4. The summary of the motives presented in this chapter contains still the most important argument which can be urged to produce liberality. We cannot but admire the felicity of Paul in this address - a felicity not the result of craft and cunning, but resulting from his amiable feelings, and the love which he bore to the Corinthians and to the cause of benevolence. He reminds them of the high opinion which he had of them, and of the honorable mention which he had been induced to make of them 2 Corinthians 9:1-2; he reminds them of the painful result to his own feelings and theirs if the collection should in any way fail, and it should appear that his confidence in them had been misplaced 2 Corinthians 9:3-5; he refers

them to the abundant reward which they might anticipate as the result of liberal benefactions, and of the fact that God loved those who gave cheerfully 2 Corinthians 9:6-7; he reminds them of the abundant grace of God, who was able to supply all their needs and to give them the means to contribute liberally to meet the needs of the poor 2 Corinthians 9:8; he reminds them of the joy which their liberality would occasion, and of the abundant thanksgiving to God which would result from it 2 Corinthians 9:12-13; and he refers them to the unspeakable gift of God, Jesus Christ, as an example, and an argument, and us urging the highest claims in them, 2 Corinthians 9:15. "Who," says Doddridge, "could withstand the force of such oratory?" No doubt it was effectual in that case, and it should be in all others.

5. May the motives here urged by the apostle be effectual to persuade us all to liberal efforts to do good! Assuredly there is no less occasion for Christian liberality now than there was in the time of Paul. There are still multitudes of the poor who need the kind and efficient aid of Christians. And the whole world now is a field in which Christian beneficence may be abundantly displayed, and every land may, and should experience the benefits of the charity to which the gospel prompts, and which it enjoins. Happy are they who are influenced by the principles of the gospel to do good to all people! Happy they who have any opportunity to illustrate the power of Christian principle in this; any ability to alleviate the needs of one sufferer, or to do anything in sending that gospel to benighted nations which alone can save the soul from eternal death!

6. Let us especially thank God for his unspeakable gift, Jesus Christ. Let us remember that to him we owe every opportunity to do good: that it was because he came that there is any possibility of benefiting a dying world; and that all who profess to love him are bound to imitate his example and to show their sense of their obligation to God for giving a Saviour. How poor and worthless are all our gifts compared with the great gift of God; how slight our expressions of compassion, even at the best, for our fellow-men, compared with the compassion which he has shown for us! When God has given his Son to die for us, what should we not be willing to give that we may show our gratitude, and that we may benefit a dying world.

2 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Introduction

Paul, having finished the subject of the duty of alms-giving in the previous chapter, enters into this on a vindication of himself from the charges of his enemies. His general design is to vindicate his apostolic authority, and to show that he had a right, as well as others, to regard himself as sent from God. This vindication is continued through 2 Corinthians 11:13, 2 Corinthians 11:22, and they boasted much of their own endowments. It is impossible, except from the Epistle itself, to ascertain the nature of their charges and objections against him. From the chapter before us it would seem that one principal ground of their objection was, that though he was bold enough in his letters and had threatened to exercise discipline, yet that he would not dare to do it. They accused him of being, when present with them, timid, weak, mild, pusillanimous, of lacking moral courage to inflict the punishment which he had threatened in his letters. To this he replies in this chapter:

(1) He appeals to the meekness and gentleness of Christ; thus indirectly and delicately vindicating his own mildness from their objections, and entreats them not to give him occasion to show the boldness and severity which he had purposed to do He had no wish to be bold and severe in the exercise of discipline, 2 Corinthians 10:1-2.

(2) he assures them that the weapons of his warfare were not carnal, but spiritual. He relied on the truth of the gospel and on the power of motives; and these weapons were mighty by the aid of God to cast down all that offend him. Yet he was ready to revenge and punish all disobedience by severe measures if it were necessary, 2 Corinthians 10:3-6.

(3) they looked on the outward appearance. He cautioned them to remember that he had as good claims to be regarded as belonging to Christ at they had, 2 Corinthians 10:7. He had given proofs that he was an apostle, and the false teachers should look at those proofs lest they should be found to be opposing God. He assured them that if he had occasion to exercise his power he would have no reason to be ashamed of it, 2 Corinthians 10:8. It would be found to be ample to execute punishment on his foes.

(4) the false teachers had said that Paul was terrible only in his letters. He boasted of his power, but it was, they supposed, only epistolary bravery. He would not dare to execute his threatening. in reply to this, Paul, in a strain of severe irony, says that he would not seem to terrify them by mere letters. It would be by something far more severe. He advised such objectors, therefore, to believe that he would prove himself to be such as he had shown himself to be in his letters; to look at the evidence, since they boasted of their talent for reasoning, that he would show himself in fact to be what he had threatened to be, 2 Corinthians 10:9-12.

(5) he pursues the strain of severe irony by secretly comparing himself with them, 2 Corinthians 10:12-16. They boasted much, but it was only by comparing themselves with one another, and not with any elevated standard of excellence. Paul admitted that he had not the courage to do that, 2 Corinthians 10:12. Nor did he dare to boast of things wholly beyond his ability as they had done. He was contented to act only within the proper limits prescribed to him by his talents and by the appointment of God. Not so they. They had boldness and courage to go far beyond that, and to boast of things wholly beyond their ability, and beyond the proper measure, 2 Corinthians 10:13-14. Nor had he courage to boast of entering into other people‘s labors. It required more courage than he had, to make a boast of what he had done if he had availed himself of things made ready to his hand as if they were the fruit of his own labors, implying that they had done this; that they had come to Corinth, a church founded by his labors, and had quietly set themselves down there, and then, instead of going into other fields of labor, had called in question the authority of him who had founded the church, and who was laboring indefatigably elsewhere, 2 Corinthians 10:15-16. Paul adds, that such was not his intention. He aimed to preach the gospel beyond, to carry it to regions where it had not been spread. Such was the nature of his courage; such the kind of boldness which he had, and he was not ambitious to join them in their boasting.

(6) he concludes this chapter with a very serious admonition. Leaving the strain of irony, he seriously says that if any man were disposed to boast, it should be only in the Lord. He should glory not in self-commendation, but in the fact that he had evidence that the Lord approved him; not in his

own talents or powers, but in the excellence and glory of the Lord, 2 Corinthians 10:17-18.

Verse 1

Now I Paul myself beseech you - I entreat you who are members of the church not to give me occasion for the exercise of severity in discipline. I have just expressed my confidence in the church in general, and my belief that you will act in accordance with the rules of the gospel. But I cannot thus speak of all. There are some among you who have spoken with contempt of my authority and my claims as an apostle. Of them I cannot speak in this manner; but instead of commanding them I entreat them not to give me occasion for the exercise of discipline.

By the meekness and gentleness of Christ - In view of the meekness and mildness of the Redeemer; or desiring to imitate his gentleness and kindness. Paul wished to imitate that. He did not wish to have occasion for severity. He desired at all times to imitate, and to exhibit the gentle feelings of the Saviour. He had no pleasure in severity; and he did not desire to exhibit it.

Who in presence - Margin, In outward appearance. It may either mean that when present among them he appeared, according to their representation, to be humble, mild, gentle 2 Corinthians 10:10; or that in his external appearance he had this aspect; see on 2 Corinthians 10:10. Most probably it means that they had represented him, as timid when among them, and afraid to exercise discipline, however much he had threatened it.

Am base among you - The word used here (ταπεινὸς tapeinos) usually means low, humble, poor. Here it means timid, modest, the opposite of boldness. Such was formerly the meaning of the English word base. It was applied to those of low degree or rank; of humble birth; and stood opposed to those of elevated rank or dignity. Now it is commonly used to denote that which is degraded or worthless; of mean spirit; vile; and stands opposed to that which is manly and noble. But Paul did not mean to use it here in that sense. He meant to say that they regarded him as timid and afraid to execute the punishment which he had threatened, and as manifesting a spirit which was the opposite of boldness. This was doubtless a charge which they brought against him; but we are not necessarily to infer that it was true. All that it proves is, that he was modest and unobtrusive, and that they interpreted this as timidity and lack of spirit.

But being absent am bold toward you - That is, in my letters; see on 2 Corinthians 10:10. This they charged him with, that he was bold enough when away from them, but that he would be tame enough when he should meet them face to face, and that they had nothing to fear from him.

Verse 2

That I may not be bold - I entreat you so to act that I may not have occasion to exercise the severity which I fear I shall be compelled to use against those who accuse me of being governed wholly by worldly motives and policy. In other words, that I may not be compelled to be bold and decisive in my measures by your improper conduct.

Which think of us - Margin, "reckon." They suppose this; or, they accuse me of it. By the word "us" here Paul means himself, though it is possible also that he speaks in the name of his fellow apostles and laborers who were associated with him, and the objections may have referred to all who acted with him.

As if we walked - As if we lived or acted. The word "walk" in the Scriptures is often used to denote the course or manner of life; see the Romans 4:12, note; 2 Corinthians 5:7, note.

According to the flesh - see the note on 2 Corinthians 1:17. As if we were governed by the weak and corrupt principles of human nature. As if we had no higher motive than carnal and worldly policy. As if we were seeking our own advantage and not the welfare of the world. The charge was, probably, that he was not governed by high and holy principles, but by the principles of mere worldly policy; that he was guided by personal interests, and by worldly views - by ambition, or the love of dominion, wealth, or popularity, and that he was destitute of every supernatural endowment and every evidence of a divine commission.

Verse 3

For though we walk in the flesh - Though we are mortal like other people; though we dwell like them in mortal bodies, and necessarily must devote some care to our temporal needs; and though, being in the flesh, we are conscious of imperfections and frailties like others. The sense is, that he did not claim exemption from the common needs and frailties of nature. The best of people are subject to these needs and frailties; the best of people are liable to err.

We do not war after the flesh - The warfare in which he was engaged was with sin, idolatry, and all forms of evil. He means that in conducting

this he was not actuated by worldly views or policy, or by such ambitious and interested aims as controlled the people of this world. This refers primarily to the warfare in which Paul was himself engaged as an apostle; and the idea is, that he went forth as a soldier under the great Captain of his salvation to fight his battles and to make conquests for him. A similar allusion occurs in 2 Timothy 2:3-4. It is true, however, that not only all ministers, but all Christians are engaged in a warfare; and it is equally true that they do not maintain their conflict "after the flesh," or on the principles which govern the people of this world. The warfare of Christians relates to the following points:

(1) It is a warfare with the corrupt desires and sensual propensities of the heart; with eternal corruption and depravity, with the remaining unsubdued propensities of a fallen nature.

(2) with the powers of darkness; the mighty spirits of evil that seek to destroy us; see Ephesians 6:11-17.

(3) with sin in all forms; with idolatry, sensuality, corruption, intemperance, profaneness, wherever they may exist. The Christian is opposed to all these, and it is the aim and purpose of his life as far as he may be able to resist and subdue them. He is a soldier enlisted under the banner of the Redeemer to oppose and resist all forms of evil. But his warfare is not conducted on worldly principles. Muhammed propagated his religion with the sword; and the people of this world seek for victory by arms and violence; The Christian looks for his conquests only by the force and the power of truth, and by the agency of the Spirit of God.

Verse 4

For the weapons of our warfare - The means by which we hope to achieve our victory.

Are not carnal - Not those of the flesh. Not such as the people of the world use. They are not such as are employed by conquerors; nor are they such as people in general rely on to advance their cause. We do not depend on eloquence, or talent, or learning, or wealth, or beauty, or any of the external aids on which the people of this world rely. They are not such as derive advantage from any power inherent in themselves. Their strength is derived from God alone.

But mighty through God - Margin, "to." They are rendered mighty or powerful by the agency of God. They depend on him for their efficacy. Paul has not here specified the weapons on which he relied; but he had before specified them 2 Corinthians 6:6-7, so that there was no danger of mistake. The weapons were such as were furnished by truth and righteousness, and these were rendered mighty by the attending agency of God. The sense is, that God is the author of the doctrines which we preach, and that he attends them with the agency of his Spirit, and accompanies them to the hearts of people. It is important for all ministers to feel that their weapons are mighty only through God. Conquerors and earthly warriors go into battle depending on the might of their own arm, and on the wisdom and skill which plans the battle. The Christian goes on his warfare, feeling that however well adapted the truths which he holds are to accomplish great purposes, and however wisely his plans are formed, yet that the efficacy of all depends on the agency of God. He has no hope of victory but in God. And if God does not attend him, he is sure of inevitable defeat.

To the pulling down of strongholds - The word rendered here as "strongholds" (ὀχύρωμα ochurōma) means properly a fastness, fortress, or strong fortification. It is here beautifully used to denote the various obstacles resembling a fortress which exist, and which are designed and adapted to oppose the truth and the triumph of the Christian‘s cause. All those obstacles are strongly fortified. The sins of his heart are fortified by long indulgence and by the hold which they have on his soul. The wickedness of the world which he opposes is strongly fortified by the fact that it has seized on strong human passions; that one point strengthens another; that great numbers are united. The idolatry of the world was strongly fortified by prejudice, and long establishment, and the protection of laws, and the power of the priesthood; and the opinions of the world are entrenched behind false philosophy and the power of subtle argumentation. The whole world is fortified against Christianity; and the nations of the earth have been engaged in little else than in raising and strengthening such strongholds for the space of 6,000 years. The Christian religion goes forth against all the combined and concentrated powers of resistance of the whole world; and the warfare is to be waged against every strongly fortified place of error and of sin. These strong fortifications of error and of sin are to be battered down and laid in ruins by our spiritual weapons.

Verse 5

Casting down imaginations - Margin, reasonings. The word is probably used here in the sense of device, and refers to all the plans of a wicked world; the various systems of false philosophy; and the reasonings of the enemies of the gospel. The various systems of false philosophy were so intrenched that they might be called the stronghold of the enemies of God. The foes of Christianity pretend to a great deal of reason, and rely on that in resisting the gospel.

And every high thing … - Every exalted opinion respecting the dignity and purity of human nature; all the pride of the human heart and of the understanding. All this is opposed to the knowledge of God, and all exalts itself into a vain self-confidence. People entertain vain and unfounded opinions respecting their own excellency, and they feel that they do not need the provisions of the gospel and are unwilling to submit to God.

And bringing into captivity … - The figure here is evidently taken from military conquests. The idea is, that all the strongholds of paganism, and pride, and sin would be demolished; and that when this was done, like throwing down the walls of a city or making a breach, all the plans and purposes of the soul, the reason, the imagination, and all the powers of the mind would be subdued or led in triumph by the gospel, like the inhabitants of a captured city. Christ was the great Captain in this warfare. In his name the battle was waged, and by his power the victory was won. The captives were made for him and under his authority; and all were to be subject to his control. Every power of thought in the pagan world; all the systems of philosophy and all forms of opinion among people; all the purposes of the soul; all the powers of reason, memory, judgment, fancy in an individual, were all to come under the laws of Christ, All doctrines were to be in accordance with his will; philosophy should no longer control them, but they should be subject to the will of Christ. All the plans of life should be controlled by the will of Christ, and formed and executed under his control - as captives are led by a conqueror. All the emotions and feelings of the heart should be controlled by him, and led by him as a captive is led by a victor. The sense is, that it was the aim and purpose of Paul to accomplish this, and that it would certainly be done. The strongholds of philosophy, paganism, and sin should be demolished, and all the opinions, plans, and purposes of the world should become subject to the all-conquering Redeemer.

Verse 6

And having in a readiness … - I am ready to punish all disobedience, notwithstanding all that is said to the contrary; see the notes on 2 Corinthians 10:1-2. Clothed as I am with this power; aiming to subdue all things to Christ, though the weapons of my warfare are not carnal, and though I am modest or timid 2 Corinthians 10:1 when I am with you, I am prepared to take any measures of severity required by my apostolic office, in order that I may inflict deserved punishment on those who have violated the laws of Christ. The design of this is, to meet the objection of his enemies, that he would not dare to execute his threatenings.

When your obedience is fulfilled - Doddridge renders this: "now your obedience is fulfilled, and the sounder part of your church restored to due order and submission." The idea seems to be, that Paul was ready to inflict discipline when the church had showed a readiness to obey his laws, and to do its own duty - delicately intimating that the reason why it was not done was the lack of entire promptness in the church itself, and that it could not be done on any offender as long as the church itself was not prepared to sustain him. The church was to discountenance the enemies of the Redeemer; to show an entire readiness to sustain the apostle, and to unite with him in the effort to maintain the discipline of Christ's house.

Verse 7

Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? - This is addressed evidently to the members of the church, and with reference to the claims which had been set up by the false teachers. There can be no doubt that they valued themselves on their external advantages, and laid claim to special honor in the work of the ministry, because they were superior in personal appearance, in rank, manners, or eloquence to Paul. Paul reproves them for thus judging, and assures them that this was not a proper criterion by which to determine on qualifications for the apostolic office. Such things were highly valued among the Greeks, and a considerable part of the effort of Paul in these letters is to show that these things constitute no evidence that those who possessed them were sent from God.

If any man trust to himself … - This refers to the false teachers who laid claims to be the followers of Christ by way of eminence. Whoever these teachers were, it is evident that they claimed to be on the side of Christ, and to be appointed by him. They were probably Jews, and they boasted of their talents and eloquence, and possibly that they had seen the Saviour. The phrase "trust to himself," seems to imply that they relied on

some special merit of their own, or some special advantage which they had - Bloomfield. It may have been that they were of the same tribe that he was, or that they had seen him, or that they. confided in their own talents or endowments as a proof that they had been sent by him. It is not an uncommon thing for people to have such confidence in their own gifts, and particularly in a power of fluent speaking, as to suppose that this is a sufficient evidence that they are sent to preach the gospel.

Let him of himself think this again - Since he relies so much on himself; since he has such confidence in his own powers, let him look at the evidence that I also am of Christ.

That as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's - That I have given as much evidence that I am commissioned by Christ as they can produce. It may be of a different kind. It is not in eloquence. and rank, and the gift of a rapid and ready elocution, but it may be superior to what they are able to produce. Probably Paul refers here to the fact that he had seen the Lord Jesus, and that he had been directly commissioned by him. The sense is, that no one could produce more proofs of being called to the ministry than he could.

Verse 8

For though I should boast … - If I should make even higher claims than I have done to a divine commission. I could urge higher evidence than I have done that I am sent by the Lord Jesus.

Of our authority - Of my authority as an apostle, my power to administer discipline, and to direct the affairs of the church.

Which the Lord hath given us for edification - A power primarily conferred to build up his people and save them and not to destroy.

I should not be ashamed - It would be founded on good evidence and sustained by the nature of my commission. I should also have no occasion to be ashamed of the manner in which it has been exercised - a power that has in fact been employed in extending religion and edifying the church, and not in originating and sustaining measures suited to destroy the soul.

Verse 9

That I may not seem … - The meaning of this verse seems to be this. "I say that I might boast more of my power in order that I may not appear disposed to terrify you with my letters merely. I do not threaten more than I can perform. I have it in my power to execute all that I have threatened, and to strike an awe not only by my letters, but by the infliction of extraordinary

miraculous punishments. And if I should boast that I had done this, and could do it again, I should have no reason to be ashamed. It would not be vain and empty boasting; not boasting which is not well-founded."

Verse 10

For his letters - The letters which he has sent to the church when absent. Reference is had here probably to the First Epistle to the Corinthians. They might also have seen some of Paul's other epistles, and been so well acquainted with them as to he able to make the general remark that he had the power of writing in an authoritative and impressive manner.

Say they - Margin, "Said he." Greek (φησὶν phēsin) in the singular. This seems to have referred to some one person who had uttered the words - perhaps some one who was the principal leader of the faction opposed to Paul.

Are weighty and powerful - Tyndale renders this: "Sore and strong." The Greek is, "heavy and strong" (βαρεῖαι καὶ ἰσχυραί bareiai kai ischuraiThe sense is, that his letters were energetic and powerful. They abounded with strong argument, manly appeals, and impressive reproof. This even his enemies were compelled to admit, and this no one can deny who ever read them. Paul's letters comprise a considerable portion of the New Testament; and some of the most important doctrines of the New Testament are those which are advocated and enforced by him; and his letters have done more to give shape to the theological doctrines of the Christian world than any other cause whatever. He wrote 14 epistles to churches and individuals on various occasions and on a great variety of topics; and his letters soon rose into very high repute among even the inspired ministers of the New Testament (see 2 Peter 3:15, 2 Peter 3:16), and were regarded as inculcating the most important doctrines of religion. The general characteristics of Paul's letters are:

(1) They are strongly argumentative. See especially the Epistles to the Romans and the Hebrews.

(2) they are distinguished for boldness and vigor of style.

(3) they are written under great energy of feeling and of thought - a rapid and impetuous torrent that bears him forcibly along.

(4) they abound more than most other writings in parentheses, and the sentences are often involved and obscure.

(5) they often evince rapid transitions and departures from the regular current of thought. A thought strikes him suddenly, and he pauses to illustrate it, and dwells upon it long, before he returns to the main subject. The consequence is, that it is often difficult to follow him.

(6) they are powerful in reproof - abounding with strokes of great boldness of denunciation, and also with specimens of most withering sarcasm and most delicate irony.

(7) they abound in expressions of great tenderness and pathos. Nowhere can be found expressions of a heart more tender and affectionate than in the writings of Paul.

(8) they dwell much on great and profound doctrines, and on the application of the principles of Christianity to the various duties of life.

(9) they abound with references to the Saviour. He illustrates everything by his life, his example, his death, his resurrection. It is not wonderful that letters composed on such subjects and in such a manner by an inspired man produced a deep impression on the Christian world; nor that they should be regarded now as among the most important and valuable portions of the Bible. Take away Paul‘s letters, and what a chasm would be made in the New Testament! What a chasm in the religious opinions and in the consolations of the Christian world!

But his bodily presence - His personal appearance.

Is weak - Imbecile, feeble (ἀσθενὴς asthenēs) - a word often used to denote infirmity of body, sickness, disease; Matthew 25:39, Matthew 25:43-44; Luke 10:9; Acts 4:9; Acts 5:15-16; 1 Corinthians 11:30. Here it is to be observed that this is a mere charge which was brought against him, and it is not of necessity to be supposed that it was true, though the presumption is, that there was some foundation for it. It is supposed to refer to some bodily imperfections, and possibly to his diminutive stature. Chrysostom says that his stature was low, his body crooked, and his head bald. Lucian, in his Philopatris, says of him, “Corpore erat parvo, contracto, incurvo,

tricubitali" - probably an exaggerated description, perhaps a caricature - to denote one very diminutive and having no advantages of personal appearance. According to Nicephorus, Paul "was a little man, crooked, and almost bent like a bow; with a pale countenance, long and wrinkled; a bald head; his eyes full of fire and benevolence; his beard long, thick, and interspersed with gray hairs, as was his head," etc. But there is no certain evidence of the truth of these representations. Nothing in the Bible would lead us to suppose that Paul was remarkably diminutive or deformed; and though there may be some foundation for the charge here alleged that his bodily presence was weak, yet we are to remember that this was the accusation of his enemies, and that it was doubtless greatly exaggerated. Nicephorus was a writer of the sixteenth century, and his statements are worthy of no regard. That Paul was eminently an eloquent man may be inferred from a great many considerations; some of which are:

(1) His recorded discourses in the Acts of the Apostles, and the effect produced by them. No one can read his defense before Agrippa or Felix and not be convinced that as an orator he deserves to be ranked among the most distinguished of ancient times. No one who reads the account in the Acts can believe that he had any remarkable impediment in his speech or that he was remarkably deformed.

(2) such was somehow his grace and power as an orator that he was taken by the inhabitants of Lycaonia as Mercury, the god of eloquence; Acts 16:12. Assuredly the evidence here is, that Paul was not deformed.

(3) it may be added, that Paul is mentioned by Longinus among the principal orators of antiquity. From these circumstances, there is no reason to believe that Paul was remarkably deficient in the qualifications requisite for an orator, or that he was in any way remarkably deformed.

And his speech contemptible - To be despised. Some suppose that he had an impediment in his speech. But conjecture here is vain and useless. We are to remember that this is a charge made by his adversaries, and that it was made by the fastidious Greeks, who professed to be great admirers of eloquence, but who in his time confided much more in the mere art of the rhetorician than in the power of thought, and in energetic appeals to the reason and conscience of people. Judged by their standard it may be that Paul had not the graces in voice or manner, or in the knowledge of the

Greek language which they esteemed necessary in a finished orator; but judged by his power of thought, and his bold and manly defense of truth, and his energy of character and manner, and his power of impressing truth on mankind, he deserves, doubtless, to be ranked among the first orators of antiquity. No man has left the impress of his own mind on more other minds than Paul.

Verse 11

Let such an one think this … - Let them not flatter themselves that there will be any discrepancy between my words and my deeds. Let them feel that all which has been threatened will be certainly executed unless there is repentance. Paul here designedly contradicts the charge which was made against him; and means to say that all that he had threatened in his letters would he certainly executed unless there was a reform. I think that the evidence here is clear that Paul does not intend to admit what they said about his bodily presence to be true; and most probably all that has been recorded about his deformity is mere fable.

Verse 12

For we dare not make ourselves of the number - We admit that we are not bold enough for that. They had accused him of a lack of boldness and energy when present with them, 2 Corinthians 10:1, 2 Corinthians 10:10. Here in a strain of severe but delicate irony, he says he was not bold enough to do things which the had done. He did not dare to do the things which had been done among them. To such boldness of character, present or absent, he could lay no claim.

Or compare ourselves … - I am not bold enough for that. That requires a stretch of boldness and energy to which I can lay no claim.

That commend themselves - That put themselves forward, and that boast of their endowments and attainments. It is probable that this was commonly done by those to whom the apostle here refers; and it is certain that it is everywhere the characteristic of pride. To do this, Paul says, required greater boldness than he possessed, and on this point he yielded to them the palm. The satire here is very delicate, and yet very severe, and was such as would doubtless be felt by them.

But they measuring themselves by themselves - Whitby and Clarke suppose that this means that they compare themselves with each other; and that they made the false apostles particularly their standard. Doddridge, Grotius, Bloomfield, and some others suppose the sense to be, that they

made themselves the standard of excellence. They looked continually on their own accomplishments, and did not look at the excellences of others. They thus formed a disproportionate opinion of themselves, and undervalued all others. Paul says that he had not boldness enough for that. It required a moral courage to which he could lay no claim. Horace (Epis. 2 Corinthians 1:7. 98) has an expression similar to this:

"Metirise quemque sue modulo ac pede verum est."

The sense of Paul is, that they made themselves the standard of excellence; that they were satisfied with their own attainments; and that they overlooked the superior excellence and attainments of others. This is a graphic description of pride and self-complacency; and, alas! it is what is often exhibited. How many there are, and it is to be feared even among professing Christians, who have no other standard of excellence than themselves. Their views are the standard of orthodoxy; their modes of worship are the standard of the proper manner of devotion; their habits and customs are in their own estimation perfect; and their own characters are the models of excellence, and they see little or no excellence in those who differ from them. They look on themselves as the true measure of orthodoxy, humility, zeal, and piety; and they condemn all others, however excellent they may be, who differ from them.

And comparing themselves … - Or rather comparing themselves with themselves. Themselves they make to be the standard, and they judge of everything by that.

Are not wise - Are stupid and foolish. Because:

(1) They had no such excellence as to make themselves the standard.

(2) because this was an indication of pride.

(3) because it made them blind to the excellences of others. It was to be presumed that others had endowments not inferior to theirs.

(4) because the requirements of God, and the character of the Redeemer, were the proper standard of conduct. Nothing is a more certain indication of folly than for a man to make himself the standard of excellence. Such an individual must be blind to his own real character; and the only thing certain about his attainments is, that he is inflated with pride. And yet how common! How self-satisfied are most persons! How pleased with their own

character and attainments! How grieved at any comparison which is made with others implying their inferiority! How prone to undervalue all others simply because they differ from them! - The margin renders this: "understand it not," that is, they do not understand their own character or their inferiority.

Verse 13

But we will not boast of things without our measure - Tyndale renders this:" But we will not rejoice above measure." There is great obscurity in the language here, arising from its brevity. But the general idea seems to be plain. Paul says that he had not boldness as they had to boast of things wholly beyond his proper rule and his actual attainments and influence: and, especially, that he was not disposed to enter into other people's labors; or to boast of things that had been done by the mere influence of his name, and beyond the proper limits of his personal exertions. He made no boast of having done anything where he had not been himself on the ground and labored assiduously to secure the object. They, it is not improbable, had boasted of what had been done in Corinth as though it were really their work though it had been done by the apostle himself. Nay more, it is probable that they boasted of what had been done by the mere influence of their name. Occupying a central position, they supposed that their reputation had gone abroad, and that the mere influence of their reputation had had an important effect. Not, so with Paul. He made no boast of anything but what God had enabled him to do by his evangelical labors, and by personal exertions. He entered into no one else's labors and claimed nothing that others had done as his own. He was not bold enough for that.

But according to the measure of the rule … - Margin, Or, "line." The word rendered "rule" (Greek, κανὼν kanōnwhence our English word canon) means properly a reed, rod, or staff employed to keep anything stiff, erect, asunder (*Hom*. ii. 8. 103): then a measuring rod or line; then any standard or rule - its usual meaning in the New Testament, as, for example, of life and doctrine, Galatians 6:16; Philemon 3:16 - Robinson's Lexicon. Here it means the limit, boundary line, or sphere of action assigned to anyone. Paul means to say that God had appropriated a certain line or boundary as the proper limit of his sphere of action; that his appropriate sphere extended to them; that in going to them, though they were far distant from the field of

his early labors, he had confined himself within the proper limits assigned him by God; and that in boasting of his labors among them he was not boasting of anything which did not properly fall within the sphere of labor assigned to him. The meaning is, that Paul was especially careful not to boast of anything beyond his proper bounds.

Which God hath distributed to us - Which in assigning our respective fields of labor God has assigned unto me and my fellow-laborers. The Greek word rendered here as "distributed" (ἐμερίσεν emerisen) means properly to measure; and the sense is, that God had measured out or apportioned their respective fields of labor; that by his providence he had assigned to each one his proper sphere, and that in the distribution Corinth had fallen to the lot of Paul. In going there he had kept within the proper limits; in boasting of his labors and success there he did not boast of what did not belong to him.

A measure to reach even unto you - The sense is, "the limits assigned me include you, and I may therefore justly boast of what I have done among you as within my proper field of labor." Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles Acts 26:17-18; and the whole country of Greece therefore he regarded as falling within the limits assigned to him. No one therefore could blame him for going there as if he was an intruder; no one assert that he had gone beyond the proper bounds.

Verse 14

For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure - In coming to preach to you we have not gone beyond the proper limits assigned us. We have not endeavored to enlarge the proper boundaries, to stretch the line which limited us, but have kept honestly within the proper limits.

As though we reached not unto you - That is, as if our boundaries did not extend so far as to comprehend you. We have not overstepped the proper limits, as if Greece was not within the proper sphere of action.

For we are come as far as to you … - In the regular work of preaching the gospel we have come to you. We have gone from place to place preaching the gospel where we had opportunity; we have omitted no important places, until in the regular discharge of our duties in preaching we have reached you and have preached the gospel to you. We have not omitted other places in order to come to you and enter into the proper field of labor of others, but in the regular work of making the gospel known as far as possible to all people we have come to Corinth. Far as it is, therefore,

from the place where we started, we have approached it in a regular manner, and have not gone out of our proper province in doing it.

Verse 15

Not boasting of things without our measure - There is here probably an allusion to the false teachers at Corinth. They had come after Paul had been there, and had entered into his labors. When he had founded the church; when he had endured trials and persecutions in order to reach Corinth; when he had labored there for a year and a half Acts 18:11, they came and entered the quiet and easy field, formed parties. and claimed the field as their own. Paul says that he had not courage to do that; see note, 2 Corinthians 10:12. That required a species of boldness to which he could lay no claim; and he did not assume honor to himself like that.

That is, of other men‘s labors - Not intruding into churches which we did not establish, and claiming the right to direct their affairs, and to exclude the founders from all proper honors and all influence, and endeavoring to alienate the affections of Christians from their spiritual father and guide.

But having hope … - So far from this; so far from a desire to enter into the labors of others and quietly enjoying the avails of their industry; and so far even from a desire to sit down ourselves and enjoy the fruit of our own labors, I desire to penetrate other untrodden regions; to encounter new dangers; to go where the gospel has not been planted, and to rear other churches there. I do not, therefore, make these remarks as if I wished even to dispossess the teachers that have entered into my labors. I make them because I wish to be aided by you in extending the gospel further; and I look to your assistance in order that I may have the means of going into the regions where I have not made known the name of the Redeemer.

When your faith is increased - When you become so strong as not to need my presence and my constant care; and when you shall be able to speed me on my way and to aid me on my journey. He expected to be assisted by them in his efforts to carry the gospel to other countries.

That we shall be enlarged - Margin, “Magnified by you.” Bloomfield supposes that this means. “to gain fame and glory by you;” that is, as the teacher may justly by his pupils. So Robinson renders it. “to make great, to praise.” But to me the idea seems to be that he wished them to enlarge or magnify him by introducing him to larger fields of action; by giving him a wider sphere of labor. It was not that he wished to be magnified by

obtaining a wider reputation, not as a matter of praise or ambition, but he wished to have his work and success greatly enlarged. This he hoped to be enabled to do partly by the aid of the church at Corinth. When they became able to manage their own affairs; when his time was not demanded to superintend them; when their faith became so strong that his presence was not needed; and when they should assist him in his preparations for travel, then he would enter on his wider field of labor. He had no intention of sitting down in ease as the false teachers in Corinth seem disposed to have done.

According to our rule - Greek, "According our canon;" see on 2 Corinthians 10:13. The sense is, according to the rule by which the sphere of his labors had been marked out. His rule was to carry the gospel as far as possible to the pagan world. He regarded the regions lying far beyond Corinth as coming properly within his limits; and he desired to occupy that field.

Abundantly - Greek, Unto abundance. So as to abound; that is, to occupy the field assigned as far as possible.

Verse 16

To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you - What regions are referred to here can be only a matter of conjecture. It may be that he wished to preach in other parts of Greece, and that he designed to go to Arcadia or Lacedaemon. Rosenmuller supposes that as the Corinthians were engaged in commerce, the apostle hoped that by them some tidings of the gospel would reach the countries with which they were engaged in traffic. But I think it most probable that he alludes to Italy and Spain. It is certain that he had formed the design of visiting Spain Romans 15:24, Romans 15:28; and he doubtless wished the Corinthians to aid him in that purpose, and was anxious to do this as soon as the condition of the eastern churches would allow it.

And not to boast in another man's line of things … - Margin, "Rule," the same word (κανὼν kanōn) which occurs in 2 Corinthians 10:13. The meaning is, that Paul did not mean to boast of what properly belonged to others. He did not claim what they had done as his own. He did not intend to labor within what was properly their bounds, and then to claim the field and the result of the labor as his. He probably means here to intimate that this had been done by the false teachers of Corinth; but so far was he from designing to do this, that he meant soon to leave Corinth, which was

properly within his limits, and the church which he had founded there, to go and preach the gospel to other regions. Whether Paul ever went to Spain has been a question (see the note on Romans 15:24); but it is certain that he went to Rome, and that he preached the gospel in many other places after this besides Corinth.

Verse 17

But he that glorieth - He that boasts. Whatever may be the occasion of his boasting, whether in planting churches or in watering them; whether in his purposes, plans, toils, or success. Paul himself did not deem it improper on some occasions to boast 2 Corinthians 11:16; 2 Corinthians 12:5, but it was not of his own power, attainments, or righteousness. He was disposed to trace all to the Lord, and to regard him as the source of all blessing and all success.

Let him glory in the Lord - In this serious and weighty admonition, Paul designs, doubtless, to express the manner in which he was accustomed to glory, and to furnish an admonition to the Corinthians. In the previous part of the chapter there had been some severe irony. He closes the chapter with the utmost seriousness and solemnity of manner, in order to show on his part that he was not disposed to glory in his own attainments and to admonish them not to boast of theirs. If they had anything valuable they should regard the Lord as the author of it. In this admonition it is probable that Paul had in his eye the passage in Jeremiah 9:23-24; though he has not expressly quoted it. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth." The sentiment is a favorite one with Paul, as it should be with all Christians; see the note on 1 Corinthians 1:31. On this verse we may here remark:

I. That nothing is more common than for people to boast or glory. Little as they really have in which to glory, yet there is no one probably who has not something of which he is proud, and of which he is disposed to boast. It would be difficult or impossible to find a person who had not something on which he prided himself; something in which he esteemed himself superior to others.

II. The things of which they boast are very various:

(1)Many are proud of their personal beauty; many, too, who would be unwilling to be thought proud of it.

(2)many glory in their accomplishments; or, what is more likely, in the accomplishments of their children.

(3)many glory in their talents; talents for anything, valuable or not, in which they suppose they surpass others. They glory in their talent for eloquence, or science, or gaining knowledge; or in their talent for gaining property or keeping it: for their skill in their professions or callings; for their ability to run, to leap, or to practice even any trick or sleight of hand. There is nothing so worthless that it does not constitute a subject of glorying, provided it be ours. If it belong to others it may be valueless.

(4)many glory in their property; in fine houses, extended plantations, or in the reputation of being rich; or in gorgeous dress, equipage, and furniture. In short, there is nothing which people possess in which they are not prone to glory. Forgetful of God the giver; forgetful that all may be soon taken from them. or that they soon must leave all; forgetful that none of these things can constitute a distinction in the grave or beyond, they boast as if these things were to remain forever, and as if they had been acquired independently of God. How prone is the man of talents to forget that God has given him his intellect, and that for its proper use he must give account! How prone is the rich man to forget that he must die! How prone the frivolous and the beautiful to forget that they will lie undistinguished in the grave; and that death will consume them as soon as the most vile and worthless of the species!

III. If we glory it should be in the Lord. We should ascribe our talents, wealth, health, strength, and salvation to him. We should rejoice:

(1)That we have such a Lord, so glorious, so full of mercy, so powerful, so worthy of confidence and love.

(2)We should rejoice in our endowments and possessions as his gift. We should rejoice that we may come and lay everything at his feet, and whatever may be our rank, or talents, or learning, we should rejoice that we may come with the humblest child of poverty, and sorrow, and want, and say, “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth‘s sake;” 1 Corinthians 1:31.

Verse 18

For not he that commendeth himself … - Not he who boasts of his talents and endowments. He is not to be judged by the estimate which he shall place on himself, but by the estimate which God shall form and express.

Is approved - By God. It is no evidence that we shall be saved that we are prone to commend ourselves; see Romans 16:10.

But whom the Lord commendeth - see the note on Romans 2:29. The idea here is, that people are to be approved or rejected by God. He is to pass judgment on them, and that judgment is to be in accordance with his estimate of their character, and not according to their own. If he approves them they will be saved; if he does not, vain will be all their empty boasting; vain all their reliance on their wealth, eloquence. learning, or earthly honors. None will save them from condemnation; not all these things can purchase for them eternal life. Paul thus seriously shows that we should be mainly anxious to obtain the divine favor. It should be the grand aim and purpose of our life; and we should repress all disposition for vain - glory or self-confidence; all reliance on our talents, attainments, or accomplishments for salvation. our boast is that we have such a redeemer: and in that we all may glory!

Remarks

1. We should have no desire to show off any special boldness or energy of character which we may have; 2 Corinthians 10:1-2. We should greatly prefer to evince the gentleness and meekness of Christ. Such a character is in itself of far more value than one that is merely energetic and bold; that is rash, authoritative, and fond of display.

2. They who are officers in the church should have no desire to administer discipline; 2 Corinthians 10:2. Some people are so fond of power that they always love to exercise it. They are willing to show it even by inflicting punishment on others; and "dressed in a little brief authority" they are constantly seeking occasion to show their consequence; they magnify trifles; they are unwilling to pass by the slightest offences. The reason is not that they love the truth, but that they love their own consequence, and they seek every opportunity to show it.

3. All Christians and all Christian ministers are engaged in a warfare; 2 Corinthians 10:3. They are at war with sin in their own hearts, and with sin

wherever it exists on earth, and with the powers of darkness. With foes so numerous and so vigilant, they should not expect to live a life of ease or quietness. Peace, perfect peace, they may expect in heaven, not on earth. Here they are to fight the good fight of faith and thus to lay held on eternal life. It has been the common lot of all the children of God to maintain such a war, and shall we expect to be exempt?

"Shall *I* be carried to the skies.
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?
"Are there no foes for me to face,
Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend to grace,
To help me on to God?"

4. The weapons of the Christian are not to be carnal, but are to be spiritual; 2 Corinthians 10:4. He is not to make his way by the exhibition of human passion; in bloody strife; and by acting under the influence of ambitious feelings. Truth is his weapon; and armed with truth, and aided by the Spirit of God, he is to expect the victory. How different is the Christian warfare from others! How different is Christianity from other systems! Muhammed made his way by arms, and propagated his religion amidst the din of battle. But not so with Christianity. That is to make its way by the silent, but mighty operation of truth; and there is not a rampart of idolatry and sin that is not yet to fall before it.

5. The Christian should be a man of a pure spirit; 2 Corinthians 10:4. He is to make his way by the truth. He should therefore love the truth, and he should seek to diffuse it as far as possible. In propagating or defending it, he should be always mild, gentle, and kind. Truth is never advanced, and an adversary is never convinced, where passion is evinced; where there is a haughty manner or a belligerent spirit. The apostolic precepts are full of "wisdom," "speaking the truth in love" Ephesians 4:15), "in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves: if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;" 2 Timothy 2:25.

6. In his warfare the Christian shall conquer; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. Against the truth of Christianity nothing has been able to stand. It made its way against the arrayed opposition of priests and emperors; against customs

and laws; against inveterate habits and opinions; against all forms of sin, until it triumphed, and "the banners of the faith floated from the palaces of the Caesars." So it will be in all the conflicts with evil. Nothing is more certain than that the powers of darkness in this world are destined to fall before the power of Christian truth, and that every stronghold of sin shall yet be demolished. So it is in the conflicts of the individual Christian. He may struggle long and hard. He may have many foes to contend with. But he shall gain the victory. His triumph shall be secure; and he shall yet be enabled to say, "I have fought a good fight - henceforth there is laid up for me a crown."

"The saints in all this glorious war.
Shall conquer though they die;
They see the triumph from afar,
And seize it with their eye."

7. Yet all should feel their dependence on God; 2 Corinthians 10:4. It is only through him and by his aid that we have any power. Truth itself has no power except as it is attended and directed by God; and we should engage in our conflict feeling that none but God can give us the victory. If forsaken by him, we shall fall; if supported by him, we may face without fear a "frowning world," and all the powers of the "dark world of hell."

8. We should not judge by the outward appearance; 2 Corinthians 10:7. It is the heart that determines the character; and by that God shall judge us, and by that we should judge ourselves.

9. We should aim to extend the gospel as far as possible; 2 Corinthians 10:14-16. Paul aimed to go beyond the regions where the gospel had been preached, and to extend it to far distant lands. So the "field" still "is the world." A large portion of the earth is yet unevangelized. Instead, therefore, of sitting down quietly in enjoyment and ease, let us, like him, earnestly desire to extend the influence of pure religion, and to bring distant nations to the saving knowledge of the truth.

10. Let us not boast in ourselves; 2 Corinthians 10:17. Not of our talents, wealth, learning, or accomplishments let us glory. But let us glory that we have such a God as Yahweh. Let us glory that we have such a Redeemer as Jesus Christ. Let us glory that we have such a sanctifier as the

Holy Spirit. Let us acknowledge God as the source of all our blessings, and to him let us honestly consecrate our hearts and our lives.

11. What a reverse of judgment there will yet be on human character! 2 Corinthians 10:17-18. How many now commend themselves who will be condemned in the last day. How many people boast of their talents and morals, and even their religion, who will then be involved in indiscriminate condemnation with the most vile and worthless of the race. How anxious should we be, therefore, to secure the approbation of God; and whatever our fellow-men may say of us, how infinitely desirable is it to be commended then by our heavenly Father.

2 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Introduction

This chapter 2 Corinthians 11:1 asks them if they could bear with him a little further in his folly, and entreats them to do it. This verse contains the scope of the chapter; and the remainder of the chapter is an enumeration of the causes which he had for his boasting, though probably each reason is adapted to some form of accusation brought against him.

Having entreated them to bear with him a little further, he states the reasons why he was disposed to go into this subject at all; 2 Corinthians 11:2-4. It was not because he was disposed to sound his own praise, but it was from love to them. He had espoused them as a chaste virgin to Christ. He was afraid that their affections would be alienated from the Redeemer. He reminded them of the manner in which Eve was tempted; and he reminded them that by the same smooth and plausible arts their affections might also be stolen away, and that they might be led into sin. He reminds them that there was danger of their receiving another gospel, and expresses the apprehension that they had done it, and that they had embraced a deceiver; 2 Corinthians 11:4.

Having made this general statement of his design, Paul now goes more into detail in answering the objections against him, and in showing the reasons which he had for boasting as he had done. The statement in answer to their objections relates to the following points:

(1) He had supposed that he was not behind the chiefest of the apostles. He had supposed that he had claims to the apostolic office of as high an order as any of them. Called to the work as he had been, and laboring as he had done, he had regarded himself as having an indisputable claim to the office of an apostle. True, they had charged him with being rude in speech, a charge which he was not disposed to deny, but in a far more important point than that he had showed that he was not disqualified for the apostolic office. In knowledge, the main qualification, he had not been deficient, as probably even his opponents were disposed to admit 2 Corinthians 11:5-6.

(2) he had not deprived himself of the claims to the office and honors of an apostle by declining to receive from them a compensation, and by

preaching the gospel without charge; 2 Corinthians 11:7-9. Probably they had alleged that this was a proof that he knew that he had no claim to the honors of an apostle. He, therefore, states exactly how this was. He had" received" a support, but he had robbed other churches to do it. And even when he was with them, he had received supplies from a distant church in order that he might not be burdensome to them. The charge was therefore groundless, that he knew that he had no right to the support due to an apostle.

(3) he declares it to be his fixed purpose that no one should prevent his boasting in that manner. And this he did because he loved them, and because he would save them from the snares of those who would destroy them. He therefore stated the true character of those who attempted to deceive them. They were the ministers of Satan, appearing as the ministers of righteousness, as Satan himself was transformed into an angel of light; 2 Corinthians 11:10.

(4) Paul claims the privilege of boasting as a fool a little further; 2 Corinthians 11:16. And he claims that as others boasted, and as they were allowed to do so by the Corinthians, he had also a right to do the same thing. They suffered them to boast; they allowed them to do it even if they devoured them, and smote them, and took their property. It was but fair, therefore, that he should be allowed to boast a little of what he was and of what he had done; 2 Corinthians 11:17-20.

(5) he goes, therefore, into an extended and most tender description of what he had suffered, and of his claims to their favorable regard. He had all the personal advantages arising from birth which they could pretend to. He was a Hebrew, of the seed of Abraham, and a minister of Christ; 2 Corinthians 11:21-23. He had endured far more labors and dangers than they had done; and in order to set this before them he enumerates the trials through which he had passed, and states the labors which constantly came upon him; 2 Corinthians 11:23-30. Of these things, of his sufferings, and trials, and infirmities, he felt that he had a right to speak, and these constituted a far higher claim to the confidence of the Christian church than the endowments of which his adversaries boasted.

(6) as another instance of peril and suffering, he refers to the fact that his life was endangered when he was in Damascus, and that he barely escaped by being lowered down from the wall of the city, 2 Corinthians 11:31-33. The conclusion which Paul doubtless intends should be derived from all this is, that he had far higher grounds of claim to the office of an apostle than his adversaries would admit, or than they could furnish themselves. He admitted that he was weak and subject to infirmities; he did not lay claim to the graces of a polished elocution, as they did; but if a life of self-denial and toil, of an honest devotion to the cause of truth at imminent and frequent hazard of life, constituted an evidence that he was an apostle, he had that evidence. They appealed to their birth, their rank, their endowments as public speakers. In the quiet and comfort of a congregation and church established to their hands; in reaping the avails of the labors of others; and in the midst of enjoyments, they coolly laid claims to the honors of the ministerial office, and denied his claims. In trial, and peril, and labor, and poverty; in scourges, and imprisonments, and shipwrecks; in hunger and thirst; in unwearied traveling from place to place: and in the care of all the congregations, were his claims to their respect and confidence, and he was willing that anyone that chose should make the comparison between them. Such was his "foolish" boasting; such his claims to their confidence and regard.

Verse 1

Would to God - Greek, "I would" (Ὄφελον Ophelon). This expresses earnest desire, but in the Greek there is no appeal to God. The sense would be well expressed by "O that," or "I earnestly wish."

Ye could bear with me - That you would bear patiently with me; that you would hear me patiently, and suffer me to speak of myself.

In my folly - Folly in boasting. The idea seems to be, "I know that boasting is generally foolish, and that it is not to be indulged in. But though it is to be generally regarded as folly, yet circumstances compel me to it, and I ask your indulgence in it." It is possible also that his opponents accused him of folly in boasting so much of himself.

And indeed bear with me - Margin, "Ye do bear." But the text has probably the correct rendering. It is the expression of an earnest wish that they would tolerate him a little in this. He entreats them to bear with him because he was constrained to it.

Verse 2

For I am jealous over you - This verse expresses the reason why he was disposed to speak of his attainments, and of what he had done. It was because he loved them, and because he feared that they were in danger of being seduced from the simplicity of the gospel. The phrase "I am jealous" (Ζηλῶ Zēlō) means properly, I ardently love you; I am full of tender attachment to you. The word was usual among the Greeks to denote an ardent affection of any kind (from ζέω zeōto boil, to be fervid or fervent). The precise meaning is to be determined by the connection; see the note on 1 Corinthians 12:31. The word may denote the jealousy which is felt by an apprehension of departure from fidelity on the part of those whom we love; or it may denote a fervid and glowing attachment. The meaning here probably is, that Paul had a strong attachment to them.

With godly jealousy - Greek, "with the zeal of God" Θεοῦ ζήλῳ Theou zēlō). That is, with very great or vehement zeal - in accordance with the Hebrew custom when the name God is used to denote any thing signally great, as the phrase "mountains of God," meaning very elevated or lofty mountains. The mention of this ardent attachment suggested what follows. His mind reverted to the tenderness of the marriage relation, and to the possibility that in that relation the affections might be estranged. He makes use of this figure, therefore, to apprize them of the change which he apprehended.

For I have espoused you … - The word used here (ἁρμόζω harmozō) means properly "to adapt, to fit, to join together." Hence, "to join in wedlock, to marry." Here it means to marry to another; and the idea is, that Paul had been the agent employed in forming a connection, similar to the marriage connection. between them and the Saviour. The allusion here is not certain. It may refer to the custom which prevailed when friends made and procured the marriage for the bridegroom; or it may refer to some custom like that which prevailed among the Lacedemonians where persons were employed to form the lives and manners of virgins and prepare them for the duties of the married life. The sense is clear. Paul claims that it was by his instrumentality that they had been united to the Redeemer. Under him they had been brought into a relation to the Saviour similar to that sustained by the bride to her husband; and he felt all the interest in them which naturally grew out of that fact and from a desire to present them blameless to the pure Redeemer. The relation of the Church to Christ is

often represented by marriage; see Ephesians 5:23-33; Revelation 19:7; Revelation 21:9.

To one husband - To the Redeemer.

That I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ - The allusion here, according to Doddridge, is, to the custom among the Greeks "of having an officer whose business it was to educate and form young women, especially those of rank and figure, designed for marriage, and then to present them to those who were to be their husbands, and if this officer through negligence permitted them to be corrupted between the espousals and the consummation of the marriage, great blame would fall upon him." Such a responsibility Paul felt. So anxious was he for the entire purity of that church which was to constitute "the bride, the Lamb's wife;" so anxious that all who were connected with that church should be presented pure in heaven.

Verse 3

But I fear - Paul had just compared the church to a virgin, soon to be presented as a bride to the Redeemer. The mention of this seems to have suggested to him the fact that the first woman was deceived and led astray by the tempter, and that the same thing might occur in regard to the church which he was so desirous should be preserved pure. The grounds of his fear were:

(1)That Satan had seduced the first woman, thus demonstrating that the most holy ones were in danger of being led astray by temptation; and,

(2)That special efforts were made to seduce them from the faith. The persuasive arts of the false teachers; the power of philosophy; and the attractive and corrupting influences of the world, he had reason to suppose might be employed to seduce them from simple attachment to Christ.

Lest by any means - Lest somehow (μήπως mēpōs). It is implied that many means would be used; that all arts would be tried; and that in some way, which perhaps they little suspected, these arts would be successful, unless they were constantly put upon their guard.

As the serpent beguiled Eve - see Genesis 3:1-11. The word "serpent" here refers doubtless to Satan, who was the agent by whom Eve was beguiled see John 8:44; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:9; Revelation 20:2. Paul did not mean that they were in danger of being corrupted in the same way, but that similar efforts would be made to seduce them. Satan adapts his temptations to the character and circumstances of the tempted. He varies

them from age to age, and applies them in such a way as best to secure his object. Hence, all should be on their guard. No one knows the mode in which he will approach him, but all may know that he will approach them in some way.

Through his subtilty - see Genesis 3:1. By his craft, art, wiles (ἐν τῇ πανουργίᾳ en tē panourgia). The word implies that shrewdness, cunning, craft was employed. A tempter always employs cunning and art to accomplish his object. The precise mode in which Satan accomplished his object is not certainly known. Perhaps the cunning consisted in assuming an attractive form - a fascinating manner - a manner suited to charm; perhaps in the idea that the eating of the forbidden fruit had endowed a serpent with the power of reason and speech above all other animals, and that it might be expected to produce a similar transformation in Eve. At all events there were false pretences and appearances, and such Paul apprehended would be employed by the false teachers to seduce and allure them; see on 2 Corinthians 11:13-14.

So your minds should be corrupted - So your thoughts should be perverted. So your hearts should be alienated. The mind is corrupted when the affections are alienated from the proper object, and when the soul is filled with unholy plans, and purposes, and desires.

From the simplicity that is in Christ -

(1) From simple and single-hearted devotedness to him - from pure and unmixed attachment to him. The fear was that their affections would be fixed on other objects, and that the singleness and unity of their devotedness to him would be destroyed.

(2) from his pure doctrines. By the admixture of philosophy; by the opinions of the world there was danger that their minds should be turned away from their hold on the simple truths which Christ had taught.

(3) from that simplicity of mind and heart; that childlike candor and docility; that freedom from all guile, dishonesty, and deception which so eminently characterized the Redeemer. Christ had a single aim; was free from all guile; was purely honest; never made use of any improper arts; never resorted to false appearances; and never deceived. His followers should in like manner be artless and guileless. There should be no mere cunning, no trick, no craft in advancing their purposes. There should be

nothing but honesty and truth in all that they say. Paul was afraid that they would lose this beautiful simplicity and artlessness of character and manner; and that they would insensibly be led to adopt the maxims of mere cunning, of policy, of expediency, of seductive arts which prevailed so much in the world - a danger which was imminent among the shrewd and cunning people of Greece; but which is confined to no time and no place. Christians should be more guileless than even children are; as pure and free from trick, and from art and cunning as was the Redeemer himself.

(4) from the simplicity in worship which the Lord Jesus commended and required. The worship which the Redeemer designed to establish was simple, unostentatious, and pure - strongly in contrast with the gorgeousness and corruption of the pagan worship, and even with the imposing splendor of the Jewish temple service. He intended that it should be adapted to all lands, and such as could be offered by all classes of people - a pure worship, claiming first the homage of the heart, and then such simple external expressions as should best exhibit the homage of the heart. How easily might this be corrupted! What temptations were there to attempt to corrupt it by those who had been accustomed to the magnificence of the temple service, and who would suppose that the religion of the Messiah could not be less gorgeous than that which was designed to shadow forth his coming; and by those who had been accustomed to the splendid rites of the pagan worship, and who would suppose that the true religion ought not to be less costly and splendid than the false religion had been. If so much expense had been lavished on false religions, how natural to suppose that equal costliness at least should be bestowed on the true religion. Accordingly the history of the church for a considerable part of its existence has been little more than a record of the various forms in which the simple worship instituted by the Redeemer has been corrupted, until all that was gorgeous in pagan ceremonies and splendid in the Jewish ritual has been introduced as a part of Christian worship.

(5) from simplicity in dress and manner of living. The Redeemer‘s dress was simple. His manner of living was simple. His requirements demand great simplicity and plainness of apparel and manner of life; 1 Peter 3:3-6; 1 Timothy 2:9-10. Yet how much proneness is there at all times to depart from this! What a besetting sin has it been in all ages to the church of

Christ! And how much pains should there be that the very simplicity that is in Christ should be observed by all who bear the Christian name!

Verse 4

For if he that cometh … - There is much difficulty in this verse in ascertaining the true sense, and expositors have been greatly perplexed and divided in opinion, especially with regard to the true sense of the last clause, "ye might well bear with him." It is difficult to ascertain whether Paul meant to speak ironically or seriously; and different views will prevail as different views are taken of the design. If it be supposed that he meant to speak seriously, the sense will be, "If the false teacher could recommend a better Saviour than I have done, or a Spirit better able to sanctify and save, then there would be a propriety in your receiving him and tolerating his doctrines." If the former, then the sense will be, "You cannot well bear with me; but if a man comes among you preaching a false Saviour, and a false Spirit, and a false doctrine. then you bear with him without any difficulty."

Another interpretation still has been proposed, by supposing that the word "me" is to be supplied at the close of the verse instead of "him," and then the sense would be, "If you receive so readily one who preaches another gospel, one who comes with far less evidence that he is sent from God than I have, and if you show yourselves thus ready to fall in with any kind of teaching that may be brought to you, you might at least bear with me also." Amidst this variety it is not easy to ascertain the true sense. To me it seems probable, however, that Paul spoke seriously, and that our translation has expressed the true sense. The main idea doubtless is, that Paul felt that there was danger that they would be corrupted. If they could bring a better gospel, a more perfect system, and proclaim a more perfect Saviour, there would be no such change. But that could not be expected. It could not be done.

If therefore they preached any other Saviour or any other gospel; if they departed from the truths which he had taught them, it would be for the worse. It could not be otherwise. The Saviour whom he preached was perfect, and was able to save. The Spirit which he preached was perfect, and able to sanctify. The gospel which he preached was perfect, and there was no hope that it could be improved. Any change must be for the worse; and as the false teachers varied from his instructions, there was every reason to

apprehend that their minds would be corrupted from the simplicity that was in Christ. The principal idea, therefore, is, that the gospel which he preached was as perfect as it could be, and that any change would be for the worse. No doctrine which others brought could be recommended because it was better. By the phrase "he that cometh" is meant doubtless the false teacher in Corinth.

Preacheth another Jesus - Proclaims one who is more worthy of your love and more able to save. If he that comes among you and claims your affections can point out another Christ who is more worthy of your confidence, then I admit that you do well to receive him. It is implied here that this could not be done. The Lord Jesus in his character and work is perfect. No Saviour superior to him has been provided; none but he is necessary.

Whom we have not preached - Let them show, if they can, that they have any Saviour to tell of whom we have not preached. We have given all the evidence that we are sent by God, and have laid all the claim to your confidence, which they can do for having made known the Saviour. They with all their pretensions have no Saviour to tell you of with whom we have not already made you acquainted. They have no claims, therefore, from this quarter which we have not also.

Or if ye receive another spirit … - If they can preach to you another Sanctifier and Comforter; or if under their ministry you have received higher proofs of the power of the Spirit in performing miracles; in the gift of tongues; in renewing sinners and in comforting your hearts. The idea is, that Paul had proclaimed the existence and agency of the same Holy Spirit which they did; that his preaching had been attended with as striking proofs of the presence and power of that Spirit; that he had all the evidence of a divine commission from such an influence attending his labors which they could possibly have. They could reveal no spirit better able to sanctify and save; none who had more power than the Holy Spirit which they had received under the preaching of Paul, and there was therefore no reason why they should be "corrupted" or seduced from the simple doctrines which they had received and follow others.

Or another gospel … - A gospel more worthy of your acceptance - one more free, more full, more rich in promises; one that revealed a better plan of salvation, or that was more full of comfort and peace.

Ye might well bear with him - Margin, "with me." The word "him" is not in the Greek; but is probably to be supplied. The sense is, there would then be some excuse for your conduct. There would be some reason why you should welcome such teachers. But if this cannot be done; if they can preach no other and no better gospel and Saviour than I have done, then there is no excuse. There is no reason why you should follow such teachers and forsake those who were your earliest guides in religion. - Let us never forsake the gospel which we have until we are sure we can get a better. Let us adhere to the simple doctrines of the New Testament until some one can furnish better and clearer doctrines. Let us follow the rules of Christ in our opinions and our conduct; our plans, our mode of worship, our dress, and our amusements, engagements, and company, until we can certainly ascertain that there are better rules. A man is foolish for making any change until he has evidence that he is likely to better himself; and it remains yet to be proved that anyone has ever bettered himself or his family by forsaking the simple doctrines of the Bible, and embracing a philosophical speculation; by forsaking the scriptural views of the Saviour as the incarnate God, and embracing the views which represent him as a mere man; by forsaking the simple and plain rules of Christ about our manner of life, our dress, and our words and actions, and embracing those which are recommended by mere fashion and by the customs of a frivolous world.

Verse 5

For I suppose … - I think that I gave as good evidence that I was commissioned by God as the most eminent of the apostles. In the miracles which I performed; in the abundance of my labors, and in my success, I suppose that I did not fall behind any of them. If so, I ought to be regarded and treated as an apostle; and if so, then the false teachers should not be allowed to supplant me in your affections, or to seduce you from the doctrines which I have taught. On the evidence that Paul was equal to others in the proper proof of a commission from God; see notes on 2 Corinthians 11:21-30.

Verse 6

But though I be rude in speech - see the note, 2 Corinthians 10:10. The word rendered "rude" here (ἰδιώτης idiōtēs) means properly a private citizen, in opposition to one in a public station; then a plebeian, or one unlettered or unlearned, in opposition to one of more elevated rank, or one who is learned; see the Acts 4:13 note; 1 Corinthians 14:16 note. The idea

is, my language is that of a plain unlettered person. This was doubtless charged upon him by his enemies, and it may be that he designed in part to admit the truth of the charge.

Yet not in knowledge - I do not admit that I am ignorant of the religion which I profess to teach. I claim to be acquainted with the doctrines of Christianity. It does not appear that they charged him with ignorance. If it be asked how the admission that he was rude in speech consists with the fact that he was endowed by the Holy Spirit. with the power of speaking languages, we may observe that Paul had undoubtedly learned to speak Greek in his native place (Tarsus in Cilicia). and that the Greek which he had learned there was probably a corrupt kind, such as was spoken in that place. It was this Greek which he probably continued to speak; for there is no more reason to suppose that the Holy Spirit would aid him in speaking language which he had thus early learned than he would in speaking Hebrew. The endowments of the Holy Spirit were conferred to enable the apostles to speak languages which they had never learned, not in perfecting them in languages with which they were before acquainted. It may have been true, therefore, that Paul may have spoken some languages which he never learned with more fluency and perfection than he did those which he had learned to speak when he was young. See the remarks of the Archbishop of Cambray, as quoted by Doddridge in loc. It may be remarked. also, that some estimate of the manner of Paul on this point may be formed from his writings. Critics profoundly acquainted with the Greek language remark, that while there is great energy of thought and of diction in the writings of Paul; while he chooses or coins most expressive words, yet that there is everywhere a lack of Attic elegance of manner, and of the smoothness and beauty which were so grateful to a Grecian ear.

But we have been thoroughly made manifest … - You have known all about me. I have concealed nothing from you, and you have had ample oppotunity to become thoroughly acquainted with me. The meaning is, "I need not dwell on this. I need speak no more of my manner of speech or knowledge. With all that you are well acquainted."

Verse 7

Have I committed an offence - Have I done wrong. Greek, "Have I committed a sin." There is here a somewhat abrupt transition from the previous verse; and the connection is not very apparent. Perhaps the connection is this. "I admit my inferiority in regard to my manner of

speaking. But this does not interfere with my full understanding of the doctrines which I preach, nor does it interfere with the numerous evidences which I have furnished that I am called to the office of an apostle. What then is the ground of offence? In what have I erred? Wherein have I shown that I was not qualified to be an apostle? Is it in the fact that I have not chosen to press my claim to a support, but have preached the gospel without charge?" There can be no doubt that they urged this as an objection to him, and as a proof that he was conscious that he had no claim to the office of an apostle; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 9:18 ff.

Verse 8

I robbed other churches - The churches of Macedonia and elsewhere, which had ministered to his needs. Probably he refers especially to the church at Philippi (see Philemon 4:15-16), which seems to have done more than almost any other church for his support. By the use of the word "robbed" here Paul does not mean that he had obtained anything from them in a violent or unlawful manner, or anything which they did not give voluntarily. The word (ἐσύλησα esulēsa) means properly, "I spoiled, plundered, robbed," but the idea of Paul here is, that he, as it were, robbed them, because he did not render an equivalent for what they gave him. They supported him when he was laboring for another people. A conqueror who plunders a country gives no equivalent for what he takes. In this sense only could Paul say that he had plundered the church at Philippi. His general principle was, that "the laborer was worthy of his hire," and that a man was to receive his support from the people for whom he labored (see 1 Corinthians 9:7-14), but this rule he had not observed in this case.

Taking wages of them - Receiving a support from them. They bore my expenses.

To do you service - That I might labor among you without being supposed to be striving to obtain your property, and that I might not be compelled to labor with my own hands, and thus to prevent my preaching the gospel as I could otherwise do. The supply from other churches rendered it unnecessary in a great measure that his time should be taken off from the ministry in order to obtain a support.

Verse 9

And when I was present with you - When I was laboring in order to build up the church in Corinth.

I was chargeable to no man - I was burdensome to no one; or more liter ally," I did not lie as a dead weight upon you." The word used here, which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament (κατενάρκησα katenarkēsa), means, literally, to become torpid against, that is, to the detriment of anyone; and hence, to be burdensome. According to Jerome, its use here is a Cilicism of Paul. The idea is that he did not lead a torpid, inactive life at the expense of others. He did not expect a support from them when he was doing nothing; nor did he demand support which would in any sense be a burden to them. By his own hands Acts 18:3, and by the aid which he received from abroad, he was supported without deriving aid from the people of Corinth.

And in all things … - In all respects I have carefully kept myself from being a burden on the church. Paul had no idea of living at other people's expense when he was doing nothing. He did not, as a general thing, mean to receive anything for which he had not rendered a fair equivalent; a just principle for ministers and for all other people; see 2 Corinthians 12:13.

Verse 10

As the truth of Christ is in me - That is, I solemnly declare this as in the presence of Christ. As I am a Christian man; as I feel bound to declare the truth, and as I must answer to Christ. It is a solemn form of asseveration, equal to an oath; see the note on Romans 9:1; compare 1 Timothy 2:7.

No man shall stop me … - Margin, "This boasting shall not be stopped in me;" see the note on 1 Corinthians 9:15. The idea here is, that Paul was solemnly determined that the same thing should continue. He had not been burdensome to any, and he was resolved that he would not be. Rather than be burdensome he had labored with his own hands, and he meant to do it still. No man in all Achaia should ever have reason to say that he had been an idler, and had been supported by the churches when he was doing nothing. It was the fixed and settled purpose of his life never to be burdensome to any man. What a noble resolution! How fixed were the principles of his life! And what an instance of magnanimous self-denial and of elevated purpose! Every man, minister or otherwise, should adopt a similar resolution. He should resolve to receive nothing for which he has not rendered a fair equivalent, and resolve if he has health never to be a burden to his friends or to the church of God. And even if sick he may yet feel that he is not burdensome to others. If he is gentle and grateful; if he

makes no unnecessary care; and especially if he furnishes an example of patience and piety, and seeks the blessing of God on his benefactors, he furnishes them what they will usually esteem an ample equivalent. No man need be burdensome to his friends; and all should resolve that by the grace of God they never will be. There is considerable variety in the mss. here (see Mill on the place), but in regard to the general sense there can be no doubt. Nothing should ever hinder this boasting; nothing should deprive him of the privilege of saying that he had not been a burden.

In the regions of Achaia - Achaia was that part of Greece of which Corinth was the capital; see the note on Acts 18:12.

Verse 11

Wherefore … - It is not because I do not love you. It is not from pride, or because I would not as willingly receive aid from you as from any other. It is not because I am more unwilling to be under obligation to you than to others. I have a deep and tender attachment to you; but it is because I can thus best promote the gospel and advance the kingdom of the Redeemer. Possibly it might have been thought that his unwillingness to receive aid from them was some proof of reserve toward them or lack of affection, and this may have been urged against him. This he solemnly denies.

Verse 12

But what I do - The course of life which I have been pursuing I will continue to pursue. That is, I will continue to preach as I have done without demanding a support. I will labor with my own hands if necessary; I will preach without demanding rigidly what I might be entitled to.

That I may cut off occasion - That I might give them no opportunity of accusing me of desiring to grow rich, and of calumniating me. Paul meant that they should have no plausible pretext even for accusing him; that no man should be able to say that he was preaching merely for the hire.

Which desire occasion - No doubt his enemies eagerly sought opportunities of accusing him, and greatly wished for some plausible reason for charging him with that which would be disgraceful and ruinous to his character. Or it may mean that they desired opportunity from the example of Paul to justify themselves in their course; that they took wages from the church at Corinth largely, and desired to be able to say that they had his example.

That wherein they glory - Probably meaning that they boasted that they preached the gospel for free (gratis); that they received nothing for

their labors. Yet while they did this, it is not improbable that they received presents of the Corinthians, and under various pretences contrived to get from them an ample support, perhaps much more than would have been a reasonable compensation. People who profess to preach the gospel gratis, usually contrive in various ways to get more from the people than those who receive a regular and stipulated compensation. By taxing pretty liberally their hospitality; by accepting liberal presents; by frequent proclamation of their self-denial and their poverty, they usually filch large amounts from the people. No people were ever louder in praise of poverty, or in proclamation of their own self-denials than some orders of monks, and that when it might be said almost that the richest possessions of Europe were passing into their hands. At all events, Paul meant that these people should have no opportunity from his course to take any such advantage. He knew what he had a right to 1 Corinthians 9:18. They should, therefore, have no opportunity from his conduct either to accuse him of preaching for money, or of sheltering themselves under his example in pretending to preach for nothing when they were in fact obtaining large sums from the people.

They may be found even as we - That they may be compelled honestly to pursue such a course as I do, and be found to be in fact what they pretend to be. The sense is, "I mean so to act that if they follow my example, or plead my authority, they may be found to lead an honest life; and that if they boast on this subject, they shall boast strictly according to truth. There shall be no trick; nothing underhanded or deceptive in what they do so far as my example can prevent it."

Verse 13

For such are false apostles - They have no claim to the apostolic office. They are deceivers. They pretend to be apostles; but they have no divine commission from the Redeemer. Paul had thus far argued the case without giving them an explicit designation as deceivers. But here he says that people who had conducted thus; who attempted to impose on the people; who had brought another gospel, whatever pretences they might have - and he was not disposed to deny that there was much that was plausible - were really impostors and the enemies of Christ. It is morally certain, from 2 Corinthians 11:22, that these people were Jews; but why they had engaged in the work of preaching, or why they had gone to Corinth, cannot with certainty be determined.

Deceitful workers - Impostors. People who practice various arts to impose on others. They were crafty, and fraudulent, and hypocritical. It is probable that they were people who saw that great advantage might be taken of the new religion; people who saw the power which it had over the people, and who saw the confidence which the new converts were inclined to repose in their teachers; perhaps people who had seen the disciples to the Christian faith commit all their property to the hands of the apostles, or who had heard of their doing it (compare Acts 4:34-35), and who supposed that by pretending to be apostles also they might come in for a share of this confidence, and avail themselves of this disposition to commit their property to their spiritual guides. To succeed, it was needful as far as possible to undermine the influence of the true apostles, and take their place in the confidence of the people. Thence they were "deceitful (δόλιοι dolioi) workers," full of trick, and cunning, and of plausible arts to impose on others.

Transforming themselves … - Pretending to be apostles. Hypocritical and deceitful, they yet pretended to have been sent by Christ. This is a direct charge of hypocrisy. They knew they were deceivers; and yet they assumed the high claims of apostles of the Son of God.

Verse 14

And no marvel - And it is not wonderful, 2 Corinthians 11:15. Since Satan himself is capable of appearing to be an angel of light, it is not to be deemed strange that those who are in his service also should resemble him.

For Satan himself is transformed … - That is, he who is an apostate angel; who is malignant and wicked; who is the prince of evil, assumes the appearance of a holy angel. Paul assumes this as an indisputable and admitted truth, without attempting to prove it, and without referring to any particular instances. Probably he had in his eye cases where Satan put on false and delusive appearances for the purpose of deceiving, or where he assumed the appearance of great sanctity and reverence for the authority of God. Such instances occurred in the temptation of our first parents Genesis 3:1-6, and in the temptation of the Saviour, Matthew 4. The phrase "an angel of light," means a pure and holy angel, light being the emblem of purity and holiness. Such are all the angels that dwell in heaven; and the idea is, that Satan assumes such a form as to appear to be such an angel. Learn here:

(1) His power. He can assume such an aspect as he pleases. He can dissemble and appear to be eminently pious. He is the prince of duplicity as well as of wickedness; and it is the consummation of bad power for an individual to be able to assume any character which he pleases.

(2) his art. he is long practiced in deceitful arts. For six thousand years he has been practicing the art of delusion. And with him it is perfect.

(3) we are not to sup pose that all that appears to be piety is piety. Some of the most plausible appearances of piety are assumed by Satan and his ministers. None ever professed a profounder regard for the authority of God than Satan did when he tempted the Saviour. And if the prince of wickedness can appear to be an angel of light, we are not to be surprised if those who have the blackest hearts appear to be people of most eminent piety.

(4) we should be on our guard. We should not listen to suggestions merely because they appear to come from a pious man, nor because they seem to be prompted by a regard to the will of God. We may be always sure that, if we are to be tempted, it will be by some one having a great appearance of virtue and religion.

(5) we are not to expect that Satan will appear to man to be as bad as he is. He never shows himself openly to be a spirit of pure wickedness; or black and abominable in his character; or full of evil and hateful. He would thus defeat himself. It is for this reason that wicked people do not believe that there is such a being as Satan. Though continually under his influence and "led captive by him at his will," yet they neither see him nor the chains which lead them, nor are they willing to believe in the existence of the one or the other.

Verse 15

Therefore it is no great thing … - It is not to be deemed surprising. You are not to wonder if people of the basest, blackest character put on the appearance of the greatest sanctity, and even become eminent as professed preachers of righteousness.

Whose end shall be … - Whose final destiny. Their doom in eternity shall not be according to their fair professions and plausible pretences, for they cannot deceive God; but shall be according to their real character, and their works. Their work is a work of deception, and they shall be judged according to that. What revelations there will be in the day of judgment, when all impostors shall be unmasked, and when all hypocrites and deceivers shall be seen in their true colors! And how desirable is it that there should be such a day to disclose all beings in their true character, and forever to remove imposture and delusion from the universe!

Verse 16

I say again - I repeat it. He refers to what he had said in 2 Corinthians 11:1. The sense is, "I have said much respecting myself which may seem to be foolish. I admit that to boast in this manner of one's own self in general is folly. But circumstances compel me to it. And I entreat you to look at those circumstances and not regard me as a fool for doing it."

If otherwise - If you think otherwise. If I cannot obtain this of you that you will not regard me as acting prudently and wisely. If you will think me foolish, still I am constrained to make these remarks in vindication of myself.

Yet as a fool receive me - Margin, "Suffer;" see 2 Corinthians 11:1. Bear with me as you do with others. Consider how much I have been provoked to this; how necessary it is to my character; and do not reject and despise me because I am constrained to say that of myself which is usually regarded as foolish boasting.

That I may boast myself a little - Since others do it and are not rebuked, may I be permitted to do it also; see 2 Corinthians 11:18-19. There is something sarcastic in the words "a little." The sense is, "Others are allowed to boast a great deal. Assuredly I may be allowed to boast a little of what I have done."

Verse 17

That which I speak - In praise of myself.

I speak it not after the Lord - see the note on 1 Corinthians 7:12. The phrase here may mean either, I do not speak this by inspiration or claiming to be inspired by the Lord; or more probably it may mean, I do not speak this imitating the example of the Lord Jesus or strictly as becomes his follower. He was eminently modest, and never vaunted or boasted. And Paul probably means to say, "I do not in this profess to follow him entirely.

I admit that it is a departure from his pure example in this respect. But circumstances have compelled me and much as I would prefer another strain at remark, and sensible as I am in general of the folly of boasting, yet a regard to my apostolic office and authority urges me to this course." Bloomfield supposes that the apostle is not speaking seriously, but that he has an allusion to their view of what he was saying. "Be it so, if you think that what I speak, I speak not as I profess to do according to the Lord, or with a view to subserve the purposes of his religion, but as it were in folly, in the confidence of boasting, yet permit me to do it notwithstanding, since you allow others to do it." It is not easy to settle which is the true sense of the passage. I see no conclusive evidence against either. But the former seems to me to be most in accordance with the scope of the whole. Paul admitted that what he said was not in exact accordance with the spirit of the Lord Jesus; and in admitting this he designed probably to administer a delicate hint that all their boasting was a wide departure from that spirit.

As it were foolishly - As in folly. It is to be admitted that to boast is in general foolish; and I admit that my language is open to this general charge.

In this confidence of boasting - In confident boasting. I speak confidently and I admit in the spirit of boasting.

Verse 18

Seeing that many glory … - The false teachers in Corinth. They boasted of their birth, rank, natural endowments, eloquence, etc.; see 2 Corinthians 11:22. Compare Philemon 3:3-4.

I will glory also - I also will boast of my endowments, which though somewhat different yet pertain in the main to the "flesh" also; see 2 Corinthians 11:23 ff. His endowments "in the flesh," or what he had to boast of pertaining to the flesh, related not so much to birth and rank, though not inferior to them in these, but to what the flesh had endured - to stripes and imprisonments, and hunger and peril. This is an exceedingly delicate and happy turn given to the whole subject.

Verse 19

For ye suffer fools gladly - You tolerate or endure those who are really fools. This is perhaps, says Dr. Bloomfield, the most sarcastic sentence ever penned by the apostle Paul. Its sense is, "You profess to be wondrous wise. And yet you who are so wise a people, freely tolerate those who are foolish in their boasting; who proclaim their own merits and attainments. You may allow me, therefore, to come in for my share, and boast also, and thus

obtain your favor." Or it may mean, "You are so profoundly wise as easily to see who are fools. You have great power of discernment in this, and have found out that I am a fool, and also that other boasters are fools. Yet knowing this, you bear patiently with such fools; have admitted them to your favor and friendship, and I may come in among the rest of the fools, and partake also of your favors." They had borne with the false apostles who had boasted of their endowments, and yet they claimed to be eminent for wisdom and discernment.

Verse 20

For ye suffer … - You bear patiently with people who impose on you in every way, and who are constantly defrauding you, though you profess to be so wise, and you may bear with me a little, though I have no such intention. Seriously, if you bear with boasters who intend to delude and deceive you in various ways, you may bear with one who comes to you with no such intention, but with an honest purpose to do good.

If a man bring you into bondage - (καταδουλοῖ katadouloi). If a man, or if anyone (εἴ τις ei tis) "make a slave of you," or reduce you to servitude. The idea is, doubtless, that the false teachers set up a lordship over their consciences; destroyed their freedom of opinion; and made them subservient to their will. They really took away their Christian freedom as much as if they had been slaves. In what way this was done is unknown. It may be that they imposed on them rites and forms, commanded expensive and inconvenient ceremonies, and required arduous services merely at their own will. A false religion always makes slaves. It is only true Christianity that leaves perfect freedom. All pagans are slaves to their priests; all fanatics are slaves to some fanatical leader; all those who embrace error are slaves to those who claim to be their guides. The papist everywhere is the slave of the priest, and the despotism there is as great as in any region of servitude whatever.

If a man devour you - This is exceedingly sarcastic. The idea is, "Though you are so wise, yet you in fact tolerate people who impose on you - no matter though they eat you up, or consume all that you have. By their exorbitant demands they would consume all you have - or, as we would say, eat you out of house and home." All this they took patiently; and freely gave all that they demanded. False teachers are always rapacious. They seek the property, not the souls of those to whom they minister. Not satisfied

with a maintenance, they aim to obtain all, and their plans are formed to secure as much as possible of those to whom they minister.

If a man take of you - If he take and seize upon your possessions. If he comes and takes what he pleases and bears it away as his own.

If a man exalt himself - If he set himself up as a ruler and claim submission. No matter how arrogant his claims, yet you are ready to bear with him. You might then bear with me in the very moderate demands which I make on your obedience and confidence.

If a man smite you on the face - The word rendered here as "smite" (δέρω derō) means properly "to skin, to flay"; but in the New Testament it means "to beat, to scourge" - especially so as "to take off the skin"; Matthew 21:35; Mark 12:3, Mark 12:5. The idea here is, if anyone treats you with contumely and scorn - since there can be no higher expression of it than to strike a man on the face; Matthew 26:67. It is not to be supposed that this occurred literally among the Corinthians; but the idea is, that the false teachers really treated them with as little respect as if they smote them on the face. In what way this was done is unknown; but probably it was by their domineering manners, and the little respect which they showed for the opinions and feelings of the Corinthian Christians. Paul says that as they bore this very patiently, they might allow him to make some remarks about himself in self-commendation.

Verse 21

I speak as concerning reproach - I speak of disgrace. That is, says Rosenmuller, "I speak of your disgrace, or, as others prefer it, of the disgrace of the false apostles." Doddridge regards it as a question. "Do I speak this by way of dishonor, from an envious desire to derogate from my superiors so as to bring them down to my own level?" But to me it seems that Paul refers to what he had been admitting respecting himself - to what he had evinced in rudeness of speech 2 Corinthians 11:6, and to his not having urged his claims to the support which an apostle had a right to receive - to things, in short, which they esteemed to be disgraceful or reproachful. And his idea, it seems to me, is this: "I have been speaking of reproach or disgrace as if I was weak, that is, as if I was disposed to admit as true all that has been said of me as reproachful or disgraceful; all that has been said of my lack of qualifications for the office, of my lack of talent, or elevated rank, or honorable birth, etc. I have not pressed my claims, but have been reasoning as if all this were true - as if all that was honorable in

birth and elevated in rank belonged to them - all that is mean and unworthy pertained to me. But it is not so. Whatever they have I have. Whatever they can boast of, I can boast of in a more eminent degree. Whatever advantage there is in birth is mine; and I can tell of toils, and trials, and sufferings in the apostolic office which far surpass theirs." Paul proceeds, therefore, to a full statement of his advantages of birth and of his labors in the cause of the Redeemer.

As though we had been weak - As if I had no claims to urge; as if I had no just cause of boldness, but must submit to this reproach.

Howbeit - (δέ de). But. The sense is, if anyone is disposed to boast, I am ready for him. I can tell also of things that have as high claims to confidence as they can. If they are disposed to go into a comparison on the points which qualify a man for the office of an apostle, I am ready to compare myself with them.

Whereinsoever - (ἐν ᾧ en hōIn what. Whatever they have to boast of I am prepared also to show that I am equal to them. Be it pertaining to birth, rank, education, labors, they will find that I do not shrink from the comparison.

Any is bold - (τις τολμᾷ tistolma). Anyone who dares to boast; anyone who is bold.

I speak foolishly - Remember now that I speak as a fool. I have been charged with this folly. Just now keep that in mind; and do not forget that it is only a fool who is speaking. Just recollect that I have no claims to public confidence; that I am destitute of all pretensions to the apostolic office; that I am given to a vain parade and ostentation, and to boasting of what does not belong to me, and when you recollect this let me tell my story. The whole passage is ironical in the highest degree. The sense is, "It is doubtless all nonsense and folly for a man to boast who has only the qualifications which I have. But there is a great deal of wisdom in their boasting who have so much more elevated endowments for the apostolic office."

I am bold also - I can meet them on their own ground, and speak of qualifications not inferior to theirs.

Verse 22

Are they Hebrews? - This proves that the persons who had made the difficulty in Corinth were those who were of Hebrew extraction though it may be that they had been born in Greece and had been educated in the Grecian philosophy and art of rhetoric. It is also clear that they prided

themselves on being Jews - on having a connection with the people and land from whence the religion which the Corinthian church now professed had emanated. Indications are apparent everywhere in the New Testament of the superiority which the Jewish converts to Christianity claimed over those converted from among the pagan. Their boast would probably be that they were the descendants of the patriarchs; that the land of the prophets was theirs; that they spake the language in which the oracles of God were given; that the true religion had proceeded from them, etc.

So am I - I have as high claims as any of them to distinction on this head. Paul had all their advantages of birth. He was an Israelite; of rite honored tribe of Benjamin; a Pharisee, circumcised at the usual time Philemon 3:5, and educated in the best manner at the feet of one of their most eminent teachers; Acts 22:3.

Are they Israelites? - Another name, signifying substantially the same thing. The only difference is, that the word "Hebrew" signified properly one who was from beyond (צברי ʿIbriyfrom צבר ‹aabarto pass, to pass over - hence, applied to Abraham, because he had come from a foreign land; and the word denoted properly a foreigner - a man from the land or country beyond, צבר ‹aabarthe Euphrates. The name Israelite denoted properly one descended from Israel or Jacob, and the difference between them was, that the name Israelite, being a patronymic derived from one of the founders of their nation, was in use among themselves; the name Hebrew was applied by the Canaanite to them as having come from beyond the river, and was the current name among foreign tribes and nations. See Gesenius' Lexicon on the word צברי ʿIbriyHebrew. Paul in the passage before us means to say that he had as good a claim to the honor of being a native born descendant of Israel as could be urged by any of them.

Are they the seed of Abraham? - Do they boast that they are descended from Abraham? This with all the Jews was regarded as a distinguished honor (see Matthew 3:9; John 8:39), and no doubt the false teachers in Corinth boasted of it as eminently qualifying them to engage in the work of the ministry.

So am I - Paul had the same qualification. He was a Jew also by birth. He was of the tribe of Benjamin; Philemon 3:5.

Verse 23

Are they ministers of Christ? - Though Jews by birth yet they claimed to be the ministers of the Messiah.

I speak as a fool - As if he had said, "Bear in mind, in what I am now about to say, that he who speaks is accused of being a fool in boasting. Let it not be deemed improper that I should act in this character, and since you regard me as such, let me speak like a fool." His frequent reminding them of this charge was eminently suited to humble them that they had ever made it, especially when they were reminded by an enumeration of his trials, of the character of the man against whom the charge was brought.

I am more - Paul was not disposed to deny that they were true ministers of Christ. But he had higher claims to the office than they had. He had been called to it in a more remarkable manner, and he had shown by his labors and trials that he had more of the true spirit of a minister of the Lord Jesus than they had. He therefore goes into detail to show what he had endured in endeavoring to diffuse the knowledge of the Saviour; trials which the had borne probably while they had been dwelling in comparative ease, and in a comfortable manner, free from suffering and persecution.

In labors more abundant - In the kind of labor necessary in propagating the gospel. Probably he had now been engaged in the work a much longer time than they had, and had been far more indefatigable in it.

In stripes - In receiving stripes; that is, I have been more frequently scourged; 2 Corinthians 11:24. This was a proof of his being a minister of Christ, because eminent devotedness to him at that time, of necessity subjected a man to frequent scourging. The ministry is one of the very few places, perhaps it stands alone in this, where it is proof of special qualification for office that a man has been treated with all manner of contumely, and has even been often publicly whipped. What other office admits such a qualification as this?

Above measure - Exceedingly; far exceeding them. He had received far more than they had, and he judged, therefore, that this was one evidence that he had been called to the ministry.

In prisons more frequent - In the Book of Acts, Luke mentions only one imprisonment of Paul before the time when this Epistle was written. That was at Philippi with Silas, Acts 16:23 ff. But we are to remember that many things were omitted by Luke. He does not profess to give an account of all that happened to Paul; and an omission is not a contradiction. For anything that Luke says, Paul may have been imprisoned often. He mentions his having been in prison once; he does not deny that he had been in prison many times besides; see on Acts 16:24.

In deaths oft - This is, exposed to death; or suffering pain equal to death; see on 2 Corinthians 1:9. No one familiar with the history of Paul can doubt that he was often in danger of death.

Verse 24

Of the Jews … - On this verse and the following verse it is of importance to make a few remarks preliminary to the explanation of the phrases:

(1) It is admitted that the particulars here referred to cannot be extracted out of the Acts of the Apostles. A few can be identified, but there are many more trials referred to here than are specified there.

(2) this proves that this Epistle was not framed from the history, but that they are written independently of one another - Paley.

(3) yet they are not inconsistent one with the other. For there is no article in the enumeration here which is contradicted by the history, and the history, though silent with respect to many of these transactions, has left space enough to suppose that they may have occurred.

(a) There is no contradiction between the accounts. Where it is said by Paul that he was thrice beaten with rods, though in the Acts but one beating is mentioned, yet there is no contradiction. It is only the omission to record all that occurred to Paul. But had the history, says Paley, contained an account of four beatings with rods, while Paul mentions here but three, there would have been a contradiction. And so of the other particulars.

(b) Though the Acts of the Apostles be silent concerning many of the instances referred to, yet that silence may be accounted for on the plan and design of the history. The date of the Epistle synchronizes with the beginning of 1 Corinthians 16:10; see the note on that place. From that time Luke attended Paul in his travels. From that period to the time when this Epistle was written occupies but four chapters of the history, and it is here if anywhere that we are to look for the minute account of the life of Paul. But here much may have occurred to Paul before Luke joined him. And as it was the design of Luke to give an account of Paul mainly after he had joined him, it is not to be wondered at that many things may have been omitted of his previous life.

(c) The period of time after the conversion of Paul to the time when Luke joined him at Troas is very succinctly given. That period embraced 16 years, and is comprised in a few chapters. Yet in that time Paul was constantly traveling. He went to Arabia, returned to Damascus, went to Jerusalem, and then to Tarsus, and from Tarsus to Antioch, and thence to Cyprus, and then through Asia Minor, etc. In this time he must have made many voyages, and been exposed to many perils. Yet all this is comprised in a few chapters, and a considerable portion of them is occupied with an account of public discourses. In that period of sixteen years, therefore, there was ample opportunity for all the occurrences which are here referred to by Paul; see Paley‘s Horse Paulinae on 2Corinthians, No. 9:

(d) I may add, that from the account which follows the time when Luke joined him at Troas (from Acts 16:10), it is altogether probable that he had endured much before. After that time there is mention of just such transactions of scourging, stoning, etc., as are here specified, and it is altogether probable that he had been called to suffer them before. When Paul says “of the Jews,” etc., he refers to this because this was a Jewish mode of punishment. It was usual with them to inflict but 39 blows. The Gentiles were not limited by law in the number which they inflicted.

Five times - This was doubtless in their synagogues and before their courts of justice. They had not the power of capital punishment, but they had the power of inflicting minor punishments. And though the instances are not specified by Luke in the Acts, yet the statement here by Paul has every degree of probability. We know that he often preached in their synagogues Acts 9:20; Acts 13:5, Acts 13:14-15; Acts 14:1; Acts 17:17; Acts 18:4; and nothing is more probable than that they would be enraged against him, and would vent their malice in every way possible. They regarded him as an apostate, and a ringleader of the Nazarenes, and they would not fail to inflict on him the severest punishment which they were permitted to inflict.

Forty stripes save one - The word “stripes” does not occur in the original, but is necessarily understood. The Law of Moses Deuteronomy 25:3 expressly limited the number of stripes that might be inflicted to 40. In no case might this number be exceeded. This was a humane provision, and one that was not found among the pagan, who inflicted any number of

blows at discretion. Unhappily it is not observed among professedly Christian nations where the practice of whipping prevails, and particularly in slave countries, where the master inflicts any number of blows at his pleasure. In practice among the Hebrews, the number of blows inflicted was in fact limited to 39, lest by any accident in counting, the criminal should receive more than the number prescribed in the Law. There was another reason still for limiting it to 39. They usually made use of a scourge with three thongs, and this was struck 13 times. That it was usual to inflict but 39 lashes is apparent from Josephus, *Ant*. 4. viii, section 21.

Verse 25

Thrice was I beaten with rods - In the Acts of the Apostles there is mention made of his being beaten in this manner but once before the time when this Epistle was written. That occurred at Philippi; Acts 16:22-23. But there is no reason to doubt that it was more frequently done. This was a frequent mode of punishment among the ancient nations, and as Paul was often persecuted, he would be naturally subjected to this shameful punishment.

Once I was stoned - This was the usual mode of punishment among the Jews for blasphemy. The instance referred to here occurred at Lystra; Acts 14:19. Paley (Horae Paulinae) has remarked that this, when confronted with the history, furnished the nearest approach to a contradiction without a contradiction being actually incurred, that he ever had met with. The history Acts 14:19 contains but one account of his being actually stoned. But prior to this Acts 14:5, it mentions that "an assault was made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully and to stone them, but they were aware of it, and fled to Lystra and Derbe." "Now," Paley remarks, "had the assault been completed; had the history related that a stone was thrown, as it relates that preparations were made both by Jews and Gentiles to stone Paul and his companions; or even had the account of this transaction stopped without going on to inform us that Paul and his companions were aware of their danger and fled, a contradiction between the history and the Epistle would have ensued. Truth is necessarily consistent; but it is scarcely possible that independent accounts, not having truth to guide them, should thus advance to the very brink of contradiction without falling into it."

Thrice I suffered shipwreck - On what occasions, or where, is now unknown, as these instances are not referred to in the Acts of the Apostles.

The instance of shipwreck recorded there Acts 27, which occurred when on his way to Rome, happened after this Epistle was written, and should not be supposed to be one of the instances referred to here. Paul made many voyages in going from Jerusalem to Tarsus, and to Antioch, and to various parts of Asia Minor, and to Cyprus; and shipwrecks in those seas were by no means such unusual occurrences as to render this account improbable.

A night and a day … - The word used here (νυχθήμερον nuchthēmeron) denotes a complete natural day, or 24 hours.

In the deep - To what this refers we do not now certainly know. It is probable, however, that Paul refers to some period when, having been shipwrecked, he was saved by supporting himself on a plank or fragment of the vessel until he obtained relief. Such a situation is one of great peril, and he mentions it, therefore, among the trials which he had endured. The supposition of some commentators that he spent his time on some rock in the deep; or of others that this means some deep dungeon; or of others that he was swallowed by a whale (that is, a big fish), like Jonah, shows the extent to which the fancy is often indulged in interpreting the Bible.

Verse 26

In journeyings often - Of course subject to the fatigue, toil, and danger which such a mode of life involves.

In perils of waters - In danger of losing my life at sea, or by floods, or by crossing streams.

Of robbers - Many of the countries, especially Arabia, through which he traveled, were then infested, as they are now, with robbers. It is not impossible or improbable that he was often attacked and his life endangered. It is still unsafe to travel in many of the places through which he traveled.

By mine own countrymen - The Jews. They often scourged him; laid wait for him and were ready to put him to death. They had deep enmity against him as an apostate, and he was in constant danger of being put to death by them.

By the pagan - By those who had not the true religion. Several instances of his danger from this quarter are mentioned in the Acts.

In the city - In cities, as in Derbe. Lystra, Philippi, Jerusalem, Ephesus, etc.

In the wilderness - In the desert, where he would be exposed to ambushes, or to wild beasts, or to hunger and want. Instances of this are not

recorded in the Acts, but no one can doubt that they occurred, The idea here is, that he had met with constant danger wherever he was, whether in the busy haunts of people or in the solitude and loneliness of the desert.

In the sea - see 2 Corinthians 11:25.

Among false brethren - This was the crowning danger and trial to Paul, as it is to all others. A man can better bear danger by land and water, among robbers and in deserts, than he can bear to have his confidence abused, and to be subjected to the action and the arts of spies upon his conduct. Who these were he has not informed us. He mentions it as the chief trial to which he had been exposed, that he had met those who pretended to be his friends, and who yet had sought every possible opportunity to expose and destroy him. Perhaps he has here a delicate reference to the danger which he apprehended from the false brethren in the church at Corinth.

Verse 27

In weariness - Resulting from traveling, exposure, labor, and want. The word κόπος kopos(from κόπτω koptō"to beat, to cut") means, properly, "wailing and grief," accompanied with beating the breast. Hence, the word means "toil, labor, wearisome effort."

And painfulness - This word (μόχθος mochthos) is a stronger term than the former. It implies painful effort; labor producing sorrow, and in the New Testament is uniformly connected with the word rendered "weariness" (1Thess, 2 Corinthians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8), rendered in both those places "travail."

In watchings often - In loss of sleep, arising from abundant toils and from danger; see the note on 2 Corinthians 6:5.

In hunger and thirst - From traveling among strangers, and being dependent on them and on his own personal labors; see the note, 1 Corinthians 4:11.

In fastings often - Either voluntary or involuntary; see the note on 2 Corinthians 6:5.

In cold and nakedness - see the note, 1 Corinthians 4:11.

Verse 28

Besides those things that are without - In addition to these external trials, these trials pertaining to the body, I have mental trials and anxieties resulting from the necessary care of all the churches, But on the meaning of these words commentators are not agreed. Rosenmuller supposes that the phrase means "besides those things that come from other sources," "that I

may omit other things." Beza, Erasmus, Bloomfield, and some others suppose that the passage means those things out of the regular routine of his office. Doddridge, "besides foreign affairs." Probably the sense is, "Apart from the things beside" (Χωρὶς τῶν παρεκτὸς Chōris tōn parektos); "not to mention other matters; or if other matters should be laid aside, there is this continually rushing anxiety arising from the care of all the churches." That is, this would be enough in itself. Laying aside all that arises from hunger, thirst, cold, etc., this continual care occupies my mind and weighs upon my heart.

That which cometh upon me daily - There is great force in the original here. The phrase rendered "that which cometh upon me" means properly, "that which rushes upon me." The word (ἐπισύστασις episustasis) means properly a concourse, a crowd, hence, a tumult; and the idea here is, that these cares rushed upon him, or pressed upon him like a crowd of people or a mob that bore all before it. This is one of Paul‘s most energetic expressions, and denotes the incessant anxiety of mind to which he was subject.

The care of all the churches - The care of the numerous churches which he had established, and which needed his constant supervision. They were young; many of them were feeble; many were made up of heterogeneous materials; many composed of Jews and Gentiles mingled together, with conflicting prejudices, habits, preferences; many of them were composed of those who had been gathered from the lowest ranks of life; and questions would be constantly occurring relating to their order and discipline in which Paul would feel a deep interest, and which would naturally be referred to him for decision. Besides this, they had many trials. They were persecuted, and would suffer much. In their sufferings Paul would feel deep sympathy, and would desire, as far as possible, to afford them relief. In addition to the churches which he had planted, he would feel an interest in all others, and doubtless many cases would be refered to him as an eminent apostle for counsel and advice. No wonder that all this came rushing on him like a tumultuous assembly ready to overpower him.

Verse 29

Who is weak … - I sympathize with all. I feel where others feel, and their sorrows excite deep sympathetic emotions in my bosom. Like a tender and compassionate friend I am affected when I see others in circumstances of distress. The word "weak" here may refer to any lack of strength, any

infirmity or feebleness arising either from body or mind. It may include all who were feeble by persecution or by disease; or it may refer to the weak in faith and doubtful about their duty (see 1 Corinthians 9:22), and to those who were burdened with mental sorrows. The idea is, that Paul had a deep sympathy in all who needed such sympathy from any cause. And the statement here shows the depth of feeling of this great apostle; and shows what should be the feeling of every pastor; see the note on Romans 12:15.

And I am not weak? - I share his feelings and sympathize with him. If he suffers, I suffer. Bloomfield supposes that Paul means that in the case of those who were weak in the faith he accommodated himself to their weakness and thus became all things to all people; see my note on 1 Corinthians 9:22. But it seems to me probable that he uses the phrase here in a more general sense, as denoting that he sympathized with those who were weak and feeble in all their circumstances.

Who is offended - (σκανδαλίζεται skandalizetai). Who is "scandalized." The word means properly to cause to stumble and fall; hence, to be a stumbling-block to any one; to give or cause offence to anyone. The idea here seems to be, "who is liable to be led astray; who has temptations and trials that are likely to lead him to sin or to cause him to fall, and I do not burn with impatience to restore him, or with indignation against the tempter?" In all such cases Paul deeply sympathized with them, and was prompt to aid them.

And I burn not? - That is, with anger or with great agitation of mind at learning that anyone had fallen into sin. This may either mean that he would burn with indignation against those who had led them into sin, or be deeply excited in view of the disgrace which would be thus brought on the Christian cause. In either case it means that his mind would be in a glow of emotion; he would feel deeply; he could not look upon such things with indifference or without being deeply agitated. With all he sympathized; and the condition of all, whether in a state of feeble faith, or feeble body, or falling into sin, excited the deepest emotions in his mind. The truth here taught is, that Paul felt a deep sympathy for all others who bore the Christian name, and this sympathy for others greatly increased the cares and toils of the apostolic office which he sustained. But having given this exposition, candor compels me to acknowledge that the whole verse may mean, "Who is feeble in the faith in regard to certain observances and rites and customs 1 Corinthians 9:22, and I do not also evince the same? I do not

rouse their prejudices, or wound their feelings, or alarm them. On the other hand, who is scandalized, or led into sin by the example of others in regard to such custom; who is led by the example of others into transgression, and I do not burn with indignation?" In either case, however, the general sense is, that he sympathized with all others.

Verse 30

If I must needs glory - It is unpleasant for me to boast, but circumstances have compelled me. But since I am compelled, I will not boast of my rank, or talents, but of that which is regarded by some as an infirmity.

Mine infirmities - Greek, "The things of my weakness." The word here used is derived from the same word which is rendered weak," in 2 Corinthians 11:29. He intends doubtless to refer here to what had preceded in his enumeration of the trials which he had endured. He had spoken of sufferings. He had endured much. He had also spoken of that tenderness of feeling which prompted him to sympathize so deeply when others suffered. He admitted that he often wept, and trembled, and glowed with strong feelings on occasions which perhaps to many would not seem to call for such strong emotions, and which they might be disposed to set down as a weakness or infirmity. This might especially be the case among the Greeks, where many philosophers, as the Stoics, were disposed to regard all sympathetic feeling, and all sensitiveness to suffering as an infirmity. But Paul admitted that he was disposed to glory in this alone. He gloried that he had sneered so much; that he had endured so many trials on account of Christianity, and that he had a mind that was capable of feeling for others and of entering into their, sorrows and trials. Well might he do this, for there is no more lovely feature in the mind of a virtuous man, and there is no more lovely influence of Christianity than this, that it teaches us to "bear a brother's woes," and to sympathize in all the sorrows and joys of others. Philosophy and infidelity may be dissocial, cheerless, cold; but it is not so with Christianity. Philosophy may snap asunder all the cords which bind us to the living world, but Christianity strengthens these cords; cold and cheerless atheism and scepticism may teach us to look with unconcern on a suffering world, but it is the glory of Christianity that it teaches us to feel an interest in the weal or woe of the obscurest man that lives, to rejoice in his joy, and to weep in his sorrows.

Verse 31

The God and Father … - Paul was accustomed to make solemn appeals to God for the truth of what he said, especially when it was likely to be called in question; see 2 Corinthians 11:10; compare Romans 9:1. The solemn appeal which he here makes to God is made in view of what he had just said of his sufferings, not of what follows - for there was nothing in the occurrence at Damascus that demanded so solemn an appeal to God. The reason of this asseveration is probably that the transactions to which he had referred were known to but few, and perhaps not all of them to even his best friends; that his trials and calamities had been so numerous and extraordinary that his enemies would say that they were improbable, and that all this had been the mere fruit of exaggeration; and as he had no witnesses to appeal to for the truth of what he said, he makes a solemn appeal to the ever-blessed God. This appeal is made with great reverence. It is not rash, or bold, and is by no means irreverent or profane. He appeals to God as the Father of the Redeemer whom he so much venerated and loved, and as himself blessed for evermore. If all appeals to God were made on as important occasions as this, and with the same profound veneration and reverence, such appeals would never be improper, and we should never be shocked as we are often now when people appeal to God. This passage proves that an appeal to God on great occasions is not improper; it proves also that it should be done with profound veneration.

Verse 32

In Damascus - This circumstance is mentioned as an additional trial. It is evidently mentioned as an instance of peril which had escaped his recollection in the rapid account of his dangers enumerated in the previous verses. It is designed to show what imminent danger he was in, and how narrowly he escaped with his life. On the situation of Damascus, see the note, Acts 9:2. The transaction here referred to is also related by Luke Acts 9:24-25, though without mentioning the name of the king, or referring to the fact that the governor kept the city with a garrison.

The governor - Greek, ὁ ἐθνάρχης ho ethnarchēs"The ethnarch;" properly a ruler of the people, a prefect, a ruler, a chief. Who he was is unknown, though he was evidently some officer under the king. It is not improbable that he was a Jew, or at any rate he was one who could be influenced by the Jews, and he was doubtless excited by the Jews to guard the city, and if possible to take Paul as a malefactor. Luke informs us Acts 9:23-24 that the Jews took counsel against Paul to kill him, and that they

watched the gates night and day to effect their object. They doubtless represented Paul as an apostate, and as aiming to overthrow their religion. He had come with an important commission to Damascus and had failed to execute it; he had become the open friend of those whom he came to destroy; and they doubtless claimed of the civil authorities of Damascus that he should be given up and taken to Jerusalem for trial. It was not difficult, therefore, to secure the cooperation of the governor of the city in the case, and there is no improbability in the statement.

Under Aretas the king - There were three kings of this name who are particularly mentioned by ancient writers. The first is mentioned in Matthew 14:3. On this account Aretas made war with Herod, and in order to resist him, Herod applied to Tiberius the Roman emperor for aid. Vitellius was sent by Tiberius to subdue Aretas, and to bring him dead or alive to Rome. But before Vitellius had embarked in the enterprise, Tiberius died, and thus Aretas was saved from ruin. It is supposed that in this state of things, when thus waging war with Herod, he made an incursion to Syria and seized upon Damascus, where he was reigning when Paul went there; or if not reigning there personally, he had appointed an ethnarch or governor who administered the affairs of the city in his place.

Kept the city … - Luke Acts 9:24 says that they watched the gates day and night to kill him. This was probably the Jews. Meantime the ethnarch guarded the city, to prevent his escape. The Jews would have killed him at once; the ethnarch wished to apprehend him and bring him to trial. In either case Paul had much to fear, and he, therefore, embraced the only way of escape.

With a garrison - The word which is used here in the original (φρουρέω phroureō) means simply to watch; to guard; to keep. Our translation would seem to imply that there was a body of people stationed in order to guard the city. The true idea is, that there were men who were appointed to guard the gates of the city and to keep watch lest he should escape them. Damascus was surrounded, as all ancient cities were, with high walls, and it did not occur to them that he could escape in any other way than by the gates.

Verse 33

And through a window - That is, through a little door or aperture in the wall; perhaps something like an embrasure, that might have been large enough to allow a man to pass through it. Luke says Acts 9:25 that they let

him down “by the wall.” But there is no inconsistency. They doubtless first passed him through the embrasure or loop-hole in the wall, and then let him down gently by the side of it. Luke does not say it was over the top of the wall, but merely that he descended by the wall. It is not probable that an embrasure or opening would be near the bottom, and consequently there would be a considerable distance for him to descend by the side of the wall after he had passed through the window. Bloomfield, however, supposes that the phrase employed by Luke and rendered “by the wall,” means properly “through the wall.” But I prefer the former interpretation.

In a basket - The word used here (σαργάνη sarganē) means anything braided or twisted; hence, a rope-basket, a net-work of cords, or a wicker hamper. It might have been such an one as was used for catching fish, or it might have been made for the occasion. The word used by Luke Acts 9:25 is σπυρὶς spuris- a word usually meaning a basket for storing grain, provisions, etc. Where Paul went immediately after he had escaped them, he does not here say. From Galatians 1:17, it appears that he went into Arabia, where he spent some time, and then returned to Damascus, and after three years he went up to Jerusalem. It would not have been safe to have gone to Jerusalem at once, and he therefore waited for the passions of the Jews to have time to cool, before he ventured himself again in their hands.

Remarks

1. There may be circumstances, but they are rare, in which it may be proper to speak of our own attainments, and of our own doings; 2 Corinthians 11:1. Boasting is in general nothing but folly - the fruit of pride - but there may be situations when to state what we have done may be necessary to the vindication of our own character, and may tend to honor God. Then we should do it; not to trumpet forth our own fame, but to glorify God and to advance his cause. Occasions occur however but rarely in which it is proper to speak in this manner of ourselves.

2. The church should be pure. It is the bride of the Redeemer; the “Lamb‘s wife;” 2 Corinthians 11:2. It is soon to be presented to Christ, soon to be admitted to his presence. How holy should be that church which sustains such a relation! How anxious to be worthy to appear before the Son of God!

3. All the individual members of that church should be holy; 2 Corinthians 11:2. They as individuals are soon to be presented in heaven as

the fruit of the labors of the Son of God, and as entitled to his eternal love. How pure should be the lips that are soon to speak his praise in heaven; how pure the eyes that are soon to behold his glory; how holy the feet that are soon to tread his courts in the heavenly world!

4. There is great danger of being corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ; 2 Corinthians 11:3. Satan desires to destroy us; and his great object is readily accomplished if he can seduce Christians from simple devotedness to the Redeemer; if he can secure corruption in doctrine or in the manner of worship, and can produce conformity in dress and in the style of living to this world. Formerly, he excited persecution. But in that he was foiled. The more the church was persecuted the more it grew. Then he changed his ground. What he could not do by persecution he sought to do by corrupting the church; and in this he has been by far more successful. This can be done slowly but certainly; effectually but without exciting suspicion. And it matters not to Satan whether the church is crippled by persecution or its zeal destroyed by false doctrine and by conformity to the world. His aim is secured; and the power of the church destroyed. The form in which he now assails the church is by attempting to seduce it from simple and hearty attachment to the Saviour. And, O! in how many instances is he successful.

5. Our religion has cost much suffering. We have in this chapter a detail of extraordinary trials and sorrows in establishing it; and we have reason to be thankful, in some degree, that the enemies of Paul made it necessary for him to boast in this manner. We have thus some most interesting details of facts of which otherwise we should have been ignorant; and we see that the life of Paul was a life of continual self-denial and toil. By sea and land; at home and abroad; among his own countrymen and strangers, he was subjected to continued privations and persecution. So it has been always in regard to the establishment of the gospel. It began its career in the sufferings of its great Author, and the foundation of the church was laid in his blood. It progressed amidst sufferings, for all the apostles, except John, it is supposed were martyrs. It continued to advance amidst sufferings - for 10 fiery persecutions raged throughout the Roman Empire, and thousands died in consequence of their professed attachment to the Saviour. It has been always propagated in pagan lands by self-denials and sacrifices, for

the life of a missionary is that of sacrifice and toil. How many such people as David Brainerd and Henry Martyn have sacrificed their lives in order to extend the true religion around the world!

6. All that we enjoy is the fruit of the sufferings, toils, and sacrifices of others. We have not one Christian privilege or hope which has not cost the life of many a martyr. How thankful should we be to God that he was pleased to raise up people who would be willing thus to suffer, and that he sustained and kept them until their work was accomplished!

7. We may infer the sincerity of the people engaged in propagating the Christian religion. What had Paul to gain in the sorrows which he endured? Why did he not remain in his own land and reap the honors which were then fully within his grasp? The answer is an easy one. It was because he believed that Christianity was true; and believing that, he believed that it was of importance to make it known to the world. Paul did not endure these sorrows, and encounter these perils for the sake of pleasure, honor, or gain. No man who reads this chapter can doubt that he was sincere, and that he was an honest man.

8. The Christian religion is, therefore, true. Not because the first preachers were sincere for the advocates of error are often sincere, and are willing to suffer much or even to die as martyrs; but because this was a case when their sincerity proved the facts in regard to the truth of Christianity. It was not sincerity in regard to opinions merely, it was in regard to facts. They not only believed that the Messiah had come and died and risen again, but they saw him - saw him when he lived; saw him die; saw him after he was risen; and it was in relation to these facts that they were sincere. But how could they be deceived here? People may be deceived in their opinions; but how could John, e. g., be deceived in affirming that he was intimately acquainted - the bosom friend - with Jesus of Nazareth; that he saw him die; and that he conversed with him after he had died? In this he could not be mistaken; and sooner than deny this, John would have spent his whole life in a cave in Patmos, or have died on the cross or at the stake. But if John saw all this, then the Christian religion is true.

9. We should be willing to suffer now. If Paul and the other apostles were willing to endure so much, why should not we be? If they were willing to deny themselves so much in order that the gospel should be spread among the nations, why should not we be? It is now just as important that it should be spread as it was then; and the church should be just as willing to sacrifice its comforts to make the gospel known as it was in the days of Paul. We may add, also, that if there was the same devotedness to Christ evinced by all Christians now which is described in this chapter; if there was the same zeal and self-denial, the time would not be far distant when the gospel would be spread all around the world. May the time soon come when all Christians shall have the same self-denial as Paul; and especially when all who enter the ministry shall be willing to forsake country and home, and to encounter peril in the city and the wilderness; on the sea and the land; to meet cold, and nakedness, hunger, thirst, persecution, and death in any way in order that they may make known the name of the Saviour to a lost world.

2 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Introduction

This chapter 2 Corinthians 11:1-10. In the previous chapter he had mentioned his trials. Here he says 2 Corinthians 12:1, that as they had compelled him to boast, he would mention the revelation which he had had of the Lord. He details, therefore, the remarkable vision which he had had several years before 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, when he was caught up to heaven, and permitted to behold the wonders there, Yet he says, that lest such an extraordinary manifestation should exalt him above measure, he was visited with a sore and special trial - a trial from which he prayed earnestly to be delivered, but that he received answer that the grace of God would be sufficient to support him; 2 Corinthians 12:5-9. It was in view of this, he says 2 Corinthians 12:10 that he had pleasure in infirmities and sufferings in the cause of the Redeemer.

2. He then 2 Corinthians 12:11-12 sums up what he had said; draws the conclusion that he had given every sign or evidence that he was an apostle; that in all that pertained to toil, and patience, and miracles, he had shown that he was commissioned by the Saviour; though with characteristic modesty he said he was nothing.

3. He then expresses his purpose to come again and see them, and his intention then not to be burdensome to them; 2 Corinthians 12:13-15. He was willing to labor for them, and to exhaust his strength in endeavoring to promote their welfare without receiving support from them, for he regarded himself in the light of a father to them, and it was not usual for children to support their parents.

4. In connection with this, he answers another charge against himself. Some accused him of being crafty; that though he did not burden them, yet he knew well how to manage so as to secure what he wanted without burdening them, or seeming to receive anything from them; 2 Corinthians 12:16. To this he answers by an appeal to fact. Particularly he appeals to the conduct of Titus when with them, in fall proof that he had no such design; 2 Corinthians 12:17-19.

5. In the conclusion of the chapter, he expresses his fear that when he should come among them he would find much that would humble them and give him occasion for severity of discipline; 2 Corinthians 12:20-21. This apprehension is evidently expressed in order that they might be led to examine themselves, and to put away whatever was wrong.

Verse 1

It is not expedient - It is not well; it does not become me. This may either mean that he felt and admitted that it did not become him to boast in this manner; that there was an impropriety in his doing it though circumstances had compelled him, and in this sense it is understood by nearly, or quite, all expositors; or it may be taken ironically. "Such a man as I am ought not to boast. So you say, and so it would seem. A man who has done no more than I have; who has suffered nothing; who has been idle and at ease as I have been, ought surely not to boast. And since there is such an evident impropriety in my boasting and speaking about myself, I will turn to another matter, and inquire whether the same thing may not be said about visions and revelations. I will speak, therefore, of a man who had some remarkable revelations, and inquire whether he has any right to boast of the favors imparted to him." This seems to me to be the probable interpretation of this passage.

To glory - To boast; 2 Corinthians 10:8, 2 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 11:10. One of the charges which they alleged against him was, that he was given to boasting without any good reason. After the enumeration in the previous chapter of what he had done and suffered, he says that this was doubtless very true. Such a man has nothing to boast of.

I will come - Margin, "For I will." Our translators have omitted the word (γὰρ gar) for in the text, evidently supposing that it is a mere expletive. Doddridge renders it, "nevertheless." But it seems to me that it contains an important sense, and that it should be rendered by then. "Since it is not fit that I should glory, then I will refer to visions, etc. I will turn away then from that subject, and come to another." Thus, the word (γὰρ gar) is used in John 7:41. "Shall then μὴ γὰρ mē garChrist come out of Galilee?" Acts 8:31. "How can I then τὼ tō γὰρ except some man should guide me?" see also Acts 19:35; Romans 3:3; Philemon 1:18.

To visions - The word "vision" is used in the Scriptures often to denote the mode in which divine communications were usually made to people.

This was done by causing some scene to appear to pass before the mind as in a landscape, so that the individual seemed to see a representation of what was to occur in some future period. It was usually applied to prophecy, and is often used in the Old Testament; see my note on Isaiah 1:1, and also on Acts 9:10. The vision which Paul here refers to was that which he was permitted to have of the heavenly world; 2 Corinthians 12:4. He was permitted to see what perhaps no other mortal had seen, the glory of heaven.

And revelations of the Lord - Which the Lord had made. Or it may mean manifestations which the Lord had made of himself to him. The word rendered "revelations" means properly an "uncovering" (ἀποκάλυψις apokalupsisfrom ἀποκαλύπτω apokaluptōto uncover), and denotes a removal of the veil of ignorance and darkness, so that an object may be clearly seen; and is thus applied to truth revealed, because the obscurity is removed and the truth becomes manifest.

Verse 2

I knew a man in Christ - I was acquainted with a Christian; the phrase "in Christ" meaning nothing more than that he was united to Christ or was a Christian; see Romans 16:7. The reason why Paul did not speak of this directly as a vision which he had himself seen was probably that he was accused of boasting, and he had admitted that it did not become him to glory. But though it did not become him to boast directly, yet he could tell them of a man concerning whom there would be no impropriety evidently in boasting. It is not uncommon, moreover, for a man to speak of himself in the third person. Thus, Caesar in his Commentaries uniformly speaks of himself. And so John in his Gospel speaks of himself, John 13:23-24; John 19:26; John 21:20. John did it on account of his modesty, because he would not appear to put himself forward, and because the mention of his own name as connected with the friendship of the Saviour in the remarkable manner in which he enjoyed it, might have savored of pride. For a similar reason Paul may have been unwilling to mention his own name here; and he may have abstained from referring to this occurrence elsewhere, because it might savor of pride, and might also excite the envy or ill-will of others. Those who have been most favored with spiritual enjoyments will not be the most ready to proclaim it. They will cherish the remembrance in order to excite gratitude in their own hearts and support them in trial; they will not emblazon it abroad as if they were more the favorites of heaven than

others are. That this refers to Paul himself is evident for the following reasons:

(1) His argument required that he should mention something that had occurred to himself. Anything that had occurred to another would not have been pertinent.

(2) he applies it directly to himself 2 Corinthians 12:7, when he says that God took effectual measures that he should not be unduly exalted in view of the abundant revelations bestowed on him.

About fourteen years ago - On what occasion or where this occurred, or why he concealed the remarkable fact so long, and why there is no other allusion to it, is unknown; and conjecture is useless. If this Epistle was written, as is commonly supposed, about the year 58 a.d., then this occurrence must have happened about the year 44 ad. This was several years after his conversion, and of course this does not refer to the trance mentioned in Acts 9:9, at the time when he was converted. Dr. Benson supposes that this vision was made to him when he was praying in the temple after his return to Jerusalem, when he was directed to go from Jerusalem to the Gentiles Acts 22:17, and that it was intended to support him in the trials which he was about to endure. There can belittle danger of error in supposing that its object was to support him in those remarkable trials, and that God designed to impart to him such views of heaven and its glory, and of the certainty that he would soon be admitted there, as to support him in his sufferings, and make him willing to bear all that should be laid upon him. God often gives to his people some clear and elevated spiritual comforts before they enter into trials as well as while in them; he prepares them for them before they come. This vision Paul had kept secret for fourteen years. He had doubtless often thought of it; and the remembrance of that glorious hour was doubtless one of the reasons why he bore trials so patiently and was willing to endure so much. But before this he had had no occasion to mention it. He had other proofs in abundance that he was called to the work of an apostle; and to mention this would savor of pride and ostentation. It was only when he was compelled to refer to the evidences of his apostolic mission that he refers to it here.

Whether in the body, I cannot tell - That is, I do not pretend to explain it. I do not know how it occurred. With the fact he was acquainted; but how it was brought about he did not know. Whether the body was caught up to

heaven; whether the soul was for a time separated from the body; or whether the scene passed before the mind in a vision, so that he seemed to have been caught up to heaven, he does not pretend to know. The evident idea is, that at the time he was in a state of insensibility in regard to surrounding objects, and was unconscious of what was occurring, as if he had been dead. Where Paul confesses his own ignorance of what occurred to himself it would be vain for us to inquire; and the question how this was done is immaterial. No one can doubt that God had power if he chose to transport the body to heaven; or that he had power for a time to separate the soul front the body; or that he had power to represent to the mind so clearly the view of the heavenly world that he would appear to see it; see Acts 7:56. It is clear only that he lost all consciousness of anything about him at that time, and that he saw only the things in heaven. It may be added here, however, that Paul evidently supposed that his soul might be taken to heaven without the body, and that it might have separate consciousness and a separate existence. He was not, therefore, a materialist, and he did not believe that the existence and consciousness of the soul was dependent on the body.

God knoweth - With the mode in which it was done God only could be acquainted. Paul did not attempt to explain that. That was to him of comparatively little consequence, and he did not lose his time in a vain attempt to explain it. How happy would it be if all theologians were as ready to be satisfied with the knowledge of a fact, and to leave the mode of explaining it with God, as this prince of theologians was. Many a man would have busied himself with a vain speculation about the way in which it was done; Paul was contented with the fact that it had occurred.

Such an one caught up - The word which is used here (ἁρπάζω harpazō) means, to seize upon, to snatch away, as wolves do their prey (John 12:10); or to seize with avidity or eagerness Matthew 11:12; or to carry away, to hurry off by force or involuntarily; see John 6:15; Acts 7:39; Acts 23:10. In the case before us there is implied the idea that Paul was conveyed by a foreign force; or that he was suddenly seized and snatched up to heaven. The word expresses the suddenness and the rapidity with which it was done. Probably it was instantaneous, so that he appeared at once to be in heaven. Of the mode in which it was done Paul has given no explanations; and conjecture would be useless.

To the third heaven - The Jews sometimes speak of seven heavens, and Muhammed has borrowed this idea from the Jews. But the Bible speaks of but three heavens, and among the Jews in the apostolic ages also the heavens were divided into three:

(1) The aerial, including the clouds and the atmosphere, the heavens above us, until we come to the stars.

(2) the starry heavens, the heavens in which the sun, moon, and stars appear to be situated.

(3) the heavens beyond the stars. That heaven was supposed to be the residence of God, of angels, and of holy spirits. It was this upper heaven, the dwelling-place of God, to which Paul was taken, and whose wonders he was permitted to behold - this region where God dwelt; where Christ was seated at the right hand of the Father, and where the spirits of the just were assembled. The fanciful opinions of the Jews about seven heavens may be seen detailed in Schoettgen or in Wetstein, by whom the principal passages from the Jewish writings relating to the subject have been collected. As their opinions throw no light on this passage, it is unnecessary to detail them here.

Verse 3

And I knew such a man - It is not uncommon to repeat a solemn affirmation in order that it may be made more emphatic. This is done here. Paul repeats the idea, that he was intimately acquainted with such a man, and that he did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body. All that was known to God.

Verse 4

Into paradise - The word "paradise" (παράδεισος paradeisos) occurs but three times in the New Testament; Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7. It occurs often in the Septuagint, as the translation of the word garden; Genesis 2:8-10, Genesis 2:15-16; Genesis 3:1-3, Genesis 3:8, Genesis 3:16, Genesis 3:23-24; Genesis 13:10; Numbers 24:6; Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 28:13; Ezekiel 31:8-9; Joel 2:3. And also Isaiah 1:30; Jeremiah 29:5; and of the word פרדס pardēcin Nehemiah 2:8; Ecclesiastes 2:5; Matthew 14:4, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." Acts 16:21, "which it is not lawful for us to observe;" Acts 22:25, "Is it lawful for you to scourge

a man that is a Roman," etc. In the same sense of lawful it is used in Matthew 12:2, Matthew 12:10, Matthew 12:12; Matthew 20:15; Mark 2:26; Mark 10:2. When it refers to possibility it probably means moral possibility; that is, propriety, or it means that it is right. It seems to me, therefore, that the word here rather means that it was not proper to give utterance to those things; it would not be right to attempt it. It might be also true that it would not have been possible for language to convey clearly the ideas connected with the things which Paul was then permitted to see; but the main thought is, that there was some reason why it would not be proper for him to have attempted to communicate those ideas to people at large The Jews held that it was unlawful to pronounce the Tetragrammaton. that is, the name of four letters יהוה Yahwehand whenever that name occurred in their scriptures, they substituted the name אדני ʿAdonaayin its place. They maintain indeed that the true pronunciation is utterly lost, and none of them to this day attempt to pronounce it. But this was mere superstition; and it is impossible that Paul should have been influenced by any such reason as this.

The transaction here referred to is very remarkable. It is the only instance in the Scriptures of anyone who was taken to heaven, either in reality or in vision, and who returned again to the earth and was then qualified to communicate important truths about the heavenly world from personal observation. Enoch and Elijah were taken to heaven; but they returned not to converse with people. Elijah appeared with Moses in conversation with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration; but they conversed with him only about his decease, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem; Luke 9:31. There would have been no propriety for them to have spoken to Jesus of heaven, for he came down from heaven and was in heaven John 3:13, and they were not permitted to speak to the disciples of heaven. Lazarus was raised from the dead Matthew 27:52, but there is no intimation that they communicated any thing to the living about the heavenly world.

Of all the million who have been taken to heaven, not one has been permitted to return to bear his testimony to its glories; to witness for God that he is faithful to his promises; to encourage his pious friends to persevere; or to invite his impenitent friends to follow him to that glorious world. And so fixed is the Law; so settled is the principle, that even Lazarus was not permitted to go, though at the earnest request of the rich man in

hell, and warn his friends not to follow hint to that world of woe; Luke 16:27-31. Muhammed indeed feigned that he had made a journey to heaven, and he attempts to describe what he saw; and the difference between true inspiration and false or pretended inspiration is strikingly evinced by the difference between Paul‘s dignified silence - verba sacro digna silentio (Horace) and the puerilities of the prophet of Mecca. See the Koran, chap. 17. As the difference between the true religion and imposture is strikingly illustrated by this, we may recur to the principal events which happened to the impostor on his celebrated journey.

The whole account may be seen in Prideaux‘s Life of Muhammed, pp. 43ff. He solemnly affirmed that he had been translated to the heaven of heavens; that on a white beast, less than a mule, but larger than an ass, he had been conveyed from the temple of Mecca to that of Jerusalem; had successively ascended the seven heavens with his companion Gabriel, receiving and returning the salutations of its blessed inhabitants; had then proceeded alone within two bow-shots of the throne of the Almighty, when he felt a cold which pierced him to the heart, and was touched on the shoulder by the hand of God, who commanded him to pray 50 times a day, but with the advice of Moses he was prevailed on to have the number reduced to five; and that he thru returned to Jerusalem and to Mecca, having performed a journey of thousands of years in the tenth part of a night.

The fact that Paul was not permitted to communicate what he had seen is very remarkable. It is natural to ask why it is so? Why has not God sent down departed saints to tell people of the glories of heaven? Why does he not permit them to come and bear testimony to what they have seen and enjoyed? Why not come and clear up the doubts of the pious; why not come and convince a thoughtless world; why not come and bear honorable testimony for God that he is faithful to reward his people? And especially why did he not suffer Paul, whom he had permitted to behold the glories of paradise, to testify simply to what he had seen, and tell us what was there?

To these questions, so obvious, it is impossible to give an answer that we can demonstrate to be the true one. But we may suggest some reasons which may furnish a plausible answer, and which may serve to remove some of the perplexity in the case. I would, therefore, suggest that the

following may have been some of the reasons why Paul was not permitted to communicate what he saw to human beings:

(1) It was designed for the support of Paul himself in view of the very remarkable trials which he was about to endure. God had called him to great toils and self-denials. He was to labor much alone; to go to foreign lands; to be persecuted, and ultimately put to death; and it was his purpose to qualify him for this work by some special manifestation of his favor. He accordingly gave him such views of heaven that he would be supported in his trials by a conviction of the undoubted truth of what he taught, and by the prospect of certain glory when his labors should end. It was one instance when God gave special views to prepare for trials, as he often does to his people now, preparing them in a unique manner for special trials. Christians, from some cause, often have more elevated views and deeper feeling before they are called to endure trials than they have at other times - special grace to prepare them for suffering. But as this was designed in a special manner for Paul alone, it was not proper for him to communicate what he saw to others.

(2) it is probable that if there were a full revelation of the glories of heaven we should not be able to comprehend it; or even if we did, we should be incredulous in regard to it. So unlike what we see; so elevated above our highest comprehension; probably so unlike what we now anticipate is heaven, that we should be slow to receive the revelation. It is always difficult to describe what we have not seen, even on earth, so that we shall have any very clear idea of it: how much more difficult must it be to describe heaven. We are often incredulous about what is reported to exist in foreign lands on earth which we have not seen, and a long time is often necessary before we will believe it. The king of Siam, when told by the Dutch ambassador that water became so hard in his country that people might walk on it, said, “I have often suspected you of falsehood, but now I know that you lie.” So incredulous might we be, with our weak faith, if we were told what actually exists in heaven. We should not improbably turn away from it as wholly incredible.

(3) there are great truths which it is not the design of God to reveal to human beings. The object is to communicate enough to win us, to comfort

us, to support our faith, not to reveal all. In eternity there must be boundless truths and glories which are not needful for us to know now, and which, on many accounts, it would not be proper to be revealed to man. The question is not, do we know all, but have we enough safely to guide us to heaven, and to comfort us in the trials of life.

(4) there is enough revealed of heaven for our guidance and comfort in this world. God has told us what it will be in general. It will be a world without sin; without tears; without wrong, injustice, fraud, or wars; without disease, pestilence, plague, death; and it is easy to fill up the picture sufficiently for all our purposes. Let us think of a world where all shall be pure and holy; of a world free from all that we now behold that is evil; free from pain, disease, death; a world where "friends never depart, foes never come;" a world where all shall be harmony and love - and where all this shall be eternal, and we shall see that God has revealed enough for our welfare here. The highest hopes of man are met when we anticipate an eternal heaven; the heaviest trials may be cheerfully borne when we have the prospect of everlasting rest.

(5) one other reason may be assigned why it was not proper for Paul to disclose what he saw, and why God has withheld more full revelations from men about heaven. It is, that his purpose is that we shall here walk by faith and not by sight. We are not to see the reward, nor to be told fully what it is. We are to have such confidence in God that we shall assuredly believe that, he will fully reward and bless us, and under this confidence we are to live and act here below. God designs, therefore, to try our faith, and to furnish an abundant evidence that his people are disposed to obey his commands and to put their trust in his faithfulness. Besides, if all the glories of heaven were revealed; if all were told that might be; and if heaven were made as attractive to mortal view as possible, then it might appear that his professed people were influenced solely by the hope of the reward. As it is, there is enough to support and comfort; not enough to make it the main and only reason why we serve God. It may be added:

(a)That we have all the truth which we shall ever have about heaven here below. No other messenger will come; none of the pious dead will return. If people, therefore, are not willing to be saved in view of the truth which they have, they must be lost. God will communicate no more.

(b)The Christian will soon know all about heaven. He will soon be there. He begins no day with any certainty that he may not close it in heaven; he lies down to rest at no time with any assurance that he will not wake in heaven amidst its full and eternal splendors.

(c)The sinner will soon know fully what it is to lose heaven. A moment may make him fully sensible of his loss - for he may die; and a moment may put him forever beyond the possibility of reaching a world of glory.

Verse 5

Of such an one will I glory - Of such a man it would be right to boast. It would be admitted that it is right to exult in such a man, and to esteem him to be uniquely favored by God. I will boast of him as having received special honor from the Lord. Bloomfield, however, supposes that the words rendered "of such an one should be translated "of such a thing," or of such a transaction; meaning" I can indeed justly boast of my being caught up to heaven as of a thing the whole glory of which pertains to him who has thus exalted me; but of myself, or of anything in me, I will not boast." So Rosenmuller explains it. But it seems to me that the connection requires that we should understand it of a person, and that the passage is partly ironical. Paul speaks in the third person. He chooses to keep himself directly out of view. And though he refers really to himself, yet he wound not say this directly, but says that of such a man they would admit it would be proper to boast.

Yet of myself - Directly. It is not expedient for me to boast of myself. "You would allow me to boast of such a man as I have referred to; I admit that it is not proper for me to boast directly of myself."

But in mine infirmities - My weaknesses, trials, pains, sufferings; such as many regard as infirmities; see the note on 2 Corinthians 11:30.

Verse 6

For though I would desire to glory - I take this to be a solemn and serious declaration of the irony which precedes; and that Paul means to say seriously, that if he had a wish to boast as other people boasted, if he chose to make much of his attainments and privileges, he would have enough of which to make mention. It would not be mere empty boasting without any foundation or any just cause, for he had as much of which to speak in a confident manner pertaining to his labors as an apostle, and his evidence of

the divine favor, as could be urged by any one. “I might go on to speak much more than I have done, and to urge claims which all would admit to be well-founded.”

I shall not be a fool - “It would not be foolish boasting; for it would be according to truth. I could urge much more than I have done; I could speak of things which no one would be disposed to call in question as laying the foundation of just claims to my being regarded as eminently favored of God; I could seriously state what all would admit to be such.”

For I will say the truth - That is, “Whatever I should say on this subject would be the simple truth. I should mention nothing which has not actually occurred. But I forbear, lest some one should form an improper estimate of me.” The apostle seems to have intended to have added something more, but he was checked by the apprehension to which he here refers. Or perhaps he means to say that if he should boast of the vision to which he had just referred; if he should go on to say how highly he had been honored and exalted by it, there would be no impropriety in it. It was so remarkable that if he confined himself strictly to the truth, as he would do, still it would he regarded by all as a very extraordinary honor, and one to which no one of the false teachers could refer as laying a foundation for their boasting.

Lest any man should think of me … - The idea in this part of the verse I take to be this. “I desire and expect to be estimated by my public life. I expect to be judged of men by my deeds, by what they see in me, and by my general reputation in respect to what I have done in establishing the Christian religion. I am willing that my character and reputation, that the estimate in which I shall be held by mankind, shall rest on that. I do not wish that my character among people shall be determined by my secret feelings; or by any secret extraordinary communication from heaven which I may have, and which cannot be subjected to the observation of my fellow-men. I am willing to be estimated by my public life; and however valuable such extraordinary manifestations may be to me as an individual; or however much they may comfort me, I do not wish to make the basis of my public reputation.

I expect to stand and be estimated by my public deeds; by what all people see and hear of me; and I would not have them form even a favorable opinion of me beyond that.” This is the noble language of a man who was willing to enjoy such a reputation as his public life entitled him to.

He wished to have the basis of his reputation such that all people could see and examine it. Unlike enthusiasts and fanatics, he appealed to no secret impulses; did not rest his claims for public confidence on any special communications from heaven; but wished to be estimated by his public deeds. And the important truth taught is, that however much the communion we may have with God; however much comfort and support in prayer and in our favored moments of fellowship with God; or however much we may fancy in this way that we are the favorites of heaven; and however much this may support us in trial: still this should not be made the foundation of claim to the favorable opinions of our fellow-men.

By our public character; by our well-known actions; by our lives as seen by people, we should desire to be estimated, and we should be satisfied with such a measure of public esteem as our deportment shall fairly entitle us to. We should seldom, perhaps, refer to our moments of secret, happy, and most favored communion with God. Paul kept his most elevated joys in this respect, secret for fourteen years: what an example to those who are constantly emblazoning their Christian experience abroad, and boasting of what they have enjoyed! We should never refer to such moments as a foundation for the estimate in which our character shall be held by our fellow-men. We should never make this the foundation of a claim to the public confidence in us. For all such claims; for all the estimate in which we shall be held by people, we should be willing to be tried by our lives. Paul would not even make a vision of heaven; not even the privilege of having beheld the glories of the upper world, though a favor conferred on no other living man, a ground of the estimate in which his character should be held! What an example to those who wish to be estimated by secret raptures, and by special communications to their souls from heaven! No. Let us be willing to be estimated by people by what they see in us; to enjoy such a reputation as our conduct shall fairly entitle us to. Let our communion with God cheer our own hearts; but let us not obtrude this on people as furnishing a claim for an exalted standard in their estimation.

Verse 7

And lest I should be exalted - Lest I should be spiritually proud; lest I should become self-confident and vain, and suppose that I was a special favorite of Heaven. If Paul was in danger of spiritual pride, who is not? If it

was necessary for God to adopt some special measures to keep him humble, we are not to be surprised that the same thing should occur in other cases. There is abundant reason to believe that Paul was naturally a proud man. He was by nature self-confident; trusting in his own talents and attainments, and eminently ambitious. When he became a Christian, therefore, one of his besetting sins would be pride; and as he had been especially favored in his call to the apostleship; in his success as a preacher; in the standing which he had among the other apostles, and in the revelations imparted to him, there was also special danger that he would become self-confident and proud of his attainments.

There is no danger that more constantly besets Christians, and even eminent Christians, than pride. There is no sin that is more subtile, insinuating, deceptive; none that lurks more constantly around the heart and that finds a more ready entrance, than pride. He who has been characterized by pride before his conversion will be in special danger of it afterward; he who has eminent gifts in prayer, or in conversation, or in preaching, will be in special danger of it; he who is eminently successful will be in danger of it; and he who has any extraordinary spiritual comforts will be in danger of it. Of this sin he who lives nearest to God may be in most special danger; and he who is most eminent in piety should feel that he also occupies a position where the enemy will approach him in a sly and subtile manner, and where he is in special danger of a fall. Possibly the fear that he might be in danger of being made proud by the flattery of his friends may have been one reason why Paul kept this thing concealed for 14 years; and if people wish to keep themselves from the danger of this sin, they should not be forward to speak even of the most favored moments of their communion with God.

Through the abundance of the revelations - By my being raised thus to heaven, and by being permitted to behold the wonders of the heavenly world, as well as by the numerous communications which God had made to me at other times.

There was given to me - That is, God was pleased to appoint me. The word which Paul uses is worthy of special notice. It is that this “thorn in the flesh” was given to him, implying that it was a favor. He does not complain of it; he does not say it was sent in cruelty; he does not even speak of it as an affliction; he speaks of it as a gift, as any man would of a favor that had

been bestowed. Paul had so clear a view of the benefits which resulted from it that he regarded it as a favor, as Christians should every trial.

A thorn in the flesh - The word used here (σκόλοψ skolops) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means properly anything pointed or sharp, e. g., a stake or palisade (Xenophon, Anabasis v. 2,5); or the point of a hook. The word is used in the Septuagint to denote a thorn or prickle, as a translation of סיר cîyrin Hosea 2:6, "I will hedge up thy way with thorns;" to denote a pricking briar in Ezekiel 28:24, as a translation of סלון cillôwnmeaning a thorn or prickle, such as is found in the shoots and twigs of the palm-tree; and to denote "pricks in the eyes" Numbers 33:55, as a translation of שׂכים class="translit">sikkim , thorns or prickles. So far as the word used here is concerned, it means a sharp thorn or prickle; and the idea is, that the trial to which he refers was as troublesome and painful as such a thorn would be in the flesh But whether he refers to some infirmity or pain in the flesh or the body is another question, and a question in which interpreters have been greatly divided in opinion.

Every one who has become familiar with commentaries knows that almost every expositor has had his own opinion about this. and also that no one has been able to give any good reason for his own. Most of them have been fanciful; and many of them eminently ridiculous. Even Baxter, who was subject himself to some such disorder, supposes that it might be the stone or gravel; and the usually very judicious Doddridge supposes that the view which he had of the glories of heavenly objects so affected his nerves as to produce a paralytic disorder, and particularly a stammering in his speech, and perhaps also a ridiculous distortion of the countenance. This opinion was suggested by Whitby, and has been adopted also by Benson, Macknight, Slade, and Bloomfield. But though sustained by most respectable names, it would be easy to show that it is mere conjecture, and perhaps quite as improbable as any of the numerous opinions which have been maintained on the subject.

If Paul's speech had been affected, and his face distorted, and his nerves shattered by such a sight, how could he doubt whether he was in the body or out of it when this occurred? Many of the Latin fathers supposed that some unruly and ungovernable lust was intended. Chrysostom and Jerome suppose that he meant the headache; Tertullian an earache; and Rosenmuller supposes that it was the gout in the head, kopfgicht, and that it was a

periodical disorder such as affected him when he was with the Galatians; Galatians 4:13. But all conjecture here is vain; and the numerous strange and ridiculous opinions of commentators is a melancholy attestation of their inclination to fanciful conjecture where it is impossible in the nature of the case to ascertain the truth. All that can be known of this is, that it was some infirmity of the flesh, some bodily affliction or calamity, that was like the continual piercing of the flesh with a thorn Galatians 4:13; and that it was something that was designed to prevent spiritual pride. It is not indeed an improbable supposition that it was something that could be seen by others, and that thus tended to humble him when with them.

The messenger of Satan - Among the Hebrews it was customary to attribute severe and painful diseases to Satan; compare Job 2:6-7; compare note on Luke 13:16. In the time of the Saviour malignant spirits are known to have taken possession of the body in numerous cases, and to have produced painful bodily diseases, and Paul here says that Satan was permitted to bring this calamity on him.

To buffet me - To buffet, means to smite with the hand; then to maltreat in any way. The meaning is, that the effect and design of this was deeply to afflict him. Doddridge and Clarke suppose that the reference is here to the false teacher whom Satan had sent to Corinth, and who was to him the source of perpetual trouble. But it seems more probable to me that he refers to some bodily infirmity. The general truth taught in this verse is, that God will take care that his people shall not be unduly exalted by the manifestations of his favor, and by the spiritual privileges which he bestows on them. He will take measures to humble them; and a large part of his dealings with his people is designed to accomplish this. Sometimes it will be done, as in the case of Paul, by bodily infirmity or trial, by sickness, or by long and lingering disease; sometimes by great poverty and by an humble condition of life; sometimes by reducing us from a state of affluence where we were in danger of being exalted above measure; sometimes by suffering us to be slandered and calumniated, by suffering foes to rise up against us who shall blacken our character and in such a manner that we cannot meet it; sometimes by persecution; sometimes by lack of success in our enterprises, and if in the ministry, by withholding his Spirit; sometimes by suffering us to fall into sin, and thus greatly humbling us before the world.

Such was the case with David and with Peter; and God often permits us to see in this manner our own weakness, and to bring us to a sense of our dependence and to proper humility by suffering us to perform some act that should be ever afterward a standing source of our humiliation; some act so base, so humiliating, so evincing the deep depravity of our hearts as forever to make and keep us humble. How could David be lifted up with pride after the murder of Uriah? How could Peter after having denied his Lord with a horrid oath? Thus, many a Christian is suffered to fall by the temptation of Satan to show him his weakness and to keep him from pride; many a fall is made the occasion of the permanent benefit of the offender. And perhaps every Christian who has been much favored with elevated spiritual views and comforts can recall something which shall be to him a standing topic of regret and humiliation in his past life. We should be thankful for any calamity that will humble us; and we should remember that clear and elevated views of God and heaven are, after all, more than a compensation for all the sufferings which it may be necessary to endure in order to make us humble.

Verse 8

For this thing - On account of this; in order that this calamity might be removed.

I besought the Lord - The word "Lord" in the New Testament, when it stands without any other word in connection to limit its signification, commonly denotes the Lord Jesus Christ; see the note on Acts 1:24. The following verse here shows conclusively that it was the Lord Jesus to whom Paul addressed this prayer. The answer was that his grace was sufficient for him; and Paul consoled himself by saying that it was a sufficient support if the power of Christ implied in that answer, should rest on him. He would glory in trials if such was their result. Even Rosenmuller maintains that it was the Lord Jesus to whom this prayer was addressed, and says that the Socinians themselves admit it. So Grotius (on 2 Corinthians 12:9) says that the answer was given by Christ. But if this refers to the Lord Jesus, then it proves that it is right to go to him in times of trouble, and that it is right to worship him. Prayer is the most solemn act of adoration which we can perform; and no better authority can be required for paying divine honors to Christ than the fact that Paul worshipped him and called upon him to remove a severe and grievous calamity.

Thrice - This may either mean that he prayed for this often, or that he sought it on three set and solemn occasions. Many commentators have supposed that the former is meant. But to me it seems probable that Paul on three special occasions earnestly prayed for the removal of this calamity. It will be recollected that the Lord Jesus prayed three times in the garden of Gethsemane that the cup might be removed from him, Matthew 26:44. At the third time he ceased, and submitted to what was the will of God. There is some reason to suppose that the Jews were in the habit of praying three times for any important blessing or for the removal of any calamity; and Paul in this would not only conform to the usual custom, but especially he would he disposed to imitate the example of the Lord Jesus. Among the Jews three was a sacred number, and repeated instances occur where an important transaction is mentioned as having been done thrice; see Numbers 22:28; Numbers 24:10; 1 Samuel 3:8; 1 Samuel 20:41; 1 Kings 18:44; Proverbs 22:20; Jeremiah 7:4; Jeremiah 22:29; John 21:17.

The probability, therefore, is, that Paul on three different occasions earnestly besought the Lord Jesus that this calamity might be removed from him. It might have been exceedingly painful, or it might, as he supposed, interfere with his success as a preacher; or it might have been of such a nature as to expose him to ridicule; and he prayed, therefore, if it were possible that it might be taken away. The passage proves that it is right to pray earnestly and repeatedly for the removal of any calamity. The Saviour so prayed in the garden; and Paul so prayed here. Yet it also proves that there should be a limit to such prayers. The Saviour prayed three times; and Paul limited himself to the same number of petitions and then submitted to the will of God. This does not prove that we should be limited to exactly this number in our petitions; but it proves that there should be a limit; that we should not be over-anxious, and that when it is plain from any cause that the calamity will not be removed, we should submit to it.

The Saviour in the garden knew that the cup would not be removed, and he acquiesced. Paul was told indirectly that his calamity would not be removed, and he submitted. We may expect no such revelation from heaven, but we may know in other ways that the calamity will not be removed; and we should submit. The child or other friend for whom we prayed may die; or the calamity, as, e. g., blindness, or deafness, or loss of health, or poverty, may become permanent, so that there is no hope of

removing it; and we should then cease to pray that it may be removed, and we should cheerfully acquiesce in the will of God. So David prayed most fervently for his child when it was alive; when it was deceased, and it was of no further use to pray for it, he bowed in submission to the will of God, 2 Samuel 12:20.

Verse 9

And he said unto me - The Saviour replied. In what way this was done, or whether it was done at the time when the prayer was offered, Paul does not inform us. It is possible, as Macknight supposes, that Christ appeared to him again and spoke to him in an audible manner. Grotius supposes that this was done by the בת קול Bath-qowl- "daughter of the voice," so frequently referred to by the Jewish writers, and which they suppose to be referred to in 1 Kings 19:12, by the phrase, "a still small voice." But it is impossible to determine in what way it was done, and it is not material. Paul was in habits of communion with the Saviour, and was accustomed to receive revelations from him. The material fact here is, that the request was not granted in the exact form in which he presented it, but that he received assurance of grace to support him in his trial.

It is one of the instances in which the fervent prayer of a good man, offered undoubtedly in faith, was not answered in the form in which he desired, though substantially answered in the assurance of grace sufficient to support him. It furnishes, therefore, a very instructive lesson in regard to prayer, and shows as that we are not to expect as a matter of course that all our prayers will be literally answered, and that we should not be disappointed or disheartened if they are not. It is a matter of fact that not all the prayers even of the pious, and of those who pray having faith in God as a hearer of prayer, are literally answered. Thus, the prayer of David 2 Samuel 12:16-20 was not literally answered; the child for whose life he so earnestly prayed died. So the Saviour's request was not literally answered, Mark 14:36. The cup of suffering which he so earnestly desired should be taken away was not removed. So in the case before us; compare also Deuteronomy 3:23-27; Job 30:20; Lamentations 3:8. So in numerous cases now, Christians pray with fervour and with faith for the removal of some calamity which is not removed; or for something which they regard as desirable for their welfare which is withheld. Some of the reasons why this is done are obvious:

(1) The grace that will be imparted if the calamity is not removed will be of greater value to the individual than would be the direct answer to his prayer. Such was the case with Paul; so it was doubtless with David; and so it is often with Christians now The removal of the calamity might be apparently a blessing, but it might also be attended with danger to our spiritual welfare; the grace imparted may be of permanent value and may be connected with the development of some of the loveliest traits of Christian character.

(2) it might not be for the good of the individual who prays that the exact thing should be granted. When a parent prays with great earnestness and with insubmission for the life of a child, he knows not what he is doing. If the child lives, he may be the occasion of much more grief to him than if he had died. David had far more trouble from Absalom than he had from the death of the child for which he so earnestly prayed. At the same time it may be better for the child that he should be removed. If he dies in infancy he will be saved. But who can tell what will be his character and destiny should he live to be a man? So of other things.

(3) God has often some better thing in store for us than would be the immediate answer to our prayer Who can doubt that this was true of Paul? The promised grace of Christ as sufficient to support us is of more value than would be the mere removal of any bodily affliction.

(4) it would not be well for us, probably, should our petition be literally answered. Who can tell what is best for himself? If the thing were obtained, who can tell how soon we might forget the benefactor and become proud and self-confident? It was the design of God to humble Paul; and this could be much better accomplished by continuing his affliction and by imparting the promised grace, than by withdrawing the affliction and withholding the grace. The very thing to be done was to keep him humble; and this affliction could not be withdrawn without also foregoing the benefit. It is true, also, that where things are in themselves proper to be asked, Christians sometimes ask them in an improper manner, and this is one of the reasons why many of their prayers are not answered. But this does not pertain to the case before us.

My grace is sufficient for thee - A much better answer than it would have been to have removed the calamity; and one that seems to have been entirely satisfactory to Paul. The meaning of the Saviour is that he would support him; that he would not suffer him to sink exhausted under his trials; that he had nothing to fear. The infliction was not indeed removed; but there was a promise that the favor of Christ would be shown to him constantly, and that he would find his support to be ample. If Paul had this support, he might well bear the trial; and if we have this assurance, as we may have, we may welcome affliction, and rejoice that calamities are brought upon us. It is a sufficient answer to our prayers if we have the solemn promise of the Redeemer that we shall be upheld and never sink under the burden of our heavy woes.

My strength is made perfect in weakness - That is, the strength which I impart to my people is more commonly and more completely manifested when my people feel that they are weak. It is not imparted to those who feel that they are strong and who do not realize their need of divine aid. It is not so completely manifested to those who are vigorous and strong as to the feeble. It is when we are conscious that we are feeble, and when we feel our need of aid, that the Redeemer manifests his power to uphold, and imparts his purest consolations. Grotius has collected several similar passages from the classic writers which may serve to illustrate this expression. Thus, Pliny, vii. Epis. 26, says, "We are best where we are weak." Seneca says, "Calamity is the occasion of virtue." Quintilian, "All temerity of mind is broken by bodily calamity." Minutius Felix, "Calamity is often the discipline of virtue." There are few Christians who cannot bear witness to the truth of what the Redeemer here says, and who have not experienced the most pure consolations which they have known, and been most sensible of his comforting presence and power in times of affliction.

Most gladly, therefore … - I count it a privilege to be afflicted, if my trials may be the means of my more abundantly enjoying the favor of the Redeemer. His presence and imparted strength are more than a compensation for all the trials that I endure.

That the power of Christ - The strength which Christ imparts; his power manifested in supporting me in trials.

May rest upon me - ἐπισκηνώσῃ episkēnōsēThe word properly means to pitch a tent upon; and then to dwell in or upon. Here it is used in the sense of abiding upon, or remaining with. The sense is, that the power

which Christ manifested to his people rested with them, or abode with them in their trials, and therefore he would rejoice in afflictions, in order that he might partake of the aid and consolation thus imparted. Hence, learn:

(1) That a Christian never loses anything by suffering and affliction. If he may obtain the favor of Christ by his trials he is a gainer. The favor of the Redeemer is more than a compensation for all that we endure in his cause.

(2) the Christian is a gainer by trial. I never knew a Christian that was not ultimately benefitted by trials. I never knew one who did not find that he had gained much that was valuable to him in scenes of affliction. I do not know that I have found one who would be willing to exchange the advantages he has gained in affliction for all that the most uninterrupted prosperity and the highest honors that the world could give would impart.

(3) learn to bear trials with joy. They are good for us. They develope some of the most lovely traits of character. They injure no one if they are properly received. And a Christian should rejoice that he may obtain what he does obtain in affliction, cost what it may. It is worth more than it costs; and when we come to die, the things that we shall have most occasion to thank God for will be our afflictions. And, O! if they are the means of raising us to a higher seat in heaven, and placing us nearer the Redeemer there who will not rejoice in his trials?

Verse 10

Therefore I take pleasure - Since so many benefits result from trials; since my afflictions are the occasion of obtaining the favor of Christ in so eminent a degree, I rejoice in the privilege of suffering. There is often real pleasure in affliction, paradoxical as it may appear. Some of the happiest persons I have known are those who have been deeply afflicted; some of the purest joys which I have witnessed have been manifested on a sick-bed, and in the prospect of death. And I have no doubt that Paul, in the midst of all his infirmities and reproaches, had a joy above that which all the wealth and honor of the world could give. See here the power of religion. It not only supports, it comforts. It not only enables one to bear suffering with resignation, but it enables him to rejoice. Philosophy blunts the feelings: infidelity leaves people to complain and repine in trial; the pleasures of this

world have no power even to support or comfort in times of affliction; but Christianity furnishes positive pleasure in trial, and enables the sufferer to smile through his tears.

In infirmities - In my weaknesses; see the note on 2 Corinthians 11:30.

In reproaches - In the contempt and scorn with which I meet as a follower of Christ, note, 2 Corinthians 11:21.

In necessities - In want: see the notes on 2 Corinthians 6:4-5.

In distresses for Christ's sake - note, 2 Corinthians 6:4. In the various needs and difficulties to which I am exposed on account of the Saviour, or which I suffer in his cause.

For when I am weak, then am I strong - When I feel weak; when I am subjected to trial, and nature faints and fails, then strength is imparted to me, and I am enabled to bear all. The more I am borne down with trials, the more do I feel my need of divine assistance, and the more do I feel the efficacy of divine grace. Such was the promise in Deuteronomy 33:25; "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." So in Hebrews 11:24; "Who out of weakness were made strong." What Christian has not experienced this, and been able to say that when he felt himself weak and felt like sinking under the accumulation of many trials, he has found his strength according to his day, and felt an arm of power supporting him? It is then that the Redeemer manifests himself in a special manner; and then that the excellency of the religion of Christ is truly seen and its power appreciated and felt.

Verse 11

I am become a fool in glorying - The meaning of this expression I take to be this. "I have been led along in speaking of myself until I admit I appear foolish in this kind of boasting. It is folly to do it, and I would not have entered on it unless I had been driven to it by my circumstances and the necessity which was imposed on me of speaking of myself." Paul doubtless desired that what he had said of himself should not be regarded as an example for others to follow. Religion repressed all vain boasting and self-exultation; and to prevent others from falling into a habit of boasting, and then pleading his example as an apology, he is careful to say that he regarded it as folly; and that he would by no means have done it if the circumstances of the case had not constrained him. If, anyone, therefore, is disposed to imitate Paul in speaking of himself and what he has done, let him do it only when he is in circumstances like Paul, and when the honor of religion and his usefulness imperiously demand it; and let him not forget

that it was the deliberate conviction of Paul that boasting was the characteristic of a fool!

Ye have compelled me - You have made it necessary for me to vindicate my character and to state the evidence of my divine commission as an apostle.

For I ought to have been commended of you - By you. Then this boasting, so foolish, would have been unnecessary. What a delicate reproof! All the fault of this foolish boasting was theirs. They knew him intimately. They had derived great benefits from his ministry, and they were bound in gratitude and from a regard to right and truth to vindicate him. But they had not done it; and hence, through their fault, he had been compelled to go into this unpleasant vindication of his own character.

For in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles - Neither in the evidences of my call to the apostolic office (see 1 Corinthians 9:1 ff); nor in the endowments of the Spirit; nor in my success; nor in the proofs of a divine commission in the power of working miracles; see the note on 2 Corinthians 11:5.

Though I be nothing - This expression was either used in sarcasm or seriously. According to the former supposition it means, that he was regarded as nothing; that the false apostles spoke of him as a mere nothing, or as having no claims to the office of an apostle. This is the opinion of Clarke, and many of the recent commentators. Bloomfield inclines to this. According to the latter view, it is an expression of humility on the part of Paul, and is designed to express his deep sense of his unworthiness in view of his past life - a conviction deepened by the exalted privileges conferred on him, and the exalted rank to which he had been raised as an apostle. This was the view of most of the early commentators. Doddridge unites the two. It is not possible to determine with certainty which is the true interpretation; but it seems to me that the latter view best accords with the scope of the passage, and with what we have reason to suppose the apostle would say at this time. It is true that in this discussion (1 Corinthians 15:9; "For I am the least of all the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle." If this be the correct interpretation, then it teaches:

(1) That the highest attainments in piety are not inconsistent with the deepest sense of our nothingness and unworthiness.

(2) that the most distinguished favors bestowed on us by God are consistent with the lowest humility.

(3) that those who are most favored in the Christian life, and most honored by God, should not he unwilling to take a low place, and to regard and speak of themselves as nothing. Compared with God, what are they? - Nothing. Compared with the angels, what are they? - Nothing. As creatures compared with the vast universe, what are we? - Nothing. An atom, a speck. Compared with other Christians, the eminent saints who have lived before us, what are we? Compared with what we ought to be, and might be, what are we? - Nothing. Let a man look over his past life, and see how vile and unworthy it has been; let him look at God, and see how great and glorious he is; let him look at the vast universe, and see how immense it is; let him think of the angels, and reflect how pure they are; let him think of what he might have been, of how much more he might have done for his Saviour; let him look at his body, and think how frail it is, and how soon it must return to the dust; and no matter how elevated his rank among his fellow-worms, and no matter how much God has favored him as a Christian or a minister, he will feel, if he feels right, that he is nothing. The most elevated saints are distinguished for the deepest humility; those who are nearest to God feel most their distance; they who are to occupy the highest place in heaven feel most deeply that they are unworthy of the lowest.

Verse 12

Truly the signs of an apostle - Such miracles as the acknowledged apostles worked. Such "signs" or evidences that they were divinely commissioned; see the Mark 16:17 note; Acts 2:22 note; Romans 15:19 note.

Were wrought among you - That is, by me; see the note, 1 Corinthians 9:2.

In all patience - I performed those works notwithstanding the opposition which I met with. I patiently persevered in furnishing the evidence of my divine commission. There was a succession of miracles demonstrating that I was from God, notwithstanding the unreasonable opposition which I met with, until I convinced you that I was called to the office of an apostle.

In signs and wonders - In working miracles; compare note, Acts 2:22. What these miracles at Corinth were, we are not distinctly informed. They probably, however, were similar to those performed in other places, in healing the sick, etc.; the most benevolent as it was one of the most decisive proofs of the divine power.

Verse 13

For what is it … - This verse contains a striking mixture of sarcasm and irony, not exceeded, says Bloomfield, by any example in Demosthenes. the sense is," I have given among you the most ample proof of my apostolic commission. I have conferred on you the highest favors of the apostolic office. In these respects you are superior to all other churches. In one respect only are you inferior - it is in this, that you have not been burdened with the privilege of supporting me. If you had had this, you would have been inferior to no others. But this was owing to me; and I pray that you will forgive me this I might have urged it; I might have claimed it; I might have given you the privilege of becoming equal to the most favored in all respects. But I have not pressed it, and you have not done it, and I ask your pardon." There is a delicate insinuation that they had not contributed to his needs (see the note, 2 Corinthians 11:8); an intimation that it was a privilege to contribute to the support of the gospel, and that Paul might have been "burdensome to them" (see the notes on 1 Corinthians 9:1-12); and an admission that he was in part to blame for this, and had not in this respect given them an opportunity to equal other churches in all respects.

Was not burdensome to you - see this explained in the notes on 2 Corinthians 10:8.

Forgive me this wrong - "If it be a fault, pardon it. Forgive me that I did not give you this opportunity to be equal to other churches. It is a privilege to contribute to the support of the gospel, and they who are permitted to do it should esteem themselves highly favored. I pray you to pardon me for depriving you of any of your Christian privileges." What the feelings of the Corinthians were about forgiving Paul for this we know not; but most churches would be as ready to forgive a minister for this as for any other offence.

Verse 14

Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you - That is, this is the third time that I have purposed to come and see you, and have made preparation for it. He does not mean that he had been twice with them and

was now coming the third time, but that he had twice before intended to go and had been disappointed; see 1 Corinthians 16:5; 2 Corinthians 1:15-16. His purpose had been to visit them on his way to Macedonia and again on his return from Macedonia. He had now formed a third resolution, which he had a prospect of carrying into execution.

And I will not be burdensome to you - I resolve still, as I have done before, not to receive a compensation that shall be oppressive to you, see the notes on 2 Corinthians 11:9-10.

For I seek not yours, but you - I desire not to obtain your property, but to save your souls. This was a noble resolution; and it is the resolution which should be formed by every minister of the gospel. While a minister of Christ has a claim to a competent support, his main purpose should not be to obtain such a support. It should be the higher and nobler object of winning souls to the Redeemer. See Paul‘s conduct in this respect explained in the notes on Acts 20:33.

For the children … - There is great delicacy and address in this sentiment. The meaning is, “It is not natural and usual for children to make provisions for their parents. The common course of events and of duty is, for parents to make provision for their offspring. I, therefore, your spiritual father, choose to act in the same way. I make provision for your spiritual needs; I labor and toil for you as a father does for his children. I seek your welfare, as he does, by constant self-denial. In return, I do not ask you to provide for me, any more than a father ordinarily expects his children to provide for him. I am willing to labor as he does, content with doing my duty, and promoting the welfare of those under me.” The words rendered “ought out” (οὐ ὀφείλει ou opheilei) are to be understood in a comparative sense. Paul does not mean that a child ought never to provide for his parents, or to lay anything up for a sick, a poor, and an infirm father, but that the duty of doing that was slight and unusual compared with the duty of a parent to provide for his children. The one was of comparatively rare occurrence; the other was constant and was the ordinary course of duty It is a matter of obligation for a child to provide for an aged and helpless parent; but commonly the duty is that of a parent to provide for his children. Paul felt like a father toward the church in Corinth; and he was willing, therefore, to labor for them without compensation.

Verse 15

And I will very gladly spend - I am willing to spend my strength, and time, and life, and all that I have, for your welfare, as a father cheerfully does for his children. Any expense which may be necessary to promote your salvation I am willing to submit to. The labor of a father for his children is cheerful and pleasant. Such is his love for them that he delights in toil for their sake, and that he may make them happy. The toil of a pastor for his flock should be cheerful. He should be willing to engage in unremitted efforts for their welfare; and if he has any right feeling he will find a pleasure in that toil He will not grudge the time demanded; he will not be grieved that it exhausts his strength, or his life, anymore than a father will who toils for his family. And as the pleasures of a father who is laboring for his children are among the purest and most pleasant which people ever enjoy, so it is with a pastor. Perhaps, on the whole, the pleasantest employment in life is that connected with the pastoral office; the happiest moments known on earth are the duties, arduous as they are, of the pastoral relation. God thus, as in the relation of a father, tempers toil and pleasure together; and accompanies most arduous labors with present and abundant reward.

Be spent - Be exhausted and worn out in my labors. So the Greek word means. Paul was willing that his powers should be entirely exhausted and his life consumed in this service.

For you - Margin, as in the Greek, for your souls. So it should have been rendered. So Tyndale renders it. The sense is, that he was willing to become wholly exhausted if by it he might secure the salvation of their souls.

Though the more abundantly I love you … - This is designed doubtless as a gentle reproof. It refers to the fact that notwithstanding the tender attachment which he had evinced for them, they had not manifested the love in return which he had a right to expect. It is possible that there may be an allusion to the case of a fond, doting parent. It sometimes happens that a parent fixes his affections with undue degree on some one of his children; and in such cases it is not uncommon that the child evinces special ingratitude and lack of love. Such may be the allusion here - that Paul had fixed his affections on them like a fond, doting father, and that he had met with a return by no means corresponding with the fervour of his attachment; yet still he was willing, like such a father, to exhaust his time and strength for their welfare. The doctrine is, that we should be willing to

labor and toil for the good of others, even when they evince great ingratitude. The proper end of laboring for their welfare is not to excite their gratitude, but to obey the will of God; and no matter whether others are grateful or not; whether they love us or not; whether we can promote our popularity with them or not, let us do them good always. It better shows the firmness of our Christian principle to endeavor to benefit others when they love us the less for all our attempts, than it does to attempt to do good on the swelling tide of popular favor.

Verse 16

But be it so - This is evidently a charge of his enemies; or at least a charge which it might be supposed they would make. Whether they ever in fact made it, or whether the apostle merely anticipates an objection, it is impossible to determine. It is clearly to be regarded as the language of objectors; for:

(1) It can never be supposed that Paul would state as a serious matter that he had caught them with deceit or fraud.

(2) he answers it as an objection in the following verse. The meaning is, "We admit that you did not burden us. You did not exact a support from us. But all this was mere trick. You accomplished the same thing in another way. You professed when with us not to seek our property but our souls. But in various ways you contrived to get our money, and to secure your object. You made others the agents for doing this, and sent them among us under various pretexts to gain money from us." It will be remembered that Paul had sent; Titus among them to take up the collection for the poor saints in Judea 2 Corinthians 8:6, and it is not at all improbable that some there had charged Paul with making use of this pretence only to obtain money for his own private use. To guard against this charge. was one of the reasons why Paul was so anxious to have some persons appointed by the church to take charge of the contribution; see 1 Corinthians 16:3; compare the notes on 2 Corinthians 8:19-21.

Being crafty - Being cunning That is, by sending persons to obtain money on different pretences.

I caught you with guile - I took you by deceit or fraud. That is, making use of fraud in pretending that the money was for poor and afflicted saints, when in reality it was for my own use. It is impossible that Paul should have ever admitted this of himself; and they greatly pervert the passage who

suppose that it applies to him, and then plead that it is right to make use of guile in accomplishing their purposes. Paul never carried his measures by dishonesty, nor did he ever justify fraud; compare the notes on Acts 23:6.

Verse 17

Did I make a gain … - In refuting this slander, Paul appeals boldly to the facts, and to what they knew. "Same the man," says he, "who has thus defrauded you under my instructions. If the charge is well-founded, let him be specified, and let the mode in which it was done be distinctly stated." The phrase "make a gain" (from πλεονεκτέω pleonekteō), means properly to have an advantage; then to take advantage, to seek unlawful gain. Here Paul asks whether he had defrauded them by means of anyone whom he had sent to them.

Verse 18

I desired Titus - To go and complete the collection which you had commenced; see 2 Corinthians 8:6.

And with him I sent a brother - see note on 2 Corinthians 8:18.

Did Titus make a gain of you - They knew that he did not. They had received him kindly, treated him with affection, and sent him away with every proof of confidence and respect; see 2 Corinthians 7:7. How then could they now pretend that he had defrauded them?

Walked we not in the same spirit? - Did not all his actions resemble mine? Was there not the same proof of honesty, sincerity, and love which I have ever manifested? This is a very delicate turn. Paul's course of life when with them they admitted was free from guile and from any attempt to get money by improper means. They charged him only with attempting it by means of others. He now boldly appeals to them and asks whether Titus and he had not in fact acted in the same manner; and whether they had not alike evinced a spirit free from covetousness and deceit?

Verse 19

Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? - see the note on 2 Corinthians 5:12. The sense is, Do not suppose that this is said from mere anxiety to obtain your favor, or to ingratiate ourselves into your esteem. This is said doubtless to keep himself from the suspicion of being actuated by improper motives. He had manifested great solicitude certainly in the previous chapter to vindicate his character; but he here says that it was not from a mere desire to show them that his conduct was right; it was from a desire to honor Christ.

We speak before God in Christ - We declare the simple and undisguised truth as in the presence of God. I have no mere desire to palliate my conduct; I disguise nothing; I conceal nothing; I say nothing for the mere purpose of self-vindication, but I can appeal to the Searcher of hearts for the exact truth of all that I say. The phrase "before God in Christ," means probably, "I speak as in the presence of God, and as a follower of Christ, as a Christian man." It is the solemn appeal of a Christian to his God for the truth of what he said, and a solemn asseveration that what he said was not for the mere purpose of excusing or apologizing for (the sense of the Greek) his conduct.

But we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying - All that I have done has been for your welfare. My vindication of my character, and my effort to disabuse you of your prejudices, has been that you might have unwavering confidence in the gospel and might be built up in holy faith. On the word "edify," see the Romans 14:19 note; 1 Corinthians 8:1; 1 Corinthians 10:23 notes.

Verse 20

For I fear, lest, when I come - see 2 Corinthians 12:14.

I shall not find you such as I would - That is, walking in the truth and order of the gospel. He had feared that the disorders would not be removed, and that they would not have corrected the errors which prevailed, and for which he had rebuked them. It was on this account that he had said so much to them. His desire was that all these disorders might be removed, and that he might be saved from the necessity of exercising severe discipline when he should come among them.

And that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not - That is, that I shall be compelled to administer discipline, and that my visit may not be as pleasant to you as you would desire. For this reason he wished all disorder corrected, and all offences removed; that everything might be pleasant when he should come; see 1 Corinthians 4:21; compare note on 2 Corinthians 10:2.

Lest there be debates - I fear that there may be existing there debates, etc., which will require the interposition of the authority of an apostle. On the meaning of the word "debate," see the note on Romans 1:29.

Envyings - see the note on 1 Corinthians 3:3.

Wraths - Anger or animosities between contending factions, the usual effect of forming parties.

Strifes - Between contending factions; see note on 1 Corinthians 3:3.

Backbitings - see the note on Romans 1:30.

Whisperings - see the note on Romans 1:29.

Swellings - Undue elation; being puffed up (see the notes on 2 Corinthians 8:1; 1 Corinthians 4:6, note; 1 Corinthians 4:18-19, note; 1 Corinthians 5:2, note) - such as would be produced by vain self-confidence.

Tumults - Disorder and confusion arising from this existence of parties. Paul, deeply sensible of the evil of all this, had endeavored in this correspondence to suppress it, that all things might be pleasant when he should come among them.

Verse 21

And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me … - Lest I should be compelled to inflict punishment on those whom I suppose to have been converted under my ministry. I had rejoiced in them as true converts: I had counted them as among the fruit of my ministry. Now to be compelled to inflict punishment on them as having no religion would mortify me and humble me. The infliction of punishment on members of the church is a sort of punishment to him who inflicts it as well as to him who is punished. Members of the church should walk uprightly, lest they overwhelm the ministry in shame.

And that I shall bewail many … - If they repented of their sin he could still rejoice in them. If they continued in their sin until he came, it would be to him a source of deep lamentation. It is evident from the word "many" here that the disorders had prevailed very extensively in the church at Corinth. The word rendered "have sinned already" means "who have sinned before," and the idea is, that they were old offenders, and that they had not yet repented.

The uncleanness - see note, Romans 1:24.

And fornication and lasciviousness … - see the notes on 1 Corinthians 5:1; 1 Corinthians 6:18. This was the sin to which they were particularly exposed in Corinth, as it was the sin for which that corrupt city was particularly distinguished. See the introduction to the First Epistle. Hence, the frequent cautions in these epistles against it; and hence, it is not to be wondered at that some of those who had become professing Christians had fallen into it. It may be added that it is still the sin to which converts from the corruptions and licentiousness of paganism are particularly exposed.

2 CORINTHIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Introduction

This closing chapter 2 Corinthians 13:1-14 of the Epistle relates to the following subjects.

I. The assurance of Paul that he was about to come among them 2 Corinthians 13:1-4, and that he would certainly inflict punishment on all who deserved His enemies had reproached him as being timid and pusillanimous; see the notes on 2 Corinthians 10:1-2, 2 Corinthians 10:10-11. They had said that he was powerful to threaten, but afraid to execute. It is probable that they had become more bold in this from the fact that he had twice proposed to go there and had failed. In reply to all this, he now in conclusion solemnly assures them that he was coming, and that in all cases where an offence was proved by two or three witnesses, punishment would be inflicted; He assures them 2 Corinthians 13:2 that he would not spare; and that since they sought a proof that Christ had sent him they should witness that proof in the punishment which he would inflict 2 Corinthians 13:3; for that Christ was now clothed with power and was able to execute punishment, though he had been crucified; 2 Corinthians 13:4.

II. Paul calls on them solemnly to examine themselves and to see whether they had any true religion; 2 Corinthians 13:5-6. In the state of things which existed there; in the corruption which had abounded in the church, he solemnly commands them to institute a faithful inquiry, to know whether they had not been deceived; at the same time expressing the hope that it would appear as the result of their examination that they were not reprobates.

III. He earnestly prays to God that they might do no evil; that they might be found to be honest and pure, whatever might be thought of Paul himself or whatever might become of him; 2 Corinthians 13:7. Their repentance would save. Paul from exerting his miraculous power in their punishment, and might thus prevent the proof of his apostolic authority which they desired, and the consequence might be that they might esteem him to be a reprobate, for he could not exert his miraculous power except in the cause of truth; 2 Corinthians 13:8. Still he was willing to be esteemed an impostor if they would do no evil.

IV. He assures them that he earnestly wished their perfection, and that the design of his writing to them severe as he had appeared, was their edification; 2 Corinthians 13:9-10.

V. Then he bids them an affectionate and tender farewell, and closes with the usual salutations and benedictions; 2 Corinthians 13:11-14.

Verse 1

This is the third time … - see the note on 2 Corinthians 12:14. For an interesting view of this passage, see Paley's Horae Paulinae on this Epistle, No. 11: It is evident that Paul had been to Corinth but once before this, but he had resolved to go before a second time, but had been disappointed.

In the mouth of two or three witnesses … - This was what the Law of Moses required; Deuteronomy 20:16; see the note on John 8:17; compare Matthew 18:16. But in regard to its application here, commentators are not agreed. Some suppose that Paul refers to his own epistles which he had sent to them as the two or three witnesses by which his promise to them would be made certain; that he had purposed it and promised it two or three times, and that as this was all that was required by the Law, it would certainly be established. This is the opinion of Bloomfield, Rosenmuller, Grotius, Hammond, Locke, and some others. But, with all the respect due to such great names, it seems to me that this would be trifling and childish in the extreme. Lightfoot supposes that he refers to Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, who would be witnesses to them of his purpose; see 1 Corinthians 16:17. But the more probable opinion, it seems to me, is that of Doddridge, Macknight, and others, that he anticipated that there wound be necessity for the administration of discipline there, but that he would feel himself under obligation in administering it to adhere to the reasonable maxim of the Jewish Law. No one should be condemned or punished where there was not at least two or three witnesses to prove the offence. But where there were, discipline would be administered according to the nature of the crime.

Verse 2

I told you before - That I would not spare offenders; that I would certainly punish them. He had intimated this before in the First Epistle 1 Corinthians 4:21; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.

And foretell you - Now apprise you of my fixed determination to punish every offender as he deserves.

As if I were present, the second time - The mention of the second time here proves that Paul had been with them but once before. He had formed the resolution to go to them, but had been disappointed. The time when he had been with them is recorded in Acts 18:1 ff. He now uses the same language to them which he says he would use if he were with them, as he had expected to be, the second time. See the remarks of Paley on this passage, referred to above.

And being absent - see the note on 1 Corinthians 5:3.

To them which have heretofore sinned - To all the offenders in the church. They had supposed that he would not come to them 1 Corinthians 4:18, or that if he came he would not dare to inflict punishment, 2 Corinthians 9-11. They had, therefore, given themselves greater liberty, and had pursued their own course, regardless of his authority and commands.

I will not spare - I will punish them. They shall not escape.

Verse 3

Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me - see the notes on the previous chapters. They had called in question his apostolic authority; they had demanded the evidence of his divine commission. He says that he would now furnish such evidence by inflicting just punishment on all offenders, and they should have abundant proof that Christ spoke by him, or that he was inspired.

Which to you-ward is not weak - Or who, that is, Christ, is not weak, etc. Christ has manifested his power abundantly toward you, that is, either by the miracles that had been performed in his name; or by the diseases and calamities which they had suffered on account of their disorders and offences (see the note on 1 Corinthians 11:30); or by the force and efficacy of his doctrine. The connection, it seems to me, requires that we should understand it of the calamities which had been inflicted by Christ on them for their sins, and which Paul says would be inflicted again if they did not repent. The idea is, that they had had ample demonstration of the power of Christ to inflict punishment, and they had reason to apprehend it again.

Verse 4

For though he was crucified through weakness - Various modes have been adopted of explaining the phrase "through weakness." The most probable explanation is that which refers it to the human nature which he

had assumed Philemon 2:7-8; 1 Peter 3:18, and to the appearance of weakness which he manifested. He did not choose to exert his power. He appeared to his enemies to be weak and feeble. This idea would be an exact illustration of the point before the apostle. He is illustrating his own conduct, and especially in the fact that he had not exerted his miraculous powers among them in the punishment of offenders; and he does it by the example of Christ, who though abundantly able to have exerted his power and to have rescued himself from his enemies, yet was willing to appear weak, and to be crucified. It is very clear:

(1) That the Lord Jesus seemed to his enemies to be weak and incapable of resistance.

(2) that he did not put forth his power to protect his life. He in fact offered no resistance, as if he had no power.

(3) he had a human nature that was especially sensitive, and sensible to suffering; and that was borne down and crushed under the weight of mighty woes; see my notes on Isaiah 53:2-3. From all these causes he seemed to be weak and feeble; and these appear to me to be the principal ideas in this expression.

Yet he liveth - He is not now dead. Though he was crucified, yet he now lives again, and is now capable of exerting his great power He furnishes proof of his being alive, in the success which attends the gospel, and in the miracles which are performed in his name and by his power. There is a living Redeemer in heaven; a Redeemer who is able to exert all the power which he ever exerted when on earth; a Redeemer, therefore, who is able to save the soul; to raise the dead; to punish all his foes.

By the power of God - In raising him from the dead and placing him at his own right hand; see Ephesians 1:19-21. Through the power of God he was brought from the tomb, and has a place assigned him at the head of the universe.

For we also are weak in him - Margin, "with him." We his apostles, also, are weak in virtue of our connection with him. We are subject to infirmities and trials; we seem to have no power; we are exposed to contempt; and we appear to our enemies to be destitute of strength. Our enemies regard us as feeble; and they despise us.

But we shall live with him … - That is, we shall show to you that we are alive. By the aid of the power of God we shall show that we are not as weak as our foes pretend; that we are invested with power; and that we are able to inflict the punishment which we threaten. This is one of the numerous instances in which Paul illustrated the case before him by a reference to the example and character of Christ. The idea is, that Christ did not exert his power, and appeared to be weak, and was put to death. So Paul says that he had not exerted his power, and seemed to be weak. But, says he, Christ lives, and is clothed with strength; and so we, though we appear to be weak, shall exert among you, or toward you, the power with which he has invested us, in inflicting punishment on our foes.

Verse 5

Examine yourselves - see the note on 1 Corinthians 11:28. The particular reason why Paul calls on them to examine themselves was, that there was occasion to fear that many of them had been deceived. Such had been the irregularities and disorders in the church at Corinth; so ignorant had many of them shown themselves of the nature of the Christian religion, that it was important, in the highest degree, for them to institute a strict and impartial examination to ascertain whether they had not been altogether deceived. This examination, however, is never unimportant or useless for Christians; and an exhortation to do it is always in place. So important are the interests at stake, and so liable are the best to deceive themselves, that all Christians should be often induced to examine the foundation of their hope of eternal salvation.

Whether ye be in the faith - Whether you are true Christians. Whether you have any true faith in the gospel. Faith in Jesus Christ, and in the promises of God through him, is one of the distinguishing characteristics of a true Christian; and to ascertain whether we have any true faith, therefore, is to ascertain whether we are sincere Christians. For some reasons for such an examination, and some remarks on the mode of doing it; see the note on 1 Corinthians 11:28.

Prove your own selves - The word used here (δοκιμάζετε dokimazete) is stronger than that before used, and rendered "examine" (πειράζετε peirazete). This word, prove, refers to assaying or trying metals by the powerful action of heat; and the idea here is, that they should make the most thorough trial of their religion, to see whether it would stand the test; see the note on 1 Corinthians 3:13. The proof of their piety was to be arrived at

by a faithful examination of their own hearts and lives; by a diligent comparison of their views and feelings with the word of God; and especially by making trial of it in life. The best way to prove our piety is to subject it to actual trial in the various duties and responsibilites of life. A man who wishes to prove an axe to see whether it is good or not, does not sit down and look at it, or read all the treatises which he can find on axe-making, and on the properties of iron and steel, valuable as such information would be; but he shoulders his axe and goes into the woods, and puts it to the trial there.

If it cuts well; if it does not break; if it is not soon made dull, he understands the quality of his axe better than he could in any other way. So if a man wishes to know what his religion is worth, let him try it in the places where religion is of any value. Let him go into the world with it. Let him go and try to do good; to endure affliction in a proper manner; to combat the errors and follies of life; to admonish sinners of the error of their ways; and to urge forward the great work of the conversion of the world, and he will soon see there what his religion is worth - as easily as a man can test the qualities of an axe. Let him not merely sit down and think, and compare himself with the Bible and look at his own heart - valuable as this may be in many respects - but let him treat his religion as he would anything else - let him subject it to actual experiment. That religion which will enable a man to imitate the example of Paul or Howard, or the great Master himself, in doing good, is genuine.

That religion which will enable a man to endure persecution for the name of Jesus; to bear calamity without complaining; to submit to a long series of disappointments and distresses for Christ‘s sake, is genuine. That religion which will prompt a man unceasingly to a life of prayer and self-denial; which will make him ever conscientious, industrious, and honest; which will enable him to warn sinners of the errors of their ways, and which will dispose him to seek the friendship of Christians, and the salvation of the world, is pure and genuine. That will answer the purpose. It is like the good axe with which a man can chop all day long, in which there is no flaw, and which does not get dull, and which answers all the purposes of an axe. Any other religion than this is worthless.

Know ye not your own selves - That is, “Do you not know yourselves?” This does not mean, as some may suppose, that they might

know of themselves, without the aid of others, what their character was; or that they might themselves ascertain it; but it means that they might know themselves, that is, their character, principles, conduct. This proves that Christians may know their true character. If they are Christians, they may know it with as undoubted certainty as they may know their character on any other subject. Why should not a man be as able to determine whether he loves God as whether he loves a child, a parent, or a friend? What greater difficulty need there be in understanding the character on the subject of religion than on any other subject; and why should there be anymore reason for doubt on this than on any other point of character? And yet it is remarkable, that while a child has no doubt that he loves a parent, or a husband a wife, or a friend a friend, almost all Christians are in very great doubt about their attachment to the Redeemer and to the great principles of religion.

Such was not the case with the apostles and early Christians. "I know," says Paul," whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him," etc.; 2 Timothy 1:12. "We know.' says John, speaking in the name of the body of Christians, "that we have passed from death unto life;" 1 John 3:14. "We know that we are of the truth;" 1 John 3:19. "We know that he abideth in us;" 1 John 3:24. "We know that we dwell in him;" 1 John 4:13; see also John 5:2, John 5:19-20. So Job said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth," etc.; Job 19:25. Such is the current language of scripture. Where, in the Bible, do the sacred speakers and writers express doubts about their attachment to God and the Redeemer? Where is such language to be found as we hear from almost all professing Christians, expressing entire uncertainty about their condition; absolute doubt whether they love God or hate him; whether they are going to heaven or hell; whether they are influenced by good motives or bad; and even making it a matter of merit to be in such doubt, and thinking it wrong not to doubt?

What would be thought of a husband that should make it a matter of merit to doubt whether he loved his wife; or of a child that should think it wrong not to doubt whether he loved his father or mother? Such attachments ought to be doubted - but they do not occur in the common relations of life. On the subject of religion, people often act as they do on no other subject; and if it is right for one to be satisfied of the sincerity of his

attachments to his best earthly friends, and to speak of such attachment without wavering or misgiving, it cannot be wrong to be satisfied with regard to our attachment to God, and to speak of that attachment, as the apostles did, in language of undoubted confidence.

How that Jesus Christ is in you - To be in Christ, or for Christ to be in us, is a common mode in the Scriptures of expressing the idea that we are Christians. It is language derived from the close union which subsists between the Redeemer and his people: see the phrase explained in the note on Romans 8:10.

Except ye be reprobates - see the note on Romans 1:28. The word rendered "reprobates" (ἀδόκιμοι adokimoi) means properly not approved, rejected: that which will not stand the trial. It is properly applicable to metals, as denoting that they will not bear the tests to which they are subjected, but are found to be base or adulterated. The sense here is, that they might know that they were Christians, unless their religion was base, false, adulterated; or such as would not bear the test. There is no allusion here to the sense which is sometimes given to the word "reprobate," of being cast off or abandoned by God, or doomed by him to eternal ruin in accordance with an eternal purpose. Whatever may be the truth on that subject, nothing is taught in regard to it here. The simple idea is, that they might know that they were Christians, unless their religion was such as would not stand the test, or was worthless.

Verse 6

But I trust … - The sense of this verse is," Whatever may be the result of your examination of yourselves, I trust (Greek I hope) you will not find us false and to be rejected; that is, I trust you will find in me evidence that I am commissioned by the Lord Jesus to be his apostle." The idea is, that they would find when he was among them, that he was endowed with all the qualifications needful to confer a claim to the apostolic office.

Verse 7

Now I pray to God that ye do no evil - I earnestly desire that you may do right, and only right; and I beseech God that it may be so, whatever may be the result in regard to me, and whatever may be thought of my claims to the apostolic office. This is designed to mitigate the apparent severity of the sentiment in 2 Corinthians 13:6. There he had said that they would find him fully endowed with the power of an apostle. They would see that he was able abundantly to punish the disobedient. They would have ample

demonstration that he was endowed by Christ with all the powers appropriate to an apostle, and that all that he had claimed had been well founded, all that he threatened would be executed. But this seemed to imply that he desired that there should be occasion for the exercise of that power of administering discipline; and he, therefore, in this verse, removes all suspicion that such was his wish, by saying solemnly, that he prayed to God that they might never do wrong; that they might never give him occasion for the exercise of his power in that way, though as a consequence he would be regarded as a reprobate, or as having no claims to the apostolic office. He would rather be regarded as an impostor; rather lie under the reproach of his enemies that he had no claims to the apostolic character, than that they, by doing wrong, should give him occasion to show that he was not a deceiver.

Not that we should appear approved - My great object, and my main desire, is not to urge my claims to the apostolic office and clear up my own character; it is that you should lead honest lives, whatever may become of me and my reputation.

Though we be as reprobates - I am willing to be regarded as rejected, disapproved, worthless, like base metal, provided you lead honest and holy lives. I prefer to be so esteemed, and to have you live as becomes Christians, than that you should dishonor your Christian profession, and thus afford me the opportunity of demonstrating, by inflicting punishment, that I am commissioned by the Lord Jesus to be an apostle. The sentiment is, that a minister of the gospel should desire that his people should walk worthy of their high calling, whatever may be the estimate in which he is held. He should never desire that they should do wrong - how can he do it? - in order that he may take occasion from their wrongdoing to vindicate, in any way, his own character, or to establish a reputation for skill in administering discipline or in governing a church. What a miserable condition it is - and as wicked as it is miserable - for a man to wish to take advantage of a state of disorder, or of the faults of others, in order to establish his own character, or to obtain reputation. Paul spurned and detested such a thought; yet it is to be feared it is sometimes done.

Verse 8

For we - That is, we the apostles.

Can do nothing against the truth … - That is, we who are under the influence of the Spirit of God; who have been commissioned by him as

apostles, can do nothing that shall be against the great system of truth which we are appointed to promulgate and defend. You need, therefore, apprehend no partial or severe discipline from us; no unjust construction of your conduct. Our aim is to promote the truth, and to do what is right; and we cannot, therefore, by any regard to our own reputation, or to any personal advantage, do what is wrong, or countenance, or desire what is wrong in others. We must wish that which is right to be done by others, whatever may be the effect on us - whether we are regarded as apostles or deceivers. I suppose, therefore, that this verse is designed to qualify and confirm the sentiment in the previous verse, that Paul meant to do only right; that he wished all others to do right; and that whatever might be the effect on his own reputation, or however he might be regarded, he could not go against the great system of gospel truth which he preached, or even desire that others should ever do wrong, though it might in any way be for his advantage. It was a fixed principle with him to act only in accordance with truth; to do what was right.

Verse 9

For we are glad when we are weak … - We rejoice in your welfare, and are willing to submit to self-denial and to infirmity if it may promote your spiritual strength. In the connection in which this stands it seems to mean, "I am content to appear weak, provided you do no wrong; I am willing not to have occasion to exercise my power in punishing offenders, and had rather lie under the reproach of being actually weak, than to have occasion to exercise my power by punishing you for wrongdoing; and provided you are strong in the faith and in the hope of the gospel, I am very willing, nay, I rejoice that I am under this necessity of appearing weak."

And this also we wish - I desire this in addition to your doing no evil.

Even your perfection - The word used here (κατάρτισις katartisis) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though the verb from which it is derived (καταρτίζω katartizō) occurs often; Matthew 4:21; Matthew 21:16; Mark 1:19; Luke 6:40; Romans 9:22; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Galatians 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:10, et al.; see the note on 2 Corinthians 13:11. On the meaning of the word see Romans 9:22. The idea of restoring, putting in order, fitting, repairing, is involved in the word "always," and hence, the idea of making perfect; that is, of completely restoring anything to its proper place. Here it evidently means that Paul wished their entire reformation - so that there should be no occasion for

exercising discipline. Doddridge renders it, "perfect good order." Macknight, "restoration." For this restoration of good order Paul had diligently labored in these epistles; and this was an object near to his heart.

Verse 10

Therefore I write these things … - This is a kind of apology for what he had said, and especially for the apparently harsh language which he had felt himself constrained to use. He had reproved them; he had admonished them of their faults; he had threatened punishment, all of which was designed to prevent the necessity of severe measures when he should be with them.

Lest being present I should use sharpness - In order that when I come I may not have occasion to employ severity; see the sentiment explained in the note on 2 Corinthians 10:2.

According to the power … - That I may not use the power with which Christ has invested me for maintaining discipline in his church. The same form of expression is found in 2 Corinthians 10:8; see the note on that place.

Verse 11

Finally, brethren - (λοιπὸν loipon). The remainder; all that remains is for me to bid you an affectionate farewell. The word here rendered "farewell" (χαίρετε chairete), means usually to joy and rejoice, or to be glad; Luke 1:14; John 16:20, John 16:22; and it is often used in the sense of "joy to you," "hail!" as a salutation; Matthew 26:49; Matthew 27:29. It is also used as a salutation at the beginning of an epistle, in the sense of greeting; Acts 15:23; Acts 23:26; James 1:1. It is generally agreed, however, that it is here to be understood in the sense of farewell, as a parting salutation, though it may be admitted that there is included in the word an expression of a wish for their happiness. This was among the last words which Cyrus, when dying, addressed to his friends.

Be perfect - See this word explained in the notes on 2 Corinthians 13:9, and Romans 9:22. It was a wish that every disorder might be removed; that all that was out of joint might be restored; that everything might be in its proper place; and that they might be just what they ought to be: A command to be perfect, however, does not prove that it has ever in fact been obeyed: and an earnest wish on the part of an apostle that others might be perfect, does not demonstrate that they were; and this passage should not be adduced to prove that any have been free from sin. It may be adduced,

however, to prove that an obligation rests on Christians to be perfect, and that there is no natural obstacle to their becoming such, since God never can command us to do an impossibility. Whether anyone, but the Lord Jesus, has been perfect, however, is a question on which different denominations of Christians have been greatly divided. It is incumbent on the advocates of the doctrine of sinless perfection to produce some one instance of a perfectly sinless character. This has not yet been done.

Be of good comfort - Be consoled by the promises and supports of the gospel. Take comfort from the hopes which the gospel imparts. Or the word may possibly have a reciprocal sense, and mean, comfort one another; see Schleusner. Rosenmuller renders it, "receive admonition from all with a grateful mind, that you may come to greater perfection." It is, at any rate, the expression of an earnest wish on the part of the apostle, that they might be happy.

Be of one mind - They had been greatly distracted, and divided into different parties and factions. At the close of the Epistle he exhorts them as he had repeatedly done before, to lay aside these strifes, and to be united, and manifest the same spirit; see the notes on Romans 12:16; Romans 15:5, note; see the note also on 1 Corinthians 1:10, note. The sense is, that Paul desired that dissensions should cease, and that they should be united in opinion and feeling as Christian brethren.

Live in peace - With each other. Let contentions and strifes cease. To promote the restoration of peace had been the main design of these epistles.

And the God of love and peace - The God who is all love, and who is the Author of all peace. What a glorious appellation is this! There can be no more beautiful expression, and it is as true as it is beautiful, that God is a God of love and of peace. He is infinitely benevolent; He delights in exhibiting His love; and He delights in the love which His people evince for each other. At the same time, He is the Author of peace, and He delights in peace among people. When Christians love each other they have reason to expect that the God of love will be with them; when they live in peace, they may expect the God of peace will take up His abode with them. In contention and strife we have no reason to expect His presence; and it is only when we are willing to lay aside all animosity that we may expect the God of peace will fix his abode with us.

Verse 12

Greet - Salute; see the note, Romans 16:3.

With an holy kiss - note, Romans 16:16.

Verse 13

All the saints salute you - That is, all who were with Paul, or in the place where he was. The Epistle was written from Macedonia, probably from Philippi. See the introduction, section 3.

Verse 14

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ - see the note, Romans 16:20. This verse contains what is usually called the apostolic benediction - the form which has been so long, and which is almost so universally used, in dismissing religious assemblies. It is properly a prayer, and it is evident that the optative εἴη eiē"May the grace," etc., is to be supplied. It is the expression of a desire that the favors here referred to may descend on all for whom they are thus invoked.

And the love of God - May the love of God toward you be manifest. This must refer especially to the Father, as the Son and the Holy Spirit are mentioned in the other members of the sentence. The "love of God" here referred to is the manifestation of his goodness and favor in the pardon of sin, in the communication of his grace, in the comforts and consolations which he imparts to his people, in all that constitutes an expression of love. The love of God brings salvation; imparts comfort; pardons sin; sanctifies the soul; fills the heart with joy and peace; and Paul here prays that all the blessings which are the fruit of that love may be with them.

And the communion of the Holy Ghost - compare note, 1 Corinthians 10:16. The word "communion" (κοινωνία koinōnia) means properly participation, fellowship, or having anything in common; Acts 2:42; Romans 15:26; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 2 Corinthians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 2 Corinthians 9:13; Galatians 2:9; Ephesians 3:9; 1 John 1:3. This is also a wish or prayer of the apostle Paul; and the desire is either that they might partake of the views and feelings of the Holy Spirit; that is, that they might have fellowship with him; or that they might all in common partake of the gifts and graces which the Spirit of God imparts. He gives love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith Galatians 5:22, as well as miraculous endowments; and Paul prays that these things might be imparted freely to all the church in common, that all might participate in them; all might share them.

Amen - This word is missing, says Clarke, in almost every ms. of any authority. It was however early affixed to the Epistle.

In regard to this closing verse of the Epistle, we may make the following remarks:

(1) It is a prayer; and if it is a prayer addressed to God, it is no less so to the Lord Jesus and to the Holy Spirit. If so, it is right to offer worship to the Lord Jesus and to the Holy Spirit.

(2) there is a distinction in the divine nature; or there is the existence of what is usually termed three persons in the Godhead. If not. why are they mentioned in this manner? If the Lord Jesus is not divine and equal with the Father, why is he mentioned in this connection? How strange it would be for Paul, an inspired man, to pray in the same breath, "the grace of a man or an angel" and "the love of God" be with you! And if the "Holy Spirit" be merely an influence of God or an attribute of God, how strange to pray that the "love of God" and the participation or fellowship of an "influence of God," or an "attribute of God" might be with them!

(3) the Holy Spirit is a person, or has a distinct personality. He is not an attribute of God, nor a mere divine influence. How could prayer be addressed to an attribute, or an influence? But here, nothing can be plainer than that there were favors which the Holy Spirit, as an intelligent and conscious agent, was expected to bestow. And nothing can be plainer than that they were favors in some sense distinct from those which were conferred by the Lord Jesus, and by the Father. Here is a distinction of some kind as real as that between the Lord Jesus and the Father; here are favors expected from him distinct from those conferred by the Father and the Son; and there is, therefore, here all the proof that there can be, that there is in some respects a distinction between the persons here referred to and that the Holy Spirit is an intelligent, conscious agent.

(4) the Lord Jesus is not inferior to the Father, that is, he has an equality with God. If he were not equal, how could he be mentioned, as he here is, as bestowing favors like God, and especially why is he mentioned first? Would Paul, in invoking blessings, mention the name of a mere man or an angel before that of the eternal God?

(5) the passage, therefore, furnishes a proof of the doctrine of the Trinity that has not yet been answered, and, it is believed, cannot be. On the supposition that there are three persons in the adorable Trinity, united in essence and yet distinct in some respects, all is plain and clear. But on the supposition that, the Lord Jesus is a mere man, an angel, or an archangel, and that the Holy Spirit is an attribute, or an influence from God, how unintelligible, confused, strange does all become! That Paul, in the solemn close of the Epistle, should at the same time invoke blessings from a mere creature, and from God, and from an attribute, surpasses belief. But that he should invoke blessings from him who was the equal with the Father, and from the Father himself, and from the Sacred Spirit sustaining the same rank, and in like manner imparting important blessings, is in accordance with all that we should expect, and makes all harmonious and appropriate.

(6) nothing could be a more proper close of the Epistle; nothing is a more appropriate close of public worship, than such an invocation. It is a prayer to the ever-blessed God, that all the rich influences which he gives as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, may be imparted; that all the benefits which God confers in the interesting relations in which he makes himself known to us may descend and bless us. What more appropriate prayer can be offered at the close of public worship? How seriously should it be pronounced, as a congregration is about to separate, perhaps to come together no more! With what solemnity should all join in it, and how devoutly should all pray, as they thus separate, that these rich and inestimable blessings may rest upon them! With hearts uplifted to God it should be pronounced and heard; and every worshiper should leave the sanctuary deeply feeling that what he most needs as he leaves the place of public worship; as he travels on the journey of life; as he engages in its duties or meets its trials; as he looks at the grave and eternity, is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the blessings which the Holy Spirit imparts in renewing, and sanctifying, and comforting His people. What more appropriate prayer than this for the writer and reader of these notes! May that blessing rest alike upon us, though we may be strangers in the flesh, and may those divine and heavenly influences guide us alike to the same everlasting kingdom of glory.

In regard to the subscription at the end of this Epistle, it may be observed, that it is missing in a great part of the most ancient mss., and is of no authority whatever; see the notes at the end of the Epistle to the Romans, and 1Corinthians. In this case, however, this subscription is in the main correct, since there is evidence that it was written from Macedonia, and not improbably from Philippi. See the introduction to this Epistle.

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CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT
Galatians

GALATIANS CONTENTS

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Contents

Introduction to Galatians

Section 1. The Situation of Galatia, and the Character of the People

Galatia was a province of Asia Minor, having Pontus on the east. Bithynia and Paphlagonia north, Cappadocia and Phrygia south, and Phrygia west. See the map prefixed to the Acts of the Apostles. In Tanner‘s Classical Atlas, however, it extends on the north to the Euxine or Black sea. It was probably about 200 miles in its greatest extent from east to west, and varied in width from 12 to 150 miles. It was one of the largest provinces of Asia Minor, and covered an extent of country almost as large as the State of New Jersey. It is probable, however, that the boundaries of Galatia varied at different times as circumstances dictated. It had no natural boundary, except on the north; and of course the limits may have been varied by conquests, or by the will of the Roman emperor, when it was erected into a province.

The name “Galatia” is derived from the word Gaul, and was given to it because it had been conquered by the Gauls, who, having subdued the country, settled in it. - Pausanias, Attic. cap. iv. These were mixed with various Grecian families, and the country was also called Gallogroecia. - Justin, lib. xxiv. 4; xxv. 2; xvii. 3. This invasion of Asia Minor was made, according to Justin (lib. xxv. cap. 2), about the 479th year after the founding of Rome, and, of course, about 272 years before Christ. They invaded Macedonia and Greece; and subsequently invaded Asia Minor, and became an object of terror to all that region. This expedition issued from Gaul, passed over the Rhine, along the Danube, through Noricum, Pannonia, and Moesia, and at its entrance into Germany, carried along with it many of the Tectosages. On their arrival in Thrace, Lutarius took them with him, crossed the Bosphorus, and effected the conquest of Asia Minor. - Liv. lib. xxxviii. c. 16. Such was their number, that Justin says, “they filled all Asia (i. e., all Asia Minor) like swarms of bees. Finally, they became so numerous that no kings of the east could engage in war without an army of Gauls; neither when driven from their kingdom could they flee to any other than to the Gauls. Such was the terror of the name of Gauls, and such the invincible felicity of their arms - *et armorum invicta felicitas erat* - that they supposed that in no other way could their own majesty be protected, or being lost, could be recovered, without the aid of Gallic courage. Their being called in by the king of Bithynia for aid, when they had gained the victory, they

divided the kingdom with him, and called that region Gallogroecia." - Justin, xxv. 2. Under the reign of Augustus Cesar, about 26 years before the birth of Christ, this region was reduced into the form of a Roman colony, and was governed by a proproetor, appointed by the emperor.

They retained their original Gaulish language as late as the 5th century, as appears from the testimony of Jerome, who says that their dialect was nearly the same as that of the Treviri. - Tom. iv. p. 256. ed. Benedict. At the same time, they also spoke the Greek language in common with all the inhabitants of Lesser Asia, and therefore the Epistle to them was written in Greek, and was intelligible to them as well as to others.

The Galatians, like the inhabitants of the surrounding country, were pagans, and their religion was of a gross and debasing kind. They are said to have worshipped "the mother of the gods," under the name of Agdistis. Callimachus, in his hymns, calls them "a foolish people." And Hillary, himself a Gaul, calls them Gallos indociles - expressions which, says Calmer, may well excuse Paul's addressing them as "foolish," Galatians 3:1. There were few cities to be found among them, with the exception of Ancyra, Tavium, and Pessinus, which carried on some trade.

The possessors of Galatia were of three different nations or tribes of Gauls; the Tolistobogi, the Troemi, and the Tectosagi. There are imperial medals extant, on which these names are found. It is of some importance to bear in mind these distinctions. It is possible that while Peter was making converts in one part of Galatia, the apostle Paul was in another; and that some, claiming authority as from Peter, propagated opinions not conformable to the views of Paul, to correct and expose which was one design of this Epistle - Calmet.

The Gauls are mentioned by ancient historians as a tall and valiant people. They went nearly naked. Their arms were only a sword and buckler. The impetuosity of their attack, it is said, was irresistible, and hence, they became so formidable, and were usually so victorious.

It is not possible to ascertain the number of the inhabitants of Galatia, at the time when the gospel was preached there, or when this Epistle was

written. In Acts 13:2, following In Acts 16:5-6, it is expressly said that they went "throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia." This journey was for tire purpose of confirming the churches, and was undertaken at the suggestion of Paul Acts 15:36, with the design of visiting their brethren in every city where they had preached the word of the Lord. It is true, that in the account of the mission of Paul and Barnabas Acts 14:5-6, that when they were in Iconium, an assault was made on them, or a purpose formed to stone them, and that, being apprized of it, they fled unto Lystra and Derbe. cities of Lycaonia, "and unto the region that lieth round about." Pliny. lib. v. c. 27, says, that a part of Lycaonia bordered on Galatia, and contained 14 cities, of which Iconium was the most celebrated. Phrygia also was contiguous to Galatia, and to Lycaonia, and these circumstances render it probable that when Paul proposed to Barnabas to visit again the churches where they had preached, Galatia was included and that they had been there before this visit referred to in Acts 16:6.

It may be, also, that Paul refers to himself in the Epistle Galatians 1:6, where he says, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel;" and if so, then it is plain that he preached to them first, and founded the churches there. The same thing may be evinced also from the expression in Galatians 4:15, where he says, "I bear you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me;" an expression which leads us to suppose that they had formed for him a peculiar attachment, because he had first preached the gospel to them, and that there had existed all the ardour of attachment implied in their first love. It is quite evident, therefore, I think, that the gospel was preached among the Galatians first by Paul, either alone or in company with some other one of the apostles. It is possible, however, as has been intimated above, that Peter also may have preached in one part of Galatia at the time that Paul was preaching in other parts. It is a circumstance also of some importance on this point, that Paul speaks in this Epistle in a tone of authority, and with a severity of reproof which he would hardly have used unless he had at first preached there, and had a right to be regarded as the founder of the church, and to address it as its father. In this respect the tone here is quite different, as Mr. Locke has remarked, from what is observable in the Epistle to the Romans. Paul had not been at Rome when he addressed the church there by letter, and his

language differs materially froth that which occurs in the Epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians. It was to them the very respectful and mild language of a stranger; here it is respectful, but it is the authoritative language of a father having a right to reprove.

Section 3. The Date of this Epistle

Many have supposed that this was the first Epistle which Paul wrote. Tertullian maintained this (see Lardner, vol. vi. p. 7. ed. Lond. 1829), and Epiphanius also. Theodoret and others suppose it was written at Rome, and was consequently written near the close of the life of Paul, and was one of his last epistles. Lightfoot supposes also that it was written from Rome, and that it was among the first which Paul wrote there. Chrysostom says that this Epistle was written before that to the Romans. Lewis Capellus, Witsius, and Wall suppose that it was written from Ephesus after the apostle had been a second time in Galatia. This also was the opinion of Pearson, who places it in the year 57 a.d., after the first Epistle to the Corinthians, and before Paul left Ephesus. Grotius thought it difficult to assign the date of the Epistle, but conjectures that it was written about the same time as that to the Romans. Mill supposes that it was not written until after that to the Romans, probably at Troas, or some other place in Asia, as Paul was going to Jerusalem. He dates the Epistle in the year 58 ad. Dr. Benson supposes that it was written at Corinth, when the apostle was first there, and made a long stay of one year and six months.

While there, he supposes that Paul received tidings of the instability of the converts in Galatia, and wrote this Epistle and sent it by one of his assistants. See these opinions examined in Lardner as quoted above. Lardner himself supposes that it was written from Corinth about the year 52 a.d., or the beginning of the year 53 a.d. Macknight supposes it was written from Antioch, after the council at Jerusalem, and before Paul and Silas undertook the journey in which they delivered to the churches the decrees which were ordained at Jerusalem; Acts 16:4. Hug, in his Introduction, supposes that it was written at Ephesus in the year 57 a.d. and after 1Thessalonians, 2Thessalonians, and the Epistle to Titus had been written. Mr. Locke supposes that Paul established churches in Galatia, in the year 51 a.d.; and that this Epistle was written between that time and the year 57 a.d. These opinions are mostly mere conjecture; and amidst such a variety of sentiment, it is evidently impossible to determine exactly at what time it was written. The only mark of time in the Epistle itself occurs in Galatians

1:6, where the apostle says, “I marvel that ye are so soon (οὕτω ταχέως houtō tacheōs) removed from him that called you,” etc.; where the words “so soon” would lead us to suppose that it was at no distant period after he had been among them. Still it might have been several years. The date assigned to it in the Polyglot Bible (Bagster‘s) is the year 58 ad.

The exact date of the Epistle is of very little importance. In regard to the time when it was written the only arguments which seem to me to be of much weight, are those advanced by Paley in his Horae Paulinae. “It will hardly be doubted,” says he, “but that it was written whilst the dispute concerning the circumcision of Gentile converts was fresh in men‘s minds; for even supposing it to have been a forgery, the only credible motive that can be assigned for the forgery, was to bring the name and authority of the apostle into this controversy. No design can be so insipid, or so unlikely to enter into the thoughts of any man, as to produce an Epistle written earnestly and pointedly on one side of a controversy, when the controversy itself was dead, and the question no longer interesting to any class of readers whatever. Now the controversy concerning the circumcision of Gentiles was of such a nature, that, if it arose at all, it must have arisen in the beginning of Christianity.” Paley then goes on to show that it was natural that the Jews, and converts from the Jews, should start this question, and agitate it; and that this was much more likely to be insisted on while the temple was standing, and they continued as a nation, and sacrifices were offered, than after their city and temple were destroyed.

It is therefore clear that the controversy must have been started, and the Epistle written before the invasion of Judea, by Titus, and the destruction of Jerusalem. The internal evidence leads to this conclusion. On the whole, it is probable that the Epistle was written somewhere about the year 53 a.d., or between that and 57 a.d.; and was evidently designed to settle an important controversy in the churches of Galatia. The place where it was written, must be, I think, wholly a matter of conjecture. The subscription at the end that it was written from Rome is of no authority whatever; and there are no internal circumstances, which, so far as I can see, throw any light on the subject.

Section 4. The Design of the Epistle

It is easy to discern from the Epistle itself that the following circumstances existed in the churches of Galatia, and that it was written with reference to them.

(1) that they had been at first devotedly attached to the apostle Paul, and had received his commands and instructions with implicit confidence when he was among them; Galatians 4:14-15; compare Galatians 1:6.

(2) that they had been perverted from the doctrine which he taught them soon after he had left them; Galatians 1:6.

(3) that this had been done by persons who were of Jewish origin, and who insisted on the observance of the rites of the Jewish religion.

(4) that they claimed to have come directly from Jerusalem, and to have derived their views of religion and their authority from the apostles there.

(5) that they taught that the apostle Paul was inferior to the apostles there; that he had been called more recently into the apostolic office; that the apostles at Jerusalem must be regarded as the source of authority in the Christian church; and that, therefore, the teaching of Paul should yield to that which was derived directly from Jerusalem.

(6) that the laws of Moses were binding, and were necessary in order to justification. That the rite of circumcision especially was of binding obligation; and it is probable Galatians 6:12, that they had prevailed on many of the Galatians to be circumcised, and certain that they had induced them to observe the Jewish festivals; Galatians 4:10.

(7) it would seem, also, that they urged that Paul himself had changed his views since he had been among the Galatians, and now maintained the necessity of circumcision; Galatians 5:11. Perhaps they alleged this, from the undoubted fact that Paul, when at Jerusalem Acts 21:26, had complied with some of the customs of the Jewish ritual.

(8) that they urged that all the promises of God were made to Abraham, and that whoever would partake of those promises, must be circumcised as Abraham was. This Paul answers, Galatians 3:7; Galatians 4:7.

(9) that in consequence of the promulgation of these views, great dissensions had arisen in the church, and strifes of an unhappy nature existed, greatly contrary to the spirit which should be manifested by those who bore the Christian name.

From this description of the state of things in the churches of Galatia, the design of the Epistle is apparent, and the scope of the argument will be easily seen. Of this state of things the apostle had been undoubtedly apprised, but whether by letters, or by messengers from the churches there, is not declared. It is not improbable, that some of his friends in the churches there had informed him of it, and he immediately set about a remedy to the evils existing there.

I. The first object, therefore, was to show that he had received his commission as an apostle, directly from God. He had not received it at all from man; he had not even been instructed by the other apostles; he had not acknowledged their superiority; he had not even consulted them. He did not acknowledge, therefore, that the apostles at Jerusalem possessed any superior rank or authority. His commission, though he had not seen the Lord Jesus before he was crucified, he had, nevertheless, derived immediately from him. The doctrine, therefore, which he had taught them, that the Mosaic laws were not binding, and that there was no necessity of being circumcised, was a doctrine which had been derived directly from God. In proof of this, he goes into an extended statement Galatians 1:24; Galatians 2:1-10; and of the fact that on one occasion, he had actually been constrained to differ from Peter, the oldest of the apostles, on a point in which he was manifestly wrong, and on one of the very points then under consideration.

II. The second great object, therefore, was to show the real nature and design of the Law of Moses, and to prove that the peculiar rites of the Mosaic ritual, and especially the rite of circumcision, were not necessary to justification and salvation; and that they who observed that rite, did in fact renounce the Scripture method of justification; make the sacrifice of Christ of no value, and make slaves of themselves. This leads him into a

consideration of the true nature of the doctrine of justification, and of the way of salvation by a Redeemer.

This point he shows in the following way:

(1) By showing that those who lived before Christ, and especially Abraham, were in fact justified, not by obedience to the ritual law of Moses, but by faith in the promises of God; Galatians 3:19-29; Galatians 4:1-8.

(3) in view of this, he reproves the Galatians for having so readily fallen into the observance of these customs; Galatians 4:9-21.

(4) this view of the design of the Mosaic Law, and of its tendency, he illustrates by an allegory drawn from the case of Hagar; Galatians 4:21-31.

This whole discourse is succeeded by an affectionate exhortation to the Galatians, to avoid the evils which had been engendered; reproving them for the strifes existing in consequence of the attempt to introduce the Mosaic rites, and earnestly entreating them to stand firm in the liberty which Christ had vouchsafed to them from the servitude of the Mosaic institutions, Galatians 5; 6.

The design of the whole Epistle, therefore, is to state and defend the true doctrine of justification, and to show that it did not depend on the observance of the laws of Moses. In the general purpose, therefore, it accords with the design of the Epistle to the Romans. In one respect, however, it differs from the design of that Epistle. That was written, to show that man could not be justified by any works of the Law, or by conformity to any law, moral or ceremonial; the object of this is, to show that justification cannot be obtained by conformity to the ritual or ceremonial law; or that the observance of the ceremonial law is not necessary to salvation. In this respect, therefore, this Epistle is of less general interest than that to the Romans. It is also, in some respects, more difficult. The argument, if I may so express myself, is more Jewish. It is more in the Jewish manner; is designed to meet a Jew in his own way, and is, therefore, somewhat more difficult for all to follow. Still it contains great and vital

statements on the doctrines of salvation, and, as such, demands the profound and careful attention of all who desire to be saved, and who would know the way of acceptance with God.

GALATIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The main design of Paul in this chapter, is to show that he had received his call to the apostleship, not from man, but from God. It had been alleged (see the introduction to Galatians) that the apostles at Jerusalem possessed the most elevated rank, and the highest authority in the Christian church; that they were to be regarded as the fountains and the judges of the truth; that Paul was inferior to them as an apostle; and that they who inculcated the necessity of circumcision, and the observance of the rites of Moses, were sustained by the authority and the examples of the apostles at Jerusalem.

To meet this statement was the design of this first chapter. Paul‘s grand object was to show that he was not appointed by human beings; that he had not been commissioned by human beings; that he had not derived his instructions from human beings; that he had not even consulted with them; but that he had been commissioned and taught expressly by Jesus Christ, and that when the apostles at Jerusalem had become acquainted with him, and with his views and plans of labor, long after he had begun to preach, they had fully concurred with him. This argument comprises the following parts:

I. The solemn declaration, that he was not commissioned by human beings, and that he was not, in any sense, an apostle of man, together with the general salutation to the churches in Galatia; Galatians 1:1-5.

II. The expression of his astonishment that the Galatians had so soon forsaken his instruction, and embraced another gospel; and a solemn declaration that whoever preached another gospel was to he held accursed; Galatians 1:6-10. Twice he anathematizes those who attempt to declare any other way of justification than that which consisted in faith in Christ, and says that it was no gospel at all. It was to he held as a great and fixed principle, that there was but one way of salvation; and no matter who attempted to preach any other, he was to be held accursed.

III. To show, therefore, that he was not appointed by human beings, and that he had not received his instructions from human beings, but that he had

preached the truth directly revealed to him by God, and that which was, therefore, immutable and eternal, he goes into a statement of the manner in which he was called into the ministry, and made acquainted with the gospel; Galatians 1:11-24.

(a) He affirms, that he was not taught it by man, but by the express revelation of Jesus Christ; Galatians 1:11-12.

(b) He refers to his former well-known life, and his zeal in the Jewish religion; showing how much he had been formerly opposed to the gospel; Galatians 1:13-14.

(c) He says that he had been separated, by the divine purpose, from his mother‘s womb, to be a preacher of the gospel, and that when he was called to the ministry, he had no conference with any human being, as to what he was to preach; he did not go up to Jerusalem to consult with those who were older apostles, but he retired far from them into Arabia, and thence, again returned to Damascus; Galatians 1:15-17.

(d) After three years, he says, he did indeed go to Jerusalem; but he remained there only fifteen days, and saw none of the apostles but Peter and James; Galatians 1:18-19. His views of the gospel were formed before that; and that he did not submit implicitly to Peter, and learn of him, he shows in Galatians 1:20-24. Of course, he had had no opportunity of deriving his views of religion from them; he had been in no sense dependent on them; but so far as they were acquainted with his views, they concurred in them. The sum of the argument, therefore, in this chapter is, that when Paul went into Cilicia and the adjacent regions, he had never seen but two of the apostles, and that for only a short time; he had never seen the apostles together; and he had never received any instructions from them. His views of the gospel, which he had imparted to the Galatians, he had derived directly from God.

Verse 1

Paul an apostle - See the note at Romans 1:1. This is the usual form in which he commences his epistles; and it was of special importance to commence the Epistle in this manner, because it was one design to vindicate

his apostleship, or to show that he had received his commission directly from the Lord Jesus.

Not of men - "Not from ἀπ᾽ ap'men." That is, he was not "from" any body of people, or commissioned by people. The word apostle means "sent," and Paul means to say, that he was not "sent" to execute any purpose of human beings, or commissioned by them. His was a higher calling; a calling of God, and he had been sent directly by him. Of course, he means to exclude here all classes of people as having had anything to do in sending him forth; and, especially, he means to affirm, that he had not been sent out by the body of apostles at Jerusalem. This, it will be remembered (see the introduction to Galatians) was one of the charges of those who had perverted the Galatians from the faith which Paul had preached to them.

Neither by man - "Neither by or through δι᾽ di'the instrumentality of any man." Here he designs to exclude all people from having had any agency in his appointment to the apostolic office. He was neither sent out from any body of people to execute their purposes; nor did he receive his commission, authority, or ordination through the medium of any man. A minister of the gospel now receives his call from God, but he is ordained or set apart to his office by man. Matthias, the apostle chosen in the place of Judas Acts 1:26, received his call from God, but it was by the vote of the body of the apostles. Timothy was also called of God, but he was appointed to his office by the laying on the hands of the presbytery; 1 Timothy 4:14. But Paul here says, that he received no such commission as that from the apostles. They were not the means or the medium of ordaining him to his work. He had, indeed, together with Barnabas, been set apart at Antioch, by the brethren there Acts 13:1-3, for a "special mission" in Asia Minor; but this was not an appointment to the apostleship. He had been restored to sight after the miraculous blindness produced by seeing the Lord Jesus on the way to Damascus, by the laying on of the hands of Ananias, and had received important instruction from him Acts 9:17, but his commission as an apostle had been received directly from the Lord Jesus, without any intervening medium, or any form of human authority, Acts 9:15; Acts 22:17-21; 1 Corinthians 9:1.

But by Jesus Christ - That is, directly by Christ. He had been called by him, and commissioned by him, and sent by him, to engage in the work of the gospel.

And God the Father - These words were omitted by Marcion, because, says Jerome he held that Christ raised himself from the dead. But there is no authority for omitting them. The sense is, that he had the highest possible authority for the office of an apostle; he had been called to it by God himself, who had raised up the Redeemer. It is remarkable here, that Paul associates Jesus Christ and God the Father, as having called and commissioned him. We may ask here, of one who should deny the divinity of Christ, how Paul could mention him as being equal with God in the work of commissioning him? We may ask further, how could he say that he had not received his call to this office from a man, if Jesus Christ were a mere man? That he was called by Christ, he expressly says, and strenuously maintains as a point of great importance. And yet, the very point and drift of his argument is, to show that he was not called by man. How could this be if Christ were a mere man?

Who raised him from the dead - See the notes at Acts 2:24, Acts 2:32. It is not quite clear why Paul introduces this circumstance here. It may have been:

(1)Because his mind was full of it. and he wished on all occasions to make that fact prominent;

(2)Because this was the distinguishing feature of the Christian religion, that the Lord Jesus had been raised up from the dead, and he wished, in the outset, to present the superiority of that religion which had brought life and immortality to light; and,

(3)Because he wished to show that he had received his commission from that same God who had raised up Jesus, and who was, therefore, the author of the true religion. His commission was from the Source of life and light, the God of the living and the dead; the God who was the Author of the glorious scheme which revealed life and immortality.

Verse 2

And all the brethren which are with me - It was usual for Paul to associate with him the ministers of the gospel, or other Christians who were with him, in expressing friendly salutations to the churches to which he wrote, or as uniting with him, and concurring in the sentiments which he expressed. Though Paul claimed to be inspired, yet it would do much to conciliate favor for what he advanced, if others also concurred with what he

said, and especially if they were known to the churches to which the epistles were written. Sometimes the names of others were associated with his in the Epistle; see the 1 Corinthians 1:1 note; Philemon 1:1 note; Colossians 1:1 note; 1 Thessalonians 1:1 note. Since we do not know where this epistle was written, of course we are ignorant who the "brethren" were, who are here referred to. They may have been ministers with Paul, or they may have been the private members of the churches. Commentators have been much divided in opinion on the subject; but all is conjecture. It is obviously impossible to determine.

Unto the churches - How many churches there were in Galatia is unknown. There were several cities in Galatia, as Ancyria, Tavia, Pessinus, etc. It is not improbable that a church had been established in each of the cities, and, since they were not far distant from each other, and the people had the same general character and habits, it is not improbable that they had fallen into the same errors. Hence, the Epistle is directed to them in common.

Verse 3

Grace be unto you … - This is the usual apostolic salutation, imploring for them the blessing of God. See it fully explained in the notes at Romans 1:7.

Verse 4

Who gave himself for our sins - The reason why Paul so soon introduces this important doctrine, and makes it here so prominent, probably is, that this was the cardinal doctrine of the Christian religion, the great truth which was ever to be kept before the mind, and because this truth had been in fact lost sight of by them. They had embraced doctrines which tended to obscure it, or to make it void. They had been led into error by the Judaizing teachers, who held that it was necessary to be circumcised, and to conform to the whole Jewish ritual. Yet the tendency of all this was to obscure the doctrines of the gospel, and particularly the great truth that people can be justified only by faith in the blood of Jesus; Galatians 5:4; compare Galatians 1:6-7. Paul, therefore, wished to make this prominent - the very "starting point" in their religion; a truth never to be forgotten, that Christ gave himself for their sins, that he might deliver them from all the bad influences of this world, and from all the false systems of religion engendered in this world. The expression "who gave" (τοῦ δόντος tou dontosis one that often occurs in relation to the work of the Redeemer,

where it is represented as a "gift," either on the part of God, or on the part of Christ himself; see note on John 3:16; compare John 4:10; Romans 4:25; 2 Corinthians 9:15; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:25; Titus 2:14. This passage proves:

(1) That it was wholly voluntary on the part of the Lord Jesus. No one compelled him to come; no one could compel him. It is not too much to say, that God could not, and would not compel any innocent and holy being to undertake the great work of the atonement, and endure the bitter sorrows which were necessary to redeem man. God will compel the guilty to suffer, but he never will compel the innocent to endure sorrows, even on behalf of others. The whole work of redemption must be voluntary, or it could not be performed.

(2) it evinced great benevolence on the part of the Redeemer. He did not come to take upon himself unknown and unsurveyed woes. He did not go to work in the dark. He knew what was to be done. He knew just what sorrows were to be endured - how long, how keen, how awful. And yet, knowing this, he came resolved and prepared to endure all those woes, and to drink the bitter cup to the dregs.

(3) if there had not been this benevolence in his bosom, man must have perished forever. He could not have saved himself; and he had no power or right to compel another to suffer on his behalf; and even God would not lay this mighty burden on any other, unless he was entirely willing to endure it. How much then do we owe to the Lord Jesus; and how entirely should we devote our lives to him who loved us, and gave himself for us. The word "himself," is rendered by the Syriac, "his life" (nafsh); and this is in fact the sense of the Greek, that he gave his "life" for our sins, or that he died in our stead. He gave his "life" up to toil, tears, privation, sorrow, and death, that he might redeem us. The phrase, "for our sins" (ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν huper tōn hamartiōn hēmōn), means the same as on account of; meaning, that the cause or reason why he gave himself to death, was our sins; that is, he died because we are sinners, and because we could be saved only by his giving himself up to death. Many mss. instead of (ὑπὲρ huper), here read (περὶ peri), but the sense is not materially varied. The Syriac translates it, "who gave himself instead of," by a word denoting that there was a "substitution" of the Redeemer in our place. The sense is, that the Lord

Jesus became a vicarious offering, and died in the stead of sinners. It is not possible to express this idea more distinctly and unambiguously than Paul has done, in this passage. Sin was the procuring cause of his death; to make expiation for sin was the design of his coming; and sin is pardoned and removed only by his substituted suffering.

That he might deliver us - The word used here (ἐξέληται exelētai) properly means, to pluck out, to tear out; to take out from a number, to select; then to rescue or deliver. This is the sense here. He came and gave himself that he might "rescue or deliver" us from this present evil world. It does not mean to take away by death, or to remove to another world, but that he might effect a separation between us and what the apostle calls here, "this present evil world." The grand purpose was, to rescue sinners from the dominion of this world, and to separate them unto God.

This present evil world - See John 17:15-16. Locke supposes, that by this phrase is intended the Jewish institutions, or the Mosaical age, in contradistinction from the age of the Messiah. Bloomfield supposes, that it means "the present state of being, this life, filled as it is with calamity, sin, and sorrow; or, rather, the sin itself, and the misery consequent upon it." Rosenmuller understands by it, "the men of this age, Jews, who reject the Messiah; and pagans, who are devoted to idolatry and crime." The word rendered "world" (αἰὼν aiōn), means properly "age," an indefinitely long period of time; then eternity, forever. It then comes to mean the world, either present or future; and then the present world, as it is, with its cares, temptations, and desires; the idea of evil, physical and moral, being everywhere implied - Robinson, Lexicon; Matthew 13:22; Luke 16:8; Luke 20:34; Romans 12:2. Here it means the world as it is, without religion, a world of bad passions, false opinions, corrupt desires; a world full of ambition, and of the love of pleasure, and of gold; a world where God is not loved or obeyed; a world where people are regardless of right, and truth, and duty; where they live for themselves, and not for God; in short, that great community, which in the Scriptures is called the world, in contradistinction from the kingdom of God. That world, that evil world, is fall of sin; and the object of the Redeemer was to "deliver" us from that; that is, to effect a separation between his followers and that. It follows, therefore, that his followers constitute a unique community, not governed by the prevailing maxims, or influenced by the special feelings of the people of this world. And it follows, also, that if there is not in fact such a

separation, then the purpose of the Redeemer‘s death, in regard to us, has not been effected, and we are still a part of that great and ungodly community, the world.

According to the will of God … - Not by the will of man, or by his wisdom, but in accordance with the will of God. It was His purpose that the Lord Jesus should thus give himself; and his doing it was in accordance with His will, and was pleasing in His sight. The whole plan originated in the divine purpose, and has been executed in accordance with the divine will. If in accordance with His will, it is good, and is worthy of universal acceptation.

Verse 5

To whom be glory … - Let Him have all the praise and honor of the plan and its execution. It is not uncommon for Paul to introduce an ascription of praise in the midst of an argument: see the note at Romans 1:25. It results from the strong desire which he had, that all the glory should be given to God, and showed that he believed that all blessings had their origin in God, and that God should be always acknowledged.

Verse 6

I marvel - I wonder. It is remarked by Luther (his commentary at the place) that Paul uses as mild a word as possible here. He does not employ the language of severe reproof, but he expresses his astonishment that the thing should have occurred. He was deeply affected and amazed, that such a thing could have happened. They had cordially embraced the gospel; they had manifested the tenderest attachment for him; they had given themselves to God, and yet in a very short time they had been led wholly astray, and had embraced opinions which tended wholly to pervert and destroy the gospel. They had shown an instability and inconstancy of character, which was to him perfectly surprising.

That ye are so soon - This proves that the Epistle was written not long after the gospel was first preached to them. According to the general supposition, it could not have been more than from two to five years. Had it been a long and gradual decline; had they been destitute for years of the privileges of the gospel; or had they had time to forget him who had first preached to them, it would not have been a matter of surprise. But when it occurred in a few months; when their once ardent love for Paul, and their confidence in him had so soon vanished, or their affections become alienated, and when they had so soon embraced opinions tending to, set the

whole gospel aside, it could not but excite Paul‘s wonder. Learn hence, that men, professedly pious, and apparently ardently attached to the gospel, may become soon perverted in their views, and alienated from those who had called them into the gospel, and whom they professed tenderly to love. The ardor of the affections becomes cool, and some artful, and zealous, and plausible teachers of error seduce the mind, corrupt the heart, and alienate the affections. Where there is the ardor of the first love to God, there is also an effort soon made by the adversary, to turn away the heart from him; and young converts are commonly soon attacked in some plausible manner, and by art and arguments adapted to turn away their minds from the truth, and to alienate the affections from God.

So soon removed - Luther remarks that this is also a mild and gentle term. It implies that foreign influence had been used to turn away their minds from the truth. The word used here (μετατίθεσθε metatithesthe) means, “to transpose; to put in another place;” and then, “to go over from one party to another.” Their affections had become transferred to other doctrines than those which they had at first embraced, and they had moved off from the only true foundation, to one which would give them no support.

From him that called you - There has been great difference of opinion in regard to the sense of this passage. Some have supposed, that it refers to God; others to Christ; others to Paul himself. Either supposition makes good sense, and conveys an idea not contrary to the Scriptures in other places. Doddridge, Chandler, Clarke, Macknight, Locke, and some others refer it to Paul; Rosenmuller, Koppe, and others, suppose it refers to God; and others refer it to the Redeemer. The Syriac renders it thus: “I marvel that ye are so soon turned away from that Messiah (Christ) who has called you.” etc. It is not possible, perhaps, to determine the true sense. It does not seem to me to refer to Paul, as the main object of the Epistle is, not to show that they had removed from “him,” but from the “gospel” - a far more grievous offence; and it seems to me that it is to he referred to God. The reasons are:

(1)That he who had called them, is said to have called them “into the grace of Christ,” which would be hardly said of Christ himself; and,

(2)That the work of calling people is usually in the Scriptures attributed to God; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Timothy 1:9.

Into the grace of Christ - Locke renders this, "into the covenant of grace which is by Christ." Doddridge understands it of the method of salvation which is by or through the grace of Christ. There is no doubt that it refers to the plan of salvation which is by Christ, or in Christ; and the main idea is, that the scheme of salvation which they had embraced under his instruction, was one which contemplated salvation only by the grace or favor of Christ; and that from that they had been removed to another scheme, essentially different, where the grace of Christ was made useless and void. It is Paul's object to show that the true plan makes Christ the great and prominent object; and that the plan which they had embraced was in this respect wholly different.

Unto another gospel - A gospel which destroys the grace of Christ; which proclaims salvation on other terms than simple dependence on the merits of the Lord Jesus; and which has introduced the Jewish rites and ceremonies as essential, in order to obtain salvation. The apostle calls that scheme the "gospel," because it pretended to be; it was preached by those who claimed to be preachers of the gospel; who alleged that they had come direct from the apostles at Jerusalem, and who pretended to declare the method of salvation. It claimed to be the gospel, and yet it was essentially unlike the plan which he had preached as constituting the gospel. That which he preached, inculcated the entire dependence of the sinner on the merits and grace of Christ; that system had introduced dependence on the observance of the rites of the Mosaic system, as necessary to salvation.

Verse 7

Which is not another - There is also a great variety of views in regard to the meaning of this expression. Tyndale translates it: "which is nothing else but there be some that trouble you." Locke, "which is not owing to anything else but only this, that ye are troubled with a certain sort of people who would overturn the gospel of Christ." But Rosenmuller, Koppe, Bloomfield, and others, give a different view; and according to them the sense is, "which, however, is not another gospel, nor indeed the gospel at all, or true," etc. According to this, the design was to state, that what they taught had none of the elements or characteristics of the gospel. It was a different system, and one which taught an entirely different method of justification before God. It seems to me that this is the true sense of the passage, and that Paul means to teach them that the system, though it was called the gospel, was essentially different from that which he had taught,

and which consisted in simple reliance on Christ for salvation. The system which they taught, was in fact the Mosaic system; the Jewish mode, depending on the rites and ceremonies of religion; and which, therefore, did not deserve to be called the gospel. It would lead them again with burdensome rites, and with cumbrous institutions, from which it was the great purpose of the gospel to relieve them.

But there be some that trouble you - Though this is most manifestly another system, and not the gospel at all, yet there are some persons who are capable of giving trouble and of unsettling your minds, by making it plausible. They pretend that they have come direct front the apostles at Jerusalem; that they have received their instructions from them, and that they preach the true gospel as they teach it. They pretend that Paul was called into the office of an apostle after them; that he had never seen the Lord Jesus; that he had derived his information only from others; and thus they are able to present a plausible argument, and to unsettle the minds of the Galatians.

And would pervert - That is, the tendency of their doctrine is wholly to turn away (μεταστρέψαι metastrepsai), to destroy, or render useless the gospel of Christ. It would lead to the denial of the necessity of dependence on the merits of the Lord Jesus for salvation, and would substitute dependence on rites and ceremonies. This does not of necessity mean that such was the design of their teaching, for they might have been in the main honest; but that such was the tendency and result of their teaching. It would lead people to rely on the Mosaic rites for salvation.

Verse 8

But though we - That is, we the apostles. Probably, he refers particularly to himself, as the plural is often used by Paul when speaking of himself. He alludes here, possibly, to a charge which was brought against him by the false teachers in Galatia, that he had changed his views since he came among them, and now preached differently from what he did then; see the introduction. They endeavored probably to fortify their own opinions in regard to the obligations of the Mosaic law, by affirming, that though Paul when he was among them had maintained that the observance of the Law was not necessary to salvation, yet that he had changed his views, and now held the same doctrine on the subject which they did. What they relied on in support of this opinion is unknown. It is certain, however, that Paul did, on some occasions (see the note at Acts 21:21-26), comply with the Jewish

rites, and it is not improbable that they were acquainted with that fact, and interpreted it as proving that he had changed his sentiments on the subject.

At all events, it would make their allegation plausible that Paul was now in favor of the observance of the Jewish rites, and that if he had ever taught differently, he must now have changed his opinion. Paul therefore begins the discussion by denying this in the most solemn manner. He affirms that the gospel which he had at first preached to them was the true gospel. It contained the great doctrines of salvation. It was to be regarded by them as a fixed and settled point, that there was no other way of salvation but by the merits of the Saviour. No matter who taught anything else; no matter though it be alleged that he bad changed his mind; no matter even though he should preach another gospel; and no matter though an angel from heaven should declare any other mode of salvation, it was to be held as a fixed and settled position, that the true gospel had been preached to them at first. We are not to suppose that Paul admitted that he had changed his mind, or that the inferences of the false teachers there were well-founded, but we are to understand this as affirming in the most solemn manner that the true gospel, and the only method of salvation, had been preached among them at first.

Or an angel from heaven - This is a very strong rhetorical mode of expression. It is not to be supposed that an angel from heaven would preach any other than the true gospel. But Paul wishes to put the strongest possible case, and to affirm in the strongest manner possible, that the true gospel had been preached to them. The great system of salvation had been taught; and no other was to be admitted, no matter who preached it; no matter what the character or rank of the preacher: and no matter with what imposing claims he came. It follows from this, that the mere rank, character, talent, eloquence, or piety of a preacher does not of necessity give his doctrine a claim to our belief, or prove that his gospel is true. Great talents may be prostituted; and great sanctity of manner, and even holiness of character, may be in error; and no matter what may be the rank, and talents, and eloquence, and piety of the preacher, if he does not accord with the gospel which was first preached, he is to be held accursed.

Preach any other gospel … - See the note at Galatians 1:6. Any gospel that differs from that which was first preached to you, any system of doctrines which goes to deny the necessity of simple dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

Let him be accursed - Greek ἀνάθεμα anathēma(anathema). On the meaning of this word, see the notes at 1 Corinthians 12:3; 1 Corinthians 16:22, note. It is not improperly here rendered "accursed," or devoted to destruction." The object of Paul is to express the greatest possible abhorrence of any other doctrine than that which he had himself preached. So great was his detestation of it, that, says Luther, "he casteth out very flames of fire, and his zeal is so fervent, that he beginneth almost to curse the angels." It follows from this:

(1) That any other doctrine than what is proclaimed in the Bible on the subject of justification is to be rejected and treated with abhorrence, no matter what the rank, talent, or eloquence of him who defends it.

(2) that we are not to patronise or countenance such preachers. No matter what their zeal or their apparent sincerity, or their apparent sanctity, or their apparent success, or their real boldness in rebuking vice, we are to withdraw from them.

"Cease, my son," said Solomon, "to hear the instruction that causes to err from the words of knowledge; Proverbs 19:27. Especially are we to withdraw wholly from that instruction which goes to deny the great doctrines of salvation; that pure gospel which the Lord Jesus and the apostle taught. If Paul would regard even an angel as doomed to destruction, and as held accursed, should he preach any other doctrine, assuredly we should not be found to lend our countenance to it, nor should we patronise it by attending on such a ministry. Who would desire to attend on the ministry of even an angel if he was to be held accursed? How much less the ministry of a man preaching the same doctrine! It does not follow from this, however, that we are to treat others with severity of language or with the language of cursing. They must answer to God. "We" are to withdraw from their teaching; we are to regard the doctrines with abhorrence; and we are not to lend our countenance to them. To their own master they stand or fall; but what must be the doom of a teacher whom an inspired man has said should be regarded as "accursed!" It may be added, how responsible is the ministerial office! How fearful the account which the ministers of religion must render! How much prayer, and study, and effort are needed that they may be able to understand the true gospel, and that they may not be led into error, or lead others into error.

Verse 9

As we said before - That is, in the previous verse. It is equivalent to saying, "as I have just said;" see 2 Corinthians 7:3. It cannot be supposed that he had said this when he was with them, as it cannot be believed that he then anticipated that his doctrines would be perverted, and that another gospel would be preached to them. The sentiment of Galatians 1:8 is here repeated on account of its importance. It is common in the Scriptures, as indeed it is everywhere else, to repeat a declaration in order to deepen the impression of its importance and its truth. Paul would not be misunderstood on this point. He would leave no doubt as to his meaning. He would not have it supposed that he had uttered the sentiment in Galatians 1:8 hastily; and he therefore repeats it with emphasis.

Than that ye have received - In the previous verse, it is, "that which we have preached." By this change in the phraseology he designs, probably, to remind them that they had once solemnly professed to embrace that system. It had not only been "preached" to them, it had been "embraced" by them. The teachers of the new system, therefore, were really in opposition to the once avowed sentiments of the Galatians; to what they knew to be true. They were not only to be held accursed, therefore, because Paul so declared, but because they preached what the Galatians themselves knew to be false, or what was contrary to that which they had themselves professed to be true.

Verse 10

For do I now persuade men, or God? - The word "now" (ἄρτι arti) is used here, evidently, to express a contrast between his present and his former purpose of life. Before his conversion to Christianity, he impliedly admits, that it was his object to conciliate the favor of people; that he derived his authority from them Acts 9:1-2; that he endeavored to act so as to please them and gain their good esteem. But "now" he says, this was not his object. He had a higher aim. It was to please God, and to conciliate His favor. The object of this verse is obscure; but it seems to me to be connected with what follows, and to be designed to introduce that by showing that he had not now received his commission from human beings, but had received it from God. perhaps there may be an allusion to an implied allegation in regard to him. It may have been alleged (see the notes at the previous verses) that even he had changed his mind, and was now himself an

observer of the laws of Moses. To this, perhaps, he replies, by this question, that such conduct would not have been inconsistent in his view, when it was his main purpose to please people, and when he derived his commission from them; but that now he had a higher aim.

His purpose was to please God; and he was not aiming in any way to gratify people. The word which is rendered "persuade" here (πείθω peithō), has been very variously interpreted. Tyndale renders it: "seek now the favor of men or of God?" Doddridge: "Do I now solicit the favor of men or of God?" This also is the interpretation of Grotius, Hammond, Elsner, Koppe, Rosenmuller, Bloomfield, etc. and is undoubtedly the true explanation. The word properly means to "persuade," or to "convince"; Acts 18:4; Acts 28:23; 2 Corinthians 5:11. But it also means, to bring over to kind feelings, to conciliate, to pacify, to quiet. Septuagint, 1 Samuel 24:8; Acts 12:20; 1 John 3:19. By the question here, Paul means to say, that his great object was now to "please God." He desired God's favor rather than the favor of man. He acted with reference to His will. He derived his authority from God, and not from the Sanhedrin or any earthly council. And the purpose of all this is to say, that he had not received his commission to preach from man, but had received it directly from God.

Or do I seek to please men? - It is not my aim or purpose to please people, and to conciliate their favor; compare 1 Thessalonians 2:4.

For if I yet pleased men - If I made it my aim to please people: if this was the regulating principle of my conduct. The word "yet" here (ἔτι eti) has reference to his former purpose. It implies that this had once been his aim. But he says if he had pursued that purpose to please people; if this had continued to be the aim of his life, he would not "now have been a servant of Christ. He had been constrained to abandon that purpose in order that he might be a servant of Christ; and the sentiment is, that in order that a man may become a Christian, it is necessary for him to abandon the purpose of pleasing people as the rule of his life. It may be implied also that if in fact a man makes it his aim to please people, or if this is the purpose for which he lives and acts, and if he shapes his conduct with reference to that, he cannot be a Christian or a servant of Christ. A Christian must act from higher motives than those, and he who aims supremely at the favor of his fellowmen has full evidence that he is not a Christian. A friend of Christ must do his duty, and must regulate his conduct by the will of God, whether people are pleased with it or not.

And it may be further implied that the life and deportment of a sincere Christian will not please people. It is not what they love. A holy, humble, spiritual life they do not love. It is true, indeed, that their consciences tell them that such a life is right; that they are often constrained to speak well of the life of Christians, and to commend it; it is true that they are constrained to respect a person who is a sincere Christian, and that they often put confidence in such a person; and it is true also that they often speak with respect of them when they are dead; but the life of an humble, devoted, and zealous Christian they do not love. It is contrary to their views of life. And especially if a Christian so lives and acts as to reprove them either by his words or by his life; or if a Christian makes his religion so prominent as to interfere with their pursuits or pleasures, they do not love it. It follows from this:

(1) That a Christian is not to expect to please people. He must not be disappointed, therefore, if he does not. His Master did not please the world; and it is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master.

(2) aprofessing Christian, and especially a minister, should be alarmed when the world flatters and caresses him. He should fear either:

(a)That he is not living as he ought to do, and that sinners love him because he is so much like them, and keeps them in countenance; or,

(b)That they mean to make him betray his religion and become conformed to them.

It is a great point gained for the frivolous world, when it can, by its caresses and attentions, get a Christian to forsake a prayer-meeting for a party, or surrender his deep spirituality to engage in some political project. "Woe unto you," said the Redeemer, "when all men speak well of you," Luke 6:26.

(3) one of the main differences between Christians and the world is, that others aim to please people; the Christian aims to please only God. And this is a great difference.

(4) it follows that if people would become Christians, they must cease to make it their object to please people. They must be willing to be met with contempt and a frown; they must be willing to be persecuted and despised; they must he willing to lay aside all hope of the praise and the flattery of people, and be content with an honest effort to please God.

(5) true Christians must differ from the world. Their aims, feelings, purposes must be unlike the world. They are to be a special people; and they should be willing to be esteemed such. It does not follow, however, that a true Christian should not desire the good esteem of the world, or that he should be indifferent to an honorable reputation 1 Timothy 3:7; nor does it follow logically that a consistent Christian will not often command the respect of the world. In times of trial, the world will put confidence in Christians; when any work of benevolence is to be done, the world will instinctively look to Christians; and, notwithstanding, sinners will not love religion, yet they will secretly feel assured that some of the brightest ornaments of society are Christians, and that they have a claim to the confidence and esteem of their fellow-men.

The servant of Christ - A Christian.

Verse 11

But I certify you - I make known to you; or, I declare to you; see 1 Corinthians 15:1. Doubtless this had been known to them before, but he now assures them of it, and goes into an extended illustration to show them that he had not received his authority from man to preach the gospel To state and prove this is the main design of this chapter.

Is not after man - The Greek text: "Not according to man"; see Galatians 1:1. That is, he was not appointed by man, nor did he have any human instructor to make known to him what the gospel was. He had neither received it from man, nor had it been debased or adulterated by any human admixtures. He had received it directly from the Lord Jesus.

Verse 12

For I neither received it of man - This is very probably said in reply to his opponents, who had maintained that Paul had derived his knowledge of the gospel from other people, since he had not been personally known to the Lord Jesus, or been of the number of those whom Jesus called to be his apostles. In reply to this, he says, that he did not receive his gospel in any way from man.

Neither was I taught it - That is, by man. He was not taught it by any written account of it, or by the instruction of man in any way. The only plausible objection to this statement which could be urged would be the fact that Paul had an interview with Ananias Acts 9:17 before his baptism, and that he would probably receive instructions from him. But to this it may be replied:

(1)That there is no evidence that Ananias went into an explanation of the nature of the Christian religion in his interview with Paul;

(2)Before this, Paul had been taught what Christianity was by his encounter with the Lord Jesus on the way to Damascus Acts 9:5; Acts 26:14-18;

(3)The purpose for which Ananias was sent to him in Damascus was that Paul might receive his sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit, Acts 9:17. Whatever instructions he may have received through Ananias, it is still true that his call was directly from the Lord Jesus, and his information of the nature of Christianity from Jesus‘ revelation.

But by the revelation of Jesus Christ - On his way to Damascus, and subsequently in the temple, Acts 22:17-21. Doubtless, he received communications at various times from the Lord Jesus with regard to the nature of the gospel and his duty. The sense here is, that he was not indebted to people for his knowledge of the gospel, but had derived it entirely from the Saviour.

Verse 13

For ye have heard of my conversation - My conduct, my mode of life, my deportment; see the note at 2 Corinthians 1:12. Probably Paul had himself made them acquainted with the events of his early years. The reason why he refers to this is, to show them that he had not derived his knowledge of the Christian religion from any instruction which he had received in his early years, or any acquaintance which he had formed with the apostles. At first, Paul had been decidedly opposed to the Lord Jesus, and had been converted only by God‘s wonderful grace.

In the Jews‘ religion - In the belief and practice of Judaism; that is, as it was understood in the time when he was educated. It was not merely in the religion of Moses, but it was in that religion as understood and practiced by the Jews in his time, when opposition to Christianity constituted a very material part of it. In that religion Paul proceeds to show that he had been more distinguished than most persons of his time.

How that beyond measure - In the highest possible degree; beyond all limits or bounds; exceedingly. The phrase which Paul uses here (καθ᾽ ὑπερβολὴν kath' huperbolēn), by hyperbole, is one which he frequently employs to denote anything that is excessive, or that cannot be expressed by

ordinary language; see the Greek text in Romans 7:13; 1 Corinthians 12:31; 2 Corinthians 1:8; 2 Corinthians 4:7, 2 Corinthians 4:17.

I persecuted the church - See Acts 8:3; Acts 9:1 ff.

And wasted it - Destroyed it. The word which is used here, means properly to waste or destroy, as when a city or country is ravaged by an army or by wild beasts. His purpose was utterly to root out and destroy the Christian religion.

Verse 14

And profited - Made advances and attainments. Paul made advances not only in the knowledge of the Jewish religion, but he also surpassed others in his zeal in defending its interests. He had had better advantages than most of his countrymen; and by his great zeal and characteristic ardor he had been able to make higher attainments than most others had done.

Above many my equals - Margin, Equal in years. This is the true sense of the original. It means that he surpassed those of the same age with himself. Possibly there may be a reference here to those of the same age who attended with him on the instructions of Gamaliel.

Being more exceedingly zealous - More studious of; more ardently attached to them; more anxious to distinguish himself in attainments in the religion in which he was brought up. All this is fully sustained by all that we know of the character of Paul, as at all times a man of singular and eminent zeal in all that he undertook.

Of the traditions of my fathers - Or the traditions of the Jews; see the note at Matthew 15:2. A large part of the doctrines of the Pharisees depended on mere tradition; and Paul doubtless made this a special matter of study, and was particularly tenacious in regard to it. It was to be learned, from the very nature of it, only by oral teaching, since there is no evidence that it was then recorded. Subsequently, these traditions were recorded in the Mishna, and are found in the Jewish writings. But in the time of Paul they were to be learned as they were handed down from one to another; and hence, the utmost diligence was requisite to obtain a knowledge of them. Paul does not here say that he was zealous then for the practice of the new religion, nor for the study of the Bible. His object in going to Jerusalem and studying at the feet of Gamaliel was doubtless to obtain a knowledge of the traditions of the sect of the Pharisees. Had he been studying the Bible all that time, he would have kept from the fiery zeal which he evinced in

persecuting the church, and would, if he had studied it right, been saved from much trouble of conscience afterward.

Verse 15

But when it pleased God - Paul traced all his hopes of eternal life, and all the good influences which had ever borne upon his mind, to God.

Who separated me … - That is, who destined me; or who purposed from my very birth that I should be a preacher and an apostle. The meaning is, that God had in his secret purposes set him apart to be an apostle. It does not mean that he had actually called him in his infancy to the work, for this was not so, but that he designed him to be an important instrument in his hands in spreading the true religion. Jeremiah Jeremiah 1:5 was thus set apart, and John the Baptist was thus early designated for the work which they afterward performed. It follows from this:

(1) That God often, if not always, has purposes in regard to people from their very birth. He designs them for some important field of labor, and endows them at their creation with talents adapted to that.

(2) it does not follow that because a young man has gone far astray; and has become even a blasphemer and a persecutor, that God has not destined him to some important and holy work in his service. How many people have been called, like Paul, and Newton, and Bunyan, and Augustine, from a life of sin to the service of God.

(3) God is often training up people in a remarkable manner for future usefulness. His eye is upon them, and He watches over them, until the time comes for their conversion. His providence was concerned in the education and training of Paul. It was by the divine intention with reference to his future work that he had so many opportunities of education, and was so well acquainted with the "traditions" of that religion which he was yet to demonstrate to be unfounded and false. He gave him the opportunity to cultivate his mind, and prepare to grapple with the Jew in argument, and show him how unfounded were his hopes. So it is often now. He gives to a young man an opportunity of a finished education. Perhaps he suffers him to fall into the snares of infidelity, and to become familiar with the arguments of sceptics, that he may thus be better prepared to meet their sophisms and to enter into their feelings. God's eye is upon them in their wanderings, and they are often allowed to wander far; to range the fields of

science; to become distinguished as scholars, as Paul was; until the time comes for their conversion, and then, in accordance with the purpose which set them apart from the world, God converts them, and consecrates all their talents and attainments to His service.

(4) we should never despair of a young man who has wandered far from God. If he has risen high in attainments; if his whole aim is ambition; or if he has become an infidel, still we are not to despair of him. It is still possible that God "separated" that talent to his service from his very birth, and that God still means to call it all to His service. How easy it was to convert Saul of Tarsus when the proper period arrived. So it is of the now unconverted and unconsecrated, but cultivated talent among the young men of our land. Far as they may have wandered from God and virtue, yet much of that talent has been devoted to Him in baptism, and by parental purposes and prayers; and, it may be - as is morally certain from the history of the past - that much of it is consecrated also by the divine purpose and intention for the noble cause of virtue and pure religion. In that now apparently wasted talent; in that learning now apparently devoted to other aims and ends, there is much that may still adorn the cause of virtue and religion; and how fervently we should pray that it may be "called" by the grace of God and actually devoted to His service.

And called me by his grace - On the way to Damascus. It was special grace, because he was then engaged in bitterly opposing Him and His cause.

Verse 16

To reveal his Son in me - This is to be regarded as connected with the first part of Galatians 1:15, "When it pleased God to reveal his Son in me," that is, on the way to Damascus. The phrase evidently means, to make me acquainted with the Lord Jesus, or to reveal his Son to me; compare the Greek in Matthew 10:32, for a similar expression. The revelation here referred to was the miraculous manifestation which was made to Paul on his way to Damascus; compare 2 Corinthians 4:6. That revelation was in order to convince him that he was the Messiah; to acquaint him with his nature, rank, and claims; and to qualify him to be a preacher to the pagan.

That I might preach him - In order that I might so preach him; or with a view to my being appointed to this work. This was the leading purpose for which Paul was converted, Acts 9:15; Acts 22:21.

The heathen - The Gentiles; the portion of the world that was not Jewish, or that was destitute of the true religion.

Immediately - Koppe supposes that this is to be connected with "I went into Arabia" Galatians 1:17. Rosenmuller supposes it means, "Immediately I consented." Dr. Wells and Locke suppose that it refers to the fact that he immediately went to Arabia. But this seems to me to be an unnatural construction. The words are too remote from each other to allow of it. The evident sense is, that he was at once decided. He did not take time to deliberate whether he should or should not become a Christian. He made up his mind at once and on the spot. He did not consult with anyone; he did not ask advice of anyone; he did not wait to be instructed by anyone. He was convinced by the vision in an overpowering manner that Jesus was the Messiah, and he yielded at once. The main idea is, that there was no delay, no consultation, no deferring it, that he might see and consult with his friends, or with the friends of Christianity. The object for which he dwells on this is to show that he did not receive his views of the gospel from man.

I conferred not - I did not "lay the case" (προσανεθέμην prosanethemēn) before any man; I did not confer with anyone.

Flesh and blood - Any human being, for so the phrase properly signifies; see the note at Matthew 16:17. This does not mean here, that Paul did not consult his own ease and happiness; that he was regardless of the sufferings which he might be called to endure; that he was willing to suffer, and was not careful to make provision for his own comfort - which was true in itself - but that he did not lay the case before any man, or any body of human beings for instruction or advice. He acted promptly and decisively. He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision Acts 26:19, but resolved at once to obey. Many suppose that this passage means that Paul did not take counsel of the evil passions and suggestions of his own heart, or of the feelings which would have prompted him to lead a life of ambition, or a life under the influence of corrupt desires. But however true this was in fact, no such thing is intended here. It simply means that he did not take counsel of any human being. He resolved at once to follow the command of the Saviour, and at once to obey him. The passage shows:

(1) That when the Lord Jesus calls us to follow him we should promptly and decidedly obey.

(2) we should not delay even to take counsel of earthly friends, or wait for human advice, or consult their wishes, but should at once resolve to follow the Lord Jesus. Most persons, when they are awakened to see their guilt, and their minds are impressed on the subject of religion are prone to defer it; to resolve to think of it at some future time; or to engage in some other business before they become Christians; or, at least, they wish to finish what they have on hand before they yield to God. If Paul had pursued this course, he probably never would have become a Christian. It follows, therefore:

(3) That when the Lord Jesus calls us, we should at once abandon any course of life, however pleasant, or any plan of ambition, however brilliant, or any scheme of gain, however promising, in order that we may follow him. What a brilliant career of ambition that Paul did abandon! and how promptly and decidedly did he do it! He did not pause or hesitate a moment! However brilliant as his prospects were, he at once forsook everything; paused in mid-career in his ambition; and without consulting one human being, he immediately gave his heart to God. Such a course should be pursued by all. Such a promptness and decision will prepare one to become an eminent Christian, and to be eminently useful.

Verse 17

Neither went I up to Jerusalem - That is, I did not go there at once. I did not go to consult with the apostles there, or to be instructed by them in regard to the nature of the Christian religion. The design of this statement is to show that, in no sense, did he derive his commission from man.

To them which were apostles before me - This implies that Paul then regarded himself to be an apostle. They were, he admits, apostles before he was; but he felt also that he had original authority with them, and he did not go to them to receive instruction, or to derive his commission from them. Several of the apostles remained in Jerusalem for a considerable time after the ascension of the Lord Jesus, and it was regarded as the principal place of authority; see Galatians 1:18 that he did not go to Jerusalem until three years after his conversion, but how large a part of this time was spent in Damascus, we have no means of ascertaining. It is probable that Paul was engaged during these three years in preaching the gospel in Damascus and the adjacent regions, and in Arabia; compare Acts 9:20, Acts 9:22, Acts

9:27. The account of this journey into Arabia is wholly omitted by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, and this fact, as has been remarked by Paley (Horae Paulinae, chapter v. No. 2), demonstrates that the Acts and this Epistle were not written by the same author, or that the one is independent of the other; because, "if the Acts of the Apostles had been a forged history made up from the Epistle, it is impossible that this journey should have been passed over in silence; if the Epistle had been composed out of what the author had read of Paul's history in the Acts, it is unaccountable that it should have been inserted."

As to the reason why Luke omitted to mention the journey into Arabia nothing is known. Various conjectures have been entertained, but they are mere conjectures. It is sufficient to say, that Luke has by no means recorded all that Paul or the other apostles did, nor has he pretended to do it. He has given the leading events in the public labors of Paul; and it is not at all improbable that he has omitted not a few short excursions made by him for the purpose of preaching the gospel. The journey into Arabia, probably, did not furnish any incidents in regard to the success of the gospel there which required particular record by the sacred historian, nor has Paul himself referred to it for any such reason, or intimated that it furnished any incidents, or any facts, that required particularly the notice of the historian. He has mentioned it for a different purpose altogether, to show that he did not receive his commission from the apostles, and that he did not go at once to consult them. He went directly the other way. Since Luke, in the Book of Acts, had no occasion to illustrate this; since he had no occasion to refer to this argument, it did not fall in with the design to mention the fact. Nor is it known why Paul went into Arabia. Bloomfield supposes that it was in order to recover his health after the calamity which he suffered on the way to Damascus. But everything in regard to this is mere conjecture. I should rather think it was more in accordance with the general character of Paul that he made this short excursion for the purpose of preaching the gospel.

And returned again unto Damascus - He did not go to Jerusalem to consult with the apostles after his visit to Arabia, but returned again to the place where he was converted and preached there, showing that he had not derived his commission from the other apostles.

Verse 18

Then after three years - Probably three years after his departure from Jerusalem to Damascus, not after his return to Arabia. So most

commentators have understood it.

Went up to Jerusalem - More correctly, as in the margin, returned.

To see Peter - Peter was the oldest and most distinguished of the apostles. In Galatians 2:9, he, with James and John, is called a pillar. But why Paul went particularly to see him is not known. It was probably, however, from the celebrity and distinction which he knew Peter had among the apostles that he wished to become particularly acquainted with him. The word which is here rendered "to see" (ἱστορῆσαι historēsai) is by no means that which is commonly employed to denote that idea. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; and properly means to ascertain by personal inquiry and examination, and then to narrate, as a historian was accustomed to do, whence our word history. The notion of personally seeing and examining, is one that belongs essentially to the word, and the idea here is that of seeing or visiting Peter in order to a personal acquaintance.

And abode with him fifteen days - Probably, says Bloomfield, including three Lord's days. Why he departed then is unknown. Beza supposes that it was on account of the plots of the Grecians against him, and their intention to destroy him Acts 9:29; but this is not assigned by Paul himself as a reason. It is probable that the purpose of his visit to Peter would be accomplished in that time, and he would not spend more time than was necessary with him. It is clear that in the short space of two weeks he could not have been very extensively taught by Peter the nature of the Christian religion, and probably the time is mentioned here to show that he had not been under the teaching of the apostles.

Verse 19

Save James the Lord's brother - That the James here referred to was an apostle is clear. The whole construction of the sentence demands this supposition. In the list of the apostles in Matthew 10:2-3, two of this name are mentioned, James the son of Zebedee and brother of John, and James the son of Alpheus. From the Acts of the Apostles, it is clear that there were two of this name in Jerusalem. Of these, James the brother of John was slain by Herod Acts 12:2, and the other continued to reside in Jerusalem, Acts 15:13; Acts 21:13. This latter James was called James the Less Mark 15:40, to distinguish him from the other James, probably because he was the younger. It is probable that this was the James referred to here, as it is evident from the Acts of the Apostles that he was a prominent man among the apostles in Jerusalem. Commentators have not been agreed as to what is

meant by his being the brother of the Lord Jesus. Doddridge understands it as meaning that he was "the near kinsman" or cousin-german to Jesus, for he was, says he, the son of Alpheus and Mary, the sister of the virgin; and if there were only two of this name, this opinion is undoubtedly correct.

In the Apostolical Constitutions (see Rosenmuller) three of this name are mentioned as apostles or eminent men in Jerusalem; and hence, many have supposed that one of them was the son of Mary the mother of the Lord Jesus. It is said Matthew 13:55 that the brothers of Jesus were James and Joses, and Simon, and Judas; and it is remarkable that three of the apostles bear the same names; James the son of Alpheus, Simon Zelotes, and Judas, John 14:22. It is indeed possible, as Bloomfield remarks, that three brothers of our Lord and three of his apostles might bear the same names, and yet be different persons; but such a coincidence would be very remarkable, and not easily explained. But if it were not so, then the James here was the son of Alpheus, and consequently a cousin of the Lord Jesus. The word "brother" may, according to Scriptural usage, be understood as denoting a near kinsman. See Schleusher (Lexicon 2) on the word ἀδελφός adelphosAfter all, however, it is not quite certain who is intended. Some have supposed that neither of the apostles of the name of James is intended, but another James who was the son of Mary the mother of Jesus. See Koppe in loc. But it is clear, I think, that one of the apostles is intended. Why James is particularly mentioned here is unknown. Since, however, he was a prominent man in Jerusalem, Paul would naturally seek his acquaintance. It is possible that the other apostles were absent from Jerusalem during the fifteen days when he was there.

Verse 20

Behold, before God I lie not - This is an oath, or a solemn appeal to God; see the note at Romans 9:1. The design of this oath here is to prevent all suspicion of falsehood, It may seem to be remarkable that Paul should make this solemn appeal to God in this argument, and in the narrative of a plain fact, when his statement could hardly be called in question by anyone. But we may remark:

(1) That the oath here refers not only to the fact that he was with Peter and James only fifteen days, but to the entire group of facts to which he had referred in this chapter. "The things which I wrote unto you." It included,

therefore, the narrative about his conversion, and the direct revelation which he had from the Lord Jesus.

(2) there were no radios which he could appeal to in this case, and he could, therefore, only appeal to God. It was probably not practicable for him to appeal to Peter or James, since neither of them were in Galatia, and a considerable part of the transactions here referred to occurred where there were no witnesses. It pertained to the direct revelation of truth from the Lord Jesus. The only way, therefore, was for Paul to appeal directly to God for the truth of what he said.

(3) the importance of the truth here affirmed was such as to justify this solemn appeal to God. It was an extraordinary and miraculous revelation of the truth by Jesus Christ himself. He received information of the truth of Christianity from no human being. He had consulted no one in regard to its nature. That fact was so extraordinary, and it was so remarkable that the system thus communicated to him should harmonize so entirely with that taught by the other apostles with whom he had had no contact, that it was not improper to appeal to God in this solemn manner. It was, therefore, no trifling matter in which Paul appealed to God; and a solemn appeal of the same nature and in the same circumstances can never be improper.

Verse 21

Afterward I came … - In this account be has omitted a circumstance recorded by Luke Acts 9:29, of the controversy which he had with the Grecians (Hellenists). It was not material to the purpose which he has here in view, which is to state that he was not indebted to the apostles for his knowledge of the doctrines of Christianity. He therefore merely states that he left Jerusalem soon after he went there, and traveled to other places.

The regions of Syria - Syria was between Jerusalem and Cilicia. Antioch was the capital of Syria, and in that city and the adjacent places he spent considerable time; compare Acts 15:23, Acts 15:41.

Cilicia - This was a province of Asia Minor, of which Tarsus, the native place of Paul, was the capital; see the note at Acts 6:9.

Verse 22

And was unknown by face … - Paul had visited Jerusalem only, and he had formed no acquaintance with any of the churches in the other parts of

Judea. He regarded himself at the first as called to preach particularly to the Gentiles, and he did not remain even to form an acquaintance with the Christians in Judea.

The churches of Judea - Those which were out of Jerusalem. Even at the early period of the conversion of Paul there were doubtless many churches in various parts of the land,

Which were in Christ - United to Christ; or which were Christian churches. The design of mentioning this is, to show that he had not derived his views of the gospel from any of them. He had neither been instructed by the apostles, nor was he indebted to the Christians in Judea for his knowledge of the Christian religion.

Verse 23

But they had heard only … - They had not seen me; but the remarkable fact of my conversion had been reported to them. It was a fact that could hardly be concealed; see the note at Acts 26:26.

Verse 24

And they glorified God in me - They praised God on my account. They regarded me as a true convert and a sincere Christian; and they praised God that he had converted such a persecutor, and had made him a preacher of the gospel. The design for which this is mentioned is, to show that though he was personally unknown to them, and had not derived his views of the gospel from them, yet that he had their entire confidence. They regarded him as a convert and an apostle, and they were disposed to praise God for his conversion. This fact would do much to conciliate the favor of the Galatians, by showing them that he had the confidence of the churches in the very land where the gospel was first planted, and which was regarded as the source of ecclesiastical authority. In view of this we may remark:

(1) That it is the duty of Christians kindly and affectionately to receive among their number those who have been converted from a career of persecution or of sin in any form. And it is always done by true Christians. It is easy to forgive a man who has been actively engaged in persecuting the church, or a man who has been profane, intemperate, dishonest, or licentious, if he becomes a true penitent, and confesses and forsakes his sins. No matter what his life has been; no matter how abandoned, sensual, or devilish; if he manifests true sorrow and gives evidence of a change of heart, he is cordially received into any church, and welcomed as a fellow-laborer in the cause which he once destroyed. Here, at least, is one place

where forgiveness is cordial and perfect. His former life is not remembered, except to praise God for His grace in recovering a sinner from such a course. The evils that he has done are forgotten, and he is henceforward regarded as entitled to all the privileges and immunities of a member of the household of faith. There is not on earth an infuriated persecutor or blasphemer who would not be cordially welcomed to any Christian church upon the evidence of his repentance; not a person so debased and vile that the most pure, and elevated, and learned, and wealthy Christians would not rejoice to sit down with him at the same communion table upon the evidence of his conversion to God.

(2) we should "glorify" or praise God for all such instances of conversion. We should do it because:

(a) Of the abstraction of the talents of the persecutor from the cause of evil. Paul could have done, and would have done immense service to the enemies of Christianity if he had pursued the career which he had commenced. But when he was converted, all that bad influence ceased. So when an infidel or a profligate man is converted now:

(b) Because now his talents will be consecrated to a better service, they will be employed in the cause of truth and salvation. All the power of the matured and educated talent will now be devoted to the interests of religion; and it is a fact for which we should thank God, that he often takes educated talent, and commanding influence, and an established reputation for ability, learning, and zeal, and devotes it to his own service.

(c) Because there will be a change of destiny; because the enemy of the Redeemer will now be saved. The moment when Saul of Tarsus was converted, was the moment which determined a change in his eternal destiny. Before, he was on the broad way to hell; henceforward, he walked in the path of life and salvation. Thus, we should always rejoice over a sinner returning from the error of his ways; and should praise God that he who was in danger of eternal ruin is now an heir of glory. Christians are not jealous in regard to the numbers who shall enter heaven. They feel that there is "room" for all; that the feast is ample for all; and they rejoice when

any can be induced to come with them and partake of the happiness of heaven.

(3) we may still glorify and praise God for the grace manifested in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. What does not the world owe to him! What do we not owe to him! No man did as much in establishing the Christian religion as he did; no one among the apostles was the means of converting and saving so many souls; no one has left so many and so valuable writings for the edification of the church. To him we owe the invaluable epistles - so full of truth, and eloquence, and promises, and consolations - upon which we are commenting; and to him the church owes, under God, some of its most elevated and ennobling views or the nature of Christian doctrine and duty. After the lapse, therefore, of more than 1,800 years, we should not cease to glorify God for the conversion of this wonderful man, and should feel that we have cause of thankfulness that he changed the infuriated persecutor to a holy and devoted apostle.

(4) let us remember that God has the same power now. There is not a persecutor whom he could not convert with the same ease with which he changed Saul of Tarsus. There is not a vile and sensual man that he could not make pure; not a dishonest man that his grace could not make honest: not a blasphemer that he could not teach to venerate his name; not a lost and abandoned sinner that he cannot receive to himself. Let us then without ceasing cry unto him that his grace may be continually manifested in reclaiming such sinners from the error of their ways, and bringing them to the knowledge of the truth, and to a consecration of their lives to his service.

GALATIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

The second chapter is closely connected in sense with the first, and is indeed a part of the same argument. Injury has been done by the division which is made. The proper division would have been at the close of Galatians 2:10. The general scope of the chapter, like the first, is to show that he did not receive the gospel from man; that he had not derived it from the apostles; that he did not acknowledge his indebtedness to them for his views of the Christian religion; that they had not even set up authority over him; but that they had welcomed him as a fellow-laborer, and acknowledged him as a co-adjutor in the work of the apostleship. In confirmation of this, he states Galatians 2:1 that he had indeed gone to Jerusalem, but that he had done it by express revelation Galatians 2:2; that he was cordially received by the apostles there - especially by those who were pillars in the church; and that so far from regarding himself as inferior to the other apostles, he had resisted Peter to his face at Antioch on a most important and vital doctrine.

The chapter, therefore, may be regarded as divided into two portions, namely:

I. "The account of his visit to Jerusalem and of what occurred there," Galatians 2:1-10.

(a)He had gone up 14 years after his conversion, after having labored long among the Gentiles in his own way, and without having felt his dependence upon the apostles at Jerusalem, Galatians 2:1-2.

(b)When he was there, there was no attempt made to compel him to submit to the Jewish rites and customs; and what was conclusive in the case was, that they had not even required Titus to be circumcised, thus proving that they did not assert jurisdiction over Paul, and that they did not intend to impose the Mosaic rites on the converts from among the Gentiles, Galatians 2:3-5.

(c)The most distinguished persons among the apostles at Jerusalem, he says, received him kindly, and admitted him to their confidence and favor without hesitation. They added no heavy burdens to him Galatians 2:6; they saw evidence that he had been appointed to bear the gospel to the Gentiles Galatians 2:7-8; they gave to him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship

Galatians 2:9; and they asked only that they should remember and show kindness to the poor saints in Judea, and thus manifest an interest in those who had been converted from Judaism, or contribute their proper proportion to the maintenance of all, and show that they were not disposed to abandon their own countrymen, Galatians 2:10. In this way they gave the fullest proof that they approved the course of Paul, and admitted him into entire fellowship with them as an apostle.

II. "The scene at Antioch, where Paul rebuked Peter for his dissimulation;" Galatians 2:11-21. The main object of mentioning this seems to be to show, first, that he did not regard himself as inferior to the other apostles, or that he had not derived his views of the gospel from them; and, secondly, to state that the observance of the Jewish rites was not necessary to salvation, and that he had maintained that from the beginning. He had strongly urged it in a controversy with Peter, and in a case where Peter was manifestly wrong; and it was no new doctrine on the subject of justification which he had preached to the Galatians. He states, therefore:

(a)That he had opposed Peter at Antioch, because he had dissembled there, and that even Barnabas had been carried away with the course which Peter had practiced; Galatians 2:11-14.

(b)That the Jews must be justified by faith, and not by dependence on their own law; Galatians 2:15-16.

(c)That they who are justified by faith should act consistently, and not attempt to build again the things which they had destroyed; Galatians 2:17-18.

(d)That the effect of justification by faith was to make one dead to the Law that he might live unto God; that the effect of it was to make one truly alive and devoted to the cause of true religion; and to show this, he appeals to the effect of his own heart and life Galatians 2:19-20.

(e)And that if justification could be obtained by the Law, then Christ had died in vain; Galatians 2:21. He thus shows that the effect of teaching the necessity of the observance of the Jewish rites was to destroy the gospel, and to render it vain and useless.

Verse 1

Then fourteen years after - That is, 14 years after his first visit there subsequent to his conversion. Some commentators, however, suppose that the date of the fourteen years is to be reckoned from his conversion. But the more obvious construction is, to refer it to the time of his visit there, as recorded in the previous chapter; Galatians 2:18. This time was spent in Asia Minor chiefly in preaching the gospel.

I went up again to Jerusalem - It is commonly supposed that Paul here refers to the visit which he made as recorded in Acts 11:29-30; Acts 12:25, but he does not mention that here, probably because he did not then see the other apostles, or more probably because that journey furnished no illustration of the point now under debate. On the occasion here referred to Acts 15:2, says, that there were others with Paul and Barnabas on that journey to Jerusalem, but who they were he does not mention. It is by no means certain that Titus was appointed by the church to go to Jerusalem; but the contrary is more probable. Paul seems to have taken him with him as a private affair; but the reason is not mentioned. It may have been to show his Christian liberty, and his sense of what he had a right to do; or it may have been to furnish a case on the subject of inquiry, and submit the matter to them whether Titus was to be circumcised. He was a Greek; but he had been converted to Christianity. Paul had not circumcised him; but had admitted him to the full privileges of the Christian church. Here then was a case in point; and it may have been important to have had such a case before them, so that they might fully understand it. This, as Doddridge properly remarks, is the first mention which occurs of Titus. He is not mentioned by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, and though his name occurs several times in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians 2 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 7:6; 2 Corinthians 8:6, 2 Corinthians 8:16, 2 Corinthians 8:23; 2 Corinthians 12:18, yet it is to be remembered that that Epistle was written a considerable time after this to the Galatians. Titus was a Greek, and was doubtless converted by the labors of Paul, because he calls him his own "son," Titus 1:4. He attended Paul frequently in his travels; was employed by him in important services (see 2Corinthians in the places referred to above); was left by him in Crete to set in order the things that were missing, and to ordain elders there Titus 1:5; subsequently, he went into Dalmatia 2 Timothy 4:10, and is supposed to have returned again to Crete, where it is said he propagated the gospel in the neighboring islands, and died at the age of 94 - Calmet.

Verse 2

And I went up by revelation - Not for the purpose of receiving instruction from the apostles there in regard to the nature of the Christian religion. It is to be remembered that the design for which Paul states this is, to show that he had not received the gospel from human beings. He is careful, therefore, to state that he went up by the express command of God. He did not go up to receive instructions from the apostles there in regard to his own work, or to be confirmed by them in his apostolic office, but he went to submit an important question pertaining to the church at large. In Acts 15:2, it is said that Paul and Barnabas went up by the appointment of the church at Antioch. But there is no discrepancy between that account and this, for though he was designated by the church there, there is no improbability in supposing that he was directed by a special revelation to comply with their request. The reason why he says that he went up by direct revelation seems to be to show that he did not seek instruction from the apostles; he did not go of his own accord to consult with them as if he were dependent upon them; but even in a case when he went to advise with them he was under the influence of express and direct revelation, proving that he was commissioned by God as much as they were.

And communicated unto them that gospel … - Made them acquainted with the doctrines which he preached among the pagans. He stated fully the principles on which he acted; the nature of the gospel which he taught; and his doctrine about the exemption of the Gentiles from the obligations of the Law of Moses. He thus satisfied them in regard to his views of the gospel; and showed them that he understood the system of Christianity which had been revealed. The result was, that they had entire confidence in him, and admitted him to entire fellowship with them; Galatians 2:9.

But privately - Margin, "Severally." Greek (κατ᾽ ἰδίαν kat' idianThe phrase means that he did it not in a public manner; not before a general assembly; not even before all the apostles collected together, but in a private manner to a few of the leaders and chief persons. He made a private explanation of his motives and views, so that they might understand it before it became a matter of public discussion. The point on which Paul made this private explanation was not whether the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles, for upon that they had no doubt after the revelation to Peter Acts 15:7; many of the sect of the Pharisees in that assembly maintained that it was needful to teach the Gentiles that the Law

of Moses was to be kept Acts 15:5; and no one can tell what would have been the issue of that discussion among the excitable minds of the converts from Judaism had not Paul taken the precaution, as he here says, to have submitted the case in private to those who were of "reputation." and if Peter and James had not in this manner been satisfied and had not submitted the views which they did, as recorded in Acts 15:7-21, and which terminated the whole controversy.

We may just remark here that this fact furnishes an argument such as Paley has dwelt so much on in his Horae Paulinae - though he has not referred to this - of what he calls undesigned coincidences. The affair in Galatians 1:18-19; and that he had had a private interview with those "of reputation" on these very points, and particularly that James, Peter, and John had approved his course, and given to him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship; Galatians 2:9. Thus understood, the case here referred to was one of the most consummate instances of prudence that occurred in the life of Paul; and from this case we may learn:

(1) That when a difficulty is to be settled involving great principles, and embracing a great many points, it is better to seek an opportunity of private explanation than to submit it to a general multitude or to public debate. It is not well to attempt to settle important points when the passions of a general assembly may be excited, and where prejudices are strong. It is better to do it by private explanations, when there is an opportunity coolly to ask questions and to state the facts just as they are.

(2) the importance of securing the countenance of influential men in a popular assembly; of having men in the assembly who would understand the whole case. It was morally certain that if such men as Peter and James were made to understand the case, there would be little difficulty in arriving at an amicable adjustment of the difficulty.

(3) though this passage does not refer to preaching the gospel in general, since the gospel here submitted to the men of reputation was the question referred to above, yet we may remark, that great prudence should be used in preaching; in stating truths that may excite prejudices, or when we have reason to apprehend prejudices; and that it is often best to preach the gospel to men of reputation κατ᾽ ἰδίαν kat' idian"separately," or "privately." In this

way the truth can be made to bear on the conscience; it may be better adapted to the character of the individual; he may put himself less in a state of defense, and guard himself less against the proper influences of truth. And especially is this true in conversing with persons on the subject of religion. It should be if possible alone, or privately. Almost any person may be approached on the subject of religion if it is done when he is alone; when he is at leisure, and if it is done in a kind spirit. Almost anybody will become irritated if you address him personally in a general assembly, or even with his family around him. I have never in more than in one or two instances been unkindly treated when I have addressed an individual on the subject of religion if he was alone; and though a minister should never shrink from stating the truth, and should never be afraid of man, however exalted his rank, or great his talents, or vast his wealth, yet he will probably meet with most success when he discourses privately to "them which are of reputation."

To them which were of reputation - Meaning here the leading men among the apostles. Tyndale renders this, "which are counted chefe." Doddridge, "those of greatest note in the church." The Greek is, literally, "those who seem," more fully in Galatians 2:6; "who seem to be something," that is, who are persons of note, or who are distinguished.

Lest by any means I should run, or had run in vain - Lest the effects of my labors and journeys should be lost. Paul feared that if he did not take this method of laying the case before them privately, they would not understand it. Others might misrepresent him, or their prejudices might be excited, and when the case came before the assembled apostles and elders, a decision might be adopted which would go to prove that he had been entirely wrong in his views, or which would lead those whom he had taught, to believe that he was, and which would greatly hinder and embarrass him in Iris future movements. In order to prevent this, therefore, and to secure a just decision, and one which would not hinder his future usefulness, he had sought this private interview, and thus his object was gained.

Verse 3

But neither Titus, who was with me - Paul introduces this case of Titus undoubtedly to show that circumcision was not necessary for salvation. It was a case just in point. He had gone up to Jerusalem with the express reference to this question. Here was a man whom he had admitted to the

Christian church without circumcising him. He claimed that he had a right to do so; and that circumcision was not necessary in order for salvation. If it were necessary, it would have been proper that Titus should have been compelled to submit to it. But Paul that says this was not demanded; or if demanded by anyone, the point was yielded, and he was not compelled to be circumcised. It is to be remembered that this was at Jerusalem; that it was a case submitted to the apostles there; and that consequently the determination of this case settled the whole controversy about the obligation of the Mosaic laws on the Gentile converts.

It is quite evident from the whole statement here that Paul did not intend that Titus should be circumcised; that he maintained that it was not necessary; and that he resisted it when it was demanded; Galatians 2:4-5. Yet on another occasion he himself performed the act of circumcision upon Timothy; Acts 16:3. But there is no inconsistency in Paul‘s conduct. In the case of Titus, it was demanded as a matter of right and as obligatory upon him, and Paul resisted the principle as dangerous. In the case of Timothy, it was a voluntary compliance on his part with the usual customs of the Jews, where it was not pressed as a matter of obligation, and where it would not be understood as indispensable to salvation. No danger would follow from compliance with the custom, and it might do much to conciliate the favor of the Jews, and he therefore submitted to it. Paul would not have hesitated to have circumcised Titus in the same circumstances in which it was done to Timothy; but the circumstances were different; and when it was insisted upon as a matter of principle and of obligation, it became a matter of principle and of obligation with him to oppose it.

Being a Greek - Born of Gentile parents, of course he had not been circumcised. Probably both his parents were Greeks. The case with Timothy was somewhat different. His mother was a Jewess, but his father was a Greek Acts 16:3.

Was compelled to be circumcised - I think it is implied here that this was demanded and insisted on by some that he should be circumcised. It is also implied that Paul resisted it, and the point was yielded, thus settling the great and important principle that it was not necessary in order for salvation; see Galatians 2:5.

Verse 4

And that because of false brethren - Who these false brethren were is not certainly known, nor is it known whether he refers to those who were at

Jerusalem or to those who were at Antioch. It is probable that he refers to Judaizing Christians, or persons who claimed to be Christians and to have been converted from Judaism. Whether they were dissemblers and hypocrites, or whether they were so imperfectly acquainted with Christianity, and so obstinate, opinionated, and perverse, though really in some respects good men, that they were conscientious in this, it is not easy to determine. It is clear, however, that they opposed the apostle Paul; that they regarded him as teaching dangerous doctrines; that they perverted and misstated his views; and that they claimed to have clearer views of the nature of the true religion than he had. Paul met such adversaries everywhere 2 Corinthians 11:26; and it required all his tact and skill to meet their plausible representations.

It is evident here that Paul is assigning a reason for something which he had done, and that reason was to counteract the influence of the "false brethren" in the case. But what is the thing concerning which he assigns a reason? It is commonly supposed to have been on account of the fact that he did not submit to the circumcision of Titus, and that he means to say that he resisted that in order to counteract their influence and to defeat their designs. But I would submit whether Galatians 2:3 is not to be regarded as a parenthesis, and whether the fact for which he assigns a reason is not that he sought a private interview with the leading men among the apostles? Galatians 2:2. The reason of his doing that would be obvious. In this way he could more easily counteract the influence of the false brethren. He could make a full statement of his doctrines. He could meet their inquiries, and anticipate the objections of his enemies. He could thus secure the influence of the leading apostles in his favor, and effectually prevent all the efforts of the false brethren to impose the Jewish rites on Gentile converts.

Unawares brought in - The word rendered "unawares" (παρεισάκτους pareisaktous) is derived from a verb meaning to lead in by the side of others, to introduce along with others; and then to lead or bring in by stealth, to smuggle in - Robinson, Lexicon. The verb occurs nowhere in the New Testament but in 2 Peter 2:1, where it is applied to heresies, and is rendered "Who privily shall bring in." Here it refers probably to men who had been artfully introduced into the ministry, who made pretensions to piety, but who were either strangers to it, or who were greatly ignorant of the true nature of the Christian system; and who were disposed to take every advantage, and to impose on others the observance of the special rites

of the Mosaic economy. Into what they were brought, the apostle does not say. It may have been that they had been introduced into the ministry in this manner (Doddridge); or it may be that they were introduced into the "assembly" where the apostles were collected to deliberate on the subject - Chandler. I think it probable that Paul refers to the occurrences in Jerusalem, and that these false brethren had been introduced from Antioch or some other place where Paul had been preaching, or that they were persons whom his adversaries had introduced to demand that Titus should be circumcised, under the plausible pretence that the laws of Moses required it, but really in order that there might be such proof as they desired that this rite was to be imposed upon the Gentile converts. If Paul were compelled to submit to this; if they could carry this point, it would be just such an instance as they needed, and would settle the whole inquiry, and prove that the Mosaic laws were to be imposed upon the Gentile converts. This was the reason why Paul so strenuously opposed it.

To spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus - In the practice of the Christian religion. The liberty referred to was, doubtless, the liberty from the painful, expensive, and onerous rites of the Jewish religion; see Galatians 5:1. Their object in spying out the liberty which Paul and others had, was, undoubtedly, to be witnesses of the fact that they did not observe the special rites of the Mosaic system; to make report of it; to insist upon their complying with those customs, and thus to secure the imposition of those rites on the Gentile converts. Their first object was to satisfy themselves of the fact that Paul did not insist on the observance of their customs; and then to secure, by the authority of the apostles, an injunction or order that Titus should be circumcised, and that Paul and the converts made under his ministry should be required to comply with those laws.

That they might bring us into bondage - Into bondage to the laws of Moses; see the note at Acts 15:10.

Verse 5

To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour - We did not submit to this at all. We did not yield even for the shortest time. We did not waver in our opposition to their demands, or in the slightest degree become subject to their wishes. We steadily opposed their claims, in order that the great principle might be forever settled, that the laws of Moses were not to be imposed as obligatory on the Gentile converts. This I take to be the clear and obvious sense of this passage, though there has been a great

variety of opinions on it. A considerable number of manuscripts omit the words οἵς οὐδὲ hois oude), "to whom neither" (see Mill, Koppe, and Griesbach), and then the sense would be reversed, that Paul did yield to them for or after a short time, in order that he might in this way better consult the permanent interests of the gospel. This opinion has been gaining ground for the last century, that the passage here has been corrupted; but it is by no means confirmed. The ancient versions (the Syriac, the Vulgate, and the Arabic) accord with the usual reading of the text. So also do by far the largest portion of mss., and such, it seems to me, is the sense demanded by the connection. Paul means, in the whole passage, to say, that a great principle was settled. That the question came up fairly whether the Mosaic rites were to be imposed upon Gentile converts. That false brethren were introduced who demanded it; and that he steadily maintained his ground. He did not yield a moment. He felt that a great principle was involved; and though on all proper occasions he was willing to yield and to become all things to all men, yet here he did not court them, or temporize with them in the least. The phrase "by subjection" here means, that he did not suffer himself to be compelled to yield. The phrase "for an hour" is equivalent to the shortest period of time. He did not waver, or yield at all.

That the truth of the gospel might continue with you - That the great principle of the Christian religion which had been taught you might continue, and that you might enjoy the full benefit of the pure gospel, without its being intermingled with any false views. Paul had defended these same views among the Galatians, and he now sought that the same views might be confirmed by the clear decision of the college of apostles at Jerusalem.

Verse 6

But of those who seemed to be somewhat - See Galatians 2:2. This undoubtedly refers to those who were the most eminent among the apostles at Jerusalem. There is an apparent harshness in our common translation which is unnecessary. The word used here (δοκούντων dokountōn) denotes those who were thought to be, or who were of reputation; that is, men who were of note and influence among the apostles. The object of referring to them here is, to show that he had the concurrence and approbation of the most eminent of the apostles to the course which he had pursued.

Whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me - Tyndale renders this, "What they were in time passed, it maketh no matter to me." The idea

seems to be this. Paul means to say that whatever was their real rank and standing, it did not in the least affect his authority as an apostle, or his argument. While he rejoiced in their concurrence, and while he sought their approbation, yet he did not admit for a moment that he was inferior to them as an apostle, or dependent on them for the justness of his views What they were, or what they might be thought to be, was immaterial to his claims as an apostle, and immaterial to the authority of his own views as an apostle. He had derived his gospel from the Lord Jesus; and he had the fullest assurance that his views were just. Paul makes this remark evidently in keeping with all that he had said, that he did not regard himself as in any manner dependent on them for his authority. He did not treat them with disrespect; but he did not regard them as having a right to claim an authority over him.

God accepteth no man's person - See the Acts 10:34 note; Romans 2:11 note. This is a general truth, that God is not influenced in His judgment by a regard to the rank, or wealth, or external condition of anyone. Its particular meaning here is, that the authority of the apostles was not to be measured by their external rank, or by the measure of reputation which they had among men. If, therefore, it were to be admitted that he himself were not in circumstances of so much external honor as the other apostles, or that they were esteemed to be of more elevated rank than he was, still he did not admit that this gave them a claim to any higher authority. God was not influenced in His judgment by any such consideration; and Paul therefore claimed that all the apostles were in fact on a level in regard to their authority.

In conference - When I conferred with them, Galatians 2:2. They did not then impose upon me any new obligations; they did not communicate anything to me of which I was previously ignorant.

Verse 7

The gospel of the uncircumcision - The duty of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised part of the world; that is, to the Gentiles Paul had received this as his unique office when he was converted and called to the ministry (see Acts 9:15; Acts 22:21); and they now perceived that he had been specially intrusted with this office, from the remarkable success which had attended his labors. It is evidently not meant here that Paul was to preach only to the Gentiles and Peter only to the Jews, for Paul often preached in the synagogues of the Jews, and Peter was the first who

preached to a Gentile Acts 10; but it is meant that it was the main business of Paul to preach to the Gentiles, or that this was especially entrusted to him.

As the gospel of the circumcision - As the office of preaching the gospel to the Jews.

Was unto Peter - Peter was to preach principally to the circumcised Jews. It is evident that until this time Peter had been principally employed in preaching to the Jews. Paul selects Peter here particularly, doubtless because he was the oldest of the apostles, and in order to show that he was himself regarded as on a level in regard to the apostleship with the most aged and venerable of those who had been called to the apostolic office by the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 8

For he that wrought effectually in Peter … - Or by the means or agency of Peter. The argument here is, that the same effects had been produced under the ministry of Paul among the Gentiles which had been under the preaching of Peter among the Jews. It is inferred, therefore, that God had called both to the apostolic office; see this argument illustrated in the notes at Acts 11:17.

The same was mighty in me … - In enabling me to work miracles, and in the success which attended the ministry.

Verse 9

And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars - That is, pillars or supports in the church. The word rendered "pillars" (στύλοι stuloi) means properly firm support; then persons of influence and authority, as in a church, or that support a church as a pillar or column does an edifice. In regard to James, see the note at Galatians 1:19; compare Acts 15:13. Cephas or Peter was the most aged of the apostles, and regarded as at the head of the apostolical college. John was the beloved disciple, and his influence in the church must of necessity have been great. Paul felt that if he had the countenance of these men, it would be an important proof to the churches of Galatia that he had a right to regard himself as an apostle. Their countenance was expressed in the most full and decisive manner.

Perceived the grace that was given unto me - That is, the favor that had been shown to me by the great Head of the church, in so abundantly blessing my labors among the Gentiles.

They gave unto me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship - The right-hand in token of fellowship or favor. They thus publicly acknowledged us as fellow-laborers, and expressed the utmost confidence in us. To give the right-hand with us is a token of friendly salutation, and it seems that it was a mode of salutation not unknown in the times of the apostles. They were thus recognised as associated with the apostles in the great work of spreading the gospel around the world. Whether this was done in a public manner is not certainly known; but it was probably in the presence of the church, or possibly at the close of the council referred to in Galatians 2:2, and they had been entirely satisfied that God had called him and Barnabas to the work of making known the gospel among the pagan. Instead of being jealous at their success, they had rejoiced in it; and instead of throwing any obstacle in their way, they cordially gave them the right hand. How easy would it be always to prevent jealousies and strifes in the same way! If there was, on the one hand, the same readiness for a full and frank explanation; and if, on the other, the same freedom from envy at remarkable success, how many strifes that have disgraced the church might have been avoided! The true way to avoid strife is just that which is here proposed. Let there be on both sides perfect frankness; let there be a willingness to explain and state things just as they are; and let there be a disposition to rejoice in the talents, and zeal, and success of others, even though it should far outstrip our own, and contention in the church would cease, and every devoted and successful minister of the gospel would receive the right-hand of fellowship from all - however venerable by age or authority - who love the cause of true religion.

Verse 10

Only they would that we should remember the poor - That is, as I suppose, the poor Christians in Judea. It can hardly be supposed that it would be necessary to make this an express stipulation in regard to the converts from among the Gentiles, and it would not have been very pertinent to the case before them to have done so. The object was, to bind together the Christians from among the pagan and from among the Jews, and to prevent alienation and unkind feeling. It might have been alleged that Paul was disposed to forget his own countrymen altogether; that he regarded himself as so entirely the apostle of the Gentiles that he would become wholly alienated from those who were his “kinsmen according to the flesh,” and thus it might be apprehended that unpleasant feelings would

be engendered among those who had been converted from among the Jews. Now nothing could be better adapted to allay this than for him to pledge himself to feel a deep interest in the poor saints among the Jewish converts; to remember them in his prayers; and to endeavor to secure contributions for their needs.

Thus he would show that he was not alienated from his countrymen; and thus the whole church would be united in the closest bonds. It is probable that the Christians in Judea were at that time suffering the ills of poverty arising either from some public persecution, or from the fact that they were subject to the displeasure of their countrymen. All who know the special feelings of the Jews at that time in regard to Christians, must see at once that many of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth would be subjected to great inconveniences on account of their attachment to him. Many a wife might be disowned by her husband; many a child disinherited by a parent; many a man might be thrown out of employment by the fact that others would not countenance him; and hence, many of the Christians would be poor. It became, therefore, an object of special importance to provide for them; and hence, this is so often referred to in the New Testament. In addition to this, the church in Judea was afflicted with famine; compare Acts 11:30; Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7.

The same which I also was forward to do - See the passages just referred to. Paul interested himself much in the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, and in this way he furnished the fullest evidence that he was not alienated from them, but that he felt the deepest interest in those who were his kindred. One of the proper ways of securing union in the church is to have the poor with them and depending on them for support; and hence, every church has some poor persons as one of the bonds of union. The best way to unite all Christians, and to prevent alienation, and jealousy, and strife, is to have a great common object of charity, in which all are interested and to which all may contribute. Such a common object for all Christians is a sinful world. All who bear the Christian name may unite in promoting its salvation, and nothing would promote union in the now divided and distracted church of Christ like a deep and common interest in the salvation of all mankind.

Verse 11

But when Peter was come to Antioch - On the situation of Antioch, see the note at Acts 11:19. The design for which Paul introduces this statement

here is evident. It is to show that he regarded himself as on a level with the chief apostles, and that he did not acknowledge his inferiority to any of them. Peter was the oldest, and probably the most honored of the apostles. Yet Paul says that he did not hesitate to resist him in a case where Peter was manifestly wrong, and thus showed that he was an apostle of the same standing as the others. Besides, what he said to Peter on that occasion was exactly pertinent to the strain of the argument which he was pursuing with the Galatians, and he therefore introduces it Galatians 2:14-21 to show that he had held the same doctrine all along, and that he had defended it in the presence of Peter, and in a case where Peter did not reply to it. The time of this journey of Peter to Antioch cannot be ascertained; nor the occasion on which it occurred. I think it is evident that it was after this visit of Paul to Jerusalem, and the occasion may have been to inspect the state of the church at Antioch, and to compose any differences of opinion which may have existed there. But everything in regard to this is mere conjecture; and it is of little importance to know when it occurred.

I withstood him to the face - I openly opposed him, and reproved him. Paul thus showed that he was equal with Peter in his apostolical authority and dignity. The instance before us is one of faithful public reproof; and every circumstance in it is worthy of special attention, as it furnishes a most important illustration of the manner in which such reproof should be conducted. The first thing to be noted is, that it was done openly, and with candor. It was reproof addressed to the offender himself. Paul did not go to others and whisper his suspicions; he did not seek to undermine the influence and authority of another by slander; he did not calumniate him and then justify himself on the ground that what he had said was no more than true: he went to him at once, and he frankly stated his views and reproved him in a case where he was manifestly wrong. This too was a case so public and well known that Paul made his remarks before the church Galatians 2:14 because the church was interested in it, and because the conduct of Peter led the church into error.

Because he was to be blamed - The word used here may either mean because he had incurred blame, or because he deserved blame. The essential idea is, that he had done wrong, and that he was by his conduct doing injury to the cause of religion.

Verse 12

For before that certain came - Some of the Jews who had been converted to Christianity. They evidently observed in the strictest manner the rites of the Jewish religion.

Came from James - See the note at Galatians 1:19. Whether they were sent by James, or whether they came of their own accord, is unknown. It is evident only that they had been intimate with James at Jerusalem, and they doubtless pleaded his authority. James had nothing to do with the course which they pursued; but the sense of the whole passage is, that James was a leading man at Jerusalem, and that the rites of Moses were observed there. When they came down to Antioch, they of course observed those rites, and insisted that others should do it also. It is very evident that at Jerusalem the special rites of the Jews were observed for a long time by those who became Christian converts. They would not at once cease to observe them, and thus needlessly shock the prejudices of their countrymen; see the notes at Acts 21:21-25.

He did eat with the Gentiles - Peter had been taught that in the remarkable vision which he saw as recorded in Acts 10. He had learned that God designed to break down the wall of partition between the Jews and the Gentiles, and he familiarly associated with them, and partook with them of their food. He evidently disregarded the special laws of the Jews about meats and drinks, and partook of the common food which was in use among the Gentiles. Thus he showed his belief that all the race was henceforward to be regarded as on a level, and that the special institutions of the Jews were not to be considered as binding, or to be imposed on others.

But when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself - He withdrew from the Gentiles, and probably from the Gentile converts to Christianity. The reason why he did this is stated. He feared those who were of the circumcision, or who had been Jews. Whether they demanded this of him; whether they encountered him in debate; or whether he silently separated himself from the Gentiles without their having said anything to him, is unknown. But he feared the effect of their opposition; he feared their reproaches; he feared the report which would be made to those at Jerusalem; and perhaps he apprehended that a tumult would be excited and a persecution commenced at Antioch by the Jews who resided there. This is a melancholy illustration of Peter‘s characteristic trait of mind. We see in this act the same Peter who trembled when he began to sink in the waves; the same Peter who denied his Lord. Bold, ardent, zealous, and forward; he

was at the same time timid and often irresolute; and he often had occasion for the deepest humility, and the most poignant regrets at the errors of his course. No one can read his history without loving his ardent and sincere attachment to his Master; and yet no one can read it without a tear of regret that he was left thus to do injury to his cause. No man loved the Saviour more sincerely than he did, yet his constitutional timidity and irresolutehess of character often led him to courses of life suited deeply to wound his cause.

Verse 13

And the other Jews - That is, those who had been converted to Christianity. It is probable that they were induced to do it by the example of Peter, as they would naturally regard him as a leader.

Dissembled likewise with him - Dissembled or concealed their true sentiments. That is, they attempted to conceal from those who had come down from James the fact that they had been in the habit of associating with the Gentiles, and of eating with them. From this it would appear that they intended to conceal this wholly from them, and that they withdrew from the Gentiles before anything had been said to them by those who came down from James.

Insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away … - Concerning Barnabas, see the note at Acts 4:36. Barnabas was the intimate friend of Paul. He had been associated with him in very important labors; and the fact, therefore, that the conduct of Peter was exciting so unhappy an influence as even to lead so worthy and good a man as he was into hypocrisy and error, made it the more proper that Paul should publicly notice and reprove the conduct of Peter. It could not but be a painful duty, but the welfare of the church and the cause of religion demanded it, and Paul did not shrink from what was so obvious a duty.

Verse 14

But when I saw that they walked not uprightly - To walk, in the Scriptures, is usually expressive of conduct or deportment; and the idea here is, that their conduct in this case was not honest.

According to the truth of the gospel - According to the true spirit and design of the gospel. That requires perfect honesty and integrity; and as that was the rule by which Paul regulated his life, and by which he felt that all ought to regulate their conduct, he felt himself called on openly to reprove the principal person who had been in fault. The spirit of the world is crafty,

cunning, and crooked. The gospel would correct all that wily policy, and would lead man in a path of entire honesty and truth.

I said unto Peter before them all - That is, probably, before all the church, or certainly before all who had offended with him in the case. Had this been a private affair, Paul would doubtless have sought a private interview with Peter, and would have remonstrated with him in private on the subject. But it was public. It was a case where many were involved, and where the interests of the church were at stake. It was a case where it was very important to establish some fixed and just principles, and he therefore took occasion to remonstrate with him in public on the subject. This might have been at the close of public worship; or it may have been that the subject came up for debate in some of their public meetings, whether the rites of the Jews were to be imposed on the Gentile converts. This was a question which agitated all the churches where the Jewish and Gentile converts were intermingled; and it would not be strange that it should be the subject of public debate at Antioch. The fact that Paul reproved Peter before "them all," proves:

(1) That he regarded himself, and was so regarded by the church, as on an equality with Peter, and as having equal authority with him.

(2) that public reproof is right when an offence has been public, and when the church at large is interested, or is in danger of being led into error; compare 1 Timothy 5:20, "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."

(3) that it is a duty to reprove those who err. It is a painful duty, and one much neglected; still it is a duty often enjoined in the Scriptures, and one that is of the deepest importance to the church. He does a favor to another man who, in a kind spirit, admonishes him of his error, and reclaims him from a course of sin. He does another the deepest injury, who suffers sin unrebuked to lie upon him, and who sees him injuring himself and others, and who is at no pains to admonish him for his faults.

(4) if it is the duty of one Christian to admonish another who is an offender, and to do it in a kind spirit, it is the duty of him who has offended to receive the admonition in a kind spirit, and with thankfulness. Excitable as Peter was by nature, yet there is no evidence that he became angry here,

or that he did not receive the admonition of his brother Paul with perfect good temper, and with an acknowledgment that Paul was right and that he was wrong. Indeed, the case was so plain, as it usually is if men would be honest, that he seems to have felt that it was right, and to have received the rebuke as became a Christian. Peter, unhappily, was accustomed to rebukes; and he was at heart too good a man to be offended when he was admonished that he had done wrong. A good man is willing to be reproved when he has erred, and it is usually proof that there is much that is wrong when we become excited and irritable if another admonishes us of our faults. It may be added here that nothing should be inferred from this in regard to the inspiration or apostolic authority of Peter. The fault was not that he taught error of doctrine, but that he sinned in conduct. Inspiration, though it kept the apostles from teaching error, did not keep them necessarily from sin. A man may always teach the truth, and yet be far from perfection in practice. The case here proves that Peter was not perfect, a fact proved by his whole life; it proves that he was sometimes timid, and even, for a period, timeserving, but it does not prove that what he wrote for our guidance was false and erroneous.

If thou, being a Jew - A Jew by birth.

Livest after the manner of the Gentiles - In eating, etc., as he had done before the Judaizing teachers came from Jerusalem, Galatians 2:12.

And not as do the Jews - Observing their special customs, and their distinctions of meats and drinks.

Why compellest thou the Gentiles … - As he would do, if he insisted that they should be circumcised, and observe the special Jewish rites. The charge against him was gross inconsistency in doing this. "Is it not at least as lawful for them to neglect the Jewish observances, as it was for thee to do it but a few days ago?" Doddridge. The word here rendered "compellest," means here moral compulsion or persuasion. The idea is, that the conduct of Peter was such as to lead the Gentiles to the belief that it was necessary for them to be circumcised in order to be saved. For similar use of the word, see Matthew 14:22; Luke 14:23; Acts 28:19.

Verse 15

We who are Jews by nature - It has long been a question whether this and the following verses are to be regarded as a part of the address of Paul to Peter, or the words of Paul as a part of the Epistle to the Galatians. A great variety of opinion has prevailed in regard to this. Grotius says, "Here

the narrative of Paul being closed, he pursues his argument to the Galatians." In this opinion Bloomfield and many others concur. Rosenmuller and many others suppose that the address to Peter is continued to Galatians 2:21. Such seems to be the most obvious interpretation, as there is no break or change in the style, nor any vestige of a transfer of the argument to the Galatians. But, on the other hand, it may be urged:

(1) That Paul in his writings often changes his mode of address without indicating it - Bloomfield.

(2) that it is rather improbable that he should have gone into so long a discourse with Peter on the subject of justification. His purpose was answered by the reproof of Peter for his dissimulation; and there is something incongruous, it is said, in his instructing Peter at such length on the subject of man's justification. Still it appears to me probable that this is to be regarded as a part of the discourse of Paul to Peter, to the close of Galatians 2:21.

The following reasons seem to me to require this interpretation:

(1) It is the most natural and obvious - usually a safe rule of interpretation. The discourse proceeds as if it were an address to Peter.

(2) there is a change at the beginning of the next chapter, where Paul expressly addresses himself to the Galatians.

(3) as to the impropriety of Paul's addressing Peter at length on the subject of justification, we are to bear in mind that he did not address him alone.

The reproof was addressed to Peter particularly, but it was "before them all" Galatians 2:14; that is, before the assembled church, or before the persons who had been led astray by the conduct of Peter, and who were in danger of error on the subject of justification. Nothing, therefore, was more proper than for Paul to continue his discourse for their benefit, and to state to them fully the doctrine of justification. And nothing was more pertinent or proper for him now titan to report this to the Galatians as a part of his argument to them, showing that he had always, since his conversion, held

and defended the same doctrine on the subject of the way in which people are to be justified in the sight of God. It is, therefore, I apprehend, to be regarded as an address to Peter and the other Jews who were present. "We who were born Jews."

By nature - By birth; or, we were born Jews. We were not born in the condition of the Gentiles.

And not sinners of the Gentiles - This cannot mean that Paul did not regard the Jews as sinners, for his views on that subject he has fully expressed in Romans 2; 3. But it must mean that the Jews were not born under the disadvantages of the Gentiles in regard to the true knowledge of the way of salvation. They were not left wholly in ignorance about the way of justification, as the Gentiles were. They knew, or they might know, that men could not be saved by their own works. It was also true that they were under more restraint than the Gentiles were, and though they were sinners, yet they were not abandoned to so gross and open sensuality as was the pagan world. They were not idolaters, and wholly ignorant of the Law of God.

Verse 16

Knowing - We who are Jews by nature, or by birth. This cannot mean that all the Jews knew this, or that he who was a Jew knew it as a matter of course, for many Jews were ignorant of it, and many opposed it. But it means that the persons here referred to, those who had been born Jews, and who had been converted to Christianity, had had an opportunity to learn and understand this, which the Gentiles had not. This gospel had been preached to them, and they had professedly embraced it. They were not left to the gross darkness and ignorance on this subject which pervaded the pagan world, and they had had a better opportunity to learn it than the converts from the Gentiles. They ought, therefore, to act in a manner becoming their superior light, and to show in all their conduct that they fully believed that a man could not be justified by obedience to the Law of Moses. This rendered the conduct of Peter and the other Jews who "dissembled" with him so entirely inexcusable. They could not plead ignorance on this vital subject, and yet they were pursuing a course, the tendency of which was to lead the Gentile converts to believe that it was indispensable to observe the laws of Moses, in order to be justified and saved.

That a man is not justified by the works of the law - See the notes at Romans 1:17; Romans 3:20, Romans 3:26; Romans 4:5.

But by the faith of Jesus Christ - By believing on Jesus Christ; see the Mark 16:16 note; Romans 3:22 note.

Even we have believed in Jesus Christ - We are therefore justified. The object of Paul here seems to be to show, that as they had believed in the Lord Jesus, and thus had been justified, there was no necessity of obeying the Law of Moses with any view to justification. The thing had been fully done without the deeds of the Law, and it was now unreasonable and unnecessary to insist on the observance of the Mosaic rites.

For by the works of the law … - See the notes at Romans 3:20, Romans 3:27. In this verse, the apostle has stated in few words the important doctrine of justification by faith - the doctrine which Luther so justly called, Articulus stantis, vel cadentis ecclesioe. In the notes referred to above, particularly in the notes at the Epistle to the Romans, I have stated in various places what I conceive to be the true doctrine on this important subject. It may be useful, however, to throw together in one connected view, as briefly as possible, the leading ideas on the subject of justification, as it is revealed in the gospel.

I. Justification is properly a word applicable to courts of justice, but is used in a similar sense in common conversation among people. An illustration will show its nature. A man is charged, e. g., with an act of trespass on his neighbor‘s property. Now there are two ways which he may take to justify himself, or to meet the charge, so as to be regarded and treated as innocent. He may:

(a)Either deny that he performed the act charged on him, or he may,

(b)Admit that the deed was done, and set up as a defense that he had a right to do it.

In either case, if the point is made out, he will be just or innocent in the sight of the Law. The Law will have nothing against him, and he will be regarded and treated in the premises as an innocent man; or he has justified himself in regard to the charge brought against him.

II. Charges of a very serious nature are brought against man by his Maker. He is charged with violating the Law of God; with a want of love to his Maker; with a corrupt, proud, sensual heart; with being entirely alienated from God by wicked works; in one word, with being entirely depraved. This charge extends to all people; and to the entire life of every unrenewed person. It is not a charge merely affecting the external conduct, nor merely affecting the heart; it is a charge of entire alienation from God; a

charge, in short, of total depravity; see, especially, Romans 4:5. We are not innocent; we never have been; we never shall be; and it is not the design of the scheme to declare any such untruth as that we are not personally undeserving. It will be always true that the justified sinner has no claims to the mercy and favor of God.

(3) it is not that we cease to be undeserving personally. He that is justified by faith, and that goes to heaven, will go there admitting that he deserves eternal death, and that he is saved wholly by favor and not by desert.

(4) it is not a declaration on the part of God that we have worked out salvation, or that we have any claim for what the Lord Jesus has done. Such a declaration would not be true, and would not be made.

(5) it is not that the righteousness of the Lord Jesus is transferred to his people.

Moral character cannot be transferred. It adheres to the moral agent as much as color does to the rays of light which cause it. It is not true that we died for sin, and it cannot be so reckoned or imputed. It is not true that we have any merit, or any claim, and it cannot be so reckoned or imputed. All the imputations of God are according to truth; and he will always reckon us to be personally undeserving and sinful. But if justification is none of these things, it may be asked, what is it? I answer - It is the declared purpose of God to regard and treat those sinners who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as if they had not sinned, on the ground of the merits of the Saviour. It is not mere pardon. The main difference between pardon and justification respects the sinner contemplated in regard to his past conduct, and to God‘s future dealings with him. Pardon is a free forgiveness of past offences.

It has reference to those sins as forgiven and blotted out. It is an act of remission on the part of God. Justification has respect to the Law, and to God‘s future dealings with the sinner. It is an act by which God determines to treat him hereafter as a righteous man, or as if he had not sinned. The ground or reason of this is, the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ; merit such that we can plead it as if it were our own. The rationale of it is that the Lord

Jesus has accomplished by his death the same happy effects in regard to the Law and the government of God, which would have been accomplished by the death of the sinner himself. In other words, nothing would be gained to the universe by the everlasing punishment of the offender himself, which will not be secured by his salvation on the ground of the death of the Lord Jesus. He has taken our place, and died in our stead; and he has met the descending stroke of justice, which would have fallen on our own head if he had not interposed (see my notes at Romans 4:5; see especially the note at Romans 4:3, in which it is observed, that almost every objection against the imputation of righteousness may be traced to two sources. The first of these is the idea that Christ‘s righteousness becomes ours, in the same sense that it is his, namely, of personal achievement; an idea continually rejected by the friends, and as often proceeded on by the enemies, of imputation. The second source is the idea that imputation involves a transference of moral character, whereas the imputing and the infusing of righteousness are allowed to be two very different things. Now, in this place, the commentator manifestly proceeds on these mistaken views. What does he mean by “transference of the righteousness of Christ” when he says, “justification is not that the righteousness of the Lord Jesus is transferred to his people?” What follows, at once explains. “Moral character,” he continues, “cannot be transferred. It adheres to the moral agent, as much as color does to the rays of light which cause it.” But this is quite aside from the subject, and proves what never had been denied. The same remarks apply with equal force to what is said about our being “always personally undeserving,” and never regarded as having ourselves actually “wrought out salvation.” These objections belong to the first source of misconception noticed above.

It has been asked a thousand times, and the question is most pertinent, How can God treat believers as innocent, if there be not some sense in which they are so? “The imputations of God are according to truth,” so is his treatment. The author tells us, that the ground of justification is the “merits of the Saviour,” which phrase he prefers throughout, to the more scriptural and more appropriate one of the righteousness of Christ; more appropriate, because the subject if forensic, belonging to judicature and dealing in matters of law; see Hervey‘s reply to Wesley, vol. iv. p. 33. Yet if these merits, or this righteousness, be not imputed to us - held as ours - how can we be justified on any such ground? “I would further observe,” says Mr.

Hervey, replying to Wesley in the publication just quoted, “that you have dropped the word ‹imputed,‘” which inclines me to suspect you would cashier the thing. But let me ask, Sir, how can we be justified by the merits of Christ, unless they are imputed to us? Would the payment made by a surety procure a discharge for the debtor, unless it were placed to his account? It is certain the sacrifices of old could not make an atonement, unless they were imputed to each offerer respectively. This was an ordinance settled by Yahweh himself, Leviticus 7:18. And were not the sacrifices, was not their imputation, typical of Christ and things pertaining to Christ, the former prefiguring his all-sufficient expiation; the latter shadowing forth the way whereby we are partakers of its efficacy?

The language of President Edwards, the prince of American clergymen, indeed of theologians universally, is decisive enough, and one would think that the opinion of this master in reasoning should have its weight on the other side of the Atlantic. “It is absolutely necessary,” says he, “that in order to a sinner‘s being justified, the righteousness of some other should be reckoned to his account; for it is declared, that the person justified is looked on as, in himself, ungodly: but God neither will nor can justify a person without a righteousness; for justification is manifestly a forensic term, as the word is used in scripture, and a judicial thing or the act of a judge; so that if a person should be justified without a righteousness, the judgment would not be according to truth. The sentence of justification would be a false sentence, unless there be a righteousness performed, that is, by the Judge properly looked upon as his.”

Nor are we sure, if our author‘s distinction between pardon and justification be altogether accurate. By those who deny imputed righteousness, justification is frequently said to consist in the mere remission of sin. In a recent American publication, the views of the “new school party” are thus given: “Though they retain the word justification, they make it consist in mere pardon. In the eye of the Law, the believer, according to their views, is not justified at all, and never will be throughout eternity. Though on the ground of what Christ has done, God is pleased to forgive the sinner upon his believing, Christ‘s righteousness is not reckoned in any sense as his, or set down to his account. He believes, and his faith or act of believing is accounted to him for righteousness; that is, faith is so

reckoned to His account that God treats him as if he were righteous" - Old and New Theology, by James Wood. Now Mr. Barnes does not exactly say that justification and pardon are the same, for he makes a distinction. "The main difference between the two respects the sinner contemplated in regard to his past conduct, and to God's future dealings with him." "Pardon is a free forgiveness of least offences. Justification has respect to the Law and to God's future dealings."

But this difference is not respecting the nature of the things. It is simply a matter of time, of past and future; and justification, after all, is neither more nor less than pardon of sins past and to come. A criminal is often pardoned while his guilt is still allowed. To exalt pardon to justification there most be supposed a righteousness on the ground of which not only is sin forgiven, but the person accepted and declared legally righteous. And in this lies the main difference between the two. In the case of the believer however these are never found apart. Whoever is pardoned is at the same time justified. Earthly princes sometimes remit the punishment of crime, but seldom or never dream of honoring the criminal; but wherever God pardons, he dignifies and ennobles.

Verse 17

But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ - The connection here is not very clear, and the sense of the verse is somewhat obscure. Rosenmuller supposes that this is an objection of a Jew, supposing that where the Law of Moses is not observed there is no rule of life, and that therefore there must be sin; and that since the doctrine of justification by faith taught that there was no necessity of obeying the ceremonial law of Moses, therefore Christ, who had introduced that system, must be regarded as the author and encourager of sin. To me it seems probable that Paul here has reference to an objection which has in all ages been brought against the doctrine of justification by faith, and which seems to have existed in his time, that the doctrine leads to licentiousness. The objections are that it does not teach the necessity of the observance of the Law in order to acceptance with God. That it pronounces a man justified and accepted who is a violator of the Law. That his acceptance does not depend on moral character.

That it releases him from the obligation of law, and that it teaches that a man may be saved though he does not conform to law. These objections

existed early, and have been found everywhere where the doctrine of justification by faith has been preached. I regard this verse, therefore, as referring to these objections, and not as being especially the objection of a Jew. The idea is, "You seek to be justified by faith without obeying the Law. You professedly reject that, and do not hold that it is necessary to yield obedience to it. If now it shall turn out that you are sinners; that your lives are not holy; that you are free from the wholesome restraint of the Law, and are given up to lives of sin, will it not follow that Christ is the cause of it; that he taught it; and that the system which he introduced is responsible for it? And is not the gospel therefore responsible for introducing a system that frees from the restraint of the Law, and introduces universal licentiousness?" To this Paul replies by stating distinctly that the gospel has no such tendency, and particularly by referring in the following verses to his own case, and to the effect of the doctrine of justification on his own heart and life.

We ourselves are found sinners - If it turns out that we are sinners, or if others discover by undoubted demonstration that we lead lives of sin; if they see us given up to a lawless life, and find us practicing all kinds of evil; if it shall be seen not only that we are not pardoned and made better by the gospel, but are actually made worse, and are freed from all moral restraint.

Is therefore Christ the minister of sin? - Is it to be traced to him? Is it a fair and legitimate conclusion that this is the tendency of the gospel? Is it to be charged on him, and on the plan of justification through him, that a lax morality prevails, and that people are freed from the wholesome restraints of law?

God forbid - It is not so. This is not the proper effect of the gospel of Christ, and of the doctrine of justification by faith. The system is not suited to produce such a freedom from restraint, and if such a freedom exists, it is to be traced to something else than the gospel.

Verse 18

For if I build again the things which I destroyed - Paul here uses the first person; but he evidently intends it as a general proposition, and means that if anyone does it he becomes a transgressor. The sense is, that if a man, having removed or destroyed that which was evil, again introduces it or establishes it, he does wrong, and is a transgressor of the Law of God. The particular application here, as it seems to me, is to the subject of

circumcision and the other rites of the Mosaic law. They had been virtually abolished by the coming of the Redeemer, and by the doctrine of justification by faith. It had been seen that there was no necessity for their observance, and of that Peter and the others had been fully aware. Yet they were lending their influence again to establish them or to build them up again. They complied with them, and they insisted on the necessity of their observance. Their conduct, therefore, was that of building up again that which had once been destroyed, destroyed by the ministry, and toils, and death of the Lord Jesus, and by the fair influence of his gospel. To rebuild that again; to re-establish those customs, was wrong, and now involved the guilt of a transgression of the Law of God. Doddridge supposes that this is an address to the Galatians, and that the address to Peter closed at the previous verse. But it is impossible to determine this; and it seems to me more probable that this is all a part of the address to Peter; or rather perhaps to the assembly when Peter was present; see the note at Galatians 2:15.

Verse 19

For I through the law - On this passage the commentators are by no means agreed. It is agreed that in the phrase "am dead to the law," the Law of Moses is referred to, and that the meaning is, that Paul had become dead to that as a ground or means of justification. He acted as though it were not; or it ceased to have influence over him. A dead man is insensible to all around him. He hears nothing; sees nothing; and nothing affects him. So when we are said to be dead to anything, the meaning is, that it does not have an influence over us. In this sense Paul was dead to the Law of Moses. He ceased to observe it as a ground of justification. It ceased to be the grand aim and purpose of his life, as it had been formerly, to obey it. He had higher purposes than that, and truly lived to God; see the note at Romans 6:2. But on the meaning of the phrase "through the law" (διὰ νόμου dia nomou) there has been a great variety of opinion.

Bloomfield, Rosenmuller, and some others suppose that he means the Christian religion, and that the meaning is, "by one law, or doctrine, I am dead to another;" that is, the Christian doctrine has caused me to cast aside the Mosaic religion. Doddridge, Clarke, Chandler, and most others, however, suppose that he here refers to the Law of Moses, and that the meaning is, that by contemplating the true character of the Law of Moses itself; by considering its nature and design; by understanding the extent of its requisitions, he had become dead to it; that is, he had laid aside all

expectations of being justified by it. This seems to me to be the correct interpretation. Paul had formerly expected to be justified by the Law. He had endeavored to obey it. It had been the object of his life to comply with all its requisitions in order to be saved by it; Philemon 3:4-6. But all this while he had not fully understood its nature; and when he was made fully to feel and comprehend its spiritual requirements, then all his hopes of justification by it died, and he became dead to it; see this sentiment more fully explained in the note at Romans 7:9.

That I might live unto God - That I might be truly alive, and might be found engaged in his service. He was dead to the Law, but not to every thing. He had not become literally inactive and insensible to all things, like a dead man, but he had become truly sensible to the commands and appeals of God, and had consecrated himself to his service; see the note at Romans 6:11.

Verse 20

I am crucified with Christ - In the previous verse, Paul had said that he was dead. In this verse he states what he meant by it, and shows that he did not wish to be understood as saying that he was inactive, or that he was literally insensible to the appeals made to him by other beings and objects. In respect to one thing he was dead; to all that was truly great and noble he was alive. To understand the remarkable phrase, "I am crucified with Christ," we may remark:

(1) That this was the way in which Christ was put to death. He suffered on a cross, and thus became literally dead.

(2) in a sense similar to this, Paul became dead to the Law, to the world, and to sin. The Redeemer by the death of the cross became insensible to all surrounding objects, as the dead always are. He ceased to see, and hear, and was as though they were not. He was laid in the cold grave, and they did not affect or influence him. So Paul says that he became insensible to the Law as a means of justification; to the world; to ambition and the love of money; to the pride and pomp of life, and to the dominion of evil and hateful passions. They lost their power over him; they ceased to influence him.

(3) this was with Christ, or by Christ. It cannot mean literally that he was put to death with him, for that is not true. But it means that the effect of the death of Christ on the cross was to make him dead to these things, in

like manner as he, when he died, became insensible to the things of this busy world. This may include the following things:

(a)There was an intimate union between Christ and his people, so that what affected him, affected them; see John 15:5-6.

(b)The death of the Redeemer on the cross involved as a consequence the death of his people to the world and to sin; see Galatians 5:24; Galatians 6:14. It was like a blow at the root of a vine or a tree, which would affect every branch and tendril or like a blow at the head which affects every member of the body.

(c)Paul felt identified with the Lord Jesus; and he was willing to share in all the ignominy and contempt which was connected with the idea of the crucifixion. He was willing to regard himself as one with the Redeemer. If there was disgrace attached to the manner in which he died, he was willing to share it with him. He regarded it as a matter to be greatly desired to be made just like Christ in all things, and even in the manner of his death. This idea he has more fully expressed in Philemon 3:10, "That I may know him, (that is, I desire earnestly to know him,) and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;" see also Colossians 1:24; compare 1 Peter 4:13.

Nevertheless I live - This expression is added, as in Galatians 2:19, to prevent the possibility of mistake. Paul, though he was crucified with Christ, did not wish to be understood that he felt himself to be dead. He was not inactive; not insensible, as the dead are, to the appeals which are made from God, or to the great objects which ought to interest an immortal mind. He was still actively employed, and the more so from the fact that he was crucified with Christ. The object of all such expressions as this is, to show that it was no design of the gospel to make people inactive, or to annihilate their energies. It was not to cause people to do nothing. It was not to paralyze their powers, or stifle their own efforts. Paul, therefore, says, "I am not dead. I am truly alive; and I live a better life than I did before." Paul was as active after conversion as he was before. Before, he was engaged in persecution; now, he devoted his great talents with as much energy, and with as untiring zeal, to the cause of the great Redeemer. Indeed, the whole narrative would lead us to suppose that he was more active and zealous after his conversion than he was before. The effect of religion is not to make one dead in regard to the putting forth of the energies of the soul. True

religion never made one lazy man; it has converted many a man of indolence, and effeminacy and self-indulgence to a man actively engaged in doing good. If a professor of religion is less active in the service at God than he was in the service of the world; less laborious, and zealous. and ardent than he was before his supposed conversion, he ought to set it down as full proof that he is an utter stranger to true religion.

Yet not I - This is also designed to prevent misapprehension. In the previous clause he had said that he lived, or was actively engaged. But lest this should he misunderstood, and it should be inferred that he meant to say it was by his own energy or powers, he guards it, and says it was not at all from himself. It was by no native tendency; no power of his own; nothing that could be traced to himself. He assumed no credit for any zeal which he had shown in the true life. He was disposed to trace it all to another. He had ample proof in his past experience that there was no tendency in himself to a life of true religion, and he therefore traced it all to another.

Christ liveth in me - Christ was the source of all the life that he had. Of course this cannot be taken literally that Christ had a residence in the apostle, but it must mean that his grace resided in him; that his principles actuated him: and that he derived all his energy, and zeal, and life from his grace. The union between the Lord Jesus and the disciple was so close that it might be said the one lived in the other. So the juices of the vine are in each branch, and leaf, and tendril, and live in them and animate them; the vital energy of the brain is in each delicate nerve - no matter how small - that is found in any part of the human frame. Christ was in him as it were the vital principle. All his life and energy were derived from him.

And the life which I now live in the flesh - As I now live on the earth surrounded by the cares and anxieties of this life. I carry the life-giving principles of my religion to all my duties and all my trials.

I live by the faith of the Son of God - By confidence in the Son of God, looking to him for strength, and trusting in his promises, and in his grace. Who loved me, etc. He felt under the highest obligation to him from the fact that he had loved him, and given himself to the death of the cross in his behalf. The conviction of obligation on this account Paul often expresses; see the Romans 6:8-11; 8:35-39 notes; 2 Corinthians 5:15 note. There is no higher sense of obligation than that which is felt toward the Saviour; and Paul felt himself bound, as we should, to live entirely to him who had redeemed him by his blood.

Verse 21

I do not frustrate the grace of God - The word rendered "frustrate" (ἀθετῶ athetō) means properly to displace, abrogate, abolish; then to make void, to render null; Mark 7:9; Luke 7:30; 1 Corinthians 1:19. The phrase "the grace of God," here refers to the favor of God manifested in the plan of salvation by the gospel, and is another name for the gospel. The sense is, that Paul would not take any measures or pursue any course that would render that vain or inefficacious. Neither by his own life, by a course of conduct which would show that it had no influence over the heart and conduct, nor by the observance of Jewish rites and customs, would he do anything to render that inefficacious. The design is to show that he regarded it as a great principle that the gospel was efficacious in renewing and saving man, and he would do nothing that would tend to prevent that impression on mankind. A life of sin, of open depravity and licentiousness, would do that. And in like manner a conformity to the rites of Moses as a ground of justification would tend to frustrate the grace of God, or to render the method of salvation solely by the Redeemer nugatory. This is to be regarded, therefore as at the same time a reproof of Peter for complying with customs which tended to frustrate the plan of the gospel, and a declaration that he intended that his own course of life should be such as to confirm the plan, and show its efficacy in pardoning the sinner and rendering him alive in the service of God.

For if righteousness come by the law - If justification can be secured by the observance of any law - ceremonial or moral - then there was no need of the death of Christ as an atonement. This is plain. If man by conformity to any law could be justified before God, what need was there of an atonement? The work would then have been wholly in his own power, and the merit would have been his. It follows from this, that man cannot be justified by his own morality, or his alms-deeds, or his forms of religion, or his honesty and integrity. If he can, he needs no Saviour; he can save himself. It follows also that when people depend on their own amiableness, and morality, and good works, they would feel no need of a Saviour; and this is the true reason why the mass of people reject the Lord Jesus. They suppose they do not deserve to be sent to hell. They have no deep sense of guilt. They confide in their own integrity, and feel that God ought to save them. Hence, they feel no need of a Saviour; for why should a person in health employ a physician? And confiding in their own righteousness, they

reject the grace of God, and despise the plan of justification through the Redeemer. To feel the need of a Saviour it is necessary to feel that we are lost and ruined sinners; that we have no merit upon which we can rely; and that we are entirely dependent on the mercy of God for salvation. Thus feeling, we shall receive the salvation of the gospel with thankfulness and joy, and show that in regard to us Christ is not "dead in vain."

GALATIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

The address of Paul to Peter, as I suppose, was closed at the last verse of Galatians 3:1. He says that Christ had been plainly set forth crucified among them, and it was strange that they had so soon been led astray from the glorious doctrine of salvation by faith.

(2) he appeals to them to show that the great benefits which they had received had not been in consequence of the observance of the Mosaic rites, but had come solely by the hearing of the gospel. Galatians 3:2-5. Particularly, the Holy Spirit, with all his miraculous and converting and sanctifying influences, had been imparted only in connection with the gospel. This was the most rich and most valuable endowment which they had ever received; and this was solely by the preaching of Christ and him crucified.

(3) in illustration of the doctrine of justification by faith, and in proof of the truth of it, he refers to the case of Abraham, and shows that he was justified in this manner, and that the Scripture had promised that others would be justified in the same way, Galatians 3:6-9.

(4) he shows that the Law pronounced a curse upon all those who were under it, and that, consequently, it was impossible to be justified by it. But Christ had redeemed us from that curse, having taken the curse on himself, so that now we might be justified in the sight of God. In this way, says he, the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, and they all might be saved in the same manner that he was, Galatians 3:10-14.

(5) this view he confirms by showing that the promise made to Abraham was made before the giving of the Law. It was a mode of justification in existence before the Law of Moses was given. It was of the nature of a solemn compact or covenant on the part of God. It referred particularly to the Messiah, and to the mode of justification in him. And, since it was of the nature of a covenant, it was impossible that the Law given many years after could disannul it or render it void, Galatians 3:15-18.

(6) it might then be asked, what was the use of the Law? Why was it given? It was added, Paul says, on account of transgressions, and was designed to restrain people from sin, and to show them their guilt. It was, further, not superior to the promise of a Mediator, or to the Mediator, for it was appointed by the instrumentality of angels, and it was in the hand of the Mediator himself, under him, and subject to him. It could not therefore be superior to him, and to the plan of justification through him, Galatians 3:19-20.

(7) yet Paul answers an important objection here, and a very obvious and material inquiry. It is, whether he means to teach that the Law of God is contradictory to his promises? Whether the Law and the gospel are rival systems? Whether it is necessary, in order to hold to the excellency of the one to hold that the other is contradictory, evil, and worthless? To all this he answers; and says, by no means. He says the fault was not in the Law. The view which he had taken, and which was revealed in the Bible, arose from the nature of the case. The Law was as good a law as could be made, and it answered all the purposes of law. It was so excellent, that, if it had been possible that people could be justified by law at all, that was the Law by which it would have been done. But it was not possible. The effect of the Law, therefore, was to show that all people were sinners, and to shut them up to the plan of justification by the work of a Redeemer. It was appointed, therefore, not to justify people, but to lead them to the Saviour, Galatians 3:21-24.

(8) the effect of the plan of justification by faith in the Lord Jesus was to make the mind free. It was no longer under a schoolmaster. They who are justified in this way become the children of God. They all become one in the Redeemer. There is neither Jew nor Greek, but they constitute one great family, and are the children of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise, Galatians 3:25-29.

Verse 1

O foolish Galatians - That is, foolish for having yielded to the influence of the false teachers, and for having embraced doctrines that tended to subvert the gospel of the Redeemer. The original word used here (ἀνόητοι anoētoi) denotes void of understanding; and they had shown it in a

remarkable manner in rejecting the doctrine of the apostles, and in embracing the errors into which they had fallen. It will be remembered that this is an expression similar to what was applied to them by others; see the introduction, Section I. Thus, Callimachus in his hymns calls them "a foolish people," and Hillary, himself a Gaul, calls them Gallos indociles, expressions remarkably in accordance with that used here by Paul. It is implied that they were without stability of character. The particular thing to which Paul refers here is that they were so easily led astray by the arguments of the false teachers.

Who hath bewitched you - The word used here (ἐβάσκανεν ebaskanen) properly means, to prate about anyone; and then to mislead by pretences, as if by magic arts; to fascinate; to influence by a charm. The idea here is, that they had not been led by reason and by sober judgment, but that there must have been some charm or fascination to have taken them away in this manner from what they had embraced as true, and what they had the fullest evidence was true. Paul had sufficient confidence in them to believe that they had not embraced their present views under the unbiassed influence of judgment and reason, but that there must have been some fascination or charm by which it was done. It was in fact accomplished by the arts and the plausible pretences of those who came from among the Jews.

That ye should not obey the truth - The truth of the gospel. That you should yield your minds to falsehood and error. It should be observed, however, that this phrase is lacking in many manuscripts. It is omitted in the Syriac version; and many of the most important Greek and Latin Fathers omit it. Mill thinks it should be omitted; and Griesbach has omitted it. It is not essential to the passage in order to the sense; and it conveys no truth which is not elsewhere taught fully. It is apparently added to show what was the effect of their being bewitched or enchanted.

Before whose eyes - In whose very presence. That is, it has been done so clearly that you may be said to have seen it.

Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth - By the preaching of the gospel. He has been so fully and plainly preached that you may be said to have seen him. The effect of his being preached in the manner in which it has been done, ought to have been as great as if you had seen him crucified before your eyes. The word rendered "hath been evidently set forth" (προεγράφῃ proegraphē), means properly to write before; and then to

announce beforehand in writing; or to announce by posting up on a tablet. The meaning here is, probably, that Christ has been announced among them crucified, as if the doctrine was set forth in a public written tablet - Robinson‘s Lexicon. There was the utmost clearness and distinctness of view, so that they need not make any mistake in regard to him. The Syriac renders it, “Christ has been crucified before your eyes as if he had been represented by painting.” According to this, the idea is, that it was as plain as if there had been a representation of him by a picture. This has been done chiefly by preaching. I see no reason, however, to doubt that Paul means also to include the celebration of the Lord‘s supper, in which the Lord Jesus is so clearly exhibited as a crucified Saviour.

Crucified among you - That is, represented among you as crucified. The words “among you,” however, are lacking in many manuscripts and obscure the sense. If they are to be retained, the meaning is, that the representations of the Lord Jesus as crucified had been as clear and impressive among them as if they had seen him with their own eyes, The argument is, that they had so clear a representation of the Lord Jesus, and of the design of his death, that it was strange that they had so soon been perverted from the belief of it. Had they seen the Saviour crucified; had they stood by the cross and witnessed his agony in death on account of sin, how could they doubt what was the design of his dying, and how could they be seduced from faith in his death, or be led to embrace any other method of justification? How could they now do it, when, although they had not seen him die, they had the fullest knowledge of the object for which he gave his precious life? The doctrine taught in this verse is that a faithful exhibition of the sufferings and death of the Saviour ought to exert an influence over our minds and hearts as if we had seen him die; and that they to whom such an exhibition has been made should avoid being led astray by the blandishments of false doctrines and by the arts of man. If we had seen the Saviour expire, we could never have forgotten the scene! Let us endeavor to cherish a remembrance of his sufferings and death as if we had seen him die.

Verse 2

This only would I learn of you - I would ask this of you; retaining still the language of severe reproof. The design here, and in the following verses, is, to prove to them that the views which they had at first embraced were correct, and that the views which they now cherished were false To

show them this, he asks them the simple question, by what means they had obtained the exalted privileges which they enjoyed? Whether they had obtained them by the simple gospel, or whether by the observance of the Law? The word "only" here (μόνον monon) implies that this was enough to settle the question. The argument to which he was about to appeal was enough for his purpose. He did not need to go any further. They had been converted. They had received the Holy Spirit. They had had abundant evidence of their acceptance with God, and the simple matter of inquiry now was, whether this had occurred as the regular effect of the gospel, or whether it had been by obeying the Law of Moses?

Received ye the Spirit - The Holy Spirit. He refers here, doubtless, to all the manifestations of the Spirit which had been made to them, in renewing the heart, in sanctifying the soul, in comforting them in affliction, and in his miraculous agency among them. The Holy Spirit had been conferred on them at their conversion (compare Acts 10:44; Acts 11:17) and this was to them proof of the favor of God, and of their being accepted by him.

By the works of the law - By obeying the Law of Moses or of any law. It was in no way connected with their obeying the Law. This must have been so clear to them that no one could have any doubt or the subject. The inestimably rich and precious gift of the Holy Spirit had not been conferred on them in consequence of their obeying the Law.

Or by the hearing of faith - In connection with hearing the gospel requiring faith as a condition of salvation. The Holy Spirit was sent down only in connection with the preaching of the gospel. It was a matter of truth, and which could not be denied, that those influences had not been imparted under the Law, but had been connected with the gospel of the Redeemer; compare Acts 2. The doctrine taught in this verse is, that the benefits resulting to Christians from the gift of the Holy Spirit are enough to prove that the gospel is from God, and therefore true. This was the case with regard to the miraculous endowments communicated in the early ages of the church by the Holy Spirit; for the miracles which were performed, the knowledge of languages imparted, and the conversion of thousands from the error of their ways, proved that the system was from heaven; and it is true now. Every Christian has had ample proof, from the influences of the Spirit on his heart and around him, that the system which is attended with such benefits is from heaven.

His own renewed heart; his elevated and sanctified affections; his exalted hopes; his consolations in trial; his peace in the prospect of death, and the happy influences of the system around him in the conversion of others, and in the intelligence, order, and purity of the community, are ample proof that the religion is true. Such effects do not come from any attempt to keep the Law; they result from no other system. No system of infidelity produces them; no mere system of infidelity can produce them. It is only by that pure system which proclaims salvation by the grace of God; which announces salvation by the merits of the Lord Jesus, that such effects are produced. The Saviour promised the Holy Spirit to descend after his ascension to heaven to apply his work; and everywhere, under the faithful preaching of the simple gospel, that Spirit keeps up the evidence of the truth of the system by his influences on the hearts and lives of people.

Verse 3

Are ye so foolish? - Can it be that you are so unwise? The idea is, that Paul hardly thought it credible that they could have pursued such a course. They had so cordially embraced the gospel when he preached to them, they had given such evidences that they were under its influence, that he regarded it as hardly possible that they should have so far abandoned it as to embrace such a system as they had done.

Having begun in the Spirit - That is, when the gospel was first preached to them. They had commenced their professedly Christian life under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and with the pure and spiritual worship of God. They had known the power and spirituality of the glorious gospel. They had been renewed by the Spirit; sanctified in some measure by him; and had submitted themselves to the spiritual influences of the gospel.

Are ye now made perfect - Tyndale renders this, "ye would now end." The word used here (ἐπιτελέω epiteleō) means properly, to bring through to an end, to finish; and the sense here has probably been expressed by Tyndale. The idea of perfecting, in the sense in which we now use that word, is not implied in the original. It is that of finishing, ending, completing; and the sense is: "You began your Christian career under the elevated and spiritual influences of Christianity, a system so pure and so exalted above the carnal ordinances of the Jews. Having begun thus, can it be that you are finishing your Christian course, or carrying it on to completion by the observance of those ordinances, as if they were more

pure and elevating than Christianity? Can it be that you regard them as an advance on the system of the gospel?"

By the flesh - By the observance of the carnal rites of the Jews, for so the word here evidently means. This has not ever been an uncommon thing. Many have been professedly converted by the Spirit, and have soon fallen into the observance of mere rites and ceremonies, and depended mainly on them for salvation. Many churches have commenced their career in an elevated and spiritual manner, and have ended in the observance of mere forms. So many Christians begin their course in a spiritual manner, and end it "in the flesh" in another sense. They soon conform to the world. They are brought under the influence of worldly appetites and propensities. They forget the spiritual nature of their religion; and they live for the indulgence of ease, and for the gratification of the senses. They build them houses, and they "plant vineyards," and they collect around them the instruments of music, and the bowl and the wine is in their feasts, and they surrender themselves to the luxury of living: and it seems as if they intended to perfect their Christianity by drawing around them as much of the world as possible. The beautiful simplicity of their early piety is gone. The blessedness of those moments when they lived by simple faith has fled. The times when they sought all their consolation in God are no more; and they now seem to differ from the world only in form. I dread to see a Christian inherit much wealth, or even to be thrown into very prosperous business. I see in it a temptation to build himself a splendid mansion, and to collect around him all that constitutes luxury among the people of the world. How natural for him to feel that if he has wealth like others, he should show it in a similar manner! And how easy for the most humble and spiritually-minded Christian, in the beginning of his Christian life, to become conformed to the world (such is the weakness of human nature in its best forms); and having begun in the spirit, to end in the flesh!

Verse 4

Have ye suffered so many things in vain? - Paul reminds them of what they had endured on account of their attachment to Christianity. He assures them, that if the opinions on account of which they had suffered were false, then their sufferings had been in vain. They were of no use to them - for what advantage was it to suffer for a false opinion? The opinions for which they had suffered had not been these which they now embraced. They were not those connected with the observance of the Jewish rites. They had

suffered on account of their having embraced the gospel, the system of justification by a crucified Redeemer; and now, if those sentiments were wrong, why, their sufferings had been wholly in vain; see this argument pursued at much greater length in 1 Corinthians 15:18-19, 1 Corinthians 15:29-32. If it be yet in vain. That is, I trust it is not in vain. I hope you have not so far abandoned the gospel, that all your sufferings in its behalf have been of no avail. I believe the system is true; and if true, and you are sincere Christians, it will not he in vain that you have suffered in its behalf, though you have gone astray. I trust, that although your principles have been shaken, yet they have not been wholly overthrown, and that you will not reap the reward of your having suffered so much on account of the gospel.

Verse 5

He therefore that ministereth … - This verse contains substantially a repetition of the argument in Galatians 3:2. The argument is, that the gift of the Holy Spirit to them was not imparted in consequence of the observance of the Law of Moses, but in connection with the preaching of the gospel. By the word "he" in this place, Clarke, Doddridge, Bloomfield, Chandler, Locke and many others, suppose that the apostle means himself Bloomfield says, that it is the common opinion of "all the ancient commentators." But this seems to me a strange opinion. The obvious reference, it seems to me, is to God, who had furnished or imparted to them the remarkable influences of the Holy Spirit, and this had been done in connection with the preaching of the gospel, and not by the observance of the Law. If, however, it refers to Paul, it means that he had been made the agent or instrument in imparting to them those remarkable endowments, and that this had been done by one who had not enforced the necessity of obeying the Law of Moses, but who had preached to them the simple gospel.

Verse 6

Even as Abraham believed God … - see this passage fully explained in the notes at Romans 4:3. The passage is introduced here by the apostle to show that the most eminent of the patriarchs was not saved by the deeds of the Law. He was saved by faith, and this fact showed that it was possible to be saved in that way, and that it was the design of God to save people in this manner. Abraham believed God, and was justified, before the Law of Moses was given. It could not, therefore, be pretended that the Law was necessary to justification; for if it had been, Abraham could not have been saved. But if not necessary in his case, it was in no other; and this instance

demonstrated that the false teachers among the Galatians were wrong even according to the Old Testament.

Verse 7

Know ye therefore … - Learn from this case. It is an inference which follows, that all they who believe are the children of Abraham.

They which are of faith - Who believe, and who are justified in this manner.

Are the children of Abraham - Abraham was the "father of the faithful." The most remarkable trait in his character was his unwavering confidence in God. They who evinced the same trait, therefore were worthy to be called his children. They would be justified in the same way, and in the same manner meet the approbation of God. It is implied here, that it was sufficient for salvation to have a character which would render it proper to say that we are the children of Abraham. If we are like him, if we evince the same spirit and character, we may be sure of salvation.

Verse 8

And the Scripture - The word Scripture refers to the Old Testament; see the note at John 5:39. It is here personified, or spoken of as foreseeing. The idea is, that he by whom the scriptures were inspired, foresaw that. It is agreeable, the meaning is, to the account on the subject in the Old Testament. The Syriac renders this, "Since God foreknew that the Gentiles would be justified by faith, he before announced to Abraham, as the scripture saith, In thee shall all nations be blessed."

Foreseeing - That is, this doctrine is contained in the Old Testament. It was foreseen and predicted that the pagan would be justified by faith, and not by the works of the Law.

That God would justify the heathen - Greek: "The nations" - τὰ ἔθνη ta ethnē- the Gentiles. The fact that the pagan, or the Gentiles would be admitted to the privileges of the true religion, and be interested in the benefits of the coming of the Messiah, is a fact which is everywhere abundantly predicted in the Old Testament. As an instance, see Isaiah 49:6, Isaiah 49:22-23; 60. I do not know that it is anywhere distinctly foretold that the pagan would be justified by faith, nor does the argument of the apostle require us to believe this. He says that the Scriptures, that is, he who inspired the Scriptures, foresaw that fact, and that the Scriptures were written as if with the knowledge of that fact; but it is not directly affirmed. The whole structure and frame of the Old Testament, however, proceeds on

the supposition that it would be so; and this is all that the declaration of the apostle requires us to understand,

Preached before the gospel - This translation does not convey quite the idea to us, which the language of Paul, in the original, would to the people to whom he addressed it. We have affixed a technical sense to the phrase "to preach the gospel." It is applied to the formal and public annunciation of the truths of religion, especially the "good news" of a Saviour's birth, and of redemption by his blood. But we are not required by the language used here to suppose that this was done to Abraham, or that "the gospel" was preached to him in the sense in which we all now use that phrase. The expression, in Greek προευηγγελίσατο proeuēngelisatomeans merely, "the joyful news was announced beforehand to Abraham;" scil. that in him should all the nations of the earth be blessed. It was implied, indeed, that it would be by the Messiah; but the distinct point of the "good news" was not the "gospel" as we understand it, but it was that somehow through him all the nations of the earth would be made happy. Tyndale has well translated it," Showed beforehand glad tidings unto Abraham." This translation should have been adopted in our common version.

In thee shall all nations be blessed - See the Acts 3:25 note; Romans 4:13 note. All nations should be made happy in him, or through him. The sense is, that the Messiah was to be descended from him, and the religion of the Messiah, producing peace and salvation, was to be extended to all the nations of the earth: see Genesis 12:3; compare the note at Galatians 3:16.

Εὐαγγελίζω Euangelizōdoubtless here, as elsewhere, signifies to announce glad tidings. And in all the passages where this word occurs, even in those where the author might be disposed to allow that the "gospel technically" was meant, the translation which he proposes here would be very suitable and exact. It was certainly the same gospel that was preached to Abraham, that is now preached to us, though not with, the same fulness of revelation, in his case. The apostle here affirms that the gospel, that is, the way of justification through Christ, in opposition to the legal system he had been condemning - was, in few words, preached to Abraham, being contained in that promise, "in thee shall all nations be blessed;" see Genesis 22:17. The full meaning of the promise, indeed, could not be gathered from the words themselves, but Abraham must have understood their application in a far more extensive sense than that "somehow through him all the nations of the earth would be made happy." Whether the true import were

made known to him directly by the Spirit of God, or discerned by him in typical representation, it is certain that Abraham‘s faith terminated on the promised Seed, that is, Christ whose day he desired to see, and seeing it afar, was glad, John 8:56. “Hereof it followeth,” says Luther on the place, “that the blessing and faith of Abraham is the same that ours is, that Abraham‘s Christ is our Christ, that Christ died as well for the sins of Abraham as for us.”)

Verse 9

So then they which be of faith - They whose leading characteristic it is that they believe. This was the leading trait in the character of Abraham, and this is the leading thing required of those who embrace the gospel, and in the character of a true Christian.

Are blessed with faithful Abraham - In the same manner they are interested in the promises made to him, and they will be treated as he was. They are justified in the same manner, and admitted to the same privileges on earth and in heaven.

Verse 10

For as many as are of the works of the law - As many as are seeking to be justified by yielding obedience to the Law - whether the moral law, or the ceremonial law. The proposition is general; and it is designed to show that, from the nature of the case, it is impossible to be justified by the works of the Law, since, under all circumstances of obedience which we can render, we are still left with its heavy curse resting on us.

Are under the curse - The curse which the Law of God denounces. Having failed by all their efforts to yield perfect obedience, they must, of course, be exposed to the curse which the Law denounces on the guilty. The word rendered “curse” (κατάρα katara) means, as with us, properly, “imprecation,” or “cursing.” It is used in the Scriptures particularly in the sense of the Hebrew אלה 'alahmalediction, or execration Job 31:30; Jeremiah 29:18; Daniel 9:11; of the word מארה me'ēraah Malachi 2:2; Revelation 22:3; and especially of the common Hebrew word קללה qelaalaaha curse; Genesis 27:12-13; Deuteronomy 11:26, Deuteronomy 11:28-29; Deuteronomy 23:5; Deuteronomy 27:13, et scope al. It is here used evidently in the sense of devoting to punishment or destruction; and the idea is, that all who attempt to secure salvation by the works of the Law, must be exposed to its penalty. It denounces a curse on all who do not yield

entire obedience; and no partial compliance with its demands can save from the penalty.

For it is written - The substance of these words is found in Deuteronomy 28:26; "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them." It is the solemn close of a series of maledictions, which Moses denounces in that chapter on the violators of the Law. In this quotation, Paul has given the sense of the passage, but he has quoted literally neither from the Hebrew nor from the Septuagint. The sense, however, is retained, The word "cursed" here means, that the violator of the Law shall be devoted to punishment or destruction. The phrase "that continueth not," in the Hebrew is "that confirmeth not" - that does not establish or confirm by his life. He would confirm it by continuing to obey it; and thus the sense in Paul and in Moses is substantially the same. The word "all" is not expressed in the Hebrew in Deuteronomy, but it is evidently implied, and has been insorted by the English translators. It is found, however, in six manuscripts of Kennicott and DeRossi; in the Samaritan text; in the Septuagint; and in several of the Targums - Clarke.

The book of the law - That is, in the Law. This phrase is not found in the passage in Deuteronomy. The expression there is, "the words of this law." Paul gives it; a somewhat larger sense, and applies it to the whole of the Law of God. The meaning is, that the whole law must be obeyed, or man cannot be justified by it, or will be exposed to its penalty and its curse. This idea is expressed more fully by James James 2:10; "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all;" that is, he is guilty of breaking the Law as a whole, and must be held responsible for such violation. The sentiment here is one that is common to all law, and must be, from the nature of the ease. The idea is, that a man who does not yield compliance to a whole law, is subject to its penalty, or to a curse. All law is sustained on this principle. A man who has been honest, and temperate, and industrious, and patriotic, if he commits a single act of murder, is subject to the curse of the Law, and must meet the penalty. A man who has been honest and honorable in all his dealings, yet if he commits a single act of forgery, he must meet the curse denounced by the laws of his country, and bear the penalty. So, in all matters pertaining to law: no matter what the integrity of the man; no matter how upright he has been, yet, for the one offence the law denounces a penalty, and he must bear it. It is out of the question for him to be justified by it. He cannot plead as a reason why

he should not be condemned for the act of murder or forgery, that he has in all other respects obeyed the law, or even that he has been guilty of no such offences before. Such is the idea of Paul in the passage before us. It was clear to his view that man had not in all respects yielded obedience to the Law of God. If he had not done this, it was impossible that he should be justified by the Law, and he must bear its penalty.

Verse 11

But that no man is justified … - The argument which Paul has been pursuing he proceeds to confirm by an express declaration of the Bible. The argument is this: "It is impossible that a man should be justified by the Law, because God has appointed another way of justification." But there cannot be two ways of obtaining life, and as he has appointed faith as the condition on which people shall live, he has precluded from them the possibility of obtaining salvation in any other mode.

For, The just shall live by faith - This is quoted from Habakkuk 2:4. This passage is also quoted by Paul in Romans 1:17; see it explained in the note on that verse. The sense here is, that life is promised to man only in connection with faith. It is not by the works of the Law that it is done. The condition of life is faith: and he lives who believes. The meaning is not, I apprehend, that the man who is justified by faith shall live, but that life is promised and exists only in connection with faith, and that the just or righteous man obtains it only in this way. Of course it cannot be obtained by the observance of the Law, but must be by some other scheme.

Verse 12

And the law is not of faith - The Law is not a matter of faith; it does not relate to faith; it does not require faith; it deals in other matters, and it pertains to another system than to faith.

But, The man … - This is the language of the Law, and this is what the Law teaches. It does not make provision for faith, but it requires unwavering and perpetual obedience, if man would obtain life by it; see this passage explained in the notes at Romans 10:5.

Verse 13

Christ hath redeemed us - The word used here ἐξηγόρασεν exēgorasenis not that which is usually employed in the New Testament to denote redemption. That word is λυτρόω lutroōThe difference between them mainly is, that the word used here more usually relates to a purchase of any kind; the other is used strictly with reference to a ransom. The word

used here is more general in its meaning; the other is strictly appropriated to a ransom. This distinction is not observable here, however, and the word used here is employed in the proper sense of redeem. It occurs in the New Testament only in this place, and in Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5. It properly means, to purchase, to buy up; and then to purchase anyone, to redeem, to set free. Here it means, that Christ had purchased, or set us free from the curse of the Law, by his being made a curse for us. On the meaning of the words redeem and ransom, see my notes at Romans 3:25; Isaiah 43:3, note; compare 2 Corinthians 5:21.

From the curse of the law - The curse which the Law threatens, and which the execution of the Law would inflict; the punishment due to sin. This must mean, that he has rescued us from the consequences of transgression in the world of woe; he has saved us from the punishment which our sins have deserved. The word, "us" here, must refer to all who are redeemed; that is, to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. The curse of the Law is a curse which is due to sin, and cannot be regarded as applied particularly to any one class of people. All who violate the Law of God, however that law may be made known, are exposed to its penalty. The word "law" here, relates to the Law of God in general, to all the laws of God made known to man. The Law of God denounced death as the wages of sin. It threatened punishment in the future world forever. That would certainly have been inflicted, but for the coming and death of Christ. The world is lying by nature under this curse, and it is sweeping the race on to ruin.

Being made a curse for us - This is an exceedingly important expression. Tyndale renders it, "And was made a curse for us." The Greek word is κατάρα katarathe same word which is used in Galatians 3:10; see the note at that verse. There is scarcely any passage in the New Testament on which it is more important to have correct views than this; and scarcely anyone on which more erroneous opinions have been entertained. In regard to it, we may observe that it does not mean:

(1) That by being made a curse, the Lord Jesus' character or work were in any sense displeasing to God. He approved always of what the Lord Jesus did, and he regarded his whole character with love and approbation. The passage should never be so interpreted as to leave the impression that he was in any conceivable sense the object of the divine displeasure.

(2) Jesus was not ill-deserving. He was not blame-worthy. He had done no wrong. He was holy, harmless, undefiled. No crime charged upon him was proved; and there is no clearer doctrine in the Bible than that, in all his character and work, the Lord Jesus was perfectly holy and pure.

(3) Jesus was not guilty in any proper sense of the word. The word guilty means, properly, to be bound to punishment for crime. It does not mean properly, to be exposed to suffering, but it always, when properly used, implies the notion of personal crime. I know that theologians have used the word in a somewhat different sense, but it is contrary to the common and just apprehensions of people. When we say that a man is guilty, we instinctively think of his having committed a crime, or having done something wrong. When a jury finds a man guilty, it implies that the man has committed a crime, and ought to be punished. But in this sense, and in no conceivable sense where the word is properly used was the Lord Jesus "guilty."

(4) it cannot be mean that the Lord Jesus properly bore the penalty of the Law. His sufferings were in the place of the penalty, not the penalty itself. They were a substitution for the penalty, and were, therefore, strictly and properly vicarious, and were not the identical sufferings which the sinner would himself have endured. There are some things in the penalty of the Law, which the Lord Jesus did not endure, and which a substitute or a vicarious victim could not endure. Remorse of conscience is a part of the inflicted penalty of the Law, and will be a vital part of the sufferings of the sinner in hell - but the Lord Jesus did not endure that. Eternity of sufferings is an essential part of the penalty of the Law - but the Lord Jesus did not suffer forever. Thus, there are numerous sorrows connected with the consciousness of personal guilt, which the Lord Jesus did not and cannot endure.

(5) Jesus was not sinful, or a sinner, in any sense. He did not so take human guilt upon him, that the words sinful and sinner could with any propriety be applied to him. They are not applied to him any way in the Bible; but there the language is undeviating. It is that in all senses he was holy and undefiled. And yet language is often used on this subject which is horrible and only a little short of blasphemy, as if he was guilty, and as if he

was even the greatest sinner in the universe. I have heard language used which sent a chill of horror to my heart; and language may be found in the writings of those who hold the doctrine of imputation in the strictest sense, which is only a little short of blasphemy. I have hesitated whether I should copy expressions here on this subject from one of the greatest and best of men (I mean Luther) to show the nature of the views which people sometimes entertain on the subject of the imputation of sin to Christ. But as Luther deliberately published them to the world in his favorite book, which he used to call his "Catharine de Bora," after the name of his wife; and since similar views are sometimes entertained now; and as it is important that such views should be held up to universal abhorrence, no matter how respectable the source from which they emanate, I will copy a few of his expressions on this subject. "And this, no doubt, all the prophets did foresee in spirit, than Christ should become the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, rebel, and blasphemer, that ever was OR could be in the world. For he being made a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world is not now an innocent person and without sins; is not now the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary; but a sinner which hath and carrieth the sin of Paul, who was a blasphemer, an oppressor, and a persecutor; of Peter, which denied Christ; of David, which was an adulterer, a murderer, and caused the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of the Lord; and, briefly, which hath and beareth all the sins of all people in his body: not that he himself committed them, but for that he received them, being committed or done of us, and laid them upon his own body, that he might make satisfaction for them with his own blood.

Therefore, this general sentence of Moses comprehendeth him also (albeit in his own person he was innocent), because it found him among sinners and transgressors; like as the magistrate taketh him for a thief, and punisheth him whom he findeth among other thieves and transgressors, though he never committed anything worthy of death. When the Law, therefore, found him among thieves it condemned and killed him as a thief." "If thou wilt deny him to be a sinner and accursed, deny, also, that he was crucified and dead." "But if it is not absurd to confess and believe that Christ was crucified between two thieves, then it is not absurd to say that he was accursed, and of all sinnerS, the greatesT." "God, our most merciful Father, sent His only Son into the world, and laid upon him all the sins of

all people, saying, be thou Peter, that denier; Paul, that persecutor, blasphemer, and cruel oppressor; David, that adulterer; that sinner which did eat the fruit in Paradise; that thief who hung upon the cross; and, briefly, be thou the person who has committed the sins of all people; see, therefore, that thou pay and satisfy for them" - Luther on the Galatians, Galatians 3:13. (pp. 213-215. London edition, 1838).

Luther was a great and holy man. He held, as firmly as anyone can, to the personal holiness of the Redeemer. But this language shows how imperfect and erroneous views may warp the language of holy people; and how those sentiments led him to use language which is little less than blasphemy. Indeed, we cannot doubt that in Luther had heard this very language used by one of the numerous enemies of the gospel in his time, as applicable to the Saviour, he would have poured out the full torrent of his burning wrath, and all the stern denunciations of his most impassioned eloquence, on the head of the scoffer and the blasphemer. It is singular, it is one of the remarkable facts in the history of mind, that a man with the New Testament before him, and accustomed to contemplate daily its language, could ever have allowed himself to use expressions like these of the holy and unspotted Saviour. But what is the meaning of the language of Paul, it will be asked, when he says that he was "made a curse for us?"

In reply, I answer, that the meaning must be ascertained from the passage which Paul quotes in support of his assertion, that Christ was "made a curse for us." That passage is, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." This passage is found in Deuteronomy 21:23. It occurs in a law respecting one who was hanged for a "sin worthy of death," Deuteronomy 21:22. The Law was, that he should be buried the same day, and that the body should not remain suspended over the night, and it is added, as a reason for this, that "he that is hanged is accursed of God;" or, as it is in the margin, "the curse of God." The meaning is, that when one was executed for crime in this manner, he was the object of the divine displeasure and malediction. Regarded thus as an object accursed of God, there was a propriety that the man who was executed for crime should be buried as soon as possible, that the offensive object should be hidden from the view In quoting this passage, Paul leaves out the words "of God," and simply says, that the one who was hanged on a tree was held accursed.

The sense of the passage before us is, therefore, that Jesus was subjected to what was regarded as an accursed death. He was treated in his death As If he had been a criminal. He was put to death in the same manner as he would have been if he had himself been guilty of the violation of the Law. If he had been a thief or a murderer; if he had committed the grossest and the blackest crimes, this would have been the punishment to which he would have been subjected. This was the mode of punishment adapted to those crimes, and he was treated as if all these had been committed by him. Or, in other words, if he had been guilty of all these, or any of these, he could not have been treated in a more shameful and ignominious manner than he was; nor could he have been subjected to a more cruel death. Since it has already been intimated, it does not mean that Jesus was guilty, nor that he was not the object of the approbation and love of God, but that Jesus‘ death was the same that it would have been if he had been the vilest of malefactors, and that that death was regarded by the Law as accursed.

It was by such substituted sorrows that we are saved; and he consented to die the most shameful and painful death, as if he were the vilest criminal, in order that the most guilty and vile of the human race might be saved. With regard to the way in which Jesus‘ death is connected with our justification, see the note at Galatians 2:16. It may be observed, also, that the punishment of the cross was unknown to the Hebrews in the time of Moses, and that the passage in Deuteronomy 21:23 did not refer originally to that. Nor is it known that hanging criminals alive was practiced among the Hebrews. Those who were guilty of great crimes were first stoned or otherwise put to death, and then their bodies were suspended for a few hours on a gibbet. In many cases, however, merely the head was suspended after it had been severed from the body. Genesis 40:17-19; Numbers 25:4-5. Crucifixion was not known in the time of the giving of the Law, but the Jews gave such an extent to the Law in Deuteronomy 21:23 as to include this mode of punishment (see John 19:31 ff).

The force of the argument here, as used by the apostle Paul, is, that if to be suspended on a gibbet after having been put to death was regarded as a curse, it should not be regarded as a curse in a less degree to be suspended Alive on a cross, and to be put to death in this manner. If this interpretation

of the passage is correct, then it follows that this should never be used as implying, in any sense, that Christ was guilty, or that he was ill-deserving, or that he was an object of the divine displeasure, or that he poured out on him all his wrath. He was, throughout, an object of the divine love and approbation. God never loved Jesus more, or approved what he did more, than when he gave himself to death on the cross. God had no hatred toward him; He had no displeasure to express toward him. And it is this which makes the atonement so wonderful and so glorious. If God had been displeased with Jesus; if the Redeemer had been properly an object of God‘s wrath; if Jesus, in any sense, deserved those sorrows, there would have been no merit in Jesus‘ sufferings; there would have been no atonement. What merit can there be when one suffers only what he deserves? But what made the atonement so wonderful, so glorious, so benevolent; what made it an atonement at all, was that innocence was treated as if it were guilt; that the most pure, and holy, and benevolent, and lovely being on earth should consent to be treated, and should be treated by God and man, as If Jesus were the most vile and ill-deserving. This is the mystery of the atonement; this shows the wonders of the divine benevolence; this is the nature of substituted sorrow; and this lays the foundation for the offer of pardon, and for the hope of eternal salvation.

Verse 14

That the blessing of Abraham - The blessing which Abraham enjoyed, to wit, that of being justified by faith. “Might come on the Gentiles.” As well as on the Jews. Abraham was blessed in this manner before he was circumcised Romans 4:11, and the same blessing might be imparted to others also who were not circumcised; see this argument illustrated in the notes at Romans 4:10-12.

Through Jesus Christ - Since he has been made a curse for all, and since he had no exclusive reference to the Jews or to any other class of people, all may come and partake alike of the benefits of his salvation.

That we might receive the promise of the Spirit - That all we who are Christian converts. The promise of the Spirit, or the promised Spirit, is here put for all the blessings connected with the Christian religion. It includes evidently the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit; and all his influences in renewing the heart, in sanctifying the soul, and in comforting the people of God. These influences had been obtained in virtue of the sufferings and

death of the Lord Jesus in the place of sinners, and these influences were the sum of all the blessings promised by the prophets.

Verse 15

Brethren, I speak after the manner of men - I draw an illustration from what actually occurs among people. The illustration is, that when a contract or agreement is made by people involving obligations and promises, no one can add to it or take from it. It will remain as it was originally made. So with God. He made a solemn promise to Abraham. That promise pertained to his posterity. The blessing was connected with that promise, and it was of the nature of a compact with Abraham. But if so, then this could not be effected by the Law which was four hundred years after, and the Law must have been given to secure some different object from that designed by the promise made to Abraham, Galatians 3:19. But the promise made to Abraham was designed to secure the "inheritance," or the favor of God; and if so, then the same thing could not be secured by the observance of the Law, since there could not be two ways so unlike each other of obtaining the same thing.

God cannot have two ways of justifying and saving people; and if he revealed a mode to Abraham, and that mode was by faith, then it could not be by the observance of the Law which was given so long after. The main design of the argument and the illustration here (Galatians 3:15 ff) is to show that the promise made to Abraham was by no means made void by the giving of the Law. The Law had another design, which did not interfere with the promise made to Abraham. That stood on its own merits, irrespective of the demands and the design of the Law. It is possible, as Rosenmuller suggests, that Paul may have had his eye on an objection to his view. The objection may have been that there were important acts of legislation which succeeded the promise made to Abraham, and that that promise must have been superseded by the giving of the Law. To this he replies that the Mosaic law given at a late period could not take away or nullify a solemn promise made to Abraham, but that it was intended for a different purpose.

Though it be but a man's covenant - A compact or agreement between man and man. Even in such a case no one can add to it or take from it. The argument here is, that such a covenant or agreement must be much less important than a promise made by God. But even that could not be annulled. How much less, therefore, could a covenant made by God be

treated as if it were vain. The word "covenant" here (διαθήκη diathēkē) is in the margin rendered "Testament;" that is, will. So Tyndale renders it. Its proper Classical signification is will or testament, though in the Septuagint and in the New Testament it is the word which is used to denote a covenant or compact; see the note at Acts 3:25. Here it is used in the proper sense of the word covenant, or compact; a mutual agreement between man and man. The idea is, that where such a covenant exists; where the faith of a man is solemnly pledged in this manner, no change can be made in the agreement. It is ratified, and firm, and final. "If it be confirmed." By a seal or otherwise.

No man disannulleth … - It must stand. No one can change it. No new conditions can be annexed; nor can there be any drawing back from its terms. It binds the parties to a faithful fulfillment of all the conditions. This is well understood among people; and the apostle says that the same thing must take place in regard to God.

Verse 16

Now to Abraham and his seed - To him and his posterity.

Were the promises made - The promise here referred to was that which is recorded in Genesis 22:17-18. "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."

He saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one … - He does not use the plural term, as if the promise extended to many persons, but he speaks in the singular number, as if only one was intended; and that one must be the Messiah. Such is Paul's interpretation; such is evidently the sentiment which he intends to convey, and the argument which he intends to urge. He designs evidently to be understood as affirming that in the use of the singular number σπέρμα sperma(seed), instead of the plural σπέρματα spermata(seeds), there is a fair ground of argument to demonstrate that the promise related to Christ or the Messiah, and to him primarily if not exclusively. Now no one probably ever read this passage without feeling a difficulty, and without asking himself whether this argument is sound, and is worthy a man of candor, and especially of an inspired man. Some of the difficulties in the passage are these:

(1) The promise referred to in Genesis seems to have related to the posterity of Abraham at large, without any particular reference to an

individual. It is to his seed; his descendants; to all his seed or posterity. Such would be the fair and natural interpretation should it be read by hundreds or thousands of persons who had never heard of the interpretation here put upon it by Paul.

(2) the argument of the apostle seems to proceed on the supposition that the word "seed" σπέρμα spermathat is, posterity, here cannot refer to more than one person. If it had, says he, it would be in the plural number. But the fact is, that the word is often used to denote posterity at large; to refer to descendants without limitation, just as the word posterity is with us; and it is a fact, moreover, that the word is not used in the plural at all to denote a posterity, the singular form being constantly employed for that purpose.

Anyone who will open Tromm's *Concordance* to the Septuagint, or Schmids' *Concordance on the New Testament* will see the most ample confirmation of this remark. Indeed the plural form of the word is never used except in this place in Galatians. The difficulty, therefore, is, that the remark here of Paul appears to be a trick of argument, or a quibble more worthy of a trifling Jewish Rabbi, than of a serious reasoner or an inspired man. I have stated this difficulty freely, just as I suppose it has struck hundreds of minds, because I do not wish to shrink from any real difficulty in examining the Bible, but to see whether it can be fairly met. In meeting it, expositors have resorted to various explanations, most of them, as it seems to me, unsatisfactory, and it is not necessary to detail them. Dr. Burner, Doddridge, and some others suppose that the apostle means to say that the promises made to Abraham were not only appropriated to one class of his descendants, that is, to those by Isaac, but that they centered in one illustrious person, through whom all the rest are made partakers of the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant.

This Doddridge admits the apostle says in "bad Greek," but still he supposes that this is the true exposition. Noessett and Rosenmuller suppose that by the word σπέρμα sperma(seed) here is not meant the Messiah, but Christians in general; the body of believers. But this is evidently in contradiction of the apostle, who expressly affirms that Christ was intended. It is also liable to another objection that is fatal to the opinion. The very point of the argument of the apostle is, that the singular and not the plural

form of the word is used, and that therefore an individual, and not a collective body or a number of individuals, is intended. But according to this interpretation the reference is, in fact, to a numerous body of individuals, to the whole body of Christians. Jerome affirms that the apostle made use of a false argument, which, although it might appear well enough to the stupid Galatians, would not be approved by wise or learned men - Chandler. Borger endeavors to show that this was in accordance with the mode of speaking and writing among the Hebrews, and especially that the Jewish Rabbis were accustomed to draw an argument like this from "the singular number," and that the Hebrew word זרע zera'"seed" is often used by them in this manner; see his remarks as quoted by Bloomfield in loc.

But the objection to this is, that though this might be common, yet it is not the less a quibble on the word, for certainly the very puerile reasoning of the Jewish Rabbis is no good authority on which to vindicate the authority of an apostle. Locke and Clarke suppose that this refers to Christ as the spiritual head of the mystical body, and to all believers in him. LeClerc supposes that it is an allegorical kind of argument, that was suited to convince the Jews only, who were accustomed to this kind of reasoning. I do not know but this solution may be satisfactory to many minds, and that it is capable of vindication, since it is not easy to say how far it is proper to make use of methods of argument used by an adversary in order to convince them. The argumentum a.d. hominem is certainly allowable to a certain extent, when designed to show the legitimate tendency of the principles advanced by an opponent.

But here there is no evidence that Paul was reasoning with an adversary. He was showing the Galatians, not the Jews, what was the truth, and justice to the character of the apostle requires us to suppose that he would make use of only such arguments as are in accordance with the eternal principles of truth, and such as may be seen to he true in all countries and at all times. The question then is, whether the argument of the apostle here drawn from the use of the singular word σπέρματα spermata(seed), is one that can be seen to be sound? or is it a mere quibble, as Jerome and LeClerc suppose? or is it to be left to be presumed to have had a force which we cannot now trace? for this is possible. Socrates and Plato may have used arguments of a subtile nature, based on some nice distinctions of words which were

perfectly sound, but which we, from our necessary ignorance of the delicate shades of meaning in the language, cannot now understand. Perhaps the following remarks may show that there is real force and propriety in the position which the apostle takes here. If not, then I confess my inability to explain the passage.

(1) there can be no reasonable objection to the opinion that the promise originally made to Abraham included the Messiah; and the promised blessings were to descend through him. This is so often affirmed in the New Testament, that to deny it would be to deny the repeated declarations of the sacred writers, and to make war on the whole structure of the Bible; see particularly John 8:56. If this general principle be admitted, it will remove much perplexity from the controversy.

(2) the promise made to Abraham Genesis 22:18, "and in thy seed זרע zeraʿSeptuagint ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου en tō spermati sou), where the words both in Hebrew and in Greek are in the singular number) shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," cannot refer to all the seed or the posterity of Abraham taken collectively. He had two sons, Isaac by Rebecca, and Ishmael by Hagar, besides numerous descendants by Keturah; Genesis 25:1 ff. Through a large part of these no particular blessings descended on the human family, and there is no sense in which all the families of the earth are particularly blessed in them. On any supposition, therefore, there must have been some limitation of the promise; or the word "seed" was intended to include only some portion of his descendants, whether a particular branch or an individual, does not yet appear. It must have referred to a part only of the posterity of Abraham, but to what part is to be learned only by subsequent revelations.

(3) it was the intention of God to confine the blessing to one branch of the family, to Isaac and his descendants. The special promised blessing was to be through him, and not through the family of Ishmael. This intention is often expressed, Genesis 17:19-21; Genesis 21:12; Genesis 25:11; compare Romans 9:7; Hebrews 11:18. Thus, the original promise of a blessing through the posterity of Abraham became somewhat narrowed down, so as to show that there was to be a limitation of the promise to a particular portion of his posterity.

(4) if the promise had referred to the two branches of the family; if it had been intended to include Ishmael as well as Isaac, then some term would have been used that would have expressed this. So unlike were Isaac and Ishmael; so different in the circumstances of their birth and their future life; so dissimilar were the prophecies respecting them, that it might be said that their descendants were two races of people; and in Scripture the race of Ishmael ceased to be spoken of as the descendants or the posterity of Abraham. There was a sense in which the posterity of Isaac was regarded as the seed or posterity of Abraham in which the descendants of Ishmael were not; and the term σπέρμα spermaor "seed" therefore properly designated the posterity of Isaac. It might be said, then, that the promise "to thy seed" did not refer to the two races, as if he had said σπέρματα spermata"seeds," but to one σπέρμα sperma"the seed" of Abraham, by way of eminence.

(5) this promise was subsequently narrowed down still more, so as to include only one portion of the descendants of Isaac. Thus it was limited to the posterity of Jacob, Esau being excluded; subsequently the special blessing was promised to the family of Judah, one of the twelve sons of Jacob Genesis 49:10; in subsequent times it was still further narrowed down or limited to the family of Jesse; then to that of David; then to that of Solomon, until it terminated in the Messiah. The original intention of the promise was that there should be a limitation, and that limitation was made from age to age, until it terminated in the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. By being thus narrowed down from age to age, and limited by successive revelations, it was shown that the Messiah was eminently intended, which is what Paul says here. The promise was indeed at first general, and the term used was of the most general nature; but it was shown from time to time that God intended that it should be applied only to one branch or portion of the family of Abraham; and that limitation was finally so made as to terminate in the Messiah. This I take to be the meaning of this very difficult passage of scripture; and though it may not be thought that all the perplexities are removed by these remarks, yet I trust they will be seen to be so far removed as that it will appear that there is real force in the argument of the apostle, and that it is not a mere trick of argument, or a quibble unworthy of him as an apostle and a man.

(Whatever may be thought of this solution of thee difficulty, the author has certainly given more than due prominence to the objections that are supposed to lie against the apostle‘s argument. Whatever license a writer in the American Biblical Repository, or such like work, might take, it certainly is not wise in a commentary intended for Sunday Schools to affirm, that the great difficulty of the passage is “that the remark here of Paul appears to be a trick of argument, or a quibble more worthy of a trifling Jewish Rabbi than of a serious reasoner and an inspired man,” and then to exhibit such a formidable array of objection, and behind it a defense comparatively feeble, accompanied with the acknowledgment that if that be not sufficient the author can do no more! These objections, moreover, are not only stated “fairly” but strongly, and something more than strongly; so that while in the end the authority of the apostle is apparently vindicated, the effect is such, that the reader, unaccustomed to such treatment of inspired men, is tempted to exclaim, “non tali auxillo, nec defensoribus istis, tempus eget” Indeed we are surprised that, with Bloomfield and Burger before him, the author should ever have made some of the assertions which are set down under this text.

As to objection first, it does not matter what interpretation hundreds and thousands of persons would naturally put on the passage in Genesis, since the authority of an inspired apostle must be allowed to settle its meaning against them all. The second objection affirms, that “the word σπέρμα spermais not used in the plural at all to denote a posterity,” on which Bloomfield thus remarks, “it has been denied that the word זרע zeraʿis ever used in the plural, except to denote the seeds of vegetables. And the same assertion has been made respecting σπέρμα spermaBut the former position merely extends to the Old Testament, which only contains a fragment and small part of the Hebrew language. So that it cannot be proved that זרע zeraʿwas never used in the plural to denote sons, races. As to the latter assertion it is unfounded; for though σπέρμα spermais used in the singular as a noun of multitude, to denote several children, yet it is sometimes used in the plural to signify several sons of the same family; as in Soph. OEd. Colossians 599, γῆς εμῆς ἀπηλάθην Προς τῶν ἐμαυτοῦ σπερμάτων gēs emēs apēlathēn Pros emautou spermatōnelaborate Latin Note of Borger, part of which is quoted in Bloomfield, will give complete satisfaction to the student who may wish thoroughly to examine this place. He maintains:

1. That though the argument of the apostle may not be founded exactly on the use of the singular number, yet the absurdity at his application of the passage in Genesis to the Messiah, would have been obvious if, instead of the singular the plural had been used, "si non σπέρματος spermatossed σπέρματων spermatōnmentio fuisset facta;" from which he justly concludes, that at all events "numerum cum hac explicatione non pugnare."

2. The word זרע zeraʿis in certain places understood of one man only (de uno homine) and therefore may be so here.

3. The apostle, arguing with Jews, employs an argument to which they were accustomed to attach importance; for they laid great stress on the respective use of the singular and plural number; which argument. indeed, would be liable to the objections stated against it by Mr. Barnes, if the thing to be proven rested entirely on this ground, and had not, besides, its foundation in the actual truth of the case. If the singular number in this place really had that force attached to it which the apostle declares, and if the Jews were influenced in other matters by arguments of this kind, it was certainly both lawful and wise to reason with them after their own fashion.

4. What is still more to the point, the Jewish writers themselves frequently use the word זרע zeraʿ*not only of one man*, but especially of the *Messiah*, "non tantum *de uno homine*, sed imprimis etiam de *Messia* exponere solent."

On the whole, the objections against the reasoning on this passage are raised in defiance of apostolical interpretation. But, as has been well observed, "the apostle, to say nothing of his inspiration, might be supposed to be better qualified to decide on a point of this kind, than any modern philologist" - Bloomfield in loco.

Verse 17

The covenant which was confirmed before of God - By God, in his promise to Abraham. It was confirmed before the giving of the Law. The confirmation was the solemn promise which God made to him.

In Christ - With respect to the Messiah; a covenant relating to him, and which promised that he should descend from Abraham. The word "in," in the phrase "in Christ," does not quite express the meaning of the Greek εἰς Χριστὸν eis ChristonThat means rather "unto Christ;" or unto the Messiah; that is, the covenant had respect to him. This is a common signification of the preposition εἰς eis"The law." The Law given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Which was four hundred and thirty years after - In regard to the difficulties which have been felt respecting the chronology referred to here; see the note at Acts 7:6. The exact time here referred to was probably when Abraham was called, and when the promise was first made to him. Assuming that as the time referred to, it is not difficult to make out the period of four hundred and thirty years. That promise was made when Abraham was seventy-five years old; Genesis 12:3-4. From that time to the birth of Isaac, when Abraham was a hundred years old, was twenty-five years; Genesis 21:5. Isaac was sixty when Jacob was born; Genesis 25:26. Jacob went into Egypt when he was one hundred and thirty years old; Genesis 47:9. And the Israelites sojourned there, according to the Septuagint Exodus 12:40, two hundred and fifteen years, which completes the number: see Doddridge, Whitby, and Bloomfield. This was doubtless the common computation in the time of Paul; and as his argument did not depend at all on the exactness of the reckoning, he took the estimate which was in common use, without pausing or embarrassing himself by an inquiry whether it was strictly accurate or not.

His argument was the same, whether the Law was given four hundred and thirty years after the promise, or only two hundred years. The argument is, that a law given after the solemn promise which had been made and confirmed, could not make that promise void. It would still be binding according to the original intention; and the Law must have been given for some purpose entirely different from that of the promise. No one can doubt the soundness of this argument. The promise to Abraham was of the nature of a compact. But no law given by one of the parties to a treaty or compact can disannul it, Two nations make a treaty of peace, involving solemn promises, pledges, and obligations. No law made afterward by one of the nations can disannul or change that treaty. Two men make a contract with solemn pledges and promises. No act of one of the parties can change that, or alter the conditions. So it was with the covenant between God and

Abraham. God made to him solemn promists which could not be affected by a future giving of a law. God would feel himself to be under the most solemn obligation to fulfil all the promises which he had made to him.

Verse 18

For if the inheritance - The inheritance promised to Abraham. The sum of the promise was, that "he should be the heir of the world;" see Romans 4:13, and the note at that verse. To that heirship or inheritance Paul refers here, and says that it was an essential part of it that it was to be in virtue of the promise made to him, and not by fulfilling the Law.

Be of the law - If it is by observing the Law of Moses; or if it come in any way by the fulfilling of law. This is plain. Yet the Jews contended that the blessings of justification and salvation were to be in virtue of the observance of the Law of Moses. But if so, says Paul, then it could not be by the promise made to Abraham, since there could not be two ways of obtaining the same blessing.

But God gave it to Abraham by promise - That, says Paul, is a settled point. It is perfectly clear; and that is to be held as an indisputable fact, that the blessing was given to Abraham by a promise. That promise was confirmed and ratified hundreds of years before the Law was given, and the giving of the Law could not affect it. But that promise was, that he would be the ancestor of the Messiah, and that in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Of course, if they were to be blessed in this way, then it was not to be by the observance of the Law, and the Law must have been given for a different purpose. What that was, he states in the following verses.

Verse 19

Wherefore then serveth the law? - This is obviously an objection which might be urged to the reasoning which the apostle had pursued. It was very obvious to ask, if the principles which he had laid down were correct, of what use was the Law? Why was it given at all? Why were there so many wonderful exhibitions of the divine power at its promulgation? Why were there so many commendations of it in the Scriptures? And why were there so many injunctions to obey it? Are all these to be regarded as nothing; and is the Law to be esteemed as worthless? To all this, the apostle replies that the Law was not useless, but that it was given by God for great and important purposes, and especially for purposes closely connected with

the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham and the work of the Mediator.

It was added - (προσετέθη prosetethē). It was appended to all the previous institutions and promises. It was an additional arrangement on the part of God for great and important purposes. It was an arrangement subsequent to the giving of the promise, and was intended to secure important advantages until the superior arrangement under the Messiah should be introduced, and was with reference to that.

Because of transgressions - On account of transgressions, or with reference to them. The meaning is, that the Law was given to show the true nature of transgressions, or to show what was sin. It was not to reveal a way of justification, but it was to disclose the true nature of sin; to deter people from committing it; to declare its penalty; to convince people of it, and thus to be "ancillary" to, and preparatory to the work of redemption through the Redeemer. This is the true account of the Law of God as given to apostate man, and this use of the Law still exists. This effect of the Law is accomplished:

(1)By showing us what God requires, and what is duty. It is the straight rule of what is right; and to depart from that is the measure of wrong.

(2)it shows us the nature and extent of transgression by showing us how far we have departed from it.

(3)it shows what is the just penalty of transgression, and is thus suited to reveal its true nature.

(4)it is suited to produce conviction for sin, and thus shows how evil and bitter a thing transgression is; see the notes at Romans 4:15; Romans 7:7-11.

(5)it thus shows its own inability to justify and save people, and is a preparatory arrangement to lead people to the cross of the Redeemer; see the note at Galatians 3:24. At the same time,

(6)The Law was given with reference to transgressions in order to keep men from transgression. It was designed to restrain and control them by its denunciations, and by the fear of its threatened penalties.

When Paul says that the Law was given on account of transgressions, we are not to suppose that this was the sole use of the Law; but that this was a main or leading purpose. It may accomplish many other important purposes (Calvin), but this is one leading design. And this design it still accomplishes. It shows people their duty. It reminds them of their guilt. It teaches them how far they have wandered from God. It reveals to them the penalty of disobedience. It shows them that justification by the Law is impossible, and that there must be some other way by which people must be saved. And since these advantages are derived from it, it is of importance that that Law should be still proclaimed, and that its high demands and its penalties should be constantly held up to the view of people.

Till the seed should come … - The Messiah, to whom the promise particularly applied; see Galatians 3:16. It is not implied here that the Law would be of no use after that; but that it would accomplish important purposes before that. A large portion of the laws of Moses would then indeed cease to be binding. They were given to accomplish important purposes among the Jews until the Messiah should come, and then they would give way to the more important institutions of the gospel. But the moral law would continue to accomplish valuable objects after his advent, in showing people the nature of transgression and leading them to the cross of Christ. The essential idea of Paul here is, that the whole arrangement of the Mosaic economy, including all his laws, was with reference to the Messiah. It was a part of a great and glorious whole. It was not an independent thing. It did not stand by itself. It was incomplete and in many respects unintelligible until he came - as one part of a tally is unmeaning and useless until the other is found. In itself it did not justify or save people, but it served to introduce a system by which they could be saved. It contained no provisions for justifying people, but it was in the design of God an essential part of a system by which they could be saved. It was not a whole in itself, but it was a part of a glorious whole, and led to the completion and fulfillment of the entire scheme by which the race could be justified and brought to heaven.

And it was ordained by angels - That is, the Law was ordained by angels. The word ordained here διαταγεὶς diatageisusually means to arrange; to dispose in order; and is commonly used with reference to the marshalling of an army. In regard to the sentiment here that the Law was ordained by angels, see the note at Acts 7:53. The Old Testament makes no

mention of the presence of angels at the giving of the Law, but it was a common opinion among the Jews that the Law was given by the instrumentality of angels, and arranged by them; and Paul speaks in accordance with this opinion; compare Hebrews 2:2. The sentiment here is that the Law was prescribed, ordered, or arranged by the instrumentality of the angels; an opinion, certainly, which none can prove not to be true. In itself considered, there is no more absurdity in the opinion that the Law of God should be given by the agency of angels, than there is that it should be done by the instrumentality of man.

In the Septuagint Deuteronomy 33:2 there is an allusion of the same kind. The Hebrew is: "From his right hand went a fiery law for them." The Septuagint renders this, "His angels with him on his right hand;" compare Josephus, Ant. xv. 5,3. That angels were present at the giving of the Law is more than implied, it is believed, in two passages of the Old Testament. The one is that which is referred to above, and a part of which the translators of the Septuagint expressly apply to angels; Deuteronomy 33:2. The Hebrew is, "Yahweh came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paron, and he came (literally) with ten thousands of holiness;" that is, with his holy ten thousands, or with his holy myriads מרבבת קדֹשׁ mēribbot qodeshBy the holy myriads mentioned here what can be meant but "the angels"? The word "holy" in the Scriptures is not given to storms and winds and tempests; and the natural interpretation is, that he was attended with vast hosts of intelligent beings.

The same sentiment is found in Psalm 68:17 - "The chariots of God are myriads, thousands repeated; the Lord is in the midst of them, as in Sinai, as in his sanctuary." Does not this evidently imply that when he gave the Law on Mount Sinai he was surrounded by a multitude of angels? see Stuart on the Hebrews, Excursus viii. pp. 565-567. It may be added, that in the fact itself there is no improbability. What is more natural than to suppose that when the Law of God was promulgated in such a solemn manner on Mount Sinai to a world, that the angels should be present? If any occasion on earth has ever occurred where their presence was allowable and proper, assuredly that was one. And yet the Scriptures abound with assurances that the angels are interested in human affairs, and that they have had an important agency in the concerns of man.

In the hand - That is, under the direction, or control of. To be in the hand of one is to be under his control; and the idea is, that while this was done by the ordering of the angels or by their disposition, it was under the control of a Mediator Rosenmuller, however, and others suppose that this means simply by (per); that is, that it was done by the instrumentality of a Mediator. But it seems to me to imply more than this; that the Mediator here referred to had some jurisdiction or control over the Law thus given; or that it was subject to him, or with reference to him. The interpretation however will be affected by the view which is taken of the meaning of the word Mediator.

Of a Mediator - The word "Mediator" Μεσίτης means properly one who intervenes between two parties, either as an interpreter or internuncius, or as an intercessor or reconciler. In the New Testament, in all the places where it occurs, unless the passage before us be an exception, it is applied to the Lord Jesus, the great Mediator between God and man; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 12:24. There has been some difference of opinion as to the reference of the word here. Rosenmuller, Grotius, Doddridge, Bloomfield, Robinson (Lexicon), Chandler, and many others suppose that it refers to Moses. Calvin and many others suppose that the reference is to Christ. The common sentiment among expositors undoubtedly is, that the reference is to Moses; and it is by no means easy to show that that is not the correct opinion. But to me it seems that there are reasons why it should he regarded as having reference to the great Mediator between God and man. Some of the reasons which incline me to this opinion are:

(1) That the name Mediator is not, so far as I know, applied to Moses elsewhere in the Scriptures.

(2) the name is appropriated to the Lord Jesus. This is certainly the case in the New Testament, unless the passage before us be an exception; and the name is not found in the Old Testament.

(3) it is difficult to see the pertinency of the remark here, or the bearing on the argument, on the supposition that it refers to Moses. How would it affect the drift and purport of the apostle's reasoning? How would it bear on the case? But on the supposition that it refers to the Lord Jesus, that would be a material fact in the argument. It would show that the Law was

subordinate to the Messiah, and was with reference to him. It was not only subservient by being ordained by angels, but as being under the Mediator, and with reference to him until he, the "promised seed," should come.

(4) it is only by such an interpretation that the following "vexed" verse can be understood. If that be applied to Moses, I see not that any sense can be affixed to it that shall be pertinent or intelligible.

These reasons may not appear satisfactory to others; and I admit they are not as clear as would be desirable that reasons should be in the exposition of the Bible, but they may be allowed perhaps to have some weight. If they are of weight, then the sentiment of the passage is, that the Law was wholly subordinate, and could not make the promise of no effect. For:

(1) It was given hundreds of years after the promise.

(2) it was under the direction of angels, who must themselves be inferior to, and subordinate to the Messiah, the Mediator between God and man. If given by their agency and instrumentality, however important it might be, it could not interfere with a direct promise made by God himself, but must be subordinate to that promise.

(3) it was under the Mediator, the promised Messiah. It was in his hand, and subject to him. It was a part of the great plan which was contemplated in the promise, and was tributary to that, and must be so regarded. It was not an independent scheme; not a thing that stood by itself; but a scheme subordinate and tributary, and wholly under the control of the Mediator, and a part of the plan of redemption, and of course to be modified or abrogated just as that plan should require, and to be regarded as wholly tributary to it. This view will accord certainly with the argument of Paul, and with his design in showing that the Law could by no means, and in no way, interfere with the promise made to Abraham, but must be regarded as wholly subordinate to the plan of redemption.

Verse 20

Now a mediator is not a mediator of one … - This verse has given great perplexity to commentators. "There is, unquestionably," says Bloomfield, "no passage in the New Testament that has so much, and to so little purpose, exercised the learning and ingenuity of commentators as the present, which seems to defy all attempts to elicit any satisfactory sense, except by methods so violent as to be almost the same thing as writing the passage afresh." In regard, however, to the truth of the declarations here - that "a mediator is not a mediator of one," and that "God is one" - there can be no doubt, and no difficulty. The very idea of a mediator supposes that there are two parties or persons between whom the mediator comes either to reconcile them or to bear some message from the one to the other; and it is abundantly affirmed also in the Old Testament that there is but one God; see Deuteronomy 6:4.

But the difficulty is, to see the pertinency or the bearing of the remark on the argument of the apostle. What does he intend to illustrate by the declaration? and how do the truths which he states, illustrate the point before him? It is not consistent with the design of these notes to detail the numerous opinions which have been entertained of the passage. They may be found in the larger commentaries, and particularly may be seen in Koppe, Excursus vii. on the Galatians. After referring to a number of works on the passage, Rosenmuller adopts the following interpretation, proposed by Noessett, as expressing the true sense. But he (that is, Moses) is not a mediator of one race (to wit, the Abrahamic), but God is the same God of them and of the Gentiles. The sense according to this is, that Moses had not reference in his office as mediator or as internuncius to the descendants of Abraham, or to that one seed or race, referred to in the promise.

He added the hard conditions of the Law; required its stern and severe observances; his institutions pertained to the Jews mainly. They indeed might obtain the favor of God, but by compliance with the severe laws which he had ordained. But to the one seed, the whole posterity of Abraham, they concerning whom the promise was made, the Gentiles as well as the Jews, he had no reference in his institutions: all their favors, therefore, must depend on the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham. But God is one and the same in reference to all. His promise pertains to all. He is the common God to the Jews and the Gentiles. There is great difficulty in embracing this view of the passage, but it is not necessary for

me to state the difficulty or to attempt to show that the view here proposed cannot be defended. Whitby has expressed substantially the same interpretation of this passage. "But this mediator (namely, Moses) was only the mediator of the Jews, and so was only the mediator of one party, to whom belonged the blessing of Abraham, Galatians 3:8, Galatians 3:14. But God, who made the promise, ‹That in one should all the families of the earth be blessed,' is one; the God of the other party, the Gentiles as well as the Jews, and so as ready to justify the one as the other."

According to this interpretation, the sense is, that Moses was mediator of one part of Abraham's seed, the Israelites; but was not the mediator of the other part of that seed, the Gentiles; yet there was the same God to both parties, who was equally ready to justify both. Locke has expressed a view of the passage which differs somewhat from this, but which has quite as much plausibility. According to his exposition it means, that God was but one of the parties to the promise. The Jews and the Gentiles made up the other. But at the giving of the Law Moses was a mediator only between God and the Israelites, and, therefore, could not transact anything which would tend to the disannulling of the promise which was between God and the Jews and Gentiles together, the other party to the promise. Or in other words, at the covenant made on Mount Sinai, there was really present but one of the parties, and consequently nothing could be done that would affect the other.

Moses did not appear in behalf of the Gentiles. They had no representative there. He was engaged only for the Jews, for a part only of the one party, and that part could not transact anything for the whole. The giving of the Law, therefore, could not affect the promise which was made to Abraham, and which related to the Jews and the Gentiles as together constituting one party. This view is plausible. It has been adopted by Doddridge, and perhaps may be the true interpretation. No one can deny, however, that it is forced, and that it is far from being obvious. It seems to be making a meaning for the apostle, or furnishing him with an argument, rather than explaining the one which he has chosen to use; and it may be doubted whether Paul would have used an argument that required so much explanation as this before it could be understood. All these expositions proceed on the supposition that the word "mediator" here refers to Moses,

and that the transaction here referred to was that on Mount Sinai. I would suggest a sense of the passage which I have found in none of the commentaries which I have consulted, and which I would, therefore, propose with diffidence.

All that I can claim for it is, that it may possibly be the meaning. According to the view which I shall submit, the words here are to be regarded as used in their usual signification; and the simplest interpretation possible is to be given to the propositions in the verse. One proposition is, that a mediator is not appointed with reference to one party, but to two. This proposition is universal. Wherever there is a mediator there are always two parties. The other proposition is, that God is one; that is, that he is the same one God, in whatever form his will may be made known to people, whether by a promise as to Abraham, or by the Law as to Moses. The interpretation which I would propose embraces the following particulars:

(1) The design of the apostle is, to show that the giving of the Law could not abrogate or affect the promise made to Abraham; and to show at the same time what is its true object. It could not annul the promises, says Paul. It was given long after, and could not affect them, Galatians 3:17. It was an addition, an appendage, a subsequent enactment for a specific purpose, yet a part of the same general plan, and subordinate to the Mediator, Galatians 3:19. It was to be shown also that the Law was not against the promises of God. It was a good law Galatians 3:21; and was not designed to be an opposing system, or intended to counteract the promise, or the scheme of salvation by promise, but was a part of the same great plan.

(2) amediator always supposes two parties. In all the transactions, therefore, where a mediator is employed, there is supposed to be two parties. When, therefore, the promise was made to Abraham with reference to the Messiah, the great Mediator; and when the Law was given in the hand of the Mediator, and under his control, there is always supposed to be two parties.

(3) the whole arrangement here referred to is under the Mediator, and with reference to him. The promise made to Abraham had reference to him and to those who should believe on him; and the Law given by Moses was

also under him, and with reference to him. He was the grand object and agent of all. He was the Mediator with reference to both. Each transaction had reference to him, though in different ways the transaction with Abraham relating to him in connection with a promise; the transaction at the giving of the Law being under his control as Mediator, and being a part of the one great plan. There was an identity of plan; and the plan had reference to the Messiah, the great Mediator.

(4) God is one and the same. He is throughout one of the parties; and he does not change. However the arrangements may vary, whether in giving the Law or imparting a promise, He is the same. There is only one God in all the transaction; and He, throughout, constitutes one of the parties. The other party is man, at first receiving the promise from this one God with reference to the Mediator through Abraham, and then receiving the Law through the same Mediator on Mount Sinai. He is still the one party unchanged; and there is the same Mediator; implying all along that there are two parties.

(5) it follows, therefore, agreeably to the argument of the apostle, that the Law given so long after the promise, could not abrogate it, because they pertained to the same plan, were under the same one God, who was one unchanging party in all this transaction, and had reference to the same Mediator and were alike under his control. It followed, also, that the Law was temporary Galatians 3:19; interposed for important purposes until the "seed should come," because it was a part of the same general arrangement, and was under the control of the same Mediator, and directed by the same one God, the unchanging one party in all these transactions. It followed, further, that the one could not be against the other Galatians 3:21, because they were a part of the same plan, under the control of the same Mediator, and where the same God remained unchanged as the one party. All that is assumed in this interpretation is:

(a)That there was but one plan or arrangement; or that the transaction with Abraham and with Moses were parts of one great scheme; and,

(b)That the Mediator here referred to was not Moses, but the Messiah, the Son of God.

The following paraphrase will express the sense which I have endeavored to convey. "The giving of the Law could not annul or abrogate

the promise made to Abraham. It was long after that, and it was itself subservient to that. It was given by the instrumentality of angels, and it was entirely under the control of the Mediator, the Messiah. The plan was one; and all the parts of it, in the promise made to Abraham and in the giving of the Law, were subordinate to him. A mediator always supposes two parties, and the reference to the Mediator, alike in the promise to Abraham and in the giving of the Law, supposes that there were two parties. God is one party, the same unchanging God in all the forms of the promise and of the Law. In this state of things, it is impossible that the Law should clash with the promise, or that it should supersede or modify it. It was a part of the one great plan; appointed with reference to the work which the Mediator came to do; and in accordance with the promise made to Abraham; and therefore they could not be contradictory and inconsistent." It is assumed in all this that the Messiah was contemplated in the whole arrangement, and that it was entered into with reference to him. That this may be assumed no one can deny who believes the scriptures. The whole arrangement in the Old Testament, it is supposed, was designed to be ancillary to redemption; and the interpretation which has been submitted above is based on that supposition.

Verse 21

Is the law then against the promises of God? - Is the Law of Moses to be regarded as opposed to the promises made to Abraham? Does this follow from any view which can be taken of the subject? The object of the apostle in asking this question is, evidently, to take an opportunity to deny in the most positive manner that there can be any such clashing or contradiction. He shows, therefore, what was the design of the Law, and declares that the object was to further the plan contemplated in the promise made to Abraham. It was an auxiliary to that. It was as good as a law could be; and it was designed to prepare the way for the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham.

God forbid - It cannot be. It is impossible. I do not hold such an opinion. Such a sentiment by no means follows from what has been advanced; compare the note at Romans 3:4.

For if there had been a law given which could have given life - The Law of Moses is as good as a law can be. It is pure, and truly, and good. It is not the design to insinuate anything against the Law in itself, or to say that as a law it is defective. But law could not give life. It is not its nature;

and man cannot be justified by obedience to it. No man has ever yielded perfect compliance with it and no man, therefore, can be justified by it, compare the notes at Galatians 2:16; Galatians 3:10, note.

Verily righteousness should have been by the law - Or justification would have been secured by the Law. The Law of Moses was as well adapted to this as a law could be. No better law could have been originated for this purpose, and if people were to attempt to justify themselves before God by their own works, the Law of Moses would be as favorable for such an undertaking as any law which could be revealed. It is as reasonable, and equal, and pure. Its demands are as just, and its terms as favorable as could be any of the terms of mere law. And such a law has been given in part in order to show that justification by the Law is out of the question. If people could not be justified by a law so pure, and equal, and just; so reasonable in all its requirements and so perfect, how could they expect to be justified by conformity to any inferior or less perfect rule of life? The fact, therefore, that no one can be justified by the pure law revealed on Mount Sinai, forever settles the question about the possibility of being justified by law.

Verse 22

But the Scripture - The Old Testament (see the note at John 5:39), containing the Law of Moses.

Hath concluded all under sin - Has "shut up" (συνέκλεισεν sunekleisen) all under the condemnation of sin; that is, has declared all people, no matter what their rank and external character, to be sinners. Of course, they cannot be justified by that law which declares them to be guilty, and which condemns them, any more than the Law of the land will acquit a murderer, and pronounce him innocent, at the same time that it holds him to be guilty. In regard to the meaning of the expression used here; see the note at Romans 11:32; compare Romans 3:9, Romans 3:19. "That the promise by faith of Jesus Christ, etc." That the promise referred to in the transaction with Abraham, the promise of justification and life by faith in the Messiah. Here we see one design of the Law. It was to show that they could not be justified by their own works, to hedge up their way in regard to justification by their own righteousness, and to show them their need of a better righteousness. The Law accomplishes the same end now. It shows people that they are guilty; and it does it in order that they may be brought under the influence of the pure system of the gospel, and become interested in the promises which are connected with eternal salvation.

Verse 23

But before faith came - That is, the system of salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus. Faith here denotes the Christian religion, because faith is its distinguishing characteristic.

We were kept under the law - We, who were sinners; we, who have violated the Law. It is a general truth, that before the gospel was introduced, people were under the condemning sentence of the Law.

Shut up unto the faith - Enclosed by the Law with reference to the full and glorious revelation of a system of salvation by faith. The design and tendency of the Law was to shut us up to that as the only method of salvation. All other means failed. The Law condemned every other mode, and the Law condemned all who attempted to be justified in any other way. Man, therefore, was shut up to that as his last hope; and could look only to that for any possible prospect of salvation. The word which in this verse is rendered "were kept" ἐφρουρούμεθα ephrouroumethausually means to guard or watch, as in a castle, or as prisoners are guarded; and though the word should not be pressed too far in the interpretation, yet it implies that there wasa rigid scrutiny observed; that the Law guarded them; that there was no way of escape; and that they were shut up. as prisoners under sentence of death, to the only hope, which was that of pardons.

Unto the faith … - That was the only hope. The Law condemned them, and offered no hope of escape. Their only hope was in that system which was to be revealed through the Messiah, the system which extended forgiveness on the ground of faith in his atoning blood.

Verse 24

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster - The word rendered schoolmaster (παιδαγωγὸς paidagōgoswhence the word "pedagogue"), referred originally to a slave or freedman, to whose care boys were committed, and who accompanied them to the public schools. The idea here is not that of instructor, but there is reference to the office and duty of the "paedagogus" among the ancients. The office was usually intrusted to slaves or freedmen. It is true, that when the "paedagogus" was properly qualified, he assisted the children committed to his care in preparing their lessons. But still his main duty was not instruction, but it was to watch over the boys; to restrain them from evil and temptation; and to conduct them to the schools, where they might receive instruction. See, for illustrations of this, Wetstein, Bloomfield, etc. In the passage before us, the proper notion

of pedagogue is retained. In our sense of the word schoolmaster, Christ is the schoolmaster, and not the Law. The Law performs the office of the ancient pedagogue, to lead us to the teacher or the instructor. That teacher or instructor is Christ. The ways in which the Law does this may be the following:

(1) It restrains us and rebukes us, and keeps us as the ancient pedagogue did his boys.

(2) the whole law was designed to be introductory to Christ. The sacrifices and offerings were designed to shadow forth the Messiah, and to introduce him to the world.

(3) the moral law - the Law of God - shows people their sin and danger, and thus leads them to the Saviour. It condemns them, and thus prepares them to welcome the offer of pardon through a Redeemer.

(4) it still does this. The whole economy of the Jews was designed to do this and under the preaching of the gospel it is still done. People see that they are condemned; they are convinced by the Law that they cannot save themselves, and thus they are led to the Redeemer. The effect of the preached gospel is to show people their sins, and thus to be preparatory to the embracing of the offer of pardon. Hence, the importance of preaching the Law still; and hence, it is needful that people should be made to feel that they are sinners, in order that they may be prepared to embrace the offers of mercy; compare the note at Romans 10:4.

Verse 25

But after that faith is come - The scheme of salvation by faith. After that is revealed; see the note at Galatians 3:23.

We are no longer under a schoolmaster - Under the poedagogus, or pedagogue. We are not kept in restraint, and under bondage, and led along to another to receive instruction. We are directly under the great Teacher, the Instructor himself; and have a kind of freedom which we were not allowed before. The bondage and servitude have passed away; and we are free from the burdensome ceremonies and expensive rites (compare the note at Acts 15:10) of the Jewish law, and from the sense of condemnation which it imposes. This was true of the converts from Judaism to

Christianity - that they became free from the burdensome rites of the Law and it is true of all converts to the faith of Christ, that, having been made to see their sin by the Law, and having been conducted by it to the cross of the Redeemer, they are now made free.

Verse 26

For ye are all the children of God … - All who bear the Christian name - the converts from among the Jews and Gentiles alike; see the note at John 1:12. The idea here is, that they are no longer under tutors and governors; they are no longer subject to the direction and will of the "paedagogus"; they are arrived at age, and are admitted to the privileges of sons; see the note at Galatians 4:1. The language here is derived from the fact, that until the son arrived at age, he was in many respects not different from a servant. He was under laws and restraints; and subject to the will of another. When of age, he entered on the privileges of heirship, and was free to act for himself. Thus, under the Law, people were under restraints, and subject to heavy exactions. Under the gospel, they are free, and admitted to the privileges of the sons of God.

Verse 27

For as many of you - Whether by nature Jews or Gentiles.

As have been baptized into Christ - Or "unto" (εἰς eis) - the same preposition which in Galatians 3:24 is rendered unto) Christ. That is, they were baptized with reference to him, or receiving him as the Saviour; see this explained in the note at Romans 6:3.

Have put on Christ - That is, they have put on his sentiments, opinions, characteristic traits, etc., as a man clothes himself. This language was common among the ancient writers; see it explained in the note at Romans 13:14.

Verse 28

There is neither Jew nor Greek - All are on a level; all are saved in the same way; all are entitled to the same privileges. There is no favoritism on account of birth, beauty, or blood. All confess that they are sinners; all are saved by the merits of the same Saviour; all are admitted to the same privileges as children of God. The word "Greek" here is used to denote the Gentiles generally; since the whole world was divided by the Jews into "Jews and Greeks" - the Greeks being the foreign nation best known to them. The Syriac renders it here "Aramean," using the word to denote the Gentiles generally. The meaning is, that whatever was the birth, or rank, or

nation, or color, or complexion, all under the gospel were on a level. They were admitted to the same privileges, and endowed with the same hopes of eternal life. This does not mean that all the civil distinctions among people are to be disregarded.

It does not mean that no respect is to be shown to those in office, or to people in elevated rank. It does not mean that all are on a level in regard to talents, comforts, or wealth; but it means only that all people are on a level "in regard to religion." This is the sole point under discussion; and the interpretation should be limited to this. It is not a fact that people are on a level in all things, nor is it a fact that the gospel designs to break down all the distinctions of society. Paul means to teach that no man has any preference or advantage in the kingdom of God because he is a rich man, or because he is of elevated rank; no one is under any disadvantage because he is poor, or because he is ignorant, or a slave. All at the foot of the cross are sinners; all at the communion table are saved by the same grace; all who enter into heaven, will enter clothed in the same robes of salvation, and arranged, not as princes and nobles, and rich men and poor men, in separate orders and ranks, but mingling together as redeemed by the same blood, and arranged in ranks according to their eminence in holiness; compare my notes at Isaiah 56:8.

There is neither bond nor free - The condition of a free man does not give him any special claims or advantages in regard to religion; and the condition of a slave does not exclude him from the hope of heaven, or from being regarded as a child of God, on the same terms, and entitled to the same privileges as his master. In regard to religion, they are on the same level. They are alike sinners, and are alike saved by grace. They sit down at the same communion table; and they look forward to the same heaven. Christianity does not admit the one to favor because he is free, or exclude the other because he is a slave. Nor, when they are admitted to favor, does it give the one a right to lord it over the other, or to feel that he is of any more value in the eye of the Redeemer, or any nearer to his heart. The essential idea is, that they are on a level, and that they are admitted to the favor of God without respect to their external condition in society. I do not see any evidence in this passage that the Christian religion designed to abolish slavery, any more than I do in the following phrase, "there is neither male nor female," that it was intended to abolish the distinction of the sexes; nor do I see in this passage any evidence that there should not be proper respect

shown by the servant to his master, though both of them are Christians, any more than there is in the following phrase, that suitable respect should not be shown in the contact with the sexes; compare 1 Timothy 6:1-5. But the proof is explicit, that masters and slaves may alike become Christians on the same terms, and are, in regard to their religious privileges and hopes, on a level. No special favor is shown to the one, in the matter of salvation, because he is free, nor is the other excluded because he is a slave. And from this it follows:

(1) That they should sit down to the same communion table. There should be no invidious and odious distinctions there.

(2) they should be regarded alike as Christian brethren in the house of God, and should be addressed and treated accordingly.

(3) the slave should excite the interest, and receive the watchful care of the pastor, as well as his master. Indeed, he may need it more; and from his ignorance, and the fewness of his opportunities, it may be proper that special attention should be bestowed on him.

In regard to this doctrine of Christianity, that there is neither "bond nor free" among those who are saved, or that all are on a level in regard to salvation, we may remark further:

(1) That it is unique to Christianity. All other systems of religion and philosophy make different ranks, and endeavor to promote the distinctions of caste among people. They teach that certain people are the favorites of heaven, in virtue of their birth or their rank in life, or that they have special facilities for salvation. Thus, in India the Brahmin is regarded as, by his birth, the favorite of heaven, and all others are supposed to be of a degraded rank. The great effort of people, in their systems of religion and philosophy, has been to show that there are favored ranks and classes, and to make permanent distinctions on account of birth and blood. Christianity regards all people as made of one blood to dwell on all the face of the earth (see the note at Acts 17:26), and esteems them all to be equal in the matter of salvation; and whatever notions of equality prevail in the world are to be traced to the influence of the Christian religion.

(2) if people are regarded as equal before God, and as entitled to the same privileges of salvation; if there is in the great work of redemption "neither bond nor free," and those who are in the Church are on a level, then such a view will induce a master to treat his slave with kindness, when that relation exists. The master who has any right feelings, will regard his servant as a Christian brother, redeemed by the same blood as himself, and destined to the same heaven. He will esteem him not as "a chattel" or "a thing," or as a piece "of property," but he will regard him as an immortal being, destined with himself to the same heaven, and about to sit down with him in the realms of glory. How can he treat such a brother with unkindness or severity? How can he rise from the same communion table with him, and give way to violent feelings against him, and regard him and treat him as if he were a brute? And Christianity, by the same principle that "the slave is a brother in the Lord," will do more to mitigate the horrors of slavery, than all the enactments that people can make, and all the other views and doctrines which can be made to prevail in society; see Philemon 1:16.

(3) this doctrine would lead to universal emancipation. All are on a level before God. In the kingdom of Jesus there is neither bond nor free. One is as much an object of favor as another. With this feeling, how can a Christian hold his fellow Christian in bondage? How can he regard as "a chattel" or "a thing," one who, like himself, is an heir of glory? How can he sell him on whom the blood of Jesus has been sprinkled? Let him feel that his slave is his equal in the sight of God; that with himself he is an heir of glory; that together they are soon to stand on Mount Zion above; that the slave is an immortal being, and has been redeemed by the blood of Calvary, and how can he hold such a being in bondage, and how can he transfer him from place to place and from hand to hand for gold? If all masters and all slaves were to become Christians, slavery would at once cease; and the prevalence of the single principle before us would put an end to all the ways in which man oppresses his fellow-man. Accordingly, it is well known that in about three centuries the influence of Christianity banished slavery from the Roman empire.

There is neither male nor female - Neither the male nor the female have any special advantages for salvation. There are no favors shown on account of sex. Both sexes are, in this respect, on a level. This does not mean, of course, that the sexes are to be regarded as in all respects equal;

nor can it mean that the two sexes may not have special duties and privileges in other respects. It does not prove that one of the sexes may not perform important offices in the church, which would not be proper for the other. It does not prove that the duties of the ministry are to be performed by the female sex, nor that the various duties of domestic life, nor the various offices of society, should be performed without any reference to the distinction of sex. The interpretation should be confined to the matter under consideration; and the passage proves only that in regard to salvation they are on a level.

One sex is not to be regarded as the special favorite of heaven, and the other to be excluded. Christianity thus elevates the female sex to an equality with the male, on the most important of all interests; and it has in this way made most important changes in the world wherever it has prevailed. Everywhere but in connection with the Christian religion, woman has been degraded. She has been kept in ignorance. She has been treated as an inferior in all respects. She has been doomed to unpitied drudgery, and ignorance, and toil. So she was among the ancient Greeks and Romans; so she is among the savages of America; so she is in China, and India, and in the islands of the sea; so she is regarded in the Koran, and in all Muslim countries. It is Christianity alone which has elevated her; and nowhere on earth does man regard the mother of his children as an intelligent companion and friend, except where the influence of the Christian religion has been felt. At the communion table, at the foot of the cross, and in the hopes of heaven, she is on a level with man; and this fact diffuses a mild, and purifying, and elevating influence over all the relations of life. Woman has been raised from deep degradation by the influence of Christianity; and, let me add, she has everywhere acknowledged the debt of gratitude, and devoted herself, as under a deep sense of obligation, to lessening the burdens of humanity, and to the work of elevating the degraded, instructing the ignorant, and comforting the afflicted, all over the world. Never has a debt been better repaid, or the advantages of elevating one portion of the race been more apparent.

For ye are all one in Christ Jesus - You are all equally accepted through the Lord Jesus Christ; or you are all on the same level, and entitled to the same privileges in your Christian profession. Bond and free, male and female, Jew and Greek, are admitted to equal privileges, and are equally acceptable before God. And the church of God, no matter what may be the

complexion, the country, the habits, or the rank of its members, is one. Every man, on whom is the image and the blood of Christ, is a brother to every other one who bears that image, and should be treated accordingly. What an influence would be excited in the breaking up of the distinctions of rank and caste among people; what an effect in abolishing the prejudice on account of color and country, if this were universally believed and felt!

Verse 29

And if ye be Christ's - If you belong to the Messiah, and are interested in his work.

Then are ye Abraham's seed - The promise made to Abraham related to the Messiah. It was a promise that in him all should be blessed. Abraham believed in that Messiah, and was distinguished for his faith in him who was to come. If they believed in Christ, therefore, they showed that they were the spiritual descendants of Abraham. No matter whether they were Jews or Gentiles; whether they had been circumcised or not, they had the same spirit which he evinced, and were interested in the promises made to him.

And heirs according to the promise - See Romans 8:17. Are heirs of God. You inherit the blessings promised to Abraham, and partake of the felicity to which he looked forward. You have become truly heirs of God, and this is in accordance with the promise made to Abraham. It is not by the obedience of the Law; it is by faith - in the same way that Abraham possessed the blessing; an arrangement before the giving of the Law, and therefore one that may include all, whether Jews or Gentiles. All are on a level; and all are alike the children of God, and in the same manner, and on the same terms that Abraham was.

GALATIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

The design of this chapter is, to show the effect of being under the Law, and the inconsistency of that kind of bondage or servitude with the freedom which is vouchsafed to the true children of God by the gospel. It is, in accordance with the whole drift of the Epistle, to recall the Galatians to just views of the gospel; and to convince them of their error in returning to the practice of the Mosaic rites and customs. In the previous chapter he had shown them that believers in the gospel were the true children of Abraham; that they had been delivered from the curse of the Law; that the Law was a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ, and that they were all the children of God. To illustrate this further, and to show them the true nature of the freedom which they had as the children of God, is the design of the argument in this chapter. He therefore states:

(1) That it was under the gospel only that they received the full advantages of freedom; Galatians 4:1-5. Before Christ came, indeed, there were true children of God, and heirs of life. But they were in the condition of minors; they had not the privileges of sons. An heir to a great estate, says the apostle Galatians 4:1-2, is treated substantially as if he were a servant. He is under tutors and governors: he is not permitted to enter on his inheritance; he is kept under the restraint of law. So it was with the people of God under the Law of Moses. They were under restraints, and were admitted to comparatively few of the privileges of the children of God. But Christ came to redeem those who were under the Law, and to place them in the elevated condition of adopted sons; Galatians 4:4-5. They were no longer servants; and it was as unreasonable that they should conform again to the Mosaic rites and customs, as it would be for the heir of full age, and who has entered on his inheritance, to return to the condition of minorship, and to be placed again under tutors and governors, and to be treated as a servant.

(2) as sons of God, God had sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, and they were enabled to cry Abba, Father. They were no longer servants, but heirs of God, and should avail themselves of the privileges of heirs; Galatians 4:6-7.

(3) sustaining this relation, and being admitted to these privileges, the apostle remonstrates with them for returning again to the "weak and beggarly elements" of the former dispensation - the condition of servitude to rites and customs in which they were before they embraced the gospel; Galatians 4:8-11. When they were ignorant of God, they served those who were no gods, and there was some excuse for that; Galatians 4:8. But now they had known God, they were acquainted with his laws; they were admitted to the privileges of his children; they were made free, and there could be no excuse for returning again to the bondage of those who had no true knowledge of the liberty which the gospel gave. Yet they observed days and times as though these were binding, and they had never been freed from them Galatians 4:10; and the apostle says, that he is afraid that his labors bestowed on them, to make them acquainted with the plan of redemption, had been in vain.

(4) to bring them to a just sense of their error, he reminds theta of their former attachment to him, Galatians 4:12-20. He had indeed preached to them amidst much infirmity, and much that was suited to prejudice them against him Galatians 4:13; but they had disregarded that, and had evinced toward him the highest proofs of attachment - so, much so, that they had received him as an angel of God Galatians 4:14, and had been ready to pluck out their own eyes to give them to him, Galatians 4:15. With great force, therefore, he asks them why they had changed their views toward him so far as to forsake his doctrines? Had he become their enemy by telling the truth? Galatians 4:16. He tenderly addresses them, therefore, as little children, and says, that he has the deepest solicitude for their welfare, and the deepest anxiety on account of their danger - a solicitude which he compares Galatians 4:19, with the pains of childbirth.

(5) in order to enforce the whole subject, and to show the true nature of the conformity to the Law compared with the liberty of the gospel, he allegorizes an interesting part of the Mosaic history - the history of the two children of Abraham; Galatians 4:21-31. The condition of Hagar - a slave - under the command of a master - harshly treated - cast out and disowned, was an apt illustration of the condition of those who were under the servitude of the Law. It would strikingly represent Mount Sinai, and the Law that was promulgated there, and the condition of those who were under

the Law. That, too, was a condition of servitude. The Law was stern, and showed no mercy. It was like a master of a slave, and would treat those who were under it with a rigidness that might be compared with the condition of Hagar and her son; Galatians 4:24-25. That same Mount Sinai also was a fair representation of Jerusalem as it was then - a city full of rites and ceremonies, where the Law reigned with rigor, where, there was a burdensome system of religion, and where there was none of the freedom which the gospel would furnish; Galatians 4:25.

On the other hand, the children of the free woman were an apt illustration of those who were made free from the oppressive ceremonies of the Law by the gospel; Galatians 4:22. That Jerusalem was free. The new system from heaven was one of liberty and rejoicing; Galatians 4:26-27. Christians were, like Isaac, the children of promise, and were not slaves to the Law; Galatians 4:28, Galatians 4:31. And as there was a command Galatians 4:30 to east out the bondwoman and her son, so the command now was to reject all that would bring the mind into ignoble servitude, and prevent its enjoying the full freedom of the gospel. The whole argument is, that it would be as unreasonable for those who were Christians to submit again to the Jewish rites and ceremonies, as it would be for a freeman to sell himself into slavery. And the design of the whole is, to recall them from the conformity to Jewish rites and customs, and from their regarding them as now binding on Christians.

Verse 1

Now I say - He had before said Galatians 3:24-25 that while they were under the Law they were in a state of minority. This sentiment he proceeds further to illustrate by showing the true condition of one who was a minor.

That the heir - Any heir to an estate, or one who has a prospect of an inheritance. No matter how great is the estate; no matter how wealthy his father; no matter to how elevated a rank he may be raised on the moment that he enters on his inheritance, yet until that time he is in the condition of a servant.

As long as he is a child - Until he arrives at the age. The word rendered "child" (νήπιοι nēpioi) properly means an infant; literally, "one not speaking" (νη nēinsep. *un*, ἔπος epos), and hence, a child or babe, but

without any definite limitation - Robinson. It is used as the word "infant" is with us in law, to denote "a minor."

Differeth nothing from a servant - That is, he has no more control of his property; he has it not at his command. This does not mean that he does not differ in any respect, but only that in the matter under consideration he does not differ. He differs in his prospects of inheriting the property, and in the affections of the father, and usually in the advantages of education, and in the respect and attention shown him. but in regard to property, he does not differ, and he is like a servant, under the control and direction of others.

Though he be lord of all - That is, in prospect. He has a prospective right to all the property, which no one else has. The word "lord" here (κύριος kurios), is used in the same sense in which it is often in the Scriptures, to denote master or owner. The idea which this is designed to illustrate is, that the condition of the Jews before the coming of the Messiah was inferior in many respects to what the condition of the friends of God would be under him - as inferior as the condition of an heir was before he was of age, to what it would be when he should enter on his inheritance. The Jews claimed, indeed, that they were the children or the sons of God, a title which the apostle would not withhold from the pious part of the nation; but it was a condition in which they had not entered on the full inheritance, and which was far inferior to that of those who had embraced the Messiah, and who were admitted to the full privileges of sonship. They were indeed heirs. They were interested in the promises. But still they were in a condition of comparative servitude, and could be made free only by the gospel.

Verse 2

But is under - Is subject to their control and direction.

Tutors - The word tutor with us properly means instructor. But this is not quite the sense of the original. The word (επίτροπος epitropos); properly means a steward, manager, agent; Matthew 20:8; Luke 8:3. As used here, it refers to one - usually a slave or a freedman - to whose care the boys of a family were committed, who trained them up, accompanied them to school, or sometimes instructed them at home; compare the note at Galatians 3:24. Such a one would have the control of them.

And governors - This word (οἰκόνομος oikonomos) means a house-manager, an overseer, a steward. It properly refers to one who had authority over the slaves or servants of a family, to assign them their tasks and

portions. They generally, also, had the management of the affairs of the household, and of the accounts. They were commonly slaves, who were entrusted with this office as a reward for fidelity; though sometimes free persons were employed; Luke 16:1, Luke 16:3, Luke 16:8. These persons had also charge of the sons of a family, probably in respect to their pecuniary matters, and thus differed from those called tutors. It is not necessary, however, to mark the difference in the words with great accuracy. The general meaning of the apostle is, that the heir was under government and restraint.

d **Until the time appointed of the father -** The time fixed for his entering on the inheritance. The time when he chose to give him his portion of the property. The law with us fixes the age at twenty-one when a son shall be at liberty to manage for himself. Other countries have affixed other times. But still, the time when the son shall inherit the father‘s property must be fixed by the father himself if he is living, or may be fixed by his will if he is deceased. The son cannot claim the property when he comes of age.

Verse 3

Even so we - We who were Jews - for so I think the word here is to be limited, and not extended to the pagan, as Bloomfield supposes. The reasons for limiting it are:

(1)That the pagans in no sense sustained such a relation to the Law and promises of Gad as is here supposed;

(2)Such an interpretation would not be pertinent to the design of Paul. He is stating reasons why there should not be subjection to the laws of Moses, and his argument is, that that condition was like that of bondage or minorship.

When we were children - (νήπιοι nēpioi). Minors; see the note at Galatians 4:1. The word is not υἱοι huioi“sons;” but the idea is, that they were in a state of non-age; and though heirs, yet were under severe discipline and regimen. They were under a kind of government that was suited to that state, and not to the condition of those who had entered on their inheritance.

Were in bondage - In a state of servitude. Treated as servants or slaves.

Under the elements of the world - Margin, Rudiments. The word rendered “elements” (sing. στοιχεῖον stoicheion), properly means a row or

series; a little step; a pin or peg, as the gnomen of a dial; and then anything "elementary," as a sound, a letter. It then denotes the elements or rudiments of any kind of instruction, and in the New Testament is applied to the first lessons or principles of religion; Hebrews 5:12. It is applied to the elements or component parts of the physical world; 2 Peter 3:10, 2 Peter 3:12. Here the figure is kept up of the reference to the infant Galatians 4:1, Galatians 4:3; and the idea is, that lessons were taught under the Jewish system adapted to their nonage - to a state of childhood. They were treated as children under tutors and governors. The phrase "the elements of the world," occurs also in Colossians 2:8, Colossians 2:20. In Galatians 4:9, Paul speaks of these lessons as "beggarly elements," referring to the same thing as here.

Different opinions have been held as to the reason why the Jewish institutions are here called "the elements of the world." Rosenmuller supposes it was because many of those rites were common to the Jews and to the pagan - as they also had altars, sacrifices, temples, libations, etc. Doddridge supposes it was because those rites were adapted to the low conceptions of children, who were most affected with sensible objects, and have no taste for spiritual and heavenly things. Locke supposes it was because those institutions led them not beyond this world, or into the possession and taste of their heavenly inheritance. It is probable that there is allusion to the Jewish manner of speaking, so common in the Scriptures, where this world is opposed to the kingdom of God, and where it is spoken of as transient and worthless compared with the future glory. The world is fading, unsatisfactory, temporary. In allusion to this common use of the word, the Jewish institutions are called the wordly rudiments. It is not that they were in themselves evil - for that is not true; it is not that they were adapted to foster a worldly spirit - for that is not true; it is not that they had their origin from this world - for that is not true; nor is it from the fact that they resembled the institutions of the pagan world - for that is as little true; but it is, that, like the things of the world, they were transient, temporary, and of little value. They were unsatisfactory in their nature, and were soon to pass away, and to give place to a better system - as the things of this world are soon to give place to heaven.

Verse 4

But when the fulness of the time was come - The full time appointed by the Father; the completion (filling up, πλήρωμα plērōmaof the designated period for the coming of the Messiah; see the Isaiah 49:7-8 notes; 2 Corinthians 6:2 note. The sense is, that the time which had been predicted, and when it was proper that he should come, was complete. The exact period had arrived when all things were ready for his coming. It is often asked why he did not come sooner, and why mankind did not have the benefit of his incarnation and atonement immediately after the fall? Why were four thousand dark and gloomy years allowed to roll on, and the world suffered to sink deeper and deeper in ignorance and sin? To these questions perhaps no answer entirely satisfactory can be given. God undoubtedly saw reasons which we cannot; see, and reasons which we shall approve if they are disclosed to us.

It may be observed, however, that this delay of redemption was in entire accordance with the whole system of divine arrangements, and with all the divine interpositions in favor of men. People are suffered long to pine in want, to suffer from disease, to encounter the evils of ignorance, before interposition is granted. On all the subjects connected with human comfort and improvement, the same questions may be asked as on the subject of redemption. Why was the invention of the art of printing so long delayed, and people suffered to remain in ignorance? Why was the discovery of vaccination delayed so long, and millions suffered to die who might have been saved? Why was not the bark of Peru sooner known, and why did so many millions die who might have been saved by its use? So of most of the medicines, and of the arts and inventions that go to ward off disease, and to promote the intelligence, the comfort, and the salvation of man. In respect to all of these, it may be true that they are made known at the very best time, the time that will on the whole most advance the welfare of the race. And so of the incarnation and work of the Saviour. It was seen by God to be the best time, the time when on the whole the race would be most benefited by his coming. Even with our limited and imperfect vision, we can see the following things in regard to its being the most fit and proper time.

(1) it was just the time when all the prophecies centerd in him, and when there could be no doubt about their fulfillment. It was important that such an event should be predicted in order that there might be full evidence that he came from heaven; and yet in order that prophecy may be seen to have

been uttered by God, it must be so far before the event as to make it impossible to have been the result of mere human conjecture.

(2) it was proper that the world should be brought to see its need of a Saviour, and that a fair and satisfactory opportunity should be given to men to try all other schemes of salvation that they might be prepared to welcome this. This had been done. Four thousand years were sufficient to show to man his own powers, and to give him an opportunity to devise some scheme of salvation. The opportunity had been furnished under every circumstance that could be deemed favorable. The most profound and splendid talent of the world had been brought to bear on it, especially in Greece and Rome; and ample Opportunity had been given to make a fair trial of the various systems of religion devised on national happiness and individual welfare; their power to meet and arrest crime; to purify the heart; to promote public morals, and to support man in his trials; their power to conduct him to the true God, and to give him a wellfounded hope of immortality. All had failed; and then it was a proper time for the Son of God to come and to reveal a better system.

(3) it was a time when the world was at peace. The temple of Janus, closed only in times of peace, was then shut, though it had been but once closed before during the Roman history. What an appropriate time for the "Prince of Peace" to come! The world was, to a great extent, under the Roman sceptre. Communications between different parts of the world were then more rapid and secure than they had been at any former period, and the gospel could be more easily propagated. Further, the Jews were scattered in almost all lands, acquainted with the promises, looking for the Messiah, furnishing facilities to their own countrymen the apostles to preach the gospel in numerous synagogues, and qualified, if they embraced the Messiah, to become most zealous and devoted missionaries. The same language, the Greek, was, moreover, after the time of Alexander the Great, the common language of no small part of the world, or at least was spoken and understood among a considerable portion of the nations of the earth. At no period before had there been so extensive a use of the same language.

(4) it was a proper period to make the new system known. It accorded with the benevolence of God, that it should be delayed no longer than that

the world should be in a suitable state for receiving the Redeemer. When that period, therefore, had arrived, God did not delay, but sent his Son on the great work of the world‘s redemption.

God sent forth his Son - This implies that the Son of God had an existence before his incarnation; see John 16:28. The Saviour is often represented as sent into the world, and as coming forth from God.

Made of a woman - In human nature; born of a woman, This also implies that he had another nature than that which was derived from the woman. On the supposition that he was a mere man, how unmeaning would this assertion be! How natural to ask, in what other way could he appear than to be born of a woman? Why was he particularly designated as coming into the world in this manner? How strange would it sound if it were said, “In the sixteenth century came Faustus Socinus preaching Unitarianism, made of a woman!” or, “In the eighteenth century came Dr. Joseph Priestley, born of a woman, preaching the doctrines of Socinus!” How else could they appear? would be the natural inquiry. What was there special in their birth and origin that rendered such language necessary? The language implies that there were other ways in which the Saviour might have come; that there was something special in the fact that he was born of a woman; and that there was some special reason why that fact should be made prominently a matter of record. The promise was Genesis 3:15 that the Messiah should be the “seed” or the descendant of woman; and Paul probably here alludes to the fulfillment of that promise.

Made under the law - As one of the human race, partaking of human nature, he was subject to the Law of God. As a man he was hound by its requirements, and subject to its control. He took his place under the Law that he might accomplish an important purpose for those who were under it. He made himself subject to it that he might become one of them, and secure their redemption.

Verse 5

To redeem them - By his death as an atoning sacrifice; see the note at Galatians 3:13.

Them that were under the law - Sinners, who had violated the Law, and who were exposed to its dread penalty.

That we might receive the adoption of sons - Be adopted as the sons or the children of God; see John 1:12, note; Romans 8:15, note.

Verse 6

And because ye are sons - As a consequence of your being adopted into the family of God, and being regarded as his sons. It follows as a part of his purpose of adoption that his children shall have the spirit of the Lord Jesus.

The Spirit of his Son - The spirit of the Lord Jesus; the spirit which animated him, or which he evinced. The idea is, that as the Lord Jesus was enabled to approach God with the language of endearment and love, so they would be. He, being the true and exalted Son of God, had the spirit appropriate to such a relation; they being adopted, and made like him, have the same spirit. The "spirit" here referred to does not mean, as I suppose: the Holy Spirit as such; nor the miraculous endowments of the Holy Spirit, but the spirit which made them like the Lord Jesus; the spirit by which they were enabled to approach God as his children, and use the reverent, and tender, and affectionate language of a child addressing a father. It is that language used by Christians when they have evidence of adoption; the expression of the warm, and elevated, and glowing emotions which they have when they can approach God as their God, and address him as their Father.

Crying - That is, the spirit thus cries, Πνεῦμα Pneuma- κράζον). Compare the notes, Romans 8:26-27. In Romans 8:15 it is, "wherewith we cry."

Abba, Father - See the note at Romans 8:15. It is said in the Babylonian Gemara, a Jewish work, that it was not permitted slaves to use the title of Abba in addressing the master of the family to which they belonged. If so, then the language which Christians are here represented as using is the language of freemen, and denotes that they are not under the servitude of sin.

Verse 7

Wherefore - In consequence of this privilege of addressing God as your Father.

Thou art no more - You who are Christians.

A servant - In the servitude of sin; or treated as a servant by being bound under the oppressive rites and ceremonies of the Law; compare the note at Galatians 4:3

But a son - A child of God, adopted into his family, and to be treated as a son.

And if a son … - Entitled to all the privileges of a son, and of course to be regarded as an heir through the Redeemer, and with him. See the sentiment here expressed explained in the the note at Romans 8:17.

Verse 8

Howbeit - But, ἀλλὰ allaThe address in this verse and the following is evidently to the portion of the Galatians who had been pagan. This is probably indicated by the particle ἀλλὰ allabut denoting a transition. In the previous verses Paul had evidently had the Jewish converts more particularly in his eye, and had described their former condition as one of servitude to the Mosaic rites and customs, and had shown the inconveniences of that condition, compared with the freedom imparted by the gospel. To complete the description, he refers also to the Gentiles, as a condition of worse servitude still, and shows Galatians 4:9 the absurdity of their turning back to a state of bondage of any kind, after the glorious deliverance which they had obtained from the degrading servitude of pagan rites. The sense is, "If the Jews were in such a state of servitude, how much more galling and severe was that of those who had been pagans. Yet fron that servitude the gospel had delivered them, and made them freemen. How absurd now to go back to a state of vassalage, and to become servants under the oppressive rites of the Jewish law!"

When ye knew not God - In your state of paganism, when you had no knowledge of the true God and of his service. The object is not to apologize for what they did, because they did not know God; it is to state the fact that they were in a state of gross and galling servitude.

Ye did service - This does not express the force of the original. The meaning is, "Ye were "slaves" to (ἐδουλεύσατε edouleusate); you were in a condition of servitude, as opposed to the freedom of the gospel;" compare Galatians 4:3, where the same word is used to describe the state of the Jews. The drift of the apostle is, to show that the Jews and Gentiles, before their conversion to Christianity, were in a state of vassalage or servitude, and that it was absurd in the highest degree to return to that condition again.

Unto them which by nature are no gods - Idols, or false gods. The expression "by nature," φύσει phuseiaccording to Grotius, means, "in fact, *re ipsa*." The sense is, that they really had no pretensions to divinity. Many of them were imaginary beings; many were the objects of creation, as the sun, and winds, and streams; and many were departed heroes that had been exalted to be objects of worship. Yet the servitude was real. It fettered their

faculties; controlled their powers; bound their imagination, and commanded their time and property, and made them slaves. Idolatry is always slavery; and the servitude of sinners to their passions and appetites, to lust and gold, and ambition, is not less galling and severe than was the servitude to the pagan gods or the Jewish rites, or than is the servitude of the African now to a harsh and cruel master. Of all Christians it may be said that before their conversion they "did service," or were slaves to harsh and cruel masters; and nothing but the gospel has made them free. It may be added, that the chains of idolatry all over the world are as fast riveted and as galling as they were in Galatia, and that nothing but the same gospel which Paul preached there can break those chains and restore man to freedom.

Verse 9

But now … - The sense is, that since they had been made free from their ignoble servitude in the worship of false gods, and had been admitted to the freedom found in the worship of the true God, it was absurd that they should return again to that which was truly slavery or bondage, the observance of the rites of the Jewish law.

That ye have known God - The true God, and the ease and freedom of his service in the gospel.

Or rather are known of God - The sense is, "Or, to speak more accurately or precisely, are known by God." The object of this correction is to avoid the impression which might be derived from the former phrase that their acquaintance with God was owing to themselves. He therefore states, that it was rather that they were known of God; that it was all owing to him that they had been brought to an acquaintance with himself. Perhaps, also, he means to bring into view the idea that it was a favor and privilege to be known by God, and that therefore it was the more absurd to turn back to the weak and beggarly elements.

How turn ye again - Margin, "Back." "How is it that you are returning to such a bondage?" The question implies surprise and indignation that they should do it.

To the weak and beggarly elements - To the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law, imposing a servitude really not less severe than the customs of paganism. On the word elements, see the note at Galatians 4:3. They are called "weak" because they had no power to save the soul; no power to justify the sinner before God. They are called "beggarly" (Greek πτωχὰ ptōchapoor), because they could not impart spiritual riches. They really

could confer few benefits on man. Or it may be, as Locke supposes, because the Law kept people in the poor estate of pupils from the full enjoyment of the inheritance; Galatians 4:1-3.

Whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage - As if you had a wish to be under servitude. The absurdity is as great as it would be for a man who had been freed from slavery to desire his chains again. They had been freed by the gospel from the galling servitude of paganism, and they now again had sunk into the Jewish observances, as if they preferred slavery to freedom, and were willing to go from one form of it to another. The main idea is, that it is absurd for people who have been made free by the gospel to go back again into any kind of servitude or bondage. We may apply it to Christians now. Many sink into a kind of servitude not less galling than was that to sin before their conversion. Some become the slaves of mere ceremonies and forms in religion. Some are slaves to fashion, and the world still rules them with the hand of a tyrant. They have escaped, it may be, from the galling chains of ambition, and degrading vice, and low sensuality; but they became slaves to the love of money, or of dress, or of the fashions of the world, as if they loved slavery and chains; and they seem no more able to break loose than the slave is to break the bonds which bind him. And some are slaves to some expensive and foolish habit. Professed Christians, and Christian ministers too, become slaves to the disgusting and loathsome habit of using tobacco, bound by a servitude as galling and as firm as that which ever shackled the limbs of an African. I grieve to add also that many professed Christians are slaves to the habit of "sitting long at the wine" and indulging in it freely. O that such knew the liberty of Christian freedom, and would break away from all such shackles, and show how the gospel frees people from all foolish and absurd customs!

Verse 10

Ye observe - The object of this verse is to specify some of the things to which they had become enslaved.

Days - The days here referred to are doubtless the days of the Jewish festivals. They had numerous days of such observances, and in addition to those specified in the Old Testament, the Jews had added many others as days commemorative of the destruction and rebuilding of the temple, and of other important events in their history. It is not a fair interpretation of this to suppose that the apostle refers to the Sabbath, properly so called, for this was a part of the Decalogue; and was observed by the Saviour himself, and

by the apostles also. It is a fair interpretation to apply it to all those days which are not commanded to be kept holy in the Scriptures; and hence, the passage is as applicable to the observance of saints‘ days, and days in honor of particular events in sacred history, as to the days observed by the Galatians. There is as real servitude in the observance of the numerous festivals, and fasts in the papal communion and in some Protestant churches, as there was in the observance of the days in the Jewish ecclesiastical calendar, and for anything that I can see, such observances are as inconsistent now with the freedom of the gospel as they were in the time of Paul. We should observe as seasons of holy time what it can be proved God has commanded us, and no more.

And months - The festivals of the new moon, kept by the Jews. Numbers 10:10; Numbers 28:11-14. On this festival, in addition to the daily sacrifice, two bullocks, a ram, and seven sheep of a year old were offered in sacrifice. The appearance of the new-moon was announced by the sound of trumpets. See Jahn, Archae. 352.

And times - Stated times; festivals returning periodically, as the Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. See Jahn, *Archae*. chap. 3. 346-360.

And years - The sabbatical year, or the year of jubilee. See Jahn as above.

Verse 11

I am afraid of you … - I have fears respecting you. His fears were that they had no genuine Christian principle. They had been so easily perverted and turned back to the servitude of ceremonies and rites, that he was apprehensive that there could be no real Christian principle in the case. What pastor has not often had such fears of his people, when he sees them turn to the weak and beggarly elements of the world, or when, after having "run well," he sees them become the slaves of fashion, or of some habit inconsistent with the simplicity of the gospel?

Verse 12

Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am … - There is great brevity in this passage, and no little obscurity, and a great many different interpretations have been given of it by commentators. The various views expressed may be seen in Bloomfield‘s Crit. Dig. Locke renders it, "Let you and I be as if we were all one, Think yourselves to be very me; as I in my own mind put no difference at all between you and myself." Koppe explains it thus:

Imitate my example; for I, though a Jew by birth, care no more for Jewish rites than you." Rosenmuller explains it, "Imitate my manner of life in rejecting the Jewish rites; as I, having renounced the Jewish rites, was much like you when I preached the gospel to you." Other interpretations may be seen in Chandler, Doddridge, Calvin, etc. In our version there seems to be an impropriety of expression; for if he was as they were it would seem to be a matter of course that they would be like him, or would resemble him. The sense of the passage, however, it seems to me cannot be difficult. The reference is doubtless to the Jewish rites and customs, and to the question whether they were binding on Christians. Paul's object is to persuade them to abandon them. He appeals to them, therefore, by his own example. And it means evidently, "Imitate me in this thing. Follow my example, and yield no conformity to those rites and customs." The ground on which he asks them to imitate him may be either:

(1)That he had abandoned them or,

(2)Because he asks them to yield a point to him.

He had done so in many instances for their welfare, and had made many sacrifices for their salvation, and he now asks them to yield this one point, and to become as he was, and to cease these Jewish observances, as he had done.

For I am as ye are - Greek "For I as ye." This means, I suppose, "For I have conformed to your customs in many things. I have abandoned my own peculiarities; given up my customs as far as possible; conformed to you as Gentiles as far as I could do, in order to benefit and save you. I have laid aside the uniqueness of the Jew on the principle of becoming all things to all men (Notes, 1 Corinthians 9:20-22), in order that I might save you. I ask in return only the slight sacrifice that you will now become like me in the matter under consideration."

Ye have not injured me at all - "It is not a personal matter. I have no cause of complaint. You have done me no personal wrong. There is no variance between us; no unkind feeling; no injury done as individuals. I may, therefore, with the more freedom, ask you to yield this point, when I assure you that I do not feel personally injured. I have no wrong to complain of, and I ask it on higher grounds than would be an individual request: it is for your good, and the good of the great cause." When Christians turn away from the truth, and disregard the instructions and exhortations of pastors, and become conformed to the world, it is not a

personal matter, or a matter of personal offence to them, painful as it may be to them. They have no special reason to say that they are personally injured. It is a higher matter. The cause suffers. The interests of religion are injured. The church at large is offended, and the Saviour is "wounded in the house of his friends." Conformity to the world, or a lapse into some sin, is a public offence, and should be regarded as an injury done to the cause of the Redeemer. It shows the magnanimity of Paul, that though they had abandoned his doctrines, and forgotten his love and his toils in their welfare, he did not regard it as a personal offence, and did not consider himself personally injured. An ambitious man or an impostor would have made that the main, if not the only thing.

Verse 13

Ye know how - To show them the folly of their embracing the new views which they had adopted, he reminds them of past times, and particularly of the strength of the attachment which they had evinced for him in former days.

Through infirmity of the flesh - Greek "Weakness" (ἀσθένειαν astheneian); compare the 1 Corinthians 2:3 note; 2 Corinthians 10:10; 2 Corinthians 12:7 notes.

Verse 14

And my temptation - "My trial," the thing which was to me a trial and calamity. The meaning is, that he was afflicted with various calamities and infirmities, but that this did not hinder their receiving him as an angel from heaven. There is, however, a considerable variety in the mss. on this verse. Many mss., instead of "my temptation," read "your temptation;" and Mill maintains that this is the true reading. Griesbach hesitates between the two. But it is not very important to determine which is the true reading. If it should be "your," then it means that they were tempted by his infirmities to reject him; and so it amounts to about the same thing. The general sense is, that he had some bodily infirmity, perhaps some periodically returning disease, that was a great trial to him, which they bore with, with great patience and affection. What that was, he has not informed us, and conjecture is vain.

But received me as an angel of God - With the utmost respect, as if I had been an angel sent from God.

Even as Christ Jesus - As you would have done the Redeemer himself. Learn hence:

(1) That the Lord Jesus is superior to an angel of God.

(2) that the highest proof of attachment to a minister, is to receive him as the Saviour would be received.

(3) it showed their attachment to the Lord Jesus, that they received his apostle as they would have received the Saviour himself; compare Matthew 10:40.

Verse 15

Where is then the blessedness - Margin, "What was" - in accordance with the Greek. The words "ye spake of" are not in the Greek, and should have been printed in italics. But they obscure the sense at any rate. This is not to be regarded as a question, asking what had become of the blessedness, implying that it had departed; but it is rather to be regarded as an exclamation, referring to the happiness of that moment, and their affection and joy when they thus received him. "What blessedness you had then! How happy was that moment! What tenderness of affection! What overflowing joy!" It was a time full of joy, and love, and affectionate confidence. So Tyndale well renders it, "How happy were ye then!" In this interpretation, Doddridge, Rosenmuller, Bloomfield, Koppe, Chandler, and others concur. Locke renders it, "What benedictions did you then pour out on me!"

For I bear you record - I testify.

Ye would have plucked out your own eyes … - No higher proof of attachment could have been given. They loved him so much, that they would have given to him anything, however dear; they would have done anything to contribute to his welfare. How changed, now that they had abandoned his doctrines, and yielded themselves to the guidance of those who taught a wholly different doctrine!

Verse 16

Am I therefore become your enemy … - Is my telling you the truth in regard to the tendency of the doctrines which you have embraced, and the character of those who have led you astray, and your own error, a proof that I have ceased to be your friend? How apt are we to feel that the man who tells us of our faults is our enemy! How apt are we to treat him coldly, and to "cut his acquaintance," and to regard him with dislike! The reason is, he

gives us pain; and we cannot have pain given to us, even by the stone against which we stumble, or by any of the brute creation, without momentary indignation, or regarding them for a time as our enemies. Besides, we do not like to have another person acquainted with our faults and our follies; and we naturally avoid the society of those who are thus acquainted with us. Such is human nature; and it requires no little grace for us to overcome this. and to regard the man who tells us of our faults, or the faults of our families, as our friend.

We love to be flattered, and to have our friends flattered; and we shrink with pain from any exposure, or any necessity for repentance. Hence, we become alienated from him who is faithful in reproving us for our faults. Hence, people become offended with their ministers when they reprove them for their sins. Hence, they become offended at the truth. Hence, they resist the influences of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to bring the truth to the heart, and to reprove men for their sins. There is nothing more difficult than to regard with steady and unwavering affection the man who faithfully tells us the truth at all times, when that truth is painful. Yet he is our best friend. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful," Proverbs 27:6. If I am in danger of falling down a precipice, he shows to me the purest friendship who tells me of it; if I am in danger of breathing the air of the pestilence, and it can be avoided, he shows to me pure kindness who tells me of it. So still more, if I am indulging in a course of conduct that may ruin me, or cherishing error that may endanger my salvation, he shows me the purest friendship who is most faithful in warning me, and apprising me of what must be the termination of my course.

Verse 17

They zealously affect you - See 1 Corinthians 12:31 (Greek); 1 Corinthians 14:39. The word used here (Ζηλόω Zēloō), means to be "zealous" toward, that is, for or against any person or thing; usually, in a good sense, to be eager for. Here it means, that the false teachers made a show of zeal toward the Galatians, or professed affection for them in order to gain them as their followers. They were full of ardor, and professed an extraordinary concern for their welfare - as people always do who are demagogues, or who seek to gain proselytes. The object of the apostle in this is, probably, to say, that it was not wholly owing to themselves that they

had become alienated from the doctrines which he had taught. Great pains had been taken to do it; and there had been a show of zeal which would be likely to endanger any person.

But not well - Not with good motives, or with good designs.

Yea, they would exclude you - Margin, "Us." A few printed editions of the New Testament have ἡμᾶς hēmas"us," instead of ὑμᾶς humas"you" - Mill. The word "exclude" here probably means, that they endeavored to exclude the Galatians from the love and affection of Paul. They would shut them out from that, in order that they might secure them for their own purposes. If the reading in the margin, however, should be retained, the sense would be clearer. "They wish to exclude us, that is, me, the apostle, in order that they may have you wholly to themselves. If they can once get rid of your attachment to me, then they will have no difficulty in securing you for themselves." This reading, says Rosenmuller, is found "in many of the best codices, and versions, and fathers." It is adopted by Doddridge, Locke, and others. The main idea is clear: Paul stood in the way of their designs. The Galatians were truly attached to him, and it was necessary, in order to accomplish their ends, to withdraw their affections from him. When false teachers have designs on a people, they begin by alienating their confidence and affections from their pastors and teachers. They can hope for no success until this is done; and hence, the efforts of errorists, and of infidels, and of scorners, is to undermine the confidence of a people in the ministry, and when this is done there is little difficulty in drawing them over to their own purposes.

That ye might affect them - The same word as in the former part of the verse, "that ye might zealously affect them" - that is, that ye might show ardent attachment to them. Their first work is to manifest special interest for your welfare; their second, to alienate you from him who had first preached the gospel to you; their object, not your salvation, or your real good, but to secure your zealous love for themselves.

Verse 18

But it is good to be, zealously affected - The meaning of this is, "Understand me: I do not speak against zeal. I have not a word to say in its disparagement. In itself, it is good; and their zeal would be good if it were in a good cause." Probably, they relied much on their zeal; perhaps they maintained, as errorists and deceivers are very apt to do, that zeal was sufficient evidence of the goodness of their cause, and that persons who are

so very zealous could not possibly be bad men. How often is this plea set up by the friends of errorists and deceivers!

And not only when I am present with you - It seems to me that there is great adroitness and great delicacy of irony in this remark; and that the apostle intends to remind them as gently as possible, that it would have been as well for them to have shown their zeal in a good cause when he was absent, as well as when he was with them. The sense may be, "You were exceedingly zealous in a good cause when I was with you. You loved the truth; you loved me. Since I left you, and as soon almost as I was out of your sight, your zeal died away, and your ardent love for me was transferred to others. Allow me to remind you, that it would be well to be zealous of good when I am away, as well as when I am with you. There is not much true affection in that which dies away as soon as a man's back is turned." The doctrine is, that true zeal or love will live alike when the object is near and when it is removed; when our friends are present with us, and when they leave us; when their eye is upon us, and when it is turned away.

Verse 19

My little children - The language of tender affection, such as a parent would use toward his own offspring; see the note at 1 Corinthians 4:15; compare Matthew 18:3; John 13:33; 1 John 2:1, 1 John 2:12-13; 1 John 4:4; 1 John 5:21. The idea here is, that Paul felt that he sustained toward them the relation of a father, and he had for them the deep and tender feelings of a parent.

Of whom I travail in birth again - For whose welfare I am deeply anxious: and for whom I endure deep anguish; compare 1 Corinthians 4:15. His anxiety for them he compares to the deepest sufferings which human nature endures; and his language here is a striking illustration of what ministers of the gospel should feel, and do sometimes feel, in regard to their people.

Until Christ be formed in you - The name Christ is often used to denote his religion, or the principles of his gospel; see the note at Romans 13:14. Here it means, until Christ reigns wholly in your hearts; until you wholly and entirely embrace his doctrines; and until you become wholly imbued with his spirit; see Colossians 1:27.

Verse 20

I desire to be present with you now - They had lost much by his absence; they had changed their views; they had in some measure become

alienated from him; and he wishes that he might be again with them, as he was before. He would hope to accomplish much more by his personal presence than he could by letter.

And to change my voice - That is, from complaint and censure, to tones of entire confidence.

For I stand in doubt of you - Margin, "I am perplexed for you." On the meaning of the word used here, see the note at 2 Corinthians 4:8. The sense is plain. Paul had much reason to doubt the sincerity and the solidity of their Christian principles, and he was deeply anxious on that account.

Verse 21

Tell me … - In order to show fully the nature and the effect of the Law, Paul here introduces an illustration from an important fact in the Jewish history. This allegory has given great perplexity to expositors, and, in some respects, it is attended with real difficulty. An examination of the difficulties will be found in the larger commentaries. My object, without examining the expositions which have been proposed, will be to state, in as few words as possible, the simple meaning and design of the allegory. The design it is not difficult to understand. It is to show the effect of being under the bondage or servitude of the Jewish law, compared with the freedom which the gospel imparts. Paul had addressed the Galatians as having a real desire to be under bondage, or to be servants; the note at Galatians 4:9. He had represented Christianity as a state of freedom, and Christians as the sons of God - not servants, but freemen.

To show the difference of the two conditions, he appeals to two cases which would furnish a striking illustration of them. The one was the case of Hagar and her son. The effect of bondage was well illustrated there. She and her son were treated with severity, and were cast out and persecuted. This was a fair illustration of bondage under the Law; of the servitude to the laws of Moses; and was a fit representation of Jerusalem as it was in the time of Paul. The other case was that of Isaac. He was the son of a free woman, and was treated accordingly. He was regarded as a son, not as a servant. And he was a fair illustration of the case of those who were made free by the gospel. They enjoyed a similar freedom and sonship, and should not seek a state of servitude or bondage. The condition of Isaac was a fit illustration of the New Jerusalem; the heavenly city; the true kingdom of God. But Paul does not mean to say, as I suppose, that the history of the son of Hagar and of the son of Rebecca was mere allegory, or that the narrative

by Moses was designed to represent the different condition of those who were under the Law and under the gospel.

He uses it simply, as showing the difference between servitude and freedom, and as a striking illustration of the nature of the bondage to the Jewish law, and of the freedom of the gospel, just as anyone may use a striking historical fact to illustrate a principle. These general remarks will constitute the basis of my interpretation of this celebrated allegory. The expression "tell me," is one of affectionate remonstrance and reasoning; see Luke 7:42, "Tell me, therefore, which of these will love him most?" Compare Isaiah 1:18, "Come, now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord."

Ye that desire to be under the law - See the note at Galatians 4:9. You who wish to yield obedience to the laws of Moses. You who maintain that conformity to those laws is necessary to justification.

Do ye not hear the law? - Do you not understand what the Law says? Will you not listen to its own admonitions, and the instruction which may be derived from the Law on the subject? The word "law" here refers not to the commands that were uttered on Mount Sinai, but to the book of the Law. The passage to which reference is made is in the Book of Genesis; but; all the five books of Moses were by the Jews classed under the general name of the Law; see the note at Luke 24:44. The sense is, "Will you not listen to a narrative found in one of the books of the Law itself, fully illustrating the nature of that servitude which you wish?"

Verse 22

For it is written - Genesis 26:1-6. But the two sons by Hagar and Sarah were the most prominent, and the events of their lives furnished the particular illustration which Paul desired.

The one by a bond-maid - Ishmael, the son of Hagar. Hagar was an Egyptian slave, whom Sarah gave to Abraham in order that he might not be wholly without posterity; Genesis 16:3.

The other by a free woman - Isaac, the son of Sarah; Genesis 21:1-2.

Verse 23

But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh - In the ordinary course of nature, without any special promise, or any unusual divine interposition, as in the case of Isaac.

But he of the free woman … - The birth of Isaac was in accordance with a special promise, and by a remarkable divine interposition; see Genesis 18:10; Genesis 21:1-2; Hebrews 11:11-12; compare the notes at Romans 4:19-21. The idea here of Paul is, that the son of the slave was in a humble and inferior condition from his very birth. There was no special promise attending him. He was born into a state of inferiority and servitude which attended him through his whole life. Isaac, however, was met with promises as soon as he was born, and was under the benefit of those promises as long as he lived. The object of Paul is, to state the truth in regard to a condition of servitude and slavery. It is attended with evils from beginning to end; from the birth to the grave. By this illustration he means to show them the folly of becoming the voluntary slaves of the Law after they had once been made free.

Verse 24

Which things - The different accounts of Ishmael and Isaac.

Are an allegory - May be regarded allegorically, or as illustrating great principles in regard to the condition of slaves and freemen; and may therefore be used to illustrate the effect of servitude to the Law of Moses compared with the freedom of the gospel. He does not mean to say that the historical record of Moses was not true, or was merely allegorical; nor does he mean to say that Moses meant this to be an allegory, or that he intended that it should be applied to the exact purpose to which Paul applied it. No such design is apparent in the narrative of Moses, and it is evident that he had no such intention. Nor can it be shown that Paul means to be understood as saying that Moses had any such design, or that his account was not a record of a plain historical fact. Paul uses it as he would any other historical fact that would illustrate the same principle, and he makes no more use of it than the Saviour did in his parables of real or fictitious narratives to illustrate an important truth, or than we always do of real history to illustrate an important principle.

The word which is used here by Paul (ἀλληγορέω allēgoreō) is derived from ἄλλος allosanother, and ἀγορεύω agoreuō , to speak, to speak openly or in public - Passow. It properly means to speak anything otherwise than it is understood (Passow); to speak allegorically; to allegorize. The word does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, nor is it found in the Septuagint, though it occurs often in the classic writers. An allegory is a continued metaphor; see Blair‘s Lectures, xv. It is a figurative sentence or discourse,

in which the principal object is described by another subject resembling it in its properties and circumstances - Webster. Allegories are in words what hieroglyphics are in painting. The distinction between a parable and an allegory is said to be, that a parable is a supposed history to illustrate some important truth, as the parable of the good Samaritan, etc.; an allegory is based on real facts.

It is not probable, however, that this distinction is always carefully observed. Sometimes the allegory is based on the resemblance to some inanimate object, as in the beautiful allegory in Matthew 26:26; that is, this represents my body. The bread was not the living body that was then before them. So in Galatians 4:28; "This is my blood of the new covenant;" that is, this represents my blood. The wine in the cup could not be the living blood of the Redeemer that was then flowing in his veins; see the note at that place; compare Genesis 41:26.

The two covenants - Margin, "Testaments." The word means here, covenants or compacts; see the note at 1 Corinthians 11:25. The two covenants here referred to, are the one on Mount Sinai made with the Jews, and the other that which is made with the people of God in the gospel. The one resembles the condition of bondage in which Hagar and her son were; the other the condition of freedom in which Sarah and Isaac were.

The one from the Mount Sinai - Margin, "Sina." The Greek is "Sina," though the word may be written either way.

Which gendereth to bondage - Which tends to produce bondage or servitude. That is, the laws are stern and severe; and the observance of them costly, and onerous like a state of bondage; see the note at Acts 15:10.

Which is Agar - Which Hagar would appropriately represent. The condition of servitude produced by the Law had a strong resemblance to her condition as a slave.

Verse 25

For this Agar is Mount Sinai - This Hagar well represents the Law given on Mount Sinai. No one can believe that Paul meant to say that Hagar was literally Mount Sinai. A great deal of perplexity has been felt in regard to this passage, and Bentley proposed to cancel it altogether as an interpolation. But there is no good authority for this. Several manuscripts and versions read it, "For this Sinai is a mountain in Arabia;" others, "to this Hagar Jerusalem answereth," etc. Griesbach has placed these readings

in the margin, and has marked them as not to be rejected as certainly false, but as worthy of a more attentive examination; as sustained by some plausible arguments, though not in the whole satisfactory. The word Hagar in Arabic is said to signify a rock; and it has been supposed that the name was appropriately given to Mount Sinai, because it was a pile of rocks, and that Paul had allusion to this meaning of the word here. So Chandler, Rosenmuller, and others interpret it. But I cannot find in Castell or Gesenius that the word Hagar in Arabic has this signification; still less is there evidence that the name was ever given to Mount Sinai by the Arabs, or that such a signification was known to Paul. The plainest and most obvious sense of a passage is generally the true sense; and the obvious sense here is, that Hagar was a fair representation of Mount Sinai, and of the Law given there.

In Arabia - Mount Sinai is situated in Arabia Petraea, or the Rocky. Rosenmuller says that this means "in the Arabic language;" but probably in this interpretation he stands alone.

And answereth to Jerusalem - Margin, "Is in the same rank with." The margin is the better translation. The meaning is, it is just like it, or corresponds with it. Jerusalem as it is now (that is, in the days of Paul), is like Mount Sinai. It is subject to laws, and rites, and customs; bound by a state of servitude, and fear, and trembling, such as existed when the Law was given on Mount Sinai. There is no freedom; there are no great and liberal views; there is none of the liberty which the gospel imparts to men. The word συστοιχεῖ sustoichei"answereth to," means properly to advance in order together; to go together with, as soldiers march along in the same rank; and then to correspond to. It means here that Mount Sinai and Jerusalem as it then was would be suited to march together in the same platoon or rank. In marshalling an army, care is taken to place soldiers of the same height, and size, and skill, and courage, if possible, together. So here it means that they were alike. Both were connected with bondage, like Hagar. On the one, a law was given that led to bondage; and the other was in fact under a miserable servitude of rites and forms.

Which now is - As it exists now; that is, a slave to rites and forms, as it was in fact in the time of Paul.

And is in bondage - To laws and customs. She was under hard and oppressive rites, like slavery. She was also in bondage to sin John 8:33-34; but this does not seem to be the idea here.

With her children - Her inhabitants. She is represented as a mother, and her inhabitants, the Jews, are in the condition of the son of Hagar. On this passage compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 10:4, for a more full illustration of the principles involved here.

Verse 26

But Jerusalem which is above - The spiritual Jerusalem; the true church of God. Jerusalem was the place where God was worshipped, and hence, it became synonymous with the word church, or is used to represent the people of God. The word rendered "above," (ἄνω anō) means properly "up above," that which is above; and hence, heavenly, celestial; Colossians 3:1-2; John 8:23. Here it means the heavenly or celestial Jerusalem; Revelation 21:2, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven." Hebrews 12:22," ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Here it is used to denote the church, as being of heavenly origin.

Is free - The spirit of the gospel is that of freedom. It is freedom from sin, freedom from the bondage of rites and customs, and it tends to promote universal freedom; see the note at Galatians 4:7; compare John 8:32, John 8:36; and the note at 2 Corinthians 3:17.

Which is the mother of us all - Of all who are true Christians, whether we are by birth Jews or Gentiles. We should not, therefore, yield ourselves to any degrading and debasing servitude el any kind; compare the note at 1 Corinthians 6:12.

Verse 27

For it is written - This passage is found in Isaiah 54:1. For an exposition of its meaning as it occurs there, see my notes at Isaiah. The object of the apostle in introducing it here seems to be to prove that the Gentiles as well as the Jews would partake of the privileges connected with the heavenly Jerusalem. He had in the previous verse spoken of the Jerusalem from above as the common mother of all, true Christians, whether by birth Jews or Gentiles. This might be disputed or doubted by the Jews; and he therefore adduces this proof from the Old Testament. Or if it was not doubted, still the quotation was pertinent, and would illustrate the sentiment which he had just uttered. The mention of Jerusalem as a mother seems to have suggested this text. Isaiah had spoken of Jerusalem as a female that had been long desolate and childless, now rejoicing by a large accession from the Gentile world, and increased in numbers like a female

who should have more children than one who had been long married. To this Paul appropriately refers when he says that the whole church, Jews and Gentiles, were the children of the heavenly Jerusalem, represented here as a rejoicing mother. He has not quoted literally from the Hebrew, but he has used the Septuagint version, and has retained the sense. The sense is, that the accession from the Gentile world would be far more numerous than the Jewish people had ever been; a prophecy that has been already fulfilled.

Rejoice thou barren that bearest not - As a woman who has had no children would rejoice. This represents probably the pagan world as having been apparently forsaken and abandoned, and with whom there had been none of the true children of God.

Break forth and cry - Or "break forth and exclaim;" that is, break out into loud and glad exclamations at the remarkable accession. The cry here referred to was to be a joyful cry or shout; the language of exultation. So the Hebrew word in Isaiah 54:1 צהל tsaahalmeans.

For the desolate - She who was desolate and apparently forsaken. It literally refers to a woman who had seemed to be desolate and forsaken, who was unmarried. In Isaiah it may refer to Jerusalem, long forsaken and desolate, or as some suppose to the Gentile world; see my note at Isaiah 54:1.

Than she which hath an husband - Perhaps referring to the Jewish people as in covenant with God, and often spoken of as married to him; Isaiah 62:4-5; Isaiah 54:5.

Verse 28

Now we, brethren - We who are Christians.

Are the children of the promise - We so far resemble Isaac, that there are great and precious promises made to us. We are not in the condition of Ishmael, to whom no promise was made.

Verse 29

But as then he that was born after the flesh - Ishmael; see Galatians 4:23.

Persecuted him that was born after the Spirit - That is, Isaac. The phrase, "after the Spirit," here, is synonymous with "according to the promise" in the previous verse. It stands opposed to the phrase "after the flesh," and means that his birth was by the special or miraculous agency of God; see Genesis 21:9, where it is said that "Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking." It was on account

of this, and at the special request of Sarah, that Hagar and her son were expelled from the house of Abraham; Genesis 21:10.

Even so it is now - That is, Christians, the children of the promise, are persecuted by the Jews, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "as it now is," and who are uninterested in the promises, as Ishmael was. For an illustration of this, see Paley's Hora Paulina, on this Epistle, no. v. Dr. Paley has remarked that it does not appear that the apostle Paul was ever set upon by the Gentiles, unless they were first stirred up by the Jews, except in two instances. One of these was at Philippi, after the cure of the Pythoness Acts 16:19; and the other at Ephesus, at the instance of Demetrius; Acts 19:24. The persecutions of the Christians arose, therefore, mainly from the Jews, from those who were in bondage to the Law, and to rites and customs; and Paul's allusion here to the case of the persecution which Isaac the free-born son endured, is exceedingly pertinent and happy.

Verse 30

Nevertheless - But Ἀλλὰ (Alla).

What saith the Scripture? - What does the Scripture teach on the subject? What lesson does it convey in regard to the bondman?

Cast out the bondwoman and her son - This was the language of Sarah, in an address to Abraham, requesting him to cast out Hagar and Ishmael; Genesis 21:10. That was done. Paul uses it here as applicable to the case before him. As used by him the meaning is, that everything like servitude in the gospel is to be rejected, as Hagar and Ishmael were driven away. It does not mean, as it seems to me, that they were to expel the Jewish teachers in Galatia, but that they were to reject everything like servitude and bondage; they were to adhere only to that which was free. Paul cannot here mean that the passage in Genesis 21:10, originally had reference to the gospel, for nothing evidently was further from the mind of Sarah than any such reference; nor can it be shown that he meant to approve of or vindicate the conduct of Sarah; but he finds a passage applicable to his purpose, and he conveys his ideas in that language as exactly expressing his meaning. We all use language in that way wherever we find it.

(Yet God confirmed the sentence of Sarah; Genesis 21:12. Hence, Mr. Scott thus paraphrases, "But as the Galatians might read in the Scriptures that God himself had commanded Hagar and Ishmael to be sent away from Abraham's family, that the son of the bondwoman might not share the inheritance with Isaac; even so the Jewish nation would soon be cast out of

the church, and all who continued under the legal covenant excluded from heaven."

Verse 31

So then, brethren - It follows from all this. Not from the allegory regarded as an argument - for Paul does not use it thus - but from the considerations suggested on the whole subject. Since the Christian religion is so superior to the Jewish; since we are by it freed from degrading servitude, and are not in bondage to rites and ceremonies; since it was designed to make us truly free, and since by that religion we are admitted to the privileges of sons, and are no longer under laws, and tutors, and governors, as if we were minors; from all this it follows, that we should feel and act, not as if we were children of a bondwoman, and born in slavery, but as if we were children of a freewoman, and born to liberty. It is the birthright of Christians to think, and feel, and act like freemen, and they should not allow themselves to become the slaves of customs, and rites, and ceremonies, but should feel that they are the adopted children of God.

Thus closes this celebrated allegory - an allegory that has greatly perplexed most expositors, and most readers of the Bible. In view of it, and of the exposition above, there are a few remarks which may not inappropriately be made.

(1) it is by no means affirmed, that the history of Hagar and Sarah in Genesis, had any original reference to the gospel. The account there is a plain historical narrative, not designed to have any such reference.

(2) the narrative contains important principles, that may be used as illustrating truth, and is so used by the apostle Paul. There are parallel points between the history and the truths of religion, where the one may be illustrated by the other.

(3) the apostle does not use it at all in the way of argument, or as if that proved that the Galatians were not to submit to the Jewish rites and customs. It is an illustration of the comparative nature of servitude and freedom, and would, therefore, illustrate the difference between a servile compliance with Jewish rites, and the freedom of the gospel.

(4) this use of an historical fact by the apostle does not make it proper for us to turn the Old Testament into allegory, or even to make a very free use of this mode of illustrating truth. That an allegory may be used sometimes with advantage, no one can doubt while the "Pilgrim's Progress" shall exist. Nor can anyone doubt that Paul has here derived, in this manner, an important and striking illustration of truth from the Old Testament. But no one acquainted with the history of interpretation can doubt that vast injury has been done by a fanciful mode of explaining the Old Testament; by making every fact in its history an allegory; and every pin and pillar of the tabernacle and the temple a type. Nothing is better suited to bring the whole science of interpretation into contempt; nothing dishonors the Bible more, than to make it a book of enigmas, and religion to consist in puerile conceits. The Bible is a book of sense; and all the doctrines essential to salvation are plainly revealed. It should be interpreted, not by mere conceit and by fancy, but by the sober laws according to which are interpreted other books. It should be explained, not under the influence of a vivid imagination, but under the influence of a heart imbued with a love of truth, and by an understanding disciplined to investigate the meaning of words and phrases, and capable of rendering a reason for the interpretation which is proposed. People may abundantly use the facts in the Old Testament to illustrate human nature, as Paul did; but far distant be the day, when the principles of Origen and of Cocceius shall again prevail, and when it shall be assumed, that "the Bible means every thing that it can be made to mean."

(These are excellent remarks, and the caution which the author gives against extravagant and imaginative systems of interpreting scripture cannot be too often repeated. It is allowed, however, nearly on all hands, that this allegory is brought forward by way of illustration only, and not of argument. This being the case, the question, as to whether the history in Genesis were originally intended represent the matter, to which Paul here applies it, is certainly not of very great importance, notwithstanding the learned labor that has been expended on it, and to such an extent as to justify the critic's remark. "vexavitinterprets vehementer vexatus ab iis et ipse." Whatever be the original design of the passage, the apostle has employed it as an illustration of his subject, and was guided by the Spirit of inspiration in so doing. But certainly we should not be very far wrong, if since an apostle has affirmed such spiritual representation, we should

suppose it originally intended by the Spirit; nor are we in great danger of making types of every pin and pillar, so long as we strictly confine ourselves to the admission of such only as rest upon apostolic authority. “This transaction,” says the eminently judicious Thomas Scott, “was so remarkable, the coincidence so exact, and the illustration so instructive, that we cannot doubt it originally was intended, by the Holy Spirit, as an allegory and type of those things to which the inspired apostle referred it.”)

GALATIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

This chapter is properly a continuation of the argument in the previous chapter, and is designed to induce the Galatians to renounce their conformity to the Jewish law, and to become entirely conformed to the gospel. In particular, it seems to be designed to meet a charge that had been brought against him, that he had preached the necessity of circumcision, or that he had so practiced it as to show that he believed that it was obligatory on others. Under his example, or pleading his authority, it seems the false teachers there had urged the necessity of its observance; see Galatians 5:11. The argument and the exhortation consist of the following parts:

I. He exhorts them to stand firm in the liberty of Christianity, and not to be brought again under bondage; Galatians 5:1.

II. He solemnly assures them, that if they depended on circumcision for salvation, they could derive no benefit from Christ. They put themselves into a perfect legal state, and must depend on that alone; and that was equivalent to renouncing Christ altogether, or to falling from grace; Galatians 5:2-6.

III. He assures them that their present belief could not have come from him by whom they were originally brought to the knowledge of the truth; but must have been from some foreign influence, operating like leaven; Galatians 5:7-9.

IV. He says he had confidence in them, on the whole, that they would obey the truth, and that they would suffer him who had troubled them to bear his proper judgment, gently insinuating that he should be disowned or cut off; Galatians 5:10, Galatians 5:12.

V. He vindicates himself from the charge that he preached the necessity of circumcision. His vindication was, that if he had done that, he would have escaped persecution, for then the offence of the cross would have ceased; Galatians 5:11.

VI. He assures them that they had been called unto liberty; that the gospel had made them free. Yet Paul felt how easy it was to abuse this doctrine, and to pretend that Christ had freed them from all restraint, and from the bondage of all law. Against this he cautions them. Their liberty was not licentiousness. It was not freedom from all the restraints of the Law. It was not that they might give indulgence to the passions of the flesh. It was designed that they should serve one another; and not fall into the indulgence of raging passions, producing strive and mutual hatred; Galatians 5:3-15.

VII. To illustrate this, and to show them the evils of giving indulgence to their appetites under the pretence that they were free, he proceeds to show what were the passions to which carnal indulgence would give rise, or what were the works of the flesh; Galatians 5:16-21.

VIII. On the other hand, the Spirit produces a train of most lovely virtues, feelings, and affections, against which there could be no law; Galatians 5:22-23.

IX. They who were Christians had in fact crucified the flesh. They were bound to live after the teachings of the Spirit, and Paul, therefore, exhorts them to lay aside all vain-glory and envy, and to live in peace; Galatians 5:24-26.

Verse 1

Stand fast, therefore - Be firm and unwavering. This verse properly belongs to the previous chapter, and should not have been separated from it. The sense is, that they were to be firm and unyielding in maintaining the great principles of Christian liberty. They had been freed from the bondage of rites and ceremonies; and they should by no means, and in no form, yield to them again.

In the liberty … - Compare John 8:32, John 8:36; Romans 6:18; Notes, Galatians 4:3-5.

And be not entangled again - Tyndale renders this, "And wrap not yourselves again." The sense is, do not again allow such a yoke to be put on you; do not again become slaves to any rites, and customs, and habits.

The yoke of bondage - Of servitude to the Jewish laws; see the note at Acts 15:10.

Verse 2

Behold, I Paul say unto you - I, who at first preached the gospel to you; I, too, who have been circumcised, and who was formerly a strenuous assertor of the necessity of observing the laws of Moses; and I, too, who am charged (see Galatians 5:11) with still preaching the necessity of circumcision, now solemnly say to you, that if you are circumcised with a view to being justified by that in whole or in part, it amounts to a rejection of the doctrine of justification by Christ, and an entire apostacy from him. He is to be "a whole Saviour." No one is to share with him in the honor of saving people; and no rite, no custom, no observance of law, is to divide the honor with his death. The design of Paul is to give them the most solemn assurance on this point; and by his own authority and experience to guard them from the danger, and to put the matter to rest.

That if ye be circumcised - This must be understood with reference to the subject under consideration. If you are circumcised with such a view as is maintained by the false teachers that have come among you; that is, with an idea that it is necessary in order to your justification. He evidently did not mean that if any of them had been circumcised before their conversion to Christianity; nor could he mean to say, that circumcision in all cases amounted to a rejection of Christianity, for he had himself procured the circumcision of Timothy, Acts 16:3. If it was done, as it was then, for prudential considerations, and with a wish not necessarily to irritate the Jews, and to give one a more ready access to them, it was not to be regarded as wrong. But if, as the false teachers in Galatia claimed, as a thing essential to salvation, as indispensable to justification and acceptance with God, then the matter assumed a different aspect; and then it became in fact a renouncing of Christ as himself sufficient to save us. So with anything else. Rites and ceremonies in religion may be in themselves well enough, if they are held to be matters not essential; but the moment they are regarded as vital and essential, that moment they begin to infringe on the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and that moment they are to be rejected; and it is because of the danger that this will be the case, that they are to be used sparingly in the Christian church. Who does not know the danger of depending upon prayers, and alms, and the sacraments, and extreme unction, and penance, and empty forms for salvation? And who does not

know how much in the papal communion the great doctrine of justification has been obscured by numberless such rites and forms?

Christ shall profit you nothing - Will be of no advantage to you. Your dependence on circumcision, in these circumstances, will in fact amount to a rejection of the Saviour, and of the doctrine of justification by him.

Verse 3

For I testify again - Probably he had stated this when he had preached the gospel to them first, and he now solemnly bears witness to the same thing again. Bloomfield, however, supposes that the word "again" here (πάλιν palin) means, on the other hand, or, "furthermore," or, as we would say, "and again."

That he is a debtor to do the whole law - He binds himself to obey all the Law of Moses. Circumcision was the distinguishing badge of the Jews, as baptism is of Christians. A man, therefore, who became circumcised became a professor of the Jewish religion, and bound himself to obey all its special laws. This must be understood, of course, with reference to the point under discussion; and means, if he did it with a view to justification, or as a thing that was necessary and binding. It would not apply to such a case as that of Timothy, where it was a matter of mere expediency or prudence; see the note at Galatians 5:2.

Verse 4

Christ is become of no effect unto you - You will derive no advantage from Christ. His work in regard to you is needless and vain. If you can be justified in any other way than by him, then of course you do not need him, and your adoption of the other mode is in fact a renunciation of him. Tyndale renders this: "Ye are gone quite from Christ." The word here used (καταργέω katargeō), means properly, to render inactive, idle, useless; to do away, to put an end to; and here it means that they had withdrawn from Christ, if they attempted to be justified by the Law. They would not need him if they could be thus justified; and they could derive no benefit from him. A man who can be justified by his own obedience, does not need the aid or the merit of another; and if it was true, as they seemed to suppose, that they could be justified by the Law, it followed that the work of Christ was in vain so far as they were concerned.

Whosoever of you are justified by the law - On the supposition that any of you are justified by the Law; or if, as you seem to suppose, any are justified by the Law. The apostle does not say that this had in fact ever

occurred; but he merely makes a supposition. If such a thing should or could occur, it would follow that you had fallen from grace.

Ye are fallen from grace - That is, this would amount to apostasy from the religion of the Redeemer, and would be in fact a rejection of the grace of the gospel. That this had ever in fact occurred among true Christians the apostle does not affirm unless he affirmed that people can in fact be justified by the Law, since he makes the falling from grace a consequence of that. But did Paul mean to teach that? Did he mean to affirm that any man in fact had been, or could be justified by his own obedience to the Law? Let his own writings answer; see, especially, Romans 3:20. But unless he held that, then this passage does not prove that anyone who has ever been a true Christian has fallen away. The fair interpretation of the passage does not demand that. Its simple and obvious meaning is, that if a man who has been a professed Christian should be justified by his own conformity to the Law, and adopt that mode of justification, then that would amount to a rejection of the mode of salvation by Christ, and would be a renouncing of the plan of justification by grace. The two systems cannot be united. The adoption of the one is, in fact, a rejection of the other. Christ will be "a whole Saviour," or none. This passage, therefore. cannot be adduced to prove that any true Christian has in fact fallen away from grace, unless it proves also that man may be justified by the deeds of the Law, contrary to the repeated declarations of Paul himself. The word "grace" here, does not mean grace in the sense of personal religion, it means the "system" of salvation by grace, in contradistinction from that by merit or by works - the system of the gospel.

Verse 5

For we - We who are Christians. It is a characteristic of the true Christian.

Through the Spirit - The Holy Spirit. We expect salvation only by his aid.

Wait for - That is, we expect salvation in this way. The main idea is, not that of waiting as if the thing were delayed; it is that of expecting. The sense is, that true Christians have no other hope of salvation than by faith in the Lord Jesus. It is not by their own works, nor is it by any conformity to the Law. The object of Paul is, to show them the true nature of the Christian hope of eternal life, and to recall them from dependence on their conformity to the Law.

The hope of righteousness - The hope of justification. They had no other hope of justification than by faith in the Redeemer; see the note at Romans 1:17.

Verse 6

For in Jesus Christ - In the religion which Christ came to establish.

Neither circumcision … - It makes no difference whether a man is circumcised or not. He is not saved because he is circumcised, nor is he condemned because he is not. The design of Christianity is to abolish these rites and ceremonies, and to introduce a way of salvation that shall be applicable to all mankind alike; see the Galatians 3:28, note; 1 Corinthians 7:19, note; compare Romans 2:29.

But faith which worketh by love - Faith that evinces its existence by love to God, and benevolence to people. It is not a mere intellectual belief, but it is that which reaches the heart, and controls the affections. It is not a dead faith, but it is that which is operative, and which is seen in Christian kindness and affection. It is not mere belief of the truth, or mere orthodoxy, but it is that which produces trite attachment to others. A mere intellectual assent to the truth may leave the heart cold and unaffected; mere orthodoxy, however bold and self-confident, and "sound," may not be inconsistent with contentions, and strifes, and logomachies, and divisions. The true faith is that which is seen in benevolence, in love to God, in love to all who bear the Christian name; in a readiness to do good to all mankind. This shows that the heart is affected by the faith that is held; and this is the nature and design of all genuine religion. Tyndale renders this, "faith, which by love is mighty in operation."

Verse 7

Ye did run well - The Christian life is often represented as a race; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:24-26. Paul means here, that they began the Christian life with ardour and zeal; compare Galatians 4:15.

Who did hinder you - Margin, "Drive you back." The word used here (ἀνακόπτω anakoptō) means properly to beat or drive back. Hence, it means to hinder, check, or retard. Dr. Doddridge remarks that this is "an Olympic expression, and properly signifies "coming across the course" while a person is running in it, in such a manner as to jostle, and throw him out of the way." Paul asks, with emphasis, who it could have been that retarded them in their Christian course, implying that it could have been done only

by their own consent, or that there was really no cause why they should not have continued as they began.

That ye should not obey the truth - The true system of justification by faith in the Redeemer. That you should have turned aside, and embraced the dangerous errors in regard to the necessity of obeying the laws of Moses.

Verse 8

This persuasion - This belief that it is necessary to obey the laws of Moses, and to intermingle the observance of Jewish rites with the belief of the Christian doctrines in order to be saved.

Not of him that calleth you - That is, of God, who had called them into his kingdom. That it refers to God and not to Paul is plain. They knew well enough that Paul had not persuaded them to it, and it was important now to show them that it could not be traced to God, though they who taught it pretended to be commissioned by him.

Verse 9

A little leaven … - This is evidently a proverbial expression; see it explained in the notes at 1 Corinthians 5:6. Its meaning here is, that the embracing of the errors which they had adopted was to be traced to some influence existing among themselves, and acting like leaven. It may either mean that there was existing among them from the first a slight tendency to conform to rites and customs, and that this had now like leaven pervaded the mass; or it may mean that the false teachers there might be compared to leaven, whose doctrines, though they were few in number, had pervaded the mass of Christians; or it may mean, as many have supposed, that any conformity to the Jewish law was like leaven. If they practiced circumcision, it would not stop there. The tendency to conform to Jewish rites would spread from that until it would infect all the doctrines of religion, and they would fall into the observance of all the rites of the Jewish law. It seems to me that the second interpretation referred to above is the correct one; and that the apostle means to say, that the influence which had brought this change about was at first small and unimportant; that there might have been but a few teachers of that kind, and it might have not been deemed worthy of particular attention or alarm; but that the doctrines thus infused into the churches, had spread like leaven, until the whole mass had become affected.

Verse 10

I have confidence in you … - Though they had been led astray, and had embraced many false opinions, yet, on the whole, Paul had confidence in their piety, and believed they would yet return and embrace the truth.

That ye will be none otherwise minded - That is, than you have been taught by me; or than I think and teach on the subject. Paul doubtless means to say, that he had full confidence that they would embrace the views which he was inculcating on the subject of justification, and he makes this remark in order to modify the severity of his tone of reprehension, and to show that, notwithstanding all he had said, he had confidence still in their piety. He believed that they would coincide with him in his opinion, alike on the general subject of justification, and in regard to the cause of their alienation from the truth. He, therefore, gently insinuates that it was not to be traced to themselves that they had departed from the truth, but to the "little leaven" that had leavened the mass; and he adds, that whoever had done this, should be held to be responsible for it.

But he that troubleth you - By leading you into error.

Shall bear his judgment - Shall be responsible for it, and will receive proper treatment from you. He gently states this general principle, which is so obvious; states that he does not believe that the defection is to be traced to themselves; and designs to prepare their minds for a proposition which he intends to submit Galatians 5:12, that the offending person or persons should be disowned and cut off.

Whosoever he be - "I do not know who he is. I mention no names; accuse no one by name; and advise no severe measures against any particular individual. I state only the obvious principle that every man should bear his own burden, and be held responsible for what he has done - no matter who he is."

Verse 11

And I, brethren - Paul here proceeds to vindicate himself from giving countenance to the doctrines which they had advanced there. It is evident that the false teachers in Galatia appealed to Paul himself, and alleged that he insisted on the necessity of circumcision, and that they were teaching no more than he taught. On what they founded this is unknown. It may have been mere slander; or it may have arisen from the fact that he had circumcised Timothy Acts 16:3, and, possibly, that he may have encouraged circumcision in some other similar cases. Or it may have been inferred from the fact (which was undoubtedly true) that Paul in general complied with

the customs of the Jews when he was with them. But his conduct and example had been greatly perverted. He had never enjoined circumcision as necessary to salvation; and had never complied with Jewish customs where there was danger that it would be understood that he regarded them as at all indispensable, or as furnishing a ground of acceptance with God.

If I yet preach circumcision - If I preach it as necessary to salvation; or if I enjoin it on those who are converted to Christianity.

Why do I yet suffer persecution? - That is, from the Jews. "Why do they oppose me? Circumcision is the special badge of the Jewish religion; it implies all the rest (see Galatians 5:2); and if I preach the necessity of that, it would satisfy the Jews, and save me from persecution. They would never persecute one who did that as they do me; and the fact that I am thus persecuted by them is full demonstration that I am not regarded as preaching the necessity of circumcision." It is remarkable that Paul does not expressly deny the charge. The reason may be, that his own word would be called in question, or that it might require much explanation to show why he had recommended circumcision in any case, as in the case of Timothy; Acts 16:3. But the fact that he was persecuted by the Jews settled the question, and showed that he did not preach the necessity of circumcision in any such sense as to satisfy them, or in any such sense as was claimed by the false teachers in Galatia. In regard to the fact that Paul was persecuted by the Jews; see Acts 14:1-2, Acts 14:19; Acts 17:4-5, Acts 17:13; compare Paley, Hora Paulina, Galat. no. v.

Then is the offence of the cross ceased - "For if I should preach the necessity of circumcision, as is alleged, the offence of the cross of Christ would be removed. The necessity of depending on the merits of the sacrifice made on the cross would be taken away, since then people could be saved by conformity to the laws of Moses. The very thing that I have so much insisted on, and that has been such a stumbling-block to the Jews (see the note at 1 Corinthians 1:23), that conformity to their rites was of no avail, and that they must be saved only by the merits of a crucified Saviour, would be done away with." Paul means that if this had been done, he would have saved himself from giving offence, and from the evils of persecution. He would have preached that people could be saved by conformity to Jewish rites, and that would have saved him from all the persecutions which he had endured in consequence of preaching the necessity of salvation by the cross.

Verse 12

I would they were even cut off - That is, as I understand it, from the communion of the church. So far am I, says Paul, from agreeing with them, and preaching the necessity of circumcision as they do, that I sincerely wish they were excluded from the church as unworthy a place among the children of God. For a very singular and monstrous interpretation of this passage, though adopted by Chrysostom, Theodoret, Theophylact, Jerome, Grotius, Rosenmuller, Koppe, and others, the learned reader may consult Koppe on this verse. To my amazement, I find that this interpretation has also been adopted by Robinson in his Lexicon, on the word ἀποκόπτω apokoptōI will state the opinion in the words of Koppe. "*Non modo circumcidant se, sed, si velint, etiam mutilant se - ipsa genitalia resecent*." The simple meaning is, I think, that Paul wished that the authors of these errors and disturbances were excluded from the church.

Which trouble you - Who pervert the true doctrines of salvation, and who thus introduce error into the church. Error always sooner or later causes trouble; compare the note at 1 Corinthians 5:7.

Verse 13

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty - Freedom from Jewish rites and ceremonies; see the notes at Galatians 3:28; Galatians 4:9, note, Galatians 4:21-31, note. The meaning here is, that Paul wished the false teachers removed because true Christians had been called unto liberty, and they were abridging and destroying that liberty. They were not in subjection to the Law of Moses, or to anything else that savored of bondage. They were free; free from the servitude of sin, and free from subjection to expensive and burdensome rites and customs. They were to remember this as a great and settled principle; and so vital a truth was this, and so important that it should be maintained, and so great the evil of forgetting it, that Paul says he earnestly wishes Galatians 5:12 that all who would reduce them to that state of servitude were cut off from the Christian church.

Only use not liberty … - The word use here introduced by our translators, obscures the sense. The idea is, "You are called to liberty, but it is not liberty for an occasion to the flesh. It is not freedom from virtuous restraints, and from the laws of God. It is liberty from the servitude of sin, and religious rites and ceremonies, not freedom from the necessary restraints of virtue." It was necessary to give this caution, because:

(1) There was a strong tendency in all converts from paganism to relapse again into their former habits. Licentiousness abounded, and where they had been addicted to it before their conversion, and where they were surrounded by it on every hand, they were in constant danger of falling into it again. A bare and naked declaration, therefore, that they had been called to liberty, to freedom from restraint, might have been misunderstood, and some might have supposed that they were free from all restraints.

(2) it is needful to guard the doctrine from abuse at all times. There has been a strong tendency, as the history of the church has shown, to abuse the doctrine of grace. The doctrine that Christians are "free;" that there is liberty to them from restraint, has been perverted always by Antinomians, and been made the occasion of their indulging freely in sin. And the result has shown that nothing was more important than to guard the doctrine of Christian liberty, and to show exactly what Christians are freed from, and what laws are still binding on them. Paul is, therefore, at great pains to show that the doctrines which he had maintained did not lead to licentiousness, and did not allow the indulgence of sinful and corrupt passions.

An occasion - As allowing indulgence to the flesh, or as a furtherance or help to corrupt passions; see the word explained in the notes at Romans 7:8.

To the flesh - The word flesh is often used in the writings of Paul to denote corrupt and gross passions and affections; see the notes at Romans 7:18; Romans 8:1, note.

But by love serve one another - By the proper manifestation of love one to another strive to promote each other's welfare. To do this will not be inconsistent with the freedom of the gospel. When there is love there is no servitude. Duty is pleasant, and offices of kindness agreeable. Paul does not consider them as freed from all law and all restraint; but they are to be governed by the law of love. They were not to feel that they were so free that they might lawfully give indulgence to the desires of the flesh, but they were to regard themselves as under the law to love one another; and thus they would fulfil the law of Christian freedom.

Verse 14

For all the law is fulfilled … - That is, this expresses the substance of the whole law; it embraces and comprises all. The apostle of course here

alludes to the Law in regard to our duty to our fellow-men, since that was the point which he particularly enforces. He is saying that this law would counteract all the evil workings of the flesh, and if this were fulfilled, all our duty to others would be discharged. A similar sentiment he has expressed in Romans 13:8-10; see the notes at that passage. The turn here in the discussion is worthy of particular notice. With great skill he changes the subject from a doctrinal argument to a strain of practical remark, and furnishes most important lessons for the right mode of overcoming our corrupt and sensual passions, and discharging our duty to others.

Thou shalt love thy neighbor … - See this explained in the note at Matthew 19:19.

Verse 15

But if ye bite - The word used here (δάκνω daknō), means, properly, to bite, to sting; and here seems to be used in the sense of contending and striving - a metaphor not improbably taken from dogs and wild beasts.

And devour one another - As wild beasts do. The sense is, "if you contend with each other;" and the reference is, probably, to the strifes which would arise between the two parties in the churches - the Jewish and the Gentile converts.

Take heed that ye be not consumed … - As wild beasts contend sometimes until both are slain. Thus, the idea is, in their contentions they would destroy the spirituality and happiness of each other; their characters would be ruined; and the church be overthrown. The readiest way to destroy the spirituality of a church, and to annihilate the influence of religion, is to excite a spirit of contention.

Verse 16

This I say then - This is the true rule about overcoming the propensities of your carnal natures, and of avoiding the evils of strife and contention.

Walk - The Christian life is often represented as a journey, and the word walk, in the scripture, is often equivalent to live; Mark 7:5. See the notes at Romans 4:12; Romans 6:4, note; Romans 8:1, note.

In the Spirit - Live under the influences of the Holy Spirit; admit those influences fully into your hearts. Do not resist him, but yield to all his suggestions; see the note at Romans 8:1. What the Holy Spirit would produce, Paul states in Galatians 5:22-23. If a man would yield his heart to those influences, he would be able to overcome all his carnal propensities; and it is because he resists that Spirit, that he is ever overcome by the

corrupt passions of his nature. Never was a better, a safer, or a more easy rule given to overcome our corrupt and sensual desires than that here furnished; compare notes, Romans 8:1-13.

And ye shall not fulfil … - Margin, "Fulfil not" - as if it were a command. So Tyndale renders it. But the more common interpretation, as it is the more significant, is that adopted by our translators. Thus, it is not merely a command, it is the statement of an important and deeply interesting truth - that the only way to overcome the corrupt desires and propensities of our nature, is by submitting to the influences of the Holy Spirit. It is not by philosophy; it is not by mere resolutions to resist them; it is not by the force of education and laws; it is only by admitting into our souls the influence of religion, and yielding ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God. If we live under the influences of that Spirit, we need not fear the power of the sensual and corrupt propensities of our nature.

Verse 17

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit - The inclinations and desires of the flesh are contrary to those of the Spirit. They draw us away in an opposite direction, and while the Spirit of God would lead us one way, our carnal nature would lead us another, and thus produce the painful controversy which exists in our minds. The word "Spirit" here refers to the Spirit of God, and to his influences on the heart.

And these are contrary … - They are opposite in their nature. They never can harmonize; see Romans 8:6-7; compare below Galatians 5:19-23. The contrariety Paul has illustrated by showing what each produces; and they are as opposite as adultery, wrath, strife, murders, drunkenness, etc., are to love, joy, goodness, gentleness, and temperance.

So that ye cannot do the things that ye would - See this sentiment illustrated in the notes at Romans 7:15-19. The expression "cannot do" is stronger by far than the original, and it is doubted whether the original will bear this interpretation. The literal translation would be, "Lest what ye will, those things ye should do" (ἵνα μὴ ὥ ἄν θέλητε , ταῦτα ποιῆτε hina mē hō an thelētetauta poiēte). It is rendered by Doddridge, "So that ye do not the things that ye would." By Locke, "You do not the things that you propose to yourselves;" and Locke remarks on the passage, "Ours is the only translation that I knew which renders it cannot." The Vulgate and the Syriac give a literal translation of the Greek, "So that you do not what you would." This is undoubtedly the true rendering; and, in the original, there is no

declaration about the possibility or the impossibility, the ability or the inability to do these things.

It is simply a statement of a fact, as it is in Romans 7:15, Romans 7:19. That statement is, that in the mind of a renewed man there is a contrariety in the two influences which bear on his soul - the Spirit of God inclining him in one direction, and the lusts of the flesh in another; that one of these influences is so great as in fact to restrain and control the mind, and prevent its doing what it would otherwise do; that when there is an inclination in one direction, there is a controlling and overpowering influence in another, producing a conflict, which prevents it, and which finally checks and restrains the mind. There is no reason for interpreting this, moreover, as seems always to be the case, of the overpowering tendency in the mind to evil, as if it taught that the Christian was desirous of doing good, but could not, on account of his indwelling corruption. So far as the language of Paul or the fact is concerned, it may be understood of just the opposite, and may mean, that such are the restraints and influences of the Holy Spirit on the heart, that the Christian does not the evil which he otherwise would, and to which his corrupt nature inclines him.

He (Paul) is exhorting them Galatians 5:16 to walk in the Spirit, and assures them that thus they would not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. To encourage them to this, he reminds them that there were contrary principles in their minds, the influences of the Spirit of God, and a carnal and downward tendency of the flesh. These are contrary one to the other; and such are, in fact, the influences of the Spirit on the mind, that the Christian does not do the things which he otherwise would. So understood, or understood in any fair interpretation of the original, it makes no assertion about the ability or inability of man to do right or wrong. It affirms as a fact, that where these opposite principles exist, a man does not do the things which otherwise he would do. If a man could not do otherwise than he actually does, he would not be to blame. Whether a Christian could not resist the influences of the Holy Spirit, and yield to the corrupt desires of the flesh; or whether he could not overcome these evil propensities and do right always, are points on which the apostle here makes no affirmation. His is the statement of a mere fact, that where these counteracting propensities exist in the mind, there is a conflict, and that the man does not do what he otherwise would do.

Verse 18

But if ye be led of the Spirit - If you submit to the teachings and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Ye are not under the law - You are under a different dispensation - the dispensation of the Spirit. You are free from the restraints and control of the Mosaic law, and are under the control of the Spirit of God.

Verse 19

Now the works of the flesh - What the flesh, or what corrupt and unrenewed human nature produces.

Are manifest - Plain, well-known. The world is full of illustrations of what corrupt human nature produces, and as to the existence and nature of those works, no one can be ignorant. It is evident here that the word σὰρξ sarx"flesh," is used to denote corrupt human nature, and not merely the body; since many of the vices here enumerated are the passions of the mind or the soul, rather than of the body. Such are "wrath," "strife," "heresies," "envyings," etc., which cannot be said to have their seat in the body. If the word, therefore, is used to denote human nature, the passage furnishes a sad commentary on its tendency, and on the character of man. It is closely parallel to the declaration of the Saviour in Matthew 15:19. Of the nature of most of these sins, or works of the flesh, it is unnecessary to offer any comment. They are not so rare as not to be well known, and the meaning of the words requires little exposition. In regard to the existence of these vices as the result of human nature, the notes at Romans 1 may be examined; or a single glance at the history of the past, or at the present condition of the pagan and a large part of the Christian world, would furnish an ample and a painful demonstration.

Verse 20

Witchcraft - Pretending to witchcraft. The apostle does not vouch for the actual existence of witchcraft; but he says that what was known as such was a proof of the corrupt nature of man, and was one of the fruits of it. No one can doubt it. It was a system of imposture and falsehood throughout; and nothing is a better demonstration of the depravity of the human heart than an extended and systematized attempt to impose on mankind. The word which is used here (φαρμακεία pharmakeiawhence our word "pharmacy," from φάρμακον , a medicine, poison, magic potion) means, properly, the preparing and giving of medicine. Then it means also

poisoning, and also magic art, or enchantment; because in savage nations pharmacy or medicine consisted much in magical incantations. Thence it means sorcery or enchantment, and it is so used uniformly in the New Testament. It is used only in Galatians 5:20; Revelation 9:21; Revelation 18:23; Revelation 21:8. Some have supposed that it means poisoning here, a crime often practiced; but the more correct interpretation is, to refer it to the black art, or to pretensions to witchcraft, and the numerous delusions which have grown out of it, as a striking illustration of the corrupt and depraved nature of man.

Hatred - Greek: "hatreds," in the plural. Antipathies, and lack of love, producing contentions and strifes.

Variance - Contentions; see the note at Romans 1:29.

Emulations - (ζήλοι zēloi). In a bad sense, meaning heart-burning, or jealousy, or perhaps inordinate ambition. The sense is ardor or zeal in a bad cause, leading to strife, etc.

Wrath - This also is plural in the Greek (θυμοὶ thumoi), meaning passions, "bursts of anger;" see the note at 2 Corinthians 12:20.

Strife - Also plural in the Greek; see the note at 2 Corinthians 12:20

Seditions - See the note at Romans 16:17.

Heresies - See the note at Acts 5:17; 1 Corinthians 11:19.

Verse 21

Envyings - see the note at 2 Corinthians 12:20.

Revellings - 2 Corinthians 12:20, note; Romans 13:13, note.

And such like - This class of evils, without attempting to specify all.

Of which I tell you before - In regard to which I forewarn you.

As I have also told you in time past - When he was with them.

Shall not inherit the kingdom of God - Cannot possibly be saved; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. In regard to this passage, we may remark:

(1) That it furnishes the most striking and unanswerable proof of human depravity. Paul represents these things as "the works of the flesh," the works of the unrenewed nature of man. They are such as human nature, when left to itself, everywhere produces. The world shows that such is the fact; and we cannot but ask, is a nature producing this to be regarded as pure? Is man an unfallen being? Can he save himself? Does he need no Saviour?

(2) this passage is full of fearful admonition to those who indulge in any or all of these vices. Paul, inspired of God, has solemnly declared, that such cannot be saved. They cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven as they are. Nor is it desirable that they should. What would heaven be if filled up with adulterers, and fornicators, and idolaters, with the proud and envious, and with murderers, and drunkards? To call such a place heaven, would be an abuse of the word. No one could wish to dwell there; and such people cannot enter into heaven.

(3) the human heart must be changed, or man cannot be saved. This follows of course. If such is its tendency, then there is a necessity for such a change as that in regeneration, in order that man may be happy and be saved.

(4) we should rejoice that such people cannot, with their present characters, be admitted to heaven. We should rejoice that there is one world where these vices are unknown, a world of perfect and eternal purity. When we look at the earth; when we see how these vices prevail; when we reflect that every land is polluted, and that we cannot traverse a continent or an island, visit a nook or corner of the earth, dwell in any city or town, where these vices do not exist, O how refreshing and invigorating is it to look forward to a pure heaven! How cheering the thought that there is one world where these vices are unknown; one world, all whose ample plains may be traversed, and the note of blasphemy shall never fall on the ear; one world, where virtue shall be safe from the arts of the seducer; one world where we may forever dwell, and not one reeling and staggering drunkard shall ever be seen; where there shall be not one family in want and tears from the vice of its unfaithful head! With what joy should we look forward to that world! With what ardor should we pant that it may be our own!

Verse 22

But the fruit of the Spirit - That which the Holy Spirit produces. It is not without design, evidently, that the apostle uses the word “Spirit” here, as denoting that these things do not flow from our own nature. The vices above enumerated are the proper “works” or result of the operations of the human heart; the virtues which he enumerates are produced by a foreign influence - the agency of the Holy Spirit. Hence, Paul does not trace them

to our own hearts, even when renewed. He says that they are to be regarded as the proper result of the Spirit‘s operations on the soul.

Is love - To God and to human beings. Probably the latter here is particularly intended, as the fruits of the Spirit are placed in contradistinction from those vices which lead to strifes among people. On the meaning of the word love, see the notes at 1 Corinthians 13:1; and for an illustration of its operations and effects, see the notes at that whole chapter.

Joy - In the love of God; in the evidences of pardon; in communion with the Redeemer, and in his service; in the duties of religion, in trial, and in the hope of heaven; see the notes at Romans 5:2; compare 1 Peter 1:8.

Peace - As the result of reconciliation with God; see the notes at Romans 5:1.

Long-suffering - In affliction and trial, and when injured by others; see the note at 1 Corinthians 13:4.

Gentleness - The same word which is translated “kindness” in 2 Corinthians 6:6; see the note at that place. The word means goodness, kindness, benignity; and is opposed to a harsh, crabbed, crooked temper. It is a disposition to be pleased; it is mildness of temper, calmness of spirit, an unruffled disposition, and a disposition to treat all with urbanity and politeness. This is one of the regular effects of the Spirit‘s operations on the heart. Religion makes no one crabby, and morose, and sour. It sweetens the temper; corrects an irritable disposition; makes the heart kind; disposes us to make all around us as happy as possible. This is true politeness; a kind of politeness which can far better be learned in the school of Christ than in that of Chesterfield; by the study of the New Testament than under the direction of the dancing-master.

Goodness - See the note at Romans 15:14. Here the word seems to be used in the sense of beneficence, or a disposition to do good to others. The sense is, that a Christian must be a good man.

Faith - On the meaning of the word faith, see the note at Mark 16:16. The word here may be used in the sense of fidelity, and may denote that the Christian will be a faithful man, a man faithful to his word and promises; a man who can be trusted or confided in. It is probable that the word is used in this sense because the object of the apostle is not to speak of the feelings which we have toward God so much as to illustrate the influences of the Spirit in directing and controlling our feelings toward people. True religion

makes a man faithful. The Christian is faithful as a man; faithful as a neighbor, friend, father, husband, son. He is faithful to his contracts; faithful to his promises. No man can be a Christian who is not thus faithful, and all pretensions to being under the influences of the Spirit when such fidelity does not exist, are deceitful and vain.

Verse 23

Meekness - See the note at Matthew 5:5.

Temperance - The word used here, (ἐγκράτεια egkrateia), means properly "self-control, continence." It is derived from ἐν enand κράτος kratos"strength," and has reference to the power or ascendancy which we have over exciting and evil passions of all kinds. It denotes the self-rule which a man has over the evil propensities of his nature. Our word temperance we use now in a much more limited sense, as referring mainly to abstinence from intoxicating drinks. But the word here used is employed in a much more extended signification. It includes the dominion over all evil propensities, and may denote continence, chastity, self-government, moderation in regard to all indulgences as well as abstinence from intoxicating drinks. See the word explained in the notes at Acts 24:25. The sense here is, that the influences of the Holy Spirit on the heart make a man moderate in all indulgences; teach him to restrain his passions, and to govern himself; to control his evil propensities, and to subdue all inordinate affection.

The Christian will not only abstain from intoxicating drinks, but from all exciting passions; he will be temperate in his manner of living, and in the government of his temper. This may be applied to temperance properly so called with us; but it should not be limited to that. A Christian must be a temperate man; and if the effect of his religion is not to produce this, it is false and vain. Abstinence from intoxicating drinks, as well as from all improper excitement, is demanded by the very genius of his religion, and on this subject there is no danger of drawing the cords too close. No one was ever injured by the strictest temperance, by total abstinence from ardent spirits, and from wine as a beverage; no man is certainly safe who does not abstain; no man, it is believed, can be in a proper frame of mind for religious duties who indulges in the habitual use of intoxicating drinks. Nothing does more scandal to religion than such indulgences; and, other things being equal, he is the most under the influence of the Spirit of God who is the most thoroughly a person of temperance.

Against such there is no law - That is, there is no law to condemn such persons. These are not the things which the Law denounces. These, therefore, are the true freemen; free from the condemning sentence of the Law, and free in the service of God. Law condemns sin; and they who evince the spirit here referred to are free from its denunciations.

Verse 24

And they that are Christ's - All who are true Christians.

Have crucified the flesh - The corrupt passions of the soul have been put to death; that is, destroyed. They are as though they were dead, and have no power over us; see the note at Galatians 2:20.

With the affections - Margin, "Passions." All corrupt desires.

And lusts - See the note at Romans 1:24.

Verse 25

If we live in the Spirit - See the note at Galatians 5:16. The sense of this verse probably is, "We who are Christians profess to be under the influences of the Holy Spirit. By his influences and agency is our spiritual life. We profess not to be under the dominion of the flesh; not to be controlled by its appetites and desires. Let us then act in this manner, and as if we believed this. Let us yield ourselves to his influences, and show that we are controlled by that Spirit." It is an earnest exhortation to Christians to yield wholly to the agency of the Holy Spirit on their hearts, and to submit to his guidance; see Romans 8:5, note9, note.

Verse 26

Let us not be desirous of vainglory - The word used here (κενόδοξοι kenodoxoi) means "proud" or "vain" of empty advantages, as of birth, property, eloquence, or learning. The reference here is probably to the paltry competitions which arose on account of these supposed advantages. It is possible that this might have been one cause of the difficulties existing in the churches of Galatia, and the apostle is anxious wholly to check and remove it. The Jews prided themselves on their birth, and people are everywhere prone to overvalue the supposed advantages of birth and blood. The doctrines of Paul are, that on great and most vital respects people are on a level; that these things contribute nothing to salvation (notes, Galatians 3:28); and that Christians should esteem them of little importance, and that they should not be suffered to interfere with their fellowship, or to mar their harmony and peace.

Provoking one another - The sense is, that they who are desirous of vainglory, do provoke one another. They provoke those whom they regard as inferiors by a haughty carriage and a contemptuous manner toward them. They look upon them often with contempt; pass them by with disdain; treat them as beneath their notice; and this provokes on the other hand hard feeling, and hatred. and a disposition to take revenge. When people regard themselves as equal in their great and vital interests; when they feel that they are fellow-heirs of the grace of life; when they feel that they belong to one great family, and are in their great interests on a level; deriving no advantage from birth and blood; on a level as descendants of the same apostate father; as being themselves sinners; on a level at the foot of the cross, at the communion table, on beds of sickness, in the grave, and at the bar of God; when they feel this, then the consequences here referred to will be avoided. There will be no haughty carriage such as to provoke opposition; and on the other hand there will be no envy on account of the superior rank of others.

Envying one another - On account of their superior wealth, rank, talent, learning. The true way to cure envy is to make people feel that in their great and important interests they are on a level. Their great interests are beyond the grave. The distinctions of this life are temporary, and are comparative trifles. Soon all will be on a level in the grave, and at the bar of God and in heaven. Wealth, and honor, and rank do not avail there. The poorest man will wear as bright a crown as the rich; the man of most humble birth will be admitted as near the throne as he who can boast the longest line of illustrious ancestors. Why should a man who is soon to wear a "crown incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away," envy him who has a ducal coronet here, or a royal diadem - baubles that are soon to be laid aside forever? Why should he, though poor here, who is soon to inherit the treasures of heaven where "moth and rust do not corrupt," envy him who can walk over a few acres as his own, or who has accumulated a glittering pile of dust, soon to be left forever?

Why should he who is soon to wear the robes of salvation, made "white in the blood of the Lamb," envy him who is "clothed in purple and fine linen," or who can adorn himself and his family in the most gorgeous attire which art and skill can make, soon to give place to the winding-sheet; soon to be succeeded by the simple garb which the most humble wears in the grave? If men feel that their great interests are beyond the tomb: that in the

important matter of salvation they are on a level; that soon they are to be undistinguished beneath the clods of the valley, how unimportant comparatively would it seem to adorn their bodies, to advance their name and rank and to improve their estates! The rich and the great would cease to look down with contempt on those of more humble rank, and the poor would cease to envy those above them, for they are soon to be their equals in the grave; their equals, perhaps their superiors in heaven!

GALATIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Introduction

This chapter is composed entirely of affectionate exhortation, and the expression of the apostle‘s earnest solicitude in the behalf of the Christians in Galatia. He exhorts them Galatians 6:1 to bring back to the ways of virtue anyone who through the strength of strong temptation had been led astray. He entreats them Galatians 6:2 to bear one another‘s burdens, and thus to show that they were true friends of Christ, and governed by his laws. He entreats them not to be lifted up with pride, and not to affix an inordinate estimate to anything that they possessed, assuring them that their true estimate was to be formed from the character of their own works; Galatians 6:3-5. He exhorts them to minister to the needs of their public teachers, the preachers of the gospel; Galatians 6:6. In Galatians 6:7-10, he reminds them of the solemn day of judgment, when all will be tried; assures them that people will be judged and rewarded according to their works; and entreats them not to be weary in well-doing, but to labor on patiently in doing good, with the assurance that they should reap in due season.

In Galatians 6:11, he shows them the interest which he felt in them by his having done what was unusual for him, and what perhaps he had done in no other instance - writing an entire letter in his own hand. He then states the true reason why others wished them to be circumcised. It was the dread of persecution, and not any real love to the cause of religion. They did not themselves keep the Law, and they only desired to glory in the number of converts to their views; Galatians 6:12-13. But Paul says that he would glory in nothing but in the cross of Christ. By that he had been crucified to the world, and the world had been crucified to him Galatians 6:14; and he repeats the solemn assurance that in the Christian religion neither circumcision nor uncircumcision was of any importance whatever; Galatians 6:15. This was the true rule of life, and on as many as walked according to this principle, he invokes the blessing of God; Galatians 6:16. He closes the Epistle by entreating them to give him no more trouble. He bore in his body already the marks or sufferings which he had received in the cause of the Lord Jesus. His trials already were sufficient; and he entreats them to spare him from future molestation Galatians 6:17, and closes with the benediction; Galatians 6:18.

Verse 1

Brethren, if a man be overtaken - Margin, "Although." It is a case which the apostle supposes might happen. Christians were not perfect; and it was possible that they who were true Christians might be surprised by temptation, and fall into sin. The word rendered "be overtaken" (προλημφθῃ prolēmphthēfrom προλαμβάνω prolambanō), means properly "to take before another, to anticipate" 1 Corinthians 11:21; then "to be before taken or caught"; and may here mean either that one had been formerly guilty of sin or had been recently hurried on by his passions or by temptations to commit a fault. It is probable that the latter here is the true sense, and that it means, if a man is found to be overtaken by any sin; if his passions, or if temptation get the better of him. Tyndale renders it: "If any man be fallen by chance into any fault." It refers to cases of surprise, or of sudden temptation. Christians do not commit sin deliberately, and as a part of the plan of life; but they may be surprised by sudden temptation, or urged on by impetuous or headstrong passion, as David and Peter were. Paul does not speak of the possibility of restoring one who deliberately forms the plan of sinning; he does not suppose that such a man could be a Christian, and that it would be proper to speak of restoring such a man.

Ye which are spiritual - Who are under the influences of the Holy Spirit; see the note at Galatians 5:22-23. The apostle, in this verse, refers evidently to those who have fallen into some sensual indulgence Galatians 5:19-21, and says that they who have escaped these temptations, and who are under the influences of the Spirit, should recover such persons. It is a very important qualification for those who would recover others from sin, that they should not be guilty of the same sin themselves. Reformers should be holy persons; people who exercise discipline in the church should be "spiritual" men - people in whom implicit confidence may be properly reposed.

Restore such an one - On the meaning of the word used here, see the note at 2 Corinthians 13:11. Here it means, not to restore him to the church after he has been excluded, but set him right, bring him back, recover him from his errors and his faults. The apostle does not say in what manner this is to be done; but it is usually to be done doubtless by affectionate admonition, by faithful instruction, and by prayer. Discipline or punishment should not be resorted to until the other methods are tried in vain; Matthew 18:15-17.

In the spirit of meekness - With a kind, forbearing, and forgiving spirit; see the note at Matthew 5:5. Not with anger; not with a lordly and overbearing mind; not with a love of finding others in fault, and with a desire for inflicting the discipline of the church; not with a harsh and unforgiving temper, but with love, and gentleness, and humility, and patience, and with a readiness to forgive when wrong has been done. This is an essential qualification for restoring and recovering an offending brother. No one should attempt to rebuke or admonish another who cannot do it in the spirit of meekness; no man should engage in any way in the work of reform who has not such a temper of mind.

Considering thyself … - Remembering how liable you are yourself to err; and how much kindness and indulgence should therefore be shown to others. You are to act as if you felt it possible that you might also be overtaken with a fault; and you should act as you would wish that others should do toward you. Pliny (Epis. viii. 22) has expressed a similar sentiment in the following beautiful language. "Atque ego optimum et emendatissimum existimo, qui caeteris ita ignoscit, tanquam ipse quotidie peccet; ita peccatis abstinet, tanquam nemini ignoscat. Prolade hoc domi, hoc foris, hoc in omni vitae genere teneamus, ut nobis implacabiles simus, exorabiles istis etiam, qui dare veniam nisi sibi nesciunt." The doctrine taught by Paul is, that such is human infirmity, and such the strength of human depravity, that no one knows into what sins he may himself fall. He may be tempted to commit; the same sins which he endeavors to amend in others; he may be left to commit even worse sins. If this is the case, we should be tender while we are firm; forgiving while we set our faces against evil; prayerful while we rebuke; and compassionate when we are compelled to inflict on others the discipline of the church. Everyone who has any proper feelings, when he attempts to recover an erring brother should pray for him and for himself also; and will regard his duty as only half done, and that very imperfectly, if he does not "consider also that he himself may be tempted."

Verse 2

Bear ye one another's burdens - See the note at Romans 15:1. Bear with each other; help each other in the divine life. The sense is, that every man has special temptations and easily besetting sins, which constitute a heavy burden. We should aid each other in regard to these, and help one another to overcome them.

And so fulfil the law of Christ - The special law of Christ, requiring us to love one another; see the note at John 13:34. This was the distinguishing law of the Redeemer; and they could in no way better fulfil it than by aiding each other in the divine life. The law of Christ would not allow us to reproach the offender, or to taunt him, or to rejoice in his fall. We should help him to take up his load of infirmities, and sustain him by our counsels, our exhortations, and our prayers. Christians, conscious of their infirmities, have a right to the sympathy and the prayers of their brethren. They should not be cast off to a cold and heartless world; a world rejoicing over their fall, and ready to brand them as hypocrites. They should be pressed to the warm bosom of brotherly kindness; and prayer should be made to ascend without ceasing around an erring and a fallen brother. Is this the case in regard to all who bear the Christian name?

Verse 3

For if a man think himself to be something … - see Galatians 5:26. This is designed, evidently, to be another reason why we should be kind and tender to those who have erred. It is, that even those who are most confident may fall. They who feel secure, and think it impossible that they should sin, are not safe. They may be wholly deceived, and may be nothing, when they have the highest estimate of themselves. They may themselves fall into sin, and have need of all the sympathy and kindness of their brethren.

When he is nothing - When he has no strength, and no moral worth. When he is not such as he apprehends, but is lifted up with vain self-conceit.

He deceiveth himself - He understands not his own character. "The worst part of the fraud falls on his own head" - Doddridge. He does not accomplish what he expected to do; and instead of acquiring reputation from others, as he expected, he renders himself contemptible in their sight.

Verse 4

But let every man prove - That is, try or examine in a proper manner. Let him form a proper estimate of what is due to himself, according to his real character. Let him compare himself with the word of God, and the infallible rule which he has given, and by which we are to be judged in the last great day; compare the Romans 12:3 note; 1 Corinthians 11:28 note; 2 Corinthians 13:5 note.

His own work - What he does. Let him form a fair and impartial estimate of his own character.

And then shall he have rejoicing - That is, he will be appropriately rewarded, and will meet with no disappointment. The man who forms an improper estimate of his own character will be sure to be disappointed. The man who examines himself, and who forms no extravagant expectation in regard to what is due to himself, will be appropriately rewarded, and will be made happy. If, by the careful examination of himself, he finds his life to be virtuous, and his course of conduct pure; if he has done no wrong to others, and if he finds evidence that he is a child of God, then he will have cause of rejoicing.

In himself alone - Compare Proverbs 14:14; "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." The sentiment is, that he will find in himself a source of pure joy. He will not be dependent on the applause of others for happiness. In an approving conscience; in the evidence of the favor of God; in an honest effort to lead a pure and holy life, he will have happiness. The source of his joys will be within; and he will not be dependent, as the man of ambition, and the man who thinks of himself more highly than he ought, will, on the favors of a capricious multitude, and on the breath of popular applause.

And not in another - He will not be dependent on others for happiness. Here is the true secret of happiness. It consists:

(1) In not forming an improper estimate of ourselves; in knowing just what we are, and what is due to us; in not thinking ourselves to be something, when we are nothing.

(2) in leading such a life that it may be examined to the core, that we may know exactly what we are without being distressed or pained. That is, in having a good conscience, and in the honest and faithful discharge of our duty to God and man.

(3) in not being dependent on the fickle applause of the world for our comfort. The man who has no internal resources, and who has no approving conscience; who is happy only when others smile, and miserable when they frown, is a man who can have no security for enjoyment. The man who has a good conscience, and who enjoys the favor of God, and the hope of heaven, carries with him the source of perpetual joy. He cannot be deprived of it. His purse may be taken, and his house robbed, but the highwayman cannot rob him of his comforts. He carries with him an unfailing source of

happiness when abroad, and the same source of happiness abides with him at home; he bears it into society, and it remains with him in solitude; it is his companion when in health, and when surrounded by his friends, and it is no less his companion when his friends leave him, and when he lies upon a bed of death.

Verse 5

For every man shall bear his own burden - This seems to be a kind of proverbial saying; and it means here, every man shall have his proper reward. If he is a virtuous man, he will be happy; if a vicious man, he will be miserable. If a virtuous man, he will have the source of happiness in himself; if a sinner, he must bear the proper penalty of his sin. In the great day every man shall be properly rewarded. Knowing this, we should be little anxious about the sentiments of others, and should seek to maintain a good conscience toward God and man. The design of this passage is, to prevent people from forming an improper estimate of themselves, and of the opinions of others. Let a man feel that he is soon to stand at the judgment-seat, and it will do much to keep him from an improper estimate of his own importance; let him feel that he must give an account to God, and that his great interests are to be determined by the estimate which God will affix to his character, and it will teach him that the opinion of the world is of little value. This will restrain his vanity and ambition. This will show him that the great business of life is to secure the favor of God, and to be prepared to give up his account; and there is no way so effectual of checking ambition, and subduing vanity and the love of applause, as to feel that we are soon to stand at the awesome bar of God.

Verse 6

Let him that is taught in the word - In the word of God; that is, the gospel.

Communicate unto him - Let him share with him who teaches; let there be a common participation of all good things.

In all good things - In everything that is needful for their comfortable subsistence. On the duty here enjoined see the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:11-13.

Verse 7

Be not deceived - That is, in regard to your character, and your hopes for eternity. This is a formula of introduction to some admonition that is

especially weighty and important. It implies that there was danger that they would be deceived in reference to their character. The sources of the danger were the corruption of their own hearts, the difficulty of knowing their true character, the instructions of false teachers, etc.; see the note at 1 Corinthians 6:9.

God is not mocked - He cannot be imposed on, or mocked. He knows what our real character is, and he will judge us accordingly. The word rendered "mocked" (μυκτηρίζω muktērizō), means, properly, to turn up the nose in scorn; hence, to mock, or deride, or insult. The sense is, that God could not be imposed on, or could not be insulted with impunity, or successfully. To mock is, properly:

(1) To imitate, to mimic: to imitate in contempt or derision.

(2) to deride, to laugh at, to ridicule.

(3) to defeat, or to illude, or to disappoint.

(4) to fool, to tantalize - Webster.

Here it cannot mean to imitate, or to mimic, but it refers to the principles of the divine administration, and must mean that they could not be treated with contempt, or successfully evaded. They could not hope to illude or impose on God. His principles of government were settled, and they could not impose on him. To what the reference is here, is not perfectly plain. In the connection in which it stands, it seems to refer to the support of the ministers of the gospel; and Paul introduces the general principle, that as a man sows he will reap, to show them what will be the effect of a liberal and proper use of their property. If they made a proper use of it; if they employed it for benevolent purposes; if they appropriated what they should to the support of religion, they would reap accordingly. God could not be imposed on in regard to this. They could not make him think that they had true religion when they were sowing to the flesh, and when they were spending their money in purchasing pleasure, and in luxury and vanity.

No zeal, however ardent; no prayers, however fervent or long, no professions, however loud, would impose on God. And to make such prayers, and to manifest such zeal and such strong professions, while the

heart was with the world, and they were spending their money for every thing else but religion, was mocking God. Alas, how much mockery of God like this still prevails! How much, when people seem disposed to make God believe that they are exceedingly zealous and devoted, while their heart is truly with the world! How many long prayers are offered; how much zeal is shown; how many warm professions are made, as if to make God and man believe that the heart was truly engaged in the cause of religion, while little or nothing is given in the cause of benevolence; while the ministers of religion are suffered to starve; and while the "loud professor" rolls in wealth, and is distinguished for luxury of living, for gaiety of apparel, for splendor of equipage, and for extravagance in parties of pleasure! Such professors attempt to mock God. They are really sowing to the flesh; and of the flesh they must reap corruption.

For whatsoever a man soweth … - See the note at 2 Corinthians 9:6. This figure is taken from agriculture. A man who sows wheat, shall reap wheat; he who sows barley, shall reap barley; he who sows cockle, shall reap cockle. Every kind of grain will produce grain like itself. So it is in regard to our works. He who is liberal, shall be dealt with liberally; he who is righteous, shall be rewarded; he who is a sinner, shall reap according to his deeds.

Verse 8

For he that soweth to his flesh - That makes provision for the indulgence of fleshly appetites and passions; see the notes at Galatians 5:19-21. He who makes use of his property to give indulgence to licentiousness, intemperance, and vanity.

Shall of the flesh - From the flesh, or as that which indulgence in fleshly appetites properly produces. Punishment, under the divine government, is commonly in the line of offences. The punishment of licentiousness and intemperance in this life is commonly loathsome and offensive disease; and when long indulged, the sensualist becomes haggard, and bloated, and corrupted, and sinks into the grave. Such, also, is often the punishment of luxurious living, of a pampered appetite, of gluttony, as well as of intemperate drinking. But if the punishment does not follow in this life, it will be sure to overtake the sensualist in the world to come. There he shall reap ruin, final and everlasting.

Corruption -

(1) By disease.

(2) in the grave - the home to which the sensualist rapidly travels.

(3) in the world of woe.

There all shall be corrupt. His virtue - even the semblance of virtue, shall all be gone. His understanding, will, fancy - his whole soul shall be debased and corrupt. No virtue will linger and live on the plains of ruin, but all shall be depravity and woe. Everything in hell is debased and corrupt; and the whole harvest of sensuality in this world and the world to come, is degradation and defilement.

But he that soweth to the Spirit - He who follows the leadings and cultivates the affections which the Holy Spirit would produce; see the notes at Galatians 5:22-23.

Shall of the Spirit - As the result of following the leadings of the Spirit.

Reap life everlasting - See the note at Romans 2:7.

Verse 9

And let us not be weary in welldoing - See the note at 1 Corinthians 15:58. The reference here is particularly to the support of the ministers of religion Galatians 6:6, but the apostle makes the exhortation general. Christians sometimes become weary. There is so much opposition to the best plans for doing good; there is so much to be done; there are so many calls on their time and their charities; and there is often so much ingratitude among those whom they endeavor to benefit, that they become disheartened. Such Paul addresses, and exhorts them not to give over, but to persevere.

For in due season - At the day of judgment. Then we shall receive the full reward of all our self-denials and charities.

We shall reap, if we faint not - If we do not give over, exhausted and disheartened. It is implied here, that unless a man perseveres in doing good to the end of life, he can hope for no reward. He who becomes disheartened, and who gives over his efforts; he that is appalled by obstacles, and that faints on account of the embarrassments thrown in his way; he that pines for ease, and withdraws from the field of benevolence, shows that he has no true attachment to the cause, and that his heart has never been truly in the work of religion. He who becomes a true Christian, becomes such for eternity. He has enlisted, never to withdraw. He becomes pledged to do

good and to serve God always. No obstacles are to deter, no embarrassments are to drive him from the field. With the vigor of his youth, and the wisdom and influence of his riper years; with his remaining powers when enfeebled by age; with the last pulsation of life here, and with his immortal energies in a higher world, he is to do good. For that he is to live. In that he is to die; and when he awakes in the resurrection with renovated powers, he is to awake to an everlasting service of doing good, as far as he may have opportunity, in the kingdom of God.

Verse 10

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men - This is the true rule about doing good. "The opportunity to do good," said Cotton Mather, "imposes the obligation to do it." The simple rule is, that we are favored with the opportunity, and that we have the power. It is not that we are to do it when it is convenient; or when it will advance the interest of a party; or when it may contribute to our fame; the rule is, that we are to do it when we have the opportunity. No matter how often that occurs; no matter how many objects of benevolence are presented - the more the better; no matter how much self-denial it may cost us; no matter how little fame we may get by it; still, if we have the opportunity to do good, we are to do it, and should be thankful for the privilege. And it is to be done to all people. Not to our family only; not to our party; not to our neighbors; not to those of our own color; not to those who live in the same land with us, but to all mankind. If we can reach and benefit a man who lives on the other side of the globe, whom we have never seen, and shall never see in this world or in the world to come, still we are to do him good. Such is Christianity. And in this, as in all other respects, it differs from the narrow and selfish spirit of clanship which prevails all over the world.

Especially - On the same principle that a man is bound particularly to benefit his own family and friends. In his large and expansive zeal for the world at large, he is not to forget or neglect them. He is to feel that they have special claims on him. They are near him. They are bound to him by tender ties. They may be particularly dependent on him. Christianity does not relax the ties which bind us to our country, our family, and our friends. It makes them more close and tender, and excites us more faithfully to discharge the duties which grow out of these relations. But, in addition to that, it excites us to do good to all people, and to bless the stranger as well as the friend; the man who has a different color from our own, as well as he

who has the same; the man who lives in another clime, as well as he who was born in the same country in which we live.

Of the household of faith - Christians are distinguished from other people primarily by their believing the gospel, and by its influence on their lives.

Verse 11

Ye see - This might be rendered see, in the imperative. So Tyndale renders it, "Behold." But it is more commonly supposed that it should be rendered in the indicative. The sense is not materially different whichever translation is adopted. The object of the apostle is, to direct their attention to the special proof of his love, which he had manifested in writing such a letter.

How large a letter - Considerable variety has existed in regard to the interpretation of this phrase. The word used here and translated "how large" (πηλίκος pēlikos), means. properly, "how great." Some have supposed that it refers to the size of the letters which Paul made in writing the Epistle - the length and crudeness of the characters which he used. Such interpreters suppose that he was not well versed in writing Greek, and that he used large letters. and those somewhat rudely made, like the Hebrew. So Doddridge and Whitby interpret it; and so Theodoret, Jerome, Theophylact, and some others. He might not, says Doddridge, have been well versed in the Greek characters; or "this inaccuracy of his writings might have been owing to the infirmity or weakness of his nerves, which he had hinted at before." Jerome says, that Paul was a Hebrew, and that he was unacquainted with the mode of writing Greek letters; and that because necessity demanded that he should write a letter in his own hand, contrary to his usual custom, he was obliged to form his characters in this crude manner. According to this interpretation, it was:

(1)A pledge to the Galatians that the Epistle was genuine, since it bore the marks of his own handwriting; and,

(2)It was proof of special affection for them that he was willing to undergo this labor on their account.

Others suppose that he means to refer to the size of the Epistle which he had written. Such is the interpretation of Grotius, Koppe, Bloomfield, Clarke, Locke, Chandler, and is, indeed, the common interpretation, as it is the obvious one. According to this, it was proof of special interest in them, and regard for them, that he had written to them a whole letter with his own

hand. Usually he employed an amanuensis, and added his name, with a brief benediction or remark at the close; see the Romans 16:22 note; 1 Corinthians 16:21 note. What induced him to depart from his usual custom here is unknown. Jerome supposes that he refers here to what follows from this verse to the end of the Epistle, as that which he had written with his own hand, but the word ἔγραψα egrapsasays Rosenmuller, refers rather to what he had written, than to that which he intended to write. On this verse, the reader may consult with advantage, Tholuck on the Life and Writings of Paul: German Selections, by Edwards and Park, Andover, 1839, pp. 35,64,65.

Verse 12

As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh - To be distinguished for their conformity to external rites and customs. To be known for their zeal in this cause. They sought to show their zeal by making converts, and by inducing others also to conform to those customs. Paul here refers, doubtless, to the Jewish teachers, and he says that their main object was to evince their zeal in the observance of rites and ceremonies.

They constrain you - You who are Gentiles. They insist on circumcision as indispensable to salvation.

Only lest they should suffer persecution - It is not from any true love for the cause of religion. It is, that they may avoid persecution from the Jews. If they should renounce the doctrine which taught that circumcision was indispensable, they would be exposed to the rage of the Jews, and would suffer persecution. Rather than do this, they make a show of great, zeal in inducing others to be circumcised.

For the cross of Christ - From attachment to the cause of a crucified Saviour. If they insisted on entire dependence on the merits of his blood, and renounced all dependence on rites and ceremonies, they would suffer persecution. This verse shows the true cause of the zeal which the Judaizing teachers evinced. It was the fear of persecution. It was the want of independence and boldness in maintaining the doctrine that people were to be saved only by the merits of the Lord Jesus. By attempting to blend together the doctrines of Judaism and Christianity; by maintaining that the observance of the Jewish rites was necessary, and yet that Jesus was the Messiah, they endeavored to keep in with both parties; and thus to escape the opposition of the Jews. It was an unhallowed compromise It was an

attempt to blend things together which could not be united. One must really displace the other. If people depended on the rites of Moses, they had no need of dependence on the Messiah; if they professed to depend on him, then to rely on anything else was in fact to disown and reject him. Embracing the one system was in fact renouncing the other. Such is the argument of Paul; and such his solemn remonstrance against embracing any doctrine which would obscure the glory of simple dependence on the cross of Christ.

Verse 13

For neither they themselves who are circumcised - The Jewish teachers, or perhaps all Jews. It was true in general that the Jews did not wholly and entirely obey the Law of Moses, but it is probable that the apostle refers particularly here to the judaizing teachers in Galatia.

Keep the law - The Law of Moses, or the Law of God. Paul‘s idea is, that if they were circumcised they brought themselves under obligation to keep the whole law of God; see the note at Galatians 5:3. But they did not do it.

(1) no person perfectly observes the whole law of God.

(2) the Jewish nation as such were very far from doing it.

(3) it is probable that these persons did not pretend even to keep the whole Law of Moses.

Paul insists on it that if they were circumcised, and depended on that for salvation, they were under obligation to keep the whole law. But they did not. Probably they did not offer sacrifice, or join in any of the numerous observances of the Jewish nation, except some of the more prominent, such as circumcision. This, says Paul, is inconsistent in the highest degree; and they thus show their insincerity and hypocrisy.

That they may glory in your flesh - In having you as converts, and in persuading you to be circumcised, that they may show their zeal for the Law, and thus escape persecution. The phrase “in your flesh” here, is equivalent to “in your circumcision;” making use of your circumcision to promote their own importance, and to save themselves from persecution.

Verse 14

But God forbid - See the note at Romans 3:4. "For me it is not to glory except in the cross of Christ." The object of Paul here is evidently to place himself in contrast with the judaizing teachers, and to show his determined purpose to glory in nothing else but the cross of Christ. Well they knew that he had as much occasion for glorying in the things pertaining to the flesh, or in the observance of external rites and customs, as any of them. He had been circumcised. He had had all the advantages of accurate training in the knowledge of the Jewish law. He had entered on life with uncommon advantages. He had evinced a zeal that was not surpassed by any of them; and his life, so far as conformity to the religion in which he had been trained was concerned, was blameless; Philemon 3:4-8. This must have been to a great extent known to the Galatians; and by placing his own conduct in strong contrast with that of the Judaizing teachers, and showing that he had no ground of confidence in himself, he designed to bring back the minds of the Galatians to simple dependence on the cross.

That I should glory - That I should boast; or that I should rely on any thing else. Others glory in their conformity to the laws of Moses; others in their zeal, or their talents, or their learning, or their orthodoxy; others in their wealth, or their accomplishments; others in their family alliances, and their birth; but the supreme boast and glorying of a Christian is in the cross of Christ.

In the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ - In Jesus the crucified Messiah. It is a subject of rejoicing and glorying that we have such a Saviour. The world looked upon him with contempt; and the cross was a stumbling-block to the Jew, and folly to the Greek. Notes, 1 Corinthians 1:23. But to the Christian, that cross is the subject of glorying. It is so because:

(1)Of the love of him who suffered there;

(2)Of the purity and holiness of his character, for the innocent died there for the guilty;

(3)Of the honor there put on the Law of God by his dying to maintain it unsullied;

(4)Of the reconciliation there made for sin, accomplishing what could be done by no other oblation, and by no power of man;

(5)Of the pardon there procured for the guilty;

(6)Of the fact that through it we become dead to the world, and are made alive to God;

(7)Of the support and consolation which goes from that cross to sustain us in trial; and,

(8)Of the fact that it procured for us admission into heaven, a title to the world of glory. All is glory around the cross.

It was a glorious Saviour who died; it was glorious love that led him to die; it was a glorious object to redeem a world; and is is unspeakable glory to which he will raise lost and ruined sinners by his death. O who would not glory in such a Saviour! Compared with this, what trifles are all the objects in which people usually boast! And what a lesson is here furnished to the true Christian! Let us not boast of our wealth. It will soon leave us, or we shall be taken from it, and it can aid us little in the great matters that are before us. It will not ward off disease; it will not enable us to bear pain; it will not smooth the couch of death; it will not save the soul. Let us not glory in our strength, for it will soon fail; in our beauty, for we shall soon be undistinguished in the corruptions of the tomb; in our accomplishments, for they will not save us; in our learning, for it is not that by which we can be brought to heaven. But let us glory that we have for a Saviour the eternal Son of God - that glorious Being who was adored by the inhabitants of heaven; who made the worlds; who is pure, and lovely, and most holy; and who has undertaken our cause and died to save us. I desire no higher honor than to be saved by the Son of God. It is the exaltation of my nature, and shows me more than anything else its true dignity, that one so great and glorious sought my redemption. That cannot be an object of temporary value which he sought by coming from heaven, and if there is any object of real magnitude in this world, it is the soul which the eternal Son of God died to redeem.

By whom the world is crucified unto me … - See the notes at Galatians 2:20.

Verse 15

For in Christ Jesus - In his religion; see the note at Galatians 5:6.

But a new creature - The fact that a man is created anew, or born again, constitutes the real difference between him and other people. This is what

Christ requires; this is the distinction which he designs to make. It is not by conformity to certain rites and customs that a man is to be accepted; it is not by elevated rank, or by wealth, or beauty, or blood; it is not by the color of the complexion; but the grand inquiry is, whether a man is born again, and is in fact a new creature in Christ Jesus; see the note at 2 Corinthians 5:17, for an explanation of the phrase "a new creature."

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Verse 16

And as many as walk - As many as live, for so the word walk is used in the Scriptures. According to this rule. Greek: "This canon"; see the word explained in the notes at 2 Corinthians 10:13.

Peace be on them - See the note at Romans 15:33.

And upon the Israel of God - The true church of God; all who are his true worshippers; see the note at Romans 2:28-29; Romans 9:6, note.

Verse 17

From henceforth - For the remaining time; that is, during the remainder of my life.

Let no man trouble me - This implies that he had had trouble of some kind, and he earnestly desires that he may have no more. What particular trouble he here refers to, is not certainly known, and commentators have not been agreed. It seems to me that the connection requires us to understand it of the molestation which he had in regard to his call to the apostolic office, and his authority to explain and defend the religion of the Redeemer. This had been one principal subject of this Epistle. His authority had been called in question. He had felt it necessary to go into a vindication of it. His instructions had been departed from on the ground that he was not one of the original apostles, and that he differed from others; see Galatians 1:11. Hence, all the anxiety and trouble which he had had in regard to their departure from the doctrines which he had taught them. He closes the whole subject of the Epistle by this tender and affecting language, the sense of which has been well expressed by Crellius: "I have shown my apostolic authority, and proved that I am commisioned by the Lord Jesus. I have stated and vindicated the great doctrine of justification by faith, and shown that the Mosaic law is not necessarily binding. On these points may I have no more trouble. I have enough for my nature to bear of other kinds. I bear in my body the impressive proofs that I am an apostle, and the sufferings that require all my fortitude to sustain them." These marks, received in the

service of the Lord Jesus, and so strongly resembling those which he himself received, prove that I am truly engaged in his cause, and am commissioned by him. These wounds and sorrows are so many, that I have need of the kindness and prayers of Christians rather than to be compelled to vindicate myself, and to rebuke them for their own wanderings."

For I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus - The word here rendered "marks" (στίγματα stigmata), means properly the marks or brands which are pricked or burnt in upon the body. So slaves were sometimes branded by their masters to prevent their escape; and so devotees to an idol god sometimes caused to be impressed on themselves the name or image of the divinity which they adored. Herodotus (ii. 113) mentions a temple of Hercules in Egypt, in which if any slave took refuge, and had the sacred brands or marks impressed on him (στίγματα stigmata), he thereby devoted himself to the god, and it was not lawful for anyone to injure him. Many have supposed that Paul here says, in allusion to such a custom, that he had the name of the Redeemer impressed on his body, and that he regarded himself as devoted to him and his cause. It seems to me that by these marks or brands he refers to the weals which he had received in his body; the marks of stripes and sufferings which he endured in the service of the Redeemer. Compare 2 Corinthians 11:24-25.

He had repeatedly been scourged. He bore the marks of that on his person now. They were the evidences that he was devoted to the Saviour. He had received them in his cause; and they were the proofs that he belonged to the Lord Jesus. He had suffered for him, and had suffered much. Having thus suffered, and having thus the evidence that he belonged to the Saviour, and having by his sufferings given ample proof of that to others, he asks to be freed from further molestation. Some had in their body the marks of circumcision, the evidence that they were disciples of the Law of Moses; others had perhaps in their persons the image and name of an idol to which they were devoted; but the marks which he bore were the weals which he had received by being again and again whipped publicly in the cause of the Redeemer. To that Redeemer, therefore, he felt himself united, and from that attachment he would not allow himself to be diverted.

How often has an old soldier shown his scars with pride and exultation as a proof of his attachment to his country! Numerous scars; the loss of an arm, an eye, or a leg, are thus the much valued and vaunted pledges of

attachment to liberty, and a passport to the confidence of every man who loves his country. “I prize this wound,” said Lafayette, when struck in the foot by a musket ball at Germantown, “as among the most valued of my honors.” So Paul felt in regard to the scourges which he had received in the cause of the Lord Jesus. They were his boast and his glory; the pledge that he had been engaged in the cause of the Saviour, and a passport to all who loved the Son of God. Christians now are not subjected to such stripes and scourings. But let us have some marks of our attachment to the Lord Jesus. By a holy life; by self-denial; by subdued animal affections; by zeal in the cause of truth; by an imitation of the Lord Jesus; and by the marks of suffering in our body, if we should be called to it, let us have some evidence that we are his, and be able to say, when we look on death and eternity, “we bear with us the evidence that we belong to the Son of God.” To us that will be of more value than any ribbon or star indicating elevated rank; more valuable than a ducal coronet; more valuable than the brightest jewel that ever sparkled on the brow of royalty.

Verse 18

Brethren, the grace … - See the note at Romans 16:20.

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CHAPTER FORTY-NINE
Ephesians

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EPHESIANS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Ephesians

Section 1. The Situation of Ephesus, and the Character of its People

This Epistle purports to have been written to the "Saints in Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus," though, as we shall see, the fact of its having been directed to the church at Ephesus has been called in question. Assuming now that it was sent to Ephesus, it is of importance to have a general view of the situation of that city, of the character of its people, and of the time and manner in which the gospel was introduced there, in order to a correct understanding of the Epistle. Ephesus was a celebrated city of Ionia in Asia Minor, and was about 40 miles south of Smyrna, and near the mouth of the river Cayster. The river, though inferior in beauty to the Meander which flows south of it, waters a fertile valley of the ancient Ionia. Ionia was the most beautiful and fertile part of Asia Minor; was settled almost wholly by Greek colonies; and it embosomed Pergamos, Smyrna, Ephesus, and Miletus; see "Travels" of Anacharsis, i. 91,208; vi. 192,97,98. The climate of Ionia is represented as remarkably mild, and the air as pure and sweet, and this region became early celebrated for everything that constitutes softness and effeminacy in life. Its people were distinguished for amiableness and refinement of manners, and also for luxury, for music and dancing, and for the seductive arts festivals occupied them at home, or attracted them to neighboring cities, where the men appeared in magnificent habits, and the women in all the elegance of female ornament, and with all the desire of pleasure (Anachar).

Ephesus was not, like Smyrna, distinguished for commercial advantages. The consequence has been that, not having such advantage, it has fallen into total ruin, while Smyrna has retained some degree of its ancient importance. It was in a rich region of country, and seems to have risen into importance mainly because it became the favorite resort of foreigners in the worship of Diana, and owed its celebrity to its temple more than to anything else. This city was once, however, the most splendid city in Asia Minor. Stephens, the geographer, gives it the title of "Epiphanestate" (Most Illustrious). Pliny styles it "the Ornament of Asia." In Roman times it was the metropolis of Asia, and unquestionably rose to a degree of splendor that was surpassed by few, if any, oriental cities.

That for which the city was most celebrated was the Temple of Diana. This temple was 425 feet in length, and 220 feet in width. It was encompassed by 127 pillars, each 60 feet in height, which were presented by as many kings. Some of those pillars, it is said, are yet to be seen in the mosque of Sophia at Constantinople, having been removed there when the Church of Sophia was erected. These, however, were the pillars that constituted a part of the temple after it had been burned and was repaired, though it is probable that the same pillars were retained in the second temple which had constituted the glory of the first. All the provinces of Asia Minor contributed to the erection of this splendid temple, and 200 years were consumed in building it. This temple was set on fire by a man named Herostratus, who, when put to the torture, confessed that his only motive was to immortalize his name. The general assembly of the states of Ionia passed a decree to devote his name to oblivion; but the fact of the decree has only served to perpetuate it; Cicero, De Nat. Deor. 2. 27; Plutarch, Life of Alexander; compare Anachar. vi. 189. The whole of the edifice was consumed except the four walls and some of the columns. It was, however, rebuilt with the same magnificence as before, and was regarded as one of the wonders of the world. It is now in utter ruin. After the temple had been repeatedly pillaged by the barbarians, Justinian removed the columns to adorn the Church of Sophia at Constantinople. The place where it stood can now be identified certainly, if at all, only by the marshy spot on which it was erected, and by the prodigious arches raised above as a foundation. The vaults formed by them compose a sort of labyrinth, and the water is knee-deep beneath. There is not an apartment entire; but thick walls, shafts of columns, and fragments of every kind are scattered around in confusion (*Encyclopedia Geog*. ii. 273,274).

During the reign of Tiberius, Ephesus was greatly damaged by an earthquake, but it was repaired and embellished by the emperor. In the war between Mithridates and the Romans, Ephesus took part with the former, and massacred the Romans who dwelt in it. Sylla severely punished this cruelty; but Ephesus was afterward treated with leniancy, and enjoyed its own laws, along with other privileges. About the end of the 11th century it was seized by a pirate named Tangripermes, but he was routed by John Ducas (the Greek admiral) in a bloody battle. Theodorus Lascarus, a Greek, made himself master of it in 1206 a.d. The Muslims recovered it in 1283. In

the year 1401Tamerlane employed a whole month in plundering the city and the neighboring country. Shortly afterward, the city was set on fire, and was mostly burnt in a combat between the Turkish governor and the Tartars. In 1405 it was taken by Muhammed I, and has continued since that time in the possession of the Turks (Calmet).

There is now (circa 1880‘s) a small, ordinary village, named Ayasaluk, near the site of the ancient town, consisting of a few cottages, which is all that now represents this city of ancient splendor. Dr. Chavolla says, “The inhabitants are a few Greek peasants, living in extreme wretchedness, dependence, and insensibility; the representatives of an illustrious people, and inhabiting the wreck of their greatness - some in the substructions of the glorious edifices which they raised - some beneath the vaults of the stadium, once the crowded scene of their diversions - and some by the abrupt precipice in the sepulchres which received their ashes. Its streets are obscured and overgrown. A herd of goats was driven to it for shelter from the sun at noon, and a noisy flight of crows from the quarries seemed to insult its silence. We heard the partridge call in the area of the theater and the stadium. The glorious pomp of its pagan worship is no longer numbered; and Christianity, which was here nursed by apostles, and fostered by general councils, until it increased to fullness of stature, barely lingers on in an existence hardly visible” (Travels, p. 131, Oxford, 1775). A very full and interesting description of Ephesus, as it appeared in 1739, may be seen in Pococke‘s Travels, vol. ii. part ii. pp. 45-53, ed. Lend. 1745. Several ruins are described by him, but they have mostly now disappeared. The Temple of Diana was on the western side of the plain on which the city was built, and the site is now in the midst of a morass which renders access difficult. The ruins of several theaters and other buildings are described by Pococke.

In the year 1821Mr. Fisk, the American missionary, visited the city of Ephesus, of which he has given the following account: “We sent back our horses to Aisaluck, and set out on foot to survey the ruins of Ephesus. The ground was covered with high grass or grain, and a very heavy dew rendered the walking rather unpleasant. On the east side of the hill we found nothing worthy of notice; no appearance of having been occupied for buildings. On the north side was the circus or stadium. Its length from east

to west is forty rods (one stadium). The north or lower side was supported by arches which still remain. The area where the races used to be performed is now a field of wheat. At the west end was the gate. The walls adjoining it are still standing, and are of considerable height and strength. North of the stadium, and separated only by a street, is a large square, inclined with fallen walls, and filled with the ruins of various edifices. A street running north and south divides this square in the center. West of the stadium is an elevation of ground, level at the top, with an immense pedestal in the center of it. What building stood there it is not easy to say. Between this and the stadium was a street passing from the great plain north of Ephesus, into the midst of the city.

"I found on the plains of Ephesus some Greek peasants, men and women, employed in pulling up tares and weeds from the wheat. I ascertained, however, that they all belonged to villages at a distance, and came there to labor. Tournefort says that, when he was at Ephesus, there were 30 or 40 Greek families there. Chandler found only 10 or 12 individuals. Now no human being lives in Ephesus; and in Aisaluck, which may be considered as Ephesus under another name, though not on precisely the same spot of ground, there are merely a few miserable Turkish huts.

"The plain of Ephesus is now very unhealthy, owing to the fogs and mists which almost continually rest upon it. The land, however, is rich, and the surrounding country is both fertile and healthy. The adjacent hills would furnish many delightful situations for villages if the difficulties were removed, which are thrown in the way by a despotic government, oppressive agas, and wandering banditti" (Missionary Herald for 1821, p. 319).

Section 2. The Introduction of the Gospel at Ephesus

It is admitted by all that the gospel was introduced into Ephesus by the apostle Paul. He first preached there when on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem, about the year 54 a.d. Acts 18:19. On this visit Paul went into the synagogue, as was his usual custom, and preached to his own countrymen, but he does not appear to have preached publicly to the pagan. He was requested to remain longer with them, but he said he must, by all means, be in Jerusalem at the approaching feast - probably the Passover, Acts 18:21. He promised, however, to visit them again if possible, and

sailed from Ephesus to Jerusalem. Two persons had gone with Paul from Corinth - Priscilla and Aquila - whom he appears to have left at Ephesus, or who, at any rate, soon returned there, Acts 18:18, Acts 18:26. During the absence of Paul there came to Ephesus a certain Jew, born in Alexandria, named Apollos, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, who had received the baptism of John, and who taught the doctrine that John had taught, Acts 18:24-25.

What was the precise nature of that doctrine it is now difficult to understand. It seems to have been in substance: (1) that repentance was necessary, (2) that baptism was to be performed, and (3) that the Messiah was about to appear. Apollos, who had embraced this doctrine with zeal, was ready to defend it, and was in just the state of mind to welcome the news that the Messiah had come. Priscilla and Aquila instructed this zealous and talented man more fully in the doctrines of the Christian religion, and communicated to him the views which they had received from Paul, Acts 18:26. Paul, having gone to Jerusalem as he planned, returned again to Asia Minor, and taking in Phrygia and Galatia in his way, he revisited Ephesus, and remained there for about three years (Acts 18:23; Acts 19:1 ff). It was during this time that the church was founded, which afterward became so prominent, and to which this Epistle was written. The principal events in the life of Paul there were:

(1) His baptizing the twelve persons whom he found there, who were disciples of John; see notes at Acts 19:1-7.

(2) Paul went into the synagogue there and engaged in an earnest discussion with the Jews respecting the Messiah for about three months Acts 19:8-10.

(3) when many of the Jews opposed him, he left the synagogue and obtained a place to preach in, in the schoolroom of a man by the name of Tyrannus. In this place he continued to preach without molestation for two years and proclaimed the gospel, so that a large portion of the inhabitants had an opportunity to hear it.

(4) the cause of religion was greatly promoted by the miracles which Paul performed Acts 19:11-17.

(5) Paul remained there until his preaching excited great commotion, and he was finally driven away by the tumult which was excited by Demetrius, Acts 20:16.

Paul remained longer at Ephesus than he did at any other one place, preaching the gospel. He seems to have set himself deliberately to work to establish a congregation there, which would ultimately overthrow idolatry. Several reasons may have led him to depart so far from his usual plan by laboring so long in one place. One may have been that this was the principal seat of idolatry in the world at that time. The evident aim of Paul in his ministry was to reach the centers of influence and power. Hence, he mainly sought to preach the gospel in large cities, and thus it was that Antioch, and Ephesus, and Corinth, and Athens, and Philippi, and Rome, shared so largely in his labors. Not ashamed of the gospel anywhere, Paul still sought mainly that its power should be felt where wealth, and learning, and genius, and talent were concentrated. The very places, therefore, where the most magnificent temples were erected to the gods, and where the worship of idols was celebrated with the most splendor and pomp, and where that worship was defended most strongly by the civil arm, were those in which the apostle sought first to preach the gospel.

Ephesus, therefore, as the most splendid seat of idolatry at that time in the whole pagan world, particularly attracted the attention of the apostle, and hence it was that he was willing to spend so large a part of his public life in that place. It may have been for this reason that John afterward made it his permanent home, and spent so many years there as the minister of the congregation which had been founded by Paul; see section 3. Another reason why Paul sought Ephesus as a field of labor may have been that it was at that time not only the principal seat of idolatry, but was a place of great importance in the civil affairs of the Roman empire. It was the residence of the Roman proconsul, and the seat of the courts of justice in Asia Minor, and, consequently, was a place to which there would be attracted a great amount of learning and talent (Macknight). The apostle, therefore, seems to have been anxious that the full power of the gospel should be tried there, and that Ephesus should become as important as a

center of influence in the Christian world as it had been in paganism and in civil affairs.

Section 3. Notices of the History of the Church at Ephesus

The church at Ephesus was one of the seven churches of Asia, and the first one mentioned to which John was directed to address an epistle from Patmos Revelation 2:1-7. Little is said of it in the New Testament from the time when Paul left it until the Book of Revelation was written. The tradition is, that Timothy was a minister at Ephesus, and was succeeded by the apostle John; but whether John came there while Timothy was living, or not until his removal or death, even "tradition" does not inform us. In the subscription to the Second Epistle to Timothy, it is said of Timothy that he was "ordained the first bishop of the church of the Ephesians;" but this is of no authority whatever. All that can be learned with certainty about the residence of Timothy at Ephesus is what the apostle Paul says of him in his First Epistle to Timothy 1 Timothy 1:3, "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine."

From this it would appear that the residence of Timothy at Ephesus was a temporary arrangement, designed to secure a result which Paul wished particularly to secure, and to avoid an evil which he had reason to dread would follow from his own absence. That it was only a temporary arrangement, is apparent from the fact that Paul soon after desired him to come to Rome, 2 Timothy 4:9, 2 Timothy 4:11. The Second Epistle of Paul to Timothy was written but a few years after the first letter. According to Lardner, the first letter was written in the year 56 a.d., and the second letter in the year 62 a.d.; according to Hug, the first letter was written in the year 59 a.d., and the second letter in the year 61 a.d.; according to the editor of the Polyglott Bible, the first letter was written 65 a.d., and the second letter in 66 a.d. According to either calculation, the time of the residence of Timothy in Ephesus was brief. There is not the slightest evidence from the New Testament that he was a permanent Bishop of Ephesus, or indeed that he was a "bishop" at all, in the modern sense of the term. Those who may be disposed to look further into this matter, and to examine the relation which Timothy sustained to the church of Ephesus, and the claim which is sometimes set up for his having sustained the office of "a bishop," may find an examination in the Review of Bishop Onderdonk's Tract on Episcopacy, published in the Quarterly Christian Spectator in March, 1834, and March,

1835, and republished in 1843 under the title of "The Organization and Government of the Apostolic Church," pp. 99-107.

Whatever was the relation which Timothy sustained to the church in Ephesus, it is agreed on all hands that John the apostle spent a considerable portion of his life there. At what time John went to Ephesus, or why he did it, is not known now. The common opinion is, that he remained at or near Jerusalem for some 15 years after the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, during which time he had the special charge of Mary, the mother of the Saviour; that he then preached the gospel to the Parthians and the Indians, and that he then returned and went to Ephesus, in or near which he spent his latter days, and in which, at a very advanced age, he died. It was from Ephesus that, under the Emperor Domitian, 95 a.d., he was banished to the island of Patmos, from which he returned in 97 a.d., on the accession of Nerva to the crown, who recalled all who had been banished. At that time, John is supposed to have been about 90 years of age. He is said to have died at Ephesus in the third year of Trajan (in 100 a.d.), at about 94 years of age. For a full and interesting biography of the apostle John, the reader may consult the "Lives of the Apostles," by David Francis Bacon, pp. 307-376.

Of the subsequent history of the church at Ephesus, little is known, and it would not be necessary to dwell upon it in order to an exposition of the Epistle before us. It is sufficient to remark, that the "candlestick is removed out of its place" Revelation 2:5, and that all the splendor of the Temple of Diana, all the pomp of her worship, and all the glory of the Christian church there, have faded away alike.

Section 4. The Time and Place of Writing the Epistle

It has never been denied that the apostle Paul was the author of this Epistle, though it has been made a question whether it were written to the Ephesians or to the Laodiceans; see Section 5. Dr. Paley (Horae Paulinae) has shown that there is conclusive internal proof that this Epistle was written by Paul. This argument is derived from the style, and is carried out by a comparison of this Epistle with the other undoubted writings of the apostle. The historical evidence on this point also is undisputed.

It is generally supposed, and, indeed, the evidence seems to be clear, that this Epistle was written during the imprisonment of the apostle at Rome; but whether it was during his first or his second imprisonment is not

certain. Paul was held in custody for approximately two years in Caesarea Acts 24:27, but there is no evidence that during that time he addressed any epistle to the churches which he had planted. That this was written when he was a prisoner is apparent from the Epistle itself. “The two years in which Paul was imprisoned at Caesarea,” says Wall, as quoted by Lardner, “seem to have been the most inactive part of Paul‘s life. There is no account of any proceedings or disputations, or of any epistles written in this space.” This may have arisen, Lardner supposes, from the fact that the Jews made such an opposition that the Roman governor would not allow him to have any contact with the people at large, or procure any intelligence from the churches abroad.

But when he was at Rome he had more liberty. He was allowed to dwell in his own hired house Acts 28:30, and had permission to address all who came to him, and to communicate freely with his friends abroad. It was during this period that he wrote at least four of his letters - the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Epistle to the Philippians, the Epistle to the Colossians, and the Epistle to Philemon. Grotius, as quoted by Lardner, says of these Epistles, that though all Paul‘s Epistles are excellent, yet he most admires those written by him when a prisoner at Rome. Concerning the Epistle to the Ephesians, he says it surpasses all human eloquence - rerum sublimitatem adaequans verbis sublimioribus, quam ulla unquam habuit lingua humana - describing the sublimity of the things by corresponding words more sublime than are found elsewhere in human language. The evidence that it was written when Paul was a prisoner is found in the Epistle itself.

Thus, in Ephesians 3:1, he says, “I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ - ὁ δέσμιος τοῦ Χπριστοῦ ho desmios tou Christou- for you Gentiles.” So he alludes to his afflictions in Ephesians 3:13, “I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you.” In Ephesians 4:1, he calls himself the “prisoner of the Lord,” or in the margin, “in the Lord “ - ὁ δέσμιος ἐν Κυρίῳ ho desmios en KuriōAnd in Ephesians 6:19-20, there is an allusion which seems to settle the inquiry beyond dispute, and to prove that it was written while he was at Rome. He there says that he was an “ambassador in bonds” - ἐν ἅλυσε en haluse- “in chains, manacles,” or “shackles;” and yet he desires Ephesians 6:19-20 that they would pray for him, that utterance might be given him to

open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, that he might speak boldly as he ought to speak.

Now this is a remarkable circumstance. A man in custody, in bonds or chains, and that too for being an "ambassador," and yet asking the aid of their prayers, that in these circumstances he might have grace to be a bold preacher of the gospel. If he was in prison this could not well be. If he was under a strict prohibition it could not well be. The circumstances of the case tally exactly with the statement in the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, that Paul was in custody in Rome; that he was permitted to "dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him" Acts 28:16; that he was permitted to call the Jews together and to debate with them freely Acts 28:17-28; and that Paul dwelt in his own hired house for two years, and "received all that came in with him, preaching the kingdom of God," etc. Acts 28:30-31. So exactly do these circumstances correspond that I have no doubt that that was the time when the Epistle was written.

And so unusual is such a train of circumstances - so unlikely would it be to occur to a man to forge such a coincidence, that it furnishes a striking proof that the Epistle was written, as it purports to be, by Paul. An impostor would not have thought of inventing such a coincidence. If it had occurred to him to make any such allusion, the place and time would have been more distinctly mentioned, and not have been left as a mere incidental allusion. The apostle Paul is supposed to have been at Rome as a prisoner twice (compare the introduction to Second Timothy), and to have suffered martyrdom there about 65 or 66 a.d. If the Epistle to the Ephesians was written during his second imprisonment at Rome, as is commonly supposed, then it must have been somewhere between the years 63 and 65 a.d. Lardner and Hug suppose that it was written April, 61 a.d.; Macknight supposes it was in 60 or 61 a.d.; the editor of the Polyglott Bible places it at 64 a.d. The exact time when it was written cannot now be ascertained, and is not material.

Section 5. To Whom Was the Epistle Written?

The Epistle purports to have been written to the Ephesians - "to the saints which are at Ephesus," - Ephesians 1:1. But the opinion that it was written to the Ephesians has been called in question by many expositors. Dr. Pales (Horae Paulinae) supposes that it was written to the Laodiceans.

Wetstein also maintained the same opinion. This opinion was expressly stated also by Marcion, a heretic of the second century. Michaelis (Introduction) supposes that it was a "circular epistle," addressed not to any congregation in particular, but that it was intended for the Ephesians, Laodiceans, and some other churches of Asia Minor. He supposes that the apostle had several copies taken; that he made it intentionally of a very general character so as to suit all; that he affixed with his own hand the subscription, Ephesians 6:24, to each copy - "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;" that at the beginning of the Epistle the name was inserted of the particular church to which it was to be sent - as "to the church in Ephesus" - "in Laodicea," etc.

When the several works composing the New Testament were collected into a volume he supposes that it so happened that the copy of this Epistle which was used was one obtained from Ephesus, containing a direction to the saints there. This is also the opinion of Archbishop Usher and Koppe. It does not comport with the design of these notes to go into an extended examination of this question; and after all that has been written on it, and the different opinions which have been entertained, it certainly does not become any one to be very confident. It is not a question of great importance, since it involves no point of doctrine or duty; but those who wish to see it discussed at length can be satisfied by referring to Paley's "Horae Paulinae;" to Michaelis' "Introduction," vol. iv. chapter xx., and to the "Prolegomena" of Koppe. The arguments which are alleged to prove that it was addressed to the church at Laodicea, or at least not to the church at Ephesus, are summarily the following:

(1) The testimony of Marcion, a heretic of the second century, who affirms that it was sent to the church in Laodicea, and that instead of the reading Ephesians 1:1, "in Ephesus," in the copy which he had it was "in Laodicea" But the opinion of Marcion is now regarded as of little weight. It is admitted that Marcion was in the habit of altering the Greek text to suit his own views.

(2) the principal objection to the opinion that it was written to the church at Ephesus is found in certain internal marks, and particularly with the lack of any allusion to the fact that Paul had ever been there, or to anything that

particularly related to the church there. This difficulty comprises several particulars.

(a) Paul spent nearly three years in Ephesus, and was engaged there in deeply interesting transactions and occurrences. He had founded the church, ordained its elders, taught them the doctrines which they held, and had at last been persecuted there and driven away. If the Epistle was written to them it is remarkable that there is in the Epistle no allusion to any one of these facts or circumstances. This is the more remarkable, since it was his usual custom to allude to the events which had occurred in the churches which he had founded (see the Epistles to the Corinthians and Philippians), and, since on two other occasions, he at least makes direct allusion to these transactions at Ephesus; see 1 Corinthians 15:32.

(b) In the other epistles which Paul wrote, it was his custom to salute a large number of persons by name. However, in this Epistle, there is no salutation of any kind. There is a general invocation of "peace to the brethren" Ephesians 6:23, but no specific mention of an individual by name. There is not even an allusion to the "elders" whom, with so much affection, he had addressed at Miletus 1 Timothy 1:3, and, if he were still there, it is singular that no allusion is made to him, and no salutation sent to him. If he had left Ephesus, and had gone to Rome to meet Paul as he requested 2 Timothy 4:9, it is remarkable that Paul did not join his name with his own in sending the Epistle to the church, or at least allude to the fact that he had arrived. This is the more remarkable, because in the Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, 1Thessalonians, and 2Thessalonians, the name of Timothy is joined with that of Paul at the commencement of the Epistle.

(d) Paul speaks of the persons to whom this Epistle was sent as if he had not been with them, or at least in a manner which is hardly conceivable, on the supposition that he had been the founder of the church. Thus, in Ephesians 1:15-16, he says, "Wherefore also after I heard of your faith in Christ Jesus," etc. But this circumstance is not conclusive. Paul may have been told of the continuance of their faith and of their growing love and zeal, and he may have alluded to that in this passage.

(e) Another circumstance on which some reliance has been placed is the statement in Ephesians 3:1-2, "For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given to you-ward," etc. It is argued (see Michaelis) that this is not language which would have been employed by one who had founded the church, and with whom they were all acquainted. He would not have spoken in a manner implying any doubt whether they had ever heard of him and his labors in the ministry on account of the Gentiles. Such are the considerations relied upon to show that the Epistle could not have been written to the Ephesians.

On the other hand, there is proof of a very strong character that it was written to them. That proof is the following:

1. The common reading in Ephesians 1:1, "To the saints which are in Ephesus." It is true, as we have seen, that this reading has been called in question. Mill says that it is omitted by Basil (lib. 2, *Adversus Eunomium*), as he says, "on the testimony of the fathers and of ancient copies." Griesbach marks it with the sign "om.," denoting that it was omitted by some, but that, in his judgment, it is to be retained. It is found in the Vulgate, the Syriac, the Arabic, and the Ethiopic in Walton's *Polyglott*. Rosenmuller remarks that "most of the ancient codices, and all the ancient versions, retain the word." To my mind this fact is conclusive. The testimony of Marcion is admitted to be of almost no authority; and as to the testimony of Basil, it is only one against the testimony of all the ancients, and is at best negative in its character; see the passage from Basil, quoted in Hug's Introduction.

2. A slight circumstance may be adverted to as throwing light incidentally upon this question. This Epistle was sent by Tychicus Ephesians 6:21. The Epistle to the Colossians was also sent from Rome by the same messenger Colossians 4:7. Now there is a strong improbability in the opinion held by Michaelis, Koppe, and others, that this was a "circular" letter, sent to the churches at large, or that different copies were prepared, and the name "Ephesus" inserted in one, and "Laodicea" in another, etc. The improbability is this, that the apostle would at the same time send such a circular letter to several of the churches, and a special letter to the church

at Colossae. What claim had that church to special notice? What pre-eminence had it over the church at Ephesus? And why should he send them a letter bearing so strong a resemblance to that addressed to the other churches, when the same letter would have suited the church at Colossae as well as the one which was actually sent to them; for there is a nearer resemblance between these two epistles, than any other two portions of the Bible. Besides, in 2 Timothy 4:12, Paul says that he had sent "Tychicus to Ephesus;" and what is more natural than that, at that time, he sent this Epistle by him?

3. There is the utter lack of evidence from manuscripts or versions, that this Epistle was sent to Laodicea, or to any other church, except Ephesus. Not a manuscript has been found (circa 1880's) having the name "Laodicea" in Ephesians 1:1; nor any manuscript which omits the words "in Ephesus." If it had been sent to another congregation, or if it had been a circular letter addressed to no particular congregation, it is scarcely credible that this could have occurred.

These considerations make it plain to me that this Epistle was addressed, as it purports to have been, to the church in Ephesus. I confess myself wholly unable, however, to explain the remarkable circumstances that Paul does not refer to his former residence there; that he alludes to none of his troubles or his triumphs; that he makes no mention of the "elders," and greets no one by name; and that, throughout, he addresses them as if they were personally unknown to him. In this respect, it is unlike all the other epistles, which he ever wrote, and all which we should have expected from a man in such circumstances. May it not be accounted for from "this very fact," that an attempt to specify individuals where so many were known, would protract the Epistle to an unreasonable length? There is, indeed, one supposition suggested by Dr. Macknight, which may possibly explain to some extent the remarkable circumstances above referred to. It is, that an instruction may have been given by Paul to Tychicus, by whom he sent the letter, to send a copy of it to the Laodiceans, with an order to them to communicate it to the Colossians. In such a case everything local would be designedly omitted, and the Epistle would be of as general a character as possible. This is, however, mere conjecture, and does not remove the entirety of the difficulty.

Section 6. The Object for which the Epistle Was Written

Very various opinions have been formed in regard to the design for which this Epistle was written. Macknight supposes that it was with reference to the Eleusinian mysteries, and to various religious rites in the Temple of Diana, and that Paul intended particularly to state the "mysteries" of the gospel in contradistinction from them. But there is no clear evidence that the apostle had any such object, and it is not necessary to go into an explanation of those mysteries in order to an understanding of the Epistle. The Epistle is such as might be addressed to any Christians, though there are allusions to customs which then prevailed, and to opinions then held, which it is desirable to understand in order to a just view of it. That there were Jews and Judaizing Christians in Ephesus, may be learned from the Epistle itself. That there were those there who supposed that the Jews were to have a more elevated rank than the Gentiles, may also be learned from the Epistle; and one object was to show that all true Christians, whether of Jewish or pagan origin, were on a level, and were entitled to the same privileges. That there was the prevalence of a false and dangerous philosophy there, may also be learned from the Epistle; and that there were those who attempted to cause divisions, and who had violated the unity of the faith, may also be learned from it.

The Epistle is divided into two parts -

I.The doctrinal part Ephesians 1:3-14.

(2)aprayer of the apostle, expressing his earnest desire that the Ephesians might avail themselves fully of all the advantages of this eternal purpose of mercy, Ephesians 1:15-23.

(3)the doctrine of the native character of man, as being dead in sins, illustrated by the past lives of the Ephesians, Ephesians 2:1-3.

(4)the doctrine of regeneration by the grace of God, and the advantages of it, Ephesians 2:5-7.

(5)the doctrine of salvation by grace alone without respect to our own works, Ephesians 2:8-9,

(6)The privilege of being thus admitted to the fellowship of the saints, Ephesians 2:11-22,

(7)A full statement of the doctrine that God meant to admit the Gentiles to the privileges of his people, and to break down the barriers between the Gentiles and the Jews, Ephesians 3:1-12.

(8)the apostle prays earnestly that they might avail themselves fully of this doctrine, and be able to appreciate fully the advantages which it was intended to confer; and with this prayer he closes the doctrinal part of the Epistle, Ephesians 3:13-21.

II. The practical part of the Epistle embraces the following topics, namely:

(1)Exhortation to unity, drawn from the consideration that there was one God, one faith, etc., Ephesians 4:17-24.

(3)exhortation to exhibit "particular" virtues - "specifying" what was required by their religion, and what they should avoid - particularly to avoid the vices of anger, lying, licentiousness, and intemperance, Ephesians 4:25-32; Ephesians 5:21-33.

(5)the duties of parents and children, Ephesians 6:1-3.

(6)the duties of masters and servants, Ephesians 6:4-9.

(7)an exhortation to fidelity in the Christian warfare, Ephesians 6:10-20.

(8)Conclusion, Ephesians 6:21-24.

The style of this Epistle is exceedingly animated. The apostle is cheered by the intelligence which he had received of their deportment in the gospel, and is warmed by the grandeur of his principal theme - the eternal purposes of divine mercy. Into the discussion of that subject he throws his whole soul, and there is probably no part of Paul's writings where there is more ardor, elevation, and soul evinced, than in this Epistle. He approaches the great doctrine of predestination as a most important and vital doctrine; he states it freely and fully, and urges it as the basis of the Christian's hope, and the foundation of eternal gratitude and praise. Perhaps nowhere is there a better illustration of the power of that doctrine to elevate the soul and fill it with grand conceptions of the character of God, and to excite grateful emotions, than in this Epistle; and the Christian, therefore, may study it as a

portion of the sacred writings eminently suited to excite his gratitude, and to fill him with adoring views of God.

EPHESIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

(1) The salutation, Ephesians 1:1-2.

(2) the doctrine of predestination, and its hearing and design, Ephesians 1:3-14.

(a)It is the foundation of praise to God, and is a source of gratitude, Ephesians 1:3.

(b)Christians have been chosen before the foundation of the world, Ephesians 1:4.

(c)The object was that they should be holy and blameless, Ephesians 1:4.

(d)They were predestinated to be the children of God, Ephesians 1:5.

(e)The cause of this was the good pleasure of God, or he did it according to the purpose of his will, Ephesians 1:5.

(f)The object of this was his own glory, Ephesians 1:6.

(3) the benefits of the plan of predestination to those who are thus chosen, Ephesians 1:7-14.

(a)They have redemption and the forgiveness of sins, Ephesians 1:7-8.

(b)They are made acquainted with the mystery of the divine will, Ephesians 1:9-10.

(c)They have obtained an inheritance in Christ, Ephesians 1:11.

(d)The object of this was the praise of the glory of God, Ephesians 1:12.

(e)As the result of this, or in the execution of this purpose, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, Ephesians 1:13-14.

(4) an earnest prayer that they might have a full understanding of the great and glorious plan of redemption, Ephesians 1:15-23,

(a)Paul says that he had been informed of their faith, Ephesians 1:15.

(b)He always remembered them in his prayers, Ephesians 1:16.

(c)His special desire was that they might see the glory of the Lord Jesus, whom God had exalted to his own right hand in heaven, Ephesians 1:17-23.

Verse 1

Paul, an apostle; - see the notes at Romans 1:1.

By the will of God - see the notes at 1 Corinthians 1:1.

To the saints - A name often given to Christians because they are holy; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 1:2.

In Ephesus - see the introduction, sections 1 and 5.

And to the faithful in Christ Jesus - This evidently refers to others than to those who were in Ephesus, and it is clear that Paul expected that this Epistle would be read by others. He gives it a general character, as if he supposed that it might be transcribed, and become the property of the church at large. It was not uncommon for him thus to give a general character to the epistles which he addressed to particular churches, and so to write that others than those to whom they were particularly directed, might feel that they were addressed to them. Thus, the First Epistle to the Corinthians was addressed to "the church of God in Corinth - with all that in every place call upon the name of Christ Jesus our Lord." The Second Epistle to the Corinthians in like manner was addressed to "the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia." Perhaps, in the Epistle before us, the apostle referred particularly to the churches of Asia Minor which he had not visited, but there is no reason for confining the address to them.

All who are "faithful in Christ Jesus" may regard the Epistle as addressed by the Holy Spirit to them, and may feel that they are as much interested in the doctrines, promises, and duties set forth in this Epistle, as were the ancient Christians of Ephesus. The word "faithful" here is not used in the sense of "trustworthy," or in the sense of "fidelity," as it is often employed, but in the sense of "believing," or "having faith" in the Lord Jesus. The apostle addresses those who were firm in the faith - another name for true Christians. The Epistle contains great doctrines about the divine purposes and decrees in which they, as Christians, were particularly concerned; important "mysteries" Ephesians 1:9, of importance for them to understand, and which the apostle proceeds to communicate to them as such. The fact that the letter was designed to be published, shows that he was not unwilling that those high doctrines should be made known to the

world at large; still they pertained particularly to the church, and they are doctrines which should be particularly addressed to the church. They are rather suited to comfort the hearts of "Christians," than to bring "sinners" to repentance. These doctrines may be addressed to the church with more prospect of securing a happy effect than to the world. In the church they will excite gratitude, and produce the hope which results from assured promises and eternal purposes; in the minds of sinners they may arouse envy, and hatred, and opposition to God.

Verse 2

Grace to you, … - see the notes, Romans 1:7.

Verse 3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ - This commences a sentence which continues to the close of Ephesians 1:12. The length of the periods in the writings of Paul, is one cause of the obscurity of his style, and renders an explanation often difficult. The meaning of this phrase is, that God has laid a foundation for gratitude for what he has done. The ground or reason of the praise here referred to, is that which is stated in the following verses. The leading thing on which the apostle dwells is God's eternal purpose - his everlasting counsel in regard to the salvation of man. Paul breaks out into the exclamation that God is worthy of praise for such a plan, and that his eternal purposes, now manifest to people, give exalted views of the character and glory of God. Most persons suppose the contrary. They feel that the plans of God are dark, and stern, and forbidding, and such as to render his character anything but amiable.

They speak of him, when he is referred to as a sovereign, as if he were tyrannical and unjust, and they never connect the idea of that which is amiable and lovely with the doctrine of eternal purposes. There is no doctrine that is usually so unpopular; none that is so much reproached; none that is so much abused. There is none that people desire so much to disbelieve or avoid; none that they are so unwilling to have preached; and none that they are so reluctant to find in the Scriptures. Even many Christians turn away from it with dread; or if they "tolerate" it, they yet feel that there is something about it that is especially dark and forbidding. Not so felt Paul. He felt that it laid the foundation for eternal praise; that it presented glorious views of God; that it was the ground of confidence and hope; and that it was desirable that Christians should dwell upon it and

praise God for it. Let us feel, therefore, as we enter upon the exposition of this chapter, that God is to be praised for all his plans, and that it is "possible" for Christians to have such views of the doctrine of "eternal predestination" as to give them most elevated conceptions of the glory of the divine character. And let us also be "willing" to know the truth. Let us approach word after word, and phrase after phrase, and verse after verse, in this chapter, willing to know all that God teaches; to believe all that he has revealed; and ready to say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for all that he has done."

Who hath blessed us - Who does Paul mean here by "us?" Does he mean all the world? This cannot be, for all the world are not thus blessed with "all" spiritual blessings. Does he mean "nations?" For the same reason this cannot be. Does he mean the Gentiles in contradistinction from the Jews? Why then does he use the word "us," including himself, who was a Jew? Does he mean to say that they were blessed with external privileges, and that this was the only object of the eternal purposes of God? This cannot be, for he speaks of "spiritual blessings;" he speaks of the persons referred to as having "redemption" and "the forgiveness of sins;" as having "obtained an inheritance," and as being sealed with the "Holy Spirit of promise." These appertain not to nations, or to external privileges, or the mere offers of the gospel, but to true Christians; to persons who have been redeemed. The persons referred to by the word "us," are those who are mentioned in Ephesians 1:1, as "saints," - ἅγίοις hagiois- "holy;" and "faithful" - πιστοῖς pistois- "believing," or "believers."

This observation is important, because it shows that the plan or decree of God had reference to individuals, and not merely to nations. Many have supposed (see Whitby, Dr. A. Clarke, Bloomfield, and others) that the apostle here refers to the "Gentiles," and that his object is to show that they were now admitted to the same privileges as the ancient Jews, and that the whole doctrine of predestination here referred to, has relation to that fact. But, I would ask, were there no Jews in the church at Ephesus? See Acts 18:20, Acts 18:24; Acts 19:1-8. The matter of fact seems to have been, that Paul was uncommonly successful there among his own countrymen, and that his chief difficulty there arose, not from the Jews, but from the influence of the heathen; Acts 19:24. Besides what evidence is there that the apostle speaks in this chapter especially of the Gentiles, or that he was writing to that portion of the church at Ephesus which was of Gentile

origin? And if he was, why did he name himself among them as one on whom this blessing had been bestowed? The fact is, that this is a mere supposition, resorted to without evidence, and in the face of every fair principle of interpretation, to avoid an unpleasant doctrine. Nothing can be clearer than that Paul meant to write to "Christians as such;" to speak of privileges which they enjoyed as special to themselves; and that he had no particular reference to "nations," and did not design merely to refer to external privileges.

With all spiritual blessings - Pardon, peace, redemption, adoption, the earnest of the Spirit, etc., referred to in the following verses - blessings which "individual Christians" enjoy, and not external privileges conferred on nations.

In heavenly places in Christ - The word "places" is here understood, and is not in the original. It may mean heavenly "places," or heavenly "things." The word "places" does not express the best sense. The idea seems to be, that God has blessed us in Christ in regard to heavenly subjects or matters. In Ephesians 1:20, the word "places" seems to be inserted with more propriety. The same phrase occurs again in Ephesians 2:6; Ephesians 3:10; and it is remarkable that it should occur in the same elliptical form four times in this one epistle, and, I believe, in no other part of the writings of Paul. Our translators have in each instance supplied the word "places," as denoting the rank or station of Christians, of the angels, and of the Saviour, to each of whom it is applied. The phrase probably means, in things pertaining to heaven; suited to prepare us for heaven; and tending toward heaven. It probably refers here to every thing that was heavenly in its nature, or that had relation to heaven, whether gifts or graces. As the apostle is speaking, however, of the mass of Christians on whom these things had been bestowed, I rather suppose that he refers to what are called Christian graces, than to the extraordinary endowments bestowed on the few. The sense is, that in Christ, i. e. through Christ, or by means of him, God had bestowed all spiritual blessings that were suited to prepare for heaven - such as pardon, adoption, the illumination of the Spirit, etc.

Verse 4

According as - The importance of this verse will render proper a somewhat minute examination of the words and phrases of which it is composed. The general sense of the passage is, that these blessings pertaining to heaven were bestowed upon Christians in accordance with an

eternal purpose. They were not conferred by chance or hap-hazard. They were the result of intention and design on the part of God. Their value was greatly enhanced from the fact that God had designed from all eternity to bestow them, and that they come to us as the result of his everlasting plan. It was not a recent plan; it was not an afterthought; it was not by mere chance; it was not by caprice; it was the fruit of an eternal counsel. Those blessings had all the value, and all the assurance of "permanency," which must result from that fact. The phrase "according as" - καθὼς kathōs- implies that these blessings were in conformity with that eternal plan, and have flowed to us as the expression of that plan. They are limited by that purpose, for it marks and measures all. It was as God had chosen that it should be, and had appointed in his eternal purpose.

He hath chosen us - The word "us" here shows that the apostle had reference to individuals, and not to communities. It includes Paul himself as one of the "chosen," and those whom he addressed - the mingled Gentile and Jewish converts in Ephesus. That it must refer to individuals is clear. Of no "community" as such can it be said that it was" chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy." It is not true of the Gentile world as such, nor of anyone of the nations making up the Gentile world. The word rendered here "hath chosen" - ἐξελέξατο exelexato- is from a word meaning "to lay out together," (Passow,) to choose out, to select. It has the idea of making a choice or selection among different objects or things. It is applied to things, as in Luke 10:42, Mary "hath chosen that good part;" - she has made a choice, or selection of it, or has shown a "preference" for it. 1 Corinthians 1:27, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world;" he has preferred to make use of them among all the conceivable things which might have been employed" to confound the wise;" compare Acts 1:2, Acts 1:24; Acts 6:5; Acts 15:22, Acts 15:25.

It denotes "to choose out," with the accessary idea of kindness or favor. Mark 13:20, "for the elect's sake whom "he hath chosen," he hath shortened the days." John 13:18, "I know whom I have chosen." Acts 13:17, "the God of this people of Israel "chose" our fathers;" that is, selected them from the nations to accomplish important purposes. This is evidently the sense of the word in the passage before us. It means to make a selection or choice with the idea of favor or love, and with a view to impart important benefits on those whom be chose. The idea of making some "distinction" between them and others, is essential to a correct

understanding of the passage - since there can be no choice where no such distinction is made. He who chooses one out of many things makes a difference, or evinces a preference - no matter what the ground or reason of his doing it may be. Whether this refers to communities and nations, or to individuals, still it is true that a distinction is made or a preference given of one over another. It may be added, that so far as "justice" is concerned, it makes no difference whether it refers to nations or to individuals. If there is injustice in choosing an "individual" to favor, there cannot be less in choosing a "nation" - for a nation is nothing but a collection of individuals. Every objection which has ever been made to the doctrine of election as it relates to individuals, will apply with equal force to the choice of a nation to unique privileges. If a distinction is made, it may be made with as much propriety in respect to individuals as to nations.

In him - In Christ. The choice was not without reference to any means of saving them; it was not a mere purpose to bring a certain number to heaven; it was with reference to the mediation of the Redeemer, and his work. It was a purpose that they should be saved "by" him, and share the benefits of the atonement. The whole choice and purpose of salvation had reference to him, and "out" of him no one was chosen to life, and no one out of him will be saved.

Before the foundation of the world - This is a very important phrase in determining the time when the choice was made. It was not an "afterthought." It was not commenced in time. The purpose was far back in the ages of eternity. But what is the meaning of the phrase "before the foundation of the world?" Dr. Clarke supposes that it means "from the commencement "of the religious system of the Jews," which," says he, "the phrase sometimes means." Such principles of interpretation are they compelled to resort to who endeavor to show that this refers to a national election to privileges, and who deny that it refers to individuals. On such principles the Bible may be made to signify anything and everything. Dr. Chandler, who also supposes that it refers to nations, admits, however, that the word "foundation" means the beginning of anything; and that the phrase here means, "before the world began" There is scarcely any phrase in the New Testament which is more clear in its signification than this.

The word rendered "foundation" - καταβολή katabolē- means properly a laying down, a founding, a foundation - as where the foundation of a building is laid - and the phrase "before the foundation of the world" clearly

means before the world was made, or before the work of creation; see Matthew 13:35; Matthew 25:34; Luke 11:50; Hebrews 9:26; Revelation 13:8, in all which places the phrase "the foundation of the world" means the beginning of human affairs; the beginning of the world; the beginning of history, etc. Thus, in John 17:24, the Lord Jesus says, "thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world," i. e., from eternity, or before the work of creation commenced. Thus, Peter says 1 Peter 1:20 of the Saviour, "who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world." It was the purpose of God before the worlds were made, to send him to save lost men; compare Revelation 17:8. Nothing can be clearer than that the phrase before us must refer to a purpose that was formed before the world was made. it is not a temporary arrangement; it has not grown up under the influence of vacillating purposes; it is not a plan newly formed, or changed with each coming generation, or variable like the plans of people. It has all the importance, dignity, and assurances of stability which necessarily result from a purpose that has been eternal in the mind of God. It may be observed here,

(1) that if the plan was formed "before the foundation of the world," all objections to the doctrine of an "eternal" plan are removed. If the plan was formed "before" the world, no matter whether a moment, an hour, a year, or millions of years, the plan is equally fixed, and the event equally necessary. All the objections which will lie against an "eternal" plan, will lie against a plan formed a day or an hour before the event. The one interferes with our freedom of action as much as the other.

(2) if the plan was formed "before the foundation of the world," it "was eternal." God has no new plan, He forms no new schemes. He is not changing and vacillating. If we can ascertain what is the plan of God at any time, we can ascertain what his eternal plan was with reference to the event. It has always been the same - for "he is of one MinD, and who can turn him?" Job 23:13. In reference to the plans and purposes of the Most High, there is nothing better settled than that what he actually does, he always meant to do - which is the doctrine of eternal decrees - "and the whole of it.

That we should be holy - Paul proceeds to state the "object" for which God had chosen his people. It is not merely that they should enter into heaven. It is not that they may live in sin. It is not that they may flatter

themselves that they are safe, and then live as they please. The tendency among people has always been to abuse the doctrine of predestination and election; to lead people to say that if all things are fixed there is no need of effort; that if God has an eternal plan, no matter how people live, they will be saved if he has elected them, and that at all events they cannot change that plan, and they may as well enjoy life by indulgence in sin. The apostle Paul held no such view of the doctrine of predestination. In his apprehension it is a doctrine suited to excite the gratitude of Christians, and the whole tendency and design of the doctrine, according to him, is to make people holy, and without blame before God in love.

And without blame before him in love - The expression "in love," is probably to be taken in connection with the following verse, and should be rendered "In love," having predestinated us unto the adoption of children." It is all to be traced to the love of God.

(1) it was love for us which prompted to it.

(2) it is the highest expression of love to be ordained to eternal life - for what higher love could God show us?

(3) it is love on his part, because we had no claim to it, and had not deserved it. If this be the correct view, then the doctrine of predestination is not inconsistent with the highest moral excellence in the divine character, and should never be represented as the offspring of partiality and injustice. Then too we should give thanks that" God "has, in love," predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will."

Verse 5

Having predestinated us - On the meaning of the word here used, see the notes at Romans 1:4; Romans 8:29, note. The word used πρωρίζω prōrizōmeans properly "to set bounds before;" and then to "pre-determine." There is the essential idea of setting bounds or limits, and of doing this beforehand. It is not that God determined to do it when it was actually done, but that he intended to do it beforehand. No language could express this more clearly, and I suppose this interpretation is generally admitted. Even by those who deny the doctrine of particular election, it is not denied that the word here used means to "pre-determine;" and they maintain that the

sense is, that God had pre-determined to admit the Gentiles to the privileges of his people. Admitting then that the meaning is to predestinate in the proper sense, the only question is, "who" are predestinated? To whom does the expression apply? Is it to nations or to individuals? In reply to this, in addition to the remarks already made, I would observe,

(1)that there is no specification of "nations" here as such, no mention of the Gentiles in contradistinction from the Jews.

(2)those referred to were those included in the word "us," among whom Paul was one - but Paul was not a heathen.

(3)the same objection will lie against the doctrine of predestinating "nations" which will lie against predestinating "individuals."

(4)nations are made up of individuals, and the pre-determination must have had some reference to individuals.

What is a nation but a collection of individuals? There is no such abstract being or thing as a nation; and if there was any purpose in regard to a nation, it must have had some reference to the individuals composing it. He that would act on the ocean, must act on the drops of water that make up the ocean; for besides the collection of drops of water there is no ocean. He that would remove a mountain, must act on the particles of matter that compose that mountain; for there is no such thing as an abstract mountain. Perhaps there was never a greater illusion than to suppose that all difficulty is removed in regard to the doctrine of election and predestination, by saying that it refers to "nations." What difficulty is lessened? What is gained by it? How does it make God appear more amiable and good?

Does it render him less "partial" to suppose that he has made a difference among nations, than to suppose that he has made a difference among individuals? Does it remove any difficulty about the offer of salvation, to suppose that he has granted the knowledge of his truth to some "nations," and withheld it from others? The truth is, that all the reasoning which has been founded on this supposition, has been merely throwing dust in the eyes. If there is "any" well-founded objection to the doctrine of decrees or predestination, it is to the doctrine "at all," alike in regard to nations and individuals, and there are just the same difficulties in the one case as in the other. But there is no real difficulty in either. Who could worship or honor a God who had no plan, or purpose, or intention in what

he did? Who can believe that the universe was formed and is governed without design? Who can doubt that what God "does" he always meant to do?

When, therefore, he converts and saves a soul, it is clear that he always intended to do it. He has no new plan. It is not an afterthought. It is not the work of chance. If I can find out anything that God has "done," I have the most certain conviction that he "always meant" to do it - and this is all that is intended by the doctrine of election or predestination. What God does, he always meant to do. What he permits, he always meant to permit. I may add further, that if it is right to "do" it, it was right to "intend" to do it. If there is no injustice or partiality in the act itself, there is no injustice or partiality in the intention to perform it. If it is right to save a soul, it was also right to intend to save it. If it is right to condemn a sinner to we, it was right to intend to do it. Let us then look "at the thing itself," and if that is not wrong, we should not blame the purpose to do it, however long it has been cherished.

Unto the adoption … - see John 1:12 note; Romans 8:15 note.

According to the good pleasure of his will - The word rendered "good pleasure" - (εὐδοκία eudokia) - means "a being well pleased;" delight in anything, favor, good-will, Luke 2:14; Philemon 1:15; compare Luke 12:32. Then it denotes purpose, or will, the idea of benevolence being included - Robinson. Rosenmuller renders the phrase, "from his most benignant decree." The evident object of the apostle is to state why God chose the heirs of salvation. It was done as it seemed good to him in the circumstances of the case. It was not that man had any control over him, or that man was consulted in the determination, or that it was based on the good works of man, real or foreseen. But we are not to suppose that there were no good reasons for what he has thus done. Convicts are frequently pardoned by an executive. He does it according to his own will, or as seems good in his sight.

He is to be the judge, and no one has a right to control him in doing it. It may seeM to be entirely arbitrary. The executive may not have communicated the reasons why he did it, either to those who are pardoned, or to the other prisoners, or to anyone else. But we are not to infer that there was no "reason" for doing it. If he is a wise magistrate, and worthy of his station, it is to be presumed that there were reasons which, if known, would

be satisfactory to all. But those reasons he is under no obligations to make known. Indeed, it might be improper that they should be known. Of that he is the best judge. Meantime, however, we may see what would be the effect in those who were not forgiven. It would excite, very likely, their hatred, and they would charge him with partiality or with tyranny. But they should remember that whoever might be pardoned, and on whatever ground it might be done, they could not complain.

They would suffer no more than they deserve. But what if, when the act of pardon was made known to one part, it was offered to the others also on certain plain and easy conditions? Suppose it should appear that while the executive meant, for wise but concealed reasons, to forgive a part, he had also determined to offer forgiveness to all. And suppose that they were in fact disposed in the highest degree to neglect it, and that no inducements or arguments could prevail on them to accept of it. Who then could blame the executive? Now this is about the case in regard to God, and the doctrine of election. All people were guilty and condemned. For wise reasons, which God has not communicated to us, he determined to bring a portion at least of the human race to salvation. This he did not intend to leave to chance and hap-hazard. He saw that all would of themselves reject the offer, and that unless some efficient means were used, the blood of the atonement would be shed in vain.

He did not make known to people who they were that he meant to save, nor the reason why they particularly were to be brought to heaven. Meantime he meant to make the offer universal; to make the terms as easy as possible, and thus to take away every ground of complaint. If people will not accept of pardon; if they prefer their sins; if nothing can induce them to come and be saved, why should they complain? If the doors of a prison are open, and the chains of the prisoners are knocked off, and they will not come out, why should they complain that others are in fact willing to come out and be saved? Let it be borne in mind that the purposes of God correspond exactly to facts as they actually occur, and much of the difficulty is taken away. If in the facts there is no just ground of complaint, there can be none, because it was the "intention of God that the facts should be so."

Verse 6

To the praise of the glory of his grace - This is a Hebraism, and means the same as "to his glorious grace." The object was to excite thanksgiving for his glorious grace manifested in electing love. The real tendency of the doctrine in minds that are properly affected, is not to excite opposition to God, or to lead to the charge of partiality, tyranny, or severity; it is to excite thankfulness and praise. In accordance with this, Paul introduced the statement Ephesians 1:3 by saying that God was to be regarded as "blessed" for forming and executing this plan. The meaning is, that the doctrine of predestination and election lays the foundation of adoring gratitude and praise. This will appear plain by a few considerations.

(1) it is the only foundation of hope for man. If he were left to himself, all the race would reject, the offers of mercy and would perish. History, experience, and the Bible alike demonstrate this.

(2) all the joys which any of the human race have, are to be traced to the purpose of God to bestow them. Man has no power of originating any of them, and if God had not intended to confer them, none of them would have been possessed.

(3) all these favors are conferred on those who had no claim on God. The Christian who is pardoned had no claim on God for pardon; he who is admitted to heaven could urge no claim for such a privilege and honor; he who enjoys comfort and peace in the hour of death, enjoys it only through the glorious grace of God.

(4) "all" that is done by election is suited to excite praise. Election is to life, and pardon, and holiness, and heaven. But why should not a man praise God for these things? God chooses people to be holy, not sinful; to be happy, not miserable; to be pure, not impure; to be saved, not to be lost. For these things he should be praised. He should be praised that he has not left the whole race to wander away and die. Had he chosen but one to eternal life, that one should praise him, and all the holy universe should join in the praise. Should he now see it to be consistent to choose but one of the fallen spirits, and to make him pure, and to readmit him to heaven, that one spirit would have occasion for eternal thanks, and all heaven might join in his praises. How much more is praise due to him, when the number chosen is

not one, or a few, but when millions which no man can number, shall be found to be chosen to life; Revelation 7:9.

(5) the doctrine of predestination to life has added no pang of sorrow to anyone of the human race. It has made millions happy who would not otherwise have been, but not one miserable. It is not a choice to sorrow, it is a choice to joy and peace.

(6) no one has a right to complain of it. Those who are chosen assuredly should not complain of the grace which has made them what they are, and which is the foundation of all their hopes. And they who are "not" chosen, have no right to complain; for,

(a)they have no claim to life;

(b)they are "in fact" unwilling to come.

They have no desire to be Christians and to be saved. Nothing can induce them to forsake their sins and come to the Saviour.

Why then should they complain if others are "in fact" willing to be saved? Why should a man complain for being left to take his own course, and to walk in his own way? Mysterious, therefore, as is the doctrine of predestination; and fearful and inscrutable as it is in some of its aspects, yet, in a just view of it, it is suited to excite the highest expressions of thanksgiving, and to exalt God in the apprehension of man. He who has been redeemed and saved by the love of God; who has been pardoned and made pure by mercy; on whom the eye of compassion has been tenderly fixed, and for whom the Son of God has died, has abundant cause for thanksgiving and praise.

Wherein he hath made us accepted - Has regarded us as the objects of favor and complacency.

In the Beloved - In the Lord Jesus Christ, the well-beloved Son of God; notes, Matthew 3:17. He has chosen us in him, and it is through him that these mercies have been conferred on us.

Verse 7

In whom we have redemption - On the meaning of the word here rendered "redemption" - (ἀπολύτρωσις apolutrōsis) - see the notes at Romans 3:24. The word here, as there, denotes that deliverance from sin and from the evil consequences of sin, which has been procured by the atonement made by the Lord Jesus Christ. This verse is one of the passages

which prove conclusively that the apostle here does not refer to "nations" and to "national privileges." Of what "nation" could it be said that it had "redemption through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins?"

Through his blood - By means of the atonement which he has made; see this phrase fully explained in the notes at Romans 3:25.

The forgiveness of sins - We obtain through his blood, or through the atonement which he has made, the forgiveness of sins. We are not to suppose that this is all the benefit which we receive from his death, or that this is all that constitutes redemption. It is the main, and perhaps the most important thing. But we also obtain the hope of heaven, the influences of the Holy Spirit, grace to guide us and to support us in trial, peace in death, and perhaps many more benefits. Still "forgiveness" is so prominent and important, that the apostle has mentioned that as if it were all.

According to the riches of his grace - According to his rich grace; see a similar phrase explained in the notes at Romans 2:4. The word "riches," in the form in which it is used here, occurs also in several other places in this Epistle; Ephesians 1:18; Ephesians 2:7; Ephesians 3:8, Ephesians 3:16. It is what Paley (Horae Paul) calls "a cant phrase," and occurs often in the writings of Paul; see Romans 2:4; Romans 9:23; Romans 11:12, Romans 11:33; Philemon 4:19; Colossians 1:27; Colossians 2:2. It is not found in any of the other writings of the New Testament, except once in a sense somewhat similar, in James James 2:5, "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world "rich" in faith," and Dr. Paley from this fact has constructed an argument to prove that this Epistle was written by Paul. It is unique to him, and marks his style in a manner which cannot be mistaken. An impostor, or a forger of the Epistle, would not have thought of introducing it, and yet it is just such a phrase as would naturally be used by Paul.

Verse 8

Wherein he hath abounded - Which he has liberally manifested to us This grace has not been stinted and confined, but has been liberal and abundant.

In all wisdom - That is, he has evinced great wisdom in the plan of salvation; wisdom in so saving people as to secure the honor of his own law, and in devising a scheme that was eminently adapted to save people; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 1:24.

And prudence - The word used here (φρονήσις phronēsis) means understanding, thinking, prudence. The meaning here is, that, so to speak,

God had evinced great "intelligence" in the plan of salvation. There was ample proof of "mind" and of "thought." It was adapted to the end in view. It was far-seeing; skillfully arranged; and carefully formed. The sense of the whole is, that there was a wise design running through the whole plan, and abounding in it in an eminent degree.

Verse 9

Having made known to us the mystery of his will - The word "mystery" (μυστήριον mustērion) means literally something into which one must be "initiated" before it is fully known (from μυέω *mueō* to initiate, to instruct); and then anything which is concealed or hidden. We commonly use the word to denote that which is above our comprehension or unintelligible. But this is never the meaning of the word in the New Testament. It means there some doctrine or fact which has been concealed, or which has not before been fully revealed, or which has been set forth only by figures and symbols. When the doctrine is made known, it may be as clear and plain as any other. Such was the doctrine that God meant to call the Gentiles, which was long concealed, at least in part, and which was not fully made known until the Saviour came, and which had been until that time "a mystery - a concealed truth" - though when it was revealed, there was nothing incomprehensible in it. Thus, in Colossians 1:26, "The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints." So it was in regard to the doctrine of election. It was a mystery until it was made known by the actual conversion of those whom God had chosen. So in regard to the incarnation of the Redeemer; the atonement; the whole plan of salvation. Over all these great points there was a veil thrown, and people did not understand them until God revealed them. When they were revealed, the mystery was removed, and men were able to see clearly the manifestation of the will of God.

Which he hath purposed in himself - Without foreign aid or counsel. His purposes originated in his own mind, and were concealed until he chose to make them known; see 2 Timothy 1:9.

Verse 10

That in the dispensation - The word rendered here as "dispensation," οἰκονομία oikonomiameans properly "the management of household affairs." Then it means stewardship or administration; a dispensation or arrangement of things: a scheme or plan. The meaning here is, that this plan was formed in order (εἰς eis) or "unto" this end, that in the full arrangement

of times, or in the arrangements completing the filling up of the times, God might gather together in one all things. Tyndale renders it: "to have it declared when the time was full come," etc.

The fulness of times - When the times were fully completed; when all the periods should have passed by which he had prescribed, or judged necessary to the completion of the object. The period referred to here is that when all things shall be gathered together in the Redeemer at the winding up of human affairs, or the consummation of all things. The arrangement was made with reference to that, and embraced all things which conduced to that. The plan stretched from before "the foundation of the world" to the period when all times should be completed; and of course all the events occurring in that intermediate period were embraced in the plan.

He might gather together in one - The word used here - ἀνακεφαλαιόω anakephalaioō- means literally, to sum up, to recapitulate, as an orator does at the close of his discourse. It is from κεφαλή kephalēthe head; or κεφάλαιον kephalaionthe sum, the chief thing, the main point. In the New Testament, the word means to collect under one head, or to comprehend several things under one; Romans 13:9. "It is briefly comprehended," i. e., summed up under this one precept," sc., "love." In the passage before us, it means that God would sum up, or comprehend all things in heaven and earth through the Christian dispensation; he would make one empire, under one head, with common feelings, and under the same laws. The reference is to the unity which will hereafter exist in the kingdom of God, when all his friends on earth and in heaven shall be united, and all shall have a common head. Now there is alienation. The earth has been separated from other worlds by rebellion. It has gone off into apostasy and sin. It refuses to acknowledge the Great Head to which other worlds are subject, and the object is to restore it to its proper place, so that there shall be one great and united kingdom.

All things - τὰ παντά ta pantaIt is remarkable that Paul has used here a word which is in the neuter gender. It is not all "persons," all angels, or all human beings, or all the elect, but all "things." Bloomfield and others suppose that "persons" are meant, and that the phrase is used for τοὺς πάντας tous pantasBut it seems to me that Paul did not use this word without design. All "things" are placed under Christ, Ephesians 1:22; Matthew 28:18, and the design of God is to restore harmony in the universe. Sin has produced disorder not not only in "mind," but in "matter." The

world is disarranged. The effects of transgression are seen everywhere; and the object of the plan of redemption is to put things on their pristine footing, and restore them as they were at first. Everything is, therefore, put under the Lord Jesus, and all things are to be brought under his control, so as to constitute one vast harmonious empire. The amount of the declaration here is, that there is hereafter to be one kingdom, in which there shall be no jar or alienation; that the now separated kingdoms of heaven and earth shall be united under one head, and that henceforward all shall be harmony and love. The things which are to be united in Christ, are those which are "in heaven and which are on earth." Nothing is said of "hell." Of course this passage cannot teach the doctrine of universal salvation, since there is one world which is not to have a part in this ultimate union.

In Christ - By means of Christ, or under him, as the great head and king. He is to be the great agent in effecting this, and he is to preside over this united kingdom. In accordance with this view the heavenly inhabitants, the angels as well as the redeemed, are uniformly represented as uniting in the same worship, and as acknowledging the Redeemer as their common head and king; Revelation 5:9-12.

Both which are in heaven - Margin, as in Greek, "in the heavens." Many different opinions have been formed of the meaning of this expression. Some suppose it to mean the saints in heaven, who died before the coming of the Saviour; and some that it refers to the Jews, designated as "the heavenly people," in contradistinction from the Gentiles, as having nothing divine and heavenly in them, and as being of the "earth." The more simple and obvious interpretation is, however, without doubt, the correct one, and this is to suppose that it refers to the holy inhabitants of other worlds. The object of the plan of salvation is to produce a harmony between them and the redeemed on earth, or to produce out of all, one great and united kingdom. In doing this, it is not necessary to suppose that any change is to be produced in the inhabitants of heaven. All the change is to occur among those on earth, and the object is to make out of all, one harmonious and glorious empire.

And which are on earth - The redeemed on earth. The object is to bring them into harmony with the inhabitants of heaven. This is the great object proposed by the plan of salvation. It is to found one glorious and eternal kingdom, that shall comprehend all holy beings on earth and all in heaven. There is now discord and disunion. Man is separated from God, and from

all holy beings. Between him and every holy being there is by nature discord and alienation. Unrenewed man has no sympathy with the feelings and work of the angels; no love for their employment; no desire to be associated with them. Nothing can be more unlike than the customs, feelings, laws, and habits which prevail on earth, from those which prevail in heaven. But the object of the plan of salvation is to restore harmony to those alienated communities, and produce eternal concord and love. Hence, learn:

(1) The greatness and glory of the plan of salvation. It is no trifling undertaking to "reconcile worlds," and of such discordant materials to found one great and glorious and eternal empire.

(2) the reason of the interest which angels feel in the plan of redemption; 1 Peter 1:12. They are deeply concerned in the redemption of those who, with them, are to constitute that great kingdom which is to be eternal. Without envy at the happiness of others; without any feeling that the accession of others will diminish "their" felicity or glory, they wait to hail the coming of others, and rejoice to receive even one who comes to be united to their number.

(3) this plan was worthy of the efforts of the Son of God. To restore harmony in heaven and earth; to prevent the evils of alienation and discord; to rear one immense and glorious kingdom, was an object worthy the incarnation of the Son of God.

(4) the glory of the Redeemer. He is to be exalted as the Head of this united and ever-glorious kingdom, and all the redeemed on earth and the angelic hosts shall acknowledge him as their common Sovereign and Head.

(5) this is the greatest and most important enterprise on earth. It should engage every heart, and enlist the powers of every soul. It should be the earnest desire of all to swell the numbers of those who shall constitute this united and ever-glorious kingdom, and to bring as many as possible of the human race into union with the holy inhabitants of he other world.

Verse 11

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance - We who are Christians. Most commentators suppose that by the word "we" the Jews particularly are intended, and that it stands in contradistinction from "ye," as referring to the Gentiles, in Ephesians 1:13. This construction, they suppose is demanded by the nature of the passage. The meaning may then be, that the Jews who were believers had "first" obtained a part in the plan of redemption, as the offer was first made to them, and then that the same favor was conferred also on the Gentiles. Or it may refer to those who had been first converted, without particular reference to the fact that they were Jews; and the reference may be to the apostle and his fellow-laborers. This seems to me to be the correct interpretation. "We the ministers of religion first believed, and have obtained an inheritance in the hopes of Christians, that we should be to the praise of God's glory; and you also, after hearing the word of truth, believed;" Ephesians 1:13. The word which is rendered "obtained our inheritance" - κληρόω klēroō- means literally "to acquire by lot," and then to obtain, to receive. Here it means that they had received the favor of being to the praise of his glory for having first trusted in the Lord Jesus.

Being predestinated - Ephesians 1:5.

According to the purpose - On the meaning of the word "purpose," see the notes, Romans 8:28.

Of him who worketh all things - Of God, the universal agent. The affirmation here is not merely that God accomplishes the designs of salvation according to the counsel of his own will, but that "he does everything." His agency is not confined to one thing, or to one class of objects. Every object and event is under his control, and is in accordance with his eternal plan. The word rendered "worketh" - ἐνεργέω energeō- means to work, to be active, to produce; Ephesians 1:20; Galatians 2:8; Philemon 2:13. A universal agency is ascribed to him. "The same God which "worketh" all in all;" 1 Corinthians 12:6. He has an agency in causing the emotions of our hearts. "God, who worketh in you both to Will and to do of his good pleasure;" Philemon 2:13. He has an agency in distributing to people their various allotments and endowments. "All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will;" 1 Corinthians 12:11.

The agency of God is seen everywhere. Every leaf, flower, rose-bud, spire of grass; every sun-beam, and every flash of lightning; every cataract

and every torrent, all declare his agency; and there is not an object that we see that does not bespeak the control of an All-present God. It would be impossible to affirm more explicitly that God‘s agency is universal, than Paul does in the passage before us. He does not attempt to prove it. It is one of those points on which he does not deem it necessary to pause and reason, but which may be regarded as a conceded point in the discussion of other topics, and which may be employed without hesitation in their illustration. Paul does not state the “mode” in which this is done. He affirms merely the fact. He does not say that he “compels” men, or that he overbears them by mere physical force. His agency he affirms to be universal; but it is undoubtedly in accordance with the nature of the object, and with the laws which he has impressed on them.

His agency in the work of creation was absolute and entire; for there was nothing to act on, and no established laws to be observed. Over the mineral kingdom his control must also be entire, yet in accordance with the laws which he has impressed on matter. The crystal and the snow are formed by his agency; but it is in accordance with the laws which he has been pleased to appoint. So in the vegetable world his agency is everywhere seen; but the lily and the rose blossom in accordance with uniform laws, and not in an arbitrary manner. So in the animal kingdom. God gives sensibility to the nerve, and excitability and power to the muscle. He causes the lungs to heave, and the arteries and veins to bear the blood along the channels of life; but it is not in an arbitrary manner. It is in accordance with the laws which he has ordained and he never disregards in his agency over these kingdoms.

So in his government of mind. He works everywhere. But he does it in accordance with the laws of mind. His agency is not exactly of the same kind on the rose-bud that it is on the diamond nor on the nerve that it is on the rose-bud, nor on the heart and will that it is on the nerve. In all these things he consults the laws which he has impressed on them; and as he chooses that the nerve should be affected in accordance with its laws and properties, so it is with mind. God does not violate its laws. Mind is free. It is influenced by truth and motives. It has a sense of right and wrong. And there is no more reason to suppose that God disregards these laws of mind in controlling the intellect and the heart, than there is that he disregards the

laws of crystalization in the formation of the ice, or of gravitation in the movements of the heavenly bodies. The general doctrine is, that God works in all things, and controls all; but that "his agency everywhere is in accordance with the laws and nature of that part of his kingdom where it is exerted." By this simple principle we may secure the two great points which it is desirable to secure on this subject:

(1) the doctrine of the universal agency of God; and,

(2) the doctrine of the freedom and responsibility of man.

After the counsel of his own will - Not by consulting his creatures, or conforming to their views, but by his own views of what is proper and right. We are not to suppose that this is by "mere" will, as if it were arbitrary, or that he determines anything without good reason. The meaning is, that his purpose is determined by what "he" views to be right, and without consulting his creatures or conforming to their views. His dealings often seem to us to be arbitrary. We are incapable of perceiving the reasons of what he does. He makes those his friends who we should have supposed would have been the last to have become Christians. He leaves those who seem to us to be on the borders of the kingdom, and they remain unmoved and unaffected. But we are not thence to suppose that he is arbitrary. In every instance, we are to believe that there is a good reason for what he does, and one which we may be permitted yet to see, and in which we shall wholly acquiesce.

The phrase "counsel of his own will" is remarkable. It is designed to express in the strongest manner the fact that it is not by human counsel or advice. The word "counsel" - βουλή boulē- means "a council" or "senate;" then a determination, purpose, or decree; see Robinson's Lexicon. Here it means that his determination was formed by his own will, and not by human reasoning. Still, his will in the case may not have been arbitrary. When it is said of man that he forms his own purposes, and acts according to his own will, we are not to infer that he acts without reason. He may have the highest and best reasons for what he does, but he does not choose to make them known to others, or to consult others. So it may be of God, and so we should presume it to be. It may be added, that we ought to have such confidence in him as to believe that he will do all things well. The best possible evidence that anything is done in perfect wisdom and goodness, is

the fact that God does it. When we have ascertained that, we should be satisfied that all is right.

Verse 12

That we should be to the praise of his glory - Should be the occasion or the means of celebrating his glory; or that praise should be ascribed to him as the result of our salvation.

Who first trusted in Christ - Margin, "hoped." This is in accordance with the original. The foundation of their "hope" was the Saviour. Some suppose that the apostle here refers to the Jews who were converted before the gospel was preached extensively to the Gentiles. The reason for this opinion is, that in the following verse he contrasts those to whom he here refers with others whom he was addressing. But it may be that by the word "we" in Ephesians 1:11-12, he refers to himself and to his fellow-laborers who had "first" hoped in the Saviour, and had then gone and proclaimed the message to others; see the notes on Ephesians 1:11. They "first" believed, and then preached to others; and they also believed, and became partakers of the same privileges.

Verse 13

In whom ye also trusted - This stands in contrast with those who had "first" embraced the gospel.

Heard the word of truth - The gospel; called the "word" or message of truth, the word of God, etc. See Romans 10:17. The phrase "the word of truth" means "the true word or message." It was a message unmixed with Jewish traditions or Gentile philosophy.

The gospel of your salvation - The gospel bringing salvation to you.

In whom also - In the Lord Jesus. A little different translation of this verse will convey more clearly its meaning. "In whom also, ye, having heard the word of truth, (the gospel of your salvation,) in whom having also believed, ye were sealed," etc. The sealing was the result of believing, and that was the result of hearing the gospel; compare Romans 10:14-15.

Ye were sealed - On the meaning of the word "seal," see the notes at John 3:33; John 6:27, note. On the phrase "ye were sealed," see the notes on 2 Corinthians 1:22.

With that Holy Spirit of promise - With the Holy Spirit that was promised; see John 16:7-11, John 16:13; John 15:26; John 14:16-17. It is not improbable, I think, that the apostle here refers particularly to the

occurrence of which we have a record in Acts 19:1-6. Paul, it is there said, having passed through the upper provinces of Asia Minor, came to Ephesus. He found certain persons who were the disciples of John, and he asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit since they "believed," Ephesians 1:2. They replied that they had not heard whether there was any Holy Spirit, and that they had been baptized unto John's baptism. Paul taught them the true nature of the baptism of John; explained to them the Christian system; and they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and "the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." They were thus sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, "after they had believed" Ephesians 1:13; they had the full evidence of the favor of God in the descent of the promised Holy Spirit, and in his miraculous influences. If this be the true interpretation, it constitutes a striking coincidence between the Epistle and the Acts, of such a nature as constitute the arguments in Paley's "Horae Paulinae" (though he has not referred to this), which shows that the Epistle was not forged. The circumstance is such that it would not have been alluded to in this manner by one who should forge the Epistle; and the mention of it in the Epistle is so slight, that no one, from the account there, would think of forging the account in the Acts. The coincidence is just such as would occur on the supposition that the transaction actually occurred, and that both the Acts and the Epistle are genuine. At the same time, there is a sealing of the Holy Spirit which is common to all Christians; see the notes referred to on 2 Corinthians 1:22.

Verse 14

Which is the earnest of our inheritance - On the meaning of this, see the notes at 2 Corinthians 1:22.

Until the redemption - see the notes at Romans 8:23. The meaning here is, we have the Holy Spirit as the pledge that that shall be ours, and the Holy Spirit will be imparted to us until we enter on that inheritance.

Of the purchased possession - Heaven, purchased for us by the death of the Redeemer. The word used here - περιποίησις peripoiēsis- occurs in the following places in the New Testament: 1 Thessalonians 5:9, rendered "to obtain salvation;" 2 Thessalonians 2:14, "to the obtaining of the glory of the Lord;" Hebrews 10:39, "to the saving of the soul;" 1 Peter 2:9, "a peculiar people;" literally, a people of "acquirement" to himself; and in the passage before us. It properly means, an acquisition, an obtaining, a laying up. Here it means, the complete deliverance from sin, and the eternal

salvation "acquired" for us by Christ. The influence of the Holy Spirit, renewing and sanctifying us, comforting us in trials, and sustaining us in afflictions, is the pledge that the redemption is yet to be wholly ours.

Unto the praise of his glory - see Ephesians 1:6.

Verse 15

Wherefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus - This is one of the passages usually relied on by those who suppose that this Epistle was not written to the Ephesians. The argument is, that he writes to them as if they were strangers to him, and that it is not language such as would be used in addressing a people among whom he had spent three years; see the introduction, section 5. But this inference is not conclusive. Paul had been some years absent from Ephesus when this Epistle was written. In the difficult communication in those times between distant places, it is not to be supposed that he would hear often from them. Perhaps he had heard nothing after the time when he bade farewell to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus Acts 20, until the time here referred to. It would be, therefore, a matter of great interest with him to hear from them; and when in some way intelligence was brought to him at Rome of a very gratifying character about their growth in piety, he says that his anxiety was relieved, and that he did not cease to give thanks for what he had heard, and to commend them to God in prayer.

Verse 16

Cease not to give thanks for you - In the prosperity of the church at Ephesus he could not but feel the deepest interest, and their welfare he never forgot.

Making mention of you in my prayers - Paul was far distant from them, and expected to see them no more. But he had faith in prayer, and he sought that they might advance in knowledge and in grace. What was the particular subject of his prayers, he mentions in the following verses.

Verse 17

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ - The God who has sent the Lord Jesus into the world, and appointed him as the Mediator between himself and man. The particular reason why Paul here speaks of him as "the God of the Lord Jesus" is, that he prays that they might be further acquainted with the Redeemer, and be enlightened in regard to the great work which he came to do.

The Father of glory - The glorious Father, that is, the Father who is worthy to be praised and honored.

May give unto you the Spirit of wisdom - May make you wise to understand the great doctrines of the religion of the Redeemer.

And revelation - That is, revealing to you more and more of the character of the Redeemer, and of the nature and results of his work. It is probable here that by the word "Spirit" the apostle refers to the Holy Spirit as the Author of all wisdom, and the Revealer of all truth. His prayer is, that God would grant to them the Holy Spirit to make them wise, and to reveal his will to them.

In the knowledge of him - Margin, "for the acknowledgment." That is, in order that you may more fully acknowledge him, or know him more intimately and thoroughly. They had already made high attainments Ephesians 1:15, but Paul felt that they might make still higher; and the idea here is, that however far Christians may have advanced in knowledge and in love, there is an unfathomed depth of knowledge which they may still explore, and which they should be exhorted still to attempt to fathom. How far was Paul from supposing that the Ephesians had attained to perfection!

Verse 18

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened - The construction here in the Greek is, probably, "that he may give you (δώη dōē Ephesians 1:17) the Spirit of wisdom, etc. - eyes of the understanding enlightened," etc. Or the phrase, "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened," may be in the accusative absolute, which Koppe and Bloomfield prefer. The phrase, "the eyes of the understanding," is a figure that is common in all languages. Thus, Philo says, "What the eye is to the body, that is the mind to the soul;" compare Matthew 6:22. The eye is the instrument by which we see; and in like manner the understanding is that by which we perceive truth. The idea here is, that Paul not only wished their "hearts" to be right, but he wished their "understanding" to be right also. Religion has much to do in enlightening the mind. Indeed, its effect there is not less striking and decisive than it is on the heart. The understanding has been blinded by sin. The views which people entertain of themselves and of God are narrow and wrong. The understanding is enfeebled and perverted by the practice of sin. It is limited in its operations by the necessity of the case, and by the impossibility of fully comprehending the great truths which pertain to the divine administration. One of the first effects of true religion is on the

understanding. It enlarges its views of truth; gives it more exalted conceptions of God; corrects its errors; raises it up toward the great Fountain of love. And nowhere is the effect of the true religion more apparent than in shedding light on the intellect of the world, and restoring the weak and perverted mind to a just view of the proportion of things, and to the true knowledge of God.

That ye may know what is the hope of his calling - What is the full import of that hope to which he has called and invited you by his Spirit and his promises. The meaning here is, that it would be an inestimable privilege to be made fully acquainted with the benefits of the Christian hope, and to be permitted to understand fully what Christians have a right to expect in the world of glory. This is the first thing which the apostle desires they should fully understand,

And what the riches of the glory of his inheritance - This is the second thing which Paul wishes them to understand. There is a force in this language which can be found perhaps nowhere else than in the writings of Paul. His mind is full, and language is burdened and borne down under the weight of his thoughts; see the notes at 2 Corinthians 4:17. On the word "riches" used here, see the notes at Ephesians 1:7. The phrase "riches of glory" means "glorious wealth;" or, as we would say, "how rich and glorious!" The meaning is, that there is an abundance - an infinitude of wealth. It is not such a possession as man may be heir to in this world, which is always limited from the necessity of the case, and which cannot be enjoyed long; it is infinite and inexhaustible; compare notes, Romans 2:4. The "inheritance" hero referred to is eternal life. notes, Romans 8:17.

In the saints - Among the saints. note, 1 Corinthians 1:2.

Verse 19

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power - On the language used here, compare the notes at 2 Corinthians 4:17. There is much emphasis and energy of expression here, as if the apostle were laboring under the greatness of his theme, and wanted words to express the magnitude of his conception. This is the "third" thing which he was particularly desirous they should know - that they should be fully acquainted with the "power" of God in the salvation of people. He refers not merely to the power which he had evinced in their salvation, but also to what the gospel was "able" to accomplish, and which they might yet experience. The "power" referred to here as exercised toward believers does not refer to one thing merely. It is

the whole series of the acts of power toward Christians which results from the work of the Redeemer. There was power exerted in their conversion. There would be power exerted in keeping them. There would be power in raising them up from the dead, and exalting them with Christ to heaven. The religion which they professed was a religion of "power." In all the forms and stages of it the power of God was manifested toward them, and would be until they reached their final inheritance.

To us-ward - Toward us, or in relation to us.

Who believe - Who are Christians.

According to the working of his mighty power - Margin, The might of his power. This should be taken with the clause in the following verse, "which he wrought in Christ;" and the meaning is, that the power which God has exerted in us is in accordance with the power which was shown in raising up the Lord Jesus. It was the proper result of that, and was power of a similar kind. The same power is requisite to convert a sinner which is demanded in raising the dead. Neither will be accomplished but by omnipotence (see the notes, Ephesians 2:5); and the apostle wished that they should be fully apprised of this fact, and of the vast "power" which God had put forth in raising them up from the death of sin. To illustrate this sentiment is one of his designs in the following verses; and, hence, he goes on to show that people before their conversion were "dead in trespasses and sins;" that they had no spiritual life; that they were the "children of wrath;" that they were raised up from their death in sin by the same power which raised the Lord Jesus from the grave, and that they were wholly saved by grace; Ephesians 2:1-10. In order to set this idea of the "power" which God had put forth in their regeneration in the strongest light, he goes into a magnificent description of the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus, and shows how that was connected with the renewing of Christians. God had set him over all things. He had put all things under his feet, and had made principalities and dominions everywhere subject to him. In this whole passage Ephesians 1:19-23; Ephesians 2:1-10, the main thing to be illustrated is the power which God has shown in renewing and saving his people; and the leading sentiment is, that the same power is evinced in that which was required to raise up the Lord Jesus from the dead, and to exalt him over the universe.

Verse 20

Which he wrought in Christ - Which he exerted in relation to the Lord Jesus when he was dead. The "power" which was then exerted was as great as that of creation. It was imparting life to a cold and "mangled" frame. It was to open again the arteries and veins, and teach the heart to beat and the lungs to heave. It was to diffuse vital warmth through the rigid muscles, and to communicate to the body the active functions of life. It is impossible to conceive of a more direct exertion of "power" than in raising up the dead; and there is no more striking illustration of the nature of conversion than in such a resurrection.

And set him at his own right hand - The idea is, that great power was displayed by this, and that a similar exhibition is made when man is renewed and exalted to the high honor of being made an heir of God. On the fact that Jesus was received to the right hand of God, see the notes at Mark 16:19; compare the notes at Acts 2:33.

In the heavenly places - see the notes at Ephesians 1:3. The phrase here evidently means in heaven itself.

Verse 21

Far above all principality - The general sense in this verse is, that the Lord Jesus was exalted to the highest conceivable dignity and honor; compare Philemon 2:9; Colossians 2:10. In this beautiful and most important passage, the apostle labors for words to convey the greatness of his conceptions, and uses those which denote the highest conceivable dignity and glory. The "main" idea is, that God had manifested great "power" in thus exalting the Lord Jesus, and that similar power was exhibited in raising up the sinner from the death of sin to the life and honor of believing. The work of religion throughout was a work of power; a work of exalting and honoring "the dead," whether dead in sin or in the grave; and Christians ought to know the extent and glory of the power thus put forth in their salvation. The word rendered "far above" - ὑπεράνω huperanō- is a compound word, meaning "high above," or greatly exalted. He was not merely "above" the ranks of the heavenly beings, as the head; he was not one of their own rank, placed by office a little above them, but he was infinitely exalted over them, as of different rank and dignity. How could this be if he were a mere man; or if he were an angel? The word rendered "principality" - ἀρχή archē- means properly, "the beginning;" and then the first, the first place, power, dominion, pre-eminence, rulers.

magistrates, etc. It may refer here to any rank and power, whether among people or angels, and the sense is, that Christ is exalted above all.

And power - It is not easy to distinguish between the exact meaning of the words which the apostle here uses. The general idea is, that Christ is elevated above all ranks of creatures, however exalted. and by whatever name they may be known. As in this he refers to the "world that is to come," as well as this world, it is clear that there is a reference here to the ranks of the angels, and probably he means to allude to the prevailing opinion among the Jews, that the angels are of different orders. Some of the Jewish rabbies reckon four, others ten orders of angels, and they presume to give them names according to their different ranks and power. But all this is evidently the result of mere fancy. The Scriptures hint in several places at a difference of rank among the angels, but the sacred writers do not go into detail. It may be added that there is no improbability in such a subordination, but it is rather to be presumed to be true. The creatures of God are not made alike; and difference of degree and rank, as far as our observation extends everywhere prevails. On this verse compare the notes at Romans 8:38.

Dominion - Greek "Lordship."

And every name that is named - Every creature of every rank.

Not only in this world - Not only above all kings, and princes, and rulers of every grade and rank on earth.

But also in that which is to come - This refers undoubtedly to heaven. The meaning is, that he is Supreme over all.

Verse 22

And hath put all things under his feet - See the notes at 1 Corinthians 15:27.

And gave him to be the head over all things - Appointed him to be the supreme ruler.

To the church - With reference to the church, or for ira benefit and welfare: see the notes or, John 17:2. The universe is under his control and direction for the welfare of his people.

(1) all the elements - the physical works of God - the winds and waves - the seas and rivers - all are under him, and all are to be made tributary to the welfare of the church.

(2) earthly kings and rulers; kingdoms and nations are under his control. Thus far Christ has controlled all the wicked rulers of the earth, and they have not been able to destroy that church which he redeemed with his own blood.

(3) angels in heaven, with all their ranks and orders, are under his control with reference to the church; see the notes at Hebrews 1:14; compare Matthew 26:53.

(4) fallen angels are under his control, and shall not be able to injure or destroy the church. See the notes at Matthew 16:18. The church, therefore, is safe. All the great powers of heaven, earth, and hell, are made subject to its Head and King; and no weapon that is formed against it shall prosper.

Verse 23

Which is his body - This comparison of the church with "a person" or body, of which the Lord Jesus is the head, is not uncommon in the New Testament; compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Corinthians 12:27, note; Ephesians 4:15-16, notes.

The fulness of him - The word rendered here as "fulness" - πλήρωμα plērōma- means properly, that with which anything is filled; the filling up; the contents; notes, Romans 11:12. The exact idea here, however, is not very clear, and interpreters have been by no means united in their opinions of the meaning. It seems probable that the sense is, that the church is the "completion or filling up" of his power and glory. It is that without which his dominion would not be complete. He has control over the angels and over distant worlds, but; his dominion would not be complete without the control over his church, and that is so glorious, that it "fills up" the honor of the universal dominion, and makes his empire complete. According to Rosenmuller, the word "fulness" here means a "great number" or multitude; a multitude, says he, which, not confined to its own territory, spreads afar, and fills various regions.

Koppe also regards it as synonymous with "multitude or many," and supposes it to mean all the dominion of the Redeemer over the body - the church. He proposes to translate the whole verse, "He has made him the Head over his church, that he might rule it as his own body - the whole wide state of his universal kingdom." "This," says Calvin (in loc.), "is the

highest honor of the church, that the Son of God regards himself as in a certain sense imperfect unless he is joined to us." The church constitutes the "complete body" of the Redeemer. A body is complete when it has all its members and limbs in proper proportions, and those members might be said to be the "completion," or the filling-up, or the "fulness" - πλήρωμα plērōma- of the body or the person. This language would not, indeed, be such as would usually be adopted to express the idea now; but this is evidently the sense in which Paul uses it here.

The meaning is, that the church sustains the same relation to Christ, which the body does to the head. It helps to form the entire person. There is a close and necessary union. The one is not complete without the other. And one is dependent on the other. When the body has all its members in due proportion, and is in sound and vigorous health, the whole person then is complete and entire. So it is to be in the kingdom of the Redeemer. He is the head; and that redeemed Church is the body, the fulness, the completion, the filling-up of the entire empire over which he presides, and which he rules. On the meaning of the word "fulness" - πλήρωμα plērōma- the reader may consult Storr's Opuscula, vol. i. pp. 144-187, particularly pp. 160-183. Storr understands the word in the sense of full or abundant mercy, and supposes that it refers to the great benignity which "God" has shown to his people, and renders it, "The great benignity of him who filleth all things with good, as he called Jesus from tile dead to life and placed him in heaven, so even you, sprung from the pagan, who were dead in sin on account of your many offences in which you formerly lived, etc. - hath he called to life by Christ." This verse, therefore, he would connect with the following chapter, and he regards it all as designed to illustrate the great power and goodness of God. Mr. Locke renders it, "Which is his body, which is completed by him alone," and supposes it means, that Christ is the head, who perfects the church by supplying all things to all its members which they need.

Chandler gives an interpretation in accordance with that which I have first suggested, as meaning that the church is the full "complement" of the body of Christ; and refers to Aelian and Dionysius Halicarnassus, who use the word "fulness" or πλήρωμα plērōmaas referring to the rowers of a ship. Thus also we say that the ship's crew is its "complement," or that a ship or

an army has its "complement" of people; that is, the ranks are filled up or complete. In like manner, the church will be the filling-up, or the complement, of the great kingdom of the Redeemer - that which will give "completion" or perfectness to his universal dominion.

Of him - Of the Redeemer.

That filleth all in all - That fills all things, or who pervades all things; see the notes, 1 Corinthians 12:6; 1 Corinthians 15:28, note; compare Colossians 3:11. The idea is, that there is no place where he is not, and which he does not fill; and that he is the source of all the holy and happy influences that are abroad in the works of God. It would not be easy to conceive of an expression more certainly denoting omnipresence and universal agency than this; and if it refers to the Lord Jesus, as seems to be indisputable, the passage teaches not only his supremacy, but demonstrates his universal agency, and his omnipresence - things that pertain only to God. From this passage we may observe:

(1) That just views of the exaltation of the Redeemer are to be obtained only by the influence of the Spirit of God on the heart; Ephesians 1:17-19. Man, by nature, tins no just conceptions of the Saviour, and has no desire to have. It is only as the knowledge of that great doctrine is imparted to the mind by the Spirit of God, that we have any practical and saving acquaintance with such an exaltation. The Christian sees him, by faith, exalted to the right hand of God, and cheerfully commits himself and his all to him, and feels that all his interests are safe in his hands.

(2) it is very desirable to have such views of an exalted Saviour. So Paul felt When he earnestly prayed that God would give such views to the Ephesians, Ephesians 1:17-20. It was desirable in order that they might have a right understanding of their privileges; in order that they might know the extent of the power which had been manifested in their redemption; in order that they might commit their souls with confidence to him. In my conscious weakness and helplessness; when I am borne down by the labors and exposed to the temptations of life; when I contemplate approaching sickness and death, I desire to feel that that Saviour to whom I have committed my all is exalted far above principalities and powers, and every name that is named. When the church is persecuted and opposed; when hosts of enemies rise up against it and threaten its peace and safety, I rejoice

to feel assured the Redeemer and Head Of the church is over all, and that he has power to subdue all her foes and his.

(3) the church is safe. Her great Head is on the throne of the universe, and no weapon that is formed against her can prosper. He has defended it hitherto in all times of persecution, and the past is a pledge that he will continue to protect it to the end of the world.

(4) let us commit our souls to this exalted Redeemer. Such a Redeemer we need - one who has all power in heaven and earth. Such a religion we need - that can restore the dead to life. Such hope and confidence we need as he can give - such peace and calmness as shall result from unwavering confidence in him who filleth all in all.

EPHESIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

This chapter Ephesians 2:19 - the greatness of the power of God, evinced in the salvation of his people. The "great" manifestation of his power had been in raising up the Lord Jesus from the dead. That had been connected with and followed by their resurrection from the death of sin; and the one had involved the exercise of a power similar to the other. In the illustration of this main idea, the apostle observes, Ephesians 2:1 that God had quickened those who had been dead in trespasses and sins, and proceeds Ephesians 2:2-3 to show the condition in which they were before their conversion. He then observes Ephesians 2:4-7, that God of his infinite mercy, when they were dead in sin, had quickened them together with Christ, and had raised them up to sit with him in heavenly places.

He then states that this was not by human power, but was the work of divine power, and that they were the workmanship of God, Ephesians 2:8-10. The remainder of the chapter Ephesians 2:11-22 is occupied with a statement of the privileges resulting from the mercy of God in calling them into his kingdom. The apostle endeavors to impress their minds strongly with a sense of the mercy and love and power of God in thus calling them to himself. He reminds them of their former condition when Gentiles, as being without God, and that they were now brought near by the blood of Christ Ephesians 2:11-13; he states that this had been done by one great Mediator, who came to break down the wall of partition between the Jews and Gentiles, and who had now made both one Ephesians 2:14-18; and he compares them now to a temple raised for God, and to constitute the place of his dwelling on the earth; Ephesians 2:19-22. By all these considerations he endeavors to impress their minds with a sense of obligation, and to lead them to devote themselves to that God who had raised them from the dead, and had breathed into them the breath of immortal life.

Verse 1

And you hath he quickened - The words "hath he quickened," or "made to live," are supplied, but not improperly, by our translators. The object of the apostle is to show the great power which God had evinced toward the people Ephesians 1:19; and to show that this was put forth in connection with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and his exaltation to the

right hand of God in heaven; see the notes at Romans 6:4-11; compare Colossians 2:12-13; Colossians 3:1. The words "hath he quickened" mean, hath he made alive, or made to live; John 5:21; Romans 4:17; 1 Corinthians 15:36.

Who were dead in trespasses and sins - On the meaning of the word "dead," see the notes at Romans 5:12; Romans 6:2, note. It is affirmed here of those to whom Paul wrote at Ephesus, that before they were converted, they were "dead in sins." There is not anywhere a more explicit proof of depravity than this, and no stronger language can be used. They were "dead" in relation to that to which they afterward became alive - i. e., to holiness. Of course, this does not mean that they were in all respects dead. It does not mean that they had no animal life, or that they did not breathe, and walk, and act. Nor can it mean that they had no living intellect or mental powers, which would not have been true. Nor does it settle any question as to their ability or power while in that state. It simply affirms a fact - that in relation to real spiritual life they were, in consequence of sin, like a dead man in regard to the objects which are around him.

A corpse is insensible. It sees not, and hears not, and feels not. The sound of music, and the voice of friendship and of alarm, do not arouse it. The rose and the lily breathe forth their fragrance around it, but the corpse perceives it not. The world is busy and active around it, but it is unconscious of it all. It sees no beauty in the landscape; hears not the voice of a friend; looks not upon the glorious sun and stars; and is unaffected by the running stream and the rolling ocean. So with the sinner in regard to the spiritual and eternal world. He sees no beauty in religion; he hears not the call of God; he is unaffected by the dying love of the Saviour; and he has no interest in eternal realities. In all these he feels no more concern, and sees no more beauty, than a dead man does in the world around him. Such is, in "fact," the condition of a sinful world. There is, indeed, life, and energy, and motion. There are vast plans and projects, and the world is intensely active. But in regard to religion, all is dead. The sinner sees no beauty there; and no human power can arouse him to act for God, anymore than human power can rouse the sleeping dead, or open the sightless eyeballs on the light of day. The same power is needed in the conversion of a sinner which is needed in raising the dead; and one and the other alike demonstrate the omnipotence of him who can do it.

Verse 2

Wherein - In which sins, or in the practice of which transgressions.

Ye walked - You lived, life being often compared to a journey or a race. note, Romans 6:4.

According to the course of this world - In conformity with the customs and manners of the world at large. The word rendered here as "world" - αἰων aiōn- means properly "age," but is often used to denote the present world, with its cares, temptations, and desires; and here denotes particularly the people of this world. The meaning is, that they had lived formerly as other people lived, and the idea is strongly conveyed that the course of the people of this world is to walk in trespasses and sins. The sense is, that there was by nature no difference between them and others, and that all the difference which now existed had been made by grace.

According to the prince of the power of the air - see Ephesians 6:12; compare the notes at 2 Corinthians 4:4. There can be no doubt that Satan is here intended, and that Paul means to say that they were under his control as their leader and prince. The phrase, "the prince of the power," may mean either "the powerful prince," or it may mean that this prince had power over the air, and lived and reigned there particularly. The word "prince" - ἄρχοντα archonta- "Archon," means one first in authority and power, and is then applied to anyone who has the pre-eminence or rule. It is applied to Satan, or the chief of the fallen angels, as where he is called "the prince - ἄρχων archōn- of the devils," Matthew 9:34; Matthew 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15; "the prince of this world," John 12:31; John 14:30; John 16:11. But "why" he is here called the prince having power "over the air," it is not easy to determine.

Robinson (Lexicon) supposes it to be because he is lord of the powers of the air; that is, of the demons who dwell and rule in the atmosphere. So Doddridge supposes that it means that he controls the fallen spirits who are permitted to range the regions of the atmosphere. It is generally admitted that the apostle here refers to the prevailing opinions both among the Jews and pagan, that the air was thickly populated with spirits or demons. That this was a current opinion, may be seen fully proved in Wetstein; compare Bloomfield, Grotius, and particularly Koppe. Why the region of the air was supposed to be the dwelling-place of such spirits, is now unknown. The opinion may have been either that such spirits "dwelt" in the air, or that they had control over it, according to the later Jewish belief. Cocceius and some

others explain the word “air” here as meaning the same as “darkness,” as in profane writers. It is evident to my mind that Paul does not speak of this as a mere tradition, opinion, or vagary of the fancy, or as a superstitious belief: but that he refers to it as a thing which he regarded as true. In this opinion I see no absurdity that should make it impossible to believe it. For:

(1) the Scriptures abundantly teach that there are fallen, wicked spirits; and the existence of fallen angels is no more improbable than the existence of fallen people.

(2) the Bible teaches that they have much to do with this world. They tempted man; they inflicted disease in the time of the Saviour; they are represented as alluring and deceiving the race.

(3) they must have “some” locality - some part of the universe where they dwell. That they were not confined down to hell in the time of the Redeemer, is clear from the New Testament; for they are often represented as having afflicted and tortured people.

(4) why is there any improbability in the belief that their residence should have been in the regions of the air? That while they were suffered to be on earth to tempt and afflict people, they should have been permitted especially to occupy these! regions? Who can tell what may be in the invisible world, and what spirits may be permitted to fill up the vast space that now composes the universe? And who can tell what control may have been given to such fallen spirits over the regions of the atmosphere - over clouds, and storms, and pestilential air? People have control over the earth, and pervert and abuse the powers of nature to their own ruin and the ruin of each other. The elements they employ for the purposes of ruin and of temptation. Fruit and grain they convert to poison; minerals, to the destruction caused by war. In itself considered, there is nothing more improbable that spirits of darkness may have had control over the regions of the air, than that fallen man has over the earth; and no more improbability that that power has been abused to ruin people, than that the power of people is abused to destroy each other. No one can “prove” that the sentiment here referred to by Paul is “not” true; and no one can show how the doctrine that fallen spirits may do mischief in any part of the works of

God, is anymore improbable than that wicked "men" should do the same thing. The word "power" here - "power of the air" - I regard as synonymous with "dominion or rule;" "a prince having dominion or rule over the air."

The spirit that now worketh - That still lives, and whose energy for evil is still seen and felt among the wicked. Paul here means undoubtedly to teach that there was such a spirit, and that he was still active in controlling people.

The children of disobedience - The wicked; Colossians 3:6.

Verse 3

We all had our conversation - see the notes at 2 Corinthians 1:12; compare 1 Peter 4:3.

In the lusts of our flesh - Living to gratify the flesh, or the propensities of a corrupt nature. It is observable here that the apostle changes the form of the address from "ye" to "we," thus including himself with others, and saying that this was true of "all" before their conversion. He means undoubtedly to say, that whatever might have been the place of their birth, or the differences of religion under which they had been trained, they were substantially alike by nature. It was a characteristic of all that they lived to fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind. The "design" of the apostle in thus grouping himself with them was, to show that he did not claim to be any better by nature than they were, and that all which any of them had of value was to be traced to the grace of God. There is much delicacy here on the part of the apostle. His object was to remind them of the former grossness of their life, and their exposure to the wrath of God. Yet he does not do it harshly. He includes himself in their number. He says that what he affirms of them was substantially true of himself - of all - that they were under condemnation, and exposed to the divine wrath.

Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind - Margin, as in Greek, "wills." Complying with the wishes of a depraved nature. The "will of the flesh" is that to which the flesh, or the unrenewed nature of man, prompts; and Paul says that all had been engaged in fulfilling those fleshly propensities. This was clearly true of the pagan, and it was no less true of the unconverted Jew that he lived for himself, and sought to gratify the purposes of a depraved nature, though it might manifest itself in a way different from the pagan. The "will of the mind" referred to here relates to the wicked "thoughts and purposes" of the unrenewed nature - the sins which relate rather to the "intellect" than to the gross passions. Such, for

instance, are the sins of pride, envy, ambition, covetousness, etc.; and Paul means to say, that before conversion they lived to gratify these propensities, and to accomplish these desires of the soul.

And were by nature - Φύσει FuseiBy birth, or before we were converted By conversion and adoption they became the children of God; before that, they were all the children of wrath. This is, I think, the fair meaning of this important declaration. It does not affirm "when" they began to be such, or that they were such as soon as they were born, or that they were such before they became moral agents, or that they became such in virtue of their connection with Adam - whatever may be the truth on these points; but it affirms that before they were renewed, they were the children of wrath. So far as This text is concerned, this might have been true at their very birth; but it does not directly and certainly prove that. It proves that at no time before their conversion were they the children of God, but that their whole condition before that was one of exposure to wrath; compare Romans 2:14, Romans 2:27; 1 Corinthians 11:14; Galatians 2:15. Some people are born Jews, and some pagan; some free, and some slaves; some white, and some black; some are born to poverty, and some to wealth; some are the children of kings, and some of beggars; but, whatever their rank or condition, they are born exposed to wrath, or in a situation which would render them liable to wrath. But why this is, the apostle does not say. Whether for their own sins or for the sins of another; whether by a corrupted soul, or by imputed guilt; whether they act as moral agents as soon as born, or at a certain period of childhood, Paul does not say.

The children of wrath - Exposed to wrath, or liable to wrath. They did not by nature inherit holiness; they inherited that which would subject; them to wrath. The meaning has been well expressed by Doddridge, who refers it "to the original apostasy and corruption, in consequence of which people do, according to the course of nature, fall early into personal guilt, and so become obnoxious to the divine displeasure." Many modern expositors have supposed that this has no reference to any original tendency of our fallen nature to sin, or to native corruption, but that it refers to the "habit" of sin, or to the fact of their having been the slaves of appetite and passion. I admit that the direct and immediate sense of the passage is that they were, when without the gospel, and before they were renewed, the children of wrath; but still the fair interpretation is, that they were born to that state, and that that condition was the regular result of their native depravity; and I

do not know a more strong or positive declaration that can be made to show that people are by nature destitute of holiness, and exposed to perdition.

Even as others - That is, "do not suppose that you stand alone, or that you are the worst of the species. You are indeed, by nature, the children of wrath; but not you alone. All others were the same. You have a common inheritance with them. I do not mean to charge you with being the worst of sinners, or as being alone transgressors. It is the common lot of man - the sad, gloomy inheritance to which we all are born." The Greek is, οἱ λοιποί hoi loipoi"the remainder, or the others," - including all; compare the notes at Romans 5:19. This doctrine that people without the gospel are the children of wrath, Paul had fully defended in Romans 13. Perhaps no truth is more frequently stated in the Bible; none is more fearful and awful in its character. What a declaration, that we "are by nature the children of wrath!" Who should not inquire what it means? Who should not make an effort to escape from the wrath to come, and become a child of glory and an heir of life?

Verse 4

But God, who is rich in mercy - On the use of the word "rich" by Paul, see the notes at Ephesians 1:7. It is a beautiful expression. "God is ‹rich‘ in mercy;" overflowing, abundant. Mercy is the riches or the wealth of God. People are often rich in gold, and silver, and diamonds, and they pride themselves in these possessions; but God is "rich in mercy." In that he abounds and he is so rich in it that he is wilting to impart it to others; so rich that he can make all blessed.

For his great love - That is, his great love was the reason why he had compassion upon us. It is not that we had any claim or deserved his favor; but it is, that God had for man original and eternal love, and that love led to the gift of a Saviour, and to the bestowment of salvation.

Verse 5

Even when we were dead in sins - notes, Ephesians 2:1; compare Romans 5:8. The construction here is, "God, who is rich in mercy, on account of the great love which he bare unto us, even being dead in sin, hath quickened us," etc. It does not mean that he quickened us when we were dead in sin, but that he loved us then, and made provision for our salvation. It was love to the children of wrath; love to those who had no love to return to him; love to the alienated and the lost. That is true love - the sincerest and the purest benevolence - love, not like that of people, but

such only as God bestows. Man loves his friend, his benefactor, his kindred - God loves his foes, and seeks to do them good.

Hath quickened us - Hath made us alive see Ephesians 2:1.

Together with Christ - In connection with him; or in virtue of his being raised up from the grave. The meaning is, that there was such a connection between Christ and those whom the Father hath given to him, that his resurrection from the grave involved their resurrection to spiritual life. It was like raising up the head and the members - the whole body together; compare the notes at Romans 6:5. Everywhere in the New Testament, the close connection of the believer with Christ is affirmed. We are crucified with him. We die with him. We rise with him. We live with him. We reign with him. We are joint heirs with him. We share his sufferings on earth 1 Peter 4:13, and we share his glory with him on his throne; Revelation 3:21.

By grace ye are saved - Margin, "by whose;" see the notes at Romans 3:24. Paul's mind was full of the subject of salvation by grace, and he throws it in here, even in an argument, as a point which he would never have them lose sight of. The subject before him was one eminently adapted to bring this truth to mind, and though, in the train of his arguments, he had no time now to dwell on it, yet he would not suffer any opportunity to pass without referring to it.

Verse 6

And hath raised us up together - That is, we are raised from the death of sin to the life of religion, in connection with the resurrection of Jesus, and in virtue of that. So close is the connection between him and his people, that his resurrection made theirs certain; compare Colossians 2:12; notes, Romans 6:5.

And made us sit together - Together with him. That is, we share his honors. So close is our connection with him, that we shall partake of his glory, and in some measure do now; compare the Matthew 19:28, note, and Romans 8:17, note.

In heavenly places - see the notes at Ephesians 1:3. The meaning is, that he has gone to the heavenly world as our Head and Representative. His entrance there is a pledge that we shall also enter there. Even here we have the anticipation of glory, and are admitted to exalted honors, as if we sat in heavenly places, in virtue of our connection with him.

In Christ Jesus - It is in connection with him that we are thus exalted, and thus filled with joy and peace. The meaning of the whole is," We are

united to Christ. We die with him, and live with him. We share his sufferings, and we share his joys. We become dead to the world in virtue of his death; we become alive unto God in virtue of his resurrection. On earth we are exalted to honor, peace, and hope, in virtue of his resurrection; in heaven we shall share his, glory and partake of his triumphs."

Verse 7

That in the ages to come - In all future times. The sense is, that the riches of divine grace, and the divine benignity, would be shown in the conversion of Christians and their salvation, to all future times. Such was his love to those who were lost, that it would be an everlasting monument of his mercy, a perpetual and unchanging proof that he was good. The sense is, we are raised up with Christ, and are made to partake of his honor and glory in order that others may forever be impressed wish a sense of the divine goodness and mercy to us.

The exceeding riches of his grace - The "abounding, overflowing" riches of grace; compare the notes, Ephesians 1:7. This is Paul's favorite expression - an expression so beautiful and so full of meaning that it will bear often to be repeated. We may learn from this verse:

(1) That one object of the conversion and salvation of sinners, is to furnish a "proof" of the mercy and goodness of God.

(2) another object is, that their conversion may be an "encouragement" to others. The fact that such sinners as the Ephesians had been, were pardoned and saved, affords encouragement also to others to come and lay hold on life. And so of all other sinners who are saved. Their conversion is a standing encouragement to all others to come in like manner; and now the history of the church for more than eighteen hundred years furnishes all the encouragement which we could desire.

(3) the conversion of "great" sinners is a special proof of the divine benignity. So Paul argues in the case before us; and so he often argued from his own case; compare the notes at 1 Timothy 1:16.

(4) heaven, the home of the redeemed, will exhibit the most impressive proof of the goodness of God that the universe furnishes. There will be a countless host who were once polluted and lost; who were dead in sins; who were under the power of Satan, and who have been saved by the riches of

the divine grace - a host now happy and pure, and free from sin, sorrow, and death - the living and eternal monuments of the grace of God.

Verse 8

For by grace are ye saved - By mere favor. It is not by your Own merit; it is not because you have any claim. This is a favorite doctrine with Paul, as it is with all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity; compare the notes at Romans 1:7; Romans 3:24, note.

Through faith - Grace bestowed through faith, or in connection with believing; see the notes at Romans 1:17; Romans 4:16, note.

And that not of yourselves - That is, salvation does not proceed from yourselves. The word rendered "that" - τοῦτο touto- is in the neuter gender, and the word "faith" - πίστις pistis- is in the feminine. The word "that," therefore, does not refer particularly to faith, as being the gift of God, but to "the salvation by grace" of which he had been speaking. This is the interpretation of the passage which is the most obvious, and which is now generally conceded to be the true one; see Bloomfield. Many critics, however, as Doddridge, Beza, Piscator, and Chrysostom, maintain that the word "that" (τοῦτο touto) refers to "faith" (πίστις pistis); and Doddridge maintains that such a use is common in the New Testament. As a matter of grammar this opinion is certainly doubtful, if not untenable; but as a matter of theology it is a question of very little importance.

Whether this passage proves it or not, it is certainly true that faith is the gift of God. It exists in the mind only when the Holy Spirit produces it there, and is, in common with every other Christian excellence, to be traced to his agency on the heart. This opinion, however, does not militate at all with the doctrine that man himself "believes." It is not God that "believes" for him, for that is impossible. It is his own mind that actually believes, or that exercises faith; see the notes at Romans 4:3. In the same manner "repentance" is to be traced to God. It is one of the fruits of the operation of the Holy Spirit on the soul. But the Holy Spirit does not "repent" for us. It is our "own mind" that repents; our own heart that feels; our own eyes that weep - and without this there can he no true repentance. No one can repent for another; and God neither can nor ought to repent; for us. He has done no wrong, and if repentance is ever exercised, therefore, it must be exercised by our own minds. So of faith. God cannot believe for us. "We" must believe, or "we" shall be damned. Still this does not conflict at all with the

opinion, that if we exercise faith, the inclination to do it is to be traced to the agency of God on the heart. I would not contend, therefore, about the grammatical construction of this passage, with respect to the point of the theology contained in it; still it accords better with the obvious grammatical construction, and with the design of the passage to understand the word "that" as referring not to "faith" only, but to "salvation by grace." So Calvin understands it, and so it is understood by Storr, Locke, Clarke, Koppe, Grotius, and others.

It is the gift of God - Salvation by grace is his gift. It is not of merit; it is wholly by favor.

Verse 9

Not of works - see the notes at Romans 3:20,27.

Verse 10

For we are his workmanship - We are his "making" - ποίημα poiēmaThat is, we are "created or formed" by him, not only in the general sense in which all things are made by him, but in that special sense which is denoted by the new creation; see the notes at 2 Corinthians 5:17. Whatever of peace, or hope, or purity we have, has been produced by his agency on the soul. There cannot be conceived to be a stronger expression to denote the agency of God in the conversion of people, or the fact that salvation is wholly of grace.

Created in Christ Jesus - On the word "created," see the notes at 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Unto good works - With reference to a holy life; or, the design for which we have been created in Christ is, that we should lead a holy life. The primary object was not to bring us to heaven. It was that we should be "holy." Paul held perhaps more firmly than any other man, to the position that people are saved by the mere grace of God, and by a divine agency on the soul; but it is certain that no man ever held more firmly that people must lead holy lives, or they could have no evidence that they were the children of God.

Which God hath before ordained - Margin, "prepared." The word here used means to "prepare beforehand," then to predestinate, or appoint before. The proper meaning of this passage is, "to which οἷς hoisgood works God has predestinated us, or appointed us beforehand, that we should walk in them." The word used here - προετοιμάζω proetoimazō- occurs in the New Testament nowhere else except in Romans 9:23, where it is rendered "had

afore prepared." It involves the idea of a previous determination, or an arrangement beforehand for securing a certain result. The previous preparation here referred to was, the divine intention; and the meaning is, that God had predetermined that we should lead holy lives. It accords, therefore, with the declaration in Ephesians 1:4, that he had chosen his people before the foundation of the world that they should be holy: see the notes at that verse.

That we should walk in them - That we should live holy lives. The word "walk" is often used in the Scriptures to denote the course of life; notes on Romans 6:4.

Verse 11

Wherefore remember - The design of this evidently is, to excite a sense of gratitude in their bosoms for that mercy which had called them from the errors and sins of their former lives, to the privileges of Christians. It is a good thing for Christians to "remember" what they were. No faculty of the mind can be better employed to produce humility, penitence, gratitude, and love, than the memory. It is well to recall the recollection of our former sins; to dwell upon our hardness of heart, our alienation, and our unbelief; and to remember our wanderings and our guilt, until the heart be affected, and we are made to feel. The converted Ephesians had much guilt to recollect and to mourn over in their former life; and so have all who are converted to the Christian faith.

That ye being in time past - Formerly - (ποτε poteGentiles in the flesh - You were Gentiles "in the flesh," i. e., under the dominion of the flesh, subject to the control of carnal appetites and pleasures.

Who are called Uncircumcision - That is, who are called "the uncircumcised." This was a term similar to that which we use when we speak of "the unbaptized." It meant that they were without the pale of the people of God; that they enjoyed none of the ordinances and privileges of the true religion; and was commonly a term of reproach; compare Judges 14:3; Judges 15:18; 1 Samuel 14:6; 1 Samuel 17:26; 1 Samuel 31:4; Ezekiel 31:18.

By that which is called the Circumcision - By those who are circumcised, i. e., by the Jews.

In the flesh made by hands - In contradistinction from the circumcision of the heart; see the notes at Romans 2:28-29. They had externally adopted the rites of the true religion, though it did not follow that

they had the circumcision of the heart, or that they were the true children of God.

Verse 12

Ye were without Christ - You were without the knowledge of the Messiah. You had not heard of him; of course you had not embraced him. You were living without any of the hopes and consolations which you now have, from having embraced him. The object of the apostle is to remind them of the deplorable condition in which they were by nature; and nothing would better express it than to say they were "without Christ," or that they had no knowledge of a Saviour. They knew of no atonement for sin. They had no assurance of pardon. They had no well-founded hope of eternal life. They were in a state of darkness and condemnation, from which nothing but a knowledge of Christ could deliver them. All Christians may in like manner be reminded of the fact that, before their conversion, they were "without Christ." Though they had heard of him, and were constantly under the instruction which reminded them of him, yet they were without any true knowledge of him, and without any of the hopes which result from having embraced him. Many were infidels. Many were scoffers. Many were profane, sensual, corrupt. Many rejected Christ with scorn; many, by simple neglect. All were without any true knowledge of him; all were destitute of the peace and hope which result from a saving acquaintance with him. We may add, that there is no more affecting description of the state of man by nature than to say, he is without a Saviour. Sad would be the condition of the world without a Redeemer - sad is the state of that portion of mankind who reject him. Reader, are you without Christ?

Being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel - This is the second characteristic of their state before their conversion to Christianity. This means more than that they were not Jews. It means that they were strangers to that "polity" - πολιτεία politeia- or arrangement by which the worship of the true God had been kept up in the world, and of course were strangers to the true religion The arrangements for the public worship of Yahweh were made among the Jews. They had his law, his temple, his sabbaths, and the ordinances of his religion; see the notes at Romans 3:2. To all these the pagans had been strangers, and of course they were deprived of all the privileges which resulted from having the true religion. The word rendered here as "commonwealth" - πολιτεία politeia- means properly citizenship, or the right of citizenship, and then a community, or state. It means here that

arrangement or organization by which the worship of the true God was maintained. The word "aliens" - ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι apēllotriōmenoi- here means merely that they were strangers to. It does not denote, of necessity, that they were hostile to it; but that they were ignorant of it, and were, therefore, deprived of the benefits which they might have derived from it, if they had been acquainted with it.

And strangers - This word - ξένος xenos- means properly a guest, or a stranger, who is hospitably entertained; then a foreigner, or one from a distant country; and here means that they did not belong to the community where the covenants of promise were enjoyed; that is, they were strangers to the privileges of the people of God.

The covenants of promise - see the notes at Romans 9:4. The covenants of promise were those various arrangements which God made with his people, by which he promised them future blessings, and especially by which he promised that the Messiah should come. To be in possession of them was regarded as a high honor and privilege; and Paul refers to it here to show that, though the Ephesians had been by nature without these, yet they had now been brought to enjoy all the benefits of them. On the word covenant, see the notes on Galatians 3:15. It may be remarked, that Walton (Polyglott) and Rosenmuller unite the word "promise" here with the word "hope" - "having no hope of the promise." But the more obvious and usual interpretation is that in our common version, meaning that they were not by nature favored with the covenants made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc., by which there was a promise of future blessings under the Messiah.

Having no hope - The apostle does not mean to affirm that they did not cherish any hope, for this is scarcely true of any man; but that they were without any proper ground of hope. It is true of perhaps nearly all people that they cherish some hope of future happiness. But the ground on which they do this is not well understood by themselves, nor do they in general regard it as a matter worth particular inquiry. Some rely on morality; some on forms of religion; some on the doctrine of universal salvation; all who are impenitent believe that they do not "deserve" eternal death, and expect to be saved by "justice." Such hopes, however, must be unfounded. No hope of life in a future world can be founded on a proper basis which does not rest on some promise of God, or some assurance that he will save us; and these hopes, therefore, which people take up they know not why, are delusive and vain.

And without God in the world - Greek ἄθεοι atheoi- "atheists;" that is, those who had no knowledge of the true God. This is the last specification of their miserable condition before they were converted; and it is an appropriate crowning of the climax. What an expression! To be without God - without God in his own world, and where he is all around us! To have no evidence of his favor, no assurance of his love, no hope of dwelling with him! The meaning, as applied to the pagan Ephesians, was, that they had no knowledge of the true God. This was true of the pagan, and in an important sense also it is true of all impenitent sinners, and was once true of all who are now Christians. They had no God. They did not worship him, or love him, or serve him, or seek his favors, or act with reference to him and his glory. Nothing can be a more appropriate and striking description of a sinner now than to say that he is "without God in the world."

He lives, and feels, and acts, as if there were no God. He neither worships him in secret, nor in his family, nor in public. He acts with no reference to his will. He puts no confidence in his promises, and fears not when he threatens; and were it announced to him that there "is no God," it would produce no change in his plan of life, or in his emotions. The announcement that the emperor of China, or the king of Siam, or the sultan of Constantinople, was dead, would produce some emotion, and might change some of his commercial arrangements; but the announcement that there is no God would interfere with none of his plans, and demand no change of life. And, if so, what is man in this beautiful world without a God? A traveler to eternity without a God! Standing over the grave without a God! An immortal being without a God! A man - fallen, sunk, ruined, with no God to praise, to love, to confide in; with no altar, no sacrifice, no worship, no hope; with no Father in trial, no counselor in perplexity, no support in death! Such is the state of man by nature. Such are the effects of sin.

Verse 13

But now, in Christ Jesus - By the coming and atonement of the Lord Jesus, and by the gospel which he preached.

Ye who sometimes were afar off - Who were "formerly" - ποτὲ poteTyndale translates it, "a whyle agoo." The phrase "afar off" - μακρὰν makran- means that they were formerly far off from God and his people. The expression is derived from the custom of speaking among the Hebrews.

God was supposed to reside in the temple. It was a privilege to be near the temple. Those who were remote from Jerusalem and the temple were regarded as far off from God, and hence as especially irreligious and wicked; see the notes at Isaiah 57:19.

Are made nigh - Are admitted to the favor of God, and permitted to approach him as his worshippers.

By the blood of Christ - The Jews came near to the mercy seat on which the symbol of the divine presence rested (the notes at Romans 3:25), by the blood that was offered in sacrifice; that is, the high priest approached that mercy-seat with blood and sprinkled it before God. Now we are permitted to approach him with the blood of the atonement. The shedding of that blood has prepared the way by which Gentiles as well as Jews may approach God, and it is by that offering that we are led to seek God.

Verse 14

For he is our peace - There is evident allusion here to Isaiah 57:19. See the notes at that verse. The "peace" here referred to is that by which a "union" in worship and in feeling has been produced between the Jews and the Gentiles Formerly they were alienated and separate. They had different objects of worship; different religious rites; different views and feelings. The Jews regarded the Gentiles with hatred, and the Gentiles the Jews with scorn. Now, says the apostle, they are at peace. They worship the same God. They have the same Saviour. They depend on the same atonement. They have the same hope. They look forward to the same heaven. They belong to the same redeemed family. Reconciliation has not only taken place with God, but with each other. "The best way to produce peace between alienated minds is to bring them to the same Saviour." That will do more to silence contentions, and to heal alienations, than any or all other means. Bring people around the same cross; fill them with love to the same Redeemer, and give them the same hope of heaven, and you put a period to alienation and strife. The love at Christ is so absorbing, and the dependence in his blood so entire, that they will lay aside these alienations, and cease their contentions. The work of the atonement is thus designed not only to produce peace with God, but peace between alienated and contending minds. The feeling that we are redeemed by the same blood, and that we have the same Saviour, will unite the rich and the poor, the bond and the free, the high and the low, in the ties of brotherhood, and make them feel that they are one. This great work of the atonement is thus designed to

produce peace in alienated minds every where, and to diffuse abroad the feeling of universal brotherhood.

Who hath made both one - Both Gentiles and Jews. He has united them in one society.

And hath broken down the middle wall - There is an allusion here undoubtedly to the wall of partition in the temple by which the court of the Gentiles was separated from that of the Jews; see the notes and the plan of the temple, in Matthew 21:12. The idea here is, that that was now broken down, and that the Gentiles had the same access to the temple as the Jews. The sense is, that in virtue of the sacrifice of the Redeemer they were admitted to the same privileges and hopes.

Verse 15

Having abolished - Having brought to naught, or put an end to it - καταργήσας katargēsasIn his flesh - By the sacrifice of his body on the cross. It was not by instruction merely; it was not by communicating the knowledge of God; it was not as a teacher; it was not by the mere exertion of power; it was by his flesh - his human nature - and this can mean only that he did it by his sacrifice of himself. It is such language as is appropriate to the doctrine of the atonement - not indeed teaching it directly - but still such as one would use who believed that doctrine, and such as no other one would employ. Who would now say of a moral teacher that he accomplished an important result by "his flesh?" Who would say of a man that was instrumental in reconciling his contending neighbors, that he did it "by his flesh?" Who would say of Dr. Priestley that he established Unitarianism "in his flesh?" No man would have ever used this language who did not believe that Jesus died as a sacrifice for sin.

The enmity - Between the Jew and the Gentile. Tyndale renders this, "the cause of hatred, that is to say, the law of commandments contained in the law written." This is expressive of the true sense. The idea is, that the ceremonial law of the Jews, on which they so much prided themselves, was the cause of the hostility existing between them. That made them different people, and laid the foundation for the alienation which existed between them. They had different laws; different institutions; a different religion. The Jews looked upon themselves as the favorites of heaven, and as in possession of the knowledge of the only way of salvation; the Gentiles regarded their laws with contempt, and looked upon the unique institutions

with scorn. When Christ came and abolished by his death their special ceremonial laws, of course the cause of this alienation ceased.

Even the law of commandments - The law of positive commandments. This does not refer to the "moral" law, which was not the cause of the alienation, and which was not abolished by the death of Christ, but to the laws commanding sacrifices, festivals, fasts, etc., which constituted the uniqueness of the Jewish system. These were the occasion of the enmity between the Jews and the Gentiles, and these were abolished by the great sacrifice which the Redeemer made; and of course when that was made, the purpose for which these laws were instituted was accomplished, and they ceased to be of value and to be binding.

Contained in ordinances - In the Mosaic commandments. The word "ordinance" means, decree, edict, law; Luke 2:1; Acts 16:4; Acts 17:7; Colossians 2:14.

For to make in himself - By virtue of his death, or under him as the head.

Of twain one new man - Of the two - Jews and Gentiles - one new spiritual person; that they might be united. The idea is, that as two persons who had been at enmity, might become reconciled and be one in aim and pursuit, so it was in the effect of the work of Christ on the Jews and Gentiles. When they were converted they would be united and harmonious.

Verse 16

And that he might reconcile both unto God - This was another of the effects of the work of redemption, and indeed the main effect. It was not merely to make them harmonious, but it was that both, who had been alienated from God, should be reconciled to "him." This was a different effect from that of producing peace between themselves, though in some sense the one grew out of the other. They who are reconciled to God will be at peace with each other. They will feel that they are of the same family, and are all brethren. On the subject of reconciliation, see the notes on 2 Corinthians 5:18.

In one body - One spiritual personage - the church; see the notes at Ephesians 1:23.

By the cross - By the atonement which he made on the cross; see Colossians 1:20; compare the notes at Romans 3:25. It is by the atonement only that men ever become reconciled to God.

Having slain the enmity - Not only the enmity between Jews and Gentiles, but the enmity between the sinner and God. He has by that death removed all the obstacles to reconciliation on the part of God and on the part of man. It is made efficacious in removing the enmity of the sinner against God, and producing peace.

Thereby - Margin, "in himself." The meaning is, in his cross, or by means of his cross.

Verse 17

And came and preached peace - That is, the system of religion which he proclaimed, was adapted to produce peace with God. This he preached personally to those who "were nigh," that is, the Jews; to those who were "afar off " - the Gentiles - he preached it by his apostles. He was the author of the system which proclaimed salvation to both.

The word "peace" here refers to reconciliation with God.

To you which were afar off, … - see the notes at Ephesians 2:13; compare the notes at Acts 2:39.

Verse 18

For through him - That is, he has secured this result that we have access to God. This he did by his death - reconciling us to God by the doctrines which he taught - acquainting us with God; and by his intercession in heaven - by which our "prayers gain acceptance" with him.

We both have access - Both Jews and Gentiles; see the notes at Romans 5:2. We are permitted to approach God through him, or in his name. The Greek word here - προσαγωγή prosagōgē- relates properly to the introduction to, or audience which we are permitted to have with a prince or other person of high rank. This must be effected through an officer of court to whom the duty is entrusted. "Rosenmuller," *Alt und neu Morgenland*, in loc.

By one Spirit - By the aid of the same Spirit - the Holy Spirit; see notes, 1 Corinthians 12:4.

Unto the Father - We are permitted to come and address God as our Father; see the Romans 8:15, note 26, note.

Verse 19

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners - You are reckoned with the people of God. You are entitled to their privileges, and are not to be regarded as outcasts and aliens. The meaning is, that they belonged to the same community - the same family - as the people of God.

The word rendered "strangers" - ξένοι xenoi- means "foreigners in state," as opposed to citizens. The word rendered "foreigners" - πάροικοι paroikoi- means "guests in a private family," as opposed to the members of the family. "Rosenmuller." Strangers and such as proposed to reside for a short time in Athens, were permitted to reside in the city, and to pursue their business undisturbed, but they could perform no public duty; they had no voice in the public deliberations, and they had no part in the management of the state. They could only look on as spectators, without mingling in the scenes of state, or interfering in any way in the affairs of the government.

They were bound humbly to submit to all the enactments of the citizens, and observe all the laws and usages of the republic. It was not even allowed them to transact any business in their own name, but they were bound to choose from among the citizens one to whose care they committed themselves as a patron, and whose duty it was to guard them against all injustice and wrong Potter's *Greek Ant.* i. 55. Proselytes, who united themselves to the Jews, were also called in the Jewish writings, "strangers." All foreigners were regarded as "strangers," and Jews only were supposed to have near access to God. But now, says the apostle, this distinction is taken away, and the believing pagan, as well as the Jew, has the right of citizenship in the New Jerusalem, and one, as well as another, is a member of the family of God. "Burder," Ros. Alt. u. neu. Morgertland, in loc. The meaning here is, that they had not come to sojourn merely as guests or foreigners, but were a part of the family itself, and entitled to all the privileges and hopes which others had.

But fellow-citizens with the saints - Belonging to the same community with the people of God.

And of the household of God - Of the same family. Entitled to the same privileges, and regarded by him as his children; see Ephesians 3:15.

Verse 20

And are built upon the foundation - The comparison of the church with a building, is common in the Scriptures: compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 3:9-10. The comparison was probably taken from the temple, and as that was an edifice of great beauty, expense, and sacredness, it was natural to compare the church with it. Besides, the temple was the sacred place where God dwelt on the earth; and as the church was the place where he delighted now to abide, it became natural to speak of his church as the temple, or the residence of God; see the notes at Isaiah 54:11-12. That

building, says Paul, was permanently founded, and was rising with great beauty of proportion, and with great majesty and splendor.

Of the apostles - The doctrines which they taught are the basis on which the church rests. It is "possible" that Paul referred here to a splendid edifice, particularly because the Ephesians were distinguished for their skill in architecture, and because the celebrated temple of Diana was among them. An allusion to a building, however, as an illustration of the church occurs several times in his other epistles, and was an allusion which would be everywhere understood.

And prophets - The prophets of the Old Testament, using the word, probably, to denote the Old Testament in general. That is, the doctrines of divine revelation, whether communicated by prophets or apostles, were laid at the foundation of the Christian church. It was not rounded on philosophy, or tradition, or on human laws, or on a venerable antiquity, but on the great truths which God had revealed. Paul does not say that it was founded on "Peter," as the papists do, but on the prophets and apostles in general. If Peter had been the "vicegerent of Christ," and the head of the church, it is incredible that his brother Paul should not have given him some honorable notice in this place. Why did he not allude to so important a fact? Would one who believed it have omitted it? Would a papist now omit it? Learn here:

(1) That no reliance is to be placed on philosophy as a basis of religious doctrine.

(2) that the traditions of people have no authority in the church, and constitute no part of the foundation.

(3) that nothing is to be regarded as a fundamental part of the Christian system, or as binding on the conscience, which cannot be found in the "prophets and apostles;" that is, as it means here, in the Holy Scriptures. No decrees of councils; no ordinances of synods; no "standard" of doctrines; no creed or confession, is to be urged as authority in forming the opinions of people. They may be valuable for some purposes, but not for this; they may be referred to as interesting parts of history, but not to form the faith of Christians; they may be used in the church to express its belief, but not to form it. What is based on the authority of apostles and prophets is true, and always true, and only true; what may be found elsewhere, may be valuable

and true, or not, but, at any rate, is not to be used to control the faith of people.

Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone - see the note at Isaiah 28:16; Romans 9:33, note. The cornerstone is the most important in the building.

(1) because the edifice rests mainly on the cornerstones. If they are small, and unstable, and settle down, the whole building is insecure; and hence care is taken to place a large stone firmly at each corner of an edifice.

(2) because it occupies a conspicuous and honorable place. If documents or valuable articles are deposited at the foundation of a building it is within the cornerstone. The Lord Jesus is called the "cornerstone," because the whole edifice rests on him, or he occupies a place relatively as important as the cornerstone of an edifice. Were it not for him, the edifice could not be sustained for a moment. Neither prophets nor apostles alone could sustain it; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 3:11; compare 1 Peter 2:6.

Verse 21

In whom - That is, "by" whom, or "upon" whom. It was in connection with him, or by being reared on him as a foundation.

All the building - The whole church of Christ.

Fitly framed together - The word used here means "to joint together," as a carpenter does the frame-work of a building. The materials are accurately and carefully united by mortises and tenons. so that the building shall be firm. Different materials may be used, and different kinds of timber may be employed, but one part shall be worked into another, so as to constitute a durable and beautiful edifice. So in the church. The different materials of the Jews and Gentiles; the people of various nations, though heretofore separated and discordant, become now united, and form an harmonious society. They believe the same doctrines; worship the same God; practice the same holiness; and look forward to the same heaven.

Groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord - see the 1 Corinthians 3:17 note; 2 Corinthians 6:16 note.

Verse 22

In whom - In Christ, or on Christ, as the solid and precious foundation.

Ye also are builded together - You are built into that, or constitute a part of it. You are not merely "added" to it, but you constitute a part of the

building.

For an habitation of God - For the indwelling, or the dwelling-place, of God. Formerly he dwelt in the temple. Now he dwells in the church, and in the hearts of his people; see the notes at 2 Corinthians 6:16.

Remarks On Ephesians 2:1. We had no spiritual life. We were insensible to the calls of God, to the beauty of religion, to the claims of the Creator. We were like corpses in the tomb in reference to the frivolous and busy and happy world around them. There we should have remained, had not the grace of God given us life, just as the dead will remain in their graves forever, unless God shall raise them up. How humble should we be at the remembrance of this fact! how grateful that God bas not left us to sleep that sleep of death forever!

2. Parents should feel deep solicitude for their children; Ephesians 2:3. They, in common with all others, are "children of wrath." They have a nature prone to evil; and that nature will develope itself in evil for ever, unless it is changed - just as the young thornbush will be a thorn-bush, and will put forth thorns and not roses; and the Bohon Upas will be a Bohon Upas, and not an olive or an orange; and as the lion will be a lion, and the panther a panther, and not a lamb, a kid, or a gazelle. They will act out their nature, unless they are changed: and they will not be changed, but by the grace of God. I do not mean that their nature is in every sense like that of the lion or the asp; but I mean that they will be as certainly "wicked," if unrenewed, as the lion will be ferocious, and the asp poisonous. And if so, what deep anxiety should parents feel for the salvation of their children! How solicitous should they be that, by the grace of God. the evil propensities of their nature may be eradicated, and that they become the adopted children of God!

3. The salvation of sinners involves all the exercise of power that is put forth in the resurrection of the dead; Ephesians 2:5. It is not a work to be performed by man; it is not a work of angelic might. None can impart spiritual life to the soul but he who gave it life at first. On that great Source of life we are dependent for our resurrection from spiritual death; and to God we must look for the grace by which we are to live. It is true that though we are by nature "dead in sins," we are not in all respects like the dead. Let not this doctrine be abused to make us secure in sin, or to prevent effort. The dead in the grave are dead in all respects. We by nature are dead

only in sin. We are active in other things; and indeed the powers of man are not less active than they would be if he were holy. But it is a tremendous activity for evil, and for evil only. The dead in their graves hear nothing, see nothing, and feel nothing.

Sinners hear, and see, and feel; but they hear not God, and they see not his glory, anymore than if they were dead. To the dead in the grave, no command could with propriety be addressed; on them, no entreaty could be urged to rise to life. But the sinner may be commanded and entreated; for he has power, though it is misdirected; and what is needful is, that he should put forth his power in a proper manner. While, therefore, we admit, with deep humiliation, that we, our children, and friends, are by nature dead in sin, let us not abuse this doctrine as though we could be required to do nothing. It is with us willful death. It is death because we do not choose to live. It is a voluntary closing our eyes, and stopping our ears, as if we were dead; and it is a voluntary remaining in this state, when we have all the requisite power to put forth the energies of life. Let a sinner be as active in the service of God as he is in the service of the devil and the world, and he would be an eminent Christian. Indeed, all that is required is, that the misdirected and abused energy of this world should be employed in the service of the Creator. Then all would be well.

(See the supplementary notes, Romans 8:7; Galatians 5:17, note. Whenever it is said the sinner has power, the kind of power should be defined. Certainly he has not moral power. This, indeed, the author allows, but for want of distinct definition of what he understands by "power," both here and elsewhere, the reader is apt to misapprehend him.)

4. Let us remember our former course of life; Ephesians 2:11-12. Nothing is more profitable for a Christian than to sit down and reflect on his former life - on his childhood, with its numerous follies and vanities; on his youth, with its errors, and passions, and sins: and on the ingratitude and faults of riper years. Had God left us in that state, what would be now our condition? Had he cut us off, where had been our abode? Should he now treat us as we deserve, what would be our doom? When the Christian is in danger of becoming proud and self-confident, let him remember what he was. Let him take some period of his life - some year, some month, or even

some one day - and think it all over, and he will find enough to humble him. These are the uses which should be made of the past:

(1) It should make us humble. If a man had before his mind a vivid sense of all the past in his own life, he would never be lifted up with pride.

(2) it should make us grateful. God cut off the companions of my childhood - why did he spare me? He cut down many of the associates of my youth in their sins - why did he preserve me? He has suffered many to live on in their sins, and they are in the "broad road" - why am I not with them, treading the path to death and hell?

(3) the recollection of the past should lead us to devote ourselves to God. Professing Christian, "remember" how much of thy life is gone to waste. "Remember" thy days of folly and vanity. "Remember" the injury thou hast done by an evil example. "Remember" how many have been corrupted by thy conversation; perverted by thy opinions; led into sin by thy example; perhaps ruined in body and soul forever by the errors and follies of thy past life. And then remember how much thou dost owe to God, and how solemnly thou art bound to endeavor to repair the evils of thy life, and to save "at least as many as" thou hast ruined.

5. Sinners are by nature without any well-founded hope of salvation; Ephesians 2:12, They are living without Christ, having no belief in him, and no hope of salvation through him. They are "aliens" from all the privileges of the friends of God. They have no "hope." They have no wellfounded expectation of happiness beyond the grave. They have a dim and shadowy expectation that "possibly" they may be happy; but it is founded on no evidence of the divine favor, and no promise of God. "They could not tell on what it is founded, if they were asked;" and what is such a hope worth? These false and delusive hopes do not sustain the soul in trial; they flee away in death. And what a description is this! In a world like this, to be without hope! Subject to trial; exposed to death; and yet destitute of any well-founded prospect of happiness beyond the tomb! They are "without God" also. They worship no God: they confide in none.

They have no altar in their families; no place of secret prayer. They form their plans with no reference to the will of God; they desire not to please him. There are multitudes who are living just as if there were no God. Their plans, their lives, their conversation, would not be different if they had the assurance that there was no God. All that they have ever asked of God, or that they would now ask of him, is, "that he would let them alone." There are multitudes whose plans would be in no respect different, if it were announced to them that there was no God in heaven. The only effect might be to produce a more hearty merriment, and a deeper plunge into sin. What a world! How strange that in God's own world it should thus be! How sad the view of a world of atheists - a race that is endeavoring to feel that the universe is without a Father and a God! How wicked the plans which can be accomplished only by laboring to forget that there is a God; and how melancholy that state of the soul in which happiness can be found only in proportion as it believes that the universe is without a Creator, and moves on without the superintending care of a God!

6. The gospel produces peace; Ephesians 2:14-17.

(1) it produces peace in the heart of the individual, reconciling him to God.

(2) it produces peace and harmony between different ranks and classes and complexions of people, causing them to love each other, and removing their alienations and antipathies. The best way of producing friendship between nations and tribes of people; between those of different complexions, pursuits, and laws, is, to preach to them the gospel. The best way to produce harmony between the oppressor and the oppressed, is to preach to both of them the gospel of peace, and make them feel that they have a common Saviour.

(3) it is suited to produce peace among the nations. Let it spread, and wars will cease; right and justice will universally prevail, and harmony and concord will spread over the world; see the notes at Isaiah 2:4.

7. Let us rejoice in the privileges which we now have as Christians. We have access to the Father; Ephesians 2:18. None are so poor, so ignorant, so

down-trodden that they may not come to God. In all times of affliction, poverty, and oppression, we may approach the father of mercies. Chains may bind the body, but no chain can fetter the soul in its contact with God. We may be thrown into a dungeon, but communion with God may be maintained there. We may be cast out and despised by people, but we may come at once unto God, and he will not cast us away. Further. We are not now strangers and foreigners. We belong to the family of God. We are fellow-citizens with the saints; Ephesians 2:19. We are participants of the hope of the redeemed, and we share their honors and their joys. It is right that true Christians should rejoice, and their joy is of such a character that no man can take it from them.

8. Let us make our appeal on all doctrines and duties to the Bible - to the prophets and the apostles; Ephesians 2:20. On them and their doctrine we can build. On them the church is reared. It is not on the opinion of philosophers and lawgivers; not on creeds, symbols, traditions, and the decisions of councils; it is on the authority of the inspired book of God. The church is in its most healthy state when it appeals for its doctrines most directly to the Bible. Individual Christians grow most in grace when they appeal most to this "book of books." The church is in great danger of error when it goes off from this pure "standard" and makes its appeal to other standards - to creeds and symbols of doctrine. "The Bible is the religion of Protestants;" and the church will be kept pure from error, and will advance in holiness, just as this is made the great principle which shall always govern and control it. If a doctrine is not found in the "apostles and prophets" - in some part of the Bible, it is not to be imposed on the conscience. It may, or may not be true; it may, or may not be suited to edify a people; but it is not to be an article of faith, or imposed on the consciences of men.

9. Let us evince always special regard for the Lord Jesus; Ephesians 2:20. He is the precious cornerstone on which the whole spiritual temple is reared. On him the church rests. How important, then, that the church should have correct views of the Redeemer! How important that the true doctrine respecting his divine nature; his atonement; his incarnation; his resurrection, should be maintained. It is not a matter of indifference whether he be God or man; whether he died as an atoning sacrifice or as a martyr;

whether he be the equal of God, or whether he be an archangel. Everything depends on the view which is held of that Redeemer - and as people entertain different opinions about him, they go off into different systems as wide from each other as the poles: Everything in the welfare of the church, and in the individual peace of its members, depends on proper views of the Lord Jesus.

10. The church is designed as the place of the special residence of the Holy Spirit on earth; Ephesians 2:21-22. It is the beautiful temple where be dwells; the edifice which is reared for his abode. How truly should that church be; how pure should be each Christian to be an appropriate habitation for such a guest! Holy should be the heart where that Spirit dwells. With what anxious care should we cherish the presence of such a guest; with what solicitude should we guard our conduct that we may not grieve him away! How anxious we are so to live that we may not grieve away our friends from our dwellings! Should an illustrious guest become an inmate in our abode, how anxious should we be to do all that we can to please him, and to retain him with us! flow much more anxious should we be to secure the indwelling of the eternal Spirit! How desirous that be should make our hearts and the church his constant abode!

EPHESIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

This chapter Ephesians 3:1-12. In illustrating this, Paul observes:

(1)That he was the prisoner of Jesus Christ in behalf of the Gentiles; Ephesians 3:1. He was in bonds for maintaining that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles, and for endeavoring to convey it to them.

(2)he reminds them all of the fact that he was called by special revelation to make known this truth, and to convey to the Gentiles this gospel - supposing that they had heard of the manner of his conversion; Ephesians 3:2-3.

(3)he refers them to what he had said before in few words on this point as proof of his acquaintance with this great plan of the gospel; Ephesians 3:3-4.

(4)he speaks of this great truth as a "mystery" - the "mystery of Christ;" the great and important truth which was concealed until Christ came, and which was fully made known by him; Ephesians 3:4-6. This had been hidden for ages. But now it had been fully revealed by the Spirit of God to the apostles and prophets in the Christian church that the great wall of partition was to be broken down, and the gospel proclaimed alike to all.

(5)the apostle says, that to him especially was this office committed to proclaim among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches. of Christ; Ephesians 3:8-9.

(6)the "design" of this was to illustrate, in view of all worlds, the great wisdom of God in the plan of salvation; Ephesians 3:10-12. It was intended to show to other intelligent beings the glory of the divine perfections, and to make manifestations of the divine character which could be perceived nowhere else.

II.Paul expresses an earnest wish that they should comprehend the glory of this plan of salvation; Ephesians 3:13-19. Particularly, he desires them not to faint on account of his afflictions in their behalf; declares that he bows his knees in prayer before the great Father of the redeemed family,

that God would be pleased to strengthen them, and enlighten them, and give them clear views of the glorious plan.

III.The chapter concludes with an ascription of praise to God, in view of the great goodness which he had manifested, and of the glory of the plan of salvation; Ephesians 3:20-21.

Verse 1

For this cause - On account of preaching this doctrine; that is, the doctrine that the gospel was to be proclaimed to the Gentiles.

I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ - A prisoner in the service of the Lord Jesus; or made a prisoner in his cause. Not a prisoner for crime or debt, or as a captive in war, but a captive in the service of the Redeemer. This proves that at the time of writing this, Paul was in bonds, and there can he no question that he was in Rome. This would be more correctly rendered, "For this cause I, Paul, am the prisoner," etc. So Tyndale renders it, "For this cause I, Paul, the servant of Jesus, am in bonds." So also Locke, Rosenmuller, Doddridge, Whitby, Koppe, and others understand it. By this construction the abruptness now manifest in our common version is avoided.

For you Gentiles - Made a prisoner at Rome on your behalf, because I maintained that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles; see Acts 22:21-23. He was taken first to Cesarea, and then to Rome. The cause of his imprisonment and of all his difficulties was, that he maintained that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles; that when the Jews rejected it God rejected them; and that he was specially called to carry the message of salvation to the pagan world.

Verse 2

If ye have heard - Εἴ-γε Ei-ge"If at least, if indeed, if so be, spoken of what is taken for granted." "Robinson;" compare 2 Corinthians 5:3; Galatians 3:4; Ephesians 4:21; Colossians 1:23, for the use of the particle. The particle here is not designed to express a doubt whether they had heard of it or not, for he takes it for granted that they had. Doddridge renders it, "since I well know you have heard," etc. He had informed them of his being called to be the minister to the Gentiles Ephesians 3:3, but still there was a possibility that they had not received the letter containing the information, and he goes, therefore, into another statement on the subject, that they might fully comprehend it. Hence, this long parenthetical sentence - one of

the longest that occurs in the writings of Paul, and expressed under the impulse of a mind full of the subject; so full, as we would say, that he did not know what to say first.

Hence, it is exceedingly difficult to understand the exact state of mind in which he was. It seems to me that the whole of this long statement grew out of the incidental mention Ephesians 3:1 of the fact that he was a prisoner for the Gentiles. Instantly he seems to have reflected that they would be grieved at the intelligence that he was suffering on their account. He goes, therefore, into this long account, to show them how it happened; that it was by the appointment of God; that it was in the evolving of a great and glorious mystery; that it was in a cause adapted to promote, in an eminent degree, the glory of God; that it was according to an eternal purpose; and he, therefore Ephesians 3:13, says, that he desires that they would not "faint" or be unduly distressed on account of his sufferings for them, since his sufferings were designed to promote their "glory." He was comforted in the belief that he was making known the glorious and eternal plan of God, and in the belief that it was for the welfare of mankind; and he, therefore, entreated them also not to be troubled inordinately at his sufferings.

The dispensation - Greek "economy;" rendered "stewardship," Luke 16:2-4; and "dispensation," Ephesians 1:10; Ephesians 3:2; Colossians 1:25; see the notes at Ephesians 1:10. It means here that this arrangement was made that he should be the apostle to the Gentiles. In the assignment of the different parts of the work of preaching the gospel, the office had been committed to him of making it known to the pagan.

Of the grace of God - In the arrangements of his grace.

Which is given me to you-ward - Toward you who are Gentiles. Not to the Ephesians particularly, but to the nations at large; see the notes at Galatians 2:7.

Verse 3

How that by revelation - see the notes at Galatians 1:12. He refers to the revelation which was made to him when he was called to the apostolic office, that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles, and that he was converted for the special purpose of carrying it to them; see Acts 9:15; Acts 22:21.

Unto me the mystery - The hitherto concealed truth that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles; see the notes, Ephesians 1:9, on the meaning of the word "mystery."

As I wrote afore in few words - Margin, "a little before." To what this refers commentators are not agreed. Bloomfield, Doddridge, Rosenmuller, Erasmus, Grotius, Locke, and others, suppose that he refers to what he had written in the two previous chapters respecting the plan of God to call the Gentiles to his kingdom. Calvin supposes that he refers to some former epistle which he had written to them, but which is now lost. Hc remarks in regard to this, "If the solicitude of Paul be rightly considered; if his vigilance and assiduity; if his zeal and studious habits; if his kindness and promptitude in assisting his brethren, it is easy to suppose that he wrote many epistles publicly and privately to this place and to that place. But those only which the Lord saw necessary to the welfare of his church has he taken care to have preserved." In this opinion there is nothing in itself improbable (compare introduction to Isaiah, section 5 (1)), but it may be doubted whether Paul here refers to any such epistle. The addition which he makes, "whereby, when ye read," etc., seems rather to imply that he refers to what he had just written.

Verse 4

Whereby, when ye read - By the bare reading of which you may understand the view which I entertain of the plan of salvation, and the knowledge which I have of God‘s method of saving people, particularly of his intention in regard to the salvation of the Gentiles.

In the mystery of Christ - This does not refer to anything "mysterious" in the person of Christ; or the union of the divine and human nature in him; or to anything difficult of apprehension in the work of the atonement. It means the hitherto concealed doctrine that through the Messiah, the Gentiles were to be received to the same privileges as the Jews, and that the plan of salvation was to be made equally free for all. This great truth had been hitherto concealed, or but partially understood, and Paul says that he was appointed to make it known to the world. His "knowledge" on the subject, he says, could be understood by what he had said, and from that they could judge whether he was qualified to state and defend the doctrines of the gospel. Paul evidently supposed that the knowledge which he had on that subject was of eminent value; that it was possessed by few; that it was important to understand it. Hence he dwells upon it. He speaks of the glory of that truth. He traces it back to the counsels of God. He shows that it entered into his eternal plans; and he evidently felt that the truth which he

had communicated in the former part of this Epistle, was among the most important that could come before the mind.

Verse 5

Which in other ages - The great purposes of God in regard to the salvation of mankind were not revealed; see the notes at Romans 16:25.

And prophets - Those who exercised the office of a prophet or inspired teacher in the Christian church; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 12:1.

By the Spirit - This proves that those who exercised the office of prophet in the Christian church were inspired. They were persons endowed in this manner for the purpose of imparting to the newly formed churches the doctrines of the Christian system. There is no evidence that this was designed to be a permanent order of people in the church. They were necessary for settling the church on a permanent basis, in the absence of a full written revelation, and when the apostles were away. When the volume of revelation was finished, and the doctrines of the gospel were fully understood, the functions of the office ceased.

Verse 6

That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs - Fellow-heirs with the ancient people of God - the Jews - and entitled to the same privileges; see the Romans 8:17, note and Ephesians 2:13-18, note.

Verse 7

Whereof I was made a minister - see the notes at Ephesians 3:2.

According to the gift of the grace of God - It was not by my own seeking or merit; it was a free gift.

Of the grace of God - The sentiment is, that throughout it was a mere matter of grace that he was called into the ministry, and that so important an office was entrusted to him as that of bearing the gospel to the Gentiles.

By the effectual working of his power - Not by any native inclination which I had to the gospel, and not by any power which I have put forth. It is by "the energy of his power;" compare notes, Galatians 2:8. Locke understands this of the energy or power which God put forth in converting the Gentiles under his ministry. But it seems to me that it refers rather to the power which God put forth in the conversion of Paul himself, and putting him into the ministry. This is clear from the following verse. The meaning is, that such was his opposition to the gospel by nature, that nothing but the "energy of God" could overcome it, and that his conversion was to be traced to that alone.

Verse 8

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints - This is one of the class of expressions unique to Paul. The ordinary terms of language do not express the idea which he wishes to convey, and a word is therefore coined to convey an idea more emphatically; compare the notes at 2 Corinthians 4:17. The word used here - ἐλαχιστότερος elachistoteros- does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It is a comparative made from the superlative. Similar expressions are found, however, in later Greek writers; see Bloomfield and Rosenmuller for examples. The word means here, "who am incomparably the least of all the saints; or who am not worthy to be reckoned among the saints." It is expressive of the deep sense which he had of the sinfulness of his past life; of his guilt in persecuting the church and the Saviour; and perhaps of his sense of his low attainments in piety; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 15:9. Paul never could forget the guilt of his former life; never forget the time when he was engaged in persecuting the church of God.

The unsearchable riches of Christ - On the word "riches," as used by Paul, see the notes at Ephesians 1:7. The word rendered "unsearchable," ἀνεξιχνίαστον anexichniastonoccurs but once elsewhere in the New Testament Romans 11:33, where it is rendered "past finding out;" see the notes at that verse. It means that which cannot be "traced out," or explored; which is inscrutable, or incomprehensible. The meaning here is, that there was a "sufficiency" in Christ which could not be traced out or explored. It was wholly incomprehensible. The fullness of the riches in him could not be appreciated. There is no more emphatic expression in the New Testament than this. It shows that the heart of the apostle was full of admiration of the sufficiency and glory that was in the Saviour; that he wanted words to express it; and that he considered it the highest honor to be permitted to tell the world that there were such riches in the Redeemer.

Verse 9

And to make all men see - In order that the whole human family might see the glory of God in the plan of salvation. Hitherto the revelation of his character and plans had been confined to the Jews. Now it was his design that all the race should be made acquainted with it.

What is the fellowship of the mystery - Instead of "fellowship" here - κοινωνία koinōnia- most mss. and versions read οἰκονομία oikonomia- "dispensation;" see Mill. This reading is adopted by Griesbach, Tittman,

Rosenmuller, Koppe, and is regarded by most critics as being the genuine reading. The mistake might easily have been made by a transcriber. The meaning then would be, "to enlighten all in respect to rite dispensation of this mystery;" that is, to cause all to understand the manner in which this great truth of the plan of salvation is communicated to people. If the word "fellowship" is to be retained, it means that this doctrine, or secret counsel of God, was now "common" to all believers. It was not to be confined to any class or rank of people. Locke renders it," and to make all people perceive how this mystery comes now to be communicated to the world." Dr. Whately (Errors of Romanism, chapter ii. section 1) renders it, the common participation of the mystery;" that is, of truths formerly unknown, and which could not be known by man's unaided powers, but which were now laid open by the gracious dispensation of Divine Providence; no longer concealed, or confined to a few, but to be partaken of by all.

The allusion, according to him, is to the mysteries of the ancient pagan religions; and he supposes that the apostle designs to contrast those "mysteries" with Christianity. In those "mysteries" there was a distinction between the initiated and uninitiated. There was a revelation to some of the worshippers, of certain holy secrets from which others were excluded. There were in some of the mysteries, as the Elensinian, "great and lesser" doctrines in which different persons were initiated. In strong contrast with these, the "great mystery" in Christianity was made known to all. It was concealed from none and there was no distinction made among those who were initiated. No truths which God had revealed were held back from any part, but there was a common participation by all. Christianity has no hidden truths for a part only of its friends; it has no "reserved" doctrines; it has no truths to be entrusted only to a sacred priesthood. Its doctrines are to be published to the wide world, and every follower of Christ is to be a partaker of all the benefits of the truths which Christ has revealed. It is difficult to determine which is the true reading, and it is not very important. The general sense is, that Paul felt himself called into the ministry in order that all people might understand now that salvation was free for all - a truth that had been concealed for ages. Bearing this great truth, he felt that he had a message of incalculable value to mankind, and he was desirous to go and proclaim it to the wide world. On the word "mystery," see the notes on Ephesians 1:9.

Hath been hid in God - With God. It has been concealed in his bosom. The plan was formed, but it had not before been made known.

Who created all things - This is plain enough; but it is not quite so plain why the declaration is introduced in this place. Locke and Rosenmuller suppose that it refers to the new creation, and that the sense is, that God frames and manages this new creation wholly by Jesus Christ. But the expression contains a truth of larger import, and naturally conveys the idea that all things were made by God, and that this was only a part of his great and universal agency. The meaning is, that God formed all things, and that this purpose of extending salvation to the world was a part of his great plan, and was under his control.

By Jesus Christ - As this stands in our common Greek text, as well as in our English version, there is a striking resemblance between the passage and that in Colossians 1:15-16. But the phrase is missing in the Vulgate, the Syriac, the Coptic, and in several of the ancient mss. Mill remarks that it was probably inserted here by some transcriber from the parallel passage in Colossians 1:16; and it is rejected as an interpolation by Griesbach. It is not "very" material whether it be retained in this place or not, as the same sentiment is elsewhere abundantly taught; see John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2. If it is to be retained, the sentiment is that the Son of God - the second person of the Trinity - was the great and immediate agent in the creation of the universe.

Verse 10

To the intent - Greek, "that" Ἵνα HinaThe sense is, that it was with this design, or that this was the purpose for which all things were made. One grand purpose in the creation of the universe was, that the wisdom of God might be clearly shown by the church. It was not enough to evince it by the formation of the sun, the stars, the earth, the seas, the mountains, the floods. It was not enough to show it by the creation of intelligent beings, the formation of immortal minds on earth, and the various ranks of the angelic world. There were views of the divine character which could be obtained only in connection with the redemption of the world. Hence the universe was created, and man was made upon the earth, not merely to illustrate the divine perfections in the work of creation, but in a still more illustrious manner in the work of redemption. And hence the deep interest which the angelic hosts have ever evinced in the salvation of man.

That now - the word "now" - νυν nun- is missing in the Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic; and is omitted by many of the fathers; see Koppe. If it is to be retained, it means that this display is to be made under the gospel. "Now, since the Messiah is come; now, under the Christian dispensation, this revelation is to be made to distant worlds."

Unto the principalities and powers - To the angelic hosts - the intelligent beings that surround the throne of God; see the notes at Ephesians 1:21.

By the church - By the incarnation of the Redeemer to save it; by I the mercy shown to it; by the wise arrangement made to recover his people from the fall; and by all the graces and beauties which that redeemed church will evince on earth and in heaven.

The manifold wisdom of God - Literally, "much-variegated." It means the "greatly-diversified wisdom." It does not mean merely that there was "great" wisdom, but that the wisdom shown was diversified and varied; like changing, Variegated colors. There was a "beautiful and well-ordered variety of dispensations" toward that church, all of which tended to evince the wisdom of God. It is like a landscape, or a panoramic view passing before the mind, with a great variety of phases and aspects, all tending to excite admiration. In the redemption of the church, there is not merely one form or one phase of wisdom. It is wisdom, ever-varying, ever-beautiful. There was wisdom manifested when the plan was formed; wisdom in the selection of the Redeemer; wisdom in the incarnation; wisdom in the atonement; wisdom in the means of renewing the heart, and sanctifying the soul; wisdom in the various dispensations by which the church is sanctified, guided, and brought to glory. The wisdom thus shown is like the ever-varying beauty of changing clouds, when the sun is reflected on them at evening. Each aspect is full of beauty. One bright; cloud differs in appearance from others; yet all tend to fill the mind with elevated views of God.

Verse 11

According to the eternal purpose - see the note, Ephesians 1:4. Literally, "the purpose of ages," or of eternity. Locke, Chandler, and Whitby render this, "according to that disposition or arrangement of the ages which he made in Jesus Christ, or through him." The object of such an interpretation seems to be to avoid the doctrine that God had a purpose or plan in the salvation of people, and hence such expositors suppose it refers

to the arrangement of the "ages" of the world by which the plan of redemption was introduced. On the word rendered here as "purpose" - προθέσις prothesis- see the notes at Romans 8:28; compare Ephesians 1:11. It is rendered "showbread" - the bread of setting before," Matthew 12:4; Mark 2:26; Luke 6:4; Hebrews 9:2; "purpose," Acts 11:23; Acts 27:13; Romans 8:28; Romans 9:11; Ephesians 1:11; Ephesians 3:11; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2 Timothy 3:10. It does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. In most of these cases it refers to the "purpose or intention" of God; in not a single case does it mean "arrangement or disposition" in any sense like that of making an arrangement of "ages" or periods of the world; and the interpretation proposed by Whitby, Locke, Clarke, and others, is wholly at variance with the settled use of the word.

The word rendered "eternal" - αἰώνων aiōnōn- may mean "ages;" but it also most usually means eternity; see Ephesians 3:9. Here it may mean "the purpose of ages;" i. e., the purpose formed in past ages; but the word is most commonly used in the New Testament in the sense of "ever, and forever;" compare the following places, where it is so rendered in our common version, and beyond a doubt correctly; Matthew 6:13; Matthew 21:19; Mark 3:29; Mark 11:14; Luke 1:33, Luke 1:55; John 4:14; John 6:51, John 6:58; John 8:35; John 14:16; Romans 1:25; Romans 9:5; Romans 11:36; Romans 16:27; 2 Corinthians 9:9; 2 Corinthians 11:31; Galatians 1:5. The fair meaning of the passage here is, that God had formed a plan which was "eternal" in reference to the salvation of people; that that plan had reference to the Lord Jesus; and that it was now executed by the gospel. It is impossible to get away from the idea that God has a "plan." It is too often affirmed in the Scriptures, and is too consonant with out' reason to be disputed. It is as "undesirable" as it is impossible to escape from that idea. Who could respect or honor an intelligent being that had no plan, no purpose, no intention, and that did all things by caprice and hap-hazard? If God has any plan, it must he eternal. He has no new schemes; he has no intentions which he did not always have.

Which he purposed - Literally, "which he made."

In Christ Jesus - With reference to him; or which were to be executed through him. The eternal plan had respect to him, and was to be executed by his coming and work.

Verse 12

We have boldness - The word used here - παῤῥησίαν parrēsian- means, properly, boldness of speaking; 2 Corinthians 7:4; John 7:26; Acts 4:13, Acts 4:29, Acts 4:31. Here it seems to mean "freedom of utterance;" and the idea is, that we may come to God now in prayer with confidence through the Lord Jesus; see Hebrews 4:16.

And access - see notes Ephesians 2:18.

By the faith of him - By faith in him. The sense is, that we may now come confidently and boldly to the throne of grace for mercy in the name of the Redeemer. Boldness is not rashness; and faith is not presumption; but we may come without hesitating, and with an assurance that our prayers will be heard.

Verse 13

Wherefore I desire that ye faint not - The connection here is this. Paul was then a prisoner at Rome. He had been made such in consequence of his efforts to diffuse the Christian religion among the Gentiles; see the notes at Ephesians 3:1. His zeal in this cause, and the opinions which he held on this subject, had roused the wrath of the Jews, and led to all the calamities which he was now suffering. Of that the Ephesians. he supposes, were aware. It was natural that they should be distressed at his sufferings, for all his privations were endured on their account. But here he tells them not to be troubled and disheartened. He was indeed suffering; but he was reconciled to it, and they should be also, since it was promoting their welfare. The word rendered "faint" - ἐκκακέω egkakeō- means literally, to turn out "a coward," or to lose one's courage; then to be fainthearted, etc.; notes, 2 Corinthians 4:1. It is rendered "faint" in Luke 18:1; 2 Corinthians 4:1, 2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 3:13, and "weary" in Galatians 6:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:13. It does not elsewhere occur. It is rendered here by Locke "dismayed." Koppe supposes it means that they should not suppose that the Christian religion was vain and false because he was suffering so much from his countrymen on account of it. But it rather means that they might be in danger of being discouraged by the fact that "he" was enduring so much. They might become disheartened in their attachment to a system of religion which exposed its friends to such calamities. Paul tells them that this ought not to follow. They were to be profited by all his sufferings, and they should, therefore, hold fast to a religion which was attended with so many benefits to them - though he should suffer.

Which is your glory - Which tends to your honor and welfare. You have occasion to rejoice that you have a friend who is willing thus to suffer for you; you have occasion to rejoice in all the benefits which will result to you from, his trials in your behalf.

Verse 14

For this cause - Some suppose that this is a resumption of what he had commenced saying in Ephesians 3:1, but which had been interrupted by a long parenthesis. So Bloomfield explains it. But it seems to me more probable that he refers to what immediately precedes. "Wherefore, that the great work may be carried on, and that the purposes of these my sufferings may be answered in your benefit and glory, I bow my knees to God, and pray to him."

I bow my knees - I pray. The usual, and the proper posture of prayer is to kneel; Compare 2 Chronicles 6:13; Daniel 6:10; Luke 22:21; Acts 7:60; Acts 9:40; Acts 20:26; Acts 21:5. It is a posture which indicates reverence, and should, therefore, be assumed when we come before God. It has been an unhappy thing that the custom of kneeling in public worship has ever been departed from in the Christian churches.

Unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ - To whom, undoubtedly, prayer should ordinarily be addressed. But this does not make it improper to address the Lord Jesus in prayer; see the notes; 7:59-60 on Acts 1:24.

Verse 15

Of whom the whole family - This expression "of whom," may refer either to "the Father," or to the Lord Jesus. Commentators have been divided in opinion in regard to it. Bloomfield, Chandler, Erasmus, Koppe, and some others, refer it to the Father. Locke, Doddridge, Calvin, and some others, refer it to the Lord Jesus. This is the more natural interpretation. The whole "family of God," means all his children; and the idea is, that they all bear the same name, derived from the Redeemer; all are Christians. No matter where they are, in heaven or in earth; no matter from what nation they are converted, whether Jews or Gentiles, they all have one name, and one Redeemer, and all belong to one family; see Ephesians 4:4-6.

In heaven - Spirits of just people made perfect. It does not properly refer to angels, for he is not speaking of them but of the family of the redeemed. If the phrase "in heaven," could "ever" be taken to denote the Jews as contradistinguished from the Gentiles, I should think that this was one of the places. Many expositors have supposed that it is frequently so

used in this Epistle, but I see no clear evidence of it, and no instance where it seems very probable, unless this should be one. And it is not necessary here, for it may mean "all" the redeemed, whether in heaven or earth, though the connection would seem rather to have suggested a reference to the Jews and the Gentiles. An expression similar to this occurs in Colossians 1:20. "To reconcile all things to himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." The passage before us is one that is commonly explained by a reference to Jewish opinions. The Jews were accustomed to call the angels in heaven God's "upper family," and his people on earth his "lower family." See the passages cited from the rabbinical writers in Wetstein.

Is named - This means substantially the same as is. They are all of one family. They all have one father, and are all of one community. The expression is taken from the custom in a family, where all bear the name of the "head" of the family; and the meaning is, that all in heaven and on earth are united under one head, and constitute one community. It does not mean that all are "called" by the same name, or that the name "Christian" is given to the angels, but that they all pertain to the same community, and constitute the same great and glorious brotherhood. Part are in heaven, near his throne; part in distant worlds; part are angels of light; part redeemed and happy spirits; part are in the church on earth; but they are all united as one family, and have one head and Father. This glorious family will yet be gathered together in heaven, and will encompass the throne of their common Father rejoicing.

Verse 16

According to the riches of his glory - According to the glorious abundance of his mercy; see Philemon 4:19. Out of those stores of rich grace which can never be exhausted. The word "riches," so often used by Paul, denotes "abundance," and the idea here is, that his grace was inexhaustible and ample for all their needs.

To be strengthened with might - To be powerfully strengthened. That is, to give you abundant strength to bear trials; to perform your duties; to glorify his name.

In the inner man - In the heart, the mind, the soul; see the notes on Romans 7:22. The "body" needs to be strengthened every day. In like manner the soul needs constant supplies of grace. Piety needs to be constantly invigorated, or it withers and decays. Every Christian needs

grace given each day to enable him to bear trials, to resist temptation, to discharge his duty, to live a life of faith.

Verse 17

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith - see the notes, Ephesians 2:22. Expressions like this often occur in the Scriptures, where God is said to dwell in us, and we are said to be the temples of the Holy Spirit; see the John 14:23, note; 1 Corinthians 6:19, note.

That ye being rooted - Firmly established - as a tree is whose roots strike deep, and extend afar. The meaning is, that his love should be as firm in our hearts, as a tree is in the soil, whose roots strike deep into the earth.

And grounded - θεθεμελιωμένοι tethemeliōmenoi- "founded" - as a building is on a foundation. The word is taken from architecture, where a firm foundation is laid, and the meaning is, that he wished them to be as firm in the love of Christ, as a building is that rests on a solid basis.

In love - In love to the Redeemer - perhaps also in love to each other - and to all. Love was the great principle of the true religion, and the apostle wished that they might be fully settled in that.

Verse 18

May be able to comprehend with all saints - That all others with you may be able to understand this. It was his desire that others, as well as they, might appreciate the wonders of redemption.

What is the breadth, and length, … - It has been doubted to what this refers. Locke says it refers to the mystery of calling the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Chandler supposes there is an allusion in all this to the temple at Ephesus. It was one of the wonders of the world - exciting admiration by its length, and height, and dimensions in every way, as well as by its extraordinary riches and splendor. In allusion to this, the object of so much admiration and pride to the Ephesians, he supposes that Paul desires that they should become fully acquainted with the extent and beauty of the spiritual temple. But I do not see that there is clear evidence that there is allusion here to the temple at Ephesus. It seems rather to be the language of a heart that was full of the subject, and impressed with its greatness; and the words are employed to denote the "dimensions" of that love, and are similar to what would be meant if he had said, "that you may know how "large," or how "great" is that love." The apostle evidently meant to express the strongest sense of the greatness of the love of the Redeemer, and to show in the most emphatic manner how much he wished that they should fully

understand it. On the phrase "depth and height," compare notes on Romans 8:39.

Verse 19

And to know the love of Christ - The love of Christ toward us; the immensity of redeeming love. It is not merely the love which he showed for the Gentiles in calling them into his kingdom, which is here referred to; it is the love which is shown for the lost world in giving himself to die. This love is often referred to in the New Testament, and is declared to surpass all other which has ever been evinced; see the Romans 5:7-8, notes; John 15:13, note. To know this; to feel this; to have a lively sense of it, is one of the highest privileges of the Christian. Nothing will so much excite gratitude in our hearts; nothing will prompt us so much to a life of self-denial; nothing will make us so benevolent and so dead to the world; see the notes on 2 Corinthians 5:14.

Which passeth knowledge - There "seems" to be a slight contradiction here in expressing a wish to know what cannot be known, or in a desire that they should understand that which cannot be understood. But it is the language of a man whose heart was full to overflowing. He had a deep sense of the love of Christ, and he expressed a wish that they should understand it. Suddenly he has such an apprehension of it, that he says it is indeed infinite. No one can attain to a full view of it. It had no limit. It was unlike anything which had ever been evinced before. It was love which led the Son of God to become incarnate; to leave the heavens: to be a man of sorrows; to be reviled and persecured; to be put to death in the most shameful manner - on a cross. Who could understand that? Where else had there been anything like that? What was there with which to compare it? What was there by which it could be illustrated? And how could it be fully understood Yet "something" of it might be seen, known, felt; and the apostle desired that as far as possible they should understand that great love which the Lord Jesus had manifested for a dying world.

That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God - What an expression! How rich and glorious Who can comprehend all that it implies? Let us inquire into its meaning. There "may" be here in these verses an allusion to the "temple." The apostle had spoken of their being founded in love, and of surveying the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of that love, as of a vast and splendid edifice, and he now desires that those whom

he addressed might be pervaded or filled with the indwelling of God. The language here is cumulative, and is full of meaning and richness.

(1) they were to be "full of God." That is, he would dwell in them.

(2) they were to be filled with "the fulness of God" - τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ Θεοῦ to plērōma tou TheouOn the word rendered "fulness," see on Ephesians 1:10, note, 23, note. It is a favorite word with Paul. Thus, he speaks of the "fulness" of the Gentiles, Romans 11:25; the "fulness" of time, Galatians 4:4; the fulness of him that filleth all in all, Ephesians 1:23; the "fulness" of Christ, Ephesians 4:13; the "fulness" of the Godhead in Christ, Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9. It means here, "that you may have the richest measures of divine consolation and of the divine presence; that you may partake of the entire enjoyment of God in the most ample measure in which he bestows his favors on his people."

(3) it was to be with "all" the fulness of God; not with partial and stinted measures of his gracious presence, but with "all" which he ever bestows. Religion is not a name. It is not a matter of form. It is not a trifle. It is the richest, best gift of God to man. It ennobles our nature. It more clearly teaches us our true dignity than all the profound discoveries which people can make in science; for none of them will ever fill us with the fulness of God. Religion is spiritual, elevating, pure, Godlike. We dwell with God; walk with God; live with God; commune with God; are like God. We become partakers of the divine nature 2 Peter 1:4; in rank we are associated with angels; in happiness and purity we are associated with God!

Verse 20

Now unto him - It is not uncommon for Paul to utter an ascription of praise in the midst of an argument; see Romans 9:5; Romans 11:36; Galatians 1:5. Here his mind is full of the subject; and in view of the fact that God communicates to his people such blessings - that they may become filled with all his fulness, he desires that praise should be given to him.

That is able to do - see the notes, Romans 16:25.

Exceeding abundantly - The compound word used here occurs only in this place, and in 1 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:13. It means, to an extent which we cannot express.

Above all that we ask or think - More than all that we can desire in our prayers; more than all that we can conceive; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 2:9.

According to the power that worketh in us - The exertion of that same power can accomplish for us more than we can now conceive.

Verse 21

Unto him be glory - see the notes, Romans 16:27.

In the church - Or, by the church; Ephesians 3:10. The church was to be the instrument by which the glory of God would be shown; and it was by the church that his praise would be celebrated.

Throughout all ages, world without end - There is a richness and amplification of language here which shows that his heart was full of the subject, and that it was difficult to find words to express his conceptions. It means, in the strongest sense, forever. It is one of "the apostle's self-invented phrases" (Bloomfield); and Blackwall says that no version can fully express the meaning. It is literally, "Unto all generations of the age of ages," or "unto all the generations of the eternity of eternities, or the eternity of ages." It is the language of a heart full of the love of God, and desiring that he might be praised without ceasing forever and ever.

Remarks On Ephesians 3:1-6. This truth had been concealed for ages. The Jews regarded themselves as a unique people, and as exclusively the favorites of Heaven. The great effort has been made everywhere to show that there was a favored class of people - a class whom God regarded with special affection, on account of their birth, or rank, or nation, or wealth, or complexion. In one nation, there has been a distinction of "caste" carefully kept up from age to age, and sustained by all the power of the priesthood and the laws; and it has been held that that one class was the favorite of Heaven, and that every other was overlooked or despised. In another nation, it has been held that the services of an illustrious ancestry made a difference among people, and that this fact was to he regarded, even in religion.

In another, complexion has made a difference; and the feeling has insensibly grown up that one class were the favorites of Heaven, because they had a skin not colored like others, and that those not thus favored might be doomed to hopeless toil and servitude. In another, the attempt is made to create such a distinction by wealth; and it is felt that the rich are the favorites of Heaven. In all these eases, there is the secret feeling that in virtue of rank, or blood, or property, one class are the objects of divine

interest, more than others; and that the same plan of salvation is not needed for them which is required for the poor, for the ignorant, and for the slave. The gospel regards all people as on a level; offers the same salvation to all; and offers it on the same terms. This is one of its glories; and for this we should love it. It meets man as he is - as everywhere a fallen and a ruined being - and provides a plan adapted to raise all to the glories of the same heaven.

2. Humility becomes us Ephesians 3:8. Paul felt that he was the least of all saints. He remembered his former life. He recalled the time when he persecuted the church. He felt that he was not worthy to be enrolled in that society which he had so greatly injured. If Paul was humble, who should not be? Who, since his time, has equalled his ardor, his zeal, his attainments in the divine life? Yet the remembrance of his former life served always to keep him humble, and operated as a check on all the tendencies to pride in his bosom. So it should be with us - with all Christians. There has been enough in our past lives to make us humble, if we would recall it, and to make us feel that we are not worthy to be enrolled among the saints. One has been an infidel; one licentious; one intemperlate; one rash, revengeful, passionate; one has been proud and ambitious; one has been false, dishonest, faithless; all have had hearts opposed to God, alienated from good, and prone to evil; and there is not a Christian in the world who will not find enough in his past life to make him humble, if he will examine himself - enough to make him feel that he deserves not even the lowest place among the saints. So we shall feel if we look over our lives since we made a profession of religion. The painful conviction will come over our souls, that we have lived so far from God, and done so little in his cause, that we are not worthy of the lowest place among the blessed.

3. It is a privilege to preach the gospel; Ephesians 3:8. So Paul felt. It was an honor of which he felt that he was by no means worthy. It was proof of the favor of God toward him that he was permitted to do it. It is a privilege - an honor - to preach the gospel, anywhere arid to any class of people. It is an honor to be permitted to preach in Christian lands; it is an honor to preach among the pagan. It is an honor far above that of conquerors; and he who does it will win a brighter and more glorious crown than he who goes forth to obtain glory by dethroning kings, and laying

nations waste. The warrior goes with the sword in one hand, and the torch in the other. His path is marked with blood, and with smouldering ruins. He treads among the slain; and the music of his march is made up of dying groans, and the shrieks of widows and orphans. Yet he is honored, and his name is blazoned abroad; he is crowned with the laurel, and triumphal arches are reared, and monuments are erected to perpetuate his fame. The man who carries the gospel goes for a different purpose. He is the minister of peace. He goes to tell of salvation. He fires no city; lays waste no field; robs no one of a home, no wife of a husband, no child of a father, no sister of a brother; - he goes to elevate the intellect, to mould the heart to virtue, to establish schools and colleges; to promote temperance, industry, and chastity; to wipe away tears, and to tell of heaven. “His” course is marked by intelligence and order; by peace and purity; by the joy of the domestic circle, and the happiness of a virtuous fire-side; by consolation on the bed of pain, and by the hope of heaven that cheers the dying. Who would not rather be a preacher of the gospel than a blood-stained warrior? Who would not rather have the wreath that shall encircle the brows of Paul, and Schwartz, and Martin, and Brainerd, than the laurels of Alexander and Caesar?

4. There is ample fullness in the plan of salvation by the Redeemer; Ephesians 3:8. In Christ there is unsearchable riches. None can understand the fulness that there is in him; none can exhaust it. Millions, and hundreds of million, have been saved by the fulness of his merits; and still those merits are as ample as ever. The sun in the heavens has shone for 6,000 years, and has shed light and comfort. on countless million; but his beams are not exhausted or diminished in splendor. Today, while I write - this beautiful, calm, sweet day - (June 24,1840) his beams are as bright, as rich, as full, as they were when they were shed on Eden. So of the Sun of righteousness. Millions have been enlightened by his beams; but today they are as full, and rich, and glorious, as they were when the first ray from that sun reached the benighted mind of a penitent sinner. And that fulness is not to be exhausted. No matter how many partake of his abundance; no matter how many darkened minds are enlightened; no matter though nation after nation comes and partakes of his fulness, yet there is no approach to exhaustion. The sun in the heavens may waste his fires and burn out, and become a dark orb, diffusing horror over a cold and cheerless world; but not

so with the Sun of righteousness. That will shine on in glory forever and ever; and the last penitent sinner on earth who comes to partake of the riches of the grace of Christ, shall find it as full and as free as did the first who sought pardon through his blood. Oh, the unsearchable riches of Christ! Who can understand this? Who can grow weary in its contemplation?

5. There is no good reason why any sinner should be lost; Ephesians 3:8. If the merits of the Saviour were limited; if his arm were a feeble human arm; if he died only for a part, and if his merit were already well-nigh exhausted, we might begin to despair. But it is not so. The riches of his grace are unbounded and inexhaustible. And why then does the sinner die? I can answer. He does like the man who expires of thirst while fountains bubble and streams flow all around him; like him who is starving amidst trees loaded with fruit; like him who is dying of fever in the midst of medicines that would at once restore him; like him who holds his breath and dies while the balmy air of heaven - pure, full, and free - floats all around him. If a man thus dies, who is to blame? If a man goes down to hell from lands where the gospel is preached, whose is the fault? It is not because the merits of Christ are limited; it is not because they are exhausted.

6. The church is designed to accomplish a most important purpose in the manifestation of the divine glory and perfections; Ephesians 3:10. It is by that that his great-wisdom is shown. It is by that entirely that his mercy is displayed; Ephesians 2:7. His power is shown in the creation and support of the worlds; his goodness in the works of creation and Providence; his truth in his promises and threatenings; his greatness and majesty are everywhere displayed in the universe which he has brought into being. His mercy is shown in the church; and there alone. Angels in heaven not having sinned, have had no occasion for its exercise; and angels that are fallen have had no offer of pardon. Throughout the wide universe there has been so far as we know, no exercise of mercy but in the church. Hence, the interest which the angelic beings feel in the work of redemption. Hence, they desire to look into these things, and to see more of the heighth and depth and length and breadth of the love of God evinced in the work of redemption. Hence the church is to be honored forever as the means of making known to distant worlds the way in which God shows mercy to rebellious creatures. It is

honor enough for one world thus to be the sole means of making known to the universe one of the attributes of God; and while other worlds may contain more proofs of his power and greatness, it is enough for ours that it shows to distant worlds how he can exercise compassion.

7. All tribulation and affliction may be intended to do some good, and may benefit others; Ephesians 3:13. Paul felt that his sufferings were for the "glory" - the welfare and honor of the Gentiles, in whose cause he was suffering. He was then a prisoner at Rome. He was permitted no longer to go abroad from land to land to preach the gospel. How natural would it have been for him to be desponding, and to feel that he was leading a useless life. But he did not feel thus. He felt that in some Way he might be doing good. He was suffering in a good cause, and his trials had been brought on him by the appointment of God. He gave himself to writing letters; he talked with all who would come to him Acts 28:30-31, and he expected to accomplish something by his example in his sufferings. The sick, the afflicted, and the imprisoned often feel that they are useless. They are laid aside from public and active life, and they feel that they are living in vain. But it is not so. The long imprisonment of John Bunyan - so mysterious to him and to his friends - was the means of producing the Pilgrim's Progress, now translated into more than twenty languages, and already blessed to the salvation of thousands. The meekness, and patience, and kindness of a Christian on a bed of pain, may do more for the honor of religion than he could do in a life of health. It shows the sustaining power of the gospel; and this is much. It is "worth" much suffering to show to a world what the gospel can do in supporting the soul in times of trial; and he who is imprisoned or persecuted; he who lies month after month or year after year on a bed of languishing, may do more for the honor of religion than by many years of active life.

8. There is but one family among the friends of God; Ephesians 3:15. They all have one Father, and all are brethren. In heaven and on earth they belong to the same family, and worship the same God. Let Christians, therefore, first love one another. Let them lay aside all contention and strife. Let them feel that they are brethren - that though they belong to different denominations, and are called by different names, yet they belong to the same family, and are united under the same glorious head. Let them,

secondly, realize how highly they are honored. They belong to the same family as the angels of light and the spirits of just men made perfect. It is an honor to belong to such a family; an honor to be a Christian. Oh, if we saw this in its true light, how much more honorable would it be to belong to this "family" than to belong to the families of the great on earth, and to have our names enrolled with nobles and with kings!

9. Let us seek to know more of the love of Christ in our redemption - to understand more of the extent of that love which he evinced for us; Ephesians 3:16-19. It is worth our study. It will reward our efforts. There are few Christians - if there are any - who understand the richness and fulness of the gospel of Christ; few who have such elevated views as they might have and should have of the glory of that gospel. It is wonderful that they who profess to love the Lord Jesus do not study that system more, and desire more to know the heighth, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ. True, it passes knowledge. We cannot hope fully to fathom it in this world. But we may know more of it than we do. We may aspire to being filled with all the fullness of God. We may long for it; pant for it; strive for it; pray for it - and we shall not strive in vain. Though we shall not attain all we wish; though there will be an infinity beyond what we can understand in this world, yet there will be enough attained to reward all our efforts, and to fill us with love and joy and peace. The love of God our Saviour is indeed an illimitable ocean; but we may see enough of it in this world to lead us to adore and praise God with overflowing hearts.

EPHESIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

This chapter Ephesians 4:1-6. He entreats them to walk worthy of their vocation Ephesians 4:1; shows them how it could be done, or what he meant; and that, in order to that, they should show meekness and kindness Ephesians 4:3, and particularly exhorts them to unity Ephesians 4:3; for they had one God, one Saviour, one baptism, one religion; Ephesians 4:4-6.

II. He shows them that God had made ample provision for his people, that they might be sound in the faith, and in unity of life and of doctrine, and need not be driven about with every wind of opinion; Ephesians 4:7-16. He assures them that to every Christian is given grace in the Redeemer adapted to his circumstances Ephesians 4:7; that the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven to obtain gifts for his people Ephesians 4:8-10; that he had given apostles prophets and evangelists, for the very purpose of imparting instruction, and confirming them in the faith of the gospel Ephesians 4:11-12; that this was in order that they might attain to the highest elevation in Christian knowledge and piety Ephesians 4:13; and particularly that they might not be driven to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine; Ephesians 4:14-16.

III. Having these arrangements made for their knowledge and piety, he exhorts them not to live as the pagan around them lived; But to show that they were under a better influence; Ephesians 4:17-24. Their understanding was darkened, and they were alienated from the life of God, or true religion Ephesians 4:18; they were past feeling, and were given over to every form of sensuality; Ephesians 4:19. The Ephesians, however, had been taught a different thing Ephesians 4:20-21, and the apostle exhorts them to lay aside everything pertaining to their former course of life, and to become wholly conformed to the principles of the new man; Ephesians 4:22-24.

IV. He exhorts them to perform particular Christian duties, and to put away certain evils, of which they and all others were in danger; Ephesians 4:25-32. In particular, he entreats them to avoid lying Ephesians 4:25; anger Ephesians 4:26; theft Ephesians 4:28; corrupt and corrupting conversation Ephesians 4:29; grieving the Holy, Spirit Ephesians 4:30; bitterness, evil-speaking, and malice Ephesians 4:3 l; and entreats them to manifest in their

conversation with each other a spirit of kindness and forgiveness; Ephesians 4:32.

Verse 1

I, therefore - In view of the great and glorious truths which God has revealed, and of the grace which he has manifested toward you who are Gentiles. See the previous chapters. The sense of the word "therefore" - οὖν oun- in this place, is, "Such being your exalted privileges; since God has done so much for you; since he has revealed for you such a glorious system; since he has bestowed on you the honor of calling you into his kingdom, and making you partakers of his mercy, I entreat you to live in accordance with these elevated privileges, and to show your sense of his goodness by devoting your all to his service." The force of the word "I," they would all feel. It was the appeal and exhortation of the founder of their church - of their spiritual father - of one who had endured much for them, and who was now in bonds on account of his devotion to the welfare of the Gentile world.

The prisoner of the Lord - Margin, "in." It means, that he was now a prisoner, or in confinement "in the cause" of the Lord; and he regarded himself as having been made a prisoner because the Lord had so willed and ordered it. He did not feel particularly that he was the prisoner of Nero; he was bound and kept because the "Lord" willed it, and because it was in his service; see the notes on Ephesians 3:1.

Beseech you that ye walk worthy - That you live as becomes those who have been called in this manner into the kingdom of God. The word "walk" is often used to denote "life, conduct," etc.; see Romans 4:12, note; Romans 6:4, note; 2 Corinthians 5:7, note.

Of the vocation - Of the "calling" - τῆς κλήσεως tēs klēseōsThis word properly means "a call," or "an invitation" - as to a banquet. Hence, it means that divine invitation or calling by which Christians are introduced into the privileges of the gospel. The word is translated "calling" in Romans 11:29; 1 Corinthians 1:26; 1 Corinthians 7:20; Ephesians 1:18; Ephesians 4:1, Ephesians 4:4; Philemon 3:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 3:1; 2 Peter 1:10. It does not occur elsewhere. The sense of the word, and the agency employed in calling us, are well expressed in the Westminster Shorter Catechism. "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds

in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel." This "calling or vocation" is through the agency of the Holy Spirit, and is his appropriate work on the human heart.

It consists essentially in influencing the mind to turn to God, or to enter into his kingdom. It is the exertion of "so much" influence on the mind as is necessary to secure the turning of the sinner to God. In this all Christians are agreed, though there have been almost endless disputes about the actual influence exerted, and the mode in which the Spirit acts on the mind. Some suppose it is by "moral persuasion;" some by physical power; some by an act of creation; some by inclining the mind to exert its proper powers in a right way, and to turn to God. What is the precise agency employed perhaps we are not to expect to be able to decide; see John 3:8. The great, the essential point is held, if it be maintained that it is by the agency of the Holy Spirit that the result is secured - and this I suppose to be held by all evangelical Christians. But though it is by the agency of the Holy Spirit, we are not to suppose that it is without the employment of "means." It is not literally like the act of creation. It is preceded and attended with means adapted to the end; means which are almost as various as the individuals who are "called" into the kingdom of God. Among those means are the following:

(1) "Preaching." Probably more are called into the kingdom by this means than any other. It is "God's great ordinance for the salvation of men." It is eminently suited for it. The "pulpit" has higher advantages for acting on the mind than any other means of affecting people. The truths that are dispensed; the sacredness of the place; the peace and quietness of the sanctuary; and the appeals to the reason, the conscience, and the heart - all are suited to affect people, and to bring them to reflection. The Spirit makes use of the word "preached," but in a great variety of ways. Sometimes many are impressed simultaneously; sometimes the same truth affects one mind while others are unmoved; and sometimes truth reaches the heart of a sinner which he has heard a hundred times before, without being interested. The Spirit acts with sovereign power, and by laws which have never yet been traced out.

(2) the events of Providence are used to call people into his kingdom. God appeals to people by laying them on a bed of pain, or by requiring them to follow a friend in the still and mournful procession to the grave. They feel that they must die, and they are led to ask the question whether they are prepared. Much fewer are affected in this way than we should suppose would be the case; but still there are many, in the aggregate, who can trace their hope of heaven to a fit of sickness, or to the death of a friend.

(3) conversation is one of the means by which sinners are called into the kingdom of God. In some states of mind, where the Spirit has prepared the soul like mellow ground prepared for the seed, a few moments‘ conversation, or a single remark, will do more to arrest the attention than much preaching.

(4) reading is often the means of calling people into the kingdom. The Bible is the great means - and if we can get people to read that, we have very cheering indications that they will be converted. The profligate Earl of Rochester was awakened and led to the Saviour by reading a chapter in Isaiah. And who can estimate the number of those who have been converted by reading Baxter‘s Call to the Unconverted; Alleine‘s Alarm; the Dairyman‘s Daughter; or the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain? He does “good” who places a good book in the way of a sinner. That mother or sister is doing good, and making the conversion of a son or brother probable, who puts a Bible in his chest when he goes to sea, or in his trunk when he goes on a journey. Never should a son be allowed to go from home without one. The time will come when, far away from home, he will read it. He will read it when his mind is pensive and tender, and the Spirit may bear the truth to his heart for his conversion.

(5) the Spirit calls people into the kingdom of Christ by presiding over, and directing in some unseen manner their own reflections, or the operations of their own minds. In some way unknown to us, he turns the thoughts to the past life; recalls forgotten deeds and plans; makes long past sins rise to remembrance; and overwhelms the mind with conscious guilt from the memory of crime. He holds this power over the soul; and it is among the most mighty and mysterious of all the influences that he has on the heart. “Sometimes” - a man can hardly tell how - the mind will be

pensive, sad, melancholy; then conscious of guilt; then alarmed at the future. Often, by sudden transitions, it will be changed from the frivolous to the serious, and from the pleasant to the sad; and often, unexpectedly to himself, and by associations which he cannot trace out, the sinner will find himself reflecting on death. judgment, and eternity. It is the Spirit of God that leads the mind along. It is not by force; not by the violation of its laws, but in accordance with those laws, that the mind is thus led along to the eternal world. In such ways, and by such means, are people "called" into the kingdom of God. To "walk worthy of that calling," is to live as becomes a Christian, an heir of glory; to live as Christ did. It is:

(1) To bear our religion with us to all places, companies, employments. Not merely to be a Christian on the Sabbath, and at the communion table, and in our own land, but every day, and everywhere, and in any land where we may be placed. We are to live religion, and not merely to profess it. We are to be Christians in the counting-room, as well as in the closet; on the farm as well as at the communion table; among strangers, and in a foreign land, as well as in our own country and in the sanctuary.

(2) it is to do nothing inconsistent with the most elevated Christian character. In temper, feeling, plan, we are to give expression to no emotion, and use no language, and perform no deed, that shall be inconsistent with the most elevated Christian character.

(3) it is to do "right always:" to be just to all; to tell the simple truth; to defraud no one; to maintain a correct standard of morals; to be known to be honest. There is a correct standard of character and conduct; and a Christian should be a man so living, that we may always know "exactly where to find him." He should so live, that we shall have no doubts that, however others may act, we shall find "him" to be the unflinching advocate of temperance, chastity, honesty, and of every good work - of every plan that is really suited to alleviate human woe, and benefit a dying world.

(4) it is to live as one should who expects soon to be "in heaven." Such a man will feel that the earth is not his home; that he is a stranger and a pilgrim here; that riches, honors, and pleasures are of comparatively little importance; that he ought to watch and pray, and that he ought to be holy. A

man who feels that he may die at any moment, will watch and pray. A man who realizes that "tomorrow" he may be in heaven, will feel that he ought to be holy. He who begins a day on earth, feeling that at its close he may be among the angels of God, and the spirits of just men made perfect; that before its close he may have seen the Saviour glorified, and the burning throne of God, will feel the importance of living a holy life, and of being wholly devoted to the service of God. Pure should be the eyes that are soon to look on the throne of God; pure the hands that are soon to strike the harps of praise in heaven; pure the feet that are to walk the "golden streets above."

Verse 2

With all lowliness - Humility; see the notes on Acts 20:19, where the same Greek word is used; compare also the following places, where the same Greek word occurs: Philemon 2:3, "in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves;" Colossians 2:18, "in a voluntary humility;" Colossians 2:23; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 5:5. The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The idea is, that humility of mind becomes those who are "called" Ephesians 4:1, and that we walk worthy of that calling when we evince it.

And meekness - see the notes on Matthew 5:5. Meekness relates to the manner in which we receive injuries. We are to bear them patiently, and not to retaliate, or seek revenge. The meaning here is, that; we adorn the gospel when we show its power in enabling us to bear injuries without anger or a desire of revenge, or with a mild and forgiving spirit; see 2 Corinthians 10:1; Galatians 5:23; Galatians 6:1; 2 Timothy 2:25; Titus 3:2; where the same Greek word occurs.

With longsuffering, … - Bearing patiently with the foibles, faults, and infirmities of others; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 13:4. The virtue here required is that which is to be manifested in our manner of receiving the provocations which we meet with from our brethren. No virtue, perhaps, is more frequently demanded in our contact with others. We do not go far with any fellow-traveler on the journey of life, before we find there is great occasion for its exercise. He has a temperament different from our own. He may be sanguine, or choleric, or melancholy; while we may be just the reverse. He has peculiarities of taste, and habits, and disposition, which differ much from ours. He has his own plans and purposes of life, and his

own way and time of doing things. He may be naturally irritable, or he may have been so trained that his modes of speech and conduct differ much from ours. Neighbors have occasion to remark this in their neighbors; friends in their friends; kindred in their kindred; one church-member in another.

A husband and wife - such is the imperfection of human nature - can find enough in each other to embitter life, if they choose to magnify imperfections, and to become irritated at trifles; and there is no friendship that may not be marred in this way, if we will allow it. Hence, if we would have life move on smoothly, we must learn to bear and forbear. We must indulge the friend that we love in the little peculiarities of saying and doing things which may be important to him, but which may be of little moment to us. Like children, we must suffer each one to build his play-house in his own way, and not quarrel with him because he does not think our way the best. All usefulness, and all comfort, may be prevented by an unkind, a sour, a crabbed temper of mind - a mind that can bear with no difference of opinion or temperament. A spirit of fault-finding; an unsatisfied temper; a constant irritability; little inequalities in the look, the temper, or the manner; a brow cloudy and dissatisfied - your husband or your wife cannot tell why - will more than neutralize all the good you can do, and render life anything but a blessing.

It is in such gentle and quiet virtues as meekness and forbearance, that the happiness and usefulness of life consist, far more than in brilliant eloquence, in splendid talent, or illustrious deeds, that shall send the name to future times. It is the bubbling spring which flows gently; the little rivulet which glides through the meadow, and which runs along day and night by the farmhouse, that is useful, rather than the swollen flood or the roaring cataract. Niagara excites our wonder; and we stand amazed at the power and greatness of God there, as he “pours it from his hollow hand.” But one Niagara is enough for a continent or a world; while that same world needs thousands and tens of thousands of silver fountains, and gently flowing rivulets, that shall water every farm, and every meadow, and every garden, and that shall flow on, every day and every night, with their gentle and quiet beauty. So with the acts of our lives. It is not by great deeds only, like those of Howard - not by great sufferings only, like those of the martyrs - that good is to be done; it is by the daily and quiet virtues of life - the Christian temper, the meek forbearance, the spirit of forgiveness in the

husband, the wife, the father, the mother, the brother, the sister, the friend, the neighbor - that good is to be done; and in this all may be useful.

Verse 3

The unity of the Spirit - A united spirit, or oneness of spirit. This does not refer to the fact that there is one Holy Spirit; but it refers to unity of affection, of confidence, of love. It means that Christians should be united in temper and affection, and not be split up into factions and parties. It may be implied here, as is undoubtedly true, that such a unity would be produced only by the Holy Spirit; and that, as there was but one Spirit which had acted on their hearts to renew them, they ought to evince the same feelings and views. There was occasion among the Ephesians for this exhortation; for they were composed of Jews and Gentiles, and there might be danger of divisions and strifes, as there had been in other churches. There is "always" occasion for such an exhortation; for:

(1) "unity" of feeling is eminently desirable to honor the gospel (see the notes on John 17:21); and,

(2) there is always danger of discord where people are brought together in one society. There are so many different tastes and habits; there is such a variety of intellect and feeling; the modes of education have been so various, and the temperament may be so different, that there is constant danger of division. Hence, the subject is so often dwelt on in the Scriptures (see the notes on 1 Corinthians 2ff), and hence, there is so much need of caution and of care in the churches.

In the bond of peace - This was to be by the cultivation of that peaceful temper which binds all together. The American Indians usually spoke of peace as a "chain of friendship" which was to be kept bright, The meaning here is, that they should be bound or united together in the sentiments and affections of peace. It is not mere "external" unity; it is not a mere unity of creed; it is not a mere unity in the forms of public worship; it is such as the Holy Spirit produces in the hearts of Christians, when it fills them all with the same love, and joy, and peace in believing. The following verses contain the reasons for this.

Verse 4

There is one body - One church - for so the word "body" means here - denoting the body of Christ; see the notes on Romans 12:5; compare notes

on Ephesians 1:23. The meaning here is, that as there is really but one church on earth, there ought to be unity. The church is, at present, divided into many denominations. It has different forms of worship, and different rites and ceremonies. It embraces those of different complexions and ranks in life, and it cannot be denied that there are often unhappy contentions and jealousies in different parts of that church. Still, there is but one - "one holy, catholic (i. e., universal) church;" and that church should feel that it is one. Christ did not come to redeem and save different churches, and to give them a different place in heaven. He did not come to save the Episcopal communion merely or the Presbyterian or the Methodist communions only; nor did he leave the world to fit up for them different mansions in heaven. He did not come to save merely the black man, or the red, or the white man; nor did he leave the world to set up for them separate mansions in the skies. He came that he might collect into one community a multitude of every complexion, and from every land, and unite them in one great brotherhood on earth, and ultimately assemble them in the same heaven. The church is one. Every sincere Christian is a brother in that church, and has an equal right with all others to its privileges. Being one by the design of the Saviour they should be one in feeling; and every Christian, no matter what his rank, should be ready to hail every other Christian as a fellow-heir of heaven.

One Spirit - The Holy Spirit. There is one and the self-same Spirit that dwells in the church The same Spirit has awakened all enlightened all; convicted all; converted all. Wherever they may be, and whoever, yet there has been substantially the same work of the Spirit on the heart of every Christian. There are circumstantial differences arising from diversities of temperament, disposition, and education; there may be a difference in the depth and power of his operations on the soul; there may be a difference in the degree of conviction for sin and in the evidence of conversion, but still there are the same operations on the heart essentially produced by the same Spirit; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 12:6-11. All the gifts of prayer, and of preaching; all the zeal, the ardor, the love, the self-denial in the church, are produced by the same Spirit. There should be, therefore, unity. The church is united in the agency by which it is saved; it should be united in the feelings which influence its members.

Even as ye are called - see Ephesians 4:1. The sense is, "there is one body and one spirit, in like manner as there is one hope resulting from your

calling." The same notion of oneness is found in relation to each of these things.

In one hope of your calling - In one hope "resulting from" your being called into his kingdom. On the meaning of the word "hope," see notes on Ephesians 2:12. The meaning here is, that Christians have the same hope, and they should therefore be one. They are looking forward to the same heaven; they hope for the same happiness beyond the grave. It is not as on earth among the people of the world, where, there is a variety of hopes - where one hopes for pleasure, and another for honor, and another for gain; but there is the prospect of the same inexhaustible joy. This "hope" is suited to promote union. There is no rivalry - for there is enough for all. "Hope" on earth does not always produce union and harmony. Two men hope to obtain the same office; two students hope to obtain the same honor in college; two rivals hope to obtain the same hand in marriage - and the consequence is jealousy, contention, and strife. The reason is, that but one can obtain the object. Not so with the crown of life - with the rewards of heaven. All may obtain "that" crown; all may share those rewards. How "can" Christians contend in an angry manner with each other, when the hope of dwelling in the same heaven swells their bosoms and animates their hearts?

Verse 5

One Lord - This evidently refers to the Lord Jesus. The "Spirit" is mentioned in the previous verse; the Father in the verse following. On the application of the word "Lord" to the Saviour, see the notes on Acts 1:24. The argument here is, that there ought to be unity among Christians, because they have one Lord and Saviour. They have not different Saviours adapted to different classes; not one for the Jew and another for the Greek; not one for the rich and another for the poor; not one for the bond and another for the free. There is but one. He belongs in common to all as their Saviour; and he has a right to rule over one as much as over another. There is no better way of promoting unity among Christians than by reminding them that they have the same Saviour. And when jealousies and heart-burnings arise; or when they are disposed to contend about trifles; when they magnify unimportant matters until they are in danger of rending the church asunder, let them feel that they have one Lord and Saviour, and they will lay aside their contentions and be one again. Let two men who have never seen each other before, meet in a distant land, and feel that they have

the same Redeemer, and their hearts will mingle into one. They are not aliens, but friends. A cord of sympathy is struck more tender than that which binds them to country or home and though of different nations, complexions, or habits, they will feel that they are one. Why should contentions ever arise between those who have the same Redeemer?

One faith - The same belief. That is, either the belief of the same doctrines, or faith of the same nature in the heart. The word may be taken in either sense. I see no reason why it should not include "both" here, or be used in the widest sense, If so used it means that Christians should be united because they hold the same great doctrines; and also, because they have the same confidence in the Redeemer in their hearts, They hold the same system as distinguished from Judaism, Paganism, Mohammedanism, Deism; and they should, therefore, be one. They have the same trust in Christ, as a living, practical principle - and they should, therefore, be one. They may differ in other attachments; in temperament; in pursuit; in professions in life - but they have a common faith - and they should be one.

One baptism - This does not affirm that there is one mode of baptism, but it refers to "the thing itself." They are all baptized in the name of the same Father, Saviour, Sanctifier. They have all in this manner been consecrated unto God, and devoted to his service. Whether by immersion, or by pouring, or by sprinkling, they have all been baptized with water; whether it is done in adult years, or in infancy, the same solemn act has been performed on all - the act of consecration to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This passage cannot be adduced to prove that only one "mode" of baptism is lawful, unless it can be shown that the thing referred to here was the "mode" and not "the thing itself;" and unless it can be proved that Paul meant to build his argument for the "unity" of Christians on the fact that the same "form" was used in their baptism. But this is evidently not the point of his argument.

The argument is, that there was really but "one baptism" - not that there was but one "mode" of baptism. I could not use this argument in this form, "Christians should be one because they have been all baptized by ‹sprinkling;‘" and yet the argument would be just as forcible as to use it in this form, "Christians should be one because they have all been baptized by ‹immersion.‘" There is one baptism, not one "mode" of baptism; and no man has a right to "assume" that there can be but one mode, and then apply this passage to that. The "essential thing" in the argument before us is, that

there has been a consecration to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, by the application of water. Thus, understood, the argument is one that will be "felt" by all who have been devoted to God by baptism. They have taken the same vows upon them. They have consecrated themselves to the same God. They have made the same solemn profession of religion. Water has been applied to one and all as the emblem of the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit; and having been thus initiated in a solemn manner into the same profession of religion, they should be one. (See Matthew 3:6 note and Matthew 3:16 note.)

Verse 6

One God - The same God; therefore there should be unity. Were there many gods to be worshipped, there could be no more hope of unity than there is among the worshippers of Mammon and Bacchus, and the various other idols that people set up. People who have different pursuits, and different objects of supreme affection, can be expected to have no union. People who worship many gods, cannot hope to be united. Their affections are directed to different objects, and there is no harmony or sympathy of feeling. But where there is one supreme object of attachment there may be expected to be unity. The children of a family that are devoted to a parent, will be united among themselves; and the fact that all Christians have the same great object of worship, should constitute a strong bond of union among themselves - a chain always kept bright.

And Father of all - One God who is the Father of all; that is, who is a common Father to all who believe. That this refers to the Father, in contradistinction from the Son and the Holy Spirit, seems evident. The Spirit and the Son are mentioned in the previous verses. But the fact that the "Father of all" is mentioned as "God," does not prove that the Spirit and the Son are not also endowed with divine attributes. That question is to be determined by the attributes ascribed to the Son and the Holy Spirit in other places. All sincere Christians worship "one" God, and "but" one. But they suppose that this one God subsists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, united in a mysterious manner, and constituting the one God, and that there is no other God. That the Father is divine, they all hold, as Paul affirms here; that the Son and the Holy Spirit are also divine, they also hold; see the Philemon 2:6 note; Romans 9:5 note. The meaning here is, that God is the common Father of "all" his people - of the rich and the poor; the bond and the free;

the learned and the unlearned. He is no respecter of persons. Nothing would tend more to overcome the prejudices of color, rank, and wealth, than to feel that we all have one Father; and that we are all equally the objects of his favor; compare notes on Acts 17:26.

Who is above all - Who is supreme; who presides over all things.

And through all - He pervades universal nature, and his agency is seen everywhere.

And in you all - There is no one in whose heart he does not dwell. You are his temple, and he abides in you; see Ephesians 2:22; notes, 1 Corinthians 6:19. The argument here is, that as the same God dwelt in every heart, they ought to be one. See this argument beautifully expressed in the Saviour‘s prayer, John 17:21; compare John 14:23.

Verse 7

But unto every one of us - Every Christian.

Is given grace - The favor of God; meaning here that God had bestowed upon each sincere Christian the means of living as he ought to do, and had in his gospel made ample provision that they might walk worthy of their vocation. What “are” the endowments thus given, the apostle states in the following verses. The “grace” referred to here, most probably means “the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit,” or his operations on the heart in connection with the use of the means which God has appointed.

According to the measure of the gift of Christ - Grace is bestowed upon all true Christians, and all have enough to enable them to live a life of holiness. Yet we are taught here:

(1) That it is a “gift.” It is “bestowed” on us. It is not what is originated by ourselves.

(2) it is by a certain “measure.” It is not unlimited, and without rule. There is a wise adaptation; an imparting it by a certain rule. The same grace is not given to all, but to all is given enough to enable them to live as they ought to live.

(3) that measure is the gift of Christ, or what is given in Christ. It comes through him. It is what he has purchased; what he has obtained by his merits. All have enough for the purposes for which God has called them into his kingdom, but there are not the same endowments conferred on all. Some have grace given them to qualify them for the ministry; some to be

apostles; some to be martyrs; some to make them eminent as public benefactors. All this has been obtained by Christ; and one Should not complain that another has more distinguished endowments than he has; compare Romans 12:3 note; John 1:16 note.

Verse 8

Wherefore he saith - The word "he" is not in the original; and it may mean "the Scripture saith," or "God saith." The "point" of the argument here is, that Christ, when he ascended to heaven, obtained certain "gifts" for people, and that those gifts are bestowed upon his people in accordance with this. To "prove" that, he adduces this passage from Psalm 68:18. Much perplexity has been felt in regard to the "principle" on which Paul quotes this Psalm, and applies it to the ascension of the Redeemer. The Psalm seems to have been composed on the occasion of removing the ark of the covenant from Kirjath-jearim to Mount Zion; 2 Samuel 6:1 ff it is a song of triumph, celebrating the victories of Yahweh, and particularly the victories which had been achieved when the ark was at the head of the army. It "appears" to have no relation to the Messiah; nor would it probably occur to anyone upon reading it, that it referred to his ascension, unless it had been so quoted by the apostle.

Great difficulty has been felt, therefore, in determining on what principle Paul applied it to the ascension of the Redeemer. Some have supposed that the Psalm had a primary reference to the Messiah; some that it referred to him in only a secondary sense; some that it is applied to him by way of "accommodation;" and some that he merely uses the words as adapted to express his idea, as a man adopts words which are familiar to him, and which will express his thoughts, though not meaning to say that the words had any such reference originally. Storr supposes that the words were used by the Ephesian Christians in their "hymns," and that Paul quoted them as containing a sentiment which was admitted among them. This is "possible;" but it is mere conjecture. It has been also supposed that the tabernacle was a type of Christ; and that the whole Psalm, therefore, having original reference to the tabernacle, might be applied to Christ as the antitype.

But this is both conjectural and fanciful. On the various modes adopted to account for the difficulty, the reader may consult Rosenmuller in loc. To

me it seems plain that the Psalm had original reference to the bringing up the ark to Mount Zion, and is a triumphal song. In the song or Psalm, the poet shows why God was to be praised - on account of his greatness and his benignity to people; Ephesians 4:1-6. He then recounts the doings of God in former times - particularly his conducting his people through the wilderness, and the fact that his enemies were discomfited before him; Ephesians 4:7-12. All this refers to the God, the symbols of whose presence were on the tabernacle, and accompanying the ark. He then speaks of the various fortunes that had befallen the ark of the covenant. It had lain among the pots, Ephesians 4:13, yet it had formerly been white as snow when God scattered kings by it; Ephesians 4:14.

He then speaks of the hill of God - the Mount Zion to which the ark was about to be removed, and says that it is an "high hill" - "high as the hills of Bashan," the hill where God desired to dwell forever; Ephesians 4:16. God is then introduced as ascending that hill, encompassed with thousands of angels, as in Mount Sinai; and the poet says that, in doing it, he had triumphed over his enemies, and had led captivity captive; Ephesians 4:18. The fact that the ark of God thus ascended the hill of Zion, the place of rest; that it was to remain there as its permanent abode, no more to be carried about at the head of armies; was the proof of its triumph. It had made everything captive. It had subdued every foe; and its ascent there would be the means of obtaining invaluable gifts for people; Mercy and truth would go forth from that mountain; and the true religion would spread abroad, even to the rebellious, as the results of the triumph of God, whose symbol was over the tabernacle and the ark.

The placing the ark there was the proof of permanent victory, and would he connected with most important benefits to people. The "ascending on high," therefore, in the Psalm, refers, as it seems to me, to the ascent of the symbol of the Divine Presence accompanying the ark on Mount Zion, or to the placing it "on high" above all its foes. The remainder of the Psalm corresponds with this view. This ascent of the ark on Mount Zion; this evidence of its triumph over all the foes of God; this permanent residence of the ark there; and this fact, that its being established there would be followed with the bestowment of invaluable gifts to people, might be regarded as a beautiful emblem of the ascension of the Redeemer to heaven.

There were strong points of resemblance. He also ascended on high. His ascent was the proof of victory over his foes. He went there for a permanent abode. And his ascension was connected with the bestowmerit of important blessings to people.

It is as such emblematic language, I suppose, that the apostle makes the quotation. It did not originally refer to this; but the events were so similar in many points, that the one would suggest the other, and the same language would describe both. It was language familiar to the apostle; language that would aptly express his thoughts, and language that was not improbably applied to the ascension of the Redeemer by Christians at that time. The phrase, therefore, "he saith " - λέγει legei- or "it saith," or "the Scripture saith," means, "it is said;" or, "this language will properly express the fact under consideration, to wit, that there is grace given to each one of us, or that the means are furnished by the Redeemer for us to lead holy lives."

(For remarks on the subject of accommodation. in connection with quotations from the Old Testament into the New Testament, see the supplementary notes, Hebrews 1:5, and Hebrews 2:6, note. The principle of accommodation, if admitted at all, should be used with great caution. Doubtless it is sanctioned by great names both in Europe and America. Yet it must be allowed, that the apostles understood the mind of the Spirit, in the Old Testament, that their inspiration preserved them from every error. When, therefore, they tell us that certain passages have an ultimate reference to the Messiah and his times, through we should never have discovered such reference without their aid, nothing of the kind, it may be, "appearing" in the original places, yet we ate bound to receive it "on their testimony." It is alleged, indeed, that the apostles sometimes use the ordinary forms of quotation, without intending to intimate thereby any prophetic reference in the passages titus introduced, nay, when such reference is obviously inadmissible. This, in the opinion of many, is a very hazardous statement, and introduces into the apostolic writings, and especially into the argumentative part of them, where so great use is made of the Old Testament, no small measure of uncertainty. Let the reader examine the passages in question, keeping in view. at the same time, the typical nature of the ancient economy, and he will have little difficulty in admitting the prophetic reference in most, if not in all of them. See Haldane

on Romans 1:17, for a very masterly view of this subject, with remarks on Matthew 2:16, and other passages supposed to demand the accommodation theory.

"Nothing can be more dishonorable," says that prince of English commentators, on the Epistle to the Romans, "to the character of divine revelation, and injurious to the edification of believers, than this method of explaining the quotations in the New Testament from the Old, not as predictions or interpretations, but as mere illustrations, by way of accommodation. In this way, many of the prophecies referred to in the Epistles are set aside from their proper application, and Christians are taught that they do not prove what the apostles adduced them to establish." In reference to the quotation in this place, there seems little difficulty in connection with the view, that though the primary reference be to the bringing up of the ark to Mount Zion, the ultimate one is to the glorious ascension of Jesus into the highest heavens. The Jews rightly interpret part of this psalm Ephesians 1:22-23.

He led captivity captive - The meaning of this in the Psalm is, that he triumphed over his foes. The margin is, "a multitude of captives." But this, I think, is not quite the idea. It is language derived from a conqueror, who not only makes captives, but who makes captives of those who were then prisoners, and who conducts them as a part of his triumphal procession. He not only subdues his enemy, but he leads his captives in triumph. The allusion is to the public triumphs of conquerors, especially as celebrated among the Romans, in which captives were led in chains (Tacitus, *Ann.* xii. 38), and to the custom in such triumphs of distributing presents among the soldiers; compare also Judges 5:30, where it appears that this was also an early custom in other nations. Burder, in Res. Alt u. neu Morgenland, in loc. When Christ ascended to heaven, he triumphed ever all his foes. It was a complete victory over the malice of the great enemy of God, and over those who had sought his life. But he did more. He rescued those who were the captives of Satan, and led them in triumph. Man was held by Satan as a prisoner. His chains were around him. Christ rescued the captive prisoner, and designed to make him a part of his triumphal procession into heaven, that thus the victory might be complete - triumphing not only over the great foe himself, but swelling his procession with the attending hosts of those who "had been" the captives of Satan, now rescued and redeemed.

And gave gifts unto men - Such as he specifies in Ephesians 4:11.

Verse 9

Now that he ascended - That is, it is affirmed in the Psalm that he "ascended" - "Thou hast ascended on high." This implies that there must have been a previous "descent;" or, as applicable to the Messiah, "it is a truth that he previously descended." It is by no means certain that Paul meant to say that the "word" "ascended" demonstrated that there must have been a previous descent; but he probably means that in the case of Christ there was, "in fact," a descent into the lower parts of the earth first. The language used here will appropriately express his descent to earth.

Into the lower parts of the earth - To the lowest state of humiliation. This seems to be the fair meaning of the words. Heaven stands opposed to earth. One is above; the other is beneath. From the one Christ descended to the other; and he came not only to the earth, but he stooped to the most humble condition of humanity here; see Philemon 2:6-8; compare notes on Isaiah 44:23. Some have understood this of the grave; others of the region of departed spirits; but these interpretations do not seem to be necessary. It is the "earth itself" that stands in contrast with the heavens; and the idea is, that the Redeemer descended from his lofty eminence in heaven, and became a man of humble rank and condition; compare Psalm 139:15.

Verse 10

He that descended is the same also that ascended - The same Redeemer came down from God, and returned to him. It was not a different being, but the same.

Far above all heavens - see the notes on Ephesians 1:20-23; compare Hebrews 7:26. He is gone above the visible heavens, and has ascended into the highest abodes of bliss; see the notes on 2 Corinthians 12:2.

That he might fill all things - Margin, "fulfil." The meaning is, "that he might fill all things by his influence, and direct and overrule all by his wisdom and power." Doddridge. See the notes on Ephesians 1:23.

Verse 11

And he gave some, apostles - He gave some to be apostles. The "object" here is to show that he has made ample provision for the extension and edification of his church On the meaning of the word "apostles," and on their appointment by the Saviour, see the notes on Matthew 10:1.

And some, prophets - He appointed some to be prophets; see the Romans 12:7, note; 1 Corinthians 12:28, note; 1 Corinthians 14:1, notes.

And some, evangelists - see the notes on Acts 21:8; compare 2 Timothy 4:5. The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. What was the precise office of the evangelist in the primitive church, it is now impossible to determine. The evangelist "may" have been one whose main business was "preaching," and who was not particularly engaged in the "government" of the church. The word properly means "a messenger of good tidings;" and Robinson (Lexicon) supposes that it denotes a minister of the gospel who was not located in any place, but who traveled as a missionary to preach the gospel, and to found churches. The word is so used now by many Christians; but it cannot be proved that it is so used in the New Testament. An explanation of the words which here occur may be found in Neander on the Primitive Church, in the Biblical Repository, vol. iv. pp. 258ff The office was distinct from that of the "pastor," the teacher, and the "prophet:" and was manifestly an office in which "preaching" was the main thing.

And some, pastors - Literally, "shepherds" - ποιμένας poimenascompare Matthew 9:36; Matthew 25:32; Matthew 26:31; Mark 6:34; Mark 14:27; Luke 2:8, Luke 2:15, Luke 2:18, Luke 2:20; John 10:2, John 10:11-12, John 10:14, John 10:16, where it is rendered "shepherd and shepherds;" also Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; in Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25, it is applied to the Lord Jesus as the great shepherd of the flock - the church. It is rendered "pastors" only in the place before us. The word is given to ministers of the gospel with obvious propriety, and with great beauty. They are to exercise the same watchfulness and care river the people of their charge which a shepherd does over his flock; compare the notes on John 21:15-16. The meaning here is, that Christ exercised a special care for his church by appointing "pastors" who would watch over it as a shepherd does over his flock.

And teachers - see the notes on Romans 12:7.

Verse 12

For the perfecting of the saints - On the meaning of the word rendered here as "perfecting" - καταρτισμὸν katartismon- see the notes on 2 Corinthians 13:9. It properly refers to "the restoring of anything to its place;" then putting in order, making complete, etc. Here it means that these various officers were appointed in order that everything in the church might be well arranged, or put into its proper place; or that the church might be

"complete." It is that Christians may have every possible advantage for becoming complete in love, and knowledge, and order.

For the work of the ministry - All these are engaged in the work of the ministry, though in different departments. Together they constituted the "ministry" by which Christ meant to establish and edify the church. All these offices had an existence at that time, and all were proper; though it is clear that they were not all designed to be permanent. The apostolic office was of course to cease with the death of those who were "the witnesses" of the life and doctrines of Jesus (compare notes on 1 Corinthians 9:1); the office of "prophets" was to cease with the cessation of inspiration; and in like manner it is possible that the office of teacher or evangelist might be suspended, as circumstances might demand. But is it not clear from this that Christ did not appoint "merely" three orders of clergy to be permanent in the church? Here are "five" orders enumerated, and in 1 Corinthians 12:28, there are "eight" mentioned; and how can it be demonstrated that the Saviour intended that there should be "three" only, and that they should be permanent? The presumption is rather that he meant that there should be but one permanent order of ministers, though the departments of their labor might be varied according to circumstances, and though there might be helpers, as occasion should demand. In founding churches among the pagan, and in instructing and governing them there, there is need of reviving nearly all the offices of teacher, helper, evangelist, etc., which Paul has enumerated as actually existing in his time.

For the edifying - For building it up; that is, in the knowledge of the truth and in piety; see the notes on Romans 14:19.

The body of Christ - The Church; see the notes on Ephesians 1:23.

Verse 13

Till we all come - Until all Christians arrive at a state of complete unity, and to entire perfection.

In the unity of the faith - Margin, into. The meaning is, until we all hold the same truths, and have the same confidence in the Son of God; see the notes on John 17:21-23.

And of the knowledge of the Son of God - That they might attain to the satire practical acquaintance with the Son of God, and might thus come to the maturity of Christian piety; see the notes on Ephesians 3:19.

Unto a perfect man - Unto a complete man. This figure is obvious. The apostle compares their condition then to a state of childhood. The perfect

man here refers to the man "grown up," the man of mature life. He says that Christ had appointed pastors and teachers that the infant church might be conducted to "maturity;" or become strong - like a man. He does not refer to the doctrine of "sinless perfection" - but to the state of manhood as compared with that of childhood - a state of strength, vigor, wisdom, when the full growth should be attained; see 1 Corinthians 14:20.

Unto the measure of the stature - Margin, or age. The word "stature" expresses the idea. It refers to the growth of a man. The stature to be attained to was that of Christ. He was the standard - not in size, not in age - but in moral character. The measure to be reached was Christ; or we are to grow until we become like him.

Of the fulness of Christ - see the notes on Ephesians 1:23. The phrase "the measure of the fulness," means, probably, the "full measure" - by a form of construction that is common in the Hebrew writings, where two nouns are so used that one is to be rendered as an adjective - "as trees of greatness" - meaning great trees. Here it means, that they should so advance in piety and knowledge as to become wholly like him.

Verse 14

That we henceforth be no more children - In some respects Christians "are" to be like children. They are to be docile, gentle, mild, and free from ambition, pride, and haughtiness; see the notes on Matthew 18:2-3. But children have other characteristics besides simplicity and docility. They are often changeable Matthew 11:17; they are credulous, and are influenced easily by others, and led astray, In these respects, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to be no longer children but urges them to put on the characteristics Of manhood; and especially to put on the firmness in religious opinion which became maturity of life.

Tossed to and fro - κλυδωνιζόμενοι kludōnizomenoiThis word is taken from waves or billows that are constantly tossed about - in all ages art image of instability of character and purpose.

And carried about with every wind of doctrine - With no firmness; no settled course; no helm. The idea is that of a vessel on the restless ocean, that is tossed about with every varying wind, and that has no settled line of sailing. So many persons are in regard to religious doctrines. They have no fixed views and principles. They hold no doctrines that are settled in their minds by careful and patient examination, and the consequence is, that they yield to every new opinion, and submit to the guidance of every new

teacher. The "doctrine" taught here is, that we should have settled religious opinions. We should carefully examine what is truth, and having found it, should adhere to it, and not yield on the coming of every new teacher. We should not, indeed, close our minds against conviction. We should be open to argument, and be willing to follow "the truth" wherever it will lead us. But this state of mind is not inconsistent with having settled opinions, and with being firm in holding them until we are convinced that we are wrong. No man can be useful who has not settled principles. No one who has not such principles can inspire confidence or be happy, and the first aim of every young convert should be to acquire settled views of the truth, and to become firmly grounded in the doctrines of the gospel.

By the sleight of men - The cunning skill "trickery" of people. The word used here - κυβεία kubeia- is from a word (κύβος kubos) meaning a cube or die, and properly means a game at dice. Hence, it means game, gambling; and then anything that turns out by mere chance or hap-hazard - as a game at dice does. It "may" possibly also denote the trick or fraud that is sometimes used in such games; but it seems rather to denote a man's forming his religious opinions by "the throw of a die;" or, in other words, it describes a man whose opinions seem to be the result of mere chance. Anything like casting a die, or like opening the Bible at random to determine a point of duty or doctrine, may come under the description of the apostle here, and would all be opposed to the true mode, that by calm examination of the Bible, and by prayer A man who forms his religious principles by chance, can un" form" them in the same way; and he who has determined his faith by one cast of the die, will be likely to throw them into another form by another. The phrase "the sleight of men" therefore I would render "by the mere chance of people, or as you may happen to find people, one holding this opinion, and the next that, and allowing yourself to be influenced by them without any settled principles."

Cunning craftiness - Deceit, trick, art; see 2 Corinthians 12:16; Luke 20:23; 1 Corinthians 3:19; notes, 2 Corinthians 4:2; 2 Corinthians 11:3, note.

Whereby they lie in wait to deceive - Literally, "Unto the method of deceit;" that is, in the usual way of deceit. Doddridge, "In every method of deceit." This is the true idea. The meaning is, that people would use plausible pretences, and would, if possible, deceive the professed friends of

Christ. Against such we should be on our guard; and not by their arts should our opinion be formed, but by the word of God.

Verse 15

But speaking the truth in love - Margin, "being sincere." The translation in the text is correct - literally, "truthing in love" - ἀληθεύοντες alētheuontesTwo things are here to be noted:

(1) The truth is "to be spoken" - the simple, unvarnished truth. This is the way to avoid error, and this is the way to preserve others from error. In opposition to all trick, and art, and cunning, and fraud, and deception, Christians are to speak the simple truth, and nothing but the truth. Every statement which they make should be unvarnished truth; every promise which they make should be true; every representation which they make of the sentiments of others should he simple truth. "Truth is the representation of things as they are;" and there is no virtue that is more valuable in a Christian than the love of simple truth.

(2) the second thing is, that the truth should be spoken "in love." There are other ways of speaking truth. It is sometimes spoken in a harsh, crabby, sour manner, which does nothing but disgust and offend When we state truth to others, it should he with love to their souls, and with a sincere desire to do them good. When we admonish a brother of his faults, it should not be in a harsh and unfeeling manner, but in love. Where a minister pronounces the awful truth of God about depravity, death, the judgment, and future woe, it should be in love. It should not be done in a harsh and repulsive manner; it should not he done as if he rejoiced that people were in danger of hell, or as if he would like to pass the final sentence; it should not be with indifference, or in a tone of superiority. And in like manner, if we go to convince one who is in error, we should approach him in love. We should not dogmatize, or denounce, or deal out anathemas. Such things only repel. "He has done about half his work in convincing another of error who has first convinced him that he loves him;" and if he does not do that, he may argue to the hour of his death and make no progress in convincing him.

May grow up into him - Into Christ; that is, to the stature of a complete man in him.

Which is the head - Ephesians 1:22 note; 1 Corinthians 11:3 note.

Verse 16

From whom the whole body - The church, compared with the human body. The idea is, that as the head in the human frame conveys vital influence, rigor, motion, etc., to every part of the body; so Christ is the source of life, and rigor, and energy, and increase to the church. The sense is, "The whole human body is admirably arranged for growth and rigor. Every member and joint contribute to its healthful and harmonious action. One part lends vigor and beauty to another, so that the whole is finely proportioned and admirably sustained. All depend on the head with reference to the most important functions of life, and all derive their vigor from that. So it is in the church. It is as well arranged for growth and vigor as the body is. It is as beautifully organized in its various members and officers as the body is. Everything is designed to he in its proper place, and nothing by the divine arrangement is lacking in its organization, to its perfection. Its officers and its members are, in their places, what the various parts of the body are with reference to the human frame. The church depends on Christ, as the head, to sustain, invigorate, and guide it, as the body is dependent on the head" See this figure carried out to greater length in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26.

Fitly joined together - The body, whose members are properly united so as to produce the most beauty and vigor. Each member is in the best place, and is properly united to the other members. Let anyone read Paley's Natural Theology, or any work on anatomy, and he will find innumerable instances of the truth of this remark; not only in the proper adjustment and placing of the members, but in the manner in which it is united to the other parts of the body. The foot, for instance, is in its proper place. It should not be where the head or the hand is. The eye is in its proper place. It should not be in the knee or the heel. The mouth, the tongue, the teeth, the lungs, the heart, are in their proper places. No other places would answer the purpose so well. The brain is in its proper place. Anywhere else in the body, it would be subject to compressions and injuries which would soon destroy life. And these parts are as admirably united to file other parts of the body, as they are admirably located. Let anyone examine, for instance, the tendons, nerves, muscles, and bones, by which the "foot" is secured to the body, and by which easy and graceful motion is obtained, and he will be satisfied of the wisdom by which the body is "joined together." How far the "knowledge" of the apostle extended on this point, we have not the means of ascertaining; but all the investigations of anatomists only serve to give

increased beauty and force to the general terms which he uses here. All that he says here of the human frame is strictly accurate, and is such language as may be used by an anatomist now, The word which is used here (συναρμολογέω sunarmologeō) means properly to sew together; to fit together; to unite, to make one. It is applied often to musicians, who produce "harmony" of various parts of music. "Passow." The idea of harmony, or appropriate union, is that in the word.

And compacted - συμβιβαζόμενον sumbibazomenonTyndale renders this, "knit together in every joint." The word properly means, to make to come together; to join or knit together. It means here that the different parts of the body are "united" and sustained in this manner.

By that which every joint supplieth - Literally, "through every joint of supply;" that is, which affords or ministers mutual aid. The word "joint" hero - ἁφή haphē- (from ἅπτω to fit) - means anything which binds, fastens, secures; find does not refer to the joint in the sense in which we commonly use it, as denoting "the articulation" of the limbs, or the joining of two or more bones; but rather that which "unites or fastens" together the different parts of the frame - the blood vessels, cords, tendons, and muscles. The meaning is, that every such "means of connecting one part of the body with another" ministers nourishment, and that thus the body is sustained. One part is dependent on another; one part derives nourishment from another; and thus all become mutually useful as contributing to the support and harmony of the whole. Thus, it furnishes an illustration of the "connection" in the members of the church, and of the aid which one can render to another.

According to the effectual working - Greek, "According to the energy in the measure of each one part." Tyndale, "According to the operation as every part has its measure." The meaning is, that each part contributes to the production of the whole result, or "labors" for this. This is in proportion to the "measure" of each part; that is, in proportion to its power. Every part labors to produce the great result. No one is idle; none is useless. But, none are overtaxed or overworked. The support demanded and furnished by every part is in exact proportion to its strength. This is a beautiful account of the anatomy of the human frame.

(1) nothing is useless. Every part contributes to the general result - the health, and beauty, and vigor of the system. Not a muscle is useless; not a nerve, not an artery, not a vein. All are employed, and all have an important

place, and all contribute “something” to the health and beauty of the whole. So numerous are the bloodvessels, that you cannot perforate the skin anywhere without piercing one; so numerous are the pores of the skin, that a grain of sand will cover thousands of them; so minute the ramifications of the nerves, that wherever the point of a needle penetrates, we feel it; and so numerous the absorbents, that million of them are employed in taking up the chyme of the food, and conveying it to the veins. And yet all are employed - all are useful - all minister life and strength to the whole.

(2) none are overtaxed. They all work according to the “measure” of their strength. Nothing is required of the minutest nerve or blood-vessel which it is not suited to perform; and it will work on for years without exhaustion or decay. So of the church. There is no member so obscure and feeble that he may not contribute something to the welfare of the whole; and no one is required to labor beyond his strength in order to secure the great object. Each one in “his place,” and laboring as he should there, will contribute to the general strength and welfare; “out of his place” - like nerves and arteries out of their place, and crossing and recrossing others - he will only embarrass the whole, and disarrange the harmony of the system.

Maketh increase of the body - The body grows in this manner.

Unto the edifying of itself - To building itself up that is, it grows up to a complete stature.

In love - In mutual harmony. This refers to the “body.” The meaning is that it seems to be made on the principle of “love.” There is no jar, no collision, no disturbance of one part with another. A great number of parts, composed of different substances, and with different functions - bones, and nerves, and muscles, and blood-vessels - are united in one, and live together without collision; and so it should be in the church. Learn, hence:

(1) That no member of the church need be useless, anymore than a minute nerve or blood-vessel in the body need be useless. No matter how obscure the individual may be, he may contribute to the harmony and vigor of the whole,

(2) Every member of the church should contribute something to the prosperity of the whole. He should no more be idle and unemployed than a nerve or a blood-vessel should be in the human system. What would be the

effect if the minutest nerves and arteries of the body should refuse to perform their office?. Langour, disease, and death. So it is in the church. The obscurest member may do "something" to destroy the healthful action of the church, and to make its piety languish and die.

(3) there should be union in the church. It is made up of materials which differ much from each other, as the body is made up of bones, and nerves, and muscles. Yet, in the body these are united; and so it should be in the church. There need be no more jarring in the church than in the body; and a jar in the church produces the same effect as would be produced in the body if the nerves and muscles should resist the action of each other, or as if one should be out of its place, and impede the healthful functions of the other.

(4) every member in the church should keep his place, just as every bone, and nerve, and muscle in the human frame should. Every member of the body should be in its right position; the heart, the lungs, the eye, the tongue, should occupy their right place; and every nerve in the system should be laid down just where it is designed to be. If so, all is well If not so, all is deformity, or disorder; just as it, is often in the church.

Verse 17

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord - I bear witness in the name of the Lord Jesus, or ministering by his authority. The object of this is, to exhort them to walk worthy of their high calling, and to adorn the doctrine of the Saviour. With this view, he reminds them of what they were before they were converted, and of the manner in which the pagan around them lived.

That ye henceforth walk not - That you do not henceforth live - the Christian life being often in the Scriptures compared to a journey.

As other Gentiles walk - This shows that probably the mass of converts in the church at Ephesus were from among the pagan, and Paul regarded them as Gentile converts. Or it may be that he here addressed himself more particularly to that portion of the church, as especially needing his admonition and care.

In the vanity of their mind - In the way of folly, or in mental folly. What he means by this he specifies in the following verses. The word "vanity" in the Scriptures means more than mere "emptiness." It denotes

moral wrong, being applied usually to those who worshipped vain idols, and then those who were alienated from the "true" God.

Verse 18

Having the understanding darkened - That is, because they were alienated from the true God, and particularly because of "the blindness of their hearts." The apostle does not say that this was a "judicial" darkening of the understanding; or that they might not have perceived the truth; or that they had no ability to understand it. He speaks of a simple and well-known fact - a fact that is seen now as well as then that the understanding becomes darkened by indulgence in sin. A man who is intemperate, has no just views of the government of the appetites. A man who is unchaste, has no perception of the loveliness of purity. A man who is avaricious or covetous, has no just views of the beauty of benevolence. A man who indulges in low vices, will weaken his mental powers, and render himself incapable of intellectual effort. Indulgence in vice destroys the intellect as well as the body, and unfits a man to appreciate the truth of a proposition in morals, or in mathematics, or the beauty of a poem, as well as the truth and beauty of religion.

Nothing is more obvious than that indulgence in sin weakens the mental powers, and renders them unfit for high intellectual effort. This is seen all over the pagan world now - in the stolid, stupid mind; the perverted moral sense; the incapacity for profound or protracted mental effort, as really as it was among the pagans to whom Paul preached. The missionary who goes among the pagan has almost to create an "intellect" as well as a "conscience," before the gospel will make an impression. It is seen, too, in all the intellect of the bar, the senate, the pulpit, and the medical profession, that is ruined by intemperance, and in the intellect of multitudes of young men wasted by licentiousness and drunkenness. I know that under the influence of ambition and stimulating drinks, the intellect may seem to put forth unnatural efforts, and to glow with an intensity nowhere else seen. But it "soon burns out" - and the wastes of such an intellect become soon like the hardened scoriae of the volcano, or the cinders of the over-heated furnace. Learn hence, that if a man wishes to be blessed with a clear understanding, he should he a "good man." He who wishes a mind well balanced and clear, should fear and love God; and had Christianity done no other good on earth than to elevate the "intellect" of mankind, it would have been the richest blessing which has ever been vouchsafed to the race. It

follows, too, that as man has debased his "understanding" by sin, it is needful to make an exertion to elevate it again: and hence a large part of the efforts to save people must consist in patient "instruction." Hence, the necessity of schools at missionary stations.

Being alienated - see the notes on Ephesians 2:12.

From the life of God - From a life "like" that of God, or a life of which he is the source and author. The meaning is, that they lived a life which was "unlike" God, or which he could not approve. Of the truth of this in regard to the pagan everywhere, there can be no doubt; see the notes on Romans 1:20-23.

Because of the blindness of their heart - Margin, "hardness." Hardness is a better word. It is a better translation of the Greek; and it better accords with the design of the apostle. Here the reason is stated why they lived and acted as they did, and why the "understanding" was blinded. It is not that God has enfeebled the human intellect by a judicial sentence on account of the sin of Adam, and made it incapable of perceiving I the truth. It is not that there is any I deficiency or incapacity of natural powers. It is not that the truths of religion are so exalted that man has no natural ability to understand them, for they may be as well understood as any other truth; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 1:14. The simple reason is, "the hardness or the heart." That is the solution given by an inspired apostle, and that is enough. A man who has a blind and hard heart sees no beauty in truth, and feels not its force, and is insensible to all its appeals. Learn, then:

(1) That people are to blame for the blindness of their understanding. Whatever proceeds from a "wicked heart" they are responsible for. But for mere "inferiority of intellect" they would not be to blame.

(2) they are under obligation to repent and love God. If it was required of them to enlarge their intellects, or create additional faculties of mind, they could not be bound to do it. But where the whole thing required is to have a "better heart," they may be held responsible.

(3) the way to elevate the understandings of mankind is to purify the heart. The approach must be made through the affections. Let people "feel" right toward God, and they will soon "think" right; let the heart be pure, and the understanding will be clear.

(Doubtless there is a reciprocal influence between the dark mind and depraved heart. The one acts on the other. Admitting that the understanding is affected "first," through the will or heart, and that it is a bad heart which makes a spiritually dark mind, still the fact remains the same, that "in consequence of our union with Adam, in consequence of the fall," all our faculties, understanding, will, affections, have been corrupted. See the supplementary notes, Romans 5)

Verse 19

Who being past feeling - Wholly hardened in sin. There is a total want of all emotion on moral subjects. This is an accurate description of the state of a sinner. He has no "feeling," no emotion. He often gives an intellectual assent to the truth, But it is without emotion of any kind. The heart is insensible as the hard rock.

Have given themselves over - They have done it voluntarily. In Romans 1:24, it is said that "God gave them up." There is no inconsistency. Whatever was the agency of God in it, they preferred it; compare notes on Romans 1:21.

Unto lasciviousness - see the notes on Romans 1:24-26.

Verse 20

But ye have not so learned Christ - You have been taught a different thing by Christ; you have been taught that his religion requires you to abandon such a course of life.

Verse 21

If so be that ye have heard him - If you have listened attentively to his instructions, and learned the true nature of his religion. There may be a slight and delicate doubt implied here whether they had attentively listened to his instructions. Doddridge, however, renders it, "Seeing ye have heard him;" compare notes on Ephesians 3:2.

And have been taught by him - By his Spirit, or by the ministers whom he had appointed.

As the truth is in Jesus - If you have learned the true nature of his religion as he himself taught it. What the truth was which the Lord Jesus taught, or what his principles implied, the apostle proceeds to state in the following verses.

Verse 22

That ye put off - That you lay aside, or renounce. The manner in which the apostle states those duties, renders it not improbable that there had been some instruction among them of a contrary character, and that it is possible there had been some teachers there who had not enforced, as they should bare done, the duties of practical religion.

Concerning the former conversation - The word "conversation" here means conduct - as it commonly does in the Bible; see the notes, 2 Corinthians 1:12. The meaning here is, "with respect to your former conduct or habits of life, lay aside all that pertained to a corrupt and fallen nature." You are not to lay "everything" aside that formerly pertained to you. Your dress, and manners, and modes of speech and conversation, might have been in many respects correct. But everything that proceeded from sin; every habit, and custom, and mode of speech and of conduct that was the result of depravity, is to be laid aside. The special characteristics of an unconverted man you are to put off, and are to assume those which are the proper fruits of a renewed heart.

The old man - see the notes on Romans 6:6.

Which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts - The meaning is:

(1) That the unrenewed man is not under the direction of reason and sound sense, but is controlled by his "passions and desires." The word "lusts," has a more limited signification with us than the original word. That word we now confine to one class of sensual appetites; but the original word denotes any passion or propensity of the heart. It may include avarice, ambition, the love of pleasure, or of gratification in any way; and the meaning here is, that the heart is by nature under the control of such desires.

(2) those passions are deceitful. They lead us astray, They plunge us into ruin. All the passions and pleasures of the world are illusive. They promise more than they perform; and they leave their deluded votaries to disappointment and to tears. Nothing is more "deceitful" than the promised pleasures of this world; and all who yield to them find at last that they "flatter but to betray."

Verse 23

And be renewed - That is, it is necessary that a man who has been following these should become a new man; see the notes on John 3:3 ff., compare the notes on 2 Corinthians 4:16. The word used here - ἀνανεόω

ananeoō- does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament; but it has the same meaning as the word used in 2 Corinthians 4:16, and Colossians 3:10. It means to make new, and is descriptive of the work of regeneration. This was addressed to the church, and to those whom Paul regarded as Christians; and we learn from this:

(1) that it is necessary that man should be "renewed" in order to be saved.

(2) that it is proper to exhort Christians to be renewed. They need renovated strength every day.

(3) that it is a matter of "obligation" to be renewed. People are "bound" thus to be renovated, And,

(4) that they have sufficient natural ability to change from the condition of the old to that of the "new" man, or they could not be exhorted to it.

(See the supplementary Romans 8:7, note; Galatians 5:17, note.)

In the spirit of your mind - In your temper; your heart; your nature.

Verse 24

And that ye put on the new man - The new man refers to the renovated nature. This is called in other places, the "new creature, or the new creation" (see the notes on 2 Corinthians 5:17), and refers to the condition after the heart is changed. The change is so great, that there is no impropriety in speaking of one who has experienced it as "a new man." He has new feelings, principles, and desires. He has laid aside his old principles and practices, and, in everything that pertains to moral character, he is new. His body is indeed the same; the intellectual structure of his mind the same; but there has been a change in his principles and feelings which malco him, in all the great purposes of life, a new being. Learn, that regeneration is not a trifling change. It is not a mere change of relations, or of the outward condition. It is not merely being brought from the world into the church, and being baptized, though by the most holy hands; it is much more. None of these things would make proper the declaration, "he is a new man." Regeneration by the Spirit of God does.

After God - κατὰ Θεὸν kata TheonIn respect to God. The idea is, evidently, that man is so renewed as to become "like" God, or the divine

image is restored to the soul. In the parallel passage in Colossians Colossians 3:9, the idea is expressed more fully, "renewed in knowledge after "the image" of him that created him." Man, by regeneration, is restored to the lost image of God; compare Genesis 1:26.

Is created - A word that is often used to denote the new birth, from its strong resemblance to the first act of creation; see it explained in the notes on 2 Corinthians 5:17.

In righteousness - That is, the renewed man is made to resemble God in righteousness. This proves that man, when he was made, was righteous; or that righteousness constituted a part of the image of God in which lie was created. The object of the work of redemption is to restore to man the lost image of God, or to bring him back to the condition in which he was before he fell.

And true holiness - Margin, as in Greek, "holinese of truth" - standing in contrast with "lusts of deceit" (Greek), in Ephesians 4:22. "Holiness" properly refers to purity toward God, and "righteousness" to integrity toward people; but it is not cerrain that this distinction is observed here. The general idea is, that the renovated man is made an upright and a pious man; and that, therefore, he should avoid the vices which are practiced by the pagan, and which the apostle proceeds to specify. This phrase also proves that, when man was created, he was a holy being.

Verse 25

Wherefore putting away lying - It may seem strange that the apostle should seriously exhort Christians to put away "lying," implying that they were in the habit of indulging in falsehood. But we are to remember:

(1) that lying is the universal vice of the pagan world. Among the ancient pagans, as among the moderns, it was almost universally practiced. It has been remarked by a distinguished jurist who had spent much time in India, that he would not believe a Hindu on his oath. The same testimony is borne by almost all the missionaries. of the character of pagans everywhere. No confidence can be placed in their statements; and, where there is the slightest temptation to falsehood, they practice it without remorse.

(2) the Ephesians had been recently converted, and were, to a great extent, ignorant of the requirements of the gospel. A conscience has to be "created" when pagans are converted, and it is long before they see the evils of many things which appear to us to be palpably wrong.

(3) the effects of former habits abide long, often, after a man is converted. He who has been in the habit of profane swearing, finds it difficult to avoid it; and he who has been all his life practicing deception, will find himself tempted to practice it still. It was for reasons such as these, probably, that the apostle exhorted the Ephesians to put away "lying," and to speak the truth only. Nor is the exhortation now inappropriate to Christians, and there are many classes to whom it would now be proper - such as the following:

(1) He who is in the habit of concealing the defects of an article in trade, or of commending it for more than its real value - "let him put away lying."

(2) he, or she, who instructs a servant to say that they are not at home, when they are at home: or that they are sick, when they are not sick or that they are engaged, when they are not engaged - "let them put away lying."

(3) he that is in the habit of giving a coloring to his narratives; of conveying a false impression by the introduction or the suppression of circumstances that are important to the right understanding of an account - "let him put away lying."

(4) he that is at no pains to ascertain the exact truth in regard to any facts that may affect his neighbor; that catches up flying rumors without investigating them, and that circulates them as undoubted truth, though they may seriously affect the character and peace of another - "let him put away lying."

(5) he that is in the habit of making promises only to disregard them - "let him put away lying." The community is full of falsehoods of that kind, and they are not all confined to the people of the world. Nothing is more important in a community than simple "truth" - and yet, it is to be feared that nothing is more habitually disregarded. No professing Christian can do any good who has not an unimpeachable character for integrity and truth - and yet who can lay his hand on his breast and say before God that he is in all cases a man that speaks the simple and unvarnished truth?

For we are members one of another - We belong to one body - the church - which is the body of Christ; see the notes Romans 5:12. The idea is, that falsehood tends to loosen the bonds of brotherhood. In the "human body" harmony is observed. The eye never deceives the hand, nor the hand the foot, nor the heart the lungs. The whole move harmoniously as if the one could put the utmost confidence in the other - and falsehood in the church is as ruinous to its interests as it would be to the body if one member was perpetually practicing a deception on another.

Verse 26

Be ye angry and sin not - It has been remarked that the direction here is conformable to the usage of the Pythagoreans, who were bound, when there were any differences among them, to furnish some token of reconciliation before the sun set. Burder, in Ros. Alt. u. neu. Morgenland, in loc. It is implied here:

(1) that there "may" be anger without sin; and,

(2) that there is special danger in all cases where there is anger that it will be accompanied with sin. "Anger" is a passion too common to need any description. It is an excitement or agitation of mind, of more or less violence, produced by the reception of a real or supposed injury, and attended commonly with a desire or purpose of revenge. The desire of revenge, however, is not essential to the existence of the passion, though it is probably always attended with a disposition to express displeasure, to chide, rebuke, or punish; compare Mark 3:5. To a great extent the sudden excitement on the reception of an injury is involuntary, and consequently innocent. Anger is excited when a horse kicks us; when a serpent hisses; when we dash our foot against a stone - and so when a man raises his hand to strike us. The "object or final cause" of implanting this passion in the mind of man is, to rouse him to an immediate defense of himself when suddenly attacked, and before his reason would, have time to suggest the proper means of defense. It prompts at once to self-protection; and when that is done its proper office ceases. If persevered in; it becomes sinful malignity. or revenge - always wrong. Anger may be excited against a "thing" as well as a "person;" as well against an act as a "man." We are suddenly excited by a wrong "thing," without any malignancy against the "man;" we may wish to rebuke or chide "that," without injuring "him." Anger is sinful in the following circumstances:

(1) When it is excited without any sufficient cause - when we are in no danger, and do not need it for a protection. We should be safe without it.

(2) when it transcends the cause, if any cause really exists. All that is beyond the necessity of immediate self-protection, is apart from its design, and is wrong.

(3) when it is against "the person" rather than the "offence." The object is not to injure another; it is to protect ourselves.

(4) when it is attended with the desire of "revenge." That is always wrong; Romans 12:17, Romans 12:19.

(5) when it is cherished and heightened by reflection. And,

(6) When there is an unforgiving spirit; a determination to exact the utmost satisfaction for the injury which has been done. If people were perfectly holy, that sudden "arousing of the mind" in danger, or on the reception of an injury; which would serve to prompt us to save ourselves from danger, would exist, and would be an important principle of our nature. As it is now, it is violent; excessive; incontrollable; persevered in - and is almost always wrong. If people were holy, this excitement of the mind would obey the first injunctions of "reasons," and be wholly under its control; as it is now, it seldom obeys reason at all - and is wholly wrong. Moreover, if all people were holy; if there were none "disposed" to do an injury, it would exist only in the form of a sudden arousing of the mind against immediate danger - which would all be right. Now, it is excited not only in view of "physical" dangers, but in view of the "wrongs" done by others - and hence it terminates on the "person" and not the "thing," and becomes often wholly evil.

Let not the sun go down - Do not cherish anger. Do not sleep upon it. Do not harbor a purpose of revenge; do not cherish ill-will against another. "When the sun sets on a man's anger, he may be sure it is wrong." The meaning of the whole of this verse then is, "If you be angry, which may be the case, and which may be unavoidable, see that the sudden excitement does not become sin. Do not let it overleap its proper bounds; do not cherish

it; do not let it remain in your bosom even to the setting of the sun. Though the sun be sinking in the west, let not the passion linger in the bosom, but let his last rays find you always peaceful and calm."

Verse 27

Neither give place to the devil - This has respect probably to the exhortation in the former verse. "Do not yield to the suggestions and temptations of Satan, who would take every opportunity to persuade you to cherish unkind and angry feelings, and to keep up a spirit of resentment among brethren." Many of our feelings, when we suppose we are merely defending our rights, and securing what is our own, are produced by the temptations of the devil. The heart is deceitful; and seldom more deceitful in any case than when a man is attempting to vindicate himself from injuries done to his person and reputation. The devil is always busy when we are angry, and in some way, if possible, will lead us into sin; and the best way to avoid his wiles is to curb the temper, and restrain even sudden anger. No man sins by "restraining" his anger: no man is certain that he will not who indulges it for a moment.

Verse 28

Let him that stole steal no more - Theft, like lying, was, and is, almost a universal vice among the pagan. The practice of pilfering prevails in, probably, every pagan community, and no property is safe which is not guarded, or so locked up as to be inaccessible. Hence, as the Christian converts at Ephesus had been long addicted to it, there was danger that they would fall into it again; and hence the necessity of special cautions on that head. We are not to suppose that "pilfering" was a common vice in the church, but the cautions on this point proceed on the principle that, where a man has been long in the habit of a particular sin, he is in great danger of falling into it again. Hence, we caution the man who has been intemperate against the least indulgence in intoxicating drinks; we exhort him not to touch that which would be so strong a temptation to him. The object of the apostle was to show that the gospel requires holy living in all its friends, and to entreat Christians at Ephesus in a special manner to avoid the vices of the surrounding pagan.

But rather let him labour - Let him seek the means of living in an honest manner, by his own industry, rather than by wronging others.

Working with his hands - Pursuing some honest employment. Paul was not ashamed to labor with "his own hands" Acts 20:35; and no man is

dishonored by labor. God made man for toil Genesis 2:15; and employment is essential to the happiness of the race. No man, who is "able" to support himself, has a "right" to depend on others; see the notes on Romans 12:11.

That he may have to give to him that needeth - Margin, "distribute." Not merely that may have the means of support, but that he may have it in his power to aid others. The reason and propriety of this is obvious. The human race is one great brotherhood. A considerable part "cannot" labor to support themselves. They are too old, or too young; or they are crippled, or feeble, or laid on beds of sickness. If others do not divide with them the avails of their labors, they will perish. We are required to laboar in order that we may have the privilege of contributing to their comfort. Learn from this verse:

(1) That every Christian should have some calling, business, or profession, by which he may support himself. The Saviour was carpenter; Paul a tentmaker; and no man is disgraced by being able to build a house or to construct a tent.

(2) Christianity promotes industry. It is rare that an idle man becomes a Christian; but if he does, religion makes him industrious just in proportion as it has influence over his mind. To talk of a "lazy Christian," is about the same as to talk of burning water or freezing fire.

(3) Christians should have some "useful" and "honest" employment. They should work "that which is good." They should not pursue an employment which will necessarily injure others. No man has a right to place a nuisance under the window of his neighbor; nor has he any "more" right to pursue an employment that shall lead his neighbor into sin or ruin him. An honest employment benefits everybody. A good farmer is a benefit to his neighborhood and country; and a good shoemaker, blacksmith, weaver, cabinetmaker, watchmaker, machinist, is a blessing to the community. He injures no one; he benefits all. How is it with the distiller, and the vender of alcoholic drinks? He benefits no one; he injures every body. Every quart of intoxicating drink that is taken from his house does evil somewhere - evil, and only evil, and that continually. No one is made better, or richer; no one is made more moral or industrious; no one is helped on the way to heaven by it. Thousands are helped on the way to hell by it, who are already in the path; and thousands are "induced" to walk in the way

to death who, but for that distillery, store, or tavern, might have walked in the way to heaven. Is this then "working that which is good?" Would Paul have done it? Would Jesus do it? Strange, that by a professing Christian it was ever done! See a striking instance of the way in which the Ephesian Christians acted when they were first converted, in the Acts of the Apostles, Acts 19:19; compare notes on that place.

(4) the main business of a Christian is not to "make money," and to become rich. It is that he may have the means of benefiting others. Beyond what he needs for himself, his poor, and sick, and aged, and afflicted brother and friend has a claim on his earnings - and they should be liberally bestowed.

(5) we should labor in "order" that we may have the means of doing good to others. It should be just as much a matter of plan and purpose to do this, as it is to labor in order to buy a coat, or to build a house, or to live comfortably, or to have the means of a decent burial. Yet how few are those who have any such end in view, or who pursue their daily toil definitely, "that they may have something to give away!" The world will be soon converted when all Christians make that the purpose of life; see the notes on Romans 12:11.

Verse 29

Let no corrupt communication proceed - see the notes on 1 Corinthians 15:33. The word rendered "corrupt" (σαπρὸς sapros) means bad, decayed, rotten, and is applied to putrid vegetable or animal substances. Then it is applied to a tree that is of a useless character, that produces no good fruit; Matthew 7:17. Then it is used in a moral sense, as our word "corrupt" is, to denote that which is depraved, evil. contaminating, and may denote here anything that is obscene, offensive, or that tends to corrupt others. The importance of this admonition will be appreciated when it is remembered:

(1) that such obscene and filthy conversation prevailed everywhere, and does still among the pagan. So general is this, that at almost every missionary station it has been found that the common conversation is so corrupt and defiling that missionaries have felt it necessary to send their

children home to be educated, in order to secure them from the contaminating influence of those around them.

(2) those who have had the misfortune to be familiar with the common conversation of the lower classes in any community, and especially with the conversation of young men, will see the importance of this admonition. Scarcely anything can be conceived more corrupt or corrupting, than that which often prevails among young men - and even young men in the academies and colleges of this land,

(3) its importance will be seen from the "influence" of such corrupt communications. "The passage of an impure thought through the mind leaves pollution behind it;" the expression of such a thought deepens the pollution on the soul, and corrupts others. It is like retaining an offensive carcase above ground, to pollute the air, and to diffuse pestilence and death, which should at once be buried out of sight. A Christian should be pure in his conversation. His Master was pure. His God is pure. The heaven to which he goes is pure. The religion which he professes is pure. Never should he indulge himself in an obscene allusion: never should he retail anecdotes of an obscene character, or smile when they are retailed by others. Never should he indulge in a jest having a double meaning; never should be listen to a song of this character. If those with whom he associates have not sufficient respect for themselves and him to abstain from such corrupt and corrupting allusions, he should at once leave them.

But that which is good to the use of edifying - Margin, to edify profitably." Greek, "to useful edification:" that is, adapted to instruct, counsel, and comfort others; to promote their intelligence anti purity. Speech is an invaluable gift; a blessing of inestimable worth. We may so speak as "always" to do good to others. We may give them some information which they have not; impart some consolation which they need; elicit some truth by friendly discussion which we did not know before, or recall by friendly admonition those who are in danger of going astray. He who talks for the mere sake of talking will say many foolish things; he whose great aim in life is to benefit others, will not be likely to say that which he will have occasion to regret; compare Matthew 12:36; Ecclesiastes 5:2; Proverbs 10:19; James 1:19.

Verse 30

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God - This is addressed to Christians, and it proves that it is possible for them to grieve the Holy Spirit. The word used here - λυπεῖτε lupeite- means properly to afflict with sorrow; to make sad or sorrowful. It is rendered to make sorry, or sorrowful, Matthew 14:9; Matthew 17:23; Matthew 18:31; Matthew 19:22; Matthew 26:22, Matthew 26:37; Mark 14:19; John 16:20; 2 Corinthians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 6:10; 2 Corinthians 7:8-9, 2 Corinthians 7:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13. It is rendered "grieved," Mark 10:22; John 21:17; Romans 14:15; 2 Corinthians 2:4-5; Ephesians 4:20; and once. "in heaviness," 1 Peter 1:6. The verb does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The common meaning is, to treat others so as to cause grief. We are not to suppose that the Holy Spirit literally endures "grief, or pain," at the conduct of people. The language is such as is suited to describe what "men" endure, and is applied to him to denote that kind of conduct which is "suited" to cause grief; and the meaning here is, "do not pursue such a course as is "suited" in its own nature, to pain the benevolent heart of a holy being. Do not act toward the Holy Spirit in a manner which would produce pain in the bosom of a friend who loves you. There is a course of conduct which will drive that Spirit from the mind as if he were grieved and pained - as a course of ingratitude and sin would pain the heart of an earthly friend, and cause him to leave you." If asked what that conduct is, we may reply:

(1) Open and gross sins. They are particularly referred to here; and the meaning of Paul is. that theft, falsehood, anger, and kindred vices, would grieve the Holy Spirit and cause him to depart.

(2) anger, in all its forms. Nothing is more suited to drive away all serious and tender impressions from the mind, than the indulgence of anger.

(3) Licentious thoughts and desires. The Spirit of God is pure, and he dwells not in a soul that is filled with corrupt imaginings.

(4) Ingratitude. "We" feel ingratitude more than almost anything else; and why should we suppose that the Holy Spirit would not feel it also?

(5) neglect. The Spirit of God is grieved by that. Often he prompts us to pray; he disposes the mind to seriousness, to the perusal of the Bible, to

tenderness and penitence. We neglect those favored moments of our piety, and lose those happy seasons for becoming like God.

(6) Resistance. Christians often resist the Holy Spirit. He would lead them to be dead to the world; yet they drive on their plans Of gain. He would teach them the folly of fashion and vanity; yet they deck themselves in the most frivolous apparel. He would keep them from the splendid party, the theater, and the ballroom; yet they go there. A l that is needful for a Christian to do in order to be eminent in piety, is to yield to the gentle influences which would draw him to prayer and to heaven.

Whereby ye are sealed - see the notes on 2 Corinthians 1:22.

Unto the day of redemption - see the notes on Ephesians 1:14.

Verse 31

Let all bitterness - see the notes on Ephesians 4:2.

And wrath - The word here does not differ essentially from anger.

Anger - see the note on Ephesians 4:26. All cherished, unreasonable anger.

And clamour - Noise, disorder, high words; such as men use in a brawl, or when they are excited. Christians are to be calm and serious. Harsh contentions and strifes; hoarse brawls and tumults, are to be unknown among them.

And evil-speaking - Slander, backbiting, angry expressions, tale-bearing, reproaches, etc.

With all malice - Rather, "with all evil" - κακίᾳ kakiaEvery kind and sort of evil is to be put away, and you are to manifest only that which is good.

Verse 32

And be ye kind one to another - Benignant, mild, courteous, "polite" - χρηστοὶ chrēstoi 1 Peter 3:8. Christianity produces true courteousness, or politeness. It does not make one rough, crabby, or sour; nor does it dispose its followers to violate the proper rules of social contact. The secret of true politeness is "benevolence," or a desire to make others happy; and a Christian should be the most polite of people. There is no religion in a sour, misanthropic temper; none in rudeness, stiffness, and repulsiveness; none in violating the rules of good breeding. There is a hollow-hearted politeness, indeed, which the Christian is not to aim at or copy. His politeness is to be based on "kindness;" Colossians 3:12. His courtesy is to be the result of

love, good-will, and a desire of the happiness of all others; and this will prompt to the kind of conduct that will render his conversation. with others agreeable and profitable.

Tender-hearted - Having a heart disposed to pity and compassion, and especially disposed to show kindness to the faults of erring brethren; for so the connection demands.

Forgiving one another - see the notes on Matthew 6:12.

As God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you - As God, on account of what Christ has suffered and done, has pardoned you. He has done it:

(1) "freely" - without merit on your part - when we were confessedly in the wrong.

(2) "fully;" he has forgiven "every" offence.

(3) "Liberally;" he has forgiven "many" offences, for our sins have been innumerable.

This is to be the rule which we are to observe in forgiving others. We are to do it "freely, fully, liberally." The forgiveness is to be entire, cordial, constant. We are not to "rake up" old offences, and charge them again upon them; we are to treat them as though they had not offended, for so God treats us Learn:

(1) That the forgiveness of an offending brother is a duty which we are not at liberty to neglect.

(2) the peace and happiness of the church depend on it. All are liable to offend their brethren, as all are liable to offend God; all need forgiveness of one another, as we all need it of God.

(3) there is no danger of carrying it too far. Let the rule be observed, "As God has forgiven you, so do you forgive others." Let a man recollect his own sins and follies; let him look over his life, and see how often he has offended God; let him remember that all has been forgiven; and then, fresh with this feeling, let him go and meet an offending brother, and say, "My brother, I forgive you. I do it frankly, fully, wholly. So Christ has forgiven me; so I forgive you. The offence shall be no more remembered. It shall not

be referred to in our contact to harrow up your feelings; it shall not diminish my love for you; it shall not prevent my uniting with you in doing good. Christ treats me, a poor sinner, as a friend; and so I will treat you."

EPHESIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

This chapter Ephesians 5:1-2.

2.The duty of avoiding the impure practices of the surrounding pagan, and of wholly breaking off from the vices in which even they themselves had indulged, before their conversion to Christianity; Ephesians 5:3-17.

3.The apostle cautions them particularly against the use of wine, and the revelry which attends its use, and exhorts them rather to engage in the exercises to which the Holy Spirit would prompt them, and to the services of praise and thanksgiving; Ephesians 5:18-20.

4.He exhorts they to mutual subjection; and particularly enjoins on wives the duty of being subject to their husbands; Ephesians 5:21-24.

5.The chapter closes with a statement of the duty of husbands to love their wives, illustrated by that which Christ showed for the church; Ephesians 5:25-33.

Verse 1

Be ye therefore followers of God - Greek, "Be imitators - μιμηταὶ mimētai- of God." The idea is not that they were to be the friends of God, or numbered among his followers, but that they were to imitate him in the particular thing under consideration. The word "therefore" - οὖν oun- connects this with the previous chapter, where he had been exhorting them to kindness, and to a spirit of forgiveness, and he here entreats them to imitate God, who was always kind and ready to forgive; compare Matthew 5:44-47; As he forgives us Ephesians 4:32, we should be ready to forgive others; as he has borne with our faults, we should bear with theirs; as he is ever ready to hear our cry when we ask for mercy, we should be ready to hear others when they desire to be forgiven; and as he is never weary with doing us good, we should never be weary in benefiting them.

As dear children - The meaning is, "as those children which are beloved follow the example of a father, so we, who are beloved of God, should follow his example." What a simple rule this is! And how much contention and strife would be avoided if it were followed! If every

Christian who is angry, unforgiving, and unkind, would just ask himself the question, "How does God treat me?" it would save all the trouble and heart-burning which ever exists in the church.

Verse 2

And walk in love - That is, let your lives be characterized by love; let that be evinced in all your deportment and conversation; see notes on John 13:34.

As Christ also hath loved us - We are to evince the same love for one another which he has done for us. He showed his love by giving himself to die for us, and we should evince similar love to one another; 1 John 3:16.

And hath given himself for us - "As Christ also hath loved us." We are to evince the same love for one another which he has done for us He showed his love by giving himself to die for us, and we should evince similar love to one another; 1 John 3:16. "And hath given himself for us." This is evidently added by the apostle to show what he meant by saying that Christ loved us, and what we ought to do to evince our love for each other. The strength of his love was so great that he was willing to give himself up to death on our account; our love for our brethren should be such that we would be willing to do the same thing for them; 1 John 3:16.

An offering - The word used here - προσφορά prosphora- means properly that which is "offered to God" in any way; or whatever it may be. It is, however, in the Scriptures commonly used to denote an offering without blood - a thank-offering - and thus is distinguished from a sacrifice or a bloody oblation. The word occurs only in Acts 21:26; Acts 24:17; Romans 15:16; Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 10:5, Hebrews 10:8, Hebrews 10:10, Hebrews 10:14, Hebrews 10:18. It means here that he regarded himself as an offering to God.

And a sacrifice - θυσίαν thusianChrist is here expressly called a "Sacrifice" - the usual word in the Scriptures to denote a proper sacrifice. A sacrifice was an offering made to God by killing an animal and burning it on an altar, designed to make atonement for sin. It always implied the "killing" of the animal as an acknowledgment of the sinner that he deserved to die. It was the giving up of "life," which was supposed to reside in the "blood" (see the notes on Romans 3:25), and hence it was necessary that "blood" should be shed. Christ was such a sacrifice; and his love was shown in his being willing that his blood should be shed to save people.

For a sweet-smelling savour - see the notes on 2 Corinthians 2:15, where the word "savor" is explained. The meaning here is, that the offering which Christ made of himself to God, was like the grateful and pleasant smell of "incense," that is, it was acceptable to him. It was an exhibition of benevolence with which he was pleased, and it gave him the opportunity of evincing his own benevolence in the salvation of people. The meaning of this in the connection here is that the offering which Christ made was one of "love." So, says Paul, do you love one another. Christ sacrificed himself by "love," and that sacrifice was acceptable to God. So do you show love one to another. Sacrifice everything which opposes it. and it will be acceptable to God. He will approve nil which is designed to promote love, as he approved the sacrifice which was made, under the influence of love, by his Son.

Verse 3

But fornication - A "common" vice among the pagan then as it is now, and one into which they were in special danger of falling; see Romans 1:29 note; 1 Corinthians 6:18 note.

And all uncleanness - Impurity of life; see the notes on Romans 1:24; compare Romans 6:19; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 4:19; Colossians 3:5.

Or covetousness - The "connection" in which this word is found is remarkable. It is associated with the lowest and most debasing vices, and this, as well as those vices, was not once to be "named" among them. What was Paul's estimate then of covetousness? He considered it as an odious and abominable vice; a vice to be regarded in the same light as the most gross sin, and as wholly to be abhorred by all who bore the Christian name see Ephesians 5:5. The covetous man, according to Paul, is to be ranked with the sensual, and with idolaters Ephesians 5:5, and with those who are entirely excluded from the kingdom of God Is this the estimate in which the vice is held now? Is it the view which professing Christians take of it? Do we not feel that there is a "great" difference between a covetous man and a man of impure and licentious life? Why is this? Because:

(1)it is so common;

(2)because it is found among those who make pretensions to refinement and even religion;

(3)because it is not so easy to define what is covetousness, as it is to define impurity of life; and,

(4)because the public conscience is seared, and the mind blinded to the low and grovelling character of the sin.

Yet, is not the view of Paul the right view? Who is a covetous man? A man who, in the pursuit of gold, neglects his soul, his intellect, and his heart. A man who, in this insatiable pursuit, is regardless of justice, truth, charity, faith, prayer, peace, comfort, usefulness, conscience; and who shall say that there is any vice more debasing or degrading than this? The time "may" come, therefore, when the covetous man will be regarded as deserving the same rank in the public estimation with the most vicious, and when to covet will be considered as much opposed to the spirit of the gospel as any of the vices here named. When that time shall come, the world's conversion will probably be not a distant event.

Let it not be once named among you - That is, let it not exist; let there be no occasion for mentioning such a thing among you; let it be wholly unknown. This cannot mean that it is wrong to "mention" these vices for the purpose of rebuking them, or cautioning those in danger of committing them - for Paul himself in this manner mentions them here, and frequently elsewhere - but that they should not "exist" among them.

As becometh saints - As befits the character of Christians, who are regarded as holy. Literally, "as becometh holy ones" - ἁγίοις hagioisf0.

Verse 4

Neither filthiness - That is, obscene, or indecent conversation. Literally, that which is shameful, or deformed - αἰσχρότης aischrotēsThe word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament.

Nor foolish talking - This word - μωρολογία mōrologia- does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means that kind of talk which is insipid, senseless, stupid, foolish; which is not suited to instruct, edify, profit - the idle "chitchat" which is so common in the world. The meaning is, that Christians should aim to have their conversation sensible, serious, sincere - remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment;" Matthew 12:36.

Nor jesting - εὐτραπελία eutrapeliaThis word occurs also nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means, that which is "well-turned" εὐ eu- well, and τρεπω trepō- to turn); and then that which is sportive, refined, courteous; and then "urbanity, humor, wit; and then jesting, levity" - which

is evidently the meaning here. The apostle would not forbid courteousness, or refinement of manners (compare 1 Peter 3:8), and the reference, therefore, must be to that which is light and trifling in conversation; to that which is known among us as jesting. It may be observed:

(1) that "courteousness" is not forbidden in the Scriptures, but is positively required; 1 Peter 3:8.

(2) "Cheerfulness" is not forbidden - for if anything can make cheerful, it is the hope of heaven.

(3) "Pleasantry" cannot be forbidden. I mean that quiet and gentle humor that arises from good-nature, and that makes one good-natured in spite of himself.

Such are many of the poems of Cowper, and many of the essays of Addison in the "Spectator" - a benevolent humor which disposes us to smile, but not to be malignant; to be good-natured, but not to inspire levity. But levity and jesting, though often manifested by ministers and other Christians, are as inconsistent with true dignity as with the gospel. Where were they seen in the conversation of the Redeemer? Where in the writings of Paul?

Which are not convenient - That is, which are not fit or proper; which do not become the character of Christians; notes, Romans 1:28. Christians should be grave and serious - though cheerful and pleasant. They should feel that they have great interests at stake, and that the world has too. They are redeemed - not to make sport; purchased with precious blood - for other purposes than to make people laugh. They are soon to be in heaven - and a man who has any impressive sense of that will habitually feel that he has much else to do than to make people laugh. The true course of life is midway between moroseness and levity; sourness and lightness; harshness and jesting. Be benevolent, kind, cheerful, bland, courteous, but serious. Be solemn, thoughtful, deeply impressed with the presence of God and with eternal things, but pleasant, affable, and benignant. Think not a smile sinful; but think not levity and jesting harmless.

But rather giving of thanks - Thanks to God, or praises are more becoming Christians than jesting. The idea here seems to be, that such employment would be far more appropriate to the character of Christians,

than idle, trifling, and indelicate conversation. Instead, therefore, of meeting together for low wit and jesting; for singing songs, and for the common discourse which often attends such "gatherings" of friends, Paul would have them come together for the purpose of praising God, and engaging in his service. Human beings are social in their nature; and it they do not assemble for good purposes, they will for bad ones. It is much more appropriate to the character of Christians to come together to sing praises to God, than to sing songs; to pray than to jest; to converse of the things of redemption than to tell anecdotes, and to devote the time to a contemplation of the world to come, than to trifles and nonsense.

Verse 5

For this ye know - Be assured of this. The object here is to deter from indulgence in those vices by the solemn assurance that no one who committed them could possibly be saved.

Nor unclean person - No one of corrupt and licentious life can be saved; see Revelation 22:15.

Nor covetous man, who is an idolater - That is, he bestows on money the affections due to God; see Colossians 3:5. To worship money is as real idolatry as to worship a block of stone. If this be so, what an idolatrous world is this! How many idolatrous are there in professedly Christian lands! How many, it is to be feared, in the church itself! And since every covetous man is certainly to be excluded from the kingdom of God, how anxious should we be to examine our hearts, and to know whether this sin may not lie at our door!

Hath any inheritance, … - Such an one shall never enter heaven. This settles the inquiry about the final destiny of a large portion of the world; and this solemn sentence our conscience and all our views of heaven approve. Let us learn hence:

(1) that heaven will be "pure."

(2) that it will be a "desirable" place for who would wish to live always with the licentious and the impure?

(3) it is right to reprove these vices and to preach against them. Shall we not be allowed to preach against those sins which will certainly exclude people from heaven?

(4) alarge part of the world is exposed to the wrath of God. What numbers are covetous! What multitudes are licentious! In how many places is licentiousness openly and unblushingly practiced! In how many more places in secret! And in how many more is the "heart" polluted, while the external conduct is moral; the soul "corrupt," while the individual moves in respectable society!

(5) what a world of shame will hell be! How dishonorable and disgraceful to be damned forever, and to linger on in eternal fires, because the man was too polluted to be admitted into pure society! Here, perhaps, he moved in fashionable life, and was rich and honored, and flattered; there he will be sent down to hell because his whole soul was corrupt, and because God would not suffer heaven to be contaminated by his presence!

(6) what doom awaits the "covetous" man! He, like the sensualist, is to be excluded from the kingdom of God. And what is to be his doom? Will he have a place apart from the common damned - a golden palace and a bed of down in hell? No. It will be no small part of his aggravation that he will be doomed to spend an eternity with those in comparison with whom on earth, perhaps, he thought himself to be pure as an angel of light.

(7) with this multitude of the licentious and the covetous, will sink to hell all who are not renewed and sanctified. What a prospect for the "happy," the fashionable, the moral, the amiable, and the lovely, who have no religion! For all the impenitent and the unbelieving, there is but one home in eternity. Hell is less terrible from its penal fires and its smoke of torment, than from its being made up of the profane, the sensual, and the vile; and its supremest horrors arise from its being the place where shall be gathered all the corrupt and unholy dwellers in a fallen world; all who are so impure that they cannot be admitted into heaven. Why then will the refined, the moral, and the amiable not be persuaded to seek the society of a pure heaven? to be prepared for the world where holy beings dwell?

Verse 6

Let no man deceive you - Let no one by artful pleas persuade you that; there will be no danger from practicing these vices, We may suppose that they would be under strong temptations to mingle in the "happy" and

festive scenes where these vices were not frowned on, or where they were practiced; or that they might be tempted to commit them by some of the plausible arguments which were then used for their indulgence. Many of their friends may have been in these circles; and they would endeavor to convince them that such were the customs which had been long practiced, and that there could be no harm still in their indulgence. Not a few philosophers endeavored, as is well known, to defend some of these practices, and even practiced them themselves; see the notes on Romans 1:18; Romans 2:8-9, note.

Upon the children of disobedience - see the Matthew 1:1, note; Romans 2:8, note.

Verse 7

Be not ye therefore partakers with them - Since these things displease God and expose to his wrath, avoid them.

Verse 8

For ye were sometimes darkness - see the Ephesians 2:11-12 notes; 1 Corinthians 6:11 note. The meaning here is, that they were themselves formerly sunk in the same ignorance, and practiced the same abominations.

But now are ye light in the Lord - Light is the emblem of happiness, knowledge, holiness. The meaning is, that they had been enlightened by the Lord to see the evil of these practices, and that they ought, therefore, to forsake them.

Walk as children of light - see the notes on Matthew 1:1, on the use of the word "son," or "children." The meaning here is, that they should live as became those who had been enlightened to see the evil of sin, and the beauty of virtue and religion; compare John 12:36, where the same phrase occurs.

Verse 9

For the fruit of the Spirit - That is, since the Holy Spirit through the gospel produces goodness, righteousness, and truth, see that you exhibit these in your lives, and thus show that you are the children of light. On the fruits of the Spirit, see the notes on Galatians 5:22-23.

Is in all goodness - Is seen in producing all kinds of goodness. He who is not good is not a Christian.

Verse 10

Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord - That is," Walk as children of light Ephesians 5:8, thus showing what is acceptable to the Lord."

Rosenmuller supposes that the participle is used here instead of the imperative. The meaning is, that by so living you will make a fair trial of what is acceptable to the Lord. The result on your happiness in this life and the next, will be such as to show that such a course is pleasing in his sight. Dr. Chandler, however, renders it as meaning that by this course they would show that they discerned and approved of what was acceptable to the Lord. See the notes on Romans 12:2, where a similar form of expression occurs.

Verse 11

And have no fellowship - See the sentiment here expressed fully explained in the notes on 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

The unfruitful works - The deeds of darkness that produce no "benefit" to the body or the soul. The word "unfruitful" is used here in contrast with the "fruit of the Spirit," Ephesians 5:9.

But rather reprove them - By your life, your conversation, and all your influence. This is the business of Christians. Their lives should be a standing rebuke of a sinful world, and they should be ever ready to express their disapprobation of its wickedness in every form.

Verse 12

For it is a shame even to speak … - ; compare notes, Romans 1:24-32. It is still a shame to speak of the practices of the pagan. Missionaries tell us that they "cannot" describe the images on the car of Juggernaut, or tell us what is done in the idol temples. All over the world the same thing is true. The cheek of modesty and virtue would be suffused with shame at the very mention of what is done by the worshippers of idols; and the same is true of what is done by multitudes in Christian lands, who are not worshippers of idols. Their deeds cannot be described in the circles of the refined and the delicate; they cannot be told in the presence of mothers and sisters. Is there not emphasis here in the words "even to speak of these things!" If the apostle would not allow them to name those things, or to "speak" of them, is it wise or safe for Christians now to be familiar with the accounts of those practices of pollution, and for ministers to portray them in the pulpit, and for the friends of "moral reform" to describe them before the world? The very "naming" of those abominations often produces improper associations in the mind; the description creates polluting images before the imagination; the exhibition of pictures, even for the purpose of condemning them, defiles the soul. There are some vices which, from the corruptions of the human heart, cannot be safely described, and it is to be feared that,

under the plea of faithfulness, many have done evil by exciting improper feelings, where they should have only alluded to the crime, and then spoken in thunder. Paul did not "describe" these vices, he denounced them; he did not dwell upon them long enough for the imagination to find employment, and to corrupt the soul. He mentioned the vice - and then he mentioned the wrath of God; he alluded to the sin, and then he spoke of the exclusion from heaven; compare notes on 1 Corinthians 6:18.

Which are done of them in secret - Many have supposed that there is an allusion here to the "mysteries" which were celebrated in Greece, usually at night, and far from the public eye. Many of these were indeed impure and abominable, but there is no necessity for supposing that there is such an allusion here. The reference may be to the vices which were secretly practiced then as now; the abominations which flee from the eye of day, and which are performed far from the public gaze.

Verse 13

But all things that are reproved - Margin, discovered. The word used here properly means proved, demonstrated, reproved, or convicted (see the notes on John 16:8); but it seems here to be used in the sense of disclosed, or discovered. The sense is, that "its true nature is demonstrated;" that is, it is made known.

Are made manifest by the light - The sense is, "light is the means of seeing what things are. We discern their form, nature, appearance, by it. So it is with the gospel - the light of the world. It enables us to see the true nature of actions. They are done in darkness, and are like objects in the dark. Their form and nature cannot then be known; but, when the light shines, we see what they are;" compare notes on John 3:20-21.

For whatsoever doth make manifest is light - "Anything which will show the real form and nature of an object, deserves to be called light." Of the truth of this, no one can doubt. The meaning in this connection is, that that system which discloses the true nature of what is done by the pagan, deserves to be considered as "light;" and that the gospel which does this, should be regarded as a system of light and truth. It discloses their odiousness and vileness, and it stands thus in strong contrast with all the false and abominable systems which have upheld or produced those vices.

Verse 14

Wherefore he saith - Margin, or "it." Διὸ λέγει Dio legeiThe meaning may be, either that the Lord says, or the Scripture. Much difficulty has been

experienced in endeavoring to ascertain "where" this is said. It is agreed on all hands that it is not found, in so many words, in the Old Testament. Some have supposed that the allusion is to Isaiah 26:19, "Thy dead men shall live - awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs," etc. But the objections to this are obvious and conclusive.

(1) this is not a quotation of that place, nor has it a "resemblance" to it, except in the word "awake."

(2) the passage in Isaiah refers to a different matter, and has a different sense altogether; see the notes on the passage.

To make it refer to those to whom the gospel comes, is most forced and unnatural. Others have supposed that the reference is to Isaiah 60:1-3, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come," etc. But the objection to this is not less decisive.

(1) it is "not" a quotation of that passage, and the resemblance is very remote, if it can be seen at all.

(2) "that" is addressed to the church, calling on her to let her light shine; "this," to awake and arise from the dead, with the assurance that Christ would give them light. The exhortation here is to Christians, to "avoid the vices of the pagan around them;" the exhortation in Isaiah is to the church, to "rejoice and exult" in view of the fact that the day of triumph had come, and that the pagan were to be converted, and to come in multitudes and devote themselves to God. In the "design" of the two passages there is no resemblance. Some have supposed that the words are taken from some book among the Hebrews which is now lost. Epiphanius supposed that it was a quotation from a prophecy of Elijah; Syncellus and Euthalius, from some writing of Jeremiah; Hippolytus, from the writing of some now unknown prophet. Jerome supposed it was taken from some apocryphal writings. Grotius supposes that it refers to the word "light" in Ephesians 5:13, and that the sense is," That light says; that is, that a man who is pervaded by that light, let him so say to another." Heumann, and after him Storr, Michaelis, and Jennings (Jewish Ant. 2:252), suppose that the reference is to a song or hymn that was sung by the early Christians, beginning in this manner, arid that the meaning is, "Wherefore, as it is said in the hymns which we sing,

‹Awake, thou that sleepest;
Arise from the dead;
Christ shall give thee light.‘

Others have supposed that there is an allusion to a sentiment which prevailed among the Jews, respecting the significancy of blowing the trumpet on the first day of the month, or the feast of the new moon. Maimonides conjectures that that call of the trumpet, especially in the month Tisri, in which the great day of atonement occurred, was designed to signify a special call to repentance; meaning, “You who sleep, arouse from your slumbers; search and try yourselves; think on your Creator, repent, and attend to the salvation of the soul.” “Burder,” in Ros. Alt. u. neu. Morgenland, in loc. But all this is evidently conjecture. I see no evidence that Paul meant to make a quotation at all. Why may we not suppose that he speaks as an inspired man, and that he means to say, simply, that God now gives this command, or that God now speaks in this way? The sense then would be, “Be separate from sinners. Come out from among the pagan. Do not mingle with their abominations; do not name them. You are the children of light; and God says to you, awake from false security, rouse from the death of sin, and Christ shall enlighten you.” Whatever be the origin of the sentiment in this verse, it is worthy of inspiration, and accords with all that is elsewhere said in the Scriptures.

(The grand objection to this view of our author is, that the apostle evidently introduces a citation. In the writings of Paul, the form διὸ λέγει dio legeiis never used in any other sense. Whence then is the quotation taken? There is nothing absurd in supposing, with Scott and Guyse, that the apostle gives the general sense of the Old Testament prophecies con cerning the calling of the Gentiles. But Isaiah 60:1-3, bears a sufficiently close resemblance to the passage in Ephesians, to vindicate the very commonly received opinion, that the apostle quotes that prophecy, in which the subject is the increase of the Church by the accession of the pagan nations. The church is called to arise and shine, and the apostle reminds the converted Ephesians of their lofty vocation. It forms no very serious objection, that between the place in Isaiah and that in Ephesians, there are certain verbal discrepancies. No one will make much of this, who remembers, nat in a multitude of cases similar variations occur, the apostles contenting themselves with giving the sense of the places to which they refer. “Accordingly,” says Dr. Dodridge, “the sense of tire passage before us is so

fairly deducible from the words of Isaiah, that I do not see any necessity of having recourse to this supposition," namely, that the quotation was from an apocryphal book ascribed to Jeremiah.)

Awake thou that sleepest - Arouse from a state of slumber and false security. "Sleep and death" are striking representations of the state in which people are by nature. In "sleep" we are, though living, insensible to any danger that may be near; we are unconscious of what may he going on around us; we hear not the voice of our friends; we see not the beauty of the grove or the landscape; we are forgetful of our real character and condition. So With the sinner. It is as if his faculties were locked in a deep slumber. He hears not when God calls; he has no sense of danger; he is insensible to the beauties and glories of the heavenly world; he is forgetful of his true character and condition. To see all this, he must be first awakened; and hence this solemn command is addressed to man. He must rouse from this condition, or he cannot be saved. But can he awaken himself? Is it not the work of God to awaken a sinner? Can he rouse himself to a sense of his condition and danger? How do we do in other things? The man that is sleeping on the verge of a dangerous precipice we would approach, and say, "Awake, you are in danger." The child that is sleeping quietly in its bed, while the flames are bursting into the room, we would rouse, and say, "Awake, or you will perish." Why not use the same language to the sinner slumbering on the verge of ruin, in a deep sleep, while the flames of wrath are kindling around him? We have no difficulty in calling on sleepers elsewhere to awake when in danger; how can we have any difficulty when speaking to the sinner?

And arise from the dead - The state of the sinner, is often compared to death; see the notes on Ephesians 2:1. People are by nature dead in sins; yet they must rouse from this condition, or they will perish. How singular, it may be said, to call upon the dead to rise! How could they raise themselves up? Yet God speak thus to people, and commands them to rise from the death of sin. Therefore, learn:

(1) That people are not dead in sin in any such sense that they are not moral agents, or responsible.

(2) that they are not dead in any such sense that they have no power of any kind.

(3) that it is right to call on sinners to arouse from their condition, and live.

(4) that they must put forth their efforts as if they were to "begin" the work themselves, without waiting for God to do it for them. "They" are to awake; "they" are to arise. It is not God who is to awake; it is not Christ who is to arise. It is the sinner who is to awake from his slumber, and arise from the state of death nor is he to wait for God to do the work for him.

And Christ shall give thee light - Christ is the light of the world; see the John 1:4, note, 9, note; John 8:12, note notes; Hebrews 1:3, note. The idea here is, that it they will use all the powers with which God has endowed them, and arouse from their spiritual slumber, and make an appropriate effort for salvation, then they may expect that Christ will shine upon them, and bless them in their efforts. This is just the promise that we need, and it is all that we need. All that man can ask is, that if he will make efforts to be saved, God will bless those efforts, so that they shall not be in vain. Faculties of mind have been given us to be employed in securing our salvation; and if we will employ them as they were intended to be employed, we may look for the divine aid; if not, we cannot expect it. "God helps those who help themselves;" and they who will make no effort for their salvation must perish as they wire will make no effort to provide food must starve. This command was indeed addressed at first to Christians; but it involves a principle which is applicable to all. Indeed, the "language" here is rather descriptive of the condition of impenitent sinners, than of Christians. In a far more important sense they are "asleep," and are "dead;" and with the more earnestness, therefore, should they be entreated to awake, and to rise from the dead, that Christ may give them light.

Verse 15

See then that ye walk circumspectly - carefully, anxiously, solicitous lest you fall into sin. The word rendered "circumspectly" - ἀκριβῶς akribōs- means "diligently," and the idea here is, that they were to take special pains to guard against the temptations around them, and to live as they ought to.

Not as fools, but as wise - Not as the people of this world live, indulging in foolish pleasures and desires, but as those who have been taught to understand heavenly wisdom, and who have been made truly wise.

Verse 16

Redeeming the time - The word rendered here as "redeeming," means "to purchase; to buy up" from the possession or power of anyone; and then to redeem, to set free - as from service or bondage; notes, Galatians 3:13. Here it means, to rescue or recover our time from waste; to improve it for great and important purposes.

Because the days are evil - Because the times in which you live are evil. There are many allurements and temptations that would lead you away from the proper improvement of time, and that would draw you into sin. Such were those that would tempt them to go to places of sinful indulgence and revelry where their time would be wasted, and worse than wasted. As these temptations abounded, they ought therefore to be more especially on their guard against a sinful and unprofitable waste of time. This exhortation may be addressed to all, and is applicable to all periods. The sentiment is, that we ought to be solicitous to improve our time to some useful purpose, because "there are, in an evil world, so many temptations to waste it." Time is given us for most valuable purposes. There are things enough to be done to occupy it all, and no one need have it hang heavy on his hands. He that has a soul to be saved from eternal death, need not have one idle moment. He that has a heaven to win, has enough to do to occupy all his time. Man has just enough given him to accomplish all the purposes which God designs, and God has not given him more than enough. They redeem their time who employ it:

(1)in gaining useful knowledge;

(2)in doing good to others;

(3)in employing it for the purpose of an honest livelihood for themselves and families;

(4)in prayer and self-examination to make the heart better;

(5)in seeking salvation, and in endeavoring to do the will of God.

They are to redeem time from all that would waste and destroy it - like recovering marshes and fens to make them rich meadows and vineyards. There is time enough wasted by each sinner to secure the salvation of the soul; time enough wasted to do all that is needful to be done to spread religion around the world, and to save the race. We should still endeavor to redeem our time for the same reasons which are suggested by the apostle -

because the days are evil. There are evil influences abroad; allurements and vices that would waste time, and from which we should endeavor to rescue it. There are evil influences tending to waste time:

(1)in the allurements to pleasure and amusement in every place, and especially in cities;

(2)in the temptations to novel-reading, consuming the precious hours of probation to no valuable purpose;

(3)in the temptations of ambition, most of the time spent for which is wholly thrown away, for few gain the prize, and when gained, it is all a bauble, not worth the effort;

(4)in dissipation - for who can estimate the amount of valuable time that is worse than thrown away in the places of revelry and dissipation;

(5)in wild and visionary plans - temptations to which abound in all lands, and pre-eminently in our own;

(6)and in luxurious indulgence - in dressing, and eating, and drinking.

Verse 17

Be ye not unwise - Be not fools in the employment of your time, and in your manner of life. Show true wisdom by endeavoring to understand what the will of the Lord is, and then doing it.

Verse 18

And be not drunk with wine - A danger to which they were exposed and a vice to which those around them were much addicted. Compare notes on Luke 21:34. It is not improbable that in this verse there is an allusion to the orgies of Bacchus, or to the festivals celebrated in honor of that pagan god. He was "the god of wine," and during those festivals, men and women regarded it as an acceptable act of worship to become intoxicated, and with wild songs and cries to run through streets, and fields, and vineyards. To these things the apostle opposes psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, as much more appropriate modes of devotion, and would have the Christian worship stand out in strong contrast with the wild and dissolute habits of the pagan. Plato says, that while those abominable ceremonies in the worship of Bacchus continued, it was difficult to find in all Attica a single sober man.

Rosenmuller, Alt. u. neu. Morgenland, in loc. On the subject of wine, and the wines used by the ancients, see the notes on John 2:10-11. We may learn from this verse:

(1) that it was not uncommon in those times to become intoxicated on wine; and,

(2) that it was positively forbidden. All intoxication is prohibited in the Scriptures - no matter by what means it is produced. There is, in fact, but one thing that produces intoxication. It is "alcohol" - the poisonous substance produced by fermentation. This substance is neither created nor changed, increased nor diminished, by distillation. It exists in the cider, the beer, and the wine, after they are fermented, and the whole process of distillation consists in driving it off by heat, and collecting it in a concentrated form, and so that it may be preserved. But distilling does not "make" it, nor change it. Alcohol is precisely the same thing in the wine that it is in the brandy after it is distilled; in the cider or the beer that it is in the whisky or the rum; and why is it right to become intoxicated on it in one form rather than in another? Since therefore there is danger of intoxication in the use of wine, as well as in the use of ardent spirits, why should we not abstain from one as well as the other? How can a man prove that it is right for him to drink alcohol in the form of wine, and that it is wrong for me to drink it in the form of brandy or rum?

Wherein is excess - There has been much difference of opinion about the word rendered here as excess - ἀσωτία asōtiaIt occurs only in two other places in the New Testament, where it is rendered "riot;" Titus 1:6; 1 Peter 4:4. The "adjective" occurs once Luke 15:13, where it is rendered riotous. The word (derived, according to Passow, from α athe alpha privative (not), and σώζω sōzō- to save, deliver) means that which is unsafe, not to be recovered; lost beyond recovery; then that which is abandoned to sensuality and lust; dissoluteness, debauchery, revelry. The meaning here is, that all this follows the use of wine. Is it proper then for Christians to be in the habit of drinking it? "Wine is so frequently the cause of this, by the ungrateful abuse of the bounty of providence in giving it, that the enormity is represented by a very strong and beautiful "figure" as contained in the very liquor." Doddridge.

But be filled with the Spirit - The Holy Spirit. How much more appropriate to Christians than to be filled with the spirit of intoxication and

revelry! Let Christians, when about to indulge in a glass of wine, think of this admonition. Let them remember that their bodies should be the temple of the Holy Spirit, rather than a receptacle for intoxicating drinks. Was any man ever made a better Christian by the use of wine? Was any minister ever better suited to counsel an anxious sinner, or to pray, or to preach the gospel, by the use of intoxicating drinks? Let the history of wine-drinking and intemperate clergymen answer.

Verse 19

Speaking to yourselves - Speaking among yourselves, that is, endeavoring to edify one another, and to promote purity of heart, by songs of praise. This has the force of a command, and it is a matter of obligation on Christians. From the beginning, praise was an important part of public worship, and is designed to be to the end of the world; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 14:15. Nothing is more clear than that it was practiced by the Saviour himself and the apostles (see Matthew 26:30), and by the primitive church, as well as by the great body of Christians in all ages.

In psalms - The Psalms of David were sung by the Jews at the temple, and by the early Christians (notes Matthew 26:30), and the singing of those psalms has constituted a delightful part of public worship in all ages. They speak the language of devotion at all times, and a large part of them are as well suited to the services of the sanctuary now as they were when first composed.

And hymns - It is not easy to determine precisely what is the difference in the meaning of the words used here, or to designate the kind of compositions which were used in the early churches. A “hymn” is properly a song or ode in honor of God. Among the pagan it was a song in honor of some deity. With us now it denotes a short poem, composed for religious service, and sung in praise to God. Such brief poems were common among the pagan, and it was natural that Christians should early introduce and adopt them. Whether any of them were composed by the apostles it is impossible now to determine, though the presumption is very strong that if they had been they would have been preserved with as much care as their epistles, or as the Psalms. One thing is proved clearly by this passage, that there were other compositions used in the praise of God than the Psalms of David; and if it was right then to make use of such compositions, it is now. They were not merely “Psalms” that were sung, but there were hymns and odes.

Spiritual songs - Spiritual "odes" - ᾠδᾶις ōdaisOdes or songs relating to spiritual things in contradistinction from these which were sung in places of festivity and revelry. An "ode" is properly a short poem or song adapted to be set to music, or to be sung; a lyric poem. In what way these were sung, it is now vain to conjecture. Whether with or without instrumental accompaniments; whether by a choir or by the assembly; whether by an individual only, or whether they were by responses, it is not possible to decide from anything in the New Testament. It is probable that it would be done in the most simple manner possible. Yet as music constituted so important a part of the worship of the temple, it is evident that the early Christians would be by no means indifferent to the nature of the music which they had in their churches. And as it was so important a part of the worship of the pagan gods, and contributed so much to maintain the influence of paganism, it is not unlikely that the early Christians would feel the importance of making their music attractive, and of making it tributary to the support of religion. If there is attractive music at the banquet, and in the theater, contributing to the maintenance of amusements where God is forgotten, assuredly the music of the sanctuary should not be such as to disgust those of pure and refined taste.

Singing - ᾄδοντες adontesThe prevailing character of music in the worship of God should be vocal. If instruments are employed, they should be so subordinate that the service may be characterized as singing.

And making melody - "Melody" is an agreeable succession of sounds; a succession so regulated and modulated as to please the ear. It differs from "harmony," inasmuch as melody is an agreeable succession of sounds by a single voice; harmony consists in the accordance of different sounds. It is not certain, however, that the apostle here had reference to what is properly called "melody." The word which he uses - ψάλλω psallō- means to touch, twitch, pluck - as the hair, the beard; and then to twitch a string - to "twang" it - as the string of a bow, and then the string of an instrument of music. It is most frequently used in the sense of touching or playing a lyre, or a harp; and then it denotes to make music in general, to sing - perhaps usually with the idea of being accompanied with a lyre or harp. It is used, in the New Testament, only in Romans 5:19; 1 Corinthians 14:15, where it is translated "sing;" in James 5:13, where it is rendered "sing psalms," and in the place before us. The idea here is, that of singing in the heart, or praising God from the heart. The psalms, and hymns, and songs were to be sung so that the

heart should be engaged, and not so as to be mere music, or a mere external performance. On the phrase "in the heart," see the notes on 1 Corinthians 14:15.

To the Lord - In praise of the Lord, or addressed to him. Singing, as here meant, is a direct and solemn act of worship, and should be considered such as really as prayer. In singing we should regard ourselves as speaking directly to God, and the words, therefore, should be spoken with a solemnity and awe becoming such a direct address to the great Yahweh. So Pliny says of the early Christians, "Carmenquc Christo quasi Deo dicere secure invicem" - "and they sang among themselves hymns to Christ as God." If this be the true nature and design of public psalmody, then it follows:

(1) that all should regard it as an act of solemn worship in which they should engage - in "heart" at least, if they cannot themselves sing.

(2) public psalmody should not be entrusted wholly to the light and frivolous; to the trifling and careless part of a congregation.

(3) they who conduct this part of public worship ought to be pious. The leader "ought" to be a Christian; and they who join in it "ought" also to give their hearts to the Redeemer. Perhaps it would not be proper to say absolutely that no one who is not a professor of religion should take part in the exercises of a choir in a church; but thoro can be no error in saying that such persons "ought" to give themselves to Christ, and to sing from the heart. Their voices would be none the less sweet; their music no less pure and beautiful; nor could their own pleasure in the service be lessened. A choir of sweet singers in a church - united in the same praises here - "ought" to be prepared to join in the same praises around the throne of God.

Verse 20

Giving thanks always - This is probably designed to be connected with the preceding verse, and to denote that the proper subject of psalms and hymns is thanksgiving and praise. This is indeed always the main design, and should be so regarded; and this part of worship should be so conducted as to keep up in the heart a lively sense of the mercy and goodness of God.

For all things - ὑπὲρ πάντων huper pantōn- for all things, or all "persons." Dr. Barrow supposes that the meaning here is, that they were to

give thanks for “all persons,” and to regard themselves as under obligations to give thanks for the mercies bestowed upon “the human race,” in accordance with the idea expressed in the Liturgy of the Episcopal church, “We, thine unworthy servants, do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for thy goodness and loving-kindness to us, and to all men.” This idea is beautiful: and it accords with the requirements of the Scriptures elsewhere; 1 Timothy 2:1. “I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all people. Such is the duty of Christians; and I see no departure from the fair meaning of the words here, in supposing that the apostle may have designed to express such an idea. The sense, according to this, would be, that we are to praise God for his general mercy to mankind; for all the happiness which mortals are permitted to enjoy; for the love of God to mankind in creation, in providence, and in redemption - just as a grateful child will give thanks for all the kindness shown to his brothers and sisters One obvious effect of this would be to overcome “selfishness,” and to make us rejoice in the happiness of others as well as in our own.

Another effect would be to make us feel a deeper interest in the condition of our fellow creatures. Another would be to elevate and enlarge our conceptions of the goodness of God - directing the mind to all the favors which he has bestowed on the race. Man has much for which to be grateful; and the duty of acknowledging the mercy of God to the race should not be forgotten. We are often prone so to magnify our calamities, and to contemplate the woes of the race, that we overlook the occasions for gratitude; and we should, therefore, look upon the “mercies” which we enjoy as well as the miseries which we endure, that our hearts may be right. He who looks only on his trials will soon find his mind soured and complaining; he who endeavors to find how many occasions for gratitude he has, will soon find the burden of his sorrows alleviated, and his mind tranquil and calm. Yet, if the words here are to be taken as in our translation, “for all things.” they are full of force and beauty. At the close of life, and in heaven, we shall see occasion to bless God for all his dealings with us. We shall see that we have not suffered one pang too much, or been required to perform one duty too severe. We shall see that all our afflictions, as well as our mercies were designed for our good, and were needful for us. Why then should we not bless God in the furnace as well as in the palace; on a bed of pain as well as on a bed of down; in want as well as when

sitting down at the splendid banquet? God knows what is best for us; and the way in which he leads us, mysterious though it seem to be now, will yet be seen to have been full of goodness and mercy.

Unto God and the Father - Or, "to God, even the Father." It cannot mean to God as distinguished from the Father, or first to God and then to the Father, as if the Father were distinct from God. The meaning is, that thanks are to be given specially to God the Father - the great Author of all mercies, and the source of all blessings.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ - That is, through his mediation, or trusting in him; see the notes on John 14:13. The meaning is, that we are "always" to approach God through the mediation of the Lord Jesus. When we ask for mercy, it is to be on his account, or through his merits; when we plead for strength and grace to support us in trial, it is to be in dependence on him; and when we give thanks, it is to be through him, and because it is through his intervention that we receive all blessings, and by his merits that even the gratitude of beings so sinful as we are can be accepted.

Verse 21

Submitting yourselves one to another - Maintaining due subordination in the various relations of life. This general principle of religion, the apostle proceeds now to illustrate in reference to wives Ephesians 5:22-24; to children Ephesians 6:1-3; and to servants, Ephesians 6:5-8. At the same time that he enforces this duty of submission, however, he enjoins on others to use their authority in a proper manner, and gives solemn injunctions that there should be no abuse of power. Particularly he enjoins on husbands the duty of loving their wives with all tenderness Ephesians 5:25-33; on fathers, the duty of treating their children so that they might easily obey them Ephesians 6:4; and on masters, the duly of treating their servants with kindness, remembering that they have a Master also in heaven; Ephesians 6:9. The general mean ing here is, that Christianity does not break up the relations of life, and produce disorder, lawlessness, and insubordination; but that it will confirm every proper authority, and make every just yoke lighter. Infidelity is always disorganizing; Christianity, never.

Verse 22

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands - On this passage, compare notes on 1 Corinthians 11:3-9. The duty of the submission of the wife to her husband is everywhere enjoined in the Scriptures; see 1 Peter 3:1; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5. While Christianity designed to elevate the

character of the wife, and to make her a fit companion of an intelligent and pious husband, it did not intend to destroy all subordination and authority. Man, by the fact that he was first created; that the woman was taken from him; that he is better qualified for ruling than she is, is evidently designed to be at the head of the little community that constitutes a family. In many other things, woman may be his equal; in loveliness, and grace, and beauty, and tenderness, and gentleness, she is far his superior; but these are not the qualities adapted for government. Their place is in another sphere; and "there," man should be as cautious about invading her prerogative, or abridging her liberty, as "she" should be about invading the prerogative that belongs to him. In every family there should be a head - someone who is to be looked up to as the counselor and the ruler; someone to whom all should be subordinate. God has given that prerogative to man; and no family prospers where that arrangement is violated. Within proper metes and limits, therefore, it is the duty of the wife to obey, or to submit herself to her husband. Those limits are such as the following:

1. In domestic arrangements, the husband is to be regarded as the head of the family; and he has a right to direct as to the style of living, the expenses of the family, the clothing, etc.

2. In regard to the laws which are to regulate the family, he is the head. It is his to say what is to be done; in what way the children are to employ themselves, and to give directions in regard to their education, etc.

3. In business matters, the wife is to submit to the husband. She may counsel with him, if he chooses; but the affairs of business and property are under his control, and must be left at his disposal.

4. In everything, except that which relates to "conscience and religion," he has authority. But there his authority ceases. He has no right to require her to commit an act of dishonesty, to connive at wrong-doing, to visit a place of amusement which her conscience tells her is wrong, nor has he a right to interfere with the proper discharge of her religious duties. He has no right to forbid her to go to church at the proper and usual time, or to make a profession of religion when she pleases. He has no right to forbid her endeavoring to exercise a religious influence over her children, or to endeavor to lead them to God. She is bound to obey God, rather than any

man (see the notes on Acts 4:19); and when even a husband interferes in such cases, and attempts to control her, he steps beyond his proper bounds, and invades the prerogative of God, and his authority ceases to be binding. It ought to be said, however, that in order to justify her acting independently in such a case, the following things are proper:

(1) It should be really a case of conscience - a case where the Lord has plainly required her to do what she proposes to do - and not a mere matter of whim, fancy, or caprice.

(2) when a husband makes opposition to the course which a wife wishes to pursue in religious duties, it should lead her to re-examine the matter, to pray much over it, and to see whether she cannot, with a good conscience, comply with his wishes.

(3) if she is convinced that she is right, she should still endeavor to see whether it is not "possible" to win him to her views, and to persuade him to accord with her; see 1 Peter 3:1. It is "possible" that, if she does right, he may be "persuaded" to do right also.

(4) if she is constrained, however, to differ from him, it should be with mildness and gentleness. There should be no reproach, and no contention. She should simply state her reasons, and leave the event to God.

(5) she should, "after" this, be a better wife, and put forth more and more effort to make her husband and family happy. She should show that the effect of her religion has been to make her love her husband and children more; to make her more and more attentive to her domestic duties, and more and more kind in affliction. By a "life" of pure religion, she should aim to secure what she could not by her entreaties - his consent that she should live as she thinks she ought to, and and walk to heaven in the path in which she believes that her Lord calls her. While, however, it is to be conceded that the husband has "authority" over the wife, and a "right" to command in all cases that do not pertain to the conscience, it should be remarked:

(1) That his command should be reasonable and proper.

(2) he has no right to require anything wrong, or contrary to the will of God.

(3) Where commands begin "in this relation," happiness usually ends; and the moment a husband "requires" a wife to do anything, it is usually a signal of departing or departed affection and peace. When there are proper feelings in both parties in this relation there will be no occasion either to command or to obey. There should be such mutual love and confidence, that the known "wish" of the husband should be a law to the wife: and that the known desires of the wife should be the rule which he would approve. A perfect government is that where the known wish of the lawgiver is a sufficient rule to the subject. Such is the government of heaven; and a family on earth should approximate as nearly as possible to that.

As unto the Lord - As you would to the Lord, because the Lord requires it, and has given to the husband this authority.

Verse 23

For the husband is the head of the wife - see the notes on 1 Corinthians 11:3.

As Christ is the head of the church - As Christ rules over the church, and has a right to direct and control it.

And he is the Saviour of the body - That is, of the church, represented as "his body;" see notes, Ephesians 1:23. The idea here seems to be, that as Christ gave himself to save his body, the church; as he practiced self-denial and made it an object of intense solicitude to preserve that church, so ought the husband to manifest a similar solicitude to make his wife happy, and to save her from want, affliction, and pain. He ought to regard himself as her natural protector; as bound to anticipate and provide for her needs; as under obligation to comfort her in trial, even as Christ does the church. What a beautiful illustration of the spirit which a husband should manifest is the care which Christ has shown for his "bride," the church! See the notes on Ephesians 5:25-29.

Verse 24

In everything - In everything which is not contrary to the will of God; see the notes on Ephesians 5:23.

Verse 25

Husbands, love your wives - The duty of the wife is to obey; the right of the husband is to command. But the apostle would guard against the abuse of that right by enjoining the manifestation of such a spirit on the husband as would secure obedience on the part of the wife. He proceeds, therefore, to show, that the husband, in all his conversation with the wife, should manifest the same spirit which the Lord Jesus did toward the church; or, in other words, he holds up the conduct of the Redeemer toward the church, as the model for a husband to imitate. If a husband wished a rule that would be short, simple, clear, and efficacious, about the manner in which he should regard and treat his wife, he could not find a better one than that here suggested.

Even as Christ loved the church - This was the strongest love that has ever been evinced in this world. It follows, that a husband is in no danger of loving his wife too much, provided she be not loved more than God. We are to make the love which Christ had for the church the model.

And gave himself for it - Gave himself to die to redeem it. The meaning here is, that husbands are to imitate the Redeemer in this respect. As he gave himself to suffer on the cross to save the church, so we are to be willing to deny ourselves, and to bear toil and trial, that we may promote the happiness of the wife. It is the duty of the husband to toil for her support; to provide for her needs; to deny himself of rest and ease, if necessary, in order to attend on her in sickness to go before her in danger; to defend her if she is in peril; and to be ready to die to save her Why should he not be? If they are shipwrecked, and there is a single plank on which safety can be secured, should he not be willing to place her on that, and see her safe at all hazards to himself? But there may be more implied in this than that a man is to toil, and even to lay down his life for the welfare of his wife. Christ laid down his life to save the church; and a husband should feel that it should be one great object of his life to promote the salvation of his wife. He is bound so to live as not to interfere with her salvation, but so as to promote it in every way possible. He is to furnish her all the "facilities" that she may need, to enable her to attend on the worship of God; and to throw no obstacles in her way. He is to set her the example; to counsel her if she needs counsel, and to make the path of salvation as easy for her as possible. If a husband has the spirit and self-denial of the Saviour, he will regard no sacrifice too great if he may promote the salvation of his family.

Verse 26

That he might sanctify - The great object of the Redeemer was to purify and save the church. The meaning here is, that a husband is to manifest similar love toward his wife, and a similar desire that she should be prepared to "walk before him in white".

And cleanse it with the washing of water - In all this there is an allusion doubtless to the various methods of purifying and cleansing those who were about to be married, and who were to be united to monarchs as their brides. In some instances this previous preparation continued for twelve months. The means of purification were various, but consisted usually in the use of costly unguents; see Esther 2:12. "Six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odors, and with other things for the purifying of women;" compare Psalm 45:13-14; Ezekiel 16:7-14. As such a virgin was purified and prepared for her husband by washing and by anointing, so the church is to be prepared for Christ. It is to be made pure and holy. Outwardly there is to be the application of water - the symbol of purity; and within there is to be holiness of heart; see the notes on 2 Corinthians 11:2, where Paul says of the Corinthians, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

By the word - There has been much diversity of opinion respecting the meaning of this. Probably the sense of the expression is, that all this was to be accomplished by the instrumentality of the truth - the Word of God. By that truth they were to be sanctified John 17:17; and in accordance with that the whole work from the commencement to the close was to be accomplished. It was not by external ceremonies, and not by any miraculous power on the heart, but by the faithful application of truth to the heart.

Verse 27

That he may present it to himself - In the last day, when he shall receive the church as his spouse to heaven; Revelation 21:9. Perhaps the word "prepare" would better express the sense here than "present" - that he may prepare it for himself as a holy church. Tyndale renders it, "to make it unto himself."

A glorious church - A church full of honor, splendor, beauty. The idea of "shining," or of being "bright," would convey the sense here. Probably there is still here an allusion to a bride "adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2; compare Psalm 45:9-14); and the ideal is, that the church

will be worthy of the love of the bridegroom, to whom it will then be presented.

Not having spot - Not having a stain, a defect, or any impurity - still retaining the allusion to a bride, and to the care taken to remove every blemish.

Or wrinkle - In the vigor and beauty of youth like a bride in whom there is no wrinkle of age.

Or any such thing - Nothing to deform, disfigure, or offend. To this beautiful illustration of the final glory of the church, the apostle was led by the mention of the relation of the husband and the wife. It shows:

(1) The tendency of the thoughts of Paul. He delighted to allow the associations in his mind, no matter what the subject was, to draw him along to the Redeemer.

(2) the passage here shows us what the church will yet be. There will be a period in its history when there shall not be any imperfection; when there shall be neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing. In heaven all will be pure. On earth we are preparing for that world of purity; and it cannot be denied that here there is much that is imperfect and impure. But in that future world, where the church shall be presented to Christ, clothed in the robes of salvation, there shall not be one unholy member; one deceiver or hypocrite; one covetous or avaricious man; one that shall pain the hearts of the friends of purity by an unholy life. And in all the million that shall be gathered there out of every land, and people, and tongue, and age, there shall be no envy, malice, backbiting, pride, vanity, worldliness; there shall be no annoying and vexing conflict in the heart with evil passions, "nor any such thing." How different from the church as it now is; and how we should pant for that blessed world!

Verse 28

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies - Because they are one flesh; Ephesians 5:31. This is the subject on which Paul had been speaking, and from which he had been diverted by the allusion to the glorified church. The doctrine here is, that a husband should have the same care for the comfort of his wife which he has for himself. He should regard her as one with himself; and as he protects his own body from cold and

hunger, and, when sick and suffering, endeavors to restore it to health, so he should regard and treat her.

He that loveth his wife loveth himself -

(1) Because she is one with him, and their interests are identified.

(2) because, by this, he really promotes his own welfare, as much as he does when he takes care of his own body. A man‘s kindness to his wife will be more than repaid by the happiness which she imparts; and all the real solicitude which he shows to make her happy, will come to more than it costs. If a man wishes to promote his own happiness in the most effectual way, he had better begin by showing kindness to his wife.

Verse 29

For no man ever yet hated his own flesh - This is urged as an argument why a man should love his wife and show kindness to her. As no man disregards the happiness of his own body, or himself, so he should show equal care to promote the happiness of his wife. A sentiment similar to this is found in the classic writers. Thus, Curtius (lib. vii.) says, “Corporibus nostris quoe utique non odimus” - “We do not hate those things that pertain to our own bodies.” So Seneca (Epis. 14), “Fateor insitam nobis esse corporis nostri charitatem” - “I confess that there is implanted in us the love of our own body.” The word nourisheth here means properly to bring up, as e. g., children. The sense here is, that he provides for it, and guards it from exposure and want. The word “cherisheth” - θάλπει thalpei- means properly to “warm;” and may mean here that he defends it from cold by clothing - and the two expressions denote that he provides food and raiment for the body. So he is to do for his wife; and in like manner the Lord Jesus regards the church, and ministers to its spiritual necessities. But this should not be spiritualized too far. The “general” idea is all that we want - that Christ has a tender concern for the needs of the church, as a man has for his own body, and that the husband should show a similar regard for his wife.

Verse 30

For we are members of his body - Of the body of Christ; see 1 Corinthians 11:3, note; 1 Corinthians 12:27, note; John 15:1-6, notes, and Ephesians 1:23, note. The idea here is, that there is a close and intimate union between the Christian and the Saviour - a union so intimate that they may be spoken of as “one”.

Of his flesh, and of his bones - There is an allusion here evidently to the language which Adam used respecting Eve. "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh;" Genesis 2:23. It is language which is employed to denote the closeness of the marriage relation, and which Paul applies to the connection between Christ and his people. Of course, it cannot be understood "literally." It is not true literally that our bones are a part of the bones of Christ, or our flesh of his flesh; nor should language ever be used that would imply a miraculous union. It is not a physical union, but a union of attachment; of feeling; of love. If we avoid the notion of a "physical" union, however, it is scarcely possible to use too strong language in describing the union of believers with the Lord Jesus. The Scriptures make use of language which is stronger than that employed to describe any other connection; and there is no union of affection so powerful as that which binds the Christian to the Saviour. So strong is it, that he is willing for it to forsake father, mother, and home; to leave his country, and to abandon his possessions; to go to distant lands and dwell among barbarians to make the Redeemer known; or to go to the cross or the stake from simple love to the Saviour. Account for it as people may, there has been manifested on earth nowhere else so strong an attachment as that which binds the Christian to the cross. It is stronger love that that which a man has for his own flesh and bones; for it makes him willing that his flesh should be consumed by fire, or his bones broken on the wheel rather than deny him. Can the infidel account for this strength of attachment on any other principle than that it has a divine origin?

(See the supplementary note, Romans 8:10, on the union between Christ and his people, in which it is shown that a mere union of feeling and love is far beneath the truth.)

Verse 31

For this cause - Ἀντὶ τούτου Anti toutouThis verse is a quotation from Genesis 2:24, and contains the account of the institution of marriage. The meaning of the phrase rendered "for this cause" is, "answerably to this;" or corresponding to this - that is, to what Paul had just said of the union of believers and the Redeemer. On the meaning of this verse, see the notes on Matthew 19:4. There is no evidence that the marriage connection was originally designed to symbolize or typify this union, but it may be used to illustrate that connection, and to show the strength of the attachment

between the Redeemer and his people. The comparison should be confined, however, strictly to the use made of it in the New Testament.

Verse 32

This is a great mystery - The Latin Vulgate translates this, "sacramentum hoc magnum est" - "this is a great sacrament" - and this is the proof, I suppose, and the only proof adduced by the papists that marriage is a "sacrament." But the original here conveys no such idea. The word "mystery" - μυστήριον mustērion- means something which is concealed, hidden, before unknown; something into which one must be "initiated" or instructed before he can understand it. It does not mean that it is "incomprehensible" when it is disclosed, but that hitherto it has been kept secret. When disclosed it may be as intelligible as any other truth; see the word explained in the notes on Ephesians 1:9. Here it means simply, that there was much about the union of the Redeemer with his people, resembling the marriage connection, which was not obvious, except to those who were instructed; which was obscure to those who were not initiated; which they did not understand who had not been "taught." It does not mean that no one could understand it, but that it pertained to the class of truths into which it was necessary for one to be "initiated" in order to comprehend them. The truth that was so great a mystery was, that the eternal Son of God should form such an union with people; that he should take them into a connection with himself, implying an ardor of attachment, and a strength of affection superior to even that which exists in the marriage relation. This was a great and profound truth, to understand which, it was necessary to receive instruction. No one would have understood it without a revelation; no one understands it now except they who are taught of God.

But I speak concerning Christ and the church - This, it seems to me, is an explicit disclaimer of any intention to be understood as affirming that the marriage contract was designed to be a "type" of the union of the Redeemer and his people. The apostle says expressly, that his remarks do not refer to "marriage at all" when he speaks of the mystery. They refer "solely" to the union of the Redeemer and his people. How strange and unwarranted, therefore, are all the comments of expositors on this passage designed to explain marriage as "a mysterious type" of the union of Christ and the church! If people would allow the apostle to speak for himself, and not force on him sentiments which he expressly disclaims, the world would be saved from such insipid allegories as Macknight and others have derived

from this passage. The Bible is a book of sense; and the time will come, it is hoped, when, freed from all such allegorizing expositions, it will commend itself to the good sense of mankind. Marriage is an important, a holy, a noble, a pure institution, altogether worthy of God; but it does not thence follow that marriage was designed to be a type of the union between Christ and the church, and it is certain that the apostle Paul meant; to teach no such thing.

Verse 33

Nevertheless - The apostle here resumes the subject which he had been discussing in Ephesians 5:21-29, and says that it was the duty of every man to love his wife as he did himself. This was the main topic, from which he had been diverted by the discussion respecting the love which the Redeemer had shown for his church.

And the wife see that she reverence her husband - The word "see" is supplied by our translators. The meaning is, that it was the special duty of the wife to show respect for her husband as the head of the family, and as set over her in the Lord; see on Ephesians 5:22, note 28, note. The word rendered "reverence," is that which usually denotes "fear" - φοβῆται phobētaiShe is to fear; i. e., to honor, respect, obey the will of her husband. It is, of course, not implied that it is not also her duty to love her husband, but that there should be no usurping of authority; no disregard of the arrangement which God has made; and that order and peace should be secured in a family by regarding the husband as the source of law.

From what is here said of the duties of husband and wife we may remark:

(1) That the happiness of society depends on just views of the marriage relation. It is true the world over, that the views which prevail in regard to this relation, determine everything in reference to all other relations of life, and to all other sources of enjoyment.

(2) God designed that woman should occupy a subordinate, though an important place in the relations of social life. This arrangement is never disregarded without evils which cannot be corrected until the original intention is secured. No imaginary good that can come out of the violation of the original design; no benefits which females, individual or associated, can confer on mankind by disregarding this arrangement, can be a

compensation for the evil that is done, nor can the evil be remedied unless woman occupies the place which God designed she should fill. There nothing else can supply her place; and when she is absent from that situation - no matter what good she may be doing elsewhere - there is a silent evil reigning, which can be removed only by her return. It is not hers to fight battles, or to command armies and navies, or to control kingdoms, or to make laws. Nor is it hers to go forward as a public leader even in enterprises of benevolence, or in associations designed to act on the public mind. Her empire is the domestic circle; her first influence is there; and in connection with that, in such scenes as she can engage in without trenching on the prerogative of man, or neglecting the duty which she owes to her own family.

(3) it is not best that there should be the open exercise of authority in a family. When "commands" begin in the relation of husband and wife, "happiness" flies; and the moment a husband is "disposed" to command his wife, or is "under a necessity" of doing it, that moment he may bid adieu to domestic peace and joy.

(4) awife, therefore, should never give her husband "occasion" to command her to do anything, or forbid anything. His known wish, except in cases of conscience, should be law to her. The moment she can ascertain what his will is, that moment ought to settle her mind as to what is to be done.

(5) ahusband should never "wish" or "expect" anything that it may not be perfectly proper for a wife to render. He, too, should consult "her" wishes; and when he understands what they are, he should regard what she prefers as the very thing which he would command. The known wish and preference of a wife, unless there be something wrong in it, should be allowed to influence his mind, and be that which he directs in the family.

(6) there is no danger that a husband will love a wife too much, provides his love be subordinate to the love of God. The command is, to love her as Christ loved the church. What love has ever been like that? How can a husband exceed it? What did not Christ endure to redeem the church? So should a husband be willing to deny himself to promote the happiness of his

wife; to watch by her in sickness, and, if need be, to peril health and life to promote her welfare. Doing this, he will not go beyond what Christ did for the church. He should remember that she has a special claim of justice on him. For him she has left her father‘s home, forsaken the friends of her youth, endowed him with whatever property she may have, sunk her name in his, confided her honor, her character, and her happiness, to his virtue; and the least that he can do for her is to love her, and strive to make her happy. This was what she asked when she consented to become his; and a husband‘s love is what she still asks to sustain and cheer her in the trials of life. If she has not this, whither shall she go for comfort?

(7) we may see, then, the guilt of those husbands who withhold their affections from their wives, and forsake those to whom they had solemnly pledged themselves at the altar; those who neglect to provide for their needs, or to minister to them in sickness; and those who become the victims of intemperance, and leave their wives to tears. There is much, much guilt of this kind on earth. There are many, many broken vows. There are many, many hearts made to bleed. There is many a pure and virtuous woman who was once the object of tender affection, now, by no fault of hers, forsaken, abused, broken-hearted, by the brutal conduct of a husband,

(8) wives should manifest such a character as to be worthy of love. They owe this to their husbands. They demand the confidence and affection of man; and they should show that they are worthy of that confidence and affection. It is not possible to love that which is unlovely, nor to force affection where it is undeserved; and, as a wife expects that a husband will love her more than he does any other earthly being, it is but right that she should evince such a spirit as shall make that proper. A wife may easily alienate the affections of her partner in life. If she is irritable and fault-finding; if none of his ways please her; if she takes no interest in his plans, and in what he does; if she forsakes her home when she should he there, and seeks happiness abroad; or if, at home, she never greets him with a smile; if she is wasteful of his earnings, and extravagant in her habits, it will be impossible to prevent the effects of such a course of life on his mind. And when a wife perceives the slightest evidence of alienated affection in her husband, she should inquire at once whether she has not given occasion

for it, and exhibited such a spirit as tended inevitably to produce such a result.

(9) to secure mutual love, therefore, it is necessary that there should be mutual kindness, and mutual loveliness of character. Whatever is seen to be offensive or painful, should be at once abandoned. All the little peculiarities of temper and modes of speech that are observed to give pain, should be forsaken; and, while one party should endeavor to tolerate them, and not to be offended, the other should make it a matter of conscience to remove them.

(10) the great secret of conjugal happiness is in the cultivation of a proper temper. It is not so much in the great and trying scenes of life that the strength of virtue is tested; it is in the events that are constantly occurring; the manifestation of kindness in the things that are happening every moment; the gentleness that flows along every day, like the stream that winds through the meadow and around the farm-house, noiseless but useful, diffusing fertility by day and by night. Great deeds rarely occur. The happiness of life depends little on them, but mainly on the little acts of kindness in life. We need them everywhere; we need them always. And eminently in the marriage relation there is need of gentleness and love, returning each morning, beaming in the eye, and dwelling in the heart through the livelong day.

EPHESIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Introduction

This chapter Ephesians 6:1-3.

(2) an exhortation to fathers to manifest such a character that children could properly obey them, and to train them up in a proper manner; Ephesians 6:4.

(3) the duty of servants; Ephesians 6:5-8.

(4) the duty of masters toward their servants; Ephesians 6:9.

(5) an exhortation to put on the whole armor of God, with a description of the Christian soldier, and of the Christian panoply; Ephesians 6:10-17.

(6) the duty of prayer, and especially of prayer for the apostle himself, that he might be enabled to speak with boldness in the cause of his Master; Ephesians 6:18-20.

(7) in the conclusion Ephesians 6:21-24, he informs them that if they wished to make any inquiries about his condition, Tychicus, who conveyed this letter, could acquaint them with his circumstances; and then closes the Epistle with the usual benedictions.

Verse 1

Children - τέκνα teknaThis word usually signifies those who are young; but it is used here, evidently, to denote those who were under the care and government of their parents, or those who were not of age.

Obey your parents - This is the first great duty which God has enjoined on children. It is, to do what their parents command them to do. The God of nature indicates that this is duty; for he has impressed it on the minds of all in every age; and the Author of revelation confirms it. It is particularly important:

(1) Because the good order of a family, and hence of the community, depends on it; no community or family being prosperous where there is not due subordination in the household.

(2) because the welfare of the child depends on it; it being of the highest importance that a child should be early taught obedience to "law," as no one can be prosperous or happy who is not thus obedient.

(3) because the child is not competent as yet; to "reason" on what is right, or qualified to direct himself; and, while that is the case, he must be subject to the will of some other person.

(4) because the parent, by his age and experience, is to be presumed to be qualified to direct and guide a child. The love which God has implanted in the heart of a parent for a child secures, in general, the administration of this domestic government in such a way as not to injure the child. A father will not, unless under strong passion or the excitement of intoxication, abuse his authority. He loves the child too much. He desires his welfare; and the placing of the child under the authority of the parent is about the same thing in regard to the welfare of the child, as it would be to endow the child at once with all the wisdom and experience of the parent himself.

(5) it is important, because the family government is designed to be an imitation of the government of God. The government of God is what a perfect family government would be; and to accustom a child to be obedient to a parent, is designed to be one method of leading him to be obedient to God. No child that is disobedient to a parent will be obedient to God; and that child that is most obedient to a father and mother will be most likely to become a Christian, and an heir of heaven. And it may be observed, in general, that no disobedient child is virtuous, prosperous, or happy. Everyone foresees the ruin of such a child; and most of the cases of crime that lead to the penitentiary, or the gallows, commence by disobedience to parents.

In the Lord - That is, as far as their commandments agree with those of God, and no further. No parent can have a right to require a child to steal, or lie, or cheat, or assist him in committing murder, or in doing any other wrong thing. No parent has a right to forbid a child to pray, to read the Bible, to worship God, or to make a profession of religion. The duties and rights of children in such cases are similar to those of wives (see the notes on Ephesians 5:22); and in all cases, God is to be obeyed rather than man. When a parent, however, is opposed to a child; when he expresses an

unwillingness that a child should attend a particular church, or make a profession of religion, such opposition should in all cases be a sufficient reason for the child to pause and re-examine the subject. he should pray much, and think much, and inquire much, before, in any case, he acts contrary to the will of a father or mother; and, when he does do it, he should state to them, with great gentleness and kindness, that he believes he ought to love and serve God.

For this is right - It is right:

(1)because it is so appointed by God as a duty;

(2)because children owe a debt of gratitude to their parents for what they have done for them;

(3)because it will be for the good of the children themselves, and for the welfare of society.

Verse 2

Honour thy father and mother - see Exodus 20:12; compare notes on Matthew 15:4.

Which is the first commandment with promise - With a promise annexed to it. The promise was, that their days should be long in the land which the Lord their God would give them. It is not to be supposed that the observance of the four first commandments would not be attended with a blessing, but no particular blessing is promised. It is true, indeed, that there is a "general declaration" annexed to the second commandment, that God would show mercy to thousands of generations of them that loved him and that kept his commandments. But that is rather a declaration in regard to all the commands of God than a promise annexed to that specific commandment. It is an assurance that obedience to the law of God would be followed with blessings to a thousand generations, and is given in view of the first and second commandments together, because they related particularly to the honor that was due to God. But the promise in the fifth commandment is a "special promise." It does not relate to obedience to God in general, but it is a particular assurance that they who honor their parents shall have a particular blessing as the result of that obedience.

Verse 3

That it may be well with thee - This is found in the fifth commandment as recorded in Deuteronomy 5:16. The whole commandment

as there recorded is, "Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The meaning here is, that they would be more happy, useful, and virtuous if they obeyed their parents than if they disobeyed them.

And thou mayest live long on the earth - In the commandment as recorded in Exodus 20:12, the promise is, "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." This referred to the promised land - the land of Canaan. The meaning doubtless, is, that there would be a special providence, securing to those who were obedient to parents length of days. Long life was regarded as a great blessing; and this blessing was promised. The apostle here gives to the promise a more general form, and says that obedience to parents was connected at all times with long life. We may remark here:

(1) that long life is a blessing. It affords a longer space to prepare for eternity; it enables a man to be more useful; and it furnishes a longer opportunity to study the works of God on earth. It is not improper to desire it; and we should make use of all the means in our power to lengthen out our days, and to preserve and protect our lives.

(2) it is still true that obedience to parents is conducive to length of life, and that those who are most obedient in early life, other things being equal, have the best prospect of living long. This occurs because:

(a) obedient children are saved from the vices and crimes which shorten life. No parent will command his child to be a drunkard, a gambler, a spendthrift, a pirate, or a murderer. But these vices and crimes, resulting in most cases from disobedience to parents, all shorten life; and they who early commit them are certain of on early grave. No child who disobeys a parent can have any "security" that he will not fall a victim to such vices and crimes.

(b) Obedience to parents is connected with virtuous habits that are conducive to long life. It will make a child industrious, temperate, sober; it will lead him to restrain and govern his wild passions; it will lead him to form habits of self-government which will in future life save him from the snares of vice and temptation.

(c) Many a life is lost early by disobeying a parent. A child disobeys a father and goes into a dramshop; or he goes to sea; or he becomes the companion of the wicked - and he may be wrecked at sea, or his character on land may be wrecked forever. Of disobedient children there is perhaps not one in a hundred that ever reaches an honored old age.

(d) We may still believe that God, in his providence, will watch over those who are obedient to a father and mother. If he regards a falling sparrow Matthew 10:29, he will not be unmindful of an obedient child; if he numbers the hairs of the head Matthew 10:30, he will not be regardless of the little boy that honors him by obeying a father and mother.

Verse 4

And ye fathers - A command addressed particularly to "fathers," because they are at the head of the family, and its government is especially committed to them. The object of the apostle here is, to show parents that their commands should be such that they can be easily obeyed, or such as are entirely reasonable and proper. If children are required to "obey," it is but reasonable that the commands of the parent should be such that they can be obeyed, or such that the child shall not be discouraged in his attempt to obey. This statement is in accordance with what he had said Ephesians 5:22-25 of the relation of husband and wife. It was the duty of the wife to obey - but it was the corresponding duty of the husband to manifest such a character that it would be pleasant to yield obedience - so to love her, that his known wish would be law to her. In like manner it is the duty of children to obey a parent; but it is the duty of a parent to exhibit such a character, and to maintain such a government, that it would be proper for the child to obey; to command nothing that is unreasonable or improper, but to train up his children in the ways of virtue and pure religion.

Provoke not your children to wrath - That is, by unreasonable commands; by needless severity; by the manifestation of anger. So govern them, and so punish them - if punishment is necessary - that they shall not lose their confidence in you, but shall love you. The apostle here has hit on the very danger to which parents are most exposed in the government of their children. It is that of souring their temper; of making them feel that the

parent is under the influence of anger, and that it is right for them to be so too. This is done:

(1) when the commands of a parent are unreasonable and severe. The spirit of a child then becomes irritated, and he is "discouraged;" Colossians 3:21.

(2) when a parent is evidently "excited" when he punishes a child. The child then feels:

(a)that if his "father" is angry, it is not wrong for him to be angry; and,

(b)the very fact of anger in a parent kindles anger in his bosom - just as it does when two men are contending.

If he submits in the case, it is only because the parent is the "strongest," not because he is "right," and the child cherishes "anger," while he yields to power. There is no principle of parental government more important than that a father should command his own temper when he inflicts punishment. He should punish a child not because he is "angry," but because it is "right;" not because it has become a matter of "personal contest," but because God requires that he should do it, and the welfare of the child demands it. The moment when a child seem that a parent punishes him under the influence of anger, that moment the child will be likely to be angry too - and his anger will be as proper as that of the parent. And yet, how often is punishment inflicted in this manner! And how often does the child feel that the parent punished him simply because he was the "strongest," not because it was "right;" and how often is the mind of a child left with a strong conviction that wrong has been done him by the punishment which he has received, rather than with repentance for the wrong that he has himself done.

But bring them up - Place them under such discipline and instruction that they shall become acquainted with the Lord.

In the nurture - ἐν παιδεία en paideiaThe word used here means "training of a child;" hence education, instruction, discipline. Here it means that they are to train up their children in such a manner as the Lord approves; that is, they are to educate them for virtue and religion.

And admonition - The word used here - νουθεσία nouthesiameans literally, "a putting in mind," then warning, admonition, instruction. The sense here is, that they were to put them in mind of the Lord - of his existence, perfections, law, and claims on their hearts and lives. This command is positive, and is in accordance with all the requirements of the

Bible on the subject. No one can doubt that the Bible enjoins on parents the duty of endeavoring to train up their children in the ways of religion, and of making it the grand purpose of this life to prepare them for heaven. It has been often objected that children should be left on religious subjects to form their own opinions when they are able to judge for themselves. Infidels and irreligious people always oppose or neglect the duty here enjoined; and the plea commonly is, that to teach religion to children is to make them prejudiced; to destroy their independence of mind; and to prevent their judging as impartially on so important a subject as they ought to. In reply to this, and in defense of the requirements of the Bible on the subject, we may remark:

(1) That to suffer a child to grow up without any instruction in religion, is about the same as to suffer a garden to lie without any culture. Such a garden would soon be overrun with weeds, and briars, and thorns - but not sooner, or more certainly, than the mind of a child would.

(2) people do instruct their children in a great many things, and why should they not in religion? They teach them how to behave in company; the art of farming; the way to make or use tools; how to make money; how to avoid the arts of the cunning seducer. But why should it not be said that all this tends to destroy their independence, and to make them prejudiced? Why not leave their minds open and free, and suffer them to form their own judgments about farming and the mechanic arts when their minds are matured?

(3) people do inculcate their own sentiments in religion. An infidel is not usually "very" anxious to conceal his views from his children. People teach by example; by incidental remarks; by the "neglect" of that which they regard as of no value. A man who does not pray, is teaching his children not to pray; he who neglects the public worship of God, is teaching his children to neglect it; he who does not read the Bible, is teaching his children not to read it. Such is the constitution of things, that it is impossible for a parent not to inculcate his own religious views on his children. Since this is so, all that the Bible requires is, that his instructions should be right.

(4) to inculcate the truths of religion is not to make the mind narrow, prejudiced, and indisposed to perceive the truth. Religion makes the mind

candid, conscientious, open to conviction, ready to follow the truth. Superstition, bigotry, infidelity, and "all" error and falsehood, make the mind narrow and prejudiced.

(5) if a man does not teach his children truth, others will teach them "error." The young sceptic that the child meets in the street; the artful infidel; the hater of God; the unprincipled stranger; "will" teach the child. But is it not better for a parent to teach his child the "truth" than for a stranger to teach him error?

(6) Religion is the most important of all subjects, and "therefore" it is of most importance that children on that subject should he taught truth. Of whom can God so properly require this as of a parent? If it be asked "in what way" a parent is to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, I answer:

1.By directly inculcating the doctrines and duties of religion - just as he does anything else that he regards as of value.

2.By placing them in the Sunday school, where he may have a guarantee that they will be taught the truth.

3.By "conducting" them - not merely "sending" them - to the sanctuary, that they may be taught in the house of God.

4.By example - all teaching being valueless without that.

5.By prayer for the divine aid in his efforts, and for the salvation of their souls. These duties are plain, simple, easy to be performed, and are such as a man "knows" he ought to perform. If neglected, and the soul of the child be lost, a parent has a most fearful account to render to God.

Verse 5

Servants - οἱ δοῦλοι hoi douloiThe word used here denotes one who is bound to render service to another, whether that service be free or voluntary, and may denote, therefore, either a slave, or one who binds himself to render service to another. It is often used in these senses in the New Testament, just as it is elsewhere. It cannot be demonstrated that the word here necessarily means "slaves;" though, if slavery existed among

those to whom this Epistle was written - as there can be little doubt that it did - it is a word which would apply to those in this condition; compare notes on 1 Corinthians 7:21; Galatians 3:28, note. On the general subject of slavery, and the Scripture doctrine in regard to it; see notes on Isaiah 58:6. Whether the persons here referred to were slaves, or were those who had bound themselves to render a voluntary servitude, the directions here given were equally appropriate. It was not the design of the Christian religion to produce a rude sundering of the ties which bind man to man, but to teach all to perform their duties aright in the relations in which Christianity found them, and gradually to modify the customs of society, and to produce ultimately the universal prevalence of that which is right.

Be obedient to them - This is the uniform direction in the New Testament; see 1 Peter 2:18; 1 Timothy 6:1-3; notes 1 Corinthians 7:21. The idea is that they were to show in that relation the excellence of the religion which they professed. If they could be made free, they were to prefer that condition to a state of bondage 1 Corinthians 7:21, but while the relation remained, they were to be kind, gentle, and obedient, as became Christians. In the parallel place in Colossians Colossians 3:22, it is said that they were to obey their masters "in all things." But evidently this is to be understood with the limitations implied in the case of wives and children (see the notes on Ephesians 5:24; Ephesians 6:1, note), and a master would have no right to command that which was morally wrong.

According to the flesh - This is designed, evidently, to limit the obligation to obedience. The meaning is, that they had control over "the body, the flesh." They had the power to command the service which the body could render; but they were not lords of the spirit. The soul acknowledged God as its Lord, and to the Lord they were to be subject in a higher sense than to their masters.

With fear and trembling - With reverence and with a dread of offending them. They have authority and power over you, and you should be afraid to incur their displeasure. Whatever might be true about the propriety of slavery, and whatever might be the duty of the master about setting the slave free, it would be more to the honor of religion for the servant to perform his task with a willing mind than to be contumacious and rebellions. He could do more for the honor of religion by patiently submitting to even what he felt to be wrong, than by being punished for what would be regarded as rebellion. It may be added here, that it was

presumed that servants then could read. These directions were addressed to them, not to their masters. Of what use would be directions like these addressed to American slaves - scarce any of whom can read?

In singleness of your heart - With a simple, sincere desire to do what ought to be done.

As unto Christ - Feeling that by rendering proper service to your masters, you are in fact serving the Lord, and that you are doing that which will be well-pleasing to him; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 7:22. Fidelity, in whatever situation we may be in life, is acceptable service to the Lord. A Christian may as acceptably serve the Lord Jesus in the condition of a servant, as if he were a minister of the gospel, or a king on a throne. Besides, it will greatly lighten the burdens of such a situation, and make the toils of an humble condition easy, to remember that we are then "serving the Lord."

Verse 6

Nor with eye-service - That is, not with service rendered only under the eye of the master, or when his eye is fixed on you. The apostle has here adverted to one of the evils of involuntary servitude as it exists everywhere. It is, that the slave will usually obey only when the eye of the master is upon him. The freeman who agrees to labor for stipulated wages may be trusted when the master is out of sight; but not the slave. Hence the necessity where there are slaves of having "drivers" who shall attend them, and who shall compel them to work. This evil it is impossible to avoid, except where true religion prevails - and the extensive prevalence of true religion would set the slave at liberty. Yet as long as the relation exists, the apostle would enjoin on the servant the duty of performing his work conscientiously, as rendering service to the Lord. This direction, moreover, is one of great importance to all who are employed in the service of others. They are bound to perform their duty with as much fidelity as though the eye of the employer was always upon them, remembering that though the eye of man may be turned away, that of God never is.

As men-pleasers - As if it were the main object to please people. The object should be rather to please and honor God.

But as the servants of Christ - see the notes on 1 Corinthians 7:22.

Doing the will of God from the heart - That is, God requires industry, fidelity, conscientiousness, submission, and obedience in that rank of life. We render acceptable service to God when, from regard to his will, we

perform the services which are demanded of us in the situation in life where we may be placed, however humble that may be.

Verse 7

As to the Lord, and not to men - That is, he should regard his lot in life as having been ordered by Divine Providence for some wise and good purpose; and until he may be permitted to enjoy his liberty in a quiet and peaceable manner (notes, 1 Corinthians 7:21), he should perform his duties with fidelity, and feel that he was rendering acceptable service to God. This would reconcile him to much of the hardships of his lot. The feeling that "God" has ordered the circumstances of our lives, and that he has some wise and good ends to answer by it, makes us contented there; though we may feel that our fellowman may be doing us injustice. It was this principle that made the martyrs so patient under the wrongs done them by people; and this may make even a slave patient and submissive under the wrongs of a master. But let not a master think, because a pious slave shows this spirit, that, therefore, the slave feels that the master is right in withholding his freedom; nor let him suppose, because religion requires the slave to be submissive and obedient, that, therefore, it approves of what the master does. It does this no more than it sanctioned the conduct of Nero and Mary, because religion required the martyrs to be unresisting, and to allow themselves to be led to the stake. A conscientious slave may find happiness in submitting to God, and doing his will, just as a conscientious martyr may. But this does not sanction the wrong, either of the slave-owner or of the persecutor.

Verse 8

Knowing that whatsoever good thing - Whatever a man does that is right, for that he shall be appropriately rewarded. No matter what his rank in life, if he discharges his duty to God and man, he will be accepted. A man in a state of servitude may so live as to honor God; and, so living, he should not be greatly solicitous about his condition. A master may fail to render suitable recompense to a slave. But, if the servant is faithful to God, he will recompense him in the future world. It is in this way that religion would make the evils of life tolerable, by teaching those who are oppressed to hear their trials in a patient spirit, and to look forward to the future world of reward. Religion does not approve of slavery. It is the friend of human rights. If it had full influence on earth, it would restore every man to freedom, and impart to each one his rights. Christianity nowhere requires its

friends to make or to own a slave. No one under the proper influence of religion ever yet made a man a slave; there is no one under its proper influence who would not desire that all should be free; and just in proportion as true religion spreads over the world, will universal freedom be its attendant. But Christianity would lighten the evils of slavery even while it exists, and would comfort those who are doomed to so hard a lot, by assuring them that there they may render acceptable service to God, and that they soon will be admitted to a world where galling servitude will be known no more. If they may not have freedom here, they may have contentment if they feel that wrong is done them by men, they may feel that right will be done them by God; if their masters do not reward them for their services here, God will; and if they may not enjoy liberty here, they will soon be received into the world of perfect freedom - heaven.

Verse 9

And, ye masters - The object of this is, to secure for servants a proper treatment. It is evident, from this, that there were in the Christian church those who were "masters;" and the most obvious interpretation is, that they were the owners of slaves. Some such persons would be converted, as such are now. Paul did not say that they could not be Christians. He did not say that they should he excluded at once from the communion. He did not hold them up to reproach, or use harsh and severe language in regard to them. He taught them their duty toward those who were under them, and laid down principles which, if followed, would lead ultimately to universal freedom.

Do the same things unto them - τὰ αὐτὰ ta autaThe "same things," here seem to refer to what he had said in the previous verses. They were, to evince toward their servants the same spirit which he had required servants to evince toward them - the same kindness, fidelity, and respect for the will of God. He had required servants to act conscientiously; to remember that the eye of God was upon them, and that in that condition in life they were to regard themselves as serving God, and as mainly answerable to him. The same things the apostle would have masters feel. They were to be faithful, conscientious, just, true to the interests of their servants, and to remember that they were responsible to God. They were not to take advantage of their power to oppress them, to punish them unreasonably, or to suppose that they were freed from responsibility in regard to the manner in which they treated them. In the corresponding passage in Colossians (Colossians 4:1),

this is, “Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal;” see the note on that place.

Forbearing threatening - Margin, “moderating.” The Greek word means to “relax, loosen;” and then, to “omit, cease from.” This is evidently the meaning here The sense is, that they were to be kind, affectionate, just. It does not mean that they were to remit punishment where it was deserved; but the object is to guard against that to which they were so much exposed in their condition - a fretful, dissatisfied temper; a disposition to govern by terror rather than by love. Where this unhappy state of society exists, it would be worth the trial of those who sustain the relation of masters, to see whether it would not be “possible” to govern their servants, as the apostle here advises, by the exercise of love. Might not kindness, and confidence, and the fear of the Lord, be substituted for threats and stripes?

Knowing that your Master also is in heaven - Margin, “Some read, both your and their.” Many mss. have this reading; see Mill. The sense is not materially affected, further than, according to the margin, the effect would be to make the master and the servant feel that, in a most important sense, they were on an equality. According to the common reading, the sense is, that masters should remember that they were responsible to God, and this fact should be allowed to influence them in a proper manner. This it would do in two ways:

(1) By the fact that injustice toward their servants would then be punished as it deserved - since there was no respect of persons with God.

(2) it would lead them to act toward their servants as they would desire God to treat them. Nothing would be better adapted to do this than the feeling that they had a common Master, and that they were soon to stand at his bar.

Neither is there respect of persons with him - see this expression explained in the notes on Romans 2:11. The meaning here is, that God would not be influenced in the distribution of rewards and punishments, by a regard to the rank or condition of the master or the slave. He would show no favor to the one because he was a master; he would withhold none from the other because he was a slave. He would treat both according to their character. In this world they occupied different ranks and conditions; at his bar they would be called to answer before the same Judge. It follows from this:

(1) that a slave is not to be regarded as a “chattel,” or a “thing,” or as “property.” He is a man; a redeemed man; an immortal man. He is one for whom Christ died. But Christ did not die for “chattels” and “things.”

(2) the master and the servant in their great interests are on a level. Both are sinners; both will soon die; both will moulder back in the same manner to dust; both will stand at the tribunal of God; both will give up their account. The one will not be admitted to heaven because he is a master; nor will the other be thrust down to hell because he is a slave. If both are Christians, they will be admitted to a heaven where the distinctions of rank and color are unknown. If the master is not a Christian and the servant is, he who has regarded himself as superior to the servant in this life, will see “him” ascend to heaven while he himself will be thrust down to hell.

(3) Considerations like these will if they have their proper influence, produce two effects:

(a) They will lighten the yoke of slavery while it continues, and while it may be difficult to remove it at once. If the master and the slave were both Christians, even if the relation continued, it would be rather a relation of mutual confidence. The master would become the protector, the teacher, the guide, the friend; the servant would become the faithful helper - rendering service to one whom he loved, and to whom he felt himself bound by the obligations of gratitude and affection.

(b) But this state of feeling would soon lead to emancipation. There is something shocking to the feelings of all, and monstrous to a Christian, in the idea of holding “a Christian brother” in bondage. So long as the slave is regarded as a “chattel” or a mere piece of “property,” like a horse, so long people endeavor to content themselves with the feeling that he may be held in bondage. But the moment it is felt that he is a “Christian brother” - a redeemed fellow-traveler to eternity, a joint heir of life - that moment a Christian should feel that there is something that violates all the principles of his religion in holding him as A slave; in making a “chattel” of that for which Christ died, and in buying and selling like a horse, an ox, or an ass, a child of God, and an heir of life. Accordingly, the prevalence of Christianity

soon did away the evil of slavery in the Roman empire; and if it prevailed in its purity, it would soon banish it from the face of the earth.

Verse 10

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord - Paul had now stated to the Ephesians the duties which they were to perform. He had considered the various relations of life which they sustained, and the obligations resulting from them. He was not unaware that in the discharge of their duties they would need strength from above. He knew that they had great and mighty foes, and that to meet them, they needed to be clothed in the panoply of the Christian soldier. He closes, therefore, by exhorting them to put on all the strength which they could to meet the enemies with which they had to contend; and in the commencement of his exhortation he reminds them that it was only by the strength of the Lord that they could hope for victory. To be "strong in the Lord," is:

(1)to be strong or courageous in his cause;

(2)to feel that he is our strength, and to rely on him and his promises.

Verse 11

Put on the whole armor of God - The whole description here is derived from the weapons of an ancient soldier. The various parts of those weapons - constituting the "whole panoply" - are specified in Ephesians 6:14-17. The word rendered "whole armor" πανοπλίαν panoplian"panoply"), means "complete armor," offensive and defensive; see Luke 11:22; Romans 13:12 note; 2 Corinthians 6:7 note. "The armor of God" is not that which God wears, but that which he has provided for the Christian soldier. The meaning here is:

(1) that we are not to provide in our warfare such weapons as people employ in their contests, but such as God provides; that we are to renounce the weapons which are carnal, and put on such as God has directed for the achievement of the victory.

(2) we are to put on the "whole armor." We are not to go armed partly with what God has appointed, and partly with such weapons as people use; nor are we to put on "a part" of the armor only, but the "whole" of it. A man needs "all" that armor if he is about to fight the battles of the Lord; and if he

lacks “one” of the weapons which God has appointed, defeat may be the consequence.

That ye may be able to stand - The foes are so numerous and mighty, that unless clothed with the divine armor, victory will be impossible.

Against the wiles of the devil - The word rendered “wiles” (μεθοδεία methodeia), means properly that which is traced out with “method;” that which is “methodized;” and then that which is well laid - art, skill, cunning. It occurs in the New Testament only in Ephesians 4:14, and in this place. It is appropriately rendered here as “wiles,” meaning cunning devices, arts, attempts to delude and destroy us. The wiles “of the devil” are the various arts and stratagems which he employs to drag souls down to perdition. We can more easily encounter open force than we can cunning; and we need the weapons of Christian armor to meet the attempts to draw us into a snare, as much as to meet open force. The idea here is, that Satan does not carry on an open warfare. He does not meet the Christian soldier face to face. He advances covertly; makes his approaches in darkness; employs cunning rather than power, and seeks rather to delude and betray than to vanquish by mere force. Hence, the necessity of being constantly armed to meet him whenever the attack is made. A man who has to contend with a visible enemy, may feel safe if he only prepares to meet him in the open field. But far different is the case if the enemy is invisible; if he steals upon us slyly and stealthily; if he practices war only by ambushes and by surprises. Such is the foe that we have to contend with - and almost all the Christian struggle is a warfare against stratagems and wiles. Satan does not openly appear. He approaches us not in repulsive forms, but comes to recommend some plausible doctrine, to lay before us some temptation that shall not immediately repel us. He presents the world in an alluring aspect; invites us to pleasures that seem to be harmless, and leads us in indulgence until we have gone so far that we cannot retreat.

Verse 12

For we wrestle - Greek, “The wrestling to us;” or, “There is not to us a wrestling with flesh and blood.” There is undoubtedly here an allusion to the ancient games of Greece, a part of the exercises in which consisted in wrestling; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 9:25-27. The Greek word used here - πάλη palē- denotes a “wrestling;” and then a struggle, fight, combat. Here it refers to the struggle or combat which the Christian has to mainrain - the Christian warfare.

Not against flesh and blood - Not with people; see the notes on Galatians 1:16. The apostle does not mean to say that Christians had no enemies among men that opposed them, for they were exposed often to fiery persecution; nor that they had nothing to contend with in the carnal and corrupt propensities of their nature, which was true of them then as it is now; but that their main controversy was with the invisible spirits of wickedness that sought to destroy them. They were the source and origin of all their spiritual conflicts, and with them the warfare was to be maintained.

But against principalities - There can be no doubt whatever that the apostle alludes here to evil spirits. Like good angels, they were regarded as divided into ranks and orders, and were supposed to be under the control of one mighty leader; see the notes on Ephesians 1:21. It is probable that the allusion here is to the ranks and orders which they sustained before their fall, something like which they may still retain. The word "principalities" refers to principal rulers, or chieftains.

Powers - Those who had power, or to whom the name of "powers" was given. Milton represents Satan as addressing the fallen angels in similar language:

"Thrones, dominations, princedoms, virtues, powers."

Against the rulers of the darkness of this world - The rulers that preside over the regions of ignorance and sin with which the earth abounds, compare notes on Ephesians 2:2. "Darkness" is an emblem of ignorance, misery, and sin; and no description could be more accurate than that of representing these malignant spirits as ruling over a dark world. The earth - dark, and wretched and ignorant, and sinful - is just such a dominion as they would choose, or as they would cause; and the degradation and woe of the pagan world are just such as foul and malignant spirits would delight in. It is a wide and a powerful empire. It has been consolidated by ages. It is sustained by all the authority of law; by all the omnipotence of the perverted religious principle; by all the reverence for antiquity; by all the power of selfish, corrupt, and base passions. No empire has been so extended, or has continued so long, as that empire of darkness; and nothing on earth is so difficult to destroy.

Yet the apostle says that it was on that kingdom they were to make war. Against that, the kingdom of the Redeemer was to be set up; and that was to be overcome by the spiritual weapons which he specifies. When he speaks of the Christian warfare here, he refers to the contest with the powers of this

dark kingdom. He regards each and every Christian as a soldier to wage war on it in whatever way he could, and wherever he could attack it. The contest therefore was not primarily with people, or with the internal corrupt propensities of the soul; it was with this vast and dark kingdom that had been set up over mankind. I do not regard this passage, therefore, as having a primary reference to the struggle which a Christian maintains with his own corrupt propensities. It is a warfare on a large scale with the entire kingdom of darkness over the world. Yet in maintaining the warfare, the struggle will be with such portions of that kingdom as we come in contact with and will actually relate:

(1)to our own sinful propensities - which are a part of the kingdom of darkness;

(2)with the evil passions of others - their pride, ambition, and spirit of revenge - which are also a part of that kingdom;

(3)with the evil customs, laws, opinions, employments, pleasures of the world - which are also a part of that dark kingdom;

(4)with error, superstition, false doctrine - which are also a part of that kingdom; and,

(5)with the wickedness of the pagan world - the sins of benighted nations - also a part of that kingdom. Wherever we come in contact with evil - whether in our own hearts or elsewhere - there we are to make war.

Against spiritual wickedness - Margin, "or wicked spirits." Literally, "The spiritual things of wickedness;" but the allusion is undoubtedly to evil spirits, and to their influences on earth.

In high places - ἐν τοῖς ἐπουράνιοις - "in celestial or heavenly places." The same phrase occurs in Ephesians 1:3; Ephesians 2:6, where it is translated, "in heavenly places." The word (ἐπουράνιος epouranios) is used of those that dwell in heaven, Matthew 18:35; Philemon 2:10; of those who come from heaven, 1 Corinthians 15:48; Philemon 3:21; of the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and stars, 1 Corinthians 15:40. Then the neuter plural of the word is used to denote the heavens; and then the "lower" heavens, the sky, the air, represented as the seat of evil spirits; see the notes on Ephesians 2:2. This is the allusion here. The evil spirits are supposed to occupy the lofty regions of the air, and thence to exert a baleful influence on

the affairs of man. What was the origin of this opinion it is not needful here to inquire. No one can "prove," however, that it is incorrect. It is against such spirits, and all their malignant influences, that Christians are called to contend. In whatever way their power is put forth - whether in the prevalence of vice and error; of superstition and magic arts; of infidelity, atheism, or antinomianism; of evil customs and laws; of pernicious fashions and opinions, or in the corruptions of our own hearts, we are to make war on all these forms of evil, and never to yield in the conflict.

Verse 13

In the evil day - The day of temptation; the day when you are violently assaulted.

And having done all, to stand - Margin, "or overcome." The Greek word means, to work out, effect, or produce; and then to work up, to make an end of, to vanquish. Robinson, Lexicon. The idea seems to be, that they were to overcome or vanquish all their foes, and thus to stand firm. The whole language here is taken from war; and the idea is, that every foe was to be subdued - no matter how numerous or formidable they might be. Safety and triumph could be looked for only when every enemy was slain.

Verse 14

Stand therefore - Resist every attack - as a soldier does in battle. In what way they were to do this, and how they were to be armed, the apostle proceeds to specify; and in doing it, gives a description of the ancient armor of a soldier.

Having your loins girt about - The "girdle, or sash," was always with the ancients an important part of their dress, in war as well as in peace. They wore loose, flowing robes; and it became necessary to gird them up when they traveled, or ran, or labored. The girdle was often highly ornamented, and was the place where they carried their money, their sword, their pipe, their writing instruments, etc.; see the notes on Matthew 5:38-41. The "girdle" seems sometimes to have been a cincture of iron or steel, and designed to keep every part of the armor in its place, and to gird the soldier on every side.

With truth - It may not be easy to determine with entire accuracy the resemblance between the parts of the armor specified in this description, and the things with which they are compared, or to determine precisely why he compared truth to a girdle, and "righteousness" to a breast-plate, rather than why he should have chosen a different order, and compared

righteousness to a girdle, etc. Perhaps in themselves there may have been no special reason for this arrangement, but the object may have been merely to specify the different parts of the armor of a soldier, and to compare them with the weapons which Christians were to use, though the comparison should be made somewhat at random. In some of the cases, however, we can see a particular significancy in the comparisons which are made; and it may not be improper to make suggestions of that kind as we go along. The idea here may be, that as the girdle was the bracer up, or support of the body, so truth is suited to brace us up, and to gird us for constancy and firmness. The girdle kept all the parts of the armor in their proper place, and preserved firmness and consistency in the dress; and so truth might serve to give consistency and firmness to our conduct. "Great," says Grotius, "is the laxity of falsehood; truth binds the man." Truth preserves a man from those lax views of morals, of duty and of religion, which leave him exposed to every assault. It makes the soul sincere, firm, constant, and always on its guard. A man who has no consistent views of truth, is just the man for the adversary successfully to assail.

And having on the breast-plate - The word rendered here as "breastplate" θώρᾰξ thōraxdenoted the "cuirass," Lat.: lorica, or coat of mail; i. e., the armor that covered the body from the neck to the thighs, and consisted of two parts, one covering the front and the other the back. It was made of rings, or in the form of scales, or of plates, so fastened together that they, would be flexible, and yet guard the body from a sword, spear, or arrow. It is referred to in the Scriptures as a "coat of mail" 1 Samuel 17:5; an "habergeon" Nehemiah 4:16, or as a "breast-plate." We are told that Goliath's coat of mail weighed five thousand shekels of brass, or nearly one hundred and sixty pounds. It was often formed of plates of brass, laid one upon another, like the scales of a fish. The following cuts will give an idea of this ancient piece of armor.

Of righteousness - Integrity, holiness, purity of life, sincerity of piety. The breast-plate defended the vital parts of the body; and the idea here may be that the integrity of life, and righteousness of character, is as necessary to defend us from the assaults of Satan, as the coat of mail was to preserve the heart from the arrows of an enemy. It was the incorruptible integrity of Job, and, in a higher sense, of the Redeemer himself, that saved them from the temptations of the devil. And it is as true now that no one can successfully meet the power of temptation unless he is righteous, as that a soldier could

not defend himself against a foe without such a coat of mail. A want of integrity will leave a man exposed to the assaults of the enemy, just as a man would be whose coat of mail was defective, or some part of which was missing. The king of Israel was smitten by an arrow sent from a bow, drawn at a venture, "between the joints of his harness" or the "breast-plate" (margin), 1 Kings 22:34; and many a man who thinks he has on the "Christian" armor is smitten in the same manner. There is some defect of character; some want of incorruptible integrity; some point that is unguarded - and that will be sure to be the point of attack by the foe. So David was tempted to commit the enormous crimes that stain his memory, and Peter to deny his Lord. So Judas was assailed, for the want of the armor of righteousness, through his avarice; and so, by some want of incorruptible integrity in a single point, many a minister of the gospel has been assailed and has fallen. It may be added here, that we need a righteousness which God alone can give; the righteousness of God our Saviour, to make us perfectly invulnerable to all the arrows of the foe.

Verse 15

And your feet shod - There is undoubtedly an allusion here to what was worn by the ancient soldier to guard his feet. The Greek is, literally, "having underbound the feet;" that is, having bound on the shoes, or sandais, or whatever was worn by the ancient soldier. The protection of the feet and ankles consisted of two parts:

(1) The sandals, or shoes, which were probably made so as to cover the foot, and which often were fitted with nails, or armed with spikes, to make the hold firm in the ground: or.

(2) with "greaves" that were fitted to the legs, and designed to defond them from any danger. These "greaves," or boots 1 Samuel 17:6, were made of brass, and were in almost universal use among the Greeks and Romans.

With the preparation - Prepared with the gospel of peace. The sense is, that the Christian soldier is to be prepared with the gospel of peace to meet attacks similar to those against which the ancient soldier designed to guard himself by the sandals or greaves which he wore. The word rendered "preparation" - (ἑτοιμασία hetoimasia) - means properly readiness, fitness for, alacrity; and the idea, according to Robinson (Lexicon), is, that they were to be ever ready to go forth to preach the gospel. Taylor (Fragments to Calmet's Dic., No. 219) supposes that it means, "Your feet shod with the

preparation of the gospel; not iron, not steel - but patient investigation, calm inquiry, assiduous, laborious, lasting; or with "firm footing" in the gospel of peace." Locke supposes it to mean," with a readiness to walk in the gospel of peace." Doddridge supposes that the allusion is to "greaves," and the spirit recommended is that peaceful and benevolent temper recommended in the gospel, and which, like the boots worn by soldiers, would bear them safe through many obstructions and trials that might be opposed to them, as a soldier might encounter sharp-pointed thorns that would oppose his progress.

It is difficult to determine the exact meaning; and perhaps all expositors have erred in endeavoring to explain the reference of these parts of armor by some particular thing in the gospel. The apostle figured to himself a soldier, clad in the usual manner. Christians were to resemble him. One part of his dress or preparation consisted in the covering and defense of the foot. It was to preserve the foot from danger, and to secure the facility of his march, and perhaps to make him firm in battle. Christians were to have the principles of the gospel of peace - the peaceful and pure gospel - to facilitate them; to aid them in their marches; to make them firm in the day of conflict with their foes. They were not to be furnished with carnal weapons, but with the peaceful gospel of the Redeemer; and, sustained by this, they were to go on in their march through the world. The principles of the gospel were to do for them what the greaves and iron-spiked sandals did for the soldier - to make them ready for the march, to make them firm in their foot-tread, and to be a part of their defense against their foes.

Verse 16

Above all - Ἐν πᾶσιν . Not "above all" in point of importance or value, but "over" all, as a soldier holds his shield to defend himself. It constitutes a protection over every part of his body, as it can be turned in every direction. The idea is, that as the shield covered or protected the other parts of the armor, so faith had a similar importance in the Christian virtues.

The shield - note, Isaiah 21:9. The shield was usually made of light wood. or a rim of brass, and covered with several folds or thicknesses of stout hide, which was preserved by frequent anointing. It was held by the left arm, and was secured by straps, through which the arm passed, as may be seen in the annexed figures. The outer surface of the shield was made more or less rounding. Item the center to the edge, and was polished

smooth, or anointed with oil, so that arrows or darts would glance off, or rebound.

Of faith - On the nature of faith, see the notes on Mark 16:16. Faith here is made to occupy a more important place than either of the other Christian graces. It bears, to the whole Christian character, the same relation which the shield does to the other parts of the armor of a soldier. It protects all, and is indispensable to the security of all, as is the case with the shield. The shield was an ingenious device by which blows and arrows might be parried off, and the whole body defended. It could be made to protect the head, or the heart, or thrown behind to meet all attack there. As long as the soldier had his shield, he felt secure; and as long as a Christian has faith, he is safe. It comes to his aid in every attack that is made on him, no matter from what quarter; it is the defense and guardian of every other Christian grace; and it secures the protection which the Christian needs in the whole of the spiritual war.

Wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked - Or, rather, "of the wicked one" - τοῦ πονηροῦ tou ponērouThe allusion is undoubtedly to the great enemy of the people of God, called, by way of eminence, the "wicked one;" compare 2 Thessalonians 3:3. Mr. Locke renders this, "Wherein you may receive, and so render ineffectual," etc. There seems a little incongruity in the idea of "quenching" darts by "a shield." But the word "quench," here, means only that they would be "put out" by being thrown "against" the shield, as a candle would by being thrown against anything. "The fiery darts" that were used in war were small, slender pieces of cane, which were filled with combustible materials, and set on fire; or darts around which some combustible material was wound, and which were set on fire, and then shot "slowly" against a foe. The object was to make the arrow fasten in the body, and increase the danger by the burning; or, more frequently, those darts were thrown against ships, forts, tents, etc., with an intention to set them on fire. They were in common use among the ancients. Arrian (Exped. Alexan. 11) mentions the πυρφορα βελη purphora belēthe fire-bearing weapons; Thucydides (ii. c. 75), the πυρφοροι ὀΐστοι purphoroi oistoithe fire-bearing arrows; and Livy refers to similar weapons as in common use in war; lib. xxi. c. 8. By the "fiery darts of the wicked," Paul here refers, probably, to the temptations of the great adversary, which are like fiery darts; or those furious suggestions of evil, and excitements to sin, which he may throw into the mind like fiery

darts. They are - blasphemous thoughts, unbelief, sudden temptation to do wrong, or thoughts that wound and torment the soul. In regard to them, we may observe:

(1)that they come suddenly, like arrows sped from a bow;

(2)they come from unexpected quarters, like arrows shot suddenly from an enemy in ambush;

(3)they pierce, and penetrate, and torment the soul, as arrows would that are on fire;

(4)they set the soul on fire, and enkindle the worst passions, as fiery darts do a ship or camp against which they are sent.

The only way to meet them is by the "shield of faith;" by confidence in God, and by relying on his gracious promises and aid. It is not by our own strength; and, if we have not faith in God, we are wholly defenseless. We should have a shield that we can turn in any direction, on which we may receive the arrow, and by which it may be put out.

Verse 17

And take the helmet - The helmet was a cap made of thick leather, or brass, fitted to the head, and was usually crowned with a plume, or crest, as an ornament. Its use was to guard the head from a blow by a sword, or war-club, or battle-axe. The cuts will show its usual form.

Of salvation - That is, "of the hope of salvation;" for so it is expressed in the parallel place in 1 Thessalonians 5:8. The idea is, that a well-founded hope of salvation will preserve us in the day of spiritual conflict, and will guard us from the blows which an enemy would strike. The helmet defended the head, a vital part; and so the hope of salvation will defend the soul, and keep it from the blows of the enemy. A soldier would not fight well without a hope of victory. A Christian could not contend with his foes, without the hope of final salvation; but, sustained by this, what has he to dread?

And the sword - The sword was an essential part of the armor of an ancient soldier. His other weapons were the bow, the spear, or the battle-axe. But, without a sword, no soldier would have regarded himself as well armed. The ancient sword was short, and usually two-edged, and resembled very much a dagger.

Of the Spirit - Which the Holy Spirit furnishes; the truth which he has revealed.

Which is the word of God - What God has spoken - his truth and promises; see the notes on Hebrews 4:12. It was with this weapon that the Saviour met the tempter in the wilderness; Matthew 4:4, Matthew 4:7, Matthew 4:10, met the tempter with the Word of God, and he was foiled. So we shah be safe if we adhere to the simple declarations of the Bible, and oppose a temptation by a positive command of God. But, the moment we leave that, and begin to parley with sin, that moment we are gone. It is as if a man should throw away his sword, and use his naked hands only in meeting an adversary. Hence,

(4) we may seethe importance of training up the young in the accurate study of the Bible. There is nothing which will furnish a better security to them in future life, when temptation comes upon them, than to have a pertinent text of Scripture at command. Temptation often assails us so suddenly that it checks all "reasoning;" but a text of Scripture will suffice to drive the tempter from us.

Verse 18

Praying always - It would be well for the soldier who goes forth to battle to pray - to pray for victory; or to pray that he may be prepared for death, should he fall. But soldiers do not often feel the necessity of this. To the Christian soldier, however, it is indispensable. Prayer crowns all lawful efforts with success and gives a victory when nothing else would. No matter how complete the armor; no matter how skilled we may be in the science of war; no matter how courageous we may be, we may be certain that without prayer we shall be defeated. God alone can give the victory; and when the Christian soldier goes forth armed completely for the spiritual conflict, if he looks to God by prayer, he may be sure of a triumph. This prayer is not to be intermitted. It is to be always. In every temptation and spiritual conflict we are to pray; see notes on Luke 18:1.

With all prayer and supplication - With all kinds of prayer; prayer in the closet, the family, the social meeting, the great assembly; prayer at the usual hours, prayer when we are specially tempted, and when we feel just like praying (see the notes, Matthew 6:6) prayer in the form of supplication for ourselves, and in the form of intercession for others. This is, after all, the great weapon of our spiritual armor, and by this we may hope to prevail.

"Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian armor bright,
And Satan trembles when he sees.
The meanest saint upon his knees."

In the Spirit - By the aid of the Holy Spirit; or perhaps it may mean that it is not to be prayer of form merely, but when the spirit and the heart accompany it. The former idea seems, however, to be the correct one.

And watching thereunto - Watching for opportunities to pray; watching for the spirit of prayer; watching against all those things which would hinder prayer; see the Matthew 26:38, note, 41, note; compare 1 Peter 4:7.

With all perseverance - Never becoming discouraged and disheartened; compare notes, Luke 18:1.

And supplication for all saints - For all Christians. We should do this:

(1) because they are our brethren - though they may have a different skin, language, or name.

(2) because, like us, they have hearts prone to evil, and need, with us, the grace of God.

(3) because nothing tends so much to make us love others and to forget their faults, as to pray for them.

(4) because the condition of the church is always such that it greatly needs the grace of God. Many Christians have backslidden; many are cold or lukewarm; many are in error; many are conformed to the world; and we should pray that they may become more holy and may devote themselves more to God.

(5) because each day many a Christian is subjected to some special temptation or trial, and though he may be unknown to us, yet our prayers may benefit him.

(6) because each day and each night many Christians die. We may reflect each night as we lie down to rest, that while we sleep, some Christians are kept awake by the prospect of death, and are now passing

through the dark valley; and each morning we may reflect that "today" some Christian will die, and we should remember them before God.

(7) because we shall soon die, and it will be a comfort to us if we can remember then that we have often prayed for dying saints, and if we may feel that they are praying for us.

Verse 19

And for me - Paul was then a prisoner at Rome. He specially needed the prayers of Christians:

(1) that he might be sustained in his afflictions; and,

(2) that he might be able to manifest the spirit which he ought, and to do good as he had opportunity. Learn hence that we should pray for the prisoner, the captive, the man in chains, the slave. There are in this land (the United States) about ten thousand prisoners - husbands, fathers, sons, brothers; or wives, mothers, daughters. True, they are the children of "crime," but they are also the children of sorrow; and in either case or both they need our prayers. There are in this land not far from three million of slaves - and they need our prayers. They are children of misfortune and of many wrongs; they are sunk in ignorance and want and we; they are subjected to trials, and exposed to temptations to the lowest vices. But many of them, we trust, love the Redeemer; and whether they do or do not, they need an interest in the prayers of Christians.

That utterance may be given unto me - Paul, though a prisoner, was permitted to preach the gospel; see the notes, Acts 28:30-31.

That I may open my mouth boldly - He was in Rome. He was almost alone. He was surrounded by multitudes of the wicked. He was exposed to death. Yet he desired to speak boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and to invite sinners to repentance. A Christians in chains, and surrounded by the wicked, may speak boldly, and "may" have hope of success - for Paul was not an unsuccessful preacher even when a captive at Rome; see the notes on Philemon 4:22.

The mystery of the gospel - notes, Ephesians 1:9.

Verse 20

For which I am an ambassador in bonds - In chains (see the margin); or in confinement. There is something especially touching in this. He was

“an ambassador” - sent to proclaim peace to a lost world. But he was now in chains. An ambassador is a sacred character. No greater affront can be given to a nation than to put its ambassadors to death, or even to throw them into prison. But Paul says here that the unusual spectacle was witnessed of an ambassador seized, bound, confined, imprisoned; an ambassador who ought to have the privileges conceded to all such people, and to be permitted to go everywhere publishing the terms of mercy and salvation. See the word “ambassador” explained in the notes on 2 Corinthians 5:20.

That therein - Margin, or “thereof.” Greek, ἐν αὐτῷ en autō- “in it;” that is, says Rosenmuller, in the gospel. It means that in speaking the gospel he might be bold.

I may speak boldly - Openly, plainly, without fear; see the notes on Acts 4:13; Acts 9:27, note; Acts 13:46, note; Acts 14:3, note; Acts 18:26, note; Acts 19:8, note; Acts 26:26, note.

As I ought to speak - Whether in bonds or at large. Paul felt that the gospel ought always to be Spoken with plainness, and without the fear of man. It is remarkable that he did not ask them to pray that he might be released. “Why” he did not we do not know; but perhaps the desire of release did not lie so near his heart as the duty of speaking the gospel with boldness It may be of much more importance that we perform our duty aright when we are afflicted, or are in trouble, than that we should be released.

Verse 21

But that ye also may know my affairs - May understand my condition, my feelings, and in what I am engaged. To them it could not but be a subject of deep interest.

And how I do - Greek, “What I do; that is how I am employed.

Tychicus - Tychicus was of the province of Asia, in Asia Minor, of which Ephesus was the capital; see Acts 20:4. It is not improbable that he was of Ephesus, and that he was well known to the church there. He also carried the letter to the Colossians Colossians 4:7, and probably the Second Epistle to Timothy; 2 Timothy 4:12. Paul also proposed to send him to Crete to succeed Titus; Titus 3:12. He was high in the confidence of: Paul, but it is not known when he was converted, or why he was now at Rome. The Greeks speak of him as one of the seventy disciples, and make him bishop of Colophon, in the province of Asia.

Verse 22

Whom I have sent unto you - The churches where Paul had preached, would feel a great interest in his welfare. He was a prisoner at Rome, and it was doubtful what the result would be. In this situation, he felt it proper to despatch a special messenger to give information about his condition; to state what was doing in Rome; to ask the prayers of the churches; and to administer consolation to them in their various trials. The same sentiment in regard to the embassy of Tychicus, is expressed in the Epistle to the Colossians, Colossians 4:7-8. No small part of the consolation which he would impart to them would be found in these invaluable letters which he bore to them from the apostle.

Verse 23

Peace be to the brethren - The Epistle is closed with the usual salutations. The expression "peace to you," was the common form of salutation in the East (see the Matthew 10:13 note; Luke 24:36 note; Romans 15:33 note; compare Galatians 6:16; 1 Peter 5:14; 3 John 1:14), and is still the "salam" which is used - the word "salam" meaning "peace."

And love with faith - Love united with faith; not only desiring that they might have faith, but the faith which worked by love.

From God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ - The Father and the Son are regarded as equally the author of peace and love; compare notes on 2 Corinthians 13:14.

Verse 24

Grace be, … - note, Romans 16:20.

That love our Lord Jesus Christ - see the notes on 1 Corinthians 16:22.

In sincerity - Margin, "with incorruption." With a pure heart; without dissembling; without hypocrisy. There could not be a more appropriate close of the Epistle than such a wish; there will be nothing more needful for us when we come to the close of life than the consciousness that we love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. To writer and reader may this be equally the inestimable consolation then! Better, far better then will be the evidence of such sincere love, than all the wealth which toil can gain, all the honors which the world can bestow - than the most splendid mansion, or the widest fame. The subscription to this Epistle, like those affixed to the other epistles, is of no authority, but in this instance there is every reason to

believe that it is correct. Compare notes at the end of the Epistle to the Romans and 1Corinthians.

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CHAPTER FIFTY
Philippians

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Contents

PHILIPPIANS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Philippians

Section 1. The Situation of Philippi

Philippi is mentioned in the New Testament only in the following places and connections. In Acts 16:11-12, it is said that Paul and his fellow travelers "loosed from Troas, came with a straight course to Samothracia and Neapolis, and from thence to Philippi." It was at this time that the "Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things which were spoken by Paul," and that the jailor was converted under such interesting circumstances. In Acts 20:1-6, it appears that Paul again visited Philippi after he had been to Athens and Corinth, and when on his way to Judea. From Philippi he went to Troas. In 1 Thessalonians 2:2, Paul alludes to the shameful treatment which he had received at Philippi, and to the fact, that having been treated in that manner at Philippi, he had passed to Thessalonica, and preached the gospel there.

Philippi received its name from Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. Before his time, its history is unknown. It is said that it was founded on the site of an old Thasian settlement, and that its former name was Crenides from the circumstance of its being surrounded by numerous rivulets and springs descending from the neighboring mountains (from κρήνη krēnēa spring). The city was also called Dathos, or Datos - Δατος Datosnotes, Acts 16:12. The Thasians, who inhabited the island of Thasus, lying off the coast in the Aegean sea, had been attracted to the place by the valuable mines of gold and silver which were found in that region. It was a city of Macedonia, to the northeast of Amphipolis, and nearly east of Thessalonica. It was not far from the borders of Thrace. It was about 15 or 20 miles from the Aegean sea, in the neighborhood of Mount Pangaeus, and had a small river or stream running near it which emptied into the Aegean sea. We have no information of the size of the city when the gospel was preached there by Paul.

This city was originally within the limits of Thrace. Philip of Macedon having turned his attention to Thrace, the situation of Crenides and Mount Pangaeus naturally attracted his notice. Accordingly, he invaded this country; expelled the feeble Cotys from his throne, and then proceeded to found a new city, on the site of the old Thasian colony, which he called after

his own name - Philippi (Anthon, *Classical Dictionary*). When Macedonia became subject to the Romans, the advantages attending the situation of Philippi induced that people to send a colony there, and it became one of the most flourishing cities of the empire; compare Acts 16:12; Pliny, iv. 10. There is a medal of this city with the following inscription - col. jul. aug. phil. From this it appears that there was a colony sent there by Julius Caesar (Michaelis). The city derived considerable importance from the fact that it was a principal thoroughfare from Asia to Europe, since the great leading road from one continent to the other was in that vicinity. This road is described at length by Appian, De Bell. Civ. L. iv. c. 105,106.

This city is celebrated in history from the fact that it was here that a great victory - deciding the fate of the Roman empire - was obtained by Octavianus (afterward called Augustus Caesar) and Antony over the forces of Brutus and Cassius, by which the republican party was completely subdued. In this battle, Cassius, who was hard pressed and defeated by Antony, and who supposed that everything was lost, killed himself in despair. Brutus deplored his loss with tears of the sincerest sorrow, calling him, “the last of the Romans.” After an interval of 20 days, Brutus hazarded a second battle. Where he himself fought in person he was successful; but the army everywhere else gave way, and the battle terminated in the entire defeat of the republican party. Brutus escaped with a few friends; passed a night in a cave, and seeing that all was irretrievably lost, ordered Strato, one of his attendants, to kill him. Strato for a long time refused; but seeing that Brutus was resolute, he turned away his face, and held his sword, and Brutus fell upon it.

The city of Philippi is often mentioned by the Byzantine writers in history. Its ruins still retain the name of Filibah. Two American missionaries visited these ruins in May, 1834. They saw the remains of what might have been the forum or marketplace, where Paul and Silas were beaten Acts 16:19 and also the fragments of a splendid palace. The road by which Paul went from Neapolis to Philippi, they think is the same that is now traveled, since it is cut through the most difficult passes in the mountains. It is still paved throughout.

Section 2. The Establishment of the Church in Philippi

Philippi was the first place in Europe where the gospel was preached; and this fact invests the place with more interest and importance than it derives from the battle fought there. The gospel was first preached here in very interesting circumstances by Paul and Silas. Paul had been called by a remarkable vision Acts 16:9 to go into Macedonia, and the first place where he preached was Philippi - having made his way, as his custom was, directly to the capital. The first person to whom he preached was Lydia, a seller of purple, from Thyatira, in Asia Minor. She was converted, and received Paul and Silas into her house, and entertained them hospitably. In consequence of Paul‘s casting out an evil spirit from a “damsel possessed of a spirit of divination,” by which the hope of gain by those who kept her in their employ was destroyed, the populace was excited, and Paul and Silas were thrown into the inner prison, and their feet were made fast in the stocks. Here, at midnight, God interposed in a remarkable manner. An earthquake shook the prison; their bonds were loosened; the doors of the prison were thrown open, and their keeper, who before had treated them with special severity, was converted, and all his family were baptized. It was in such solemn circumstances that the gospel was first introduced into Europe. After the tumult, and the conversion of the jailor, Paul was honorably released, and soon left the city; Acts 16:40. He subsequently visited Macedonia before his imprisonment at Rome, and doubtless went to Philippi Acts 20:1-2. It is supposed, that after his first imprisonment at Rome, he was released and again visited the churches which he had founded. In this Epistle Phlippians 1:25-26; Phlippians 2:24 he expresses a confident hope that he would be released, and would be permitted to see them again; and there is a probability that his wishes in regard to this were accomplished; see the introduction to 2Timothy.

Section 3. The Time When the Epistle Was Written

It is evident that this epistle was written from Rome. This appears:

(1)because it was composed when Paul was in “bonds” Phlippians 1:13-14;

(2)because circumstances are suggested, such as to leave no doubt that the imprisonment was at Rome; thus, in Phlippians 1:13, he says that his “bonds were manifested in all the palace:” a phrase which would naturally suggest the idea of the Roman capitol; and, in Phlippians 4:22, he says, “all the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar‘s household.”

It is further evident that it was after he had been imprisoned for a considerable time, and, probably, not long before his release. This appears from the following circumstances:

(1) The apostle had been a prisoner so long in Rome, that the character which he had manifested in his trials had contributed considerably to the success of the gospel; Phlippians 1:12-14. His bonds, he says, were manifest "in all the palace;" and many of the brethren had become increasingly bold by his "bonds," and had taken occasion to preach the gospel without fear.

(2) the account given of Epaphroditus imports that, when Paul wrote this Epistle, he had been at Rome for a considerable time. He was with Paul in Rome, and had been sick there. The Philippians had received an account of his sickness, and he had again been informed how much they had been affected with the knowledge of his illness; Phlippians 2:25-26. The passing and repassing of this knowledge, Dr. Paley remarks, must have occupied considerable time, and must have all taken place during Paul's residence at Rome.

(3) after a residence at Rome, thus proved to have been of considerable duration, Paul, at the time of writing this epistle, regards the decision of his destiny as at hand. He anticipates that the matter would soon be determined; Phlippians 2:23.

"Him therefore (Timothy) I hope to send presently, so soon as I see how it will go with me." Paul had some expectation that he might be released, and be permitted to visit them again; Phlippians 2:21. "I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly;" compare Phlippians 1:25, Phlippians 1:27. Yet he was not absolutely certain how it would go with him, and though, in one place, he speaks with great confidence that he would be released Phlippians 1:25, yet in another he suggests the possibility that he might be put to death; Phlippians 2:17. "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." These circumstances concur to fix the time of writing the epistle to the period at which the imprisonment in Rome was about to terminate. From Acts 28:30, we learn that Paul was in Rome "two whole years;" and it was during the latter part of this period that the Epistle was written. It is commonly agreed,

therefore, that it was written about 61 or 62 ad. Hug (Introduction) places it at the end of the year 61 a.d., or the beginning of the year 62 a.d.; Lardner, at the close of the year 62 ad. It is evident that it was written before the great conflagration at Rome in the time of Nero (64 a.d.); because it is hardly credible that Paul would have omitted a reference to such an event, if it had occurred. It is certain, from the persecution of the Christians which followed that event, that he would not have been likely to have represented his condition to be so favorable as he has done in this epistle. He could hardly have looked then for a release.

Section 4. The Design and Character of the Epistle

The object of the Epistle is apparent. It was sent by Epaphroditus Phlippians 2:25, who appears to have been a resident at Philippi, and a member of the church there, to express the thanks of the apostle for the favors which they had conferred upon him, and to comfort them with the hope that he might be soon set at liberty. Epaphroditus had been sent by the Philippians to convey their benefactions to him in the time of his imprisonment; Phlippians 4:18. While at Rome, he had been taken ill; Phlippians 2:26-27. Upon his recovery, Paul deemed it proper that Epaphroditus should return to Philippi immediately. It was natural that he should give them some information about his condition and prospects. A considerable part of the Epistle, therefore is occupied in giving an account of the effects of Paul‘s imprisonment in promoting the spread of the gospel, and of Paul‘s own feelings in the circumstances in which he was then. He was not yet certain what the result of his imprisonment would be Phlippians 1:20; but he was prepared either to live or to die, Phlippians 1:23. He wished to live only that he might be useful to others; and, supposing that he might be made useful, he had some expectation that he might be released from his bonds.

There is, perhaps, not one of the epistles of the apostle Paul which is so tender, and which abounds so much with expressions of kindness, as this. In relation to other churches, he was often under the necessity of using the language of reproof. The prevalence of some error, as in the churches of Galatia; the existence of divisions and strifes, or some aggravated case requiring discipline, or some gross irregularity, as in the church at Corinth, frequently demanded the language of severity. But, in the church at Philippi, there was scarcely anything which required rebuke; there was very much that demanded commendation and gratitude. Their conduct toward

him, and their general deportment, had been exemplary, generous, and noble. They had evinced for him the tenderest regard in his troubles; providing for his needs, sending a special messenger to supply him when no other opportunity occurred Phlippians 4:10, and sympathizing with him in his trials; and they had, in the order, peace, and harmony of the church, eminently adorned the doctrine of the Saviour. The language of the apostle, therefore, throughout the Epistle, is of the most affectionate character - such as a benevolent heart would always choose to employ, and such as must have been exceedingly grateful to them.

Paul never hesitated to use the language of commendation where it was deserved, since he never shrank from reproof where it was merited; and he appears to have regarded the one as a matter of duty as much as the other. We are to remember, too, the circumstances of Paul, and to ask what kind of an Epistle an affectionate and grateful spiritual father would be likely to write to a much-beloved flock, when he felt that he was about to die; and we shall find that this is just such an epistle as we should suppose such a man would write. It breathes the spirit of a ripe Christian, whose piety was mellowing for the harvest; of one who felt that he was not far from heaven, and might soon "be with Christ." Though there was some expectation of a release, yet his situation was such as led him to look death in the face. He was lying under heavy accusations; he had no hope of justice from his own countrymen; the character of the emperor (Nero) was not such as to inspire him with great confidence of having justice done; and it is possible that the fires of persecution had already begun to burn.

At the mercy of such a man as Nero; a prisoner; among strangers, and with death staring him in the face, it is natural to suppose that there would be a special solemnity, tenderness, pathos, and ardor of affection, breathing through the entire Epistle. Such is the fact; and in none of the writings of Paul are these qualities more apparent than in this letter to the Philippians. He expresses his grateful remembrance of all their kindness; he evinces a tender regard for their welfare; and he pours forth the full-flowing language of gratitude, and utters a father‘s feelings toward them by tender and kind admonitions. It is important to remember these circumstances in the interpretation of this Epistle. It breathes the language of a father, rather than the authority of an apostle; the entreaties of a tender friend, rather than the

commands of one in authority. It expresses the affections of a man who felt that he might be near death, and who tenderly loved them; and it will be, to all ages, a model of affectionate counsel and advice.

PHILIPPIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This chapter embraces the following points:

I. The salutation to the church, Phlippians 1:1-2.

II. In Phlippians 1:3-8, the apostle expresses his gratitude for the evidence which they had given of love to God, and for their fidelity in the gospel from the time when it was first proclaimed among them. He says that he was confident that this would continue, and that God, who had so mercifully imparted grace to them to be faithful, would do it to the end.

III. He expresses the earnest hope that they might abound more and more in knowledge, and be without offence to the day of Christ; Phlippians 1:9-11.

IV. In Phlippians 1:12-21, he states to them what had been the effect of his imprisonment in Rome - presuming that in would be grateful intelligence to them that even his imprisonment had been overruled for the spread of the gospel. His trials, he says, had been the means of the extension of the knowledge of Christ even in the palace, and many Christians had been emboldened by his sufferings to increased diligence in making known the truth. Some, indeed, he says, preached Christ from unworthy motives, and with a view to increase his affliction, but in the great fact that Christ was preached, he says, he rejoiced. Forgetting himself and any injury which they might design to do to him, he could sincerely rejoice that the gospel was proclaimed - no matter by whom or with what motives. The whole affair he trusted would be made conducive to his salvation. Christ was the great end and aim of his life; and if he were made known everything else was of minor importance.

V. The mention of the fact Phlippians 1:21 that his great aim in living was “Christ.” leads him to advert to the probability that he might soon be with him; Phlippians 1:22-26. So great was his wish to be with him, that he would hardly know which to choose - whether to die at once, or to live and to make him known to others. Believing, however, that his life might be still

useful to them, he had an expectation of considerable confidence that his life would be spared, and that he would be released.

VI. The chapter closes, Phlippians 1:27-30, with an earnest exhortation that they would live as became the gospel of Christ. Whatever might befall him - whether he should be permitted to see them, or should hear of them, he entreated that he might know that they were living as became the gospel. They were not to he afraid of their adversaries; and if called to suffer, they were to remember that "it was given" them not only to believe on the Redeemer, but also to suffer in his cause.

Verse 1

Paul and Timotheus - Paul frequently unites some person with him in his epistles; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 1:1. It is clear from this, that Timothy was with Paul at Rome. Why he was there is unknown. It is evident that he was not there as a prisoner with Paul, and the probability is, that he was one of the friends who had gone to Rome with a view to show his sympathy with him in his sufferings; compare the notes at 2 Timothy 4:9. There was special propriety in the fact that Timothy was joined with the apostle in writing the Epistle, for he was with him when the church was founded, and doubtless felt a deep interest in its welfare; Romans 1:1.

To all the saints in Christ Jesus - The common appellation given to the church, denoting that it was holy; see the notes, Romans 1:7.

With the bishops - σὺν επισκόποις sun episkopoissee the notes, Acts 20:28. The word used here occurs in the New Testament only in the following places: Acts 20:28, translated "overseers;" and Phlippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 2:25, in each of which places it is rendered as "bishop." The word properly means an inspector, overseer, or guardian, and was given to the ministers of the gospel because they exercised this care over the churches, or were appointed to oversee their interests. It is a term, therefore, which might be given to any of the officers of the churches, and was originally equivalent to the term presbyter. It is evidently used in this sense here. It cannot be used to denote a diocesan bishop; or a bishop having the care of the churches in a large district of country, and of a superior rank to other ministers of the gospel, because the word is used here in the plural number, and it is in the highest degree improbable that there were dioceses in Philippi. It is clear, moreover, that they were the only

officers of the church there except "deacons;" and the persons referred to, therefore, must have been those who were invested simply with the pastoral office. Thus, Jerome, one of the early fathers, says, respecting the word bishop: "A presbyter is the same as a bishop. And until there arose divisions in religion, churches were governed by a common counsel of presbyters. But afterward, it was everywhere decreed, that one person, elected from the presbyters, should be placed over the others." "Philippi," says he, "is a single city of Macedonia; and certainly there could not have been several like these who are now called bishops, at one time in the same city. But as, at that time, they called the same bishops whom they called presbyters also, the apostles spoke indifferently of bishops as of presbyters." Annotations on the Epistle to Titus, as quoted by Dr. Woods on Episcopacy, p. 63.

And deacons - On the appointment of deacons, and their duty, see the notes at Acts 6:1. The word "deacons" does not occur before this place in the common version of the New Testament, though the Greek word rendered here as "deacon" frequently occurs. It is rendered "minister" and "ministers" in Matthew 20:26; Mark 10:43; Romans 13:4; Romans 15:8; 1 Corinthians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 2 Corinthians 6:4; 2 Corinthians 11:15, 2 Corinthians 11:23; Galatians 2:17; Ephesians 3:7; Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 1:7, Colossians 1:23, Colossians 1:25; Colossians 4:7; 1 Timothy 4:6; "servant" and "servants," Matthew 22:13; Matthew 23:11; Mark 9:25; John 2:5, John 2:9; John 12:26; Romans 16:1; and "deacon" or "deacons," Phlippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8, 1 Timothy 3:12. The word properly means servants, and is then applied to the ministers of the gospel as being the servants of Christ, and of the churches. Hence, it came especially to denote those who had charge of the alms of the church, and who were the overseers of the sick and the poor. In this sense the word is probably used in the passage before us, as the officers here referred to were distinct in some way from the bishops. The apostle here mentions but two orders of ministers in the church at Philippi, and this account is of great importance in its bearing on the question about the way in which Christian churches were at first organized, and about the officers which existed in them. In regard to this we may remark:

(1) That only two orders of ministers are mentioned. This is undeniable, whatever rank they may have held.

(2) there is no intimation whatever that a minister like a prelatical bishop had ever been appointed there, and that the incumbent of the office

was absent, or that the office was now vacant. If the bishop was absent, as Bloomfield and others suppose, it is remarkable that no allusion is made to him, and that Paul should have left the impression that there were in fact but two "orders" there. If there were a prelate there, why did not Paul refer to him with affectionate salutations? Why does he refer to the two other "orders of clergy" without the slightest allusion to the man who was set over them as "superior in ministerial rank and power?" Was Paul jealous of this prelate? But if they had a prelate, and the see was then vacant, why is there no reference to this fact? Why no condolence at their loss? Why no prayer that God would send them a man to enter into the vacant diocese? It is a mere assumption to suppose, as the friends of prelacy often do, that they had a prelatical bishop, but that he was then absent. But even granting this, it is an inquiry which has never been answered, why Paul did not make some reference to this fact, and ask their prayers for the absent prelate.

(3) the church was organized by the apostle Paul himself, and there can be no doubt that it was organized on the "truly primitive and apostolic plan."

(4) the church at Philippi was in the center of a large territory; was the capital of Macedonia, and was not likely to be placed in subjection to the diocesan of another region.

(5) it was surrounded by other churches, since we have express mention of the church at Thessalonica, and the preaching of the gospel at Berea; Acts 17.

(6) there is more than one bishop mentioned as connected with the church in Philippi. But these could not have been bishops of the Episcopal or prelatical order, if Episcopalians choose to say that they were prelates, then it follows:

(a)that there was a plurality of such persons in the same diocese, the same city, and the same church - which is contrary to the fundamental idea of Episcopacy. It follows also,

(b)that there was entirely missing in the church at Philippi what the Episcopalians call the "second order" of clergy; that a church was organized by the apostles defective in one of the essential grades, with a body of

prelates without presbyters - that is, an order of men of "superior" rank designated to exercise jurisdiction over "priests" who had no existence.

If there were such presbyters or "priests" there, why did not Paul name them? If their office was one that was contemplated in the church, and was then vacant, how did this happen? And if this were so, why is there no allusion to so remarkable a fact?

(7) it follows, therefore, that in this church there were only two orders of officers; and further that it is right and proper to apply the term "bishop" to the ordinary ministers of the churches. As no mention is made of a prelate; as there are but two orders of men mentioned to whom the care of the church was entrusted, it follows that there was one church at least organized by the apostles without any prelate.

(8) the same thing may be observed in regard to the distinction between "teaching" elders and "ruling" elders. No such distinction is referred to here; and however useful such an office as that of ruling elder may be, and certain as it is, that such an office existed in some of the primitive churches, yet here is one church where no such officer is found, and this fact proves that such an officer is not essential to the Christian church.

Verse 2

Grace be unto you … - See the note at Romans 1:7.

Verse 3

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you - Margin, "mention." The Greek word means, "recollection, remembrance." But this recollection may have been suggested either by his own reflections on what he had seen, or by what he had heard of them by others, or by the favors which they conferred on him reminding him of them. The meaning is, that as often as he thought on them, from whatever cause, he had occasion of thankfulness. He says that he thanked his God, intimating that the conduct of the Philippians was a proof of the favor of God to him; that is, he regarded their piety as one of the tokens of the favor of God to his own soul - for in producing that piety he had been mainly instrumental.

Verse 4

Always - There is much emphasis in the expressions which are used here. Paul labors to show them that he never forgot them; that he always remembered them in his prayers.

In every prayer of mine - This was a proof of particular and special affection, that while there were so many objects demanding his prayers, and so many other churches which he had founded, he never forgot them. The person or object that we remember in every prayer must be very dear to the heart.

For you all - Not for the church in general, but for the individual members. "He industriously repeats the word ‹all,‘ that he might show that he loved them all equally well, and that he might the more successfully excite them to the manifestation of the same love and benevolence" - Wetstein.

Making request with joy - With joy at your consistent walk and benevolent lives - mingling thanksgiving with my prayers in view of your holy walk.

Verse 5

For your fellowship in the gospel - "For your liberality toward me, a preacher of the gospel." - Wetstein. There has been, however, no little difference of opinion about the meaning of this phrase. Many - as Doddridge, Koppe, and others - suppose it refers to the fact that they participated in the blessings of the gospel from the first day that he preached it until the time when he wrote this Epistle. Others suppose that it refers to their constancy in the Christian faith. Others - as Pierce, Michaelis, Wetstein, Bloomfield, and Storr - suppose it refers to their liberality in contributing to the support of the gospel; to their participating with others, or sharing what they had in common with others, for the maintenance of the gospel. That this is the true sense seems apparent:

(1) because it accords with the scope of the Epistle, and what the apostle elsewhere says of their benefactions. He speaks particularly of their liberality, and indeed this was one of the principal occasions of his writing the Epistle; Phlippians 4:10-12, Phlippians 4:15-18.

(2) it accords with a frequent meaning of the word rendered "fellowship" - κοινωνία koinōniaIt denotes that which is in common; that of which we participate with others, communion, fellowship; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Corinthians 10:16; Phlippians 1:6; then it means communication, distribution, contribution; Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 9:13. That it cannot mean "accession to the gospel" as has been supposed (see Robinson‘s Lexicon), is apparent from what he adds - "from the first

day until now." The fellowship must have been something constant, and continually manifest - and the general meaning is, that in relation to the gospel - to its support, and privileges, and spirit, they all shared in common. They felt a common interest in every thing that pertained to it, and they showed this in every suitable way, and especially in ministering to the wants of those who were appointed to preach it.

From the first day - The time when it was first preached to them. They had been constant. This is honorable testimony. It is much to say of a church or of an individual Christian, that they have been constant and uniform in the requirements of the gospel. Alas, of how few can this be said. On these verses Phlippians 1:3-5 we may remark:

(1) That one of the highest joys which a minister of the gospel can have, is that furnished by the holy walk of the people to whom he has ministered; compare 3 John 1:4. It is joy like that of a farmer when he sees his fields ripe for a rich harvest; like that of a teacher in the good conduct and rapid progress of his scholars; like that of a parent in the virtue, success, and piety of his sons. Yet it is superior to all that. The interests are higher and more important; the results are more far-reaching and pure; and the joy is more disinterested. Probably there is nowhere else on earth any happiness so pure, elevated, consoling, and rich, as that of a pastor in the piety, peace, benevolence, and growing zeal of his people.

(2) it is right to commend Christians when they do well. Paul never hesitated to do this, and never supposed that it would do injury. Flattery would injure - but Paul never flattered. Commendation or praise, in order to do good, and not to injure, should be:

(a)the simple statement of the truth;

(b)it should be without exaggeration;

(c)it should be connected with an equal readiness to rebuke when wrong; to admonish when in error, and to counsel when one goes astray.

Constant fault-finding, scolding, or fretfulness, does no good in a family, a school, or a church. The tendency is to dishearten, irritate, and discourage. To commend a child when he does well, may be as important, and as much a duty, as to rebuke him when he does ill. God is as careful to commend his people when they do well, as he is to rebuke them when they do wrong - and that parent, teacher, or pastor, has much mistaken the path of wisdom, who supposes it to be his duty always to find fault. In this world there is

nothing that goes so far in promoting happiness as a willingness to be pleased rather than displeased to be satisfied rather than dissatisfied with the conduct of others.

(3) our absent friends should be remembered in our prayers. On our knees before God is the best place to remember them. We know not their condition. If they are sick, we cannot minister to their needs; if in danger, we cannot run to their relief; if tempted, we cannot counsel them. But God, who is with them, car do all this; and it is an inestimable privilege thus to be permitted to commend them to his holy care and keeping. Besides, it is a duty to do it. It is one way - and the best way - to repay their kindness. A child may always be repaying the kindness of absent parents by supplicating the divine blessing on them each morning; and a brother may strengthen and continue his love for a sister, and in part repay her tender love, by seeking, when far away, the divine favor to be bestowed on her.

Verse 6

Being confident - This is strong language. It means to be fully and firmly persuaded or convinced; participle, middle voice, from πείθω peithō- to persuade; compare Luke 16:31. "Neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead;" that is, they would not be convinced; Acts 17:4; Hebrews 11:13; Acts 28:24. It means here that Paul was entirely convinced of the truth of what he said. It is the language of a man who had no doubt on the subject.

That he which hath begun a good work in you - The "good work" here referred to, can be no other than religion, or true piety. This is called the work of God; the work of the Lord; or the work of Christ; John 6:29; compare 1 Corinthians 15:58; 1 Corinthians 16:10; Phlippians 2:30. Paul affirms here that that work was begun by God. It was not by their own agency or will; compare the notes on John 1:13. It was on the fact that it was begun by God, that he based his firm conviction that it would be permanent. Had it been the agency of man, he would have had no such conviction, for nothing that man does today can lay the foundation of a certain conviction that he will do the same thing tomorrow. If the perseverance of the Christian depended wholly on himself, therefore, there could be no sure evidence that he would ever reach heaven.

Will perform it - Margin, "Or, finish" The Greek word - ἐπιτελέσει epitelesei- means that he would carry it forward to completion; he would perfect it. It is an intensive form of the word, meaning that it would be

carried through to the end. It occurs in the following places: Luke 13:32, "I do cures;" Romans 15:28, "when I have performed this;" 2 Corinthians 7:1, "perfecting holiness;" 2 Corinthians 8:6, "so he would also finish in you;" 2 Corinthians 8:11, "perform the doing of it;" Galatians 3:3, "are ye now made perfect by the flesh;" Hebrews 8:5, "when he was about to make the tabernacle;" Hebrews 9:6, "accomplishing this service;" and 1 Peter 5:9, "are accomplished in your brethren." The word occurs nowhere else; and here means that God would carry on the work which he had begun to completion. He would not leave it unfinished. It would not he commenced and then abandoned. This would or could be "performed" or "finished" only:

(1) by keeping them from falling from grace, and,

(2) by their ultimate entire perfection.

Until the day of Jesus Christ - The day when Christ shall so manifest himself as to be the great attractive object, or the day when he shall appear to glorify himself, so that it may be said emphatically to be his day. That day is often called "his day," or "the day of the Lord," because it will be the day of his triumph and glory. It refers here to the day when the Lord Jesus will appear to receive his people to himself - the day of judgment. We may remark on this verse, that Paul believed in the perseverance of saints. It would be impossible to express a stronger conviction of the truth of that doctrine than he has done here. Language could not be clearer, and nothing can be more unequivocal than the declaration of his opinion that where God has begun a good work in the soul, it will not be finally lost. The ground of this belief he has not stated in full, but has merely hinted at it. It is based on the fact that God had begun the good work. That ground of belief is something like the following:

(1) It is in God alone. It is not in man in any sense. No reliance is to be placed upon man in keeping himself. He is too weak; too changeable; too ready to be led astray; too much disposed to yield to temptation.

(2) the reliance, therefore, is on God; and the evidence that the renewed man will be kept is this:

(a)God began the work of grace in the soul.

(b)He had a design in it. It was deliberate, and intentional. It was not by chance or haphazard. It was because he had some object that was worthy of his interposition.

(c)There is no reason why he should begin such a work and then abandon it. It cannot be because he has no power to complete it, or because there are more enemies to be overcome than he had supposed; or because there are difficulties which he did not foresee; or because it is not desirable that the work should be completed. Why then should he abandon it?

(d)God abandons nothing that he undertakes. There are no unfinished worlds or systems; no half-made and forsaken works of His hands. There is no evidence in His works of creation of change of plan, or of having forsaken what He began from disgust, or disappointment, or lack of power to complete them. Why should there be in the salvation of the soul?

(e)He has promised to keep the renewed soul to eternal life; see John 10:27-29; Hebrews 6:17-20; compare Romans 8:29-30.

Verse 7

Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all - "There is a reason why I should cherish this hope of you, and this confident expectation that you will be saved. That reason is found in the evidence which you have given that you are sincere Christians. Having evidence of that, it is proper that I should believe that you will finally reach heaven."

Because I have you in my heart - Margin, "Ye have me in your." The Greek will bear either, though the former translation is the most obvious. The meaning is, that he was warmly attached to them, and had experienced many proofs of their kindness; and that there was, therefore, a propriety in his wishing for their salvation. Their conduct toward him, moreover, in his trials, had convinced him that they were actuated by Christian principle; and it was proper that he should believe that they would be kept to eternal life.

Both in my bonds - While I have been a prisoner - referring to the care which they had taken to minister to his needs; Phlippians 4:10, Phlippians 4:14, Phlippians 4:18.

And in the defence - Greek: apology. He is probably referring to the time when he made his defense before Nero, and vindicated himself from the charges which had been brought against him; see the notes at 2 Timothy 4:16. Perhaps he means here, that on that occasion he was abandoned by

those who should have stood by him, but that the Philippians showed him all the attention which they could. It is not impossible that they may have sent some of their number to sympathize with him in his trials, and to assure him of the unabated confidence of the church.

And confirmation of the gospel - In my efforts to defend the gospel, and to make it known; see Phlippians 1:17. The allusion is probably to the fact that, in all his efforts to defend the gospel, he had been sure of their sympathy and cooperation. Perhaps he refers to some assistance which he had derived from them in this cause, which is now to us unknown.

Ye all are partakers of my grace - Margin, "Or, with me of grace." The meaning is, that as they had participated with him in the defense of the gospel; as in all his troubles and persecutions they had made common cause with him, so it followed that they would partake of the same tokens of the divine favor. He expected that the divine blessing would follow his efforts in the cause of the gospel, and he says that they would share in the blessing. They had shown all the sympathy which they could in his trials; they had nobly stood by him when others forsook him; and he anticipated, as a matter of course, that they would all share in the benefits which would flow to him in his efforts in the cause of the Redeemer.

Verse 8

For God is my record - My witness; I can solemnly appeal to him.

How greatly I long after you all - To see you; and how much I desire your welfare.

In the bowels of Jesus Christ - The word "bowels," in the Scriptures denotes the upper viscera - the region of the heart and lungs: see the notes at Isaiah 16:11. That region was regarded as the seat of affection, sympathy, and compassion, as the heart is with us. The allusion here is to the sympathy, tenderness, and love of the Redeemer; and probably the meaning is, that Paul regarded them with something of the affection which the Lord Jesus had for them. This was the tenderest and strongest expression which he could find to denote the ardor of his attachment.

Verse 9

And this I pray - We pray for those whom we love, and whose welfare we seek. We desire their happiness; and there is no way more appropriate of expressing that desire than of going to God, and seeking it at his hand. Paul proceeds to enumerate the blessings which he sought for them; and it is worthy of observation that he did not ask riches, or worldly prosperity, but

that his supplications were confined to spiritual blessings, and he sought these as the most desirable of all favors.

That your love may abound … - Love to God; love to one another; love to absent Christians; love to the world. This is an appropriate subject of prayer. We cannot wish and pray for a better thing for our Christian friends, than that they may abound in love. Nothing will promote their welfare like this; and we had better pray for this, than that they may obtain abundant riches, and share the honors and pleasures of the world.

In knowledge - The idea is, that he wished them to have intelligent affection. It should not be mere blind affection, but that intelligent love which is based on an enlarged view of divine things - on a just apprehension of the claims of God.

And in all judgment - Margin, "sense;" compare the notes at Hebrews 5:14. The word here means, the power of discerning; and the meaning is, that he wished that their love should be exercised with proper discrimination. It should be in proportion to the relative value of objects; and the meaning of the whole is, that the wished their religion to be intelligent and discriminating; to be based on knowledge, and a proper sense of the relative value of objects, as well as to be the tender affection of the heart.

Verse 10

That ye may approve things - Margin, "Or, try." The word used here denotes the kind of trial to which metals are exposed in order to test their nature; and the sense here is, that the apostle wished them so to try the things that were of real value, as to discern that which was true and genuine.

That are excellent - Margin: Or, "differ." The margin here more correctly expresses the sense of the Greek word. The idea is, that he wished them to be able to distinguish between things that differed from each other; to have an intelligent apprehension of what was right and wrong - of what was good and evil. He would not have them love and approve all things indiscriminately. They should be esteemed according to their real value. It is remarkable here how anxious the apostle was not only that they should be Christians, but that they should be intelligent Christians, and should understand the real worth and value of objects.

That ye may be sincere - See the notes at Ephesians 6:24. The word used here - εἰλικρινής eilikrinēs- occurs nowhere else in the New

Testament, except in 2 Peter 3:1, where it is rendered "pure." The noun εἰλικρίνεια eilikrineiahowever, occurs in 1 Corinthians 5:8; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 2 Corinthians 2:17; in all which places it is rendered "sincerity." The word properly means, "that which is judged in sunshine" εἵλῃ κρίνω heilē krinōand then "that which is clear and manifest." It is that over which there are no clouds; which is not doubtful and dark; which is pure and bright. The word "sincere" means literally without wax (sine cera); that is, honey which is pure and transparent. Applied to Christian character, it means that which is not deceitful, ambiguous, hypocritical; that which is not mingled with error, worldliness, and sin; that which does not proceed from selfish and interested motives, and where there is nothing disguised. There is no more desirable appellation that can be given to a man than to say that he is sincere - a sincere friend, benefactor, Christian; and there is nothing more lovely in the character of a Christian than sincerity. It implies:

(1)that he is truly converted - that he has not assumed Christianity as a mask;

(2)that his motives are disinterested and pure;

(3)that his conduct is free from double-dealing, trick, and cunning;

(4)that his words express the real sentiments of his heart;

(5)that he is true to his word, and faithful to his promises; and,

(6)that he is always what he professes to be. A sincere Christian would bear to have the light let in upon him always; to have the emotions of his heart seen; to be scanned everywhere, and at all times, by people, by angels, and by God.

And without offence - Inoffensive to others. Not injuring them in property, feelings, or reputation. This is a negative virtue, and is often despised by the world. But it is much to say of a man that he injures no one; that neither by example, nor opinions, nor conversation, he leads them astray; that he never does injustice to their motives, and never impedes their influence; that he never wounds their feelings, or gives occasion for hard thoughts; and that he so lives that all may see that his is a blameless life.

Till the day of Christ - See the notes at Phlippians 1:6.

Verse 11

Being filled with the fruits of righteousness - That which righteousness in the heart produces. The fruits, or results, will be seen in the life; and those fruits are - honesty, truth, charity, kindness, meekness, goodness. The wish of the apostle is, that they might show abundantly by their lives that they were truly righteous. He does not refer to liberality merely, but to everything which true piety in the heart is fitted to produce in the life.

Which are by Jesus Christ -

(1) Which his religion is fitted to produce.

(2) which result from endeavoring to follow his example.

(3) which are produced by his agency on the heart.

Unto the glory and praise of God - His honor is never more promoted than by the eminent holiness of his friends; see the notes at John 15:8. If we wish, therefore, to honor God, it should not be merely with the lips, or by acts of prayer and praise; it should be by a life devoted to him. It is easy to render the service of the lips; it is far more difficult to render that service which consists in a life of patient and consistent piety; and in proportion to the difficulty of it, is its value in his sight.

Verse 12

But I would ye should understand - Paul here turns to himself, and goes into a somewhat extended account of his own feelings in his trials, and of the effects of his imprisonment at Rome he wished them to understand what his circumstances were, and what had been the effect of his imprisonment, probably, for such reasons as these:

(1) They were tenderly attached to him, and would feel an interest in all that pertained to him.

(2) it was possible that they might hear unfounded rumors about the manner of his treatment, and he wished that they should understand the exact truth.

(3) he had real intelligence to communicate to them that would be joyful to them, about the effect of his imprisonment, and his treatment there; and he wished them to rejoice with him.

That the things which happened unto me - The accusations against him, and his imprisonment at Rome. He had been falsely accused, and had been constrained to appeal to Caesar, and had been taken to Rome as a prisoner; Acts 2528. This arrest and imprisonment would seem to have been against his success as a preacher; but he now says that the contrary had been the fact.

Have fallen out - Have resulted in. Literally, "have come." Tyndale. "My business is happened."

The furtherance - The increase, the promotion of the gospel. Instead of being a hindrance, they have been rather an advantage.

Verse 13

So that my bonds in Christ - Margin, "for." The meaning is, his bonds in the cause of Christ. He was imprisoned because he preached Christ (see the notes, Ephesians 6:20), and was really suffering because of his attachment to the Redeemer. It was not for crime, but for being a Christian for had he not been a Christian, he would have escaped all this. The manner of Paul's imprisonment was, that he was permitted to occupy a house by himself, though chained to a soldier who was his guard; Acts 28:16. He was not in a dungeon indeed, but he was not at liberty, and this was a severe mode of confinement. Who would wish to be chained night and day to a living witness of all that he did; to a spy on all his movements? Who would wish to have such a man always with him, to hear all he said, and to see all that he did? Who could well bear the feeling that he could never be alone - and never be at liberty to do anything without the permission of one too who probably had little disposition to be indulgent?

Are manifest - That is, it has become known that I am imprisoned only for the sake of Christ - Grotius. The true reason why I am thus accused and imprisoned begins to be understood, and this has awakened sympathy for me as an injured man. They see that it is not for crime, but that it is on account of my religious opinions, and the conviction of my innocence has spread abroad, and has produced a favorable impression in regard to Christianity itself. It must have been a matter of much importance for Paul to have this knowledge of the real cause why he was imprisoned go abroad. Such a knowledge would do much to prepare others to listen to what he had to say - for there is no man to whom we listen more readily than to one who is suffering wrongfully.

In all the palace - Margin, "Or, Caesar's court." Greek, ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ πραιτωρίῳ en holō tō praitōriō- in all the praetorium. This word properly denotes the general's tent in a camp; then the house or palace of a governor of a province, then any large hall, house, or palace. It occurs in the New Testament only in the following places: Matthew 27:27, where it is rendered "common hall"; Mark 15:16, rendered "Praetorium"; John 18:28, John 18:33; John 19:9; Acts 23:35, rendered "judgment hall"; and here in Phlippians 1:13. It is employed to denote:

(1)the palace of Herod at Jerusalem, built with great magnificence at the northern part of the upper city, westward of the temple, and overlooking the temple;

(2)the palace of Herod at Caesarea, which was probably occupied by the Roman procurator; and,

(3)in the place before us to denote either the palace of the emperor at Rome, or the praetorian camp, the headquarters of the praetorian guards or cohorts.

These cohorts were a body of select troops instituted by Augustus to guard his person, and have charge of the city; see Robinson (*Lexicon*), Bloomfield, Rosenmuller, and some others, understand this of the praetorian camp, and suppose that Paul meant to say that the cause of his imprisonment had become known to all the band of the praetorians.

Grotius says that the usual word to denote the residence of the emperor at Rome was palatium - palace, but that those who resided in the provinces were accustomed to the word "praetorium," and would use it when speaking of the palace of the emperor. Chrysostom says that the palace of the emperor was called praetorium, by a Latin word derived from the Greek; see Erasmus in loc. Calvin supposes that the palace of Nero is intended. The question about the meaning of the word is important, as it bears on the inquiry to what extent the gospel was made known at Rome in the time of Paul, and perhaps as to the question why he was released from his imprisonment. It the knowledge of his innocence had reached the palace, it was a ground of hope that he might be acquitted; and if that palace is here intended, it is an interesting fact, as showing that in some way the gospel had been introduced into the family of the emperor himself. That the palace or residence of the emperor is intended here, may be considered at least probable from the following considerations:

(1) It is the name which would be likely to be used by the Jews who came up from Judea and other provinces, to denote the chief place of judgment, or the principal residence of the highest magistrate. So it was used in Jerusalem, in Cesarea, and in the provinces generally, to denote the residence of the general in the camp, or the procurator in the cities - the highest representative of the Roman power.

(2) if the remark of Chrysostom, above referred to, be well founded, that this was a common name given to the palace in Rome, then this goes far to determine the question.

(3) in Phlippians 4:22, Paul, in the salutation of the saints at Rome to those of Philippi, mentions particularly those of "Caesar's household." From this it would seem that some of the family of the emperor had been made acquainted with the Christian religion, and had been converted. In what way the knowledge of the true cause of Paul's imprisonment had been circulated in the "palace," is not now known. There was, however, close intimacy between the military officers and the government, and it was probably by means of some of the soldiers or officers who had the special charge of Paul, that this had been communicated. To Paul, in his bonds, it must have been a subject of great rejoicing, that the government became thus apprised of the true character of the opposition which had been excited against him; and it must have done much to reconcile him to the sorrows and privations of imprisonment, that he was thus the means of introducing religion to the very palace of the emperor.

And in all other places - Margin, to all others. The Greek will bear either construction. But if, as has been supposed, the reference in the word praetorium is to the palace, then this should be rendered "all other places." It then means, that the knowledge of his innocence, and the consequences of that knowledge in its happy influence in spreading religion, were not confined to the palace, but were extended to other places. The subject was generally understood, so that it might be said that correct views of the matter pervaded the city, and the fact of his imprisonment was accomplishing extensively the most happy effects on the public mind.

Verse 14

And many of the brethren - Many Christians. It is evident from this, that there were already "many" in Rome who professed Christianity.

In the Lord - In the Lord Jesus; that is, united to him and to each other by a professed attachment to him. This is a common phrase to, designate Christians.

Waxing confident by my bonds - Becoming increasingly bold and zealous in consequence of my being confined. This might have been either:

(1)that from the very fact that so distinguished a champion of the truth had been imprisoned, they were excited to do all they could in the cause of the gospel. Or,

(2)they were aroused by the fact that the cause of his imprisonment had become generally understood, and that there was a strong current of popular favor setting toward Christianity in consequence of it. Or,

(3)they had had contact with Paul in his own "hired house," and had been incited and encouraged by him to put forth great efforts in the cause. Or,

(4)it would seem that some had been emboldened to promulgate their views, and set themselves up as preachers, who would have been restrained if Paul had been at liberty.

They were disposed to form parties, and to secure followers, and rejoiced in an opportunity to increase their own popularity, and were not unwilling thus to diminish the popularity and lessen the influence of so great a man as Paul. Had he been at liberty, they would have had no prospect of success; see Phlippians 1:16. To this may be added a suggestion by Theodoret. "Many of the brethren have increased boldness - θάρσος tharsos- on account of my bonds. For seeing me bear such hard things with pleasure, they announce that the gospel (which sustains me) is divine." The same sentiment occurs in Oecumen, and Theophylact; see Bloomfield. In Paul himself they had an illustration of the power of religion, and being convinced of its truth, they went and proclaimed it abroad.

To speak the word without fear - That is, they see that I remain safely (compare Acts 28:30), and that there is no danger of persecution, and, stimulated by my sufferings and patience, they go and make the gospel known.

Verse 15

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife - What was the ground of this "envy and strife" the apostle does not mention. It would seem, however, that even in Rome there was a party which was jealous of the influence of Paul, and which supposed that this was a good opportunity to diminish his influence, and to strengthen their own cause. He was not now at large so as to be able: to meet and confute them. They had access to the mass of the people. It was easy, under plausible pretences, to insinuate hints about the ambitious aims, or improper influence of Paul, or to take strong ground against him and in favor of their own views, and they availed themselves of this opportunity. It would seem most probable, though this is not mentioned, that these persons were Judaizing teachers, professing Christianity, and who supposed that Paul's views were derogatory to the honor of Moses and the Law.

And some also of good will - From pure motives, having no party aims to accomplish, and not intending in any way to give me trouble.

Verse 16

The one preach Christ of contention - So as to form parties, and to produce strifes among his professed followers.

Not sincerely - Not "purely" - ἁγνῶς hagnōs- not with pure motives or intentions. Their real aim is not to preach Christ, but to produce difficulty, and to stir up strife. They are ambitious people, and they have no real regard for the welfare of the church and the honor of religion.

Supposing to add affliction to my bonds - To make my trial the greater. How they did this is unknown. Perhaps they were those who were strongly imbued with Jewish notions, and who felt that his course tended to diminish respect for the law of Moses, and who now took this opportunity to promote their views, knowing that this would be particularly painful to him when he was not at liberty to meet them openly, and to defend his own opinions. It is possible also that they may have urged that Paul himself had met with a signal reproof for the course which he had taken, and, as a consequence, was now thrown into chains. Bloomfield suggests that it was the opinion of many of the ancient expositors that they endeavored to do this by so preaching as to excite the fury of the multitude or the rulers against Paul, and to produce increased severity in his punishment. But the way in which they did this is unknown, and conjecture is altogether useless.

Verse 17

But the other of love - From pure motives, and from sincere affection to me.

Knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel - They believe that I am an ambassador from God. They regard me as unjustly imprisoned, and while I am disabled, they are willing to aid me in the great cause to which my life is devoted. To alleviate his sorrows, and to carry forward the great cause to defend which he was particularly appointed, they engaged in the work which he could not now do, and went forth to vindicate the gospel, and to make its claims better known. Coverdale renders this: "for they know that I lie here for the defense of the gospel." So Piscator, Michaelis, and Endius render it: supposing that the meaning is, that he lay in prison for the defense of the gospel, or as a consequence of his efforts to defend it. But this is not in accordance with the usual meaning of the Greek word κεῖμαι keimaiIt means to lie, and, in the perfect passive, to be laid, set, placed. If the apostle had referred to his being in prison, he would have added that fact to the statement made. The sense is, that he was appointed to be a defender of the gospel, and that they being well convinced of this, went forth to promulgate and defend the truth. That fact was one of Paul's chief consolations while he was thus in confinement.

Verse 18

What then? - What follows from this? What effect does it have on my mind? Does the fact that some preach from a spirit of envy and contention give me pain?

Notwithstanding every way - No matter in what way it is done. We are not to suppose, however, that Paul was indifferent as to the way in which the gospel was preached, or the spirit with which it was done; but the meaning is, that it was a matter of rejoicing that it was done at all, whatever the motives might be.

Whether in pretence or in truth - Whether as a mere pretext to cover up some other design, or from pure motives. Their pretence was that they preached the gospel because they believed it true and loved it; their real object was to build up a party, and to diminish the influence and authority of Paul.

Christ is preached - They made known the name of the Saviour, and announced that the Messiah had come. They could not go forth under any pretence as preachers, without making known some truth about the Redeemer. So now, it is hardly possible that any persons should attempt to

preach, without stating some truth that would not otherwise be known. The name of a Saviour will be announced, and that will be something. Some views of his life and work will be presented, which, though they may be far enough from full views, are yet better than none. Though there may be much error in what is said, yet there will be also some truth. It would be better to have preachers that were better instructed, or that were more prudent, or that had purer motives, or that held a more perfect system, yet it is much in our world to have the name of the Redeemer announced in any way, and even to be told, in the most stammering manner, and from whatever motives, that man has a Saviour. The announcement of that fact in any way may save a soul; but ignorance of it could save none.

And I therein do rejoice - This is an instance of great magnanimity on the part of Paul, and nothing, perhaps, could better show his supreme love for the Saviour. Paul preached to increase his afflictions, and the tendency of that preaching was, probably, as it was designed to be, to unsettle confidence in him, and to lessen his influence. Yet this did not move him. The more important matter was secured, and Christ was made known; and if this were secured, he was willing that his own name should be cast into the shade. This may furnish valuable lessons to preachers of the gospel now:

(1) When we are laid aside from preaching by sickness, we should rejoice that others are in health, and are able to make the Saviour known, though we are forgotten.

(2) when we are unpopular and unsuccessful, we should rejoice that others are more popular and successful - for Christ is preached.

(3) when we have rivals, who have better plans than we for doing good, and whose labors are crowned with success, we should not be envious or jealous - for Christ is preached.

(4) when ministers of other denominations preach what we regard as error, and their preaching becomes popular, and is attended with success, we can find occasion to rejoice - for they preach Christ.

In the error we should not, we cannot rejoice; but in the fact that the great truth is held up that Christ died for people, we can always find

abundant occasion for joy. Mingled as it may be with error, it may be nevertheless the means of saving souls, and though we should rejoice more if the truth were preached without any admixture of error, yet still the very fact that Christ is made known lays the foundation for gratitude and rejoicing. If all Christians and Christian ministers had the feelings which Paul expresses here, there would be much less envy and uncharitableness than there is now in the churches. May we not hope that the time will yet come when all who preach the gospel will have such supreme regard for the name and work of the Saviour, that they will find sincere joy in the success of a rival denomination, or a rival preacher, or in rival plans for doing good? Then, indeed, contentions would cease, and the hearts of Christians, "like kindred drops," would mingle into one.

Verse 19

For I know that this shall turn to my salvation - Will be a means of my salvation. Whether the effect shall be to turn public favor toward the Christian religion, and secure my release; or whether it shall be to instigate my enemies more, so as to lead to my death; I am satisfied that the result, so far as I am concerned, will be well. The word "salvation," here, does not refer to his release from captivity, as Koppe, Rosenmuller, Clarke, and others, suppose; for he was not absolutely certain of that, and could not expect that to be effected by "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" But the meaning is, that all these dealings, including his imprisonment, and especially the conduct of those who thought to add affliction to his bonds, would be among the means of his salvation. Trying and painful as all this was, yet trial and pain Paul reckoned among the means of grace; and he had no doubt that this would prove so.

Through your prayer - See the notes at 2 Corinthians 1:11.

And the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ - To sustain me, and to cause those happy results to come out of these trials. He needed the same spirit which Jesus Christ had, to enable him to bear his trials with patience, and to impart to him the consolations which he required. He had no idea that these trials would produce these effects of their own accord, nor that it could be by any strength of his own.

Verse 20

According to my earnest expectation - The word used here occurs but in one other place in the New Testament; see it explained in the notes at

Romans 8:19. The earnest desire and hope which Paul had was not, primarily, that he might be released; but it was that, in all circumstances, he might be able to honor the gospel, living or dying. To that he looked as a much more important matter than to save his life. Life with him was the secondary consideration; the main thing was, to stand up everywhere as the advocate of the gospel, to maintain its truth, and to exhibit its spirit.

That in nothing I shall be ashamed - That I shall do nothing of which I shall have occasion to be ashamed. That in these heavy trials, I may not be left to deny the truth of the Christian religion; that, even before the emperor, I may maintain its principles; and that the dread of death may not lead me to do a dishonorable thing, or in any way so to shrink from an avowal of my belief, as to give me or my friends occasion of regret.

But that with all boldness - By my speaking the truth, and maintaining my principles with all boldness; see the 2 Corinthians 7:4 note; Ephesians 6:19-20 notes.

Christ shall be magnified - Shall be held up to the view of man as the true and only Saviour, whatever becomes of me.

Whether it be by life - If I am permitted to live. He was not yet certain how the case would terminate with him. He had not been put on his trial, and, whether that trial would result in his acquittal or not, he could not certainly know. But he felt assured that, if he was acquitted, the effect would be to honor Christ. He would ascribe his deliverance to his gracious interposition; he would devote himself with new ardor to his service; and he felt assured, from his past efforts, that he would be able to do something that would "magnify" Christ in the estimation of mankind.

Or by death - If my trial shall result in my death. Then, he believed he would be able to show such a spirit as to do honor to Christ and his cause. He was not afraid to die, and he was persuaded that he would be enabled to bear the pains of death in such a manner as to show the sustaining power of religion, and the value of Christianity. Christ is magnified in the death of Christians, when his gospel is seen to sustain them; when, supported by its promises, they are enabled to go calmly into the dark valley; and when, in the departing moments, they confidently commit their eternal all into his hands. The effect of this state of feeling on the mind of Paul must have been most happy. In whatever way his trial terminated, he felt assured that the great object for which he lived would be promoted. Christ would be honored, perhaps, as much by his dying as a martyr, as by his living yet

many years to proclaim his gospel. He was, therefore, reconciled to his lot. He had no anxiety. Come what might, the purpose which he had most at heart would be secured, and the name of the Saviour would be honored.

Verse 21

For to me to live is Christ - My sole aim in living is to glorify Christ. He is the supreme End of my life, and I value it only as being devoted to his honor - Doddridge. His aim was not honor, learning, gold, pleasure; it was, to glorify the Lord Jesus. This was the single purpose of his soul - a purpose to which he devoted himself with as much singleness and ardor as ever did a miser to the pursuit of gold, or a devotee of pleasure to amusement, or an aspirant for fame to ambition. This implied the following things:

(1) apurpose to know as much of Christ as it was possible to know - to become as fully acquainted as he could with his rank, his character, his plans, with the relations which he sustained to the Father, and with the claims and influences of his religion; see Phlippians 3:10; Ephesians 3:19; compare John 17:3.

(2) apurpose to imitate Christ - to make him the model of his life. It was a design that his Spirit should reign in his heart, that the same temper should actuate him, and that the same great end should be constantly had in view.

(3) apurpose to make his religion known, as far as possible, among mankind. To this, Paul seriously gave his life, and devoted his great talents. His aim was to see on bow many minds he could impress the sentiments of the Christian religion; to see to how many of the human family he could make Christ known, to whom he was unknown before. Never was there a man who gave himself with more ardor to any enterprise, than Paul did to this; and never was one more successful, in any undertaking, than he was in this.

(4) it was a purpose to enjoy Christ. He drew his comforts from him. His happiness he found in communion with him. It was not in the works of art; not in the pursuits of elegant literature; not in the frivolous and fashionable world; but it was in communion with the Saviour, and in endeavoring to please him.

Remarks On Revelation 14:13. A sentiment similar to this occurs frequently in the Greek and Latin classic writers. See Wetstein, in loc., who has collected numerous such passages. With them, the sentiment had its origin in the belief that they would be freed from suffering, and admitted to some happy world beyond the grave. To them, however, all this was conjecture and uncertainty. The word "gain," here, means profit, advantage; and the meaning is, there would be an advantage in dying above that of living. Important benefits would result to him personally, should he die; and the only reason why he should wish at all to live was, that he might be the means of benefiting others; Phlippians 1:24-25. But how would it be gain to die? What advantage would there be in Paul's circumstances? What in ours? It may be answered, that it will be gain for a Christian to die in the following respects:

(1) He will be then freed from sin. Here it is the source of perpetual humiliation and sorrow; in heaven be will sin no more.

(2) he will be freed from doubts about his condition. Here the best are liable to doubts about their personal piety, and often experience many an anxious hour in reference to this point; in heaven, doubt will be known no more.

(3) he will be freed from temptation. Here, no one knows when he may be tempted, nor how powerful the temptation may be; in heaven, there will be no allurement to lead him astray; no artful, cunning, and skillful votaries of pleasure to place inducements before him to sin; and no heart to yield to them, if there were.

(4) he will be delivered from all his enemies - from the slanderer, the calumniator, the persecutor. Here the Christian is constantly liable to have his motives called in question, or to be met with detraction and slander; there, there will be none to do him injustice; all will rejoice in the belief that he is pure,

(5) He will be delivered from suffering. Here he is constantly liable to it. His health fails, his friends die, his mind is sad. There, there shall be no separation of friends, no sickness, and no tears.

(6) he will be delivered from death. Here, death is always near - dreadful, alarming, terrible to our nature. There, death will be known no more. No face will ever turn pale, and no knees tremble, at his approach; in all heaven there will never be seen a funeral procession, nor will the soil there ever open its bosom to furnish a grave.

(7) to all this may be added the fact, that the Christian will be surrounded by his best friends; that he will be reunited with those whom he loved on earth; that he will be associated with the angels of light; and that he will be admitted to the immediate presence of his Saviour and his God! Why, then, should a Christian be afraid to die? And why should he not hail that hour, when it comes, as the hour of his deliverance, and rejoice that he is going home? Does the prisoner, long confined in a dungeon, dread the hour which is to open his prison, and permit him to return to his family and friends? Does the man in a foreign land, long an exile, dread the hour when he shall embark on the ocean to be conveyed where he may embrace the friends of his youth? Does the sick man dread the hour which restores him to health; the afflicted, the hour of comfort? the wanderer at night, the cheering light of returning day? And why then should the Christian dread the hour which will restore him to immortal rigor; which shall remove all his sorrows; which shall introduce him to everlasting day?

Death is the crown of life:
Were death denied, poor man would live in vain:
Were death denied, to live would not be life.

Were death denied, even fools would wish to die.

Death wounds to cure; we fall; we rise; we reign!

Spring from our fetters; fasten in the skies;

Where blooming Eden withers in our sight.

Death gives us more than was in Eden lost,

The king of terrors is the prince of peace.

Night Thoughts, iii.

Verse 22

But if I live in the flesh - If I continue to live; if I am not condemned and make a martyr at my approaching trial.

This is the fruit of my labour - The meaning of this passage, which has given much perplexity to commentators, it seems to me is, "If I live in the flesh, it will cost me labor; it will be attended, as it has been, with much effort and anxious care, and I know not which to prefer - whether to remain on the earth with these cares and the hope of doing good, or to go at once to a world of rest." A more literal version of the Greek will show that this is the meaning. Τοῦτό μοι καρπὸς ἔργου **Touto moi karpos ergou- "this to me is (or would be) the fruit of labor." Coverdale, however, renders it: "Inasmuch as to live in the flesh is fruitful to me for the work, I wot not what I shall choose." So Luther: "But since to live in the flesh serves to produce more fruit." And so Bloomfield: "But if my life in the flesh be of use to the gospel (be it so, I say no more), verily what I shall choose I see and know not."**

See also Koppe, Rosenmuller, and Calvin, who give the same sense. According to this, the meaning is, that if his life were of value to the gospel, he was willing to live; or that it was a valuable object - operae pretium- worth an effort thus to live. This sense accords well with the connection, and the thought is a valuable one, but it is somewhat doubtful whether it can be made out from the Greek. To do it, it is necessary to suppose that μοι **moi- "my" - is expletive (Koppe, and that** καὶ **kai- "and" - is used in an unusual sense. See Erasmus. According to the interpretation first suggested, it means, that Paul felt that it would be gain to die, and that he was entirely willing; that he felt that if he continued to live it would involve toil and fatigue, and that, therefore, great as was the natural love of life, and desirous as he was to do good, he did not know which to choose - an immediate departure to the world of rest, or a prolonged life of toil and pain, attended even with the hope that he might do good. There was an intense desire to be with Christ, joined with the belief that his life here must be attended with toil and anxiety; and on the other hand an earnest wish to live in order to do good, and he knew not which to prefer.**

Yet - The sense has been obscured by this translation. The Greek word (καὶ **kai) means "and," and should have been so rendered here, in**

its usual sense. "To die would be gain; my life here would be one of toil, and I know not which to choose."

What I shall choose I wot not - I do not know which I should prefer, if it were left to me. On each side there were important considerations, and he knew not which overbalanced the other. Are not Christians often in this state, that if it were left to themselves they would not know which to choose, whether to live or to die?

Verse 23

For I am in a strait betwixt two - Two things, each of which I desire. I earnestly long to be with Christ; and I desire to remain to be useful to the world. The word rendered "I am in a strait" - συνέχομαι **sunechomai- means to be pressed on or constrained, as in a crowd; to feel oneself pressed or pent up so as not to know what to do; and it here means that he was in perplexity and doubt, and did not know what to choose. "The words of the original are very emphatic. They appear to be derived from a ship when lying at anchor, and when violent winds blow upon it that would drive it out to sea. The apostle represents himself as in a similar condition. His strong affection for them bound his heart to them - as an anchor holds a ship to its moorings and yet there was a heavenly influence bearing upon him - like the gale upon the vessel - which would bear him away to heaven." Burder, in Ros. Alt. u. neu. Morgenland, in loc.**

Having a desire to depart - To die - to leave this world for a better. People, as they are by nature, usually dread to die. Few are even made willing to die. Almost none desire to die - and even then they wish it only as the least of two evils. Pressed down by pain and sorrow; or sick and weary of the world, the mind may be worked up into a desire to be away. But this with the world is, in all cases, the result of misanthropy, or morbid feeling, or disappointed ambition, or an accumulation of many sorrows. Wetstein has adduced on this verse several most beautiful passages from the classic writers, in which people expressed a desire to depart - but all of them probably could be traced to disappointed ambition, or to mental or bodily sorrows, or to dissatisfaction with the world. It was from no such wish that Paul desired to die. It was not because he hated man - for he ardently loved him. It was not because he had been disappointed about wealth and honor - for he had sought neither. It was not because he had not been

successful - for no man had been more so. It was not because he had been subjected to pains and imprisonments - for he was willing to bear them. It was not because he was old, and infirm, and a burden to the world - for, from anything that appears, he was in the vigor of life, and in the fullness of his strength. It was from a purer, higher motive than any of these - the strength of attachment which bound him to the Saviour, and which made him long to be with him.

And to be with Christ - We may remark on this expression:

(1) That this was the true reason why he wished to be away. It was his strong love to Christ; his anxious wish to be with him; his firm belief that in his presence was "fulness of joy."

(2) Paul believed that the soul of the Christian would be immediately with the Saviour at death. It was evidently his expectation that he would at once pass to his presence, and not that he would remain in an intermediate state to some far distant period.

(3) the soul does not sleep at death. Paul expected to be with Christ, and to be conscious of the fact - to see him, and to partake of his glory.

(4) the soul of the believer is made happy at death. To be with Christ is synonymous with being in heaven - for Christ is in heaven, and is its glory. We may add:

(a) that this wish to be with Christ constitutes a marked difference between a Christian and other people. Other people may be willing to die; perhaps be desirous to die, because their sorrows are so great that they feel that they cannot be borne. But the Christian desires to depart from a different motive altogether. It is to be with Christ - and this constitutes a broad line of distinction between him and other people.

(b) A mere willingness to die, or even a desire to die, is no certain evidence of preparation for death. If this willingness or desire is caused by mere intensity of suffering; if it is produced by disgust at the world or by disappointment; if it arises from some view of fancied Elysian fields beyond the grave, it constitutes no evidence whatever of a preparation for death. I have seen not a few persons who were not

professed Christians on a bed of death, and not a few willing to die, nay, not a few who wished to depart. But in the vast majority of instances it was because they were sick of life, or because their pain made them sigh for relief, or because they were so wretched that they did not care what happened - and this they and their friends construed into an evidence that they were prepared to die! In most instances this is a miserable delusion; in no case is a mere willingness to die an evidence of preparation for death.

Which is far better - Would be attended with more happiness; and would be a higher, holier state than to remain on earth. This proves also that the soul of the Christian at death is made at once happy - for a state of insensibility can in no way be said to be a better condition than to remain in this present world. The Greek phrase here - πολλῷ μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον **pollō mallon kreisson- is very emphatic, and the apostle seems to labor for language which will fully convey his idea. It means, "by much more, or rather better," and the sense is, "better beyond all expression." Doddridge. See numerous examples illustrating the phrase in Wetstein. Paul did not mean to say that he was merely willing to die, or that he acquiesced in its necessity, but that the fact of being with Christ was a condition greatly to be preferred to remaining on earth. This is the true feeling of Christian piety; and having this feeling, death to us will have no terrors.**

Verse 24

Nevertheless to abide in the flesh - To live. All this is language derived from the belief that the soul will be separate from the body at death, and will occupy a separate state of existence.

Is more needful for you - Another object that was dear to the heart of Paul. He never supposed that his life was useless; or that it was a matter of no importance to the cause of religion whether he lived or died. He knew that God works by means; and that the life of a minister of the gospel is of real value to the church and the world. His experience, his influence, his paternal counsels, he felt assured would be of value to the church, and he had, therefore, a desire to live - and it was no part of his religion affectedly to undervalue or despise himself.

Verse 25

And having this confidence - "Being persuaded of this, that my continuance on earth is desirable for your welfare, and that the Lord

has a work for me to do, I confidently expect that I shall be permitted to live." The "confidence" here referred to was, that his life was needful for them, and hence that God would spare him. A literal translation would be, "And being persuaded as to this, or of this" - τοῦτο πεποιθὼς **touto pepoithōs- "I know," etc. The foundation of his expectation that he should live does not appear to have been any revelation to that effect, as Doddridge supposes; or any intimation which he had from the palace of the intentions of the government, as some others suppose, but the fact that he believed his life to be necessary for them, and that therefore God would preserve it.**

I know that I shall abide - The word "know," however, (οιδα **oida) is not to be pressed as denoting absolute necessity - for it appears from Phlippians 1:27 and Phlippians 2:17, that there was some ground for doubt whether he would live - but is to be taken in a popular sense, as denoting good courage, and an earnest hope that he would be permitted to live and visit them. Heinrichs.**

And continue with you all - That is, that he would be permitted not only to live, but to enjoy their society.

For your furtherance and joy of faith - For the increase of your faith, and the promotion of that joy which is the consequence of faith. Wetstein has quoted a beautiful passage from Seneca (Epis. 104) which strikingly resembles this sentiment of Paul. He says that when a man had meditated death, and when on his own account he would be willing to die, yet that he ought to be willing to live - to come back again to life - for the sake of his friends. Pagan adds: "It pertains to a great mind to be willing to come back to life for the sake of others; which distinguished people often do."

Verse 26

That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ - Through the mercy and grace of Christ, If he was spared, his deliverance would be traced to Christ, and they would rejoice together in one who had so mercifully delivered him.

For me by my coming to you again - Their joy would not only be that he was delivered, but that he was permitted to see them again.

Verse 27

Only let your conversation - The word "conversation" we now apply almost exclusively to oral discourse, or to talking. But it was not

formerly confined to that and is never so used in the Scriptures. It means conduct in general - including, of course, our manner of speaking, but not limited to that - and should be so understood in every place where it occurs in the Bible. The original word used here - πολιτεύω politeuō- means properly "to administer the state; to live as a citizen; to conduct oneself according to the laws and customs of a state;" see Acts 23:1; compare examples in Wetstein. It would not be improperly rendered: "let your conduct as a citizen be as becomes the gospel;" and might without impropriety, though not exclusively, be referred to our deportment as members of a community, or citizens of a state. It undoubtedly implies that, as citizens, we should act, in all the duties which that relation involves - in maintaining the laws, in submission to authority, in the choice of rulers, etc., as well as in other relations - on the principles of the gospel; for the believer is bound to perform every duty on Christian principles. But the direction here should not be confined to that. It doubtless includes our conduct in all relations in life, and refers to our deportment in general; not merely as citizens of the state, but as members of the church, and in all other relations. In our manner of speech, our plans of living, our dealings with others, our conduct and walk in the church and out of it - all should be done as becomes the gospel. The direction, therefore, in this place, is to be understood of everything pertaining to conduct.

As it becometh the gospel of Christ -

(1) The rules of the gospel are to be applied to all our conduct - to our conversation, business transactions, modes of dress, style of living, entertainments, etc. There is nothing which we do, or say, or purpose, that is to be excepted from those rules.

(2) there is a way of living which is appropriate to the gospel, or which is such as the gospel requires. There is something which the gospel would secure as its proper fruits in all our conduct, and by which our lives should be regulated. It would distinguish us from the frivolous, and from those who seek honor and wealth as their supreme object. If all Christians were under the influence of the gospel, there would be something in their dress, temper, conversation, and aims, which would distinguish them from others; The gospel is not a thing of nothing; nor is it intended that it should exert no influence on its friends.

(3) it is very important that Christians should frame their lives by the rules of the gospel, and, to this end, should study them and know what they are. This is important:

(a)because they are the best and wisest of all rules;

(b)because it is only in this way that Christians can do good;

(c)because they have solemnly covenanted with the Lord to take his laws as their guide;

(d)because it is only in this way that they can enjoy religion; and,

(e)because it is only by this that they can have peace on a dying bed.

If people live as "becometh the gospel," they live well. Their lives are honest and honorable; they are people of truth and uprightness; they will have no sources of regret when they die, and they will not give occasion to their friends to hang their heads with shame in the remembrance of them. No man on a dying bed ever yet regretted that he had framed his life by the rules of the gospel, or felt that his conduct had been conformed too much to it.

That whether I come and see you - Alluding to the possibility that he might be released, and be permitted to visit them again.

Or else be absent - Either at Rome, still confined, or released, and permitted to go abroad.

I may hear of your affairs … - I may hear always respecting you that you are united, and that you are vigorously striving to promote the interests of the gospel.

Verse 28

And in nothing terrified by your adversaries - Adversaries, or opponents, they had, like most of the other early Christians. There were Jews there who would be likely to oppose them (compare Acts 17:5), and they were exposed to persecution by the pagan. In that city, Paul had himself suffered much Acts 16; and it would not be strange if the same scenes should be repeated. It is evident from this passage, as well as from some other parts of the Epistle, that the Philippians were at this time experiencing some form of severe suffering. But in what way, or why, the opposition to them was excited, is nowhere stated. The

meaning here is, "do not be alarmed at anything which they can do. Maintain your Christian integrity, notwithstanding all the opposition which they can make. They will, in the end, certainly be destroyed, and you will be saved."

Which is to them an evident token of perdition - What, it may be asked, would be the token of their perdition? What is the evidence to which Paul refers that they will be destroyed? The relative "which" - ἥτις hētis- is probably used as referring to the persecution which had been commenced, and to the constancy which the apostle supposed the Philippians would evince. The sentence is elliptical; but it is manifest that the apostle refers either to the circumstance then occurring, that they were persecuted, and that they evinced constancy; or to the constancy which he wished them to evince in their persecutions. He says that this circumstance of persecution, if they evinced such a spirit as he wished, would be to them an evidence of two things:

(1) Of the destruction of those who were engaged in the persecution. This would be, because they knew that such persecutors could not ultimately prevail. Persecution of the church would be a certain indication that they who did it would be finally destroyed.

(2) it would be a proof of their own salvation, because it would show that they were the friends of the Redeemer; and they had the assurance that all those who were persecuted for his sake would be saved. The gender of the Greek relative here is determined by the following noun (ἔνδειξις endeixis), in a manner that is not uncommon in Greek; see Wetstein, in loc., and Koppe.

And that of God - That is, their persecution is a proof that God will interpose in due time and save you. The hostility of the wicked to us is one evidence that we are the friends of God, and shall be saved.

Verse 29

For unto you - Unto you as Christians. This favor is granted unto you in your present circumstances.

It is given - God concedes to you this privilege or advantage.

In the behalf of Christ - In the cause of Christ, or with a view to honor Christ. Or, these things are brought on you in consequence of your being Christians.

Not only to believe on him - It is represented here as a privilege to be permitted to believe on Christ. It is so:

(1) It is an honor to a man to believe one who ought to be believed, to trust one who ought to be trusted, to love one who ought to be loved.

(2) it is a privilege to believe on Christ, because it is by such faith that out sins are forgiven; that we become reconciled to God, and have the hope of heaven.

(3) it is a privilege, because it saves the mind from the tortures and the deadly influence of unbelief - the agitation, and restlessness, and darkness, and gloom of a skeptic.

(4) it is a privilege, because we have then a friend to whom we may go in trial, and on whom we may roll all our burdens. If there is anything for which a Christian ought to give unfeigned thanks, it is that he has been permitted to believe on the Redeemer. Let a sincere Christian compare his peace, and joy, and hope of heaven, and support in trials, with the restlessness, uneasiness, and dread of death, in the mind of an unbeliever; and he will see abundant occasion for gratitude.

But also to suffer for his sake - Here it is represented as a privilege to suffer in the cause of the Redeemer - a declaration which may sound strange to the world. Yet this sentiment frequently occurs in the New Testament. Thus, it is said of the apostles Acts 5:41, that "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name;" Colossians 1:24. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you;" 1 Peter 4:13. "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings;" compare James 1:2; Mark 10:30; see the notes at Acts 5:41. It is a privilege thus to suffer in the cause of Christ:

(1)because we then resemble the Lord Jesus, and are united with him in trials;

(2)because we have evidence that we are his, if trials come upon us in his cause;

(3)because we are engaged in a good cause, and the privilege of maintaining such a cause is worth much of suffering; and,

(4)because it will be connected with a brighter crown and more exalted honor in heaven.

Verse 30

Having the same conflict - The same agony - ἀγῶνα agōna- the same strife with bitter foes, and the same struggle in the warfare.

Which ye saw in me - When I was in Philippi, opposed by the multitude, and thrown into prison; Acts 16.

And now hear to be in me - In Rome. He was a prisoner there, was surrounded by enemies, and was about to be tried for his life. He says that they ought to rejoice if they were called to pass through the same trials.

In this chapter we have a beautiful illustration of the true spirit of a Christian in circumstances exceedingly trying. The apostle was in a situation where religion would show itself, if there were any in the heart; and where, if there was none, the bad passions of our nature would be developed. He was a prisoner. He had been unjustly accused. He was about to be put on trial for his life, and it was wholly uncertain what the result would be. He was surrounded with enemies, and there were not a few false friends and rivals who took advantage of his imprisonment to diminish his influence and to extend their own. He was, perhaps, about to die; and at any rate, was in such circumstances as to be under a necessity of looking death in the face.

In this situation he exhibited some of the tenderest and purest feelings that ever exist in the heart of man - the genuine fruit of pure religion. He remembered them with affectionate and constant interest in his prayers. He gave thanks for all that God had done for them. Looking upon his own condition, he said that the trials which had happened to him, great as they were, had been overruled to the furtherance of the gospel. The gospel had become known even in the imperial palace. And though it had been preached by some with no good will toward him, and with much error, yet he cherished no hard feeling; he sought for no revenge; he rejoiced that in any way, and from any motives, the great truth had been made known that a Saviour died. Looking forward to the possibility that his trial before the emperor

might terminate in his death, he calmly anticipated such a result, and looked at it with composure.

He says that in reference to the great purpose of his life, it would make no difference whether he lived or died, for he was assured that Christ would be honored, whatever was the result. To him personally it would be gain to die; and, as an individual, he longed for the hour when he might be with Christ. This feeling is religion, and this is produced only by the hope of eternal life through the Redeemer. An impenitent sinner never expressed such feelings as these; nor does any other form of religion but Christianity enable a man to look upon death in this manner. It is not often that a man is even willing to die - and then this state of mind is produced, not by the hope of heaven, but by disgust at the world; by disappointed ambition; by painful sickness, when the sufferer feels that any change would be for the better. But Paul had none of these feelings. His desire to depart was not produced by a hatred of life; nor by the greatness of his sufferings; nor by disgust at the world.

It was the noble, elevated, and pure wish to be with Christ - to see him whom he supremely loved, whom he had so long and so faithfully served, and with whom he was to dwell forever. To that world where Christ dwelt be would gladly rise; and the only reason why he could be content to remain here was, that he might be a little longer useful to his fellow human beings. Such is the elevated nature of Christian feeling. But, alas, how few attain to it; and even among Christians, how few are they that can habitually feel and realize that it would be gain for them to die! How few can say with sincerity that they desire to depart and to be with Christ! How rarely does even the Christian reach that state of mind, and gain that view of heaven, that, standing amidst his comforts here, and looking on his family, and friends, and property, he can say from the depths of his soul, that he feels it would be gain for him to go to heaven! Yet such deadness to the world may be produced - as it was in the case of Paul; such deadness to the world should exist in the heart of every sincere Christian. Where it does exist, death loses its terror, and the heir of life can look calmly on the bed where he will lie down to die; can think calmly of the moment when he will give the parting hand

to wife and child, and press them to his bosom for the last time, and imprint on them the last kiss; can look peacefully on the spot where he will moulder back to dust, and in view of all can triumphantly say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

PHILIPPIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

This chapter Phlippians 2:1-4. This exhortation he enforces in a most impressive manner by a reference to the example of Christ - an example of condescension and humiliation fitted to repress in us all the aspirings of ambition, and to make us ready to submit to the most humble offices to benefit others; Phlippians 2:5-11. He then exhorts them to work out their salvation with diligence, assuring them, for their encouragement, that God worked in them to will and to do of his good pleasure; Phlippians 2:12-13.

To this he adds an exhortation that they would avoid everything like complaining and disputing - that they would be blameless and harmless in their walk, showing the excellency of the religion which they loved to all around them, and exerting such an influence on others that Paul might feel that he had not labored in vain; Phlippians 2:14-16. To excite them to this, he assures them that he was ready himself to be sacrificed for their welfare, and should rejoice if by his laying down his life their happiness would be promoted. He asked the same thing in return from them; Phlippians 2:17-18. He then tells them, in expressing his interest in them, that he hoped soon to be able to send Timothy to them again - a man who felt a deep interest in their welfare, and whose going to them would be one of the highest proofs of the apostle‘s love; Phlippians 2:19-24. The same love for them, he says, he had now shown by sending to them Epaphroditus - a man to whom he was tenderly attached, and who had an earnest desire again to return to the church from which he had been sent. Paul sent him, therefore, again to Philippi, that he might be with them and comfort them, and he asked for him a kind reception and affectionate treatment, in view of the sufferings which he had experienced in the cause of the Redeemer; Phlippians 2:25-30.

Verse 1

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ - This, with what is said in the remainder of the verse, is designed as a motive for what he exhorts them to in Phlippians 2:2 - that they would be of the same mind, and would thus fulfill his joy. To urge them to this, he appeals to the tender considerations which religion furnished - and begins by a reference to the consolation which there was in Christ. The meaning here may be this: “I am

now persecuted and afflicted. In my trials it will give me the highest joy to learn that you act as becomes Christians. You also are persecuted and afflicted Phlippians 1:28-30; and, in these circumstances, I entreat that the highest consolation may be sought; and by all that is tender and sacred in the Christian religion, I conjure you, so to live as not to dishonor the gospel. So live as to bring down the highest consolation which can be obtained - the consolation which Christ alone can impart We are not to suppose that Paul doubted whether there was any consolation in Christ but the form of expression here is one that is designed to urge upon them the duty of seeking the highest possible. The consolation in Christ is that which Christ furnishes or imparts. Paul regarded him as the source of all comfort, and earnestly prays that they might so live that he and they might avail themselves in the fullest sense of that unspeakable enjoyment. The idea is, that Christians ought at all times, and especially in affliction, so to act as to secure the highest possible happiness which their Saviour can impart to them. Such an object is worth their highest effort; and if God sees it needful, in order to that, that they should endure much affliction, still it is gain. Religious consolation is always worth all which it costs to secure it.

If any comfort of love - If there be any comfort in the exercise of tender affection. That there is, no one can doubt. Our happiness is almost all centered in love. It is when we love a parent, a wife, a child, a sister, a neighbor, that we have the highest earthly enjoyment. It is in the love of God, of Christ, of Christians, of the souls of people, that the redeemed find their highest happiness. Hatred is a passion full of misery; love an emotion full of joy. By this consideration, Paul appeals to them, and the motive here is drawn from all the joy which mutual love and sympathy are fitted to produce in the soul Paul would have that love exercised in the highest degree, and would have them enjoy all the happiness which its mutual exercise could furnish.

If any fellowship of the Spirit - The word "fellowship - κοινωνία koinōnia- means that which is common to two or more; that of which they partake together; Ephesians 3:9 note; Phlippians 1:5 note. The idea here is, that among Christians there was a participation in the influences of the Holy Spirit; that they shared in some degree the feelings, views, and joys of the Sacred Spirit Himself; and that this was a privilege of the highest order. By this fact, Paul now exhorts them to unity, love, and zeal - so to live that they might partake in the highest degree of the consolations of this Spirit.

If any bowels and mercies - If there is any affectionate bond by which you are united to me, and any regard for my sorrows, and any desire to fill up my joys, so live as to impart to me, your spiritual father and friend, the consolation which I seek.

Verse 2

Fulfil ye my joy - Fill up my joy so that nothing shall be wanting to complete it. This, he says, would be done by their union, zeal, and humility; compare John 3:29.

That ye be like-minded - Greek That ye think the same thing; see the notes at 2 Corinthians 13:11. Perfect unity of sentiment, opinion, and plan would be desirable if it could be attained. It may be, so far as to prevent discord, schism, contention and strife in the church, and so that Christians may be harmonious in promoting the same great work - the salvation of souls.

Having the same love - Love to the same objects, and the same love one for another. Though their opinions might differ on some points, yet they might be united in love; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 1:10.

Being of one accord - σύμψυχοι sumpsuchoi- of one soul; having your souls joined together. The word used here does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means a union of soul; or an acting together as if but one soul actuated them.

Of one mind - Greek "Thinking the same thing." The apostle here uses a great variety of expressions to denote the same thing. The object which he aimed at was union of heart, of feeling, of plan, of purpose. He wished them to avoid all divisions and strifes; and to show the power of religion by being united in the common cause. Probably there is no single thing so much insisted on in the New Testament as the importance of harmony among Christians. Now, there is almost nothing so little known; but if it prevailed, the world would soon be converted to God; compare the notes at John 17:21 - or see the text itself without the notes.

Verse 3

Let nothing be done through strife - With a spirit of contention. This command forbids us to do anything, or attempt anything as the mere result of strife. This is not the principle from which we are to act, or by which we are to be governed. We are to form no plan, and aim at no object which is to be secured in this way. The command prohibits all attempts to secure anything over others by mere physical strength, or by superiority of intellect

or numbers. or as the result of dark schemes and plans formed by rivalry, or by the indulgence of angry passions, or with the spirit of ambition. We are not to attempt to do anything merely by outstripping others, or by showing that we have more talent, courage, or zeal. What we do is to be by principle, and with a desire to maintain the truth, and to glorify God. And yet how often is this rule violated! How often do Christian denominations attempt to outstrip each other, and to see which shall be the greatest! How often do ministers preach with no better aim! How often do we attempt to outdo others in dress, and it the splendor of furniture and equipment! How often, even in plans of benevolence, and in the cause of virtue and religion, is the secret aim to outdo others. This is all wrong. There is no holiness in such efforts. Never once did the Redeemer act from such a motive, and never once should this motive be allowed to influence us. The conduct of others may be allowed to show us what we can do, and ought to do; but it should not be our sole aim to outstrip them; compare 2 Corinthians 9:2-4.

Or vain glory - The word used here - κενοδοξία kenodoxiaoccurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though the adjective - κενόδοξος kenodoxos- occurs once in Galatians 5:26; see the notes at that place. It means properly empty pride, or glory, and is descriptive of vain and hollow parade and show. Suidas renders it, "any vain opinion about oneself" - ματαία τις περὶ ἑαυτου οἴησις mataia tis peri eautou oiēsisThe idea seems to be that of mere self-esteem; a mere desire to honor ourselves, to attract attention, to win praise, to make ourselves uppermost, or foremost, or the main object. The command here solemnly forbids our doing anything with such an aim - no matter whether it be in intellectual attainments, in physical strength, in skill in music, in eloquence or song, in dress, furniture, or religion. Self is not to be foremost; selfishness is not to be the motive. Probably there is no command of the Bible which would have a wider sweep than this, or would touch on more points of human conduct, it fairly applied. Who is there who passes a single day without, in some respect, desiring to display himself? What minister of the gospel preaches, who never has any wish to exhibit his talents, eloquence, or learning? How few make a gesture, but with some wish to display the grace or power with which it is done! Who, in conversation, is always free from a desire to show his wit, or his power in argumentation, or his skill in repartee? Who plays at the piano without the desire of commendation? Who thunders in the senate, or goes to the field of battle; who builds a house, or purchases an article of

apparel; who writes a book, or performs a deed of benevolence, altogether uninfluenced by this desire? If all could be taken out of human conduct which is performed merely from "strife," or from "vain-glory," how small a portion would be left!

But in lowliness of mind - Modesty, or humility. The word used here is the same which is rendered "humility" in Acts 20:19; Colossians 2:18, Colossians 2:23; 1 Peter 5:5; humbleness, in Colossians 3:12; and lowliness, in Ephesians 4:2; Phlippians 2:3. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It here means humility, and it stands opposed to that pride or self-valuation which would lead us to strive for the ascendancy, or which acts from a wish for flattery, or praise. The best and the only true correction of these faults is humility. This virtue consists in estimating ourselves according to truth. It is a willingness to take the place which we ought to take in the sight of God and man; and, having the low estimate of our own importance and character which the truth about our insignificance as creatures and vileness as sinners would produce, it will lead us to a willingness to perform lowly and humble offices that we may benefit others.

Let each esteem other better than themselves - Compare 1 Peter 5:5. This is one of the effects produced by true humility, and it naturally exists in every truly modest mind. We are sensible of our own defects, but we have not the same clear view of the defects of others. We see our own hearts; we are conscious of the great corruption there; we have painful evidence of the impurity of the motives which often actuate us - of the evil thoughts and corrupt desires in our own souls; but we have not the same view of the errors, defects, and follies of others. We can see only their outward conduct; but, in our own case, we can look within. It is natural for those who have any just sense of the depravity of their own souls, charitably to hope that it is not so with others, and to believe that they have purer hearts. This will lead us to feel that they are worthy of more respect than we are. Hence, this is always the characteristic of modesty and humility - graces which the gospel is eminently suited to produce. A truly pious man will be always, therefore, an humble man, and will wish that others should be preferred in office and honor to himself. Of course, this will not make him blind to the defects of others when they are manifested; but he will be himself retiring, modest, unambitious, unobtrusive. This rule of Christianity would strike a blow at all the ambition of the world. It would

rebuke the love of office and would produce universal contentment in any low condition of life where the providence of God may have cast our lot; compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 7:21.

Verse 4

Look not every man on his own things - That is, be not selfish. Do not let your care and attention be wholly absorbed by your own concerns, or by the concerns of your own family. Evince a tender interest for the happiness of the whole, and let the welfare of others lie near your hearts. This, of course, does not mean that there is to be any improper interference in the business of others, or that we are to have the character of "busy-bodies in other people's matters" (compare the 2 Thessalonians 3:11, note; 1 Timothy 5:13, note; 1 Peter 4:15, note); but that we are to regard with appropriate solicitude the welfare of others, and to strive to do them good.

But every man also on the things of others - It is the duty of every man to do this. No one is at liberty to live for himself or to disregard the wants of others. The object of this rule is to break up the narrow spirit of selfishness, and to produce a benevolent regard for the happiness of others. In respect to the rule we may observe:

(1) We are not to be "busybodies" in the concerns of others; see the references above. We are not to attempt to pry into their secret purposes. Every man has his own plans, and thoughts, and intentions, which no other one has a right to look into. Nothing is more odious than a meddler in the concerns of others.

(2) we are not to obtrude our advice where it is not sought, or at unseasonable times and places, even if the advice is in itself good. No one likes to be interrupted to hear advice; and I have no right to require that he should suspend his business in order that I may give him counsel.

(3) we are not to find fault with what pertains exclusively to him. We are to remember that there are some things which are his business, not ours; and we are to learn to "possess our souls in patience," if he does not give just as much as we think be ought to benevolent objects, or if he dresses in a manner not to please our taste, or if he indulges in things which do not accord exactly with our views. He may see reasons for his conduct which we do not; and it is possible that be may be right, and that, if we understood the whole case, we should think and act as he does. We often complain of a

man because be does not give as much as we think he ought, to objects of charity; and it is possible that he may be miserably niggardly and narrow. But it is also possible that he may be more embarrassed than we know of; or that he may just then have demands against him of which we are ignorant; or that he may have numerous poor relatives dependent on him; or that he gives much with “the left hand” which is not known by “the right hand.” At any rate, it is his business, not ours; and we are not qualified to judge until we understand the whole case.

(4) we are not to be gossips about the concerns of others. We are not to hunt up small stories, and petty scandals respecting their families; we are not to pry into domestic affairs, and divulge them abroad, and find pleasure in circulating snell things from house to house. There are domestic secrets, which are not to be betrayed; and there is scarcely an offence of a meaner or more injurious character than to divulge to the public what we have seen a family whose hospitality we have enjoyed.

(5) where Christian duty and kindness require us to look into the concerns of others, there should be the utmost delicacy. Even children have their own secrets, and their own plans and amusements, on a small scale, quite as important to them as the greater games which we are playing in life; and they will feel the meddlesomeness of a busybody to be as odious to them as we should in our plans. A delicate parent, therefore, who has undoubtedly a right to know all about his children, will not rudely intrude into their privacies, or meddle with their concerns. So, when we visit the sick, while we show a tender sympathy for them, we should not be too particular in inquiring into their maladies or their feelings. So, when those with whom we sympathize have brought their calamities on themselves by their own fault, we should not ask too many questions about it. We should not too closely examine one who is made poor by intemperance, or who is in prison for crime. And so, when we go to sympathize with those who have been, by a reverse of circumstances, reduced from affluence to penury, we should not ask too many questions. We should let them tell their own story. If they voluntarily make us their confidants, and tell us all about their circumstances, it is well; but let us not drag out the circumstances, or wound their feelings by our impertinent inquiries, or our indiscreet

sympathy in their affairs. There are always secrets which the sons and daughters of misfortune would wish to keep to themselves.

However, while these things are true, it is also true that the rule before us positively requires us to show an interest in the concerns of others; and it may be regarded as implying the following things:

(1) We are to feel that the spiritual interests of everyone in the church is, in a certain sense, our own interest. The church is one. It is confederated together for a common object. Each one is entrusted with a portion of the honor of the whole, and the conduct of one member affects the character of all. We are, therefore, to promote, in every way possible, the welfare of every other member of the church. If they go astray, we are to admonish and entreat them; if they are in error, we are to instruct them; if they are in trouble, we are to aid them. Every member of the church has a claim on the sympathy of his brethren, and should be certain of always finding it when his circumstances are such as to demand it.

(2) there are circumstances where it is proper to look with special interest on the temporal concerns of others. It is when the poor, the fatherless, and the afflicted must be sought out in order to be aided and relieved. They are too retiring and modest to press their situation on the attention of others, and they need that others should manifest a generous care in their welfare in order to relieve them. This is not improper interference in their concerns, nor will it be so regarded.

(3) for a similar reason, we should seek the welfare of all others in a spiritual sense. We should seek to arouse the sinner, and lead him to the Saviour. He is blind, and will not come himself; unconcerned, and will not seek salvation; filled with the love of this world, and will not seek a better; devoted to pursuits that will lead him to ruin, and he ought to be apprised of it. It is no more an improper interference in his concerns to apprise him of his condition, and to attempt to lead him to the Saviour, than it is to warn a man in a dark night, who walks on the verge of a precipice, of his peril; or to arouse one from sleep whose house is in flames. In like manner, it is no more meddling with the concerns of another to tell him that there is a glorious heaven which may be his, than it is to apprise a man that there is a

mine of golden ore on his farm. It is for the man‘s own interest, and it is the office of a friend to remind him of these things. He does a man a favor who tells him that he has a Redeemer, and that there is a heaven to which he may rise; he does his neighbor the greatest possible kindness who apprises him that there is a world of infinite woe, and tells him of an easy way by which he may escape it. The world around is dependant on the church of Christ to be apprised of these truths. The frivolous ones will not warn the fools of their danger; the crowd that presses to the theater or the ballroom will not apprise those who are there that they are in the broad way to hell; and everyone who loves his neighbor, should feel sufficient interest in him to tell him that he may be eternally happy in heaven.

Verse 5

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus - The object of this reference to the example of the Saviour is particularly to enforce the duty of humility. This was the highest example which could be furnished, and it would illustrate and confirm all the apostle had said of this virtue. The principle in the case is, that we are to make the Lord Jesus our model, and are in all respects to frame our lives, as far as possible, in accordance with this great example. The point here is, that he left a state of inexpressible glory, and took upon him the most humble form of humanity, and performed the most lowly offices, that he might benefit us.

Verse 6

Who, being in the form of God - There is scarcely any passage in the New Testament which has given rise to more discussion than this. The importance of the passage on the question of the divinity of the Saviour will be perceived at once, and no small part of the point of the appeal by the apostle depends, as will be seen, in the fact that Paul regarded the Redeemer as equal with God. If he was truly divine, then his consenting to become a man was the most remarkable of all possible acts of humiliation. The word rendered “form” - μορφή morphē- occurs only in three places in the New Testament, and in each place is rendered “form.” Mark 16:12; Phlippians 2:6-7. In Mark it is applied to the form which Jesus assumed after his resurrection, and in which he appeared to two of his disciples on his way to Emmaus. “After that he appeared in another form unto two of them.” This “form” was so unlike his usual appearance, that they did not know him. The word properly means, form, shape, bodily shape, especially a beautiful

form, a beautiful bodily appearance - Passow. In Phlippians 2:7, it is applied to the appearance of a servant - and took upon him the form of a servant;" that is, he was in the condition of a servant - or of the lowest condition. The word "form" is often applied to the gods by the classic writers, denoting their aspect or appearance when they became visible to people; see Cic. de Nat. Deor. ii. 2; Ovid, Meta. i. 37; Silius, xiii. 643; Xeno. Memora. iv; Aeneid, iv. 556, and other places cited by Wetstein, in loc. Hesychius explains it by ἰδέα εἶδος idea eidosThe word occurs often in the Septuagint:

(1)as the translation of the word ציי - Ziv- "splendour," Daniel 4:33; Daniel 5:6, Daniel 5:9-10; Daniel 7:28;

(2)as the translation of the word תבנית tabniythstructure, model, pattern - as in building, Isaiah 44:13;

(3)as the translation of תמונה temuwnahappearance, form, shape, image, likeness, Job 4:16; see also Wisdom Job 18:1.

The word can have here only one or two meanings, either:

(1)splendor, majesty, glory - referring to the honor which the Redeemer had, his power to work miracles, etc. - or.

(2)nature, or essence - meaning the same as φύσις phusis"nature," or ουσία ousia"being."

The first is the opinion adopted by Crellius, Grotius, and others, and substantially by Calvin. Calvin says, "The form of God here denotes majesty. For as a man is known from the appearance of his form, so the majesty which shines in God, is his figure. Or to use a more appropriate similitude, the form of a king consists of the external marks which indicate a king - as his scepter, diadem, coat of mail, attendants, throne, and other insignia of royalty; the form of a counsul is the toga, ivory chair, attending lictors, etc. Therefore Christ before the foundation of the world was in the form of God, because he had glory with the Father before the world was; John 17:5. For in the wisdom of God, before he put on our nature, there was nothing humble or abject, but there was magnificence worthy of God." Commentary in loc. The second opinion is, that the word is equivalent to nature, or being; that is, that he was in the nature of God, or his mode of existence was that of God, or was divine. This is the opinion adopted by Schleusner (Lexicon); Prof. Stuart (Letters to Dr. Channing, p. 40); Doddridge, and by orthodox expositors in general, and seems to me to be the correct interpretation. In support of this interpretation, and in opposition

to that which refers it to his power of working miracles, or his divine appearance when on earth, we may adduce the following considerations:

(1) The "form" here referred to must have been something before he became a man, or before he took upon him the form of a servant. It was something from which he humbled himself by making "himself of no reputation;" by taking upon himself "the form of a servant;" and by being made "in the likeness of men." Of course, it must have been something which existed when he had not the likeness of people; that is, before he became incarnate. He must therefore have had an existence before he appeared on earth as a man, and in that previous state of existence there must have been something which rendered it proper to say that he was "in the form of God."

(2) that it does not refer to any moral qualities, or to his power of working miracles on earth, is apparent from the fact that these were not laid aside. When did he divest himself of these in order that he might humble himself? There was something which he possessed which made it proper to say of him that he was "in the form of God," which he laid aside when he appeared in the form of a servant and in the likeness of human beings. But assuredly that could not have been his moral qualities, nor is there any conceivable sense in which it can be said that he divested himself of the power of working miracles in order that he might take upon himself the "form of a servant." All the miracles which he ever did were performed when he sustained the form of a servant, in his lowly and humble condition. These considerations make it certain that the apostle refers to a period before the incarnation. It may be added:

(3) that the phrase "form of God" is one that naturally conveys the idea that he was God. When it is said that he was "in the form of a servant," the idea is, that he was actually in a humble and depressed condition, and not merely that he appeared to be. Still it may be asked, what was the "form" which he had before his incarnation? What is meant by his having been then "in the form of God?" To these questions perhaps no satisfactory answer can be given. He himself speaks John 17:5 of "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was;" and the language naturally conveys the idea that there was then a manifestation of the divine nature through him, which in some measure ceased when he became incarnate; that there was

some visible splendor and majesty which was then laid aside. What manifestation of his glory God may make in the heavenly world, of course, we cannot now fully understand. Nothing forbids us, however, to suppose that there is some such visible manifestation; some splendor and magnificence of God in the view of the angelic beings such as becomes the Great Sovereign of the universe - for he "dwells in light which no map can approach unto;" 1 Timothy 6:16. That glory, visible manifestation, or splendor, indicating the nature of God, it is here said that the Lord Jesus possessed before his incarnation.

Thought it not robbery to be equal with God - This passage, also, has given occasion to much discussion. Prof. Stuart renders it: "did not regard his equality with God as an object of solicitous desire;" that is, that though he was of a divine nature or condition, be did not eagerly seek to retain his equality with God, but took on him an humble condition - even that of a servant. Letters to Channing, pp. 88-92. That this is the correct rendering of the passage is apparent from the following considerations:

(1) It accords with the scope and design of the apostle's reasoning. His object is not to show, as our common translation would seem to imply, that he aspired to be equal with God, or that he did not regard it as an improper invasion of the prerogatives of God to be equal with him, but that he did not regard it, in the circumstances of the case, as an object to greatly desired or eagerly sought to retain his equality with God. Instead of retaining this by an earnest effort, or by a grasp which he was unwilling to relinquish, he chose to forego the dignity, and to assume the humble condition of a man.

(2) it accords better with the Greek than the common version. The word rendered "robbery" - ἁρπαγμος harpagmos- is found nowhere else in the New Testament, though the verb from which it is derived frequently occurs; Matthew 11:12; Matthew 13:19; John 6:15; John 10:12, John 10:28-29; Acts 8:29; Acts 23:10; 2 Corinthians 12:2, 2 Corinthians 12:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; Jude 1:23; Revelation 12:5. The notion of violence, or seizing, or carrying away, enters into the meaning of the word in all these places. The word used here does not properly mean an act of robbery, but the thing robbed - the plunder - das Rauben (Passow), and hence something to be eagerly seized and appropriated. Schleusner; compare Storr, Opuscul. Acade. i. 322,323. According to this, the meaning of the word here is, something to be seized and eagerly sought, and the sense is, that his being

equal with God was not a thing to be anxiously retained. The phrase "thought it not," means "did not consider;" it was not judged to be a matter of such importance that it could not be dispensed with. The sense is, "he did not eagerly seize and tenaciously hold" as one does who seizes prey or spoil. So Rosenmuller, Schleusner, Bloomfield, Stuart, and others understand it.

To be equal with God - τὸ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ to einai isa TheōThat is, the being equal with God he did not consider a thing to be tenaciously retained. The plural neuter form of the word "equal" in Greek - ἴσα isa- is used in accordance with a known rule of the language, thus stated by Buttman: "When an adjective as predicate is separated from its substantive, it often stands in the neuter where the substantive is a masculine or feminine, and in the singular where the substantive is in the plural. That which the predicate expresses is, in this case, considered in general as a thing." *Greek Grammar*, section 129,6. The phrase "equal with God," or "equal with the gods," is of frequent occurrence in the Greek Classics; see Wetstein in loc. The very phrase here used occurs in the *Odyssey*:

Τον νῦν ἴσα Θεῷ Ἰθακήσιοι εἰσορόωσι Ton nun isa Theō Ithakēsioi eisoroōsi

Compare John 5:18. "Made himself equal with God." The phrase means one who sustains the same rank, dignity, nature. Now it could not be said of an angel that he was in any sense equal with God; much less could this be said of a mere man. The natural and obvious meaning of the language is, that there was an equality of nature and of rank with God, from which he humbled himself when he became a man. The meaning of the whole verse, according to the interpretation suggested above, is, that Christ, before he became a man, was invested with honor, majesty, and glory, such as was appropriate to God himself; that there was some manifestation or splendor in his existence and mode of being then, which showed that he was equal with God; that he did not consider that that honor, indicating equality with God, was to be retained at all events, and so as to do violence, as it were, to other interests, and to rob the universe of the glory of redemption; and that he was willing, therefore, to forget that, or lay it by for a time, in order that he might redeem the world. There were a glory and majesty which were appropriate to God, and which indicated equality with God - such as none but God could assume. For how could an angel have such glory, or such

external splendor in heaven, as to make it proper to say that he was "equal with God?" With what glory could he be invested which would be such as became God only? The "fair" interpretation of this passage, therefore, is, that Christ before his incarnation was equal with God.

Verse 7

But made himself of no reputation - This translation by no means conveys the sense of the original According to this it would seem that he consented to be without distinction or honor among people; or that he was willing to be despised or disregarded. The Greek is ἑαυτον ἐκένωσεν heauton ekenōsenThe word κενόω kenoōmeans literally, to empty, "to make empty, to make vain or void." It is rendered: "made void" in Romans 4:14; "made of none effect," 1 Corinthians 1:17; "make void," 1 Corinthians 9:15; "should be vain," 2 Corinthians 9:3. The word does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, except in the passage before us. The essential idea is that of bringing to emptiness, vanity, or nothingness; and, hence, it is applied to a case where one lays aside his rank and dignity, and becomes in respect to that as nothing; that is, he assumes a more humble rank and station. In regard to its meaning here, we may remark:

(1) that it cannot mean that he literally divested himself of his divine nature and perfections, for that was impossible. He could not cease to be omnipotent, and omnipresent, and most holy, and true, and good.

(2) it is conceivable that he might have laid aside, for a time, the symbols or the manifestation of his glory, or that the outward expressions of his majesty in heaven might have been withdrawn. It is conceivable for a divine being to intermit the exercise of his almighty power, since it cannot be supposed that God is always exerting his power to the utmost. And in like manner there might be for a time a laying aside or intermitting of these manifestations or symbols, which were expressive of the divine glory and perfections. Yet,

(3) this supposes no change in the divine nature, or in the essential glory of the divine perfections. When the sun is obscured by a cloud, or in an eclipse, there is no real change of its glory, nor are his beams extinguished, nor is the sun himself in any measure changed. His luster is only for a time obscured. So it might have been in regard to the manifestation of the glory

of the Son of God. Of course there is much in regard to this which is obscure, but the language of the apostle undoubtedly implies more than that he took an humble place, or that he demeaned himself in an humble manner. In regard to the actual change respecting his manifestations in heaven, or the withdrawing of the symbols of his glory there, the Scriptures are nearly silent, and conjecture is useless - perhaps improper. The language before us fairly implies that he laid aside that which was expressive of his being divine - that glory which is involved in the phrase "being in the form of God" - and took upon himself another form and manifestation in the condition of a servant.

And took upon him the form of a servant - The phrase "form of a servant," should be allowed to explain the phrase "form of God," in Phlippians 2:6. The "form of a servant" is that which indicates the condition of a servant, in contradistinction from one of higher rank. It means to appear as a servant, to perform the offices of a servant, and to be regarded as such. He was made like a servant in the lowly condition which he assumed. The whole connection and force of the argument here demands this interpretation. Storr and Rosenmuller interpret this as meaning that he became the servant or minister of God, and that in doing it, it was necessary that he should become a man. But the objection to this is obvious. It greatly weakens the force of the apostle's argument. His object is to state the depth of humiliation to which he descended, and this was best done by saying that he descended to the lowest condition of humanity and appeared in the most humble garb. The idea of being a "servant or minister of God" would not express that, for this is a term which might be applied to the highest angel in heaven. Though the Lord Jesus was not literally a servant or slave, yet what is here affirmed was true of him in the following respects:

(1) He occupied a most lowly condition in life.

(2) he condescended to perform such acts as are appropriate only to those who are servants. "I am among you as he that serveth;" Luke 22:27; compare John 13:4-15.

And was made in the likeness of men - Margin, habit. The Greek word means likeness, resemblance. The meaning is, he was made like unto people by assuming such a body as theirs; see the notes at Romans 8:3.

Verse 8

And being found - That is, being such, or existing as a man, he humbled himself.

In fashion as a man - The word rendered "fashion" - σχῆμα schēma- means figure, mien, deportment. Here it is the same as state, or condition. The sense is, that when he was reduced to this condition he humbled himself, and obeyed even unto death. He took upon himself all the attributes of a man. He assumed all the innocent infirmities of our nature. He appeared as other people do, was subjected to the necessity of food and clothing, like others, and was made liable to suffering, as other men are. It was still he who had been in the "form of God" who thus appeared; and, though his divine glory had been for a time laid aside, yet it was not extinguished or lost. It is important to remember, in all our meditations on the Saviour, that it was the same Being who had been invested with so much glory in heaven, that appeared on earth in the form of a man.

He humbled himself - Even then, when he appeared as a man. He had not only laid aside the symbols of his glory Phlippians 2:7, and become a man; but when he was a man, he humbled himself. Humiliation was a constant characteristic of him as a man. He did not aspire to high honors; he did not affect pomp and parade; he did not demand the service of a train of menials; but he condescended to the lowest conditions of life; Luke 22:27. The words here are very carefully chosen. In the former case Phlippians 2:7, when he became a man, he "emptied himself," or laid aside the symbols of his glory; now, when a man, he humbled himself. That is, though he was God appearing in the form of man - a divine person on earth - yet he did not assume and assert the dignity and prerogatives appropriate to a divine being, but put himself in a condition of obedience. For such a being to obey law, implied voluntary humiliation; and the greatness of his humiliation was shown by his becoming entirely obedient, even until he died on the cross.

And became obedient - He subjected himself to the law of God, and wholly obeyed it; Hebrews 10:7, Hebrews 10:9. It was a characteristic of the Redeemer that he yielded perfect obedience to the will of God. Should it be said that, if he was God himself, he must have been himself the lawgiver, we may reply that this rendered his obedience all the more wonderful and all the more meritorious. If a monarch should for an important purpose place himself in a position to obey his own laws, nothing could show in a more striking manner their importance in his view. The highest honor that

has been shown to the Law of God on earth was, that it was perfectly observed by him who made the Law - the great Mediator.

Unto death - He obeyed even when obedience terminated in death. The point of this expression is this: One may readily and cheerfully obey another where there is no particular peril. But the case is different where obedience is attended with danger. The child shows a spirit of true obedience when he yields to the commands of a father, though it should expose him to hazard; the servant who obeys his master, when obedience is attended with risk of life; the soldier, when he is morally certain that to obey will be followed by death. Thus, many a company or platoon has been ordered into the "deadly breach," or directed to storm a redoubt, or to scale a wall, or to face a cannon, when it was morally certain that death would be the consequence. No profounder spirit of obedience can be evinced than this. It should be said, however, that the obedience of the soldier is in many cases scarcely voluntary, since, if he did not obey, death would be the penalty. But, in the case of the Redeemer, it was wholly voluntary. He placed himself in the condition of a servant to do the will of God, and then never shrank from what that condition involved.

Even the death of the cross - It was not such a death as a servant might incur by crossing a stream, or by failing among robbers, or by being worn out by toil; it was not such as the soldier meets when he is suddenly cut down, covered with glory as he falls; it was the long lingering, painful, humiliating death of the cross. Many a one might be willing to obey if the death that was suffered was regarded as glorious; but when it is ignominious, and of the most degrading character, and the most torturing that human ingenuity can invent, then the whole character of the obedience is changed. Yet this was the obedience the Lord Jesus evinced; and it was in this way that his remarkable readiness to suffer was shown.

Verse 9

Wherefore - As a reward of this humiliation and these sufferings. The idea is, that there was an appropriate reward for it, and that that was bestowed upon him by his exaltation as Mediator to the right hand of God; compare the notes at Hebrews 2:9.

God also hath highly exalted him - As Mediator. Though he was thus humbled, and appeared in the form of a servant, he is now raised up to the throne of glory, and to universal dominion. This exaltation is spoken of the Redeemer as he was, sustaining a divine and a human nature. If there was,

as has been supposed, some obscuration or withdrawing of the symbols of his glory Phlippians 2:7, when he became a man, then this refers to the restoration of that glory, and would seem to imply, also, that there was additional honor conferred on him. There was all the augmented glory resulting from the work which he had performed in redeeming man.

And given him a name which is above every name - No other name can be compared with his. It stands alone. He only is Redeemer, Saviour. He only is Christ, the Anointed of God; see the notes at Hebrews 1:4. He only is the Son of God. His rank, his titles, his dignity, are above all others; see this illustrated in the notes at Ephesians 1:20-21.

Verse 10

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow - The knee should bow, or bend, in token of honor, or worship; that is, all people should adore him. This cannot mean merely that at the mention of the name of Jesses we should bow; nor is there any evidence that God requires this. Why should we bow at the mention of that name, rather than at any of the other titles of the Redeemer? Is there any special sacredness or honor in it above the other names which he bears? And why should we how at his name rather than at the name of the Father! Besides, if any special homage is to be paid to the name of the Saviour under the authority of this passage - and this is the only one on which the authority of this custom is based - it should be by bowing the knee, not the head. But the truth is, this authorizes and requires neither; and the custom of bowing at the name of Jesus, in some churches, has arisen entirely from a misinterpretation of this passage. There is no other place in the Bible to which an appeal is made to authorize the custom; compare Neal‘s *History of the Puritans*, chapter 5. Ninth 5. The meaning here is, not that a special act of respect or adoration should be shown wherever the name “Jesus” occurs in reading the Scriptures, or whenever it is mentioned, but that he was so exalted that it would be proper that all in heaven and on earth should worship him, and that the time would come when he would be thus everywhere acknowledged as Lord. The bowing of the knee properly expresses homage, respect, adoration (compare the notes at Romans 11:4); and it cannot be done to the Saviour by those who are in heaven, unless it be divine.

Of things in heaven - ἐπουρανίων epouraniōn- rather of beings in heaven, the word “things” being improperly supplied by our translators. The word may be in the neuter plural; but it may be also in the masculine plural,

and denote beings rather than things. Things do not bow the knee; and the reference here is undoubtedly to angels, and to the "spirits of the just made perfect" in heaven. If Jesus is worshipped there, he is divine; for there is no idolatry eta creature in heaven. In this whole passage there is probably an allusion to Isaiah 45:23; see it illustrated in the notes at Romans 14:11. In the great divisions here specified - of those in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth - the apostle intends, doubtless, to denote the universe. The same mode of designating the universe occurs in Revelation 5:13; Exodus 20:4; compare Psalm 96:11-12. This mode of expression is equivalent to saying, "all that is above, around, and beneath us," and arises from what appears to us. The division is natural and obvious - that which is above us in the heavens, that which is on the earth where we dwell, and all that is beneath us.

And things in earth - Rather, "beings on earth," to wit, people; for they only are capable of rendering homage.

And things under the earth - Beings under the earth. The whole universe shall confess that he is Lord. This embraces, doubtless, those who have departed from this life, and perhaps includes also fallen angels. The meaning is, that riley shall all acknowledge him as universal Lord; all how to his sovereign will; all be subject to his control; all recognize him as divine. The fallen and the lost will do this; for they will be constrained to yield an unwilling homage to him by submitting to the sentence from his lips that shall consign them to woe; and thus the whole universe shall acknowledge the exalted dignity of the Son of God. But this does not mean that they will all be saved, for the guilty and the lost may be compelled to acknowledge his power, and submit to his decree as the sovereign of the universe. There is the free and cheerful homage of the heart which they who worship him in heaven will render; and there is the constrained homage which they must yield who are compelled to acknowledge his authority.

Verse 11

And that every tongue should confess - Everyone should acknowledge him. On the duty and importance of confessing Christ, see the notes at Romans 10:9-10.

That Jesus Christ is Lord - The word "Lord," here, is used in its primitive and proper sense, as denoting owner, ruler, sovereign; compare the notes at Romans 14:9. The meaning is, that all should acknowledge him as the universal sovereign.

To the glory of God the Father - Such a universal confession would honor God; see the notes at John 5:23, where this sentiment is explained.

Verse 12

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed - The Philippians had from the beginning manifested a remarkable readiness to show respect to the apostle, and to listen to his teaching. This readiness he more than once refers to and commends. He still appeals to them, and urges them to follow his counsels, that they might secure their salvation.

Now much more in my absence - Though they had been obedient when he was with them, yet circumstances had occurred in his absence which made their obedience more remarkable, and more worthy of special commendation.

Work out your own salvation - This important command was first addressed to Christians, but there is no reason why the same command should not be regarded as addressed to all - for it is equally applicable to all. The duty of doing this is enjoined here; the reason for making the effort, or the encouragement for the effort, is stated in the next verse. In regard to the command here, it is natural to inquire why it is a duty; and what is necessary to be done in order to comply with it? On the first of these inquiries, it may be observed that it is a duty to make a personal effort to secure salvation, or to work out our salvation:

(1) Because God commands it. There is no command more frequently repeated in the Scriptures, than the command to make to ourselves a new heart; to strive to enter in at the strait gate; to break off from sin, and to repent.

(2) it is a duty because it is our own personal interest that is at stake. No one else has, or can have, as much interest in our salvation as we have. It is every person‘s duty to be as happy as possible here, and to be prepared for eternal happiness in the future world. No person has a right either to throw away his life or his soul. He has no more right to do the one than the other; and if it is a person‘s duty to endeavor to save his life when in danger of drowning, it is no less his duty to endeavor to save his soul when in danger of hell.

(3) our earthly friends cannot save us. No effort of theirs can deliver us from eternal death without our own exertion. Great as may be their

solicitude for us, and much as they may do, there is a point where their efforts must stop - and that point is always short of our salvation, unless we are roused to seek salvation. They may pray, and weep, and plead, but they cannot save us. There is a work to be done on our own hearts which they cannot do.

(4) it is a duty, because the salvation of the soul will not take care of itself without an effort on our part. There is no more reason to suppose this than that health and life will take care of themselves without our own exertion. And yet many live as if they supposed that somehow all would yet be well; that the matter of salvation need not give them any concern, for that things will so arrange themselves that they will be saved. Why should they suppose this anymore in regard to religion than in regard to anything else?

(5) it is a duty, because there is no reason to expect the divine interposition without our own effort. No such interposition is promised to any man, and why should he expect it? In the case of all who have been saved, they have made an effort - and why should we expect that God will favor us more than he did them? "God helps them who help themselves;" and what reason has any man to suppose that he will interfere in his case and save him, if he will put forth no effort to "work out his own salvation?" In regard to the other inquiry - What does the command imply; or what is necessary to be done in order to comply with it? We may observe, that it does not mean:

(a)that we are to attempt to deserve salvation on the ground of merit. That is out of the question; for what can man do that shall be an equivalent for eternal happiness in heaven? Nor,

(b)does it mean that we are to endeavor to make atonement for past sins. That would be equally impossible, and it is, besides, unnecessary. That work has been done by the great Redeemer. But it means:

(i)that we are to make an honest effort to be saved in the way which God has appointed;

(ii)that we are to break off from our sins by true repentance;

(iii)that we are to believe in the Saviour, and honestly to put our trust in him;

(iv)that we are to give up all that we have to God;

(v)that we are to break away from all evil companions and evil plans of life; and,

(vi)that we are to resist all the allurements of the world, and all the temptations which may assail us that would lead us back from God, and are to persevere unto the end. The great difficulty in working out salvation is in forming a purpose to begin at once. When that purpose is formed, salvation is easy.

With fear and trembling - That is, with that kind of anxiety which one has who feels that he has an important interest at stake, and that he is in danger of losing it. The reason or the ground for "fear" in this case is in general this: there is danger of losing the soul.

(1) so many persons make shipwreck of all hope and perish, that there is danger that we may also.

(2) there are so many temptations and allurements in the world, and so many things that lead us to defer attention to religion, that there is danger that we may be lost.

(3) there is danger that if the present opportunity passes, another may not occur. Death may soon overtake us. No one has a moment to lose. No one can designate one single moment of his life, and say, "I may safely lose that moment. I may safely spend it in the neglect of my soul."

(4) it should be done with the most earnest concern, front the immensity of the interest at stake. If the soul is lost, all is lost. And who is there that can estimate the value of that soul which is thus in danger of being lost forever?

Verse 13

For it is God that worketh in you - This is given as a reason for making an effort to be saved, or for working out our salvation. It is often thought to be the very reverse, and people often feel that if God works "in us to will and to do," there can be no need of our making an effort, and that there would be no use in it. If God does all the work, say they, why should

we not patiently sit still, and wait until He puts forth His power and accomplishes in us what He wills? It is of importance, therefore, to understand what this declaration of the apostle means, in order to see whether this objection is valid, or whether the fact that God "works in us" is to be regarded as a reason why we should make no effort. The word rendered "worketh" - ἐνεργῶν energōn- working - is from a verb meaning to work, to be active to produce effect - and is that from which we have derived the word "energetic." The meaning is, that God "produces a certain effect in us;" he exerts such an influence over us as to lead to a certain result in our minds - to wit, "to will and to do." Nothing is said of the mode in which this is done, and probably this cannot be understood by us here; compare John 3:8. In regard to the divine agency here referred to, however, certain things, though of a negative character, are clear:

(1) It is not God who acts for us. He leads us to "will and to do." It is not said that he wills and does for us, and it cannot be. It is man that "wills and does" - though God so influences him that he does it.

(2) he does not compel or force us against our will. He leads us to will as well as to do. The will cannot be forced; and the meaning here must be that God exerts such an influence as to make us willing to obey Him; compare Psalm 110:3.

(3) it is not a physical force, but it must be a moral influence. A physical power cannot act on the will. You may chain a man, incarcerate him in the deepest dungeon, starve him, scourge him, apply red-hot pincers to his flesh, or place on him the thumb-screw, but the will is still free. You cannot bend that or control it, or make him believe otherwise than as he chooses to believe. The declaration here, therefore, cannot mean that God compels us, or that we are anything else but free agents still, though He "works in us to will and to do." It must mean merely that he exerts such an influence as to secure this result.

To will and to do of his good pleasure - Not to will and to do everything, but "His good pleasure." The extent of the divine agency here referred to, is limited to that, and no man should adduce this passage to prove that God "works" in him to lead him to commit sin. This passage teaches no such doctrine. It refers here to Christians, and means that he works in their hearts that which is agreeable to him, or leads them to "will

and to do" that which is in accordance with his own will. The word rendered "good pleasure" - εὐδοκία eudokia- means "delight, good-will, favor;" then "good pleasure, purpose, will;" see Ephesians 1:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:11. Here it means that which would be agreeable to him; and the idea is, that he exerts such an influence as to lead people to will and to do that which is in accordance with his will. Paul regarded this fact as a reason why we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling. It is with that view that he urges it, and not with any idea that it will embarrass our efforts, or be a hindrance to us in seeking salvation. The question then is, how this fact can be a motive to us to make an effort? In regard to this we may observe:

(1) That the work of our salvation is such that we need help, and such help as God only can impart. We need it to enable us to overcome our sins; to give us such a view of them as to produce true penitence; to break away from our evil companions; to give up our plans of evil, and to resolve to lead different lives. We need help that our minds may be enlightened; that we may be led in the way of truth; that we may be saved from the danger of error, and that we may not be suffered to fall back into the ways of transgression. Such help we should welcome from any quarter; and any assistance furnished on these points will not interfere with our freedom.

(2) the influence which God exerts on the mind is in the way of help or aid. What He does will not embarrass or hinder us. It will prevent no effort which we make to be saved; it will throw no hindrance or obstacle in the way. When we speak of Gods working "in us to will and to do," people often seem to suppose that His agency will hinder us, or throw some obstacle in our way, or exert some evil influence on our minds, or make it more difficult for us to work out our salvation than it would be without His agency. But this cannot be. We may be sure that all the influence which God exerts over our minds, will be to aid us in the work of salvation, not to embarrass us; will be to enable us to overcome our spiritual enemies and our sins, and not to put additional weapons into their hands or to confer on them new power. Why should people ever dread the influence of God on their hearts, as if he would hinder their efforts for their own good?

(3) the fact that God works is an encouragement for us to work. When a man is about to set out a peach or an apple tree, it is an encouragement for

him to reflect that the agency of God is around him, and that he can cause the tree to produce blossoms, and leaves, and fruit. When he is about to plow and sow his farm, it is an encouragement, not a hindrance, to reflect that God works, and that he can quicken the grain that is sown, and produce an abundant harvest. What encouragement of a higher order can man ask? And what farmer is afraid of the agency of God in the case, or supposes that the fact that God exerts an agency is a reason why he should not plow and plant his field, or set out his orchard? Poor encouragement would a man have in these things if God did not exert any agency in the world, and could not be expected to make the tree grow or to cause the grain to spring up; and equally poor would be all the encouragement in religion without his aid.

Verse 14

Do all things without murmurings and disputings - In a quiet, peaceful, inoffensive manner. Let there be no brawls, strifes, or contentions. The object of the apostle here is, probably, to illustrate the sentiment which he had expressed in Phlippians 2:3-5, where he had inculcated the general duties of humbleness of mind, and of esteeming others better than themselves, in order that that spirit might be fully manifested, he now enjoins the duty of doing everything in a quiet and gentle manner, and of avoiding any species of strife; see the notes at Ephesians 4:31-32.

Verse 15

That ye may be blameless - That you may give no occasion for others to accuse you of having done wrong.

And harmless - Margin, "sincere." The Greek word (ἀκέραιος akeraios) means properly that which is unmixed; and then pure, sincere. The idea here is, that they should be artless, simple, without guile. Then they would injure no one. The word occurs only in Matthew 10:16; Phlippians 2:15, where it is rendered "harmless," and Romans 16:19, where it is rendered "sincere"; see the Matthew 10:16 note, and Romans 16:19 note.

The sons of God - The children of God; a phrase by which true Christians were denoted; see the Matthew 5:45 note; Ephesians 5:1 note.

Without rebuke - Without blame; without giving occasion for anyone to complain of you.

In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation - Among those of perverted sentiments and habits; those who are disposed to complain and find fault; those who will take every occasion to pervert what you do and say, and who seek every opportunity to retard the cause of truth and righteousness. It is not certainly known to whom the apostle refers here, but it seems not improbable that he had particular reference to the Jews who were in Philippi. The language used here was employed by Moses Deuteronomy 32:5, as applicable to the Jewish people, and it is accurately descriptive of the character of the nation in the time of Paul. The Jews were among the most bitter foes of the gospel, and did perhaps more than any other people to embarrass the cause of truth and prevent the spread of the true religion.

Among whom ye shine - Margin, "or, shine ye." The Greek will admit of either construction, and expositors have differed as to the correct interpretation. Rosenmuller, Doddridge and others regard it as imperative, and as designed to enforce on them the duty of letting their light shine. Erasmus says it is doubtful whether it is to be understood in the indicative or imperative. Grotius, Koppe, Bloomfield, and others regard it as in the indicative, and as teaching that they did in fact shine as lights in the world. The sense can be determined only by the connection; and in regard to it different readers will form different opinions. It seems to me that the connection seems rather to require the sense of duty or obligation to be understood. The apostle is enforcing on them the duty of being blameless and harmless; of holding forth the word of life; and it is in accordance with his design to remind them that they ought to be lights to those around them.

As lights in the world - The comparison of Christians with light, often occurs in the Scriptures; see at Matthew 5:14, note, 16, note. The image here is not improbably taken from light-houses on a seacoast. The image then is, that as those light-houses are placed on a dangerous coast to apprise vessels of their peril, and to save them from shipwreck, so the light of Christian piety shines on a dark world, and in the dangers of the voyage which we are making; see the note of Burder, in *Ros. Alt. u. neu. Morgenland*, in loc.

Verse 16

Holding forth the word of life - That is, you are under obligation to hold forth the word of life. It is a duty incumbent on you as Christians to do it. The "word of life" means the gospel, called the "word of life" because it

is the message that promises life; or perhaps this is a Hebraism, denoting the living, or life-giving word. The gospel stands thus in contrast with all human systems of religion - for they have no efficacy to save - and to the law which "killeth;" see the John 6:63, note, and 2 Corinthians 3:6, note. The duty here enjoined is that of making the gospel known to others, and of thus keeping up the knowledge of it in the world. This duty rests on Christians (compare Matthew 5:14, Matthew 5:16), and they cannot escape from the obligation. They are bound to do this, not only because God commands it, but:

(1) because they are called into the church that they may be witnesses for God, Isaiah 43:10.

(2) because they are kept on the earth for that purpose. If it were not for some such design, they would be removed to heaven at once on their conversion.

(3) because there are no others to do it. The frivolous ones will not warn the fools, nor will the proud warn the proud, nor the scoffer the scoffer. The thoughtless and the vain will not go and tell others that there is a God and a Saviour; nor will the wicked warn the wicked, and tell them that they are in the way to hell. There are none who will do this but Christians; and, if they neglect it, sinners will go unwarned and unalarmed down to death. This duty rests on every Christian.

The exhortation here is not made to the pastor, or to any officer of the church particularly; but to the mass of communicants. They are to shine as lights in the world; they are to hold forth the word of life. There is not one member of a church who is so obscure as to be exempt from the obligation; and there is not one who may not do something in this work. If we are asked how this may be done, we may reply:

(1) They are to do it by example. Everyone is to hold forth the living word in that way.

(2) by efforts to send the gospel to those who have it not. There is almost no one who cannot contribute something, though it may be but two mites, to accomplish this.

(3) by conversation. There is no Christian who has not some influence over the minds and hearts of others; and he is bound to use that influence in holding forth the word of life.

(4) by defending the divine origin of religion when attacked.

(5) by rebuking sin, and thus testifying to the value of holiness. The defense of the truth, under God, and the diffusion of a knowledge of the way of salvation, rests on those who are Christians. Paganism never originates a system which it would not be an advantage to the world to have destroyed as soon as it is conceived. Philosophy has never yet told of a way by which a sinner may be saved. The world at large devises no plan for the salvation of the soul. The most crude, ill-digested, and perverse systems of belief conceivable, prevail in the community called "the world." Every form of opinion has an advocate there; every monstrous vagary that the human mind ever conceived, finds friends and defenders there. The human mind has of itself no elastic energy to bring it from the ways of sin; it has no recuperative power to lead it back to God. The world at large is dependant on the church for any just views of God, and of the way of salvation; and every Christian is to do his part in making that salvation known.

That I may rejoice - This was one reason which the apostle urged, and which it was proper to urge, why they should let their light shine. He had been the instrument of their conversion, he had founded their church, he was their spiritual father, and had shown the deepest interest in their welfare; and he now entreats them, as a means of promoting his highest joy, to be faithful and holy. The exemplary piety and holy lives of the members of a church will be one of the sources of highest joy to a minister in the day of judgment; compare 3 John 1:4.

In the day of Christ - The day when Christ shall appear - the day of judgment. It is called the day of Christ, because he will be the glorious object which will be prominent on that day; it will be the day in which he will be honored as the judge of all the world.

That I have not run in vain - That is, that I have not lived in vain - life being compared with a race: see the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:26.

Neither laboured in vain - In preaching the gospel. Their holy lives would be the fullest proof that he was a faithful preacher.

Verse 17

Yea, and if I be offered - Margin, "poured forth." The mention of his labors in their behalf, in the previous verse, seems to have suggested to him the sufferings which he was likely yet to endure on their account. He had labored for their salvation. He had exposed himself to peril that they and others might have the gospel. On their account he had suffered much; he had been made a prisoner at Rome; and there was a possibility, if not a probability, that his life might be a forfeit for his labors in their behalf. Yet he says that, even if this should happen, he would not regret it, but it would be a source of joy. The word which is used here - σπένδομαι spendomai- properly means, to pour out, to make a libation; and is commonly used, in the classic writers, in connection with sacrifices. It refers to a drink-offering, where one who was about to offer a sacrifice, or to present a drink-offering to the gods, before he tasted of it himself, poured out apart of it on the altar. Passow. It is used also to denote the fact that, when an animal was about to be slain in sacrifice, wine was poured on it as a solemn act of devoting it to God; compare Numbers 15:5; Numbers 28:7, Numbers 28:14. In like manner, Paul may have regarded himself as a victim prepared for the sacrifice. In the New Testament it is found only in this place, and in 2 Timothy 4:6, where it is rendered, "I am ready to be offered;" compare the notes at that place. It does not here mean that Paul really expected to be a sacrifice, or to make an expiation for sin by his death; but that he might be called to pour out his blood, or to offer up his life as if he were a sacrifice, or an offering to God. We have a similar use of language, when we say that a man sacrifices himself for his friends or his country.

Upon the sacrifice - ἐπὶ τῇ θυσίᾳ epi tē thusiaThe word rendered here as "sacrifice," means:

(1)the act of sacrificing;

(2)the victim that is offered; and,

(3)any oblation or offering.

Robinson's *Lexicon*. Here it must be used in the latter sense, and is connected with "faith" - "the sacrifice of your faith." The reference is probably to the faith, i. e., the religion of the Philippians, regarded as a sacrifice or an offering to God; the worship which they rendered to Him.

The idea of Paul is, that if, in order to render that offering what it should be - to make it as complete and acceptable to God as possible - it were necessary for him to die, pouring out his blood, and strength, and life, as wine was poured out to prepare a sacrifice for the altar and make it complete, he would not refuse to do it, but would rejoice in the opportunity. He seems to have regarded them as engaged in making an offering of faith, and as endeavoring to make the offering complete and acceptable; and says that if his death were necessary to make their piety of the highest and most acceptable kind, he was ready to die.

And service - λειτουργία leitourgia- a word taken from an act of worship, or public service, and especially the ministry of those engaged in offering sacrifices; Luke 1:23; Hebrews 8:6. Here it means, the ministering or service which the Philippians rendered to God; the worship which they offered, the essential element of which was faith. Paul was willing to endure anything, even to suffer death in their cause, if it would tend to make their "service" more pure, spiritual, and acceptable to God. The meaning of the whole is:

(1) that the sufferings and dangers which he now experienced were in their cause, and on their behalf; and,

(2) that he was willing to lay down his life, if their piety would be promoted, and their worship be rendered more pure and acceptable to God.

I joy - That is, I am not afraid of death; and if my dying can be the means of promoting your piety, it will be a source of rejoicing; compare the notes at Phlippians 1:23.

And rejoice with you all - My joy will be increased in anything that promotes yours. The fruits of my death will reach and benefit you, and it will be a source of mutual congratulation.

Verse 18

For the same cause - Because we are united, and what affects one of us should affect both.

Do ye joy, and rejoice with me - That is, "do not grieve at my death. Be not overwhelmed with sorrow, but let your hearts be filled with congratulation. It will be a privilege and a pleasure thus to die." This is a noble sentiment, and one that could have been uttered only by a heroic and generous mind - by a man who will not dread death, and who felt that it was honorable thus to die Doddridge has illustrated the sentiment by an

appropriate reference to a fact stated by Plutarch. A brave Athenian returned from the battle of Marathon, bleeding with wounds and exhausted, and rushed into the presence of the magistrates, and uttered only these two words - χαιρετε chairete χαιρομεν chairomen- "rejoice, we rejoice," and immediately expired. So Paul felt that there was occasion for him, and for all whom he loved, to rejoice, if he was permitted to die in the cause of others, and in such a manner that his death would benefit the world.

Verse 19

But I trust in the Lord Jesus - His hope was that the Lord Jesus would so order affairs as to permit this - an expression that no man could use who did not regard the Lord Jesus as on the throne, and as more that human.

To send Timotheus shortly unto you - There was a special reason why Paul desired to send Timothy to them rather than any other person, which he himself states, Phlippians 2:22. "Ye know the proof of him, that as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel." From this passage, as well as from Phlippians 1:1, where Timothy is joined with Paul in the salutation, it is evident that he had been with the apostle at Philippi. But this fact is nowhere mentioned in the sixteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, which contains an account of the visit of Paul to that place. The narrative in the Acts, however, as Dr. Paley has remarked (Horae Paulinae, in loc.) is such as to render this altogether probable, and the manner in which the fact is adverted to here is such as would have occurred to no one forging an epistle like this, and shows that the Acts of the Apostles and the epistle are independent books, and are not the work of imposture.

In the Acts of the Apostles it is said that when Paul came to Derbe and Lystra he found a certain disciple named Timothy, whom he would have go forth with him; Phil Acts 16:1-3. The narrative then proceeds with an account of the progress of Paul through variotis provinces of Asia Minor, until it brings him to Troas. There he was warned in a vision to go over into Macedonia. In pursuance of this call, he passed over the Aegean Sea, came to Samothracia, and thence to Neapolis, and thence to Philippi. No mention is made, indeed, of Timothy as being with Paul at Philippi, but after he had left that city, and had gone to Berea, where the "brethren sent away Paul," it is added, "but Silas and Timotheus abode there still." From this it is evident that he had accompanied them in their journey, and had no doubt been with them at Philippi. For the argument which Dr. Paley has derived from the manner in which this subject is mentioned in the Acts, and in this Epistle in

favor of the genuineness of the Scripture account; see Horae Paul, on the Epistle to the Philippians, no. iv.

When I know your state - It was a considerable time since Epaphroditus had left the Philippians, and since, therefore, Paul had been informed of their condition.

Verse 20

For I have no man like-minded - Margin, "so dear unto me." The Greek is, ἰσόψυχον isopsuchon- similar in mind, or like-minded. The meaning is, that there was no one with him who would feel so deep an interest in their welfare.

Who will naturally care - The word rendered "naturally" - γνησίως gnēsiōs- means sincerely and the idea is, that he would regard their interests with a sincere tenderness and concern. He might be depended on to enter heartily into their concerns. This arose doubtless from the fact that he had been with them when the church was founded there, and that he felt a deeper interest in what related to the apostle Paul than any other man. Paul regarded Timothy as a son, and Paul's sending him on such an occasion would evince the feelings of a father who should send a beloved son on an important message.

Verse 21

For all seek their own - That is, all who are with me. Who Paul had with him at this time is not fully known, but he doubtless means that this remark should apply to the mass of Christians and Christian ministers then in Rome. Perhaps he had proposed to some of them to go and visit the church at Philippi, and they had declined it because of the distance and the dangers of the way. When the trial of Paul came on before the emperor, all who were with him in Rome fled from him 2 Timothy 4:16, and it is possible that the same disregard of his wishes and his welfare had already begun to manifest itself among the Christians who were at Rome, so that he was constrained to say that, as a general thing, they sought their own ease and comfort, and were unwilling to deny themselves in order to promote the happiness of those who lived in the remote parts of the world. Let us not be harsh in judging them. How many professing Christians in our cities and towns are there now who would be willing to leave their business and their comfortable homes and go on embassy like this to Philippi? How many are there who would not seek some excuse, and show that it was a

characteristic that they "sought their own" rather than the things which pertained to the kingdom of Jesus Christ?

Not the things which are Jesus Christ's - Which pertain to his cause and kingdom. They are not willing to practice self-denial in order to promote that cause. It is implied here:

(1) that it is the duty of those who profess religion to seek the things which pertain to the kingdom of the Redeemer, or to make that the great and leading object of their lives. They are bound to be willing to sacrifice their own things - to deny themselves of ease, and to be always ready to expose themselves to peril and want if they may be the means of advancing his cause.

(2) that frequently this is not done by those who profess religion. It was the case with the professed Christians at Rome, and it is often the case in the churches now. There are few Christians who deny themselves much to promote the kingdom of the Redeemer; few who are willing to lay aside what they regard as their own in order to advance his cause. People live for their own ease; for their families; for the prosecution of their own business - as if a Christian could have anything which he has a right to pursue independently of the kingdom of the Redeemer, and without regard to his will and glory.

Verse 22

But ye know the proof of him - You have had evidence among yourselves how faithfully Timothy devoted himself to the promotion of the gospel, and how constantly he served with me. This proves that Timothy was with Paul when he was at Philippi.

As a son with the father - Manifesting the same spirit toward me which a son does toward a father, and evincing the same interest in my work. He did all he could do to aid me, and lighten my labors and sufferings.

Verse 23

So soon as I shall see how it will go with me - Paul was a prisoner at Rome, and there was not a little uncertainty whether he would be condemned or acquitted. He was, it is commonly supposed, in fact released on the first trial; 2 Timothy 4:16. He now felt that he would soon be able to send Timothy to them at any rate. If he was condemned and put to death, he would, of course, have no further occasion for his services, and if he was

released from his present troubles and dangers, he could spare him for a season to go and visit the churches.

Verse 24

But I trust in the Lord … - note, Phlippians 1:25.

Verse 25

Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus - Epaphroditus is nowhere else mentioned but in this Epistle; see Phlippians 4:18. All that is known of him, therefore, is what is mentioned here. He was from Philippi, and was a member of the church there. He had been employed by the Philippians to carry relief to Paul when he was in Rome Phlippians 4:18, and while in Rome he was taken dangerously sick. News of this had been conveyed to Philippi, and again intelligence had been brought to him that they had heard of his sickness and that they were much affected by it. On his recovery, Paul thought it best that he should return at once to Philippi, and doubtless sent this Epistle by him. He is much commended by Paul for his faithfulness and zeal.

My brother - In the gospel; or brother Christian. These expressions of affectionate regard must have been highly gratifying to the Philippians.

And companion in labour - It is not impossible that he may have labored with Paul in the gospel, at Philippi; but more probably the sense is, that he regarded him as engaged in the same great work that he was. It is not probable that he assisted Paul much in Rome, as he appears to have been sick during a considerable part of the time he was there.

And fellow-soldier - Christians and Christian ministers are compared with soldiers Phlippians 1:2; 2 Timothy 2:3-4, because of the nature of the service in which they are engaged. The Christian life is a warfare; there are many foes to be overcome; the period which they are to serve is fixed by the Great Captain of salvation, and they will soon be permitted to enjoy the triumphs of victory. Paul regarded himself as enlisted to make war on all the spiritual enemies of the Redeemer, and he esteemed Epaphroditus as one who had shown that he was worthy to be engaged in so good a cause.

But your messenger - Sent to convey supplies to Paul; Phlippians 4:18. The original is, "your apostle" - ὑμῶν δὲ ἀπόστολον humōn de apostolon- and some have proposed to take this literally, meaning that he was the apostle of the church at Philippi, or that he was their bishop. The advocates for Episcopacy have been the rather inclined to this, because in Phlippians 1:1, there are but two orders of ministers mentioned - "bishops and

deacons" - from which they have supposed that "the bishop" might have been absent, and that "the bishop" was probably this Epaphroditus. But against this supposition the objections are obvious:

(1) The word ἀπόστολος apostolosmeans properly one sent forth, a messenger, and it is uniformly used in this sense unless there is something in the connection to limit it to an "apostle," technically so called.

(2) the supposition that it here means a messenger meets all the circumstances of the case, and describes exactly what Epaphroditus did. He was in fact sent as a messenger to Paul; Phlippians 4:18.

(3) he was not an apostle in the proper sense of the term - the apostles having been chosen to be witnesses of the life, the teachings, the death, and the resurrection of the Saviour; see Acts 1:22; compare the notes, 1 Corinthians 9:1.

(4) if he had been an apostle, it is altogether improbable that he would have seen sent on an errand comparatively so humble as that of carrying supplies to Paul. Was there no one else who could do this without sending their bishop? Would a diocese be likely to employ a "bishop" for such a purpose now?

And he that ministered to my wants - Phlippians 4:18.

Verse 26

For he longed after you all - He was desirous to see you all, and to relieve your anxiety in regard to his safety.

Verse 27

For indeed he was sick nigh unto death - Dr. Paley has remarked (Hor. Paul. on Phil no. ii.) that the account of the sickness and recovery of Epaphroditus is such as to lead us to suppose that he was not restored by miracle; and he infers that the power of healing the sick was conferred on the apostles only occasionally, and did not depend at all on their will, since, if it had, there is every reason to suppose that Paul would at once have restored him to health. This account, he adds, shows also that this Epistle is not the work of an impostor. Had it been, a miracle would not have been spared. Paul would not have been introduced as showing such anxiety about a friend lying at the point of death, and as being unable to restore him. It

would have been said that he interposed at once, and raised him up to health.

But God had mercy on him - By restoring him to health evidently not by miracle, but by the use of ordinary means.

On me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow - In addition to all the sorrows of imprisonment, and the prospect of a trial, and the want of friends. The sources of his sorrow, had Epaphroditus died, would have been such as these:

(1) He would have lost a valued friend, and one whom he esteemed as a brother and worthy fellow-laborer.

(2) He would have felt that the church at Philippi had lost a valuable member.

(3) his grief might have been aggravated from the consideration that his life had been lost in endeavoring to do him good. He would have felt that he was the occasion, though innocent, of his exposure to danger.

Verse 28

I send him therefore the more carefully - With more diligence, or speed; I was the more ready to send him.

That I may be the less sorrowful - That is, on account of my solicitude for you; that I may know that your minds are at ease, and that you rejoice in his being among you.

Verse 29

Receive him therefore in the Lord - As the servant of the Lord, or as now restored to you by the Lord, and therefore to be regarded as a fresh gift from God. Our friends restored to us after a long absence, we should receive as the gift of God, and as a proof of his mercy.

And hold such in reputation - Margin, honor such. This is a high commendation of Epaphroditus, and, at the same time, it enjoins an important duty in regard to the proper treatment of those who sustain such a character. It is a Christian duty to honor those who ought to be honored, to respect the virtuous and the pious, and especially to honor those who evince fidelity in the work of the Lord.

Verse 30

Because for the work of Christ - That is, either by exposing himself in his journey to see the apostle in Rome, or by his labors there.

Not regarding his life - There is a difference in the mss. here, so great that it is impossible now to determine which is the true reading, though the sense is not materially affected. The common reading of the Greek text is, παραβολευσάμενος paraboleusamenosliterally "misconsulting, not consulting carefully, not taking pains." The other reading is, παραζολευσάμενος parazoleusamenos"exposing oneself to danger," regardless of life; see the authorities for this reading in Wetstein; compare Bloomfield, in loc. This reading suits the connection, and is generally regarded as the correct one.

To supply your lack of service toward me - Not that they had been indifferent to him, or inattentive to his wants, for he does not mean to blame them; but they had not had an opportunity to send to his relief (see Phlippians 4:10), and Epaphroditus therefore made a special journey to Rome on his account. He came and rendered to him the service which they could not do in person; and what the church would have done, if Paul had been among them, he performed in their name and on their behalf.

Remarks On Phlippians 2:3. Every person who is virtuous and pious has some claim to esteem. He has a reputation which is valuable to him and to the church, and we should not withhold respect from him. It is one evidence, also, of true humility and of right feeling, when we esteem them as better than ourselves, and when we are willing to see them honored, and are willing to sacrifice our own ease to promote their welfare. It is one of the instinctive promptings of true humility to feel that other persons are better than we are.

2. We should not he disappointed or mortified if others think little of us - if we are not brought into prominent notice among people; Phlippians 2:3. We profess to have a low opinion of ourselves, if we are Christians, and we ought to have; and why should we be chagrined and mortified if others have the same opinion of us? Why should we not be willing that they should accord in judgment with us in regard to ourselves?

3. We should be willing to occupy our appropriate place in the church; Phlippians 2:3. That is true humility; and why should anyone be unwilling to be esteemed just as he ought to be? Pride makes us miserable, and is the grand thing that stands in the way of the influence of the gospel on our

hearts. No one can become a Christian who is not willing to occupy just the place which he ought to occupy; to take the lowly position as a penitent which he ought to take; and to have God regard and treat him just as he ought to be treated. The first, second, and third thing in religion is humility; and no one ever becomes a Christian who is not willing to take the lowly condition of a child.

4. We should feel a deep interest in the welfare of others; Phlippians 2:4. People are by nature selfish, and it is the design of religion to make them benevolent. They seek their own interests by nature, and the gospel would teach them to regard the welfare of others. If we are truly under the influence of religion, there is not a member of the church in whom we should not feel an interest, and whose welfare we should not strive to promote as far as we have opportunity. And we may have opportunity every day. It is an easy matter to do good to others. A kind word, or even a kind look, does good; and who so poor that he cannot render this? Every day that we live, we come in contact with some who may be benefited by our example, our advice, or our alms; and every day, therefore, may be closed with the feeling that we have not lived in vain.

5. Let us in all things look to the example of Christ; Phlippians 2:5. He came that he might be an example; and he was exactly such an example as we need. We may be always sure that we are right when we follow his example and possess his spirit. We cannot be so sure that we are right in any other way. He came to be our model in all things, and in all the relations of life:

(a)He showed us what the law of God requires of us.

(b)lie showed us what we should aim to be, and what human nature would be if it were wholly under the influence of religion.

(c)lie showed us what true religion is, for it is just such as was seen in his life.

(d)he showed us how to act in our treatment of mankind.

(e)he showed us how to bear the ills of poverty, and want, and pain, and temptation, and reproach, from the world. We should learn to manifest the

same spirit in suffering which he did, for then we are sure we are right.

(f)and he has showed us how to die. He has exhibited in death just the spirit which we should when we die; for it is not less desirable to die well than to live well.

6. It is right and proper to worship Christ; Phlippians 2:6. He was in the form of God, and equal with God; and, being such, we should adore him. No one need be afraid to render too high honor to the Saviour; and all piety may he measured by the respect which is shown to him. Religion advances in the world just in proportion as people are disposed to render honor to the Redeemer; it becomes dim and dies away just in proportion as that honor is withheld.

7. Like the Redeemer, we should he willing to deny ourselves in order that we may promote the welfare of others; Phlippians 2:6-8. We can never, indeed, equal his condescension. We can never stoop from such a state of dignity and honor as he did; but, in our measure, we should aim to imitate him. If we have comforts, we should be willing to deny ourselves of them to promote the happiness of others. If we occupy an elevated rank in life, we should be willing to stoop to one more humble. If we live in a palace, we should be willing to enter the most lowly cottage, if we can render its inmates happy.

8. Christ was obedient unto death; Phlippians 2:8. Let us be obedient also, doing the will of God in all things. If in his service we are called to pass through trials, even those which will terminate in death, let us obey. He has a right to command us, and we have the example of the Saviour to sustain us. if he requires us, by his providence, and by the leadings of his Spirit, to forsake our country and home; to visit climes of pestilential air, or to traverse wastes of burning sand, to make his name known; if he demands that, in that service, we shall die far away from kindred and home, and that our bones shall be laid on the banks of the Senegal or the Ganges - still, let us remember that these sufferings are not equal to those of the Master. He was an exile from heaven, in a world of suffering. Our exile from our own land is not like that from heaven; nor will our sufferings, though in regions of pestilence and death, be like his sufferings in the garden and on the cross.

9. Let us rejoice that we have a Saviour who has ascended to heaven, and who is to be forever honored there; Phlippians 2:9-11. He is to suffer no more. He has endured the last pang; has passed through a state of humiliation and woe which he will never repeat; and has submitted to insults and mockeries to which it will not be necessary for him to submit again. When we now think of the Redeemer, we can think of him as always happy and honored. There is no moment, by day or by night, in which he is not the object of adoration, love, and praise - nor will there ever be such a moment to all eternity. Our best friend is thus to be eternally reverenced, and in heaven he will receive a full reward for all his unparalleled woes.

10. Let us diligently endeavor to work out our salvation; Phlippians 2:12-13. Nothing else so much demands our unceasing solicitude as this, and in nothing else have we so much encouragement. We are assured that God aids us in this work. He throws no obstructions in our path, but all that God does in the matter of salvation is in the way of help. He does not work in us evil passions, or impure desires, or unbelief; his agency is to enable us to perform "his good pleasure," or that which will please him - that is, that which is holy. The farmer is encouraged to plow and plant his fields when God works around him by sending the warm breezes of the spring, and by refreshing the earth with gentle dews and rains. And so we may be encouraged to seek our salvation when God works in our hearts, producing serious thoughts, and a feeling that we need the blessings of salvation.

11. Christians should let their light shine; Phlippians 2:14-16. God has called them into his kingdom that they may show what is the nature and power of true religion. They are to illustrate in their lives the nature of that gospel which he has revealed, and to show its value in purifying the soul, and in sustaining it in the time of trial. The world is dependent on Christians for just views of religion, and every day that a Christian lives he is doing something to honor or dishonor the gospel. Every word that he speaks, every expression of the eye, every cloud or beam of sunshine on his brow, will have some effect in doing this. He cannot live without making some impression upon the world around him, either favorable or unfavorable to the cause of his Redeemer.

12. We should be ready to die, if called to such a sacrifice in behalf of the church of Christ; Phlippians 2:17. We should rejoice in being permitted to suffer, that we may promote the welfare of others, and be the means of saving those for whom Christ died. It has been an honor to be a martyr in the cause of religion, and so it ever will be when God calls to such a sacrifice of life. If he calls us to it, therefore, we should not shrink from it, nor should we shrink from any sufferings by which we may honor the Saviour, and rescue souls from death.

13. Let us learn, from the interesting narrative respecting Epaphroditus at the close of this chapter, to live and act as becomes Christians in every situation in life; Phlippians 2:25-30. It was much to have the praise of an apostle and to be commended for his Christian conduct, as this stranger in Rome was. He went there, not to view the wonders of the imperial city, and not to run the rounds of giddy pleasure there, but to perform an important duty of religion. While there he became sick - not by indulgence in pleasures; not as the result of feasting and revelry, but in the work of Christ. In a strange city, far from home, amidst the rich, the great, the frivolous; in a place where theaters opened their doors, and where places of amusement abounded, he led a life which an apostle could commend as pure. There is nothing more difficult for a Christian than to maintain an irreproachable walk when away from the usual restraints and influences that serve to keep him in the paths of piety, and when surrounded with the fascinations and allurements of a great and wicked city.

There strangers, extending the rites of hospitality, often invite the guest to places of amusement which the Christian would not visit were he at home. There the desire to see all that is to be seen, and to hear all that is to be heard, attracts him to the theater, the opera, and the gallery of obscene and licentious statuary and painting. There the plea readily presents itself that an opportunity of witnessing these things may never occur again; that he is unknown, and that his example, therefore, can do no harm; that it is desirable, from personal observation, to know what is the condition of the world; or that perhaps his former views in these matters may have been precise and puritanical. To such considerations he yields; but yields only to regret it in future life. Rarely is such a thing done without its being in some way soon known; and rarely, very rarely does a Christian minister or other

member of the church travel much without injury to his piety, and to the cause of religion. A Christian man who is under a necessity of visiting Europe from this country, should feel that he has special need of the prayers of his friends, that he may not dishonor his religion abroad; he who is permitted to remain at home, and to cultivate the graces of piety in his own family, and in the quiet scenes where he has been accustomed to move, should regard it as a cause of special thankfulness to God.

PHILIPPIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

This chapter Phlippians 3:1.

He warns them against the Jewish teachers who urged the necessity of complying with the Mosaic laws, and who appear to have boasted of their being Jews, and to have regarded themselves as the favorites of God on that account; Phlippians 3:2-3.

To meet what they had said, and to show how little all that on which they relied was to be valued, Paul says that he had had advantages of birth and education which surpassed them all and that all the claim to the favor of God, and all the hope of salvation which could be derived from birth, education, and a life of zeal and conformity to the law, had been his; Phlippians 3:4-5.

Yet he says, he had renounced all this, and now regarded it as utterly worthless in the matter of salvation. He had cheerfully suffered the loss of all things, and was willing still to do it, if he might obtain salvation through the Redeemer. Christ was more to him than all the advantages of birth, and rank, and blood; and all other grounds of dependence for salvation, compared with reliance on him, were worthless; Phlippians 3:7-11.

The object which he had sought in doing this, he says, he had not yet fully attained. He had seen enough to know its inestimable value, and he now pressed onward that he might secure all that he desired. The mark was before him, and he pressed on to secure the prize; Phlippians 3:12-14.

He exhorts them to aim at the same thing, and to endeavor to secure the same object, assuring them that God was ready to disclose to them all that they desired to know, and to grant all that they wished to obtain; Phlippians 3:15-16.

This whole exhortation he enforces in the end of the chapter Phlippians 3:17-21 by two considerations. One was, that there were not a few who had been deceived and who had no true religion - whom he had often warned with tears, Phlippians 3:18-19; the other was, that the home, the citizenship

of the true Christian, was in heaven, and they who were Christians ought to live us those who expected soon to be there. The Saviour would soon return to take them to glory. He would change their vile body, and make them like himself, and they should therefore live as became those who had a hope so blessed and transforming.

Verse 1

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord - That is, in the Lord Jesus; see Phlippians 3:3; compare the Acts 1:24 note, and 1 Thessalonians 5:16 note. The idea here is, that it is the duty of Christians to rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ. This duty implies the following things:

(1) They should rejoice that they have such a Saviour. People everywhere have felt the need of a Saviour, and to us it should be a subject of unfeigned joy that one has been provided for us. When we think of our sins, we may now rejoice that there is one who can deliver us from them; when we think of the worth of the soul, we may rejoice that there is one who can save it from death; when we think of our danger, we can rejoice that there is one who can rescue us from all peril, and bring us to a world where we shall be for ever safe.

(2) we may rejoice that we have such a Saviour. He is just such as we need. He accomplishes just what we want a Saviour to do. We need one to make known to us a way of pardon, and he does it. We need one to make an atonement for sin, and he does it. We need one to give us peace from a troubled conscience, and he does it. We need one to support us in trials and bereavements, and he does it. We need one who can comfort us on the bed of death, and guide us through the dark valley, and the Lord Jesus is just what we want. When we look at his character, it is just such as it should be to win our hearts, and to make us love him; and when we look at what he has done, we see that he has accomplished all that we can desire, and why should we not rejoice?

(3) we may and should rejoice in him. The principal joy of the true Christian should be in the Lord. He should find his happiness not in riches, or gaiety, or vanity, or ambition, or books, or in the world in any form, but in communion with the Lord Jesus, and in the hope of eternal life through him. In his friendship, and in his service, should be the highest of our joys,

and in these we may always be happy. It is the privilege, therefore, of a Christian to rejoice. He has more sources of joy than any other man - sources which do not fail when all others fail. Religion is not sadness or melancholy, it is joy; and the Christian should never leave the impression on others that his religion makes him either gloomy or morose. A cheerful countenance, an eye of benignity, a conversation pleasant and kind, should always evince the joy of his heart, and in all his contact with the world around hint he should show that his heart is full of joy.

To write the same things - That is, to repeat the same truths and admonitions. Perhaps he refers in this to the exhortations which he had given them when he was with them, on the same topics on which he is now writing to them. He says, that for him to record these exhortations, and transmit them by a letter, might be the means of permanent welfare to them, and would not be burdensome or oppressive to him. It was not absolutely necessary for them, but still it would be conducive to their order and comfort as a church. We may suppose that this chapter is a summary of what he had often inculcated when he was with them.

To me indeed is not grievous - It is not burdensome or oppressive to me to repeat these exhortations in this manner. They might suppose that in the multitude of cares which he had, and in his trials in Rome, it might be too great a burden for him to bestow so much attention on their interests.

But for you it is safe - It will contribute to your security as Christians, to have these sentiments and admonitions on record. They were exposed to dangers which made them proper. What those dangers were, the apostle specifies in the following verses.

Verse 2

Beware of dogs - Dogs in the east are mostly without masters; they wander at large in the streets and fields, and feed upon offals, and even upon corpses; compare 1 Kings 14:11; 1 Kings 16:4; 1 Kings 21:19. They are held as unclean, and to call one a dog is a much stronger expression of contempt there than with us; 1 Samuel 17:43; 2 Kings 8:13. The Jews called the pagan dogs, and the Muslims call Jews and Christians by the same name. The term dog also is used to denote a person that is shameless, impudent, malignant, snarling, dissatisfied, and contentious, and is evidently so employed here. It is possible that the language used here may have been derived from some custom of affixing a caution, on a house that was guarded by a dog, to persons approaching it. Lenfant remarks that at

Rome it was common for a dog to lie chained before the door of a house, and that a notice was placed in sight, "Beware of the dog." The same notice I have seen in this city affixed to the kennel of dogs in front of a bank, that were appointed to guard it. The reference here is, doubtless, to Judaizing teachers, and the idea is, that they were contentious, troublesome, dissatisfied, and would produce disturbance. The strong language which the apostle uses here, shows the sense which he had of the danger arising from their influence. It may be observed, however, that the term dogs is used in ancient writings with great frequency, and even by the most grave speakers. It is employed by the most dignified characters in the Iliad (Boomfield), and the name was given to a whole class of Greek philosophers - the Cynics. It is used in one instance by the Saviour; Matthew 7:6. By the use of the term here, there can be no doubt that the apostle meant to express strong disapprobation of the character and course of the persons referred to, and to warn the Philippians in the most solemn manner against them.

Beware of evil workers - Referring, doubtless, to the same persons that he had characterized as dogs The reference is to Jewish teachers, whose doctrines and influence he regarded only as evil We do not know what was the nature of their teaching, but we may presume that it consisted much in urging the obligations of the Jewish rites and ceremonies; in speaking of the advantage of having been born Jews: and in urging a compliance with the law in order to justification before God. In this way their teachings tended to set aside the great doctrine of salvation by the merits of the Redeemer.

Beware of the concision - Referring, doubtless, also to the Jewish teachers. The word rendered "concision" - κατατομή katatomē- means properly a cutting off, a mutilation. It is used here contemptuously for the Jewish circumcision in contrast with the true circumcision. Robinson, Lexicon. It is not to be understood that Paul meant to throw contempt on circumcision as enjoined by God, and as practiced by the pious Jews of other times (compare Acts 16:3), but only as it was held by the false Judaizing teachers. As they held it, it was not the true circumcision. They made salvation to depend on it, instead of its being only a sign of the covenant with God. Such a doctrine, as they held it, was a mere cutting off of the flesh, without understanding anything of the true nature of the rite, and, hence, the unusual term by which he designates it. Perhaps, also, there may be included the idea that a doctrine so held would be in fact a cutting off of the soul; that is, that it tended to destruction. Their cutting and

mangling the flesh might be regarded as an emblem of the manner in which their doctrine would cut and mangle the church - Doddridge. The meaning of the whole is, that they did not understand the true nature of the doctrine of circumcision, but that with them it was a mere cutting of the flesh, and tended to destroy the church.

Verse 3

For we are the circumcision - We who are Christians. We have and hold the true doctrine of circumcision. We have that which was intended to be secured by this rite - for we are led to renounce the flesh, and to worship God in the spirit. The apostle in this verse teaches that the ordinance of circumcision was not designed to be a mere outward ceremony, but was intended to be emblematic of the renunciation of the flesh with its corrupt propensities, and to lead to the pure and spiritual worship of God. In this, he has undoubtedly stated its true design. They who now urged it as necessary to salvation, and who made salvation depend on its mere outward observance, had lost sight of this object of the rite. But this, the real design of circumcision, was attained by those who had been led to renounce the flesh, and who had devoted themselves to the worship of God; see the notes at Romans 2:28-29.

Which worship God in the spirit - See the notes at John 4:24; compare Genesis 17:10-14.

And rejoice in Christ Jesus - See Phlippians 3:1. That is, we have, through him, renounced the flesh; we have become the true worshippers of God, and have thus attained what was originally contemplated by circumcision, and by all the other rites of religion.

And have no confidence in the flesh - In our own corrupt nature; or in any ordinances that relate merely to the flesh. We do not depend on circumcision for salvation, or on any external rites and forms whatever - on any advantage of rank, or blood. The word “flesh” here seems to refer to every advantage which any may have of birth; to any external conformity to the law, and to everything which unaided human nature can do to effect salvation. Or none of these things can we put reliance for salvation; none of them will constitute a ground of hope.

Verse 4

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh - That is, though I had uncommon advantages of this kind; and if anyone could have trusted in them, I could have done it. The object of the apostle is to show that he did

not despise those things because he did not possess them, but because he now saw that they were of no value in the great matter of salvation. Once he had confided in them, and if anyone could find any ground of reliance on them, he could have found more than any of them. But he had seen that all these things were valueless in regard to the salvation of the soul. We may remark here, that Christians do not despise or disregard advantages of birth, or amiableness of manners, or external morality, because they do not possess them - but because they regard them as insufficient to secure their salvation. They who have been most amiable and moral before their conversion will speak in the most decided manner of the insufficiency of these things for salvation, and of the danger of relying on them. They have once tried it, and they now see that their feet were standing on a slippery rock. The Greek here is, literally: "although I (was) having confidence in the flesh." The meaning is, that he had every ground of confidence in the flesh which anyone could have, and that if there was any advantage for salvation to be derived from birth, and blood, and external conformity to the law, he possessed it. He had more to rely on than most other people had; nay, he could have boasted of advantages of this sort which could not be found united in any other individual. What those advantages were, he proceeds to specify.

Verse 5

Circumcised the eighth day - That is, he was circumcised in exact compliance with the law. If there was any ground confidence from such compliance with the law, he had it. The law required that circumcision should be performed on the eighth day Genesis 17:12; Leviticus 12:3; Luke 1:59; but it is probable that, in some cases, this was delayed on account of sickness, or from some other cause; and, in the case of proselytes, it was not performed until adult age; see Acts 16:3. But Paul says that, in his case, the law had been literally complied with; and, consequently, all the advantage which could be derived from such a compliance, was his.

Of the stock of Israel - Descended from the patriarch Israel, or Jacob; and, therefore, able to trace his genealogy back as far as any Jew could. He was not a proselyte himself from among the pagan, nor were any of his ancestors proselytes. He had all the advantages which could be derived from a regular descent from the venerable founders of the Jewish nation. He was thus distinguished from the Edomites and others who practiced circumcision; from the Samaritans, who were made up of a mixture of

people; and from many, even among the Jews, whose ancestors had been once pagan, and who had become proselytes.

Of the tribe of Benjamin - Benjamin was one of the two tribes which remained when the ten tribes revolted under Jeroboam, and, with the tribe of Judah, it ever afterward maintained its allegiance to God. The idea of Paul is, that he was not one of the revolted tribes, but that he had as high a claim to the honor of being a Jew as anyone could boast. The tribe of Benjamin, also, was located near the temple, and indeed it has been said that the temple was on the dividing line between that tribe and the tribe of Judah; and it might have been supposed that there was some advantage in securing salvation from having been born and reared so near where the holy rites of religion were celebrated. If there were any such derived from the proximity of the tribe to the temple, he could claim it; for, though his birth was in another place, yet he was a member of the tribe.

An Hebrew of the Hebrews - This is the Hebrew mode of expressing the superlative degree; and the idea is, that Paul enjoyed every advantage which could possibly be derived from the fact of being a Hebrew. He had a lineal descent from the very ancestor of the nation; he belonged to a tribe that was as honorable as any other, and that had its location near the very center of religious influence; and he was an Hebrew by both his parents, with no admixture of Gentile blood. On this fact - that no one of his ancestors had been a proselyte, or of Gentile extraction - a Jew would pride himself much; and Paul says that he was entitled to all the advantage which could be derived from it.

As touching the law, a Pharisee - In my views of the law, and in my manner of observing it, I was of the straitest sect - a Pharisee; see the notes at Acts 26:5. The Pharisees were distinguished among the Jewish sects for their rigid adherence to the letter of the law, and had endeavored to guard it from the possibility of violation by throwing around it a vast body of traditions, which they considered to be equally binding with the written law; see the notes at Matthew 3:7. The Sadducees were much less strict; and Paul here says that whatever advantage could be derived from the most rigid adherence to the letter of the law, was his.

Verse 6

Concerning zeal, persecuting the church - Showing the greatness of my zeal for the religion which I believed to be true, by persecuting those whom I considered to be in dangerous error. Zeal was supposed to be, as it

is, an important part of religion; see 2 Kings 10:16; Psalm 69:9; Psalm 119:139; Isaiah 59:17; Romans 10:2. Paul says that he had shown the highest degree of zeal that was possible. He had gone so far in his attachment for the religion of his fathers, as to pursue with purposes of death those who had departed from it, and who had embraced a different form of belief. If any, therefore, could hope for salvation on the ground of extraordinary devotedness to religion, he said that he could.

Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless - So far as the righteousness which can be obtained by obeying the law is concerned. It is not needful to suppose here that he refers merely to the ceremonial law; but the meaning is, that he did all that could be done to obtain salvation by the mere observance of law. It was supposed by the Jews, and especially by the Pharisees, to which sect he belonged, that it was possible to be saved in that way; and Paul says that he had done all that was supposed to be necessary for that. We are not to imagine that, when he penned this declaration, he meant to be understood as saying that he had wholly complied with the law of God; but that, before his conversion, he supposed that he had done all that was necessary to be done in order to be saved by the observance of law he neglected no duty that he understood it to enjoin. He was not guilty of deliberately violating it.

He led a moral and strictly upright life, and no one had occasion to "blame" or to accuse him as a violator of the law of God. There is every reason to believe that Paul, before his conversion, was a young man of correct deportment, of upright life, of entire integrity; and that he was free from the indulgences of vice and passion, into which young people often fall. In all that he ever says of himself as being "the chief of sinners," and as being "unworthy to be called an apostle," he never gives the least intimation that his early life was stained by vice, or corrupted by licentious passions. On the contrary, we are left to the fair presumption that, if any man could be saved by his own works, he was that man. This fact should be allowed to make its proper impression on those who are seeking salvation in the same way; and they should be willing to inquire whether they may not be deceived in the matter, as he was, and whether they are not in as much real danger in depending on their own righteousness, as was this most upright and zealous young man.

Verse 7

But what things were gain to me - The advantages of birth, of education, and of external conformity to the law. "I thought these to be gain - that is, to be of vast advantage in the matter of salvation. I valued myself on these things, and supposed that I was rich in all that pertained to moral character and to religion." Perhaps, also, he refers to these things as laying the foundation of a hope of future advancement in honor and in wealth in this world. They commended him to the rulers of the nation; they opened before him a brilliant prospect of distinction; they made it certain that he could rise to posts of honor and of office, and could easily gratify all the aspirings of his ambition.

Those I counted loss - "I now regard them all as so much loss. They were really a disadvantage - a hindrance - an injury. I look upon them, not as gain or an advantage, but as an obstacle to my salvation." He had relied on them. He had been led by these things to an improper estimate of his own character, and he had been thus hindered from embracing the true religion. He says, therefore, that he now renounced all dependence on them; that he esteemed them not as contributing to his salvation, but, so far as any reliance should be placed on them, as in fact so much loss.

For Christ - Greek, "On account of Christ." That is, so far as Christ and his religion were concerned, they were to be regarded as worthless. In order to obtain salvation by him, it was necessary to renounce all dependence on these things.

Verse 8

Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss - Not only those things which he had just specified, and which he had himself possessed, he says he would be willing to renounce in order to obtain an interest in the Saviour, but everything which could be imagined. Were all the wealth and honor which could be conceived of his, he would be willing to renounce them in order that he might obtain the knowledge of the Redeemer. He would be a gainer who should sacrifice everything in order to win Christ. Paul had not only acted on this principle when he became a Christian, but had ever afterward continued to be ready to give up everything in order that he might obtain an interest in the Saviour. He uses here the same word - ζημίαν zēmian- which he does in the Acts of the Apostles, Acts 27:21, when speaking of the loss which had been sustained by loosing from Crete, contrary to his advice, on the voyage to Rome. The idea here seems to be, "What I might obtain, or did possess, I regard as loss in comparison with

the knowledge of Christ, even as seamen do the goods on which they set a high value, in comparison with their lives. Valuable as they may be, they are willing to throw them all overboard in order to save themselves." Burder, in Ros. Alt. u. neu. Morgenland, in loc.

For the excellency of the knowledge - A Hebrew expression to denote excellent knowledge. The idea is, that he held everything else to be worthless in comparison with that knowledge, and he was willing to sacrifice everything else in order to obtain it. On the value of this knowledge of the Saviour, see the notes at Ephesians 3:19.

For whom I have suffered the loss of all things - Paul, when he became a Christian, gave up his brilliant prospects in regard to this life, and everything indeed on which his heart had been placed. He abandoned the hope of honor and distinction; he sacrificed every prospect of gain or ease; and he gave up his dearest friends and separated himself from those whom he tenderly loved. He might have risen to the highest posts of honor in his native land, and the path which an ambitious young man desires was fully open before him. But all this had been cheerfully sacrificed in order that he might obtain an interest in the Saviour, and partake of the blessings of his religion. He has not, indeed, informed us of the exact extent of his loss in becoming a Christian. It is by no means improbable that he had been excommunicated by the Jews; and that he had been disowned by his own family.

And do count them but dung - The word used here - σκύβαλον skubalon- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, dregs; refuse; what is thrown away as worthless; chaff; offal, or the refuse of a table or of slaughtered animals, and then filth of any kind. No language could express a more deep sense of the utter worthlessness of all that external advantages can confer in the matter of salvation. In the question of justification before God, all reliance on birth, and blood, and external morality, and forms of religion, and prayers, and alms, is to be renounced, and, in comparison with the merits of the great Redeemer, to be esteemed as vile. Such were Paul's views, and we may remark that if this was so in his case, it should he in ours. Such things can no more avail for our salvation than they could for his. We can no more be justified by them than he could. Nor will they do anything more in our case to commend us to God than they did in his.

Verse 9

And be found in him - That is, united to him by a living faith. The idea is, that when the investigations of the great day should take place in regard to the ground of salvation, it might be found that he was united to the Redeemer and depended solely on his merits for salvation; compare the notes at John 6:56.

Not having mine own righteousness - That is, not relying on that for salvation. This was now the great aim of Paul, that it might be found at last that he was not trusting to his own merits, but to those of the Lord Jesus.

Which is of the law - see the notes at Romans 10:3. The "righteousness which is of the law" is that which could be obtained by conformity to the precepts of the Jewish religion, such as Paul had endeavored to obtain before he became a Christian. He now saw that no one complied perfectly with the holy law of God, and that all dependence on such a righteousness was vain. All people by nature seek salvation by the law. They set up some standard which they mean to comply with, and expect to be saved by conformity to that. With some it is the law of honor, with others the law of honesty, with others the law of kindness and courtesy, and with others the law of God. If they comply with the requirements of these laws, they suppose that they will be safe, and it is only the grace of God showing them how defective their standard is, or how far they come from complying with its demands, that can ever bring them from this dangerous dependence. Paul in early life depended on his compliance with the laws of God as he understood them, and supposed that he was safe. When he was brought to realize his true condition, he saw how far short he had come of what the law of God required, and that all dependence on his own works was vain.

But that which is through the faith of Christ - That justification which is obtained by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ; see at Romans 1:17, note; Romans 3:24, note; Romans 4:5, note.

Righteousness which is of God by faith - Which proceeds from God, or of which he is the great source and fountain. This may include the following things:

(1) God is the author of pardon - and this is a part of the righteousness which the man who is justified has.

(2) God purposes to treat the justified sinner as if he had not sinned - and thus his righteousness is of God.

(3) God is the source of all the grace that will be imparted to the soul, making it really holy. In this way, all the righteousness which the Christian has is "of God." The idea of Paul is, that he now saw that it was far more desirable to be saved by righteousness obtained from God than by his own. That obtained from God was perfect, and glorious, and sufficient; that which he had attempted to work out was defective, impure, and wholly insufficient to save the soul. It is far more honorable to be saved by God than to save ourselves; it is more glorious to depend on him than to depend on anything that we can do.

Verse 10

That I may know him - That I may be fully acquainted with his nature, his character, his work, and with the salvation which he has worked out. It is one of the highest objects of desire in the mind of the Christian to know Christ; see the notes at Ephesians 3:19.

And the power of his resurrection - That is, that I may understand and experience the proper influence which the fact of his resurrection should have on the mind. That influence would he felt in imparting the hope of immortality; in sustaining the soul in the prospect of death, by the expectation of being raised from the grave in like manner; and in raising the mind above the world; Romans 6:11. There is no one truth that will have greater power over us, when properly believed, than the truth that Christ has risen from the dead. His resurrection confirms the truth of the Christian religion (notes, 1 Peter 4:13. So Paul says Colossians 1:24 that he rejoiced in his sufferings in behalf of his brethren, and desired "to fill up that which was behind, of the afflictions of Christ," or that in which he had hitherto come short of the afflictions which Christ endured. The idea is, that it is an honor to suffer as Christ suffered; and that the true Christian will esteem it a privilege to be made just like him, not only in glory, but in trial. To do this, is one evidence of piety; and we may ask ourselves, therefore, whether these are the feelings of our hearts. Are we seeking merely the honors of heaven, or should we esteem it a privilege to be reproached and reviled as Christ was - to have our names cast out as his was - to be made the object of sport and derision as he was - and to be held up to the contempt of a world as he was? If so, it is an evidence that we love him; if not so, and we are merely seeking the crown of glory, we should doubt whether we have ever known anything of the nature of true religion.

Being made conformable to his death - In all things, being just like Christ - to live as he did, and to die as he did. There can be no doubt that Paul means to say that he esteemed it so desirable to be just like Christ, that he would regard it as an honor to die in the same manner. He would rejoice to go with him to the cross, and to pass through the circumstances of scorn and pain which attended such a death. Yet how few there are who would be willing to die as Christ died, and how little would the mass of people regard it as a privilege and honor! Indeed, it requires an elevated state of pious feeling to be able to say that it would be regarded as a privilege and honor to die like Christ to have such a sense of the loveliness of his character in all things, and such ardent attachment to him, as to rejoice in the opportunity of dying as he did! When we think of dying, we wish to have our departure made as comfortable as possible. We would have our sun go down without a cloud. We would wish to lie on a bed of down; we would have our head sustained by the kind arm of a friend, and not left to fall, in the intensity of suffering, on the breast; we would wish to have the place where we die surrounded by sympathizing kindred, and not by those who would mock our dying agonies. And, if such is the will of God, it is not improper to desire that our end may be peaceful and happy; but we should also feel, if God should order it otherwise, that it would be an honor, in the cause of the Redeemer, to die amidst reproaches - to be led to the stake, as the martyrs have been - or to die, as our Master did, on a cross. They who are most like him in the scenes of humiliation here, will be most like him in the realms of glory.

Verse 11

If by any means - Implying, that he meant to make use of the most strenuous exertions to obtain the object.

I might attain unto - I may come to, or may secure this object.

The resurrection of the dead - Paul believed that all the dead would be raised Acts 24:15; Acts 26:6-8; and in this respect he would certainly attain to the resurrection of the dead, in common with all mankind. But the phrase, "the resurrection of the dead," also might be used, in a more limited sense, to denote the resurrection of the righteous as a most desirable object; and this might be secured by effort. It was this which Paul sought - this for which he strove - this that was so bright an object in his eye that it was to be secured at any sacrifice. To rise with the saints; to enter with them into the blessedness of the heavenly inheritance, was an object that the apostle

thought was worth every effort which could he made. The doctrine of the resurrection was, in his view, that which distinguished the true religion, and which made it of such inestimable value Acts 26:6-7; Acts 23:6; 1 Corinthians 15; and he sought to participate in the full honor and glory of such a resurrection.

Verse 12

Not as though I had already attained - This verse and the two following are full of allusions to the Grecian races. "The word rendered ‹attained‘ signifies, to have arrived at the goal and won the prize, but without having as yet received it" - The Pictorial Bible. The meaning here is, I do not pretend to have attained to what I wish or hope to be. He had indeed been converted; he had been raised up from the death of sin; he had been imbued with spiritual life and peace; but there was a glorious object before him which he had not yet received. There was to be a kind of resurrection which he had not arrived at. It is possible that Paul here may have had his eye on an error which prevailed to some extent in the early church, that "the resurrection was already past" 2 Timothy 2:18, by which the faith of some had been perverted. How far this error had spread, or on what it was founded, is not now known; but it is possible that it might have found advocates extensively in the churches. Paul says, however, that he entertained no such opinion. He looked forward to a resurrection which had not yet occurred. He anticipated it as a glorious event yet to come, and he purposed to secure it by every effort which he could make.

Either were already perfect - This is a distinct assertion of the apostle Paul that he did not regard himself as a perfect man. He had not reached that state where he was free from sin. It is not indeed a declaration that no one was perfect, or that no one could be in this life but it is a declaration that he did not regard himself as having attained to it. Yet who can urge better claims to having attained perfection than Paul could have done? Who has surpassed him in love, and zeal, and self-denial, and true devotedness to the service of the Redeemer? Who has more elevated views of God, and of the plan of salvation? Who prays more, or lives nearer to God than he did? That must be extraordinary piety which surpasses that of the apostle Paul; and he who lays claim to a degree of holiness which even Paul did not pretend to, gives little evidence that he has any true knowledge of himself, or has ever been imbued with the true humility which the gospel produces.

It should be observed, however, that many critics, as Bloomfield, Koppe, Rosenmuller, Robinson (Lexicon), Clarke, the editor of The Pictorial Bible, and others, suppose the word used here - τελειόω teleioō- not to refer to moral or Christian perfection, but to be an allusion to the games that were celebrated in Greece, and to mean that he had not completed his course and arrived at the goal, so as to receive the prize. According to this, the sense would be, that he had not yet received the crown which he aspired after as the result of his efforts in this life. It is of importance to understand precisely what he meant by the declaration here; and, in order to this, it will be proper to look at the meaning of the word elsewhere in the New Testament. The word properly means, to complete, to make perfect, so as to be full, or so that nothing shall be wanting. In the New Testament it is used in the following places, and is translated in the following manner: It is rendered "fulfilled" in Luke 2:23; John 19:28; "perfect," and "perfected," in Luke 13:32; John 17:23; 2 Corinthians 12:9; Phlippians 3:12; Hebrews 2:10; Hebrews 5:9; Hebrews 7:19; Hebrews 9:9; Hebrews 10:1, Hebrews 10:14; Hebrews 11:40; Hebrews 12:23; James 2:22; 1 John 2:5; 1 John 4:12, 1 John 4:17-18; "finish," and "finished," John 5:36; Acts 20:24; and "consecrated," Hebrews 7:28.

In one case Acts 20:24, it is applied to a race or course that is run - "That I might finish my course with joy;" but this is the only instance, unless it be in the case before us. The proper sense of the word is that of bringing to an end, or rendering complete, so that nothing shall be wanting. The idea of Paul evidently is, that he had not yet attained that which would be the completion of his hopes. There was something which he was striving after, which he had not obtained, and which was needful to render him perfect, or complete. He lacked now what he hoped yet to attain to; and that which he lacked may refer to all those things which were wanting in his character and condition then, which he expected to secure in the resurrection. What he would then obtain, would be - perfect freedom from sin, deliverance from trials and temptations, victory over the grave, and the possession of immortal life.

As those things were needful in order to the completion of his happiness, we may suppose that he referred to them now, when he says that he was not yet "perfect." This word, therefore, while it will embrace an

allusion to moral character, need not be understood of that only, but may include all those things which were necessary to be observed in order to his complete felicity. Though there may be, therefore, an allusion in the passage to the Grecian foot-races, yet still it would teach that he did not regard himself as in any sense perfect in all respects, there were things wanting to render his character and condition complete, or what he desired they might ultimately be. The same is true of all Christians now. We are imperfect in our moral and religious character, in our joys, in our condition. Our state here is far different from that which will exist in heaven; and no Christian can say, anymore than Paul could, that he has obtained that which is requisite to the completion or perfection of his character and condition. He looks for something brighter and purer in the world beyond the grave. Though, therefore, there may be - as I think the connection and phraseology seem to demand - a reference to the Grecian games, yet the sense of the passage is not materially varied. It was still a struggle for the crown of perfection - a crown which the apostle says he had not yet obtained.

But I follow after - I pursue the object, striving to obtain it. The prize was seen in the distance, and he diligently sought to obtain it. There is a reference here to the Grecian races, and the meaning is, "I steadily pursue my course;" compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:24.

If that I may apprehend - If I may obtain, or reach, the heavenly prize. There was a glorious object in view, and he made most strenuous exertions to obtain it. The idea in the word "apprehend" is that of taking hold of, or of seizing suddenly and with eagerness; and, since there is no doubt of its being used in an allusion to the Grecian foot-races, it is not improbable that there is a reference to the laying hold of the pole or post which marked the goal, by the racer who had outstripped the other competitors, and who, by that act, might claim the victory and the reward.

That for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus - By Christ Jesus. The idea is, that he had been called into the service of the Lord Jesus, with a view to the obtaining of an important object. He recognized:

(1) the fact that the Lord Jesus had, as it were, laid hold on him, or seized him with eagerness or suddenness, for so the word used here - κατελήμφθην katelēmphthēn- means (compare Mark 9:18; John 8:3-4; John 12:35; 1 Thessalonians 5:4; and,

(2) the fact that the Lord Jesus had laid hold on him, with a view to his obtaining the prize. He had done it in order that he might obtain the crown of life, that he might serve him faithfully here, and then be rewarded in heaven.

We may learn, from this:

(1) That Christians are seized, or laid hold on, when they are converted, by the power of Christ, to be employed in his service.

(2) that there is an object or purpose which he has in view. He designs that they shall obtain a glorious prize, and he "apprehends" them with reference to its attainment.

(3) that the fact that Christ has called us into his service with reference to such an object, and designs to bestow the crown upon us, need not and should not dampen our exertions, or diminish our zeal. It should rather, as in the case of Paul, excite our ardor, and urge us forward. We should seek diligently to gain that, for the securing of which, Christ has called us into his service. The fact that he has thus arrested us in our mad career of sin; that he has by his grace constrained us to enter into his service, and that he contemplates the bestowment upon us of the immortal crown, should be the highest motive for effort. The true Christian, then, who feels that heaven is to be his home, and who believes that Christ means to bestow it upon him, will make the most strenuous efforts to obtain it. The prize is so beautiful and glorious, that he will exert every power of body and soul that it may be his. The belief, therefore, that God means to save us, is one of the highest incentives to effort in the cause of religion.

Verse 13

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended - That is, to have obtained that for which I have been called into the service of the Redeemer. There is something which I strive after which I have not yet gained. This statement is a confirmation of the opinion that in the previous verse, where he says that he was not "already perfect," he includes a moral perfection, and not merely the obtainment of the prize or reward; for no one could

suppose that he meant to be understood as saying that he had obtained the crown of glory.

This one thing I do - Paul had one great aim and purpose of life. He did not attempt to mingle the world and religion, and to gain both. He did not seek to obtain wealth and salvation too; or honor here and the crown of glory hereafter, but he had one object, one aim, one great purpose of soul. To this singleness of purpose he owed his extraordinary attainments in piety, and his uncommon success as a minister. A man will accomplish little who allows his mind to be distracted by a multiplicity of objects. A Christian will accomplish nothing who has not a single great aim and purpose of soul. That purpose should be to secure the prize, and to renounce everything that would be in the way to its attainment. Let us then so live that we may be able to say, that there is one great object which we always have in view, and that we mean to avoid everything which would interfere with that.

Forgetting those things which are behind - There is an allusion here undoubtedly to the Grecian races. One running to secure the prize would not stop to look behind him to see how much ground he had run over, or who of his competitors had fallen or lingered in the way. He would keep his eye steadily on the prize, and strain every nerve that he might obtain it. If his attention was diverted for a moment from that, it would hinder his flight, and might be the means of his losing the crown. So the apostle says it was with him. He looked onward to the prize. He fixed the eye intently on that. It was the single object in his view, and he did not allow his mind to be diverted from that by anything - not even by the contemplation of the past. He did not stop to think of the difficulties which he had overcome, or the troubles which he had met, but he thought of what was yet to be accomplished.

This does not mean that he would not have regarded a proper contemplation of the past life as useful and profitable for a Christian (compare the notes at Ephesians 2:11), but that he would not allow any reference to the past to interfere with the one great effort to win the prize. It may be, and is, profitable for a Christian to look over the past mercies of God to his soul, in order to awaken emotions of gratitude in the heart, and to think of his shortcomings and errors, to produce penitence and humility. But none of these things should be allowed for one moment to divert the mind from the purpose to win the incorruptible crown. And it may be

remarked in general, that a Christian will make more rapid advances in piety by looking forward than by looking backward. Forward we see everything to cheer and animate us - the crown of victory, the joys of heaven, the society of the blessed - the Saviour beckoning to us and encouraging us.

Backward, we see everything to dishearten and to humble. Our own unfaithfulness; our coldness, deadness, and dullness; the little zeal and ardor which we have, all are fitted to humble and discourage. He is the most cheerful Christian who looks onward, and who keeps heaven always in view; he who is accustomed much to dwell on the past, though he may be a true Christian, will be likely to be melancholy and dispirited, to be a recluse rather than a warm-hearted and active friend of the Saviour. Or if he looks backward to contemplate what he has done - the space that he has run over - the difficulties which he has surmounted - and his own rapidity in the race, he will be likely to become self-complacent and self-satisfied. He will trust his past endeavors, and feel that the prize is now secure, and will relax his future efforts. Let us then look onward. Let us not spend our time either in pondering the gloomy past, and our own unfaithfulness, or in thinking of what we have done, and thus becoming puffed up with self-complacency; but let us keep the eye steadily on the prize, and run the race as though we had just commenced it.

And reaching forth - As one does in a race.

Unto those things which are before - Before the racer there was a crown or garland to be bestowed by the judges of the games. Before the Christian there is a crown of glory, the eternal reward of heaven. There is the favor of God, victory over sin and death, the society of the redeemed and of angelic beings, and the assurance of perfect and eternal freedom from all evil. These are enough to animate the soul, and to urge it on with ever-increasing vigor in the christian race.

Verse 14

I press toward the mark - As he who was running a race did. The "mark" means properly the object set up at a distance at which one looks or aims, and hence the goal, or post which was set up at the end of a race-course, and which was to be reached in order that the prize might be won. Here it means that which is at the end of the Christian race - in heaven.

For the prize - The prize of the racer was a crown or garland of olive, laurel, pine, or apple; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:24. The prize of the Christian is the crown that is incorruptible in heaven.

Of the high calling of God - Which is the end or result of that calling. God has called us to great and noble efforts; to a career of true honor and glory; to the obtainment of a bright and imperishable crown. It is a calling which is "high," or "upward" - (ἄνω anō) - that is, which tends to the skies. The calling of the Christian is from heaven, and to heaven; compare Proverbs 15:24. He has been summoned by God through the gospel of the Lord Jesus to secure the crown. It is placed before and above him in heaven. It may be his, if he will not faint or tire or look backward. It demands his highest efforts, and it is worth all the exertions which a mortal can make even in the longest life.

Verse 15

Let us therefore, as many as be perfect - see the notes at Phlippians 3:12. Or, rather, those who would be perfect; or who are aiming at perfection. It can hardly be supposed that the apostle would address them as already perfect, when he had just said of himself that lie had not attained to that state. But those whom he addressed might be supposed to be aiming at perfection, and he exhorts them, therefore, to have the same spirit that he himself had, and to make the same efforts which he himself put forth.

Be thus minded - That is, be united in the effort to obtain the prize, and to become entirely perfect. "Let them put forth the same effort which I do, forgetting what is behind, and pressing forward to the mark."

And if in anything ye be otherwise minded - That is, if there were any among them who had not these elevated views and aims, and who had not been brought to see the necessity of such efforts, or who had not learned that such high attainments were possible. There might be those among them who had been very imperfectly instructed in the nature of religion; those who entertained views which impeded their progress, and prevented the simple and earnest striving for salvation which Paul was enabled to put forth. He had laid aside every obstacle; renounced all the Jewish opinions which had impeded his salvation, and had now one single aim - that of securing the prize. But there might be those who had not attained to these views, and who were still impeded and embarrassed by erroneous opinions.

God shall reveal even this unto you - He will correct your erroneous opinions, and disclose to you the importance of making this effort for the

prize. This is the expression of an opinion, that to those who were sincere and true Christians, God would yet make a full revelation of the nature of religion, or would lead them on so that they would fully understand, it. They who are acquainted with religion at all, or who have been truly converted, God will teach and guide until they shall have a full understanding of divine things.

Verse 16

Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule - This is a most wise and valuable rule, and a rule that would save much difficulty and contention in the church, if it were honestly applied. The meaning is this, that though there might be different degrees of attainment among Christians, and different views on many subjects, yet there were points in which all could agree; there were attainments which they all had made, and in reference to them they should walk in harmony and love. It might be that some had made much greater advances than others. They had more elevated views of religion; they had higher knowledge; they were nearer perfection. Others had had less advantages of education and instruction, had had fewer opportunities of making progress in the divine life, and would less understand the higher mysteries of the Christian life. They might not see the truth or propriety of many things which those in advance of them would see clearly.

But it was not worth while to quarrel about these things. There should be no angry feeling, and no fault-finding on either side. There were many things in which they could see alike, and where there were no jarring sentiments. In those things they could walk harmoniously; and they who were in advance of others should not complain of their less informed brethren as lacking all evidence of piety; nor should those who had not made such advances complain of those before them as fanatical, or as disposed to push things to extremes. They who had the higher views should, as Paul did, believe that God will yet communicate them to the church at large, and in the meantime should not denounce others; and those who had less elevated attainments should not censure their brethren as wild and visionary. There were common grounds on which they might unite, and thus the harmony of the church would be secured.

No better rule than this could be applied to the subjects of inquiry which spring up among Christians respecting temperance, slavery, moral reform,

and the various doctrines of religion; and, if this rule had been always observed, the church would have been always saved from harsh contention and from schism. If a man does not see things just as I do, let me try with mildness to Teach him, and let me believe that, if he is a Christian, God will make this known to him yet; but let me not quarrel with him, for neither of us would be benefited by that, nor would the object be likely to be attained. In the meantime, there are many things in which we can agree. In them let us work together, and strive, as far as we can, to promote the common object. Thus we shall save our temper, give no occasion to the world to reproach us, and be much more likely to come together in all our views. The best way to make true Christians harmonious is, to labor together in the common cause of saying souls. As far as we can agree, let us go and labor together; and where we cannot yet, let us "agree to differ." We shall all think alike by-and-by.

Verse 17

Brethren, be followers together of me - That is, live as I do. A minister of the gospel, a parent, or a Christian of any age or condition, ought so to live that he can refer to his own example, and exhort others to imitate the course of life which he had led. Paul could do this without ostentation or impropriety. They knew that he lived so as to be a proper example for others; and he knew that they would feel that his life had been such that there would be no impropriety in his referring to it in this manner. But, alas, how few are there who can safely imitate Paul in this!

And mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample - There were those in the church who endeavored to live as he had done, renouncing all confidence in the flesh, and aiming to win the prize. There were others, it would seem, who were actuated by different views; see Phlippians 3:18. There are usually two kinds of professing Christians in every church - those who imitate the Saviour, and those who are worldly and vain. The exhortation here is, to "mark" - that is, to observe with a view to imitate - those who lived as the apostles did. We should set before our minds the best examples, and endeavor to imitate the most holy people. A worldly and fashionable professor of religion is a very bad example to follow; and especially young Christians should set before their minds for imitation, and associate with, the purest and most spiritual members of the church. Our religion takes its form and complexion much from those with

whom we associate; and he will usually be the most holy man who associates with the most holy companions.

Verse 18

For many walk - Many live, the Christian life being often in the Scriptures compared with a journey. In order to induce them to imitate those who were the most holy, the apostle says that there were many, even in the church, whom it would not be safe for them to imitate. He evidently here refers mainly to the church at Philippi, though it may be that he meant to make the declaration general, and to say that the same thing existed in other churches. There has not probably been any time yet in the Christian church when the same thing might not be said.

Of whom I have told you often - When he preached in Philippi. Paul was not afraid to speak of church members when they did wrong, and to warn others not to imitate their example. He did not attempt to cover up or excuse guilt because it was in the church, or to apologize for the defects and errors of those who professed to be Christians. The true way is, to admit that there are those in the church who do not honor their religion, and to warn others against following their example. But this fact does not make religion any the less true or valuable, anymore than the fact that there is counterfeit money makes all money bad, or makes genuine coin of no value.

And now tell you even weeping - This is the true spirit with which to speak of the errors and faults of Christians. It is not to go and blazon their inconsistencies abroad. It is not to find pleasure in the fact that they are inconsistent. It is not to reproach religion on that account, and to say that all religion is false and hollow, and that all professors are hypocrites. We should rather speak of the fact with tears; for, if there is anything that should make us weep, it is, that there are those in the church who are hypocrites, or who dishonor their profession. We should weep:

(1)because they are in danger of destroying their own souls;

(2)because they are destined to certain disappointment when they come to appear before God; and,

(3)because they injure the cause of religion, and give occasion to the "enemies of the Lord to speak reproachfully." He who loves religion. will weep over the inconsistencies of its friends; he who does not, will exult and triumph.

That they are the enemies of the cross of Christ - The "cross" was the instrument of death on which the Redeemer died to make atonement for sin. As the atonement made by Christ for sin is that which especially distinguishes his religion from all others, the "cross" comes to be used to denote his religion; and the phrase here means, that they were the enemies of his religion, or were strangers to the gospel. It is not to be supposed that they were open and avowed enemies of the cross, or that they denied that the Lord Jesus died on the cross to make an atonement. The characteristic of those persons mentioned in the following verse is, rather, that they were living in a manner which showed that they were strangers to his pure gospel. An immoral life is enmity to the cross of Christ; for he died to make us holy. A life where there is no evidence that the heart is renewed, is enmity to the cross; for he died that we might be renewed. They are the enemies of the cross, in the church:

(1)who have never been born again;

(2)who are living in the indulgence of known sin;

(3)who manifest none of the peculiarities of those who truly love him;

(4)who have a deeper interest in worldly affairs than they have in the cause of the Redeemer;

(5)whom nothing can induce to give up their worldly concerns when God demands it;

(6)who are opposed to all the unique doctrines of Christianity; and,

(7)who are opposed to all the special duties of religion, or who live in the habitual neglect of them.

It is to be feared that at all times there are such enemies of the cross in the church, and the language of the apostle implies that it is a proper subject of grief and tears. He wept over it, and so should we. It is from this cause that so much injury is done to the true religion in the world. One secret enemy in a camp may do more harm than fifty men who are open foes; and a single unholy or inconstant member in a church may do much more injury than many men who are avowedly opposed to religion. It is not by infidels, and scoffers, and blasphemers, so much, that injury is done to the cause of

religion; it is by the unholy lives of its professed friends - the worldliness, inconsistency, and want of the proper spirit of religion, among those who are in the church. Nearly all the objections that are made to religion are from this quarter; and, if this objection were taken away, the religion of Christ would soon spread its triumphs around the globe.

Verse 19

Whose end is destruction - That is, as they have no true religion, they must perish in the same manner as all sinners. A mere profession will not save them. Unless they are converted, and become the true friends of the cross, they cannot enter heaven.

Whose God is their belly - Who worship their own appetites; or who live not to adore and honor God, but for self-indulgence and sensual gratifications; see Romans 16:18.

And whose glory is in their shame - That is, they glory in things of which they ought to be ashamed. They indulge in modes of living which ought to cover them with confusion.

Who mind earthly things - That is, whose hearts are set on earthly things, or who live to obtain them. Their attention is directed to honor, gain, or pleasure, and their chief anxiety is that they may secure these objects. This is mentioned as one of the characteristics of enmity to the cross of Christ; and if this be so, how many are there in the church now who are the real enemies of the cross! How many professing Christians are there who regard little else than worldly things! How many who live only to acquire wealth. to gain honor, or to enjoy the pleasures of the world! How many are there who have no interest in a prayer meeting, in a Sunday school, in religious conversation, and in the advancement of true religion on the earth! These are the real enemies of the cross. It is not so much those who deny the doctrines of the cross, as it is those who oppose its influence on their hearts; not so much those who live to scoff and deride religion, as it is those who "mind earthly things," that injure this holy cause in the world.

Verse 20

For our conversation is in heaven - That is, this is true of all who are sincere Christians. It is a characteristic of Christians, in contradistinction from those who are the "enemies of the cross," that their conversation is in heaven. The word "conversation" we now apply almost entirely to oral discourse. It formerly, however, meant conduct in general, and it is usually employed in this sense in the Scriptures; see the notes at Phlippians 1:27,

where the verb occurs, from which the noun here is derived. The word used here - πολίτευμα politeuma- is found nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means, any public measure, administration of the state, the manner in which the affairs of a state are administered; and then the state itself, the community, commonwealth, those who are hound under the same laws, and associated in the same society. Here it cannot mean that their "conversation," in the sense of discourse or talking, was in heaven; nor that their "conduct" was in heaven - for this would convey no idea, and the original word does not demand it; but the idea is, that they were heavenly citizens, or citizens of the heavenly world, in contradistinction from a worldly community, They were governed by the laws of heaven; they were a community associated as citizens of that world, and expecting there to dwell.

The idea is, that there are two great communities in the universe - that of the world, and that of heaven: that governed by worldly laws and institutions, and that by the laws of heaven; that associated for worldly purposes, and that associated for heavenly or religious purposes; and that the Christian belonged to the latter - the enemy of the cross, though in the church, belonged to the former. Between true Christians, therefore, and others, there is all the difference which arises from belonging to different communities; being bound together for different purposes; subject to different laws; and altogether under a different administration. There is more difference between them than there is between the subjects of two earthly governments; compare Ephesians 2:6, note 19, note.

From whence also we look for the Saviour - From heaven. That is, it is one of the characteristics of the Christian that he believes that the Lord Jesus will return from heaven, and that he looks and waits for it. Other men do not believe this 2 Peter 3:4, but the Christian confidently expects it. His Saviour has been taken away from the earth, and is now in heaven, but it is a great and standing article of his faith that that same Saviour will again come, and take the believer to himself; see the John 14:2-3, note; 1 Thessalonians 4:1, note. This was the firm belief of the early Christians, and this expectation with them was allowed to exert a constant influence on their hearts and lives. It led them:

(1)to desire to be prepared for his coming;

(2)to feel that earthly affairs were of little importance, as the scene here was soon to close;

(3)to live above the world, and in the desire of the appearing of the Lord Jesus.

This was one of the elementary doctrines of their faith, and one of the means of producing deadness to the world among them; and among the early Christians there was, perhaps, no doctrine that was more the object of firm belief, and the ground of more delightful contemplation, than that their ascended Master would return. In regard to the certainty of their belief on this point, and the effect which it had on their minds, see the following texts of the New Testament; Matthew 24:42, Matthew 24:44; Luke 12:37; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:1; Hebrews 10:37; James 5:7-8; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 22:7, Revelation 22:12, Revelation 22:20. It may be asked, with great force, whether Christians in general have now any such expectation of the second appearing of the Lord Jesus, or whether they have not fallen into the dangerous error of prevailing unbelief, so that the expectation of his coming is allowed to exert almost no influence on the soul.

In the passage before us, Paul says that it was one of the distinct characteristics of Christians that they looked for the coming of the Saviour from heaven. They believed that he would return. They anticipated that important effects would follow to them from his second coming. So we should look. There may be, indeed, a difference of opinion about the time when he will come, and about the question whether he will come to reign "literally, on the earth - but the fact that Christ will return to our world is common ground on which all Christians may meet, and is a fact which should be allowed to exert its full influence on the heart. It is a glorious truth - for what a sad world would this be, and what a sad prospect would be before the Christian, if the Saviour were never to come to raise his people from their graves, and to gather his redeemed to himself! The fact that he will come is identified with all our hopes. It is fitted to cheer us in trial; to guard us in temptation; to make us dead to the world; to lead us to keep the eye turned toward heaven.

Verse 21

Who shall change our vile body - compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 15:44); and it is doubtless accompanied with all the circumstances of splendor and glory which are appropriate to the Son of God. The idea here

is, that it is the object of the desire and anticipation of the Christian, to be made just like Christ in all things. He desires to resemble him in moral character here, and to be like him in heaven. Nothing else will satisfy him but such conformity to the Son of God; and when he shall resemble him in all things, the wishes of his soul will all be met and fulfilled.

According to the working … - That is, such a change demands the exertion of vast power. No creature can do it. But there is One who has power entrusted to him over all things, and he can effect this great transformation in the bodies of people; compare 1 Corinthians 15:26-27. He can mould the mind and the heart to conformity to his own image, and thus also he can transform the body so that it shall resemble his. Everything he can make subject to his will. (Matthew 28:18, note; John 17:2, note.) And he that has this power can change our humbled and debased bodies, so that they shall put on the glorious appearance and form of that of the Son of God himself. What a contrast between our bodies here - frail, feeble, subject to sickness, decay, and corruption - and the body as it will be in heaven! And what a glorious prospect awaits the weak and dying believer, in the future world!

Remarks On Phlippians 3:1. He has more sources of real joy than any other persons; see 1 Thessalonians 5:16. He has a Saviour in whom he may always find peace; a God whose character he can always contemplate with pleasure a heaven to look forward to where there is nothing but happiness; a Bible that is full of precious promises, and at all times the opportunity of prayer, in which he may roll all Iris sorrows on the arms of an unchanging friend. If there is anyone on earth who ought to be happy, it is the Christian.

2. The Christian should so live as to leave on others the impression that religion produces happiness. In our contact with our friends, we should show them that religion does not cause sadness or gloom, sourness or misanthropy, but that it produces cheerfulness, contentment, and peace. This may be shown by the countenance, and by the whole demeanour - by a calm brow, and a benignant eye, and by a cheerful aspect. The internal peace of the soul should be evinced by every proper external expression. A Christian may thus be always doing good - for he is always doing good who leaves the impression on others that religion makes its possessors happy.

3. The nature of religion is almost always mistaken by the world. They suppose that it makes its possessors melancholy and sad. The reason is, not

that they are told so by those who are religious, and not that even they can see anything in religion to produce misery, but because they have fixed their affections on certain things which they suppose to be essential to happiness, and which they suppose religion would require them to give up without substituting anything in their place. But never was there a greater mistake. Let them go and ask Christians, and they will obtain but one answer from them. It is, that they never knew what true happiness was until they found it in the Saviour. This question may be proposed to a Christian of any denomination, or in any land, and the answer will be uniformly the same. Why is it, then, that the mass of persons regard religion as adapted only to make them unhappy? Why will they not take the testimony of their friends in the case, and believe those whom they would believe on any other subject, when they declare that it is only true religion that ever gives them solid peace?

4. We cannot depend on any external advantages of birth or blood for salvation; Phlippians 3:4-6. Few or no persons have as much in this respect to rely on as Paul had. Indeed, if salvation were to be obtained at all by such external advantages, it is impossible to conceive that more could have been united in one case than there was in his. He had not only the advantage of having been born a Hebrew; of having been early trained in the Jewish religion; of being instructed in the ablest manner, but also the advantage of entire blamelessness in his moral deportment. He had showed in every way possible that he was heartily attached to the religion of his fathers, and he began life with a zeal in the cause which seemed to justify the warmest expectations of his friends. But all this was renounced, when he came to see the true method of salvation, and saw the better way by which eternal life is to be obtained.

And if Paul could not depend on this, we cannot safely do it. It will not save us that we have been born in the church; that we have had pious parents; that we were early baptized and consecrated to God; that we were trained in the Sunday school. Nor will it save us that we attend regularly on the place of worship, or that we are amiable, correct, honest, and upright in our lives. We can no more depend on these things than Saul of Tarsus could, and if all his eminent advantages failed to give him a solid ground of hope, our advantages will be equally vain in regard to our salvation. It almost

seems as if God designed in the case of Saul of Tarsus, that there should be one instance where every possible external advantage for salvation should be found, and there should be everything that people ever could rely on in moral character, in order to show that no such things could be sufficient to save the soul. All these may exist, and yet there may not be a particle of love to God, and the heart may be full of selfishness, pride, and ambition, as it was in his case.

5. Religion demands humility; Phlippians 3:7-8. It requires us to renounce all dependence on our own merits, and to rely simply on the merits of another - the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are ever saved, we must be brought to esteem all the advantages which birth and blood and our own righteousness can bestow as worthless, and even vile, in the matter of justification. We shall not despise these things in themselves, nor shall we consider that vice is as desirable as virtue, nor that a bad temper is to be sought rather than an amiable disposition, nor that dishonesty is as commendable as honesty; but we shall feel that in comparison with the merits of the Redeemer all these are worthless. But the mind is not brought to this condition without great humiliation. Nothing but the power of God can bring a proud and haughty and self-righteous sinner to this state, where he is willing to renounce all dependence on his own merits, and to be saved in the same way as the vilest of the species.

6. Let us seek to obtain an interest in the righteousness of the Redeemer; Phlippians 3:9. Our own righteousness cannot save us. But in him there is enough. There is all that we want, and if we have that righteousness which is by faith, we have all that is needful to render us accepted with God, and to prepare us for heaven. When there is such a way of salvation - so easy, so free, so glorious, so ample for all, how unwise is anyone to rest on his own works, and to expect to be saved by what he has done! The highest honor of man is to be saved by the merits of the Son of God, and he has reached the most elevated rank in the human condition who has the most certain hope of salvation through him.

7. There is enough to be gained to excite us to the utmost diligence and effort in the Christian life; Phlippians 3:10-14. If people can be excited to effort by the prospect of an earthly crown in a race or a game, how much

more should we be urged forward by the prospect of the eternal prize! To seek to know the Redeemer; to be raised up from the degradation of sin to have part in the resurrection of the just: to obtain the prize of the high calling in heaven - to be made everlastingly happy and glorious there - what object was ever placed before the mind like this? What ardor should it excite that we may gain it! Surely, the hope of obtaining such a prize as is before the Christian, should call forth all our powers. The struggle will not be long. The race will soon be won. The victory will be glorious; the defeat would be overwhelming and awful. No one need fear that he can put forth too much effort to obtain the prize. It is worth every exertion, and we should never relax our efforts, or give over in despair.

8. Let us, like Paul, ever cherish an humble sense of our attainments in religion; Phlippians 3:12-13. If Paul had not reached the point of perfection, it is not to be presumed that we have; if he could not say that he had "attained," it is presumption in us to suppose that we have, if he had occasion for humiliation, we have more; if he felt that he was far short of the object which he sought, and was pressed down with the consciousness of imperfection, such a feeling becomes us also. Yet let us not sink down in despondency and inaction. Like him, let us strain every nerve that we may overcome our imperfections and win the prize. That prize is before us. It is glorious. We may be sensible that we, as yet, have not reached it, but if we will strive to obtain it, it will soon be certainly ours. We may feel that we are far distant from it now in the degree of our attainments, but we are not far from it in fact. It will be but a short period before the Christian will lay hold on that immortal crown, and before his brow will be encircled with the diadem of glory. For the race of life, whether we win or lose, is soon run; and when a Christian begins a day, he knows not but he may end it in heaven; when he lies down on his bed at night, he knows not but he may awake with the "prize" in his hand, and with the diadem of glory sparkling on his brow.

9. Our thoughts should be much in heaven; Phlippians 3:20. Our home is there, our citizenship is there. Here we are strangers and pilgrims. We are away from home, in a cold and unfriendly world. Our great interests are in the skies; our eternal dwelling is to be there; our best friends are already there. There is our glorious Saviour with a body adapted to those pure

abodes, and there are many whom we have loved on earth already with him. They are happy now, and we should not love them less because they are in heaven. Since, therefore, our great interests are there, and our best friends there; and since we ourselves are citizens of that heavenly world, our best affections should be there.

10. We look for the Saviour; Phlippians 3:20-21. He will return to our world. He will change our vile bodies, and make them like his own glorious body And since this is so, let us:

(a) bear with patience the trials and infirmities to which our bodies here are subject. These trials will be short, and we may well bear them for a few days, knowing that soon all pain will cease, and that all that is humiliating in the body will be exchanged for glory.

(b) Let us not think too highly or too much of our bodies here. They may be now beautiful and comely, but they are "vile" and degraded, compared with what they will soon be. They are subject to infirmity and to numerous pains and sicknesses. Soon the most beautiful body may become loathsome to our best friends. Soon, too offensive to be looked upon, it will be hidden in the grave. Why then should we seek to pamper and adorn these mortal frames? Why live only to decorate them? Why should we idolize a mass of moulded and animated clay? Yet,

(c) let us learn to honor the body in a true sense. It is soon to be changed. It will be made like the glorified body of Christ. Yes, this frail, diseased, corruptible, and humbled body; this body, that is soon to be laid in the grave, and to return to the dust, is soon to put on a new form, and to be clothed with immortality. It will be what the body of Christ now is - glorious and immortal. What a change! Christian, go and look on the creeping caterpillar, and see it changed to the happy and gilded butterfly - yesterday, a crawling and offensive insect; today, with gaudy colors an inhabitant of the air, and a dweller amidst flowers; and see an image of what thy body shall be, and of the mighty transformation which thou wilt soon undergo. See the change from the cold death of winter to the fragrance and life of spring, and behold an image of the change which thou thyself wilt ere long experience and a proof that some such change awaits thee.

“Shall spring the faded world revive?
Shall waning moons their light renew?
Again shall setting suns ascend.
And chase the darkness from our view?
Shall life revisit dying worms.
And spread the joyful insect‘s wing?
And, oh, shall man awake no more,
To see thy face, thy name to sing?
Faith sees the bright, eternal doors.
Unfold to make her children way;
They shall be cloth‘d with endless life,
And shine in everlasting day.”

Dwight.

11. Let us look for the coming of the Lord; Phlippians 3:21. All that we hope for depends on his reappearing. Our day of triumph and of the fulness of our joy is to be when he shall return. Then we shall be raised from the grave; then our vile bodies shall be changed; then we shall be acknowledged as his friends; then we shall go to be forever with him. The earth is not our home; nor is the grave to he our everlasting bed of rest. Our home is heaven - and the Saviour will come, that he may raise us up to that blessed abode. And who knows when he may appear? He himself commanded us to be ready, for he said he would come at an hour when we think not. We should so desire his coming, that the hours of his delay would seem to be heavy and long and should so live that we can breathe forth with sincerity, at all times, the fervent prayer of the beloved disciple, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;” Revelation 22:20.

“My faith shall triumph o‘er the grave,
And trample on the tombs;
My Jesus, my Redeemer, lives,
My God, my Saviour, comes;
Ere long I know he shall appear,
In power and glory great;
And death, the last of all his foes,
Lie vanquish‘d at his feet.
Then, though the worms my flesh devour.
And make my form their prey,
I know I shall arise with power,

On the last judgment day;
When God shall stand upon the earth,
Him then mine eyes shall see;
My flesh shall feel a sacred birth,
And ever with him be.
Then his own hand shall wipe the tears.
From every weeping eye;
And pains, and groans, and griefs, and fears,
Shall cease eternally.
How long, dear Saviour! Oh, how long.
Shall this bright hour delay?
Fly swift around, ye wheels of time,
And bring the welcome day."
- Watts.

PHILIPPIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

This chapter Phlippians 4:1-3.

(1)he exhorts them to stand fast in the Lord; Phlippians 4:1.

(2)he entreats Euodias and Syntyche, who appear to have been alienated from each other, to be reconciled; Phlippians 4:2.

(3)he entreats one whom he calls a "true yoke-fellow" to render assistance to those women who had labored with him in the gospel; Phlippians 4:3.

II. Commands; Phlippians 4:4-9. He commands them to rejoice in the Lord always, Phlippians 4:4; to let their moderation be known to all, Phlippians 4:5; to have no anxiety about worldly matters, but in all their necessities to go to God, Phlippians 4:6-7; and to do whatever was honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, Phlippians 4:8-9.

III. A grateful acknowledgment of their kindness; Phlippians 4:10-19. He says that their care of him had been manifested again, in such a way as to be highly grateful to his feelings; Phlippians 4:10. He did not indeed say that he had suffered, for he had learned, in whatever state he was, to be content Phlippians 4:11-13; but they had shown a proper spirit in endeavoring to relieve his necessities; Phlippians 4:14. He remarks that their church was the only one that had aided him when he was in Macedonia, and that they had sent to him more than once when he was in Thessalonica, and says that their favor now was an offering acceptable to God, who would abundantly reward them; Phlippians 4:15-20.

IV. Salutations; Phlippians 4:21-23.

Verse 1

Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for - Doddridge unites this verse with the previous chapter, and supposes that it is the proper close of the solemn statement which the apostle makes there. The word "therefore" - ὥστε hōste- has undoubted reference to the remarks made there; and the meaning is, that in view of the fact that there were many professed Christians who were not sincere - that the "citizenship" of all true Christians was in heaven, and that Christians looked for the coming of the

Lord Jesus, who would make them like to himself, the apostle exhorts them to stand fast in the Lord. The accumulation of epithets of endearment in this verse shows his tender regard for them, and is expressive of his earnest solicitude for their welfare, and his deep conviction of their danger. The term "longed for" is expressive of strong affection; see Phlippians 1:8, and Phlippians 2:26.

My joy - The source of my joy. He rejoiced in the fact that they had been converted under him; and in their holy walk, and their friendship. Our chief joy is in our friends; and the chief happiness of a minister of the gospel is in the pure lives of those to whom he ministers; see 3 John 1:4.

And crown - Compare 1 Thessalonians 2:19. The word "crown" means a circlet, chaplet, or diadem:

(1)as the emblem of royal dignity - the symbol of office;

(2)as the prize conferred on victors in the public games, 1 Corinthians 9:25, and hence, as an emblem of the rewards of a future life; 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4;

(3)anything that is an ornament or honor, as one glories in a crown; compare Proverbs 12:4, "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband;" Proverbs 14:24, "The crown of the wise is their riches;" Proverbs 16:31, "The hoary head is a crown of glory;" Proverbs 17:6, "Children's children are the crown of old men."

The idea here is, that the church at Philippi was that in which the apostle gloried. He regarded it as a high honor to have been the means of founding such a church, and he looked upon it with the same interest with which a monarch looks upon the diadem which he wears.

So stand fast in the Lord - In the service of the Lord, and in the strength which he imparts; see the notes at Ephesians 6:13-14.

Verse 2

I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche - These are doubtless the names of females. The name Syntyche is sometimes the name of a man; but, if these persons are referred to in Phlippians 4:3, there can be no doubt that they were females. Nothing more is known of them than is here mentioned. It has been commonly supposed that they were deaconesses, who preached the gospel to those of their own sex; but there is no certain evidence of this. All that is known is, that there was some disagreement between them, and the apostle entreats them to be reconciled to each other.

That they be of the same mind - That they be united, or reconciled. Whether the difference related to doctrine, or to something else, we cannot determine from this phrase. The language is such as would properly relate to any difference.

In the Lord - In their Christian walk and plans. They were doubtless professing Christians, and the apostle exhorts them to make the Lord the great object of their affections, and in their regard for him, to bury all their petty differences and animosities.

Verse 3

And I entreat thee also, true yoke-fellow - It is not known to whom the apostle refers here. No name is mentioned, and conjecture is useless. All that is known is, that it was someone whom Paul regarded as associated with himself in labor, and one who was so prominent at Philippi that it would be understood who was referred to, without more particularly mentioning him. The presumption, therefore. is, that it was one of the ministers, or "bishops" (see the notes at Phlippians 1:1) of Philippi, who had been particularly associated with Paul when he was there. The Epistle was addressed to the "church with the bishops and deacons" Phlippians 1:1; and the fact that this one had been particularly associated with Paul, would serve to designate him with sufficient particularity. Whether he was related to the women referred to, is wholly unknown. Doddridge supposes that he might be the husband of one of these women; but of that there is no evidence. The term "yoke-fellow" - συζυγος suzugos- some have understood as a proper name (Syzygus); but the proper import of the word is yoke-fellow, and there is no reason to believe that it is used here to denote a proper name. If it had been, it is probable that some other word than that used here and rendered "true" - γνήσιος gnēsios- would have been employed. The word "true" - γνήσιος gnēsios- means that he was sincere, faithful, worthy of confidence. Paul had had evidence of his sincerity and fidelity; and he was a proper person, therefore, to whom to entrust a delicate and important business.

Help those women - The common opinion is, tidal the women here referred to were Euodias and Syntyche, and that the office which the friend of Paul was asked to perform was, to secure a reconciliation between them. There is, however, no certain evidence of this The reference seems rather to be to influential females who had rendered important assistance to Paul when he was there. The kind of "help" which was to be imparted was

probably by counsel, and friendly cooperation in the duties which they were called to perform, There is no evidence that it refers to pecuniary aid; and, had it referred to a reconciliation of those who were at variance, it is probable that some other word would have been used than that rendered here as "help" - συλλαμβάνου sullambanouWhich laboured with me in the gospel - As Paul did not permit women to preach (see 1 Timothy 2:12; compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 10:5), he must have referred here to some other services which they had rendered. There were deaconesses in the primitive churches (see the Romans 16:1 note; 1 Timothy 5:9., note), to whom was probably entrusted particularly the care of the female members of a church. In the custom which prevailed in the oriental world, of excluding females from the public gaze, and of confining them to their houses, it would not be practicable for the apostles to have access to them. The duties of instructing and exhorting them were then probably entrusted chiefly to pious females; and in this way important aid would be rendered in the gospel. Paul could regard such as "laboring with him," though they were not engaged in preaching.

With Clement also - That is, they were associated with Clement, and with the other fellow-laborers of Paul, in aiding him in the gospel. Clement as doubtless someone who was well known among them; and the apostle felt that, by associating them with him, as having been real helpers in the gospel, their claim to respectful attention would be better appreciated. Who Clement was, is unknown. Most of the ancients say it was Clement of Rome, one of the primitive fathers. But there is no evidence of this. The name Clement was common, and there is no improbability in supposing that there might have been a preacher of this name in the church at Philippi.

Whose names are in the book of life - see the notes at Isaiah 4:3. The phrase, "the book of life," which occurs here, and in Revelation 3:5; Revelation 13:8; Revelation 20:12, Revelation 20:15; Revelation 21:27; Revelation 22:19, is a Jewish phrase, and refers originally to a record or catalogue of names, as the roll of an army. It then means to be among the living, as the name of an individual would be erased from a catalog when he was deceased. The word "life" here refers to eternal life; and the whole phrase refers to those who were enrolled among the true friends of God, or who would certainly be saved. The use of this phrase here implies the belief of Paul that these persons were true Christians. Names that are written in

the book of life will not be blotted out. If the hand of God records them there who can obliterate them?

Verse 4

Rejoice in the Lord alway - see the notes at Phlippians 3:1. It is the privilege of Christians to do this, not at certain periods and at distant intervals, but at all times they may rejoice that there is a God and Saviour; they may rejoice in the character, law, and government of God - in his promises, and in communion with him. The Christian, therefore, may be, and should be, always a happy man. If everything else changes, yet the Lord does not change; if the sources of all other joy are dried up, yet this is not; and there is not a moment of a Christian‘s life in which he may not find joy in the character, law, and promises of God.

Verse 5

Let your moderation be known unto all men - That is, let it be such that others may see it. This does not mean that they were to make an ostentatious display of it, but that it should be such a characteristic of their lives that it would be constantly visible to others. The word “moderation” - ἐπιεικὲς epieikes- refers to restraint on the passions, general soberness of living, being free from all excesses. The word properly means that which is fit or suitable, and then propriety, gentleness, mildness - They were to indulge in no excess of passion, or dress, or eating, or drinking. They were to govern their appetites, restrain their temper, and to be examples of what was proper for people in view of the expectation that the Lord would soon appear.

The Lord is at hand - Is near; see the Phlippians 3:20 note; 1 Corinthians 16:22 note. This has the appearance of being a phrase in common use among the early Christians, and as being designed to keep before their minds a lively impression of an event which ought, by its anticipation, to produce an important effect. Whether, by this phrase, they commonly understood the coming of the Lord to destroy Jerusalem, or to remove them by death, or to judge the world, or to reign personally on the earth, it is impossible now to determine, and is not very material to a proper understanding of its use here. The idea is, that the expectation that the Lord Jesus will “come,” ought to be allowed to produce moderation of our passions, in our manner of living, in our expectations of what this world can furnish, and in our desires of earthly good. On him who feels that he is soon to die, and to stand at the bar of God - on him who expects soon to see the

Lord Jesus coming in the clouds of heaven, it cannot fail to have this effect. People indulge their passions - are extravagant in their plans of life, and in their expectations of earthly good for themselves and for their families, because they have no realizing sense of the truth that there is before them a vast eternity. He that has a lively expectation that heaven will soon be his, will form very moderate expectations of what this world can furnish.

Verse 6

Be careful for nothing - That is, be not anxious or solicitous about the things of the present life. The word used here - μεριμνᾶτε merimnate- does not mean that we are to exercise no care about worldly matters - no care to preserve our property, or to provide for our families (compare 1 Timothy 5:8); but that there is to be such confidence in God as to free the mind from anxiety, and such a sense of dependence on him as to keep it calm; see the subject explained in the notes on Matthew 6:25.

But in everything - Everything in reference to the supply of your wants, and the wants of your families; everything in respect to afflictions, embarrassments, and trials; and everything relating to your spiritual condition. There is nothing which pertains to body, mind, estate, friends, conflicts, losses, trials, hopes, fears, in reference to which we may not go and spread it all out before the Lord.

By prayer and supplication - The word rendered "supplication" is a stronger term than the former. It is the mode of prayer which especially arises from the sense of "need," or "want" - from δέομαι deomai"to want, to need."

With thanksgiving - Thanksgiving connected with prayer. We can always find something to be thankful for, no matter what may be the burden of our wants, or the special subject of our petitions. When we pray for the supply of our wants, we may be thankful for that kind providence which has hitherto befriended us; when we pray for restoration from sickness, we may be thankful for the health we have hitherto enjoyed, and for God's merciful interposition in the former days of trial, and for his goodness in now sparing our lives; when we pray that our children and friends may be preserved from danger and death, we may remember how often God has interposed to save them; when, oppressed with a sense of sin, we pray for pardon, we have abundant cause of thanksgiving that there is a glorious way by which we may be saved. The greatest sufferer that lives in this world of redeeming love, and who has the offer of heaven before him, has cause of gratitude.

Let your request be made known unto God - Not as if you were to give him information, but to express to him your wants. God needs not to be informed of our necessities, but he requires that we come and express them to him; compare Ezekiel 36:37. "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

Verse 7

And the peace of God - The peace which God gives. The peace here particularly referred to is that which is felt when we have no anxious care about the supply of our needs, and when we go confidently and commit everything into the hands of God. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee;" Isaiah 26:3; see the notes at John 14:27.

Which passeth all understanding - That is, which surpasses all that people had conceived or imagined. The expression is one that denotes that the peace imparted is of the highest possible kind. The apostle Paul frequently used terms which had somewhat of a hyperbolical cast (see the notes on Ephesians 3:19; compare John 21:25, and the language here is that which one would use who designed to speak of that which was of the highest order. The Christian, committing his way to God, and feeling that he will order all things aright, has a peace which is nowhere else known. Nothing else will furnish it but religion. No confidence that a man can have in his own powers; no reliance which he can repose on his own plans or on the promises or fidelity of his fellow-men, and no calculations which he can make on the course of events, can impart such peace to the soul as simple confidence in God.

Shall keep your hearts and minds - That is, shall keep them from anxiety and agitation. The idea is, that by thus making our requests known to God, and going to him in view of all our trials and wants, the mind would be preserved from distressing anxiety. The way to find peace, and to have the heart kept from trouble, is thus to go and spread out all before the Lord; compare Isaiah 26:3-4, Isaiah 26:20; Isaiah 37:1-7. The word rendered here "shall keep," is a military term, and means that the mind would be guarded as a camp or castle is. It would be preserved from the intrusion of anxious fears and alarms.

Through Christ Jesus - By his agency, or intervention. It is only in him that the mind can be preserved in peace. It is not by mere confidence in God, or by mere prayer, but it is by confidence in God as he is revealed through the Redeemer, and by faith in him. Paul never lost sight of the truth

that all the security and happiness of a believer were to be traced to the Saviour.

Verse 8

Finally, brethren - As for what remains - τὸ λοιπὸν to loipon- or as a final counsel or exhortation.

Whatsoever things are true - In this exhortation the apostle assumes that there were certain things admitted to be true, and pure, and good, in the world, which had not been directly revealed, or which were commonly regarded as such by the people of the world, and his object is to show them that such things ought to be exhibited by the Christian. Everything that was honest and just toward God and toward people was to be practiced by them, and they were in all things to be examples of the highest kind of morality. They were not to exhibit partial virtues; not to perform one set of duties to the neglect or exclusion of others; not to be faithful in their duties to God, and to neglect their duty to people, not to be punctual in their religious rites, and neglectful of the comment laws of morality; but they were to do everything that could be regarded as the fair subject of commendation, and that was implied in the highest moral character. The word true refers here to everything that was the reverse of falsehood. They were to be true to their engagements; true to their promises; true in their statements; and true in their friendships. They were to maintain the truth about God; about eternity; about the judgment; and about every man‘s character. Truth is a representation of things as they are; and they were constantly to live under the correct impression of objects. A man who is false to his engagements, or false in his statements and promises, is one who will always disgrace religion.

Whatsoever things are honest - σεμνὰ semnaProperly, venerable, reverend; then honorable, reputable. The word was originally used in relation to the gods, and to the things that pertained to them, as being worthy of honor or veneration - Passow. As applied to people, it commonly means grave, dignified, worthy of veneration or regard. In the New Testament it is rendered “grave” in 1 Timothy 3:8, 1 Timothy 3:11, and Titus 2:2, the only places where the word occurs except this; and the noun (σεμνότης semnotēs) is rendered “honesty” in 1 Timothy 2:2, and “gravity” in 1 Timothy 3:4, and Titus 2:7. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The word, therefore, does not express precisely what the word “honest” does with us, as confined to dealings or business transactions, but

rather has reference to what was regarded as worthy of reputation or honor; what there was in the customs of society, in the respect due to age and rank, and in the contact of the world, that deserved respect or esteem. It includes indeed what is right in the transaction of business, but it embraces also much more, and means that the Christian is to show respect to all the venerable and proper customs of society, when they did not violate conscience or interfere with the law of God; compare 1 Timothy 3:7.

Whatsoever things are just - The things which are right between man and man. A Christian should be just in all his dealings. His religion does not exempt him from the strict laws which bind people to the exercise of this virtue, and there is no way by which a professor of religion can do more injury perhaps than by injustice and dishonesty in his dealings. It is to be remembered that the people of the world, in estimating a person‘s character, affix much more importance to the virtues of justice and honesty than they do to regularity in observing the ordinances of religion; and therefore if a Christian would make an impression on his fellow-men favorable to religion, it is indispensable that he manifest uncorrupted integrity in his dealings.

Whatsoever things are pure - Chaste - in thought, in feeling, and in the conversation between the sexes; compare the notes at 1 Timothy 5:2.

Whatsoever things are lovely - The word used here means properly what is dear to anyone; then what is pleasing. Here it means what is amiable - such a temper of mind that one can love it; or such as to be agreeable to others. A Christian should not be sour, crabby, or irritable in his temper - for nothing almost tends so much to injure the cause of religion as a temper always chafed; a brow morose and stern; an eye that is severe and unkind, and a disposition to find fault with everything. And yet it is to be regretted that there are many persons who make no pretensions to piety, who far surpass many professors of religion in the virtue here commended. A sour and crabby temper in a professor of religion will undo all the good that he attempts to do.

Whatsoever things are of good report - That is, whatsoever is truly reputable in the world at large. There are actions which all people agree in commending, and which in all ages and countries are regarded as virtues. courtesy, urbanity, kindness, respect for parents, purity between brothers and sisters, are among those virtues, and the Christian should be a pattern

and an example in them all. His usefulness depends much more on the cultivation of these virtues than is commonly supposed.

If there be any virtue - If there is anything truly virtuous. Paul did not suppose that he had given a full catalogue of the virtues which he would have cultivated. He, therefore, adds, that if there was anything else that had the nature of true virtue in it, they should be careful to cultivate that also. The Christian should be a pattern and an example of every virtue.

And if there be any praise - Anything worthy of praise, or that ought to be praised.

Think on these things - Let them be the object of your careful attention and study, so as to practice them. Think what they are; think on the obligation to observe them; think on the influence which they would have on the world around you.

Verse 9

Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do - That is, what you have witnessed in me, and what you have learned of me, and what you have heard about me, practice yourselves. Paul refers them to his uniform conduct - to all that they had seen, and known, and heard of him, as that which it was proper for them to imitate. The same thing, substantially, he urges in Phlippians 3:17; see the notes at that verse. It could have been only the consciousness of a pure and upright life which would make such counsel proper. How few are the people at this day who can urge others to imitate all that they have seen in them, and learned from them, and heard of them.

And the God of peace shall be with you - The God who gives peace; compare Hebrews 13:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; see also the notes at Phlippians 4:7. The meaning here is, that Paul, by pursuing the course of life which he had led, and which he here counsels them to follow, had found that it had been attended with the blessing of the God of peace, and he felt the fullest assurance that the same blessing would rest on them if they imitated his example. The way to obtain the blessing of the God of peace, is to lead a holy life, and to perform with faithfulness all the duties which we owe to God and to our fellow-men.

Verse 10

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly - The favor which Paul had received, and for which he felt so much gratitude, had been received of the Philippians; but he regarded “the Lord” as the source of it, and rejoiced in it

as the expression of his kindness. The effect was to lead his heart with cheerfulness and joy up to God.

That now at the last - After so long a time. The reason why he had not before received the favor, was not neglect or inattention on their part, but the difficulty of having communication with him.

Your care of me hath flourished again - In the margin this is rendered "is revived," and this is the proper meaning of the Greek word. It is a word properly applicable to plants or flowers, meaning to grow green again; to flourish again; to spring up again. Here the meaning is, that they had been again prospered in their care of him, and to Paul it seemed as if their care had sprung up anew.

Wherein ye were also careful - That is, they were desirous to render him assistance, and to minister to his wants. Paul adds this, lest they should think he was disposed to blame them for inattention.

But ye lacked opportunity - Because there were no persons going to Rome from Philippi by whom they could send to him. The distance was considerable, and it is not probable that the contact between the two places was very constant.

Verse 11

Not that I speak in respect of want - Though Paul was doubtless often in circumstances of necessity, yet he did not make these remarks on that account. In his journeys, in his imprisonments, he could not but be at times in want; but be had learned to bear all this; and that which most impressed itself on his mind was the interest which the church ought to show in the cause of religion, and the evidence which it would thus furnish of attachment to the cause. As to his own personal trials, he had learned to bear them, so that they did not give him great uneasiness.

For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content - That is, to have a contented mind. Paul says that he had "learned" this. Probably by nature he had a mind as prone to impatience as others, but he had been in circumstances fitted to produce a different state of feeling. He had had ample experience 2 Corinthians 11:26, and, in his life of trials, he had acquired invaluable lessons on the subject. He had had abundant time for reflection, and he had found that there was grace enough in the gospel to enable him to bear trials with resignation. The considerations by which he had been taught this, he does not state; but they were probably such as the following: that it is wrong to complain at the allotments of Providence; that

a spirit of impatience does no good, remedies no evil, and supplies no want; that God could provide for him in a way which he could not foresee, and that the Saviour was able abundantly to sustain him. A contented mind is an invaluable blessing, and is one of the fruits of religion in the soul. It arises from the belief that God is right in all his ways. Why should we be impatient, restless, discontented? What evil will be remedied by it? what want supplied? what calamity removed? "He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast" Proverbs 15:15; and one of the secrets of happiness is to have a mind satisfied with all the allotments of Providence. The members of the Episcopal church beautifully pray, every day: "Give us minds always contented with our present condition." No prayer can be offered which will enter more deeply into all our happiness on earth.

Verse 12

I know both how to be abased - To be in circumstances of want.

And I know how to abound - To have an abundance. lie had been in circumstances where he had an ample supply for all his needs, and knew what it was to have enough. It requires as much grace to keep the heart right in prosperity, as it does in adversity, and perhaps more. Adversity, of itself, does something to keep the mind in a right state; prosperity does nothing.

Everywhere and in all things - In all my travels and imprisonments, and in reference to everything that occurs, I learn important lessons on these points.

I am instructed - The word used here - μεμύημαι memuēmai- is one that is commonly used in relation to mysteries, and denoted being instructed in the secret doctrines that were taught in the ancient "mysteries" - Passow. In those mysteries, it was only the "initiated" who were made acquainted with the lessons that were taught there. Paul says that he had been initiated into the lessons taught by trials and by prosperity. The secret and important lessons which these schools of adversity are fitted to teach, he had had an ample opportunity of learning; and he had faithfully embraced the doctrines thus taught.

Both to be full - That is, he had learned to have an ample supply of his needs, and yet to observe the laws of temperance and soberness, and to cherish gratitude for the mercies which he had enjoyed.

And to be hungry - That is, to be in circumstances of want, and yet not to murmur or complain. He had learned to bear all this without discontent. This was then, as it is now, no easy lesson to learn; and it is not improper to

suppose that, when Paul says that he had "been instructed" in this, even he means to say that it was only by degrees that he had acquired it. It is a lesson which we slowly learn, not to complain at the allotments of Providence; not to be envious at the prosperity of others; not to repine when our comforts are removed. There may be another idea suggested here. The condition of Paul was not always the same. He passed through great reverses. At one time he had abundance; then he was reduced to want; now he was in a state which might be regarded as affluent; then he was brought down to extreme poverty. Yesterday, he was poor and hungry; today, all his necessities are supplied.

Now, it is in these sudden reverses that grace is most needed, and in these rapid changes of life that it is most difficult to learn the lessons of calm contentment. People get accustomed to an even tenor of life, no matter what it is, and learn to shape their temper and their calculations according to it. But these lessons of philosophy vanish when they pass suddenly from one extreme to another, and find their condition in life suddenly changed. The garment that was adapted to weather of an uniform temperature, whether of heat or cold, fails to be suited to our needs when these transitions rapidly succeed each other. Such changes are constantly occurring in life. God tries his people, not by a steady course of prosperity, or by long-continued and uniform adversity, but by transition from the one to the other; and it often happens that the grace which would have been sufficient for either continued prosperity or adversity, would fail in the transition from the one to the other.

Hence, new grace is imparted for this new form of trial, and new traits of Christian character are developed in these rapid transitions in life, as some of the most beautiful exhibitions of the laws of matter are brought out in the transitions produced in chemistry. The rapid changes from heat to cold, or from a solid to a gaseous state, develop properties before unknown, and acquaint us much more intimately with the wonderful works of God. The gold or the diamond, unsubjected to the action of intense heat, and to the changes produced by the powerful agents brought to bear on them, might have continued to shine with steady beauty and brilliancy; but we should never have witnessed the special beauty and brilliancy which may be produced in rapid chemical changes. And so there is many a beautiful trait of character which would never have been known by either continued

prosperity or adversity. There might have been always a beautiful exhibition of virtue and piety, but not tidal special manifestation which is produced in the transitions from the one to the other.

Verse 13

I can do all things - From the experience which Paul had in these various circumstances of life, he comes here to the general conclusion that he could "do all things." He could bear any trial, perform any duty, subdue any evil propensity of his nature, and meet all the temptations incident to any condition of prosperity or adversity. His own experience in the various changes of life had warranted him in arriving at this conclusion; and he now expresses the firm confidence that nothing would be required of him which he would not be able to perform. In Paul, this declaration was not a vain self-reliance, nor was it the mere result of his former experience. He knew well where the strength was to be obtained by which to do all things, and on that arm that was able to uphold him he confidently relied.

Through Christ which strengtheneth me - See the notes at John 15:5. Of the strength which Christ can impart, Paul had had abundant experience; and now his whole reliance was there. It was not in any native ability which he had; not in any vigor of body or of mind; not in any power which there was in his own resolutions; it was in the strength that he derived from the Redeemer. By that he was enabled to bear cold, fatigue, and hunger; by that, he met temptations and persecutions; and by that, he engaged in the performance of his arduous duties let us learn, hence:

(1) that we need not sink under any trial, for there is one who can strengthen us.

(2) that we need not yield to temptation. There is one who is able to make a way for our escape.

(3) that we need not be harassed, and vexed, and tortured with improper thoughts and unholy desires. There is one who can enable us to banish such thoughts from the mind, and restore the right balance to the affections of the soul.

(4) that we need not dread what is to come. Trials, temptations, poverty, want, persecution, may await us; but we need not sink into despondency. At

every step of life, Christ is able to strengthen us, and can bring us triumphantly through. What a privilege it is, therefore, to be a Christian - to feel, in the trials of life, that we have one friend, unchanging and most mighty, who can always help us! How cheerfully should we engage in our duties, and meet the trials that are before us, leaning on the arm of our Almighty Redeemer! Let us not shrink from duty; let us not dread persecution let us not fear the bed of death. In all circumstances, Christ, our unchanging Friend, can uphold us. Let the eye and the affections of the heart be fixed on him; let the simple, fervent, believing prayer be directed always to him when trials come, when temptations assail, when duty presses hard upon us, and when a crowd of unholy and forbidden thoughts rush into the soul: and we shall be safe.

Verse 14

Notwithstanding, ye have well done - Though he had learned the grace of contentment, and though he knew that Christ could enable him to do all things, it was well for them to show sympathy for his sufferings; for it evinced a proper regard for a benefactor and an apostle.

Ye did communicate - You took part with my affliction. That is, you sympathized with me, and assisted me in bearing it. The relief which they had sent, not only supplied his wants, but it sustained him by the certainty that he was not forgotten.

Verse 15

In the beginning of the gospel - "At the time when I first preached the gospel to you; or when the gospel began its benign influence on your hearts."

When I departed from Macedonia - See Acts 17:14. The last place that Paul visited in Macedonia, at that time, was Berea. There a tumult was excited by the Jews, and it was necessary for him to go away. He left Macedonia to go to Athens; and left it in haste, amidst scenes of persecution, and when he needed sympathizing aid. At that time, as well as when he was in Thessalonica Acts 17:1-10, he needed the assistance of others to supply his wants; and he says that aid was not withheld. The meaning here is, that this aid was sent to him "as he was departing from Macedonia;" that is, alike in Thessalonica and afterward. This was about twelve years before this Epistle was written - Doddridge.

No church communicated with me - No church so participated with me in my sufferings and necessities, as to send to my relief; compare 2 Corinthians 11:8-9. Why they did not, Paul does not intimate. it is not necessary to suppose that he meant to blame them. They might not have been acquainted with his necessities. All that is implied here is, that he specially commends the Philippians for their attention to him.

Verse 16

For even in Thessalonica; - see the notes, Acts 17:1. Paul remained there long enough to establish a flourishing church. He met, indeed, with much opposition and persecution there; and, hence, it was necessary that his wants should be supplied by others.

Verse 17

Not because I desire a gift - "The reason why I rejoice in the reception of what you have sent to me, is not that I am covetous." From the interest with which he had spoken of their attention to him, some might perhaps be disposed to say, that it arose from this cause. He says, therefore, that, grateful as he was for the favor which he had received, his chief interest in it arose from the fact that it would contribute ultimately to their own good. It showed that they were governed by Christian principle, and this would not fall to be rewarded. What Paul states here is by no means impossible; though it may not be very common. In the reception of layouts from others, it is practicable to rejoice in them mainly, because their bestowment will be a means of good to the benefactor himself. All our selfish feelings and gratifications may be absorbed and lost in the superior joy which we have in seeing others actuated by a right spirit, and in the belief that they will be rewarded. This feeling is one of the fruits of Christian kindness. It is that which leads us to look away from self, and to rejoice in every evidence that others will be made happy.

I desire fruit - The word "fruit" is often used in the Scriptures, as elsewhere, to denote results, or that which is produced. Thus, we speak of punishment as the fruit of sin, poverty as the fruit of idleness, and happiness as the fruit of a virtuous life. The language is taken from the fact, that a man reaps or gathers the fruit or result of that which he plants.

To your account - A phrase taken from commercial dealings. The apostle wished that it might be set down to their credit. He desired that when they came to appear before God, they might reap the benefit of all the acts of kindness which they had shown him.

Verse 18

But I have all - Margin, "or, have received." The phrase here is equivalent to, "I have received everything. I have all I want, and desire no more." He was entirely satisfied. What they had sent to him is, of course, now unknown. It is sufficient to know, that it was of such a nature as to make his situation comfortable.

I am full - I have enough, This is a strong expression, denoting that nothing was lacking.

Having received of Epaphroditus - see the notes at Phlippians 2:25.

An odour of a sweet smell - This does not mean that it was such an odor to Paul, but to God. He regarded it as an offering which they had made to God himself; and he was persuaded that he would regard it as acceptable to him. They had doubtless made the offering, not merely from personal friendship for Paul, but because he was a minister of Christ, and from love for his cause; and Paul felt assured that this offering would be acceptable to him; compare Matthew 10:41-42. The word "odor" refers properly to the pleasant fragrance produced in the temple by the burning of incense; notes on Luke 1:9. On the meaning of the word rendered "a sweet smell," -εὐωδία euōdia- see the notes at 2 Corinthians 2:15. The whole language here is taken from an act of worship; and the apostle regarded what he had received from the Philippians as in fact a thank-offering to God, and a presented with the spirit of true devotion to him. It was not, indeed, a formal act of worship; but it was acceptable to God as an expression of their regard for his cause.

A sacrifice acceptable - Acceptable to God; compare Hebrews 13:16; notes, Romans 12:1.

Well-pleasing to God - Because it evinced a regard for true religion. Hence, learn:

(1) that kindness done to the ministers of the gospel is regarded as an acceptable offering to God.

(2) that kindness to the servants of God in distress and want, is as well-pleasing to God as direct acts of worship.

(3) that such acts of benevolence are evidences of attachment to the cause of religion, and are proofs of genuine piety; notes, Matthew 10:42.

Verse 19

But my God shall supply all your need - That is, "You have shown your regard for me as a friend of God, by sending to me in my distress, and I have confidence that, in return for all this, God will supply all your needs, when you are in circumstances of necessity." Paul's confidence in this seems not to have been founded on any express revelation; but on the general principle that God would regard their offering with favor. Nothing is lost, even in the present life, by doing good. In thousands of instances it is abundantly repaid. The benevolent are not usually poor; and if they are, God often raises up for them benefactions, and sends supplies in a manner as unexpected, and hearing proofs of divine interposition as decided, as when supplies were sent by the ravens to the prophet.

According to his riches in glory - see the notes, Ephesians 3:16. The word "riches" here means, His abundant fullness; His possessing all things; His inexhaustible ability to supply their needs. The phrase "in glory," is probably to he connected with the following phrase, "in Christ Jesus;" and means that the method of imparting supplies to people was through Jesus Christ, and was a glorious method; or, that it was done in a glorious manner. It is such an expression as Paul is accustomed to use, when speaking of what God does. He is not satisfied with saying simply that it is so; but connects with it the idea that whatever God does is done in a way worthy of himself, and so as to illustrate his own perfections.

In Christ Jesus - By the medium of Christ; or through him. All the favors that Paul expected for himself, or his fellow-men, he believed would be conferred through the Redeemer. Even the supply of our temporal needs comes to us through the Saviour. Were it not for the atonement, there is no more reason to suppose that blessings would be conferred upon people than that they would be on fallen angels. For them no atonement has been made; and at the hand of justice they have received only wretchedness and woe.

Verse 20

Now unto God and our Father, … - see the notes at Romans 16:27. It was common for Paul to address such an ascription of praise to God, at the close of his epistles.

Verse 21

Salute every saint in Christ Jesus - It was usual for him also to close his epistles with affectionate salutations to various members of the churches to which he wrote. These salutations are generally specific, and mention the

names, particularly if prominent members of the churches; see the close of the Epistles to the Romans; 1Corinthians; Colossians, and 2Timothy. In this Epistle, however, as in some others, the salutation in general. Why none are specified in particular is not certainly known.

The brethren which are with me … - The word "brethren" here probably refers to ministers that were with Paul as the "saints" in general are mentioned in the next verse. It is possible that at Rome the ministers were known by the general name of "the brethren" - Pierce.

Verse 22

All the saints salute you - All in Rome, where this Epistle was written. No individuals are specified, perhaps because none of the Christians at Rome wore personally known to the church at Philippi. They would, however, feel a deep interest in a church which had thus the confidence and affection of Paul. There is reason to believe that the bonds of affection among the churches then were much stronger than they are now. There was a generous warmth in the newness of the Christian affection - the first ardor of love; and the common trials to which they were exposed would serve to bind them closely together.

Chiefly they that are of Caesar's household - That is, of Nero, who was at that time the reigning emperor. The name Caesar was given to all the emperors after the time of Julius Caesar, as the name Pharaoh was the common name of the kings of Egypt. The phrase used here - "the household of Caesar" - may refer to the relatives of the emperor; and it is certainly possible that some of them may have been converted to Christianity. But it does not of necessity refer to those related to him, but may be applied to his domestics, or to some of the officers of the court that were more particularly employed around his person; and as it is more probable that some of them would be converted than his own relatives, it is more safe to suppose that they were intended; see the notes at Phlippians 1:13.

Verse 23

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, … - notes, Romans 16:20.

In regard to the subscription at the end of this Epistle, it may be remarked, as has been done of the other subscriptions at the end of the Epistles, that it is of no authority whatever. There is no reason, however, to doubt that in this case it is correct. The Epistle bears internal evidence of having been written from Rome, and was doubtless sent by Epaphroditus. See the introduction, section 3. There is considerable variety in the

subscription. The Greek is: “It was written to the Philippians from Rome by Epaphroditus.” The Syriac: “The Epistle to the Philippians was written from Rome, and sent by Epaphroditus.” The Aethiopic: “To the Philippians, by Timothy.”

Remarks On Phlippians 4:1. This duty should be pressed on Christians by their teachers, and by each other, by all that is tender and sacred in the Christian profession, and all that is endearing in Christian friendship. Like Paul, we should appeal to others as “brethren dearly beloved and longed for,” and by all their affection for us we should entreat them to be steadfast in the Christian profession. As their “joy and crown,” also, ministers should desire that their people should be holy. Their own happiness and reward is to be closely connected with the firmness with which their people maintain the principles of the Christian faith. If Christians, therefore, wish to impart the highest joy to their religious teachers, and to exalt them as high as possible in future happiness and glory, they should strive to be faithful to their great Master, and to be steadfast in attachment to his cause.

2. It is the duty of those who have from any cause been alienated, to seek to be reconciled; Phlippians 4:2. They should be of the same mind. Almost nothing does more to hinder the cause of religion than alienations and bickerings among its professed friends. It is possible for them to live in harmony, and to be of the same mind in the Lord; and such is the importance of this, that it well deserves to be enforced by apostolic authority and persuasion. It may be observed, also, that in the case referred to in this chapter - that of Euodias and Syntyche - the exhortation to reconciliation is addressed to both. Which was in the wrong, or whether both were, is not intimated, and is not needful for us to know. It is enough to know that there was alienation, and both of them were exhorted to see that the quarrel was made up. So, in all cases where members of the church are at variance, it is the business of both parties to seek to be reconciled, and neither party is right if he waits for the other before he moves in the matter. If you feel that you have been injured, go and tell your brother kindly wherein you think he has done you wrong. He may at once explain the matter, and show that you have misunderstood it, or he may make proper confession or restitution. Or, if he will do neither, you will have done your duty; Matthew 18:15. If you are conscious that you have injured, him, then nothing is more proper than that you should go and make confession. The blame of the quarrel rests wholly on you. And if some meddling third

person has got up the quarrel between you, then go and see your brother, and disappoint the devices of the enemy of religion.

3. It is our duty and our privilege to rejoice in the Lord always; Phlippians 4:4. As God is unchanging, we may always find joy in him. The character of God which we loved yesterday, and in the contemplation of which we found happiness then, is the same today, and its contemplation will furnish the same joy to us now. His promises are the same; his government is the same; his readiness to impart consolation is the same; the support which he can give in trial and temptation is the same. Though in our own hearts we may find much over which to mourn, yet when we look away from ourselves we may find abundant sources of consolation and peace. The Christian, therefore, may be always happy. If he will look to God and not to himself; to heaven and not to earth, he will find permanent and substantial sources of enjoyment. But in nothing else than God can we rejoice always. Our friends. in whom we find comfort, are taken away; the property that we thought would make us happy, fails to do so; and pleasures that we thought would satisfy, pall upon the sense and make us wretched. No man can be permanently happy who does not make the Lord the source of joy, and who does not expect to find his chief pleasure in him.

4. It is a privilege to be permitted to go and commit everything to God; Phlippians 4:6-7. The mind may be in such a state that it shall feel no anxiety about anything. We may feel so certain that God will supply all our wants; that he will bestow upon us all that is really necessary for us in this life and the next, and that he will withhold from us nothing which it is not for our real good to have withheld, that the mind may be constantly in a state of peace. With a thankful heart for all the mercies which we have enjoyed - and in all cases they are many - we may go and commit ourselves to God for all that we need hereafter Such is the privilege of religion; such an advantage is it to be a Christian. Such a state of mind will be followed by peace. And it is only in such a way that true peace can be found. In every other method there will be agitation of mind and deep anxiety. If we have not this confidence in God, and this readiness to go and commit all to him, we shall be perplexed with the cares of this life; losses and disappointments will harass us; the changes which occur will weary and wear out our spirits, and through life we shall be tossed as on a restless ocean.

5. It is the duty of Christians to be upright in every respect; Phlippians 4:8. Every friend of the Redeemer should be a man of incorruptible and unsuspected integrity. He should be one who can always be depended on to do what is right, and pure, and true, and lovely. I know not that there is a more important verse in the New Testament than the eighth verse of this chapter. It deserves to be recorded in letters of gold in the dwelling of every Christian, and it would be well if it could be made to shine on his way as if written in characters of living light. There should be no virtue, no truth, no noble plan of benevolence, no pure and holy undertaking in society, of which the Christian should not be, according to his ability, the patron and the friend. The reasons are obvious. It is not only because this is in accordance with the law of God, but it is from its effect on the community.

The people of the world judge of religion by the character of its professed friends. It is not from what they hear in the pulpit, or learn from the Bible, or from treatises on divinity; it is from what they see in the lives of those who profess to follow Christ. They mark the expression of the eye; the curl of the lip; the words that we speak - and if they perceive peevishness and irritability, they set it down to the credit of religion, They watch the conduct, the temper and disposition, the manner of doing business, the respect which a man has for truth, the way in which he keeps his promises, and set it all down to the credit of religion. If a professed Christian fails in anyone of these things, he dishonors religion and neutralizes all the good which he might otherwise do. It is not only the man in the church who is untrue, and dishonest, and unjust, and unlovely in his temper, that does evil; it is he who is either false, or dishonest, or unjust, or unlovely in his temper. One evil propensity will neutralize all that is good; and one member of the church who fails to lead a moral and upright life will do much to neutralize all the good that can be done by all the rest of the church; compare Ecclesiastes 10:1.

6. It is the duty of Christians to show kindness to the ministers of the gospel, especially in times and circumstances of want; Phlippians 4:10, Phlippians 4:14-17. Paul commended much what the Philippians had done for him. Yet they had done no more than they ought to do; see 1 Corinthians 9:11. He had established the gospel among them, carrying it to them by

great persona, sacrifice and self-denial. What he had done for them had cost him much more than what they had done for him - and was of much more value. He had been in want. He was a prisoner; among strangers; incapable of exerting himself for his own support; not in a situation to minister to his own needs, as he had often done by tent-making, and in these circumstances he needed the sympathizing help of friends. He was not a man to be voluntarily dependent on others, or to be at any time a burden to them. But circumstances beyond his control had made it necessary for others to supply his needs.

The Philippians nobly responded to his claims on them, and did all that he could ask. Their conduct is a good example for other Christians to imitate in their treatment of the ministers of the gospel. Ministers now are often in want. They become old, and are unable to labor; they are sick, and cannot render the service which they have been accustomed to; their families are afflicted, and they do not have the means of providing for them comfortably in sickness. It is to be remembered also that such cases often happen where a minister has spent the best part of his life in the service of a people; where he has devoted his most vigorous days to their welfare; where he has been unable to lay up anything for sickness or old age; where he may have abandoned what would have been a lucrative calling in life, for the purpose of preaching the gospel. If there ever is a claim on the generosity of a people, his case is one, and there is no debt of gratitude which a people ought more cheerfully to pay than that of providing for the needs of an aged or an afflicted and disabled servant of Christ, who has spent his best years in endeavoring to train them and their children up for heaven.

Yet, it cannot be denied, that great injustice is often done in such cases. The poor beast that has served a man and his family in the days of his vigor, is often turned out in old age to die; and something like this sometimes occurs in the treatment of ministers of the gospel. The conduct of a people, generous in many other respects, is often unaccountable in their treatment of their pastors; and one of the lessons which ministers often have to learn, like their Master, by bitter experience, is the ingratitude of those for whose welfare they have toiled, and prayed, and wept.

7. Let us learn to be contented with our present condition; Phlippians 4:11-12. Paul learned this lesson. It is not a native state of mind. It is a lesson to be acquired by experience. By nature we are all restless and impatient; we are reaching after things that we have not, and often after things that we cannot and ought not to have. We are envious of the condition of others, and suppose that if we had what they have we should be happy. Yet, if we have right feelings, we shall always find enough in our present condition to make us contented. We shall have such confidence in the arrangements of Providence as to feel that things are ordered for the best. If we are poor, and persecuted, and in want, or are prostrated by sickness, we shall feel that there is some good reason why this is so arranged - though the reason may not be known to us. If we are benevolent, as we ought to be, we shall be willing that others shall be made happy by what they possess, instead of coveting it for ourselves, and desiring to wrest it from them.

If we are disposed to estimate our mercies, and not to give up our minds to a spirit of complaining, we shall see enough around us to make us contented. Paul was a prisoner; he was poor; he was among strangers; he had neither wife nor children; he was about to be tried for his life, and probably put to death - yet he learned to be content. He had a good conscience; the hope of heaven; a sound intellect; a heart disposed to do good, and confidence in God, and why should a man in such circumstances complain? Says Jeremy Taylor, "Am I fallen into the hands of publicans and sequestrators, who have taken all from me? What now? Let me look about me. They have left me the sun and moon, fire and water, a loving wife, and many friends to pity me, and some to relieve me, and I can still discourse; and unless I list, they have not taken away my merry countenance, and a cheerful spirit, and a good conscience; they still have left me the providence of God, and all the promises of the gospel, and my religion, and my hopes of heaven, and my charity to them too; and still I sleep and digest; I eat and drink; I read and meditate; I can walk in my neighbor's pleasant fields, and see the varieties of natural beauties, and delight in all in which God delights, that is, in virtue and wisdom, in the whole creation, and in God himself. And he who hath so many causes of joy, and so great, is very much in love with sorrow and peevishness. who loses all these pleasures, and chooses to sit down upon his little handful of thorns" - Holy Living, chapter

ii. section vi. Let the whole of this section “on Contentedness” be read. It is one of the most beautiful arguments for contentment that ever proceeded from uninspired lips.

8. In all these things; in all the duties and the trials of life; in all our efforts to meet temptation, and to cultivate contentment with our present condition, let us put our trust in the Saviour; Phlippians 4:13. Paul said that he could “do all things through Christ who strengthened him.” His strength was there; ours is there also. If we attempt these things, relying on out own strength, we shall certainly fail. The bad passions of our nature will get the ascendency, and we shall be left to discontent and complaining. The arm that is to uphold us is that of the Redeemer; and relying on that, we shall find no duty so arduous that we may not be able to perform it; no temptation so formidable that we may not be able to meet it; no trial so great that we may not be able to bear it; no situation in life through which we may be called to pass, where we may not find contentment and peace. And may God of his rich mercy give to each one who shalt read these notes on this beautiful Epistle to the Philippians, abundant grace thus to confide in the Saviour, and to practice all the duties so tenderly enjoined on the Philippian Christians and on us by this illustrious prisoner in the cause of Christ.

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COLOSSIANS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Colossians

Section 1. The Situation of Colossae

Colossae, or, as it is written in many manuscripts, Colasse, was a celebrated city of Phrygia, in Asia Minor. It was in the southern part of that province, was nearly directly east of Ephesus, north of Laodicea, and nearly west of Antioch in Pisidia. It is mentioned by Herodotus (Polyhymn. Lib. viii. c. 30) as "a great city of Phrygia, in that part where the river Lycus descends into a chasm of the earth and disappears, but which, after a distance of five stadia, rises again and flows into the Meander " - ες τον Μαιανδρον es ton MaiandronXenophon also mentions the city of Colossae as being Πολις οικουμενη ευδαιμων και μεγαλη Polis oikoumenē eudaimōn kai megalē- "a city well inhabited, pleasant, and large." Expedi. Cyr. Lib. i. In the time of Strabo, however, it seems to have been much diminished in size, as it is mentioned by him among the "smaller towns" -

d **polismata -** , Lib. xii. p. 864.

In the latter part of the reign of Nero, and not long after this Epistle was written, Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis, were at the same time overwhelmed by an earthquake. Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* Lib. v. c. 41. Colossae recovered, however, from this shock, and is mentioned by the Byzantine writers as among the most opulent cities; see Koppe, Prolegomena. The ancient town is now extinct, but its site is occupied by a village called Chonos, or Khonas. This village is described by Mr. Arundell as being situated most picturesquely under the immense range of Mount Cadmus, which rises to a very lofty and perpendicular height behind the Village, in some parts clothed with pines, in others bare of soil, with vast chasms and caverns. An immense perpendicular chasm, affords an outlet to a wide mountain torrent, the bed of which is dry in summer. The approach to the village is as wild as the village itself is beautiful, abounding in tall trees, from which vines of most luxuriant growth are suspended. In the immediate neighborhood are several vestiges of an ancient city, consisting of arches, vaults, squared stones, while the ground is strewed with broken pottery, which so generally and so remarkably indicates the site of ancient towns in the East. That these ruins are all that now remain of Colossae, there seems no reason to doubt.

Colossae, as has been remarked, was situated in Phrygia. On the name Phrygia, and the origin of the Phrygians, very different opinions have been entertained, which it is not necessary to specify in order to an understanding of this Epistle. They claimed to be the most ancient people of the world; and it is said that this claim was admitted by the Egyptians, who, though boastful of their own antiquity, were content to regard themselves as second to the Phrygians. Like other parts of Asia Minor which were distinguished as provinces under the Roman empire, Phrygia is first historically known as a kingdom, and continued such until it was made a province of the Lydian monarchy. It remained a province of that monarchy until Croesus, king of Lydia, was conquered by Cyrus of Persia, who added the Lydian kingdom to his empire. After that, Phrygia, like the rest of Asia Minor, became successively subject to the Greeks, the Romans, and the Turks. In the time when the gospel was preached there, it was subject to the Romans; it is now under the dominion of the Turks. Phrygia was anciently celebrated for its fertility; but, under the Moslem yoke, a great part of the country lies uncultivated.

Section 2. The Establishment of the Church in Colossae

The gospel was first preached in Phrygia by Paul and Silas, accompanied also by Timothy; Acts 15:40-41; Acts 16:1-3, Acts 16:6. It is said that they "went throughout Phrygia," which means, doubtless, that they went to the principal cities and towns; in Acts 18:23, it is said that Paul visited Phrygia again, after he had been to Philippi, Athens, Jerusalem, and Antioch. He "went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples." It is not, indeed, expressly said of Paul and Silas that they went to Colossae; but, since this was one of the principal cities of Phrygia, there is every reason to suppose that they preached the gospel there.

It has been doubted, however, whether Paul was ever at Colossae. It is expressly affirmed by Hug (Introduction), and by Koppe (Prolegomena), that Paul had not taught at Colossae himself, and that he had no personal acquaintance with the Christians there. It has been maintained that the gospel was, probably, first preached there by Epaphras, who heard the apostle at Ephesus, and who returned and preached the gospel to his own countrymen. The opinion that Paul had not been there, and was personally unacquainted with the church, is founded on his declaration in Colossians

2:1; “For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.” From this it is inferred that he was neither at Colossae nor at Laodicea. Yet it may be justly doubted whether this passage will authorize this conclusion. Theodoret long since suggested that the meaning of this was - “I have not only a concern for you, but I have also great concern for those who have not seen me.” Dr. Lardner, however, maintains that the gospel was preached in Colossae by Paul. The reasons which he gives for the opinion are briefly these:

(1) The declarations of Luke, already quoted, that Paul more than once passed through Phrygia. The presumption is, that he would visit the chief cities of that province in passing and repassing through it. It is to be remembered that, according to Colossians 2:1, Colossae and Laodicea are placed on the same footing; and hence the difficulty of the supposition that he did not visit the former is increased. Can it be supposed that Paul would go again and again through that region, preaching the gospel in the points where it would be likely to exert the widest influence, and yet never visit either of these principal cities of the province, especially when it is remembered that Laodicea was the capital?

(2) Dr. Lardner appeals to what Paul says in Colossians 1:6; Colossians 2:6-7, in proof that he knew that they had been rightly taught the gospel. From this he infers that Paul had himself communicated it to them. This conclusion is not perfectly clear, since it is certain that Paul might have known their first teachers, and been satisfied that they taught the truth; but it is such language as he would have used on the supposition that he was the spiritual father of the church.

(3) Epaphras, says Dr. Lardner, was not their first instructor in the gospel. This he infers from what is said of him in Colossians 1:7, and in Colossians 4:12-13. He is commended as “one of them,” as a “fellow-servant,” as “a faithful minister of Christ,” as one “beloved.” But he is not spoken of as sustaining any nearer relation to them. If he had been the founder of their church, he thinks it is incredible that there is no allusion to this fact in writing to them; that the apostle should have spoken more than

once of him, and never referred to his agency in establishing the church there.

(4) Paul does, in effect, say that he had himself dispensed the gospel to these Colossians; Colossians 1:21-25. The salutations at the end of the Epistle, to various persons at Laodicea and Colossae, show that he was personally acquainted there. See these and other reasons drawn out in Lardner‘s *Works*, vol. vi., pp. 151ff, Ed. Lond. 1829. The considerations suggested by Dr. Lardner seem to me to be sufficient to render it in the highest degree probable that the church at Colossae was founded by Paul.

Section 3. When and Where the Epistle Was Written

This Epistle is believed to have been written at Rome, when Paul was a prisoner there, and at about the same time that the Epistle to the Ephesians, and the Epistle to Philemon, were written; and that they were all sent by the same persons. It is said in the Epistle itself Colossians 4:7, Colossians 4:9, that it was sent by Tychicus and Onesimus, both of whom are commended as “faithful and beloved” brethren. But the Epistle to the Ephesians was written at Rome (see the introduction) and was sent by Tychicus Ephesians 6:21; and the Epistle to Philemon was sent by Onesimus. It is probable, therefore, that these persons visited Ephesus, Colossae, and the place where Philemon resided; or, rather, that Tychicus and Onesimus visited Colossae together, and that then Tychicus went to Ephesus, and Onesimus went to his former master Philemon. That this Epistle and the one to Philemon were written at about the same time, is further apparent from the fact that Epaphras is mentioned in both as with the apostle, and as joining in the salutation; Colossians 4:12; Philemon 1:23. The Epistle to the Colossians bears internal marks of having been written at Rome, when the apostle was a prisoner. Thus, in Colossians 1:24, he says, “who now rejoice in my sufferings for you;” Colossians 4:18, “Remember my bonds.” If this be so, then it is not difficult to fix the date of the Epistle with some degree of accuracy. This would be about the year 62 ad.

Section 4. The Occasion and Design of the Epistle

The general drift of this Epistle has a strong resemblance to that addressed to the Ephesians, and it bears internal marks of being from the same hand. It was evidently written in view of errors which extensively prevailed among the churches of that part of Asia Minor, and was designed to inculcate the same general duties. It is of importance, therefore, to

possess a general understanding of the nature of these errors, in order to a correct interpretation of the Epistle.

The church at Colossae was one of a circle or group of churches, lying near each other, in Asia Minor; and it is probable that the same general views of philosophy, and the same errors, prevailed throughout the entire region where they were situated. That group of churches embraced those at Ephesus, Laodicea, Thyatira, and, in general, those addressed in the Apocalypse as "the seven churches of Asia." From some of the notices of those churches in the New Testament, as well as from the Epistle before us, we may learn what errors prevailed there in general, and against what form of error particularly the Epistle to the Colossians was designed to guard.

(1) several classes of errorists are mentioned as existing within the limits of the "seven churches of Asia." Thus, in the church at Ephesus, "those which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" Revelation 2:2; in Smyrna, those "which say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan" Revelation 2:9; in Thyatira, "that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess" Revelation 2:20; in Pergamos, "them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes;" those "who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel" Revelation 2:14-15. The near proximity of these churches to Colossae would render it probable that the infection of these errors might have reached that church also.

(2) the apostle Paul, in his parting speech to the elders of the church at Ephesus, alludes to dangerous teachers to which the church there might be exposed, in such a manner as to show that there was some peculiar danger from such teachers in that community. "For I know that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your ownselves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them;" Acts 20:29-30. He does not specify, indeed, the kind of danger to which they would be exposed; but it is evident that the danger arose from plausible teachers of error. These were of two classes - those who would come in from abroad, implying probably that there were such teachers in the neighboring churches; and such as would spring up among themselves.

(3) in that vicinity there appear to have been numerous disciples of John the Baptist, retaining many Jewish prejudices and prepossessions, who would be tenacious of the observances of the Mosaic law. What were their views, is not precisely known. But it is clear that they regarded the Jewish law as still binding; that they would be rigid in its observance, and in insisting on its observance by others; that they had at best, if any, a very imperfect acquaintance with Christianity; and that they were ignorant of the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, and of the fact that that had been poured out in a remarkable manner under the preaching of the apostles. Paul found a number of these disciples of John at Ephesus, who professed not to have received the Holy Spirit, and who said that they had been baptized unto John‘s baptism; Acts 19:1-3. Among the most distinguished and influential of the disciples of John in that region was Apollos Acts 18:24-25, who is represented as an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures. He taught at Ephesus, but how long before he was made more fully acquainted with the gospel, is unknown.

He is represented as having been zealously engaged in that work, and as being eminently successful; Acts 18:25. There is no reason to doubt that he contributed not a little in diffusing, in that region, the peculiar views held by those who were known as the disciples of John. What was precisely the doctrine which Apollos taught, before “the way of God was expounded more perfectly to him” Acts 18:26, is not now known. There is every reason, however, to suppose that he would insist on the observance of the Jewish laws, and the customs of their nation. The opinions which would be likely to be defended by one in his circumstances, would be those which prevailed when John preached - when the law of Moses was considered to be in full force, and when it was necessary to observe all his institutions. the Jewish law among the churches would be likely to appeal with great force to the sentiments of so good and so eloquent a man as Apollos. So extensive was his influence, that Koppe supposes that the principal errors prevailing in the churches in Phrygia, which it was the design of the apostle in this Epistle to correct, could be traced to the influence of the disciples of John, and especially to the teachings of this eloquent man. Prolegomena, p. 160.

(4) If we look into the Epistle itself, we shall be able to determine with some degree of certainty the errors which prevailed, and which it was the

design of this Epistle to correct, and we shall find that they correspond remarkably with what we might anticipate, from what we have seen to be the errors abounding in that region.

(a) Their first danger arose from the influence of philosophy; Colossians 2:4-8. The apostle warns them to beware lest any one should "beguile them with enticing words;" he cautions them against "philosophy and vain deceit " - a philosophy that was based on the "tradition of men," "after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Such philosophy might be expected to prevail in those cities so near to Greece, and so much imbued with the Grecian spirit, and one of the chief dangers which would beset them would arise from its prevalence.

(b) A second source of danger referred to, was that arising from the influence of those who insisted on the observance of the rites and customs of the Jewish religion. This the apostle refers to in Colossians 2:16. "Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days." These are subjects on which the Jews would insist much, and in this respect the disciples of John would be likely to sympathize entirely with them. It is evident that there were those among them who were endeavoring to enforce the observance of these things.

(c) There is some evidence of the prevalence there of a philosophy more Oriental than Grecian - a philosophy that savored of Gnosticism. This philosophy was subsequently the foundation of a large part of the errors that crept into the church. Indications of its prevalence in Colossae, occur in places like the following; Colossians 2:9 - "For in him (Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" from which it would seem probable that there were those who denied that the fullness of the Godhead dwelt physically in the Lord Jesus - a favorite doctrine of the Gnostics, who maintained that the assumption of human nature by the Son of God, was in appearance only, and that he died on the cross only in appearance, and not in reality. So in Colossians 2:18, there is a reference to "a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which are not seen, and which tend vainly to puff up a fleshly mind" - a description that will apply with remarkable accuracy to the homage paid by the

Gnostics to the AEons, and to the general efforts of those who held the doctrines of that philosophy to intrude into those things which are not seen, and to offer an explanation of the mode of the divine existence, and the nature of the divine agency. See notes on the verses here referred to. It will contribute not a little to a proper understanding of this Epistle, to keep these things in remembrance respecting the kind of philosophy which prevailed in the region in which Colossae was situated, and the nature of the dangers to which they were exposed.

(5) it will be seen from these remarks, and from the Epistle itself, that the difficulties in the church at Colossae did not relate to the moral and religious character of its members. There is no mention of any improper conduct, either in individuals or in the church at large, as there was in the church at Corinth; there is no intimation that they had been guilty of any sins but such as were common to all pagans before conversion. There are, indeed, intimations that they were exposed to sin, and there are solemn charges against indulgence in it. But the sins to which they were exposed were such as prevailed in all the ancient pagan world, and doubtless such as the Gentile part of the church particularly, had been guilty of before their conversion. The following sins particularly are mentioned: "Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, covetousness, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communications, and lying;" Colossians 3:5-9. These were common sins among the pagan (compare the notes at Colossians 3:7, and as they were therefore the more liable to fall into them again, there was abundant occasion for all the solicitude which the apostle manifests on the subject.

From the remarks now made, it is easy to see what was the design of the Epistle to the Colossians. It was primarily to guard the church against the errors to which it was exposed from the prevalence of false philosophy, and from the influence of false teachers in religion; to assert the superior claims of Christianity over all philosophy, and its independence of the peculiar rites and customs of the Jewish religion.

It has been asked why the apostle wrote an epistle to the church at Colossae, rather than to the church in Laodicea, especially as Laodicea was the capital of Phrygia? And it has been asked also, why an epistle was

addressed to that church so strikingly resembling the Epistle to the Ephesians (see Section 5), especially as it has been supposed that the Epistle to the Ephesians was designed to be a circular letter, to be read by the churches in the vicinity. The reasons why an epistle was addressed particularly to the church at Colossae, seem to have been such as the following:

(1) Onesimus was at that time with Paul at Rome, and was about to return to his master Philemon, at Colossae; see the Introduction to the Epistle to Philemon. It was perfectly natural that Paul should avail himself of the opportunity thus afforded him, to address a letter to the church at Colossae also.

(2) Epaphras, a principal teacher of the church at Colossae, was also with Paul at Rome; Colossians 1:7; Colossians 4:12. He was at that time a fellow-prisoner with him Philemon 1:23, and it is not improbable that it was at his solicitation particularly that this Epistle was written. Paul had learned from him the state of the church at Colossae Colossians 1:6-7, and it is not impossible, as Koppe conjectures, that he had been sent to Rome by the church to seek the counsel of the apostle in the state of things which then existed in Colossae. Epaphras was, at any rate, greatly interested in the state of things in the church, as well as in the condition of the churches at Laodicea and Hierapolis Colossians 4:13, and nothing was more natural than that he should endeavor to induce the apostle to direct a letter that might be of benefit to them all.

(3) aparticular reason for sending this Epistle appears to have been to confirm the authority of Epaphras, and to give the sanction of the apostle to the truths which he had taught. In their difficulties and dangers Epaphras had taken an important part in giving them counsel. His views might have been opposed; or his authority might have been disputed by the teachers of error there, and it was important that the apostolic sanction should be given to what he had taught. Hence, the apostle speaks with so much affection of Epaphras, and so warmly of him as a faithful servant of Christ; Colossians 1:7; Colossians 4:12-13.

(4) it may be added, that; although there is a strong resemblance between this Epistle and that to the Ephesians, and although it may be regarded as probable that the Epistle to the Ephesians was intended in part as a circular, yet this Epistle would not have been needless. It contains many things which are not in that Epistle; is especially adapted to the state of things in the church at Colossae, and would have the greater weight with Christians there from being specifically addressed to them. See Michaelis' *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. v. 122, and Koppe, *Prolegomena* pp. 163,164.

Section 5. The Resemblance between this Epistle and the Epistle to the Ephesians

Every person who has given any considerable degree of attention to this Epistle, must have been struck with its remarkable similarity to the Epistle to the Ephesians. That resemblance is greater by far than exists between any other two of the epistles of Paul - a resemblance not only in the general style and manner which may be expected to characterize the different productions of the same author, but extending to the course of thought; the structure of the argument; the particular instructions, and to some phrases which do not occur elsewhere. This similarity relates particularly to the following points:

(1) In the representation of the reason for which the apostle was imprisoned at Rome. This resemblance, Dr. Paley (HoraePaul) remarks, is too close to be accounted for from accident, and yet too indirect and latent to be imputed to design, and is one which cannot easily be resolved into any other source than truth. It is not found in any other of his epistles. It consists in this, that Paul in these two epistles attributes his imprisonment not to his preaching Christianity in general, but to his asserting the right of the Gent footing with the Jews, and without being obliged to conform themselves to the Jewish law. This was the doctrine to which he considered himself a martyr. Thus, in Colossians 1:24, he says, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you;" and in Colossians 2:1, "for I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea." That is, his conflicts and trials, his imprisonment and danger of death, had somehow come upon him in consequence of his endeavoring to spread the gospel in such places as Colossae and Laodicea. These were Gentile communities; and the meaning is, that his trials were the result of his efforts to preach among the Gentiles. The same representation is made in the Epistle to the

Ephesians - likewise written from Rome during his imprisonment. “For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles;” Colossians 3:1.

And this coincidence is also apparent by comparing two other places in the epistles. Thus, Colossians 4:3, “Praying for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mysteries of Christ, for which I am in bonds.” An allusion to the same “mystery” occurs also in the Epistle to the Ephesians. “Whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ - that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel;” Colossians 3:4-6. In the Acts of the Apostles the same statement occurs in regard to the cause for which the apostle was persecuted and imprisoned - and it is on this coincidence, which is so evidently undesigned, that Paley has founded the argument for the genuineness of the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. Horae Paulinae. The statement in the Acts of the Apostles is, that the persecutions of Paul which led to his appeal to the Roman emperor and to his imprisonment, at Rome, were in consequence of his maintaining that the Gentiles were, in the Christian administration, to be admitted to the same privileges as the Jews, or that there was no distinction between them in the matter of salvation; and his sufferings, therefore, were, as he says, “in behalf of the Gentiles.” See, particularly, Acts 21:28; Acts 22:21-22. From these passages it appears that the offence which drew down on Paul the vengeance of his countrymen was, his mission to the Gentiles, and his maintaining that they were to be admitted to the privileges of salvation on the same terms as the Jews.

(2) there is a strong resemblance between the course of thought and the general structure of the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians. To an extent that does not occur in any other of Paul‘s epistles, the same topics are introduced, and in the same order and connection. Indeed, in some portions, they are almost identical. Particularly the order in which the various topics are introduced is nearly the same. The following portions of the two epistles will be seen to correspond with each other.

d **EphesiansColossians**

d

d Ephesians 1:15-19

d with

d Colossians 1:9-11

d

d Ephesians 1:20-23

d with

d Colossians 1:15-19

d

d Ephesians 1:10

d with

d Colossians 1:20

d

d Ephesians 2:1-10

d with

d Colossians 1:21-23

d

d Ephesians 3:7

d with

d Colossians 1:25

d

d Ephesians 3:9-10

d with

d Colossians 1:26-27

d

d Ephesians 3:17

d with

d Colossians 2:7

d

d Ephesians 2:11-22

d with

d Colossians 2:11-15

d

d Ephesians 4:14

d with

d Colossians 2:8

d

d Ephesians 4:15-16

d with

d Colossians 2:19

d

d Ephesians 4:25

d with

d Colossians 3:9

d

d Ephesians 4:22-24

d with

d Colossians 3:9-10

d

d Ephesians 4:32

d with

d Colossians 3:12

d

d Ephesians 5:19-20

d with

d Colossians 3:16-17

d

d Ephesians 5:21; Ephesians 6:6-9

d with

d Colossians 3:18-22; Colossians 4:1

d

d Ephesians 6:19

d with

d Colossians 4:3

d

d Ephesians 5:16

d with

d Colossians 4:5

d

d Ephesians 6:21

d with

d Colossians 4:7

d

d

This resemblance, thus carried almost through the Epistle, shows that there was a similarity of condition in the two churches in reference to the dangers to which they were exposed, the kind of philosophy which prevailed, the false teachers who might have an influence over them, and the particular duties to which it was desirable their attention should be turned. There is, indeed, some considerable variety of phraseology in the discussion of these topics, but still the resemblance is remarkable, and would indicate that the epistles were written not far from the same time, and clearly by the same person. It is remarkable, among other things, as Michaelis has observed, that it is only in these two epistles that the apostle warns his readers against lying; Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9. Hence, we may conclude that this vice was one that particularly prevailed in the region where these churches were situated, and that the members of these churches had been particularly addicted to this vice before their conversion.

Section 6. The Epistle from Laodicea

In Colossians 4:16 of this Epistle, the apostle gives this direction: "And when this Epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that ye likewise read the Epistle from Laodicea." The former part of this verse is clear, and the direction was given, doubtless, because the churches of Colossae and Laodicea were in the vicinity of each other, and the instructions were adapted to both churches. Doubtless the same form of philosophy prevailed, and the churches were exposed to the same errors. But it is not so clear what is meant by the "Epistle from Laodicea." The most natural and obvious interpretation would be, that Paul had sent a letter also to that church, and that he wished them to procure it and read it. But no such epistle is now extant, and, consequently, much difficulty has been felt in determining what the apostle referred to. A brief examination of the opinions entertained on the subject seems necessary in this place. They are the following:

1. It has been supposed that the reference is to a letter sent from the Laodiceans to Paul, proposing to him some questions which they desired him to answer, and that he now wishes the Colossians to procure that letter, in order that they might more fully understand the drift of the Epistle which he now sent to them. This opinion was held by Theodoret, and has been defended by Storr, Rosenmuller, and others. But the objections to it are obvious and conclusive.

(1) it is not the fair meaning of the language used by Paul. If he had referred to a letter to him, he would have said so; whereas the obvious meaning of the language used is, that the Colossians were to procure a letter in the possession of the Laodiceans, in exchange for the one which they now received from Paul. The churches were to make an exchange of letters, and one church was to read that which had been addressed to the other.

(2) if the letter had been addressed to Paul, it was doubtless in his possession; and if he wished the church at Colossae to read it, nothing would be more natural or obvious than to send it, by Tychicus, along with the letter which he now sent. Why should he give directions to send to Laodicea to procure a copy of it?

(3) if a letter had been sent to him by the Laodiceans, proposing certain questions, why did he send the answer to the church at Colossae, and not to the church at Laodicea? The church at Laodicea would certainly have been the one that was entitled to the reply. There would have been a manifest impropriety in sending an epistle to one church, made up of answers to questions proposed by another, and then at the end requesting them to procare those questions, that they might understand the Epistle.

(4) it may be added, that it is not necessary to suppose that there was any such epistle, in order to understand this Epistle to the Colossians. This is not more difficult of interpretation than the other epistles of Paul, and does not furnish in its structure any particular evidence that it was sent in answer to inquiries which had been proposed to the author.

2. It has been supposed by some that the epistle referred to was one written to Timothy, by the apostle himself, at Laodicea. This opinion was defended by Theophylact. The only show of authority for it is the subscription at the end of the First Epistle to Timothy - “The first to Timothy was written from Laodicea, which is the chiefest city of Phrygia Pacatiana.” But that this is erroneous, can be easily shown.

(1) the subscription to the Epistle to Timothy is of no authority.

(2) if this Epistle had been referred to, Paul would not have designated it in this manner. It would have been rather by mentioning the person to whom it was addressed, than the place where it was written.

(3) there is nothing in the Epistle to Timothy which would throw any important light on this to the Colossians, or which would be particularly important to them as a church. It was addressed to one individual, and it contains counsels adapted to a minister of the gospel, rather than to a church.

3. Many have supposed that the "Epistle from Laodicea," referred to, was one which Paul had written to the Laodiceans, partly for they use, but which was of the nature of a circular epistle, and that we still have it under another name. Those who hold this opinion suppose that the Epistle to the Ephesians is the one referred to, and that it was, in fact, sent also to the church at Laodicea. See this question treated at length in the introduction to the Epistle to the Ephesians, Section 5. The reasons for supposing that the Epistle now known as the "Epistle to the Ephesians" was neither a circular letter, nor addressed to the church at Laodicea, are there given. But if the common reading of the text in Ephesians 1:1, "the saints which are at Ephesus," be correct, then it is clear that that Epistle was really sent to the church in that place. The only question, then, is, whether it is of so general a character that it might as well be sent to other churches as to that, and whether Paul actually sent it as a circular, with a direction to different churches? Against this supposition, there are strong improbabilities:

(1) It is contrary to the usual practice of Paul. He addressed letters to particular churches and individuals; and, unless this case be one, there is no evidence that he ever adopted the practice of sending the same letter to different individuals or churches.

(2) there would have been some impropriety in it, if not dishonesty. An avowed circular letter, addressed to churches in general, or to any number whose names are enumerated, would be perfectly honest. But how would this be, if the same letter was addressed to one church, and then, with a new direction, addressed to another, with no intimation of its circular character?

Would there not be a species of concealment in this which we should not expect of Paul?

(3) how happens it, if this had occurred, that all remembrance of it was forgotten? When those epistles were collected, would not the attention be called to the fact, and some record of it be found in some ancient writer Would it fail to be adverted to that the same epistle had been found to have been addressed to different churches, with a mere change in the name?

4. There is but one other opinion which can exist on this question; and that is, that the apostle refers to some letter which had been sent to the Laodiceans, which we have not now in the New Testament. If this be so, then the reference could only be to some epistle which may be extant elsewhere, or which is now lost. There is an epistle extant which is known by the name of "Paul's Epistle to the Laodiceans;" but it has no well-founded claims to being a genuine epistle of Paul, and is universally regarded as a forgery. "It is," says Michaelis, "a mere rhapsody, collected from Paul's other epistles, and which no critic can receive as a genuine work of the apostle. It contains nothing which it was necessary for the Colossians to know, nothing which is not ten times better and more fully explained in the Epistle which Paul sent to the Colossians; in short, nothing which could be suitable to Paul's design."

Introduction to the New Testament iv. 127. The Greek of this Epistle may be found at length in Michaelis; and, as it may be a matter of curiosity, and will show that this cannot be the Epistle referred to by Paul in Colossians 4:16, I will subjoin here a translation. It is as follows: "Paul an apostle, not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ, to the brethren in Laodicea. Grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God in Christ always, in my prayers, that you are mindful of and are persevering in good works, waiting for the promise in the day of judgment. And let not the vain speeches of some who would conceal the truth disturb you, to turn you away from the truth of the gospel which has been preached unto you. Now God grant that all they who are of me may be borne forward to the perfection of the truth of the gospel, to perform those excellent good works which become the salvation of eternal life.

And now are my bonds manifest, in which bonds I am in Christ, and at the present time; but I rejoice, for I know that this shall be for the furtherance of my salvation, which is through your prayer and the supply of the Holy Spirit, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is joy. But our Lord himself shall grant you his mercy with us, that, possessing love you may be of the same mind and think the same thing. On this account, brethren, as ye have heard of the appearing of the Lord, so think and do in the fear of God, and it shall be eternal life to you, for it is God who worketh in you. Do all things without complaints and disputings. And for the remainder, brethren, rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ, and see that ye keep yourselves from all base gain of covetousness. Let all your requests be made known with boldness unto God, and be firm in the mind of Christ. And finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are holy, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, these things do.

And what you have heard and received, keep in your hearts, and it shalt give you peace. Salute all the brethren with an holy kiss. All the saints salute you. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Cause that this epistle be read in the church of the Colossians, and do you also read the epistle from Colossae." Nothing can be plainer than that this is not such an epistle as the apostle Paul would have written; it is therefore a mere forgery. The conclusion to which we are conducted is, that the reference in Colossians 4:16, is to some epistle of Paul to the church at Laodicea which is not now extant, and that the probability is, that, having accomplished the object for which it was sent, it has been suffered to be lost. Thus, it is to be numbered with the writings of Gad, and Iddo the seer, and Nathan, and the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and the book of Jehu 1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29; 2 Chronicles 20:34; 1 Kings 16:1; works which, having accomplished the object for which they were composed, have been suffered to become extinct.

Nor is there anything improbable or absurd in the supposition that an inspired book may have been lost. There is no special sacredness in a mere writing, or in the fact that inspired truth was recorded, that makes it indispensable that it should be preserved. The oral discourses of the Saviour

were as certainly inspired as the writings of Paul; and yet but a small part of what he said has been preserved; John 21:25. Why should there be any improbability in supposing that an inspired book may also have been lost? And, if it has, how does that fact weaken the evidence of the importance or the value of what we now possess? How does the fact that a large part of the sermons of the Saviour have perished, by not being recorded, diminish the value, or lessen the evidence of the divine authority, of the Sermon on the Mount?

COLOSSIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This chapter embraces the following topics:

(1) The usual salutation to the church; Colossians 1:1-2.

(2) thanks to God for what He had done for the Colossians, and for the fruits of the gospel among them; Colossians 1:3-8.

(3) prayer that they might persevere in the same course, and might walk worthy of their calling; Colossians 1:9-11.

(4) an exhortation to render thanks to God for what He had done for them in redemption; Colossians 1:12-14.

(5) astatement of the exalted dignity of the Redeemer; Colossians 1:15-18.

(6) astatement of what Christ had done in the work of redemption, in making peace by the blood of his cross and reconciling the world to God; Colossians 1:19-20.

(7) through this gospel, Paul says, they had been reconciled to God, and were now brought into a state in which they might be presented as holy and unblameable in his sight; Colossians 1:21-23.

(8) of this gospel, Paul says he was a minister; in preaching it he had been called to endure trials, but those trials he endured with joy; and in preaching this gospel he used the utmost diligence, warning every man, and teaching every person in all wisdom, so that he might present each one perfect in Christ Jesus; Colossians 1:24-29.

Verse 1

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ - See the notes. at Romans 1:1

By the will of God - Notes, 1 Corinthians 1:1.

And Timotheus our brother - On the question as to why Paul associated others with him in his epistles, see the notes at 1 Corinthians 1:1.

There was a particular reason why Timothy should be associated with him in writing this Epistle. He was a native of the region where the church was situated Acts 16:1-3, and had been with Paul when be preached there, and was doubtless well known to the church there; Acts 16:6. It is evident, however, from the manner in which Paul mentions him here, that he did not regard him as "an apostle," and did not wish the church at Colosse to consider him as such. It is not "Paul and Timothy, apostles of Jesus Christ," but "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother." Paul is careful never to apply the term "apostle" to Timothy; Philemon 1:1. "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ;" compare 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1. If he had regarded Timothy as an apostle, or as having apostolic authority, it is not easy to conceive why he should not have referred to him as such in these letters to the churches. Could he have failed to see that the manner in which he referred to him was adapted to produce a very important difference in file estimate in which he and Timothy would be held by the Colossians?

Verse 2

Grace be unto you - See the notes at Romans 1:7.

Verse 3

We give thanks to God - See the notes at the parallel place in Ephesians 1:15-16.

Praying always for you - See the Romans 1:9, note; Ephesians 1:16, note; compare 1 Thessalonians 1:2.

Verse 4

Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus - To wit, by Epaphras, who had informed Paul of the steadfastness of their faith and love; Colossians 1:7-8. This does not prove that Paul had never been at Colossae, or that he did not establish the church there, for he uses a similar expression respecting the church at Ephesus Ephesians 1:15, of which he was undoubtedly the founder. The meaning is, that he had heard of their faith at that time, or of their perseverance in faith and love.

Which ye have to all the saints - In what way they had manifested this is not known. It would seem that Paul had been informed that this was a character of their piety, that they had remarkable love for all who bore the Christian name. Nothing could be more acceptable information respecting them to one who himself so ardently loved the church; and nothing could

have furnished better evidence that they were influenced by the true spirit of religion; compare 1 John 3:14.

Verse 5

For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven - That is, "I give thanks that there is such a hope laid up for you." The evidence which he had that this hope was theirs, was founded on the faith and love to the saints which he heard they had evinced. He fully believed that where there was such faith and love, there was a well-founded hope of heaven. The word "hope" here is used, as it often is, for the thing hoped for. The object of hope - to wit, eternal happiness, was reserved for them in heaven.

Whereof ye heard before - When the gospel was first preached to you. You were told of the blessed rewards of a life of faith, in heaven.

In the word of the truth of the gospel - In the true word of the gospel.

Verse 6

Which is come unto you - It has not been confined to the Jews, or limited to the narrow country where it was first preached, but has been sent abroad to the Gentile world. The object of the apostle here seems to be, to excite in them a sense of gratitude that the gospel had been sent to them. It was owing entirely to the goodness of God in sending them the gospel, that they had this hope of eternal life.

As it is in all the world - It is confined to no place or people, but is designed to be a universal religion. It offers the same blessedness in heaven to all; compare the notes at Colossians 1:23.

And bringing forth fruit - The fruits of righteousness or good living; see the notes at 2 Corinthians 9:10. The meaning is, that the gospel was not without effect wherever it was preached. The same results were observable everywhere else as in Colossae, that it produced most salutary influences on the hearts and lives of those who received it. On the nature of the "fruits" of religion, see the notes at Galatians 5:22-23.

Since the day ye heard of it - It has constantly been producing these fruits since you first heard it preached.

And knew the grace of God in truth - Since the time ye knew the true grace of God; since you became acquainted with the real benevolence which God has manifested in the gospel. The meaning is, that ever since they had heard the gospel it had been producing among them abundantly its appropriate fruit, and that the same thing had also characterized it wherever it had been dispensed.

Verse 7

As ye also learned of Epaphras - Epaphras was then with Paul. Philemon 1:23. He had probably been sent to him by the church at Colossae to consult him in reference to some matters pertaining to the church there. It is evident from this, that Epaphras was a minister of the church at Colossae, though there is no evidence, as has been often supposed, that he was the founder of the church. The apostle here says, that they had learned from Epaphras the true nature of the gospel, and he designs undoubtedly to confirm what he had taught them in opposition to the teachings of errorists; see the Introduction, Section 4. He had doubtless conferred with Epaphras respecting the doctrines which he had taught there.

Our dear fellow-servant - This shows that Paul had contracted a strong friendship for Epaphras. There is no reason to believe that he had known him before, but his acquaintance with him now had served to attach him strongly to him. It is possible, as has been conjectured (see the Introduction), that there was a party in the church at Colossae opposed to Epaphras and to the doctrines which he preached, and if this were so, Paul's strong expression of attachment for him would do much to silence the opposition.

Who is for you a faithful minister of Christ - "For you," when he is with you, and in managing your interests here.

Verse 8

Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit - The love wrought in you by the Holy Spirit. It was not mere natural affection, but love worked in their hearts by the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 9

Do not cease to pray for you - Colossians 1:3. The progress which they had already made, and the love which they had shown, constituted an encouragement for prayer, and a reason why higher blessings still should be sought. We always feel stimulated and encouraged to pray for those who are doing well.

That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will - They had shown by their faith and love that they were disposed to do his will, and the apostle now prays that they might be fully acquainted with what he would have them do. He offered a similar prayer in behalf of the Ephesians; see the parallel place in Ephesians 1:17-19, and the notes at those verses.

In all wisdom - That you may be truly wise in all things; Ephesians 1:17.

And spiritual understanding - In understanding those things that pertain to the "Spirit;" that is, those things taught by the Holy Spirit, and those which he produces in the work of salvation; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 2:12-13; compare 1 John 2:20; 1 John 5:20.

Verse 10

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord - That you may live as becomes the followers of the Lord. How this was to be done he states in this and the following verses.

Unto all pleasing - So as to please him in all things; compare Hebrews 11:5.

Being fruitful in every good work - This is one way in which we are to walk worthy of the Lord, and so as to please him; see the notes at John 15:8.

And increasing in the knowledge of God - This is another way in which we may walk worthy of the Lord, and so as to please him. It is by endeavoring to become better acquainted with his true character. God is pleased with those who desire to understand what he is; what he does; what he purposes; what he commands. Hence he not only commands us to study his works (compare Psalm 111:2), but he has made a world so beautiful as to invite us to contemplate his perfections as reflected in that world. All good beings desire that others should understand their character, and God delights in those who are sincerely desirous of knowing what he is, and who inquire with humility and reverence into his counsels and his will. People are often displeased when others attempt to look into their plans, for they are sensible they will not bear the light of investigation. God has no plans which would not be seen to be, in the highest degree, glorious to him.

Verse 11

Strengthened with all might - This was also an object of Paul's earnest prayer. He desired that they might be strengthened for the performance of duty; to meet temptations; and to bear up under the various trials of life.

According to his glorious power - Not by any human means, but by the power of God. There is a manifestation of power in the spirit with which Christians are enabled to bear up under trials, which shows that it is not of human origin. It is the power which God gives them in the day of trial. This power is "glorious," or, as it is in the Greek, it is the "power of his glory." It

is manifestly the power of the great and glorious God, and it tends to promote his glory, and to show forth his praise.

Unto all patience - So that you may be enabled to bear all your trials without complaining. It is only the power of God that can enable us to do that.

And long-suffering - Notes, 1 Corinthians 13:4.

With joyfulness - Romans 5:3, note; 2 Corinthians 7:4, note. The Syriac version, Chrysostom, and a few manuscripts attach this to the following verse, and read it: "With joyfulness giving thanks to the Father," etc. The only difference is in the pointing, and either reading makes good sense.

Verse 12

Giving thanks to the Father - This is another mode by which we may "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing" Colossians 1:10; to wit, by rendering appropriate thanks to God for his mercy. The particular point which the apostle here says demanded thanksgiving was, that they had been called from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. This had been done by the special mercy of the Father who had provided the plan of salvation, and had sent his Son to redeem them. The connection shows that the word "Father" refers, in this place, not to God as the Father of his creatures, but to the Father as distinguished from the Son. It is the "Father" who has translated us into the kingdom of the "Son." Our special thanks are due to the "Father" in this, as he is represented as the great Author of the whole plan of salvation - as he who sent his Son to redeem us.

Who hath made us meet - The word used here - ἱκανόω hikanoō- means properly to make sufficient, from ἱκανός hikanos- sufficient, abundant, much. The word conveys the idea of having sufficient or enough to accomplish anything; see it explained in the notes at 2 Corinthians 3:6. The verb is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. In its use here, there seems to be implied the idea of conferring the privilege or the ability to be thus made the partakers of the kingdom, and the idea also of rendering us fit for it. The sense is, he has conferred on us grace sufficient to make it proper that we should partake of the blessings of his kingdom. In regard to this "fitness" or "meetness" for that kingdom, we may remark:

(1) that it does not mean that we are rendered fit by our own merits, or by anything which we have done; for it is expressly said that it is God who has thus rendered us "meet" for it. No one, by his own merits, even made himself fit for heaven. His good works cannot be an equivalent for the

eternal rewards of heaven; nor is the heart when unrenewed, even in the best state, fit for the society and the employments of heaven. There is no adaptedness of such a heart, however amiable and however refined, to the pure spiritual joys of the upper world. Those joys are the joys of religion, of the love of God, of pleasure in holiness; and the unrenewed heart can never be wrought up to a fitness to enter into those joys. Yet.

(2) there is a fitness or meetness which Christians possess for heaven. It consists in two things. First, in their having complied with the conditions on which God promises heaven, so that, although they have no merit in themselves, and no fitness by their own works, they have that meetness which results from having complied with the terms of favor. They have truly repented of their sins, and believed in the Redeemer; and they are thus in the proper state of mind to receive the mercy of God; for, according to the terms of mercy, there is a propriety that pardon should be bestowed on the penitent, and peace on the believing. A child that is truly brokenhearted for a fault, is in a fit state of mind to be forgiven; a proud, and obstinate, and rebellious child, is not. Secondly, there is, in fact, a fitness in the Christian for the participation of the inheritance of the saints in light. He has a state of feeling that is adapted to that. There is a congruity between his feelings and heaven - a state of mind that can be satisfied with nothing but heaven. He has in his heart substantially the same principles which reign in heaven; and he is suited to find happiness only in the same objects in which the inhabitants of heaven do, He loves the same God and Saviour; has pleasure in the same truths; prefers, as they do, holiness to sin; and, like the inhabitants of heaven, he would choose to seek his pleasure in holy living, rather than in the ways of vanity. His preferences are all on the side of holiness and virtue; and, with such preferences, he is fitted for the enjoyments of heaven. In character, views, feelings, and preferences, therefore, the Christian is made suitable to participate in the employments and joys of the saints in light.

To be partakers of the inheritance - The privileges of religion are often represented as an heirship, or an inheritance; see the notes at Romans 8:17.

Of the saints in light - Called in Colossians 1:13, “the kingdom of his dear Son.” This is a kingdom of light, as opposed to the kingdom of darkness in which they formerly were. In the East, and particularly in

Persia, there prevailed early the belief that there were two great kingdoms in the universe - that of light, and that of darkness. We find traces of this opinion in the Scriptures, where the kingdom of God is called "light," and that of Satan is called "darkness." These are, of course, figurative expressions; but they convoy important truth. Light, in the Scriptures, is the emblem of holiness, knowledge, happiness; and all these are found in the kingdom over which God presides, and of which Christians are the heirs. Accordingly, we find the word "light" often used to describe this kingdom. Thus, it is said of God, who presides over it, that he "is light, and in him is no darkness at all," 1 John 1:5; of Christ, that he is "the light of man," John 1:4; that he is "the true light," John 1:9; that he is "the light of the world," John 8:12; compare John 12:35; Luke 2:32. The angels of that kingdom are "angels of light," 2 Corinthians 11:14. Those who compose that kingdom on earth are "the children of light," Luke 16:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5. And all the descriptions of that kingdom in heaven represent it as filled with light and glory, Isaiah 60:19; Revelation 21:23; Revelation 22:5.

Verse 13

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness - The power exerted over us in that dark kingdom to which we formerly belonged - the kingdom of Satan. The characteristic of this empire is darkness - the emblem of:

(1)sin;

(2)error;

(3)misery and death.

Over us, by nature, these things had uncontrollable power; but now we are delivered from them, and brought to the enjoyment of the privileges of those who are connected with the kingdom of light. Darkness is often used to represent the state in which men are by nature; compare Luke 1:79; Acts 26:18; Romans 13:12; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 2:8.

And hath translated us - The word rendered here "translated" is often used in the sense of removing a people from one country to another; see Josephus, *Ant*. ix. 11. 1. It means, here, that they who are Christians have been transferred from one kingdom to another, as if a people were thus removed. They become subjects of a new kingdom, are under different laws, and belong to a different community. This change is made in regeneration, by which we pass from the kingdom of darkness to the

kingdom of light; from the empire of sin, ignorance, and misery, to one of holiness, knowledge, and happiness. No change, therefore, in a man‘s life is so important as this; and no words can suitably express the gratitude which they should feel who are thus transferred from the empire of darkness to that of light.

Verse 14

In whom we have redemption; - See this explained in the notes at Ephesians 1:7. The passage here proves that we obtain forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ; but it does not prove that this is all that we obtain through that blood.

Verse 15

Who is the image of the invisible God - εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου eikōn tou Theou tou aoratouThe objects. here, as it is in the parallel place in Ephesians 1:20-23, is to give a just view of the exaltation of the Redeemer. It is probable that, in both cases, the design is to meet some erroneous opinion on this subject that prevailed in those churches, or among those that claimed to be teachers there. See the Introduction to this Epistle, and compare the notes at Ephesians 1:20-23. For the meaning of the phrase occurring here, “the image of the invisible God,” see the Hebrews 1:3, note, and 2 Corinthians 4:4, note. The meaning is, that he represents to mankind the perfections of God, as an image, figure, or drawing does the object which it is made to resemble. See the word “image” - εἰκὼν eikōn- explained in the notes at Hebrews 10:1. It properly denotes that which is a copy or delineation of a thing; which accurately and fully represents it, in contradistinction from a rough sketch, or outline; compare Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 11:7; 1 Corinthians 15:49.

The meaning here is, that the being and perfections of God are accurately and fully represented by Christ. In what respects particularly he was thus a representative of God, the apostle proceeds to state in the following verses, to wit, in his creative power, in his eternal existence, in his heirship over the universe, in the fulness that dwelt in him. This cannot refer to him merely as incarnate, for some of the things affirmed of him pertained to him before his incarnation; and the idea is, that in all things Christ fairly represents to us the divine nature and perfections. God is manifest to us through him; 1 Timothy 3:16. We see God in him as we see an object in that which is in all respects an exact copy of it. God is invisible. No eye has seen him, or can see him; but in what Christ is, and has done in

the works of creation and redemption, we have a fair and full representation of what God is; see the notes at John 1:18; John 14:9, note.

The first-born of every creature - Among all the creatures of God, or over all his creation, occupying the rank and pro-eminence of the first-born. The first-born, or the oldest son, among the Hebrews as elsewhere, had special privileges. He was entitled to a double portion of the inheritance. It has been, also, and especially in oriental countries, a common thing for the oldest son to succeed to the estate and the title of his father. In early times, the first-born son was the officiating priest in the family, in the absence or on the death of the father. There can be no doubt that the apostle here has reference to the usual distinctions and honors conferred on the first-born, and means to say that, among all the creatures of God, Christ occupied a pre-eminence similar to that. He does not say that, in all respects, he resembled the first-born in a family; nor does he say that he himself was a creature, for the point of his comparison does not turn on these things, and what he proceeds to affirm respecting him is inconsistent with the idea of his being a created being himself.

He that "created all things that are in heaven and that are in earth," was not himself created. That the apostle did not mean to represent him as a creature, is also manifest from the reason which he assigns why he is called the first-born. "He is the image of God, and the first-born of every creature, for - ὅτι hoti- by him were all things created." That is, he sustains the elevated rank of the first-born, or a high eminence over the creation, because by him "all things were created in heaven and in earth." The language used here, also, does not fairly imply that he was a creature, or that he was in nature and rank one of those in relation to whom it is said he was the first-born. It is true that the word "first-born" - πρωτότοκος prōtotokos- properly means the first-born child of a father or mother, Matthew 1:25; Luke 2:7; or the first-born of animals. But two things are also to be remarked in regard to the use of the word:

(1) It does not necessarily imply that anyone is born afterward in the family, for it would be used of the first-born, though an only child; and,

(2) it is used to denote one who is chief, or who is highly distinguished and pre-eminent. Thus, it is employed in Romans 8:29, "That he might be the first-born among many brethren." So, in Colossians 1:18, it is said that

he was “the first-born from the dead;” not that he was literally the first that was raised from the dead, which was not the fact, but that he might be pre-eminent among those that are raised; compare Exodus 4:22. The meaning, then, is, that Christ sustains the most exalted rank in the universe; he is pre-eminent above all others; he is at the head of all things. The expression does not mean that he was “begotten before all creatures,” as it is often explained, but refers to the simple fact that he sustains the highest rank over the creation. He is the Son of God. He is the heir of all things. All other creatures are also the “offspring of God;” but he is exalted as the Son of God above all.

(This clause has been variously explained. The most commonly received, and, as we think, best supported opinion, is that which renders πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως prōtotokos pasēs ktiseōs“begotten before all creation.” This most natural and obvious sense would have been more readily admitted, had it not been supposed hostile to certain views on the sonship of Christ. Some explain πρωτότοκος prōtotokosactively, and render “first begetter or producer of all things,” which gives, at all events, a sense consistent with truth and with the context, which immediately assigns as the reason of Christ being styled πρωτότοκος prōtotokosthe clause beginning ὁτι εν αυτω εκτισθη hoti en autō ektisthē“For by him were all things created.” Others, with the author explain the word figuratively, of pre-eminence or lordship. To this view however, there are serious objections.

It seems not supported by sufficient evidence. No argument can be drawn from Colossians 1:18 until it is proved that “firstborn from the dead,” does not mean the first that was raised to die no more, which Doddridge affirms to be “the easiest, surest, most natural sense, in which the best commentators are agreed.” Nor is the argument from Romans 8:29 satisfactory. “ Πρωτότοκος Prōtotokossays Bloomfield, at the close of an admirable note on this verse, “is not well taken by Whitby and others, in a figurative sense, to denote ‹Lord of all things, since the word is never so used, except in reference to primogeniture. And although, in Romans 8:29, we have τον ρωτοτοκος εν πολλοις αδελφοις ton prōtotokos en pollois adelphoisyet there his followers are represented not as his creatures, but as his brethren. On which, and other accounts, the interpretation, according to which we have here a strong testimony to the eternal filiation of our Saviour

is greatly preferable; and it is clear that Colossians 1:15, Colossians 1:18 are illustrative of the nature, as Colossians 1:16-17 are an evidence of the pre-existence and divinity of Christ.")

Verse 16

For by him were all things created - This is one of the reasons why he is called "the image of God," and the "first-born." He makes God known to us by his creative power, and by the same power in creation shows that he is exalted over all things as the Son of God. The phrase which is used here by the apostle is universal. He does not declare that he created all things in the spiritual kingdom of God, or that he arranged the events of the gospel dispensation, as Socinians suppose (see Crellius); but that every thing was created by him. A similar form of expression occurs in John 1:3; see the notes at that verse. There could not possibly be a more explicit declaration that the universe was created by Christ, than this. As if the simple declaration in the most comprehensive terms were not enough, the apostle goes into a specification of things existing in heaven and earth, and so varies the statement as if to prevent the possibility of mistake.

That are in heaven - The division of the universe into "heaven and earth" is natural and obvious, for it is the one that is apparent; see Genesis 1:1. Heaven, then, according to this division, will embrace all the universe, except the earth; and will include the heavenly bodies and their inhabitants, the distant worlds, as well as heaven, more strictly so called, where God resides. The declaration, then, is, that all things that were in the worlds above us were the work of his creative power.

And that are in earth - All the animals, plants, minerals, waters, hidden fires, etc. Everything which the earth contains.

Visible and invisible - We see but a small part of the universe. The angels we cannot see. The inhabitants of distant worlds we cannot see. Nay, there are multitudes of worlds which, even with the best instruments, we cannot see. Yet all these things are said to have been created by Christ.

Whether they be thrones - Whether those invisible things be thrones. The reference is to the ranks of angels, called here thrones, dominions, etc.; see the notes at Ephesians 1:21. The word "thrones" does not occur in the parallel place in Ephesians; but there can be no doubt that the reference is to an order of angelic beings, as those to whom dominion and power were

intrusted. The other orders enumerated here are also mentioned in Ephesians 1:21.

All things were created by him - The repetition, and the varied statement here, are designed to express the truth with emphasis, and so that there could not be the possibility of mistake or misapprehension; compare the notes at John 1:1-3. The importance of the doctrine, and the fact that it was probably denied by false teachers, or that they held philosophical opinions that tended to its practical denial, are the reasons why the apostle dwells so particularly on this point.

And for him - For his glory; for such purposes as he designed. There was a reference to himself in the work of creation, just as, when a man builds a house, it is with reference to some important purposes which he contemplates, pertaining to himself. The universe was built by the Greater to be his own property; to be the theater on which he would accomplish his purposes, and display his perfections. Particularly the earth was made by the Son of God to be the place where he would become incarnate, and exhibit the wonders of redeeming love. There could not be a more positive declaration than this, that the universe was created by Christ; and, if so, he is divine. The work of creation is the exertion of the highest power of which we can form a conception, and is often appealed to in the Scriptures by God to prove that he is divine, in contradistinction from idols. If, therefore, this passage be understood literally, it settles the question about the divinity of Christ. Accordingly, Unitarians have endeavored to show that the creation here referred to is a moral creation; that it refers to the arrangement of affairs in the Christian church, or to the kingdom of God on earth, and not to the creation of the material universe. This interpretation has been adopted even by Grotius, who supposes that it refers to the arrangement by which all things are fitted up in the new creation, and by which angels and men are reconciled. By "the things in heaven and in earth," some Unitarian expositors have understood the Jews and the Gentiles, who are reconciled by the gospel; others, by the things in heaven, understand the angels, and, by the things on earth, men, who are brought into harmony by the gospel plan of salvation. But the objections to this interpretation are insuperable:

(1) The word "created" is not used in this sense properly, and cannot be. That it may mean to arrange, to order, is true; but it is not used in the sense of reconciling, or of bringing discordant things into harmony. To the great

mass of men, who have no theory to support, it would be understood in its natural and obvious sense, as denoting the literal creation.

(2) the assertion is, that the "creative" power of Christ was exerted on "all things." It is not in reference to angels only, or to men, or to Jews, or to Gentiles; it is in relation to "everything in heaven and in earth;" that is, to the whole universe. Why should so universal a declaration be supposed to denote merely the intelligent creation?

(3) with what propriety, or in what tolerable sense, can the expression "things in heaven and things in earth" be applied to the Jews and Gentiles? In what sense can it be said that they are "visible and invisible?" And, if the language could be thus used, how can the fact that Christ is the means of reconciling them be a reason why he should be called "the image of the invisible God?"

(4) if it be understood of a moral creation, of a renovation of things, of a change of nature, how can this be applied to the angels? Has Christ created them anew? Has he changed their nature and character? Good angels cannot need a spiritual renovation; and Christ did not come to convert fallen angels, and to bring them into harmony with the rest of the universe.

(5) the phrase here employed, of "creating all things in heaven and on earth," is never used elsewhere to denote a moral or spiritual creation. It appropriately expresses the creation of the universe. It is language strikingly similar to that used by Moses, Genesis 1:1; and it would be so understood by the great mass of mankind. If this be so, then Christ is divine, and we can see in this great work a good reason why he is called "the image of the invisible God," and why he is at the head of the universe - the first-born of the creation. It is because, through him, God is made known to us in the work of creation; and because, being the great agent in that work, there is a propriety that he should occupy this position at the head of all things.

Verse 17

And he is before all things - As he must be, if he created all things. Those who regard this as referring to a moral creation, interpret it as meaning that he has the pre-eminence over all things; not as referring to his

pre-existence. But the fair and proper meaning of the word "before" (πρὸ pro) is, that he was before all things in the order of existence; compare Matthew 8:29; John 11:55; John 13:1; Acts 5:36; Acts 21:38; 2 Corinthians 12:2. It is equivalent to saying that he was eternal - for he that had an existence before any thing was created, must be eternal. Thus, it is equivalent to the phrase, "In the beginning;" Genesis 1:1; compare the notes at John 1:1.

And by him all things subsist - Or are sustained; see the notes at Hebrews 1:3. The meaning is, that they are kept in the present state; their existence, order, and arrangement are continued by his power. If unsupported by him, they would fall into disorder, or sink back to nothing. If this be the proper interpretation, then it is the ascription to Christ of infinite power - for nothing less could be sufficient to uphold the universe; and of infinite wisdom - for this is needed to preserve the harmonious action of the suns and systems of which it is composed. None could do this but one who is divine; and hence we see the reason why he is represented as the image of the invisible God. He is the great and glorious and everactive agent by whom the perfections of God are made known.

Verse 18

And he is the head of the body, the church - Notes Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 5:23, note.

Who is the beginning - In all things - alike in the work of creation and in the church. He is the fountain of authority and power, and commences everything that is designed to uphold the order of the universe, and to save the world.

The first-born from the dead - At the head of those who rise from their graves. This does not mean literally that he was the first who rose from the dead for he himself raised up Lazarus and others, and the bodies of saints arose at his crucifixion; but it means that he had the pre-eminence among them all; he was the most illustrious of those who will be raised from the dead, and is the head over them all. Especially, he had this pre-eminence in the resurrection in this respect, that he was the first who rose from death to immortality. Others who were raised undoubtedly died again. Christ rose to die no more; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 15:20.

That in all things - Margin, "among all." The Greek will bear either construction, and either will accord with the scope of the apostle's remarks. If the former, it means that he is at the head of all things - the universe; if

the latter, that he is chief among those who rose from the dead. Each of these is true, but the scope of the passage seems rather to require us to understand this of everything, and to mean that all the arrangements respecting him were such as to give him supremacy over the universe.

He might have the pre-eminence - Greek, "might be first" - πρωτεύων prōteuōnThat is, might be first in rank, dignity, honor, power. He has the pre-eminence:

(1)as over the universe which he has formed - as its Creator and Proprietor;

(2)as chief among those who shall rise from the dead - since he first rose to die no more, and their resurrection depends on him;

(3)as head of the church - all synods, councils, and governments being subject to him, and he alone having a right to give law to his people; and,

(4)in the affections of his friends - being in their affections and confidence superior to all others.

Verse 19

For it pleased the Father - The words "the Father" are not in the original, but they are not improperly supplied. Some word must be understood, and as the apostle in Colossians 1:12 referred to "the Father" as having a claim to the thanks of his people for what he had done, and as the great favor for which they ought to be thankful is that which he immediately specifies - the exaltation of Christ, it is not improper to suppose that this is the word to be understood here. The meaning is, that he chose to confer on his Son such a rank, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence, and that there might be in him "all fulness." Hence, by his appointment, he was the agent in creation, and hence he is placed over all things as the head of the church.

That in him should all fulness dwell - That in him there should be such dignity, authority, power, and moral excellence as to be fitted to the work of creating the world, redeeming his people, and supplying everything needful for their salvation. On the word "fullness," see John 1:14, note, 16, note; compare Romans 11:12, Romans 11:25; Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:23; Ephesians 3:19; Colossians 2:9. This is to us a most precious truth. We have a Saviour who is in no respect deficient in wisdom, power, and grace to

redeem and save us. There is nothing necessary to be done in our salvation which he is not qualified to do; there is nothing which we need to enable us to perform our duties, to meet temptation, and to bear trial, which he is not able to impart. In no situation of trouble and danger will the church find that there is a deficiency in him; in no enterprise to which she can put her hands will there be a lack of power in her great Head to enable her to accomplish what he calls her to. We may go to him in all our troubles, weaknesses temptations, and needs, and may be supplied from his fullness - just as, if we were thirsty, we might go to an ocean of pure water and drink.

Verse 20

And having made peace - Margin, "making." The Greek will bear either. The meaning is, that by his atonement he produces reconciliation between those who were alienated from each other; see the notes at Ephesians 2:14. It does not mean here that he had actually effected peace by his death, but that he had laid the foundation for it; he had done that which would secure it.

By the blood of his cross - By his blood shed on the cross. That blood, making atonement for sin, was the means of making reconciliation between God and man. On the meaning of the word "blood," as used in this connection, see the notes at Romans 3:25.

By him to reconcile all things to himself - On the meaning of the word reconcile, see the Matthew 5:24, note; Romans 5:10, note, and 2 Corinthians 5:18, note. When it is said that "it pleased the Father by Christ to reconcile all things to himself," the declaration must be understood with some limitation.

(1) it relates only to those things which are in heaven and earth - for those only are specified. Nothing is said of the inhabitants of hell, whether fallen angels, or the spirits of wicked men who are there.

(2) it cannot mean that all things are actually reconciled - for that never has been true. Multitudes on earth have remained alienated from God, and have lived and died his enemies.

(3) it can mean then, only, that he had executed a plan that was adapted to this; that if fairly and properly applied, the blood of the cross was fitted to secure entire reconciliation between heaven and earth. There was no

enemy which it was not fitted to reconcile to God; there was no guilt, now producing alienation, which it could not wash away.

Whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven - That is, to produce harmony between the things in heaven and in earth; so that all things shall be reconciled to him, or so that there shalt be harmony between heaven and earth. The meaning is not, that "the things in heaven" were alienated from God, but that there was alienation in the universe which affected heaven, and the object was to produce again universal concord and love. Substantially the same sentiment is found in Ephesians 1:10; see the notes at that verse. Much has been written on the meaning of this expression, and a great variety of opinions have been entertained of it. It is best, always, unless necessity require a different interpretation, to take words in their usual signification. If that rule be adopted here," things in heaven" will refer to God and the angels, and perhaps may include the principles of the divine government, "Things on earth," will embrace men, and the various things on earth which are now at variance with God and with heaven. Between these, it is designed to produce harmony by the blood of the cross, or by the atonement. As in heaven nothing is wrong; as it is not desirable that anything should he changed there, all the change that is to take place in order to produce reconciliation, is to be on the part of men and the things of this world. The only effect of the blood of the atonement on the "things" of heaven in effecting the reconciliation is, to render it consistent for God to be at peace with sinners. The effect on earth is, to dispose the sinner to a willingness to be reconciled; to lead him to lay aside his enmity; to change his heart, and to effect a change in the views and principles prevailing on earth which are now at variance with God and his government. When this shall be done there will be harmony between heaven and earth, and an alienated world will be brought into conformity with the laws and government of the Creator.

Verse 21

And you, that were sometime alienated - In this work of reconciling heaven and earth, you at Colossae, who were once enemies of God, have been reached. The benefit of that great plan has been extended to you, and it has accomplished in you what it is designed to effect everywhere - to reconcile enemies to God. The word "sometime" here - ποτε pote- means "formerly." In common with all other men they were, by nature, in a state of enmity against God; compare the notes at Ephesians 2:1-3.

In your mind - It was not merely by wicked works, or by an evil life; it was alienation seated in the mind, and leading to wicked works. It was deliberate and purposed enmity. It was not the result of passion and excitement; it had a deeper seat, and took hold of the intellectual powers The understanding was perverse and alienated from God, and all the powers of the soul were enlisted against him. It is this fact which renders reconciliation with God so difficult. Sin has corrupted and perverted alike the moral and the intellectual powers, and thus the whole man is arrayed against his Creator; compare the notes at Ephesians 4:18.

By wicked works - The alienation of the mind showed itself by wicked works, and those works were the public evidence of the alienation; compare Ephesians 2:1-2.

Yet now hath he reconciled - Harmony has been secured between you and God, and you are brought to friendship and love. Such a change has been produced in you as to bring your minds into friendship with that of God. All the change in producing this is on the part of man, for God cannot change, and there is no reason why he should, if he could. In the work of reconciliation man lays aside his hostility to his Maker, and thus becomes his friend; see the notes at 2 Corinthians 5:18.

Verse 22

In the body of his flesh through death - The death of his body, or his death in making an atonement, has been the means of producing this reconciliation. It:

(1) removed the obstacles to reconciliation on the part of God - vindicating his truth and justice, and maintaining the principles of his government as much as if the sinner had himself suffered the penalty of the law - thus rendering it consistent for God to indulge the benevolence of his nature in pardoning sinners; and,

(2) it was the means of bringing the sinner himself to a willingness to be reconciled - furnishing the strongest possible appeal to him; leading him to reflect on the love of his Creator, and showing him his own guilt and danger. No means ever used to produce reconciliation between two alienated parties has had so much tenderness and power as those which God has adopted in the plan of salvation; and if the dying love of the Son of God fails to lead the sinner back to God, everything else will fail. The phrase "the body of his flesh" means, the body of flesh which he assumed in order

to suffer in making an atonement. The reconciliation could not have been effected but by his assuming such a body, for his divine nature could not so suffer as to make atonement for sins.

To present you - That is, before God. The object of the atonement was to enable him to present the redeemed to God freed from sin, and made holy in his sight. The whole work had reference to the glories of that day when the Redeemer and the redeemed will stand before God, and he shall present them to his Father as completely recovered from the ruins of the fall.

Holy - Made holy, or made free from sin; compare Luke 20:36.

And unblameable - Not that in themselves they will not be deserving of blame, or will not be unworthy, but that they will be purified from their sins. The word used here - ἄμωμος amōmos- means, properly "spotless, without blemish;" see Ephesians 1:4, note; Ephesians 5:27, note; Hebrews 9:4, note. It is applied to a lamb, 1 Peter 1:19; to the Savior, Hebrews 9:14, and to the church, Ephesians 1:4; Ephesians 5:27; Jude 1:24; Revelation 14:5. It does not elsewhere occur. When the redeemed enter heaven, all their sins will have been taken away; not a spot of the deep dye of inquiry will remain on their souls; Revelation 1:5; Revelation 7:14.

And unreproveable in his sight - There will be none to accuse them before God; or they will be free from all accusation. The law will not accuse them - for the death of their Redeemer has done as much to honor it as their own punishment would have done; God will not accuse them - for he has freely forgiven them; their consciences will not accuse them - for their sins will all have been taken away, and they will enjoy the favor of God as if they had not sinned; holy angels will not accuse them - for they will welcome them to their society; and even Satan will not accuse them, for he will have seen that their piety is sincere, and that they are truly what they profess to be; compare the notes at Romans 8:33-34.

Verse 23

If ye continue in the faith - In the belief of the gospel, and in holy living. If this were done, they would be presented unblameable be fore God; if not, they would not be. The meaning is, that it will be impossible to be saved unless we continue to lead lives becoming the gospel.

Grounded - On a firm foundation; see the notes at Ephesians 3:17, where the same word occurs.

And settled - Greek, "firm;" as a building is that is founded on a rock; compare Matthew 7:25.

And be not moved away from the hope of the gospel - By the arts of philosophy, and the allurements of sin.

Which was preached to every creature which is under heaven - It cannot be supposed that it was literally true that every creature under heaven had actually heard the gospel. But this may mean:

(1) That it was designed to be preached to every creature, or that the commission to make it known embraced everyone, and that, so far as the provisions of the gospel are concerned, it may be said that it was a system proclaimed to all mankind; see Mark 16:15. If a vast army, or the inhabitants of a distant province, were in rebellion against a government, and a proclamation of pardon were issued, it would not be improper to say that it was made to every one of them, though, as a matter of fact, it might not be true that everyone in the remote parts of the army or province had actually heard of it.

(2) the gospel in the time of Paul seems to have been so extensively preached, that it might be said that it was proclaimed to everybody. All known countries appear to have been visited; and so zealous and laborious had been the heralds of salvation, that it might be said that the message had been proclaimed to all the world; see Colossians 1:6; compare the notes at Matthew 24:14.

Whereof I Paul am made a minister - See the notes at Ephesians 3:1-7. Paul here pursues the same train of thought which he does in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where, having shown the exalted nature of the Redeemer, and the design of the gospel, he adverts to his own labors and sufferings in making it known. The object seems to be to show that he regarded it as the highest honor to be thus intrusted with the message of mercy to mankind, and considered it as a privilege to suffer in that cause.

Verse 24

Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you - For you as a part of the Gentile world. It was not for the Colossians alone, but he regarded himself as suffering on account of his labors in preaching to the pagan at large. His trials at Rome had come upon him because he had maintained that the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles was broken down, and that the gospel was to be preached indiscriminately to all mankind; see this illustrated in the introduction, Section 5.

And fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ - That which I lack of coming up to the sufferings which Christ endured in the cause of the church. The apostle seems to mean:

(1)that be suffered in the same cause as that for which Christ suffered;

(2)that he endured the same kind of sufferings, to some extent, in reproaches, persecutions, and opposition from the world;

(3)that he had not yet suffered as much as Christ did in this cause, and, though be had suffered greatly, yet there was much that was lacking to make him equal in this respect to the Saviour; and,

(4)that he felt that it was an object to be earnestly desired to be made in all respects just like Christ, and that in his present circumstances he was fast filling up that which was lacking, so that he would have a more complete resemblance to him.

What he says here is based on the leading desire of his soul - the great principle of his life - to be just like Christ; alike in moral character, in suffering, and in destiny; see the notes at Philemon 3:10. Having this strong wish, he had been led to pursue a course of life which conducted him through trials strongly resembling those which Christ himself endured; and, as fast as possible, he was filling up that in which he now fell short. He does not mean that there was anything lacking or deficient in the sufferings which Christ endured in making an atonement which was to be supplied by his followers, so that their merits might be added to his in order to secure the salvation of men, as the Romanists seem to suppose; but that there was still much lacking on his part before he should be entirely conformed to the Saviour in his sufferings, and that his present condition was such as rapidly to fill that up. This seems to me to be the fair meaning of this expressions though not the one commonly given. The usual interpretation is, "that which remains to me of affliction to be endured in the cause of Christ." But this seems to me to be cold and tame, and not to suit the genius of Paul.

In my flesh - In bodily sufferings.

For his body's sake, which is the church - See the notes at Ephesians 1:23.

Verse 25

According to the dispensation of God - The arrangement which God has made. That is, he designed that the gospel should be preached to the

Gentiles, and, in accordance with that arrangement, he has called me to be a minister. Notes, Ephesians 3:2.

To fulfil the word of God - Margin, "fully to preach." The Greek is, "to fill up the word of God;" the meaning is, "fully to teach and promulgate the gospel;" compare the notes at Romans 15:19.

Verse 26

Even the mystery - To make that mystery fully known. See this explained in the notes at Ephesians 3:2-9. The great doctrine that salvation was to be proclaimed to all mankind, Paul says, had been concealed for many generations. Hence, it was called a mystery, or a hidden truth.

But now is made manifest to his saints - It was communicated especially to the apostles who were appointed to proclaim it, and through them to all the saints. Paul says that he regarded himself as specially called to make this truth known, as far as possible, to mankind.

Verse 27

To whom - To the saints.

God would make known - "Willed (Greek) to make known;" that is, he was pleased to make this known. It was concealed in his bosom until he chose to reveal it to his apostles. It was a doctrine which the Jewish people did not understand; Ephesians 3:5-6.

What is the riches of the glory of this mystery - The rich glory of this great, long-concealed truth. On the use of the word "riches," see the notes at Romans 2:4. It is a favorite word with the apostle Paul to denote that which is valuable, or that which abounds. The meaning here is, that the truth that the gospel was to be preached to all mankind, was a truth abounding in glory.

Among the Gentiles - That is, the glory of this truth is manifested by the effects which it has produced among the Gentiles.

Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory - Or, Christ among you. Margin. The meaning is, that the whole of that truth, so full of glory, and so rich and elevated in its effect, is summed up in this - that Christ is revealed among you as the source of the hope of glory in a better world. This was the great truth which so animated the heart and fired the zeal of the apostle Paul. The wonderful announcement had burst on his mind like a flood of day, that the offer of salvation was not to be confined, as he had once supposed, to the Jewish people, but that all men were now placed on a level; that they had a common Saviour; that the same heaven was now

opened for all, and that there were none so degraded and vile that they might not have the offer of life as well as others. This great truth Paul burned to communicate to the whole world; and for holding it, and in making it known, he had involved himself in all the difficulties which he had with his own countrymen; had suffered from want, and peril, and toil; and had finally been made a captive, and was expecting to be put to death. It was just such a truth as was fitted to fire such a mind as that of Paul, and to make it; known as worth all the sacrifices and toils which he endured. Life is well sacrificed in making known such a doctrine to the world.

Verse 28

Whom we preach, warning every man - This does not mean warning of danger, but "admonishing all of the claims of the gospel to attention." Our word warn is commonly used in the sense of cautioning against danger. The Greek word here means to put in mind; to admonish; to exhort. The idea of the apostle is, that he made it his great business to bring the offers of the gospel fairly before the mind of every man. As it had the same claims on all; as it might be freely offered to all, and as it furnished the only hope of glory, he made it the object of his life to apprize every man of it, as far as he could.

And teaching every man - Paul made it his business to instruct men, as well as to exhort them. Exhortation and warning are of little use where there is not sound instruction and a careful inculcation of the truth. It is one of the duties of the ministry to instruct men in those truths of which they were before ignorant; see Matthew 28:19; 2 Timothy 2:25.

In all wisdom - Compare the Matthew 10:16 note; Colossians 1:9 note. The meaning is, that he and his fellow-laborers endeavored to manifest true wisdom in the method in which they instructed others.

That we may present every man - When we come to appear before God; Notes, 2 Corinthians 11:2. Paul was anxious that no one to whom this gospel was preached should be lost. He believed it to be adapted to save every man; and as he expected to meet all his hearers at the bar of God, his aim was to present them made perfect by means of that gospel which he preached.

Verse 29

Whereunto I also labour - See the notes at 1 Corinthians 15:10.

Striving - Greek agonizing. He taxed all his energies to accomplish this, as the wrestlers strove for the mastery in the Grecian games.

According to his working - Not by my own strength, but by the power which God alone can give; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 15:10.

Remarks On Colossians 1:2-8. It should be to us a subject of unfeigned gratitude to God; when others are faithful to their high calling, and when they so live as to adorn the blessed gospel. In all their faith, and love, and joy, we should find occasion for thankfulness to God. We should not envy it, or be disposed to charge it to wrong motives, or suspect it of insincerity or hypocrisy; but should welcome every account of the zeal and faithfulness of those who bear the Christian name - no matter who the persons are, or with what denomination of Christians they may be connected. Especially is this true in relation to our friends, or to those for whose salvation we have labored. The source of high, est gratitude to a Christian, in relation to his friends, should be, that they act as becomes the friends of God; the purest joy that can swell the bosom of a minister of Christ, is produced by the evidence that they to whom he has ministered are advancing in knowledge and love.

2. We should earnestly pray that they who have been much favored should be prospered more and more; Colossians 1:9-11.

3. It is a good time to pray for Christians when they are already prosperous, and are distinguished for zeal and love; Colossians 1:9-11. We have then encouragement to do it. We feel that our prayers will not be in vain. For a man that is doing well, we feel encouraged to pray that he may do still better. For a Christian who has true spiritual joy, we are encouraged to pray that he may have more joy. For one who is aiming to make advances in the knowledge of God, we are encouraged to pray that he may make still higher advances; and if, therefore; we wish others to pray for us, we should, show them by our efforts that there is some encouragement for them to do it.

4. Let us cherish with suitable gratitude the remembrance of the goodness of God, who has translated us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son; Colossians 1:12-13. By nature we, like others, were under the power of darkness. In that kingdom of sin, and error, and misery, we were born and reared, until God, in great compassion, brought us out from it, and made us heirs of light. Now, if we are true Christians, we belong to a kingdom of holiness, and knowledge, and happiness. No words

can express appropriately the goodness of God in thus making us heirs of light; and not an hour of our lives should pass without a thoughtful remembrance of his mercy.

5. In the affections of our hearts let the Saviour in all things have the pre-eminence; Colossians 1:15-18. He is the image of God; and when we think of him, we see what God is - how holy, pure, benevolent. He is the first-born of all things; the Son of God; exalted to the highest seat in the universe. When we look on the sun, moon, and stars, let us remember that he created them all. When we think of the angels, let us remember that they are the workmanship of his hands. When we look on the earth - the floods, the rivers, the hills, let us remember that all these were made by his power. The vast universe is still sustained by him. Its beautiful order and harmony are preserved by him; and all its movements are under his control. So the church is under him. It is subject to his command; receives its laws from his lips, and is bound to do his will. Over all councils and synods; over all rule and authority in the church, Christ is the Head; and whatever may be ordained by man, his will is to be obeyed. So, when we think of the resurrection, Christ is chief. He first rose to return to death no more; he rose as the pledge that his people should also rise. As Christ is thus head over all things, so let him be first in the affections of our hearts; as it is designed that in every thing he shall have the pre-eminence, so let him have the pre-eminence in the affections of our souls. None should be loved by us as Christ is loved; and no friend, however dear, should be allowed to displace him from the supremacy in our affections.

6. In all our wants let us go to Christ; Colossians 1:19, “It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.” We do not have a need which he cannot supply; there is not a sorrow of our lives in which he cannot comfort us; not a temptation from which he cannot deliver us; not a pain which he cannot relieve, or enable us to hear. Every necessity of body or mind he can supply; and we never can go to him, in any circumstance of life in which we can possibly be placed, where we shall fail of consolation and support because Christ is not able to help us. True piety learns day by day to live more by simple dependence on the Saviour. As we advance in holiness, we become more and more sensible of our weakness and

insufficiency, and more and more disposed to live by the faith of the Son of God."

7. By religion we become united with the angels; Colossians 1:20. Harmony is produced between heaven and earth. Alienated worlds are reconciled again, and from jarring elements there is rearing one great and harmonious empire. The work of the atonement is designed to remove what separated earth from heaven; men from angels; man from God. The redeemed have substantially the same feelings now, which they have who are around the throne of God; and though we are far inferior to them in rank, yet we shall be united with them in affection and purpose, for ever and ever. What a glorious work is that of the gospel! It reconciles and harmonizes distant worlds, and produces concord and love in millions of hearts which but for that would have been alienated forever.

8. By religion we become fitted for heaven; Colossians 1:12, Colossians 1:22. We are made "meet" to enter there; we shall be presented there unblamable and unreprovable. No one will accuse us before the throne of God. Nor Satan, nor our own consciences nor our fellowmen will then urge that we ought not to be admitted to heaven. Redeemed and pardoned, renewed and sanctified, the universe will be satisfied that we ought to be saved, and will rejoice. Satan will no longer charge the friends of Jesus with insincerity and hypocrisy; our own minds will be no longer troubled with doubts and fears; and holy angels will welcome us to their presence. Not a voice will be lifted up in reproach or condemnation, and the Universal Father will stretch out his arms and press to his bosom the returning prodigals. Clothed in the white robes of salvation, we shall be welcome even in heaven, and the universe will rejoice that we are there.

9. It is a privilege to suffer for the welfare of the church; Colossians 1:24. Paul regarded it as such and rejoiced in the trials which came upon him in the cause of religion. The Saviour so, regarded it, and shrank not from the great sorrows involved in the work of saving his people. We may suffer much in promoting the same object. We may be exposed to persecution and death. We may be called to part with all we have - to leave country and friends and home, to go and preach the gospel to benighted people. On a foreign shore, far from all that we hold dear on earth, we may

lie down and die, and our grave, unmarked by sculptured marble, may be soon forgotten. But to do good; to defend truth; to promote virtue; to save the souls of the perishing, is worth all which it costs, and he who accomplishes these things by exchanging for them earthly comforts, and even life, has made a wise exchange. The universe gains by it in happiness; and the benevolent heart should rejoice that there is such a gain, though attended with our individual and personal suffering.

10. Ministers ave a noble office Colossians 1:24-29. It is their privilege to make known to men the most glorious truths that can come before the human mind; truths which were hidden from ages and generations, but which are now revealed by the gospel. These great truths are intrusted to the ministry to explain and defend, and are by them to be carried around the world. The ministers of religion strive not for gold and honor and worldly pleasures; they strive in the noble effort to show to every man that he has a Saviour; that there is a heaven to which he may come; and to present everyone perfect before God. With all its sacrifices and self-denials, therefore, it is an inestimable privilege to he a minister of the gospel - for there is no man who diffuses through a community so much solid happiness; there is no one, the result of whose labors reaches so far into future ages. To a benevolent heart there is no higher privilege than to be permitted to go to every man - to the poor, the tempted, the oppressed, the slave, the penitent, and the dying sinner, and to say to him that he has a Saviour, that Christ died for him, and that, if he will have it so, he may have a home in heaven.

No matter whom he meets; no matter how debased and degraded he may be to whom he ministers, no matter though it be the poor slave, or the lonely wanderer on pathless sands, or the orphan, or the outcast, the herald of salvation may tell him that there is a heaven for him - a Saviour who died for him - a God who is ready to pardon and save his soul. In such a work it is a privilege to exhaust our strength; in the performance of the duties of such an office, it is an honor to be permitted to wear out life itself. Doing this, a man when he comes to die will feel that he has not lived in vain; and whatever self-denial he may practice in it; however much comfort, or however many friends he may forsake, all these things will give him no pang of regret when from a bed of death he looks out on the eternal world.

COLOSSIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

This entire chapter may be regarded as designed to guard the Colossians against the seductive influence of the false philosophy which tended to draw them away from the gospel. It is evident from the chapter that there were at Colossae, or in the vicinity, professed instructors in religion, who taught an artful and plausible philosophy, adapting themselves to the prejudices of the people, and inculcating opinions that tended to lead them away from the truths which they had embraced. These teachers were probably of Jewish origin, and had adopted many of the arts of a plausible rhetoric, from the prevailing philosophy in that region. See the Introduction, Section 4. Against the seductive influences of this philosophy, it is the design of this chapter to guard them, and though the apostle does not seem to have intended to pursue an exact logical order; yet the argument in the chapter can be conveniently regarded as consisting of two parts: A statement of the reasons why they should be on their guard against the arts of that philosophy; and a specification of the particular errors to which they were exposed:

I. A statement of the reasons why they should not allow themselves to be drawn away by the influence of the prevalent philosophy; Colossians 2:1-15. This also consists of two parts.

A.The importance of the subject; Colossians 2:1-7.

(1)the apostle felt great solicitude for them, and for all whom he had not seen, that they might hold the truth in reference to the divine existence and perfections; Colossians 2:1-2.

(2)all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were in Christ, and it was, therefore, of the greatest importance to hold to the truth respecting him; Colossians 2:3.

(3)they were in danger of being led astray by enticing words; Colossians 2:4.

(4)Paul says that he was with them in spirit, and he exhorted them, therefore, to remain rooted and grounded in the doctrines which they had received respecting the Saviour; Colossians 2:5-7.

B.Reasons why they should be steadfast and not drawn away by the influence of false philosophy; Colossians 2:8-15.

(1)the danger of depending on traditions and worldly principles in religion; of being "spoiled" or robbed by philosophy; Colossians 2:8.

(2)all that we need to desire is to be found in Christ; Colossians 2:9-10.

(3)we have received through him the true circumcision - the putting away our sins; Colossians 2:11.

(4)we have been buried with him in baptism, and have solemnly devoted ourselves to him, Colossians 2:12.

(5)we have been quickened by him; our sins have been forgiven; and everything that hindered our salvation has been taken out of the way by him, and he has triumphed over our foes; Colossians 2:13-15.

II. Specification of particular errors to which they were exposed, or of particular things to be avoided; Colossians 2:16-23.

The chapter closes Colossians 2:20-23 with an earnest exhortation wholly to avoid these things; not to touch or taste or handle them. However plausible the pretences might be on which they were urged; whatever appearance of wisdom or humility there might be, the apostle assures them that there was no real honor in them, and that they were wholly to be avoided.

Verse 1

For I would that ye knew - I wish you knew or fully understood. He supposes that this would deeply affect them if they understood the solicitude which he had had on their account.

What great conflict - Margin, fear, or care. The Greek word is "agony" - ἀγῶνα agōnaIt is not, however, the word rendered "agony" in Luke 22:44 - ἀγωνία agōnia- though that is derived from this. The word is rendered conflict in Philemon 1:30; contention, 1 Thessalonians 2:2; fight, 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7; and race, Hebrews 12:1. It properly refers to the combats, contests, struggles, efforts at the public games; the toil and conflict to obtain a victory. It refers here to the anxious care, the mental conflict, the earnest solicitude which he had in their behalf, in view of the dangers to which they were exposed from Judaizing Christians and Pagan philosophy. This mental struggle resembled that which the combatants had

at the public games; compare the 1 Corinthians 9:25, note, 27, note. And for them at Laodicea For Christians there, who were exposed to similar danger. Laodicea was the capital of Phrygia, in Asia Minor, and a little south of Colossae. See Introduction, Section 1. 6. Notes, Colossians 4:16. There was a church early planted there - the "lukewarm" church mentioned in Revelation 3:14. Being in the vicinity of Colossae, the church there would be exposed to the same perils, and the rebuke in Revelation 3:14, showed that the fears of Paul were well founded, and that the arts of the false teachers were too successful.

And for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh - That is, evidently in that region. He had, doubtless, a general solicitude for all Christians, but his remark here has reference to those in the neighborhood of the church at Colossae, or in that church. On the question which has been raised, whether this proves that the apostle Paul had never been at Colossae or Laodicea, see Introduction, Section 2,4. This passage does not seem to me to prove that he had not been there. It may mean that he had great solicitude for those Christians there whom he knew, and for all others there, or in the vicinity, even though he was not personally acquainted with them. He may refer:

(1) to some churches in the neighborhood formed since he was there; or.

(2) to strangers who had come in there since he was with them; or.

(3) to those who had been converted since he was there, and with whom he had no personal acquaintance. For all these he would feel the same solicitude, for they were all exposed to the same danger. To "see one's face in the flesh," is a Hebraism, meaning to become personally acquainted with him.

Verse 2

That their hearts might be comforted - Like all other Christians in the times of the apostles, they were doubtless exposed to trials and persecutions.

Being knit together in love - The same word which is used here (συμβιβάζω sumbibazō) occurs in Ephesians 4:16, and is rendered compacted; see the notes at that place. In Acts 9:22, it is rendered proving; Acts 16:10, assuredly gathering; 1 Corinthians 2:16, instruct; and here, and

in Colossians 2:19, knit together. It means, properly, to make to come together, and hence, refers to a firm union, as where the heart of Christians are one. Here it means that the way of comforting each other was by solid Christian friendship, and that the means of cementing that was love. It was not by a mere outward profession, or by mere speculative faith; it was by a union of affection.

And unto all riches - On the meaning of the word "riches," as used by the apostle Paul, see the notes at Romans 2:4. There is a great energy of expression here. The meaning is, that the thing referred to - "the full understanding" of the "mystery" of religion - was an invaluable possession, like abundant wealth. This passage also shows the object for which they should be united. It should be in order that they might obtain this inestimable wealth. If they were divided in affections, and split up into factions, they could not hope to secure it.

Of the full assurance of understanding - This word (πληροφορία plērophoria) means firm persuasion, settled conviction. It occurs only here and in 1 Thessalonians 1:5; Hebrews 6:11; Hebrews 10:22, and is rendered by assurance, or full assurance, in every instance. See the verb, however, in Luke 1:1; Romans 4:21; Romans 14:5; 2 Timothy 4:5, 2 Timothy 4:17. It was the desire of the apostle that they might have entire conviction of the truth of the Christian doctrines.

To the acknowledgment - So as fully and openly to acknowledge or confess this mystery.

The mystery - On the meaning of this word, see the Romans 11:25, note; Ephesians 1:9, note. The meaning is, the doctrine respecting God, which had before been concealed or hidden, but which was now revealed in the gospel. It does not mean that there was any thing unintelligible or incomprehensible respecting this doctrine when it; was made known. That might be as clear as any other truth.

Of God - Of God as he actually subsists. This does not mean that the mere fact of the existence of God was a "mystery," or a truth which had been concealed, for that was not true. But the sense plainly is, that there were truths now made known in the gospel to mankind, about the mode of the divine existence, which had not before been disclosed; and this "mystery" he wished them to retain, or fully acknowledge. The "mystery," or the hitherto unrevealed truth, related to the fact that God subsisted in more persons than one, as "Father," and as "Christ."

And of the Father - Or, rather, "even of the Father;" for so the word καὶ kai(and) is often used. The apostle does not mean that he wished them to acknowledge the hitherto unrevealed truth respecting "God' and another being called "the Father;" but respecting "God" as the "Father," or of God as" Father' and as "Christ."

And of Christ - As a person of the Godhead. What the apostle wished them to acknowledge was, the full revelation now made known respecting the essential nature of God, as the "Father," and as "Christ." In relation to this, they were in special danger of being corrupted by the prevalent philosophy, as it is in relation to this that error of Christian doctrine usually commences. It should be said, however, that there is great variety of reading in the mss. on this whole clause, and that many critics (see Rosenmuller) regard it as spurious. I do not see evidence that it is not genuine; and the strain of exhortation of the apostle seems to me to demand it.

Verse 3

In whom - Margin, "wherein." The more correct translation is "in whom." The reference is doubtless to Christ, as his name is the immediate antecedent, and as what is affirmed here properly appertains to him.

Are hid - Like treasures that are concealed or garnered up. It does not mean that none of those "treasures" had been developed; but that, so to speak, Christ, as Mediator, was the great treasure-house where were to be found all the wisdom and knowledge needful for people.

All the treasures - It is common to compare any thing valuable with "treasures" of silver or gold. The idea here is, that in reference to the wisdom and knowledge needful for us, Christ is what abundant treasures are in reference to the supply of our wants.

Wisdom - The wisdom needful for our salvation. Notes, 1 Corinthians 1:24.

And knowledge - The knowledge which is requisite to guide us in the way to life. Christ is able to instruct us in all that it is desirable for us to know, so that it is not necessary for us to apply to philosophy, or to the teachings of human beings.

Verse 4

And this I say - Respecting the character and sufficiency of the truth revealed in Christ.

Lest any man should beguile you - Deceive you, lead you away from the truth.

With enticing words - Artful words, smooth and plausible arguments; such as were employed by the Greek sophists and rhetoricians.

Verse 5

For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit - That is, I seem to see you; I feel as if I were there, and were looking upon you; and I have the same solicitude as if I were there, and saw all the danger which exists that your beautiful order and harmony should be disturbed by the influence of false philosophy; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 5:3. The word "spirit," here, does not refer to the Holy Spirit, or to any inspiration by which the apostle was enabled to see them; but it is equivalent to what we mean when we say, "My heart is with you." He seemed to be beholding them.

Joying and beholding your order - That is, I rejoice as if I saw your order. He had such confidence that everything would be done among them as became Christians, that he could rejoice as if he actually saw it.

Verse 6

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord - Have received him by faith as your Saviour, or as you were instructed respecting his rank, character, and work. The object here is to induce them not to swerve from the views which they had of Christ when he was made known to them. They had at first probably received their ideas of the Saviour from the apostle himself (see the Introduction); and, at any rate, the apostle designs to assure them that the views which they had when they "received him," were founded in truth.

So walk in him - Continue in those views of Christ; live in the maintenance of them; let them regulate your whole conduct. The word walk, in the Scriptures, is used to denote the manner of life; and the sense here is, that they should live and act wholly under the influence of the conceptions which they had of the Saviour when they first embraced him. The particle "so" is supplied by our translators, and rather weakens the sense. No stress should be laid on it, as is often done. The meaning is, simply, "Since you have received Christ as your Lord, as he was preached to you, hold fast the doctrine which you have received, and do not permit yourselves to be turned aside by any Jewish teachers, or teachers of philosophy."

Verse 7

Rooted … in him - As a tree strikes its roots deep in the earth, so our faith should strike deep into the doctrine respecting the Saviour. See the phrase used here explained in the parallel place in Ephesians 3:17.

And established in the faith, as ye have been taught - To wit, by the founders of the church, and by those faithful ministers who had succeeded them; Notes, Colossians 1:7.

Abounding therein with thanksgiving - Expressing overflowing thanks to God that you have been made acquainted with truths so precious and glorious. If there is any thing for which we ought to be thankful, it is for the knowledge of the great truths respecting our Lord and Saviour.

Verse 8

Beware lest any man spoil you - The word "spoil" now commonly means, to corrupt, to cause to decay and perish, as fruit is spoiled by keeping too long, or paper by wetting, or hay by a long rain, or crops by mildew. But the Greek word used here means to spoil in the sense of plunder, rob, as when plunder is taken in war. The meaning is, "Take heed lest anyone plunder or rob you of your faith and hope by philosophy." These false teachers would strip them of their faith and hope, as an invading army would rob a country of all that was valuable.

Through philosophy - The Greek philosophy prevailed much in the regions around Colossae, and perhaps also the oriental or Gnostic philosophy. See the Introduction They were exposed to the influences of these plausible systems. They consisted much of speculations respecting the nature of the divine existence; and the danger of the Colossians was, that they would rely rather on the deductions of that specious reasoning, than on what they had been taught by their Christian teachers.

And vain deceit - Mere fallacy. The idea is, that the doctrines which were advanced in those systems were maintained by plausible, not by solid arguments; by considerations not fitted to lead to the truth, but to lead astray.

After the tradition of men - There appear to have been two sources of danger to which the Christians at Colesso were exposed, and to which the apostle in these cautions alludes, though he is not careful to distinguish them. The one was that arising from the Grecian philosophy; the other, from Jewish opinions. The latter is that to which he refers here. The Jews depended much on tradition (see the notes at Matthew 15:2); and many of those traditions would have tended much to corrupt the gospel of Christ.

After the rudiments of the world - Margin, elements. See this explained in the Notes at Galatians 4:3.

And not after Christ - Not such as Christ taught.

Verse 9

For in him dwelleth - That is, this was the great and central doctrine that was to be maintained about Christ, that all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him. Every system which denied this was a denial of the doctrine which they had been taught; and against every thing that would go to undermine this; they were especially to be on their guard. Almost all heresy has been begun by some form of the denial of the great central truth of the incarnation of the Son of God.

All the fulness - Notes, Colossians 1:19.

Of the Godhead - Of the Divinity, the divine nature - θεότης theotēsThe word is one that properly denotes the divine nature and perfections. Robinson, Lexicon. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament.

Bodily - σωματικῶς sōmatikōsThis word also is found nowhere else in the New Testament, though the adjective bodily - σωματικὸς sōmatikos- occurs twice; Luke 3:22, "in a bodily shape;" and 1 Timothy 4:8, "for bodily exercise profiteth little." The word means, "having a bodily appearance, instead of existing or appearing in a spiritual form;" and the fair sense of the phrase is, that the fullness of the divine nature became incarnate, and was indwelling in the body of the Redeemer. It does not meet the case to say, as Crellius does, that the "whole divine will was in him," for the word θεότη theotē- "godhead" - does not mean the will of God; and it is as certainly true that the inspired prophets were under the control of the divine will, as that the Saviour was. Nor can it mean, as Socinus supposes, that the fulness of divine knowledge dwelt in him, for this is not the proper meaning of the word (θεότης theotēs) "godhead;" nor can it mean, for the same reason, that a fullness of divine gifts was intrusted to him. The language is such as would be obviously employed on the supposition that God became incarnate, and appeared in human form; and there is no other idea which it so naturally expresses, nor is there any other which it can be made to express without a forced construction. The meaning is, that it was not anyone attribute of the Deity that became incarnate in the Saviour; that he was not merely endowed with the knowledge, or the power, or the wisdom of God; but that the whole Deity thus became incarnate, and appeared in human form; compare John 14:9; John 1:18. No language

could, therefore, more clearly demonstrate the divinity of Christ. Of what mere man - of what angel, could it be used?

Verse 10

And ye are complete in him - Having no need, for the purposes of salvation, of any aid to be derived from the philosophy of the Greeks, or the traditions of the Jews. All that is necessary to secure your salvation is to be found in the Lord Jesus. There is a completion, or a filling up, in him, so as to leave nothing wanting. This is true in respect:

(1)to the wisdom which is needful to guide us;

(2)the atonement to be made for sin;

(3)the merit by which a sinner can be justified; and,

(4)the grace which is needful to sustain us in the trials, and to aid us in the duties, of life; compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 1:30.

There is no necessity, therefore, that we should look to the aid of philosophy, as if there was a defect in the teachings of the Saviour; or to human strength, as if he were unable to save us; or to the merits of the saints, as if those of the Redeemer were not sufficient to meet all our wants. The sentiment advanced in this verse would overthrow the whole papal doctrine of the merits of the saints, and, of course, the whole doctrine of papal "indulgences."

Which is the head - See the notes at Ephesians 1:21-22.

Verse 11

In whom - In connection with whom, or in virtue of whose religion.

Ye are circumcised - You have received that which was designed to be represented by circumcision - the putting away of sin; Notes, Philemon 3:3.

With the circumcision made without hands - That made in the heart by the renunciation of all sin. The Jewish teachers insisted on the necessity of the literal circumcision in order to salvation (compare Ephesians 2:11); and hence, this subject is so often introduced into the writings of Paul, and he is at so much pains to show that, by believing in Christ, all was obtained which was required in order to salvation. Circumcision was an ordinance by which it was denoted that all sin was to be cut off or renounced, and that he who was circumcised was to be devoted to God and to a holy life. All this, the apostle says, was obtained by the gospel; and, consequently they had all that was denoted by the ancient rite of circumcision. What Christians had

obtained, moreover, related to the heart; it was not a mere ordinance pertaining to the flesh.

In putting off the body of the sins of the flesh - That is, in renouncing the deeds of the flesh, or becoming holy. The word "body," here, seems to be used with reference to circumcision. In that ordinance, the body of the FLesH was subjected to the rite; with Christians, it is the body of Sin that is cut off.

By the circumcision of Christ - Not by the fact that Christ was circumcised, but that we have that kind of circumcision which Christ established, to wit, the renouncing of sin. The idea of the apostle here seems to be, that since we have thus been enabled by Christ to renounce sin, and to devote ourselves to God, we should not, be induced by any plausible arguments to return to an ordinance pertaining to the flesh, as if that were needful for salvation.

Verse 12

Buried with him in baptism - See the notes at Romans 6:4.

Wherein also - In which ordinance, or by virtue of that which is signified by the ordinance.

Ye are risen with him - From the death of sin to the life of religion; Notes, Romans 6:4-5; compare the notes at Ephesians 2:5-6.

Through the faith of the operation of God - By a firm belief on the agency of God in raising him up; that is, a belief of the fact that God has raised him from the dead. The resurrection of Christ is often represented as the foundation of all our hopes; and, as he was raised from the grave to die no more, so, in virtue of that we are raised from the death of sin to eternal spiritual life. The belief of this is shown by our baptism, whatever be the mode in which that ordinance is performed, and as well shown in one mode as another.

Verse 13

And you, being dead in your sins - Notes, Ephesians 2:1.

And the uncircumcision of your flesh - That is, Gentiles, and giving unrestrained indulgence to the desires of the flesh. They lived as those who had not by any religious rite or covenant brought themselves under obligations to lead holy lives.

Hath he quickened - Notes, Ephesians 2:1.

Together with him - In virtue of his being restored to life. That is, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was the means of imparting to us spiritual

life.

Verse 14

Blotting out the handwriting - The word rendered handwriting means something written by the hand, a manuscript; and here, probably, the writings of the Mosaic law, or the law appointing many ordinances or observances in religion. The allusion is probably to a written contract, in which we bind ourselves to do any work, or to make a payment, and which remains in force against us until the bond is cancelled. That might be done, either by blotting out the names, or by drawing lines through it, or, as appears to have been practiced in the East, by driving a nail through it. The Jewish ceremonial law is here represented as such a contract, binding those under it to its observance, until it was nailed to the cross. The meaning here is, that the burdensome requirements of the Mosaic law are abolished, and that its necessity is superseded by the death of Christ. His death had the same effect, in reference to those ordinances, as if they had been blotted from the statute-book. This it did by fulfilling them, by introducing a more perfect system, and by rendering their observance no longer necessary, since all that they were designed to typify had been now accomplished in a better way; compare the notes at Ephesians 2:15.

Of ordinances - Prescribing the numerous rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion.

That was against us - That is, against our peace, happiness, comfort; or in other words, which was oppressive and burdensome; compare the notes at Acts 15:10. Those ordinances bound and lettered the soul, restrained the expansive spirit of true piety which seeks the salvation of all alike, and thus operated as a hindrance to the enlarged spirit of true religion. Thus, they really operated against the truly pious Jew, whose religion would lead him to seek the salvation of the world; and to the Gentile, since he was not in a situation to avail himself of them, and since they would be burdensome if he could. It is in this sense, probably, that the apostle uses the word "us," as referring to all, and as cramping and restraining the true nature of religion.

Which was contrary to us - Operated as a hindrance, or obstruction, in the matter of religion. The ordinances of the Mosaic law were necessary, in order to introduce the gospel; but they were always burdensome. They were to be confined to one people; and, if they were continued, they would operate to prevent the spread of the true religion around the world; compare 2 Corinthians 3:7, note, 9, note. Hence, the exulting language of the apostle

in view of the fact that they were now taken away, and that the benefits of religion might be diffused all over the world. The gospel contains nothing which is "against," or "contrary to," the true interest and happiness of any nation or any class of people.

And took it out of the way - Greek, "Out of the midst;" that is, he wholly removed it. He has removed the obstruction, so that it no longer prevents union and harmony between the Jews and the Gentiles.

Nailing it to his cross - As if he had nailed it to his cross, so that it would be entirely removed out of our way. The death of Jesus had the same effect, in regard to the rites and institutions of the Mosaic religion, as if they had been affixed to his cross. It is said that there is an allusion here to the ancient method by which a bond or obligation was cancelled, by driving a nail through it, and affixing it to a post. This was practiced, says Grotius, in Asia. In a somewhat similar manner, in our banks now, a sharp instrument like the blade of a knife is driven through a check, making a hole through it, and furnishing to the teller of the bank a sign or evidence that it has been paid. If this be the meaning, then the expression here denotes that the obligation of the Jewish institutions ceased on the death of Jesus, as if he had taken them and nailed them to his own cross, in the manner in which a bond was cancelled.

Verse 15

And having spoiled - Plundered as a victorious army does a conquered country. Notes, Colossians 2:8. The terms used in this verse are all military, and the idea is, that Christ has completely subdued our enemies by his death. A complete victory was achieved by his death, so that every thing is now in subjection to him, and we have nothing to fear.

Principalities and powers - Notes, Ephesians 1:21; Ephesians 6:12, note. The "principalities and powers" here referred to, are the formidable enemies that had held man in subjection, and prevented his serving God. There can be no doubt, I think, that the apostle refers to the ranks of fallen, evil spirits which had usurped a dominion over the world, John 12:31, note; Ephesians 2:2, note. The Saviour, by his death, wrested the dominion from them, and seized upon what they had captured as a conqueror seizes upon his prey. Satan and his legions had invaded the earth and drawn its inhabitants into captivity, and subjected them to their evil reign. Christ, by his death. subdues the invaders and recaptures those whom they had subdued.

He made a show of them openly - As a conqueror, returning from a victory, displays in a triumphal procession the kings and princes whom he has taken, and the spoils of victory. This was commonly done when a "triumph" was decreed for a conqueror. On such occasions it sometimes happened that a considerable number of prisoners were led along amidst the scenes of triumph see the notes at 2 Corinthians 2:14. Paul says that this was now done "openly" - that is, it was in the face of the whole universe - a grand victory; a glorious triumph over all the powers of hell It does not refer to any public procession or display on the earth; but to the grand victory as achieved in view of the universe, by which Christ, as a conqueror, dragged Satan and his legions at his triumphal car; compare Romans 16:20.

Triumphing over them in it - Margin, or, "himself." Either "by the cross," or "by himself." Or, it may mean, as Rosenmuller suggests, that "God Colossians 2:12 triumphed over these foes in him; i. e., in Christ. The sense is substantially the same, that this triumph was effected by the atonement made for sin by the Redeemer. See the word "triumph" explained in the Notes on 2 Corinthians 2:14. The meaning of all this is, that since Christ has achieved for us such a victory, and has subdued all the foes of man, we should not be led captive, but should regard ourselves as freemen. We should not be made again the slaves of custom, or habit, or ritual observances, or superstitious rites, or anything whatever that has its origin in the kingdom of darkness. We are bound to assert and to use our freedom, and should not allow any hostile power in the form of philosophy or false teaching of any kind, to plunder or "spoil" us; Colossians 2:8. The Christian is a freeman. His great Captain has subdued all his enemies, and we should not allow them again to set up their dark empire over our souls. The argument of the apostle in these verses Colossians 2:13-15 is derived from what Christ has done for us. He mentions four things:

(1) He has given us spiritual life.

(2) he has forgiven all our trespasses.

(3) he has blotted out or abolished the "ordinances" that were against us.

(4) he has triumphed over all our foes. From all this he infers (Colossians 2:16 ff) that we should not be made captive or subdued by any

of the rites of superstition, or any of the influences of the kingdom of darkness.

Verse 16

Let no man, therefore, judge you - compare Romans 14:10, note, 13, note. The word judge here is used in the sense of pronouncing a sentence. The meaning is, "since you have thus been delivered by Christ from the evils which surrounded you: since you have been freed from the observances of the law, let no one sit in judgment on you, or claim the right to decide for you in those matters. You are not responsible to man for your conduct, but to Christ; and no man has a right to impose that on you as a burden from which he has made you free."

In meat - Margin, or eating and drinking. The meaning is, "in respect to the various articles of food and drink." There is reference here, undoubtedly, to the distinctions which the Jews made on this subject, implying that an effort had been made by Jewish teachers to show them that the Mosaic laws were binding on all.

Or in respect of a holy day - Margin, part. The meaning is, "in the part, or the particular of a holy day; that is, in respect to it" The word rendered "holy-day" - ἑορτὴ heortē- means properly a "feast" or "festival;" and the allusion here is to the festivals of the Jews. The sense is, that no one had a right to impose their observance on Christians, or to condemn them if they did not keep them. They had been delivered from that obligation by the death of Christ; Colossians 2:14.

Or of the new moon - On the appearance of the new moon, among the Hebrews, in addition to the daily sacrifices, two bullocks, a ram, and seven sheep, with a meat offering, were required to be presented to God; Numbers 10:10; Numbers 28:11-14. The new moon in the beginning of the month Tisri (October) was the beginning of their civil year, and was commanded to be observed as a festival; Leviticus 23:24, Leviticus 23:25.

Or of the Sabbath days - Greek, "of the Sabbaths." The word Sabbath in the Old Testament is applied not only to the seventh day, but to all the days of holy rest that were observed by the Hebrews, and particularly to the beginning and close of their great festivals. There is, doubtless, reference to those days in this place, since the word is used in the plural number, and the apostle does not refer particularly to the Sabbath properly so called. There is no evidence from this passage that he would teach that there was no

obligation to observe any holy time, for there is not the slightest reason to believe that he meant to teach that one of the ten commandments had ceased to be binding on mankind. If he had used the word in the singular number - "the Sabbath," it would then, of course, have been clear that he meant to teach that that commandment had ceased to be binding, and that a Sabbath was no longer to be observed. But the use of the term in the plural number, and the connection, show that he had his eye on the great number of days which were observed by the Hebrews as festivals, as a part of their ceremonial and typical law, and not to the moral law, or the Ten Commandments. No part of the moral law - no one of the ten commandments could be spoken of as "a shadow of good things to come." These commandments are, from the nature of moral law, of perpetual and universal obligation.

Verse 17

Which are a shadow of things to come - See the notes at Hebrews 8:5; Hebrews 10:1, note. They were only a dim outline of future things, not the reality.

But the body is of Christ - The reality, the substance. All that they signified is of or in Christ. Between those things themselves which are in Christ, and those which only represented or prefigured them, there is as much difference as there is between a body and a shadow; a solid substance and a mere outline. Having now, therefore, the thing itself the shadow can be to us of no value; and that having come which was prefigured, that which was designed merely to represent it, is no longer binding.

Verse 18

Let no man beguile you of your reward - Margin, judge against you. The word used here - καταβραβεύω katabrabeuō- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is a word which was employed with reference to the distribution of prizes at the Grecian games, and means, to give the prize against anyone, to deprive of the palm. Hence, it means to deprive of a due reward: and the sense here is, that they were to be on their guard lest the "reward" - the crown of victory to which they looked forward - should be wrested from them by the arts of others. That would be done if they should be persuaded to turn back, or to falter in the race. The only way to secure the prize was to hold on in the race which they then were running; but if they yielded to the philosophy of the Greeks, and the teachings of the Jews, they would be defrauded of this reward as certainly as a racer at the games

would if the crown of victory should be unjustly awarded to another. In this case, too, as real injustice would be done, though the apostle does not say it would be in the same manner. Here it would be by art; in the case of the racer it would be by a wrong decision - but in either case the crown was lost. This exhortation has the more force from this consideration. Against an unjust judge we could have no power; but we may take care that the reward be not wrested from us by fraud.

In a voluntary humility - Margin," being a voluntary in humility." Tyndale renders this," Let no man make you shoot at a wrong mark, which, after his own imagination, walketh in the humbleness of angels." The word used here (ταπεινοφροσύνη tapeinophrosunē) means "lowliness of mind, modesty, humbleness of deportment;" and the apostle refers, doubtless, to the spirit assumed by those against whom he would guard the Colossians - the spirit of modesty or of humble inquirers. The meaning is, that they would not announce their opinions with dogmatic certainty, but they would put on the appearance of great modesty. In this way, they would become really more dangerous - for no false teachers are so dangerous as those who assume the aspect of great humility, and who manifest great reverence for divine things. The word rendered "voluntary" here - θέλων thelōn- does not, properly, belong to the word rendered "humility." It rather appertains to the subsequent part of the sentence, and means that the persons referred to were willing, or had pleasure in attempting, to search into the hidden and abstruse things of religion. They were desirous of appearing to do this with an humble spirit - even with the modesty of an angel - but still they had pleasure in that profound and dangerous kind of inquiry.

And worshipping of angels - θρησκείᾳ τῶν ἀγγέλων thrēskeia tōn angelōnThis does not mean, as it seems to me, that they would themselves worship angels or that they would teach others to do it for there is no reason to believe this. Certainly the Jewish teachers, whom the apostle seems to have had particularly in his eye, would not do it; nor is there any evidence that any class of false teachers would deliberately teach that angels were to be worshipped The reference is rather to the profound reverence; the spirit of lowly piety which the angels evinced, and to the fact that the teachers referred to would assume the same spirit, and were, therefore, the more dangerous. They would come professing profound regard for the great mysteries of religion, and for the incomprehensible perfections of the divinity, and would approach the subject professedly with the awful

veneration which the angels have when they "look into these things;" 1 Peter 1:12. There was no bold, irreverent, or confident declamation, but the danger in the case arose from the fact that they assumed so much the aspect of modest piety; so much the appearance of the lowly devotion of angelic beings. The word rendered here "worship" - θρησκεία thrēskeia- occurs in the New Testament only here, in Acts 26:5; and James 1:26-27, in each of which places it is rendered "religion." It means here the religion, or the spirit of humble reverence and devotion which is evinced by the angels; and this accords well with the meaning in James 1:26-27.

Intruding into those things which he hath not seen - Or inquiring into them. The word used here (ἐμβατεύων embateuōn) means to go in, or enter; then to investigate, to inquire. It has not, properly, the meaning of intruding, or of impertinent inquiry (see Passow), and I do not see that the apostle meant to characterize the inquiry here as such. He says that it was the object of their investigations to look, with great professed modesty and reverence, into those things which are not visible to the eye of mortals. The "things" which seem here to be particularly referred to, are the abstruse questions respecting the mode of the divine subsistence; the ranks, orders, and employments of angelic beings; and the obscure doctrines relating to the divine government and plans. These questions comprised most of the subjects of inquiry in the Oriental and Grecian philosophy, and inquiries on these the apostle apprehended would tend to draw away the mind from the "simplicity that is in Christ." Of these subjects what can be known more than is revealed?

Vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind - Notwithstanding the avowed "humility," the modesty, the angelic reverence, yet the mind was full of vain conceit, and self-confident, carnal wisdom. The two things are by no means incompatible - the men apparently most meek and modest being sometimes the most bold in their speculations, and the most reckless in regard to the great landmarks of truth. It is not so with true modesty, and real "angelic veneration," but all this is sometimes assumed for the purpose of deceiving; and sometimes there is a native appearance of modesty which is by no means an index of the true feelings of the soul. The most meek and modest men in appearance are sometimes the most proud and reckless in their investigations of the doctrines of religion.

Verse 19

And not holding the Head - Not holding the true doctrine respecting the Great Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ; Notes, Ephesians 1:22. This is regarded here as essential to the maintenance of all the other doctrines of religion. He who has just views of the Redeemer will not be in much danger of erring respecting the other points of religious belief.

From which all the body … - This passage is almost word for word the same as in Ephesians 4:15-16. See it explained in the notes there.

Verse 20

Wherefore - In view of all that has been said. If it be true that you are really dead to the world, why do you act as if you still lived under the principles of the world?

If ye be dead with Christ - If you are dead to the world in virtue of his death. The apostle here, as elsewhere, speaks of a very close union with Christ. We died with him; that is, such was the efficacy of his death, and such is our union with him, that we became dead also to the world; Notes, Romans 6:2, note, 4, note, 8, note, 11, note.

From the rudiments of the world - Margin, "elements." The elements or principles which are of a worldly nature, and which reign among worldly men; see the notes at Galatians 4:3.

Why, as though living in the world - Why do you allow them to influence you, as though you were living and acting under those worldly principles? They ought no more to do it, than the things of this world influence those who are in their graves.

Are ye subject to ordinances - The rites and ceremonies of the Jewish religion; see the notes at Galatians 5:1-4.

Verse 21

Tough not; taste not; handle not - These words seem intended as a specimen of the kind of ordinances which the apostle refers to, or an imitation of the language of the Jewish teachers in regard to various kinds of food and drink. "Why are ye subject to ordinances of various kinds, such as this - Touch not, taste not, handle not?" That is, such as prohibit you from even touching certain kinds of food, or tasting certain kinds of drink, or handling certain prohibited things. The rapid succession of the words here, without any connecting particle, is supposed to denote the eagerness of the persons who imposed this injunction, and their earnestness in warning others from contaminating themselves with the prohibited things. Many injunctions of this kind are found in the writings of the Jewish rabbis;

and the ancient Jewish sect of the Essenes (Notes, Matthew 3:7) abounded in precepts of this kind.

See Schoetgen, and Pict. Bib. in loc. "They allowed themselves no food that was pleasant to the taste, but ate dry, coarse bread, and drank only water. Many of them ate nothing until sunset, and, if anyone touched them who did not belong to their sect, they washed themselves as if they had been most deeply defiled. Perhaps there was at Colossae a society of this kind, as there were in many other places out of Judea; and, if there was, it is not improbable that many Christians imitated them in the uniqueness of their rules and observances;" compare Jenning's Jew. Ant. i. 471, and Ros. Alt. u. neu. Morgenland, in loc. If this be the correct interpretation, then these are not the words of the apostle, forbidding Christians to have anything to do with these ordinances, but are introduced as a specimen of the manner in which they who enjoined the observance of those ordinances pressed the subject on others.

There were certain things which they prohibited, in conformity with what they understood to be the law of Moses; and they were constantly saying, in regard to them, "do not touch them, taste them, handle them." These words are often used as a kind of motto in reference to the use of intoxicating drinks. They express very well what is held by the friends of total abstinence; but it is obvious that they had no such reference as used by the apostle, nor should they be alleged as an authority, or as an argument, in the question about the propriety or impropriety of the use of spirituous liquors. They may as well be employed in reference to anything else as that, and would have no authority in either case. Intoxicating drinks should be abstained from; but the obligation to do it should be made to rest on solid arguments, and not on passages of Scripture like this. This passage could with more plausibility be pressed into the service of the enemies of the total abstinence societies, than into their support; but it really has nothing to do with the subject, one way or the other.

Verse 22

Which all are to perish with the using - This is commonly marked as a part of the parenthesis, or the quotation; and there is considerable difficulty in ascertaining its true meaning. It seems most probable that these are the words of the apostle himself, thrown in in the rapidity of composition, and

that they are not to be connected with the phrase "touch not," etc. If so, the idea is, that it cannot be of so much consequence as the Jewish teachers supposed, to mark distinctly the difference between meats and drinks. They were all to perish with the use of them. Nothing was permanent about them. It could really then be of no great importance what was eaten, or what was drunk, provided it was not in itself injurious. These ordinances had a value among the Hebrews when it was designed to keep them as a distinct people; but they had no value in themselves, so as to make them binding on all mankind. To suppose this, was the common error of the Jews; and hence, the apostle so frequently labored to show that the Jewish rites had no permanent value; see the Romans 14:1-6 notes; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, note; compare the notes at Matthew 15:17-18. According to this interpretation, Colossians 2:21 should be regarded as expressing the common maxim of the Jewish teachers, and the clause before us as the words of the apostle, and should be marked as a parenthesis. So it is marked in Hahn's Ed. of the New Testament.

After the commandments and doctrines of men - Many of the ordinances on which the Jews insisted were those which were handed down by tradition. They depended on human authority only, and of course, should not bind the conscience. Others take the words here to mean, "All which things tend to the corruption of religion (Doddridge), or are cause of destruction or condemnation (Robinson, Lexicon), by the use of these things, according to the commandments and doctrines of these men."

Verse 23

Which things - Which scrupulous observance of the numerous precepts enjoining rites and ceremonies, the observance of days, and the distinctions between meats and drinks.

Have indeed a show of wisdom - Have a great appearance of piety and of regard for the will of God They have a show of "wisdom," too, or of a deep acquaintance with divine things. They who insist on them appear to be learned in what constitutes religion, and to have a deep insight into its mysteries. Doubtless they who urged the obligation of these things laid claim to uncommon acquaintance with the nature of religion, and urged the observance of these things on the ground of their tendency to promote piety, just as they always do who insist much on the observance of religious rites and ceremonies.

In will-worship - Voluntary worship; i. e., worship beyond what God strictly requires-supererogatory service. Probably many of these things they did not urge as being strictly required, but as conducing greatly to piety. The plea doubtless was, that piety might be promot ed by service rendered beyond what was absolutely enjoined, and that thus there would be evinced a spirit of uncommon piety - a readiness not only to obey all that God required, but even to go beyond this, and to render him voluntary service. There is much plausibility in this; and this has been the foundation of the appointment of the fasts and festivals of the church; of penances and self-inflicted tortures; of painful vigils and pilgrimages; of works of supererogation, and of the merits of the "saints." A large part of the corruptions of religion have arisen from this plausible but deceitful argument. God knew best what things it was most conducive to piety for his people to observe; and we are most safe when we adhere most closely to what he has appointed, and observe no more days and ordinances than he has directed. There is much apparent piety about these things; but there is much wickedness of heart at the bottom, and there is nothing that more tends to corrupt pure religion.

And humility - Notes, Colossians 2:18. There is a great show of reverence for divine things in the manner in which they pursue their investigations, and in their humble and meek compliance with painful rites and ceremonies; in fastings, abstinence, and penances. Under all this there lurks often the worst kind of pride; because:

"Pride may be pampered while the flesh grows lean."

And neglecting the body - Putting on sackcloth and ashes; subjecting it to painful fastings and penances; appearing in a form of squalid poverty, as if the body were not worth regarding, and as if the attention were so much engrossed by the nobler care of the soul, as to be entirely regardless of the body. Yet, we may observe,

(1) God made the body as well as the soul, and has shown his care of it by its" being fearfully and wonderfully made," and by all the provision which he has made for all its needs.

(2) Religion pertains to the body as well as the soul, and should teach a man properly to regard it. Man is bound so to take care of the body, as to have the most health and the longest life possible in the service of his Creator, and so as to be able to employ it in the best manner. There is no

religion in ragged or squalid clothing, in a dirty face, in offensive personal habits, in filth and defilement, and in setting at defiance the decencies of life.

(3) much affected sanctity may exist where there is a most proud and corrupt heart. A long face, a demure countenance, a studied disregard of the decencies of dress and the courtesies of life, as if they were unworthy of notice, may be the exponent of the most hateful pride, and of the basest purposes of the soul. A man should be on his guard always against one who, under pretence of extraordinary sanctity, professes to despise the ordinary dress and usages of society.

Not in any honour - That is, there is no real honor in these things; there is nothing to ennoble and elevate the soul; nothing that is to be commended.

To the satisfying of the flesh - The only effect is, to satisfy or please the flesh; that is, the carnal and corrupt nature, for so the word "flesh" is often used in the Scriptures. The effect of these observances, on which so much stress is laid as if they would promote piety, is merely to gratify pride, self-righteousness, the love of distinction, and the other carnal propensities of our nature. There seems to be a great deal of humility and piety in them; there is really little else than pride, selfishness, and ambition.

Remarks On Colossians 2:1-2. All belong to the same family, have the same enemies to contend with, are engaged in the same warfare, are traveling to the same heaven. By our prayers and sympathy, we may often do much good to those whom we shall never see until we meet them in heaven.

2. We should be on our guard against the seductive arts of false teachers. They are often plausible; they can urge arguments which we may not be able to answer; they may have much more learning than we have; and they may put on the appearance of great humility and of real piety; Colossians 2:3-4.3. It is, in general, a safe rule for a Christian to abide by the views which he had on the great subjects of religion when he became converted; Colossians 2:6. Then the heart was tender and soft - like wax - and received the impression which the Spirit made on it. There are some things in which the heart judges better than the head; and in which we are quite as likely to go right if we follow the former as we are the latter. In relation to the performance of many of the duties of life - the duties of kindness and charity - the heart is often a more safe guide than the head; and so in many

things pertaining more immediately to religion, a man is more likely to judge right if he follows the promptings of his feelings in the happiest moments of piety, than he is to wait for the more cool and cautious course of argument. The same thing may be true even of many of the doctrines of religion. When a poor sinner trembles on the verge of hell, he feels that none but an Almighty Saviour can deliver him, and he goes and commits himself to Jesus as God - and he is not in much danger of erring in that. He will be more likely to be drawn aside from the truth by the artful reasonings of the advocates of error, than he will by his feelings at that moment.

4. Our views of the "mystery of God" - of the divine nature, and especially of the rank and character of Christ, will determine all our views of theology; Colossians 2:2. This has been so in all ages; and however it may be accounted for, the fact is undoubted, that if at any time we can ascertain what are the prevalent views of Christ we can easily see what is the prevailing character of the theology of that age. The influence of this will be felt on the views which are held of the native character of man: of regeneration, the divine purposes, the nature of holiness, and the retributions beyond the grave. Hence, the reason why the apostle Paul insisted so much on this, and urged so earnestly the importance of adhering to just views of the Saviour.

5. Christ has laid us under the highest obligations to love and serve him; Colossians 2:11-15. He has enabled us to put off our sins; he has raised us from spiritual death to spiritual life; he has removed the old ordinances that were against us, and has made religion easy and pleasant; he has subdued our enemies, and triumphed over them. He achieved a glorious victory over "principalities and powers," and has led our great enemy captive. He met the enemy of man when on earth, and overcame his power of temptation; expelled him from the bodies of men; laid the foundation for a permanent victory over him on the cross, and triumphed over him when he rose and ascended to heaven. Satan is now an humbled foe. His power is broken and limited, and the Lord Jesus will yet completely triumph over him. He will return from heaven; raise all the dead; and reascend, in the face of the universe, to his native skies, with all his ransomed hosts - the "spoils" of victory. We should not then fear what Satan can do to us; nor should we fear that the great enemy of the church will ever be triumphant:

Stand up, my soul, shake off thy fears,
And gird the gospel armor on;
March to the gates of endless joy,
Where thy great Captain Saviour‘s gone.
Hell and thy sins resist thy course,
But hell and sin are vanquish‘d foes;
Thy Jesus nail‘d them to the cross,
And sung the triumph when he rose.
Then let my soul march boldly on,
Press forward to the heavenly gate;
There peace and joy eternal reign,
And glittering robes for conquerors wait.
Then shall I wear a starry crown,
And triumph in Almighty grace;
While all the armies of the skies.
Join in my glorious Leader‘s praise.

6. No individual has a right to appoint ceremonies and ordinances in the church to be binding on the consciences of others; nor is this authority intrusted to any body of men; Colossians 2:16. What God has enjoined is to be obeyed. What man enjoins beyond that, is of no binding force on the conscience: and it is the solemn and sacred duty of all Christians to resist all such attempts to make ceremonial observances binding on the conscience. Christ has appointed a few ordinances of religion - and they are enough. They are simple, easily observed, and all adapted to promote piety. He appointed baptism and the Lord‘s supper; but he appointed no stated festivals or fasts; no days in commemoration of the saints, or of his own birth or death; he enjoined no rites of religion but those which are most simple and which are easily observed. He well knew how those observances would be abused to the purposes of superstition, and obscure the great doctrine of justification by faith. He knew how ready men would be to rely on them rather than on the merits of the great Sacrifice, and hence he appointed no ordinance where that danger could exist.

7. Pride is often united with apparent humility; Colossians 2:18. It is easy to assume the appearance of humility in the outer deportment, but no such assumed appearance reaches the heart. That remains the same, whatever external appearance is assumed, until it is renewed by the grace of God.

8. A meek, modest, and candid demeanor is consistent with great boldness and daring in speculation; Colossians 2:18. The most daring speculators in religion; they who make the most reckless attacks on the truth, are often, to appearance, eminently candid, and even put on the aspect of angelic devotion. Yet they are bold "where angels fear to tread;" and they declaim with confidence on subjects which must be forever beyond the grasp of the human mind.

9. We should not infer, because a man is modest and humble, and because he appears to be endued with uncommon meekness and piety, that, therefore, he is a good man or a safe guide; Colossians 2:18. The teachers in Colossae, against whom Paul warned the Christians there, appear to have been men just of this stamp; and this is commonly assumed by those who would lead their fellow men into error. "Satan is often transformed into an angel of light."

10. We should not attempt to penetrate into those things which lie beyond the grasp of the human mind; Colossians 2:18. We should not "intrude into those things which are unseen." There is an outer limit to our investigations on all subjects, and we soon reach it. In life we are to act chiefly on facts; not on the reason why those facts exist. When we have ascertained or established a fact, our feet stand on a solid rock; and there we shall stand securely. We act safely and wisely if we act in view of that fact; we do not act safely or wisely if we disregard that, and act on theory or imagination.

11. Many real Christians are in danger of being "beguiled of the reward" which they might obtain; Colossians 2:18. They are allured by the world; they are drawn into error by the arts of philosophy; they obscure the lustre of their piety by conformity to the world, and thus they lose the high recompense which they might have obtained in heaven. For the rewards of heaven will be strictly in proportion to the measure of our religion here - the zeal, and faith, and love which we evince in the cause of our Master.

12. Many persons are in danger of losing the "reward" altogether - for the "reward" of a life of piety is set before all; Colossians 2:18. Heaven is

offered freely to all, and there is no one who might not obtain it. But, alas! how many there are who are drawn aside by the allurements of error and of sin; who are led to defer to a future time the great subject of preparation for death; who spend their lives in disregard of the commands of God and the invitations of mercy, until it is too late to seek salvation, and they sink down to final ruin. Every impenitent sinner is in imminent danger of losing his soul. The great deceiver is endeavoring to blind him and decoy him down to death, and a thousand snares on every side are spread for his feet, into which he is in constant danger of falling. In a world of allurements, where the work of death from the beginning has been carried on chiefly by deception, with what solicitude should man guard himself lest he be "beguiled of heaven" and sink to a world where heaven will be offered no more!

COLOSSIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the apostle had showed what a true Christian ought not to follow after. He had warned the Colossians against the dangers of false philosophy, and the doctrines of erroneous teachers. In this chapter, he teaches them what they ought to pursue and to seek. He therefore enjoins various duties in the different relations of life, which they ought to perform in such a way as to show that true religion had a controlling influence over their hearts. He specifies the following:

(1)The duty of setting the affections on things above; Colossians 3:1-4. They were risen with Christ Colossians 2:12, they were dead to sin Colossians 3:3; they were soon to he like Christ Colossians 3:4, and they should, therefore, fix their affections on heavenly things.

(2)the duty of mortifying their corrupt passions and carnal propensities; Colossians 3:5-8.

(3)the duty of speaking the truth, since they had put off the old man with his deeds; Colossians 3:9-11.

(4)the duty of kindness, gentleness, charity, and the spirit of peace; Colossians 3:12-15.

(5)the duty of edifying one another by psalms and songs of praise; Colossians 3:16-17,

(6)The duty of wives, Colossians 3:18;

(7)of husbands, Colossians 3:19;

(8)of children, Colossians 3:20;

(9)of fathers, Colossians 3:21;

(10)of servants, Colossians 3:22-25.

There is a very striking similarity between this chapter and Ephesians 5; 6, and a full exposition of the principal subjects adverted to here may be

found in the notes there.

Verse 1

If ye then be risen with Christ - The apostle in this place evidently founds the argument on what he had said in Colossians 2:12; see the notes at that passage. The argument is, that there was such an union between Christ and his people, that in virtue of his death they become dead to sin; that in virtue of his resurrection they rise to spiritual life, and that, therefore, as Christ now lives in heaven, they should live for heaven, and fix their affections there.

Seek those things which are above - That is, seek them as the objects of pursuit and affection; strive to secure them.

Where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God - Notes, Mark 16:19. The argument here is, that since Christ is there, and since he is the object of our supreme attachment, we should fix our affections on heavenly things, and seek to be prepared to dwell with him.

Verse 2

Set your affection - Margin, "or mind." Greek" think of" - φρονεῖτε phroneiteThe thoughts should be occupied about the things where Christ now dwells, where our final home is to be, where our great interests are. Since we are raised from the death of sin, and are made to live anew, the great object of our contemplation should be the heavenly world.

Not on things on the earth - Wealth, honor, pleasure. Our affections should not be fixed on houses and lands; on scenes of fashion and gaiety; on low and debasing enjoyments.

Verse 3

For ye are dead - Dead to the world; dead to sin; dead to earthly pleasures. On the meaning of the word "dead," see the Romans 6:2 note; Ephesians 2:1 note. The idea of the apostle is, that as Christ became literally dead in the tomb, so we, in virtue of our connection with him, have become dead to sin, to worldly influences, pleasures, and ambition. Or, in other words, we are to be to them as if we were dead, and they had no more influence over us than the things of earth had over him in the grave; Notes, Romans 6:2.

And your life - There is still life. Though dead to one class of objects, you are alive to others. See the sentiment here expressed, explained at large in the notes at Galatians 2:20.

Is hid with Christ in God - The language here is taken probably from treasure which is "hid" or concealed in a place of security; and the idea is, that eternal life is an invaluable jewel or treasure, which is laid up with Christ in heaven where God is. There it is safely deposited. It has this security, that it is with the Redeemer, and that he is in the presence of God; and thus nothing can reach it or take it away. It is not left with us, or intrusted to our keeping - for then it might be lost as we might lose an invaluable jewel; or it might be wrested from us; or we might be defrauded of it; but it is now laid up far out of our sight, and far from the reach of all our enemies, and with one who can "keep that which we have committed to him against that day;" 2 Timothy 1:12. Our eternal life, therefore, is as secure as it could possibly be made. The true condition of the Christian is, that he is "dead" to this world, but that he has immortal life in prospect, and that is secure, being in the holy keeping of his Redeemer, now in the presence of God. From this it follows that he should regard himself as living for heaven.

Verse 4

When Christ, who is our life - Notes, John 1:4; John 11:25, note.

Shall appear - In the day when he shall come to judge the world.

Then shall ye also appear with him in glory - 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. Christians shall then be raised from the dead, and ascend with the Redeemer to heaven.

Verse 5

Mortify therefore your members - Since you are dead to sin and the world, and are to appear with Christ in the glories of his kingdom, subdue every carnal and evil propensity of your nature. The word mortify means to put to death (Romans 8:13, note; Galatians 5:24, note), and the meaning here is that they were entirely to subdue their evil propensities, so that they would have no remains of life; that is, they were not at all to indulge them. The word "members" here, refers to the different members of the body - as the seat of evil desires and passions; compare the notes at Romans 6:13. They were wholly to extirpate those evil passions which he specifies as having their seat in the various members of the earthly body.

Fornication - Notes, Romans 1:2.

Uncleanness - Notes, Romans 1:24.

Inordinate affection - πάθος pathosRendered in Romans 1:26, "vile affections;" see the notes at that verse. In 1 Thessalonians 4:5, the word is

rendered “lust” - which is its meaning here.

Evil concupiscence - Evil desires; licentious passions; Romans 1:24. Greek.

And covetousness, which is idolatry - It is remarkable that the apostle always ranks covetousness with these base and detestable passions. The meaning here is:

(1) that it is a low and debasing passion, like those which he had specified; and,

(2) that it secures the affections which properly belong to God, and is, therefore, idolatry. Of all base passions, this is the one that most dethrones God from the soul. See this whole passage more fully explained in the notes at Ephesians 5:3-5.

Verse 6

For which things‘ sake … - See the notes at Ephesians 5:6, where the same expression occurs.

Verse 7

In the which - In all which evil passions.

Ye also walked sometime - You formerly lived. These were the common vices of the pagan; Ephesians 5:8, note; 1 Corinthians 6:10-11, notes; compare Romans 1:24-32, notes.

Verse 8

But now ye also put off all these - All these which follow, as being also inconsistent with the Christian calling.

Anger, wrath - Notes, Ephesians 4:26.

Malice - Notes, Ephesians 4:31.

Blasphemy - Notes, Matthew 9:3. The word here seems to mean all injurious and calumnious speaking - whether against God or man.

Filthy communication out of your mouth - Lewd, indecent, and immodest discourse; Notes, Ephesians 4:29. The conversation of the pagan everywhere abounds with this. A pure method of conversation among men is the fruit of Christianity.

Verse 9

Lie not one to another - Notes, Ephesians 4:25.

Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds - Your former corrupt and evil nature; Notes, Ephesians 4:22. The reason for putting away

lying, stated in Ephesians 4:25, is, that we "are members one of another" - or are brethren. The reason assigned here is, that we have put off the old man with his deeds. The sense is, that lying is one of the fruits of sin. It is that which the corrupt nature of man naturally produces; and when that is put off, then all that that nature produces should be also put off with it. The vice of lying is a universal fruit of sin, and seems to exist everywhere where the gospel does not prevail; compare the notes at Titus 1:12. There is, perhaps, no single form of sin that reigns so universally in the pagan world.

Verse 10

Which is renewed in knowledge - In Ephesians 4:24, it is said that the new man is "created after God in righteousness and true holiness." In this place it is added that to the renewed soul knowledge is imparted, and it is made in that respect as man was when he was first created. This passage, in connection with Ephesians 4:24, proves that before man fell he was endowed with "righteousness, true holiness, and knowledge." The knowledge here referred to, is not the knowledge of everything, but the knowledge of God. Man was acquainted with his Creator. He resembled him in his capacity for knowledge. He was an intelligent being, and he had an acquaintance with the divine existence and perfections; compare the notes at Romans 5:12. But especially had he that knowledge which is the fear of the Lord; that knowledge of God which is the result of love. Piety, in the Scriptures, is often represented as the "knowledge" of God; see the notes at John 17:3; compare the notes at Ephesians 3:19.

After the image of him that created him - So as to resemble God. In knowledge he was made in the likeness of his Maker.%%

Verse 11

Where there is neither Greek nor Jew - See this fully explained in the notes at Galatians 3:28. The meaning here is, that all are on a level; that there is no distinction of nation in the church; that all are to be regarded and treated as brethren, and that therefore no one should be false to another, or lie to another.

Circumcision nor uncircumcision - No one is admitted into that blessed society because he is circumcised; no one is excluded because he is uncircumcised. That distinction is unknown, and all are on a level.

Barbarian - No one is excluded because he is a barbarian, or because he lives among those who are uncivilized, and is unpolished in his manners; see the word "barbarian" explained in the notes at Romans 1:14.

Scythian - This word does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The name Scythian is applied in ancient geography to the people who lived on the north and northeast of the Black and Caspian seas, a region stretchings indefinitely into the unknown countries of Asia. They occupied the lands now peopled by the Monguls and Tartars. The name was almost synonymous with barbarian, for they were regarded as a wild and savage race. The meaning here is, that even such a ferocious and uncivilized people were not excluded from the gospel, but they were as welcome as any other, and were entitled to the same privileges as others. No one was excluded because he belonged to the most rude and uncivilized portion of mankind.

Bond nor free - See the notes at Galatians 3:28.

But Christ is all, and in all - The great thing that constitutes the uniqueness of the church is, that Christ is its Saviour, and that all are his friends and followers. Its members lay aside all other distinctions, and are known only as his friends. They are not known as Jews and Gentiles; as of this nation or that; as slaves or freemen, but they are known as Christians; distinguished from all the rest of mankind as the united friends of the Redeemer; compare the notes at Galatians 3:28.

Verse 12

Put on, therefore, as the elect of God - The fact that you thus belong to one and the same church; that you have been redeemed by the sameblood, and chosen by the same grace, and that you are all brethren, should lead you to manifest a spirit of kindness, gentleness, and love.

Bowels of mercies - Notes, Philemon 2:1.

Kindness … - See the notes at Ephesians 4:32. The language here is a little different from what it is there, but the sentiment is the same.

Verse 13

Forbearing one another - Notes, Ephesians 4:2.

And forgiving one another - Notes, Matthew 6:12, Matthew 6:14.

If any man have a quarrel against any - Margin, "or complaint." The word used here - μομφή momphē- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, "fault found, blame, censure;" and here denotes occasion of complaint. The idea is, that if another one has given us just occasion of complaint, we are to forgive him; that is, we are:

(1)to harbor no malice against him;

(2)we are to be ready to do him good as if he had not given us occasion of complaint;

(3)we are to be willing to declare that we forgive him when be asks it; and,

(4)we are always afterward to treat him as kindly as if he had not injured us - as God treats us when he forgives us; see the notes at Matthew 18:21.

Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye - Learn here that Christ has power to forgive sin; compare the Matthew 9:6 note; Acts 5:31 note. Christ forgave us:

(1)freely - he did not hesitate or delay when we asked him;

(2)entirely - he pardoned all our offences;

(3)forever - he did it so as to remember our sins no more, and to treat us ever onward as if we had not sinned.

So we should forgive an offending brother.

Verse 14

And above all these things - Over, or upon all these things; compare the notes at Ephesians 6:16.

Charity - Love. Notes, 1 Corinthians 13:1.

Which is the bond of perfectness - The bond of all perfection; the thing which will unite all other things, and make them complete; compare the parallel place in Ephesians 4:3. The idea seems to be that love will bind all the other graces fast together, and render the whole system complete. Without love, though there might be other graces and virtues, there would be a want of harmony and compactness in our Christian graces, and this was necessary to unite and complete the whole. There is great beauty in the expression, and it contains most important truth. If it were possible to conceive that the other graces could exist among a Christian people, yet there would be a sad incompleteness, a painful want of harmony and union, if love were not the reigning principle. Nor faith, nor zeal, nor prophecy, nor the power of speaking with the tongue of angels, would answer the purpose. See this sentiment expressed in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, and the effect of love more fully explained in the notes at that chapter.

Verse 15

And let the peace of God - The peace which God gives; Notes, Philemon 4:7.

Rule in your hearts - Preside in your hearts; sit as umpire there (Doddridge); govern and control you. The word rendered here "rule" - βραβεύετω brabeuetō- is commonly used in reference to the Olympic and other games. It means, to be a director, or arbiter of the public games; to preside over them and preserve order, and to distribute the prizes to the victors. The meaning here is, that the peace which God gives to the soul is to be to us what the brabeutes, or governor at the games was to those who contended there. It is to preside over and govern the mind; to preserve every thing in its place; and to save it from tumult, disorder, and irregularity. The thought is a very beautiful one. The soul is liable to the agitations of passion and excitement - like an assembled multitude of men. It needs something to preside over it, and keep its various faculties in place and order; and nothing is so well fitted to do this as the calm peace which religion gives, a deep sense of the presence of God, the desire and the evidence of his friendship, the hope of his favor, and the belief that he has forgiven all our sins. The "peace of God" will thus calm down every agitated element of the soul; subdue the tumult of passion, and preserve the mind in healthful action and order - as a ruler sways and controls the passions of assembled multitudes of people.

To the which ye are also called - To which peace.

In one body - To be one body; or to be united as one; notes, Ephesians 4:4-6.

And be ye thankful - For all mercies, and especially for your privileges and hopes as Christians. A spirit of thankfulness, also, would tend much to promote harmony and peace. An ungrateful people is commonly a tumultuous, agitated, restless, and dissatisfied people. Nothing better tends to promote peace and order than gratitude to God for his mercies.

Verse 16

Let the word of Christ - The doctrine of Christ.

Dwell in you richly in all wisdom - Abundantly, producing the spirit of true wisdom. That doctrine is adapted to make you wise. The meaning is, that they were to lay up the doctrines of the gospel in their hearts, to meditate upon them; to allow them to be their guide, and to endearor wisely to improve them to the best purpose.

Teaching and admonishing … - See this explained in the notes at Ephesians 5:19-20. The only additional thought here is, that their psalms and hymns were to be regarded as a method of "teaching" and

"admonishing;" that is, they were to be imbued with truth, and to be such as to elevate the mind, and withdraw it from error and sin. Dr. Johnson once said, that if he were allowed to make the ballads of a nation, he cared not who made the laws. It is true in a more important sense that he who is permitted to make the hymns of a church, need care little who preaches, or who makes the creed. He will more effectually mould the sentiments of a church than they who preach or make creeds and confessions. Hence, it is indispensable, in order to the preservation of the truth, that the sacred songs of a church should be imbued with sound evangelical sentiment.

Verse 17

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed - Whatever ye say or do - whether relating to temporal affairs or to religion. The command here extends to all that we do.

Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus - Do it all because he requires and commands it, and with a desire to honor him. His authority should be the warrant; his glory the aim of all our actions and words. See the general sentiment here expressed, fully illustrated in the notes at 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Giving thanks to God and the Father by him - Through him; or in his name. All our actions are to be accompanied with thanksgiving; Notes, Philemon 4:6. We are to engage in every duty, not only in the name of Christ, but with thankfulness for strength and reason; for the privilege of acting so that we may honor him; and with a grateful remembrance of the mercy of God that gave us such a Saviour to be an example and guide. He is most likely to do his duty well who goes to it with a heart overflowing with gratitude to God for his mercies, and he who is likely to perform his duties with the most cheerful fidelity, is he who has the deepest sense of the divine goodness in providing a Saviour for his lost and ruined soul; see the notes at 2 Corinthians 5:14-15.

Verse 18

Wives, submit yourselves … - Notes on the parallel passage in Ephesians 5:21-24.

Verse 19

Husbands, love your wives … - Notes, Ephesians 4:25-29.

Verse 20

Children, obey your parents … - Notes, Ephesians 6:1-4.

Verse 21

Fathers, provoke not … - Notes, Ephesians 6:4.

Lest they be discouraged - Lest, by your continually finding fault with them, they should lose all courage, and despair of ever pleasing you. There is much sound sense and practical wisdom in this observation of the apostle. Children should not be flattered, but they should be encouraged. They should not be so praised as to make them vain and proud, but they should be commended when they do well. The desire of praise should not be the principle from which they should be taught to act, but they should feel that the approbation of parents is a desirable thing, and when they act so as to deserve that approbation, no injury is done them by their understanding it. He who always finds fault with a child; who is never satisfied with what he does; who scolds and frets and complains, let him do as he will, breaks his spirit, and soon destroys in the delicate texture of his soul all desire of doing well. The child in despair soon gives over every effort to please. He becomes sullen, morose, stupid, and indifferent to all the motives that can be presented to him, and becomes to a great extent indifferent as to what he does - since all that he does meets with the same reception from the parent.

Verses 22-25

Servants, obey in all things … - ; see the notes at Ephesians 6:5-8.

COLOSSIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Verse 1

Masters, give unto your servants … - See the notes at Ephesians 6:9.

That which is just and equal - What they ought to have; what is fairly their due. The apostle here, probably, refers to bondmen or slaves, and the propriety of this rule is apparent. Such persons were subject to their masters‘ control; their time and services were at their disposal, and they could not enforce their just and equal claims by an appeal to the laws. They were, therefore, dependent on the equity and kindness of their masters. There can be no doubt that not a few who were converted to the Christian faith were held to involuntary servitude (see 1 Timothy 6:1-4. But it is equally clear that they meant to represent slavery as a hard and undesirable condition; that they intended to instruct the slaves to embrace the earliest opportunity to be free which was presented 1 Corinthians 7:21; and that they meant to suggest such considerations, and to lay down such principles as would lead masters to emancipate their slaves, and thus ultimately to abolish it. Among these principles are such as these:

(1) That all men were of one and the same blood; Acts 17:26.

(2) that they were all redeemed by the same Saviour, and were brethren; 1 Timothy 6:2; Philemon 1:16. If redeemed; if they were “brethren;” if they were heirs of glory, they were not “chattels,” or “things;” and how could a Christian conscientiously hold or regard them as property?

(3) that they were to “render them that which was just and equal.” What would follow from this if fairly applied? What would be just and equal to a man in those circumstances? Would it not be.

(a) to compensate him fairly for his labor; to furnish him an adequate remuneration for what he had earned? But this would strike a blow at the root of slavery - for one of the elementary principles of it is, that there must be “unrequited labor;” that is, the slave must earn as much more than he receives as will do his part in maintaining the master in idleness, for it is of the very essence of the system that he is to be maintained in indolence by the slaves which he owns - or just so far as he owns a slave. If he were disposed to earn his own living, he would not need the labor of slaves. No

one ever yet became the permanent owner of a slave from benevolence to him, or because he desired to pay him fully for his work, or because he meant himself to work in order to maintain his slave in indolence.

(b) If a man should in fact render to his slaves "that which is just and equal," would he not restore them to freedom? Have they not been deprived of their liberty by injustice, and would not "justice" restore it? What has the slave done to forfeit his liberty? If he should make him "equal" in rights to himself, or to what he is by nature, would he not emancipate him? Has he not been reduced to his present condition by withholding that which is "equal?" Has he "equal" rights, and "equal" privileges with other men? Has he not been cut off from them by denying him the equality to which he is entitled in the arrangements of God's government? Can he be held at all without violating all the just notions of equality? Though, therefore, it may be true that this passage only enjoins the rendering of that which was" just" and "equal" in their condition as slaves, yet it contains a principle which would" lay the axe at the root" of slavery, and would lead a conscientious Christian to the feeling that his slaves ought to be free. These principles actually effected the freedom of slaves in the Roman empire in a few centuries after Christianity was introduced, and they are destined to effect it yet all over the world.

Knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven - Notes, Ephesians 6:9.

Verse 2

Continue in prayer - That is, do not neglect it; observe it at all stated times; maintain the spirit of prayer, and embrace all proper occasions to engage in it; compare the Luke 18:1 note; Ephesians 6:18 note; 1 Thessalonians 4:17 note.

And watch in the same with thanksgiving - Watch for favorable opportunities; watch that your mind may be in a right frame when you pray: and watch, that when your mind is in a right frame you may not neglect to pray; see the Ephesians 6:18 note; Philemon 4:6.

Verse 3

Withal - With all the supplications which you offer for other persons and things; or at the same time that you pray for them.

Praying also for us - Notes, Ephesians 6:19-20; compare 2 Corinthians 1:11; Philemon 1:19; Hebrews 13:18-19.

That God would open to us a door of utterance - To preach the gospel. He earnestly desired to have liberty to preach the gospel, and asked them to pray that this might be restored to him; see the notes at Ephesians 6:19.

To speak the mystery of Christ - Called in Ephesians 6:19, the "mystery of the gospel;" see the notes there.

For which I also am in bonds - A prisoner at Rome; Notes, Ephesians 6:20.

Verse 4

That I may make it manifest … - Notes, Ephesians 6:20.

Verse 5

Walk in wisdom - That is, conduct uprightly and honestly. Deal with them on the strictest principles of integrity, so that they may not have occasion to reproach the religion which you profess.

Toward them that are without - Without the pale of the church, or who are not professing Christians; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 5:12. They were surrounded by pagans, as Christians now are by men of the world. The injunction is one that requires us to act with prudence and propriety (ἐν σοφίᾳ en sophiatoward them; and there is perhaps not a more important direction in the New Testament than this. Among the reasons for this are the following:

(1) People of the world judge of religion, not from the profession, but from the life of its friends.

(2) they judge of religion, not from preaching, or from books, or from the conduct of its Founder and his apostles, but from what they see in the daily walk and conversation of the members of the church.

(3) they understand the nature of religion so well as to know when its friends are or are not consistent with their profession.

(4) they set a much higher value on honesty and integrity than they do on the doctrines and duties of religion; and if the professed friends of religion are destitute of the principles of truth and honesty, they think they have nothing of any value. They may be very devout on the Sabbath; very regular at prayer-meetings; very strict in the observance of rites and

ceremonies - but all these are of little worth in the estimation of the world, unless attended with an upright life.

(5) no professing Christian can possibly do good to others who does not live an upright life. If you have cheated a man out of never so small a sum, it is vain that you talk to him about the salvation of his soul; if you have failed to pay him a debt when it was due, or to finish a piece of work when you promised it, or to tell him the exact truth in conversation, it is vain for you to endeavor to induce him to be a Christian. He will feel, if he does not say - and he might very properly say - that he wants no religion which will not make a man honest.

(6) no person will attempt to do much good to others whose own life is not upright. He will be sensible of the inconsistency, and will feel that he cannot do it with any sense of propriety; and the honor of religion, therefore, and the salvation of our fellow-men, demand that in all our intercourse with others, we should lead lives of the strictest integrity.

Redeeming the time - Notes, Ephesians 5:6.

Verse 6

Let your speech - Your conversation. In the previous verse the apostle had given a general direction that our conduct toward those who are not professing Christians should be wise and prudent; he here gives a particular direction in regard to our conversation.

Be alway with grace - Imbued with the spirit of religion. It should be such as religion is fitted to produce; such as to show that the grace of God is in our hearts. Bloomfield supposes that this means "courteous and agreeable, not morose and melancholy." But though this may be included, and though the rule here laid down would lead to that, it cannot be all that is intended. It rather means that our conversation should be such as to show that we are governed by the principles of religion, and that there is unfeigned piety in the heart. This will indeed make us mild, courteous, agreeable, and urbane in our conversation; but it will do more than this. It will imbue our discourse with the spirit of religion, so as to show that the soul is under the influence of love to the Redeemer.

Seasoned with salt - Salt, among the Greeks, was the emblem of wit. Here the meaning seems to be, that our conversation should be seasoned with piety or grace in a way similar to that in which we employ salt in our

food. It makes it wholesome and palatable. So with our conversation. If it be not imbued with the spirit of piety, it is flat, insipid, unprofitable, injurious. The spirit of piety will make it what it should be - useful, agreeable, beneficial to mankind. This does not mean that our conversation is to be always, strictly speaking, religious - wherever we may be - any more than our food should be mere salt; but it means that, whatever be the topic, the spirit of piety should be diffused through it - as the salt in our food should properly season it all - whatever the article of food may be.

That ye may know how ye ought to answer every man - Be imbued with the spirit of piety, that you may not utter any thing that would be rash and foolish, but be prepared to answer anyone who may question you about your religion in a way that will show that you understand its nature, and that will tend to edification. This remark may be extended further. It may be understood as meaning also, "be imbued with the spirit of religion, and you will be able to answer any man appropriately on any subject. If he asks you about the evidence or the nature of religion, you will be able to reply to him. If he converses with you on the common topics of the day, you will be able to answer him in a mild, kind, affable spirit. If he asks you of things of which you are ignorant; if he introduces some topic of science with which you are not acquainted, you will not be ashamed to confess your ignorance, and to seek instruction. If he addresses you in a haughty, insolent, and overbearing manner, you will be able to repress the risings of your temper, and to answer him with gentleness and kindness; compare Luke 2:46.

Verse 7-8

All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you - See these verses explained in the notes at Ephesians 6:21-22.

Verse 9

With Onesimus - Who had been formerly a servant of Philemon, an inhabitant of Colossae; see the notes at Philemon 1:10. Onesimus had probably been recently converted; and Paul felt toward him the warm attachment of a brother; Philemon 1:16. In what way he became acquainted with him is unknown. A more full account of him will be found in the notes at the Epistle to Philemon.

Who is one of you - That is, either who is from your city, or one of your own people and nation. It is clear from this, that Onesimus was from Phrygia, and probably from the city of Colossae itself. It would seem also that he was of a higher rank than is designated by the word "slave" now. He

was, indeed, a "servant" δοῦλος doulos- of Philemon, but would the apostle have addressed the Colossians, and said that he was "one of them," if he had occupied precisely the condition which is now denoted by the word "slave"? Would a minister of the gospel now in the Northern States, who should send a letter by a run-away slave to a community of masters at the South, say of him that he was "one of them?" Would it be kindly received, or produce a good impression, if he did? There is reason, therefore, to think that Onesimus was not a slave in the proper sense, but that he might have been a respectable youth, who had bound himself to service for a term of years; compare Philemon 1:18.

They shall make known to you all things which are done here - Relating to Paul himself and the state of the church in Rome. As the Epistle which Paul sent was designed not only for them, but to be a part of the volume of revealed truth, he wrote only those things which would be of permanent interest. Other matters he left for those who carried the Epistle to communicate. It would also serve to give Tychicus and Onesimus more respectability in view of the church at Colossae, if he referred the church to them for information on important points.

Verse 10

Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner - Aristarchus was of Thessalonica, and is mentioned in Acts 19:29; Acts 20:4, as Paul's companion in his travels. In Acts 27:2, it is said that he accompanied him in his voyage to Rome, and from the passage before us it appears that he was there imprisoned with him. As he held the same sentiments as Paul, and was united with him in his travels and labors, it was natural that he should be treated in the same manner. He, together with Gaius, had been seized in the tumult at Ephesus and treated with violence, but he adhered to the apostle in all his troubles, and attended him all his perils. Nothing further is certainly known of him, though "the Greeks say that he was bishop of Assamea in Syria, and was beheaded with Paul at Rome, under Nero" - Calmet.

And Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas - John Mark, in relation to whom Paul and Barnabas had formerly disagreed so much as to cause a separation between Barnabas and Paul. The ground of the disagreement was, that Barnabas wished to take him, probably on account of relationship, with them in their travels; Paul was unwilling to take him, because he had, on one occasion, departed from them; Notes, Acts 15:37-39. They afterward became reconciled, and Paul mentions Mark here with affection. He sent for

him when he sent Tychicus to Ephesus, and it seems that he had come to him in obedience to his request; 2 Timothy 4:11. Mark had probably become more decided, and Paul did not harbor unkind and unforgiving feelings toward anyone.

Touching whom ye received commandments - What these directions were, and how they were communicated, whether verbally or by writing, is now unknown. It was, not improbably, on some occasion when Paul was with them. He refers to it here in order that they might know distinctly whom he meant.

If he come to you, receive him - In Philemon 1:24, Mark is mentioned as a" fellow-laborer" of Paul. It would seem probable, therefore, that he was not a prisoner. Paul here intimates that he was about to leave Rome, and he enjoins it on the Colossians to receive him kindly. This injunction may have been necessary, as the Colossians may have been aware of the breach between him and Paul, and may have been disposed to regard him with suspicion. Paul retained no malice, and now commended, in the warmest manner, one from whom he was formerly constrained to separate.

Verse 11

And Jesus, who is called Justus - The name Jesus was probably that which he bore among the Jews. Justus is a Roman name, and was probably that by which he was known among the Romans. It was not uncommon thus to assume another name when one went among a foreign people; compare the notes at Acts 13:9.

Who are of the circumcision - Jews, or Jewish Christians. Nothing more is known of Justus.

These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God - The word "only" here, probably refers to the fact that they only of all the Jews who were at Rome assisted Paul in his work. Epaphras and Luke were also with him at Rome, and doubtless aided him.

Which have been a comfort unto me - The more so because they were Jews. The other Jews in Rome stood aloof, and doubtless endeavored to augment the trials of the apostle; compare Acts 28:23-29.

Verse 12

Epaphras - Notes, Colossians 1:7.

Always laboring fervently for you in prayers - Margin, "or striving." Greek: "agonizing." The word denotes the intense desire which he had for their salvation; his fervent, earnest pleading for their welfare.

That ye may stand perfect and complete - Margin, as in Greek, filled. The desire was, that they might maintain their Christian principles unadulterated by the mixture of philosophy and error, and completely perform the will of God in every respect. This is the expression of a pious wish in regard to them, without any affirmation that any had been absolutely perfect, or that they would be perfect in this world. It is, however, a command of God that we should be perfect (see Matthew 5:48), and it is the highest wish of benevolence in reference to anyone that he may be complete in moral character, and may do all the will of God; compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 13:9.

Verse 13

For I bear him record - Paul had had abundant opportunity to know what were his feelings in regard to these churches.

A great zeal for you - A great desire to promote your welfare.

And them that are in Laodicea - Laodicea was the capital of Phrygia, and not far from Colossae, There was a church there. See the Introduction, and the notes at Colossians 4:16.

And them in Hierapolis - This was also a city in Phrygia, and not far from Laodicea and Colossae. It was situated under a hill to the north, and had on the south a large plain about five miles over. On the south of that plain, and opposite to Hierapolis, was Laodicea, with the river Lycus running between them, nearer to Laodicea than to Hierapolls. This place is now called by the Turks Pambuck-Kulasi, or the Cotton-Tower, on account of the white cliffs which lie round about it. It is now utterly forsaken and desolate, but the ruins are so magnificent as to show that it was once one of the most splendid cities in the East. It was celebrated for the hot springs in its vicinity; and on account of the numerous temples erected there, it received the name of Hierapolis, or the holy city. The principal deity worshipped there was Apollo. See *Travels* by T. Smith. B. D. 1678. Compare the notes at Colossians 4:16. From the allusion to it here, it would seem that there were Christians there in the time of Paul, though there is no mention of a church there. It is nowhere else mentioned in the New Testament.

Verse 14

Luke, the beloved physician - This was undoubtedly the author of the Gospel which bears his name, and of the Acts of the Apostles. He is mentioned as the traveling companion of Paul in Acts 17:10, and appears to

have accompanied him afterward until his imprisonment at Rome see 2 Timothy 4:11. From Colossians 4:11, it is evident that he was not by birth a Jew, but was probably a proselyte. He is supposed to have been a native of Cyrene, and to have died in Achaia, soon after the martyrdom of Paul, at the advanced age of 84. See Rob. Cal. Art. Luke. He is here mentioned as a physician, and in his Gospel, and in the Acts, there are incidental evidences that he was acquainted with the science of medicine, and that he observed the events which he has recorded with the eye of one who practiced the healing art. It is easy to imagine that the presence of a physician might have been of important service to the apostle Paul in his travels; and that his acquaintance with the art of healing may have aided not a little in the furtherance of the gospel. The miraculous power of healing, possessed by the Saviour and his apostles, contributed much to the success of their preaching; for the power of alleviating pain of body - of restoring to health by miracles, would not only be an evidence of the divine origin of their mission - a credential that they were sent from God, but would dispose those who had received such important benefits to listen attentively to the message of salvation. One of the best qualifications in missionaries in modern times, in order to gain access to the pagan, is an acquaintance with the healing art.

And Demas - Demas is mentioned in two other places, Philemon 1:24, and 2 Timothy 4:10. He is here spoken of with commendation as one in whom the apostle had confidence. Afterwards, when troubles thickened, he was not found proof to the trials which threatened him in Rome, and forsook the apostle and went to Thessalonica. He did this under the influence of the "love of this present world," or of life, evidently unwilling to lay down his life in the cause for which Paul suffered; see the notes at 2 Timothy 4:10. His departure, and that of the others on whom Paul relied in Rome, was one of the severest trials which he was called there to endure; see the notes at 2 Timothy 4:16.

Verse 15

Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea - Notes, Colossians 2:1.

And Nymphas - This person is nowhere else mentioned, and nothing more is known of him.

And the church which is in his house - Notes, Romans 16:5.

Verse 16

And when this Epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans - Laodicea was near to Colossae, and the church there was evidently exposed to the same dangers from philosophy and false teachers as the at Colossae. The counsels in this Epistle, therefore, would be equally applicable to both. In 1 Thessalonians 5:27, the apostle also charges those to whom that Epistle was addressed to see that it be "read unto all the holy brethren." It is evident that the apostles designed that the letters which they addressed to the churches should be read also by others, and should become the permanent source of instruction to the friends of Christ. Laodicea, here referred to, was the seat of one of the "Seven churches" of Asia Revelation 3:14; was a city of Phrygia, and was its capital. It was situated on the river Lycus (hence, called Λαοδίκεία ἐπὶ Λύκῳ Laodikeia epi Lukō- Laodicea on the Lycus) and stood at the southwestern angle of Phrygia. Its early name appears to have been Dios polis, changed subsequently to Rhoas. The name Laodicea was given to it by Antiochus Theos, in honor of his wife Laodice. Under the Romans it became a very flourishing commercial city.

It was often damaged by earthquakes, but was restored by the Roman emperors. It is supposed to have been destroyed during the inroad of Timur Leng in 1402. The ruins are called by the Turks Eski Hissar. These ruins, and the ruins of Hierapolis, were visited by Mr. Riggs, an American Missionary, in 1842, who thus speaks of them: "These spots, so interesting to the Christian, are now utterly desolate. The threatening expressed in Revelation 3:10, has been fulfilled, and Laodicea is but a name. In the midst of one of the finest plains of Asia Minor, it is entirely without inhabitant. Sardis, in like manner, whose church had a name to live, but was dead, is now an utter desolation. Its soil is turned up by the plow, or overgrown by rank weeds: while in Philadelphia, since the day when our Saviour commended those who had there "kept the word of his patience," there has never ceased to be a nominally Christian church. The ruins of Laodicea and Hierapolis are very extensive. The stadium of the former city, and the gymnasia and theaters of both, are the most complete which I have anywhere seen. Hierapolis is remarkable also for the so-called frozen cascades, a natural curiosity, in its kind probably not surpassed for beauty and extent in the world. It consists of a deposit of carbonate of lime, white as the driven snow, assuming, when closely examined, various forms, and covering nearly the whole southern and western declivities of the elevation

on which the city was built. It is visible for many miles, and has procured for the place the name by which alone Hierapolis is known among the Turks, of the Cotton Castle."

And that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea - In regard to this Epistle, see Introduction, Section 6.

Verse 17

And say to Archippus - Archippus is mentioned also in Philemon 1:2. He is not elsewhere referred to in the New Testament, and nothing further is known of him.

Take heed to the ministry … - The Greek here is, τὴν διακονίαν tēn diakonian- meaning the office of ministering in divine things; but it is not certain precisely what office he held there. It seems probable from the language which the apostle applies to him - "the ministry" - (compare Acts 1:17, Acts 1:25; Acts 6:4; Acts 20:24; Acts 21:19; Romans 11:13; 1 Corinthians 12:5; 2 Corinthians 3:7-9; 2 Corinthians 4:1; 2 Corinthians 5:18; 2 Corinthians 6:3; Ephesians 4:12), that he was not a deacon, properly so called, but that he was a preacher of the word. In Philemon 1:2, he is mentioned by Paul as his "fellow-soldier," and it is evident that the apostle meant to speak of him with honor. There is no evidence, as has been supposed by some, that he intended to imply, by what he said, that he had been remiss in the performance of his duties, but the apostle doubtless meant to encourage him and to excite him to increased ardor and zeal in the work of the Lord; compare the notes at Acts 20:28. It is always proper to caution even the most faithful and self-denying servants of the Lord to "take heed," or see to it, that they perform their duties with fidelity. The office of the ministry is such, and the temptations to unfaithfulness are so great, that we need constant watchfulness.

That thou fulfil it - That there be nothing wanting, or lacking, in any of the departments of labor which you are called to perform.

Verse 18

The salutation by the hand of me Paul - Probably the rest of the Epistle was written by an amanuensis. As was his custom, Paul affixed his own hand to it in the form of a salutation; compare the 1 Corinthians 16:21 note; 2 Thessalonians 3:17 note.

Remember my bonds - Also evidently written by his own hand, to make the injunction more impressive; compare the notes at Hebrews 13:3. The meaning is, that they should not forget him in his confinement. They

should remember that he was suffering on their account (Notes, Colossians 1:24), and that he was entitled to every expression of sympathy and love.

Grace be with you - Notes, Romans 16:20.

The subscription to this Epistle is undoubtedly correct. See the Introduction.

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1 Thessalonians

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Introduction to 1Thessalonians

Section 1. The Situation of Thessalonica

Thessalonica was a city and sea-port of Macedonia. It was at the head of the bay Thermaicus, or the Gulf of Thessalonica, and was, therefore, favorably situated for commerce. It was on the great Egnatian Way; was possessed of an excellent harbor, and had great advantages for commerce through the Hellespont, and with Asia Minor and the adjacent countries. It was southwest of Philippi and Amphipolis, and a short distance northeast of Berea. Macedonia was an independent country until it was subdued by the Romans. The occasion of the wars which led to its conquest by the Romans was an alliance which was formed by Philip II. with Carthage, during the second Punic war. The Romans delayed their revenge for a season; but Philip having laid siege to Athens, the Athenians called the Romans to their aid, and they declared war against the Macedonians. Philip was compelled to sue for peace, to surrender his vessels, to reduce his army to 500 men, and to defray the expenses of the war.

Perseus, the successor of Philip, took up arms against the Romans, and was totally defeated at Pydna by Paulus Emilins, and the Romans took possession of the country. Indignant at their oppression, the Macedonian nobility and the whole nation rebelled under Andriscus; but after a long struggle they were overcome by Quintus Caecilius, surnamed, from his conquest, Macedonius, and the country became a Roman province, b.c. 148. It was divided into four districts, and the city of Thessalonica was made the capital of the second division, and was the station of a Roman governor and questor. At the time, therefore, that the gospel was preached there. this whole country was subject to Roman authority. The city, called, when Paul visited it, Thessalonica, was anciently called Therme, and by this name was known in the times of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Eschines. We are informed by Strabo that Cassander changed the name of Therme to Thessalonica, in honor of his wife, who was a daughter of Phil Others have said that the name was given to it by Philip himself, in memory of a victory which he obtained over the armies of Thessaly. In the time of Brutus and Cassius it was a city of so much importance that the promise of being permitted to plunder the city, as the reward of victory, infused new courage into their armies.

The city was inhabited by Greeks, Romans, and Jews. It adored many gods, but particularly Jupiter, as the father of Hercules, the alleged founder of its ancient royal family. It had a celebrated amphitheater, where gladiatorial shows were exhibited for the amusement of the citizens, and a circus for public games. The Roman part of the population was, of course, introduced after the conquest, and it is impossible now to estimate the relative number of the Greeks and the Romans in the time when the gospel was preached there. In common with most of the other cities of Greece, a considerable number of Jews resided there, who had a synagogue at the time when the city was visited by Paul; Acts 17:1. Little is known of the morals of the place, but there is reason to believe that it was somewhat distinguished for dissoluteness of manners. "The females, particularly, could claim little credit on the score of modest, retiring demeanour; for this virtue was in so low estimation in the city, that the place was selected as the scene of the wanton fancies of the satirist." (Lucian.) See Hug. Intro. The name of the place now is Saloniki. It is a Turkish commercial town, and contains about 70,000 inhabitants.

Its situation and appearance are thus described by Dr. Clarke: "The walls of Salonica give a very remarkable appearance to the town, and cause it to be seen at a great distance, being white-washed; and what is still more extraordinary, they are painted. They extend in a semi-circular manner from the sea, enclosing the whole of the buildings within a peribolus, whose circuit is five or six miles; but a great part of the space within the walls is void. It is one of the few remaining cities which has preserved the ancient form of its fortifications; the mural turrets yet standing, and the walls that support them, being entire. Their antiquity is perhaps, unknown, for, though they have been ascribed to the Greek emperors, it is very evident they were constructed in two distinct periods of time; the old Cyclopean masonry remaining in the lower parts of them, surmounted by an upper structure of brickwork.

Like all the ancient and modern cities of Greece, its wretched aspect within is forcibly contrasted with the beauty of its external appearance. The houses are generally built of unburnt bricks, and, for the most part, they are no better than so many hovels." It is, however, a flourishing commercial

town, from which is exported the corn, cotton, wool, tobacco, bees-wax, and silk of Macedonia. It is the seat of a Pasha, and has still among its population a considerable proportion of Jews. rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, who visited it in a.d. 1160, describes it, under the name of Salunki, and says that it was built by Seleucus, one of the four Greek nobles who arose after Alexander, and that when, he visited it, it was "a large city containing about five hundred Jewish inhabitants." "The Jews," says he, "are much oppressed in this place, and live by the exercise of handicrafts." Itinerary, vol. 1:49,50, Ed. 1840. He describes it as having at that time more Jewish inhabitants than any other town in Greece, Thebes alone excepted. It is said at present to contain about 20,000 Jewish inhabitants. Its favorable situation for commerce is probably the cause of the numerous assemblage of the Jews there. See Asher's Ed. of Benjamin of Tudela, vol. 2:p. 42.

Section 2. The Establishment of the Church in Thessalonica

The gospel was first preached in Thessalonica by Paul and Silas. After their release from imprisonment at Philippi, they passed through Amphipolls and Apollonia, and came to Thessalonica. For some cause they appear not to have paused to preach in either of the first two places, but went at once to the city of Thessalonica, That was a much more important place, and they may have been attracted there particularly because many Jews resided there. It was customary for the apostle Paul, when he came to a place where there were Jews, to preach the gospel first to them; and as there was a synagogue in Thessalonica, he entered it, and, for three Sabbath days, reasoned with the Jews in regard to the Messiah. The points on which he endeavored to convince them were, that, according to the Scriptures, it was necessary that the Messiah should be put to death, and that he would rise from the dead, and that all the predictions on these points were completely fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth; Acts 17:2-3.

A few of the Jews believed, and a much larger number of the "devout Greeks," and also a considerable number of females of the more elevated ranks. From these converts the church was organized, and the number at the organization would seem to have been large. It is not quite certain how long Paul and Silas remained at Thessalonica. It is known only that they preached in the synagogue for three sabbaths, and if that were all the time that they remained there, it could not have been more than about three weeks. But it is not certain that they did not remain in the city a longer time. It is possible that they may have been excluded from the synagogue, but

still may have found some other place in which to preach. This would seem probable from one or two circumstances referred to in the history and in the Epistle. In the history Acts 17:5, it appears that Paul and Silas, for a time at least, made the house of Jason their home, and that so large numbers attended on their ministry as to give occasion to great excitement among the Jews. In the epistle 1 Thessalonians 2:9, Paul says that when he was among them, he "labored night and day, because he would not be chargeable unto any of them, and preached unto them the gospel of God" (compare 2 Thessalonians 3:8), which looks as if he had been with them a longer time than the "three sabbaths," and as if he had labored at his usual occupation for support, before he shared the hospitality of Jason. It appears also, from Philemon 4:16, that he was there long enough to receive repeated supplies from the church at Philippi. "For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity."

Paul and Silas were driven away from Thessalonica by the opposition of the Jews. A mob was created by them; the house of Jason was assailed; he and "certain brethren," who were supposed to have harbored and secreted Paul and Silas, were dragged before the magistrates and accused of receiving those who "had turned the world upside down," and who were guilty of treason against the Roman emperor; Acts 17:5-7 So great was the tumult, and such would be the danger of Paul and Silas if they remained there, that the members of the church judged it best that they should go to a place of safety, and they were conveyed by night to the neighboring city of Berea. There the gospel was received with more favor, and Paul preached without opposition, until the Jews from Thessalonica, hearing where he was, came thither and excited the people against him; Acts 17:13. It became necessary again that he should be removed to a place of safety, and he was conducted to Athens, while Silas and Timothy remained at Berea. Timothy, it appears, had accompanied Paul, and had been with him, as well as Luke, at Philippi and Thessalonica, though he is not mentioned as present with them until the arrival at Berea. When Paul went to Athens, he gave commandment to those who conducted him, that Silas and Timothy should come to him as soon as possible; and while he waited for them at Athens, he delivered the memorable speech on Mars' hill, recorded in 1 Thessalonians 3:1, 1 Thessalonians 3:2, "Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone, and sent Timotheus our brother,

etc., to comfort you concerning your faith." Timothy appears, therefore, to have been with Paul at Athens but a short time, for he sent him back to Thessalonica, and before his return, Paul had gone to Corinth, whither Timothy followed him; Acts 18:5.

Section 18:5.

3. The Time and Place of Writing the Epistle

The subscription at the close of this epistle affirms that it was written at Athens. But these subscriptions are of no authority whatever (see notes at the close of 1Corinthians), and in this case, as in several others, the subscription is false. Paul remained but a short time at Athens, and there is internal evidence that the epistle was not written there. In 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2, Paul says that, such was his anxiety for them, that he had concluded to remain at Athens alone, and that he had sent Timothy to them from that place to impart to them consolation. In the same epistle 1 Thessalonians 3:6, he speaks of Timothy's return to him before the epistle was written. But from Acts 18:5, it is evident that Timothy did not return to Paul at Athens, but that he and Silas came to him after he had left Athens and had gone to Corinth. To that place Paul had gone after his short visit to Athens, and there he remained a year and a half; Acts 18:11.

It is further evident that the epistle was not written to the Thessalonians so soon as it would be necessary to suppose, if it were written from Athens. In 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18, the author says, "But we, brethren, being taken from you a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us." From this it is evident that the apostle had repeatedly endeavored to visit them, but had been hindered. But it is not reasonable to suppose that he had attempted this during the short time that he was in Athens, and so soon after having been driven away from Berea. It is more probable that this had occurred during his residence at Corinth, and it would seem also from this, that the epistle was written toward the close of his residence there. At the time of writing the epistle, Silas and Timothy were with the apostle 1 Thessalonians 1:1, and we know that they were with him when he was at Corinth; Acts 18:5.

If this epistle was written at the time supposed, at Corinth, it must have been about the 13th year of the reign of Claudius, and about a.d. 52. That

this was the time in which it was written, is the opinion of Mill, of Lardner, of Hug, and is indeed generally admitted. It was the first epistle written by the apostle Paul, and, in some respects, may be allowed to excite a deeper interest on that account than any others of his. The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians is supposed to have been written at the same place, and probably in the same year; see Lardner, vol. Acts 6:4-6. Grotius, indeed, supposes that the order of the epistles has been inverted, and that that which is now called the "Second Epistle to the Thessalonians" was in fact first sent. But there is no evidence of this.

Section 4. The Character of the Church at Thessalonica, and the Design of the Epistle

The church at Thessalonica, at first, was composed of the following classes of persons:

(1) Jews. To them Paul preached first, and though the mass of them opposed him, and rejected his message, yet some of them believed; Acts 17:4,

(2) Greeks who had been proselyted to the Jewish faith, and who seem to have been in attendance on the synagogue; Acts 17:4. They are called "devout Greeks" - σεβομένοι Ἑλλήνοι sebomenoi Hellēnoi- that is, religious Greeks, or those who had renounced the worship of idols, and who attended on the worship of the synagogue. They were probably what the Jews called "Proselytes of the Gate;" persons who were admitted to many privileges, but who were not proselytes in the fullest sense. There were many such persons usually where a synagogue was established among the Gentiles.

(3) females of the more elevated rank and standing in the community; Acts 17:4. They were women of influence, and were connected with distinguished families. Possibly they also may have been of the number of the proselytes.

(4) not a few members of the church appear to have been converted from idolatry by the preaching of the apostle, or had connected themselves with it after he had left them. Thus, in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, it is said, "For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.

Though the apostle had been much opposed when there, and the gospel had been rejected by the great body of the inhabitants of Thessalonica, yet it had been most cordially embraced by these different classes 1 Thessalonians 2:13, and they were entirely harmonious in the belief of it. They forgot all their former differences in the cordiality with which they had embraced the gospel. The characteristics of the church there, and the circumstances existing, which gave occasion for the two epistles to the Thessalonians, appear to have been, so far as can he gathered from the history 1 Thessalonians 2:17, and now led him to write to them; compare 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6; 1 Thessalonians 2:8-9, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20. Paul had for them the strong affection which a nurse has for the children committed to her charge (1 Thessalonians 2:7), or a father for his children 1 Thessalonians 2:11, and hence the interest shown for them by writing these epistles.

(2) they were disposed not only to embrace the gospel, but to spread it abroad (chap 1 Thessalonians 1:8), and Paul was evidently desirous of commending them for this, and of exciting them to greater love and zeal in doing it.

(3) they had at first embraced the gospel amidst scenes of strife 1 Thessalonians 2:2; they were now opposed, as they had been there, by the Jews, and by their own countrymen 1 Thessalonians 2:14; and they appear to have been called to some peculiar trials, by the loss of some valued members of the church - friends who were peculiarly dear to their hearts; 1 Thessalonians 2:3, 1 Thessalonians 2:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:13. To console them in view of these afflictions was one design of the first epistle, and in doing it the apostle states one of the most interesting views of the resurrection to be found in the Scriptures; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18.

(4) they had been instructed in reference to the future coming of the Saviour; the day of judgment, and the fact that the appearing of the "day of the Lord" would be like a thief in the night; 1 Thessalonians 5:2. But they seem to have inferred that that day was near, and they were looking for the immediate advent of the Redeemer, and the close of the world. To this view they seem to have been led by two things. One was, a misinterpretation of

what the apostle says, 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3, about the advent of the Redeemer, which they seem to have understood as if it meant that it would be "soon;" and the other was, probably, the fact that certain letters had been forged in the name of Paul which maintained this doctrine; 2 Thessalonians 2:2. To correct this view was one of the leading objects of the second epistle, and accordingly the apostle in that shows them that events must occur preceding the coming of the Lord Jesus which would occupy a long time, and that the end of the world, therefore, could not be near; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12.

(5) An error seems also to have prevailed among them in regard to the resurrection, which was the cause of great uneasiness to those who had lost Christian friends by death; 1 Thessalonians 4:13, They seem to have supposed that when the Lord Jesus appeared, they who were alive would have great advantages over those who were deceased; that the living would be allowed to behold his glory, and to participate in the splendors of his personal reign, while those who were in their graves would slumber through these magnificent scenes. To correct these views, appears to have been one design of the first epistle. The apostle shows them that at the coming of the Saviour, all the redeemed, whether living or dead, would participate alike in his glory. They who were alive would not anticipate those who were in their graves. In fact, he says, those who were dead would rise before the change would take place in the living that was to fit them to dwell with the Lord, and then all would he taken up to be forever with him; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18.

(6) it would appear to be not improbable that after the departure of the apostle from Thessalonica, he had been accused by the enemies of the gospel there, of a lack of courage, and that they had urged this as proof that he was conscious that the gospel was an imposture. Besides, his leaving the church there without any instructors in a time when they greatly needed them, may have been urged as a proof that he had no real affection for them, or concern for their welfare. To meet this charge, the apostle urges several things, vindicating his conduct, and showing the strength of his attachment for them. He says, (1) that, as they knew; so far from being deterred by persecution from preaching, after a violent persecution at Philippi, he and his fellow laborers had at once preached the same gospel at Thessalonica,

and they had done it there amidst the same kind of opposition; 1 Thessalonians 2:2. (2) that they themselves were witnesses that it had been done without any appearance of fraud or of guile. They had given them all possible proofs of sincerity; 1 Thessalonians 2:3-5; (3) That they had given every proof possible that they did not seek glory from men, and that their aims were not selfish. They were willing to have imparted, not the gospel only, but also their own lives; and to show that they had had no selfish aim while with them, they had supported themselves by the labor of their own hands; 1 Thessalonians 2:6-9. (4) that so far from not feeling any interest in them, he had repeatedly sought to visit them, but had in every instance been prevented 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18; and (5) that, since he was prevented from going to them, he had submitted to the personal sacrifice of parting with Timothy at Athens, and of being left alone there, in order that he might go to them and comfort their hearts; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2.

(7) in common with other churches, gathered in part or in whole from the pagan, they were in danger of falling into the sins to which they had been addicted before their conversion, and one object of the first epistle is to put them on their guard against the leading vices to which they were exposed; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7.

(8) it would seem, also, that there were some in the church who had a spirit of insubordination toward their religious teachers, and who, under pretence of edifying others, were guilty of disorder. To correct this was also one object of the epistle; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14.

From these views, the design of this epistle, and also of the second epistle to the same church, which seems to have been written soon-after this, will be apparent. They were the effusions of warm attachment toward a church which the apostle had founded, but from which he had been soon driven away, and which he had been prevented from revisiting when be had earnestly desired it. They are filled with expressions of tender regard; they remind the members of the church of the ardor with which they had at first embraced the gospel; caution them against the dangers to which they were exposed; commend them for their fidelity hitherto, and encourage them in their trials and persecutions. They present some most interesting views of the nature of the gospel, and especially contain statements about the

resurrection of the saints which are not found elsewhere in the New Testament, and views in relation to the great apostasy, and the “man of sin,” which demonstrate that the writer was inspired, and which are of inestimable importance in guarding the true church from the power of Antichrist. No one could have drawn the picture of the Papacy in the second chapter of the second epistle who was not under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and no true Christian can be sufficiently grateful that the apostle was thus inspired to reveal the features of that great apostasy, to put the church on its guard against the wiles and the power of him who “exalteth himself above all that is called God.”

1 THESSALONIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

The first chapter of this Epistle embraces the following subjects:

1.The inscription by Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the Thessalonians, and the usual salutations; 1 Thessalonians 1:1.

2.An expression of thanks for their fidelity in the gospel; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4. The apostle says that he made mention of them continually in his prayers; that he remembered their faith, and love, and patience, for by these things they had shown that they were among the elect of God.

3.He reminds them of the manner in which they received the gospel when it was first preached to them; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6. The power of God had been manifested among them in a remarkable manner; they had embraced the gospel with strong assurance, and though in the midst of deep afflictions, they had received the word with joy.

4.The effect of the establishment of the church in Thessalonica had been felt far abroad, and had been of the most happy character; 1 Thessalonians 1:7-10. They had become examples to all that believed in Macedonia and Achaia. From them the gospel had been sounded abroad throughout Greece, and indeed in all places with which they had connection by their commercial relations. Those who dwelt in distant places bore witness to the influence of the gospel on them, and to the power of that religion which had turned them from idols to serve the living God. These verses contain a beautiful illustration of the effect of the gospel in a place favorably situated for commerce, and having extensive contact with other regions.

Verse 1

Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus - On the reasons why Paul associated other names with his in his epistles, see the 1 Corinthians 1:1 note, and 2 Corinthians 2:1 note. Silvanus, or Silas, and Timothy were properly united with him on this occasion, because they had been with him when the church was founded there, 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2. Silas is first mentioned in the New Testament as one who was sent by the church at

Jerusalem with Paul to Antioch (notes, Acts 15:22); and he afterward became his traveling companion.

Which is in God the Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ - Who are united to the true God and to the Redeemer; or who sustain an intimate relation to the Father and the Lord Jesus. This is strong language, denoting, that they were a true church; compare 1 John 5:20. "Grace be unto you," etc.; see the notes, Romans 1:7.

Verse 2

We give thanks to God always for you all - see the notes, Romans 1:9.

Making mention of you in our prayers - See the notes at Ephesians 1:16. It may be observed here:

(1) that the apostle was in the habit of constant prayer.

(2) that he was accustomed to extemporary prayer, and not to written prayer. It is not credible that "forms" of prayer had been framed for the churches at Thessalonica and Ephesus, and the other churches for which Paul says he prayed, nor would it have been possible to have adapted such forms to the varying circumstances attending the organization of new churches.

Verse 3

Remembering without ceasing - Remembering your faith and love whenever we pray. This is not to be understood literally, but it is language such as we use respecting anything that interests us much. It is constantly in our mind. Such an interest the apostle had in the churches which he had established.

Your work of faith - That is, your showing or evincing faith. The reference is probably to acts of duty, holiness, and benevolence, which proved that they exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Works of faith are those to which faith prompts, and which show that there is faith in the heart. This does not mean, therefore, a work of their own producing faith, but a work which showed that they had faith.

And labour of love - Labour produced by love, or showing that you are actuated by love. Such would be all their kindness toward the poor, the oppressed, and the afflicted; and all their acts which showed that they loved the souls of people.

And patience of hope - Patience in your trials, showing that you have such a hope of future blessedness as to sustain you in your afflictions. It was the hope of heaven through the Lord Jesus that gave them patience; see the notes on Romans 8:24. "The phrases here are Hebraisims, meaning active faith, and laborious love, and patient hope, and might have been so translated." Doddridge.

In our Lord Jesus Christ - That is, your hope is founded only on him. The only hope that we have of heaven is through the Redeemer.

In the sight of God and our Father - Before God, even our Father. It is a hope which we have through the merits of the Redeemer, and which we are permitted to cherish before God; that is, in his very presence. When we think of God; when we reflect that we must soon stand before him, we are permitted to cherish this hope. It is a hope which will be found to be genuine even in the presence of a holy and heart-searching God. This does not mean that it had been merely professed before God, but that it was a hope which they might dare to entertain even in the presence of God, and which would bear the scrutiny of his eye.

Verse 4

Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God - The margin here reads, "beloved of God, your election." The difference depends merely on the pointing, and that which would require the marginal reading has been adopted by Hahn, Tittman, Bloomfield, and Griesbach. The sense is not materially varied, and the common version may be regarded as giving the true meaning. There is no great difference between "being beloved of God," and "being chosen of God." The sense then is, "knowing that you are chosen by God unto salvation;" compare notes on Ephesians 1:4-5, Ephesians 1:11. The word "knowing" here refers to Paul himself, and to Silas and Timothy, who united with him in writing the Epistle, and in rendering thanks for the favors shown to the church at Thessalonica. The meaning is, that they had so strong confidence that they had been chosen of God as a church unto salvation, that they might say they knew it.

The way in which they knew it seems not to have been by direct revelation or by inspiration, but by the evidence which they had furnished, and which constituted such a proof of piety as to leave no doubt of the fact. Calvin. What this evidence was, the apostle states in the following verses. I was shown by the manner in which they embraced the gospel, and by the spirit which they had evinced under its influence The meaning here seems

to be, not that all the members of the church at Thessalonica were certainly chosen of God to salvation - for, as in other churches, there might have been those there who were false professors - but that the church, as such, had given evidence that it was a true church - that it was founded on Christian principles - and that, as a church, it had furnished evidence of its "election by God." Nor can it mean, as Clarke and Bloomfield suppose, that God "had chosen and called the Gentiles to the same privileges to which he chose and called the Jews; and that as they (the Jews) had rejected the gospel, God had now elected the Gentiles in their stead;" for a considerable portion of the church was composed of Jews (see Acts 17:4-5), and it cannot, therefore, mean that the Gentiles had been selected in the place of the Jews. Besides, the election of the Gentiles, or any portion of the human family, to the privileges of salvation, to the neglect or exclusion of any other part, would be attended with all the difficulties which occur in the doctrine of personal and individual election. Nothing is gained on this subject in removing the difficulties, by supposing that God chooses masses of people instead of individuals. How can the one be more proper than the other? What difficulty in the doctrine of election is removed by the supposition? Why is it not as right to choose an individual as a nation? Why not as proper to reject an individual as a whole people? If this means that the church at Thessalonica had shown that it was a true church of Christ, chosen by God, then we may learn:

(1) that a true church owes what it has to the "election of God." It is because God has chosen it; has called it out from the world; and has endowed it in such a manner as to he a true church.

(2) achurch may give evidence that it is chosen of God, and is a true church. There are things which it may do, which will show that it is undoubtedly such a church as God has chosen, and such as he approves. There are just principles on which a church should be organized, and there is a spirit which may be manifested by a church which will distinguish it from any other association of people.

(3) it is not improper to speak with strong confidence of such a church as undoubtedly chosen of God. There are churches which, by their zeal, self-denial, and deadness to the world, show beyond question their "election

of God," and the world may see that they are founded on other principles and manifest a different spirit from other organizations of people.

(4) every church should evince such a spirit that there may be no doubt of its "election of God." It should be so dead to the world; so pure in doctrine and in practice, and so much engaged in spreading the knowledge of salvation, that the world will see that it is governed by higher principles than any worldly association, and that nothing could produce this but the influence of the Holy Spirit of God.

Verse 5

For our gospel came not unto you - When first preached; Acts 17:1-3. Paul speaks of it as "our gospel," because it was the gospel preached by him and Silas and Timothy; comp 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Timothy 2:8. He did not mean to say that the gospel had been originated by him, but only that he had delivered the good news of salvation to them. He is here stating the evidence which had been given that they were a church "chosen by God." He refers, first, to the manner in which the gospel was received by them 1 Thessalonians 1:5-7, and, secondly, to the spirit which they themselves manifested in sending it abroad; yet. 1 Thessalonians 1:8.

In word only - Was not merely spoken; or was not merely heard. It produced a powerful effect on the heart and life. It was not a mere empty sound that produced no other effect than to entertain or amuse; compare Ezekiel 33:32.

But also in power - That is, in such power as to convert the soul. The apostle evidently refers not to any miracles that were performed there, but to the effect of the gospel on those who heard it. It is possible that there were miracles performed there, as there were in other places, but there is no mention of such a fact, and it is not necessary to suppose it, in order to see the full meaning of this language. There was great power manifested in the gospel in its leading them to break off from their sins, to abandon their idols, and to give their hearts to God; see this more fully explained in the notes on 1 Corinthians 2:4.

And in the Holy Ghost - Compare the notes on 1 Corinthians 2:4. It is there called the "demonstration of the Spirit."

And in much assurance - That is, with firm conviction, or full persuasion of its truth. It was not embraced as a doubtful thing, and it did

not produce the effect on the mind which is caused by anything that is uncertain in its character. Many seem to embrace the gospel as if they only half believed it, or as if it were a matter of very doubtful truth and importance; but this was not the case with the Thessalonians. There was the firmest conviction of its truth, and they embraced it "heart and soul;" compare Colossians 2:2; Hebrews 6:11. From all that is said in this verse, it is evident that the power of God was remarkably manifested in the conversion of the Thessalonians, and that they embraced the gospel with an uncommonly strong conviction of its truth and value. This fact will account for the subsequent zeal which the apostle so much commends in them - for it is usually true that the character of piety in a church, as it is in an individual, is determined by the views with which the gospel is first embraced, and the purposes which are formed at the beginning of the Christian life.

As ye know what manner of men, … - Paul often appeals to those among whom he had labored as competent witnesses with respect to his own conduct and character; see 1 Thessalonians 2:9-10; Acts 20:33-35. He means here that he and his fellow-laborers had set them an example, or had shown what Christianity was by their manner of living, and that the Thessalonians had become convinced that the religion which they taught was real. The holy life of a preacher goes far to confirm the truth of the religion which he preaches, and is among the most efficacious means of inducing them to embrace the gospel.

Verse 6

And ye became followers of us - "You became imitators - μιμηταὶ mimētai- of us." This does not mean that they became followers of Paul, Silas, and Timothy, in the sense that they had set themselves up as teachers, or as the head of a sect, but that they imitated their manner of living; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1.

And of the Lord - The Lord Jesus. You also learned to imitate him. From this it is evident that the manner in which the Saviour lived was a prominent topic of their preaching, and also that it was one of the means of the conversion of the Thessalonians. It is probable that preaching on the pure and holy life of the Lord Jesus might be made a much more important means of the conversion of sinners than it is. Nothing is better adapted to show them the evil of their own guilty lives than the contrast between their

lives and his; and nothing can be conceived better fitted to win them to holy living than the contemplation of his pure and holy deportment.

Having received the word in much affliction - That is, amidst much opposition from others; see Acts 17:5-8. It was in the midst of these trials that they had become converted - and they seem to have been all the better Christians for them. In this they were imitators of the Saviour, or shared the same lot with him, and thus became his followers. Their embracing and holding fast the truths of religion amidst all this opposition, showed that they were controlled by the same principles that he was, and that they were truly his friends.

With joy of the Holy Ghost - With happiness produced by the Holy Ghost. Though they were much afflicted and persecuted, yet there was joy. There was joy in their conversion - in the evidence of pardoned sin - in the hope of heaven; see the notes, Acts 8:8. However great may be the trials and persecutions experienced in receiving the gospel, or however numerous and long the sufferings of the subsequent life in consequence of having embraced it, there is a joy in religion that more than overbalances all, and that makes religion the richest of all blessings.

Verse 7

So that ye were ensamples to all that believe - Examples in reference to the firmness with which you embraced the gospel, the fidelity with which you adhered to it in trials, and the zeal which you showed in spreading it abroad. These things are specified in the previous and subsequent verses as characterizing their piety. The word here rendered "ensamples" - τύπον tuponsingular - is that from which the word type is derived. It properly denotes anything caused or produced by the means of "blows" (from τύπτω tuptō), and hence a mark, print, or impression, made by a stamp or die; and then a resemblance, figure, pattern, exemplar - a model after which anything is made. This is the meaning here. They became, as it were, a model or pattern after which the piety of others should be moulded, or showed what the piety of others ought to be.

In Macedonia - Thessalonica was an important city of Macedonia (see the Intro.; compare notes, Acts 16:9), and of course their influence would be felt on the whole of the surrounding region. This is a striking instance of the effect which a church in a city may have on the country. The influence of a city church may be felt, and will usually be felt afar on the other churches

of a community - just as, in all other respects, a city has an important influence on the country at large.

And Achaia - Achaia proper was the part of Greece of which Corinth was the capital. The word, however, was sometimes so used as to comprehend the whole of Greece, and in this sense it seems to be employed here, as there is no reason to suppose that their influence would be felt particularly in the province of which Corinth was the center. Koppe observes that Macedonia and Achaia were the two provinces into which all Greece was divided when it was brought under the Roman yoke, the former of which comprehended Macedonia proper, Illyricum, Epirus, and Thessaly, and the other Greece properly so called. The meaning here is, therefore, that their influence was felt on all the parts of Greece; that their piety was spoken of, and the effect of their conversion had been felt in all those places. Thessalonica was a commercial city, and a sea-port. It had contact with all the other parts of Macedonia, with Greece, and with Asia Minor. It was partly owing to the advantages of its situation that its influence was thus felt.

Its own merchants and mariners who went abroad would carry with them the spirit of the religion of the church there, and those who visited it from other ports would see the effect of religion there. This is just an instance, therefore, of the influence which a commercial town and a sea-port may have in religion on other parts of the world. A revival of religion in such a place will extend its influence afar to other places, and appropriate zeal among the friends of the Redeemer there may have an important effect on sea-ports, and towns, and lands far remote. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of such places in regard to the spread of the gospel; and Christians who reside there - be they merchants, mechanics, lawyers, physicians, mariners, or ministers of the gospel, should feel that on them God has placed the responsibility of using a vast influence in sending the gospel to other lands. He that goes forth from a commercial town should be imbued with the spirit of the gospel, and churches located there should be so under the influence of religion, that they who come among them from abroad shall bear to their own lands honorable testimony of the power of religion there.

Verse 8

For from you sounded out the word of the Lord - The truths of religion were thus spread abroad. The word rendered "sounded out" - ἐξήχηται exēchētai- refers to the sounding of a trumpet (Bloomfield), and the idea is, that the gospel was proclaimed like the sonorous voice of a trumpet echoing from place to place; compare Isaiah 58:1; Revelation 1:10. Their influence had an effect in diffusing the gospel in other places, as if the sound of a trumpet echoed and reechoed among the hills and along the vales of the classic land of Greece. This seems to have been done:

(1) involuntarily; that is, the necessary result of their conversion, even without any direct purpose of the kind of their own, would be to produce this effect. Their central and advantageous commercial position; the fact that many of them were in the habit of visiting other places; and the fact that they were visited by strangers from abroad, would naturally contribute to this result. But.

(2) this does not appear to be all that is intended. The apostle commends them in such a way as to make it certain that they were voluntary in the spread of the gospel; that they made decided efforts to take advantage of their position to send the knowledge of the truth abroad. If so, this is an interesting instance of one of the first efforts made by a church to diffuse the gospel, and to send it to those who were destitute of it. There is no improbability in the supposition that they sent out members of their church - messengers of salvation - to other parts of Macedonia and Greece that they might communicate the same gospel to others. See Doddridge.

But also in every place - Thessalonica was connected not only with Macedonia and Greece proper, in its commercial relations, but also with the ports of Asia Minor, and not improbably with still more remote regions. The meaning is, that in all the places with which they trafficked the effect of their faith was seen and spoken of.

Faith to God-ward - Fidelity toward God. They showed that they had a true belief in God and in the truth which he had revealed.

So that we need not to speak anything - That is, wherever we go, we need say nothing of the fact that you have been turned to the Lord, or of the character of your piety. These things are sufficiently made known by those who come from you, by those who visit you, and by your zeal in spreading the true religion.

Verse 9

For they themselves - They who have visited you, and they whom you have sent out; all persons testify of your piety. The apostle seems to refer to all whom he had met or had heard of "in all places," who said anything about the Thessalonians They were unanimous in bearing testimony to their fidelity and piety.

Show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you - The testimony which they bear of you is, in fact, testimony of the manner in which we preached the gospel, and demeaned ourselves when we were with you. It shows that we were intent on our Master's work, and that we were not actuated by selfish or sinister motives The argument is, that such effects could not have been produced among them if Paul, Silas, and their fellow laborers had been impostors. Their sound conversion to God; their change from idolatry to the true religion, and the zeal which had been the result of their conversion, was an argument to which Paul and his fellow-laborers might appeal in proof of their sincerity and their being sent from God. Paul often makes a similar appeal; compare notes on 2 Corinthians 3:2-3. It is certain that many of the Jews in Thessalonica, when Paul and his fellow-laborers were there, regarded them as impostors Acts 17:6, Acts 17:8, and there is every reason to suppose that after they left the city, they would endeavor to keep up this impression among the people. To meet this, Paul now says that their own undoubted conversion to a life of holiness and zeal under their ministry, was an unanswerable argument that this was not so. How could impostors and deceivers have been the means of producing such effects?

And how ye turned to God from idols - That is, under our preaching. This proves that the church was to a considerable extent composed of those who were converted from idolatry under the preaching of Paul; compare Intro. 4. The meaning here is, that they who came from them, or they who had visited them, bore abundant testimony to the fact that they had turned from idols to the worship of the true God; compare notes 1 Corinthians 12:2; Galatians 1:8.

To serve the living and true God - He is called the "living God" in opposition to idols - who are represented as dead, dumb, deaf, and blind; compare Psalm 135:15-17; notes, Isaiah 44:10-17; Matthew 16:16; John 5:26; Acts 14:15.

Verse 10

And to wait for his Son from heaven - It is clear from this and from other parts of these two Epistles, that the return of the Lord Jesus to this world was a prominent subject of the preaching of Paul at Thessalonica. No small part of these Epistles is occupied with stating the true doctrine on this point (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, and because, in that connection, it was so well calculated to rouse them to vigilance and zeal; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11. He makes it prominent in the second Epistle, because material errors prevailed there in reference to it which needed to be corrected.

In the passage before us, he says that the return of the Son of God from heaven was an important point which had been insisted on when he was there, and that their conduct, as borne witness to by all, had shown with what power it had seized upon them, and what a practical influence it had exerted in their lives. They lived as if they were" waiting" for his return. They fully believed in it; they expected it. They were looking out for it, not knowing when it might occur, and as if it might occur at any moment. They were, therefore, dead to the world, and were animated with an earnest desire to do good. This is one of the instances which demonstrate that the doctrine that the Lord Jesus will return to our world, is fitted, when understood in the true sense revealed in the Scriptures, to exert a powerful influence on the souls of people. It is eminently adapted to comfort the hearts of true Christians in the sorrows, bereavements, and sicknesses of life John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Peter 3:8-9; to lead us to watchfulness and to an earnest inquiry into the question whether we are prepared to meet him Matthew 24:37-44; Matthew 25:13; to make us dead to the world, and to lead us to act as becomes the children of light (1 Thessalonians 5:5-9; to awaken and arouse impenitent and carless sinners 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; 2 Peter 3:3-7, and to excite Christians to self-denying efforts to spread the gospel in distant lands, as was the case at Thessalonica. Every doctrine of the gospel is adapted to produce some happy practical effects on mankind, but there are few that are more full of elevated and holy influences than that which teaches that the Lord Jesus will return to the earth, and which leads the soul to wait for his appearing; compare notes, 1 Corinthians 1:7; Philemon 3:20.

Whom he raised from the dead - See the Acts 2:24-32 notes; 1 Corinthians 15:4-9 notes. Paul probably means to intimate here, that this was one of the great truths which they had received, that the Lord Jesus had

been raised from the dead. We know it was a prominent doctrine wherever the gospel was preached.

Which delivered us from the wrath to come - Another of the prominent doctrines of Christianity, which was undoubtedly always inculcated by the first preachers of religion. The "wrath to come" is the divine indignation which will come upon the guilty; Matthew 3:7. From that Christ delivers us by taking our place, and dying in our stead. It was the great purpose of his coming to save us from this approaching wrath. It follows from this:

(1) that there was wrath which man had to dread - since Jesus came to deliver us from something that was real, and not from what was imaginary; and,

(2) that the same wrath is to be dreaded now by all who are not united to Christ, since in this respect they are now just as all were before he died; that is, they are exposed to fearful punishment, from which He alone can deliver. It may be added, that the existence of this wrath is real, whether people believe it or not, for the fact of its existence is not affected by our belief or unbelief.

Remarks On 1 Thessalonians 1:3. Paul was never afraid of injuring any one by commending him when he deserved it: nor was he ever afraid to rebuke when censure was due.

(2) Christians are chosen to salvation; 1 Thessalonians 1:4. Their hope of heaven depends on the "election of God."

(3) it is possible for a people to know that they are chosen of God, and to give such evidence of it that others shall know it also; 1 Thessalonians 1:4. It is possible for a church to evince such a spirit of piety, self-denial, love, and holiness, and such a desire to spread the gospel, as to show that they are "chosen of God," or that they are a true church. This question is not to be determined by their adherence to certain rites and forms; by their holding to the sentiments of an orthodox creed: or by their zeal in defense of the "apostolic succession," but by their bringing forth "the fruits of good living." In determining that the church at Thessalonica was "chosen of God," Paul does not refer to its external organization, or to the fact that it was founded by apostolic hands, or that it had a true ministry and valid ordinances, but to the fact that it evinced the true spirit of Christian piety;

and particularly that they had been zealous in sending the gospel to others. There were three things to which he referred:

1.that the gospel had power over themselves, inducing them to abandon their sins;

2.that it had such influence on their lives that others recognized in them the evidence of true religion; and,

3.that it made them benevolent, and excited them to make efforts to diffuse its blessings abroad.

(4) if a church may know that it is chosen or elected of God, it is true of an individual also that he may know it. It is not by any direct revelation from heaven; not by an infallible communication of the Holy Spirit; not by any voice or vision; but it is in the same way in which this may be evinced by a church. The conversion of an individual, or his "election of God," may be certainly known by himself, if,

1.the gospel is received as "the word of God," and induces him to abandon his sins;

2.if it leads him to pursue such a life that others shall see that he is actuated by Christian principles; and,

3.if he makes it his great aim in life to do good, and to diffuse abroad, as far as he can, that religion which he professes to love. He who finds in his own heart and life evidence of these things, need not doubt that he is among the "chosen of God."

(5) the character of piety in the life of an individual Christian, and in a church, is often determined by the manner in which the gospel is embraced at first, and by the spirit with which the Christian life is entered on; see the notes on 1 Thessalonians 1:5-6. If so, then this fact is of immense importance in the question about organizing a church, and about making a profession of religion. If a church is so organized as to have it understood that it shall be to a considerable extent the patron of worldly amusements - a "halfway house" between the world and religion, that purpose will determine all its subsequent character - unless it shall be counteracted by the grace of God. If it is organized so as to look with a benignant and tolerant eye on gaiety, vanity, self-indulgence, ease, and what are called the amusements and pleasures of life, it is not difficult to see what will be its character and influence. How can such a church diffuse far and near the

conviction that it is “chosen of God,” as the church at Thessalonica did And so of an individual. Commonly, the whole character of the religious life will be determined by the views with which the profession of religion is made. If there is a purpose to enjoy religion and the world too; to be the patron of fashion as well as a professed follower of Christ; to seek the flattery or the plaudits of man as well as the approbation of God, that purpose will render the whole religious life useless, vacillating, inconsistent, miserable. The individual will live without the enjoyment of religion, and will die leaving little evidence to his friends that he has gone to be with God. If, on the other hand, there be singleness of purpose, and entire dedication to God at the commencement of the Christian life, the religious career will be one of usefulness, respectability, and peace. The most important period in a man‘s life, then, is that when he is pondering the question whether he shall make a profession of religion.

(6) achurch in a city should cause its influence to be felt afar; 1 Thessalonians 1:7-9. This is true, indeed, of all other churches, but it is especially so of a church in a large town. Cities will be centers of influence in fashion, science, literature, religion, and morals. A thousand ties of interest bind them to other parts of a land, and though in fact there may be, as there often is, much more intelligence in a country neighborhood than among the same number of inhabitants taken promiscuously from a city; and though there may be, as there often is, far more good sense and capability to appreciate religious truth in a country congregation than in a congregation in a city, yet it is true that the city will be the radiating point of influence. This, of course, increases the responsibility of Christians in a city, and makes it important that, like those of Thessalonica, they should be models of self-denial and of efforts to spread the gospel.

(7) achurch in a commercial town should make use of its special influence to spread the gospel abroad; 1 Thessalonians 1:7-9. Such a place is connected with remote lands, and those who, for commercial purposes, visit distant ports from that place, should bear with them the spirit of the gospel. Such, too, should be the character of piety in the churches in such a city, that all who visit it for any purpose, should see the reality of religion, and be led to bear the honorable report of it again to their own land,

(8) such, too, should be the piety of any church. The church at Thessalonica evinced the true spirit of religion; 1 Thessalonians 1:7-9. Its light shone afar. It sent out those who went to spread the gospel. Its members, when they went abroad, showed that they were influenced by higher and purer principles than those which actuated them before conversion, and than were evinced by the pagan world. Those who visited them, also, saw that there was a reality in religion, and bore an honorable report of it again to their own lands. Let any church evince this spirit, and it will show that it is "chosen of God," or a true church; and wherever there is a church formed after the primitive model, these traits will always be seen.

(9) it is our duty and privilege to "wait for the Son of God to return from heaven." We know not when his appearing, either to remove us by death, or to judge the world, will be - and we should therefore watch and be ready. The hope of his return to our world to raise the dead, and to convey his ransomed to heaven, is the brightest and most cheering prospect that dawns on man, and we should be ready, whenever it occurs, to hail him as our returning Lord, and to rush to his arms as our glorious Redeemer. It should be always the characteristic of our piety, as it was that of John to say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus;" Revelation 22:20.

1 THESSALONIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

The principal subjects embraced in this chapter are the following:

I. A statement of the conduct of Paul and his fellow-laborers when they first preached the gospel at Thessalonica; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12. In this statement, the apostle specifies particularly the following things:

(1)That he and his fellow-laborers had been shamefully treated at Philippi, and had been obliged to encounter much opposition at Thessalonica; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2.

(2)that in their efforts to convert the Thessalonians they had used no deceit, corruption, or grille; 1 Thessalonians 2:3-4.

(3)that they had not sought the praise of people, and had not used the weight of authority which they might have done as the apostles of Christ; 1 Thessalonians 2:6.

(4)that they had been gentle and mild in all their conversation with them; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8.

(5)that, in order not to be burdensome, or to subject themselves to the charge of selfishness, they had supported themselves by laboring night and day; 1 Thessalonians 2:9.

(6)that the Thessalonians themselves were witnesses in what a holy and pure manner they had lived when there, and how they had exhorted them to a holy life; 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12.

II. The apostle refers to the manner in which the Thessalonians had received the truth at first, as undoubtedly the word of God, and not as the word of people; 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

III. He reminds them of the fact that they had met with the same opposition from the Jews which the churches in Judea had, for that everywhere the Jews had made the same opposition to the messengers of God, killing the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and forbidding the apostles everywhere to speak to the Gentiles; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16.

IV. In the conclusion of the chapter, the apostle expresses the earnest desire which he had to visit them, and the reason why he had not done it. It was because he had been prevented by causes beyond his control, and now his earnest and sincere wish was that he might be permitted to see them - for they were his hope, and joy, and crown; 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20.

It is reasonable to suppose that the statements in this chapter were designed to meet a certain condition of things in the church there, and if so, we may learn something of the difficulties which the Thessalonians had to encounter, and of the objections which were made to Paul and to the gospel. It is often in this way that we can get the best view of the internal condition of a church referred to in the New Testament - not by direct statement respecting difficulties and errors in it, but by the character of the Epistle sent to it. Judging by this rule, we should infer that there were those in Thessalonica who utterly denied the divine origin of the gospel. This general charge, the apostle meets in the first chapter, by showing that the power of the gospel evinced in their conversion, and its effects in their lives, demonstrated it to be of heavenly origin.

In reference to the state of things as referred to in this chapter, we should also infer the following things:

1. That it was represented by some that the apostle and his fellow-laborers sought influence and power; that they were dictatorial and authoritative; that they were indisposed to labor; and were, in fact, impostors. This charge Paul refutes abundantly by his appeal to what they knew of him, and what they had seen of him when he was there: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

2. That the church at Thessalonica met with severe and violent opposition from the Jews who were there; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-17. This appears to have been a formidable opposition; compare Acts 17:5 ff. They would not only be likely to use violence, but it is not improbable that they employed the semblance of argument that might perplex the church. They might represent that they were from the same country as Paul and his fellow-laborers; that they, while pretending to great zeal for religion, were, in fact, apostates, and were engaged in overturning the revealed doctrines of God. It would be easy to represent them as people who, from this cause, were worthy of no confidence, and to urge the fact that those who thus acted in opposition to the religion of their own country, and to the sacred rites of the temple at Jerusalem, could be entitled to no regard. These

charges, if they were made, the apostle meets, by assuring the Thessalonians that they were suffering precisely the same things which the churches in Judea did; that the Jews manifested the same spirit there which they did in Thessalonica; that they had killed alike the Lord Jesus and their own undoubted prophets, and that it was a characteristic of them that they were opposed to all other people. Their opposition, therefore, was not to be wondered at, nor was it to be regarded as any argument that the apostles, though Jews, were unworthy of confidence; 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16.

3. It was very probably represented by the enemies of Paul and his fellow-laborers, that they had fled from Thessalonica on the slightest danger, and had no regard for the church there, or they would have remained there in the time of peril, or, at least, that they would have returned to visit them. Their continued absence was probably urged as a proof that they had no concern for them. The apostle meets this by stating that they had been indeed "taken from them" for a little time, but that their hearts were still with them, and by assuring them that he had often endeavored to visit them again, but that "Satan had hindered" him; 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20. He had, however, given them the highest proof of interest and affection that he could, for when he was unable to go himself, he had, at great self-denial, sent Timothy to establish them in the faith, and to comfort their hearts; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-3. His absence, therefore, should not be urged as a proof that he had no regard for them.

Verse 1

For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you - notes, 1 Thessalonians 1:9. Paul appeals to themselves for proof that they had not come among them as impostors. They had had a full opportunity to see them, and to know what influenced them. Paul frequently appeals to his own life, and to what they, among whom he labored, knew of it, as a full refutation of the slanderous accusations of his enemies; compare notes, 1 Corinthians 4:10-16; 1 Corinthians 9:19-27; 2 Corinthians 6:3-10. Every minister of the gospel ought so to live as to be able, when slanderously attacked, to make such an appeal to his people.

That it was not in vain - κενὴ kenēThis word means:

(1)"empty, vain, fruitless," or without success;

(2)that in which there is no truth or reality - "false, fallacious;" Ephesians 5:6; Colossians 2:8.

Here it seems, from the connection 1 Thessalonians 2:3-5, to be used in the latter sense, as denoting that they were not deceivers. The object does not appear to be so much to show that their ministry was successful, as to meet a charge of their adversaries that they were impostors. Paul tells them that from their own observation they knew that this was not so.

Verse 2

But even after that we had suffered before - Before we came among you.

And were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi - Acts 16:19 ff. By being beaten and cast into prison. The shame of the treatment consisted in the fact that it was wholly undeserved; that it was contrary to the laws; and that it was accompanied with circumstances designed to make their punishment as ignominious as possible. The Thessalonians knew of this, and Paul was not disposed to palliate the conduct of the Philippians. What was "shameful treatment" he speaks of as such without hesitation. It is not wrong to call things by their right names, and when we have been abused, it is not necessary that we should attempt to smooth the matter over by saying that it was not so.

We were bold in our God - By humble dependence on the support of our God. It was only his powerful aid that could have enabled them to persevere with ardor and zeal in such a work after such treatment The meaning here is, that they were not deterred from preaching the gospel by the treatment which they had received, but at the very next important town, and on the first opportunity, they proclaimed the same truth, though there was no security that they might not meet with the same persecution there. Paul evidently appeals to this in order to show them that they were not impostors, and that they were not influenced by the hope of ease or of selfish gains. People who were not sincere and earnest in their purposes would have been deterred by such treatment as they had received at Philippi.

With much contention - Amidst much opposition, and where great effort was necessary. The Greek word here used is ἀγώνι agōni(agony), a word referring usually to the Grecian games; notes, Colossians 2:1. It means the course, or place of contest; and then the contest itself, the strife, the combat, the effort for victory; and the apostle here means, that owing to

the opposition there, there was need of an effort on his part like the desperate struggles of those who contended for the mastery at the Grecian games; compare notes on 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. The triumph of the gospel there was secured only by an effort of the highest kind, and by overcoming the most formidable opposition.

Verse 3

For our exhortation - That is, the exhortation to embrace the gospel. The word seems to be used here so as to include preaching in general. The sense is, that the means which they used to induce them to become Christians were not such as to delude them.

Was not of deceit - Was not founded on sophistry. The apostle means to say, that the Thessalonians knew that his manner of preaching was not such as was adopted by the advocates of error.

Nor of uncleanness - Not such as to lead to an impure life. It was such as to lead to holiness and purity. The apostle appeals to what they knew to be the tendency of his doctrine as an evidence that it was true. Most of the teaching of the pagan philosophers led to a life of licentiousness and corruption. The tendency of the gospel was just the reverse.

d **Nor in guile -** Not by the arts of deceit. There was no craftiness or trick, such as could not bear a severe scrutiny. No point was carried by art, cunning, or stratagem. Everything was done on the most honorable and fair principles. It is much when a man can say that he has never endeavored to accomplish anything by mere trick, craft, or cunning. Sagacity and shrewdness are always allowable in ministers as well as others; trick and cunning never. Yet stratagem often takes the place of sagacity, and trick is often miscalled shrewdness. Guile, craft, cunning. imply deception, and can never be reconciled with that entire honesty which a minister of the gospel, and all other Christians, ought to possess; see notes on 2 Corinthians 12:16; compare Psalm 32:2; Psalm 34:13; John 1:47; 1 Peter 2:1, 1 Peter 2:22; Revelation 14:5.

Verse 4

But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel - Compare 1 Timothy 1:11-12. Since there had been committed to us an office so high and holy, and so much demanding sincerity, fidelity, and honesty, we endeavored to act in all respects in conformity to the trust reposed in us. The gospel is a system of truth and sincerity, and we evinced

the same. The gospel is concerned with great realities, and we did not resort to trick and illusion. The office of the ministry is most responsible, and we acted in view of the great account which we must render. The meaning is, that Paul had such a sense of the truth, reality, and importance of the gospel, and of his responsibility, as effectually to keep him from anything like craft or cunning in preaching it. An effectual restrainer from mere management and trick will always be found in a deep conviction of the truth and importance of religion. Artifice and cunning are the usual accompaniments of a bad cause - and, when adopted by a minister of the gospel, will usually, when detected, leave the impression that he feels that he is engaged in such a cause. If an object cannot be secured by sincerity and straight-forward dealing, it is not desirable that it should be secured at all.

Even so we speak - In accordance with the nature of the gospel; with the truth and sincerity which such a cause demands.

Not as pleasing men - Not in the manner of impostors, who make it their object to please people. The meaning of the apostle is, that he did not aim to teach such doctrines as would flatter people; as would win their applause; or as would gratify their passions or their fancy. We are not to suppose that he desired to offend people; or that he regarded their esteem as of no value; or that he was indifferent whether they were pleased or displeased; but that it was not the direct object of his preaching to please them. It was to declare the truth, and to obtain the approbation of God whatever people might think of it; see the notes on Galatians 1:10.

Which trieth our hearts - It is often said to be an attribute of God that he tries or searches the hearts of people; 1 Chronicles 28:9; 1 Chronicles 29:17; Jeremiah 11:20; Jeremiah 17:10; Psalm 11:4; Romans 8:27. The meaning here is, that the apostle had a deep conviction of the truth that God knew all his motives, and that all would be revealed in the last day.

Verse 5

For neither at any time used we flattering words - see the Job 31:21-22 notes; and on 2 Corinthians 2:17 note. The word here rendered "flattering" - κολακείας kolakeias- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The meaning is, that the apostle did not deal in the language of adulation; he did not praise them for their beauty, wealth, talent, or accomplishments, and conceal from them the painful truths about their guilt and danger. He stated simple truth - not refusing to commend people if truth would admit of it, and never hesitating to declare his honest convictions

about their guilt and danger. One of the principal arts of the deceiver on all subjects is flattery; and Paul says, that when preaching to the Thessalonians he had carefully avoided it. He now appeals to that fact as a proof of his own integrity. They knew that he had been faithful to their souls.

Nor a cloke of covetousness - The word rendered "cloke" here - πρόφασει prophasei- means, properly, "what is shown or appears before any one;" i. e., "show, pretence, pretext," put forth in order to cover one's real intent; Matthew 22:14; Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47. The meaning here is, that he did not put on a pretence or appearance of piety for the sake of promoting the schemes of covetousness. The evidence of that was not only what they observed of the general spirit of the apostle, but also the fact that when with them he had actually labored with his own hands for a support; 1 Thessalonians 2:9. It is obvious that there were those there, as sometimes there are now, who, under the pretence of great zeal for religion, were really seeking wealth, and it is possible that it may have been alleged against Paul and his fellow-laborers that they were such persons.

God is witness - This is a solemn appeal to God for the truth of what he had said. He refers not only to their own observation, but he calls God himself to witness his sincerity. God knew the truth in the case. There could have been no imposing on him; and the appeal, therefore, is to one who was intimately acquainted with the truth. Learn hence:

(1) That it is right, on important occasions, to appeal to God for the truth of what we say.

(2) we should always so live that we can properly make such an appeal to him.

Verse 6

Nor of men sought we glory - Or praise. The love of applause was not that which influenced them; see the notes on Colossians 1:10.

Neither of you, nor yet of others - Nowhere has this been our object The love of fame is not that which has influenced us. The particular idea in this verse seems to be that though they had uncommon advantages, as the apostles of Christ, for setting up a dominion or securing an ascendancy over others, yet they had not availed themselves of it. As an apostle of Christ; as appointed by him to found churches; as endowed with the power of

working miracles, Paul had every advantage for securing authority over others, and turning it to the purposes of ambition or gain.

When we might have been burdensome - Margin, "or, used authority." Some understand this as meaning that they might have demanded a support in virtue of their being apostles; others, as Calvin, and as it is in the margin, that they might have used authority, and have governed them wholly in that manner, exacting unqualified obedience. The Greek properly refers to that which is "weighty" - ἐν βαρέι en barei- "heavy, burdensome." Anything that weighs down or oppresses - as a burden, sorrow, or authority, would meet the sense of the Greek. It seems probable, from the context, that the apostle did not refer either to authority or to support exclusively, but may have included both. In their circumstances it might have been somewhat burden some for them to have maintained him and his fellowlaborers, though as an apostle he might have required it; compare 1 Corinthians 9:8-15. Rather than be oppressive in this respect, he had chosen to forego his right, and to maintain himself by his own labor. As an apostle also he might have exerted his authority, and might have made use of his great office for the purpose of placing himself at the head of churches, and giving them laws. But he chose to do nothing that would be a burden: he treated them with the gentleness with which a nurse cherishes her children (1 Thessalonians 2:7), or a father his sons (1 Thessalonians 2:11). and employed only the arts of persuasion; compare notes on 2 Corinthians 12:13-16.

As the apostles of Christ - Though the writer uses the word apostles here in the plural number, it is not certain that he means to apply it to Silas and Timothy. He often uses the plural number where he refers to himself only; and though Silas and Timothy are joined with him in this Epistle 1 Thessalonians 1:1, yet it is evident that he writes the letter as if he were alone and that they had no part in the composition or the instructions. Timothy and Silas are associated with him for the mere purpose of salutation or kind remembrance. That this is so, is apparent from 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13. In 1 Thessalonians 3:1, Paul uses the plural term also. "When we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; compare 1 Thessalonians 3:5. "For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith." Neither Silas nor Timothy were apostles in the strict and proper sense, and there is no evidence that they had the "authority" which Paul here says might have been exerted by an apostle of Christ.

Verse 7

But we were gentle among you - Instead of using authority, we used only the most kind and gentle methods to win you and to promote your peace and order. The word here rendered "nurse," may mean any one who nurses a child, whether a mother or another person. It seems here to refer to a mother (compare 1 Thessalonians 2:11), and the idea is, that the apostle felt for them the affectionate solicitude which a mother does for the child at her breast.

Verse 8

So, being affectionately desirous of you - The word here rendered "being affectionately desirous" - ὁμειρομενοι homeiromenoi- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means to "long after, to have a strong affection for." The sense here is, that Paul was so strongly attached to them that he would have been willing to lay down his life for them.

We were willing to have imparted unto you - To have given or communicated; Romans 1:11.

Not the gospel of God only - To be willing to communicate the knowledge of the gospel was in itself a strong proof of love, even if it were attended with no self-denial or hazard in doing it. We evince a decided love for a man when we tell him of the way of salvation, and urge him to accept of it. We show strong interest for one who is in danger, when we tell him of a way of escape, or for one who is sick, when we tell him of a medicine that will restore him; but we manifest a much higher love when we tell a lost and ruined sinner of the way in which he may be saved. There is no method in which we can show so strong an interest in our fellow-men, and so much true benevolence for them, as to go to them and tell them of the way by which they may be rescued from everlasting ruin.

But also our own souls - Or rather "lives" - ψυχὰς psuchas Matthew 6:25; Matthew 20:28; Luke 12:22, Luke 12:13; Mark 3:4. This does not mean that the apostle was willing to be damned, or to lose his soul in order to save them, but that if it had been necessary he would have been ready to lay down his life; see 1 John 3:16. "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren;" compare notes, John 15:13. His object seems to be to assure them that he did not leave them from any want of love to them, or from the fear of being put to death. It was done from the strong conviction of duty. He appears to have left them because he could not longer remain without

exposing others to danger, and without the certainty that there would be continued disturbances; see Acts 17:9-10.

Verse 9

Ye remember, brethren, our labour - Doubtless in the occupation of a tent-maker; Acts 20:34 note; 1 Corinthians 4:12 note.

And travail - see the notes on 2 Corinthians 11:27. The word means "wearisome labor."

For labouring night and day - That is, when he was not engaged in preaching the gospel. He appears to have labored through the week and to have preached on the Sabbath; or if engaged in preaching in the day time during the week, he made it up by night labor.

We preached unto you the gospel of God - That is, I supported myself when I preached among you. No one, therefore, could say that I was disposed to live in idleness; no one that I sought to make myself rich at the expense of others.

Verse 10

Ye are witnesses - They had a full opportunity of knowing his manner of life.

And God also - See the notes on ver 5.

How holily - Piously - observing all the duties of religion.

And justly - In our contact with people. I did them no wrong.

And unblameably - This seems to refer to his duties both to God and man. In reference to all those duties no one could bring a charge against him. Every duty was faithfully performed. This is not a claim to absolute perfection, but it is a claim to consistency of character, and to faithfulness in duty, which every Christian should be enabled to make. Every man professing religion should so live as to be able to appeal to all who have had an opportunity of knowing him, as witnesses that he was consistent and faithful, and that there was nothing which could be laid to his charge.

Verse 11

How we exhorted - That is, to a holy life.

And comforted - In the times of affliction.

And charged - Greek, "testified." The word testify is used here in the sense of protesting, or making an earnest and solemn appeal. They came as witnesses from God of the truth of religion, and of the importance of living in a holy manner They did not originate the gospel themselves, or teach its duties and doctrines as their own, but they came in the capacity of those

who bore witness of what God had revealed and required, and they did this in the earnest and solemn manner which became such an office.

As a father doth his children - With an interest in your welfare, such as a father feels for his children, and with such a method as a father would use. It was not done in a harsh, dictatorial, and arbitrary manner, but in tenderness and love.

Verse 12

That ye would walk worthy of God … - That you would live in such a manner as would honor God, who has chosen you to be his friends; notes, Ephesians 4:1. A child "walks worthy of a parent" when he lives in such way as to reflect honor on that parent for the method in which he has trained him; when he so lives as to bring no disgrace on him, so as not to pain his heart by misconduct, or so as to give no occasion to any to speak reproachfully of him. This he does, when:

(1)he keeps all his commands;

(2)when he leads a life of purity and virtue;

(3)when he carries out the principles of the family into his own life;

(4)when he honors a father by evincing a profound respect for his opinions; and,

(5)when he endeavors to provide for his comfort and to promote his welfare.

In a manner similar to this, a true Christian honors God. He lives so as not to bring a reproach upon him or his cause, and so as to teach the world to honor him who has bestowed such grace upon him.

Who hath called you - See the notes at 1 Corinthians 1:9.

Verse 13

For this cause also thank we God - In addition to the reasons for thankfulness already suggested, the apostle here refers to the fact that they received the truth, when it was preached, in such a way as to show that they fully believed it to be the word of God.

Not as the word of men - Not of human origin, but as a divine revelation. You were not led to embrace it by human reasoning, or the mere arts of persuasion, or from personal respect for others, but by your conviction that it was a revelation from God. It is only when the gospel is

embraced in this way that religion will show itself sufficient to abide the fiery trials to which Christians may be exposed. He who is convinced by mere human reasoning may have his faith shaken by opposite artful reasoning; he who is won by the mere arts of popular eloquence will have no faith which will be proof against similar arts in the cause of error; he who embraces religion from mere respect for a pastor, parent, or friend, or because others do, may abandon it when the popular current shall set in a different direction, or when his friends shall embrace different views; but he who embraces religion as the truth of God, and from the love of the truth, will have a faith, like that of the Thessalonians, which will abide every trial.

Which effectually worketh also in you that believe - The word rendered "which" here - ὅς hos- may be referred either to "truth" or to "God." The grammatical construction will admit of either, but it is not material which is adopted. Either of them expresses a sense undeniably true, and of great importance. The meaning is, that the truth was made efficacious in the minds of all who became true Christians. It induced them to abandon their sins, to devote themselves to God, to lead pure and holy lives, and enabled them to abide the trials and temptations of life; compare notes on Philemon 2:12-13; Hebrews 13:21. The particular illustration here is, that when they embraced the gospel it had such an efficacy on their hearts as to prepare them to meet all the terrors of bitter persecution without shrinking.

Verse 14

For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus - Which are united to the Lord Jesus, or which are founded on his truth: that is, which are true churches. Of those churches they became "imitators" - μιμηταὶ mimētai- to wit, in their sufferings. This does not mean that they were founded on the same model; or that they professed to be the followers of those churches, but that they had been treated in the same way, and thus were like them. They had been persecuted in the same manner, and by the same people - the Jews; and they had borne their persecutions with the same spirit. The object of this is to comfort and encourage them, by showing them that others had been treated in the same manner, and that it was to be expected that a true church would be persecuted by the Jews. They ought not, therefore, to consider it as any evidence that they were not a true church that they had been persecuted by

those who claimed to be the people of God, and who made extraordinary pretensions to piety.

For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen - Literally, "of those who are of your fellow-tribe, or fellowclansmen " - συμφυλέτων sumphuletōnThe Greek word means "one of the same tribe," and then a fellow-citizen, or fellowcountryman. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. The particular reference here seems not to be to the pagan who were the agents or actors in the scenes of tumult and persecutions, but to the Jews by whom they were led on, or who were the prime movers in the persecutions which they had endured. It is necessary to suppose that they were principally Jews who were the cause of the persecution which had been excited against them, in order to make the parallelism between the church there and the churches in Palestine exact. At the same time there was a propriety in saying that, though the parallelism was exact, it was by the "hands of their own countrymen" that it was done; that is, they were the visible agents or actors by whom it was done - the instruments in the hands of others.

In Palestine. the Jews persecuted the churches directly; out of Palestine, they did it by means of others. They were the real authors of it, as they were in Judea, but they usually accomplished it by producing an excitement among the pagan, and by the plea that the apostles were making war on civil institutions. This was the case in Thessalonica. "The Jews which believed not, moved with envy, set all the city on an uproar." "They drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, ‹Those that have turned the world up side down have come hither also;‘" Acts 17:5-6. The same thing occurred a short time after at Berea. "When the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also and stirred up the people;" Acts 17:13; compare Acts 14:2. "The unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil-affected against the brethren." "The Epistle, therefore, represents the case accurately as the history states it. It was the Jews always who set on foot the persecutions against the apostles and their followers;" Paley, Hor. Paul. in loc. It was, therefore, strictly true, as the apostle here states it:

(1) that they were subjected to the same treatment from the Jews as the churches in Judea were, since they were the authors of the excitement

against them; and,

(2) that it was carried on, as the apostle states, "by their own countrymen;" that is, that they were the agents or instruments by which it was done. This kind of undesigned coincidence between the Epistle and the history in the Acts of the Apostles, is one of the arguments from which Paley (Hor. Paul.) infers the genuineness of both.

As they have of the Jews - Directly. In Palestine there were no others but Jews who could be excited against Christians, and they were obliged to appear as the persecutors themselves.

Verse 15

Who both killed the Lord Jesus - see the notes on Acts 2:23. The meaning here is, that it was characteristic of the Jews to be engaged in the work of persecution, and that they should not regard it as strange that they who had put their own Messiah to death, and slain the prophets, should now be found persecuting the true children of God.

And their own prophets - see the Matthew 21:33-40; 23:29-37 notes; Acts 7:52 note.

And have persecuted us - As at Iconium Acts 14:1, Derbe, and Lystra Acts 14:6, and at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. The meaning is, that it was characteristic of them to persecute, and they spared no one. If they had persecuted the apostles themselves, who were their own countrymen, it should not be considered strange that they should persecute those who were Gentiles.

And they please not God - Their conduct is not such as to please God, but such as to expose them to his wrath; 1 Thessalonians 2:16. The meaning is not that they did not aim to please God - whatever may have been the truth about that - but that they had shown by all their history that their conduct could not meet with the divine approbation. They made extraordinary pretensions to being the special people of God, and it was important for the apostle to show that their conduct demonstrated that they had no such claims. Their opposition to the Thessalonians, therefore, was no proof that God was opposed to them, and they should not allow themselves to be troubled by such opposition. It was rather proof that they were the friends of God - since those who now persecuted them had been engaged in persecuting the most holy people that had lived.

And are contrary to all men - They do not merely differ from other people in customs and opinions - which might be harmless - but they keep up an active opposition to all other people. It was not opposition to one nation only, but to all; it was not to one form of religion only, but to all - even including God‘s last revelation to mankind; it was not opposition evinced in their own country, but they carried it with them wherever they went. The truth of this statement is confirmed, not only by authority of the apostle and the uniform record in the New Testament, but by the testimony borne of them in the classic writers. This was universally regarded as their national characteristic, for they had so demeaned themselves as to leave this impression on the minds of those with whom they had contact. Thus Tacitus describes them as “cherishing hatred against all others” - adversus omnes alios hostile odium; *Hist*. v. 5. So Juvenal (Sat. xiv. 103,104), describes them.

Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti,

Quaesitum a.d. fontem solos deducere verpos.

“They would not even point out the way to any one except of the same religion, nor, being asked, guide any to a fountain except the circumcised.” So they are called by Appollonius “atheists and misanthropes, and the most uncultivated barbarians” - ἀθεοι καὶ μισανθρώποι καὶ ἀφεῦστατοι τῶν βάρβαρῶν atheoi kai misanthrōpoi kai apheustatoi tōn barbarōnJosephus, *Contra Apion* ii. 14. So Diodorus Siculus (34:p. 524), describes them as “those alone among all the nations who were unwilling to have any contact (or intermingling - επιμιξιας) epimixiaswith any other nation, and who regarded all others as enemies” καὶ πολεμίους ὑπολαμβάνειν πάντας kai polemious hupolambanein pantasTheir history had given abundant occasion for these charges.

Verse 16

Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles - see Acts 17:5, Acts 17:13. No particular instance is mentioned in the life of Paul previous to this, when they had formally commanded him not to preach to the pagan, but no one can doubt that this was one of the leading points of difference between him and them. Paul maintained that the Jews and Gentiles were now on a level with regard to salvation; that the wall of partition was broken down; that the Jew had no advantages over the rest of mankind in this respect, and that the pagan might be saved without becoming Jews, or being circumcised; Romans 2:25-29; Romans 3:22-31; notes, Colossians 1:24. The Jews did

not hold it unlawful "to speak to the Gentiles," and even to offer to them eternal life Matthew 23:15, but it was only on condition that they should become proselytes to their religion, and should observe the institutions of Moses. If saved, they held that it would be as Jews - either originally such, or such by becoming proselytes. Paul maintained just the opposite opinion, that pagans might be saved without becoming proselytes to the Jewish system, and that, in fact, salvation was as freely offered to them as to the children of Abraham. Though there are no express instances in which they prohibited Paul from speaking to the Gentiles recorded before the date of this Epistle, yet events occurred afterward which showed what were their feelings, and such as to make it in the highest degree probable that they had attempted to restrain him; see Acts 22:21-22, "And he (Christ) said unto me (Paul), Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. And they (the Jews) gave him audience unto this word, and then lift up their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live."

That they might be saved - That is, as freely as others, and on the same terms, not by conversion to Judaism, but by repentance and faith.

To fill up their sins alway - At all times - πάντοτε pantote- in every generation. That is, to do now as they have always done, by resisting God and exposing themselves to His wrath. The idea is, that it had been a characteristic of the nation, at all times, to oppose God, and that they did it now in this manner in conformity with their fixed character; compare Acts 7:51-53, and notes on Matthew 23:32, on the expression, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers."

For the wrath is come upon them - This cannot mean that the wrath of God had been then actually poured out upon them in the extreme degree referred to, or that they had experienced the full expressions of the divine displeasure, for this Epistle was written before the destruction of their city and temple (see the Introduction); but that the cup of their iniquity was full; that they were in fact abandoned by God; that they were the objects even then of his displeasure, and that their destruction was so certain that it might be spoken of as an indubitable fact. The "wrath of God" may be said to have come upon a man when he abandons him, even though there may not be as yet any external expressions of his indignation. It is not punishment that constitutes the wrath of God. That is the mere outward expression of the divine indignation, and the wrath of God may in fact have come upon a

man when as yet there are no external tokens of it. The overthrow of Jerusalem and the temple, were but the outward expressions of the divine displeasure at their conduct. Paul, inspired to speak of the feelings of God, describes that wrath as already existing in the divine mind; compare Romans 4:17.

To the uttermost - Greek - εἰς τέλος eis telos- "to the end;" that is, until wrath shall be "complete" or "exhausted;" or wrath in the extremest degree. It does not mean "to the end of their race or history;" nor necessarily to the remotest periods of time, but to that which constitutes completion, so that there should be nothing lacking of that which would make indignation perfect: " εἰς τέλος eis telos- gantz und gar" - thoroughly, entirely, through and through." Passow. Some have understood this as meaning "at the last," or "at length," as Macknight, Rosenmuller, Koppe, and Wetstein; others as referring to duration, meaning that it would follow them everywhere; but the more correct interpretation seems to be to refer it to that extremity of calamity and woe which was about to come upon the nation. For an account of this, see the notes on Matthew 24:21.

Verse 17

But we, brethren, being taken from you - There is more implied in the Greek word here rendered, "being taken from you " - ἀπορφανισθέντες aporphanisthentes- than appears from our translation. It properly has relation to the condition of an orphan (compare notes on John 14:18), or one who is bereaved of parents, or one who is bereaved of parentsThen it is used in a more general sense, denoting to be bereaved of; and in this place it does not mean merely that he was "taken from them," but there is included the idea that it was like a painful bereavement. It was such a state as that of one who had lost a parent. No word, perhaps, could have expressed stranger attachment for them.

For a short time - Greek, "For the time of an hour;" that is, for a brief period. The meaning is, that when he left them he supposed it would be only for a short time. The fact seems to have been Acts 17:10, that it was supposed, when Paul was sent to Berea, that things would soon be in such a state that he could safely return to Thessalonica. He was "sent" there by those who thought it was necessary for the safety of some of his friends at Thessalonica, and he evidently purposed to return as soon as it could properly be done. It had, in fact, however, turned out to be a long and painful absence.

In presence, not in heart - My heart was still with you. This is an elegant and touching expression, which we still use to denote affection for an absent friend.

Endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face - Made every endeavor possible. It was from no want of affection that I have not done it, but from causes beyond my control.

With great desire - Compare the notes at Luke 22:15.

Verse 18

Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul - The phrase "even I Paul," seems to be used by way of emphasis. He had a special desire to go himself. He had sent Timothy to them 1 Thessalonians 3:2, 1 Thessalonians 3:5, and perhaps, some might have been disposed to allege that Paul was afraid to go himself, or that he did not feel interest enough in them to go, though he was willing to send one to visit them. Paul, therefore, is at much pains to assure them that his long separation from them was unavoidable.

But Satan hindered us - Compare the notes on 2 Corinthians 12:7. In what way this was done is unknown, and conjecture would be useless. The apostle recognized the hand of Satan in frustrating his attempt to do good, and preventing the accomplishment of his strong desire to see his Christian friends. In the obstacles, therefore, to the performance of our duty, and in the hindrances of our enjoyment, it is not improper to trace the hand of the great enemy of good. The agency of Satan may, for aught we can tell, often be employed in the embarrassments that we meet with in life. The hindrances which we meet with in our efforts to do good, when the providence of God seems to favor us, and his word and Spirit seem to call us to a particular duty, often look very much like the work of Satan. They are just such obstructions as a very wicked being would be glad to throw in our way.

Verse 19

For what is our hope - That is, "I had a strong desire to see you; to assist you; to enjoy your friendship; for you are my hope and joy, and my absence does not arise from a want of affection." The meaning, when he says that they were his "hope," is, that their conversion and salvation was one of the grounds of his hope of future blessedness. It was an evidence that he was a faithful servant of God, and that he would be rewarded in heaven.

Or joy - The source of joy here and in heaven.

Or crown of rejoicing - Margin, as in Greek, "glorying;" that is, boasting, or exulting. The allusion is, probably, to the victors at the Grecian games; and the sense is, that he rejoiced in their conversion as the victor there did in the garland which he had won; notes, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

Are not even ye - Or, will not you be?

In the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming - "When the Lord Jesus appears at the end of the world, then our highest source of happiness and honor will be your conversion and salvation." Then their salvation would be a proof of his fidelity. It would fill his soul with the highest happiness, that he had been the means of saving them from ruin.

Verse 20

For ye are our glory and joy - The meaning is, that the source of happiness to a minister of the gospel in the day of judgment will be the conversion and salvation of souls. The object of the apostle in dwelling on this in a manner so tender and affectionate is, to show them that his leaving them, and his long absence from them, were not caused by any want of affection for them.

Remarks On 1 Thessalonians 2:3-5.

(2) they should not make it a point to please people; 1 Thessalonians 2:4, they do please men; or if their ministry is acceptable to people, they should not regard it, indeed, as proof that they are unfaithful, for they "should have a good report of them that are without;" nor should they make it a point to displease people, or consider it a proof that because people are offended, therefore they are faithful; but it should not be their leading aim or purpose to gratify people. They should preach the truth; and if they do this, God will take care of their reputation, and give them just as much as they ought to have. The same principle should operate with all Christians. They should do right, and leave their reputation with God.

(3) ministers of the gospel should be gentle, tender, and affectionate. They should be kind in feeling, and courteous in manner - like a father or a mother; 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 1 Thessalonians 2:11. Nothing is ever gained by a sour, harsh, crabby, dissatisfied manner. Sinners are never scolded either into duty or into heaven. "Flies are not caught with vinegar." No man is a better or more faithful preacher because he is rough in manner, coarse or harsh in his expressions, or sour in his contact with mankind. Not thus was the Master or Paul. There is no crime in being polite and courteous;

none in observing the rules of good breeding, and paying respect to the sensibilities of others; and there is no piety in outraging all the laws which society has found necessary to adopt to promote happy conversation. What is wrong we should indeed oppose - but it should be in the kindest manner toward the persons of those who do wrong; what is true, and right we should maintain and defend - and we shall always do it more effectually if we do it kindly.

(4) ministers should be willing to labor in any proper calling, if it is necessary for their own support or to do good; 1 Thessalonians 2:9. It is, indeed, the duty of a people to support the gospel, but there may be situations where they are not able to do it, and a minister should be able to earn something, in some other way, and should be willing to do it. Paul made tents; and if he was willing to do that, a minister should not feel himself degraded if he is obliged to make shoes, or to hoe corn, or to plow, or to keep cattle. He had better not do it, if he can avoid it well - for he needs his time for his more important work; but he should feel it no dishonor if he is obliged to do it - and should feel that it is a privilege to preach the gospel even if he is obliged to support himself by making either tents or shoes. It is no dishonor for a minister to work hard; and it is not well for a man to enter the ministry wholly unacquainted with every other way of procuring an honest living.

(5) every minister should be able to appeal to the people among whom he has labored in proof that he is an honest man, and lives consistently with his profession; 1 Thessalonians 2:1, 1 Thessalonians 2:9-11. The same remark applies to all other Christians. They should so live that they may at once refer to their neighbors in proof of the uprightness of their lives, and their consistent walk, But to be enabled to do this, a man should live as he ought - for the world generally forms a very correct estimate of character.

(6) the joy of a minister in the day of judgment will be measured by the amount of good which he has done, and the number of souls which he has been the means of converting and saving; 1 Thessalonians 2:19. It will not be the honor which he has received from people; the titles which they have conferred on him; the commendation which he has received for eloquence or talent, or the learning which he has acquired, but it will be found in the

number of those who have been converted from the error of their ways, and in the evidence of the good which he did on the earth. And will not the same thing be substantily true of all others who bear the Christian name? Will it then be a source of joy to them that they were richer than their neighbors; or that they were advanced to higher honors; or that they had a more splendid mansion, or were able to fare more "sumptuously?" The good that we do will be remembered certainly with pleasure in the day of judgment: of how many other things which now interest us so much can the same thing be said?

(7). Paul expected evidently to recognize the Thessalonian Christians at the day of judgment, for he said that they would be then his "joy and crown of rejoicin;" 1 Thessalonians 2:19. But this could not be, unless he should be able to know those who had been converted by his instrumentality. If he expected then to recognize them, and to rejoice with them, then we also may hope to know our pious friends in that happy world. Nothing in the Bible forbids this hope, and we can hardly believe that God has created the strong ties which bind us to each other, to endure for the present life only. If Paul hoped to meet those who had been converted by his instrumentality, and to rejoice with them there, then the parent may hope to meet the child over whose loss he mourned; the husband and wife will meet again; the pious children of a family will be re-assembled; and the pastor and his flock will be permitted to rejoice together before the Lord. This hope, which nothing in the Bible forbids us to entertain, should do much to alleviate the sorrow of the parting pang, and may be an important and powerful inducement to draw our own thoughts to a brighter and a better world. Of many of the living it is true that the best and dearest friends which they have are already in heaven - and how should their own hearts pant that they may meet them there!

1 THESSALONIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13 is a continuation of the course of thought pursued in the previous chapter, and seems designed to meet the same state of feeling existing in Thessalonica, and the same objection which some there urged against the apostle. The objection seems to have been, that be had really no attachment for them, and no regard for their welfare; that he had fled from them on the slightest danger, and that when the danger was passed he had not returned, but had left them to bear their afflictions alone. It appears to have been inferred from his long absence, that he had no solicitude for their welfare, and had brought them into difficulties, to escape from which, or to bear which. he was now indisposed to render any assistance. It was important, therefore, for him to remind them of what he had actually done, and to state his real feelings toward them. He refers them, therefore, to the following things as proof of his interest in them, and his affection for them:

(1) He had sent Timothy to them at great personal inconvenience, when he could not go himself: 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5.

(2) he had been greatly comforted by the report which Timothy had brought of their steadfastness in the faith; 1 Thessalonians 3:6-8. Every expression of their attachment to him had gone to his heart, and their faith and charity had been to him in his trials the source of unspeakable consolation. His very life depended, as it were, on their fidelity, and he says he should live and be happy if they stood fast in the Lord; 1 Thessalonians 3:8.

(3) he expresses again the earnest desire which he had to see them; says that it had been to him the subject of unceasing prayer night and day, and beseeches God again now that he would be pleased to direct his way to them; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-11.

(4) as a proof of affection, the chapter is closed with a fervent prayer that God would cause them to abound more and more in love, and would establish their hearts unblameable before him; 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13. The

Thessalonians well knew the apostle Paul. They had had abundant proof of his love when he was with them; and if his enemies there had succeeded in any degree in causing their affection toward him to become cool, or to excite suspicions that he was not sincere, their love must have been rekindled, and their suspicions must have been entirely allayed by the expressions of attachment in this chapter. Language of warmer love, or of deeper interest in the welfare of others, it would not be possible to find anywhere.

Verse 1

Wherefore - See 1 Thessalonians 2:18. This particle (διὸ dio) is designed here to refer to another proof of his affection for them. One evidence had been referred to in his strong desire to visit them, which he had been unable to accomplish 1 Thessalonians 2:18, and he here refers to another - to wit, the fact that he had sent Timothy to them.

We could no longer forbear - That is, when I could not 1 Thessalonians 3:5, for there is every evidence that Paul refers to himself only though he uses the plural form of the word. There was no one with him at Athens after he had sent Timothy away Acts 17:15; Acts 18:5, and this shows that when, in 1 Thessalonians 2:6, he uses the term apostles in the plural number, he refers to himself only, and does not mean to give the name to Timothy and Silas. If this be so, Timothy and Silas are nowhere called "apostles" in the New Testament. The word rendered here "could forbear" (στέγοντες stegontes), means, properly, "to cover, to conceal;" and then to hide or conceal anger, impatience, weariness, etc.; that is, to hold out as to anything, to bear with, to endure. It is rendered suffer in 1 Corinthians 9:12; beareth, 1 Corinthians 13:7; and forbear, 1 Thessalonians 3:1, 1 Thessalonians 3:5. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. It means that he could no longer bear up under, hide, or suppress his impatience in regard to them - his painful emotions - his wish to know of their state; and he therefore sent Timothy to them.

We thought it good - I was willing to suffer the inconvenience of parting with him in order to show my concern for you.

To be left at Athens alone - Paul had been conducted to Athens from Berea, where he remained until Silas and Timothy could come to him; Acts 17:15. It appears from the statement here that Timothy had joined him there, but such was his solicitude for the church at Thessalonica, that he

very soon after sent him there, and chose to remain himself alone at Athens. Why he did not himself return to Thessalonica, is not stated. It is evidently implied here that it was a great personal inconvenience for him thus to part with Timothy, and to remain alone at Athens, and that he evinced the strong love which he had for the church at Thessalonica by being willing to submit to it. What that inconvenience consisted in, he has not stated, but it is not difficult to understand,

(1) he was among total strangers, and, when Timothy was gone, without an acquaintance or friend.

(2) the aid of Timothy was needed in order to prosecute the work which he contemplated. He had requested that Timothy should join him as soon as possible when he left Berea Acts 17:15, and he evidently felt it desirable that in preaching the gospel in that city he should have all the assistance he could obtain. Yet he was willing to forego those comforts and advantages in order to promote the edification of the church at Thessalonica.

Verse 2

And sent Timotheus - That is, evidently, he sent him from Athens - for this is the fair construction of the passage. But in the history Acts 17:14-15. The history further states, that after Paul had remained some time at Athens, he went to Corinth, where he was joined by Timothy and Silas, who came to him "from Macedonia;" Acts 18:5. But in order to reconcile the account in the Acts with the statement before us in the Epistle, it is necessary to suppose that Timothy had come to Athens. In reconciling these accounts, we may observe, that though the history does not expressly mention the arrival of Timothy at Athens, yet there are circumstances mentioned which render this extremely probable.

First, as soon as Paul reached Athens, he sent a message back to Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, and there is every probability that this request would be obeyed; Acts 17:15. Secondly, his stay at Athens was on purpose that they might join him there. "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred within him;" Acts 17:16. Thirdly, his departure from Athens does not appear to have been in any sort hastened or abrupt. He had an opportunity of seeing the city Acts 17:23; he disputed in the synagogue and in the market "daily" Acts 17:17; he held a controversy with the philosophers Acts 17:18-22; he made

converts there Acts 17:24, and "after these things" he calmly went to Corinth. There was no tumult or excitement, and it is not suggested that he was driven away, as in other places, because his life was in danger. There was, therefore, ample time for Timothy to come to him there - for Paul was at liberty to remain as long as he pleased, and as he stayed there for the express purpose of having Timothy and Silas meet him, it is to be presumed that his wish was in this respect accomplished.

Fourthly, the sending back of Timothy to Macedonia, as mentioned in the Epistle, is a circumstance which will account for the fact mentioned in Acts 18:5, that Timothy came to him "at Corinth," instead of at Athens. He had given directions for him to meet him at Athens Acts 17:15, but the history mentions only that he met him, after a long delay, at Corinth. This delay, and this change of place, when they rejoined each other for the purpose of laboring together, can only be accounted for by the supposition that Timothy had come to him at Athens, and had been immediately sent back to Macedonia, with instructions to join him again at Corinth. This is one of the "undesigned coincidences" between the history in the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles of Paul, of which Paley (Hor. Paul.) has made so good use in demonstrating the genuineness of both. "The epistle discloses a fact which is not preserved in the history; but which makes what is said in the history more significant, probable, and consistent. The history bears marks of an omission; the epistle furnishes a circumstance which supplies that omission."

Our brother - See the notes at Colossians 1:1. The mention of his being a "brother" is designed to show his interest in the church there. He did not send one whose absence would be no inconvenience to him, or for whom he had no regard. He sent one who was as dear to him as a brother.

And minister of God - Another circumstance showing his affection for them. He did not send a layman, or one who could not be useful with him or to them, but he sent one fully qualified to preach to them, and to break to them the bread of life. One of the richest tokens of affection which can be shown to any people, is to send to them a faithful minister of God.

And our fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ - A third token of affectionate interest in their welfare. The meaning is, "I did not send one whom I did not want, or who could be of no use here, but one who was a fellow-laborer with me, and whose aid would have been of essential service

to me. In parting with him, therefore, for your welfare I showed a strong attachment for you. I was willing to endure personal inconvenience, and additional toil, in order to promote your welfare."

To establish you - To strengthen you; to make you firm - στηρίξαι stērixaiThis was to be done by presenting such considerations as would enable them to maintain their faith steadfastly in their trials.

And to comfort you concerning your faith - It is evident that they were suffering persecution on account of their faith in the Lord Jesus; that is, for their belief in him as a Saviour. The object of sending Timothy was to suggest such topics of consolation as would sustain them in their trials - that is, that he was the Son of God; that the people of God had been persecuted in all ages; that God was able to support them, etc.

Verse 3

That no man should be moved - The word rendered "moved" (σαίνω sainō) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means to wag, to move to and fro, as of dogs which wag their tails in fondness (Hom. Od. K. 216. AEl. A. N. 10:7. Ovid. 14:258); then to caress, to fawn upon, to flatter; then to move or waver in mind - as from fear; to dread, to tremble. See Passow and Wetstein. Here the sense is, to be so moved or agitated by fear, or by the terror of persecution, as to forsake their religion. The object of sending Timothy was, that they might not be thus moved, but that amidst all opposition they might adhere steadfastly to their religion.

These afflictions - See the notes at 1 Thessalonians 2:14.

For yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto - It is not quite certain whether by the word "we" here the apostle refers to himself; or to himself and the Thessalonians; or to Christians in general. On either supposition what he says is true, and either would meet the case. It would be most to the purpose, however, to suppose that he means to state the general idea that all Christians are exposed to persecution and could not hope to avoid it. It would then appear that the Thessalonians had partaken only of the common lot. Still there may have been a special reference to the fact that Paul and his fellow-laborers there were subjected to trials; and if this be the reference, then the idea is, that the Thessalonians should not be "moved" by their trials, for even their teachers were not exempt. Even their enemies could not say that the apostle and his co-workers were impostors, for they had persevered in preaching the gospel when they knew that these trials were coming upon them. The phrase, "we are appointed thereunto,"

means that such was the divine arrangement. No one who professed Christianity could hope to be exempted from trial, for it was the common lot of all believers; compare 1 Corinthians 4:9 note; 2 Timothy 3:12 note.

Verse 4

For verily, when we were with you, we told you before … - It is not mentioned in the history Acts 17:5-8.

Verse 5

For this cause - Since I knew that you were so liable to be persecuted, and since I feared that some might be turned from the truth by this opposition.

When I could no longer forbear - See the notes at 1 Thessalonians 3:1.

I sent to know your faith - That is, your fidelity. or your steadfastness in the gospel.

Lest by some means - Either by allurements to apostasy, set before you by your former pagan friends; or by the arts of false teachers; or by the severity of suffering. Satan has many methods of seducing people from the truth, and Paul was fearful that by some of his arts he might be successful there.

The tempter - Satan; for though the Jews were the immediate actors in those transactions, yet the apostle regarded them as being under the direction of Satan, and as accomplishing his purposes. He was, therefore, the real author of the persecutions which had been excited. He is here called the "Tempter," as he is often (compare Matt. iv.), and the truths taught are:

(1) that Satan is the great author of persecution; and,

(2) that in a time of persecution - or of trial of any kind - he endeavors to tempt people to swerve from the truth, and to abandon their religion. In persecution, people are tempted to apostatize from God, in order to avoid suffering. In afflictions of other kinds, Satan often tempts the sufferer to murmur and complain; to charge God with harshness, partiality, and severity, and to give vent to expressions that will show that religion has none of its boasted power to support the soul in the day of trial; compare Job 1:9-11. In all times of affliction, as well as in prosperity, we may be sure that "the Tempter" is not far off, and should be on our guard against his wiles.

And our labour be in vain - By your being turned from the faith; notes, Galatians 4:11.

Verse 6

But now when Timotheus came from you unto us - To Corinth, after he had been sent to Thessalonica; Acts 18:5; compare notes on 1 Thessalonians 3:2.

And brought us good tidings - A cheerful or favorable account. Greek "evangelizing;" that is, bringing good news.

Of your faith - Of your faithfulness or fidelity. Amidst all their trials they evinced fidelity to the Christian cause.

And charity - Love; notes, 1 Corinthians 13:1.

And that ye have good remembrance of us always - That is, probably, they showed their remembrance of Paul by obeying his precepts, and by cherishing an affectionate regard for him, notwithstanding all the efforts which had been made to alienate their affections from him.

Desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you - There was no disposition to blame him for having left them, or because he did not return to them. They would have welcomed him again as their teacher and friend. The meaning of this is, that there was between him and them a strong mutual attachment.

Verse 7

We were comforted over you - See the notes, 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 2 Corinthians 7:6-7. The sense here is, that their steadfastness was a great source of comfort to him in his trials. It was an instance where the holy lives and the fidelity of a people did much, as will always be the case, to lighten the burdens and cheer the heart of a minister of the gospel. In the inevitable trials of the ministerial office there is no source of comfort more rich and pure than this.

Verse 8

For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord - This is equivalent to saying, "My life and comfort depend on your stability in the faith, and your correct Christian walk;" compare Martial 6:70. Non est vivere, sed valere, vita - "Life consists not merely in living, but in the enjoyment of health." See also Seneca, Epis. 99, and Manilius, 1 Thessalonians 4:5, as quoted by Wetstein. The meaning here is, that Paul now enjoyed life; he had that which constituted real life, in the fact that they acted as became Christians, and so as to show that his labor among them had not been in vain. The same thing here affirmed is true of all faithful ministers of the gospel. They feel

that they have something that may be called life, and that is worth living for, when those to whom they preach maintain a close walk with God.

Verse 9

For what thanks can we render to God again - That is, what expression of thanksgiving can we render to God that shall be an equivalent for the joy which your holy walk has furnished, or which will suitably express our gratitude for it.

Verse 10

Night and day - Constantly.

Praying exceedingly - Greek, abundantly; that is, there was much more than ordinary prayer. He made this a special subject of prayer; he urged it with earnestness, and without intermission; compare 1 Thessalonians 2:17.

And might perfect that which is lacking in your faith - Might render it complete, or fill up anything which is missing. The word used here (καταρτίσαι katartisai), means, properly, to make fully ready, to put full in order, to make complete; see the Romans 9:22 note; 2 Corinthians 13:9 note; Galatians 6:1 note. It is rendered mending, Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19; perfect and perfected, Matthew 21:19; Luke 6:40; 2 Corinthians 13:11; 1 Thessalonians 3:10; Hebrews 13:21; 1 Peter 5:10; fitted, Romans 9:22; perfectly joined together, 1 Corinthians 1:10; restore, Galatians 6:1; prepared, Hebrews 10:5; and framed, Hebrews 11:3. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. The meaning here is, that whatever was deficient in their views of religious doctrine the apostle desired to supply. It is to be remembered that he was with them but a comparatively short time before he was compelled to depart to Berea, and it is reasonable to suppose that there were many subjects on which he would be glad to have an opportunity to instruct them more fully.

Verse 11

Now God himself - This is evidently a prayer. He earnestly sought of God that he might be permitted to visit them, and that he would so prepare the way that he might do it.

And our Father - Even our Father. The reference is particularly to the "Father," the First Person of the Trinity. It does not refer to the divine nature in general, or to God as such, but to God as the Father of the Lord Jesus. It is a distinct prayer offered to him that he would direct his way to them. It is right therefore to offer prayer to God as the First Person of the Trinity.

And our Lord Jesus Christ - This also is a prayer, as much as the former was, for it can be understood in no other way. What can be its meaning, unless the apostle believed that the Lord Jesus had power to direct his way to them, and that it was proper for him to express this wish to him; that is, to pray to him? If this be so, then it is right to pray to the Lord Jesus, or to worship him; see the John 20:28 note; Acts 1:24 note. Would Paul have prayed to an angel to direct his way to the church at Thessalonica?

Direct our way unto you - Margin, "guide." The Greek word - κατευθύνω kateuthunō- means, to guide straight toward or upon anything. It is rendered "guide," in Luke 1:79, and "direct" here and in 2 Thessalonians 3:5. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The idea is that or conducting one straight to a place, and not by a round-about course. Here the petition is, that God would remove all obstacles so that he could come directly to them.

Verse 12

And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love - compare notes, 2 Corinthians 9:8. The word "Lord" here probably refers to the Lord Jesus, as this is the name by which he is commonly designated in the New Testament; see the notes on Acts 1:24. If this be so, then this is a petition to the Lord Jesus as the fountain of all grace and goodness.

Verse 13

To the end he may stablish your hearts - That is, "may the Lord cause you to increase in love 1 Thessalonians 3:12, in order that you may be established, and be without blame in the day of judgment." The idea is, that if charity were diffused through their hearts, they would abound in every virtue, and would be at length found blameless.

Unblameable - See the 1 Thessalonians 1:10 note; Philemon 2:15; Philemon 3:6 notes; Hebrews 8:7 note; compare Luke 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23. The meaning is, so that there could be no "charge" or "accusation" against them.

In holiness - Not in outward conduct merely, or the observance of rites and forms of religion, but in purity of heart.

At the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ - To judge the world; notes, 1 Thessalonians 1:10. As we are to appear before him, we should so live that our Judge will find nothing in us to be blamed.

With all his saints - With all his "holy ones" - τῶν ἁγίων tōn hagiōnThe word includes his "angels," who will come with him Matthew 25:31, and

all the redeemed, who will then surround him. The idea is, that before that holy assemblage it is desirable that we should be prepared to appear blameless. We should be fitted to be welcomed to the “goodly fellowship” of the angels, and to be regarded as worthy to be numbered with the redeemed who” have washed their robes and have made them pure in the blood of the Lamb.” When we come to appear amidst that vast assemblage of holy beings, the honors of the world will appear to be small things; the wealth of the earth will appear worthless, and all the pleasures of this life beneath our notice. Happy will they be who are prepared for the solemnities of that day, and who shall have led such a life of holy love - of pure devotion to the Redeemer - of deadness to the world - and of zeal in the cause of pure religion of universal justice, fidelity, honesty, and truth, as to be without reproach, and to meet with the approbation of their Lord.

1 THESSALONIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter, properly, comprises two parts: First, various practical exhortations, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; and secondly, suggestions designed to console those who have been bereaved; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

The first part embraces the following topics:

(1) An exhortation to increase and abound in the Christian virtues which they had already manifested; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2.

(2) aparticular exhortation on the subject of sanctification 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, in which two points are specified, probably as illustrations of the general subject, and embracing those in regard to which they were exposed to special danger. The first was fornication, the other was fraud.

(3) an exhortation to brotherly love; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10.

(4) an exhortation to quiet industry, and to honesty in their dealings. particularly with those who were Christians; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12.

The second part is designed to comfort the Thessalonians who had been bereaved; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Some of their number had died. They appear to have been beloved members of the church, and dear friends of those to whom the apostle wrote. To console them he brings into view the doctrine of the second coming of the Saviour, and the truth that they would be raised up to live with him for ever. He reminds them that those who had died were “asleep” - reposing in a gentle slumber, as if they were to be awakened again 1 Thessalonians 4:13; that they should not sorrow as they did who have no hope 1 Thessalonians 4:13; that if they believed that Jesus died and rose again, they ought to believe that God would raise up all those who sleep in Jesus 1 Thessalonians 4:14; that in the last day they would rise before the living should be changed, and that the living would not be taken up to heaven and leave their departed friends in their graves 1 Thessalonians 4:15-16, and that both the living and the dead would be

raised up to heaven and would be forever with the Lord 1 Thessalonians 4:17. With this prospect, they had every ground of comfort which they could desire, and they should sustain each other in their trials by this bright hope; 1 Thessalonians 4:18.

Verse 1

Furthermore then - Τὸ λοιπὸν To loipon"As to what remains." That is, all that remains is to offer these exhortations; see the 2 Corinthians 13:11 note; Galatians 6:17 note; Ephesians 6:10 note; Philemon 4:8 note. The phrase is a formula appropriate to the end of an argument or discourse.

We beseech you - Margin, "request." The Greek is, "we ask you" - ἐρωτῶμεν erōtōmenIt is not as strong a word as that which follows.

And exhort you - Marg, "beseech." This is the word which is commonly used to denote earnest exhortation. The use of these words here implies that Paul regarded the subject as of great importance. He might have commanded them - but kind exhortation usually accomplishes more than a command,

By the Lord Jesus - In his name and by his authority.

That as ye have received of us - As you were taught by us. Paul doubtless had given them repeated instructions as to their duty as Christians.

How ye ought to walk - That is, how ye ought to live. Life is often represented as a journey; Romans 6:4; Romans 8:1; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 6:16, Ephesians 4:1.

So ye would abound more and more - "That is, follow the directions which they had received more and more fully." Abbott.

Verse 2

For ye know what commandments - It was but a short time since Paul was with them, and they could not but recollect the rules of living which he had laid down.

By the Lord Jesus - By the authority of the Lord Jesus. Some of those rules, or commandments, the apostle refers to, probably, in the following verses.

Verse 3

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification - It is the will or command of God that you should be holy. This does not refer to the purpose or decree of God, and does not mean that he intended to make them holy -

but it means that it was his command that they should be holy. It was also true that it was agreeable to the divine will or purpose that they should be holy, and that he meant to use such an influence as to secure this; but this is not the truth taught here. This text, therefore, should not be brought as a proof that God intends to make his people holy, or that they are sanctified. It is a proof only that he requires holiness. The word here rendered "sanctification" - ἁγιασμὸς hagiasmos- is not used in the Greek classics, but is several times found in the New Testament. It is rendered holiness, Romans 6:19, Romans 6:22; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; 1 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 12:14; and sanctification, 1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, and 1 Peter 1:2; see the Romans 6:19 note; 1 Corinthians 1:30 note. It means here "purity of life," and particularly abstinence from those vices which debase and degrade the soul Sanctification consists in two things:

(1) in "ceasing to do evil;" and,

(2) in "learning to do well." Or in other words, the first work of sanctification is in overcoming the propensities to evil in our nature, and checking and subduing the unholy habits which we had formed before we became Christians; the second part of the work consists in cultivating the positive principles of holiness in the soul.

That ye should abstain from fornication - A vice which was freely indulged among the pagan, and to which, from that fact, and from their own former habits, they were particularly exposed. On the fact that they were thus exposed, and on the reasons for these solemn commands on the subject, see the Acts 15:20 note, and 1 Corinthians 6:18 note.

Verse 4

That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel - The word "vessel" here (σκεῦος skeuos), probably refers to the body. When it is so used, it is either because the body is frail and feeble, like an earthen vessel, easily broken 2 Corinthians 4:7, or because it is that which contains the soul, or in which the soul is lodged. Lucret. Lib. iii. 441. The word vessel also (Greek σκεῦος skeuos) was used by the latter Hebrews to denote a wife, as the vessel of her husband. Schoettg. Hor. Heb. p. 827. Compare Wetstein in loc. Many, as Augustine, Wetstein, Schoettgen, Koppe, Robinson (Lex.), and others, have supposed that this is the reference here; compare 1 Peter 3:7. The word body, however, accords more naturally with

the usual signification of the word, and as the apostle was giving directions to the whole church, embracing both sexes, it is hardly probable that he confined his direction to those who had wives. It was the duty of females, and of the unmarried among the males, as well as of married men, to observe this command. The injunction then is, that we should preserve the body pure; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 6:18-20.

In sanctification and honour - Should not debase or pollute it; that is, that we should honor it as a noble work of God, to be employed for pure purposes; notes, 1 Corinthians 6:19.

Verse 5

Not in the lust of concupiscence - In gross gratifications.

Even as the Gentiles - This was, and is, a common vice among the pagan; see the Acts 15:20 note; Romans 1:29 note; Ephesians 4:17-18 notes, and the reports of missionaries everywhere.

Which know not God - See the Romans 1:21, Romans 1:28 notes; Ephesians 2:12 note.

Verse 6

That no man go beyond - ὑπερβαίνειν huperbaineinThis word means, "to make to go over," as, e. g., a wall or mountain; then, to overpass, to wit, certain limits, to transgress; and then to go too far, i. e., to go beyond right - hence to cheat or defraud. It is not used elsewhere in the New Testament. The idea of overreaching is that which is implied in its use here.

And defraud - πλεονεκτεῖν pleonekteinMargin, "oppress," or "overreach." This word properly means, to have more than another; then to have an advantage; and then to take advantage of any one, to circumvent, defraud, cheat. It is rendered "got an advantage," 2 Corinthians 2:11; "defraud," 2 Corinthians 7:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:6; "make a gain," 2 Corinthians 12:17-18. Compare for the use of the adjective, 1 Corinthians 5:10-11; 1 Corinthians 6:10; Ephesians 5:5; and the noun, Mark 7:22; Luke 12:15; Romans 1:29; 2 Corinthians 9:5; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:5; 2 Peter 2:3, 2 Peter 2:14. It is the word commonly used to denote covetousness. Taking advantage of, is the idea which it conveys here.

In any matter - Margin, "or the." According to the reading in the margin, this would refer to the particular matter under discussion 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, to wit, concupiscence. and the meaning then would be, that no one should be guilty of illicit intercourse with the wife of another.

Many expositors - as Hammond Whitby, Macknight, Rosenmuller, and others, suppose that this is a prohibition of adultery, and there can be no doubt that it does include this. But there is no reason why it should be confined to it. The Greek is so general that it may prohibit all kinds of fraud, overreaching, or covetousness, and may refer to any attempt to deprive another of his rights, whether it be the right which he has in his property, or his rights as a husband, or his rights in any other respect. It is a general command not to defraud; in no way to take advantage of another; in no way to deprive him of his rights.

Because that the Lord is the avenger of all such - Of all such as are guilty of fraud; that is, he will punish them; compare Romans 12:19 note; Ephesians 6:9 note.

As we also have forewarned - Doubtless when he was with them.

Verse 7

For God hath not called us unto uncleanness - When he called us to be his followers, it was not that we should lead lives of impurity, but of holiness. We should, therefore, fulfil the purposes for which we were called into his kingdom. The word "uncleanness" (ἀκαθαρσία akatharsia), means, properly, "impurity, filth;" and then, in a moral sense, "pollution, lewdness," as opposed to chastity; Romans 1:24; Romans 6:19; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 4:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5.

Verse 8

He therefore that despiseth - Margin, "rejecteth." That is, he who disregards such commands as these which call him to a holy life, is really rejecting and disobeying God. Some might be disposed to say that these were merely the precepts of man, and that therefore it was not important whether they were obeyed or not. The apostle assures them in the most solemn manner, that, though communicated to them by man, yet they were really the commands of God.

Who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit - This is a claim to inspiration. Paul did not give these commands as his own, but as taught by the Spirit of God; compare notes on 1 Corinthians 7:40.

Verse 9

But as touching brotherly love - The "peculiar charity and affection which one Christian owes to another." Doddridge; see the notes on John 13:34.

Ye need not that I write unto you - That is, "as I have done on the other points." They were so taught of God in regard to this duty, that they did not need any special instruction.

For ye yourselves are taught of God - The word here rendered "taught of God" - θεοδίδακτοί theodidaktoi- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is correctly translated, and must refer here to some direct teaching of God on their own hearts, for Paul speaks of their being so taught by him as to need no special precepts in the case. He probably refers to that influence exerted on them when, they became Christians, by which they were led to love all who bear the divine image. He calls this being "taught of God," not because it was of the nature of revelation or inspiration, but because it was in fact the teaching of God in this case, though it was secret and silent. God has many ways of teaching people. The lessons which we learn from his Providence are a part of his instructions. The same is true of the decisions of our own consciences, and of the secret and silent influence of his Spirit on our hearts, disposing us to love what is lovely, and to do what ought to be done. In this manner all true Christians are taught to love those who bear the image of their Saviour. They feel that they are brethren; and such is their strong attachment to them, from the very nature of religion, that they do not need any express command of God to teach them to love them. It is one of the first - the elementary effects of religion on the soul, to lead us to love "the brethren" - and to do this is one of the evidences of piety about which there need be no danger of deception; compare 1 John 3:14.

Verse 10

And indeed ye do it - See the notes on 1 Thessalonians 1:7.

But we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more - See the notes at 1 Thessalonians 3:12. Here, as elsewhere, the apostle makes the fact that they deserved commendation for what they had done, a stimulus to arouse them to still higher attainments. Bloomfield.

Verse 11

And that ye study to be quiet - Orderly, peaceful; living in the practice of the calm virtues of life. The duty to which he would exhort them was that of being subordinate to the laws; of avoiding all tumult and disorder; of calmly pursuing their regular avocations, and of keeping themselves from all the assemblages of the idle, the restless, and the dissatisfied. No Christian should be engaged in a mob; none should be identified with the

popular excitements which lead to disorder and to the disregard of the laws. The word rendered "ye study" (φιλοτιμέομαι philotimeomai), means properly, "to love honor, to be ambitious;" and here means the same as when we say "to make it a point of honor to do so and so. Robinson, Lex. It is to be regarded as a sacred duty; a thing in which our honor is concerned. Every man should regard himself as disgraced who is concerned in a mob.

And to do your own business - To attend to their own concerns, without interfering with the affairs of others; see the notes on Philemon 2:4; compare 2 Thessalonians 3:11; 1 Timothy 5:13; 1 Peter 4:13. The injunction here is one of the beautiful precepts of Christianity so well adapted to promote the good order and the happiness of society. It would prevent the impertinent and unauthorized prying into the affairs of others, to which many are so prone, and produce that careful attention to what properly belongs to our calling in life, which leads to thrift, order, and competence. Religion teaches no man to neglect his business. It requires no one to give up an honest calling and to be idle. It asks no one to forsake a useful occupation; unless he can exchange it for one more useful. It demands, indeed, that we shall be willing so far to suspend our ordinary labors as to observe the Sabbath; to maintain habits of devotion; to improve our minds and hearts by the study of truth, to cultivate the social affections, and to do good to others as we have an opportunity; but it makes no one idle, and it countenances idleness in no one. A man who is habitually idle can have very slender pretensions to piety. There is enough in this world for every one to do, and the Saviour set such an example of untiring industry in his vocation as to give each one occasion to doubt whether he is his true follower if he is not disposed to be employed.

And to work with your own hands, as we commanded you - This command is not referred to in the history Acts 17:21. Idleness is one of the great evils of the pagan world in almost every country, and the parent of no small part of their vices. The effect of religion everywhere is to make people industrious; and every man, who is able, should feel himself under sacred obligation to be employed. God made man to work (compare Genesis 2:15; Genesis 3:19), and there is no more benevolent arrangement of his government than this. No one who has already enough for himself and family, but who can make money to do good to others, has a right to retire from business and to live in idleness (compare Acts 20:34; Ephesians 4:27); no one has a right to live in such a relation as to be wholly dependent

on others, if he can support himself; and no one has a right to compel others to labor for him, and to exact their unrequited toil, in order that he may be supported in indolence and ease. The application of this rule to all mankind would speedily put an end to slavery, and would convert multitudes, even in the church, from useless to useful people. If a man has no necessity to labor for himself and family, he should regard it as an inestimable privilege to be permitted to aid those who cannot work - the sick, the aged, the infirm. If a man has no need to add to what he has for his own temporal comfort, what a privilege it is for him to toil in promoting public improvements: in founding colleges, libraries, hospitals, and asylums; and in sending the gospel to those who are sunk in wretchedness and want! No man understands fully the blessings which God has bestowed on him, if he has hands to work and will not work.

Verse 12

That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without - Out of the church; comp notes on Colossians 4:5. The word rendered honestly, means "becomingly, decorously, in a proper manner;" Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 14:40. It does not refer here to mere honesty in the transaction of business, but to their general treatment of those who were not professing Christians. They were to conduct themselves toward them in all respects in a becoming manner - to be honest with them; to be faithful to their engagements; to be kind and courteous in their conversation; to show respect where it was due, and to endeavor in every way to do them good. There are few precepts of religion more important than those which enjoin upon Christians the duty of a proper treatment of those who are not connected with the church.

And that ye may have lack of nothing - Margin, no man. The Greek will bear either construction, but the translation in the text is probably the correct one. The phrase is to be taken in connection not merely with that which immediately precedes it - as if "their walking honestly toward those who were without" would preserve them from want - but as meaning that their industrious and quiet habits; their patient attention to their own business, and upright dealing with every man, would do it. They would, in this way, have a competence, and would not be beholden to others. Learn hence, that it is the duty of a Christian so to live as not to be dependent on others, unless he is made so by events of divine Providence which he cannot foresee or control. No man should be dependent on others as the

result of idle habits; of extravagance and improvidence; of the neglect of his own business, and of intermeddling with that of others. If by age, losses, infirmities, sickness, he is made dependent, he cannot be blamed, and he should not repine at his lot. One of the ways in which a Christian may always do good in society, and honor his religion, is by quiet and patient industry, and by showing that religion prompts to those habits of economy on which the happiness of society so much depends.

Verse 13

But I would not have you to be ignorant - I would have you fully informed on the important subject which is here referred to. It is quite probable from this, that some erroneous views prevailed among them in reference to the condition of those who were dead, which tended to prevent their enjoying the full consolation, which they might otherwise have done. Of the prevalence of these views, it is probable the apostle had been informed by Timothy on his return from Thessalonica; 1 Thessalonians 3:6. What they were we are not distinctly informed, and can only gather from the allusions which Paul makes to them, or from the opposite doctrines which he states, and which are evidently designed to correct those which prevailed among them. From these statements, it would appear that they supposed that those who had died, though they were true Christians, would be deprived of some important advantages which those would possess who should survive to the coming of the Lord. There seems some reason to suppose, as Koppe conjectures (compare also Saurin, Serm. vol. 6:1), that the case of their grief was two-fold; one, that some among them doubted whether there would be any resurrection (compare 1 Corinthians 15:12), and that they supposed that they who had died were thus cut off from the hope of eternal happiness, so as to leave their surviving friends to sorrow "as those who had no hope;" the other, that some of them believed that, though those who were dead would indeed rise again, yet it would be long after those who were living when the Lord Jesus would return had been taken to glory, and would be always in a condition inferior to them.

See Koppe, in loc. The effect of such opinions as these can be readily imagined. it would be to deprive them of the consolation which they might have had, and should have had, in the loss of their pious friends. They would either mourn over them as wholly cut off from hope, or would sorrow that they were to be deprived of the highest privileges which could result from redemption. It is not to be regarded as wonderful that such

views should have prevailed in Thessalonica. There were those even at Corinth who wholly denied the doctrine of the resurrection 1 Corinthians 15:12; and we are to remember that those to whom the apostle now wrote had been recently converted from paganism; that they had enjoyed his preaching but a short time; that they had few or no books on the subject of religion; and that they were surrounded by those who had no faith in the doctrine of the resurrection at all, and who were doubtless able - as skeptical philosophers often are now - to urge their objections to the doctrine in such a way as greatly to perplex Christians. The apostle, therefore, felt the importance of stating the exact truth on the subject, that they might not have unnecessary sorrow, and that their unavoidable grief for their departed friends might not be aggravated by painful apprehensions about their future condition.

Concerning them which are asleep - It is evident from this that they had been recently called to part with some dear and valued members of their church. The word sleep is frequently applied in the New Testament to the death of saints. For the reasons why it is, see the John 11:11 note; 1 Corinthians 11:30; 1 Corinthians 15:51 notes.

That ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope - That is, evidently, as the pagan, who had no hope of future life; compare notes on Ephesians 2:12. Their sorrow was caused not only by the fact that their friends were removed from them by death, but from the fact that they had no evidence that their souls were immortal; or that, if they still lived, that they were, happy; or that their bodies would rise again. Hence, when they buried them, they buried their hopes in the grave, and so far as they had any evidence, they were never to see them again. Their grief at parting was not mitigated by the belief that the soul was now happy, or by the prospect of again being with them in a better world. It was on this account, in part, that the pagans indulged in expressions of such excessive grief. When their friends died, they hired men to play in a mournful manner on a pipe or trumpet, or women to howl and lament in a dismal manner. They beat their breasts; uttered loud shrieks; rent their garments; tore off their hair; cast dust on their heads, or sat down in ashes. It is not improbable that some among the Thessalonians, on the death of their pious friends, kept up these expressions of excessive sorrow. To prevent this, and to mitigate their sorrow, the apostle refers them to the bright hopes which Christianity had

revealed, and points them to the future glorious re-union with the departed pious dead. Hence, learn:

(1) That the world without religion is destitute of hope. It is just as true of the pagan world now as it was of the ancient pagans, that they have no hope of a future state. They have no evidence that there is any such future state of blessedness; and without such evidence there can be no hope; compare notes on Ephesians 2:12.

(2) that the excessive sorrow of the children of this world, when they lose a friend, is not to be wondered at. They bury their hopes in the grave. They part, for all that they know or believe, with such a friend for ever. The wife, the son, the daughter, they consign to silence - to decay - to dust, not expecting to meet them again. They look forward to no glorious resurrection when that body shall rise, and when they shall be reunited to part no more. It is no wonder that they weep - for who would not weep when he believes that he parts with his friends for ever?

(3) it is only the hope of future blessedness that can mitigate this sorrow. Religion reveals a brighter world - a world where all the pious shall be reunited; where the bonds of love shall be made stronger than they were here; where they shall never be severed again. It is only this hope that can sooth the pains of grief at parting; only when we can look forward to a better world and feel that we shall see them again - love them again - love them forever - that our tears are made dry.

(4) the Christian, therefore, when he loses a Christian friend, should not sorrow as others do. He will feel, indeed, as keenly as they do, the loss of their society; the absence of their well-known faces; the want of the sweet voice of friendship and love; for religion does not blunt the sensibility of the soul, of make the heart unfeeling. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, and religion does not prevent the warm, gushing expressions of sorrow when God comes into a family and removes a friend. But this sorrow should not be like that of the world. It should not be:

(a)such as arises from the feeling that there is to be no future union;

(b)it should not be accompanied with repining or complaining;

(c)it should not be excessive, or beyond that which God designs that we should feel.

It should be calm, submissive, patient; it should be that which is connected with steady confidence in God; and it should be mitigated by the hope of a future glorious union in heaven. The eye of the weeper should look up through his tears to God. The heart of the sufferer should acquiesce in him even in the unsearchable mysteries of his dealings, and feel that all is right.

(5) it is a sad thing to die without hope - so to die as to have no hope for ourselves, and to leave none to our surviving friends that we are happy. Such is the condition of the whole pagan world; and such the state of those who die in Christian lands, who have no evidence that their peace is made with God. As I love my friends - my father, my mother, my wife, my children, I would not have them go forth-and weep over my grave as those who have no hope in my death. I would have their sorrow for my departure alleviated by the belief that my soul is happy with my God, even when they commit my cold clay to the dust; and were there no other reason for being a Christian, this would be worth all the effort which it requires to become one. It would demonstrate the unspeakable value of religion, that my living friends may go forth to my grave and be comforted in their sorrows with the assurance that my soul is already in glory, and that my body will rise again! No eulogium for talents, accomplishments, or learning; no pegans of praise for eloquence, beauty, or martial deeds; no remembrances of wealth and worldly greatness, would then so meet the desires which my heart cherishes, as to have them enabled, when standing around my open grave, to sing the song which only Christians can sing:

Unveil thy bosom, faithful tomb,
Take this new treasure to thy trust;
And give these sacred relics room.
To seek a slumber in the dust.
Nor pain, nor grief, nor anxious fear.
Invade thy bounds. No mortal woes.
Can reach the peaceful sleeper here,
While angels watch the soft repose.
So Jesus slept: God‘s dying Son.
Pass‘d thro‘ the grave, and blest the bed;
Rest here, bleat saint, until from his throne.
The morning break, and pierce the shade.
Break from his throne, illustrious morn;

Attend, O Earth, his sovereign word;
Restore thy trust - a glorious form -
Call'd to ascend, and meet the Lord.
Watts.

Verse 14

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again - That is, if we believe this, we ought also to believe that those who have died in. the faith of Jesus will be raised from the dead. The meaning is not that the fact of the resurrection depends on our believing that Jesus rose, but that the death and resurrection of the Saviour were connected with the resurrection of the saints; that the one followed from the other, and that the one was as certain as the other. The doctrine of the resurrection of the saints so certainly follows from that of the resurrection of Christ, that, if the one is believed, the other ought to be also; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 15:12-14.

Which sleep in Jesus - A most beautiful expression. It is not merely that they have calm repose - like a gentle slumber - in the hope of awaking again, but that this is "in Jesus" - or "through" (διὰ dia) him; that is, his death and resurrection are the cause of their quiet and calm repose. They do not "sleep" in paganism, or in infidelity, or in the gloom of atheism - but in the blessed hope which Jesus has imparted. They lie, as he did, in the tomb - free from pain and sorrow, and with the certainty of being raised up again.

They sleep in Jesus, and are bless'd,
How kind their slumbers are;
From sufferings and from sin released,
And freed from every snare.

When, therefore, we think of the death of saints, let us think of what Jesus was in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Such is the sleep of our pious friends now in the grave; such will be our own when we die.

Will God bring with him - This does not mean that God will bring them with him from heaven when the Saviour comes - though it will be true that their spirits will descend with the Saviour; but it means that he will bring them from their graves, and will conduct them with him to glory, to be with him; compare notes, John 14:3. The declaration, as it seems to me, is designed to teach the general truth that the redeemed are so united with Christ that they shall share the same destiny as he does. As the head was raised, so will all the members be. As God brought Christ from the grave, so will he bring them; that is, his resurrection made it certain that they would

rise. It is a great and universal truth that God will bring all from their graves who "sleep in Jesus;" or that they shall all rise. The apostle does not, therefore, refer so much to the time when this would occur - meaning that it would happen when the Lord Jesus should return - as to the fact that there was an established connection between him and his people, which made it certain that if they died united with him by faith, they would be as certainly brought from the grave as he was.

If, however, it means, as Prof. Bush (*Anastasis*, pp. 266,267) supposes, that they will be brought with him from heaven, or will accompany him down, it does not prove that there must have been a previous resurrection, for the full force of the language would be met by the supposition that their spirits had ascended to heaven, and would be brought with him to be united to their bodies when raised. If this be the correct interpretation, then there is probably an allusion to such passages as the following, representing the coming of the Lord accompanied by his saints. "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." Zechariah 14:5. "And Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh, with thousand of his saints;" Jude 1:14. "Who," says President Dwight (Serm. 164), "are those whom God will bring with Him at this time? Certainly not the bodies of his saints … The only answer is, he will bring with him ‹the spirits of just men made perfect.'"

Verse 15

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord - By the command or inspired teaching of the Lord. Prof. Bush (*Anastasis*, p. 265) supposes that the apostle here alludes to what the Saviour says in Matthew 24:30-31, "And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven," etc. It is possible that Paul may have designed a general allusion to all that the Lord had said about his coming, but there cannot have been an exclusive reference to that passage, for in what he says here there are several circumstances mentioned to which the Saviour in Matthew does not allude. The probability, therefore, is, that Paul means that the Lord Jesus had made a special communication to him on the subject.

That we which are alive - See this fully explained in the notes on 1 Corinthians 15:51. From this expression, it would seem, that some of the Thessalonians supposed that Paul meant to teach that he himself, and many of the living, would survive until the coming of the Lord Jesus, and, of

course, that that event was near at hand. That this was not his meaning, however, he is at special pains to show in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10.

And remain unto the coming of the Lord - Those Christians who shall then be alive.

Shall not prevent them which are asleep - Shall not precede; anticipate; go before. The word prevent with us is now commonly used in the sense of hinder, but this is never its meaning in the Scriptures. The word, in the time of the translators of the Bible, was used in its primitive and proper sense (praevenio), meaning to precede, or anticipate. Job 3:12," why did the knees prevent me?" That is, why did they anticipate me, so that I did not perish, Psalm 79:8, "Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us;" that is, go before us in danger. Psalm 119:147, "I prevented the dawning of the morning and cried;" that is, I anticipated it, or I prayed before the morning dawned. Matthew 17:25," Jesus prevented him, saying;" that is, Jesus anticipated him; he commenced speaking before Peter had told him what he had said; compare Psalm 17:13; Psalm 59:10; Psalm 88:13; Psalm 95:2; 2 Samuel 22:6, 2 Samuel 22:19; Job 30:27; Job 41:11 The meaning here is, that they who would be alive at the coming of the Lord Jesus, would not be "changed" and received up into glory before those who were in their graves were raised up. The object seems to be to correct an opinion which prevailed among the Thessalonians that they who should survive to the coming of the Lord Jesus would have great advantages over those who had died. What they supposed those advantages would be - whether the privilege of seeing him come, or that they would be raised to higher honors in heaven, or that they who had died would not rise at all, does not appear, nor is the origin of this sentiment known. It is clear, however, that it was producing an increase of their sorrow on the death of their pious friends, and hence it was very important to correct the error. The apostle, therefore, states that no such disadvantage could follow, for the matter of fact was, that the dead would rise first.

Verse 16

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven - notes, Acts 1:11.

With a shout - The word here used (κέλευσμα keleusma), does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It properly means a "cry' of excitement, or of arging on; an outcry, clamor, or shout, as of sailors at the oar, Luc. Catapl. 19; of soldiers rushing to battle, Thuc. 3:14; of a multitude of people, Diod. Sic. 3:15; of a huntsman to his dogs, Xen. Ven. 6:20. It

does not mean here, that the Lord would himself make such a shout, but that he would be attended with it; that is, with a multitude who would lift up the voice like that of an army rushing to the conflict.

With the voice of the archangel - The word archangel occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Jude 1:9, where it is applied to Michael. It properly means a chief angel; one who is first, or who is over others - ἄρχων archōnThe word is not found in the Septuagint, and the only archangel, therefore, which is named in the Scriptures, is Michael; Jude 1:9; compare Revelation 12:7. Seven angels, however, are referred to in the Scriptures as having an eminence above others, and these are commonly regarded as archangels. Revelation 8:2, "and I saw the seven angels which stood before God." One of these is supposed to be referred to in the Book of Tobit, 12:15, "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One." The names of three only of the seven are mentioned in the Jewish writings: Michael, the patron of the Jewish nation, Daniel 10:13, Daniel 10:21; Daniel 12:1.

Gabriel, Daniel 8:16; Daniel 9:21; compare Luke 1:19, Luke 1:26. Raphael, Daniel 10:13; and as "the great prince," Daniel 12:1; compare notes on Ephesians 1:21, and see an article by Prof. Stuart in the Bibliotheca Sacra. No. 1, on Angelology. It seems evident from the Scriptures, that there is one or more among the angels to whom the name archangel properly belongs. This view is in accordance with the doctrine in the Scriptures that the heavenly beings are divided into ranks and orders, for if so, it is not unreasonable to suppose that there should be one or more to whom the most exalted rank pertains; compare Revelation 12:7. Whether there is more than one to whom this name appropriately belongs, it is impossible now to determine, and is not material. The word here (in Greek) is without the article, and the phrase might be rendered, "with the voice of an archangel."

The Syriac renders it, "with the voice of the prince of the angels." On an occasion so august and momentous as that of the coming of the final Judge of all mankind; the resurrection of the dead, and the solemn transactions before the tribunal of the Son of God deciding the destiny of countless million for ever, it will not be inappropriate that the highest among the heavenly hosts should be present and take an important part in the

solemnities of the day. It is not quite certain what is meant here by "the voice of the archangel," or for what purpose that voice will be heard. It cannot be that it will be to raise the dead - for that will be by the "voice of the Son of God" John 5:28-29, and it seems most probable that the meaning is, that this will be a part of the loud shout or cry which will be made by the descending hosts of heaven; or perhaps it may be for the purpose of summoning the world to the bar of judgment; compare Matthew 24:31.

And with the trump of God - The trump which God appoints to be sounded on that solemn occasion. It does not mean that it will be sounded by God himself; see the notes on Matthew 24:31.

And the dead in Christ - Christians.

Shall rise first - That is, before the living shall be changed. A doctrine similar to this was held by the Jews. "Resch Lachisch said, Those who die in the land of Israel shall rise first in the days of the Messiah." See Wetstein, in loc. It is implied in all this description, that the interval between their resurrection and the change which will occur to the living, will be brief, or that the one will rapidly succeed the other compare notes, 1 Corinthians 15:23, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52.

Verse 17

Then we which are alive - Those who shall then be alive; see 1 Thessalonians 4:15. The word here rendered "then" (ἔπειτα epeita), does not necessarily mean that this would occur immediately. It properly marks succession in time, and means "afterward, next, next in the order of events;" Luke 16:7; Galatians 1:21; James 4:14. There may be a considerable interval between the resurrection of the pious and the time when the living shall be caught up to meet the Lord, for the change is to take place in them which will fit them to ascend with those who have been raised. The meaning is, that after the dead are raised, or the next thing in order, they and the living will ascend to meet the Lord. The proper meaning of the word, however, denotes a succession so close as to exclude the idea of a long interval in which other important transactions would occur, such an interval, for example, as would be involved in a long personal reign of the Redeemer on earth. The word demands this interpretation - that the next thing in order after the resurrection of the righteous, will be their being caught up with the living, with an appropriate change, into the air - though, as has been remarked, it will admit of the supposition of such a brief, momentary

interval ἐν ἄτομος ἐν ῥιπη ὀφθαλμου en atomos en rhipē ophthalmou 1 Corinthians 15:51-52) as shall be necessary to prepare for it.

Shall be caught up - The word here used implies that there will be the application of external force or power by which this will be done. It will not be by any power of ascending which they will themselves have; or by any tendency of their raised or changed bodies to ascend of their own accord, or even by any effort of their own will, but by a power applied to them which will cause them to rise. Compare the use of the word ἁρπάζω harpazōin Matthew 11:12, "the violent take it by force;" Matthew 13:19, "then cometh the wicked one and snatcheth away;" John 6:15, "that they would come and take him by force; John 10:12, "the wolf catcheth them;" Acts 8:39, "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; 2 Corinthians 12:2, "such an one caught up to the third heaven;" also, John 12:28-29; Acts 23:10; Jude 1:23; Revelation 12:5. The verb does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament In all these instances there is the idea of either foreign force or violence effecting that which is done. What force or power is to be applied in causing the living and the dead to ascend, is not expressed. Whether it is to be by the ministry of angels, or by the direct power of the Son of God, is not intimated, though the latter seems to be most probable. The word should not be construed, however. as implying that there will be any reluctance on the part of the saints to appear before the Saviour, but merely with reference to the physical fact that power will be necessary to elevate them to meet him in the air. Will their, bodies then be such that they will have the power of locomotion at will from place to place?

In the clouds - Greek, "in clouds" - ἐν νεφέλαις en nephelais- without the article. This may mean "in clouds;" that is, in such numbers, and in such grouping as to resemble clouds. So it is rendered by Macknight, Koppe, Rosenmuller, Bush (*Anasta*. 266), and others. The absence of the article here would rather seem to demand this interpretation Still, however, the other interpretation may be true, that it means that they will be caught up into the region of the clouds, or to the clouds which shall accompany the Lord Jesus on his return to our world. Matthew 24:30; Matthew 26:64; Mark 16:19; Mark 14:62; Revelation 1:7; compare Daniel 7:13. In whichever sense it is understood, the expression is one of great sublimity, and the scene will be immensely grand. Some doctrine of this kind was held by the ancient Jews. Thus rabbi Nathan (Midras Tillin, 48:13) says, "What

has been done before will be done again. As he led the Israelites from Egypt in the clouds of heaven, so will he do to them in the future time."

To meet the Lord in the air - In the regions of the atmosphere - above the earth. It would seem from this, that the Lord Jesus, in his coming, would not descend to the earth, but would remain at a distance from it in the air, where the great transactions of the judgment will occur. It is, indeed, nowhere said that the transactions of the judgment will occur upon the earth. The world would not be spacious enough to contain all the assembled living and dead, and hence the throne of judgment will be fixed in the ample space above it.

And so shall we ever be with the Lord - This does not mean that they will always remain with him in the air - for their final home will be heaven - and after the trial they will accompany him to the realms of glory; Matthew 25:34, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom," etc. The time during which they will remain with him "in the air" is nowhere mentioned in the Bible. It will be as long as will be necessary for the purposes of judging a world and deciding the eternal doom of every individual "according to the deeds done in the body." There is no reason to suppose that this will be accomplished in a single day of twenty-four hours; but it is impossible to form and conjecture of the period which will be occupied.

Verse 18

Wherefore comfort one another - Margin, "exhort." The word comfort probably best expresses the meaning. They were to bring these glorious truths and these bright prospects be fore their minds, in order to alleviate, the sorrows of bereavement. The topics of consolation are these: first, that those who had died in the faith would not always lie in the grave; second, that when they rose they would not occupy an inferior condition because they were cut off before the coming of the Lord; and third, that all Christians, living and dead, would be received to heaven and dwell forever with the Lord.

With these words - That is, with these truths.

Remarks On 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 contains a truth which is to be found in no pagan classic writer, and nowhere else. except in the teachings of the New Testament. For the elevated and glorious view which it gives of future scenes pertaining to our world, and for all its inestimable consolations, we are wholly indebted to the Christian religion. Reason,

unassisted by revelation, never dared to conjecture that such scenes would occur; if it had, it would have had no arguments on which the conjecture could be supported.

2. The death of the Christian is a calm and gentle slumber; 1 Thessalonians 4:13. It is not annihilation; it is not the extinction of hope. It is like gentle repose when we lie down at night, and when we hope to awake again in the morning; it is like the quiet, sweet slumber of the infant. Why, then, should the Christian be afraid to die? Is he afraid to close his eyes in slumber? Why dread the night - the stillness of death? Is he afraid of the darkness, the silence, the chilliness of the midnight hour, when his senses are locked in repose? Why should death to him appear so terrible? "Is the slumbering of an infant an object of terror?"

3. There are magnificent scenes before us. There is no description anywhere which is more sublime than that in the close of this chapter. Great events are brought together here, any one of which is more grand than all the pomp of courts, and all the sublimity of battle, and all the grandeur of a triumphal civic procession. The glory of the descending Judge of all mankind; the attending retinue of angels, and of the spirits of the dead; the loud shout of the descending host; the clangor of the archangel's trumpet; the bursting of graves and the coming forth of the million there entombed; the rapid, sudden, glorious change on the million of living people; the consternation of the wicked; the ascent of the innumerable host to the regions of the air, and the solemn process of the judgment there - what has ever occurred like these events in this world. And how strange it is that the thoughts of people are not turned away from the trifles - the show - the shadow - the glitter - the empty pageantry here - to these bright and glorious realities!

4. In those scenes we shall all be personally interested. If we do not survive until they occur, yet we shall have an important part to act in them. We shall hear the archangel's trump; we shall be summoned before the descending Judge. In these scenes we shall mingle not as careless spectators, but as those whose eternal doom is there to be determined, and with all the intensity of emotion derived from the fact that the Son of God will descend to judge us, and to pronounce our final doom! Can we be too much concerned to be prepared for the solemnities of that day?

5. We have, in the passage before us, an interesting view of the order in which these great events will occur. There will be:

(1)the descent of the judge with the attending hosts of heaven;

(2)the raising up of the righteous dead;

(3)the change which the living will undergo (compare 1 Corinthians 15:52);

(4)the ascent to meet the Lord in the air; and,

(5)the return with him to glory.

What place in this series of wonders will be assigned for the resurrection of the wicked, is not mentioned here. The object of the apostle did not lead him to advert to that, since his purpose was to comfort the afflicted by the assurance that their pious friends would rise again, and would suffer no disadvantage by the fact that they had died before the coming of the Redeemer. From John 5:28-29, however, it seems most probable that they will be raised at the same time with the righteous, and will ascend with them to the place of judgment in the air.

6. There is no intimation here of a "personal reign" of Christ upon the earth. Indeed, there is no evidence that he will return to the earth at all. All that appears is, that he will descend "from heaven" to the regions of "the air," and there will summon the living and the dead to his bar. But there is no intimation that he will set up a visible kingdom then on earth, to continue a thousand or more years; that the Jews will be re-collected in their own land; that a magnificent city or temple will be built there; or that the saints will hover in the air, or reign personally with the Lord Jesus over the nations. There are two considerations in view of this passage, which, to my mind, are conclusive proof that all this is romance - splendid and magnificent indeed as an Arabian tale - but wholly unknown to the apostle Paul. The one is, that if this were to occur, it is inconceivable that there should have been no allusion to it here. It would have been such a magnificent conception of the design of the Second Advent, that it could not have failed to have been adverted to in a description like this. The other consideration is, that such a view would have been exactly in point to meet the object of the apostle here. What could have been more appropriate in

comforting the Thessalonian Christians respecting those who had died in the faith, than to describe the gorgeous scenes of the "personal reign" of Christ, and the important part which the risen saints were to play in that great drama? How can it he accounted for that the apostle did not advert to it? Would a believer in the "persocial reign" now be likely to omit so material a point in a description of the scenes which are to occur at the "Second Advent?"

7. The saints will be forever with the Lord. They will dwell with him in his own eternal home; John 14:3. This expression comprises the sum of all their anticipated felicity and glory. To be with Christ will be, in itself, the perfection of bliss; for it will be a security that they will sin no more, that they will suffer no more, and that they will be shielded from danger and death. They will have realized the object of their long, fond desire - that of seeing their Saviour; they will have suffered the last pang, encountered the last temptation, and escaped forever from the dominion of death. What a glorious prospect is this! Assuredly we should be willing to endure pain, privation, and contempt here for the brief period of our earthly pilgrimage, if we may come at last to a world of eternal rest. What trifles are all earthly sorrows compared with the glories of an endless life with our God and Saviour!

8. It is possible that even the prospect of the judgment-day should be a source of consolation; 1 Thessalonians 4:18. To most people it is justly an object of dread - for all that they have to fear is concentrated on the issues of that day. But why should a Christian fear it? In the descending Judge he will hail his Redeemer and friend; and just in proportion as he has true religion here, will be the certainty of his acquittal there. Nay, his feelings in anticipation of the judgment may be more than the mere absence of fear and alarm. It may be to him the source of positive joy. It will be the day of his deliverance from death and the grave. It will confirm to him all his long cherished hopes. It will put the seal of approbation on his life spent in endeavoring to do the will of God. It will reunite him to his dear friends who have died in the Lord. It will admit him to a full and glorious view of that Saviour whom "having not seen he has loved;" and it will make him the-companion of angels and of God. If there is anything, therefore, which ought to cheer and sustain our hearts in the sorrows and bereavements of

this life, it is the anticipation of the glorious scenes connected with the Second Advent of our Lord, and the prospect of standing before him clothed in the robes of salvation, surrounded by all those whom we have loved who have died in the faith, and with the innumerable company of the redeemed of all ages and lands.

1 THESSALONIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter consists of two parts:

I.The continuation of the subject of the coming of the Lord; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; and,

II.Various practical exhortations.

I. In the first part, the apostle states:

(1)that it was well understood by the Thessalonians that the coming of the Lord would be sudden, and at an unexpected moment, 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2;

(2)he refers to the effect of his coming on the wicked and the righteous, and says that it would be attended with the sudden and inevitable destruction of the former, 1 Thessalonians 5:3; but that the result of his coming would be far different on the righteous; 1 Thessalonians 5:4-11.

The prospect of his coming was fitted to make them watchful and sober, 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8; and his advent would be attended with their certain salvation; 1 Thessalonians 5:9.

II. In the second part of the chapter, he exhorts them to show proper respect for their spiritual teachers and rulers, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; to endeavor to restrain the unruly, to support the feeble, and to evince toward all the spirit of patience and forbearance, 1 Thessalonians 5:14; to manifest a meek and benevolent manner of life, 1 Thessalonians 5:15; to rejoice always, 1 Thessalonians 5:16; to pray constantly, 1 Thessalonians 5:17; to render thanks to God in every situation, 1 Thessalonians 5:18; to cherish the influences of the Holy Ghost on their souls, 1 Thessalonians 5:19; to show respect for all the divine prophetic communications, 1 Thessalonians 5:20; to consider and examine carefully everything submitted to them for belief; to adhere steadfastly to all that was good and true, 1 Thessalonians 5:21; and to avoid the very appearance of evil, 1 Thessalonians 5:22. The Epistle closes with a fervent prayer that God would sanctify them entirely; with an earnest entreaty that they would pray for him; with a command that the Epistle should be read to all the churches, and with the benediction; 1 Thessalonians 5:22-28.

Verse 1

But of the times and the seasons - See the notes, Acts 1:7. The reference here is to the coming of the Lord Jesus, and to the various events connected with his advent; see the close of 1 Thessalonians 1:10.

Verse 2

For yourselves know perfectly - That is, they had been fully taught this. There could be no doubt in their minds respecting it.

The day of the Lord so cometh - Of the Lord Jesus - for so the word "Lord" in the New Testament commonly means; see the notes, Acts 1:24. The "day of the Lord" means that day in which he will be manifested, or in which he will be the prominent object in view of the assembled universe.

As a thief in the night - Suddenly and unexpectedly, as a robber breaks into a dwelling. A thief comes without giving any warning, or any indications of his approach. He not only gives none, but he is careful that none shall be given. It is a point with him that, if possible, the man whose house he is about to rob shall have no means of ascertaining his approach until he comes suddenly upon him; compare Matthew 24:37-43 notes; Luke 12:39-40 notes. In this way the Lord Jesus will return to judgment; and this proves that all the attempts to determine the day, the year, or the century when he will come, must be fallacious. He intends that his coming to this world shall be sudden and unexpected, "like that of a thief in the night;" that there shall be no such indications of his approach that it shall not be sudden and unexpected; and that no warning of it shall be given so that people may know the time of his appearing. If this be not the point of the comparison in expressions like this, what is it? Is there anything else in which his coming will resemble that of a thief? And if this be the true point of comparison, how can it be true that people can ascertain when that is to occur? Assuredly, if they can, his coming will not be like that of a thief; comp. notes on Acts 1:7.

Verse 3

For when they shall say, Peace and safety - That is, when the wicked shall say this, for the apostle here refers only to those on whom "sudden destruction" will come; compare Matthew 24:36-42 notes; 2 Peter 3:3-4 notes. It is clear from this:

(1) that when the Lord Jesus shall come the world will not all be converted. There will be some to be "destroyed." How large this proportion will be, it is impossible now to ascertain. This supposition, however, is not

inconsistent with the belief that there will be a general prevalence of the gospel before that period.

(2) the impenitent and wicked world will be sunk in carnal security when he comes. They will regard themselves as safe. They will see no danger. They will give no heed to warning. They will be unprepared for his advent. So it has always been. it seems to be a universal truth in regard to all the visitations of God to wicked people for punishment, that he comes upon them at a time when they are not expecting him, and that they have no faith in the predictions of his advent. So it was in the time of the flood; in the destruction of Sodom Gomorrah, and Jerusalem; in the overthrow of Babylon: so it is when the sinner dies, and so it will be when the Lord Jesus shall return to judge the world. One of the most remarkable facts about the history of man is, that he takes no warning from his Maker; he never changes his plans, or feels any emotion, because his Creator "thunders damnation along his path," and threatens to destroy him in hell.

Sudden destruction - Destruction that was unforeseen (αἰφνίδιος aiphnidios) or unexpected. The word here rendered "sudden," occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Luke 21:34, "Lest that day come upon you unawares." The word rendered "destruction" - ὄλεθρος olethros- occurs in the New Testament only here and in 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Timothy 6:9, in all of which places it is correctly translated destruction. The word destruction is familiar to us. It means, properly, demolition; pulling down; the annihilation of the form of anything, or that form of parts which constitutes it what it is; as the destruction of grass by eating; of a forest by cutting down the trees; of life by murder; of the soul by consigning it to misery. It does not necessarily mean annihilation - for a house or city is not annihilated which is pulled down or burnt; a forest is not annihilated which is cut down; and a man is not annihilated whose character and happiness are destroyed. In regard to the destruction here referred to, we may remark:

(1)it will be after the return of the Lord Jesus to judgment; and hence it is not true that the wicked experience all the punishment which they ever will in the present life;

(2)that it seems fairly implied that the destruction which they will then suffer will not be annihilation, but will be connected with conscious existence; and,

(3)that they will then be cut off from life and hope and salvation.

How can the solemn affirmation that they will be "destroyed suddenly," be consistent with the belief that all people will be saved? Is it the same thing to be destroyed and to be saved? Does the Lord Jesus, when he speaks of the salvation of his people, say that he comes to destroy them?

As travail upon a woman with child - This expression is sometimes used to denote great consternation, as in Psalm 48:6; Jeremiah 6:24; Micah 4:9-10; great pain, as Isaiah 53:11; Jeremiah 4:31; John 16:21; or the suddenness with which anything occurs; Jeremiah 13:21. It seems here to be used to denote two things; first, that the coming of the Lord to a wicked world will be sudden; and, secondly, that it will be an event of the most distressing and overwhelming nature.

And they shall not escape - That is, the destruction, or punishment. They calculated on impunity, but now the time will have come when none of these refuges will avail them, and no rocks will cover them from the "wrath to come."

Verse 4

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief - The allusion here is to the manner in which a thief or robber accomplishes his purpose. He comes in the night, when people are asleep. So, says the apostle, the Lord will come to the wicked. They are like those who are asleep when the thief comes upon them. But it is not so with Christians. They are, in relation to the coming of the day of the Lord, as people are who are awake when the robber comes. They could see his approach, and could prepare for it, so that it would not take them by surprise.

Verse 5

Ye are all the children of light - All who are Christians. The phrase" children of light" is a Hebraism, meaning that they were the enlightened children of God.

And the children of the day - Who live as if light always shone round about them. The meaning is, that in reference to the coming of the Lord they are as people would be in reference to the coming of a thief, if there were no night and no necessity of slumber. They would always be wakeful and active, and it would be impossible to come upon them by surprise. Christians are always to be wakeful and vigilant; they are so to expect the

coming of the Redeemer, that he will not find them off their guard, and will not come upon them by surprise.

Verse 6

Therefore let us no sleep, as do others - As the wicked world does; compare notes, Matthew 25:5.

But let us watch - That is, for the coming of the Lord. Let us regard it as an event which is certainly to occur, and which may occur at any moment; notes, Matthew 25:13.

And be sober - The word here used (νήφω nēphō) is rendered sober in 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:8; 1 Peter 1:13; 1 Peter 5:8; and watch in 2 Timothy 4:5, and 1 Peter 4:7. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It properly means, to be temperate or abstinent, especially in respect to wine. Joseph. *Jewish Wars*, 5. 5,7; Xenophon, Cyr. 7. 5,20; and then it is used in a more general sense, as meaning to be sober-minded, watchful, circumspect. In this passage there is an allusion to the fact that persons not only sleep in the night, but that they are frequently drunken in the night also. The idea is, that the Lord Jesus, when he comes, will find the wicked sunk not only in carnal security, but in sinful indulgences, and that those who are Christians ought not only to be awake and to watch as in the day-time, but to be temperate. They ought to be like persons engaged in the sober, honest, and appropriate employments of the day, and not like those who waste their days in sleep, and their nights in revelry.

A man who expects soon to see the Son of God coming to judgment, ought to be a sober man. No one would wish to be summoned from a scene of dissipation to his bar. And who would wish to be called there from the ball-room; from the theater; from the scene of brilliant worldly amusemet? The most frivolous votary of the world; the most accomplished and flattered and joyous patron of the ball-room; the most richly-dressed and admired daughter of vanity, would tremble at the thought of being summoned from those brilliant halls, where pleasure is now found, to the judgment bar. They would wish to have at least a little time that they might prepare for so solemn a scene. But if so, as this event may at any moment occur, why should they not be habitually sober-minded? Why should they not aim to be always in that state of mind which they know would be appropriate to meet him? Especially should Christians live with such vigilance and soberness as to be always prepared to meet the Son of God. What Christian can think it appropriate for him to go up to meet his Saviour from the theater, the

ballroom, or the brilliant worldly party? A Christian ought always so to live that the coming of the Son of God in the clouds of heaven would not excite the least alarm.

Verse 7

For they that sleep, sleep in the night - Night is the time for sleep. The day is the time for action, and in the light of day people should be employed. Night and sleep are made for each other, and so are the day and active employment. The meaning here is, that it is in accordance with the character of those who are of the night, that is, sinners, to be sunk in stupidity and carnal security, as if they were asleep; but for the children of the day, that is, for Christians, it is no more appropriate to be inactive than it is for people to sleep in the daytime. "It is not to be wondered at that wicked people are negligent and are given to vice, for they are ignorant of the will of God. Negligence in doing right, and corrupt morals, usually accompany ignorance." Rosenmuller.

And they that be drunken, are drunken in the night - The night is devoted by them to revelry and dissipation. It is in accordance with the usual custom in all lands and times, that the night is the usual season for riot and revelry. The leisure, the darkness, the security from observation, and the freedom from the usual toils and cares of life, have caused those hours usually to be selected for indulgence in intemperate eating and drinking. This was probably more particularly the case among the ancients than with us, and much as drunkenness abounded, it was much more rare to see a man intoxicated in the day-time than it is now. To be drunk then in the day-time was regarded as the greatest disgrace. See Polyb. Exc. Leg. 8, and Apul. viii., as quoted by Wetstein; compare Acts 2:15 note; Isaiah 5:11 note. The object of the apostle here is, to exhort Christians to be sober and temperate, and the meaning is, that it is as disgraceful for them to indulge in habits of revelry, as for a man to be drunk in the day-time. The propriety of this exhortation, addressed to Christians, is based on the fact that intoxication was hardly regarded as a crime, and, surrounded as they were with those who freely indulged in drinking to excess, they were then, as they are now, exposed to the danger of disgracing their religion. The actions of Christians ought always to be such that they may be performed in open day and in the view of all the world. Other people seek the cover of the night to perform

their deeds; the Christian should do nothing which may not be done under the full blaze of day.

Verse 8

But let us, who are of the day, be sober - Temperate, as people usually are in the daytime.

Putting on the breast-plate of faith and love - This is a favorite comparison of the apostle Paul; see it explained at length in the notes on Ephesians 6:14.

And for an helmet, the hope of salvation - See the notes at Ephesians 6:17.

Verse 9

For God hath not appointed us to wrath - This is designed as an encouragement to effort to secure our salvation. The wish of God is to save us, and therefore we should watch and be sober; we should take to ourselves the whole of the Christian armor, and strive for victory. If he had appointed us to wrath, effort would have been in vain, for we could do nothing but yield to our inevitable destiny. The hope of a final triumph should animate us in our efforts, and cheer us in our struggles with our foes. How much does the hope of victory animate the soldier in battle! When morally certain of success, how his arm is nerved! When everything conspires to favor him, and when he seems to feel that God fights for him, and intends to give him the victory, how his heart exults, and how strong is he in battle! Hence, it was a great point among the ancients, when about entering into battle, to secure evidence that the gods favored them, and meant to give them the victory.

For this purpose they offered sacrifices, and consulted the flight of birds and the entrails of animals; and for this armies were accompanied by soothsayers and priests, that they might interpret any signs which might occur that would be favorable, or to propitiate the favor of the gods by sacrifice. See Homer, passim; Arrian‘s Expedition of Alexander, and the classic writers generally. The apostle alludes to something of this kind here. He would excite us to maintain the Christian warfare manfully, by the assurance that God intends that we shall be triumphant. This we are to learn by no conjectures of soothsayers; by no observation of the flight of birds; by no sacrifice which we can make to propitiate his favor, but by the unerring assurance of his holy word. If we are Christians, we know that he intends our salvation, and that victory will be ours; if we are willing to

become Christians, we know that the Almighty arm will be stretched out to aid us, and that the "gates of hell" cannot prevent it.

Verse 10

Who died for us - That is, to redeem us. He designed by his death that we should ultimately live with him; and this effect of his death could be secured only as it was an atoning sacrifice.

Whether we wake or sleep - Whether we are found among the living or the dead when he comes. The object here is to show that the one class would have no advantage over the other. This was designed to calm their minds in their trials, and to correct an error which seems to have prevailed in the belief that those who were found alive when he should return would have some priority over those who were dead; see the notes on 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Should live together with him - See the notes at John 14:3. The word rendered "together" (ἅμα hama) is not to be regarded as connected with the phrase "with him" - as meaning that he and they would be "together," but it refers to those who "wake and those who sleep" - those who are alive and those who are dead - meaning that they would be "together" or would be with the Lord "at the same time;" there would be no priority or precedence. Rosenmuller.

Verse 11

Wherefore comfort yourselves - notes, 1 Thessalonians 4:18.

And edify one another - Strive to build up each other, or to establish each other in the faith by these truths; notes, Romans 14:19.

Even as also ye do - Continue to do it. Let nothing intervene to disturb the harmony and consolation which you have been accustomed to derive from these high and holy doctrines.

Verse 12

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you - Who they were is not mentioned. It is evident, however, that the church was not left without appointed persons to minister to it when its founders should be away. We know that there were presbyters ordained over the church at Ephesus, and over the churches in Crete (Acts 20:17; Titus i. 5), and that there were bishops and deacons at Philippi Philemon 1:1, and there is every reason to believe that similar officers would be appointed in every newly organized church, The word "know" seems to mean that they

were not to make themselves strangers to them - to be cold and distant toward them - to be ignorant of their needs, or to be indifferent to them. While a people are not obtrusively to intermeddle with the business of a minister, anymore than they are with that of any other man, yet there are things in regard to him with which they should be acquainted. They should seek to be personally acquainted with him, and make him their confidant and counselor in their spiritual troubles. They should seek his friendship, and endeavor to maintain all proper contact with him. They should not regard him as a distant man, or as a stranger among them. They should so far understand his circumstances as to know what is requisite to make him comfortable, and should be on such terms that they may readily and cheerfully furnish what he needs. And they are to "know" or regard him as their spiritual teacher and ruler; not to be strangers to the place where he preaches the word of life, and not to listen to his admonitions and reproofs as those of a stranger, but as those of a pastor and friend.

Which labour among you - There is no reason to suppose, as many have done, that the apostle here refers to different classes of ministers. He rather refers to different parts of the work which the same ministers perform. The first is, that they "labor" - that is, evidently, in preaching the gospel. For the use of the word, see John 4:38, where it occurs twice; 1 Corinthians 15:10; 1 Corinthians 16:16. The word is one which properly expresses wearisome toil, and implies that the office of preaching is one that demands constant industry.

And are over you in the Lord - That is, by the appointment of the Lord, or under his direction. They are not absolute sovereigns, but are themselves subject to one who is over them - the Lord Jesus. On the word here rendered "are over you" (προΐσταμένους proistamenous) see the notes on Romans 12:8, where it is translated "ruleth."

And admonish you - The word here used (νουθετέω noutheteō) is rendered "admonish," and "admonished," in Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 2 Thessalonians 3:15; and warn, and warning, 1 Corinthians 4:14; Colossians 1:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:14. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means, to put in mind; and then to warn, entreat, exhort. It is a part of the duty of a minister to put his people in mind of the truth; to warn them of danger; to exhort them to perform their duty; to admonish them if they go astray.

Verse 13

And to esteem them very highly in love - To cherish for them an affectionate regard. The office of a minister of religion demands respect. They who are faithful in that office have a claim on the kind regards of their fellow-men. The very nature of the office requires them to do good to others, and there is no benefactor who should be treated with more affectionate regard than he who endeavors to save us from ruin; to impart to us the consolations of the gospel in affliction; and to bring us and our families to heaven.

For their work's sake - Not primarily as a personal matter, or on their own account, but on account of the work in which they are engaged. It is a work whose only tendency, when rightly performed, is to do good. It injures no man, but contributes to the happiness of all. It promotes intelligence, industry, order, neatness, economy, temperance, chastity, charity, and kindness in this world, and leads to eternal blessedness in the world to come. A man who sincerely devotes himself to such a work has a claim on the kind regards of his fellow-men.

And be at peace among yourselves - See the Mark 9:50 note; Romans 12:18; Romans 14:19 notes.

Verse 14

Now we exhort you, brethren - Margin, "beseech." This earnest entreaty is evidently addressed to the whole church, and not to the ministers of the gospel only. The duties here enjoined are such as pertain to all Christians in their appropriate spheres, and should not be left to be performed by ministers only.

Warn them - The same word which in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 is rendered "admonish." It is the duty of every church member, as well as of the ministers of the gospel, affectionately to admonish those whom they know to be living contrary to the requirements of the gospel. One reason why there is so little piety in the church, and why so many professors of religion go astray, is, that the great mass of church members feel no responsibility on this subject. They suppose that it is the duty only of the officers of the church to admonish an erring brother, and hence many become careless and cold and worldly, and no one utters a kind word to them to recall them to a holy walk with God.

That are unruly - Margin, "disorderly." The word here used (ἄτακτος ataktos), is one which properly means "not keeping the ranks," as of soldiers; and then irregular, confused, neglectful of duty, disorderly. The

reference here is to the members of the church who were irregular in their Christian walk. It is not difficult, in an army, when soldiers get out of the line, or leave their places in the ranks, or are thrown into confusion, to see that little can be accomplished in such a state of irregularity and confusion. As little difficult is it, when the members of a church are out of their places, to see that little can be accomplished in such a state. Many a church is like an army where half the soldiers are out of the line; where there is entire insubordination in the ranks, and where not half of them could be depended on for efficient service in a campaign. Indeed, an army would accomplish little if as large a proportion of it were irregular, idle, remiss, or pursuing their own aims to the neglect of the public interest, as there are members of the church who can never be depended on in accomplishing the great purpose for which it was organized.

Comfort the feeble-minded - The dispirited; the disheartened; the downcast. To do this is also the duty of each church member. There are almost always those who are in this condition, and it is not easy to appreciate the value of a kind word to one in that state. Christians are assailed by temptation; in making efforts to do good they are opposed and become disheartened; in their contests with their spiritual foes they are almost overcome; they walk through shades of spiritual night, and find no comfort. In such circumstances, how consoling is the voice of a friend! How comforting is it to feel that they are not alone! How supporting to be addressed by one who has had the same conflicts, and has triumphed! Every Christian - especially every one who has been long in the service of his Master - has a fund of experience which is the property of the church, and which may be of incalculable value to those who are struggling now amidst many embarrassments along the Christian way. He who has that experience should help a weak and sinking brother; he should make his own experience of the efficacy of religion in his trials and conflicts, the means of sustaining others in their struggles. There is no one who would not reach out his hand to save a child borne down rapid stream; yet how often do experienced and strong men in the Christian faith pass by those who are struggling in the "deep waters, where the proud waves have come over their souls!"

Support the weak - See the notes at Romans 15:1.

Be patient toward all men - See the Greek word here used, explained in the notes on 1 Corinthians 13:4; compare Ephesians 4:2; Galatians 5:22; Colossians 3:12.

Verse 15

See that none render evil for evil - See the notes on Matthew 5:39, Matthew 5:44. The meaning here is, that we are not to take vengeance; compare notes on Romans 12:17, Romans 12:19. This law is positive, and is universally binding. The moment we feel ourselves acting from a desire to "return evil for evil," that moment we are acting wrong. It may be right to defend our lives and the lives of our friends; to seek the protection of the law for our persons, reputation, or property, against those who would wrong us; to repel the assaults of calumniators and slanderers, but in no case should the motive be to do them wrong for the evil which they have done us.

But ever follow that which is good - Which is benevolent, kind, just, generous; see the notes, Romans 12:20-21.

Both among yourselves, and to all men - The phrase "to all men," seems to have been added to avoid the possibility of misconstruction. Some might possibly suppose that this was a good rule to be observed toward those of their own number, but that a greater latitude in avenging injuries might be allowable toward their enemies out of the church. The apostle, therefore, says that the rule is universal. It relates to the pagan, to infidels, sceptics, and persecutors, as well as to the members of the church. To every man we are to do good as we are able - no matter what they do to us. This is the rule which God himself observes toward the evil and unthankful (notes, Matthew 5:45), and is one of the original and beautiful laws of our holy religion.

Verse 16

Rejoice evermore - See the notes on Philemon 3:1; Philemon 4:4.

Verse 17

Pray without ceasing - See the notes on Romans 12:12. The direction here may be fairly construed as meaning:

(1) That we are to be regular and constant in the observance of the stated seasons of prayer. We are to observe the duty of prayer in the closet, in the family, and in the assembly convened to call on the name of the Lord. We are not to allow this duty to be interrupted or intermitted by any trifling cause. We are so to act that it may be said we pray regularly in the closet, in the family, and at the usual seasons when the church prays to which we belong.

(2) we are to maintain an uninterrupted and constant spirit of prayer. We are to be in such a frame of mind as to be ready to pray publicly if requested; and when alone, to improve any moment of leisure which we may have when we feel ourselves strongly inclined to pray. That Christian is in a bad state of mind who has suffered himself, by attention to worldly cares, or by light conversation, or by gaiety and vanity, or by reading an improper book, or by eating or drinking too much, or by late hours at night among the thoughtless and the vain, to be brought into such a condition that he cannot engage in prayer with proper feelings. There has been evil done to the soul if it is not prepared for communion with God at all times, and if it would not find pleasure in approaching his holy throne.

Verse 18

In every thing give thanks - See the Ephesians 5:20 note; Philemon 4:6 note. We can always find something to be thankful for, and there may be reasons why we ought to be thankful for even those dispensations which appear dark and frowning. Chrysostom, once the archbishop of Constantinople, and then driven into exile, persecuted, and despised, died far away form all the splendors of the capital, and all the comforts and honors which he had enjoyed, uttering his favorite motto - δόξα τῷ Θεῷ πάντων ἕνεκεν doxa tō Theō pantōn heneken- "glory to God for all things." Bibliotheca Sacra, 1:700. So we may praise God for everything that happens to us under his government. A man owes a debt of obligation to him for anything which will recall him from his wanderings, and which will prepare him for heaven. Are there any dealings of God toward people which do not contemplate such an end? Is a man ever made to drink the cup of affliction when no drop of mercy is intermingled? Is he ever visited with calamity which does not in some way contemplate his own temporal or eternal good! Could we see all, we should see that we are never placed in circumstances in which there is not much for which we should thank God. And when, in his dealings, a cloud seems to cover his face, let us remember the good things without number which we have received, and especially remember that we are in the world of redeeming love, and we shall find enough for which to be thankful.

For this is the will of God - That is, that you should be grateful. This is what God is pleased to require you to perform in the name of the Lord Jesus. In the gift of that Saviour he has laid the foundation for that claim,

and he requires that you should not be unmindful of the obligation; see the notes, Hebrews 13:15.

Verse 19

Quench not the Spirit - This language is taken from the way of putting out a fire, and the sense is, we are not to extinguish the influences of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Possibly there may be an allusion here to fire on an altar, which was to be kept constantly burning. This fire may have been regarded as emblematic of devotion, and as denoting that that devotion was never to become extinct. The Holy Spirit is the source of true devotion, and hence the enkindlings of piety in the heart, by the Spirit, are never to be quenched. Fire may be put out by pouring on water; or by covering it with any incombustible substance; or by neglecting to supply fuel. If it is to be made to burn, it must be nourished with proper care and attention. The Holy Spirit, in his influences on the soul, is here compared with fire that might be made to burn more intensely, or that might be extinguished.

In a similar manner the apostle gives this direction to Timothy, "I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up ἀναζωπυρεῖν anazōpureinkindle up, cause to burn) the gift of God;" 2 Timothy 1:6. Anything that will tend to damp the ardor of piety in the soul; to chill our feelings; to render us cold and lifeless in the service of God, may be regarded as "quenching the Spirit." Neglect of cultivating the Christian graces, or of prayer, of the Bible, of the sanctuary, of a careful watchfulness over the heart, will do it. Worldliness, vanity, levity, ambition, pride, the love of dress, or indulgence in an improper train of thought, will do it. It is a great rule in religion that all the piety which there is in the soul is the fair result of culture. A man has no more religion than he intends to have; he has no graces of the Spirit which he does not seek; he has no deadness to the world which is not the object of his sincere desire, and which he does not aim to have. Any one, if he will, may make elevated attainments in the divine life; or he may make his religion merely a religion of form, and know little of its power and its consolations.

Verse 20

Despise not prophesyings - On the subject of prophesyings in the early Christian church, see the notes on 1 Corinthians 14:1 ff1 ff. The reference here seems to be to preaching. They were not to undervalue it in comparison with other things. It is possible that in Thessalonica, as appears

to have been the case subsequently in Corinth (compare 1 Corinthians 14:19), there were those who regarded the power of working miracles, or of speaking in unknown tongues, as a much more eminent endowment than that of stating the truths of religion in language easily understood. It would not be unnatural that comparisons should be made between these two classes of endowments, much to the disadvantage of the latter; and hence may have arisen this solemn caution not to disregard or despise the ability to make known divine truth in intelligible language. A similar counsel may not be inapplicable to us now. The office of setting forth the truth of God is to be the permanent office in the church; that of speaking foreign languages by miraculous endowment, was to be temporary. But the office of addressing mankind on the great duties of religion, and of publishing salvation, is to be God‘s great ordinance for converting the world. It should not be despised, and no man commends his own wisdom who contemns it - for:

(1) it is God‘s appointment - the means which he has designated for saving people.

(2) it has too much to entitle it to respect to make it proper to despise or contemn it. There is nothing else that has so much power over mankind as the preaching of the gospel; there is no other institution of heaven or earth among people that is destined to exert so wide and permanent an influence as the Christian ministry.

(3) it is an influence which is wholly good. No man is made the poorer, or the less respectable, or more miserable in life or in death, by following the counsels of a minister of Christ when he makes known the gospel.

(4) he who despises it contemns that which is designed to promote his own welfare, and which is indispensable for his salvation. It remains yet to be shown that any man has promoted his own happiness, or the welfare of his family, by affecting to treat with contempt the instructions of the Christian ministry.

Verse 21

Prove all things - Subject everything submitted to you to be believed to the proper test. The word here used (δοκιμάζετε dokimazete), is one that is

properly applicable to metals, referring to the art of the assayer, by which the true nature and value of the metal is tested; see notes, 1 Corinthians 3:13. This trial was usually made by fire. The meaning here is, that they were carefully to examine everything proposed for their belief. They were not to receive it on trust; to take it on assertion; to believe it because it was urged with vehemence, zeal, or plausibility. In the various opinions and doctrines which were submitted to them for adoption, they were to apply the appropriate tests from reason and the word of God, and what they found to be true they were to embrace; what was false they were to reject. Christianity does not require people to disregard their reason, or to be credulous. It does not expect them to believe anything because others say it is so. It does not make it a duty to receive as undoubted truth all that synods and councils have decreed; or all that is advanced by the ministers of religion. It is, more than any other form of religion, the friend of free inquiry, and would lead people everywhere to understand the reason of the opinions which they entertain; compare Acts 17:11-12; 1 Peter 3:15.

Hold fast that which is good - Which is in accordance with reason and the word of God; which is adapted to promote the salvation of the soul and the welfare of society. This is just as much a duty as it is to "prove all things." A man who has applied the proper tests, and has found out what is truth, is bound to embrace it and to hold it fast. He is not at liberty to throw it away, as if it were valueless; or to treat truth and falsehood alike. It is a duty which he owes to himself and to God to adhere to it firmly, and to suffer the loss of all things rather than to abandon it. There are few more important rules in the New Testament than the one in this passage. It shows what is the true nature of Christianity, and it is a rule whose practical value cannot but be felt constantly in our lives. Other religions require their votaries to receive everything upon trust; Christianity asks us to examine everything.

Error, superstition, bigotry, and fanaticism attempt to repress free discussion, by saying that there are certain things which are too sacred in their nature, or which have been too long held, or which are sanctioned by too many great and holy names, to permit their being subjected to the scrutiny of common eyes, or to be handled by common hands. In opposition to all this, Christianity requires us to examine everything - no matter by whom held; by what councils ordained; by what venerableness of antiquity sustained; or by what sacredness it may be invested. We are to receive no

opinion until we are convinced that it is true; we are to be subjected to no pains or penalties for not believing what we do not perceive to be true; we are to be prohibited from examining no opinion which our fellow-men regard as true, and which they seek to make others believe. No popular current in favor of any doctrine; no influence which name and rank and learning can give it, is to commend it to us as certainly worthy of our belief. By whomsoever held, we are to examine it freely before we embrace it; but when we are convinced that it is true, it is to be held, no matter what current of popular opinion or prejudice maybe against it; no matter what ridicule may be poured upon it; and no matter though the belief of it may require us to die a martyr‘s death.

Verse 22

Abstain from all appearance of evil - Not only from evil itself, but from that which seems to be wrong. There are many things which are known to be wrong. They are positively forbidden by the laws of heaven, and the world concurs in the sentiment that they are wicked. But there are also many things about which there may be some reasonable doubt. It is not quite easy to determine in the case what is right or wrong. The subject has not been fully examined, or the question of its morality may be so difficult to settle, that the mind may be nearly or quite balanced in regard to it. There are many things which, in themselves, may not appear to us to be positively wrong, but which are so considered by large and respectable portions of the community; and for us to do them would be regarded as inconsistent and improper. There are many things, also, in respect to which there is great variety of sentiment among mankind - where one portion would regard them as proper, and another as improper.

There are things, also, where, whatever may be our motive, we may be certain that our conduct will be regarded as improper. A great variety of subjects, such as those pertaining to dress, amusements, the opera, the ball-room, games of chance and hazard, and various practices in the transaction of business, come under this general class; which, though on the supposition that they cannot be proved to be in themselves positively wrong or forbidden, have much the “appearance” of evil, and will be so interpreted by others. The safe and proper rule is to lean always to the side of virtue. In these instances it may be certain that there will be no sin committed by abstaining; there may be by indulgence. No command of God, or of

propriety, will be violated if we decline complying with these customs; but on the other hand we may wound the cause of religion by yielding to what possibly is a mere temptation. No one ever does injury or wrong by abstaining from the pleasures of the ball-room, the theater, or a glass of wine; who can indulge in them without, in the view of large and respectable portions of the community, doing that which has the "appearance" at least of "evil?"

Verse 23

And the very God of peace - The God who gives peace or happiness; compare notes, Romans 1:7.

Sanctify you - See the notes at John 17:17.

Wholly - ὁλοτελεῖς holoteleisIn every part; completely. It is always proper to pray that God would make his people entirely holy. A prayer for perfect sanctification, however, should not be adduced as a proof that it is in fact attained in the present life.

Your whole spirit and soul and body - There is an allusion here, doubtless, to the popular opinion in regard to what constitutes man. We have a body; we have animal life and instincts in common with the inferior creation; and we have also a rational and immortal soul. This distinction is one that appears to the mass of people to be true, and the apostle speaks of it in the language commonly employed by mankind. At the same time, no one can demonstrate that it is not founded in truth. The body we see, and there can be no difference of opinion in regard to its existence. The "soul" (ἡ ψυκὴ hē psuchē- *psyche*), the vital principle, the animal life, or the seat of the senses, desires, affections, appetites, we have in common with other animals. It pertains to the nature of the animal creation, though more perfect in some animals than in others, but is in all distinct from the soul as the seat of conscience, and as capable of moral agency.

See the use of the word in Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27; Luke 12:20; Acts 20:10; Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 8:9, et al. In the Pythagorean and Platonic philosophy this was distinguished from the higher rational nature ὁ νοῦς , τὸ πνεῦμα ho nousto pneumaas this last belonged to man alone. This "psyche" (ψυχὴ psuchē) "soul." or life, it is commonly supposed, becomes extinct at death. It is so connected with the bodily organization, that when the tissues of the animal frame cease their functions, this ceases also. This was not, however, the opinion of the

ancient Greeks. Homer uses the term to denote that which leaves the body with the breath, as escaping from the ἕρκος ὀδοντων herkos odontōn- "the fence or sept of thy teeth" - and as also passing out through a wound. - This ψυχή psuchē- "psyche" - continued to exist in Hades, and was supposed to have a definite form there, but could not be seized by the hands.

Ody. 2:207. See "Passow," 2; compare Prof. Bush, *Anasta*. pp. 72,73. Though this word, however, denotes the vital principle or the animal life, in man it may be connected with morals - just as the body may be - for it is a part of himself in his present organization, and whatever may be true in regard to the inferior creation, it is his duty to bring his whole nature under law, or so to control it that it may not be an occasion of sin. Hence the apostle prays that the "whole body and soul" - or animal nature - may be made holy. This distinction between the animal life and the mind of man (the "anima" and "animus," the ψυχὴ psuchēand the πνεῦμα pneuma), was often made by the ancient philosophers. See Plato, Timae. p. 1048, A. Nemesius, de Nat. Hom. 1Cited Glyca, p. 70; Lucretius, 3:94; 116,131; Juvenal, 15:146; Cicero, de Divinat. 129, as quoted by Wetstein in loc. A similar view prevailed also among the Jews. rabbi Isaac (Zohar in Lev. fol. 29,2), says, "Worthy are the righteous in this world and the world to come, for lo, they are all holy; their body is holy, their soul is holy, their spirit and their breath is holy." Whether the apostle meant to sanction this view, or merely to speak in common and popular language, may indeed be questioned, but there seems to be a foundation for the language in the nature of man. The word here rendered "spirit" (πνεῦμα pneuma), refers to the intellectual or higher nature of man; that which is the seat of reason, of conscience, and of responsibility. This is immortal. It has no necessary connection with the body, as animal life or the *psyche* (ψυχὴ psuchē) has, and consequently will be unaffected by death. It is this which distinguishes man from the brute creation; this which allies him with higher intelligences around the throne of God.

Be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ - The apostle does not intimate here that either the body or the vital principle will be admitted to heaven, or will be found in a future state of being, whatever may be the truth on that subject. The prayer is, that they might be entirely holy, and be kept from transgression, until the Lord Jesus should come; that is, until he should come either to remove them by death, or to

wind up the affairs of this lower world; see the notes on 1 Thessalonians 1:10. By his praying that the "body and the soul" - meaning here the animal nature, the seat of the affections and passions - might be kept holy, there is reference to the fact that, connected as they are with a rational and accountable soul, they may be the occasion of sin. The same natural propensities; the same excitability of passion; the same affections which in a brute would involve no responsibility, and have nothing moral in their character, may be a very different thing in man, who is placed under a moral law, and who is bound to restrain and govern all his passions by a reference to that law, and to his higher nature. For a cur to snarl and growl; for a lion to roar and rage; for a hyena to be fierce and untameable; for a serpent to hiss and bite, and for the ostrich to leave her eggs without concern Job 39:14, involves no blame, no guilt for them, for they are not accountable; but for man to evince the same temper, and the same want of affection, does involve guilt, for he has a higher nature, and all these things should be subject to the law which God has imposed on him as a moral and accountable being. As these things may, therefore, in man be the occasion of sin, and ought to be subdued, there was a fitness in praying that they might be "preserved blameless" to the coming of the Saviour; compare the notes on 1 Corinthians 9:27.

Verse 24

Faithful is he that calleth you - That is, your sanctification after all depends on him, and as he has begun a work of grace in your hearts, you may depend on his faithfulness to complete it; see the 1 Thessalonians 4:3 note; Philemon 1:6 note; 1 Corinthians 1:9 note.

Verse 25

Brethren, pray for us - A request which the apostle often makes; notes on Hebrews 13:18. He was a man of like passions as others: liable to the same temptations; engaged in an arduous work; often called to meet with opposition, and exposed to peril and want, and he especially needed the prayers of the people of God. A minister, surrounded as he is by temptations, is in great danger if he has not the prayers of his people. Without those prayers, he will be likely to accomplish little in the cause of his Master. His own devotions in the sanctuary will be formal and frigid, and the word which he preaches will be likely to come from a cold and heavy heart, and to fall also on cold and heavy hearts. There is no way in

which a people can better advance the cause of piety in their own hearts, than by praying much for their minister.

Verse 26

Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss - see the notes on Romans 16:16.

Verse 27

I charge you by the Lord - Margin, "adjure." Greek, "I put you under oath by the Lord" - ενορκίζω ὑμᾶς τὸν Κύριον enorkizō humas ton KurionIt is equivalent to binding persons by an oath; see the notes on Matthew 26:63; compare Genesis 21:23-24; Genesis 24:3, Genesis 24:37.

That this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren - To all the church; compare notes on Colossians 4:16. The meaning is, that the Epistle was to be read to the whole church on some occasion. on which it was assembled together. It was not merely designed for the individual or individuals into whose hands it might happen to fall, but as it contained matters of common interest, and was designed for the whole body of believers at Thessalonica, the apostle gives a solemn charge that it should not be suppressed or kept from them. Injunctions of this kind occurring in the Epistles, look as if the apostles regarded themselves as under the influence of inspiration, and as having authority to give infallible instructions to the churches.

Verse 28

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, … - notes, Romans 16:20.

In regard to the subscription at the close of the Epistle, purporting that it was written from Athens, see the introduction, section 3. These subscriptions are of no authority, and the one here, like several others, is probably wrong.

From the solemn charge in 1 Thessalonians 5:27 that "this epistle should be read to all the holy brethren," that is, to the church at large, we may infer that it is in accordance with the will of God that all Christians should have free access to the Holy Scriptures. What was the particular reason for this injunction in Thessalonica, is not known, but it is possible that an opinion had begun to prevail even then that the Scriptures were designed to be kept in the hands of the ministers of religion, and that their common perusal was to be prohibited. At all events, whether this opinion prevailed then or not, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the Holy Spirit, by whom this Epistle

was dictated, foresaw that the time would come when this doctrine would be defended by cardinals and popes and councils; and that it would be one of the means by which the monstrous fabric of the Papacy would be sustained and perpetuated. It is worthy of remark, also, that the apostle Paul, in his epistles to the Thessalonians, has dwelt more fully on the fact that the great apostasy would occur under the Papacy, and on the characteristics of that grand usurpation over the rights of people, than he has anywhere else in his Epistle; see 2 Thessalonians 2:11. It is no improbable supposition that with reference to that, and to counteract one of its leading dogmas, his mind was supernaturally directed to give this solemn injunction, that the contents of the Epistle which he had written should be communicated without reserve to all the Christian brethren in Thessalonica. In view of this injunction, therefore, at the close of this Epistle, we may remark:

(1) that it is a subject of express divine command that the people should have access to the Holy Scriptures. So important was this considered, that it was deemed necessary to enjoin those who should receive the word of God, under the solemnities of an oath, and by all the force of apostolic authority, to communicate what they had received to others.

(2) this injunction had reference to all the members of the church, for they were all to be made acquainted with the word of God. The command is, indeed, that it he "read" to them, but by parity of reasoning it would follow that it was to be in their hands; that it was to be accessible to them; that it was in no manner to be withheld from them. Probably many of them could not read, but in some way the contents of revelation were to be made known to them - and not by preaching only, but by reading the words of inspiration. No part was to be kept back; nor were they to be denied such access that they could fully understand it; nor was it to be insisted on that there should be an authorized expounder of it. It was presumed that all the members of the church were qualified to understand what had been written to them, and to profit by it. It follows therefore,

(3) that there is great iniquity in all those decisions and laws which are designed to keep the Scriptures from the common people. This is true:

(a)in reference to the Papal communion, and to all the ordinances there which prohibit the free circulation of the Sacred Volume among the people;

(b)it is true of all those laws in slave-holding communities which prohibit slaves from being taught to read the Scriptures; and,

(c)it is true of all the opinions and dogmas which prevail in any community where the right of "private judgment" is denied, and where free access to the volume of inspiration is forbidden.

The richest blessing of heaven to mankind is the Bible; and there is no book ever written so admirably adapted to the common mind, and so fitted to elevate the sunken, the ignorant, and the degraded. There is no more decided enemy of the progress of the human race in intelligence, purity, and freedom, than he who prevents the free circulation of this holy volume; and there is no sincerer friend of the species than he who "causes it to be read by all," and who contributes to make it accessible to all the families and all the inhabitants of the world.

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Introduction to 2Thessalonians

For a general view of Thessalonica: of the establishment of the church there; of the character of the church, and of the design for which the apostle addressed these letters to it, see the introduction to the First Epistle.

This Epistle appears to have been written soon after the First Epistle, and from the same place - Corinth. See the introduction to the First Epistle, 3. The proof of this indeed is not certain, because there are no marks of time or place in the Epistle by which these points can be determined. The probability rests upon these grounds:

(1) That the same persons - Paul, Silas, and Timothy - are associated in both Epistles, and are mentioned as being together at the time when they were written 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1. However, since there is reason to believe that they did not continue long together, it is to be presumed that one Epistle was written soon after the other.

(2) Paul refers to an error which had grown up, apparently in consequence of a misunderstanding of his First Epistle 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2, an error which he regarded as of great magnitude, and which was producing very unhappy results 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12, and it was natural that he should hasten to correct that error as soon as possible.

(3) there is some probability, as Benson has remarked, that the Epistle was written before the troubles came upon him at Corinth under the administration of Gallio Acts 18:12-16, and yet that he saw that the storm was approaching, and hints at it in 2 Thessalonians 3:2, “And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.” If so, this Epistle was written only a few months at the most after the First Epistle. We may regard the evidence, therefore, as sufficiently clear, that this Epistle was written at Corinth sense time during the latter part of a.d. 53, or the beginning of a.d. 54.

There is little doubt as to the design for which it was written. Either by a false interpretation of his former Epistle, or by an epistle forged in his name and sent to them, the opinion had become prevalent in the church at

Thessalonica that the Saviour was about to appear, and that the end of the world was at hand; see 2 Thessalonians 2:2, compare Hug‘s *Introduction*, section 94, and Stuart‘s *Notes* on the same passage, pp. 741ff. Correct this impression was the leading purpose of this Epistle. Some people had become alarmed, and were suffering from unnecessary apprehension 2 Thessalonians 2:2; and some, under the natural belief that labor then was useless, and that property was of no value, had given up all attention to their worldly concerns 2 Thessalonians 3:10-11; and it was of the utmost importance that the error should be corrected. This was done in this Second Epistle, and in doing it. As usual, Paul intermingled several other topics of importance, adapted to the condition of those to whom he wrote.

This Epistle, though short, has great permanent value, and is indispensable to a proper understanding of the great doctrine of the Second Advent of the Redeemer. It was written, indeed, to correct an error in a single church, and at a particular time, but history has shown there is a tendency toward that same error in all ages, and that there was need of some permanent inspired statement to check it. It was inferred from the First Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, that he meant to teach that the day of judgment was not far off. If this Second Epistle had not been written to correct that false interpretation, and to show what Paul‘s true belief was, it would have been charged to Paul that he was mistaken, and then the inference would have been naturally made that all the prophecies respecting that event were false! The distance between this and absolute infidelity, it is easy to see, is very small. Paul, by his prompt explanation, arrested that danger, and showed that he intended to teach no such doctrine as had been drawn from his first letter to them. There this Epistle is of importance to show:

(1) that the apostle did not believe, or mean to teach, that the end of the world was very near. There are many expressions, indeed, which, like those in First Thessalonians, would seeM to imply that the apostle held that belief, but the explanation of an inspired apostle of his own sentiments at the time, settled that matter. No one now has a right to charge that belief on him, or on others who then used the same language. No one can pretend that they held the opinion that the end of the world was very near. There is no stronger language on that subject in any of their writings than occurs in

the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, and Paul in the Second Epistle expressly says that he held no such opinion, and meant to teach no such thing.

(2) this Epistle is a standing rebuke of the kind of interpretation which attempts to determine the time when the Saviour will come, and of all those theories which represent "the day of Christ as at hand." The declarations in the Scriptures are positive and abundant that the time of his appearing is not made known to mortals (Notes on Acts 1:7), and it is not possible now to make out a stronger argument to prove that that time is near, than could have been made out from the First Epistle to the Thessalonians; and yet Paul deemed it necessary to write them a second letter, expressly to show them that the interpretation which they put upon his language was unauthorized. The truth is, that it was not the design of God to make known to human beings the exact time when the Lord Jesus will return for judgment; and all attempts since the time of Paul to settle that have failed, and all will doubtless continue to fall, as they always have done.

2 THESSALONIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 comprises the following points:

(1)The salutation; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-2.

(2)an expression of thanks for the progress which the Thessalonians had made in piety, and especially for the manner in which they had been enabled to bear their trials; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4.

(3)an assurance that the manner in which they had been enabled to bear their trials was an evidence that they were true Christians; 2 Thessalonians 1:5.

(4)adeclaration that those who had persecuted them, and all others who were wicked, would be punished when the Lord Jesus should come, and that when this should occur the righteous would appear in glory and honor; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10.

(5)the expression of an earnest desire that they might be prepared for the solemn scenes of that day; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12.

Verse 1

Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus; - See the notes on 1 Thessalonians 1:1.

Verse 3

We are bound to thank God always for you; - See the notes on 1 Thessalonians 1:2. "As it is meet." Since it is fit or proper. "Because that your faith groweth exceedingly." It would seem probable from this that Paul had heard from them since his First Epistle was written. He had doubtless received intelligence of the error which prevailed among them respecting his views of the coming of the Lord Jesus, and of the progress which the truth was making, at the same time. "And the charity of every one of you all toward each other." Your mutual love.

Verse 4

So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God - That is, we mention your example to other churches, and glory in it, as an evidence of

what the gospel is suited to do; see the notes on 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; compare the notes on 2 Corinthians 9:2.

For your patience - Your patient endurance of trials.

And faith - Fidelity, or constancy. You have shown unwavering confidence in God in your afflictions.

In all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure - See the notes on 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:13. It would seem from this that the persecutions and trials to which the apostle referred in his First Epistle were still continued.

Verse 5

Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God - The word "which" is supplied by our translators, and there may be some doubt to what the apostle has reference as being "a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God." The general sense seems to be, that the fact that they were thus persecuted was an evidence that there would be a future judgment, when the righteous who were persecuted would be rewarded, and the wicked who persecuted them would be punished. The manner in which they bore their trials was an indication also of what the result would be in regard to them. Their patience and faith under persecutions were constantly showing that they would "be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which they were called to suffer." It is evident that a relative must be supplied here, as our translators have done, but there has been a difference of view as to what it refers. Some suppose that it is to "patience," others to "persecutions and tribulations," and others to the "whole sentence" preceding. The latter is probably the true construction, and the sense is, that the endurance of affliction in a proper manner by the righteous is a proof that there will be a righteous judgment of God in the last day:

(1) It is evidence that there will be a future judgment - since the righteous here suffer so much, and the wicked triumph.

(2) these things are now permitted in order that the character may be developed, and that the reason of the sentence in the last day may be seen.

(3) the manner in which these afflictions are borne is an evidence - an indication (ἔνδειγμα endeigma) of what the results of the judgment will be. The word rendered "manifest token" (ἔνδειγμα endeigma), occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means an indication, token, proof - anything

that shows or points out how a thing is, or is to be (from ἐνδείκνυμι endeiknumito show, to point out). The meaning here is, therefore, that the course of events referred to - the persecutions which they endured, and the manner in which they were borne - furnished a proof that there would be a righteous judgment, and also afforded an indication of what the result of that judgment would be. We may, in general, learn what will be the issues of the judgment in the case of an individual from the manner in which he bears trials.

Of the righteous judgment of God - That there will be a just judgment hereafter. The crimes of the wicked who go unpunished on the earth, and the sufferings of the good who are unavenged, are a demonstration that there will be a judgment, when all these inequalities will be adjusted.

That ye may be counted worthy - As the result of your affliction, that you may be fitted for the kingdom of God. This does not mean that Christians will merit heaven by their sufferings, but that they may show that they have such a character that there is a fitness or propriety that they should be admitted there. They may evince by their patience and resignation, by their deadness to the world and their holy lives, that they are not disqualified to enter into that kingdom where the redeemed are to dwell. No true Christian will ever feel that he is worthy on his own account, or that he has any claim to eternal life, yet he may have evidence that he has the characteristics to which God has promised salvation, and is fitted to dwell in heaven.

Of the kingdom of God. - In heaven, see the notes on Matthew 3:2.

For which ye also suffer. - The sufferings which you now endure are because you are professed heirs of the kingdom; that is, you are persecuted because you are Christians; see 1 Thessalonians 2:14.

Verse 6

Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you - The sense is: "There will be a future judgment, because it is proper that God should punish those who now persecute you. It is not right that they should go unpunished, and triumph forever. It is not an arbitrary thing, a thing which is indifferent, a thing which may or may not be done; it is a just and proper thing that the wicked should be punished." The doctrine is, that the future punishment of the wicked is just and proper; and that, being just and proper, it will be inflicted. Many suppose that there would be no justice in the eternal punishment of the wicked; that the

threatening of that punishment is wholly arbitrary; that it might easily be dispensed with, and that because it is unjust it will not be inflicted, and need not be dreaded. But that it is just and proper, a very slight degree of reflection must show. Because:

(1) it is inconceivable that God should threaten such punishment unless it were just. How can it be reconciled with his perfections that he can hold up before mankind the assurance that any of them will be punished forever, unless it be right that it should be so? Can we believe that he deliberately threatens what is wrong, or that, in the face of the universe, he publicly declares his intention to do what is wrong?

(2) people themselves believe that it is just that the wicked should be punished. They are constantly making laws, and affixing penalties to them, and executing them, under the belief that it is right. Can they regard it as wrong in God to do the same thing? Can that be wrong in him which is right in themselves?

(3) if it is right to punish wickedness here, it is not wrong to punish it in the future world. There is nothing in the two places which can change the nature of what is done. If it is right for God to visit the sinner here with the tokens of his displeasure, there is nothing which can make it wrong to visit him in like manner in the future world. Why should that be wrong in another world which is right and proper in this?

(4) it will be a righteous thing for God to punish the wicked in a future state, for they are not always punished here as they deserve. No one can seriously maintain that there is an equal distribution of rewards and punishments on the earth. Many a man goes to the grave having received no adequate punishment for his crimes. Many a murderer, pirate, robber, traitor, and plunderer of nations under the name of a conqueror, thus dies. No one can doubt that it would be a just thing to punish them here if they could be arrested. Why should it be any the less "just" to punish them when they enter another world? In like manner, many a man lives a life of profligacy; or is an open scoffer; or aims to cast off the government of God; or is a seducer of innocence; and yet lives in the midst of wealth, and goes down in calmness and peace to the grave; Psalm 73:3-5; Job 21:23-33. Why is it not just that such an one should be punished in the future world?

compare Psalm 73:16-20. But, if it is right that God should punish the wicked in the future world, it will be done. Because:

(1) There is nothing to hinder him from doing it. He has all power, and has all necessary means of inflicting punishment, entirely at his disposal.

(2) it would not be right not to do it. It is not right for a magistrate to treat the righteous and the wicked alike, or to show that he has as much regard to the one as to the other.

(3) it cannot be believed that God has uttered a threatening which he never meant to execute, or to appear before the universe as having held up before men the terror of the most awful punishment which could be inflicted, but which he never intended to carry into effect. Who could have confidence in such a Being? Who could know what to believe when he makes the most solemn declaration?

(4) the Judge of all the earth "will do right;" and if it is right to declare that "the wicked shall be turned into hell," it will not be wrong to inflict the sentence. And if, on the whole, it is right that the sinner should be punished, it will be done.

Them that trouble you. - Those who persecute you; see 1 Thessalonians 2:14.

Verse 7

And to you who are troubled - That is, "it will be a righteous thing for God to give to you who are persecuted rest in the last day." As it will be right and proper to punish the wicked, so it will he right to reward the good. It will not, however, be in precisely the same sense. The wicked will deserve all that they will suffer, but it cannot be said that the righteous will deserve the reward which they will receive. It will be right and proper, because:

(1) there is a fitness that they who are the friends of God should be treated as such, or it is proper that he should show himself to be their friend; and,

(2) because in this life this is not always clearly done. They are often less prospered, and less happy in their outward circumstances, than the

wicked. There is, therefore, a propriety that in the future state God should manifest himself as their friend, and show to assembled worlds that he is not indifferent to character, or that wickedness does not deserve his smiles, and piety incur his frown. At the same time, however, it will be owing wholly to his grace that any are ever admitted to heaven.

Rest - The future happiness of believers is often represented under the image of rest. It is rest like that of the weary laborer after his day of toil; rest, like that of the soldier after the hardships of a long and perilous march; rest, like the calm repose of one who has been racked with pain; see the notes on Hebrews 4:9. The word "rest" here (ἄνεσις anesis) means a letting loose, a remission, a relaxation; and hence composure, quiet; 2 Corinthians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 7:5.

With us - That is, with Paul, Silas, and Timothy; 2 Thessalonians 1:1. It would increase the comfort of the Thessalonians derived from the anticipation of the future world, to reflect that they would meet their religious teachers and friends there. It always augments the anticipated joy of heaven to reflect that we are to share its blessedness with them. There is no envy among those who anticipate heaven; there will be none there. They who desire heaven at all, desire that it may be shared in the highest degree by all who are dear to them.

When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven - Shall appear; shall come from heaven; see the notes, 1 Thessalonians 4:6.

With his mighty angels - Margin, "angels of his power." So the Greek. The sense is, that angels of exalted rank and glory will accompany him; see the 1 Thessalonians 4:16 note; Matthew 24:31; Matthew 25:31 notes.

Verse 8

In flaming fire - This is a circumstance which is not noticed in the account of his appearing in the parallel place in 1 Thessalonians 4:16. The object of the apostle here seems to be to represent him as coming amidst vivid flashes of lightning. He is commonly described as coming in clouds, and to that common description there is here added the image of incessant lightnings, as if the whole heavens were illuminated with a continued blaze.

Taking vengeance - Margin, "yielding." Greek, "giving. The word "vengeance" is used in the sense of punishment, for there cannot be in God what literally corresponds with the passion of revenge; compare the notes on Romans 12:19.

On them that know not God. - On all who are strangers to him; that is, who are living in pagan darkness, or who, having heard of him, have no practical acquaintance with him.

And that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. - Who do not embrace it, and practice its precepts in their lives; compare the notes on Romans 2:9.

Verse 9

Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction; - see the notes on Matthew 25:41, Matthew 25:46. The word which is here rendered "destruction" (ὄλεθρον olethron), is different from that which occurs in Matthew 25:46, and which is there rendered "punishment" - κόλασις kolasisThe word ὄλεθρον olethron- "olethron" - occurs only here and in 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:3; 1 Timothy 6:9; in each of which places it is rendered destruction. It does not denote annihilation, but is used in the same sense in which we use the word when we say that a thing is destroyed. Thus, health is destroyed when it fails; property is destroyed when it is burned or sunk in the ocean; a limb is destroyed that is lost in battle; life is destroyed when one dies. In the case before us, the destruction, whatever it be, is:

(1) to be continued forever; and,

(2) is to be of the nature of punishment.

The meaning then must be, that the soul is destroyed as to the great purposes of its being - its enjoyment, dignity, honor, holiness, happiness. It will not be annihilated, but will live and linger on in destruction. It seems difficult to conceive how anyone can profess to hold that this passage is a part of the Word of God, and yet deny the doctrine of future eternal punishment. It would not be possible to state that doctrine in clearer language than this. It is never is in clearer language in any creed or confession of faith, and if it is not true that the wicked will be punished forever, then it must be admitted that it would not have been possible to reveal the doctrine in human language!

From the presence of the Lord - That is, a part of their punishment will consist in being banished from the immediate presence of the Lord. There is a sense in which God is everywhere present, and in that sense he will be in the world where the wicked will dwell, to punish them. But the

phrase is also used to denote his more immediate presence; the place where are the symbols of his majesty and glory; the home of the holy and the blessed. It is in that sense that the word is used here, and the idea is, that it will be one of the circumstances contributing to the deeper woe of the place of punishment, that those who dwell there will be banished from that holy abode, and will never be permitted to enter there.

And from the glory of his power - The meaning seems to be, that they will not be able to endure the manifestation of his power and majesty when he shall appear, but will be driven away by it into outer darkness; see 2 Thessalonians 2:8. The Saviour, in describing his second coming, uses this language: "They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory;" Matthew 24:30. There will be a great exhibition of both. The power will be seen in the convulsions of nature which will precede or attend him; in the resurrection of the dead; and in the bringing of all to judgment: and the glory will be seen in his own person; the dignity and number of his attendants; and the honor that shall then be conferred on him as the final Judge of all mankind. By the manifestation of that power and glory the wicked will be driven away into eternal ruin. They will not be able to stand before it, and though, in common with the righteous, they may see the majesty of the Redeemer in the last day, yet they will be driven away to witness it no more.

Verse 10

When he shall come to be glorified in his saints - That is, the redeemed in that day will be the means of promoting his glory, or the universe will see his glory manifested in their redemption. His chief glory as seen in that day will be connected with the fact that he has redeemed his people; and he will come in order that all the appropriate honor of such a work may then be manifested. He will be "glorified" then by the numbers that shall have been redeemed; by their patience in the trials through which they have passed; by the triumphs which religion shall have made on the earth; by their praises and songs, and by their ascent with him to the realms of blessedness.

And to be admired in all them that believe - This may either mean that he will be admired among or by them that believe; or that the ground of the admiration which he will receive in that day will be what will be seen in them; that is, their graces, their numbers, their joys, their triumphs will be the occasion of producing admiration of him - for he will be regarded as the

source of it all. Tyndale renders it: “and to be made marvelous in all them that believe.” The latter interpretation seems to me to be the correct one. The general idea is, that Christ in that day will be manifested in a glorious manner, and that the source of his highest triumphs will be what is seen in the saints. His main honor when he returns to the world will not be the outward splendors which will attend his coming, nor the angels that will accompany him, nor the manifestation of his power over the elements, but the church which he has redeemed. It will then be seen that he is worthy of universal admiration, for having redeemed that church. He shall then be admired or glorified in his people:

(1)for having conceived the plan of redeeming them;

(2)for being willing to become incarnate and to die to save them;

(3)for the defense of his church in all its persecutions and trials;

(4)for raising his people from the dead;

(5)for the virtues and graces which they will exhibit in that day.

This appropriate honor of Christ in the church has never yet been fully seen. His people on earth have, in general, most imperfectly reflected his image. They have in general been comparatively few in number, and scattered upon the earth. They have been poor and despised. Often they have been persecuted and regarded as the “filth of the world and the offscouring of all things.” The honors of this world have been withheld from them. The great have regarded it as no honor to be identified with the church, and the proud have been ashamed to be enrolled among the followers of the Lamb. In the last day all this will be changed, and the assembled church will show to admiring worlds how great and glorious is it, Redeemer, and how glorious was the work of redemption.

Because our testimony among you was believed. - The meaning of this seems to be, that they would be among the number of those who would in that day honor the Saviour, because they had embraced what the apostle had preached to them respecting these future scenes. Thus interpreted, this clause should be regarded as connected with 2 Thessalonians 2:7. “And to you it is a righteous thing that he should give rest with us, because our testimony among you was believed,” That is, you have shown that you are

true Christians, and it is proper that you should partake of the triumphs and hopes of that day.

Verse 11

Wherefore also we pray always for you - See the notes, 1 Thessalonians 1:2.

That our God would count you worthy of this calling. - Margin, "or, vouchsafe." The meaning is, "that he would regard you as worthy of this calling;" see the notes on ver. 5. Of this calling; see the notes, Ephesians 4:1. The "calling" here, is that which had brought them into the kingdom, and led them to become Christians.

And fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness. - That is, make the work of salvation complete and effectual. Oldshausen has well expressed the sense: "May God fill you with all that good which is pleasing to him." The thoughts in the passage are:

(1)that the purpose toward them on the part of God was one of "goodness" or benevolence;

(2)that there was a state of mind which would be regarded by him as pleasing, or as his "good pleasure;" and,

(3)that Paul wished that this might be accomplished in them. He desired that there might be in them everything which would be pleasing to God, and which his benevolence was fitted to secure.

And the work of faith - The work which faith is adapted to produce on the soul; see 1 John 5:4-5.

With power - Effectually, completely. The apostle prays that so much power may be exerted as will be sufficient to secure the object. The work of religion on the soul is always represented in the Bible as one of power.

Verse 12

That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ - That is, that the Lord Jesus himself may be honored among you; the name often denoting the person. The idea is that the apostle wished that the Lord Jesus might be honored among them by the fair application and development of the principles of his religion.

And ye in him - That you may be regarded and treated as his friends when he shall come to judge the world.

According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ - That is, that you may experience all the honor which his grace is fitted to impart.

In view of the exposition given of this chapter, we may remark:

(1) That the wicked will certainly be punished when the Lord Jesus shall come to judgment. Words cannot reveal this truth more plainly than is done in this chapter, and if it is not to be so, then language has no meaning.

(2) the punishment of the wicked will be eternal. It is impossible for language to teach that doctrine more clearly than is done in this chapter. If it were admitted to have been the intention of God to teach the doctrine of eternal punishment, it is impossible to conceive that he could have chosen more plain and positive language to express the doctrine than has been done here. Can it be, then, that he means to trifle with people on so solemn a subject, by using words which have no meaning?

(3) it will greatly aggravate the punishment of the wicked that it will be "a righteous thing" for God thus to punish them. If they were to suffer as martyrs; if in their sufferings they could feel that they were oppressed and crushed beneath mere power; if they could feel that they were right and that God was wrong; if they could get up a party in the universe against God, sympathizing with them as if they were wronged, the case would be changed. A man can endure suffering much more easily when he has a good conscience, and feels that he is right, than he can when he feels that what he endures is deserved. But the sinner in hell can never have this consolation. He will forever feel that God is right and that he is wrong, and that every pang which he endures is deserved.

(4) if it be a "righteous thing" that the wicked shall be punished, then they never can be saved by mere justice. No one will go to heaven because he deserves or merits it. All dependence on human merit, therefore, is taken away in the matter of salvation, and if the sinner is ever saved, it will be by grace, and not by justice.

(5) if it is a "righteous thing" that the sinner should perish, he will perish. God will do right to all.

(6) it is amazing that the mass of men have so little concern about their future condition. God has plainly revealed that he will destroy the wicked

forever, and that it will be a righteous thing for him to do it; and yet the mass of mankind are wholly unconcerned, and disregard all the solemn declarations of the Bible on this subject as if they were idle tales. One would suppose that the very possibility of eternal suffering would rouse all the sensibilities of the soul, and lead to the earnest inquiry whether it is not possible to avoid it. Yet the mass of people feel no concern in this inquiry. It is impossible to ever get them to think of it. We cannot get them even to ask the question, seriously, whether they themselves are to be happy or miserable for all eternity. This stupidity and indifference is the most unaccountable fact on earth, and probably distinguishes this world from all others.

(7) it is rational to think of religion; to reflect on eternity; to be serious; to be anxious about the future state. If there is even a possibility that we may be miserable forever, it is proper to be serious about it. And if there is a solemn declaration of God that it will be a "righteous thing" for him to punish the wicked, and that he will "punish them with everlasting destruction," assuredly the mind should be concerned. Is there anything more worthy the calm and sober attention of the human soul than such solemn declarations of the infinite God?

2 THESSALONIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

The main object of 2 Thessalonians 2:2. It became, therefore, necessary to state the truth on the subject, in order to free their minds from alarm; and this purpose of the apostle leads to one of the most important prophecies in the New Testament. The chapter comprises the following points:

I. An exhortation that they would not be alarmed or distressed by the expectation of the speedy coming of the Saviour; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2.

II. A statement of the truth that he would not soon appear, and of the characteristics of a great apostasy which must intervene before his advent; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12.

In this part of the chapter, the apostle shows that he did not mean to teach that that event would soon happen, by stating that before that there would occur a most melancholy apostasy, which would require a considerable time before it was matured.

(a)That day would not come until there should be a great apostasy, and a revelation of the man of sin; 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

(b)The character of this "man of sin" was to be such that it could not be mistaken: he would be opposed to God; would exalt himself above all that is called God; and would sit in the temple showing himself as God; 2 Thessalonians 2:4.

(c)There was a restraint then exercised which prevented the development of the great apostasy. There were indeed causes then at work which would lead to it, but they were then held in check, and God would restrain them until some future time, when he would suffer the man of sin to be revealed; 2 Thessalonians 2:5-7.

(d)When that time should come, then that "wicked" one would be revealed, with such marks that he could not be mistaken.

His coming would be after the working of Satan, with power and signs and lying wonders, and under him there would be strong delusion, and the belief of a lie; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12. This great foe of God was to be destroyed by the coming of the Saviour, and one object of his appearing would be to put an end to his dominion; 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

III. The apostle then says, that there was occasion for thankfulness to God, that he had chosen them to salvation, and not left them to be destroyed; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14.

IV. An exhortation to stand fast, and to maintain what they had been taught 2 Thessalonians 2:15, and a prayer that God, who had given them a good hope, would comfort their hearts, closes the chapter; 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17.

Verse 1

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ - The phrase "by the coming," is not here, as our translators seem to have supposed, a form of solemn adjuration. It is not common, if it ever occurs, in the Scriptures, to make a solemn adjuration in view of an event, and the connection here demands that we give to the phrase a different sense. It means, respecting his coming; and the idea of Paul is: "In regard to that great event of which I spoke to you in my former epistle - the coming of the Saviour - I beseech you not to be troubled, as if it were soon to happen. As his views had been misunderstood or misrepresented, he now proposes to show them that there was nothing in the true doctrine which should create alarm, as if he were about to appear.

And by our gathering together unto him - There is manifest allusion here to what is said in the First Epistle 1 Thessalonians 4:17, "then we shall be caught up together with them in the clouds;" and the meaning is: "in reference to our being gathered unto him, I beseech you not to be shaken in mind, as if that event were near."

Verse 2

That ye be not soon shaken in mind - The word here used signifies, properly, to be moved as a wave of the sea, or to be tossed upon the waves, as a vessel is. Then it means to be shaken in any way; see Matthew 11:7; Matthew 24:29; Luke 6:38; Acts 4:31; Hebrews 12:26. The reference here is to the agitation or alarm felt from the belief that the day of judgment would soon occur. It is uniformly said in the Scriptures, that the approach of the Lord Jesus to judge the world, will produce a great consternation and alarm. Matthew 24:30, "then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn." Revelation 1:7, "behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Luke

23:30, “then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills Cover us;” compare Isaiah 2:21-22.

Of the truth of this, there can be no doubt. We may imagine something of the effects which will be produced by the alarm caused in a community when a belief prevails that the day of judgment is near. In a single year (1843) 17 persons were admitted to the Lunatic Asylum in Worcester, Mass., who had become deranged in consequence of the expectation that the Lord Jesus was about to appear. It is easy to account for such facts, and no doubt, when the Lord Jesus shall actually come, the effect on the guilty world will be overwhelming. The apostle here says, also, that those who were Christians were “shaken in mind and troubled” by this anticipation. There are, doubtless, many true Christians who would be alarmed at such an event, as there are many who, like Hezekiah Isaiah 38:1-2, are alarmed at the prospect of death. Many real Christians might, on the sudden occurrence of such an event, feel that they were not prepared, and be alarmed at the prospect of passing through the great trial which is to determine their everlasting destiny. It is no certain evidence of a want of piety to be alarmed at the approach of death. Our nature dreads death, and though there may be a well-founded hope of heaven, it will not always preserve a delicate physical frame from trembling when it comes.

Or be troubled - That is, disturbed, or terrified. It would seem that this belief had produced much consternation among them.

Neither by spirit - By any pretended spirit of prophecy. But whether this refers to the predictions of those who were false prophets in Thessalonica, or to something which it was alleged the apostle Paul had himself said there, and which was construed as meaning that the time was near, is not certain. This depends much on the question whether the phrase “as from us,” refers only to the letters which had been sent to them, or also to the “word” and to the “spirit,” here spoken of; see Oldshausen on the place. It would seem, from the connection, that all their consternation had been caused by some misconstruction which had been put on the sentiments of Paul himself, for if there had been any other source of alarm, he would naturally have referred to it. It is probable, therefore, that allusion is made to some representation which had been given of what he had said under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and that the expectation that the end of the world was near, was supposed to be a doctrine of inspiration. Whether, however, the Thessalonians themselves put this construction on what he

said, or whether those who had caused the alarm represented him as teaching this, cannot be determined.

Nor by word - That is, by public instruction, or in preaching. It is evident that when the apostle was among them, this subject, from such causes, was prominent in his discourses; see 2 Thessalonians 2:5. It had been inferred, it seems, from what he said, that he meant to teach that the end of the world was near.

Nor by letter - Either the one which he had before written to them - the First Epistle to the Thessalonians - or one which had been forged in his name. "As from us." That is, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, who are united in writing the two epistles 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1, and in whose names a letter would be forged, if one of this description were sent to them. It has been made a question, whether the apostle refers here to the former epistle which he had sent to them, or to a forged letter; and on this question critics have been about equally divided. The reasons for the former opinion may be seen in Paley's Herin Paulinae, in loc. The question is not very important, and perhaps cannot be easily settled. There are two or three circumstances, however, which seem to make it probable that he refers to an epistle which had been forged, and which had been pretended to be received from him. (1.) one is found in the expression "as from us." If he had referred to his own former letter, it seems to me that the allusion would have been more distinct, and that the particle "as" (ὡς hōs) would not have been used. This is such an expression as would have been employed if the reference were to such a forged letter.

(2) asecond circumstance is found in the expression in the next verse, "Let no man deceive you by any means," which looks as if they were not led into this belief by their own interpretation of his former epistle, but by a deliberate attempt of some one to delude them on the subject.

(3) perhaps a third circumstance would be found in the fact that it was not uncommon in early times of Christianity to attempt to impose forged writings on the churches. Nothing would be more natural for an impostor who wished to acquire influence, than to do this; and that it was often done is well known. That epistles were forged under the names of the apostles, appears very probable, as Benson has remarked, from chap. 2 Thessalonians 3:17; Galatians 6:11; and Philemon 1:19. There are, indeed, none of those forged epistles extant which were composed in the time of the apostles, but

there is extant an epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, besides the two which we have; another to the Laodiceans, and six of Paul‘s epistles to Seneca - all of which are undoubted forgeries; see Benson in loc. If Paul, however, here refers to his former epistle, the reference is doubtless to 1 Thessalonians 4:15, and 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4, which might easily be understood as teaching that the end of the world was near, and to which those who maintained that opinion might appeal with great plausibility. We have, however, the authority of the apostle himself that he meant to teach no such thing. “As that the day of Christ is at hand.” The time when he would appear - called “the day of Christ,” because it would be appointed especially for the manifestation of his glory. The phrase “at hand,” means near. Grotius supposes that it denotes that same year, and refers for proof to Romans 8:38; 1 Corinthians 3:22; Galatians 1:4. Hebrews 9:9. If so, the attempt to fix the day was an early indication of the desire to determine the very time of his appearing - a disposition which has been so common since, and which has led into so many sad mistakes.

Verse 3

Let no man deceive you by any means - That is, respecting the coming of the Lord Jesus. This implies that there were then attempts to deceive, and that it was of great importance for Christians to be on their guard. The result has shown that there is almost no subject on which caution is more proper, and on which men are more liable to delusion. The means then resorted to for deception appear from the previous verse to have been either an appeal to a pretended verbal message from the apostle, or a pretended letter from him. The means now, consist of a claim to uncommon wisdom in the interpretation of obscure prophecies of the Scriptures. The necessity for the caution here given has not ceased.

For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first - Until an apostasy (ἀποστασία apostasia) shall have occurred - the great apostasy. There is scarcely any passage of the New Testament which has given occasion to greater diversity of opinion than this. Though the reference seems to be plain, and there is scarcely any prophecy of the Bible apparently more obvious and easy in its general interpretation; yet it is proper to mention some of the opinions which have been entertained of it.

Some have referred it to a great apostasy from the Christian church, particularly on account of persecution, which would occur before the

destruction of Jerusalem. The "coming of the Lord" they suppose refers to the destruction of the holy city, and according to this, the meaning is, that there would be a great apostasy before that event would take place. Of this opinion was Vitringa, who refers the "apostasy" to a great defection from the faith which took place between the time of Nero and Trajan.

Whitby also refers it to an event which was to take place before the destruction of Jerusalem, and supposes that the apostasy would consist in a return from the Christian to the Jewish faith by multitudes of professed converts. The "man of sin," according to him, means the Jewish nation, so characterized on account of its eminent wickedness.

Hammond explains the apostasy by the defection to the Gnostics, by the arts of Simon Magus, whom he supposes to be the man of sin, and by the "day of the Lord" he also understands the destruction of Jerusalem.

Grotius takes Caius Caesar or Caligula, to be the man of sin, and by the apostasy he understands his abominable wickedness. In the beginning of his government, he says, his plans of iniquity were concealed, and the hopes of all were excited in regard to his reign; but his secret iniquity was subsequently "revealed," and his true character understood.

Wetstein understands by the "man of sin," that it referred to Titus and the Flavian house. He says that he does not understand it of the Roman Pontiff, who "is not one such as the demonstrative pronoun thrice repeated designates, and who neither sits in the temple of God, nor calls himself God, nor Caius, nor Simon Gioriae, nor any Jewish impostor, nor Simon Magus."

Koppe refers it to the King mentioned in Daniel 11:36. According to him, the reference is to a great apostasy of the Jews from the worship of God, and the "man of sin" is the Jewish people.

Others have supposed that the reference is to Muhammed, and that the main characteristics of the prophecy may be found in him.

Of the Papists, a part affirm that the apostasy is the falling away from Rome in the time of the Reformation, but the greater portion suppose that the allusion is to Antichrist, who, they say, will appear in the world before the great day of judgment, to combat religion and the saints. See these opinions stated at length, and examined, in Dr. Newton on the Prophecies, Dissertation xxii.

Some more recent expositors have referred it to Napoleon Bonaparte, and some (as Oldshausen) suppose that it refers to some one who has not yet appeared, in whom all the characteristics here specified will be found united.

Most Protestant commentators have referred it to the great apostasy under the papacy, and, by the "man of sin," they suppose there is allusion to the Roman Pontiff, the Pope. It is evident that we are in better circumstances to understand the passage than those were who immediately succeeded the apostles.

Eighteen hundred years have passed (written circa 1880's) away since the Epistle was written, and the "day of the Lord" has not yet come, and we have an opportunity of inquiring, whether in all that long tract of time any one man can be found, or any series of men have arisen, to whom the description here given is applicable. If so, it is in accordance with all the proper rules of interpreting prophecy, to make such an application. If it is fairly applicable to the papacy, and cannot be applied in its great features to anything else, it is proper to regard it as having such an original reference. Happily, the expressions which are used by the apostle are, in themselves, not difficult of interpretation, and all that the expositor has to do is, to ascertain whether in any one great apostasy all the things here mentioned have occurred. If so, it is fair to apply the prophecy to such an event; if not so, we must wait still for its fulfillment.

The word rendered "falling away" (ἀποστασία apostasiaapostasy), is of so general a character, that it may be applied to any departure from the faith as it was received in the time of the apostles. It occurs in the New Testament only here and in Acts 21:21, where it is rendered "to forsake" - "thou teachest all the Jews which are among us to forsake Moses" -

apostasy from Moses - ἀποστασίαν ἀπὸ Μωῦσέως apostasian apo MōuseōsThe word means a departing from, or a defection; see the verb used in 1 Timothy 4:1, "Some shall depart from the faith" - ἀποστήσονται apostēsontaicompare the notes on that passage; see also Hebrews 3:12; Luke 8:13; Acts 5:37. The reference here is evidently to some general falling away, or to some great religious apostasy that was to occur, and which would be under one head, leader, or dynasty, and which would involve many in the same departure from the faith, and in the same destruction. The use of the article here, "the apostasy" (Greek), Erasmus remarks, "signifies that great and before-predicted apostasy." It is evidently emphatic, showing that there had been a reference to this before, or that they understood well that there was to be such an apostasy. Paul says 2 Thessalonians 2:5, that when he was with them, he had told them of these things. The writers in the New Testament often speak of such a defection under the name of Antichrist; see Revelation 13:14; 1 John 2:18, 1 John 2:22; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 1:7.

And that man of sin - This is a Hebraism, meaning a man of eminent wickedness; one distinguished for depravity; compare John 17:12; Proverbs 6:12, in Heb. The use of the article here - ὁ ἄνθρωπος ho anthrōpos- "the man of sin," is also emphatic, as in the reference to "the falling away," and shows that there is allusion to one of whom they had before heard, and whose character was well known; who would be the wicked one by way of eminence; see also 2 Thessalonians 2:8, "that wicked" - ὁ ἄνομος ho anomosThere are two general questions in regard to the proper interpretation of this appellative; the one is, whether it refers to an individual, or to a series of individuals of the same general character, aiming at the accomplishment of the same plans; and the other is, whether there has been any individual, or any series of individuals, since the time of the apostle, who, by eminence, deserved to be called "the man of sin." That the phrase, "the man of sin," may refer to a succession of men of the same general character, and that it does so refer here, is evident from the following considerations:

(1) The word "king" is used in Daniel 7:25; Daniel 11:36, to which places Paul seems to allude, to denote a succession of kings.

(2) the same is true of the beast mentioned in Revelation 17:4, which cannot refer to a single woman, but is the emblem of a continued corrupt

administration.

(4) it is clear that a succession is intended here, because the work assigned to “the man of sin,” cannot be supposed to be that which could be accomplished by a single individual. The statement of the apostle is, that there were then tendencies to such an apostasy, and that the “man of sin “would be revealed at no distant period, and yet that he would continue his work of “lying wonders” until the coming of the Saviour. In regard to this “man of sin,” it may be further observed:

(1) that his appearing was to be preceded by “the great apostasy;” and,

(2) that he was to continue and perpetuate it. His rise was to be owing to a great departure from the faith, and then he was to be the principal agent in continuing it by “signs and lying wonders.” He was not himself to originate the defection, but was to be the creation, or result of it. He was to rise upon it, or grow out of it, and, by artful arrangements adapted to that purpose, was to perpetuate it. The question then is, to whom this phrase, descriptive of a succession of individuals so eminent for wickedness that the name “the man of sin” could be applied, was designed by the spirit of inspiration to refer. Dr. Newton has shown that it cannot refer to Caligula, to Simon Magus, to the revolt of the Jews from the Romans, or to the revolt of the Jews from the faith, or to the Flavian family, or to Luther, as some of the papists suppose, or to one man who will appear just before the end of the world, as others of the Romanists suppose; see his Dissertations on the Prophecies, xxii, pp. 393-402; compare Oldshausen, in loc. The argument is too long to be inserted here. But can it be referred to the papacy? Can it denote the Pope of Rome, meaning not a single pope, but the succession? If all the circumstances of the entire passage can be shown to be fairly applicable to him, or if it can he shown that all that is fairly implied in the language used here has received a fulfillment in him, then it is proper to regard it as having been designed to be so applied, and then this may be numbered among the prophecies that are in part fulfilled.

The question now is on the applicability of the phrase “the man of sin” to the Pope. That his rise was preceded by a great apostasy, or departure from the purity of the simple gospel, as revealed in the New Testament,

cannot reasonably be doubted by any one acquainted with the history of the church. That he is the creation or result of that apostasy, is equally clear. That he is the grand agent in continuing it, is equally manifest. Is the phrase itself one that is properly applicable to him Is it proper to speak of the Pope of Rome, as he has actually appeared, as "the man of sin?" In reply to this, it might be sufficient to refer to the general character of the papacy, and to its influence in upholding and perpetuating various forms of iniquity in the world. It would be easy to show that there has been no dynasty or system that has contributed so much to uphold and perpetuate sins of various kinds on the earth, as the papacy. No other one has been so extensively and so long the patron of superstition; and there are vices of the grossest character which have all along been fostered by its system of celibacy, indulgences, monasteries, and absolutions. But it would be a better illustration of the meaning of the phrase "man of sin," as applicable to the Pope of Rome, to look at the general character of the popes themselves. Though there may have been some exceptions, yet there never has been a succession of men of so decidedly wicked character, as have occupied the papal throne since the great apostasy commenced.

A very few references to the characters of the popes will furnish an illustration of this point. Pope Vagilius waded to the pontifical throne through the blood of his predecessor. Pope Joan (the Roman Catholic writers tell us) a female in disguise, was elected and confirmed Pope, as John VIII. Platina says, that "she became with child by some of those that were round about her; that she miscarried, and died on her way from the Lateran to the temple." Pope Marcellinus sacrificed to idols. Concerning Pope Honorius, the council of Constantinople decreed, "We have caused Honorius, the late Pope of Old Rome, to be accursed; for that in all things he followed the mind of Sergius the heretic, and confirmed his wicked doctrines." The Council of Basil thus condemned Pope Eugenius: "We condemn and depose Pope Eugenius, a despiser of the holy canons; a disturber of the peace and unity of the church of God; a notorious offender of the whole universal church; a Simonist; a perjurer; a man incorrigible; a schismatic; a man fallen from the faith, and a willful heretic."

Pope John II, was publicly charged at Rome with incest. Pope John XIII usurped the Pontificate, spent his time in hunting, in lasciviousness, and

monstrous forms of vice; he fled from the trial to which he was summoned, and was stabbed, being taken in the act of adultery. Pope Sixtus IV licensed brothels at Rome. Pope Alexander VI was, as a Roman Catholic historian says, "one of the greatest and most horrible monsters in nature that could scandalize the holy chair. His beastly morals, his immense ambition, his insatiable avarice, his detestable cruelty, his furious lusts, and monstrous incest with his daughter Lucretia, are, at large, described by Guicciardini Ciaconius, and other authentic papal historians." Of the popes, Platina (a Roman Catholic) says: "The chair of Saint Peter was usurped, rather than possessed, by monsters of wickedness, ambition, and bribery. They left no wickedness unpracticed;" see the New Englander, April, 1844, pp. 285,286. To no succession of men who have ever lived could the appellative, "the man of sin, be applied with so much propriety as to this succession. Yet they claim to have been the true "successors" of the apostles, and there are Protestants who deem it of essential importance to be able to show that they have derived the true "succession" through such men.

Be revealed - Be made manifest. There were, at the time when the apostle wrote, two remarkable things:

(1) that there was already a tendency to such an apostasy as he spoke of; and,

(2) there was something which as yet prevented the appearance or the rise of the man of sin; 2 Thessalonians 2:7. When the hindrance which then existed should be taken out of the way, he would be manifested; see the notes on 2 Thessalonians 2:7.

"The son of perdition." This is the same appellation which the Saviour bestowed on Judas; see it explained in the notes on John 18:12. It may mean either that he would be the cause of ruin to others, or that he would himself be devoted to destruction. It would seem here rather to be used in the latter sense, though this is not absolutely certain. The phrase, whichever interpretation be adopted, is used to denote one of eminent wickedness.

Verse 4

Who opposeth - That is, he is distinguished as an opposer of the great system which God has revealed for human salvation, and of those who would serve God in purity in the gospel of his Son. No Protestant will doubt

that this has been the character of the papacy. The opposition of the general system to the gospel; the persecution of Wycliffe, of John Huss, of Jerome of Prague, of the Waldenses and the Reformers; the Inquisition, the cruelties in the reign of Mary (Queen of Scots), and the massacre of Bartholomew in France, are obvious illustrations of this.

And exalteth himself above all that is called God - That is, whether among the pagans or the Jews; above a false God, or the true God. This could be true only of one who set aside the divine laws; who undertook to legislate where God only has a right to legislate, and whose legislation was contrary to that of God. Any claim of a dominion over conscience; or any arrangement to set aside the divine laws, and to render them nugatory, would correspond with what is implied in this description. It cannot be supposed that any one would openly claim to be superior to God, but the sense must be, that the enactments and ordinances of the "man of sin" would pertain to the province in which God only can legislate, and that the ordinances made by him would be such as to render nugatory the divine laws, by appointing others in their place. No one can reasonably doubt that all that is here affirmed may be found in the claims of the Pope of Rome. The assumptions of the papacy have related to the following things:

(1) To authority above all the inferior orders of the priesthood - above all pastors, bishops, and primates.

(2) authority above all kings and emperors, "deposing some, and advancing others, obliging them to prostrate themselves before him, to kiss his toe, to hold his stirrup, to wait barefooted at his gate, treading even upon the neck, and kicking off the imperial crown with his foot" - Newton. Thus, Gregory VII made Henry IV wait barefooted at his gate. Thus, Alexander III trod upon the neck of Alexander I. Thus, Celestin kicked off the imperial crown of Henry VI. Thus, the right was claimed, and asserted, of laying nations under interdict, of deposing kings, and of absolving their subjects from their oaths of allegiance. And thus the Pope claimed the right over all unknown lands that might be discovered by Columbus, and apportioned the New World as he pleased - in all these things claiming prerogatives which can pertain only to God.

(3) to authority over the conscience, in matters which can pertain only to God himself, and where he only can legislate. Thus, it has been, and is, one

of the claims set up for the Pope that he is infallible. Thus, he "forbids what God has commanded," as the marriage of the clergy, communion in both kinds, the use of the Scriptures for the common people. Thus, he has set aside the second commandment by the appointment of image-worship; and thus he claims the power of the forgiveness of sins. Multitudes of things which Christ allows his people are forbidden by the papacy, and many things are enjoined, or allowed, directly contrary to the divine legislation.

Or that is worshipped - σέβασμα sebasmaThis word means "an object of worship;" see Acts 17:3, where it is rendered devotions. It may be applied to the worship of a pagan divinity, or of the true God. "It may refer to a person, an idol, or a place. Probably Paul refers here to the heroes and other subordinate divinities of the heathen mythology" - Oldshausen. No one can doubt that the Pope has claimed higher honors, as the vicegerent of Christ, than was ever rendered in the ancient "hero worship."

So that he, as God - That is, claiming the honors due to God. This expression would not imply that he actually claimed to be the true God, but only that he sits in the temple, and manifests himself as if he were God. He claims such honors and such reverence as the true God would if he should appear in human form. It should be observed here, however, that there is much reason to doubt the genuineness of this phrase - "as God" - ὡς Θεον hōs TheonMill supposes that it was inserted from the context. It is marked with an asterisk in the Vulgate, the Coptic, and the Syriac, and is omitted by many of the fathers; see Mill and Wetstein. It is rejected by Griesbach and Lachmann, and marked as doubtful by Hahn. It is defended, however, by Matthaei, Koppe, Knapp, and Schott. The sense is not materially affected whether it be regarded as genuine or not.

Sitteth in the temple of God - That is, in the Christian church. It is by no means necessary to understand this of the temple at Jerusalem, which was standing at the time this Epistle was written, because:

(1) the phrase "the temple of God" is several times used with reference to the Christian church, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 3:17; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21; Revelation 3:12; and,

(2) the temple was the proper symbol of the church, and an apostle trained amidst the Hebrew institutions would naturally speak of the church as the temple of God. The temple at Jerusalem was regarded as the peculiar dwelling-place of God on earth. When the Christian church was founded, it

was spoken of as the peculiar dwelling-place of God; see the passages referred to above. He dwelt among His people. He was with them, and walked with them, and manifested himself among them - as he had done in the ancient temple. The usage in the New Testament would not lead us to restrict this language to an edifice, or a "church," as the word is now commonly used, but rather to suppose that it denotes the church as a society, and the idea is, that the Antichrist here referred to would present himself in the midst of that church as claiming the honors due to God alone. In the temple at Jerusalem, God himself presided. There he gave laws to his people; there he manifested himself as God; and there he was worshipped. The reign of the "man of sin" would be as if he should sit there. In the Christian church he would usurp the place which God had occupied in the temple. He would claim divine attributes and homage. He would give laws and responses as God did there. He would be regarded as the head of all ecclesiastical power; the source from which all authority emanated; the same in the Christian church which God himself was in the temple. This does not then refer primarily to the Pope as sitting in any particular church on any particular occasion, but to his claiming in the Church of Christ the authority and homage which God had in the temple at Jerusalem. In whatever place, whether in a cathedral or elsewhere, this authority should be exercised, all that the language here conveys would be fulfilled. No one can fail to see that the authority claimed by the Pope of Rome, meets the full force of the language used here by the apostle.

Showing himself that he is God - This does not necessarily mean that he actually, in so many words, claimed to be God; but that he usurped the place of God, and claimed the prerogatives of God. If the names of God are given to him, or are claimed by him; if he receives the honors due to God; if he asserts a dominion like that of God, then all that the language fairly implies will be fulfilled. The following expressions, applied to the Pope of Rome by Catholic writers, without any rebuke from the papacy, will show how entirely applicable this is to the pretended Head of the Church. He has been styled "Our Lord God the Pope; another God upon earth; king of kings and lord of lords. The same is the dominion of God and the Pope. To believe that our Lord God the Pope might not decree as he decreed is heresy. The power of the Pope is greater than all created power, and extends itself to things celestial, terrestrial, and infernal. The Pope doeth whatsoever he listeth, even things unlawful, and is more than God;" see the authority

for these extraordinary declarations in Dr. Newton book on the Prophecies, Dissertations xxii. How can it be doubted that the reference here is to the papacy? Language could not be plainer, and it is not possible to conceive that anything can ever occur which would furnish a more manifest fulfillment of this prophecy. Indeed, interpreted by the claims of the papacy, it stands among the very clearest of all the predictions in the Sacred Scriptures.

Verse 5

Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? - The whole subject of the second coming of the Saviour seems to have constituted an important part of the instructions of Paul when at Thessalonica. He now refers them to what he had told them respecting the great apostasy, to show that his views had not changed, and that he did not mean to have them understand that the world would soon come to an end. He had stated these things to them implying that a considerable interval must elapse before the Saviour would appear. Much of the obscurity of this prophecy arises from the fact, that the apostle alludes to things which he had told them when with them, of which we have now no knowledge. Hence, what would be perfectly clear to them, on reading this letter, is now difficult to be understood.

Verse 6

And now ye know what withholdeth - Margin, "holdeth." The reference is, to something that then operated to constrain or hold back the obvious tendency of things, so that the "man of sin" should not at once appear, or so that things should not soon so develop themselves as to give rise to this anti-Christian power. There were causes at work even then, which would ultimately lead to this; but there was also something which checked the tendency of things, so that the revelation or development of the "man of sin" was put off to a future period. The obvious meaning of this would be, that, when the apostle wrote, there was a tendency to what would occur under the great apostasy, and that this would soon develop itself if it were not restrained. If the reference is to the papacy, this would consist in corruptions already existing in the church, having a resemblance to those which afterward existed under that system, or which were the germ of that system.

If there was a tendency toward the concentration of all power in an individual in the church, - if there was an assumption of authority by one

class of ministers above another, - if there was a denial of the "parity of the clergy," the tendency would have been to that ultimate assumption of authority which is found in the Romish hierarchy. But conjecture is useless as to what was the precise form in which this tendency then began to develop itself. That the corruptions early began in the church which terminated in the papacy, and which led on directly to it, we know; and that the apostle was able to foresee and predict such a final development, shows that he was under the influence of inspiration. It is not known precisely what is referred to by the phrase "what withholdeth," τὸ κατέχον to katechonThe phrase means properly, something that "holds back," or "restrains."

The word here is in the neuter gender, "What withholdeth." In the following verse it is in the masculine gender, ὁ κατέχων ho katechōn- "he that letteth," or withholdeth; and the reference would seem to be to some agency or state of things under the control of an individual, or of some civil power, that then operated as a restraint on the natural tendency of things. Of this, the apostle says, they had had full information; but we can only conjecture what it was. The restraining power of anything controlled by an individual, or of any government, or the restraining power of God, would meet all that the phrase implies. The most natural interpretation is that which refers it to civil power, meaning that there was something in the form of the existing administration which would prevent this development until that restraint should be removed. The supposition that there was even then a tendency to concentrate all ecclesiastical power at Rome, and that while the civil authority remained there it would not suffer ecclesiastical power to grow to the exorbitant height which it ultimately reached, will meet all that is implied in the language.

That he might be revealed in his time - The man of sin. The meaning is, that there was then a restraint operating which would prevent the development of this anti-Christian power until the proper time; that is, until the state of the world should be such that in the divine arrangements it would be proper to permit it. It was not to be permitted until the gospel should be extensively preached, and had had an opportunity of showing its fair effects on the nations; until it had become so planted and established that even the rise of this anti-Christian power could not effectually uproot it. If the "man of sin" had been permitted to rise at once, the consequence

might have been that the new religion would have been crushed, so that it could never have revived again. There was then a providential arrangement by which this growth of wickedness should be checked and restrained, until the new religion should take deep root in the earth, and its perpetuity should be secured. Then the great trial was to be permitted under the "man of sin."

Verse 7

For the mystery of iniquity - On the meaning of the word mystery, see the notes on Romans 11:25; compare 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:9; Ephesians 3:3; Colossians 1:26. It means properly what is hidden or concealed; not necessarily that which is unintelligible. The "mystery of iniquity" seems here to refer to some hidden or concealed depravity - some form of sin which was working secretly and silently, and which had not yet developed itself. Any secret sources of iniquity in the church - anything that tended to corrupt its doctrines, and to destroy the simplicity of the faith of the gospel, would correspond with the meaning of the word. Doddridge correctly supposes that this may refer to the pride and ambition of some ministers, the factious temper of some Christians, the imposing' of unauthorized severities, the worship of angels, etc.

Doth already work - There are elements of these corruptions already existing in the church. Dr. Newton maintains that the foundations of popery were laid in the apostle's days, and that the superstructure was raised by degrees; and this is entirely in accordance with the statements of the apostle Paul. In his own time, he says, there were things which, if not restrained, would expand and ripen into that apostasy. He has not told as particularly to what he refers, but there are several intimations in his writings, as well as in other parts of the New Testament, that even in the apostolic age there existed the elements of those corruptions which were afterward developed and imbodied in the papacy. Even then, says Dr. Newton, "idolatry was stealing into the church 1 Corinthians 10:14, and a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels." (Colossians 2:18; see, however, my note on that passage.) "There existed strife and divisions 1 Corinthians 3:3, an adulterating and handling the word of God deceitfully 2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Corinthians 4:2, a gain of godliness, teaching of things for filthy lucre's sake 1 Timothy 6:5; Titus 1:11, a vain observation of festivals Galatians 4:10, a vain distinction of meats 1 Corinthians 8:8, a neglecting of the body Colossians 2:23, traditions, and commandments, and doctrines of men Colossians 2:8, Colossians 2:22; compare 3 John 1:9, "Diotrephes, who

loveth to have the pre-eminence." These things constituted the elements of the corruptions which were afterward developed in the papacy, and which are imbodied in that system. An eye that could see all, would even then have perceived that if there were no restraint, these incipient corruptions would grow up into that system, and would be expanded into all the corruptions and arrogant claims which have ever characterized it; compare 1 John 4:3.

Only he who now letteth - Who now hinders, or restrains - ὁ κατέχων ho katechōnThis is the same word which is used in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, and rendered "withholdeth," except that it is there in the neuter gender. There can be no doubt that there is reference to the same restraining power, or the same power under the control of an individual; but what that was, is not quite certain. It was some power which operated as a check on the growing corruptions then existing, and which prevented their full development, but which was to be removed at no distant period, and whose removal would give an opportunity for these corruptions to develop themselves, and for the full revelation of the man of sin. Such a supposition as that the civil power of Rome was such a restraint, operating to prevent the assumption of the ecclesiastical claims of supremacy which afterward characterized the papacy, will correspond with all that is necessarily implied in the language.

Will let, until he be taken out of the way - This will be an effectual check on these corruptions, preventing their full development, until it is removed, and then the man of sin will appear. The supposition which will best suit this language is, that there was then some civil restraint, preventing the development of existing corruptions, but that there would be a removal, or withdrawing of that restraint; and that then the tendency of the existing corruptions would be seen. It is evident, as Oldshausen remarks, that this resisting or restraining power must be something out of the church, and distinguished from the anti-Christian tendency itself; yon der Kirche und vom Antichristenthum. It is necessary, therefore, to understand this of the restraints of civil power. Was there, then, any fact in history which will accord with this interpretation? The belief among the primitive Christians was, that what hindered the rise of the man of sin was the Roman empire, and therefore "they prayed for its peace and welfare, as knowing that when the Roman empire should be dissolved and broken in pieces, the empire of the man of sin would be raised on its ruins."

Dr. Newton. How this revolution was effected, may be seen by the statement of Machiavel. “The emperor of Rome, quitting Rome to dwell at Constantinople” (in the fourth century, under Constantine), “the Roman empire began to decline, but the church of Rome augmented as fast. Nevertheless, until the coming in of the Lombards, all Italy being under the dominion of either emperors or kings, the bishops assumed no more power than what was due to their doctrine and manners; in civil affairs they were subject to the civil power. But Theodoric, king of the Goths, fixing his seat at Ravenna, was that which advanced their interest, and made them more considerable in Italy, for there being no other prince left in Rome, the Romans were forced for protection to pay greater allegiance to the Pope. The Lombards having invaded and reduced Italy into several cantons, the Pope took the opportunity, and began to hold up his head. For being, as it were, governor and principal of Rome, the emperor of Constantinople and the Lombards bare him a respect, so that the Romans (by mediation of their Pope) began to treat and confederate with Longinus (the emperor‘s lieutenant), and the Lombards, not as subjects, but as equals and companions; which said custom continuing, and the Pope‘s entering into alliance sometimes with the Lombards, and sometimes with the Greeks, contracted great reputation to their dignity.” (History of Florence, B. i., p. 6, of the English translation.) A more extended quotation on the same subject, may be seen in Newton on the Prophecies, pp. 407,408. To anyone acquainted with the decline and fall of the Roman empire, nothing can be more manifest than the correspondence of the facts in history respecting the rise of the papacy, and the statement of the apostle Paul here. The simple facts are these:

(1) There were early corruptions in the church at Rome, as there were elsewhere, but peculiarly there, as Rome was the seat of philosophy and of power.

(2) there were great efforts made by the bishop of Rome to increase his authority, and there was a steady approximation to what he subsequently claimed - that of being Universal Bishop.

(3) there was a constant tendency to yield to him deference and respect in all matters.

(4) this was kept in check as long as Rome was the seat of the imperial power. Had that power remained there, it would have been impossible for the Roman Bishop ever to have obtained the civil and ecclesiastical eminence which he ultimately did. Rome could not have had two heads, both claiming and exercising supreme power; and there never could have been a "revelation of the man of sin."

(5) Constantine removed the seat of empire to Constantinople; and this removal or "taking away" of the only restraint on the ambitious projects of the Roman bishops, gave all the opportunity which could be desired for the growth of the papal power. In all history there cannot, probably, be found a series of events corresponding more accurately with a prophetic statement than this; and there is every evidence, therefore, that these are the events to which the Spirit of inspiration referred.

Verse 8

And then shall that Wicked be revealed - ὁ ἄνομος ho anomos- "the wicked one," referring to the "man of sin," and called "the wicked one" because of the eminent depravity of the system of which he was to be the head; see the notes on 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

Whom the Lord shall consume - The Lord Jesus; see the notes on Acts 1:24. The word "consume" here - ἀναλώσει analōsei- means "to destroy;" see Galatians 5:15; Luke 9:54. The word would be applicable to any kind of destruction. The methods by which this will be done are immediately specified - and it is of much importance to understand them, if this refers to the papacy. "With the spirit of his mouth." What goes out of his mouth, or what he speaks; that is, word, truth, command, or gospel - all of which he may be regarded as speaking. In Revelation 1:16; Revelation 19:15, Revelation 19:21, it is said of the Redeemer that "a sharp two-edged sword goeth out of his mouth;" that is, his word, doctrine, or command - what he speaks - is like a sharp sword. It will cut deep; will lay open the heart; will destroy his enemies. Compare Isaiah 11:4, "With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." The reference in the passage before us is to one of the methods which would be employed to "destroy" the man of sin; and the sense is, that it would be by what is spoken by the Redeemer. This may refer either to what he will say at his coming, or to his truth - already

spoken; to what has gone from his lips, by whomsoever uttered; and the meaning then is, that one of the grand agencies for destroying this anti-Christian power is the truth spoken or revealed by the Saviour - that is, his pure gospel.

If this latter is the true interpretation, it may mean that the process for his destruction may have commenced long anterior to the personal appearing of the Redeemer, but that the complete destruction of this power will be accomplished by the splendor of his second coming. It cannot be denied, however, that the most obvious interpretation is that which refers both clauses in the sentence to the same period - that of his second coming. Still, it is not improper to suppose that it may be implied that his power will be weakened and diminished by the influence of the gospel, though it may not be wholly destroyed until the second coming of the Saviour.

And shall destroy - καταργήσει katargēseiShall bring to nothing; cause to cease; put an end to. This is, in some respects, a stronger word than that which in the former part of the verse is rendered "consume." It denotes a more entire destruction than that, though it does not refer so much to any positive agency by which it will be done. In the former word, the attention is directed more to the agency by which the destruction will be effected - to the exertion of some kind of power to do it; in this word the attention is directed rather to the entireness or totality of the destruction. The anti-Christian domination will wholly cease, or be entirely destroyed. The words would naturally harmonize with the idea that there would be a somewhat gradual process under the operation of truth toward the destruction of the man of sin, but that the complete annihilation of his power would be by some more manifest exhibition of the personal glory of the Saviour.

With the brightness of his coming - This is evidently a Hebraism, meaning his splendid or glorious appearing. The Greek word, however, rendered "brightness" (ἐπιφανεία epiphaneia- epiphany) - means merely "an appearing," or "appearance." So it is used in 1 Timothy 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:1, 2 Timothy 4:8; Titus 2:13, in all which places it is rendered appearing, and refers to the manifestation of the Saviour when he shall come to judge the world. It is used nowhere else in the New Testament. There is no necessary idea of splendor in the word, and the idea is not, as our translation would seem to convey, that there would be such a dazzling light, or such unsufferable brightness that all would be consumed before it, but that he would appear, and that this anti-Christian power would

be destroyed by his appearing; that is, by himself when he would return. The agency in doing it would not be his brightness, but himself. It would seem to follow from this, that, however this enormous power of wickedness might be weakened by truth, the final triumph over it would be reserved for the Son of God himself on his second return to our world. Yet, if this be so, it need not lessen our zeal in endeavoring to diminish the power of these corruptions; to establish and spread the truth, or to convert the defenders of these errors to a better faith.

Verse 9

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan - Greek, κατ᾽ ἐνέργειαν τοὺ Σατανᾶ kat' energeian tou SatanaAccording to the energy of Satan; that is, the energetic or efficient operation of Satan. The word rendered "after," it need not be said to one who looks at the Greek, does not refer to time, but is a preposition, meaning according to; in conformity with; meaning that the manner of his appearing would be accompanied by such works as would show that the agency of Satan was employed, and such as he only could produce. It does not mean that the coming of the Lord Jesus would be after Satan had worked in this manner, but that the manifestation of that wicked one would be with such demonstrations of power and wonder as Satan only could effect. The system over which he presides is originated by Satan, and sustained by those things which he alone can perform. On the word "Satan," see the notes on Job 1:6. The idea is, that it would be under the direction and control of the great enemy of God, and that the things on which it would rely for support could be traced to his agency. In all the pretended miracles to which it would appeal, there would be nothing which Satan could not accomplish.

With all power - With all the power which Satan can exhibit; meaning also, that there would be a great exertion of power in the case. It would not be a feeble and imbecile dominion. The dominion of the papacy has been one of the most powerful on earth. There has been none which has been more dreaded by the nations of the earth - and there have been times when nations trembled, and kings turned pale on their thrones at the frown of the Pope.

And signs - This word frequently denotes real miracles, but not necessarily so. It may be applied to pretended miracles as well as real, and is undoubtedly so used here, as it is connected with "lying wonders," and as it is said that the thing done would be "after the working of Satan." There is

doubtless reference to such "signs and wonders" as the Saviour mentions in Matthew 24:24; see the notes on that passage. It is hardly necessary to remark that the papacy has always relied for support on its pretended miracles. Even in our own age the wonders performed by the Prince Hohenloe, and by the pretended seamless garment of the Saviour, have been proclaimed as true miracles, and as furnishing indubitable evidence of the truth of the Roman Catholic system. The dissolving of the blood of Januarius, the removal of Pilate's stairs to Rome, and the transportation to Italy of the "house of our Lady," are among the miracles to which there is a constant reference in the papal communion. In addition to these and to all similar pretensions, there is the power claimed of performing a miracle at the pleasure of the priest by the change of bread and wine into the "body and blood, the soul and divinity" of the Lord Jesus. In 1756, there was published in London a book entitled, "The miraculous power of the Church of Christ, asserted through each successive century, from the apostles down to the present time." The power of working miracles has been one of the standing claims of the papacy.

And lying wonders - False or pretended miracles. They would be such as would be claimed to be miracles; such as would excite wonder; and yet such as were false and delusive. No Protestant assuredly needs to be convinced that this is just the character of the pretended miracles of the papacy. It would be impossible for language to describe them more clearly, in the apprehension of all Protestants, than is done in this language of the apostle Paul.

Verse 10

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness - There are two ideas here. The first is, that there would be deceit; and the other is, that it would be for the purpose of promoting unrighteousness or iniquity. The iniquitous system would be maintained by fraudulent methods. No one who has read Pascal's Provincial Letters can ever doubt that this description is applicable to the system of the Jesuits; and no one familiar with the acts of the papacy, as they have always been practiced, can doubt that the whole system is accurately described by this language. The plausible reasoning by which the advocates of that system have palliated and apologized for sins of various kinds, has been among its most remarkable features.

In them that perish - Among those who will perish; that is, among the abandoned and wicked. The reference is to men of corrupt minds and lives,

over whom this system would have power; countenancing them in their depravity, and fitting them still farther for destruction. The idea is, that these acts would have special reference to men who would be lost at any rate, and who would be sustained in their wickedness by this false and delusive system.

Because they received not the love of the truth - They prefer this system of error and delusion to the simple and pure gospel, by which they might have been saved.

Verse 11

And for this cause - Because they choose error, or their hearts love that more than they do truth. The original reason then of their embracing and adhering to the system was not an arbitrary decree on the part of God, but that they did not love the truth. Hence, he gave them up to this system of error. If a man strongly prefers error to truth, and sin to holiness, it is not wrong to allow him freely to evince his own preference.

God shall send them strong delusion - Greek: "energy of deceit;" a Hebraism, meaning strong deceit, The agency of God is here distinctly recognised, in accordance with the uniform statements of the Scriptures, respecting evil; compare Exodus 7:13; Exodus 9:12; Exodus 10:1, Exodus 10:20, Exodus 10:27; Exodus 11:10; Exodus 14:8. Isaiah 45:7. On the nature of this agency, see the notes on John 12:40. It is not necessary here to suppose that there was any positive influence on the part of God in causing this delusion to come upon them, but all the force of the language will be met, as well as the reasoning of the apostle, by supposing that God withdrew all restraint, and suffered men simply to show that they did not love the truth. God often places people in circumstances to develop their own nature, and it cannot be shown to be wrong that He should do so. If people have no love of the truth, and no desire to be saved, it is not improper that they should be allowed to manifest this. How it happened that they had no "love of the truth," is a different question, to which the remarks of the apostle do not appertain; compare Romans 9:17-18, note; Romans 1:24, note.

That they should believe a lie - This does not affirm that God wished them to believe a lie; nor that He would not have preferred that they should believe the truth; nor that He exerted any direct agency to cause them to believe a lie. It means merely that He left them, because they did not love the truth, to believe what was false, and what would end in their

destruction. Can anyone doubt that this constantly occurs in the world? People are left to believe impostors; to trust to false guides; to rely on unfounded information; to credit those who live to delude and betray the innocent; and to follow those who lead them to ruin. God does not interpose by direct power to preserve them. Can anyone doubt this? Yet this is not especially the doctrine of revelation. The fact pertains just as much to the infidel as it does to the believer in Christianity, and he is just as much bound to explain it as the Christian is. It belongs to our world - to us all - and it should not be charged on Christianity as a doctrine pertaining especially to that system.

Verse 12

That they all might be damned - The word "damned" we commonly apply now exclusively to future punishment, and it has a harsher signification than the original word; compare the notes, 1 Corinthians 11:29. The Greek word - κρίνω krinō- means to judge, determine, decide; and then to condemn; Romans 2:27; Romans 14:22; James 4:11; John 7:51; Luke 19:22; Acts 13:27. It may be applied to the judgment of the last day John 5:22; John 8:50; Acts 17:31; Romans 3:6; 2 Timothy 4:1, but not necessarily. The word "judged" or "condemned," would, in this place, express all that the Greek word necessarily conveys. Yet there can be no doubt that the judgment or condemnation which is referred to, is that which will occur when the Saviour will appear. It does not seem to me to be a necessary interpretation of this to suppose that it teaches that God would send a strong delusion that they should believe a lie, in order that all might be damned who did not believe the truth; or that he desired that they should be damned, and sent this as the means of securing it; but the sense is, that this course of events would be allowed to occur, "so that" ἵνα hina- not εἰς τὸ all who do not love the truth would be condemned.

The particle here used, and rendered "that" (ἵνα hina), in connection with the phrase "all might be damned" is employed in two general senses, either as marking the end, purpose, or cause for, or on account of, which anything is done; to the end that, or in order that it may be so and so; or as marking simply the result, event, or upshot of an action, so that, so as that. Robinson, Lexicon. In the latter case it denotes merely that something will really take place, without indicating that such was the design of the agent, or that what brought it about was in order that it might take place. It is also used, in the later Greek, so as neither to mark the purpose, nor to indicate

that the event would occur, but merely to point out that to which the preceding words refer. It is not proper, therefore, to infer that this passage teaches that all these things would be brought about in the arrangements of Providence, in order that they might be damned who came under their influence. The passage teaches that such would be the result; that the connection between these delusions and the condemnation of those who were deluded, would be certain. It cannot be proved from the Scriptures that God sends on men strong delusions, in order that they may be damned. No such construction should be put on a passage of Scripture if it can be avoided, and it cannot be shown that it is necessary here.

Who believed not the truth The grounds or reasons why they would be damned are now stated. One would be that they did not believe the truth - not that God sent upon them delusion in order that they might be damned. That people will be condemned for not believing the truth, and that it will be right thus to condemn them, is everywhere the doctrine of the Scriptures, and is equally the doctrine of common sense; see the notes on Mark 16:16.

But had pleasure in unrighteousness - This is the second ground or reason of their condemnation. If men have pleasure in sin, it is proper that they should be punished. There can be no more just ground of condemnation than that a man loves to do wrong.

Verse 13

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you; - see the notes on 2 Thessalonians 1:3. "Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." The following important things are affirmed or implied here:

(1) That God had chosen or elected them (εἵλετο heileto) to salvation. The doctrine of election, therefore, is true.

(2) that this was from "the beginning" ἀπ᾽ ἀρχῆς ap' archēsthat is, from eternity; see the John 1:1 note; Ephesians 1:4; 3:9-11 notes. The doctrine of eternal election is, therefore, true.

(3) that this was the choice of the persons to whom Paul referred. The doctrine of personal election is, therefore, true.

(4) that this is a reason for thanksgiving. Why should it not be? Can there be any higher ground of praise or gratitude than that God has chosen us to be eternally holy and happy, and that he has from eternity designed that we should be so? Whatever, therefore, may be the feelings with which those who are not chosen to salvation, regard this doctrine, it is clear that those who have evidence that they are chosen should make it a subject of grateful praise. They can have no more exalted source of gratitude than that they are chosen to eternal life.

Through sanctification of the Spirit - Being made holy by the Divine Spirit. It is not without respect to character, but it is a choice to holiness and then to salvation. No one can have evidence that he is chosen to salvation except as he has evidence that he is sanctified by the Spirit; see the notes on Ephesians 1:4.

And belief of the truth - In connection with believing the truth. No one who is not a believer in the truth can have evidence that God has chosen him.

Verse 14

Whereunto he called you by our gospel - He made the gospel as preached by us the means of calling you to salvation. That is, God has chosen you to salvation from eternity, and has made the gospel as preached by us the means of carrying that eternal purpose into effect.

To the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ - That you may partake of the same glory as the Saviour in heaven; see the notes on John 17:22, John 17:24.

Verse 15

Therefore - In view of the fact that you are thus chosen from eternity, and that you are to be raised up to such honor and glory.

Stand fast - Amidst all the temptations which surround you; compare the notes on Ephesians 6:10-14. And hold the traditions which ye have been taught On the word "traditions," see the notes on Matthew 15:2. It means properly things delivered over from one to another; then anything orally delivered - any precept, doctrine, or law. It is frequently employed to denote that which is not written, as contradistinguished from that which is written (compare Matthew 15:2), but not necessarily or always; for here the apostle speaks of the "traditions which they had been taught by his epistle;" compare the notes, 1 Corinthians 11:2. Here it means the doctrines or precepts which they had received from the apostle, whether when he was

with them, or after he left them; whether communicated by preaching or by letter. This passage can furnish no authority for holding the "traditions" which have come down from ancient times, and which profess to have been derived from the apostles; because:

(1)there is no evidence that any of those traditions were given by the apostles;

(2)many of them are manifestly so trifling, false, and contrary to the writings of the apostles, that they could not have been delivered by them;

(3)if any of them are genuine, it is impossible to separate them from those which are false;

(4)we have all that is necessary for salvation in the written word; and,

(5)there is not the least evidence that the apostle here meant to refer to any such thing.

He speaks only of what had been delivered to them by himself, whether orally or by letter; not of what was delivered from one to another as from him. There is no intimation here that they were to hold anything as from him which they had not received directly from him, either by his own instructions personally or by letter. With what propriety, then, can this passage be adduced to prove that we are to hold the traditions which professedly come to us through a great number of intermediate persons? Where is the evidence here that the church was to hold those unwritten traditions, and transmit them to future times?

Whether by word - By preaching, when we were with you. It does not mean that he had sent any oral message to them by a third person.

Or our epistle - The former letter which he had written to them.

Verse 16

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself - This expression is equivalent to this: "I pray our Lord Jesus, and our Father, to comfort you." It is really a prayer offered to the Saviour - a recognition of Christ as the source of consolation as well as the Father, and a union of his name with that of the Father in invoking important blessings. It is such language as could be used only by one who regarded the Lord Jesus as divine.

And God even our Father - Greek: "And God, *and* (και kai) our Father;" though not incorrectly rendered "even our Father." If it should be

contended that the use of the word "and" - "our Lord Jesus Christ, and God," proves that the Lord Jesus is a different being from God - the use of the same word "and" would prove that the "Father" is a different being from God. But the truth is, the apostle meant to speak of the Father and the Son as the common Source of the blessing for which he prayed.

Which hath loved us - Referring particularly to the Father. The love which is referred to is that manifested in redemption, or which is shown us through Christ; see John 3:16; 1 John 4:9.

And hath given us everlasting consolation. - Not temporary comfort, but that which will endure forever. The joys of religion are not like other joys. They soon fade away - they always terminate at death - they cease when trouble comes, when sickness invades the frame, when wealth or friends depart, when disappointment lowers, when the senses by age refuse to minister as they once did to our pleasures. The comforts of religion depend upon no such contingencies. They live through all these changes - attend us in sickness, poverty, bereavement, losses, and age; they are with us in death, and they are perpetual and unchanging beyond the grave.

And good hope through grace - see the Romans 5:2, Romans 5:5 notes; Hebrews 6:19 note.

Verse 17

Comfort your hearts; - see the notes, 1 Thessalonians 3:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:14. The Thessalonians were in the midst of trials, and Paul prayed that they might have the full consolations of their religion.

And stablish you - Make you firm and steadfast; 1 Thessalonians 3:2, 1 Thessalonians 3:13.

In every good word and work - In every true doctrine, and in the practice of every virtue.

This chapter is very important in reference to the rise of that great anti-Christian power which has exerted, and which still exerts so baleful an influence over the Christian world. Assuming now that it refers to the papacy, in accordance with the exposition which has been given, there are a few important reflections to which it gives rise:

(1) The second advent of the Redeemer is an event which is distinctly predicted in the Scriptures. This is assumed in this chapter; and though Paul corrects some errors into which the Thessalonians had fallen, he does not

suggest this as one of them. Their error was in regard to the time of his appearing; not the fact.

(2) the time when he will appear is not made known to mankind. The apostles did not pretend to designate it, noR did the Saviour himself; Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7.

(3) the course of reasoning in 2 Thessalonians 2 would lead to the expectation that a considerable time would elapse before the Saviour would appear. The apostles, therefore, did not believe that the end of the world was very near, and they did not teach false doctrine on the subject, as infidels have often alleged. No one, who attentively and candidly studies 2 Thessalonians 2, it seems to me, can suppose that Paul believed that the second coming of the Saviour would occur within a short time, or during the generation when he lived. He has described a long series of events which were to intervene before the Saviour would appear - events which, if the interpretation which has been given is correct, have been in fact in a process of development from that time to the present, and which, it must have been foreseen, even then, would require a long period before they would be completed. There was to be a great apostasy.

There were at that time subtle causes at work which would lead to it. They were, however, then held in check and restrained by some foreign influence. But the time would come, when that foreign power would be withdrawn. Then these now hidden and restrained corruptions would develop themselves into this great anti-Christian power. That power would sustain itself by a series of pretended miracles and lying wonders - and, after all this, would be the second coming of the Son of man. But this would require time. Such a series of events would not be completed in a day, or in a single generation. They would require a succession - perhaps a long succession - of years, before these developments would be complete. It is clear, therefore, that the apostle did not hold that the Lord Jesus would return in that age, and that he did not mean to be understood as teaching it; and consequently it should not be said that he or his fellow-apostles were mistaken in the statements which they have recorded respecting the second coming of the Lord Jesus and the end of the world.

(4) the apostle Paul was inspired. He has recorded in this chapter a distinct prediction of an important series of events which were to occur at a future, and most of them at quite a remote period. They were such that they could have been foreseen by no natural sagacity, and no human skill. There were, indeed, corruptions existing then in the church, but no mere natural sagacity could have foreseen that they would grow up into that enormous system which would overshadow the Christian world, and live for so many ages.

(5) if these predictions referred to the papacy, we may see how we are to regard that system of religion. The simple inquiry, if this interpretation is correct, is, how did the apostle Paul regard that system to which he referred? Did he consider it to be the true church? Did he regard it as a church at all? The language which he uses will enable us easily to answer these questions. He speaks of it as "the apostasy;" he speaks of the head of that system as "the man of sin," "the son of perdition," "the wicked one," and as "opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God;" he says that his "coming is after the working of Satan, with lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness." Can it be believed then that he regarded this as a true church of Jesus Christ? Are these the characteristics of the church as laid down elsewhere in the Scriptures? Wherever it may lead, it seems clear to me that the apostle did not regard that system of which he spoke as having any of the marks of a true church, and the only question which can be raised on this point is, whether the fair interpretation of the passage demands that it shall be considered as referring to the papacy. Protestants believe that it must be so understood, and papists have not yet disproved the reasons which they allege for their belief.

(6) if this be the "fair interpretation," then we may see what is the value of the pretended "succession" of the ministry through that system. If such a regular "succession" of ministers from the apostles could be made out, what would it be worth? What is the value of a spiritual descent from Pope Alexander VI? How would it increase the proper respect for the ministerial office, if it could be proved to be derived in a right line from those monsters of incest, ambition, covetousness, and blood, who have occupied the papal throne? A Protestant minister should blush and hang his head if it were charged on him that he held his office by no better title than such a

derivation. Much less should he make it a matter of glorying and an argument to prove that he only is an authorized minister, that he has received his office through such men.

(7) from this chapter we may see the tendency of human nature to degeneracy. The elements of that great and corrupt apostasy existed even in apostolic times. Those elements grew regularly up into the system of the papacy, and spread blighting and death over the whole Christian world. It is the tendency of human nature to corrupt the best things. The Christian church was put in possession of a pure, and lovely, and glorious system of religion. It was a religion adapted to elevate and save the race. There was not an interest of humanity which it would not have fostered and promoted; there was not a source of human sorrow which it would not have mitigated or relieved; there were none of the race whom it would not have elevated and purified. Its influence, as far as it was seen, was uniformly of the happiest kind. It did no injury anywhere, but produced only good. But how soon was it voluntarily exchanged for the worst form of superstition and error that has ever brooded in darkness over mankind! How soon did the light fade, and how rapidly did it become more obscure, until it almost went out altogether! And with what tenacity did the world adhere to the system that grew up under the great apostasy, maintaining it by learning, and power, and laws, and dungeons, and racks, and faggots! What a comment is this on human nature, thus "loving darkness more than light," and error rather than truth!

(8) the chapter teaches the importance of resisting error at the beginning. These errors had their foundation in the time of the apostles. They were then comparatively small, and perhaps to many they appeared unimportant; and yet the whole papal system was just the development of errors, the germs of which existed in their days, Had these been crushed, as Paul wished to crush them, the church might have been saved from the corruption, and woes, and persecutions produced by the papacy. So error now should always be opposed - no matter how small or unimportant it may appear. We have no right to connive at it; to patronize it; to smile upon it. The beginnings of evil are always to be resisted with firmness; and if that is done, the triumph of truth will be certain.

(9) the church is safe. It has now passed through every conceivable form of trial, and still survives, and is now more vigorous and flourishing than it ever was before. It has passed through fiery times of persecution; survived the attempts of emperors and kings to destroy it, and lived while the system of error described here by the apostle Paul has thrown its baleful shade over almost the whole Christian world. It cannot reasonably be supposed that it will be called to pass through such trials again as it has already endured; but whether it does or not, the past history of the church is a guarantee that it will survive all that it is destined to encounter. None but a religion of divine origin could have continued to live amidst so many corruptions, and so many attempts to destroy it; and in the view of the past history of that church it is impossible not to come to the conclusion that it has been founded by God himself.

2 THESSALONIANS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2. He desires them to pray particularly that the true religion might be prospered, and that, in preaching the gospel, he might be delivered from the opposition of unreasonable and wicked men.

(2)he expresses confidence that God would incline them to do what was right, and prays that he would keep their hearts in his love, and in patient waiting for the Saviour; 2 Thessalonians 3:3-5.

(3)he commands them to remove from their number those who were disorderly, and especially those who were idle, and addresses an earnest exhortation to this class, that they would be diligently engaged in the prosecution of the business of their appropriate callings; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12.

(4)he exhorts them not to be weary in doing well; 2 Thessalonians 3:13.

(5)he directs that if any one should not obey the commands given in this Epistle, he should be noted, and they were to separate themselves from him. Yet they were not to regard him as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15.

(6)the Epistle closes with the usual salutations; 2 Thessalonians 3:16-18.

Verse 1

Finally, brethren, pray for us - That is, for Paul, Silas, and Timothy, then engaged in arduous labors at Corinth. This request for the prayers of Christians is one which Paul often makes; see the notes, 1 Thessalonians 5:25.

That the word of the Lord may have free course - That is, the gospel. The margin is "run." So also the Greek. The idea is, that it might meet with no obstruction, but that it might be carried abroad with the rapidity of a racer out of whose way every hindrance was removed. The gospel would spread rapidly in the earth if all the obstructions which men have put in its

way were removed; and that they may be removed should be one of the constant subjects of prayer.

And be glorified - Be honored; or appear to be glorious.

As it is with you - It is evident from this that Paul met with some obstructions in preaching the gospel where he was then laboring. What they were, he mentions in the next verse. He was then at Corinth (see the introduction), and the history in the Acts of the Apostles informs us of the difficulties which he had to encounter there; see Acts 18.

Verse 2

And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men - That is, from opposition in their endeavors to spread the gospel. Paul encountered such men everywhere, as all do who labor to diffuse the knowledge of the truth, but it is probable that there is particular reference here to the opposition which he encountered when in Corinth. This opposition arose mainly from the Jews; see Acts 18:5-6, Acts 18:12-13. The word "unreasonable" is rendered in the margin as "absurd." The Greek word (ἀτόπος atopos) means, properly, "out of place;" then "absurd, unusual, strange; then improper, unreasonable, wicked." It is rendered in Luke 23:41 as "amiss;" in Acts 28:6 as "harm." It does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It refers here to people who acted amiss or improperly; people who were not found in the right place, or who did not have the right views of things; and probably does not refer so much to their being positively wicked or malicious, as "to their putting things out of their proper place."

They gave an undue prominence to certain things, and less importance to others than they deserved. They had a distorted vision of the value of objects, and in tenacious adherence to their own views, and prosecuting their own objects to the exclusion of all others, they presented a constant obstruction to the true gospel. This word would apply, and probably was designed to be applied, to Jewish teachers (see Acts 18:5-6), who gave an undue prominence to the laws of Moses; but it will apply well to all who entertain distorted views of the relative importance of objects, and who put things out of their place. People often have a hobby. They give more importance to some object than it deserves. They, therefore, undervalue other objects; press their own with improper zeal; denounce others who do not feel the same interest in them which they do; withdraw from those who will not go with them in their views; form separate parties, and thus throw

themselves in the way of all who are endeavoring to do good in some other method. It was from people who thus put themselves out of place, that the apostle prayed to be delivered.

And wicked men - Men with bad aims and purposes. It is not always true that those who would come under the appellation of what the apostle here calls "unreasonable," are wicked. They are sometimes well-meaning, but misguided people. But in this case, it seems, they were men of bad character, who were at heart opposed to what was good, as well as inclined to put things out of their place.

For all men have not faith - Of the truth of this, no one can doubt. The only question is, as to its bearing on the case before us. Some suppose it means, "there are few men whom we can safely trust;" others, that it means that they have not that "upright and candid disposition which would engage men to receive the testimony of the apostles" (Doddridge); others, that "all men do not embrace the Christian faith, but many oppose it" (Benson); and others, that "all men do not believe, but the worthy only" - Bloomfield. The connection seems to require us to understand it as meaning that all people are not prepared to embrace the gospel. Hence, they set themselves against it, and from such people Paul prayed that he might be delivered; compare 2 Timothy 3:8. The state of mind in which the apostle was when he wrote this, seems to have been this: He recollected the readiness with which the Thessalonians had embraced the gospel, and the firmness with which they held it, and seems to suppose that they would imagine the same thing must be found true everywhere. But he says all people have not the same faith; all were not prepared cordially and fully to embrace the gospel. There were unreasonable and wicked people whom he had encountered, from whom he prayed that he might be delivered.

Verse 3

But the Lord is faithful - - Though human beings cannot be trusted, God is faithful to his promises and his purposes. He may always be confided in; and when people are unbelieving, perverse, unkind, and disposed to do us wrong, we may go to him, and we shall always find in him one in whom we may confide. This is an exceedingly interesting declaration, and is a beautiful illustration of the resource which a truly pious mind will feel that it has. We often have occasion to know, to our sorrow, that "all men have not faith." We witness their infidelity. We see how they turn away from the truth. We see many who once gave some evidence that

they had "faith," abandon it all; and we see many in the church who seem to have no true faith, and who refuse to lend their aid in promoting the cause of religion. In such circumstances, the heart is disposed to despond, and to ask whether religion can be advanced in the midst of so much indifference and opposition? At such times, how consoling is it to be able to turn, as Paul did, to one who is faithful; who never fails us; and who will certainly accomplish his benevolent purposes. Men may be faithless and false, but God never is. They may refuse to embrace the gospel, and set themselves against it, but God will not abandon His great purposes. Many who are in the church may forget their solemn and sacred vows, and may show no fidelity to the cause of their Saviour, but God himself will never abandon that cause. To a pious mind it affords unspeakably more consolation to reflect that a faithful God is the friend of the cause which we love, than it would were all men, in and out of the church, its friends.

Who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil - see the notes on John 17:5; compare the notes on Ephesians 6:16. The allusion is to the Evil One, or Satan, and the meaning is, that God would keep them from his wiles.

Verse 4

And we have confidence in the Lord - Not primarily in you, for you have hearts like others, but in the Lord. It is remarkable that when Paul expresses the utmost confidence in Christians that they will live and act as becomes their profession, his reliance is not on anything in themselves, but wholly on the faithfulness of God. He must be a stranger to the human heart who puts much confidence in it even in its best state; see Philemon 1:6; Philemon 4:7; 2 Timothy 1:12; compare Jude 1:24; Revelation 3:10; Proverbs 28:26.

Verse 5

And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God - So direct your hearts that you may love God. "And into the patient waiting for Christ." Margin, "patience of Christ." The marginal reading is in accordance with the Greek, and seems best to express the apostle's meaning. The prayer of the apostle was, that they might have the love of God in their hearts, and "the patience of Christ;" that is, the same patience which Christ evinced in his trials. They were then suffering affliction and persecution. They needed patience, that they might endure their trials in a proper manner. It was natural for the apostle to refer them to the Saviour, the great example of

patience, and to pray that they might have the same which he had. That it does not mean that they were to wait patiently for the appearing of Christ, as our translation seems to imply, is quite clear, because the apostle had just been showing them that he would not appear until after a long series of events had occurred.

Verse 6

Now we command you, brethren - The apostle now 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12 turns to an important subject - the proper method of treating those who were idle and disorderly in the church. In the previous Epistle he had adverted to this subject, but in the mild language of exhortation. When he wrote that Epistle he was aware that there were some among them who were disposed to be idle, and he had tenderly exhorted them "to be quiet, and to mind their own business, and to work with their own hands;" 1 Thessalonians 4:11. But it seems the exhortation, and the example of Paul himself when there 1 Thessalonians 2:9, had not been effectual in inducing them to be industrious. It became, therefore, necessary to use the strong language of command, as he does here, and to require that if they would not work, the church should withdraw from them. What was the original cause of their idleness, is not known. There seems no reason, however, to doubt that it was much increased by their expectation that the Saviour would soon appear, and that the world would soon come to an end. If this was to be so, of what use would it be to labor? Why strive to accumulate property with reference to the wants of a family, or to a day of sickness, or old age? Why should a man build a house that was soon to be burnt up, or why buy a farm which he was soon to leave? The effect of the expectation of the speedy appearing of the Lord Jesus has always been to induce men to neglect their worldly affairs, and to lead idle lives. Man, naturally disposed to be idle, wants the stimulus of hope that he is laboring for the future welfare of himself, for his family, or for society, nor will he labor if he believes that the Saviour is about to appear.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ - see the notes on 1 Corinthians 5:4. "That ye withdraw yourselves;" see the notes on 1 Timothy 6:5. This is the true notion of Christian discipline. It is not primarily that of cutting a man off, or denouncing him, or excommunicating him; it is that of withdrawing from him. We cease to have fellowship with him. We do not regard him any longer as a Christian brother. We separate from him. We do not seek to affect him in any other respect; we do not injure his name or

standing as a man, or hold him up to reprobation; we do not follow him with denunciation or a spirit of revenge; we simply cease to recognise him as a Christian brother, when he shows that he is no longer worthy to be regarded as such. We do not deliver him over to the civil arm; we do not inflict any positive punishment on him; we leave him unmolested in all his rights as a citizen, a man, a neighbor, a husband, a father, and simply say that he is no longer one of us as a Christian. How different is this from excommunication, as it has been commonly understood! How different from the anathemas fulminated by the papacy, and the delivering of the heretic over to the civil power!

From every brother that walketh disorderly - compare the notes, 1 Corinthians 5:11-13. A "disorderly walk" denotes conduct that is in any way contrary to the rules of Christ. The proper idea of the word used here (ἀτάκτως ataktōs), is that of soldiers who do not keep the ranks; who are regardless of order; and then who are irregular in any way. The word would include any violation of the rules of Christ on any subject.

And not after the tradition which ye received of us - According to the doctrine which we delivered to you; see the notes on 2 Thessalonians 2:15. This shows that by the word "tradition" the apostle did not mean unwritten doctrines handed down from one to another, for he evidently alludes to what he had himself taught them, and his direction is not that that should be handed down by them, but that they should obey it.

Verse 7

For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us - You know what you should do in order to imitate us.

For we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you - See the notes on 1 Thessalonians 2:10.

Verse 8

Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought - We were not supported in idleness at the expense of others. We gave a fair equivalent for all that we received, and, in fact, labored for our own support; see the notes on 1 Thessalonians 2:9.

Verse 9

Not because we have not power … - See the notes on 1 Corinthians 9:6, 1 Corinthians 9:12, 1 Corinthians 9:14.

Verse 10

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you - It would seem from this that the evil of which the apostle here complains had begun to operate even when he was with them. There were those who were disposed to be idle, and who needed the solemn command of an apostle to induce them to labor.

That if any would not work, neither should he eat - That is, at the public expense. They should not be supported by the church. This was a maxim among the Jews (see Wetstein, in loc.), and the same sentiment may be found in Homer, Demosthenes, and Pythagoras; see Grotius, in loc. The maxim is founded in obvious justice, and is in accordance with the great law under which our Creator has placed us; Genesis 3:19. That law, in the circumstances, was benevolent, and it should be our aim to carry it out in reference to ourselves and to others. The law here laid down by the apostle extends to all who are able to work for a living, and who will not do it, and binds us not to contribute to their support if they will not labor for it. It should be regarded as extending:

(1)to the members of a church - who, though poor, should not be supported by their brethren, unless they are willing to work in any way they can for their own maintenance.

(2)to those who beg from door to door, who should never be assisted unless they are willing to do all they can do for their own support. No one can be justified in assisting a lazy man. In no possible circumstances are we to contribute to foster indolence. A man might as properly help to maintain open vice.

Verse 11

For we hear - It is not known in what way this was made known to Paul, whether by Timothy, or by some other one. He had no doubt of its truth, and he seems to have been prepared to believe it the more readily from what he saw when he was among them.

Which walk disorderly - See the notes, 2 Thessalonians 3:6.

But are busy-bodies - Compare the 1 Timothy 5:13 note; 1 Peter 4:15 note. That is, they meddled with the affairs of others - a thing which they who have nothing of their own to busy themselves about will be very likely to do. The apostle had seen that there was a tendency to his when he was in Thessalonica, and hence he had commanded them to "do their own business;" 1 Thessalonians 4:11. The injunction, it seems, had availed little,

for there is no class of persons who will heed good counsel so little as those who have a propensity to intermeddle with the affairs of others. One of the indispensable things to check this is, that each one should have enough to do himself; and one of the most pestiferous of all persons is he who has nothing to do but to look after the affairs of his neighbors. In times of affliction and want, we should be ready to lend our aid. At other times, we should feel that he can manage his own affairs as well as we can do it for him; or if he cannot, it is his business, not ours. The Greek word used occurs only here, and in 1 Timothy 5:13; compare the notes on Philemon 2:4.

Verse 12

Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus … - A more solemn command and appeal to do what he had before enjoined on all of them; 1 Thessalonians 4:11; see the notes on that verse.

Verse 13

But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing - Margin, "faint not." The Greek means, properly, to turn out a coward; then to be faint-hearted, to despond. The idea is, that they were not to be discouraged from doing good to the truly worthy and deserving by the idleness and improper conduct of some who asked their assistance. They were, indeed, shiftless and worthless. They would not labor; they spent their time in intermeddling with the concerns of their neighbors, and they depended for their support on the charity of others. The tendency of this, as all persons feel who have ever been applied to by such persons for aid, is, to indispose us to do good to any. We almost insensibly feel that all who ask for aid are of the same character; or, not being able to discriminate, we close our hands alike against all. Against this the apostle would guard us, and he says that though there may be many such persons, and though we may find it difficult to distinguish the worthy from the unworthy, we should not become so disheartened as not to give at all. Nor should we be weary though the applications for assistance are frequent. They are indeed frequent. God designs that they should be. But the effect should not be to dishearten us, or to make us weary in well-doing, but to fill us with gratitude - for it is a privilege to be permitted to do good. It is the great distinguishing characteristic of God that he always does good. It was that which marked the character of the Redeemer, that he "went about doing good;" and whenever God gives us the opportunity and the means of doing good, it

should be to us an occasion of special thanksgiving. A man ought to become "weary" of everything else sooner than of evincing benevolence; compare the notes on Galatians 6:10.

Verse 14

And if any man obey not our word by this epistle - Margin, "or signify that man by an epistle." According to the marginal reading this would mean "signify, mark out, or designate that man to me by an epistle." The difference is merely whether we unite the words "by the epistle" with what goes before, or what follows. The Greek would admit of either construction (Winer, p. 93), but it seems to me that the construction in the text is the correct one, because:

(1)the requirement was to proceed to discipline such a man by withdrawing from him;

(2)in order to do this it was not necessary that the case should be made known to Paul, for there was no supposable difficulty in it, and the effect would be only needless delay;

(3)Paul regarded the right of discipline as residing in the church itself, and did not require that cases should be referred to him to determine; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 5:2-4.

(4)though the Greek will admit of either construction, yet it rather favors this; see Oldhhausen, in loc. Note that man. The word here used, means to mark; to sign; to note with marks; and the idea is, set such a mark upon him that he shall be shunned; that is, withdraw all Christian fellowship from him.

And have no company with him - The Greek word here means, to mix up together; then to mingle together with; to have contact with. The idea is that they were not to mingle with him as a Christian brother, or as one of their own number. They were not to show that they regarded him as a worthy member of the church, or as having a claim to its privileges. The extent of their discipline was, that they were to withdraw from him; see the 2 Thessalonians 3:6 note, and Matthew 18:17 note; compare 2 John 1:10-11.

Verse 15

Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother - This shows the true spirit in which discipline is to be administered in the

Christian church. We are not to deal with a man as an adversary over whom we are to seek to gain a victory, but as an erring brother - a brother still, though he errs. There was necessity for this caution. There is great danger that when we undertake the work of discipline we shall forget that he who is the subject of it is a brother, and that we shall regard and treat him as an enemy. Such is human nature. We set ourselves in array against him. We cut him off as one who is unworthy to walk with us. We triumph over him, and consider him at once as an enemy of the church, and as having lost all claim to its sympathies. We abandon him to the tender mercies of a cold and unfeeling world, and let him take his course. Perhaps we follow him with anathemas, and hold him up as unworthy the confidence of mankind. Now all this is entirely unlike the method and aim of discipline as the New Testament requires. There all is kind, and gentle, though firm; the offender is a man and a brother still; he is to be followed with tender sympathy and prayer, and the hearts and the arms of the Christian brotherhood are to be open to receive him again when he gives any evidence of repenting.

Verse 16

Now the Lord of peace - The Lord who alone can impart peace; see the Romans 15:33 note; 1 Corinthians 14:33 note; Hebrews 13:20 note; John 14:27 note.

Verse 17

The salutation of Paul with mine own hand; - See the notes, 1 Corinthians 16:21. "Which is the token in every epistle." Greek: "sign." That is, this signature is a sign or proof of the genuineness of the epistle; compare the notes on Galatians 6:11.

So I write - Referring, probably, to some mark or method which Paul had of signing his name, which was well known, and which would easily be recognized by them.

Verse 18

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all; - See the notes, Romans 16:20.

From the subscription to this Epistle, it purports to have been "written from Athens." This is probably incorrect, as there is reason to think that it was written from Corinth. See the introduction. At all events, this subscription is of no authority. See the notes at the end of the Epistles to the Romans and 1Corinthians.

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Introduction to 1Timothy

Section 1. Notices of the Life of Timothy

Nearly all that can now be known of Timothy is to be learned from the New Testament. He was a native of either Derbe or Lystra, but it is not certainly known which Acts 16:1. Paul found him there on his visit to those places, and does not appear to have been acquainted with him before. His mother, whose name was Eunice, was a Jewess, and was pious, as was also his grandmother, Lois 2 Timothy 1:3. His father was a Greek, but was evidently not unfriendly to the Jewish religion, because Timothy had been carefully trained in the Scriptures 2 Timothy 3:15. Paul came to Derbe and Lystra. and became acquainted with Timothy, about 51 or 52 a.d., but there is no method now of ascertaining the exact age of Timothy at that time, though there is reason to think that he was then a youth 1 Timothy 4:12. It would seem, also, that he was a youth of uncommon hope and promise, and that there had been some special indications that he would rise to distinction as a religious man, and would exert an extended influence in favor of religion 1 Timothy 1:18. At the time when Paul first met with Timothy, he was a "disciple," or a Christian convert; but the means which had been used for his conversion are unknown. Timothy's mother had been before converted to the Christian faith Acts 16:1, and Timothy was well known to the Christians in the neighboring towns of Lystra and Iconium. The gospel had been preached by Paul and Barnabas, in Iconium, Derbe, and Lystra, some six or seven years before it is said that Paul met with Timothy Acts 16:1, and it is not improbable that this youth had been converted in the interval.

Several things appear to have combined to induce the apostle to introduce him into the ministry, and to make him a traveling companion. His youth; his acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures; the "prophecies which went before on him;" his talents; his general reputation in the church, and, it would seem also, his amiableness of manners, adapting himself to be an agreeable companion. attracted the attention of the apostle, and led Paul to desire that he might be a fellow-laborer with him. To satisfy the prejudices of the Jews, and to prevent any possible objection which might be made against his qualifications for the ministerial office, Paul circumcised him Acts 16:3, and Timothy was ordained to the office of the

ministry by “the laying on of the hands of the presbytery” 1 Timothy 4:14. When this ordination occurred is not known, but it is most probable that it was before Timothy went on his travels with Paul, since it is known that Paul was present on the occasion, and took a leading part in the transaction 2 Timothy 1:6.

Having joined Paul and Silas, Timothy accompanied them on a visit to the congregations of Phrygia and Galatia, in which they delivered them the decrees to keep which had been ordained at Jerusalem; Acts 16:4 following. Having done this, they endeavored to go together into Bythinia, a province of Asia Minor, on the northwest, but were prevented; and they then went into Mysia, and to the towns of Troas; Acts 16:8. Here Luke appears to have joined them, and from this place, in obedience to a vision which appeared to Paul, they went into Macedonia, and preached the gospel first at Philippi, where they established a church. In this city Paul and Silas were imprisoned; but it is remarkable that nothing is said of Timothy and Luke, and it is not known whether they shared in the sufferings of the persecution there or not. Everything, however, renders it probable that Timothy was with them at Philippi, as he is mentioned as having started with them to go on the journey Acts 16:3; and, since we find Timothy at Berea, after the apostle had been released from prison, and had preached at Thessalonica and Berea Acts 17:14. From this place Paul was conducted to Athens, but left an injunction for Silas and Timothy to join him there as soon as possible. This was done; - but when Timothy had come to Athens, Paul felt it to be important that the church at Thessalonica should be visited and comforted in its afflictions, and being prevented from doing it himself, he sent Timothy, at great personal inconvenience, back to that church. Having discharged the duty there, he rejoined the apostle at Corinth Acts 18:5, from which place the First Epistle to the Thessalonians was written; see the introduction to 1Thessalonians and the notes on 1 Thessalonians 1:1, and 1 Thessalonians 3:2. These transactions occurred about 52 ad.

Paul remained at Corinth for a year and a half Acts 18:11, and it is probable that Timothy and Silas continued with him; see 2 Thessalonians 1:1. From Corinth he sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila, whom he appears to have left on his way at Ephesus; Acts 18:18-19, Acts 18:26. Whether Timothy and Silas accompanied him is not mentioned, but

we find Timothy again with him at Ephesus, after he had been to Caesarea and Antioch, and had returned to Ephesus; Acts 18:22; Acts 19:1, Acts 19:22. From Ephesus, he sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia Acts 19:22, but for what purpose, or how long they remained, is unknown. From 1 Corinthians 4:17, it appears that Paul expected that on this journey Timothy would stop at Corinth, and would give the church there instructions adapted to its situation. Paul continued in Ephesus until he was compelled to depart by the tumult caused by Demetrius, when he left and went to Macedonia; Acts 19:9-10; and Timothy was sent away before the disturbances caused by Demetrius; Acts 19:22. Paul designed to follow him soon, and then to go to Jerusalem, and then to Rome; Acts 19:21. Paul Acts 20:31 was in Ephesus in all for about three years; and it is not unreasonable to suppose that he remained there after Timothy was sent to Macedonia long enough for him to go and to return to him again. If so, it is possible that when Paul himself went away, he left Timothy there in his place; compare 1 Timothy 1:3. It has been the general opinion that the First Epistle to Timothy was written at this time, either when the apostle was on his way to Macedonia, or while in Macedonia. But this opinion has not been unquestioned.

The departure of Paul for Macedonia occurred about 58 or 59 a.d. In Acts 20:4, Timothy is again mentioned as accompanying Paul, after he had remained in Greece three months, on the route to Syria through Macedonia. He went with him, in company with many others, into "Asia." Going before Paul, they waited for him at Troas Acts 20:5, and thence doubtless accompanied him on his way to Jerusalem. It was on this occasion that Paul delivered his farewell charge to the elders of the church of Ephesus at Miletus Acts 20:17. When in Macedonia, Paul wrote the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and Timothy was then with him, for Paul unites in the salutations; 2 Corinthians 1:1. Timothy was also with the apostle on this journey at Corinth, when from that city he wrote his Epistle to the Romans; Romans 16:21.

The subsequent events of the life of Timothy are less known. It does not appear from the Acts of the Apostles, that Timothy was with Paul during his two years' imprisonment at Caesarea, nor during his voyage to Rome. It is certain, however, that he was at Rome with the apostle when he wrote the

epistles to the Philippians, to the Colossians, and to Philemon; Philemon 1:1; Colossians 1:1; Philemon 1:1; From Hebrews 13:23 it appears also, that Timothy had been with the apostle there, but that when the Epistle was written he was absent on some important embassy, and that Paul was expecting his speedy return; see notes on that verse. Between the first and second imprisonment of Paul at Rome, no mention is made of Timothy, nor is it known where he was, or whether he accompanied him in his travels or not. When he was imprisoned there the second time, he wrote the Second Epistle to Timothy, in which he desires him to come to Rome, and bring with him several things which he had left at Troas; 2 Timothy 4:9-13, 2 Timothy 4:21. If Timothy went to Rome, agreeably to the request of the apostle, it is probable that he was a witness there of his martyrdom.

In regard to the latter part of the life of Timothy, there is nothing which can be depended upon. It has been the current opinion, derived from tradition, that he was "Bishop" of Ephesus; that he died and was buried there; and that his bones were subsequently removed to Constantinople. The belief that he was "Bishop" of Ephesus rests mainly on the "subscription" to the Second Epistle to Timothy - which is no authority whatever (see notes on that subscription). On the question whether he was an episcopal prelate at Ephesus, the reader may consult my "Enquiry into the Organization and Government of the Apostolic Church," pp. 88-107. The supposition that he died at Ephesus, and was subsequently removed to Constantinople, rests on no certain historical basis.

Timothy was long the companion and the friend of the apostle Paul, and is often mentioned by him with affectionate interest. Indeed there seems to have been not one of his fellow-laborers to whom he was so warmly attached; see 1 Timothy 1:2, 1 Timothy 1:18; 2 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 2:1; 1 Corinthians 4:17, where he calls him "his own son," and "his beloved son" 2 Timothy 1:4, where he expresses his earnest desire to see him, and makes a reference to the tears which Timothy shed at parting from him; - 1 Corinthians 16:10-11, where he bespeaks for him a kind reception among the Corinthians; - 1 Corinthians 16:10; Romans 16:21; 1 Thessalonians 3:2, where he speaks of his fidelity, of his usefulness to him in his labors, and of the interest which he took in the churches which the apostle had established.

Section 2. When and Where the Epistle Was Written

The subscription at the close of the epistle states that it was written from Laodicea. But these subscriptions are of no authority, and many of them are false; see notes at the end of 1Corinthians. There has been much diversity of opinion in regard to the time when this epistle was written, and of course in regard to the place where it was composed. All that is certain from the epistle itself is, that it was addressed to Timothy at Ephesus, and that it was soon after Paul had left that city to go to Macedonia; 1 Timothy 1:3. Paul is mentioned in the Acts as having been at Ephesus twice: Acts 18:19-23; 19:1-41. After his first visit there, he went directly to Jerusalem, and of course it could not have been written at that time. The only question then is, whether it was written when Paul left the city, having been driven away by the excitement caused by Demetrius Acts 20:1, or whether he visited Ephesus again on some occasion after his first imprisonment at Rome, and of course after the narrative of Luke in the Acts of the Apostles closes. If on the former occasion, it was written about the year 58 or 59; if the latter, about the year 64 or 65 a.d. Critics have been divided in reference to this point, and the question is still unsettled, and it may be impossible to determine it with entire certainty.

Those who have maintained the former opinion, among others, are Theodoret, Benson, Zachariae, Michaelis, Schmidt. Koppe, Planck, Grotius Lightfoot, Witsius, Lardner, Hug, and Prof. Stuart. The latter opinion, that it was written subsequently to the period of Paul‘s first imprisonment at Rome, is maintained by Paley, Pearson, L‘Enfant, LeClerc, Cave, Mill, Whitby, Macknight, and others.

An examination of the reasons in favor of each of these opinions in regard to the date of the epistle, may be found in Paley‘s Horae Paul.; Macknight; Hug‘s Intro., and Koppe, Prolegomena.

The theory of Eichhorn, which is unique, and which is supported by some ingenious and plausible, but not conclusive reasoning, may be seen in his Einleitung in das neue Test. 3 B. 314-352.

In the diversity of opinion which prevails about the time when the epistle was written, it is impossible to determine the question in such a manner as to leave no room for doubt. After the most careful examination which I have been able to give to the subject, however, it seems to me that

the former opinion is correct, that it was written soon after Paul was driven from Ephesus by the tumult caused by Demetrius, as recorded in Acts 20:1. The reasons for this opinion are briefly these:

1. This is the only record that occurs in the New Testament of the apostle‘s having gone from Ephesus to Macedonia; see above. It is natural, therefore, to suppose that this is referred to in 1 Timothy 1:3, unless there is some insuperable difficulty in the way.

2. There is no certain evidence that Paul visited the church at Ephesus after his first imprisonment at Rome. It is certainly possible that he did, but there is no record of any such visit in the New Testament, nor any historical record of it elsewhere. If there had been such a visit after his release, and if this epistle was written then, it is remarkable that the apostle does not make any allusion to his imprisonment in this epistle, and that he does not refer at all to his own escape from this danger of death at Rome; compare 2 Timothy 4:16-17.

3. The supposition that the epistle was written at the time supposed, agrees better with the character of the epistle, and with the design for which Timothy was left at Ephesus, than the others. It is manifest from the epistle that the church was in some respects in an unsettled condition, and it would seem also that one part of the duty of Timothy there was to see that it was placed under a proper organization. This Paul had evidently proposed to accomplish himself, but it is clear from 1 Timothy 1:3, that he left his work unfinished, and that he gave what he had proposed to do into the hands of Timothy to be perfected. After the first imprisonment of Paul at Rome, however, there is every reason to suppose that the church was completely organized. Even when Paul went from Macedonia to Jerusalem 1 Timothy 4:12. It is true, that if he was somewhere about twenty years of age when he was introduced into the ministry, as has been commonly supposed, this language would not he entirely inappropriate, even after the imprisonment of Paul, but still the language would more properly denote one somewhat younger than Timothy would be at that time.

5. To this may be added the declaration of Paul in 1 Timothy 3:14, that he “hoped to come to him shortly.” This is an expression which agrees well

with the supposition that he had himself been driven away before he had intended to leave; that he had left something unfinished there which he desired to complete, and that he hoped that affairs would soon be in such a state that he would be permitted to return. It may he also suggested, as a circumstance of some importance, though not conclusive, that when Paul met the elders of the church of Ephesus at Miletus, he said that he had no expectation of ever seeing them again. "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more;" Acts 20:25. I do not think that this is to be understood as an inspired prediction, affirming with absolute certainty that he never would see them again, but that he rather expressed his apprehensions that it would be so from the circumstances which then existed; Acts 20:22-23. Still, this passage shows that when he uttered it he did not expect to visit Ephesus again, as he manifestly did when he wrote the epistle to Timothy.

These considerations seem so clear that they would leave no doubt on the mind, were it not for certain things which it seems to many impossible to reconcile with this supposition. The difficulties are the following:

1. That before Paul went to Macedonia, he had sent Timothy with Erastus before him Acts 19:22, purposing to follow them at no distant period, and to pass through Macedonia and Achaia, and then to go to Jerusalem, and afterward to visit Rome; Acts 19:21. As he had sent Timothy before him but so short a time before he left Ephesus, it is asked how Timothy could be left at Ephesus when Paul went himself to Macedonia? To this objection we may reply, that it is not improbable by any means that Timothy may have accomplished the object of his journey to Macedonia, and may have returned to the apostle at Ephesus before he was driven away. It does not appear, from the narrative, that Timothy was entrusted with any commission which would require a long time to fulfil it, nor that Paul expected that he would remain in Macedonia until he himself came. The purpose for which he sent Timothy and Erastus is not indeed mentioned, but it seems probable that it was with reference to the collection which he proposed to take up for the poor saints at Jerusalem; see notes on Acts 19:21-22; compare 1 Corinthians 16:1-6. If it was the purpose to prepare the churches for such a collection, it could not have required any considerable time, nor was it necessary that Timothy should remain long in a place; and

it was natural also that he should return to the apostle at Ephesus and apprize him of what he had done, and what was the prospect in regard to the collection. It has been clearly shown by Hug (*Introduction to the New Testament*, sections 104,109), that such a journey could easily have been made during the time which the apostle remained at Ephesus after he had sent Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia.

2. The next objection - and one which is regarded by Paley as decisive against the supposition that the epistle was written on this occasion - is, that from the Second Epistle to the Corinthians 2 Corinthians 1:1, it is evident that at the time in which this epistle is supposed to have been written, Timothy was with the apostle in Macedonia. The second epistle to the Corinthians was undoubtedly written during this visit of Paul to Macedonia, and at that time Timothy was with him; see the Introduction to 2Corinthians, section 3. How then can it be supposed that he was at Ephesus? Or how can this fact be reconciled with the supposition that Timothy was left there, and especially with the declaration of Paul to him 1 Timothy 3:14, that he "hoped to come to him shortly?" That Paul expected that Timothy would remain at Ephesus, at least for some time, is evident from 1 Timothy 3:15, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God;" and from 1 Timothy 4:13, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." The only solution of this difficulty is, that Timothy had left Ephesus, and had followed the apostle into Macedonia; and the only question here is, whether, since the apostle designed that he should remain at Ephesus, and expected himself to return and meet him there, Timothy would be likely to leave that place and go to Macedonia. It is certain that the history in the Acts does not make this record, but that is no material objection - since it cannot be supposed that every occurrence in the travels of the apostles was recorded. But there are two or three circumstances which may render the supposition that Timothy, either by the concurrence, or by the direction of Paul, privately communicated to him, may have left Ephesus sooner than was at first contemplated, and may have rejoined him in Macedonia.

(1) one is, that the main business which Timothy was appointed to perform at Ephesus - to give a solemn charge to certain persons there to teach no other doctrine but that which Paul taught 1 Timothy 1:3 - might

have been speedily accomplished. Paul was driven away in haste, and as he had not the opportunity of doing this himself as he wished, he left Timothy in charge of it. But this did not require, of necessity, any considerable time.

(2) another is, that the business of appointing suitable officers over the church there, might also have been soon accomplished. In fact, the church there is known to have been supplied with proper officers not long after this, for Paul sent from Miletus for the elders to meet him there on his way to Jerusalem. This remark is made in accordance with the opinion that a part of the work which Timothy was expected to perform there was to constitute proper officers over the church. But there is no proof that that was a part of his business. It is not specified in what Paul mentions, in 1 Timothy 1:3, as the design for which he was left there, and it is hardly probable that the apostle would have spent so long a time as he did in Ephesus nearly three years Acts 20:31 - without having organized the church with proper officers. Besides, the address of Paul to the elders at Miletus implies that they had received their appointment before he left them; see Acts 20:35. The instructions to Timothy in this Epistle about the proper qualifications of the officers of the church, do not prove that he was then to appoint officers at Ephesus, for they are general instructions, having no particular reference to the church there, and designed to guide him in his work through life. There is, therefore, nothing in the duties which Timothy was to perform at Ephesus which would forbid the supposition that he may have soon followed the apostle into Macedonia.

(3) It appears that though Paul may have intended, if possible, to visit Ephesus on his way to Jerusalem, in accordance with 1 Timothy 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 4:13, yet, if that had been his intention, he subsequently changed his mind, and found it necessary to make other arrangements. Thus it is said Acts 20:16, that "Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia:" that is, he had resolved to sail past Ephesus without visiting it. It would seem probable also, that this resolution had been formed before he left Macedonia, for it is said that he "had determined" it (ἔκρινεν ekrinen), and if so, there is no improbability in supposing that he had in some way caused it to be intimated to Timothy that he wished him to leave Ephesus and join him before he left Macedonia.

(4) in fact, and in accordance with this supposition, we find Timothy with Paul when he went on that occasion into "Asia;" Acts 20:4-5. These considerations render it probable that the epistle was written to Timothy soon after Paul left Ephesus to go into Macedonia after the tumult excited by Demetrius. As Paul was driven away unexpectedly, and when he had not completed what he designed to do there, nothing is more natural than the supposition that he would embrace the earliest opportunity to give suitable instructions to Timothy, that he might know how to complete the work.

Section 3. The Occasion and Design of the Epistle

This is specified in 1 Timothy 1:3. Paul had gone into Macedonia, having been suddenly driven away from Ephesus, before he had entirely done what he had designed to do there. He left Timothy there to "charge some that they teach no other doctrine;" that is, no other doctrine than that which he had himself taught when there. It is clear, from this, that there were certain errors prevailing there which Paul thought it of the highest importance to have corrected. In regard to those errors, see the introduction to the Epistle to the Ephesians, and the Epistle to the Colossians. Some of the circumstances which gave occasion to this epistle can be gathered from the history in the Acts of the Apostles; others can be derived from the epistle itself. From these sources of information we learn the following things in reference to the state of the church in Ephesus, which made it proper that Timothy should be left there, and that these instructions should be given him to regulate his conduct.

(1)there was much opposition to the apostle Paul from the Jews who resided there; Acts 19:8-9.

(2)there were in the church teachers who endeavored to enforce the maxims of the Jewish law, and to represent that law as binding on Christians; 1 Timothy 1:6-7.

(3)some of the Jews residing there were addicted to exorcism, and endeavored to make use of Christianity and the name of Jesus to promote their selfish ends; Acts 19:14; compare 1 Timothy 1:4.

(4)the Jewish teachers laid great stress on genealogies and traditions. and were much given to debates about various questions connected with the law; 1 Timothy 1:4-6,

(5)There were erroneous views prevailing respecting the rights of women, and the place which they ought to occupy in the church: 1 Timothy 2:8-15.

(6)the organization of the officers of the church had not been effected as Paul wished it to be. It is probable that some of the officers had been appointed, and that some instructions had been given to them in regard to their duties, but the whole arrangement had not been completed; 1 Timothy 3:4;

(7)There were certain questions in regard to the proper treatment of widows which had not yet been determined; Ephesians 6:5-10; Colossians 3:22; Colossians 4:2.

Such appears to have been the state of things when the apostle was compelled suddenly to leave Ephesus. He had hitherto directed the affairs of the church there mainly himself, and had endeavored to correct the errors then prevailing, and to establish the church on a right foundation. Matters appear to have been tending to the desired result; religion was acquiring a strong hold on the members of the church Acts 19:18-20; error was giving way; the community was becoming more and more impressed with the value of Christianity; the influence of idolatry was becoming less and less Acts 19:23, and the arrangements for the complete organization of the church were in progress. Such was the promising state of things in these respects that the apostle hoped to be able to leave Ephesus at no very distant period, and had actually made arrangements to do it; Acts 19:21. But his arrangements were not quite finished, and before they were completed, he was compelled to leave by the tumult excited by Demetrius. He left Timothy, therefore, to complete the arrangements, and, in this first epistle, gave him all the instructions which were necessary to guide him in that work.

This view of the state of things in Ephesus at the time when the apostle was constrained to leave it, will enable us to understand the drift of the epistle, and the reasons why the various topics found in it were introduced. At the same time, the instructions are of so general a character that they would be an invaluable guide to Timothy not only at Ephesus, but through

his life; and not only to him, but to all the ministers of the gospel in every age and land. A more detailed view of these topics will be furnished in the analysis prefixed to the several chapters of the epistle.

The Epistles to Timothy and Titus occupy a very important place in the New Testament, and without them there would be a manifest and most material defect in the volume of inspiration. Their canonical authority has never been questioned by the great body of the church, and there is no doubt that they are the productions of the apostle Paul. If the various epistles which he wrote, and the various other books of the New Testament; be attentively examined, it will be found that each one is designed to accomplish an important object, and that if anyone were removed a material chasm would be made. Though the removal of anyone of them would not so impair the volume of the New Testament as to obscure any essential doctrine, or prevent our obtaining the knowledge of the way of salvation from the remainder, yet it would mar the beauty and symmetry of the truth, and would render the system of instruction defective and incomplete.

This is true in regard to the epistles to Timothy and Titus, as it is of the other epistles. They fill a department which nothing else in the New Testament would enable us to supply, and without which instructions to man respecting redemption would be incomplete. They relate mainly "to the office of the ministry;" and though there are important instructions, of the Saviour himself respecting the office (Matthew 10; Mark 16, add elsewhere), and though in the address of Paul to the elders of Ephesus Acts 20, and in the Epistles to the Corinthians, there are invaluable suggestions respecting it, yet such is its importance in the organization of the church, that more full and complete instructions seem to be imperiously demanded. Those instructions are furnished in these epistles. They are as full and complete as we could desire in regard to the nature of the office, the qualifications for it, and the duties which grow out of it.

They are fitted not only to direct Timothy and Titus in the work to which they were specifically appointed, but to counsel the ministry in every age and in every land. It is obvious that the character and welfare of the church depend greatly, if not entirely, on the character of the ministry. The office of the ministry is God‘s great appointment for the preservation of pure

religion, and for spreading it abroad through the world. The church adheres to the truth; is built up in faith; is distinguished for love, and purity, and zeal, in proportion as the ministry is honored, and shows itself qualified for its work. In every age corruption in the church has commenced in the ministry; and where the gospel has been spread abroad with zeal, and the church has arisen in her strength and beauty, it has been pre-eminently where God has sent down his Spirit in copious measures on those who have filled the sacred office. So important, then, is this office to the welfare of the church and the world, that it was desirable that full instructions should be furnished in the volume of revelation in regard to its nature and design. Such instructions we have in these epistles, and there is scarcely any portion of the New Testament which the church could not better afford to part with than the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. Had the ministry always been such as these epistles contemplate; had they who have filled the sacred office always had the character and qualifications here described, we may believe that the church would have been saved from the strifes that have torn it, and that the pure gospel would long before this have been spread through the world.

But it is not to the ministry only that these Epistles are of so much value. They are of scarcely less importance to the church at large. Its vitality; its purity; its freedom from strife; its zeal and love and triumph in spreading the gospel, depend on the character of the ministry. If the church will prosper from age to age, the pulpit must be filled with a pious, learned, laborious, and devoted ministry, and one of the first cares of the church should be that such a ministry should be secured. This great object cannot better be attained than by keeping the instructions in these Epistles steadily before the minds of the members of the church; and though a large part of them is particularly adapted to the ministers of the gospel, yet the church itself can in no better way promote its own purity and prosperity than by a prayerful and attentive study of the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

1 TIMOTHY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter 1 Timothy 1:1-2.

(2) the purpose for which he had left him at Ephesus; 1 Timothy 1:3-4. It was that he might correct the false instructions of some of the teachers there, and especially, as it would seem, in regard to the true use of the law. They gave undue importance to somethings in the laws of Moses; they did not understand the true nature and design of his laws; and they mingled in their instructions much that was mere fable.

(3) the true use and design of the law; 1 Timothy 1:5-11. It was to produce love not vain jangling. It was not made to fetter the conscience by vain and troublesome austerities and ceremonies; it was to restrain and bind the wicked. The use of the law, according to these teachers, and according to the prevailing Jewish notions, was to prescribe a great number of formalities, and to secure outward conformity in a great variety of cumbrous rites and ceremonies. Paul instructs Timothy to teach them that love, out of a pure heart and a good conscience, was the elementary principle of religion, and that the "law" was primarily designed to restrain and control the wicked, and that the gospel brought to light and enforced this important truth.

(4) the mention of the gospel in this connection, leads Paul to express his thanks to God that he had been entrusted with this message of salvation; 1 Timothy 1:12-17. Once he had the same views as others. But he had obtained mercy, and he was permitted to publish that glorious gospel which had shed such light on the law of God, and which had revealed a plan of salvation that was worthy of universal acceleration.

(5) this solemn duty of preaching the gospel he commits now to Timothy, 1 Timothy 1:18-20. He says that he had been called to the work in accordance with the prophecies which had been uttered of him in anticipation of his future usefulness in the church, and in the expectation that he would not, like some others, make shipwreck of his faith.

Verse 1

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ; - see the notes on Romans 1:1.

By the commandment of God - See the notes at 1 Corinthians 1:1.

Our Saviour - The name Saviour is as applicable to God the Father as to the Lord Jesus Christ, since God is the great Author of salvation; see the notes, Luke 1:47; compare 1 Timothy 4:10; Titus 2:10; Jude 1:25.

And Lord Jesus Christ - The apostle Paul had received his commission directly from him; see the notes, Galatians 1:11-12.

Which is our hope - See the notes at Colossians 1:27.

Verse 2

Unto Timothy - For an account of Timothy, see Intro. Section 1.

My own son in the faith - Converted to the Christian faith by my instrumentality, and regarded by me with the affection of a father; see notes, 1 Corinthians 4:15. Paul had no children of his own, and he adopted Timothy as a son, and uniformly regarded and treated him as such. He had the same feeling also toward Titus; Titus 1:4; compare Galatians 4:19 note; 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 1 Thessalonians 2:11 notes; and Philemon 1:10 note.

Grace, mercy, and peace, … - See the notes, Romans 1:7.

Verse 3

As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus - It is clear from this, that Paul and Timothy had been laboring together at Ephesus, and the language accords with the supposition that Paul had been compelled to leave before he had completed what he had designed to do there. See the Intro. Section 2.

When I went into Macedonia - Having been driven away by the excitement caused by Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen; Acts 20:1. See the Intro. Section 2,3.

That thou mightest charge some - The word charge here - παραγγειλης parangeilēs- seems to mean more than is commonly implied by the word as used by us. If it had been a single direction or command, it might have been given by Paul himself before he left, but it seems rather to refer to that continuous instruction which would convince these various errorists and lead them to inculcate only the true doctrine. As they may have been numerous - as they may have embraced various forms of error, and as they might have had plausible grounds for their belief, this was evidently a work requiring time, and hence Timothy was left to effect this at leisure. It would seem that the wrath which had been excited against Paul had not affected

Timothy, but that he was permitted to remain and labor without molestation. It is not certainly known who these teachers were, but they appear to have been of Jewish origin, and to have inculcated the special sentiments of the Jews respecting the law.

That they teach no other doctrine - That is, no other doctrine than that taught by the apostles. The Greek word here used is not found in the classic writers, and does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament, except in 1 Timothy 6:3 of this Epistle, where it is rendered "teach otherwise." We may learn here what was the design for which Timothy was left at Ephesus.

(1) it was for a temporary purpose, and not as a permanent arrangement. It was to correct certain errors prevailing there which Paul would have been able himself soon to correct if he had been suffered to remain. Paul expected soon to return to him again, and then they would proceed unitedly with their work; 1 Timothy 4:13; 1 Timothy 3:15.

(2) it was not that he might be the "Bishop" of Ephesus. There is no evidence that he was "ordained" there at all, as the subscription to the Second Epistle declares (see the notes on that subscription), nor were the functions which he was to perform, those of a prelatical bishop. He was not to take the charge of a "diocese," or to ordain ministers of the "second rank," or to administer the rite of confirmation, or to perform acts of discipline. He was left there for a purpose which is specified, and that is as far as possible from what are now regarded as the appropriate functions of a prelatical bishop. Perhaps no claim which has ever been set up has had less semblance of argument than that which asserts that Timothy was the "Bishop of Ephesus." See this clause examined in my "Inquiry into the Organization and Government of the Apostolic Church," pp. 84-107.

Verse 4

Neither give heed to fables - That is, that they should not bestow their attention on fables, or regard such trifles as of importance. The "fables" here referred to were probably the idle and puerile superstitions and conceits of the Jewish rabbies. The word rendered "fable" (μῦθος muthos) means properly "speech" or "discourse," and then fable or fiction, or a mystic discourse. Such things abounded among the Greeks as well as the Jews, but it is probable that the latter here are particularly intended. These were composed of frivolous and unfounded stories, which they regarded as

of great importance, and which they seem to have desired to incorporate with the teachings of Christianity. Paul, who had been brought up amidst these superstitions, saw at once how they would tend to draw off the mind from the truth, and would corrupt the true religion. One of the most successful arts of the adversary of souls has been to mingle fable with truth; and when he cannot overthrow the truth by direct opposition, to neutralize it by mingling with it much that is false and frivolous.

And endless genealogies - This also refers to Jewish teaching. The Hebrews kept careful genealogical records, for this was necessary in order that the distinction of their tribes might be kept up. Of course, in the lapse of centuries these tables would become very numerous, complicated, and extended - so that they might without much exaggeration be called "endless." The Jews attached great importance to them, and insisted on their being carefully preserved. As the Messiah, however, had now come - as the Jewish polity was to cease - as the separation between them and the pagan was no longer necessary, and the distinction of tribes was now useless, there was no propriety that these distinctions should be regarded by Christians. The whole system was, moreover, contrary to the genius of Christianity, for it served to keep up the pride of blood and of birth.

Which minister questions - Which afford matter for troublesome and angry debates. It was often difficult to settle or understand them. They became complicated and perplexing. Nothing is more difficult than to unravel an extensive genealogical table. To do this, therefore, would often give rise to contentions, and when settled, would give rise still further to questions about rank and precedence.

Rather than godly edifying which is in faith - These inquiries do nothing to promote true religion in the soul. They settle no permanent principle of truth; they determine nothing that is really concerned in the salvation of people. They might be pursued through life, and not one soul be converted by them; they might be settled with the greatest accuracy, and yet not one heart be made better. Is not this still true of many controversies and logomachies in the church? No point of controversy is worth much trouble, which, if it were settled one way or the other, would not tend to convert the soul from sin, or to establish some important principle in promoting true religion. "So do." These words are supplied by our translators, but they are necessary to the sense. The meaning is, that

Timothy was to remain at Ephesus, and faithfully perform the duty which he had been left there to discharge.

Verse 5

Now the end of the commandment - see the notes on Romans 10:4. In order that Timothy might fulfil the design of his appointment, it was necessary that he should have a correct view of the design of the law. The teachers to whom he refers insisted much on its obligation and importance; and Paul designs to say that he did not intend to teach that the law was of no consequence, and was not, when properly understood, obligatory. Its nature and use, however, was not correctly understood by them, and hence it was of great importance for Timothy to inculcate correct views of the purpose for which it was given. The word "commandment" here some have understood of the gospel (Doddridge), others of the particular command which the apostle here gives to Timothy (Benson, Clarke, and Macknight); but it seems more naturally to refer to all that God had commanded - his whole law. As the error of these teachers arose from improper views of the nature and design of law, Paul says that that design should be understood. It was not to produce distinctions and angry contentions, and was not to fetter the minds of Christians with minute and burdensome observances, but it was to produce love.

Is charity - On the meaning of this word, see notes on 1 Corinthians 13:1.

Out of a pure heart - The love which is genuine must proceed from a holy heart. The commandment was not designed to secure merely the outward expressions of love, but that which had its seat in the heart.

And of a good conscience - A conscience free from guilt. Of course there can be no genuine love to God where the dictates of conscience are constantly violated, or where a man knows that he is continually doing wrong. If a man wishes to have the evidence of love to God, he must keep a good conscience. All pretended love, where a man knows that he is living in sin, is mere hypocrisy.

And of faith unfeigned - Undissembled confidence in God. This does seem to be intended specifically of faith in the Lord Jesus, but it means that all true love to God, such as this law would produce, must be based on confidence in him. How can anyone have love to him who has no confidence in him? Can we exercise love to a professed friend in whom we

have no confidence? Faith, then, is as necessary under the law as it is under the gospel.

Verse 6

From which some having swerved - Margin, "not aiming at." The word here used - ἀστοχέω astocheō- means properly, to miss the mark; to err; and then, to swerve from compare 1 Timothy 6:21; 2 Timothy 2:18. It does not mean that they had ever had that from which they are said to have swerved - for it does not follow that a man who misses a mark had ever hit it - but merely that they failed of the things referred to, and had turned to vain talk. The word "which" ὧν hōnin the plural, refers not to the law, but to the things enumerated - a pure heart, a good conscience, and unfeigned faith.

Have turned aside unto vain jangling - Vain talk, empty declamation, discourses without sense. The word here used does not mean contention or strife, but that kind of discourse which is not founded in good sense. They were discourses on their pretended distinctions in the law; on their traditions and ceremonies; on their useless genealogies, and on the fabulous statements which they had appended to the law of Moses.

Verse 7

Desiring to be teachers of the law - That is, to have the credit and reputation of being well versed in the law of Moses, and qualified to explain it to others. This was a high honor among the Jews, and these teachers laid claim to the same distinction.

Understanding neither what they say - That is, they do not understand the true nature and design of that law which they attempt to explain to others. This was true of the Jewish teachers, and equally so of those in the church at Ephesus, who attempted to explain it. They appear to have explained the law on the principles which commonly prevailed among the Jews, and hence their instructions tended greatly to corrupt the faith of the gospel. They made affirmations of what they knew nothing of, and though they made confident observations, yet they often pertained to things about which they had no knowledge. One needs only a slight acquaintance with the manner of teaching among Jewish rabbies, or with the things found in their traditions, to see the accuracy of this statement of the apostle. A sufficient illustration of this may be found in Allen's "Modern Judaism."

Verse 8

But we know that the law is good - We admit this; it is that which we all concede. This declaration is evidently made by the apostle to guard against the supposition that he was an enemy of the law. Doubtless this charge would be brought against him, or against anyone who maintained the sentiments which he had just expressed. By speaking thus of what those teachers regarded as so important in the law, it would be natural for them to declare that he was an enemy of the law itself, and would be glad to see all its claims abrogated. Paul says that he designs no such thing. He admitted that the law was good. He was never disposed for one moment to call it in question. He only asked that it should be rightly understood and properly explained. Paul was never disposed to call in question the excellency and the utility of the law, however it might bear on him or on others; compare Romans 7:12 note, and Acts 21:21-26 notes.

If a man use it lawfully - In a proper manner; for the purposes for which it was designed. It is intended to occupy a most important place, but it should not be perverted. Paul asked only that it should be used aright, and in order to this, he proceeds to state what is its true design.

Verse 9

Knowing this - That is, "If anyone knows, or admits this, he has the prover view of the design of the law." The apostle does not refer particularly to himself as knowing or conceding this, for then he would have uses the plural form of the participle (see the Greek), but he means that anyone who had just views of the law would see that that which he proceeds to specify was its real purpose.

The law is not made for a righteous man - There has been great variety in the interpretation of this passage. Some suppose that the law here refers to the ceremonial laws of Moses (Clarke, Rosenmuller, Abbot); others to the denunciatory part of the law (Doddridge and Bloomfield); and others that it means that the chief purpose of the law was to restrain the wicked. It seems clear, however, that the apostle does not refer merely to the ceremonial law, for he specifies that which condemns the unholy and profane; the murderers of fathers and mothers; liars and perjured persons. It was not the ceremonial law which condemned these things, but the moral law. It cannot be supposed, moreover, that the apostle meant to say that the law was not binding on a righteous man, or that he was under no obligation to obey it - for he everywhere teaches that the moral law is obligatory on all mankind.

To suppose also that a righteous man is released from the obligation to obey the law, that is, to do right, is an absurdity. Nor does he seem to mean, as Macknight supposes, that the law was not given for the purpose of justifying a righteous man - for this was originally one of its designs. Had man always obeyed it, he would have been justified by it. The meaning seems to be, that the purpose of the law was not to fetter and perplex those who were righteous, and who aimed to do their duty and to please God. It was not intended to produce a spirit of servitude and bondage. As the Jews interpreted it, it did this, and this interpretation appears to have been adopted by the teachers at Ephesus, to whom Paul refers. The whole tendency of their teaching was to bring the soul into a state of bondage, and to make religion a condition, of servitude. Paul teaches, on the other hand, that religion was a condition of freedom, and that the main purpose of the law was not to fetter the minds of the righteous by numberless observances and minute regulations, but that it was to restrain the wicked from sin. This is the case with all law. No good man feels himself lettered and manacled by wholesome laws, nor does he feel that the purpose of law is to reduce him to a state of servitude. It is only the wicked who have this feeling - and in this sense the law is made for a man who intends to do wrong.

For the lawless - To bind and restrain them. The word here used means, properly, those who have no law, and then those who are transgressors - the wicked. It is rendered transgressors in Matthew 15:28; Luke 22:37, and wicked, Acts 2:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

And disobedient - Those who are insubordinate, lawless, refractory. The word properly means those who are under no subjection or authority. It occurs in the New Testament only here, and Titus 1:6, Titus 1:10, where it is rendered unruly, and Hebrews 2:8, where it is translated not put under; that is, under Christ.

For the ungodly - Those who have no religion; who do not worship or honor God. The Greek word occurs in the following places, in all of which it is rendered ungodly; Romans 4:5; Romans 5:6; 1 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 4:18; 2 Peter 2:5; 2 Peter 3:7; Jude 1:15. The meaning is, that the law is against all who do not worship or honor God.

And for sinners - The word used here is the common word to denote sinners. It is general, and includes sins of all kinds.

For unholy - "Those who are regardless of duty to God or man," Robinson, Lexicon. The word occurs in the New Testament only here, and

in 2 Timothy 3:2. It has particular reference to those who fail of their duty toward God, and means those who have no piety; who are irreligious.

And profane - This does not necessarily mean that they were profane in the sense that blasphemed the name of God, or were profane swearers - though the word would include that - but it means properly those who are impious, or who are scoffers; notes, Hebrews 12:16. The word occurs only in the following places, in all of which it is rendered profane: 1 Timothy 1:9; 1 Timothy 4:7; 1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 2:16; Hebrews 12:16. A man who treats religion with contempt. mockery, or scorn, would correspond with the meaning of the word.

For murderers of fathers - The Greek properly means a "smiter of a father" (Robinson), though here it undoubtedly means a parricide. This was expressly forbidden by the law of Moses, and was a crime punishable by death; Exodus 21:15. It is said to have been a crime which the Roman law did not contemplate as possible, and hence that there was no enactment against it. It is, indeed, a crime of the highest order; but facts have shown that if the Romans supposed it would never be committed, they did not judge aright of human nature. There is no sin which man will not commit if unrestrained, and there is in fact no conceivable form of crime of which he has not been guilty.

Murderers of mothers - A still more atrocious and monstrous crime, if possible, than the former. We can conceive nothing superior to this in atrocity, and yet it has been committed. Nero caused his mother to be murdered, and the annals of crime disclose the names of not a few who have imbrued their own hands in the blood of those who bare them. This was also expressly forbidden by the law of Moses; Exodus 21:15.

For manslayers - This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means a homicide - a murderer. The crime is expressly forbidden by the law; Exodus 20:13; Genesis 9:6.

Verse 10

For whoremongers - Leviticus 19:29; Leviticus 20:5.

For them that defile themselves with mankind - Sodomites. See the evidence that this crime abounded in ancient times, in the notes on Romans 1:27. It was forbidden by the law of Moses, and was punishable with death; Leviticus 20:13.

For menstealers - The word here used - ἀνδρᾶποδιστής andrapodistēs- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means one who

steals another for the purpose of making him a slave - a kidnapper. This is the common way in which people are made slaves. Some, indeed, are taken in war and sold as slaves, but the mass of those who have been reduced to servitude have become slaves by being kidnapped. Children are stolen from their parents, or wives from their husbands, or husbands from their wives, or parents from their children, or whole families are stolen together. None become slaves voluntarily, and consequently the whole process of making slaves partakes of the nature of theft of the worst kind. What theft is like that of stealing a man‘s children, or his wife, or his father or mother? The guilt of manstealing is incurred essentially by those who purchase those who are thus stolen - as the purchaser of a stolen horse, knowing it to be so, participates in the crime. A measure of that criminality also adheres to all who own slaves, and who thus maintain the system - for it is a system known to have been originated by theft. This crime was expressly forbidden by the law of God, and was made punishable with death; Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7.

For liars - Leviticus 6:2-4; Leviticus 19:11.

For perjured persons - Those who swear falsely; Leviticus 19:12; Leviticus 6:3; Exodus 20:7.

And if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine - To sound or correct teaching - for so the word doctrine means. The meaning is, if there is anything else that is opposed to the instruction which the law of God gives.

Verse 11

According to the glorious gospel - The gospel is a system of divine revelation. It makes known the will of God. It states what is duty, and accords in its great principles with the law, or is in harmony with it. The law, in principle, forbids all which the gospel forbids, and in publishing the requirements of the gospel, therefore, Paul says that the law really forbade all which was prohibited in the gospel, and was designed to restrain all who would act contrary to that gospel. There is no contradiction between the law and the gospel. They forbid the same things, and in regard to morals and true piety, the clearer revelations of the gospel are but carrying out the principles stated in the law. They who preach the gospel, then, should not be regarded as arrayed against the law, and Paul says that they who preached the gospel aright really stated the true principles of the law. This he evidently intends should bear against the false teachers who professed to

explain the law of Moses. He means here that if a man wished to explain the law, the best explanation would be found in that gospel which it was his office to publish; compare Romans 3:31.

Of the blessed God - Revealed by the blessed God - the same God who was the Author of the law.

Which was committed to my trust - Not to him alone, but to him in common with others. He had received it directly from the Lord; 1 Corinthians 9:17; notes, Galatians 1:1.

Verse 12

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord - The mention of the gospel 1 Timothy 1:11, and of the fact that it was committed to him, leads the apostle to express his gratitude to him who had called him to the work of preaching it. The Lord Jesus had called him when he was a blasphemer and a persecutor. He had constrained him to leave his career of persecution and blasphemy, and to consecrate himself to the defense and the propagation of the gospel. For all this, though it had required him to give up his favorite projects in life, and all the flattering schemes of ambition, he now felt that praise was due to the Redeemer. If there is anything for which a good man will be thankful, and should be thankful, it is that he has been so directed by the Spirit and providence of God as to be put into the ministry. It is indeed a work of toil, and of self-denial, and demanding many sacrifices of personal ease and comfort. It requires a man to give up his splendid prospects of worldly distinction, and of wealth and ease. It is often identified with want, and poverty, and neglect, and persecution. But it is an office so honorable, so excellent, so noble, and ennobling; it is attended with so many precious comforts here, and is so useful to the world, and it has such promises of blessedness and happiness in the world to come, that no matter what a man is required to give up in order to become a minister of the gospel, he should be thankful to Christ for putting him into the office. A minister, when he comes to die, feels that the highest favor which Heaven has conferred on him has been in turning his feet away from the paths of ambition, and the pursuits of ease or gain, and leading him to that holy work to which he has been enabled to consecrate his life.

Who hath enabled me - Who has given me ability or strength for this service. The apostle traced to the Lord Jesus the fact that he was in the ministry at all, and all the ability which he had to perform the duties of that holy office. It is not necessary here to suppose, as many have done, that he

refers to miraculous power conferred on him, but he makes the acknowledgment which any faithful minister would do, that all the strength which he has to perform the duties of his office is derived from Christ; compare John 15:5 note; 1 Corinthians 15:10 note.

For that he counted me faithful - This is equivalent to saying that he reposed confidence in me. It means that there was something in the character of Paul, and in his attachment to the Saviour, on which reliance could be placed, or that there was that which gave the assurance that he would be faithful. A sovereign, when he sends an ambassador to a foreign court, reposes confidence in him, and would not commission him unless he had reason to believe that he would be faithful. So it is in reference to all who are called by the Redeemer into the ministry. They are his ambassadors to a lost world. His putting them into the ministry is an act expressive of great confidence in them - for he commits to them great and important interests. Hence, learn:

(1) that no one ought to regard himself as called to the ministry who will not be "faithful" to his Master; and,

(2) that the office of the ministry is most honorable and responsible. Nowhere else are there so great interests entrusted to man.

Verse 13

Who was before a blasphemer - This does not mean that Paul before his conversion was what would now be regarded as an open blasphemer - that he was one who abused and reviled sacred things, or one who was in the habit of profane swearing. His character appears to have been just the reverse of this, for he was remarkable for treating what he regarded as sacred with the utmost respect; see the notes on Philemon 3:4-6. The meaning is, that he had reviled the name of Christ, and opposed him and his cause - not believing that he was the Messiah; and in thus opposing he had really been guilty of blasphemy. The true Messiah he had in fact treated with contempt and reproaches, and he now looked back upon that fact with the deepest mortification, and with wonder that one who had been so treated by him should have been willing to put him into the ministry. On the meaning of the word blaspheme, see the notes on Matthew 9:3; compare Acts 26:11. In his conduct here referred to, Paul elsewhere says, that he thought at the time that he was doing what he ought to do Acts 26:9; here he

says that he now regarded it as blasphemy. Hence, learn that people may have very different views of their conduct when they come to look at it in subsequent life. What they now regard as harmless, or even as right and proper, may hereafter overwhelm them with shame and remorse. The sinner will yet feel the deepest self-reproaches for that which now gives us no uneasiness.

And a persecutor - Acts 9:1 ff; Acts 22:4; Acts 26:11; 1 Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13, Galatians 1:23.

And injurious - The word here used (ὑβριστής hubristēs), occurs only in one other place in the New Testament, Romans 1:30, where it is rendered "despiteful." The word injurious does not quite express its force. It does not mean merely doing injury, but refers rather to the manner or spirit in which it is done. It is a word of intenser signification than either the word "blasphemer," or "persecutor," and means that what he did was done with a proud, haughty, insolent spirit. There was wicked and malicious violence, an arrogance and spirit of tyranny in what he did, which greatly aggravated the wrong that was done; compare the Greek in Matthew 22:6; Luke 11:45; Luke 18:32; Acts 14:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 12:10, for illustrations of the meaning of the word. Tyndale and Coverdale render it here "tyrant."

But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief - compare notes on Luke 23:34. The ignorance and unbelief of Paul were not such excuses for what he did that they would wholly free him from blame, nor did he regard them as such - for what he did was with a violent and wicked spirit - but they were mitigating circumstances. They served to modify his guilt, and were among the reasons why God had mercy on him. What is said here, therefore, accords with what the Saviour said in his prayer for his murderers; "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It is undoubtedly true that persons who sin ignorantly, and who regard themselves as right in what they do, are much more likely to obtain mercy than those who do wrong designedly.

Yet we cannot but regard - Paul's "ignorance in unbelief" as, in itself, a grievous sin, He had abundant means of knowing the truth had he been disposed to inquire with patience and candor. His great abilities and excellent education are a further aggravation of the crime. It is, therefore, impossible to acquiesce in any solution of this clause which seems to make criminal ignorance a ground of mercy. The author, however, intends nothing

of this kind, nor would it be fair to put such construction on his words. Yet, a little more fullness had been desirable on a subject of this nature. It is certain, that, independent of the nature of the ignorance, whether willful or otherwise, the character of crime is affected by it. He who should oppose truth, knowing it to be such, is more guilty than he who opposes it in ignorance, or under the conviction that it is not truth, but falsehood. In a certain sense, too, this ignorance, may be regarded as a reason why mercy is bestowed on such as sin desperately or blasphemously under it. Rather, it is a reason why they are not excluded from mercy. It shows why persons so guilty are not beyond its pale. This is, we think, the true key both to the passage, and that in Luke 23:34. The ignorance is not a reason why God should bestow mercy on such persons, rather than on others left to perish, but a reason why they obtain mercy at all, who, by their blasphemies had been supposed to have reached the sin against the Holy Spirit.

Now consider the passage in this view. The apostle had just been showing how great a sinner he had formerly been. His criminality had been so great that it went near to shutting him out from mercy altogether. Had he maliciously persecuted and blasphemed Christ, knowing him to be the Messiah, his had been the unpardonable sin, and his lot that of judicial, final obduracy. But he had not got that length. He was saved from that gulph, and obtained mercy, because, sinning ignorantly and in unbelief, he was not beyond its range.

That Paul should set himself to excuse his guilt is altogether impossible. He does the very reverse. He has but escaped the unpardonable sin. He is chief of sinners. He owes his salvation to exceeding abundant grace. All long-suffering has been exercised toward him. He affirms, that mercy was extended to him, that, to the end of time, there might be a proof or pattern of mercy to the guiltiest. Had he been assigning a reason why he obtained mercy, rather than others left to perish, doubtless that had been what he has elsewhere assigned and defended, "God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion;" Romans 9:15.

Verse 14

And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant - That is, in his conversion under these circumstances and in the aid which was afterward

imparted to him in his work.

With faith and love which is in Christ Jesus - Accompanied with the exercise of faith and love; or producing faith and love. The grace which was imparted to him was seen in the faith and love which it produced; see the notes, 1 Corinthians 15:10.

Verse 15

This is a faithful saying - Greek, "Faithful is the word," or doctrine - ὁ λογος ho logosThis verse has somewhat the character of a parenthesis, and seems to have been thrown into the midst of the narrative because the mind of the apostle was full of the subject. He had said that he, a great sinner, had obtained mercy. This naturally led him to think of the purpose for which Christ came into the world - to save sinners - and to think how strikingly that truth had been illustrated in his own case, and how that case had shown that it was worthy the attention of all. The word rendered "saying," means in this place doctrine, position, or declaration. The word "faithful," means assuredly true; it was that which might be depended on, or on which reliance might be placed. The meaning is, that the doctrine that Christ came to save sinners might be depended on as certainly true; compare 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 3:8.

And worthy of all acceptation - Worthy to be embraced or believed by all. This is so, because:

(1) all are sinners and need a Saviour. All, therefore ought to welcome a doctrine which shows them how they may be saved.

(2) because Christ died for all. If he had died for only a part of the race, and could save only a part, it could not be said with any propriety that the doctrine was worthy of the acceptance of all. If that were so, what had it to do with all? How could all be interested in it or benefited by it If medicine had been provided for only a part of the patients in a hospital, it could not be said that the announcement of such a fact was worthy the attention of all. It would be highly worthy the attention of those for whom it was designed, but there would be a part who would have nothing to do with it; and why should they concern themselves about it? But if it was provided for each one, then each one would have the highest interest in it. So, if salvation has been provided for me, it is a matter claiming my profoundest attention; and the same is true of every human being. If not provided for me, I have nothing to do with it. It does not concern me at all.

See this subject discussed at length in the supplementary note on 2 Corinthians 5:14.

(3) the manner in which the provision of salvation has been made in the gospel is such as to make it worthy of universal acceptation. It provides for the complete pardon of sin, and the restoration of the soul to God. This is done in a way that is honorable to God - maintaining his law and his justice; and, at the same time, it is in a way that is honorable to man. He is treated afterward as a friend of God and an heir of life. He is raised up from his degradation, and restored to the favor of his Maker. If man were himself to suggest a way of salvation, he could think of none that would be more honorable to God and to himself; none that would do so much to maintain the law and to elevate him from all that now degrades him. What higher honor can be conferred on man than to have his salvation sought as an object of intense and earnest desire by one so great and glorious as the Son of God?

(4) it is worthy of all acceptance, from the nature of the salvation itself. Heaven is offered, with all its everlasting glories, through the blood of Christ - and is not this worthy of universal acceptation? People would accept of a coronet or crown; a splendid mansion, or a rich estate; a present of jewels and gold, if freely tendered to them - but what trifles are these compared with heaven! If there is anything that is worthy of universal acceptation, it is heaven - for all will be miserable unless they enter there.

That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners - The great and unique doctrine of the gospel. He "came into the world." He therefore had a previous existence. He came. He had, therefore, an object in coming. It makes his gospel more worthy of acceptation that he had an intention, a plan, a wish, in thus coming into the world. He came when he was under no necessity of coming; he came to save, not to destroy; to reveal mercy, not to denounce judgment; to save sinners - the poor, the lost, the wandering, not to condemn them; he came to restore them to the favor of God, to raise them up from their degradation, and to bring them to heaven.

Of whom I am chief - Greek, "first." The word is used to denote eminence - and it means that he occupied the first rank among sinners. There were none who surpassed him. This does not mean that he had been

the greatest of sinners in all respects, but that in some respects he had been so great a sinner, that on the whole there were none who had surpassed him. That to which he particularly refers was doubtless the part which he had taken in putting the saints to death; but in connection with this, he felt, undoubtedly, that he had by nature a heart eminently prone to sin; see Philemon 3:6; Acts 26:4-5. After his conversion, he never attempted to extenuate his conduct, or excuse himself. He was always ready, in all circles, and in all places, to admit to its fullest extent the fact that he was a sinner. So deeply convinced was he of the truth of this, that he bore about with him the constant impression that he was eminently unworthy; and hence he does not say merely that he had been a sinner of most aggravated character, but he speaks of it as something that always pertained to him - "of whom I am chief." We may remark:

(1)that a true Christian will always be ready to admit that his past life has been evil;

(2)that this will become the abiding and steady conviction of the soul; and,

(3)that an acknowledgment that we are sinners is not inconsistent with evidence of piety, and with high attainments in it. The most eminent Christian has the deepest sense of the depravity of his own heart and of the evil of his past life.

Verse 16

Howbeit for this cause - That is, this was one of the causes, or this was a leading reason. We are not to suppose that this was the only one. God had other ends to answer by his conversion than this, but this was one of the designs why he was pardoned - that there might be for all ages a permanent proof that sins of the deepest dye might be forgiven. It was well to have one such example at the outset, that a doubt might never arise about the possibility of forgiving great transgressors. The question thus would be settled for ever.

That in me first - Not first in the order of time, as our translation would seem to imply, but that in me the first or chief of sinners (ἐν ἐμοὶ πρώτῳ en emoi prōtō) he might show an example. The idea is, that he sustained the first rank as a sinner, and that Jesus Christ designed to show mercy to him as such, in order that the possibility of pardoning the greatest sinners might

be evinced, and that no one might afterward despair of salvation on account of the greatness of his crimes.

Might shew forth all long-suffering - The highest possible degree of forbearance, in order that a case might never occur about which there could be any doubt. It was shown by his example that the Lord Jesus could evince any possible degree of patience, and could have mercy on the greatest imaginable offenders.

For a pattern - ὑποτύπωσιν hupotupōsinThis word occurs no where else in the New Testament, except in 2 Timothy 1:13, where it is rendered "form." It properly means a form, sketch, or imperfect delineation. Then it denotes a pattern or example, and here it means that the case of Paul was an example for the encouragement of sinners in all subsequent times. It was that to which they might look when they desired forgiveness and salvation. It furnished all the illustration and argument which they would need to show that they might be forgiven. It settled the question forever that the greatest sinners might be pardoned; for as he was "the chief of sinners," it proved that a case could not occur which was beyond the possibility of mercy.

Which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting - All might learn from the mercy shown to him that salvation could be obtained. From this verse we may learn:

(1) that no sinner should despair of mercy. No one should say that he is so great a sinner that he cannot be forgiven. One who regarded himself as the "chief" of sinners was pardoned, and pardoned for the very purpose of illustrating this truth, that any sinner might be saved. His example stands as the illustration of this to all ages; and were there no other, any sinner might now come and hope for mercy. But there are other examples. Sinners of all ranks and descriptions have been pardoned. Indeed, there is no form of depravity of which people can be guilty, in respect to which there are not instances where just such offenders have been forgiven. The persecutor may reflect that great enemies of the cross like him have been pardoned; the profane man and the blasphemer, that many such have been forgiven; the murderer, the thief, the sensualist, that many of the same character have found mercy, and have been admitted to heaven.

(2) the fact that great sinners have been pardoned, is a proof that others of the same description may be also. The same mercy that saved them can

save us - for mercy is not exhausted by being frequently exercised. The blood of atonement which has cleansed so many can cleanse us - for its efficacy is not destroyed by being once applied to the guilty soul. Let no one then despair of obtaining mercy because he feels that his sins are too great to be forgiven. Let him look to the past, and remember what God has done. Let him remember the case of Saul of Tarsus; let him think of David and Peter; let him recall the names of Augustine, and Colonel Gardiner, and the Earl of Rochester, and John Newton, and John Bunyan - and thousands like them, who have found mercy; and in their examples let him see a full proof that God is willing to save any sinner, no matter how vile, provided he is penitent and believing.

Verse 17

Now unto the king eternal - This ascription of praise is offered to God in view of the mercy which he had shown to so great a sinner. It is the outbreak of that grateful emotion which swelled his bosom, and which would not be denied expression, when Paul recalled his former life and the mercy of God to his soul. It somewhat interrupts indeed the train of his remarks, but the heart was so full that it demanded utterance. It is just an instance of the joy and gratitude which fill the soul of a Christian when he is led along in a train of reflections which conduct him to the recollections of his former sin and danger, and to the fact that he has obtained mercy and has now the hope of heaven. The apostle Paul not unfrequently, in accordance with a mode of writing that was common among the Hebrews, interposes an expression of praise in the midst of his reasonings; compare Romans 1:25; 2 Corinthians 11:31. God is called King here, as he is often in the Scriptures, to denote that he rules over the universe. A literal translation of the passage would be, "To the King of ages, who is immortal," etc. The meaning of this expression - "the King of ages" - βασιλει τὼν αἰώνων basilei tōn aiōnōn- is, that he is a king who rules throughout all ages. This does not mean that he himself lives for ever, but that his dominion extends over all ages or generations. The rule of earthly monarchs does not extend into successive ages; his does. Their reign is temporary; his is enduring, and continues as one generation after another passes on, and thus embraces them all.

Immortal - This refers to God himself, not to his reign. It means that he does not die, and it is given to him to distinguish him from other

sovereigns. All other monarchs but God expire - and are just as liable to die at any moment as any other people.

Invisible - 1 Timothy 6:16; see the notes on John 1:18.

The only wise God - notes, Romans 16:27. The word "wise" is missing in many mss., and in some editions of the New Testament. It is omitted by Griesbach; marked as doubtful by Tittman, and rejected in the valuable edition of Hahn. Erasmus conjectures that it was added against the Arians, who maintained that the Father only was God, and that as he is here mentioned as such, the word wise was interpolated to denote merely that the attribute of perfect wisdom belonged only to him. Wetstein regards the reading as genuine, and suspects that in some of the early manuscripts where it is missing it was omitted by the transcriber, because it was regarded as inelegant for two adjectives to be united in this manner. It is not easy to determine as to the genuineness of the reading. The sense is not materially affected, whichever view be adopted. It is true that Yahweh is the only God; it is also true that he is the only wise God. The gods of the pagan are "vanity and a lie," and they are wholly destitute of wisdom; see Psalm 115:3-8; Psalm 135:15-18; Isaiah 40:18-20; Isaiah 44:10-17.

Be honour - Let there be all the respect and veneration shown to him which is his due.

And glory - Praise. Let him be praised by all for ever.

Amen - So be it; an expression of strong affirmation; John 3:3. Here it is used to denote the solemn assent of the heart to the sentiment conveyed by the words used; see the Matthew 6:13 note; 1 Corinthians 14:16 note.

Verse 18

This charge - This command or injunction. It does not refer to any "charge," or "cure," which he had as bishop or minister, as the word is sometimes used now, but to the commands or injunctions which he was delivering to him. The command particularly referred to is that in 1 Timothy 1:8.

According to the prophecies which went before on thee - The general meaning of this is plain. It is, that Paul was committing to him an important trust, and one that required great wisdom and fidelity; and that in doing it he was acting in conformity with the hopes which had been cherished respecting Timothy, and with certain expressed anticipations about his influence in the church. From early life the hope had been entertained that he would be a man to whom important trusts might be committed; and it

had been predicted that he would be distinguished as a friend of religion. These hopes seem to have been cherished in consequence of the careful training in religion which he had had 2 Timothy 2:1; 2 Timothy 3:15, and probably from the early indications of seriousness, prudence, and piety, which he manifested. It was natural to entertain such hopes, and it seems, from this place, that such hopes had even assumed the form of predictions.

It is not absolutely necessary to suppose that these predictions referred to by the word prophecies were inspired, for the word may be used in a popular sense, as it is often now. We speak now familiarly of predicting or foretelling the future usefulness of a serious, prudent, studious, and pious youth. We argue from what he is, to what he will be, and we do not deem it unsafe or improper to hazard the prediction that, if he lives, he will be a man to whom important interests may be entrusted. As there were, however. prophets in the Christian church (Acts 11:27 note; Ephesians 6:10-17; 1 Corinthians 9:7; 2 Corinthians 4:4), and the services of the Christian ministry especially are likened to those of a soldier; 2 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Timothy 4:7. The meaning here is, that he should contend with earnestness as a Christian and a minister in that holy service in which he was engaged, and endeavor to secure the victory. He "wars a good warfare" who is engaged in a righteous cause; who is faithful to his commander and to his post; who is unslumbering in observing the motions of the enemy, and fearless in courage in meeting them; who never forsakes his standard, and who continues thus faithful until the period of his enlistment has expired, or until death. Such a soldier the Christian minister should be.

Verse 19

Holding faith - Fidelity to the cause in which you are enlisted - as a good soldier should do. This does not mean, as it seems to me, that Timothy should hold to the system of doctrines revealed in the gospel, but that he should have that fidelity which a good soldier should have. He should not betray his trust. He should adhere to the cause of his master with unwavering steadfastness. This would include, of course, a belief of the truth, but this is not the leading idea in the phrase.

And a good conscience - see the notes, Acts 23:1. A good conscience, as well as fidelity, is necessary in the service of the Redeemer. A good conscience is that which is well informed in regard to what is right, and where its dictates are honestly followed.

Which some having put away - That is, which good conscience some have put from them, or in other words, have not followed its dictates. The truth thus taught is, that people make shipwreck of their faith by not keeping a good conscience. They love sin. They follow the leadings of passion. They choose to indulge in carnal propensities. As a matter of course, they must, if they will do this, reject and renounce the gospel. People become infidels because they wish to indulge in sin. No man can be a sensualist, and yet love that gospel which enjoins purity of life. If people would keep a good conscience, the way to a steady belief in the gospel would be easy. If people will not, they must expect sooner or later to be landed in infidelity.

Concerning faith - In respect to the whole subject of faith. They are unfaithful to God, and they reject the whole system of the gospel. "Faith" is sometimes used to denote the gospel - as faith is the principal thing in the gospel.

Have made shipwreck - There is an entire destruction of faith - as a ship is wholly ruined that strikes on a rock and sinks.

Verse 20

Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander - Hymeneus is nowhere else mentioned in the New Testament, except in 2 Timothy 2:17, where he is mentioned in connection with Philetus as a very dangerous man. An Alexander is mentioned in Acts 19:33, which some have supposed to be the same as the one referred to here. It is not certain, however, that the same person is intended; see the notes on that verse. In 2 Timothy 4:14, Alexander the coppersmith is mentioned as one who had done the apostle "much evil," and there can be little doubt that he is the same person who is referred to here. One of the doctrines which Hymeneus held was, that the "resurrection was past already" 2 Timothy 2:18; but what doctrine Alexander held is unknown, It is not improbable, as he is mentioned here in connection with Hymeneus, that he maintained the same opinion, and in addition to that he appears to have been guilty of some personal injury to the apostle. Both also were guilty of blasphemy.

Whom I have delivered unto Satan - On the meaning of this expression, see the notes on 1 Corinthians 5:5.

That they may learn not to blaspheme - It cannot be supposed that Satan would undertake to teach them not to blaspheme, or that Paul put them under him as an instructor on that subject. The instructions of Satan

tend rather to teach his followers to blaspheme, and none in his school fail to be apt scholars. The meaning here is, that Paul excommunicated them, and not improbably brought upon them, by giving them over to Satan, some physical maladies, that they might be reformed; compare notes on 1 Corinthians 5:5. It is not entirely clear what is meant by blaspheme in this place; compare notes on 1 Timothy 1:13. It cannot be supposed that they were open and bold blasphemers, for such could not have maintained a place in the church, but rather that they held doctrines which the apostle regarded as amounting to blasphemy; that is, doctrines which were in fact a reproach on the divine character. There are many doctrines held by people which are in fact a reflection on the divine character, and which amount to the same thing as blasphemy. A blasphemer openly expresses views of the divine character which are a reproach to God; an errorist expresses the same thing in another way - by teaching as true about God that which represents him in a false light, and, to suppose which, in fact, is a reproach. The spirit with which this is done in the two cases may be different; the thing itself may be the same. Let us be careful that we hold no views about God which are reproachful to him, and which, though we do not express it in words, may lead us to blaspheme him in our hearts.

1 TIMOTHY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter 1 Timothy 2:1-15 is occupied mainly in directions about the mode of conducting public worship. Timothy had been left at Ephesus to complete the plans which the apostle had commenced in reference to the church there, but from completing which he had been unexpectedly prevented (see the Intro.), and it was important to state the views which he entertained on this subject to Timothy. It was important also that general directions on these subjects should be given, which would be useful to the church at large. The directions in this chapter relate to the following subjects:

I. Public prayer; 1 Timothy 2:1-8.

(1)It was to be offered for all classes of people, without distinction of rank, sect, party, country, or name, especially for all that were in authority; 1 Timothy 2:1-2. The reasons for this were:

(a)That God desired all people to be saved, and it was acceptable to him that prayer should be offered for all; 1 Timothy 2:3-4.

(b)There is but one God over all the human race, and all are alike his children; 1 Timothy 2:5.

(c)There is one and the same Mediator between God and all people; 1 Timothy 2:5.

(d)The same atonement has been made for all; 1 Timothy 2:6-7.

(2)the way in which prayer should be offered. It should be with holy hands, and without the intermingling of any bad passion; 1 Timothy 2:8.

II. The duties of women; 1 Timothy 2:9-15.

(1)Modesty in their demeanor and apparel; 1 Timothy 2:9.

(2)good works - the chief ornament of women professing piety; 1 Timothy 2:10.

(3)the duty of learning from others with a gentle and quiet spirit; 1 Timothy 2:11.

(4)the duty of a proper subordination and submission to man; 1 Timothy 2:12.

(5)the reasons for this subordination and submission are then stated. They are:

(a)That Adam was first formed; 1 Timothy 2:13.

(b)That the woman had been deceived, and should be willing to occupy a subordinate place, as she was first in the transgression and was the means of leading him into sin; 1 Timothy 2:14.

(6)yet, as if to make a kind remark in favor of woman - to show that he did not intend to teach that she was degraded and abandoned of God - the apostle says that she would be under the divine protection, and that in the special sorrow and peril which had been brought upon her for her transgression, God would sustain her if she continued in faith, and evinced the spirit of a Christian in her life; 1 Timothy 2:15.

Verse 1

I exhort, therefore - Margin, "desire." The word exhort, however, better expresses the sense of the original. The exhortation here is not addressed particularly to Timothy, but relates to all who were called to lead in public prayer; 1 Timothy 2:8. This exhortation, it may be observed, is inconsistent with the supposition that a liturgy was then in use, or with the supposition that there ever would be a liturgy - since, in that case, the objects to be prayed for would be prescribed. How singular would it be now for an Episcopal bishop to "exhort" his presbyters to pray "for the President of the United States and for all who are in authority." When the prayer is prescribed, do they not do this as a matter of course?

First of all - That is, as the first duty to be enjoined; the thing that is to be regarded with primary concern; compare Luke 12:1; 2 Peter 1:20. It does not mean that this was to be the first thing in public worship in the order of time, but that it was to be regarded as a duty of primary importance. The duty of praying for the salvation of the whole world was not to be regarded as a subordinate and secondary thing.

Supplications - It is not entirely easy to mark the difference in the meaning of the words used here, and it is not essential. They all relate to prayer, and refer only to the different parts of prayer, or to distinct classes of thought and desire which come before the mind in pleading for others. On

the difference between the words supplications and prayers, see notes on Hebrews 5:7.

Intercessions - The noun used occurs only in this place and in 1 Timothy 4:5, of this Epistle. The verb, however ἐντυγχάνω entungchanōoccurs in Acts 25:4; Romans 8:27, Romans 8:34; Romans 11:2; Hebrews 7:25. See the meaning explained in the Romans 8:26 note; Hebrews 7:25 note. There is one great Intercessor between God and man, who pleads for our salvation on the ground of what he himself has done, but we are permitted to intercede for others, not on the ground of any merit which they or we possess, but on the ground of the merit of the great Advocate and Intercessor. It is an inestimable privilege to be permitted to plead for the salvation of our fellow-men.

Giving of thanks - That is, in behalf of others. We ought to give thanks for the mercy of God to ourselves; it is right and proper also that we should give thanks for the goodness of God to others. We should render praise that there is a way of salvation provided; that no one is excluded from the offer of mercy; and that God is using so many means to call lost sinners to himself.

For all men - Prayers should be made for all people - for all need the grace and mercy of God; thanks should be rendered for all, for all may be saved. Does not this direction imply that Christ died for all mankind? How could we give thanks in their behalf if there were no mercy for them, and no way had been provided by which they could be saved? It may be observed here, that the direction to pray and to give thanks for all people, showed the large and catholic nature of Christianity. It was opposed entirely to the narrow and bigoted feelings of the Jews, who regarded the whole Gentile world as excluded from covenant mercies, and as having no offer of life. Christianity threw down all these barriers, and all people are on a level; and since Christ has died for all, there is ample ground for thanksgiving and praise in behalf of the whole human race.

See Supplementary note, 2 Corinthians 5:14.

Verse 2

For kings - On the respect due to rulers, see the notes on Romans 13:1-7. The meaning here is, that while all people should be the subjects of prayer, those should be particularly remembered before the throne of grace who are in authority. The reason is, that so much depends on their character

and plans; that the security of life, liberty, and property, depends so much on them. God has power to influence their hearts, and to incline them to what is just and equal; and hence we should pray that a divine influence may descend upon them. The salvation of a king is of itself of no more importance than that of a peasant or a slave; but the welfare of thousands may depend on him, and hence he should be made the special subject of prayer.

All that are in authority - Margin, or, "eminent place." This does not necessarily mean those who hold office, but refers to any of elevated rank. The happiness of all who are under their control depends greatly on them, and hence we should pray for them that they may be converted people, and inclined to do that which is right.

That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life - That their hearts may be so inclined to what is right that they may protect us in the enjoyment of religion, and that we may not be opposed or harassed by persecution. This does not mean that their protection would dispose us to lead quiet and peaceful lives, but that under their protection we may be saved from oppression on account of our religion. Christians are disposed of themselves to be peaceful and orderly; they ask of their rulers only that they may not be harassed in the enjoyment of their rights.

In all godliness and honesty - In the practice of all our duties toward God, and of all the duties which we owe to people. The word godliness here denotes piety - or the duty which we owe to God; the word honesty refers to our duties to our fellow-men. The Christian asks from civil rulers such protection that; he maybe enabled quietly to perform both these classes of duties.

Verse 3

For this is good and acceptable - That is, it is good and acceptable to God that we should pray for all people. The reason is, that he desires their salvation, and hence it is agreeable to him that we should pray for it. If there were no provision made for their salvation, or if he was unwilling that they should be saved, it could not be agreeable to him that we should offer prayer for them.

Verse 4

Who will have all men to be saved - That is, it is in accordance with his nature, his feelings, his desires. The word "will" cannot be taken here in the absolute sense, denoting a decree like that by which he willed the

creation of the world, for then it would certainly be done. But the word is often used to denote a desire, wish, or what is in accordance with the nature of anyone. Thus it may be said of God that he "wills" that his creatures may be happy - because it is in accordance with his nature, and because he has made abundant provision for their happiness - though it is not true that he wills it in the sense that he exerts his absolute power to make them happy. God wills that sickness should be relieved, and sorrow mitigated, and that the oppressed should go free, because it is agreeable to his nature; though it is not true that he wills it in the sense that he exerts his absolute power to produce it. A parent wills the welfare of his child. It is in accordance with his nature, his feelings, his desires; and he makes every needful arrangement for it. If the child is not virtuous and happy, it is his own fault. So God wills that all people should be saved. It would be in accordance with his benevolent nature. He has made ample provision for it. He uses all proper means to secure their salvation. He uses no positive means to prevent it, and if they are not saved it will be their own fault. For places in the New Testament where the word here translated "will" (θέλω thelō), means to desire or wish, see Luke 8:20; Luke 23:8; John 16:19; Galatians 4:20; Mark 7:24; 1 Corinthians 7:7; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Corinthians 14:5; Matthew 15:28. This passage cannot mean, as many have supposed, that God wills that all kinds of people should be saved, or that some sinners of every rank and class may be saved, because:

(1) the natural and obvious interpretation of the language is opposed to such a sense. The language expresses the desire that "all men" should be saved, and we should not depart from the obvious sense of a passage unless necessity requires it.

(2) prayer and thanksgiving 1 Timothy 2:1 are directed to be offered, not for some of all ranks and conditions, but for all mankind. No exception is made, and no direction is given that we should exclude any of the race from the expressions of our sympathy, and from an interest in our supplications. The reason given here for that prayer is, that God desires that all people should be saved. But how could this be a reason for praying for all, if it means that God desired only the salvation of some of all ranks?

(3) in 1 Timothy 2:5-6 the apostle gives reasons showing that God wished the salvation of all people, and those reasons are such as to prove

that the language here is to be taken in the most unlimited sense. Those reasons are:

(a)that there is one God over all, and one Mediator between God and people - showing that God is the Father of all, and has the same interest in all; and,

(b)that Christ gave himself a ransom for all - showing that God desired their salvation.

This verse proves:

(1)that salvation is provided for all - for if God wished all people to be saved, he would undoubtedly make provision for their salvation; and if he had not made such provision, it could not be said that he desired their salvation, since no one can doubt that he has power to provide for the salvation of all;

(2)that salvation should be offered to all people - for if God desires it, it is right for his ministers to announce that desire, and if he desires it, it is not proper for them to announce anything contrary to this;

(3)that people are to blame if they are not saved.

If God did not wish their salvation, and if he had made no provision for it, they could not be to blame if they rejected the gospel. If God wishes it, and has made provision for it, and they are not saved, the sin must be their own - and it is a great sin, for there is no greater crime which a man can commit than to destroy his own soul, and to make himself the eternal enemy of his Maker.

And to come unto the knowledge of the truth - The truth which God has revealed; the "truth as it is in Jesus." notes, Ephesians 4:21.

Verse 5

For there is one God - This is a reason for offering prayer for all people, and for the declaration 1 Timothy 2:4 that God desires that all people should be saved. The reason is founded in the fact that he is the common Father of all the race, and that he must have the same desire for the welfare of all his children, He has made them of one blood Acts 17:26, and he must have the same interest in the happiness of all; compare Ephesians 4:6 note; Romans 3:30 note.

And one Mediator between God and men - see Galatians 3:19-20 notes; Hebrews 9:15 note. This also is given as a reason why prayer should be offered for all, and a proof that God desires their salvation. The argument

is, that there is the same Mediator between God and all people. He is not the Mediator between God and a part of the human race, but between "God and men," implying that He desired the salvation of the race. Whatever love there was in giving the Mediator at all, was love for all the race; whatever can be argued from that about the interest which God has in man, is proof of his interest in the race at large. It is proper, therefore, to pray for all. It may be remarked here that there is but one Mediator. There is not one for kings and another for their subjects; one for the rich and another for the poor; one for the master and another for the slave. All are on the same level, and the servant may feel that, in the gift of a Mediator, God regarded him with the same interest that he did his master. It may be added also that the doctrine of the Papists that the saints or the Virgin Mary may act as mediators to procure blessings for us, is false. There is but "one Mediator;" and but one is necessary. Prayer offered to the "saints," or to the "Virgin," is idolatry, and at the same time removes the one great Mediator from the office which he alone holds, of making intercession with God.

The man Christ Jesus - Jesus was truly and properly a man, having a perfect human body and soul, and is often called a man in the New Testament. But this does not prove that he was not also divine - anymore than his being called God (John 1:1; John 20:28; Romans 9:5; 1 John 5:20; Hebrews 1:8), proves that he was not also a man. The use of the word man here was probably designed to intimate that though he was divine, it was in his human nature that we are to consider him as discharging the office. Doddridge.

Verse 6

Who gave himself a ransom for all - This also is stated as a reason why prayer should be offered for all, and a proof that God desires the salvation of all. The argument is, that as Christ died for all, it is proper to pray for all, and that the fact that he died for all is proof that God desired the salvation of all. Whatever proof of his desire for their salvation can be derived from this in relation to any of the race, is proof in relation to all. On the meaning of the phrase "he gave himself a ransom," see the Matthew 20:28 note; Romans 3:25 note; on the fact that it was for "all," see the notes on 2 Corinthians 5:14.

See also the Supp. note on the same passage.

To be testified in due time - Margin, "a testimony." The Greek is, "the testimony in its own times," or in proper times - τὸ μαρτύριον καιροῖς ἰδίοις

to marturion kairois idioisThere have been very different explanations of this phrase. The common interpretation, and that which seems to me to be correct, is, that "the testimony of this will be furnished in the proper time; that is, in the proper time it shall be made known through all the world;" see Rosenmuller. Paul affirms it as a great and important truth that Christ gave himself a ransom for all mankind - for Jews and Gentiles; for all classes and conditions of people alike. This truth had not always been understood. The Jews had supposed that salvation was designed exclusively for their nation, and denied that it could be extended to others, unless they became Jews. According to them, salvation was not provided for, or offered to pagans as such, but only on condition that they became Jews. In opposition to this, Paul says that it was a doctrine of revelation that redemption was to be provided for all people, and that it was intended that the testimony to this should be afforded at the proper time. It was not fully made known under the ancient dispensation, but now the period had come when it should be communicated to all; compare Romans 5:6 note, and Galatians 4:4 note.

Verse 7

Whereunto - Greek, "Unto which;" that is, to the bearing of which testimony I am appointed.

I am ordained - Greek, "I am placed or constituted" - ἐτέθην etethēnThe word "ordain" has now acquired a technical signification, meaning to set apart solemnly to a sacred office by the imposition of hands; but it has not that meaning here. It does not refer to the manner in which he was set apart, or to any act of others in consecrating him to this work, but merely to the fact that he had been placed in this office, or appointed to it. He refers doubtless to the fact that the Lord Jesus had designated him to this work.

A preacher and an apostle - see the 1 Corinthians 9:1-6 notes; Galatians 1:11-12 notes.

I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not - That is, by Christ; or I solemnly appeal to Christ - a form of an oath; notes, Romans 9:1. Paul makes a solemn declaration similar to this in regard to his call to the apostleship, in Galatians 1:20. For the reasons why he did it, see the notes on that verse. It is probable that there were those in Ephesus who denied that he could be an apostle, and hence his solemn declaration affirming it.

A teacher of the Gentiles - Specially appointed to carry the gospel to the Gentiles or the pagan; see the Romans 11:13 note; Galatians 2:7 note.

In faith and verity - These words mean that he was appointed to instruct the Gentiles in faith and the knowledge of the truth.

Verse 8

I will therefore - The Greek word here (βοὺλομαι boulomai) is different from the word rendered "will" - θέλω thelō- in 1 Timothy 2:4. The distinction is, that the word there used - θέλω thelō- denotes an active volition or purpose; the word here used - βοὺλομαι boulomai- a mere passive desire, propensity, willingness. Robinson's Lexicon The meaning here is, "it is my will" - expressing his wish in the case, or giving direction - though using a milder word than that which is commonly employed to denote an act of will.

That men pray everywhere - Not merely in the temple, or in other sacred places, but in all places. The Jews supposed that there was special efficacy in prayers offered at the temple in Jerusalem; the pagan also had the same view in regard to their temples - for both seemed to suppose that they came nearer to God by approaching his sacred abode. Christianity teaches that God may be worshipped in any place, and that we are at all times equally near him; see the John 4:20-24 notes; Acts 17:25 note. The direction here given that men should pray, in contradistinction from the duties of women, specified in the next verse, may be intended to imply that men should conduct the exercises of public worship. The duties of women pertain to a different sphere; compare 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

Lifting up holy hands - To lift up the hands denotes supplication, as it was a common attitude of prayer to spread abroad the hands toward heaven; compare Psalm 68:31; Exodus 9:29, Exodus 9:33; 1 Kings 8:22; 2 Chronicles 6:12-13; Isaiah 1:15; see also Horace *Odes*, iii. 23. 1; Ovid, M. 9:701; Livy, v. 21; Seneca, Luke 9:46; Mark 9:33-34; Philemon 2:14. This is the sense evidently in this place. They were not to approach God in prayer in the midst of clamorous disputings and angry contentions. They were not to come when the mind was heated with debate, and irritated by strife for victory. Prayer was to be offered in a calm, serious, sober state of mind, and they who engaged in polemical strife, or in warm contention of any kind, are little fitted to unite in the solemn act of addressing God. How often are theologians, when assembled together, so heated by debate, and so anxious for party victory, that they are in no suitable state of mind to pray! How often do even good people, holding different views on the disputed points of religious doctrine, suffer their minds to become so excited, and

their temper so ruffled, that they are conscious they are in an unfit state of mind to approach the throne of grace together! That theological debate has gone too far; that strife for victory has become too warm, when the disputants are in such a state of mind that they cannot unite in prayer; when they could not cease their contentions, and with a calm and proper spirit, bow together before the throne of grace.

Verse 9

In like manner also - That is, with the same propriety; with the same regard to what religion demands. The apostle had stated particularly the duty of men in public worship 1 Timothy 2:8, and he now proceeds to state the duty of women. All the directions here evidently refer to the proper manner of conducting public worship, and not to private duties; and the object here is to state the way in which he would have the different sexes appear. He had said that he would have prayers offered for all people (1 Timothy 2:1 ff), and that in offering such petitions he would have the men on whom devolved the duty of conducting public devotion, do it with holy hands, and without any intermingling of passion, and with entire freedom from the spirit of contention. In reference to the duty of females in attendance on public worship, he says that he would have them appear in apparel suitable to the place and the occasion - adorned not after the manner of the world, but with the zeal and love in the cause of the Redeemer which became Christians. He would not have a woman become a public teacher 1 Timothy 2:12, but would wish her ever to occupy the place in society for which she was designed 1 Timothy 2:11, and to which she had shown that she was adapted; 1 Timothy 2:13-14. The direction in 1 Timothy 2:9-12, therefore, is to be understood particularly of the proper deportment of females in the duties of public worship. At the same time, the principles laid down are doubtless such as were intended to apply to them in the other situations in life, for if modest apparel is appropriate in the sanctuary, it is appropriate everywhere. If what is here prohibited in dress is wrong there, it would be difficult to show that it is right elsewhere.

That women adorn themselves - The words "I will" are to be understood here as repeated from 1 Timothy 2:8. The apostle by the use of the word "adorn" (κοσμεῖν kosmein), shows that he is not opposed to ornament or adorning, provided it be of the right kind. The world, as God has made it, is full of beauty, and he has shown in each flower that he is not opposed to true ornament. There are multitudes of things which, so far as

we can see, appear to be designed for mere ornament, or are made merely because they are beautiful. Religion does not forbid true adorning. It differs from the world only on the question what "is" true ornament, or what it becomes us, all things considered, to do in the situation in which we are placed, the character which we sustain, the duties which we have to perform, and the profession which we make. It may be that there are ornaments in heaven which would be anything but appropriate for the condition of a poor, lost, dying sinner on earth.

In modest apparel - The word here rendered "modest" (κόσμιος kosmios), properly relates to ornament, or decoration, and means that which is "well-ordered, decorous, becoming." It does not, properly, mean modest in the sense of being opposed to that which is immodest, or which tends to excite improper passions and desires, but that which is becoming or appropriate. The apostle does not positively specify what this would be, but he mentions somethings which are to be excluded from it, and which, in his view, are inconsistent with the true adorning of Christian females - "broidered hair, gold, pearls, costly array." The sense here is, that the apparel of females should be such as becomes them, or is appropriate to them. The word here used (κόσμιος kosmios), shows that there should be due attention that it may be truly neat, fit, decorous. There is no religion in a negligent mode of apparel, or in inattention to personal appearance - anymore than there is in wearing gold and pearls; and a female may as truly violate the precepts of her religion by neglecting her personal appearance as by excessive attention to it. The true idea here is, that her attention to her appearance should be such that she will be offensive to no class of persons; such as to show that her mind is supremely fixed on higher and more important things, and such as to interfere with no duty which she owes, and no good which she can do, either by spending her time needlessly in personal adorning, or by lavishing that money for dress which might do good to others, or by neglecting the proprieties of her station, and making herself offensive to others.

With shamefacedness - With modesty of appearance and manner - an eminent female virtue, whether in the sanctuary or at home.

And sobriety - The word here used means, properly, "sanity;" then sober-mindedness, moderation of the desires and passions. It is opposed to all that is frivolous, and to all undue excitement of the passions. The idea is,

that in their apparel and deportment they should not entrench on the strictest decorum. Doddridge.

Not with broidered hair - Margin, "plaited." Females in the East pay much more attention to the hair than is commonly done with us. It is plaited with great care, and arranged in various forms, according to the prevailing fashion, and often ornamented with spangles or with silver wire or tissue interwoven; see the notes on Isaiah 3:24. The sense here is, that Christian females are not to imitate those of the world in their careful attention to the ornaments of the head. It cannot be supposed that the mere braiding of the hair is forbidden, but only that careful attention to the manner of doing it, and to the ornaments usually worn in it, which characterized worldly females.

Or gold, or pearls - It is not to be supposed that all use of gold or pearls as articles of dress is here forbidden; but the idea is, that the Christian female is not to seek these as the adorning which she desires, or is not to imitate the world in these personal decorations. It may be a difficult question to settle how much ornament is allowable, and when the true line is passed. But though this cannot be settled by any exact rules, since much must depend on age, and on the relative rank in life, and the means which one may possess, yet there is one general rule which is applicable to all, and which might regulate all. It is, that the true line is passed when more is thought of this external adorning, than of the ornament of the heart. Any external decoration which occupies the mind more than the virtues of the heart, and which engrosses the time and attention more, we may be certain is wrong. The apparel should be such as not to attract attention; such as becomes our situation; such as will not be particularly singular; such as shall leave the impression that the heart is not fixed on it. It is a poor ambition to decorate a dying body with gold and pearls. It should not be forgotten that the body thus adorned will soon need other habiliments, and will occupy a position where gold and pearls would be a mockery. When the heart is right; when there is true and supreme love for religion, it is usually not difficult to regulate the subject of dress.

Costly array - Expensive dress. This is forbidden - for it is foolish, and the money thus employed may be much more profitably used in doing good. "Costly array" includes that which can be ill afforded, and that which is inconsistent with the feeling that the principle ornament is that of the heart.

Verse 10

with good works(which becometh women professing godliness) with good works - That is, it is not appropriate for women who profess to be the followers of the Saviour, to seek to be distinguished for personal, external decorations. If they are Christians, they have seen the vanity of these things, and have fixed the heart on more substantial realities. They are professed followers of Him "who went about doing good," and the performance of good works especially becomes them. They profess to have fixed the affections on God their Saviour, and to be living for heaven; and it is not becoming in them to seek such ornaments as would indicate that the heart is supremely attached to worldly things. There is great beauty in this direction. Good works, or deeds of benevolence, eminently become a Christian female. The nature of woman seems to be adapted to the performance of all deeds demanding kindness, tenderness, and gentleness of feeling; of all that proceeds from pity, sympathy, and affection; and we feel instinctively that while acts of hardy enterprise and daring in a good cause especially become a Christian man, there is something exquisitely appropriate to the female character in deeds of humble and unobtrusive sympathy and benevolence. God seems to have formed her mind for just such things, and in such things it occupies its appropriate sphere rather than in seeking external adorning.

Verse 11

Let the woman learn in silence - Listen attentively to instruction, without attempting to teach in public; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 14:35.

With all subjection - With due subjection to those who are in authority, and who are appointed to minister in holy things; notes, 1 Corinthians 14:34.

Verse 12

But I suffer not a woman to teach - see the notes on 1 Corinthians 14:34.

Nor to usurp authority over the man - notes, 1 Corinthians 11:3.

Verse 13

For Adam was first formed, then Eve - The apostle, in this verse, and the following, gives reasons why a woman should occupy a subordinate situation, and not usurp authority. The first is, that she was second in the act of creation, or was made subsequent to man. The reason here assigned cannot be understood to be merely that of priority of existence - for then it would give every old person authority over a younger one; but it must refer

to the circumstances of the case as detailed in the history of the creation; 1 Corinthians 11:8-9.

Verse 14

And Adam was not deceived - This is the second reason why the woman should occupy a subordinate rank in all things. It is, that in the most important situation in which she was ever placed she had shown that she was not qualified to take the lead. She had evinced a readiness to yield to temptation; a feebleness of resistance; a pliancy of character, which showed that she was not adapted to the situation of headship, and which made it proper that she should ever afterward occupy a subordinate situation. It is not meant here that Adam did not sin, nor even that he was not deceived by the tempter, but that the woman opposed a feebler resistance to the temptation than he would have done, and that the temptation as actually applied to her would have been ineffectual on him. To tempt and seduce him to fall, there were needed all the soft persuasions, the entreaties, and example of his wife.

Satan understood this, and approached man not with the specious argument of the serpent, but through the allurements of his wife. It is undoubtedly implied here that man in general has a power of resisting certain kinds of temptation superior to that possessed by woman, and hence that the headship properly belongs to him. This is, undoubtedly, the general truth, though there may be many exceptions, and many noble cases to the honor of the female sex, in which they evince a power of resistance to temptation superior to man. In many traits of character, and among them those which are most lovely, woman is superior to man; yet it is undoubtedly true that, as a general thing, temptation will make a stronger impression on her than on him. When it is said that "Adam was not deceived," it is not meant that when he partook actually of the fruit he was under no deception, but that he was not deceived by the serpent; he was not first deceived, or first in the transgression. The woman should remember that sin began with her, and she should therefore be willing to occupy an humble and subordinate situation.

But the woman being deceived - She was made to suppose that the fruit would not injure her, but would make her wise, and that God would not fulfil his threatening of death. Sin, from the beginning, has been a process of delusion. Every man or woman who violates the law of God is

deceived as to the happiness which is expected from the violation, and as to the consequences which will follow it.

Verse 15

Notwithstanding she shall be saved - The promise in this verse is designed to alleviate the apparent severity of the remarks just made about the condition of woman, and of the allusion to the painful facts of her early history. What the apostle had just said would carry the mind back to the period in which woman introduced sin into the world, and by an obvious and easy association, to the sentence which had been passed on her in consequence of her transgression, and to the burden of sorrows which she was doomed to bear. By the remark in this verse, however, Paul shows that it was not his intention to overwhelm her with anguish. He did not design to harrow up her feelings by an unkind allusion to a melancholy fact in her history. It was necessary for him to state, and for her to know, that her place was secondary and subordinate, and he wished this truth ever to be kept in memory among Christians. It was not unkind or improper also to state the reasons for this opinion, and to show that her own history had demonstrated that she was not designed for headship.

But she was not to be regarded as degraded and abandoned. She was not to be overwhelmed by the recollection of what "the mother of all living" had done. There were consolations in her case. There was a special divine interposition which she might look for, evincing tender care on the part of God in those deep sorrows which had come upon her in consequence of her transgression; and instead of being crushed and broken-hearted on account of her condition, she should remember that the everlasting arms of God would sustain her in her condition of sorrow and pain. Paul, then, would speak to her the language of consolation, and while he would have her occupy her proper place, he would have her feel that "God was her Friend." In regard to the nature of the consolation referred to here, there has been a considerable variety of opinion. Some have held, that by the expression "she shall be saved in child-bearing," the apostle designs to include all the duties of the maternal relation, meaning that she should be saved through the faithful performance of her duties as a mother.

Robinson, Lexicon. Rosenmuller regards the words rendered "child-bearing" (τεκνογονία teknogonia), as synonymous with education, and supposes that the meaning is, that a woman, by the proper training of her

children, can obtain salvation as well as her husband, and that her appropriate duty is not public teaching, but the training of her family. Wetstein supposes that it means "she shall be saved from the arts of impostors, and from the luxury and vice of the age, if, instead of wandering about, she remains at home, cultivates modesty, is subject to her husband, and engages carefully in the training of her children." This sense agrees well with the connection. Calvin supposes that the apostle designs to console the woman by the assurance that, if she bears the trials of her condition of sorrow with a proper spirit, abiding in faith and holiness, she will be saved. She is not to regard herself as cut off from the hope of heaven. Doddridge, Macknight, Clarke, and others suppose that it refers to the promise in Genesis 3:15, and means that the woman shall be saved through, or by means of bearing a child, to wit, the Messiah; and that the apostle means to sustain the woman in her sorrows, and in her state of subordination and inferiority, by referring to the honor which has been put upon her by the fact that a woman gave birth to the Messiah. It is supposed also that he means to say that special honor is thus conferred on her over the man, inasmuch as the Messiah had no human father. Doddridge. The objections to this interpretation, however, though it is sustained by most respectable names, seem to me to be insuperable. They are such as these:

(1) The interpretation is too refined and abstruse. It is not that which is obvious. It depends for its point on the fact that the Messiah had no human father, and in the apostle had intended to refer to that, and to build an argument on it it may be doubted whether he would have done it in so obscure a manner. But it may reasonably be questioned whether he would have made that fact a point on which his argument would turn. There would be a species of refinement about such an argument, such as we should not look for in the writings of Paul.

(2) it is not the obvious meaning of the word "child-bearing." There is nothing in the word which requires that it should have any reference to the birth of the Messiah. The word is of a general character, and properly refers to child-hearing in general.

(3) it is not true that woman would be "saved" merely by having given birth to the Messiah. She will be saved, as man will be, as a consequence of

his having been born; but there is no evidence that the mere fact that woman gave birth to him, and that he had no human father, did anything to save Mary herself, or any one else of her sex. If, therefore, the word refers to the "bearing" of the Messiah, or to the fact that he was born, it would be no more proper to say that this was connected with the salvation of woman than that of man. The true meaning, it seems to me, has been suggested by Calvin, and may be seen by the following remarks:

(1) The apostle designed to comfort woman, or to alleviate the sadness of the picture which he had drawn respecting her condition.

(2) he had referred, incidentally, as a proof of the subordinate character of her station, to the first apostasy. This naturally suggested the sentence which was passed on her, and the condition of sorrow to which she was doomed, particularly in child-birth. That was the standing demonstration of her guilt; that the condition in which she suffered most; that the situation in which she was in greatest peril.

(3) Paul assures her, therefore, that though she must thus suffer, yet that she ought not to regard herself in her deep sorrows and dangers, though on account of sin, as necessarily under the divine displeasure, or as excluded from the hope of heaven. The way of salvation was open to her as well as to men, and was to be entered in the same manner. If she had faith and holiness, even in her condition of sorrow brought on by guilt, she might as well hope for eternal life as man. The object of the apostle seems to be to guard against a possible construction which might be put on his words, that he did not regard the woman as in circumstances as favorable for salvation as those of man, or as if he thought that salvation for her was more difficult, or perhaps that she could not be saved at all. The general sentiments of the Jews in regard to the salvation of the female sex, and their exclusion from the religious privileges which men enjoy; the views of the Muslims in reference to the inferiority of the sex; and the prevalent feelings in the pagan world, degrading the sex and making their condition, in regard to salvation, far inferior to that of man, show the propriety of what the apostle here says, and the fitness that he should so guard himself that his language could not possibly be construed so as to give countenance to such a sentiment.

According to the interpretation of the passage here proposed, the apostle does not mean to teach that a Christian female would be certainly saved from death in child-birth - for this would not be true, and the proper construction of the passage does not require us to understand him as affirming this. Religion is not designed to make any immediate and direct change in the laws of our physical being. It does not of itself guard us from the pestilence; it does not arrest the progress of disease; it does not save us from death; and, as a matter of fact, woman, by the highest degree of piety, is not necessarily saved from the perils of that condition to which she has been subjected in consequence of the apostasy. The apostle means to show this - that in all her pain and sorrow; amidst all the evidence of apostasy, and all that reminds her that she was "first" in the transgression, she may look up to God as her Friend and strength, and may hope for acceptance and salvation.

If they continue - If woman continues - it being not uncommon to change the singular form to the plural, especially if the subject spoken of have the character of a noun of multitude. Many have understood this of children, as teaching that if the mother were faithful, so that her children continued in faith, she would be saved. But this is not a necessary or probable interpretation. The apostle says nothing of children, and it is not reasonable to suppose that he would make the prospect of her salvation depend on their being pious. This would be to add a hard condition of salvation, and one nowhere else suggested in the New Testament. The object of the apostle evidently is, to show that woman must continue in the faithful service of God if she would be saved - a doctrine everywhere insisted on in the New Testament in reference to all persons. She must not imitate the example of the mother of mankind, but she must faithfully yield obedience to the laws of God until death.

Faith - Faith in the Redeemer and in divine truth, or a life of fidelity in the service of God.

Charity - Love to all; compare notes on 1 Timothy 2:9. In such a life, woman may look to a world where she will be forever free from all the sadnesses and sorrows of her condition here; where, by unequalled pain, she will be no more reminded of the time when.

- "Her rash hand in evil hour.

Forth reaching to the fruit, she pluck‘d, she.

Ate;”

And when before the throne she shall be admitted to full equality with all the redeemed of the Lord. Religion meets all the sadnesses of her condition here; pours consolation into the cup of her many woes; speaks kindly to her in her distresses; utters the language of forgiveness to her heart when crushed with the remembrance of sin - for “she loves much” Luke 7:37-48; and conducts her to immortal glory in that world where all sorrow shall be unknown.

1 TIMOTHY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

The object of this chapter 1 Timothy 3:1-7. The enumeration of his qualifications is preceded by a general statement that the office was an honorable one, and that he who aspired to it sought an employment that was, in itself, to be regarded as desirable; 1 Timothy 3:1. The qualifications specified for this office, are the following:

(1)He must be a man of good private character; possessing and illustrating the Christian virtues, or, as we would say now, an upright man, and a Christian gentleman; 1 Timothy 3:2-3.

(2)he must be a man who ruled his own house well, and who thus showed that he was qualified to preside as the first officer in the church of God; 1 Timothy 3:4-5.

(3)he must be a man of suitable age and experience - one who would not be likely to fall into the temptations that are laid for the young; 1 Timothy 3:6.

(4)he must have a fair reputation among those who were not Christians - as it is intended that the influence of his ministry shall reach them, and as it is impossible to do them good unless he is believed to be a man of integrity; 1 Timothy 3:7.

II. The qualifications of deacons; 1 Timothy 3:8-10, 1 Timothy 3:12-13. They must be:

(1)Men of fair character - serious, temperate, candid; 1 Timothy 3:8.

(2)men who hold to the doctrines of the gospel with a pure conscience; 1 Timothy 3:9.

(3)men who have been proved, and who have shown that they are qualified to serve the church: 1 Timothy 3:10.

(4)men whose wives are of such a character that their example will contribute to the promotion of the common cause; 1 Timothy 3:11.

(5)men not living in polygamy, and who exercise exemplary family government; 1 Timothy 3:12-13.

III. The reason why Paul gave these instructions to Timothy; 1 Timothy 3:14-15. It was, that he might know how he ought to demean himself in the important station which he was called to occupy. Paul hoped to be able to come to him before long, and to complete the work which he had commenced at Ephesus, but, in the meantime, he gave him these written councils, that he might understand particularly the duty which was required of him.

IV. The chapter closes with a statemerit which seems to have been intended to impress the mind of Timothy with the importance of the duties in which he was engaged; 1 Timothy 3:15-16. The statement is, that the church is the great defender of the truth in the world 1 Timothy 3:15, and that the truth which the church is to maintain is of the greatest importance. It relates to the incarnation of the Son of God, and to the work which he accomplished on earth a work which excited the deepest interest in heaven, and the true doctrine respecting which it was of the utmost importance to keep up among people; 1 Timothy 3:16. This reason is further urged in the following chapter, by showing that the time would come when, under the influence of Satan, these great doctrines would be denied, and the truth be corrupted and perverted.

Verse 1

This is a trite saying - Greek, "Faithful is the word" - the very phrase which is used in 1 Timothy 1:15; see the notes on that verse. The idea here is, that it was worthy of credence; it was not to be doubted.

If a man desire - Implying that there would be those who would wish to be put into the ministry. The Lord, undoubtedly, by his Spirit, often excites an earnest and irrepressible desire to preach the gospel - a desire so strong, that he in whom it exists can be satisfied in no other calling. In such a case, it should be regarded as one evidence of a call to this work. The apostle, however, by the statements which follow, intimates that wherever this desire exists, it is of the utmost importance to have just views of the nature of the office, and that there should be other qualifications for the ministry than a mere desire to preach the gospel. He proceeds, therefore, to state those qualifications, and no one who "desires" the office of the ministry should conclude that he is called to it, unless these qualifications

substantially are found in him. The word rendered "desire" here (ὀρέγω oregō), denotes properly, "to reach" or "stretch out" - and hence to reach after anything, to long after, to try to obtain; Hebrews 11:16.

The office of a bishop - The Greek here is a single word - ἐπισκοπῆς episkopēsThe word ἐπισκοπή episkopē- "Episcope" - whence the word "Episcopal" is derived - occurs but four times in the New Testament. It is translated "visitation" in Luke 19:44, and in 1 Peter 2:12; "bishoprick," Acts. Acts 1:20; and in this place "office of a bishop." The verb from which it is derived (ἐπισκοπέω episkopeō), occurs but twice, In Hebrews 12:15, it is rendered "looking diligently," and in 1 Peter 5:2, "taking the oversight." The noun rendered bishop occurs in Acts 20:28; Philemon 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 2:25. The verb means, properly, to look upon, behold; to inspect, to look after, see to, take care of; and the noun denotes the office of overseeing, inspecting, or looking to. It is used to denote the care of the sick, Xeno. Oec. 15,9; compare "Passow;" and is of so general a character that it may denote any office of overseeing, or attending to. There is nothing in the word itself which would limit it to any class or grade of the ministry, and it is, in fact, applied to nearly all the officers of the church in the New Testament, and, indeed, to Christians who did not sustain "any" office. Thus it is applied:

(a)to believers in general, directing them to "look diligently, lest anyone should fail of the grace of God," Hebrews 12:15;

(b)to the elders of the church at Ephesus, "over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers," Acts 20:28;

(c)to the elders or presbyters of the church in 1 Peter 5:2, "Feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof;

(d)to the officers of the church in Philippi, mentioned in connection with deacons as the only officers of the church there, "to the saints at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons," Philemon 1:1;

(e)to Judas, the apostate. Acts 1:20; and,

(f)to the great Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Peter 2:25, "the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

From this use of the term it follows:

(1) That the word is never used to designate the "uniqueness" of the apostolic office, or so as to have any special applicability to the apostles. Indeed, the term "bishop" is "never" applied to any of them in the New Testament; nor is the word in any of its forms ever used with reference to them, except in the single case of "Judas," Acts 1:20.

(2) it is never employed in the New Testament to designate an order of men superior to presbyters, regarded as having any other functions than presbyters, or being in any sense "successors" to the apostles. It is so used now by the advocates of prelacy; but this is a use wholly unknown to the New Testament. It is so undeniable that the name is never given in the New Testament to those who are now called "bishops," that even Episcopalians concede it. Thus, Dr. Onderdonk (Tract on Episcopacy, p. 12) says, "All that we read in the New Testament concerning ‹bishops' is to be regarded as pertaining to the ‹middle grade;' that is, to those who are now regarded as ‹priests.'" This is not strictly correct, as is clear from the remarks above respecting what is called the "middle grade;" but it is strictly correct, so far as it affirms that it is "never" applied to prelates.

(3) it is used in the New Testament to denote ministers of the gospel who had the care or oversight of the churches, without any regard to grade or rank.

(4) it has now, as used by Episcopalians, a sense which is wholly unauthorized by the New Testament, and which, indeed, is entirely at variance with the usage there. To apply the term to a pretended superior order of clergy, as designating their special office, is wholly to depart from the use of the word as it occurs in the Bible.

(5) as it is never used in the Scriptures with reference to "prelates," it "should" be used with reference to the pastors, or other officers of the church; and to be a "pastor," or "overseer" of the flock of Christ, should be regarded as being a scriptural bishop.

He desireth a good work - An honorable office; an office which it is right for a man to desire. There are some stations in life which ought never to be desired; it is proper for anyone to desire the office of a bishop who has the proper qualifications; compare notes on Romans 11:13.

Verse 2

A bishop - A minister of religion, according to the foregoing remarks, who has the charge or oversight of any Christian church. The reference here is doubtless to one who had the government of the church entrusted to him 1 Timothy 3:4-5, and who was also a preacher of the gospel.

Must be blameless - This is a different word (ἀνεπίλημπτον anepilēmpton) from that rendered "blameless" in Luke 1:6; Philemon 2:15; Philemon 3:6 (ἄμεμπτος amemptos); compare however, Luke 1:6 note; Philemon 3:6 note. The word here used does not mean that, as a necessary qualification for office, a bishop should be "perfect;" but that he should be a man against whom no charge of immorality, or of holding false doctrine, is alleged. His conduct should be irreprehensible or irreproachable. Undoubtedly it means that if "any" charge could be brought against him implying moral obliquity, he is not fit for the office. He should be a man of irreproachable character for truth, honesty, chastity, and general uprightness.

The husband of one wife - This need not be understood as requiring that a bishop "should be" a married man, as Vigilantius, a presbyter in the church at Barcelona in the fourth century, supposed, however desirable in general it may be that a minister of the gospel should be married. But, while this interpretation is manifestly to be excluded as false, there has been much difference of opinion on the question whether the passage means that a minister should not have more than one wife at the same time, or whether it prohibits the marriage of a second wife after the death of the first. On this question, the notes of Bloomfield, Doddridge, and Macknight, may be consulted. That the former is the correct opinion, seems to me to be evident from the following considerations:

(1) It is the most obvious meaning of the language, and it would doubtless be thus understood by those to whom it was addressed. At a time when polygamy was not uncommon, to say that a man should "have but one wife" would be naturally understood as prohibiting polygamy.

(2) the marriage of a second wife, after the death of the first, is nowhere spoken of in the Scriptures as wrong. The marriage of a widow to a second husband is expressely declared to be proper 1 Corinthians 7:39; and it is not unfair to infer from that permission that it is equally lawful and proper for man to marry the second time. But if it is lawful for any man it is right for a minister of the gospel. No reason can he assigned against such marriages in

his case, which would not be equally valid in any other. Marriage is as honorable for a minister of the gospel as for any other man (compare notes on Hebrews 13:4); and, as Doddridge has well remarked, "Circumstances may be so adjusted that there may be as much reason for a second marriage as for the first, and as little inconvenience of any kind may attend it."

(3) there was a special propriety in the prohibition, if understood as prohibiting polygamy. It is known that it was extensively practiced, and was not regarded as unlawful. Yet one design of the gospel was to restore the marriage relation to its primitive condition; and though it might not have seemed absolutely necessary to require of every man who came into the church to divorce his wives, if he had more than one, yet, in order to fix a brand on this irregular practice, it might have been deemed desirable to require of the ministers of the gospel that they should have but one wife. Thus the practice of polygamy would gradually come to be regarded as dishonorable and improper, and the example and influence of the ministry would tend to introduce correct views in regard to the nature of this relation. One thing is clear from this passage, that the views of the Papists in regard to the celibacy of the clergy are directly at variance with the Bible. The declaration of Paul in Hebrews 13:4, is, that "marriage is honorable in all;" and here it is implied that it was proper that a minister should be married. If it were not, why did not Paul prohibit it altogether? Instead of saying that it was improper that a bishop should have more than one wife, why did he not say that it was improper that he should be married at all? Would not a Romanist say so now?

Vigilant - This word (νηφάλεος nēphaleos) occurs only here and in 1 Timothy 3:11; Titus 2:2. It means, properly, "sober, temperate, abstinent," especially in respect to wine; then "sober-minded, watchful, circumspect. Robinson." A minister should have a watchful care over his own conduct. He should be on his gaurd against sin in any form.

Sober - σώφρονα sōphronaProperly, a man of "a sound mind;" one who follows sound reason, and who is not under the control of passion. The idea is, that he should have his desires and passions well regulated. Perhaps the word "prudent" would come nearer to the meaning of the apostle than any single word which we have.

Of good behaviour - Margin, "modest." Coverdale renders it, "mannerly." The most correct rendering, according to the modern use of

language, would be, that he should be "a gentleman." He should not be slovenly in his appearance, or rough and boorish in his manners. He should not do violence to the usages of refined conversation, nor be unfit to appear respectable in the most refined circles of society. Inattention to personal neatness, and to the rules which regulate refined contact, is indicative neither of talent, learning, nor religion; and though they are occasionally - not often - connected with talent, learning, and religion, yet they are never the fruit of either, and are always a disgrace to those who exhibit such incivility and boorishness, for such men "ought" to know better. A minister of the gospel should be a finished gentleman in his manners, and there is no excuse for him if he is not. His religion, if he has any, is adapted to make him such. He has usually received such an education as ought to make him such, and in all cases "ought" to have had such a training. He is admitted into the best society, and has an opportunity of becoming familiar with the laws of refined conversation. He should be an example and a pattern in all that goes to promote the welfare of mankind, and there are few things so easily acquired that are suited to do this, as refinement and gentility of manners. No man can do good, on the whole, or in the "long run," by disregarding the rules of refined contact; and, other things being equal, the refined, courteous, polite gentleman in the ministry, will always do more good than he who neglects the rules of goodbreeding.

Given to hospitality - This is often enjoined on all Christians as a duty of religion. For the reasons of this, and the nature of the duty, see the Romans 12:13 note; Hebrews 13:2 note. It was a special duty of the ministers of religion, as they were to be examples of every Christian virtue.

Apt to teach - Greek, "Didactic;" that is, capable of instructing, or qualified for the office of a teacher of religion. As the principal business of a preacher of the gospel is to "teach," or to communicate to his fellow-men the knowledge of the truth, the necessity of this qualification is obvious. No one should be allowed to enter the ministry who is not qualified to impart "instruction" to others on the doctrines and duties of religion; and no one should feel that he ought to continue in the ministry, who has not industry, and self-denial, and the love of study enough to lead him constantly to endeavor to "increase" in knowledge, that he may be qualified to teach others. A man who would "teach" a people, must himself keep in advance of them on the subjects on which he would instruct them.

Verse 3

Not given to wine - Margin, "Not ready to quarrel and offer wrong, as one in wine." The Greek word (πάροινος paroinos) occurs in the New Testament only here and in Titus 1:7. It means, properly, "by wine;" i. e., spoken of what takes place "by" or "over" wine, as revelry, drinking songs, etc. Then it denotes, as it does here, one who sits "by" wine; that is, who is in the habit of drinking it. It cannot be inferred, from the use of the word here, that wine was absolutely and entirely prohibited; for the word does not properly express that idea. It means that one who is in the habit of drinking wine, or who is accustomed to sit with those who indulge in it, should not be admitted to the ministry. The way in which the apostle mentions the subject here would lead us fairly to suppose that he did not mean to commend its use in any sense; that he regarded its use as dangerous, and that he would wish the ministers of religion to avoid it altogether. In regard to its use at all, except at the communion or as a medicine, it may be remarked, that a minister will do no injury to himself or others by letting it entirely alone; he may do injury by indulging in it. No man is under any "obligation" of courtesy or Christian duty to use it; thousands of ministers of the gospel have brought ruin on themselves, and disgrace on the ministry, by its use; compare Matthew 11:9 note, and 1 Timothy 5:23 note.

No striker - He must be a peaceable, not a quarrelsome man. This is connected with the caution about the use of wine, probably, because that is commonly found to produce a spirit of contention and strife.

Not greedy of filthy lucre - Not contentious or avaricious. Greek, Not desirous of base gain. The desire of this is condemned everywhere in the New Testament; but it is especially the duty of a minister of the gospel to be free from it. He has a right to a support (see the notes on Philemon 4:5; Titus 3:2; James 3:17, and 1 Peter 2:18, where it is rendered "gentle." The word means that the minister of the gospel should be a man of mild and kind demeanor, such as his Master was.

Not a brawler - compare 2 Timothy 2:24. That is, he should not be a man given to contention, or apt to take up a quarrel. The Greek is, literally, "Not disposed to fight."

Not covetous - Greek, "Not a lover of silver;" that is, of money. A man should not be put into the ministry who is characteristically a lover of money. Such a one, no matter what his talents may be, has no proper qualification for the office, and will do more harm than good.

Verse 4

One that ruleth well his own house - This implies that a minister of the gospel would be, and ought to be, a married man. It is everywhere in the New Testament supposed that he would be a man who could be an example in all the relations of life. The position which he occupies in the church has a strong resemblance to the relation which a father sustains to his household; and a qualification to govern a family well, would be an evidence of a qualification to preside properly in the church. It is probable that, in the early Christian church, ministers were not unfrequently taken from those of mature life, and who were, at the time, at the head of families; and, of course, such would be men who had had an opportunity of showing that they had this qualification for the office. Though, however, this cannot be insisted on now as a "previous" qualification for the office, yet it is still true that, if he has a family, it is a necessary qualification, and that a man in the ministry "should be" one who governs his own house well. A want of this will always be a hindrance to extensive usefulness.

Having his children in subjection with all gravity - This does not mean that his "children" should evince gravity, whatever may be true on that point; but it refers "to the father." He should be a grave or serious man in his family; a man free from levity of character, and from frivolity and fickleness, in his conversation with his children. It does not mean that he should be severe, stern, morose - which are traits that are often mistaken for gravity, and which are as inconsistent with the proper spirit of a father as frivolity of manner - but that he should be a serious and sober-minded man. He should maintain proper "dignity" (σεμνότης semnotēs); he should maintain self-respect, and his deportment should be such as to inspire others with respect for him.

Verse 5

For if a man know not how to rule - This is a beautiful and striking argument. A church resembles a family. It is, indeed, larger, and there is a greater variety of dispositions in it than there is in a family. The authority of a minister of the gospel in a church is also less absolute than that of a father. But still there is a striking resemblance. The church is made up of an assemblage of brothers and sisters. They are banded together for the same purposes, and have a common object to aim at. They have common feelings and common needs. They have sympathy, like a family, with each other in their distresses and afflictions. The government of the church also is designed to be "paternal." It should be felt that he who presides over it has

the feelings of a father; that he loves all the members of the great family; that he has no prejudices, no partialities, no selfish aims to gratify.

Now, if a man cannot govern his own family well; if he is severe, partial, neglectful, or tyrannical at home, how can he be expected to take charge of the more numerous "household of faith" with proper views and feelings? If, with all the natural and strong ties of affection which bind a father to his own children; if, when they are few comparatively in number, and where his eye is constantly upon them, he is unable to govern them aright, how can he be expected to preside in a proper manner over the larger household where he will be bound with comparatively feebler ties, and where he will be exposed more to the influence of passion, and where he will have a much less constant opportunity of supervision? Confucius, as quoted by Doddridge, has a sentiment strikingly resembling that before us: "It is impossible that he who knows not how to govern and reform his own family, should rightly govern and reform a people." We may remark, also, in this verse, a delicate and beautiful use of words by the apostle to prevent the possibility of misapprehension. While he institutes a comparison between the government of a family and that of the church, he guards against the possibility of its being supposed that he would countenance "arbitrary" authority in the church, even such authority as a father must of necessity employ in his own family. Hence, he uses different words. He speaks of the father as "ruling" over his own family, or "presiding over it" - προστῆναι prostēnaihe describes the minister of religion as "having a tender care for the church" - ἐπιμελήσεται epimelēsetaif0.

Verse 6

Not a novice - Margin, "one newly come to the faith." The Greek word, which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, means, properly, that which is "newly planted." Thus it would mean a plant that was not strong, or not fitted to bear the severity of storms; that had not as yet struck its roots deep, and could not resist the fierceness of a cold blast. Then the word comes to mean a new convert; one who has had little opportunity to test his own faith, or to give evidence to others that he would be faithful to the trust committed to him. The word does not refer so much to one who is young "in years," as one who is young "in faith." Still, all the reasons which apply against introducing a very recent convert into the ministry, will apply commonly with equal force against introducing one young in years.

Lest being lifted up with pride - We are not to suppose that this is the only reason against introducing a recent convert into the ministry, but it is a sufficient reason. He would be likely to be elated by being entrusted at once with the highest office in the church, and by the commendations and flattery which he might receive. No condition is wholly proof against this; but he is much less likely to be injured who has had much experience of the depravity of his own heart, and whose mind has been deeply imbued with the spirit of the gospel.

He fall into the condemnation of the devil - That is, the same kind of condemnation which the devil fell into; to wit, condemnation on account of pride. It is here intimated that the cause of the apostasy of Satan was pride - a cause which is as likely to have been the true one as any other. Who can tell but it may have been produced by some new honor which was conferred on him in heaven, and that his virtue was not found sufficient for the untried circumstances in which he was placed? Much of the apostasy from eminent virtue in this world, arises from this cause; and possibly the case of Satan may have been the most signal instance of this kind which has occurred in the universe. The idea of Paul is, that a young convert should not suddenly be raised to an exalted station in the church. Who can doubt the wisdom of this direction? The word rendered "lifted up" (τυφωθὲις tuphōtheis), is from a verb which means to smoke, to fume, to surround with smoke; then to "inflate" - as a bladder is with air; and then to be conceited or proud; that is, to be "like" a bladder filled, not with a solid substance, but with air.

Verse 7

Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without - Who are without the church; that is, of those who are not Christians. This includes, of course, "all" classes of those who are not Christians - pagans, infidels, Jews, moral people, and scoffers. The idea is, that he must have a fair reputation with them for integrity of character. His life must be in their view upright. He must not be addicted to anything which they regard as inconsistent with good morals. His deportment must be such that they shall regard it as not inconsistent with his profession. He must be true and just and honest in his dealings with his fellow-men, and so live that they cannot say that he has wronged them. He must not give occasion for scandal or reproach in his contact with the other sex, but must be regarded as a man of a pure life and of a holy walk. The "reason" for this injunction is obvious.

It is his business to endeavor to do such people good, and to persuade them to become Christians. "But no minister of the gospel can possibly do such people good, unless they regard him as an upright and honest man." No matter how he preaches or prays; no matter how orthodox, learned, or apparently devout he may be, all his efforts will be in vain unless they regard him as a man of incorruptible integrity. If they hate religion themselves, they insist justly that since he has professed it he shall be governed by its principles; or if they feel its importance, they will not be influenced to embrace it by a man that they regard as hypocritical and impure. Go to a man whom you have defrauded, or who regards you as having done or attempted wrong to any other one, and talk to him about the necessity of religion, and he will instinctively say that he does not "want" a religion which will not make its professor true, honest, and pure. It is impossible, therefore, for a minister to over-estimate the importance of having a fair character in the view of the world, and no man should be introduced into the ministry, or sustained in it, who has not a fair reputation; compare Colossians 4:5 note; 1 Thessalonians 4:12 note.

Lest he fall into reproach - That is, in such a way as to bring dishonor on the ministerial character. His life will be such as to give people occasion to reproach the cause of religion.

And the snare of the devil - The snare which the devil lays to entrap and ruin the ministers of the gospel and all good people. The snare to which reference is here made, is that of "blasting the character and influence of the minister of the gospel." The idea is, that Satan lays this snare so to entangle him as to secure this object, and the means which he uses is the vigilance and suspicion of those who are out of the church. If there is anything of this kind in the life of a minister which they can make use of, they will be ready to do it. Hence, the necessity on his part of an upright and blameless life. Satan is constantly aiming at this thing; the world is watching for it, and if the minister has any "propensity" which is not in entire accordance with honesty, Satan will take advantage of it and lead him into the snare.

Verse 8

Likewise must the deacons - On the meaning of the word "deacons," see the notes on Philemon 1:1. On their appointment, see the notes, Acts 6:1. The word here evidently denotes those who had charge of the temporal affairs of the church, the poor, etc. No qualifications are mentioned, implying that they were to be preachers of the gospel. In most respects,

except in regard to preaching, their qualifications were to be the same as those of the "bishops."

Be grave - Serious, sober-minded men. In Acts 6:3, it is said that they should be men "of honest report." On the meaning of the word "grave," see the notes on 1 Timothy 3:4. They should be men who by their serious deportment will inspire respect.

Not double-tongued - The word here used δίλογος dilogos- does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means, properly, uttering the same thing twice (from δίς disand λέγω legō), and then deceitful, or speaking one thing and meaning another. They should be men who can be relied on for the exact truth of what they say, and for the exact fulfillment of their promises.

Not given to much wine - see 1 Timothy 3:3. The word "much" is added here to what is said 1 Timothy 3:2 of the qualification of a bishop. It is not affirmed that it would be proper for the deacon, anymore than the bishop, to indulge in the use of wine in small quantities, but it "is" affirmed that a man who is much given to the use of wine ought not, on any consideration, to be a deacon. It may be remarked here, that this qualification was everywhere regarded as necessary for a minister of religion. Even the pagan priests, on entering a temple, did not drink wine. "Bloomfield." The use of wine, and of strong drinks of all kinds, was absolutely prohibited to the Jewish ministers of every rank when they were about to engage in the service of God; Leviticus 10:9. Why should it then be anymore proper for a Christian minister to drink wine than for a Jewish or a pagan priest? Shall a minister of the gospel be less holy than they? Shall he have a feebler sense of the purity of his vocation? Shall he be less careful lest he expose himself to the possibility of conducting the services of religion in an irreverent and silly manner? Shall he venture to approach the altar of God under the influence of intoxicating drinks, when a sense of propriety restrained the pagan priest, and a solemn statue of Yahweh restrained the Jewish priest from doing it?

Not greedy of filthy lucre - notes, 1 Timothy 3:3. The special reason why this qualification was important in the deacon was, that he would be entrusted with the funds of the church, and might be tempted to appropriate them to his own use instead of the charitable purposes for which they were designed; see this illustrated in the case of Judas, John 12:6.

Verse 9

Holding the mystery of the faith - On the word "mystery," see notes on 1 Corinthians 2:7. It means that which had been concealed, or hidden, but which was now revealed. The word "faith" here, is synonymous with "the gospel;" and the sense is, that he should hold firmly the great doctrines of the Christian religion which had been so long concealed from people, but which were now revealed. The reason is obvious. Though not a preacher, yet his influence and example would be great, and a man who held material error ought not to be in office.

In a pure conscience - A mere orthodox faith was not all that was necessary, for it was possible that a man might be professedly firm in the belief of the truths of revelation, and yet be corrupt at heart.

Verse 10

And let these also first be proved - That is, tried or tested in regard to the things which were the proper qualifications for the office. This does not mean that they were to be employed as "preachers," but that they were to undergo a proper trial in regard to their fitness for the office which they were to fill. They were not to be put into it without any opportunity of knowing what they were. It should be ascertained that they were grave, serious, temperate, trustworthy men; men who were sound in the faith, and who would not dishonor the office. It is not said here that there should be a "formal" trial, as if they were candidates for this office; but the meaning is, that they should have had an opportunity of making their character known, and should have gained such respect for their piety, and their other qualifications, that there would be reason to believe that they would perform the functions of the office well. Thus, in Acts 6:3, when deacons were first appointed, the church was directed to "look out seven men of honest report," who might be appointed to the office.

Then let them use the office of a deacon - Let them be appointed to this office, and fulfil its duties.

Being found blameless - If nothing can be alleged against their character see the notes on 1 Timothy 3:2.

Verse 11

Even so must their wives be grave - Chrysostom, Theophylact, Grotius, Bloomfield, and many others, suppose that by the word "wives," here, (γυνᾶικας gunaikas), the apostle means "deaconesses." Clarke supposes that it refers to women in general. The reason assigned for supposing that it does not refer to the wives of deacons, as such, is, that

nothing is said of the qualifications of the wives of bishops - a matter of as much importance as that of the character of the wife of a deacon; and that it cannot be supposed that the apostle would specify the one without some allusion to the other. But that the common interpretation, which makes it refer to the wives of deacons, as such, is to be adhered to, seems to me to be clear. Because:

(1) it is the obvious and natural interpretation.

(2) the word here used - "wives" - is never used of itself to denote deaconesses.

(3) if the apostle had meant deaconesses, it would have been easy to express it without ambiguity; compare notes, Romans 16:1.

(4) what is here mentioned is important, whether the same thing is mentioned of bishops or not.

(5) in the qualifications of bishops, the apostle had made a statement respecting his family, which made any specification about the particular members of the family unnecessary. He was to be one who presided in a proper manner over his own house, or who had a well-regulated family; 1 Timothy 3:4-5. By a comparison of this passage, also, with Titus 2:3-4, which bears a strong resemblance to this, it would seem that it was supposed that the deacons would be taken from those who were advanced in life, and that their wives would have some superintendence over the younger females of the church. It was, therefore, especially important that they should be persons whose influence would be known to be decidedly favorable to piety. No one can doubt that the character of a woman may be such, that it is not desirable that her husband should be an officer in the church. A bad woman ought not to be entrusted with any additional power or influence.

Grave - notes, 1 Timothy 3:4.

Not slanderers - compare Titus 2:3, "Not false accusers." The Greek word is διαβόλους diabolous- "devils." It is used here in its original and proper sense, to denote a "calumniator," "slanderer," or "accuser." It occurs in the same sense in 2 Timothy 3:3, and Titus 2:3. Elsewhere in the New Testament, it is uniformly rendered "devil" (compare notes, Matthew 4:1),

and is given to Satan, the prince of the fallen angels Matthew 9:34, by way of eminence, as "the accuser;" compare Job 1:6-11 notes, and Revelation 12:10 note. Here it means that they should not be women who were in the habit of calumniating others, or aspersing their character. Mingling as they would with the church, and having an opportunity to claim acquaintance with many, it would be in their power, if they chose, to do great injury to the character of others.

Sober - notes, 1 Timothy 3:2.

Faithful in all things - To their husbands, to their families, to the church, to the Saviour.

Verse 12

Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife - notes, 1 Timothy 3:2.

Ruling their children and their own houses well - notes, 1 Timothy 3:4-5.

Verse 13

For they that have used the office of a deacon well - Margin, "ministered." The Greek word is the same as deacon, meaning ministering, or serving in this office. The sense would be well expressed by the phrase, "deaconizing well." The "word" implies nothing as to the exact nature of the office.

Purchase to themselves - Procure for themselves; see this word explained in the notes on Acts 20:28.

A good degree - The word here used (βαθμός bathmos) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, "a step," as of a stair; and the fair meaning is that of going up higher, or taking an additional step of dignity, honor, or standing. So far as the "word" is concerned, it may mean either an advance in office, in dignity, in respectability, or in influence. It cannot certainly be inferred that the apostle referred to a higher grade of "office;" for all that the word essentially conveys is, that, by exercising this office well, a deacon would secure additional respectability and influence in the church. Still, it is possible that those who had performed the duties of this office well were appointed to be preachers. They may have shown so much piety, prudence, good sense, and ability to preside over the church, that it was judged proper that they should be advanced to the office of bishops or pastors of the churches. Such a course would not be unnatural. This is, however, far from teaching that the office of a deacon is a subordinate office, "with a view" to an ascent to a higher grade.

And great boldness in the faith - The word here rendered "boldness" properly refers to boldness "in speaking;" see it explained in the Acts 4:13 note; 2 Corinthians 3:12 note; Philemon 1:20 note. But the word is commonly used to denote boldness of any kind - openness, frankness, confidence, assurance; John 8:13, John 8:26; Mark 8:32; 2 Corinthians 7:4. As it is here connected with "faith" - "boldness in the faith" - it means, evidently, not so much public speaking, as a manly and independent exercise of faith in Christ. The sense is, that by the faithful performance of the duties of the office of a deacon, and by the kind of experience which a man would have in that office, he would establish a character of firmness in the faith, which would show that he was a decided Christian. This passage, therefore, cannot be fairly used to prove that the deacon was "a preacher," or that he belonged to a grade of ministerial office from which he was regularly to rise to that of a presbyter.

Verse 14

These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly - That is, he hoped to come there to give instructions personally, or to finish, himself, the work which he had commenced in Ephesus, and which had been interrupted by his being driven so unexpectedly away. This verse proves that the apostle Paul did not regard Timothy as the permanent diocesan bishop of Ephesus. Would any Episcopal bishop write this to another bishop? If Timothy were the permanent prelate of Ephesus, would Paul have intimated that he expected soon to come and take the work of completing the arrangements there into his own hands? In regard to his expectation of going soon to Ephesus, see the notes on 1 Timothy 1:3; compare the Introduction to the Epistle.

Verse 15

But if I tarry long - Paul appears to have been uncertain how long circumstances would require him to be absent. He expected to return, but it was possible that his hope of returning soon would be disappointed.

That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself - That is, that he might have just views about settling the affairs of the church.

In the house of God - This does not mean in a place of public worship, nor does it refer to propriety of deportment there. It refers rather to the church as a body of believers, and to converse with them. The church is called the "house of God," because it is that in which he dwells. Formerly,

his unique residence was in the temple at Jerusalem; now that the temple is destroyed, it is the church of Christ, among his people.

Which is the church of the living God - This seems to have been added to impress the mind of Timothy with the solemn nature of the duty which he was to perform. What he did pertained to the honor and welfare of the church of the living God, and hence he should feet the importance of a correct deportment, and of a right administration of its affairs.

The pillar and ground of the truth - There has been no little diversity of opinion among critics whether this phrase is to be taken in connection with the preceding, meaning that "the church" is the pillar and ground of the truth; or whether it is to be taken in connection with what follows, meaning that the principal support of the truth was the doctrine there referred to - that God was manifest in the flesh. Bloomfield remarks on this: "It is surprising that any who have any knowledge or experience in Greek literature could tolerate so harsh a construction as that which arises from the latter method." The more natural interpretation certainly is, to refer it to the former; and this is supported by the consideration that it would then fall in with the object of the apostle. His design here seems to be, to impress Timothy with a deep sense of the importance of correct conduct in relation to the church; of the responsibility of those who presided over it; and of the necessity of care and caution in the selection of proper officers.

To do this, he reminded him that the truth of God - that revealed truth which he had given to save the world - was entrusted to the church; that it was designed to preserve it pure, to defend it, and to transmit it to future times; and that, therefore, every one to whom the administration of the affairs of the church was entrusted, should engage in this duty with a deep conviction of his responsibility. On the construction of the passage, Bloomfield Rosenmuller, and Clarke, may be consulted. The word "pillar" means a column, such as that by which a building is supported, and then any firm prop or support; Galatians 2:9; Revelation 3:12. If it refers to the church here, it means that that is the support of the truth, as a pillar is of a building. It sustains it amidst the war of elements, the natural tendency to fall, and the assaults which may be made on it, and preserves it when it would otherwise tumble into ruin.

Thus it is with the church. It is entrusted with the business of maintaining the truth, of defending it from the assaults of error, and of

transmitting it to future times. The truth is, in fact, upheld in the world by the church. The people of the world feel no interest in defending it, and it is to the church of Christ that it is owing that it is preserved and transmitted from age to age. The word rendered "ground" - ἑδραίωμα hedraiōma- means, properly, a basis, or foundation. The figure here is evidently taken from architecture, as the use of the word pillar is. The proper meaning of the one expression would be, that truth is supported by the church. as an edifice is by a pillar; of the other, that the truth rests "on" the church, as a house does on its foundation. It is that which makes it fixed, stable, permanent; that on which it securely stands amidst storms and tempests; that which renders it firm when systems of error are swept away as a house that is built on the sand; compare notes on Matthew 7:24-27.

The meaning then is, that the stability of the truth on earth is dependent on the church. It is owing to the fact that the church is itself founded on a rock, that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, that no storms of persecution can overthrow it, that the truth is preserved from age to age. Other systems of religion are swept away; other opinions change; other forms of doctrine vanish; but the knowledge of the great system of redemption is preserved on earth unshaken, because the church is preserved, and because its foundations cannot be moved. This does not refer, I suppose, to creeds and confessions, or to the decisions of synods and councils; but to the living spirit of truth and piety "in" the church itself. As certainly as the church continues to live, so certain it will be that the truth of God will be perpetuated among people.

Verse 16

And, without controversy - Undeniably, certainly. The object of the apostle is to say that the truth which he was about to state admitted of no dispute.

Great is the mystery - On the meaning of the word "mystery," see the notes on 1 Corinthians 2:7. The word means that which had been hidden or concealed. The meaning here is not that the proposition which he affirms was mysterious in the sense that it was unintelligible, or impossible to be understood; but that the doctrine respecting the incarnation and the work of the Messiah, which had been so long "kept hidden" from the world, was a subject of the deepest importance. This passage, therefore, should not be

used to prove that there is anything unintelligible, or anything that surpasses human comprehension, in that doctrine, whatever may be the truth on that point; but that the doctrine which he now proceeds to state, and which had been so long concealed from mankind, was of the utmost consequence.

Of godliness - The word "godliness" means, properly, piety, reverence, or religiousness. It is used here, however, for the gospel scheme, to wit, that which the apostle proceeds to state. This "mystery," which had "been hidden from ages and from generations, and which was now manifest" Colossians 1:26, was the great doctrine on which depended "religion" everywhere, or was that which constituted the Christian scheme.

God - Probably there is no passage in the New Testament which has excited so much discussion among critics as this, and none in reference to which it is so difficult to determine the true reading. It is the only one, it is believed, in which the microscope has been employed to determine the lines of the letters used in a manuscript; and, after all that has been done to ascertain the exact truth in regard to it, still the question remains undecided. It is not the object of these notes to enter into the examination of questions of this nature. A full investigation may be found in Wetstein. The question which has excited so much controversy is, whether the original Greek word was Θεὸς Theos"God," or whether it was ὅς hos"who," or ὁ ho"which." The controversy has turned, to a considerable degree, on the reading in the "Codex Alexandrinus;" and a remark or two on the method in which the manuscripts in the New Testament were written, will show the true nature of the controversy.

Greek manuscripts were formerly written entirely in capital letters, and without breaks or intervals between the words, and without accents; see a full description of the methods of writing the New Testament, in an article by Prof. Stuart in Dr. Robinson's Biblotheca Sacra, No. 2, pp. 254ff The small, cursive Greek letters which are now used, were not commonly employed in transcribing the New Testament, if at all, until the ninth or tenth centuries. It was a common thing to abridge or contract words in the manuscript. Thus, πρ would be used for πατερ pater"father;" κς for κυριος kurios"Lord;" Θς for Θεος Theos"God," etc. The words thus contracted were designated by a faint line or dash over them. In this place, therefore, if the original uncials (capitals) were Θ ¯C¯, standing for Θεὸς Theos"God," and the line in the Θ , and the faint line over it, were obliterated from any cause, it would easily be mistaken for OC - ὅς hos- "who."

To ascertain which of these is the true reading, has been the great question; and it is with reference to this that the microscope has been resorted to in the examination of the Alexandrian manuscript. It is now generally admitted that the faint line "over" the word has been added by some later hand, though not improbably by one who found that the line was nearly obliterated, and who meant merely to restore it. Whether the letter O was originally written with a line within it, making the reading "God," it is now said to be impossible to determine, in consequence of the manuscript at this place having become so much worn by frequent examination. The Vulgate and the Syriac read it: "who," or "which." The Vulgate is, "Great is the sacrament of piety which was manifested in the flesh." The Syriac, "Great is the mystery of godliness, that he was manifested in the flesh." The "probability" in regard to the correct reading here, as it seems to me, is, that the word, as originally written, was Θεός Theos- "God." At the same time, however, the evidence is not so clear that it can be properly used in an argument. But the passage is not "necessary" to prove the doctrine which is affirmed, on the supposition that that is the correct reading. The same truth is abundantly taught elsewhere; compare Matthew 1:23; John 1:14.

Was manifest - Margin, "Manifested." The meaning is, "appeared" in the flesh.

In the flesh - In human nature; see this explained in the notes on Romans 1:3. The expression here looks as though the true reading of the much-disputed word was "God." It could not have been, it would seem evident, ὁ ho"which," referring to "mystery;" for how could a mystery "be manifested in the flesh?" Nor could it it be ὅς hos"who," unless that should refer to one who was more than a man; for how absurd would it be to say that "a man was manifested, or appeared in the flesh!" How else could a man appear? The phrase here means that God appeared in human form, or with human nature; and this is declared to be the "great" truth so long concealed from human view, but now revealed as constituting the fundamental doctrine of the gospel. The expressions which follow in this verse refer to God "as" thus manifested in the flesh; to the Saviour as he appeared on earth, regarded as a divine and human being. It was the fact that he thus appeared and sustained this character, which made the things which are immediately specified so remarkable, and so worthy of attention.

Justified in the Spirit - That is, the incarnate person above referred to; the Redeemer, regarded as God and man. The word "Spirit," here, it is evident, refers to the Holy Spirit, because:

(1) it is not possible to attach any intelligible idea to the phrase, "he was justified by his own spirit, or soul;"

(2) as the Holy Spirit performed so important a part in the work of Christ, it is natural to suppose there would be some allusion here to him; and,

(3) as the "angels" are mentioned here as having been with him, and as the Holy Spirit is often mentioned in connection with him, it is natural to suppose that there would be some allusion to Him here. The word "justified," here, is not used in the sense in which it is when applied to Christians, but in its more common signification. It means to "vindicate," and the sense is, that he was shown to be the Son of God by the agency of the Holy Spirit; he was thus vindicated from the charges alleged against him. The Holy Spirit furnished the evidence that he was the Son of God, or "justified" his claims. Thus he descended on him at his baptism, Matthew 3:16; he was sent to convince the world of sin because it did not believe on him, John 16:8-9; the Saviour cast out devils by him, Matthew 12:28; the Spirit was given to him without measure, John 3:34, and the Spirit was sent down in accordance with his promise, to convert the hearts of people; Acts 2:33. All the manifestations of God to him; all the power of working miracles by his agency; all the influences imparted to the man Christ Jesus, endowing him with such wisdom as man never had before, may be regarded as an attestation of the Holy Spirit to the divine mission of the Lord Jesus, and of course as a vindication from all the charges against him. In like manner, the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and his agency in the conversion of every sinner, prove the same thing, and furnish the grand argument in vindication of the Redeemer that he was sent from God. To this the apostle refers as a part of the glorious truth of the Christian scheme now revealed - the "mystery of religion;" as a portion of the amazing records, the memory of which the church was to preserve as connected with the redemption of the world.

Seen of angels - They were attendants on his ministry, and came to him in times of distress, peril, and want; compare Luke 2:9-13; Luke 22:43;

Luke 24:4; Hebrews 1:6; Matthew 4:11. They felt an interest in him and his work, and they gladly came to him in his sorrows and troubles. The design of the apostle is to give an impressive view of the grandeur and glory of that work which attracted the attention of the heavenly hosts, and which drew them from the skies that they might proclaim his advent, sustain him in his temptations, witness his crucifixion, and watch over him in the tomb. The work of Christ, though despised by people, excited the deepest interest in heaven; compare notes on 1 Peter 1:12.

Preached unto the Gentiles - This is placed by the apostle among the "great" things which constituted the "mystery" of religion. The meaning is, that it was a glorious truth that salvation might be, and should be, proclaimed to all mankind, and that this was a part of the important truths made known in the gospel. Elsewhere this is called, by way of eminence, "the mystery of the gospel;" that is, the grand truth which had not been known until the coming of the Saviour; see the Ephesians 6:19 note; Colossians 1:26-27; Colossians 4:3 notes. Before his coming, a wall of partition had divided the Jewish and Gentile world. The Jews regarded the rest of mankind as excluded from the covenant mercies of God, and it was one of the principal stumblingblocks in their way, in regard to the gospel, that it proclaimed that all the race was on a level, that that middle wall of partition was broken down, and that salvation might now be published to all people; compare Acts 22:21; Ephesians 2:14-15; Romans 3:22; Romans 10:11-20.

The Jew had no special advantage for salvation by being a Jew; the Gentile was not excluded from the hope of salvation. The plan of redemption was adapted "to man" as such - without regard to his complexion, country, customs, or laws. The blood of Christ was shed for all, and wherever a human being could be found, salvation might be freely offered him. This "is" a glorious truth; and taken in all its bearings, and in reference to the views which then prevailed, and which have always more or less prevailed about the distinctions made among people by caste and rank, there is scarcely anymore glorious truth connected with the Christian revelation, or one which will exert a wider influence in promoting the welfare of man. It is a great privilege to be permitted to proclaim that all people, in one respect - and that the most important - are on a level; that they are all equally the objects of the divine compassion; that Christ died for one as really as for another; that birth, wealth, elevated rank, or beauty

of complexion, contribute nothing to the salvation of one man; and that poverty, a darker skin, slavery, or a meaner rank, do nothing to exclude another from the favor of his Maker.

Believed on in the world - This also is mentioned among the "great" things which constitute the mystery of revealed religion. But why is this regarded as so remarkable as to be mentioned thus? In point of importance, how can it be mentioned in connection with the fact that God was manifest in the flesh; that he was vindicated by the Holy Spirit; that he was an object of intense interest to angelic hosts, and that his coming had broken down the walls which had separated the world, and placed them now on a level? I answer, perhaps the following circumstances may have induced the apostle to place this among the remarkable things evincing the greatness of this truth:

(1) The strong "improbability" arising from the greatness of the "mystery," that the doctrines respecting the incarnate Deity would be believed. Such is the incomprehensible nature of many of the truths connected with the incarnation; so strange does it seem that God would become incarnate; so amazing that he should appear in human flesh and blood, and that the incarnate Son of God should die, that it might be regarded as a wonderful thing that such a doctrine had in fact obtained credence in the world. But it was a glorious truth that all the natural improbabilities in the case had been overcome, and that people had accredited the announcement.

(2) the strong improbability that his message would be believed, arising from the "wickedness of the human heart." Man, in all his history, had shown a strong reluctance to believe any message from God, or any truth whatever revealed by him. The Jews had rejected his prophets and put them to death John 17:5; see the notes on Acts 1:9. This is mentioned as among the "great" or remarkable things pertaining to "godliness," or the Christian revelation, because it was an event which had not elsewhere occurred, and was the crowning grandeur of the work of Christ. It was an event that was fitted to excite the deepest interest in heaven itself. No event of more importance has ever occurred in the universe, of which we have any knowledge, than the re-ascension of the triumphant Son of God to glory after having accomplished the redemption of a world.

In view of the instructions of this chapter, we may make the following remarks.

1. The word “bishop” in the New Testament never means what is now commonly understood by it - “a Prelate.” It does not denote here, or anywhere else in the Now Testament, one who has charge over a “diocese” composed of a certain district of country, embracing a number of churches with their clergy.

2. There are not “three orders” of clergy in the New Testament. The apostle Paul in this chapter expressly designates the characteristics of those who should have charge of the church, but mentions only two, “bishops” and “deacons.” The former are ministers of the word, having charge of the spiritual interests of the church; the other are deacons, of whom there is no evidence that they were appointed to preach. There is no “third” order. There is no allusion to anyone who was to be “superior” to the “bishops” and “deacons.” As the apostle Paul was expressly giving instructions in regard to the organization of the church, such an omission is unaccountable if he supposed there was to be an order of “prelates” in the church. Why is there no allusion to them? Why is there no mention of their qualifications? If Timothy was himself a prelate, was he to have nothing to do in transmitting the office to others? Were there no special qualifications required in such an order of people which it would be proper to mention? Would it not be “respectful,” at least, in Paul to have made some allusion to such an office, if Timothy himself held it?

3. There is only one order of preachers in the church. The qualifications of that order are specified with great minuteness and particularity, as well as beauty; 1 Timothy 3:2-7. No man really needs to know more of the qualifications for this office than could be learned from a prayerful study of this passage.

4. A man who enters the ministry “ought” to have high qualifications; 1 Timothy 3:2-7. No man “ought,” under any pretence, to be put into the ministry who has not the qualifications here specified. Nothing is gained in any department of human labor, by appointing incompetent persons to fill it. A farmer gains nothing by employing a man on his farm who has no

proper qualifications for his business; a carpenter, a shoemaker, or a blacksmith, gains nothing by employing a man who knows nothing about his trade; and a neighborhood gains nothing by employing a man as a teacher of a school who has no qualifications to teach, or who has a bad character. Such a man would do more mischief on a farm, or in a workshop, or in a school, than all the good which he could do would compensate. And so it is in the ministry. The true object is not to increase the "number" of ministers, it is to increase the number of those who are "qualified" for their work, and if a man has not the qualifications laid down by the inspired apostle, he had better seek some other calling.

5. The church is the guardian of the truth; 1 Timothy 3:15. It is appointed to preserve it pure, and to transmit it to future ages. The world is dependent on it for any just views of truth. The church has the power, and is entrusted with the duty, of preserving on earth a just knowledge of God and of eternal things; of the way of salvation; of the requirements of pure morality: to keep up the knowledge of that truth which tends to elevate society and to save man. It is entrusted with the Bible, to preserve uncorrupted, and to transmit to distant ages and lands. It is bound to maintain and assert the truth in its creeds and confessions of faith. And it is to preserve the truth by the holy lives of its members, and to show in their walk what is the appropriate influence of truth on the soul. Whatever religious truth there is now on the earth, has been thus preserved and transmitted, and it still devolves on the church to bear the truth of God on to future times, and to diffuse it abroad to distant lands.

6. The closing verse of this chapter 1 Timothy 3:16 gives us a most elevated view of the plan of salvation. and of its grandeur and glory. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to condense more interesting and sublime thought into so narrow a compass as this. The great mystery of the incarnation; the interest of angelic beings in the events of redemption; the effect of the gospel on the pagan world; the tendency of the Christian religion to break down every barrier among people, and to place all the race on a level; its power in overcoming the unbelief of mankind; and the re-ascension of the Son of God to heaven, present a series of most wonderful facts to our contemplation. These things are found in no other system of religion, and these are worthy of the profound attention of every human

being. The manifestation of God in the flesh! What a thought! It was worthy of the deepest interest among the angels, and it "claims" the attention of people, for it was for human beings and not for angels that he thus appeared in human form; compare notes on 1 Peter 1:12.

7. How strange it is that "man" feels no more interest in these things! God was manifest in the flesh for his salvation, but he does not regard it Angels looked upon it with wonder: but man, for whom he came, feels little interest in his advent or his work! The Christian religion has broken down the barrier among nations, and has proclaimed that all people may be saved; yet the mass of people look on this with entire unconcern. The Redeemer ascended to heaven, having finished his great work; but how little interest do the mass of mankind feel in this! He will come again to judge the world; but the race moves on, regardless of this truth; unalarmed at the prospect of meeting him; feeling no interest in the assurance that he "has" come and died for sinners, and no apprehension in view of the fact that he will come again, and that they must stand at his bar. All heaven was moved with his first advent, and will be with his second; but the earth regards it with unconcern. Angelic beings look upon this with the deepest anxiety, though they have no personal interest in it; man, though all his great interests are concentrated on it, regards it as a fable, disbelieves it all, and treats it with contempt and scorn. Such is the difference between heaven and earth - angels and human beings!

1 TIMOTHY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

There is, in many respects, a strong resemblance between the first part of this chapter, 1 Timothy 4:1-6.

(a)There was to be, in the latter days, a great departing from the faith; 1 Timothy 4:1.

(b)Some of the characteristics of that apostasy were these; there would be a giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; 1 Timothy 4:1. Those who taught would hypocritically speak what they knew to be falsehood, having their own consciences seared; 1 Timothy 4:2. They would forbid to marry, and forbid the use of certain articles of food which God had appointed for man; 1 Timothy 4:3-5.

II. Timothy was to warn the churches against trifling and superstitious views, such as the apostle calls "old wives'" fables; 1 Timothy 4:7-11.

(a)He was not to allow himself to be influenced by such fables, but at once to reject them; 1 Timothy 4:7.

(b)The bodily exercise which the friends of such "fables" recommended was of no advantage to the soul, and no stress ought to be laid on it, as if it were important; 1 Timothy 4:8.

(c)That which was truly profitable, and which ought to be regarded as important was godliness; for "that" had promise of the present life, and of the life to come; 1 Timothy 4:8.

(d)Timothy must expect, in giving these instructions, to endure labor and to suffer reproach; nevertheless, he was faithfully to inculcate these important truths; 1 Timothy 4:10-11.

III. Various admonitions respecting his personal deportment; 1 Timothy 4:12-16.

(a)He was so to live that no one would despise him or his ministry because he was young; 1 Timothy 4:12.

(b)He was to give a constant attention to his duties until the apostle should himself return to him; 1 Timothy 4:13.

(c)He was carefully to cultivate the gift which has been conferred by his education, and by his ordination to the work of the ministry; 1 Timothy 4:14.

(d)He was to meditate on these things, and to give himself wholly to the work, so that his profiting might appear to all; 1 Timothy 4:15.

(e)He was to take good heed to himself, and to the manner and matter of his teaching, that he might save himself and those who heard him; 1 Timothy 4:16.

Verse 1

Now the Spirit - Evidently the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of inspiration. It is not quite certain, from this passage, whether the apostle means to say that this was a revelation "then" made to him, or whether it was a well-understood thing as taught by the Holy Spirit. He himself elsewhere refers to this same prophecy, and John also more than once mentions it; compare 1 John 2:18; Revelation 20:1-15. From 2 Thessalonians 2:5, it would seem that this was a truth which had before been communicated to the apostle Paul, and that he had dwelt on it when he preached the gospel in Thessalonica. There is no improbability, however, in the supposition that so important a subject was communicated directly by the Holy Spirit to others of the apostles.

Speaketh expressly - In express words, ῥητῶς rētōsIt was not by mere hints, and symbols, and shadowy images of the future; it was in an open and plain manner - in so many words. The object of this statement seems to be to call the attention of Timothy to it in an emphatic manner, and to show the importance of attending to it.

That in the latter times - Under the last dispensation, during which the affairs of the world would close; see the notes on Hebrews 1:2. It does not mean that this would occur "just before" the end of the world, but that it would take place during "that last dispensation," and that the end of the world would not happen until this should take place; see the notes on 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

Some shall depart from the faith - The Greek word here - ἀποστήσονται apostēsontai- is that from which we have derived the word "apostatize," and would be properly so rendered here. The meaning is, that

they would "apostatize" from the belief of the truths of the gospel. It does not mean that, as individuals, they would have been true Christians; but that there would be a departure from the great doctrines which constitute the Christian faith. The ways in which they would do this are immediately specified, showing what the apostle meant here by departing from the faith. They would give heed to seducing spirits, to the doctrines of devils, etc. The use of the word "some," here τινες tines- does not imply that the number would be small. The meaning is, that "certain persons" would thus depart, or that "there would be" an apostasy of the kind here mentioned, in the last days. From the parallel passage in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, it would seem that this was to be an extensive apostasy.

Giving heed to seducing spirits - Rather than to the Spirit of God. It would be a part of their system to yield to those spirits that led astray. The spirits here referred to are any that cause to err, and the most obvious and natural construction is to refer it to the agency of fallen spirits. Though it "may" apply to false teachers, yet, if so, it is rather to them as under the influence of evil spirits. This may be applied, so far as the phraseology is concerned, to "any" false teaching; but it is evident that the apostle had a specific apostasy in view - some great "system" that would greatly corrupt the Christian faith; and the words here should be interpreted with reference to that. It is true that people in all ages are prone to give heed to seducing spirits; but the thing referred to here is some grand apostasy, in which the characteristics would be manifested, and the doctrines held, which the apostle proceeds immediately to specify; compare 1 John 4:1.

And doctrines of devils - Greek, "Teachings of demons - διδασκαλίαις δαιμωνίων didaskaliais daimōniōnThis may either mean teachings "respecting" demons, or teachings "by" demons. The particular sense must be determined by the connection. Ambiguity of this kind in the construction of words, where one is in the genitive case, is not uncommon; compare John 15:9-10; John 21:15. Instances of the construction where the genitive denotes the "object," and should be translated "concerning," occur in Matthew 9:25; "The gospel of the kingdom," i. e., concerning the kingdom; Matthew 10:1; "Power of unclean spirits," i. e., over or concerning unclean spirits; so, also, Acts 4:9; Romans 16:15; 2 Corinthians 1:5; Ephesians 3:1; Revelation 2:13. Instances of construction where the genitive denotes the "agent," occur in the following places: Luke 1:69, "A horn of salvation," i. e., a horn which produces or causes salvation; John 6:28; Romans 3:22; 2

Corinthians 4:10; Ephesians 4:18; Colossians 2:11. Whether the phrase here means that, in the apostasy, they would give heed to doctrines "respecting" demons, or to doctrines which demons "taught," cannot, it seems to me, be determined with certainty. If the previous phrase, however, means that they would embrace doctrines taught by evil spirits, it can hardly be supposed that the apostle would immediately repeat the same idea in another form; and then the sense would be, that one characteristic of the time referred to would be the prevalent teaching "respecting" demons. They would "give heed to," or embrace, some special views respecting demons. The word here rendered "devils" is δαιμονία daimonia- "demons." This word, among the Greeks, denoted the following things:

(1) A god or goddess, spoken of the pagan gods; compare in New Testament, Acts 17:18.

(2) adivine being, where no particular one was specified, the agent or author of good or evil fortune; of death, fate, etc. In this sense it is often used in Homer.

(3) the souls of people of the golden age, which dwelt unobserved upon the earth to regard the actions of men, and to defend them - tutelary divinities, or geniuses - like that which Socrates regarded as his constant attendant. Xen. Mem. 4. 8. 1. 5; Apol. Soc. 4. See "Passow."

(4) to this may be added the common use in the New Testament, where the word denotes a demon in the Jewish sense - a bad spirit, subject to Satan, and under his control; one of the host of fallen angels - commonly, but not very properly rendered "devil" or "devils." These spirits were supposed to wander in desolate places, Matthew 12:43; compare Isaiah 13:21; Isaiah 34:14; or they dwell in the air, Ephesians 2:2. They were regarded as hostile to mankind, John 8:44; as able to utter pagan oracles, Acts 16:17; as lurking in the idols of the pagan, 1 Corinthians 10:20; Revelation 9:20. They are spoken of as the authors of evil, James 2:19; compare Ephesians 6:12, and as having the power of taking "possession" of a person, of producing diseases, or of causing mania, as in the case of the demoniacs, Luke 4:33; Luke 8:27; Matthew 17:18; Mark 7:29-30; and often elsewhere. The doctrine, therefore, which the apostle predicted would

prevail, might, “so far as the word used is concerned,” be either of the following:

(1) Accordance with the prevalent notions of the pagan respecting false gods; or a falling into idolatry similar to that taught in the Grecian mythology. It can hardly be supposed, however, that he designed to say that the common notions of the pagan would prevail in the Christian church, or that the worship of the pagan gods “as such” would be set up there.

(2) an accordance with the Jewish views respecting demoniacal possessions and the power of exorcising them. If this view should extensively prevail in the Christian church, it would be in accordance with the language of the prediction.

(3) accordance with the prevalent pagan notions respecting the departed spirits of the good and the great, who were exalted to the rank of demi-gods, and who, though invisible, were supposed still to exert an important influence in favor of mankind. To these beings, the pagan rendered extraordinary homage. They regarded them as demi-gods. They supposed that they took a deep interest in human affairs. They invoked their aid. They set apart days in honor of them. They offered sacrifices, and performed rites and ceremonies to propitiate their favor. They were regarded as a sort of mediators or intercessors between man and the superior divinities. If these things are found anywhere in the Christian church, they may be regarded as a fulfillment of this prediction, for they were not of a nature to be foreseen by any human sagacity. Now it so happens, that they are in fact found in the Papal communion, and in a way that corresponds fairly to the meaning of the phrase, as it would have been understood in the time of the apostle.

There is, “first,” the worship of the virgin and of the saints, or the extraordinary honors rendered to them - corresponding almost entirely with the reverence paid by the pagan to the spirits of heroes or to demi-gods. The saints are supposed to have extraordinary power with God, and their aid is implored as intercessors. The virgin Mary is invoked as “the mother of God,” and as having power still to command her Son. The Papists do not, indeed, offer the same homage to the saints which they do to God, but they ask their aid; they offer prayer to them. The following extracts from the

catechism of Dr. James Butler, approved and recommended by Dr. Kenrick, "Bishop of Philadelphia," expresses the general views of Roman Catholics on this subject. "Question: How do Catholics distinguish between the honor they give to God, and the honor they give to the saints, when they pray to God and the saints?

Answer: Of God alone they beg grace and mercy; and of the saints they only ask the assistance of their prayers? Question Is it lawful to recommend ourselves to the saints, and ask their prayers. Answer: Yes; as it is lawful and a very pious practice to ask the prayers of our fellow-creatures on earth, and to pray for them." In the "Prayer to be said before mass," the following language occurs: "In union with the holy church and its minister, and invoking the blessed virgin Mary, Mother of God, and all the angels and saints, we now offer the adorable sacrifice of the mass," etc. In the General Confession, it is said - "I confess to Almighty God, to the blessed Mary, ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the saints, that I have sinned exceedingly." So also, the council of Trent declared, Sess. 25, "Concerning the invocation of the saints," "that it is good and useful to supplicate them, and to fly to their prayers, power, and aid; but that they who deny that the saints are to be invoked, or who assert that they do not pray for people, or that their invocation of them is idolatry, hold an impious opinion. See also Peter Den's Moral Theology, translated by the Rev. John F. Berg, pp. 342-356. "Secondly," in the Papal communion the doctrine of "exorcism" is still held - implying a belief that evil spirits or demons have power over the human frame - a doctrine which comes fairly under the meaning of the phrase here - "the doctrine respecting demons."

Thus, in Dr. Butler's Catechism: "Question: What do you mean by exorcism? Answer: The rites and prayers instituted by the church for the casting out devils, or restraining them from hurting persons, disquieting places, or abusing any of God's creatures to our harm. Question: Has Christ given his church any such power over devils? Anser: Yes, he has; see Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:15; Luke 9:1. And that this power was not to die with the apostles, nor to cease after the apostolic age, we learn from the perpetual practice of the church, and the experience of all ages." The characteristic here referred to by the apostle, therefore, is one that applies

precisely to the Roman Catholic communion, and cannot be applied with the same fitness to any other association calling itself Christian on earth. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the Holy Spirit designed to designate that apostate church.

Verse 2

Speaking lies in hypocrisy - ἐν ὑποκρισει ψευδολόγων en hupokrisei pseudologōnOr rather, "by, or through the hypocrisy of those speaking lies. So it is rendered by Whitby, Benson, Macknight, and others. Our translators have rendered it as if the word translated "speaking lies" - ψευδολόγων pseudologōn- referred to "demons," or, "devils," δαιμονίων daimoniōn- in the previous verse. But there are two objections to this. One is, that then, as Koppe observes, the words would have been inverted - ψευδολόγων ἐν ὑποκρίσει pseudologōn en hupokriseiThe other is, that if that construction is adopted, it must be carried through the sentence, and then all the phrases "speaking lies," "having their conscience seared," "forbidding to marry," etc., must be referred to demons. The preposition ἐν en"in" may denote "by" or "through," and is often so used.

If this be the true construction, then it will mean that those who departed from the faith did it "by" or "through" the hypocritical teachings of those who spoke lies, or who knew that they were inculcating falsehoods; of those whose conscience was seared; of those who forbade to marry, etc. The meaning then will be, "In the last days certain persons will depart from the faith of the gospel. This apostasy will essentially consist in their giving heed to spirits that lead to error, and in embracing corrupt and erroneous views on demonology, or in reference to invisible beings between us and God. This they will do through the hypocritical teaching of those who inculcate falsehood; whose consciences are seared," etc. The series of characteristics, therefore, which follow, are those of the "teachers," not of "the taught;" of the ministers of the church, not of the great body of the people.

The apostle meant to say that this grand apostasy would occur under the influence of a hypocritical, hardened, and arbitrary ministry, teaching their own doctrines instead of the divine commands, and forbidding that which God had declared to be lawful. In the clause before us - "speaking lies in hypocrisy" - two things are implied, "first," that the characteristic of those

referred to would be that they would "speak lies;" "second," that this would be done "hypocritically." In regard to the first, there can be no doubt among Protestants of its applicability to the papal communion. The entire series of doctrines respecting the authority of the Pope, purgatory, the mass, the invocation of the saints, the veneration of relics, the seven sacraments, the authority of tradition, the doctrine of merit, etc., is regarded as false. Indeed, the system could not be better characterized than by saying that it is a system "speaking lies." The entire scheme attempts to palm falsehood upon the world, in the place of the simple teaching of the New Testament. The only question is, whether this is done "in hypocrisy," or hypocritically. In regard to this, it is not necessary to maintain that there is "no" sincerity among the ministers of that communion, or that "all" are hypocritical in their belief and their teaching. The sense is, that this is the general characteristic, or that this is understood by the leaders or prime movers in that apostasy. In regard to the applicability of this to the ministers of the Papal communion, and the question whether they teach what they know to be false, we may observe:

(1) that many of them are men of eminent learning, and there can he no reason to doubt that they Know that many of the Catholic legends are false, and many of the doctrines of their faith contrary to the Bible.

(2) not a few of the things in that communion must be known by them to be false, though not known to be so by the people. Such are all the pretended miracles performed by the relics of the saints; the liquefying of the blood of Januarius, etc.; see the notes on 2 Thessalonians 2:9. As the working of these tricks depends wholly on the priesthood, they must know that they are "speaking lies in hypocrisy."

(3) the matter of fact seems to be, that when young men who have been trained in the Catholic Church, first turn their attention to the ministry, they are sincere. They have not yet been made acquainted with the "mysteries of iniquity" in the communion in which they have been trained, and they do not suspect the deceptions that are practiced there. When they pass through their course of study, however, and become acquainted with the arts and devices on which the fabric rests, and with the scandalous lives of many of the clergy, they are shocked to find how corrupt and false the whole system

is. But they are now committed. They have devoted their lives to this profession. They are trained now to this system of imposture, and they must continue to practice and perpetuate the fraud, or abandon the church, and subject themselves to all the civil and ecclesiastical disabilities which would now follow if they were to leave and reveal all its frauds and impostures. A gentleman of high authority, and who has had as good an opportunity as any man living to make accurate and extensive observations, stated to me, that this was a common thing in regard to the Catholic clergy in France and Italy. No one can reasonably doubt that the great body of that clergy "must" be apprized that much that is relied on for the support of the system is mere legend, and that the miracles which are pretended to be performed are mere trick and imposture.

Having their conscience seared with a hot iron - The allusion here is doubtless to the effect of applying a hot iron to the skin. The cauterized part becomes rigid and hard, and is dead to sensibility. So with the conscience of those referred to. It has the same relation to a conscience that is sensitive and quick in its decisions, that a cauterized part of the body has to a thin, delicate, and sensitive skin. Such a conscience exists in a mind that will practice delusion without concern; that will carry on a vast system of fraud without wincing; that will incarcerate, scourge, or burn the innocent without compassion; and that will practice gross enormities, and indulge in sensual gratifications under the mask of piety. While there are many eminent exceptions to an application of this to the Papal communion, yet this description will apply better to the Roman priesthood in the time of Luther - and in many other periods of the world - than to any other "body of men" that ever lived.

Verse 3

Forbidding to marry - That is, "They will depart from the faith through the hypocritical teaching - of those who forbid to marry;" see notes on 1 Timothy 4:2. This does not necessarily mean that they would prohibit marriage altogether, but that it would be a characteristic of their teaching that marriage would "be forbidden," whether of one class of persons or many. They would "commend" and "enjoin" celibacy and virginity. They would regard such a state, for certain persons, as more holy than the married condition, and would consider it as "so" holy that they would absolutely prohibit those who wished to be most holy from entering into the relation. It is needless to say how accurately this applies to the views of the

papacy in regard to the comparative purity and advantages of a state of celibacy, and to their absolute prohibition of the marriage of the clergy. The tenth article of the decree of the Council of Trent, in relation to marriage, will show the general view of the papacy on that subject. "Whosoever shall say that the married state is to be preferred to a state of virginity, or celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity, or celibacy, than to be joined in marriage; let him be accursed!" Compare Peter Dens' Moral Theology, pp. 497-500.

And commanding to abstain from meats, … - The word "meat" in the Scriptures, commonly denotes "food" of all kinds; Matthew 3:4; Matthew 6:25; Matthew 10:10; Matthew 15:37. This was the meaning of the word when the translation of the Bible was made. It is now used by us, almost exclusively, to denote animal food. The word here used - βρῶμα brōma- means, properly, whatever is eaten, and may refer to animal flesh, fish, fruit, or vegetables. It is often, however, in the New Testament, employed particularly to denote the flesh of animals; Heb, Matthew 9:10; Matthew 13:9; Romans 14:15, Romans 14:20; 1 Corinthians 8:8, 1 Corinthians 8:13. As it was animal food particularly which was forbidden under the Jewish code, and as the questions on this subject among Christians would relate to the same kinds of prohibition, it is probable that the word has the same limited signification here, and should be taken as meaning the same thing that the word "meat" does with us.

To forbid the use of certain meats, is here described as one of the characteristics of those who would instruct the church in the time of the great apostasy. It is not necessary to suppose that there would be an "entire" prohibition, but only a prohibition of certain kinds, and at certain seasons. That "this" characteristic is found in the papacy more than anywhere else in the Christian world, it is needless to prove. The following questions and answers from Dr. Butler's Catechism, will show what is the sentiment of Roman Catholics on this subject. "Question: Are there any other commandments besides the Ten Commandments of God? Answer: There are the commandments or precepts of the church, which are chiefly six. Question: What are we obliged to do by the second commandment of the church? Answer: To give part of the year to fast and abstinence. Question: What do you mean by fast-days? Answer: Certain days on which we are allowed but one meal, and "forbidden flesh meat."

Question: What do you mean by days of abstinence? Answer: Certain days on which we are forbidden to eat flesh meat; but are allowed the usual number of meals. Question: Is it strictly forbidden by the church to eat flesh meat on days of abstinence? Answer: Yes; and to eat flesh meat on any day on which it is forbidden, without necessity and leave of the church, is very sinful." Could there be a more impressive and striking commentary on what the apostle says here, that "in the latter days some would depart from the faith, under the hypocritical teaching of those who commanded to abstain from meats?" The authority claimed by the papacy to issue "commands" on this subject, may be seen still further by the following extract from the same catechism, showing the gracious permission of the church to the "faithful." "The abstinence on Saturday is dispensed with, for the faithful throughout the United States, for the space of ten years (from 1833), except when a fast falls on a Saturday. The use of flesh meat is allowed at present by dispensation in the diocess of Philadelphia, on all the Sundays of Lent, except Palm Sunday, and once a day on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday in each week, except the Thursday after Ash Wednesday, and also excepting Holy-week." Such is the Roman Catholic religion! See also Peter Dens' Moral Theology, pp. 321-330. It is true that what is said here "might" apply to the Essenes, as Koppe supposes, or to the Judaizing teachers, but it applies more appropriately and fully to the Papal communion than to any other body of men professing Christianity, and taken in connection with the other characteristics of the apostasy, there can be no doubt that the reference is to that.

Which God hath created - The articles of food which he has made, and which he has designed for the nourishment of man. The fact that God had "created" them was proof that they were not to be regarded as evil, and that it was not to be considered as a religious duty to abstain from them. All that "God" has made is good in its place, and what is adapted to be food for man is not to be refused or forbidden; compare Ecclesiastes 5:18. There can be no doubt that in the apostasy here referred to, those things would be forbidden, not because they were injurious or hurtful in their nature, but because it might be made a part of a system of religion of self-righteousness and because there might be connected with such a prohibition the belief of special merit.

Verse 4

For every creature of God is good - Greek, "all the creatures, or all that God has created" - πᾶν κτίσμα pan ktismathat is, as he made it; compare Genesis 1:10, Genesis 1:12, Genesis 1:18, Genesis 1:31. It does not mean that every moral agent remains good as long as he is "a creature of God," but moral agents, human beings and angels, were good as they were made at first; Genesis 1:31. Nor does it mean that all that God has made is good "for every object to which it can be applied." It is good in its place; good for the purpose for which he made it. But it should not be inferred that a thing which is poisonous in its nature is good for food, "because" it is a creation of God. It is good only in its place, and for the ends for which he intended it. Nor should it be inferred that what God has made is necessarily good "after" it has been perverted by man. As God made it originally, it might have been used without injury.

Apples and peaches were made good, and are still useful and proper as articles of food; rye and Indian-corn are good, and are admirably adapted to the support of man and beast, but it does not follow that all that "man" can make of them is necessarily good. He extracts from them a poisonous liquid, and then says that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused." But is this a fair use of this passage of Scripture? True, they "are" good - they "are" to be received with gratitude as he made them, and as applied to the uses for which he designed them; but why apply this passage to prove that a deleterious beverage, which "man" has extracted from what God has made, is good also, and good for all the purposes to which it can be applied? As "God" made these things, they are good. As man perverts them, it is no longer proper to call them the "creation of God," and they may be injurious in the highest degree. This passage, therefore, should not be adduced to vindicate the use of intoxicating drinks. As employed by the apostle, it had no such reference, nor does it contain any "principle" which can properly receive any such application.

And nothing to be refused - Nothing that God has made, for the purposes for which he designed it. The necessity of the case the "exigency of the passage" - requires this interpretation. It "cannot" mean that we are not to refuse poison if offered in our food, or that we are never to refuse food that is to us injurious or offensive; nor can it anymore mean that we are to receive "all" that may be offered to us as a beverage. The sense is, that as God made it, and for the purposes for which he designed it, it is not to be held to be evil; or, which is the same thing, it is not to be prohibited as

if there were merit in abstaining from it. It is not to be regarded as a religious duty to abstain from food which God has appointed for the support of man.

If it be received with thanksgiving - see the 1 Corinthians 10:31 note; Ephesians 5:20 note; Philemon 4:6 note.

Verse 5

For it is sanctified by the word of God - By the authority or permission of God. It would be profane or unholy if he had forbidden it; it is made holy or proper for our use by his permission, and no command of "man" can make it unholy or improper; compare Genesis 1:29; Genesis 9:3.

And prayer - If it is partaken of with prayer. By prayer we are enabled to receive it with gratitude, and everything that we eat or drink may thus be made a means of grace.

Verse 6

If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things - Of the truths just stated. They are, therefore, proper subjects to preach upon. It is the duty of the ministry to show to the people of their charge what "is" error and where it may be apprehended, and to caution them to avoid it.

Nourished up in the words of faith - That is, you will be then "a good minister of Jesus Christ, as becomes one who has been nourished up in the words of faith, or trained up in the doctrines of religion." The apostle evidently designs to remind Timothy of the manner in which he had been trained, and to show him how he might act in accordance with that. From one who had been thus educated, it was reasonable to expect that he would be a faithful and exemplary minister of the gospel.

Whereunto thou hast attained - The word used here means, properly, to accompany side by side; to follow closely; to follow out, trace, or examine. It is rendered "shall follow," in Matthew 16:17; "having had understanding," in Luke 1:3; and "hast fully known," in 2 Timothy 3:10. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The meaning here seems to be, that Timothy had followed out the doctrines in which he had been trained to their legitimate results; he had accurately seen and understood their bearing, as leading him to embrace the Christian religion. His early training in the Scriptures of the Old Testament 2 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 3:15, he had now fully carried out, by embracing the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, and by evincing the proper results of the early teaching which he had received in connection with that religion. If he now followed the

directions of the apostle, he would be a minister of the Lord Jesus, worthy of the attainments in religious knowledge which he had made, and of the expectations which had been formed of him. No young man should, by neglect, indolence, or folly, disappoint the reasonable expectations of his friends. Their cherished hopes are a proper ground of appeal to him, and it may be properly demanded of every one that he shall carry out to their legitimate results all the principles of his early training, and that he shall be in his profession all that his early advantages make it reasonable to "expect" that he will be.

Verse 7

But refuse - That is, refuse to pay attention to them, or reject them. Do not consider them of sufficient importance to occupy your time.

Profane - The word here used does not mean that the fables here referred to were blasphemous or impious in their character, but that they had not the character of true religion; 2 Timothy 2:16.

d **And old wives' -** Old women's stories; or such as old women held to be important. The word is used here, as it is often with us, in the sense of silly.

Fables - Fictions, or stories that were not founded on fact. The pagan religion abounded with fictions of this kind, and the Jewish teachers were also remarkable for the number of such fables which they had introduced into their system. It is probable that the apostle referred here particularly to the Jewish fables, and the counsel which he gives to Timothy is, to have nothing to do with them.

And exercise thyself rather unto godliness - Rather than attempt to understand those fables. Do not occupy your time and attention with them, but rather cultivate piety, and seek to become more holy.

Verse 8

For bodily exercise profiteth little - Margin, "for a little time." The Greek will admit of either interpretation, and what is here affirmed is true in either sense. The bodily exercise to which the apostle refers is of little advantage compared with that piety which he recommended Timothy to cultivate, and whatever advantage could be derived from it, would be but of short duration. "Bodily exercise" here refers, doubtless, to the mortifications of the body by abstinence and penance which the ancient devotees, and particularly the Essenes, made so important as a part of their religion. The apostle does not mean to say that bodily exercise is in itself

improper, or that no advantage can be derived from it in the preservation of health, but he refers to it solely as a means of religion; as supposed to promote holiness of heart and of life. By these bodily austerities it was supposed that the corrupt passions would be subdued, the wanderings of an unholy fancy lettered down, and the soul brought into conformity to God. In opposition to this supposition, the apostle has here stated a great principle which experience has shown to be universally correct, that such austerities do little to promote holiness, but much to promote superstition. There must be a deeper work on the soul than any which can be accomplished by the mere mortification of the body; see the notes on Colossians 2:23, and compare 1 Corinthians 9:25-27.

But godliness - Piety or religion.

Is profitable unto all things - In every respect. There is not an interest of man, in reference to this life, or to the life to come, which it would not promote. It is favorable to health of body, by promoting temperance, industry, and frugality; to clearness and vigor of intellect, by giving just views of truth, and of the relative value of objects; to peace of conscience, by leading to the faithful performance of duty; to prosperity in business, by making a man sober, honest, prudent, and industrious; to a good name, by leading a man to pursue such a course of life as shall deserve it; and to comfort in trial, calmness in death, and immortal peace beyond the grave. Religion injures no one. It does not destroy health; it does not enfeeble the intellect; it does not disturb the conscience; it does not pander to raging and consuming passions; it does not diminish the honor of a good name; it furnishes no subject of bitter reflection on a bed of death.

It makes no one the poorer; it prompts to no crime; it engenders no disease. If a man should do that which would most certainly make him happy, he would be decidedly and conscientiously religious; and though piety promises no earthly possessions directly as its reward, and secures no immunity from sickness, bereavement, and death, yet there is nothing which so certainly secures a steady growth of prosperity in a community as the virtues which it engenders and sustains, and there is nothing else that will certainly meet the ills to which man is subject. I have no doubt that it is the real conviction of every man, that if he ever becomes certainly “happy,” he will be a Christian; and I presume that it is the honest belief of every one that the true and consistent Christian is the most happy of people. And yet, with this conviction, people seek everything else rather than religion, and in

the pursuit of baubles, which they know cannot confer happiness, they defer religion - the only certain source of happiness at any time - to the last period of life, or reject it altogether.

Having promise of the life that now is - That is, it furnishes the promise of whatever is really necessary for us in this life. The promises of the Scriptures on this subject are abundant, and there is probably not a lack of our nature for which there might not be found a specific promise in the Bible; compare Psalm 23:1; Psalm 84:11; Philemon 4:19. Religion promises us needful food and raiment, Matthew 6:25-33; Isaiah 33:16; comfort in affliction, Deuteronomy 33:27; Job 5:19; Psalm 46:1-11; Hebrews 13:5; support in old age and death, Isaiah 46:4; Psalm 23:4; compare Isaiah 43:2; and a good reputation, an honored name when we are dead; Psalm 37:1-6. There is nothing which man really "needs" in this life, which is not promised by religion; and if the inquiry were made, it would be surprising to many, even with our imperfect religion, how literally these promises are fulfilled. David, near the close of a long life, was able to bear this remarkable testimony on this subject: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread;" Psalm 37:25. And now, of the beggars that come to our doors, to how few of them can we give a cup of cold water, feeling that we are giving it to a disciple! How rare is it that a true Christian becomes a beggar! Of the inmates of our alms-houses, how very few give any evidence that they have religion! They have been brought there by vice, not by religion. True piety sends none to the alms-house; it would have saved the great mass of those who are there from ever needing the charity of their fellow-men.

And of that which is to come - Eternal life. And it is the only thing that "promises" such a life. Infidelity makes no "promise" of future happiness. Its business is to take away all the comforts which religion gives, and to leave people to go to a dark eternity with no promise or hope of eternal joy. Vice "promises" pleasures in the present life, but only to disappoint its votaries here; it makes no promise of happiness in the future world. There is nothing that furnishes any certain "promises" of happiness hereafter, in this world or the next, but religion. God makes no promise of such happiness to beauty, birth, or blood; to the possession of honors or wealth; to great attainments in science and learning, or to the graces of external accomplishment. All these, whatever flattering hopes of happiness they may hold out here, have no assurance of future eternal bliss. It is not by such

things that God graduates the rewards of heaven, and it is only "piety" or "true religion" that furnishes any assurance of happiness in the world to come.

Verse 9

This is a faithful saying - see the notes on 1 Timothy 1:15.

Verse 10

For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach - In making this truth known, that all might be saved, or that salvation was offered to all. The "labor" was chiefly experienced in carrying this intelligence abroad among the Gentiles; the "reproach" arose chiefly from the Jews for doing it.

Because we trust in the living God - This does not mean, as our translation would seem to imply, that he labored and suffered "because" he confided in God, or that this was the "reason" of his sufferings, but rather that this trust in the living God was his "support" in these labors and trials. "We labor and suffer reproach, for we have hope in God. Through him we look for salvation. We believe that he has made this known to people, and believing this, we labor earnestly to make it known, even though it be attended with reproaches." The sentiment is, that the belief that God has revealed a plan of salvation for all people, and invites all people to be saved, will make his friends willing to "labor" to make this known, though it be attended with reproaches.

Who is the Saviour of all men - This must be understood as denoting that he is the Saviour of all people in some sense which differs from what is immediately affirmed - "especially of those that believe." There is something pertaining to "them" in regard to salvation which does not pertain to "all men." It cannot mean that he brings all people to heaven, "especially" those who believe - for this would be nonsense. And if he brings all people actually to heaven, how can it be "especially" true that he does this in regard to those who believe? Does it mean that he saves others "without" believing? But this would be contrary to the uniform doctrine of the Scriptures; see Mark 16:16. When, therefore, it is said that he "is the Saviour of ‹all‘ people, ‹especially‘ of those who believe," it must mean that there is a sense in which it is true that he may be called the Saviour of all people, while, at the same time, it is "actually" true that those only are saved who believe. This may be true in two respects:

(1)As he is the "Preserver" of people Job 7:20, for in this sense he may be said to "save" them from famine, and war, and peril - keeping them from

day to day; compare Psalm 107:28;

(2)as he has "provided" salvation for all people. He is thus their Saviour - and may be called the common Saviour of all; that is, he has confined the offer of salvation to no one class of people; he has not limited the atonement to one division of the human race; and he actually saves all who are willing to be saved by him.

(See supplementary note on 2 Corinthians 5:21. This passage however is not regarded a proof text now on the extent of the atonement, as the fair rendering of σωτήρ sōtēris "Preserver." Dr. Wardlaw has accordingly excluded it in his recent work.)

Specially of those that believe - This is evidently designed to limit the previous remark. If it had been left there, it might have been inferred that he would "actually save" all people. But the apostle held no such doctrine, and he here teaches that salvation is "actually" limited to those who believe. This is the speciality or the uniqueness in the salvation of those who actually reach heaven, that they are "believers;" see the notes on Mark 16:16. All people, therefore, do not enter heaven, unless all people have faith. But is this so? What evidence is there that the great mass of mankind die believing on the Son of God?

Verse 11

These things command and teach - As important doctrines, and as embracing the sum of the Christian system. It follows from this, that a minister of the gospel is solemnly bound to teach that there is a sense in which God is the Saviour of all people. He is just as much bound to teach this, as he is that only those will be saved who believe. It is a glorious truth - and it is a thing for which a man should unceasingly give thanks to God that he may go and proclaim that He has provided salvation for all, and is willing that all should come and live.

Verse 12

Let no man despise thy youth - That is, do not act in such a manner that any shall despise you on account of your youth. Act as becomes a minister of the gospel in all things, and in such a way that people will respect you as such, though you are young. It is clear from this that Timothy was then a young man, but his exact age there is no means of determining. It is implied here:

(1) that there was danger that, by the levity and indiscretion to which youth are so much exposed, the ministry might be regarded with contempt;

and,

(2) that it was possible that his deportment should be so grave, serious, and every way appropriate, that the ministry would not be blamed, but honored. The "way" in which Timothy was to live so that the ministry would not be despised on account of his youth, the apostle proceeds immediately to specify.

But be thou an example of the believers - One of the constant duties of a minister of the gospel, no matter what his age. A minister should so live, that if all his people should closely follow his example, their salvation would be secure, and they would make the highest possible attainments in piety. On the meaning of the word rendered "example," see the notes on Philemon 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:7.

In word - In "speech," that is, your manner of conversation. This does not refer to his "public teaching" - in which he could not probably be an "example" to them - but to his usual and familiar conversation.

In conversation - In general deportment. See this word explained in the notes on Philemon 1:27.

In charity - Love to the brethren, and to all; see notes on 1 Timothy 5:2. There should be nothing in your contact with the other sex that would give rise to scandal. The papists, with great impropriety, understand this as enjoining celibacy - as if there could be no "purity" in that holy relation which God appointed in Eden, and which he has declared to "be honorable in all" Hebrews 13:4, and which he has made so essential to the wellbeing of mankind. If the apostle had wished to produce the highest possible degree of corruption in the church, he would have enjoined the celibacy of the clergy and the celibacy of an indefinite number of nuns and monks. There are no other institutions on the earth which have done so much to corrupt the chastity of the race, as those which have grown out of the doctrine that celibacy is more honorable than marriage.

Verse 13

Till I come; - notes, 1 Timothy 3:14-15.

Give attendance to reading - The word here used may refer either to public or to private reading; see Acts 13:15; 2 Corinthians 3:14; compare Esdr. 9:48. The more obvious interpretation here is to refer it to private reading, or to a careful perusal of those books which would qualify him for his public work. The then written portions of the sacred volume - the Old

Testament - are doubtless specially intended here, but there is no reason to doubt that there were included also such other books as would be useful, to which Timothy might have access. Even those were then few in number, but Paul evidently meant that Timothy should, as far as practicable, become acquainted with them. The apostle himself, on more than one occasion, showed that he had some acquaintance with the classic writings of Greece; Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12.

To exhortation - see the notes on Romans 12:8.

To doctrine - To teaching - for so the word means; compare notes on Romans 12:7.

Verse 14

Neglect not the gift that is in thee - An important question arises here, to what the word "gift" refers; whether to natural endowment; to office; or to some supposed virtue which had been conferred by ordination - some transmitted influence which made him holy as a minister of religion, and which was to continue to be transmitted by the imposition of apostolic hands. The word which is here used, is rendered "gift" in every place in which it occurs in the New Testament. It is found in the following places, and with the following significations: deliverance from peril, 2 Corinthians 1:11; a gift or quality of the mind, 1 Corinthians 7:7; gifts of Christian knowledge or consolation, Romans 1:11; 1 Corinthians 1:7; redemption or salvation through Christ, Romans 5:15-16; Romans 6:23; Romans 11:29; the miraculous endowments conferred by the Holy Spirit, Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:4, 1Corinthians 12:9,1 Corinthians 12:28, 1 Corinthians 12:30-31, and the special gift or endowment for the work of the ministry, 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; 1 Peter 4:10. The "gift" then referred to here was that by which Timothy was qualified for the work of the ministry. It relates to his office and qualifications - to "every thing" that entered into his fitness for the work. It does not refer "exclusively" to any influence that came upon him in virtue of his ordination, or to any new grace that was infused into him by that act, making him either officially or personally more holy than other people, or than he was before - or to any efficacy in the mere act of ordination - but it comprised "the whole train of circumstances" by which he had been qualified for the sacred office and recognized as a minister of religion. All this was regarded as a "gift," a "benefit," or a "favor" - χαρισμα charisma- and he was not to neglect or disregard the

responsibilities and advantages growing out of it. In regard to the manner in which this gift or favor was bestowed, the following things are specified:

(1) It was the gift of God; 2 Timothy 1:6. He was to be recognized as its source; and it was not therefore conferred merely by human hands. The call to the ministry, the qualifications for the office, and the whole arrangement by which one is endowed for the work, are primarily to be traced to him as the source.

(2) it was given to Timothy in accordance with certain predictions which had existed in regard to him - the expectations of those who had observed his qualifications for such an office, and who had expressed the hope that he would one day be permitted to serve the Lord in it.

(3) it was sanctioned by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. The call of God to the work thus recognized by the church, and the approbation of the Presbytery expressed by setting him apart to the office, should be regarded by Timothy as a part of the "gift" or "benefit" (charisma) which had been conferred on him, and which he was not to neglect.

(4) an additional circumstance which might serve to impress the mind of Timothy with the value of this endowment, and the responsibility of this office, was, that Paul himself had been concerned in his ordination; 2 Timothy 1:6. He who was so much more aged (Philemon 1:9; compare 2 Timothy 4:6-7); he who had been a father to him, and who had adopted him and treated him as a son had been concerned in his ordination; and this fact imposed a higher obligation to perform aright the functions of an office which had been conferred on him in this manner. We are not to suppose, therefore, that there was any mysterious influence - any "virus" - conveyed by the act of ordination, or that that act imparted any additional degree of holiness. The endowment for the ministry; the previous anticipations and hopes of friends; and the manner in which he had been inducted into the sacred office, should all be regarded as a "benefit" or "favor" of a high order, and as a reason why the gift thus bestowed should not be neglected - and the same things now should make a man who is in the ministry deeply feel the solemn obligations resting on him to cultivate his powers in the highest degree, and to make the most of his talents.

Which was given thee by prophecy - That is, the prophetic declarations and the hopes of pious friends in regard to your future usefulness, have been among the means by which you have been introduced to the ministry, and should be a reason why you should cultivate your powers, and perform faithfully the duties of your office; see the notes on 1 Timothy 1:18.

With the laying on of the hands of the presbytery - it was common to lay on the hands in imparting a blessing, or in setting apart to any office; see Matthew 19:15; Mark 6:5; Luke 4:40; Luke 12:13; Leviticus 8:14; Numbers 27:23; Acts 28:8; Acts 6:6; Acts 8:17; Acts 13:3. The reference here is undoubtedly to the act by which Timothy was set apart to the office of the ministry. The word rendered "presbytery" - πρεσβυτέριον presbuterion- occurs only in two other places in the New Testament - Luke 22:66, where it is rendered "elders;" and Acts 22:5, where it is rendered "estate of the elders." It properly means an "assembly of aged men; council of elders." In Luke 22:66, and Acts 22:5, it refers to the Jewish "sanhedrin;" see the notes on Matthew 5:22. In the passage before us, it cannot refer to that body - for they did not ordain men to the Christian ministry - but to some association, or council, or body of elders of the Christian church. It is clear from the passage:

(1) that there was more than "one person" engaged in this service, and taking part in it when Timothy was ordained, and therefore it could not have been by a "prelate" or "bishop" alone.

(2) that the power conferred, whatever it was, was conferred by the whole body constituting the presbytery - since the apostle says that the "gift" was imparted, not in virtue of any particular power or eminence in anyone individual, but by the "laying on of the hands of the presbytery."

(3) the statement here is just such a one as would be made now respecting a Presbyterian ordination; it is not one which would be made of an Episcopal ordination. A Presbyterian would choose "these very words" in giving an account of an ordination to the work of the ministry; an Episcopalian "would not." The former speaks of an ordination by a "presbytery;" the latter of ordination by a "bishop." The former can use the account of the apostle Paul here as applicable to an ordination, without explanations, comments, new versions or criticisms; the latter cannot. The

passage, therefore, is full proof that, in one of the most important ordinations mentioned in the New Testament, it was performed by an association of men, and not by a prelate, and therefore, that this was the primitive mode of ordination. Indeed, there is not a single instance of ordination to an office mentioned in the New Testament which was performed by one man alone. See this passage examined at greater length in my" Enquiry into the organization and government of the apostolic church," pp. 208-221.

Verse 15

Meditate upon these things - Upon the train of events by which you have been led into the ministry, and upon the responsibilites and duties of the office. Let your mind be deeply impressed with these things; make them the subject of profound and serious thought.

Give thyself wholly to them - Greek "Be in them" - a phrase similar to that of Horace - "totus in illis." The meaning is plain. He was to devote his life wholly to this work. He was to have no other grand aim of living. His time, attention, talents, were to be absorbed in the proper duties of the work. He was not to make that subordinate and tributary to any other purpose, nor was he to allow any other object to interfere with the appropriate duties of that office. He was not to live for money, fame, or pleasure; not to devote his time to the pursuits of literature or science for their own sakes; not to seek the reputation of an elegant or profound scholar; not to aim to be distinguished merely as an accomplished gentleman, or as a skillful farmer, teacher, or author. Whatever was done in any of these departments, was to be wholly consistent with the direction, ἐν τούτοις ἴσθι en toutois isthi- "be in these things" - be absorbed in the appropriate duties of the ministerial office. It may be remarked here that no man will ever make much of himself, or accomplish much in any profession, who does not make this the rule of his life. He who has one great purpose of life to which he patiently and steadily devotes himself, and to which he makes everything else bend, will uniformly rise to high respectability, if not to eminence. He who does not do this can expect to accomplish nothing.

That thy profiting - Greek Thy going forward; that is, thy advancement, or progress. A minister of the gospel ought to make steady improvement in all that pertains to his office. No man ought to be satisfied with present attainments.

To all - Margin, “in all things.” The margin is the more correct rendering, but either of them makes good sense. It should be apparent to all persons who attend on the stated preaching of a minister of the gospel, that he is making steady advances in knowledge, wisdom, and piety, and in all things that pertain to the proper performance of the duties of his office. If a man really makes progress, it will be seen and appreciated by others; if he does not, that will be as well understood by his hearers.

Verse 16

Take heed unto thyself - This may be understood as relating to everything of a personal nature that would qualify him for his work. It may be applied to personal piety; to health; to manners; to habits of living; to temper; to the ruling purposes; to the contact with others. In relation to personal religion, a minister should take heed:

(1) that he has true piety; and,

(2) that he is advancing in the knowledge and love of God. In relation to morals, he should be upright; to his contact with others, and his personal habits, he should be correct, consistent, and gentlemanly, so as to give needless offence to none. The person of a minister should be neat and cleanly; his manners such as will show the fair influence of religion on his temper and deportment; his style of conversation such as will be an example to the old and the young, and such as will not offend against the proper laws of courtesy and urbanity. There is no religion in a filthy person; in uncouth manners; in an inconvenient and strange form of apparel; in bad grammar, and in slovenly habits - and to be a real gentleman should be as much a matter of conscience with a minister of the gospel as to be a real Christian. Indeed, under the full and fair influence of the gospel, the one always implies the other. Religion refines the manners - it does not corrupt them; it makes one courteous, polite, and kind - it never produces boorish manners, or habits that give offence to the well-bred and the refined.

And unto the doctrine - The kind of teaching which you give, or to your public instructions. The meaning is, that he should hold and teach only the truth. He was to “take heed” to the whole business of public instruction; that is, both to the matter and the manner. The great object was to get as much truth as possible before the minds of his hearers, and in such a way as to produce the deepest impression on them.

Continue in them - That is, in these things which have been specified. He was ever to be found perseveringly engaged in the performance of these duties.

For in doing this thou shalt both save thyself - By holding of the truth, and by the faithful performance of your duties, you will secure the salvation of the soul. We are not to suppose that the apostle meant to teach that this would be the meritorious cause of his salvation, but that these faithful labors would be regarded as an evidence of piety, and would be accepted as such. It is equivalent to saying, that an unfaithful minister of the gospel cannot be saved; one who faithfully performs all the duties of that office with a right spirit, will be.

And them that hear thee - That is, you will be the means of their salvation. It is not necessary to suppose that the apostle meant to teach that he would save all that heard him. The declaration is to be understood in a popular sense, and it is undoubtedly true that a faithful minister will be the means of saving many sinners. This assurance furnishes a ground of encouragement for a minister of the gospel. He may hope for success, and should look for success. He has the promise of God that if he is faithful he shall see the fruit of his labors, and this result of his work is a sufficient reward for all the toils and sacrifices and self-denials of the ministry. If a minister should be the means of saving but one soul from the horrors of eternal suffering and eternal sinning, it would be worth the most self-denying labors of the longest life. Yet what minister of the gospel is there, who is at all faithful to his trust, who is not made the honored instrument of the salvation of many more than one? Few are the devoted ministers of Christ who are not permitted to see evidence even here, that their labor has not been in vain. Let not, then, the faithful preacher be discouraged. A single soul rescued from death will be a gem in his eternal crown brighter by far than ever sparkled on the brow of royalty.

1 TIMOTHY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter 1 Timothy 5:1-2.

(2) instructions respecting the proper treatment of widows; 1 Timothy 5:3-16.

(a) Those who were true widows were to be regarded with honor and respect.

(b) Who sustained this character; 1 Timothy 5:4-7. Those who had evinced piety at home in taking charge of those who were dependent on them, and who were steady in their devotions. No one was to be received into this number who was not of the age of sixty, who had been married to more than one man, and who had not given evidence in all the duties of domestic fidelity and charity, that she was imbued with the spirit of religion; 1 Timothy 5:9-10.

(c) Those who were young were not to be admitted into this class; 1 Timothy 5:11-15. The reasons given are, that they would marry again, or that they would be idle, and would be intermeddlers in the affairs of others. It was better, therefore, that they should marry, and have charge of a family of their own; 1 Timothy 5:14-15.

(d) The duty of the individual members of the church to sustain helpless and dependent widows, if they had such among their relations; 1 Timothy 5:16. In these verses 1 Timothy 5:3-16 it is evident that the apostle had his eye on a class of widows that sustained some such relation to other females as the elders did to the whole church. They were aged women to whom was entrusted the superintendence of the females of the church - probably because from the customs then prevalent, men had much less liberty of access to the other sex, and much less freedom of contact was allowable, than now.

(3) the duty of supporting and honoring those who ruled in the church; 1 Timothy 5:17-18.

(4) the suitable guarding of the rights of the elders in the church. No accusation was to be received, unless it was sustained by two or three witnesses; 1 Timothy 5:19.

(5) no one who was guilty was to be spared. All who sinned were to be publicly rebuked; 1 Timothy 5:20

(6) A solemn charge is given to Timothy to keep these commandments; 1 Timothy 5:21.

(7) the statement of his duty not to ordain any person rashly or hastily to the sacred office; 1 Timothy 5:22.

(8) to guard his health; 1 Timothy 5:23.

(9) adeclaration respecting sin - that sometimes it is open beforehand, and sometimes it is concealed until it is revealed at the judgment, closes the chapter; 1 Timothy 5:24-25. The design of this closing statement seems to be, to show Timothy that he should not judge people by appearances, but that he should evince great caution in forming his estimate of their character.

Verse 1

Rebuke not an elder - The word "elder" here is not used in the sense in which it often is, to denote an officer of the church, a presbyter, but in its proper and usual sense, to denote an aged man. This is evident, because the apostle immediately mentions in contradistinction from the elder, "the younger men," where it cannot be supposed that he refers to them as officers. The command to treat the "elder" as a "father," also shows the same thing. By the direction not to rebuke, it is not to be supposed that the minister of the gospel is not to admonish the aged, or that he is not to show them their sins when they go astray, but that he is to do this as he would to a father. He is not to assume a harsh, dictatorial, and denunciatory manner. The precepts of religion always respect the proprieties of life, and never allow us to transgress them, even when the object is to reclaim a soul from error, and to save one who is wandering. Besides, when this is the aim, it

will always be most certainly accomplished by observing the respect due to others on account of office, relation, rank, or age.

But entreat him as a father - As you would a father. That is, do not harshly denounce him. Endeavor to persuade him to lead a more holy life. One of the things for which the ancients were remarkable above most of the moderns, and for which the Orientals are still distinguished, was respect for age. Few things are enjoined with more explicitness and emphasis in the Bible than this; Leviticus 19:32; Proverbs 20:20; Proverbs 30:17; compare Daniel 7:9-10; Revelation 1:14-15. The apostle would have Timothy, and, for the same reason, every other minister of the gospel, a model of this virtue.

And the younger men as brethren - That is, treat them as you would your own brothers. Do not consider them as aliens, strangers, or enemies, but entertain toward them, even when they go astray, the kindly feelings of a brother. This refers more particularly to his private conversation with them, and to his personal efforts to reclaim them when they had fallen into sin. When these efforts were ineffectual, and they sinned openly, he was to "rebuke them before all" 1 Timothy 5:20, that others might be deterred from following their example.

Verse 2

The elder women as mothers - Showing still the same respect for age, and for the proprieties of life. No son who had proper feelings would rebuke his own mother with severity. Let the minister of religion evince the same feelings if he is called to address a "mother in Israel" who has erred.

The younger as sisters - With the feelings which you have toward a sister. The tender love which one has for a beloved sister would always keep him from using harsh and severe language. The same mildness, gentleness, and affection should be used toward a sister in the church.

With all purity - Nothing could be more characteristic of Paul's manner than this injunction; nothing could show a deeper acquaintance with human nature. He knew the danger which would beset a youthful minister of the gospel when it was his duty to admonish and entreat a youthful female; he knew, too, the scandal to which he might be exposed if, in the performance of the necessary duties of his office, there should be the slightest departure from purity and propriety. He was therefore to guard his heart with more than common vigilance in such circumstances, and was to indulge in no word, or look, or action, which could by any possibility be construed as

manifesting an improper state of feeling. On nothing else do the fair character and usefulness of a youthful minister more depend, than on the observance of this precept. Nowhere else does he more need the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the exercise of prudence, and the manifestation of incorruptible integrity, than in the performance of this duty. A youthful minister who fails here, can never recover the perfect purity of an unsullied reputation, and never in subsequent life be wholly free from suspicion; compare notes, Matthew 5:28.

Verse 3

Honour widows - The particular attention and respect which are enjoined here, seem to refer to the class of widows who were supported by the church, and who were entrusted with the performance of certain duties toward the other female members, see 1 Timothy 5:9. It is to be remembered that the contact of the sexes was much more circumscribed in Oriental countries than it is among us; that access to the female members of the church would be much less free than it is now, and that consequently there might have been a special propriety in entrusting the duty of watching over the younger among them to the more aged. This duty would be naturally entrusted to those who had not the care of families. It would also be natural to commit it, if they were qualified, to those who had not the means of support, and who, while they were maintained by the church, might be rendering a valuable service to it. It would seem, therefore, that there was a class of this description, who were entrusted with these duties, and in regard to whose qualifications it was proper that Timothy should be instructed. The change of customs in society has made this class less necessary, and probably the arrangement was never designed to be permanent, but still it may be a question whether such an arrangement would not now be wise and useful in the church. On this subject, see the notes on Romans 16:1.

That are widows indeed - Who are truly widows. We associate with the word "widow," commonly, not only the idea of the loss of a husband, but many other things that are the usual accompaniments of widowhood - a poor and dependent condition; care and solicitude; sadness and sorrow. This idea is implied in the use of the word employed here - χήρα chēra- which means properly one who is "bereaved," (from the adjective χήρος chēros"bereaved"), and which, as Calvin says, conveys the idea of one in distressed circumstances. What Paul regarded as constituting true

widowhood, he specifies in 1 Timothy 5:4-5, 1 Timothy 5:9-10. He connects with it the idea that she had no persons dependent on her; that she was desolate, and evinced true trust in God; that she was so aged that she would not marry again; and that by her life she had given evidence of possessing a heart of true benevolence; 1 Timothy 5:10.

Verse 4

But if any widow have children - Who would be dependent on her care, and who might themselves contribute to her support.

Or nephews - The word nephew now commonly means the son of a brother or sister. Formerly the English word also meant grandchildren, or descendants of any description. Webster. The Greek word here - ἔκγονα ekgona- has the latter meaning. It denotes those "sprung from or born of;" and then descendants of any kind - sons, daughters, grandchildren. The Greek word would not, in fact, properly include nephews and nieces. It embraces only those in a direct line.

Let them learn first to show piety at home - Margin, "or kindness." That is, let the children and grandchildren learn to do this. Let them have an opportunity of performing their duty toward their aged parent or grandparent. Do not receive such a widow among the poor and dependent females of the church, to be maintained at public expense, but let her children support her. Thus they will have an opportunity of evincing Christian kindness, and of requiting her for her care. This the apostle calls "showing piety" - εὐσεβεῖν eusebein- that is, "filial piety;" piety toward a parent by providing for the needs of that parent in advanced age. The word is commonly used to denote piety toward God, but it is also used to denote proper reverence and respect for a parent. Robinson.

And to requite their parents - To repay them, as far as possible, for all their kindness. This debt can never be wholly repaid, but still a child should feel it a matter of sacred obligation to do as much toward it as possible.

For that is good and acceptable before God - It is a duty everywhere enjoined; compare Matthew 15:5-7 notes; Ephesians 6:1-2 notes.

Verse 5

A widow indeed, and desolate - The word rendered "desolate" means "solitary, alone." It does not necessarily imply the idea of discomfort which we attach to the word desolate. The sense is, that she had no children or other descendants; none on whom she could depend for support.

Trusteth in God - She has no one else to look to but God. She has no earthly reliance, and, destitute of husband, children, and property, she feels her dependence, and steadily looks to God for consolation and support.

And continueth in supplications and prayers night and day - Continually; compare notes on 1 Timothy 2:1; see also the description of Anna in Luke 2:36-37. The apostle regards this as one of the characteristics of those who were "widows indeed," whom he would have received into the class to be maintained by the church, and to whom the charge of younger members of the church might be entrusted.

Verse 6

But she that liveth in pleasure - Margin, "delicately." The Greek word (σπαταλάω spatalaō) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in James 5:5, "Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth." It properly means to live in luxury, voluptuously; to indulge freely in eating and drinking; to yield to the indulgence of the appetites. It does not indicate grossly criminal pleasures; but the kind of pleasure connected with luxurious living, and with pampering the appetites. It is probable that in the time of the apostle, there were professedly Christian widows who lived in this manner - as there are such professing Christians of all kinds in every age of the world.

Is dead while she liveth - To all the proper purposes of life she is as if she were dead. There is great emphasis in this expression, and nothing could convey more forcibly the idea that true happiness is not to be found in the pleasure of sense. There is nothing in them that answers the purposes of life. They are not the objects for which life was given, and as to the great and proper designs of existence, such persons might as well be dead.

Verse 7

And these things give in charge - Announce, or declare these things, to wit, particularly respecting the duty of children to their widowed mothers, and the proper duty of those who are widows.

Verse 8

But if any provide not for his own - The apostle was speaking 1 Timothy 5:4 particularly of the duty of children toward a widowed mother. In enforcing that duty, he gives the subject, as he often does in similar cases, a general direction, and says that all ought to provide for those who were dependent on them, and that if they did not do this, they had a less impressive sense of the obligations of duty than even the pagan had. On the duty here referred to, compare Romans 12:17 note; 2 Corinthians 8:21 note.

The meaning is, that the person referred to is to think beforehand (προνοεῖ pronoei) of the probable needs of his own family, and make arrangements to meet them. God thus provides for our needs; that is, he sees beforehand what we shall need, and makes arrangements for those needs by long preparation. The food that we eat, and the raiment that we wear, he foresaw that we should need, and the arrangement for the supply was made years since, and to meet these needs he has been carrying forward the plans of his providence in the seasons; in the growth of animals; in the formation of fruit; in the bountiful harvest. So, according to our measure, we are to anticipate what will be the probable needs of our families, and to make arrangements to meet them. The words "his own," refer to those who are naturally dependent on him, whether living in his own immediate family or not. There may be many distant relatives naturally dependent on our aid, besides those who live in our own house.

And specially for those of his own house - Margin, "kindred." The word "house," or "household," better expresses the sense than the word "kindred." The meaning is, those who live in his own family. They would naturally have higher claims on him than those who did not. They would commonly be his nearer relatives, and the fact, from whatever cause, that they constituted his own family, would lay the foundation for a strong claim upon him. He who neglected his own immediate family would be more guilty than he who neglected a more remote relative.

He hath denied the faith - By his conduct, perhaps, not openly. He may be still a professor of religion and do this; but he will show that he is imbued with none of the spirit of religion, and is a stranger to its real nature. The meaning is, that he would, by such an act, have practically renounced Christianity, since it enjoins this duty on all. We may hence learn that it is possible to deny the faith by conduct as well as by words; and that a neglect of doing our duty is as real a denial of Christianity as it would be openly to renounce it. Peter denied his Lord in one way, and thousands do the same thing in another. He did it in words; they by neglecting their duty to their families, or their duty in their closets, or their duty in attempting to send salvation to their fellow-men, or by an openly irreligious life. A neglect of any duty is so far a denial of the faith.

And is worse than an infidel - The word here does not mean an infidel, technically so called, or one who openly professes to disbelieve Christianity, but anyone who does not believe; that is, anyone who is not a

sincere Christian. The word, therefore, would include the pagan, and it is to them, doubtless, that the apostle particularly refers. They acknowledged the obligation to provide for their relatives. This was one of the great laws of nature written on their hearts, and a law which they felt bound to obey. Few things were inculcated more constantly by pagan moralists than this duty. Gelgacus, in Tacitus, says, "Nature dictates that to every one, his own children and relatives should be most dear." Cicero says, "Every man should take care of his own family " - suos quisque debet tueri; see Rosenmuller, in loc., and also numerous examples of the same kind quoted from Apuleius, Cicero, Plutarch, Homer, Terence, Virgil, and Servius, in Pricaeus, in loc. The doctrine here is:

(1)that a Christian ought not to be inferior to an unbeliever in respect to any virtue;

(2)that in all that constitutes true virtue he ought to surpass him;

(3)that the duties which are taught by nature ought to be regarded as the more sacred and obligatory from the fact that God has given us a better religion; and,

(4)that a Christian ought never to give occasion to an enemy of the gospel to point to a man of the world and say, "there is one who surpasses you in any virtue."

Verse 9

Let not a widow be taken into the number - Margin, "chosen." The margin expresses the sense of the Greek more accurately, but the meaning is not materially different. Paul does not here specify into what "number" the widow is to be "taken," or for what purpose she is to be "chosen," but he speaks of this as a thing that was well understood. There can be no doubt, however, what he means. In the Acts of the Apostles 1 Timothy 6:1 we have this account: "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a complaining of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." "It appears that from the first formation of the Christian church, provision was made out of the public funds of the society for the indigent widows who belonged to it;" see Patey's Horae Paulinae on 1Tim. No. 11. To this, as to a well-known practice, Paul here evidently refers. The manner in which he refers

to it is such as to show that the custom had an existence. All that was necessary in the case, was, not to speak of it as if it were a new arrangement, but to mention those who ought to be re garded as proper subjects of the charity. It would seem, also, that it was understood that such widows, according to their ability, should exercise a proper watch over the younger females of the church. In this way, while they were supported by the church, they might render themselves useful.

Under threescore years old - For such reasons as those mentioned in 1 Timothy 5:11-14.

Having been the wife of one man - There has been much diversity of opinion whether this means that she had never had but one husband, or whether she had been the wife of but one man at a time; that is, whether she had cast off one and married another; see Whitby, in loc. The same difficulty has been felt in regard to this as on the passage in 1 Timothy 3:2; see the notes on that verse. Doddridge, Clarke, and others, suppose that it means, "who had lived in conjugal fidelity to her husband." The reason assigned for this opinion by Doddridge, is, that the apostle did not mean to condemn second marriages, since he expressly 1 Timothy 5:14 commends it in the younger widows. The correct interpretation probably is, to refer it to one who had been married but once, and who, after her husband had died, had remained a widow. The reasons for this opinion briefly are:

(1) That this is the interpretation most naturally suggested by the phrase;

(2) that it agrees better with the description of the one that was to be enrolled among the "number" - those who were "widows indeed" - as we should more naturally apply this term to one who had remained unmarried after the death of her husband, than to one who had been married again;

(3) that, while it was not unlawful or improper in itself for a widow to marry a second time, there was a degree of respect and honor attached to one who did not do it, which would not be felt for one who did; compare Luke 2:36-37, "She was a widow of great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years." The same is true now. There is a higher degree of respect felt for such a widow than there is for one who has been married again, though she may be again a widow.

(4) among the pagans, it was regarded as especially honorable to have been married to but one man, and such widows were the Pudicitioe Coronam, or crown of chastity; Val. Max. L. i. c. ii.; compare Livy, L. 10:c. 23; see Whitby.

(5) as these persons were not only to be maintained by the church, but appear also to have been entrusted with an office of guardianship over the younger females, it was of importance that they should have such a character that no occasion of offence should be given, even among the pagan; and, in order to that, Paul gave direction that only those should be thus enrolled who were in all respects widows, and who would be regarded, on account of their age and their whole deportment, as "widows indeed." I cannot doubt, therefore, that he meant to exclude those from the number here referred to who had been married the second time.

Verse 10

Well reported of for good works - Of good character or reputation; see the notes on 1 Timothy 3:7.

If she have brought up children - Either her own or others. The idea is, if she has done this in a proper manner.

If she have lodged strangers - If she has been characterized by hospitality - a virtue greatly commended in the Scriptures; compare notes on 1 Timothy 3:2.

If she have washed the saints' feet - It is not certain whether this is to be understood literally, or whether it merely denotes that she had performed offices of a humble and self-denying kind - such as would be shown by washing the feet of others. It was one of the rites of hospitality in the East to wash the feet of the guest Genesis 18:4, and Paul might have spoken of this as having been literally performed. There is not the slightest evidence that he refers to it as a religious rite, or ordinance, anymore than he does to the act of bringing up children as a religious rite; compare notes on John 13:1-10.

If she have relieved the afflicted - If it has been her character that she was ready to furnish relief to those who were in distress.

If she have diligently followed every good work - This is one of the characteristics of true piety. A sincere Christian will, like God, be the friend of all that is good, and will be ready to promote every good object

according to his ability. He will not merely be the friend of one good cause, to the neglect of others, but he will endeavor to promote every good object, and though from special circumstances, and special dealings of Providence, he may have been particularly interested in some one object of charity, yet every good object will find a response in his heart, and he will be ready to promote it by his influence, his property, and his prayers.

Verse 11

But the younger widows refuse - That is, in respect to the matter under discussion. Do not admit them into the class of widows referred to. It cannot mean that he was to reject them as members of the church, or not to treat them with respect and kindness.

For when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ - There is probably a thought conveyed by these words to most minds which is by no means in the original, and which does injustice both to the apostle and to the "younger widows" referred to. In the Greek there is no idea of wantonness in the sense of lasciviousness or lewdness; nor was this, though now a common idea attached to the word, by any means essential to it when our translation wan made. The word "wanton" then meant "wandering" or "roving in gaiety or sport; moving or flying loosely; playing in the wind; then, wandering from moral rectitude, licentious, dissolute, libidinous" - Webster. The Greek word here used, καταστρηνιάζω katastrēniazōoccurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The word στρηνιάω strēniaō- however, is used twice, and is in both cases translated "lived deliciously;" Revelation 18:7, Revelation 18:9. The word is derived from στρῆνος strēnos(whence "strenuous"), properly meaning "rudeness, insolence, pride," and hence, "revel, riot, luxury;" or from -

d **streenees -** , the adjective - "strong, stiff, hard, rough." The verb then means "to live strenuously, rudely," as in English, "to live hard;" also, to live wild, or without restraint; to run riot, to live luxuriously. The idea of strength is the essential one, and then of strength that is not subordinate to law; that is wild and riotous; see Pussow and Robinson, Lexicon. The sense here is, that they would not be subordinate to the restraints implied in that situation, they would become impatient, and would marry again. The idea is not that of wantonness or lewdness, but it is that of a mind not subdued by age and by trials, and that would be impatient under the necessary restraints of the condition which was contemplated. They could not be depended on

with certainty, but they might be expected again to enter into the married relation.

They will marry - It is clear, from this, that the apostle did not contemplate any vows which would prevent their marrying again; nor does he say that it would be absolutely wrong for them to marry, even if they were admitted in to that rank; or as if there were any vows to restrain them from doing it. This passage, therefore, can never be adduced in favor of that practice of taking the veil in nunneries, and of a vow of perpetual seclusion from the world.

Verse 12

Having damnation - Or, rather, having "condemnation;" or incurring guilt. This does not mean of necessity that they would lose their souls; see the phrase explained in the notes on 1 Corinthians 11:29. The meaning is, that they would contract guilt, if they had been admitted among this class of persons, and then married again. The apostle does not say that that would be wrong in itself (compare notes on 1 Timothy 5:14), or that they would be absolutely prohibited from it, but that injury would be done if they were admitted among those who were "widows indeed" - who were supported by the church, and who were entrusted with a certain degree of care over the more youthful females - and then should leave that situation. It might give occasion for scandal it might break in upon the arrangements; it would show that there was a relaxing of the faith, and of the deadness to the world, which they were supposed to have; and it was better that they should be married 1 Timothy 5:14, without having been thus admitted.

Because they have cast off their first faith - This does not mean that they would lose all their religion, or wholly fall away, but that this would show that they had not the strong faith, the deadness to the world, the simple dependence on God 1 Timothy 5:5, and the desire which they had to be weaned from worldly cares and influences, which they once had. When they became widows, all their earthly hopes seemed to be blasted. They were then dead to the world, and felt their sole dependence on God. But if, under the influence of these strong emotions, they were admitted to the "class of widows" in the church, there was no certainty that they would continue in this state of mind. Time would do much to modify their grief. There would be a reviving love of the world, and under the influence of this they would be disposed to enter again into the marriage relation, and thus

show that they had not the strong and simple faith which they had when the blow which made them widows fell heavily upon then.

Verse 13

And withal - In addition to the prospect that they may marry again, there are other disadvantages which might follow from such an arrangement, and other evils to be feared which it is desirable to avoid.

They learn to be idle - That is, if supported by the church, and if without the settled principles which might be expected in those more aged and experienced, it may be feared that they will give themselves up to an indolent life. There would be a security in the age and established habits of these more advanced in life, which there could not be in their case. The apostle does not mean that widows are naturally disposed to be idle, but that in the situation referred to there would be danger of it.

Wandering about from house to house - A natural consequence of supposing that they had nothing to do, and a practice not only profitless, but always attended with mischief.

Tattlers also - Literally, "overflowing;" then overflowing with talk; praters, triflers. They would learn all the news; become acquainted with the secrets of families, and of course indulge in much idle and improper conversation. Our word "gossipers" would accurately express the meaning here. The noun does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The verb occurs in John 3:10; rendered, "prating against."

And busy-bodies - see the notes on 2 Thessalonians 3:11. The word means, probably, "working all round, overdoing," and then "an intermeddler." Persons who have nothing to do of their own, commonly find employment by interesting themselves in the affairs of their neighbors. No one likes to be wholly idle, and if anyone is not found doing what he ought to do, he will commonly be found engaged in doing what he ought not.

Speaking things which they ought not - Revealing the concerns of their neighbors; disclosing secrets; magnifying trifles, so as to exalt themselves into importance, as if they were entrusted with the secrets of others; inventing stories and tales of gossip, that they may magnify and maintain their own consequence in the community. No persons are commonly more dangerous to the peace of a neighborhood than those who have nothing to do.

Verse 14

I will therefore - I give it as my opinion; or this is my counsel; compare notes, 1 Corinthians 7:6, 1 Corinthians 7:10, 1 Corinthians 7:40.

That the younger women marry - The word "women" is not expressed or necessarily implied in the original -

d **neooteras -** - and it is evident that the apostle here had particular reference to "widows," and that the injunction should be understood as relating to them. We are not to suppose that he gives this as an absolute and universal command, for it might not always be at the option of the widow to marry again, and it cannot be doubted that there may be cases where it would be unadvisable. But he speaks of this as a general rule. It is better for such persons to have domestic concerns that require their attention, than it is to be exposed to the evils of an idle life. We may learn from this:

(1)that second marriages are not improper or unlawful, but that in some circumstances they may be preferable to widowhood;

(2)that marriage itself is in a high degree honorable. How different are the views of the inspired apostle Paul about marriage from those of the Papists!

Bear children, guide the house - These words signify, says Bloomfield, to "exercise and occupy themselves in the duties of a wife." It is better to be employed in the duties growing out of the cares of a family, than to lead a life of celibacy.

Give none occasion to the adversary - The enemy of religion - the pagan or the infidel.

To speak reproachfully - Margin, "for their railing." That is, on account of a life which would do no honor to religion. In the performance of domestic duties, when fully employed, they would avoid the evils specified in 1 Timothy 5:13. Every one who professes religion should so live as to give no occasion to an infidel or a man of the world to speak reproachfully of the cause of the Redeemer.

Verse 15

For some are already turned aside after Satan - That is, some young widows. The meaning is, that in the respects above mentioned 1 Timothy 5:13, they had followed the great Tempter, rather than the Lord Jesus. This is stated as a reason why they should not be admitted into the number of the widows who were to be maintained at the expense of the church, and to whom the care of the younger female members was to be committed.

Verse 16

If any man or woman that believeth - Christians are often simply called "believers," because faith is the leading and most important act of their religion.

Have widows - Widowed mothers, or grandmothers, or any other widows whose support would naturally devolve on them.

Let them relieve them - That is, let them support them. This was an obvious rule of duty; see the notes on 1 Timothy 5:8. Nothing can be more unreasonable than to leave those who are properly dependent on us to be supported by others, when we are able to maintain them ourselves.

That it may relieve, … - That it may have the means of supporting those who are truly dependent. To require or expect the Church, therefore, to support those whom we ought ourselves to support, is, in fact, to rob the poor and friendless. In regard to these directions respecting widows 1 Timothy 5:3-16, we may remark in general, as the result of the exposition which has been given:

(1) they were to be poor widows, who had not the means of support themselves.

(2) they were, probably, to be not merely supported, but to be usefully employed in the service of the church, particularly in overseeing the conduct, and imparting instruction to the female members.

(3) they were to be of such age and character that there would be security of stability and correctness of deportment; such that they would not be tempted to leave the situation or to act so as to give occasion of reproach.

(4) it is by no means certain that this was intended to be a permanent arrangement. It grew probably out of the special customs respecting contact between the sexes in the Oriental world, and would undoubtedly be proper now in similar circumstances. But it by no means follows that this arrangement is binding on the churches where the customs of society are different. Yet.

(5) the passage inculcates the general principle that the poor widows of the church are to be assisted when they have no relatives on whom they can naturally depend. No class of people are more helpless than aged widows,

and for that class God has always shown a special concern, and his people should do so likewise.

Verse 17

Let the elders that rule well - Greek, πρεσβύτεροι presbuteroiPresbyters. The apostle had given full instructions respecting bishops 1 Timothy 3:1-7; deacons 1 Timothy 3:8-13; widows 1 Timothy 5:3-16; and he here proceeds to prescribe the duty of the church toward those who sustain the office of elder. The word used - "elder" or "presbyter" - properly refers to age, and is then used to denote the officers of the church, probably because the aged were at first entrusted with the administration of the affairs of the church. The word was in familiar use among the Jews to denote the body of men that presided in the synagogue; see the Matthew 15:2 note; Acts 11:30; Acts 15:2 notes.

That rule well - Presiding well, or well managing the spiritual interests of the church. The word rendered "rule" - προεστῶτες proestōtes- is from a verb meaning to be over; to preside over; to have the care of. The word is used with reference to bishops, Titus 1:5, Titus 1:7; to an apostle, 1 Peter 5:1; and is such a word as would apply to any officers to whom the management and government of the church was entrusted. On the general subject of the rulers in the church; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 12:28. It is probable that not precisely the same organization was pursued in every place where a church was established; and where there was a Jewish synagogue, the Christian church would be formed substantially after that model, and in such a church there would be a bench of presiding eiders; see, on this subject, Whately's "Kingdom of Christ delineated," pp. 84-80. The language here seems to have been taken from such an organization. On the Jewish synagogue, see the notes on Matthew 4:23.

Be counted worthy of double honour - Of double respect; that is, of a high degree of respect; of a degree of respect becoming their age and office; compare 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13. From the quotation which is made in 1 Timothy 5:18, in relation to this subject, it would seem probable that the apostle had some reference also to their support, or to what was necessary for their maintenance. There is no improbability in supposing that all the officers of the church, of whatever grade or rank, may have had some compensation, corresponding to the amount of time which their office required them to devote to the service of the church. Nothing would be

more reasonable than that, if their duties in the church interfered with their regular employments in their secular calling, their brethren should contribute to their support; compare notes on Romans 12:7 note; 1 Corinthians 12:28 note), and a part may have been employed in managing other concerns of the church, and yet all were regarded as the προεστῶτες πρεσβύτεροι proestōtes presbuteroi- or "elders presiding over the church." It cannot, I think, be certainly concluded from this passage, that the ruling elders who did not teach or preach were regarded as a separate class or order of permanent officers in the church. There seems to have been a bench of elders selected on account of age, piety, prudence, and wisdom, to whom was entrusted the whole business of the instruction and government of the church, and they performed the various parts of the duty as they had ability. Those among them who "labored in the word and doctrine," and who gave up all their time to the business of their office, would be worthy of special respect, and of a higher compensation.

Verse 18

For the Scripture saith - This is adduced as a reason why a church should show all due respect and care for its ministers. The reason is, that as God took care to make provision for the laboring ox, much more should due attention be paid to those who labor for the welfare of the church.

Thou shalt not muzzle the ox - see this passage explained, and its bearing on such an argument shown, in the notes on 1 Corinthians 9:8-10.

And, The labourer is worthy of his reward - This expression is found substantially in Matthew 10:10, and Luke 10:7. It does not occur in so many words in the Old Testament, and yet the apostle adduces it evidently as a quotation from the Scriptures, and as authority in the case. It would seem probable, therefore, that he had seen the Gospel by Matthew or by Luke, and that he quoted this as a part of Scripture, and regarded the Book from which he made the quotation as of the same authority as the Old Testament. If so, then this may be regarded as an attestation of the apostle to the inspiration of the "Gospel" in which it was found.

Verse 19

Against an elder - The word "elder" here seems to be used in the sense in which it is in the previous verse as relating to "office," and not in the sense of an aged man, as in 1 Timothy 5:1. The connection demands this interpretation.

Receive not an accusation - He was not to regard such a charge as well founded unless sustained by two or three witnesses. It is clear from this, that Paul supposed that Timothy would be called on to hear charges against others who were in the ministerial office, and to express his judgment on such cases. There is no reason, however, to suppose that he meant that he should hear them alone, or as a "bishop," for this direction does not make the supposition improper that others would be associated with him. It is just such counsel as would now be given to a Presbyterian or congregational minister, or such as would be given to an associate justice in a court, on the supposition that a brother judge was at any time to be tried by him and his colleagues.

But before two or three witnesses - Margin, "under." The meaning is, unless supported by the testimony of two or three persons. He was not to regard an accusation against a presbyter as proved, if there was but one witness in the case, however positive he might be in his testimony. The reasons for this direction were probably such as these:

(1) This was the requirement of the Jewish law in all cases, which had thus settled a principle which the apostle seems to have regarded as important, if not obligatory, under the Christian dispensation; see Deuteronomy 17:6; Deuteronomy 19:15; compare notes on John 8:17; 2 Corinthians 13:1.

(2) there would be much greater reason to apprehend that one person might be deceived in the matter on which he bore witness, or might do it from malignant motives, or might be bribed to give false testimony, than that two or three would give such testimony; and the arrangement, therefore, furnished important security for the innocent.

(3) there might be reason to apprehend that evil-minded persons might be disposed to bring charges against the ministers of the gospel or other officers of the church, and it was important, therefore, that their rights should be guarded with anxious care. The ministers of religion often give offence to wicked people by their rebukes of sin (compare Mark 6:17-20); wicked people would rejoice to see an accusation against them sustained; the cause of religion would be liable to suffer much when its ministers were condemned as guilty of gross offences, and it is right, therefore, that the evidence in the case should be as free as possible from all suspicion that it

is caused by malignity, by hatred of religion, or by conspiracy, or by a desire to see religion disgraced.

(4) the character of a minister of the gospel is of value, not only to himself and family, as is the case with that of other people, but is of special value to the church, and to the cause of religion. It is the property of the church. The interests of religion depend much on it, and it should not be wantonly assailed; and every precaution should be adopted that Christianity should not be deprived of the advantage which may be derived in its favor from the piety, experience, and talents of its public defenders. At the same time, however, the wicked, though in the ministry, should not be screened from the punishment which they deserve. The apostle gave no injunction to attempt to cover up their faults, or to save them from a fair trial. He only demanded such security as the nature of the case required, that the trial should be fair. If a minister of the gospel has been proved to be guilty of crime, the honor of religion, as well as simple justice, requires that he shall be punished as he deserves. He sins against great light; he prostitutes a holy office, and makes use of the very reputation which his office gives him, that he may betray the confidence of others; and such a man should not escape. There should be no "benefit of clergy," and neither a black coat, nor bands, nor the lawn should save a villain.

Verse 20

Them that sin - That have been proved to have committed sin - referring probably to the elders mentioned in the previous verse, but giving the direction so general a form that it might be applicable to others.

Rebuke before all - Before all the church or congregation. The word "rebuke" properly denotes to reprove or reprehend. It means here that there should be a public statement of the nature of the offence, and such a censure as the case demanded. It extends only to spiritual censures. There is no power given of inflicting any punishment by fine or imprisonment. The power of the church, in such cases, is only to express its strong and decided disapprobation of the wrong done, and, if the case demands it, of disowning the offending member or minister. This direction to "rebuke an offender before all," may be easily reconciled with the direction in 1 Timothy 5:1, "Rebuke not an elder." The latter refers to the private and pastoral conversation with an elder, and to the method in which he should be treated

in such contact - to wit, with the feelings due to a father; the direction here refers to the manner in which an offender should be treated who has been proved to be guilty, and where the case has become public. Then there is to be a public expression of disapprobation.

That others also may fear - That they may be kept from committing the same offence; compare 1 Peter 2:14. The end of punishment is not the gratification of the private feelings of him who administers it, but the prevention of crime.

Verse 21

I charge thee before God - compare Luke 16:28; Acts 2:20. The word rendered "charge" means, properly, to call to witness; then to affirm with solemn attestations; and then to admonish solemnly, to urge upon earnestly. It is a word which implies that the subject is of great importance. Paul gives this charge as in the presence of God, of the Redeemer, and of the elect angels, and wishes to secure that sense of its solemnity which must arise from the presence of such holy witnesses.

And the Lord Jesus Christ - As in the presence of the Lord Jesus; with his eye resting upon you.

And the elect angels - It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to speak as if we were in the presence of holy angels, and of the disembodied spirits of the good; compare notes on Hebrews 12:1. No one can prove that the angels, and that the departed spirits of holy men, are not witnesses of what we do. At all events, it is right to urge on others the performance of duty as if the eye of a departed father, mother, or sister were fixed upon us, and as if we were encompassed by all the holy beings of heaven. Sin, too, should be avoided as if every eye in the universe were upon us. How many things do we do which we would not; how many feelings do we cherish which we would at once banish from our minds, if we felt that the heavens above us were as transparent as glass, and that all the holy beings around the throne were fixing an intense gaze upon us! The word "elect" here seems to imply that there had been some influence used to keep them, and some purpose respecting them, which had not existed in regard to those who had fallen. Saints are called "elect" because they are chosen of God unto salvation (notes on Ephesians 1:4-5), and it would appear that it is a great law extending through the universe, that both those who remain in a state of holiness, and those who are made holy, are the subjects of purpose and choice on the part of God. The fact only is stated; the reasons which led to

the choice, alike in regard to angels and human beings, are unknown to us; compare notes on Matthew 11:25.

That thou observe these things - Probably referring to all the things which he had enjoined in the previous parts of the Epistle.

Without preferring one before another - Margin, "prejudice." The meaning is, "without previous judgment" - χωρὶς προκρίματος chōris prokrimatos- without any prejudice on account of rank, wealth, personal friendship, or predilection of any sort. Let there be entire impartiality in all cases. Justice was beautifully represented by the ancients as holding a pair of scales equally balanced. It is as important that there should be entire impartiality in the church as in civil transactions, and though it is not wrong for a minister of the gospel to have his personal friends, yet in the administration of the affairs of the church he should remember that all are brethren, and all, of whatever rank, color, sex, or age, have equal rights.

Partiality - Greek, "inclination," or "proclivity" - that is, without being inclined to favor one party or person more than another. There should be no purpose to find one guilty and another innocent; no inclination of heart toward one which would lead us to resolve to find him innocent; and no aversion from another which would make us resolve to find him guilty.

Verse 22

Lay hands suddenly on no man - Some have understood this of laying on hands to heal the sick (Koppe); others of the laying on of hands to absolve penitents, but the obvious meaning is to refer it to ordination. It was usual to lay the hands on the heads of those who were ordained to a sacred office, or appointed to perform an important duty; notes, 1 Timothy 4:14; compare Acts 6:6; Acts 8:17. The idea here is, that Timothy should not be hasty in an act so important as that of introducing people to the ministry. He should take time to give them a fair trial of their piety; he should have satisfactory evidence of their qualifications. He should not at once introduce a man to the ministry because he gave evidence of piety, or because he burned with an ardent zeal, or because he thought himself qualified for the work. It is clear from this that the apostle regarded Timothy as having the right to ordain to the ministry; but not that he was to ordain alone, or as a prelate. The injunction would be entirely proper on the supposition that others were to be associated with him in the act of ordaining. It is just such as a Presbyterian father in the ministry would give in a charge to his son now; it is in fact just the charge which is now given by Presbyterians and

congregationalists to those who are set apart to the sacred office, in reference to ordaining others.

Neither be partaker of other men‘s sins - This is evidently to be interpreted in connection with the injunction “to lay hands suddenly on no man.” The meaning, in this connection, is, that Timothy was not to become a participant in the sins of another by introducing him to the sacred office. He was not to invest one with a holy office who was a wicked man or a heretic, for this would be to sanction his wickedness and error. If we ordain a man to the office of the ministry who is known to be living in sin, or to cherish dangerous error, we become the patrons of the sin and of the heresy. We lend to it the sanction of our approbation; and give to it whatever currency it may acquire from the reputation which we may have, or which it may acquire from the influence of the sacred office of the ministry. Hence, the importance of caution in investing anyone with the ministerial office. But while Paul meant, doubtless, that this should be applied particularly to ordination to the ministry, he has given it a general character. In no way are we to participate in the sins of other people. We are not to be engaged with them in doing wrong; we are not to patronize them in a wicked business; we are not to be known as their companions or friends; and we are not to partake of their unlawful gains. We are not to lend money, or a boat, or a horse, or a pistol, or a bowie-knife, for an unlawful business; we are not to furnish capital for the slave-trade, or for manufacturing intoxicating drinks, or for an enterprise that contemplates the violation of the Sabbath.

Keep thyself pure - Particularly, in regard to participation in the sins of others; generally, in all things - in heart, in word, in conduct.

Verse 23

Drink no longer water - There has been much difficulty felt in regard to the connection which this advice has with what precedes and what follows. Many have considered the difficulty to be so great that they have supposed that this verse has been displaced, and that it should be introduced in some other connection. The true connection, and the reason for the introduction of the counsel here, seems to me to be this: Paul appears to have been suddenly impressed with the thought - a thought which is very likely to come over a man who is writing on the duties of the ministry - of the arduous nature of the ministerial office. He was giving counsels in regard to an office which required a great amount of labor, care, and anxiety. The labors enjoined were such as to demand all the time; the care

and anxiety incident to such a charge would be very likely to prostrate the frame, and to injure the health. Then he remembered that Timothy was yet but a youth; he recalled his feebleness of constitution and his frequent attacks of illness; he recollected the very abstemious habits which he had prescribed for himself, and, in this connection, he urges him to a careful regard for his health, and prescribes the use of a small quantity of wine, mingled with his water, as a suitable medicine in his case. Thus considered, this direction is as worthy to be given by an inspired teacher as it is to counsel a man to pay a proper regard to his health, and not needlessly to throw away his life; compare Matthew 10:23. The phrase, "drink no longer water," is equivalent to, "drink not water only;" see numerous instances in Wetstein. The Greek word here used does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament.

But use a little wine - Mingled with the water - the common method of drinking wine in the East; see Robinson's Bibliotheca Sacra, 1:512,513.

For thy stomach's sake - It was not for the pleasure to be derived from the use of wine, or because it would produce hilarity or excitement, but solely because it was regarded as necessary for the promotion of health; that is, as a medicine.

And thine often infirmities - ἀσθενείας astheneias- Weaknesses or sicknesses. The word would include all infirmities of body, but seems to refer here to some attacks of sickness to which Timothy was liable, or to some feebleness of constitution; but beyond this we have no information in regard to the nature of his maladies. In view of this passage, and as a further explanation of it, we may make the following remarks:

(1) The use of wine, and of all intoxicating drinks, was solemnly forbidden to the priests under the Mosaic law, when engaged in the performance of their sacred duties; Leviticus 10:9-10. The same was the case among the Egyptian priests. Clarke; compare notes on 1 Timothy 3:3. It is not improbable that the same thing would be regarded as proper among those who ministered in holy things under the Christian dispensation. The natural feeling would be, and not improperly, that a Christian minister should not be less holy than a Jewish priest, and especially when it is remembered that the reason of the Jewish law remained the same - "that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and clean and unclean."

(2) it is evident from this passage that Timothy usually drank water only, or that, in modern language, he was a “tee-totaller.” He was, evidently, not in the habit of drinking wine, or he could not have been exhorted to do it.

(3) he must have been a remarkably temperate youth to have required the authority of an apostle to induce him to drink even a little wine; see Doddridge. There are few young men so temperate as to require such an authority to induce them to do it.

(4) the exhortation extended only to a very moderate use of wine. It was not to drink it freely; it was not to drink it at the tables of the rich and the great, or in the social circle; it was not even to drink it by itself; it was to use “a little,” mingled with water - for this was the usual method; see Athaeneus, Deipno. lib. 9: x. 100:7.

(5) it was not as a common drink, but the exhortation or command extends only to its use as a medicine. All the use which can be legitimately made of this injunction - whatever conclusion may be drawn from other precepts - is, that it is proper to use a small quantity of wine for medicinal purposes.

(6) there are many ministers of the gospel, now, alas! to whom under no circumstances could an apostle apply this exhortation - “Drink no longer water only.” They would ask, with surprise, what he meant? whether he intended it in irony, and for banter - for they need no apostolic command to drink wine. Or if he should address to them the exhortation, “use a little wine,” they could regard it only as a reproof for their usual habit of drinking much. To many, the exhortation would be appropriate, if they ought to use wine at all, only because they are in the habit of using so much that it would be proper to restrain them to a much smaller quantity.

(7) this whole passage is one of great value to the cause of temperance. Timothy was undoubtedly in the habit of abstaining wholly from the use of wine. Paul knew this, and he did not reprove him for it. He manifestly favored the general habit, and only asked him to depart in some small degree from it, in order that he might restore and preserve his health. So far, and no further, is it right to apply this language in regard to the use of wine;

and the minister who should follow this injunction would be in no danger of disgracing his sacred profession by the debasing and demoralizing sin of intemperance.

Verse 24

Some men's sins are open beforehand - This declaration, though it assumes a general form, is to be taken evidently in connection with the general subject of introducing men to the ministry 1 Timothy 5:22; and 1 Timothy 5:23 is to be regarded as a parenthesis. The apostle had given Timothy a charge 1 Timothy 5:22 respecting the character of those whom he should ordain. He here says, in reference to that, that the character of some people was manifest. There was no disguise. It was evident to all what it was, and there could be no danger of mistake respecting it. Their conduct was apparent to all. About such people he ought not to hesitate a moment, and, no matter what their talents, or learning, or rank in the community, he ought to have no participation in introducing them to the ministry.

Going before to judgment - Their character is well understood. There is no need of waiting for the day of judgment to know what they are. Their deeds so precede their own appearance at the judgment-bar, that the record and the verdict can be made up before they arrive there, and there will be scarcely need even of the formality of a trial. The meaning here is, that there could be no doubt about the character of such people, and Timothy should not be accessory to their being introduced into the office of the ministry.

And some men they follow after - That is, their character is not fully understood here. They conceal their plans. They practice deception. They appear different from what they really are. But the character of such people will be developed, and they will be judged according to their works. They cannot hope to escape with impunity. Though they have endeavored to hide their evil deeds, yet they will follow after them to the judgment-bar, and will meet them there. The meaning, in this connection, seems to be, that there ought to be circumspection in judging of the qualifications of men for the office of the ministry. It ought not to be inferred from favorable appearances at once, or on slight acquaintance, that they are qualified for the office - for they may be of the number of those whose characters, now concealed or misunderstood, will be developed only on the final trial.

Verse 25

Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand - The character of some people is clear, and accurately understood. There can be no doubt, from their works, that they are good people. We need not wait for the day of judgment to determine that, but may treat them here as good men, and introduce them to offices which only good men can fill. The idea here is that their character may be so certain and undoubted that there need be no hesitation in setting them apart to the office of the ministry.

And they that are otherwise cannot be hid - That is, they cannot be ultimately concealed or misunderstood. There are arrangements in the divine government for bringing out the character of every man so that it may be clearly understood. The expression here refers to good men. The idea is, that there are some good men whose character is known to all. Their deeds spread a glory around them, so that no one can mistake what they are. They correspond, in respect to the publicity of their character with those mentioned in 1 Timothy 5:24, whose "sins are open beforehand;" for the good deeds of the one are as manifest as the sins of the other. But there are those who are "otherwise." They are modest, retiring, unobtrusive, unknown. They may live in obscurity; may have slender means for doing good; may be constitutionally so diffident that they never appear on the stage of public action. What they do is concealed from the world. These correspond in respect to publicity with those mentioned in 1 Timothy 5:24, "whose deeds follow after them." Yet, says the apostle, these cannot always be hid. There are arrangements for developing every man's character, and it will be ultimately known what he is. The connection here, seems to be this. As Timothy 1 Timothy 5:24 was to be on his guard in introducing men into the ministry, against those whose character for evil was not developed, but who might be concealing their plans and practicing secret sins, so he was to endeavor to search out the modest, the unobtrusive, and those who, though now unknown, were among the excellent of the earth, and bring them forward to a station of usefulness where their virtues might shine on the world.

Apart from the reference of this beautiful passage 1 Timothy 5:24-25 to the ministry, it contains truth important to all:

(1) The character of many wicked people is now clearly known. No one has any doubt of it. Their deeds have gone before them, and are recorded in the books that will be open at the judgment. They might even now be

judged without the formality of appearing there, and the universe would acquiesce in the sentence of condemnation.

(2) the character of many wicked people is concealed. They hide their plans. They are practicing secret iniquity. They do not mean that the world shall know what they are. More than half the real depravity of the world is thus concealed from human view, and in regard to more than half the race who are going up to the judgment there is an entire mistake as to their real character. If all the secret wickedness of the earth were disclosed, no one would have any doubt about the doctrine of human depravity.

(3) there is a process steadily going forward for bringing out the real character of people, and showing what they are. This process consists, first, in the arrangements of Providence for developing their character here. Many a man, who was supposed to be virtuous, is shown, by some sudden trial, to have been all along a villain at heart. Many a minister of the gospel, a lawyer, a physician, an officer in a bank, a merchant, whose character was supposed to stand fair, has been suffered to fall into open sin, that he might develope the long-cherished secret depravity of his soul. Secondly, the process will be completed on the final trial. Then nothing will be concealed. Every man will been seen as he is. All they whose characters were understood to be wicked here, will be seen then also to be wicked, and many who were supposed on earth to have a good character, will be seen there to have been hollow-hearted and base hypocrites.

(4) every man in the last day will be judged according to his real character. No one, however successful he may have been here, can hope to practice a deception on his final Judge.

(5) there is a fitness and propriety in the fact that there will be a final judgment. Indeed, there must be such a judgment, in order that God may be just. The characters of people are not fully developed here. The process is not completed. Many are taken away before their schemes of iniquity are accomplished, and before their real characters are understood. If they were to live long enough on the earth, their characters would be ultimately developed here, but the divine arrangement is, that man shall not live long here, and the development, therefore, must be in the future world.

(6) the modest, the retiring, the humble, and those here unknown, will not be overlooked in the last great day. There is much good, as there is much evil in the world, that is now concealed. There are many plans of benevolence formed which they who formed them are not permitted to complete; many desires of benefiting others are cherished which there are no means of gratifying; many a deed of kindness is performed which is not blazoned abroad to the world; and many a wish is entertained for the progress of virtue, the freedom of the enslaved, the relief of the oppressed, and the salvation of the world, which can find expression only in prayer. We are not to suppose then that all that is concealed and unknown in the world is evil.

(7) there will be amazing developments in the last great day; and as it will then be seen in the revelations of the secret deeds of evil that human nature is corrupt, so it will be seen that there was much more good in the world than was commonly supposed. As a large portion of the wickedness of the earth is concealed, so, from the necessity of the case, it is true that no small portion of the goodness on earth is hidden. Wickedness conceals itself from shame, from a desire better to effect its purposes, from the dread of punishment; goodness, from its modesty, its retiring nature, and from the want of an opportunity of acting out its desires; but whatever may have been the cause of the concealment, in all cases all will be made known on the final trial - to the shame and confusion of the one class; to the joy and triumph of the other.

1 TIMOTHY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter 1 Timothy 6:1-5. They were to treat their masters with all proper respect, 1 Timothy 6:1; if their masters were Christians, they were, on that account, to serve them with the more fidelity, 1 Timothy 6:2; and any opposite kind of teaching would tend only to stir up strife and produce dissatisfaction and contention, and could proceed only from a proud and self-confident heart.

(2) the advantage of piety and of a contented mind; 1 Timothy 6:6-8. The argument for this is, that we brought nothing into the world, and can carry nothing out; that our essential needs here are food and raiment, and that, having enough to make us comfortable, we should be content.

(3) the evils of a desire to be rich 1 Timothy 6:9-10 - evils seen in the temptations to which it leads; the passions which it fosters, and the danger to religion itself.

(4) an exhortation to Timothy, as a minister of religion, to pursue higher and nobler objects; 1 Timothy 6:11-16. He was:

(a)to avoid these worldly things; he was.

(b)to pursue nobler objects. He was to follow after righteousness, and to fight the good fight of faith. To do this, he was to be encouraged by the assurance that the Great and only Potentate would, in due time, place the crown on his head.

(5) the duty of those who were rich - for it is supposed that some Christians will be rich - either by inheritance, or by prosperous business; 1 Timothy 6:17-19. They are:

(a)not to be proud;

(b)nor to trust in their riches so as to forget their dependence on God;

(c)to do good with their property; and,

(d)to make their wealth the means of securing eternal life.

(6) asolemn charge to Timothy to observe these things, and not to be turned from them by any of the arguments and objections of pretended

science; 1 Timothy 6:20-21.

Verse 1

Let as many servants - On the word here rendered "servants" - δοῦλοι douloi- see the notes on Ephesians 6:5. The word is that which was commonly applied to a slave, but it is so extensive in its signification as to be applicable to any species of servitude, whether voluntary or involuntary. If slavery existed in Ephesus at the time when this Epistle was written, it would be applicable to slaves; if any other kind of servitude existed, the word would be equally applicable to that. There is nothing in the word itself which essentially limits it to slavery; examine Matthew 13:27; Matthew 20:27; Mark 10:44; Luke 2:29; John 15:15; Acts 2:18; Acts 4:29; Acts 16:17; Romans 1:1; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Jude 1:1; Revelation 1:1; Revelation 2:20; Revelation 7:3. The addition of the phrase "under the yoke," however, shows undoubtedly that it is to be understood here of slavery.

As are under the yoke - On the word yoke, see the notes on Matthew 11:29. The phrase here properly denotes slavery, as it would not be applied to any other species of servitude; see Leviticus 26:13; Dem. 322,12. ζεῦγος δουλοσύνης zeugos doulosunēsRobinson's Lexicon. It sometimes denotes the bondage of the Mosaic law as being a severe and oppressive burden; Acts 15:10; Galatians 5:1. It may be remarked here that the apostle did not regard slavery as a light or desirable thing. He would not have applied this term to the condition of a wife or of a child.

Count their own masters worthy of all honour - Treat them with all proper respect. They were to manifest the right spirit themselves, whatever their masters did; they were not to do anything that would dishonor religion. The injunction here would seem to have particular reference to those whose masters were not Christians. In the following verse, the apostle gives particular instructions to those who had pious masters. The meaning here is, that the slave ought to show the Christian spirit toward his master who was not a Christian; he ought to conduct himself so that religion would not be dishonored; he ought not to give his master occasion to say that the only effect of the Christian religion on the mind of a servant was to make him restless, discontented, dissatisfied, and disobedient. In the humble and trying situation in which he confessedly was - under the yoke of bondage - he ought to evince patience, kindness, and respect for his master, and as long as the relation continued he was to be obedient. This command, however, was by no means inconsistent with his desiring his freedom, and

securing it, if the opportunity presented itself; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 7:21; compare, on the passage before us, the Ephesians 6:5-8 notes, and 1 Peter 2:18 note.

That the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed - That religion be not dishonored and reproached, and that there may be no occasion to say that Christianity tends to produce discontent and to lead to insurrection. If the effect of religion had been to teach all who were servants that they should no longer obey their masters, or that they should rise upon them and assert their freedom by violence, or that their masters were to be treated with indignity on account of their usurped rights over others, the effect would have been obvious. There would have been a loud and united outcry against the new religion, and it could have made no progress in the world. Instead of this, Christianity taught the necessity of patience, and meekness, and forbearance in the endurance of all wrong - whether from private individuals Matthew 5:39-41; 1 Corinthians 6:7, or under the oppressions and exactions of Nero Romans 13:1-7, or amidst the hardships and cruelties of slavery. These peaceful injunctions, however, did not demonstrate that Christ approved the act of him "that smote on the one cheek," or that Paul regarded the government of Nero as a good government, - and as little do they prove that Paul or the Saviour approved of slavery.

Verse 2

And they that have believing masters - Masters who are Christians. It is clear from this, that Paul supposed that, at that time, and under those circumstances, a man might become a Christian who had slaves under him. How long he might continue to hold his fellow-men in bondage, and yet be a Christian, is, however, quite a different question. It is quite clear, from the New Testament, as well as from facts now, that God may convert people when pursuing any kind of wickedness. The effect of religion, however, in all cases, will be to lead them to cease to do wrong. It is by no means improbable that many of those who had owned slaves, in accordance with the prevailing custom in the Roman empire, may have been converted - for the fact that a man has been living a life of sin does not prevent the possibility of his conversion. There is no evidence that Paul refers here to any who had bought slaves after they were converted; nor is there any intimation of any such transaction among Christians in the New Testament. Nor is there any intimation that he regarded it as right and best that they

should continue to hold slaves; nor that he would approve their making arrangements to persevere in this as a permanent institution.

Nor is it to be fairly inferred from this passage that he meant to teach that they might continue this, and yet be entitled to all the respect and confidence due to the Christian name, or be regarded as maintaining a good standing in the church. Whatever may be true on these points, the passage before us only proves that Paul considered that a man who was a slaveholder might be converted, and be spoken of as a "believer," or a Christian. Many have been converted in similar circumstances, as many have in the practice of all other kinds of iniquity. What was their duty after their conversion, was another question and what was the duty of their "servants" or slaves, was another question still. It is only this latter question which the apostle is here considering.

Not despise them, because they are brethren - Not treat them with any want of the respect which is due to their station. The word here used sometimes denotes "to neglect," or, "not to care for;" Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13. Here it is not necessary to suppose that it denotes actual contempt, but only that want of respect which might possibly spring up in the mind if not well instructed, or not on its guard, among those who were servants or slaves. It was to be apprehended that the effect of the master and the slave having both embraced religion, would be to produce in the mind of the servant a want of respect and deference for his master. This danger was to be apprehended from the following causes:

(1) Christianity taught that all people were made of "one blood," and were by nature equal; Acts 17:26. It was natural, therefore for the slave to infer that by nature he was equal to his master, and it would be easy to pervert this truth to make him disrespectful and insubordinate.

(2) they were equal to them as Christians. Christianity taught them that they were all "brethren" in the Lord, and that there was no distinction before God. It might be natural to infer from this, that all distinctions in society were to be abolished, and that, in all respects, the slave was to regard himself as on a level with his master.

(3) some, who did not well understand the nature of Christianity, or who might have been disposed to cause trouble, may have taken advantage of the undeniable truths about the equality of people by nature and by

redemption, to produce discontent on the part of the slave. They may have endeavored to embitter the feelings of the slaves toward their masters who held them in bondage. The effect, it is easy to see, may have been to lead those who were in a state of servitude to manifest open and marked disrespect. In opposition to this, the apostle would have Timothy teach that Christianity did not rudely assail the existing institutions of society, and especially did not teach those who were in subordinate ranks to be disrespectful to these above them.

But rather do them service - That is, serve them with more cheerfulness and alacrity than they did before the master was converted; or serve them with the more cheerfulness because they were Christians. The reasons for this were, because the master was now more worthy of affectionate regard, and because the servant might look for better treatment at his hands; compare notes on Ephesians 6:6.

Because they are faithful - That is, "because" they are "believers," or are Christians - πιστοί pistoithe same word which in the beginning of the verse is rendered "believing." It does not here mean that they were "faithful" to their servants or their God, but merely that they were Christians.

And beloved - Probably, "beloved of God;" for so the word is often used. As they are the friends of God, they who are servants should show them the more respect. The idea is, simply, that one whom God loves should be treated with more respect than if he were not thus beloved; or, a good man deserves more respect than a wicked man. In all the relations of life, we should respect those above us the more in proportion to the excellency of their character.

Partakers of the benefit - That is, the benefit which the gospel imparts - for so the connection requires us to understand it. It cannot mean, as many have supposed, that they were "partakers of the benefit of the labors of the servant," or enjoyed the fruits of their labors - for how could this be a reason for their treating them with the more respect? It would be rather a reason for treating them with less respect, because they were living on the avails of unrequited toil. But the true reason assigned is that the master had been, by the grace of God, permitted to participate in the same benefits of salvation as the servant; he had received, like him, the pardon of sin, and he was to be regarded as a fellow-heir of the grace of life. The expression here might be rendered, "they are partakers of, or are devoted to, the good

cause." Robinson's Lexicon. The argument is, that they were not infidels, or strangers to religion, or those who would try to hinder the progress of that which was dear to the heart of the servant, but were united with them in that same good work; they participated in the blessings of the same salvation, and they were really endeavoring to further the interests of religion. There ought, therefore, to be the more respect shown to them, and the more cheerful service rendered them.

Verse 3

If any man teach otherwise - Any otherwise than that respect should be shown to masters; and that a more cheerful and ready service should be rendered because they were Christians. It is evidently implied here that some might be disposed to inculcate such views of religion as would produce discontent and a spirit of insubordination among those who were held to servitude. Who they were is not known, nor is it known what arguments they would employ to do it. It would seem probable that the arguments which would be employed would be such as these: that God made all people equal; that all had been redeemed by the same blood; that all true Christians were fellow-heirs of heaven; and that it was wrong to hold a Christian brother in bondage, etc. From undeniable principles it would seem that they drew the inference that slaves ought at once to assert their freedom; that they should refuse obedience to their masters; and that the tendency of their teaching was, instead of removing the evil by the gradual and silent influence of Christian principles, to produce discontent and insurrection. From some of the expressions here used by the apostle, as characteristic of these teachers, it would seem to be probable that these persons were Jews. They were people given to subtle disputations, and those who doted about questions and verbal disputes, and who were intent on gain, supposing that that which conduced to mere worldly prosperity was of course religion. These characteristics apply well to Jewish teachers.

And consent not to wholesome words - Words conducing to a healthful state of the church; that is, doctrines tending to produce order and a due observance of the proprieties of life; doctrines leading to contentment, and sober industry, and the patient endurance of evils.

Even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ - The doctrines of the Saviour - all of which tended to a quiet life, and to a patient endurance of wrongs.

And to the doctrine which is according to godliness - Which tends to produce piety or religion; that is, the doctrine which would be most favorable to an easy and rapid propagation of the gospel. The idea seems to be, that such a state of insubordination and discontent as they would produce, would be unfavorable to the promotion of religion. Who can doubt it?

Verse 4

He is proud - That is, he is lifted up with his fancied superior acquaintance with the nature of religion. The Greek verb means, properly, "to smoke, to fume;" and then to be inflated, to "be conceited, etc." The idea is, that he has no proper knowledge of the nature of the gospel, and yet he values himself on a fancied superior acquaintance with its principles.

Knowing nothing - Margin, "a fool." That is, that he does not understand the nature of religion as he supposes he does. His views in regard to the relation of masters and servants, and to the bearing of religion on that relation, show that he does not understand the genius of Christianity. The apostle expresses this in strong language; by saying that he knows nothing; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 8:2.

But doting - Margin, "sick." The Greek word - νοσέω noseō- means properly to be sick; then to languish, to pine after. The meaning here is, that such persons had a sickly or morbid desire for debates of this kind. They had not a sound and healthy state of mind on the subject of religion. They were like a sickly man, who has no desire for solid and healthful food, but for that which will gratify a diseased appetite. They desired not sound doctrine, but controversies about unimportant and unsubstantial matters - things that bore the same relation to important doctrines which the things that a sick man pines after do to substantial food.

Questions and strifes of words - The Jews abounded much in disputes of this sort, and it would seem probable that the persons here referred to were Jewish teachers; compare 1 Timothy 1:6-7 notes, and Acts 18:15 note.

Whereof cometh envy - The only fruit of which is to produce envy. That is, the appearance of superior knowledge; the boast of being profoundly acquainted with religion, and the show of an ability for subtle argumentation, would produce in a certain class envy. Envy is uneasiness, pain, mortification, or discontent, excited by another's prosperity, or by his superior knowledge or possessions; see the notes on Romans 1:29.

Strife - Or contentions with those who will not readily yield to their opinions.

Railings - Harsh and abusive language toward those who will not concede a point - a common effect of disputes, and more commonly of disputes about small and unimportant matters, than of these which are of magnitude. Such railings often attend disputes that arise out of nice and subtle distinctions.

Evil surmisings - Suspicions that they are led to hold their views, not by the love of the truth, but from sordid or worldly motives. Such suspicions are very apt to attend an angry debate of any kind. It might be expected especially to exist on such a question as the apostle refers to here - the relation of a master and a slave. It is always very hard to do justice to the motives of one who seems to us to be living in sin, or to believe it to be possible that he acts from right motives.

Verse 5

Perverse disputings - Margin, "gallings one of another." In regard to the correct reading of this passage, see Bib. Repository, vol. iii. pp. 61,62. The word which is here used in the Received Text - παραδιατρίβη paradiatribē- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means "mis-employment;" then "idle occupation." (Robinson's Lexicon) The verb from which this is derived means to "rub in pieces, to wear away;" and hence the word here used refers to what was a mere "wearing away" of time. The idea is that of employments that merely consumed time without any advantage. The notion of contention or dispute is not necessarily implied in this passage, but the allusion is to inquiries or discussions that were of no practical value, but; were a mere consumption of time; compare Koppe on the passage. The reading in the margin is derived from the common usage of the verb "to rub," and hence our translators attached the idea of "rubbing against" each other, or of "galling" each other, as by rubbing. This is not, however, the idea in the Greek word. The phrase "idle employments" would better suit the meaning of the Greek than either of the phrases which our translators have employed.

Of men of corrupt minds - That is, of wicked hearts.

And destitute of the truth - Not knowing the truth; or not having just views of truth. They show that they have no correct acquaintance with the Christian system.

Supposing that gain is godliness - That that which contributes to an increase of property is of course true religion; or that it is proper to infer that any course which contributes to worldly prosperity must be sanctioned by religion. They judge of the consistency of any course with religion by its tendency to promote outward prosperity. This they have exalted into a maxim, and this they make the essential thing in religion. But how could any man do this? And what connection would this have with the subject under consideration - the kind of instruction that was to be given to servants? The meaning of the maxim seems to be, that religion must necessarily promote prosperity by its promoting temperance, and industry, and length of days; and that since this was the case, it was fair to infer that anything which would not do this could not be consistent with religion. They adopted it, therefore, as a general rule of judging, and one in entire accordance with the wishes of their own hearts, that any course of life that would not do this must be contrary to the true spirit of religion. This maxim, it would seem, they applied to the relation of the slave and his master, and as the tendency of the system was always to keep the servant poor and in an humble condition, they seem to have inferred that the relation was contrary to Christianity, and hence to have excited the servant to disaffection. In their reasoning they were not far out of the way, for it is fair to infer that a system that tends to produce uniform poverty, and to perpetuate a degraded condition in society, is contrary to the genius of Christianity. They were wrong:

(1) in making this a general maxim by which to judge of everything in religion; and,

(2) in so applying it as to produce insubordination and discontent in the minds of servants toward their masters; and,

(3) in supposing that everything which produced gain was consistent with religion, or that they could infallibly judge of the moral quality of any course of life by its contributing to outward prosperity. Religion will uniformly lead to that which conduces to prosperity, but it does not follow that every way of making money is therefore a part of piety. It is possible, also, that in some way they hoped for “gain” to themselves by inculcating those principles. It may be remarked here, that this is not an uncommon maxim practically among people - that “gain is godliness.” The whole

object of life with them is to make money; the rule by which they judge of everything is by its tendency to produce gain; and their whole religion may be summed up in this, that they live for gain. Wealth is the real object of pursuit; but it is often with them cloaked under the pretence of piety. They have no more religion than they suppose will contribute to this object; they judge of the nature and value of every maxim by its tendency to make people prosperous in their worldly business; they have as much as they suppose will promote their pecuniary interest, and they sacrifice every principle of religion which they suppose would conflict with their earthly advancement.

From such withdraw thyself - That is, have no communion or fellowship with them. Do not recognize them as religious teachers; do not countenance their views. Timothy was, in no way, to show that he regarded them as inculcating truth, or to patronize their doctrines. From such people, as having any claim to the character of Christians, every man should withdraw with feelings of unutterable pity and loathing. This passage 1 Timothy 6:1-5 is often appealed to by the advocates and apologists for slavery, to prove that Christianity countenances that institution, and that no direct attempt should be made by the ministers of the gospel, or other Christians, to show the evil of the institution, and to promote its abolition, and to prove that we have no right to interfere in any way with what pertains to these "domestic relations." It is of importance, therefore, in view of the exposition which has been given of the words and phrases in the passage, to sum up the truths which it inculcates. From it, therefore, the following lessons may be derived:

(1) That those who are slaves, and who have been converted to Christianity, should not be indolent or disorderly. If their masters are Christians, they should treat them with respect, and all the more because they are fellow-heirs of the grace of life. If they are not Christians, they should yet show the nature of religion on themselves, and bear the evils of their condition with patience - showing how religion teaches them to endure wrong. In either case, they are to be quiet, industrious, kind, meek, respectful. This Christianity everywhere enjoins while the relation continues, At the same time, however, it does not forbid the slave earnestly to desire his freedom, or to use all proper measures to obtain it; see 1 Corinthians 7:21.

(2) that the ministers of religion should not labor to produce a spirit of discontent among slaves, or excite them to rise upon their masters. This passage would undoubtedly forbid all such interference, and all agencies or embassies sent among slaves themselves to inflame their minds against their masters, in view of their wrongs; to put arms into their hands; or to induce them to form combinations for purposes of insurrection. It is not so much in the true spirit of Christianity to go to those who are wronged, as to those who do the wrong. The primary message in such cases is to the latter; and when it does go to the former, it is to teach them to be patient under their wrongs, to evince the Christian spirit there, and to make use only of those means which are consistent with the gospel to free themselves from the evils under which they suffer. At the same time, nothing in this passage, or in any other part of the New Testament, forbids us to go to the master himself, and to show him the evil of the system, and to enjoin upon him to let the oppressed go free.

Nothing in this passage can be reasonably construed as teaching that an appeal of the most earnest and urgent kind may not be made to him; or that the wrongs of the system may not be fully set before him, or that any man or set of men may not lawfully lift up in his hearing a loud and earnest voice in favor of the freedom of all. And in like manner there is nothing which makes it improper that the slave himself should be put fully in possession of that gospel which will apprize him of his rights as a man, and as redeemed by the blood of Jesus. Every human being, whether held in bondage or not, has a right to be made acquainted with all the provisions and truths of that gospel, nor has any man or class of men a right to withhold such knowledge from him. No system of things can be right which contemplates that that gospel shall be withheld, or under which it is necessary to withhold it in order to the perpetuity of the system.

(3) the passage teaches that it is possible that a man who is a slaveholder may become a Christian. But it does not teach that, though he may become a Christian while he is a slaveholder, that it is proper for him to continue this relation after he becomes such. It does not teach that a man can be a Christian and yet go into the business of buying and selling slaves. It does not teach that a man can be a Christian and continue to hold others in bondage, whatever may be true on that point. It does not teach that he ought

to be considered as maintaining a "good standing" in the church, if he continues to be a slaveholder; and whatever may be the truth on these points, this passage should not be adduced as demonstrating them. It settles one point only in regard to these questions - that a case was supposable in which a slave had a Christian master. It settles the duty of the slave in such a case; it says nothing about the duty of the master.

(4) this passage does not teach that slavery is either a good thing, or a just thing, a desirable relation in life, or an institution that God wishes to be perpetuated on the earth. The injunctions to slaves to be patient, meek, industrious, and respectful, no more demonstrate this, than the command to subjects to be obedient to the laws proves that God regarded the government of Nero as such an administration as he wished to be perpetuated on the earth. To exhort a slave to manifest a Christian spirit under his oppressions and wrongs, is not to justify the system that does him wrong, nor does it prohibit us from showing to masters that the system is contrary to the gospel, and that it ought to be abandoned.

(5) this passage, therefore, furnishes no real support for slavery. It can no more be adduced in favor of it than any exhortation to those who are oppressed, or in any degrading situation in life, to be patient, proves that the system which oppresses and degrades them, is a good one. Nor does the fact that a man might be converted who was a slaveholder, and might be spoken of as a πιστός pistosor believer, prove that it would be right and desirable that he should continue that relation, anymore than the fact that Saul of Tarsus became a Christian when engaged in persecution, proves that it would have been right for him to continue in that business, or than the conversion of the Ephesians who "used curious arts" Acts 19:19, proved that it would have been proper for them to continue in that employment. People who are doing wrong are converted in order to turn them from that course of life, not to justify them in it.

Verse 6

But godliness - Piety; religion. The meaning is, that real religion should be regarded as the greatest and most valuable acquisition. "With contentment." This word, as now used, refers to a state of mind; a calm and satisfied feeling; a freedom from murmuring and complaining. The idea is,

that "piety, connected with a contented mind - or a mind acquiescing in the allotments of life - is to be regarded as the real gain." Tyndale gives substantially the same interpretation: "Godliness is great riches, if a man be content with that he hath" Coverdale: "Howbeit, it is of great advantage, who is so godly, and holdeth him content with that he hath." The word which is used here - αὐτάρκεια autarkeia- means, properly, "self-sufficency," and is used here, in a good sense, to denote a mind satisfied with its lot. If there be true religion, united with its proper accompaniment, peace of mind, it is to be regarded as the true riches. The object of the apostle seems to be, to rebuke those who supposed that property constituted everything that was worth living for. He tells them, therefore, that the true gain, the real riches which we ought to seek, is religion, with a contented mind. This does more to promote happiness than wealth can ever do, and this is what should be regarded as the great object of life.

Verse 7

For we brought nothing into this world … - A sentiment very similar to this occurs in Job 1:21 - and it would seem probable that the apostle had that passage in his eye; see the notes on that passage. Numerous expressions of this kind occur in the classic writers; see Wetstein, in loc., and Pricaeus, in loc. in the Critici Sacri. Of the truth of what is here said, there can be nothing more obvious. It is apparent to all. We bring no property with us into the world - no clothing, no jewels, no gold - and it is equally clear that we can take nothing with us when we leave the earth. Our coming into the world introduces no additional property to that which the race before possessed, and our going from the world removes none that we may have helped the race to accumulate. This is said by the apostle as an obvious reason why we should be contented if our actual needs are supplied - for this is really all that we need, and all that the world is toiling for.

We can carry nothing out - compare Psalm 49:17. "For when he - the rich man - dieth, he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him."

Verse 8

And having food and raiment - Food and raiment, here, seem to be used to denote supplies for our needs in general. It is not uncommon to denote the whole by a part, and, as these are the principal things which we really need, and without which life could not be sustained, the apostle uses the phrase to denote all that is really necessary for us. We cannot suppose

that he would forbid a desire of a comfortable habitation, or of the means of knowledge, or of conveniences for worshipping God, etc. The idea is, that having those flyings which meet the actual necessities of our nature, and save us from distress, we should not strive after "uncertain riches," or make wealth the object of our anxious pursuit; compare notes on Philemon 4:11-12.

Verse 9

But they that will be rich - Further to enforce the duty of contentment, the apostle refers to some of the evils which necessarily attend a desire to be rich. Those evils have been so great and uniform in all ages, and are so necessary accompaniments of that desire, that, even amidst many inconveniences which may attend the opposite condition, we should he contented with our lot. Indeed, if we could see all, it would only be necessary to see the evils which the desire of wealth produces in the world, to make us contented with a most lowly condition of life. Perhaps nothing more would be necessary to make a poor man satisfied with his lot, and grateful for it, than to be acquainted with the perplexities and cares of a rich man. There is more emphasis to be placed on the word will, here, in the phrase, "will be rich," than might be supposed from our translation. It is not the sign of the future tense, but implies an actual "purpose" or "design" to become rich - οἱ βουλόμενοι hoi boulomenoiThe reference is to those in whom this becomes the object of earnest desire, and who lay their plans for it.

Fall into temptation - That is, they are tempted to do wicked things in order to accomplish their purposes. It is extremely difficult to cherish the desire to be rich, as the leading purpose of the soul, and to he an honest man.

And a snare - Birds are taken in a snare, and wild beasts were formerly; see the notes on Job 18:8-9. The net was sprung suddenly upon them, and they could not escape. The idea here is, that they who have this desire become so entangled, that they cannot easily escape. They become involved in the meshes of worldliness and sin; their movements are so fettered by cares, and inordinate desires, and by artificial needs, that they are no longer freemen. They become so involved in these things, that they cannot well break away from them if they would; compare Proverbs 28:20.

And into many foolish and hurtful lusts - Desires, such as the love of wealth creates. They are foolish - as being not such as an intelligent and

immortal being should pursue; and they are hurtful - as being injurious to morals, to health, and to the soul. Among those desires, are the fondness for display; for a magnificent dwelling, a train of menials, and a splendid equipage; for sumptuous living, feasting, the social glass, company, and riotous dissipation.

Which drown men in destruction and perdition - The word which is here rendered, "drown" - βυθίζω buthizō- means, to "sink in the" deep, or, "to cause to sink;" and the meaning here is, that they become submerged as a ship that sinks. The idea of drowning is not properly that of the apostle, but the image is that of a wreck, where a ship and all that is in it go down together. The destruction is complete. There is a total ruin of happiness, of virtue, of reputation, and of the soul. The ruling desire to be rich leads on a train of follies which ruins everything here, and hereafter. How many of the human family have thus been destroyed!

Verse 10

For the love of money is the root of all evil - That is, of all kinds of evil. This is evidently not to be understood as literally true, for there are evils which cannot, be traced to the love of money - the evils growing out of ambition, and intemperance, and debasing lusts, and of the hatred of God and of goodness. The expression here is evidently a popular saying - "all sorts of evils grow out of the love of money." Similar expressions often occur in the classic writers; see Wetstein, in loc, and numerous examples quoted by Priceaus. Of the truth of this, no one can doubt. No small part of the crimes of the world can be traced to the love of gold. But it deserves to be remarked here, that the apostle does not say that "money is the root of all evil," or that it is an evil at all. It is the "love" of it which is the source of evil.

Which while some coveted after - That is, some who were professing Christians. The apostle is doubtless referring to persons whose history was known to Timothy, and warning him, and teaching him to warn others, by their example.

They have erred from the faith - Margin, "been seduced." The Greek is, they have been led astray from; that is, they have been so deceived as to depart from the faith. The notion of deception or delusion is in the word, and the sense is, that, deceived by the promises held out by the prospect of wealth, they have apostatized from the faith. It is not implied of necessity

that they were ever real Christians. They have been led off from truth and duty, and from all the hopes and joys which religion would have imparted.

And pierced themselves through with many sorrows - With such sorrows as remorse, and painful reflections on their folly, and the apprehension of future wrath. Too late they see that they have thrown away the hopes of religion for that which is at best unworthy the pursuit of an immortal mind; which leads them on to a life of wickedness; which fails of imparting what it promised when its pursuit is successful, and which, in the great majority of instances, disappoints its votaries in respect to its attainment. The word rendered "pierced themselves through" - περιέπειραν periepeiran- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and is a word whose force and emphasis cannot be well expressed in a translation. It is from πείρω peirōand is made more emphatic by the addition of the preposition περι periThe word πείρω peirōmeans, properly, "to pierce through from one end to another," and is applied to meat that is "pierced through" by the spit when it is to be roasted (Passow); then it means to pierce through and through. The addition of the preposition περι perito the word, conveys the idea of doing this "all round;" of piercing everywhere. It was not a single thrust which was made, but they are gashed all round with penetrating wounds. Such is the effect on those who cast off religion for the sake of gold. None can avoid these consequences who do this. Every man is in the hands of a holy and just God, and sooner or later he must feel the effects of his sin and folly.

Verse 11

But thou, O man of God, flee these things - These allurements of wealth, and these sad consequences which the love of gold produces.

And follow after righteousness, … - Make these the grand object of your pursuit. On the virtues here enumerated, see the notes on Galatians 5:22-23.

Verse 12

Fight the good fight of faith - The noble conflict in the cause of religion; see the notes on Ephesians 6:10-17; compare notes on 1 Corinthians 9:26-27. The allusion is to the contests at the Grecian games.

Lay hold on eternal life - As the crown of victory that is held out to you. Seize this as eagerly as the competitors at the Grecian games laid hold on the prize; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 9:25.

Whereunto thou art also called - That is, by the Spirit of God, and by the very nature of your profession. God does not "call" his people that they may become rich; he does not convert them in order that they may devote themselves to the business of gain. They are "called" to a higher and nobler work. Yet how many professing Christians there are who seem to live as if God had "called" them to the special business of making money, and who devote themselves to it with a zeal and assiduity that would do honor to such a calling, if this had been the grand object which God had in view in converting them!

And hast professed a good profession before many witnesses - That is, either when he embraced the Christian religion, and made a public profession of it in the presence of the church and of the world; or when he was solemnly set apart to the ministry; or as he in his Christian life had been enabled publicly to evince his attachment to the Saviour. I see no reason to doubt that the apostle may have referred to the former, and that in early times a profession of religion may have been openly made before the church and the world. Such a method of admitting members to the church would have been natural, and would have been fitted to make a deep impression on others. It is a good thing often to remind professors of religion of the feelings which they had when they made a profession of religion; of the fact that the transaction was witnessed by the world; and of the promises which they then made to lead holy lives. One of the best ways of stimulating ourselves or others to the faithful performance of duty, is the remembrance of the vows then made; and one of the most effectual methods of reclaiming a backslider is to bring to his remembrance that solemn hour when he publicly gave himself to God.

Verse 13

I give thee charge in the sight God - see the notes on 1 Timothy 5:21.

Who quickeneth all things - Who gives life to all; notes on Ephesians 2:1. It is not quite clear why the apostle refers to this attribute of God as enforcing the charge which he here makes. Perhaps he means to say that God is the source of life, and that as he had given life to Timothy - natural and spiritual - he had a right to require that it should be employed in his service; and that, if, in obedience to this charge and in the performance of his duties, he should be required to lay down his life, he should bear in remembrance that God had power to raise him up again. This is more distinctly urged in 2 Timothy 2:8-10.

And before Christ Jesus - As in the presence of Christ, and stimulated by his example.

Who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession - Margin, "profession." The same Greek word is used which in 1 Timothy 6:12 is translated "profession." The reference is to the fact that the Lord Jesus, when standing at the bar of Pilate who claimed to have power over his life, did not shrink from an open avowal of the truth; John 18:36-37. Nothing can be better fitted to preserve our minds steadfast in the faith, and to enable us to maintain our sacred vows in this world when allured by temptation, or when ridiculed for our religion, than to remember the example of the Lord Jesus; Let us place him before us as he stood at the bar of Pilate - threatened with death in its most appalling form, and ridiculed for the principles which he maintained; let us look on him, friendless and alone, and see with what seriousness, and sincerity, and boldness he stated the simple truth about himself, and we shall have one of the best securities that we can have, that we shall not dishonor our profession. A clear view of the example of Christ our Saviour, in those circumstances, and a deep conviction that his eye is upon us to discern whether we are steadfast as he was, will do more than all abstract precepts to make us faithful to our christian calling.

Verse 14

That thou keep this commandment - Referring particularly to the solemn injunction which he had just given him, to "fight the good fight of faith," but perhaps also including all that he had enjoined on him.

Without spot - It seems harsh, and is unusual, to apply the epithet, "without spot" - ἄσπιλος aspilos- to a command or doctrine, and the passage may be so construed that this may be understood as referring to Timothy himself - "That thou keep the commandment so that thou mayest be without spot and unrebukable." See Bloomfield, Crit. Dig., in loc. The word here rendered "without spot," occurs in the New Testament only here and in James 1:27; 1 Peter 1:19; 2 Peter 3:14. It means without any "stain" or "blemish; pure." If applied here to Timothy, it means that he should so keep the command that there would be no stain on his moral character; if to the doctrine, that that should be kept pure.

Unrebukable - So that there be no occasion for reproach or reproof; see notes on Philemon 2:15.

Until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ - see notes on 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

Verse 15

Which in his times he shall show - Which God will reveal at such times as he shall deem best. It is implied here that the time is unknown to people; see the notes on Acts 1:7.

Who is the blessed and only Potentate - God, who is the ruler over all. The word used here - δυνάστης dunastēs- means one who is "mighty" Luke 1:22, then a prince or ruler; compare Acts 8:27. It is applied here to God as the mighty ruler over the universe.

The King of kings - Who claims dominion over all the kings of the earth. In Revelation 7:14, the same appellation is applied to the Lord Jesus, ascribing to him universal dominion.

Lord of lords - The idea here is, that all the sovereigns of the earth are under his sway; that none of them can prevent the accomplishment of his purposes; and that he can direct the winding up of human affairs when he pleases.

Verse 16

Who only hath immortality - The word here - ἀθανασία athanasia- properly means "exemption from death," and seems to mean that God, in his own nature, enjoys a perfect and certain exemption from death. Creatures have immortality only as they derive it from him, and of course are dependent on him for it. He has it by his very nature, and it is in his case underived, and he cannot be deprived of it. It is one of the essential attributes of his being, that he will always exist, and that death cannot reach him; compare the expression in John 5:26, "The Father hath life in himself," and the notes on that passage.

Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto - Greek, "Inhabiting inapproachable light." The light where he dwells is so brilliant and dazzling that mortal eyes could not endure it. This is a very common representation of the dwelling place of God. See examples quoted in Pricaeus, in loc. Heaven is constantly represented as a place of the most pure and brilliant light, needing not the light of the sun, or the moon, or the stars Revelation 21:23-24; Revelation 22:5, and God is represented as dwelling in that light, surrounded by amazing and inapproachable glory compare Revelation 4:6; Ezekiel 1:4; Hebrews 1:3.

Whom no man hath seen nor can see - notes on John 1:18.

To whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen - see the notes on Romans 11:36.

Verse 17

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded - One of the evils to which they are particularly exposed. The idea is, that they should not value themselves on account of their wealth, or look down with pride and arrogance on their inferiors. They should not suppose that they are any better people or any nearer heaven, because they are wealthy. Property really makes no distinction in the great things that pertain to character and salvation, It does not necessarily make one wise, or learned, or great, or good. In all these things, the man who has not wealth may be vastly the superior of him who has; and for so slight and unimportant a distinction as gold can confer, no man should be proud. Besides, let such a man reflect that his property is the gift of God; that he is made rich because God has chosen to arrange things so that he should be; that it is not primarily owing to any skill or wisdom which he has; that his property only increases his responsibility, and that it must all soon be left, and he be as poor as the "beggar that lies at his gate;" and he will see ample reason why he should not be proud.

Nor trust in uncertain riches - Margin, "The uncertainty of." The margin expresses the meaning of the Greek more accurately than the text, but the sense is not materially varied. Riches are uncertain because they may soon be taken away. No dependence can be placed on them in the emergencies of life. He who is rich today, has no security that he will be tomorrow; and if he shall be rich tomorrow, he has no certainty that his riches will meet his necessities then. A man whose house is in flames, or who is shipwrecked, or whose child lies dying, or who is himself in the agonizes of death, can derive no advantage from the fact that he is richer than other people; see notes on Luke 12:16-21. That against which Paul here directs Timothy to caution the rich, is that to which they are most exposed. A man who is rich, is very liable to "trust" in His riches, and to suppose that he needs nothing more; compare Luke 12:19. He feels that he is not dependent on his fellow-men, and he is very likely to feel that he is not dependent on God. It is for this cause that God has recorded so many solemn declarations in his word respecting the instability of riches (compare Proverbs 23:5), and that he is furnishing so many instructive

lessons in his providence, showing how easily riches may suddenly vanish away.

But in the living God -

(1) He is able to supply all our needs, and to do for us what riches cannot do; and,

(2) he never changes, or leaves those who put their trust in him. He is able to meet our needs if in the flames, or in a storm at sea, or when a friend dies, or when we lie down on a bed of death, or wherever we may be in the eternal world.

Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy - The meaning of this seems to be, that God permits us to enjoy everything. Everything in the works of creation and redemption he has given to man for his happiness, and he should therefore trust in him. He has not merely given wealth for the comfort of people, but he has given everything, and he on whom so many and so great blessings have been bestowed for his comfort, should trust in the great Benefactor himself, and not rely merely on one of his gifts; compare notes on 1 Corinthians 3:21-23.

Verse 18

That they do good - On the duty enjoined in this verse, see Galatians 6:10 note; Hebrews 13:10 note.

That they be rich in good works - "That their good works may be as abundant as their riches."

Ready to distribute - To divide with others; compare Acts 4:34. The meaning is, that they should be liberal, or bountiful.

Willing to communicate - Margin, or "sociable." The translation in the text is a more correct rendering of the Greek. The idea is, that they should be willing to share their blessings with others, so as to make others comfortable; see the notes on Hebrews 13:16; compare the argument of Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:13-15, and the notes on that passage.

Verse 19

Laying up in store for themselves … - The meaning of this verse is, that they were to make such a use of their property that it would contribute to their eternal welfare. It might be the means of exalted happiness and honor in heaven, if they would so use it as not to interfere with religion in the soul, and so as to do the most good possible. See the sentiment in this verse explained at length in the notes on Luke 16:9.

Verse 20

Keep that which is committed to thy trust - All that is entrusted to you, and to which reference has been particularly made in this Epistle. The honor of the gospel, and the interests of religion, had been specially committed to him; and he was sacredly to guard this holy trust, and not suffer it to be wrested from him.

Avoiding profane and vain babblings - Greek, "Profane, empty words." The reference is to such controversies and doctrines as tended only to produce strife, and were not adapted to promote the edification of the church; see the notes on 1 Timothy 1:4; 1 Timothy 4:7.

And oppositions of science falsely so called - Religion has nothing to fear from true science, and the minister of the gospel is not exhorted to dread that. Real science, in all its advances, contributes to the support of religion; and just in proportion as that is promoted will it be found to sustain the Bible, and to confirm the claims of religion to the faith of mankind. See this illustrated at length in Wiseman's Lectures on the connection between science and religion. It is only false or pretended science that religion has to dread, and which the friend of Christianity is to avoid. The meaning here is, that Timothy was to avoid everything which falsely laid claim to being "knowledge" or "science." There was much of this in the world at the time the apostle wrote; and this, more perhaps than anything else, has tended to corrupt true religion since.

Verse 21

Which some professing - Evidently some who professed to be true Christians. They were attracted by false philosophy, and soon, as a consequence, were led to deny the doctrines of Christianity. This result has not been uncommon in the world.

Have erred concerning the faith - see notes on 1 Timothy 1:6-7; 1 Timothy 6:10.

Grace be with thee - see the notes, Romans 1:7.

On the subscription at the close of this Epistle, see Intro., Section 2. It is, like the other subscriptions at the close of the epistles, of no authority.

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2 TIMOTHY INTRODUCTION

Introduction to 2Timothy

Section 1. Time and Place of Writing the Epistle

There has been much diversity of sentiment on the question when this Epistle was written. That it was written at Rome, and when the apostle was imprisoned there, is the unanimous opinion of all who have written on the Epistle, and indeed is apparent on the face of it; see 2 Timothy 1:8, 2 Timothy 1:16; 2 Timothy 4:6. But whether it was written during his first imprisonment there, or during a second imprisonment, is a question, on which critics even now are by no means agreed. The most respectable names may be found on each side of this question, though the common opinion has been that it was during a second imprisonment. Of this opinion are Mosheim, Michaelis, Benson, Mill, Macknight, LeClerc, Paley, Stuart, Clarke, and Doddridge. The reasons for this may be seen at length in Hug‘s *Introduction*, pp. 761-763, Macknight, and in Paley‘s *Horae Paulinae*. Dr. Lardner, Baronius, Witsius, Lightfoot, Hammond, Hug, Hemsen, and others, maintain that it was written during the first imprisonment, and that it was sent about the same time as the Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon. The reasons for this opinion may be found in Hug‘s *Introduction*, pp. 556-559, and in Lardner, vol. 6, pp. 38-72. It is not consistent with the design of these Notes to go at length into an examination of this question, and it is not material in order to an exposition of the Epistle.

After considering the reasonings of Lardner and Hug to prove that this Epistle was written during Paul‘s first imprisonment at Rome - that is, as they suppose, during his only imprisonment there, and not long after the First Epistle was written - it seems to me still that there are insuperable difficulties in such a view, and that the evidence is clear that it was during a second imprisonment. The reasons for this are briefly the following:

(1) In the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon, written during his first imprisonment, Paul confidently looked forward to a release, and to a speedy departure from Rome. In this, he had no such expectation. Thus, he tells the Philippians Philemon 2:24, “I trust in the Lord, that I myself shall come shortly.” In the Epistle to Philemon Philemon 1:22, he says, “But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall

be given unto you." In this Epistle, however, the author had no such expectation; 2 Timothy 4:6, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

(2) in 2 Timothy 4:16, the apostle uses the following language: "At my first answer, no man stood with me, but all forsook me." It is true that this may refer to a hearing which he had had before Nero during the same imprisonment at Rome in which this Second Epistle was written; but the most natural interpretation is to suppose that he had had one hearing, and had been discharged, and that the imprisonment of which he speaks in this Epistle was a second one. This seems to me to be confirmed by what he says in the next verse: "Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." Here it appears:

(a)that he had been delivered, on that occasion, from death - "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion," which is equivalent to saying that he was discharged;

(b)that after that discharge he was permitted to preach the gospel - "that by me the preaching might be fully known;"

(c)that he had been permitted after that to travel and preach "and that all the Gentiles might hear," which is just such an expression as he would use on the supposition that he had been discharged, and been permitted to go abroad and preach the gospel extensively, and is not such an expression as he could have used if he had been imprisoned but once.

(3) the expression occurring in 2 Timothy 4:20, "Erastus ‹abode‘ at Corinth," implies that he had made a second journey to Rome. The word rendered "abode" - ἔμεινεν emeinen- is such as would be used where two were traveling together, and where one of them chose to remain at a certain place. It implies that, at the time referred to, the two were together, and that one chose to go on, and the other to remain. But it is capable of very clear proof that, when Paul was sent to Rome by Festus 2 Timothy 4:21. But how could it be a reason for this urgency to say that, "some five years before,"

he had been forsaken by one fellow-laborer, and had been obliged to leave another one sick on the way?

(4) Similar remarks may be made respecting what Paul says in the close of the same verse 2 Timothy 4:20; "Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." Paul, when sent by Festus to Rome, did not stop at Miletus; for the course which the ship took on that occasion is minutely described 2 Timothy 4:13, "The cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments." This evidently refers to some recent affair. Can it be believed that these had been there for some five years, and that Paul had not needed them before? He was at Caesarea for two years. He had abundant opportunity of sending for them. An article of wearing apparel, or books to study, or his own writings, he would be likely to need long before, and it is highly improbable that he should have suffered them to remain during this long period without sending for them.

(6) in the epistles which were written during Paul's first imprisonment, certain persons are referred to as being then with him, who are in this Epistle mentioned as absent. It is almost beyond a doubt that the Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon, were written during Paul's first imprisonment at Rome; see the Introduction to those epistles. In the Epistle to the Colossians, Colossians 1:1, Timothy is mentioned as being then with the apostle. When this was written, of course he was absent. In the same Epistle, Mark is mentioned as with Paul, and unites with him in the salutation to the Colossians 2 Timothy 4:10; when this Epistle was written, he was absent, for Timothy is ordered to bring him with him 2 Timothy 4:11. Demas was then with him Colossians 4:14; now he was absent, for Paul says, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica;" 2 Timothy 4:10. These circumstances make it quite clear that the Second Epistle to Timothy was not written during the imprisonment at Rome in which the Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, etc., were written, unless a change had taken place in the circumstances of the apostle, which we have no reason to suppose occurred. The probability, then, seems to be strong, that the apostle was imprisoned there a second time, and that the things referred to in this Epistle occurred then.

(7) to these circumstances should be added the fact, that many of the Fathers say that Paul was liberated from his first imprisonment, and afterwards traveled extensively in preaching the gospel. This testimony is borne by Eusebius, Chrysostom, Theodoret, and others; see Calmet's Dictionary, and Lives of the Apostles, by D. F. Bacon, New Haven, pp. 619-621. - If the supposition of a second imprisonment at Rome, during which this Epistle was written, is correct, then it was written probably not far from the year 65 a.d. Lardner, however, who supposes it was written during the first imprisonment, places its date in May, 61 a.d.; Hug, also, in the same year.

Section 2. The Place Where Timothy Was When the Epistle Was Addressed to Him

There can be little doubt that Timothy was at Ephesus at the time when this Epistle was addressed to him. The evidence for this opinion is thus stated by Lightfoot and others:

(1) Paul directs Timothy to salute the household of Onesiphorus, 2 Timothy 4:19. But it is evident, from 2 Timothy 1:18, that Onesiphorus was an Ephesian, and, as the direction is to salute his "household," it may be argued with the more certainty that Timothy was then at Ephesus, the ordinary residence of the family of Onesiphorus.

(2) he directs Timothy to take Troas in the way as he came to him at Rome 2 Timothy 4:13, which was the way that Paul had gone to Ephesus 2 Corinthians 2:12; Acts 20:5, thus showing that this was the usual route of travel, and was a way which Timothy would naturally take in passing from Ephesus to Rome. It is true that this does not absolutely prove that he was at "Ephesus" - since, if he had been in any other part of the western portion of Asia Minor, the direction would have been the same - but it is a slight circumstance corroborating others.

(3) he warns him to beware of Alexander 2 Timothy 4:14, who we know was an Ephesian - 1 Timothy 1:20; Acts 19:33.

(4) in 2 Timothy 4:9, he gives direction to Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, and then adds 2 Timothy 4:12, "Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus." From this it would seem that one reason why he wished him then to come was, that he had appointed one to occupy his place there, so that he

could leave without injury to the cause. But it would seem also probable that Paul was not in the habit of calling away a laborer from an important station without supplying his place. Thus, in Titus 3:12, he says, "When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me." It may thence, be inferred that Timothy was at Ephesus at the time when Paul wrote to him, and that he had taken care that his place should not be left vacant, by the appointment of Tychicus to fill it when he should leave.

(5) it may be added, that the errors and vices which Timothy is directed to oppose, are the same which are referred to in the First Epistle, and it may be hence, inferred thai he was at the same place.

How long Timothy had been in Ephesus is not certainly known, and is not material to be known in order to a proper understanding of the Epistle. It does not appear, from the Acts, that he was with Paul during the two years in which he was in Caesarea, nor during his voyage to Rome; yet it is certain that he was in Rome when Paul wrote to the Philippians, to the Colossians, and to Philemon, because he is named in the titles to those Epistles. In Hebrews 13:23, Paul says that Timothy was "set at liberty," or, more probably, "sent away" (see notes on that verse), but to what place he had gone is not mentioned. Nothing would be more natural, however, than that he should visit Ephesus again, and it is not improbable that Paul would leave him there when he again visited Rome.

Section 3. The Occasion on Which the Epistle Was Written

The Epistle was evidently written when the apostle was expecting soon to be put to death; 2 Timothy 4:6-8. The main object of writing it seems to have been to request Timothy to come to him as speedily as possible; 2 Timothy 4:9. But, in doing this, it was natural that Paul should accompany the request with such counsel as Timothy needed, and such as it was proper for Paul to give in probably the last letter that he would write to him. The particular reason why the apostle desired the presence of Timothy seems to have been, that nearly all the others on whom he might have supposed he could rely in a time of trial, had left him. Thus, he says that Demas had forsaken him; Crescens had gone to Galatia; Titus to Dalmatia, and Tychicus he had himself sent to Ephesus; 2 Timothy 4:10-12. No one remained with him but Luke 2 Timothy 4:11, and he was, therefore, desirous that Timothy and Mark should be with him; 2 Timothy 4:11. He

did not ask their presence merely that they might sustain him in his trials, but that they might aid him in the work of the ministry 2 Timothy 4:11, for it would seem that all hope of doing good in Rome was not closed.

If the view of the time when this Epistle was written which has been taken in this introduction, is correct, and if this is the last Epistle which was written by the apostle Paul before his martyrdom, then it occupies a very important place in sacred canon, and is invested with great interest. It may be regarded as the dying counsels of the most eminent of the apostles to one who had just entered on the ministerial life. We should read it with the interest with which we do the last words of the great and the good. Then we feel that every word which they utter has a weight which demands attention. We feel that, whatever a man might do at other times, he will not trifle then. We feel that, having little time to express his wishes, he will select topics that lie nearest his heart, and that he deems most important. There is no more interesting position in which we can be placed, than when we sit down at such a man‘s feet, and listen to his parting counsels. To a young minister of the gospel, therefore, this Epistle is invaluable; to any and every Christian, it cannot fail to be a matter of interest to listen to the last words of the great apostle of the Gentiles, and to ponder his last written testimony in favour of that religion to the promulgation of which he had devoted his talents and his life.

2 TIMOTHY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The principal design of 2 Timothy 1:1-2, he proceeds to present these considerations to the mind of Timothy:

(1) He commences the chapter with "delicate praise" of his young friend - one of the most happy methods of inducing him to persevere in the course of life on which he had entered; 2 Timothy 1:3-5. We naturally desire to perfect that in which we already excel; we feel encouraged for future efforts in a cause in which we have already been successful. The apostle, therefore, reminds Timothy of the manner in which he had been trained; of the piety of his mother and grandmother, and assures him of his belief that their efforts to train him up in the ways of religion had not been in vain.

(2) he urges various considerations to induce him not to turn away from that holy purpose to which he had devoted himself. The considerations which he urges, are these:

(a)he had been solemnly consecrated to the work of preaching the gospel, 2 Timothy 1:6;

(b)God had imparted to him, as to others, a spirit of love and power, and a sound mind, 2 Timothy 1:7;

(c)the grace of God had called him to his great work, and he possessed that gospel by which life and immortality are brought to light, 2 Timothy 1:8-11;

(d)Paul urges his own example, and says that, amidst all his own trials, he had never seen occasion to be ashamed of the gospel, 2 Timothy 1:12-14; and,

(e)he reminds Timothy that all his other friends in Asia had turned away from him, specifying two of them, and urges him, therefore, to maintain a steadfast attachment to the principles which he had professed, 2 Timothy 1:15.

(3) the chapter closes with the expression of an earnest prayer that the Lord would bless the family of Onesiphorus, and with a grateful mention of his kindness to him, 2 Timothy 1:16-18.

Verse 1

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, - See the notes at Romans 1:1.

By the will of God - Called to be an apostle in accordance with the divine will and purpose; see the notes at Galatians 1:1.

According to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus - In accordance with the great promise of eternal life through the Saviour; that is, he was called to be an apostle to carry out the great purpose of human salvation; compare Ephesians 3:6. God has made a promise of life to mankind through faith in the Lord Jesus, and it was with reference to this that he was called to the apostleship.

Verse 2

To Timothy, my dearly beloved son; - See the notes at 1 Timothy 1:2.

Grace, mercy, and peace - see the notes at Romans 1:7.

Verse 3

I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers - Paul reckoned among his forefathers the patriarchs and the holy men of former times, as being of the same nation with himself, though it may be that he also included his more immediate ancestors, who, for anything known to the contrary, may have been distinguished examples of piety. His own parents, it is certain, took care that he should be trained up in the ways of religion; compare the Philemon 3:4-5 notes; Acts 26:4-5. The phrase "from my forefathers," probably means, after the example of my ancestors. He worshipped the same God; he held substantially the same truths; he had the same hope of the resurrection and of immortality; he trusted to the same Saviour having come, on whom they relied as about to come. His was not, therefore, a different religion from theirs; it was the same religion carried out and perfected. The religion of the Old Testament and the New is essentially the same; see the notes at Acts 23:6.

With pure conscience - see the notes at Acts 23:1.

That without ceasing - compare the Romans 12:12 note; 1 Thessalonians 5:17 note.

I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day - see the notes at Philemon 1:3-4.

Verse 4

Greatly desiring to see thee; - see 2 Timothy 4:9, 2 Timothy 4:21. It was probably on, account of this earnest desire that this Epistle was written. He wished to see him, not only on account of the warm friendship which he

had for him, but because he would be useful to him in his present circumstances; see the introduction, Section 3.

Being mindful of thy tears - Alluding probably to the tears which he shed at parting from him. The occasion to which he refers is not mentioned; but nothing is more probable than that Timothy would weep when separated from such a father and friend. It is not wrong thus to weep, for religion is not intended to make us stoics or savages.

That I may be filled with joy - By seeing you again. It is easy to imagine what joy it would give Paul, then a prisoner, and forsaken by nearly all his friends, and about to die, to see a friend whom he loved as he did this young man. Learn hence, that there may be very pure and warm friendship between an old and young man, and that the warmth of true friendship is not diminished by the near prospect of death.

Verse 5

When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee; - notes, 1 Timothy 1:5. On the faith of Timothy, see the notes at 1 Timothy 4:6.

Which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois - That is, the same faith dwelt in her; or, she was a sincere believer in Christ. It would seem probable, from this, that she was the first of the family who had been converted. In the Acts of the Apostles Acts 16:1, we have an account of the family of Timothy: - "Then came he to Derbe and Lystra; and behold a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek." In this account no mention is made of the grandmother Lois, but there is no improbability in supposing that Paul was better acquainted with the family than Luke. There is, at any rate, no contradiction between the two accounts; but the one confirms the other, and the "undesigned coincidence" furnishes an argument for the authenticity of both. See Paley's Horae Paulinae, in loc. As the mother of Timothy was a Hebrew, it is clear that his grandmother was also. Nothing more is known of her than is mentioned here.

And in thy mother Eunice - In Acts 16:1, it is said that the mother of Timothy was "a Jewess, and believed;" but her name is not mentioned. This shows that Paul was acquainted with the family, and that the statement in the Epistle to Timothy was not forged from the account in the Acts. Here is another "undesigned coincidence." In the history in the Acts, nothing is said of the father, except that he was "a Greek," but it is implied that he was not

a believer. In the Epistle before us, nothing whatever is said of him. But the piety of his mother alone is commended, and it is fairly implied that his father was not a believer. This is one of those coincidences on which Paley has constructed his beautiful argument in the Horae Paulinae in favor of the genuineness of the New Testament.

Verse 6

That thou stir up the gift of God - Greek, That thou "kindle up" as a fire. The original word used here denotes the kindling of a fire, as by bellows, etc. It is not uncommon to compare piety to a flame or a fire, and the image is one that is obvious when we speak of causing that to burn more brightly. The idea is, that Timothy was to use all proper means to keep the flame of pure religion in the soul burning, and more particularly his zeal in the great cause to which he had been set apart. The agency of man himself is needful to keep the religion of the heart warm and glowing. However rich the gifts which God has bestowed upon us, they do not grow of their own accord, but need to be cultivated by our own personal care.

Which is in thee by the putting on of my hands - In connection with the presbytery; see the notes at 1 Timothy 4:14. This proves that Paul took part in the ordination of Timothy; but it does not prove either that he performed the duty alone, or that the "ordaining virtue," whatever that was, was imparted by him only; because:

(1) it is expressly said 1 Timothy 4:14, that he was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, of which Paul was doubtless one; and,

(2) the language here used, "by the putting on of my hands," is just such as Paul, or any other one of the presbytery, would use in referring to the ordination of Timothy, though they were all regarded as on a level. It is such an expression as an aged Presbyterian, or Congregational, or Baptist minister would address to a son whom he had assisted to ordain. Nothing would be more natural than to remind him that his own hands had been laid on him when he was set apart to the work of the ministry. It would be in the nature of a tender, pathetic, and solemn appeal, bringing all that there was in his own character, age, and relation to the other, to bear on him, in order to induce him to be faithful to his trust. On other occasions, he would naturally remind him that others had united with him in the act, and that he had derived his authority through the presbytery, just as Paul appeals to

Timothy, 1 Timothy 4:14. But no one would now think of inferring from this, that he meant to be understood as saying that he alone had ordained him, or that all the authority for preaching the gospel had been imparted through his hands, and that those who were associated with him only expressed "concurrence;" that is, that their presence there was only an unmeaning ceremony. What was the "gift of God" which had been conferred in this way, Paul specifies in the next verse 2 Timothy 1:7. It is "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." The meaning is, that these had been conferred by God, and that the gift had been recognized by his ordination. It does not imply that any mysterious influence had gone from the hands of the ordainers, imparting any holiness to Timothy which he had not before.

Verse 7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear - A timorous and servile spirit. This is said in order to encourage Timothy, who was not improbably modest and diffident.

But of power - Power to encounter foes and dangers; power to bear up under trials; power to triumph in persecutions. That is, it is the nature of the gospel to inspire the mind with holy courage; compare, however, Luke 24:49.

And of love - Love to God and to the souls of men. The tendency of This, also, is to "cast out fear" 1 John 4:18, and to make the mind bold and constant. Nothing will do more to inspire courage, to make a man fearless of danger, or ready to endure privation and persecution, than "love." The love of country, and wife, and children, and home, makes the most timid bold when they are assailed; and the love of Christ and of a dying world nerves the soul to great enterprises, and sustains it in the deepest sorrows.

And of a sound mind - The Greek word denotes one of sober mind; a man of prudence and discretion. The state referred to here is that in which the mind is well balanced, and under right influences; in which it sees things in their just proportions and relations; in which it is not feverish and excited, but when everything is in its proper place. It was this state of mind which Timothy was exhorted to cultivate; this which Paul regarded as so necessary to the performance of the duties of his office. It is as needful now for the minister of religion as it was then.

Verse 8

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord - Do not be ashamed to bear your testimony to the doctrines taught by the Lord Jesus; John 3:11, John 3:32-33; John 7:7; compare Acts 10:22; Acts 20:24; 1 Corinthians 1:6; Revelation 22:16. Paul seems to have apprehended that Timothy was in some danger of being ashamed of this gospel, or of shrinking back from its open avowal in the trials and persecutions to which he now saw it exposed him.

Nor of me his prisoner - Of the testimony which I have borne to the truth of the gospel. This passage proves that, when Paul wrote this Epistle, he was in confinement; compare Ephesians 3:1; Ephesians 6:20; Philemon 1:13-14, Philemon 1:16; Colossians 4:3, Colossians 4:18; Philemon 1:9. Timothy knew that he had been thrown into prison on account of his love for the gospel. To avoid that himself, there might be some danger that a timid young man might shrink from an open avowal of his belief in the same system of truth.

But be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel - The sufferings to which the profession of the gospel may expose you; compare the notes at Colossians 1:24.

According to the power of God - That is, according to the power which God gives to those who are afflicted on account of the gospel. The apostle evidently supposes that they who were subjected to trials on account of the gospel, might look for divine strength to uphold them, and asks him to endure those trials, relying on that strength, and not on his own.

Verse 9

Who hath saved us; - See the notes at Matthew 1:21. He has brought us into a state in which salvation is so certain, that Paul could speak of it as if it were already done.

And called us - see the notes at Romans 8:28, Romans 8:30.

With an holy calling - A calling which is in its own nature holy, and which leads to holiness; compare the Ephesians 4:1 note; Philemon 3:14 note; Hebrews 3:1 note.

Not according to our works - Titus 3:5; notes, Ephesians 2:8-9. The idea is, that our own works have nothing to do in inducing God to call us. As, when we become Christians, he does not choose us because of our works, so the eternal purpose in regard to our salvation could not have been formed because he foresaw that we would perform such works as would be

a reason why he should choose us. The whole arrangement was irrespective of our deserts.

But according to his own purpose and grace - see the Romans 9:11-13 notes, 16; Ephesians 1:4-5 notes.

Which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began - That is, which he intended to give us, for it was not then actually given. The thing was so certain in the divine purposes, that it might be said to be already done; compare the notes at Romans 4:17.

Verse 10

But is now made manifest - The purpose to save us was long concealed in the divine mind, but the Saviour came that he might make it known.

Who hath abolished death - That is, he has made it so certain that death will be abolished, that it may be spoken of as already done. It is remarkable how often, in this chapter, Paul speaks of what God intends to do as so certain, that it may be spoken of as a thing that is already done. In the meaning of the expression here, see the notes at 1 Corinthians 15:54; compare the notes at Hebrews 2:14. The meaning is, that, through the gospel, death will cease to reign, and over those who are saved there will be no such thing as we now understand by dying.

And hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel - This is one of the great and glorious achievements of the gospel, and one of the things by which it is distinguished from every other system. The word rendered "hath brought to light" - φωτίζω phōtizō- means to give light, to shine; then to give light to, to shine upon; and then to bring to light, to make known. Robinson, Lexicon. The sense is, that these things were before obscure or unknown, and that they have been disclosed to us by the gospel. It is, of course, not meant that there were no intimations of these truths before, or that nothing was known of them - for the Old Testament shed some light on them; but that they are fully disclosed to man in the gospel. It is there that all ambiguity and doubt are removed, and that the evidence is so clearly stated as to leave no doubt on the subject. The intimations of a future state, among the wisest of the pagan, were certainly very obscure, and their hopes very faint.

The hope of a future state is styled by Cicero, Futurorum quoddam augurium saeculorum - "a conjecture or surmise of future ages. Tusc. Q. 1. Seneca says it is "that which our wise men do promise, but they do not prove." Epis. 102. Socrates, even at his death, said, "I hope to go hence to

good men, but of that I am not very confident; nor doth it become any wise man to be positive that so it will be. I must now die, and you shall live; but which of us is in the better state, the living or the dead, only God knows." Pliny says, "Neither soul nor body has any more sense after death, than before it was born." Cicero begins his discourse on the subject with a profession that he intended to deliver nothing as fixed and certain, but only as probable, and as having some likelihood of truth. And, having mentioned the different sentiments of philosophers, he concludes, - "Which of these opinions is true, some god must tell us; which is most like to truth, is a great question."

See Whitby, "in loc." Such doubts existed in regard to the immortality of the soul; but of the resurrection and future life of the body, they had no conception whatever; compare the notes at Acts 17:32. With what propriety, then, may it be said that these doctrines were brought to light through the gospel! Man would never have known them if it had not been for revelation. The word "life," here, refers undoubtedly to life in the future world. The question was, whether man would live at all; and that question has been determined by the gospel. The word "immortality" means, properly, "incorruption, incapacity of decay;" and may be applied either to the body or the soul. See it explained in the notes at 1 Corinthians 15:42. It is used in reference to the body, in 1 Corinthians 15:42, 1 Corinthians 15:53-54; in Romans 2:7, it is applied to the future state of rewards, without special reference to the body or soul. Here it seems to refer to the future state as that in which there will be no corruption or decay.

Many suppose that the phrase "life and immortality," here, is used by hendiadys (two things for one), as meaning immortal or incorruptible life. The gospel thus has truths not found in any other system, and contains what man never would have discovered of himself. As fair a trial had been made among the philosophers of Greece and Rome as could be made, to determine whether the unaided powers of the human mind could arrive at these great truths; and their most distinguished philosophers confessed that they could arrive at no certainty on the subject. In this state of things, the gospel comes and reveals truths worthy of all acceptation; sheds light where man had desired it; solves the great problems which had for ages perplexed the human mind, and discloses to man all that he could wish - that not only

the soul will live for ever, but that the body will be raised from the grave, and that the entire man will become immortal. How strange it is that men will not embrace the gospel! Socrates and Cicero would have hailed its light, and welcomed its truths, as those which their whole nature panted to know.

Verse 11

Whereunto I am appointed a preacher - That is, I am appointed to make these truths known; see the notes at Ephesians 3:7-8.

Verse 12

For the which cause I also suffer these things - That is, I suffer on account of my purpose to carry the gospel to the Gentiles; see the notes at Colossians 1:24.

Nevertheless I am not ashamed - compare the notes at Romans 1:16.

For I know whom I have believed - Margin, "trusted." The idea is, that he understood the character of that Redeemer to whom he had committed his eternal interests, and knew that he had no reason to be ashamed of confiding in him. He was able to keep all that he had intrusted to his care, and would not suffer him to be lost; see Isaiah 28:16.

And am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him - That is, the soul, with all its immortal interests. A man has nothing of higher value to intrust to another than the interests of his soul, and there is no other act of confidence like that in which he intrusts the keeping of that soul to the Son of God. Hence, learn:

(1) that religion consists in committing the soul to the care of the Lord Jesus; because:

(a)We feel that we cannot secure the soul's salvation ourselves.

(b)The soul is by nature in danger.

(c)If not saved by him, the soul will not be saved at all.

(2) that the soul is a great and invaluable treasure which is committed to him.

(a)No higher treasure can be committed to another;

(b)In connection with that the whole question of our happiness on earth and in heaven is entrusted to him, and all depends on his fidelity.

(3) it is done by the true Christian with the most entire confidence, so that the mind is at rest. The grounds of this confidence are:

(a)what is said of the mighty power of the Saviour;

(b)his promises that he will keep all who confide in him (compare the notes at John 10:27-29;

(c)experience - the fact that those who have trusted in him have found that he is able to keep them.

(4) this act of committing the soul, with all its interests, to the Saviour, is the true source of peace in the trials of life. This is so because:

(a)having done this, we feel that our great interests are secure. If the soul is safe, why need we be disturbed by the loss of health, or property, or other temporal comforts? Those are secondary things. A man who is shipwrecked, and who sees his son or daughter safe with him on the shore, will be little concerned that a casket of jewels fell overboard - however valuable it might be:

(b)All those trials will soon pass away, and he will be safe in heaven.

(c)These very things may further the great object - the salvation of the soul. A man‘s great interests may be more safe when in a prison than when in a palace; on a pallet of straw than on a bed of down; when constrained to say, “Give us this day our daily bread,” than when encompassed with the wealth of Croesus.

Against that day - The day of judgment - called “that day,” without anything further to designate it, because it is the great day; “the day for which all others days were made.” It seems to have been so much the object of thought and conversation among the early Christians, that the apostle supposed that he would be understood by merely referring to it as “that day;” that is, the day which they were always preaching about, and talking about, and thinking about.

Verse 13

Hold fast the form of sound words; - see the notes at 1 Timothy 1:3. On the Greek word here rendered “form,” see the notes at 1 Timothy 1:16, where it is rendered pattern. The word means a form, sketch, or imperfect delineation - an outline. Grotius says that it here means “an exemplar, but an exemplar fixed in the mind - an idea.” Calvin says that the command is that he should adhere to the doctrine which he had learned, not only in its substance, but in its form. Dr. Tillotson explains this as meaning the profession of faith which was made by Christians at baptism. There seems

to be an allusion to some summary or outline of truth which Paul had given to Timothy, though there is no evidence that it was written. Indeed, there is every presumption that, if it refers to such a summary, it was not committed to writing. If it had been, it would have been regarded as inspired, and would have taken its place in the canon of Scripture. It may be presumed that almost none of the sacred writings would have been more sacredly preserved than such a condensed summary of Christian truth. But there is no improbability in supposing that Paul, either at his ordination, or on some other occasion, may have stated the outlines of the Christian religion to Timothy, that he might have a clear and connected view of the subject. The passage, therefore, may be used as an argument for the propriety of some brief summary of doctrine as a matter of convenience, though not as having binding authority on the consciences of others. "Of sound words;" compare the notes at 1 Timothy 6:3. The Greek is the same in both places.

Which thou hast heard of me - This proves that he does not refer to a written creed, since what he refers to was something which he had heard.

In faith and love which is in Christ Jesus - Hold these truths with sincere faith in the Lord Jesus, and with that love which is the best evidence of attachment to him.

sa40

Verse 14

That good thing which was committed unto thee; - see the notes at 1 Timothy 6:20. The reference here in the phrase, "that good thing committed to thee," is to the sound Christian doctrine with which he had been intrusted, and which he was required to transmit to others.

Keep by the Holy Ghost - By the aid of the Holy Spirit. One of the best methods of preserving the knowledge and the love of truth is to cherish the influences of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 15

This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me - That is, in that part of Asia Minor of which Ephesus was the capital. The name Asia was often given particularly to that part of Asia Minor; see the notes at Acts 2:9; Acts 16:6. This passage proves that Timothy was somewhere in that region when this Epistle was written to him, for otherwise he could not be supposed to Know what is here said. When Paul says that "all" were turned away from him, he must use the

word in a general sense, for he immediately specifies one who had been faithful and kind to him.

Of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes - We know nothing of these individuals but what is here mentioned. It would seem that they were prominent persons, and those from whom the apostle had a right to expect other treatment. "The ecclesiastical traditions allege that they were of the seventy disciples, and in the end became followers of Simon Magus. We imagine that this is little more than conjecture." It is a sad thing when the only record made of a man - the only evidence which we have that he ever lived at all - is, that he turned away from a friend, or forsook the paths of true religion. And yet there are many men of whom the only thing to be remembered of them is, that they lived to do wrong.

Verse 16

The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus - The family of Onesiphorus - for so the word house is often used. He was himself still living 2 Timothy 1:18, but not improbably then absent from his home; compare the notes at 2 Timothy 4:19. He was evidently of Asia, and is the only one who is mentioned from that region who had showed the apostle kindness in his trials. He is mentioned only in this Epistle, and nothing more is known of him. The record is entirely honorable to him, and for his family the apostle felt a warm interest on account of the kindness which he had showed to him in prison. The ecclesiastical traditions also state that he was one of the seventy disciples, and was ultimately Bishop of Corone. But there is no evidence of this. There is much force in the remark of the Editor of the Pictorial Bible, that "the pretended lists of the 70 disciples seem to have been made out on the principle of including all the names incidentally mentioned in the sacred books, and not otherwise appropriated."

For he oft refreshed me - That is, showed me kindness, and ministered to my needs.

And was not ashamed of my chain - Was not ashamed to be known as a friend of one who was a prisoner on account of religion. Paul was bound with a chain when a prisoner at Rome; Philemon 1:13-14, Philemon 1:16; Colossians 4:3, Colossians 4:18; Philemon 1:10; see the notes at Acts 28:20.

Verse 17

But when he was in Rome - What was the employment of Onesiphorus is not known. It may have been that he was a merchant, and had occasion to visit Rome on business. At all events, he was at pains to search out the

apostle, and his attention was the more valuable because it cost him trouble to find him. It is not everyone, even among professors of religion, who in a great and splendid city would be at the trouble to search out a Christian brother, or even a minister, who was a prisoner, and endeavor to relieve his sorrows. This man, so kind to the great apostle, will be among those to whom the Saviour will say, at the final judgment, "I was in prison, and ye came unto me;" Matthew 25:36.

Verse 18

The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day - The day of judgment; notes at 2 Timothy 1:12. This proves that Onesiphorus was then alive, as Paul would not offer prayer for him if he was dead. The Papists, indeed, argue from this in favor of praying for the dead - assuminG from 2 Timothy 4:19, that Onesiphorus was then dead. But there is no evidence of that. The passage in 2 Timothy 4:19, would prove only that he was then absent from his family.

And in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus - This was the home of Onesiphorus, and his family was still there; 2 Timothy 4:19. When Paul was at Ephesus, it would seem that Onesiphorus had showed him great kindness. His affection for him did not change when he became a prisoner. True friendship, and especially that which is based on religion, will live in all the vicissitudes of fortune, whether we are in prosperity or adversity; whether in a home of plenty, or in a prison.

This chapter is full of interest, and may suggest many interesting reflections. We see:

(1) A holy man imprisoned and about to die. He had nearly finished his course, and had the prospect of soon departing.

(2) he was forsaken by his friends, and left to bear his sorrows alone. They on whom he might have relied, had left him; and to all his outward sufferings, there was added this, one of the keenest which his Master endured before him, that his friends forsook him, and left him to bear his sorrows alone.

(3) yet his mind is calm, and his faith in the gospel is unshaken. He expresses no regret that he had embraced the gospel; no sorrow that he had been so zealous in it as to bring these calamities upon himself. That gospel

he still loves, and his great solicitude is, that his young friend may never shrink from avowing it, though it may call him also to pass through scenes of persecution and sorrow.

(4) in the general apostasy, the turning away of those on whom he might have relied, it is refreshing and interesting, to find mention made of one unshaken friend; 2 Timothy 1:16. He never swerved in his affections. He had been kind to him in former years of comparative honor, and he did not leave him now in the dark day of adversity. It is always interesting to find true friendship in this world - friendship that survives all reverses, and that is willing to manifest itself when the great mass turn coldly away. There is such a thing as friendship, and there is such a thing as religion, and when they meet and mingle in the same heart, the one strengthens the other; and then neither persecution, nor poverty, nor chains, will prevent our doing good to him who is in prison and is about to die; see the notes at 2 Timothy 4:16.

2 TIMOTHY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

This chapter, 2 Timothy 2:1; to commit the great trust which he had received to faithful men 2 Timothy 2:2; to endure hardships like a good soldier 2 Timothy 2:3-7, and refers him:

(a)to the case of one who goes to war, whose great business it is to please him in whose service he is 2 Timothy 2:4;

(b)to the case of one who strives for a crown at the games 2 Timothy 2:5, and,

(c)to the husbandman who looks onward for the reward of his labor; 2 Timothy 2:6.

He then, in order to encourage him to be patient in enduring the trials to which he would be exposed, refers him.

(a)to the certainty of the truth of that religion in whose cause he would suffer 2 Timothy 2:8;

(b)to his own case, reminding him how much he had endured in that cause 2 Timothy 2:9-10;

(c)to the fact that our sufferings here will be crowned with certain glory hereafter 2 Timothy 2:11-12; and,

(d)to the assurance that the Lord Jesus will be faithful to all his promises to his people; 2 Timothy 2:13.

These things the apostle then exhorts him to press upon the hearts of others, that they might not waste their time in unprofitable pursuits, but might engage in the same great and arduous struggle for securing the reward; 2 Timothy 2:14. He then exhorts Timothy to study to perform his duties in such a way that he would not be ashamed and to avoid the unimportant strifes which were then raging; and to enforce this, he refers to a real case with which Timothy was acquainted - that of Hymeneus and Philetus, who, by unprofitable speculations, had been led to deny a fundamental doctrine of religion; 2 Timothy 2:15-18. Yet, Paul says, he should not be discouraged because some had been led into dangerous errors. The foundation of God remained firm. Those that were truly his were known, and would not apostatize; 2 Timothy 2:19. In illustration of

this, and to show that it was to be expected that all would not honor religion, the apostle refers to a house in which there were all sorts of vessels, some to honor and some to dishonor, and says that, if any one would endeavor to free himself from all that was base and impure, he would be a vessel meet for the use of the Master; 2 Timothy 2:20-21. To accomplish this, he gives Timothy various directions respecting his conduct. He was to flee from youthful lusts; he was to follow righteousness, faith, charity, and peace; he was to avoid foolish questions; he was to be an example of gentleness and meekness, and he was patiently to instruct those that were of a different character; 2 Timothy 2:22-26.

Verse 1

Thou therefore - In view of the fact stated in the previous chapter, that many had turned away from the apostle, and had forsaken the paths of truth.

Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus; - compare the notes at Ephesians 6:10. The meaning is, Be strong, relying on the grace which the Lord Jesus only can impart.

Verse 2

And the things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses - Margin, "by." Before, or in the presence of, many witnesses. Perhaps he refers to a solemn charge which he gave him, in the presence of the church, when he was ordained. It is by no means improbable that such a charge was given then to a newly ordained minister, as it is now. On such an occasion, the apostle would be likely to state a summary of Christian doctrine, - (compare the notes at 2 Timothy 1:13), - and to exhort Timothy to a faithful adherence to it.

The same commit thou to faithful men - In the same way as those things have been committed to you. The reference is undoubtedly to ordination to the ministerial office. Timothy was to see that those only were admitted to the ministry who were qualified to understand the truths of religion, and to communicate them to others. This is a clear warrant for ministers to set apart others to the same sacred office. It does not prove that the people are not at liberty to choose their own pastor, but only that those in the ministry are to set apart others to the same office with themselves. There is, doubtless, to be a "succession" of ministers in the church; but the true line of the "succession" is to be found in good men who are qualified to teach, and who have the spirit of Christ, and not merely in those who have been ordained.

Who shall be able to teach others also - On the qualifications of ministers, see the notes at 1 Timothy 3:2-7.

Verse 3

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ - Such hardships as a soldier is called to endure. The apostle supposes that a minister of the gospel might be called to endure hardships, and that it is reasonable that he should be as ready to do it as a soldier is. On the hardships which he endured himself, see the notes at 2 Corinthians 11:23-29. Soldiers often endure great privations. Taken from their homes and friends; exposed to cold, or heat, or storms, or fatiguing marches; sustained on coarse fare, or almost destitute of food, they are often compelled to endure as much as the human frame can bear, and often indeed, sink under their burdens, and die. If, for reward or their country‘s sake, they are willing to do this, the soldier of the cross should be willing to do it for his Saviour‘s sake, and for the good of the human race. Hence, let no man seek the office of the ministry as a place of ease. Let no one come into it merely to enjoy himself. Let no one enter it who is not prepared to lead a soldier‘s life and to welcome hardship and trial as his portion. He would make a bad soldier, who, at his enlistment, should make it a condition that he should be permitted to sleep on a bed of down, and always be well clothed and fed, and never exposed to peril, or compelled to pursue a wearisome march. Yet do not some men enter the ministry, making these the conditions? And would they enter the ministry on any other terms?

Verse 4

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life - Having alluded to the soldier, and stated one thing in which the Christian minister is to resemble him, another point of resemblance is suggested to the mind of the apostle. Neither the minister nor the soldier is to be encumbered with the affairs of this life, and the one should not be more than the other. This is always a condition in becoming a soldier. He gives up his own business during the time for which he is enlisted, and devotes himself to the service of his country. The farmer leaves his plow, and the mechanic his shop, and the merchant his store, and the student his books, and the lawyer his brief; and neither of them expect to pursue these things while engaged in the service of their country. It would be wholly impracticable to carry on the plans of a campaign, if each one of these classes should undertake to prosecute his private business. See this fully

illustrated from the Rules of War among the Romans, by Grotius, "in loc." Roman soldiers were not allowed to marry, or to engage in any husbandry or trade; and they were forbidden to act as tutors to any person, or curators to any man's estate, or proctors in the cause of other men. The general principle was, that they were excluded from those relations, agencies, and engagements, which it was thought would divert their minds from that which was to be the sole object of pursuit. So with the ministers of the gospel. It is equally improper for them to "entangle" themselves with the business of a farm or plantation; with plans of speculation and gain, and with any purpose of worldly aggrandizement. The minister of the gospel accomplishes the design of his appointment only when he can say in sincerity, that he "is not entangled with the affairs of this life;" compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:25-27.

That he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier - That is, him who has enlisted him, or in whose employ he is. His great object is to approve himself to him. It is not to pursue his own plans, or to have his own will, or to accumulate property or fame for himself. His will is absorbed in the will of his commander, and his purpose is accomplished if he meet with his approbation. Nowhere else is it so true that the will of one becomes lost in that of another, as in the case of the soldier. In an army it is contemplated that there shall be but one mind, one heart, one purpose - that of the commander; and that the whole army shall be as obedient to that as the members of the human body are to the one will that controls all. The application of this is obvious. The grand purpose of the minister of the gospel is to please Christ. He is to pursue no separate plans, and to have no separate will, of his own; and it is contemplated that the whole "Corps" of Christian ministers and members of the churches shall be as entirely subordinate to the will of Christ, as an army is to the orders of its chief.

Verse 5

And if a man also strive for masteries - As in the Grecian games. See this favorite illustration of Paul explained in the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:24 ff.

Yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully - In conformity with the rules of the games. See Grotius, in loc. No one could obtain the prize unless he had complied with all the laws of the games, and had thus given to those with whom he contended, a fair opportunity to succeed. "In those contests, he who transgressed the rules in the least matter, not only failed of

the prize, even though the apparent victor, but was sometimes disgraced and punished." Pictorial Bible. So the apostle here represents the Christian minister as engaged in a struggle or conflict for the crown. He says that he could not hope to win it unless he should comply with all the laws by which it is conferred; unless he should subdue every improper propensity, and make an effort like that evinced by the combatants at the Olympic games; compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:26-27.

Verse 6

The husbandman that laboureth - The margin is, "labouring first, must be partaker." The idea, according to the translation in the text, is, that there is a fitness or propriety (δει dei) that the man who cultivates the earth, should enjoy the fruits of his labor. See the same image explained in the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:10. But if this be the meaning here, it is not easy to see why the apostle introduces it. According to the marginal reading, the word "first" is introduced in connection with the word "labour" - "labouring first, must be partaker." That is, it is a great law that the husbandman must work before be receives a harvest. This sense will accord with the purpose of the apostle. It was to remind Timothy that labor must precede reward; that if a man would reap, he must sow; that he could hope for no fruits, unless he toiled for them. The point was not that the husbandman would be the first one who would partake of the fruits; but that he must first labor before he obtained the reward. Thus understood, this would be an encouragement to Timothy to persevere in his toils, looking onward to the reward. The Greek will bear this construction, though it is not the most obvious one.

Verse 7

Consider what I say; - see the notes at 1 Timothy 4:15. The sense is "Think of the condition of the soldier, and the principles on which he is enlisted; think of the aspirant for the crown in the Grecian games; think of the farmer, patiently toiling in the prospect of the distant harvest; and then go to your work with a similar spirit." These things are worth attention. When the minister of the gospel thinks of his hardships, of his struggles against an evil world, and of his arduous and constant discouraging toil, let him think of the soldier, of the man who struggles for this world‘s honors, and of the patient farmer - AND be content. How patiently do they bear all, and yet for what inferior rewards!

And the Lord give thee understanding in all things - Enable you to see the force of these considerations, and to apply them to your own case. Such are often the discouragements of the ministry; so prone is the mind to despondency, that we need the help of the Lord to enable us to apply the most obvious considerations, and to derive support from the most plain and simple truths and promises.

Verse 8

Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead - Or rather, perhaps, "Remember Jesus Christ; him who was raised from the dead." The idea seems not to be, as our translators supposed, that he was to reflect on the fact that he was raised from the dead; but rather that he was to think of the Saviour himself. "Think of the Saviour, now raised up from the dead after all the sorrows of this life, and let this encourage you to bear your trials." There is nothing better fitted to enable us to endure the labors and trials of this life, than to think of the Saviour. On the phrase "seed of David," see the notes at Romans 1:3.

According to my gospel - The gospel which I preach; see the notes at 2 Thessalonians 2:14.

Verse 9

Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil-doer - as if I were a violator of the laws. That is, I am treated as if I were a criminal.

Even unto bonds - As if I were one of the words kind of malefactors; see the notes at Ephesians 6:20. During the apostle's first imprisonment at Rome, he was permitted to "dwell in his own hired house," though guarded by a soldier, and probably chained to him; see the notes at Acts 28:16, Acts 28:30. What was his condition in his second imprisonment, during which this Epistle was written, we have no means of knowing with certainty. It is probable, however, that he was subjected to much more rigid treatment than he had been in the first instance. The tradition is, that he and Peter were together in the Mamertine prison at Rome; and the place is still shown in which it is said that they were confined. The Mamertine prisons are of great antiquity. According to Livy, they were constructed by Ancus Martius, and enlarged by Servius Tullius. The lower prison is supposed to have been once a quarry, and to have been at one time occupied as a granary. These prisons are on the descent of the Capitoline Mount, toward the Forum. They consist of two apartments, one over the other, built with large, uncemented stones. There is no entrance to either, except by a small aperture in the roof,

and by a small hole in the upper floor, leading to the cell below, without any staircase to either. The upper prison is twenty-seven feet long, by twenty wide; the lower one is elliptical, and measures twenty feet by ten. In the lower one is a small spring, which is said at Rome to have arisen at the command of Peter, to enable him to baptize his keepers, Processus and Martianus, with 47 companions, whom he converted. No certain reliance can be placed on any part of this tradition, though in itself there is no improbability in supposing that these prisons may have been used for confining Christians, and the apostle Paul among others. Dr. Burton says that a more horrible place for the confinement of a human being can scarcely be conceived.

But the word of God is not bound - This is one of Paul‘s happy turns of thought; compare the notes at Acts 26:29. The meaning is plain. The gospel was prospered. that could not be lettered and imprisoned. It circulated with freedom. even when he who was appointed to preach it was in chains; see Philemon 1:13-14. As this was the great matter, his own imprisonment was of comparatively little consequence. What may befall us is of secondary importance. The grand thing is the triumph of truth on the earth; and well may we bear privations and sorrows, if the gospel moves on in triumph.

Verse 10

Therefore I endure all things for the elect‘s sakes; - see the notes at 2 Corinthians 1:6. The sense is, What I suffer is in the cause of the church, spoken of here, as it is often, as chosen, or elected; see the notes at Ephesians 1:4.

That they may also obtain the salvation, … - Their salvation, though they, were elected, could not be secured without proper efforts. The meaning of the apostle here is, that he was willing to suffer if he might save others; and any one ought to be willing to suffer in order to secure the salvation of the elect - for it was an object for which the Redeemer was willing to lay down his life.

Verse 11

It is a faithful saying - Or, rather, that which he was about to say was worthy of entire credence and profound attention; see the notes at 1 Timothy 1:15. The object is to encourage Timothy to bear trials by the hope of salvation.

For if we be dead with him - see the notes at Romans 6:8.

We shall also live with him - This was a sort of maxim, or a settled point, which is often referred to in the Bible; see the Romans 6:3-5 notes; John 11:25 note; 1 Thessalonians 4:14 note.

Verse 12

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him - The meaning is, that the members will be treated as the Head is. We become united with him by faith, and, if we share his treatment on earth, we shall share his triumphs in heaven; see the notes at Romans 8:17.

If we deny him, he also will deny us; - see the notes at Matthew 10:32-33.

Verse 13

If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful - This cannot mean that, if we live in sin, he will certainly save us, as if he had made any promise to the elect, or formed any purpose that he would save them; whatever might be their conduct; because:

(1) he had just said that if we deny him he will deny us; and,

(2) there is no such promise in the Bible, and no such purpose has been formed. The promise is, that be that is a believer shall be saved, and there is no purpose to save any but such as lead holy lives. The meaning must be, that if we are unbelieving and unfaithful, Christ will remain true to his word, and we cannot hope to be saved. The object of the apostle evidently is, to excite Timothy to fidelity in the performance of duty, and to encourage him to bear trials, by the assurance that we cannot hope to escape if we are not faithful to the cause of the Saviour. This interpretation accords with the design which he had in view.

He cannot deny himself - Implying that it would be a denial of his very nature to save those who are unfaithful. He is holy; and how can he save one who is unholy? His very nature is purity; and how can he save one who has no purity? Let no one, then, suppose that, because he is elected, he is safe, if he lives in sin. The electing purpose of God, indeed, makes salvation sure; but it is only for those who lead righteous lives. Nothing would be mere dishonorable for God than to resolve to save a man that lived habitually in sin; and if that were the doctrine of election, it would deserve all the opprobrium that has ever been heaped upon it.

Verse 14

Of these things put them in remembrance - These great principles in regard to the kingdom of Christ. They would be as useful to others as they were for Timothy, to whom they were specially addressed.

Charging them before the Lord - In the presence of the Lord, implying that it was a very important matter; see the notes at 1 Timothy 1:18.

That they strive not about words to no profit; - see the notes at 1 Timothy 1:6; 1 Timothy 6:4.

But to the subverting of the hearers - Turning them away from the simplicity of faith. It is rare, indeed, that a religious controversy does not produce this effect, and this is commonly the case, where, as often happens, the matter in dispute is of little importance.

Verse 15

Study to show thyself approved unto God - Give diligence 2 Peter 2:10, or make an effort so to discharge the duties of the ministerial office as to meet the divine approbation. The object of the ministry is not to please men. Such doctrines should be preached, and such plans formed, and such a manner of life pursued, as God will approve. To do this demands study or care - for there are many temptations to the opposite course; there are many things the tendency of which is to lead a minister to seek popular favor rather than the divine approval. If any man please God, it will be as the result of deliberate intention and a careful life.

A workman that needeth not to be ashamed - A man faithfully performing his duty, so that when he looks over what he has done, he may not blush.

Rightly dividing the word of truth - The word here rendered "rightly dividing," occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, "to cut straight, to divide right;" and the allusion here may be to a steward who makes a proper distribution to each one under his care of such things as his office and their necessities require; compare the notes at Matthew 13:52. Some have supposed that there is an allusion here to the Jewish priest, cutting or dividing the sacrifice into proper parts; others, that the allusion is to the scribes dividing the law into sections; others, to a carver distributing food to the guests at a feast. Robinson (Lexicon) renders it, "rightly proceeding as to the word of truth;" that is, rightfully and skillfully teaching the word of truth. The idea seems to be, that the minister of the gospel is to make a proper distribution of that word, adapting his

instructions to the circumstances and wants of his hearers, and giving to each that which will be fitted to nourish the soul for heaven.

Verse 16

But shun profane and vain babblings, - see the notes at 1 Timothy 6:20.

For they will increase unto more ungodliness - Their tendency is to alienate the soul from God, and to lead to impiety. Such kinds of disputation are not merely a waste of time, they are productive of positive mischief. A man fond of contention in religious things is seldom one who has much love for the practical duties of piety, or any very deep sense of the distinction between right and wrong. You will not usually look for him in the place of prayer, nor can you expect his aid in the conversion of sinners, nor will you find that he has any very strict views of religious obligation.

Verse 17

And their word - The word, or the discourses of those who love vain and idle disputations.

Will eat as doth a canker - Margin, "gangrene." This word - γάγγραινα gangraina- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is derived from γραιω *graiō* γραινω *grainō* to devour, corrode," and means "gangrene" or "mortification" - the death of a part, spreading, unless arrested, by degrees over the whole body. The words rendered "will eat," mean "will have nutriment;" that is, will spread over and consume the healthful parts. It will not merely destroy the parts immediately affected, but will extend into the surrounding healthy parts and destroy them also. So it is with erroneous doctrines. They will not merely eat out the truth in the particular matter to which they refer, but they will also spread over and corrupt other truths. The doctrines of religion are closely connected, and are dependent on each other - like the different parts of the human body. One cannot be corrupted without affecting those adjacent to it, and unless checked, the corruption will soon spread over the whole.

Of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus - In regard to Hymenaeus, see the notes at 1 Timothy 1:20. Of Philetus nothing more is known. They have gained an undesirable immortality, destined to be known to the end of time only as the advocates of error.

Verse 18

Who concerning the truth have erred - To what extent they had erred is unknown. Paul mentions only one point - that pertaining to the

resurrection; but says that this was like a gangrene. It would certainly, unless checked, destroy all the other doctrines of religion. No man can safely hold a single error, any more than he can safely have one part of his body in a state of mortification.

Saying that the resurrection is past already - It is not known in what form they held this opinion. It may have been, as Augustine supposes, that they taught that there was no resurrection but that which occurs in the soul when it is recovered from the death of sin, and made to live anew. Or it may be that they held that those who had died had experienced all the resurrection which they ever would, by passing into another state, and receiving at death a spiritual body fitted to their mode of being in the heavenly world. Whatever was the form of the opinion, the apostle regarded it as a most dangerous error, for just views of the resurrection undoubtedly lie at the foundation of correct apprehensions of the Christian system; compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 15:12-19.

And overthrow the faith of some - That is, on this point, and as would appear on all the correlative subjects of Christian belief; compare 1 Timothy 1:19-20.

Verse 19

Nevertheless the foundation of God is sure - Margin, "steady." The meaning is, that though some had been turned away by the arts of these errorists, yet the foundation of the church which God had laid remained firm; compare Ephesians 2:20, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." As long as this foundation remained firm, there was no reason to be troubled from the few instances of apostasy which had occurred; compare Psalm 11:3. It is not uncommon to compare the church to a building erected on a solid foundation; Ephesians 2:20-21; 1 Corinthians 3:9-10; Matthew 16:18.

Having this seal - Or rather a seal with this inscription. The word "seal" is sometimes used to denote the instrument by which an impression is made, and sometimes the impression or inscription itself. A seal is used for security Matthew 27:66, or as a mark of genuineness; Revelation 9:4. The seal here is one that was affixed to the foundation, and seems to refer to some inscription on the foundation-stone which always remained there, and which denoted the character and design of the edifice. The allusion is to the custom, in rearing an edifice, of inscribing the name of the builder and the design of the edifice on the cornerstone. See Rosenmuller, *Alte undneue*

Morgenland, No. 405. So the church of Christ is a building reared by the hands of God. Its foundation has been firmly and securely laid, and on that foundation there is an inscription always remaining which determines the character of the edifice.

The Lord knoweth them that are his - This is one of the inscriptions on the foundation-stone of the church, which seems to mark the character of the building. It always stands there, no matter who apostatizes. It is at the same time a fearful inscription - showing that no one can deceive God; that he is intimately acquainted with all who enter that building; and that in the multitudes which enter there, the friends and the foes of God are intimately known. He can separate his own friends from all others, and his constant care will be extended to all who are truly his own, to keep them from falling. This has the appearance of being a quotation, but no such passage is found in the Old Testament in so many words. In Nahum 1:7, the following words are found: "And he knoweth them that trust in him;" and it is possible that Paul may have had that in his eye; but it is not necessary to suppose that he designed it as a quotation. A phrase somewhat similar to this is found in 1 Numbers 16:5, "the Lord will show who are his," rendered in the Septuagint, "God knoweth who are his;" and Whitby supposes that this is the passage referred to. But whether Paul had these passages in view or not, it is clear that he meant to say that it was one of the fundamental things in religion, that God knew who were his own people, and that he would preserve them from the danger of making shipwreck of their faith.

And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity - This is the other seal or inscription which is made on the foundation which God has laid. The foundation has two inscriptions - the first implying that God knows all who are his own people; the other, that all who are his professed people should depart from evil. This is not found in so many words in the Old Testament, and, like the former, it is not to be regarded as a quotation. The meaning is, that it is an elementary principle in the true church, that all who become members of it should lead holy lives. It was also true that they would lead holy lives, and amidst all the defections of errorists, and all their attempts to draw away others from the true faith, those might be known to be the true people of God who did avoid evil.

Verse 20

But in a great house - Still keeping up the comparison of the church with a building. The idea is, that the church is a large edifice, and that in

such a building we are not to expect entire uniformity in all the articles which it contains.

There are not only vessels of gold and of silver, … - You are not to expect to find all the articles of furniture alike, or all made of the same material. Variety in the form, and use, and material, is necessary in furnishing such a house.

And some to honour, and some to dishonour - Some to most honorable uses - as drinking vessels, and vessels to contain costly viands, and some for the less honorable purposes connected with cooking, etc. The same thing is to be expected in the church. See this idea illustrated at greater length under another figure in the notes at 1 Corinthians 12:14-26; compare the notes, Romans 9:21. The application here seems to be, that in the church it is to be presumed that there will be a great variety of gifts and attainments, and that we are no more to expect that all will be alike, than we are that all the vessels in a large house will be made of gold.

Verse 21

If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour - If a man "cleanse" or "purify" himself; compare the notes on John 15:2. The word "these" refers, here, to the persons represented by the vessels of wood and of earth - the vessels made to dishonor, as mentioned in the previous verse 2 Timothy 2:20. The idea is, that if one would preserve himself from the corrupting influence of such men, he would be fitted to be a vessel of honor, or to be employed in the most useful and honorable service in the cause of his Master. On the word "vessel," see the notes at Acts 9:15.

And meet for the master's use - Suitable to be employed by the Lord Jesus in promoting his work on earth.

Verse 22

Flee also youthful lusts - Such passions as youth are subject to. On the word "flee," and the pertinency of its use in such a connection, see the notes at 1 Corinthians 6:18. Paul felt that Timothy, then a young man, was subject to the same passions as other young men; and hence, his repeated cautions to him to avoid all those things, arising from his youth, which might be the occasion of scandal; compare the notes at 1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Timothy 5:2. It is to be remembered that this Epistle is applicable to other ministers, as well as to Timothy; and, to a young man in the ministry, no counsel could be more appropriate than to "flee from youthful lusts;" not to indulge for a

moment in those corrupt passions to which youth are subject, but to cultivate the pure and sober virtues which become the ministerial office.

But follow righteousness, … - compare the notes at Hebrews 12:14. The general meaning here is, that he was to practice all that is good and virtuous. He was to practice righteousness, or justice and equity, in all his dealings with men; faith, or fidelity in his duties; charity, or love to all men (see the notes at 1 Corinthians 1:2; compare Acts 9:11. In all his social contact with them, Timothy was to manifest the virtues above recommended. But not with them alone. It would be incumbent on him to exhibit the same virtues in his intercourse with all.

Verse 23

But foolish and unlearned questions avoid; - see the notes at 2 Timothy 2:16; compare the notes at 1 Timothy 1:4, 1 Timothy 1:6; 1 Timothy 4:7. The word "unlearned," here, means "trifling; that which does not tend to edification; stupid." The Greeks and the Hebrews were greatly given to controversies of various kinds, and many of the questions discussed pertained to points which could not be settled, or which, if settled, were of no importance. Such has been the character of no small part of the disputes which have agitated the world. Paul correctly says that the only effect of such disputes is to engender harsh contention. Points of real importance can be discussed with no injury to the temper; but people cannot safely dispute about trifles.

Verse 24

And the servant of the Lord - Referring here primarily to the Christian minister, but applicable to all Christians; for all profess to be the servants of the Lord.

Must not strive - He may calmly inquire after truth; he may discuss points of morals, or theology, if he will do it with a proper spirit; he may "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints" Jude 1:3; but he may not do that which is here mentioned as strife. The Greek word -μάχεσθαι machesthai- commonly denotes, "to fight, to make war, to contend." In John 6:52; Acts 7:26; 2 Timothy 2:24;, it is rendered "strove," and "strive;" in James 4:2, "fight." It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. The meaning is, that the servant of Christ should be a man of peace. He should not indulge in the feelings which commonly give rise to contention, and which commonly characterize it. He should not struggle for mere victory, even when endeavoring to maintain truth; but should do this,

in all cases, with a kind spirit, and a mild temper; with entire candor; with nothing designed to provoke and irritate an adversary; and so that, whatever may be the result of the discussion, "the bond of peace" may, if possible, be preserved; compare the notes at Romans 12:18.

But be gentle unto all men; - see the notes at 1 Thessalonians 2:7. The word rendered "gentle," does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means that the Christian minister is to be meek and mild toward all, not disputatious and quarrelsome.

Apt to teach; - see the notes at 1 Timothy 3:2.

Patient - Margin, "forbearing." The Greek word here used does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means, patient under evils and injuries. Robinson, Lexicon. Compare the Ephesians 4:2 note; Colossians 3:13 note.

Verse 25

In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves - That is, those who embrace error, and array themselves against the truth. We are not to become angry with such persons, and denounce them at once as heretics. We are not to hold them up to public reproach and scorn; but we are to set about the business of patiently "instructing them." Their grand difficulty, it is supposed in this direction, is, that they are ignorant of the truth. Our business with them is, "calmly to show them what the truth is." If they are angry, we are not to be. If they oppose the truth, we are still calmly to state it to them. If they are slow to see it, we are not to become weary or impatient. Nor, if they do not embrace it at all, are we to become angry with them, and denounce them. We may pity them, but we need not use hard words. This is the apostolic precept about the way of treating those who are in error; and can any one fail to see its beauty and propriety? Let it be remembered, also, that this is not only beautiful and proper in itself; it is the wiseST course, if we would bring others over to our opinions. You are not likely to convince a man that you are right, and that he is wrong, if you first make him angry; nor are you very likely to do it, if you enter into harsh contention. You then put him on his guard; you make him a party, and, from self-respect, or pride, or anger, he will endeavor to defend his own opinions, and will not yield to yours. "Meekness" and "gentleness" are the very best things, if you wish to convince another that he is wrong. With his heart first, and then modestly and kindly show him "what the truth is," in as few words, and with as unassuming a spirit, as possible, "and you have him."

If God peradventure will give them repentance, … - Give them such a view of the error which they have embraced, and such regret for having embraced it, that they shall be willing to admit the truth. After all our care in teaching others the truth, our only dependence is on God for its success. We cannot be absolutely certain that they will see their error; we cannot rely certainly on any power which argument will have; we can only hope that God may show them their error, and enable them to see and embrace the truth; compare Acts 11:18. The word rendered "peradventure," here - μήποτε mēpote- means, usually, "not even, never;" and then, "that never, lest ever" - the same as "lest perhaps." It is translated "lest at any time," Matthew 4:6; Matthew 5:25; Matthew 13:15; Mark 4:12; Luke 21:34; "lest," Matt, Luke 7:6; Luke 13:29; Luke 15:32; "et al.: lest haply," Luke 14:12; Acts 5:39. It does not imply that there was any CHance about what is said, but rather that there was uncertainty in the mind of the speaker, and that there was need of caution LesT something should occur; or, that anything was done, or should be done, to prevent something from happening.

It is not used elsewhere in the New Testament in the sense which our translators, and all the critics, so far as I have examined, give to it here - as implying A hope that God would give them repentance, etc. But I may be permitted to suggest another interpretation, which will accord with the uniform meaning of the word in the New Testament, and which will refer the matter to those who had embraced the error, and not to God. It is this: "In meekness instructing ‹those that oppose themselves‘ (ἀντιδιατιθεμένους antidiatithemenous) ‹lest‘ - μήποτε mēpote- God should give them repentance, and they should recover themselves out of the snare of the devil," etc. That is, they put themselves in this posture of opposition so that they shall not be brought to repentance, and recover themselves. They do it with a precautionary view that they may not be thus brought to repentance, and be recovered to God. They take this position of opposition to the truth, intending not to be converted; and this is the reason why they are not converted.

Verse 26

And that they may recover themselves - Margin, "awake." The word which is rendered "recover" in the text, and "awake" in the margin - ἀνανήψωσιν ananēpsōsin- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It

properly means, to become sober again, as from inebriation; to awake from a deep sleep, and then, to come to a right mind, as one does who is aroused from a state of inebriety, or from sleep. The representation in this part of the verse implies that, while under the influence of error, they were like a man intoxicated, or like one in deep slumber. From this state they were to be roused as one is from sleep, or as a man is recovered from the stupor and dullness of intoxication.

Out of the snare of the devil - The snare which the devil has spread for them, and in which they have become entangled. There is a little confusion of metaphor here, since, in the first part of the verse, they are represented as asleep, or intoxicated; and, here, as taken in a snare. Yet the general idea is clear. In one part of the verse, the influence of error is represented as producing sleep, or stupor; in the other, as being taken in a snare, or net; and, in both, the idea is, that an effort was to be made that they might be rescued from this perilous condition.

Who are taken captive by him at his will - Margin, "alive." The Greek word means, properly, to take alive; and then, to take captive, to win over Luke 5:10; and then, to ensnare, or seduce. Here it means that they had been ensnared by the arts of Satan "unto (εἰς eis) his will;" that is, they were so influenced by him, that they complied with his will. Another interpretation of this passage should be mentioned here, by which it is proposed to avoid the incongruousness of the metaphor of "awaking" one from a "snare." It is adopted by Doddridge, and is suggested also by Burder, as quoted by Rosenmuller, "A. u. n. Morgenland." According to this, the reference is to an artifice of fowlers, to scatter seeds impregnated with some intoxicating drugs, intended to lay birds asleep, that they may draw the snare over them more securely. There can be no doubt that such arts were practiced, and it is possible that Paul may have alluded to it. Whatever is the allusion, the general idea is clear. It is an affecting representation of those who have fallen into error. They are in a deep slumber. They are as if under the fatal influence of some stupefying potion. They are like birds taken alive in this state, and at the mercy of the fowler. They will remain in this condition, unless they shall be roused by the mercy of God; and it is the business of the ministers of religion to carry to them that gospel call, which God is accustomed to bless in showing them their danger. That message should be continually sounded in the ears of the sinner, with the prayer and the hope that God will make it the means of arousing him to seek his salvation.

2 TIMOTHY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

In the first part of this chapter 2 Timothy 3:1-8, Paul reminds Timothy of the great apostasy which was to be expected in the church, and states some of the characteristics of it. In 2 Timothy 3:9, he says that that apostasy would not always continue; but would be at some time arrested, and so arrested as to show to all men the folly of those who were concerned in it. In 2 Timothy 3:11-12, he refers Timothy to his own manner of life in the midst of persecutions, as an encouragement to him to bear the trials which might be expected to occur to him in a similar manner. "Perilous times" were to come, and Timothy might be expected to be called to pass through trials similar to those which Paul himself had experienced. in those times the remembrance of his example would be invaluable. In 2 Timothy 3:12-13, he assures Timothy that persecutions and trials were to be expected by all who aimed to lead holy lives, and that it was as certainly to be expected that evil men would become worse and worse. And in 2 Timothy 3:14-17, he exhorts him to be steadfast in maintaining the truth; and, to encourage him to do this, reminds him of his early training in the Holy Scriptures, and of the value of those Scriptures. To the Scriptures he might repair in all times of trial, and find support in the divine promises. What he had learned there was the inspired truth of God, and was able to make him wise, and to furnish him abundantly for all that he was to do or to suffer.

Verse 1

This know also - The "object" of this reference to the perilous times which were to occur, was evidently to show the necessity of using every precaution to preserve the purity of the church, from the fact that such sad scenes were to open upon it. The apostle had dwelt upon this subject in his First Epistle to Timothy 1 Timothy 4:1 note, and Hebrews 1:2 note.

Perilous times shall come - Times of danger, of persecution, and of trial. On the general meaning of this passage, and the general characteristics of those times, the reader may consult the 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 notes, and 1 Timothy 4:1-3 notes. There can be no doubt that in all these passages the apostle refers to the same events.

Verse 2

For men shall be lovers of their own selves - It shall be one of the characteristics of those times that men shall be eminently selfish - evidently

under the garb of religion; 2 Timothy 3:5. The word here used - φίλαυτος philautos- does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means a lover of oneself, "selfish." Such a love of self as to lead us to secure our salvation, is proper. But this interferes with the rights and happiness of no other persons. The selfishness which is condemned, is that regard to our own interests which interferes with the rights and comforts of others; which makes self the central and leading object of living; and which tramples on all that would interfere with that. As such, it is a base, and hateful, and narrow passion; but it has been so common in the world that no one can doubt the correctness of the prophecy of the apostle that it would exist "in the last times."

Covetous - Greek, Lovers of silver; i. e., of money; Luke 6:14; see the notes at 1 Timothy 6:20.

Boasters - see the notes at Romans 1:30.

Proud - see the notes at Romans 1:30.

Blasphemers - see the notes at Matthew 9:3.

Disobedient to parents - see the notes at Romans 1:30.

Unthankful - see Luke 6:35. The word here used occurs in the New Testament only in these two places. Ingratitude has always been regarded as one of the worst of crimes. It is said here that it would characterize that wicked age of which the apostle speaks, and its prevalence would, as it always does, indicate a decline of religion. Religion makes us grateful to every benefactor - to God, and to man.

Unholy - see the notes at 1 Timothy 1:9.

Verse 3

Without natural affection - see the notes at Romans 1:31.

Trucebreakers - The same word in Romans 1:31, is rendered "implacable;" see the notes at that verse. It properly means "without treaty;" that is, those who are averse to any treaty or compact. It may thus refer to those who are unwilling to enter into any agreement; that is, either those who are unwilling to be reconciled to others when there is a variance - implacable; or those who disregard treaties or agreements. In either case, this marks a very corrupt condition of society. Nothing would be more indicative of the lowest state of degradation, than that in which all compacts and agreements were utterly disregarded.

False accusers - Margin, "makebates." The word "makebate" means one who excites contentions and quarrels. Webster. The Greek here is

διάβολοι diaboloi- "devils" - the primitive meaning of which is, "calumniator, slanderer, accuser;" compare the notes at 1 Timothy 3:11, where the word is rendered "slanderers."

Incontinent - 1 Corinthians 7:5. Literally, "without strength;" that is, without strength to resist the solicitations of passion, or who readily yield to it.

Fierce - The Greek word used here - ἀνήμερος anēmeros- does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means "ungentle, harsh, severe," and is the opposite of gentleness and mildness. Religion produces gentleness; the want of it makes men rough, harsh, cruel; compare the notes at 2 Timothy 2:24.

Despisers of those that are good - In Titus 1:8, it is said of a bishop that he must be "a lover of good men." This, in every condition of life, is a virtue, and hence, the opposite of it is here set down as one of the characteristics of that evil age of which the apostle speaks.

Verse 4

Traitors - This word is used in the New Testament only here and in Luke 6:16; Acts 7:52. It means any one who betrays - whether it be a friend or his country. Treason has been in all ages regarded as one of the worst crimes that man can commit.

Heady - The same word in Acts 19:36, is rendered rashly. It occurs only there and in this place in the New Testament. It properly means "falling forwards; prone, inclined, ready to do anything; then precipitate, headlong, rash." It is opposed to that which is deliberate and calm, and here means that men would be ready to do anything without deliberation, or concern for the consequences. They would engage in enterprises which would only disturb society, or prove their own ruin.

High-minded - Literally, "puffed up;" compare the notes at 1 Timothy 3:6, where the same word is rendered "lifted up with pride." The meaning is, that they would be inflated with pride or self-conceit.

Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God - That is, of sensual pleasures, or vain amusements. This has been, and is, the characteristic of a great part of the world, and has often distinguished even many who profess religion. Of a large portion of mankind it may be said that this is their characteristic, that they live for pleasure; they have no serious pursuits; they brook no restraints which interfere with their amusements, and they greatly

prefer the pleasures to be found in the gay assembly, in the ball-room, or in the place of low dissipation, to the friendship of their Creator.

Verse 5

Having a form of godliness - That is, they profess religion, or are in connection with the church. This shows that the apostle referred to some great corruption in the church; and there can be little doubt that he had his eye on the same great apostasy to which he refers in 2 John 1:10-11; see the notes at 2 Corinthians 6:17.

Verse 6

For of this sort are they which creep into houses - Who go slyly and insidiously into families. They are not open and manly in endeavoring to propagate their views, but they endeavor by their address to ingratiate themselves first with weak women, and through them to influence men; compare Titus 1:11. The word translated "creep into," is rendered by Doddridge, "insinuate themselves;" by Bloomfield, "wind their way into," in the manner of serpents; by Bretschneider, "deceitfully enter;" by Robinson and Passow," go in, enter in." It is not certain that the idea of deceit or cunning is contained in this "word," yet the whole complexion of the passage implies that they made their way by art and deceitful tricks.

And lead captive silly women - One of the tricks always played by the advocates of error, and one of the ways by which they seek to promote their purposes. Satan began his work of temptation with Eve rather than with Adam, and the advocates of error usually follow his example. There are always weak-minded women enough in any community to give an opportunity of practicing these arts, and often the aims of the impostor and deceiver can be best secured by appealing to them. Such women are easily flattered; they are charmed by the graceful manners of religious instructors; they lend a willing ear to anything that has the appearance of religion, and their hearts are open to anything that promises to advance the welfare of the world. At the same time, they are just such persons as the propagators of error can rely upon. They have leisure; they have wealth; they are busy; they move about in society, and by their activity they obtain an influence to which they are by no means entitled by their piety or talents. There are, indeed, very many women in the world who cannot be so easily led away as men; but it cannot be denied also that there are those who are just adapted to the purposes of such as seek to spread plausible error. The word rendered "silly women," means properly "little women," and then "weak women."

Laden with sins - With so many sins that they seem to be "burdened" with them. The idea is, that they are under the influence of sinful desires and propensities, and hence, are better adapted to the purposes of deceivers.

Led away with divers lusts - With various kinds of passions or desires - ἐπιθυμίας epithumias- such as pride, vanity, the love of novelty, or a susceptibility to flattery, so as to make them an easy prey to deceivers.

Verse 7

Ever learning - That is, these "silly women;" for so the Greek demands. The idea is, that they seeM to be disciples. They put themselves wholly under the care of these professedly religious teachers, but they never acquire the true knowledge of the way of salvation.

And never able to come to the knowledge of the truth - They may learn many things, but the true nature of religion they do not learn. There are many such persons in the world, who, whatever attention they may pay to religion, never understand its nature. Many obtain much speculative acquaintance with the "doctrines" of Christianity, but never become savingly acquainted with the system; many study the constitution and government of the church, but remain strangers to practical piety; many become familiar with the various philosophical theories of religion, but never become truly acquainted with what religion is; and many embrace visionary theories, who never show that they are influenced by the spirit of the gospel. Nothing is more common than for persons to be very busy and active in religion, and even to "learn" many things about it, who still remain strangers to the saving power of the gospel.

Verse 8

Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses - The names of these two men are not elsewhere mentioned in the Bible. They are supposed to have been two of the magicians who resisted Moses (Exodus 7:11, et al.), and who opposed their miracles to those of Moses and Aaron. It is not certain where the apostle obtained their names; but they are frequently mentioned by the Hebrew writers, and also by other writers; so that there can be no reasonable doubt that their names were correctly handed down by tradition. Nothing is more probable than that the names of the more distinguished magicians who attempted to imitate the miracles of Moses, would be preserved by tradition; and though they are not mentioned by Moses himself, and the Jews have told many ridiculous stories respecting them, yet this should not lead us to doubt the truth of the tradition

respecting their names. A full collection of the Jewish statements in regard to them may be found in Wetstein, in loc.

They are also mentioned by Pliny, Nat. Hist. 30:7; and by Numenius, the philosopher, as quoted by Eusebius, 9:8, and Origen, against Celsus, p. 199. See Wetstein. By the rabbinical writers, they are sometimes mentioned as Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses in Egypt, and sometimes as the sons of Balaam. The more common account is, that they were the princes of the Egyptian magicians. One of the Jewish rabbins represents them as having been convinced by the miracles of Moses, and as having become converts to the Hebrew religion. There is no reason to doubt that these were in fact the leading men who opposed Moses in Egypt, by attempting to work counter-miracles. The point of the remark of the apostle here, is, that they resisted Moses by attempting to imitate his miracles, thus neutralizing the evidence that he was sent from God. In like manner, the persons here referred to, opposed the progress of the gospel by setting up a similar claim to that of the apostles; by pretending to have as much authority as they had; and by thus neutralizing the claims of the true religion, and leading off weak-minded persons from the truth. This is often the most dangerous kind of opposition that is made to religion.

Men of corrupt minds; - compare the notes at 1 Timothy 6:5.

Reprobate concerning the faith - So far as the Christian faith is concerned. On the word rendered "reprobate," see the Romans 1:28 note; 1 Corinthians 9:27 note, rendered "cast-away;" 2 Corinthians 13:5 note. The margin here is, "of no judgment." The meaning is, that in respect to the Christian faith, or the doctrines of religion, their views could not be approved, and they were not to be regarded as true teachers of religion.

Verse 9

But they shall proceed no further - There is a certain point beyond which they will not be allowed to go. Their folly will become manifest, and the world will understand it. The apostle does not say how far these false teachers would be allowed to go, but that they would not be suffered always to prosper and prevail. They might be plausible at first, and lead many astray; they might, by art and cunning, cover up the real character of their system; but there would be a fair development of it, and it would be seen to be folly. The apostle here may be understood as declaring a general truth in regard to error. It often is so plausible at first, that it seems to be true. It wins the hearts of many persons, and leads them astray. It flatters them

personally, or it flatters them with the hope of a better state of things in the church and the world. But the time will always come when men will see the folly of it. Error will advance only to a certain point, when it will be "seen" to be falsehood and folly, and when the world will arise and cast it off. In some cases, this point may be slower in being reached than in others; but there "is" a point, beyond which error will not go. At the reformation under Luther, that point had been reached, when the teachings of the great apostasy were seen to be "folly," and when the awakened intellect of the world would allow it to "proceed no farther," and aroused itself and threw it off. In the workings of society, as well as by the direct appointment of God, there is a point beyond which error cannot prevail; and hence, there is a certainty that truth will finally triumph.

For their folly shall be manifest unto all men - The world will see and understand what they are, and what they teach. By smooth sophistry, and cunning arts, they will not be able always to deceive mankind.

As their's also was - That of Jannes and Jambres. That is, it became manifest to all that they could not compete with Moses and Aaron; that their claims to the power of working miracles were the mere arts of magicians, and that they had set up pretensions which they could not sustain; compare Exodus 8:18-19. In regard to the time to which the apostle referred in this description, it has already been observed (see the notes at 2 Timothy 3:1), that it was probably to that great apostasy of the "latter days," which he has described in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, he says that the "mystery of iniquity" was already at work, or was even then manifesting itself; and there can be no doubt that the apostle saw that there had then commenced what he knew would yet grow up into the great defection from the truth. In some persons, at that time, who had the form of godliness, but who denied its power; who made use of insinuating arts to proselyte the weak and the credulous; who endeavor to imitate the true apostles, perhaps by attempting to work miracles, as Jannes and Jambres did, he saw the "germ" of what was yet to grow up into so gigantic a system of iniquity as to overshadow the world. Yet he consoled Timothy with the assurance that there was a point beyond which the system of error would not be allowed to go, but where its folly must be seen, and where it would be arrested.

Verse 10

But thou hast fully known my doctrine … - Margin, "been a diligent follower of." The margin is more in accordance with the usual meaning of

the Greek word, which means, properly, to accompany side by side; to follow closely; to trace out; to examine Luke 1:3, and to conform to. The meaning here, however, seems to be, that Timothy had an opportunity to follow out; i. e., to examine closely the manner of life of the apostle Paul. He had been so long his companion, that he had had the fullest opportunity of knowing how he had lived and taught, and how he had borne persecutions. The object of this reference to his own life and sufferings is evidently to encourage Timothy to bear persecutions and trials in the same manner; compare 2 Timothy 3:14. He saw, in the events which began already to develope themselves, that trials must be expected; he knew that all who would live holy lives must suffer persecution; and hence, he sought to prepare the mind of Timothy for the proper endurance of trials, by a reference to his own case. The word "doctrine," here, refers to his "teaching," or manner of giving instruction. It does not refer, as the word now does, to the opinions which he held; see the notes at 1 Timothy 4:16. In regard to the opportunities which Timothy had for knowing the manner of Paul's life, see the introduction to the Epistle, and Paley, *Hor. Paul.*, "in loc." Timothy had been the companion of Paul during a considerable portion of the time after his conversion. The "persecutions" referred to here 2 Timothy 3:11 are those which occurred in the vicinity of Timothy's native place, and which he would have had a particular opportunity of being acquainted with. This circumstance, and the fact that Paul did not refer to other persecutions in more remote places, is one of the "undesigned coincidences," of which Paley has made so much in his incomparable little work - Horae Paulinae.

Manner of life - Literally, "leading, guidance;" then, the method in which one is led - his manner of life; compare the notes at 1 Thessalonians 2:1.

Purpose - Plans, or designs.

Faith - Perhaps fidelity, or faithfulness.

Long-suffering - With the evil passions of others, and their efforts to injure him. See the word explained in the notes at 1 Corinthians 13:4.

Charity - see the notes at 1 Corinthians 13.

Patience - "A calm temper, which suffers evils without murmuring or discontent." Webster.

Verse 11

Persecutions - On the meaning of this word, see the notes at Matthew 5:10.

Afflictions - Trials of other kinds than those which arose from persecutions. The apostle met them everywhere; compare the notes at Acts 20:23.

Which came unto me at Antioch - The Antioch here referred to is not the place of that name in Syria (see the notes at Acts 11:19); but a city of the same name in Pisidia, in Asia Minor; notes, Acts 13:14. Paul there suffered persecution from the Jews; Acts 13:45.

At Iconium; - notes, Acts 13:50. On the persecution there, see the notes at Acts 14:3-6.

At Lystra; - Acts 14:6. At this place, Paul was stoned; notes, Acts 14:19. Timothy was a native of either Derbe or Lystra, cities near to each other, and was doubtless there at the time of this occurrence; Acts 16:1.

But out of them all the Lord delivered me - See the history in the places referred to in the Acts.

Verse 12

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution - Paul takes occasion from the reference to his own persecutions, to say that his case was not unique. It was the common lot of all who endeavored to serve their Redeemer faithfully; and Timothy himself, therefore, must not hope to escape from it. The apostle had a particular reference, doubtless, to his own times; but he has put his remark into the most general form, as applicable to all periods. It is undoubtedly true at all times, and will ever be, that they who are devoted Christians - who live as the Saviour did - and who carry out his principles always, will experience some form of persecution. The "essence" of persecution consists in "subjecting a person to injury or disadvantage on account of his opinions." It is something more than meeting his opinions by argument, which is always right and proper; it is inflicting some injury on him; depriving him of some privilege, or right; subjecting him to some disadvantage, or placing him in less favorable circumstances, on account of his sentiments.

This may be either an injury done to his feelings, his family, his reputation, his property, his liberty, his influence; it may be by depriving him of an office which he held, or preventing him from obtaining one to which he is eligible; it may be by subjecting him to fine or imprisonment, to

banishment, torture, or death. If, in any manner, or in any way, he is subjected to disadvantage on account of his religious opinions, and deprived of any immunities and rights to which he would be otherwise entitled, this is persecution. Now, it is doubtless as true as it ever was, that a man who will live as the Saviour did, will, like him, be subjected to some such injury or disadvantage. On account of his opinions, he may be held up to ridicule, or treated with neglect, or excluded from society to which his attainments and manners would otherwise introduce him, or shunned by those who might otherwise value his friendship. These things may be expected in the best times, and under the most favorable circumstances; and it is known that a large part of the history of the world, in its relation to the church, is nothing more than a history of persecution. It follows from this:

(1) that they who make a profession of religion, should come prepared to be persecuted. It should be considered as one of the proper qualifications for membership in the church, to be willing to bear persecution, and to resolve not to shrink from any duty in order to avoid it.

(2) they who are persecuted for their opinions, should consider that this may be one evidence that they have the spirit of Christ, and are his true friends. They should remember that, in this respect, they are treated as the Master was, and are in the goodly company of the prophets, apostles, and martyrs; for they were all persecuted. Yet,

(3) if we are persecuted, we should carefully inquire, before we avail ourselves of this consolation, whether we are persecuted because we "live godly in Christ Jesus," or for some other reason. A man may embrace some absurd opinion, and call it religion; he may adopt some mode of dress irresistibly ludicrous, from the mere love of singularity, and may call it "conscience;" or he may be boorish in his manners, and uncivil in his deportment, outraging all the laws of social life, and may call this "deadness to the world;" and for these, and similar things, he may be contemned, ridiculed, and despised. But let him not infer, "therefore," that he is to be enrolled among the martyrs, and that he is certainly a real Christian. That persecution which will properly furnish any evidence that we are the friends of Christ, must be only that which is "for righteousness

sake" Matthew 5:10, and must be brought upon us in an honest effort to obey the commands of God.

(4) let those who have never been persecuted in any way, inquire whether it is not an evidence that they have no religion. If they had been more faithful, and more like their Master, would they have always escaped? And may not their freedom from it prove that they have surrendered the principles of their religion, where they should have stood firm, though the world were arrayed against them? It is easy for a professed Christian to avoid persecution, if he yields every point in which religion is opposed to the world. But let not a man who will do this, suppose that he has any claim to be numbered among the martyrs, or even entitled to the Christian name.

Verse 13

But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse - That is, it is the character of such men to do this; they may be expected to do it. This is the general law of depravity - that if men are not converted, they are always growing worse, and sinking deeper into iniquity. Their progress will be certain, though it may be gradual, since "nemo repente turpissimus." The connection here is this: that Timothy was not to expect that he would be exempt from persecution 2 Timothy 3:12, by any change for the better in the wicked men referred to. He was to anticipate in them the operation of the general law in regard to bad men and seducers - that they would grow worse and worse. From this fact, he was to regard it as certain that he, as well as others, would be liable to be persecuted. The word rendered "seducers" - γόης goēs- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, a "juggler, or diviner;" and then, a "deceiver, or impostor." Here it refers to those who by seductive arts, lead persons into error.

Deceiving - Making others believe that to be true and right, which is false and wrong. This was, of course, done by seductive arts.

And being deceived - Under delusion themselves. The advocates of error are often themselves as really under deception, as those whom they impose upon. They are often sincere in the belief of error, and then they are under a delusion; or, if they are insincere, they are equally deluded in supposing that they can make error pass for truth before God, or can deceive the Searcher of hearts. The worst victims of delusion are those who attempt to delude others.

Verse 14

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of - To wit, the truths of religion. Timothy had been taught those truths when a child, and he had been confirmed in them by the instructions of Paul. Amidst the errors and seductions of false teachers, Paul now exhorts him to hold fast those doctrines, whoever might oppose them, or whatever might be the consequence; compare the notes at 2 Timothy 1:13.

Knowing of whom thou hast learned them - To wit, of his mother 2 Timothy 1:5, and of Paul; 2 Timothy 1:13. The reference seems to be particularly to the fact that he had learned these truths first from the lips of a mother (see 2 Timothy 3:15); and the doctrine taught here is, "that the fact that we have received the views of truth from a parent's lips, is a strong motive for adhering to them." It is not to be supposed, indeed, that this is the highest motive, or that we are always to adhere to the doctrines which have been taught us, if, on maturer examination, we are convinced they are erroneous; but that this is a strong reason for adhering to what we have been taught in early life. It is so, because:

(1)aparent has no motive for deceiving a child, and it cannot be supposed that he would teach him what he knew to be false;

(2)aparent usually has had much more experience, and much better opportunities of examining what is true, than his child has;

(3)there is a degree of respect which nature teaches us to be due to the sentiments of a parent.

A child should depart very slowly from the opinions held by a father or mother; and, when it is done, it should be only as the result of prolonged examination and prayer. These considerations should have the greater weight, if a parent has been eminent for piety, and especially if that parent has been removed to heaven. A child, standing by the grave of a pious father or mother, should reflect and pray much, before he deliberately adopts opinions which he knows that father or mother would regard as wrong.

Verse 15

And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures - That is, the Old Testament; for the New Testament was not then written; see the notes at John 5:39. The mother of Timothy was a pious Hebrewess, and

regarded it as one of the duties of her religion to train her son in the careful knowledge of the word of God. This was regarded by the Hebrews as an important duty of religion, and there is reason to believe that it was commonly faithfully performed. The Jewish writings abound with lessons on this subject. Rabbi Judah says, "The boy of five years of age ought to apply to the study of the sacred Scriptures." Rabbi Solomon, on Deuteronomy 11:19, says, "When the boy begins to talk, his father ought to converse with him in the sacred language, and to teach him the law; if he does not do that, he seems to bury him." See numerous instances referred to in Wetstein, in loc. The expression used by Paul - "from a child" (ἀπὸ βρέφους apo brephous) - does not make it certain at precisely what age Timothy was first instructed in the Scriptures, though it would denote an "early" age. The word used - βρέφος brephos- denotes:

(1)ababe unborn, Luke 1:41, Luke 1:44;

(2)an infant, babe, suckling.

In the New Testament, it is rendered "babe and babes," Luke 1:41, Luke 1:44; Luke 2:12, Luke 2:16; 1 Peter 2:2; "infants," Luke 8:15; and "young children," Acts 7:19. It does not elsewhere occur, and its current use would make it probable that Timothy had been taught the Scriptures as soon as he was capable of learning anything. Dr. Doddridge correctly renders it here "from infancy." It may be remarked then,

(1) that it is proper to teach the Bible to children at as early a period of life as possible.

(2) that there is reason to hope that such instruction will not be forgotten, but will have a salutary influence on their future lives. The piety of Timothy is traced by the apostle to the fact that he had been early taught to read the Scriptures, and a great proportion of those who are in the church have been early made acquainted with the Bible.

(3) it is proper to teach the "Old" Testament to children - since this was all that Timothy had, and this was made the means of his salvation.

(4) we may see the utility of Sunday schools. The great, and almost the sole object of such schools is to teach the Bible, and from the view which Paul had of the advantage to Timothy of having been early made acquainted with the Bible, there can be no doubt that if Sunday-schools had then been in existence, he would have been their hearty patron and friend.

Which are able to make thee wise unto salvation - So to instruct you in the way of salvation, that you may find the path to life. Hence, learn:

(1) that the plan of salvation may be learned from the Old Testament. It is not as clearly revealed there as it is in the New, but "it is there;" and if a man had only the Old Testament, he might find the way to be saved. The Jew, then, has no excuse if he is not saved.

(2) the Scriptures have "power." They are "able to make one wise to salvation." They are not a cold, tame, dead thing. There is no book that has so much "power" as the Bible; none that is so efficient in moving the hearts, and consciences, and intellects of mankind. There is no book that has moved so many minds; none that has produced so deep and permanent effects on the world.

(3) to find the way of salvation, is the best kind of wisdom; and none are wise who do not make that the great object of life.

Through faith which is in Christ Jesus; - see the Mark 16:16 note; Romans 1:17 note. Paul knew of no salvation, except through the Lord Jesus. He says, therefore, that the study of the Scriptures, valuable as they were, would not save the soul unless there was faith in the Redeemer; and it is implied, also, that the proper effect of a careful study of the "Old" Testament, would be to lead one to put his trust in the Messiah.

Verse 16

All Scripture - This properly refers to the Old Testament, and should not be applied to any part of the New Testament, unless it can be shown that that part was then written, and was included under the general name of "the Scriptures;" compare 2 Peter 3:15-16. But it includes the whole of the Old Testament, and is the solemn testimony of Paul that it was all inspired. If now it can be proved that Paul himself was an inspired man, this settles the question as to the inspiration of the Old Testament.

Is given by inspiration of God - All this is expressed in the original by one word - Θεόπνευστος TheopneustosThis word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means, God-inspired - from Θεός Theos"God," and πνέω pneō"to breathe, to breathe out." The idea of "breathing upon, or breathing into the soul," is that which the word naturally conveys. Thus, God breathed into the nostrils of Adam the breath of life Genesis 2:7, and thus the Saviour breathed on his disciples, and said, "receive ye the Holy Ghost;" John 20:22. The idea seems to have been, that

the life was in the breath, and that an intelligent spirit was communicated with the breath. The expression was used among the Greeks, and a similar one was employed by the Romans. Plutarch ed. R. 9:p. 583. 9. τοὺς ὀνείρους τοὺς θεοπνεύστους tous oneirous tous theopneustousPhocylid. 121. τῆς δὲ θεοπνεύστου σοφίης λόγος ἐστὶν ἄριστος tēs de theopnoustou sophiēs logos estin aristoshowever, this is not an expression of Phocylides, but of the pseudo Phocylides. So it is understood by Bloomfield. Cicero, pro Arch. 8. "poetam - quasi divino quodam spiritu inflari." The word does not occur in the Septuagint, but is found in Josephus, Contra Apion, i. 7. "The Scripture of the prophets who were taught according to the inspiration of God - κατὰ τὴν ἐπίπνοιαν τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ kata tēn epipnoian tēn apo tou TheouIn regard to the manner of inspiration, and to the various questions which have been started as to its nature, nothing can be learned from the use of this word. It asserts a fact - that the Old Testament was composed under a divine influence, which might be represented by "breathing on one," and so imparting life. But the language must be figurative; for God does not breathe, though the fair inference is, that those Scriptures are as much the production of God, or are as much to be traced to him, as life is; compare Matthew 22:43; 2 Peter 1:21. The question as to the degree of inspiration, and whether it extends to the words of Scripture, and how far the sacred writers were left to the exercise of their own faculties, is foreign to the design of these notes. All that is necessary to be held is, that the sacred writers were kept from error on those subjects which were matters of their own observation, or which pertained to memory; and that there were truths imparted to them directly by the Spirit of God, which they could never have arrived at by the unaided exercise of their own minds. Compare the introduction to Isaiah and Job.

And is profitable. - It is useful; it is adapted to give instruction, to administer reproof, etc. If "all" Scripture is thus valuable, then we are to esteem no part of the Old Testament as worthless. There is no portion of it, even now, which may not be fitted, in certain circumstances, to furnish us valuable lessons, and, consequently, no part of it which could be spared from the sacred canon. There is no part of the human body which is not useful in its place, and no part of it which can be spared without sensible loss.

For doctrine - For teaching or communicating instruction; compare the notes on 1 Timothy 4:16.

For reproof - On the meaning of the word here rendered "reproof" - ἐλέγγμος elengmos- see the notes on Hebrews 11:1. It here means, probably, for "convincing;" that is, convincing a man of his sins, of the truth and claims of religion, etc.; see the notes on John 16:8.

For correction - The word here used - ἐπανόρθωσις epanorthōsis- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, "a setting to rights, reparation, restoration," (from ἐπανορθόω epanorthoōto right up again, to restore); and here means, the leading to a correction or amendment of life - "a reformation." The meaning is, that the Scriptures are a powerful means of reformation, or of putting men into the proper condition in regard to morals. After all the means which have been employed to reform mankind; all the appeals which are made to them on the score of health, happiness, respectability, property, and long life, the word of God is still the most powerful and the most effectual means of recovering those who have fallen into vice. No reformation can be permanent which is not based on the principles of the word of God.

For instruction in righteousness - Instruction in regard to the principles of justice, or what is right. Man needs not only to be made acquainted with truth, to be convinced of his error, and to be reformed; but he needs to be taught what is right, or what is required of him, in order that he may lead a holy life. Every reformed and regenerated man needs instruction, and should not be left merely with the evidence that he is "reformed, or converted." He should be followed with the principles of the word of God, to show him how he may lead an upright life. The Scriptures furnish the rules of holy living in abundance, and thus they are adapted to the whole work of recovering man, and of guiding him to heaven.

Verse 17

That the man of God may be perfect - The object is not merely to convince and to convert him; it is to furnish all the instruction needful for his entire perfection. The idea here is, not that any one is absolutely perfect, but that the Scriptures have laid down the way which leads to perfection, and that, if any one were perfect, he would find in the Scriptures all the instruction which he needed in those circumstances. There is no deficiency in the Bible for man, in any of the situations in which he may be placed in life; and the whole tendency of the book is to make him who will put himself fairly under its instructions, absolutely perfect.

Thoroughly furnished unto all good works - Margin, "perfected." The Greek means, to bring to an end; to make complete. The idea is, that whatever good work the man of God desires to perform, or however perfect he aims to be, he will find no deficiency in the Scriptures, but will find there the most ample instructions that he needs. He can never advance so far, as to become forsaken of his guide. He can never make such progress, as to have gone in advance of the volume of revealed truth, and to be thrown upon his own resources in a region which was not thought of by the Author of the Bible. No new phase of human affairs can appear in which it will not direct him; no new plan of benevolence can be started, for which he will not find principles there to guide him; and he can make no progress in knowledge or holiness, where he will not feel that his holy counsellor is in advance of him still, and that it is capable of conducting him even yet into higher and purer regions. Let us, then, study and prize the Bible. It is a holy and a safe guide. It has conducted millions along the dark and dangerous way of life, and has never led one astray. The human mind, in its investigations of truth, has never gone beyond its teachings; nor has man ever advanced into a region so bright that its light has become dim, or where it has not thrown its beams of glory on still far distant objects. We are often in circumstances in which we feel that we have reached the outer limit of what man can teach us; but we never get into such circumstance in regard to the Word of God.

How precious is the book divine,
By, inspiration given!
Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine.
To guide our souls to heaven.
It sweetly cheers our drooping hearts.
In this dark vale of tears:
Life, light, and joy, it still imparts,
And quells our rising fears.
This lamp, through all the tedious night.
Of life, shall guide our way;
Till we behold the clearer light.
Of an eternal day.

2 TIMOTHY CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

This chapter, 2 Timothy 4:1-5. The particular reason given for this charge was, that the time was approaching when men would not endure sound doctrine, but would turn away from the truth. Hence, Timothy is exhorted to be faithful in his work, and to be prepared to endure the trials which, in such circumstances, a faithful minister must be expected to meet.

2. A statement of Paul that his own work was nearly done, and that the hour of his departure drew near; 2 Timothy 4:6-8. This statement, also, seems to be made in order to excite Timothy to increased fidelity in the ministry. His teacher, guide, father, and friend, was about to be withdrawn, and the great work of preaching was to be committed to other hands. Hence, in view of his own departure, Paul exhorts Timothy to fidelity when he himself should be removed.

3. An exhortation to Timothy to come to him as soon as practicable; 2 Timothy 4:9-15. Paul was then in bonds, and was expecting soon to die. He was alone. For various reasons, those who had been with him had left him, and he needed some companion and friend. He, therefore, exhorts Timothy to come to him as soon as possible.

4. Paul refers now to his first trial before the emperor, and to the fact that then no one stood by him; 2 Timothy 4:16-19. The reason of his referring to this seems to be, to induce Timothy to come to him in view of his anticipated second trial. The Lord, he says, then stood by him, and he had confidence that he would continue to do it; yet who is there that does not feel it desirable to have some dear earthly friend to be with him when he dies?

5. The Epistle is closed, in the usual manner, with various salutations, and with the benediction; 2 Timothy 4:19-22.

Verse 1

I charge thee therefore before God - See the notes on 1 Timothy 5:21.

Who shall judge the quick and the dead - That is, the Lord Jesus; for he is to be the judge of men; 2 Corinthians 5:10. The word "quick" means

"living" (See the Acts 10:42 note; Ephesians 2:1 note); and the idea is, that he would be alike the judge of all who were alive when he should come, and of all who had died; see the notes on 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. In view of the fact that all, whether preachers or hearers, must give up their account to the final Judge, Paul charges Timothy to be faithful; and what is there which will more conduce to fidelity in the discharge of duty, than the thought that we must soon give up a solemn account of the manner in which we have performed it?

At his appearing - That is, the judgment shall then take place. This must refer to a judgment yet to take place, for the Lord Jesus has not yet "appeared" the second time to men; and, if this be so, then there is to be a resurrection of the dead. On the meaning of the word rendered "appearing," see the notes on 2 Thessalonians 2:8. It is there rendered "brighteness"; compare 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 1:10; Titus 2:13.

And his kingdom - Or, at the setting up of his kingdom. The idea of his reigning, or setting up his kingdom, is not unfrequently associated with the idea of his cominG; see Matthew 16:28. The meaning is, that, at his second advent, the extent and majesty of his kingdom will be fully displayed. It will be seen that he has control over the elements, over the graves of the dead, and over all the living. It will be seen that the earth and the heavens are under his sway, and that all things there acknowledge him as their sovereign Lord. In order to meet the full force of the language used by Paul here, it is not necessary to suppose that he will set up a visible kingdom on the earth, but only that there will be an illustrious display of himself as a king, and of the extent and majesty of the empire over which he presides: compare the Romans 14:11 note; Philemon 2:10 note.

Verse 2

Preach the word - The Word of God; the gospel. This was to be the main business of the life of Timothy, and Paul solemnly charges him in view of the certain coming of the Redeemer to judgment, to be faithful in the performance of it.

Be instant - see the notes at Romans 12:12. The meaning here is, that he should be constant in this duty. Literally, "to stand by, or to stand fast by;" that is, he was to be pressing or urgent in the performance of this work. He was always to be at his post, and was to embrace every opportunity of making known the gospel. What Paul seems to have contemplated was not merely, that he should perform the duty at stated and regular times; but that

he should press the matter as one who had the subject much at heart, and never lose an opportunity of making the gospel known.

In season - εὐκαίρως eukairōsIn good time; opportunely; compare Matthew 26:16; Luke 22:6; Mark 14:11. The sense is, when it could be conveniently done; when all things were favorable, and when there were no obstructions or hindrances. It may include the "stated and regular" seasons for public worship, but is not confined to them.

Out of season - ἀκαίρως akairōsThis word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It is the opposite of the former, and means that a minister is to seek opportunities to preach the gospel even at such periods as might be inconvenient to himself, or when there might be hindrances and embarrassments, or when there was no stated appointment for preaching. He is not to confine himself to the appointed times of worship, or to preach only when it will be perfectly convenient for himself, but he is to have such an interest and earnestness in the work, that it will lead him to do it in the face of embarrassments and discouragements, and whenever he can find an opportunity. A man who is greatly intent on an object will seek every opportunity to promote it. He will not confine himself to stated times and places, but will present it everywhere, and at all times. A man, therefore, who merely confines himself to the stated seasons of preaching the gospel, or who merely preaches when it is convenient to himself, should not consider that he has come up to the requirement of the rule laid down by the apostle. He should preach in his private conversation, and in the intervals of his public labors, at the side of the sick bed, and wherever there is a prospect of doing good to any one. If his heart is full of love to the Saviour and to souls, he cannot help doing this.

Reprove - Or "convince;" See the notes at 2 Timothy 3:16. The meaning is that he was to use such arguments as would "convince" men of the truth of religion, and of their own need of it.

Rebuke - Rebuke offenders; Titus 2:15; see the use of the word in Matthew 8:26; Matthew 12:16, (rendered "charged"); Matthew 16:22; Matthew 17:18; Matthew 19:13; Matthew 20:31; Luke 4:35, Luke 4:39; Luke 17:13; Luke 18:15; Jude 1:9. In the New Testament the word is used to express a judgment of what is wrong or contrary to one's will, and hence, to admonish or reprove. It implies our conviction that there is something evil, or some fault in him who is rebuked. The word in this verse rendered "reprove," does not imply this, but merely that one may be in error, and

needs to have arguments presented to convince him of the truth. That word also implies no superior authority in him who does it. He presents "reasons, or argues" the case, for the purpose of convincing. The word here rendered rebuke, implies authority or superiority, and means merely that we may say that a thing is wrong, and administer a rebuke for it, as if there were no doubt that it was wrong. The propriety of the rebuke rests on our authority for doing it, not on the arguments which we present. This is based on the presumption that men often Know that they are doing wrong, and need no arguments to convince them of it. The idea is, that the minister is not merely to reason about sin, and convince men that it is wrong, but he may solemnly admonish them not to do it, and warn them of the consequences.

Exhort - See the notes at Romans 12:8.

With all long-suffering - That is, with a patient and persevering spirit if you are opposed; see the notes on 2 Timothy 2:25; compare the notes on Romans 2:4; compare Romans 9:22; 2 Corinthians 6:6; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 1:11; Colossians 3:12; 1 Timothy 1:16.

And doctrine - Teaching, or patient instruction.

Verse 3

For the time will come … - Probably referring to the time mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:1, following.

When they will not endure sound doctrine - Greek, "healthful doctrine;" i. e., doctrine contributing to the health of the soul, or to salvation. At that time they would seek a kind of instruction more conformable to their wishes and feelings.

But after their own lusts - They will seek such kind of preaching as will accord with their carnal desires; or such as will palliate their evil propensities, and deal gently with their vices; compare Isaiah 30:10. "Speak unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits."

Shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears - The word rendered "heap" - ἐπισωρεύω episōreuō- does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means "to heap up upon, to accumulate;" and here "to multiply." The word rendered "itching" - κνήθω knēthō- also occurs only in this place in the New Testament. It means "to rub, to scratch;" and then "to tickle," and here to feel an "itching" for something pleasing or gratifying. The image is derived from the desire which we have when there is an itching sensation, to have it rubbed or scratched. Such an uneasiness would these persons have to have some kind of instruction that would allay

their restless and uneasy desires, or would gratify them. In explanation of this passage we may observe,

(1) that there will be always religious teachers of some kind, and that in proportion as error and sin abound, they will be multiplied. The apostle here says, that by turning away from Timothy, and from sound instruction, they would not abandon all religious teachers, but would rather increase and multiply them. People often declaim much against a regular ministry, and call it "priest-craft;" and yet, if they were to get rid of such a ministry, they would by no means escape from all kinds of religious teachers. The deeper the darkness, and the more gross the errors, and the more prevalent the wickedness of men, the more will a certain kind of religious teachers abound, and the more it will cost to support them. Italy and Spain swarm with priests, and in every pagan nation they constitute a very numerous class of the population. The cheapest ministry on the earth is a well-educated Protestant clergy, and if society wishes to free itself from swarms of preachers, and prophets, and exhorters, it should secure the regular services of an educated and pious ministry.

(2) in such classes of persons as the apostle here refers to, there is a restless, uneasy desire to have some kind of preachers. They have "itching ears." They will be ready to run after all kinds of public instructors. They will be little pleased with any, and this will be one reason why they will have so many. They are fickle, and unsettled, and never satisfied. A desire to hear the truth, and to learn the way of salvation, is a good desire. But this can be better gratified by far under the patient and intelligent labor of a single religious teacher, than by running after many teachers, or than by frequent changes. How much would a child learn if he was constantly running from one school to another?

(3) such persons would have teachers according to "their own lusts;" that is, their own tastes, or wishes. They would have those who would coincide with their whims; who would foster every vagary which might enter their imagination; who would countenance every wild project for doing good; who would be the advocates of the errors which they held; and who would be afraid to rebuke their faults. These are the principles on which many persons choose their religious teachers. The true principle

should be, to select those who will faithfully declare the truth, and who will not shrink from exposing and denouncing sin, wherever it may be found.

Verse 4

And they shall turn away their ears from the truth - That is, the people themselves will turn away from the truth. It does not mean that the teachers would turn them away by the influence of their instructions.

And shall be turned unto fables; - See the notes at 1 Timothy 1:4.

Verse 5

But watch thou in all things - Be vigilant against error and against sin, and faithful in the performance of duty; See the Matthew 25:13 note; 1 Corinthians 16:13 note.

Endure afflictions - See the notes at 2 Timothy 2:3. The Greek word here is the same which is there rendered "endure hardness."

Do the work of an evangelist - On the word "evangelist," see the notes on Acts 21:8. The phrase here means, "do the work of preaching the gospel," or of one appointed to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. This is the proper business of all ministers, whatever other rank they may maintain. Whether it was ever regarded as the proper duty of a separate class of men to do this, see the notes on Ephesians 4:11.

Make full proof of thy ministry - Margin, "fulfill;" compare the notes at Romans 14:5. The word here used denotes, properly, to bear or bring fully; then to persuade fully; and then to make fully assured of, to give full proof of. The meaning here seems to be, "to furnish full evidence of what is the design of the Christian ministry, and of what it is adapted to accomplish," by the faithful performance of all its duties. Timothy was so to discharge the duties of his office as to furnish "a fair illustration" of what the ministry could do, and thus to show the wisdom of the Saviour in its institution. This should be the aim of all the ministers of the gospel. Each one should resolve, by the blessing of God, that the ministry, in his hands, shall be allowed, "by a fair trial," to show to the utmost what it is adapted to do for the welfare of mankind.

Verse 6

For I am now ready to be offered - This conviction of the apostle that he was about to die, is urged as a reason why Timothy should be laborious and faithful in the performance of the duties of his office. His own work was nearly done. He was soon to be withdrawn from the earth, and

whatever benefit the world might have derived from his experience or active exertions, it was now to be deprived of it. He was about to leave a work which he much loved, and to which he had devoted the vigor of his life, and he was anxious that they who were to succeed him should carry on the work with all the energy and zeal in their power. This expresses the common feeling of aged ministers as death draws near. The word "ready" in the phrase "ready to be offered," conveys an idea which is not in the original. It implies a willingness to depart, which, whether true or not, is not the idea conveyed by the apostle.

His statement is merely of "the fact" that he was "about" to die, or that his work "was" drawing to a close. No doubt he was ready, in the sense of being willing and prepared, but this is not the idea in the Greek. The single Greek word rendered "I am ready to be offered" - σπένδομαι spendomai- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Philemon 2:17, where it is translated "if I be offered;" see it explained in the notes on that place. The allusion here, says Burder (in Rosenmuller's A. u. n. Morgenland), is to the custom which prevailed among the pagan generally, of pouring wine and oil on the head of a victim when it was about to be offered in sacrifice. The idea of the apostle then is, that he was in the condition of the victim on whose head the wine and oil had been already poured, and which was just about to be put to death; that is, he was about to die. Every preparation had been made, and he only awaited the blow which was to strike him down.

The meaning is not that he was to be a sacrifice; it is that his death was about to occur. Nothing more remained to be done but to die. The victim was all ready, and he was sure that the blow would soon fall. What was the ground of his expectation, he has not told us. Probably there were events occurring in Rome which made it morally certain that though he had once been acquitted, he could not now escape. At all events, it is interesting to contemplate an aged and experienced Christian on the borders of the grave, and to learn what were his feelings in the prospect of his departure to the eternal world. Happily, Paul has in more places than one (compare Philemon 1:23), stated his views in such circumstances, and we know that his religion then did not fail him. He found it to be in the prospect of death what he had found it to be through all his life - the source of unspeakable consolation - and he was enabled to look calmly onward to the hour which should summon him into the presence of his Judge.

And the time of my departure is at hand - Greek: "dissolving, or dissolution." So we speak of the "dissolution" of the soul and body. The verb from which the noun (ἀνάλυσις analusis), is derived (ἀναλύω analuō), means to loosen again; to undo. It is applied to the act of unloosing or casting off the fastenings of a ship, preparatory to a departure. The proper idea in the use of the word would be, that he had been bound to the present world, like a ship to its moorings, and that death would be a release. He would now spread his sails on the broad ocean of eternity. The true idea of death is that of loosening the bands that confine us to the present world; of setting us free, and permitting the soul to go forth, as with expanded sails, on its eternal voyage. With such a view of death, why should a Christian fear to die?

Verse 7

I have fought a good fight - The Christian life is often represented as a conflict, or warfare; see the notes on 1 Timothy 6:12. That noble conflict with sin, the world, the flesh, and the devil, Paul now says he had been able to maintain.

I have finished my course - The Christian life, too, is often represented as a "race" to be run; compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:24-26.

I have kept the faith - I have steadfastly maintained the faith of the gospel; or, have lived a life of fidelity to my Master. Probably the expression means that he had kept his plighted faith to the Redeemer, or had spent a life in faithfully endeavoring to serve his Lord.

Verse 8

Henceforth there is laid up for me - At the end of my race, as there was a crown in reserve for those who had successfully striven in the Grecian games; compare the notes on 1 Corinthians 9:25. The word "henceforth" - λοιπὸν loipon- means "what remains, or as to the rest;" and the idea is, that that was what remained of the whole career. The race had been run; the conflict had been waged; and all which was now necessary to complete the whole transaction, was merely that the crown be bestowed.

A crown of righteousness - That is, a crown won in the cause of righteousness, and conferred as the reward of his conflicts and efforts in the cause of holiness. It was not the crown of ambition; it was not a garland won in struggles for earthly distinction; it was that which was the appropriate reward of his efforts to be personally holy, and to spread the principles of holiness as far as possible through the world.

Which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me - The Lord Jesus, appointed to judge the world, and to dispense the rewards of eternity. It will be seen in the last day that the rewards of heaven are not conferred in an arbitrary manner, but that they are bestowed because they ought to be, or that God is righteous and just in doing it. No man will be admitted to heaven who ought not, under all the circumstances of the case, to be admitted there; no one will be excluded who ought to have been saved.

At that day - That is, the time when he will come to judge the world; 1 Corinthians 9:25), which could be conferred only on one victor (See the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:24); but here every one may obtain the crown who strives for it. The struggle is not between me and a competitor in such a sense that, if ‹I‘ obtain the crown, ‹he‘ must be excluded; but it is a crown which ‹he" can obtain as well as ‹I.‘ As many as run - as many as fight the good fight - as many as keep the faith - as many as love his appearing, may win the crown as well as I." Such is religion, and such is the manner in which its rewards differ from all others.

At the Grecian games, but one could obtain the prize; 1 Corinthians 9:24. All the rest who contended in those games, no matter how numerous they were, or how skilfully they contended, or how much effort they made, were of course subjected to the mortification of a failure, and to all the ill-feeling and envy to which such a failure might give rise. So it is in respect to all the prizes which this world can bestow. In a lottery, but one can obtain the highest prize; in a class in college, but one can secure the highest honor; in the scramble for office, no matter how numerous the competitors may be, or what may be their merits, but one can obtain it. All the rest are liable to the disappointments and mortifications of defeat. Not so in religion. No matter how numerous the competitors, or how worthy any one of them may be, or how pre-eminent above his brethren, yet all may obtain the prize; all may be crowned with a diadem of life, of equal brilliancy. No one is excluded because another is successful; no one fails of the reward because another obtains it. Who, then, would not make an effort to win the immortal crown?

Unto all them also that love his appearing - That is, unto all who desire his second coming. To believe in the second advent of the Lord Jesus to judge the world, and to desire his return, became a kind of a criterion by which Christians were known. No others but true Christians were supposed to believe in that, and no others truly desired it; compare Revelation 1:7;

Revelation 22:20. It is so now. It is one of the characteristics of a true Christian that he sincerely desires the return of his Saviour, and would weLcome his appearing in the clouds of heaven.

Verse 9

Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me - As soon as possible. Timothy had been Paul's traveling companion, and was his intimate friend. The apostle was now nearly forsaken, and was about to pass through severe trials. It is not certainly known for what purpose he wished him to come to him, but perhaps he desired to give him some parting counsels; perhaps he wished him to be near him when he died. It is evident from this that he did not regard him as the prelatical "bishop of the church of the Ephesians," or consider that he was so confined to that place in his labors, that he was not also to go to other places if he was called in the providence of God. It is probable that Timothy would obey such a summons, and there is no reason to believe that he ever returned to Ephseus.

Verse 10

For Demas hath forsaken me - Demas is honorably mentioned in Colossians 4:14; but nothing more is known of him than what can be gathered from that place and this - that he was at first a friend and fellow-laborer of Paul, but that, under the influence of a desire to live, he afterward forsook him, even in circumstances where he greatly needed the presence of a friend.

Having loved this present world - This does not mean, necessarily, that he was an avaricious man, or that, in itself, he loved the honors or wealth of this world; but it means that he desired to live. He was not willing to stay with Paul, and subject himself to the probabilities of martyrdom; and, in order to secure his life, he departed to a place of safety. The Greek is, ἀγαπὴσας τὸν νὺν αἰῶνα agapēsas ton nun aiōna- having loved the world that now is; that is, this world as it is, with all its cares, and troubles, and comforts; having desired to remain in this world, rather than to go to the other. There is, perhaps, a slight censure here in the language of Paul - "the censure of grief;" but there is no reason why Demas should be held up as an example of a worldly man. That he desired to live longer; that he was unwilling to remain and risk the loss of life, is indeed clear. That Paul was pained by his departure, and that he felt lonely and sad, is quite apparent; but I see no evidence that Demas was influenced by what are commonly

called worldly feelings, or that he was led to this course by the desire of wealth, or fame, or pleasure.

And is departed unto Thessalonica - Perhaps his native place. "Calmet."

Crescens - Nothing more is known of Crescens than is here mentioned. "He is thought by Eusebius and others to have preached in Gaul, and to have founded the church in Vienne, in Dauphiny" - Calmet.

To Galatia - See Intro. to the Epistle to the Galatians, Section 1. It is not known to what part of Galatia he had gone, or why he went there.

Titus into Dalmatia - Dalmatia was a part of Illyricum, on the gulf of Venice, or the Adriatic sea. On the situation of Illyricum, see the notes on Romans 15:19. Paul does not mention the reason why Titus had gone there; but it is not improbable that he had gone to preach the gospel, or to visit the churches which Paul had planted in that region. The apostle does not suggest that he was deserving of blame for having gone, and it can hardly be supposed that "Titus" would have left him at this time without his concurrence. Perhaps, when he permitted him to go, he did not know how soon events would come to a crisis with him; and as a letter would more readily reach Timothy at Ephesus, than Titus in Dalmatia, he requested him to come to him, instead of directing Titus to return.

Verse 11

Only Luke is with me - Luke, the author of the gospel which bears his name, and of the Acts of the Apostles. For a considerable part of the ministry of Paul, he was his traveling companion (compare the notes on Acts 16:10), and we know that he went with him to Rome; Acts 27:1.

Take Mark - John Mark, see the notes at Acts 15:37. He was the son of a sister of Barnabas, and had been the traveling companion of Barnabas and Paul. There had been a temporary alienation between Paul and him Acts 15:38; but this passage proves that that had been removed, and that Paul was reconciled to him.

For he is profitable to me for the ministry - In what way he would be profitable, he does not say; nor is it known why Mark was at that time with Timothy. It may be observed, however, that this is such language as Paul might be expected to use of Mark, after what had occurred, as recorded in Acts 15:38. He felt that he was now about to die. If he suspected that there was on the part of Mark any lingering apprehension that the great apostle was not entirely reconciled to him, or retained a recollection of what had

formerly occurred, nothing would be more natural than that, at this trying time of his life, Paul should summon him to his side, and express toward him the kindest emotions. It would soothe any lingering irritation in the mind of Mark, to receive such a message.

Verse 12

And Tychicus - See Acts 20:4. In Ephesians 6:21, Paul calls him "a beloved brother, and faithful minister in the Lord." But it may be asked why he did not retain him with him, or why should he have sent him away, and then call Timothy to him? The probability is, that he had sent him before he had seen reason to apprehend that he would be put to death; and now, feeling the need of a friend to be with him, he sent to Timothy, rather than to him, because Tychicus had been employed to perform some service which he could not well leave, and because Paul wished to give some some special instructions to Timothy before he died.

Have I sent to Ephesus - Why, is not certainly known; compare Intro. Section 2.

Verse 13

The cloak that I left at Troas - On the situation of Troas, see the notes on Acts 16:8. It was not on the most direct route from Ephesus to Rome, but was a route frequently taken. See also the introduction, section 2. In regard to what the "cloak" here mentioned was, there has been considerable difference of opinion. The Greek word used (φελόνης phelonēs- variously written φαιλόνης , φελόνης , and φελώνης), occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is supposed to be used for a similar Greek word (φαινόλης phainolēs) to denote a cloak, or great-coat, with a hood, used chiefly on journeys, or in the army: Latin, "penula." It is described by Eschenberg (Man. Class. Lit., p. 209) as a "cloak without sleeves, for cold or rainy weather." See the uses of it in the quotations made by Wetstein, in loc.

Others, however, have supposed that the word means a traveling-case for books, etc. So Hesychius understands it. Bloomfield endeavors to unite the two opinions by suggesting that it may mean a "cloak-bag," and that he had left his books and parchments in it. It is impossible to settle the precise meaning of the word here, and it is not material. The common opinion that it was a wrapper or traveling-cloak, is the most probable; and such a garment would not be undesirable for a prisoner. It should be remembered, also, that winter was approaching 2 Timothy 4:21, and such a cloak would

be particularly needed. He had probably passed through Troas in summer, and, not needing the cloak, and not choosing to encumber himself with it, had left it at the house of a friend. On the meaning of the word, see Wetstein, Robinson, *Lex*., and Schleusner, *Lexicon*. Compare, also, Suic. Thes ii. 1422. The doubt in regard to what is here meant, is as old as Chrysostom. He says (Homily x. on this Epistle), that the word φελόνην phelonēndenotes a garment - τὸ ἱματίον to himationBut some understood by it a capsula, or bag - γλωσσόκομον glōssokomon(compare the notes on John 12:6), "in which books, etc. were carried."

With Carpus - Carpus is not elsewhere mentioned. He was evidently a friend of the apostle, and it would seem probable that Paul had made his house his home when he was in Troas.

And the books - It is impossible to determine what books are meant here. They may have been portions of the Old Testament, or classic writings, or books written by other Christians, or by himself. It is worthy of remark that even Paul did not travel without books, and that he found them in some way necessary for the work of the ministry.

Especially the parchments - The word here used (μεμβράνας membranaswhence our word "membrane"), occurs only in this place in the New Testament, and means skin, membrane, or parchment. Dressed skins were among the earliest materials for writing, and were in common use before the art of making paper from rags was discovered. These "parchments" seem to have been something different from "books," and probably refer to some of his own writings. They may have contained notes, memorandums, journals, or unfinished letters. It is, of course, impossible now to determine what they were. Benson supposes they were letters which he had received from the churches; Macknight, that they were the originals of the letters which he had written; Dr. Bull, that they were a kind of common-place book, in which he inserted hints and extracts of the most remarkable passages in the authors which he read. All this, however, is mere conjecture.

Verse 14

Alexander the coppersmith - Or, rather, "the brazier" - ὁ χαλκεύς ho chalkeusThe word is used, however, to denote a worker in any kind of metals. This is probably the same person who is mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20, and perhaps the same as the one mentioned in Acts 19:33; see the notes on 1 Timothy 1:20.

Did me much evil - In what way this was done, is not mentioned. If this is the same person who is referred to in 1 Timothy 1:20, it is probable that it was not evil to Paul personally, so much as embarrassment to the cause of religion which he advocated; compare 2 Timothy 2:17-18.

The Lord reward him according to his works; - compare the notes at 1 Timothy 1:20. This need not be regarded as an expression of private feeling; still less should it be understood as expressing a desire of revenge. It is the language of one who wished that God would treat him exactly as he ought to be treated, and might be in accordance with the highest benevolence of any heart. It is the aim of every just government that every one should be treated exactly as he deserves; and every good citizen should desire and pray that exact justice may be done to all. It is the business of a police officer to ferret out the guilty, to bring them to trial, to secure a just sentence; and any police officer might "pray," with the utmost propriety, that God would assist him in his endeavors, and enable him to perform his duty. This might be done with no malevolent feeling toward any human being, but with the purest love of country, and the most earnest desire for the welfare of all.

if such a police officer, or if a judge, or a juryman, were heard thus to pray, who would dare to accuse him of having a vindictive spirit, or a malevolent heart? And why should Paul be so charged, when his prayer amounts to no more than this? For it remains yet to be proved that he refers to any private wrong which Alexander had done him, or that he was actuated by any other desire than that the sacred interests of truth should be guarded, and equal justice done to all. Why is it wrong to desire or to pray that universal justice may be done, and that every man may be treated as, under all the circumstances of the case, he ought to be treated? On the subject of the "Imprecations in the Scriptures," the reader may consult an article in the Bibliotheca Sacra, vol. 1, pp. 97-110. It should be added here, that some manuscripts, instead of ἀποδῴη apodōē"may the Lord reward," read it in the future - ἀποδώσει , "will reward." See Wetstein. The future is also found in the Vulgate, Coptic, and in Augustine, Theodoret, and Chrysostom. Augustine says (on the Sermon on the Mount), "He does not say, may he reward (reddat); but, he will reward (reddet), which is a verb of prophecy, not of imprecation. The authority, however, is not sufficient to justify a change in the present reading. These variations have doubtless arisen from a belief that the common reading expresses a sentiment

inconsistent with the true spirit of a Christian, and a desire to find a better. But there is no reason for "desiring" a change in the text.

Verse 15

Of whom be thou ware also - It would seem from this that Alexander was still a public teacher, and that his discourses were plausible and artful. The best and the wisest of men need to be on their guard against the efforts of the advocates of error.

For he hath greatly withstood our words - Margin, "preachings." The Greek is, "words;" but the reference is doubtless to the public teachings of Paul. This verse makes it clear that it was no private wrong that Paul referred to, but the injury which he was doing to the cause of truth as a professed public teacher.

Verse 16

At my first answer - Greek, "apology (ἀπολογία apologia), plea, or defense." This evidently refers to some trial which he had had before the Roman emperor. He speaks of a first trial of this kind; but whether it was on some former occasion, and he had been released and permitted again to go abroad, or whether it was a trial which he had already had during his second imprisonment, it is not easy to determine. The former is the most natural supposition; for, if he had had a trial during his present imprisonment, it is difficult to see why he was still held as a prisoner. See this point examined in the introduction, section 1.

No man stood with me - Paul had many friends in Rome (2 Timothy 4:21; compare Job 19:13-17;

He hath put my brethren far from me,
And mine acquaintance verily are estranged from me.
My kinsfolk have failed,

And my familiar friends have forgotten me.

They that dwell in my house, and my maids,

Count me for a stranger.

I am an alien in their sight.

I called my servant, and he gave me no answer; I entreated him with my mouth.

My breath is strange to my wife.

Though I entreated for the children‘s sake of mine own body.

Thus, the Psalmist was forsaken by his friends in the time of calamity; Psalm 35:12-16; Psalm 38:2; Psalm 41:9; Psalm 55:12. And thus the Saviour was forsaken in his trials; Matthew 26:56; compare, for illustration, Zechariah 13:6. The world is full of instances in which those who have been overtaken by overwhelming calamities, have been forsaken by professed friends, and have been left to suffer alone. This has arisen, partly from the circumstance that many sincere friends are timid, and their courage fails them when their attachment for another would expose them to peril; but more commonly from the circumstance that there is much professed friendship in the world which is false, and that calamity becomes a test of it which it cannot abide. There is professed friendship which is caused by wealth Proverbs 14:20; Proverbs 19:4; there is that which is cherished for those in elevated and fashionable circles; there is that which is formed for beauty of person, or graceful manners, rather than for the solid virtues of the heart; there is that which is created in the sunshine of life - the affection of those “swallow friends; who retire in the winter, and return in the spring.” Compare the concluding remarks on the book of Job. Such friendship is always tested by calamity; and when affliction comes, they who in the days of prosperity were surrounded by many flatterers and admirers, are surprised to find how few there were among them who truly loved them.

“In the wind and tempest of his frown,

Distinction, with a broad and powerful fan,

Puffing at all, winnows the light away;

And what hath mass or matter by itself,

Lies, rich in virtue and unmingled.”

Troilus and Cressida.

So common has this been - so little confidence can be placed in professed friends in time of adversity, that we are sometimes disposed to

believe that there is more truth than fancy in the representation of the poet when he says:

"And what is friendship but a name,
A charm that lulls to sleep;
A shade that follows wealth or fame.
But leaves the wretch to weep?"

Yet there is true friendship in the world. It existed between Damon and Pythias, and its power and beauty were still more strikingly illustrated in the warm affection of David and Jonathan. In the trials of David - though raised from the condition of a shepherd boy - and though having no powerful friends at court, the son of Saul never forsook him, and never gave him occasion to suspect the sincerity or the depth of his affection. With what exquisite beauty he sang of that attachment when Jonathan was dead!

"I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan.
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me:
Thy love to me was wonderful,

Passing the love of women."

2 Samuel 1:26

True friendship, founded on sincere love, so rare, so difficult to be found, so little known among the gay and the great, is one of the richest of Heaven's blessings to man, and when enjoyed, should be regarded as more than a compensation for all of show, and splendor, and flattery that wealth can obtain.

"Though choice of follies fasten on the great,
None clings more obstinate, than fancy fond.
That sacred friendship is their easy prey;

Caught by the wafture of a golden lure,

Or fascination of a high-born smile.

Their smiles, the great, and the coquette, throw out.

For other's hearts, tenacious of their own,

And we no less of ours, when such the bait,

Ye fortune‘s cofferers? ye powers of wealth!

Can gold gain friendship! Impudence of hope!

As well mere man an angel might beget.

Love, and love only, is the loan for love.

Lorenzo! pride repress; nor hope to find.

A friend, but what has found a friend in thee.

All like the purchase; few the price will pay,

And this makes friends such miracles below.

A friend is worth all hazards we can run.

Poor is the friendless master of a world;

A world in purchase of a friend is gain.”
Night Thoughts, Night 2

I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge - That it may not be “reckoned,” or imputed to them - λογισθείῃ logistheiēOn the meaning of this word, see the notes on Romans 4:3, and Luke 23:34; compare Acts 7:60.

Verse 17

Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me - Though all “men” forsook me, yet “God” did not. This expresses a universal truth in regard to the faithfulness of God; see Psalm 27:10; compare Job 5:17-19; Isaiah 14:1-2.

That by me the preaching might be fully known - The word “preaching,” here probably means “the gospel as preached by him.” The word rendered “might be fully known” - πληροφορηθῇ plērophorēthē- means “might obtain full credence;” that is, might be fully confirmed, so that others might be assured of its truth. The apostle doubtless means that on his trial, though forsaken by all men, he was enabled to be so steadfast in

his profession of the truth, and so calm in the prospect of death, that all who witnessed his trial saw that there was a reality in religion, and that the gospel was founded in truth. He had maintained as a preacher that the gospel was able to support the soul in trial, and he was now able to illustrate its power in his own case. He had proclaimed the gospel as the true system of religion, and he was now able to bear testimony to it with the prospect of approaching martyrdom.

The sentiment of this passage then is, that the truth of the gospel is made known, or that men may become fully assured of it, by the testimony which is borne to it by its friends in the near prospect of death. One of the most important means of establishing the truth of the gospel in the world has been the testimony borne to it by martyrs, and the spirit of unwavering confidence in God which they have evinced. And now, one of the most important methods of keeping up the knowledge of the value of religion in the world, and of convincing men of the truth of Christianity, is the spirit evinced by its friends when they are about to die. Men judge much, and justly, of the value of a system of religion by its power to comfort in the day of calamity, and to sustain the soul when about to enter on an untried state of being. That system is of little value to mankind which leaves us in the day of trial; that is of inestimable worth which will enable us to die with the firm hope of a brighter and better world. A Christian, having served his God faithfully in life, may, therefore, be eminently useful when he comes to die.

And that all the Gentiles might hear - Paul was at this time in Rome. His trial was before a pagan tribunal, and he was surrounded by Pagans. Rome, too, was then the center of the world, and at all times there was a great conflux of strangers there. His trial, therefore, gave him an opportunity of testifying to the truth of Christianity before Gentile rulers, and in such circumstances that the knowledge of his sufferings, and of the religion for which he suffered, might be conveyed by the strangers who witnessed it to the ends of the world. His main object in life was to make the gospel known to the Gentiles, and he had thus an opportunity of furthering that great cause, even on what he supposed might be the trial which would determine with him the question of life or death; compare the notes on Romans 1:10.

And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion - This may either mean that he was delivered from Nero, compared with a lion, or literally

that he was saved from being thrown to lions in the amphitheater, as was common in Rome; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 15:32.

It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to compare tyrants and persecutors with ravenous wild beasts; compare Psalm 22:13, Psalm 22:21; Jeremiah 2:30. Nero is called a "lion" by Seneca, and it was usual among pagan writers to apply the term in various senses to princes and warriors; see Grotius, in loc. The common interpretation here has been, that this refers to Nero, and there is no improbability in the interpretation. Still, it is quite as natural to suppose that the punishment which had been appointed for him, or to which he would have been subjected, was to be thrown to lions, and that in some way, now unknown to us, he had been delivered from it. Paul attributes his deliverance entirely to the Lord - but what instrumental agency there may have been, he does not specify. It seems probable that it was his own defense; that he was enabled to plead his own cause with so much ability that he found favor even with the Roman emperor, and was discharged. If it had been through the help of a friend at court, it is hardly to be supposed that he would not have mentioned the name of him to whom he owed his deliverance.

Verse 18

And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work - He does not say from "death," for he expected now to die; see 2 Timothy 4:6. But he was assured that God would keep him from shrinking from death when the hour approached; from apostasy, and from the manifestation of an improper spirit when he came to die.

And will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom - So keep me from evil that I shall reach his heavenly kingdom; see 2 Timothy 4:8.

To whom be glory forever and ever - Paul was accustomed to introduce a doxology in his writings when his heart was full (compare Romans 9:5), and in no place could it be more appropriate than here, when he had the fullest confidence that he was soon to be brought to heaven. If man is ever disposed to ascribe glory to God, it is on such an occasion.

Verse 19

Salute Prisca and Aquila - Prisca, or Priscilla, was the wife of Aquila, though her name is sometimes mentioned first. In regard to their history, see the notes at Romans 16:3. They were at Rome when Paul wrote his Epistle

to the Romans, but afterward went into Asia Minor, which was the native place of Aquila Acts 18:2, and where they probably died.

And the household of Onesiphorus; - see the notes on 2 Timothy 1:16.

Verse 20

Erastus - see the notes on Romans 16:23.

Abode at Corinth - This was his home, where he filled an important office; see the notes at Romans 16:23. It would seem that when Paul went to Rome, there was some expectation that he would accompany him, but that reasons had occurred for his remaining in Corinth. His doing so is referred to without blame.

But Trophimus - see Acts 20:4. He was a native of Asia Minor.

Have I left at Miletum sick - Probably he designed to accompany him to Rome, as he had been often with him in his journeys. On the situation of Miletus, or Miletum, see the notes on Acts 20:15.

Verse 21

Do thy diligence; - 2 Timothy 4:9.

To come before winter - Probably because of the dangers of the navigation then, and because the circumstances of the apostle were such as to demand the presence of a friend.

Eubulus, … - These names are of common occurrence in the works of the classic writers, but of the persons here referred to we know nothing.

Verse 22

The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit; - see Galatians 6:18; Romans 15:20. The subscription to this Epistle was not added by Paul himself, nor is there any evidence that it was by an inspired man, and it is of no authority. There is not the slightest evidence that Timothy was "ordained the first bishop of the church of the Ephesians," or that he was a "bishop" there at all. There is no reason to believe that he was even a "pastor" there, in the technical sense; see the notes on 1 Timothy 1:3. Compare the remarks on the subscriptions to the Epistle to the Romans, 1Corinthians, and especially Titus.

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Titus

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TITUS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Titus

Section 1. The History of Titus

Of Titus nothing more is certainly known than what we find in the epistles of Paul. It is somewhat remarkable that there is no mention of him in the Acts of the Apostles, nor does his name occur in the New Testament anywhere, except in the writings of the apostle Paul. From his incidental allusions to him, we learn the following particulars respecting him.

(1.) he was by birth a Gentile. In Galatians 2:3, he is called a Greek, and it is certain from that passage that he had not been circumcised, and the probability is, that up to the time of his conversion he had lived as other Gentiles, and had not been converted to the Jewish faith. His father and mother were, doubtless, both Greeks, and thus he was distinguished from Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess, but whose father was a Greek; Acts 16:3; compare Notes on Galatians 2:3. If Titus had been proselyted to the Jewish faith, it is to be presumed that he would have been circumcised.

(2.) he had been converted to Christianity by the instrumentality of Paul himself. This is clear from the epistle, Titus 1:4, "To Titus, mine own son, after the common faith;" see the notes at 1 Timothy 1:2. This is language which the apostle would not have used of one who had been converted by the instrumentality of another. But where he lived, and when or how he was converted, is wholly unknown. As to the time when he was converted, it is known only that this occurred before the fourteenth year after the conversion of Paul, for at that time Titus, a Christian, was with Paul at Jerusalem; Galatians 2:1. As to the place where he lived, there seems some reason to suppose that it was in some part of Asia Minor - for the Greeks abounded there; Paul laboured much there; and there were numerous converts made there to the Christian faith. Still this is not by any means certain.

(3.) Titus went with Paul to Jerusalem when he was deputed by the church at Antioch with Barnabas, to lay certain questions before the apostles and eiders there in reference to the converts from the Gentiles; Galatians 2:1. It is not known why he took Titus with him on that occasion and the reasons can be only conjectural; see Notes on Galatians 2:1. It is

possible that he was taken with him to Jerusalem because his was a case in point in regard to the question which was to come before the apostles and elders there. It is not improbable, from an expression which Paul uses in describing his visit there - "neither was Titus compelled to be circumcised " - that the case came up for discussion, and that strenuous efforts were made by the Judaizing portion there (compare Galatians 2:4), to have him circumcised. Paul and Barnabas, however, so managed the cause that the principle was settled that it was not necessary that converts from the heathen should be circumcised; Acts 15:19-20.

(4.) after the council at Jerusalem, it seems probable that Titus returned with Paul and Barnabas, accompanied by Silas and Judas Acts 15:23, and that afterwards he attended the apostle for a considerable time in his travels and labours. This appears from a remark in 2 Corinthians 8:23; "Whether any do inquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow-helper concerning you." From this it would seem, that he had been with Paul; that he was as yet not well known; and that the fact that he had been seen with him had led to inquiry who he was, and what was the office which he sustained. That he was also a companion of Paul, and quite essential to his comfort in his work, is apparent from the following allusions to him in the same epistle - 2 Corinthians 7:6 - "God, that comforteth those who are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;" 2 Corinthians 2:13. "I had no rest in my spirit because I found not Titus my brother;" 2 Corinthians 7:13. "Yea and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus;" compare 2 Timothy 4:10; 2 Corinthians 12:18.

(5.) there is reason to believe that Titus spent some time with the apostle in Ephesus. For the First Epistle to the Corinthians was written at Ephesus, and was sent by the hand of Titus; Introduction to 1Corinthians, Section 6. It is to be presumed also, that he would on such an occasion send some one with the epistle in whom he had entire confidence, and who had been so long with him as to become familiar with his views. For Titus, on this occasion, was sent not only to bear the epistle, but to endeavour to heal the divisions and disorders there, and to complete a collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem which the apostle had himself commenced; compare the notes at 2 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 7:6; 2 Corinthians 8:6. After this he met Paul in Macedonia 2 Corinthians 7:5-6, but whether he was with

him when he went with the collection to Jerusalem, and during his imprisonment in Cesarea, or on his voyage to Rome, we have no information.

(6.) we next hear of him as being left by the apostle in the island of Crete, that he might "set in order the things that were wanting, and ordain elders in every city;" Titus 1:5. This is supposed to have occurred about the year 62, and after the first imprisonment of the apostle at Rome. It is evidently implied that the apostle had been himself there with him, and that he had undertaken to accomplish some important object there, but that something had prevented his completing it, and that he had left Titus to finish it. This was clearly a temporary arrangement, for there is no evidence that it was designed that Titus should be a permanent "bishop" of Crete, or that he remained there long. That he did not design that he should be a permanent bishop of that island, is clear from Titus 3:12, where the apostle directs him, when he should send Artemas to take his place, to come to him to Nicopolis. If Titus was a prelatical bishop, the apostle would not in this summary manner have superseded him, or removed him from his diocese.

(7.) he was with Paul in Rome during his second imprisonment there. He did not, however, remain with him until his trial, but left him and went into Dalmatia; 2 Timothy 4:10. For the probable reason why he had gone there, see Notes on that place. What became of him afterward, we are not informed. The tradition is, that he returned to Crete, and preached the gospel there and in the neighbouring islands, and died at the age of 94. But this tradition depends on no certain evidence.

Section 2. The Island of Crete

As Paul Titus 1:5 says that he had left Titus in Crete to perform an important service there, and as the instructions in this epistle doubtless had some peculiar applicability to the state of things existing there, it is of importance, in order to a correct understanding of the epistle, to have some knowledge of that island, and of the circumstances in which the gospel was introduced there.

The island of Crete, now Candia, is one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean, at the south of all the Cyclades. See the Map of Asia Minor, prefixed to the Acts of the Apostles. Its name is said by some to have been derived from the Curetes, who are supposed to have been its first

inhabitants; by others, from the nymph Crete, daughter of Hesperus; and by others, from Cres, a son of Jupiter and the nymph Idaea. The ancient authors in general say that Crete was originally peopled from Palestine. According to Bochart (Lib. 5, c. 15), that part of Palestine which lies by the Mediterranean was called by the Arabs Keritha, and by Syrians Creth; and the Hebrews called the inhabitants Crethi, or Crethim, which the Septuagint has rendered Κρητας Krētas- Cretans; Ezekiel 25:16; Zephaniah 2:5. It would be easy to pass from Palestine to the island of Crete. Sir Isaac Newton, also, is of opinion that Crete was peopled from Palestine. He says, "Many of the Phoenicians and Syrians, in the year before Christ 1045, fled from Zidon, and from king David, into Asia Minor, Crete, Greece, and Libya, and introduced letters, music, poetry, the Octaeteris, metals and their fabrication and other arts, sciences, and customs of the Phoenicians. Along with these Phoenicians came a sort of men skilled in religious mysteries, arts, and sciences of Phoenicia, and settled in several places, under the names of Curetes, Idaei, Dactyli," etc.

According to Pliny, the extent of Crete from east to west is about 270 miles, but its breadth nowhere exceeds fifty miles. The early inhabitants are generally supposed to be the Eteocretes of Homer; but their origin is unknown. Minos, who had expelled his brother Sarpedon from the throne, first gave laws to the Cretans, and, having conquered the pirates who infested the Aegean sea, established a powerful navy. In the Trojan war, Idomeneus, sovereign of Crete, led its forces to war in eighty vessels - a number little inferior to those commanded by Agamemnon himself. At this period, the island appears to have been inhabited by a mixed population of Greeks and barbarians. After the Trojan war, the principal cities formed themselves into several republics, for the most part independent, while some of them were connected with federal ties. The Cretan code of laws was supposed by many to have furnished Lycurgus with the model of his most salutary regulations.

It was founded on the just basis of liberty and an equality of rights, and its great aim was to promote social harmony and peace, by enforcing temperance and frugality. In regard to this code, see Anthon'S Class. Dic., Art. Creta. In the time of Polybius (bc 203), the Cretans had much degenerated from their ancient character; for he charges them repeatedly

with the grossest immorality, and the basest vices. Polyb. 4,47,53; Id. 6,46. We know, also, with what severity they are reproved by Paul, in the words of Epimenides; see the notes at Titus 1:12. Crete was subdued by the Romans, and became a part of a Roman province. The interior of the island is very hilly and woody, and intersected with fertile valleys. Mount Ida, in the center of the island, is the principal mountain, and surpasses all the others in elevation. The island contains no lakes, and its rivers are mostly mountain torrents, which are dry during the summer season.

The valleys, or sloping plains, in the island are represented as very fertile. The greater portion of the land is not cultivated; but it might produce sugar-cane, excellent wine, and the best kind of fruit. It has a delightful climate, and is remarkably healthful. The ancients asserted that this delightful island, the birth-place of Jupiter, was freed, by the indulgence of the gods, from every noxious animal. No quadrupeds of a ferocious character belong to it. The wild goat is the only inhabitant of the forest and the lofty mountains, and sheep overspread the plains, and graze undisturbed by ravenous enemies. The island now is under Turkish rule, and is divided into three pachaliks; but the inhabitants are mostly Greeks, who are kept in a state of great depression. The native Candians are of the Greek church, and are allowed the free exercise of their religion. The island is divided into twelve bishoprics, the bishop of one of which assumes the title of archbishop, and is appointed by the patriarch of Constantinople. The situation of this island for commerce can scarcely be surpassed. It is at an almost equal distance from Asia, Europe, and Africa, and might be made the emporium for the manufactures and agricultural productions of each; but, from the oppressive nature of the government, the indolence of the Turks, and the degraded state of the Greeks, those advantages are not improved, and its condition partakes of that of the general condition of the Turkish empire.

This island was formerly famous for its hundred cities; it is distinguished in the ancient fabulous legends for the arrival there of Europa, on a bull, from Phoenicia; for the laws of Minos; for the labyrinth, the work of Daedalus; and, above all, as the place where Jupiter was born and was buried. According to the fables of mythology, he was born in a cavern near Lyctus, or Cnosus; was rocked in a golden cradle; was fed with honey, and

with the milk of the goat Amalthea, while the Curetes danced around him, clashing their arms, to prevent his cries from being heard by Saturn. He became, according to the legend, the king of Crete, and was buried on the island. See Anthon, Class. Dic., Art. Jupiter.

Section 3. The introduction of the gospel into Crete

We have no certain information in regard to the time when the gospel was first preached in Crete, nor by whom it was done. There are some circumstances mentioned, however, which furnish all the light which we need on this point, in order to an understanding of the epistle before us. Among the persons who were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and who were converted there, Cretans are mentioned Acts 2:11; and it is highly probable that, when they returned to their homes, they made the gospel known to their countrymen. Yet history is wholly silent as to the method by which it was done, and as to the result on the minds of the inhabitants. As no visit of any of the apostles to that island is mentioned by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, it may be presumed that the gospel there had not produced any very marked success; and the early history of Christianity there is to us unknown.

It is clear from the epistle before us Titus 1:5, that the apostle Paul was there on some occasion, and that the gospel, either when he was there or before, was attended with success. “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city.” Here it is manifest that Paul had been there with Titus; that he had commenced some arrangements which he had not been able himself to complete; and that the gospel had had an effect extensively on the island, since he was to ordain eiders “in every city.”

It is not certainly known, however, when Paul was there. There is no mention in the Acts of the Apostles of his having been there, except when he was on his way to Rome Acts 27:7-8; and this was in such circumstances as to preclude the supposition that that was the time referred to in this epistle, for.

(1.) Titus was not then with him:

(2) there is no reason to suppose that he remained there long enough to preach the gospel to any extent, or to establish churches.

He was sailing to Rome as a prisoner, and there is no probability that he would be permitted to go at large and preach for any considerable time. There is, therefore, a moral certainty that it must have been on some other occasion. “It is striking,” says Neander (History of the Planting of the Christian Church, vol. 1, pp. 400,401), “that while Luke in the Acts reports so fully and circumstantially the occurrences of the apostles last voyage to Rome, and mentions his stay in Crete, he says not a word (contrary to his usual practice in such cases) of the friendly reception given to him by the Christians there, or even of his meeting them at all. Hence, we may conclude that no Christian churches existed in that island, though that transient visit would naturally give rise to the intention of planting the gospel there, which he probably fulfilled soon after he was set at liberty, when he came into these parts.”

There is reason to believe that Paul, after his first imprisonment, at Rome, was released, and again visited Asia Minor and Macedonia. See Introduction to 2Timothy. On this journey, it is not improbable that he may have visited Crete, having, as Neander supposes, had his attention called to this island as a desirable place for preaching the gospel, when on his way to Rome. “If we may be allowed to suppose,” says Dr. Paley (Hor. Paul.), “that Paul, after his liberation at Rome, sailed into Asia, taking Crete in his way; that from Asia, and from Ephesus, the capital of that country, he proceeded into Macedonia, and, crossing the peninsula in his progress, came into the neighbourhood of Nicopolis, we have a route which falls in with everything. It executes the intention expressed by the apostle of visiting Colosse and Philippi, as soon as he should be set at liberty at Rome. It allows him to leave ‹Titus at Crete,‘ and ‹Timothy at Ephesus, as he went into Macedonia,‘ and to write to both, not long after, from the peninsula of Greece, and probably from the neighbourhood of Nicopolis, thus bringing together the dates of these two letters” (1Tim. and Titus), “and thereby accounting for that affinity between them, both in subject and language, which our remarks have pointed out. I confess that the journey which we have thus traced out for Paul is in a great measure hypothetic; but it should be observed that it is a species of consistency which seldom belongs to falsehood, to admit of an hypothesis which includes a great number of remote and independent circumstances without contradiction.” See

Neander, History of the Planting of the Churches, i. 401. Compare, however, Introduction to 1Timothy, Section 2.

Why Paul left Crete without completing the work which was to be done, and especially without ordaining the eiders himself, is not certainly known. There is evidently a striking resemblance between the circumstances which induced him to leave Titus there, and those which existed at Ephesus when he left Timothy there to complete an important work; 1 Timothy 1:3-4. We know that Paul was driven away from Ephesus before he had finished the work there which he had purposed to accomplish Acts 20:1; and it is not at all improbable that some such disturbance took place in Crete. Compare Koppe, Proleg. p. 194. When he thus left, he committed to Titus the work which he had designed to accomplish, with instructions to finish it as soon as possible, and then to come to him at Nicopolis; Titus 3:12.

Section 3:12.

4. The place, time, and occasion of writing the epistle

There has been much diversity of opinion as to the time and place of writing this epistle.

In regard to the place, there can be little doubt that it was at a Nicopolis; for the apostle, in Titus 3:12, directs Titus to come to him at that place. But it is not easy to determine what Nicopolis is meant, for there were many cities of that name. The person who affixed the subscription at the end of the epistle, affirms that it was "Nicopolis of Macedonia;" but, as has been frequently remarked in these Notes, these subscriptions are of no authority. The name Nicopolis (meaning, properly, a city of victory - νίκη nikēand πόλις) was given to several places. There was a city of this name in Thrace, on the river Nessus, now called Nikopi. There was also a city of the same name in Epirus, two in Moesia, another in Armenia, another in Cilicia, and another in Egypt, in the vicinity of Alexandria. It is by no means easy to ascertain which of these cities is meant, though, as Paul was accustomed to travel in Greece and Asia Minor, there seems to be a probability that one of those cities is intended.

The only way of determining this with any degree of probability, is, to ascertain what city was best known by that name at the time when the epistle was written, or what city one would be likely to go to, if he were directed to go to Nicopolis, without any further specification - as if one

were directed to go to Philadelphia, London, or Rome. In such a case, he would go to the principal city of that name, though there might be many other smaller places of that name also. But even this would not be absolutely certain, for Paul may have specified to Titus the place where he expected to go before he left him, so that he would be in no danger of doubt where the place was. But if we were to allow this consideration to influence us in regard to the place, there can be little doubt that the city which he meant was Nicopolis in Epirus, and the common opinion has been that the apostle alludes to this city.

This Nicopolis was situated in Epirus, in Greece, north-west of Corinth and Athens, on the Ambracian gulf, and near its mouth. See the Map prefixed to the Acts of the Apostles. On the same gulf, and directly opposite to Nicopolis, is Actium, the place where Augustus achieved a signal victory over Mark Antony; and the city of Nicopolis he built in honour of that victory. Augustus was anxious to raise this city to the highest rank among the cities of Greece, and caused games to be celebrated there, with great pomp, every few years. Having afterwards fallen into decay, the city was restored by the emperor Julian. Modern travelers describe the remains of Nicopolis as very extensive; the site which they now occupy is called Prevesa Vecchia. See Anthon‘s Class. Dic. It should be said, however, that there is no absolute certainty about the place where the epistle was written. Macknight and Benson suppose it was at Colosse; Lardner supposes it was in or near Macedonia; Hug, at Ephesus.

If the epistle was written from the Nicopolis referred to, then it was probably after Paul‘s first imprisonment at Rome. If so, it was written about the year 63 or 64. But there is great diversity of opinion as to the time. Lardner and Hug place it in the year 56. It is of no material importance to be able to determine the exact time.

The occasion on which it was written is specified by the apostle himself, with such clearness, that there can be no doubt on that point. Paul had left Titus in Crete, to “set in order the things which were wanting, and to ordain elders in every city” Titus 1:5; and as he had himself, perhaps, been called to leave suddenly, it was important that Titus should have more full instructions than he had been able to give him on various points of duty, or,

at any rate, that he should have permanent instructions to which he could refer. The epistle is occupied, therefore, mainly with such counsels as were appropriate to a minister of the gospel engaged in the duties which Titus was left to discharge.

The principal difficulties which it was apprehended Titus would meet with in the performance of his duties there, and which in fact made his labours there desirable, arose from two sources: (1.) the character of the Cretans themselves; and (2.) the influence of Judaizing teachers.

(1.) the character of the Cretans themselves was such as to demand the vigilance and care of Titus. They were a people characterized for insincerity, falsehood, and gross living; Titus 1:12. There was great danger, therefore, that their religion would be hollow and insincere, and great need of caution lest they should be corrupted from the simplicity and purity required in the gospel; Titus 1:13.

(2.) the influence of Judaizing teachers was to be guarded against. It is evident from Acts 2:11, that there were Jews residing there; and it is probable that it was by those who had gone from that island to Jerusalem to attend the feast of the Pentecost, and who had been converted on that occasion, that the gospel was first introduced there. From this epistle, also, it is clear that one of the great dangers to piety in the churches of Crete, arose from the efforts of such teachers, and from the plausible arguments which they would use in favour of the Mosaic law; see Titus 1:10, Titus 1:14-16; Titus 3:9. To counteract the effect of their teaching, it was necessary to have ministers of the gospel appointed in every important place, who should be qualified for their work. To make these arrangements, was the great design for which Titus was left there; and to give him full information as to the kind of ministers which was needed, this epistle was written.

There is a very striking resemblance between this epistle and the first epistle to Timothy. See Paley‘s Horae Paulinae. “Both letters were addressed to persons left by the writer to preside in their respective churches during his absence. Both letters are principally occupied in describing the qualifications to be sought for in those whom they should

appoint to offices in the church; and the ingredients of this description are, in both letters, nearly the same. Timothy and Titus, likewise, are cautioned against the same prevailing corruptions, and, in particular, against the same misdirection of their cares and studies." Paley. This similarity is found, not only in the general structure of the epistles, but also in particular phrases and expressions; compare 1 Timothy 1:2-3, with Titus 1:4-5; 1 Timothy 1:4, with Titus 1:14; Titus 3:9; 1 Timothy 4:12, with Titus 3:7; Titus 2:15; 1 Timothy 3:2-4, with Titus 1:6-8.

It is evident, from this, that the epistles were written by the same person, and to those who were in substantially the same circumstances. They are incidental proofs that they are genuine, and were written by the person, and to the persons, whose names appear, and on the occasions which are said in the epistle to have existed. On the subjects in this introduction, the reader may consult Macknight's Introduction to the Epistle; Michaelis's Introduction; Benson, Koppe, and especially Paley's *Horae Paulinae* - a work which will never be consulted without profit.

TITUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This chapter embraces the following points:

1. The usual inscription and salutation; Titus 1:1-4. In this Paul declares himself to be the author of the epistle, and asserts in the strongest manner his claims to the apostleship. He alludes to the great cause in which, as an apostle, he was engaged - as acting under the eternal plan of God for the salvation of the elect, and appointed to communicate the glorious truths of that system which had been now revealed to mankind. The object of this seems to be to impress the mind of Titus with his right to give him instruction.

2. A statement of the object for which Titus had been left in Crete, and the general character of the work which he was to perform there; Titus 1:5.

3. The qualifications of those who were to be ordained to the ministry; Titus 1:6-9. The characteristics laid down are substantially the same as in Titus 1:10-13. Those reasons arose from the character of the Cretans. There were many deceivers there, and the character of the Cretans was such that there was great danger that they who professed to be Christians would be hypocritical, and if put into the eldership that they would do great injury to the cause.

5. A solemn charge to Titus to rebuke them faithfully for their prevailing and characteristic vices, and to avoid giving any countenance to that for which they were so much distinguished; Titus 1:13-16.

Verse 1

Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ - See notes at Romans 1:1; compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:1-5.

According to the faith of God‘s elect - Compare the Romans 8:33 note; Ephesians 1:4 note; 2 Timothy 2:10 note. The meaning of the word rendered here, “according to” - κατὰ kata- is, probably, with reference to; that is, he was appointed to be an apostle with respect to the faith of those whom God had chosen, or, in order that they might be led to believe the gospel. God had chosen them to salvation, but he intended that it should be

in connection with their believing, and, in order to that, he had appointed Paul to be an apostle that he might go and make known to them the gospel. It is the purpose of God to save His people, but he does not mean to save them as infidels, or unbelievers. He intends that they shall be believers first - and hence he sends his ministers that they may become such.

And the acknowledging of the truth - In order to secure the acknowledgment or recognition of the truth. The object of the apostleship, as it is of the ministry in general, is to secure the proper acknowledgment of the truth among men.

Which is after godliness - Which tends to promote piety towards God. On the word rendered godliness, see the notes at 1 Timothy 2:2; 1 Timothy 3:16. - The truth, the acknowledgment of which Paul was appointed to secure, was not scientific, historical, or political truth: it was that of religion - that which was adapted to lead men to a holy life, and to prepare them for a holy heaven.

Verse 2

In hope of eternal life - Margin, for. Greek, ἐπ᾽ ἐλπίδι ep' elpidiThis does not mean that Paul cherished the hope of eternal life, but that the "faith of the elect," which he aimed to secure, was in order that people might have the hope of eternal life. The whole system which he was appointed to preach was designed to secure to man a well-founded hope of salvation; compare the notes, 2 Timothy 1:10.

Which God, that cannot lie - On the phrase" cannot lie," see the notes at Hebrews 6:13. The fact that God cannot lie; that it is his nature always to speak the truth; and that no circumstances can ever occur in which He will depart from it, is the foundation of all our hopes of salvation.

Promised - The only hope of salvation is in the promise of God. It is only as we can have evidence that He has assured us that we may be saved, that we are authorized to cherish any hope of salvation. That promise is not made to us as individuals, or by name, but it becomes ours:

(1) because He has made a general promise that they who repent and believe shall be saved; and,

(2) because, we may have evidence that we have repented, and do believe the gospel. If this is so, we fairly come under the promise of salvation, and may apply it to ourselves.

Before the world began - That is, the purpose was then formed, and the promise may be considered as in fact then made; - for a purpose in the mind of God, though it is not as yet made known, is equivalent to a promise; compare the Matthew 25:34 note; 2 Timothy 1:9 note.

Verse 3

But hath in due times - At the proper time; the time which he had intended; the best time: see the notes at 1 Timothy 2:6; compare the notes at Matthew 2:2.

Manifested his word through preaching - See the notes at 2 Timothy 2:10. The meaning here is, that he has made known his eternal purpose through the preaching of the gospel; compare the notes at Romans 10:14-15.

Which is committed unto me - Not exclusively, but in common with others; see the notes at 2 Timothy 1:11.

According to the commandment of God our Saviour - Paul always claimed to be divinely commissioned, and affirmed that he was engaged in the work of preaching by the authority of God; see Galatians 1:1-12; 1 Corinthians 1:1; Romans 1:1-4.

Verse 4

To Titus - See the Introduction, Section 1.

Mine own son - Notes, 1 Timothy 1:2.

After the common faith - The faith of all Christians; - equivalent to saying "my son in the gospel." That is, Paul had been the means of converting him by preaching that gospel which was received by all who were Christians.

Grace, mercy, and peace … - See the notes at Romans 1:7.

Verse 5

For this cause left I thee in Crete - Compare the notes, 1 Timothy 1:3. On the situation of Crete, see the Introduction, Section 2.

That thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting - Margin, "left undone." The Greek is: "the things that are left;" that is, those which were left unfinished; referring, doubtless, to arrangements which had been commenced, but which for some cause had been left incomplete. Whether this had occurred because he had been driven away by persecution, or called away by important duties demanding his attention elsewhere, cannot now be determined. The word rendered "set in order", ἐπιδιορθώσῃ epidiorthōsēoccurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It

means, properly, "to make straight upon, and then to put further to rights, to arrange further." Robinson, Lexicon - There were things left unfinished which he was to complete. One of these things, and perhaps the principal, was to appoint elders in the various cities where the gospel had been preached.

And ordain - The word "ordain" has now acquired a technical signification which it cannot be shown that it has in the New Testament. It means, in common usage, to "invest with a ministerial function or sacerdotal power; to introduce, and establish, and settle in the pastoral office with the customary forms and solemnities" (Webster); and it may be added, with the idea always connected with it, of the imposition of hands. But the word used here does not necessarily convey this meaning, or imply that Titus was to go through what would now be called an ordination service. It means to set, place, or constitute; then, to set over anything, as a steward or other officer (see Matthew 24:45; Luke 12:42; Acts 6:3), though without reference to any particular mode of investment with an office; see the word, "ordain," explained in the notes at Acts 1:22; Acts 14:23. Titus was to appoint or set them over the churches, though with what ceremony is now unknown. There is no reason to suppose that he did this except as the result of the choice of the people; compare the notes at Acts 6:3.

Elders - Greek: Presbyters; see the word explained in the notes at Acts 14:23. These "elders," or "Presbyters," were also called "bishops" (compare the notes at 1 Timothy 3:1), for Paul immediately, in describing their qualifications, calls them bishops: - "ordain elders in every city - if any be blameless - for a bishop must be blameless," etc. If the elders and bishops in the times of the apostles were of different ranks, this direction would be wholly unmeaningful. It would be the same as if the following direction were given to one who was authorized to appoint officers over an army: "Appoint captains over each company, who shall be of good character, and acquainted with military tactics, for a Brigadier General must be of good character, and acquainted with the rules of war." - That the same rank is denoted also by the terms Presbyter and Bishop here, is further apparent because the qualifications which Paul states as requisite for the "bishop" are not those which pertain to a prelate or a diocesan bishop, but to one who was a pastor of a church, or an evangelist. It is clear, from Titus 1:7, that those whom Titus was to appoint were "bishops," and yet it is absurd to suppose that the apostle meant prelatical bishops, for no one can believe

that such bishops were to be appointed in "every city" of the island. According to all modern notions of Episcopacy, one such bishop would have been enough for such an island as Crete, and indeed it has been not infrequently maintained that Titus himself was in fact the Bishop of that Diocese. But if these were not prelates who were to be ordained by Titus, then it is clear that the term "bishop" in the New Testament is given to the Presbyters or elders; that is, to all ministers of the gospel. That usage should never have been departed from.

In every city - Crete was anciently celebrated for the number of its cities. In one passage Homer ascribes to the island 100 cities (*Iliad* ii. 649), in another, 90 cities (*Odyssey* xix. 174). It may be presumed that many of these cities were towns of not very considerable size, and yet it would seem probable that each one was large enough to have a church, and to maintain the gospel. Paul, doubtless, expected that Titus would travel over the whole island, and endeavor to introduce the gospel in every important place.

As I had appointed thee - As I commanded thee, or gave thee direction - διεταξάμην dietaxamēn- This is a different word from the one used in the former part of the verse - and rendered "ordain" - καθίστημι kathistēmiIt does not mean that Titus was to ordain elders in the same manner as Paul had ordained him, but that he was to set them over the cities as he had directed him to do. He had, doubtless, given him oral instructions, when he left him, as to the way in which it was to be done.

Verse 6

If any be blameless, the husband of one wife - See the notes at 1 Timothy 3:2.

Having faithful children - See the notes at 1 Timothy 3:4-5. That is, having a family well-governed, and well-trained in religion. The word here - πιστὰ pista- applied to the children, and rendered faithful, does not necessarily mean that they should be truly pious, but it is descriptive of those who had been well-trained, and were in due subordination. If a man's family were not of his character - if his children were insubordinate, and opposed to religion - if they were decided infidels or scoffers, it would show that there was such a deficiency in the head of the family that he could not be safely entrusted with the government of the church; compare the notes at 1 Timothy 3:5. It is probably true, also, that the preachers at that time would be selected, as far as practicable, from those whose families

were all Christians. There might be great impropriety in placing a man over a church, a part of whose family were Jews or heathens.

Not accused of riot - That is, whose children were not accused of riot. This explains what is meant by faithful. The word rendered "riot" - ἀσωτία asōtia- is translated excess in Ephesians 5:18, and riot in Titus 1:6; 1 Peter 4:4. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament, though the word riotous is found in Luke 15:13; see it explained in the notes at Ephesians 5:18. The meaning here is, that they should not be justly accused of this; this should not be their character. It would, doubtless, be a good reason now why a man should not be ordained to the ministry that he had a dissipated and disorderly family.

Or unruly - Insubordinate; ungoverned; see the notes, 1 Timothy 1:9; Luke 3:4.

Verse 7

For a bishop must be blameless - 1 Timothy 3:2.

As the steward of God - See notes, 1 Corinthians 4:1-2. A man, in order to perform the duties of such an office, should be one against whom no accusation could lie.

Not self-willed - Compare 2 Peter 2:10. The word - αὐθάδης authadēs- does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means, properly, self-complacent; and then, assuming, arrogant, imperious; Robinson, Lexicon - The gist of the offence - the very "head and front" - is that of being self-complacent; a trait of character which, of necessity, makes a man imperious, dogmatical, impatient of contradiction, and unyielding. Such a man, evidently, is not fit for the office of a minister of the gospel.

Not soon angry - See notes, 1 Timothy 3:2, and the margin there.

Not given to wine - Notes, 1 Timothy 3:3.

No striker - Notes, 1 Timothy 3:3.

Not given to filthy lucre - In 1 Timothy 3, "Not given of filthy lucre." The same Greek word is used.

Verse 8

But a lover of hospitality - Notes, 1 Timothy 3:2.

A lover of good men - Margin, "or things." The Greek (φιλάγαθος philagathos) means, a lover of good, and may apply to any thing that is good. It may refer to good men, as included under the general term good; and there is no more essential qualification of a bishop than this. A man who sustains the office of a minister of the gospel, should love every good

object, and be ever ready to promote it; and he should love every good man, no matter in what denomination or country he may be found - no matter what his complexion, and no matter what his rank in life; compare the notes at Philemon 4:8.

Sober - Notes, 1 Timothy 1:2.

Just - Upright in his dealings with all. A minister can do little good who is not; compare the notes at Philemon 4:8.

Holy - Pious, or devout. Faithful in all his duties to God; Notes, 1 Timothy 2:8.

Temperate - ἐγκρατῆ egkratēHaving power or control over all his passions. We apply the term now with reference to abstinence from intoxicating liquors. In the Scriptures, it includes not only that, but also much more. It implies control over all our passions and appetites. See it explained in the notes at Acts 24:25; compare 1 Corinthians 7:9; 1 Corinthians 9:25; Galatians 5:23.

Verse 9

Holding fast the faithful word - That is, the true doctrines of the gospel. This means that he is to hold this fast, in opposition to one who would wrest it away, and in opposition to all false teachers, and to all systems of false philosophy. He must be a man who is firm in his belief of the doctrines of the Christian faith, and a man who can be relied on to maintain and defend those doctrines in all circumstances; compare notes, 2 Thessalonians 2:15.

As he hath been taught - Margin, "in teaching." Greek "According to the teaching." The sense is, according to that doctrine as taught by the inspired teachers of religion. It does not mean as he had individually been taught; but he was to hold the faith as it was delivered by those whom the Saviour had appointed to make it known to mankind. The phrase "the doctrine," or "the teaching," had a sort of technical meaning, denoting the gospel as that which had been communicated to mankind, not by human reason, but by teaching.

That he may be able by sound doctrine - By sound teaching, or instruction; Notes, 1 Timothy 1:10; 1 Timothy 4:16. He was not to dictate, or to denounce; but to seek to convince by the statement of the truth; see the notes at 2 Timothy 2:25.

Both to exhort and to convince - To persuade them, or to bring them over to your views by kind exhortation, and by the instruction which shall

convince. The former method is to be used where men know the truth, but need encouragement to follow it; the latter, where they are ignorant, or are opposed to it. Both exhortation and argument are to be used by the ministers of religion.

The gainsayers - Opposers Literally, those who speak against; that is, against the truth; Notes, Romans 10:21.

Verse 10

For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers - There are many persons who are indisposed to submit to authority (see the word unruly in Titus 1:6); many who are vain talkers - who are more given to talk than to the duties of practical religion (see the character of "Talkative," in the Pilgrim's Progress); and many who live to deceive others under the mask of religion. They make great pretensions to piety; they are fluent in argument, and they urge their views in a plausible manner.

Specially they of the circumcision - Jews, spoken of here as "of the circumcision" particularly, because they urged the necessity of circumcision in order that men might be saved; Notes, Acts 15:1. This proves that there were not a few Jews in the island of Crete.

Verse 11

Whose mouths must be stopped - The word here rendered stopped - ἐπιστομιζειν epistomizein- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, to check, or curb, as with a bridle; to restrain, or bridle in; and then, to put to silence. It is, of course, implied here that this was to be done in a proper way, and in accordance with the spirit of the gospel. The apostle gives Timothy no civil power to do it, nor does he direct him to call in the aid of the civil arm. All the agency which he specifies as proper for this, is that of argument and exhortation. These are the proper means of silencing the advocates of error; and the history of the church shows that the ministers of religion can be safely entrusted with no other; compare Psalm 32:8-9.

Who subvert whole houses - Whole families; compare Matthew 23:14; 2 Timothy 3:6. That is, they turn them aside from the faith.

Teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake - For gain. That is, they inculcate such doctrines as will make themselves popular, and as will give them access to the confidence of the people. They make it their first object to acquire influence as ministers of religion, and then abuse that in order to obtain money from the people. This they would

doubtless do under many pretences; such as that it was needful for the support of the gospel, or for the relief of the poor, or perhaps for the assistance of distant Christians in persecution. Religion is the most powerful principle that ever governs the mind; and if a man has the control of that, it is no difficult thing to induce men to give up their worldly possessions. In all ages, there have been impostors who have taken advantage of the powerful principle of religion to obtain money from their deluded followers. No people can be too vigilant in regard to pretended religious teachers; and while it is undoubtedly their duty to contribute liberally for the support of the gospel, and the promotion of every good cause, it is no less their duty to examine with care every proposed object of benevolence, and to watch with an eagle eye those who have the disbursement of the charities of the church. It is very rare that ministers ought to have much to do with disposing of the funds given for benevolent purposes; and when they do, they should in all cases be associated with their lay brethren; see Paley's *Horae Paulinae*, chap. iv., No. 1,3, note; compare 1 Corinthians 16:3. On the phrase "filthy lucre," see the notes at 1 Timothy 3:3.

Verse 12

One of themselves - That is, one of the Cretans. The quotation here shows that Paul had his eye not only on the Jewish teachers there, but on the native Cretans. The meaning is, that, alike in reference to Jewish teachers and native-born Cretans, there was need of the utmost vigilance in the selection of persons for the ministry. They all had well-known traits of character, which made it proper that no one should be introduced into the ministry without extreme caution. It would seem, also, from the reasoning of Paul here, that the trait of character here referred to pertained not only to the native Cretans, but also to the character of the Jews residing there; for he evidently means that the caution should extend to all who dwelt on the island,

Even a prophet of their own - Or, a poet; for the word "prophet" - προφήτης prophētēs- like the Latin word "vates," was often applied to poets, because they were supposed to be inspired of the muses, or to write under the influence of inspiration. So Virgil, Ecl. ix. 32: Et me fecere poetam Pierides … me quoque dicunt vatem pastores. Varro, Ling. Lat. vi. 3: Vates poetae dicti sunt. The term "prophet" was also given by the Greeks to one who was regarded as the interpreter of the gods, or who explained

the obscure responses of the oracles. As such an interpreter - as one who thus saw future events, he was called a prophet; and as the poets claimed much of this kind of knowledge, the name was given to them. It was also given to one who was regarded as eminently endowed with wisdom, or who had that kind of sagacity by which the results of present conduct might be foreseen, as if he was under the influence of a kind of inspiration.

The word might have been applied to the person here referred to - Epimenides - in this latter sense, because he was eminently endowed with wisdom. He was one of the seven wise men of Greece. He was a contemporary of Solon, and was born at Phaestus, in the island of Crete, b.c. 659, and is said to have reached the age of 157 years. Many marvelous tales are told of him (see Anthon, Class. Dic) which are commonly supposed to be fabulous, and which are to be traced to the invention of the Cretans. The event in his life which is best known is, that he visited Athens, at the request of the inhabitants, to prepare the way by sacrifices for the introduction of the laws of Solon. He was supposed to have contact with the gods, and it was presumed that a special sacredness would attend the religious services in which he officiated. On this account, also, as well as because he was a poet, the name prophet may have been given him. Feuds and animosities prevailed at Athens, which it was supposed such a man might allay, and thus prepare them for the reception of the laws of Solon. The Athenians wished to reward him with wealth and public honors; but he refused to accept of any remuneration, and only demanded a branch of the sacred olive tree, and a decree of perpetual friendship between Athens and his native city. After his death, divine honors were paid to him by the Cretans. He wrote a poem on the Argonautic expedition, and other poems, which are now entirely lost. The quotation here is supposed to be made from a treatise on oracles and responses, which is also lost.

The Cretians are always liars - This character of the Cretans is abundantly sustained by the examples adduced by Wetstein. To be a Cretan, became synonymous with being a liar, in the same way as to be a Corinthian, became synonymous with living a licentious life; compare Introduction to 1Corinthians, Section 1. Thus, the scholiast says, παροιμία ἐστι τὸ κρητίζειν ἐπὶ τοῦ ψεύδεσθαι paroimia esti to krētizein epi tou pseudesthai- “to act the Cretan, is a proverb for to lie.” The particular reason why they had this character abroad, rather than other people, is unknown. Bishop Warburton supposes that they acquired it by claiming to

have among them the tomb of Jupiter, and by maintaining that all the gods, like Jupiter, were only mortals who had been raised to divine honors. Thus the Greeks maintained that they always proclaimed a falsehood by asserting this opinion. But their reputation for falsehood seems to have arisen from some deeper cause than this, and to have pertained to their general moral character. They were only more eminent in what was common among the ancient pagan, and what is almost universal among the pagan now; compare the notes at Ephesians 4:25.

Evil beasts - In their character, beasts or brutes of a ferocious or malignant kind. This would imply that there was a great want of civilization, and that their want of refinement was accompanied with what commonly exists in that condition - the unrestrained indulgence of wild and ferocious passions. See examples of the same manner of speaking of barbarous and malicious men in Wetstein.

Slow bellies - Mere gormandizers. Two vices seem here to be attributed to them, which indeed commonly go together - gluttony and sloth. An industrious man will not be likely to be a gormandizer, and a gormandizer will not often be an industrious man. The mind of the poet, in this, seems to have conceived of them first as an indolent, worthless people; and then immediately to have recurred to the cause - that they were a race of gluttons, a people whose only concern was the stomach; compare Philemon 3:19. On the connection between gluttony and sloth, see the examples in Wetstein. Seldom have more undesirable, and, in some respects, incongruous qualities, been grouped together in describing any people. They were false to a proverb, which was, indeed, consistent enough with their being ferocious - though ferocious and wild nations are sometimes faithful to their word; but they were at the same time ferocious and lazy, fierce and gluttonous - qualities which are not often found together. In some respects, therefore, they surpassed the common depravity of human nature, and blended in themselves ignoble properties which, among the worst people, are usually found existing alone. To mingle apparently contradictory qualities of wickedness in the same individual or people, is the height of depravity; as to blend in the same mind apparently inconsistent traits of virtuous character, or those which exist commonly, in their highest perfection, only alone, is the highest virtue.

Verse 13

This witness is true - That is, this testimony long before borne by one of their own number, was true when the apostle wrote to Titus. The fact that this was the general Character of the people, was a reason why he should be on his guard in introducing men into the ministry, and in the arrangement of affairs pertaining to the church. That it was true, see proofs in Wetstein.

Wherefore rebuke them - Notes, 2 Timothy 4:2.

Sharply - ἀποτόμως apotomōs- "cuttingly, severely" - from ἀποτέμνω apotemnō"to cut off." The word is used here in the sense of severity, meaning that the reproof should be such as would be understood, and would show them plainly the wickedness of such traits of character. He was not to be mealy-mouthed, but he was to call things by their right names, and not to spare their faults. When men know that they are doing wrong, we should tell them so in few words; if they do not know it, it is necessary to teach them, in order to convince them of their error.

That they may be sound in the faith - That they may not allow the prevailing vices to corrupt their views of religion.

Verse 14

Not giving heed to Jewish fables … - See the notes at 1 Timothy 1:4.

And commandments of men that turn from the truth - Notes, Matthew 15:3-5.

Verse 15

Unto the pure all things are pure - See the notes at Romans 14:14, Romans 14:20. There is probably an allusion here to the distinctions made in respect to meats and drinks among the Jews. Some articles of food were regarded as "clean," or allowed to be eaten, and some as "unclean," or forbidden. Paul says that those distinctions ceased under the Christian dispensation, and that to those who had a conscience not easily troubled by nice and delicate questions about ceremonial observances, all kinds of food might be regarded as lawful and proper; compare the notes at 1 Timothy 4:4-5. If a man habitually maintains a good conscience in the sight of God, it will be accepted of him whether he do or do not abstain from certain kinds of food; compare the notes at Colossians 2:16. This passage, therefore, should not be interpreted as proving that all things are right and lawful for a Christian, or that whatever he may choose to do will be regarded as pure, but as primarily referring to distinctions in food, and meaning that there was no sanctity in eating one kind of food, and no sin in another, but that the mind was equally pure whatever was eaten.

The phrase has a proverbial cast, though I know not that it was so fused. The principle of the declaration is, that a pure mind - a truly pious mind - will not regard the distinctions of food and drink; of festivals, rites, ceremonies, and days, as necessary to be observed in order to promote its purity. The conscience is not to be burdened and enslaved by these things, but is to be controlled only by the moral laws which God has ordained. But there may be a somewhat higher application of the words - that every ordinance of religion, every command of God, every event that occurs in divine Providence, tends to promote the holiness of one who is of pure heart. He can see a sanctifying tendency in everything, and can derive from all that is commanded, and all that occurs, the means of making the heart more holy. While a depraved mind will turn every such thing to a pernicious use, and make it the means of augmenting its malignity and corruption, to the pure mind it will be the means of increasing its confidence in God, and of making itself more holy. To such a mind everything may become a means of grace.

But unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure - Everything is made the means of increasing their depravity. No matter what ordinances of religion they observe; what distinctions of meats, or drinks, or days they regard, and what events of Providence occur, all are the occasion of augmented depravity. Such distinctions in food they make the means of fostering their pride and producing self-righteousness; the mercies of God they abuse to pamper their own lusts, and the afflictive events of Divine Providence they make the occasion of murmuring and rebellion. Naturally corrupt at heart, no ordinances of religion, and no events of Providence, make them any better, but all tend to deepen their depravity. A sentiment similar to this is found in the classic writers. Thus Seneca, *Epis*. 98. Malus animus omnia in malum vertit, etiam quae specie optimi venerunt. So again (de Beneficiis v. 12), (Quemadmodum stomachus morbo vitiatus, et colliques bilem, quoscunque acceperit cibos mutat - ita animus caecus, quicquid fill commiseris, id onus suum et perniciem facited.

But even their mind and conscience is defiled - It is not a mere external defilement - a thing which they so much dread - but a much worse kind of pollution, that which extends to the soul and the conscience. Everything which they do tends to corrupt the inner man more and more, and to make them really more polluted and abominable in the sight of God. The wicked, while they remain impenitent, are constantly becoming worse

and worse. They make everything the means of increasing their depravity, and even these things which seem to pertain only to outward observances are made the occasion of the deeper corruption of the heart.

Verse 16

They profess that they know God - That is, the Jewish teachers particularly, who are referred to in Titus 1:14. All those persons were professors of religion, and claimed that they had a special knowledge of God.

But in works they deny him - Their conduct is such as to show that they have no real acquaintance with him.

Being abominable - In their conduct. The word here used - βδελυκτοὶ bdeluktoi- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means that which is detestable, or to be held in abhorrence.

And disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate - Margin, "void of judgment." On the word here used - ἀδοκίμος adokimos- see the Romans 1:28 note; 2 Corinthians 13:5 note. It means here that in reference to everything that was good, their conduct was such that it could not be approved, or deserved disapprobation. It was for this reason; from the character of the people of the island of Crete, and of those who claimed to be teachers there enforcing the obligation of the Mosaic law, that it was so important for Titus to exercise special care in introducing men into the ministry, and in completing the arrangements contemplated in the organization of the churches there. Yet is this character confined to them? Are there none now who profess that they know God, but in works deny him; whose conduct is such that it ought to be abhorred; who are disobedient to the plain commands of God, and whose character in respect to all that pertains to true piety is to be disapproved by the truly pious, and will be by God at the last day? Alas, taking the church at large, there are many such, and the fact that there are such persons is the grand hindrance to the triumphs of religion on the earth. "The way to heaven is blocked up by dead professors of religion."

TITUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the apostle had directed Titus what to do in the organization of churches in the various cities of Crete, and had put him on his guard in doing it, by showing the character of the people he had to deal with. In this chapter he gives him various instructions as to his own method of teaching, showing what kind of doctrines he should inculcate, and what kind of instructions he should give to the various classes of his hearers. He was, in general, to speak only such things as became sound doctrine; Titus 2:1. In particular he was to instruct aged men to be sober, grave, and temperate - acting in a manner that became their time of life, Titus 2:2; the aged women to be a proper example to the younger females, and to exercise a proper care over them, Titus 2:3-5; the young men to be sober-minded, Titus 2:6; Titus himself, who evidently came under the class of young men, was to be an example to them in all things, Titus 2:7-8; and servants were to be instructed to perform their duty to their masters with fidelity, Titus 2:9-10. The duty of giving these instructions is then enforced by a reference to the nature and design of the gospel; Titus 2:11-15. That grace which brings salvation has appeared to all mankind, and its design is to make all holy who embrace it, and to teach all to live for a higher and a better world.

Verse 1

But speak thou - In thine own ministry. In the previous chapter he had given him instructions as to the kind of persons who were to be put into the sacred office. Here he gives him special instructions in regard to his own preaching. "The things which become sound doctrine." To wit, those which he proceeds immediately to specify. On the phrase sound doctrine, see the notes at 1 Timothy 1:10; compare 2 Timothy 4:3.

Verse 2

That the aged men - All aged men - for there is no reason to suppose that the apostle refers particularly to those who were in office, or who were technically elders, or Presbyters. If he had, he would have used the common word - πρεσβύτερος presbuteros- "presbyter" (see Matthew 15:2; Matthew 16:21; Matthew 21:23; Matthew 26:3, Matthew 26:47, Matthew 26:57, Matthew 26:59; 1 Timothy 5:1, 1 Timothy 5:17, 1 Timothy 5:19; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1), instead of the unusual word - πρεσβύτης presbutēs- an old or aged man - a word which occurs nowhere else in the

New Testament except in Luke 1:18, "For I am an old man," and Philemon 1:9, "being such an one as Paul the aged." It is in no instance applied to an office. Besides, the instructions which Titus was to give to such men was not that which especially pertained to elders as officers in the church, but to all old men. The idea is, that he was to adapt his instructions to the special character of different classes of his hearers. The aged needed special instructions, and so did the young.

Be sober - Margin, "vigilant." See the word explained in the notes at 1 Timothy 3:2, where it is rendered vigilant. In 1 Timothy 3:11, the same word is rendered sober. -

Grave - Serious; see the notes at 1 Timothy 3:8; compare the notes at Philemon 4:8, where the same word is rendered hottest.

Temperate - σώφρονας sōphronasRather, prudent, or sober-minded. See it explained in the notes, 1 Timothy 3:2, where it is rendered "sober." Also Titus 1:8.

Sound in faith - 1 Timothy 1:10 note; Titus 1:13 note.

In charity - In love; Notes, 1 Corinthians 13. The meaning is, that an old man should evince love for all, especially for those who are good. He should have overcome, at his time of life, all the fiery, impetuous, envious, wrathful passions of his early years, and his mind should be subdued into sweet benevolence to all mankind.

In patience - In the infirmities of old age - in the trials resulting from the loss of the friends of their early years - in their loneliness in the world, they should show that the effect of all God's dealings with them has been to produce patience. The aged should submit to the trials of their advanced years, also, with resignation - for they will soon be over. A few more sighs, and they will sigh no more; a little longer bearing up under their infirmities, and they will renew their youth before the throne of God.

Verse 3

The aged women likewise - Not only those who may have the office of deaconesses, but all aged females.

That they be in behaviour as becometh holiness - Marg, "holy women." The Greek word is not found elsewhere in the New Testament. It means appropriate to a sacred place or person, or becoming to religion. Their conduct should be such as the gospel requires.

Not false accusers - - Margin, "make-bates." Greek, διαβόλους diabolous- the word commonly applied to the devil - "as the accuser." See it

explained in the notes at 1 Timothy 3:11, where it is rendered slanderers.

Not given to much wine - Notes, 1 Timothy 5:2-6.

Verse 4

That they may teach the young women to be sober - Margin, "wise" - a word similar to that which in Titus 2:2 is rendered "temperate," and in 1 Timothy 3:2, "sober." The meaning is, that they should instruct them to have their desires and passions well regulated, or under proper control.

To love their husbands - φιλάνδρους philandrousThis word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. In Ephesians 5:25, Paul directs husbands to love their wives, and in Ephesians 5:33, the wife to reverence her husband, and here he says that it should be one of the first duties enjoined Son the wife that she should love her husband. All happiness in the marriage relation is based on mutual love. When that departs, happiness departs. No wealth or splendor in a dwelling - no gorgeousness of equipage or apparel - no magnificence of entertainment or sweetness of music - and no forms of courtesy and politeness, can be a compensation for the want of affection. Mutual love between a husband and wife will diffuse comfort through the obscurest cottage of poverty; the want of it cannot be supplied by all that can be furnished in the palaces of the great.

To love their children - Nature prompts to this, and yet there are those so depraved that they have no maternal affection; Notes, Romans 1:31. Religion reproduces natural affection when sin has weakened or destroyed it, and it is the design of Christianity to recover and invigorate all the lost or weakened sensibilities of our nature.

Verse 5

To be discreet - The same word rendered, in Titus 2:2, "temperate," and explained in Titus 2:4.

Chaste - Pure - in heart, and in life.

Keepers at home - That is, characteristically attentive to their domestic concerns, or to their duties in their families. A similar injunction is found in the precepts of the Pythagoreans - τὰν γὰρ γύναικα δεῖ οἰκουρεῖν καὶ ἔνδον μένειν tan gar gunaika dei oikourein kai endon meneinSee Creuzer's Symbolik, iii. 120. This does not mean, of course, that they are never to go abroad, but they are not to neglect their domestic affairs; they are not to be better known abroad than at home; they are not to omit their own duties and become "busy-bodies" in the concerns of others. Religion is the patron of the domestic virtues, and regards the appropriate duties in a family as those

most intimately connected with its own progress in the world. It looks benignly on all which makes home a place of contentment, intelligence, and peace. It does not flourish when domestic duties are neglected; - and whatever may be done abroad, or whatever self-denial and zeal in the cause of religion may be evinced there, or whatever call there may be for the labors of Christians there, or however much good may be actually done abroad, religion has gained nothing, on the whole, if, in order to secure these things, the duties of a wife and mother at home have been disregarded. Our first duty is at home, and all other duties will be well performed just in proportion as that is.

Good - In all respects, and in all relations. To a wife, a mother, a sister, there can be no higher characteristic ascribed, than to say that she is good. What other trait of mind will enable her better to perform her appropriate duties of life? What other will make her more like her Saviour?

Obedient to their own husbands - Ephesians 5:22-24 note; Colossians 3:18 note.

That the word of God be not blasphemed - That the gospel may not be injuriously spoken of (Notes, Matthew 9:3), on account of the inconsistent lives of those who profess to be influenced by it. The idea is, that religion ought to produce the virtues here spoken of, and that when it does not, it will be reproached as being of no value.

Verse 6

Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded - Margin, "discreet." On the meaning of the Greek word used here (σωφρονεῖν sōphronein), see the notes at Titus 2:2, Titus 2:4. The idea is, that they should be entreated to be prudent, discreet, serious in their deportment; to get the mastery over their passions and appetites; to control the propensities to which youth are subject; and that there should be such self-government, under the influence of, religion, as to avoid excess in everything. A well-governed mind, superior to the indulgence of those passions to which the young are prone, will express the meaning of the word here. They should be "steady in their behaviour, superior to sensual temptations, and constant in the exercise of every part of self-government." Doddridge. The reasons for this are obvious:

(1) The hopes of the church depend much on them.

(2) ayoung man who cannot govern himself, gives little promise of being useful or happy.

(3) Indulgence in the propensities to which young men are prone, will, sooner or later, bring ruin to the body and the soul.

(4) they are just at the period of life when they are exposed to special temptations, and when they need to exercise a special guardianship over their own conduct.

(5) like others, they may soon die; and they should be habitually in such a frame of mind, as to be prepared to stand before God. A young man who feels that he may be soon in the eternal world, cannot but be sensible of the propriety of having a serious mind, and of living and acting as in the immediate presence of his Maker and Judge.

Verse 7

In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works - Not merely teaching others, but showing them by example how they ought to live. On the word rendered "pattern" (τύπον tupontype), see the Hebrews 9:5 note; 1 Corinthians 10:6 note; Philemon 3:17 note.

In doctrine - In your manner of teaching; notes, 1 Timothy 4:16.

Showing uncorruptness - The word here used does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means, here, the same as purity - that which is not erroneous, and which does not tend to corrupt or vitiate the morals of others, or to endanger their salvation. Everything in his teaching was to be such as to make men purer and better.

Gravity - See this word explained in the notes at 1 Timothy 2:2, where it is rendered "honesty;" compare the notes at 1 Timothy 3:4, where it is rendered "gravity." It does not elsewhere occur; see the use of the adjective, however, in Philemon 4:8; 1 Timothy 3:8, 1 Timothy 3:11; Titus 2:9. The word properly means "venerableness;" then, whatever will insure respect, in character, opinions, deportment. The sense here is, that the manner in which a preacher delivers his message, should be such as to command respect. He should evince good sense, undoubted piety, an acquaintance with his subject, simplicity, seriousness, and earnestness, in his manner.

Sincerity - See this word (ἀφθαρσία aphtharsia) explained in the notes at Ephesians 6:24. It is rendered immortality in Romans 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:10; incorruption, in 1 Corinthians 15:42, 1 Corinthians 15:50, 1 Corinthians 15:53-54; and sincerity, Ephesians 6:24, and in the place before us. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means incorruption, incapacity of decay; and, therefore, would be here synonymous with purity. It should be said, however, that it is wanting in many msS, and is rejected in the later editions of the New Testament by Wetstein, Tittman, and Hahn.

Verse 8

Sound speech - Notes, 1 Timothy 1:10. He was to use language that would be spiritually "healthful" (ὑγιῆ hugiē); that is, true, pure, uncorrupted. - This word, and its correlatives, is used in this sense, in the New Testament, only by the apostle Paul. It is commonly applied to the body, meaning that which is healthful, or whole; see Luke 5:31; Luke 6:10; Luke 7:10; Luke 15:27; Matthew 12:13; Matthew 15:31; Mark 3:5; Mark 5:34; John 5:4, John 5:6, John 5:9, John 5:11, John 5:14-15; John 7:23; Acts 4:10; 3 John 1:2. For Paul's use of the word see 1 Timothy 1:10; 1 Timothy 6:3; 2 Timothy 1:13; 2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9, Titus 1:13; Titus 2:1-2, Titus 2:8. It does not elsewhere occur.

That cannot be condemned - Such as cannot be shown to be weak, or unsound; such that no one could find fault with it, or such as an adversary could not take hold of and blame. This direction would imply purity and seriousness of language, solidity of argument, and truth in the doctrines which he maintained.

That he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed … - Ashamed that he has opposed such views.

Verse 9

Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters - See this explained in the notes at Ephesians 6:5, following, and 1 Timothy 6:1-4.

And to please them well in all things - That is, so far as they lawfully may, or in those things which are not contrary to the will of God; compare Ephesians 6:6. It should be an object with one who is a servant, to meet the approbation of his master, as long as this relation continues. This rule would not, however, go to the extent to require him to please his master in doing anything that is contrary to the law of God, or that is morally wrong.

Not answering again - Margin, "gainsaying." Not contradicting, or not disobeying. They were to do what the master required, if it did not interfere with the rights of conscience, without attempting to argue the matter - without disputing with the master - and without advancing their own opinions. Where this relation exists, no one can doubt that this is a proper frame of mind for a servant. It may be observed, however, that all that is here said would be equally appropriate, whether the servitude was voluntary or involuntary. A man who becomes voluntarily a servant, binds himself to obey his master cheerfully and quietly, without gainsaying, and without attempting to reason the matter with him, or propounding his own opinions, even though they may be much wiser than those of his employer. He makes a contract to obey his master, not to reason with him, or to instruct him.

Verse 10

Not purloining - Not to appropriate to themselves what belongs to their masters. The word "purloin" means, literally, to take or carry away for oneself; and would be applied to an approbation to oneself of what pertained to a common stock, or what belonged to one in whose employ we are - as the embezzlement of public funds. Here it means that the servant was not to apply to his own use what belonged to his master; that is, was not to pilfer - a vice to which, as all know, servants, and especially slaves, are particularly exposed; see the word explained in the notes at Acts 5:2.

But showing all good fidelity - In laboring, and in taking care of the property intrusted to them.

That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things - That they may show the fair influence of religion on them, in all respects, making them industrious, honest, kind, and obedient. They were to show that the effect of the religion which they professed was to make them better fitted to discharge the duties of their station in life, however humble; or that its influence on them was desirable in every respect. In this way, they might hope also that the minds of their masters might be reached, and that they might be brought to respect and love the gospel. Hence, learn:

(1) that one in the most humble walk of life may so live as to be an ornament to religion, as well as one favored with more advantages.

(2) that servants may do much good, by so living as to show to all around them that there is a reality in the gospel, and to lead others to love it.

(3) if in this situation of life, it is a duty so to live as to adorn religion, it cannot be less so in more elevated situations. A master should feel the obligation not to be surpassed in religious character by his servant.

Verse 11

For the grace of God - The favor of God, shown to the undeserving; see the notes at Romans 1:7.

That bringeth salvation - Margin, to all men, hath appeared. That is, in the margin, "the grace which brings salvation to all men has been revealed." The marginal reading is most in accordance with the Greek, though it will bear either construction. If that which is in the text be adopted, it means that the plan of salvation has been revealed to all classes of men; that is, that it is announced or revealed to all the race that they may be saved; compare the notes at Colossians 1:23. If the other rendering be adopted, it means that that plan was fitted to secure the salvation of all men; that none were excluded from the offer; that provision had been made for all, and all might come and be saved. Whichever interpretation be adopted, the sense here will not be essentially varied. It is, that the gospel was adapted to man as man, and therefore might include servants as well as masters; subjects, as well as kings; the por, as well as the rich; the ignorant, as well as the learned; see 1 Timothy 2:1-2 notes; Acts 17:26 note.

Verse 12

Teaching us - That is, the "grace of God" so teaches us; or that system of religion which is a manifestation of the grace of God, inculcates the great and important duties which Paul proceeds to state.

That denying ungodliness and worldly lusts - "That by denying ourselves of these, or refusing to practice them, we should lead a holy life." The word ungodliness here means all that would be included under the word impiety; that is, all failure in the performance of our proper duties towards God; see the notes at Romans 1:18. The phrase "worldly lusts" refers to all improper desires pertaining to this life - the desire of wealth, pleasure, honor, sensual indulgence. It refers to such passions as the people of this world are prone to, and would include all those things which cannot be indulged in with a proper reference to the world to come. The gross passions would be of course included, and all those more refined pleasures also which constitute the characteristic and special enjoyments of those who do not live unto God.

We should live soberly - See the word "soberly" (σωφρόνως sōphronōs) explained in the notes at Titus 2:2, Titus 2:4. It means that we should exercise a due restraint on our passions and propensities.

Righteously - Justly - δικαίως dikaiōsThis refers to the proper performance of our duties to our fellow-men; and it means that religion teaches us to perform those duties with fidelity, according to all our relations in life; to all our promises and contracts; to our fellow-citizens and neighbors; to the poor, and needy, and ignorant, and oppressed; and to all those who are providentially placed in our way who need our kind offices. Justice to them would lead us to act as we would wish that they would towards us.

And godly - Piously; that is, in the faithful performance of our duties to God. We have here, then, an epitome of all that religion requires:

(1)our duty to ourselves - included in the word "soberly" and requiring a suitable control over our evil propensities and passions;

(2)our duty to our fellow-men in all the relations we sustain in life; and,

(3)our duty to God - evinced in what will be properly regarded as a pious life.

He that does these things, meets all the responsibilites of his condition and relations; and the Christian system, requiring the faithful performance of these duties, shows how admirably it is adapted to man.

In this present world - That is, as long as we shall continue in it. These are the duties which we owe in the present life.

Verse 13

Looking for - Expecting; waiting for. That is, in the faithful performance of our duties to ourselves, to our fellow-creatures, and to God, we are patiently to wait for the coming of our Lord.

(1)We are to believe that he will return;

(2)We are to be in a posture of expectation, not knowing when he will come; and,

(3)We are to be ready for him whenever he shall come; see the Matthew 24:42-44 notes; 1 Thessalonians 5:4 note; Philemon 3:20 note.

That blessed hope - The fulfillment of that hope so full of blessedness to us.

The glorious appearing - Notes, 2 Thessalonians 2:8; compare 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:8.

Of the great God - There can be little doubt, if any, that by "the great God" here, the apostle referred to the Lord Jesus, for it is not a doctrine of the New Testament that God himself as such, or in contradistinction from his incarnate Son, will appear at the last day. It is said, indeed, that the Saviour will come "in the glory of his Father, with his angels" Matthew 16:27, but that God as such will appear is not taught in the Bible. The doctrine there is, that God will be manifest in his Son; that the divine approach to our world be through him to judge the race; and that though he will be accompanied with the appropriate symbols of the divinity, yet it will be the Son of God who will be visible. No one, accustomed to Paul's views, can well doubt that when he used this language he had his eye throughout on the Son of God, and that he expected no other manifestation than what would be made through him.

In no place in the New Testament is the phrase ἐπιφάνειαν τοῦ Θεοῦ epiphaneian tou Theou- "the manifestation or appearing of God" - applied to any other one than Christ It is true that this is spoken of here as the "appearing of the glory - τῆς δόξης tēs doxēs- of the great God," but the idea is that of such a manifestation as became God, or would appropriately display his glory. It is known to most persons who have attended to religious controversies, that this passage has given rise to much discussion. The ancients, in general, interpreted it as meaning" The glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ." This sense has been vindicated by the labors of Beza, Whitby, Bull, Matthaei, and Middleton (on the Greek article), and is the common interpretation of those who claim to be orthodox; see Bloomfield, Rec. Syn., and Notes, in loc. He contends that the meaning is, "the glorious appearance of that great being who is our God and Saviour." The arguments for this opinion are well summed up by Bloomfield. Without going into a critical examination of this passage, which would not be in accordance with the design of these Notes, it may be remarked in general:

(1) that no plain reader of the New Testament, accustomed to the common language there, would have any doubt that the apostle referred here to the coming of the Lord Jesus.

(2) that the "coming" of God, as such, is not spoken of in this manner in the New Testament.

(3) that the expectation of Christians was directed to the advent of the ascended Saviour, not to the appearing of God as such.

(4) that this is just such language as one would use who believed that the Lord Jesus is divine, or that the name God might properly be applied to him.

(5) that it would naturally and obviously convey the idea that he was divine, to one who had no theory to defend.

(6) that if the apostle did not mean this, he used such language as was fitted to lead people into error.

(7) and that the fair construction of the Greek here, according to the application of the most rigid rules, abundantly sustains the interpretation which the plain reader of the New Testament would affix to it. The names above referred to are abundant proof that no violation is done to the rules of the Greek language by this interpretation, but rather that the fair construction of the original demands it. If this be so, then this furnishes an important proof of the divinity of Christ.

Verse 14

Who gave himself for us - See the notes at Ephesians 5:2.

That he might redeem us from all iniquity - The word here rendered "redeem" - λυτρόω lutroōoccurs only here and in Luke 24:21; 1 Peter 1:18. The noun, however - λύτρον lutronoccurs in Matthew 20:28; and Mark 10:45; where it is rendered "ransom;" see it explained in the notes at Matthew 20:28. It is here said that the object of his giving himself was to save his people from all iniquity; see this explained in the notes at Matthew 1:21.

And purify unto himself -

(1) Purify them, or make them holy. This is the first and leading object; see the notes at Hebrews 9:14

(2) "Unto himself;" that is, they are no longer to be regarded as their own, but as redeemed for his own service, and for the promotion of his glory; - Notes, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

A peculiar people - 1 Peter 2:9. The word here used (περιούσιος periousios) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, having abundance; and then one's own, what is special, or peculiar (Robinson, Lexicon), and here means that they were to be regarded as belonging to the Lord Jesus. It does not mean, as the word would seem to imply - and as is undoubtedly true - that they are to be a unique people in the sense that they are to be unlike others, or to have views and principles unique to themselves; but that they belong to the Saviour in contradistinction from belonging to themselves - "peculiar" or his own in the sense that a man's property is his own, and does not belong to others. This passage, therefore, should not be used to prove that Christians should be unlike others in their manner of living, but that they belong to Christ as his redeemed people. From that it may indeed be inferred that they should be unlike others, but that is not the direct teaching of the passage.

Zealous of good works - As the result of their redemption; that is, this is one object of their having been redeemed; Notes, Ephesians 2:10.

Verse 15

These things speak and exhort - Notes, 1 Timothy 6:2.

And rebuke with all authority - 1 Timothy 5:1, note, 20, note; 2 Timothy 4:2 note. The word "authority" here means command - ἐπιταγὴ epitagē 1 Corinthians 7:6, 1 Corinthians 7:25; 2 Corinthians 8:8; 1 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:3. The sense here is, he was to do it decidedly, without ambiguity, without compromise, and without keeping anything back. He was to state these things not as being advice or counsel, but as the requirement of God.

Let no man despise thee - That is, conduct yourself, as you may easily do, so as to command universal respect as a minister of God; see the notes at 1 Timothy 4:12.

TITUS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

This chapter comprises the following subjects:

(1) Titus was to instruct his hearers to be subject to lawful authority, and in general to manifest meekness and gentleness towards all classes of men; Titus 3:1-2.

(2) areason is assigned why they should do this; Titus 3:3-8. They who were Christians were once, indeed, like others, disobedient and unholy; they were regardless of law, and gave free indulgence to their evil propensities, but they had been redeemed for a better purpose, and it was the design of God in redeeming them, that they should manifest every kind of virtue.

(3) Titus was to avoid foolish questions, and contentions, and strifes about the law; Titus 3:9.

(4) he who was a heretic was to be rejected after suitable admonitions; Titus 3:10-11.

(5) Paul directs Titus to come to him at Nicopolis, and to bring Zenas and Apollos with him; Titus 3:12-14.

(6) he closes with the customary salutations; Titus 3:15.

Verse 1

Put them in mind to be subject … - See the duty here enjoined, explained in the notes at Romans 13:1, following.

Principalities and powers - See these words explained in the notes at Romans 8:38. The word here rendered "powers" (ἐξουσίαις exousiais), is not, indeed, the same as that which is found there (δυνάμεις dunameis), but the same idea is conveyed; compare the notes at Ephesians 1:21.

To obey magistrates - That is, to obey them in all that was not contrary to the word of God; Romans 13:1 note, following; Acts 4:19-20 notes.

To be ready to every good work - "To be prepared for" (ἑτοίμους hetoimous); prompt to perform all that is good; Notes, Philemon 4:8. A Christian should be always ready to do good as far as he is able. He should

not need to be urged, or coaxed, or persuaded, but should be so ready always to do good that he will count it a privilege to have the opportunity to do it.

Verse 2

To speak evil of no man - Greek, "to blaspheme (βλασφημεῖν blasphēmeincompare the notes at Matthew 9:3) no one." Doddridge renders it, "calumniate no one." The idea is, that we are not to slander, revile, or defame anyone. We are not to say anything to anyone, or of anyone, which will do him injury. We are never to utter anything which we know to be false about him or to give such a coloring to his words or conduct as to do him wrong in any way. We should always so speak to him and of him in such a way that he will have no reason to complain that he is an injured man. It may be necessary, when we are called to state what we know of his character, to say things which are not at all in his favor, or things which he has said or done that were wrong; but,

(1)we should never do this for the purpose of doing him injury, or so as to find a pleasure in it; and,

(2)where it is necessary to make the statement, it should be so as to do him no injustice.

We should give no improper coloring. We should exaggerate no circumstances. We should never attempt to express ourselves about his motives, or charge on him bad motives - for we know not what his motives were. We should state every palliating circumstance of which we have knowledge, and do entire justice to it. We should not make the bad traits of his character prominent, and pass over all that is good. In a word, we should show that we would rather find him to be a good man than a bad man - even if the result should be that we had been mistaken in our opinions. It is better that we should have been mistaken, than that he should be a bad man.

To be no brawlers - See the notes at 1 Timothy 3:3. The same Greek word occurs in both places. It is not elsewhere found in the New Testament.

But gentle - The word here used is rendered "moderation" in Philemon 4:5, "patient" in 1 Timothy 3:3, and elsewhere "gentle;" see the notes at 1 Timothy 3:3.

Showing all meekness unto all men - In the reception of injuries; see the Matthew 5:5 note; Ephesians 4:2 note.

Verse 3

For we ourselves - We who are Christians. There is no reason for supposing, as Benson does, that this is to be understood as confined to Paul himself. There are some things mentioned here which were not probably true of him before his conversion, and the connection does not require us to suppose that he referred particularly to himself. He is stating a reason why those to whom Titus was appointed to preach should be urged to lead holy lives, and especially to manifest a spirit of order, peace, kindness, and due subordination to law. In enforcing this, he says, that those who were now Christians had formerly been wicked, disorderly, and sensual, but that under the influence of the gospel, they had been induced to lead better lives. The same gospel which had been effectual in their case, might, be in others. To others it would be an encouragement to show that there were cases in which the gospel had been thus efficacious, and they who were appointed to preach it might refer to their own example as a reason why others should be persuaded to lead holy lives. In preaching to others, also, they were not to be proud or arrogant. They were to remember that they were formerly in the same condition with those whom they addressed, and whom they exhorted to reformation. They were not to forget that what they had that was superior to others they owed to the grace of God, and not to any native goodness. He will exhort the wicked to repentance most effectually who remembers that his own former life was wicked; he will evince most of the proper spirit in doing it who has the deepest sense of the errors and folly of his own past ways.

Foolish - See this word explained in the notes at Luke 24:25, where it is rendered "fools;" compare Romans 1:14, where it is rendered "unwise," and Galatians 3:1, Galatians 3:3; 1 Timothy 6:9, where it is rendered "foolish."

Disobedient - To law, to parents, to civil authority, to God. This is the natural character of the human heart; see Luke 1:17; Romans 1:30; 2 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:16, where the same word occurs.

Deceived - By the great enemy, by false teachers, by our own hearts, and by the flattery of others. It is a characteristic of man by nature that he sees nothing in its true light, but walks along amidst constant, though changing and very beautiful illusions; compare Matthew 24:4-5, Matthew 24:11; 2 Timothy 3:13; 1 Peter 2:25; Revelation 12:9; Revelation 18:23, where the same word occurs; see also Revelation 20:3, Revelation 20:8, Revelation 20:10, where the same word is applied to that great deceiver who has led the world astray. Every one who is converted feels, and is

ready to confess, that before conversion he was deceived as to the comparative value of things, as to the enjoyment which he expected to find in scenes of pleasure and riot, and often in what seemed to him well-formed plans.

Serving divers lusts and pleasures - Indulging in the various corrupt passions and propensities of the soul. We were so under their influence that it might be said we were their servants, or were slaves to them (δουλεύοντες douleuontes); that is, we implicitly obeyed them; see the notes at Romans 6:16-17.

Living in malice - Greek, "in evil" - ἐν κακίᾳ en kakiathat is, in all kinds of evil; see the notes at Romans 1:29, where the word is rendered maliciousness.

And envy - Displeasure at the happiness and prosperity of others; Notes, Romans 1:29.

Hateful - στυγητοὶ stugētoiThis word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means that our conduct was such as to be worthy of the hatred of others. Of whom, before his conversion, is not this true?

And hating one another - There was no brotherly love; no true affection for others. There was ill-will felt in the heart, and it was evinced in the life. This is an apt description of the state of the heathen world before the gospel shines on it, and it may be regarded as the characteristic of all men before conversion. They have no true love for one another, such as they ought to cherish, and they are liable constantly to give indulgence to feelings which evince hatred. In contentions, and strifes, and litigations, and wars, this feeling is constantly breaking out. All this is suggested here as a reason why Christians should now be gentle and mild toward those who are evil. Let us remember what we were, and we shall not be disposed to treat others harshly. When a Christian is tempted to unkind thoughts or words towards others, nothing is more appropriate for him than to reflect on his own past life.

Verse 4

But after that - Greek, when - ὅτε hoteThe meaning is, that "when the love of God was manifested in the plan of salvation, he saved us from this state God appeared" after we had sinned in this way, but that when his mercy was thus displayed we were converted from our sins, and made pure in his sight.

The kindness - χρηστότης chrēstotēs- "the goodness, or the benignity." The word is rendered "goodness" and "good" in Romans 2:4; Romans 3:12; Romans 11:22, thrice; "kindness," 2 Corinthians 6:6; Ephesians 2:7; Colossians 3:12; Titus 3:4; and "gentleness," Galatians 5:22. The act of redeeming us was one of great kindness, or goodness.

And love of God - Margin, "pity." The Greek word is φιλανθρωπία philanthrōpia- "philanthropy - the love of man." The plan of salvation was founded on love to man, and was the highest expression of that love; the notes at John 3:16. The Greek of this verse is, "When the kindness and love of God our Saviour to man was manifested, he saved us" Titus 3:5, to wit, from those sins of which we had before been guilty.

Verse 5

Not by works of righteousness which we have done - The plan was not based on our own good works, nor are our own good works now the cause of our salvation. If people could have been saved by their own good works, there would have been no need of salvation by the Redeemer; if our own deeds were now the basis of our title to eternal life, the work of Christ would be equally unnecessary. It is a great and fundamental principle of the gospel that the good works of men come in for no share in the justification of the soul. They are in no sense a consideration on account of which God pardons a man, and receives him to favor. The only basis of justification is the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the matter of justification before God, all the race is on a level; see the notes at Ephesians 2:8-9.

But according to his mercy -

(1)It had its origin in mercy;

(2)It is by mere mercy or compassion, and not by justice;

(3)It is an expression of great mercy, and,

(4)It is now in fact conferred only by mercy.

Whatever we have done or can do, when we come to receive salvation from the hand of God, there is no other element which enters into it but mercy. It is not because our deeds deserve it; it is not because we have by repentance and faith wrought ourselves into such a state of mind that we can claim it; but, after all our tears, and sighs, and prayers, and good deeds, it is a mere favor. Even then God might justly withhold it if he chose, and

no blame would be attached to him if he should suffer us to sink down to ruin.

He saved us - That is, he began that salvation in us which is to be completed in heaven. A man who is already renewed and pardoned may be spoken of as saved - for:

(1)the work of salvation is begun, and,

(2)when begun it will certainly be completed; see the notes at Philemon 1:6.

By the washing of regeneration - In order to a correct understanding of this important passage, it is necessary to ascertain whether the phrase here used refers to baptism, and whether anything different is intended by it from what is meant by the succeeding phrase - "renewing of the Holy Ghost." - The word rendered "washing" (λουτρόυ loutrou) occurs in the New Testament only in this place and in Ephesians 5:26, where also it is rendered "washing" - "That he might sanctify and cleanse it (the church) with the washing of water by the word." The word properly means "a bath;" then water for bathing; then the act of bathing, washing, ablution. Passow and Robinson. It is used by Homer to denote a warm or cold bath; then a washing away, and is thus applied to the drink-offerings in sacrifice, which were supposed to purify or wash away sin. Passow. The word here does not mean "laver," or the vessel for washing in, which would be expressed by λουτὴρ loutērand this word cannot be properly applied to the baptismal font.

The word in itself would naturally be understood as referring to baptism (compare notes at Acts 22:16), which was regarded as the emblem of washing away sins, or of cleansing from them. I say it was the emblem, not the means of purify ing the soul from sin. If this be the allusion, and it seems probable, then the phrase "washing of regeneration" would mean "that outward washing or baptism which is the emblem of regeneration," and which is appointed as one of the ordinances connected with salvation; see the notes at Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." It is not affirmed in this phrase that baptism is the means of regeneration; or that grace is necessarily conveyed by it; and still less that baptism is regeneration, for no one of these is a necessary interpretation of the passage, and should not be assumed to be the true one. The full force of the language will be met by the supposition that it means that baptism is the

emblem or symbol of regeneration, and, if this is the case, no one has a right to assume that the other is certainly the meaning.

And that this is the meaning is further clear, because it is nowhere taught in the New Testament that baptism is regeneration, or that it is the means of regeneration. The word rendered "regeneration" (παλιγγενεσία palingenesia) - occurs in the New Testament only here and in Matthew 19:28, - "in the regeneration when the Son of man," etc. It means, properly, a new birth, reproduction, or renewal. It would properly be applied to one who should be begotten again in this sense, that a new life was commenced in him in some way corresponding to his being made to live at first. To the proper idea of the word, it is essential that there should be connected the notion of the commencement of life in the man, so that he may be said to live anew; and as religion is in the Scriptures represented as life, it is properly applied to the beginning of that kind of life by which man may be said to live anew. This word, occurring only here and in Matthew 19:28, and there indubitably not referring to baptism, should not be here understood as referring to that, or be applied to that, because:

(1)that is not the proper meaning of the word;

(2)there is no Scripture usage to sanction it;

(3)the connection here does not demand it;

(4)the correlatives of the word (see John 3:3, John 3:5-6, John 3:8; 1 Peter 1:3,) are applied only to that great moral change which is produced by the Holy Spirit, and,

(5)it is a dangerous use of the word.

Its use in this sense leaves the impression that the only change needful for man is that which is produced by being regularly baptized. On almost no point has so much injury been done in the church as by the application of the word "regeneration" to baptism. It affects the beginning of religion in the soul, and if a mistake is made there, it is one which must pervade all the views of piety.

And renewing of the Holy Ghost - This is an important clause, added by Paul apparently to save from the possibility of falling into error. If the former expression, "the washing of regeneration," had been left to stand by

itself, it might have been supposed possibly that all the regeneration which would be needed would be that which would accompany baptism. But he avoids the possibility of this error, by saying that the "renewing of the Holy Ghost" is an indispensable part of that by which we are saved. It is necessary that this should exist in addition to that which is the mere emblem of it - the washing of regeneration - for without this the former would be unmeaning and unavailing. It is important to observe that the apostle by no means says that this always follows from the former, nor does he affirm that it ever follows from it - whatever may be the truth on that point - but he asserts that this is that on which our salvation depends. - The word rendered "renewing" (ἀνακαίνωσις anakainōsis) occurs only here and in Romans 12:2, where it is also rendered "renewing;" compare Note on that place. The verb (ἀνακαινόω anakainoō) occurs in 2 Corinthians 4:15, and Colossians 3:19, in both which places it is rendered "renewed," and the corresponding word, ἀνακαινίζω anakainizōin Hebrews 6:6.

The noun properly means making new again: a renewing; a renovation; compare H. Planck in Bib. Repos. i. 677. It is a word which is found only in the writings of Paul, and in ecclesiastical Greek writers. It would be properly applied to such a change as the Holy Spirit produces in the soul, making one a new man; that is, a man new, so far as religion is concerned - new in his views, feelings, desires, hopes, plans, and purposes. He is so far different from what he was before, that it may be said he enters on a new life; see the notes at Ephesians 4:23-24. The "renewing of the Holy Ghost" of course means that which the Holy Spirit produces, recognizing the fact, everywhere taught in the Scriptures, that the Holy Spirit is the Author of the new creation. It cannot mean, as Koppe supposes, the renewing of the mind itself, or producing a holy spirit in the soul.

Verse 6

Which he shed on us - Greek, "Which he poured out on us" - ἐξέχην exechēnsee the notes at Acts 2:17. The same Greek word is used there as here. It occurs also in the same sense in Acts 2:18, Acts 2:33.

Abundantly - Margin, as in Greek, "richly." The meaning is, that the Holy Spirit had been imparted in copious measure in order to convert them from their former wickedness. There is no particular allusion here to the day of Pentecost, but the sense is, that the Holy Spirit had been imparted richly to all who were converted, at any time or place, from the error of their

ways. What the apostle says here is true of all who become Christians, and can be applied to all who become believers in any age or land,

Through Jesus Christ our Saviour - See Notes, Acts 2:33.

Verse 7

That being justified by his grace - Not by our own works, but by his favor or mercy; see the notes at Romans 3:24.

We should be made heirs - See the notes at Romans 8:15, Romans 8:17.

According to the hope of eternal life - In reference to the hope of eternal life; that is, we have that hope in virtue of our being adopted with the family of God, and being made heirs. He has received us as his children, and permits us to hope that we shall live with him forever.

Verse 8

This is a faithful saying - See the notes at 1 Timothy 1:15. The reference here is to what he had been just saying, meaning that the doctrine which he had stated about the method of salvation was in the highest degree important, and entirely worthy of belief.

And these things I will that thou affirm constantly - Make them the constant subject of your preaching. "That they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." This shows that Paul supposed that the doctrines of the gospel were fitted to lead people to holy living; compare Titus 3:1, and the notes at Philemon 4:8. The "good works" here refer not merely to acts of benevolence and charity, but to all that is upright and good - to an honest and holy life.

These things are good and profitable unto men - That is, these doctrines which he had stated were not mere matters of speculation, but they were fitted to promote human happiness, and they should be constantly taught.

Verse 9

But avoid foolish questions and genealogies - See the 1 Timothy 1:4 note; 2 Timothy 2:16, 2 Timothy 2:23 notes.

And contentions, and strivings about the law - Such as the Jews started about various matters connected with the law - about meats and drinks, etc.; the notes at 1 Timothy 1:4; compare the notes at Acts 18:15.

For they are unprofitable and vain - - They disturb and embitter the feelings; they lead to the indulgence of a bad spirit; they are often difficult to be settled, and are of no practical importance if they could be determined.

The same thing might be said of multitudes of things about which men dispute so earnestly now.

Verse 10

A man that is an heretic - The word "heretic" is now commonly applied to one who holds some fundamental error of doctrine, "a person who holds and teaches opinions repugnant to the established faith, or that which is made the standard of orthodoxy." Webster. The Greek word here used αἱρετικὸς hairetikosoccurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The corresponding noun (αἵρεσις hairesis) occurs in the following places: Acts 5:17; Acts 15:5; Acts 24:5; Acts 26:5; Acts 28:22, where it is rendered "sect;" and Acts 25:14; 1 Corinthians 11:19; Galatians 5:20; 2 Peter 2:1, where it is rendered "heresy," and "heresies;" see the notes at Acts 24:14. The true notion of the word is that of one who is a promoter of a sect or party. The man who makes divisions in a church, instead of aiming to promote unity, is the one who is intended. Such a man may form sects and parties on some points of doctrine on which be differs from others, or on some custom, religious rite, or special practice; he may make some unimportant matter a ground of distinction from his brethren, and may refuse to have fellowship with them, and endeavor to get up a new organization. Such a man, according to the Scripture usage, is a heretic, and not merely one who holds a different doctrine from that which is regarded as orthodoxy. The spirit of the doctrine here is the same as in Romans 16:17, and the same class of persons is referred to. "Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have received; and avoid them." See the notes at that passage. The word here used is defined by Robinson (*Lexicon*), "one who creates dissensions, introduces errors, a factious person." It is not found in classic Greek, but often in ecclesiastical writers; see Suicer's Thesaurus.

After the first and second admonition - Compare Matthew 18:15-17. That is, do not do it hastily and rashly. Give him an opportunity to explain himself, and to repent and abandon his course. No man is to be cut off without giving him a proper opportunity to vindicate his conduct, and to repent if he has done wrong. If after the first and second admonition a man who is undoubtedly doing wrong, will not repent, then he is to be cut off. The apostle does not say in what way this admonition is to be given, or whether it should be public or private. The language which he uses would justify either, and the method which is to be adopted is doubtless to be

determined by circumstances. The thing which is to be reached is, that his fault is to be fairly set before his mind.

Reject - παραιτοῦ paraitouThis word is rendered "excuse" in Luke 14:18-19; "refuse," Acts 25:11; 1 Timothy 4:7; 1 Timothy 5:11; Hebrews 12:25; "avoid," 2 Timothy 2:23, and "entreated," Hebrews 12:19. Its prevailing meaning, as used in connections like the one before us, is to reject in relation to an office; that is, to decline appointing one to an office. It probably had a primary reference to that here, and meant that a man who was given to making dissensions, or who was a factious person, should not be admitted to an office in the church. The general direction would also include this, - that he should not be admitted to the church. He is neither to be owned as a member, nor admitted to office; compare Matthew 18:17. "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." In regard to this passage, then, we may observe:

(1) That the utmost limit which this allows is mere exclusion. It does not allow us to follow the offender with injury.

(2) it does not authorize us to oppose one on account of his mere private opinions. The essential idea is that of a factious, division-making man; a man who aims to form sects and parties, whether on account of opinions, or from any other cause.

(3) it does not make it right to deliver such a man over to the "secular arm," or to harm him in body, soul, property, or reputation. It gives no power to torture him on the rack, or with thumb-screws, or to bind him to the stake. It authorizes us not to recognize him as a Christian brother, or to admit him to an office in the church - but beyond this it gives us no right to go. He has a right to his own opinion still, as far as we are concerned, and we are not to molest him in the enjoyment of that right.

(4) it demands that, when a man is undoubtedly a heretic in the sense here explained, there should be the utmost kindness towards him, in order if possible to reclaim him. We should not begin by attacking and denouncing his opinions; or by formally arraigning him; or by blazoning his name as a heretic; but he is to be dealt with in all Christian kindness and brotherly fidelity. He is to be admonished more than once by those who have the right to admonish him; and then, and then only, if he does not repent, he is to be

simply avoided. That is to be an end of the matter so far as we are concerned. The power of the church there ceases. It has no power to deliver him over to anyone else for persecution or punishment, or in any way to meddle with him. He may live where he pleases; pursue his own plans; entertain his own opinions or company, provided he does not interfere with us; and though we have a right to examine the opinions which he may entertain, yet our work with him is done. If these plain principles had been observed, what scenes of bloody and cruel persecution in the church would have been avoided!

Verse 11

Knowing that he that is such is subverted - Literally, "is turned out;" or, "is changed," i. e., for the worse. He has gone from the right way, and therefore he should be rejected.

And sinneth, being condemned of himself - His own conscience condemns him. He will approve the sentence, for he knows that he is wrong; and his self-condemnation will be punishment sufficient. His own course, in attempting a division or schism in the church, shows him that it is right that he should be separated from the communion of Christians. He that attempts to rend the church, without a good reason, should himself be separated from it.

Verse 12

When I shall send Artemas unto thee - This person is not elsewhere mentioned in the New Testament, and nothing more is known of him.

Or Tychicus - Notes, Acts 20:4.

Be diligent - Notes, 2 Timothy 4:9. "To come unto me to Nicopolis." It was at this place, probably, that this epistle was written. In regard to its situation, see Introduction, Section 4.

For I have determined there to winter - Why Paul designed to spend the winter there, or what he purposed to do there, are questions on which no light can now be thrown. There is no evidence that he organized a church there, though it may be presumed that he preached the gospel, and that he did not do it without success. His requesting Titus to leave his important post and to come to him, looks as if his aid were needed in the work of the ministry there, and as if Paul supposed there was a promising field of labor there.

Verse 13

Bring Zenas the lawyer - - This person is not elsewhere mentioned in the New Testament, and nothing more is known of him. He belonged doubtless to that class of persons so often mentioned in the New Testament as lawyers; that is, who were regarded as qualified to expound the Jewish laws; see the notes at Matthew 22:35. It does not mean that he practiced law, in the modern sense of that phrase. He had doubtless been converted to the Christian faith, and it is not improbable that there were Jews at Nicopolis, and that Paul supposed he might be particularly useful among them.

And Apollos - Notes, Acts 18:24. He was also well-skilled in the laws of Moses, being "mighty in the Scriptures" Acts 18:24, and he and Zenas appear to have been traveling together. It would seem that they had been already on a journey, probably in preaching the gospel, and Paul supposed that they would be in Crete, and that Titus could aid them.

Diligently - 2 Timothy 4:9; Greek Speedily; i. e., facilitate their journey as much as possible.

That nothing be wanting unto them - Nothing necessary for their journey. Paul desired that they might meet with hospitable treatment from Christians in Crete, and might not be embarrassed for the want of that which was needful for their journey. It would seem most probable that they had been sent by Paul on a visit to the churches.

Verse 14

And let ours - Our friends; that is, those who were Christians Paul had just directed Titus to aid Zenas and Apollos himself, and he here adds that he wished that others who were Christians would be char acterized by good works of all kinds.

To maintain good works - Margin, profess honest trades. The Greek will admit of the interpretation in the margin, or will include that, but there is no reason why the direction should be supposed to have any special reference to an honest mode of livelihood, or why it should be confined to that. It rather means, that they should be distinguished for good works, including benevolent deeds, acts of charity, honest toil, and whatever would enter into the conception of an upright life; see the notes at Titus 3:8.

For necessary uses - Such as are required by their duty to their families, and by the demands of charity; see Titus 3:8.

That they be not unfruitful - - That it may be seen that their religion is not barren and worthless, but that it produces a happy effect on themselves

and on society; compare the John 15:16 note; Ephesians 4:28 note.

Verse 15

All that are with me salute thee - Notes, Romans 16:3. Paul, at the close of his epistles, usually mentions the names of those who sent affectionate salutations. Here it would seem to be implied that Titus knew who were with Paul, and also that he himself had been traveling with him. He evidently refers not to those who were residing in the place where he was, but to those who had gone with him from Crete as his companions.

Greet them that love us in the faith - In the faith of the gospel, or as Christians. No names are here mentioned; compare 1 Thessalonians 5:26; Colossians 4:15.

Grace be with you all - Notes, Romans 1:7; Romans 16:20.

The subscription, "It was written to Titus," etc., is, like the other subscriptions at the close of the epistles, of no authority whatever; see the close of the notes at 1Cor. In this subscription there are probably two errors:

(1) In the statement that Titus was "ordained the first bishop of the church of the Cretians;" because:

(a)there is no evidence that there was a church there called "the church of the Cretians," as there were doubtless many churches on the island;

(b)there is no evidence that Titus was the first Bishop of the church there, or that he was the first one there to whom might be properly applied the term "bishop" in the Scriptural sense. Indeed, there is positive evidence that he was not the first, for Paul was there with him, and Titus was "left" there to complete what he had begun.

(c)There is no evidence that Titus was "bishop" there at all in the prelatical sense of the term, or even that he was a settled pastor; see the notes at Titus 3:1, Titus 3:5.

(2) that the epistle was written "from Nicopolis of Macedonia;" for

(a)there is no certain evidence that it was written at Nicopolis at all, though this is probable;

(b)there is no reason to believe that the Nicopolis referred to was in Macedonia; see Introduction 4.

These subscriptions are so utterly destitute of authority, and are so full of mistakes, that it is high time they were omitted in the editions of the Bible. They are no part of the inspired writings, but are of the nature of "notes and comments," and are constantly doing something, perhaps much,

to perpetuate-error. “The opinion that Timothy and Titus were prelatical bishops, the one of Ephesus and the other of Crete, depends far more on these worthless subscriptions than on anything in the epistles themselves.” Indeed, there is no evidence of it in the epistles; and, if these subscriptions were removed, no man from the New Testament would ever suppose that they sustained this office at all.

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Introduction to Philemon

Section 1. The History of Philemon

On Philemon, to whom this Epistle was addressed, almost nothing more is known than can be ascertained from the Epistle itself. It is short, and of a private character; but it is a bright and beautiful gem in the volume of inspiration.

From Colossians 4:9, it may be inferred that the person to whom it was addressed was an inhabitant of Colossae, since Onesimus, concerning whom this Epistle was written, is there mentioned as "one of them." See the notes on that verse; compare the ingenious remarks of Paley, *Hor. Paul.*, on Colossians, No. IV. He is said by Calmet and Michaelis to have been wealthy; but this cannot be determined with certainty, though it is not improbable. The only circumstances which seem to indicate this, are, that Onesimus had been his "servant," from which it has been inferred that he was an owner of slaves; and that he appears to have been accustomed to show hospitality to strangers, or, as Michaelis expresses it, "traveling Christians;" see Philemon 1:22 of the Epistle. But these circumstances are not sufficient to determine that he was a man of property. There is no evidence, as we shall see, that he was a slave-holder; and Christians in moderate circumstances were accustomed to show hospitality to their brethren. Besides, it is not said in Philemon 1:22 that he was accustomed to show general hospitality; but Paul merely asks him to provide for him a lodging. It is probable that he had been accustomed to remain with him when he was in Colossae.

It is quite clear that he had been converted under the ministry of the apostle himself. This appears from what is said in Philemon 1:19; "I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self." This cannot be understood otherwise than as implying that he had been converted under his preaching, unless the apostle, on some former occasion, had been the means of saving his life, of which there is no evidence. Indeed, it is manifest, from the general tone of the Epistle, that Philemon had been converted by the labors of the author. It is just such a letter as it would be natural and proper to write on such a supposition; it is not one which the apostle would have been likely to write to any one who did not sustain such a relation to him.

But where and when he was converted, is unknown. It is possible that Paul may have met with him at Ephesus; but it is much more probable that he had himself been at Colossae, and that Philemon was one of his converts there. See the introduction to the Epistle to the Colossians.

It is evident from the Epistle that Paul regarded him as a sincere Christian; as a man of strict integrity; as one who could be depended on to do right. Thus Philemon 1:5-7, he says that he had heard of his "love and faith toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints;" thus he confidently asks him to provide for him a lodging when he should come Philemon 1:22; and thus he expresses the assured belief that he would do what was right towards one who had been his servant, who, having been formerly unfaithful, was now converted, and, in the estimation of the apostle, was worthy of the confidence and affection of his former master.

In regard to his rank in the Christian church, nothing whatever is known. Paul calls him Philemon 1:1 his "fellow-laborer;" but this appellation is so general, that it determines nothing in regard to the manner in which be co-operated with him in promoting religion. It is a term which might be applied to any active Christian, whether a preacher, an elder, a deacon, or a private member of the church. It would seem clear, however, that he was not a traveling preacher, for he had a home in Colossae Philemon 1:2, Philemon 1:22; and the presumption is, that he was an active and benevolent member of the church, who did not sustain any office. There are many private members of the churches, to whom all that is said of Philemon in the Epistle would apply. Yet there have been various conjectures in regard to the office which he held. Hoffmann (*Introduction a.d. Lection. Eph. a.d. Colossenses*, 18) supposes that he was bishop of Colossae; Michaelis supposes that he was a deacon in the church; but of either of these, there is no evidence whatever.

Nothing is known of his age, his profession, or of the time and circumstances of his death. Neither is it certainly known what effect this Epistle had on him, or whether he again received Onesimus under his roof. It may be presumed, however, that such a letter, addressed to such a man, would not fail of its object.

Section 2. The Occasion upon which the Epistle was written

This can be learned only from the Epistle itself, and there the circumstances are so marked as to make a mistake impossible.

(1) Philemon had had a servant of the name of Onesimus. Of the character of this servant, before Paul became acquainted with him, nothing more is known than that he had been "unprofitable" to Philemon Philemon 1:11, and that he bad probably done him some wrong, either by taking his property, or by the fact that he had escaped from him; Philemon 1:18. It is not necessary to suppose that he was a slave: for all that is implied of necessity in the word which is employed to designate his condition in Philemon 1:16 (δοῦλος doulos), and all that is stated of him in the Epistle, would be met by the supposition that he was bound to Philemon, either by his parents or guardians, or that he had bound himself to render voluntary service; see the notes at Philemon 1:16.

(2) for some cause, this servant had fled from his master, and had gone to Rome. The cause of his escaping is unknown. It may be that he had purloined the property of his master, and dreaded detection; or that he had, by his base conduct in some other way, exposed himself to punishment; or that he merely desired freedom from oppression; or that he disregarded the bonds into which he himself, or his parents or guardians, had entered, and had therefore escaped. Nothing can be inferred about his condition, or his relation to Philemon, from the fact that he ran away. It is perhaps quite as common for apprentices to run away, as it is for slaves; and they who enter into voluntary bonds to render service to another, do not always regard them.

(3) in some way, when at Rome, this servant had found out the apostle Paul, and had been converted by his instrumentality. Paul says Philemon 1:10 that he had "begotten him in his bonds" - ἐν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου en tois desmois mouwhich seems to imply that Onesimus had come to him, and not that Paul had searched him out. It does not appear that Paul, when a prisoner at Rome, was allowed to go at large (compare Acts 28:30), though he was permitted to receive all who came to him. Why Onesimus came to the apostle, is not known. It may have been because he was in want, and Paul was the only one in Rome whom he had ever seen; or it may have been because his mind had become distressed on account of sin, and he sought

him out to obtain spiritual counsel. Conjecture on these points is useless, where there is not even a hint that can serve as a clew to find out the truth.

(4) from some cause, equally unknown, Onesimus, when converted, was desirous of returning to his former master. It is commonly assumed that his returning again was at the instigation of the apostle, and that this furnishes an instance of his belief that runaway slaves should be sent back to their masters. But, besides that there is no certain evidence that he ever was a slave, there is as little proof that he returned at the instigation of Paul, or that his return was not wholly voluntary on his part. For the only expression which the apostle uses on this subject Philemon 1:12, "whom I have sent again" - ἀνεπέμπσα anapempsa- does not necessarily imply that he even proposed it to him, still less that he commanded it. It is a word of such general import, that it would be employed on the supposition that Onesimus desired to return, and that Paul, who had a strong wish to retain him, to aid him in the same way that Philemon himself would do if he were with him (compare Philemon 1:13), had, on the whole, concluded to part with him, and to send him again, with a letter, to his friend Philemon. It is just such language as he would have used of Timothy, Titus, or Epaphroditus, if employed on an important embassy at the request of the apostle; compare Luke 7:6, Luke 7:10, Luke 7:19; Luke 20:13; Acts 10:5; Acts 15:22; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Corinthians 9:3; Ephesians 6:22; Philemon 2:19, Philemon 2:23, Philemon 2:25, Philemon 2:28; 1 Thessalonians 3:2, 1 Thessalonians 3:5; Titus 3:12, for a similar use of the word "send" (πέμπω pempō).

There is nothing in the statement which forbids us to suppose that Onesimus was himself disposed to return to Philemon, and that Paul "sent" him at his own request. To this, Onesimus might have been inclined from many causes. He may have repented that he left his master, and had forsaken the comforts which he had enjoyed under his roof. It is no uncommon thing for a runaway apprentice, or servant, when he has seen and felt the misery of being among strangers and in want, to wish himself well back again in the house of his master. Or he may have felt that he had wronged his master in some way (compare the notes at Philemon 1:18), and, being now converted, was desirous of repairing the wrong. Or he may have had friends and kindred in Colossae whom he was desirous of seeing

again. Since any one of these, or of many other supposable causes, may have induced him to desire to return to his master, it should not be assumed that Paul sent him against his will, and thence be inferred that he was in favor of sending back runaway slaves to their masters against their will. There are many points to be proved, which cannot be proved, to make that a legitimate inference; see the notes at Philemon 1:12.

(5) whatever were the reasons why Onesimus desired to return to Philemon, it is clear that he was apprehensive of some trouble if he went back. What those reasons were, it is impossible now to determine with absolute certainty, but it is not difficult to conjecture what they may have been, and any of the following will account for his apprehensions - either:

(a)that he had done his master wrong by the mere act of leaving him, depriving him of valuable services which he was bound to render; or

(b)that he may have felt that the mere act of running away had injured the character of his master, for such an act always implies that there is something in the dealings of a master which makes it desirable to leave him; or

(c)that he had in some way injured him in respect to property, by taking that which did not belong to him, Philemon 1:18; or

(d)that he owed his master, and he may have inferred from his leaving him that he meant to defraud him, Philemon 1:18; or

(e)that the laws of Phrygia were such that Onesimus apprehended that if he returned, even penitent, it would be judged by his master necessary to punish him, in order to deter others from committing a similar offence.

The laws of Phrygia, it is said, allowed the master to punish a slave without applying to a magistrate. See Macknight. It should be said also that the Phrygians were a severe people (Curtius, Lib. v. c. 1), and it is not improbable that, from the customs there, Onesimus may have apprehended harsh treatment if he returned. - It is not proper to assume that any one of these was certainly the reason why he feared to return, for this cannot be absolutely determined. We should not take it for granted that he had defrauded his master - for that is not necessarily implied in what is said in Philemon 1:18, and we should not impute crimes to men without proof; nor

should we take it for granted that he feared to be punished as a runaway slave - for that cannot be proved; but someone or more of these reasons doubtless operated to make him apprehensive that if he returned he would meet with, at least, a cold reception.

(6) to induce his master to receive him kindly again, was the main object of this courteous and kind Epistle. For a view of the arguments upon which he urges this, see the Analysis of the Epistle. The arguments are such, that we should suppose they could not be resisted, and we may presume, without impropriety, that they had the desired effect upon the mind of Philemon - but of that we have no certain evidence.

Section 3. The Time and Place of Writing the Epistle

There can be no doubt that this letter was written from Rome about the time when the Epistle to the Colossians was written; compare the introduction to that Epistle. The circumstances which conduct to this conclusion are such as the following:

(1) Paul at the time when it was written was a prisoner; Philemon 1:1. "Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ;" Philemon 1:10. "Whom I have begotten in my bonds;" compare Philemon 1:23. "Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus."

(2) it was written when he had hopes of obtaining his liberty, or when he had such a prospect of it that he could ask Philemon, with confidence, to "prepare him a lodging;" Philemon 1:22.

(3) Timothy was with him at the time when it was written Philemon 1:1, and we know that Paul desired him to come to him to Rome when he was a prisoner there as soon as possible; 2 Timothy 4:9. "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me."

(4) we know that Onesimus was actually sent by Paul to Colossae while he was a prisoner at Rome, and it would be morally certain that, under the circumstances of the case, he would send the letter to his master at that time. No other instance is mentioned in which he sent him to Colossae, and the evidence is as certain as the nature of the case admits, that that was the time when the Epistle was written; see Colossians 4:9.

(5) the same persons are mentioned in the salutations in the two Epistles, at least they are so far the same as to make it probable that the Epistles were written at the same time, for it is not very probable that the same persons would in another place, and on another occasion, have been with the apostle. Thus, Aristarchus, Mark, Epaphras, Luke, and Demas, join in the salutations both to the church at Colossae and to Philemon. Probably at no other time in the life of Paul were all these persons with him, than when he was a prisoner at Rome. These considerations make it clear that the Epistle was written while Paul was a prisoner at Rome and at about the same time with the Epistle to the Colossians. If so, it was about a.d. 62.

Section 4. The Character of this Epistle

This letter is almost wholly of a private character, and yet there is scarcely any portion of the New Testament of equal length which is of more value. It is exquisitely beautiful and delicate. It is a model of courtesy and politeness. It presents the character of the author in a most amiable light, and shows what true religion will produce in causing genuine refinement of thought and language. It is gentle and persuasive, and yet the argument is one that we should suppose would have been, and probably was, irresistible. It is very easy to conceive that the task which the apostle undertook to perform was one which it would be difficult to accomplish - that of reconciling an offended master to a runaway servant. And yet it is done with so much kindness, persuasiveness, gentleness, and true affection, that, as the letter was read, it is easy to imagine that all the hostility of the master was disarmed, and we can almost see him desiring to embrace him who bore it, not now as a servant, but as a Christian brother; Philemon 1:16 "It is impossible," says Doddridge, "to read over this admirable Epistle without being touched with the delicacy of sentiment, and the masterly address, that appear in every part of it. We see here, in a most striking light, how perfectly consistent true politeness is, - not only with all the warmth and sincerity of a friend, but even with the dignity of the Christian and the Apostle. And if this letter were to be considered in no other view than as a mere human composition, it must be allowed to be a master-piece in its kind.

As an illustration of this remark, it may not be improper to compare it with an epistle of Pliny, that seems to have been written on a similar occasion (Lib. ix. Let. 21); which, though penned by one that was reckoned to excel in the epistolary style, though it has undoubtedly many beauties,

yet must be acknowledged by every impartial reader vastly inferior to this animated composition of the apostle." As a specimen of the courtesy and politeness which the Christian ought to practice at all times, as well as furnishing many valuable lessons on Christian duty (see the remarks at the close), it deserves a place in the volume of inspiration; and a material chasm would be produced in the instructions which are needful for us, if it were withdrawn from the sacred canon.

PHILEMON CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Epistle embraces the following subjects:

I. The salutation; Philemon 1:1-3.

II. A mention of the excellent account which the apostle had heard of Philemon, and the occasion which he had for thankfulness on his behalf; Philemon 1:4-7.

(a)He always remembered him in his prayers; Philemon 1:4.

(b)He had heard of his faith and love, and of his kindness toward those who bore the Christian name; Philemon 1:5.

(c)He desired that his goodness in making others, in common with him, partakers of the expression of his faith, might be even more effective in securing the proper acknowledgment of it wherever it might be known; Philemon 1:6.

(d)He says that he had great joy and consolation from the happiness which he had conferred on Christians who needed his aid; Philemon 1:7.

III. The main subject of the Epistle - the desire that he would receive his servant Onesimus again, and the arguments to persuade him to do it; Philemon 1:8-21.

(1)he places it on the ground of entreaty, not of command. He might, in virtue of his apostolic office, enjoin many things on him, and possibly this, yet he chooses to place it entirely on other grounds, and to make it a matter of personal friendship; Philemon 1:8.

(2)Particular reasons why he should do it:

(a)For love‘s sake - love to Paul - now an old man, and in prison on account of their common religion; Philemon 1:9.

(b)Paul regarded Onesimus as his own son, and asked that he might be received and treated as such; Philemon 1:10.

(c)He assures Philemon that, whatever he might have been formerly, he would now find him to be profitable to himself; Philemon 1:11.

(d)He assures him that Onesimus was especially dear to him, and that he would have been very useful to him in his circumstances, but that he did not

think it proper to retain him with him without the consent of Philemon. Onesimus, therefore, was not sent back as a worthless vagabond, and Philemon, in receiving him, might be sure that he was receiving one who Paul believed was fitted to be eminently useful; Philemon 1:12-14.

(e)He suggests to Philemon that probably it was so arranged by divine Providence, that Onesimus should depart in order that he might receive him again in a far more tender and endearing relation, not as a servant, but as a Christian brother; Philemon 1:15-16

(f)He appeals to the personal friendship of Philemon, and asks that if he regarded him as a participator with him in the hopes of the gospel, or as a fellow-laborer in a common cause, he would receive him as he would himself; Philemon 1:17.

(g)He says that he would himself become security for Onesimus if he owed Philemon anything, or had in any way wronged him; Philemon 1:18-19.

He concludes the argument by referring to the happiness which it would give him if Philemon would receive his former servant again; and with the expression of his conviction that he would do more than he asked in the matter, and then asks that, while he showed favor to Onesimus, he would also prepare a lodging for him, for he hoped soon to be with him; Philemon 1:20-22.

Perhaps by this last suggestion he hoped also to do much to favor the cause of Onesimus - for Philemon could hardly turn him away when he expected that Paul himself would soon be with him. Such an argument would be likely to be effectual in the case. We do not like to deny the request which a friend makes in a letter, if we expect soon to see the writer himself. It would be much more easy to do it if we had no expectations of seeing him very soon.

IV. The Epistle closes with affectionate salutations from certain persons who were with Paul, and who were probably well known to Philemon, and with the customary benediction; Philemon 1:23-25.

Verse 1

Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ - A prisoner at Rome in the cause of Jesus Christ; Ephesians 3:1 note; 2 Timothy 1:8 note.

And Timothy our brother - Timothy, it seems, had come to him agreeably to his request; 2 Timothy 4:9. Paul not unfrequently joins his name with his own in his epistles; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Philemon 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1. As Timothy was of that region of country, and as he had accompanied Paul in his travels, he was doubtless acquainted with Philemon.

Unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow-labourer - See Introduction, Section 1. The word rendered "fellow-laborer" συνεργω sunergōdoes not determine what office he held, if he held any, or in what respects he was a fellow-laborer with Paul. It means a co-worker, or helper, and doubtless here means that he was a helper or fellow-worker in the great cause to which Paul had devoted his life, but whether as a preacher, or deacon, or a private Christian, can not be ascertained. It is commonly, in the New Testament, applied to ministers of the gospel, though by no means exclusively, and in several instances it cannot be determined whether it denotes ministers of the gospel, or those who furthered the cause of religion, and cooperated with the apostle in some other way than preaching. See the following places, which are the only ones where it occurs in the New Testament; Romans 16:3, Romans 16:9, Romans 16:21; 1 Corinthians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 1:24; 2 Corinthians 8:23; Philemon 2:25; Philemon 4:3; Colossians 4:11; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; Philemon 1:24; 3 John 1:8.

Verse 2

And to our beloved Apphia - This was a female (Greek ἀγαπητῇ agapētē), and was probably the wife of Philemon.

And Archippus our fellow-soldier - See the notes at Colossians 4:17. It has been supposed that he was a son of Philemon, and this would appear not to be improbable, as he was one of his family. On the term "fellow-soldier," see the notes at Philemon 2:25. It is applied here to one who was a minister of the gospel, and who is spoken of in con nection with Paul as enlisted under the banners of the Captain of salvation, and waging a warfare with the wickedness of the world; compare the notes at 2 Timothy 2:3-4. That Archippus was a minister of the gospel, is clear from Colossians 4:17.

And to the church in thy house - Either the church that commonly met in his house, or more probably that was composed of his own family; compare the notes at Romans 16:5.

Verse 3

Grace to you, and peace … - See if the notes at Romans 1:7.

Verse 4

I thank my God - That is, for what I hear of you.

Making mention of thee always in my prayers - See a similar declaration respecting the church at Ephesus, Ephesians 1:16. It would appear from this that Paul, in his private devotions, was in the habit of mentioning churches and individuals by name. It would seem, also, that though he was a prisoner, yet he somehow found opportunity for secret devotion. And it would appear further, that, though encompassed with many cares and sorrows, and about to be put on trial for his life, he did not forget to remember a Christian brother though far distant from him, and to bear him on his heart before the throne of grace. To remember with affectionate concern these churches and individuals, as he did, Paul must have been a man of much prayer.

Verse 5

Hearing of thy love and faith - Either by Onesimus, who, after his conversion, would be disposed to state all that he knew that was favorable of Philemon, or hearing it by some other persons who had come from Colosse to Rome. The faith which is mentioned here refers to the Lord Jesus; the love, to the saints. The order in the Greek is indeed the same as in our version, but it is not unusual by synthesis, or uniting two or more things together, to arrange words in that manner. Thus Matthew 12:22, "The blind and dumb both spake and saw;" that is, the blind saw, and the dumb spake. The meaning is, that he had strong faith in the Lord Jesus, and ardent love toward all who were Christians. See a similar declaration in Colossians 1:4.

Verse 6

That the communication of thy faith - That is, this was a subject of prayer on the part of the apostle, that the "communication of his faith" might receive from all the proper acknowledgment of the good which he did in the Christian cause. The phrase translated "communication of thy faith," means the making of thy faith common to others; that is, enabling others to partake of the fruits of it, to wit, by good deeds. On the meaning of the word here rendered "communication" (κοινωνία koinōnia), see the notes at Ephesians 3:9; compare Philemon 2:1; Philemon 3:10. Calvin has well expressed the sense of this passage. "It is to be observed that the apostle here does not proceed in the commendation of Philemon, but rather expresses what he desires for him from the Lord. These words are connected with those in which he says that he remembered him in his

prayers. What, therefore, did he desire for Philemon? That his faith, expressing itself by good fruits, might be shown to be true and not vain. For he calls that the communication of his faith when it does not remain inoperative within, but bears itself forth to benefit men by its proper effects. For although faith has its proper seat in the heart, yet it communicates itself to men by good works." The meaning is, that he desired that Philemon would so make common the proper fruits of faith by his good deeds toward others, that all might acknowledge it to be genuine and efficacious.

May become effectual - Greek, "May be energetic" (ἐνεργὴς energēs); may become operative, active, effective.

By the acknowledging - That is, so as to secure from others the proper recognition of the existence of faith in your heart. In other words, so that others may see that you are truly pious, and understand to what extent you have faith.

Of every good thing which is in you - Of every good principle, and of every benevolent trait, which is in your character. That is, the proper outward expression of his faith in Christ, by doing good to others, would be a development of the benevolence which existed in his heart.

In Christ Jesus - Or "toward (εἰς eis) Christ Jesus." The goodness in his heart had respect to the Lord Jesus as its proper object, but would be made manifest by his kindness to men. The truth which is taught in this passage, therefore, is, that when faith exists in the heart, it is very desirable that it should impart its proper fruits toward others in such a way that all may see that it is operative, and may recognize its power; or in other words, it is desirable that when true religion exists it should be fairly developed, that its possessor may be acknowledged to be under its influence. We should wish that he may have all the credit and honor which the goodness of his heart is entitled to. Paul supposed that a case had now occurred in which an opportunity was furnished to Philemon to show the world how much he was governed by the faith of the gospel.

Verse 7

For we have great joy and consolation in thy love - In thy love toward Christians. The word here rendered "joy" (χάριν charin), properly means grace. A large number of manuscripts, however, instead of this word, have χαρὰν charanCharan, joy. See Wetstein. This reading has been adopted by Griesbach, Tittman, and Hahn.

Because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother - For your kindness to them. The word "bowels" here probably means minds, hearts, for it is used in the Scriptures to denote the affections. The sense is, that the kindness which he had shown to Christians had done much to make them happy. On the word refreshed, see 2 Corinthians 7:13; 2 Timothy 1:16.

Verse 8

Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ - Though I might have much boldness as an apostle of Christ. He means that he was invested with authority by the Lord Jesus, and would have a right, as an apostle, to enjoin what ought to be done in the case which he is about to lay before him; compare 1 Thessalonians 2:6-7.

To enjoin thee that which is convenient - To command what is proper to be done. The word "convenient" here (τὸ ἀνῆκω to anēkō), means that which would be fit or proper in the case; compare the notes at Ephesians 5:4. The apostle implies here that what he was about to ask, was proper to be done in the circumstances, but he does not put it on that ground, but rather asks it as a personal layout. It is usually not best to command a thing to be done if we can as well secure it by asking it as a favor; compare Daniel 1:8, Daniel 1:11-12.

Verse 9

Yet for love's sake - For the love which you bear me, and for the common cause.

I rather beseech thee - Rather than command thee.

Being such an one as Paul the aged - πρεσβυτης presbutēs- an old man. We have no means of ascertaining the exact age of Paul at this time, and I do not recollect that he ever alludes to his age, though he often does to his infirmities, in any place except here. Doddridge supposes that at the time when Stephen was stoned, when he is called "a young man" (νεανίας neanias Acts 7:58), he was 24 years of age, in which case he would now have been about 53. Chrysostom supposes that he may have been 35 years old at the time of his conversion, which would have made him about 63 at this time. The difficulty of determining with any degree of accuracy the age of the apostle at this time, arises from the indefinite nature of the word used by Luke, Acts 7:58, and rendered "a young man." That word, like the corresponding word νεανίσκος neaniskoswas applied to men in the vigor of manhood up to the age of 40 years.

Robinson, Lex. Phavorinus says a man is called νεανίσκος neaniskosa young man, until he is 28; and πρεσβύτης presbutēspresbutēsfrom 49 until he is 56. Varro says that a man is young ("juvenis"), until he is 45, and aged at 60. Whitby. These periods of time, however, are very indefinite, but it will accord well with the usual meaning of the words to suppose that Paul was in the neighborhood of 30 when he was converted, and that he was now not far from 60. We are to remember also, that the constitution of Paul may have been much broken by his labors, his perils, and his trials. Not advanced probably to the usual limit of human life, he may have had all the characteristics of a very aged man; compare the note of Benson. The argument here is, that we feel that it is proper, as far as we can, to grant the request of an old man. Paul thus felt that it was reasonable to suppose that Philemon would not refuse to gratify the wishes of an aged servant of Christ, who had spent the vigor of his life in the service of their common Master. It should be a very strong case when we refuse to gratify the wishes of an aged Christian in anything, especially if he has rendered important services to the church and the world.

And now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ - In the cause of Jesus Christ; or a prisoner for endeavoring to make him known to the world; compare the Ephesians 3:1; Ephesians 4:1; Ephesians 6:20 notes; Colossians 4:10 note. The argument here is, that it might be presumed that Philemon would not refuse the request of one who was suffering in prison on account of their common religion. For such a prisoner we should be ready to do all that we can to mitigate the sorrows of his confinement, and to make his condition comfortable.

Verse 10

I beseech thee for my son Onesimus - That is, my son in the gospel; one to whom I sustain the relation of a spiritual father; compare the notes at 1 Timothy 1:2. The address and tact of Paul here are worthy of particular observation. Any other mode of bringing the case before the mind of Philemon might have repelled him. If he had simply said, "I beseech thee for Onesimus;" or, "I beseech thee for thy servant Onesimus," he would at once have reverted to his former conduct, and remembered all his ingratitude and disobedience. But the phrase "my son," makes the way easy for the mention of his name, for he had already found the way to his heart before his eye lighted on his name, by the mention of the relation which he sustained to himself. Who could refuse to such a man as Paul - a laborious

servant of Christ - an aged man, exhausted with his many sufferings and toils - and a prisoner - a request which he made for one whom he regarded as his son? It may be added, that the delicate address of the apostle in introducing the subject, is better seen in the original than in our translation. In the original, the name Onesimus is reserved to come in last in the sentence. The order of the Greek is this: "I entreat thee concerning a son of mine, whom I have begotten in my bonds - Onesimus." Here the name is not suggested, until he had mentioned that he sustained to him the relation of a son, and also until he had added that his conversion was the fruit of his labors while he was a prisoner. Then, when the name of Onesimus is mentioned, it would occur to Philemon not primarily as the name of an ungrateful and disobedient servant, but as the interesting case of one converted by the labors of his own friend in prison. Was there ever more delicacy evinced in preparing the way for disarming one of prejudice, and carrying an appeal to his heart?

Whom I have begotten in my bonds - Who has been converted by my efforts while I have been a prisoner. On the phrase "whom I have begotten," see 1 Corinthians 4:15. Nothing is said of the way in which he had become acquainted with Onesimus, or why he had put himself under the teaching of Paul; see the introduction, Section 2. See (3) below.

Verse 11

Which in time past was to thee unprofitable - Either because he was indolent; because he had wronged him (compare the notes at Philemon 1:18), or because he had run away from him. It is possible that there may be an allusion here to the meaning of the name "Onesimus," which denotes "profitable" (from ὀνίνημι oninēmifuture ὀνήσω onēsōto be useful, to be profitable, to help), and that Paul means to say that he had hitherto not well answered to the meaning of his own name, but that now he would be found to do so.

But now profitable to thee - The Greek here is εὔχρηστον euchrēstonbut the meaning is about the same as that of the word Onesimus. It denotes very useful. In 2 Timothy 2:21, it is rendered "meet for use;" in 2 Timothy 4:11, and here, profitable. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament.

And to me - Paul had doubtless found him useful to him as Christian brother in his bonds, and it is easy to conceive that, in his circumstances, he would greatly desire to retain him with him.

Verse 12

Whom I have sent again - That is, to Philemon. This was, doubtless, at his own request, for:

(1) there is not the slightest evidence that he compelled him, or even urged him to go. The language is just such as would have been used on the supposition either that he requested him to go and bear a letter to Colosse, or that Onesimus desired to go, and that Paul sent him agreeably to his request; compare Philemon 2:25. "Yet I suppose it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother, and companion in labor," etc.; Colossians 4:7-8. "All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord: whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate," etc. But Epaphroditus and Tychicus were not sent against their own will - nor is there any more reason to think that Onesimus was; see the introduction, Section 2. See (4) below.

(2) Paul had no power to send Onesimus back to his master unless he chose to go. He had no civil authority; he had no guard to accompany him; he could entrust him to no sheriff to convey him from place to place, and he had no means of controlling him, if he chose to go to any other place than Colosse. He could indeed have sent him away from himself; he could have told him to go to Colossae, but his power ended there. Onesimus then could have gone where he pleased. But there is no evidence that Paul even told him to go to Colossae against his own inclination, or that he would have sent him away at all unless he had himself requested it.

(3) there may have been many reasons why Onesimus desired to return to Colosse, and no one can prove that he did not express that desire to Paul, and that his "sending" him was not in consequence of such a request. He may have had friends and relatives there; or, being now converted, be may have been sensible that he had wronged his former master, and that he ought to return and repair the wrong; or he may have been poor, and a stranger in Rome, and may have been greatly disappointed in what he had expected to find there when he left Philemon, and may have desired to return to the comparative comforts of his former condition.

(4) it may be added, therefore,

(a) that this passage should not be adduced to prove that we ought to send back runaway slaves to their former masters against their own consent; or to justify the laws which require magistrates to do it; or to show that they who have escaped should be arrested and forcibly detained; or to justify any sort of influence over a runaway slave to induce him to return to his former master. There is not the least evidence that any of these things occurred in the case before us, and if this instance is ever appealed to, it should be to justify what Paul did - and nothing else.

(b) The passage shows that it is right to aid a servant of any kind to return to his master, if he desires it. It is right to give him a "letter," and to plead earnestly for his favorable reception if he has in any way wronged his master - for Paul did this. On the same principle it would be right to give him pecuniary assistance to enable him to return - for there may be cases where one who has fled from servitude might wish to return. There may be instances where one has had a kind master, with whom he would feel that on the whole he could be more happy than in his present circumstances. Such cases, however, are exceedingly rare. Or there may be instances where one may have relatives that are in the neighborhood or in the family of his former master, and the desire to be with them may be so strong that on the whole he would choose to be a servant as he was before, rather than to remain as he is now. In all such cases it is right to render aid - for the example of the apostle Paul goes to sustain this. But it goes no further. So far as appears, he neither advised Onesimus to return, nor did he compel him; nor did he say one word to influence him to do it; - nor did he mean or expect that he would be a slave when he should have been received again by his master; see the notes at Philemon 1:16.

Thou, therefore, receive him, that is, mine own bowels - There is great delicacy also in this expression. If he had merely said "receive him," Philemon might have thought only of him as he formerly was. Paul, therefore, adds, "that is, mine own bowels" - "one whom I so tenderly love that he seems to carry my heart with him wherever he goes." - Doddridge.

Verse 13

Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead - "That he might render me the service which I know you would if you were here."

The Greek is: “for thee” ὑπὲρ σοῦ huper southat is, what he should do for Paul might be regarded as done by Philemon himself.

He might have ministered unto me - He might have rendered me assistance (διακονῇ diakonē); to wit, in such a way as one who was in bonds would need.

Verse 14

But without thy mind would I do nothing - Nothing in the matter referred to. He would not retain Onesimus in his service, much as he needed his assistance, without the cordial consent of Philemon. He would not give him occasion for hard feeling or complaint, as if Paul had induced him to leave his master, or as if he persuaded him to remain with him when he wished to return - or as if he kept him away from him when he owed him or had wronged him. All that is said here is entirely consistent with the supposition that Onesimus was disposed to return to his master, and with the supposition that Paul did not compel or urge him to do it. For it is probable that if Onesimus had proposed to return, it would have been easy for Paul to have retained him with him. He might have represented his own want of a friend. He might have appealed to his gratitude on account of his efforts for his conversion.

He might have shown him that he was under no moral obligation to go back. He might have refused to give him this letter, and might have so represented to him the dangers of the way, and the probability of a harsh reception, as effectually to have dissuaded him from such a purpose. But, in that case, it is clear that this might have caused hard feeling in the bosom of Philemon, and rather than do that he preferred to let him return to his master, and to plead for him that he might have a kind reception. It is, therefore, by no means necessary to suppose that Paul felt that Onesimus was under obligation to return, or that he was disposed to compel him, or that Onesimus was not inclined to return voluntarily; but all the cirumstances of the case are met by the supposition that, if Paul retained him, Philemon might conceive that he had injured him. Suppose, as seems to have been the case, that Onesimus “owed” Philemon Philemon 1:18, and then suppose that Paul had chosen to retain him with himself, and had dissuaded him from returning to him, would not Philemon have had reason to complain of it?

There was, therefore, on every account, great propriety in his saying that he did not wish to use any influence over him to retain him with him when he purposed to return to Colosse, and that he felt that it would be wrong for him to keep him, much as he needed him, without the consent of Philemon. Nor is it necessary, by what is said here, to suppose that Onesimus was a slave, and that Paul believed that Philemon had a right to him and to his services as such. All that he says here would be met by the supposition that he was a hired servant, and would be in fact equally proper even on the supposition that he was an apprentice. In either case, he would feel that he gave just ground of complaint on the part of Philemon if, when Onesimus desired to return, he used any influence to dissuade him from it, and to retain him with himself. It would have been a violation of the rule requiring us to do to others as we would wish them to do unto us, and Paul therefore felt unwilling, much as he needed the services of Onesimus, to make use of any influence to retain him with him without the consent of his master.

That thy benefit - The favor which I might receive from thee by having the services of Onesimus. If Onesimus should remain with him and assist him, he would feel that the benefit which would be conferred by his services would be in fact bestowed by Philemon, for he had a right to the service of Onesimus, and, while Paul enjoyed it, he would be deprived of it. The word rendered "benefit" here - ἀγαθόν agathon- means good, and the sense is, "the good which you would do me;" to wit, by the service of Onesimus.

Should not be as it were of necessity - As it would be it Paul should detain Onesimus with him without affording Philemon an opportunity of expressing his assent. Paul would even then have felt that he was in fact receiving a "good" at the expense of Philemon, but it would not be a voluntary favor on his part.

But willingly - As it would be if he had given his consent that Onesimus should remain with him.

Verse 15

For perhaps he therefore departed for a season - Perhaps on this account, or for this reason - διὰ τοῦτο dia touto- he left you for a little time. Greek, "for an hour" - πρὸς ὥραν pros hōranThe meaning is, that it was possible that this was permitted in the Providence of God in order that Onesimus might be brought under the influence of the gospel, and be far more serviceable to Philemon as a Christian, than he could have been in his

former relation to him. What appeared to Philemon, therefore, to be a calamity, and what seemed to him to be wrong on the part of Onesimus, might have been permitted to occur in order that he might receive a higher benefit. Such things are not uncommon in human affairs.

That thou shouldest receive him for ever - That is, in the higher relation of a Christian friend and brother; that he might be united to thee in eternal affection; that he might not only be with thee in a far more endearing relation during the present life than he was before, but in the bonds of love in a world that shall never end.

Verse 16

Not now as a servant - The adverb rendered "not now" (οὐκέτι ouketi), means "no more, no further, no longer." It implies that he had been before in this condition, but was not to be now; compare Matthew 19:6, "They are no more twain." They were once so, but they are not to be regarded as such now; Matthew 22:46, "Neither durst any man, from that day forth ask him any more questions." They once did it, but now they did not dare to do it; Luke 15:19, "And am no more worthy to be called thy son," though I once was; John 6:66, "And walked no more with him," though they once did; see also John 11:54; John 14:19; John 17:11; Acts 8:39; Galatians 4:7; Ephesians 2:19. This passage then proves that he had been before a servant - δοῦλος doulos- a slave. But still, it is not certain what kind of a servant he was. The word does not necessarily mean slave, nor can it be proved from this passage, or from any other part of the Epistle, that he was at any time a slave; see the Ephesians 6:5 note, and 1 Timothy 6:1 note. The word denotes servant of any kind, and it should never be assumed that those to whom it was applied were slaves. It is true that slavery existed in the heathen nations when the gospel was first preached, and it is doubtless true that many slaves were converted (compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 7:21), but the mere use of the word does not necessarily prove that he to whom it is applied was a slave. If Onesimus was a slave, there is reason to think that he was of a most respectable character (compare the notes at Colossians 4:9), and indeed all that is implied in the use of the term here, and all that is said of him, would be met by the supposition that he was a voluntary servant, and that he had been in fact intrusted with important business by Philemon. It would seem from Philemon 1:18 ("or oweth thee ought"), that he was in a condition which made it possible for him to hold property, or at least to be intrusted.

But above a servant, a brother beloved - A Christian brother; compare the notes at 1 Timothy 6:2. He was especially dear to Paul himself as a Christian, and he trusted that he would be so to Philemon.

Specially to me - That is, I feel a special or particular interest in him, and affection for him. This he felt not only on account of the traits of character which he had evinced since his conversion, but because he had been converted under his instrumentality when he was a prisoner. A convert made in such circumstances would be particularly dear to one.

But how much more unto thee - Why, it may be asked, would he then be particularly dear to Philemon? I answer, because:

(1)of the former relation which he sustained to him - a member of his own family, and bound to him by strong ties;

(2)because he would receive him as a penitent, and would have joy in his returning from the error of his ways;

(3)because he might expect him to remain long with him and be of advantage to him as a Christian brother; and,

(4)because he had voluntarily returned, and thus shown that he felt a strong attachment to his former master.

In the flesh - This phrase is properly used in reference to any relation which may exist pertaining to the present world, as contradistinguished from that which is formed primarily by religion, and which would be expressed by the subjoined phrase, "in the Lord." It might, in itself, refer to any natural relation of blood, or to any formed in business, or to any constituted by mere friendship, or to family alliance, or to any relation having its origin in voluntary or involuntary servitude. It is not necessary to suppose, in order to meet the full force of the expression, either that Onesimus had been a slave, or that he would continue to be regarded as such. Whatever relation of the kind, referred to above, may have existed between him and Philemon, would be appropriately denoted by this phrase. The new and more interesting relation which they were now to sustain to each other, which was formed by religion, is expressed by the phrase "in the Lord." In both these, Paul hoped that Onesimus would manifest the appropriate spirit of a Christian, and be worthy of his entire confidence.

In the Lord - As a Christian. He will be greatly endeared to your heart as a consistent and worthy follower of the Lord Jesus. - On this important

verse then, in relation to the use which is so often made of this Epistle by the advocates of slavery, to show that Paul sanctioned it, and that it is a duty to send back those who have escaped from their masters that they may again be held in bondage, we may remark that:

(1) there is no certain evidence that Onesimus was ever a slave at all. All the proof that he was, is to be found in the word δοῦλος doulos- doulos - in this verse. But, as we have seen, the mere use of this word by no means proves that. All that is necessarily implied by it is that he was in some way the servant of Philemon - whether hired or bought cannot be shown.

(2) at all events, even supposing that he had been a slave, Paul did not mean that he should return as such, or to be regarded as such. He meant, whatever may have been his former relation, and whatever subsequent relation he may have sustained, that he should be regarded as a beloved Christian brother; that the leading conception in regard to him should be that he was a fellow-heir of salvation, a member of the same redeemed church, a candidate for the same heaven.

(3) Paul did not send him back in order that he might be a slave, or with a view that the shackles of servitude should be riveted on him. There is not the slightest evidence that he forced him to return, or that he advised him to do it, or even that he expressed a wish that he would; and when he did send him, it was not as a slave, but as a beloved brother in the Lord. It cannot be shown that the motive for sending him back was in the slightest degree that he should be a slave. No such thing is intimated, nor is any such thing necessary to be supposed in order to a fair interpretation of the passage.

(4) it is clear that, even if Onesimus had been a slave before, it would have been contrary to the wishes of Paul that Philemon should now hold him as such. Paul wished him to regard him “not as a servant,” but as a “beloved brother.” If Philemon complied with his wishes, Onesimus was never afterward regarded or treated as a slave. If he did so regard or treat him, it was contrary to the expressed intention of the apostle, and it is certain that he could never have shown this letter in justification of it. It cannot fail to strike any one that if Philemon followed the spirit of this Epistle, he would not consider Onesimus to be a slave, but if he sustained the relation of a servant at all, it would be as a voluntary member of his

household, where, in all respects, he would be regarded and treated, not as a "chattel," or a "thing," but as a Christian brother.

(5) this passage, therefore, may be regarded as full proof that it is not right to send a slave back, against his will, to his former master, to be a slave. It is right to help one if he wishes to go back; to give him a letter to his master, as Paul did to Onesimus; to furnish him money to help him on his journey if he desires to return; and to commend him as a Christian brother, if he is such; but beyond that, the example of the apostle Paul does not go. It is perfectly clear that he would not have sent him back to be regarded and treated as a slave, but being able to commend him as a Christian, he was willing to do it, and he expected that he would be treated, not as a slave, but as a Christian. The case before us does not go at all to prove that Paul would have ever sent him back to be a chattel or a thing. If, with his own consent, and by his own wish, we can send a slave back to his master, to be treated as a Christian and as a man, the example of Paul may show that it would be right to do it, but it does not go beyond that.

(6) in confirmation of this, and as a guide in duty now, it may be observed, that Paul had been educated as a Hebrew; that he was thoroughly imbued with the doctrines of the Old Testament, and that one of the elementary principles of that system of religion was, that a runaway slave was in no circumstances to be returned by force to his former master. "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant that is escaped from his master unto thee;" Deuteronomy 23:15. It cannot be supposed that, trained as he was in the principles of the Hebrew religion - of which this was a positive and unrepealed law, and imbued with the benevolent spirit of the gospel - a system so hostile to oppression, the apostle Paul would have constrained a slave who had escaped from bondage to return to servitude against his will.

(7) it may be added, that if the principles here acted on by Paul were carried out, slavery would speedily cease in the world. Very soon would it come to an end if masters were to regard those whom they hold, "not as slaves," but as beloved Christian brothers; not as chattels and things, but as the redeemed children of God. Thus regarding them, they would no longer feel that they might chain them, and task them, and sell them as property. They would feel that as Christians and as men, they were on a level with

themselves, and that they who were made in the image of God, and who had been redeemed with the blood of his Son, "ought to be free."

Verse 17

If there count me therefore a partner - The word rendered "partner" (κοινωνὸς koinōnosmeans "a partaker, a companion." The idea in the word is that of having something in common (κοινὸς koinos) with any one - as common principles; common attachments; a common interest in an enterprise; common hopes. It may be applied to those who hold the same principles of religion, and who have the same hope of heaven, the same views of things, etc. Here the meaning is, that if Philemon regarded Paul as sharing with him in the principles and hopes of religion, or as a brother in the gospel so that he would receive him, he ought to receive Onesimus in the same way. He was actuated by the same principles, and had the same hopes, and had a claim to be received as a Christian brother. His receiving Onesimus would be interpreted by Paul as proof that he regarded him as a partaker of the hopes of the gospel, and as a companion and friend. For a plea in behalf of another, strongly resembling this, see Horace, Epis. Lib. 1, Ephesians 9.

Verse 18

If he hath wronged thee - Either by escaping from you, or by failing to perform what he had agreed to, or by unfaithfulness when he was with you as a servant, or by taking your property when he went away. Any of these methods would meet all that is said here, and it is impossible to determine in which of them he had done Philemon wrong. It may be observed, however, that the apostle evinces much delicacy in this matter. He does not say that he had wronged him, but he makes a supposition that he might have done it. Doubtless, Philemon would suppose that he had done it, even if he had done no more than to escape from him, and, whatever Paul's views of that might be, he says that even if it were so, he would wish him to set that over to his account. He took the blame on himself, and asked Philemon not to remember it against Onesimus.

Or oweth thee ought - It appears from this, that Onesimus, whatever may have been his former condition, was capable of holding property, and of contracting debts. It is possible that he might have borrowed money of Philemon, or he may have been regarded as a tenant, and may not have paid the rent of his farm, or the apostle may mean that he had owed him service

which he had not performed. Conjecture is useless as to the way in which the debt had been contracted.

Put that on mine account - Reckon, or impute that to me - εμοὶ ἐλλόγα emoi ellogaThis word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Romans 5:13, where it is rendered imputed. See the notes at that passage. It means to "reckon;" to put to one's account, to wit, what properly belongs to him, or what he assumes. It never implies that that is to be charged on one which does not properly belong to him, either as his own act, or as that which he has assumed. In this case, it would have been manifestly unjust for Philemon to charge the wrong which Onesimus had done, or what he owed him, to the apostle Paul without his consent; and it cannot be inferred from what Paul says here that it would have been right to do so. The steps in the case were these:

(1) Onesimus, not Paul, had done the wrong.

(2) Paul was not guilty of it, or blameworthy for it, and never in any way, or by any process, could be made to be, or conceived to be. It would be true forever that Onesimus and not he had done the wrong.

(3) Paul assumed the debt and the wrong to himself. He was willing, by putting himself in the place of Onesimus, to bear the consequences, and to have Onesimus treated as if he had not done it. When he had voluntarily assumed it, it was right to treat him as if he had done so; that is, to hold him responsible. A man may assume a debt if he pleases, and then he may be held answerable for it.

(4) if he had not assumed this himself, it never could have been right for Philemon to charge it on him. No possible supposition could make it right. No agency which he had in the conversion of Onesimus; no friendship which he had for him; no favor which he had shown him, could make it right. The consent, the concurrence on the part of Paul was absolutely necessary in order that he should be in any way responsible for what Onesimus had done.

(5) the same principle prevails in imputation everywhere.

(a)What we have done is chargeable upon us.

(b)If we have not done a thing, or have not assumed it by a voluntary act, it is not right to charge it upon us.

(c)God reckons things as they are.

The Saviour voluntarily assumed the place of man, and God reckoned, or considered it so. He did not hold him guilty or blameworthy in the case; but as he had voluntarily taken the place of the sinner, he was treated as if he had been a sinner. God, in like manner, does not charge on man crimes of which he is not guilty. He does not hold him to be blameworthy, or ill-deserving for the sin of Adam, or any other sin but his own. He reckons things as they are. Adam sinned, and he alone was held to be blameworthy or ill-deserving for the act. By a divine constitution (compare the notes at Romans 5:12, following), he had appointed that if he sinned, the consequences or results should pass over and terminate on his posterity - as the consequences of the sin of the drunkard pass over and terminate on his sons, and God reckons this to be so - and treats the race accordingly. He never reckons those to be guilty who are not guilty; or those to be ill-deserving who are not ill-deserving; nor does he punish one for what another has done. When Paul, therefore, voluntarily assumed a debt or an obligation, what he did should not be urged as an argument to prove that it would be right for God to charge on all the posterity of Adam the sin of their first father, or to hold them guilty for an offence committed ages before they had an existence. The case should be adduced to demonstrate one point only - that when a man assumes a debt, or voluntarily takes a wrong done upon himself, it is right to hold him responsible for it.

(See the subject of imputation discussed in the supplementary notes, Romans 5:12, Romans 5:19; 2 Corinthians 5:19, 2 Corinthians 5:21 notes; Galatians 3:13 note.)

Verse 19

I Paul have written it with mine own hand - It has been inferred from this, that Paul wrote this entire Epistle with his own hand, though this was contrary to his usual practice; compare the Romans 16:22 note; 1 Corinthians 16:21 note; Galatians 6:11 note. He undoubtedly meant to refer to this as a mark of special favor toward Philemon, and as furnishing security that he would certainly be bound for what he had promised.

I will repay it - I will be security for it. It is not probable that Paul supposed that Philemon would rigidly exact it from him, but if he did, he would feel himself bound to pay it.

Albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides - Paul had doubtless been the means of the conversion of Philemon, and whatever hope he cherished of eternal life, was to be traced to his instrumentality. Paul says that this was equivalent to his owing himself to him. His very life - his eternal welfare - was to be traced to his labors. What he asked now of him was a small matter compared with this, and he seems to have supposed - what was probably true - that for this consideration, Philemon would not think of exacting of him what he had voluntarily obligated himself to obey.

Verse 20

Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord - "By showing me this favor in receiving my friend and brother as I request." The phrase "in the Lord," here seems to mean that, if this request was granted, he would recognize the hand of the Lord in it, and would receive it as a favor from him.

Refresh my bowels in the Lord - The "bowels," in the Scriptures, are uniformly spoken of as the seat of the affections - meaning commonly the upper viscera, embracing the heart and the lungs; compare the notes at Isaiah 16:11. The reason is, that in any deep emotion this part of our frame is peculiarly affected, or we feel it there. Compare Robinson's *Lex*. on the word σπλάγχνον See this illustrated at length in Sir Charles Bell's" Anatomy of Expression," p. 85, following Ed. London, 1844. The idea here is, that Paul had such a tender affection for Onesimus as to give him great concern and uneasiness. The word rendered "refresh" - ἀνάπαυσόν anapauson- means "to give rest to, to give repose, to free from sorrow or care;" and the sense is, that by receiving Onesimus, Philemon would cause the deep and anxious feelings of Paul to cease, and he would be calm and happy; compare the notes at Philemon 1:7.

Verse 21

Having confidence in thy obedience - That you would comply with all my expressed desires.

I wrote unto thee - "I have written to you;" to wit, in this Epistle.

Knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say - In all the respects which he had mentioned - in receiving Onesimus, and in his kind treatment of him. He had asked a great favor of him, but he knew that he would go even beyond what he had asked.

Verse 22

But withal - Or, at the same time - Ἅμα HamaWhile you are granting this favor, do me also another by preparing a lodging for me.

Prepare me also a lodging - Philemon had been accustomed to show kindness to the saints Philemon 1:5, and not improbably Paul had before shared his hospitality. The word rendered "lodging" (ξενία xenia), means, properly, guest-right, hospitality, entertainment; and then, a place for a guest; compare Acts 28:23.

For I trust - Paul had some hope of being released - an event which probably occurred; see the notes at Philemon 1:25; Philemon 2:23-24; compare the introduction to 2Timothy.

Through your prayers - Notes, 2 Corinthians 1:11. He expected release in answer to the petitions of those who loved him, and the cause in which he was engaged; compare the notes at Acts 12:5.

I shall be given unto you - I shall be permitted to return to you, as a favor - χαρισθήσομαι charisthēsomaiPaul had no doubt thus Philemon would so regard it, and he had no apprehension that his abiding with him would be considered as a burden.

Verse 23

There salute thee Epaphras - The same persons who are here mentioned as greeting Philemon, are mentioned in the close of the Epistle to the Colossians - furnishing a high degree of evidence that Philemon resided at Colosse. Epaphras was a member of the church there; the notes at Colossians 4:12.

My fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus - In the cause of Christ; Notes, Philemon 1:1. The circumstance of his being a prisoner is not mentioned in the parallel place in the Epistle to the Colossians, but nothing is more probable.

Verse 24

Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, and Lucas - see the notes at the Epistle to the Colossians, Colossians 4:10, Colossians 4:14.

Verse 25

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ … - Notes, 2 Timothy 4:22.

The subscription to the Epistle is of no authority, but in this case is undoubtedly correct. Compare the remarks at the close of 1Corinthians, and Titus.

Remarks On Philemon

Having now passed through with the exposition of this Epistle, it may be proper to copy, for comparison with it, one of the most beautiful specimens of epistolary composition to be found in profane literature, an epistle of Pliny, written on a similar occasion, and having a strong resemblance to this. As a matter of taste, it is of importance to show that the sacred writers do not fall behind the most favorable specimens of literary composition to be found in uninspired writings. The epistle of Pliny was directed to his friend Sabinianus, in behalf of his manumitted slave who had offended him, and who was consequently cast out of his favor. It is in the following words:

C. Plinius Sabiniano, S. (in Latin)

Libertus tuus, cui succensere te dixeras, venit a.d. me, advolutusque pedibus meis, tanquam tuis, haesit: flevit muitum, multum rogavit, maltum etiam tacuit: in summa, fecit mihi fidem poenitentiae Vere credo emendatum, quia deliquisse sentit. Irasceris scio; et irasceris merito, id quoque scio: sed tune praecipua mansuetudinis laus, cure irae causa justissima est. Amasti hominem; et spero amabis: interim sufficit ut exorari te sinas. Licebit rursus irasci, si meruerit; quod exoratus excusatius facies.

Remitte aliquid adolescentiae ipsius; remitte lachrymis; remitte indulgentiae tuae; ne torseris illum, ne torseris etiam te. Torqueris enim cum tam lenis irasceris. Vereor, ne videar non rogare, sed cogere, si precibus ejus meas junxero. Jungam tamen tanto plenius et effusius quanto ipsum acrius severiusque corripui, destricte minatus, nunquam me postea rogaturum. Hoc illi, quem terreri oportebat; tibi non idem. Nam fortasse iterum rogabo, impetrabo irerum: sit mode tale, ut rogare me, ut praestare te, deceat. Vale. Epistolar. Lib. ix.Philemon 1:16. Even if it should be admitted to be probable that he was, it would be necessary, in order that this Epistle should be adduced in favor of slavery, that that fact should be made out without any ground of doubt, or the argument is worthless. It is clear that the Epistle, under any circumstances, can be adduced in favor of slavery only so far as it is certain that Onesimus was a slave. But that is not certain. It cannot be made to be certain. It should not be taken for granted. Either of the suppositions that he was bound to service until he was of age by a parent or guardian, or that he had voluntarily bound himself to service for wages, will meet all that is necessarily implied in the Epistle.

(2) there is not the least evidence that Paul used any force or even persuasion to induce him to return to his master. It cannot be proved from

the Epistle that he even advised him to return. It is certain that he did not compel him to do it - for Paul had no power to do this, and no guard or civil officer accompanied Onesimus to secure him if he had chosen to escape. Every one of the circumstances mentioned in the Epistle will be met by the supposition that Onesimus desired to return, but that there were circumstances which made him apprehensive that if he did, he would not be kindly received, and that, at his request, Paul wrote the Epistle to induce Philemon to receive him kindly. Nothing more can be proved; nothing more is necessary to be believed, in order to a fair interpretation of the Epistle. Nothing is more natural than the supposition that when Onesimus was truly converted, he would desire to return to Philemon if he had in any way done him wrong. But to make it proper to adduce this Epistle to show that it is a duty to return a runaway slave to his master, even on the supposition that Onesimus was a slave, it is necessary to prove either that Paul advised him to return, or that he compelled him to do it against his will. No one doubts that it would be right to help one who had escaped from slavery, if, on any proper account, he should wish to go back to his former master: if he felt that he had wronged him, or if he had a wife and children in the neighborhood, or if he was satisfied that he could be more happy in his service than he could be elsewhere. To this point, and this only, this Epistle goes.

(3) there is no evidence that Paul meant that Onesimus should return as a slave, or with a view to be retained and treated as a slave. Even supposing he had been so formerly, there is not the slightest intimation in the Epistle that when he sent him back to his master, he meant that he should throw himself into the chains of bondage again. Nor is there the slightest evidence that if he had supposed that this would be the result, he would have even consented that he should return to his master. No man can take this Epistle and prove from it that Paul would have sent him at all, if he had supposed that the effect would be that he would be reduced to slavery, and held in bondage. If such had been his expectation, he would never have written such a letter as this. The expression of such a desire would have found a place in the Epistle; or, at least, the Epistle would not have been so framed as almost of necessity to lead to a different result.

(4) there is very satisfactory evidence, besides this, that he did not mean that Onesimus should be regarded and treated by Philemon as a slave. It would be impossible for Philemon to comply with the wishes breathed forth in this letter, and meet exactly the desires of Paul in the case, and yet retain him as a slave, or regard him as property - as a "chattel " - as a "thing." For.

(a) if he had been formerly a slave; if this is the fair meaning of the word δοῦλος - doulos- then this is expressly declared. Thus, in Philemon 1:16, he is commanded to receive him "not now as a servant" - οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον ouketi hōs doulonIf he had been a slave before, he did not wish that he should be received as such now, or regarded as such any longer. How could Philemon comply with the wish of the apostle, and yet regard Onesimus as a slave? The very attempt to do it would be directly in the face of the expressed desire of Paul, and every moment he held him as such he would be disregarding his wishes.

(b) He desired him to receive and treat him, in all respects, as a Christian brother - as one redeemed - as a man: - "Above a servant, a brother beloved." How could he do this, and yet regard and treat him as a slave? Is it treating one as a Christian brother to hold him as property; to deprive him of freedom; to consider him an article of merchandise; to exact his labor without compensation? Would the man himself who makes another a slave suppose that he was treated as a Christian brother, if he were reduced to that condition? Would he feel that his son was so regarded if he was made a slave? There are no ways of reconciling these things. It is impossible for a master to regard His slave as, in the proper and full sense of the phrase, "a Christian brother.' He may, indeed, esteem him highly as a Christian; he may treat him with kindness; he may show him many favors; but - he regards him also as his slave; and this fact makes a difference wide "as from the center thrice to the utmost pole" in his feelings toward him and other Christians. He is not on a level with them as a Christian. The notion of his being his slave mingles with all his feelings toward him, and gives a coloring to all his views of him. He cannot but feel, if he himself is under the influence of religion, that that slave, if he were treated in all respects as a Christian, would be as free as himself; would have a right to his time, and skill, and liberty; would be permitted to form his own plans, and to enjoy

the avails of his own labor; and would be secure from the possibility of being sold.

(c) Suppose now that Paul, after a short interval, had actually come to the residence of Philemon, as he expected to Philemon 1:22, and had found him regarding and treating Onesimus as a slave; would he have felt that Philemon had complied with his wishes? Did he ask this of him? Did he not request just the contrary? Philemon 1:16. Would it not be natural for him to say to him that he had not received him as he wished him to? And how would Philemon reply to this?

(5) the principles laid down in this Epistle would lead to the universal abolition of slavery. If all those who are now slaves were to become Christians, and their masters were to treat them "not as slaves, but as brethren beloved," the period would not be far distant when slavery would cease. This probably will be admitted by all. But a state of things which would be destroyed by the widest prevalence of Christianity, is not right at any time. Christianity, in its highest influences, interferes with nothing that is good, and would annihilate nothing which is not wrong. That which is true, and best for the welfare of man, will survive when the true religion spreads all over the world; and to say, as is commonly admitted even by the advocates of slavery, that Christianity will ultimately destroy the system, is to say that it is now wrong - for Christianity destroys nothing which is in itself right, and which is desirable for the highest good of man.

It will destroy intemperance, and idolatry, and superstition, and war - because they are evil and wrong - and only because they are so; and for the same reason, and that only, will it abolish slavery. When a man, therefore, admits that the gospel will ultimately destroy slavery, he at the same time admits that it is now an evil and a sin. The gospel is adapted and designed to put an end to the system. It did annihilate it in the Roman empire, and its tendency everywhere is to secure its final abolition. The system, therefore, is evil. It is opposed to the spirit of religion. It is destructive of the welfare of society. It is a violation of human rights. It is contrary to the will of God. The gospel everywhere teaches us to regard the slave "no longer as a slave, but as a brother;" and when this is secured, the system must speedily come to an end. For this, and for all its other anticipated influences, we should

labor and pray that the gospel may be diffused as speedily as possible all over the world; that it may raise man everywhere from his degradation, and invest every human being with the dignity of a freeman; that it "may undo the heavy burden, break every yoke, and bid the oppressed go free." Isaiah 58:6.

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HEBREWS INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Hebrews

Section 1. Preliminary Remarks

It need not be said that this Epistle has given rise to much discussion among writers on the New Testament. Indeed there is probably no part of the Bible in regard to which so many conflicting views have been entertained. The name of the author; the time and place where the Epistle was written; the character of the book; its canonical authority; the language in which it was composed; and the persons to whom it was addressed - all have given rise to great difference of opinion. Among the causes of this are the following: - The name of the author is not mentioned. The church to which it was sent, if sent to any particular church, is not designated. There are no certain marks of time in the Epistle, as there often are in the writings of Paul, by which we can determine the time when it was written.

It is not the design of these notes to go into an extended examination of these questions. Those who are disposed to pursue these inquiries, and to examine the questions which have been started in regard to the Epistle, can find ample means in the larger works that have treated of it; and especially in Lardner; in Michaelis' *Introduction*; in the *Prolegomena* of Kuinoel; in Hug's *Introduction*; and particularly in Professor Stuart's invaluable *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. No other work on this portion of the New Testament is so complete as his, and in the *Introduction* he has left nothing to be desired in regard to the literature of the Epistle.

Early on controversies arose in the church in regard to a great variety of questions pertaining to this Epistle, which are not yet fully settled. Most of those questions, however, pertain to the literature of the Epistle, and however they may be decided, are not such as to affect the respect which a Christian ought to have for it as a part of the word of God. They pertain to the inquiries, to whom it was written; in what language, and at what time it was composed; questions which in whatever way they may be settled, do not affect its canonical authority, and should not shake the confidence of Christians in it as a part of divine revelation. The only inquiry on these points which it is proper to institute in these notes is, whether the claims of the Epistle to a place in the canon of Scripture are of such a kind as to allow Christians to read it as a part of the oracles of God? May we sit down to it

feeling that we are perusing that which has been given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit as a part of revealed truth? Other questions are interesting in their places, and the solution of them is worth all which it has cost; but they need not embarrass us here, nor claim our attention as preliminary to the exposition of the Epistle. All that will be attempted, therefore, in this Introduction, will be such a "condensation" of the evidence collected by others, as shall show that this Epistle has of right a place in the volume of revealed truth, and is of authority to regulate the faith and practice of mankind.

Section 2. To Whom Was the Epistle Written?

It purports to have been written to the "Hebrews." This is not found, indeed, in the body of the Epistle, though it occurs in the subscription at the end. It differs from all the other epistles of Paul in this respect, and from most of the others in the New Testament. In all of the other epistles of Paul, the church or person to whom the letter was sent is specified in the commencement. This, however, commences in the form of an essay or homily; nor is there anywhere in the Epistle any direct intimation as to what church it was sent. The subscription at the end is of no authority, since it cannot be supposed that the author himself would affix it to the Epistle, and since it is known that many of those subscriptions are false. See the remarks at the close of the notes on Romans, and the notes 1Corinthians. Several questions present themselves here which we may briefly investigate:

(I) "What is the evidence that it was written to the Hebrews?" In reply to this we may observe:

(1) That the inscription at the commencement, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews," though not affixed by the author, may be allowed to express the current sense of the church in ancient times in reference to a question on which they had the best means of judging. These inscriptions at the commencement of the epistles have hitherto in general escaped the suspicion of spuriousness, to which the subscriptions at the close are justly exposed. "Michaelis." They should not in any case be called in question, unless there is good reason from the Epistle itself, or from some other source. This inscription is found in all our present Greek manuscripts, and in nearly all the ancient versions. It is found in the Peshito, the Old Syriac version, which was made in the first or in the early part of the second

century. It is the title given to the Epistle by the fathers of the second century, and onward - Stuart.

(2) the testimony of the fathers. Their testimony is unbroken and uniform. With one accord they declare this, and this should be regarded as testimony of great value. Unless there is some good reason to depart from such evidence, it should be regarded as decisive. In this case, there is no good reason for calling it in question, but every reason to suppose it to be correct; nor so far as I have found is there any one who has doubted it.

(3) the internal evidence is of the highest character that it was written to Hebrew converts. It treats subjects of Hebrew institutions. It explains their nature. It makes no allusion to Gentile customs or laws. It all along supposes that those to whom it was sent were familiar with the Jewish history; with the nature of the temple service; with the functions of the priestly office; and with the whole structure of their religion. No other person than those who had been Jews are addressed throughout the Epistle. There is no attempt to explain the nature or design of any customs except those with which they were familiar. At the same time, it is equally clear that they were Jewish converts - converts from Judaism to Christianity - who are addressed. The writer addresses them as Christians, not as those who were to be converted to Christianity; he explains to them the Jewish customs as one would do to those who had been converted from Judaism; he endeavors to guard them from apostasy, as if there were danger that they would relapse again into the system from which they were converted. These considerations seem to be decisive; and in the view of all who have written on the Epistle, as well as of the Christian world at large, they settle the question. It has never been held that the Epistle was directed to Gentiles; and in all the opinions and questions which have been started on the subject, it has been admitted that, wherever they resided, the persons to whom the Epistle was addressed were originally Hebrews who had never been converted to the Christian religion.

(II) “To what particular church of the Hebrews was it written?” Very different opinions have been held on this question. The celebrated Storr held that it was written to the Hebrew part of the churches in Galatia; and that the Epistle to the Galatians was addressed to the Gentile part of those

churches. Semler and Noessett maintained that it was written to the churches in Macedonia, and particularly to the church of Thessalonica. Bolten maintains that it was addressed to the Jewish Christians who fled from Palestine in a time of persecution about the year 60 a.d., and who were scattered through Asia Minor. Michael Weber supposed that it was addressed to the church at Corinth. Ludwig conjectured that it was addressed to a church in Spain. Wetstein supposes that it was written to the church at Rome. Most of these opinions are mere conjectures, and all of them depend upon circumstances which furnish only slight evidence of probability. Those who are disposed to examine these, and to see them confuted, may consult Stuart‘s *Commentary on the Hebrews*, Introduction Sections 5-9.

The common, and the almost universally received opinion is that the Epistle was addressed to the Hebrew Christians in Palestine. The reasons for this opinion, briefly, are the following:

(1) The testimony of the ancient church was uniform on this point - that the Epistle was not only written to the Hebrew Christians, but to those who were in Palestine. Lardner affirms this to be the testimony of Clement of Alexandria, Jerome, Euthalius, Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Theophylact; and adds that this was the general opinion of the ancients. Works, vol. iv. pp 80,81. ed. London, 1829.

(2) The inscription at the commencement of the Epistle leads to this supposition. That inscription, though not appended by the hand of the author, was early affixed to it. It is found not only in the Greek manuscripts, but in all the early versions, as the Syriac and the Itala; and was doubtless affixed at a very early period, and by whomsoever affixed, expressed the current sense at the time. It is hardly possible that a mistake would be made on this point; and unless there is good evidence to the contrary, this ought to be allowed to determine the question. That inscription is, “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews.” But who are the Hebrews - the Ἑβρᾶιοι HebraioiProfessor Stuart has endeavored to show that this was a term that was employed exclusively to denote the “Jews in Palestine,” in contradistinction from foreign Jews, who were called “Hellenists.” Compare my notes on Acts 6:1. Bertholdt declares that there is not a single

example which can be found in early times of Jewish Christians out of Palestine being called "Hebrews." See a Dissertation on the Greek Language in Palestine. and of the meaning of the word "Hellenists," by Hug, in the Bib. Repository, Vol. I, 547,548. Compare also Robinson's Lexicon on the word Ἑβρᾶιος HebraiosIf this is so, and if the inscription is of any authority, then it goes far to settle the question. The word "Hebrews" occurs only three times in the New Testament Acts 6:1; 2 Corinthians 11:22; Philemon 3:5 in the first of which it is certain that it is used in this sense, and in both the others of which it is probable. There can be no doubt, it seems to me, that an ancient writer acquainted with the usual sense of the word "Hebrew," would understand an inscription of this kind - "written to the Hebrews" - as designed for the inhabitants of Palestine, and not for the Jews of other countries.

(3) there are some passages in the Epistle itself which Lardner supposes indicate that this Epistle was written to the Hebrews in Palestine, or to those there who had been converted from Judaism to Christianity. As those passages are not conclusive, and as their force has been called in question, and with much propriety, by Professor Stuart (pp. 32-34). I shall merely refer to them. They can be examined at leisure by those who are disposed, and though they do not prove that the Epistle was addressed to the Hebrew Christians in Palestine, yet they can be best interpreted on that supposition, and a special significancy would be attached to them on this supposition. They are the following: Hebrews 1:2; Hebrews 4:2; Hebrews 2:1-4; Hebrews 5:12; Hebrews 4:4-6; Hebrews 10:26-29, Hebrews 10:32-34; Hebrews 13:13-14. The argument of Lardner is that these would be more applicable to their condition than to others; a position which I think cannot be doubted. Some of them are of so general character, indeed, as to be applicable to Christians elsewhere; and in regard to some of them it cannot be certainly demonstrated that the state of things referred to existed in Judea, but taken together they would be more applicable by far to them than to the circumstances of any others of which we have knowledge; and this may be allowed to have some weight at least in determining to whom the Epistle was sent.

(4) the internal evidence of the Epistle corresponds with the supposition that it was written to the Hebrew Christians in Palestine. The passages

referred to in the previous remarks (3) might be adduced here as proof. But there is other proof. It might have been otherwise. There might be such strong internal proof that an epistle was not addressed to a supposed people, as completely to neutralize all the evidence derived from an inscription like that prefixed to this Epistle, and all the evidence derived from tradition. But it is not so here. All the circumstances referred to in the Epistle; the general strain of remark; the argument: the allusions, are just such as would be likely to be found in an epistle addressed to the Hebrew Christians in Palestine, and such as would not be likely to occur in an epistle addressed to any other place or people. They are such as the following:

(a) The familiar acquaintance with the Jewish institutions supposed by the writer to exist among those to whom it was sent - a familiarity hardly to be expected even of Jews who lived in other countries.

(b) The danger so frequently adverted to of their relapsing into their former state; of apostatizing from Christianity, and of embracing again the Jewish rites and ceremonies - a danger that would exist nowhere else in so great a degree as in Judea. Compare Hebrews 2:1-3; Hebrews 3:7-11, Hebrews 3:15; Hebrews 4:1; Hebrews 6:1-8; Hebrews 10:26-35.

(c) The nature of the discussion in the Epistle - not turning upon the obligation of circumcision, and the distinction of meats and drinks, which occupied so much of the attention of the apostles and early Christians in other places - but a discussion relating to the whole structure of the Mosaic economy, the pre-eminence of Moses or Christ, the meaning of the rites of the temple, etc. These great questions would be more likely to arise in Judea than elsewhere, and it was important to discuss them fully, as it is done in this Epistle. In other places they would be of less interest, and would excite less difficulty.

(d) The allusion to local places and events; to facts in their history; and to the circumstances of public worship, which would be better understood there than elsewhere. There are no allusions - or if there are they are very brief and infrequent - to pagan customs games, races, and philosophical opinions, as there are often in the other epistles of the New Testament. Those to whom the Epistle was sent, are presumed to have an intimate and

minute knowledge of the Hebrew history, and such a knowledge as could be hardly supposed elsewhere. Compare Hebrews 11:32-39. Thus, it is implied that they so well understood the subjects referred to relating to the Jewish rites, that it was not necessary that the writer should specify them particularly. See Hebrews 9:5. Of what other persons could this be so appropriately said as of the dwellers in Palestine?

(e) The circumstances of trial and persecution so often referred to in the Epistle, agree well with the known condition of the church in Palestine. That it was subjected to great trials we know; and though this was extensively true of other churches, yet it is probable that there were more vexatious and grievous exactions; that there was more spite and malice; that there were more of the trials arising from the separation of families and the losses of property attending a profession of Christianity in Palestine than elsewhere in the early Christian church. These considerations - though not so conclusive as to furnish absolute demonstration - go far to settle the question. They seem to me so strong as to preclude any reasonable doubt, and are such as the mind can repose on with a great degree of confidence in regard to the original destination of the Epistle.

(3) "was it addressed to a particular church in Palestine, or to the Hebrew Christians there in general?" Whether it was addressed to the churches in general in Palestine, or to some particular church there, it is now impossible to determine. Prof. Stuart inclines to the opinion that it was addressed to the church in Caesarea. The ancients in general supposed it was addressed to the church in Jerusalem. There are some local references in the Epistle which look as though it was directed to some particular church. But the means of determining this question are put beyond our reach, and it is of little importance to settle the question. From the allusions to the temple, the priesthood, the sacrifices, and the whole train of special institutions there, it would seem probable that it was directed to the church in Jerusalem. As that was the capital of the nation, and the center of religious influence; and as there was a large and flourishing church there, this opinion would seem to have great probability; but it is impossible now to determine it. If we suppose that the author sent the Epistle, in the first instance, to some local church, near the central seat of the great influence which he intended to reach by it - addressing to that church the particular

communications in the last verses - we shall make a supposition which, so far as can now be ascertained, will accord with the truth in the case.

Section 3. The Author of the Epistle

To those who are familiar with the investigations which have taken place in regard to this Epistle, it need not be said that the question of its authorship has given rise to much discussion. The design of these notes does not permit me to go at length into this inquiry. Those who are disposed to see the investigation pursued at length, and to see the objections to the Pauline origin examined in a most satisfactory manner, can find it done in the *Introduction to the Epistle to the Hebrews*, by Prof. Stuart, pp. 77-260. All that my purpose requires is to state, in a very brief manner, the evidence on which it is ascribed to the apostle Paul. That evidence is, briefly, the following:

(1) That derived from the church at Alexandria. Clement of Alexandria says, that Paul wrote to the Hebrews, and that this was the opinion of Pantaenus, who was at the head of the celebrated Christian school at Alexandria, and who flourished about 180 a.d. Pantaenus lived near Palestine. He must have been acquainted with the prevailing opinions on the subject, and his testimony must be regarded as proof that the Epistle was regarded as Paul‘s by the churches in that region. Origen, also of Alexandria, ascribes the Epistle to Paul; though he says that the “sentiments” are those of Paul, but that the words and phrases belong to some one relating the apostle‘s sentiments, and as it were commenting on the words of his master. The testimony of the church at Alexandria was uniform after the time of Origen, that it was the production of Paul. Indeed there seems never to have been any doubt in regard to it there, and from the commencement it was admitted as his production. The testimony of that church and school is particularly valuable, because:

(a)it was near to Palestine, where the Epistle was probably sent;

(b)Clement particularly had traveled much, and would be likely to understand the prevailing sentiments of the East;

(c)Alexandria was the seat of the most celebrated theological school of the early Christian ages, and those who were at the head of this school would be likely to have correct information on a point like this; and,

(d)Origen is admitted to have been the most learned of the Greek fathers, and his testimony that the “sentiments” were those of Paul may be regarded as of unique value.

(2) it was inserted in the translation into the Syriac, made very early in the second century, and in the Old Italic version, and was hence believed to be of apostolic origin, and is by the inscription ascribed to Paul. This may be allowed to express the general sense of the churches at that time, as this would not have been done unless there had been a general impression that the Epistle was written by him. The fact that it was regarded early as an inspired book is also conclusively shown by the fact that the Second Epistle of Peter, and the Second Epistle and Third Epistle of John, are not found in that version. They came later into circulation than the other epistles, and were not possessed, or regarded as genuine, by the author of that version. The Epistle to the Hebrews is found in these versions, and was, therefore, regarded as one of the inspired books. In those versions it bears the inscription, “To the Hebrews.”

(3) this Epistle was received as the production of Paul by the Eastern churches. Justin Martyr, who was born at Samaria, quotes it, about the year 140 a.d. It was found, as has been already remarked, in the Peshito - the Old Syriac Version, made in the early part of the second century Jacob, bishop of Nisibis, also (about 325 a.d.) repeatedly quotes it as the production of an apostle. Ephrem Syrus, or the Syrian, abundantly ascribes this Epistle to Paul. He was the disciple of Jacob of Nisibis, and no man was better qualified to inform himself on this point than Ephrem. No man stands deservedly higher in the memory of the Eastern churches. After him, all the Syrian churches acknowledged the canonical authority of the Epistle to the Hebrews. But the most important testimony of the Eastern church is that of Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, in Palestine. He is the well-known historian of the church, and he took pains from all quarters to collect testimony in regard to the Books of Scripture. He says, “There are fourteen epistles of Paul, manifest and well known: but yet there are some who reject that to the Hebrews, alleging in behalf of their opinion, that it was not received by the church of Rome as a writing of Paul.” The testimony of Eusebius is particularly important.

He had heard of the objection to its canonical authority. He had weighed that objection. Yet in view of the testimony in the case, he regarded it as the

undoubted production of Paul. As such it was received in the churches in the East; and the fact which he mentions, that its genuineness had been disputed by the church of Rome, and that he specifies no other church, proves that it had not been called in question in the East. This seems to me to be sufficient testimony to settle this inquiry. The writers here referred to lived in the very country to which the Epistle was evidently written, and their testimony is uniform. Justin Martyr was born in Samaria; Ephrem passed his life in Syria; Eusebius lived in Cesarea, and Origen passed the last twenty years of his life in Palestine. The churches there were unanimous in the opinion that this Epistle was written by Paul, and their united testimony should settle the question.

Indeed when their testimony is considered, it seems remarkable that the subject should have been regarded as doubtful by critics, or that it should have given rise to so much protracted investigation. I might add to the testimonies above referred to, the fact that the Epistle was declared to be Paul‘s by the following persons: Archelaus, Bishop of Mesopotamia, about 300 a.d.; Adamantius, about 330 a.d.; Cyril, of Jerusalem, about 348 a.d.; the Council of Laodicea, about 363 a.d.; Epiphanius, about 368 a.d.; Basil, 370 a.d.; Gregory Nazianzen, 370 a.d.; Chrysostom, 398 a.d., etc. etc. Why should not the testimony of such men and churches be admitted? What more clear or decided evidence could we wish in regard to any fact of ancient history? Would not such testimony be ample in regard to an anonymous oration of Cicero, or poem of Virgil or Horace? Are we not constantly acting on far feebler evidence in regard to the authorship of many productions of celebrated English writers?

(4) in regard to the Western churches, it is to be admitted that, like the Second Epistle of Peter, and the Second Epistle and Third Epistle of John, the canonical authority was for some time doubted, or was even called in question. But this may be accounted for. The Epistle had not the name of the author. All the other epistles of Paul had. As the Epistle was addressed to the Hebrews in Palestine, it may not have been soon known to the Western churches. As there were spurious epistles and gospels at an early age, much caution would be used in admitting any anonymous production to a place in the sacred canon. Yet it was not long before all these doubts were removed, and the Epistle to the Hebrews was allowed to take its place

among the other acknowledged writings of Paul. It was received as the Epistle of Paul by Hilary, Bishop of Poictiers, about 354 a.d.; by Lucifer, Bishop of Cagliari, 354 a.d.; by Victorinus, 360 a.d.; by Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, 360 a.d.; by Rufinus, 397 a.d., etc. etc.

Jerome, the well-known Latin Father, uses in regard to it the following language: "This is to be maintained, that this Epistle, which is inscribed to the Hebrews, is not only received by the churches at the East as the apostle Paul's, but has been in past times by all ecclesiastical writers in the Greek language; although most Latins think that Barnabas or Clement was the author." Still, it was not rejected by "all" the Latins. Some received it in the time of Jerome as the production of Paul. See Stuart, pp. 114,115, for the full testimony of Jerome. Augustine admitted that the Epistle was written by Paul. He mentions that Paul wrote fourteen epistles, and specifies particularly the Epistle to the Hebrews. He often cites it as a part of Scripture, and quotes it as the production of an apostle - Stuart, p. 115. From the time of Augustine it was undisputed. By the Council of Hippo, 393 a.d., the Third Council of Carthage, 397 a.d., and the Fifth Council of Carthage, 419 a.d., it was declared to be the Epistle of Paul, and was commended to the churches as such.

(5) as another proof that it is the writing of Paul, we may appeal to the internal evidence:

(a) The author of the Epistle was the companion and friend of Timothy. "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty - or is sent away - ἀπολελυμένον apolelumenon- with whom if he come speedily, I will make you a visit." Hebrews 13:23. Sent away, perhaps, on a journey, to visit some of the churches, and expected soon to return. In Philemon 2:19, Paul speaks of sending Timothy to them "so soon as he should see how it would go with him," at the same time expressing a hope that he should himself see them shortly. What is more natural than to suppose that he had now sent Timothy to Philippi; that during his absence he wrote this Epistle; that he was waiting for his return; and that he proposed, if Timothy should return soon, to visit Palestine with him? And who would more naturally say this than the apostle Paul - the companion and friend of Timothy; by whom he had been

accompanied in his travels; and by whom he was regarded with special interest as a minister of the gospel?

(b) In Hebrews 13:18-19, he asks their prayers that he might be restored to them; and in Hebrews 13:23, he expresses a confident expectation of being able soon to come and see them. From this it is evident that he was then imprisoned, but had hope of speedy release - a state of things in exact accordance with what existed at Rome. Philemon 2:17-24.

(c) He was in bonds when he wrote this Epistle. Hebrews 10:34, "ye had compassion of me in my bonds;" an expression that will exactly apply to the case of Paul. He was in "bonds" in Palestine; he was two whole years in Caesarea a prisoner Acts 24:27; and what was more natural than that the Christians in Palestine should have had compassion on him, and ministered to his needs? To what other person would these circumstances so certainly be applicable?

(d) The salutation Hebrews 13:24, "they of Italy salute you," agrees with the supposition that it was written by Paul when a prisoner at Rome. Paul writing from Rome, and acquainted with Christians from other parts of Italy, would be likely to send such a salutation. In regard to the "objections" which may be made to this use of the passage, the reader may consult Stuart's *Introduction to the Hebrews*, p. 127, following.

(e) The "doctrines" of the Epistle are the same as those which are taught by Paul in his undisputed writings. It is true that this consideration is not conclusive, but the want of it would be conclusive evidence against the position that Paul wrote it. But the resemblance is not general. It is not such as any man would exhibit who held to the same general system of truth. It relates to "peculiarities" of doctrine, and is such as would be manifested by a man who bad been reared and trained as Paul had:

(1) No one can doubt that the author was formerly a Jew - and a Jew who had been familiar to an uncommon degree with the institutions of the Jewish religion. Every rite and ceremony; every form of opinion; every fact in their history, is perfectly familiar to him. And though the other apostles were Jews, yet we can hardly suppose that they had the familiarity with the

minute rites and ceremonies so accurately referred to in this Epistle, and so fully illustrated. With Paul all this was perfectly natural. He had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and had spent the early part of his life at Jerusalem in the careful study of the Old Testament, in the examination of the prevalent opinions, and in the attentive observance of the rites of religion. The other apostles had been born and trained, apparently, on the banks of Gennesareth, and certainly with few of the opportunities which Paul had had for becoming acquainted with the institutions of the temple service. This consideration is fatal, in my view, to the claim which has been set up for Clement as the author of the Epistle. It is wholly incredible that a foreigner should be so familiar with the Jewish opinions, laws, institutions, and history, as the author of this Epistle manifestly was.

(2) there is the same preference for Christianity over Judaism in this Epistle which is shown by Paul in his other epistles, and exhibited in the same form. Among these points are the following - "The gospel imparts superior light." Compare Galatians 4:3, Galatians 4:9; 1 Corinthians 14:20; Ephesians 4:11-13; 2 Corinthians 3:18; with Hebrews 1:1-2; Hebrews 2:2-4; Hebrews 8:9-11; Hebrews 10:1; Hebrews 11:39-40. "The gospel holds out superior motives and encouragements to piety." Compare Galatians 3:23; Galatians 4:2-3; Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:1; Galatians 5:13; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 6:15; with Hebrews 9:9, Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 12:18-24, Hebrews 12:28; Hebrews 8:6-13. "The gospel is superior in promoting the real and permanent happiness of mankind." Compare Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 3:7, 2 Corinthians 3:9; Romans 3:20; Romans 4:24-25; Ephesians 1:7; Romans 5:1-2; Galatians 2:16; and the same views in Hebrews 12:18-21; Hebrews 9:9; Hebrews 10:4, Hebrews 10:11; Hebrews 6:18-20; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 9:24. "The Jewish dispensation was a type and shadow of the Christian." See Colossians 2:16-17; 1 Corinthians 10:1-6; Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:45-47; 2 Corinthians 3:13-18; Galatians 4:22-31; Galatians 4:1-5; and for the same or similar views, see Hebrews 9:9-14; Hebrews 10:1; Hebrews 8:1-9; Hebrews 9:22-24. "The Christian religion was designed to be perpetual, while the Jewish was intended to be abolished."

See 2 Corinthians 3:10-11, 2 Corinthians 3:13, 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 4:14-16; Romans 7:4-6; Galatians 3:21-25; Galatians 4:1-7;

Galatians 5:1; and for similar views compare Hebrews 8:6-8, Hebrews 8:13; Hebrews 7:17-19; Hebrews 10:1-14. "The person of the Mediator is presented in the same light by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews and by Paul." See Philemon 2:6-11; Colossians 1:15-20; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Ephesians 3:9; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Corinthians 15:25-27; and for the same and similar views, see Hebrews 1:2-3; Hebrews 2:9, Hebrews 2:14; Hebrews 12:2; Hebrews 2:8; Hebrews 10:13. "The death of Christ is the propitiatory sacrifice for sin." See 1 Timothy 1:15; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Romans 8:32; Romans 3:24; Galatians 1:4; Galatians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; 1 Timothy 2:6; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Corinthians 7:23; Romans 5:12-21; Romans 3:20, Romans 3:28; Romans 8:3; 1 Timothy 2:5-6. For similar views see Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 2:9; Hebrews 5:8-9; Hebrews 8:1-13; Hebrews 10:19, it is principally doctrinal; the remainder is mainly practical. "The manner of appealing to, and applying the Jewish Scriptures, is the same in this Epistle as in those of Paul." The general structure of the Epistle, and the slightest comparison between them, will show this with sufficient clearness. The general remark to be made in view of this comparison is, that the Epistle to the Hebrews is just such an one as Paul might be expected to write; that it agrees with what we know to have been his early training, his views, his manner of life, his opinions, and his habit in writing; that it accords better with his views than with those of any other known writer of antiquity; and that it falls in with the circumstances in which he was known to be placed, and the general object which he had in view. So satisfactory are these views to my mind, that they seem to have all the force of demonstration which can be had in regard to any anonymous publication, and it is a matter of wonder that so much doubt has been experienced in reference to the question who was the author.

It is difficult to account for the fact that the name of the author was omitted. It is found in every other Epistle of Paul, and in general it is appended to the epistles in the New Testament. It is omitted, however, in the three Epistles of John, for reasons which are now unknown. And there may have been similar reasons also unknown for omitting it in this case. The simple fact is, that it is anonymous; and whoever was the author, the same difficulty will exist in accounting for it. If this fact will prove that Paul was not the author, it would prove the same thing in regard to any other person,

and would thus be ultimately conclusive evidence that it had no author. What were the reasons for omitting the name can be only matter of conjecture. The most probable opinion, as it seems to me, is this. The name of Paul was odious to the Jews. He was regarded by the nation as an apostate from their religion, and everywhere they showed special malignity against him.

See the Acts of the Apostles. The fact that he was so regarded by them might indirectly influence even those who had been converted from Judaism to Christianity. They lived in Palestine. They were near the temple, and were engaged in its ceremonies and sacrifices - for there is no evidence that they broke off from those observances on their conversion to Christianity. Paul was abroad. It might have been reported that he was preaching against the temple and its sacrifices, and even the Jewish Christians in Palestine might have supposed that he was carrying matters too far. In these circumstances it might have been imprudent for him to have announced his name at the outset, for it might have aroused prejudices which a wise man would wish to allay. But if he could present an argument, somewhat in the form of an essay, showing that he believed that the Jewish institutions were appointed by God, and that he was not an apostate and an infidel; if he could conduct a demonstration that would accord in the main with the prevailing views of the Christians in Palestine, and that was adapted to, strengthen them in the faith of the gospel, and explain to them the true nature of the Jewish rites, then the object could be gained without difficulty, and then they would be prepared to learn that Pant was the author, without prejudice or alarm. Accordingly he thus conducts the argument; and at the close gives them such intimations that they would understand who wrote it without much difficulty. If this was the motive, it was an instance of tact such as was certainly characteristic of Paul, and such as was not unworthy any man. I have no doubt that this was the true motive. It would be soon known who wrote it; and accordingly we have seen it was never disputed in the Eastern churches.

Section 4. The Time When Written

In regard to the time when this Epistle was written, and the place where, critics have been better agreed than on most of the questions which have been started in regard to it. Mill was of opinion that it was written by Paul in the year 63 a.d., in some part of Italy, soon after he bad been released

from imprisonment at Rome. Wetstein was of the same opinion. Tillemont also places this Epistle in the year 63 a.d., and supposes that it was written while Paul was at Rome, or at least in Italy, and soon after he was released from imprisonment. Basnage supposes it was written about the year 61, and during the imprisonment of the apostle. Lardner supposes also that it was written in the beginning of the year 63 a.d., and soon after the apostle was released from his confinement. This also is the opinion of Calmet. The circumstances in the Epistle which will enable us to form an opinion on the question about the time and the place are the following:

(1) It was written while the temple was still standing, and before Jerusalem was destroyed. This is evident from the whole structure of the Epistle. There is no allusion to the destruction of the temple or the city, which there certainly would have been if they had been destroyed. Such an event would have contributed much to the object in view, and would have furnished an unbreakable argument that the institutions of the Jews were intended to be superseded by another and a more perfect system. Moreover, there are allusions in the Epistle which suppose that the temple service was then performed. See Hebrews 9:9; Hebrews 8:4-5. But the city and temple were destroyed in the year 70 a.d., and, of course, the Epistle was written before that year.

(2) it was evidently written before the civil wars and commotions in Judea, which terminated in the destruction of the city and nation. This is clear, because there are no allusions to any such disorders or troubles in Palestine, and there is no intimation that they were suffering the evils incident to a state of war. Compare Hebrews 12:4. But those wars commenced 66 a.d., and evidently the Epistle was written before that time.

(3) they were not suffering the evils of violent persecution. They had indeed formerly suffered (compare Hebrews 10:32, Hebrews 10:34); James and Stephen had been put to death Hebrews 10:32-33. But the persecution under Nero began in the year 64 a.d., and though it began at Rome, and was confined to a considerable degree to Italy, yet it is not improbable that it extended to other places, and it is to be presumed that if such a persecution were raging at the time when the Epistle was written there would be some allusion to this fact. It may be set down, therefore, that it was written before the year 64 ad.

(4) It is equally true that the Epistle was written during the latter part of the apostolic age. The author speaks of the former days in which after they were illuminated they had endured a great fight of afflictions, and when they were made a gazing-stock, and were plundered by their oppressors Hebrews 10:32-34; and he speaks of them as having been so long-converted that they ought to have been qualified to teach others Hebrews 5:12; and, hence, it is fairly to be inferred that they were not recent converts, but that the church there had been established for a considerable period. It may be added, that it was after the writer had been imprisoned - as I suppose in Caesarea (see Section 3) - when they had ministered to him; Hebrews 10:34. But this was as late as the year 60 ad.

(5) At the time when Paul wrote the Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, he had hopes of deliverance. Timothy was evidently with him. But now he was absent; Hebrews 13:23. In the Epistle to the Philippians Philemon 2:19-23 he says, "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I may be also of good comfort, when I know your state." He expected, therefore, that Timothy would come back to him at Rome. It is probable that Timothy was sent soon after this. The apostle had a fair prospect of being set at liberty, and sent him to them. "During his absence" at this time, it would seem probable, this Epistle was written. Thus, the writer says Hebrews 13:23, "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty" - or rather, "sent away," or "sent abroad" (see the note in that place); "with whom if be come shortly, I will see you." That is, if he returns soon, as I expect him, I will pay you a visit. It is probable that the Epistle was written while Timothy was thus absent at Philippi, and when he returned, Paul and he went to Palestine, and thence to Ephesus. If so it was written somewhere about the year 63 a.d. as this was the time when Paul was set at liberty.

(6) the Epistle was written evidently in Italy. Thus, in Hebrews 13:24, the writer says, "They of Italy salute you." This would be the natural form of salutation on the supposition that it was written there. He mentions none by name, as he does in his other epistles, for it is probable that none of those who were at Rome would be known by name in Palestine. But there was a general salutation, showing the interest which they had in the

Christians in Judea, and expressive of regard for their welfare. This expression is, to my mind, conclusive evidence that the Epistle was written in Italy; and in Italy there was no place where this would be so likely to occur as at Rome.

Section 5. The Language in which It Was Written

This is a vexed and still unsettled question, and it does not seem to be possible to determine it with any considerable degree of certainty. Critics of the ablest name have been divided on it, and what is remarkable, have appealed to the same arguments to prove exactly opposite opinions - one class arguing that the style of the Epistle is such as to prove that it was written in Hebrew, and the other appealing to the same proofs to demonstrate that it was written in Greek. Among those who have supposed that it was written in Hebrew are the following, namely: - Some of the fathers - as Clement of Alexandria, Theodoret, John Damascenus, Theophylact; and among the moderns, Michaelis has been the most strenuous defender of this opinion. This opinion was also held by the late Dr. James P. Wilson, who says, "It was probably written in the common language of the Jews;" that is, in that mixture of Hebrew, Syriac, and Chaldee, which was usually spoken in the time of the Saviour, and which was known as the Syro-Chaldaic.

On the other hand, the great body of critics have supposed it was written in the Greek language. This was the opinion of Fabricius, Lightfoot, Whitby, Beausobre, Capellus, Basnage, Mill, and others, and is also the opinion of Lardnet, Hug, Stuart, and perhaps of most modern critics. These opinions may be seen examined at length in Michaelis' *Introduction*, Hag, Stuart, and Lardner.

The arguments in support of the opinion that it was written in Hebrew are, briefly, the following:

(1) The testimony of the fathers. Thus, Clement of Alexandria says, "Paul wrote to the Hebrews in the Hebrew language, and Luke carefully translated it into Greek." Jerome says, "Paul as a Hebrew wrote to the Hebrews in Hebrew - Scripserat ut Hebraeus Hebraeis Hebraice;" and then he adds, "this Epistle was translated into Greek, so that the coloring of the style was made diverse in this way from that of Paul's."

(2) the fact that it was written for the use of the Hebrews, who spoke the Hebrew, or the "Talmudic" language, is alleged as a reason for supposing that it must have been written in that language.

(3) it is alleged by Michaelis, that the style of the Greek, as we now have it, is far more pure and Classical than Paul elsewhere employs, and that hence it is to be inferred that it was translated by some one who was master of the Greek language. On this, however, the most eminent critics disagree.

(4) it is alleged by Michaelis, that the quotations in the Epistle, as we have it, are made from the Septuagint, and that they are foreign to the purpose which the writer had in view as they are now quoted, whereas they are exactly in point as they stand in the Hebrew. Hence he infers that the original Hebrew was quoted by the author, and that the translator used the common version at hand instead of making an exact translation for himself. Of the fact alleged here, however, there may be good ground to raise a question; and if it were so, it would not prove that the writer might not have used the common and accredited translation, though less to his purpose than the original. Of the fact, moreover, to which Michaelis here refers, Prof. Stuart says, "He has not adduced a single instance of what he calls a "wrong translation" which wears the appearance of any considerable probability." The only instance urged by Michaelis which seems to me to be plausible is Hebrews 1:7. These are the principal arguments which have been urged in favor of the opinion that this Epistle was written in the Hebrew language. They are evidently not conclusive. The only argument of any considerable weight is the testimony of some of the fathers, and it may be doubted whether they gave this as a matter of historic fact or only as a matter of opinion. See Hug's *Introduction*, 144. It is morally certain that in one respect their statement cannot be true. They state that it was translated by Luke; but it is capable of the clearest proof that it was not translated by Luke, the author of the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, since there is the most remarkable dissimilarity in the style.

On the other hand there are alleged in favor of the opinion that it was written in Greek the following considerations, namely:

(1) The fact that we have no Hebrew original. If it was written in Hebrew, the original was early lost. None of the fathers say that they had seen it; none quote it. All the copies that we have are in Greek. If it was written in Hebrew, and the original was destroyed, it must have been at a very early period, and it is remarkable that no one should have mentioned the fact or alluded to it. Besides, it is scarcely conceivable that the original should have so soon perished, and that the translation should have altogether taken its place. If it was addressed to the Hebrews in Palestine, the same reason which made it proper that it should have been written in Hebrew would have led them to retain it in that language, and we might have supposed that Origen, or Eusebius, or Jerome, who lived there, or Ephrem the Syrian, would have adverted to the fact that there was there a Hebrew original. The Jews were remarkable for retaining their sacred books in the language in which they were written, and if this were written in Hebrew it is difficult to account for the fact that it was so soon suffered to perish.

(2) the presumption - a presumption amounting to almost a moral certainty - is, that an apostle writing to the Christians in Palestine would write in Greek. This presumption is based on the following circumstances:

(a) The fact that all the other books of the New Testament were written in Greek, unless the Gospel by Matthew is an exception.

(b) This occurred in cases where it would seem to have been as improbable as it was that one writing to the Hebrews should use that language. For instance, Paul wrote to the church in Rome in the Greek language, though the “Latin” language was what was in universal use there.

(c) The Greek was a common language in the East. It seems to have been familiarly spoken, and to have been commonly understood.

(d) Like the other books of the New Testament, this Epistle does not appear to have been intended to be confined to the Hebrews only. The writings of the apostles were regarded as the property of the church at large. Those writings would be copied and spread abroad. The Greek language was a far better language for such a purpose than the Hebrew language. It

was polished and elegant; was adapted to the purpose of discoursing on moral subjects; was fitted to express delicate shades of thought, and was the language which was best understood by the world at large.

(e) It was the language which Paul would naturally use unless there was a strong reason for his employing the Hebrew. Though he was able to speak in Hebrew Acts 21:40, yet he had spent his early days in Tarsus, where the Greek was the vernacular tongue, and it was probably that which he had first learned. Besides this, when this Epistle was written he had been absent from Palestine about 25 years, and in all that time he had been there but a few days. He had been where the Greek language was universally spoken. He had been among Jews who spoke that language. It was the language used in their synagogues, and Paul had addressed them in it. After thus preaching, conversing, and writing in that language for 25 years, is it any wonder that he should prefer writing in it; that he should naturally do it; and is it not to be presumed that he would do it in this case? These presumptions are so strong that they ought to be allowed to settle a question of this kind unless there is positive proof to the contrary.

(3) there is internal proof that it was written in the Greek language. The evidence of this kind consists in the fact that the writer bases an argument on the meaning and force of Greek words, which could not have occurred had he written in Hebrew. Instances of this kind are such as these:

(a) In Psalm 8:1-9 to prove that the Son of God must have had a human nature, which was to be exalted above the angels, and placed at the head of the creation. The passage is, “Thou hast made him a little while inferior to the angels. Hebrews 2:7, margin. In the Hebrew, in Psalm 8:5, the word rendered “angels,” is אלהים 'Elohiym- God; and the sense of “angels” attached to that word, though it may sometimes occur, is so unusual, that an argument would not have been built on the Hebrew language.

(b) In Hebrews 7:1, the writer has explained the name “Melchizedek,” and translated it “king of Salem” - telling what it is in “Greek” - a thing which would not have been done had he written in Hebrew, where the word was well understood. It is possible, indeed, that a translator might have

done this, but the explanation seems to be interwoven with the discourse itself, and to constitute a part of the argument.

(c) In Hebrews 9:16-17, there is an argument on the meaning of the word "covenant" - διαθήκη diathēkē- which could not have occurred had the Epistle been in Hebrew. It is founded on the double meaning of that word - denoting both a "covenant" and a "testament," or "will." The Hebrew word - ברית beriyt- has no such double signification. It means only "covenant," and is never used in the sense of the word "will," or testament. The proper translation of that word would be συνθήκη sunthēkē- but the translators of the Septuagint uniformly used the former - διαθήκη diathēkēand on this word the argument of the apostle is based. This could not have been done by a translator; it must have been by the original author, for it is incorporated into the argument.

(d) In Hebrews 10:3-9, the author shows that Christ came to make an atonement for sin, and that in order to this it was necessary that he should have a human body. This he shows was not only necessary, but was predicted. In doing this, he appeals to Psalm 40:6 - "A body hast thou prepared for me." But the Hebrew here is, "Mine ears hast thou opened." This passage would have been much less pertinent than the other form - "a body hast thou prepared me; " - and indeed it is not easy to see how it would bear at all on the object in view. See Hebrews 10:10. But in the Septuagint, the phrase stands as he quotes it - "a body hast thou prepared for me;" a fact which demonstrates, whatever difficulties there may be about the "principle" on which he makes the quotation, that the Epistle was written in Greek. It may be added, that it has nothing of the appearance of a translation. It is not stiff, forced, or constrained in style, as translations usually are. It is impassioned, free, flowing, full of animation, life, and coloring, and has all the appearance of being an original composition. So clear have these considerations appeared, that the great body of critics now concur in the opinion that the Epistle was originally written in Greek

Section 6. The Design and General Argument of the Epistle

The general purpose of this Epistle is, to preserve those to whom it was sent from the danger of apostasy. Their danger on this subject did not arise so much from persecution, as from the circumstances that were fitted to attract them again to the Jewish religion. The temple, it is supposed, and

indeed it is evident, was still standing. The morning and evening sacrifice was still offered. The splendid rites of that imposing religion were still observed. The authority of the law was undisputed. Moses was a lawgiver, sent from God, and no one doubted that the Jewish form of religion had been instituted by their fathers in conformity with the direction of God. Their religion had been founded amidst remarkable manifestations of the Deity - in flames, and smoke, and thunder; it had been communicated by the ministration of angels; it had on its side and in its favor all the venerableness and sanction of a remote antiquity; and it commended itself by the pomp of its ritual, and by the splendor of its ceremonies. On the other hand, the new form of religion had little or nothing of this to commend it. It was of recent origin. It was founded by the Man of Nazareth, who had been trained up in their own land, and who had been a carpenter, and who had had no extraordinary advantages of education. Its rites were few and simple. It had no splendid temple service; none of the pomp and pageantry, the music and the magnificence of the ancient religion. It had no splendid array of priests in magnificent vestments, and it had not been imparted by the ministry of angels. Fishermen were its ministers; and by the body of the nation it was regarded as a schism, or heresy, that enlisted in its favor only the most humble and lowly of the people.

In these circumstances, how natural was it for the enemies of the gospel in Judea to contrast the two forms of religion, and how keenly would Christians there feel it! All that was said of the antiquity and the divine origin of the Jewish religion they knew and admitted; all that was said of its splendor and magnificence they saw; and all that was said of the humble origin of their own religion they were constrained to admit also. their danger was not that arising from persecution. It was that of being affected by considerations like these, and of relapsing again into the religion of their fathers, and of apostatizing from the gospel; and it was a danger which beset no other part of the Christian world.

To meet and counteract this danger was the design of this Epistle. Accordingly, the writer contrasts the two religions in all the great points on which the minds of Christians in Judea would be likely to be affected, and shows the superiority of the Christian religion over the Jewish in every respect, and especially in the points that had so much attracted their attention, and affected their hearts. He begins by showing that the author of

the Christian religion was superior in rank to any and all who had ever delivered the word of God to man. He was superior to the prophets, and even to the angels. He was over all things, and all things were subject to him. There was, therefore, a special reason why they should listen to him, and obey his commands; Hebrews 1:1-14 and Hebrews 2: He was superior to Moses, the great Jewish lawgiver, whom they venerated so much, and on whom they so much prided themselves; Hebrews 3: Having shown that the Great Founder of the Christian religion was superior to the prophets, to Moses, and to the angels, the writer proceeds to show that the Christian religion was characterized by having a High Priest superior to that of the Jews, and of whom the Jewish high priest was but a type and emblem.

He shows that all the rites of the ancient religion, splendid as they were, were also but types, and were to vanish away - for they had had their fulfillment in the realities of the Christian faith He allows that the Christians High Priest derived his origin and his rank from a more venerable antiquity than the Jewish high priest did - because he went back to Melchizedek, who lived long before Aaron, and that he had far superior dignity from the fact that he had entered into the Holy of Holies in heaven.

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

The main object of the Epistle is to commend the Christian religion to those who were addressed in it in such a way as to prevent defection from it. This is done, principally, by showing its superiority to the Mosaic system. The great danger of Christians in Palestine was of relapsing into the Jewish system. The imposing nature or its rites; the public sentiment in its favor; the fact of its antiquity, and its undisputed divine origin, would all tend to that. To counteract this, the writer of this Epistle shows that the gospel bad higher claims on their attention, and that if that was rejected ruin was inevitable. In doing this, he begins, in this chapter, by showing the superiority of the Author of Christianity to prophets and to the angels; that is, that he had a rank that entitled him to the profoundest regard. The drift of this chapter, therefore, is to show the dignity and exalted nature of the Author of the Christian system - the Son of God. The chapter comprises the following points:

I. The announcement of the fact that God, who had formerly spoken by the prophets, had in this last dispensation spoken by his Son; Hebrews 1:1-2.

II. The statement respecting his rank and dignity. He was:

(1)the Heir of all things;

(2)the Creator of the worlds;

(3)the Brightness of the divine glory and the proper expression of his nature;

(4)he upheld all things; Hebrews 1:2-3.

III. The work and exaltation of the Author of the Christian system:

(1)He, by his own unassisted agency, purified us from our sins.

(2)he is seated at the right hand of God.

(3)he has a more exalted and valuable inheritance than the angels, in proportion as his name is more exalted than theirs; Hebrews 1:3-4.

IV. Proofs that what is here ascribed to him belongs to him, particularly that he is declared to be superior to the angels; Hebrews 1:5-14.

(1)the angels have never been addressed with the title of Son: Hebrews 1:5.

(2)he is declared to be the object of worship by the angels, while they are employed merely as the messengers of God; Hebrews 1:6-7.

(3)he is addressed as God, and his throne is said to be forever and ever; Hebrews 1:8-9.

(4)he is addressed as immutable. He is declared to have laid the foundations of heaven and earth; and though they would perish, yet he would remain the same; Hebrews 1:10-12.

(5)none of the angels had been addressed in this manner, but they were employed in the subordinate work of ministering to the heirs of salvation; Hebrews 1:13-14.

From this train of reasoning, the inference is drawn in Hebrews 2:1-4, that we ought to give diligent heed to what had been spoken. The Great Author of the Christian scheme had special claims to be heard, and there was special danger in disregarding his message. The object of this chapter is to impress those to whom the Epistle was addressed with the high claims of the Founder of Christianity, and to show that it was superior in this respect to any other system.

Verse 1

God who at sundry times - The commencement of this Epistle varies from all the others which Paul wrote. In every other instance he at first announces his name, and the name of the church or of the individual to whom he wrote. In regard to the reason why he here varies from that custom, see the introduction, section 3. This commences with the full acknowledgment of his belief that God had made important revelations in past times, but that now he had communicated his will in a manner that more especially claimed their attention. This announcement was of particular importance here. He was writing to those who had been trained up in the full belief of the truths taught by the prophets. As the object of the apostle was to show the superior claims of the gospel, and to lead them from putting confidence in the rites instituted in accordance with the directions of the Old Testament, it was of essential importance that he

should admit that their belief of the inspiration of the prophets was well founded.

He was not an infidel. He was not disposed to call in question the divine origin of the books which were regarded as given by inspiration. He fully admitted all that had been held by the Hebrews on that heart, and yet showed that the new revelation had more important claims to their attention. The word rendered "at sundry times" - πολυμερῶς polumerōs- means "in many parts." It refers here to the fact that the former revelation had been given in various parts. It had not all been given at once. It had been communicated from time to time as the exigencies of the people required, and as God chose to communicate it. At one time it was by history, then by prophecy, by poetry, by proverbs, by some solemn and special message, etc. The ancient revelation was a collection of various writings, on different subjects, and given at different times; but now God had addressed us by His Son - the one great Messenger who had come to finish the divine communications, and to give a uniform and connected revelation to mankind. The contrast here is between the numerous separate parts of the revelation given by the prophets, and the oneness of that given by his Son. The word does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament.

And in divers manners - - πολυτρόπως polutropōsIn many ways. It was not all in one mode. He had employed various methods in communicating his will. At one time it was by direct communication, at another by dreams, at another by visions, etc. In regard to the various methods which God employed to communicate his will, see Introduction to Isaiah, section 7. In contradistinction from these, God had now spoken by his Son. He had addressed us in one uniform manner. It was not by dreams, or visions; it was a direct communication from him. The word used here, also, occurs nowhere else in the New Testament.

In times past - Formerly; in ancient times. The series of revelations began, as recorded by Moses, with Adam Romans 12:6 note; 1 Corinthians 14:1 note. It is used here in that large sense - as denoting all those by whom God had made communications to the Jews in former times.

Verse 2

Hath in these last days - In this the final dispensation; or in this dispensation under which the affairs of the world will be wound up. Phrases similar to this occur frequently in the Scriptures. They do not imply that the world was soon coming to an end, but that that was the "last" dispensation,

the "last" period of the world. There had been the patriarchal period, the period under the Law, the prophets, etc., and This was the period during which God's "last" method of communication would be enjoyed, and under which the world would close. It might be a very long period, but it would be the "last" one; and so far as the meaning of the phrase is concerned, it might be the longest period, or longer than all the others put together, but still it would be the "last" one. See Acts 2:17 note; Isaiah 2:2 note.

Spoken unto us - The word "us" here does not of necessity imply that the writer of the Epistle had actually heard him, or that they had heard him to whom the Epistle was written. It means that God had now communicated his will to man by his Son. It may be said with entire propriety that God has spoken to us by his Son, though we have not personally heard or seen him. We have what he spoke and caused to be recorded for our direction.

By his Son - The title commonly given to the Lord Jesus, as denoting his unique relation to God. It was understood by the Jews to denote equality with God (notes, John 5:18; compare John 10:33, John 10:36), and is used with such a reference here. See notes on Romans 1:4, where the meaning of the phrase "Son of God" is fully considered. It is implied here that the fact that the Son of God has spoken to us imposes the highest obligations to attend to what he has said; that he has an authority superior to all those who have spoken in past times; and that there will be special guilt in refusing to attend to what he has spoken. See Hebrews 2:1-4; compare Hebrews 12:25. The reasons for the superior respect which should be shown to the revelations of the Son of God may be such as these:

(1) His rank and dignity. He is the equal with God John 1:1, and is himself called God in this chapter; Hebrews 1:8. He has a right, therefore, to command, and when he speaks, people should obey.

(2) The clearness of the truths which he communicated to man on a great variety of subjects that are of the highest moment to the world. Revelation has been gradual - like the breaking of the day in the east. At first there is a little light; it increases and expands until objects become more and more visible, and then the sun rises in full-orbed glory. At first we discern only the existence of some object - obscure and undefined; then we can trace its outline; then its color, its size, its proportions, its drapery - until it stands before us fully revealed. So it has been with revelation. There is a great variety of subjects which we now see clearly, which were very

imperfectly understood by the teaching of the prophets, and would be now if we had only the Old Testament. Among them are the following:

(a) The character of God. Christ came to make him known as a merciful being, and to show how he could be merciful as well as just. The views given of God by the Lord Jesus are far more clear than any given by the ancient prophets; compared with those entertained by the ancient philosophers, they are like the sun compared with the darkest midnight,

(b) The way in which man may be reconcile to God. The New Testament - which may be considered as what God "has spoken to us by his Son" - has told us how the great work of being reconciled to God can be effected. The Lord Jesus told us that he came to "give his life a ransom for many;" that he laid down his life for his friends; that he was about to die for man; that he would draw all people to him. The prophets indeed - particularly Isaiah - threw much light on these points. But the mass of the people did not understand their revelations. They pertained to future events always difficult to be understood. But Christ has told us the way of salvation, and he has made it so plain that he who runs may read.

(c) The moral precepts of the Redeemer are superior to those of any and all that had gone before him. They are elevated, pure, expansive, benevolent - such as became the Son of God to proclaim. Indeed this is admitted on all hands. Infidels are constrained to acknowledge that all the moral precepts of the Saviour are eminently pure and benignant. If they were obeyed, the world would be filled with justice, truth, purity, and benevolence. Error, fraud, hypocrisy, ambition, wars, licentiousness, and intemperance, would cease; and the opposite virtues would diffuse happiness over the face of the world. Prophets had indeed delivered many moral precepts of great importance, but the purest and most extensive body of just principles of good morals on earth are to be found in the teachings of the Saviour.

(d) He has given to us the clearest view which man has had of the future state; and he has disclosed in regard to that future state a class of truths of the deepest interest to mankind, which were before wholly unknown or only partially revealed.

1. He has revealed the certainty of a state of future existence - in opposition to the Sadducees of all ages. This was denied before he came by multitudes, and where it was not, the arguments by which it was supported were often of the feeblest kind. The "truth" was held by some - like Plato and his followers - but the "arguments" on which they relied were feeble, and such as were untitled to give rest to the soul. The "truth" they had obtained by tradition; the "arguments" were their own.

2. He revealed the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. This before was doubted or denied by nearly all the world. It was held to be absurd and impossible. The Saviour taught its certainty; he raised up more than one to show that it was possible; he was himself raised, to put the whole matter beyond debate.

3. He revealed the certainty of future judgment - the judgment of all mankind.

4. It disclosed great and momentous truths respecting the future state. Before he came, all was dark. The Greeks spoke of Elysian fields, but they were dreams of the imagination; the Hebrews had some faint notion of a future state where all was dark and gloomy, with perhaps an occasional glimpse of the truth that there is a holy and blessed heaven; but to the mass of mind all was obscure. Christ revealed a heaven, and told us of a hell. He showed us that the one might be gained and the other avoided. He presented important motives for doing it; and had he done nothing more, his communications were worthy the profound attention of mankind. I may add:

(3) That the Son of God has claims on our attention from the manner in which he spoke. He spoke as one having "authority;" Matthew 7:29. He spoke as a "witness" of what he saw and knew; John 3:11. He spoke without doubt or ambiguity of God, and heaven, and hell. His is the language of one who is familiar with all that he describes; who saw all, who knew all. There is no hesitancy or doubt in his mind of the truth of what he speaks; and he speaks as if his whole soul were impressed with its unspeakable importance. Never were so momentous communications made to people of hell as fell from the lips of the Lord Jesus (see notes on

Matthew 23:33); never were announcements made so suited to awe and appall a sinful world.

Whom he hath appointed heir of all things - see Psalm 2:8; compare notes, Romans 8:17. This is language taken from the fact that he is "the Son of God." If a son, then he is an heir - for so it is usually among people. This is not to be taken literally, as if he inherits anything as a man does. An heir is one who inherits anything after the death of its possessor - usually his father. But this cannot be applied in this sense to the Lord Jesus. The language is used to denote his rank and dignity as the Son of God. As such all things are his, as the property of a father descends to his son at his death. The word rendered "heir" - κληρονόμος klēronomos- means properly:

(1) one who acquires anything by lot; and,

(2) an "heir" in the sense in which we usually understand the word. It may also denote a "possessor" of anything received as a portion, or of property of any kind; see Romans 4:13-14. It is in every instance rendered "heir" in the New Testament. Applied to Christ, it means that as the Son of God he is possessor or lord of all things, or that all things are his; compare Acts 2:36; Acts 10:36; John 17:10; John 16:15. "All things that the Father hath are mine." The sense is, that all things belong to the Son of God. Who is so "rich" then as Christ? Who so able to endow his friends with enduring and abundant wealth?

By whom - By whose agency; or who was the actual agent in the creation. Grotins supposes that this means, "on account of whom;" and that the meaning is, that the universe was formed with reference to the Messiah, in accordance with an ancient Jewish maxim. But the more common and Classical usage of the word rendered "by" (διὰ dia), when it governs a genitive, as here, is to denote the instrumental cause; the agent by which anything is done; see Matthew 1:22; Matthew 2:5, Matthew 2:15, Matthew 2:23; Luke 18:31; John 2:17; Acts, Acts 2:22, Acts 2:43; Acts 4:16; Acts 12:9; Romans 2:16; Romans 5:5. It may be true that the universe was formed with reference to the glory of the Son of God, and that this world was brought into being in order to show his glory; but it would not do to establish that doctrine on a passage like this. Its obvious and proper meaning is, that he was the agent of the creation - a truth that is abundantly taught elsewhere; see John 1:3, John 1:10; Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 3:9; 1 Corinthians 8:6. This sense, also, better agrees with the design of the

apostle in this place. His object is to set forth the dignity of the Son of God. This is better shown by the consideration that he was the creator of all things, than that all things were made for him.

The worlds - The universe, or creation. So the word here - αἰών aiōn- is undoubtedly used in Hebrews 11:3. The word properly means "age" - an indefinitely long period of time; then perpetuity, ever, eternity - "always" being. For an extended investigation of the meaning of the word, the reader may consult an essay by Prof. Stuart, in the Spirit of the Pilgrims, for 1829, pp. 406-452. From the sense of "age," or "duration," the word comes to denote the present and future age; the present world and the world to come; the present world, with all its cares, anxieties, and evils; the people of this world - a wicked generation, etc. Then it means the world - the material universe creation as it is. The only perfectly clear use of the word in this sense in the New Testament is in Hebrews 11:3, and there there can be no doubt. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were made by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." The passage before us will bear the same interpretation, and this is the most obvious and intelligible. What would be the meaning of saying that the "ages" or "dispensations" were made by the Son of God? The Hebrews used the word - עולם ʿowlaam- in the same sense. It properly means "age, duration;" and thence it came to be used by them to denote the world - made up of "ages" or generations; and then the world itself. This is the fair, and, as it seems to me, the only intelligible interpretation of this passage - an interpretation amply sustained by texts referred to above as demonstrating that the universe was made by the agency of the Son of God. Compare Hebrews 1:10 note, and John 1:3 note.

Verse 3

Who being the brightness of his glory - This verse is designed to state the dignity and exalted rank of the Son of God, and is exceedingly important with reference to a correct view of the Redeemer. Every word which is employed is of great importance, and should be clearly understood in order to a correct apprehension of the passage. First, in what manner does it refer to the Redeemer? To his divine nature? To the mode of his existence before he was incarnate? Or to him as he appeared on earth? Most of the ancient commentators supposed that it referred to his divine dignity before he became incarnate, and proceed to argue on that supposition on the mode of the divine existence. The true solution seems to me to be, that it refers to

him as incarnate, but still has reference to him as the incarnate "Son of God." It refers to him as Mediator, but not simply or mainly as a man. It is rather to him as divine - thus, in his incarnation, being the brightness of the divine glory, and the express image of God. That this is the correct view is apparent, I think, from the whole scope of the passage. The drift of the argument is, to show his dignity as "he has spoken to us" Hebrews 1:1, and not in the period antecedent to his incarnation. It is to show his claims to our reverence as sent from God - the last and greatest of the messengers which God bas sent to man. But, then it is a description of him "as he actually is" - the incarnate Son of God; the equal of the Father in human flesh; and this leads the writer to dwell on his divine, character, and to argue from that; Hebrews 1:8, Hebrews 1:10-12. I have no doubt, therefore, that this description refers to his divine nature, but it is the divine nature as it appears in human flesh. An examination of the words used will prepare us for a more clear comprehension of the sense. The word "glory" - δόξα doxa- means properly "a seeming, an appearance;" and then:

(1)praise, applause, honor:

(2)dignity, splendor, glory;

(3)brightness, dazzling light; and,

(4)excellence, perfection, such as belongs to God and such as there is in heaven.

It is probably used here, as the word - כבוד kaabowd- is often among the Hebrews, to denote splendor, brightness, and refers to the divine perfections as resembling a bright light, or the sun. The word is applied to the sun and stars, 1 Corinthians 15:40-41; to the light which Paul saw on the way to Damascus, Acts 22:11; to the shining of Moses' face, 2 Corinthians 3:7; to the celestial light which surrounds the angels, Revelation 18:1; and glorified saints, Luke 9:31-32; and to the dazzling splendor or majesty in which God is enthroned; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; 2 Peter 1:17; Revelation 15:8; Revelation 21:11, Revelation 21:23. Here there is a comparison of God with the sun; he is encompassed with splendor and majesty; he is a being of light and of infinite perfection. It refers to "all in God" that is bright, splendid, glorious; and the idea is, that the Son of God is the "brightness" of it all.

The word rendered "brightness" - ἀπαύγασμα apaugasma- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means properly "reflected splendor,"

or the light which emanates from a luminous body. The rays or beams of the sun are its "brightness," or that by which the sun is seen and known. The sun itself we do not see; the beams which flow from it we do see. The meaning here is, that if God be represented under the image of a luminous body, as he is in the Scriptures (see Psalm 84:11; Malachi 4:2), then Christ is the radiance of that light, the brightness of that luminary - Stuart. He is that by which we perceive God, or by which God is made known to us in his real perfections; compare John 1:18; John 14:9. - It is by him only that the true character and glory of God is known to people. This is true in regard to the great system of revelation but it is especially true in regard to the views which people have of God. Matthew 11:27 - "no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

The human soul is dark respecting the divine character until it is enlightened by Christ. It sees no beauty, no glory in his nature - nothing that excites wonder, or that wins the affections, until it is disclosed by the Redeemer. somehow it happens, account for it as people may, that there are no elevating practical views of God in the world; no views that engage and hold the affections of the soul; no views that are transforming and purifying, but those which are derived from the Lord Jesus. A man becomes a Christian, and at once he has elevated, practical views of God. He is to him the most glorious of all beings. He finds supreme delight in contemplating his perfections. But he may be a philosopher or an infidel, and though he may profess to believe in the existence of God, yet the belief excites no practical influence on him; he sees nothing to admire; nothing which leads him to worship him; compare Romans 1:21.

And the express image - The word used here - χαρακτὴρ charaktēr- likewise occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is that from which our word "character" is derived. It properly means a "engraving-tool;" and then something "engraved" or "stamped" - "a character" - as a letter, mark, sign. The image stamped on coins, seals, wax, expresses the idea: and the sense here is, that if God be represented under the idea of a substance, or being, then Christ is the exact resemblance of that - as an image is of the stamp or die. The resemblance between a stamp and the figure which is impressed is exact; and so is the resemblance between the Redeemer and God; see Colossians 1:15. "Who is the image of the invisible God."

Of his person - The word "person" with us denotes an individual being, and is applied to human beings, consisting of body and soul. We do not apply it to anything dead - not using it with reference to the body when the spirit is gone. It is applied to man - with individual and separate consciousness and will; with body and soul; with an existence separate from others. It is evident that it cannot be used in this sense when applied to God, and that this word does not express the true idea of the passage here. Tyndale renders it, more accurately, "substance." The word in the original - ὑπόστασις hupostasis- whence our word "hypostasis," means, literally, a "foundation," or "substructure." Then it means a well-founded trust, firm expectation, confidence, firmness, boldness; and then "reality, substance, essential nature." In the New Testament, it is rendered "confident," or "confidence" 2 Corinthians 9:4; 2 Corinthians 11:17; Hebrews 3:14; "substance" Hebrews 11:1; and "person" in the passage before us. It is not used elsewhere. Here it properly refers to the essential nature of God - what distinguishes him from all other beings, and which, if I may so say, "constitutes him God;" and the idea is, that the Redeemer is the exact resemblance of "that." This resemblance consists, probably, in the following things - though perhaps the enumeration does not include all - but in these he certainly resembles God, or is his exact image:

(1) In his original mode of being, or before the incarnation. Of this we know little. But he had a "glory with the Father before the world was;" John 17:5. He was "in the beginning with God, and was God;" John 1:1. He was in intimate union with the Father, and was one with Him, in certain respects; though in certain other respects, there was a distinction. I do not see any evidence in the Scriptures of the doctrine of "eternal generation," and it is certain that that doctrine militates against the "proper eternity" of the Son of God. The natural and fair meaning of that doctrine would be, that there was a time when he had not an existence, and when he began to be, or was begotten. But the Scripture doctrine is, that he had a strict and proper eternity. I see no evidence that he was in any sense a "derived being" - deriving his existence and his divinity from the Father. The Fathers of the Christian church, it is believed, held that the Son of God as to his divine, as well as his human nature, was "derived" from the Father. Hence, the Nicene creed speaks of him as "begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made" - language implying derivation in his divine nature. They held, with one voice, that he

was God (divine); but it was in this manner; see Stuart, *Excursus III. on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. But this is incredible and impossible. A derived being cannot in any proper sense be "God"; and if there is any attribute which the Scriptures have ascribed to the Saviour with special clearness, it is that of proper eternity; Revelation 1:11, Revelation 1:17; John 1:1.

(Perhaps the doctrine of Christ's natural or eternal Sonship had been as well understood without the help of the term "generation," which adds nothing to our stock of ideas on the subject, and gives rise, as the above remarks prove, to objections which attach altogether to the "word," and from which the "doctrine" itself is free. In fairness however, it should be remembered that, like many other theological terms, the term in question, when applied to Christ's Sonship, is not to be understood in the ordinary acceptation, as implying derivation or extraction. It is used as making some approach to a proper term only, and in this case, as in others of like nature, it is but just to respect the acknowledged rule that when human phraseology is employed concerning the divine nature, all that is imperfect, all that belongs to the creature, is to be rejected, and that only retained which comports with the majesty of the Creator. It is on this very principle that Prof. Stuart, in his first excursus, and Trinitarians generally, have so successfully defended the use of the word "person" to designate a distinction in the Godhead. Overlooking this principle, our author deduces consequences from the doctrine of eternal generation, which do not properly belong to it, and which its advocates distinctly repudiate.

That doctrine cannot militate against the proper eternity of the Son, since, while it uses the term "generation," not "more human," but with every thing of human informity separated from it, it supplies also the adjunct "eternal." Whatever some indiscreet advocates of the eternal Sonship may have affirmed, it should never be forgotten, that the ablest friends equally with the author, contend that there is no "Derivation or communication of essence from the Father to the Son." "Although the terms "Father" and "Son" indicate a relation analogous to that among people, yet, as in the latter case, it is a relation between two material and separate beings, and in the former, is a relation in the same Spiritual essence, the one can throw no light upon the other; and to attempt to illustrate the one by the other is equally illogical and presumptuous. We can conceive the

communication of a material essence by one material being to another, because it takes place in the generation of animals; but the communication of a spiritual, indivisible, immutable essence is altogether inconceivable, especially when we add, that the supposed communication does not constitute a different being, but takes place in the essences communicating."

Dick's Theology, vol. 2, page 71. It is readily allowed that the Fathers, and many since their times, have written unguardedly on this mysterious subject: but their errors, instead of leading us to reject the doctrine entirely, should lead us only to examine the Scriptures more fully, and form our opinions on them alone. The excellent author already quoted has well remarked: "I cannot conceive what object they have in view who admit the Divinity, but deny the natural Sonship of our Saviour, unless it be to get rid of the strange notions about communication of essence and subordination which have prevailed so much; and in this case, like too many disputants, in avoiding one extreme, they run into the other.")

It may have been that it was by him that the perfections of God were made known before the incarnation to the angelic world, but on that point the Scriptures are silent.

(2) on earth he was the brightness of the divine glory, and the express image of his person:

(a)It was by him, eminently, that God was made known to human beings - as it is by the beams of the sun that that is made known.

(b)He bore an exact resemblance to God. He was just such a being as we should suppose God to be were he to become incarnate, and to act as a man.

He was the embodied representation of the Deity. He was pure - like God. He was benevolent - like God. He spake to the winds and storms - like God. He healed diseases - like God. He raised the dead - like God. He wielded the power which God only can wield, and he manifested a character in all respects like what we should suppose God would evince if he appeared in human flesh, and dwelt among people and this is saying much. It is in fact saying that the account in the Gospels is real, and that the Christian religion is true. Uninspired men could never have drawn such a character as that of Jesus Christ, unless that character had actually existed.

The attempt has often been made to describe God, or to show how be would speak and act if he came down to earth.

Thus, the Hindus speak of the incarnations of Vishnu; and thus Homer, and Virgil, and most of the ancient poets, speak of the appearance of the gods, and describe them as they were supposed to appear. But how different from the character of the Lord Jesus! they are full of passion, and lust, and anger, and contention, and strife; they come to mingle in battles, and to take part with contending armies, and they evince the same spirit as men, and are merely "men of great power, and more gigantic passions; "but Christ is God in human nature. The form is that of man; the spirit is that of God. He walks, and eats, and sleeps as a man; he thinks, and speaks, and acts like God. He was born as a man - but the angels adored him as God. As a man he ate; yet by a word he created food for thousands, as if he were God. Like a man he slept on a pillow while the vessel was tossed by the waves; like God be rose, and rebuked the winds and they were still. As a man he went, with affectionate interest, to the house of Martha and Mary. As a man he sympathized with them in their affliction, and wept at the grave of their brother; like God he spoke, and the dead came forth to the land of the living. As a man he traveled through the land of Judea. He was without a home. Yet everywhere the sick were laid at his feet, and health came from his touch, and strength from the words of his lips as if he were God. As a man he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane; he bore his cross to Calvary; he was nailed to the tree: yet then the heavens grew dark, and the earth shook and the dead arose as if he were God. As a man he slept in the cold tomb - like God he rose, and brought life and immortality to light.

He lived on earth as a man - he ascended to heaven like God. And in all the life of the Redeemer, in all the variety of trying situations in which he was placed, there was not a word or action which was inconsistent with the supposition that he was the incarnate God. There was no failure of any effort to heal the sick or to raise the dead; no look, no word, no deed that is not perfectly consistent with this supposition; but on the contrary, his life is full of events which can be explained on no other supposition than that he was the appropriate shining forth of the divine glory, and the exact resemblance of the essence of God. There are not two Gods - as there are not two suns when the sun shines. It is the one God, in a mysterious and incomprehensible manner shining into the world in the face of Jesus Christ.

See note on 2 Corinthians 4:6. As the wax bears the perfect image of the seal - perfect not only in the outline, but in the filling up - in all the lines, and features, and letters, so is it with the Redeemer. There is not one of the divine perfections which has not the counterpart in him, and if the glory of the divine character is seen at all by people, it will be seen in and through him.

And upholding all things by the word of his power - That is, by his powerful word, or command. The phrase "word of his power" is a Hebraism, and means his efficient command. There could not be a more distinct ascription of divinity to the Son of God than this. He upholds or sustains all things - that is, the universe. It is not merely the earth; not only its rocks, mountains, seas, animals and human beings, but it is the universe - all distant worlds. How can he do this who is not God? He does it by his word - his command. What a conception! That one simple command should do all this! So the world was made when God "spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast;" Psalm 33:9. So the Lord Jesus commanded the waves and the winds, and they were still Matthew 8:26-27; so he spoke to diseases and they departed, and to the dead land they arose; compare Genesis 1:3. I do know how people can "explain away" this ascription of infinite power to the Redeemer. There can be no higher idea of omnipotence than to say that he upholds all things by his word; and assuredly he who can "hold up" this vast universe so that it does not sink into anarchy or into nothing, must be God. The same power Jesus claimed for himself; see Matthew 28:18.

When he had by himself purged our sins - "By himself" - not by the blood of bulls and lambs, but by his own blood. This is designed to bring in the grand feature of the Christian scheme, that the purification made for sin was by his blood, instead of the blood which was shed in the temple-service. The word rendered here "purged" means "purified" or "expiated;" see notes on John 15:2. The literal rendering is, "having made purification for our sins." The purification or cleansing which he effected was by his blood; see 1 John 1:7 "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." This the apostle here states to have been the great object for which he came, and having done this, he sat down on the right hand of God; see Hebrews 7:27; Hebrews 9:12-14. It was not merely to teach that he came; it was to purify the hearts of people, to remove their sins, and to put an end to sacrifice by the sacrifice of himself.

Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high - Of God; see the notes on Mark 16:19; Ephesians 1:20-23.

Verse 4

Being made so much better - Being exalted so much above the angels. The word "better" here does not refer to moral character, but to exaltation of rank. As Mediator; as the Son of God in our nature, he is exalted far above the angels.

Than the angels - Than all angels of every rank; see notes on Ephesians 1:21; compare 1 Peter 3:22. "Angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him." He is exalted to his mediatorial throne, and all things are placed beneath his feet.

As he hath by inheritance - Or in virtue of his name - the Son of God; an exaltation such as is implied in that name. As a son has a rank in a family above servants; as he has a control over the property above that which servants have, so it is with the Mediator. He is the Son of God: angels are the servants of God, and the servants of the church. They occupy a place in the universe compared with what he occupies, similar to the place which servants in a family occupy compared with that which a son has. To illustrate and prove this is the design of the remainder of this chapter. The argument which the apostle insists on is, that the title "the Son of God is to be given to him alone. It has been conferred on no others. Though the angels, and though saints are called in general "sons of God," yet the title" the Son of God" has been given to him only. As the apostle was writing to Hebrews, he makes his appeal to the Hebrew Scriptures alone for the confirmation of this opinion.

A more excellent name - To wit, the name Son. It is a more honorable and exalted name than has ever been bestowed on them. It involves more exalted privileges, and entitles him on whom it is bestowed to higher respect and honor than any name ever bestowed on them.

Verse 5

For unto which of the angels … - The object of this is, to prove that the Son of God, who has spoken to people in these last days, is superior to the angels. As the apostle was writing to those who had been trained in the Jewish religion, and who admitted the authority of the Old Testament, of course he made his appeal to that, and undoubtedly referred for proof to those places which were generally admitted to relate to the Messiah. Abarbanel says, that it was the common opinion of the Jewish doctors that

the Messiah would be exalted above Abraham, Moses, and the angels - Stuart. There is a difficulty, as we shall see, in applying the passages which follow to the Messiah - a difficulty which we may find it not easy to explain. Some remarks will be made on the particular passages as we go along. In general it may be observed here:

(1) That it is to be presumed that those passages were in the time of Paul applied to the Messiah. He seems to argue from them as though this was commonly understood, and is at no pains to prove it.

(2) it is to be presumed that those to whom he wrote would at once admit this to be so. If this were not so, we cannot suppose that he would regard this mode of reasoning as at all efficacious, or adapted to convince those to whom he wrote.

(3) he did not apprehend that the application which he made of these texts would be called in question by the countrymen of those to whom he wrote. It is to be presumed, therefore, that the application was made in accordance with the received opinions, and the common interpretation.

(4) Paul had been instructed in early life in the doctrines of the Jewish religion, and made fully acquainted with all their principles of interpretation. It is to be presumed, therefore, that he made these quotations in accordance with the prevalent belief, and with principles which were well understood and admitted.

(5) every age and people have their own modes of reasoning. They may differ from others, and others may regard them as unsound, and yet to that age and people they are satisfactory and conclusive. The ancient philosophers employed modes of reasoning which would not strike us as the most forcible, and which perhaps we should not regard as tenable. So it is with the Chinese, the Hindus, the Muslims now. So it was with the writers of the dark ages who lived under the influence of the scholastic philosophy. They argue from admitted principles in their country and time - just as we do in ours. Their reasoning was as satisfactory to them as ours is to us.

(6) in a writer of any particular age we are to expect to find the prevailing mode of reasoning, and appeals to the usual arguments on any

subject. We are not to look for methods of argument founded on the inductive philosophy in the writings of the schoolmen, or in the writings of the Chinese or the Hindus. It would be unreasonable to expect it. We are to expect that they will be found to reason in accordance with the customs of their time; to appeal to such arguments as were commonly alleged; and if they are reasoning with an adversary, "to make use of the points which he concedes," and to urge them as suited to convince "him." And this is not wrong. It may strike him with more force than it does us; it may be that we can see that is not the most solid mode of reasoning, but still it may not be in itself an improper method. That the writers of the New Testament should have used that mode of reasoning sometimes, is no more surprising than that we find writers in China reasoning from acknowledged principles, and in the usual manner there, or than that people in our own land reason on the principles of the inductive philosophy. These remarks may not explain all the difficulties in regard to the proof-texts adduced by Paul in this chapter, but they may remove some of them, and may so prepare the way that we may be able to dispose of them all as we advance. In the passage which is quoted in this verse, there is not much difficulty in regard to the propriety of its being thus used. The difficulty lies in the subsequent quotations in the chapter.

Said he at any time - He never used language respecting the angels like what he employs respecting his Son. He never applied to any one of them the name Son. "Thou art my Son." The name "sons of God," is applied in the Scriptures to saints, and may have been given to the angels. But the argument here is, that the name, my "Son" has never been given to any one of them particularly and by eminence. In a large general sense, they are the sons of God, or the children of God, but the name is given to the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, in a special sense, implying a unique relation to him, and a special dominion over all things. This passage is quoted from Psalm 2:1-12; - a Psalm that is usually believed to pertain particularly to the Messiah, and one of the few Psalms that have undisputed reference to him; see notes on Acts 4:25; Acts 13:33.

This day - see notes on Acts 13:33, where this passage is applied to the resurrection of Christ from the dead: proving that the phrase "this day" does not refer to the doctrine of eternal generation, but to the resurrection of the Redeemer - "the first-begotten of the dead:" Revelation 1:5. Thus, Theodoret says of the phrase "this day," "it does not express his eternal

generation, but what is connected with time." The argument of the apostle here does not turn on the time when this was said, but on the fact that this was said to him and not to any one of the angels, and this argument will have equal force whether the phrase be understood as referring to the fact of his resurrection, or to his previous existence. The structure and scope of the second Psalm refers to his exaltation after the kings of the earth set themselves against him, and endeavored to cast off His government from them. In spite of that, and subsequent to that, he would set his king, which they had rejected, on his holy hill of Zion; see Psalm 2:2-6.

Have I begotten thee - See this place explained in the notes on Acts 13:33. It must, from the necessity of the case, be understood figuratively; and must mean, substantially, "I have constituted, or appointed thee." If it refers to his resurrection, it means that that resurrection was a kind of "begetting" to life, or, a beginning of life; see Revelation 1:5.

And yet though Paul Acts 13:33 has applied it to the resurrection of the Redeemer, and though the name "Son of God" is applied to him on account of his resurrection (see notes on Romans 1:4), yet I confess this does not seem to me to come up to "all" that the writer here intended. The phrase," The Son of God," I suppose, properly denotes that the Lord Jesus sustained a relation to God, designated by that name, corresponding to the relations which he sustained to man, designated by the name "the Son of man." The one implied that he had a special relation to God, as the other implied that he had a special relation to man. This is indisputable. But on what particular account the name was given him, or how he was manifested to be the Son of God, has been the great question. Whether the name refers to the mode of his existence before the incarnation, and to his "being begotten from eternity," or to the incarnation and the resurrection, has long been a point on which people have been divided in opinion.

The natural idea conveyed by the title "the Son of God" is, that he sustained a relation to God which implied more than was human or angelic; and this is certainly the drift of the argument of the apostle here. I do not see, however, that he refers to the doctrine of "eternal generation," or that he means to teach that. His point is, that God had declared and treated him as "a Son" - as superior to the angels and to human beings, and that this was shown in what had been said of him in the Old Testament. This would be equally clear, whether there is reference to the doctrine of eternal generation

or not. The sense is, “he is more than human.” He is more than angelic. He has been addressed and treated as a Son - which none of the angels have. They are regarded simply as ministering spirits. They sustain subordinate stations, and are treated accordingly. He, on the contrary, is the brightness of the divine glory.

He is treated and addressed as a Son. In his original existence this was so. In his incarnation this was so. When on earth this was so; and in his resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of God, he was treated in all respects “as a Son” - as superior to all servants, and to all ministering spirits.” The exact reference, then, of the phrase “this day have I begotten thee,” in the Psalm, is to the act of “constituting” him in a public manner the Son of God - and refers to God‘s setting him as king on the “holy hill of Zion” - or making him king over the church and the world as Messiah; and this was done, eminently, as Paul shows Psalm 95:7; Hebrews 4:7. The order of the second Psalm, too, certainly does prove that the “begetting” took place after the opposition which the kings and rulers made to Christ, and not prior to it. Accordingly, the text is quoted elsewhere in reference to the resurrection of Christ, Romans 1:4; Acts 13:33. Besides, the chief design of the apostle in the place is not so much to show why Christ is called the Son of God, as simply to direct attention to the fact that he has this name, on the possession of which the whole argument is founded. He inherits a name which is never given to angels, and that of itself is proof of his superiority to them, whether we suppose the ground of the title to lie in his previous existence, or, with our author, in his incarnate Deity. But on this question, it must be admitted, that the passage determines nothing.

All this is substantially allowed by Owen, than whom a more stanch supporter of the doctrine of eternal Sonship cannot be named. “The apostle, in this place,” says he, “does not treat of the eternal generation of the Son, but of His exaltation and pre-eminence above angels. The word also, היום haayowmconstantly in the Scripture, denotes some signal time, one day, or more. And that expression, ‹this day have I begotten thee,‘ following immediately upon that other typical one, ‹I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion,‘ seems to be of the same import, and in like manner to be interpreted.” On the general doctrine of the Sonship, the author has stated his views both here and elsewhere. That it is eternal or has its origin in the previous existence of Christ, he will not allow. It is given to the second

person of the Trinity because he became God incarnate, so that but for the incarnation and the economy of redemption, he would not have had this name. But the eternal Sonship of Christ rests on a body of evidence, that will not soon or easily be set aside. See that evidence adduced in a supplementary Note under Romans 1:4. Meanwhile we would simply ask the reader, if it do not raise our idea of the love of God, in the mission of Christ, to suppose that he held the dear relation of Son previous to His coming - that being the Son, he was sent to prove what a sacrifice the Father could make, in yielding up one so near, and so dear. But this astonishing evidence of love, if not destroyed, is greatly weakened, by the supposition that there was no Sonship until the sending of Christ. See also supplementary note under Hebrews 1:3.)

"And again, I will be to him a Father." This passage is evidently quoted from 2 Samuel 7:14. A sentiment similar to this is found in Psalm 89:20-27. As these words were originally spoken, they referred to Solomon. They occur in a promise to David that he should not fail to have an heir to sit on his throne, or that his throne should be perpetual. The promise was particularly designed to comfort him in view of the fact that God would not suffer him to build the temple because his hands had been defiled with blood. To console him in reference to that, God promises him far greater honor than that would be. He promises that the house should be built by one of his own family, and that his family and kingdom should be established forever. That in this series of promises the "Messiah" was included as a descendant of David, was the common opinion of the Jews, of the early Christians, and has been of the great body of interpreters.

It was certainly from such passages as this, that the Jews derived the notion which prevailed so universally in the time of the Saviour that the Messiah was to be the son or the descendant of David; see Matthew 22:42-45; Matthew 9:27; Matthew 15:22; Matthew 20:30-31; Mark 10:47-48; Luke 18:38-39; Matthew 12:23; Matthew 21:9; John 7:42; Romans 1:3; Revelation 5:5; Revelation 22:16. That opinion was universal. No one doubted it; and it must have been common for the Jews to apply such texts as this to the Messiah. Paul would not have done it in this instance unless it had been usual. Nor was it improper. If the Messiah was to be a descendant of David, then it was natural to apply these promises in regard to his posterity in an eminent and special sense to the Messiah. They were a part of the promises which included him, and which terminated in him. The

promise, therefore, which is here made is, that God would be to him, in a special sense, a Father, and he should be a Son. It does not, as I suppose, pertain originally exclusively to the Messiah, but included him as a descendant of David. To him it would be applicable in an eminent sense; and if applicable to him at all, it proved all that the passage here is adduced to prove - that the name "Son" is given to the Messiah - a "name" not given to angels.

That is just the point on which the argument turns. What is implied in the bestowment of that name is another point on which the apostle discourses in the other parts of the argument. I have no doubt, therefore, that while these words originally might have been applicable to Solomon, or to any of the other descendants of David who succeeded him on the throne, yet they at last terminated, and were designed to terminate in the Messiah - to whom pre-eminently God would be a Father; compare the introduction to Isaiah, section 7, iii. (3), and the notes on Isaiah 7:16.

(The promise, doubtless, had a special reference to the Messiah. Nay, we may safely assert, that the chief reference was to him, for in the case of typical persons and things what they adumbrate is principally to be regarded. So here, though the original application of the passage be to Solomon, the type of Christ, yet it finds its great and ultimate application in the person of the glorious antitype. However strange this double application may seem to us, it is quite in accordance with the whole system of things under the Jewish dispensation. Almost everything connected with it was constructed on this typical principle. This the apostles understood so well, that they were never stumbled by it, and what is remarkable, and of the last importance on this subject, "never for a moment drawn from the ultimate and chief design of a promise or prophecy" by its primary reference to the type. They saw Christ in it, and made the application solely to him, passing over entirely the literal sense, and seizing at once the ultimate and superior import. The very passage in question 2 Samuel 7:11-17, is thus directly applied not only here, but throughout the New Testament; Luke 1:32-33; Acts 2:30, Acts 2:37; Acts 13:22-23. Now certainly the apostles are the best judges in matters of this kind. Their authority, in regard to the sense of passages quoted by them from the Old Testament, is just as great as in the case of the original matter of the New Testament. That Christ was indeed

principally intended is further evident from the fact, that "when the kingdom had passed from the house of David," succeeding prophets repeat the promise in Jeremiah 33:14, Jeremiah 33:26. Now connecting this fact with the direct assertion of the writer of the New Testament above referred to, every doubt must be removed.

It will be alleged, however, that while the direct application to the Messiah, of this and other prophecies, is obvious and authoritative, it is yet desirable, and they who deny inspiration will insist on it as essential, to prove that there is at least nothing in the original places, whence the citations are made, inconsistent with such application. Such proof seems to be especially requisite here; for immediately after the words, "I will be his Father and he shall be my Son," there follows: "if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men," 2 Samuel 7:14; which last sentence, it is affirmed, cannot, in any sense, be applicable to the Messiah. It has been said in reply, that though such language cannot be applied to Christ "personally," it may yet refer to him as the "covenant head" of his people. Though there be no iniquity in him, "such fallings and transgressions as disannul not the covenant, often fall out on their part for whom he undertaketh therein." In accordance with this view, it has been observed by Mr. Pierce, and others after him, that the Hebrew relative pronoun אשר 'ashershould be translated "whosoever;" in which case, the sense is, whosoever of his "children," that is, the Messiah's, shall commit iniquity, etc. And to this effect indeed is the alteration of the words in Psalm 89, where the original covenant is repeated, "if his children forsake my law - then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes."

Perhaps, however, the better solution of the difficulty is what at once admits, that the words in question cannot apply to the antitype but to the type only. It is a mistake to suppose, that in a typical passage every thing must necessarily have its antitypical reference. The reader will find some excellent and apposite remarks on this subject in Dr. Owen's commentary on the place. "No type," says that judicious writer, "was in all things a type of Christ, but only in that particular wherein he was designed of God so to be. David was a type of Christ, but not in all things that he was and did. In his conquests of the enemies of the church, in his throne and kingdom, he

was so; but in his private actions, whether as a man, or as a king, or captain, he was not so. Nay, not all things spoken of him that was a type, even in those respects wherein he was a type, are spoken of him as a type, or have any respect unto the thing signified, but some of them may belong to him in his personal capacity only. And the reason is, that he who was a type by God‘s institution, might morally fail in the performance of his duty, even then and in those things wherein he was a type. And this wholly removes the difficulty connected with the words ‹if he sin against me;‘ for those words relating to the moral duty of Solomon, in that wherein he was a type of Christ, namely, the rule and administration of his kingdom, may not at all belong to Christ, who was prefigured by God‘s institution of things, and not in any moral deportment in the observance of them.”

These observations seem to contain the true principles of explication in this and similar cases. The solution of Prof. Stuart is not materially different. “Did not God,” says he, “engage, that David should have successors on his ‹earthly‘ throne, and also that he ‹should‘ have a son who would sit on a ‹spiritual‘ throne, and have a kingdom of which David‘s own was but a mere type? Admitting this, our difficulty is diminished if not removed. “The iniquity committed is predicated of that part of David‘s seed, who might commit it,” that is, his successors on the ‹national‘ throne, while the more exalted condition predicated of his successor, belongs to Him to whom was given a kingdom over all.”)

Verse 6

And again - Margin, “When he bringeth in again.” The proper construction of this sentence probably is, “But when, moreover, he brings in,” etc. The word “again” refers not to the fact that the Son of God is brought “again” into the world, implying that he had been introduced before; but it refers to the course of the apostle‘s argument, or to the declaration which is made about the Messiah in another place. “The name Son is not only given to him as above, but also in another place, or on another occasion when he brings in the first-begotten into the world.” “When he bringeth in.” When he introduces. So far as the “language” here is concerned this might refer to the birth of the Messiah, but it is evident from the whole connection that the writer means to refer to something that is said in the Old Testament. This is plain because the passage occurs

among quotations designed to prove a specific point - that the Son of God, the Author of the Christian system, was superior to the angels.

A declaration of the writer here, however true and solemn, would not have answered the purpose. A "proof-text" was missing; a text which would be admitted by those to whom he wrote to bear on the point under consideration. The meaning then is, "that on another occasion different from those to which he had referred, God, when speaking of the Messiah, or when introducing him to mankind, had used language showing that he was superior to the angels." The meaning of the phrase, "when he bringeth in," therefore, I take to be, when he introduces him to people; when he makes him known to the world - to wit, by the declaration which he proceeds immediately to quote. "The first-begotten." Christ is called the "first-begotten," with reference to his resurrection from the dead, in Revelation 1:5, and Colossians 1:18. It is probable here, however, that the word is used, like the word "first-born," or "first-begotten" among the Hebrews, by way of eminence.

As the first-born was the principal heir, and had special privileges, so the Lord Jesus Christ sustains a similar rank in the universe of which God is the Head and Father; see notes on John 1:14, where the word "only-begotten" is used to denote the dignity and honor of the Lord Jesus. "Into the world." When he introduces him to mankind, or declares what he is to be. "He saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." Much difficulty has been experienced in regard to this quotation, for it cannot be denied that it is intended to be a quotation. In the Septuagint these very words occur in Deuteronomy 32:43, where they are inserted in the Song of Moses. But they are not in the Hebrew, nor are they in all the copies of the Septuagint. The Hebrew is, "Rejoice, O ye nations with his people; for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries." The Septuagint is, "Rejoice ye heavens with him; and let all the angels of God worship him. Let the nations rejoice with his people, and let all the sons of God be strong in him, for he has avenged the blood of his sons." But there are objections to our supposing that the apostle had this place in his view, which seem to me to settle the matter.

(1) one is, that the passage is not in the Hebrew; and it seems hardly credible that in writing to Hebrews, and to those residing in the very

country where the Hebrew Scriptures were constantly used, he should adduce as a proof-text on an important doctrine what was not in their Scriptures.

(2) asecond is, that it is omitted in all the ancient versions except the Septuagint.

(3) athird is, that it is impossible to believe that the passage in question in Deuteronomy had any reference to the Messiah. It does not relate to his "introduction" to the world. It would not occur to any reader that it had any such reference. The context celebrates the victory over the enemies of Israel which God will achieve. After saying that "his arrows would be drunk with blood, and that his sword would devour flesh with the blood of the slain and of captives, from the time when he began to take vengeance on an enemy," the Septuagint (not the Hebrew) immediately asserts, "let the heavens rejoice at the same time with him, and let all the angels of God worship him." That is, "Let the inhabitants of the heavenly world rejoice in the victory of God over the enemies of his people, and let them pay their adoration to him." But the Messiah does not appear to be alluded to anywhere in the context; much less described as "introduced into the world."

There is, moreover, not the slightest evidence that it was ever supposed by the Jews to have any such reference; and though it might be said that the apostle merely quoted "language" that expressed his meaning - as we often do when we are familiar with any well-known phrase that will exactly suit our purpose and convey an idea - yet it should be remarked that this is not the way in which this passage is quoted. It is a "proof-text," and Paul evidently meant to be understood as saying that that passage had a "fair" reference to the Messiah. It is evident, moreover, that it would be admitted to have such a reference by those to whom he wrote. It is morally certain, therefore, that this was not the passage which the writer intended to quote. The probability is, that the writer here referred to Psalm 97:7, (in the Septuagint Psalm 96:7). In that place, the Hebrew is, "worship him, all ye gods" כל אלהים kaal 'elohiym- "all ye ‹elohiym."

In the Septuagint it is, “Let all his angels worship him;” where the translation is literal, except that the word “God” - “angels of God” - is used by the apostle instead of “his” - “all his angels” - as it is in the Septuagint. The word “gods” - אלהים 'elohiym- is rendered by the word “angels” - but the word may have that sense. Thus, it is rendered by the Septuagint; in Job 20:15; and in Psalm 8:6; Psalm 137:1. It is well known that the word אלהים 'elohiymmay denote “kings” and “magistrates,” because of their rank and dignity; and is there anything improbable in the supposition that, for a similar reason, the word may be given also to “angels”? The fair interpretation of the passage then would be, to refer it to “angelic beings” - and the command in Psalm 97:1-12 is for them to do homage to the Being there referred to. The only question then is, whether the Psalm can be regarded properly as having any reference to the Messiah? Did the apostle fairly and properly use this language as referring to him? On this we may remark:

(1) That the fact that he uses it thus may be regarded as proof that it would be admitted to be proper by the Jews in his time, and renders it probable that it was in fact so used.

(2) two Jewish Rabbis of distinction - Rashi and Kimchi - affirm that all the Psalms Hebrews 1:1, the earth is called on to rejoice that the Lord reigns. In Hebrews 1:2-5, he is introduced or described as coming in the most magnificent manner - clouds and darkness attend him; a fire goes before him; the lightnings play; and the hills melt like wax - a sublime description of his coming, with appropriate symbols, to reign, or to judge the world. In Hebrews 1:6, it is said that all people shall see his glory; in Hebrews 1:7, that all who worship graven images shall be confounded, and “all the angels are required to do him homage;” and in Hebrews 1:8-12, the effect of his advent is described as filling Zion with rejoicing, and the hearts of the people of God with gladness. It cannot be proveD, therefore, that this Psalm had no reference to the Messiah; but the presumption is that it had, and that the apostle has quoted it not only as it was usually regarded in his time, but as it was designed by the Holy Ghost. If so, then it proves, what the writer intended, that the Son of God should be adored by the angels; and of course that he was superior to them. It proves also more. Whom would God require the angels to adore? A creature? A man? A fellow-angel? To

ask these questions is to answer them. He could require them to worship none but God, and the passage proves that the Son of God is divine.

Verse 7

And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits - He gives to them an inferior name, and assigns to them a more humble office. They are mere ministers, and have not ascribed to them the name of "Son." They have a name which implies a more humble rank and office - the name "spirit," and the appellation of a "flame of fire." They obey his will as the winds and the lightnings do. The "object" of the apostle in this passage is to show that the angels serve God in a ministerial capacity - as the winds do; while the Son is Lord of all. The one serves him passively, as being wholly under his control; the other acts as a Sovereign, as Lord over all, and is addressed and regarded as the equal with God. This quotation is made from Psalm 104:4. The passage "might" be translated, "Who maketh his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire;" that is, "who makes his angels like the winds, or as swift as the winds, and his ministers as rapid, as terrible, and as resistless as the lightning."

So Doddridge renders it; and so did the late Dr. John P. Wilson (manuscript notes). The passage in the Psalm is susceptible, I think, of another interpretation, and might be regarded as meaning, "who makes the winds his messengers, and the flaming fire his ministers;" and perhaps this is the sense which would most naturally occur to a reader of the Hebrew. The Hebrew, however, will admit of the construction here put upon it, and it cannot be proved that it was the original intention of the passage to show that the angels were the mere servants of God, rapid, quick, and prompt to do his will - like the winds. The Chaldee Paraphrase renders this passage in the Psalm, "Who makes his messengers swift as the wind; his ministers strong like a flame of fire." Prof. Stuart maintains that the passage in the Psalms cannot mean "who makes the winds his messengers," but that the intention of the Psalmist is to describe the "invisible" as well as the "visible" majesty of God, and that he refers to the angels as a part of the retinue which goes to make up His glory.

This does not seem to me to be perfectly certain; but still it cannot be demonstrated that Paul has made an improper use of the passage. It is to be presumed that he, who had been trained in the knowledge of the Hebrew

language, would have had a better opportunity of knowing its fair construction than we can; and it is morally certain that he would employ the passage "in an argument" as it was commonly understood by those to whom he wrote - that is, to those who were familiar with the Hebrew language and literature. If he has so used the passage; if he has - as no one can disprove - put the fair construction on it, then it is just in point. It proves that the angels are the "attendant servants" of God; employed to grace his train, to do his will, to accompany him as the clouds and winds and lightnings do, and to occupy a subordinate rank in his creation. "Flame of fire." This probably refers to lightning - which is often the meaning of the phrase. The word "ministers" here, means the same as angels, and the sense of the whole is, that the attending retinue of God, when he manifests himself with great power and glory, is like the winds and the lightning. His angels are like them. They are prompt to do his will - rapid, quick, obedient in his service; they are in all respects subordinate to him, and occupy, as the winds and the lightnings do, the place of servants. They are not addressed in language like what is applied to the Son of God, and they must all be far inferior to him.

Verse 8

But unto the Son he saith - In Psalm 45:6-7. The fact that the writer of this Epistle makes this application of the Psalm to the Messiah, proves that it was so applied in his time, or that it would be readily admitted to be applicable to him. It has been generally admitted, by both Jewish and Christian interpreters, to have such a reference. Even those who have doubted its primary applicability to the Messiah, have regarded it as referring to him in a secondary sense. Many have supposed that it referred to Solomon in the primary sense, and that it has a secondary reference to the Messiah. To me it seems most probable that it had an original and exclusive reference to the Messiah. It is to be remembered that the hope of the Messiah was the special hope of the Jewish people. The coming of the future king, so early promised, was the great event to which they all looked forward with the deepest interest.

That hope inspired their prophets and their bards, and cheered the hearts of the nation in the time of despondency. The Messiah, if I may so express it, was the "hero" of the Old Testament - more so than Achilles is of the Iliad, and *Aeneas* of the Aenead. The sacred poets were accustomed to

employ all their most magnificent imagery in describing him, and to present him in every form that was beautiful in their conception, and that would be gratifying to the pride and hopes of the nation. Everything that is gorgeous and splendid in description is lavished on him, and they were never under any apprehension of attributing to him too great magnificence in his personal reign; too great beauty of moral character; or too great an extent of dominion. That which would be regarded by them as a magnificent description of a monarch, they freely applied to him; and this is evidently the case in this Psalm. That the description may have been in part derived from the view of Solomon in the magnificence of his court, is possible, but no more probable than that it was derived from the general view of the splendor of any Oriental monarch, or than that it might have been the description of a monarch which was the pure creation of inspired poetry.

Indeed, I do see not why this Psalm should ever have been supposed to be applicable to Solomon. His "name" is not mentioned. It has no special applicability to him. There is nothing that would apply to him which would not also apply to many an Oriental prince. There are some things in it which are much less applicable to him than to many others. The king here described is a conqueror. He girds his sword on his thigh, and his arrows are sharp in the hearts of his foes, and the people are subdued under him. This was not true of Solomon. His was a reign of peace and tranquillity, nor was he ever distinguished for war. On the whole, it seems clear to me, that this Psalm is designed to be a beautiful poetic description of the Messiah as king. The images are drawn from the usual characteristics of an Oriental prince, and there are many things in the poem - as there are in parables - for the sake of keeping, or verisimilitude, and which are not, in the interpretation, to be cut to the quick.

The writer imagined to himself a magnificent and beautiful prince; a prince riding prosperously in his conquests; swaying a permanent and wide dominion; clothed in rich and splendid vestments; eminently upright and pure; and scattering blessings everywhere - and that prince was the Messiah. The Psalm, therefore, I regard as relating originally and exclusively to Christ; and though in the interpretation, the circumstances should not be unduly pressed, nor an attempt be made to spiritualize them, yet the whole is a glowing and most beautiful description of Christ as a

King. The same principles of interpretation should be applied to it which are applied to parables, and the same allowance be made for the introduction of circumstances for the sake of keeping, or for finishing the story. If this be the correct view, then Paul has quoted the Psalm in conformity exactly with its original intention, as he undoubtedly quoted it as it was understood in his time.

"Thy throne." A throne is the seat on which a monarch sits, and is here the symbol of dominion, because kings when acting as rulers sit on thrones. Thus, a throne becomes the emblem of authority or empire. Here it means, that his "rule" or "dominion" would be perpetual - "forever and ever" - which assuredly could not be applied to Solomon. "O God." This certainly could not be applied to Solomon; but applied to the Messiah it proves what the apostle is aiming to prove - that he is above the angels. The argument is, that a name is given to "him" which is never given to "them." They are not called "God" in any strict and proper sense. The "argument" here requires us to understand this word, as used in a sense more exalted than any name which is ever given to angels, and though it may be maintained that the name אלהים 'elohiymis given to magistrates or to angels, yet here the argument requires us to understand it as used in a sense superior to what it ever is when applied to an angel - or of course to any creature, since it was the express design of the argument to prove that the Messiah was superior to the angels.

The word "God" should be taken in its natural and obvious sense, unless there is some necessary reason for limiting it. If applied to magistrates Psalm 82:6, it must be so limited. If applied to the Messiah, there is no such necessity, John 1:1; Isaiah 9:6; 1 John 5:20; Philemon 2:6, and it should be taken in its natural and proper sense. The "form" here - ὁ Θεὸς ho Theos- is in the vocative case and not the nominative. It is the usual form of the vocative in the Septuagint, and nearly the only form of it - Stuart. This then is a direct address to the Messiah, calling him God; and I see not why it is not to be used in the usual and proper sense of the word. Unitarians proposed to translate this, "God is thy throne;" but how can God be "a throne" of a creature? What is the meaning of such an expression? Where is there one parallel? And what must be the nature of that cause which renders

such an argument necessary? - This refers, as it seems to me, to the Messiah "as king."

It does not relate to his mode of existence before the incarnation, but to him as the magnificent monarch of his people. Still, the ground or reason why this name is given to him is that he is "divine." It is language which properly expresses his nature. He must have a divine nature, or such language would be improper. I regard this passage, therefore, as full proof that the Lord Jesus is divine; nor is it possible to evade this conclusion by any fair interpretation of it. It cannot be wrong to address him as God; nor addressing him as such, not to regard him as divine. "Is forever and ever." This could not in any proper sense apply to Solomon. As applied to the Messiah, it means that his essential kingdom will be perpetual, Luke 1:33. As Mediator his kingdom will be given up to the Father, or to God without reference to a mediatorial work, (1 Corinthians 15:24, 1 Corinthians 15:28 - see notes on these verses), but his reign over his people will be perpetual.

There never will come a time when they shall not obey and serve him, though the special form of his kingdom, as connected with the work of mediation, will be changed. The form of the organized church, for example, will be changed, for there shall be no necessity for it in heaven, but the essential dominion and power of the Son of God will not cease. He shall have the same dominion which he had before he entered on the work of mediation; and that will be eternal. It is also true that, compared with earthly monarchs, his kingdom shall be perpetual. They soon die. Dynasties pass away. But his empire extends from age to age, and is properly a perpetual dominion. The fair and obvious interpretation of this passage would satisfy me, were there nothing else, that this Psalm had no reference to Solomon, but was designed originally as a description of the Messiah as the expected King and Prince of his people. "A scepter of righteousness."

That is, a right or just scepter. The phrase is a Hebraism. The former expression described the perpetuity of his kingdom; this describes its "equable nature." It would be just and equal; see notes on Isaiah 11:5. A "scepter" is a staff or wand usually made of wood, five or six feet long, and commonly overlaid with gold, or ornamented with golden rings. Sometimes, however, the scepter was made of ivory, or wholly of gold. It

was borne in the hands of kings as an emblem of authority and power. Probably it had its origin in the staff or crook of the shepherd - as kings were at first regarded as the "shepherds" of their people. Thus, Agamemnon is commonly called by Homer the "shepherd" of the people. The "scepter" thus becomes the emblem of kingly office and power - as when we speak of "swaying a scepter;" - and the idea here is, that the Messiah would be a "king," and that the authority which he would wield would be equitable and just. He would not be governed, as monarchs often are, by mere caprice, or by the wishes of courtiers and flatterers; he would not be controlled by mere "will" and the love of arbitrary lower; but the execution of his laws would be in accordance with the principles of equity and justice. - How well this accords with the character of the Lord Jesus we need not pause to show; compare notes on Isaiah 11:2-5.

Verse 9

Thou hast loved righteousness - Thou hast been obedient to the Law of God, or holy and upright. Nothing can be more truly adapted to express the character of anyone than this is to describe the Lord Jesus, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled," who "did no sin, and in whose mouth no guile was found;" but it is with difficulty that this can be applied to Solomon. Assuredly, for a considerable part of his life, this declaration could not well be appropriate to him; and it seems to me that it is not to be regarded as descriptive of him at all. It is language prompted by the warm and pious imagination of the Psalmist describing the future Messiah - and, as applied to him, is true to the letter. "Therefore God, even thy God." The word "even" inserted here by the translators, weakens the force of the expression. This might be translated, "O God, thy God hath anointed thee." So it is rendered by Doddridge, Clarke, Stuart, and others.

The Greek will bear this construction, as well the Hebrew in Psalm 45:7. In the margin in the Psalm it is rendered "O God." This is the most natural construction, as it accords with what is just said before. "Thy throne, O God, is forever. Thou art just and holy, therefore, O God, thy God hath anointed thee," etc. It is not material, however, which construction is adopted. "Hath anointed thee." Anciently kings and priests were consecrated to their office by pouring oil on their heads; see Leviticus 8:12; Numbers 3:3; 1 Samuel 10:1; 2 Samuel 2:7; Psalm 2:2; Isaiah 61:1; Acts 4:27; Acts 10:38; Note, Matthew 1:1. The expression "to anoint," therefore,

comes to mean to consecrate to office, or to set apart to some public work. This is evidently the meaning in the Psalm, where the whole language refers to the appointment of the personage there referred to to the kingly office. "The oil of gladness." This probably means the perfumed oil that was poured on the head, attended with many expressions of joy and rejoicing. The inauguration of the Messiah as king would be an occasion of rejoicing and triumph. Thousands would exult at it as in the coronation of a king; and thousands would be made glad by such a consecration to the office of Messiah. "Above thy fellows." Above thine associates; that is, above all who sustain the kingly office. He would be more exalted than all other kings. Doddridge supposes that it refers to angels, who might have been associated with the Messiah in the government of the world. But the more natural construction is to suppose that it refers to kings, and to mean that he was the most exalted of all.

Verse 10

And - That is, "To add another instance;" or, "to the Son he saith in another place, or in the following language." This is connected with Hebrews 1:8. "Unto the Son he saith Hebrews 1:8, Thy throne," etc. - and Hebrews 1:10 he "also" saith, "Thou Lord," etc. That this is the meaning is apparent, because:

(1) the "object" of the whole quotation is to show the exalted character of the Son of God, and,

(2) an address here to Yahweh would be wholly irrelevant. Why, in an argument designed to prove that the Son of God was superior to the angels, should the writer break out in an address to Yahweh in view of the fact that he had laid the foundations of the world, and that he himself would continue to live when the heavens should be rolled up and pass away? Such is not the manner of Paul or of any other good writer, and it is clear that the writer here designed to adduce this as applicable to the Messiah. Whatever difficulties there may be about the principles on which it is done, and the reason why This passage was selected for the purpose, there can be no doubt about the design of the writer. He meant to be understood as applying it to the Messiah beyond all question, or the quotation is wholly irrelevant, and it is inconceivable why it should have been made. "Thou Lord." This is taken from Psalm 102:25-27. The quotation is made from the Septuagint

with only a slight variation, and is an accurate translation of the Hebrew. In the Psalm, there can be no doubt that Yahweh is intended. This is apparent on the face of the Psalm, and particularly because the "name" Yahweh is introduced in Hebrews 1:10, and because He is addressed as the Creator of all things, and as immutable. No one, on reading the Psalm, ever would doubt that it referred to God, and if the apostle meant to apply it to the Lord Jesus it proves most conclusively that he is divine. In regard to the difficult inquiry why he applied this to the Messiah, or on what principle such an application can be vindicated, we may perhaps throw some light by the following remarks. It must be admitted that probably few persons, if any, on reading the "Psalm," would suppose that it referred to the Messiah; but:

(1) the fact that the apostle thus employs it, proves that it was understood in his time to have such a reference, or at least that those to whom he wrote would admit that it had such a reference. On no other principle would he have used it in an argument. This is at least of some consequence in showing what the prevailing interpretation was.

(2) it cannot be demonstrated that it had no such reference, for such was the habit of the sacred writers in making the future Messiah the theme of their poetry, that no one can prove that the writer of this Psalm did not design that the Messiah should be the sub ject of his praise here.

(3) there is nothing in the Psalm which may not be applied to the Messiah; but there is much in it that is especially applicable to him. Suppose, for example, that the Psalmist Psalm 102:1-11, in his complaints, represents the people of God before the Redeemer appeared - as lowly, sad, dejected, and afflicted - speaking of himself as one of them, and as a fair representative of that people, the remainder of the Psalm will well agree with the promised redemption. Thus, having described the sadness and sorrow of the people of God, he speaks of the act that God would arise and have mercy upon Zion Psalm 102:13-14, that the pagan would fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth would see his glory Psalm 102:15, and that when the Lord should build up Zion, he would appear in his glory; Psalm 102:16. To whom else could this be so well applied as to the Messiah? To what time so well as to his time? Thus, too in Psalm 102:20, it is said that the Lord would look down from heaven "to hear the

groaning of the prisoner, and to loose them that are appointed to death" - language remarkably resembling that used by Isaiah, Isaiah 61:1, which the Saviour applies to himself, in Luke 4:17-21. The passage then quoted by the apostle Psalm 102:25-27 is designed to denote the "immutability" of the Messiah, and the fact that in him all the interests of the church were safe. He would not change. He had formed all things, and he would remain the same. His kingdom would be permanent amidst all the changes occurring on earth, and his people had no cause of apprehension or alarm; Psalm 102:28.

(4) Paul applies this language to the Messiah in accordance with the doctrine which he had stated Hebrews 1:2, that it was by him that God "made the worlds." Having stated that, he seems to have felt that it was not improper to apply to him the passages occurring in the Old Testament that speak of the work of creation. The argument is this, "He was in fact the creator of all things." But to the Creator there is applied language in the Scriptures which shows that he was far exalted above the angels. He would remain the same, while the heavens and the earth should fade away. His years are enduring and eternal. "Such" a being must be superior to the angels; such a being must be divine. The words "Thou Lord" - σὺ Κύριε su Kurie- are not in the Hebrew of the Psalm, though they are in the Septuagint. In the Hebrew, in the Psalm (Psalm 102:24,), it is an address to God - "I said, O my God" - אלי 'Eeliy- but there can be no doubt that the Psalmist meant to address Yahweh, and that the word "God" is used in its proper sense, denoting divinity; see Hebrews 1:1, Hebrews 1:12, of the Psalm. "In the beginning;" see Genesis 1:1.

When the world was made; compare notes on John 1:1, where the same phrase is applied to the Messiah - "In the beginning was the word, where the same phrase is applied to the Messiah - "In the beginning was the word." "Hast laid the foundation of the earth." Hast made the earth. This language is such as is common in the Scriptures, where the earth is represented as laid on a foundation, or as supported. It is figurative language, derived from the act of rearing an edifice. The meaning here is, that the Son of God was the original creator or founder of the universe. He did not merely arrange it out of pre-existing materials, but he was properly its creator or founder. "And the heavens are the works of thine hands." This

must demonstrate the Lord Jesus to be divine. He that made the vast heavens must be God. No creature could perform a work like that; nor can we conceive that power to create the vast array of distant worlds could possibly be delegated. If that power could be delegated, there is not an attribute of Deity which may not be, and thus all our notions of what constitutes divinity would be utterly confounded. The word "heavens" here, must mean all parts of the universe except the earth; see Genesis 1:1. The word "hands" is used, because it is by the hands that we usually perform any work.

Verse 11

They shall perish - That is, the heavens and the earth. They shall pass away; or they shall be destroyed. Probably no more is meant by the phrase here, than that important changes will take place in them, or than that they will change their form. Still it is not possible to foresee what changes may yet take place in the heavenly bodies, or to say that the present universe may not at some period be destroyed, and be succeeded by another creation still more magnificent. He that created the universe by a word, can destroy it by a word and he that formed the present frame of nature can cause it to be succeeded by another not less wonderful and glorious. The Scriptures seem to hold out the idea that the present frame of the universe shall be destroyed; see 2 Peter 3:10-13; Matthew 24:35. "But thou remainest." Thou shalt not die or be destroyed. What a sublime thought! The idea is, that though the heavens and earth should suddenly disappear, or though they should gradually wear out and become extinct, yet there is one infinite being who remains unaffected and unchanged.

Nothing can reach or disturb him. All these changes shall take place under his direction, and by his command; see Revelation 20:11. Let us not be alarmed then at any revolution. Let us not fear though we should see the heavens rolled up as a scroll, and the stars falling from their places. God, the Creator and the Redeemer, presides over all. He is unchanged. He ever lives; and though the universe should pass away, it will be only at his bidding, and under his direction. "And they all shall wax old." Shall "grow" or become old. The word "wax" is an Old Saxon word, meaning to grow, or increase, or become. The heavens here are compared to a garment, meaning that as that grows old and decays, so it will be with the heavens and the earth. The language is evidently figurative; and yet who can tell how much

literal truth there may be couched under it? Is it absurd to suppose that that sun which daily sends forth so many countless millions of beams of light over the universe, may in a course of ages become diminished in its splendor, and shine with feeble lustre? Can there be constant exhaustion, a constant burning like that, and yet no tendency to decay at some far distant period? Not unless the material for its splendor shall be supplied from the boundless resources of the Great Source of Light - God; and when he shall choose to withhold it, even that glorious sun must be dimmed of its splendor, and shine with enfeebled beams.

Verse 12

And as a vesture - A garment; literally something thrown around - περιβόλαιον peribolaion- and denoting properly the outer garment, the cloak or mantle; see notes, Matthew 5:40. "Shalt thou fold them up." That is, the heavens. They are represented in the Scriptures as an "expanse." or something spread out (the Hebrew text of Genesis 1:7): as a "curtain," or "tent" Isaiah 40:22, and as a "scroll" that might be spread out or rolled up like a book or volume, Isaiah 34:4; Revelation 6:14. Here they are represented as a garment or mantle that might be folded up - language borrowed from folding up and laying aside garments that are no longer fit for use. "And they shall be changed." That is, they shall be exchanged for others, or they shall give place to the new heavens and the new earth; 2 Peter 3:13. The meaning is, that the present form of the heavens and the earth is not to be permanent, but is to be succeeded by others, or to pass away, but that the Creator is to remain the same. "Thou art the same." Thou wilt not change. "And thy years shall not fail." Thou wilt exist forever unchanged. What could more clearly prove that he of whom this is spoken is immutable? Yet it is indubitably spoken of the Messiah, and must demonstrate that he is divine. These attributes cannot be conferred on a creature; and nothing can be clearer than that he who penned the Epistle believed that the Son of God was divine.

Verse 13

But to which of the angels - The apostle adduces one other proof of the exaltation of the Son of God above the angels. He asks where there is an instance in which God had addressed any one of the angels, and asked him to sit at his right hand until he should subdue his enemies under him? Yet that high honor had been conferred on the Son of God; and he was therefore

far exalted above them. “Sit on my right hand;” see notes on Hebrews 1:3. This passage is taken from Psalm 110:1, a Psalm that is repeatedly quoted in this Epistle as referring to the Messiah, and the very passage before is applied by the Saviour to himself, in Matthew 22:43-44, and by Peter it is applied to him in Acts 2:34-35. There can be no doubt, therefore, of its applicability to the Messiah. “Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Until I reduce them to entire subjection. A footstool is what is placed under the feet when we sit on a chair, and the phrase here means that an enemy is entirely subdued; compare notes on 1 Corinthians 15:25. The phrase “to make an enemy a footstool,” is borrowed from the custom of ancient warriors who stood on the necks of vanquished kings on the occasion of celebrating a triumph over them as a token of their complete prostration and subjection; see notes on Isaiah 10:6. The enemies here referred to are the foes of God and of his religion, and the meaning is, that the Messiah is to be exalted until all those foes are subdued. Then he will give up the kingdom to the Father; see notes on 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. The exaltation of the Redeemer, to which the apostle refers here, is to the mediatorial throne. In this he is exalted far above the angels. His foes are to be subdued to him, but angels are to be employed as mere instruments in that great work.

Verse 14

Are they not all - There is not one of them that is elevated to the high rank of the Redeemer. Even the most exalted angel is employed in the comparatively humble office of a ministering spirit appointed to aid the heirs of salvation. “Ministering spirits.” A “ministering” spirit is one that is employed to execute the will of God. The proper meaning of the word here - λειτουργικὰ leitourgika- (whence our word “liturgy”) is, “pertaining to public service,” or “the service of the people” (λαός laosand is applied particularly to those who were engaged in the public service of the temple. They were those who rendered aid to others; who were helpers, or servants. Such is the meaning as used here. They are employed to render “aid” or “assistance” to others - to wit, to Christians. “Sent forth.” Appointed by God for this. They are “sent;” are under his control; are in a subordinate capacity.

Thus, Gabriel was sent forth to convey an important message to Daniel; Daniel 9:21-23. “To minister.” For the help or succour of such. They come to render them assistance - and, if employed in this humble office, how much inferior to the dignity of the Son of God - the Creator and Ruler of the

worlds! “Who shall be heirs of salvation.” To the saints; to Christians. They are called “heirs of salvation” because they are adopted into the family of God, and are treated as his sons; see notes on Romans 8:14-17. The main point here is, that the angels are employed in a much more humble capacity than the Son of God; and, therefore, that he sustains a far more elevated rank. But while the apostle has proved that, he has incidentally stated an exceedingly interesting and important doctrine, that the angels are employed to further the salvation of the people of God, and to aid them in their journey to heaven.

In this doctrine there is nothing absurd. It is no more improbable that angels should be employed to aid man, than that one man should aid another; certainly not as improbable as that the Son of God should come down “not to be ministered unto but to minister,” Matthew 20:28, and that he performed on earth the office of a servant; John 13:1-15. Indeed it is a great principle of the divine administration that one class of God‘s creatures are to minister to others; that one is to aid another to assist him in trouble, to provide for him when poor, and to counsel him in perplexity. We are constantly deriving benefit from others, and are dependent on their counsel and help. Thus, God has appointed parents to aid their children; neighbors to aid their neighbors: the rich to aid the poor; and all over the world the principle is seen, that one is to derive benefit from the aid of others. Why may not the angels be employed in this service?

They are pure, benevolent, powerful; and as man was ruined in the fall by the temptation offered by one of an angelic, though fallen nature, why should not others of angelic, unfallen holiness come to assist in repairing the evils which their fallen, guilty brethren have inflicted on the race? To me there seems to be a beautiful propriety in bringing “aid” from another race, as “ruin” came from another race; and that as those endowed with angelic might, though with fiendish malignity, ruined man, those with angelic might, but heavenly benevolence, should aid in his recovery and salvation. Further, it is, from the necessity of the case, a great principle, that the weak shall be aided by the strong; the ignorant by the enlightened; the impure by the pure; the tempted by those who have not fallen by temptation. All over the world we see this in operation; and it constitutes the beauty of the moral arrangements on the earth; and why shall not this be

extended to the inhabitants of other abodes? Why shall not angels, with their superior intelligence, benevolence, and power, come in to perfect this system, and show how much adapted it is to glorify God? In regard to the ways in which angels become ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, the Scriptures have not fully informed us, but facts are mentioned which will furnish some light on this inquiry. What they do now may be learned from the Scripture account of what they have done - as it seems to be a fair principle of interpretation that they are engaged in substantially the same employment in which they have ever been. The following methods of angelic interposition in behalf of man are noted in the Scriptures:

(1) They feel a deep interest in man. Thus, the Saviour says, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth;" Luke 15:10. Thus also he says, when speaking of the "little ones" that compose his church, "in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven;" Matthew 18:10.

(2) they feel a special interest in all that relates to the redemption of man. Thus, Peter says of the things pertaining to redemption, "which things the angels desire to look into;" 1 Peter 1:12. In accordance with this they are represented as praising God over the fields of Bethlehem, where the shepherds were to whom it was announced that a Saviour was born Luke 2:13; an angel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of the Messiah Luke 1:26; an angel declared to the shepherds that He was born Luke 2:10; the angels came and ministered to Him in His temptation Matthew 4:11; an angel strengthened Him in the garden of Gethsemane Luke 22:43; angels were present in the sepulchre where the Lord Jesus had been laid, to announce His resurrection to His disciples John 20:12; and they reappeared to his disciples on Mount Olivet to assure them that he would return and receive his people to him self, Acts 1:10.

(3) they appear for the defense and protection of the people of God. Thus it is said Psalm 34:7, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Thus, two angels came to hasten Lot from the cities of the plain, and to rescue him from the impending destruction; Genesis 19:1, Genesis 19:15. Thus, an angel opened the prison doors of the apostles, and delivered them when they had been confined by

the Jews; Acts 5:19. Thus, the angel of the Lord delivered Peter from prison when he had been confined by Herod; Acts 12:7-8.

(4) angels are sent to give us strength to resist temptation. Aid was thus furnished to the Redeemer in the garden of Gethsemane, when there "appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him;" Luke 22:43. The great trial there seems to have been somehow connected with temptation; some influence of the power of darkness, or of the Prince of evil; Luke 22:53; compare John 14:30. In this aid which they rendered to the tempted Redeemer, and in the assistance which they render to us when tempted, there is a special fitness and propriety. Man was at first tempted by a fallen angel. No small part - if not all the temptations in the world - are under the direction now of fallen angels. They roam at large "seeking whom they may devour;" 1 Peter 5:8. The temptations which occur in life, the numerous allurements which beset our path, all have the marks of being under the control of dark and malignant spirits. What, therefore, can be more appropriate than for the pure angels of God to interpose and aid man against the skill and wiles of their fallen and malignant fellow-spirits? Fallen angelic power and skill - power and skill far above the capability and the strength of man - are employed to ruin us, and how desirable is it for like power and skill, under the guidance of benevolence, to come in to aid us!

(5) they support us in affliction. Thus, an angel brought a cheering message to Daniel; the angels were present to give comfort to the disciples of the Saviour when he had been taken from them by death, and when he ascended to heaven. Why may it not be so now, that important consolations, in some way, are imparted to us by angelic influence? And,

(6) they attend dying saints, and conduct them to glory. Thus, the Saviour says of Lazarus that when he died he was "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom;" Luke 16:22. Is there any impropriety in supposing that the same thing may be done still? Assuredly, if anywhere heavenly aid is needed, it is when the spirit leaves the body. If anywhere a guide is needed, it is when the ransomed soul goes up the unknown path to God. And if angels are employed on any messages of mercy to mankind, it is proper that it should be when life is closing, and the spirit is about to ascend to heaven. Should it be said that they are invisible, and that it is difficult to

conceive how we can be aided by beings whom we never see, I answer, I know that they are unseen. They no longer appear as they once did to be the visible protectors and defenders of the people of God. But no small part of the aid which we receive from others comes from sources unseen by us. We owe more to unseen benefactors than to those whom we see, and the most grateful of all aid, perhaps, is what is furnished by a hand which we do not see, and from quarters which we cannot trace. How many an orphan is benefited by some unseen and unknown benefactor! So it may be a part of the great arrangements of Divine Providence that many of the most needed and acceptable interpositions for our welfare should come to us from invisible sources, and be conveyed to us from God by unseen hands.

Remarks

1. The Christian religion has a claim on the attention of man. God has spoken to us in the Gospel by his Son; Hebrews 1:1-2. This fact constitutes a claim on us to attend to what is spoken in the New Testament. When God sent prophets to address people, endowing them with more than human wisdom and eloquence, and commanding them to deliver solemn messages to mankind, that was a reason why people should hear. But how much more important is the message which is brought by his own Son! How much more exalted the Messenger! How much higher his claim to our attention and regard! compare Matthew 21:37. Yet it is lamentable to reflect how few attended to him when he lived on the earth, and how few comparatively regard him now. The great mass of people feel no interest in the fact that the Son of God has come and spoken to the human race. Few take the pains to read what he said, though all the records of the discourses of the Saviour could be read in a few hours.

A newspaper is read; a poem; a novel; a play; a history of battles and sieges; but the New Testament is neglected, and there are thousands even in Christian lands who have not even read through the Sermon on the Mount! Few also listen to the truths which the Redeemer taught when they are proclaimed in the sanctuary. Multitudes never go to the place where the gospel is preached; multitudes when there are engaged in thinking of other things, or are wholly inattentive to the truths which are proclaimed. Such a reception has the Son of God met with in our world! The most wonderful of all events is, that he should have come from heaven to be the teacher of mankind; next to that, the most wonderful event is that, when he has come, people feel no interest in the fact, and refuse to listen to what he says of the

unseen and eternal world. What a man will say about the possibility of making a fortune by some wild speculation will be listened to with the deepest interest; but what the Redeemer says about the "certainty" of heaven and eternal riches there, excites no emotion: what one from the dead might say about the unseen world would excite the profoundest attention; what he has said who has always dwelt in the unseen world, and who knows all that has occurred there, and all that is yet to occur, awakens no interest, and excites no inquiry. Such is man. The visit, too, of an illustrious stranger - like Lafayette to America - will rouse a nation, and spread enthusiasm everywhere; the visit of the Son of God to the earth on a great errand of mercy is regarded as an event of no importance, and excites no interest in the great mass of human hearts.

2. Christ is divine. In the view of the writer of this Epistle he was undoubtedly regarded as equal with God. This is so clear that it seems wonderful that it should ever have been called in question. He who made the worlds; who is to be worshipped by the angels; who is addressed as God; who is said to have laid the foundation of the earth, and to have made the heavens, and to be unchanged when all these things shall pass away, must be divine. These are the attributes of God, and belong to him alone. These things could not be spoken of a man, an angel, an archangel. It is impossible to conceive that attributes like these could belong to a creature. If they could, then all our notions of what constitutes the distinction between God and his creatures are confounded, and we can have no intelligible idea of God.

3. It is not improbable that Christ is the medium of communicating the knowledge of the divine essence and perfections to all worlds. He is the brightness of the divine glory - the showing forth - the manifestation of God; Hebrews 1:3. The body of the sun is not seen - certainly not by the naked eye. We cannot look upon it. But there is a shining, a brightness, a glory, a manifestation which is seen! It is in the sun-beams, the manifestation of the glory and the existence of the sun. By his shining the sun is known. So the Son of God - incarnate or not - may be the manifestation of the divine essence. And from this illustration, may we not without irreverence derive an illustration of the doctrine of the glorious Trinity? There is the body of the sun - to us invisible - yet great and

glorious, and the source of all light, and heat, and life. The vast body of the sun is the source of all this radiance, the fountain of all that warms and enlivens.

All light and heat and life depend on him, and should he be extinct all would die. Thus, may it not be with God the Father; God the eternal and unchanging essence - the fountain of all light, and life in the universe. In the sun there is also the "manifestation" - the shining - the glorious light. The brightness which we see emanates from that - emanates at once, continually, always. While the sun exists, that exists, and cannot be separated from it. By that brightness the sun is seen; by that the world is enlightened. Without these beams there would be no light, but all would be involved in darkness. What a beautiful representation of the Son of God - the brightness of the divine glory; the medium by which God is made known; the source of light to man, and for anything we know, to the universe! When he shines upon people, there is light when he does not shine, there is as certain moral darkness as there is night when the sun sinks in the west.

And for aught we can see, the manifestation which the Son of God makes may be as necessary in all worlds to a proper contemplation of the divine essence, as the beams of the sun are to understand its nature. Then there are the warmth and heat and vivifying influences of the sun - an influence which is the source of life and beauty to the material world. It is not the mere shining - it is the attendant warmth and vivifying power. All nature is dependent on it. Each seed, and bud, and leaf, and flower; each spire of grass, and each animal on earth, and each bird on the wing, is dependent on it. Without that, vegetation would decay at once, and animal life would be extinct, and universal death would reign. What a beautiful illustration of the Holy Spirit, and of his influences on the moral world! "The Lord God is a Sun" Psalm 84:11; and I do not see that it is improper thus to derive from the sun an illustration of the doctrine of the Trinity. I am certain we should know nothing of the sun but for the beams that reveal him, and that enlighten the world; and I am certain that all animal and vegetable life would die if it were not for his vivifying and quickening rays. I do not see that it may not be equally probable that the nature - the essence of God would be unknown were it not manifested by the Son of God; and I

am certain that all moral and spiritual life would die were it not for the quickening and vivifying influences of the Holy Spirit on the human soul.

4. Christ has made an atonement for sin; Hebrews 1:3. He has done it by "himself." It was not by the blood of bulls and of goats; it was by his own blood. Let us rejoice that we have not now to come before God with a bloody offering; that we need not come leading up a lamb to be slain, but that we may come confiding in that blood which has been shed for the sins of mankind. The great sacrifice has been made. The victim is slain. The blood has been offered which expiates the sin of the world. We may now come at once to the throne of grace, and plead the merits of that blood. How different is our condition from that of the ancient Jewish worshippers! They were required to come leading the victim that was to be slain for sin, and to do this every year and every day. We may come with the feeling that the one great sacrifice has been made for us; that it is never to be repeated, and that in that sacrifice there is merit sufficient to cancel all our sins. How different our condition from that of the pagan! They too lead up sacrifices to be slain on bloody altars. They offer lambs, and goats, and bullocks, and captives taken in war, and slaves, and even their own children! But amidst these horrid offerings, while they show their deep conviction that some sacrifice is necessary, they have no promise - no evidence whatever, that the sacrifice will be accepted. They go away unpardoned. They repeat the offering with no evidence that their sins are forgiven, and at last they die in despair! We come assured that the "blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," and the soul rejoices in the evidence that all past sins are forgiven, and is at peace with God.

5. Let us rejoice that the Lord Jesus is thus exalted to the right hand of God; Hebrews 1:3-4. He has gone into heaven. He is seated on the throne of glory. He has suffered the last pang, and shed the last drop of blood that will ever be necessary to be shed for the sins of the world. No cold tomb is again to hold him; and no spear of a soldier is again to enter his side. He is now happy and glorious in heaven. The angels there render him homage Hebrews 1:6, and the universe is placed under his control.

6. It is right to worship the Lord Jesus. When he came into the world the angels were required to do it Hebrews 1:6, and it cannot be wrong for us to

do it now. If the angels in heaven might properly worship him, we may. If they worshipped him, he is divine. Assuredly, God would not require them to worship a fellow-angel or a man! I feel safe in adoring where angels adore; I do not feel that I have a right to withhold my homage where they have been required to render theirs.

7. It is right to address the Lord Jesus as God; Hebrews 1:8. If he is so addressed in the language of inspiration, it is not improper for us so to address him. We do not err when we adhere closely to the language of the Bible; nor can we have a stronger evidence that we are right than that we express our sentiments and our devotions in the very language of the sacred Scriptures.

8. The kingdom of the Redeemer is a righteous kingdom. It is founded in equity; Hebrews 1:8-9. Other kingdoms have been kingdoms of cruelty, oppression, and blood. Tyrants have swayed an iron scepter over people. But not thus with the Redeemer in his kingdom. There is not a law there which is not equal and mild; not a statute which it would not promote the temporal and eternal welfare of man to obey. Happy is the man that is wholly under his scepter; happy the kingdom that yields entire obedience to his laws!

9. The heavens shall perish; the earth shall decay; Hebrews 1:10-11. Great changes have already taken place in the earth - as the researches of geologists show; and we have no reason to doubt that similar changes may have occurred in distant worlds. Still greater changes may be expected to occur in future times, and some of them we may be called to witness. Our souls are to exist forever; and far on in future ages - far beyond the utmost period which we can now compute - we may witness most important changes in these heavens and this earth. God may display his power in a manner which has never been seen yet; and safe near his throne his people may be permitted to behold the exhibition of power of which the mind has never yet had the remotest conception.

10. Yet amidst these changes, the Saviour will be the same; Hebrews 1:12. He changes not. In all past revolutions, he has been the same. In all the changes which have occurred in the physical world, he has been

unchanged; in all the revolutions which have occurred among kingdoms, he has been unmoved. One change succeeds another; kingdoms rise and fall and empires waste away; one generation goes off to be succeeded by another, but he remains the same. No matter what tempests howl, or how wars rage, or how the pestilence spreads abroad, or how the earth is shaken by earthquakes, still the Redeemer is the same. And no matter what are our external changes, he is the same. We pass from childhood to youth, to manhood, to old age, but he changes not. We are in prosperity or adversity; we may pass from affluence to poverty, from honor to dishonor, from health to sickness, but he is the same.

We may go and lie down in the cold tomb, and our mortal frames may decay, but he is the same during our long sleep, and he will remain the same till he shall return and summon us to renovated life. I rejoice that in all the circumstances of life I have the same Saviour. I know what he is. I know, if the expression may be allowed, "where he may be found." Man may change by caprice, or whim, or by some new suggestion of interest, of passion, or ambition. I go to my friend today, and find him kind and true - but I have no absolute certainty that I shall find him such tomorrow. His feelings, from some unknown cause, may have become cold toward me. Some enemy may have breathed suspicion into his ear about me, or he may have formed some stronger attachment, or he may be sick, or dead. But nothing like this can happen in regard to the Redeemer. He changes not. I am sure that he is always the same. No one can influence him by slander; no new friendship can weaken the old; no sickness or death can occur to him to change him; and though the heavens be on fire, and the earth be convulsed, he is the same. In such a Saviour I may confide; in such a friend why should not all confide? Of earthly attachments it has been too truly said:

"And what is friendship but a name,
A charm that lulls to sleep;
A shade that follows wealth or fame,
But leaves the wretch to weep?"

But this can never be said of the attachment formed between the Christian and their gracious Redeemer. That is unaffected by all external changes; that shall live in all the revolutions of material things, and when all earthly ties shall be severed; that shall survive the dissolution of all things.

11. We see the dignity of man; Hebrews 1:13-14. Angels are sent to be his attendants. They come to minister to him here, and to conduct him home "to glory." Kings and princes are surrounded by armed men, or by sages called to be their counselors; but the most humble saint may be encompassed by a retinue of beings of far greater power and more elevated rank. The angels of light and glory feel a deep interest in the salvation of people. They come to attend the redeemed; they wait on their steps; they sustain them in trial; they accompany them when departing to heaven. It is a higher honor to be attended by one of those pure intelligences than by the most elevated monarch that ever swayed a scepter or wore a crown; and the humblest and obscurest Christian shall soon be himself conducted to a throne in heaven, compared with which the most splendid seat of royalty on earth loses its luster and fades away:

"And is there care in heaven? and is there love.
In heavenly spirits to these creatures base,
That may compassion of their evils move?
There is: else much more wretched were the case.
Of men than beasts; But O! th' exceeding grace.
Of Highest God that loves his creatures so,
And all his works of mercy doth embrace,
That blessed angels he sends to and fro,
To serve to wicked man, to serve his wicked foe!
"How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
To come to succour us that succour want!
How do they with golden pinions cleave.
The yielding skies, like flying pursuivant.
Against foul fiends to aid us militant!
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant;
And all for love and nothing for reward;
O why should Heavenly God to men have such regard!"

"Spenser's *Faery Queen*," B. II. Canto Hebrews 8:1, Hebrews 8:2.

12. What has God done for the salvation of man! He formed an eternal plan. He sent his prophets to communicate his will. He sent his Son to bear a message of mercy, and to die the just for the unjust. He exalted him to heaven, and placed the universe under his control that man may be saved. He sent his Holy Spirit; his ministers and messengers for this. And last, to

complete the work, he sends his angels to be ministering spirits; to sustain his people; to comfort them in dying; to attend them to the realms of glory. What an interest is felt in the salvation of a single Christian! What a value he has in the universe! And how important it is that he should be holy! A man who has been redeemed by the blood of the Son of God should be pure. He who is an heir of life should be holy. He who is attended by celestial beings, and who is soon - he knows not "how" soon - to be transported to heaven, should be holy. Are angels my attendants? Then I should walk worthy of my companionship. Am I soon to go and dwell with angels? Then I should be pure. Are these feet soon to tread the courts of heaven? Is this tongue soon to unite with heavenly beings in praising God? Are these eyes soon to look on the throne of eternal glory, and on the ascended Redeemer? Then these feet, and eyes, and lips should be pure and holy, and I should be dead to the world, and should live only for heaven.

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

The main object of Hebrews 2:1-4.

(2) Jesus had been honored, as incarnate, in such a way as to show that he had a right to be heard, and that what he said should receive the profound attention of people; Hebrews 2:5-9. The world to come had not been put under the angels as it had been under him Hebrews 2:5; the general principle had been stated in the Scriptures that all things were put under man Hebrews 2:7-8, but this was fulfilled only in the Lord Jesus, who had been made a little lower than the angels, and when so made crowned with glory and honor; Hebrews 2:9. His appearance as a man, therefore, was in no way inconsistent with what had been said of his dignity, or his claim to be heard.

(3) the apostle then proceeds to show why he became a man, and why, though he was so exalted, he was subjected to so severe sufferings: and with this the chapter closes; Hebrews 2:10-18. It was because this was "proper" from the relation which he sustained to man. The argument is, that the Redeemer and his people were identified; that he did not come to save "angels," and that, therefore, there was a propriety in his assuming the nature of man, and being subjected to trials like those whom he came to save. In all things it behoved him to be made like his brethren, in order to redeem them, and in order to set them an example, and show them how to suffer. The humiliation, therefore, of the Redeemer; the fact that he appeared as a man, and that he was a sufferer, so far from being a reason why he should not be "heard," was rather an additional reason why we should attend to what he said. He had a claim to the right of being heard not only from his original dignity, but from the friendship which he has evinced for us in taking upon himself our nature, and suffering in our behalf.

Verse 1

Therefore - Greek "On account of this" - Δια τοῦτο Dia touto- that is, on account of the exalted dignity and rank of the Messiah as stated in the previous chapter. The sense is: "Since Christ, the author of the new

dispensation, is so far exalted above the prophets, and even the angels, we ought to give the more earnest attention to all that has been spoken."

We ought - It is suitable or proper (Greek δεὶ dei) that we should attend to those things. When the Son of God speaks to people, every consideration makes it appropriate that we should attend to what is spoken.

To give the more earnest heed. - To give the more strict attention.

To the things which we have heard. - Whether directly from the Lord Jesus, or from his apostles. It is possible that some of those to whom the apostle was writing had heard the Lord Jesus himself preach the gospel: others had heard the same truths declared by the apostles.

Lest at any time. - We ought to attend to those things at all times. We ought never to forget them; never to be indifferent to them. We are sometimes interested in them, and then we feel indifferent to them; sometimes at leisure to attend to them, and then the cares of the world, or a heaviness and dullness of mind, or a cold and languid state of the affections, renders us indifferent to them, and they are suffered to pass out of the mind without concern. Paul says, that this ought never to be done. At no time should we be indifferent to those things. They are always important to us, and we should never be in a state of mind when they would be uninteresting. At all times; in all places; and in every situation of life, we should feel that the truths of religion are of more importance to us than all other truths, and nothing should be suffered to efface their image from the heart.

We should let them slip. - Margin, "Run out as leaking vessels." Tyndale renders this, "lest we be spilt." The expression here has given rise to much discussion as to its meaning; and has been very differently translated. Doddridge renders it, "lest we let them flow out of our minds." Prof. Stuart, "lest at any time we should slight them." Whitby: "that they may not entirely slip out of our memories." The word used here - παραῤῥυέω pararrueō- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The Septuagint translators have used the word only once. Proverbs 3:21. "Son, do not pass by (μὴ παραῤῥυῇς mē pararruēsbut keep my counsel;" that is, do not pass by my advice by neglect, or suffer it to be disregarded. The word means, according to Passow, to flow by, to flow over; and then to go by, to fall, to go away. It is used to mean to flow near, to flow by - as of a river; to glide away, to escape - as from the mind, that is, to forget; and to glide along - as a thief does by stealth. See Robinson's Lexicon. The Syriac

and Arabic translators have rendered it: “that we may not fall.” After all that has been said on the meaning of the word here (compare Stuart in loc.), it seems to me that the true sense of the expression is that of flowing, or gliding by - as a river; and that the meaning here is, that we should be very cautious that the important truths spoken by the Redeemer and his apostles should not be suffered to “glide by” us without attention, or without profit. We should not allow them to be like a stream that glides on by us without benefiting us; that is, we should endeavor to secure and retain them as our own. The truth taught, is that there is great danger, now that the true system of religion has been revealed, that it will not profit us, but that we shall lose all the benefit of it. This danger may arise from many sources - some of which are the following:

(1) We may not feel that the truths revealed are important - and before their importance is felt, they may be beyond our reach. So we are often deceived in regard to the importance of objects - and before we perceive their value they are irrecoverably gone. So it is often with time, and with the opportunities of obtaining an education, or of accomplishing any object which is of value. The opportunity is gone before we perceive its importance. So the young suffer the most important period of life to glide away before they perceive its value, and the opportunity of making much of their talents is lost because they did not embrace the suitable opportunities.

(2) by being engrossed in business. We feel that that is now the most important thing. That claims all our attention. We have no time to pray, to read the Bible, to think of religion, for the cares of the world engross all the time - and the opportunities of salvation glide insensibly away, until it is too late.

(3) by being attracted by the pleasures of life. We attend to them now, and are drawn along from one to another, until religion is suffered to glide away with all its hopes and consolations, and we perceive, too late, that we have let the opportunity of salvation slip forever. Allured by those pleasures, the young neglect it; and new pleasures starting up in future life carry on the delusion, until every favorable opportunity for salvation has passed away.

(4) we suffer favorable opportunities to pass by without improving them. Youth is by far the best time, as it is the most appropriate time, to become a Christian - and yet how easy is it to allow that period to slip away without becoming interested in the Saviour! One day glides on after another, and one week, and one month, one year passes away after another - like a gently-flowing stream - until all the precious time of youth has gone, and we are still not Christians. So a revival of religion is a favorable time - and yet many suffer this to pass by without becoming interested in it. Others are converted, and the heavenly influences descend all around us, but we are unaffected, and the season so full of happy and heavenly influences is gone - to return no more.

(5) we let the favorable season slip, because we design to attend to it at some future period of life. So youth defers it to manhood - manhood to old age - old age to a death-bed - and then neglects it - until the whole of life has glided away, and the soul is not saved. Paul knew man. He knew how prone he was to let the things of religion slip out of the mind - and hence, the earnestness of his caution that we should give heed to the subject now - lest the opportunity of salvation should soon glide away. When once passed, it can never be recalled. Hence, learn:

(1) the truths of religion will not benefit us unless we give heed to them. It will not save us that the Lord Jesus has come and spoken to people, unless we are disposed to listen. It will not benefit us that the sun shines, unless we open our eyes. Books will not benefit us, unless we read them; medicine, unless we take it; nor will the fruits of the earth sustain our lives, however rich and abundant they may be, if we disregard and neglect them. So with the truths of religion. There is truth enough to save the world - but the world disregards and despises it.

(2) it needs not great sins to destroy the soul. Simple “neglect” will do it as certainly as atrocious crimes. Every person has a sinful heart that will destroy him unless he makes an effort to be saved; and it is not merely the great sinner, therefore, who is in danger. It is the man who “neglects” his soul - whether a moral or an immoral man - a daughter of amiableness, or a daughter of vanity and vice.

Verse 2

For if the word spoken by angels - The revelation in the Old Testament. It was indeed given by Yahweh, but it was the common opinion of the Hebrews that it was by the ministry of angels; see Acts 7:38, Acts 7:53 notes, and Galatians 3:19 note, where this point is fully considered. As Paul was discoursing here of the superiority of the Redeemer to the angels, it was to the point to refer to the fact that the Law had been given by the ministry of angels.

Was steadfast - Was firm - βέβαιος bebaiossettled - established. It was not vacillating and fluctuating. It determined what crime was, and it was firm in its punishment. It did not yield to circumstances; but if not obeyed in all respects, it denounced punishment. The idea here is not that everything was "fulfilled," but it is that the Law so given could not be violated with impunity. It was not safe to violate it, but it took notice of the slightest failure to yield perfect obedience to its demands.

And every transgression - Literally, "going beyond, passing by." It means every instance of "disregarding" the Law.

And disobedience. - Every instance of "not hearing" the Law - παρακοὴ parakoē- and hence, every instance of disobeying it. The word here stands opposite to "hearing" it, or attending to it - and the sense of the whole is, that the slightest infraction of the Law was sure to be punished. It made no provision for indulgence in sin; it demanded prompt, implicit, and entire obedience. "Received a just recompense of reward." Was strictly punished. Subjected to equal retribution. This was the character of the Law. It threatened punishment for each and every offence, and made no allowance for transgression in any form; compare Numbers 15:30-31.

Verse 3

How shall we escape - How shall we escape the just recompense due to transgressors? What way is there of being saved from punishment, if we suffer the great salvation to be neglected, and do not embrace its offers? The sense is, that there is no other way of salvation, and the neglect of this will be followed by certain destruction. why it will, the apostle proceeds to show, by stating that this plan of salvation was proclaimed first by the Lord himself, and had been confirmed by the most decided and amazing miracles.

If we neglect - It is not merely if we commit great sins. Not, if we are murderers, adulterers, thieves, infidels, atheists, scoffers. It is, if we merely

“neglect” this salvation - if we do not embrace it - if we suffer it to pass unimproved. “Neglect” is enough to ruin a man. A man who is in business need not commit forgery or robbery to ruin himself; he has only to “neglect” his business, and his ruin is certain. A man who is lying on a bed of sickness, need not cut his throat to destroy himself; he has only to “neglect” the means of restoration, and he will be ruined. A man floating in a skiff above Niagara, need not move an oar or make an effort to destroy himself; he has only to “neglect” using the oar at the proper time, and he will certainly be carried over the cataract. Most of the calamities of life are caused by simple “neglect.” By neglect of education children grow up in ignorance; by neglect a farm grows up to weeds and briars; by neglect a house goes to decay; by neglect of sowing, a man will have no harvest; by neglect of reaping, the harvest would rot in the fields. No worldly interest can prosper where there is neglect; and why may it not be so in religion? There is nothing in earthly affairs that is valuable that will not be ruined if it is not attended to - and why may it not be so with the concerns of the soul? Let no one infer, therefore, that because he is not a drunkard, or an adulterer, or a murderer, that, therefore, he will be saved. Such an inference would be as irrational as it would be for a man to infer that because he is not a murderer his farm will produce a harvest, or that because he is not an adulterer therefore his merchandise will take care of itself. Salvation would be worth nothing if it cost no effort - and there will be no salvation where no effort is put forth.

So great salvation - . Salvation from sin and from hell. It is called “great” because:

(1) Its author is great. This is perhaps the main idea in this passage. It “began to be spoken by the Lord;” it had for its author the Son of God, who is so much superior to the angels; whom the angels were required to worship Hebrews 1:6; who is expressly called God Hebrews 1:8; who made all things, and who is eternal; Hebrews 1:10-12. A system of salvation promulgated by him “must” be of infinite importance, and have a claim to the attention of man.

(2) it is “great” because it saves from great sins. It is adapted to deliver from all sins, no matter how aggravated. No one is saved who feels that his sins are small, or that they are of no consequence. Each one sees his sins to be black and aggravated, and each one who enters heaven, will go there

feeling and confessing that it is a great salvation which has brought such a sinner there. Besides, this salvation delivers from all sin - no matter how gross and aggravated. The adulterer, the murderer, the blasphemer, may come and be saved, and the salvation which redeems such sinners from eternal ruin is “great.”

(3) it is great because it saves from great dangers. The danger of an eternal hell besets the path of each one. All do not see it; and all will not believe it when told of it. But this danger hovers over the path of every mortal. The danger of an eternal hell! Salvation from everlasting burnings! Deliverance from unending ruin! Surely that salvation must be great which shall save from such a doom! If that salvation is neglected, that danger still hangs over each and every man. The gospel did not create that danger - it came to deliver from it. Whether the gospel be true or false, each man is by nature exposed to eternal death - just as each one is exposed to temporal death whether the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and of the resurrection be true or false. The gospel comes to provide a remedy for dangers and woes - it does not create them; it comes to deliver people from great dangers - not to plunge them into them. “Back of the gospel,” and before it was preached at all, people were in danger of everlasting punishment, and that system which came to proclaim deliverance from such a danger, is great.

(4) the salvation itself is great in heaven. It exalts people to infinite honors, and places on their heads an eternal crown. Heaven with all its glories is offered to us; and such a deliverance, and such an elevation to eternal honors, deserves to be called great. If that is neglected, there is no other salvation; and man must be inevitably destroyed.

(5) it is “great” because it was effected by infinite displays of power, and wisdom, and love. It was procured by the incarnation and humiliation of the Son of God. It was accomplished amidst great sufferings and self-denials. It was attended with great miracles. The tempest was stilled, and the deaf were made to hear, and the blind to see, and the dead were raised, and the sun was darkened, and the rocks were rent. The whole series of wonders connected with the incarnation and death of the Lord Jesus, was such as the world had not seen elsewhere, and such as was suited to hold the race in

mute admiration and astonishment. If this be so, then religion is no trifle. It is not a matter of little importance whether we embrace it or not. It is the most momentous of all the concerns that pertain to man; and has a claim on his attention which nothing else can have. Yet the mass of people live in the "neglect" of it. It is not that they are professedly atheists, or deists, or that they are immoral or profane; it is not that they oppose it, and ridicule it, and despise it; it is that they simply "neglect" it. They pass it by. They attend to other things. They are busy with their pleasures, or in their counting-houses, in their workshops, or on their farms; they are engaged in politics, or in bookmaking, and they "neglect" religion now as a thing of small importance - proposing to attend to it hereafter, as if they acted on the principle that everything else was to be attended to before religion.

Which at the first - Greek "Which received the beginning of being spoken." The meaning is correctly expressed in our translation. Christ "began" to preach the gospel; the apostles followed him. John prepared the way; but the Saviour was properly the first preacher of the gospel.

By the Lord - By the Lord Jesus; see notes on Acts 1:24.

And was confirmed unto us … - They who heard him preach, that is, the apostles, were witnesses of what he said, and certified us of its truth. When the apostle here says "us," he means the church at large. Christians were assured of the truth of what the Lord Jesus spake by the testimony of the apostles; or the apostles communicated it to those who had not heard him in such a manner as to leave no room for doubt.

Verse 4

God also bearing them witness - By miracles. Giving them the sanction of his authority, or showing that they were sent by him. No man can work a miracle by his own power. When the dead are raised, the deaf made to hear and the blind to see by a word, it is the power of God alone that does it. He thus becomes a "witness" to the divine appointment of him by whose instrumentality the miracle is performed; or furnishes an attestation that what he says is true; see notes on Acts 14:3.

With signs and wonders. - These words are usually connected in the New Testament. The word rendered "signs" - σημεῖον sēmeion- means any miraculous event that is suited to show that what had been predicted by a prophet would certainly take place; see Matthew 12:38; compare note on Isaiah 7:11. A "wonder" - τέρας teras- denotes a portent, or prodigy - something that is suited to excite wonder or amazement - and hence, a

miracle. The words together refer to the various miracles which were performed by the Lord Jesus and his apostles, designed to confirm the truth of the Christian religion.

And with divers miracles. - Various miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, etc. The miracles were not of one class merely, but were various, so that all pretence of deception should be taken away.

And gifts of the Holy Ghost. - Margin, "Distributions." The various influences of the Holy Spirit enabling them to speak different languages, and to perform works beyond the power of man; see notes on 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

According to his will - As he chose. He acted as a sovereign in this. He gave them where he pleased, and imparted them in such measure as he chose. The sense of this whole passage is, "The gospel has been promulgated to man in a solemn manner. It was first published by the Lord of glory himself. It was confirmed by the most impressive and solemn miracles. It is undoubtedly a revelation from heaven; was given in more solemn circumstances than the Law of Moses, and its threatenings are more to be dreaded than those of the Law. Beware, therefore, how you trifle with it, or disregard it. It cannot be neglected with safety; its neglect or rejection must be attended with condemnation."

Verse 5

For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection - In this verse the apostle returns to the subject which he had been discussing in Hebrews 1:1-14 - the superiority of the Messiah to the angels. From that subject he had been diverted Hebrews 2:1-4, by showing them what must be the consequences of defection from Christianity, and the danger of neglecting it. Having shown that, he now proceeds with the discussion, and shows that an honor had been conferred on the Lord Jesus which had never been bestowed on the angels - to wit, the "supremacy over this world." This he does by proving from the Old Testament that such a dominion was given to "man" Hebrews 2:6-8, and that this dominion was in fact exercised by the Lord Jesus; Hebrews 2:9. At the same time, he meets an objection which a Jew would be likely to make. It is, that Jesus appeared to be far inferior to the angels. He was a man of a humble condition. He was poor, and despised. He had none of the external honor which was shown to Moses - the founder of the Jewish economy; none of the apparent honor which belonged to angelic beings. This implied objection he removes by showing

the reason why he became so. It was proper, since he came to redeem man, that he should be a man, and not take on himself the nature of angels; and for the same reason it was proper that he should be subjected to sufferings, and be made a man of sorrows; Hebrews 2:10-17. The remark of the apostle in the verse before us is, that God had never put the world in subjection to the angels as he had to the Lord Jesus. They had no jurisdiction over it; they were mere ministering spirits; but the world had been put under the dominion of the Lord Jesus.

The world to come - The word rendered here "world" - οἰκουμένη oikoumenē- means properly the "inhabited," or "inhabitable" world; see Matthew 24:14; Luke 2:1; Luke 4:5; Luke 21:26 (Greek); Acts 11:28; Acts 17:6, Acts 17:31; Acts 19:27; Acts 24:5; Romans 10:18; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 3:10; Revelation 12:9; Revelation 16:14 - in all which places, but one, it is rendered "world." It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The proper meaning is the world or earth considered as inhabitable - and here the jurisdiction refers to the control over man, or the dwellers on the earth. The phrase "the world to come," occurs not unfrequently in the New Testament; compare Ephesians 2:7; 1 Corinthians 10:11; Hebrews 6:5. The same phrase "the world to come," עולם הבא ʿowlaam habaa'- occurs often in the Jewish writings. According to Buxtorf (Lexicon Ch. Talm. Rab.) it means, as some suppose, "the world which is to exist after this world is destroyed, and after the resurrection of the dead, when souls shall be again united to their bodies." By others it is supposed to mean "the days of the Messiah, when he shall reign on the earth." To me it seems to be clear that the phrase here means, "the world under the Messiah" - the world, age, or dispensation which was to succeed the Jewish, and which was familiarly known to them as "the world to come;" and the idea is, that that world, or age, was placed under the jurisdiction of the Christ, and not of the angels. This point the apostle proceeds to make out; compare notes on Isaiah 2:2.

Whereof we speak - . "Of which I am writing;" that is, of the Christian religion, or the reign of the Messiah.

Verse 6

But one in a certain place testified - The apostle was writing to those who were supposed to be familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures, and where it would be necessary only to make a reference in general without mentioning the name. The place which is quoted here is Psalm 8:4-6. The "argument"

of the apostle is this, that there stood in the sacred Scriptures a declaration that "all things were placed under the control and jurisdiction of man," but that that had not yet been accomplished. It was not true (Hebrews 2:8) that all things were subject to him, and the complete truth of that declaration would be found only in the jurisdiction conferred on the Messiah - the man by way of eminence - the incarnate Son of God. It would not occur to anyone probably in reading the Psalm that the verse here quoted had any reference to the Messiah. It seems to relate to the dominion which God had given man over his works in this lower world, or to the fact that he was made lord over all things.

That dominion is apparent, to a considerable extent, everywhere, and is a standing proof of the truth of what is recorded in Genesis 1:26, that God originally gave dominion to man over the creatures on earth, since it is only by this supposition that it can be accounted for that the horse, and the elephant, and the ox, and even the panther and the lion, are subject to the control of man. The argument of Paul seems to be this: Originally this control was given to man. It was absolute and entire. All things were subject to him, and all obeyed. Man was made a little lower than the angels, and was the undisputed lord of this lower world. He was in a state of innocence. But he rebelled, and this dominion has been in some measure lost. It is found complete only in the "second man the Lord from heaven" 1 Corinthians 15:47, the Lord Jesus to whom this control is absolutely given. He comes up to the complete idea of man - man as he was in innocence, and man as he was described by the Psalmist, as having been made a little lower than the angels, and having entire dominion over the world.

Much difficulty has been felt by commentators in regard to this passage, and to the principle on which it is quoted. The above seems to me to be what is most probably true. There are two other methods by which an attempt has been made to explain it. One is, that Paul uses the words here by way of "allusion," or "accommodation" (Doddridge), as words that will express his meaning, without designing to say that the Psalm originally had any reference to the Messiah. Most of the later commentators accord with this opinion. The other opinion is, that David originally referred to the Messiah - that he was deeply and gratefully affected in view of the honor that God had conferred on him; and that in looking down by faith on the posterity that God had promised him (see 2 Samuel 7:16), he saw one

among his own descendants to whom God would give this wide dominion, and expresses himself in the elevated language of praise. This opinion is defended by Prof. Stuart; see his Commentary on Hebrews, Excursus IX.

(That the grand and ultimate reference, in Psalm 8:1-9, is to the person of the Messiah, none can reasonably doubt. Both our Lord and his apostles have affirmed it; Matthew 21:15-16; 1 Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 1:22. Add to these, the place before us, where - as the quotation is introduced "in the midst of an argument, and by way of proof" - the idea of "accommodation" is inconsistent with the wisdom and honesty of the apostles, and therefore inadmissible. The opposite extreme, however, of "sole and original" reference to the Messiah is not so certain. There is a more obvious and primary reference, which at once strikes the reader of the Psalm, and which, therefore, should not be rejected, until disproved. The conjecture, which a learned author mentioned above, has made, regarding the course of thought in the Psalmist's mind, supposing him to have been occupied with the contemplation of the covenant, as recorded in Psalm 8:1-9, which it is allowed on all hands the primary reference alone could not do. It is sufficiently clear that such universal dominion belongs not to man, in his present fallen state. Even if it be allowed that the contemplation of David regarded "man as innocent, as he was when created," yet absolutely universal dominion did not belong to Adam. Christ alone is Lord of all. Creation animate and inanimate is subject to him.

Here then we have what has been well styled: "the safe middle point, the μέτρον ἀριστὸν metron aristonbetween the two extremes of supposing this, and such like passages, to belong only to the Messiah, or only to him concerning whom they were first spoken." This middle point has been ably defended by Dr. Middleton. "Indeed." says he, "on no other hypothesis can we avoid one of two great difficulties; for else we must assert that the multitudes of applications made by Christ and his apostles are fanciful and unauthorized, and wholly inadequate to prove the points for which they are cited; or, on the other band, we must believe that the obvious and natural sense of such passages was never intended, and that it is a mere illusion. Of Psalm 8:1-9 the primary import is so certain that it could not be mistaken." The only objection to this double reference, worthy of being noticed, is connected with the clause, Ἠλαττωσας αὐτον βραχύτι παρ᾽ ἀγγελους

Ēlattōsas auton brachuti par angelouswhich, it is affirmed, must possess two senses, not only different, but opposite and contradictory.

In its primary application to man, the idea is plainly that of exaltation and honor. Such was the dignity of man that he was made "but a little" lower than the angels; on the other hand, the secondary, or prophetic application, gives to the language the sense of humiliation or depression. For, considering the original dignity of Christ, the being made lower than the angels, cannot otherwise be regarded. But may not the clause, in both applications, have the idea of exaltation attached to it? If so, the objection is at once met. And that this is the case has, we think, been satisfactorily made out. "What," asks Prof. Stuart "is his (Paul's) design?" To prove that Christ in his human nature is exalted above angels. How does he undertake to prove this? First by showing that this nature is made but little inferior to that of the angels, and next that it has been exalted to the empire of the world." This note has been extended to such length, because it involves a "principle" applicable to a multitude of passages. On the whole, it may be observed in reference to all these cases of quotation, that the mind of the pious and humble reader will not be greatly distressed by any difficulties connected with their application, but will ever rest satisfied with the assertion and authority of people, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.)

What is man … - What is there in man that entitles him to so much notice? Why has God conferred on him so signal honors? Why has he placed him over the works of his hands? He seems so insignificant; his life is so much like a vapor; he so soon disappears, that the question may well be asked why this extraordinary dominion is given him? He is so sinful also, and so unworthy; so much unlike God, and so passionate and revengeful; is so prone to abuse his dominion, that it may well be asked why God has given it to him? Who would suppose that God would give such a dominion over his creatures to one who was so prone to abuse it as man has shown himself to be? He is so feeble, also, compared with other creatures - even of those which are made subject to him - that the question may well be asked why God has conceded it to him? Such question may be asked when we contemplate man as he is. But similar questions may be asked, if, as was probably the case, the Psalm here be supposed to have had reference to man "as he was created."

Why was one so feeble, and so comparatively without strength, placed over this lower world, and the earth made subject to his control? Why is it that when the heavens are so vast and glorious Psalm 8:3, God has taken such notice of man? Of what consequence can he be amidst works so wonderful? “When I look on the heavens and survey their greatness and their glory,” is the sentiment of David, “why is it that man has attracted so much notice, and that he has not been wholly overlooked in the vastness of the works of the Almighty? Why is it that instead of this he has been exalted to so much dignity and honor?” This question, thus considered, strikes us with more force now than it could have struck David. Let anyone sit down and contemplate the heavens as they are disclosed by the discoveries of modern astronomy, and he may well ask the question, “What is man that he should have attracted the attention of God, and been the object of so much care?”

The same question would not have been inappropriate to David if the Psalm be supposed to have had reference originally to the Messiah, and if he was speaking of himself particularly as the ancestor of the Messiah. “What is man; what am I; what can any of my descendants be, who must be of mortal frame, that this dominion should be given him? Why should anyone of a race so feeble, so ignorant, so imperfect, be exalted to such honor?” We may ask the question here, and it may be asked in heaven with pertinency and with power, ‹Why was man so honored as to be united to the Godhead? Why did the Deity appear in the human form? What was there in man that should entitle him to this honor of being united to the Divinity, and of being thus exalted above the angels?‘ The wonder is not yet solved; and we may well suppose that the angelic ranks look with amazement - but without envy - on the fact that “man,” by his union with the Deity in the person of the Lord Jesus, has been raised above them in rank and in glory. “Or the son of man.” This phrase means the same as “man,” and is used merely to give variety to the mode of expression. Such a change or variety in words and phrases, when the same thing is intended, occurs constantly in Hebrew poetry. The name “son of man” is often given to Christ to denote his intimate connection with our race, and the interest which he felt in us, and is the common term which the Saviour uses when speaking of himself. Here it means “man,” and maybe applied to human nature everywhere - and therefore to human nature in the person of the Messiah.

That thou visitest him - That thou shouldst regard him or treat him with so much honor. Why is he the object of so much interest to the Divine Mind?

Verse 7

Thou madest him a little lower than the angels - Margin, "A little while inferior to." The Greek may here mean a little inferior in rank, or inferior for a little time. But the probable meaning is, that it refers to inferiority of rank. Such is its obvious sense in Psalm 8:1-9, from which this is quoted. The meaning is, that God had made man but little inferior to the angels in rank. He was inferior, but still God had exalted him almost to their rank. Feeble, and weak, and dying as he was, God had exalted him, and had given him a dominion and a rank almost like that of the angels. The wonder of the Psalmist is, that God had given to human nature so much honor - a wonder that is not at all diminished when we think of the honor done to man by his connection with the divine nature in the person of the Lord Jesus. If in contemplating the race as it appears; if when we look at the dominion of man over the lower world, we are amazed that God has bestowed so much honor on our nature, how much more should we wonder that he has honored man by his connection with the divinity. Paul applies this to the Lord Jesus. His object is to show that he is superior to the angels. In doing this he shows that he had a nature given him in itself but little inferior to the angels, and then that that had been exalted to a rank and dominion far above theirs. That such honor should be put on "man" is what is suited to excite amazement, and well may one continue to ask why it has been done? When we survey the heavens, and contemplate their glories, and think of the exalted rank of other beings, we may well inquire why has such honor been conferred on man?

Thou crownedst him with glory and honor. - That is, with exalted honor. Glory and honor here are nearly synonymous. The meaning is, that elevated honor had been conferred on human nature. A most exalted and extended dominion had been given to "man," which showed that God had greatly honored him. This appeared eminently in the person of the Lord Jesus, "the exalted Man," to whom this dominion was given in the widest extent.

And didst set him over … - "Man" has been placed over the other works of God:

(1)by the original appointment Genesis 1:26;

(2)man at large - though fallen, sinful, feeble, dying;

(3)man, eminently in the person of the Lord Jesus, in whom human nature has received its chief exaltation. This is what is particularly in the eye of the apostle - and the language of the Psalm will accurately express this exaltation.

Verse 8

Thou hast put all things in subjection … - Psalm 8:6. That is, all things are put under the control of man, or thou hast given him dominion over all things.

For in that he put all in subjection - The meaning of this is, that the "fair interpretation" of the passage in the Psalm is, that the dominion of "man," or of human nature over the earth, was to be absolute and total. Nothing was to be excepted. But this is not now the fact in regard to man in general, and can be true only of human nature in the person of the Lord Jesus. There the dominion is absolute and universal." The point of the argument of the apostle may be this. It was the original appointment Genesis 1:26 that man should have dominion over this lower world, and be its absolute lord and sovereign. Had he continued in innocence, this dominion would have been entire and perpetual. But he fell, and we do not now see him exerting this dominion. What is said of the dominion of man can be true only of human nature in the person of the Lord Jesus, and there it is completely fulfilled.

But now we see not yet all things put under him - That is, "It is not now true that all things are subject to the control of man. There is indeed a general dominion over the works of God, and over the inferior creation. But the control is not universal. A large part of the animal creation rebels, and is brought into subjection only with difficulty. The elements are not entirely under his control; the tempest and the ocean rage; the pestilence conveys death through city and hamlet; the dominion of man is a broken dominion. His government is an imperfect government. The world is not yet put wholly under his dominion, but enough has been done to constitute a pledge that it will yet be done. It will be fully accomplished only in him who sustains our nature, and to whom dominion is given over the worlds."

Verse 9

But we see Jesus - We do not see that mankind has the extended dominion of which the Psalmist speaks elsewhere. But we see the fulfillment of it in Jesus, who was crowned with glory and honor, and who has received a dominion that is superior to that of the angels. The point of this is, not that he suffered, and not that he tasted death for every man; but that "on account of this," or "as a reward" for thus suffering, he was crowned with glory and honor, and that he thus fulfilled all that David Psalm 8:1-9 had said of the dignity and honor of man. The object of the apostle is, to show that he was "exalted," and in order to this he shows why it was - to wit, because he had suffered death to redeem man; compare Philemon 2:8-9.

Who was made a little lower than the angels. - That is, as a man, or when on earth. His assumed rank was inferior to that of the angels. He took upon himself not the nature of angels Hebrews 2:16, but the nature of man. The apostle is probably here answering some implied objections to the rank which it was claimed that the Lord Jesus had, or which might be urged to the views which he was defending. These objections were mainly two. First, that Jesus was a man; and secondly, that he suffered and died. If that was the fact, it was natural to ask how he could be superior to the angels? How could he have had the rank which was claimed for him? This he answers by showing first, that his condition as a man was "voluntarily" assumed - "he was made lower than the angels;" and secondly, by showing that as a consequence of his sufferings and death, he was immediately crowned with glory and honor. This state of humiliation became him in the great work which he had undertaken, and he was immediately exalted to universal dominion, and as Mediator was raised to a rank far above the angels.

For the suffering of death. - Margin, "By." The meaning of the preposition rendered here "for" (διὰ diahere governing the accusative) is, "on account of;" that is, Jesus on account of the sufferings of death, or in virtue of that, was crowned with glory and honor. His crowning was the result of his condescension and sufferings; see notes, Philemon 2:8-9. It does not here mean, as our translation would seem to imply, that he was made a little lower than the angels in order to suffer death, but that as a reward for having suffered death he was raised up to the right hand of God.

Crowned with glory and honor. - That is, at the right hand of God. He was raised up to heaven; Acts 2:33; Mark 16:19. The meaning is, that he

was crowned with the highest honor on account of his sufferings; compare Philemon 2:8-9; Hebrews 12:2; Hebrews 5:7-9; Ephesians 1:20-23.

That he - . Or rather, "since he by the grace of God tasted death for every man." The sense is, that after he had thus tasted death, and as a consequence of it, he was thus exalted. The word rendered here "that" - ὅπως hopōs- means usually and properly "that, so that, in order that, to the end that," etc. But it may also mean "when, after that, after;" see the notes at Acts 3:19. This is the interpretation which is given by Prof. Stuart (in loc.), and this interpretation seems to be demanded by the connection. The general interpretation of the passage has been different. According to that, the sense is, "We see Jesus, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, so as that, by the grace of God, he might taste of death for every man;" see Robinson's Lexicon on the word ὅπως hopōsand Doddridge on the place. But it is natural to ask when Jesus was thus crowned with glory and honor? It was not before the crucifixion - for he was then poor and despised. The connection seems to require us to understand this of the glory to which he was exalted in heaven, and this was after his death, and could not be in order that he might taste of death. I am disposed, therefore, to regard this as teaching that the Lord Jesus was exalted to heaven in virtue of the atonement which he had made, and this accords with Philemon 2:8-9, and Hebrews 12:2. It accords both with "the fact" in the case, and with the design of the apostle in the argument before us.

By the grace of God - By the favor of God, or by his benevolent purpose toward people. It was not by any claim which man had, but was by his special favor.

Should taste death - Should die; or should experience death; see Matthew 16:28. Death seems to be represented as something bitter and unpalatable - something unpleasant - as an object may be to the taste. Or the language may be taken from a cup - since to experience calamity and sorrow is often represented as drinking a cup of woes; Psalm 11:6; Psalm 73:10; Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17; Matthew 20:22; Matthew 26:39.

For every man - For all - Ὑπὲρ παντὸς Huper pantos- for each and all - whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, high or low, elect or non-elect. How could words affirm more clearly that the atonement made by the Lord Jesus was unlimited in its nature and design? How can we express that idea in more clear or intelligible language? That this refers to the atonement is evident - for it says that he "tasted death" for them. The friends of the

doctrine of general atonement do not desire any other than Scripture language in which to express their belief. It expresses it exactly - without any need of modification or explanation. The advocates of the doctrine of limited atonement cannot thus use Scripture language to express their belief. They cannot incorporate it with their creeds that the Lord Jesus "tasted death for every man." They are compelled to modify it, to limit it, to explain it, in order to prevent error and misconception. But that system cannot be true which requires people to shape and modify the plain language of the Bible in order to keep people from error! compare the notes at 2 Corinthians 5:14, where this point is considered at length.

(With the author's views on the doctrine of atonement we accord in the main; yet are here tempted to ask if the advocates of universal atonement would not be under the like necessity, of explaining, modifying, or "extending," such passages as limit, or seem to limit, the atonement of Christ; and if in framing a creed, the advantage would not lie about equal on either side? Neither party would be contented to set down in it those scriptures which seemed least favorable to themselves without note or explanation. If this remark appears unjust, in as much as the universalist could admit into his creed, that "Christ laid down his life for the sheep," though at the same time he believed further, that he laid it down not for them only, nay, not for them in any special sense "more than for others;" let it be observed that the limitation could just as well admit into his, that "Christ tasted death for every man," or for all people, (Υπερ παντος Huper pantos) though he might believe further, not for all specially, not for all efficaciously, or with Prof. Stuart on the place, not for all universally, but "for all without distinction" that is, both Jew and Gentile. It is indeed difficult to say on which side explanation would be most needed.

In the case of the limited passage it would require to be observed first, that the atonement extended further than it intimated, and besides, that there was no special reference to the parties specified, the sheep, namely. There would be required, in truth, both extension and limitation, that is, if a creed were to be made, or a full view of opinion given. They seem to come nearest the truth on this subject, who deny neither the general nor special aspect of the atonement. On the one hand there is a large class of "universal passages," which cannot be satisfactorily explained on any other principle than what regards the atonement as a great remedial plan, that rendered it

consistent with the divine honor, to extend mercy to guilty people at large, and which would have been equally requisite had there been an intention to save one, or millions; numbers indeed not forming any part of the question. On the other hand, there is a large class of "special" texts, which cannot be explained without admitting, that while this atonement has reference to all, "yet God in providing it had a special design to save his people by it;" see the whole subject fully discussed, on the author's note referred to above, and in the supplementary note, on the same passages, which contains a digest of the more recent controversies on the point.)

Hence, learn Hebrews 2:6-9, from the incarnation of the Son of God, and his exaltation to heaven, what an honor has been conferred on human nature. When we look on the weakness and sinfulness of our race, we may well ask, what is man that God should honor him or regard him? He is the creature of a day. He is feeble and dying. He is lost and degraded. Compared with the universe at large, he is a speck, an atom. He has done nothing to deserve the divine favor or notice, and when we look at the race at large we can do it only with sentiments of the deepest humiliation and mortification. But when we looker human nature in the person of the Lord Jesus, we see it honored there to a degree that is commensurate with all our desires, and that fills us with wonder. We feel that it is an honor to human nature - that it has done much to elevate man - when we look on such a man as Howard or Washington. But how much more has that nature been honored in the person of the Lord Jesus!

(1) what an honor to us it was that he should take our nature into intimate union with himself - passing by the angelic hosts, and becoming a man!

(2) what an honor it was that human nature there was so pure and holy; that "man" - everywhere else so degraded and vile - "could" be seen to be noble, and pure, and godlike!

(3) what an honor it was that the divinity should speak to people in connection with human nature, and perform such wonderful works - that the pure precepts of religion should come forth from human lips - the great

doctrines of eternal life be uttered by “a man,” and that from human hands should go forth power to heal the sick and to raise the dead!

(4) what an honor to man it was that the atonement for sin should be made in his own nature, and that the universe should be attracted to that scene where one in our form, and with flesh and blood like our own, should perform that great work.

(5) what an honor it is to man that his own nature is exalted far above all heavens! That one in our form sits on the throne of the universe! That adoring angels fall prostrate before him! That to him is intrusted all power in heaven and on earth!

(6) what an honor to man that one in his nature should be appointed to judge the worlds! That one in our own form, and with a nature like ours, shall sit on the throne of judgment and pronounce the final doom on angels and human beings! Those assembled millions shall be constrained to bow before him, and receive their eternal doom from his hands! That prince and potentate - the illustrious dead of all past times, and the mighty men who are yet to live, shall all appear before him, and all receive from him there the sentence of their final destiny! I see, therefore, the most honor done to my nature as a man, not in the deeds of proud conquerors; not in the lives of sages and philanthropists; not in those who have carried their investigations farthest into the obscurities of matter and of mind; not in the splendid orators, poets, and historians of other times, or that now live - much as I may admire them, or feel it an honor to belong to a race which has produced such illustrious men - but in the fact that the Son of God has chosen a body like my own in which to dwell; in the inexpressible loveliness evinced in his pure morals, his benevolence, his blameless life; in the great deeds that he performed on earth; in the fact that it was this form that was chosen in which to make atonement for sin; in the honors that now cluster around him in heaven, and the glories that shall attend him when he shall come to judge the world.

“Princes to his imperial name.
Bend their bright scepters down;
Dominions, thrones, and powers rejoice,

To see him wear the crown.
“Archangels sound his lofty praise.
Through every heavenly street,
And lay their highest honors down,

Submissive at his feet.
“Those soft, those blessed feet of his,
That once rude iron tore -
High on a throne of light they stand,

And all the saints adore.
“His head, the dear, majestic head,
That cruel thorns did wound -
See - what immortal glories shine,

And circle it around!
“This is the Man, th‘ exalted Man,
Whom we, unseen, adore;
But when our eyes behold his face,
Our hearts shall love him more.”

Verse 10

For it became him - There was a fitness or propriety in it; it was such an arrangement as became God to make, in redeeming many, that the great agent by whom it was accomplished, should be made complete in all respects by sufferings. The apostle evidently means by this to meet an objection that might be offered by a Jew to the doctrine which he had been stating - an objection drawn from the fact that Jesus was a man of sorrows, and that his life was a life of affliction. This he meets by stating that there was a “fitness” and “propriety” in that fact. There was a reason for it - a reason drawn from the plan and character of God. It was fit, in the nature of the case, that he should be qualified to be “a complete” or “perfect Saviour” - a Saviour just adapted to the purpose undertaken, by sufferings. The “reasons” of this fitness, the apostle does not state. The amount of it probably was, that it became him as a Being of infinite benevolence; as one who wished to provide a perfect system of redemption, to subject his Son to such sufferings as should completely qualify him to be a Saviour for all people. This subjection to his humble condition, and to his many woes,

made him such a Saviour as man needed, and qualified him fully for his work. There was a propriety that he who should redeem the suffering and the lost should partake of their nature; identify himself with them; and share their woes, and the consequences of their sins.

For whom are all things - With respect to whose glory the whole universe was made; and with respect to whom the whole arrangement for salvation has been formed. The phrase is synonymous with "the Supreme Ruler;" and the idea is, that it became the Sovereign of the universe to provide a perfect scheme of salvation - even though it involved the humiliation and death of his own Son.

And by whom are all things - By whose agency everything is made. As it was by his agency, therefore, that the plan of salvation was entered into, there was a "fitness" that it should be perfect. It was not the work of fate or chance, and there was a propriety that the whole plan should bear the mark of the infinite wisdom of its Author.

In bringing many sons unto glory - To heaven. This was the plan - it was to bring many to heaven who should be regarded and treated as his sons. It was not a plan to save a few - but to save many. Hence, learn:

(1) that the plan was full of benevolence.

(2) no representation of the gospel should ever be made which will leave the impression that only a few, or a small part of the whole race, will be saved. There is no such representation in the Bible, and it should not be made. God intends, taking the whole race together, to save a large part of the human family. Few in ages that are past, it is true, may have been saved; few now are his friends and are traveling to heaven; but there are to be brighter days on earth. The period is to arrive when the gospel shall spread over all lands, and during that long period of the millennium, innumerable millions will be brought under its saving power, and be admitted to heaven. All exhibitions of the gospel are wrong which represent it as narrow in its design; narrow in its offer; and narrow in its result.

To make the captain of their salvation - The Lord Jesus, who is represented as the leader or commander of the army of the redeemed - "the sacramental host of God's elect." The word "captain" we apply now to an inferior officer - the commander of a "company" of soldiers. The Greek word - ἀρχηγὸς archēgos- is a more general term, and denotes, properly, the author or source of anything; then a leader, chief prince. In Acts 3:15, it is

rendered “prince” - “and killed the prince of life.” So in Acts 5:31. “Him hath God exalted to be a prince and a Saviour.” In Hebrews 12:2, it is rendered “author.” “Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith;” compare the notes at that place.

Perfect through sufferings - Complete by means of sufferings; that is, to render him wholly qualified for his work, so that he should be a Saviour just adapted to redeem man. This does not mean that he was sinful before and was made holy by his sufferings; nor that he was not in all respects a perfect man before; but it means, that by his sufferings he was made “wholly suited” to be a Saviour of people; and that, therefore, the fact of his being a suffering man was no evidence, as a Jew might have urged, that he was not the Son of God. There was a “completeness,” a “filling up,” of all which was necessary to his character as a Saviour, by the sufferings which he endured. We are made morally “better” by afflictions, if we receive them in a right manner - for we are sinful, and need to be purified in the furnace of affliction; Christ was not made “better,” for he was before perfectly holy, but he was completely endowed for the work which he came to do, by his sorrows. Nor does this mean here precisely that he was exalted to heaven as a “reward” for his sufferings, or that he was raised up to glory as a consequence of them - which was true in itself - but that he was rendered “complete” or “fully qualified” to be a Saviour by his sorrows. Thus, he was rendered complete:

(1)Because his suffering in all the forms that flesh is liable to, made him an example to all his people who shall pass through trials. They have before them a perfect model to show them how to bear afflictions. Had this not occurred, he could not have been regarded as a “complete” or “perfect” Saviour - that is, such a Saviour as we need.

(2)he is able to sympathize with them, and to succour them in their temptations, Hebrews 2:18.

(3)by his sufferings an atonement was made for sin. He would have been an “imperfect” Saviour - if the name “Saviour” could have been given to him at all - if he had not died to make an atonement for transgression. To render him “complete” as a Saviour, it was necessary that he should suffer and die; and when he hung on the cross in the agonies of death, he could appropriately say, “it is “finished.” The work is complete. All has been done that could be required to be done; and man may now have the assurance

that he has a perfect Saviour, perfect not only in moral character - but perfect in his work, and in his adaptedness to the condition of people;" compare Hebrews 5:8-9. See the note at Luke 13:32.

Verse 11

For both he that sanctifieth - This refers, evidently, to the Lord Jesus. The object is to show that there was such a union between him and those for whom he died, as to make it necessary that he should partake of the same nature, or that he should be a suffering man; Hebrews 2:14. he undertook to redeem and sanctify them. He called them brethren. He identified them with himself. There was, in the great work of redemption, a oneness between him and them, and hence, it was necessary that he should assume their nature - and the fact, therefore, that he appeared as a suffering "man," does not at all militate with the doctrine that he had a more exalted nature, and was even above the angels. Prof. Stuart endeavors to prove that the word "sanctify" here is used in the sense of, "to make expiation" or "atonement," and that the meaning is, "he who maketh expiation, and they for whom expiation is made."

Bloomfield gives the same sense to the word, as also does Rosenmuller. That the word may have such a signification it would be presumptuous in anyone to doubt, after the view which such people have taken of it; but it may be doubted whether this idea is necessary here. The word "sanctify" is a general term, meaning to make holy or pure; to consecrate, set apart, devote to God; to regard as holy, or to hallow. Applied to the Saviour here, it may be used in this general sense - that he consecrated, or devoted himself to God - as eminently "the consecrated" or "holy one" - the Messiah (compare the note at John 17:19); applied to his people, it may mean that they in like manner were the consecrated, the holy, the pure, on earth. There is a richness and fulness in the word when so understood which there is not when it is limited to the idea of expiation; and it seems to me that it is to be taken in its richest and fullest sense, and that the meaning is, "the great consecrated Messiah - the Holy One of God - and his consecrated and holy followers, are all of one." "All of one."

Of one family; spirit; Father; nature. Either of these significations will suit the connection, and some such idea must be understood. The meaning is, that they were united, or partook of something in common, so as to

constitute a oneness, or a brotherhood; and that since this was the case, there was a propriety in his taking their nature. It does not mean that they were originally of one nature or family; but that it was understood in the writings of the prophets that the Messiah should partake of the nature of his people, and that, "therefore," though he was more exalted than the angels, there was a propriety that he should appear in the human form; compare John 17:21.

For which cause - That is, because he is thus united with them, or has undertaken their redemption.

He is not ashamed - As it might be supposed that one so exalted and pure would be. It might have been anticipated that the Son of God would refuse to give the name "brethren" to those who were so humble, and sunken and degraded as those whom he came to redeem. But he is willing to be ranked with them, and to be regarded as one of their family.

To call them brethren - To acknowledge himself as of the same family, and to speak of them as his brothers. That is, "he is so represented as speaking of them in the prophecies respecting the Messiah" - for this interpretation the argument of the apostle demands. It was material for him to show that he was so represented in the Old Testament. This he does in the following verses.

Verse 12

Saying - This passage is found in Psalm 22:22. The whole of that Psalm has been commonly referred to the Messiah; and in regard to such a reference there is less difficulty than attends most of the other portions of the Old Testament that are usually supposed to relate to him. The following verses of the Psalm are applied to him, or to transactions connected with him, in the New Testament, Hebrews 2:1, Hebrews 2:8, Hebrews 2:18; and the whole Psalm is so strikingly descriptive of his condition and sufferings, that there can be no reasonable doubt that it had an original reference to him. There is much in the Psalm that cannot be well applied to David; there is nothing which cannot be applied to the Messiah; and the proof seems to be clear that Paul quoted this passage in accordance with the original sense of the Psalm. The point of the quotation here is not that he would "declare the name" of God - but that he gave the name brethren to those whom he addressed.

I will declare thy name - I will make thee known. The word "name" is used, as it often is, to denote God himself. The meaning is, that it would be

a part of the Messiah‘s work to make known to his disciples the character and perfections of God - or to make them acquainted with God. He performed this. In his parting prayer John 17:6, he says, “I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world.” And again, Hebrews 2:26, “And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it.”

Unto my brethren - The point of the quotation is in this. He spoke of them as “brethren.” Paul is showing that he was not ashamed to call them such. As he was reasoning with those who had been “Jews,” and as it was necessary as a part of his argument to show that what he maintained respecting the Messiah was found in the Old Testament, he makes his appeal to that, and shows that the Redeemer is represented as addressing his people as “brethren.” It would have been easy to appeal to “facts,” and to have shown that the Redeemer used that term familiarly in addressing his disciples, (compare Matthew 12:48-49; Matthew 25:40; Matthew 28:10; Luke 8:21; John 20:17), but that would not have been pertinent to his object. It is full proof to us, however, that the prediction in the Psalm was literally fulfilled.

In the midst of the church - That is, in the assembly of my brethren. The point of the proof urged by the apostle lies in the first part of the quotation. This latter part seems to have been adduced because it might assist their memory to have the whole verse quoted; or because it contained an interesting truth respecting the Redeemer - though not precisely a “proof” of what he was urging; or because it “implied” substantially the same truth as the former member. It shows that he was united with his church; that he was one of them; and that he mingled with them as among brethren.

Will I sing praise - That the Redeemer united with his disciples in singing praise, we may suppose to have been in the highest degree probable - though, I believe, but a single case is mentioned - that at the close of the Supper which he instituted to commemorate his death; Matthew 26:30. This, therefore, proves what the apostle intended - that the Messiah was among them as his brethren - that he spoke to them as such - and mingled in their devotions as one of their number.

Verse 13

And again - That is, it is said in another place, or language is used of the Messiah in another place, indicating the confidence which he put in

God, and showing that he partook of the feelings of the children of God, and regarded himself as one of them.

I will put my trust in him - I will confide in God; implying:

(1) asense of dependence on God; and,

(2) confidence in him. It is with reference to the former idea that the apostle seems to use it here - as denoting a condition where there was felt to be need of divine aid. His object is to show that he took part with his people, and regarded them as brethren - and the purpose of this quotation seems to be to show that he was in such a situation as to make an expression of dependence proper. He was one with his people, and shared their "dependence" and their piety - using language which showed that he was identified with them, and could mingle with the tenderest sympathy in all their feelings. It is not certain from what place this passage is quoted. In Psalm 18:2, and the corresponding passage in 2 Samuel 22:3, the Hebrew is אחסה־בו echacah bow- "I will trust in him;" but this Psalm has never been regarded as having any reference to the Messiah, even by the Jews, and it is difficult to see how it could be considered as having any relation to him. Most critics, therefore, as Rosenmuller, Calvin, Koppe, Bloomfield, Stuart, etc., regard the passage as taken from Isaiah 8:17. The reasons for this are:

(1)that the words are the same in the Septuagint as in the Epistle to the Hebrews;

(2)the apostle quotes the next verse immediately as applicable to the Messiah;

(3)no other place occurs where the same expression is found.

The Hebrew in Isaiah 8:17, is וקויתי־לו weqiwweytiy-low- "I will wait for him," or I will trust in him - rendered by the Septuagint πεποιθὼς ἔσομαι ἐπ᾽αὐτῶ pepoithōs esomai ep'autō- the same phrase precisely as is used by Paul - and there can be no doubt that he meant to quote it here. The sense in Isaiah is, that he had closed his message to the people; he had been directed to seal up the testimony; he had exhorted the nation to repent, but he had done it in vain; and he had now nothing to do but to put his trust in the Lord, and commit the whole cause to him. His only hope was in God; and he calmly and confidently committed his cause to him. Paul evidently designs to refer this to the Messiah; and the sense as applied to him is, "The Messiah in using this language expresses himself as a man. It is people who

exercise dependence on God; and by the use of this language he speaks as one who had the nature of man, and who expressed the feelings of the pious, and showed that he was one of them, and that he regarded them as brethren." There is not much difficulty in the "argument" on the passage; for it is seen that in such language he must speak as "a man," or as one having human nature; but the main difficulty is on the question how this and the verse following can be applied to the Messiah? In the prophecy, they seem to refer solely to Isaiah, and to be expressive of his feelings alone - the feelings of a man who saw little encouragement in his work, and who having done all that he could do, at last put his sole trust in God. In regard to this difficult, and yet unsettled question, the reader may consult my Introduction to Isaiah, section 7. The following remarks may serve in part to remove the difficulty.

(1) the passage in Isaiah Isaiah 8:17-18, occurs "in the midst" of a number of predictions relating to the Messiah - preceded and followed by passages that had an ultimate reference undoubtedly to him; see Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 8:8; Isaiah 9:1-7, and the notes at those passages.

(2) the language, if used of Isaiah, would as accurately and fitly express the feelings and the condition of the Redeemer. There was such a remarkable similarity in the circumstances that the same language would express the condition of both. Both had delivered a solemn message to people; both had come to exhort them to turn to God, and to put their trust in him and both with the same result. The nation had disregarded them alike, and now their only hope was to confide in God, and the language used here would express the feelings of both - "I will trust in God. I will put confidence in him, and look to him."

(3) there can be little doubt that in the time of Paul this passage was regarded by the Jews as applicable to the Messiah. This is evident, because:

(a)Paul would not have so quoted it as a "proof text" unless it would be admitted to have such a reference by those to whom he wrote; and,

(b)because in Romans 9:32-33, it is evident that the passage in Isaiah 8:14, is regarded as having reference to the Messiah, and as being so admitted by the Jews. It is true that this may be considered merely as an argument "ad hominem" - or an argument from what was admitted by those with whom he was reasoning, without vouching for the precise accuracy of the manner in which the passage was applied - but that method of argument

is admitted elsewhere, and why should we not expect to find the sacred writers reasoning as other people do, and especially as was common in their own times?

(Yet the integrity of the apostle would seem to demand, that he argue not only "ex concessis," but "ex veris." We cannot suppose for a moment, that the sacred writers (whatever others might do), would take advantage of erroneous admissions. We would rather expect them to correct these. Proceed upon them, they could not; see the supplementary note on Hebrews 1:5. Without the help of this defense, what the author has otherwise alleged here, is enough to vindicate the use the apostle has made of the passage; see also the note on Hebrews 2:6.)

The apostle is showing them that according to "their own Scriptures," and in accordance with principles which they themselves admitted, it was necessary that the Messiah should be a man and a sufferer; that he should be identified with his people, and be able to use language which would express that condition. In doing this, it is not remarkable that he should apply to him language which "they" admitted to belong to him, and which would accurately describe his condition.

(4) it is not necessary to suppose that the passage in Isaiah had an original and primary reference to the Messiah. It is evident from the whole passage that it had not. There was a "primary" reference to Isaiah himself, and to his children as being emblems of certain truths. But still, there was a strong "resemblance," in certain respects, between his feelings and condition and those of the Messiah. There was such a resemblance that the one would not unaptly symbolize the other. There was such a resemblance that the mind - probably of the prophet himself, and of the people - would look forward to the more remote but similar event - the coming and the circumstances of the Messiah. So strong was this resemblance, and so much did the expressions of the prophet here agree with his declarations elsewhere pertaining to the Messiah, that in the course of time they came to be regarded as relating to him in a very important sense, and as destined to have their complete fulfillment when he should come. As such they seem to have been used in the time of Paul; and no one can prove that the application was improper. Who can demonstrate that God did not "intend" that those transactions referred to by Isaiah should be designed as symbols of what would occur in the time of the Redeemer? They were certainly symbolical actions - for they are expressly so said to have been by Isaiah

himself Isaiah 8:18, and none can demonstrate that they might not have had an ultimate reference to the Redeemer.

And again - In another verse, or in another declaration; to wit, Isaiah 8:18.

Behold I and the children which God hath given me - This is only a part of the passage in Isaiah, and seems to have been partially quoted because the "point" of the quotation consisted in the fact that he sustained to them somewhat of the relation of a parent toward his children - as having the same "nature," and being identified with them in interest and feeling. As it is used by Isaiah, it means that he and his children were "for signs and emblems" to the people of his time - to communicate and confirm the will of God, and to be pledges of the divine favor and protection; see the notes at the passage in Isaiah. As applied to the Messiah, it means that he unstained to his people a relation so intimate that they could be addressed and regarded as his children. They were of one family; one nature. He became one of them, and had in them all the interest which a father has in his sons. He had, therefore, a nature like ours; and though he was exalted above the angels, yet his relation to man was like the most tender and intimate earthly connections, showing that he took part in the same nature with them. The "point" is, that he was a man; that since those who were to be redeemed partook of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same Hebrews 2:14, and thus identified himself with them.

Verse 14

Forasmuch then - Since; or because.

As the children - Those who were to become the adopted children of God; or who were to sustain that relation to him.

Are partakers of flesh and blood - Have a human and not an angelic nature. Since they are men, he became a man. There was a fitness or propriety that he should partake of their nature; see the 1 Corinthians 15:50 note; Matthew 16:17 note.

He also himself, … - He also became a man, or partook of the same nature with them; see the notes at John 1:14.

That through death - By dying. It is implied here:

(1)that the work which he undertook of destroying him that had the power of death, was to be accomplished by "his own dying;" and,

(2)that in order to this, it was necessary that he should be a man. An angel does not die, and therefore he did not take on him the nature of

angels; and the Son of God in his divine nature could not die, and therefore he assumed a form in which he could die - that of a man. In that nature the Son of God could taste of death; and thus he could destroy him that had the power of death.

He might destroy - That he might "subdue," or that he might overcome him, and "destroy" his dominion. The word "destroy" here is not used in the sense of "closing life," or of "killing," but in the sense of bringing into subjection, or crushing his power. This is the work which the Lord Jesus came to perform - to destroy the kingdom of Satan in the world, and to set up another kingdom in its place. This was understood by Satan to be his object: see the Matthew 8:29 note; Mark 1:24 note.

That had the power of death - I understand this as meaning that the devil was the cause of death in this world. He was the means of its introduction, and of its long and melancholy reign. This does not "affirm" anything of his power of inflicting death in particular instances - whatever may be true on that point - but that "death" was a part of his dominion; that he introduced it; that he seduced man from God, and led on the train of woes which result in death. He also made it terrible. Instead of being regarded as falling asleep, or being looked on without alarm, it becomes under him the means of terror and distress. What "power" Satan may have in inflicting death in particular instances no one can tell. The Jewish Rabbis speak much of Sammael, "the angel of death" - מלאך המות mal'aak hamuwt- who they supposed had the control of life, and was the great messenger employed in closing it.

The Scriptures, it is believed, are silent on that point. But that Satan was the means of introducing "death into the world, and all our woe," no one can doubt; and over the whole subject, therefore, he may be said to have had power. To "destroy" that dominion: to rescue man; to restore him to life; to place him in a world where death is unknown; to introduce a state of things where "not another one would ever die," was the great purpose for which the Redeemer came. What a noble object! What enterprise in the universe has been so grand and noble as this! Surely an undertaking that contemplates the annihilation of death; that designs to bring this dark dominion to an end, is full of benevolence, and commends itself to every man as worthy of his profound attention and gratitude. What woes are caused by death in this world! They are seen everywhere. The earth is "arched with graves." In almost every dwelling death has been doing his

work of misery. The palace cannot exclude him; and he comes unbidden into the cottage. He finds his way to the dwelling of ice in which the Esquimaux and the Greenlander live; to the tent of the Bedouin Arab, and the wandering Tartar; to the wigwam of the Indian, and to the harem of the Turk; to the splendid mansion of the rich, as well as to the abode of the poor. That reign of death has now extended near 6,000 years, and will travel on to future times - meeting each generation, and consigning the young, the vigorous, the lovely, and the pure, to dust. Shall that gloomy reign continue forever? Is there no way to arrest it? Is there no place where death can be excluded? Yes: heaven - and the object of the Redeemer is to bring us there.

Verse 15

And deliver them - Not all of them "in fact," though the way is open for all. This deliverance relates:

(1) to the dread of death. He came to free them from that.

(2) from death itself - that is, ultimately to bring them to a world where death shall be unknown. The dread of death may be removed by the work of Christ, and they who had been subject to constant alarms on account of it may be brought to look on it with calmness and peace; and ultimately they will be brought to a world where it will be wholly unknown. The dread of death is taken away, or they are delivered from that, because:

(a)the cause of that dread - to wit, sin, is removed; see the notes at 1 Corinthians 15:54-55.

(b)Because they are enabled to look to the world beyond with triumphant joy.

Death conducts them to heaven. A Christian has nothing to fear in death; nothing beyond the grave. In no part of the universe has he any thing to dread, for God is his friend, and he will be his Protector everywhere. On the dying bed; in the grave; on the way up to the judgment; at the solemn tribunal; and in the eternal world, he is under the eye and the protection of his Saviour - and of what should he be afraid?

Who through fear of death - From the dread of dying - that is, whenever they think of it, and they think of it "so often" as to make them slaves of that fear. This obviously means the natural dread of dying, and not particularly the fear of punishment beyond. It is that indeed which often gives its principal terror to the dread of death, but still the apostle refers here evidently to natural death - as an object which people fear. All men

have, by nature, this dread of dying - and perhaps some of the inferior creation have it also. It is certain that it exists in the heart of every man, and that God has implanted it there for some wise purpose. There is the dread:

(1)of the dying pang, or pain.

(2)Of the darkness and gloom of mind that attends it.

(3)of the unknown world beyond - the "evil that we know not of."

(4)of the chilliness, and loneliness, and darkness of the grave.

(5)of the solemn trial at the bar of God.

(6)of the condemnation which awaits the guilty - the apprehension of future wo. There is no other evil that we fear so much as we do death - and there is nothing more clear than that God intended that we should have a dread of dying.

The reasons why he designed this are equally clear:

(1)One may have been to lead people to prepare for it - which otherwise they would neglect.

(2)another, to "deter them from committing self-murder" - where nothing else would deter them.

Facts have shown that it was necessary that there should be some strong principle in the human bosom to prevent this crime - and even the dread of death does not always do it. So sick do people become of the life that God gave them; so weary of the world; so overwhelmed with calamity; so oppressed with disappointment and cares, that they lay violent hands on themselves, and rush unbidden into the awful presence of their Creator. This would occur more frequently by far than it now does, if it were not for the salutary fear of death which God has implanted in every bosom. The feelings of the human heart; on this subject were never more accurately or graphically drawn than in the celebrated Soliloquy of Hamlet:

- To die; - to sleep -
No more; - and by a sleep, to say we end.
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks.

That flesh is heir to, - ‹tis a consummation.

Devoutly to be wished. To die - to sleep -

To sleep: - perchance to dream; - ay, there‘s the rub;

For in that deep of death what dreams may come,

When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,

Must give us pause: - there‘s the respect.

That makes calamity of so long a life:

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,

The oppressor‘s wrong, the proud man‘s contumely,

The pangs of despised love, the law‘s delay,

The insolence of office, and the spurns.

That patient merit of the unworthy takes,

When he himself might his quietus make.

With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,

To grunt and sweat under a weary life;

But that the dread of something after death,

The undiscovered country from whose bourne.

No traveler returns, puzzles the will;

And makes us rather bear those ills we have,

Than fly to others that we know not of?

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,

And thus the native hue of resolution.

Is sicklied o‘er with the pale cast of thought;

And enterprises of great pith and moment.

With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.

God planned that man should be deterred from rushing uncalled into His awful presence, by this salutary dread of death - and his implanting this feeling in the human heart is one of the most striking and conclusive proofs of a moral government over the world. This instinctive dread of death can be overcome only by religion - and then man does not need it to reconcile him to life. He becomes submissive to trials. He is willing to bear all that is laid on him. He resigns himself to the dispensations of Providence, and feels that life, even in affliction, is the gift of God, and is a valuable endowment. He now dreads “self-murder” as a crime of deep dye, and religion restrains him and keeps him by a more mild and salutary restraint than the dread of death. The man who has true religion is willing to live or to die; he feels that life is the gift of God, and that he will take it away in the best time and manner; and feeling this, he is willing to leave all in his hands. We may remark:

(1) How much do we owe to religion! It is the only thing that will effectually take away the dread of death, and yet secure this point - to make man willing to live in all the circumstances where God may place him. It is possible that philosophy or stoicism may remove to a great extent the dread of death - but then it will be likely to make man willing to take his life if he is placed in trying circumstances. Such an effect it had on Cato in Utica; and such an effect it had on Hume, who maintained that suicide was lawful, and that to turn a current of blood from its accustomed channel was of no more consequence than to change the course of any other fluid!

(2) in what a sad condition is the sinner! There are thousands who never think of death with composure, and who all their life long are subject to

bondage through the fear of it. They never think of it if they can avoid it; and when it is forced upon them, it fills them with alarm. They attempt to drive the thought away. They travel; they plunge into business; they occupy the mind with trifles; they drown their fears in the intoxicating bowl: but all this tends only to make death more terrific and awful when the reality comes. If man were wise, he would seek an interest in that religion which, if it did nothing else, would deliver him from the dread of death; and the influence of the gospel in this respect, if it exerted no other, is worth to a man all the sacrifices and self-denials which it would ever require.

All their life-time subject to bondage - Slaves of fear; in a depressed and miserable condition, like slaves under a master. They have no freedom; no comfort; no peace. From this miserable state Christ comes to deliver man. Religion enables him to look calmly on death and the judgment, and to feel that all will be well.

Verse 16

For verily - Truly.

He took not on him the nature of angels - Margin, "He taketh not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold." The word used here - ἐπιλαμβάνεται epilambanetai- means, to take hold upon; to seize; to surprise; to take hold with a view to detain for oneself. Robinson. Then it means to take hold of one as by the hand - with a view to aid, conduct, or succour; Mark 8:23; Acts 23:19. It is rendered "took," Mark 8:23; Luke 9:47; Luke 14:4; Acts 9:27; Acts 17:19; Acts 18:17; Acts 21:30, Acts 21:33; Acts 23:19; Hebrews 8:9; "caught," Matthew 14:31; Acts 16:19; "take hold," Luke 20:20, Luke 20:26; "lay hold," and "laid hold," Luke 23:26; 1 Timothy 6:12. The general idea is that of seizing upon, or laying hold of anyone - no matter what the object is - whether to aid, or to drag to punishment, or simply to conduct. Here it means to lay hold with reference to "aid," or "help;" and the meaning is, that he did not seize the nature of angels, or take it to himself with reference to rendering "them" aid, but he assumed the nature of man - in order to aid "him." He undertook the work of human redemption, and consequently it was necessary for him to be man.

But he took on him the seed of Abraham - He came to help the descendants of Abraham, and consequently, since they were men, he became a man. Writing to Jews, it was not unnatural for the apostle to refer particularly to them as the descendants of Abraham, though this does not exclude the idea that he died for the whole human race. It was true that he

came to render aid to the descendants of Abraham, but it was also true that he died for all. The fact that I love one of my children, and that I make provision for his education, and tell him so, does not exclude the idea that I love the others also - and that I may make to them a similar appeal when it shall be proper.

Verse 17

Wherefore in all things - In respect to his body; his soul; his rank and character. There was a propriety that he should be like them, and should partake of their nature. The meaning is, that there was a fitness that nothing should be wanting in him in reference to the innocent propensities and sympathies of human nature.

It behoved him - It became him; or there was a fitness and propriety in it. The reason why it was proper, the apostle proceeds to state.

Like unto his brethren - Like unto those who sustained to him the relation of brethren; particularly as he undertook to redeem the descendants of Abraham, and as he was a descendant of Abraham himself, there was a propriety that he should be like them. He calls them brethren; and it was proper that he should show that he regarded them as such by assuming their nature.

That he might be a merciful and faithful high priest -

(1) That he might be "merciful;" that is, compassionate. That he might know how to pity us in our infirmities and trials, by having a nature like our own.

(2) that he might be "faithful;" that is, perform with fidelity all the functions pertaining to the office of high priest. The idea is, that it was needful that he should become a man; that he should experience as we do the infirmities and trials of life, and that by being a man, and partaking of all that pertained to man except his sins, he might feel how necessary it was that there should be "fidelity" in the office of high priest. Here was a race of sinners and sufferers. They were exposed to the wrath of God. They were liable to everlasting punishment. The judgment impended over the race, and the day of vengeance hastened on. "All now depended on the great high priest." All their hope Was in his "fidelity" to the great office which he had undertaken. If he were faithful, all would be safe; if he were unfaithful, all would be lost. Hence, the necessity that he should enter fully into the feelings, fears, and dangers of man; that he should become one of the race

and be identified with them, so that he might be qualified to perform with faithfulness the great trust committed to him.

High priest - The Jewish high priest was the successor of Aaron, and was at the head of the ministers of religion among the Jews. He was set apart with solemn ceremonies - clad in his sacred vestments - and anointed with oil; Exodus 29:5-9; Leviticus 8:2. He was by his office the general judge of all that pertained to religion, and even of the judicial affairs of the Jewish nation; Deuteronomy 17:8-12; Deuteronomy 19:17; Deuteronomy 21:5; Deuteronomy 33:9-10. He only had the privilege of entering the most holy place once a year, on the great day of expiation, to make atonement for the sins of the whole people; Leviticus 16:2, etc. He was the oracle of truth - so that when clothed in his proper vestments, and having on the Urim and Thummim, he made known the will of God in regard to future events. The Lord Jesus became in the Christian dispensation what the Jewish high priest was in the old; and an important object of this Epistle is to show that he far surpassed the Jewish high priest, and in what respects the Jewish high priest was designed to typify the Redeemer. Paul, therefore, early introduces the subject, and shows that the Lord Jesus came to perform the functions of that sacred office, and that he was eminently endowed for it.

In things pertaining to God - In offering sacrifice; or in services of a religious nature. The great purpose was to offer sacrifice, and make intercession; and the idea is, that Jesus took on himself our nature that he might sympathize with us; that thus he might be faithful to the great trust committed to him - the redemption of the world. Had he been unfaithful, all would have been lost, and the world would have sunk down to wo.

To make reconciliation - By his death as a sacrifice. The word used here - ἱλάσκομαι hilaskomai- occurs but in one other place in the New Testament Luke 18:13, where it is rendered "God be merciful to me a sinner;" that is, reconciled to me. The noun (ἱλασμός hilasmos- "propitiation") is used in 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10. The word here means properly to "appease," to reconcile, to conciliate; and hence, to "propitiate" as to "sins;" that is, to propitiate God in reference to sins, or to render him propitious. The Son of God became a man, that he might so fully enter into the feelings of the people as to be faithful, and that he might be qualified as a high priest to perform the great work of rendering God propitious in regard to sins. How he did this, is fully shown in the subsequent parts of the Epistle.

Verse 18

For in that he himself … - "Because" he has suffered, he is able to sympathize with sufferers.

Being tempted - Or, being "tried." The Greek word used here is more general in its meaning than the English word "tempted." It means to "put to the proof;" to try the nature or character of; and this may be done either:

(1)by subjecting a person to "afflictions" or "sufferings" that his true character may be tried - that it may be seen whether he has sincere piety and love to God; or.

(2)by allowing one to fall into "temptation," properly so called - where some strong inducement to evil is presented to the mind, and where it becomes thus a "trial" of virtue.

The Saviour was subjected to both these in as severe a form as was ever presented to people. His sufferings surpassed all others; and the temptations of Satan (see Colossians 1:24; Philemon 3:10); and,

(2)they are thus enabled to be far more extensively useful.

Many a minister owes a large part of his usefulness to the fact that he has been much afflicted; and for those afflictions, therefore, he should unfeignedly thank God. The idea which is here expressed by the apostle - that one is enabled to sympathize with others from having himself suffered, was long since beautifully expressed by Virgil:

"Me quoque per multos similis fortuna labores,
Jactatam, hac demum voluit consistere terra.
Non ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco.
Aeneid I. 628.
"For I myself like you have been distressed,
Till heaven afforded me this place of rest:
Like you, an alien in a land unknown,

I learn to pity woes so like my own.
- *Dryden.*

Jesus is thus able to alleviate the sufferer. In all our temptations and trials let us remember:

(1) that he suffered more - infinitely more - than we can do, and that in all our sorrows we shall never reach what he endured. We enter no region of trial where he has not gone beyond us; we tread no dark and gloomy way where he has not gone before us.

(2) that he is to us “a brother,” for he “is not ashamed to call us brethren.” He had a nature like ours; he condescended to appear as one of our race, with all the innocent propensities and passions of a man. What matchless condescension! And what an honor for us to be permitted to address him as an “older brother,” and to know that he feels a deep sympathy in our woes!

(3) let us then, in all times of affliction, look to him. Go not, suffering Christian, to philosophy; attempt not to deaden your feelings by the art of the Stoic; but go at once to the Saviour - the great, sympathizing High Priest, who is able to succour you - and rest your burdens on him.

“His heart is made of tenderness,
His soul is filled with love.
“Touch‘d with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame;
He knows what sore temptations mean,
For he has felt the same.
“Then let our humble faith address.
His mercy and his power;
We shall obtain delivering grace,
In every trying hour.”

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

In Hebrews 4:13, relates to the first of these points, and is occupied with showing the superiority of the Redeemer to Moses, and the consequences which result from the admission of that fact. It consists, therefore, of two parts.

I. The first is employed in showing that if the Author of the Christian religion is compared with Moses, he has the preference; Hebrews 3:1-6. Moses was indeed faithful, but it was "as a servant." Christ was faithful, "as a son." He had a rank as much above that of Moses as one who builds a house has over the house itself.

II. The consequences that resulted from that; Hebrews 3:7-19, and Hebrews 4:1-13. The general doctrine here is, that there would be special danger in apostatizing from the Christian religion - danger far superior to that which was threatened to the Israelites if they were disobedient to Moses. In illustrating this, the apostle is naturally led to a statement of the warnings against defection under Moses, and of the consequences of unbelief and rebellion there. He entreats them, therefore,

(1)not to harden their hearts against God, as the Israelites did, who were excluded from Canaan; Hebrews 3:7-11.

(2)to be on their guard against unbelief; Hebrews 2:12.

(3)to exhort one another constantly, and to stimulate one another, that they might not fall away; Hebrews 2:13.

(4)to hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end, and not to provoke God as they did who came out of Egypt; Hebrews 3:14-19.

In the following chapter Hebrews 3:1-13 he completes the exhortation, by showing them that many who came out of Egypt were excluded from the promised land, and that there was equal danger now; and then proceeds with the comparison of Christ with the Jewish high priest, and extends that comparison through the remainder of the doctrinal part of the Epistle.

Verse 1

Wherefore - That is, since Christ sustains such a character as has been stated in the previous chapter; since he is so able to succour those who need assistance; since he assumed our nature that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, his character ought to be attentively considered, and we ought to endeavor fully to understand it.

Holy brethren - The name "brethren" is often given to Christians to denote that they are of one family. It is "possible," also, that the apostle may have used the word here in a double sense - denoting that they were his brethren as "Christians," and as "Jews." The word "holy" is applied to them to denote that they were set apart to God, or that they were sanctified. The Jews were often called a "holy people," as being consecrated to God; and Christians are holy, not only as consecrated to God, but as sanctified.

Partakers of the heavenly calling - On the meaning of the word "calling," see the notes at Ephesians 4:1. The "heavenly calling" denotes the calling which was given to them from heaven, or which was of a heavenly nature. It pertained to heaven, not to earth; it came from heaven, not from earth; it was a calling to the reward and happiness of heaven, and not to the pleasures and honors of the world.

Consider - Attentively ponder all that is said of the Messiah. Think of his rank; his dignity; his holiness; his sufferings; his death; his resurrection, ascension, intercession. Think of him that you may see the claims to a holy life; that you may learn to bear trials; that you may be kept from apostasy. The character and work of the Son of God are worthy of the profound and prayerful consideration of every man; and especially every Christian should reflect much on him. Of the friend that we love we think much; but what friend have we like the Lord Jesus?

The apostle - The word "apostle" is nowhere else applied to the Lord Jesus. The word means one who "is sent" - and in this sense it might be applied to the Redeemer as one "sent" by God, or as by way of eminence the one sent by him. But the connection seems to demand that; there should be some allusion here to one who sustained a similar rank among the Jews; and it is probable that the allusion is to Moses, as having been the great apostle of God to the Jewish people, and that Paul here means to say, that the Lord Jesus, under the new dispensation, filled the place of Moses and of the high priest under the old, and that the office of "apostle" and "high priest," instead of being now separated, as it was between Moses and Aaron under the old dispensation, was now blended in the Messiah. The name

“apostle” is not indeed given to Moses directly in the Old Testament, but the verb from which the Hebrew word for apostle is derived is frequently given him. Thus, in Exodus 3:10, it is said, “Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh.” And in Hebrews 3:13, “The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you.” So also in Hebrews 3:14-15, of the same chapter. From the word there used - שׁלח shaalach- “to send.” The word denoting “apostle” - שׁליח shaliyach- is derived; and it is not improbable that Moses would be regarded as being by way of eminence the one “sent” by God. Further, the Jews applied the word ” - שׁליח shaliyach- “apostle,” to the minister of the synagogue; to him who presided over its affairs, and who had the general charge of the services there; and in this sense it might be applied by way of eminence to Moses as being the general director and controller of the religious affairs of the nation, and as “sent” for that purpose. The object of Paul is to show that the Lord Jesus in the Christian system - as the great apostle sent from God - sustained a rank and office similar to this, but superior in dignity and authority.

And High Priest - One great object of this Epistle is to compare the Lord Jesus with the high priest of the Jews, and to show that he was in all respects superior. This was important, because the office of high priest was what eminently distinguished the Jewish religion, and because the Christian religion proposed to abolish that. It became necessary, therefore, to show that all that was dignified and valuable in that office was to be found in the Christian system. This was done by showing that in the Lord Jesus was found all the characteristics of a high priest, and that all the functions which had been performed in the Jewish ritual were performed by him, and that all which had been prefigured by the Jewish high priest was fulfilled in him. The apostle here merely alludes to him, or names him as the high priest, and then postpones the consideration of his character in that respect until after he had compared him with Moses.

Of our profession - Of our religion; of that religion which we profess. The apostle and high priest whom we confessed as ours when we embraced the Christian religion.

Verse 2

Who was faithful - see the note, Hebrews 2:17. He performed with fidelity all the functions entrusted to him.

To him that appointed him - Margin, “made.” The word “made,” however, is used in the sense of constituted, or appointed. The meaning is,

that he was faithful to God. Perhaps Paul urges on them the necessity of considering "his fidelity" in order to keep "them" from the danger of apostasy. A leading object of this Epistle was to preserve those whom he had addressed from apostatizing from God amidst the temptations and trials to which they were exposed. In doing this, what could be a more powerful argument than to direct their attention to the unwavering constancy and fidelity of the Lord Jesus? The "importance" of such a virtue in the Saviour is manifest. It is seen everywhere; and all the great interests of the world depend on it. A husband should maintain inviolate fidelity toward a wife, and a wife toward her husband; a child should be faithful to a parent, a clerk and apprentice to his employer, a lawyer to his client, a physician to his patient, an ambassador to the government that commissions him.

No matter what may be the temptations in the way, in all these, and in all other relations, there should be inviolate fidelity. The welfare of the world depended on the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus. Had he failed in that, all would have been lost. His fidelity was worthy of the more attentive consideration from the numerous temptations which beset his path, and the attempts which were made to turn him aside from his devotedness to God. Amidst all the temptations of the adversary, and all the trials through which he passed, he never for a moment swerved from fidelity to the great trust which had been committed to his hands. What better example to preserve them from the temptations to apostasy could the apostle propose to the Christians whom he addressed? What, in these temptations and trials, could be more appropriate than for them to consider the example of the great apostle and high priest of their profession? What more proper for us now in the trials and temptations of our lives, than to keep that great and glorious example continually before our eyes?

As also Moses was faithful - Fidelity to God was remarkable in Moses. In all the provocations and rebellions of the Jews, he was firm and unwavering. This is affirmed of him in Numbers 12:7, to which place the apostle here alludes, "My servant, Moses, is not so, who is faithful in all his house." The word "house," as applied to Moses, is used probably in the sense of "family," as it often is, and refers to the "family" over which he presided - that is, the Jewish nation. The whole Jewish people were a "household," or the family of God, and Moses was appointed to preside over it, and was faithful in the functions of his office there.

Verse 3

For this man - The Lord Jesus. The word "man" is understood, but there can be no doubt that he is referred to.

Was counted more worthy - Was more worthy; or is more worthy. The word used here does not refer to anything that had been said of him, or to any estimate which had been made of him. It means simply that he was worthy of more honor than Moses. how he was so, Paul proceeds to show.

Of more glory - - δόξης doxēsHonor, dignity, regard. He really had a higher rank, and was worthy of more respect. This was saying much for the Messiah, and that it was proper to say this, Paul proceeds to show. He did not attempt in any way to undervalue Moses and his institutions. He gave him all the honor which the Jews were themselves disposed to render him. He admitted that he had been eminently faithful in the station where God had placed him; and he then proceeds to show that the Lord Jesus was entitled to honor superior to that, and that hence the Christian religion had more to attach its friends to it than the Jewish had.

Inasmuch as he who hath builded the house - The idea here is, either that he who is the maker of a house - the architect - is worthy of more respect than the house itself; or that he who is the founder of a family is worthy of more honor than the family of which he is the founder. It seems to me that the former is the meaning - for the latter is not always true. The founder of a family may be really deserving of much less respect than some of his descendants. But it is always true that the architect is worthy of more respect than the house which he makes. He exhibits intellect and skill. The house, however splendid, has neither. The plan of the house was drawn by him; its beauty, its proportions, its ornaments, are what he made them, and but for him they would not have existed. Michelangelo was worthy of more honor than "St. Peter's Cathedral" at Rome; and Sir Christopher Wren worthy of more than "St. Paul's Cathedral" at London. Galileo is worthy of more praise than the telescope, and Fulton more than a steam-engine. All the evidence of skill and adaptedness that there is in the invention had its origin in the inventor all the beauty of the statue or the temple had its origin in the mind of him that designed it. An author is worthy of more honor than a book; and he that forms a work of art is worthy of more respect than the work itself. This is the idea here. Paul assumes that all things owed their origin to the Son of God; Hebrews 1:2, Hebrews 1:8, Hebrews 1:10. He was the author of the universe; the source of all wise and well-founded systems; the originator of the Jewish dispensation over which Moses presided.

Whatever beauty or excellence there might have been, therefore, in that system, was to be traced to him; and whatever ability even Moses displayed was imparted by him. Christ is really the head of the family over which Moses presided, and has claims, therefore, to higher honor as such.

Verse 4

For every house is builded by some man - The words in this verse are plain, and the sentiment in it clear. The only difficulty is in seeing the connection, and in understanding how it is intended to bear on what precedes, or on what follows. It is clear that every house must have a builder, and equally clear that God is the Creator of all things. But what is the meaning of this passage in this connection? What is its bearing on the argument? If the verse was entirely omitted, and the fifth verse read in connection with the third, there would be apparently nothing wanting to complete the sense of the writer, or to finish the comparison which he had commenced. Various ways have been adopted to explain the difficulty. Perhaps the following observations may remove it, and express the true sense:

(1) Every family must have a founder; every dispensation an author; every house a builder. There must be someone, therefore, over all dispensations - the old and the new - the Jewish and the Christian.

(2) Paul "assumes" that the Lord Jesus was divine. He had demonstrated this in Hebrews 1:1-14; and he argues as if this were so, without now stopping to prove it, or even to affirm it expressly.

(3) God must be over "all things." He is Creator of all, and he must, therefore, be over all. As the Lord Jesus, therefore, is divine, he must be over the Jewish dispensation as well as the Christian - or he must, as God, have been at the head of that - or over his own family or household.

(4) as such, he must have a glory and honor which could not belong to Moses. He, in his divine character, was the Author of both the Jewish and the Christian dispensations, and he must, therefore, have a rank far superior to that of Moses - which was the point which the apostle designed to illustrate. The meaning of the whole may be thus expressed. "The Lord Jesus is worthy of more honor than Moses. He is so, as the maker of a house deserves more honor than the house. He is divine. In the beginning he

laid the foundation of the earth, and was the agent in the creation of all things; Hebrews 1:2, Hebrews 1:10. He presides, therefore, over everything; and was over the Jewish and the Christian dispensations - for there must have been someone over them, or the author of them, as really as it must be true that every house is built by some person. Being, therefore, over all things, and at the head of all dispensations, he must be more exalted than Moses." This seems to me to be the argument - an argument which is based on the supposition that he is at the head of all things, and that he was the agent in the creation of all worlds. This view will make all consistent. The Lord Jesus will be seen to have a claim to a far higher honor than Moses, and Moses will be seen to have derived his honor, as a servant of the Mediator, in the economy which he had appointed.

Verse 5

Moses was faithful … as a servant - Not as the head of the dispensation; not as having originated it; but as in the employ and under the direction of its great Founder and Author - the Messiah. As such a servant he deserves all the honor for fidelity which has ever been claimed for him, but it cannot be the honor which is due to him who is at the head of the family or house. Paul "assumed" that Moses was a "servant," and argued on that supposition, without attempting to prove it, because it was so often affirmed in the Old Testament, and must have been conceded by all the Jews. In numerous instances he is spoken of as "the servant of the Lord;" see Joshua 1:1-2; Joshua 9:24; 1 Chronicles 6:49; 2 Chronicles 24:9; Nehemiah 10:29; Daniel 9:11; Exodus 14:31; 1 Kings 8:56; Psalm 105:26. As this point was undisputed, it was only necessary to show that the Messiah was superior to a "servant," in order to make the argument clear.

For a testimony - To bear witness to those truths which were to be revealed; that is, he was the instrument of the divine communications to the people, or the medium by which God made his will known. He did not originate the truths himself; but he was the mere medium by which God made known his truth to his people - a servant whom He employed to make his will known. The word after here is not necessary in order to a just translation of this passage, and obscures the sense. It does not mean that he was a witness of those truths which were to be spoken "subsequently" to his time under another dispensation, nor those truths which the apostle proposed to consider in another part of the Epistle, as Doddridge supposes;

but it means merely that Moses stood forth as a public witness of the truths which God designed to reveal, or which were to be spoken. God did not speak to his people "directly," and face to face, but he spoke through Moses as an organ, or medium. The sense is, Moses was a mere servant of God to communicate his will to man.

Verse 6

But Christ as a Son over his own house - He is not a servant. To the whole household or family of God he sustains the same relation which a son and heir in a family does to the household. That relation is far different from that of a servant. Moses was the latter; Christ was the former. To God he sustained the relation of a Son, and recognized Him as his Father, and sought in all things to do his will; but over the whole family of God - the entire Church of all dispensations - he was like a son over the affairs of a family. Compared with the condition of a servant, Christ is as much superior to Moses as a son and heir is to the condition of a servant. A servant owns nothing; is heir to nothing; has no authority, and no right to control anything, and is himself wholly at the will of another. A son is the heir of all; has a prospective right to all; and is looked up to by all with respect. But the idea here is not merely that Christ is a son; it is that as a son he is placed over the whole arrangements of the household, and is one to whom all is entrusted as if it were His own.

Whose house we are - Of whose family we are a part, or to which we belong. That is, we belong to the family over which Christ is placed, and not to what was subject to Moses.

If we hold fast - A leading object of this Epistle is to guard those to whom it was addressed against the danger of apostasy. Hence, this is introduced on all suitable occasions, and the apostle here says, that the only evidence which they could have that they belonged to the family of Christ, would be that they held fast the confidence which they had unto the end. If they did not do that, it would demonstrate that they never belonged to his family, for evidence of having belonged to his household was to be furnished only by perseverance to the end.

The confidence - The word used here originally means "the liberty of speaking boldly and without restraint;" then it means boldness or confidence in general.

And the rejoicing - The word used here means properly "glorying, boasting," and then rejoicing. These words are used here in an adverbial

signification, and the meaning is, that the Christian has "a confident and a rejoicing hope." It is:

(1)confident - bold - firm. It is not like the timid hope of the Pagan, and the dreams and conjectures of the philosopher; it is not that which gives way at every breath of opposition; it is bold, firm, and manly. It is.

(2)"rejoicing" - triumphant, exulting. Why should not the hope of heaven fill with joy? Why should not he exult who has the prospect of everlasting happiness?

Unto the end - To the end of life. Our religion, our hope, our confidence in God must he persevered in to the end of life, if we would have evidence that we are his children. If hope is cherished for a while and then abandoned; if people profess religion and then fall away, no matter what were their raptures and triumphs, it proves that they never had any real piety. No evidence can be strong enough to prove that a man is a Christian, unless it leads him to persevere to the end of life.

Verse 7

Wherefore - In view of the fact that the Author of the Christian dispensation has a rank far superior to that of Moses. Because Christ has claims on us far greater than those which Moses had, let us hearken to his voice, and dread his displeasure.

As the Holy Ghost saith - In Psalm 95:7-11. This is full proof that in the estimation of the author of this Epistle the writer of this Psalm was inspired. The Holy Spirit speaks through the word which he has revealed. The apostle quotes this passage and applies it to those whom he addressed, because the admonition was as pertinent and important under the Christian dispensation, as it was under the Jewish. The danger of hardening the heart by neglecting to hear his voice was as great, and the consequences would be as fearful and alarming. We should regard the solemn warnings in the Old Testament against sin, and against the danger of apostasy, as addressed by the Holy Spirit to us. They are as applicable to us as they were to those to whom they were at first addressed; and we need all the influence of such appeals, to keep us from apostasy as much as they did.

Today - Now; at present. At the very time when the command is addressed to you. It is not to be put off until tomorrow. All God's commands relate to "the present" - to this day - to the passing moment. He gives us no commands "about the future." He does not require us to repent and to turn to him "tomorrow," or 10 years hence. The reasons are obvious:

(1)Duty pertains to the present. It is our duty to turn from sin, and to love him now.

(2)we know not that we shall live to another day. A command, therefore, could not extend to that time unless it were accompanied with "a revelation" that we should live until then - and such a revelation God does not choose to give. Every one, therefore, should feel that whatever commands God addresses to him are addressed to him now. Whatever guilt he incurs by neglecting those commands is incurred now. For the present neglect and disobedience each one is to answer - and each one must give account to God for what he does today.

If ye will hear - In case you are willing to hearken to God, listen now, and do not defer it to a future period. There is much in a "willingness" to hear the voice of God. A willingness to learn is usually the precursor of great attainments in knowledge. A "willingness" to reform, is usually the precursor of reformation. Get a man "willing" to break off his habits of profaneness or intemperance, and usually all the rest is easy. The great difficulty in the mind of a sinner is in his will. He is unwilling to hear the voice of God; unwilling that he should reign over him; unwilling now to attend to religion. While this unwillingness lasts he will make no efforts, and he sees, or creates a thousand difficulties in the way of his becoming a Christian. But when that unwillingness is overcome, and he is disposed to engage in the work of religion, difficulties vanish, and the work of salvation becomes easy.

His voice - The voice of God speaking to us:

(1)in his written word;

(2)in the preached gospel;

(3)in our own consciences;

(4)in the events of his Providence;

(5)in the admonitions of our relatives and friends. Whatever conveys to us the truth of God, or is adapted to impress that on us, may be regarded as "his voice" speaking to us. He thus speaks to us "every day" in some of these ways; and every day, therefore, he may entreat us not to harden our hearts.

Verse 8

Harden not your hearts - Do not render the heart insensible to the divine voice and admonition. A hard heart is that where the conscience is seared and insensible; where truth makes no impression; where no religious effect is produced by afflictions; where preaching is listened to without interest; and where the mind is unaffected by the appeals of friends. The idea here is, that a refusal to listen to the voice of God is connected with a hardening of the heart. It is in two ways:

(1)The very refusal to do this tends to harden it. And,

(2)in order to resist the appeals of God, people must resort to the means of "voluntarily" hardening the heart. This they do by setting themselves against the truth; by the excuses which they offer for not becoming Christians: by plunging into sin in order to avoid serious impressions; and by direct resistance of the Holy Spirit. No inconsiderable part of the efforts of sinners consists in endeavoring to produce insensibility in their minds to the truth and the appeals of God.

As in the provocation - Literally, "in the embittering" - ἐν τῷ παραπικρασμῷ en tō parapikrasmōThen it means what embitters or provokes the mind - as disobedience. Here it refers to what they did to "embitter" the mind of God against them; that is to the course of conduct which was adopted to provoke him to wrath.

In the day of temptation - In the time of temptation - the word "day" being used here, as it is often, to denote an indefinite period, or "time" in general. The word "temptation" here refers to the various provocations by which they "tried" the patience of God. They rebelled against him; they did what put the divine patience and forbearance to a trial. It does not mean that they tempted God to do evil, but that his long-suffering was "tried" by their sins.

In the wilderness - The desert through which they passed. The word "wilderness" in the Scriptures commonly means a "desert;" see the notes at Matthew 3:1. "One provocation was in demanding bread at Sin; a second for want of water at Massah or Meribah; a third time at Sinai with the golden calf; a fourth time at Taberah for want of flesh; a fifth time at Kadesh when they refused to go up into Canaan, and the oath came that they should die in the wilderness. A like refusal may prevent us from entering into rest." - Dr. John P. Wilson, Manuscript Notes.

Verse 9

Proved me - "As if they would have made an experiment how much it was possible for me to bear." - Doddridge. The meaning is: "they put my patience to a thorough trial."

And saw my works - That is, my miracles, or my interpositions in their behalf. They saw the wonders at the Red Sea, the descent on Mount Sinai, the supply of manna, etc., and yet while seeing those works they rebelled. Even while sinners look on the doings of God, and are surrounded by the proofs of his power and goodness, they rebel, and provoke him to anger. Men sin when God is filling their houses with plenty; when he opens his hand daily to supply their wants; when they behold the manifestations of his goodness on the sea and on the land; and even in the midst of all the blessings of redemption, they provoke him to wrath.

Forty years - The whole time during which they were passing from Egypt to the promised land. This may mean either that they saw his works forty years, or that they tempted him forty years. The sense is not materially affected whichever interpretation is preferred.

Verse 10

Wherefore I was grieved - On the word "grieved," see the notes at Ephesians 4:30. The word here means that he was offended with, or that he was indignant at them.

They do always err in their heart - Their long trial of forty years had been sufficient to show that it was a characteristic of the people that they were disposed to wander from God. Forty years are enough to show what the character is. They had seen his works; they had been called to obey him; they had received his Law; and yet their conduct during that time had shown that they were not disposed to obey him. So of an individual. A man who has lived in sin forty years; who during all that time has rebelled against God, and disregarded all his appeals; who has lived for himself and not for his Maker, has shown what his character is. Longer time is unnecessary; and if God should then cut him down and consign him to hell, he could not be blamed for doing it. A man who during forty years will live in sin, and resist all the appeals of God, shows what is in his heart, and no injustice is done if then he is summoned before God, and he swears that he shall not enter into his rest.

And they have not known my ways - They have been rebellious. They have not been acquainted with the true God; or they have not "approved"

my doings. The word "know" is often used in the Scriptures in the sense of "approving," or "loving;" see the notes at Matthew 7:23.

Verse 11

So I sware in my wrath - God is often represented in the Scriptures as "swearing" - and usually as swearing by himself, or by his own existence. Of course this in figurative, and denotes a strong affirmation, or a settled and determined purpose. An oath with us implies the strongest affirmation, or the expression of the most settled and determined purpose of mind. The meaning here is, that so refractory and perverse had they showed themselves, that he solemnly resolved that they should never enter into the land of Canaan.

They shall not enter into my rest - Margin, As in the original, "if they shall enter." That is, they shall not enter. The word (אם ʿim) "if" has this negative meaning in Hebrew, and this meaning is transferred to the Greek word "if;" compare 1 Samuel 3:17; 2 Samuel 3:35; 2 Kings 6:31. It is called "my rest" here, meaning that it was such rest as God had provided, or such as he enjoyed. The particular "rest" referred to here was that of the land of Canaan, but which was undoubtedly regarded as emblematic of the "rest" in heaven. Into that rest God solemnly said they should never enter. They had been rebellious. All the means of reclaiming them had failed. God had warned and entreated them; he had caused his mercies to pass before them, and had visited them with judgments in vain; and he now declares that for all their rebellion they should be excluded from the promised land. God speaks here in the manner of human beings. Men are affected with feelings of indignation in such circumstances, and God makes use of such language as expresses such feelings. But we are to understand it in a manner consistent with his character, and we are not to suppose that he is affected with the same emotions which agitate the bosoms of people. The meaning is, that he formed and expressed a deliberate and solemn purpose that they should never enter into the promised land. Whether this "rest" refers here to heaven, and whether the meaning is that God would exclude them from that blessed world, will be more appropriately considered in the next chapter. The particular idea is, that they were to be excluded from the promised land, and that they should fall in the wilderness. No one can doubt, also, that their conduct had been such as to show that the great body of them were unfit to enter into heaven.

Verse 12

Take heed, brethren - In view of the conduct of the rebellious Jews, and of their fearful doom, be on your guard lest you also be found to have had the same feelings of rebellion and unbelief. See to it, that under the new dispensation, and in the enjoyment of the privileges of the gospel, you be not found to manifest such feelings as shall exclude you from the heavenly world. The "principle" has been settled by their unbelief that they who oppose God will be excluded from his rest. That may be shown under all dispensations, and in all circumstances, and there is not less danger of it under the gospel than there was when the fathers were conducted to the promised land. You are traveling through a wilderness - the barren wilderness of this world. You are exposed to trials and temptations. You meet with many a deadly and mighty foe. You have hearts prone to apostasy and sin. You are seeking a land of promise; a land of rest. You are surrounded by the wonders of Almighty power, and by the proofs of infinite beneficence. Disobedience and rebellion in you will as certainly exclude you from heaven as their rebellion did them from the promised land; and as their great sin was unbelief, be on your guard lest you manifest the same.

An evil heart of unbelief - An evil, unbelieving heart. The word "unbelief" is used to qualify the word "heart," by a Hebraism - a mode of speech that is common in the New Testament. An unbelieving heart was the cause of "their" apostasy, and what worked their ruin will produce ours. The root of their evil was "a want of confidence in God" - and this is what is meant here by a heart of unbelief. The great difficulty on earth everywhere is a "want of confidence in God" - and this has produced all the ills that man has ever suffered. It led to the first apostasy; and it has led to every other apostasy - and will continue to produce the same effects to the end of the world. The apostle says that this heart of unbelief is "evil." Men often feel that it is a matter of little consequence whether they have faith or not, provided their conduct is right; and hence, they do not see or admit the propriety of what is said about the consequences of unbelief in the Scriptures. But what do they say about a want of confidence between a husband and wife?

Are there no evils in that? What husband can sleep with quietness on his pillow, if he has no confidence in the virtue of his wife? What child can have peace who has no confidence in a parent? How can there be prosperity in a community where there is no confidence in a bank, or an insurance office, or where one merchant has no confidence in another; where a

neighbor has no confidence in his neighbor; where the sick have no confidence in a physician, and where in general all confidence is broken up between man and man? If I wished to produce the deepest distress in any community, and had the power, I would produce the same want of confidence between man and man which there is now between man and his Maker. I would thus take away sleep from the pillow of every husband and wife; every parent and child; and make every man wretched with the feeling that all the property which he had was insecure. Among people, nothing is seen to be productive of greater evil than a want of confidence or faith - and why should not the same evil exist in the divine administration? And if want of confidence produces such results between man and man, why should it not produce similar, or greater, miseries where it occurs in relation to God? There is not an evil that man endures which might not be alleviated or removed by confidence in God; and hence one great object of the Christian religion is, to restore to man his lost confidence in the God that made him.

In departing from the living God - Manifested in departing from him; or leading to a departure from him. The idea is, that such a heart of unbelief would be connected with apostasy from God. All apostasy first exists in the heart, and then is manifested in the life. They who indulge in unbelief in any form, or in regard to any subject, should remember that this is the great source of all alienation from God, and that if indulged it will lead to complete apostasy. They who wish to live a life of piety should keep the heart right. He that lives "by the faith of the Son of God" is safe; and none is safe but he.

Verse 13

But exhort one another daily - This is addressed to the members of the churches; and it follows, therefore:

(1) that it is their duty to exhort their brethren; and,

(2) that it is their duty to do it "daily;" that is, constantly; see Hebrews 10:25; 1 Thessalonians 4:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; note, Romans 12:8. While this is the special duty of the ministers of the gospel 1 Timothy 6:2; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 2:6, Titus 2:15, it is also the duty of all the members of the churches, and a most important, but much-neglected duty. This does not refer to "public" exhortation, which more appropriately pertains to the ministers of the gospel, but to that private watch and care which the individual members of the church should have over one another. But in

what eases is such exhortation proper? What rules should regulate it? I answer, it may be regarded as a duty, or is to be performed in such cases as the following:

(1) Intimate friends in the church should exhort and counsel one another; should admonish each other of their faults; and should aid one another in the divine life.

(2) parents should do the same thing to their children. They are placed particularly under their watch and care. A pastor cannot often see the members of his flock in private; and a parent may greatly aid him in his work by watching over the members of their families who are connected with the church.

(3) Sunday School teachers may aid much in this duty. They are to be assistants to parents and to pastors. They often have under their care youthful members of the churches. They have an opportunity of knowing their state of mind, their temptations, and their dangers better than the pastor can have. It should be theirs, therefore, to exhort them to a holy life.

(4) the aged should exhort the young. Every aged Christian may thus do much for the promotion of religion. His experience is the property of the church; and he is bound so to employ it as to be useful in aiding the feeble, reclaiming the wandering, recovering the backslider, and directing the inquiring. There is a vast amount of "spiritual capital" of this kind in the church that is unemployed, and that might be made eminently useful in helping others to heaven.

(5) church members should exhort one another. There may not be the intimacy of personal friendship among all the members of a large church, but still the connection between them should be regarded as sufficiently tender and confidential to make it proper for anyone to admonish a brother who goes astray. They belong to the same communion. They sit down at the same supper of the Lord. They express their assent to the same articles of faith. They are regarded by the community as united. Each member sustains a portion of the honor and the responsibility of the whole; and each member should feel that he has a right, and that it is his duty to admonish a brother if

he goes astray. Yet this duty is greatly neglected. In what church is it performed? How often do church members see a fellow member go astray without any exhortation or admonition! How often do they hear reports of the inconsistent lives of other members and perhaps contribute to the circulation of those reports themselves, without any pains taken to inquire whether they are true! How often do the poor fear the rich members of the church, or the rich despise the poor, and see one another live in sin, without any attempt to entreat or save them! I would not have the courtesies of life violated. I would not have any assume a dogmatical or dictatorial air. I would have no one step out of his proper sphere of life. But the principle which I would lay down is, that the fact of church membership should inspire such confidence as to make it proper for one member to exhort another whom he sees going astray. Belonging to the same family; having the same interest in religion; and all suffering when one suffers, why should they not be allowed tenderly and kindly to exhort one another to a holy life?

While it is called Today - While life lasts; or while you may be permitted to use the language "Today hear the voice of God." The idea is, that the exhortation is not to be intermitted. It is to be our daily business to admonish and exhort one another. Christians are liable every day to go astray; every day they need aid in the divine life; and they who are fellow-heirs with them of salvation should be ever ready to counsel and advise them.

Lest any of you be hardened - the notes at Hebrews 3:8. It is possible for Christians to become in a sense hardened. Their minds become less sensitive than they were to the claims of duty, and their consciences become less tender. Hence, the propriory of mutual exhortation, that they may always have the right feeling, and may always listen to the commands of God.

The deceitfulness of sin - See the notes at Ephesians 4:22. Sin is always deceitful. It promises more than it performs. It assures us of pleasure which it never imparts. It leads us on beyond what was supposed when we began to indulge in it. The man who commits sin is always under a delusion; and sin, if he indulges it, will lead him on from one step to another until the heart becomes entirely hardened. Sin puts on plausible appearances and preferences; it assumes the name of virtue; it offers excuses and palliations, until the victim is snared, and then spell-bound he is hurried on to every excess. If sin was always seen in its true aspect when man is tempted to

commit it, it would be so hateful that he would flee from it with the utmost abhorrence. What young man would become a drunkard if he saw when he began exactly the career which he would run? What young man, now vigorous and healthful, and with fair prospects of usefulness and happiness would ever touch the intoxicating bowl, if he saw what he "would be" when he became a sot? What man would ever enter the room of the gambler if he saw just where indulgence would soon lead him, and if at the commencement he saw exactly the wo and despair which would inevitably ensue? Who would become a voluptuary and a sensualist, if he saw exactly the close of such a career? Sin deceives, deludes, blinds. Men do not, or will not, see the fearful results of indulgence. They are deluded by the hope of happiness or of gain; they are drawn along by the fascinations and allurements of pleasure until the heart becomes hard and the conscience seared - and then they give way without remorse. From such a course, the apostle would have Christians guarded by kind and affectionate exhortation. Each one should feel that he has an interest in keeping his brother from Such a doom; and each Christian thus in danger should be willing to listen to the kind exhortation of a Christian brother.

Verse 14

For we are made partakers of Christ - We are spiritually united to the Saviour. We become one with him. We partake of his spirit and his allotments. The sacred writers are accustomed to describe the Christian as being closely united to the Saviour, and as being one with him see the John 15:1-7; John 17:21, John 17:23 notes; Ephesians 5:30 note; 1 Corinthians 12:27 note. The idea is, that we participate in all that pertains to him. It is a union of feeling and affection; a union of principle and of congeniality; a union of dependence as well as love; a union where nothing is to be imparted by us, but everything gained; and a union, therefore, on the part of the Redeemer of great condescension. It is the union of the branch to the vine, where the branch is supported and nourished by the vine, and not the union of the ivy and the oak, where the ivy has its own roots, and merely clings around the oak and climbs up upon it. What else can be said so honorable of man as that he is a "partaker of Christ;" that he shares his feelings here, and that he is to share his honors in a brighter world? Compared with this, what is it to participate with the rich and the frivolous in their pleasures; what would it be to share in the honors of conquerors and kings?

μετοχοι του Χριστου metochoi tou Christoucannot signify, as some explain, participation merely in the blessings of Christ‘s death, but must be referred, as our author here affirms, to the spiritual union which subsists between Christ and his people. That union doubtless involves, as necessary consequents, “a union of feeling and affection, a union of principle and congeniality, a union of dependence and love.” Yet, we think, it is something more. It is a “real” and vital union, formed by the one Spirit of Christ, pervading the head and the members of the mystical body. And this is the “foundation” of all union of affection, etc. For a condensed view of the subject, see the supplementary note on Romans 8:10.)

If we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast - see the note at Hebrews 3:6. If we continue to maintain the same confidence which we had in the beginning, or which we showed at the commencement of our Christian life. At first, they had been firm in the Christian hope. They evinced true and strong attachment to the Redeemer. They were ardent and devoted to his cause. If they continued to maintain that to the end, that is, the end of life; if in the midst of all temptations and trials they adhered inflexibly to the cause of the Saviour, they would show that they were true Christians, and would partake of the blessedness of the heavenly world with the Redeemer. The idea is, that it is only perseverance in the ways of religion that constitutes certain evidence of piety. Where piety is manifested through life, or where there is an untiring devotion to the cause of God, there the evidence is clear and undoubted.

But where there is at first great ardor, zeal, and confidence, which soon dies away, then it is clear that they never had any real attachment to him and his cause. It may be remarked here, that the “beginning of the confidence” of those who are deceived, and who know nothing about religion at heart, is often as bold as where there is true piety. The hypocrite makes up in ardor what he lacks in sincerity; and he who is really deceived, is usually deceived under the influence of some strong and vivid emotion, which he mistakes for true religion. Often the sincere convert is calm, though decided, and sometimes is even timorous and doubting; while the self-deceiver is noisy in profession, and clamorous in his zeal, and much disposed to blame the lukewarmness of others. Evidence of piety, therefore, should not be built on that early zeal; nor should it be concluded that because there is ardor, there is of necessity genuine religion. Ardor is valuable, and true religion is ardent; but there is other ardor than what the

gospel inspires. The evidence of genuine piety is to be found in what will bear us up under trials, and endure amidst persecution and opposition. The doctrine here is, that it is necessary to persevere if we would have the evidence of true piety. This doctrine is taught everywhere in the Scriptures. Persevere in what? I answer, not:

(1)merely in a profession of religion. A man may do that and have no piety.

(2)not in zeal for party, or sect. The Pharisees had that to the end of their lives.

(3)not in mere honesty, and correctness of external deportment. A man may do that in the church, as well as out of it, and yet have no religion.

But we should persevere:

(1)in the love of God and of Christ - in conscious, ardent, steady attachment to Him to whom our lives are professedly devoted.

(2)in the secret duties of religion. In that watchfulness over the heart; that communion with God; that careful study of the Bible; that guardianship over the temper; and in that habitual contact with God in secret prayer which is appropriate to a Christian, and which marks the Christian character.

(3)in the performance of the public duties of religion; in leading a "Christian" life - as distinguished from a life of worldliness and vanity; a life of mere morality, and honesty; a life such as thousands lead who are out of the church.

There is something which distinguishes a Christian from one who is not a Christian; a religious from an irreligious man. There is "something" in religion; "something" which serves to characterize a Christian, and unless that something is manifested, there can be no evidence of true piety. The Christian is to be distinguished in temper, feeling, deportment, aims, plans, from the people of this world - and unless those characteristics are shown in the life and deportment, there can be no well-founded evidence of religion.

Learn:

(1)that it is not mere "feeling" that furnishes evidence of religion.

(2)that it is not mere "excitement" that constitutes religion.

(3)that it is not mere ardor.

(4)that it is not mere zeal.

All these may be temporary. Religion is something that lasts throughout life. It goes with a person everywhere. It is with him in trial. It forms his plans; regulates his temper; suggests his words; prompts to his actions. It lives with him in all his external changes, and goes with him through the dark valley of death, and accompanies him up to the bar of God, and is with him forever.

Verse 15

While it is said, Today … - That is, persevere as long as life lasts, or as long as it can be said "today;" and by persevering in this manner you will have evidence that you are the friends of the Redeemer. This is a quotation from Psalm 95:7. Paul means, undoubtedly, to make use of this language himself as a direct exhortation to the Christians to whom he was writing. He entreats them, therefore, as long as it could be said "today," or as long as life lasted, to take care lest they should harden their hearts as had been done in the temptation in the wilderness.

Verse 16

For some - Some of the Hebrews who came out of Egypt. The truth was that a large proportion of them rebelled against God, and provoked him to indignation. It is somewhat remarkable that though "all" the Hebrews seem to have joined in the provocation - except a very small number - Paul should have used language which would seem to imply that the number which rebelled was comparatively small. Another version, therefore, has been given to this passage by some of the most eminent critics, consisting merely in a change in the punctuation, by which a different view is given of the whole sentence. According to this, it would be a question, and would mean, "But who were they who when they had heard did provoke? Were they not all indeed who came out of Egypt under Moses? And with whom was He angry for 40 years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?" This version was adopted by Chrysostom, Theodoret, and others of the Fathers; and is adopted by Rosenmuller, Clarke, Stuart, Pyle, and some others. In favor of it, it may be alleged:

(1)that the Greek will bear it, all the change required being in the punctuation;

(2)that it avoids the difficulty which exists in the other interpretation of supposing the apostle to imply that but few of them rebelled, when the truth

was that it was nearly all;

(3)it thus accords with the remainder of the exhortation, which consists in a series of questions; and,

(4)it agrees with the scope and design of the whole.

The object was not to state that it was not all who came out of Egypt that rebelled, or that the number was small, but that the great body of them rebelled and fell in the wilderness, and that Christians should be admonished by their example. These reasons seem to be so strong as to make it probable that this is the true construction, and the sense then will be, "For who were they that having heard did provoke? Were they not all who came out of Egypt under Moses?"

When they had heard - Had heard God speaking to them, and giving them his commands.

Did provoke - Provoked him to anger; or their conduct was such as was suited to produce indignation; see the note on Hebrews 3:8.

Howbeit - Αλλά Alla"But." This particle "in a series of questions, and standing at the head of a question, means "but, further." It serves to connect, and give intensity to the interrogation" - Stuart. Paul means to ask with emphasis whether the great mass of those who came out of Egypt did not apostatize? At the same time he means to intimate that there is no security that they who have witnessed - remarkable manifestations of the greatness of God, and who have partaken of extraordinary mercies, will not apostatize and perish. As the Hebrews, who heard God speak from Mount Sinai, revolted and perished, so it is possible that they who witness the mercies of God in redemption, may be in danger of abusing all those mercies, and of perishing. By the example, therefore, of the disobedient Israelites, he would admonish professed Christians of their danger.

Not all … - According to the interpretation proposed above, "Were they not all who came out of Egypt?" Or "did not all who came out of Egypt?" The word "all" here is not to be taken in the strict sense, It is often used to denote the great body; a large proportion; or vast multitudes. Thus, it is used in Matthew 3:5, "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan." So in John 3:26, "The same baptizeth, and all people came to him." So Philemon 2:21, "For all seek their own;" 2 Corinthians 3:2, "Ye are our epistle, known and read of all men." "In fact"

there were two exceptions - and but two - of the adults who came out of Egypt - Caleb and Joshua; Numbers 14:30. All the others complained against the Lord, and were prohibited from entering the promised land. Of the great multitudes who came out of Egypt, and who murmured, the exception was so small that the apostle had no scruple in saying in general that they were all rebellious.

Verse 17

But with whom was he grieved forty years? - With whom was he angry; see the notes at Hebrews 3:10.

Was it not with them that had sinned - That had sinned in various ways - by rebellion, murmuring, unbelief. As God was angry with them for their sins, we have the same reason to apprehend that he will be angry with us if we sin; and we should, therefore, be on our guard against that unbelief which would lead us to depart from him; Hebrews 3:12.

Whose carcasses fell … - Numbers 14:29. That is, they all died, and were left on the sands of the desert. The whole generation was strewed along in the way to Canaan. All of those who had seen the wonders that God had done "in the land of Ham;" who had been rescued in so remarkable a manner from oppression, were thus cut down, and died in the deserts through which they were passing; Numbers 26:64-65. Such an example of the effects of revolt against God, and of unbelief, was well suited to admonish Christians in the time of the apostle, and is suited to admonish us now, of the danger of the sin of unbelief. We are not to suppose that all of those who thus died were excluded from heaven. Moses and Aaron were among the number of those who were not permitted to enter the promised land, but of their piety there can be no doubt; Beyond all question, also, there were many others of that generation who were truly pious. But at different times they seem all to have partaken of the prevalent feelings of discontent, and were all involved in the sweeping condemnation that they should die in the wilderness.

Verse 18

And to whom sware he - note, Hebrews 3:11.

But to them that believed not - That did not confide in God; Deuteronomy 1:32. "Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God." In consequence of this want of faith, God solemnly sware unto them that they should not enter into the promised land; Deuteronomy 1:34-35. "And the Lord heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and sware,

saying, “Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land which I sware to give unto your fathers, save Caleb,” etc. The distinct reason, therefore, assigned by Moses why they did not enter the promised land, was a want of faith, and this accords directly with the design of the apostle here. He is exhorting those whom he addressed to beware of an evil heart of unbelief; Hebrews 3:12. He says that it was such a heart that excluded the Hebrews from the promised land. The same thing, says he, must exclude you from heaven - the promised home of the believer; and if that firm confidence in God and his promises which he requires is wanting, you will be excluded from the world of eternal rest.

Verse 19

So we see … - We see from the direct testimony of the Old Testament that unbelief was the reason why they were excluded from the promised land. Let us learn in view of the reasoning and exhortations here:

(1) The evil of unbelief. It excluded that whole generation, consisting of many hundred thousand souls, from the land of promise - the land to which they had looked with ardent hopes, and with warm desires. It will exclude countless millions from heaven. A “lack of confidence in God” is the great source of evil in this world, and will be the cause of wretchedness to all eternity of unnumbered hosts. But surely that was not a small or unimportant thing which strewed the desert with the bones of that whole generation whom God had in so remarkable a manner rescued from Egyptian servitude. And that cannot be a small matter which will cause multitudes to sink down to infinite wretchedness and despair.

(2) let us who are professed Christians be cautious against indulging unbelief in our hearts. Our difficulties all begin there. We lose confidence in God. We doubt his promises, his oaths, his threatenings. In dark and trying times we begin to have doubts about the wisdom of his dealings, and about his goodness. Unbelief once admitted into the heart is the beginning of many woes. When a man loses confidence in God, he is on a shoreless ocean that is full of whirlpools, and rocks, and quicksands, and where it is “impossible” to find a secure anchorage. There is nothing to which he may moor his driven bark; and he will never find safety or peace until he comes back to God.

(3) let us live a life of faith. Let us so live that we may say with Paul, “The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” So living, we shall have peace. The mind will be at rest. Storms and tempests may blow, but we shall be secure. Others may be troubled in the vicissitudes of life, but our minds will be at peace.

(4) let us live expecting the future “rest” that remains for us. Let us keep our eye fixed upon it. To us there is a rest promised, as there was to the Hebrews whom God had delivered from the land of oppression; and we may by faith attain to that “rest” as they might have reached the land of Canaan.

(5) let us persevere to the end. He that draws back must be lost. He that does not endure to the end of life in the ways of religion can never have been a Christian. There is nothing which will furnish certain evidence of religion unless our piety is such as to lead us to persevere until death. The man who enters on the professed Christian life expecting to fall away, or who can look upon the possibility of falling away without concern, has never known anything of the nature of true religion. He cannot be a Christian. He may have had raptures and visions; he may be a loud professor and a noisy and zealous partisan, but he has no evidence that he has ever known anything about religion. That religion which is not connected with a firm and determined purpose by the grace of God to persevere to the end of life, is no true religion; and a man who expects to fall away and go back again to the world, or who can look at such an idea without alarm, should regard it as a settled matter that he has no true knowledge of God.

(6) no man should delay the work of salvation to a future time. today is the accepted time; today the only time of which we have any security. God speaks “today,” and today his voice should be heard. No man on any subject should defer until tomorrow what ought to be done today. He who defers religion until a future time neglects his own best interest; violates most solemn obligations; and endangers his immortal soul. What security can anyone have that he will live to see another day? What evidence has he that he will be any more disposed to attend to his salvation then than he is now?

What evidence can he have that he will not provoke God by this course, and bring condemnation on his soul? Of all delusions, that is the most wonderful by which dying people are led to defer attention to the concerns of the soul to a future period of life. Nowhere has Satan such advantage as in keeping this delusion before the mind; and if in respect to anything the voice of warning and alarm should be lifted loud and long, it is in reference to this. O why will not people be wise "today?" Why will they not embrace the offer of salvation "now?" Why will they not at once make sure of eternal happiness? And why, amidst the changes and trials of this life, will they not so secure the everlasting inheritance as to feel that that is safe - that there is one thing at least that cannot be shaken and disturbed by commercial embarrassment and distress; one thing secure though friends and kindred are torn away from them; one thing safe when their own health fails, and they lie down on the bed where they will bid adieu to all earthly comforts, and from which they will never rise?

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter Hebrews 4:1-13, the apostle pursues and completes the exhortation which he had commenced in the previous chapter, drawn from the comparison of the Saviour with Moses (see the analysis of Hebrews 4:14-16, he enters on the consideration of the character of Christ as a high priest, which is pursued to the end of the doctrinal part of the Epistle.

In the first part Hebrews 4:1-13, he describes more at length the character of the "rest" to which he had referred in the previous chapter Hebrews 4:1, that the promise of a "rest" yet remains, and that there is still danger, as there was formerly, of coming short of it, or of losing it. He affirms that such was the nature of that promise, that it is applicable to us as well as to those to whom it was first made, and that the promise of rest as really pertains to Christians now as it did to the Hebrews of old; Hebrews 4:2. The reason, he adds, Hebrews 4:2, why "they" did not enter into that rest was, that they had not faith. This he had established in the previous chapter, yer. 18. In Hebrews 4:3-6, he proceeds to demonstrate more at length that there is a rest remaining for those who believe. The great object in this part of the chapter is to prove that a "rest" remains for believers now; a rest of a spiritual character, and much more desirable than that of the land of Canaan; a rest to which Christians may look forward, and which there may be danger of losing.

Addressing Hebrew Christians, he, of course, appeals to the Old Testament, and refers to several places where the word "rest" occurs, and argues that those expressions are of such a character as to show that there remains a "rest" for Christians yet. It would have been easy to have "affirmed" this as a part of the Christian revelation, but throughout the Epistle he is bringing his illustrations from the Old Testament, and showing to the Hebrew Christians to whom he wrote that there were abundant considerations "in the Old Testament itself" to constitute an argument why they should adhere inviolably to the Christian religion. He says, therefore, Hebrews 4:4, that God himself had spoken of his "own rest" from his works; that when he had finished the work of creation he had instituted a "rest" which was characterized by the peace, and beauty, and order of the

first Sabbath after the work of creation, when all was new, and lovely, and pure.

That might be called the "rest of God" - a beautiful emblem of what dwells around his throne in heaven. The meaning of this verse Hebrews 4:4 is, that the Bible spoke early of a "rest" which appertained to God himself. In Hebrews 4:5, he goes on to say that the prospect of entering into "his" rest was spoken of as a possible thing; that some were excluded, but that there was a place deserved to be called "the rest of God" - "My rest" - to which all may come. Of course, that rest must be of a spiritual nature, and must be different from that of the promised land. That "rest" the apostle "implies" it was possible to attain. He does not argue this point at length, but he assumes that God would not create a place of rest in vain; that it was made to be enjoyed; and that since those to whom it was at first offered were excluded, it must follow that it remained still; and as they were excluded by the want of "faith," it would follow also that it was reserved for those who "had" faith. Of course, therefore, it is offered to Christians now; Hebrews 4:6.

This view he proceeds to confirm by another consideration; Hebrews 4:7-8. It is that David, who lived nearly five hundred years after the land of promise had been occupied by the Israelites, spoke "then" of the possibility of entering into such a "rest." He says Psalm 95:7, that, in his time, the people were called to hear the voice of God; that he warned them against the guilt and danger of hardening their hearts; that he reminded them that it was by that that the Israelites were excluded from the promised land, and that he said that the same thing would occur if those in his own time should harden their hearts. It followed, therefore, that even in the time of David there was a hope and promise of "rest;" and that there was something more intended for the true people of God than merely entering into the promised land. There must be something in advance of that; something that existed to the time of David - and it must be, therefore, a spiritual rest.

This, the apostle adds, Hebrews 4:8, is conclusive; for if Joshua had given them all the "rest" that was contemplated, then David would not have spoken as he did of the danger of being excluded from it in his time. He, therefore, Hebrews 4:9, comes to the conclusion that there must still remain

a “rest” for the people of God, a “rest” to which they were invited, and which they were in danger of losing by unbelief. He adds Hebrews 4:10, that he who enters into that “rest” ceases from toil, as God did from his when he had finished the work of creation. Since, therefore, there is such a “rest,” and since there is danger of coming short of it, the apostle urges them Hebrews 4:11, to make every effort to enter into it. He adds Hebrews 4:12-13, as a consideration to quicken them to earnest effort and to anxious care lest they should be deceived, and should fail of it, the fact that God cannot be deceived; that his word penetrates the heart, and that everything is naked and open before him. There should, therefore, be the most faithful investigation of the heart, lest they should fail of the grace of God, and lose the hoped-for rest.

In the second portion of the chapter Hebrews 4:14-16, he enters on the consideration of the character of Christ as High Priest, and says that since we have such an High Priest as he is, we should be encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace. We have encouragement to persevere from the fact that we have such a High Priest, and in all our conscious weakness and helplesness we may look to him for aid.

Verse 1

Let us therefore fear - Let us be apprehensive that we may possibly fall of that rest. The kind of “fear” which is recommended here is what leads to caution and care. A man who is in danger of losing his life or health should be watchful; a seaman that is in danger of running on a lee-shore should be on his guard. So we who have the offer of heaven, and who yet are in danger of losing it, should take all possible precautions lest we fail of it.

Lest a promise being left us - Paul assumes here that there is such a promise. In the subsequent part of the chapter, he goes more into the subject, and proves from the Old Testament that there is such a promise made to us. It is to be remembered that Paul had not the New Testament then to appeal to, as we have, which is perfectly clear on the subject, but that he was obliged to appeal to the Old Testament. This he did not only because the New Testament was not then written, but because he was reasoning with those who had been Hebrews, and who regarded the authority of the Old Testament as decisive. If his reasoning to us appears somewhat obscure, we should put ourselves in his place, and should

remember that the converts then had not the full light which we have now in the New Testament.

Of entering into his rest - The rest of God - the rest of the world where he dwells. It is called "his" rest, because it is what he enjoys, and which he alone can confer. There can be no doubt that Paul refers here to heaven, and means to say that there is a promise left to Christians of being admitted to the enjoyment of that blessed world where God dwells.

Any of you should seem to come short of it - The word "seem" here is used as a form of gentle and mild address, implying the possibility of thus coming short. The word here - δοκέω dokeō- is often used so as to appear to give no essential addition to the sense of a passage, though it is probable that it always gave a shading to the meaning. Thus, the phrase "esse videatur" is often used by Cicero at the end of a period, to denote merely that a thing "was" - though he expressed it as though it merely "seemed" to be. Such language is often used in argument or in conversation as a "modest" expression, as when we say a thing "seems" to be so and so, instead of saying "it is." In some such sense Paul probably used the phrase here - perhaps as expressing what we would by this language - "lest it should appear at last that any of you had come short of it." The phrase "come short of it" is probably used with reference to the journey to the promised land, where they who came out of Egypt "came short" of that land, and fell in the wilderness. They did not reach it. This verse teaches the important truth that, though heaven is offered to us, and that a "rest" is promised to us if we seek it, yet that there is reason to think that many may fail of reaching it who had expected to obtain it. Among those will be the following classes:

(1)Those who are professors of religion but who have never known anything of true piety.

(2)those who are expecting to be saved by their own works, and are looking forward to a world of rest on the ground of what their own hands can do.

(3)those who defer attention to the subject from time to time until it becomes too late. They expect to reach heaven, but they are not ready to give their hearts to God "now," and the subject is deferred from one period to another, until death arrests them unprepared.

(4)those who have been awakened to see their guilt and danger, and who have been almost but not quite ready to give up their hearts to God. Such were Agrippa, Felix, the young ruler Mark 10:21, and such are all those who are "almost" but not "quite" prepared to give up the world and to devote themselves to the Redeemer. To all these the promise of "rest" is made, if they will accept of salvation as it is offered in the gospel; all of them cherish a hope that they will be saved; and all of them are destined alike to be disappointed. With what earnestness, therefore, should we strive that we may not fail of the grace of God!

Verse 2

For unto us was the gospel preached as well as unto them - This translation by no means conveys the sense of the original. According to this it would seem that the "gospel," as we understand it, or the whole plan of salvation, was communicated to "them," as well as to "us." But this is by no means the idea. The discussion has reference only to "the promise of rest," and the assertion of the apostle is that this "good news" of a promise of rest is made to us as really as it was made to "them." "Rest" was promised to them in the land of Canaan - an emblem of the eternal rest of the people of God. That was unquestioned, and Paul took it for granted. His object now is, to show that a promise of "rest" is as really made to us as it was to them, and that there is the same danger of failing to secure it as there was then. It was important for him to show that there was such a promise made to the people of God in his time, and as he was discoursing of those who were Hebrews, he of course made his appeal to the Old Testament. The literal translation would be, "For we are evangelized - ἐσμεν εὐηγγελισμένοι esmen euēngelismenoi- as well as they." The word "evangelize" means to communicate good news, or glad tidings; and the idea here is, that the good news, or glad tidings of "rest" is announced to us as really as it was to them. This the apostle proves in the following verses.

But the word preached - Margin, "Of hearing." The word "preach" we also use now in a technical sense as denoting a formal proclamation of the gospel by the ministers of religion. But this is not the idea here. It means, simply, the word which "they heard;" and refers particularly to the promise of "rest" which was made to them. That message was communicated to them by Moses.

Did not profit them - They derived no advantage from it. They rejected and despised it, and were, therefore, excluded from the promised land. It exerted no influence over their hearts and lives, and they lived and died as though no such promise had been made. Thus, many persons live and die now. The offer of salvation is made to them. They are invited to come and be saved. They are assured that God is willing to save them, and that the Redeemer stands with open arms to welcome them to heaven. They are trained up under the gospel; are led early in life to the sanctuary; are in the habit of attending on the preaching of the gospel all their days, but still what they hear exerts no saving influence on their hearts. At the close of life all that could be truly said of them is, that they have not been "profited;" it has been no real advantage to them in regard to their final destiny that they have enjoyed so many privileges.

Not being mixed with faith in them that heard it - Margin, "Or, because they were not united by faith to." There are some various readings on this text, and one of these has given occasion to the version in the margin. Many mss. instead of the common reading - συγκεκερασμένος sugkekerasmenos- by which the word "mixed" would be united to ὁ λόγος ho logos- "the word," have another reading - sugkekrame&noujsungkekramenous- according to which the word "mixed" would refer to "them," and would mean that they who heard the Word and rejected it were not "mixed," or united with those who believed it. The former reading makes the best sense, and is the best sustained; and the idea is, that the message which was preached was not received into the heart by faith. They were destitute of faith, and the message did not profit them. The word "mixed" is supposed by many of the best critics to refer to the process by which "food" is made nutritive, by being properly "mixed" with the saliva and the gastric juice, and thus converted into chyme, and chyle, and then changed into blood.

If suitably "mixed" in this manner, it contributes to the life and health of the physical frame; if not, it is the means of disease and death. So it is supposed the apostle meant to say of the message which God sends to man. If properly received; if mixed or united with faith, it becomes the means of spiritual support and life. If not, it furnishes no aliment to the soul, and will be of no advantage. As food when properly digested incorporates itself with the body, and gives it support, so those critics suppose it to be of the Word of God, that it incorporates itself with the internal and spiritual man, and

gives it support and life. It may be doubted, however, whether the apostle had any such allusion as this, and whether it is not rather a refinement of the critics than of Paul. The word used here properly denotes a mixing or mingling together, like water and wine, 1 Corinthians 12:24; and it may refer here merely to a proper "union" of faith with the word, in order that it might be profitable. The idea is, that merely to "hear" the message of life with the outward ear will be of no advantage. It must be "believed," or it will be of no benefit. The message is sent to mankind at large. God declares his readiness to save all. But this message is of no advantage to multitudes - for such reasons as these.

(1) Many do not attend to it at all. They do not even "listen" respectfully to it. Multitudes go not near the place where the gospel is proclaimed; and many, when there, and when they "seem" to attend, have their minds and hearts on other things.

(2) many do not "believe" it. They have doubts about the whole subject of religion, or about the particular doctrines of the gospel - and while they do not believe it, how can they be benefitted by it? How can a man be profited by the records of "history" if he does not believe them? How can one be benefited by the truths of "science" if he does not believe them? And if a man was assured that by going to a certain place he might close a bargain that would be a great advantage to him, of what use would this information be to him if he did not believe a word of it? So of the knowledge of salvation; the facts of the history recorded in the Bible; the offer of eternal life.

(3) men do not allow the message of life to influence their conduct, and of course it is of no advantage to them. Of what use can it be if they steadily resist all the influence which it would have, and ought to have, on their lives? They live as though it were ascertained that there is no truth in the Bible; no reason for being influenced by the offered hope of eternal life, or alarmed by the threatened danger of eternal death. Resolved to pursue a course of life that is at variance with the commands of God, they cannot be profited by the message of salvation. Having no faith which influences and controls the heart, they are not in the least benefited by the offer of heaven. When they die, their condition is in no wise made better by the fact that

they were trained up in a pious family; that they were instructed in the Sunday School; that they had the Bible in their dwellings, and that they sat regularly under a preached gospel. For any "advantage" to be derived from all this in the future world, they might as well have never heard the message of life. Nay it would have been better for them. The only effect of these privileges is to harden them in guilt, and to sink them deeper in hell; see the notes, 2 Corinthians 2:16.

Verse 3

For we which have believed do enter into rest - That is, it is a certain fact that believers "will" enter into rest. That promise is made to "believers;" and as we have evidence that "we" come under the denomination of believers, it will follow that we have the offer of rest as well as they. That this is so, the apostle proceeds to prove; that is, he proceeds to show from the Old Testament that there was a promise to "believers" that they would enter into rest. Since there was such a promise, and since there was danger that by unbelief that "rest" might be lost, he proceeds to show them the danger, and to warn them of it.

As he said … - see Hebrews 3:11. The meaning of this passage is this. "God made a promise of rest to those who believe. They to whom the offer was first made failed, and did not enter in. It must follow, therefore, that the offer extended to others, since God designed that some should enter in, or that it should not he provided in vain. To them it was a solemn declaration that unbelievers should not enter in, and this implied that believers would. "As we now," says he, "sustain the character of "believers," it follows that to us the promise of rest is now made and we may partake of it."

If they shall enter … - That is, they shall "not" enter in; see Hebrews 3:11. The "rest" here spoken of as reserved for Christians must be different from that of the promised land. It is something that pertains to Christians now, and it must, therefore, refer to the "rest" that remains in heaven.

Although the works were finished … - This is a difficult expression. What works are referred to? it may be asked. How does this bear on the subject under discussion? How can it be a proof that there remains a "rest" to those who believe now? This was the point to be demonstrated; and this passage was designed clearly to bear on that point. As it is in our translation, the passage seems to make no sense whatever. Tyndale renders it, "And that spake he verily long after that the works were made from the

foundation of the world laid;" which makes much better sense than our translation. Doddridge explains it as meaning, "And this may lead us further to reflect on what is said elsewhere concerning his works as they were finished from the foundation of the world." But it is difficult to see why they should reflect on his works just then, and how this would bear on the case in hand. Prof. Stuart supposes that the word "rest" must be understood here before "works," and translates it, "Shall not enter into my rest, to wit, rest from the works which were performed when the world was founded." Prof. Robinson (Lexicon) explains it as meaning, "The rest here spoken of, ‹my rest,' could not have been God's resting from his works Genesis 2:2, for this rest, the Sabbath, had already existed from the creation of the world." Dr. John P. Wilson (ms. notes) renders it, "For we who have believed, do enter into rest (or a cessation) indeed (καίτοι kaitoi) of the works done (among people) from the beginning of the world." Amidst this variety of interpretation it is difficult to determine the true sense. But perhaps the main thought may be collected from the following remarks:

(1)The Jews as the people of God had a rest promised them in the land of Canaan. Of that they failed by their unbelief.

(2)the purpose of the apostle was to prove that there was a similar promise made to the people of God long subsequent to that, and to which "all" his people were invited.

(3)that rest was not that of the promised land, it was such as "God had himself" when he had finished the work of creation. That was especially "his rest" - the rest of God, without toil, or weariness, and after his whole "work" was finished.

(4)his people were invited to the same "rest" - the rest of God - to partake of his felicity; to enter into that bliss which "he" enjoyed when he had finished the work of creation. The happiness of the saints was to be "like" that. It was to be "in their case" also a rest from toil - to be enjoyed at the end of all that "they" had to do.

To prove that Christians were to attain to "such" a rest, was the purpose which the apostle had in view - showing that it was a general doctrine pertaining to believers in every age, that there was a promise of rest for them. I would then regard the middle clause of this verse as a parenthesis, and render the whole, "For we who are believers shall enter into rest - (the

rest) indeed which occurred when the works were finished at the foundation of the world - as he said (in one place) as I have sworn in my wrath they shall not enter into my rest." That was the true rest - such rest or repose as "God" had when he finished the work of creation - such as he has now in heaven. This gives the highest possible idea of the dignity and desirableness of that "rest" to which we look forward - for it is to be such as God enjoys, and is to elevate us more and more to him. What more exalted idea can there be of happiness than to participate in the calmness, the peace, the repose, the freedom from raging passions, from wearisome toil, and from agitating cares, which God enjoys? Who, torn with conflicting passions here, wearied with toil, and distracted with care, ought not to feel it a privilege to look forward to that rest? Of this rest the Sabbath and the promised land were emblems. They to whom the promise was made did not enter in, but some "shall" enter in, and the promise therefore pertains to us.

Verse 4

For he spake - Genesis 2:2. "And God did rest." "At the close of the work of creation he rested. The work was done. "That" was the rest of God. He was happy in the contemplation of his own works; and he instituted that day to be observed as a memorial of "his" resting from his works, and as a "type" of the eternal rest which remained for man." The idea is this, that the notion of "rest" of some kind runs through all dispensations. It was seen in the finishing of the work of creation; seen in the appointment of the Sabbath; seen in the offer of the promised land, and is seen now in the promise of heaven. All dispensations contemplate "rest," and there must be such a prospect before man now. When it is said that "God did rest," of course it does not mean that he was wearied with his toil, but merely that he "ceased" from the stupendous work of creation. He no more put forth creative energy, but calmly contemplated his own works in their beauty and grandeur; Genesis 1:31. In carrying forward the great affairs of the universe, he always has been. actively employed John 5:17, but he is not employed in the work of "creation" properly so called. That is done; and the sublime cessation from that constitutes the "rest of God."

Verse 5

And in this place again - Psalm 95:11.

If they shall enter - That is, they shall not enter; see the notes at Hebrews 3:11. The object of quoting this here seems to be two-fold:

(1)To show that even in this Psalm God spoke of "his" rest, and said that they should not enter into it; and,

(2)it is connected with Hebrews 4:6, and is designed to show that it was implied that a rest yet remained. "That which deserves to be called "the divine rest" is spoken of in the Scriptures, and as "they" did not enter into it, it follows that it must be in reserve for some others, and that the promise must still remain."

Verse 6

Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein - That is, "Since there is a rest spoken of in the Scriptures, implying that it is to be enjoyed by some, and since they to whom it was first promised did not inherit it, it follows that it must still be in reserve." This is the conclusion which the apostle draws from the argument in the previous verses, and is connected with Hebrews 4:9, where he says that "there remaineth a rest to the people of God" - the point to which the whole argument tended. The statement in Hebrews 4:7, Hebrews 4:8, is to be regarded as an "interruption" in stating the conclusion, or as the suggestion of a new thought or a new argument bearing on the subject, which he sets down even while stating the conclusion from his argument. It has the appearance of being "suggested" to him as a new thought of importance, and which he preferred to place even in the midst of the summing up of the argument rather than omit it altogether. It denotes a state of mind full of the subject, and where one idea came hastening after another, and which it was deemed important to notice, even though it should seem to be out of place. The "position" in this Hebrews 4:6 is, that it was a settled or indisputable matter that some would enter into rest. The implied argument to prove this is:

(1)that there was a "rest" spoken of which deserved to be called a "divine rest," or the "rest of God;"

(2)it could not be supposed that God would prepare such a rest in vain, for it would follow that if he had suited up a world of rest, he designed that it should be occupied. As he knew, therefore, that they to whom it was first offered would not enter in, it must be that he designed it for some others, and that it "remained" to be occupied by us now.

And they to whom it was first preached - Margin, "The Gospel." Greek "Evangelized;" that is, to where the good news of the rest was first

announced - the Israelites. “Entered not in because of unbelief;” see the notes at Hebrews 3:19.

Verse 7

Again, he limiteth - He designates, or definitely mentions. The word rendered “limiteth” - ὁρίζει horizei- means to “bound,” to set a boundary - as of a field or farm; and then to determine or fix definitely, to designate, appoint. Here it means, that he specifies particularly, or mentions expressly.

A certain day - A particular time; he mentions today particularly. That is, in the time of David, he uses the word “today,” as if time was “then” an offer of rest, and as if it were then possible to enter into it. The object of the additional thought was to show that the offer of rest was not confined to the Israelites to whom it was first made; that David regarded it as existing in his day; and that man might even then be invited to come and partake of the rest that was promised. “Nearly five hundred years after the time when the Israelites were going to the promised land, and when the offer of rest was made to them, we hear David speaking of “rest” still; rest which Was offered in his time, and which might then be lost by hardening the heart. It could not be, therefore, that the offer of rest pertained merely to the promised land. It must be something in advance of that. It must be something existing in the time of David. It must be an offer of heaven.” A Jew might feel the force of this argument more than we do; still it is conclusive to prove the point under consideration, that there was a rest spoken of long after the offer of the promised land, and that all the promises could not have pertained to that.

Saying in David - In a Psalm composed by David, or rather perhaps, saying “by” David; that is, God spake by him.

Today - Now - that is, even in the time of David.

After so long a time - That is, so long after the first promise was made; to wit, about 500 years. These are the words of Paul calling attention to the fact that so long a time after the entrance into the promised land there was still a speaking of “today,” as if even then they were called to partake of the rest.

As it is said - To quote it exactly; or to bring the express authority of the Scriptures. It is expressly said even after that long time, “today - or now, if you will hear his voice.” All this is to prove that even in that time there was an offer of rest.

Verse 8

For if Jesus - Margin, "That is, Joshua." The Syriac renders it, "Joshua the son of Nun." "Jesus" is the Greek mode of writing "Joshua," and there can be no doubt that Joshua is here intended. The object is to prove that Joshua did" not" give the people of God such a rest as to make it improper to speak of a "rest" after that time. "If Joshua had given them a complete and final rest; if by his conducting them to the promised land all had been done which had been contemplated by the promise, then it would not have been alluded to again, as it was in the time of David." Joshua "did" give them a rest in the promised land; but it was not all which was intended, and it did not exclude the promise of another and more important rest.

Then would he not - Then "God" would not have spoken of another time when that rest could be obtained. The "other day" here referred to is that which is mentioned before by the phrase "today," and refers to the time in which it is spoken of long after Joshua, to wit, in the time of David.

Verse 9

There remaineth, therefore, a rest - This is the conclusion to which the apostle comes. The meaning is this, that according to the Scriptures there is "now" a promise of rest made to the people of God. It did not pertain merely to those who were called to go to the promised land, nor to those who lived in the time of David, but it is "still" true that the promise of rest pertains to "all" the people of God of every generation. The "reasoning" by which the apostle comes to this conclusion is briefly this:

(1)That there was a "rest" - called "the rest of God" - spoken of in the earliest period of the world - implying that God meant that it should be enjoyed.

(2)that the Israelites, to whom the promise was made, failed of obtaining what was promised by their unbelief.

(3)that God intended that "some" should enter into his rest - since it would not be provided in vain.

(4)that long after the Israelites had fallen in the wilderness, we find the same reference to a rest which David in his time exhorts those whom he addressed to endeavor to obtain.

(5)that if all that had been meant by the word "rest," and by the promise, had been accomplished when Joshua conducted the Israelites to the land of

Canaan, we should not have heard another day spoken of when it was possible to forfeit that rest by unbelief.

It followed, therefore, that there was something besides that; something that pertained to all the people of God to which the name rest might still be given, and which they were exhorted still to obtain. The word "rest" in this verse - σαββατισμὸς sabbatismos- "Sabbatism," in the margin is rendered "keeping of a Sabbath." It is a different word from σάββατον sabbaton- "the Sabbath;" and it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and is not found in the Septuagint. It properly means "a keeping Sabbath" from σαββατίζω sabbatizō- "to keep Sabbath." This word, not used in the New Testament, occurs frequently in the Septuagint; Exodus 16:30; Leviticus 23:32; Leviticus 26:35; 2 Chronicles 36:21; and in 3Esdr. 1:58; Hebrews 4:4, note), and of which that was the type and emblem. There will be "employment" there, but it will be without fatigue; there will be the occupation of the mind, and of whatever powers we may possess, but without weariness. Here we are often worn down and exhausted. The body sinks under continued toil, and fails into the grave. There the slave will rest from his toil; the man here oppressed and broken down by anxious care will cease from his labors. We know but little of heaven; but we know that a large part of what now oppresses and crushes the frame will not exist there. Slavery will be unknown; the anxious care for support will be unknown, and all the exhaustion which proceeds from the love of gain, and from ambition, will be unknown. In the wearisome toils of life, then, let us look forward to the "rest" that remains in heaven, and as the laborer looks to the shades of the evening, or to the Sabbath as a period of rest, so let us look to heaven as the place of eternal repose.

(2) heaven will be like a Sabbath. The best description of it is to say it is "an eternal Sabbath." Take the Sabbath on earth when best observed, and extend the idea to eternity, and let there be separated all idea of imperfection from its observance, and that would be heaven. The Sabbath is holy; so is heaven. It is a period of worship; so is heaven. It is for praise and for the contemplation of heavenly truth; so is heaven. The Sabbath is appointed that we may lay aside worldly cares and anxieties for a little season here; heaven that we may lay them aside forever.

(3) the Sabbath here should be like heaven. It is designed to be its type and emblem. So far as the circumstances of the case will allow, it should be

just like heaven. There should be the same employments; the same joys; the same communion with God. One of the best rules for employing the Sabbath aright is, to think what heaven will be, and then to endeavor to spend it in the same way. One day in seven at least should remind us of what heaven is to be; and that day may be, and should be, the most happy of the seven.

(4) they who do not love the Sabbath on earth, are not prepared for heaven. If it is to them a day of tediousness; if its hours move heavily; if they have no delight in its sacred employments, what would an eternity of such days be? How would they be passed? Nothing can be clearer than that if we have no such happiness in a season of holy rest, and in holy employments here, we are wholly unprepared for heaven. To the Christian it is the subject of the highest joy in anticipation that heaven is to be "one long unbroken" sabbath - an eternity of successive Sabbath hours. But what to a sinner could be a more repulsive and gloomy prospect than such an eternal Sabbath?

(5) if this be so, then what a melancholy view is furnished as to the actual preparation of the great mass of people for heaven! How is the Sabbath now spent? In idleness; in business; in traveling; in hunting and fishing; in light reading and conversation; in sleep; in visiting; in riding, walking, lounging, "ennui;" - in revelry and dissipation; in any and every way "except the right way;" in every way except in holy communion with God. What would the race be if once transported to heaven as they are! What a prospect would it be to this multitude to have to spend "an eternity" which would be but a prolongation of the Sabbath of holiness!

(6) let those who love the Sabbath rejoice in the prospect of eternal rest in heaven. In our labor let us look to that world where wearisome toil is unknown; in our afflictions, let us look to that world where tears never fall; and when our hearts are pained by the violation of the Sabbath all around us, let us look to that blessed world where such violation will cease forever. It is not far distant. A few steps will bring us there. Of any Christian it may be said that perhaps his next Sabbath will be spent in heaven - near the throne of God.

Verse 10

For he that is entered into rest - That is, the man who is so happy as to reach heaven, will enjoy a rest similar to what God had when he finished the work of creation. It will be:

(1)acessation from toil; and,

(2)it will be a rest similar to that of God - the same kind of enjoyment, the same freedom from care, anxiety, and labor.

How happy then are they who have entered into heaven! Their toils are over. Their labors are done. Never again will they know fatigue. Never more will they feel anxious care. Let us learn then:

(1) not to mourn improperly for those who have left us and gone to heaven. Happy in the rest of God, why should not we rejoice? Why wish them back again in a world of toil!

(2) let us in our toils look forward to the world of rest. Our labors will all be over. The weary man will lay down his burden; the exhausted frame will know fatigue no more. Rest is sweet at night after the toils of day; how much more sweet will it be in heaven after the toils of life! Let us.

(3) labor while is is called today. Soon we shall cease from our work. All that we have to do is to be done soon. We shall soon cease from "our" work as God did from his. What we have to do for the salvation of children, brothers, sisters, friends, and for the world, is to be done soon. From the abodes of bliss we shall not be sent forth to speak to our kindred of the blessedness of that world, or to admonish our friends to escape from the place of despair. The pastor will not come again to warn and invite his people; the parent will not come again to tell his children of the Saviour and of heaven; the neighbor will not come to admonish his neighbor; compare Luke 16:24-29. We shall all have ceased from our work as God did from his; and never again shall we speak to a living friend to invite him to heaven.

Verse 11

Let us therefore labour - Let us earnestly strive. Since there is a rest whose attainment is worth all our efforts; since so many have failed of reaching it by their unbelief, and since there is so much danger that we may fail of it also, let us give all diligence that we may enter into it. Heaven is

never obtained but by diligence; and no one enters there who does not earnestly desire it, and who does not make a sincere effort to reach it.

Of unbelief - Margin, "disobedience." The word "unbelief" best expresses the sense, as the apostle was showing that this was the principal thing that prevented people from entering into heaven; see the notes at Hebrews 3:12.

Verse 12

For the word of God - The design of this and the following verse is obvious. It is to show that we cannot escape the notice of God; that all insincerity, unbelief, hypocrisy, will be detected by him; and that since our hearts are perfectly open before him, we should be sincere and should not attempt to deceive him. The sense is, that the truth of God is all-penetrating and searching, and that the real thoughts and intents of the heart will be brought to light, and that if there is insincerity and self-deception there can be no hope of escape. There has been a great variety of opinion here about the meaning of the phrase "the Word of God." Some have supposed that it means the Lord Jesus; others, the whole of the divine revelation; others the gospel; others the particular threatening referred to here. The "Word of God" is "what God speaks" - whether it be a promise or a threatening; whether it be Law or gospel; whether it be a simple declaration or a statement of a doctrine. The idea here is, that what "God had said" is suited to detect hypocrisy and to lay open the true nature of the feelings of the soul, so that there can be no escape for the guilty. His "truth" is adapted to bring out the real feelings, and to show man exactly what he is. Truth always has this power - whether preached, or read, or communicated by conversation, or impressed upon the memory and conscience by the Holy Spirit. There can be no escape from the penetrating, searching application of the Word of God. That truth has power to show what man is, and is like a penetrating sword that lays open the whole man; compare Isaiah 49:2. The phrase "the Word of God" here may be applied, therefore, to the "truth" of God, however made known to the mind. In some way it will bring out the real feelings, and show what man is.

Is quick - Greek ζῶν zōn- "living." It is not dead, inert, and powerless. It has a "living" power, and is energetic and active. It is "adapted" to produce this effect.

And powerful - Mighty. Its power is seen in awakening the conscience; alarming the fears; laying bare the secret feelings of the heart, and causing

the sinner to tremble with the apprehension of the coming judgment. All the great changes in the moral world for the better, have been caused by the power of truth. They are such as the truth in its own nature is suited to effect, and if we may judge of its power by the greatness of the revolutions produced, no words can over-estimate the might of the truth which God has revealed.

Sharper than any two-edged sword - Literally, "two-mouthed" sword - δίστομον distomonThe word "mouth" was given to the sword because it seemed to "devour" all before it. It consumed or destroyed as a wild beast does. The comparison of the Word of God to a sword or to an arrow, is designed to show its power of penetrating the heart; Ecclesiastes 12:11, "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies;" compare Isaiah 49:2. "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword;" Revelation 1:16, "And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword;" Revelation 2:12, Revelation 2:16; Revelation 19:15. The comparison is common in the classics, and in Arabic poetry; see Gesenius, on Isaiah 49:2. The idea is that of piercing, or penetrating; and the meaning here is, that the Word of God reaches the "heart" - the very center of action, and lays open the motives and feelings of the man. It was common among the ancients to have a sword with two edges. The Roman sword was commonly made in this manner. The fact that it had two edges made it more easy to penetrate, as well as to cut with every way.

Piercing even to the dividing asunder - Penetrating so as to divide.

Soul and spirit - The animal life from the immortal soul. The former word here - ψυχή psuchē- "soul" - is evidently used to denote the "animal life," as distinguished from the mind or soul. The latter word - πνεῦμα pneuma- "spirit" - means the soul; the immaterial and immortal part; what lives when the animal life is extinct. This distinction occurs in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, "your whole spirit, and soul, and body;" and it is a distinction which we are constantly in the habit of making. There is the body in man - the animal life - and the immortal part that leaves the body when life is extinct. Mysteriously united, they constitute one man. When the animal life is separated from the soul, or when the soul leaves the animated body, the body dies, and life is extinct. To separate the one from the other is, therefore, the same as to take life - and this is the idea here, that the Word of God is like a sharp sword that inflicts deadly wounds. The sinner "dies;" that is, he becomes dead to his former hopes, or is "slain" by the Law;

Romans 7:9, "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." This is the power referred to here - the power of destroying the hopes of the sinner; cutting him down under conviction; and prostrating him as if a sword had pierced his heart.

And of the joints and marrow - The figure is still continued of the sword that takes life. Such a sword would seem to penetrate even the joints and marrow of the body. It would separate the joints, and pierce through the very bones to the marrow. A similar effect, Paul says, is produced by truth. It seems to penetrate the very essence of the soul, and lay it all open to the view.

And is a discerner of the thoughts - It shows what the thoughts and intentions are. Prof. Stuart, Bloomfield, and some others, suppose that the reference here is to "God" speaking by his word. But the more natural construction certainly is, to refer it to the Word or truth of God. It is true that God searches the heart, and knows the thoughts, but that is not the truth which is prominent here. It is, that the thoughts and intents of the heart are brought out to view by the Word of God. And can anyone doubt this? see Romans 7:7. Is it not true that people are made to see their real character under the exhibition of the truth of God? That in the light of the Law they see their past lives to be sinful? That the exhibition of truth calls to their recollection many long-forgotten sins? And that their real feelings are brought out when the truth of God is proclaimed? Men then are made to look upon their motives as they had never done before, and to see in their hearts feelings whose existence they would not have suspected if it had not been for the exhibition of the truth. The exhibition of the truth is like pouring down the beams of the sun at midnight on a dark world; and the truth lays open the real feelings of the sinner as that sun would disclose the clouds of wickedness that are now performed under cover of the night. Many a man has a deep and fixed hostility to God and to his gospel who might never be sensible of it if the truth was not faithfully proclaimed. The particular idea here is, that the truth of God will detect the feelings of the hypocrite and self-deceiver. They cannot always conceal their emotions, and the time will come when truth, like light poured into the soul, will reveal their unbelief and their secret sins. They who are cherishing a hope of salvation, therefore, should be on their guard lest they mistake the name for the reality. Let us learn from this verse:

(1) The power of truth. It is “suited” to lay open the secret feelings of the soul. There is not an effect produced in awakening a sinner; or in his conviction, conversion, and sanctification, which the truth is not “adapted” to produce. The truth of God is not dead; nor suited to make people “worse;” nor designed merely to show its own “weakness,” and to be a mere occasion on which the Holy Spirit acts on the mind; it is in its own nature Fitted to produce just the effects which are produced when it awakens, convicts, converts, and sanctifies the soul.

(2) the truth should be preached with the feeling that it is adapted to this end. Men who preach should endeavor to understand the nature of the mind and of the moral feelings, as really as he who would inflict a deadly wound should endeavor to understand enough about anatomy to know where the heart is, or he who administers medicine should endeavor to know what is adapted to remove certain diseases. And he who has no belief in the efficacy of truth to produce any effect, resembles one who should suppose that all knowledge of the human system was needless to him who wished to perform a surgical operation, and who should cut at random - piously leaving it with God to direct the knife; or he who should go into a hospital of patients and administer medicines indiscriminately - devoutly saying that all healing must come from God, and that the use of medicine was only to show its own weakness! Thus, many men seem to preach. Yet for aught that appears, truth is just as wisely adapted to save the soul as medicine is to heal the sick; and why then should not a preacher be as careful to study the nature of truth and its adaptedness to a particular end, as a student of the healing art is to understand the adaptedness of medicine to cure disease? The true way of preaching is, to feel that truth is adapted to the end in view; to select what is best suited for that end; to preach as if the whole result depended on getting that truth before the mind and into the heart - and then to leave the whole result with God - as a physician with right feelings will exert all his skill to save his patient, and then commit the whole question of life and health to God. He will be more likely to praise God intelligently who believes that he has wisely adapted a plan to the end in view, than he who believes that God works only at random.

Verse 13

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight - There is no being who is not wholly known to God. All his thoughts, feelings, plans, are distinctly understood. Of the truth of this there can be no doubt. The "design" of the remark here is, to guard those to whom the apostle was writing from self-deception - since they could conceal nothing from God.

All things are naked - Exposed; uncovered. There is nothing that can be concealed from God; Psalm 139:11-12.

"The veil of night is no disguise,
No screen from thy all-searching eyes;
Thy hands can seize thy foes as soon.
Thro' midnight shades as blazing noon."

And opened - - τετραχηλισμένα tetrachēlismenaThe word used here - Τραχηλίζω Trachēlizō- properly means:

(1)to lay bare the neck, or to bend it back, so as to expose the throat to being cut;

(2)to expose; to lay open in any way.

Why the word is used here has been a matter of inquiry. Some have supposed that the phrase is derived from offering sacrifice, and from the fact that the priest carefully examined the victim to see whether it was sound, before it was offered. But this is manifestly a forced exposition. Others have supposed that it is derived from the custom of bending back the head of a criminal so as to look full in his face, and recognize him so as not to be mistaken; but this is equally forced and unnatural. This opinion was first proposed by Erasmus, and has been adopted by Clarke and others. Bloomfield, following, as he says, the interpretation of Chrysostom, Grotius (though this is not the sentiment of Grotius), Beza, Atling, Hammond, and others, supposes the allusion to be to the custom of cutting the animal down the back bone through the spinal marrow, and thus of laying it open entirely.

This sense would well suit the connection. Grotius supposes that it means to strip off the skin by dividing it at the neck. and then removing it. This view is also adopted substantially by Doddridge. These explanations are forced, and imply a departure more or less from the proper meaning of the Greek word. The most simple and obvious meaning is usually the best in explaining the Bible. The word which the apostle employs relates to "the neck" - τράχηλος trachēlos- and not to the spinal marrow, or the skin. The proper meaning of the verb is "to bend the neck back" so as to expose it in front when an animal is slain - Passow. Then it means to make bare; to

remove everything like covering; to expose a thing entirely - as the naked neck is for the knife. The allusion here is undoubtedly to the "sword" which Paul had referred to in the previous verse, as dividing the soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow; and the meaning is, that in the hand of God, who held that sword, everything was exposed.

We are in relation to that, like an animal whose neck is bent back, and laid bare, and ready for the slaughter. Nothing "hinders" God from striking; there is nothing that can prevent that sword from penetrating the heart - any more than when the neck of the animal is bent back and laid bare, there is anything that can hinder the sacrificing priest from thrusting the knife into the throat of the victim. If this be the true interpretation, then what an affecting view does it give of the power of God, and of the exposedness of man to destruction! All is bare, naked, open. There is no concealment; no hindrance; no power of resistance. In a moment God can strike, and his dreadful sentence shall fall on the sinner like the knife on the exposed throat of the victim. What emotions should the sinner have who feels that he is exposed each moment to the sentence of eternal justice - to the sword of God - as the animal with bent-back neck is exposed to the knife! And what solemn feelings should all have who remember that all is naked and open before God! Were we "transparent" so that the world could see all we are, who would dare go abroad?

Who would wish the world to read all his thoughts and feelings for a single day? Who would wish his best friends to look in upon his naked soul as we can look into a room through a window? O what blushes and confusion; what a hanging down of the head, and what an effort to escape from the gaze of people would there be, if every one knew that all his secret feelings were seen by every person whom he met! Social enjoyment would end; and the now frivolous and blithe multitudes in the streets would become processions of downcast and blushing convicts. And yet all these are known to God. He reads every thought; sees every feeling; looks through the whole soul. How careful should we be to keep our hearts pure; how anxious that there should be nothing in the soul that we are not willing to have known!

With whom we have to do - Literally, "with whom is our account." Our account; our reckoning is to be with him before whom all is naked and

open. We cannot, therefore, impose on him. We cannot pass off hypocrisy for sincerity. He will judge us according to truth, not according to appearances; and his sentence, therefore, will be just. A man who is to be tried by one "who knows all about him," should be a pure and holy man.

Verse 14

Seeing then that we have a great high priest - The apostle here resumes the subject which had been slightly hinted at in Hebrews 2:17; Hebrews 3:1, and pursues it to the end of Luke 1:5 note; Matthew 26:3 note. The name "great high priest" would designate him who actually held the office, and was at the head of all the other priests; and the idea here is, not merely that the Lord Jesus was "a priest," but that he was at the head of all: in the Christian economy he sustained a rank that corresponded with that of the great high priest in the Jewish.

That is passed into the heavens - Hebrews 9:12, Hebrews 9:24. The Jewish high priest went once a year into the most holy place in the temple, to offer the blood of the atonement; see the notes on Hebrews 9:7. Paul says that the Christian High Priest has gone into heaven. He has gone there also to make intercession, and to sprinkle the blood of the atonement on the mercy-seat; see the notes at Hebrews 9:24-25.

Jesus the Son of God - Not a descendant of Aaron, but one much greater - the Son of God; see the notes at Hebrews 1:2.

Let us hold fast our profession - see the notes at Hebrews 10:23; Hebrews 3:14; see the note, Hebrews 3:1. This is the drift and scope of the Epistle - to show that Christians should hold fast their profession, and not apostatize. The object of the apostle now is to show why the fact that we have such a High Priest, is a reason why we should hold fast our professed attachment to him. These reasons - which are drawn out in the succeeding chapters - are such as the following:

(1)We may look to him for assistance - since he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; Hebrews 4:15-16.

(2)the impossibility of being renewed again if we should fall away from him, since there is but "one" such High Priest, and since the sacrifice for sin can never be repeated; Hebrews 10:27-30.

By considerations such as these, the apostle aims to show them the danger of apostasy, and to urge them to a faithful adherence to their Christian profession.

Verse 15

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched - Our High Priest is not cold and unfeeling. That is, we have one who is abundantly qualified to sympathize with us in our afflictions, and to whom, therefore, we may look for aid and support in trials. Had we a high priest who was cold and heartless; who simply performed the external duties of his office without entering into the sympathies of those who came to seek for pardon; who had never experienced any trials, and who felt himself above those who sought his aid, we should necessarily feel disheartened in attempting to overcome our sins, and to live to God. His coldness would repel us; his stateliness would awe us; his distance and reserve would keep us away, and perhaps render us indifferent to all desire to be saved. But tenderness and sympathy attract those who are feeble, and kindness does more than anything else to encourage those who have to encounter difficulties and dangers; see the notes at Hebrews 2:16-18. Such tenderness and sympathy has our Great High Priest.

But was in all points tempted like as we are - "Tried" as we are; see the notes at Hebrews 2:18. He was subjected to all the kinds of trial to which we can be, and he is, therefore, able to sympathize with us and to aid us. He was tempted - in the literal sense; he was persecuted; he was poor; he was despised; he suffered physical pain; he endured the sorrows of a lingering and most cruel death.

Yet without sin - 1 Peter 2:22. "Who did no sin;" Isaiah 53:9, "He had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth;" Hebrews 7:26, "Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." The importance of this fact - that the Great High Priest of the Christian profession was "without sin," the apostle illustrates at length in Hebrews 79. He here merely alludes to it, and says that one who was "without sin" was able to assist those who were sinners, and who put their trust in him.

Verse 16

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace - "The throne of grace!" What a beautiful expression. A throne is the seat of a sovereign; a throne of grace is designed to represent a sovereign seated to dispense mercy and pardon. The illustration or comparison here may have been derived from the temple service. In that service God is represented as seated in the most holy place on the mercy seat. The high priest approaches that seat or throne of the divine majesty with the blood of the atonement to make intercession for the people, and to plead for pardon; see the notes on

Hebrews 9:7-8. That scene was emblematic of heaven. God is seated on a throne of mercy. The great High Priest of the Christian calling, having shed his own blood to make expiation, is represented as approaching, God and pleading for the pardon of people. To a God willing to show mercy he comes with the merits of a sacrifice sufficient for all, and pleads for their salvation. We may, therefore, come with boldness and look for pardon. We come not depending on our own merits, but we come where a sufficient sacrifice has been offered for human guilt; and where we are assured that God is merciful. We may, therefore, come without hesitancy, or trembling, and ask for all the mercy that we need.

That we may obtain mercy - This is what we want first. We need pardon - as the first thing when we come to God. We are guilty and self-condemned - and our first cry should be for "mercy" - "mercy." A man who comes to God not feeling his need of mercy must fail of obtaining the divine favor; and he will be best prepared to obtain that favor who has the deepest sense of his need of forgiveness.

And find grace - Favor - strength, help, counsel, direction, support, for the various duties and trials of life. This is what we next need - we all need - we always need. Even when pardoned, we need grace to keep us from sin, to aid us in duty, to preserve us in the day of temptation. And feeling our need of this, we may come and ask of God "all" that we want for this purpose. Such is the assurance given us; and to this bold approach to the throne of grace all are freely invited. In view of it, let us,

(1) Rejoice that there "is" a throne of grace. What a world would this be if God sat on a throne of "justice" only, and if no mercy were ever to be shown to people! Who is there who would not be overwhelmed with despair? But it is not so. He is on a throne of grace. By day and by night; from year to year; from generation to generation; he is on such a throne. In every land he may be approached, and in as many different languages as people speak, may they plead for mercy. In all times of our trial and temptation we may be assured that he is seated on that throne, and wherever we are, we may approach him with acceptance.

(2) we "need" the privilege of coming before such a throne. We are sinful - and need mercy; we are feeble, and need grace to help us. There is not a day of our lives in which we do not need pardon; not an hour in which we do not need grace.

(3) how obvious are the propriety and necessity of prayer! Every man is a sinner - and should pray for pardon; every man is weak, feeble, dependent, and should pray for grace. Not until a man can prove that he has never done any sin, should he maintain that he has no need of pardon; not until he can show that he is able alone to meet the storms and temptations of life, should he feel that he has no need to ask for grace. Yet who can feel this? And how strange it is that all people do not pray!

(4) it is easy to be forgiven. All that needs to be done is to plead the merits of our Great High Priest, and God is ready to pardon. Who would not be glad to be able to pay a debt in a manner so easy? Yet how few there are who are willing to pay the debt to justice thus!

(5) it is easy to obtain all the grace that we need. We have only to "ask for it" - and it is done. How easy then to meet temptation if we would! How strange that any should rely on their own strength, when they may lean on the arm of God!

(6) if people are not pardoned, and if they fall into sin and ruin, they alone are to blame. There is a throne of grace. It is always accessible. There is A God. He is always ready to pardon. There is A Redeemer. He is the Great High Priest of people. He is always interceding. His merits may always be pleaded as the ground of our salvation. Why then, O why, should any remain unforgiven and perish? On them alone the blame must lie. In their own bosoms is the reason why they are not saved.

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

In this chapter Hebrews 5:1-14 the subject of the priestly office of Christ is continued and further illustrated. It had been introduced Hebrews 2:16, Hebrews 2:18; Hebrews 3:1; Hebrews 4:14-17. The Jews regarded the office of high priest as an essential feature in the true religion; and it became, therefore, of the highest importance to show that in the Christian system there was a High Priest every way equal to that of the Jews. In his rank; in his character; and in the sacrifice which he offered, he was more than equal to the Jewish high priest, and they who had forsaken Judaism and embraced Christianity had lost nothing in this respect by the change, and had gained much. It became necessary, therefore, in making out this point, to institute a comparison between the Jewish high priest and the Great Author of the Christian religion, and this comparison is pursued in this and the following chapters. The comparison in this chapter turns mainly on the "qualifications" for the office, and the question whether the Lord Jesus had those qualifications. The chapter embraces the following points:

I. The qualifications of a Jewish high priest; Hebrews 5:1-4. They are these.

(1)he must have been ordained or appointed by God for the purpose of offering gifts and sacrifices for sins; Hebrews 5:1.

(2)he must be tender and compassionate in his feelings, so that he can "sympathize" with those for whom he ministers; Hebrews 5:2.

(3)he must have an offering to bring to God, and be able to present a sacrifice alike for himself and for the people; Hebrews 5:3.

(4)he could not take this honor on himself, but must have evidence that he was called of God, as was Aaron; Hebrews 5:4.

II. An inquiry whether these qualifications were found in the Lord Jesus, the great High priest of the Christian dispensation; Hebrews 5:5-10. In considering this, the apostle specifies the following qualifications in him, corresponding to those which he had said were required by the Jewish high priest:

(1)He did not take this honor on himself, but was called directly by God, and after an order superior to the Aaronic priesthood - the order of Melchizedek; Hebrews 5:5-6, Hebrews 5:9-10.

(2)he was kind, tender, and compassionate, and showed that he was able to sympathize with those for whom he had undertaken the office. When on the earth he had evinced all the tenderness which could be desired in one who had come to pity and save mankind. He had a tender, sensitive, human nature. He felt deeply as a man, under the pressure of the great sufferings which he endured, and thus showed that he was abundantly qualified to sympathize with his people; Hebrews 5:7-8.

III. In Hebrews 5:10 the apostle had introduced, incidentally, a topic of great difficulty; and he adds Hebrews 5:11-14, that he had much to say on that subject, but that those whom he addressed were not qualified then to understand it. They ought to have been so far advanced in knowledge as to have been able to embrace the more abstruse and difficult points connected with the doctrines of Christianity. But they needed, he says, instruction even yet in the more simple elements of religion, and he feared that what he had to say of Melchizedek would be far above their comprehension. This point, therefore, he drops for the present, and in Hebrews 6 states again, and at greater length, the danger of apostasy, and the importance of perseverance in endeavoring to comprehend the sublime mysteries of the Christian religion; and then Hebrews 7 he resumes the subject of the comparison between Christ and Melchizedek.

Verse 1

For every high priest - That is, among the Jews, for the remarks relate to the Jewish system. The Jews had one high priest who was regarded as the successor of Aaron. The word "high priest" means "chief priest;" that is, a priest of higher rank and office than others. By the original regulation the Jewish high priest was to be of the family of Aaron Exodus 29:9, though in later times the office was frequently conferred on others. In the time of the Romans it had become venal, and the Mosaic regulation was disregarded; Deuteronomy 17:8-12; Deuteronomy 19:17; Deuteronomy 21:5; Deuteronomy 27:9-10.

He only had the privilege of entering the most holy place once a year, on the great day of atonement, to make expiation for the sins of the people; Leviticus 21:13. The "dress" of the high priest was much more costly and magnificent than that of the inferior order of priests; Exodus 39:1-7. He

wore a mantle or robe - מציל mèiyl- of blue, with the borders embroidered with pomegranates in purple and scarlet; an "ephod" - אפוד ʿephowd- made of cotton, with crimson, purple, and blue, and ornamented with gold worn over the robe or mantle, without sleeves, and divided below the arm-pits into two parts or halves, of which one was in front covering the breast, and the other behind covering the back. In the ephod was a breastplate of curious workmanship, and on the head a mitre. The breastplate was a piece of broidered work about ten inches square, and was made double, so as to answer the purpose of a pouch or bag. It was adorned with twelve precious stones, each one having the name of one of the tribes of Israel. The two upper corners of the breastplate were fastened to the ephod, and the two lower to the girdle.

Taken from among men - There maybe an allusion here to the fact that the great High Priest of the Christian dispensation had a higher than human origin, and was selected from a rank far above people. Or it may be that the meaning is, that every high priest on earth - including all under the old dispensation and the great high priest of the new - is ordained with reference to the welfare of people, and to bring some valuable offering forman to God.

Is ordained for men - Is set apart or consecrated for the welfare of people. The Jewish high priest was set apart to his office with great solemnity; see Hebrews 9:6-10. We may remark here:

(1)that the proper office of a priest is to present a "sacrifice" for sin.

(2)it is "improper" to give the name "priest" to a minister of the gospel. The reason is, that he offers no sacrifice; he sprinkles no blood. He is appointed to "preach the word," and to lead the devotions of the church, but not to offer sacrifice. Accordingly the New Testament preserves entire consistency on this point, for the name "priest" is never once given to the apostles, or to any other minister of the gospel.

Among the Papists there is "consistency" - though gross and dangerous error - in the use of the word "priest." They believe that the minister of religion offers up" the real body and blood of our Lord;" that the bread and wine are changed by the words of consecration into the "body and blood, the soul and divinity, of the Lord Jesus" (Decrees of the Council of Trent), and that "this" is really offered by him as a sacrifice. Accordingly they "elevate the host;" that is, lift up, or offer the sacrifice and, require all to bow before it and worship, and with this view they are "consistent" in

retaining the word "priest." But why should this name be applied to a "Protestant" minister, who believes that all this is blasphemy, and who claims to have no "sacrifice" to offer when he comes to minister before God? The great sacrifice; the one sufficient atonement, has been offered - and the ministers of the gospel are appointed to proclaim that truth to men, not to offer sacrifices for sin.

Verse 2

Who can have compassion - Margin, "Reasonably bear with." The idea is that of "sympathizing with." The high priest is taken from among men, in order that he may have a fellow-feeling for those on whose behalf he officiates. Sensible of his own ignorance, he is able to sympathize with those who are ignorant; and compassed about with infirmity, he is able to succour those who have like infirmities.

And on them that are out of the way - The erring, and the guilty. If he were taken from an order of beings superior to people, be would be less qualified to sympathize with those who felt that they were sinners, and who needed pardon.

For that he himself also is compassed with infirmity - see chap. Hebrews 7:28. He is liable to err; He is subject to temptation; he must die, and appear before God - and encompassed with these infirmities, he is better qualified to minister in behalf of guilty and dying people. For the same reason it is, that the ministers of the gospel are chosen from among people. They are of like passions with others. They are sinners; they are dying men. They can enter into the feelings of those who are conscious of guilt; they can sympathize with those who tremble in dread of death; they can partake of the emotions of those who expect soon to appear before God.

Verse 3

And by reason hereof - Because he is a sinner; an imperfect man. "As for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins." To make an expiation for sins. He needs the same atonement; he offers the sacrifice for himself which he does for others; Leviticus 9:7. The same thing is true of the ministers of religion now. They come before God feeling that they have need of the benefit of the same atonement which they preach to others; they plead the merits of the same blood for their own salvation which they show to be indispensable for the salvation of others.

Verse 4

And no man taketh this honor to himself - No one has a right to enter on this office unless he has the qualifications which God has prescribed. There were fixed and definite laws in regard to the succession in the office of the high priest, and to the qualifications of him who should hold the office.

But he that is called of God as was Aaron - Aaron was designated by name. It was necessary that his successors should have as clear evidence that they were called of God to the office, as though they had been mentioned by name. The manner in which the high priest was to succeed to the office was designated in the Law of Moses, but in the time of Paul these rules were little regarded. The office had become venal, and was conferred at pleasure by the Roman rulers. Still it was true that according to the Law, to which alone Paul here refers, no one might hold this office but he who had the qualifications which Moses prescribed, and which showed that he was called of God. We may remark here:

(1) that this does not refer so much to an internal, as to an "external" call. He was to have the qualifications prescribed in the Law - but it is not specified that he should be conscious of an internal call to the office, or be influenced by the Holy Spirit to it. Such a call was, doubtless, in the highest degree desirable, but it was not prescribed as an essential qualification.

(2) this has no reference to the call to the work of the Christian ministry, and should not be applied to it. It should not be urged as a proof-text to show that a minister of the gospel should have a "call" directly from God, or that he should be called according to a certain order of succession. The object of Paul is not to state this - whatever may be the truth on this point. His object is, to show that the Jewish high priest was called of God to "his" office in a certain way, showing that he held the appointment from God, and that "therefore" it was necessary that the Great High Priest of the Christian profession should be called in a similar manner. To this alone the comparison should be understood as applicable.

Verse 5

So also Christ glorified not himself; - see the notes at John 8:54. The meaning is, that Jesus was not ambitious; that he did not obtrude himself into the great office of high priest; he did not enter upon its duties without being regularly called to it. Paul claimed that Christ held that office; but, as

he was not descended front Aaron, and as no one might perform its duties without being regularly called to it, it was incumbent on him to show that Jesus was not an intruder, but had a regular vocation to that work. This he shows by a reference to two passages of the Old Testament.

But he that said unto him - That is, he who said to him "Thou art my Son," exalted him to that office. He received his appointment from him. This was decisive in the case, and this was sufficient, if it could be made out, for the only claim which Aaron and his successors could have to the office, was the fact that they had received their appointment front God.

Thou art my Son - Psalm 2:7. See this passage explained in the notes on Acts 13:38. It is used here with reference to the designation to the priestly office, though in the Psalm more particularly to the anointing to the office of king. The propriety of this application is founded on the fact that the language in the Psalm is of so general a character, that it may be applied to "any" exaltation of the Redeemer, or to any honor conferred on him. It is used here with strict propriety, for Paul is saying that Jesus did not exalt "himself," and in proof of that he refers to the fact that God had exalted him by calling him his "Son."

Verse 6

As he saith also in another place - Psalm 110:4. "Thou art a priest forever." It is evident here that the apostle means to be understood as saying that the Psalm referred to Christ, and this is one of the instances of quotation from the Old Testament respecting which there can be no doubt. Paul makes much of this argument in a subsequent part of this Epistle, Hebrews 5:1.

(2)it cannot be referred to Jehovah himself, for he is expressly Hebrews 5:1 distinguished from him who is here addressed.

(3)it cannot be referred to anyone in the time of David, for there was no one to whom he would attribute this character of superiority but God.

(4)for the same reason there was no one among his posterity, except the Messiah, to whom he would apply this language.

(5)it is expressly ascribed by the Lord Jesus to himself; Matthew 22:43-44.

(6)the scope of the Psalm is such as to be applicable to the Messiah, and there is no part of it which would be inconsistent with such a reference. Indeed, there is no passage of the Old Testament of which it would be more universally conceded that there was a reference to the Messiah, than this Psalm.

Thou art a priest - He is not here called a "high priest," for Melchizedek did not bear that title, nor was the Lord Jesus to be a high priest exactly in the sense in which the name was given to Aaron and his successors. A word is used, therefore, in a general sense to denote that he would be a "priest" simply, or would sustain the priestly office. This was all that was needful to the present argument which was, that he was "designated by God" to the priestly office, and that he had not intruded himself into it.

For ever - This was an important circumstance, of which the apostle makes much use in another part of the Epistle; see the notes at Hebrews 7:8, Hebrews 7:23-24. The priesthood of the Messiah was not to change from hand to hand; it was not to be laid down at death; it was to remain unchangeably the same.

After the order - The word rendered "order" - τάξις taxis- means "a setting in order - hence, "arrangement" or "disposition." It may be applied to ranks of soldiers; to the gradations of office; or to any rank which men sustain in society. To say that he was of the same "order" with Melchizedek, was to say that he was of the same "rank" or "stations." He was like him in his designation to the office. In what respects he was like him the apostle shows more fully in Hebrews 5:5. The meaning is, that Melchizedek was of a special rank or order; that he was not numbered with the Levitical priests, and that there were important features in his office which differed from theirs. In those features it was distinctly predicted that the Messiah would resemble him.

Melchisedek - see the notes on Hebrews 7:1 ff.

Verse 7

Who - That is, the Lord Jesus - for so the connection demands. The object of this verse and the two following is, to show that the Lord Jesus had that qualification for the office of priest to which he had referred in Hebrews 5:2. It was one important qualification for that office that he who sustained it should be able to show compassion, to aid those that were out of the way, and to sympathize with sufferers; in other words, they were

themselves encompassed with infirmity, and thus were able to succour those who were subjected to trials. The apostle shows now that the Lord Jesus had those qualifications, as far as it was possible for one to have them who had no sin. In the days of his flesh he suffered intensely; he prayed with fervor; he placed himself in a situation where he learned subjection and obedience by his trials; and in all this he went far beyond what had been evinced by the priests under the ancient dispensation.

In the days of his flesh - When he appeared on earth as a man. Flesh is used to denote human nature, and especially human nature as susceptible of suffering. The Son of God still is united to human nature, but it is human nature glorified, for in his case, as in all others, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Corinthians 15:50. He has now a glorified body Philemon 3:21, such as the redeemed will have in the future world; compare Revelation 1:13-17. The phrase "days of his flesh," means the "time" when he was incarnate, or when he lived on earth in human form. The particular time here referred to, evidently, was the agony in the garden of Gethsemane.

Prayers and supplications - These words are often used to denote the same thing. If there is a difference, the former - δεήσεις deēseis- means petitions which arise "from a sense of need" - from δέομαι deomai- "to want, to need;" the latter refers usually to supplication "for protection," and is applicable to one who under a sense of guilt flees to an altar with the symbols of supplication in his hand. Suppliants in such cases often carried an olive-branch as an emblem of the peace which they sought. A fact is mentioned by Livy respecting the Locrians that may illustrate this passage. "Ten delegates from the Locrians, squalid and covered with rags, came into the hall where the consuls were sitting, extending the badges of suppliants - olive-branches - according to the custom of the Greeks; and prostrated themselves on the ground before the tribunal, with a lamentable cry;" Lib. xxix. 100:16. The particular idea in the word used here - ἱκετηρία hiketēria- is petition for "protection, help," or "shelter" (Passow), and this idea accords well with the design of the passage. The Lord Jesus prayed as one who had "need," and as one who desired "protection, shelter," or "help." The words here, therefore, do not mean the same thing, and are not merely intensive, but they refer to distinct purposes which the Redeemer had in his prayers. He was about to die, and as a man needed the divine help; he was,

probably, tempted in that dark hour (see the note, John 12:31), and he fled to God for "protection."

With strong crying - This word does not mean "weeping," as the word "crying" does familiarly with us. It rather means an outcry, the voice of wailing and lamentation. It is the cry for help of one who is deeply distressed, or in danger; and refers here to the "earnest petition" of the Saviour when in the agony of Gethsemane or when on the cross. It is the "intensity of the voice" which is referred to when it is raised by an agony of suffering; compare Luke 22:44, "He prayed more earnestly;" Matthew 27:46, "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice - My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" see also Matthew 26:38-39; Matthew 27:50.

And tears - Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus John 11:35, and over Jerusalem; Luke 19:41. It is not expressly stated by the Evangelists that he "wept" in the garden of Gethsemane, but there is no reason to doubt that he did. In such an intense agony as to cause a bloody sweat, there is every probability that it would be accompanied with tears. We may remark then:

(1)That there is nothing "dishonorable" in tears and that man should not be ashamed on proper occasions to weep. The fact that the Son of God wept is a full demonstration that it is not disgraceful to weep. God has so made us as to express sympathy for others by tears. Religion does not make the heart insensible and hard as stoical philosophy does; it makes it tender and susceptible to impression.

(2)it is not "improper" to weep. The Son of God wept - and if he poured forth tears it cannot be wrong for us. Besides, it is a great law of our nature that in suffering we should find relief by tears. God would not have so made us if it had been wrong.

(3)the fact that the Son of God thus wept should be allowed deeply to effect our hearts.

"He wept that we might weep;
Each sin demands a tear."

He wept that he might redeem us we should weep that our sins were so great as to demand such bitter woes for our salvation. That we had sinned; that our sins caused him such anguish; that he endured for us this bitter conflict, should make us weep. Tear should answer to tear, and sigh respond to sigh, and groan to groan, when we contemplate the sorrows of the Son of

God in accomplishing our redemption. That man must have a hard heart who has never had an emotion when he has reflected that the Son of God wept, and bled, and died for him.

Unto him that was able - To God. He alone was able then to save. In such a conflict man could not aid, and the help of angels, ready as they were to assist him, could not sustain him. We may derive aid from man in trial; we may be comforted by sympathy and counsel; but there are sorrows where God only can uphold the sufferer. That God was "able" to uphold him in his severe conflict, the Redeemer could not doubt; nor need "we" doubt it in reference to ourselves when deep sorrows come over our souls.

To save him from death - It would seem from this, that what constituted the agony of the Redeemer was the dread of death, and that he prayed that he might be saved from that. This might be, so far as the language is concerned, either the dread of death on the spot by the intensity of his sufferings and by the power of the tempter, or it might be the dread of the approaching death on the cross. As the Redeemer, however, knew that he was to die on the cross, it can hardly be supposed that he apprehended death in the garden of Gethsemane. What he prayed for was, that, if it were possible, he might be spared from a death so painful as he apprehended; Matthew 26:39. Feeling that God had "power" to save him from that mode of dying, the burden of his petition was, that, if human redemption could be accomplished without such sufferings, it might please his Father to remove that cup from him.

And was heard - In John 11:42, the Saviour says," I know that thou hearest me always." In the garden of Gethsemane, he was heard. His prayer was not disregarded, though it was not" literally" answered. The cup of death was not taken away; but his prayer was not disregarded. What answer was given; what assurance or support was imparted to his soul, we are not informed. The case, however, shows us:

(1) That prayer may be heard even when the sufferings which are dreaded, and from which we prayed to be delivered, may come upon us. They may come with such assurances of divine favor, and such supports, as will be full proof that the prayer was not disregarded.

(2) that prayer offered in faith may not be always" literally answered." No one can doubt that Jesus offered the prayer of faith; and it is as little to be doubted, if he referred in the prayer to the death on the cross, that it was

not “literally” answered; compare Matthew 26:39. In like manner, it may occur now, that prayer shall be offered with every right feeling, and with an earnest desire for the object, which may not be literally answered. Christians, even in the highest exercise of faith, are not inspired to know what is best for them, and as long as this is the case, it is possible that they may ask for things which it would not be best to have granted. They who maintain that the prayer of faith is always literally answered, must hold that the Christian is under such a guidance of the Spirit of God that he cannot ask anything amiss; see the notes on 2 Corinthians 12:9.

In that he feared - Margin, “For his piety.” Coverdale, “Because he had God in honor.” Tyndale, “Because he had God in reverence.” Prof. Stuart renders it, “And was delivered from what he feared.” So also Doddridge. Whitby, “Was delivered from his fear.” Luther renders it, “And was heard for that he had God in reverence” - “dass er Gott in Ehren hatte.” Beza renders it, “His prayers being heard, he was delivered, from fear.” From this variety in translating the passage, it will be seen at once that it is attended with difficulty. The Greek is literally “from fear or reverence” - ἀπὸ της εὐλαβείας apo tēs eulabeiasThe word occurs in the New Testament only in one other place, Hebrews 12:28, where it is rendered “fear.” “Let us serve him with reverence and godly fear.” The word properly means “caution, circumspection;” then timidity, fear; then the fear of God, reverence, piety.

Where the most distinguished scholars have differed as to the meaning of a Greek phrase, it would be presumption in me to attempt to determine its sense. The most natural and obvious interpretation, however, as it seems to me, is, that it means that he was heard on account of his reverence for God; his profound veneration; his submission. Such was his piety that the prayer was “heard,” though it was not literally answered. A prayer may be “heard” and yet not literally answered; it may be acceptable to God, though it may not consist with his arrangements to bestow the very blessing that is sought. The posture of the mind of the Redeemer perhaps was something like this. He knew that he was about to be put to death in a most cruel manner. His tender and sensitive nature as a man shrank from such a death. As a man he went under the pressure of his great sorrows and pleaded that the cup might be removed, and that man might be redeemed by a less fearful scene of suffering.

That arrangement, however, could not be made. Yet the spirit which he evinced; the desire to do the will of God; the resignation, and the confidence in his Father which he evinced, were such as were acceptable in his sight. They showed that he had unconquerable virtue; that no power of temptation, and no prospect of the intensest woes which human nature could endure, could alienate him from piety. To show this was an object of inestimable value, and much as it cost the Saviour was worth it all. So now it is worth much to see what Christian piety can endure; what strong temptations it can resist; and what strength it has to hear up under accumulated woes; and even though the prayer of the pious sufferer is not directly answered, yet, that prayer is acceptable to God, and the result of such a trial is worth all that it costs.

Verse 8

Though he were a Son - Though the Son of God. Though he sustained this exalted rank, and was conscious of it, yet he was willing to learn experimentally what is meant by obedience in the midst of sufferings.

Yet learned he obedience - That is, he learned experimentally and practically. It cannot be supposed that he did not "know" what obedience was; or that he was "indisposed" to obey God before he suffered; or that he had, as we have, perversities of nature leading to rebellion which required to be subdued by suffering, but that he was willing to "test" the power of obedience in sufferings; to become personally and practically acquainted with the nature of such obedience in the midst of protracted woes; compare note on Philemon 2:8. The "object" here is, to show how well suited the Lord Jesus was to be a Saviour for mankind; and the argument is, that he has set us an example, and has shown that the most perfect obedience may be manifested in the deepest sorrows of the body and the soul. Hence, learn that one of the objects of affliction is to lead us "to obey God." In prosperity we forget it. We become self-confident and rebellious. "Then" God lays his hand upon us; breaks up our plans; crushes our hopes; takes away our health, and teaches us that we "must" be submissive to his will. Some of the most valuable lessons of obedience are learned in the furnace of affliction; and many of the most submissive children of the Almighty have been made so as the result of protracted woes.

Verse 9

And being made perfect - That is, being made a "complete" Saviour - a Saviour suited in all respects to redeem people. Sufferings were necessary to the "completeness" or the "finish" of his character as a Saviour, not to his moral perfection, for he was always without sin; see this explained in the notes on Hebrews 2:10.

He became the author - That is, he was the procuring cause (αἴτιος aitios) of salvation. It is to be traced wholly to his sufferings and death; see the note, Hebrews 2:10. "Unto all them that obey him." It is not to save those who live in sin. Only those who "obey" him have any evidence that they will be saved; see the note, John 14:15.

Verse 10

Called of God - Addressed by him, or greeted by him. The word used here does not mean that he was "appointed" by God, or "called" to the office, in the sense in which we often use the word, but simply that he was "addressed" as such, to wit, in Psalm 110:1-7;

An high priest - In the Septuagint Psalm 110:4, and in Hebrews 5:6, above, it is rendered "priest" - ἱερεύς hiereus- but the Hebrew word - כהן kohēn- is often used to denote the high priest, and may mean either; see Septuagint in Leviticus 4:3. Whether the word "priest," or "high priest," be used here, does not affect the argument of the apostle. "After the order of Melchizedek." see the notes at Hebrews 5:6.

Verse 11

Of whom we have many things to say - There are many things which seem strange in regard to him; many things which are hard to be understood. Paul knew that what be had to say of this man as a type of the Redeemer would excite wonder, and that many might be disposed to call it in question. He knew that in order to be understood, what he was about to say required a familiar acquaintance with the Scriptures, and a strong and elevated faith. A young convert; one who had just commenced the Christian life, could hardly expect to be able to understand it. The same thing is true now. One of the first questions which a young convert often asks, is, Who was Melchizedek? And one of the things which most uniformly perplex those who begin to study the Bible, is, the statement which is made about this remarkable man.

Hard to be uttered - Rather, hard to be "interpreted," or "explained." So the Greek word means.

Seeing ye are dull of hearing - That is, when they ought to have been acquainted with the higher truths of religion, they had shown that they received them slowly, and were dull of apprehension. On what particular "fact" Paul grounded this charge respecting them is unknown; nor could we know, unless we were better acquainted with the persons to whom he wrote, and their circumstances, than we now are. But he had doubtless in his eye some fact which showed that they were slow to understand the great principles of the gospel.

Verse 12

For when for the time - Considering the time which has elapsed since you were converted. You have been Christians long enough to he expected to understand such doctrines. This verse proves that those to whom he wrote were not recent converts.

Ye ought to be teachers - You ought to be able to instruct others. He does not mean to say, evidently, that they ought all to become public teachers, or preachers of the gospel, but that they ought to be able to explain to others the truths of the Christian religion. As parents they ought to be able to explain them to their children; as neighbors, to their neighbors; or as friends, to those who were inquiring the way to life.

Ye have need - That is, probably, the mass of them had need. As a people, or a church, they had shown that they were ignorant of some of the very elements of the gospel.

Again - This shows that they "had been" taught on some former occasion what were the first principles of religion, but they had not followed, up the teaching as they ought to have done.

The first principles - The very elements; the rudiments; the first lessons - such as children learn before they advance to higher studies. See the word used here explained in the notes on Galatians 4:3, under the word "elements." The Greek word is the same.

Of the oracles of God - Of the Scriptures, or what God has spoken; see the notes on Romans 3:2. The phrase here may refer to the writings of the Old Testament, and particularly to those parts which relate to the Messiah; or it may include all that God had at that time revealed in whatever way it was preserved; in 1 Peter 4:11, it is used with reference to the Christian religion, and to the doctrines which God had revealed in the gospel. In the passage before us, it may mean" the divine oracles or communications," in

whatever way they had been made known. They had shown that they were ignorant of the very rudiments of the divine teaching.

And are become such - There is more meant in this phrase than that they simply "were" such persons. The word rendered "are become" - γίνομαι ginomai- sometimes implies "a change of state," or a passing from one state to another - well expressed by the phrase "are become;" see Matthew 5:45; Matthew 4:3; Matthew 13:32; Matthew 6:16; Matthew 10:25; Mark 1:17; Romans 7:3-4. The idea here is, that they had passed from the hopeful condition in which they were when they showed that they had an acquaintance with the great principles of the gospel, and that they had become such as to need again the most simple form of instruction. This agrees well with the general strain of the Epistle, which is to preserve them from the danger of apostasy. They were verging toward it, and had come to that state where if they were recovered it must be by being again taught the elements of religion.

Have need of milk - Like little children. You can bear only the most simple nourishment. The meaning is, that they were incapable of receiving the higher doctrines of the gospel as much as little children are incapable of digesting solid food. They were in fact in a state of spiritual infancy.

And not of strong meat - Greek. "Strong food." The word "meat" with us is used now to denote only animal food. Formerly it meant food in general. The Greek word here means "nourishment."

Verse 13

For every one that useth milk - Referring to the food of children. The apostle has in view here those Christians who resemble children in this respect, that they are not capable of receiving the stronger food adapted to those of mature age.

Is unskilful - Inexperienced; who has not skill to perform anything. The word is properly applied to one who has not experience or skill, or who is ignorant. Here it does not mean that they were not true Christians - but that they had not the experience or skill requisite to enable them to understand the higher mysteries of the Christian religion.

In the word of righteousness - The doctrine respecting the way in which men become righteous, or the way of salvation by the Redeemer; see the notes on Romans 1:17.

For He is a babe - That is, in religious matters. He understands the great system only as a child may. It is common to speak of "babes in

knowledge," as denoting a state of ignorance.

Verse 14

Strong meat - Solid food pertains to those of maturer years. So it is with the higher doctrines of Christianity. They can be understood and appreciated only by those who are advanced in Christian experience.

Of full age - Margin, "Perfect." The expression refers to those who are grown up.

Who by reason of use - Margin, Or, "an habit," or, "perfection." Coverdale and Tyndale render it, "through custom." The Greek word means "habit, practice." The meaning is, that by long use and habit they had arrived to that state in which they could appreciate the more elevated doctrines of Christianity. The reference in the use of this word is not to those who "eat food" - meaning that by long use they are able to distinguish good from bad - but it is to experienced Christians, who by long experience are able to distinguish what is useful in pretended religious instruction from what is injurious. It refers to the delicate taste which an experienced Christian has in regard to those doctrines which impart most light and consolation. Experience will thus enable one to discern what is suited to the soul of man; what elevates and purifies the affections, and what tends to draw the heart near to God.

Have their senses - The word used here means properly "the senses" - as we use the term; the seat of sensation, the smell, taste, etc. Then it means "the internal sense," the faculty of perceiving truth; and this is the idea here. The meaning is, that by long experience Christians come to be able to understand the more elevated doctrines of Christianity; they see their beauty and value, and they are able carefully and accurately to distinguish them from error; compare the notes at John 7:17.

To discern both good and evil - That is, in doctrine. They will appreciate and understand what is true; they will reject what is false.

Remarks

1. Let us rejoice that we have a High Priest who is duly called to take upon himself the functions of that great office, and who lives forever: Hebrews 5:1. True, he was not of the tribe of Levi; he was not a descendant of Aaron; but he had a more noble elevation, and a more exalted rank. He was the Son of God, and was called to his office by special divine designation. He did not obtrude himself into the work; he did not unduly exalt himself, but he was directly called to it by the appointment of God.

When, moreover, the Jewish high priests could look back on the long line of their ancestors, and trace the succession up to Aaron, it was in the power of the great High Priest; of the Christian faith to look further back still, and to be associated in the office with one of higher antiquity than Aaron, and of higher rank - one of the most remarkable men of all ancient times - he whom Abraham acknowledged as his superior, and from whom Abraham received the benediction.

2. It is not unmanly to weep; Hebrews 5:7. The Son of God poured out prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears. He wept at the grave of Lazarus, and he wept over Jerusalem. If the Redeemer wept, it is not unmanly to weep; and we should not be ashamed to have tears seen streaming down our cheeks. Tears are appointed by God to be the natural expression of sorrow, and often to furnish a relief to a burdened soul. We instinctively honor the man whom we see weeping when there is occasion for grief. We sympathize with him in his sorrow, and we love him the more. When we see a father who could face the cannon‘s mouth without shrinking, yet weeping over the open grave of a daughter, we honor him more than we could otherwise do. He shows that he has a heart that can love and feel, as well as courage that can meet danger without alarm. Washington wept when he signed the death-warrant of Major Andre; and who ever read the affecting account without feeling that his character was the more worthy of our love? There is enough in the world to make us weep. Sickness, calamity, death, are around us. They come into our dwellings, and our dearest objects of affection are taken away, and “God intends” that we shall deeply feel. Tears here will make heaven more sweet; and our sorrows on earth are intended to prepare us for the joy of that day when it shall be announced to us that” all tears shall be wiped away from every face.”

3. We see the propriety of prayer in view of approaching death; Hebrews 5:7. The Redeemer prayed when he felt that he must die. We know, also, that we must die. True, we shall not suffer as he did. He had pangs on the cross which no other dying man ever bore. But death to us is an object of dread. The hour of death is a fearful hour. The scene when a man dies is a gloomy scene. The sunken eye, the pallid cheek, the clammy sweat, the stiffened corpse, the coffin, the shroud, the grave, are all sad and gloomy things. We know not, too, what severe pangs we may have when we die.

Death may come to us in some especially fearful form; and in view of his approach in any way, we should pray. Pray, dying man, that you may be prepared for that sad hour; pray, that you may not be left to complain, and rebel, and murmur then; pray that you may lie down in calmness and peace; pray that you may be enabled to "honor God even in death."

4. It is not sinful to dread death; Hebrews 5:7. The Redeemer dreaded it. His human nature, though perfectly holy, shrank back from the fearful agonies of dying. The fear of death, therefore, in itself is not sinful. Christians are often troubled because they have not that calmness in the prospect of death which they suppose they ought to have, and because their nature shrinks back from the dying pang. They suppose that such feelings are inconsistent with religion, and that they who have them cannot be true Christians. But they forget their Redeemer and his sorrows; they forget the earnestness with which he pleaded that the cup might be removed. Death is in itself fearful, and it is a part of our nature to dread it, and even in the best of minds sometimes the fear of it is not wholly taken away until the hour comes, and God gives them "dying grace." There are probably two reasons why God made death so fearful to man:

(1) One is, to impress him with the importance of being prepared for it. Death is to him the entrance on an endless being, and it is an object of God to keep the attention fixed on that as a most momentous and solemn event. The ox, the lamb, the robin, the dove, have no immortal nature; no conscience; no responsibility, and no need of making preparation for death - and hence - except in a very slight degree - they seem to have no dread of dying. But not so with man. He has an undying soul. His main business here is to prepare for death and for the world beyond, and hence, by all the fear of the dying pang, and by all the horror of the grave, God would fix the attention of man on his own death as a most momentous event, and lead him to seek that hope of immortality which alone can lay the foundation for any proper removal of the fear of dying.

(2) the other reason is, to deter man from taking his own life. To keep him from this, he is made so as to start back from death. He fears it; it is to him an object of deepest dread, and even when pressed down by calamity and sadness, as a general law, he "had rather bear the ills he has, than fly to

others that he knows not of." Man is the only creature in reference to whom this danger exists. There is no one of the brute creation, unless it be the scorpion, that will take its own life, and hence, they have not such a dread of dying. But we know how it is with man. Weary of life; goaded by a guilty conscience; disappointed and heart-broken, he is under strong temptation to commit the enormous crime of self-murder, and to rush uncalled to the bar of God. As one of the means of deterring from this, God has so made us that we fear to die; and thousands are kept from this enormous crime by this fear, when nothing else would save them. It is benevolence, therefore, to the world, that man is afraid to die - and in every pang of the dying struggle, and everything about death that makes us turn pale and tremble at its approach, there is in some way the manifestation of goodness to mankind.

5. We may be comforted in the prospect of death by looking to the example of the Redeemer; Hebrews 5:7. Much as we may fear to die, and much as we may be left to suffer then, of one thing we may be sure. It is, that he has gone beyond us in suffering. The sorrows of our dying will never equal his. We shall never go through such scenes as occurred in the garden of Gethsemane and on the cross. It may be some consolation that human nature has endured greater pangs than we shall, and that there is one who has surpassed us even in our keenest sufferings. It "should" be to us a source of consolation, also of the highest kind, that he did it that he might alleviate our sorrows, and that he might drive away the horrors of death from us by "bringing life and immortality to light," and that as the result of his sufferings our dying moments may be calm and peaceful.

6. It often occurs that people are true Christians, and yet are ignorant of some of the elementary principles of religion; Hebrews 5:12. This is owing to such things as the following; a want of early religious instruction; the faults of preachers who fail to teach their people; a want of inquiry on the part of Christians, and the interest which they feel in other things above what they feel in religion. It is often surprising what vague and unsettled opinions many professed Christians have on some of the most important points of Christianity, and how little qualified they are to defend their opinions when they are attacked. Of multitudes in the Church even now it might be said, that they "need some one to teach them what are the very

first principles of true religion." To some of the "elementary" doctrines of Christianity about deadness to the world, about self-denial, about prayer, about doing good, and about spirituality, they are utter strangers. So of forgiveness of injuries, and charity, and love for a dying world. These are the "elements" of Christianity - rudiments which children in righteousness should learn; and yet they are not learned by multitudes who bear the Christian name.

7. All Christians ought to be "teachers;" Hebrews 5:12. I do not mean that they should all be "preachers;" but they should all so live as to "teach" others the true nature of religion. This they should do by their example, and by their daily conversation. Any Christian is qualified to impart useful instruction to others. The servant of lowest rank may teach his master how a Christian should live. A child may thus teach a parent how he should live, and his daily walk may furnish to the parent lessons of inestimable value. Neighbors may thus teach neighbors; and strangers may learn of strangers. Every Christian has a knowledge of the way to be saved which it would be of the highest value to others to know, and is qualified to tell the rich, and proud, and learned sinner, that about himself and of the final destiny of man of which he is now wholly ignorant. Let it be remembered, also, that the world derives its views of the nature of religion from the lives and conduct of its professed friends. It is not from the Bible, or from the pulpit, or from books, that people learn what Christianity is; it is from the daily walk of those who profess to be its friends; and every day we live, a wife, a child, a neighbor, or a stranger, is forming some view of the nature of religion from what they see in us. How important, therefore, it is that we so live as to communicate to them just views of what constitutes religion!

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

In Hebrews 5:10-11, the apostle had said that the Lord Jesus was called to the office of high priest after the order of Melchizedek, and that there were many things to be said of him which were not easy to be understood. They had not, he says, advanced as far in the knowledge of the true religion as might have been reasonably expected, but had rather gone back; Hebrews 5:12-14. The design of this chapter seems to be to warn them against the danger of going back entirely, and to encourage them to make the highest attainments possible in the knowledge of Christianity, and in the divine life. The apostle would keep them from entire apostasy, and would excite them to make all the advances which they possibly could make, and particularly he designs to prepare them to receive what he had yet to say about the higher doctrines of the Christian religion. In doing this he presents the following considerations:

(1) An exhortation to leave the elements or rudiments of the Christian religion, and to go on to the contemplation of the higher doctrines. The elements were the doctrines of repentance, faith, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. These entered into the very nature of Christianity. They were its first principles, and were indispensable. The higher doctrines related to other matters, which the apostle called them now to contemplate; Hebrews 6:1-3.

(2) he warns them, in the most solemn manner, against apostasy. He assures them that if they should apostatize, it would be impossible to renew them again. They could not fall away from grace and again be renewed; they could not, after having been Christians and then apostatizing, be recovered. Their fall in that case would be final and irrecoverable, for there was no other way by which they could be saved; and by rejecting the Christian scheme, they would reject the only plan by which they could ever be brought to heaven. By this solemn consideration, therefore, he warns them of the danger of going back from their exalted hopes, or of neglecting the opportunities which they had to advance to the knowledge of the higher truths of religion; Hebrews 6:4-6.

(3) this sentiment is illustrated Hebrews 6:7-8 by a striking and beautiful figure drawn from agriculture. The sentiment was, that they who did not improve their advantage, and grow in the knowledge of the gospel, but who should go back and apostatize, would inevitably be destroyed. They could not be renewed and saved. It will be says the apostle, as it is with the earth. That which receives the rain that falls, and that bears its proper increase for the use of man, partakes of the divine blessing. That which does not - which bears only thorns and briers - is rejected, and is nigh to cursing, and will be burned with fire.

(4) yet the apostle says, he hoped better things of them. They had, indeed, receded from what they had been. They had not made the advances which he says they might have done. But still, there was reason to hope that they would not wholly apostatize, and be cast off by God. They had shown that they had true religion, and he believed that God would not forget the evidence which they had furnished that they loved him; Hebrews 6:9-10.

(5) he expresses his earnest wish that they all would show the same diligence until they attained the full assurance of hope; Hebrews 6:11-12.

(6) to encourage them in this, he refers them to the solemn oath which God had taken, and his sacred covenant with them confirmed by an oath, in order that they might have true consolation, and be sustained in the temptations and trials of life. That hope was theirs. It was sure and steadfast. It entered into that within the veil; it had been confirmed by him who had entered heaven as the great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek; Hebrews 6:13-20. By such considerations he would guard them from the danger of apostasy; he would encourage them to diligence in the divine life; and he would seek to prepare them to welcome the more high and difficult doctrines of the Christian religion.

Verse 1

Therefore - "Since, as was stated in the previous chapter, you ought to be capable of comprehending the higher doctrines of religion; since those doctrines are adapted to those who have been for a considerable time professors of Christianity, and have had opportunities of growing in knowledge and grace - as much as strong meat is for those of mature years -

leave now the elements of Christian doctrine, and go on to understand its higher mysteries." The idea is, that to those who had so long been acquainted with the way of salvation, the elements of Christianity were no more adapted than milk was for grown persons.

Leaving - Dismissing; intermitting; passing by the consideration of with a view to advance to something higher. The apostle refers to his discussion of the subject, and also to their condition. He wished to go on to the contemplation of higher doctrines, and he desired that they should no longer linger around the mere elements. "Let us advance to a higher state of knowledge than the mere elements of the subject." On the sense of the word "leaving," or quitting with a view to engage in something else, see Matthew 4:20, Matthew 4:22; Matthew 5:24.

The principles - Margin: "The word of the beginning of Christ." Tyndale renders it: "let us leave the doctrine pertaining to the beginning of a Christian man." Coverdale, "let us leave the doctrine pertaining to the beginning of a Christian life." On the word "principles" see the note on Hebrews 5:12. The Greek there, indeed, is not the same as in this place, but the idea is evidently the same. The reference is to what he regarded as the very elements of the Christian doctrine; and the meaning is, "let us no longer linger here. We should go on to higher attainments. We should wholly understand the system. We should discuss and receive its great principles. You have been long enough converted to have understood these; but you linger among the very elementary truths of religion. But you cannot remain here. You must either advance or recede; and if you do not go forward, you will go back into entire apostasy, when it will be impossible to be renewed." The apostle here, therefore, does not refer to his discussion of the points under consideration as the main thing, but to their state as one of danger; and in writing to them he was not content to discuss the elements of religion as being alone suited to their condition, but would have them make higher attainments, and advance to the more elevated principles of the gospel.

Of the doctrine - Literally, "the word" - λόγον logon- "reason, or doctrine of the beginning of Christ." That is, the word or reason that pertains to the elements of his system; the first principles of Christian doctrine.

Of Christ - Which pertain to the Messiah. Either what he taught, or what is taught of him and his religion. Most probably it is the latter - what

pertains to the Messiah, or to the Christian revelation. The idea is, that there is a set of truths which may be regarded as lying at the foundation of Christian doctrine, and those truths they had embraced, but had not advanced beyond them.

Let us go on - Let us advance to a higher state of knowledge and holiness. The reference is alike to his discussion of the subject, and to their advancement in piety and in knowledge. He would not linger around these elements in the discussion, nor would he have them linger at the threshold of the Christian doctrines.

Unto perfection - compare the notes on Hebrews 2:10. The word here is used, evidently, to denote an advanced state of Christian knowledge and piety; or the more elevated Christian doctrines, and the holier living to which it was their duty to attain. It does not refer solely to the intention of the apostle to discuss the more elevated doctrines of Christianity, but to" such an advance as would secure them from the danger of apostasy." If it should be said, however, that the word "perfection" is to be understood in the most absolute and unqualified sense, as denoting entire freedom from sin, it may be remarked:

(1)that this does not prove that they ever attained to it, nor should this be adduced as a text to show that such an attainment is ever made. To exhort a man to do a thing - however reasonable - is no proof in itself that it is ever done.

(2)it is proper to exhort Christians to aim at entire perfection. Even if none have ever reached that point on earth, that fact does not make it any the less desirable or proper to aim at it.

(3)there is much in making an honest attempt to be perfectly holy, even though we should not attain to it in this life. No man accomplishes much who does not aim high.

Not laying again the foundation - Not laying down - as one does a foundation for an edifice. The idea is, that they were not to begin and build all this over again. They were not to make it necessary to lay down again the very cornerstones, and the foundations of the edifice, but since these were laid already, they were to go on and build the superstructure and complete the edifice.

Of repentance from dead works - From works that cause death or condemnation; or that have no vitality or life. The reference may be either

to those actions which were sinful in their nature, or to those which related to the forms of religion, where there was no spiritual life. This was the character of much of the religion of the Jews; and conversion to the true religion consisted greatly in repentance for having relied on those heartless and hollow forms. It is possible that the apostle referred mainly to these, as he was writing to those who had been Hebrews. When formalists are converted, one of the first and the main exercises of their minds in conversion, consists in deep and genuine sorrow for their dependence on those forms. Religion is life; and irreligion is a state of spiritual death, (compare the notes on Ephesians 2:1), whether it be in open transgression, or in false and hollow forms of religion. The apostle has here stated what is the first element of the Christian religion. It consists in genuine sorrow for sin, and a purpose to turn from it; see the note on Matthew 3:2.

And of faith toward God - see the note on Mark 16:16. This is the second element in the Christian system. Faith is everywhere required in order to salvation, but it is usually faith "in the Lord Jesus" that is spoken of; see Acts 20:21. Here, however, faith "in God" is particularly referred to. But there is no essential difference. It is faith in God in regard to his existence and perfections, and to his plan of saving people. It includes, therefore, faith in his message and messenger, and thus embraces the plan of salvation by the Redeemer. There is but one God - "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and he who believes in the true God believes in him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the Author of the plan of redemption, and the Saviour of lost people. No one can believe "in the true God" who does not believe in the Saviour; compare John 5:23; John 17:3. He who supposes that he confides "in any other" God than the Author of the Christian religion, worships a being of the imagination as really as though he bowed down to a block of wood or stone. If Christianity is true, there is no such God as the infidel professes to believe in, any more than the God of the Brahmin has an existence. To believe "in God," therefore, is to believe in him as he "actually exists" - as the true God - the Author of the great plan of salvation by the Redeemer. It is needless to attempt to show that faith in the true God is essential to salvation. How can he be saved who has no "confidence" in the God that made him?

Verse 2

Of the doctrine of baptisms - This is mentioned as the third element or principle of the Christian religion. The Jews made much of various kinds of

“washings,” which were called “baptisms;” see the note on Mark 7:4. It is supposed also, that they were in the practice of baptizing proselytes to their religion; see the note on Matthew 3:6. Since they made so much of various kinds of ablution, it was important that the true doctrine on the subject should be stated as one of the elements of the Christian religion, that they might be recalled from superstition, and that they might enjoy the benefits of what was designed to be an important aid to piety - the true doctrine of baptisms. It will be observed that the plural form is used here - “baptisms.” There are two baptisms whose necessity is taught by the Christian religion - baptism by water, and by the Holy Spirit; the first of which is an emblem of the second.

These are stated to be among the “elements” of Christianity, or the things which Christian converts would first learn. The necessity of both is taught. He that believeth and is “baptized” shall be saved; Mark 16:16. “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” John 3:5. On the baptism of the Holy Spirit, see the Matthew 3:11 note; Acts 1:5 note; compare Acts 19:1-6. To understand the true doctrine respecting baptism was one of the first principles to be learned then as it is now, as baptism is the rite by which we are “initiated” into the Church. This was supposed to be so simple that young converts could understand it as one of the elements of the true religion, and the teaching on that subject now should be made so plain that the humblest disciple may comprehend it. If it was an element or first principle of religion; if it was presumed that anyone who entered the Church could understand it, can it be believed that it was then so perplexing and embarrassing as it is often made now? Can it be believed that a vast array of learning, and a knowledge of languages and a careful inquiry into the customs of ancient times, was needful in order that a candidate for baptism should understand it? The truth is, that it was probably regarded as among the most simple and plain matters of religion; and every convert was supposed to understand that the application of water to the body in this ordinance, in any mode, was designed to be merely emblematic of the influences of the Holy Spirit.

And of laying on of hands - This is the FourTH element or principle of religion. The Jews practiced the laying on of hands on a great variety of occasions. It was done when a blessing was imparted to anyone; when prayer was made for one; and when they offered sacrifice they laid their hands on the head of the victim, confessing their sins; Leviticus 16:21;

Leviticus 24:14; Numbers 8:12. It was done on occasions of solemn consecration to office, and when friend supplicated the divine favor on friend. In like manner, it was often done by the Saviour and the apostles. The Redeemer laid his hands on children to bless them, and on the sick when he healed them; Matthew 19:13; Mark 5:23; Matthew 9:18. In like manner the apostles laid hands on others in the following circumstances:

(1)In healing the sick; Acts 28:8.

(2)in ordination to office; 1 Timothy 5:22; Acts 6:6.

(3)In imparting the miraculous influences of the Holy Spirit; Acts 8:17, Acts 8:19; Acts 19:6.

The true doctrine respecting the design of laying on the hands, is said here to be one of the elements of the Christian religion. That the custom of laying on the hands as symbolical of imparting spiritual gifts, prevailed in the Church in the time of the apostles, no one can doubt. But on the question whether it is to be regarded as of perpetual obligation in the Church, we are to remember:

(1) That the apostles were endowed with the power of imparting the influences of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous or extraordinary manner. It was with reference to such an imparting of the Holy Spirit that the expression is used in each of the cases where it occurs in the New Testament.

(2) the Saviour did not appoint the imposition of the hands of a "bishop" to be one of the rites or ceremonies to be observed perpetually in the Church. The injunction to be baptized and to observe his supper is positive, and is universal in its obligation. But there is no such command respecting the imposition of hands.

(3) no one now is intrusted with the power of imparting the Holy Spirit in that manner There is no class of officers in the Church, that can make good their claim to any such power. What evidence is there that the Holy Spirit is imparted at the rite of "confirmation?"

(4) it is liable to be abused, or to lead persons to substitute the form for the thing; or to think that because they have been "confirmed," that therefore they are sure of the mercy and favor of God.

Still, if it be regarded as a "simple form of admission to a church," without claiming that it is enjoined by God, or that it is connected with any authority to impart the Holy Spirit, no objection can be made to it any more than there need be to any other form of recognizing Church membership. Every pastor has a right, if he chooses, to lay his hands on the members of his flock, and to implore a blessing on them; and such an act on making a profession of religion would have much in it that would be appropriate and solemn.

And of resurrection of the dead - This is mentioned as the fifth element or principle of the Christian religion. This doctrine was denied by the Sadducees Mark 12:18; Acts 23:8, and was ridiculed by philosophers; Acts 17:32. It was, however, clearly taught by the Saviour, John 5:28-29, and became one of the cardinal doctrines of his religion. By the resurrection of the dead, however, in the New Testament, there is more intended than the resurrection of the "body." The question about the resurrection included the whole inquiry about the future state, or whether man would live at all in the future world; compare the Matthew 22:23 note; Acts 23:6 note. This is one of the most important subjects that can come before the human mind, and one on which man has felt more perplexity than any other. The belief of the resurrection of the dead is an elementary article in the system of Christianity. It lies at the foundation of all our hopes. Christianity is designed to prepare us for a future state; and one of the first things, therefore, in the preparation, is to "assure" us there is a future state, and to tell us what it is. It is, moreover, a unique doctrine of Christianity. The belief of the resurrection is found in no other system of religion, nor is there a ray of light shed upon the future condition of man by any other scheme of philosophy or religion.

And of eternal judgment - This is the sixth element or principle of religion. It is, that there will be a judgment whose consequences will be eternal. It does not mean, of course, that the process of the judgment will be eternal, or that the judgment day will continue forever; but that the results or consequences of the decision of that day will continue for ever. There will be no appeal from the sentence, nor will there be any reversal of the judgment then pronounced. What is decided then will be determined forever. The approval of the righteous will fix their state eternally in heaven, and in like manner the condemnation of the wicked will fix their doom forever in hell. This doctrine was one of the earliest that was taught

by the Saviour and his apostles, and is inculcated in the New Testament perhaps with more frequency than any other; see Acts 17:31. That the consequences or results of the judgment will be "eternal," is abundantly affirmed; see Matthew 25:46; John 5:29;; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Mark 9:45, Mark 9:48.

Verse 3

And this will we do - We will make these advances toward a higher state of knowledge and piety. Paul had confidence that they would do it (see Hebrews 6:9-10), and though they had lingered long around the elements of Christian knowledge, he believed that they would yet go on to make higher attainments.

If God permit - This is not to be interpreted as if God was "unwilling" that they should make such advances, or as if it were "doubtful" whether he would allow it if they made an honest effort, and their lives were spared; but it is a phrase used to denote their "dependence" on him. It is equivalent to saying, "if he would spare their lives, their health, and their reason; if he would continue the means of grace, and would impart his Holy Spirit; if he would favor their efforts and crown them with success, they would make these advances." In reference to anything that we undertake, however pleasing to God in itself, it is proper to recognize our entire dependence on God; see James 4:13-15; compare the notes on John 15:5.

Verse 4

For it is impossible - It is needless to say that the passage here Hebrews 6:4-6, has given occasion to much controversy, and that the opinions of commentators and of the Christian world are yet greatly divided in regard to its meaning. On the one hand, it is held that the passage is not intended to describe those who are true Christians, but only those who have been awakened and enlightened, and who then fall back; and on the other it is maintained that it refers to those who are true Christians, and who then apostatize. The contending parties have been Calvinists and Arminians; each party, in general, interpreting it according to the views which are held on the question about falling from grace. I shall endeavor, as well as I may be able, to state the true meaning of the passage by an examination of the words and phrases in detail, observing here, in general, that it seems to me that it refers to true Christians; that the object is to keep them from apostasy, and that it teaches that if they should apostatize, it would be

impossible to renew them again or to save them. That it refers to true Christians will be apparent from these considerations.

(1) Such is the sense which would strike the great mass of readers. Unless there were some theory to defend, the great body of readers of the New Testament would consider the expression used here as describing true Christians.

(2) The connection demands such an interpretation. The apostle was addressing Christians. He was endeavoring to keep them from apostasy. The object was not to keep those who were awakened and enlightened from apostasy, but it was to preserve those who were already in the Church of Christ, from going back to perdition. The kind of exhortation appropriate to those who were awakened and convicted, but who were not truly converted, would be "to become converted;" not to warn them of the danger of "falling away." Besides, the apostle would not have said of such persons that they could not be converted and saved. But of sincere Christians it might be said with the utmost propriety, that they could not be renewed again and be saved if they should fall away - because they rejected the only plan of salvation after they had tried it, and renounced the only scheme of redemption after they had tasted its benefits. If that plan could not save them, what could? If they neglected that, by what other means could they be brought to God?

(3) This interpretation accords, as I suppose, with the exact meaning of the phrases which the apostle uses. An examination of those phrases will show that he refers to those who are sincere believers. The phrase "it is impossible" obviously and properly denotes absolute impossibility. It has been contended, by Storr and others, that it denotes only great difficulty. But the meaning which would at first strike all readers would be that "the thing could not be done;" that it was not merely very difficult, but absolutely impracticable. The word - ἀδύνατον adunaton- occurs only in the New Testament in the following places, in all which it denotes that the thing could not be done; Matthew 19:26; Mark 10:27, "With men this is impossible;" that is, men could not save one who was rich, implying that the thing was wholly beyond human power. Luke 18:27, "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God" - referring to the same case; Acts 14:8, "A man of Lystra, impotent in his feet;" that is, who was

wholly "unable" to walk; Romans 8:3, "For what the law could not do;" what was absolutely "impossible" for the Law to accomplish; that is, to save people; Hebrews 6:18, "In which it was impossible for God to lie;" Hebrews 10:4, "It is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin;" and Hebrews 11:6, "Without faith it is impossible to please God;" in all of these instances denoting absolute impossibility.

These passages show that it is not merely a great difficulty to which the apostle refers, but that he meant to say that the thing was wholly impracticable; that it could not be done. And if this be the meaning, then it proves that if those referred to should fall away, they could never be renewed. Their case was hopeless, and they must perish: that is, if a true Christian should apostatize, or fall from grace, "he never could be renewed again," and could not be saved. Paul did not teach that he might fall away and be renewed again as often as he pleased. He had other views of the grace of God than this; and he meant to teach, that if a man should once cast off true religion, his case was hopeless, and he must perish; and by this solemn consideration - the only one that would be effectual in such a case - he meant to guard them against the danger of apostasy.

For those who were once enlightened - The phrase "to be enlightened" is one that is often used in the Scriptures, and may be applied either to one whose understanding has been enlightened to discern his duty, though he is not converted (compare the note on John 1:9); or more commonly to one who is truly converted; see the note on Ephesians 1:18. It does not of necessity refer to true Christians, though it cannot be denied that it more obviously suggests the idea that the heart is truly changed, and that it is more commonly used in that sense; compare Psalm 19:8. Light, in the Scriptures, is the emblem of knowledge, holiness, and happiness, and there is no impropriety here in understanding it in accordance with the more decisive phrases which follow, as referring to true Christians.

And have tasted - To "taste" of a thing means, according to the usage in the Scriptures, to "experience," or to "understand" it. The expression is derived from the fact that the "taste" is one of the means by which we ascertain the nature or quality of an object; compare Matthew 16:28; John 8:51; Hebrews 2:9. The proper idea here is, that they had "experienced" the heavenly gift, or had learned its nature.

The heavenly gift - The gift from heaven, or which pertains to heaven; compare the note on John 4:10. The expression properly means some favor or gift which has descended from heaven, and may refer to any of the benefits which God has conferred on man in the work of redemption. It might include the plan of salvation; the forgiveness of sins; the enlightening, renewing, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, or any one of the graces which that Spirit imparts. The use of the article, however - "the heavenly gift," limits it to something special, as being conferred directly from heaven, and the connection would seem to demand that we understand it of some "special" favor which could be conferred only on the children of God. It is an expression which "may" be applied to sincere Christians; it is at least doubtful whether it can with propriety be applied to any other.

And were made partakers of the Holy Ghost - Partakers of the influences of the Holy Spirit - for it is only in this sense that we can partake of the Holy Spirit. We "partake" of food when we share it with others; we "partake" of pleasure when we enjoy it with others; we "partake" of spoils in war when they are divided between us and others. So we partake of the influences of the Holy Spirit when we share these influences conferred on his people. This is not language which can properly be applied to anyone but a true Christian; and though it is true that an unpardoned sinner may be enlightened and awakened by the Holy Spirit, yet the language used here is not such as would be likely to be employed to describe his state. It is too clearly expressive of those influences which renew and sanctify the soul. It is as elevated language as can be used to describe the joy of the Christian, and is undoubtedly used in that sense here. If it is not, it would be difficult to find any language which would properly express the condition of a renewed heart. Grotius, Bloomfield, and some others, understood this of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. But this is not necessary, and does not accord well with the general description here, which evidently pertains to the mass of those whom the apostle addressed.

Verse 5

And have tasted the good word of God - That is, either the doctrines which he teaches, and which are good, or pleasant to the soul; or the Word of God which is connected with good, that is, which promises good. The former seems to me to be the correct meaning - that the Word of God, or the truth which he taught, was itself a good. It was what the soul desired, and in

which it found comfort and peace; compare Psalm 119:103; Psalm 141:6. The meaning here is, that they had experienced the excellency of the truth of God; they had seen and enjoyed its beauty. This is language which cannot be applied to an impenitent sinner. He has no relish for the truth of God; sees no beauty in it; derives no comfort from it. It is only the true Christian who has pleasure in its contemplation, and who can be said to "taste" and enjoy it. This language describes a state of mind of which every sincere Christian is conscious. It is that of pleasure in the Word of God. He loves the Bible; he loves the truth of God that is preached. He sees an exquisite beauty in that truth. It is not merely in its poetry; in its sublimity; in its argument; but he has now a "taste" or "relish" for the truth itself, which he had not before his conversion. Then he might have admired the Bible for its beauty of language or for its poetry; he might have been interested in preaching for its eloquence or power of argument; but now his love is for "the truth;" compare Psalm 19:10. There is no book that he so much delights in as the Bible; and no pleasure is so pure as what he has in contemplating the truth; compare Joshua 21:45; Joshua 23:15.

And the powers of the world to come - Or of the "coming age." "The age to come" was a phrase in common use among the Hebrews, to denote the future dispensation, the times of the Messiah. The same idea was expressed by the phrases "the last times," "the end of the world," etc. which are of so frequent occurrence in the Scriptures. They all denoted an age which was to succeed the old dispensation; the time of the Messiah; or the period in which the affairs of the world would be wound up; see the notes on Isaiah 2:2. Here it evidently refers to that period, and the meaning is, that they had participated in the special blessings to be expected in that dispensation - to wit, in the clear views of the way of salvation, and the influences of the Holy Spirit on the soul. The word "powers" here implies that in that time there would be some extraordinary manifestation of the "power" of God. An unusual energy would be put forth to save people, particularly as evinced by the agency of the Holy Spirit on the heart. Of this "power" the apostle here says they of whom he spake had partaken. They had been brought under the awakening and renewing energy which God put forth under the Messiah. in saving the soul. They had experienced the promised blessings of the new and last dispensation; and the language here is such as appropriately describes Christians, and as indeed can be

applicable to no other. It may be remarked respecting the various expressions used here Hebrews 6:4-5,

(1) that they are such as properly denote a renewed state. They obviously describe the condition of a Christian; and though it may be not certain that any one of them if taken by itself would prove that the person to whom it was applied was truly converted, yet taken together it is clear that they are designed to describe such a state. If they are not, it would be difficult to find any language which would be properly descriptive of the character of a sincere Christian. I regard the description here, therefore, as what is clearly designed to denote the state of those who were born again, and were the true children of God; and it seems plain to me that no other interpretation would have ever been thought of if this view had not seemed to conflict with the doctrine of the "perseverance of the saints."

(2) there is a regular gradation here from the first elements of piety in the soul to its highest developments; and, whether the apostle so designed it or not, the language describes the successive steps by which a true Christian advances to the highest stage of Christian experience. The mind is:

(a)enlightened; then.

(b)tastes the gift of heaven, or has some experience of it; then.

(c)it is made to partake of the influences of the Holy Spirit; then.

(d)there is experience of the excellence and loveliness of the Word of God; and,

(e)finally there is a participation of the full "powers" of the new dispensation; of the extraordinary energy which God puts forth in the gospel to sanctify and save the soul.

Verse 6

If they shall fall away - literally, "and having fallen away." "There is no if in the Greek in this place - "having fallen away." Dr. John P. Wilson. It is not an affirmation that any had actually fallen away, or that in fact they would do it; but the statement is, that "on the supposition that they had fallen away," it would be impossible to renew them again. It is the same as supposing a case which in fact might never occur: as if we should say, "had a man fallen down a precipice it would be impossible to save him," or "had

the child fallen into the stream he would certainly have been drowned." But though this literally means, "having fallen away," yet the sense in the connection in which it stands is not improperly expressed by our common translation. The Syriac has given a version which is remarkable, not as a correct translation, but as showing what was the prevailing belief in the time in which it was made, (probably the first or second century), in regard to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. "For it is impossible that they who have been baptized, and who have tasted the gift which is from heaven, and have received the spirit of holiness, and have tasted the good word of God, and the power of the coming age, should again sin, so that they should be renewed again to repentance, and again crucify the Son of God and put him to ignominy."

The word rendered "fall away" means properly "to fall near by anyone;" "to fall in with or meet;" and thus to fall aside from, to swerve or deviate from; and here means undoubtedly to "apostatize from," and implies an entire renunciation of Christianity, or a going back to a state of Judaism, paganism, or sin. The Greek word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is material to remark here that the apostle does not say that any true Christian ever had fallen away. He makes a statement of what would occur on the supposition that such a thing should happen - but a statement may be made of what would occur on the supposition that a certain thing should take place, and yet it be morally certain that the event never would happen. It would be easy to suppose what would happen if the ocean should overflow a continent, or if the sun should cease to rise, and still there be entire certainty that such an event never would occur.

To renew them again - Implying that they had been before renewed, or had been true Christians. The word "again" - πάλιν palin- supposes this; and this passage, therefore, confirms the considerations suggested above, showing that they were true Christians who were referred to. They had once repented, but it would be impossible to bring them to this state "again." This declaration of course is to be read in connection with the first clause of Hebrews 6:4, "It is impossible to renew again to repentance those who once were true Christians should they fall away." I know of no declaration more unambiguous than this. It is a positive declaration. It is not that it would be very difficult to do it; or that it would be impossible for man to do it, though it might be done by God; it is an unequivocal and absolute declaration that it would be utterly impracticable that it should be done by anyone, or by

any means; and this, I have no doubt, is the meaning of the apostle. Should a Christian fall from grace, he "must perish." he never could be saved. The reason of this the apostle immediately adds.

Seeing - This word is not in the Greek, though the sense is expressed. The Greek literally is, "having again crucified to themselves the Son of God." The "reason" here given is, that the crime would be so great, and they would so effectually exclude themselves from the only plan of salvation, that they could not be saved. There is but one way of salvation. Having tried that, and then renounced it, how could they then be saved? The case is like that of a drowning man. If there was but one plank by which he could be saved, and he should get on that and then push it away and plunge into the deep, he must die. Or if there was but one rope by which the shore could be reached from a wreck, and he should cut that and cast it off, he must die. Or if a man were sick, and there was but one kind of medicine that could possibly restore him, and he should deliberately dash that away, he must die. So in religion. There is "but one" way of salvation. If a man deliberately rejects that, he must perish.

They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh - Our translators have rendered this as if the Greek were - ἀνασταυροῦντας πάλιν anastaurountas palin- "crucify again," and so it is rendered by Chrysostom, by Tyndale, Coverdale, Beza, Luther, and others. But this is not properly the meaning of the Greek. The word ἀνασταυρόω anastauroō- is an "intensive" word, and is employed instead of the usual word "to crucify" only to denote "emphasis." It means that such an act of apostasy would be equivalent to crucifying him in an aggravated manner. Of course this is to be taken "figuratively." It could not be literally true that they would thus crucify the Redeemer. The meaning is, that their conduct would be "as if" they had crucified him; it would bear a strong resemblance to the act by which the Lord Jesus was publicly rejected and condemned to die. The act of crucifying the Son of God was the great crime which outpeers any other deed of human guilt. Yet the apostle says that should they who had been true Christians fall away and reject him, they would be guilty of a similar crime. It would be a public and solemn act of rejecting him. It would show that if they had been there they would have joined in the cry "crucify him, crucify him." The "intensity and aggravation" of such a crime perhaps the apostle meant to indicate by the intensive or emphatic ἀνὰ anain the word

ἀνασταυροῦντας anastaurountasSuch an act would render their salvation impossible, because:

(1) the crime would be aggravated beyond that of those who rejected him and put him to death - for they knew not what they did; and,

(2) because it would be a rejection of the only possible plan of salvation after they had had experience of its power and known its efficacy.

The phrase "to themselves," Tyndale readers, "as concerning themselves." Others, "as far as in them lies," or as far as they have ability to do. Others, "to their own heart." Probably Grotius has suggested the true sense. "They do it for themselves. They make the act their own. It is as if they did it themselves; and they are to he regarded as having done the deed." So we make the act of another our own when we authorize it beforehand, or approve of it after it is done.

And put him to an open shame - Make him a public example; or hold him up as worthy of death on the cross; see the same word explained in the notes on Matthew 1:19, in the phrase "make her a public example." The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Their apostasy and rejection of the Saviour would be like holding him up publicly as deserving the infamy and ignominy of the cross. A great part of the crime attending the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, consisted in exhibiting him to the passing multitude as deserving the death of a malefactor. Of that sin they would partake who should reject him, for they would thus show that they regarded his religion as an imposture, and would in a public manner hold him up as worthy only of rejection and contempt. Such, it seems to me, is the fair meaning of this much-disputed passage - a passage which would never have given so much perplexity if it had not been supposed that the obvious interpretation would interfere with some prevalent articles of theology. The passage "proves" that if true Christians should apostatize, it would be impossible to renew and save them. If then it should be asked whether I believe that any true Christian ever did, or ever will fall from grace, and wholly lose his religion, I would answer unhesitatingly, no! (compare the John 10:27-28 notes; Romans 8:38-39 notes; Galatians 6:4 note.) If then it be asked what was the use of a warning like this, I answer:

(1) it would show the great sin of apostasy from God if it were to occur. It is proper to state the greatness of an act of sin, though it might never occur, in order to show how it would be regarded by God.

(2) such a statement might be one of the most effectual means of preserving from apostasy. To state that a fall from a precipice would cause certain death, would be one of the most certain means of preserving one from falling; to affirm that arsenic would be certainly fatal, is one of the most effectual means of preventing its being taken; to know that fire certainly destroys, is one of the most sure checks from the danger. Thousands have been preserved from going over the Falls of Niagara by knowing that there would be no possibility of escape; and so effectual has been this knowledge that it has preserved all from such a catastrophe, except the very few who have gone over by accident. So in religion. The knowledge that apostasy would be fatal, and there could be no hope of being of the danger than all the other means that could be used. If a man believed that it would be an easy matter to be restored again should he apostatize, he would feel little solicitude in regard to it; and it has occurred in fact, that they who suppose that this may occur, have manifested little of the care to walk in the paths of strict religion, which should have been evinced.

(3) it may be added, that the means used by God to preserve his people from apostasy, have been entirely effectual. There is no evidence that one has ever fallen away who was a true Christian, (compare John 10:27-28, and 1 John 2:19); and to the end of the world it will be true that the means which he uses to keep his people from apostasy will not in a single instance fail.

(This view seems not opposed to the doctrine of the saint‘s perseverance. It professes indeed, to meet the objection usually raised from the passage, if not in a new mode, yet in a mode different from that commonly adopted by orthodox expositors. Admitting that true Christians are intended, it is asserted only, that if they should fall, their recovery would be impossible, It is not said that they ever have fallen or will fall. “The apostle in thus giving judgment on the case, if it should happen, does not declare that it actually does.” And as to the use of supposing a case which never can occur, it is argued that means are constantly used to bring about what the decree or determination of God had before rendered certain. These exhortations are the means by which perseverance is secured.

Yet it may be doubted, whether there be anything in the passage to convince us, that the apostle has introduced an “impossible” case. He seems

rather to speak of what “might” happen, of which there was “danger.” If the reader incline to this view, he will apply the description to professors, and learn from it how far these may go, and yet fall short of the mark. But how would this suit the apostle‘s design? Well. If “professors” may go “so far,” how much is this fact suited to arouse all to vigilance and inquiry. We, notwithstanding our gifts and “apparent” graces, may not be “true” Christians, may, therefore, not be “secure,” may fall away and sink, under the doom of him whom it is impossible to renew. And he must be a very exalted Christian indeed, who does not occasionally find need of inquiry, and examination of evidences. Certainly, the whole passage may be explained in perfect consistency with this application of it.

Men may be enlightened, that is, well acquainted with the doctrines and duties of the Christian faith; may have tasted of the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Spirit in his miraculous influences, which many in primitive times enjoyed, without any sanctifying virtue; may have tasted the good word of God, or experienced impressions of affection and joy under it, as in the case of the stony ground hearers; may have tasted the powers of the world to come, or been influenced by the doctrine of a future state, with its accompanying rewards and punishments; - and yet not be “true” Christians. “All these things, except miraculous gifts, often take place in the hearts and consciences of people in these days, who yet continue unregenerate. They have knowledge, convictions, fears, hope, joys, and seasons of apparent earnestness, and deep concern about eternal things; and they are endued with such gifts, as often make them acceptable and useful to others, but they are not truly “humbled;” they are not “spiritually minded;” religion is not their element and delight” - Scott.

It should be observed, moreover, that while there are many “infallible” marks of the true Christian, none of these are mentioned in this place. The persons described are not said to have been elected, to have been regenerated, to have believed, or to have been sanctified. The apostle writes very differently when describing the character and privileges of the saints, Romans 8:27, Romans 8:30. The succeeding context, too, is supposed to favor this opinion.

“They (the characters in question) are, in the following verses, compared to the ground on which the rain often falls, and beareth nothing but thorns

and briars. But this is not so with true believers, for faith itself is an herb special to the enclosed garden of Christ. And the apostle afterward, discoursing of true belief, doth in many particulars distinguish them from such as may be apostates, which is supposed of the persons here intended. He ascribeth to them, in general, better things. and such as accompany salvation. He ascribes a work and labor of love, asserts their preservation, etc." - Owen.

Our author, however, fortifies himself against the objection in the first part of this quotation, by repeating and applying at Romans 8:7, his principle of exposition. "The design," says he, "is to show, that if Christians should be come like the barren earth, they would be cast away and lost."

Yet the attentive reader of this very ingenious exposition will observe, that the author has difficulty in carrying out his principles, and finds it necessary to introduce the "mere" professor ere he has done with the passage. "It is not supposed," says he, commenting on the 8th verse, "that a true Christian will fall away and be lost, but we may remark, that there are many professed Christians who seem to be in danger of such ruin. Corrupt desires are as certainly seen in their lives, as thorns on a bad soil. Such are nigh unto cursing. Unsanctified, etc., there is nothing else which can be done for them, and they must be lost. What a thought!" Yet that the case of the professor in danger cannot very consistently be introduced by him, appears from the fact, that such ruin as is here described is suspended on a condition which never occurs. It happens "only" if the "Christian" should fall. According to the author, it is not here denounced "on any other supposition." As then true Christians cannot fall, the ruin never can occur "in any case whatever." From these premises we "dare not" draw the conclusion, that any class of professors will be given over to final impenitence.

As to what may be alleged concerning the "apparent" sense of the passage, or the sense which would strike "the mass of readers;" every one will judge according to the sense which himself thinks most obvious. Few perhaps would imagine that the apostle was introducing an impossible case. Nor does the "connection" stand much in the way of the application to professors. In addition to what has already been stated, let it be further observed, that although the appropriate exhortation to awakened, yet unconverted persons would be, "to become converted; not to warn them of

the danger of falling away;" yet the apostle is writing to the Hebrews at large, is addressing a body of professing Christians, concerning whom he could have no infallible assurance that "all of them" were true Christians. Therefore, it was right that they should be warned in the way the apostle has adopted. The objection leaves out of sight the important fact that the "exhortations and warnings addressed to the saints in Scripture are addressed to mixed societies, in which there may be hypocrites as well as believers."

Those who profess the faith, and associate with the church, are addressed without any decision regarding state. But the very existence of the warnings implies a fear that there may be some whose state is not safe. And "all," therefore, have need to inquire whether this be their condition. How appropriate then such warnings. This consideration, too, will furnish an answer to what has been alleged by another celebrated transatlantic writer, namely, "that whatever may be true in the divine purposes as to the final salvation of all those who are once truly regenerated. and this doctrine I feel constrained to admit, yet nothing can be plainer, than that the sacred writers have every where addressed saints in the same manner as they would address those whom they considered as constantly exposed to fall away and to perish forever." Lastly. The phraseology of the passage does not appear to remove it out of all possible application to "mere" professors.

It has already been briefly explained in consistency with such application. There is a difficulty, indeed, connected with the phrase, παλιν ανακαινιζειν εις μετανοιαν palin anakainizein eis metanoian"again" to renew to repentance; implying, as is said, that they, to whom reference is made, had been renewed "before." But what should hinder this being understood of "reinstating in former condition," or in possession of former privilege; Bloomfield supposes, there may be an allusion to the non-reiteration of baptism, and Owen explains the phrase of bringing them again into a state of profession by a second renovation, and a second baptism, as a pledge thereof. The renewing he understands here "externally" of a solemn confession of faith and repentance, followed by baptism. This, says he, was their ἀνακαινισμος anakainismostheir renovation. It would seem then that there is nothing in the phrase to prevent its interpretation on the same principle that above has been applied to the passage generally.)

Verse 7

For the earth - The design of the apostle by this comparison is apparent. It is to show the consequences of not making a proper use of all the privileges which Christians have, and the effect which would follow should those privileges fail to be improved. He says, it is like the earth. If that absorbs the rain, and produces an abundant harvest, it receives the divine blessing. If not, it is cursed, or is worthless. The design is to show that "if" Christians should become like the barren earth they would be cast away and lost.

Which drinketh in the rain - A comparison of the earth as if it were "thirsty" - a comparison that is common in all languages.

That cometh oft upon it - The frequent showers that fall. The object is to describe fertile land which is often watered with the rains of heaven. The comparison of "drinking in" the rain is designed to distinguish a mellow soil which receives the rain, from hard or rocky land where it runs off.

And bringeth forth herbs - The word "herbs" we now limit in common discourse to the small vegetables which die every year, and which are used as articles of food, or to such in general as have not ligneous or hard woody stems. The word here means anything which is cultivated in the earth as an article of food, and includes all kinds of grains.

Meet for them - Useful or appropriate to them.

By whom it is dressed - Margin, "for whom." The meaning is, on account of whom it is cultivated. The word "dressed" here means "cultivated:" compare Genesis 2:15.

Receiveth blessing from God - Receives the divine approbation. It is in accordance with his wishes and plans, and he smiles upon it and blesses it. He does not curse it as he does the desolate and barren soil. The language is figurative, and must be used to denote what is an object of the divine favor. God delights in the harvests which the earth brings forth; in the effects of dews and rains and suns in causing beauty and abundance; and on such fields of beauty and plenty he looks down with pleasure. This does not mean, as I suppose, that he renders it more fertile and abundant, for:

(1)it cannot be shown that it is true that God thus rewards the earth for its fertility; and,

(2)such an interpretation would not accord well with the scope of the passage.

The design is to show that a Christian who makes proper use of the means of growing in grace which God bestows upon him, and who does not apostatize, meets with the divine favor and approbation. His course accords with the divine intention and wishes, and he is a man on whom God will smile - as he seems to do on the fertile earth.

Verse 8

But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected - That is, by the farmer or owner. It is abandoned as worthless. The force of the comparison here is, that God would thus deal with those who professed to be renewed if they should be like such a worthless field.

And is nigh unto cursing - Is given over to execration, or is abandoned as useless. The word "cursing" means devoting to destruction. The sense is not that the owner would curse it "in words," or imprecate a curse on it, as a man does who uses profane language, but the language is taken here from the more common use of the word "curse" - as meaning to devote to destruction. So the land would be regarded by the farmer. It would be valueless, and would be given up to be overrun with fire.

Whose end is to be burned - Referring to the land. The allusion here is to the common practice among the Oriental and Roman agriculturists of burning bad and barren lands. An illustration of this is afforded by Pliny. "There are some who burn the stubble on the field, chiefly upon the authority of Virgil; the principal reason for which is, that they may burn the seeds of weeds;" Nat. Hist. xviii. 30. The authority of Virgil, to which Pliny refers, may be found in Georg. i. 84:

"Saepe etiam steriles incendere profuit agros,
Atque levem stipulam ciepitantibus urere flammis."

"It is often useful to set fire to barren lands, and burn the light stubble in crackling flames." The purpose of burning land in this way was to render it available for useful purposes; or to destroy noxious weeds, and thorns, and underbrush. But the object of the apostle requires him to refer merely to the "fact" of the burning, and to make use of it as an illustration of an act of punishment. So, Paul says, it would be in the dealings of God with his people. If after all attempts to secure holy living, and to keep them in the paths of salvation, they should evince none of the spirit of piety, all that could be done would be to abandon them to destruction as such a field is overrun with fire. It is not supposed that a true Christian will fall away and be lost, but we may remark.

(1) that there are many professed Christians who seem to be in danger of such ruin. They resist all attempts to produce in them the fruits of good living as really as some pieces of ground do to secure a harvest. Corrupt desires, pride, envy, uncharitableness, covetousness, and vanity are as certainly seen in their lives as thorns and briars are on a bad soil. Such briars and thorns you may cut down again and again; you may strike the plow deep and seem to tear away all their roots; you may sow the ground with the choicest grain, but soon the briars and the thorns will again appear, and be as troublesome as ever. No pains will subdue them, or secure a harvest. So with many a professed Christian. He may be taught, admonished, rebuked, and afflicted, but all will not do. There is essential and unsubdued perverseness in his soul, and despite all the attempts to make him a holy man, the same bad passions are continually breaking out anew.

(2) such professing Christians are "nigh unto cursing." They are about to be abandoned forever. Unsanctified and wicked in their hearts, there is nothing else which can be done for them, and they must be lost. What a thought! A professing Christian "nigh unto cursing!" A man, the efforts for, whose salvation are about to cease forever, and who is to he given over as incorrigible and hopeless! For such a man - in the church or out of it - we should have compassion. We have some compassion for an ox which is so stubborn that he will not work - and which is to be put to death; for a horse which is so fractious that he cannot be broken, and which is to be killed; for cattle which are so unruly that they cannot be restrained, and which are only to be fattened for the slaughter; and even for a field which is desolate and barren, and which is given up to be overrun with briars and thorns; but how much more should we pity a man all the efforts for whose salvation fail, and who is soon to be abandoned to everlasting destruction!

Verse 9

But, beloved, we are persuaded better things - We confidently hope for better things respecting you. We trust that you are true Christians; that you will produce the proper fruits of holiness; that you will be saved. "Things that accompany salvation." Things that pertain to salvation. The Greek phrase here means, "near to salvation," or things that are conjoined with salvation. So Coverdale renders it, "and that salvation is nigher." The

form of expression seems to refer to what was said in Hebrews 6:8. The land overrun with briars was "nigh" to cursing; the things which Paul saw in them were "nigh" to salvation. From this verse it is evident:

(1)that the apostle regarded them as sincere Christians; and,

(2)that he believed they would not fall away.

Though he had stated what must be the inevitable consequence if Christians "should" apostatize, yet he says that in their case he had a firm conviction that it would not occur. There is no inconsistency in this. We may be certain that if a man should take arsenic it would kill him; and yet we may have the fullest conviction that he will not do it. Is not this verse a clear proof that Paul felt that it was certain that true Christians would never fall away and be lost? If he supposed that they might, how could he be persuaded that it would not happen to them? Why not to them as well as to others? Hence, learn that while we assure people that if they should fall away they would certainly perish we may nevertheless address them with the full persuasion that they will be saved.

Verse 10

For God is not unrighteous - God will do no wrong. He will not forget or fail to reward the endeavors of his people to promote his glory, and to do good. The meaning here is, that by their kindness in ministering to the wants of the saints, they had given full evidence of true piety. If God should forget that, it would be "unrighteous:

(1)because there was a propriety that it should be remembered; and,

(2)because it is expressly promised that it shall not fail of reward; Matthew 10:42.

Your work - Particularly in ministering to the wants of the saints.

Labour of love - Deeds of benevolence when there was no hope of recompense, or when love was the motive in doing it.

Which ye have showed toward his name - Toward him - for the word "name" is often used to denote the person himself. They had showed that they loved God by their kindness to his people; Matthew 25:40, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

In that ye have ministered to the saints - You have supplied their wants. This may refer either to the fact that they contributed to supply the wants of the poor members of the church (compare the note on Galatians 2:10), or it may refer to some special acts of kindness which they had

shown to suffering and persecuted Christians. It is not possible now to know to what particular acts the apostle refers. We may learn.

(1)that to show kindness to Christians, because they are Christians, is an important evidence of piety.

(2)it will in no case be unrewarded. God is not "unjust;" and he will remember an act of kindness shown to his people - even though it be nothing but giving a cup of cold water.

Verse 11

And we desire that every one of you - We wish that every member of the church should exhibit the same endeavor to do good until they attain to the full assurance of hope. It is implied here that the full assurance of hope is to be obtained by a persevering effort to lead a holy life.

The same diligence - The same strenuous endeavor, the same ardor and zeal.

To the full assurance of hope - In order to obtain the full assurance of hope. The word rendered "full assurance," means firm persuasion, and refers to a state of mind where there is the fullest conviction, or where there is no doubt; see Colossians 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; Hebrews 10:22; compare Luke 1:1; Romans 4:21; Romans 14:5; 2 Timothy 4:5, 2 Timothy 4:17, where the same word, in different forms, occurs. Hope is a compound emotion (see the note on Ephesians 2:12), made up of an earnest "desire" for an object, and a corresponding "expectation" of obtaining it. The hope of heaven is made up of an earnest "wish" to reach heaven, and a corresponding "expectation" of it, or "reason to believe" that it will be ours. The full assurance of that hope exists where there is the highest desire of heaven, and such corresponding evidence of personal piety as to leave no doubt that it will be ours.

To the end - To the end of life. The apostle wished that they would persevere in such acts of piety to the end of their course, as to have their hope of heaven fully established, and to leave no doubt on the mind that they were sincere Christians. Hence, learn:

(1)that full assurance of hope is to be obtained only by holy living.

(2)it is only when that is persevered in that it can be obtained.

(3)it is not by visions and raptures; by dreams and revelations that it can now be acquired, for God imparts no such direct revelation now.

(4)it is usually only as the result of a life of consistent piety that such an assurance is to be obtained. No man can have it who does not persevere in holy living, and they who do obtain it usually secure it only near the end of a life of eminent devotedness to God.

God could impart it at once when the soul is converted, but such is the tendency of man to indolence and sloth that even good people would then relax their efforts, and sit down contented, feeling that they had now the undoubted prospect of heaven. As it is, it is held out as a prize to be won - as that whose acquisition is to cheer us in our old age, when the warfare is over, and when amidst the infirmities of years, and the near prospect of death, we need special consolation; compare 2 Timothy 4:6-7.

Verse 12

That ye be not slothful - Indolent; inactive. This was what he was especially desirous of guarding them against. By diligent and strenuous effort only could they secure themselves from the danger of apostasy.

But followers - Imitators - that you may live as they lived.

Of them who through faith and patience - By faith, or confidence in God, and by patience in suffering - referring to those who in times of trial had remained faithful to God, and had been admitted to heaven. In Hebrews 11, the apostle has given a long list of such persevering and faithful friends of God; see the notes on that chapter.

The promise - The promise of heaven.

Verse 13

For when God made promise to Abraham - That he would bless him, and multiply his seed as the stars of heaven; Genesis 22:16-17. The object of introducing this example here is, to encourage those to whom the apostle was writing to persevere in the Christian life, This he does by showing that God had given the highest possible assurance of his purpose to bless his people, by an oath. Reference is made to Abraham in this argument, probably, for two reasons:

(1)To show the nature of the evidence which Christians have that they will be saved, or the ground of encouragement - being the same as that made to Abraham, and depending, as in his case, on the promise of God; and,

(2)because the “example” of Abraham was just in point. He had persevered. He had relied firmly and solely on the promise of God. He did

this when appearances were much against the fulfillment of the promise, and he thus showed the advantage of perseverance and fidelity in the cause of God.

Because he could swear by no greater - There is no being greater than God. In taking an oath among people it is always implied that the appeal is to one of superior power, who is able to punish for its infraction. But this could not occur in the case of God himself. There was no greater being than himself, and the oath, therefore, was by his own existence.

He sware by himself - Genesis 22:16. "By myself have I sworn;" compare Isaiah 45:23. In an oath of this kind God pledges his veracity; declares that the event shall be as certain as his existence; and secures it by all the perfections of his nature. The usual form of the oath is, "As I live, saith the Lord;" see Numbers 14:21, Numbers 14:28; Ezekiel 33:11.

Verse 14

Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee - That is, I will certainly bless thee. The phrase is a Hebrew mode of expression, to denote emphasis or certainty - indicated by the repetition of a word; compare Genesis 14:23; Exodus 8:10; Joel 3:14; Judges 5:30; Judges 15:16.

Multiplying I will multiply thee - I will greatly increase thee - I will grant thee an exceedingly numerous posterity.

Verse 15

And so, after he had patiently endured - After he had waited for a long time. He did not faint or grow weary, but he persevered in a confident expectation of the fulfillment of what God had so solemnly promised.

He obtained the promise - Evidently the promise referred to in the oath - that he would have a numerous posterity. The apostle intimates that he had waited for that a long time; that his faith did not waver, and that in due season the object of his wishes was granted. To see the force of this, we are to remember:

(1)that when he was called by God from Haran, and when the promise of a numerous posterity was made to him, he was seventy-five years old; Genesis 12:1-5.

(2)Twenty-four years elapsed after this, during which he was a sojourner in a strange land, before the manner in which this promise would be fulfilled was made known to him; Genesis 21:1-5.

(4)The birth of that son was a pledge that the other blessings implied in the promise would be granted, and in that pledge Abraham may be said to have "received the promise."

He did not actually see the numerous posterity of which he was to be the honored ancestor, nor the Messiah who was to descend from him, nor the happy influences which would result to mankind from the fulfillment of the promise. But he saw the certainty that all this would occur; he saw by faith the Messiah in the distance John 8:56, and the numerous blessings which would result from his coming. It was a remarkable instance of faith, and one well suited to the purpose of the apostle. It would furnish ample encouragement to the Christians to whom he wrote, to persevere in their course, and to avoid the dangers of apostasy. If Abraham persevered when "appearances" were so much against the fulfillment of what had been promised, then Christians should persevere under the clearer light and with the more distinct promises of the gospel.

Verse 16

For men verily swear by the greater - That is, they appeal to God. They never swear by one who is inferior to themselves. The object of the apostle in this declaration is to show that as far as this could be done it had been by God. He could not indeed swear by one greater than himself, but he could make his promise as certain as an oath taken by people was when they solemnly appealed to him. He could appeal to his own existence and veracity, which was at any time the most solemn form of an oath, and thus put the mind to rest in regard to the hope of heaven.

And an oath for confirmation - An oath taken to confirm or establish anything.

Is to them an end of all strife - That is, when two parties are at variance, or have a cause at issue, an oath binds them to adhere to the terms of agreement concluded on, or contracting parties bind themselves by a solemn oath to adhere to the conditions of an agreement, and this puts an end to all strife. They rest satisfied when a solemn oath has been taken, and they feel assured that the agreement will be complied with. Or it may refer to cases where a man was accused of wrong before a court, and where he took a solemn oath that the thing had not been done, and his oath was admitted to be sufficient to put an end to the controversy. The general meaning is clear, that in disputes between man and man, an appeal was made to an oath, and that was allowed to settle it. The connection here is,

that as far as the case would admit of, the same thing was done by God. His oath by himself made his promise firm.

Verse 17

Wherein God - On account of which; or since an oath had this effect, God was willing to appeal to it in order to assure his people of salvation.

Willing more abundantly - In the most abundant manner, or to make the case as sure as possible. It does not mean more abundantly than in the case of Abraham, but that he was willing to give the most ample assurance possible. Coverdale renders it correctly, "very abundantly."

The heirs of promise - The heirs to whom the promise of life pertained; that is, all who were interested in the promises made to Abraham - thus embracing the heirs of salvation now.

The immutability of his counsel - His fixed purpose. He meant to show in the most solemn manner that his purpose would not change. The plans of God never change; and all the hope which we can have of heaven is founded on the fact that his purpose is immutable. If he changed his plans; if he was controlled by caprice; if he willed one thing today and another thing tomorrow, who could confide in him, or who would have any hope of heaven? No one would know what to expect; and no one could put confidence in him. The farmer plows and sows because he believes that the laws of nature are settled and fixed; the mariner ventures into unknown seas because the needle points in one direction; we plant an apple tree because we believe it will produce apples, a peach because it will produce peaches, a pear because it will produce a pear. But suppose there were no settled laws, that all was governed by caprice; who would know what to plant? Who then would plant anything? So in religion. If there were nothing fixed and settled, who would know what to do? If God should change his plans by caprice, and save one man by faith today and condemn another for the same faith tomorrow; or if he should pardon a man today and withdraw the pardon tomorrow, what security could we have of salvation? How grateful, therefore, should we be that God has an "immutable counsel," and that this is confirmed by a solemn oath! No one could honor a God that had not such an immutability of purpose; and all the hope which man can have of heaven is in the fact that He is unchanging.

Confirmed it by an oath - Margin, "Interposed himself." Tyndale and Coverdale, "added an oath." The Greek is, "interposed with an oath" - ἐμεσιτεύσεν ὅρκῳ emesiteusen horkōThe word used here - μεσιτεύω

mesiteuō- means to mediate or intercede for one; and then to intervene or interpose. The meaning here is, "that he interposed an oath" between himself and the other party by way of a confirmation or pledge.

Verse 18

That by two immutable things - What the "two immutable things" here referred to are, has been made a matter of question among commentators. Most expositors, as Doddridge, Whitby, Rosenmuller, Koppe, and Calvin, suppose that the reference is to the promise and the oath of God, each of which would be a firm ground of the assurance of salvation, and in each of which it would be impossible for God to lie. Prof. Stuart supposes that the reference is to "two oaths" - the oath made to Abraham, and that by which the Messiah was made High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek; Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5:6, Hebrews 5:10. He supposes that thus the salvation of believers would be amply secured, by the promise that Abraham should have a Son, the Messiah, in whom all the families of the earth would be blessed, and in the oath that this Son should be High Priest forever. But to this interpretation it may be objected that the apostle seems to refer to two things distinct from each other in their nature, and not to two acts of the same kind. There are two kinds of security referred to, whereas the security furnished according to this interpretation would be the same - that arising from an oath. However numerous the oaths might be, still it would be security of the same kind, and if one of them were broken no certainty could be derived from the other. On the supposition, however, that he refers to the "promise" and the "oath," there would be two kinds of assurance of different kinds. On the supposition that the "promise" was disregarded - if such a supposition may be made still there would be the security of the "oath" - and thus the assurance of salvation was two-fold. It seems to me, therefore, that the apostle refers to the "promise" and to the "oath" of God, as constituting the two grounds of security for the salvation of his people. Those things were both unchangeable, and when his word and oath are once passed, what he promises is secure.

In which it was impossible for God to lie - That is, it would be contrary to his nature; it is not for a moment to be supposed; compare Titus 1:2, "God - that cannot lie." The impossibility is a "moral" impossibility, and the use of the word here explains the sense in which the words "impossible, cannot," etc., are often used in the Scriptures. The meaning

here is, that such was the love of God for truth; such his holiness of character, that he "could" not speak falsely.

We might have a strong consolation - The strongest of which the mind can conceive. The consolation of a Christian is not in his own strength; his hope of heaven is not in any reliance on his own powers. His comfort is, that God has "promised" eternal life to his people, and that He cannot prove false to his word; Titus 1:2.

Who have fled for refuge - Referring to the fact that one charged with murder fled to the city of refuge, or laid hold on an altar for security. So we guilty and deserving of death have fled to the hopes of the gospel in the Redeemer.

To lay hold upon - To seize and hold fast - as one does an altar when he is pursued by the avenger of blood.

The hope set before us - The hope of eternal life offered in the gospel. This is set before us as our refuge, and to this we flee when we feel that we are in danger of death. On the nature of hope, see the notes on Ephesians 2:12.

Verse 19

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul - Hope accomplishes for the soul the same thing which an anchor does for a ship. It makes it fast and secure. An anchor preserves a ship when the waves beat and the wind blows, and as long as the anchor holds, so long the ship is safe, and the mariner apprehends no danger. So with the soul of the Christian. In the tempests and trials of life, his mind is calm as long as his hope of heaven is firm. If that gives way, he feels that all is lost. Among the pagan writers, "hope" is often compared with an anchor. So Socrates said, "To ground hope on a false supposition, is like trusting to a weak anchor." Again - "A ship ought not to trust to one anchor, nor life to one hope." Both sure and steadfast. Firm and secure. This refers to the anchor. That is fixed in the sand, and the vessel is secure.

And which entereth into that within the veil - The allusion to the "anchor" here is dropped, and the apostle speaks simply of hope. The "veil" here refers to what in the temple divided the holy from the most holy place; see the notes on Matthew 21:12. The place "within the veil" - the most holy place - was regarded as God's special abode - where he dwelt by the visible symbol of his presence. That holy place was emblematic of heaven; and the idea here is, that the hope of the Christian enters into heaven itself; it takes

hold on the throne of God; it is made firm by being fastened there. It is not the hope of future riches, honors, or pleasures in this life - for such a hope would not keep the soul steady; it is the hope of immortal blessedness and purity in the world beyond.

Verse 20

Whither - To which most holy place - heaven.

The forerunner - The word used here occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. A "forerunner" - πρόδρομος prodromos- is one who goes before others to prepare the way. The word is applied to light troops sent forward as scouts; Diod. Sic. 17,17; compare "Wisdom of Solomon" (apoc) 12:8. "Thou didst send wasps, forerunners of thy host, to destroy them by little and little." The meaning here is, that Jesus went first into the heavenly sanctuary. He led the way. He has gone there on our account, to prepare a place for us; John 14:3. Having such a friend and advocate there, we should be firm in the hope of eternal life, and amidst the storms and tempests around us, we should be calm.

Made an high priest forever - see the notes on Hebrews 5:6, Hebrews 5:10. To illustrate this fact, was the object for which this discussion was introduced, and which had been interrupted by the remarks occurring in this chapter on the danger of apostasy. Having warned them of this danger, and exhorted them to go on to make the highest attainments possible in the divine life, the apostle resumes the discussion respecting Melchizedek, and makes the remarks which he intended to make respecting this remarkable man; see Hebrews 5:11.

Remarks

1. We should aim at perfection in order that we may have evidence of piety; Hebrews 6:1. No man can be a Christian who does not do this, or who does not desire to be perfect as God is perfect. No one can be a Christian who is "satisfied" or "contented" to remain in sin; or who would not "prefer" to be made at once as holy as an angel - as the Lord Jesus - as God.

2. We should aim at perfection in order to make great attainments; Hebrews 6:1. No man makes any great advance in anything, who does not set his standard high. Men usually accomplish about what they expect to accomplish, If a man expects to be a quack physician, he becomes such; if he is satisfied to be a fourth-rate lawyer, he becomes such; if he is willing to be an indifferent mechanic, he advances no higher; if he has no intention or

expectation of being a firstrate farmer, he will never become one. If he sincerely aims, however, to excel, he usually accomplishes his object. And it is so in religion. If a man does not intend to be an eminent Christian, he may be certain he never will be. Religion is not produced by chance - any more than fine fruit is, or than a good harvest is. One of the principal reasons why President Edwards became so eminent a Christian, was, that in early life he adopted the following resolution, to which he appears always to have adhered, that "on the supposition that there never was to be but one individual in the world, at any one time, who was properly a complete Christian, in all respects of a right stamp, having Christianity always shining in its true lustre, and appearing excellent and lovely, from whatever part, and under whatever character viewed: Resolved, To act just as I would do, if I strove with all my might to be that one, who should live in my time." Life, by S. E. Dwight, D. D., p. 72.

3. We should aim to acquire as much "knowledge" of religious truth as we possibly can; Hebrews 6:1-2. True piety is "principle." It is not fancy, or dreaming, or visions, or enthusiasm. It is based on knowledge, and does not go "beyond" that. No man has any more religion than he has "knowledge" of the way of salvation. He cannot force his religion to overstep the bounds of his knowledge; for "ignorance" contributes nothing to devotion. There may be knowledge where there is no piety; but there can be no true religion where there is no knowledge. If, therefore, a Christian wishes to make advances, he must gain a knowledge of the truth. He must understand the great doctrines of his religion. And in like manner, if we wish the next generation to be intelligent and solid Christians, we must train them up to "understand" the Bible.

4. The consequences of the judgment will be eternal; Hebrews 6:2. No truth is more solemn than this. It is this which makes the prospect of the judgment so awful. If the consequences of the sentence were to continue for a few years, or ages, or centuries only, it would be of much less importance. But who can abide the thought of "eternal judgment?" Of an "eternal sentence?" Here the most fearful and solemn sentence is for a short period. The sentence will soon expire; or it is mitigated by the hope of a change. Pain here is brief. Disgrace, and sorrow, and heaviness of heart, and all the woes that man can inflict, soon come to an end. There is an outer limit of

suffering, and no severity of a sentence, no ingenuity of man, can prolong it far. The man disgraced, and whose life is a burden, will soon die. On the cheeks of the solitary prisoner, doomed to the dungeon for life, a "mortal paleness" will soon settle down, and the comforts of an approaching release by death may soothe the anguish of his sad heart.

The rack of torture cheats itself of its own purpose, and the exhausted sufferer is released. "The excess (of grief,) makes it soon mortal." But in the world of future woe the sentence will never expire; and death will never come to relieve the sufferer. I may ask, then, of my reader, Are you prepared for the "eternal" sentence? Are you ready to hear a doom pronounced which can never be changed? Would you be willing to have God judge you just as you are, and pronounce such a sentence as ought to be pronounced now, and have the assurance that it would be eternal? You seek worldly honor. Would you be willing to be doomed "always" to seek that? You aspire after wealth. Would you be willing to be doomed to aspire after that "always?" You seek pleasure - in the frivolous and giddy world. Would you be willing to be doomed "always" to seek after that? You have no religion; perhaps desire to have none. Yet would you be willing to be doomed to be always without religion? You are a stranger to the God that made you. Would you be willing to be sentenced to be "always" a stranger to God? You indulge in passion, pride, envy, sensuality. Would you be willing to be sentenced always to the raging of these passions and lusts? How few are they who would be willing to have an "eternal" sentence passed on them, or to be doomed to pursue their present employments, or to cherish their present opinions for ever! How few who would "dare" to meet a sentence which should be in strict accordance with what was "just," and which was never to change!

5. With the righteous it should be matter of rejoicing that the judgment is to be eternal; Hebrews 6:2. They can desire no change of the sentence which will assign them to heaven; and it will be no small part of the joy of the heavenly world, that the results of the judgment will be everlasting. There will be no further trial; no reversing of the sentence; no withdrawing of the crown of glory. The righteous are the only ones who have not reason to dread a "just eternal sentence;" and they will rejoice when the time shall come which will fix their doom forever.

6. We should dread apostasy from the true religion; Hebrews 6:4. We should habitually feel that if we should deny our Lord, and reject his religion, there would be no hope. The die would be cast; and we must then perish for ever. By this solemn consideration God intends to preserve his people, and it is a consideration which has been so effectual that there is not the least reason to suppose that anyone who has ever had any true religion, has fallen away and perished. Many have been "almost" Christians, and have then turned back to perdition Matthew 7:2, Matthew 7:23; Acts 26:28, but there is no reason to suppose that any who have been true Christians have thus apostatized and been lost. Yet Christians are not kept without watchfulness; they cannot be kept without the most sincere and constant endeavors to preserve themselves from failing.

7. If the sin of apostasy is so great, then every approach to it is dangerous; and then every sin should be avoided. He that habitually indulges in sin "cannot" be a Christian; and every sin which a sincere Christian commits should be measured by the guilt which "would" exist should it become final, and should he wholly fall away. No man can indulge in sin and be safe; and no professed Christian who finds himself disposed to indulge in sin, should cherish the expectation of reaching heaven; Hebrews 6:4-6.

8. It is a matter of devout gratitude that God "has" kept all his true people from apostasy; Hebrews 6:4-6. If it is true that no one who has been regenerated has ever fallen away; if the means which God has used have been effectual in a world so full of temptations, and when we have hearts so prone to evil; and if it is the intention of God to keep all to eternal salvation who are truly converted, then it should be to us a subject of devout thankfulness and of encouragement. In view of this, we should admire the wisdom of the plan which thus secures salvation; we should look to him with the firm assurance that he "will keep" what we have committed to him to the final day.

9. We should improve the privileges which we enjoy so as to receive a blessing from God; Hebrews 6:7-8. It is desirable that a farm should be well cultivated so as not to be overrun with briars and thorns; desirable that it

should produce an abundant harvest, and not exhibit mere barrenness and desolation. Yet, alas, there are many professing Christians who resemble such a field of thorns, and such a scene of desolation. They produce no fruits of righteousness; they do nothing to extend the kingdom of the Redeemer! What can such expect but the "curse" of God? What can the end of such be but to be "burned?"

10. God will not fail to reward his faithful people; Hebrews 6:10. What we have done in his service, and with a sincere desire to promote his glory, unworthy of his notice as it may seem to us to be, he will not fail to reward. It may be unobserved or forgotten by the world; nay, it may pass out of our own recollection, but it will never fail from the mind of God. Whether it be "two mites" contributed to his cause, or a "cup of cold water given to a disciple," or a life consecrated to his service, it will be alike remembered. What encouragement there is, therefore, to labor in the promotion of his glory, and to do all we can for the advancement of his kingdom!

11. Let us follow those who have inherited the promises; Hebrews 6:12. They are worthy examples. When from their lofty seats in heaven they look back on the journey of life, though to them attended with many trials, they never regret the "faith and patience" by which they were enabled to persevere. We have most illustrious examples to imitate. They are numerous as the drops of dew, and bright as the star of the morning. It is an honor to tread in the footsteps of the holy men who have inherited the promises; an honor to feel that we are walking in the same path, and are reaching out the hand to the same crown.

12. It is the privilege of those who are truly the children of God to enjoy strong consolation; Hebrews 6:13-18. Their hope is based on what cannot fail. God cannot lie. And when we have evidence that he has promised us eternal life, we may open our hearts to the full influence of Christian consolation. It may be asked, perhaps, how we may have that evidence? Will God speak to us from heaven and assure us that we are his children? Will he reveal our names as written in his book? Will he come to us in the night watches and address us by name as his? I answer, No. None of these things are we to expect. But if we have evidence that we have true repentance, and sincere faith in the Redeemer; if we love holiness and

desire to lead a pure life; if we delight in the Bible and in the people of God, then we may regard him as addressing us in the promises and oaths of his word, and assuring us of salvation. These promises belong to us, and we may apply them to ourselves. And if we have evidence that God "promises" us eternal life, why should we doubt? We may feel that we are unworthy; our consciences may reproach us for the errors and follies of our past lives; but on the unchanging word and oath of God we may rely, and there we may feel secure.

13. How invaluable is the Christian hope! Hebrews 6:19. To us it is like the anchor to a vessel in a storm. We are sailing along the voyage of life. We are exposed to breakers, and tempests. Our bark is liable to be tossed about, or to be shipwrecked. In the agitations and troubles of life, how much we need some anchor of the soul; something that shall make us calm and serene! Such an anchor is found in the hope of the gospel. While that hope is firm we need fear nothing. All is then safe, and we may look calmly on, assured that we shall ride out the storm, and come at last safely into the haven of peace. Happy they who have fled for refuge to the faith of the gospel; whose hope like a steady anchor has entered into heaven and binds the soul to the throne of God; whose confidence in the Redeemer is unshaken in all the storms of life, and who have the assurance that when the tempest shall have beaten upon them a little longer they will be admitted to a haven of rest, where storms and tempests are forever unknown. With such a hope we may well bear the trials of this life for the few days appointed to us on earth - for what are the longest trials here compared with that eternal rest which remains for all who love God in a brighter world?

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

In Hebrews 5:10-11, the apostle had introduced the name of Melchizedek, and said that Christ was made an high priest after the same order as he. He added, that he had much to say of him, but that they were not in a state of mind then to receive or understand it. He then Hebrews 5:12-14 rebukes them for the little progress which they had made in Christian knowledge; exhorts them to go on and make higher attainments (Hebrews 6:1-3); warns them against the danger of apostasy Hebrews 7:4-8; and encourages them to hold fast their faith and hope to the end, in view of the covenant faithfulness of God, Hebrews 7:9-20; and now returns to the subject under discussion - "the high priesthood of Christ." His object is to show that he was superior to the Jewish high priest, and for this purpose he institutes the comparison between him and Melchizedek. The "argument" is the following:

I. That which is drawn from the exalted rank of Melchizedek, and the fact that the ancestor of the whole Jewish priesthood and community - Abraham - acknowledged him as his superior, and rendered tribute to him. But Christ was of the order of Melchizedek, and the apostle, therefore, infers his superiority to the Jewish priesthood; Hebrews 7:1-10. In the prosecution of this argument, the apostle dwells on the import of the name "Melchizedek" Hebrews 7:1-2; states the fact that he was without any known ancestry or descent, and that he stood alone on the pages of the sacred record, and was therefore worthy to be compared with the Son of God, who had a similar pre-eminence Hebrews 7:3; urges the consideration that even Abraham, the ancestor of the whole Jewish community and priesthood, paid tithes to him, and thus confessed his inferiority Hebrews 7:4; shows that he of whom a blessing was received must be superior to the one who receives it Hebrews 7:6-7; and that even Levi, the ancestor of the whole Levitical priesthood, might be said to have paid tithes in Abraham, and thus to have acknowledged his inferiority to Melchizedek, and consequently to the Son of God, who was of his "order;" Hebrews 7:9-10.

II. The apostle shows that "perfection" could not arise out of the Levitical priesthood, and that a priesthood that introduced a perfect state

must be superior; Hebrews 7:11-19. In the prosecution of this argument, he states that perfection could not be arrived at under the Hebrew economy, and that there was need that a priesthood of another order should be formed Hebrews 7:11; that a change of the priesthood involved of necessity a change in the law or administration Hebrews 7:12; that the necessity of change of the law also followed from the fact that the great high priest was now of another tribe than that of Levi Hebrews 7:13-14; that the Christian High Priest was constituted not after a commandment pertaining to the flesh and liable to change, but "after the power of an endless life" - adapted to a life that was never to change or to end Hebrews 7:15-17; that consequently there was a disannulling of the commandment going before, because it was weak and unprofitable Hebrews 7:18; and that the old Law made "nothing" perfect, but that by the new arrangement a system of entire and eternal perfection was introduced; Hebrews 7:19.

III. The apostle shows the superiority of the priesthood of Christ to that of the Jewish system from the fact that the great High Priest of the Christian system was constituted with the solemnity of an oath; the Jewish priesthood was not; Hebrews 7:20-22. His priesthood, therefore, was as much more important and solemn as an oath is superior to a command; and his suretyship became as much more certain as an oath is superior to a simple promise; Hebrews 7:22.

IV. The superiority of the priesthood of Christ is further shown from the fact that under the former dispensation there were "many" priests; but here there was but "one." There, they lived but a brief period, and then gave way to their successors; but here there was no removal by death, there was no succession, there was an unchangeable priesthood; Hebrews 7:23-24. He infers, therefore Hebrews 7:25, that the Christian High Priest was able to save to the uttermost all that came to the Father by him, since he ever lived to make intercession.

V. The last argument is, that under the Levitical priesthood it was necessary for the priest to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. No such necessity, however, existed in regard to the High Priest of the Christian system. He was holy, harmless, and undefiled; he had no need to offer sacrifices for his own sins; and in this respect there

was a vast superiority of the Christian priesthood over the Jewish; Hebrews 7:26-28. The force of these several arguments we shall be able to estimate as we advance in the exposition.

Verse 1

For this Melchisedek; - compare the notes on Hebrews 5:6. The name Melchizedek, from which the apostle derives a portion of his argument here, is Hebrew, מלכי־צדק Malkiy-Tsedeqand is correctly explained as meaning "king of righteousness" - being compounded of two words - "king and righteousness." Why this name was given to this man is unknown. Names, however, were frequently given on account of some quality or characteristic of the man: see the notes on Isaiah 8:18. This name may have been given on account of his eminent integrity. The apostle calls attention to it Hebrews 7:2 as a circumstance worthy of notice, that his name, and the name of the city where he reigned, were so appropriate to one who, as a priest, was the predecessor of the Messiah. The account of Melchizedek, which is very brief, occurs in Genesis 14:18-20. The name occurs in the Bible only in Psalm 110:4, and in this Epistle. Nothing else is certainly known of him.

Grotius supposes that he is the same man who in the history of Sanchoniathon is called Συδύκ SudukIt has indeed been made a question by some whether such a person ever actually existed, and consequently whether this be a proper name. But the account in Genesis is as simple a historical record as any other in the Bible. In that account there is no difficulty whatever. It is said simply that when Abraham was returning from a successful military expedition, this man, who it seems was well known, and who was respected as a priest of God, came out to express his approbation of what he had done, and to refresh him with bread and wine. As a tribute of gratitude to him, and as a thank-offering to God, Abraham gave him a tenth part of the spoils which he had taken. Such an occurrence was by no means improbable, nor would it have been attended with any special difficulty if it had not been for the use which the apostle makes of it in this Epistle. Yet on no subject has there been a greater variety of opinion than in regard to this man.

The bare recital of the opinions which have been entertained of him would fill a volume. But in a case which "seems" to be plain from the

Scripture narrative, it is not necessary even to enumerate these opinions. They only serve to show how easy it is for people to mystify a clear statement of history, and how fond they are of finding what is mysterious and marvelous in the plainest narrative of facts. That he was Shem, as the Jews suppose, or that he was the Son of God himself, as many Christian expositors have maintained, there is not the slightest evidence. That the latter opinion is false is perfectly clear - for if he were the Son of God, with what propriety could the apostle say that he "was made like the Son of God" Hebrews 7:3; that is, like himself; or that Christ was constituted a priest "after the order of Melchisedek;" that is, that he was a type of himself? The most simple and probable opinion is that given by Josephus, that he was a pious Canaanitish prince; a personage eminently endowed by God, and who acted as the priest of his people.

That he combined in himself the offices of priest and king, furnished to the apostle a beautiful illustration of the offices sustained by the Redeemer, and was in this respect, perhaps, the only one whose history is recorded in the Old Testament, who would furnish such an illustration. That his genealogy was not recorded, while that of every other priest mentioned was so carefully traced and preserved, furnished another striking illustration. In this respect, like the Son of God, he stood alone. He was not in a "line" of priests; he was preceded by no one in the sacerdotal office, nor was he followed by any. That he was superior to Abraham. and consequently to all who descended from Abraham; that a tribute was rendered to him by the great Ancestor of all the fraternity of Jewish priests was just an illustration which suited the purpose of Paul. His name, therefore, the place where he reigned, his solitariness, his lone conspicuity in all the past, his dignity, and perhaps the air of mystery thrown over him in the brief history in Genesis, furnished a beautiful and striking illustration of the solitary grandeur, and the inapproachable eminence of the priesthood of the Son of God. There is no evidence that Melchizedek was "designed" to be a type of the Messiah, or that Abraham so understood it, Nothing of this kind is affirmed; and how shall "we" affirm it when the sacred oracles are silent?

(Doubtless great care and sobriety are requisite in the interpretation of types, and we admire the caution that, in every instance, demands the authority of Scripture, expressed or distinctly implied. From want of this

caution, the greatest extravagancies have been committed, the most fanciful analogies established, where none were intended, and every minute circumstance in the Old Testament exalted into a type of something in the New. The very boards and nails of the tabernacle of Moses have been thus exalted.

Yet in our just aversion to one extreme, it is possible we may run into another. Of the typical character of Melchizedek, we had thought no doubt could be entertained. The canon of typical interpretation, indeed, demands, that in order to constitute the relation between type and antitype, there be, in addition to mere resemblance, "precious design," and "pre-ordained connection." And the commentary affirms, that "there is no evidence, that Melchizedek was designed to be a type of the Messiah, or that Abraham so understood it." Let it be observed in reply, that in the Psalm 110:1 Psalm the typical character of Melchizedek "seems" expressly acknowledged. It may be alleged, that the prophet simply states resemblance, without affirming that such resemblance was designed or intended. But that a prophet should be commissioned to declare, that Christ's priesthood should be "after such an order," and yet that in the institution of that exalted order there should have been no designed reference to Christ, is improbable.

The prediction seems to involve the original design. And this order of priesthood, too, is far superior to that of Aaron, the typical character of which is admitted. Moreover, the last clause of verse third, in this chapter, according to our English translation as a designed connection. Melchizedek was "made like unto the Son of God." The translation is accurate. Ἀφομοιωμενος Aphomoiōmenosaccording to Parkhurst, is "made very like." So also Scott: "The composition is probably intended to add energy; made very like." And Bloomfield adopts, "being made by the divine decree a type of that great High Priest, who, &c,;" see the notes in Greek Testament. Lastly, on any other principle than that of "designed" typical relation, it is difficult, if not impossible, to give any just account of the remarkable omissions, the apparently studied silence, in the history of Melchizedek, in regard to those things that are commonly related in notices of lives, however brief.

He is introduced to us with an air of impenetrable mystery. He appears on the stage as Priest of the most High God, and then disappears, leaving us in complete darkness concerning his birth, parentage, and death. "In all these respects," says Mr. Scott, "the silence of the Scripture is intentional and refers to the great antitype." Melchizedek, therefore, we may remark, seems not only to have been designed as a type, but "special care" has been taken, that the record of him should be in all things suited to that design. That the apostle lighted on a happy coincidence, deserving of a passing thought, is not probable, whether this remark be meant to apply to the name, or to other particulars in this remarkable story. Indeed, divest it of its designed typical character, and the grandeur of the passage vanishes. A simple resemblance has been discovered between Christ and a certain character in the old Testament. This is all the apostle means to affirm! And for this too, he introduces Melchizedek, with such wondrous caution in Hebrews 5:11; "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, but ye are dull of hearing." What was hard to be uttered, or difficult to be comprehended about a mere "illustration," or "resemblance?"

The following remarks of Owen are pertinent and beautiful. "The true cause of all these omissions was the same with that of the institution of his (Melchizedek's) priesthood, and the introduction of his person into the story. And this was, that he might he the more express and signal representative of the Lord Christ in his priesthood. And we may herein consider the sovereign wisdom of the Holy Spirit in bringing forth truth unto light, according as the state and condition of the church doth require. And first he prophesieth only a naked story of a person that was a type of Christ. Something the people of the age wherein he lived, might learn by his ministrations, but not much. For what was principally instructive in him, for the use of the church, was not of force until all his circumstances were forgotten. Yea, the contrivance of any tradition concerning his parents, birth, and death, had been contrary to the mind of God, and what instruction he intended the church by him.

Afterward, when, it may be, all thoughts of any use or design in this story were lost, and the church was fully satisfied in a priesthood quite of another nature, the Holy Spirit in one word of prophecy instructs her, not only that the things spoken concerning Melchizedek were not so recorded

for his own sake, or on his own account, but with respect to another priest, which was afterward to arise, by him represented. This gave a new consideration to the whole story; but moreover gave the church to know, that the priesthood, which it then had, was not always to continue, but that one of another nature was to be introduced, as was signified long before the institution of that priesthood which they enjoyed, Psalm 110:4. Yet the church was left greatly in the dark, and, at the coming of our Saviour, had utterly lost all knowledge of the mystery of the type, and the promise renewed in the Psalm. Wherefore, our apostle entering on the unfolding of this mystery, doth not only preface it with an assertion of its difficulty, but also by a long previous discourse, variously prepareth their minds to a most diligent attention."

The excellence of this quotation will, in the reader's estimation, excuse the length of it. On the whole, he who reflects how all things in the ancient economy were ordered of God, and how great a part of that economy was meant to adumbrate the realities of the gospel, while he will be cautious in admitting typical analogies of a doubtful kind, will be slow to believe that the resemblance between Christ's priesthood, and that of the "most" exalted order previously instituted, is casual, or undesigned - slow to believe, that the apostle would make so large use of such accidental analogy, and found on it an argument so great.)

King of Salem - Such is the record in Genesis 14:18. The word "Salem" - שׁלם shalēm- means "peace;" and from this fact the apostle derives his illustration in Hebrews 7:2. He regards it as a fact worth remarking on, that the "name" of the place over which he ruled expressed so strikingly the nature of the kingdom over which the Messiah was placed. In regard to the "place" here denoted by the name "Salem," the almost uniform opinion has been that it was that afterward known as Jerusalem. The reasons for this opinion are,

(1)that it is a part of the name Jerusalem itself - the name "Jerus," altered from "Jebus," having been afterward added, because it was the residence of the "Jebusites."

(2)the name "Salem" is itself given to Jerusalem; Psalm 76:2, "In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion."

(3)Jerusalem would be in the direction through which Abraham would naturally pass on his return from the slaughter of the kings. He had pursued them unto Dan Genesis 14:14, and he was returning to Mamre, that is, Hebron; Genesis 14:13, on his return, therefore, he would pass in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

Rosenmuller, however, supposes that by the name here, Jerusalem is not intended, but the whole region occupied by the Jebusites and Hittites, or the royal seat of this region, situated not far from the cities of the plain - the vale of Siddim where Sodom and Gomorrah were situated. But I see no reason for doubting that the common opinion that Jerusalem is intended, is correct. That place was favorably situated for a capital of a nation or tribe; was easily fortified; and would be likely to be early selected as a royal residence.

Priest of the most high God - This is the account which is given of him in Genesis 14:18. The leading office of "priest" was to offer sacrifice. This duty was probably first performed by the father of the family (compare the notes on Job 1:5; see also Genesis 8:20; Genesis 22:2), and when he was dead it devolved on the oldest son. It would seem also that in the early ages, among all nations whose records have reached us, the office of priest and king were united in the same person. It was long before it was found that the interests of religion would be promoted by having the office of priest pertain to an order of men set apart for this special work. That Melchizedek, who was a king, should also be a priest, was not, therefore, remarkable. The only thing remarkable is, that be should have been a priest "of the true God." In what way he became acquainted with Him, is wholly unknown. It may have been by tradition preserved from the times of Noah, as it is possible that the arrival of Abraham in that land may have been in some way the means of acquainting him with the existence and character of Jehovah. The "fact" shows at least that the knowledge of the true God was not extinct in the world.

Who met Abraham - He came out to meet him, and brought with him bread and wine. "Why" he did this, is not mentioned. It was probably as an expression of gratitude to Abraham for having freed the country from oppressive and troublesome invaders, and in order to furnish refreshments to the party which Abraham headed who had become weary and exhausted with the pursuit. There is not the slightest evidence that the bread and wine which he brought forth was designed to typify the Sacrament of the Lord's

Supper, as has been sometimes supposed; compare Bush on Genesis 14:18. What did he know of this ordinance? And why should we resort to such a supposition, when the whole case may be met by a simple reference to the ancient rites of hospitality, and by the fact that the deliverance of the country by Abraham from a grievous invasion made some expression of gratitude on the part of this pious king in the highest degree proper?

Returning from the slaughter of the kings - Amraphel, king of Shinar, Arioch, king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, and "Tidal, king of nations," who had invaded the valley where Sodom and Gomorrah were, and had departed with a great amount of booty. Those kings Abraham had pursued beyond Dan, and to the neighborhood of Damascus, and had smitten them, and recovered the spoil.

And blessed him - For the important service which he had rendered in taking vengeance on these invaders; in freeing the land from the apprehension of being invaded again; and in recovering the valuable booty which they had taken away. From Hebrews 7:6-7, it appears that this act of "blessing" was regarded as that of one who was superior to Abraham. That is, he blessed him as a priest and a king. As such he was superior in rank to Abraham, who never claimed the title of "king," and who is not spoken of as a "priest."

Verse 2

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all - That is, a tenth part of all the spoils which he had taken Genesis 14:20, thus acknowledging that in dignity of office Melchizedek was greatly his superior; Hebrews 7:4, Hebrews 7:6, Hebrews 7:8. This does not appear to have been on the part of Abraham so much designed as a present to Melchizedek personally, as an act of pious thankfulness to God. He doubtless recognized in Melchizedek one who was a minister of God, and to him as such he devoted the tenth of all which he had taken, as a proper acknowledgment of the goodness of God and of his claims. From this it is evident that the propriety of devoting a tenth part of what was possessed to God, was regarded as a duty before the appointment of the Levitical law. "Some" expression of this kind is obviously demanded, and piety seems early to have fixed on the "tenth" part as being no more than a proper proportion to consecrate to the service of religion. For the propriety of the use which the apostle makes of this fact, see the notes on Hebrews 7:4, Hebrews 7:6, Hebrews 7:8.

First being - The "first" idea in the interpretation of his name and office, etc. First being mentioned as king of righteousness, and then as king of peace.

King of righteousness - The literal translation of the name Melchizedek; see the notes on ver. 1. The "argument" implied in this by the remarks of the apostle is, that he bore a name which made him a proper emblem of the Messiah. There was a propriety that one in whose "order" the Messiah was to be found, should have such a name. It would be exactly descriptive of him, and it was "worthy of observation" that he of whose "order" it was said the Messiah would be, should have had such a name. Paul does not say that this name was given to him with any such reference; or that it was "designed" to be symbolical of what the Messiah would be, but that there was a "remarkable coincidence;" that it was a fact which was worth at least "a passing thought." This is a kind of remark that might occur to anyone to make, and where the slight use which Paul makes of it would not be improper anywhere; but it cannot be denied that to one accustomed to the Jewish mode of reasoning - accustomed to dwell much on hidden meanings, and to trace out concealed analogies, it would be much more obvious and striking than it is with us.

We are to place ourselves in the situation of those to whom Paul wrote - trained up with Jewish feelings, and Jewish modes of thought, and to ask how this would strike "their" minds. And this is no more unreasonable than it would be in interpreting a Greek classic, or a work of a Hindu philosopher, that we should endeavor to place ourselves in the situation of the writer and of those for whom he wrote, and ascertain what ideas would be conveyed to them by certain expressions. It is not meant by these observations that there was really no intrinsic force in what Paul here said respecting the import of the "name." There was force; and all the use which he makes of it is proper. His meaning appears to be merely that it was a fact worthy of remark, that the "name" had a meaning which corresponded so entirely with the character of him who was to be a high priest of the same "order." "And after that." He is mentioned after that with another appellation equally significant.

King of peace - A literal translation of the appellation "king of Salem;" Hebrews 7:1. The idea of Paul is, that it was "worthy of remark" that the appellation which he bore was appropriate to one whose ministry it was said the priesthood of the Messiah would resemble.

Verse 3

Without father - The phrase "without father" - ἀπάτωρ apatōr- means literally one who has no father; one who has lost his father; one who is an orphan. Then it denotes one who is born after the death of his father; then one whose father is unknown - "spurious. Passow." The word occurs often in these senses in the classic writers, for numerous examples of which the reader may consult Wetstein in loc. It is morally certain, however, that the apostle did not use the word here in either of the senses, for there is no evidence that Melchizedek was "fatherless" in any of these respects. It was very important in the estimation of the Jews that the line of their priesthood should be carefully kept; that their genealogies should be accurately marked and preserved; and that their direct descent from Aaron should be susceptible of easy and certain proof. But the apostle says that there was no such genealogical table in regard to Melchizedek. There was no "record" made of the name either of his father, his mother, or any of his posterity. "He stood alone."

It is simply said that such a man came out to meet Abraham - and that is the first and the last which we hear of him and of his family. Now, says the apostle, it is distinctly said Psalm 110:4, that the Messiah was to be a priest "according to his order" - and in this respect there is a remarkable resemblance, "so far as the point of his being a priest" - which was the point under discussion - "was concerned." The Messiah thus, "as a priest," StooD alone. His name does not appear in the line of priests. He pertained to another tribe; Hebrews 7:14. No one of his ancestors is mentioned as a priest; and as a priest he has no descendants, and no followers. He has a lonely conspicuity similar to that of Melchizedek; a standing unlike that of any other priest. This should not, therefore, be construed as meaning that the genealogy of Christ could not be traced out - which is not true, for Matthew Numbers 4:3, Numbers 4:23, Numbers 4:35, Numbers 4:43, Numbers 4:47; Numbers 8:24-25.

After the age of fifty, they were released from the more arduous and severe duties of their office. In later periods of the Jewish history they commenced their duties at the age of twenty; 1 Chronicles 23:24, 1 Chronicles 23:27. The priests, also, and the high priest entered on their office at thirty years of age, though it is not supposed that they retired from it at any particular period of life. The idea of the apostle here is, that

nothing of this kind occurs in regard to Melchizedek. No period is mentioned when he entered on his office; none when he retired from it. From anything that "appears" in the sacred record it might be perpetual - though Paul evidently did not mean to be understood as saying that it was so. It "cannot" be that he meant to say that Melchizedek had "no beginning" of days literally, that is, that he was from eternity; or that he had "no end of life" literally, that is, that he would exist forever - for this would be to make him equal with God. The expression used must be interpreted according to the matter under discussion, and that was the office of Melchizedek "as a priest."

Of that no beginning is mentioned, and no end. That this is the meaning of Paul there can be no doubt; but there is a much more difficult question about the force and pertinency of this reasoning; about the use which he means to make of this fact, and the strength of the argument which he here designs to employ. This inquiry cannot be easily settled. It may be admitted undoubtedly, that it would strike a Jew with much more force than it would any other person, and to see its pertinency we ought to be able to place ourselves in their condition, and to transfer to ourselves as far as possible their state of feeling. It was mentioned in Psalm 110:4, that the Messiah was to be a "priest after the order of Melchizedek." It was natural then to turn to the only record which existed of him - the very brief narrative in Hebrews 7:1; and the intermediate statements are of the nature of a parenthesis, containing important suggestions respecting the character of Melchizedek, which would be useful in preparing the readers for the argument which the apostle proposed to draw from his rank and character. The meaning is, that there is no account of his death, or of his ceasing to exercise the priestly office, and in this respect be may be compared with the Lord Jesus. All other priests cease to exercise their office by death Hebrews 7:23; but of the death of Melchizedek there is no mention. It must have been true that the priesthood of Melchizedek terminated at his death; and it will be also true that that of Christ will cease when his church shall have been redeemed, and when he shall have given up the mediatorial kingdom to the Father; 1 Corinthians 15:25-28. The expression, "abideth a priest continually," therefore, is equivalent to saying that he had a "perpetual priesthood" in contradistinction from those whose office terminated at a definite period, or whose office passed over into the hands of others; see the notes on ver. 24.

Verse 4

Now consider how great this man was - The object of the apostle was to exalt the rank and dignity of Melchizedek. The Jews had a profound veneration for Abraham, and if it could be shown that Melchizedek was superior to Abraham, then it would be easy to demonstrate the superiority of Christ as a priest to all who descended from Abraham. Accordingly he argues, that he to whom even the patriarch Abraham showed so much respect, must have had an exalted rank. Abraham, according to the views of the East, the illustrious ancestor of the Jewish nation, was regarded as superior to any of his posterity, and of course was to be considered as of higher rank and dignity than the Levitical priests who were descended from him.

Even the patriarch Abraham - One so great as he is acknowledged to have been. On the word "patriarch," see the notes on Acts 2:29. It occurs only in Acts 2:29; Acts 7:8-9, and in this place.

Gave the tenth of the spoils - see the notes, Hebrews 7:2. The argument here is, that Abraham acknowledged the superiority of Melchizedek by thus devoting the usual part of the spoils of war, or of what was possessed, to God by his hands, as the priest of the Most High. Instead of making a direct consecration by himself, he brought them to him as a minister of religion, and recognized in him one who had a higher official standing in the matter of religion than himself. The Greek word rendered here "spoils" - ἀκροθίνιον akrothinion- means literally, "the top of the heap," from ἄκρον akron"top," and θίν thin"heap." The Greeks were accustomed, after a battle, to collect the spoils together, and throw them into a pile, and then, before they were distributed, to take off a portion from the top, and devote it to the gods; Xen. Cyro. 7,5,35; Herod. i. 86,90; 8:121,122; Dion. Hal. ii. In like manner it was customary to place the harvest in a heap, and as the first thing to take off a portion from the top to consecrate as a thank-offering to God. The word then came to denote the "first-fruits" which were offered to God, and then the best of the spoils of battle. It has that sense here, and denotes the spoils or plunder which Abraham had taken of the discomfited kings.

Verse 5

And verily they that are of the sons of Levi - The meaning of this verse is, that the Levitical priests had a right to receive tithes of their

brethren, but still that they were inferior to Melchizedek. The apostle admits that their superiority to the rest of the people was shown by the fact that they had a right to require of them the tenth part of the productions of the land for their maintenance, and for the support of religion. But still he says, that their inferiority to Melchizedek, and consequently to Christ as a priest, was shown by the fact that the illustrious ancestor of all the Jewish people, including the priests as well as others, had confessed his inferiority to Melchizedek by paying him tithes.

Who receive the office of the priesthood - Not all the descendants of Levi were priests. The apostle, therefore, specifies particularly those who "received this office," as being those whom he specially designed, and as those whose inferiority to Christ as a priest it was his object to show.

Have a commandment to take tithes - Have by the Law a commission, or a right to exact tithes of the people. Deuteronomy 14:22, Deuteronomy 14:27-29.

Verse 6

But he whose descent is not counted from them - Melchizedek. The word "descent" is "pedigree" in the margin. The meaning is, that he was not "in the same genealogy" - μὴ γενεαλογούμενος mē genealogoumenos- he was not of the order of Levitical priests. That Melchizedek is meant there can be no doubt; at the same time, also, the thought is presented with prominence on which Paul so much insists, that he was of a different order from the Levitical priesthood.

And blessed him - Blessed him as a priest of God; blessed him in such a manner as to imply acknowledged superiority; see Hebrews 7:1.

That had the promises - The promise that he should have a numerous posterity; that in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed; see Hebrews 6:12-16.

Verse 7

And without all contradiction - It is an admitted principle; a point about which there can be no dispute.

The less is blessed of the better - The act of pronouncing a blessing is understood to imply superiority of rank, age, or station. So when a father lays his hand on his children and blesses them, it is understood to be the act of one superior in age, venerableness, and authority; when a prophet pronounced a blessing on the people, the same thing was understood, and the same is true also when a minister of religion pronounces a blessing on a

congregation. It is the act of one who is understood to sustain an office above the people on whom the blessing is pronounced. This was understood of the Saviour when parents brought their children to him to lay his hands on them and bless them Matthew 19:13; and the same was true of Jacob when dying he blessed the sons of Joseph; Hebrews 11:21; Genesis 20:7, yet he is nowhere called either a priest or a king. In these respects, it was undoubted that he was inferior to Melchizedek.

Verse 8

And here men that die receive tithes - Another point showing the inferiority of the Levitical priesthood. They who thus received tithes, though by the right to do this they asserted a superiority over their brethren, were mortal. Like others, they would soon die; and in regard to the most essential things they were on a level with their brethren. They had no exemption from sickness, affliction, or bereavement, and death came to them with just as much certainty as he approached other men. The meaning of this is, that they are mortal like their brethren, and the design is to show the inferiority of their office by this fact. Its obvious and natural signification, in the apprehension of the great mass of readers, would not be, as the meaning has been supposed to be, that it refers "to the brief and mutable condition of the Levitical priesthood;" see Stuart in loco. Such an interpretation would not occur to anyone if it were not to avoid the difficulty existing in the correlative member of the verse where it is said of Melchizedek that "he liveth." But is the difficulty avoided then? Is it not as difficult to understand what is meant by his having an immutable and perpetual priesthood, as it is to know what is meant by his not dying literally? Is the one any more true than the other? Whatever difficulties, therefore, there may be, we are bound to adhere to the obvious sense of the expression here; a sense which furnishes also a just and forcible ground of comparison. It seems to me, therefore, that the simple meaning of this passage is, that, under the Levitical economy, those who received tithes were mortal, and were thus placed in strong contrast with him of whom it was said "he liveth." Thus, they were inferior to him - as a mortal is inferior to one who does not die; and thus also they must be inferior to him who was made a priest after the "order" of him who thus "lived."

But there - In contrast with "here" in the same verse. The reference here is to the account of Melchizedek, "Here," in the Levitical economy, men

received tithes who are mortal; “there,” in the account of Melchizedek, the case is different.

He receiveth them - Melchizedek - for so the connection evidently demands.

Of whom it is witnessed - Of whom the record is. There is not in Genesis, indeed, any direct record that he lives, but there is the absence of a record that he died, and this seems to have been regarded as in fact a record of permanency in the office; or as having an office which did not pass over to successors by the death of the then incumbent.

That he liveth - This is an exceedingly difficult expression, and one which has always greatly perplexed commentators. The fair and obvious meaning is, that all the record we have of Melchizedek is, that he was “alive;” or as Grotins says, the record is merely that he lived. We have no mention of his death. From anything that the record shows, it might appear that he continued to live on, and did not die. “Arguing from the record,” therefore, there is a strong contrast between him and the Levitical priests, all of whom we know are mortal; Hebrews 7:23. The apostle is desirous of making out a contrast between them and the priesthood of Christ on “this point” among others, and in doing this, he appeals to the record in the Old Testament, and says that there was a case which furnished an intimation that the priestly office of the Messiah was not to pass over from him to others by death.

That case was, that he was expressly compared Psalm 110:4 with Melchizedek, and that in the account of Melchizedek there was no record of his death. As to the force of this argument, it must be admitted that it would strike a Jew more impressively than it does most readers now; and it may not be improbable that the apostle was reasoning from some interpretation of the passages in Genesis 14: and Ps. cx., which was then prevalent, and which would then be conceded on all hands to be correct. If this was the admitted interpretation, and if there is no equivocation, or mere trick in the reasoning - as there cannot be shown to be - why should we not allow to the Jew a uniqueness of reasoning as we do to all other people? There are modes of reasoning and illustration in all nations, in all societies, and in all professions, which do not strike others as very forcible. The ancient philosophers had methods of reasoning which now seem weak to us; the lawyer often argues in a way which appears to be a mere quirk or quibble, and so the lecturer in science sometimes reasons.

The cause of all this may not be always that there is real quibble or quirk, in the mode of argumentation, but that he who reasons in this manner has in his view certain points which he regards as undisputed which do not appear so to us; or that he argues from what is admitted in the profession, or in the school where he is taught, which are not understood by those whom he addresses. To this should be added also the consideration, that Paul had a constant reference to the Messiah, and that it is possible that in his mind there was here a transition from the type to the antitype, and that the language which he uses may be stronger than if he had been speaking of the mere record of Melchizedek if he had found it standing by itself. Still his reasoning turns mainly on the fact that in the case of Melchizedek there was no one who had preceded him in that office, and that he had no successor, and, in regard to the matter in hand, it was all one as if he had been a perpetual priest, or had continued still alive.

(The reasoning in the whole passage is founded on the Scripture account of Melchizedek. He is not to be regarded absolutely, but typically. View him just as he appears in the record in Genesis, and the difficulty will be greatly lessened, if it do not altogether disappear. There, he is presented to us, in his typical character, as living. All notice of his death is studiously omitted with the express design, that, appearing only as a living priest, he might the better typify our immortal Redeemer. In this view, which indeed is so well brought out in the commentary above, "the apostle's argument unto the dignity, and pre-eminence of Melchizedek above the Levitical priests, in this instance, is of an "unquestionable evidence." For, consider Melchizedek, not in his natural being and existence, which belongs not unto this mystery, but in his Scripture being and existence, and he is immortal, always living, wherein he is more excellent than those who were always obnoxious to death in the exercise of their office" - Owen. McKnight, observing that the Greek verb ζη zēhere is not in the present, but the imperfect of the indicative, translates - lived, a priest all his life, in contradistinction from those who ceased to be priests at a certain age. But whatever view may be taken of the passage, whatever solution of the difficulty may be adopted, apology for the mode of reasoning may well be spared. An inspired writer needs it not. All his reasoning has, doubtless, a solid basis in truth. It is impossible he should proceed on any peculiarities

or modes of reasoning, but such as are strictly true, the accuracy of which might, any where, and at any time, be admitted, by those who had the means and patience for a right understanding of them.)

Verse 9

And as I may so say - So to speak - ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν hōs epos eipeinFor numerous examples in the classic writers of this expression, see Wetstein in loc. It is used precisely as it is with us when we say "so to speak," or "if I may be allowed the expression." It is employed when what is said is not strictly and literally true, but when it amounts to the same thing, or when about the same idea is conveyed. "It is a "softening down" of an expression which a writer supposes his readers may deem too strong, or which may have the appearance of excess or severity. It amounts to an indirect apology for employing an unusual or unexpected assertion or phrase." "Prof. Stuart." Here Paul could not mean that Levi had actually paid tithes in Abraham - for he had not then an existence; or that Abraham was his representative - for there had been no appointment of Abraham to act in that capacity by Levi; or that the act of Abraham was imputed or reckoned to Levi, for that was not true, and would not have been pertinent to the case if it were so. But it means, that in the circumstances of the case, the same thing occurred in regard to the superiority of Melchizedek, and the inferiority of the Levitical priesthood, as if Levi had been present with Abraham, and had himself actually paid tithes on that occasion. This was so because Abraham was the distinguished ancestor of Levi, and when an ancestor has done an act implying inferiority of rank to another, we feel as if the whole family or all the descendants, by that act recognized the inferiority, unless something occurs to change the relative rank of the persons. Here nothing indicating any such change had occurred. Melchizedek had no descendants of which mention is made, and the act of Abraham, as the head of the Hebrew race, stood therefore as if it were the act of all who descended from him.

Levi - The ancestor of the whole Levitical priesthood, and from whom they received their name. He was the third son of Jacob and Leah, and was born in Mesopotamia. On account of the conduct of Simeon and Levi toward Shechem, for the manner in which he had treated their sister Dinah Genesis 34:25, and which Jacob characterized as "cruelty" Genesis 49:5-6, Jacob said that they should be "scattered in Israel." Genesis 49:7. Afterward

the whole tribe of Levi was chosen by God to execute the various functions of the priesthood, and were "scattered" over the land, having no inheritance of their own, but deriving their subsistence from the offerings of the people; Numbers 3:6 ff. Levi is here spoken of as the ancestor of the tribe, or collectively to denote the entire Jewish priesthood.

Who receiveth tithes - That is, his descendants, the priests and Levites, receive tithes.

Payed tithes in Abraham - It is the same as if he had payed tithes in or by Abraham.

Verse 10

For he was yet in the loins of his father - Abraham is here called the father of Levi, by a common use of the word, referring to a more remote ancestor than the literal father. The meaning of the apostle is, that he was even then, in a certain sense, in the loins of Abraham, when Melchizedek met him; or it was all the same as if he were there, and had then an existence. The relation which subsisted between him and Abraham, in the circumstances of the case, implied the same thing as if he had then been born, and had acted for himself by paying tithes. Instances of this occur constantly. A father sells a farm, to which his son would he heir, and it is the same as if the son had sold it. He has no more control over it than if he had been present and disposed of it himself. A father acknowledges fealty to a government for a certain title or property which is to descend to his heirs, and it is all one as if the heir had himself done it; and it is not improper to say that it is the same as if he had been there and acted for himself.

For some valuable remarks on the nature of the reasoning here employed, see Stuart on the Hebrews; Excursus xiv. The reasoning here is, indeed, especially such as would be suited to impress a Jewish mind, and perhaps more forcibly than it does ours. The Jews valued themselves on the dignity and honor of the Levitical priesthood, and it was important to show them on their own principles, and according to their own sacred writings, that the great ancestor of all the Levitical community had himself acknowledged his inferiority to one who was declared also in their own writings Psalm 110:1-7 to be like the Messiah, or who was of the same "order." At the same time, the reasoning concedes nothing false; and conveys no wrong impression. It is not mere fancy or accommodation, nor is it framed on allegory or cabalistic principles. It is founded in truth, and such as might be used anywhere, where regard was shown to pedigree, or

respect was claimed on account of the illustrious deeds of an ancestor. It would be regarded as sound reasoning in a country like England, where titles and ranks are recognized, and where various orders of nobility exist. The fact that a remote ancestor had done homage or fealty to the ancestor of another class of titled birth, would be regarded as proof of acknowledged inferiority in the family, and might be used with force and propriety in an argument. Paul has done no more than this.

(Several excellent and evangelical commentators explain the passage on the principle of representations, the admission of which relieves it from many difficulties. If we allow that Abraham was the representative of his seed, and of the sons of Levi among the number, then they unquestionably may be said to have paid tithes in him, in a most obvious and intelligible sense. That Abraham is to be here regarded, as not only the natural but covenant head of Israel, is argued from what is said in Psalm 110:6, of his having "had the promises," which promises manifestly did not belong to him alone, but to him and to his seed, Genesis 17:4-9. The land of Canaan never was actually given to Abraham. He obtained the promise or grant of it, as the representative of his posterity, who came to its enjoyment when four hundred years had expired. By those who adopt this view, the passage is supposed to contain an illustration of the manner in which Adam and Christ represent those who respectively belong to them.

And here let it be noticed, that the objection against Abraham's representative character, grounded by our author on the fact, "that there had been no appointment of Abraham to act in that capacity by Levi," might with equal force be urged against the representation of Adam and Christ, which the reader will find established in the supplementary notes on Matthew 12:27; Luke 11:19. But if the reader consult these passages, he will find that mistake is impossible. The plainest indication is given, that the argument proceeds on the principle of all adversary. It would require no small ingenuity, however, to press this passage into the same rank with those now quoted. It clearly belongs to a different class, and the apostle proceeds with his argument, without the slightest indication that it was grounded rather on what was admitted, than on what was strictly true.)

Verse 11

If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood - As the Jews supposed. They were accustomed to regard the system as perfect. It was an appointment of God, and they were tenacious of the opinion that it was to be permanent, and that it needed no change. But Paul says that this could not be. Even from their own Scriptures it was apparent that a priest was to arise of another order, and of a more permanent character, and this he says was full proof: that there was defect of some kind in the previous order. What this defect was, he does not here specify, but the subsequent reasoning shows that it was in such points as these - that it was not permanent; that it could not make the worshippers perfect; that the blood which they offered in sacrifice could not take away sin, and could not render those who offered it holy; compare Hebrews 7:19, Hebrews 7:23-24; Hebrews 10:1-4.

For under it the people received the law - This assertion seems necessary in order to establish the point maintained in Hebrews 7:12, that if the priesthood is changed there must be also a change of the Law. In order to this, it was necessary to admit that the Law was received under that economy, and that "it was a part of it," so that the change of one involved also the change of the other. It was not strictly true that the whole Law was given after the various orders of Levitical priest were established - for the Law on Sinai, and several other laws, were given before that distinct arrangement was made; but it was true:

(1)that a considerable part of the laws of Moses were given under that arrangement; and,

(2)that the whole of the ceremonial observances was connected with that. They were parts of one system, and mutually dependent on each other. This is all that the argument demands.

What further need was there … - "If that system would lead to perfection; if it was sufficient to make the conscience pure, and to remove sin, then there was no necessity of any other. Yet the Scriptures have declared that there "would be" another of a different order, implying that there was some defect in the former." This reasoning is founded on the fact that there was an express prediction of the coming of a priest of a different "order" Psalm 110:4, and that this fact implied that there was some deficiency in the former arrangement. To this reasoning it is impossible to conceive that there can be any objection.

Verse 12

For the priesthood being changed - According to the prediction in Ps. cx., that it would be. When that occurs, the consequence specified will also follow.

There is made of necessity a change also of the law - The Law so far as it grew out of that, or was dependent on it. The connection requires us to understand it only of the Law "so far as it was connected with the Levitical priesthood." This could not apply to the ten commandments - for they were given before the institution of the priesthood; nor could it apply to any other part of the moral law, for that was not dependent on the appointment of the Levitical priests. But the meaning is, that since a large number of laws - constituting a code of considerable extent and importance - was given for the regulation of the priesthood, and in reference to the rites of religion, which they were to observe or superintend, it followed that when their office was superseded by "one of a wholly different order," the Law which had regulated them vanished also, or ceased to be binding. This was a very important point in the introduction of Christianity, and hence, it is that it is so often insisted on in the writings of Paul. The argument to show that there had been a change or transfer of the priestly office, he proceeds to establish in the sequel.

Verse 13

For he of whom these things are spoken - The Lord Jesus, the Messiah, to whom they had reference. The things here spoken of pertain to his office as priest; his being of the order of Melchizedek. The apostle here "assumes" it as a point concerning which there could be no dispute, that these things referred to the Lord Jesus. Those whom he addressed would not be disposed to call this in question, and his argument had conducted him to this conclusion.

Pertaineth to another tribe - To the tribe of Judah; Hebrews 7:14.

Of which no man gave attendance at the altar - The priestly office pertained only to the tribe of Levi. No one of the tribe of Judah had any part in the performance of the duties of that office. This was settled by the Jewish Law.

Verse 14

For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah - It is well known: it cannot be a matter of dispute. About the fact that the Lord Jesus was of the tribe of Judah, there could be no doubt; compare Matthew 1:3. But probably the apostle means here to refer to more than that simple fact.

It was a doctrine of the Old Testament, and was admitted by the Jews, that the Messiah was to be of that tribe; see Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 11:1; Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6. This was an additional consideration to show that there was to be a change of some kind in the office of the priesthood, since it was declared (Ps. cx) that the Messiah was to be a priest. The fact that the Messiah is to be of the tribe of Judah is still admitted by the Jews. As their distinction of tribes now, however, is broken up, and as it is impossible for them to tell who belongs to the tribe of Judah, it is held by them that when he comes this will be made known by miracle.

Of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood - That is, in the Mosaic laws respecting the office of priest, this tribe is not mentioned. All the arrangements pertain to the tribe of Levi.

Verse 15

And it is yet far more evident - Not that our Lord would spring out of Judah, but the point which he was endeavoring to establish that there must be a change of the priesthood, was rendered still more evident from another consideration. A strong proof of the necessity of such a change of the priesthood was furnished from the fact that the Messiah was to be of the tribe of Judah; but a much stronger, because "as a priest" he was to be of the order of Melchizedek - that is, he was of the same rank with one who did not even belong to that tribe.

After the similitude - Resembling; that is, he was to be of the order of Melchizedek.

Verse 16

Who is made - That is, the other priest is made, to wit, the Messiah. He was made a priest by a special law.

Not after the law of a carnal commandment - Not according to the Law of a commandment pertaining to the flesh. The word "carnal" means "fleshly;" and the idea is, that the Law under which the priests of the old dispensation were made was external, rather than spiritual; it related more to outward observances than to the keeping of the heart. That this was the nature of the Mosaic ritual in the main, it was impossible to doubt, and the apostle proceeds to argue from this undeniable truth.

But after the power of an endless life - By an authority of endless duration. That is, it was not concerned mainly with outward observances, and did not pass over from one to another by death, but was unchanging in its character, and spiritual in its nature. It was enduring and perpetual as a

priesthood, and was thus far exalted above the service performed by the priests under the former dispensation.

Verse 17

For he testifieth - "That this is the true account of it is proved by the testimony of God himself, that he was to be a priest for ever;" see the note on Hebrews 5:6.

Verse 18

For there is verily a disannulling - A setting aside. The Law which existed before in regard to the priesthood becomes now abrogated in consequence of the change which has been made in the priesthood; see the note at Hebrews 7:12.

Of the commandment - Relating to the office of priest, or to the ceremonial rites in general. This does not refer to the moral law, as if that was abrogated, for:

(1)the reasoning of the apostle does not pertain to that, and,

(2)that law cannot be abrogated. It grows out of the nature of things, and must be perpetual and universal.

Going before - Going before the Christian dispensation and introducing it.

For the weakness and unprofitableness thereof - That is, it was not adapted to save man; it had not power to accomplish what was necessary to be done in human salvation. It answered the end for which it was designed - that of introducing a more perfect plan, and then vanished as a matter of course. It did not expiate guilt; it did not give peace to the conscience; it did not produce perfection Hebrews 7:11, and therefore it gave place to a better system.

Verse 19

For the law made nothing perfect - The Levitical, ceremonial law. It did not produce a perfect state; it did not do what was desirable to be done for a sinner; see the note on Hebrews 7:11. That Law, as such, did not reconcile man to God; it did not make an atonement: it did not put away guilt; in one word, "it did not restore things to the condition in which they were before the Law was broken and man became a sinner." If man were saved under that system - as many undoubtedly were - it was not in virtue of any intrinsic efficacy which it possessed, but in virtue of that great sacrifice which it typified.

But the bringing in of a better hope did - Margin, "But it was." The correct rendering is, probably, "but there is the bringing in of a better hope, by which we have access to God." The Law could not effect this. It left the conscience guilty, and sin unexpiated. But there is now the introduction of a better system by which we can approach a reconciled God. The "better hope" here refers to the more sure and certain expectation of heaven introduced by the gospel. There is a better foundation for hope; a more certain way of obtaining the divine favor than the Law could furnish.

By the which - By which better hope; that is, by means of the ground of hope furnished by the gospel, to wit, that God is now reconciled. and that we can approach him with the assurance that he is ready to save us.

We draw nigh unto God - We have access to him; notes, Romans 5:1-2.

Verse 20

And inasmuch as not without an oath - In addition to every other consideration showing the superiority of Christ as a priest, there was the solemnity of the oath by which he was set apart to the office. The appointment of one to the office of priest by an oath, such as occurred in the case of Jesus, was much more solemn and important than where the office was received merely by descent.

Verse 21

For those priests were made without an oath - The Levitical priests were set apart and consecrated without their office being confirmed to them by an oath on the part of God. They received it by regular descent, and when they arrived at a suitable age they entered on it of course. Jesus received his office by special appointment, and it was secured to him by an oath. The word rendered "oath" is in the margin "swearing of an oath." This is the proper meaning of the Greek word, but the sense is not materially varied.

But this with an oath - This priest, the Lord Jesus, became a priest in virtue of an oath.

The Lord sware - see the note at Hebrews 6:13. The reference here is to Psalm 110:4. "The Lord hath sworn."

And will not repent - That is, "will not regret, or will not alter his mind through regret" - for this is the meaning of the Greek word.

Verse 22

By so much - Inasmuch as an oath is more solemn than a mere appointment. The meaning is, that there is all the additional security in the suretyship of Jesus which arises from the solemnity of an oath. It is not implied that God would not be true to his mere promise, but the argument here is derived from the custom of speaking among people. An oath is regarded as much more sacred and binding than a mere promise, and the fact that God has sworn in a given case furnishes the highest security that what he has promised will be performed.

Was Jesus made a surety - The word "surety" - ἐγγυος enguos- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament nor is it found in the Septuagint. It properly means, a bondsman; one who pledges his name, property, or influence, that a certain thing shall be done. When a contract is made, debt contracted, or a note given, a friend often becomes the "security" in the case, and is himself responsible if the terms of the contract are not complied with. In the case of the new covenant between God and man, Jesus is the "security" or the bondsman. But of what, and to whom, is he the surety? It cannot be that he is a bondsman for God that he will maintain the covenant, and be true to the promise which he makes, as Crellius supposes, for we need no such "security" of the divine faithfulness and veracity. It cannot be that he becomes responsible for the divine conduct in any way - for no such responsibility is needed or possible.

But it must mean that he is the security or bondsman on the part of man. He is the pledge that we shall be saved. He becomes responsible, so to speak, to law and justice, that no injury shall be done by our salvation, though we are sinners. He is not a security that we shall be saved at any rate, without holiness, repentance, faith, or true religion - for he never could enter into a suretyship of that kind: but his suretyship extends to this point, that the law shall be honored; that all its demands shall be met; that we may be saved though we have violated it, and that its terrific penalty shall not fall upon us. The case is this. A sinner becomes a true penitent and enters heaven. It might be said that he does this over a broken law; that God treats the good and bad alike, and that no respect has been paid to the law or the penalty in his salvation. Here the Great Surety comes in, and says that it is not so.

He has become responsible for this; he the surety, the pledge, that all proper honor shall be paid to justice, and that the same good effects shall

ensue as if the penalty of the law had been fully borne. He himself has died to honor the law, and to open a way by which its penalty may be fully remitted consistently with justice, and he becomes "the everlasting pledge or security" to law, to justice, to the universe, that no injury shall result from the pardon and salvation of the sinner. According to this view, no man can rely on the suretyship of Jesus but he who expects salvation on the terms of the gospel. The suretyship is not at all that he shall be saved in his sins, or that he shall enter heaven no matter what life he leads; it is only that if he believes, repents, and is saved, no injury shall be done to the universe; no dishonor to the law. For this the Lord Jesus is responsible.

Of a better testament - Rather, "of a better covenant." The former covenant was what God made with his people under the Mosaic dispensation; the new covenant is that made by means of Christ. This is "better" because:

(1)the terms are more simple and easy;

(2)the observances and rites are much less onerous and hard;

(3)it relates to all people, not being confined to the Jewish people;

(4)it is now sure. The former was administered through the instrumentality of the Levitical priesthood, this by the Son of God; that was transitory and changing, this is permanent and eternal.

(The word rendered "Surety," is εγγυος enguosIt occurs indeed here only in the New Testament, nor is it found in the Septuagint, i, e. the very word is not. Yet its derivatives occur there, and bear the sense that is ordinarily, and everywhere expressed by suretyship, Proverbs 17:18; Proverbs 22:26, and other places. The word itself, too, is found in the Apocrypha Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 12:24. But because Christ is called, in these places, the μεσιτης mesitēsor mediator of the covenant, it does not follow that εγγυος enguoshere has "precisely" the same sense. Or, if so, how shall we account for the introduction of this singular word at all? Why was not μεσιτης mesitēsemployed here, as, in other places, in the Epistle? This has, indeed been accounted for by observing, that as the apostle, in the Hebrews 7:19, had used the word εγγιζομεν engizomenwe draw near, he employed εγγυος enguosin the Hebrews 7:22, for the sake of the "paronomasia," to which figure he is alleged to have been much attached. But in whatever way the apostle may

have been led to the use of the word (and the above account is probable enough), he never would have used it, in a sense altogether different from what ordinarily is attached to it, out of fondness for any figure whatever. “A surety has to pay what they owe, for whom he is engaged; to do, what is to be done by them, which they cannot perform. ‹And if this be not the notion of a surety in this place, the apostle makes use of a word, nowhere else used in the whole scripture, to teach us what it doth never signify among people, which is improbable and absurd.‘ For the sole reason why he did make use of it was, that from the nature and notion of it among people, in other cases, we may understand the signification of it, and what, under that name, he ascribes unto the Lord Jesus” - Owen.

Having thus proved that εγγυος enguosis properly translated “surety,” and that Christ is so styled, in a sense not widely different from what is usually attached to the word - let us next inquire, how Christ discharges this suretyship, or what he does in his capacity of surety? Is he surety to us for God? This last question, by orthodox writers, is for the most part, answered in the negative on the ground that there can be no need of security for God, his promise and his oath being sufficient guarantee that he will fulfil his engagement; on the ground also, that a surety must be some one greater than the party for whom he engages, which, in the case of God, renders the thing impossible, since there is none greater than Heb. Thus, Dr. Owen has argued at great length, and is followed by Guyse, Boston, and many others. Yet there are not wanting writers of great reputation for learning and orthodoxy, who scruple not to say that Christ is surety “for God;” (see Mr. Scott on this place).

He undertook, on the part of the Father. that all the promises should be made good to the seed. He acts in the behalf of God toward us, and assures us of the divine favor. “If it be asked, what need was there of a Mediator to assure us of the fulfillment of the promises made by the God of truth, who cannot lie or deceive us, I answer, the same objection might be made against God‘s adding his oath to his promise, whereby he intended to give us the greater security of accomplishment? - Pierce. The exclusion of this idea from the suretyship of Christ, on the part of so many divines, doubtless arose from the improper use made of it by Socinians, who unwilling to admit that Christ had become bound for our debt of suffering and obedience, and, in this sense, was surety “for us,” resolved the suretyship

into a mere engagement "in behalf of God." They could not allow more, without allowing the atonement.

While, however, we see no necessity for discarding this idea, because it has been used for bad purposes, we maintain, that this is neither all, nor even the principal part, of the suretyship of Christ. Revert to the original notion of a surety. He is one who engages, in behalf of another, to pay a debt or discharge a duty, which that other may fail to pay or discharge. Christ engaged to stand in that relation toward us, and therefore he is the "surety for us God," that our debt shall be discharged. God the Father, on his part, engages, that Christ shall see his seed, that they shall be saved; and the Son of God, on his part, becomes bound for the debt of penalty and obedience. This is the covenant of redemption, "the counsel of peace" between the Father and the Son, before all worlds; Zechariah 6:13; Isaiah 53:10, Isaiah 53:12. It is unnecessary further to observe, that Christ, in his capacity of surety, has nobly redeemed his pledge, endured the penalty, and honored the precept of the broken law, and thereby secured for his people the blessings of the covenant.

Before concluding this note, we may remark that some difference of opinion exists among those who hold the suretyship of Christ, in reference to another question. Namely, Whether he became surety for the faith, repentance, and evangelical obedience of his people? "I answer," says Thomas Boston. "though the elect's believing, repenting, and sincere obedience are infallibly secured in the covenant, yet I judge, that Christ did not become surety in the covenant, in way of caution to his Father, that the elect should perform these deeds, or any other. These belong rather to the promissory part of the covenant. "They are benefits promised in the covenant" by God unto Christ, the surety, as a reward of his fulfilling the condition of the covenant. And so they are, by the unchangeable truth of God, and his exact justice, ensured beyond all possibility of failure; Psalm 22:27, Psalm 22:30-31; Psalm 110:3; Isaiah 53:10, with Hebrews 7:1; Ezekiel 34:26-27, Ezekiel 34:31; Hebrews 8:10-11." - Boston on the Covenant of Grace; see also Dr. Dick's admirable lectures on the same subject.

It will be seen from this review of the suretyship of Christ, that the sentiments of our author on the subject are not materially different from those of evangelical divines in Scotland. He may not use the same phraseology, but "security to the law, to justice, to the universe, that no injury shall result from the pardon of the sinner," is much the same with "surety to God for us, that our debt shall be discharged, that is, that none of these interests shall suffer.)

Verse 23

And they truly - Under the Jewish dispensation. The object of this verse and the following is, to state one more reason of the excellence of the priesthood of Christ. It is, that owing to the frailty of human nature, and the shortness of life, the office of priest there was continually changing. But here there was no such change. Christ, being exalted to the heavens to live forever there, has now an unchangeable priesthood, and everything in regard to his office is permanent.

Verse 24

But this man - Greek "But he" - referring to Christ.

Because he continueth ever - Greek "Because he remains forever." The idea is because he does not die, but ever lives, he has an unchanging priesthood. There is no necessity that he should yield it to others, as was the case with the Jewish priests because they were mortal. The reason in their case, why it passed to others, was not that they did not perform the office well, but that they were mortal, and could not continue to hold it. But this reason could not operate in the case of the Lord Jesus, and therefore his priesthood would be permanent.

Hath an unchangeable priesthood - Margin, "or, "which passeth not from one to another." The margin expresses the sense of the passage. The idea is not strictly that it was "unchangable," but that "it did not pass over into other hands." The Levitical priesthood passed from one to another as successive generations came on the stage of action. This reasoning is not designed to prove that the priesthood of Christ will be literally "eternal" - for its necessity may cease when all the redeemed are in heaven - but that it is permanent, and does not pass from hand to hand,

Verse 25

Wherefore he is able also - As he ever lives, and ever intercedes, he has power to save. He does not begin the work of salvation, and then

relinquish it by reason of death, but he lives on as long as it is necessary that anything should be done for the salvation of his people. We need a Saviour who has power, and Christ has shown that he has all the power which is needful to rescue man from eternal death.

To the uttermost - This does not mean simply "forever" - but that he has power to save them so that their salvation shall be "complete" - εἰς τὸ παντελὲς eis to pantelesHe does not abandon the work midway; he does not begin a work which he is unable to finish. He can aid us as long as we need anything done for our salvation; he can save all who will entrust their salvation to his hands.

That come unto God by him - In his name; or depending on him. To come to God, is to approach him for pardon and salvation.

Seeing he ever liveth - He does not die as the Jewish priests did.

To make intercession for them - see the note at Romans 8:34. He constantly presents the merits of his death as a reason why we should be saved. The precise mode, however, in which he makes intercession in heaven for his people is not revealed. The general meaning is, that he undertakes their cause, and assists them in overcoming their foes and in their endeavors to live a holy life; compare 1 John 2:1. He does in heaven whatever is necessary to obtain for us grace and strength; secures the aid which we need against our foes; and is the pledge or security for us that the law shall be honored, and the justice and truth of God maintained, though we are saved. It is reasonable to presume that this is somehow by the presentation of the merits of his great sacrifice, and that that is the ground on which all this grace is obtained. As that is infinite, we need not fear that it will ever be exhausted.

Verse 26

For such an High Priest became us - Was suited to our condition. That is, there was that in our character and circumstances which demanded that a high priest for us should be personally holy. It was not requisite merely that he should have great power; or that he should be of a rank superior to that of the Jewish priesthood; but there was a special propriety that he should surpass all others in "moral" purity. Other priests were mere mortal men, and it was necessary that their office should pass to other hands; they were "sinful" men also, and it was necessary that sacrifices should be made for themselves as well as others. We need, however, a different priest. We need not only one who ever lives, but one who is perfectly holy, and who has no

need to bring an offering for himself, and all the merit of whose sacrifice, therefore, may be ours. Such an high priest we have in the person of the Lord Jesus; and there is no truth more interesting, and no proposition more susceptible of proof, than that he is exactly Fitted to man. In his moral character, and in the great work which he has accomplishcd, he is just such a Saviour as is adapted to the wants of ignorant, fallen, wretched, sinful man. He is benevolent, and pities our woes; wise, and is able to enlighten our ignorance; compassionate, and ready to forgive our faults. He has made such a sacrifice as was necessary to put away our guilt, and offers such intercession as we need to have offered for us in order that we may be preserved from falling.

Who is holy - Not merely "outwardly righteous," but pure in heart.

Harmless - Not injuring anyone. To no one did he do wrong. Neither to their name, person, or property, did he ever do injury; nor will he ever. He is the only one who has lived on earth of whom it could be said that he never, in any way, did wrong to another.

Undefiled - By sin; by any improper desire or passion. He was unstained by crime; "unspotted from the world." Sin always defiles the soul; but from every such pollution the Lord Jesus was free.

Separate from sinners - That is, he did not associate with them as such. He did not partake of their feelings, plans, pleasures. Though he mingled with them, yet it was merely to do them good, and in all his life there was an entire separation from the feelings, principles, and views of a sinful world.

And made higher than the heavens - Exalted above the visible heavens; that is, at the right hand of God; see the Ephesians 1:21 note; Philemon 2:9 note. We needed a high priest who is thus exalted that he may manage our cause before the throne of God.

Verse 27

Who needeth not daily, as those high priests - As the Jewish priests. This is an additional circumstance introduced to show the superior excellency of the High Priest of the Christian profession, and to show also how he was suited to our wants. The Jewish high priest was a sinful man. He had the same fallen and corrupt nature as others. He needed an expiatory sacrifice for his own sins as really as they did for theirs. When he approached God to offer sacrifice, it was needful to make an atonement for himself, and when all was done it was still a sacrifice offered by a sinful

man. But it was not so in the case of Jesus. He was so holy that he needed no sacrifice for himself, and all that he did was in behalf of others. Besides, it was necessary that the sacrifices in the Jewish service should be constantly repeated. They were imperfect. They were mere types and shadows. They who offered them were frail, sinful men. It became necessary, therefore, to repeat them every day to keep up the proper sense of their transgressions, and to furnish a suitable acknowledgment of the tendency to sin alike among the people and the priests. Neither in the nature of the offering, nor in the character of those who made it, was there any sufficient reason why it should cease to be offered, and it was therefore repeated day by day. But it was not so with the Lord Jesus. The offering which he made, though presented but once, was so ample and perfect that it had sufficient merit for all the sins of the world, and needed never to be repeated. It is not probable that the Jewish high priest himself personally officiated at the offering of sacrifice every day; but the meaning here is, that it was done daily, and that there was need of a daily sacrifice in his behalf. As one of the Jewish people, the sacrifice was offered on his account as well as on the account of others - for he partook of the common infirmities and sinfulness of the nation.

For this he did once - That is, once for all - ἐφάπαξ ephapaxHe made such an atonement that it was not needful that it should be repeated. Thus, he put an end to sacrifice, for when he made the great atonement it was complete, and there was no need that any more blood should be shed for human guilt.

Verse 28

For the law - The ceremonial law.

Which have infirmity - Who are weak, frail, sinful, dying. Such were all who were appointed to the office of priest under the Jewish Law.

But the word of the oath - By which one was appointed after the order of Melchizedek; note, Hebrews 7:21.

Maketh the Son - The Son of God. That appointment has resulted in his being set apart to this work.

Who is consecrated forevermore - Margin, “Perfected;” see the note at Hebrews 2:10. The idea is, that the appointment is “complete” and “permanent.” It does not pass from one to the other. It is perfect in all the arrangements, and will remain so forever.

Remarks

The subject of this chapter is the exalted high priesthood of the Redeemer. This is a subject which pertains to all Christians, and to all men. All religions imply the priestly office; all suppose sacrifice of some kind. In regard to the priestly office of Christ as illustrated in this chapter, we may observe:

(1) He stands alone. In that office he had no predecessor, and has no one to succeed him. In this respect he was without father, mother, or descent - and he stands in lonely majesty as the only one who sustains the office; Hebrews 7:3.

(2) he is superior to Abraham. Abraham never laid claim to the ofrice of priest, but he recognized his inferiority to one whom the Messiah was to resemble; Hebrews 7:2, Hebrews 7:4.

(3) he is superior to all the Jewish priesthood - sustaining a rank and performing an office above them all. The great ancestor of all the Levitical priests recognized his inferiority to one of the rank or "order" of which the Messiah was to be, and received from him a blessing. In our contemplation of Christ, therefore, as priest, we have the privilege of regarding him as superior to the Jewish high priest - exalted as was his office, and important as were the functions of his office; as more grand, more pure, more worthy of confidence and love.

(4) the great High Priest of the Christian profession is the only perfect priest; Hebrews 7:11, Hebrews 7:19. The Jewish priests were all imperfect and sinful men. The sacrifices which they offered were imperfect, and could not give peace to the conscience. There was need of some better system, and they all looked forward to it. But in the Lord Jesus, and in his work, there is absolute perfection. What he did was complete, and his office needs no change.

(5) the office now is permanent. It does not change from hand to hand; Hebrews 7:23-24. He who sustains this office does not die, and we may ever apply to him and cast our cares on him. Men die; one generation succeeds another; but our High Priest is the same. We may trust in him in whom our fathers found peace and salvation, and then we may teach our

children to confide in the same High Priest - and so send the invaluable lesson down to latest generations.

(6) his work is firm and sure; Hebrews 7:20-22. His office is founded on an oath, and he has become the security for all who will commit their cause to him. Can great interests like those of the soul be entrusted to better hands? Are they not safer in his keeping than in our own?

(7) he is able to save to the uttermost; Hebrews 7:25. That power he showed when he was on earth; that power he is constantly evincing. No one has asked aid of him and found him unable to render it; no one has been suffered to sink down to hell because his arm was weak. What he has done for a few he can do for "all;" and they who will entrust themselves to him will find him a sure Saviour. So why will people not be persuaded to commit themselves to him? Can they save themselves? Where is there one who has shown that he was able to do it? Do they not need a Saviour? Let the history of the world answer. Can man conduct his own cause before God? How weak, ignorant, and blind is he; how little qualified for such an office! Has anyone suffered wrong by committing himself to the Redeemer? If there is such an one, where is he? Who has ever made this complaint that has tried it? Who ever will make it? In countless millions of instances, the trial has been made whether Christ was "able to save." Men have gone with a troubled spirit; with a guilty conscience; and with awful apprehensions of the wrath to come, and have asked him to save them. Not one of those who have done this has found reason to doubt his ability; not one has regretted that he has committed the deathless interest of the soul into his hands.

(8) Christ saves to the uttermost; Hebrews 7:25. He makes the salvation complete. So the Bible assures us; and so we see it in fact as far as we can trace the soul. When a Christian friend dies, we stand at his bed-side and accompany him as far as we can into the valley of the shadow of death. We ask him whether he feels that Christ is able to save? He replies, "yes." When he has lost the power of speaking above a whisper, we ask him the same question, and receive the same reply. When he gives us the parting hand, and we, still anxious to know whether all is well, ask the same question, a sign, a smile, a lighting up of the dying eye, declares that all is well. As far as we can trace the departing soul when it goes into the dark

valley, we receive the same assurance; and why should we doubt that the same grace is bestowed further onward, and that he saves "to the uttermost?" But what else thus saves? Friends give the parting hand at the gloomy entrance to that valley, and the frivolous and the worldly coolly turn away. The delusions of infidelity there forsake the soul, and minister no comfort then. Flatterers turn away from the dying scene - for who flatters the dying with the praise of beauty or accomplishments? Taste, skill, learning, talent, do not help then, for how can they save a dying soul? None but Jesus saves to the "uttermost;" no other friend but he goes with us entirely through the valley of death. Is it not better to have such a friend than to go alone through that dark, gloomy path? Any other gloomy and dangerous way may be more safely trod without a friend, than the vale of death.

(9) the Christian religion is suited to our condition; Hebrews 7:26-27. It has just such a High Priest as we need - holy, harmless, undefiled. Just such an atonement has been made as is necessary - ample, rich, full, and not needing to be made again. It reveals just such truth as we want - that respecting the immortality of the soul, and the glorious state of the redeemed beyond the grave. It imparts just such consolation as is suited to our condition - pure, rich, unfailing, elevating. It reconciles us to God just as it should be done - in such a way that God can be honored, and the purity and dignity of his Law maintained. It is the religion adapted to dying, ignorant, sinful, wretched man. No other system so much consults the true dignity of our nature, and the honor of God; no one diffuses such consolations through the life that is, or fills with such hopes in regard to the life to come.

(10) since, then, we have now such a Great High Priest; since the promises of the gospel are settled on so firm a foundation; and since the gospel in its provisions of mercy is all that we can desire it to be, let us yield our hearts entirely to the Saviour, and make this salvation wholly ours. We have the privilege, if we will, of drawing near to God with boldness. We may come near his throne. Though we are poor, and sinful, and deserve neither notice nor mercy, yet we may come and ask for all that we need. We may go to God, and supplicate his favor, with the assurance that he is ready to hear. We may go feeling that the great atonement has been made for our

sins, and that no other offering is now needed; that the last bloody offering which God required has been presented, and that all that he now asks is the sacrifice of a contrite and a grateful heart. All that was needful to be done on the part of God to provide a way of salvation has been done; all that remains is for man to forsake his sins and to come back to a God who waits to be gracious.

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter Hebrews 8:1-13 is a continuation of the argument which has been prosecuted in the previous chapters respecting the priesthood of Christ. The apostle had demonstrated that he was to be a priest, and that he was to be, not of the Levitical order, but of the order of Melchizedek. As a consequence he had proved that this involved a change of the Law appointing the priesthood, and that in respect to permanency, and happy moral influence, the priesthood of Christ far surpassed the Jewish. This thought he pursues in this chapter, and shows particularly that it involved a change in the nature of the covenant between God and his people. In the prosecution of this, he:

(1) states the sum or principal point of the whole matter under discussion - that the priesthood of Christ was real and permanent, while that of the Hebrew economy was typical, and was destined in its own nature to be temporary; Hebrews 8:1-3.

(2) there was a fitness and propriety in his being removed to heaven to perform the functions of his office there - since if he had remained on earth he could not have officiated as priest, that duty being by the Law of Moses entrusted to others pertaining to another tribe; Hebrews 8:4-5.

(3) Christ had obtained a more exalted ministry than the Jewish priests held, because he was the Mediator in a better covenant - a covenant that related rather to the heart than to external observances; Hebrews 8:6-13. That new covenant excelled the old in the following respects:

(a)It was established on better promises; Hebrews 8:6.

(b)It was not a covenant requiring mainly external observances, but pertained to the soul, and the Law of that covenant was written there; Hebrews 8:7-10.

(c)It was connected with the diffusion of the knowledge of the Lord among all classes from the highest to the lowest; Hebrews 8:11.

(d)The evidence of forgiveness might be made more clear than it was under the old dispensation, and the way in which sins are pardoned be much

better understood; Hebrews 8:12. These considerations involved the consequence, also, which is stated in Hebrews 8:13, that the old covenant was of necessity about to vanish away.

Verse 1

Now of the things which we have spoken - Or, "of the things of which we are speaking" (Stuart); or as we should say, "of what is said." The Greek does not necessarily mean things that "had been" spoken, but may refer to all that he was saying, taking the whole subject into consideration.

This is the sum - Or this is the principal thing; referring to what he was about to say, not what he had said. Our translators seem to have understood this as referring to a "summing up," or recapitulation of what he had said, and there can be no doubt that the Greek would bear this interpretation. But another exposition has been proposed, adopted by Bloomfield, Stuart, Michaelis, and Storr, among the moderns, and found also in Suidas, Theodoret, Theophylact, and others, among the ancients. It is what regards the word rendered "sum" - κεφάλαιον kephalaion- as meaning the "principal thing;" the chief matter; the most important point. The reason for this interpretation is, that the apostle in fact goes into no recapitulation of what he had said, but enters on a new topic relating to the priesthood of Christ. Instead of going over what he had demonstrated, he enters on a more important point, that the priesthood of Christ is performed in heaven, and that he has entered into the true tabernacle there. All which preceded was type and shadow; this was that which the former economy had adumbrated. In the previous chapters the apostle had shown that he who sustained this office was superior in rank to the Jewish priests; that they were frail and dying, and that the office in their hands was changing from one to another, but that that of Christ was permanent and abiding. He now comes to consider the real nature of the office itself; the sacrifice which was offered; the substance of which all in the former dispensation was the type. This was the "principal thing" - κεφάλαιον kephalaion- the "head," the most important matter; and the consideration of this is pursued through the Hebrews 8:1, Hebrews 9:1, and Hebrews 10:1 chapters Mark 16:19. Of course the language is figurative - as God has no hands literally - but the language conveys an important meaning, that he is near to God; is high in his affection and love, and is raised to the most elevated situation in heaven; see Philemon 2:9; notes Ephesians 1:21-22.

Verse 2

A minister of the sanctuary - Margin, "or holy things." Greek τῶν ἁγίων tōn hagiōnThe Greek may either mean "the sanctuary" - denoting the Holy of Holies; or "holy things." The word "sanctuary" - קדֹשׁ qodesh- was given to the tabernacle or temple as a "holy place," and the plural form which is used here - τὰ ἅγια ta hagia- was given to the most holy place by way of eminence - the full form of the name being - קדֹשׁ qodeshקדֹשׁ קדֹשׁים qodesh qodâshiymor, ἅγια ἅγιων hagia hagiōn- "hagia hagion," (Jahn's *Arche*. section 328), or as it is used here simply as τὰ ἅγια ta hagiaThe connection seems to require us to understand it of the "most holy place," and not of holy things. The idea is, that the Lord Jesus the Great High Priest, has entered into the Holy of Holies in heaven, of which that in the tabernacle was an emblem. For a description of the Most Holy place in the temple, see the notes on Matthew 21:12.

And of the true tabernacle - The "real" tabernacle in heaven, of which that among the Hebrews was but the type. The word "tabernacle" - σκηνὴ skēnē- means properly a "booth, hut, or tent," and was applied to the "tent" which Moses was directed to build as the place for the worship of God. That tabernacle, as the temple was afterward, was regarded as the special abode of God on earth. Here the reference is to heaven, as the dwelling place of God, of which that tabernacle was the emblem or symbol. It is called the "true tabernacle," as it is the real dwelling of God, of which the one made by Moses was but the "emblem." It is not moveable and perishable like that made by man, but is unchanging and eternal.

Which the Lord pitched, and not man - The word "pitched" is adapted to express the setting up of a "tent." When it is said that "the Lord pitched the true tabernacle," that is, the permanent dwelling in heaven; the meaning is, that heaven has been prepared by God himself, and that whatever is necessary to constitute that an appropriate abode for the divine majesty has been done by him. To that glorious dwelling the Redeemer has been received, and there he performs the office of high priest in behalf of man. In what way he does this, the apostle specifies in the remainder of this chapter, and in Hebrews 910:

Verse 3

For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices - This is a general statement about the functions of the high priest. It was the uniqueness of the office; it constituted its essence, that some gift or sacrifice

was to be presented. This was indisputable in regard to the Jewish high priest, and this is involved in the nature of the priestly office everywhere. A "priest" is one who offers sacrifice, mainly in behalf of others. The principles involved in the office are:

(1)that there is need that some offering or atonement should be made for sin; and,

(2)that there is a fitness or propriety that some one should be designated to do it.

If this idea that a priest must offer sacrifice be correct, then it follows that the name priest should not be given to any one who is not appointed to offer sacrifice. It should not therefore be given to the ministers of the gospel, for it is no part of their work to offer sacrifice - the great sacrifice for sin having been once offered by the Lord Jesus, and not being again to be repeated. Accordingly the writers in the New Testament are perfectly uniform and consistent on this point. The name priest is never once given to the ministers of the gospel there. They are called ministers, ambassadors, pastors, bishops, overseers, etc., but never priests. Nor should they be so called in the Christian church. The name priest as applied to Christian ministers, has been derived from the "papists." They hold that the priest does offer as a sacrifice the real body and blood of Christ in the mass, and holding this, the name priest is given to the minister who does it "consistently." It is not indeed "right or Scriptural" - for the whole doctrine on which it is based is absurd and false, but while that doctrine is held the name is consistent. But with what show of consistency or propriety can the name be given to a Protestant minister of the gospel?

Wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer - That the Lord Jesus should make an offering. That is, since he is declared to be a priest, and since it is essential to the office that a priest should make an offering, it is indispensable that he should bring a sacrifice to God. He could not be a priest on the acknowledged principles on which that office is held, unless he did it. What the offering was which the Lord Jesus made, the apostle specifies more fully in Hebrews 9:11-14, Hebrews 9:25-26.

Verse 4

For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest - He could not perform that office. The design of this is, to show a reason why he was removed to heaven. The reason was, that on earth there were those who

were set apart to that office, and that he, not being of the same tribe with them, could not officiate as priest. There was an order of people here on earth consecrated already to that office, and hence, it was necessary that the Lord Jesus, in performing the functions of the office, should be removed to another sphere.

Verse 5

Who serve unto the example - Who perform their service by the mere example and shadow of the heavenly things; or in a tabernacle, and in a mode, that is the mere emblem of the reality which exists in heaven. The reference is to the tabernacle, which was a mere "example" or "copy" of heaven. The word rendered here "example" - ὑποδείγμα hupodeigma- means a "copy, likeness, or imitation." The tabernacle was made after a pattern which was shown to Moses; it was made so as to have some faint resemblance to the reality in heaven, and in that "copy," or "example," they were appointed to officiate. Their service, therefore, had some resemblance to that in heaven.

And shadow - That is, in the tabernacle where they served there was a mere shadow of what was real and substantial. Compared with what is in heaven, it was what the shadow is compared with the substance. A shadow - as of a man, a house, a tree, will indicate the form, the outline, the size of the object; but it has no substance, or reality. So it was with the rites of the Jewish religion. They were designed merely as a shadow of the substantial realities of the true religion, or to present the dim outlines of what is true and real in heaven; compare the Colossians 2:17 note; Hebrews 10:1 note. The word "shadow" here - σκιᾶ skia- is used in distinction from the body or reality - σῶμα sōma- (compare Colossians 2:17), and also from εἰκών eikōn- a perfect image or resemblance; see Hebrews 10:1.

Of heavenly things - Of the heavenly sanctuary; of what is real and substantial in heaven. That is, there exists in heaven a reality of which the service in the Jewish sanctuary was but the outline. The reference is, undoubtedly, to the service which the Lord Jesus performs there as the great high priest of his people.

As Moses was admonished of God - As he was divinely instructed. The word used used - χρηματίζω chrēmatizō- means properly to give oracular responses; to make communications to people in a supernatural way - by dreams, by direct revelations, etc.; see Matthew 2:12, Matthew 2:22; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22; Hebrews 11:7.

For, see, saith he - Exodus 25:9, Exodus 25:40; Exodus 26:30. In Exodus 11:1-10, it is also repeatedly said that Moses executed all the work of the tabernacle as he had been commanded. Great care was taken that an exact copy should be exhibited to him of all which he was to make, and that the work should be exactly like the pattern. The reason doubtless was, that as the Jewish service was to be typical, none but God could judge of the form in which the tabernacle should be made. It was not to be an edifice of architectural beauty, skill, or taste, but was designed to adumbrate important realities which were known only to God. Hence, it was needful that the exact model of them should be given to Moses, and that it should be scrupulously followed.

That thou make all things - Not only the tabernacle itself, but the altars, the ark, the candlestick, etc. The form and materials for each were specified, and the exact pattern shown to Moses in the mount.

According to the pattern - Greek τύπον tupon- "type;" that is, figure, form. The word τύπος tupos"type," means properly anything produced by the agency or means of "blows" (from τύπτω tuptō"to strike"); hence, a mark, stamp, print, impression - as that made by driving nails in the hands John 20:25; then a figure or form, as of an image or statue Acts 7:43; the form of a doctrine or opinion Romans 6:17; then an example to be imitated or followed 1 Corinthians 10:6-7; Philemon 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 3:9; and hence, a pattern, or model after which anything is to be made; Acts 7:44. This is the meaning here. The allusion is to a pattern such as an architect or sculptor uses; a drawing, or figure made in wood or clay, after which the work is to be modelled. The idea is, that some such drawing or model was exhibited to Moses by God on mount Sinai, so that he might have an exact idea of the tabernacle which was to be made. A similar drawing or model of the temple was given by David to Solomon; 1 Chronicles 28:11-12. We are not indeed to suppose that there was in the case of the pattern shown to Moses, any miniature model of wood or stone actually created and exhibited, but that the form of the tabernacle was exhibited to Moses in vision (note, Isaiah 1:1), or was so vividly impressed on his mind that he would have a distinct view of the edifice which was to be reared.

In the mount - In mount Sinai; for it was while Moses was there in the presence of God, that these communications were made.

Verse 6

But now hath he obtained - That is, Christ.

A more excellent ministry - A service of a higher order, or of a more exalted nature. It was the real and substantial service of which the other was but the emblem; it pertained to things in heaven, while that was concerned with the earthly tabernacle; it was enduring, while that was to vanish away; see the notes on 2 Corinthians 3:6-9.

By how much - By as much as the new covenant is more important than the old, by so much does his ministry exceed in dignity that under the ancient dispensation.

He is the mediator - see the notes on Galatians 3:19-20, where the word "mediator" is explained. It means here that Christ officiates between God and man according to the arrangements of the new covenant.

Of a better covenant - Margin, "Or testament." This word properly denotes a "disposition, arrangement, or ordering" of things; and in the Scriptures is employed to describe the arrangement which God has made to secure the maintenance of his worship on earth, and the salvation of people. It is uniformly used in the Septuagint and in the New Testament to denote the covenant which God makes with people. The word which "properly" denotes a "covenant or compact" - συνθήκη sunthēkē- "suntheke" is never used. The writers of the New Testament evidently derived its use from the Septuagint, but why the authors of that version employed it as denoting a "will" rather than the proper one denoting a "compact," is unknown. It has been supposed by some, and the conjecture is not wholly improbable, that it was because they were unwilling to represent God as making a "compact" or "agreement" with people, but chose rather to represent him as making a mere "arrangement or ordering of things;" compare the notes on Hebrews 8:8, and Hebrews 9:16-17. This is a better covenant than the old, inasmuch as it relates mainly to the pardon of sin; to a spiritual and holy religion; see Hebrews 8:10. The former related more to external rites and observances, and was destined to vanish away; see Hebrews 8:13.

Which was established upon better promises - The promises in the first covenant pertained mainly to the present life. They were promises of length of days; of increase of numbers; of seed time and harvest; of national privileges, and of extraordinary peace, abunance, and prosperity. That there was also the promise of eternal life, it would be wrong to doubt; but this was not the main thing. In the new covenant, however, the promise of spiritual blessings becomes the principal thing. The mind is directed to

heaven; the heart is cheered with the hopes of immortal life, the favor of God and the anticipation of heaven are secured in the most ample and solemn manner.

Verse 7

For if that first covenant had been faultless - see the note on Hebrews 7:11. It is implied here that God had said that that covenant was not perfect or faultless. The meaning is not that that first covenant made under Moses had any real faults - or inculcated what was wrong, but that it did not contain the ample provision for the pardon of sin and the salvation of the soul which was desirable. It was merely "preparatory" to the gospel.

Then should no place have been sought for the second - There could not have been - inasmuch as in that case it would have been impossible to have bettered it, and any change would have been only for the worse.

Verse 8

For finding fault with them - Or rather, "finding fault, he says to them." The difference is only in the punctuation, and this change is required by the passage itself. This is commonly interpreted as meaning that the fault was not found with "them" - that is, with the Jewish people, for they had had nothing to do in giving the covenant, but "with the covenant itself." "Stating its defects, he had said to them that he would give them one more perfect, and of which that was only preparatory." So Grotius, Stuart, Rosenmuller, and Erasmus understand it. Doddridge, Koppe, and many others understand it as it is in our translation, as implying that the fault was found with the people, and they refer to the passage quoted from Jeremiah for proof, where the complaint is of the people. The Greek may bear either construction; but may we not adopt a somewhat different interpretation still?

May not this be the meaning? For using the language of complaint, or language that implied that there was defect or error, he speaks of another covenant. According to this, the idea would be, not that he found fault specifically either with the covenant or the people, but generally that he used language which implied that there was defect somewhere when he promised another and a better covenant. The word rendered "finding fault" properly means to censure, or to blame. It is rendered in Mark 7:2, "they found fault," to wit, with those who ate with unwashed hands; in Romans 9:19, "why doth he yet find fault?" It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, It is language used where wrong has been done; where there is

ground of complaint; where it is desirable that there should be a change. In the passage here quoted from Jeremiah, it is not expressly stated that God found fault either with the covenant or with the people, but that he promised that he would give another covenant, and that it should be "different" from what he gave them when they came out of Egypt - implying that there was defect in that, or that it was not "faultless." The whole meaning is, that there was a deficiency which the giving of a new covenant would remove.

He saith - In Jeremiah 31:31-34. The apostle has not quoted the passage literally as it is in the Hebrew, but he has retained the substance, and the sense is not essentially varied. The quotation appears to have been made partly from the Septuagint, and partly from memory. This often occurs in the New Testament.

Behold - This particle is designed to call attention to what was about to be said as important, or as having some special claim to notice. It is of very frequent occurrence in the Scriptures, being much more freely used by the sacred writers than it is in the classic authors.

The days come - The time is coming. This refers doubtless to the times of the Messiah. Phrases such as these, "in the last days," "in after times," and "the time is coming," are often used in the Old Testament to denote the last dispensation of the world - the dispensation when the affairs of the world would be wound up; see the phrase explained in the Hebrews 1:2 note, and Isaiah 2:2 note. There can be no doubt that as it is used by Jeremiah it refers to the times of the gospel.

When I will make a new covenant - A covenant that shall contemplate somewhat different ends; that shall have different conditions, and that shall be more effective in restraining from sin. The word "covenant" here refers to the arrangement, plan, or dispensation into which he would enter in his dealings with people. On the meaning of the word, see the Acts 7:8 note, and Hebrews 9:16-17 notes. The word "covenant" with us commonly denotes a compact or agreement between two parties that are equal, and who are free to enter into the agreement or not. In this sense, of course, it cannot be used in relation to the arrangement which God makes with man. There is:

(1)no equality between them, and,

(2)man is not at liberty to reject any proposal which God shall make.

The word, therefore, is used in a more general sense, and more in accordance with the original meaning of the Greek word. It has been above

remarked (see the notes on Hebrews 8:6), that the "proper" word to denote "covenant," or "compact" - συνθηκη sunthēkē- "syntheke" - is never used either in the Septuagint or in the New Testament - another word - διαθήκη diathēkē- "diatheke" - being carefully employed. Whether the reason there suggested for the adoption of this word in the Septuagint be the real one or not, the fact is indisputable. I may be allowed to suggest as possible here an additional reason why this so uniformly occurs in the New Testament. It is, that the writers of the New Testament never meant to represent the transactions between God and man as a "compact or covenant" properly so called. They have studiously avoided it, and their uniform practice, in making this nice distinction between the two words, may show the real sense in which the Hebrew word rendered "covenant" - ברית beriyt- is used in the Old Testament. The word which they employ - διαθήκη diathēkē- never means a compact or agreement as between equals.

It remotely and secondarily means a "will, or testament" - and hence, our phrase "New Testament." But this is not the sense in which it is used in the Bible - for God has never made a will in the sense of a testamentary disposition of what belongs to him. We are referred; therefore, in order to arrive at the true Scripture view of this whole matter, to the original meaning of the word - διαθήκη diathēkē- as denoting a "disposition, arrangement, plan;" then what is ordered, a law, precept, promise, etc. Unhappily we have no single word which expresses the idea, and hence, a constant error has existed in the church - either keeping up the notion of a "compact" - as if God could make one with people; or the idea of a will - equally repugnant to truth. The word διαθήκη diathēkēis derived from a verb - διατίθημι diatithēmi- meaning to place apart, to set in order; and then to appoint, to make over, to make an arrangement with. Hence, the word διαθήκη diathēkē- means properly the "arrangement or disposition" which God made with people in regard to salvation; the system of statutes, directions, laws, and promises by which people are to become subject to him, and to be saved. The meaning here is, that he would make a "new" arrangement, contemplating as a primary thing that the Law should be written in the "heart;" an arrangement which would be especially spiritual in its character, and which would be attended with the diffusion of just views of the Lord.

With the house of Israel - The family, or race of Israel, for so the word "house" is often used in the Scriptures and elsewhere. The word "Israel" is

used in the Scriptures in the following senses:

(1)as a name given to Jacob because he wrestled with the angel of God and prevailed as a prince; Genesis 32:28.

(2)as denoting all who were descended from him - called "the children of Israel" - or the Jewish nation.

(3)as denoting the kingdom of the ten tribes - or the kingdom of Samaria, or Ephraim - that kingdom having taken the name Israel in contradistinction from the other kingdom, which was called "Judah."

(4)as denoting the people of God in general - his true and sincere friends - his church; see the notes on Romans 2:28-29; Romans 9:6.

In this place quoted from Jeremiah, it seems to be used to denote the kingdom of Israel in contradistinction from that of Judah, and "together they denote the whole people of God, or the whole Hebrew nation." This arrangement was ratified and confirmed by the gift of the Messiah, and by implanting his laws in the heart. It is not necessary to understand this as referring to the whole of the Jews, or to the restoration of the ten tribes; but the words "Israel" and "Judah" are used to denote the people of God in general, and the idea is, that with the true Israel under the Messiah the laws of God would be written in the heart rather than be mere external observances.

And with the house of Judah - The kingdom of Judah. This kingdom consisted of two tribes - Judah and Benjamin. The tribe of Benjamin was, however, small, and the name was lost in that of Judah.

Verse 9

Not according to the covenant … - An arrangement or dispensation relating mainly to outward observances, and to temporal blessings. The meaning is, that the new dispensation would be different from what was made with them when they came out of Egypt. In what respects it would differ is specified in Hebrews 8:10-12.

Because they continued not in my covenant - In Jeremiah, in the Hebrew, this is, "while my covenant they brake." That is, they failed to comply with the conditions on which I promised to bestow blessings upon them. In Jeremiah this is stated as a simple fact; in the manner in which the apostle quotes it, it is given as a reason why he would give a new arrangement. The apostle has quoted it literally from the Septuagint, and the

sense is not materially varied. The word rendered “because” - ὅτι hoti- may mean “since” - “since they did not obey that covenant, and it was ineffectual in keeping them from sin, showing that it was not perfect or complete in regard to what was needful to be done for man, a new arrangement shall be made that will be without defect.” This accords with the reasoning of the apostle; and the idea is, simply, that an arrangement may be made for man adapted to produce important ends in one state of society or one age of the world, which would not be well adapted to him in another, and which would not accomplish all which it would be desirable to accomplish for the race. So an arrangement may be made for teaching children which would not answer the purpose of instructing those of mature years, and which at that time of life may be superseded by another. A system of measures may be adapted to the infancy of society, or to a comparatively rude period of the world, which would be ill adapted to a more advanced state of society. Such was the Hebrew system. It was well adapted to the Jewish community in their circumstances, and answered the end then in view. It served to keep them separate from other people; to preserve the knowledge and the worship of the true God, and to introduce the gospel dispensation.

And I regarded them not - In Jeremiah this is, “Although I was an husband unto them.” The Septuagint is as it is quoted here by Paul. The Hebrew is, ואנכי בצלתי בם wa'aanokiy baaʿaltiy baam- which may be rendered, “although I was their Lord;” or as it is translated by Gesenius, “and I rejected them.” The word בצל bàal- means:

(1)to be lord or master over anything Isaiah 26:13;

(2)to become the husband of anyone Deuteronomy 21:13; Deuteronomy 24:1;

(3)with ba-, “to disdain, to reject”; so Jeremiah 3:14. It is very probable that this is the meaning here, for it is not only adopted by the Septuagint, but by the Syriac. So Abulwalid, Kimchi, and Rabbi Tanchum understood it.

The Arabic word means “to reject, to loath, to disdain.” All that is necessary to observe here is, that it cannot be demonstrated that the apostle has not given the true sense of the prophet. The probability is, that the Septuagint translators would give the meaning which was commonly

understood to be correct, and there is still more probability that the Syriac translator would adopt the true sense, for.

(1)the Syriac and Hebrew languages strongly resemble each other; and,

(2)the old Syriac version - the Peshito - is incomparably a better translation than the Septuagint.

If this, therefore, be the correct translation, the meaning is, that since they did not regard and obey the laws which he gave them, God would reject them as his people, and give new laws better adapted to save people. Instead of regarding and treating them as his friends, he would punish them for their offences, and visit them with calamities.

Verse 10

For this is the covenant - This is the arrangement, or the dispensation which shall succeed the old one. "With the house of Israel." With the true Israel; that is, with all those whom he will regard and treat as his friends.

After those days - This may either mean, "after those days I will put my laws in their hearts," or, "I will make this covenant with them after those days." This difference is merely in the punctuation, and the sense is not materially affected. It seems, to me, however, that the meaning of the Hebrew in Jeremiah is, "in those after days" (compare notes on Isaiah 2:1)I will put my laws into their mind - that is, in that subsequent period, called in Scripture "the after times," "the last days," "the ages to come," meaning the last dispensation of the world. Thus interpreted, the sense is, that this would be done in the times of the Messiah. "I will put my laws into their mind." Margin, "Give." The word "give" in Hebrew is often used in the sense of "put." The meaning here is, that they would not be mere external observances, but would affect the conscience and the heart. The laws of the Hebrews pertained mainly to external rites and ceremonies; the laws of the new dispensation would relate particularly to the inner man, and be designed to control the heart. The grand uniqueness of the Christian system is, that it regulates the conscience and the principles of the soul rather than external matters. It prescribes few external rites, and those are exceedingly simple, and are merely the proper expressions of the pious feelings supposed to be in the heart; and all attempts either to increase the number of these rites, or to make them imposing by their gorgeousness, have done just so much to mar the simplicity of the gospel, and to corrupt religion.

And write them in their hearts - Margin, "Upon." Not on fables of stone or brass, but on the soul itself. That is, the obedience rendered will not

be external. The law of the new system will have living power, and bind the faculties of the soul to obedience. The commandment there will be written in more lasting characters than if engraved on fables of stone.

And I will be to them a God - This is quoted literally from the Hebrew. The meaning is, that he would sustain to them the appropriate relation of a God; or, if the expression may be allowed, he would be to them what a God should be, or what it is desirable that people should find in a God. We speak of a father‘s acting in a manner appropriate to the character of a father; and the meaning here is, that he would be to his people all that is properly implied in the name of God. He would be their Lawgiver, their counsellor, their protector, their Redeemer, their guide. He would provide for their wants, defend them in danger, pardon their sins, comfort them in trials, and save their souls. He would be a faithful friend, and would never leave them nor forsake them. It is one of the inestimable privileges of his people that Jehovah is their God. The living and ever-blessed Being who made the heavens sustains to them the relation of a Protector and a Friend, and they may look up to heaven feeling that he is all which they could desire in the character of a God.

And they shall be to me a people - This is not merely stated as a “fact,” but as a “privilege.” It is an inestimable blessing to be regarded as one of the people of God, and to feel that we belong to him - that we are associated with those whom he loves, and whom he treats as his friends.

Verse 11

And they shall not teach every man his neighbor … - That is, no one shall be under a necessity of imparting instruction to another, or of exhorting him to become acquainted with the Lord. This is designed to set forth another of the advantages which would attend the new dispensation. In the previous verse it had been said that one advantage of that economy would be, that the Law would be written on the heart, and that they who were thus blessed would be regarded as the people of God. Another advantage over the “old” arrangement or covenant is here stated. It is, that the knowledge of the Lord and of the true religion would be deeply engraved on the minds of all, and that there would be no necessity for mutual exhortation and counsel. “They shall have a much more certain and effectual teaching than they can derive from another.” “Doddridge.” This passage does not refer to the fact that the true religion will be universally diffused, but that among those who are interested in the blessings of the

new covenant there would be an accurate and just knowledge of the Lord. In some way they would be so taught respecting his character that they would not need the aid to be derived from others. All under that dispensation, or sustaining to him the relation of "a people," would in fact have a correct knowledge of the Lord. This could not be said of the old dispensation, for.

(1)their religion consisted much in outward observances.

(2)it was not to such an extent as the new system a dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

(3)there were not as many means as now for learning the true character of God.

(4)the fullest revelations had not been made to them of that character. That was reserved for the coming of the Saviour, and under him it was intended that there should be communicated the full knowledge of the character of God.

Many mss., and those among the best, here have πολίτην politēn- "citizen;" "fellow-citizen," instead of πλησίον plēsion"neighbor," and this is adopted by Griesbach, Tittman, Rosenmuller, Knapp, Stuart, and by many of the fathers. It is also in the version of the Septuagint in the place quoted from Jeremiah. It is not easy to determine the true reading, but the word "neighbor" better agrees with the meaning of the Hebrew - רֵעַ rēà- and there is strong authority from the mss. and the versions for this reading.

And every man his brother - Another form of expression, meaning that there would be no necessity that one should teach another.

Saying, Know the Lord - That is, become acquainted with God; learn his character and his will. The idea is, that the true knowledge of Yahweh would prevail as a characteristic of those times.

For all shall know me - That is, all those referred to; all who are interested in the new covenant, and who are partakers of its blessings. It does not mean that all persons, in all lands, would then know the Lord - though the time will come when that will be true; but the expression is to be limited by the point under discussion. That point is not that the knowledge of the Lord will fill the whole world, but that all who are interested in the new dispensation will have a much more full and clear knowledge of God than was possessed under the old. Of the truth of this no one can doubt.

Christians have a much more perfect knowledge of God and of his government than could have been learned merely from the revelations of the Old Testament.

Verse 12

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness … - That is, the blessing of "pardon" will be much more richly enjoyed under the new dispensation than it was under the old. This is the "fourth" circumstance adduced in which the new covenant will surpass the old. That was comparatively severe in its inflictions (see Hebrews 10:28); marked every offence with strictness, and employed the language of mercy much less frequently than that of justice. It was a system where law and justice reigned; not where mercy was the crowning and prevalent attribute. It was true that it contemplated pardon, and made arrangements for it; but it is still true that this is much more prominent in the new dispensation than in the old. It is there the leading idea. It is what separates it from all other systems. The entire arrangement is one for the pardon of sin in a manner consistent with the claims of law and justice, and it bestows the benefit of forgiveness in the most ample and perfect manner on all who are interested in the plan. In fact, the uniqueness by which the gospel is distinguished from all other systems, ancient and modern, philosophic and moral, pagan and deistical, is that it is a system making provision for the forgiveness of sin, and actually bestowing pardon on the guilty. This is the center, the crown, the glory of the new dispensation. God is merciful to the unrighteousness of people and their sins are remembered no more.

Will I remember no more - This is evidently spoken after the manner of men, and in accordance with human apprehension. It cannot mean literally that God forgets that people are sinners, but it means that he treats them as if this were forgotten. Their sins are not charged upon them, and they are no more punished than if they had passed entirely out of the recollection. God treats them with just as much kindness, and regards them with as sincere affection, as if their sins ceased wholly to be remembered, or which is the same thing, as if they had never sinned.

Verse 13

In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old - That is, the use of the word "new" implies that the one which it was to supersede was "old." New and old stand in contradistinction from each other. Thus, we speak of a new and old house, a new and old garment, etc. The object of

the apostle is to show that by the very fact of the arrangement for a new dispensation differing so much from the old, it was implied of necessity that that was to be superseded, and would vanish away. This was one of the leading points at which he arrived.

Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away - This is a general truth which would be undisputed, and which Paul applies to the case under consideration. An old house, or garment; an ancient tree; an aged man, all have indications that they are soon to disappear. They cannot be expected to remain long. The very fact of their growing old is an indication that they will soon be gone. So Paul says it was with the dispensation that was represented as old. It had symptoms of decay. It had lost the vigour which it had when it was fresh and new; it had every mark of an antiquated and a declining system; and it had been expressly declared that a new and more perfect dispensation was to be given to the world. Paul concluded, therefore, that the Jewish system must soon disappear.

Remarks

1. The fact that we have a high priest, is suited to impart consolation to the pious mind; Hebrews 8:1-5. He ever lives, and is ever the same. He is a minister of the true sanctuary, and is ever before the mercy-seat. He enters there not once a year only, but has entered there to abide there for ever. We can never approach the throne of mercy without having a high priest there - for he at all times, day and night, appears before God. The merits of his sacrifice are never exhausted, and God is never wearied with hearing his pleadings in behalf of his people. He is the same that he was when he gave himself on the cross. He has the same love and the same compassion which he had then, and that love which led him to make the atonement, will lead him always to regard with tenderness those for whom he died.

2. It is a privilege to live under the blessings of the Christian system; Hebrews 8:6. We have a better covenant than the old one was - one less expensive and less burdensome, and one that is established upon better promises. Now the sacrifice is made, and we do not have to renew it every day. It was made once for all, and need never be repeated. Having now a high priest in heaven who has made the sacrifice, we may approach him in any part of the earth, and at all times, and feel that our offering will be acceptable to him. If there is any blessing for which we ought to be thankful, it is for the Christian religion; for we have only to look at any portion of the pagan world, or even to the condition of the people of God

under the comparatively dark and obscure Jewish dispensation, to see abundant reasons for thanksgiving for what we enjoy.

3. Let us often contemplate the mercies of the new dispensation with which we are favored - the favors of that religion whose smiles and sunshine we are permitted to enjoy; Hebrews 8:10-12. It contains all that we want, and is exactly adapted to our condition. It has that for which every man should be thankful; and has not one thing which should lead a man to reject it. It furnishes all the security which we could desire for our salvation; lays upon us no oppressive burdens or charges; and accomplishes all which we ought to desire in our souls. Let us contemplate a moment the arrangements of that "covenant," and see how suited it is to make man blessed and happy.

First, It writes the laws of God on the mind and the heart; Hebrews 8:10. It not only reveals them, but it secures their observance. It has made arrangements for disposing people to keep the laws a thing which has not been introduced into any other system. Legislators may enact good laws, but they cannot induce others to obey them; parents may utter good precepts, but they cannot engrave them on the hearts of their children; and sages may express sound maxims and just precepts in morals, but there is no security that they will be regarded. So in all the pagan world - there is no power to inscribe good maxims and rules of living on the heart. They may be written; recorded on tablets; hung up in temples; but still people will not regard them. They will still give indulgence to evil passions, and lead wicked lives. But it is not so with the arrangement which God has made in the plan of salvation. One of the very first provisions of that plan is, that the laws shall be inscribed on the heart, and that there shall be a disposition to obey. Such a systcm is what man wants, and such a system he can nowhere else find.

Secondly, This new arrangement "reveals to us" a God such as we need; Hebrews 8:10. It contains the promise that he will be "our God." He will be to his people all that can be "desired in God;" all that man could wish. He is just such a God as the human mind, when it is pure, most loves; has all the attributes which it could be desired there should be in his character; has done all that we could desire a God to do; and is ready to do all that we

could wish a God to perform. “Man wants a God;” a God in whom he can put confidence, and on whom he can rely. The ancient Greek philosopher wanted a God - and he would then have made a beautiful and efficient system of morals; the pagan want a God - to dwell in their empty temples, and in their corrupt hearts; the Atheist wants a God to make him calm, contented, and happy in this life - for he has no God now, and man everywhere, wretched, sinful, suffering, dying, wants a God. Such a God is revealed in the Bible - one whose character we may contemplate with ever-increasing admiration; one who has all the attributes which we can desire; one who will minister to us all the consolation which we need in this world; and one who will be to us the same God forever and ever.

Thirdly, The new covenant contemplates the diffusion of “knowledge;” Hebrews 8:11. This too was what man needed, for everywhere else he has been ignorant of God and of the way of salvation. The whole pagan world is sunk in ignorance, and indeed all people, except as they are enlightened by the gospel, are in profound darkness on the great questions which most nearly pertain to their welfare. But it is not so with the new arrangement which God has made with his people. It is a fact that they know the Lord, and a dispensation which would produce that is just what man needed. There are two things hinted at in Hebrews 8:11, which are worthy of more than a passing notice, illustrating the excellency of the Christian religion. The first is, that in the new dispensation “all would know the Lord.” The matter of fact is, that the obscurest and most unlettered Christian often has a knowledge of God which sages never had, and which is never obtained except by the teachings of the Spirit of God. However this may be accounted for, the fact cannot be denied.

There is a clear and elevating view of God; a knowledge of him which exerts a practical influence on the heart, and which transforms the soul; and a correctness of apprehension in regard to what truth is, possessed by the humble Christian, though a peasant, which philosophy never imparted to its votaries. Many a sage would be instructed in the truths of religion if he would sit down and converse with the comparatively unlearned Christian, who has no book but his Bible. The other thing hinted at here is, that all would know the Lord “from the least to the greatest.” Children and youth, as well as age and experience, would have an acquaintance with God. This

promise is remarkably verified under the new dispensation. One of the most striking things of the system is, the attention which it pays to the young; one of its most wonderful effects is the knowledge which it is the means of imparting to those in early life. Many a child in the Sunday School has a knowledge of God which Grecian sages never had; many a youth in the Church has a more consistent acquaintance with God‘s real plan of governing and saving people, than all the teachings which philosophy could ever furnish.

Fourthly, The new dispensation contemplates the pardon of sin, and is, therefore, suited to the condition of man; Hebrews 8:12. It is what man needs. The knowledge of some way of pardon is what human nature has been sighing for for ages; which has been sought in every system of religion, and by every bloody offering; but which has never been found elsewhere. The philosopher had no assurance that God would pardon, and indeed one of the chief aims of the philosopher has been to convince himself that he had no need of pardon. The pagan have had no assurance that their offerings have availed to put away the divine anger, and to obtain forgiveness. “The only assurance anywhere furnished that sin may be forgiven, is in the Bible.” This is the great uniqueness of the system recorded there, and this it is which renders it so valuable above all the other systems. It furnishes the assurance that sins may be pardoned, and shows how it may be done. This is what we must have, or perish. And why, since Christianity reveals a way of forgiveness - a way honorable to God and not degrading to man - why should any man reject it? Why should not the guilty embrace a system which proclaims pardon to the guilty, and which assures all that, if they will embrace him who is the “Mediator of the new covenant,” “God will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and will remember their iniquities no more.”

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

The general design of this chapter Hebrews 9:1-5.

(2) adescription of the services in it, particularly of that performed by the high priest once a year; Hebrews 9:6-7.

(3) all this was typical and symbolical, and was a standing demonstration that the way into the most holy place in heaven was not yet fully revealed; Hebrews 9:8-10.

(4) Christ was now come - the substance of which that was the shadow; the real sacrifice of which that was the emblem; Hebrews 9:11-14. He pertained as a priest to a more perfect tabernacle Hebrews 9:11; he offered not the blood of bulls and goats, but his own blood Hebrews 9:12; with that blood he entered into the most holy place in heaven Hebrews 9:12; and if the blood of bulls and goats was admitted to be efficacious in putting away external uncleanness, it must be admitted that the blood of Christ had an efficacy in cleansing the conscience; Hebrews 9:13-14.

(5) his blood is efficacious not only in remitting present sins, but it extends in its efficacy even to past ages, and removes the sins of those who had worshipped God under the former covenant; Hebrews 9:15.

(6) the apostle then proceeds to show that it was necessary that the mediator of the new covenant should shed his own blood, and that the blood thus shed should be applied to purify those for whom the sacrifice was made; Hebrews 9:16-23. This he shows by the following considerations, namely:

(a)He argues it from the nature of a covenant or compact, showing that it was ratified only over dead sacrifices, and that of necessity the victim that was set apart to confirm or ratify it must be slain; see notes on Hebrews 9:16-17.

(b)The first covenant was confirmed or ratified by blood, and hence, it was necessary that, since the “patterns” of the heavenly things were

sprinkled with blood, the heavenly things themselves should be purified with better sacrifices; Hebrews 9:18-23.

(7) the offering made by the Redeemer was to be made but once. This arose from the necessity of the case, since it could not be supposed that the mediator would suffer often, as the high priest went once every year into the most holy place. He had come and died once in the last dispensation of things on earth, and then had entered into heaven and could suffer no more; Hebrews 9:24-26.

(8) in the close of the chapter the apostle adverts to the fact that there was a remarkable resemblance, in one respect, between the death of Christ and the death of all people. It was appointed to them to die once, and but once, and so Christ died but once. As a man, it was in accordance with the universal condition of things that he should die once; and in accordance with the same condition of things it was proper that he should die but once. In like manner there was a resemblance or fitness in regard to what would occur after death. Man was to appear at the judgment. He was not to cease to be, but would stand hereafter at the bar of God. In like manner, Christ would again appear. He did not cease to exist when he expired, but would appear again that he might save his people; Hebrews 9:27-28.

Verse 1

Then verily - Or, moreover. The object is to describe the tabernacle in which the service of God was celebrated under the former dispensation, and to show that it had a reference to what was future, and was only an imperfect representation of the reality. It was important to show this, as the Jews regarded the ordinances of the tabernacle and of the whole Levitical service as of divine appointment, and of perpetual obligation. The object of Paul is to prove that they were to give place to a more perfect system, and hence, it was necessary to discuss their real nature.

The first covenant - The word "covenant" is not in the Greek, but is not improperly supplied. The meaning is, that the former arrangement or dispensation had religious rites and services connected with it.

Had also ordinances - Margin, "Ceremonies." The Greek word means "laws, precepts, ordinances;" and the idea is, that there were laws regulating the worship of God. The Jewish institutions abounded with such laws.

And a worldly sanctuary - The word "sanctuary" means a holy place, and is applied to a house of worship, or a temple. Here it may refer either to

the temple or to the tabernacle. As the temple was constructed after the same form as the tabernacle, and had the same furniture, the description of the apostle may be regarded as applicable to either of them, and it is difficult to determine which he had in his eye. The term "worldly," applied to "sanctuary," here means that it pertained to this world; it was contradistinguished from the heavenly sanctuary not made with hands where Christ was now gone; compare Hebrews 9:11-24. It does not mean that it was "worldly" in the sense in which that word is now used as denoting the opposite of spiritual, serious, religious; but worldly in the sense that it belonged to the earth rather than to heaven; it was made by human hands, not directly by the hands of God.

Verse 2

For there was a tabernacle made - The word "tabernacle" properly means a tent, a booth, or a hut, and was then given by way of eminence to the tent for public worship made by Moses in the wilderness. For a description of this, see Hebrews 9:3 to denote the "inner" sanctuary, or holy of holies. The tabernacle, like the temple afterward, was divided into two parts by the veil Exodus 26:31, Exodus 26:33, one of which was called "the holy place," and the other "the holy of holies." The exact size of the two rooms in the tabernacle is not specified in the Scriptures, but it is commonly supposed that the tabernacle was divided in the same manner as the temple was afterward; that is, two-thirds of the interior constituted the holy place, and one-third the holy of holies. According to this, the holy place, or "first tabernacle" was twenty cubits long by ten broad, and the most holy place was ten cubits square. The whole length of the tabernacle was about fifty-five feet, the breadth eighteen, and the height eighteen. In the temple, the two rooms, though of the same relative proportions, were of course much larger. See a description of the temple in the notes on Matthew 21:12. In both cases, the holy place was at the east, and the Holy of Holies at the west end of the sacred edifice.

The first - The first room on entering the sacred edifice, here called the "first tabernacle." The apostle proceeds now to enumerate the various articles of furniture which were in the two rooms of the tabernacle and temple. His object seems to be, not for information, for it could not be supposed that they to whom he was writing were ignorant on this point, but partly to show that it could not be said that he spoke of that of which he had no information, or that he undervalued it; and partly to show the real nature

of the institution, and to prove that it was of an imperfect and typical character, and had a designed reference to something that was to come. It is remarkable that though he maintains that the whole institution was a "figure" of what was to come, and though he specifies by name all the furniture of the tabernacle, he does not attempt to explain their particular typical character, nor does he affirm that they had such a character.

He does not say that the candlestick, and the table of show-bread, and the ark, and the cherubim were designed to adumbrate some particular truth or fact of the future dispensation, or had a designed spiritual meaning. It would have been happy if all expositors had followed the example of Paul, and had been content, as he was, to state the facts about the tabernacle, and the general truth that the dispensation was intended to introduce a more perfect economy, without endeavoring to explain the typical import of every pin and pillar of the ancient place of worship. If those things had such a designed typical reference, it is remarkable that Paul did not go into an explanation of that fact in the Epistle before us. Never could a better opportunity for doing it occur than was furnished here. Yet it was not done. Paul is silent where many expositors have found occasion for admiration. Where they have seen the profoundest wisdom, he saw none; where they have found spiritual instruction in the various implements of divine service in the sanctuary, he found none.

Why should we be more wise than he was? Why attempt to hunt for types and shadows where he found none? And why should we not be limited to the views which he actually expressed in regard to the design and import of the ancient dispensation? Following an inspired example we are on solid ground, and are not in danger. But the moment we leave that, and attempt to spiritualize everything in the ancient economy, we are in an open sea without compass or chart, and no one knows to what fairy lands he may be drifted. As there are frequent allusions in the New Testament to the different parts of the tabernacle furniture here specified, it may be a matter of interest and profit to furnish an illustration of the most material of them.

(Without attempting to explain the typical import of every pin and pillar of the tabernacle, one may be excused for thinking, that such prominent parts of its furniture, as the ark, the candlestick, and the cherubim, were designed as types. Nor can it be wrong to inquire into the spiritual

significancy of them, under such guidance as the light of Scripture, here or affords elsewhere. This has been done by a host of most sober and learned commentators. It is of no use to allege, that the apostle himself has given no particular explanation of these matters, since this would have kept him back too long from his main object; and is, therefore, expressly declined by him. "Yet," says McLean, his manner of declining it implies, that each of these sacred utensils had a mystical signification. They were all constructed according to particular divine directions, Hebrews 8:5; "the patterns of things in the heavens, Hebrews 9:23; and these typical patterns included not only the tabernacle and its services, but every article of its furniture, as is plain from the words of Moses, Exodus 25:8-9. There are also other passages which seem to allude to, and even to explain, some of these articles, such as the golden candlestick, with its seven lamps, Revelation 1:12-13, Revelation 1:20; the golden censer, Revelation 8:3-4; the vail, Hebrews 10:20; the mercy-seat, Romans 3:25; Hebrews 4:16; and, perhaps, the angelic cherubim, 1 Peter 1:12." It must, however, be acknowledged that too great care and caution cannot be used in investigating such subjects.)

The candlestick - For an account of the candlestick, see Exodus 25:31-37. It was made of pure gold, and had seven branches, that is, three on each side and one in the center. These branches had on the extremities seven golden lamps, which were fed with pure olive oil, and which were lighted "to give light over against it;" that is, they shed light on the altar of incense, the table of show-bread, and generally on the furniture of the holy place. These branches were made with three "bowls," "knops," and "flowers" occurring alternately on each one of the six branches; while on the center or upright shaft there were four "bowls," "knops" and "flowers" of this kind. These ornaments were probably taken from the almond, and represented the flower of that tree in various stages. The "bowls" on the branches of the candlestick probably meant the calyx or cup of that plant from which the flower springs.

The "knops" probably referred to some ornament on the candlestick mingled with the "bowls" and the "flowers," perhaps designed as an imitation of the nut or fruit of the almond. The "flowers" were evidently ornaments resembling the flowers on the almond-tree, wrought, as all the rest were, in pure gold. See Bush's notes on Leviticus 24:5-9. The number twelve was selected with reference to the twelve tribes of Israel. They were

made without leaven; were renewed each Sabbath, when the old loaves were then taken away to be eaten by the priests only. The Hebrew phrase rendered "show-bread" means properly "bread of faces," or "bread of presence." The Septuagint render it ἄρτους ἐνώπιους artous enōpious- foreplaced loaves. In the New Testament it is, ἡ πρόθεσις τῶν ἄρτων hē prothesis tōn artōn- "the placing of bread;" and in Symmachus, "bread of proposition," or placing. Why it was called "bread of presence" has been a subject on which expositors have been much divided.

Some have held that it was because it was "before," or in the presence of the symbol of the divine presence in the tabernacle, though in another department; some that it was because it was set there to be seen by people, rather than to be seen by God. Others that it had an emblematic design, looking forward to the Messiah as the food or nourishment of the soul, and was substantially the same as the table spread with the symbols of the Saviour's body and blood. See Bush, in loc. But of this last-mentioned opinion, it may be asked where is the proof? It is not found in the account of it in the Old Testament, and there is not the slightest intimation in the New Testament that it had any such design. The object for which it was placed there can be only a matter of conjecture, as it is not explained in the Bible, and it is more difficult to ascertain the use and design of the show-bread than of almost any other emblem of the Jewish economy."

Calmet. Perhaps the true idea, after all that has been written and conjectured is, that the table and the bread were for the sake of carrying out the idea that the tabernacle was the dwelling-place of God, and that there was a propriety that it should be prepared with the usual appurtenances of a dwelling. Hence, there was a candlestick and a table, because these were the common and ordinary furniture of a room; and the idea was to be kept up constantly that that was the dwelling-place of the Most High by lighting and trimming the lamps every day, and by renewing the bread on the table periodically. The most simple explanation of the phrase "bread of faces," or "bread of presence" is, that it was so called because it was set before the "face" or in the "presence" of God in the tabernacle. The various forms which it has been supposed would represent the table of showbread may be seen in Calmet's Large Dictionary. The Jews say that they were separated by plates of gold.

Which is called the sanctuary - Margin, "Or, holy." That is, "the holy place." The name sanctuary was commonly given to the whole edifice, but with strict propriety appertained only to this first room.

Verse 3

And after the second veil - There were two "veils" to the tabernacle. The one which is described in Exodus 26:36-37, was called "the hanging for the door of the tent," and was made of "blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen," and was suspended on five pillars of shittim-wood, overlaid with gold. This answered for a door to the whole tabernacle. The second or inner veil, here referred to, divided the holy from the most holy place. This is described in Exodus 26:31-33. It was made of the same materials as the other, though it would seem in a more costly manner, and with more embroidered work. On this veil the figures of the cherubim were curiously wrought. The design of this veil was to separate the holy from the most holy place; and in regard to its symbolical meaning we can be at no loss, for the apostle Paul has himself explained it in this chapter; see notes on Hebrews 9:8-14. "The tabernacle." That is, the inner tabernacle; or what more properly was called the tabernacle. The name was given to either of the two rooms into which it was divided, or to the whole structure.

Which is called the Holiest of all - It was called "the Most Holy place;" "the Holy of Holies;" or "the Holiest of all." It was so called because the symbol of the divine presence - the "Shekinah" - dwelt there between the Cherubim.

Verse 4

Which had the golden censer - The censer was a "fire-pan," made for the purpose of carrying fire, in order to burn incense on it in the place of worship. The forms of the censer were various. Some difficulty has been felt respecting the statement of Paul here that the "golden censer" was in the most holy place, from the fact that no such utensil is mentioned by Moses as pertaining to the tabernacle, nor in the description of Solomon's temple, which was modelled after the tabernacle, is there any account of it given. But the following considerations will probably remove the difficulty.

(1) Paul was a Jew, and was familiar with what pertained to the temple, and gave such a description of it as would be in accordance with what actually existed in his time. The fact that Moses does not expressly mention it, does not prove that in fact no such censer was laid up in the most holy place.

(2) Aaron and his successors were expressly commanded to burn incense in a "censer" in the most holy place before the mercy-seat. This was to be done on the great day of atonement, and but once in a year; Leviticus 16:12-13.

(3) there is every probability that the censer that was used on such an occasion was made of gold. All the implements that were employed in the most holy place were made of gold, or overlaid with gold, and it is in the highest degree improbable that the high priest would use any other on so solemn an occasion; compare 1 Kings 7:50.

(4) as the golden censer was to be used only once in a year, it would naturally be laid away in some secure situation, and none would so obviously occur as the most holy place. There it would be perfectly safe. No one was permitted to enter there but the high priest, and being preserved there it would be always ready for his use. The statement of Paul, therefore, has the highest probability, and undoubtedly accords with what actually occurred in the tabernacle and the temple. The object of the incense burned in worship was to produce an agreeable fragrance or smell; see notes on Luke 1:9.

And the ark of the covenant - This ark or chest was made of shittim-wood, was two cubits and a half long, a cubit and a half broad, and the same in height; Exodus 25:10. It was completely covered with gold, and had a "lid," which was called the "mercy-seat," on which rested the Shekinah, the symbol of the divine presence, between the outstretched wings of the cherubim. It was called "the ark of the covenant," because within it were the two tables of the covenant, or the Law of God written on tables of stone. It was a simple "chest, coffer, or box," with little ornament, though rich in its materials. A golden crown or molding ran around the top, and it had rings and staves in its sides by which it might be borne; Exodus 25:12-16. This ark was regarded as the most sacred of all the appendages of the tabernacle. Containing the Law, and being the place where the symbol of the divine presence was manifested, it was regarded as especially holy, and in the various wars and revolutions in the Hebrew commonwealth, it was guarded with special care.

After the passage over the Jordan it remained for some time at Gilgal Joshua 4:19, whence it was removed to Shiloh; 1 Samuel 1:3. From hence, the Israelites took it to their camp, apparently to animate them in battle, but it was taken by the Philistines; 1 Samuel 7:1. In the reign of Saul it was at Nob. David conveyed it to the house of Obededom, and thence to his palace on Mount Zion; 2 Chronicles 35:3. The subsequent history of the ark is unknown. It is probable that it was either destroyed when the city of Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar, or that it was carried with other spoils to Babylon, There is no good reason to suppose that it was ever in the second temple, and it is generally admitted by the Jews that the ark of the covenant was one of the things that were wanting there. Abarbanel says, that the Jews flatter themselves that it will be restored by the Messiah.

Wherein - That is, in the ark - for so the construction naturally requires. In 1 Kings 8:9, however, it is said that there was nothing in the ark, "save the two tables of stone which Moses put there at Horeb," and it has been supposed by some that the pot of manna and the rod of Aaron were not in the ark, but that they were in capsules, or ledges made on its sides for their safe keeping, and that this should be rendered "by the ark." But the apostle uses the same language respecting the pot of manna and the rod of Aaron which he does about the two tables of stone, and as they were certainly in the ark, the fair construction here is that the pot of manna and the rod of Aaron were in it also. The account in Exodus 16:32-34; Numbers 17:10, is, that they were laid up in the most holy place, "before the testimony," and there is no improbability whatever in the supposition that they were in the ark. Indeed, that would be the most safe place to keep them, as the tabernacle was often taken down and removed from place to place. It is clear from the passage in 1 Kings 8:9, that they were not in the ark in the temple, but there is no improbability in the supposition that before the temple was built they might have been removed from the ark and lost. When the ark was carried from place to place, or during its captivity by the Philistines, it is probable that they were lost, as we never hear of them afterward.

The golden pot - In Exodus 16:33, it is simply "a pot," without specifying the material. In the Septuagint it is rendered "golden pot," and as the other utensils of the sanctuary were of gold, it may be fairly presumed that this was also.

That had manna - A small quantity of manna which was to be preserved as a perpetual remembrancer of the food which they had eaten in their long journey in the wilderness, and of the goodness of God in miraculously supplying their wants. As the manna, also, would not of itself keep, Exodus 16:20, the fact that this was to be laid up to be preserved from age to age, was a perpetual miracle in proof of the presence and faithfulness of God. On the subject of the manna, see Bush's notes on Exodus 16:15.

And Aaron's rod that budded - That budded and blossomed as a proof that God had chosen him to minister to him. The princes of the tribes were disposed to rebel, and to call in question the authority of Aaron. To settle the matter, each one was required to take a rod or staff of office, and to bring it to Moses with the name of the tribe to which it appertained written on it. These were laid up by Moses in the tabernacle, and it was found on the next day that the rod marked with the name of Levi had budded and blossomed, and produced almonds. In perpetual remembrance of this miracle, the rod was preserved in the ark; Numbers 17:1-13. Its subsequent history is unknown. It was not in the ark when the temple was built, nor is there any reason to suppose that it was preserved to that time.

And the tables of the covenant - The two tables of stone on which the ten commandments were written. They were expressly called "the words of the covenant" in Exodus 34:28. On the word "covenant"; see notes on Hebrews 9:16 and 17 of this chapter. These two tables were in the ark at the time the temple was dedicated. 1 Kings 8:9. Their subsequent history is unknown. It is probable that they shared the fate of the ark, and were either carried to Babylon, or were destroyed when the city was taken by Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 5

And over it - That is, over the ark.

The cherubim of glory - A Hebrew mode of expression, meaning "the glorious cherubim." The word "cherubim" is the Hebrew form of the plural, of which cherub is the singular. The word "glory" used here in connection with "cherubim," refers to the splendor, or magnificence of the image, as being carved with great skill, and covered with gold. There were two cherubim on the ark, placed on the lid in such a manner that their faces looked inward toward each other, and downward toward the mercy-seat. They stretched out their wings "on high," and covered the mercy-seat, or the lid of the ark; Exodus 25:18-20; compare 1 Kings 8:6-7; 1 Chronicles

28:18. In the temple, the cherubim were made of the olive tree, and were ten cubits high. They were overlaid with gold, and were so placed that the wing of one touched the wall on one side of the Holy of Holies, and that of the other the other side, and their wings met together over the ark; 1 Kings 6:23-28.

It is not probable, however, that this was the form used in the tabernacle, as wings thus expanded would have rendered it inconvenient to carry them from place to place. Of the form and design of the cherubim much has been written, and much that is the mere creation of fancy, and the fruit of wild conjecture. Their design is not explained in the Bible, and silence in regard to it would have been wisdom. If they were intended to be symbolical, as is certainly possible, (compare Ezekiel 10:20-22), it is impossible now to determine the object of the symbol. Who is authorized to explain it? Who can give to his speculations anything more than the authority of "pious conjecture?" And of what advantage, therefore, can speculation be, where the volume of inspiration says nothing? They who wish to examine this subject more fully, with the various opinions that have been formed on it, may consult the following works, namely, Calmet's Dictionary, Fragment No. 152, with the numerous illustrations; Bush's notes on Exodus 25:18; and the Quarterly Christian Spectator, vol. viii. pp. 368-388. Drawings resembling the cherubim were not uncommon on ancient sculptures.

Shadowing - Stretching out its wings so as to cover the mercy-seat.

The mercy-seat - The cover of the ark on which rested the cloud or visible symbol of the divine presence. It was called "mercy-seat," or "propitiatory" - ἱλαστήριον hilastērion- because it was this which was sprinkled over with the blood of atonement or propitiation, and because it was from this place, on which the symbol of the deity rested, that God manifested himself as propitious to sinners. The blood of the atonement was that through or by means of which he declared his mercy to the guilty. Here God was supposed to be seated, and from this place he was supposed to dispense mercy to man when the blood of the atonement was sprinkled there. This was undoubtedly designed to be a symbol of his dispensing mercy to people in virtue of the blood which the Saviour shed as the great sacrifice for guilt; see Hebrews 9:13-14.

Of which we cannot now speak particularly - That is, it is not my present design to speak particularly of these things. These matters were well

understood by those to whom he wrote, and his object did not require him to go into a fuller explanation.

Verse 6

When these things were thus ordained - Thus arranged or appointed. Having shown what the tabernacle was, the apostle proceeds to show what was done in it. "The priests went always into the first tabernacle." The outer tabernacle called the holy place. They were not permitted to enter the Holy of Holies, that being entered only once in a year by the High Priest. The holy place was entered every day to make the morning and evening oblation.

Accomplishing the service of God - Performing the acts of worship which God had appointed - burning incense, etc.; Luke 1:9.

Verse 7

But into the second - The second apartment or room, called the most holy place; Hebrews 9:3.

Went the high priest alone once every year - On the great day of atonement; Exodus 30:10. On that day he probably entered the Holy of Holies three or four times, first to burn incense, Leviticus 16:12; then to sprinkle the blood of the bullock on the mercy-seat, Leviticus 16:14; then he was to kill the goat of the sin-offering, and bring that blood within the Veil and sprinkle it also on the mercy-seat, and then, perhaps, he entered again to bring out the golden censer. The Jewish tradition is, that he entered the Holy of Holies four times on that day. After all, however, the number of times is not certain, nor is it material, the only important point being that he entered it only on one day of the year, while the holy place was entered every day.

Not without blood - That is, he bare with him blood to sprinkle on the mercy-seat. This was the blood of the bullock and of the goat - borne in at two different times.

Which he offered for himself - The blood of the bullock was offered for himself and for his house or family - thus keeping impressively before his own mind and the mind of the people the fact that the priests even of the highest order were sinners, and needed expiation like others; Leviticus 9:7.

And for the errors of the people - The blood of the goat was offered for them; Leviticus 16:15. The word rendered "errors" - ἀγνόημα agnoēma- denotes properly "ignorance, involuntary error;" and then error or fault in general - the same as the Hebrew מִשְׁגֶה mishgeh- from שָׁגָה shaagah- "to err."

The object was to make expiation for all the errors and sins of the people, and this occurred once in the year. The repetition of these sacrifices was a constant remembrancer of sin, and the design was that neither the priests nor the people should lose sight of the fact that they were violators of the Law of God.

Verse 8

The Holy Ghost - Who appointed all this. The whole arrangement in the service of the tabernacle is represented as having been under the direction of the Holy Spirit, or this was one of his methods of teaching the great truths of religion, and of keeping them before the minds of people. Sometimes that Spirit taught by direct revelation; sometimes by the written word, and sometimes by symbols. The tabernacle, with its different apartments, utensils, and services, was a permanent means of keeping important truths before the minds of the ancient people of God.

This signifying - That is, showing this truth, or making use of this arrangement to impress this truth on the minds of people that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest.

That the way into the holiest of all - Into heaven - of which the Most Holy place in the tabernacle was undoubtedly designed to be an emblem. It was the place where the visible symbol of God - the Shekinah - dwelt; where the blood of propitiation was sprinkled, and was, therefore, an appropriate emblem of that holy heaven where God dwells, and whence pardon is obtained by the blood of the atonement.

Was not yet made manifest - The way to heaven was not opened or fully understood. It was not known how people could appear before God, or how they could come with the hope of pardon. That way has now been opened by the ascension of the Redeemer to heaven, and by the assurance that all who will may come in his name.

While as the first tabernacle was yet standing - As long as it stood, and the appointed services were held in it. The idea is, that until it was superseded by a more perfect system, it was a “proof” that the way to heaven was not yet fully and freely optioned, and that the Holy Spirit “designed” that it should be such a proof. The apostle does not specify in what the proof consisted, but it may have been in something like the following.

(1)it was a mere “symbol,” and not the “reality” - showing that the true way was not yet fully understood.

(2)it was entered but once a year - showing that there was not access at all times.

(3)it was entered only by the High Priest - showing that there was not free end full access to all the people.

(4)it was accessible only by Jews - showing that the way in which all men might be saved was not then fully revealed.

The sense is, that it was a system of types and shadows, in which there were many burdensome rites and many things to prevent people from coming before the symbol of the divinity, and was, therefore, an "imperfect system." All these obstructions are now removed; the Saviour - the great High Priest of his people - has entered heaven and "opened it to all true believers," and all of every nation may now have free access to God; see Hebrews 9:12; compare Hebrews 10:19-22.

Verse 9

Which was a figure for the time then present - That is, as long as the tabernacle stood. The word rendered "figure" - παραβολὴ parabolē- is not the same as type - τύπος tupos- (Romans 5:14; Acts 7:13, Acts 7:44; John 20:25; 1 Corinthians 10:6, 1 Corinthians 10:11; Philemon 3:17, et al.) - but is the word commonly rendered "parable;" Matthew 13:3, Matthew 13:10, Matthew 13:13, Matthew 13:18, Matthew 13:24, Matthew 13:31, Matthew 13:33-36, Matthew 13:53; Matthew 15:15, "et soepe," and means properly "a placing side by side;" then a "comparison, or similitude." Here it is used in the sense of "image, or symbol" - something to "represent" other things. The idea is, that the arrangements and services of the tabernacle were a representation of important realities, and of things which were more fully to be revealed at a future period. There can be no doubt that Paul meant to say that this service in general was symbolical or typical, though this will not authorize us to attempt to spiritualize every minute arrangement of it. Some of the things in which it was typical are specified by the apostle himself, and wisdom and safety in explaining the arrangements of the tabernacle and its services consist in adhering very closely to the explanations furnished by the inspired writers. An interpreter is on an open sea, to be driven he knows not whither, when he takes leave of these safe pilots.

Both gifts - Thank-offerings.

And sacrifices - Bloody offerings. The idea is, that all kinds of offerings to God were made there.

That could not make him that did the service perfect - That could not take away sin, and remove the stains of guilt on the soul; note, Hebrews 7:11; compare Hebrews 8:7; Hebrews 7:27; Hebrews 10:1, Hebrews 10:11.

As pertaining to the conscience - They related mainly to outward and ceremonial rites, and even when offerings were made for sin the conscience was not relieved. They could not expiate guilt; they could not make the soul pure; they could not of themselves impart peace to the soul by reconciling it to God. They could not fully accomplish what the conscience needed to have done in order to give it peace. Nothing will do this but the blood of the Redeemer.

Verse 10

Which stood only in meats and drinks - The idea is, that the ordinances of the Jews, in connection with the services of religion, consisted much of laws pertaining to what was lawful to eat and drink, etc. A considerable part of those laws related to the distinction between clean and unclean beasts, and to such arrangements as were designed to keep them externally distinct from other nations. It is possible also that there may be a reference here to meat and drink offerings. On the grammatical difficulties of this verse, see Stuart on the Hebrews, in loc.

And divers washings - The various ablutions which were required in the service of the tabernacle and the temple - washing of the hands, of the victim that was to be offered, etc. It was for this purpose that the laver was erected in front of the tabernacle Exodus 30:18; Exodus 31:9; Exodus 35:16, and that the brass sea and the lavers were constructed in connection with the temple of Solomon; 2 Chronicles 4:2-5; 1 Kings 7:26. The Greek word here is "baptisms." On its meaning, see Matthew 3:6 note; Mark 7:4 note.

And carnal ordinances - Margin, "Or, rites, or ceremonies." Greek "Ordinances of the flesh;" that is, which pertained to the flesh or to external ceremonies. The object was rather to keep them "externally" pure than to cleanse the conscience and make them holy in heart.

Imposed on them - "Laid on them" - ἐπικείμενα epikeimenaIt does not mean that there was any "oppression" or "injustice" in regard to these ordinances, but that they were appointed for a temporary purpose.

Until the time of reformation - The word rendered here "reformation" - διόρθωσις diorthōsis- means properly "emendation, improvement, reform." It refers to putting a thing in a right condition; making it better; or raising up and restoring what is fallen down. Passow. Here the reference is undoubtedly to the gospel as being a better system - "a putting things where they ought to be;" compare notes on Acts 3:21. The idea here is, that those ordinances were only temporary in their nature, and were designed to endure until a more perfect system should be introduced. They were of value "to introduce" that better system; they were not adapted to purify the conscience and remove the stains of guilt from the soul.

Verse 11

But Christ being come - Now that the Messiah has come, a more perfect system is introduced by which the conscience may be made free from guilt.

An high priest of good things to come - see Hebrews 10:1. The apostle having described the tabernacle, and shown wherein it was defective in regard to the real wants of sinners, proceeds now to describe the Christian system, and to show how that met the real condition of man, and especially how it was adapted to remove sin from the soul. The phrase "high priest of good things to come," seems to refer to those "good things" which belonged to the dispensation that was to come; that is, the dispensation under the Messiah. The Jews anticipated great blessings in that time. They looked forward to better things than they enjoyed under the old dispensation. They expected more signal proofs of the divine favor; a clearer knowledge of the way of pardon; and more eminent spiritual enjoyments. Of these, the apostle says that Christ, who had come, was now the high priest. It was he by whom they were procured; and the time had actually arrived when they might enjoy the long-anticipated good things under the Messiah.

By a greater and more perfect tabernacle - The meaning is, that Christ officiated as high priest in a much more magnificent and perfect temple than either the tabernacle or the temple under the old dispensation. He performed the great functions of his priestly office - the sprinkling of the blood of the atonement - in heaven itself, of which the most holy place in the tabernacle was but the emblem. The Jewish high priest entered the sanctuary made with hands to minister before God; Christ entered into heaven itself. The word "by" here - διὰ dia- means probably through, and the idea is, that Christ passed through a more perfect tabernacle on his way

to the mercy-seat in heaven than the Jewish high priest did when he passed through the outer tabernacle Hebrews 9:2 and through the veil into the most holy place. Probably the idea in the mind of the writer was that of the Saviour passing through the "visible heavens" above us, to which the veil, dividing the holy from the most holy place in the temple, bore some resemblance. Many, however, have understood the word "tabernacle" here as denoting the "body of Christ" (see Grotius and Bloomfield in loc.); and according to this the idea is, that Christ, by means of his own body and blood offered as a sacrifice, entered into the most holy place in heaven. But it seems to me that the whole scope of the passage requires us to understand it of the more perfect temple in heaven where Christ performs his ministry, and of which the tabernacle of the Hebrews was but the emblem. Christ did not belong to the tribe of Levi; he was not an high priest of the order of Aaron; he did not enter the holy place on earth, but he entered the heavens, and perfects the work of his ministry there.

Not made with hands - A phrase that properly describes heaven as being prepared by God himself; see notes on 2 Corinthians 5:1.

Not of this building - Greek "of this "creation" - κτίσεως ktiseōsThe meaning is, that the place where he officiates is not made by human power and art, but is the work of God. The object is to show that his ministry is altogether more perfect than what could be rendered by a Jewish priest, and performed in a temple which could not have been reared by human skill and power.

Verse 12

Neither by the blood of goats and calves - The Jewish sacrifice consisted of the shedding of the blood of animals. On the great day of the atonement the high priest took with him into the most holy place:

(1)the blood of a young bullock Leviticus 16:3, Leviticus 16:11, which is here called the blood of a "calf," which he offered for his own sin; and,

(2)the blood of a goat, as a sin-offering for others; Leviticus 16:9, Leviticus 16:15. It was "by," or "by means of" - διὰ dia- blood thus sprinkled on the mercyseat, that the high priest sought the forgiveness of his own sins and the sins of the people.

But by his own blood - That is, by his own blood shed for the remission of sins. The meaning is, that it was in virtue of his own blood, or "by means" of that, that he sought the pardon of his people. That blood was not shed for himself - for he had no sin - and consequently there was a material

difference between his offering and that of the Jewish high priest. The difference related to such points as these.

(1)the offering which Christ made was wholly for others; that of the Jewish priest for himself as well as for them.

(2)the blood offered by the Jewish priest was that of animals; that offered by the Saviour was his own.

(3)that offered by the Jewish priest was only an emblem or type - for it could not take away sin; that offered by Christ had a real efficacy, and removes transgression from the soul.

He entered into the holy place - Heaven. The meaning is, that as the Jewish high priest bore the blood of the animal into the Holy of Holies, and sprinkled it there as the means of expiation, so the offering which Christ has to make in heaven, or the consideration on which he pleads for the pardon of his people, is the blood which he shed on Calvary. Having made the atonement, he now pleads the merit of it as a "reason" why sinners should be saved. It is not of course meant that he literally bore his own blood into heaven - as the high priest did the blood of the bullock and the goat into the sanctuary; or that he literally "sprinkled" it on the mercy-seat there, but that that blood, having been shed for sin, is now the ground of his pleading and intercession for the pardon of sin - as the sprinkled blood of the Jewish sacrifice was the ground of the pleading of the Jewish high priest for the pardon of himself and the people.

Having obtained eternal redemption for us - That is, by the shedding of his blood. On the meaning of the word "redemption," see notes on Galatians 3:13. The redemption which the Lord Jesus effected for his people is eternal. It will continue forever. It is not a temporary deliverance leaving the redeemed in danger of falling into sin and ruin, but it makes salvation secure, and in its effects extends through eternity. Who can estimate the extent of that love which purchased for us "such" a redemption? Who can be sufficiently grateful that he is thus redeemed? The doctrine in this verse is, that the blood of Christ is the means of redemption, or atones for sin. In the following verses the apostle shows that it not only makes atonement for sin, but that it is the means of sanctifying or purifying the soul.

Verse 13

For if the blood of bulls and of goats - Referring still to the great day of atonement, when the offering made was the sacrifice of a bullock and a goat.

And the ashes of an heifer - For an account of this, see Numbers 19:2-10. In ver. 9, it is said that the ashes of the heifer, after it was burnt, should be kept "for a water of separation; it is a purification for sin." That is, the ashes were to be carefully preserved, and being mixed with water were sprinkled on those who were from any cause ceremonially impure. The "reason" for this appears to have been that the heifer was considered as a sacrifice whose blood has been offered, and the application of the ashes to which she had been burnt was regarded as an evidence of participation in that sacrifice. It was needful, where the laws were so numerous respecting external pollutions, or where the members of the Jewish community were regarded as so frequently "unclean" by contact with dead bodies, and in various other ways, that there should be some method in which they could be declared to be cleansed from their "uncleanness." The nature of these institutions also required that this should be in connection with "sacrifice," and in order to this, it was arranged that there should be this "permanent sacrifice" - the ashes of the heifer that had been sacrificed - of which they could avail themselves at any time, without the expense and delay of making a bloody offering specifically for the occasion. It was, therefore, a provision of convenience, and at the same time was designed to keep up the idea, that all purification was somehow connected with the shedding of blood.

Sprinkling the unclean - Mingled with water, and sprinkled on the unclean. The word "unclean" here refers to such as had been defiled by contact with dead bodies, or when one had died in the family, etc.; see Numbers 19:11-22.

Sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh - Makes holy so far as the flesh or body is concerned. The uncleanness here referred to related to the body only, and of course the means of cleansing extended only to that. It was not designed to give peace to the conscience, or to expiate moral offences. The offering thus made removed the obstructions to the worship of God so far as to allow him who had been defiled to approach him in a regular manner. Thus, much the apostle allows was accomplished by the Jewish rites. They had an efficacy in removing ceremonial uncleanness, and in rendering it proper that he who had been polluted should be permitted

again to approach and worship God. The apostle goes on to argue that if they had such an efficacy, it was fair to presume that the blood of Christ would have far greater efficacy, and would reach to the conscience itself, and make that pure.

Verse 14

How much more shall the blood of Christ - As being infinitely more precious than the blood of an animal could possibly be. If the blood of an animal had any efficacy at all, even in removing ceremonial pollutions, how much more is it reasonable to suppose may be effected by the blood of the Son of God!

Who through the eternal Spirit - This expression is very difficult, and has given rise to a great variety of interpretation. - Some mss. instead of "eternal" here, read "holy," making it refer directly to the Holy Spirit; see "Wetstein." These various readings, however, are not regarded as of sufficient authority to lead to a change in the text, and are of importance only as showing that it was an early opinion that the Holy Spirit is here referred to. The principal opinions which have been entertained of the meaning of this phrase, are the following.

(1) that which regards it as referring to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. This was the opinion of Owen, Doddridge, and archbishop Tillotson.

(2) that which refers it to the "divine nature" of Christ. Among those who have maintained this opinion, are Beza, Ernesti, Wolf, Vitringa, Storr, and the late Dr. John P. Wilson. mss. Notes.

(3) others, as Grotius, Rosenmuller, Koppe, understand it as meaning "endless" or "immortal life," in contradistinction from the Jewish sacrifices which were of a perishable nature, and which needed so often to be repeated.

(4) others regard it as referring to the glorified person of the Saviour, meaning that in his exalted, or spiritual station in heaven, he presents the efficacy of his blood.

(5) others suppose that it means "divine influence," and that the idea is, that Christ was actuated and filled with a divine influence when he offered

up himself as a sacrifice; an influence which was not of a temporal and fleeting nature, but which was eternal in its efficacy. This is the interpretation preferred by Prof. Stuart.

For an examination of these various opinions, see his "*Excursus*, xviii." on this Epistle. It is difficult, if not impossible, to decide what is the true meaning of the passage amidst this diversity of opinion; but there are some reasons which seem to me to make it probable that the Holy Spirit is intended, and that the idea is, that Christ made his great sacrifice under "the extraordinary influences of that Eternal Spirit." The reasons which lead me to this opinion, are the following:

(1)It is what would occur to the great mass of the readers of the New Testament. It is presumed that the great body of sober, plain, and intelligent readers of the Bible, on perusing the passage, suppose that it refers to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. There are few better and safer rules for the interpretation of a volume designed like the Bible for the mass of mankind, than to abide by the sense in which they understand it.

(2)this interpretation is one which is most naturally conveyed by the language of the original. The phrase "the spirit" - τὸ πνέυμα to pneuma- has so far a technical and established meaning in the New Testament as to denote the Holy Spirit, unless there is something in the connection which renders such an application improper. In this case there is nothing certainly which "necessarily" forbids such an application. The high names and Classical authority of those who have held this opinion, are a sufficient guarantee of this.

(3)this interpretation accords with the fact that the Lord Jesus is represented as having been eminently endowed with the influences of the Holy Spirit; compare notes on John 3:34. Though he was divine, yet he was also a man, and as such was under influences similar to those of other pious people. The Holy Spirit is the source and sustainer of all piety in the soul, and it is not improper to suppose that the man Christ Jesus was in a remarkable manner influenced by the Holy Spirit in his readiness to obey God and to suffer according to his will.

(4)if there was ever any occasion on which we may suppose he was influenced by the Holy Spirit, that of his sufferings and death here referred

to may be supposed eminently to have been such an one. It was expressive of the highest state of piety - of the purest love to God and man - which has ever existed in the human bosom; it was the most trying time of his own life; it was the period when there would be the most strong temptation to abandon his work; and as the redemption of the whole world was dependent on that act, it is reasonable to suppose that the richest heavenly grace would be there imparted to him, and that he would then be eminently under the influence of that Spirit which was granted not "by measure unto him." notes, John 3:34.

(5)this representation is not inconsistent with the belief that the sufferings and death of the Redeemer were "voluntary," and had all the merit which belongs to a voluntary transaction. Piety in the heart of a Christian now is not less voluntary because it is produced and cherished by the Holy Spirit, nor is there less excellence in it because the Holy Spirit imparts strong faith in the time of temptation and trial. It seems to me, therefore, that the meaning of this expression is, that the Lord Jesus was led by the strong influences of the Spirit of God to devote himself as a sacrifice for sin. It was not by any temporary influence; not by mere excitement; it was by the influence of the "Eternal" Spirit of God, and the sacrifice thus offered could, therefore, accomplish effects which would be eternal in their character. It was not like the offering made by the Jewish high priest which was necessarily renewed every year, but it was under the influence of one who was "eternal," and the effects of whose influence might be everlasting. It may be added, that if this is a correct exposition, it follows that the Holy Spirit is eternal, and must, therefore, be divine.

Offered himself - That is, as a sacrifice. He did not offer a bullock or a goat, but he offered "himself." The sacrifice of oneself is the highest offering which he can make; in this case it was the highest which the universe had to make.

Without spot - Margin, "Or fault." The animal that was offered in the Jewish sacrifices was to be without blemish; see Leviticus 1:10; Leviticus 22:17-22. It was not to be lame, or blind, or diseased. The word which is used here and rendered "without spot" ἄμωμος amōmos- refers to this fact - that there was no defect or blemish. The idea is, that the Lord Jesus, the great sacrifice, was "perfect;" see Hebrews 7:26.

Purge your conscience - That is, cleanse, purify, or sanctify your conscience. The idea is, that this offering would take away whatever rendered the conscience defiled or sinful. The offerings of the Jews related in the main to external purification, and were not adapted to give peace to a troubled conscience. They could render the worshipper externally pure so that he might draw near to God and not be excluded by any ceremonial pollution or defilement; but the mind, the heart, the conscience, they could not make pure. They could not remove what troubles a man when he recollects that he has violated a holy law and has offended God, and when he looks forward to an awful judgment-bar. The word "conscience" here is not to be understood as a distinct and independent faculty of the soul, but as the soul or mind itself reflecting and pronouncing on its own acts. The whole expression refers to a mind alarmed by the recollection of guilt - for it is guilt only that disturbs a man's conscience.

Guilt originates in the soul remorse and despair; guilt makes a man troubled when he thinks of death and the judgment; it is guilt only which alarms a man when he thinks of a holy God; and it is nothing but guilt that makes the entrance into another world terrible and awful. If a man had no guilt he would never dread his Maker, nor would the presence of his God be ever painful to him (compare Genesis 3:6-10); if a man had no guilt he would not fear to die - for what have the innocent to fear anywhere? The universe is under the government of a God of goodness and truth, and, under such a government, how can those who have done no wrong have anything to dread? The fear of death, the apprehension of the judgment to come, and "the dread of God," are strong and irrefragable proofs that every man is a sinner. The only thing, therefore, which ever disturbs the conscience, and makes death dreadful, and God an object of aversion, and eternity awful, is guilt. If that is removed, man is calm and peaceful; if not, he is the victim of wretchedness and despair.

From dead works - From works that are deadly in their nature, or that lead to death. Or it may mean from works that have no spirituality and no life. By "works" here the apostle does not refer to their outward religious acts particularly, but to the conduct of the life, to what people do; and the idea is, that their acts are not spiritual and saving but such as lead to death; see note, Hebrews 6:1.

To serve the living God - Not in outward form, but in sincerity and in truth; to be his true friends and worshippers. The phrase "the living God" is

commonly used in the Scriptures to describe the true God as distinguished from idols, which are represented as "dead," or without life; Psalm 115:4-7. The idea in this verse is, that it is only the sacrifice made by Christ which can remove the stain of guilt from the soul. It could not be done by the blood of bulls and of goats - for that did not furnish relief to a guilty conscience, but it could be done by the blood of Christ. The sacrifice which he made for sin was so pure and of such value, that God can consistently pardon the offender and restore him to his favor. That blood too can give peace - for Christ poured it out in behalf of the guilty. It is not that he took part with the sinner against God; it is not that he endeavors to convince him who has a troubled conscience that he is needlessly alarmed, or that sin is not as bad as it is represented to be, or that it does not expose the soul to danger. Christ never took the part of the sinner against God; he never taught that sin was a small matter, or that it did not expose to danger. He admitted all that is said of its evil. But he provides for giving peace to the guilty conscience by shedding his blood that it may be forgiven, and by revealing a God of mercy who is willing to receive the offender into favor, and to treat him as though he had never sinned. Thus, the troubled conscience may find peace; and thus, though guilty, man may be delivered from the dread of the wrath to come.

Verse 15

And for this cause - With this view; that is, to make an effectual atonement for sin, and to provide a way by which the troubled conscience may have peace.

He is the Mediator - see notes on Galatians 3:19-20. He is the Mediator between God and man in respect to that new covenant which he has made, or that new dispensation by which people are to be saved. He stands between God and man - the parties at variance - and undertakes the work of mediation and reconciliation.

Of the New Testament - Not "testament" - for a "testament," or "will," needs no mediator; but of the "new covenant," or the new "arrangement" or "disposition" of things under which he proposes to pardon and save the guilty; see notes on Hebrews 9:16-17.

That by means of death - His own death as a sacrifice for sin. The "old" covenant or arrangement also contemplated "death" - but it was the death of an "animal." The purposes of this were to be effected by the death of the Mediator himself; or this covenant was to be ratified in his blood.

For the redemption of the transgression that were "under the first testament - The covenant or arrangement under Moses. The general idea here is, that these were offences for which no expiation could be made by the sacrifices under that dispensation, or from which the blood then shed could not redeem. This general idea may include two particulars.

(1) that they who had committed transgressions under that covenant, and who could not be fully pardoned by the imperfect sacrifices then made, would receive a full forgiveness of all their sins in the great day of account through the blood of Christ. Though the blood of bulls and goats could not expiate, yet they offered that blood in faith; they relied on the promised mercy of God; they looked forward to a perfect sacrifice - and now the blood of the great atonement offered as a "full" expiation for all their sins, would be the ground of their acquittal in the last day.

(2) that the blood of Christ would now avail for the remission of all those sins which could not be expiated by the sacrifices offered under the Law. It not only contemplated the remission of all the offences committed by the truly pious under that Law, but would now avail to put away sin entirely. No sacrifice which people could offer would avail, but the blood of Christ would remove all that guilt.

That they which are called - Alike under the old covenant and the new.

Might receive the promise of eternal inheritance - That is, the fulfillment of the promise; or that they might be made partakers of eternal blessings. That blood is effectual alike to save those under the ancient covenant and the new - so that they will be saved in the same manner, and unite in the same song of redeeming love.

Verse 16

For where a testament is - This is the same word - διαθήκη diathēkē- which in Hebrews 8:6, is rendered "covenant." For the general signification of the word, see note on that verse. There is so much depending, however, on the meaning of the word, not only in the interpretation of this passage, but also of other parts of the Bible, that it may be proper to explain it here more at length. The word - διαθήκη diathēkē- occurs in the New Testament thirty-three times. It is translated "covenant" in the common version, in Luke 1:72; Acts 3:25; Acts 7:8; Romans 9:4; Romans 11:27; Galatians 3:15, Galatians 3:17; Galatians 4:24; Ephesians 2:12; Hebrews 8:6, Hebrews 8:9, "twice," Hebrews 8:10; Hebrews 9:4, "twice," Hebrews 10:16; Hebrews

12:24; Hebrews 13:20. In the remaining places it is rendered "testament;" Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6, 2 Corinthians 3:14; Hebrews 7:22; Hebrews 9:15-17, Hebrews 9:20; Revelation 11:19. In four of those instances (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20, and 1 Corinthians 11:25), it is used with reference to the institution or celebration of the Lord's Supper. In the Septuagint it occurs not far from 300 times, in considerably more than 200 times of which it is the translation of the Hebrew word ברית beriytone instance Zechariah 11:14 it is the translation of the word "brotherhood;" once Deuteronomy 9:5, of דבר daabaar- "word;" once Jeremiah 11:2, of "words of the covenant;" once Leviticus 26:11), of "tabernacle;" once Exodus 31:7, of "testimony;" it occurs once Ezekiel 20:37, where the reading of the Greek and Hebrew text is doubtful; and it occurs three times 1 Samuel 11:2; 1 Samuel 20:8; 1 Kings 8:9, where there is no corresponding word in the Hebrew text. From this use of the word by the authors of the Septuagint, it is evident that they regarded it as the proper translation of the Hebrew - ברית beriytand as conveying the same sense which that word does. It cannot be reasonably doubted that the writers of the New Testament were led to the use of the word, in part, at least, by the fact that they found it occurring so frequently in the version in common use, but it cannot be doubted also that they regarded it as fairly conveying the sense of the word ברית beriytOn no principle can it be supposed that inspired and honest people would use a word in referring to transactions in the Old Testament which did not "fairly" convey the idea which the writers of the Old Testament meant to express. The use being thus regarded as settled, there are some "facts" in reference to it which are of great importance in interpreting the New Testament, and in understanding the nature of the "covenant" which God makes with man. These facts are the following:

(1) The word διαθήκη diathēkē- "diatheke" - is not what properly denotes "compact, agreement," or "covenant." That word is συνθήκη sunthēkē- "syntheke" or in other forms σύνθεσις sunthesisand συνθεσίας sunthesiasor if the word "diatheke" is used in that signification it is only remotely, and as a secondary meaning; see "Passow;" compare the Septuagint in Isaiah 28:15; Isaiah 30:1; Daniel 11:6, and Wisdom Daniel 1:16; Isaiah 28:15; Isaiah 30:1; Daniel 11:6. This remarkable fact that the authors of that version never use the word to denote any transaction

between God and man, shows that there must have been some reason for it which acted on their minds with entire uniformity.

(4) it is no less remarkable that neither in the Septuagint nor the New Testament is the word διαθήκη diathēkē- "diatheke" - "ever" used in the sense of "will" or "testament," unless it be in the case before us. This is conceded on all hands, and is expressly admitted by Prof. Stuart; (Com. on Heb. p. 439), though he defends this use of the word in this passage. - A very important inquiry presents itself here, which has never received a solution generally regarded as satisfactory. It is, why the word διαθήκη diathēkē- "diatheke" - was selected by the writers of the New Testament to express the nature of the transaction between God and man in the plan of salvation. It might be said indeed that they found this word uniformly used in the Septuagint, and that they employed it as expressing the idea which they wished to convey, with sufficient accuracy. But this is only removing the difficulty one step further back.

Why did the Septuagint adopt this word? Why did they not rather use the common and appropriate Greek word to express the notion of a covenant? A suggestion on this subject has already been made in the notes on Hebrews 8:6; compare *Bib. Repository* vol. xx. p. 55. Another reason may, however, be suggested for this remarkable fact which is liable to no objection. It is, that in the apprehension of the authors of the Septuagint, and of the writers of the New Testament, the word διαθήκη diathēkē- "diatheke" - in its original and proper signification "fairly" conveyed the sense of the Hebrew word ברית beriytand that the word συνθήκη sunthēkē- or "compact, agreement," would "not" express that; and "that they never meant to be understood as conveying the idea either that God entered into a compact or covenant with man, or that he made a will." They meant to represent; him as making "an arrangement, a disposition, an ordering" of things, by which his service might be kept up among his people, and by which people might be saved; but they were equally remote from representing him as making a "compact," or a "will." In support of this there may be alleged.

(1) the remarkable uniformity in which the word διαθήκη diathēkē- "diatheke" - is used, showing that there was some "settled principle" from

which they never departed; and,

(2) it is used mainly as the meaning of the word itself. Prof. Stuart has, undoubtedly, given the accurate original sense of the word. “The real, genuine, and original meaning of διαθήκη diathēkē(diatheke) is, “arrangement, disposition,” or “disposal” of a thing.” P. 440. The word from which it is derived - διατίθημι diatithēmi- means to place apart or asunder; and then to set, arrange, dispose in a certain order. “Passow.” From this original signification is derived the use which the word has with singular uniformity in the Scriptures. It denotes the “arrangment, disposition,” or “ordering” of things which God made in relation to mankind, by which he designed to keep up his worship on earth, and to save the soul. It means neither covenant nor will; neither compact nor legacy; neither agreement nor testament. It is an “arrangement” of an entirely different order from either of them, and the sacred writers with an uniformity which could have been secured only by the presiding influence of the One Eternal Spirit, have avoided the suggestion that God made with man either a “compact” or a “will.”

We have no word which precisely expresses this idea, and hence, our conceptions are constantly floating between a “compact” and a “will,” and the views which we have are as unsettled as they are. unscriptural. The simple idea is, that God has made an “arrangement” by which his worship may be celebrated and souls saved. Under the Jewish economy this arrangement assumed one form; under the Christian another. In neither was it a compact or covenant between two parties in such a sense that one party would be at liberty to reject the terms proposed; in neither was it a testament or will, as if God had left a legacy to man, but in both there were some things in regard to the arrangement such as are found in a covenant or compact. One of those things - equally appropriate to a compact between man and man and to this arrangement, the apostle refers to here - that it implied in all cases the death of the victim.

If these remarks are well-founded, they should be allowed materially to shape our views in the interpretation of the Bible. Whole treatises of divinity have been written on a mistaken view of the meaning of this word - understood as meaning “covenant.” Volumes of angry controversy have

been published on the nature of the “covenant” with Adam, and on its influence on his posterity. The only literal “covenant” which can he supposed in the plan of redemption is that between the Father and the Son - though even the existence of such a covenant is rather the result of devout and learned imagining than of any distinct statement in the volume of inspiration. The simple statement there is, that God has made an arrangement for salvation, the execution of which he has entrusted to his Son, and has proposed it to man to be accepted as the only arrangement by which man can be saved, and which he is not at liberty to disregard.

There has been much difference of opinion in reference to the meaning of the passage here, and to the design of the illustration introduced. If the word used - διαθήκη diathēkē- means “testament,” in the sense of a “will,” then the sense of that passage is that “a will is of force only when he who made it dies, for it relates to a disposition of his property after his death.” The force of the remark of the apostle then would be, that the fact that the Lord Jesus made or expressed his “will” to mankind, implied that he would die to confirm it; or that since in the ordinary mode of making a will, it was of force only when he who made it was dead, therefore it was necessary that the Redeemer should die, in order to confirm and ratify what he made. But the objections to this, which appears to have been the view of our translators, seem to me to be insuperable. They are these:

(1)the word διαθήκη diathēkē- “diatheke” - is not used in this sense in the New Testament elsewhere; see the remarks above.

(2)the Lord Jesus made no such will. He had no property, and the commandments and instructions which he gave to his disciples were not of the nature of a will or testament.

(3)such an illustration would not be pertinent to the design of the apostle, or in keeping with his argument.

He is comparing the Jewish and Christian dispensations, and the point of comparison in this chapter relates to the question about the efficacy of sacrifice in the two arrangements. He showed that the arrangement for blood-shedding by sacrifice entered into both; that the high priest of both offered blood as an expiation; that the holy place was entered with blood, and that consequently there was death in both the arrangements, or dispensations. The former arrangement or dispensation was ratified with

blood, and it was equally proper that the new arrangement should be also. The point of comparison is not that Moses made a will or testament which could be of force only when he died, and that the same thing was required in the new dispensation, but it is that the former covenant was "ratified by blood," or "by the death of a victim," and that it might be expected that the new dispensation would be confirmed, and that it was in fact confirmed in the same manner. In this view of the argument, what pertinency would there be in introducing an illustration respecting a will, and the manner in which it became efficient; compare notes on Hebrews 9:18. It seems clear, therefore, to me, that the word rendered "testament" here is to be taken in the sense in which it is ordinarily used in the New Testament. The opinion that the word here means such a divine arrangement as is commonly denoted a "covenant," and not testament, is sanctioned by not a few names of eminence in criticism, such as Pierce, Doddridge, Michaelis, Steudel, and the late Dr. John P. Wilson. Bloomfield says that the connection here demands this. The principal objections to this view are:

(1)that it is not proved that no covenants or compacts were valid except such as were made by the intervention of sacrifices.

(2)that the word rendered "testator" - διαθεμενος diathemenos- cannot refer to the death of an animal slain for the purpose of ratifying a covenant, but must mean either a "testator," or a "contractor," that is, one of two contracting parties.

(3)that the word rendered "dead" Hebrews 9:17 - νεκροῖς nekrois- means only "dead men," and never is applied to the dead bodies of animals; (see Stuart on the Hebrew, p. 442.)

These objections to the supposition that the passage refers to a covenant or compact, Prof. Stuart says are in his view insuperable, and they are certainly entitled to grave consideration. Whether the view above presented is one which can be sustained, we may be better able to determine after an examination of the words and phrases which the apostle uses. Those objections which depend wholly on the "philological" argument derived from the words used, will be considered of course in such an examination. It is to be remembered at the outset:

(1)that the word διαθήκη diathēkē- "diatheke" - is never used in the New Testament in the sense of "testament," or "will," unless in this place;

(2)that it is never used in this sense in the Septuagint; and,

(3)that the Hebrew word ברית beriyt- “never” has this signification. This is admitted; see Stuart on the Heb. pp. 439,440. It must require very strong reasons to prove that it has this meaning here, and that Paul has employed the word in a sense differing from its uniform signification elsewhere in the Bible; compare, however, the remarks of Prof. Stuart in Bib. Repos. vol. xx. p. 364.

There must also of necessity be - ἀνάγκη anagkē- That is, it is necessary in order to confirm the covenant, or it would not be binding in cases where this did not occur. The “necessity” in the case is simply to make it valid or obligatory. So we say now there must “necessarily” be a “seal,” or a deed would not be valid. The fair interpretation of this is, that this was the common and established custom in making a “covenant” with God, or confirming the arrangement with him in regard to salvation. To this it is objected (see the first objection above), that “it is yet to be made out that no covenants were valid execpt those by the intervention of sacrifices.” In reply to this, we may observe:

(1) that the point to be made out is not that this was a custom in compacts between “man and man,” but between “man and his Maker.” There is no evidence, as it seems to me, that the apostle alludes to a compact between man and man. The mistake on this subject has arisen partly from the use of the word “testament” by our translators, in the sense of “will” - supposing that it must refer to some transaction relating to man only; and partly from the insertion of the word “men” in Hebrews 9:17, in the translation of the phrase - ἐπὶ νεκροῖς epi nekrois- “upon the dead,” or” over the dead.” But it is not necessary to suppose that there is a reference here to any transaction between man and man at all, as the whole force of the illustration introduced by the apostle will be retained if we suppose him speaking “only” of a covenant between man and God. Then his assertion will be simply that in the arrangement between God and man there was a “necessity” of the death of something, or of the shedding of blood in order to ratify it. This view will save the necessity of proof that the custom of ratifying compacts between man and man by sacrifice prevailed. Whether that can be made out or not, the assertion of the apostle may be true, that in the arrangement which God makes with man, sacrifice was necessary in order to confirm or ratify it.

(2) the point to be made out is, not that such a custom is or was universal among all nations, but that it was the known and regular opinion among the Hebrews that a sacrifice was necessary in a "covenant" with God, in the same way as if we should say that a deed was not valid without a seal, it would not be necessary to show this in regard to all nations, but only that it is the law or the custom in the nation where the writer lived, and at the time when he lived. Other nations may have very different modes of confirming or ratifying a deed, and the same nation may have different methods at various times. The fact or custom to which I suppose there is allusion here, is that of sacrificing an animal to ratify the arrangement between man and his Maker, commonly called a "covenant." In regard to the existence of such a custom, particularly among the Hebrews, we may make the following observations.

It was the common mode of ratifying the "covenant" between God and man. That was done over a sacrifice, or by the shedding of blood. So the covenant with Abraham was ratified by slaying an heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon. The animals were divided and a burning lamp passed between them; Genesis 15:9, Genesis 15:18. So the covenant made with the Hebrews in the wilderness was ratified in the same manner; Exodus 24:6, seq. Thus, in Jeremiah 34:18, God speaks of the "men that had transgressed his covenant which they had made before him when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof;" see also Zechariah 9:11. Indeed all the Jewish sacrifices were regarded as a ratification of the covenant. It was never supposed that it was ratified or confirmed in a proper manner without such a sacrifice. Instances occur, indeed, in which there was no sacrifice offered when a covenant was made between man and man (see Genesis 23:16; Genesis 24:9; Deuteronomy 25:7, Deuteronomy 25:9; Rth 4:7), but these cases do not establish the point that the custom did not prevail of ratifying a covenant with God by the blood of sacrifice.

Further; the terms used in the Hebrew in regard to making a covenant with God, prove that it was understood to be ratified by sacrifice, or that the death of a victim was necessary כרת ברית kaarat beriyt"to cut a covenant" - the word כרת kaaratmeaning "to cut; to cut off; to cut down," and the allusion being to the victims offered in sacrifice, and "cut in pieces" on

occasion of entering into a covenant; see Genesis 15:10; Jeremiah 34:18-19. The same idea is expressed in the Greek phrases ὅρκια τέμνειν , τέμνειν σπονδάς horkia temneintemnein spondasand in the Latin "icere foedus;" compare Virgil, *Aeneid* viii. 941.

Et caesa jungebant foedera porca.

These considerations show that it was the common sentiment, alike among the Hebrews and the pagan, that a covenant with God was to be ratified or sanctioned by sacrifice; and the statement of Paul here is, that the death of a sacrificial victim was needful to confirm or ratify such a covenant with God. It was not secure, or confirmed, until blood was thus shed. This was well understood among the Hebrews, that all their covenant transactions with God were to be ratified by a sacrifice; and Paul says that the same principle must apply to any arrangement between God and human beings. Hence, he goes on to show that it was "necessary" that a sacrificial victim should die in the new covenant which God established by man through the Mediator; see Hebrews 9:23. This I understand to be the sum of the argument here. It is not that every contract made between man and man was to be ratified or confirmed by a sacrifice - for the apostle is not discussing that point; but it is that every similar transaction with God must be based on such a sacrifice, and that no covenant with him could be complete without such a sacrifice. This was provided for in the ancient dispensation by the sacrifices which were constantly offered in their worship; in the new, by the one great sacrifice offered on the cross. Hence, all our approaches to God are based on the supposition of such a sacrifice, and are, as it were, ratified over it. We ratify or confirm such a covenant arrangement, not by offering the sacrifice anew, but by recalling it in a proper manner when we celebrate the death of Christ, and when in view of his cross we solemnly pledge ourselves to be the Lord‘s.

The death of the testator - According to our common version, "the death of him who makes a will." But if the views above expressed are correct, this should be rendered the "covenanter," or "the victim set apart to be slain." The Greek will admit of the translation of the word διαθέμενος diathemenos"diathemenos," by the word "covenanter," if the word διαθήκη diathēkē- "diatheke" - is rendered "covenant." To such a translation here as would make the word refer "to a victim slain in order to ratify a covenant," it is objected that the "word has no such meaning anywhere else. It must either mean a "testator," or a "contractor," that is, one of two covenanting

parties. But where is the death of a person covenanting made necessary in order to confirm the covenant?" Prof. Stuart, in loc. To this objection I remark respectfully:

(1) that the word is never used in the sense of "testator" either in the New Testament or the Old, unless it be here. It is admitted of the word διαθήκη diathēkē- by Prof. Stuart himself, that it never means "will," or "testament," unless it be here, and it is equally true of the word used here that it never means one "who makes a will." If, therefore, it should be that a meaning quite uncommon, or wholly unknown in the usage of the Scriptures, is to be assigned to the use of the word here, why should it be "assumed" that that unusual meaning should be that of "making a will," and not that of confirming a covenant?

(2) if the apostle used the word διαθήκη diathēkē- "diatheke" - in the sense of "a covenant" in this passage, nothing is more natural than that he should use the corresponding word διαθέμενος diathemenos- "diathemenos" - in the sense of that by which a covenant was ratified. He wished to express the idea that the covenant was always ratified by the death of a victim - a sacrifice of an animal under the Law, and the sacrifice of the Redeemer under the gospel - and no word would so naturally convey that idea as the one from which the word "covenant" was derived. It is to be remembered also that there was no word to express that thought. Neither the Hebrew nor the Greek furnished such a word; nor have we now any word to express that thought, but are obliged to use circumlocution to convey the idea. The word "covenanter" would not do it; nor the words "victim," or "sacrifice." We can express the idea only by some phrase like this - "the victim set apart to be slain to ratify the covenant." But it was not an unusual thing for the apostle Paul to make use of a word in a sense quite unique to himself; compare 2 Corinthians 4:17.

(3) the word διατίθημι diatithēmi- properly means, "to place apart, to set in order, to arrange." It is rendered "appoint" in Luke 22:29; "made," and "make," with reference to a covenant, Acts 3:25; Hebrews 8:10; Hebrews 10:16. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in the passage before us. The idea of "placing, laying, disposing, arranging," etc., enters into the word - as to place wares or merchandise for sale, to arrange a contract, &c; see "Passow." The fair meaning of the word here may be,

whatever goes to arrange, dispose, or settle the covenant, or to make the covenant secure and firm. If the reference be to a compact, it cannot relate to one of the contracting parties, because the death of neither is necessary to confirm it. But it may refer to that which was well-known as an established opinion, that a covenant with God was ratified only by a sacrifice. Still, it must be admitted that this use of the word is not found elsewhere, and the only material question is, whether it is to be presumed that the apostle would employ a word in a single instance in a special signification, where the connection would not render it difficult to be understood. This must be admitted, that he might, whichever view is taken of the meaning of this passage, for on the supposition that he refers here to a will, it is conceded that he uses the word in a sense which does not once occur elsewhere either in the Old Testament or the New. It seems to me, therefore, that the word here may, without impropriety, be regarded as referring to "the victim that was slain in order to ratify a covenant with God," and that the meaning is, that such a covenant was not regarded as confirmed until the victim was slain. It may be added that the authority of Michaelis, Macknight, Doddridge, Bloomfield, and Dr. JohnP. Wilson, is a proof that such an interpretation cannot be a very serious departure from the proper use of a Greek word.

Verse 17

For a testament - Such an arrangement as God enters into with man; see the remarks on Hebrews 9:16.

Is of force - Is ratified, or confirmed - in the same way as a deed or compact is confirmed by affixing a seal.

After men are dead - ἐπὶ νεκροῖς epi nekrois"Over the dead." That is, in accordance with the view given above, after the animal is dead; or over the body of the animal slain for sacrifice, and to confirm the covenant. "For a covenant is completed or confirmed over dead sacrifices, seeing it is never of force as long as the victim set apart for its ratification is still living." ms. notes of Dr. JohnP. Wilson. To this interpretation it is objected, that " νεκροῖς nekrois- "nekrois" - means only "dead men;" but human beings surely were not sacrificed by the Jews, as a mediating sacrifice in order to confirm a covenant." Prof. Stuart in loc. In regard to this objection, and to the proper meaning of the passage, we may remark:

(1) that the word “men” is not in the Greek, nor is it necessarily implied, unless it be in the use of the Greek word rendered “dead.” The proper translation is, “upon, or over the dead.” The use of the word “men” here by our translators would seem to limit it to the making of a will.

(2) it is to be presumed, unless there is positive proof to the contrary, that the Greeks and Hebrews used the word “dead” as it is used by other people, and that it “might” refer to deceased animals, or vegetables, as well as to human beings. A sacrifice that had been offered was dead; a tree that had fallen was dead; an animal that had been torn by other wild animals was dead. It is “possible” that a people might have one word to refer to “dead men,” and another to “dead animals,” and another to “dead vegetables:” but what is the evidence that the Hebrews or the Greeks had such words?

(3) what is the meaning of this very word - νεκρός nekros- “nekros” - in Hebrews 6:1; Hebrews 9:14, of this very Epistle when it is applied to works - “dead works” - if it never refers to anything but people? compare James 2:17, James 2:20, James 2:26; Ephesians 2:1, Ephesians 2:5; Revelation 3:1. In Ecclesiastes 9:4, it is applied to a dead lion. I suppose, therefore, that the Greek phrase here will admit of the interpretation which the “exigency of the place” seems to demand, and that the idea is, that a covenant with God was ratified over the animals slain in sacrifice, and was not considered as confirmed until the sacrifice was killed.

Otherwise - Since - ἐπεί epeiThat is, unless this takes place it will be of no force.

It is of no strength - It is not “strong” - ἰσχύει ischuei- it is not confirmed or ratified. “While the testator liveth.” Or while the animal selected to confirm the covenant is alive. It can be confirmed only by its being slain. A full examination of the meaning of this passage Hebrews 9:16-17 may be found in an article in the Biblical Repository, vol. 20, pp. 51-71, and in Prof. Stuart‘s reply to that article. Bib. Repos. 20, pp. 356-381.

Verse 18

Whereupon - Ὅθεν Hothen- “Whence.” Or since this is a settled principle, or an indisputable fact, it occurred in accordance with this, that the first covenant was confirmed by the shedding of blood. The admitted

principle which the apostle had stated, that the death of the victim was necessary to confirm the covenant, was the "reason" why the first covenant was ratified with blood. If there were any doubt about the correctness of the interpretation given above, that Hebrews 9:16-17, refer to a "covenant," and not a "will," this verse would seem to be enough to remove it. For how could the fact that a will is not binding until he who makes it is dead, be a reason why a "covenant" should be confirmed by blood? What bearing would such a fact have on the question whether it ought or ought not to be confirmed in this manner? Or how could that fact, though it is universal, be given as a "reason" to account for the fact that the covenant made by the instrumentality of Moses was ratified with blood?

No possible connection can be seen in such reasoning. But admit that Paul had stated in Hebrews 9:16-17, a general principle that in all covenant transactions with God, the death of a victim was necessary, and everything is plain. We then see why he offered the sacrifice and sprinkled the blood. It was not on the basis of such reasoning as this: "The death of a man who makes a will is indispensable before the will is of binding force, therefore it was that Moses confirmed the covenant made with our fathers by the blood of a sacrifice;" but by such reasoning as this: "It is a great principle that in order to ratify a covenant between God and his people a victim should be slain, therefore it was that Moses ratified the old covenant in this manner, and "therefore" it was also that the death of a victim was necessary under the new dispensation." Here the reasoning of Paul is clear and explicit; but who could see the force of the former?

Prof. Stuart indeed connects this verse with Hebrews 9:15, and says that the course of thought is, "The new covenant or redemption from sin was sanctioned by the death of Jesus; consequently, or wherefore (ὅθεν hothen) the old covenant, which is a type of the new, was sanctioned by the blood of victims." But is this the reasoning of Paul? Does he say that because the blood of a Mediator was to be shed under the new dispensation, and because the old was a type of this, that therefore the old was confirmed by blood? Is he not rather accounting for the shedding of blood at all, and showing that it was "necessary" that the blood of the Mediator should be shed rather than assuming that, and from that arguing that a typical shedding of blood was needful? Besides, on this supposition, why is the

statement in Hebrews 9:16-17, introduced? What bearing have these verses in the train of thought? What are they but an inexplicable obstruction?

The first testament - Or rather covenant - the word "testament" being supplied by the translators.

Was dedicated - Margin, "Purified." The word used to "ratify," to "confirm," to "consecrate," to "sanction." Literally, "to renew."

Without blood - It was ratified by the blood of the animals that were slain in sacrifice. The blood was then sprinkled on the principal objects that were regarded as holy under that dispensation.

Verse 19

For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people - When he had recited all the Law, and had given all the commandments entrusted him to deliver; Exodus 24:3.

He took the blood of calves and of goats - This passage has given great perplexity to commentators from the fact that Moses in his account of the transactions connected with the ratification of the covenant with the people, Matthew 15:2), yet they doubtless had many that were true;

(4)in referring to those traditions, there is no impropriety in supposing that Paul may have been guided by the Spirit of inspiration in selecting only those which were true; and,

(5)nothing is more probable than what is here stated. If Moses sprinkled "the people;" if he read "the book of the law" then Exodus 24:7, and if this was regarded as a solemn act of ratifying a covenant with God, nothing would be more natural than that he should sprinkle the book of the covenant, and even the tabernacle and its various sacred utensils.

We are to remember also, that it was common among the Hebrews to sprinkle blood for the purpose of consecrating, or as an emblem of purifying. Thus, Aaron and his sons and their garments were sprinkled with blood when they were consecrated to the office of priests, Exodus 29:19-21; the blood of sacrifices was sprinkled on the altar, Leviticus 1:5, Leviticus 1:11; Leviticus 3:2, Leviticus 3:13; and blood was sprinkled before the veil of the sanctuary, Leviticus 4:10, Leviticus 4:17; compare Leviticus 6:27; Leviticus 7:14. So Josephus speaks of the garments of Aaron and of his sons being sprinkled with "the blood of the slain beasts, and with spring water." "Having consecrated them and their garments," he says, "for seven days together, he did the same to the tabernacle, and the vessels thereto

belonging, both with oil and with the blood of bulls and of rams." *Ant*. book iii, chapter 8, section 6. These circumstances show the strong "probability" of the truth of what is here affirmed by Paul, while it is impossible to prove that Moses did not sprinkle the book and the tabernacle in the manner stated. The mere omission by Moses cannot demonstrate that it was not done. On the phrase "the blood of calves and of goats," see note on Hebrews 9:12.

With water - Agreeably to the declaration of Josephus that "spring water was used." In Leviticus 14:49-51, it is expressly mentioned that the blood of the bird that was killed to cleanse a house from the plague of leprosy should be shed over running water, and that the blood and the water should be sprinkled on the walls. It has been suggested also (see Bloomfield), that the use of water was necessary in order to prevent the blood from coagulating, or so as to make it possible to sprinkle it.

And scarlet wool - Margin, "Purple." The word used here denotes crimson, or deep-scarlet. The colour was obtained from a small insect which was found adhering to the shoots of a species of oak in Spain and in Western Asia, of about the size of a pea. It was regarded as the most valuable of the colours for dyeing, and was very expensive. Why the wool used by Moses was of this colour is not known, unless it be because it was the most expensive of colours, and thus accorded with everything employed in the construction of the tabernacle and its utensils. Wool appears to have been used in order to absorb and retain the blood.

And hyssop - That is, a bunch of hyssop intermingled with the wool, or so connected with it as to constitute a convenient instrument for sprinkling; compare Leviticus 14:51. Hyssop is a low shrub, regarded as one of the smallest of the plants, and hence, put in contrast with the cedar of Lebanon. It sprung out of the rocks or walls, 1 Kings 4:33, and was used for purposes of purification. The term seems to have comprised not only the common hyssop, but also lavender and other aromatic plants. Its fragrance, as well as its size, may have suggested the idea of using it in the sacred services of the tabernacle.

And sprinkled both the book - This circumstance is not mentioned by Moses, but it has been shown above not to be improbable. Some expositors, however, in order to avoid the difficulty in the passage, have taken this in connection with the word λαβὼν labōn- rendered "he took" - meaning

"taking the blood, and the book itself;" but the more natural and proper construction is, that the book was sprinkled with the blood.

And all the people - Moses says, "and sprinkled it on the people;" Exodus 24:8. We are not to suppose that either Moses or Paul designs to say that the blood was actually sprinkled on each one of the three millions of people in the wilderness, but the meaning doubtless is that the blood was sprinkled over the people, though in fact it might have fallen on a few. So a man now standing on an elevated place, and surrounded by a large assembly, if he should sprinkle water over them from the place where he stood, might be said to sprinkle it on the people, though in fact but few might have been touched by it. The act would be equally significant whether the emblem fell on few or many.

Verse 20

Saying, This is the blood of the testament - Of the covenant; see notes on Hebrews 9:16-17. That is, this is the blood by which the covenant is ratified. It was the means used to confirm it; the sacred and solemn form by which it was made sure. When this was done, the covenant between God and the people was confirmed - as a covenant between man and man is when it is sealed.

Which God hath enjoined unto you - In Exodus 24:8, "which God hath made with you." The language used by Paul, "which God hath enjoined" - ἐνετείλατο eneteilato- "commanded" - shows that he did not regard this as strictly of the nature of a "covenant," or "compact." When a compact is made between parties, one does not "enjoin" or "command" the other, but it is a mutual "agreement." In the transactions between God and man, though called ברית beriytor διαθήκη diathēkēthe idea of a "covenant" or "compact" is so far excluded that God never loses his right to "command" or "enjoin." It is not a transaction between equals, or an "agreement;" it is a solemn "arrangement" on the part of God which he proposes to mankind, and which he enjoins them to embrace; which they are not indeed at liberty to disregard, but which when embraced is appropriately ratified by some solemn act on their part; compare notes on Hebrews 8:6.

Verse 21

He sprinkled … both the tabernacle - This circumstance is not stated by Moses. On the probability that this was done, see notes on Hebrews 9:19. The account of setting up the tabernacle occurs in Exodus 11:1-10. In

that account it is said that Moses "anointed" the tabernacle with the holy anointing oil; Hebrews 9:9-11. Josephus (*Ant*. book iii, chapter 8, section 6), says that he consecrated it and the vessels thereto belonging with the blood of bulls and of rams. This was undoubtedly the tradition in the time of Paul, and no one can prove that it is not correct.

And all the vessels of the ministry - Employed in the service of God. The altar, the laver, Exodus 40:10-11, the censers, dishes, bowls, etc., which were used in the tabernacle.

Verse 22

And almost all things - It is a general custom to purify everything by blood. This rule was not universal, for some things were purified by fire and water, Numbers 31:22-23, and some by water only; Numbers 31:24; Leviticus 16:26, Leviticus 16:28. But the exceptions to the general rule were few. Almost everything in the tabernacle and temple service, was consecrated or purified by blood.

And without shedding of blood is no remission - Remission or forgiveness of sins. That is, though some things were purified by fire and water, yet when the matter pertained to the forgiveness of sins, it was "universally" true that no sins were pardoned except by the shedding of blood. Some impurities might be removed by water and fire, but the stain of "sin" could be removed only by blood. This declaration referred in its primary meaning, to the Jewish rites, and the sense is, that under that dispensation it was universally true that in order to the forgiveness of sin blood must be shed. But it contains a truth of higher order and importance still. "It is universally true that sin never has been, and never will be forgiven, except in connection with, and in virtue of the shedding of blood." It is on this principle that the plan of salvation by the atonement is based, and on this that God in fact bestows pardon upon people. There is not the slightest evidence that any man has ever been pardoned except through the blood shed for the remission of sins. The infidel who rejects the atonement has no evidence that his sins are pardoned; the man who lives in the neglect of the gospel, though he has abundant evidence that he is a sinner, furnishes none that his sins are forgiven; and the Mussulman and the pagan can point to no proof that their sins are blotted out. It remains to be demonstrated that one single member of the human family has ever had the slightest evidence of pardoned sin, except through the blood of expiation. In the divine arrangement there is no principle better established than this, that all sin

which is forgiven is remitted through the blood of the atonement; a principle which has never been departed from hitherto, and which never will be. It follows, therefore:

(1)that no sinner can hope for forgiveness except through the blood of Christ;

(2)that if people are ever saved they must be willing to rely on the merits of that blood;

(3)that all people are on a level in regard to salvation, since all are to be saved in the same way; and,

(4)that there will be one and the same song in heaven - the song of redeeming love.

Verse 23

The patterns of things in the heavens - The tabernacle and its various utensils; see the notes on Hebrews 8:5.

Be purified with these - With water and blood, and by these ceremonies.

But the heavenly things themselves - The heavenly tabernacle or sanctuary into which Christ has entered, and where he performs the functions of his ministry. The use of the word "purified" here applied to heaven, does not imply that heaven was before "unholy," but it denotes that it is now made accessible to sinners; or that they may come and worship there in an acceptable manner. The ancient tabernacle was purified or consecrated by the blood of the victims slain, so that people might approach with acceptance and worship; the heavens by purer blood are rendered accessible to the guilty. The necessity for "better sacrifices" in regard to the latter was, that it was designed to make the conscience pure, and because the service in heaven is more holy than any rendered on earth.

With better sacrifices than these - To wit, the sacrifice made by the offering of the Lord Jesus on the cross. This infinitely surpassed in value all that had been offered under the Jewish dispensation.

Verse 24

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands - Into the temple or tabernacle. The Jewish high priest alone entered into the most holy place; and the other priests into the holy place. Jesus, being of the tribe

of Judah, and not of Levi, never entered the temple proper. He had access only to the courts of the temple, in the same way as any other Jew had; see the notes on Matthew 21:12. He has entered into the true temple - heaven - of which the earthly tabernacle was the type.

Which are the figures of the true - Literally, "the antitypes" - ἀντίτυπα antitupaThe word properly means what is formed after a model, pattern, or type; and then what corresponds to something or answers to it. The idea here is, that the "type" or "fashion" - the "true" figure or form - was shown to Moses in the Mount, and then the tabernacle was made after that model, or corresponded to it. The "true original" figure is heaven itself; the tabernacle was an antitype of that - or was so formed as in some sense to correspond to it. That is, it corresponded in regard to the matters under consideration - the most holy place denoted heaven; the mercy-seat and the shekinah were symbols of the presence of God, and of the fact that he shows mercy in heaven; the entrance of the high priest was emblematical of the entrance of the Redeemer into heaven; the sprinkling of the blood there was a type of what the Redeemer would do in heaven.

Now to appear in the presence of God for us - As the Jewish high priest appeared before the shekinah, the symbol of the divine presence in the tabernacle, so Christ appears before God himself in our behalf in heaven. He has gone to plead for our salvation; to present the merits of his blood as a permanent reason why we should be saved; Romans 8:34 note; Hebrews 7:25 note.

Verse 25

Nor yet that he should offer himself often - The Jewish high priest entered the most holy place with blood once every year. In this respect the offering made by Christ, and the work which he performed, differed from that of the Jewish high priest. It was not needful that he should enter the holy place but once. Having entered there, he permanently remains there.

With the blood of others - That is, with the blood of calves, and goats. This is a second point in which the work of Christ differs from that of the Jewish high priest. Christ entered there with his own blood; notes on Hebrews 9:12.

Verse 26

For then must he often have suffered - That is, if his blood had no more efficacy than what the Jewish high priest offered, and which was so

often repeated, it would have been necessary that Christ should have often died.

But now once - Once for all; once in the sense that it is not to be repeated again - ἅπαξ hapaxIn the end of the world - In the last dispensation or economy; that under which the affairs of the world will be wound up; see the phrase fully explained in Hebrews 1:2 note, and Acts 2:17 note; 1 Corinthians 10:11, and Isaiah 2:2.

Hath he appeared - He has been manifested in human form.

To put away sin -

(1)To remove the punishment due to sin, or to provide a way of pardon; and,

(2)to remove the stain of sin from the soul; see the notes on Hebrews 9:14.

By the sacrifice of himself - see the notes on Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 2:14; Hebrews 7:27.

Verse 27

And as it is appointed unto men once to die - Or, "since it is appointed unto men to die once only." The object of this is to illustrate the fact that Christ died but once for sin, and that is done by showing that the most important events pertaining to man occur but once. Thus, it is with "death." That does not, and cannot occur many times. It is the great law of our being that people die only once, and hence, the same thing was to be expected to occur in regard to him who made the atonement. It could not be supposed that this great law pertaining to man would be departed from in the case of him who died to make the atonement, and that he would repeatedly undergo the pains of death. The same thing was true in regard to the "judgment." Man is to he judged once, and but once. The decision is to be final, and is not to be repeated. In like manner there was a fitness that the great Redeemer should die "but once," and that his death should, without being repeated, determine the destiny of man. There was a remarkable "oneness" in the great events which most affected people; and neither death, the judgment, nor the atonement could be repeated. In regard to the declaration here that "it is appointed unto men once to die," we may observe:

(1) that death is the result of "appointment;" Genesis 3:19. It is not the effect of chance, or haphazard. It is not a "debt of nature." It is not the condition to which man was subject by the laws of his creation. It is not to be accounted for by the mere principles of physiology. God could as well

have made the heart to play forever as for 50 years. Death is no more the regular result of physical laws than the guillotine and the gallows are. It is in all cases the result of "intelligent appointment," and for "an adequate cause."

(2) that cause, or the reason of that appointment, is sin; notes, Romans 6:23. This is the adequate cause; this explains the whole of it. Holy beings do not die. There is not the slightest proof that an angel in heaven has died, or that any perfectly holy being has ever died except the Lord Jesus. In every death, then, we have a demonstration that the race is guilty; in each case of mortality we have an affecting memento that we are individually transgressors.

(3) death occurs but "once" in this world. It cannot be repeated if we should desire to have it repeated. Whatever truths or facts then pertain to death; whatever lessons it is calculated to convey, pertain to it as an event which is not to occur again. That which is to occur but once in an eternity of existence acquires, from that very fact, if there were no other circumstances, an immense importance. What is to be done but, "once," we should wish to be done well. We should make all proper preparation for it; we should regard it with singular interest. If preparation is to be made for it, we should make all which we expect "ever" to make. A man who is to cross the ocean but "once;" to go away from his home never to return, should make the right kind of preparation. He cannot come back to take what he has forgotten; to arrange what he has neglected; to give counsel which he has failed to do; to ask forgiveness for offences for which he has neglected to seek pardon. And so of death. A man who dies, dies but once. He cannot come back again to make preparation if he has neglected it; to repair the evils which he has caused by a wicked life; or to implore pardon for sins for which he had failed to ask forgiveness. Whatever is "to be done" with reference to death, is to be done "once for all" before he dies.

(4) death occurs to all. "It is appointed unto men" - to the race. It is not an appointment for one, but for all. No one is appointed by name to die; and not an individual is designated as one who shall escape. No exception is made in favour of youth, beauty, or blood; no rank or station is exempt; no merit, no virtue, no patriotism, no talent, can purchase freedom from it. In

every other sentence which goes out against people there may be "some" hope of reprieve. Here there is none. We cannot meet an individual who is not "under sentence of death." It is not only the poor wretch in the dungeon doomed to the gallows who is to die, it is the rich man in his palace; the frivolous trifler in the assembly room; the friend that we embrace and love; and she whom we meet in the crowded saloon of fashion with all the graces of accomplishment and adorning. Each one of these is just as much under sentence of death as the poor wretch in the cell, and the execution on any one of them may occur before his. It is too for substantially the same cause, and is as really deserved. It is for "sin" that all are doomed to death, and the "fact" that we must die should be a constant remembrancer of our guilt.

(5) as death is to occur to us but once, there is a cheering interest in the reflection that when it is passed it is passed "forever." The dying pang, the chill, the cold sweat, are not to be repeated. Death is not to approach us often - he is to be allowed to come to us but once. When we have once passed through the dark valley, we shall have the assurance that we shall never tread its gloomy way again. Once, then, let us be willing to die - since we can die "but" once; and let us rejoice in the assurance which the gospel furnishes, that they who die in the Lord leave the world to go where death in any form is unknown.

But after this the judgment - The apostle does not say "how long" after death this will be, nor is it possible for us to know; Acts 1:7; compare Matthew 24:36. We may suppose, however. that there will be two periods in which there will be an act of judgment passed on those who die.

(1) immediately after death when they pass into the eternal world, when their destiny will be made known to them. This seems to be necessarily implied in the supposition that they will continue to live, and to be happy or miserable after death. This act of judgment may not be formal or public, but it will be such as to show them what must be the issues of the final day, and as the result of that interview with God, they will be made happy or miserable until the final doom shall be pronounced.

(2) the more public and formal act of judgment, when the whole world will be assembled at the bar of Christ; Matthew 25. The decision of that day will not change or reverse the former; but the trial will be of such a nature as to bring out all the deeds done on earth, and the sentence which will be

pronounced will be in view of the universe, and will fix the everlasting doom. Then the body will have been raised; the affairs of the world will be wound up; the elect will all be gathered in, and the state of retribution will commence, to continue forever. The main thought of the apostle here may be, that after death will commence a state of "retribution" which can never change. Hence, there was a propriety that Christ should die but once. In that future world he would not die to make atonement, for there all will be fixed and final. If people, therefore, neglect to avail themselves of the benefits of the atonement here, the opportunity will be lost forever. In that changeless state which constitutes the eternal judgment no sacrifice will be again offered for sin; there will be no opportunity to embrace that Saviour who was rejected here on earth.

Verse 28

So Christ was once offered - Since people are to die but once; and as all beyond the grave is fixed by the judgment, so that his death there would make no change in the destiny, there was a propriety that he should die but once for sin. The argument is, there is one probation only, and therefore there was need of but one sacrifice, or of his dying but once. If death were to occur frequently in the existence of each individual, and if each intermediate period were a state of probation, then there might be a propriety that an atonement should be made with reference to each state. Or if beyond the grave there were a state of probation still, then also there might be propriety that an atoning sacrifice should be offered there. But since neither of these things is true, there was a fitness that the great victim should die but once.

(Rather, perhaps, as in the original sentence, "once dying" was the penalty denounced on the sinner, so the substitute in enduring it, is in like manner, under necessity of dying but once. By this he fully answers the requirement of the Law. Or there may be in the passage a simple intimation that, in this respect, as in others. Christ is like us, namely, in being but once subject to death. It would be inconsistent with the nature which he sustains, to suppose him a second time subject to death.)

To bear the sins of many - To suffer and die on account of their sins; see Isaiah 53:6, Isaiah 53:11 notes; Galatians 3:13 note. The phrase does not mean:

(1) that Christ was a “sinner” - for that was in no sense true. See Hebrews 7:26. Nor

(2) that he literally bore the penalty due to transgression - for that is equally untrue.

The penalty of the Law for sin is all which the Law when executed inflicts on the offender for his transgression, and includes, in “fact,” remorse of conscience, overwhelming despair, and eternal punishment. But Christ did not suffer forever, nor did he experience remorse of conscience, nor did he endure utter despair. Nor.

(3) does it mean that he was literally “punished” for our sins. Punishment pertains only to the guilty. An innocent being may “suffer” for what another does, but there is no propriety in saying that he is “punished” for it. A father suffers much from the misconduct of a son, but we do not say that he is punished for it; a child suffers much from the intemperance of a parent - but no one would say that it was a punishment on the child. Men always connect the idea of criminality with punishment, and when we say that a man is punished, we suppose at once that there is “guilt.” The phrase here means simply, that Christ endured sufferings in his own person, which, if they had been inflicted on us, would have been the proper punishment of sin. He who was innocent interposed, and received on himself what was descending to meet us, and consented to be treated “as he would have deserved if he had been a sinner.” Thus, he bore what was due to us; and this, in Scripture phrase, is what is meant by “bearing our iniquities;” see the notes Isaiah 53:4.

(It is indeed true, that Christ did not endure the very penalty which we had incurred, and, but for his interference, should have endured. His sufferings must be regarded in the light of an equivalent to the Law‘s original claim, of a satisfaction to its injured honor, which the Lawgiver has been pleased to accept. It is, however, equally true, that the sufferings of Christ were strictly penal. They were the punishment of sin. The true meaning of the important phrase in this verse, “to bear sin,” establishes this point. It can have no other meaning than bearing the punishment of sin. See Stuart‘s xix. Excursus. That punishment supposes guilt is not denied. What

then? Not certainly that Christ was personally guilty, but that our guilt has been imputed to him - that he has taken the place of the guilty, and become answerable for their transgressions. See Supp. note, 2 Corinthians 5:21.)

And unto them that look for him - To his people. It is one of the characteristics of Christians that they look for the return of their Lord; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 3:12; compare the notes, 1 Thessalonians 1:10. They fully believe that he will come. They earnestly desire that he will come; 2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 22:20. They are waiting for his appearing; 1 Thessalonians 1:10. He left the world and ascended to heaven, but he will again return to earth, and his people are looking for that time as the period when they shall be raised up from their graves; when they shall be publicly acknowledged to be his, and when they shall be admitted to heaven; see the notes on John 14:3.

Shall he appear the second time - He first appeared as the man of sorrows to make atonement for sin. His second appearance will be as the Lord of his people, and the Judge of the quick and the dead; Matthew 25:31, see the notes, Acts 1:11. The apostle does not say when this would be, nor is any intimation given in the Scriptures when it will occur. It is on the contrary everywhere declared that this is concealed from people Acts 1:7; Matthew 24:36, and all that is known respecting the time is, that it will be suddenly and at an unexpected moment; Matthew 24:42, Matthew 24:44, Matthew 24:50.

Without sin - That is, when be comes again he will not make himself a sin-offering; or will not come in order to make atonement for sin. It is not implied that when he came the first time he was in any sense a sinner, but that he came then with reference to sin. or that the main object of his incarnation was to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." When he comes the second time, it will be with reference to another object.

Unto salvation - That is, to receive his friends and followers to eternal salvation. He will come to save them from all their sins and temptations; to raise them from their graves; to place them at his right hand in glory, and to confirm them in the everlasting inheritance which he has promised to all who truly love him, and who wait for his appearing.

In view of this anticipated return of the Redeemer, we may remark:

(1) There is a propriety that the Lord Jesus should thus return. He came once to be humbled, despised, and put to death; and there is a fitness that he

should come to be honored in his own world.

(2) every person on earth is interested in the fact that he will return, for "every eye shall see him;" Revelation 1:7. All who are now In their graves, and all who now live, and all who will hereafter live, will behold the Redeemer in his glory.

(3) it will not be merely to gaze upon him, and to admire his magnificence that they will see him. It will be for greater and more momentous purposes - with reference to an eternal doom.

(4) the great mass of people are not prepared to meet him. They do not believe that he will return; they do not desire that he should appear; they are not ready for the solemn interview which they will have with him. His appearing now would overwhelm them with surprise and horror. There is nothing in the future which they less expect and desire than the second coming of the Son of God, and in, the present state of the world his appearance would produce almost universal consternation and despair. It would be like the coming of the flood of waters on the old world; like the sheets of flame on the cities of the plain; or as "death" now comes to the great mass of those who die.

(5) Christians "are" prepared for his coming. They believe in it; they desire it; they are expecting it. In this they are distinguished from all the world besides, and they would be ready to hail his coming as that of a friend, and to rejoice in his appearance as that of "their" Saviour.

(6) let us then live in habitual preparation for his advent. To each one of us he will come soon; to all he will come suddenly. Whether he come to remove us by death, or whether in the clouds of heaven to judge the world, the period is not far distant when "we" shall see him. Yes, our eyes shall behold the Son of God in his glory! That which we have long desired - a sight of our Saviour who died for us, shall soon, very soon be granted unto us. No Christian begins a week or a day in which there is not a possibility that, before its close, he may have seen the Son of God in his glory; none lies down upon his bed at night who may not, when the morning dawns

upon this world, be gazing with infinite delight on the glories of the Great Redeemer in the heavens.

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

The general subject of this chapter Hebrews 10:1-4. The Law was a mere shadow of good things to come, and the sacrifices which were made under it could never render those who offered them perfect. This was conclusively proved by the fact, that they continued constantly to be offered.

II. Since this was the fact in regard to those sacrifices, a better offering had been provided in the gospel by the Redeemer; Hebrews 10:5-10. A body had been prepared him for this work; and when God had said that he had no pleasure in the offerings under the Law, Christ had come and offered his body once for all, in order that an effectual atonement might be made for sin.

III. This sentiment the apostle further illustrates, by showing how this one great offering was connected with the forgiveness of sins; Hebrews 10:11-18. Under the Jewish dispensation, sacrifices were repeated every day; but under the Christian economy, when the sacrifice was once made, he who had offered it sat down forever on the right hand of God, for his great work was done. Having done this, he looked forward to the time when his work would have full effect, and when his enemies would be made his footstool. That this was to be the effect of the offering made by the Messiah, the apostle then shows from the Scriptures themselves, where it is said Jeremiah 31:33-34, that under the gospel the laws of God would be written on the heart, and sin would be remembered no more. There must then be, the apostle inferred, some way by which this was to be secured, and this was by the great sacrifice on the cross, which had the effect of perfecting forever those who were sanctified.

IV. Since it was a fact that such an atonement had been made; that one great offering for sin had been presented to God which was never to be repeated, there were certain consequences which followed from that, which the apostle proceeds to state; Hebrews 10:19-25. They were these:

(a)the privilege of drawing near to God with full assurance of faith Hebrews 10:22;

(b)the duty of holding fast the profession of faith without wavering Hebrews 10:23;

(c)the duty of exhorting one another to fidelity and to good works Hebrews 10:24;

(d)the duty of assembling for public worship, since they had a High Priest in heaven, and might now draw near to God; Hebrews 10:25.

V. As a "reason" for fidelity in the divine life, and for embracing the offer of mercy now made through the one sacrifice on the cross, the apostle urges the consequence which "must" follow from the rejection of that atonement, and especially after having been made acquainted with the truth; Hebrews 10:26-31. The result, says he, must be certain destruction. If that was rejected, there could remain nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment for there was no other way of salvation. In support of this, the apostle refers to what was the effect, under the Law of Moses, of disobedience, and says that, under the greater light of the gospel, much more fearful results must follow.

VI. The chapter closes Hebrews 10:32-39 with an exhortation to fidelity and perseverance. The apostle reminds those to whom he wrote of what they had already endured; encourages them by the commendation of what they had already done, and especially by the kindness which they had shown to him; says that they had need only of patience, and that the time of their deliverance from all trial was not far off, for that he who was to come would come; says that it was their duty to live by faith, but that if any one drew back, God could have no pleasure in him. Having thus in the close of the chapter alluded to the subject of faith, he proceeds in the following chapter to illustrate its value at length. The object of the whole is to encourage Christians to make strenuous efforts for salvation; to guard them against the danger of apostasy; and to exhort them to bear their trials with patience, and with submission to the will of God.

Verse 1

For the law having a shadow - That is, the whole of the Mosaic economy was a shadow; for so the word "Law" is often used. The word "shadow" here refers to a rough outline of anything, a mere sketch, such as a carpenter draws with a piece of chalk, or such as an artist delineates when

he is about to make a picture. He sketches an outline of the object which he designs to draw, which has "some" resemblance to it, but is not the "very image;" for it is not yet complete. The words rendered "the very image" refer to a painting or statue which is finished, where every part is an exact copy of the original. The "good things to come" here refer to the future blessings which would be conferred on man by the gospel. The idea is, that under the ancient sacrifices there was an imperfect representation; a dim outline of the blessings which the gospel would impart to people. They were a typical representation; they were not such that it could be pretended that they would answer the purpose of the things themselves which they were to represent, and would make those who offered them perfect. Such a rude outline; such a mere sketch, or imperfect delineation, could no more answer the purpose of saving the soul than the rough sketch which an architect makes would answer the purpose of a house, or than the first outline which a painter draws would answer the purpose of a perfect and finished portrait. All that could be done by either would be to convey some distant and obscure idea of what the house or the picture might be, and this was all that was done by the Law of Moses.

Can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually - The sacrifices here particularly referred to were those which were offered on the great day of atonement. These were regarded as the most sacred and efficacious of all, and yet the apostle says that the very fact that they were offered every year showed that there must be some deficiency about them, or they would have ceased to be offered.

Make the comers thereunto perfect - They could not free them from the stains of guilt; they could not give ease to a troubled conscience; there was in them no efficacy by which sin could be put away; compare the notes on Hebrews 7:11; Hebrews 9:9.

Verse 2

For then would they not have ceased to be offered? - Margin, "Or they would have." The sense is the same. The idea is, that the very fact that they were repeated showed that there was some deficiency in them as to the matter of cleansing the soul from sin. If they had answered all the purposes of a sacrifice in putting away guilt, there would have been no need of repeating them in this manner. They were in this respect like medicine. If what is given to a patient heals him, there is no need of repeating it; but if it is repeated often it shows that there was some deficiency in it, and if taken

periodically through a man‘s life, and the disease should still remain, it would show that it was not sufficient to effect his cure. So it was with the offerings made by the Jews. They were offered every year, and indeed every day, and still the disease of sin remained. The conscience was not satisfied; and the guilty felt that it was necessary that the sacrifice should be repeated again and again.

Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sin - That is, if their sacrifices had so availed as to remove their past sins, and to procure forgiveness, they would have had no more trouble of conscience on account of them. They would not have felt that it was necessary to make these sacrifices over and over again in order to find peace. When a man has full evidence that an atonement has been made which will meet all the demands of the Law, and which secures the remission of sin, he feels that it is enough. It is all that the case demands, and his conscience may have peace. But when he does “not” feel this, or has not evidence that his sins are all forgiven, those sins will rise to remembrance, and he will be alarmed. He may be punished for them after all. Thence it follows that if a man wants peace he should have good evidence that his sins are forgiven through the blood of the atonement.

No temporary expedient; no attempt to cover them up; no effort to forget them will answer the purpose. They “must be blotted out” if he will have peace - and that can be only through a perfect sacrifice. By the use of the word rendered “conscience” here, it is not meant that he who was pardoned would have no “consciousness” that he was a sinner, or that he would forget it, but that he would have no trouble of conscience; he would have no apprehension of future wrath. The pardon of sin does not cause it to cease to be remembered. He who is forgiven may have a deeper conviction of its evil than he had ever had before. But he will not be troubled or distressed by it as if it were to expose him to the wrath of God. The remembrance of it will humble him; it will serve to exalt his conceptions of the mercy of God and the glory of the atonement, but it will no longer overwhelm the mind with the dread of hell. This effect, the apostle says, was not produced on the minds of those who offered sacrifices every year. The very fact that they did it, showed that the conscience was not at peace.

Verse 3

But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year - The reference here is to the sacrifices made on the great day of atonement. This occurred once in a year. Of course as often as a sacrifice was offered, it was an acknowledgment of guilt on the part of those for whom it was made. As these sacrifices continued to be offered every year, they who made the offering were reminded of their guilt and their desert of punishment. All the efficacy which could be pretended to belong those sacrifices, was that they made expiation for the past year. Their efficacy did not extend into the future, nor did it embrace any but those who were engaged in offering them. These sacrifices, therefore, could not make the atonement which man needed. They could not make the conscience easy; they could not be regarded as a sufficient expiation for the time to come, so that the sinner at any time could plead an offering which was already made as a ground of pardon, and they could not meet the wants of all people in all lands and at all times. These things are to be found only in that great sacrifice made by the Redeemer on the cross.

Verse 4

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins - The reference here is to the sacrifices which were made on the great day of the atonement, for on that day the blood of bulls and of goats alone was offered; see the notes on Hebrews 9:7. Paul here means to say, doubtless, that it was not possible that the blood of these animals should make a complete expiation so as to purify the conscience, and so as to save the sinner from deserved wrath. According to the divine arrangement, expiation was made by those sacrifices for offences of various kinds against the ritual law of Moses, and pardon for such offences was thus obtained. But the meaning here is, that there was no efficacy in the blood of a mere animal to wash away a "moral" offence. It could not repair the Law; it could not do anything to maintain the justice of God; it had no efficacy to make the heart pure. The mere shedding of the blood of an animal never could make the soul pure. This the apostle states as a truth which must be admitted at once as indisputable, and yet it is probable that many of the Jews had imbibed the opinion that there was such efficacy in blood shed according to the divine direction, as to remove all stains of guilt from the soul; see the notes, Hebrews 9:9-10.

Verse 5

Wherefore - This word shows that the apostle means to sustain what he had said by a reference to the Old Testament itself. Nothing could be more opposite to the prevailing Jewish opinions about the efficacy of sacrifice, than what he had just said. It was, therefore, of the highest importance to defend the position which he had laid down by authority which they would not presume to call in question, and he therefore makes his appeal to their own Scriptures.

When he cometh into the world - When the Messiah came, for the passage evidently referred to him. The Greek is, "Wherefore coming into the world, he saith." It has been made a question "when" this is to be understood as spoken - whether when he was born, or when he entered on the work of his ministry. Grotius understands it of the latter. But it is not material to a proper understanding of the passage to determine this. The simple idea is, that since it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin, Christ coming into the world made arrangements for a better sacrifice.

He saith - That is, this is the language denoted by his great undertaking; this is what his coming to make an atonement implies. We are not to suppose that Christ formally used these words on any occasion for we have no record that he did - but this language is what appropriately expresses the nature of his work. Perhaps also the apostle means to say that it was originally employed in the Psalm from which it is quoted in reference to him, or was indited by him with reference to his future advent.

Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not - This is quoted from Psalm 40:6, Psalm 40:8. There has been much perplexity felt by expositorsin reference to this quotation, and after all which has been written, it is not entirely removed. The difficulty relates to these points.

(1) to the question whether the Psalm originally had any reference to the Messiah. The Psalm "appears" to have pertained merely to David, and it would probably occur to no one on reading it to suppose that it referred to the Messiah, unless it had been so applied by the apostle in this place.

(2) there are many parts of the Psalm, it has been said, which cannot, without a very forced interpretation, be applied to Christ; see Psalm 40:2, Psalm 40:12, Psalm 40:14-16.

(3) the argument of the apostle in the expression "a body hast thou prepared me," seems to be based on a false translation of the Septuagint, which he has adopted, and it is difficult to see on what principles he has done it. - It is not the design of these notes to go into an extended examination of questions of this nature. Such examination must be sought in more extended commentaries, and in treatises expressly relating to points of this kind.

On the design of Psalm 40:2, the speaker in the Psalm says, "He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock," and on the ground of this he gives thanks to God. But there is no real difficulty in supposing that this may refer to the Messiah. His enemies often plotted against his life; laid snares for him and endeavored to destroy him, and it may be that he refers to some deliverance from such machinations. If it is objected to this that it is spoken of as having been uttered" when he came into the world," it may be replied that that phrase does not necessarily refer to the time of his birth, but that he uttered this sentiment sometime "during" the period of his incarnation. "He coming into the world for the purpose of redemption made use of this language." In a similar manner we would say of Lafayette, that "he coming to the United States to aid in the cause of liberty, suffered a wound in battle." That is, during the period in which he was engaged in this cause, he suffered in this manner.

(b) The next objection or difficulty relates to the application of Psalm 40:12 to the Messiah. "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me." To meet this some have suggested that he refers to the sins of people which he took upon himself, and which he here speaks of as "his own." But it is not true that the Lord Jesus so took upon himself the sins of others that they could be his. They were "not" his, for he was in every sense "holy, harmless, and undefiled." The true solution of this difficulty, probably is, that the word rendered "iniquity" - צוֹן awon- means "calamity, misfortune, trouble;" see Psalm 31:10; 1 Samuel 28:10; 2 Kings 7:9; Psalm 28:6; compare Psalm 49:5. The proper idea in the word is that of "turning away, curving, making crooked;" and it is thus applied to anything which is "perverted" or turned from the right way; as when one is turned from the path of rectitude, or commits sin; when one is turned from the way

of prosperity or happiness, or is exposed to calamity. This seems to be the idea demanded by the scope of the Psalm, for it is not a penitential Psalm, in which the speaker is recounting his "sins," but one in which he is enumerating his "sorrows;" praising God in the first part of the Psalm for some deliverance already experienced, and supplicating his interposition in view of calamities that he saw to be coming upon him. This interpretation also seems to be demanded in Psalm 40:12 by the "parallelism." In the former part of the verse, the word to which "iniquity" corresponds, is not "sin," but "evil," that is, calamity.

"For innumerable evils have compassed me about;
Mine iniquities (calamities) have taken hold upon me."

If the word, therefore, be used here as it often is, and as the scope of the Psalm and the connection seem to demand, there is no solid objection against applying this verse to the Messiah.

(c) A third objection to this application of the Psalm to the Messiah is, that it cannot be supposed that he would utter such imprecations on his enemies as are found in Psalm 40:14-15. "Let them be ashamed and confounded; let them be driven backward; let them be desolate." To this it may be replied, that such imprecations are as proper in the mouth of the Messiah as of David; but particularly, it may be said also, that they are improper in the mouth of neither. Both David and the Messiah "did" in fact utter denunciations against the enemies of piety and of God. God does the same thing in his word and by his Providence. There is no evidence of any "malignant" feeling in this; nor is it inconsistent with the highest benevolence. The Lawgiver who says that the murderer shall die, may have a heart full of benevolence; the judge who sentences him to death, may do it with eyes filled with tears. The objections, then, are not of such a nature that it is improper to regard this Psalm as wholly applicable to the Messiah.

(4) the Psalm cannot be applied with propriety to David, nor do we know of anyone to whom it can be but to the Messiah. When was it true of David that he said that he "had come to do the will of God in view of the fact that God did not require sacrifice and offerings?" In what "volume of a book" was it written of him before his birth that he "delighted to do the will of God?" When was it true that he had" preached righteousness in the great congregation?" These expressions are such as can be applied properly only to the Messiah, as Paul does here; and taking all these circumstances

together it will probably be regarded as the most proper interpretation to refer the whole Psalm at once to the Redeemer and to suppose that Paul has used it in strict accordance with its original design. The other difficulties referred to will be considered in the exposition of the passage. The difference between "sacrifice" and "offering" is, that the former refers to "bloody" sacrifices; the latter to "any" oblation made to God - as a thank-offering; an offering of flour, oil, etc.; see the notes on Isaiah 1:11.

When it is said "sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not," the meaning is not that such oblations were "in no sense" acceptable to God - for as his appointment, and when offered with a sincere heart, they doubtless were; but that they were not as acceptable to him as obedience, and especially as the expression is used here that they could not avail to secure the forgiveness of sins. They were not in their own nature such as was demanded to make an expiation for sin, and hence, a body was prepared for the Messiah by which a more perfect sacrifice could be made. The sentiment here expressed occurs more than once in the Old Testament. Thus, 1 Samuel 15:22. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," Hosea 6:6, "For I desired mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings;" compare Psalm 51:16-17, "For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." This was an indisputable principle of the Old Testament, though it was much obscured and forgotten in the common estimation among the Jews. In accordance with this principle the Messiah came to render obedience of the highest order, even to such an extent that he was willing to lay down his own life.

But a body hast thou prepared me - This is one of the passages which has caused a difficulty in understanding this quotation from the Psalm. The difficulty is, that it differs from the Hebrew, and that the apostle builds an argument upon it. It is not unusual indeed in the New Testament to make use of the language of the Septuagint even where it varies somewhat from the Hebrew; and where no "argument" is based on such a "passage," there can be no difficulty in such a usage, since it is not uncommon to make use of the language of others to express our own thoughts. But the apostle does not appear to have made such a use of the passage here, but to have applied it in the way of "argument." The argument, indeed, does not rest "wholly,"

perhaps not "principally," on the fact that a "body had been prepared" for the Messiah; but still this was evidently in the view of the apostle an important consideration, and this is the passage on which the proof of this is based.

The Hebrew Psalm 40:6 "Mine ears hast thou opened," or as it is in the margin, "digged." The idea there is, that the ear had been, as it were, excavated, or dug out, so as to be made to hear distinctly; that is, certain truths had been clearly revealed to the speaker; or perhaps it may mean that he had been made "readily and attentively obedient." Stuart; compare Isaiah 1:5. "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious." In the Psalm, the proper connection would seem to be, that the speaker had been made obedient, or had been so led that he was disposed to do the will of God. This may be expressed by the fact that the ear had been opened so as to be quick to hear, since an indisposition to obey is often expressed by the fact that the ears are "stopped." There is manifestly no allusion here, as has been sometimes supposed, to the custom of boring through the ear of a servant with an awl as a sign that he was willing to remain and serve his master; Exodus 21:6; Deuteronomy 15:17.

In that case, the outer circle, or rim of the ear was bored through with an awl; here the idea is that of hollowing out, digging, or excavating - a process to make the passage clear, not to pierce the outward ear. The Hebrew in file Psalm the Septuagint translates, "a body hast thou prepared me," and this rendering has been adopted by the apostle. Various ways have been resorted to of explaining the fact that the translators of the Septuagint rendered it in this manner, none of which are entirely free from difficulty. Some critics, as Cappell, Ernesti, and others have endeavored to show that it is probable that the Septuagint reading in Psalm 40:6, was - ὠτίον κατηρτίσω μοι ōtion katērtisō moi- "my ear thou hast prepared;" that is, for obedience. But of this there is no proof, and indeed it is evident that the apostle quoted it as if it were σῶμα sōma"body;" see Hebrews 10:10. It is probably altogether impossible now to explain the reason why the translators of the Septuagint rendered the phrase as they did; and this remark may be extended to many other places of their version. It is to be admitted here, beyond all doubt, whatever consequences may follow:

(1)that their version does not accord with the Hebrew;

(2)that the apostle has quoted their version as it stood, without attempting to correct it;

(3)that his use of the passage is designed, to some extent at least, as "proof" of what he was demonstrating.

The leading idea; the important and essential point in the argument, is, indeed, not that "a body was prepared," but that "he came to do the will of God;" but still it is clear that the apostle meant to lay some stress on the fact that a body had been prepared for the Redeemer. Sacrifice and offering by the bodies of lambs and goats were not what was required, but instead of that the Messiah came to do the will of God by offering a more perfect sacrifice, and in accomplishing that it was necessary that he should be endowed with a body But on what principle the apostle has quoted a passage to prove this which differs from the Hebrew, I confess I cannot see, nor do any of the explanations offered commend themselves as satisfactory. The only circumstances which seem to furnish any relief to the difficulty are these two:

(1)that the "main point" in the argument of the apostle was not that "a body had been prepared," but that the Messiah came to do the "will of God," and that the preparation of a body for that was rather an incidental circumstance; and

(2)that the translation by the Septuagint was not a material departure from the "scope" of the whole Hebrew passage.

The "main" thought - that of doing the will of God in the place of offering sacrifice - was still retained; the opening of the ears, that is, rendering the person attentive and disposed to obey, and the preparing of a body in order to obedience, were not circumstances so unlike as to make it necessary for the apostle to re-translate the whole passage in order to the main end which he had in view. Still, I admit, that these considerations do not seem to me to be wholly satisfactory. Those who are disposed to examine the various opinions which have been entertained of this passage may find them in Kuinoel, in loc., Rosenmuller, Stuart on the Hebrews, Excursus xx., and Kennicott on Psalm 40:6. Kennicott supposes that there has been a change in the Hebrew text, and that instead of the present reading - אזנים ʿaaznaayim- "ears," the reading was אז גוף ʿaaz guwph- then a body;" and that these words became united by the error of transcribers, and by a slight change then became as the present copies of the Hebrew text

stands. This conjecture is ingenious, and if it were ever allowable to follow a "mere" conjecture, I should be disposed to do it here. But there is no authority from mss. for any change, nor do any of the old versions justify it, or agree with this except the Arabic.

Verse 6

In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure - This is not quoted literally from the Psalm, but the sense is retained. The reading there is, "burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required." The quotation by the apostle is taken from the Septuagint, with the change of a single word, which does not materially affect the sense - the word ὀυκ ἐυδόκησας ouk eudokēsas- "ouk eudokesas" - "thou hast no pleasure," instead of ὀυκ ἠθέλησας ouk ēthelēsas- "ouk ethelesas" - "thou dost not will." The idea is, that God had no pleasure in them as compared with obedience. He preferred the latter, and they could not be made to come in the place of it, or to answer the same purpose. When they were performed with a pure heart, he was doubtless pleased with the offering. As used here in reference to the Messiah, the meaning is, that they would not be what was required of "him." Such offerings would not answer the end for which he was sent into the world, for that end was to be accomplished only by his being "obedient unto death."

Verse 7

Then said I - "I the Messiah." Paul applies this directly to Christ, showing that he regarded the passage in the Psalms as referring to him as the speaker.

Lo, I come - Come into the world; Hebrews 10:5. It is not easy to see how this could be applied to David in any circumstance of his life. There was no situation in which he could say that, since sacrifices and offerings were not what was demanded, he came to do the will of God in the place or stead of them. The time here referred to by the word "then" is when it was manifest that sacrifices and offerings for sin would not answer all the purposes desirable, or when in view of that fact the purpose of the Redeemer is conceived as formed to enter upon a work which would effect what they could not.

In the volume of the book it is written of me - The word rendered here "volume " - κεφαλίς kephalis- means properly "a little head;" and then a knob, and here refers doubtless to the head or knob of the rod on which the Hebrew manuscripts were rolled. Books were usually so written as to be

rolled up, and when they were read they were unrolled at one end of the manuscript, and rolled up at the other as fast as they were read; see notes on Luke 4:17. The rods on which they were rolled had small heads, either for the purpose of holding them, or for ornament, and hence, the name head came metaphorically to be given to the roll or volume. But what volume is here intended? And where is that written which is here referred to? If David was the author of the Psalm from which this is quoted John 5:46, and by the apostles (compare Acts 26:22, Acts 26:3), and that the general spirit of the institutions of Moses had reference to him is abundantly demonstrated in this Epistle. The meaning here is, "I come to do thy will in making an atonement, for no other offering would expiate sin. That I would do this is the language of the Scriptures which predict my coming, and of the whole spirit and design of the ancient dispensation."

To do thy will, O God - This expresses the amount of all that the Redeemer came to do. He came to do the will of God:

(1)by perfect obedience to his Law, and,

(2)by making an atonement for sin - becoming "obedient unto death;" Philemon 2:8.

The latter is the principal thought here, for the apostle is showing that sacrifice and offering such as were made under the Law would not put away sin, and that Christ came in contradistinction from them to make a sacrifice that would be efficacious. Everywhere in the Scriptures it is held out as being the "will of God" that such an atonement should be made. There was salvation in no other way, nor was it possible that the race should be saved unless the Redeemer drank that cup of bitter sorrows; see Matthew 26:39. We are not to suppose, however, that it was by mere arbitrary will that those sufferings were demanded. There were good reasons for all that the Saviour was to endure, though those reasons are not all made known to us.

Verse 8

Above when he said - That is, the Messiah. The word "above" refers here to the former part of the quotation. That is, "having in the former part of what was quoted said that God did not require sacrifices, in the latter part he says that he came to do the will of God in the place of them."

Sacrifice and offering, and burnt-offerings … - These words are not all used in the Psalm from which the apostle quotes, but the idea is, that the specification there included all kinds of offerings. The apostle dwells upon it because it was important to show that the same remark applied to all the

sacrifices which could be offered by man. When the Redeemer made the observation about the inefficacy of sacrifices, he meant that there was none of them which would be sufficient to take away sin.

Verse 9

Then said he - In another part of the passage quoted. When he had said that no offering which man could make would avail, then he said that he would come himself.

He taketh away the first - The word "first" here refers to sacrifices and offerings. He takes them away; that is, he shows that they are of no value in removing sin. He states their inefficacy, and declares his purpose to abolish them.

That he may establish the second - To wit, the doing of the will of God. The two stand in contrast with each other, and he shows the inefficacy of the former, in order that the necessity for his coming to do the will of God may be fully seen. If they had been efficacious, there would have been no need of his coming to make an atonement.

Verse 10

By the which will - That is, by his obeying God in the manner specified. It is in virtue of his obedience that we are sanctified. The apostle immediately specifies what he means, and furnishes the key to his whole argument, when he says that it was "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ." It was not merely his doing the will of God in general, but it was the specific thing of offering his body in the place of the Jewish sacrifices; compare Philemon 2:8. Whatever part his personal obedience had in our salvation, yet the particular thing here specified is, that it was his doing the will of God by offering himself as a sacrifice for sin that was the means of our sanctification.

We are sanctified - We are made holy. The word here is not confined to the specific work which is commonly called sanctification - or the process of making the soul holy after it is renewed, but it includes everything by which we are made holy in the sight of God. It embraces, therefore, justification and regeneration as well as what is commonly known as sanctification. The idea is, that whatever there is in our hearts which is holy, or whatever influences are brought to bear upon us to make us holy, is all to be traced to the fact that the Redeemer became obedient unto death, and was willing to offer his body as a sacrifice for sin.

Through the offering of the body - As a sacrifice. A body just adapted to such a purpose had been prepared for him; Hebrews 10:5. It was perfectly holy; it was so organized as to be keenly sensitive to suffering; it was the dwelling-place of the incarnate Deity.

Once for all - In the sense that it is not to be offered again; see the notes on Hebrews 9:28. This ideals repeated here because it was very important to be clearly understood in order to show the contrast between the offering made by Christ, and those made under the Law. The object of the apostle is to exalt the sacrifice made by him above those made by the Jewish high priests. This he does by showing that such was the efficacy of the atonement made by him that it did not need to be repeated; the sacrifices made by them, however, were to be renewed every year.

Verse 11

And every priest standeth daily ministering - That is, this is done every day. It does not mean literally that every priest was daily concerned in offering sacrifices, for they took turns according to their courses, (notes on Luke 1:5), but that this was done each day, and that every priest was to take his regular place in doing it; Numbers 28:3. The object of the apostle is to prove that under the Jewish economy sacrifices were repeated constantly, showing their imperfection, but that under the Christian economy the great sacrifice had been offered once, which was sufficient for all.

And offering oftentimes the same sacrifices - The same sacrifices were offered morning and evening every day.

Which can never take away sins - notes, Hebrews 9:9; Hebrews 10:1.

Verse 12

But this man - The Lord Jesus. The word "man" is not in the original here. The Greek is literally "but this;" to wit, this priest. The apostle does not state here whether he was a man, or a being of a higher order. He merely mentions him as a priest in contradistinction from the Jewish priests.

After he had offered one sacrifice for sins - By dying on the cross. This he did but once; this could not be repeated; and need not be repeated, for it was sufficient for the sins of the world.

For ever sat down - That is, he sat down then to return no more for the purpose of offering sacrifice for sin. He will no more submit himself to scenes of suffering and death to expiate human guilt.

On the right hand of God - see the notes on Mark 16:19; compare the notes on Ephesians 1:20-22.

Verse 13

From henceforth expecting - Or waiting. He waits there until this shall be accomplished according to the promise made to him that all things shall be subdued under him; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 15:25-27.

Till his enemies - There is an allusion here to Psalm 110:1, where it is said, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." The enemies of the Redeemer are Satan, the wicked of the earth, and all the evil passions of the heart. The idea is, that all things are yet to be made subject to his will - either by a cheerful and cordial submission to his authority, or by being crushed beneath his power. The Redeemer, having performed his great work of redemption by giving himself as a sacrifice on the cross, is represented now as calmly waiting until this glorious triumph is achieved, and this promise is fulfilled. We are not to suppose that he is inactive, or that he takes no share in the agency by which this is to be done. but the meaning is, that he looks to the certain fulfillment of the promise.

His footstool - That is, they shall be thoroughly and completely subdued. The same idea is expressed in 1 Corinthians 15:25, by saying that all his enemies shall be put under his feet. The language arose from the custom of conquerors in putting their feet on the necks of their enemies, as a symbol of subjection; see Joshua 10:24; notes, Isaiah 26:5-6.

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Verse 14

For by one offering - By offering himself once on the cross. The Jewish priest offered his sacrifices often, and still they did not avail to put away sin; the Saviour made one sacrifice, and it was sufficient for the sins of the world.

He hath perfected forever - He hath laid the foundation of the eternal perfection. The offering is of such a character that it secures their final freedom from sin, and will make them forever holy. It cannot mean that those for whom he died are made at once perfectly holy, for that is not true; but the idea is, that the offering was complete, and did not need to be repeated; and that it was of such a nature as entirely to remove the penalty due to sin, and to lay the foundation for their final and eternal holiness. The offerings made under the Jewish Law were so defective that there was a necessity for repeating them every day; the offering made by the Saviour

was so perfect that it needed not to be repeated, and that it secured the complete and final salvation of those who availed themselves of it.

Them that are sanctified - Those who are made holy by that offering. It does not mean that they are as yet "wholly" sanctified, but that they have been brought under the influence of that gospel which sanctifies and saves; see Hebrews 2:11; Hebrews 9:14. The doctrine taught in this verse is, that all those who are in any measure sanctified will be perfected forever. It is not a temporary work which has been begun in their souls, but one which is designed to be carried forward to perfection. In the atonement made by the Redeemer there is the foundation laid for their eternal perfection, and it was with reference to that, that it was offered. Respecting this work and the consequences of it, we may remark, that there is:

(1)perfection in its nature, it being of such a character that it needs not to be repeated;

(2)there is perfection in regard to the pardon of sin - all past sins being forgiven to those who embrace it, and being forever forgiven; and

(3)there is to be absolute perfection for them forever.

They will be made perfect at some future period, and when that shall take place it will be to continue forever and ever.

(The perfection, in this place, is not to be understood of the perfection of grace or of glory. It is perfection, in regard to the matter in hand, in regard to what was the chief design of sacrifices, namely, expiation and consequent pardon and acceptance of God. And this indeed is the Τελειωσις Teleiōsisof the Epistle to the Hebrews generally, Hebrews 7:11; Hebrews 9:9; Hebrews 10:1. Perfect moral purity and consummate happiness will doubtless follow as consequences of the sacrifice of Christ, but the completeness of his expiation, and its power to bring pardon and peace to the guilty and trembling sinner, to justify him unto eternal life, is here, at all events, principally intended. The parties thus perfected or completely justified, are τους ἁγιαζομενους tous hagiazomenousthe "sanctified." Ἁγιαζω , however, besides the general sense of "sanctify" has in this Epistle, like τελειοω teleioōits sacrificial sense of cleansing from guilt. "Whether ceremonially, as under the Levitical dispensation; Hebrews 9:13; comp, Leviticus 16:19; or really and truly, by the offering of the body of Christ; Hebrews 10:10, Hebrews 10:14, Hebrews 10:29; compare Hebrews 10:2, and Hebrews 2:11; Hebrews 9:14." - Parkhurst's Greek Lexicon. The meaning, then, may be,

that they who are purged or cleansed by this sacrifice, in other words, those to whom its virtue is applied, are perfectly justified.

Wherever this divine remedy is used, it will effectually save. By one offering Christ hath forever justified such as are purged or cleansed by it. This could not be said of those sanctified or purged by the legal sacrifices. Mr. Scott gives the sacrificial sense of the word, but combines with it the sense of sanctifying morally, in the following excellent paraphrase. "By his one oblation he hath provided effectually for the perfect justification unto eternal life, of all those who should ever receive his atonement, by faith springing from regeneration, and evidenced ‹by the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience,' and who were thus set apart and consecrated to the service of God.")

Verses 15-17

Whereof the Holy Ghost is a witness to us - That is, the Holy Spirit is a proof of the truth of the position here laid down - that the one atonement made by the Redeemer lays the foundation for the eternal perfection of all who are sanctified. The witness of the Holy Spirit here referred to is what is furnished in the Scriptures, and not any witness in ourselves. Paul immediately makes his appeal to a passage of the Old Testament, and he thus shows his firm conviction that the Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

For after that he had said before - The apostle here appeals to a passage which he had before quoted from Jeremiah 31:33-34; see it explained in the notes on Hebrews 8:8-12. The object of the quotation in both cases is, to show that the new covenant contemplated the formation of a holy character or a holy people. It was not to set apart a people who should be externally holy only, or be distinguished for conformity to external rites and ceremonies, but who should be holy in heart and in life. There has been some difficulty felt by expositors in ascertaining what corresponds to the expression "after that he had said before," and some have supposed that the phrase "then he saith" should be understood before Hebrews 10:17. But probably the apostle means to refer to two distinct parts of the quotation from Jeremiah, the former of which expresses the fact that God meant to make a new covenant with his people, and the latter expresses the nature of that covenant, and it is particularly to the latter that he refers.

This is seen more distinctly in the passage in Jeremiah than it is in our translation of the quotation in this Epistle. The meaning is this, "The Holy Spirit first said, this is the covenant that I will make with them:" and having said this, he then added, "After those days, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." The first part of it expresses the purpose to form such a covenant; the latter states what that covenant would be. The quotation is not, indeed, literally made, but the sense is retained; compare the notes on Hebrews 8:8-12. Still, it may be asked, how this quotation proves the point for which it is adduced - that the design of the atonement of Christ was "to perfect forever them that are sanctified?" In regard to this, we may observe:

(1)that it was declared that those who were interested in it would be holy, for the law would be in their hearts and written on their minds; and,

(2)that this would be "entire and perpetual." Their sins would be "wholly" forgiven; they would never be remembered again - and thus they would be "perfected forever."

Verse 18

Now where remission of these is - Remission or forgiveness of sins; that is, of the sins mentioned in the previous verse.

There is no more offering for sin - If those sins are wholly blotted out, there is no more need of sacrifice to atone for them, any more than there is need to pay a debt again which has been once paid. The idea of Paul is, that in the Jewish dispensation there was a constant repeating of the remembrance of sins by the sacrifices which were offered, but that in reference to the dispensation under the Messiah, sin would be entirely cancelled. There would be one great and all-sufficient sacrifice, and when there was faith in that offering, sin would be absolutely forgiven. If that was the case, there would be no occasion for any further sacrifice for it, and the offering need not be repeated. This circumstance, on which the apostle insists so much, made a very important difference between the new covenant and the old. In the one, sacrifices were offered every day; in the other, the sacrifice once made was final and complete; in the one case, there was no such forgiveness but that the offender was constantly reminded of his sins by the necessity of the repetition of sacrifice; in the other, the pardon was so complete that all dread of wrath was taken away, and the

sinner might look up to God as calmly and joyfully as if he had never been guilty of transgression.

Verse 19

Having therefore, brethren - The apostle, in this verse, enters on the hortatory part of his Epistle, which continues to the end of it. He had gone into an extensive examination of the Jewish and Christian systems; he had compared the Founders of the two - Moses and the Son of God, and shown how far superior the latter was to the former; he had compared the Christian Great High Priest with the Jewish high priest, and shown his superiority; he had compared the sacrifices under the two dispensations, and showed that in all respects the Christian sacrifice was superior to the Jewish - that it was an offering that cleansed from sin; that it was sufficient when once offered without being repeated, while the Jewish offerings were only typical, and were unable to put away sin; and he had shown that the great High Priest of the Christian profession had opened a way to the mercy-seat in heaven, and was himself now seated there; and having shown this, he now exhorts Christians to avail themselves fully of all their advantages, and to enjoy to the widest extent all the privileges now conferred on them. One of the first of these benefits was, that they had now free access to the mercy-seat.

Boldness to enter into the holiest - Margin, "liberty." The word rendered "boldness" - παῤῥησίαν parrēsian- properly means "boldness of speech," or freedom where one speaks all that he thinks (notes, Acts 4:13); and then it means boldness in general, license, authority, pardon. Here the idea is, that before Christ died and entered into heaven, there was no such access to the throne of grace as man needed. Man had no offering which he could bring that would make him acceptable to God. But now the way was open. Access was free for all, and all might come with the utmost freedom. The word "holiest" here is taken from the holy of holies in the temple (notes on Hebrews 9:3), and is there applied to heaven, of which that was the emblem. The entrance into the most holy place was forbidden to all but the high priest; but now access to the real "holy of holies" was granted to all in the name of the great High Priest of the Christian profession.

By the blood of Jesus - The blood of Jesus is the means by which this access to heaven is procured. The Jewish high priest entered the holy of holies with the blood of bullocks and of rams (notes, Hebrews 9:7); but the Saviour offered his own blood, and that became the means by which we may have access to God.

Verse 20

By a new and living way - By a new method or manner. It was a mode of access that was till then unknown. No doubt many were saved before the Redeemer came, but the method by which they approached God was imperfect and difficult. The word which is rendered here "new" - πρόσφατον prosphaton- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means "slain, or killed thereto;" that is, "newly killed, just dead; and then fresh, recent." Passow. It does not so much convey the idea that it is new in the sense that it had never existed before, as new in the sense that it is recent, or fresh. It was a way which was recently disclosed, and which had all the freshness of novelty. It is called a "living way," because it is a method that imparts life, or because it leads to life and happiness. Doddridge renders it "ever-living way," and supposes, in accordance with the opinion of Dr. Owen, that the allusion is to the fact that under the old dispensation the blood was to be offered as soon as it was shed, and that it could not be offered when it was cold and coagulated. The way by Christ was, however, always open. His blood was, as it were, always warm, and as if it had been recently shed. This interpretation seems to derive some support from the word which is rendered "new." See above. The word "living," also, has often the sense of perennial, or perpetual, as when applied to a fountain always running, in opposition to a pool that dries up (see the notes on John 4:10), and the new way to heaven may be called living - in all these respects. It is away that conducts to life. It is ever-living as if the blood which was shed always retained the freshness of what is flowing from the vein. And it is "perpetual" and "constant" like a fountain that always flows - for it is by a sacrifice whose power is perpetual and unchanging.

Which he hath consecrated for us - Margin, "or new made." The word here used means properly to renew, and then to initiate, to consecrate, to sanction. The idea is, that he has dedicated this way for our use; as if a temple or house were set apart for our service. It is a part consecrated by him for the service and salvation of man; a way of access to the eternal sanctuary for the sinner which has been set apart by the Redeemer for this service alone.

Through the veil, that is to say, his flesh - The Jewish high priest entered into the most holy place through the veil that divided the holy from the most holy place. That entrance was made by his drawing the veil aside,

and thus the interior sanctuary was laid open. But there has been much difficulty felt in regard to the sense of the expression used here. The plain meaning of the expression is, that the way to heaven was opened by means, or through the medium of the flesh of Jesus; that is, of his body sacrificed for sin, as the most holy place in the temple was entered by means or through the medium of the veil. We are not to suppose, however, that the apostle meant to say that there was in all respects a resemblance between the veil and the flesh of Jesus, nor that the veil was in any manner typical of his body, but there was a resemblance in the respect under consideration - to wit, in the fact that the holy place was rendered accessible by withdrawing the veil, and that heaven was rendered accessible through the slain body of Jesus. The idea is, that there is by means both of the veil of the temple, and of the body of Jesus, a medium of access to God. God dwelt in the most holy place in the temple behind the veil by visible symbols, and was to be approached by removing the veil; and God dwells in heaven, in the most holy place there, and is to be approached only through the offering of the body of Christ. Prof. Stuart supposes that the point of the comparison may be, that the veil of the temple operated as a screen to hide the visible symbol of the presence of God from human view, and that in like manner the body of Jesus might be regarded as a "kind of temporary tabernacle, or veil of the divine nature which dwelt within him." and that "as the veil of the tabernacle concealed the glory of Yahweh in the holy of holies, from the view of people, so Christ's flesh or body screened or concealed the higher nature from our view, which dwelt within this veil, as God did of old within the veil of the temple."

See this and other views explained at length in the larger commentaries. It does not seem to me to be necessary to attempt to carry out the point of the comparison in all respects. The simple idea which seems to have been in the mind of the apostle was, that the veil of the temple and the body of Jesus were alike in this respect, that they were the medium of access to God. It is by the offering of the body of Jesus; by the fact that he was clothed with flesh, and that in his body he made an atonement for sin, and that with his body raised up from the dead he has ascended to heaven, that we have access now to the throne of mercy.

Verse 21

And having an High Priest over the house of God - Over the spiritual house of God; that is, the church; compare the notes on Hebrews 3:1-6. Under the Jewish dispensation there was a great high priest, and the same is true under the Christian dispensation. This the apostle had shown at length in the previous part of the Epistle. The idea here is, that as under the former dispensation it was regarded as a privilege that the people of God might have access to the mercy-seat by means of the high priest; so it is true in a much higher sense that we may now have access to God through our greater and more glorious High Priest.

Verse 22

Let us draw near with a true heart - In prayer and praise; in every act of confidence and of worship. A sincere heart was required under the ancient dispensation; it is always demanded of people when they draw near to God to worship him; see John 4:23-24. Every form of religion which God has revealed requires the worshippers to come with pure and holy hearts.

In full assurance of faith - see the word used here explained in the notes on Hebrews 6:11. The "full assurance of faith" means unwavering confidence; a fulness of faith in God which leaves no room for doubt. Christians are permitted to come thus because God has revealed himself through the Redeemer as in every way deserving their fullest confidence. No one approaches God in an acceptable manner who does not come to him in this manner. What parent would feel that a child came with any right feelings to ask a favour of him who had not "the fullest confidence in him?"

("This πληροφορια plērophoriaor full assurance of faith, is not, as many imagine, absolute certainty of a man's own particular salvation, for that is termed "the full assurance of hope," Hebrews 6:11, and arises from faith and its fruits. But the full assurance of faith is the assurance of that truth, which is testified and proposed in the gospel, to all the hearers of it in common, to be believed by them, unto their salvation, and is also termed the full assurance of understanding; Colossians 2:2. Though all that the gospel reveals, claims the full assurance of faith, yet here it seems more particularly to respect the efficacy and all-sufficiency of Christ's offering for procuring pardon and acceptance." - McLean.

Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience - By the blood of Jesus. This was prepared to make the conscience pure. The Jewish cleansing or sprinkling with blood related only to what was external, and

could not make the conscience perfect Hebrews 9:9, but the sacrifice offered by the Saviour was designed to give peace to the troubled mind, and to make it pure and holy. An "evil conscience" is a consciousness of evil, or a conscience oppressed with sin; that is, a conscience that accuses of guilt. We are made free from such a conscience through the atonement of Jesus, not because we become convinced that we have not committed sin, and not because we are led to suppose that our sins are less than we had otherwise supposed - for the reverse of both these is true - but because our sins are forgiven, and since they are freely pardoned they no longer produce remorse and the fear of future wrath. A child that has been forgiven may feel that he has done very wrong, but still he will not be then overpowered with distress in view of his guilt, or with the apprehension of punishment.

And our bodies washed with pure water - It was common for the Jews to wash themselves, or to perform various ablutions in their services; see Exodus 39:4; Exodus 30:19-21; Exodus 40:12; Leviticus 6:27; Leviticus 13:54, Leviticus 13:58; Leviticus 14:8-9; Leviticus 15:16; Leviticus 16:4, Leviticus 16:24; Leviticus 22:6; compare the notes on Mark 7:3. The same thing was also true among the pagan. There was usually, at the entrance of their temples, a vessel placed with consecrated water, in which, as Pliny says (Hist. Nat. lib. 15:c. 30), there was a branch of laurel placed with which the priests sprinkled all who approached for worship. It was necessary that this water should be pure, and it was drawn fresh from wells or fountains for the purpose. Water from pools and ponds was regarded as unsuitable, as was also even the purest water of the fountain, if it had stood long. AEneas sprinkled himself in this manner, as he was about to enter the invisible world (*Aeneid* vi. 635), with fresh water.

Porphyry says that the Essenes were accustomed to cleanse themselves with the purest water. Thus, Ezekiel also says, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean." Sea-water was usually regarded as best adapted to this purpose, as the salt was supposed to have a cleansing property. The Jews who dwelt near the sea, were thence accustomed, as Aristides says, to wash their hands every morning on this account in the sea-water. Potter's *Greek Archae.* i. 222. Rosenmuller, *Alte und Neue Morgenland*, in loc. It was from the pagan custom of placing a vessel with consecrated water at the entrance of their temples, that the Roman Catholic custom is derived in their churches of placing "holy water" near the door, that those who worship there may "cross themselves." In accordance with

the Jewish custom, the apostle says, that it was proper that under the Christian dispensation we should approach God, having performed an act emblematic of purity by the application of water to the body.

That there is an allusion to baptism is clear. The apostle is comparing the two dispensations, and his aim is to show that in the Christian dispensation there was everything which was regarded as valuable and important in the old. So he had shown it to have been in regard to the fact that there was a Lawgiver; that there was a great High Priest; and that there were sacrifices and ordinances of religion in the Christian dispensation as well as the Jewish. In regard to each of these, he had shown that they existed in the Christian religion in a much more valuable and important sense than under the ancient dispensation. In like manner it was true, that as they were required to come to the service of God, having performed various ablutions to keep the body pure, so it was with Christians. Water was applied to the Jews as emblematic of purity, and Christians came, having had it applied to them also in baptism, as a symbol of holiness.

It is not necessary, in order to see the force of this, to suppose that water had been applied to the whole of the body, or that they had been completely immersed, for all the force of the reasoning is retained by the supposition that it was a mere symbol or emblem of purification. The whole stress of the argument here turns, not on the fact that the body had been washed all over, but that the worshipper had been qualified for the spiritual service of the Most High in connection with an appropriate emblematic ceremony. The quantity of water used for this is not a material point, any more than the quantity of oil was in the ceremony of inaugurating kings and priests. This was not done in the Christian dispensation by washing the body frequently, as in the ancient system, nor even necessarily by washing the whole body - which would no more contribute to the purity of the heart than by application of water to any part of the body, but by the fact that water had been used as emblematic of the purifying of the soul. The passage before us proves, undoubtedly:

(1)that water should be applied under the new dispensation as an ordinance of religion; and,

(2)that pure water should be used - for that only is a proper emblem of the purity of the heart.

Verse 23

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering - To secure this was one of the leading designs of this Epistle, and hence, the apostle adverts to it so frequently. It is evident that those whom he wrote were suffering persecution 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Verse 24

And let us consider one another - Let us so regard the welfare of others as to endeavor to excite them to persevere in the Christian life. The idea is, that much might be done, in securing perseverance and fidelity, by mutual kind exhortation. They were not to be selfish; they were not to regard their own interests only (notes, Philemon 2:4); they were to have a kind sympathy in the concerns of each other. They had, as Christians have now, the same duties to perform, and the same trials to meet, and they should strengthen each other in their trials and encourage them in their work.

To provoke unto love - We use the word "provoke" now in a somewhat different sense, as meaning to offend, to irritate, to incense; but its original meaning is to "arouse, to excite, to call into action," and it is used in this sense here. The Greek is, literally, "unto a paroxysm of love" - εἰς παροξυσμον eis paroxusmon- the word "paroxysm" meaning "excitement or impulse," and the idea is, that they were to endeavor to arouse or excite each other to the manifestation of love. The word is what properly expresses excitement, and means that Christians should endeavor to excite each other. Men are sometimes afraid of excitement in religion. But there is no danger that Christians will ever be excited to love each other too much, or to perform too many good works.

Verse 25

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together - That is, for purposes of public worship. Some expositors have understood the word rendered here as "assembling" - ἐπισυναγωγὴν episunagōgēn- as meaning "the society of Christians," or the church; and they have supposed that the object of the apostle here is, to exhort them. not to apostatize from the church. The arguments for this opinion may be seen at length in Kuinoel, in loc. But the more obvious interpretation is what is commonly adopted, that it refers to public worship. The Greek word (the noun) is used nowhere else in the New Testament, except in 2 Thessalonians 2:1, where it is rendered

"gathering together." The verb is used in Matthew 23:37; Matthew 24:31; Mark 1:33; Mark 13:27; Luke 12:1; Luke 13:34, in all which places it is rendered "gathered together." It properly means an act of assembling, or a gathering together, and is nowhere used in the New Testament in the sense of an assembly, or the church. The command, then, here is, to meet together for the worship of God, and it is enjoined on Christians as an important duty to do it. It is implied, also, that there is blame or fault where this is "neglected."

As the manner of some is - Why those here referred to neglected public worship, is not specified. It may have been from such causes as the following:

(1)some may have been deterred by the fear of persecution, as those who were thus assembled would be more exposed to danger than others.

(2)some may have neglected the duty because they felt no interest in it - as professing Christians now sometimes do.

(3)it is possible that some may have had doubts about the necessity and propriety of this duty, and on that account may have neglected it.

(4)or it may perhaps have been, though we can hardly suppose that this reason existed, that some may have neglected it from a cause which now sometimes operates - from dissatisfaction with a preacher, or with some member or members of the church, or with some measure in the church.

Whatever were the reasons, the apostle says that they should not be allowed to operate, but that Christians should regard it as a sacred duty to meet together for the worship of God. None of the causes above suggested should deter people from this duty. With all who bear the Christian name, with all who expect to make advances in piety and religious knowledge, it should be regarded as a sacred duty to assemble together for public worship. Religion is social; and our graces are to be strengthened and invigorated by waiting together on the Lord. There is an obvious propriety that people should assemble together for the worship of the Most High, and no Christian can hope that his graces will grow, or that he can perform his duty to his Maker, without uniting thus with those who love the service of God.

But exhorting one another - That is, in your assembling together a direction which proves that it is proper for Christians to exhort one another

when they are gathered together for public worship. Indeed there is reason to believe that the preaching in the early Christian assemblies partook much of the character of mutual exhortation.

And so much the more as ye see the day approaching - The term "day" here refers to some event which was certainly anticipated, and which was so well understood by them that no particular explanation was necessary. It was also some event that was expected soon to occur, and in relation to which there were indications then of its speedily arriving. If it had not been something which was expected soon to happen, the apostle would have gone into a more full explanation of it, and would have stated at length what these indications were. There has been some diversity of opinion about what is here referred to, many commentators supposing that the reference is to the anticipated second coming of the Lord Jesus to set up a visible kingdom on the earth; and others to the fact that the period was approaching when Jerusalem was to be destroyed, and when the services of the temple were to cease. So far as the language is concerned, the reference might be to either event, for the word a "day" is applied to both in the New Testament. The word would properly be understood as referring to an expected period when something remarkable was to happen which ought to have an important influence on their character and conduct. In support of the opinion that it refers to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, and not to the coming of the Lord Jesus to set up a visible kingdom, we may adduce the following considerations:

(1) The term used - "day" - will as properly refer to that event as to any other. It is a word which would be likely to suggest the idea of distress, calamity, or judgment of some kind, for so it is often used in the Scriptures; comp Psalm 27:13; 1 Samuel 26:10; Jeremiah 30:7; Ezekiel 21:5; notes Isaiah 2:12.

(2) such a period was distinctly predicted by the Saviour, and the indications which would precede it were clearly pointed out; see Matthew 24:34.(3) The destruction of Jerusalem was an event of great importance to the Hebrews, and to the Hebrew Christians to whom this Epistle was directed, and it might be reasonable to suppose that the apostle Paul would refer to it.

(4) it is not improbable that at the time of writing this Epistle there were indications that that day was approaching. Those indications were of so marked a character that when the time approached they could not well be mistaken (see Matthew 24:6-12, Matthew 24:24, Matthew 24:26), and it is probable that they had already begun to appear.

(5) there were no such indications that the Lord Jesus was about to appear to set up a visible kingdom. It was not a fact that that was about to occur, as the result has shown; nor is there any positive proof that the mass of Christians were expecting it, and no reason to believe that the apostle Paul had any such expectation; see 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5.

(6) the expectation that the destruction of Jerusalem was referred to, and was about to occur, was just what might be expected to produce the effect on the minds of the Hebrew Christians which the apostle here refers to. It was to be a solemn and fearful event. It would be a remarkable manifestation of God. It would break up the civil and ecclesiastical polity of the nation, and would scatter them abroad. It would require all the exercise of their patience and faith in passing through these scenes. It might be expected to be a time when many would be tempted to apostatize, and it was proper, therefore, to exhort them to meet together, and to strengthen and encourage each other as they saw that that event was drawing near. The argument then would be this. The danger against which the apostle desired to guard those to whom he was writing was, that of apostasy from Christianity to Judaism. To preserve them from this, he urges the fact that the downfall of Judaism was near, and that every indication which they saw of its approach ought to be allowed to influence them, and to guard them from that danger.

It is for reasons such as these that I suppose the reference here is not to the "second advent" of the Redeemer, but to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem. At the same time, it is not improper to use this passage as an exhortation to Christians to fidelity when they shall see that the end of the world draws nigh, and when they shall perceive indications that the Lord Jesus is about to come. And so of death. We should be the more diligent when we see the indications that the great Messenger is about to come to summon us into the presence of our final Judge. And who does not know

that he is approaching him with silent and steady footsteps, and that even now he may be very near? Who can fail to see in himself indications that the time approaches when he must lie down and die? Every pang that we suffer should remind us of this; and when the hair changes its hue, and time makes furrows in the cheek, and the limbs become feeble, we should regard them as premonitions that he is coming, and should be more diligent as we see that be is drawing near.

Verse 26

For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth - If after we are converted and become true Christians we should apostatize, it would be impossible to be recovered again, for there would be no other sacrifice for sin; no way by which we could be saved. This passage, however, like Hebrews 6:4-6, has given rise to much difference of opinion. But that the above is the correct interpretation, seems evident to me from the following considerations:

(1) It is the natural and obvious interpretation, such as would occur probably to ninety-nine readers in a hundred, if there were no theory to support, and no fear that it would conflict with some other doctrine.

(2) it accords with the scope of the Epistle, which is, to keep those whom the apostle addressed from returning again to the Jewish religion, under the trials to which they were subjected.

(3) it is in accordance with the fair meaning of the language - the words "after that we have received the knowledge of the truth," referring more naturally to true conversion than to any other state of mind.

(4) the sentiment would not be correct if it referred to any but real Christians. It would not be true that one who had been somewhat enlightened, and who then sinned "wilfully," must look on fearfully to the judgment without a possibility of being saved. There are multitudes of cases where such persons are saved. They "wilfully" resist the Holy Spirit; they strive against him; they for a long time refuse to yield, but they are brought again to reflection, and are led to give their hearts to God.

(5) it is true, and always will be true, that if a sincere Christian should apostatize he could never be converted again; see the notes on Hebrews 6:4-6. The reasons are obvious. He would have tried the only plan of salvation, and it would have failed. He would have embraced the Saviour, and there would not have been efficacy enough in his blood to keep him, and there would be no more powerful Saviour and no more efficacious blood of atonement. He would have renounced the Holy Spirit, and would have shown that his influences were not effectual to keep him, and there would be no other agent of greater power to renew and save him after he had apostatized. For these reasons it seems clear to me that this passage refers to true Christians, and that the doctrine here taught is, that if such an one should apostatize, he must look forward only to the terrors of the judgment, and to final condemnation.

Whether this in fact ever occurs, is quite another question. In regard to that inquiry, see the notes on Hebrews 6:4-6. If this view be correct, we may add, that the passage should not be regarded as applying to what is commonly known as the "sin against the Holy Spirit," or "the unpardonable sin." The word rendered "wilfully" - ἑκουσίως hekousiōs- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in 1 Peter 5:2, where it is rendered "willingly" - "taking the oversight thereof (of the church) not by constraint, but willingly." It properly means, "willingly, voluntarily, of our own accord," and applies to cases where no constraint is used. It is not to be construed here strictly, or metaphysically, for all sin is voluntary, or is committed willingly, but must refer to a deliberate act, where a man means to abandon his religion, and to turn away from God. If it were to be taken with metaphysical exactness, it would demonstrate that every Christian who ever does anything wrong, no matter how small, would be lost.

But this cannot, from the nature of the case, be the meaning. The apostle well knew that Christians do commit such sins (see the notes on Leviticus 4:2, Leviticus 4:13, Leviticus 4:22, Leviticus 4:27; Leviticus 5:15; Numbers 15:24, Numbers 15:27-29; compare Acts 3:17; Acts 17:30), and sins of presumption; sins that are deliberately and intentionally committed; see Exodus 21:14; Numbers 15:30; Deuteronomy 17:12; Psalm 19:13. The apostle here has reference, evidently, to such a distinction, and means to

speak of a decided and deliberate purpose to break away from the restraints and obligations of the Christian religion.

There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins - Should a man do this, there is no sacrifice for sins which could save him. He would have rejected deliberately the only atonement made for sin, and there will be no other made. It is as if a man should reject the only medicine that could heal him, or push away the only boat that could save him when shipwrecked; see notes, Hebrews 6:6. The sacrifice made for sin by the Redeemer is never to be repeated, and if that is deliberately rejected, the soul must be lost.

Verse 27

But a certain fearful looking for of judgment - The word "certain" here does not mean "fixed, sure, inevitable," as our translation would seem to imply. The Greek is the same as "a (τις tis) fearful expectation," etc. So it is rendered by Tyndale. The idea is, that if there was voluntary apostasy after having embraced the Christian religion, there could be nothing but an expectation of the judgment to come. There could be no other hope but that through the gospel, and as this would have been renounced, it would follow that the soul must perish. The "fearful apprehension" or expectation here does not refer so much to what would be in the mind itself, or what would be experienced, as to what must follow. It might be that the person referred to would have no realizing sense of all this, and still his situation be that of one who had nothing to expect but the terrors of the judgment to come.

And fiery indignation - Fire is often used in the Scriptures as an emblem of fierce punishment. The idea is, that the person referred to could expect nothing but the wrath of God.

Which shall devour the adversaries - All who become the adversaries or enemies of the Lord. Fire is often said to devour, or consume, and the meaning here is, that those who should thus become the enemies of the Lord must perish.

Verse 28

He that despised Moses' law - That is, the apostate from the religion of Moses. It does not mean that in all cases the offender against the Law of Moses died without mercy, but only where offences were punishable with death, and probably the apostle had in his eye particularly the case of apostasy from the Jewish religion. The subject of apostasy from the Christian religion is particularly under discussion here, and it was natural to illustrate this by a reference to a similar case under the Law of Moses. The

Law in regard to apostates from the Jewish religion was positive. There was no reprieve; Deuteronomy 13:6-10.

Died without mercy - That is, there was no provision for pardon.

Under two or three witnesses - It was the settled law among the Hebrews that in all cases involving capital punishment, two or three witnesses should be necessary. That is, no one was to be executed unless two persons certainly bore testimony, and it was regarded as important, if possible, that three witnesses should concur in the statement. The object was the security of the accused person if innocent. The "principle" in the Law was, that it was to be presumed that two or three persons would be much less likely to conspire to render a false testimony than one would be, and that two or three would not be likely to be deceived in regard to a fact which they had observed.

Verse 29

Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy - That is, he who renounces Christianity ought to be regarded as deserving a much severer punishment than the man who apostatized from the Jewish religion, and if he ought to be so regarded he will be - for God will treat every man as he ought to be treated. This must refer to future punishment, for the severest punishment was inflicted on the apostate from the Jewish religion which can be in this world - death; and yet the apostle here says that a severer punishment than that would be deserved by him who should apostatize from the Christian faith. The reasons why so much severer punishment would be deserved, are such as these - the Author of the Christian system was far more exalted than Moses, the founder of the Jewish system; he had revealed more important truths; he had increased and confirmed the motives to holiness; he had furnished more means for leading a holy life; he had given himself as a sacrifice to redeem the soul from death, and he had revealed with far greater clearness the truth that there is a heaven of glory and of holiness. He who should apostatize from the Christian faith, the apostle goes on to say, would also be guilty of the most aggravated crime of which man could be guilty - the crime of trampling under foot the Son of God, of showing contempt for his holy blood. and despising the Spirit of grace.

Who hath trodden under foot the Son of God - This language is taken either from the custom of ancient conquerors who were accustomed to tread on the necks of their enemies in token of their being subdued, or from the

fact that people tread on what they despise and contemn. The idea is, that he who should apostatize from the Christian faith would act as if he should indignantly and contemptuously trample on God‘s only Son. What crime could be more aggravated than this?

And hath counted the blood of the covenant - The blood of Jesus by which the new covenant between God and man was ratified; see the notes on Hebrews 9:16-20; compare the notes on Matthew 26:28.

Wherewith he was sanctified - Made holy, or set apart to the service of God. The word “sanctify” is used in both these senses. Prof. Stuart renders it, “by which expiation is made;” and many others, in accordance with this view, have supposed that it refers to the Lord Jesus. But it seems to me that it refers to the person who is here supposed to renounce the Christian religion, or to apostatize from it. The reasons for this are such as these:

(1)it is the natural and proper meaning of the word rendered here “sanctified.” This word is commonly applied to Christians in the sense that they are made holy; see Acts 20:32; Acts 26:18; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Jude 1:1; compare John 10:36; John 17:17.

(2)it is unusual to apply this word to the Saviour. It is true, indeed, that he says John 17:19, “for their sakes I sanctify myself,” but there is no instance in which he says that he was sanctified by his own blood. And where is there an instance in which the word is used as meaning “to make expiations?”

(3)the supposition that it refers to one who is here spoken of as in danger of apostasy, and not of the Lord Jesus, agrees with the scope of the argument. The apostle is showing the great guilt, and the certain destruction, of one who should apostatize from the Christian religion. In doing this it was natural to speak of the dishonor which would thus be done to the means which had been used for his sanctification - the blood of the Redeemer. It would be treating it as if it were a common thing, or as if it might be disregarded like anything else which was of no value.

An unholy thing - Greek common; often used in the sense of unholy. The word is so used because what was holy was separated from a common to a sacred use. What was not thus consecrated was free to all, or was for common use, and hence, also the word is used to denote what is unholy.

And hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace - The Holy Spirit, called “the Spirit of grace,” because he confers favor (grace) upon people.

The meaning of the phrase “done despite unto” - ἐνυβρίσας enubrisas- is, “having reproached, or treated with malignity, or contempt.” The idea is, that if they were thus to apostatize, they would by such an act treat the Spirit of God with disdain and contempt. It was by him that they had been renewed; by him that they had been brought to embrace the Saviour and to love God; by him that they had any holy feelings or pure desires; and if they now apostatized from religion, such an act would be in fact treating the Holy Spirit with the highest indignity. It would be saying that all his influences were valueless, and that they needed no help from him. From such considerations, the apostle shows that if a true Christian were to apostatize, nothing would remain for him but the terrific prospect of eternal condemnation. He would have rejected the only Saviour; he would have in fact treated him with the highest indignity; he would have considered his sacred blood, shed to sanctify people, as a common thing, and would have shown the highest disregard for the only agent who can save the soul - the Spirit of God. How could such an one afterward be saved? The apostle does not indeed say that anyone ever would thus apostatize from the true religion, nor is there any reason to believe that such a case ever has occurred, but if it should occur the doom would be inevitable. How dangerous then is every step which would lead to such a precipice! And how strange and unscriptural the opinion held by so many that sincere Christians may “fall away” and be renewed, again and again!

(See the supplementary note on Hebrews 6:6. where certain principles are laid down, for the interpretation of this and similar passages, in consistency with the doctrine of the saints‘ perseverance. If that doctrine be maintained, and our author‘s view of the passage at the same be correct, then plainly it contains an impossible case. It is descriptive of real Christians, yet they never can fall away. The utility of the warning, in this case, may indeed successfully be vindicated, on the ground that it is the means of preventing apostasy in the saints, the means by which the decree of God in reference to their stability is effected. Most, however, will incline to the view which regards this case, as something more than imaginary, as possible, as real. The warning is addressed to professors generally, without any attempt of distinguishing or separating into true or false. Doubtless there might be some even of the latter class in the churches whose members the apostles, presuming on their professed character, addressed as “saints, “elect,” and “faithful,” without distinction.

Of course, in consistency with the doctrine of perseverance only the "false," in whom the "root of the matter" had never existed, could apostatize; yet at the same time, when no distinction was made, when the apostle made none, but addressed all in the language of charity, when Christians themselves might find it difficult at all times to affirm decidedly on their own case, universal vigilance was secured, or at all events designed. But is not the party whose apostasy is here supposed, described by two attributes which belong to none but genuine Christians, namely, the "reception of the knowledge of the truth," and "sanctification through the blood of the covenant?" The answer which has been given to this question is generally, that neither of these things necessarily involves more than external dedication to God. The first is parallel to the "once enlightened" of Hebrews 6:4, and of course admits of the same explanation; see supplementary note there.

The second thing, namely, the sanctification of the party "is not real or internal sanctification, and all the disputes concerning the total and final apostasy from the faith of them who have been really and internally sanctified from this place, are altogether vain. As at the giving of the Law, the people being sprinkled with blood, were sanctified or dedicated to God in a special manner, so those who, by baptism and confession of faith in the church of Christ, were separated from all others were especially dedicated to God thereby." - "Owen." Yet, this eminent writer is rather disposed to adopt the opinion of those who construe, ἐν ᾧ ἡγιασθη en hō hēgiasthēwith the immediate antecedent, τον Υἱον του Θεου ton Huion tou Theouthus referring the sanctification to Christ, and not to the apostate; see John 17:19. Whichever of these views we receive, the great doctrine of perseverance is, of course, unaffected. In reference to an objection which the author has urged that "the sentiment (in the Hebrews 10:26 and Hebrews 10:27 verses) would not be correct, if it referred to any but true Christians," let it be noticed that while many may be saved, who have long resisted the Spirit, yet the assertion must appear hazardous in the extreme, that any can be saved, who do all that the apostate in this passage is alleged to do. The sin described seems to be that of a determined, insulting, final rejection of the only remedy for sin.)

Verse 30

For we know him that hath said - We know who has said this - God. They knew this because it was recorded in their own sacred books.

Vengeance belongeth unto me … - This is found in Deuteronomy 32:35; see it explained in the notes on Romans 12:19. It is there quoted to show that we should not avenge ourselves; it is here quoted to show that God will certainly inflict punishment on those who deserve it. If any should apostatize in the manner here referred to by the apostle, they would, says he, be guilty of great and unparalleled wickedness, and would have the certainty that they must meet the wrath of God.

And again, The Lord shall judge his people - This is quoted from Deuteronomy 32:36. That is, he will judge them when they deserve it, and punish them if they ought to be punished. The mere fact that they are his people will not save them from punishment if they deserve it, any more than the fact that one is a beloved child will save him from correction when he does wrong. This truth was abundantly illustrated in the history of the Israelites; and the same great principle would be applied should any sincere Christian apostatize from his religion. He would have before him the certainty of the most fearful and severe of all punishments.

Verse 31

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God - There may be an allusion here to the request of David to "fall into the hands of the Lord and not into the hands of men," when it was submitted to him for the sin of numbering the people, whether he would choose seven years of famine, or flee three months before his enemies, or have three days of pestilence; 2 Samuel 24. He preferred "to fall into the hands of the Lord," and God smote seventy thousand men by the pestilence. The idea here is, that to fall into the hands of the Lord, after having despised his mercy and rejected his salvation, would be terrific; and the fear of this should deter from the commission of the dreadful crime. The phrase "living God" is used in the Scripture in opposition to "idols." God always lives; his power is capable of being always exerted. He is not like the idols of wood or stone which have no life, and which are not to be dreaded, but he always lives. It is the more fearful to fall into his hands because he will live "forever." A man who inflicts punishment will die, and the punishment will come to an end; but God will never cease to exist, and the punshment which he is capable of inflicting today he will be capable of inflicting forever and ever.

To fall into his hands, therefore, “for the purpose of punishment” - which is the idea here - is fearful:

(1)because he has all power, and can inflict just what punishment he pleases;

(2)because he is strictly just, and will inflict the punishment which ought to be inflicted;

(3)because he lives forever, and can carry on his purpose of punishment to eternal ages; and

(4)because the actual inflictions of punishment which have occurred show what is to be dreaded.

So it was on the old world; on the cities of the plain; on Babylon, Idumea, Capernaum, and Jerusalem; and so it is in the world of wo - the eternal abodes of despair, where the worm never dies. All people must, in one sense, fall into his hands. They must appear before him. They must be brought to his bar when they die. How unspeakably important it is then now to embrace his offers of salvation, that we may not fall into his hands as a righteous, avenging judge, and sink beneath his uplifted arm forever!

Verse 32

But call to remembrance the former days - It would seem from this, that at the time when the apostle wrote this Epistle they were suffering some severe trials, in which they were in great danger of apostatizing from their religion. It is also manifest that they had on some former occasion endured a similar trial, and had been enabled to bear it with a Christian spirit, and with resignation. The object of the apostle now is to remind them that they were sustained under those trials, and he would encourage them now to similar patience by the recollection of the grace then conferred on them. What was the nature of their former trials, or of what they were then experiencing, is not certainly known. It would seem probable, however, that the reference in both instances is to some form of persecution by their own countrymen. The meaning is, “that when we have been enabled to pass through trials once, we are to make the remembrance of the grace then bestowed on us a means of supporting and encouraging us in future trials.”

After ye were illuminated - After you became Christians, or were enlightened to see the truth. This phrase, referring here undoubtedly to the

fact that they were Christians, may serve to explain the disputed phrase in Hebrews 6:4; see notes on that passage.

A great fight of afflictions - The language here seems to be taken from the Grecian games. The word "fight" means properly contention, combat, such as occurred in the public games. Here the idea is, that in the trials referred to, they had a great struggle; that is, a struggle to maintain their faith without wavering, or against those who would have led them to apostatize from their religion. Some of the circumstances attending this conflict are alluded to in the following verses.

Verse 33

Partly - That is, your affliction consisted partly in this. The Greek is, "this" - specifying one kind of affliction that they were called to endure.

Whilst ye were made a gazing-stock - Greek θεατριζόμενοι theatrizomenoi- you were made a public spectacle, as if in a theater; you were held up to public view, or exposed to public scorn. When this was done, or in precisely what manner, we are not told. It was not an uncommon thing, however, for the early Christians to be held up to reproach and scorn, and probably this refers to some time when it was done by rulers or magistrates. It was a common custom among the Greeks and Romans to lead criminals, before they were put to death, through the theater, and thus to expose them to the insults and reproaches of the multitude. See the proofs of this adduced by Kuinoel on this passage. The "language" here seems to have been taken from this custom, though there is no evidence that the Christians to whom Paul refers had been treated in this manner.

By reproaches - Repreached as being the followers of Jesus of Nazareth; probably as weak and fanatical.

And afflictions - Various "sufferings" inflicted on them. They were not merely reviled in words, but they were made to endure positive sufferings of various kinds.

And partly, while ye became companions of them that were so used - That is, even when they had not themselves been subjected to these trials, they had sympathized with those who were. They doubtless imparted to them of their property; sent to them relief, and identified themselves with them. It is not known to what particular occasion the apostle here refers. In the next verse he mentions one instance in which they had done this, in aiding him when he was a prisoner.

Verse 34

For ye had compassion of me in my bonds - You sympathized with me when a prisoner, and sent to my relief. It is not known to what particular instance of imprisonment the apostle here refers. It is probable, however, that it was on some occasion when he was a prisoner in Judea, for the persons to whom this Epistle was sent most probably resided there. Paul was at one time a prisoner more than two years at Cesarea Acts 24:27, and during this time he was kept in the charge of a centurion, and his friends had free access to him; Acts 24:23. It would seem not improbable that this was the occasion to which he here refers.

And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods - The plunder of your property. It was not an uncommon thing for the early Christians to be plundered. This was doubtless a part of the "afflictions" to which the apostle refers in this case. The meaning is, that they yielded their property not only without resistance, but with joy. They, in common with all the early Christians, counted it a privilege and honor to suffer in the cause of their Master; see the notes on Philemon 3:10; compare Romans 5:3. Men may be brought to such a state of mind as to part with their property with joy. It is not usually the case; but religion will enable a man to do it.

Knowing in yourselves - Marg "or, that ye have in yourselves; or, for yourselves." The true rendering is, "knowing that ye have for yourselves." It does not refer to any internal knowledge which they had of this, but to the fact that they were assured that they had laid up for themselves a better inheritance in heaven.

That ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance - Better than any earthly possession, and more permanent. It is:

(1) better; it is worth more; it gives more comfort; it makes a man really richer. The treasure laid up in heaven is worth more to a man than all the wealth of Croesus. It will give him more solid peace and comfort; will better serve his turn in the various situations in which he may be placed in life, and will do more on the whole to make him happy. It is not said here that property is worth nothing to a man - which is not true, if he uses it well - but that the treasures of heaven are worth more.

(2) it is more enduring. Property here soon vanishes. Riches take to themselves wings and fly away, or at any rate all that we possess must soon be left. But in heaven all is permanent and secure. No calamity of war, pestilence, or famine; no change of times; no commercial embarrassments;

no failure of a crop, or a bank; no fraud of sharpers and swindlers, and no act of a pick-pocket or highwayman can take it away; nor does death ever come there to remove the inhabitants of heaven from their "mansions." With this hope, therefore, Christians may cheerfully see their earthly wealth vanish, for they can look forward to their enduring and their better inheritance.

Verse 35

Cast not away therefore your confidence - Greek "your boldness;" referring to their confident hope in God. They were not to cast this away, and to become timid, disheartened, and discouraged. They were to bear up manfully under all their trials, and to maintain a steadfast adherence to God and to his cause. The command is not to "cast this away." Nothing could take it from them if they trusted in God, and it could be lost only by their own neglect or imprudence. Rosenmuller supposes (Alte und Neue Morgenland, "in loc.") that there may be an allusion here to the disgrace which was attached to the act of a warrior if he cast away his shield. Among the Greeks this was a crime which was punishable with death. Alexander ab Alexand. Gen. Dier. L. ii c. 13. Among the ancient Germans, Tacitus says, that to lose the shield in battle was regarded as the deepest dishonor, and that those who were guilty of it were not allowed to be present at the sacrifices or in the assembly of the people. Many, says he, who had suffered this calamity, closed their own lives with the baiter under the loss of honor. Tac. Germ. c. 6. A similar disgrace would attend the Christian soldier if he should cast away his shield of faith; compare the notes, Ephesians 6:16.

Which hath great recompense of reward - It will furnish a reward by the peace of mind which it gives here, and will be connected with the rewards of heaven.

Verse 36

For ye have need of patience - They were then suffering, and in all trials we have need of patience. We have need of it because there is in us so much disposition to complain and repine; because our nature is liable to sink under sufferings; and because our trials are often protracted. All that Christians can do in such cases is to be patient - to lie calmly in the hands of God, and submit to his will day by day, and year by year; see James 1:3-4; notes, Romans 5:4.

That after ye have done the will of God - That is, in bearing trials, for the reference here is particularly to afflictions.

d **Ye might receive the promise -** The promised inheritance or reward - in heaven. It is implied here that this promise will not be received unless we are patient in our trials, and the prospect of this reward should encourage us to endure them.

Verse 37

For yet a little while - There seems to be an allusion here to what the Saviour himself said, "A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while and ye shall see me;" John 16:16. Or more probably it may be to Habakkuk 2:3. "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not he: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." The idea which the apostle means to convey evidently is, that the time of their deliverance from their trials was not far remote.

And he that shall come will come - The reference here is, doubtless, to the Messiah. But what "coming" of his is referred to here, is more uncertain. Most probably the idea is, that the Messiah who was coming to destroy Jerusalem, and to overthrow the Jewish power Luke 21:28. "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh;" see the notes on that passage. The Christians in Palestine were oppressed, reviled, and persecuted by the Jews. The destruction of the city and the temple would put an end to that power, and would be in fact the time of deliverance for those who had been persecuted. In the passage before us, Paul intimates that that period was not far distant. Perhaps there were already "signs" of his coming, or indications that he was about to appear, and he therefore urges them patiently to persevere in their fidelity to him during the little time of trial that remained. The same encouragement and consolation may be employed still. To all the afflicted it may be said that "he that shall come will come" soon. The time of affiction is not long. Soon the Redeemer will appear to deliver his afflicted people from all their sorrow; to remove them from a world of pain and tears; and to raise their bodies from the dust, and to receive them to mansions where trials are forever unknown; John 14:3 note; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 notes.

Verse 38

Now the just shall live by faith - This is a part of the quotation from Habakkuk Habakkuk 2:3-4, which was probably commenced in the previous verse; see the passage fully explained in the notes on Romans 1:17. The meaning in the connection in which it stands here, in accordance with the sense in which it was used by Habakkuk, is, that the righteous should live by "continued confidence" in God. They should pass their lives not in doubt, and fear, and trembling apprehension, but in the exercise of a calm trust in God. In this sense it accords with the scope of what the apostle is here saying. He is exhorting the Christians whom he addressed, to perseverance in their religion even in the midst of many persecutions. To encourage this he says, that it was a great principle that the just, that is, all the pious, ought to live in the constant exercise of "faith in God." They should not confide in their own merits, works, or strength. They should exercise constant reliance on their Maker, and he would keep them even unto eternal life. The sense is, that a persevering confidence or belief in the Lord will preserve us amidst all the trials and calamities to which we are exposed.

But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him - This also is a quotation from Habakkuk 2:4, but from the Septuagint, not from the Hebrew. "Why" the authors of the Septuagint thus translated the passage, it is impossible now to say. The Hebrew is rendered in the common version, "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him;" or more literally, "Behold the scornful; his mind shall not be happy" (Stuart); or as Gesenius renders it, "See, he whose soul is unbelieving shall, on this account, be unhappy." The sentiment there is, that the scorner or unbeliever in that day would be unhappy, or would not prosper - לה ישרה lo'yaasharaahThe apostle has retained the general sense of the passage, and the idea which he expresses is, that the unbeliever, or he who renounces his religion, will incur the divine displeasure. He will be a man exposed to the divine wrath; a man on whom God cannot look but with disapprobation. By this solemn consideration, therefore, the apostle urges on them the importance of perseverance, and the guilt and danger of apostasy from the Christian faith. If such a case should occur, no matter what might have been the former condition, and no matter what love or zeal might have been evinced, yet such an apostasy would expose the individual to the certain wrath of God. His former love could not save him, any more than the former obedience of the angels saved them from the horrors of eternal

chains and darkness, or than the holiness in which Adam was created saved him and his posterity from the calamities which his apostasy incurred.

Verse 39

But we are not of them … - We who are true Christians do not belong to such a class. In this the apostle expresses the fullest conviction that none of those to whom he wrote would apostatize. The case which he had been describing was only a supposable case, not one which he believed would occur. He had only been stating what "must" happen if a sincere Christian should apostatize. But he did not mean to say that this "would" occur in regard to them. or in any case. He made a statement of a general principle under the divine administration, and he designed that this should be a means of keeping them in the path to life. What could be a more effectual means than the assurance that if a Christian should apostatize "he must inevitably perish forever?" See the sentiment in this verse illustrated at length in the notes on Hebrews 6:4-10.

Remarks

(1) It is a subject of rejoicing that we are brought under a more perfect system than the ancient people of God were. We have not merely a rude outline - a dim and shadowy sketch of religion, as they had. We are not now required to go before a bloody altar every day, and lead up a victim to be slain. We may come to the altar of God feeling that the great sacrifice has been made, and that the last drop of blood to make atonement has been shed. A pure, glorious, holy body was prepared for the Great Victim, and in that body he did the will of God and died for our sins; Hebrews 10:1-10.

(2) like that Great Redeemer, let us do the will of God. It may lead us through sufferings, and we may he called to meet trials strongly resembling his. But the will of God is to be done alike in bearing trials, and in prayer and praise. "Obedience" is the great thing which he demands; which he has always sought. When his ancient people led up in faith, a lamb to the altar, still he preferred obedience to sacrifice; and when his Son came into the world to teach us how to live, and how to die, still the great thing was obedience. He came to illustrate the nature of perfect conformity to the will of God, and he did that by a most holy life, and by the most patient submission to all the trials appointed him in his purpose to make atonement for the sins of the world. Our model, alike in holy living and holy dying, is to be the Saviour; and like him we are required to exercise simple submission to the will of God; Hebrews 10:1-10.

(3) the Redeemer looks calmly forward to the time when all his foes will be brought in submission to his feet; Hebrews 10:12, Hebrews 10:13. He is at the right hand of God. His great work on earth is done. He is to suffer no more. He is exalted beyond the possibility of pain and sorrow, and he is seated now on high looking to the period when all his foes shall be subdued and he will be acknowledged as universal Lord.

(4) the Christian has exalted advantages. He has access to the mercy-seat of God. He may enter by faith into the "Holiest" - the very heavens where God dwells. Christ, his great High Priest, has entered there; has sprinkled over the mercy-seat with his blood, and ever lives there to plead his cause. There is no privilege granted to people like that of a near and constant access to the mercy-seat. This is the privilege not of a few; and not to be enjoyed but once in a year, or at distant intervals, but which the most humble Christian possesses, and which may be enjoyed at all times, and in all places. There is not a Christian so obscure, so poor, so ignorant that he may not come and speak to God; and there is not a situation of poverty, want, or wo, where he may not make his wants known with the assurance that his prayers will be heard through faith in the great Redeemer; Hebrews 10:19-20.

(5) when we come before God, let our hearts be pure; Hebrews 10:22. The body has been washed with pure water in baptism, emblematic of the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit. Let the conscience be also pure. Let us lay aside every unholy thought. Our worship will not be acceptable; our prayers will not be heard, if it is not so. "If we regard iniquity in our hearts the Lord will not hear us." No matter though there be a great High Priest; no matter though he have offered a perfect sacrifice for sin, and no matter though the throne of God be accessible to people, yet if there is in the heart the love of sin; if the conscience is not pure, our prayers will not be heard. Is this not one great reason why our worship is so barren and unprofitable?

(6) it is the duty of Christians to exhort one another to mutual fidelity; Hebrews 10:24. We should so far regard the interests of each other, as to strive to promote our mutual advance in piety. The church is one. All true Christians are brethren. Each one has an interest in the spiritual welfare of

every one who loves the Lord Jesus, and should strive to increase his spiritual joy and usefulness. A Christian brother often goes astray and needs kind admonition to reclaim him; or he becomes disheartened and needs encouragement to cheer him or his Christian way.

(7) Christians should not neglect to assemble together for the worship of God; Hebrews 10:25. It is a duty which they owe to God to acknowledge him publicly, and their own growth in piety is essentially connected with public worship. It is impossible for a man to secure the advancement of religion in his soul who habitually neglects public worship, and religion will not flourish in any community where this duty is not performed. There are great benefits growing out of the worship of God, which can be secured in no other way. God has made us social beings, and he intends that the social principle shall be called into exercise in religion, as well as in other things. We have common wants, and it is proper to present them together before the mercy-seat. We have received common blessings in our creation, in the providence of God, and in redemption, and it is proper that we should assemble together and render united praise to our Maker for his goodness.

Besides, in any community, the public worship of God does more to promote intelligence, order, peace, harmony, friendship, neatness of apparel, and purity and propriety of contact between neighbors, than anything else can, and for which nothing else can be a compensation. Every Christian, and every other man, therefore, is bound to lend his influence in thus keeping up the worship of God, and should always be in his place in the sanctuary. The particular thing in the exhortation of the apostle is, that this should be done "even in the face of persecution." The early Christians felt so much the importance of this, that we are told they were accustomed to assemble at night. Forbidden to meet in public houses of worship, they met in caves, and even when threatened with death they continued to maintain the worship of God. It may be added, that so important is this, that it should be preserved even when the preaching of the gospel is not enjoyed. Let Christians assemble together. Let them pray and offer praise. Let them read the Word of God, and an appropriate sermon. Even this will exert an influence on them and on the community of incalculable importance, and will serve to keep the flame of piety burning on the altar of their own hearts, and in the community around them.

(8) we may see the danger of indulging in any sin; Hebrews 10:26-27. None can tell to what it may lead. No matter how small and unimportant it may appear at the time, yet if indulged in it will prove that there is no true religion, and will lead on to those greater offences which make shipwreck of the Christian name, and ruin the soul. He that "wilfully" and deliberately sins "after he professes to have received the knowledge of the truth," shows that his religion is but a name, and that he has never known any thing of its power.

(9) we should guard with sacred vigilance against everything which might lead to apostasy; Hebrews 10:26-29. If a sincere Christian "should" apostatize from God, he could never be renewed and saved. There would remain no more sacrifice for sins; there is no other Saviour to be provided; there is no other Holy Spirit to be sent down to recover the apostate. Since, therefore; so fearful a punishment would follow apostasy from the true religion, we may see the guilt of everything which has a "tendency" to it. That guilt is to be measured by the fearful consequences which would ensue if it were followed out; and the Christian should, therefore, tremble when he is on the verge of committing any sin whose legitimate tendency would be such a result.

(10) we may learn from the views presented in this chapter Hebrews 10:26, Hebrews 10:29, the error of those who suppose that a true Christian may fall away and be renewed again and saved. If there is any principle clearly settled in the New Testament, it is, that if a sincere Christian should apostatize, "he must perish." There would be no possibility of renewing him. He would have tried the only religion which saves people, and it would in his case have failed; he would have applied to the only blood which purifies the soul, and it would have been found inefficacious; he would have been brought under the only influence which renews the soul, and that would not have been sufficient to save him. What hope could there be? What would then save him if these would not? To what would he apply to what Saviour, to what blood of atonement, to what renewing and sanctifying agent, if the gospel, and the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit had all been tried in vain? There are few errors in the community more directly

at variance with the express teachings of the Bible than the belief that a Christian may fall away and he again renewed.

(11) Christians, in their conflicts, their trials, and their temptations, should be strengthened by what is past; Hebrews 10:32-35. They should remember the days when they were afflicted and God sustained them, when they were persecuted and he brought them relief. It is proper also to remember for their own encouragement; now, the spirit of patience and submission which they were enabled to manifest in those times of trial, and the sacrifices which they were enabled to make. They may find in such things evidence that they are the children of God; and they should find in their past experience proof that he who has borne them through past trials, is able to keep them unto his everlasting kingdom.

(12) we need patience - but it is only for a little time; Hebrews 10:36-39. Soon all our conflicts will be over. "He that shall come will come and will not tarry." He will come to deliver his suffering people from all their trials. He will come to rescue the persecuted from the persecutor; the oppressed from the oppressor; the down-trodden from the tyrant; and the sorrowful and sad from their woes. The coming of the Saviour to each one of the afflicted is the signal of release from sorrow, and his advent at the end of the world will be proof that all the trials of the bleeding and persecuted church are at an end. The time too is short before he will appear. In each individual case it is to be but a brief period before he will come to relieve the sufferer from his woes, and in the case of the church at large the time is not far remote when the Great Deliverer shall appear to receive "the bride," the church redeemed, to the "mansions" which he has gone to prepare.

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

In the close of the previous chapter Hebrews 10:38-39, and said that the just should live by faith. The object of the whole argument in this Epistle was to keep those to whom it was addressed from apostatizing from the Christian religion, and especially from relapsing again into Judaism. They were in the midst of trials, and were evidently suffering some form of persecution, the tendency of which was to expose them to the danger of relapsing. The indispensable means of securing them from apostasy was "faith," and with a view to show its efficacy in this respect, the apostle goes into an extended account of its nature and effects, occupying this entire chapter. As the persons whom he addressed had been Hebrews, and as the Old Testament contained an account of numerous instances of persons in substantially the same circumstances in which they were, the reference is made to the illustrious examples of the efficacy of faith in the Jewish history. The object is, to show that "faith," or confidence in the divine promises, has been in all ages the means of perseverance in the true religion, and consequently of salvation. In this chapter Hebrews 11:1, and then illustrates its efficacy and power by reference to numerous instances; Hebrews 11:2-40. In these illustrations he refers to the steady belief which we have that God made the worlds, and then to the examples of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and Rahab in particular, and then to numerous other examples without mentioning their names. The object is to show that there is power in faith to keep the mind and heart in the midst of trials, and that having these examples before them, those whom he addressed should continue to adhere steadfastly to the profession of the true religion.

Verse 1

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for - On the general nature of faith, see the notes on Mark 16:16. The margin here is, "ground or confidence." There is scarcely any verse of the New Testament more important than this, for it states what is the nature of all true faith, and is the only definition of it which is attempted in the Scriptures. Eternal life depends on the existence and exercise of faith Mark 16:16, and hence, the importance of an accurate understanding of its nature. The word rendered

"substance" - ὑπόστασις hupostasis- occurs in the New Testament only in the following places. In 2 Corinthians 9:4; 2 Corinthians 11:17; Hebrews 3:14, where it is rendered "confident" and "confidence;" and in Hebrews 1:3, where it is rendered "person," and in the passage before us; compare the notes on Hebrews 1:3. Prof. Stuart renders it here "confidence;" Chrysostom, "Faith gives reality or substance to things hoped for."

The word properly means "that which is placed under" (Germ. Unterstellen); then "ground, basis, foundation, support." Then it means also "reality, substance, existence," in contradistinction from what is unreal, imaginary, or deceptive (*täuschung*). "Passow." It seems to me, therefore, that the word here has reference to something which imparts reality in the view of the mind to those things which are not seen, and which serves to distinguish them from those things which are unreal and illusive. It is what enables us to feel and act as if they were real, or which causes them to exert an influence over us as if we saw them. Faith does this on all other subjects as well as religion. A belief that there is such a place as London or Calcutta, leads us to act as if this were so, if we have occasion to go to either; a belief that money may be made in a certain undertaking, leads people to act as if this were so; a belief in the veracity of another leads us to act as if this were so. As long as the faith continues, whether it be well-founded or not, it gives all the force of reality to what is believed. We feel and act just as if it were so, or as if we saw the object before our eyes. This, I think, is the clear meaning here. We do not see the things of eternity. We do not see God, or heaven, or the angels, or the redeemed in glory, or the crowns of victory, or the harps of praise; but we have faith in them, and this leads us to act as if we saw them. And this is, undoubtedly, the fact in regard to all who live by faith and who are fairly under its influence.

Of things hoped for - In heaven. Faith gives them reality in the view of the mind. The Christian hopes to be admitted into heaven; to be raised up in the last day from the slumbers of the tomb, to be made perfectly free from sin; to be everlastingly happy. Under the influence of faith he allows these things to control his mind as if they were a most affecting reality.

The evidence of things not seen - Of the existence of God; of heaven; of angels; of the glories of the world suited for the redeemed. The word rendered "evidence" - ἔλεγχος elengchos- occurs in the New Testament only in this place and in 2 Timothy 3:16, where it is rendered "reproof." It means properly proof, or means of proving, to wit, evidence; then proof

which convinces another of error or guilt; then vindication, or defense; then summary or contents; see “Passow.” The idea of “evidence” which goes to demonstrate the thing under consideration, or which is adapted to produce “conviction” in the mind, seems to be the elementary idea in the word. So when a proposition is demonstrated; when a man is arraigned and evidence is furnished of his guilt, or when he establishes his innocence; or when one by argument refutes his adversaries, the idea of “convincing argument” enters into the use of the word in each case.

This, I think, is clearly the meaning of the word here. “Faith in the divine declarations answers all the purposes of a convincing argument, or is itself a convincing argument to the mind, of the real existence of those things which are not seen.” But is it a good argument? Is it rational to rely on such a means of being convinced? Is mere “faith” a consideration which should ever convince a rational mind? The infidel says “no;” and we know there may be a faith which is no argument of the truth of what is believed. But when a man who has never seen it believes that there is such a place as London, his belief in the numerous testimonies respecting it which he has heard and read is to his mind a good and rational proof of its existence, and he would act on that belief without hesitation. When a son credits the declaration or the promise of a father who has never deceived him, and acts as though that declaration and promise were true, his faith is to him a ground of conviction and of action, and he will act as if these things were so.

In like manner the Christian believes what God says. He has never seen heaven; he has never seen an angel; he has never seen the Redeemer; he has never seen a body raised from the grave. “But he has evidence which is satisfactory to his mind that God has spoken on these subjects,” and his very nature prompts him to confide in the declarations of his Creator. Those declarations are to his mind more convincing proof than anything else would be. They are more conclusive evidence than would be the deductions of his own reason; far better and more rational than all the reasonings and declarations of the infidel to the contrary. He feels and acts, therefore, as if these things were so - for his faith in the declarations of God has convinced him that they are so - The object of the apostle, in this chapter, is not to illustrate the nature of what is called “saving faith,” but to show the power of “unwavering confidence in God” in sustaining the soul, especially in

times of trial; and particularly in leading us to act in view of promises and of things not seen as if they were so. "Saving faith" is the same kind of confidence directed to the Messiah - the Lord Jesus - as the Saviour of the soul.

Verse 2

For by it - That is, by that faith which gives reality to things hoped for, and a certain persuasion to the mind of the existence of those things which are not seen.

The elders - The ancients; the Hebrew patriarchs and fathers.

Obtained a good report - Literally, "were witnessed of;" that is, an honorable testimony was borne to them in consequence of their faith. The idea is, that their acting under the influence of faith, in the circumstances in which they were, was the ground of the honorable testimony which was borne to them in the Old Testament; see this use of the word in Hebrews 7:8, and in Hebrews 7:4 of this chapter. Also Luke 4:22; Acts 15:8. In the cases which the apostle proceeds to enumerate in the subsequent part of the chapter, he mentions those whose piety is particularly commended in the Old Testament, and who showed in trying circumstances that they had unwavering confidence in God.

Verse 3

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed - The first instance of the strength of faith which the apostle refers to is that by which we give credence to the declarations in the Scriptures about the work of creation; Genesis 1:1. This is selected first, evidently because it is the first thing that occurs in the Bible, or is the first thing there narrated in relation to which there is the exercise of faith. He points to no particular instance in which this faith was exercised - for none is especially mentioned - but refers to it as an illustration of the nature of faith which every one might observe in himself. The "faith" here exercised is confidence in the truth of the divine declarations in regard to the creation. The meaning is, that our knowledge on this subject is a mere matter of faith in the divine testimony. It is not that we could "reason" this out, and demonstrate that the worlds were thus made; it is not that profane history goes back to that period and informs us of it; it is simply that God has told us so in his word. The "strength" of the faith in this case is measured:

(1)by the fact that it is mere faith - that there is nothing else on which to rely in the case, and,

(2)by the greatness of the truth believed.

After all the acts of faith which have ever been exercised in this world, perhaps there is none which is really more strong, or which requires higher confidence in God, than the declaration that this vast universe has been brought into existence by a word!

We understand - We attain to the apprehension of; we receive and comprehend the idea. Our knowledge of this fact is derived only from faith, and not from our own reasoning.

That the worlds - In Genesis 1:1, it is "the heaven and the earth." The phrase which the apostle uses denotes a plurality of worlds, and is proof that he supposed there were other worlds besides our earth. How far his knowledge extended on this point, we have no means of ascertaining, but there is no reason to doubt that he regarded the stars as "worlds" in some respects like our own. On the meaning of the Greek word used here, see the notes on Hebrews 1:2. The plural form is used there also, and in both cases, it seems to me, not without design.

Were framed - It is observable that the apostle does not here use the word "make or create." That which he does use - καταρτίζω katartizō- means to put in order, to arrange, to complete, and may be applied to that which before had an existence, and which is to be put in order, or re-fitted; Matthew 4:24; Mark 1:19; Matthew 21:6; Hebrews 10:5. The meaning here is, that they "were set in order" by the Word of God. This implies the act of creation, but the specific idea is that of "arranging" them in the beautiful order in which they are now. Doddridge renders it "adjusted." Kuinoel, however, supposes that the word is used here in the sense of "form, or make." It has probably about the meaning which we attach to the phrase "fitting up anything," as, for example, a dwelling, and includes all the previous arrangements, though the thing which is particularly denoted is not the making, but the arrangemenent. So in the work here referred to. "We arrive at the conviction that the universe was prepared or arranged in the present manner by the Word of God."

By the word of God - This does not mean here, by the "Logos," or the second person of the Trinity, for Paul does not use that term here or elsewhere. The word which he employs is ῥῆμα rēma- "rema" - meaning properly a word spoken, and in this place "command;" compare Genesis

1:3, Genesis 1:6, Genesis 1:9, Genesis 1:11, Genesis 1:14, Genesis 1:20; Psalm 33:6. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." In regard to the agency of the Son of God in the work of the creation, see the notes on Hebrews 1:2; compare the notes on John 1:3.

So that things which are seen - The point of the remark here is, that the visible creation was not moulded out of pre-existing materials, but was made out of nothing. In reference to the grammatical construction of the passage, see Stuart, Commentary in loc. The doctrine taught is, that matter was not eternal; that the materials of the universe, as well as the arrangement, were formed by God, and that all this was done by a simple command. The "argument" here, so far as it is adapted to the purpose of the apostle, seems to be, that there was nothing which "appeared," or which was to be "seen," that could lay the foundation of a belief that God made the worlds; and in like manner our faith now is not to be based on what; "appears," by which we could infer or reason out what would be, but that we must exercise strong confidence in Him who had power to create the universe out of nothing. If this vast universe has been called into existence by the mere word of God, there is nothing which we may not believe he has ample power to perform.

Verse 4

By faith Abel offered - see Genesis 4:4-5. In the account in Genesis of the offering made by Abel, there is no mention of "faith" - as is true also indeed of most of the instances referred to by the apostle. The account in Genesis is, simply, that Abel "brought of the firstlings of his flock, and the fat thereof, and that the Lord had respect to Abel and his offering." Men have speculated much as to the reason why the offering of Abel was accepted, and that of Cain rejected; but such speculation rests on no certain basis, and the solution of the apostle should be regarded as decisive and satisfactory, that in the one case there was faith, in the other not. It could not have been because an offering of the fruits of the ground was not pleasing to God, for such an offering was commanded under the Jewish Law, and was not in itself improper. Both the brothers selected what was to them most obvious; which they had reared with their own bands; which they regarded as most valuable.

Cain had cultivated the earth, and he naturally brought what had grown under his care; Abel kept a flock, and he as naturally brought what he had

raised: and had the temper of mind in both been the same, there is no reason to doubt that the offering of each would have been accepted. To this conclusion we are led by the nature of the case, and the apostle advances substantially the same sentiment, for he says that the particular state of mind on which the whole turned was, that the one had faith, and the other not. "How" the apostle himself was informed of the fact that it was "faith" which made the difference, he has not informed us. The belief that he was inspired will, however, relieve the subject of this difficulty, for according to such a belief all his statements here, whether recorded in the Old Testament or not, are founded in truth. It is equally impossible to tell with "certainty" what was the nature of the faith of Abel. It has been commonly asserted, that it was faith in Christ - looking forward to his coming, and depending on his sacrifice when offering what was to he a type of him.

But of this there is no positive evidence, though from Hebrews 12:24, it seems to be not improbable. Sacrifice, as a type of the Redeemer's great offering, was instituted early in the history of the world. There can be no reason assigned for the offering of "blood" as an atonement for sin, except that it had originally a reference to the great atonement which was to be made by blood; and as the salvation of man depended on this entirely, it is probable that that would be one of the truths which would he first communicated to man after the fall. The bloody offering of Abel is the first of the kind which is definitely mentioned in the Scriptures (though it is not improbable that such sacrifices were offered by Adam, compare Genesis 3:21), and consequently Abel may be regarded "as the recorded head of the whole typical system, of which fist was the antitype and the fulfillment." Compare notes, Hebrews 12:24. "A more excellent sacrifice." Πλείονα θυσίαν Pleiona thusian- as rendered by Tyndale, "a more plenteous sacrifice;" or, as Wicklift renders it more literally, "a much more sacrifice;" that is, a more full or complete sacrifice; a better sacrifice. The meaning is, that it had in it much more to render it acceptable to God. In the estimate of its value, the views of him who offered it would be more to be regarded than the nature of the offering itself.

("By offering victims of the choice of his flock, Abel not only showed a more decided attachment to God, but there is great reason to suppose (as Abp. Magee on Atonement, p. 52, shows) that his faith was especially

superior, as being not only directed to God alone (recognizing his existence, authority, and providence) but also to the Great Redeemer, promised immediately after the fall, Genesis 3:15 whose expiatory death was typified by animal sacrifice, by offering which Abel had evinced his faith in the great sacrifice of the Redeemer, prefigured by it: and then he obtained that acceptance from God, and witnessing of his offering, which was refused to Cain; see more in Macknight and Scott" - Bloomfield.

By which - By which sacrifice so offered. The way in which he obtained the testimony of divine approbation was by the sacrifice offered in this manner. It was not "merely" by faith, it was by the offering of a sacrifice in connection with, and under the influence of faith.

He obtained witness that he was righteous - That is, from God. His offering made in faith was the means of his obtaining the divine testimonial that he was a righteous man. Compare the notes on Hebrews 11:2. This is implied in what is said in Genesis 4:4. "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering;" that is, he regarded it as the offering of a righteous man.

God testifying of his gifts - In what way this was done is not mentioned either here or in Genesis. Commentators have usually supposed that it was by fire descending from heaven to consume the sacrifice. But there is no evidence of this, for there is no intimation of it in the Bible. It is true that this frequently occurred when an offering was made to God, (see Genesis 15:17; Leviticus 9:24; Judges 6:21; 1 Kings 18:38), but the sacred writers give us no hint that this happened in the case of the sacrifice made by Abel, and since it is expressly mentioned in other cases and not here, the presumption rather is that no such miracle occurred on the occasion. So remarkable a fact - the first one in all history if it were so - could hardly have failed to be noticed by the sacred writer. It seems to me, therefore, that there was some method by which God "testified" his approbation of the offering of AbeL which is unknown to us, but in regard to what it was conjecture is vain.

And by it he, being dead, yet speaketh - Margin, "Is yet spoken of." This difference of translation arises from a difference of reading in the mss. That from which the translation in the text is derived, is λαλεῖ lalei- "he speaketh." That from which the rendering in the margin is derived, is λαλεῖται laleitai- "is being spoken of;" that is, is "praised or commended." The latter is the common reading in the Greek text, and is found in Walton, Wetstein, Matthzei, Titman, and Mill; the former is adopted by Griesbach,

Koppe, Knapp, Grotius, Hammond, Storr, Rosenmuller, Prof. Stuart, Bloomfield, and Hahn, and is found in the Syriac and Coptic, and is what is favored by most of the Fathers. See "Wetstein." The authority of manuscripts is in favor of the reading λαλεῖται laleitai- "is spoken of." It is impossible, in this variety of opinion, to determine which is the true reading, and this is one of the cases where the original text must probably be forever undecided.

Happily no important doctrine or duty is depending on it. Either of the modes of reading will give a good sense. The apostle is saying that it is by faith that the "elders have obtained a good report" (Hebrews 11:2); he had said (Hebrews 11:4), that it was by faith that Abel obtained the testimony of God in his favor, and if the reading "is spoken of" be adopted, the apostle means that in consequence of that offering thus made, Abel continued even to his time to receive an honorable mention. This act was commended still; and the "good report" of which it had been the occasion, had been transmitted from age to age. A sentiment thus of great beauty and value may be derived from the passage - that true piety is the occasion of transmitting a good report - or an honorable reputation, even down to the latest generation. It is what will embalm the memory in the grateful recollection of mankind; that on which they will reflect with pleasure, and which they will love to transmit to future ages. But after all, it seems to me to be probable that the true sentiment in this passage is what is expressed in the common version, "he yet speaketh." The reasons are briefly these:

(1) The authority of manuscripts, versions, editions, and critics, is so nearly equal, that it is impossible from this source to determine the true reading, and we must, therefore, form our judgment from the connection.

(2) the apostle had twice in this verse expressed substantially the idea that he was honorably testified of by his faith, and it is hardly probable that he would again repeat it so soon.

(3) there seems to be an allusion here to the "language" used respecting Abel Genesis 4:10, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground;" or utters a distinct voice - and the apostle seems to design to represent Abel as still speaking.

(4) in Hebrews 12:24, he represents both Abel and Christ as still "speaking" - as if Abel continued to utter a voice of admonition. The reference there is to the fact that he continued to proclaim from age to age, even to the time of the apostle, the great truth that salvation was only "by blood." He had proclaimed it at first by his faith when he offered the sacrifice of the lamb; he continued to speak from generation to generation, and to show that it was one of the earliest principles of religion that there could be redemption from sin in no other way.

(5) the expression "yet speaketh" accords better with the connection. The other interpretation is cold compared with this, and less fits the case before us. On the faith of Noah, Abraham, and Moses, it might be said with equal propriety that it is still commended or celebrated as well as that of Abel, but the apostle evidently means to say that there was a voice in that of Abel which was special; there was something in "his" life and character which continued to speak from age to age. His sacrifice, his faith, his death, his blood, all continued to lift up the voice, and to proclaim the excellence and value of confidence in God, and to admonish the world how to live.

(6) this accords with usage in classic writers, where it is common to say of the dead that they continue to speak. Compare Virgil, *Aeneid* vi. 618.

Et magna testatur voce per umbras:

Discite justitiam moniti, et non temnere Divos.

If this be the true meaning, then the sense is that there is an influence from the piety of Abel which continues to admonish all coming ages of the value of religion, and especially of the great doctrine of the necessity of an atonement by blood. His faith and his sacrifice proclaimed from age to age that this was one of the first great truths made known to fallen man; and on this he continues to address the world as if he were still living. Thus, all who are pious continue to exert an influence in favor of religion long after the soul is removed to heaven, and the body consigned to the grave. This is true in the following respects:

(1)they speak by their "example." The example of a pious father, mother neighbor will be remembered. It will often have an effect after their death in influencing those over whom it had little control while living.

(2)they continue to speak by their "precepts." The precepts of a father may be re membered, with profit, when he is in his grave, though they were

heard with indifference when he lived; the counsels of a minister may be recollected with benefit though they were heard with scorn.

(3)they continue to speak from the fact that the good are remembered with increasing respect and honor as long as they are remembered at all.

The character of Abel, Noah, and Abraham, is brighter now than it was when they lived, and will continue to grow brighter to the end of time. "The name of the wicked will rot," and the influence which they had when living will grow feebler and feebler until it wholly dies away. Howard will be remembered, and will proclaim from age to age the excellence of a life of benevolence; the character of Nero, Caligula, and Richard III, has long since ceased to exercise any influence whatever in favor of evil, but rather shows the world, by contrast, the excellence of virtue: and the same will yet be true of Paine, and Voltaire, and Byron, and Gibbon, and Hume. The time will come when they shall cease to exert any influence in favor of infidelity and sin, and when the world shall be so satisfied of the error of their sentiments, and the abuse of their talents, and the corruption of their hearts, that their names, by contrast, will be made to promote the, cause of piety and virtue. If a man, wishes to exert any permanent influence after he is dead, he should be a good man. The "strength" of the faith of Abel here commended, will be seen by a reference to a few circumstances:

(1) It was manifested shortly after the apostasy, and not long after the fearful sentence had been pronounced in view of the sin of man. The serpent had been cursed; the earth had been cursed; woe had been denounced on the mother of mankind; and the father of the apostate race and all his posterity, doomed to toil and death. The thunder of this curse had scarcely died away; man had been ejected from Paradise and sent out to enter on his career of woes; and the earth was trembling under the malediction, and yet Abel maintained his confidence in God.

(2) there was then little truth revealed, and only the slightest intimation of mercy. The promise in Genesis 3:15, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, is so enigmatical and obscure that it is not easy even now to see its exact meaning, and it cannot be supposed that Abel could have had a full understanding of what was denoted by it. Yet this appears to have been all the truth respecting the salvation of man then revealed, and on this Abel maintained his faith steadfast in God.

(3) Abel had an older brother, undoubtedly an infidel, a scoffer, a mocker of religion. He was evidently endowed with a talent for sarcasm Genesis 4:9, and there is no reason to doubt, that, like other infidels and scoffers, he would be disposed to use that talent when occasion offered, to hold up religion to contempt. The power with which he used this, and the talent with which he did this, may be seen illustrated probably with melancholy fidelity in Lord Byron's "Cain." No man ever lived who could more forcibly express the feelings that passed through the mind of Cain - for there is too much reason to think that his extraordinary talents were employed on this occasion to give vent to the feelings of his own heart in the sentiments put into the mouth of Cain. Yet, notwithstanding the infidelity of his older brother, Abel adhered to God, and his cause. Whatever influence that infidel brother might have sought to use over him - and there can be no reason to doubt that such an influence would be attempted - yet he never swerved, but maintained with steadfastness his belief in religion, and his faith in God.

Verse 5

By faith Enoch was translated - The account of Enoch is found in Genesis 5:21-24. It is very brief, and is this, that "Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him." There is no particular mention of his "faith," and the apostle attributes this to him, as in the case of Abel, either because it was involved in the very nature of piety, or because the fact was communicated to him by direct revelation. In the account in Genesis, there is nothing inconsistent with the belief that Enoch was characterized by eminent faith, but it is rather implied in the expression, "he walked with God." Compare 2 Corinthians 5:7. It may also be implied in what is said by the apostle Jude Jude 1:14-15, that "he prophesied, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints," etc. From this it would appear that he was a preacher: that he predicted the coming of the Lord to judgment, and that he lived in the firm belief of what was to occur in future times. Moses does not say expressly that Enoch was translated. He says "he was not, for God took him." The expression "he was not," means he was no more among people; or he was removed from the earth. "This" language would be applicable to any method by which he was removed, whether by dying, or by being translated. A similar expression respecting Romulus

occurs in Livy (i. 16), Nec deinde in terris Romulus fuit. The translation of the Septuagint on this part of the verse in Genesis is, οὐχ εὑρίσκετο ouch heurisketo- "was not found;" that is, he disappeared. The authority for what the apostle says here, that he "was translated," is found in the other phrase in Genesis, "God took him." The reasons which led to the statement that he was transported without seeing death, or that show that this is a fair conclusion from the words in Genesis, are such, as these:

(1) There is no mention made of his death, and in this respect the account of Enoch stands by itself. It is, except in this case, the uniform custom of Moses to mention the age and the death of the individuals whose biography he records, and in many cases this is about all that is said of them. But in regard to Enoch there is this remarkable exception that no record is made of his death - showing that there was something unusual in the manner of his removal from the world.

(2) the Hebrew word used by Moses, found in such a connection, is one which would rather suggest the idea that he had been taken in some extraordinary manner from the world. That word - לקח laaqach- means "to take" - with the idea of taking "to oneself." Thus, Genesis 8:20, "Noah took of all beasts and offered a burnt-offering." Thus, it is often used in the sense of "taking a wife" - that is, to oneself Genesis 4:19; Genesis 6:2; Genesis 12:19; Genesis 19:14; and then it is used in the sense of "taking away;" Genesis 14:12; Genesis 27:35; Job 1:21; Job 12:20; Psalm 31:13; Jeremiah 15:15. The word, therefore, would naturally suggest the idea that he had been taken by God to himself, or had been removed in an extraordinary manner from the earth. This is confirmed by the fact that the word is not used anywhere in the Scriptures to denote a "removal by death," and that in the only other instance in which it (לקח laaqach) is used in relation to a removal from this world, it occurs in the statement respecting the translation of Elijah. "And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel, came forth to Elisha, and said to him, Knowest thou that the Lord "will take away" (לקח laaqach) thy master from thy head today?" 2 Kings 2:3, 2 Kings 2:5; compare Hebrews 11:11. This transaction, where there could be no doubt about the "manner" of the removal, shows in what sense the word is used in Genesis.

(3) it was so understood by the translators of the Septuagint. The apostle has used the same word in this place which is employed by the Seventy in Genesis 5:24 - μετατίθημι metatithēmiThis word means to transpose, to put in another place; and then to transport, transfer, translate; Acts 7:16; Hebrews 7:12. It properly expresses the removal to another place, and is the very word which would he used on the supposition that one was taken to heaven without dying.

(4) this interpretation of the passage in Genesis by Paul is in accordance with the uniform interpretation of the Jews. In the Targum of Onkelos it is evidently supposed that Enoch was transported without dying. In that Targum the passage in Genesis 5:24 is rendered, "And Enoch walked in the fear of the Lord, and was not, for the Lord did not put him to death" - לה lo'- ‹amiyt yityeh YahwehSo also in Ecclesiasticus or the Son of Sirach (49:14), "But upon the earth was no man created like Enoch; for he was taken from the earth." These opinions of the Jews and of the early translators, are of value only as showing that the interpretation which Paul has put upon Genesis 5:2 is the natural interpretation. It is such as occurs to separate writers, without collusion, and thus shows that this is the meaning most naturally suggested by the passage.

That he should not see death - That is, that he should not experience death, or be made personally acquainted with it. The word "taste" often occurs in the same sense. Hebrews 2:9, "that he should taste death for every man;" compare Matthew 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27.

And was not found - Genesis 5:24, "And he was not." That is, he was not in the land of the living. Paul retains the word used in the Septuagint.

He had this testimony, that he pleased God - Implied in the declaration in Genesis 5:22, that he "walked with God." This denotes a state of friendship between God and him, and of course implies that his conduct was pleasing to God. The apostle appeals here to the sense of the account in Genesis, but does not retain the very "words." The meaning here is not that the testimony respecting Enoch was actually "given" before his translation, but that the testimony relates to his having "pleased God" before he was removed. "Stuart." In regard to this instructive fragment of history, and to the reasons why Enoch was thus removed, we may make the following remarks:

(1) The age in which he lived was undoubtedly one of great wickedness. Enoch is selected as the only one of that generation signalized by eminent piety, and he appears to have spent his life in publicly reproving a sinful generation, and in warning them of the approaching judgment; Jude 1:14-15. The wickedness which ultimately led to the universal deluge seems already to have commenced in the earth, and Enoch, like Noah, his great-grandson, was raised up as a preacher of righteousness to reprove a sinful generation.

(2) it is not improbable that the great truths of religion in that age were extensively denied, and probably among other things the future state, the resurrection, the belief that man would exist in another world, and that it was maintained that death was the end of being - was an eternal sleep. If so, nothing could be better adapted to correct the prevailing evils than the removal of an eminent man, without dying, from the world. His departure would thus confirm the instructions of his life, and his removal, like the death of saints often now, would serve to make an impression which his living instructions would not.

(3) his removal is, in itself, a very important and instructive fact in history. It has occurred in no other instance except that of Elijah; nor has any other living man been transported to heaven except the Lord Jesus. That fact was instructive in a great many respects:

(a) It showed that there was a future state - another world.

(b) It showed that the “body” might exist in that future state - though doubtless so changed as to adapt it to the condition of things there.

(c) It prepared the world to credit the account of the ascension of the Redeemer. If Enoch and Elijah were removed thus without dying, there was no intrinsic improbability that the Lord Jesus would be removed after having died and risen again.

(d) It furnishes a demonstration of the doctrine that the saints will exist hereafter, which meets all the arguments of the sceptic and the infidel. One single “fact” overturns all the mere “speculations” of philosophy, and

renders nugatory all the objections of the sceptic. The infidel argues against the truth of the resurrection and of the future state from the "difficulties" attending the doctrine. A single case of one who has been raised up from the dead, or who has been removed to heaven, annihilates all such arguments - for how can supposed difficulties destroy a well-authenticated "fact?"

(e) It is an encouragement to piety. It shows that God regards his friends; that their fidelity and holy living please him; and that "in the midst of eminent wickedness and a scoffing world it is possible so to live as to please God." The conduct of this holy man, therefore, is an encouragement to us to do our duty though we stand alone; and to defend the truth though all who live with us upon the earth deny and deride it.

(4) the removal of Enoch shows that the same thing would be "possible" in the case of every saint. God could do it in other cases, as well as in his, with equal ease. That his friends, therefore, are suffered to remain on the earth; that they linger on in enfeebled health, or are crushed by calamity, or are stricken down by the pestilence as others are, is not because God "could" not remove them as Enoch was without dying, but because there is some important "reason" why they should remain and linger, and suffer, and die. Among those reasons may be such as the following:

(a) The regular operation of the laws of nature as now constituted, require it. Vegetables die; the inhabitants of the deep die; the fowls that fly in the air, and the beasts that roam over hills and plains die; and man, by his sins, is brought under the operation of this great universal law. It would be "possible" indeed for God to save his people from this law, but it would require the interposition of continued "miracles," and it is better to have the laws of nature regularly operating, than to have them constantly set aside by divine interposition.

(b) The power of religion is now better illustrated in the way in which the saints are actually removed from the earth, than it would be if they were all transported. Its power is now seen in its enabling us to overcome the dread of death, and in its supporting us in the pains and sorrows of the departing hour. It is a good thing to discipline the soul so that it will not fear to die; it shows how superior religion is to all the forms of philosophy, that

it enables the believer to look calmly forward to his own certain approaching death It is an important matter to keep this up from age to age, and to show to each generation that religion can overcome the natural apprehension of the most fearful calamity which befalls a creature - death: and can make man calm in the prospect of lying beneath the clods of the valley, cold, dark, alone, to moulder back to his native dust.

(c) The death of the Christian does good. It preaches to the living. The calm resignation; the peace; the triumph of the dying believer, is a constant admonition to a thoughtless and wicked world. The deathbed of the Christian proclaims the mercy of God from generation to generation, and there is not a dying saint who may not, and who probably does not do great good in the closing hours of his earthly being.

(d) It may be added that the present arrangement falls in with the general laws of religion that we are to be influenced by faith, not by sight. If all Christians were removed like Enoch, it would be an argument for the truth of religion addressed constantly to the senses. But this is not the way in which the evidence of the truth of religion is proposed to man. It is submitted to his understanding, his conscience, his heart; and in this there is of design a broad distinction between religion and other things. Men act in other matters under the influence of the senses; it is designed that in religion they shall act under the influence of higher and nobler considerations, and that they shall be influenced not solely by a reference to what is passing before their eyes, but to the things which are not seen.

Verse 6

But without faith it is impossible to please him - Without "confidence" in God - in his fidelity, his truth, his wisdom, his promises. And this is as true in other things as in religion. It is impossible for a child to please his father unless he has confidence in him. It is impossible for a wife to please her husband, or a husband a wife, unless they have confidence in each other. If there is distrust and jealousy on either part, there is discord and misery. We cannot be pleased with a professed friend unless he has such confidence in us as to believe our declarations and promises. The same thing is true of God. He cannot be pleased with the man who has no confidence in him; who doubts the truth of his declarations and

promises; who does not believe that his ways are right, or that he is qualified for universal empire. The requirement of faith or confidence in God is not arbitrary; it is just what we require of our children, and partners in life, and friends, as the indispensable condition of our being pleased with them.

For he that cometh to God - In any way - as a worshipper. This is alike required in public worship, in the family, and in secret devotion.

Must believe that he is - That God exists. This is the first thing required in worship. Evidently we cannot come to him in an acceptable manner if we doubt his existence. We do not see him, but we must believe that he is; we cannot form in our mind a correct image of God, but this should not prevent a conviction that there is such a Being. But the declaration here implies more than that there should be a general persuasion of the truth that there is a God. It is necessary that we have this belief in lively exercise in the act of drawing near to him, and that we should realize that we are actually in the presence of the all-seeing Jehovah.

And that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him - This is equally necessary as the belief that he exists. If we could not believe that God would hear and answer our prayers, there could be no encouragement to call upon him. It is not meant here that the desire of the reward is to be the motive for seeking God - for the apostle makes no affirmation on that point; but that it is impossible to make an acceptable approach to him unless we have this belief.

Verse 7

By faith Noah - It is less difficult to see that Noah must have been influenced "by faith" than that Abel and Enoch were. Everything which Noah did in reference to the threatened deluge, was done in virtue of simple faith or belief of what God said. It was not because he could show from the course of events that things were tending to such a catastrophe; or because such an event had occurred before, rendering it probable that it would be likely to occur again; or because this was the common belief of men, and it was easy to fall into this himself. It was simply because God had informed him of it, and he put unwavering reliance on the truth of the divine declaration.

Being warned of God - Genesis 6:13." The Greek word used here means divinely admonished; compare Hebrews 8:5.

Of things not seen as yet - Of the flood which was yet future. The meaning is, that there were no visible signs of it; there was nothing which could be a basis of calculation that it would occur. This admonition was given an hundered and twenty years before the deluge, and of course long before there could have been any natural indications that it would occur.

Moved with fear - Margin, "Being wary." The Greek word - εὐλαβηθεὶς eulabētheis- occurs only here and in Acts 23:10, "The chief captain fearing lest Paul," etc. The noun occurs in Hebrews 5:7, "And was heard in that he feared," (see the note on that place), and in Hebrews 12:28, "With reverence and godly fear." The verb properly means, "to act with caution, to be circumspect," and then "to fear, to be afraid." So far as the "word" is concerned, it might mean here that Noah was influenced by the dread of what was coming, or it may mean that he was influenced by proper caution and reverence for God. The latter meaning agrees better with the scope of the remarks of Paul, and is probably the true sense. His reverence and respect for God induced him to act under the belief that what he had said was true, and that the calamity which he had predicted would certainly come upon the world.

Prepared an ark to the saving of his house - In order that his family might be saved. Genesis 6:14-22. The salvation here referred to was preservation from the flood.

By the which - By which faith.

He condemned the world - That is, the wicked world around him. The meaning is, that by his confidence in God, and his preparation for the flood, he showed the wisdom of his own course and the folly of theirs. We have the same phrase now in common use where one who sets a good example is said to "condemn others." He shows the guilt and folly of their lives by the contrast between his conduct; and theirs. The wickedness of the sinner is condemned not only by preaching, and by the admonitions and threatenings of the Law of God, but by the conduct of every good man. The language of such a life is as plain a rebuke of the sinner as the most fearful denunciations of divine wrath.

And became heir of the righteousness which is by faith - The phrase "heir of righteousness" here means properly that he acquired, gained, or became possessed of that righteousness. It does not refer so much to the "mode" by which it was done as if it were by inheritance, as to the "fact" that he obtained it. The word "heir" is used in this general sense in Romans

4:13-14; Titus 3:7; Hebrews 1:2; Hebrews 6:17. Noah was not the "heir" to that righteousness by "inheriting" it from his ancestors, but in virtue of it he was regarded as among the heirs or sons of God, and as being a possessor of that righteousness which is connected with faith. The phrase "righteousness which is by faith" refers to the fact that he was regarded and treated as a righteous man. notes on Romans 1:17. It is observable here that it is not said that Noah had specific faith in Christ, or that his being made heir of the righteousness of faith depended on that, but it was in connection with his believing what God said respecting the deluge.

It was "faith or confidence" in God which was the ground of his justification, in accordance with the general doctrine of the Scriptures that it is only by faith that man can be saved, though the specific mode of faith was not what is required now under the gospel. In the early ages of the world, when few truths were revealed, a cordial belief of any of those truths showed that there was real confidence in God, or that the "principle" of faith was in the heart; in the fuller revelation which we enjoy, we are not only to believe those truths, but specifically to believe in him who has made the great atonement for sin, and by whose merits all have been saved who have entered heaven. The same faith or confidence in God which led Noah to believe what God said about the deluge would have led him to believe what he has said about the Redeemer; and the same confidence in Godwhich led him to commit himself to his safe keeping in an ark on the world of waters, would have led him to commit his soul to the safe keeping of the Redeemer, the true ark of safety. As the "principle" of faith, therefore, existed in the heart of Noah, it was proper that he should become, with others, an "heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

(If this righteousness which is by faith be the same with that in Romans 1:17; Romans 3:21; and of this there can be no doubt - if it be the same with what forms the ground of the sinner's justification in every age, namely, the glorious righteousness which Christ has worked out in his active and passive obedience - then clearly there is no way of getting possession of this, but by faith in Jesus, And, without doubt, by "this" faith, Noah was saved. It is absurd to suppose that the doctrine of salvation by the Redeemer was unknown to him. Was not the ark itself a type and pledge of this salvation? 1 Peter 3:21. Was Noah ignorant of the promise concerning the Messiah? Dr. Owen can scarce speak with patience of the view that

excludes Christ as the specific object of Noah‘s faith,” That in this faith of the patriarchs no respect was had unto Christ and his righteousness, is such a putid figment, is so destructive of the first promises, and of all true faith in the church of old, is so inconsistent with, and contrary to the design of the apostle, and is so utterly destructive of the whole force of his argument, that it deserves no consideration.” The idea indeed seems to derogate from the glory of Christ as the alone object of faith and salvation in every age; see also Scott. Bloomfield, McLean.)

In regard to the circumstances which show the strength of his faith, we may make the following remarks:

(1) It pertained to a very distant future event. It looked forward to what was to happen after a lapse of an hundred and twenty years. This was known to Noah Genesis 6:3, and at this long period before it occurred, he was to begin to build an ark to save himself and family; to act as though this would be undoubtedly true. This is a much longer period than man now is required to exercise faith before that is realized which is the object of belief. Rare is it that three score years intervene between the time when a man first believes in God and when he enters into heaven; much more frequently it is but a few months or days; not an instance now occurs in which the period is lengthened out to 120 years.

(2) there was no outward “evidence” that what Noah believed would occur. There were no appearances in nature which indicated that there would be such a flood of waters after more than a century had passed away. There were no breakings up of the fountains of the deep; no marks of the far distant storm gathering on the sky which could be the basis of the calculation. The “word of God” was the only ground of evidence; the only thing to which he could refer gainsayers and revilers. It is so now. There are no visible signs of the coming of the Saviour to judge the world. Yet the true believer feels and acts as if it were so - resting on the sure word of God.

(3) the course of things was much against the truth of what Noah believed. No such event had ever occurred. There is no evidence that there had ever been a storm of rain half sufficient to drown the world; or that

there had ever been the breaking up of the deep, or that there had been ever a partial deluge. For sixteen hundred years the course of nature had been uniform, and all the force of this uniformity would be felt and urged when it should be alleged that this was to be disturbed and to give place to an entire new order of events. Compare 2 Peter 3:4. The same thing is now felt in regard to the objects of the Christian faith. The course of events is uniform. The laws of nature are regular and steady. The dead do not leave their graves. Seasons succeed each other in regular succession; people are born, live, and die, as in former times; fire does not wrap the earth in flames; the elements do not melt with fervent heat; seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter follow each other, and "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." How many probabilities are there now, therefore, as there were in the time of Noah, against what is the object of faith!

(4) it is not improbable that when Noah proclaimed the approaching destruction of the world by a deluge, the "possibility" of such an event was strongly denied by the philosophers of that age. The fact that such an event could have occurred has been denied by infidel philosophers in our own times, and attempts have been gravely made to show that the earth did not contain water enough to cover its surface to the height mentioned in the Scriptures, and that no condensation of the vapour in the atmosphere could produce such an effect. It is not improbable that some such arguments may have been used in the time of Noah, and "it is morally certain that he could not meet those arguments by any philosophy of his own." There is no reason to think that he was endowed with such a knowledge of chemistry as to be able to show that such a thing was possible, or that he had such an acquaintance with the structure of the earth as to demonstrate that it contained within itself the elements of its own destruction. All that he could oppose to such speculations was the simple declaration of God; and the same thing is also true now in regard to the cavils and philosophical arguments of infidelity. Objections drawn from philosophy are often made against the doctrine of the resurrection of the body; the destruction of the earth by the agency of fire; and even the existence of the soul after death. These difficulties may be obviated partly by science; but the proof that these events will occur, does not depend on science. It is a matter of simple faith; and all that we can in fact oppose to these objections is the declaration

of God. The result showed that Noah was not a feel or a fanatic in trusting to the Word of God against the philosophy of his age; and the result will show the same of the Christian in his confiding in the truth of the divine declarations against the philosophy of “his” age.

(5) it is beyond all question that Noah would be subjected to much ridicule and scorn. He would be regarded as a dreamer; a fanatic; an alarmist; a wild projector. The purpose of making preparation for such an event as the flood, to occur after the lapse of an hundred and twenty years, and when there were no indications of it, and all appearances were against it, would be regarded as in the highest degree wild and visionary. The design of building a vessel which would outride the storm, and which would live in such an open sea, and which would contain all sorts of animals, with the food for them for an indefinite period, could not but have been regarded as eminently ridiculous. When the ark was preparing, nothing could have been a more happy subject for scoffing and jibes. In such an age, therefore, and in such circumstances, we may suppose that all the means possible would have been resorted to, to pour contempt on such an undertaking. They who had wit, would find here an ample subject for its exercise; if ballads were made then, no more fertile theme for a profane song could be desired than this; and in the haunts of revelry, intemperance, and pollution, nothing would furnish a finer topic to give point to a jest, than the credulity and folly of the old man who was building the ark. It would require strong faith to contend thus with the wit, the sarcasm, the contempt, the raillery, and the low jesting, as well as with the wisdom and philosophy of a whole world. Yet it is a fair illustration of what occurs often now, and of the strength of that faith in the Christian heart which meets meekly and calmly the scoffs and jeers of a wicked generation.

(6) all this would be heightened by delay. The time was distant. What now completes four generations would have passed away before the event predicted would occur. Youth grew up to manhood, and manhood passed on to old age, and still there were no signs of the coming storm. That was no feeble faith which could hold on in this manner, for an hundred and twenty years, believing unwaveringly that all which God had said would be accomplished. But it is an illustration of faith in the Christian church now. The church maintains the same confidence in God from age to age - and

regardless of all the reproaches of scoffers, and all the arguments of philosophy, still adheres to the truths which God has revealed. So with individual Christians. They look for the promise. They are expecting heaven. They doubt not that the time will come when they will be received to glory; when their bodies will be raised up glorified and immortal, and when sin and sorrow will be no more.

In the conflicts and trials of life the time of their deliverance may seem to be long delayed. The world may reproach them, and Satan may tempt them to doubt whether all their hope of heaven is not delusion. But their faith fails not, and though hope seems delayed, and the heart is sick, yet they keep the eye on heaven. So it is in regard to the final triumphs of the gospel. The Christian looks forward to the time when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea. Yet that time may seem to be long delayed. Wickedness triumphs. A large part of the earth is still filled with the habitations of cruelty. The progress of the gospel is slow. The church comes up reluctantly to the work. The enemies of the cause exult and rejoice, and ask with scoffing triumph where is the evidence that the nations will be converted to God? They suggest difficulties; they refer to the numbers, and to the opposition of the enemies of the true religion; to the might of kingdoms, and to the power of fixed opinion, and to the hold which idolatry has on mankind, and they sneeringly inquire at what period will the world be converted to Christ? Yet in the face of all difficulties, and arguments, and sneers, "faith" confides in the promise of the Father to the Son, that the "heathen shall be given to him for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession," Psalm 2:8. The faith of the true Christian is as strong in the fulfillment of this promise, as that of Noah was in the assurance that the guilty world would be destroyed by a flood of waters.

Verse 8

By faith Abraham - There is no difficulty in determining that Abraham was influenced by faith in God. The case is even stronger than that of Noah, for it is expressly declared, Genesis 15:6, "And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Compare notes, Romans 4:1-5. In the illustrations of the power of faith in this chapter, the apostle appeals to two instances in which it was exhibited by Abraham, "the father of the

faithful." Each of these required confidence in God of extraordinary strength, and each of them demanded a special and honorable mention. The first was that when he left his own country to go to a distant land of strangers (Genesis 15:8-10); the other when he showed his readiness to sacrifice his own son in obedience to the will of God, Hebrews 11:17-19.

When he was called - Genesis 12:1, "Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."

Into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed - To Palestine, or the land of Canaan, though that was not indicated at the time.

And he went out, not knowing whither he went - Genesis 12:4. Abraham at that time took with him Sarai, and Lot the son of his brother, and "the souls that they had gotten in Haran." Terah, the father of Abraham, started on the journey with them, but died in Haran; Genesis 11:31-32. The original call was made to Abraham, Genesis 12:1; Acts 7:2-3, but he appears to have induced his father and his nephew to accompany him. At this time he had no children Genesis 11:30, though it seems probable that Lot had; Genesis 12:5. Some, however, understand the expression in Genesis 12:5, "and the souls they had gotten in Haran," as referring to the servants or domestics that they had in various ways procured, and to the fact that Abraham and Lot gradually drew around them a train of dependents and followers who were disposed to unite with them, and accompany them wherever they went. The Chaldee Paraphrast; understands it of the proselytes which Abraham had made there - "All the souls which he had subdued unto the law." When it is said that Abraham "went out, not knowing whither he went," it must be understood as meaning that he was ignorant to what country he would in fact be led. If it be supposed that he had some general intimation of the nature of that country, arid of the direction in which it was situated, yet it must be remembered that the knowledge of geography was then exceedingly imperfect; that this was a distant country; that it lay beyond a pathless desert, and that probably no traveler had ever come from that land to apprize him what it was. All this serves to show what was the strength of the faith of Abraham.

Verse 9

By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country - The land of Canaan that had been promised to him and his posterity. He

resided there as if he were a stranger and sojourner. He had no possessions there which he did not procure by honest purchase; he owned no land in fee-simple except the small piece which he bought for a burial-place; see Genesis 23:7-20. In all respects he lived there as if he had no special right in the soil; as if he never expected to own it; as if he were in a country wholly owned by others. He exercised no privileges which might not have been exercised by any foreigner, and which was not regarded as a right of common - that of feeding his cattle in any unoccupied part of the land; and he would have had no power of ejecting any other persons excepting what anyone might have enjoyed by the pre-occupancy of the pasture-grounds. To all intents and purposes he was a stranger. Yet he seems to have lived in the confident and quiet expectation that that land would at some period come into the possession of his posterity. It was a strong instance of faith that he should cherish this belief for so long a time, when he was a stranger there; when he gained no right in the soil except in the small piece that was purchased as a burial-place for his wife, and when he saw old age coming on and still the whole land in the possession of others.

Dwelling in tabernacles - In tents - the common mode of living in countries where the principal occupation is that of keeping flocks and herds. His dwelling thus in moveable tents looked little like its being his permanent possession.

With Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise - That is, the same thing occurred in regard to them, which had to Abraham. "They" also lived in tents. They acquired no fixed property, and no title to the land except to the small portion purchased as a burial-place. Yet they were heirs of the same promise as Abraham, that the land would be theirs. Though it was still owned by others, and filled with its native inhabitants, yet they adhered to the belief that it would come into the possession of their families. In their moveable habitations; in their migrations from place to place, they seem never to have doubted that the fixed habitation of their posterity was to be there, and that all that had been promised would be certainly fulfilled.

Verse 10

For he looked for a city which hath foundations - It has been doubted to what the apostle here refers. Grotius and some others suppose, that he refers to Jerusalem, as a permanent dwelling for his posterity, in contradistinction from the unsettled mode of life which Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob led. But there is no evidence that Abraham looked forward to the building of such a city, for no promise was made to him of this kind; and this interpretation falls evidently below the whole drift of the passage; compare Hebrews 11:14-16; Hebrews 12:22; Hebrews 13:14. Phrases like that of "the city of God," "a city with foundations," "the new Jerusalem," and "the heavenly Jerusalem" in the time of the apostle, appear to have acquired a kind of technical signification. They referred to "heaven" - of which Jerusalem, the seat of the worship of God, seems to have been regarded as the emblem. Thus, in Hebrews 12:22, the apostle speaks of the "heavenly Jerusalem," and in Hebrews 13:14, he says, "here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

In Revelation 21:2, John says that he "saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven," and proceeds in that chapter and the following to give a most beautiful description of it. Even so early as the time of Abraham, it would seem that the future blessedness of the righteous was foretold under the image of a splendid city reared on permanent foundations. It is remarkable that Moses does not mention this as an object of the faith of Abraham, and it is impossible to ascertain the degree of distinctness which this had in his view. It is probable that the apostle in speaking of his faith in this particular did not rely on any distinct record, or even any tradition, but spoke of his piety in the language which he would use to characterize religion of any age, or in any individual. He was accustomed, in common with others of his time, to contemplate the future blessedness of the righteous under the image of a beautiful city; a place where the worship of God would be celebrated for ever - a city of which Jerusalem was the most striking representation to the mind of a Jew. It was natural for him to speak of strong piety in this manner wherever it existed, and especially in such a case as that of Abraham, who left his own habitation to wander in a distant land,

This fact showed that he regarded himself as a stranger and sojourner, and yet he had a strong expectation of a fixed habitation, and a permanent inheritance. He must, therefore, have looked on to the permanent abodes of the righteous; the heavenly city; and though he had an undoubted confidence that the promised land would be given to his posterity, yet as he did not possess it himself, he must have looked for his own permanent abode to the fixed residence of the just in heaven. This passage seems to me

to prove that Abraham had an expectation of future happiness after death. There is not the slightest evidence that he supposed there would be a magnificent and glorious capital where the Messiah would personally reign, and where the righteous dead, raised from their graves, would dwell in the second advent of the Redeemer. All that the passage fairly implies is, that while Abraham. expected the possession of the promised land for his posterity, yet his faith looked beyond this for a permanent home in a future world.

Whose builder and maker is God - Which would not be reared by the agency of man, but of which God was the immediate and direct architect. This shows conclusively, I think, that the reference in this allusion to the "city" is not to Jerusalem, as Grotius supposes; but the language is just such as will appropriately describe heaven, represented as a city reared without human hands or art, and founded and fashioned by the skill and power of the Deity; compare the notes on 2 Corinthians 5:1. The language here applied to God as the "architect" or framer of the universe, is often used in the classic writers. See Kuinoel and Wetstein. The apostle here commends the faith of Abraham as eminently strong. The following "hints" will furnish topics of reflection to those who are disposed to inquire more fully into its strength:

(1) The journey which he undertook was then a long and dangerous one. The distance from Haran to Palestine by a direct route was not less than four hundred miles, and this journey lay across a vast desert - a part of Arabia Deserta. That journey has always been tedious and perilous; but to see its real difficulty, we must put ourselves into the position in which the world was four thousand years ago. There was no knowledge of the way; no frequented path; no facility for traveling; no turnpike or rail-way; and such a journey then must have appeared incomparably more perilous than almost any which could now be undertaken.

(2) he was going among strangers. Who they were he knew not; but the impression could not but have been made on his mind that they were strangers to religion, and that a residence among them would be anything but desirable.

(3) he was leaving country, and home, and friends; the place of his birth and the graves of his fathers, with the moral certainty that he would see

them no more.

(4) he had no right to the country which he went to receive. He could urge no claim on the ground of discovery, or inheritance, or conquest at any former period; but though he went in a peaceful manner, and with no power to take it, and could urge no claim to it whatever, yet he went with the utmost confidence that it would be his. He did not even expect to buy it - for he had no means to do this, and it seems never to have entered his mind to bargain for it in any way, except for the small portion that be needed for a burying-ground.

(5) He had no means of obtaining possession. He had no wealth to purchase it; no armies to conquer it; no title to it which could be enforced before the tribunals of the land. The prospect of obtaining it must have been distant, and probably he saw no means by which it was to be done. In such a case, his only hope could be in God.

(6) it is not impossible that the enterprise in that age might have been treated by the friends of the patriarch as perfectly wild and visionary. The prevailing religion evidently was idolatry, and the claim which Abraham set up to a special call from the Most High, might have been deemed entirely fanatical. To start off on a journey through a pathless desert; to leave his country and home, and all that he held dear, when he himself knew not whither he went; to go with no means of conquest, but with the expectation that the distant and unknown land would be given him, could not but have been regarded as a singular instance of visionary hope. The whole transaction, therefore, was in the highest degree an act of simple confidence in God, where there was no human basis of calculation, and where all the principles on which people commonly act would have led him to pursue just the contrary course. It is, therefore, not without reason that the faith of Abraham is so commended.

Verse 11

Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed - The word "herself" here - αὐτὴ autē- implies that there was something remarkable in the fact that "she" should manifest this faith. Perhaps there may be reference here to the incredulity with which she at first received the

announcement that she should have a child; Genesis 18:11, Genesis 18:13. Even "her" strong incredulity was overcome, and though everything seemed to render what was announced impossible, and though she was so much disposed to laugh at the very suggestion at first, yet her unbelief was overcome, and she ultimately credited the divine promise. The apostle does not state the authority for his assertion that the strength of Sarah was derived from her faith, nor when particularly it was exercised. The argument seems to be, that here was a case where all human probabilities were against what was predicted, and where, therefore, there must have been simple trust in God. Nothing else but "faith" could have led her to believe that in her old age she would have borne a son.

When she was past age - She was at this time more than ninety years of age; Genesis 17:17; compare Genesis 18:11.

Because she judged him faithful who had promised - She had no other ground of confidence or expectation. All human probability was against the supposition that at her time of life she would be a mother.

Verse 12

Therefore sprang there even of one - From a single individual. What is observed here by the apostle as worthy of remark, is, that the whole Jewish people sprang from one man, and that, as the reward of his strong faith he was made the father and founder of a nation.

And him as good as dead - So far as the subject under discussion is concerned, To human appearance there was no more probability, that he would have a son at that period of life, than that the dead would have.

So many as the stars in the sky … - An innumerable multitude. This was agreeable to the promise; Genesis 15:5; Genesis 22:17. The phrases used here are often employed to denote a vast multitude, as nothing appears more numerous than the stars of heaven, or than the sands that lie on the shores of the ocean. The strength of faith in this case was, that there was simple confidence in God in the fulfillment of a promise where all human probabilities were against it. This is, therefore, an illustration of the nature of faith. It does not depend on human reasoning; on analogy; on philosophical probabilities; on the foreseen operation of natural laws; but on the mere assurance of God - no matter what may be the difficulties to human view, or the improbabilities against it.

Verse 13

These all died in faith - That is, those who had been just mentioned - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah. It was true of Abel and Noah also that they died in faith, but they are not included in "this" declaration, for the "promises" were not particularly entrusted to them, and if the word "these" be made to include them it must include Enoch also, who did not die at all. The phrase used here, "these all died in faith," does not mean that they died in the exercise or possession of religion, but more strictly that they died not having possessed what was the object of their faith. They had been looking for something future, which they did not obtain during their lifetime, and died believing that it would yet be theirs.

Not having received the promises - That is, not having received the "fulfillment" of the promises; or "the promised blessings." The promises themselves they "had" received; compare Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4; Acts 2:39; Galatians 3:14, and Hebrews 11:33, Hebrews 11:39. In all these places the word "promise" is used by metonymy "for the thing promised."

But having seen them afar off - Having seen that they would be fulfilled in future times; compare John 8:56. It is probable that the apostle here means that they saw "the entire fulfillment" of all that the promises embraced in the future - that is, the bestowment of the land of Canaan, the certainty of a numerous posterity, and of the entrance into the heavenly Canaan - the world of fixed and permanent rest. According to the reasoning of the apostle here the "promises" to which they trusted included all these things.

d **And were persuaded of them -** Had no doubt of their reality.

And embraced them - This word implies more than our word "embrace" frequently does; that is, "to receive as true." It means properly "to draw to oneself;" and then to embrace as one does a friend from whom he has been separated. It then means to greet, salute, welcome, and here means a joyful greeting of those promises; or a pressing them to the heart as we do a friend. It was not a cold and formal reception of them, but a warm and hearty welcome. Such is the nature of true faith when it embraces the promises of salvation. No act of pressing a friend to the bosom is ever more warm and cordial.

And confessed that they were strangers - Thus, Abraham said Genesis 23:4, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you." That is, he regarded himself as a foreigner; as having no home and no possessions there. It was on this ground that he proposed to buy a burial-place of the sons of Heth.

And pilgrims - This is the word - παρεπίδημος parepidēmos- which is used by Abraham, as rendered by the Septuagint in Genesis 23:4, and which is translated "sojourner" there in the common English version. The word "pilgrim" means properly "a wanderer, a traveler," and particularly one who leaves his own country to visit a holy place. This sense does not quite suit the meaning here, or in Genesis 23:4. The Hebrew word - תּוֹשָׁב towshaab- means properly one who "dwells in a place," and particularly one who is a "mere" resident without the rights of a citizen. The Greek word means a "by-resident;" one who lives by another; or among a people not his own. This is the idea here. It is not that they confessed themselves to be wanderers; or that they had left their home to visit a holy place, but that they "resided" as mere sojourners in a, country that was not theirs. What might be their ultimate destination, or their purpose, is not implied in the meaning of the word. They were such as reside awhile among another people, but have no permanent home there.

On the earth - The phrase used here - ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς epi tēs gēs- might mean merely on the land of Canaan, but the apostle evidently uses it in a larger sense as denoting the earth in general. There can be no doubt that this accords with the views which the patriarchs had - regarding themselves not only as strangers in the land of Canaan, but feeling that the same thing was true in reference to their whole residence upon the earth - that it was not their permanent home.

Verse 14

For they that say such things … - That speak of themselves as having come into a land of strangers; and that negotiate for a small piece of land, not to cultivate, but to bury their dead. So we should think of any strange people coming among us now - who lived in tents; who frequently changed their residence; who became the purchasers of no land except to bury their dead, and who never spake of becoming permanent residents. We should think that they were in search of some place as their home, and that they had not yet found it. Such people were the Hebrew patriarchs. They lived and acted just as if they had not yet found a permanent habitation, but were traveling in search of one.

Verse 15

And truly if they had been mindful of that country … - If they had remembered it with sufficient interest and affection to have made them desirous to return.

They might have had opportunity to have returned - The journey was not so long or perilous that they could not have retraced their steps. It would have been no more difficult or dangerous for them to do that than it was to make the journey at first. This shows that their remaining as strangers and sojourners in the land of Canaan was voluntary. They preferred it, with all its inconveniences and hardships, to a return to their native land. The same thing is true of all the people of God now. If they choose to return to the world, and to engage again in all its vain pursuits, there is nothing to hinder them. There are "opportunities" enough. There are abundant inducements held out. There are numerous frivolous and worldly friends who would regard it as a matter of joy and triumph to have them return to vanity and folly again. They would welcome them to their society; rejoice to have them participate in their pleasures; and be willing that they should share in the honors and the wealth of the world. And they might do it. There are multitudes of Christians who could grace, as they once did, the ball-room: who could charm the social party by song and wit; who could rise to the highest posts of office, or compete successfully with others in the race for the acquisition of fame. They have seen and tasted enough of the vain pursuits of the world to satisfy them with their vanity; they are convinced of the sinfulness of making these things the great objects of living; their affections are now fixed on higher and nobler objects, and they "choose" not to return to those pursuits again, but to live as strangers and sojourners on the earth - for there is nothing more "voluntary" than religion.

Verse 16

But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly - That is, at the time referred to when they confessed that they were strangers and sojourners, they showed that they sought a better country than the one which they had left. They lived as if they had no expectation of a permanent residence on earth, and were looking to another world. The argument of the apostle here appears to be based upon what is apparent from the whole history, that they had a confident belief that the land of Canaan would be given to "their posterity," but as for "themselves" they had no expectation of permanently dwelling there, but looked to a home in the heavenly country. Hence, they formed no plans for conquest; they laid claim to no title in the soil; they made no purchases of farms for cultivation; they lived and died without owning any land except enough to bury their dead. All this

appears as if they looked for a final home in a "better country, even a heavenly."

Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God - Since they had such an elevated aim, he was willing to speak of himself as their God and Friend. They acted as became his friends, and he was not ashamed of the relation which he sustained to them. The language to which the apostle evidently refers here is what is found in Exodus 3:6, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." We are not to suppose that God is ever "ashamed" of anything that he does. The meaning here is, that they had acted in such a manner that it was fit that he should show toward them the character of a Benefactor, Protector, and Friend.

For he hath prepared for them a city - Such as they had expected - a heavenly residence; Hebrews 11:10. There is evidently here a reference to heaven, represented as a city - the new Jerusalem - prepared for his people by God himself; compare the notes on Matthew 25:34. Thus, they obtained what they had looked for by faith. The wandering and unsettled patriarchs to whom the promise was made, and who showed all their lives that they regarded themselves as strangers and pilgrims, were admitted to the home of permanent rest, and their posterity was ultimately admitted to the possession of the promised land. Nothing could more certainly demonstrate that the patriarchs believed in a future state than this passage. They did not expect a permanent home on earth. They made no efforts to enter into the possession of the promised land themselves. They quietly and calmly waited for the time when God would give it to their posterity, and in the meantime for themselves they looked forward to their permanent home in the heavens.

Even in this early period of the world, therefore, there was the confident expectation of the future state; compare the notes on Matthew 22:3l-32. We may remark, that the life of the patriarchs was, in all essential respects, such as we should lead. They looked forward to heaven; they sought no permanent possessions here; they regarded themselves as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. So should we be. In our more fixed and settled habits of life; in our quiet homes; in our residence in the land in which we were born, and in the society of old and tried friends, we should yet regard ourselves as "strangers and sojourners." We have here no fixed abode. The houses in which we dwell will soon be occupied by others; the paths in which we go will soon be trod by the feet of others; the fields which we

cultivate will soon be plowed and sown and reaped by others. Others will read the books which we read; sit down at the tables where we sit; lie on the beds where we repose; occupy the chambers where we shall die, and from whence we shall be removed to our graves. If we have any permanent home, it is in heaven; and that we have, the faithful lives of the patriarchs teach us, and the unerring word of God everywhere assures us.

Verse 17

By faith Abraham - The apostle had stated one strong instance of the faith of Abraham, and he now refers to one still more remarkable - the strongest illustration of faith, undoubtedly, which has ever been evinced in our world.

When he was tried - The word used here is rendered "tempted," in Matthew 4:1, Matthew 4:3; Matthew 16:1; Matthew 19:3; Matthew 22:18, Matthew 22:35, and in twenty-two other places in the New Testament; "prove," in John 6:6; "hath gone about," in Acts 24:6; "examine," 2 Corinthians 13:5; and "tried," in Revelation 2:2, Revelation 2:10; Revelation 3:10. It does not mean here, as it often does, to place inducements before one to lead him to do wrong, but to subject his faith to a "trial" in order to test its genuineness and strength. The meaning here is, that Abraham was placed in circumstances which showed what was the real strength of his confidence in God.

Offered up Isaac - That is, he showed that he was ready and willing to make the sacrifice, and would have done it if he had not been restrained by the voice of the angel; Genesis 22:11-12. So far as the intention of Abraham was concerned, the deed was done, for he had made every preparation for the offering, and was actually about to take the life of his son.

And he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son - The promises particularly of a numerous posterity. The fulfillment of those promises depended on him whom he was now about to offer as a sacrifice. If Abraham had been surrounded with children, or if no special promise of a numerous posterity had been made to him, this act would not have been so remarkable. It would in any case have been a strong act of faith; it "was especially" strong in his ease from the circumstances that he had an only son, and that the fulfillment of the promise depended on his life.

Verse 18

Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called; - Genesis 21:12. A numerous posterity had been promised to him. It was there said expressly that this promise was not to be fulfilled through the son of Abraham, by the bondwoman Hagar, but through Isaac. Of course, it was implied that Isaac was to reach manhood, and yet notwithstanding this, and notwithstanding Abraham fully believed it, be prepared deliberately, in obedience to the divine command, to put him to death. The phrase "thy seed be called" means, that his posterity was to be named after Isaac, or was to descend only from him. The word "called" in the Scriptures is often equivalent to the verb "to be;" see Isaiah 56:7. To "name" or "call" a thing was the same as to say that it was, or that it existed. It does not mean here that his "spiritual" children were to be called or selected from among the posterity of Isaac, but that the posterity promised to Abraham would descend neither from Ishmael nor the sons of Keturah, but in the line of Isaac. This is a strong circumstance insisted on by the apostle to show the strength of Abraham's faith. It was shown not only by his willing hess to offer up the child of his old age - his only son by his beloved wife, but by his readiness, at the command of God, to sacrifice even him on whom the fulfillment of the promises depended.

Verse 19

Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead - And that he would do it; for so Abraham evidently believed, and this idea is plainly implied in the whole narrative. There was no other way in which the promise could be fulfilled; and Abraham reasoned justly in the case. He had received the promise of a numerous posterity. He had been told expressly that it was to be through this favorite child. He was now commanded to put him to death as a sacrifice, and he prepared to do it. To fulfil these promises, therefore, there was no other way possible but for him to be raised up from the dead, and Abraham fully believed that it would be done. The child had been given to him at first in a supernatural manner, and he was prepared, therefore, to believe that he would be restored to him again by miracle. He did not doubt that be who had given him to him in a manner at first so contrary to all human probability, could restore him again in a method as extraordinary. He, therefore, anticipated that he would raise him up immediately from the dead. That this was the expectation of Abraham is apparent from the narrative in Genesis 22:5, "And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and

worship, and come again to you;" in the plural - ונשובה אליכם wanaashuwbaah 'alēykem- "and we will return;" that is, I and Isaac will return, for no other persons went with them, Hebrews 11:6. As Abraham went with the full expectation of sacrificing Isaac, and as he expected Isaac to return with him, it follows that he believed that God would raise him up immediately from the dead.

From whence also he received him in a figure - There has been great difference of opinion as to the sense of this passage, but it seems to me to be plain. The obvious interpretation is that he then received him by his being raised up from the altar as if from the dead. He was to Abraham dead. He had given him up. He had prepared to offer him as a sacrifice. He lay there before him as one who was dead From that altar he was raised up by direct divine interposition, as if he was raised from the grave, and this was to Abraham a "figure" or a representation of the resurrection. Other interpretations may be seen in Stuart in loc. - The following circumstances will illustrate the strength of Abraham's faith in this remarkable transaction.

(1) the strong persuasion on his mind that God had commanded this. In a case of this nature - where such a sacrifice was required - how natural would it have been for a more feeble faith to have doubted whether the command came from God! It might have been suggested to such a mind that this must be a delusion, or a temptation of Satan; that God "could not" require such a thing; and that whatever might be the appearance of a divine command in the case, there must be some deception about it. Yet Abraham does not appear to have reasoned about it at all, or to have allowed the strong feelings of a father to come in to modify his conviction that God had commanded him to give up his son. What an example is this to us! And how ready should we be to yield up a son - an only son - when God comes himself and removes him from us.

(2) the strength of his faith was seen in the fact that in obedience to the simple command of God, all the strong feelings of a father were overcome. On the one hand there were his warm affections for an only son; and on the other there was the simple command of God. They came in collision - but Abraham did not hesitate a moment. The strong paternal feeling was sacrificed at once. What an example this too for us! When the command of God and our own attachments come into collision, we should not hesitate a moment. God is to be obeyed. His command and arrangements are to be

yielded to, though most tender ties are rent asunder, and though the heart bleeds.

(3) the strength of his faith was seen in the fact, that, in obedience to the command of God, he resolved to do what in the eyes of the world would be regarded as a most awful crime. There is no crime of a higher grade than the murder of a son by the hand of a father. So it is now estimated by the world, and so it would have been in the time of Abraham. All the laws of God and of society appeared to be against the act which Abraham was about to commit, and he went forth not ignorant of the estimate which the world would put on this deed if it were known. How natural in such circumstances would it have been to argue that God could not possibly give such a command; that it was against all the laws of heaven and earth; that there was required in this what God and man alike must and would pronounce to be wrong and abominable! Yet Abraham did not hesitate. The command of God in the case was to his mind a sufficient proof that this was right - and it should teach us that whatever our Maker commands us should be done - no matter what may be the estimate affixed to it by human laws, and no matter how it may be regarded by the world.

(4) the strength of his faith was seen in the fact that there was a positive promise of God to himself which would seem to be frustrated by what he was about to do. God had expressly promised to him a numerous posterity, and had said that it was to be through this son. How could this be if he was put to death as a sacrifice? And how could God command such a thing when his promise was thus positive? Yet Abraham did not hesitate. It was not for him to reconcile these things; it was his to obey. He did not doubt that somehow all that God had said would prove to be true; and as he saw but one way in which it could be done - by his being immediately restored to life - he concluded that that was to be the way. So when God utters his will to us, it is ours simply to obey. It is not to inquire in what way his commands or revealed truth can be reconciled with other things. He will himself take care of that. It is ours at once to yield to what he commands, and to believe that somehow all that he has required and said will be consistent with everything else which he has uttered.

(5) the strength of the faith of Abraham was seen in his belief that God would raise his son from the dead. Of that he had no doubt. But what evidence had he of that? It had not been promised. No case of the kind had ever occurred; and the subject was attended with all the difficulties which attend it now. But Abraham believed it; for, first, there was no other way in which the promise of God could be fulfilled; and second, such a thing would be no more remarkable than what had already occurred. It was as easy for God to raise him from the dead as it was to give him at first contrary to all the probabilities of the case, and he did not, therefore, doubt that it would be so. Is it less easy for us to believe the doctrine of the resurrection than it was for Abraham? Is the subject attended with more difficulties now than it was then? The faith of Abraham in this remarkable instance shows us that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, not withstanding the limited revelations then enjoyed, and all the obvious difficulties of the case, was early believed in the world; and as those difficulties are no greater now, and as new light has been shed upon it by subsequent revelations, and especially as in more than one instance the dead have been actually raised, those difficulties should not be allowed to make us doubt it now.

Verse 20

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come - see Genesis 27:26-40. The meaning is, that he pronounced a blessing on them in respect to their future condition. This was by faith in God who had communicated it to him, and in full confidence that he would accomplish all that was here predicted. The act of faith here was simply what believes that all that God says is true. There were no human probabilities at the time when these prophetic announcements were made, which could have been the basis of his calculation, but all that he said must have rested merely on the belief that God had revealed it to him. A blessing was pronounced on each, of a very different nature, but Isaac had no doubt that both would be fulfilled.

Verse 21

By faith Jacob, when he was a dying - Genesis 47:31; 48:1-20. That is, when he was about to die. He saw his death near when he pronounced this blessing on Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph.

And worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff - This is an exact quotation from the Septuagint in Genesis 47:31. The English version of that place is, "and Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head," which is a proper translation, in the main, of the word מטה miTTahThat word, however, with different vowel points - מטה maTTehmeans a branch, a bough, a rod, a staff, and the translators of the Septuagint have so rendered it. The Masoretic points are of no authority, and either translation, therefore, would be proper. The word rendered "head" in Genesis 47:31 - "bed's head" - ראשׁ ro'shmeans properly head, but may there mean the top of anything, and there is no impropriety in applying it to the head or top of a staff. The word rendered in Genesis 47:31 as "bowed" - וישׁתחו wayishtachuw- implies properly the idea of "worshipping." It is bowing, or prostration for the purpose of worship or homage.

Though the Septuagint and the apostle here have, therefore, given a somewhat different version from that commonly given of the Hebrew, and sustained by the Masoretic pointing, yet it cannot be demonstrated that the version is unauthorized, or that it is not a fair translation of the Hebrew. It has also the probabilities of the case in its favour. Jacob was tenderly affected in view of the goodness of God, and of the assurance that he would be conveyed from Egypt when he died, and buried in the land of his fathers. Deeply impressed with this, nothing was more natural than that the old man should lean reverently forward and incline his head upon the top of his staff, and adore the covenant faithfulness of his God. Such an image is much more natural and probable than that he should "bow upon his bed's head" - a phrase which at best is not very intelligible. If this be the true account, then the apostle does not refer here to what was done when he "blessed the sons of Joseph," but to an act expressive of strong faith in God which had occurred just before. The meaning then is, "By faith when about to die he blessed the sons of Joseph; and by faith also he reverently bowed before God in the belief that when he died his remains would be conveyed to the promised land, and expressed his gratitude in an act of worship, leaning reverently on the top of his staff." The order in which these things are mentioned is of no consequence, and thus the whole difficulty in the case vanishes. Both the acts here referred to were expressive of strong confidence in God.

Verse 22

By faith Joseph, when he died - When about to die; see Genesis 50:24-25.

Made mention of the departing of the children of Israel - Margin, "remembered." The meaning is, that he called this to their mind; he spake of it. "And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die; and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." This prediction of Joseph could have rested only on faith in the promise of God. There were no events then occurring which would be likely to lead to this, and nothing which could be a basis of calculation that it would be so, except what God had spoken. The faith of Joseph, then, was simple confidence in God; and its strength was seen in his firm conviction that what had been promised would be fulfilled, even when there were no appearances that to human view justified it.

And gave commandment concerning his bones - Genesis 50:25. "And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." He had such a firm belief that they would possess the land of promise, that he exacted an oath of them that they would remove his remains with them, that he might be buried in the land of his fathers. He could not have exacted this oaths, nor could they have taken it, unless both he and they had a sure confidence that what God had spoken would be performed.

Verse 23

By faith Moses, when he was born - That is, by the faith of his parents. The faith of Moses himself is commended in the following verses. The statement of the apostle here is, that his parents were led to preserve his life by their confidence in God. They believed that he was destined to some great purpose, and that he would be spared, notwithstanding all the probabilities against it, and all the difficulties in the case.

Was hid three months of his parents - By his parents. In Exodus 2:2, it is said that it was done "by his mother." The truth doubtless was, that the mother was the agent in doing it - since the concealment, probably, could be better effected by one than where two were employed - but that the father also concurred in it is morally certain. The concealment was, at first, probably in their own house. The command seems to have been Exodus 1:22, that the child should be cast into the river as soon as born. This child was concealed in the hope that some way might be found out by which his life might be spared.

Because they saw he was a proper child - A fair, or beautiful child - ἀστεῖον asteionThe word properly means "pertaining to a city" - (from ἄστυ astua city); then urbane, polished, elegant; then fair, beautiful. In Acts 7:20, it is said that he was "fair to God," (Margin,); that is, exceedingly fair, or very handsome. His extraordinary beauty seems to have been the reason which particularly influenced his parents to attempt to preserve him. It is not impossible that they supposed that his uncommon beauty indicated that he was destined to some important service in life, and that they were on that account the more anxious to save him.

And they were not afraid of the king's commandment - Requiring that all male children should be given up to be thrown into the Nile. That is, they were not so alarmed, or did not so dread the king, as to be induced to comply with the command. The strength of the faith of the parents of Moses, appears:

(1)because the command of Pharaoh to destroy all the male children was positive, but they had so much confidence in God as to disregard it.

(2)because there was a strong improbability that their child could be saved. They themselves found it impossible to conceal him longer than three months, and when it was discovered, there was every probability that the law would be enforced and that the child would be put to death. Perhaps there was reason also to apprehend that the parents would be punished for disregarding the authority of the king.

(3)because they probably believed that their child was destined to some important work. They thus committed him to God instead of complying with the command of an earthly monarch, and against strong probabilities in the ease, they believed that it was possible that in some way he might be preserved alive. The remarkable result showed that their faith was not unfounded.

Verse 24

By faith Moses - He had confidence in God when he called him to be the leader of his people. He believed that he was able to deliver them, and he so trusted in him that he was willing at his command to forego the splendid prospects which opened before him in Egypt. "When he was come to years." Greek "being great;" that is, when he was grown up to manhood. He was at that time forty years of age; see the notes on Acts 7:23. He took

this step, therefore, in the full maturity of his judgment, and when there was no danger of being influenced by the ardent passions of youth.

Refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter - When saved from the ark in which he was placed on the Nile, he was brought up for the daughter of Pharaoh; Exodus 2:9. He seems to have been adopted by her, and trained up as her own son. What prospects this opened before him is not certainly known. There is no probability that he would he the heir to the crown of Egypt, as is often affirmed, for there is no proof that the crown descended in the line of daughters; nor if it did, is there any probability that it would descend on an adopted son of a daughter. But his situation could not but be regarded as highly honorable, and as attended with great advantages. It gave him the opportunity of receiving the best education which the times and country afforded - an opportunity of which he seems to have availed himself to the utmost; notes, Acts 7:22. It would doubtless be connected with important offices in the state. It furnished the opportunity of a life of ease and pleasure - such as they commonly delight in who reside at courts. And it doubtless opened before him the prospect of wealth - for there is no improbability in supposing that he would be the heir of the daughter of a rich monarch. Yet all this, it is said, he "refused." There is indeed no express mention made of his formaliy and openly refusing it, but his leaving the court, and identifying himself with his oppressed countrymen, was in fact a refusal of these high honors, and of these brilliant prospects. It is not impossible that when he became acquainted with his real history, there was some open and decided refusal on his part, to be regarded as the son of the daughter of this pagan monarch.

Verse 25

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God - With those whom God had chosen to he his people - the Israelites. They were then oppressed and down-trodden; but they were the descendants of Abraham, and were those whom God had designed to be his special people. Moses saw that if he cast in his lot with them, he must expect trials. They were poor, and crushed, and despised - a nation of slaves. If he identified himself with them, his condition would be like theirs - one of great trial; if he sought to elevate and deliver them, such an undertaking could not but be one of great peril and hardship. Trial and danger, want and care would follow from any course which he could adopt, and he knew that an effort to rescue them from bondage must be attended with the sacrifice of all the

comforts and honor which he enjoyed at court. Yet he "chose" this. He on the whole preferred it. He left the court, not because he was driven away; not because there was nothing there to gratify ambition or to he a stimulus to avarice; and not on account of harsh treatment - for there is no intimation that he was not treated with all the respect and honor due to his station, his talents, and his learning, but because he deliberately preferred to share the trials and sorrows of the friends of God. So every one who becomes a friend of God and casts in his lot with his people, though he may anticipate that it will be attended with persecution, with poverty, and with scorn, prefers this to all the pleasures of a life of gaiety and sin, and to the most brilliant prospects of wealth and fame which this world can offer.

Than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season - We are not to suppose that Moses, even at the court of Pharaoh, was leading a life of vicious indulgence. The idea is, that sins were practiced there such as those in which pleasure is sought, and that if he had remained there it must have been because he loved the pleasures of a sinful court and a sinful life rather than the favour of God. We may learn from this:

(1) that there is a degree of pleasure in sin. It does not deserve to be called happiness, and the apostle does not call it so. It is "pleasure," excitement, hilarity, merriment, amusement. Happiness is more solid and enduring than "pleasure;" and solid happiness is not found in the ways of sin. But it cannot be denied that there is a degree of pleasure which may be found in amusement; in the excitement of the ball-room; in feasting and revelry; in sensual enjoyments. All which wealth and splendour; music and dancing; sensual gratifications, and the more refined pursuits in the circles of fashion, can furnish, may be found in a life of irreligion; and if disappointment, and envy, and sickness, and mortified pride, and bereavements do not occur, the children of vanity and sin can find no inconsiderable enjoyment in these things. They say they do; and there is no reason to doubt the truth of their own testimony in the case. They call it a "life of pleasure;" and it is not proper to withhold from it the appellation which they choose to give it. It is not the most pure or elevated kind of enjoyment, but it would be unjust to deny that there is any enjoyment in such a course.

(2) it is only "for a season." It will all soon pass away. Had Moses lived at the court of Pharaoh all his days, it would have been only for a little

“season.” These pleasures soon vanish, because:

(a) life itself is short at best, and if a career of “pleasure” is pursued through the whole of the ordinary period allotted to man, it is very brief.

(b) Those who live for pleasure often abridge their own lives. Indulgence brings disease in its train, and the volaries of sensuality usually die young. The art has never been yet discovered of combining intemperance and sensuality with length of days. If a man wishes a reasonable prospect of long life, he must be temperate and virtuous. Indulgence in vice wears out the nervous and muscular system, and destroys the powers of life - just as a machine without balance-wheel or governor would soon tear itself to pieces.

(c) Calamity, disappointment, envy, and rivalship mar such a life of pleasure - and he who enters on it, from causes which he cannot control, finds it very short. And,

(d) compared with eternity, O how brief is the longest life spent in the ways of sin! Soon it must be over - and then the unpardoned sinner enters on an immortal career where pleasure is forever unknown!

(3) in view of all the “pleasures” which sin can furnish, and in view of the most brilliant prospects which this world can hold out, religion enables man to pursue a different path. They who become the friends of God are willing to give up all those fair and glittering anticipations, and to submit to whatever trials may be incident to a life of self-denying piety. Religion, with all its privations and sacrifices, is preferred, nor is there ever occasion to regret the choice. Moses deliberately made that choice; nor in all the trials which succeeded it - in all the cares incident to his great office in conducting the children of Israel to the promised land - in all their ingratitude and rebellion - is there the least evidence that he ever once wished himself back again that he might enjoy “the pleasures of sin” in Egypt.

Verse 26

Esteeming the reproach of Christ - Margin, "For;" that is, on account of Christ. This means either that he was willing to bear the reproaches incident to his belief that the Messiah would come, and that he gave up his fair prospects in Egypt with that expectation; or that he endured such reproaches as Christ suffered; or the apostle uses the expression as a sort of technical phrase, well understood in his time, to denote sufferings endured in the cause of religion. Christians at that time would naturally describe all sufferings on account of religion as endured in the cause of Christ; and Paul, therefore, may have used this phrase to denote sufferings in the cause of religion - meaning that Moses suffered what, when the apostle wrote, would be called "the reproaches of Christ." It is not easy, or perhaps possible, to determine which of these interpretations is the correct one, The most respectable names may be adduced in favour of each, and every reader must be left to adopt his own view of what is correct. The original will admit of either of them. The general idea is, that he would be reproached for the course which he pursued. He could not expect to leave the splendours of a court and undertake what he did, without subjecting himself to trials. He would be blamed by the Egyptians for his interference in freeing their "slaves," and in bringing so many calamities upon their country; and he would be exposed to ridicule for his folly in leaving his brilliant prospects at court, to become identified with an oppressed and despised people. It is rare that men are zealous in doing good without exposing themselves both to blame and to ridicule.

Greater riches - Worth more; of greater value. Reproach itself is not desirable; but reproach, when a man receives it in an effort to do good to others, is worth more to him than gold, 1 Peter 4:13-14. The scars which an old soldier has received in the defense of his country are more valued by him than his pension; and the reproach which a good man receives in endeavoring to save others is a subject of greater joy to him than would be all the wealth which could be gained in a life of sin.

Than the treasures in Egypt - It is implied here, that Moses had a prospect of inheriting large treasures in Egypt, and that he voluntarily gave them up to be the means of delivering his nation from bondage. Egypt abounded in wealth; and the adopted son of the daughter of the king would naturally be heir to a great estate.

For he had respect unto the recompense of the reward - The "recompense of the reward" here referred to must mean the blessedness of

heaven - for he had no earthly reward to look to. He had no prospect of pleasure, or wealth, or honor, in his undertaking. If he had sought these, so far as human sagacity could foresee, he would have remained at the court of Pharaoh. The declaration here proves that it is right to have respect to the rewards of heaven in serving God. It does not prove that this was the only or the main motive which induced Moses to abandon his prospects at court; nor does it prove that this should be our main or only motive in leading a life of piety. If it were, our religion would be mere selfishness. But it is right that we should desire the rewards and joys of heaven, and that we should allow the prospect of those rewards and joys to influence us as a motive to do our duty to God, and to sustain us in our trials; compare Philemon 3:8-11, Philemon 3:13-14.

Verse 27

By faith he forsook Egypt - Some have understood this of the first time in which Moses forsook Egypt, when he fled into Midian, as recorded in Exodus 2:14-15. He was at that time in fear of his life; but when he left Egypt at the head of the Hebrew people, he had no such apprehensions. God conducted him out with "an high hand," and throughout all the events connected with that remarkable deliverance, he manifested no dread of Pharaoh, and had no apprehension from what he could do. He went forth, indeed, at the head of his people when all the power of the king was excited to destroy them, but he went confiding in God: and this is the faith referred to here.

For he endured - He persevered, amidst all the trials and difficulties connected with his leading forth the people from bondage.

As seeing him who is invisible - "As if" he saw God. He had no more doubt that God had called him to this work, and that he would sustain him, than if he saw him with his physical eyes. This is a most accurate account of the nature of faith; compare notes on Hebrews 11:1.

Verse 28

Through faith he kept the passover - Greek, "he made - πεποίηκε pepoiēke- the passover," which means more, it seems to me, than that he merely kept or celebrated it. It implies that he instituted this rite, and made the arrangements for its observance. There is reference to the special agency, and the special faith which he had in its institution. The faith in the case was confidence that this would be the means of preserving the first-born of the Israelites, when the angel should destroy the first-born of the

Egyptians, and also that it would be celebrated as a perpetual memorial of this great deliverance. On the passover, see the notes on Matthew 26:2.

And the sprinkling of blood - The blood of the paschal lamb on the lintels and door-posts of the houses; Exodus 12:22.

Lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them - The first-born of the Egyptians; Exodus 12:23. The apostle has thus enumerated some of the things which illustrated the faith of Moses. The strength of his faith may be seen by a reference to some of the circumstances which characterized it.

(1) it was such confidence in God as to lead him to forsake the most flattering prospects of worldly enjoyment. I see no evidence, indeed, that he was the heir to the throne; but he was evidently heir to great wealth; he was encompassed with all the means of worldly pleasure; he had every opportunity for a life of literary and scientific pursuits; he was eligible to high and important trusts; he had a rank and station which would be regarded as one of the most honored and enviable on earth. None of those who are mentioned before in this chapter were required to make just such sacrifices as this. Neither Abel, nor Noah, nor Enoch, was called to forsake so brilliant worldly prospects; and though Abraham was called to a higher act of faith when commanded to give up his beloved son, yet there were some circumstances of trial in the case of Moses illustrating the nature of faith which did not exist in the case of Abraham. Moses, in the maturity of life, and with everything around him that is usually regarded by people as objects of ambition, was ready to forego it all. So wherever true faith exists, there is a readiness to abandon the hope of gain, and brilliant prospects of distinction, and fascinating pleasures, in obedience to the command of God.

(2) Moses entered on an undertaking wholly beyond the power of man to accomplish, and against every human probability of success. It was no less than that of restoring to freedom two millions of down-trodden, oppressed, and dispirited. slaves, and conducting aged and feeble men, tender females, helpless children, with numerous flocks and herds, across barren wastes to a distant land. He undertook this against the power of probably the most mighty monarch of his time; from the midst of a warlike nation; and when the whole nation would be kindled into rage at the loss of so many slaves, and when he might expect that all the power of their wrath would descend on him and his undisciplined and feeble hosts. He did this

when he had no wealth that he could employ to furnish provisions or the means of defense; no armies at his command to encircle his people on their march; and even no influence among the people himself, and with every probability that they would disregard him; compare Exodus 3:11; Exodus 4:1. He did this when the whole Hebrew people were to be aroused to willingness to enter on the great undertaking; when there was every probability that they would meet with formidable enemies in the way, and when there was nothing human whatever on which the mind could fix as a basis of calculation of success. If there ever was any undertaking commenced opposed to every human probability of success, it was that of delivering the Hebrew people and conducting them to the promised land. To human view it was quite as hopeless and impracticable as it would be now for a stranger from Africa, claiming to be a native prince there, and to have a commission from God to liberate the two and a half millions of slaves in the U. States and conduct them to the land of their fathers. In all the difficulties and discouragements of the undertaking of Moses, therefore, his only hope of success must have arisen from his confidence in God.

(3) it was an undertaking where there were many certain trials before him. The people whom he sought to deliver were poor and oppressed. An attempt to rescue them would bring down the wrath of the mighty monarch under whom they were. They were a people unaccustomed to self-government, and as the result proved, prone to ingratitude and rebellion. The journey before him lay through a dreary waste, where there was every prospect that there would be a want of food and water, and where he might expect to meet with formidable enemies. In all these things his only hope must have been in God. It was he only who could deliver them from the grasp of the tyrant; who could conduct them through the wilderness, who could provide for their wants in the desert; and who could defend a vast multitude of women and children from the enemies which they would be likely to encounter.

(4) there was nothing in this to gratify ambition, or to promise an earthly reward. All these prospects he gave up when he left the court of Pharaoh. To be the leader of a company of emancipated slaves through a pathless desert to a distant land, had nothing in itself that could gratify the ambition of one who had been bred at the most magnificent court on earth, and who had

enjoyed every advantage which the age afforded to qualify him to fill any exalted office. The result showed that Moses never designed to be himself the king of the people whom he led forth, and that he had no intention of aggrandizing his own family in the case.

Verse 29

By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land - Exodus 14:22, Exodus 14:29. That is, it was only by confidence in God that they were able to do this. It was not by power which they had to remove the waters and to make a passage for themselves; and it was not by the operation of any natural causes. It is not to be supposed that all who passed through the Red sea had saving faith. The assertion of the apostle is, that the passage was made in virtue of strong confidence in God, and that if it had not been for this confidence the passage could not have been made at all. Of this no one can entertain a doubt who reads the history of that remarkable transaction.

Which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned - Exodus 14:27-28. Evidently referred to here as showing the effects of not having faith in God, and of what must inevitably have befallen the Israelites if they had had no faith. The destruction of the Egyptians by the return of the waters in accordance with natural laws, showed that the Israelites would have been destroyed in the passage if a divine energy had not been employed to prevent it. On the passage through the Red sea, see Robinson‘s *Biblical Researches*, vol. 1, pp. 81-86.

Verse 30

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down … - Josephus, Hebrews 6:12-20. That is, it was not by any natural causes, or by any means that were in themselves adapted to secure such a result. It was not because they fell of themselves; nor because they were assailed by the hosts of the Israelites; nor was it because there was any natural tendency in the blowing of horns to cause them to fall. None of these things were true; and it was only by confidence in God that means so little adapted to such a purpose could have been employed at all; and it was only by continued faith in him that they could have been persevered in day by day, when no impression whatever was made. The strength of the faith evinced on this occasion appears from such circumstances as these: - that there was no natural tendency in the means used to produce the effect; that there was great apparent

improbability that the effect would follow; that they might be exposed to much ridicule from those within the city for attempting to demolish their strong walls in this manner, and from the fact that the city was encircled day after day without producing any result.

This may teach us the propriety and necessity of faith in similar circumstances. Ministers of the gospel often preach where there seems to be as little prospect of beating down the opposition in the human heart by the message which they deliver, as there was of demolishing the walls of Jericho by the blowing of rams‘ horns. they blow the gospel trumpet from week to week and month to month, and there seems to be no tendency in the strong citadel of the heart to yield. Perhaps the only apparent result is to excite ridicule and scorn. Yet let them not despair. Let them blow on. Let them still lift up their voice with faith in God, and in due time the walls of the citadel will totter and fall. God has power over the human heart as he had over Jericho; and in our darkest day of discouragement let us remember that we are never in circumstances indicating less probability of success from any apparent tendency in the means used to accomplish the result, than those were who encompassed this pagan city. With similar confidence in God we may hope for similar success.

Verse 31

By faith the harlot Rahab - She resided in Jericho; Joshua 2:1. When Joshua crossed the Jordan, he sent two men as spies to her house, and she saved them by concealment from the enemies that would have destroyed their lives. For this act of hospitality and kindness, they assured her of safety when the city should be destroyed, and directed her to give an indication of her place of abode to the invading Israelites, that her house might be spared; Joshua 2:18-19. In the destruction of the city, she was accordingly preserved; Joshua 2:6 is, that she had been a woman of abandoned character, and that she was known as such. That she might have been also a hostess, or one who kept a house of entertainment for strangers, is at the same time by no means improbable, since it not unfrequently happened in ancient as well as modern times, that females of this character kept such houses. It might have been the fact that her house was “known” merely as a house of entertainment that led the spies who went to Jericho to seek a lodging there. It would be natural that strangers coming into a place

should act in this respect as all other travelers did, and should apply for entertainment at what was known as a public house.

(2) there is no improbability in supposing that her course of life had been changed either before their arrival, or in consequence of it. They were doubtless wise and holy men. Men would not be selected for an enterprise like this, in whom the leader of the Hebrew army could not put entire confidence. It is not unfair then to suppose that they were men of eminent piety, as well as sagacity. Nor is there any improbability in supposing that they would acquaint this female with the history of their people, with their remarkable deliverance from Egypt, and with the design for which they were about to invade the land of Canaan. There is evidence that some such representations made a deep impression on her mind, and led to a change in her views and feelings, for she not only received them with the usual proofs of hospitality, but jeoparded her own life in their defense, when she might easily have betrayed them. This fact showed that she had a firm belief that they were what they professed to be - the people of God, and that she was willing to identify her interests with theirs.

(3) this case - supposing that she had been a woman of bad character, but now was truly converted - does not stand alone. Other females of a similar character have been converted, and have subsequently led lives of piety; and though the number is not comparatively great, yet the truth of God has shown its power in renewing and sanctifying some at least of this, the most abandoned and degraded class of human beings. “Publicans and harlots,” said the Saviour, “go into the kingdom of God;” Matthew 21:31. Rahab seems to have been one of them; and her case shows that such instances of depravity are not hopeless. This record, therefore, is one of encouragement for the most abandoned sinners; and one too which shows that strangers, even in a public house, may do good to those who have wandered far from God and virtue, and that we should never despair of saving the most abandoned of our race.

(4) there is no need of supposing that the apostle in commending this woman approved of all that she did. That she was not perfect is true. That she did some things which cannot be vindicated is true also - and who does not? But admitting all that may be said about any imperfection in her character, (compare Joshua 2:4), it was still true that she had strong faith -

and that is all that the apostle commends. We are under no more necessity of vindicating all that she did, than we are all that David or Peter did - or all that is now done by those who have the highest claims to virtue.

(5) she had strong faith. It was only a strong belief that Yahweh was the true God, and that the children of Israel were his people, which would have led her to screen the strangers at the peril of her own life; and when the city was encompassed, and the walls fell, and the tumult of battle raged she showed her steady confidence in their fidelity, and in God, by using the simple means on which she was told the safety of herself and her family depended; Joshua 6:22-23.

With them that believed not - The inhabitants of the idolatrous city of Jericho. The margin is, "were disobedient." The more correct rendering, however, is, as in the text, believed not. They evinced no such faith as Rahab had, and they were therefore destroyed.

Received the spies with peace - With friendliness and kindness; Joshua 2:1 ff.

Verse 32

And what shall I more say? - There are numerous other instances showing the strength of faith which there is not time to mention.

For the time would fail me to tell - To recount all that they did; all the illustrations of the strength and power of faith evinced in their lives.

Of Gedeon - The history of Gideon is detailed at length in Judges 15:16; Judges 16:30.

And of Jephthae - The story of Jephtha is recorded in Judges 11:29-32.

(It is not likely that Jephtha's faith would have found a record here, had it been of no higher kind than this. Peirce admits his unnatural crime, but supposes him to have repented. "It must be owned," says he, "that if Jephtha had not repented of this very heinous wickedness, he could not have been entitled to salvation. The apostle, therefore, who has assured us of his salvation, must undoubtedly have gone upon the supposition that Jephtha actually repented of it before he died. That he had time to repent is beyond dispute, because he lived near six years after this. For it is expressly said he judged Israel six years, Judges 12:7, and it is as certain he made this vow in the beginning of his government. What evidence the apostle had of Jephtha's repentance I cannot say. He might know it by the help of old Jewish histories, or by inspiration.")

Even in the great and improper sacrifice of his only daughter which the obvious interpretation of the record respecting him in Judges 11:39, leads us to suppose he made, he did it as an offering to the Lord, and under these mistaken views of duty, he showed by the greatest sacrifice which a man could make - that of an only child that he was disposed to do what he believed was required by religion. A full examination of the case of Jephtha, and of the question whether he really sacrificed his daughter, may be found in Warburton‘s *Divine Legation of Moses*, book 9, notes, in Bush‘s Notes on Judges 11; and in the Biblical Repository for January 1843. It is not necessary to go into the much litigated inquiry here whether he really put his daughter to death, for whether he did or not, it is equally true that he evinced strong confidence in God. If he did do it, in obedience as he supposed to duty and to the divine command, no higher instance of faith in God as having a right to dispose of all that he had, could be furnished; if he did not, his eminent valour and success in battle show that he relied for strength and victory on the arm of Yahweh. The single reason why the piety of Jephtha has ever been called in question has been the fact that he sacrificed his own daughter. If he did not do that, no one will doubt his claims to an honored rank among those who have evinced faith in God.

Of David also - Commended justly as an eminent example of a man who had faith in, God, though it cannot be supposed that all that he did was approved.

And Samuel - In early youth distinguished for his piety, and manifesting it through his life; see 1Sam.

And of the prophets - They were men who had strong confidence in the truth of what God directed them to foretell, and who were ever ready, depending on him, to make known the most unwelcome truths to their fellow man, even at the peril of their lives.

Verse 33

Who through faith subdued kingdoms - That is, those specified in the previous verses, and others like them. The meaning is, that some of them subdued kingdoms, others obtained promises, etc. Thus, Joshua subdued the nations of Canaan; Gideon the Midianites; Jephtha the Ammonites; David the Philistines, Amalekites, Jebusites, Edomites, etc.

Wrought righteousness - Carried the laws of justice into execution, particularly on guilty nations. They executed the great purposes of God in

punishing the wicked, and in cutting off his foes.

Obtained promises - Or obtained "promised blessings" (Bloomfield, Stuart); that is, they obtained as a result of their faith, promises of blessings on their posterity in future times.

Stopped the mouths of lions - As Samson, Judges 14:6; David, 1 Samuel 17:34 ff; and particularly Daniel; Daniel 6:7, following To be able to subdue and render harmless the king of the forest - the animal most dreaded in early times - was regarded as an eminent achievement.

Verse 34

Quenched the violence of fire - As Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did; Daniel 3:15-26. "Escaped the edge of the sword." As Elijah did when he fled from Ahab, 1 Kings 19:3; as Elijah did when he was delivered from the king of Syria, 2 Kings 6:16; and as David did when he fled from Saul.

Out of weakness were made strong - Enabled to perform exploits beyond their natural strength, or raised up from a state of physical infirmity, and invigorated for conflict. Such a case as that of Samson may be referred to, Judges 15:15; Judges 16:26-30; or as that of Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20 who was restored from dangerous sickness by the immediate interposition of God; see the notes on Isaiah 38.

Waxed valiant in fight - Became valiant. Like Joshua. Barak, David, etc. The books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings supply instances of this in abundance.

Turned to flight the armies of the aliens - The foreigners - as the invading Philistines, Ammonites, Moabites, Assyrians, etc.

Verse 35

Women received their dead raised to life again - As in the case of the woman of Zarephath, whose child was restored to life by Elijah, 1 Kings 17:19-24; and of the son of the Shunamite woman whose child was restored to life by Elisha; Isaiah 5:12. The engine of torture here referred to, probably resembled the drum in form, on which the body of a criminal was bent so as to give greater severity to the wounds which were inflicted by scourging. The lash would cut deeper when the body was so extended, and the open gashes exposed to the air would increase the torture; see 2 Maccabees 6:19-29. The punishment here referred to seems to have consisted of two things - the stretching upon the instrument, and the scourging; see Robinson's *Lexicon* and Stuart in loc. Bloomfield, however,

supposes that the mode of the torture can be best learned from the original meaning of the word τυμπανον tumpanon- "tympanum" - as meaning:

(1)abeatingstick, and,

(2)abeating-post which was in the form of a T, thus suggesting the posture of the sufferer. This beating, says he, was sometimes administered with sticks or rods; and sometimes with leather thongs inclosing pieces of lead. The former account, however, better agrees with the usual meaning of the word.

Not accepting deliverance - When it was offered them; that is, on condition that they would renounce their opinions, or do what was required of them. This is the very nature of the spirit of martyrdom.

That they might obtain a better resurrection - That is, when they were subjected to this kind of torture they were looked upon as certainly dead. To have accepted deliverance then, would have been a kind of restoration to life, or a species of resurrection. But they refused this, and looked forward to a more honorable and glorious restoration to life; a resurrection, therefore, which would be better than this. It would be in itself more noble and honorable, and would be permanent, and therefore better. No particular instance of this kind is mentioned in the Old Testament; but amidst the multitude of cases of persecution to which good men were subjected, there is no improbability in supposing that this may have occurred. The case of Eleazer, recorded in 2 Maccabees 6, so strongly resembles what the apostle says here, that it is very possible he may have had it in his eye. The passage before us proves that the doctrine of the resurrection was understood and believed before the coming of the Saviour, and that it was one of the doctrines which sustained and animated those who were called to suffer on account of their religion. In the prospect of death under the infliction of torture on account of religion, or under the pain produced by disease, nothing will better enable us to bear up under the suffering than the expectation that the body will be restored to immortal vigour, and raised to a mode of life where it will be no longer susceptible of pain. To be raised up to that life is a "better resurrection" than to be saved from death when persecuted, or to be raised up from a bed of pain.

Verse 36

And others had trial of cruel mockings - Referring to the scorn and derision which the ancient victims of persecution experienced. This has been often experienced by martyrs, and doubtless it was the case with those

who suffered on account of their religion, before the advent of the Saviour as well as afterward. Some instances of this kind are mentioned in the Old Testament 2 Kings 2:23; 1 Kings 22:24; and it was frequent in the time of the Maccabees.

And scourging - Whipping. This was a common mode of punishment, and was usually inflicted before a martyr was put to death; see the notes on Matthew 10:17; Matthew 27:26. For instances of this, see Jeremiah 20:2; Genesis 39:20.

And imprisonment - see 1 Kings 22:27; Jeremiah 20:2.

Verse 37

They were stoned - A common method of punishment among the Jews; see the notes on Matthew 21:35, Matthew 21:44. Thus, Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, was stoned; see 2 Chronicles 24:21; compare 1 Kings 21:1-14. It is not improbable that this was often resorted to in times of popular tumult, as in the case of Stephen; Acts 7:59; compare John 10:31; Acts 14:5. In the time of the terrible persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes, and under Manasseh, such instances also probably occurred.

They were sawn asunder - It is commonly supposed that Isaiah was put to death in this manner. For the evidence of this, see introduction to Isaiah, 2. It is known that this mode of punishment, though not common, did exist in ancient times. Among the Romans, the laws of the twelve tables affixed this as the punishment of certain crimes, but this mode of execution was very rare, since Aulius Gellius says that in his time no one remembered to have seen it practiced. It appears, however, from Suetonius that the emperor Caligula often condemned persons of rank to be sawn through the middle. Calmet, writing above a hundred years ago, says, "I am assured that the punishment of the saw is still in use among the Switzers, and that they put it in practice not many years ago upon one of their countrymen, guilty of a great crime, in the plain of Grenelles, near Paris. They put him into a kind of coffin, and sawed him lengthwise, beginning at the head, as a piece of wood is sawn; "Pict. Bib." It was not an unusual mode of punishment to cut a person asunder, and to suspend the different parts of the body to walls and towers, as a warning to the living; see 1 Samuel 31:10, and Morier's Second Journey to Persia, p. 96.

Were tempted - On this expression, which has given much perplexity in critics, see the notes of Prof. Stuart, Bloomfield, and Kuinoel. There is a great variety of reading in the mss. and editions of the New Testament, and

many have regarded it as an interpolation. The difficulty which has been felt in reference to it has been, that it is a much milder word than those just used, and that it is hardly probable that the apostle would enumerate this among those which he had just specified, as if to be tempted deserved to be mentioned among sufferings of so severe a nature. But it seems to me there need be no real difficulty in the case. The apostle here, among other sufferings which they were called to endure, may have referred to the temptations which were presented to the martyrs when about to die to abandon their religion and live. It is very possible to conceive that this might have been among the highest aggravations of their sufferings. We know that in later times it was a common practice to offer life to those who were doomed to a horrid death on condition that they would throw incense on the altars of a pagan god, and we may easily suppose that a temptation of that kind, artfully presented in the midst of keen tortures, would greatly aggravate their sufferings. Or suppose when a father was about to be put to death for his religion, his wife and children were placed before him and should plead with him to save his life by abandoning his religion, we can easily imagine that no pain of the rack would cause so keen torture to the soul as their cries and tears would. Amidst the sorrows of martyrs, therefore, it was not improper to say that they were tempted, and to place this among their most aggravated woes. For instances of this nature. see 1 Samuel 22:18; and the prophets. of whose slaughter by the sword Elijah complains; 1 Kings 19:10.

They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins - Driven away from their homes, and compelled to clothe themselves in this rude and uncomfortable manner. A dress of this kind, or a dress made of hair, was not uncommon with the prophets, and seems indeed to have been regarded as an appropriate badge of their office; see 2 Kings 1:8; Zechariah 13:4.

Being destitute, afflicted, tormented - The word "tormented" here means tortured. The apostle expresses here in general what in the previous verses he had specified in detail.

Verse 38

Of whom the world was not worthy - The world was so wicked that it had no claim that such holy men should live in it. These poor, despised, and persecuted people, living as outcasts and wanderers, were of a character far elevated above the world. This is a most beautiful expression. It is at once a

statement of their eminent holiness, and of the wickedness of the rest of mankind.

They wandered in deserts … - On the Scripture meaning of the word "desert" or wilderness, see the notes on Matthew 3:1. This is a description of persons driven away from their homes, and wandering about from place to place to procure a scanty subsistence; compare 1 Maccabees 1:53; 2 Maccabees 5:27; 6:7. The instances mentioned in the Books of Maccabees are so much in point, that there is no impropriety in supposing that Paul referred to some such cases, if not these very cases. As there is no doubt about their historic truth, there was no impropriety in referring to them, though they are not mentioned in the canonical books of Scripture. One of those cases may be referred to as strikingly illustrating what is here said. "But Judas Maccabeus with nine others or thereabout, withdrew himself into the wilderness, and lived in the mountains after the manner of beasts, with his company, who fed on herbs continually lest they should be partakers of the pollution;" 2 Maccabees 5:27.

Verse 39

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith - They were all commended and approved on account of their confidence in God; see the notes on Hebrews 11:2.

Received not the promise - That is, did not receive the fulfillment of the promise; or did not receive all that was promised. They all still looked forward to some future blessings; notes, Hebrews 11:13.

Verse 40

God having provided some better thing for us - Margin, "foreseen." That is, "God having provided, or determined on giving some better thing than any of them realized, and which we are now permitted to enjoy." That is, God gave them promises; but they were not allowed to see their fulfillment. We are permitted now to see what they referred to, and in part, at least, to witness their completion; and though the promise was made to them, the fulfillment more particularly pertains to us.

That they without us should not be made perfect - That is, complete. The whole system of revelation was not complete at once, or in one generation. It required successive ages to make the system complete, so that it might be said that it was finished, or perfect. Our existence, therefore, and the developments in our times, were as necessary to the perfection of the system, as the promise made to the patriarchs. And as the system would not

have been complete if the blessings had been simply conferred on us without the previous arrangements, and the long scheme of introductory measures, so it would not have been complete if the promises had been merely given to them without the corresponding fulfillment in our times. They are like the two parts of a tally. The fathers had one part in the promises, and we the other in the fulfullment, and neither would have been complete without the other. The "better things" then referred to here as possessed by Christians, are the privilege of seeing those promises fulfilled in the Messiah; the blessings resulting from the atonement; the more expanded views which they have under the gospel; the brighter hopes of heaven itself, and the clearer apprehension of what heaven will be, which they are permitted to enjoy. This, therefore, accords entirely with the argument which the apostle is pursuing - which is, to show that the Christians whom he addressed should not apostatize from their religion. The argument is, that in numerous instances, as specified, the saints of ancient times, even under fiery trials, were sustained by faith in God, and that too when they had not seen the fulfillment of the promises, and when they had much more obscure views than we are permitted to enjoy. If they, under the influence of the mere promise of future blessings, were enabled thus to persevere, how much more reason is there for us to persevere who have been permitted, by the coming of the Messiah, to wittess the perfection of the system!

There is no part of the New Testament of more value than this chapter; none which deserves to be more patiently studied, or which may be more frequently applied to the circumstances of Christians. These invaluable records are adapted to sustain us in times of trial, temptation, and persecution; to show us what faith has done in days that are past, and what it may do still in similar circumstances. Nothing can better show the value and the power of faith, or of true religion, than the records in this chapter. It has done what nothing else could do. It has enabled people to endure what nothing else would enable them to bear, and it has shown its power in inducing them to give up, at the command of God, what the human heart holds most dear. And among the lessons which we may derive from the study of this portion of divine truth, let us learn from the example of Abel to continue to offer to God the sacrifice of true piety which he requires, though we may be taunted or opposed by our nearest kindred; from that of Enoch to walk with God, though surrounded by a wicked world, and to look to the

blessed translation to heaven which awaits all the righteous; from that of Noah to comply with all the directions of God, and to make all needful preparations for the future events which he has predicted, in which we are to be interested - as death, judgment, and eternity - though the events may seem to be remote, and though there may be no visible indications of their coming, and though the world may deride our faith and our fears; from that of Abraham to leave country, and home, and kindred, if God calls us to, and to go just where he commands, through deserts and wilds, and among strange people, and like him also to be ready to give up the dearest objects of our earthly affection, even when attended with all that can try or torture our feelings of affection - feeling that God who gave has a right to require their removal in his own way, and that however much we may fix our hopes on a dear child, he can fulfil all his purposes and promises to us though such a child should be removed by death; from that of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to regard ourselves as strangers and pilgrims on earth, having here no permanent home. and seeking a better country; from that of Moses to be willing to leave all the pomp and splendour of the world, all our brilliant prospects and hopes, and to welcome poverty, reproach, and suffering, that we may identify ourselves with the people of God; by the remembrance of the host of worthies who met danger, and encountered mighty foes, aud vanquished them, let us learn to go forth in our spiritual conflicts against the enemies of our souls and of the church, assured of victory; and from the example of those who were driven from the abodes of human beings, and exposed to the storms of persecution, let us learn to bear every trial, and to be ready at any moment to lay down our lives in the cause of truth and of God. Of all those holy men who made these sacrifices, which of them ever regretted it, when he came calmly to look over his life, and to review it on the borders of the eternal world?

None. Not one of them ever expressed regret that he had given up the world; or that he had obeyed the Lord too early, too faithfully, or too long. Not Abraham who left his country and kindred; not Moses who abandoned his brilliant prospects in Egypt; not Noah who subjected himself to ridicule and scorn for an hundred and twenty years; and not one of those who were exposed to lions, to fire, to the edge of the sword, or who were driven away from society as outcasts to wander in pathless deserts or to take up their abodes in caverns, ever regretted the course which they had chosen. And

who of them all now regrets it? Who, of these worthies, now looks from heaven and feels that he suffered one privation too much, or that he has not had an ample recompense for all the ills he experienced in the cause of religion? So we shall feel when from the bed of death we look over the present life, and look out on eternity.

Whatever our religion may have cost us, we shall not feel that we began to serve God too early, or served him too faithfully. Whatever pleasure, gain, or splendid prospects we gave up in order to become Christians, we shall feel that it was the way of wisdom, and shall rejoice that we were able to do it. Whatever sacrifices, trials, persecution, and pain, we may meet with, we shall feel that there has been more than a compensation in the consolations of religion, and in the hope of heaven, and that by every sacrifice we have been the gainers. When we reach heaven, we shall see that we have not endured one pain too much, and that through whatever trials we may have passed, the result is worth all which it has cost. Strengthened then in our trials by the remembrance of what faith has done in times that are past; recalling the example of those who through faith and patience have inherited the promises, let us go cheerfully on our way. Soon the journey of trials will be ended, and soon what are now objects of faith will become objects of fruition, and in their enjoyment, how trifling and brief will seem all the sorrows of our pilgrimage below!

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

The apostle having illustrated the nature and power of faith in the previous chapter Hebrews 11:1.

II. He appeals to the example of the Saviour; Hebrews 12:2-4. This was a more illustrious instance than any of those which had been adverted to, and is not referred to with theirs, but is adduced as deserving a separate and a special specification. The circumstances in his case which are an encouragement to perseverance in the Christian conflict, are these.

(1)he endured the cross, and is now exalted to the right hand of God.

(2)he bore the contradiction of sinners against himself, as those were called to do to whom Paul wrote.

(3)he went beyond them in his trials and temptations - beyond anything which they could have reason to apprehend - for he had "resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

III. He encourages them by showing that their trials would result in their own good, and particularly that the hand of a Father was in them; Hebrews 12:5-13. Particularly he urges:

(1)that God addressed those who suffered as his sons, and called on them not to receive with improper feeling the chastening of the Lord, Hebrews 12:5;

(2)that it was a general principle that the Lord chastened those whom he loved, and the fact that we received chastening was to be regarded as evidence that we are under his paternal care, and that he has not forsaken us, Hebrews 12:6-8;

(3)that they had been subject to the correction of earthly fathers and had learned to be submissive, and that there was much higher reason for submitting to God, Hebrews 12:9-10;

(4)and that however painful chastisement might be at present, yet it would ultimately produce important benefits; Hebrews 12:11. By these considerations he encourages them to bear their trials with patience, and to

assume new courage in their efforts to live a Christian life; Hebrews 12:12-13.

IV. He exhorts them to perseverance and fidelity by the fact that if they should become remiss, and renounce their confidence in God, it would be impossible to retrieve what was lost; Hebrews 12:14-17. In illustrating this, he appeals to the case of Esau. For a trifling consideration, when in distress, he parted with an invaluable blessing. When it was gone, it was impossible to recover it. No consideration could induce a change, though he sought it earnestly with tears. So it would be with Christians, if, under the power of temptation, they should renounce their religion, and go back to their former state.

V. He urges them to perseverance by the nature of the dispensation under which they were, as compared with the one under which they had formerly been - the Jewish; Hebrews 12:18-29. Under the former, everything was suited to alarm and terrify the soul; Hebrews 12:18-21. The new dispensation was of a different character. It was adapted to encourage and to win the heart. The real Mount Zion - the city of the living God - the New Jerusalem - the company of the angels - the church of the first-born - the Judge of all - the great Mediator - to which they had come under the new dispensation, all these were suited to encourage the fainting heart, and to win the affections of the soul; Hebrews 12:22-24. Yet, in proportion to the sacredness and tenderness of these considerations, and to the light and privileges which they now enjoyed, would be their guilt if they should renounce their religion - for under this dispensation, as under the old, God was a consuming fire; Hebrews 12:25-29.

Verse 1

Wherefore - In view of what has been said in the previous chapter.

Seeing we also are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses - The apostle represents those to whom he had referred in the previous chapter, as looking on to witness the efforts which Christians make, and the manner in which they live. There is allusion here, doubtless, to the ancient games. A great multitude of spectators usually occupied the circular seats in the amphitheater, from which they could easily behold the combatants; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. In like manner, the apostle represents Christians as encompassed with the multitude of worthies to whom he had referred in the previous chapter. It cannot be fairly inferred

from this that he means to say that all those ancient worthies were actually looking at the conduct of Christians, and saw their conflicts. It is a figurative representation, such as is common, and means that we ought to act as if they were in sight, and cheered us on. How far the spirits of the just who are departed from this world are permitted to behold what is done on earth - if at all - is not revealed in the Scriptures. The phrase, "a cloud of witnesses," means many witnesses, or a number so great that they seem to be a cloud. The comparison of a multitude of persons to a cloud is common in the classic writers; see Homer II. 4:274,23:133; Statius 1:340, and other instances adduced in Wetstein, in loc.; compare notes on 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

Let us lay aside every weight - The word rendered "weight" - ὄγκον ogkon- means what is crooked or hooked, and thence any thing that is attached or suspended by a hook that is, by its whole weight, and hence means weight; see "Passow." It does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The word is often used in the classic writers in the sense of swelling, tumour, pride. Its usual meaning is that of weight or burden, and there is allusion here, doubtless, to the runners in the games who were careful not to encumber themselves with anything that was heavy. Hence, their clothes were so made as not to impede their running, and hence, they were careful in their training not to overburden themselves with food, and in every way to remove what would be an impediment or hindrance. As applied to the racers it does not mean that they began to run with anything like a burden, and then threw it away - as persons sometimes aid their jumping by taking a stone in their hands to acquire increased momentum - but that they were careful not to allow anything that would be a weight or an encumbrance.

As applied to Christians it means that they should remove all which would obstruct their progress in the Christian course. Thus, it is fair to apply it to whatever would be an impediment in our efforts to win the crown of life. It is not the same thing in all persons. In one it may be pride; in another vanity; in another worldliness; in another a violent and almost ungovernable temper; in another a corrupt imagination; in another a heavy, leaden, insensible heart; in another some improper and unholy attachment. Whatever it may be, we are exhorted to lay it aside, and this general direction may be applied to anything which prevents our making the highest possible attainment in the divine life. Some persons would make much

more progress if they would throw away many of their personal ornaments; some, if they would disencumber themselves of the heavy weight of gold which they are endeavoring to carry with them. So some very light objects, in themselves considered, become material encumbrances. Even a feather or a ring - such may be the fondness for these toys - may become such a weight that they will never make much progress toward the prize.

And the sin which doth so easily beset us - The word which is here rendered "easily beset" - εὐπερίστατον euperistaton- "euperistaton" - does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It properly means, "standing well around;" and hence, denotes what is near, or at hand, or readily occurring. So Chrysostom explains it. Passow defines it as meaning "easy to encircle." Tyndale renders it "the sin that hangeth on us." Theodoret and others explain the word as if derived from περίστασις peristasis- a word which sometimes means affliction, peril - and hence, regard it as denoting what is full of peril, or the sin which so easily subjects one to calamity. Bloomfield supposes, in accordance with the opinion of Grotius, Crellius, Kype, Kuinoel, and others, that it means "the sin which especially winds around us, and hinders our course," with allusion to the long Oriental garments. According to this, the meaning would be, that as a runner would be careful not to encumber himself with a garment which would be apt to wind around his legs in running, and hinder him, so it should be with the Christian, who especially ought to lay aside everything which resembles this; that is, all sin, which must impede his course. The former of these interpretations, however, is most commonly adopted, and best agrees with the established sense of the word. It will then mean that we are to lay aside every encumbrance, particularly or especially - for so the word καὶ kai"and," should be rendered here "the sins to which we are most exposed." Such sins are appropriately called "easily besetting sins." They are those to which we are particularly liable. They are such sins as the following:

(1) Those to which we are particularly exposed by our natural temperament, or disposition. In some this is pride, in others indolence, or gaiety, or levity, or avarice, or ambition, or sensuality.

(2) those in which we freely indulged before we became Christians. They will be likely to return with power, and we are far more likely from the laws of association, to fall into them than into any other. Thus, a man who has been intemperate is in special danger from that quarter; a man who

has been an infidel, is in special danger of scepticism: one who has been avaricious, proud, frivolous, or ambitious, is in special danger, even after conversion, of again committing these sins.

(3) sins to which we are exposed by our profession, by our relations to others, or by our situation in life. They whose condition will entitle them to associate with what are regarded as the more elevated classes of society, are in special danger of indulging in the methods of living, and of amusement that are common among them; they who are prospered in the world are in danger of losing the simplicity and spirituality of their religion; they who hold a civil office are in danger of becoming mere politicians, and of losing the very form and substance of piety.

(4) sins to which we are exposed from some special weakness in our character. On some points we may be in no danger. We may be constitutionally so firm as not to be especially liable to certain forms of sin. But every man has one or more weak points in his character; and it is there that he is particularly exposed. A bow may be in the main very strong. All along its length there may be no danger of its giving way - save at one place where it has been made too thin, or where the material was defective - and if it ever breaks, it will of course be at that point. That is the point, therefore, which needs to be guarded and strengthened. So in reference to character. There is always some weak point which needs specially to be guarded, and our principal danger is there. Self-knowledge, so necessary in leading a holy life, consists much in searching out those weak points of character where we are most exposed; and our progress in the Christian course will be determined much by the fidelity with which we guard and strengthen them.

And let us run with patience the race that is set before us. - The word rendered "patience" rather means in this place, perseverance. We are to run the race without allowing ourselves to be hindered by any obstructions, and without giving out or fainting in the way. Encouraged by the example of the multitudes who have run the same race before us, and who are now looking out upon us from heaven, where they dwell, we are to persevere as they did to the end.

Verse 2

Looking unto Jesus - As a further inducement to do this, the apostle exhorts us to look to the Saviour. We are to look to his holy life; to his patience and perseverance in trials; to what he endured in order to obtain the crown, and to his final success and triumph.

The author and finisher of our faith - The word "our" is not in the original here, and obscures the sense. The meaning is, he is the first and the last as an example of faith or of confidence in God - occupying in this, as in all other things, the pre-eminence, and being the most complete model that can be placed before us. The apostle had not enumerated him among those who had been distinguished for their faith, but he now refers to him as above them all; as a case that deserved to stand by itself. It is probable that there is a continuance here of the allusion to the Grecian games which the apostle had commenced in the previous verse. The word "author" - ἀρχηγὸν archēgon- (marg. beginner) - means properly the source, or cause of anything; or one who makes a beginning. It is rendered in Acts 3:15; Acts 5:31, "Prince"; in Hebrews 2:10, "Captain"; and in the place before us, "Author."

It does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The phrase "the beginner of faith," or the leader on of faith, would express the idea. He is at the head of all those who have furnished an example of confidence in God, for he was himself the most illustrious instance of it. The expression, then, does not mean properly that he produces faith in us, or that we believe because he causes us to believe - whatever may be the truth about that - but that he stands at the head as the most eminent example that can be referred to on the subject of faith. We are exhorted to look to him, as if at the Grecian games there was one who stood before the racer who had previously carried away every palm of victory; who had always been triumphant, and with whom there was no one who could be compared. The word "finisher" - τελειωτὴν teleiōtēn- corresponds in meaning with the word "author." It means that he is the completer as well as the beginner; the last as well as the first.

As there has been no one hitherto who could be compared with him, so there will be no one hereafter; compare Revelation 1:8, Revelation 1:11. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last." The word does not mean that he was the "finisher" of faith in the sense that he makes our faith complete or perfects it - whatever may be true about that

- but that he occupies this elevated position of being beyond comparison above all others. Alike in the commencement and the close, in the beginning of faith, and in its ending, he stands pre-eminent. To this illustrious model we should look - as a racer would on one who had been always so successful that he surpassed all competitors and rivals. If this be the meaning, then it is not properly explained, as it is commonly (see Bloomfield and Stuart in loc.), by saying that the word here is synonymous with "rewarder," and refers to the βραβευτὴς brabeutēs- or the distributor of the prize; compare notes on Colossians 3:15, There is no instance where the word is used in this sense in the New Testament (compare Passow), nor would such an interpretation present so beautiful and appropriate a thought as the one suggested above.

Who for the joy that was set before him - That is, who in view of all the honor which he would have at the right hand of God, and the happiness which he would experience from the consciousness that he had redeemed a world, was willing to bear the sorrows connected with the atonement.

Endured the cross - Endured patiently the ignominy and pain connected with the suffering of death on the cross.

Despising the shame - Disregarding the ignominy of such a mode of death. It is difficult for us now to realize the force of the expression, "enduring the shame of the cross," as it was understood in the time of the Saviour and the apostles. The views of the world have changed, and it is now difficult to divest the "cross" of the associations of honor and glory which the word suggests, so as to appreciate the ideas which encompassed it then. There is a degree of dishonor which we attach to the guillotine, but the ignominy of a death on the cross was greater than that; there is disgrace attached to the block, but the ignominy of the cross was greater than that; there is a much deeper infamy attached to the gallows, but the ignominy of the cross was greater than that. And that word - the cross - which when now proclaimed in the ears of the refined, the intelligent, and even the frivolous, excites an idea of honor, in the ears of the people of Athens, of Corinth, and of Rome, excited deeper disgust than the word "gallows" does with us - for it was regarded as the appropriate punishment of the most infamous of mankind.

We can now scarcely appreciate these feelings, and of course the declaration that Jesus "endured the cross, despising the shame," does not make the impression on our minds in regard to the nature of his sufferings,

and the value of his example, which it should do. When we now think of the "cross," it is not of the multitude of slaves, and robbers, and thieves, and rebels, who have died on it, but of the one great Victim, whose death has ennobled even this instrument of torture, and encircled it with a halo of glory. We have been accustomed to read of it as an imperial standard in war in the days of Constantine, and as the banner under which armies have marched to conquest; it is intermingled with the sweetest poetry; it is a sacred thing in the most magnificent cathedrals; it adorns the altar, and is even an object of adoration; it is in the most elegant engravings; it is worn by beauty and piety as an ornament near the heart; it is associated with all that is pure in love, great in self-sacrifice, and holy in religion. To see the true force of the expression here, therefore, it is necessary to divest ourselves of these ideas of glory which encircle the "cross," and to place ourselves in the times and lands in which, when the most infamous of mankind were stretched upon it, it was regarded for such people as an appropriate mode of punishment. That infamy Jesus was willing to bear, and the strength of his confidence in God, his love for man, and the depth of his humiliation, was shown in the readiness and firmness with which he went forward to such a death.

And is set down at the right hand of the throne of God - Exalted to the highest place of dignity and honor in the universe; Mark 16:19 note; Ephesians 1:20-22 notes. The sentiment here is, "Imitate the example of the great Author of our religion. He, in view of the honor and joy before him, endured the most severe sufferings to which the human frame can be subjected, and the form of death which is regarded as the most shameful. So amidst all the severe trials to which you are exposed on account of religion, patiently endure all - for the glorious rewards, the happiness and the triumph of heaven, are before you."

Verse 3

For consider him - Attentively reflect on his example that you may be able to bear your trials in a proper manner.

That endured such contradiction of sinners - Such opposition. The reference is to the Jews of the time of the Saviour, who opposed his plans, perverted his sayings, and ridiculed his claims. Yet, regardless of their opposition, he persevered in the course which he had marked out, and went patiently forward in the execution of his plans. The idea is, that we are to pursue the path of duty and follow the dictates of conscience, let the world

say what they will about it. In doing this we cannot find a better example than the Saviour. No opposition of sinners ever turned him from the way which he regarded as right; no ridicule ever caused him to abandon any of his plans; no argument, or expression of scorn, ever caused him for a moment to deviate from his course.

Lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds - The meaning is, that there is great danger of being disheartened and wearied out by the opposition which you meet with. But with the bright example of one who was never disheartened, and who never became weary in doing the will of God, you may persevere. The best means of leading a faithful Christian life amidst the opposition which we may encounter, is to keep the eye steadily fixed on the Saviour.

Verse 4

Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin - The general sense of this passage is, "you have not yet been called in your Christian struggles to the highest kind of sufferings and sacrifices. Great as your trials may seem to have been, yet your faith has not yet been put to the severest test. And since this is so, you ought not to yield in the conflict with evil, but manfully resist it." In the language used here there is undoubtedly a continuance of the allusion to the agonistic games - the strugglings and wrestlings for mastery there. In those games, the boxers were accustomed to arm themselves for the fight with the caestus. This at first consisted of strong leathern thongs wound around the hands, and extending only to the wrist, to give greater solidity to the fist. Afterward these were made to extend to the elbow, and then to the shoulder, and finally, they sewed pieces of lead or iron in them that they might strike a heavier and more destructive blow. The consequence was, that those who were engaged in the fight were often covered with blood, and that resistance "unto blood" showed a determined courage, and a purpose not to yield. But though the language here may be taken from this custom, the fact to which the apostle alludes, it seems to me, is the struggling of the Saviour in the garden of Gethsemane, when his conflict was so severe that, great drops of blood fell down to the ground see the notes on Matthew 26:36-44. It is, indeed, commonly understood to mean that they had not yet been called to shed their blood as martyrs in the cause of religion; see Stuart Bloomfield, Doddridge, Clarke, Whitby, Kuinoel, etc. Indeed, I find in none of the commentators what seems to me to be the true sense of this passage, and what gives an

exquisite beauty to it, the allusion to the sufferings of the Saviour in the garden. The reasons which lead me to believe that there is such an allusion, are briefly these:

(1) The connection. The apostle is appealing to the example of the Saviour, and urging Christians to persevere amidst their trials by looking to him. Nothing would be more natural in this connection, than to refer to that dark night, when in the severest conflict with temptation which he ever encountered. he so signally showed his own firmness of purpose, and the effects of resistance on his own bleeding body, and his signal victory - in the garden of Gethsemane.

(2) the expression "striving against sin" seems to demand the same interpretation. On the common interpretation, the allusion would be merely to their resisting persecution; but here the allusion is to some struggle in their minds against "committing sin." The apostle exhorts them to strive manfully and perseveringly against; sin in every form, and especially against the sin of apostasy. To encourage them he refers them to the highest instance on record where there was a "striving against sin" - the struggle of the Redeemer in the garden with the great enemy who there made his most violent assault, and where the resistance of the Redeemer was so great as to force the blood through his pores. What was the exact form of the temptation there, we are not informed. It may have been to induce him to abandon his work even then and to yield, in view of the severe sufferings of his approaching death on the cross.

If there ever was a point where temptation would be powerful, it would be there. When a man is about to be put to death, how strong is the inducement to abandon his purpose, his plans, or his principles, if he may save his life! How many, of feeble virtue, have yielded just there! If to this consideration we add the thought that the Redeemer was engaged in a work never before undertaken; that he designed to make an atonement never before made; that he was about to endure sorrows never before endured; and that on the decision of that moment depended the ascendency of sin or holiness on the earth, the triumph or the fall of Satan‘s kingdom, the success or the defeat of all the plans of the great adversary of God and man, and that, on such an occasion as this, the tempter would use all his power to crush the lonely and unprotected man of sorrows in the garden of

Gethsemane, it is easy to imagine what may have been the terror of that fearful conflict, and what virtue it would require in him to resist the concentrated energy of Satan‘s might to induce him even then to abandon his work. The apostle says of those to whom he wrote, that they had not yet reached that point; compare notes on Hebrews 5:7.

(3) this view furnishes a proper climax to the argument of the apostle for perseverance. It presents the Redeemer before the mind as the great example; directs the mind to him in various scenes of his life - as looking to the joy before him - disregarding the ignominy of his sufferings - enduring the opposition of sinners - and then in the garden as engaged in a conflict with his great foe, and so resisting sin that rather than yield he endured that fearful mental struggle which was attended with such remarkable consequences. This is the highest consideration which could be presented to the mind of a believer to keep him from yielding in the conflict with evil; and if we could keep him in the eye resisting even unto blood rather than yield in the least degree, it would do more than all other things to restrain us from sin. How different his case from ours! How readily we yield to sin! We offer a faint and feeble resistance, and then surrender. We think it will be unknown: or that others do it; or that we may repent of it; or that we have no power to resist it; or that it is of little consequence, and our resolution gives way. Not so the Redeemer, Rather than yield in any form to sin, he measured strength with the great adversary when alone with him in the darkness of the night, and gloriously triumphed! And so would we always triumph if we had the same settled purpose to resist sin in every form even unto blood.

Verse 5

And ye have forgotten the exhortation - This exhortation is found in Proverbs 3:11-12. The object of the apostle in introducing it here is, to show that afflictions were designed on the part of God to produce some happy effects in the lives of his people, and that they ought, therefore, to bear them patiently. In the previous verses, he directs them to the example of the Saviour. In this verse and the following, for the same object he directs their attention to the design of trials, showing that they are necessary to our welfare, and that they are in fact proof of the paternal care of God. This verse might be rendered as a question. “And have ye forgotten?” etc. This

mode of rendering it will agree somewhat better with the design of the apostle.

Which speaketh, unto you - Which may be regarded as addressed to you; or which involves a principle as applicable to you as to others. He does not mean that when Solomon used the words, he had reference to them particularly, but that he used them with reference to the children of God, and they might therefore be applied to them. in this way we may regard the language of the Scriptures as addressed to us.

As unto children - As if he were addressing children. The language is such as a father uses.

My son - It is possible that in these words Solomon may have intended to address a son literally, giving him paternal counsel; or he may have spoken as the Head of the Jewish people, designing to address all the pious, to whom he sustained, as it were, the relation of a father. Or, it is possible also, that it may be regarded as the language of God himself addressing his children. Whichever supposition is adopted, the sense is substantially the same.

Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord - Literally, "Do not regard it as a small matter, or as a trivial thing - ὀλιγώρει oligōreiThe Greek word used here does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The word rendered here "chastening" - παιδεία paideia- and also in Hebrews 12:6-8, and in Hebrews 12:9, "corrected" - παιδευτὰς paideutas- does not refer to affliction in general, but that kind of affliction which is designed to correct us for our faults, or which is of the nature of discipline. The verb properly relates to the training up of a child - including instruction, counsel, discipline, and correction (see this use of the verb in Acts 7:22; 2 Timothy 2:25; Titus 2:12), and then especially discipline or correction for faults - to "correct, chastise, chasten;" 1 Corinthians 11:32; 2 Corinthians 6:9; Revelation 3:19. This is the meaning here; and the idea is, not that God will afflict his people in general, but that if they wander away he will correct them for their faults. He will bring calamity upon them as a punishment for their offences, and in order to bring them back to himself. He will not suffer them to wander away unrebuked and unchecked, but will mercifully reclaim them though by great sufferings. Afflictions have many objects, or produce many happy effects. That referred to here is, that they are means of reclaiming the wandering and erring children of God, and are proofs of his paternal care and love; compare 2 Samuel 7:14; 2 Samuel 12:13-14; Psalm

89:31-34; Proverbs 3:11-12. Afflictions, which are always sent by God, should not be regarded as small matters, for these reasons:

(1)The fact that they are sent by God. Whatever he does is of importance, and is worthy of the profound attention of people.

(2)they are sent for some important purpose, and they should be regarded, therefore, with attentive concern.

Men "despise" them when:

(1)they treat them with affected or real unconcern;

(2)when they fail to receive them as divine admonitions, and regard them as without any intelligent design; and,

(3)when they receive them with "expressions" of contempt, and speak of them and of the government of God with scorn.

It should be a matter of deep concern when we are afflicted in any manner, not to treat the matter lightly, but to derive from our trials all the lessons which they are adapted to produce on the mind.

Nor faint … - Bear up patiently under them. This is the second duty. We are first to study their character and design; and secondly, to bear up under them, however severe they may be, and however long they may be continued. "Avoid the extremes of proud insensibility and entire dejection" - Doddridge.

Verse 6

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth - This is also a quotation from Proverbs 3. It means that it is a universal rule that God sends trials on those whom he truly loves. It does not, of course, mean that he sends chastisement which is not deserved; or that he sends it "for the mere purpose" of inflicting pain. That cannot be. But it means that by his chastisements he shows that he has a paternal care for us. He does not treat us with neglect and unconcern, as a father often does his illegitimate child. The very fact that he corrects us shows that he has toward us a father's feelings, and exercises toward us a paternal care. If he did not, he would let us go on without any attention, and leave us to pursue a course of sin that would involve us in ruin. To restrain and govern a child; to correct him when he errs, shows that there is a parental solicitude for him, and that he is not an outcast. And as there is in the life of every child of God something that deserves correction, it happens that it is universally true that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth - Whom he receives or acknowledges as his child. This is not quoted literally from the Hebrew, but from the Septuagint. The Hebrew is, "even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." The general sense of the passage is retained, as is often the case in the quotations from the Old Testament. The meaning is the same as in the former part of the verse, that every one who becomes a child of God is treated by him with that watchful care which shows that he sustains toward him the paternal relation.

Verse 7

If ye endure chastening - That is, if you undergo, or are called to experience correction. It does not mean here, "if you endure it patiently; or if you bear up under it;" but "if you are chastised or corrected by God." The affirmation does not relate to the manner of bearing it, but to the fact that we are disciplined.

God dealeth with you as with sons - He does not cast you off and regard you as if you were in no way related to him.

For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not - That is, he evinces toward his son the care which shows that he sustains the relation of a father. If he deserves correction, he corrects him; and he aims by all proper means to exhibit the appropriate care and character of a father. And as we receive such attention from an earthly parent, we ought to expect to receive similar notice from our Father in heaven.

Verse 8

But if ye be without chastisement - If you never meet with anything that is adapted to correct your faults; to subdue your temper; to chide your wanderings, it would prove that you were in the condition of illegitimate children - cast off and disregarded by their father.

Whereof all are partakers - All who are the true children of God.

Then are ye bastards, and not sons - The reference here is to the neglect with which such children are treated, and to the general want of care and discipline over them:

"Lost in the world's wide range; enjoin'd no aim,
Prescrib'd no duty, and assign'd no name."
Savage.

In the English law, a bastard is termed "nullius filius." Illegitimate children are usually abandoned by their father. The care of them is left to the mother, and the father endeavors to avoid all responsibility, and usually

to be concealed and unknown. His own child he does not wish to recognize; he neither provides for him; nor instructs him; nor governs him; nor disciplines him. A father, who is worthy of the name, will do all these things. So Paul says it is with Christians. God has not cast them off. In every way he evinces toward them the character of a father. And if it should be that they passed along through life without any occurrence that would indicate the paternal care and attention designed to correct their faults, it would show that they never had been his children, but - were cast off and wholly disregarded. This is a beautiful argument; and we should receive every affliction as full proof that we are not forgotten by the High and Holy One who condescends to sustain to us the character, and to evince toward us, in our wanderings, the watchful care of a Father.

Verse 9

Furthermore - As an additional consideration to induce us to receive chastisement with submission. The argument in this verse is derived from the difference in the spirit and design with which we are corrected by God and by an earthly parent. In God everything is without any intermingling of passion or any improper feeling. In an earthly parent there is often much that is the result of hasty emotion, of an irascible temper, perhaps of the mere love of power. There is much that is inflicted without due reflection, and that produces only pain in the bosom of the parent himself in the recollection. Yet with all this imperfection of parental government, we were patient and unmurmuring. How much more should we submit to one whose paternal discipline is caused by no excited feeling; by no love of power; by no want of reflection, and which never furnishes occasion for regret!

Fathers of our flesh - Earthly fathers; those from whom we have derived our being here. They are contrasted here with God, who is called "the Father of spirits," not because the father does not sustain the paternal relation to the soul as well as the body, but to designate the nature of the dominion over us. The dominion of God is what pertains to a spiritual kingdom, having more direct reference to the discipline of the soul, and being designed to prepare us for the spiritual world; that of the earthly father pertains primarily to our condition here, and the discipline is designed to subdue our unruly passions, to teach us to restrain our appetites, to inculcate maxims of health and prosperity, and to prevent those things which would impede our happiness in the present world. See, however,

many curious instances of the manner in which these phrases were used by the Jewish writers, collected by Wetstein.

We gave them reverence - We submitted to them; honored them; loved them. Painful at the time as correction may have been, yet when we have fully understood the design of it, we have loved them the more. The effect of such discipline, properly administered, is to produce real veneration for a parent - for he who in a timely and appropriate manner restrains his child is the only one who will secure ultimate reverence and respect.

Shall we not much rather be in subjection - Since God‘s government is so much more perfect; since he has so much better right to control us; and since his administration is free from all the defects which attend parental discipline on earth, there is a much higher reason for bowing with submission and reverence to him.

The Father of spirits - Thus, in Numbers 16:22, God is called “the God of the spirits of all flesh;” so also Numbers 27:16; compare Job 33:4. The idea seems to be that, as the soul is the most important part of man, this name is given to God by way of eminence, or he is eminently and supremely our Father. It was his to create the immortal part, and to that spirit which is never to die he sustains the relation of Father. The earthly father is parent to the man as mortal; God is the Father of man as immortal. God is himself a spirit. Angels and human souls, therefore, may be represented as especially his offspring. It is the highest designation which could be given to God to say that he is at the head of the universe of mind; not implying that he is not also at the head of the material universe, but designing to bring into view this high characteristic of the Almighty, that all created minds throughout the universe sustain to him the relation of children. To this Great Being we should, therefore, more cheerfully subject ourselves than to an earthly parent.

And live - Meaning that his fatherly chastisements are adapted to secure our spiritual life. He corrects us that he may promote our final happiness, and his inflictions are the means of saving us from eternal death.

Verse 10

For they verily for a few days - That is, with reference to a few days (πρὸς prosor it was a chastisement that had reference mainly to this short life. The apostle seems to bring in this circumstance to contrast the dealings of earthly parents with those of God. One of the circumstances is, that the corrections of earthly parents had a much less important object than those

of God. They related to this life - a life so brief that it may be said to continue but a "few days." Yet, in order to secure the benefit to be derived for so short a period from fatherly correction, we submitted without complaining. Much more cheerfully ought we to submit to that discipline from the hand of our heavenly Father which is designed to extend its benefits through eternity. This seems to me to afford a better sense than that adopted by Prof. Stuart and others, that it means "during our childhood or minority;" or than that proposed by Doddridge, that it refers both to our earthly parents and to our heavenly Father.

After their own pleasure - Margin, "as seemed good, or meet to them." Meaning that it was sometimes done arbitrarily, or from caprice, or under the influence of passion. This is an additional reason why we should submit to God. We submitted to our earthly parents, though their correction was sometimes passionate, and was designed to gratify their own pleasure rather than to promote our good. There is much of this kind of punishment in families; but there is none of it under the administration of God.

But he for our profit - Never from passion, from caprice, from the love of power or superiority, but always for our good. The exact benefit which he designs to produce we may not be able always to understand, but we may be assured that no other cause influences him than a desire to promote our real welfare, and as he can never be mistaken in regard to the proper means to secure that, we may be assured that our trials are always adapted to that end.

That we might be partakers of his holiness - Become so holy that it may be said that we are partakers of the very holiness of God; compare 2 Peter 1:4. This is the elevated object at which God aims by our trials. It is not that he delights to produce pain; not that he envies us and would rob us of our little comforts; not that he needs what we prize to increase his own enjoyment, and therefore rudely takes it away; and not that he acts from caprice - now conferring a blessing and then withdrawing it without any reason: it is, that he may make us more pure and holy, and thus promote our own best interest. To be holy as God is holy; to be so holy that it may be said that we "are partakers of his holiness," is a richer blessing than health, and property, and friends, without it; and when by the exchange of the one we acquire the other, we have secured infinitely more than we have lost. To obtain the greater good we should be willing to part with the less; to secure the everlasting friendship and favour of God we should be willing, if

necessary, to surrender the last farthing of our property; the last friend that is left us; the last feeble and fluttering pulsation of life in our veins.

Verse 11

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous - It does not impart pleasure, nor is this its design. All chastisement is intended to produce pain, and the Christian is as sensitive to pain as others. His religion does not blunt his sensibilities and make him a stoic, but it rather increases his susceptibility to suffering. The Lord Jesus, probably, felt pain, reproach, and contempt more keenly than any other human being ever did; and the Christian feels the loss of a child, or physical suffering, as keenly as anyone. But while religion does not render him insensible to suffering, it does two things:

(1)it enables him to bear the pain without complaining; and,

(2)it turns the affliction into a blessing on his soul. "Nevertheless afterward." In future life. The effect is seen in a pure life, and in a more entire devotedness to God. We are not to look for the proper fruits of affliction while we are suffering, but "afterward."

It yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness - It is a tree that bears good fruit, and we do not expect the fruit to form and ripen at once. It may be long maturing, but it will be rich and mellow when it is ripe. It frequently requires a long time before all the results of affliction appear - as it requires months to form and ripen fruit. Like fruit it may appear at first sour, crabbed, and unpalatable; but it will be at last like the ruddy peach or the golden orange. When those fruits are ripened, they are:

(1)fruits of "righteousness." They make us more holy, more dead to sin and the world, and more alive to God. And they are

(2)"peaceable." They produce peace, calmness, submission in the soul. They make the heart more tranquil in its confidence in God, and more disposed to promote the religion of peace.

The apostle speaks of this as if it were a universal truth in regard to Christians who are afflicted. And it is so. There is no Christian who is not ultimately benefited by trials, and who is not able at some period subsequently to say, "It was good for me that I was afflicted. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." When a Christian comes to die, he does not feel that he has had one trial too many, or one which he did not deserve. He can then look back and see the effect of some early trial so severe that he once thought he could hardly endure it,

spreading a hallowed influence over his future years, and scattering its golden fruit all along the pathway of life. I have never known a Christian who was not benefited by afflictions; I have seen none who was not able to say that his trials produced some happy effect on his religious character, and on his real happiness in life. If this be so, then no matter how severe our trials, we should submit to them without a complaint. The more severe they are, the more we shall yet be blessed - on earth or in heaven.

Verse 12

Wherefore - In view of the facts which have been now stated - that afflictions are sent from God, and are evidences of his paternal watchfulness.

Lift up the hands which hang down - As if from weariness and exhaustion. Renew your courage; make a new effort to bear them. The hands fall by the side when we are exhausted with toil, or worn down by disease; see the notes on Isaiah 35:3, from which place this exhortation is taken.

And the feeble knees - The knees also become enfeebled by long effort, and tremble as if their strength were gone. Courage and resolution may do much, however, to make them firm, and it is to this that the apostle exhorts those to whom he wrote. They were to make every effort to bear up under their trials. The hope of victory will do much to strengthen one almost exhausted in battle; the desire to reach home invigorates the frame of the weary traveler. So it is with the Christian. In persecution, and sickness, and bereavement, he may be ready to sink under his burdens. The hands fall, and the knees tremble, and the heart sinks within us. But confidence in God, and the hope of heaven, and the assurance that all this is for our good, will reinvigorate the enfeebled frame, and enable us to bear what we once supposed would crush us to the dust. A courageous mind braces a feeble body, and hope makes it fresh for new conflicts.

Verse 13

And make straight paths for your feet - Margin, "even." The word used here means properly straight, in the sense of upright, erect; Acts 14:10; but it is used here in the sense of straight horizontally, that is, level, plain, smooth. The meaning is, that they were to remove all obstacles out of the way, so that they need not stumble and fail. There is probably an allusion here to Proverbs 4:25-27. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be

established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil." The idea is, that by every proper means they were to make the way to heaven as plain and easy as possible. They were to allow no obstructions in the path over which the lame and feeble might fall.

Lest that which is lame be turned out of the way - A lame man needs a smooth path to walk in. The idea is here, that everything which would prevent those in the church who were in any danger of falling - the feeble, the unestablished, the weak - from walking in the path to heaven, or which might be an occasion to them of falling, should be removed. Or it may mean, that in a road that was not level, those who were lame would be in danger of spraining, distorting, or wrenching a lame limb; and the counsel is, that whatever would have a tendency to this should be removed. Divested of the figure, the passage means, that everything should be removed which would hinder anyone from walking in the path to life.

But let it rather be healed - As in the case of lameness, pains should be taken to heal it rather than to suffer it to be increased by careless exposure to a new sprain or fracture, so it should be in our religious and moral character. Whatever is defective we should endeavor to restore to soundness, rather than to suffer the defect to be increased. Whatever is feeble in our faith or hope; whatever evil tendency there is in our hearts, we should endeavor to strengthen and amend, lest it should become worse, and we should entirely fall.

Verse 14

Follow peace with all men - Do not give indulgence to those passions which lead to litigations, strifes, wars; see the notes on Romans 14:19. The connection here requires us to understand this mainly of persecutors. The apostle is referring to the trials which those whom he addressed were experiencing. Those trials seem to have arisen mainly from persecution, and he exhorts them to manifest a spirit of kindness toward all - even though they were engaged in persecuting them. This is the temper of the gospel. We are to make war with sin, but not with people; with bad passions and corrupt desires, but not with our fellow-worms.

And holiness - Instead of yielding to contending passions and to a spirit of war; instead of seeking revenge on your persecutors and foes, make it rather your aim to be holy. Let that be the object of your pursuit; the great purpose of your life. Men might in such cases counsel them to seek revenge; the spirit of religion would counsel them to strive to be holy. In

such times they were in great danger of giving indulgence to evil passions, and hence, the special propriety of the exhortation to endeavor to be holy.

Without which no man shall see the Lord - That is, shall see him in peace; or shall so see him as to dwell with him. All will see him in the day of judgment, but to "see" one is often used in the sense of being with one; dwelling with one; enjoying one; see the notes on Matthew 5:8. The principle here stated is one which is never departed from; Revelation 21:27; Isaiah 35:8; Isaiah 52:1; Isaiah 60:21; Joel 3:17; Matthew 13:41; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. No one has ever been admitted to heaven in his sins; nor is it desirable that anyone ever should be. Desirable as it is that lost people should be happy, yet it is benevolence which excludes the profane, the impious, and the unbelieving from heaven - just as it is benevolence to a family to exclude profligates and seducers, and as it is benevolence to a community to confine thieves and robbers in prison. This great principle in the divine administration will always be adhered to; and hence, they who are expecting to be saved without holiness or religion, are destined to certain disappointment.

Heaven and earth will pass away, but God will not admit one unrepenting and unpardoned sinner to heaven. It was the importance and the certainty of this principle which made the apostle insist on it here with so much earnestness. Amidst all their trials; when exposed to persecution; and when everything might tempt them to the indulgence of feelings which were the opposite of holiness, they were to make it their great object to be like God. For this they were to seek, to strive. to labor, to pray. This with us in all our trials should also be the great aim of life. How deeply affecting then is the inquiry whether we have that holiness which is indispensable to salvation! Let us not deceive ourselves. We may have many things else - many things which are in themselves desirable, but without this one thing we shall never see the Lord in peace. We may have wealth, genius, learning, beauty, accomplishments, houses, lands, books, friends - but without religion they will be all in vain. Never can we see God in peace without a holy heart; never can we be admitted into heaven without that religion which will identify us with the angels around the throne!

Verse 15

Looking diligently - This phrase implies close attention. It is implied that there are reasons why we should take special care. Those reasons are

found in the propensities of our hearts to evil; in the temptations of the world; in the allurements to apostasy presented by the great adversary of our souls.

Lest any man fail - As every man is in danger, it is his personal duty to see to it that his salvation be secure.

Fail of the grace of God - Margin, "fail from." The Greek is, "lest any one be wanting or lacking" - ὑστερῶν husterōnThere is no intimation in the words used here that they already had grace and might fall away - whatever might he true about that - but that there was danger that they might be found at last to be deficient in that religion which was necessary to save them. Whether this was to be by losing the religion which they now had, or by the fact that they never had any however near they may have come to it - the apostle does not here intimate, and this passage should not be used in the discussion of the question about failing from grace. It is a proper exhortation to be addressed to any man in the church or out of it, to inquire diligently whether there is not reason to apprehend that when he comes to appear before God he will be found to be wholly destitute of religion.

Lest any root of bitterness springing up - Any bitter root. There is doubtless an allusion here to Deuteronomy 29:18. "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." The allusion there is to those who were idolaters, and who instead of bearing the fruits of righteousness, and promoting the piety and happiness of the nation, would bear the fruits of idolatry, and spread abroad irreligion and sin. The allusion, in both cases, is to a bitter plant springing up among those that were cultivated for ornament or use, or to a tree bearing bitter and poisonous fruit, among those that produced good fruit. The reference of the apostle is to some person who should produce a similar effect in the church - to one who should inculcate false doctrines; or who should apostatize; or who should lead an unholy life, and thus be the means of corrupting and destroying others. They were to be at especial pains that no such person should start up from among themselves, or be tolerated by them.

Trouble you - By his doctrines and example.

And thereby many be defiled - Led away from the faith and corrupted. One wicked man, and especially one hypocrite in the church, may be the means of destroying many others.

Verse 16

Lest there be any fornicator - The sin here referred to is one of those which would spread corruption in the church, and against which they ought to be especially on their guard. Allusion is made to Esau as an example, who, himself a corrupt and profane man, for a trifle threw away the highest honor which as a son he could have. Many have regarded the word used here as referring to idolatry, or defection from the true religion to a false one - as the word is often used in the Old Testament - but it is more natural to understand it literally. The crime here mentioned was one which abounded everywhere in ancient times, as it does now, and it was important to guard the church against it; see the Acts 15:20 note; 1 Corinthians 6:18 note.

Or profane person - The word "profane" here refers to one who by word or conduct treats religion with contempt, or has no reverence for what is sacred. This may be shown by words; by the manner; by a sneer; by neglect of religion; or by openly renouncing the privileges which might be connected with our salvation. The allusion here is to one who should openly cast off all the hopes of religion for indulgence in temporary pleasure, as Esau gave up his birthright for a trifling gratification. In a similar manner, the young, for temporary gratification, neglect or despise all the privileges and hopes resulting from their being born in the bosom of the church; from being baptized and consecrated to God; and from being trained up in the lap of piety.

As Esau - It is clearly implied here that Esau sustained the character of a fornicator and a profane person. The former appellation is probably given to him to denote his licentiousness shown by his marrying many wives, and particularly foreigners, or the daughters of Canaan: see Genesis 36:2; compare Genesis 26:34-35. The Jewish writers abundantly declare that that was his character; see Wetstein, in loc. In proof that the latter appellation - that of a profane person - belonged to him, see Genesis 25:29-34. It is true that it is rather by inference, than by direct assertion, that it is known that he sustained this character. The birth-right, in his circumstances, was a high honor. The promise respecting the inheritance of the land of Canaan, the coming of the Messiah, and the preservation of the true religion, had been given to Abraham and Isaac, and was to be transmitted by them. As the oldest son, all the honor connected with this, and which is now associated with the name Jacob, would have properly appertained to Esau. But he

undervalued it. He lived a licentious life. He followed his corrupt propensities, and gave the reins to indulgence. In a time of temporary distress, also, he showed how little he really valued all this, by bartering it away for a single meal of victuals. Rather than bear the evils of hunger for a short period, and evidently in a manner implying a great undervaluing of the honor which he held as the first-born son in a pious line, he agreed to surrender all the privileges connected with his birth. It was this which made the appellation appropriate to him; and this will make the appellation appropriate in any similar instance.

Who for one morsel of meat - The word "meat" here is used, as it is commonly in the Scriptures, in its primitive sense in English, to denote food: Genesis 25:34. The phrase here, "morsel of meat," would be better rendered by "a single meal."

Sold his birthright - The birth-right seems to have implied the first place or rank in the family; the privilege of offering sacrifice and conducting worship in the absence or death of the father; a double share of the inheritance, and in this instance the honor of being in the line of the patriarchs, and transmitting the promises made to Abraham and Isaac. What Esau parted with, we can easily understand by reflecting on the honors which have clustered around the name of Jacob.

Verse 17

For ye know how that afterward … - When he came to his father, and earnestly besought him to reverse the sentence which he had pronounced; see Genesis 27:34-40. The "blessing" here referred to was not that of the birth-right, which he knew he could not regain, but that pronounced by the father Isaac on him whom he regarded as his first-born son. This Jacob obtained by fraud, when Isaac really "meant" to bestow it on Esau. Isaac appears to have been ignorant wholly of the bargain which Jacob and Esau had made in regard to the birth-right, and Jacob and his mother contrived in this way to have that confirmed which Jacob had obtained of Esau by contract. The sanction of the father, it seems, was necessary, before it could be made sure, and Rebecca and Jacob understood that the dying blessing of the aged patriarch would establish it all. It was obtained by dishonesty on the part of Jacob; but so far as Esau was concerned, it was an act of righteous retribution for the little regard he had shown for the honor of his birth.

For he found no place of repentance - Margin, "Way to change his mind," That is, no place for repentance "in the mind of isaac," or no way to change his mind. It does not mean that Esau earnestly sought to repent and could not, but that when once the blessing had passed the lips of his father, he found it impossible to change it. Isaac firmly declared that he had "pronounced" the blessing, and though it had been obtained by fraud, yet as it was of the nature of a divine prediction, it could not now be changed. He had not indeed intended that it should be thus. He had pronounced a blessing on another which had been designed for him. But still the benediction had been given. The prophetic words had been pronounced. By divine direction the truth had been spoken, and how could it be changed? It was impossible now to reverse the divine purposes in the case, and hence, the "blessing" must stand as it had been spoken. Isaac did, however, all that could be done. He gave a benediction to his son Esau, though of far inferior value to what he had pronounced on the fraudulent Jacob; Genesis 27:39-40.

Though he sought it carefully with tears - Genesis 27:34. He sought to change the purpose of his father, but could not do it. The meaning and bearing of this passage, as used by the apostle, may be easily understood:

(1) The decision of God on the human character and destiny will soon be pronounced. That decision will be according to truth, and cannot be changed.

(2) if we should despise our privileges as Esau did his birth-right, and renounce our religion, it would be impossible to recover what we had lost. There would be no possibility of changing the divine decision in the case, for it would be determined forever. This passage, therefore, should not be alleged to show that a sinner. "cannot repent," or that he cannot find "place for repentance," or assistance to enable him to repent, or that tears and sorrow for sin would be of no avail, for it teaches none of these things; but it should be used to keep us from disregarding our privileges, from turning away from the true religion, from slighting the favors of the gospel, and from neglecting religion until death comes; because when God has once pronounced a sentence excluding us from his favor, no tears, or pleading, or effort of our own can change him. The sentence which he pronounces on the scoffer, the impenitent, the hypocrite, and the apostate, is one that will abide forever without change. This passage, therefore, is in accordance with

the doctrine more than once stated before in this Epistle, that if a Christian should really apostatize it would be impossible that he should be saved; see the notes on Hebrews 6:1-6.

Verse 18

For ye are not come - To enforce the considerations already urged, the apostle introduces this sublime comparison between the old and new dispensations; Hebrews 12:18-24. The object, in accordance with the principal scope of the Epistle, is, to guard them against apostasy. To do this, he shows that under the new dispensation there was much more to hind them to fidelity, and to make apostasy dangerous, than there was under the old. The main point of the comparison is, that under the Jewish dispensation, everything was adapted to awe the mind, and to restrain by the exhibition of grandeur and of power; but that under the Christian dispensation, while there was as much that was sublime, there was much more that was adapted to win and hold the affections. There were revelations of higher truths. There were more affecting motives to lead to obedience. There was that of which the former was but the type and emblem. There was the clear revelation of the glories of heaven, and of the blessed society there, all adapted to prompt to the earnest desire that they might be our own. The considerations presented in this passage constitute the climax of the argument so beautifully pursued through this Epistle, showing that the Christian system was far superior in every respect to the Jewish. In presenting this closing argument, the apostle first refers to some of the circumstances attending the former dispensation which were designed to keep the people of God from apostasy, and then the considerations of superior weight existing under the Christian economy.

The mount that might be touched - Mount Sinai. The meaning here is, that "that mountain was palpable, material, touchable" - in contradistinction from the Mount Zion to which the church had now come, which is above the reach of the external senses; Hebrews 12:22. The apostle does not mean that it was permitted to the Israelites to touch Mount Sinai - for this was strictly forbidden, Exodus 19:12; but he evidently alludes to that prohibition, and means to say that a command forbidding them to "touch" the mountain, implied that it was a material or palpable object. The sense of the passage is, that every circumstance that occurred there was suited to fill the soul with terror. Everything accompanying the giving of the Law, the

setting of bounds around the mountain which they might not pass, and the darkness and tempest on the mountain itself, was adopted to overawe the soul. The phrase "the touchable mountain" - if such a phrase is proper - would express the meaning of the apostle here. The "Mount Zion" to which the church now has come, is of a different character. It is not thus visible and palpable. It is not enveloped in smoke and flame, and the thunders of the Almighty do not roll and re-echo among its lofty peaks as at Horeb; yet it presents "stronger" motives to perseverance in the service of God.

And that burned with fire - Exodus 19:18; compare Deuteronomy 4:11; Deuteronomy 33:2.

Nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest - see Exodus 19:16.

Verse 19

And the voice of a trumpet - Exodus 19:19. The sound of the trumpet amidst the tempest was suited to increase the terror of the scene.

And the voice of words - Spoken by God; Exodus 19:19. It is easy to conceive what must have been the awe produced by a voice uttered from the midst of the tempest so distinct as to be heard by the hundreds of thousands of Israel, when the speaker was invisible.

Which voice they that heard … - Exodus 20:18-19. It was so fearful and overpowering that the people earnestly prayed that if they must be addressed, it might he by the familiar voice of Moses and not by the awful voice of the Deity.

Verse 20

For they could not endure that which was commanded - They could not sustain the awe produced by the fact that God uttered his commands himself. The meaning is not that the commands themselves were intolerable, but that the manner in which they were communicated inspired a terror which they could not bear. They feared that they should die; Exodus 20:19.

And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned - Exodus 19:13. The prohibition was, that neither beast nor man should touch it on pain of death. The punishment was to be either by stoning, or being "shot through."

Or thrust through with a dart - Exodus 19:13. "Or shot through." This phrase, however, though it is found in the common editions of the New Testament, is wanting in all the more valuable manuscripts; in all the ancient versions; and it occurs in none of the Greek ecclesiastical writers,

with one exception. It is omitted now by almost all editors of the New Testament. It is beyond all doubt an addition of later times, taken from the Septuagint of Exodus 19:13. Its omission does not injure the sense.

Verse 21

And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said … - This is not recorded in the account of the giving of the Law in Exodus, and it has been made a question on what authority the apostle made this declaration respecting Moses. In Deuteronomy 9:19, Moses indeed says, of himself, after he had come down from the mountain, and had broken the two tables of stone that were in his hand, that he was greatly afraid of the anger of the Lord on account of the sin of the people. "I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure wherewith the Lord was wroth against you to destroy you;" and it has been supposed by many that this is the passage to which the apostle here alludes. But it is very evident that was spoken on a different occasion from the one which is referred to in the passage before us. That was after the Law was promulgated, and Moses had descended from the mount; and it was not said in view of the terrors of the scene when the Law was given, but of the apprehension of the wrath of God against the people for their sin in making the golden calf.

I know not how to explain this, except by the supposition that the apostle here refers to some tradition that the scene produced this effect on his mind. In itself it is not improbable that Moses thus trembled with alarm (compare Exodus 19:16), nor that the remembrance of it should have been handed down among the numerous traditions which the Jews transmitted from age to age. There must have been many things that occurred in their journey through the wilderness which are not recorded in the Books of Moses. Many of them would be preserved naturally in the memory of the people, and transmitted to their posterity; and though those truths might become intermingled with much that was fabulous, yet it is not irrational to suppose that an inspired writer may have adduced pertinent and true examples from these traditions of what actually occurred. It was one method of preserving "the truth," thus to select such instances of what actually took place from the mass of traditions which were destined to perish, at would be useful in future times. The circumstance here mentioned was greatly suited to increase the impression of the sublimity and fearfulness of the scene. Moses was accustomed to commune with God. He had met him at the "bush," and had been addressed by him face to face, and

yet so awful were the scenes at Horeb that even he could not bear it with composure. What may we then suppose to have been the alarm of the body of the people, when the mind of the great leader himself was thus overpowered!

Verse 22

But ye are come unto Mount Sion - You who are Christians; all who are under the new dispensation. The design is to "contrast" the Christian dispensation with the Jewish. and to show that its excellencies and advantages were far superior to the religion of their fathers. It had more to win the affections; more to elevate the soul; more to inspire with hope. It had less that was terrific and alarming; it appealed less to the fears and more to the tropes of mankind; but still apostasy from this religion could not be less terrible in its consequences than apostasy from the religion of Moses. In the passage before us, the apostle evidently contrasts Sinai with Mount Zion, and means to say that there was more about the latter that was adapted to win the heart and to preserve allegiance than there was about the former. Mount Zion literally denoted the Southern hill in Jerusalem, on which a part of the city was built.

That part of the city was made by David and his successors the residence of the court, and soon the name Zion, was given familiarly to the whole city. Jerusalem was the center of religion in the land; the place where the temple stood, and where the worship of God was celebrated, and where God dwelt by a visible symbol, and it became the type and emblem of the holy abode where He dwells in heaven. It cannot be literally meant here that they had come to the Mount Zion in Jerusalem, for that was as true of the whole Jewish people as of those whom the apostle addressed, but it must mean that they had come to the Mount Zion of which the holy city was an emblem; to the glorious mount which is revealed as the dwelling-place of God, of angels, of saints. That is, they had "come" to this by the revelations and hopes of the gospel. They were not indeed literally in heaven, nor was that glorious city literally on earth, but the dispensation to which they had been brought was what conducted them directly up to the city of the living God, and to the holy mount where he dwelt above. The view was not confined to an earthly mountain enveloped in smoke and flame, but opened at once on the holy place where God abides. By the phrase, "ye are come," the apostle means that this was the characteristic of the new dispensation

that it conducted them there, and that they were already in fact inhabitants of that glorious city. They were citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem (compare note, Philemon 3:20), and were entitled to its privileges.

And unto the city of the living God - The city where the living God dwells - the heavenly Jerusalem; compare notes on Hebrews 11:10. God dwelt by a visible symbol in the temple at Jerusalem - and to that his people came under the old dispensation. In a more literal and glorious sense his abode is in heaven, and to that his people have now come.

The heavenly Jerusalem - Heaven is not unfrequently represented as a magnificent city where God and angels dwelt; and the Christian revelation discloses this to Christians as certainly their final home. They should regard themselves already as dwellers in that city, and live and act as if they saw its splendor and partook of its joy. In regard to this representation of heaven as a city where God dwells, the following places may be consulted: Hebrews 11:10, Hebrews 11:14-16; Hebrews 12:28; Hebrews 13:14; Galatians 4:26; Revelation 3:12; Revelation 21:2,10-27. It is true that Christians have not yet seen that city by the physical eye, but they look to it with the eye of faith. It is revealed to them; they are permitted by anticipation to contemplate its glories, and to feel that it is to be their eternal home. They are permitted to live and act as if they saw the glorious God whose dwelling is there, and were already surrounded by the angels and the redeemed. The apostle does not represent them as if they were expecting that it would be visibly set up on the earth, but as being now actually dwellers in that city, and bound to live and act as if they were amidst its splendors.

And to an innumerable company of angels - The Greek here is, "to myriads (or ten thousands) of angels in an assembly or joyful convocation." The phrase "tens of thousands" is often used to denote a great and indefinite number. The word rendered "general assembly," Hebrews 12:22 - πανήγυρις panēguris- refers properly to an "assembly, or convocation of the whole people in order to celebrate any public festival or solemnity, as the public games or sacrifices; Robinson's Lexicon. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and refers here to the angels viewed as assembled around the throne of God and celebrating his praises. It should be regarded as connected with the word "angels," referring to "their" convocation in heaven, and not to the church of the first-born. This construction is demanded by the Greek. Our common translation renders it as if it were to

be united with the church - "to the general assembly and church of the first-born;" but the Greek will not admit of this construction.

The interpretation which unites it with the angels is adopted now by almost all critics, and in almost all the editions of the New Testament. On the convocation of angels, see the notes on Job 1:6. The writer intends, doubtless, to contrast that joyful assemblage of the angels in heaven with those who appeared in the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. God is always represented as surrounded by hosts of angels in heaven; see Deuteronomy 33:2; 1 Kings 22:19; Daniel 7:10; Psalm 68:17; compare notes, Hebrews 12:1; see also Revelation 5:11; Matthew 26:53; Luke 2:13. The meaning is, that under the Christian dispensation Christians in their feelings and worship become united to this vast host of holy angelic beings. it is, of course, not meant that they are "visible," but they are seen by the eye of faith. The "argument" here is, that as, in virtue of the Christian revelation, we become associated with those pure and happy spirits, we should not apostatize from such a religion, for we should regard it as honorable and glorious to be identified with them.

Verse 23

To the general assembly - see the notes on Hebrews 12:22.

And church of the first-born - That is, you are united with the church of the first-born. They who were first-born among the Hebrews enjoyed special privileges, and especially pre-eminence of rank; see the notes on Colossians 1:15. The reference here is, evidently, to those saints who had been distinguished for their piety, and who may be supposed to be exalted to special honors in heaven - such as the patriarchs, prophets, martyrs. The meaning is, that by becoming Christians, we have become in fact identified with that happy and honored church, and that this is a powerful motive to induce us to persevere. It is a consideration which should make us adhere to our religion amidst all temptations and persecutions, that we are identified with the most eminently holy men who have lived, and that we are to share their honors and their joys. The Christian is united in feeling, in honor, and in destiny, with the excellent of all the earth, and of all times. He should feel it, therefore, an honor to be a Christian; he should yield to no temptation which would induce him to part from so goodly a fellowship.

Which are written in heaven - Margin, enrolled. The word here was employed by the Greeks to denote that one was enrolled as a citizen, or

entitled to the privileges of citizenship. Here it means that the names of the persons referred to were registered or enrolled among the inhabitants of the heavenly world; see the notes, Luke 10:20.

And to God the Judge of all - God, who will pronounce the final sentence on all mankind. The object of the reference here to God as judge does not appear to be to contrast the condition of Christians with that of the Jews, as is the case in some of the circumstances alluded to, but to bring impressively before their minds the fact that they sustained a especially near relation to him from whom all were to receive their final allotment. As the destiny of all depended on him, they should be careful not to provoke his wrath. The design of the apostle seems to be to give a rapid glance of what there was in heaven, as disclosed by the eye of faith to the Christian, which should operate as a motive to induce him to persevere in his Christian course. The thought that seems to have struck his mind in regard to God was, that he would do right to all. They had, therefore, everything to fear if they revolted from him; they had everything to hope if they bore their trials with patience, and persevered to the end.

And to the spirits of just men made perfect - Not only to the more eminent saints - the "church of the firstborn" - but to "all" who were made perfect in heaven. They were not only united with the imperfect Christians on earth, but with those who have become completely delivered from sin, and admitted to the world of glory. This is a consideration which ought to influence the minds of all believers. They are even now united with "all" the redeemed in heaven. They should so live as not to be separated from them in the final day. Most Christians have among the redeemed already not a few of their most tenderly beloved friends. A father may be there; a mother, a sister, a smiling babe. It should be a powerful motive with us so to live as to be prepared to be reunited with them in heaven.

Verse 24

And to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant - This was the crowning excellence of the new dispensation in contradistinction from the old. They had been made acquainted with the true Messiah; they were united to him by faith; they had been sprinkled with his blood; see the notes on Hebrews 7:22, and Hebrews 8:6. The highest consideration which can be urged to induce anyone to persevere in a life of piety is the fact that the Son of God has come into the world and died to save sinners; compare notes on Hebrews 12:2-4 of this chapter.

And to the blood of sprinkling - The blood which Jesus shed, and which is sprinkled upon us to ratify the covenant; see notes on Hebrews 9:18-23.

That speaketh better things than that of Abel - Greek "Than Abel;" the words "that of" being supplied by the translators. In the original there is no reference to the blood of Abel shed by Cain, as our translators seem to have supposed, but the allusion is to the faith of Abel, or to the testimony which he bore to a great and vital truth of religion. The meaning here is, that the blood of Jesus speaks better things than Abel did; that is, that the blood of Jesus is the "reality" of which the offering of Abel was a "type." Abel proclaimed by the sacrifice which he made the great truth that salvation could be only by a bloody offering - but he did this only in a typical and obscure manner; Jesus proclaimed it in a more distinct and better manner by the reality. The object here is to compare the Redeemer with Abel, not in the sense that the blood shed in either case calls for vengeance, but that salvation by blood is more clearly revealed in the Christian plan than in the ancient history; and hence illustrating, in accordance with the design of this Epistle, the superior excellency of the Christian scheme over all which had preceded it.

There were other points of resemblance between Abel and the Redeemer, but on them the apostle does not insist. Abel was a martyr, and so was Christ; Abel was cruelly murdered, and so was Christ; there was aggravated guilt in the murder of Abel by his brother, and so there was in that of Jesus by his brethren - his own countrymen; the blood of Abel called for vengeance, and was followed by a fearful penalty on Cain, and so was the death of the Redeemer on his murderers - for they said, "his blood be on us and on our children," and are yet suffering under the fearful malediction then invoked; but the point of contrast here is, that the blood of Jesus makes a more full, distinct, and clear proclamation of the truth that salvation is by blood than the offering made by Abel did. The apostle alludes here to what he had said in Hebrews 11:4; see the notes on that verse. Such is the contrast between the former and the latter dispensations; and such the motives to perseverance presented by both.

In the former, the Jewish, all was imperfect, terrible, and alarming. In the latter, everything was comparatively mild, winning, alluring, animating. Terror was not the principal element, but heaven was opened to the eye of

faith, and the Christian was permitted to survey the Mount Zion; the New Jerusalem; the angels; the redeemed; the blessed God; the glorious Mediator, and to feel that that blessed abode was to be his home. To that happy world he was tending; and with all these pure and glorious beings he was identified. Having stated and urged this argument, the apostle in the remainder of the chapter warns those whom he addressed in a most solemn manner against a renunciation of their Christian faith.

Verse 25

See that ye refuse not - That you do not reject or disregard.

Him that speaketh - That is, in the gospel. Do not turn away from him who has addressed you in the new dispensation, and called you to obey and serve him. The meaning is, that God had addressed "them" in the gospel as really as he had done the Hebrews on Mount Sinai, and that there was as much to be dreaded in disregarding his voice now as there was then. He does not speak, indeed, amidst lightnings, and thunders, and clouds, but he speaks by every message of mercy; by every invitation; by every tender appeal. He spake by his Son Hebrews 1:1; he speaks by the Holy Spirit, and by all his calls and warnings in the gospel.

For if they escaped not - If they who heard God under the old dispensation, who refused to obey him, were cut off; notes, Hebrews 10:28.

Who refused him that spake on earth - That is, Moses. The contrast here is between Moses and the Son of God - the head of the Jewish and the head of the Christian dispensation. Moses was a mere man, and spake as such, though in the name of God. The Son of God was from above, and spake as an inhabitant of heaven. "Much more," etc.; see the notes on Hebrews 2:2-3; Hebrews 10:29.

Verse 26

Whose voice then shook the earth - When he spake at Mount Sinai. The meaning is, that the mountain and the region around quaked; Exodus 19:18. The "voice" here referred to is that of God speaking from the holy mount.

But now hath he promised, saying - The words here quoted are taken from Haggai 2:6, where they refer to the changes which would take place under the Messiah. The meaning is, that there would be great revolutions in his coming, "as if" the universe were shaken to its center. The apostle

evidently applies this passage as it is done in Haggai, to the first advent of the Redeemer.

I shake not the earth only - This is not quoted literally from the Hebrew, but the sense is retained. In Haggai it is, "Yet once it is a little while, and I wilt shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." The apostle lays emphasis on the fact that not only the earth was to be shaken but also heaven. The shaking of the earth here evidently refers to the commotions among the nations that would prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

But also heaven - This may refer either:

(1)to the extraordinary phenomena in the heavens at the birth, the death, and the ascension of Christ; or.

(2)to the revolutions in morals and religion which would be caused by the introduction of the gospel, as if everything were to be changed - expressed by "a shaking of the heavens and the earth;" or.

(3)it may be more literally taken as denoting that there was a remarkable agitation in the heavens - in the bosoms of its inhabitants - arising from a fact so wonderful as that the Son of God should descend to earth, suffer, and die.

I see no reason to doubt that the latter idea may have been included here; and the meaning of the whole then is, that while the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, fearful and solemn as it was, was an event that merely shook the earth in the vicinity of the holy Mount, the introduction of the gospel agitated the universe. Great changes upon the earth were to precede it; one revolution was to succeed another preparatory to it, and the whole universe would be moved at an event so extraordinary. The meaning is, that the introduction of the gospel was a much more solemn and momentous thing than the giving of the Law - and that, therefore, it was much more fearful and dangerous to apostatize from it.

Verse 27

And this word, Yet once more - That is, this reference to a great agitation or commotion in some future time. This is designed as an explanation of the prophecy in Haggai, and the idea is, that there would be such agitations that everything which was not fixed on a permanent and immovable basis would be thrown down as in an earthquake. Everything

which was temporary in human institutions; everything which was wrong in customs and morals; and everything in the ancient system of religion, which was merely of a preparatory and typical character, would be removed. What was of permanent value would be retained, and a kingdom would be established which nothing could move. The effect of the gospel would be to overturn everything which was of a temporary character in the previous system, and everything in morals which was not founded on a solid basis, and to set up in the place of it principles which no revolution and no time could change. The coming of the Saviour, and the influence of his religion on mankind, had this effect in such respects as the following:

(1) All that was of a sound and permanent nature in the Jewish economy was retained; all that was typical and temporary was removed. The whole mass of sacrifices and ceremonies that were designed to prefigure the Messiah of course then ceased; all that was of permanent value in the Law of God, and in the principles of religion, was incorporated in the new system, and perpetuated.

(2) the same is true in regard to morals. There was much truth on the earth before the time of the Saviour; but it was intermingled with much that was false. The effect of his coming has been to distinguish what is true and what is false; to give permanency to the one, and to cause the other to vanish.

(3) the same is true of religion, There are some views of religion which men have by nature which are correct; there are many which are false. The Christian religion gives permanence and stability to the one and causes the other to disappear. And in general, it may be remarked, that the effect of Christianity is to give stability to all that is founded on truth, and to drive error from the world. Christ came that he might destroy all the systems of error - that is, all that could he shaken on earth, and to confirm all that is true. The result of all will be that he will preside over a permanent kingdom, and that his people will inherit "a kingdom which cannot be moved;" Hebrews 12:28.

The removing of those things that are shaken - Margin, more correctly "may be." The meaning is, that those principles of religion and morals which were not founded on truth would be removed by his coming.

As of things that are made - Much perplexity has been felt by expositors in regard to this phrase, but the meaning seems to be plain. The apostle is contrasting the things which are fixed and stable with those which are temporary in their nature, or which are settled on no firm foundation. The former he speaks of as if they were uncreated and eternal principles of truth and righteousness. The latter he speaks of as if they were created, and therefore liable, like all things which are "made," to decay, to change, to dissolution.

That those things which cannot be shaken may remain - The eternal principles of truth, and law, and righteousness. These would enter into the new kingdom which was to be set up, and of course that kingdom would be permanent. These are not changed or modified by time, circumstances, human opinions, or laws. They remain the same from age to age, in every land, and in all worlds, They have been permanent in all the fluctuations of opinion; in all the varied forms of government on earth; in all the revolutions of states and empires. To bring out these is the result of the events of divine Providence, and the object of the coming of the Redeemer; and on these principles that great kingdom is to be reared which is to endure forever and ever.

Verse 28

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved - We who are Christians. We pertain to a kingdom that is permanent and unchanging. The meaning is, that the kingdom of the Redeemer is never to pass away. It is not like the Jewish dispensation, to give place to another, nor is there any power that can destroy it; see the notes on Matthew 16:18. It has now endured for eighteen hundred years, amidst all the revolutions on earth, and in spite of all the attempts which have been made to destroy it; and it is now as vigorous and stable as it ever was. The past has shown that there is no power of earth or hell that can destroy it, and that in the midst of all revolutions this kingdom still survives. Its great principles and laws will endure on earth to the end of time, and will be made permanent in heaven. This is the only kingdom in which we can be certain that there will be no revolution; the only empire which is destined never to fall.

Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God - Margin, "let us hold fast." The Greek is, literally, let us have grace; the meaning is, "let us hold fast the grace or favor which we have received in being admitted to the privileges of that kingdom." The object of the apostle is, to keep them in the

reverent fear and service of God. The "argument" which he presents is, that this kingdom is permanent. There is no danger of its being overthrown. It is to continue on earth to the end of time; it is to be established in heaven forever. If it were temporary, changeable, liable to be overthrown at any moment, there would be much less encouragement to perseverance. But in a kingdom like this there is every encouragement, for there is the assurance:

(1)that all our interests there are safe;

(2)that all our exertions will be crowned with ultimate success,

(3)that the efforts which we make to do good will have a permanent influence on mankind, and will bless future ages; and

(4)that the reward is certain.

A man subject to a government about whose continuance there would be the utmost uncertainty, would have little encouragement to labor with a view to any permanent interest. In a government where nothing is settled; where all policy is changing, and where there are constantly vacillating plans, there is no inducement to enter on any enterprise demanding time and risk. But where the policy is settled; where the principles and the laws are firm; where there is evidence of permanency, there is the highest encouragement. The highest possible encouragement of this kind is in the permanent and established kingdom of God. All other governments may be revolutionized; this never will be - all others may have a changeful policy; this has none - all others will be overthrown; this never will.

With reverence and godly fear - With true veneration for God, and with pious devotedness.

Verse 29

For our God is a consuming fire - This is a further reason why we should serve God with profound reverence and unwavering fidelity. The quotation is made from Deuteronomy 4:24. "For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." The object of the apostle here seems to be, to show that there was the same reason for fearing the displeasure of God under the new dispensation which there was under the old. It was the same God who was served. There had been no change in his attributes, or in the principles of his government. He was no more the friend of sin now than he was then; and the same perfections of his nature which would then lead him to punish transgression would also lead him to do it now. His anger was

really as terrible, and as much to be dreaded as it was at Mount Sinai; and the destruction which he would inflict on his foes would be as terrible now as it was then.

The fearfulness with which he would come forth to destroy the wicked might be compared to a "fire" that consumed all before it; see the notes, Mark 9:44-46. The image here is a most fearful one, and is in accordance with all the representations of God in the Bible and with all that we see in the divine dealings with wicked people, that punishment; as inflicted by him is awful and overwhelming. So it was on the old world; on the cities of the plain; on the hosts of Sennacherib; and on Jerusalem - and so it has been in the calamities of pestilence, war, flood, and famine with which God has visited guilty people. By all these tender and solemn considerations, therefore, the apostle urges the friends of God to perseverance and fidelity in his service. His goodness and mercy; the gift of a Saviour to redeem us; the revelation of a glorious world; the assurance that all may soon be united in fellowship with the angels and the redeemed; the certainty that the kingdom of the Saviour is established on a permanent basis, and the apprehension of the dreadful wrath of God against the guilty, all should lead us to persevere in the duties of our Christian calling, and to avoid those things which would jeopard the eternal interests of our souls.

HEBREWS CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

The closing chapter Hebrews 13:1; hospitality, Hebrews 13:2; sympathy with those in bonds, Hebrews 13:3; fidelity in the marriage relation, Hebrews 13:4; contentment, Hebrews 13:5-6; submission to those in authority, Hebrews 13:7-8; stability in the doctrines of religion, Hebrews 13:9-15; benevolence, Hebrews 13:16; obedience to those entrusted with office, Hebrews 13:17; and special prayer for him who wrote this Epistle, Hebrews 13:18-19. The Epistle then closes with a beautiful and impressive benediction, Hebrews 13:20-21; with an entreaty that they would receive with favor what had been written, Hebrews 13:22; with the grateful announcement that Timothy, in whom they doubtless felt a great interest, was set at liberty, Hebrews 13:23; and with a salutation to all the saints, Hebrews 13:24-25.

Verse 1

Let brotherly love continue - Implying that it now existed among them. The apostle had no occasion to reprove them for the want of it, as he had in regard to some to whom he wrote, but he aims merely to impress on them the importance of this virtue, and to caution them against the danger of allowing it ever to be interrupted; see the notes on John 13:34.

Verse 2

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers - On the duty of hospitality, see a full explanation in the notes on Romans 12:13.

For thereby some have entertained angels unawares - Without knowing that they were angels. As Abraham (Genesis 18:2 ff), and Lot did; Genesis 19. The motive here urged for doing it is, that by entertaining the stranger we may perhaps be honored with the presence of those whose society will be to us an honor and a blessing. It is not well for us to miss the opportunity of the presence, the conversation, and the prayers of the good. The influence of such guests in a family is worth more than it costs to entertain them. If there is danger that we may sometimes receive those of an opposite character. yet it is not wise on account of such possible danger, to lose the opportunity of entertaining those whose presence would be a blessing. Many a parent owes the conversion of a child to the influence of a pious stranger in his family; and the hope that this may occur, or that our

own souls may be blessed, should make us ready, at all proper times, to welcome the feet of the stranger to our doors. Many a man, if, he had been accosted as Abraham was at the door of his tent by strangers, would have turned them rudely away; many a one in the situation of Lot would have sent the unknown guests rudely from his door; but who can estimate what would have been the results of such a course on the destiny of those good people and their families? For a great number of instances in which the pagan were supposed to have entertained the gods, though unknown to them, see Wetstein in loc.

Verse 3

Remember them that are in bonds - All who are "bound;" whether prisoners of war; captives in dungeons; those detained in custody for trial; those who are imprisoned for righteousness' sake, or those held in slavery. The word used here will include all instances where "bonds, shackles, chains were ever used." Perhaps there is an immediate allusion to their fellow-Christians who were suffering imprisonment on account of their religion, of whom there were doubtless many at that time, but the "principle" will apply to every case of those who are imprisoned or oppressed. The word "remember" implies more than that we are merely to "think" of them; compare Exodus 20:8; Ecclesiastes 12:1. It means that we are to remember them "with appropriate sympathy;" or as we should wish others to remember us if we were in their circumstances. That is, we are

(1)to feel deep compassion for them;

(2)we are to remember them in our prayers;

(3)we are to remember them, as far as practicable, with aid for their relief.

Christianity teaches us to sympathize with all the oppressed, the suffering, and the sad; and there are more of this class than we commonly suppose, and they have stronger claims on our sympathy than we commonly realize. In America there are not far from ten thousand confined in prison - the father separated from his children; the husband from his wife; the brother from his sister; and all cut off from the living world. Their fare is coarse, and their couches hard, and the ties which bound them to the living world are rudely snapped asunder. Many of them are in solitary dungeons; all of them are sad and melancholy men. True, they are there for crime; but they are men - they are our brothers. They have still the feelings

of our common humanity, and many of them feel their separation from wife, and children, and home, as keenly as we would.

That God who has mercifully made our lot different from theirs, has commanded us to sympathize with them - and we should sympathize all the more when we remember that but for his restraining grace we should have been in the same condition. There are in this land of "liberty" also nearly three millions who are held in the hard bondage of slavery. There is the father, the mother, the child, the brother, the sister. They are held as property; liable to be sold; having no right to the avails of their own labor; exposed to the danger of having the tenderest ties sundered at the will of their master; shut out from the privilege of reading the Word of God; fed on coarse fare; living in wretched hovels; and often subjected to the painful inflictions of the lash at the caprice of a passionate driver. Wives and daughters are made the victims of degrading sensuality without the power of resistance or redress; the security of home is unknown; and they are dependent on the will of another man whether they shall or shall not worship their Creator. We should remember them, and sympathize with them as if they were our fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, or sons and daughters.

Though of different colour, yet the same blood flows in their veins as in ours Acts 17:26; they are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. By nature they have the same right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" which we and our children have, and to deprive them of that right is as unjust as it would be to deprive us and ours of it. They have a claim on our sympathy, for they are our brethren. They need it, for they are poor and helpless. They should have it, for the same God who has kept us from that hard lot has commanded us to remember them. That kind remembrance of them should be shown in every practicable way. By prayer; by plans contemplating their freedom; by efforts to send them the gospel; by diffusing abroad the principles of liberty and of the rights of man, by using our influence to arouse the public mind in their behalf, we should endeavor to relieve those who are in bonds, and to hasten the time when "the oppressed shall go free." On this subject, see the notes on Isaiah 58:6.

As bound with them - There is great force and beauty in this expression. Religion teaches us to identify ourselves with all who are oppressed, and to feel what they suffer as if we endured it ourselves.

Infidelity and atheism are cold and distant. They stand aloof from the oppressed and the sad. But Christianity unites all hearts in one; binds us to all the race, and reveals to us in the case of each one oppressed and injured, a brother.

And them which suffer adversity - The word used here refers properly to those who are maltreated, or who are injured by others. It does not properly refer to those who merely experience calamity.

As being ourselves also in the body - As being yourselves exposed to persecution and suffering, and liable to be injured. That is, do to them as you would wish them to do to you if you were the sufferer. When we see an oppressed and injured man, we should remember that it is possible that we may be in the same circumstances, and that then we shall need and desire the sympathy of others.

Verse 4

Marriage is honorable in all - The object here is to state that "honor" is to be shown to the marriage relation. It is not to be undervalued by the pretence of the superior purity of a state of celibacy, as if marriage were improper for any class of people or any condition of life; and it should not be dishonored by any violation of the marriage contract. The course of things has shown that there was abundant reason for the apostle to assert with emphasis, that "marriage was an honorable condition of life." There has been a constant effort made to show that celibacy was a more holy state; that there was something in marriage that rendered it "dishonorable" for those who are in the ministry, and for those of either sex who would be eminently pure. This sentiment has been the cause of more abomination in the world than any other single opinion claiming to have a religious sanction. It is one of the supports on which the Papal system rests, and has been one of the principal upholders of all the corruptions in monasteries and nunneries. The apostle asserts, without any restriction or qualification, that marriage is honorable in all; and this proves that it is lawful for the ministers of religion to marry, and that the whole doctrine of the superior purity of a state of celibacy is false; see this subject examined in the notes on 1 Corinthians 6:9. The sins here referred to prevailed everywhere, and hence, there was the more propriety for the frequent and solemn injunctions to avoid them which we find in the Scriptures.

Verse 5

Let your conversation - Your "conduct" - for so the word "conversation" is used in the Scriptures; notes, Philemon 1:27.

Be without covetousness - Ephesians 5:3 note; Colossians 3:5 note.

And be content with such things as ye have - see the Philemon 4:11-12 notes; Matthew 6:25-34 notes. The particular reason here given for contentment is, that God has promised never to leave his people. Compare with this the beautiful argument of the Saviour in Matthew 6:25 ff.

For he hath said - That is, God has said.

I will never leave thee nor forsake thee - see Deuteronomy 31:6; Joshua 1:5; 1 Chronicles 28:20. Substantially the same expression is found in each of those places, and all of them contain the principle on which the apostle here relies, that God will not forsake his people.

Verse 6

So that we may boldly say - Without any hesitation or doubt, In all times of perplexity and threatening want; in all times when we scarcely know whence the supplies for our necessities are to come, we may put our trust in God, and be assured that he will not leave us to suffer. In the facts which occur under the providential dealings, there is a ground for confidence on this subject which is not always exercised even by good people. It remains yet to be shown that they who exercise simple trust in God for the supply of their wants are ever forsaken; compare Psalm 37:25.

The Lord is my helper - Substantially this sentiment is found in Psalm 27:1, and Psalm 118:6. The apostle does not adduce it as a quotation, but as language which a true Christian may employ. The sentiment is beautiful and full of consolation. What can we fear if we have the assurance that the Lord is on our side, and that he will help us? Man can do no more to us than he permits, and of course no more than will be for our own good; and under whatever trials we may be placed, we need be under no painful apprehensions, for God will be our protector and our friend.

Verse 7

Remember them which have the rule over you - Margin, "are the guides." The word used here means properly "leaders, guides, directors." It is often applied to military commanders. Here it means teachers - appointed to lead or guide them to eternal life. It does not refer to them so much as rulers or governors, as teachers, or guides. In Hebrews 13:17, however, it is used in the former sense. The duty here enjoined is that of remembering them; that is, remembering their counsel; their instructions; their example.

Who have spoken to you the word of God - Preachers; either apostles or others. Respect is to be shown to the ministerial office, by whomsoever it is borne.

Whose faith follow - That is, imitate; see the notes on Hebrews 6:12.

Considering the end of their conversation - Of their conduct; of their manner of life. The word rendered here "the end" - ἔκβασις ekbasis- occurs only here and in 1 Corinthians 10:13, where it is rendered "a way of escape." It properly means, "a going out, an egress," and is hence spoken of as a going out from life, or of an exit from the world - "death." This is probably the meaning here. It does not mean, as our translation would seem to imply, that Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever, was the aim or end for which they lived - for the Greek will not bear that construction; but it means that they were attentively to contemplate the end or the issue of the conduct of those holy teachers - the close or going out of all that they did; to wit, in a peaceful death. Their faith sustained them. They were enabled to persevere in a Christian course, and did not faint or fail. There is allusion, doubtless, to those who had been their religious instructors, and who had died in the faith of the gospel, either by persecution or by an ordinary death, and the apostle points to them as examples of that to which he would exhort those whom he addressed - of perseverance in the faith until death. Thus explained, this verse does not refer to the duty of Christians toward living teachers, but toward those who are dead. Their duty toward living teachers is enforced in Hebrews 13:17. The sentiment here is, that the proper remembrance of those now deceased who were once our spiritual instructors and guides, should be allowed to have an important influence in inducing us to lead a holy life. We should remember them with affection and gratitude; we should recall the truths which they taught, and the exhortations which they addressed to us; we should cherish with kind affection the memory of all that they did for our welfare, and we should not forget the effect of the truths which they taught in sustaining their own souls when they died.

Verse 8

Jesus Christ the same yesterday … - As this stands in our common translation, it conveys an idea which is not in the original. It would seem to mean that Jesus Christ, the unchangeable Saviour, was the end or aim of the conduct of those referred to, or that they lived to imitate and glorify him. But this is by no means the meaning in the original. There it stands as an

absolute proposition, that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever;" that is, that he is unchangeable. The evident design of this independent proposition here is, to encourage them to persevere by showing that their Saviour was always the same; that he who had sustained his people in former times, was the same still, and would be the same forever. The argument here, therefore, for perseverance is founded on the "immutability" of the Redeemer. If he were fickle, vacillating, changing in his character and plans; if today he aids his people, and tomorrow will forsake them; if at one time he loves the virtuous, and at another equally loves the vicious; if he formed a plan yesterday which he has abandoned today; or if he is ever to be a different being from what he is now, there would be no encouragement to effort. Who would know what to depend on? Who would know what to expect tomorrow? For who could have any certainty that he could ever please a capricious or a vacillating being? Who could know how to shape his conduct if the principles of the divine administration were not always the same? At the same time, also, that this passage furnishes the strongest argument for fidelity and perseverance, it is an irrefragable proof of the divinity of the Saviour. It asserts immutability - sameness in the past, the present, and to all eternity but of whom can this be affirmed but God? It would not be possible to conceive of a declaration which would more strongly assert immutability than this.

Verse 9

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines - That is, they should have settled and fixed points of belief, and not yield to every new opinion which was started. The apostle does not exhort them to adhere to an opinion merely because they had before held it, or because it was an old opinion, nor does he forbid their following the leadings of truth though they might be required to abandon what they had before held; but he cautions them against that vacillating spirit, and that easy credulity, which would lead them to yield to any novelty, and to embrace an opinion because it was new or strange. Probably the principal reference here is to the Judaizing teachers, and to their various doctrines about their ceremonial observances and traditions. But the exhortation is applicable to Christians at all times. A religious opinion, once embraced on what was regarded a good evidence, or in which we have been trained, should not be abandoned for slight causes. Truth indeed should always be followed, but it should be only after careful inquiry.

For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace - This is the proper foundation of adherence to the truth. The heart should be established with the love of God, with pure religion, and then we shall love the truth, and love it in the right manner. If it is the head merely which is convinced, the consequence is bigotry, pride, narrowmindedness. If the belief of the truth has its seat in the heart, it will be accompanied with charity, kindness, good-will to all people. In such a belief of the truth it is a good thing to have the heart established. It will produce:

(1)firmness and stability of character;

(2)charity and kindness to others;

(3)consolation and support in trials and temptations.

When a man is thrown into trials and temptations, he ought to have some settled principles on which he can rely; some fixed points of belief that will sustain his soul.

Not with meats - The meaning is, that it is better to have the heart established with grace, or with the principles of pure religion, than with the most accurate knowledge of the rules of distinguishing the clean from the unclean among the various articles of food. Many such rules were found in the Law of Moses, and many more had been added by the refinements of Jewish rulers and by tradition. To distinguish and remember all these, required no small amount of knowledge, and the Jewish teachers, doubtless, prided themselves much on it. Paul says that it would be much better to have the principles of grace in the heart than all this knowledge; to have the mind settled on the great truths of religion than to be able to make the most accurate and learned distinctions in this matter. The same remark may be made about a great many other points besides the Jewish distinctions respecting meats. The principle is, that it is better to have the heart established in the grace of God than to have the most accurate knowledge of the distinctions which are made on useless or unimportant subjects of religion. This observation would extend to many of the shibboleths of party; to many of the metaphysical distinctions in a hair-splitting theology; to many of the points of controversy which divide the Christian world.

Which have not profited … - Which have been of no real benefit to their souls; see the notes on 1 Corinthians 8:8.

Verse 10

We have an altar - We who are Christians. The Jews had an altar on which their sacrifices were offered which was regarded as sacred, and of the benefit of which no others might partake. The design of the apostle is to show that the same thing substantially, so far as "privilege" and "sanctifying influence" were concerned, was enjoyed by Christians. The "altar" to which he here refers is evidently the cross on which the great sacrifice was made.

Whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle - A part of the meat offered in sacrifice among the Jews became the property of the priests and Levites, and they had, by the Law, a right to this as a part of their support; see Leviticus 6:25-26; Numbers 18:9-10. But the apostle says that there is a higher and more valuable sacrifice of which they have no right to partake while they remain in the service of the "tabernacle" or temple; that is, while they remain Jews. The participation in the great Christian sacrifice appertained only to those who were the friends of the Redeemer, and however much they might value themselves on the privilege of partaking of the sacrifices offered under the Jewish Law, that of partaking of the great sacrifice made by the Son of God was much greater.

Which serve the tabernacle - notes, Hebrews 9:2-3. The Jewish priests and Levites.

Verse 11

For the bodies of those beasts … - The word rendered here "for" - γὰρ gar- would be here more properly rendered "moreover." Stuart. The apostle is not urging a reason for what he had said in the previous verse, but is suggesting a new consideration to excite those whom he addressed to fidelity and perseverance. In the previous verse the consideration was, that Christians are permitted to partake of the benefits of a higher and more perfect sacrifice than the Jews were, and therefore should not relapse into that religion. In this verse the consideration is, that the bodies of the beasts that were burnt were taken without the camp, and that in like manner the Lord Jesus suffered without the gate of Jerusalem, and that we should be willing to go out with him to that sacrifice, whatever reproach or shame it might be attended with.

Whose blood is brought into the sanctuary - ; see the notes on Hebrews 9:7, Hebrews 9:12. "Are burned without the camp;" Leviticus 4:12, Leviticus 4:21; Leviticus 16:27. The "camp" here refers to the time when the Israelites were in the wilderness, and lived in encampments. The

same custom was observed after the temple was built by conveying the body of the animal slain for a sin-offering on the great day of atonement beyond the walls of Jerusalem to be consumed there. “Whatever,” says Grotius, “was not lawful to be done in the camp, afterward was not lawful to be done in the city.”

Verse 12

Wherefore, Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood - That there might be a conformity between his death for sin and the sacrifices which typified it. It is implied here that it was voluntary on the part of Jesus that he suffered out of the city; that is, it was so ordered by Providence that it should be so. This was secured by his being put to death as the result of a judicial trial, and not by popular tumult; see the notes on Isaiah 53:8. If he had been killed in a tumult, it is possible that it might have been done as in other cases (compare the case of Zacharias son of Barachias, Matthew 23:35), even at the altar. As he was subjected, however, to a judicial process, his death was effected with more deliberation, and in the usual form. Hence, he was conducted out of the city, because no criminal was executed within the walls of Jerusalem.

Without the gate - Without the gate of Jerusalem; John 19:17-18. The place where he was put to death was called Golgotha, the place of a skull, and hence, the Latin word which we commonly use in speaking of it, Calvary, Luke 23:33; compare notes on Matthew 27:33. Calvary, as it is now shown, is within the walls of Jerusalem, but there is no reason to believe that this is the place where the Lord Jesus was crucified, for that was outside of the walls of the city. The precise direction from the city is not designated by the sacred writers, nor are there any historical records, or traditional marks by which it can now be known where the exact place was. All that we know on the subject from the New Testament is, that the name was Golgotha; that the place of the crucifixion and sepulchre were near each other; that they were without the gate and nigh to the city, and that they were in a frequented spot; John 19:20. “This would favor the conclusion that the place was probably upon a great road leading from one of the gates: and such a spot would only be found upon the western or northern sides of the city, on the roads leading toward Joppa or Damascus.” See the question about the place of the crucifixion examined at length in Robinson‘s Bibli. Research., vol. ii. pp. 69-80, and Bibliotheca Sacra, No. 1.

Verse 13

Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp - As if we were going forth with him when he was led away to be crucified. He was put to death as a malefactor. He was the object of contempt and scorn. He was held up to derision, and was taunted and reviled on his way to the place of death, and even on the cross. To be identified with him there; to follow him; to sympathize with him; to be regarded as his friend, would have subjected one to similar shame and reproach. The meaning here is, that we should be willing to regard ourselves as identified with the Lord Jesus, and to bear the same shame and reproaches which he did. When he was led away amidst scoffing and reviling to be put to death, would we, if we had been there, been willing to be regarded as his followers, and to have gone out with him as his avowed disciples and friends? Alas, how many are there who profess to love him when religion subjects them to no reproach, who would have shrunk from following him to Calvary!

Bearing his reproach - Sympathizing with him; or bearing such reproach as he did; see 1 Peter 4:13; compare Hebrews 12:2 note; Philemon 3:10 note; Colossians 1:24 note.

Verse 14

For here we have no continuing city … - We do not regard this as our final home, or our fixed abode, and we should be willing to bear reproaches during the little time that we are to remain here; compare notes, Hebrews 11:10, Hebrews 11:13-14. If, therefore, in consequence of our professed attachment to the Saviour, we should be driven away from our habitations, and compelled to wander, we should be willing to submit to it, for our permanent home is not here, but in heaven. The object of the writer seems to be to comfort the Hebrew Christians on the supposition that they would be driven by persecution from the city of Jerusalem, and doomed to wander as exiles. He tells them that their Lord was led from that city to be put to death, and they should be willing to go forth also; that their permanent home was not Jerusalem, but heaven, and they should be willing in view of that blessed abode to be exiled from the city where they dwelt, and made wanderers in the earth.

Verse 15

By him, therefore - The Jews approached God by the blood of the sacrifice and by the ministry of their high priest. The exhortation of the apostle here is founded on the general course of argument in the Epistle "In

view of all the considerations presented respecting the Christian High Priest - his dignity, purity, and love; his sacrifice and his intercession, let us persevere in offering through him praise to God." That is, let us persevere in adherence to our religion.

The sacrifice of praise - For all the mercies of redemption. The Jews, says Rosenmuller (Alte u. neue Morgenland, in loc.), had a species of offerings which they called "peace-offerings, or friendship-offerings." They were designed not to produce peace or friendship with God, but to preserve it. Burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and trespass-offerings, were all on account of transgression, and were designed to remove transgression. But in their peace-offerings, the offerer was regarded as one who stood in the relation of a friend with God, and the oblation was a sign of thankful acknowledgment for favors received. or they were connected with vows in order that further blessings might be obtained, or they were brought voluntarily as a means to continue themselves in the friendship and favor of God; Leviticus 7:11-12; compare Jenning's Jew. Ant. i. 335.

That is, the fruit of our lips - The phrase "fruit of the lips." is a Hebraism, meaning what the lips produce; that is, words; compare Proverbs 18:20; Hosea 14:2.

Giving thanks to his name - To God; the name of one being often put for the person himself. "Praise" now is one of the great duties of the redeemed. It will be their employment forever.

Verse 16

But to do good, and to communicate, forget not - To communicate or impart to others; that is, to share with them what we have. The Greek word means having in common with others. The meaning is, that they were to show liberality to those who were in want, and were to take special pains not to forget this duty. We are prone to think constantly of our own interests, and there is great danger of forgetting the duty which we owe to the poor and the needy. On the duty here enjoined, see the notes on Galatians 6:10.

For with such sacrifices God is well pleased - He is pleased with the sacrifices of prayer and of praise; with the offerings of a broken and a contrite heart: but he is especially pleased with the religion which leads us to do good to others. This was eminently the religion of his Son, the Lord Jesus; and to this all true religion prompts. The word "sacrifices" here is not taken in a strict sense, as denoting what is offered as an expiation for sin, or in the sense that we are by doing good to attempt to make atonement for our

transgressions, but in the general sense of an offering made to God. God is pleased with this:

(1)because it shows in us a right state of heart;

(2)because it accords with his own nature. He does good continually, and he is pleased with all who evince the same spirit.

Verse 17

Obey them that have the rule over you - Margin, guide; see notes on Hebrews 13:7. The reference here is to their religious teachers, and not to civil rulers. They were to show them proper respect, and to submit to their authority in the church, so far as it was administered in accordance with the precepts of the Saviour. The obligation to obedience does not, of course, extend to anything which is wrong in itself, or which would be a violation of conscience. The doctrine is, that subordination is necessary to the welfare of the church, and that there ought to be a disposition to yield all proper obedience to those who are set over us in the Lord; compare notes on 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13.

And submit yourselves - That is, to all which they enjoin that is lawful and right. There are in relation to a society:

(1)those things which God has positively commanded - which are always to be obeyed.

(2)many things which have been agreed on by the society as needful for its welfare - and these are to be submitted to unless they violate the rights of conscience; and

(3)many things which are in themselves a matter of no express divine command, and of no formal enactment by the community. They are matters of convenience; things that tend to the order and harmony of the community, and of the propriety of these, "rulers" in the church and elsewhere should be allowed to judge, and we should submit to them patiently.

Hence, in the church we are to submit to all the proper regulations for conducting public worship; for the promotion of religion; and for the administration of discipline.

For they watch for your souls - They have no selfish aim in this. They do not seek "to lord it over God's heritage." It is for your own good that they do this, and you should therefore submit to these arrangements. And

this shows also the true principle on which authority should be exercised in a church. It should be in such a way as to promote the salvation of the people; and all the arrangements should be with that end. The measures adopted, therefore, and the obedience enjoined, should not be arbitrary, oppressive, or severe, but should be such as will really promote salvation.

As they that must give account - To God. The ministers of religion must give account to God for their fidelity. For all that they teach, and for every measure which they adopt, they must soon be called into judgment. There is, therefore, the best security that under the influence of this solemn truth they will pursue only that course which will be for your good.

That they may do it with joy, and not with grief - Greek μὴ στενάζοντες mē stenazontes- not sighing, or groaning; as they would who had been unsuccessful. The meaning is, that they should so obey, that when their teachers came to give up their account they need not do it with sorrow over their perverseness and disobedience.

For this is unprofitable for you - That is, their giving up their account in that manner - as unsuccessful in their efforts to save you - would not be of advantage to you, but would be highly injurious. This is a strong mode of expressing the idea that it must be attended with eminent peril to their souls to have their religious teachers go and give an account against them. As they would wish, therefore, to avoid that, they should render to them all proper honor and obedience.

Verse 18

Pray for us - This is a request which the apostle often makes in his own behalf, and in behalf of his fellow laborers in the gospel; see 1 Thessalonians 5:25. notes, Ephesians 6:18-19.

For we trust we have a good conscience … - see the notes on Acts 24:16. The apostle here appeals to the uprightness of his Christian life as a reason why he might claim their sympathy. He was conscious of an aim to do good; he sought the welfare of the church; and having this aim he felt that he might appeal to the sympathy of all Christians in his behalf. It is only when we aim to do right, and to maintain a good conscience, that we can with propriety ask the prayers of others, or claim their sympathy. And if we are "willing in all things to live honestly," we may expect the sympathy, the prayers, and the affections of all good people.

Verse 19

That I may be restored to you the sooner - It is here clearly implied that the writer was deterred from visiting them by some adverse circumstances over which he had no control. This might be either by imprisonment, or sickness, or the want of a convenient opportunity of reaching them. The probability is, judging particularly from the statement in Hebrews 13:23, that he was then a prisoner, and that his detention was on that account; see Introduction, section 4 (6). The language here is such as Paul would use on the supposition that he was then a prisoner at Rome, and this is a slight circumstance going to show the probability that the Epistle was composed by him.

Verse 20

Now the God of peace - God who is the Author, or the source of peace; notes, 1 Thessalonians 5:23. The word "peace" in the New Testament is used to denote every kind of blessing or happiness. It is opposed to all that would disturb or trouble the mind, and may refer, therefore, to reconciliation with God; to a quiet conscience; to the evidence of pardoned sin; to health and prosperity, and to the hope of heaven; see the notes on John 14:27.

That brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus - Acts 2:32 note; 1 Corinthians 15:15 note. It is only by the fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus that we have peace, for it is only by him that we have the prospect of an admission into heaven.

That great Shepherd of the sheep - notes, John 10:1, John 10:14. The idea here is, that it is through the tender care of that great Shepherd that true happiness is bestowed on the people of God.

Through the blood of the everlasting covenant - The blood shed to ratify the everlasting covenant that God makes with his people; notes, Hebrews 9:14-23. This phrase, in the original, is not connected, as it is in our translation, with his being raised from the dead, nor should it be so rendered, for what can be the sense of "raising Christ from the dead by the blood of the covenant?" In the Greek it is, "the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the shepherd of the sheep, great by the blood of the everlasting covenant, our Lord Jesus," etc. The meaning is, that he was made or constituted the great Shepherd of the sheep - the great Lord and ruler of his people, by that blood. That which makes him so eminently distinguished; that by which he was made superior to all others who ever ruled over the people of God, was the fact that he offered the blood by

which the eternal covenant was ratified. It is called everlasting or eternal, because:

(1)it was formed in the councils of eternity, or has been an eternal plan in the divine mind; and,

(2)because it is to continue forever. Through such a covenant God can bestow permanent and solid "peace" on his people, for it lays the foundation of the assurance of eternal happiness.

Verse 21

Make you perfect - The apostle here does not affirm that they were then perfect, or that they would be in this life. The word used here - καταρτιζω katartizō- means to make fully ready; to put in full order; to make complete. The meaning here is, that Paul prayed that God would fully endow them with whatever grace was necessary to do his will and to keep his commandments; see the word explained in the notes on Hebrews 11:3. It is an appropriate prayer to be offered at all times, and by all who love the church, that God would make all his people perfectly qualified to do all his will.

Working in you - Margin, "Doing." The idea here is, that the only hope that they would do the will of God was, that he would, by his own agency, cause them to do what was well-pleasing in his sight; compare notes on Philemon 2:12. It is not from any expectation that man would do it himself.

Through Jesus Christ - The idea is, that God does not directly, and by his own immediate agency, convert and sanctify the heart, but it is through the gospel of Christ, and all good influences on the soul must be expected through the Saviour.

To whom be glory forever and ever - That is, to Christ; for so the connection evidently demands. It is not uncommon for the apostle Paul to introduce doxologies in this way in the midst of a letter; see the notes, Romans 9:5. It was common among the Jews, as it is now in the writings and conversation of the Muslims, when the name of God was mentioned to accompany it with an expression of praise.

Verse 22

Suffer the word of exhortation - Referring to the arguments and counsels in this whole Epistle, which is in fact a practical exhortation to perseverance in adhering to the Christian religion amidst all the temptations which existed to apostasy.

For I have written a letter unto you in few words - This does not mean that this Epistle is short compared with the others that the author had written, for most of the Epistles of Paul are shorter than this. But it means, that it was brief compared with the importance and difficulty of the subjects of which he had treated. The topics introduced would have allowed a much more extended discussion; but in handling them he had made use of as few words as possible. No one can deny this who considers the sententious manner of this Epistle. As an illustration of this, perhaps we may remark that it is easy to expand the thoughts of this Epistle into ample volumes of exposition, and that in fact it is difficult to give an explanation of it without a commentary that shall greatly surpass in extent the text. None can doubt, also, that the author of this Epistle could have himself greatly expanded the thoughts and the Illustrations if he had chosen. It is with reference to such considerations, probably, that he says that the Epistle was brief.

Verse 23

Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty - Or, is sent away. So it is rendered by Prof. Stuart and others. On the meaning of this, and its importance in determining who was the author of the Epistle, see the Introduction section 3, (5) 4, and Prof. Stuart‘s *Introduction*, section 19. This is a strong circumstance showing that Paul was the author of the Epistle, for from the first acquaintance of Timothy with Paul he is represented as his constant companion, and spoken of as a brother; 2 Corinthians 1:1 note; Philemon 1:1 note; Colossians 1:1 note; Philemon 2:19, Philemon 2:23, Paul, then a prisoner at Rome, speaks of the hope which he entertained that he would be able to send Timothy to them as soon as he should know how it would go with him. He designed to retain him until that point was settled, as his presence with him would be important until then, and then to send him to give consolation to the Philippians, and to look into the condition of the church. Now the passage before us agrees well with the supposition that that event had occurred - that Paul had ascertained with sufficient clearness that he would be released, so that he might be permitted yet to visit the Hebrew Christians, that he had sent Timothy to Philippi and was waiting for his return; that as soon as he should return he would be prepared to visit them; and that in the mean time while Timothy was absent, he wrote to them this Epistle.

(3) the supposition agrees well with the meaning of the word used here - ἀπολύω apoluōIt denotes properly, to let loose from: to loosen; to unbind; to

release; to let go free; to put away or divorce; to dismiss simply, or let go, or send away; see Matthew 14:15, Matthew 14:22-23; Matthew 15:32, Matthew 15:39; Luke 9:12, et al.; compare Robinson‘s *Lexicon* and Stuart‘s *Introduction*, section 19. The meaning, then, I take to be this, that Timothy was then sent away on some important embassage; that the apostle expected his speedy return; and that then he trusted that he would be able with him to visit those to whom this Epistle was written.

Verse 24

Salute all them - see the notes on Romans 16:3 ff. It was customary for the apostle Paul to close his epistles with an affectionate salutation.

That have the rule over you - notes, Hebrews 13:7,17. None are mentioned by name, as is usual in the Epistles of Paul. The cause of this omission is unknown. “And all the saints.” The common name given to Christians in the Scriptures; see the notes on Romans 1:7.

They of Italy salute you - The saints or Christians in Italy. Showing that the writer of the Epistle was then in Italy. He was probably in Rome; see the introduction, section 4.

Verse 25

Grace be with you all - notes, Romans 16:20, Romans 16:24.

The subscription at the close of the Epistle “written to the Hebrews from Italy by Timothy,” like the other subscriptions, is of no authority; see notes at the end of 1Cor. It is demonstrably erroneous here, for it is expressly said by the author of the Epistle that at the time he wrote it, Timothy was absent; Hebrews 13:23. In regard to the time and place of writing it, see the Introduction, section 4.

At the close of this exposition, it is not improper to refer the reader to the remarks on its design at the end of the introduction, section 6. Having passed through the exposition, we may see more clearly the importance of the views there presented. There is no book of the New Testament more important than this, and of course none whose want would be more perceptible in the canon of the Scriptures. Every reader of the Old Testament needs such a guide as this Epistle, written by some one who had an intimate acquaintance from childhood with the Jewish system; who had all the advantages of the most able and faithful instruction, and who was under the influence of inspiration, to make us acquainted with the true

nature of those institutions Nothing was more important than to settle the principles in regard to the nature of the Jewish economy; to show what was typical, and how those institutions were the means of introducing a far more perfect system - the system of the Christian religion.

If we have right feelings, we shall have sincere gratitude to God that he caused the Christian religion to be prefigured by a system in itself so magnificent and grand as that of the Jewish, and higher gratitude for that sublime system of religion of which the Jewish, with all its splendor, was only the shadow. There was much that was beautiful, cheering, and sublime in the Jewish system. There was much that was grand and awful in the giving of the Law, and much that was imposing in its ceremonies. In its palmy and pure days, it was incomparably the purest and noblest system of religion then on earth. It taught the knowledge of the one true God; inculcated a pure system of morals; preserved the record of the truth on the earth, and held up constantly before man the hope of a better system still in days to come. But it was expensive, burdensome, precise in its prescriptions, and wearisome in its ceremonies; Acts 15:10. It was adapted to one people - a people who occupied a small territory, and who could conveniently assemble at the central place of their worship three times in a year. It was not a system adapted to the whole world, nor was it designed for the whole world. When the Saviour came, therefore, to introduce whom was the design of the Jewish economy, it ceased as a matter of course. The Jewish altars were soon thrown down; the temple was razed to the ground, and the city of their solemnities was destroyed. The religion of the Hebrews passed away to be revived no more in its splendor and power, and it has never lived since, except as an empty form.

This Epistle teaches us why it passed away, and why it can never he restored. It is the true key with which to unlock the Old Testament; and with these views, we may remark in conclusion, that he who would understand the Bible thoroughly should make himself familiar with this Epistle; that the canon of Scripture would be incomplete without it; and that, to one who wishes to understand the Revelation which God has given, there is no portion of the volume whose loss would be a more irreparable calamity than that of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

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JAMES INTRODUCTION

The General Epistle Of James

Section 1. The Question: Who Was the Author of this Epistle?

There have been more difficult questions raised in regard to the Epistle of James than perhaps any other portion of the New Testament. Those questions it is of importance to examine as fully as is consistent with the design of these notes; that is, so far as to enable a candid inquirer to see what is the real difficulty in the case, and what is, so far as can be ascertained, the truth.

The first question is, Who was the author? It has been attributed to one of three persons: to James "the elder," the son of Zebedee, and brother of John; to James "the less," son of Alphaeus or Cleophas; and to a James of whom nothing more is known. Some have supposed, also, that the James who is mentioned as the "Lord's brother," Galatians 1:19, was a different person from James, the son of Alphaeus.

There are no methods of determining this point from the Epistle itself. All that can be established from the Epistle is:

(1)that the name of the author was James, James 1:1

(2)that he professed to be a "servant of God," James 1:1

(3)that he had been probably a Jew, and sustained such a relation to those to whom he wrote, as to make it proper for him to address them with authority; and,

(4)that he was a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, James 2:1; James 5:8

There are two persons, if not three, of the name of James, mentioned in the New Testament. The one is James, the son of Zebedee, Matthew 4:21; Mark 3:17; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13, et al. He was the brother of John, and is usually mentioned in connection with him; Matthew 4:21; Matthew 17:1; Mark 5:37; Mark 13:3, et al. The name of their mother was Salome. Compare Matthew 27:56, with Mark 15:40. He was put to death by Herod Agrippa, about 41 a.d. Acts 12:2. He was called the major, or the elder - to distinguish him from the other James, the younger, or the less, Mark 15:40; called also, in ancient history, James the Just.

The other James was a son of Alphaeus or Cleophas; Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Acts 1:13; Luke 24:18. That Alphaeus and Cleophas was the same person is evident from the fact that both the words are derived from the Hebrew הלפי h-l-p-yThe name of the mother of this James was Mary, Mark 15:40; and James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, are mentioned as brethren; Matthew 13:55. There is also a James mentioned in Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; and Galatians 1:19, as a "brother of our Lord." On the meaning of this expression, see the notes at Galatians 1:19

It has been a question which has been agitated from the earliest times, whether the James who is mentioned as the son of Alphaeus, and the James who is mentioned as the "Lord's brother," were the same or different persons. It is not necessary for the purposes of these notes to go into an examination of this question. Those who are disposed to see it pursued, may consult Hug's *Introduction*, Section 158, and the works there referred to; Neander's *History of the Planting and Training of the Christian Church*, vol. ii. p. 2, following, Edin. Ed.; and Michaelis' *Introduction*, vol. iv. 271, following. The question, says Neander, is one of the most difficult in the apostolic history. Hug supposes that James the son of Alphaeus, and James the brother of the Lord, were the same. Neander supposes that the James mentioned by the title of the "Lord's brother" was a son of Joseph, either by a former marriage, or by Mary, and consequently a "brother" in the stricter sense.

It is remarked by Michaelis, that James may have been called "the Lord's brother," or mentioned as one of his brethren, in one of the following senses:

(1) That the persons accounted as the "brethren of the Lord" (Matthew 13:55, et al.) were the sons of Joseph, not by Mary the mother of Jesus, but by a former wife. This, says he, was the most ancient opinion, and there is in it nothing improbable. If so, they were older than Jesus.

(2) it may mean that they were the sons of Joseph by Mary, the mother of Jesus. Compare the notes at Matthew 13:55. If so, James was an own brother of Jesus, but younger than he. There is nothing in this opinion inconsistent with any statement in the Bible; for the notion of the perpetual virginity of Mary is not founded on the authority of the Scriptures. If either of these suppositions were true, however, and James and Judas, the authors

of the Epistles which bear their names, were literally the brothers of Christ, it would follow that they were not apostles; for the elder apostle James was the son of Zebedee, and James the younger was the son of Alphaeus.

(3) athird opinion in relation to James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, is, that they were the sons of Joseph by the widow of a brother who had died without children, and to whom, therefore, Joseph, by the Mosaic laws, was obliged to raise up issue. This opinion, however, is entirely unsupported, and is wholly improbable, because:

(a)the law which obliged the Jews to take their brothers" widows applied only to those who were single (Michaelis); and,

(b)if this had been an instance of that kind, all the requirement of the law in the case would have been satisfied when one heir was born.

(4) it might be maintained that, according to the preceding opinion, the brother of Joseph was Alphaeus, and then they would be reckoned as his sons; and in this case, the James and Judas who are called the brothers of Jesus, would have been the same as the apostles of that name. But, in that case, Alphaeus would not have been the same as Cleopas, for Cleopas had a wife - the sister of Joseph's wife.

(5) afifth opinion, and one which was advanced by Jerome, and which has been extensively maintained, is, that the persons referred to were called "brethren" of the Lord Jesus only in a somewhat lax sense, as denoting his near kinsmen. See the notes at Galatians 1:19. According to this, they would have been cousins of the Lord Jesus, and the relationship was of this kind: James and Judas, sons of Alphaeus, were the apostles, and consequently Alphaeus was the father of Simon and Joses. Further, Alphaeus is the same as Cleopas, who married Mary, the sister of the mother of Jesus John 19:25, and, consequently, the sons of Cleopas were cousins of the Saviour.

Which of these opinions is the correct one, it is impossible now to determine. The latter is the common opinion, and perhaps, on the whole, best sustained; and if so, then there were but two Jameses referred to, both apostles, and the one who wrote this Epistle was a cousin of the Lord Jesus. Neander, however, supposes that there were two Jameses besides James the brother of John, the son of Zebedee, and that the one who wrote this Epistle was not the apostle, the son of Alphaeus, but was, in the stricter sense, the "brother" of our Lord, and was trained up with him. *History of the Planting of Christianity*, ii., p. 3, following.

It is a circumstance of some importance, in showing that there was but one James besides James the brother of John, and that this was the apostle, the son of Alphaeus, that after the death of the elder James Acts 12:1, no mention is made of more than one of that name. If there had been, it is hardly possible, says Hug, that there should not have been some allusion to him. This, however, is not conclusive; for there is no mention of Simon, or Bartholomew, or Thomas after that time.

There is but one serious objection, perhaps, to this theory, which is, that it is said John 7:5 that "his brethren did not believe on him." It is possible, however, that the word "brethren" in that place may not have included all his kinsmen, but may have had particular reference to the larger portion of them John 7:3, who were not believers, though it might have been that some of them were believers.

On the whole, it seems probable that the James who was the author of this Epistle was one of the apostles of that name, the son of Alphaeus, and that he was a cousin of our Lord. Entire certainty on that point, however, cannot he hoped for.

If the author of this Epistle was a different person from the one who resided at Jerusalem, and who is often mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, then nothing more is known of him. That James was evidently an apostle Galatians 1:19, and perhaps, from his relationship to the Lord Jesus, would have a special influence and authority there.

Of this James, little more is certainly known than what is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles. Hegesippus, as quoted by Neander, says, that from childhood he led the life of a Nazarene. He is described by Josephus (*Archaeol*. xx. 9,) as well as by Hegesippus and Eusebius, as a man eminent for his integrity of life, and as well meriting the appellation or surname which he bore among the Jews, of צדיק tsadiyq δίκαιος dikaios"the Just." He is mentioned as one who set himself against the corruptions of the age, and who was thence termed the bulwark of the people - צִפְלַ צם opel̀ am- περιοχη τοῦ λαοῦ periochē tou laouHis manner of life is represented as strict and holy, and such as to command in an eminent degree the confidence of his countrymen, the Jews. Hegesippus says that he frequently

prostrated himself on his knees in the Temple, calling on God to forgive the sins of his people, praying that the divine judgments on the unbelievers might be averted, and that they might be led to repentance and faith, and thus to a participation of the kingdom of the glorified Messiah. Neander, as quoted before, p. 10.

In the New Testament, James appears as a prominent and leading man in the church at Jerusalem. In later times he is mentioned by the ecclesiastical writers as "Bishop of Jerusalem;" but this title is not given to him in the New Testament, nor is there any reason to suppose that he filled the office which is now usually denoted by the word bishop. He appears, however, from some cause, to have had his home permanently in Jerusalem, and, for a considerable portion of his life, to have been the only apostle residing there. As such, as well as from his near relationship to the Lord Jesus, and his own personal worth, he was entitled to, and received, marked respect. His prominence, and the respect which was shown to him at Jerusalem, appear in the following circumstances:

(1) In the council that was held respecting the rules that were to be imposed on the converts from the Gentiles, and the manner in which they were to be regarded and treated Acts 12:17

(3) when Paul visited Jerusalem after his conversion, James is twice mentioned by him as occupying a prominent position there. First, Paul says that when he went there on the first occasion, he saw none of the apostles but Peter, and "James the Lord's brother." Galatians 1:18-19. He is here mentioned as one of the apostles, and as sustaining a near relation to the Lord Jesus. On the second occasion, when Paul went up there 14 years after, he is mentioned, in enumerating those who gave to him the right hand of fellowship, as one of the "pillars" of the church; and among those who recognized him as an apostle, he is mentioned first. "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship." Galatians 2:9

(4) when Paul went up to Jerusalem after his visit to Asia Minor and to Greece, the whole matter pertaining to his visit was laid before James, and his counsel was followed by Paul. Acts 21:18-24

The leading points in the character of James seem to have been these:

(1) Incorruptible integrity; integrity such as to secure the confidence of all men, and to deserve the appellation of "the Just."

(2) an exalted regard for the rites and ceremonies of the ancient religion, and a desire that they should be respected everywhere and honored. He was more slow in coming to the conclusion that they were to be superseded by Christianity than Paul or Peter was (compare Acts 21:18; Galatians 2:12), though he admitted that they were not to be imposed on the Gentile converts as absolutely binding. Acts 15:19-21, Acts 15:24-29. Repeated intimations of his great respect for the laws of Moses are found in the Epistle before us, thus furnishing an internal proof of its genuineness. If he was educated as a Nazarene, and if he always resided with the Jews, in the very vicinity of the Temple, this is not difficult to be accounted for, and this might be expected to tinge his writings.

(3) the point from which he contemplated religion particularly was, conformity to the law. He looked at it as it was intended, to regulate the life, and to produce holiness of deportment, in opposition to all lax views of morals and low conceptions of holiness. He lived in a corrupt age, and among corrupt people; among those who sought to be justified before God by the mere fact that they were Jews, that they had the true religion, and that they were the chosen people of God, and who, in consequence, were lax in their morals, and comparatively regardless of the obligations to personal holiness. He therefore contemplated religion, not so much in respect to the question how man may be justified, as to the question to what kind of life it will lead us; and his great object was to show that personal holiness is necessary to salvation. Paul, on the other hand, was led to contemplate it mainly with reference to another question - how man may be justified; and it became necessary for him to show that men cannot be justified by their own works, but that it must be by faith in the Redeemer. The error which Paul particularly combats, is an error on the subject of justification; the error which James particularly opposes, is a practical error on the influence of religion on the life. It was because religion was contemplated by these two writers from these different points of view, and not from any real contradiction, that the apparent discrepancy arose between the Epistle of James and the writings of Paul. The peculiarity in the character and circumstances of James will account for the views which he took of religion; and, keeping this in mind, it will be easy to show that there

is no real contradiction between these writers. It was of great importance to guard against each of the errors referred to; and the views expressed by both of the apostles are necessary to understand the nature and to see the full developement of religion.

How long James lived, and when and how he died, is not certainly known. It is agreed by all that he spent his last days in Jerusalem, and that he probably died there. On the subject of his death there is a remarkable passage in Josephus, which, though its genuineness has been disputed, is worth transcribing, as, if genuine, it shows the respect in which James was held, and contains an interesting account of his death. It is as follows: "The emperor (Roman) being informed of the death of Festus, sent Albinus to be prefect of Judea. But the younger Aranus, who, as we said before, was made high priest, was haughty in his behavior, and was very ambitious. And, moreover, he was of the sect of the Sadducees, who, as we have also observed before, are, above all other Jews, severe in their judicial sentences. This, then, being the temper of Ananus, he, thinking he had a fit opportunity, because Festus was dead, and Albinus was yet on the road, calls a council.

And, bringing before them James, the brother of him who is called Christ, and some others, he accused them as transgressors of the laws, and had them stoned to death. But the most moderate men of the city, who were also reckoned most skillful in the laws, were offended at this proceeding. They therefore sent privately to the king (Agrippa the younger), entreating him to send orders to Ananus no more to attempt any such things." - Ant., B. xx. A long account of the manner of his death, by Hegesippus, is preserved in Eusebius, going much more into detail, and evidently introducing much that is fabulous. The amount of all that can now be known in regard to his decease would seem to be, that he was put to death by violence in Jerusalem, a short time before the destruction of the Temple. From the well-known character of the Jews, this account is by no means improbable. On the subject of his life and death, the reader may find all that is known in Lardner's *Works*, vol. vi. pp. 162-195; Bacon's *Lives of the Apostles*, pp. 411-433; and Neander, *History of the Planting of the Christian Church*, ii., pp. 1-23, Edin. Ed.

The belief that it was this James, the son of Alphaeus, who resided so long at Jerusalem, who was the author of this Epistle, has been the

common, though not the unanimous opinion of the Christian church, and seems to be supported by satisfactory arguments. It must evidently have been written either by him or by James the elder, the son of Zebedee, or by some other James, the supposed literal brother of our Lord.

In regard to these opinions, we may observe:

I. That the supposition that it was written by some third one of that name, "wholly unknown to fame," is mere hypothesis. It has no evidence whatever in its support.

II. There are strong reasons for supposing that it was not written by James the elder, the son of Zebedee, and brother of John. It has been indeed ascribed to him. In the old Syriac version, in the earlier editions, it is expressly attributed to him. But against this opinion the following objections may be urged, which seem to be conclusive.

(1) James the elder was beheaded about the year 43 or 44 a.d., and if this Epistle was written by him, it is the oldest of the writings of the New Testament. It is possible, indeed, that the Epistle may have been written at as early a period as that, but the considerations which remain to be stated, will show that this Epistle has sufficient internal marks to prove that it was of later origin.

(2) before the death of James the elder, the preaching of the gospel was chiefly confined within the limits of Palestine; but this Epistle was written to Christians "of the dispersion," that is, to those who resided out of Palestine. It is hardly credible that in so short a time after the ascension of our Lord, there were so many Christians scattered abroad as to make it probable that a letter would be sent to them.

(3) this Epistle is occupied very much with a consideration of a false and perverted view of the doctrine of justification by faith. It is evident that false views on that subject prevailed, and that a considerable corruption of morals was the consequence. But this supposes that the doctrine of justification by faith had been extensively preached; consequently that considerable time had elapsed from the time when the doctrine had been first promulgated. The perversion of a doctrine, so as to produce injurious effects, seldom occurs until some time after the doctrine was first preached, and it can hardly be supposed that this would have occurred before the

death of James, the son of Zebedee. See these reasons stated more at length in Benson.

III. There are strong probabilities, from the Epistle itself, to show that it was written by James the Less.

(1) his position at Jerusalem, and his eminence among the apostles, as well as his established character, made it proper that he should address such an epistle to those who were scattered abroad. There was no one among the apostles who would command greater respect from those abroad who were of Jewish origin than James. If he had his residence at Jerusalem; if he was in any manner regarded as the head of the church there; if he sustained a near relation to the Lord Jesus; and if his character was such as has been commonly represented, there was no one among the apostles whose opinions would be treated with greater respect, or who would be considered as having a clearer right to address those who were scattered abroad.

(2) the character of the Epistle accords with the well-known character of James the Less. His strong regard for the law; his zeal for incorruptible integrity; his opposition to lax notions of morals; his opposition to all reliance on faith that was not productive of good works, all appear in this Epistle. The necessity of conformity to the law of God, and of a holy life, is everywhere apparent, and the views expressed in the Epistle agree with all that is stated of the early education and the established character of James. While there is no real contradiction between this Epistle and the writings of Paul, yet it is much easier to show that this is a production of James than it would be to prove that it was written by Paul. Compare Hug, *Introduction*, Section 159.

Section 2. To Whom Was the Epistle Written?

The Epistle purports to have been written to the "twelve tribes scattered abroad" - or the "twelve tribes of the dispersion" - ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ en tē diaspora James 1:1. See the 1 Peter 1:1 note, and the James 1:1 note. No mention of the place where they resided is made; nor can it be determined to what portion of the world it was first sent, or whether more than one copy was sent. All that can be conclusively determined in regard to the persons to whom it was addressed, is:

(1)that they were of Jewish descent - as is implied in the phrase "to the twelve tribes" James 1:1, and as is manifest in all the reasonings of the Epistle; and,

(2)that they were Christian converts, James 2:1.

But by whose labors they were converted, is wholly unknown. The Jewish people who were "scattered abroad" had two central points of union, the dispersion in the East, of which Babylon was the head, and the dispersion in the West, of which Alexandria was the head, Hug. Section 156. Peter wrote his Epistles to the latter 1 Peter 1:1, though he was at Babylon when he wrote them 1 Peter 5:13, and it would seem probable that this Epistle was addressed to the former. Beza supposed that this Epistle was sent to the believing Jews, dispersed all over the world; Grotius, that it was written to all the Jews living out of Judea; Lardner, that it was written to all Jews, descendants of Jacob, of every denomination, in Judea, and out of it. It seems plain, however, from the Epistle itself, that it was not addressed to the Jews as such, or without respect to their being already Christians, for:

(a)if it had been, it is hardly conceivable that there should have been no arguments to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, and no extended statements of the nature of the Christian system; and,

(b)it bears on the face of it evidence of having been addressed to those who were regarded as Christians; James 2:1; James 5:7, James 5:11, James 5:14.

It may be difficult to account for the fact, on any principles, that there are no more definite allusions to the nature of the Christian doctrines in the Epistle, but it is morally certain that if it had been written to Jews as such, by a Christian apostle, there would have been a more formal defense and statement of the Christian religion. Compare the arguments of the apostles with the Jews in the Acts, passim. I regard the Epistle, therefore, as having been sent to those who were of Jewish origin, but who had embraced the Christian faith by one who had been himself a Jew, and who, though now a Christian apostle, retained much of his early habits of thinking and reasoning in addressing his own countrymen.

Section 3. Where and When Was the Epistle Written?

There are no certain indications by which it can be determined where this Epistle was written, but if the considerations above suggested are well founded, there can be little doubt that it was at Jerusalem. There are indeed certain internal marks, as Hug has observed (*Introduction*, Section 155), pertaining to the country with which the writer was familiar, and to certain features of natural scenery incidentally alluded to in the Epistle. Thus, his native land was situated not far from the sea James 1:6; James 3:4; it was

blessed with valuable productions, as figs, oil, and wine James 3:12; there were springs of saline and fresh water with which he was familiar James 3:11; the land was much exposed to drought, and there were frequently reasons to apprehend famine from the want of rain James 5:17, James 5:18 there were sad devastations produced, and to be dreaded, from a consuming, burning wind James 1:11; and it was a land in which the phenomena known as "early and latter rains" were familiarly understood; James 5:7. All these allusions apply well to Palestine, and were such as would be employed by one who resided in that country, and they may be regarded as an incidental proof that the Epistle was written in that land,

There is no way of determining with certainty when the Epistle was written. Hug supposes that it was after the Epistle to the Hebrews, and not before the beginning of the 10th year of Nero, nor after the accession of Albinus; i. e., the close of the same year. Mill and Fabricius suppose it was before the destruction of Jerusalem, and about a year and a half before the death of James. Lardner supposes that James was put to death about the year 62 a.d., and that this Epistle was written about a year before. He supposes also that his death was hastened by the strong language of reprehension employed in the Epistle. It is probable that the year in which it was written was not far from 58 or 60 a.d., some 10 or 12 years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Section 4. The Canonical Authority of the Epistle

On the question generally respecting the canonical authority of the disputed Epistles, see the Introduction to the Catholic Epistles, Section 2. The particular proof of the canonical authority of this Epistle is contained in the evidence that it was written by one of the apostles. If it was written, as suggested above (Section 1), by James the Less, or if it be supposed that it was written by James the elder, both of whom were apostles, its canonical authority will be admitted. As there is no evidence that it was written by any other James, the point seems to be clear.

But there are additional considerations, derived from its reception in the church, which may furnish some degree of confirmation of its authority. These are:

(a)It was included in the old Syriac version, the Peshita, made either in the first century or in the early part of the second, thus showing that it was recognized in the country to which it was probably sent;

(b)Ephrem the Syrian, in his Greek works, made use of it in many places, and attributed it to James, the brother of our Lord (Hug);

(c)It is quoted as of authority by several of the Fathers; by Clement of Rome, who does not indeed mention the name of the writer, but quotes the words of the Epistle James 3:13; James 4:6, James 4:11; James 2:21, James 2:23; by Hermas; and by Jerome. See Lardner, vol. vi. pp. 195-199, and Hug, Section 161.

Section 5. The Evidence that the Writer Was Acquainted with the Writings of Paul; the Alleged Contradiction between Them; and the Question How They Can Be Reconciled

It has been frequently supposed, and sometimes affirmed, that this Epistle is directly contradictory to Paul on the great doctrine of justification, and that it was written to counteract the tendency of his writings on that subject. Thus Hug strangely says, "In this Epistle, Paul is (if I may be allowed to use so harsh an expression for a while) contradicted so flatly, that it would seem to have been written in opposition to some of his doctrines and opinions." Section 157. It is of importance, therefore, to inquire into the foundation of this charge, for if it be so, it is clear that either this Epistle or those of Paul would not be entitled to a place in the sacred canon. In order to this investigation, it is necessary to inquire to what extent the author was acquainted with the writings of Paul, and then to ask whether the statements of James are susceptible of any explanation which will reconcile them with those of Paul.

(1) there is undoubted evidence that the author was acquainted with the writings of Paul. This evidence is found in the similarity of the expressions occurring in the Epistles of Paul and James; a similarity such as would occur not merely from the fact that two men were writing on the same subject, but such as occurs only where one is acquainted with the writings of the other. Between two persons writing on the same subject, and resting their opinions on the same general reasons, there might be indeed a general resemblance, and possibly there might be expressions used which would be precisely the same. But it might happen that the resemblance would be so minute and particular, and on points where there could be naturally no such similarity, as to demonstrate that one of the writers was familiar with the productions of the other. For example, a man writing on a religious subject, if he had never heard of the Bible, might use expressions coincident with

some that are found there; but it is clear also that he might in so many cases use the same expressions which occur there, and on points where the statements in the Bible are so peculiar, as to show conclusively that he was familiar with that book. So also a man might show that he was familiar with the Rambler or the Spectator, with Shakespeare or Milton. Such, it is supposed, are the allusions in the Epistle of James, showing that he was acquainted with the writings of Paul. Among these passages are the following:

d **JamesPaul**

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d James 1:2 “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” Romans 5:3 “We glory in tribulations also.”

d

d James 1:3 “Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.” Romans 5:3 “Knowing that tribulation worketh patience.”

d

d James 1:4 “Wanting nothing.” 1 Corinthians 1:7 “Ye come behind in no gift.”

d

d James 1:6 “He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed.” Ephesians 4:14 “Tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine.”

d

d James 1:12 “When he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life … ” 2 Timothy 4:8 “There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.”

d

d James 1:15 “When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Romans 7:7-8 “I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.”

d

d James 1:18 “That we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.” Romans 8:23 “Ourselves also which have the first-fruits of the Spirit.”

d

d James 1:21 “Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness”, etc. Colossians 3:8 “But now ye also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communications out of your mouth.”

d

d James 1:22 “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only”, etc. Romans 2:13 “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law.”

d

d James 2:5 “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith”, etc. 1 Corinthians 1:27 “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise”, etc.

d

d

Compare also, on this subject, the passage in James 5:14-16, with Romans 3:20 ff; the examples of Abraham and Rahab, referred to in James 2:21, James 2:25, with the reference to Abraham in James 4:12, with Romans 2:1; Romans 14:4

These passages will show that James had an acquaintance with the writings of Paul, and that he was familiar with his usual method of expressing his thoughts. These allusions are not such as two men would be likely to make who were total strangers to each other‘s mode of speaking and of writing.

It may be added here, also, that some critics have supposed that there is another kind of evidence that James was acquainted with the writings of Paul, than that which arises from mere similarity of expression, and that he meant to refer to him, with a view to correct the influence of some of his views. Thus, Hug, in the passage already referred to (Section 157), says, “In this Epistle, the apostle Paul is (if I may be allowed to use so harsh an expression for a while) contradicted so flatly, that it would seem to have been written in opposition to some of his doctrines and opinions. All that Paul has taught respecting faith, its efficacy in justification, and the inutility of works, is here directly contravened.” After citing examples from the Epistle to the Romans, and the Epistle of James, in support of this, Hug adds, “The Epistle was therefore written of set purpose against Paul, against the doctrine that faith procures man justification and the divine favor.” The contradiction between James and Paul appeared so palpable to Luther, and the difficulty of reconciling them seemed to him to be so great, that for a long time he rejected the Epistle of James altogether. He subsequently, however, became satisfied that it was a part of the inspired canon of Scripture.

(2) it has been, therefore, an object of much solicitude to know how the views of Paul and James, apparently so contradictory, can be reconciled; and many attempts have been made to do it. Those who wish to pursue this inquiry to greater length than is consistent with the design of these notes, may consult Neander‘s *History of the Planting of the Christian Church*, vol. ii., pp. 1-23,228-239, and Dr. Dwight‘s *Theology*, serm. lxviii. The particular consideration of this pertains more appropriately to the exposition

of the Epistle (see the remarks at the close of James 3); but a few general principles may be laid down here, which may aid those who are disposed to make the comparison between the two, and which may show that there is no designed, and no real contradiction.

(a) The view which is taken of any object depends much on the point of vision from which it is beheld - the stand-point, as the Germans say; and in order to estimate the truthfulness or value of a description or a picture, it is necessary for us to place ourselves in the same position with him who has given the description, or who has made the picture. Two men, painting or describing a mountain, a valley, a waterfall, or an edifice, might take such different positions in regard to it, that the descriptions which they give would seem to be quite contradictory and irreconcilable, unless this were taken into the account. A landscape, sketched from the top of a high tower or on a level plain; a view of Niagara Falls, taken above or below the falls - on the American or Canada side; a view of St. Paul‘s Cathedral, taken from one side or another, from the dome or when on the ground, might be very different; and two such views might present features which it would be scarcely possible to reconcile with each other. So it is of moral subjects. Much depends on the point from which they are viewed, and from the bearings and tendencies of the doctrine which is the particular subject of contemplation. The subject of temperance, for example, may be contemplated with reference, on the one hand, to the dangers arising from too lax a view of the matter, or, on the other, to the danger of pressing the principle too far; and in order to know a man‘s views, and not to do injustice to him, it is proper to understand the particular aspect in which he looked at it, and the particular object which he had in view.

(b) The object of Paul - the “stand-point” from which he viewed the subject of justification - on which point alone it has been supposed that he and James differ - was to show that there is no justification before God, except by faith; that the meritorious cause of justification is the atonement; that good works do not enter into the question of justification as a matter of merit, or as the ground of acceptance; that if it were not for faith in Christ, it would not be possible for man to be justified. The point which he opposes is, that men can be justified by good works, by conformity to the law, by dependence on rites and ceremonies, by birth or blood. The aim of Paul is

not to demonstrate that good works are not necessary or desirable in religion, but that they are not the ground of justification. The point of view in which he contemplates man, is before he is converted, and with reference to the question on what ground he can be justified: and he affirms that it is only by faith, and that good works come in for no share in justification, as a ground of merit.

(c) The object of James - the "stand-point" from which he viewed the subject - was, to show that a man cannot have evidence that he is justified, or that his faith is genuine, unless he is characterized by good works, or by holy living. His aim is to show, not that faith is not essential to justification, and not that the real ground of dependence is not the merit of the Saviour, but that conformity to the law of God is indispensable to true religion. The point of view in which he contemplates the subject, is after a man professes to be justified, and with reference to the question whether his faith is genuine; and he affirms that no faith is of value in justification but that which is productive of good works. By his own character, by education, by the habits of his whole life, he was accustomed to look on religion as obedience to the will of God; and everything in his character led him to oppose all that was lax in principle, and loose in tendency, in religion.

The point which he opposed, therefore, was, that mere faith in religion, as a revelation from God; a mere assent to certain doctrines, without a corresponding life, could be a ground of justification before God. This was the prevalent error of his countrymen; and while the Jews held to the belief of divine revelation as a matter of speculative faith, the most lax views of morals prevailed, and they freely indulged in practices entirely inconsistent with true piety, and subversive of all proper views of religion. It was not improper, therefore, as Paul had given prominence to one aspect of the doctrine of justification, showing that a man could not be saved by dependence on the works of the law, but that it must be by the work of Christ, that James should give due prominence to the other form of the doctrine, by showing that the essential and necessary tendency of the true doctrine of justification was to lead to a holy life; and that a man whose life was not conformed to the law of God, could not depend on any mere assent to the truth of religion, or any speculative faith whatever. Both these statements are necessary to a full exposition of the doctrine of justification;

both are opposed to dangerous errors; and both, therefore, are essential in order to a full understanding of that important subject.

(d) Both these statements are true:

(1)That of Paul is true, that there can be no justification before God on the ground of our own works, but that the real ground of justification is faith in the great sacrifice made for sin.

(2)that of James is no less true, that there can be no genuine faith which is not productive of good works, and that good works furnish the evidence that we have true religion, and are just before God. A mere faith; a naked assent to dogmas, accompanied with lax views of morals, can furnish no evidence of true piety. It is as true, that where there is not a holy life there is no religion, as it is in cases where there is no faith.

It may be added, therefore, that the Epistle of James occupies an important place in the New Testament, and that it could not be withdrawn without materially marring the proportions of the scheme of religion which is there revealed. Instead, therefore, of being regarded as contradictory to any part of the New Testament, it should rather be deemed indispensable to the concinnity and beauty of the whole.

Keeping in view, therefore, the general design of the Epistle, and the point of view from which James contemplated the subject of religion; the general corruptions of the age in which he lived, in regard to morals; the tendency of the Jews to suppose that mere assent to the truths of religion was enough to save them; the liability which there was to abuse the doctrine of Paul on the subject of justification - it will not be difficult to understand the general drift of this Epistle, or to appreciate its value. A summary of its contents, and a more particular view of its design, will be found in the "Analyses" prefixed to the several chapters.

JAMES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This chapter seems to comprise two general classes of subjects; the statement in regard to the first of which is complete, but the second is only commenced in this chapter, and is continued in the second. The first is the general subject of temptation and trial James 1:1-15; the second is the nature of true religion: the statement that all true religion has its origin in God, the source of purity and truth, and that it requires us to be docile and meek; to be doers of the word; to bridle the tongue, and to be the friends of the fatherless and the widow, James 1:16-27.

I. The general subject of temptation or trial, James 1:1-15. It is evident that those to whom the Epistle was directed were, at that time, suffering in some form, or that they were called to pass through temptations, and that they needed counsel and support. They were in danger of sinking in despondency; of murmuring and complaining, and of charging God as the author of temptation and of sin. This part of the chapter comprises the following topics:

1. The salutation, James 1:1.

2. The subject of temptations or trials. They were to regard it, not as a subject of sorrow, but of gladness and joy, that they were called to pass through trials; for if borne in a proper manner, they would produce the grace of patience, and this was to be regarded as an object worth being secured, even by much suffering, James 1:2-4.

3. If in their trials they felt that they had lacked the wisdom which they needed to enable them to bear them in a proper manner, they had the privilege of looking to God, and seeking it at his hand. This was a privilege conceded to all, and if it were asked in faith, without any wavering, it would certainly be granted, James 1:5-7.

4. The importance and value of stability, especially in trials; of being firm in principle, and of having one single great aim in life. A man who wavered in his faith would waver in everything, James 1:8.

5. An encouragement to those who, in the trials which they experienced, passed through rapid changes of circumstances. Whatever those changes were, they were to rejoice in them as ordered by the Lord. They were to remember the essential instability of all earthly things. The rich especially, who were most disposed to murmur and complain when their circumstances were changed, were to remember how the burning heat blasts the beauty of the flower, and that in like manner all worldly splendor must fade away, James 1:9-11.

6. Every person is blessed who endures trials in a proper manner, for such an endurance of trial will be connected with a rich reward - the crown of life, James 1:12.

7. In their trials, however, in the allurements to sin which might be set before them; in the temptations to apostatize, or to do anything wrong, which might be connected with their suffering condition, they were to be careful never to charge temptation as such on God. They were never to allow their minds to feel for a moment that he allured them to sin, or placed an inducement of any kind before them to do wrong. Everything of that kind, every disposition to commit sin, originated in their own hearts, and they should never allow themselves to charge it on God, James 1:13-15.

II. The nature of true religion, James 1:16-27.

1.It has its origin in God, the source of every good gift, the Father of lights, who has of his own will begotten us again, that he might raise us to an exalted rank among his creatures. God, therefore, should be regarded not as the author of sin, but as the source of all the good that is in us, James 1:16-18.

2.Religion requires us to be meek and docile; to lay aside all disposition to dictate or prescribe, all irritability against the truth, and all corruption of heart, and to receive meekly the ingrafted word, James 1:19-21.

3.Religion requires us to be doers of the word, and not hearers only, James 1:23-25.

4.Religion requires us to bridle the tongue, to set a special guard on our words, James 1:26.

5.Religion requires us to be the friends of the fatherless and the widow, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, James 1:27.

Verse 1

James, a servant of God - On the meaning of the word "servant" in this connection, see the note at Romans 1:1. Compare the note at Philemon 1:16. It is remarkable that James does not call himself an apostle; but this does not prove that the writer of the Epistle was not an apostle, for the same omission occurs in the Epistle of John, and in the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians, the Thessalonians, and to Philemon. It is remarkable, also, considering the relation which James is supposed to have borne to the Lord Jesus as his "brother" (Galatians 1:19; Introduction, 1). That he did not refer to that as constituting a ground of claim to his right to address others; but this is only one instance out of many, in the New Testament, in which it is regarded as a higher honor to be the "servant of God," and to belong to his family, than to sustain any relations of blood or kindred. Compare Matthew 11:50. It may be observed also (Compare the introduction, Section 1), that this term is one which was especially appropriate to James, as a man eminent for his integrity. His claim to respect and deference was not primarily founded on any relationship which he sustained; any honor of birth or blood; or even any external office, but on the fact that he was a "servant of God."

And of the Lord Jesus Christ - The "servant of the Lord Jesus," is an appellation which is often given to Christians, and particularly to the ministers of religion. They are his servants, not in the sense that they are slaves, but in the sense that they voluntarily obey his will, and labor for him, and not for themselves.

To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad - Greek "The twelve tribes which are in the dispersion," or of the dispersion (ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ en tē diaspora). This word occurs only here and in 1 Peter 1:1, and John 7:35. It refers properly to those who lived out of Palestine, or who were scattered among the Gentiles. There were two great "dispersions;" the Eastern and the Western. The first had its origin about the time when the ten tribes were carried away to Assyria, and in the time of the Babylonian captivity. In consequence of these events, and of the fact that large numbers of the Jews went to Babylon, and other Eastern countries, for purposes of travel,

commerce, etc., there were many Jews in the East in the times of the apostles. The other was the Western "dispersion," which commenced about the time of Alexander the Great, and which was promoted by various causes, until there were large numbers of Jews in Egypt and along Northern Africa, in Asia Minor, in Greece proper, and even in Rome. To which of these classes this Epistle was directed is not known; but most probably the writer had particular reference to those in the East. See the introduction, Section 2. The phrase "the twelve tribes," was the common term by which the Jewish people were designated, and was in use long after the ten tribes were carried away, leaving, in fact, only two of the twelve in Palestine. Compare the notes at Acts 26:7. Many have supposed that James here addressed them as Jews, and that the Epistle was sent to them as such. But this opinion has no probability; because:

(1)If this had been the case, he would not have been likely to begin his Epistle by saying that he was "a servant of Jesus Christ," a name so odious to the Jews.

(2)and, if he had spoken of himself as a Christian, and had addressed his countrymen as himself a believer in Jesus as the Messiah, though regarding them as Jews, it is incredible that he did not make a more distinct reference to the principles of the Christian religion; that he used no arguments to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah; that he did not attempt to convert them to the Christian faith.

It should be added, that at first most converts were made from those who had been trained in the Jewish faith, and it is not improbable that one in Jerusalem, addressing those who were Christians out of Palestine, would naturally think of them as of Jewish origin, and would be likely to address them as appertaining to the "twelve tribes." The phrase "the twelve tribes" became also a sort of technical expression to denote the people of God - the church.

Greeting - A customary form of salutation, meaning, in Greek, to joy, to rejoice; and implying that he wished their welfare. Compare Acts 15:23.

Verse 2

My brethren - Not brethren as Jews, but as Christians. Compare James 2:1.

Count it all joy - Regard it as a thing to rejoice in; a matter which should afford you happiness. You are not to consider it as a punishment, a

curse, or a calamity, but as a fit subject of felicitation. Compare the notes at Matthew 5:12.

When ye fall into divers temptations - Oh the meaning of the word "temptations," see the notes at Matthew 4:1. It is now commonly used in the sense of placing allurements before others to induce them to sin, and in this sense the word seems to be used in James 1:13-14 of this chapter. Here, however, the word is used in the sense of trials, to wit, by persecution, poverty, calamity of any kind. These cannot be said to be direct inducements or allurements to sin, but they try the faith, and they show whether he who is tried is disposed to adhere to his faith in God, or whether he will apostatize. They so far coincide with temptations, properly so called, as to test the religion of men. They differ from temptations, properly so called, in that they are not brought before the mind for the express purpose of inducing people to sin. In this sense it is true that God never tempts men, James 1:13-14. On the sentiment in the passage before us, see the notes at 1 Peter 1:6-7. The word "divers" here refers to the various kinds of trials which they might experience - sickness, poverty, bereavement, persecution, etc. They were to count it a matter of joy that their religion was subjected to anything that tried it. It is well for us to have the reality of our religion tested, in whatever way it may be done.

Verse 3

Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience - Patience is one of the fruits of such a trial, and the grace of patience is worth the trial which it may cost to procure it. This is one of the passages which show that James was acquainted with the writings of Paul. See the Introduction, Section 5. The sentiment expressed here is found in Romans 5:3. See the notes at that verse. Paul has carried the sentiment out farther, and shows that tribulation produces other effects than patience. James only asks that patience may have its perfect work, supposing that every Christian grace is implied in this.

Verse 4

But let patience have her perfect work - Let it be fairly developed; let it produce its appropriate effects without being hindered. Let it not be obstructed in its fair influence on the soul by murmurings, complaining, or rebellion. Patience under trials is fitted to produce important effects on the soul, and we are not to hinder them in any manner by a perverse spirit, or by opposition to the will of God. Every one who is afflicted should desire

that the fair effects of affliction should be produced on his mind, or that there should be produced in his soul precisely the results which his trials are adapted to accomplish.

That ye may be perfect and entire - The meaning of this is explained in the following phrase - "wanting nothing;" that is, that there may be nothing lacking to complete your character. There may be the elements of a good character; there may be sound principles, but those principles may not be fully carried out so as to show what they are. Afflictions, perhaps more than anything else, will do this, and we should therefore allow them to do all that they are adapted to do in developing what is good in us. The idea here is, that it is desirable not only to have the elements or principles of piety in the soul, but to have them fairly carried out, so as to show what is their real tendency and value. Compare the notes at 1 Peter 1:7. On the word "perfect," as used in the Scriptures, see the notes at Job 1:1. The word rendered "entire" (ὁλόκληροι holoklēroi) means, whole in every part. Compare the notes at 1 Thessalonians 5:23. The word occurs only in these two places. The corresponding noun (ὁλοκληρία holoklēria) occurs in Acts 3:16, rendered "perfect soundness."

Wanting nothing - "Being left in nothing;" that is, everything being complete, or fully carried out.

Verse 5

If any of you lack wisdom - Probably this refers particularly to the kind of wisdom which they would need in their trials, to enable them to bear them in a proper manner, for there is nothing in which Christians more feel the need of heavenly wisdom than in regard to the manner in which they should bear trials, and what they should do in the perplexities, and disappointments, and bereavements that come upon them; but the language employed is so general, that what is here said may be applied to the need of wisdom in all respects. The particular kind of wisdom which we need in trials is to enable us to understand their design and tendency; to perform our duty under them, or the new duties which may grow out of them; to learn the lessons which God designs to teach, for he always designs to teach us some valuable lessons by affliction; and to cultivate such views and feelings as are appropriate under the peculiar forms of trial which are brought upon us; to find out the sins for which we have been afflicted, and to learn how we may avoid them in time to come. We are in great danger of going wrong when we are afflicted; of complaining and murmuring; of evincing a spirit

of rebellion, and of losing the benefits which we might have obtained if we had submitted to the trial in a proper manner. So in all things we "lack wisdom." We are short-sighted; we have hearts prone to sin; and there are great and important matters pertaining to duty and salvation on which we cannot but feel that we need heavenly guidance.

Let him ask of God - That is, for the specific wisdom which he needs; the very wisdom which is necessary for him in the particular case. It is proper to bear the very case before God; to make mention of the specific want; to ask of God to guide us in the very matter where we feel so much embarrassment. It is one of the privileges of Christians, that they may not only go to God and ask him for that general wisdom which is needful for them in life, but that whenever a particular emergency arises, a case of perplexity and difficulty in regard to duty, they may bring that particular thing before his throne, with the assurance that he will guide them. Compare Psalm 25:9; Isaiah 37:14; Joel 2:17.

That giveth to all men liberally - The word men here is supplied by the translators, but not improperly, though the promise should be regarded as restricted to those who ask. The object of the writer was to encourage those who felt their need of wisdom, to go and ask it of God; and it would not contribute anything to furnish such a specific encouragement to say of God that he gives to all men liberally whether they ask or not. In the Scriptures, the promise of divine aid is always limited to the desire. No blessing is promised to man that is not sought; no man can feel that he has a right to hope for the favor of God, who does not value it enough to pray for it; no one ought to obtain it, who does not prize it enough to ask for it. Compare Matthew 7:7-8. The word rendered "liberally"

d **haploos -** means, properly, "simply;" that is, in simplicity, sincerity, reality. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though the corresponding noun occurs in Romans 12:8; 2 Corinthians 1:12; 2 Corinthians 11:3, rendered simplicity; in 2 Corinthians 8:2; 2 Corinthians 9:13, rendered "liberality," and "liberal;" 2 Corinthians 9:11, rendered "bountifulness;" and Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22, rendered "singleness," of the heart. The idea seems to be that of openness, frankness, generosity; the absence of all that is sordid and contracted; where there is the manifestation of generous feeling, and liberal conduct. In a higher sense than in the case of any man, all that is excellent in these things is to be found in God; and we may therefore come to him feeling that in his heart

there is more that is noble and generous in bestowing favors than in any other being. There is nothing that is stinted and close; there is no partiality; there is no withholding of his favor because we are poor, and unlettered, and unknown.

And upbraideth not - Does not reproach, rebuke, or treat harshly. He does not coldly repel us, if we come and ask what we need, though we do it often and with importunity. Compare Luke 18:1-7. The proper meaning of the Greek word is to rail at, reproach, revile, chide; and the object here is probably to place the manner in which God bestows his favors in contrast with what sometimes occurs among men. He does not reproach or chide us for our past conduct; for our foolishness; for our importunity in asking. He permits us to come in the most free manner, and meets us with a Spirit of entire kindness, and with promptness in granting our requests. We are not always sure, when we ask a favor of a man, that we shall not encounter something that will be repulsive, or that will mortify us; we are certain, however, when we ask a favor of God, that we shall never be reproached in an unfeeling manner, or meet with a harsh response.

And it shall be given him - Compare Jeremiah 29:12-13; "Then shall ye call upon me, and go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with your whole heart." See also Matthew 7:7-8; Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:24; 1 John 3:22; 1 John 5:14. This promise in regard to the wisdom that may be necessary for us, is absolute; and we may be sure that if it be asked in a proper manner it will be granted us. There can be no doubt that it is one of the things which God is able to impart; which will be for our own good; and which, therefore, he is ever ready to bestow. About many things there might be doubt whether, if they were granted, they would be for our real welfare, and therefore there may be a doubt whether it would be consistent for God to bestow them; but there can be no such doubt about wisdom. That is always for our good; and we may be sure, therefore, that we shall obtain that, if the request be made with a right spirit. If it be asked in what way we may expect he will bestow it on us, it may be replied:

(1)That it is through his word - by enabling us to see clearly the meaning of the sacred volume, and to understand the directions which he has there given to guide us;

(2)By the secret influences of his Spirit.

(a) Suggesting to us the way in which we should go, and,

(b) Inclining us to do that which is prudent and wise; and,

(3)By the events of His Providence making plain to us the path of duty, and removing the obstructions which may be in our path. It is easy for God to guide his people; and they who "watch daily at the gates, and wait at the posts of the doors" of wisdom Proverbs 8:34, will not be in danger of going astray. Psalm 25:9.

Verse 6

But let him ask in faith - See the passages referred to in James 1:5. Compare the Matthew 7:7 note, and Hebrews 11:6 note. We cannot hope to obtain any favor from God if there is not faith; and where, as in regard to the wisdom necessary to guide us, we are sure that it is in accordance with his will to grant it to us, we may come to him with the utmost confidence, the most entire assurance, that it will be granted. In this case, we should come to God without a doubt that, if we ask with a proper spirit, the very thing that we ask will be bestowed on us. We cannot in all other cases be so sure that what we ask will be for our good, or that it will be in accordance with his will to bestow it; and hence, we cannot in such cases come with the same kind of faith. We can then only come with unwavering confidence in God, that he will do what is right and best; and that if he sees that what we ask will be for our good, he will bestow it upon us. Here, however, nothing prevents our coming with the assurance that the very thing which we ask will be conferred on us.

Nothing wavering - (μηδὲν διακρινόμενος mēden diakrinomenos"Doubting or hesitating as to nothing, or in no respect." See Acts 20:20; Acts 11:12. In regard to the matter under consideration, there is to be no hesitancy, no doubting, no vacillation of the mind. We are to come to God with the utmost confidence and assurance.

For he that wavereth, is like a wave of the sea … - The propriety and beauty of this comparison will be seen at once. The wave of the sea has no stability. It is at the mercy of every wind, and seems to be driven and tossed every way. So he that comes to God with unsettled convictions and hopes, is liable to be driven about by every new feeling that may spring up in the mind. At one moment, hope and faith impel him to come to God; then the mind is at once filled with uncertainty and doubt, and the soul is agitated and restless as the ocean. Compare Isaiah 57:20. Hope on the one hand, and the fear of not obtaining the favor which is desired on the other, keep the mind restless and discomposed.

Verse 7

For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord - Compare Hebrews 11:6. A man can hope for favor from God only as he puts confidence in him. He sees the heart; and if he sees that there is no belief in his existence, or his perfections - no real trust in him - no reliance on his promises, his wisdom, his grace - it cannot be proper that he should grant an answer to our petitions. That will account sufficiently for the fact that there are so many prayers unanswered; that we so frequently go to the throne of grace, and are sent empty away. A man that goes to God in such a state of mind, should not expect to receive any favor.

Verse 8

A double minded man - The word here used, δίψυχος dipsuchosoccurs only here and in James 4:8. It means, properly, one who has two souls; then one who is wavering or inconstant. It is applicable to a man who has no settled principles; who is controlled by passion; who is influenced by popular feeling; who is now inclined to one opinion or course of conduct, and now to another.

Is unstable in all his ways - That is, not merely in regard to prayer, the point particularly under discussion, but in respect to everything. From the instability which the wavering must evince in regard to prayer, the apostle takes occasion to make the general remark concerning such a man, that stability and firmness could be expected on no subject. The hesitancy which manifested on that one subject would extend to all; and we might expect to find such a man irresolute and undetermined in all things. This is always true. If we find a man who takes hold of the promises of God with firmness; who feels the deepest assurance when he prays that God will hear prayer; who always goes to him without hesitation in his perplexities and trials, never wavering, we shall find one who is firm in his principles, steady in his integrity, settled in his determinations, and steadfast in his plans of life - a man whose character we shall feel that we understand, and in whom we can confide. Such a man eminently was Luther; and the spirit which is thus evinced by taking firmly hold of the promises of God is the best kind of religion.

Verse 9

Let the brother of low degree - This verse seems to introduce a new topic, which has no other connection with what precedes than that the apostle is discussing the general subject of trials. Compare James 1:2.

Turning from the consideration of trials in general, he passes to the consideration of a particular kind of trials, that which results from a change of circumstances in life, from poverty to affluence, and from affluence to poverty. The idea which seems to have been in the mind of the apostle is, that there is a great and important trial of faith in any reverse of circumstances; a trial in being elevated from poverty to riches, or in being depressed from a state of affluence to want. Wherever change occurs in the external circumstances of life, there a man‘s religion is put to the test, and there he should feel that God is trying the reality of his faith. The phrase "of low degree" (ταπεινὸς tapeinos) means one in humble circumstances; one of lowly rank or employment; one in a condition of dependence or poverty. It stands here particularly opposed to one who is rich; and the apostle doubtless had his eye, in the use of this word, on those who had been poor.

Rejoice - Margin, "glory." Not because, being made rich, he has the means of sensual gratification and indulgence; not because he will now be regarded as a rich man, and will feel that he is above want; not even because he will have the means of doing good to others. Neither of these was the idea in the mind of the apostle; but it was, that the poor man that is made rich should rejoice because his faith and the reality of his religion are now tried; because a test is furnished which will show, in the new circumstances in which he is placed, whether his piety is genuine. In fact, there is almost no trial of religion which is more certain and decisive than that furnished by a sudden transition from poverty to affluence from adversity to prosperity, from sickness to health. There is much religion in the world that will bear the ills of poverty, sickness, and persecution, or that will bear the temptations arising from prosperity, and even affluence, which will not bear the transition from one to the other; as there is many a human frame that could become accustomed to bear either the steady heat of the equator, or the intense cold of the north, that could not bear a rapid transition from the one to the other. See this thought illustrated in the notes at Philemon 4:12.

In that he is exalted - A good man might rejoice in such a transition, because it would furnish him the means of being more extensively useful; most persons would rejoice because such a condition is that for which men commonly aim, and because it would furnish them the means of display, of sensual gratification, or of ease; but neither of these is the idea of the apostle. The thing in which we are to rejoice in the transitions of life is, that

a test is furnished of our piety; that a trial is applied to it which enables us to determine whether it is genuine. The most important thing conceivable for us is to know whether we are true Christians, and we should rejoice in everything that will enable us to settle this point.

(Yet it seems not at all likely that an Apostle would exhort a poor man to rejoice in his exaltation to wealth. An exhortation to fear and trembling appears more suitable. Wealth brings along with it so many dangerous temptations, that a man must have greater confidence in his faith and stability than he ought to have, who can rejoice in its acquisition, simply as furnishing occasion to try him: the same may be said of poverty, or of the transition front riches to poverty. The spirit of Agar is more suitable to the humility of piety, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain, " Proverbs 30:8-9. Besides, there is no necessity for resorting to this interpretation. The words will, without any straining, bear another sense, which is both excellent in itself, and suitable in its connection. The poor man, or man in humble life, may well rejoice "in that he is exalted" to the dignity of a child of God, and heir of glory.

If he be depressed with his humble rank in this life, let him but think of his spiritual elevation, of his relation to God and Christ, and he shall have an antidote for his dejection. What is the world's dignity in comparison of his! The rich man, or the man of rank, on the other hand, has reason to rejoice "in that he is made low" through the possession of a meek and humble spirit which his affluence illustrates, but neither destroys nor impairs. It would be matter of grief were he otherwise minded; since all his adventitious splendor is as evanescent as the flower which, forming for a time the crown of the green stalk on which it hangs, perishes before it. This falls admirably in with the design of the Apostle, which was to fortify Christians against trial. Every condition in life had its own trials. The two great conditions of poverty and wealth had theirs; but Christianity guards against the danger, both of the one state and of the other. It elevates the poor under his depression, and humbles the rich in his elevation, and bids both rejoice in its power to shield and bless them. The passage in this view is conceived in the same spirit with one of Paul, in which he beautifully balances the respective conditions of slaves and freemen, by honoring the

former with the appellation of the Lord‘s freemen, and imposing on the latter that of Christ‘s servants, 1 Corinthians 7:22.)

Verse 10

But the rich, in that he is made low - That is, because his property is taken away, and he is made poor. Such a transition is often the source of the deepest sorrow; but the apostle says that even in that a Christian may find occasion for thanksgiving. The reasons for rejoicing in this manner, which the apostle seems to have had in view, were these:

(1)because it furnished a test of the reality of religion, by showing that it is adapted to sustain the soul in this great trial; that it can not only bear prosperity, but that it can bear the rapid transition from that state to one of poverty; and,

(2)because it would furnish to the mind an impressive and salutary illustration of the fact that all earthly glory is soon to fade away.

I may remark here, that the transition from affluence to poverty is often borne by Christians with the manifestation of a most lovely spirit, and with an entire freedom from murmuring and complaining. Indeed, there are more Christians who could safely bear a transition from affluence to poverty, from prosperity to adversity, than there are who could bear a sudden transition from poverty to affluence. Some of the loveliest exhibitions of piety which I have ever witnessed have been in such transitions; nor have I seen occasion anywhere to love religion more than in the ease, and grace, and cheerfulness, with which it has enabled those accustomed long to more elevated walks, to descend to the comparatively humble lot where God places them. New grace is imparted for this new form of trial, and new traits of Christian character are developed in these rapid transitions, as some of the most beautiful exhibitions of the laws of matter are brought out in the rapid transitions in the laboratory of the chemist.

Because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away - That is, since it is a fact that he will thus pass away, he should rejoice that he is reminded of it. He should, therefore, esteem it a favor that this lesson is brought impressively before his mind. To learn this effectually, though by the loss of property, is of more value to him than all his wealth would be if he were forgetful of it. The comparison of worldly splendor with the fading flower of the field, is one that is common in Scripture. It is probable that James had his eye on the passage in Isaiah 40:6-8. See the notes at that passage.

Compare the notes at 1 Peter 1:24-25. See also Psalm 103:15; Matthew 6:28-30.

Verse 11

For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat - Isaiah Isaiah 40:7 employs the word "wind," referring to a burning wind that dries up the flowers. It is probable that the apostle also refers not so much to the sun itself, as to the hot and fiery wind called the simoom, which often rises with the sun, and which consumes the green herbage of the fields. So Rosenmuller and Bloomfield interpret it.

It withereth the grass - Isaiah 40:7. It withereth the stalk, or that which, when dried, produces hay or fodder - the word here used being commonly employed in the latter sense. The meaning is, that the effect of the hot wind is to wither the stalk or spire which supports the flower, and when that is dried up, the flower itself falls. This idea will give increased beauty and appropriateness to the figure - that man himself is blasted and withered, and then that all the external splendor which encircled him falls to the ground, like a flower whose support is gone.

And the grace of the fashion of it perisheth - Its beauty disappears.

So shall the rich man fade away in his ways - That is, his splendor, and all on which he prideth himself, shall vanish. The phrase "in his ways," according to Rosenmuller, refers to his counsels, his plans, his purposes; and the meaning is, that the rich man, with all by which he is known, shall vanish. A man's "ways," that is, his mode of life, or those things by which he appears before the world, may have somewhat the same relation to him which the flower has to the stalk on which it grows, and by which it is sustained. The idea of James seems to be, that as it was indisputable that the rich man must soon disappear, with all that he had of pomp and splendor in the view of the world, it was well for him to be reminded of it by every change of condition; and that he should therefore rejoice in the providential dispensation by which his property would be taken away, and by which the reality of his religion would be tested. We should rejoice in anything by which it can be shown whether we are prepared for heaven or not.

Verse 12

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation - The apostle seems here to use the word "temptation" in the most general sense, as denoting anything that will try the reality of religion, whether affliction, or persecution, or a direct inducement to sin placed before the mind. The word

temptation appears in this chapter to be used in two senses; and the question may arise, why the apostle so employs it. Compare James 1:2, James 1:13. But, in fact, the word "temptation" is in itself of so general a character as to cover the whole usage, and to justify the manner in which it is employed. It denotes anything that will try or test the reality of our religion; and it may be applied, therefore, either to afflictions or to direct solicitations to sin - the latter being the sense in which it is now commonly employed. In another respect, also, essentially the same idea enters into both the ways in which the word is employed.

Affliction, persecution, sickness, etc., may be regarded as, in a certain sense, temptations to sin; that is, the question comes before us whether we will adhere to the religion on account of which we are persecuted, or apostatize from it, and escape these sufferings; whether in sickness and losses we will be patient and submissive to that God who lays his hand upon us, or revolt and murmur. In each and every case, whether by affliction, or by direct allurements to do wrong, the question comes before the mind whether we have religion enough to keep us, or whether we will yield to murmuring, to rebellion, and to sin. In these respects, in a general sense, all forms of trial may be regarded as temptation. Yet in the following verse James 1:13 the apostle would guard this from abuse. So far as the form of trial involved an allurement or inducement to sin, he says that no man should regard it as from God. That cannot be his design. The trial is what he aims at, not the sin. In the verse before us he says, that whatever may be the form of the trial, a Christian should rejoice in it, for it will furnish an evidence that he is a child of God.

For when he is tried - In any way - if he bears the trial.

He shall receive the crown of life - See the notes at 2 Timothy 4:8. It is possible that James had that passage in his eye Compare the Introduction, 5.

Which the Lord hath promised - The sacred writers often speak of such a crown as promised, or as in reserve for the children of God. 2 Timothy 4:8; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 2:10; Revelation 3:11; Revelation 4:4.

Them that love him - A common expression to denote those who are truly pious, or who are his friends. It is sufficiently distinctive to characterize them, for the great mass of men do not love God. Compare Romans 1:30.

Verse 13

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God - See the remarks on the previous verse. The apostle here seems to have had his eye on whatever there was in trial of any kind to induce us to commit sin - whether by complaining, by murmuring, by apostacy, or by yielding to sin. So far as that was concerned, he said that no one should charge it on God. He did nothing in any way with a view to induce men to do evil. That was only an incidental thing in the trial, and was no part of the divine purpose or design. The apostle felt evidently that there was great danger, from the general manner in which the word "temptation" was used, and from the perverse tendency of the heart, that it would be charged on God that he so arranged these trials, and so influenced the mind, as to present inducements to sin. Against this, it was proper that an inspired apostle should bear his solemn testimony; so to guard the whole subject as to show that whatever there was in any form of trial that could be regarded as an inducement or allurement to sin, is not the thing which he contemplated in the arrangement, and does not proceed from him. It has its origin in other causes; and if there was nothing in the corrupt human mind itself leading to sin, there would be nothing in the divine arrangement that would produce it.

For God cannot be tempted with evil - Margin, "evils." The sense is the same. The object seems to be to show that, in regard to the whole matter of temptation, it does not pertain to God. Nothing can be presented to his mind as an inducement to do wrong, and as little can he present anything to the mind of man to induce him to sin. Temptation is a subject which does not pertain to him. He stands aloof from it altogether. In regard to the particular statement here, that "God cannot be tempted with evil," or to do evil, there can be no doubt of its truth, and it furnishes the highest security for the welfare of the universe. There is nothing in him that has a tendency to wrong; there can be nothing presented from without to induce him to do wrong:

(1)There is no evil passion to be gratified, as there is in men;

(2)There is no want of power, so that an allurement could be presented to seek what he has not;

(3)There is no want of wealth, for he has infinite resources, and all that there is or can be is his Psalm 50:10-11;

(4)There is no want of happiness, that he should seek happiness in sources which are not now in his possession. Nothing, therefore, could be presented to the divine mind as an inducement to do evil.

Neither tempteth he any man - That is, he places nothing before any human being with a view to induce him to do wrong. This is one of the most positive and unambiguous of all the declarations in the Bible, and one of the most important. It may be added, that it is one which stands in opposition to as many feelings of the human heart as perhaps any other one. We are perpetually thinking - the heart suggests it constantly - that God does place before us inducements to evil, with a view to lead us to sin. This is done in many ways:

(a)People take such views of his decrees as if the doctrine implied that he meant that we should sin, and that it could not be otherwise than that we should sin.

(b)It is felt that all things are under his control, and that he has made his arrangements with a design that men should do as they actually do.

(c)It is said that he has created us with just such dispositions as we actually have, and knowing that we would sin.

(d)It is said that, by the arrangements of his Providence, he actually places inducements before us to sin, knowing that the effect will be that we will fall into sin, when we might easily have prevented it.

(e)It is said that he suffers some to tempt others, when he might easily prevent it if he chose, and that this is the same as tempting them himself.

Now, in regard to these things, there may be much which we cannot explain, and much which often troubles the heart even of the good; yet the passage before us is explicit on one point, and all these things must be held in consistency with that - that God does not place inducements before us with a view that we should sin, or in order to lead us into sin. None of his decrees, or his arrangements, or his desires, are based on that, but all have some other purpose and end. The real force of temptation is to be traced to some other source - to ourselves, and not to God. See the next verse.

Verse 14

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust - That is, the fountain or source of all temptation is in man himself. It is true

that external inducements to sin may be placed before him, but they would have no force if there was not something in himself to which they corresponded, and over which they might have power. There must be some "lust;" some desire; some inclination; something which is unsatisfied now, which is made the foundation of the temptation, and which gives it all its power. If there were no capacity for receiving food, or desire for it, objects placed before us appealing to the appetite could never be made a source of temptation; if there were nothing in the soul which could be regarded as the love of acquisition or possession, gold would furnish no temptation; if there were no sensual propensities, we should be in that quarter above the power of temptation.

In each case, and in every form, the power of the temptation is laid in some propensity of our nature, some desire of that which we do not now possess. The word rendered "lust" in this place (ἐπιθυμίας epithumias), is not employed here in the narrow sense in which it is now commonly used, as denoting libidinousness. It means desire in general; an earnest wish for anything. Notes, Ephesians 4:22. It seems here to be used with reference to the original propensities of our nature - the desires implanted in us, which are a stimulus to employment - as the desire of knowledge, of food, of power, of sensual gratifications; and the idea is, that a man may be drawn along by these beyond the prescribed limits of indulgence, and in the pursuit of objects that are forbidden. He does not stop at the point at which the law requires him to stop, and is therefore guilty of transgression. This is the source of all sin. The original propensity may not be wrong, but may be perfectly harmless - as in the case of the desire of food, etc. Nay, it may furnish a most desirable stimulus to action; for how could the human powers be called forth, if it were not for this? The error, the fault, the sin, is, not restraining the indulgence where we are commanded to do it, either in regard to the objects sought, or in regard to the degree of indulgence.

And enticed - Entrapped, caught; that is, he is seized by this power, and held fast; or he is led along and beguiled, until he falls into sin, as in a snare that springs suddenly upon him.

Επιθυμια Epithumiain the New Testament, is sometimes employed in a good sense, Luke 22:15; Philemon 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:17; often in a bad sense, as in Mark 4:19; John 8:44; Romans 1:24; Romans 6:12; Romans 7:7; 1 John 2:16; but there is no difficulty in making the distinction; the context easily determining the matter. And this passage in

James seems at once to fix down on επιθυμιας epithumiasthe sense of evil or corrupt desire. That it can mean a "harmless propensity;" or that it is a propensity on whose character the apostle does not at all pronounce, is incredible. It is said to "draw away a man and entice him;" to "conceive and bring forth sin:" and a principle from which such fruit springs cannot be very harmless. Without doubt, the apostle traces the whole evil of temptation, which some falsely ascribed to God, to the sinful desires of the human heart; and, as our author remarks, he seems to take the common sense view without entertaining any thought of nice philosophical distinction. We cannot for a moment suppose the apostle to say - "the evil is not to be traced to God, but to a harmless propensity."

The whole passage, with the words and figures which are used, show that the idea in the apostle's mind was that of an enticing harlot. The επιθυμια epithumiais personified. She persuades the understanding and will into her impure embrace. The result of this fatal union is the "conception" and ultimate "bringing forth" of actual sin, which again brings forth death. This is the true genealogy of sin (McKnight); and to say that the επιθυμια epithumiaor evil desire, of which the apostle says that it is the "origo mali," is harmless, - is to contradict him, and Paul also, who in a parallel passage says that he had not known the επιθυμια epithumiaor inward desire after forbidden objects, to be sinful, unless the law had enlightened him and said "thou shalt not covet." Mr. Scott has spoken in strong terms of the folly of some parties who understand επιθυμια epithumiaHere only of the desire of sensual gross indulgence, to the exclusion of other sinful desires; but the extreme of interpreting it as meaning nothing sinful at all, deserves equal reprehension. The reader, however, will notice that the author does not venture on this assertion. He says "it may be so," and otherwise modifies his view.)

Verse 15

Then when lust hath conceived - Compare Job 15:35. The allusion here is obvious. The meaning is, when the desire which we have naturally is quickened, or made to act, the result is that sin is produced. As our desires of good lie in the mind by nature, as our propensities exist as they were created, they cannot be regarded as sin, or treated as such; but when they are indulged, when plans of gratification are formed, when they are

developed in actual life, the effect is sin. In the mere desire of good, of happiness, of food, of raiment, there is no sin; it becomes sin when indulged in an improper manner, and when it leads us to seek that which is forbidden - to invade the rights of others, or in any way to violate the laws of God. The Rabbis have a metaphor which strongly expresses the general sense of this passage" - "Evil concupiscence is at the beginning like the thread of a spider's web; afterwards it is like a cart rope." Sanhedrin, fol. 99.

It bringeth forth sin - The result is sin - open, actual sin. When that which is conceived in the heart is matured, it is seen to be sin. The design of all this is to show that sin is not to be traced to God, but to man himself; and in order to this, the apostle says that there is enough in the heart of man to account for all actual sin, without supposing that it is caused by God. The solution which he gives is, that there are certain propensities in man which, when they are suffered to act themselves out, will account for all the sin in the world. In regard to those native propensities themselves, he does not say whether he regards them as sinful and blameworthy or not; and the probability is, that he did not design to enter into a formal examination, or to make a formal statement, of the nature of these propensities themselves. He looked at man as he is as a creature of God - as endowed with certain animal propensities - as seen, in fact, to have strong passions by nature; and he showed that there was enough in him to account for the existence of sin, without bringing in the agency of God, or charging it on him.

In reference to those propensities, it may be observed that there are two kinds, either of which may account for the existence of sin, but which are frequently both combined. There are, first, our natural propensities; those which we have as men, as endowed with an animal nature, as having constitutional desires to be gratified, and wants to be supplied. Such Adam had in innocence; such the Saviour had; and such are to be regarded as in no respect in themselves sinful and wrong. Yet they may, in our case, as they did in Adam, lead us to sin, because, under their strong influence, we may be led to desire that which is forbidden, or which belongs to another. But there are, secondly, the propensities and inclinations which we have as the result of the fall, and which are evil in their nature and tendency; which as a matter of course, and especially when combined with the former, lead to open transgression. It is not always easy to separate these, and in fact they are often combined in producing the actual guilt of the world. It often requires a close analysis of a man's own mind to detect these different

ingredients in his conduct, and the one often gets the credit of the other. The apostle James seems to have looked at it as a simple matter of fact, with a common sense view, by saying that there were "desires" (ἐπιθυμίας epithumias) in a man's own mind which would account for all the actual sin in the world, without charging it on God. Of the truth of this, no one can entertain a doubt. - (See the supplementary note above at James 1:14.)

And sin, when it is finished bringeth forth death - The result of sin when it is fully carried out, is death - death in all forms. The idea is, that death, in whatever form it exists, is to be traced to sin, and that sin will naturally and regularly produce it. There is a strong similarity between this declaration and that of the apostle Paul Romans 6:21-23; and it is probable that James had that passage in his mind. See the sentiment illustrated in the notes at that passage, and Romans 5:12 note. Any one who indulges in a sinful thought or corrupt desire, should reflect that it may end in death - death temporal and eternal. Its natural tendency will be to produce such a death. This reflection should induce us to check an evil thought or desire at the beginning. Not for one moment should we indulge in it, for soon it may secure the mastery and be beyond our control; and the end may be seen in the grave, and the awful world of woe.

Verse 16

Do not err, my beloved brethren - This is said as if there were great danger of error in the point under consideration. The point on which he would guard them, seems to have been in respect to the opinion that God was the author of sin, and that the evils in the world are to be traced to him. There was great danger that they would embrace that opinion, for experience has shown that it is a danger into which men are always prone to fall. Some of the sources of this danger have been already alluded to. Notes, James 1:13. To meet the danger he says that, so far is it from being true that God is the source of evil, he is in fact the author of all that is good: every good gift, and every perfect gift James 1:17, is from him, James 1:18.

Verse 17

Every good gift and every perfect gift - The difference between good and perfect here, it is not easy to mark accurately. It may be that the former means that which is benevolent in its character and tendency; the latter that which is entire, where there is nothing even apparently wanting to complete it; where it can be regarded as good as a whole and in all its parts. The general sense is, that God is the author of all good. Every thing that is good

on the earth we are to trace to him; evil has another origin. Compare Matthew 13:28.

Is from above - From God, who is often represented as dwelling above - in heaven.

And cometh down from the Father of lights - From God, the source and fountain of all light. Light, in the Scriptures, is the emblem ot knowledge, purity, happiness; and God is often represented as light. Compare 1 John 1:5. Notes, 1 Timothy 6:16. There is, doubtless, an allusion here to the heavenly bodies, among which the sun is the most brilliant. It appears to us to be the great original fountain of light, diffusing its radiance overall worlds. No cloud, no darkness seems to come from the sun, but it pours its rich effulgence on the farthest part of the universe. So it is with God. There is no darkness in him 1 John 1:5; and all the moral light and purity which there is in the universe is to be traced to him. The word Father here is used in a sense which is common in Hebrew (Compare the notes at Matthew 1:1) as denoting that which is the source of anything, or that from which anything proceeds. Compare the notes at Isaiah 9:6.

With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning - The design here is clearly to contrast God with the sun in a certain respect. As the source of light, there is a strong resemblance. But in the sun there are certain changes. It does not shine on all parts of the earth at the same time, nor in the same manner all the year. It rises and sets; it crosses the line, and seems to go far to the south, and sends its rays obliquely on the earth; then it ascends to the north, recrosses the line, and sends its rays obliquely on southern regions. By its revolutions it produces the changes of the seasons, and makes a constant variety on the earth in the productions of different climes. In this respect God is not indeed like the sun. With him there is no variableness, not even the appearance of turning. He is always the same, at all seasons of the year, and in all ages; there is no change in his character, his mode of being, his purposes and plans. What he was millions of ages before the worlds were made, he is now; what he is now, he will be countless millions of ages hence. We may be sure that whatever changes there may be in human affairs; whatever reverses we may undergo; whatever oceans we may cross, or whatever mountains we may climb, or in whatever worlds we may hereafter take up our abode, God is the same. The word which is here rendered "variableness" (παραλλαγὴ parallagē) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means change, alteration, vicissitude,

and would properly be applied to the changes observed in astronomy. See the examples quoted in Wetstein. The phrase rendered "shadow of turning" would properly refer to the different shade or shadow cast by the sun from an object, in its various revolutions, in rising and setting, and in its changes at the different seasons of the year. God, on the other hand, is as if the sun stood in the meridian at noon-day, and never cast any shadow.

Verse 18

Of his own will - Greek "willing." βουληθεὶς boulētheisThe idea is, that the fact that we are "begotten" to be his children is to be traced solely to his will. He purposed it, and it was done. The antecedent in the case on which all depended was the sovereign will of God. See this sentiment explained in the notes at John 1:13. Compare the notes at Ephesians 1:5. When it is said, however, that he has done this by his mere will, it is not to be inferred that there was no reason why it should be done, or that the exercise of his will was arbitrary, but only that his will determined the matter, and that is the cause of our conversion. It is not to be inferred that there are not in all cases good reasons why God wills as he does, though those reasons are not often stated to us, and perhaps we could not comprehend them if they were. The object of the statement here seems to be to direct the mind up to God as the source of good and not evil; and among the most eminent illustrations of his goodness is this, that by his mere will, without any external power to control him, and where there could be nothing but benevolence, he has adopted us into his family, and given us a most exalted condition, as renovated beings, among his creatures.

Begat he us - The Greek word here is the same which in James 1:15 is rendered "bringeth forth," - "sin bringeth forth death." The word is perhaps designedly used here in contrast with that, and the object is to refer to a different kind of production, or bringing forth, under the agency of sin, and the agency of God. The meaning here is, that we owe the beginning of our spiritual life to God.

With the word of truth - By the instrumentality of truth. It was not a mere creative act, but it was by truth as the seed or germ. There is no effect produced in our minds in regeneration which the truth is not fitted to produce, and the agency of God in the case is to secure its fair and full influence on the soul.

That we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures - Compare Ephesians 1:12. For the meaning of the word rendered "first-fruits," see the

note at Romans 8:23. Compare Romans 11:6; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Corinthians 16:15; Revelation 14:4. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament It denotes, properly, that which is first taken from anything; the portion which was usually offered to God. The phrase here does not primarily denote eminence in honor or degree, but refers rather to time - the first in time; and in a secondary sense it is then used to denote the honor attached to that circumstance. The meaning here is, either.

(1)that, under the gospel, those who were addressed by the apostles had the honor of being first called into his kingdom as a part of that glorious harvest which it was designed to gather in this world, and that the goodness of God was manifested in thus furnishing the first-fruits of a most glorious harvest; or,

(2)the reference may be to the rank and dignity which all who are born again would have among the creatures of God in virtue of the new birth.

Verse 19

Wherefore, my beloved brethren - The connection is this: "since God is the only source of good; since he tempts no man; and since by his mere sovereign goodness, without any claim on our part, we have had the high honor conferred on us of being made the first-fruits of his creatures, we ought to be ready to hear his voice, to subdue all our evil passions, and to bring our souls to entire practical obedience." The necessity of obedience, or the doctrine that the gospel is not only to be learned but practiced, is pursued at length in this and the following chapter. The particular statement here James 1:19-21 is, that religion requires us to be meek and docile; to lay aside all irritability against the truth, and all pride of opinion, and all corruption of heart, and to receive meekly the ingrafted word. See the analysis of the chapter.

Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak - That is, primarily, to hear God; to listen to the instructions of that truth by which we have been begotten, and brought into so near relation to him. At the same time, though this is the primary sense of the phrase here, it may be regarded as inculcating the general doctrine that we are to be more ready to hear than to speak; or that we are to be disposed to learn always, and from any source. Our appropriate condition is rather that of learners than instructors; and the attitude of mind which we should cultivate is that of a readiness to receive

information from any quarter. The ancients have some sayings on this subject which are well worthy of our attention. “Men have two ears, and but one tongue, that they should hear more than they speak.” “The ears are always open, ever ready to receive instruction; but the tongue is surrounded with a double row of teeth, to hedge it in, and to keep it within proper bounds.” See Benson. So Valerius Maximus, vii. 2.

“How noble was the response of Xenocrates! When he met the reproaches of others with a profound silence, someone asked him why he alone was silent. ‹Because,‘ says he, ‹I have sometimes had occasion to regret that I have spoken, never that I was silent.‘” See Wetstein. So the son of Sirach, “Be swift to hear, and with deep consideration (ἐν μακροθυμίᾳ en makrothumia) give answer.” So the Rabbis have some similar sentiments. “Talk little and work much.” Pirkey Aboth. c. i. 15. “The righteous speak little and do much; the wicked speak much and do nothing.” Bava Metsia, fol. 87. A sentiment similar to that before us is found in Ecclesiastes 5:2. “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God.” So Proverbs 10:19. “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin.” Proverbs 13:3. “He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life.” Proverbs 15:2. “The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright, but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.”

Slow to wrath - That is, we are to govern and restrain our temper; we are not to give indulgence to excited and angry passions. Compare Proverbs 16:32, “He that is slow to anger is greater than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” See also on this subject, Job 5:2; Proverbs 11:17; Proverbs 13:10; Proverbs 14:16; Proverbs 15:18; Proverbs 19:19; Proverbs 22:24; Proverbs 25:28; Ecclesiastes 7:9; Romans 12:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 1 Peter 3:8. The particular point here is, however, not that we should be slow to wrath as a general habit of mind, which is indeed most true, but in reference particularly to the reception of the truth. We should lay aside all anger and wrath, and should come to the investigation of truth with a calm mind, and an imperturbed spirit. A state of wrath or anger is always unfavorable to the investigation of truth. Such an investigation demands a calm spirit, and he whose mind is excited and enraged is not in a condition to see the value of truth, or to weigh the evidence for it.

Verse 20

For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God - Does not produce in the life that righteousness which God requires. Its tendency is not to incline us to keep the law, but to break it; not to induce us to embrace the truth, but the opposite. The meaning of this passage is not that our wrath will make God either more or less righteous; but that its tendency is not to produce that upright course of life, and love of truth, which God requires. A man is never sure of doing right under the influence of excited feelings; he may do that which is in the highest sense wrong, and which he will regret all his life. The particular meaning of this passage is, that wrath in the mind of man will not have any tendency to make him righteous. It is only that candid state of mind which will lead him to embrace the truth which can be hoped to have such an effect.

Verse 21

Wherefore - In view of the fact that God has begotten us for his own service; in view of the fact that excited feeling tends only to wrong, let us lay aside all that is evil, and submit ourselves wholly to the influence of truth.

Lay apart all filthiness - The word here rendered filthiness, occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, It means properly filth; and then is applied to evil conduct considered as disgusting or offensive. Sin may be contemplated as a wrong thing; as a violation of law; as evil in its nature and tendency, and therefore to be avoided; or it may be contemplated as disgusting, offensive, loathsome. To a pure mind, this is one of its most odious characteristics; for, to such a mind, sin in any form is more loathsome than the most offensive object can be to any of the senses.

And superfluity of haughtiness - Literally, "abounding of evil." It is rendered by Doddridge, "overflowing of malignity;" by Tindal, "superfluity of maliciousness;" by Benson, "superfluity of malice;" by Bloomfield, "petulance." The phrase "superfluity of haughtiness," or of evil, does not exactly express the sense, as if we were only to lay aside that which abounded, or which is superfluous, though we might retain that which does not come under this description; but the object of the apostle is to express his deep abhorrence of the thing referred to by strong and emphatic language. He had just spoken of sin in one aspect, as filthy, loathsome, detestable; here he designs to express his abhorrence of it by a still more emphatic description, and he speaks of it not merely as an evil, but as an evil abounding, overflowing; an evil in the highest degree. The thing

referred to had the essence of evil in it (κακία kakia); but it was not merely evil, it was evil that was aggravated, that was overflowing, that was eminent in degree (περισσείαν perisseian). The particular reference in these passages is to the reception of the truth; and the doctrine taught is, that a corrupt mind, a mind full of sensuality and wickedness, is not favorable to the reception of the truth. It is not fitted to see its beauty, to appreciate its value, to understand its just claims, or to welcome it to the soul. Purity of heart is the best preparation always for seeing the force of truth.

And receive with meekness - That is, open the mind and heart to instruction, and to the fair influence of truth. Meekness, gentleness, docility, are everywhere required in receiving the instructions of religion, as they are in obtaining knowledge of any kind. See the notes at Matthew 18:2-3.

The engrafted word - The gospel is here represented under the image of that which is implanted or engrafted from another source; by a figure that would be readily understood, for the art of engrafting is everywhere known. Sometimes the gospel is represented under the image of seed sown (Compare Mark 6:14, following); but here it is under the figure of a shoot implanted or engrafted, that produces fruit of its own, whatever may be the original character of the tree into which it is engrafted. Compare the notes at Romans 11:17. The meaning here is, that we should allow the principles of the gospel to be thus engrafted on our nature; that however crabbed or perverse our nature may be, or however bitter and vile the fruits which it might bring forth of its own accord, it might, through the engrafted word, produce the fruits of righteousness.

Which is able to save your souls - It is not, therefore, a weak and powerless thing, merely designed to show its own feebleness, and to give occasion for God to work a miracle; but it has power, and is adapted to save. Compare the notes at Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Timothy 3:15.

Verse 22

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only - Obey the gospel, and do not merely listen to it. Compare Matthew 7:21.

Deceiving your own selves - It is implied here, that by merely hearing the word but not doing it, they would deceive their own souls. The nature of this deception was this, that they would imagine that that was all which was required, whereas the main thing was that they should be obedient. If a man supposes that by a mere punctual attendance on preaching, or a respectful

attention to it, he has done all that is required of him, he is laboring under a most gross self-deception. And yet there are multitudes who seem to imagine that they have done all that is demanded of them when they have heard attentively the word preached. Of its influence on their lives, and its claims to obedience, they are utterly regardless.

Verse 23-24

For if any be … - The ground of the comparison in these verses is obvious. The apostle refers to what all persons experience, the fact that we do not retain a distinct impression of ourselves after we have looked in a mirror. While actually looking in the mirror, we see all our features, and can trace them distinctly; when we turn away, the image and the impression both vanish. When looking in the mirror, we can see all the defects and blemishes of our person; if there is a scar, a deformity, a feature of ugliness, it is distinctly before the mind; but when we turn away, that is "out of sight and out of mind." When unseen it gives no uneasiness, and, even if capable of correction, we take no pains to remove it. So when we hear the word of God. It is like a mirror held up before us. In the perfect precepts of the law, and the perfect requirements of the gospel, we see our own short-comings and defects, and perhaps think that we will correct them. But we turn away immediately, and forget it all. If, however, we were doers of the word," we should endeavor to remove all those defects and blemishes in our moral character, and to bring our whole souls into conformity with what the law and the gospel require. The phrase "natural face" (Greek: face of birth), means, the face or appearance which we have in virtue of our natural birth. The word glass here means mirror. Glass was not commonly used for mirrors among the ancients, but they were made of polished plates of metal. See the Isaiah 3:24 note, and Job 37:18 note.

James 1:24

For he beholdeth himself - While he looks in the mirror he sees his true appearance.

And goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth - As soon as he goes away, he forgets it. The apostle does not refer to any intention on his part, but to what is known to occur as a matter of fact.

What manner of than he was - How he looked; and especially if there was anything in his appearance that required correction.

Verse 25

But whoso looketh - (παρακύψας parakupsas). This word means, to stoop down near by anything; to bend forward near, so as to look at anything more closely. See the word explained in the notes at 1 Peter 1:12. The idea here is that of a close and attentive observation. The object is not to contrast the manner of looking in the glass, and in the law of liberty, implying that the former was a "careless beholding," and the latter an attentive and careful looking, as Doddridge, Rosenmuller, Bloomfield, and others suppose; for the word used in the former case (κατενόησε katanoēse) implies intense or accurate observation, as really as the word used here; but the object is to show that if a man would attentively look into, and continue in the law of liberty, and not do as one who went away and forgot how he looked, he would be blessed. The emphasis is not in the manner of looking, it is on the duty of continuing or persevering in the observance of the law.

The perfect law of liberty - Referring to the law of God or his will, however made known, as the correct standard of conduct. It is called the perfect law, as being wholly free from all defects; being just such as a law ought to be. Compare Psalm 19:7. It is called the law of liberty, or freedom because it is a law producing freedom from the servitude of sinful passions and lusts. Compare Psalm 119:45; Notes, Romans 6:16-18.

And continueth therein - He must not merely look at the law, or see what he is by comparing himself with its requirements, but he must yield steady obedience to it. See the notes at John 14:21.

This man shall be blessed in his deed - Margin, doing. The meaning is, that he shall be blessed in the very act of keeping the law. It will produce peace of conscience; it will impart happiness of a high order to his mind; it will exert a good influence over his whole soul. Psalm 19:11. "In keeping of them there is great reward."

Verse 26

If any man among you seem to be religious - Pious, or devout. That is, if he does not restrain his tongue, his other evidences of religion are worthless. A man may undoubtedly have many things in his character which seem to be evidences of the existence of religion in his heart, and yet there may be some one thing that shall show that all those evidences are false. Religion is designed to produce an effect on our whole conduct; and if there is any one thing in reference to which it does not bring us under its control, that one thing may show that all other appearances of piety are worthless.

And bridleth not his tongue - Restrains or curbs it not, as a horse is restrained with a bridle. There may have been some reason why the apostle referred to this particular sin which is now unknown to us; or he may perhaps have intended to select this as a specimen to illustrate this idea, that if there is any one evil propensity which religion does not control, or if there is any one thing in respect to which its influence is not felt, whatever other evidences of piety there may be, this will demonstrate that all those appearances of religion are vain. For religion is designed to bring the whole man under control, and to subdue every faculty of the body and mind to its demands. If the tongue is not restrained, or if there is any unsubdued propensity to sin whatever, it proves that there is no true religion.

But deceiveth his own heart - Implying that he does deceive his heart by supposing that any evidence can prove that he is under the influence of religion if his tongue is unrestrained. Whatever love, or zeal, or orthodoxy, or gift in preaching or in prayer he may have, this one evil propensity will neutralize it all, and show that there is no true religion at heart.

This man‘s religion is vain - As all religion must be which does not control all the faculties of the body and the mind. The truths, then, which are taught in this verse are:

(1) That there may be evidences of piety which seem to be very plausible or clear, but which in themselves do not prove that there is any true religion. There may be much zeal, as in the case of the Pharisees; there may be much apparent love of Christians, or much outward benevolence; there may be an uncommon gift in prayer; there may be much self-denial, as among those who withdraw from the world in monasteries or nunneries; or there may have been deep conviction for sin, and much joy at the time of the supposed conversion, and still there be no true religion. Each and all of these things may exist in the heart where there is no true religion.

(2) asingle unsubdued sinful propensity neutralizes all these things, and shows that there is no true religion. If the tongue is not subdued; if any sin is indulged, it will show that the seat of the evil has not been reached, and that the soul, as such, has never been brought into subjection to the law of God. For the very essence of all the sin that there was in the soul may have been concentrated on that one propensity. Everything else which may be manifested may be accounted for on the supposition that there is no religion; this cannot be accounted for on the supposition that there is any.

Verse 27

Pure religion - On the word here rendered "religion" (θρησκεία thrēskeia), see the notes at Colossians 2:18. It is used here evidently in the sense of piety, or as we commonly employ the word religion. The object of the apostle is to describe what enters essentially into religion; what it will do when it is properly and fairly developed. The phrase "pure religion" means that which is genuine and sincere, or which is free from any improper mixture.

And undefiled before God and the Father - That which God sees to be pure and undefiled. Rosenmuller supposes that there is a metaphor here taken from pearls or gems, which should be pure, or without stain.

Is this - That is, this enters into it; or this is religion such as God approves. The apostle does not say that this is the whole of religion, or that there is nothing else essential to it; but his general design clearly is, to show that religion will lead to a holy life, and he mentions this as a specimen, or an instance of what it will lead us to do. The things which he specifies here are in fact two:

(1)that pure religion will lead to a life of practical benevolence; and,

(2)that it will keep us unspotted from the world. If these things are found, they show that there is true piety. If they are not, there is none.

To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction - To go to see, to look after, to be ready to aid them. This is an instance or specimen of what true religion will do, showing that it will lead to a life of practical benevolence. It may be remarked in respect to this:

(1)that this has always been regarded as an essential thing in true religion; because

(a) it is thus an imitation of God, who is "a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows in his holy habitation," Psalm 68:5; and who has always revealed himself as their friend, Deuteronomy 10:18; Deuteronomy 14:29; Psalm 10:14; Psalm 82:3; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 7:7; Jeremiah 49:11; Hosea 14:3.

(b) Religion is represented as leading its friends to do this, or this is required everywhere of those who claim to be religious, Isaiah 1:17; Deuteronomy 24:17; Deuteronomy 14:29; Exodus 22:22; Job 29:11-13.

(2)where this disposition to be the real friend of the widow and the orphan exists, there will also exist other corresponding things which go to

make up the religious character. This will not stand alone. It will show what the heart is, and prove that it will ever be ready to do good. If a man, from proper motives, is the real friend of the widow and the fatherless, he will be the friend of every good word and work, and we may rely on him in any and every way in doing good.

And to keep himself unspotted from the world - Compare the Romans 12:2 note; James 4:4 note; 1 John 2:15-17 note. That is, religion will keep us from the maxims, vices, and corruptions which prevail in the world, and make us holy. These two things may, in fact, be said to constitute religion. If a man is truly benevolent, he bears the image of that God who is the fountain of benevolence; if he is pure and uncontaminated in his walk and deportment, he also resembles his Maker, for he is holy. If he has not these things, he cannot have any well-founded evidence that he is a Christian; for it is always the nature and tendency of religion to produce these things. It is, therefore, an easy matter for a man to determine whether he has any religion; and equally easy to see that religion is eminently desirable. Who can doubt that that is good which leads to compassion for the poor and the helpless, and which makes the heart and the life pure?

JAMES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

This chapter is evidently made up of three parts, or three subjects are discussed:

I. The duty of impartiality in the treatment of others, James 2:1-9. There was to be no favoritism on account of rank, birth, wealth, or apparel. The case to which the apostle refers for an illustration of this, is that where two persons should come into an assembly of Christian worshippers, one elegantly dressed, and the other meanly clad, and they should show special favor to the former, and should assign to the latter a more humble place. The reasons which the apostle assigns why they should not do this are,

(a)that God has chosen the poor for his own people, having selected his friends mainly from them;

(b)because rich men in fact oppressed them, and showed that they were worthy of no special regard;

(c)because they were often found among revilers, and in fact despised their religion; and,

(d)because the law required that they should love their neighbors as themselves, and if they did this, it was all that was demanded; that is, that the love of the man was not to be set aside by the love of splendid apparel.

II. The duty of yielding obedience to the whole law in order to have evidence of true religion, James 2:10-13. This subject seems to have been introduced in accordance with the general principles and aims of James (see the Introduction) that religion consists in obeying the law of God, and that there can be none when this is not done. It is not improbable that, among those to whom he wrote, there were some who denied this, or who had embraced some views of religion which led them to doubt it. He therefore enforces the duty by the following considerations:

(1)That if a man should obey every part of the law, and yet be guilty of offending in one point, he was in fact guilty of all; for he showed that he had no genuine principle of obedience, and was guilty of violating the law as a whole, James 2:10.

(2)every part of the law rests on the same authority, and one part, therefore, is as binding as another. The same God that has forbidden

murder, has also forbidden adultery; and he who does the one as really violates the law as he who does the other, James 2:11.

(3)the judgment is before us, and we shall be tried on impartial principles, not with reference to obeying one part of the law, but with reference to its whole claim; and we should so act as becomes those who expect to be judged by the whole law, or on the question whether we have conformed to every part of it, James 2:12-13.

III. The subject of justification, showing that works are necessary in order that a man may be justified, or esteemed righteous before God, James 2:14-26. For a general view of the design of this part of the Epistle, see Introduction, Section 5. The object here is to show that in fact no one can be regarded as truly righteous before God who does not lead an upright life; and that if a man professes to have faith, and has not works, he cannot be justified; or that if he have real faith, it will be shown by his works. If it is not shown by works corresponding to its nature, it will be certain that there is no true religion, or that his professed faith is worth nothing. The "stand-point" from which James views the subject, is not that faith is unnecessary or worthless, or that a man is not justified by faith rather than by his own works, in the sense of its being the ground of acceptance with God; or, in other words, the place where the apostle takes his position, and which is the point from which he views the subject, is not before a man is justified, to inquire in what way he may be accepted of God, but it is after the act of justification by faith, to show that if faith does not lead to good works it is "dead," or is of no value; and that in fact, therefore, the evidence of justification is to be found in good living, and that when this is not manifest, all a man's professed religion is worth nothing. In doing this, he:

(a)makes the general statement, by a pointed interrogatory, that faith cannot profit, that is, cannot save a man, unless there be also works, James 2:14. He then:

(b)appeals, for an illustration, to the case of one who is hungry or naked, and asks what mere faith could do in his case, if it were not accompanied with proper acts of benevolence, James 2:15-17. He then,

(c)by a strong supposable case, says that real faith will be evinced by works, or that works are the proper evidence of its existence, James 2:18. He then.

(d)shows that there is a kind of faith which even the devils have on one of the most important doctrines of religion, and which can be of no value; showing that it cannot be by mere faith, irrespective of the question of what sort the faith is, that a man is to be saved, James 2:19. He then.

(e)appeals to the case of Abraham showing that in fact works performed an important part in his acceptance with God; or that if it had not been for his works - that is, if there had been no spirit of true obedience in his case, he could have had no evidence that he was justified, or that his works were the proper carrying out or fulfillment of his faith, James 2:20-24. He then:

(f)shows that the same thing was true of another case recorded in the Old Testament - that of Rahab James 2:25; and then observes James 2:26 that faith without works would have no more claim to being true religion than a dead body, without a soul, would be regarded as a living man.

Verse 1

My brethren - Perhaps meaning brethren in two respects - as Jews, and as Christians. In both respects the form of address would be proper.

Have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ - Faith is the distinguishing thing in the Christian religion, for it is this by which man is justified, and hence, it comes to be put for religion itself. Notes, 1 Timothy 3:9. The meaning here is, "do not hold such views of the religion of Christ, as to lead you to manifest partiality to others on account of their difference of rank or outward circumstances."

The Lord of glory - The glorious Lord; he who is glorious himself, and who is encompassed with glory. See the notes at 1 Corinthians 2:8. The design here seems to be to show that the religion of such a Lord should be in no way dishonored.

With respect of persons - That is, you are not to show respect of persons, or to evince partiality to others on account of their rank, wealth, apparel, etc. Compare Proverbs 24:23; Proverbs 28:21; Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:17; Deuteronomy 10:17; 2 Chronicles 19:7; Psalm 40:4. See the subject explained in the Acts 10:34 note; Romans 2:11 note.

Verse 2

For if there come into your assembly - Margin, as in Greek, "synagogue." It is remarkable that this is the only place in the New Testament where the word "synagogue" is applied to the Christian church. It is probably employed here because the apostle was writing to those who had been Jews; and it is to be presumed that the word synagogue would be naturally used by the early converts from Judaism to designate a Christian place of worship, or a Christian congregation, and it was probably so employed until it was superseded by a word which the Gentile converts would be more likely to employ, and which would, in fact, be better and more expressive - the word church. The word "synagogue" (συναγωγὴν sunagōgēn) would properly refer to the whole congregation, considered as "assembled together," without respect to the question whether all were truly pious or not; the word "church" (ἐκκλησία ekklēsia) would refer to the assembly convened for worship as called out, referring to the fact that they were called out from the world, and convened as worshippers of God, and would, therefore, be more applicable to a body of spiritual worshippers.

It is probable that the Christian church was modelled, in its general arrangements, after the Jewish synagogue; but there would be obviously some disadvantages in retaining the name, as applicable to Christian worship. It would be difficult to avoid the associations connected with the name, and hence it was better to adopt some other name which would be free from this disadvantage, and on which might be engrafted all the ideas which it was necessary to connect with the notion of the Christian organization. Hence the word "church," liable to no such objection as that of "synagogue," was soon adopted, and ultimately prevailed, though the passage before us shows that the word "synagogue" would be in some places, and for a time, employed to designate a Christian congregation. We should express the idea here by saying. "If a man of this description should come into the church."

A man with a gold ring - Indicative of rank or property. Rings were common ornaments of the rich; and probably then, as now, of those who desired to be esteemed to be rich. For proof that they were commonly worn, see the quotations in Wetstein, in loc.

In goodly apparel - Rich and splendid dress. Compare Luke 16:19.

A poor man in vile raiment - The Greek here is, filthy, foul; the meaning of the passage is, in sordid, shabby clothes. The reference here seems to be, not to those who commonly attended on public worship, or

who were members of the church, but to those who might accidentally drop in to witness the services of Christians. See 1 Corinthians 14:24.

Verse 3

And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing - If you show him superior attention on account of his rich and gay apparel, giving him a seat by himself, and treating others with neglect or contempt. Religion does not forbid proper respect to rank, to office, to age, or to distinguished talents and services, though even in such cases it does not require that we should feel that such persons have any peculiar claims to salvation, or that they are not on a level with all others, as sinners before God; it does not forbid that a man who has the means of procuring for himself an eligible pew in a church should be permitted to do so; but it requires that men shall be regarded and treated according to their moral worth, and not according to their external adorning; that all shall be considered as in fact on a level before God, and entitled to the privileges which grow out of the worship of the Creator. A stranger coming into any place of worship, no matter what his rank, dress, or complexion, should be treated with respect, and everything should be done that can be to win his heart to the service of God.

And say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place - Margin, as in Greek, "well" or "seemly;" that is, in an honorable place near the pulpit; or in some elevated place where he would be conspicuous. The meaning is, you treat him with distinguished marks of respect on the first appearance, merely from the indications that he is a rich man, without knowing any thing about his character.

And say to the poor, Stand thou there - Without even the civility of offering him a seat at all. This may be presumed not often to occur in a Christian church; yet it practically does sometimes, when no disposition is evinced to furnish a stranger with a seat.

Or sit here under my footstool - Perhaps some seats in the places of worship were raised, so that even the footstool would be elevated above a lower seat. The meaning is, that he would be treated as if he were not worth the least attention.

Verse 4

Are ye not then partial in yourselves? - Among yourselves. Do you not show that you are partial?

And are become judges of evil thoughts - There has been considerable difference of opinion respecting this passage, yet the sense seems not to be difficult. There are two ideas in it: one is, that they showed by this conduct that they took it upon themselves to be judges, to pronounce on the character of men who were strangers, and on their claims to respect (Compare Matthew 7:1); the other is, that in doing this, they were not guided by just rules, but that they did it under the influence of improper "thoughts." They did it not from benevolence; not from a desire to do justice to all according to their moral character; but from that improper feeling which leads us to show honor to men on account of their external appearance, rather than their real worth. The wrong in the case was in their presuming to "judge" these strangers at all, as they practically did by making this distinction, and then by doing it under the influence of such an unjust rule of judgment. The sense is, that we have no right to form a decisive judgment of men on their first appearance, as we do when we treat one with respect and the other not; and that when we make up our opinion in regard to them, it should be by some other means of judging than the question whether they can wear gold rings, and dress well, or not. Beza and Doddridge render this, "ye become judges who reason ill."

Verse 5

Hearken, my beloved brethren - The apostle now proceeds to show that the rich, as such, had no special claim on their favor, and that the poor in fact might be made more entitled to esteem than they were. For a view of the arguments by which he does this, compare the analysis of the chapter.

Hath not God chosen the poor of this world? - Those who are poor so far as this world is concerned, or those who have not wealth. This is the first argument which the apostle suggests why the poor should not be treated with neglect. It is, that God has had special reference to them in choosing those who should be his children. The meaning is not that he is not as willing to save the rich as the poor, for he has no partiality; but that there are circumstances in the condition of the poor which make it more likely that they will embrace the offers of the gospel than the rich; and that in fact the great mass of believers is taken from those who are in comparatively humble life. Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 1:26-28. The fact that God has chosen one to be an "heir of the kingdom" is as good a reason now why he should not be treated with neglect, as it was in the times of the apostles.

Rich in faith - Though poor in this world‘s goods, they are rich in a higher and more important sense. They have faith in God their Saviour; and in this world of trial and of sin, that is a more valuable possession than piles of hoarded silver or gold. A man who has that is sure that he will have all that is truly needful for him in this world and the next; a man who has it not, though he may have the wealth of Croesus, will be utterly without resources in respect to the great wants of his existence.

“Give what thou wilt, without thee we are poor;
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away.”

Faith in God the Saviour will answer more purposes, and accomplish more valuable ends for man, than the wealth of the Indies could: and this the poor may have as well as the rich. Compare Revelation 2:9.

And heirs of the kingdom … - Margin, “that.” Compare the notes at Matthew 5:3.

Verse 6

But ye have despised the poor - Koppe reads this as an interrogation: “Do ye despise the poor?” Perhaps it might be understood somewhat ironically: “You despise the poor, do you, and are disposed to honor the rich! Look then, and see how the rich treat you, and see whether you have so much occasion to regard them with any peculiar respect.” The object of the apostle is to fix the attention on the impropriety of that partiality which many were disposed to show to the rich, by reminding them that the rich had never evinced towards them any such treatment as to lay the foundation of a claim to the honor which they were disposed to render them.

Do not rich men oppress you? - Referring probably to something in their conduct which existed particularly then. The meaning is not that they oppressed the poor as such, but that they oppressed those whom James addressed. It is probable that then, as since, a considerable portion of those who were Christians were in fact poor, and that this would have all the force of a personal appeal; but still the particular thought is, that it was a characteristic of the rich and the great, whom they were disposed peculiarly to honor, to oppress and crush the poor. The Greek here is very expressive: “Do they not imperiously lord it over you?” The statement here will apply with too much force to the rich in every age.

And draw you before the judgment-seats - That is, they are your persecutors rather than your friends. It was undoubtedly the case that many

of the rich were engaged in persecuting Christians, and that on various pretences they dragged them before the judicial tribunals.

Verse 7

Do they not blaspheme that worthy name? - This is another argument to show that the rich had no special claim to the honor which they were disposed to show them. The "worthy name" here referred to is, doubtless, the name of the Saviour. The thing here affirmed would, of course, accompany persecution. They who persecuted Christians, would revile the name which they bore. This has always occurred. But besides this, it is no improbable supposition that many of those who were not disposed to engage in open persecution, would revile the name of Christ, by speaking contemptuously of him and his religion. This has been sufficiently common in every age of the world, to make the description here not improper. And yet nothing has been more remarkable than the very thing adverted to here by James, that notwithstanding this, many who profess to be Christians have been more disposed to treat even such persons with respect and attention than they have their own brethren, if they were poor; that they have cultivated the favor, sought the friendship, desired the smiles, aped the manners, and coveted the society of such persons, rather than the friendship and the favor of their poorer Christian brethren. Even though they are known to despise religion in their hearts, and not to be sparing of their words of reproach and scorn towards Christianity; though they are known to be blasphemers, and to have the most thorough contempt for serious, spiritual religion, yet there is many a professing Christian who would prefer to be at a party given by such persons than at a prayer-meeting where their poorer brethren are assembled; who would rather be known by the world to be the associates and friends of such persons, than of those humble believers who can make no boast of rank or wealth, and who are looked down upon with contempt by the great and the gay.

Verse 8

If ye fulfil the royal law - That is, the law which he immediately mentions requiring us to love our neighbor as ourselves. It is called a "royal law," or kingly law, on account of its excellence or nobleness; not because it is ordained by God as a king, but because it has some such prominence and importance among other laws as a king has among other men; that is, it is majestic, noble, worthy of veneration. It is a law which ought to govern and direct us in all our intercourse with men - as a king rules his subjects.

According to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself - Leviticus 19:18. Compare Matthew 19:19. See it explained by the Saviour, in the parable of the good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37. In regard to its meaning, see the notes at Matthew 19:19.

Ye do well - That is, "if you fairly comply with the spirit of this law, you do all that is required of you in regulating your intercourse with others. You are to regard all persons as your "neighbors," and are to treat them according to their real worth; you are not to be influenced in judging of them, or in your treatment of them, by their apparel, or their complexion, or the circumstances of their birth, but by the fact that they are fellow-beings." This is another reason why they should not show partiality in their treatment of others, for if, in the true sense, they regarded all others as "neighbors," they would treat no one with neglect or contempt.

Verse 9

But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin - You transgress the plain law of God, and do wrong. See the references on James 2:1.

And are convinced of the law as transgressors - Greek "By the law." The word convinced is now used in a somewhat different sense from what it was formerly. It now commonly refers to the impression made on a man's mind by showing him the truth of a thing which before was doubted, or in respect to which the evidence was not clear. A man who doubted the truth of a report or a proposition may be convinced or satisfied of its truth; a man who has done wrong, though he supposed he was doing what was proper, may be convinced of his error. So a man may be convinced that he is a sinner, though before he had no belief of it, and no concern about it; and this may produce in his mind the feeling which is technically known as conviction, producing deep distress and anguish. See the notes at John 16:8. Here, however, the word does not refer so much to the effect produced on the mind itself, as to the fact that the law would hold such an one to be guilty; that is, the law pronounces what is done to be wrong. Whether they would be personally convinced of it, and troubled about it as convicted sinners, would be a different question, and one to which the apostle does not refer; for his object is not to show that they would be troubled about it, but to show that the law of God condemned this course, and would hold them to be guilty. The argument here is not from the personal distress which this course would produce in their own minds, but from the fact that the law of God condemned it.

Verse 10

For whosoever shall keep the whole law - All except the single point referred to. The apostle does not say that this in fact ever did occur, but he says that if it should, and yet a man should have failed in only one particular, he must be judged to be guilty. The case supposed seems to be that of one who claimed that he had kept the whole law. The apostle says that even if this should be admitted for the time to be true in all other respects, yet, if he had failed in any one particular - in showing respect to persons, or in anything else - he could not but be held to be a transgressor, The design of this is to show the importance of yielding universal obedience, and to impress upon the mind a sense of the enormity of sin from the fact that the violation of any one precept is in fact an offence against the whole law of God. The whole law here means all the law of God; all that he has required; all that he has given to regulate us in our lives.

And yet offend in one point - In one respect; or shall violate any one of the commands included in the general word law. The word offend here means, properly, to stumble, to fall; then to err, or fail in duty. See the notes at Matthew 5:29; Matthew 26:31.

He is guilty of all - He is guilty of violating the law as a whole, or of violating the law of God as such; he has rendered it impossible that he should be justified and saved by the law. This does not affirm that he is as guilty as if he had violated every law of God; or that all sinners are of equal grade because all have violated some one or more of the laws of God; but the meaning is, that he is guilty of violating the law of God as such; he shows that be has not the true spirit of obedience; he has exposed himself to the penalty of the law, and made it impossible now to be saved by it. His acts of obedience in other respects, no matter how many, will not screen him from the charge of being a violator of the law, or from its penalty. He must be held and treated as a transgressor for that offence, however upright he may be in other respects, and must meet the penalty of the law as certainly as though he had violated every commandment.

One portion of the law is as much binding as another, and if a man violates any one plain commandment, he sets at nought the authority of God. This is a simple principle which is everywhere recognised, and the apostle means no more by it than occurs every day. A man who has stolen a horse is held to be a violator of the law, no matter in how many other respects he has kept it, and the law condemns him for it. He cannot plead

his obedience to the law in other things as a reason why he should not be punished for this sin; but however upright he may have been in general, even though it may have been through a long life, the law holds him to be a transgressor, and condemns him. He is as really condemned, and as much thrown from the protection of law, as though he had violated every command. So of murder, arson, treason, or any other crime. The law judges a man for what he has done in this specific case, and he cannot plead in justification of it that he has been obedient in other things.

It follows, therefore, that if a man has been guilty of violating the law of God in any one instance, or is not perfectly holy, he cannot be justified and saved by it, though he should have obeyed it in every other respect, any more than a man who has been guilty of murder can be saved from the gallows because he has, in other respects, been a good citizen, a kind father, an honest neighbor, or has been compassionate to the poor and the needy. He cannot plead his act of truth in one case as an offset to the sin of falsehood in another; he cannot defend himself from the charge of dishonesty in one instance by the plea that he has been honest in another; he cannot urge the fact that he has done a good thing as a reason why he should not be punished for a bad one. He must answer for the specific charge against him, and none of these other things can be an offset against this one act of wrong. Let it be remarked, also, in respect to our being justified by obedience to the law, that no man can plead before God that he has kept all his law except in one point. Who is there that has not, in spirit at least, broken each one of the ten commandments? The sentiment here expressed by James was not new with him. It was often expressed by the Jewish writers, and seems to have been an admitted principle among the Jews. See Wetstein, in loc., for examples.

Verse 11

For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill - That is, these are parts of the same law of God, and one is as obligatory as the other. If, therefore, you violate either of these precepts, you transgress the law of God as such, and must be held to be guilty of violating it as a whole. The penalty of the law will be incurred, whatever precept you violate.

Verse 12

So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty - On the phrase, "the law of liberty," see the notes at James 1:25. Compare the notes at James 4:11. The meaning is, that in all our conduct we are to act under the constant impression of the truth that we are soon to be brought into judgment, and that the law by which we are to be judged is that by which it is contemplated that we shall be set free from the dominion of sin. In the rule which God has laid down in his word, called "the law of liberty," or the rule by which true freedom is to be secured, a system of religion is revealed by which it is designed that man shall be emancipated not only from one sin, but from all. Now, it is with reference to such a law that we are to be judged; that is, we shall not be able to plead on our trial that we were under a necessity of sinning, but we shall be judged under that law by which the arrangement was made that we might be free from sin. If we might be free from sin; if an arrangement was made by which we could have led holy lives, then it will be proper that we shall be judged and condemned if we are not righteous. The sense is, "In all your conduct, whatever you do or say, remember that you are to be judged, or that you are to give an impartial account; and remember also that the rule by which you are to be judged is that by which provision is made for being delivered from the dominion of sin, and brought into the freedom of the gospel." The argument here seems to be, that he who habitually feels that he is soon to be judged by a law under which it was contemplated that he might be, and should be, free from the bondage of sin, has one of the strongest of all inducements to lead a holy life.

Verse 13

For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy - This is obviously an equitable principle, and is one which is everywhere found in the Bible. Proverbs 21:13. "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself but will not be heard." 2 Samuel 22:26-27, "with the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, and with the froward thou wilt show thyself unsavory." Compare Psalm 18:25-26; Matthew 6:15; Matthew 7:1-2. The idea which the apostle seems to design to convey here is, that there will certainly be a judgment, and that we must expect that it will be conducted on equitable principles; that no mercy is to be shown when the character is not such that it will be proper that it should be; and that we should habitually feel in our conduct that God will be impartial, and should frame our lives accordingly.

And mercy rejoiceth against judgment - Margin, "glorieth." Greek Boasts, glories, or exults. The idea is that of glorying over, as where one is superior to another, or has gained a victory over another. The reference all along here is to the judgment, the trial of the great day; and the apostle is stating the principles on which the trial at that day will be conducted - on which one class shall be condemned, and the other acquitted and saved. In reference to one class, the wicked, he says that where there has been no mercy shown to others - referring to this as one evidence of piety - that is, where there is no true piety, there will be judgment without mercy; in the other case there will be, as it were, a triumph of mercy, or mercy will appear to have gained a victory over judgment. Strict justice would indeed plead for their condemnation, but the attribute of mercy will triumph, and they will be acquitted.

The attributes of mercy and justice would seem to come in conflict, but mercy would prevail. This is a true statement of the plan of salvation, and of what actually occurs in the redemption of a sinner. Justice demands, as what is her due, that the sinner should be condemned; mercy pleads that he may be saved - and mercy prevails. It is not uncommon that there seems to be a conflict between the two. In the dispensations of justice before human tribunals, this often occurs. Strict justice demands the punishment of the offender; and yet there are cases when mercy pleads, and when every man feels that it would be desirable that pardon should be extended to the guilty, and when we always rejoice if mercy triumphs. In such a case, for example, as that of Major Andre, this is strikingly seen. On the one hand, there was the undoubted proof that he was guilty; that he had been taken as a spy; that by the laws of war he ought to be put to death; that as what he had done had tended to the ruin of the American cause, and as such an act, if unpunished, would always expose an army to surprise and destruction, he ought, in accordance with the law of nations, to die.

On the other hand, there were his youth, his high attainments, his honorable connections, his brilliant hopes, all pleading that he might live, and that he might be pardoned. In the bosom of Washington, the promptings of justice and mercy thus came into collision. Both could not be gratified, and there seemed to be but one course to be pursued. His sense of justice was shown in the act by which he signed the death-warrant; his feelings of compassion in the fact that when he did it his eyes poured forth a flood of

tears. How every generous feeling of our nature would have been gratified if mercy could have triumphed, and the youthful and accomplished officer could have been spared! In the plan of salvation, this does occur. Respect is done to justice, but mercy triumphs. Justice indeed pleaded for the condemnation of the sinner, but mercy interposed, and he is saved. Justice is not disregarded, for the great Redeemer of mankind has done all that is needful to uphold it; but there is the most free and full exercise of mercy, and, while the justice of God is maintained, every benevolent feeling in the breasts of all holy beings can be gratified in the salvation of countless thousands.

Verse 14

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith? - The apostle here returns to the subject adverted to in James 1:22-27, the importance of a practical attention to the duties of religion, and the assurance that men cannot be saved by a mere speculative opinion, or merely by holding correct sentiments. He doubtless had in his eye those who abused the doctrine of justification by faith, by holding that good works are unnecessary to salvation, provided they maintain an orthodox belief. As this abuse probably existed in the time of the apostles, and as the Holy Ghost saw that there would be danger that in later times the great and glorious doctrine of justification by faith would be thus abused, it was important that the error should be rebuked, and that the doctrine should be distinctly laid down that good works are necessary to salvation. The apostle, therefore, in the question before us, implicitly asserts that faith would not "profit" at all unless accompanied with a holy life, and this doctrine he proceeds to illustrate in the following verses, See the analysis of this chapter; and Introduction, Section 5, (2). In order to a proper interpretation of this passage, it should be observed that the stand-point from which the apostle views this subject is not before a man is converted, inquiring in what way he may be justified before God, or on what ground his sins may be forgiven; but it is after a man is converted, showing that that faith can have no value which is not followed by good works; that is, that it is not real faith, and that good works are necessary if a man would have evidence that he is justified. Thus understood, all that James says is in entire accordance with what is taught elsewhere in the New Testament.

Can faith save him? - It is implied in this question that faith cannot save him, for very often the most emphatic way of making an affirmation is by asking a question. The meaning here is, that that faith which does not produce good works, or which would not produce holy living if fairly acted out, will save no man, for it is not genuine faith.

Verses 15-17

If a brother or sister be naked … - The comparison in these verses is very obvious and striking. The sense is, that faith in itself, without the acts that correspond to it, and to which it would prompt, is as cold, and heartless, and unmeaning, and useless, as it would be to say to one who was destitute of the necessaries of life, depart in peace." In itself considered, it might seem to have something that was good; but it would answer none of the purposes of faith unless it should prompt to action. In the case of one who was hungry or naked, what he wanted was not good wishes or kind words merely, but the acts to which good wishes and kind words prompt. And so in religion, what is wanted is not merely the abstract state of mind which would be indicated by faith, but the life of goodness to which it ought to lead. Good wishes and kind words, in order to make them what they should be for the welfare of the world, should be accompanied with corresponding action. So it is with faith. It is not enough for salvation without the benevolent and holy acts to which it would prompt, any more than the good wishes and kind words of the benevolent are enough to satisfy the wants of the hungry, and to clothe the naked, without correspondent action. Faith is not and cannot be shown to be genuine, unless it is accompanied with corresponding acts; as our good wishes for the poor and needy can be shown to be genuine, when we have the means of aiding them, only by actually ministering to their necessities. In the one case, our wishes would be shown to be unmeaning and heartless; in the other, our faith would be equally so. In regard to this passage, therefore, it may be observed:

(1) That in fact faith is of no more value, and has no more evidence of genuineness when it is unaccompanied with good works, than such empty wishes for the welfare of the poor would be when unaccompanied with the means of relieving their wants. Faith is designed to lead to good works. It is intended to produce a holy life; a life of activity in the service of the Saviour. This is its very essence; it is what it always produces when it is

genuine. Religion is not designed to be a cold abstraction; it is to be a living and vivifying principle.

(2) there is a great deal of that kindness and charity in the world which is expressed by mere good wishes. If we really have not the means of relieving the poor and the needy, then the expression of a kind wish may be in itself an alleviation to their sorrows, for even sympathy in such a case is of value, and it is much to us to know that others feel for us; but if we have the means, and the object is a worthy one, then such expressions are mere mockery, and aggravate rather than soothe the feelings of the sufferer. Such wishes will neither clothe nor feed them; and they will only make deeper the sorrows which we ought to heal. But how much of this is there in the world, when the sufferer cannot but feel that all these wishes, however kindly expressed, are hollow and false, and when he cannot but feel that relief would be easy!

(3) in like manner there is much of this same kind of worthless faith in the world - faith that is dead; faith that produces no good works; faith that exerts no practical influence whatever on the life. The individual professes indeed to believe the truths of the gospel; he may be in the church of Christ; he would esteem it a gross calumny to be spoken of as an infidel; but as to any influence which his faith exerts over him, his life would be the same if he had never heard of the gospel. There is not one of the truths of religion which is bodied forth in his life; not a deed to which he is prompted by religion; not an act which could not be accounted for on the supposition that he has no true piety. In such a case, faith may with propriety be said to be dead.

Being alone - Margin, "by itself." The sense is, "being by itself:" that is, destitute of any accompanying fruits or results, it shows that it is dead. That which is alive bodies itself forth, produces effects, makes itself visible; that which is dead produces no effect, and is as if it were not.

Verse 18

Yea, a man may say … - The word which is rendered "yea" (ἀλλὰ alla) would be better rendered by "but." The apostle designs to introduce an objection, not to make an affirmation. The sense is, "some one might say," or, "to this it might be urged in reply." That is, it might perhaps be said that religion is not always manifested in the same way, or we should not

suppose that, because it is not always exhibited in the same form, it does not exist. One man may manifest it in one way, and another in another, and still both have true piety. One may be distinguished for his faith, and another for his works, and both may have real religion. This objection would certainly have some plausibility, and it was important to meet it. It would seem that all religion was not to be manifested in the same way, as all virtue is not; and that it might occur that one man might be particularly eminent for one form of religion, and another for another; as one man may be distinguished for zeal, and another for meekness, and another for integrity, and another for truth, and another for his gifts in prayer, and another for his large-hearted benevolence. To this the apostle replies, that the two things referred to, faith and works, were not independent things, which could exist separately, without the one materially influencing another - as, for example, charity and chastity, zeal and meekness; but that the one was the germ or source of the other, and that the existence of the one was to be known only by its developing itself in the form of the other. A man could not show that he possessed the one unless it developed itself in the form of the other. In proof of this, he could boldly appeal to anyone to show a case where faith existed without works. He was himself willing to submit to this just trial in regard to this point, and to demonstrate the existence of his own faith by his works.

Thou hast faith, and I have works - You have one form or manifestation of religion in an eminent or prominent degree, and I have another. You are characterized particularly for one of the virtues of religion, and I am for another; as one man may be particularly eminent for meekness, and another for zeal, and another for benevolence, and each be a virtuous man. The expression here is equivalent to saying, "One may have faith, and another works."

Show me thy faith without thy works - That is, you who maintain that faith is enough to prove the existence of religion; that a man may be justified and saved by that alone, or where it does not develop itself in holy living; or that all that is necessary in order to be saved is merely to believe. Let the reality of any such faith as that be shown, if it can be; let any real faith be shown to exist without a life of good works, and the point will be settled. I, says the apostle, will undertake to exhibit the evidence of my faith in a different way - in a way about which there can be no doubt, and which is the appropriate method. It is clear, if the common reading here is correct,

that the apostle meant to deny that true faith could be evinced without appropriate works. It should be said, however, that there is a difference of reading here of considerable importance. Many manuscripts and printed editions of the New Testament, instead of "without" (works - χωρίς chōris), read "from" or "by" (ἐκ ek), as in the other part of the verse, "show me thy faith by thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works."

This reading is found in Walton, Wetstein, Mill, and in the received text generally; the other (without) is found in many manuscripts, and in the Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic, English, and Armenian versions; and is adopted by Beza, Castalio, Grotius, Bengel, Hammond, Whitby, Drusius, Griesbach, Tittman, and Hahn, and is now commonly received as the correct reading. It may be added that this reading seems to be demanded by the similar reading in James 2:20, "But wilt thou know that faith "without works" (χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων chōris tōn ergōn) is dead," evidently implying that something had been said before about "faith without works." This reading also is so natural, and makes so good sense in the connection, that it would seem to be demanded. Doddridge felt the difficulty in the other reading, and has given a version of the passage which showed his great perplexity, and which is one of the most unhappy that he ever made.

And I will show thee my faith by my works - I will furnish in this way the best and most certain proof of the existence of faith. It is implied here that true faith is adapted to lead to a holy life, and that such a life would be the appropriate evidence of the existence of faith. By their fruits the principles held by men are known. See the notes at Matthew 7:16.

Verse 19

Thou believest that there is one God - One of the great and cardinal doctrines of religion is here selected as an illustration of all. The design of the apostle seems to have been to select one of the doctrines of religion, the belief of which would - if mere belief in any doctrine could - save the soul; and to show that even this might be held as an article of faith by those who could be supposed by no one to have any claim to the name of Christian. He selects, therefore, the great fundamental doctrine of all religion, - the doctrine of the existence of one Supreme Being, - and shows that if even this were held in such a way as it might be, and as it was held by devils, it could not save men. The apostle here is not to be supposed to be addressing such an one as Paul, who held to the doctrine that we are justified by faith; nor is he to be supposed to be combating the doctrine of Paul, as some have

maintained, (see the Introduction); but he is to be regarded as addressing one who held, in the broadest and most unqualified sense, that provided there was faith, a man would be saved. To this he replies, that even the devils might have faith of a certain sort, and faith that would produce sensible effects on them of a certain kind, and still it could not be supposed that they had true religion, or that they would be saved. Why might not the same thing occur in regard to man?

Thou doest well - So far as this is concerned, or so far as it goes. It is a doctrine which ought to be held, for it is one of the great fundamental truths of religion.

The devils - The "demons," - (τα δαιμόνια ta daimonia). There is, properly, but one being spoken of in the New Testament as "the devil" - ὁ διάβολος ho diabolosand ὁ Σατᾶν ho Satan- though "demons" are frequently spoken of in the plural number. They are represented as evil spirits, subject to Satan, or under his control, and engaged with him in carrying out his plans of wickedness. These spirits or demons were supposed to wander in desert and desolate places, Matthew 12:43, or to dwell in the atmosphere, (Notes, Ephesians 2:2); they were thought to have the power of working miracles, but not for good, (Revelation 16:14; compare John 10:21); to be hostile to mankind, John 8:44; to utter the pagan oracles, Acts 16:17; to lurk in the idols of the heathen, 1 Corinthians 10:20; and to take up their abodes in the bodies of men, afflicting them with various kinds of diseases, Matthew 7:22; Matthew 9:34; Matthew 10:8; Matthew 17:18; Mark 7:29-30; Luke 4:33; Luke 8:27, Luke 8:30, et soepe. It is of these evil spirits that the apostle speaks when he says that they believe.

Also believe - That is, particularly, they believe in the existence of the one God. How far their knowledge may extend respecting God, we cannot know; but they are never represented in the Scriptures as denying his existence, or as doubting the great truths of religion. They are never described as atheists. That is a sin of this world only. They are not represented as sceptics. That, too, is a peculiar sin of the earth; and probably, in all the universe besides, there are no beings but those who dwell on this globe, who doubt or deny the existence of God, or the other great truths of religion.

And tremble - The word here used (φρίσσουσιν phrissousin) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, to be rough,

uneven, jaggy, sc., with bristling hair; to bristle, to stand on end, as the hair does in a fright; and then to shudder or quake with fear, etc. Here the meaning is, that there was much more in the case referred to than mere speculative faith. There was a faith that produced some effect, and an effect of a very decided character. It did not, indeed, produce good works, or a holy life, but it made it manifest that there was faith; and, consequently, it followed that the existence of mere faith was not all that was necessary to save men, or to make it certain that they would be secure, unless it were held that the devils would be justified and saved by it. If they might hold such faith, and still remain in perdition, men might hold it, and go to perdition. A man should not infer, therefore, because he has faith, even that faith in God which will fill him with alarm, that therefore he is safe. He must have a faith which will produce another effect altogether - that which will lead to a holy life.

Verse 20

But wilt thou know - Will you have a full demonstration of it; will you have the clearest proof in the case. The apostle evidently felt that the instances to which he was about to refer, those of Abraham and Rahab, were decisive.

O vain man - The reference by this language is to a man who held an opinion that could not be defended. The word "vain" here used (κενε kene) means properly "empty," as opposed to "full" - as empty hands, having nothing in them; then fruitless, or without utility or success; then false, fallacious. The meaning here, properly, would be "empty," in the sense of being void of understanding; and this would be a mild and gentle way of saying of one that he was foolish, or that he maintained an argument that was without sense. James means, doubtless, to represent it as a perfectly plain matter, a matter about which no man of sense could have any reasonable doubt. If we must call a man foolish, as is sometimes necessary, let us use as mild and inoffensive a term as possible - a term which, while it will convey our meaning, will not unnecessarily wound and irritate.

That faith without works is dead - That the faith which does not produce good works is useless in the matter of salvation. He does not mean to say that it would produce no effect, for in the case of the demons it did produce trembling and alarm; but that it would be valueless in the matter of salvation. The faith of Abraham and of Rahab was entirely different from this.

Verse 21

Was not Abraham our father - Our progenitor, our ancestor; using the word "father," as frequently occurs in the Bible, to denote a remote ancestor. Compare the notes at Matthew 1:1. A reference to his case would have great weight with those who were Jews by birth, and probably most of those to whom this Epistle was addressed were of this character. See the Introduction.

Justified by works - That is, in the sense in which James is maintaining that a man professing religion is to be justified by his works. He does not affirm that the ground of acceptance with God is that we keep the law, or are perfect; or that our good works make an atonement for our sins, and that it is on their account that we are pardoned; nor does he deny that it is necessary that a man should believe in order to be saved. In this sense he does not deny that men are justified by faith; and thus he does not contradict the doctrine of the apostle Paul. But he does teach that where there are no good works, or where there is not a holy life, there is no true religion; that that faith which is not productive of good works is of no value; that if a man has that faith only, it would be impossible that he could be regarded as justified, or could be saved and that consequently, in that large sense, a man is justified by his works that is, they are the evidence that he is a justified man, or is regarded and treated as righteous by his Maker. The point on which the apostle has his eye is the nature of saving faith; and his design is to show that a mere faith which would produce no more effect than that of the demons did, could not save.

In this he states no doctrine which contradicts that of Paul. The evidence to which he appeals in regard to faith, is good works and a holy life; and where that exists it shows that the faith is genuine. The case of Abraham is one directly in point. He showed that he had that kind of faith which was not dead. He gave the most affecting evidence that his faith was of such a kind as to lead him to implicit obedience, and to painful sacrifices. Such an act as that referred to - the act of offering up his son - demonstrated, if anything could, that his faith was genuine, and that his religion was deep and pure. In the sight of heaven and earth it would justify him as a righteous man, or would prove that he was a righteous man. In regard to the strength of his faith, and the nature of his obedience in this sacrifice, see the notes at Hebrews 11:19. That the apostle here cannot refer to the act of justification as the term is commonly understood, referring by that to the moment when

he was accepted of God as a righteous man, is clear from the fact that in a passage of the Scriptures which he himself quotes, that is declared to be consequent on his believing: "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness."

The act here referred to occurred long subsequent to that, and was thus a fulfillment or confirmation of the declaration of Scripture, which says that "he believed God." It showed that his faith was not merely speculative, but was an active principle, leading to holy living. See the notes at James 2:23. This demonstrates that what the apostle refers to here is the evidence by which it is shown that a man's faith is genuine, and that he does not refer to the question whether the act of justification, where a sinner is converted, is solely in consequence of believing. Thus the case proves what James purposes to prove, that the faith which justifies is only that which leads to good works.

When he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar - This was long after he believed, and was an act which, if any could, would show that his faith was genuine and sincere. On the meaning of this passage, see the notes at Hebrews 11:17.

Verse 22

Seest thou - Margin, "Thou seest." Either rendering is correct, and the sense is the same. The apostle means to say that this was so plain that they could not but see it.

How faith wrought with his works - συνήργει sunērgeiCooperated with. The meaning of the word is, "to work together with anyone; to co operate," 1 Corinthians 16:16; 2 Corinthians 6:1; then to aid, or help, Mark 16:20; to contribute to the production of any result, where two or more persons or agents are united. Compare Romans 8:28. The idea here is, that the result in the case of Abraham, that is, his salvation, or his religion, was secured, not by one of these things alone, but that both contributed to it. The result which was reached, to wit, his acceptance with God, could not have been obtained by either one of them separately, but both, in some sense, entered into it. The apostle does not say that, in regard to the merit which justifies, they came in for an equal share, for he makes no affirmation on that point; he does not deny that in the sight of God, who foresees and knows all things, he was regarded as a justified man the moment he believed, but he looks at the result as it was, at Abraham as he appeared

under the trial of his faith, and says that in that result there was to be seen the co-operation of faith and good works. Both contributed to the end, as they do now in all cases where there is true religion.

(By the somewhat unhappy term "merit," the author clearly means nothing more than "principle," as is obvious from his acute and evangelical comment on the verse; as well as from the admirable reconciliation of Paul and James below.)

And by works was faith made perfect - Made complete, finished, or entire. It was so carried out as to show its legitimate and fair results. This does not mean that the faith in itself was defective before this, and that the defect was remedied by good works; or that there is any deficiency in what the right kind of faith can do in the matter of justification, which is to be helped out by good works; but that there was that kind of completion which a thing has when it is fully developed, or is fairly carried out.

Verse 23

And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith - That is, the fair and full meaning of the language of Scripture was expressed by this act, showing in the highest sense that his faith was genuine; or the declaration that he truly believed, was confirmed or established by this act. His faith was shown to be genuine; and the fair meaning of the declaration that he believed God was carried out in the subsequent act. The passage here referred to occurs in Genesis 15:6. That which it is said Abraham believed, or in which he believed God, was this: "This shall not be thine heir (namely, Eliezer of Damascus), but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels, shall be thine heir." And again, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be," James 2:3-5. The act of confiding in these promises, was that act of which it is said that "he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness."

The act of offering his son on the altar by which James says this Scripture was fulfilled, occurred some 20 years afterward. That act confirmed or fulfilled the declaration. It showed that his faith was genuine, and that the declaration that he believed in God was true; for what could do more to confirm that, than a readiness to offer his own son at the command of God? It cannot be supposed that James meant to say that Abraham was justified by works without respect to faith, or to deny that the primary round of his justification in the sight of God was faith, for the very passage which he quotes shows that faith was the primary consideration: "Abraham

believed God, and it was imputed," etc. The meaning, therefore, can only be, that this declaration received its fair and full expression when Abraham, by an act of obedience of the most striking character, long after he first exercised that faith by which he was accepted of God, showed that his faith was genuine. It he had not thus obeyed, his faith would have been inoperative and of no value. As it was, his act showed that the declaration of the Scripture that, he "believed" was well founded.

Abraham believed God, and it was imputed … - See this passage fully explained in the notes at Romans 4:3.

And he was called the friend of God - In virtue of his strong faith and obedience. See 2 Chronicles 20:7; "Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend forever?" Isaiah 41:8. "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend." This was a most honorable appellation; but it is one which, in all cases, will result from true faith and obedience.

Verse 24

Ye see then - From the course of reasoning pursued, and the example referred to.

How that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only - Not by a cold, abstract, inoperative faith. It must be by a faith that shall produce good works, and whose existence will be shown to men by good works. As justification takes place in the sight of God, it is by faith, for he sees that the faith is genuine, and that it will produce good works if the individual who exercises faith shall live; and he justifies men in view of that faith, and of no other. If he sees that the faith is merely speculative; that it is cold and dead, and would not produce good works, the man is not justified in his sight. As a matter of fact, therefore, it is only the faith that produces good works that justifies; and good works, therefore, as the proper expression of the nature of faith, foreseen by God as the certain result of faith, and actually performed as seen by men, are necessary in order to justification. In other words, no man will be justified who has not a faith which will produce good works, and which is of an operative and practical character. The ground of justification in the case is faith, and that only; the evidence of it, the carrying it out, the proof of the existence of the faith, is good works; and thus men are justified and saved not by mere abstract and cold faith, but by a faith necessarily connected with good works, and where good

works perform an important part. James, therefore, does not contradict Paul, but he contradicts a false explanation of Paul‘s doctrine. He does not deny that a man is justified in the sight of God by faith, for the very passage which he quotes shows that he believes that; but he does deny that a man is justified by a faith which would not produce good works, and which is not expressed by good works; and thus he maintains, as Paul always did, that nothing else than a holy life can show that a man is a true Christian, and is accepted of God.

Verse 25

Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works? - In the same sense in which Abraham was, as explained above - showing by her act that her faith was genuine, and that it was not a mere cold and speculative assent to the truths of religion. Her act showed that she truly believed God. If that act had not been performed, the fact would have shown that her faith was not genuine, and she could not have been justified. God saw her faith as it was; he saw that it would produce acts of obedience, and he accepted her as righteous. The act which she performed was the public manifestation of her faith, the evidence that she was justified. See the case of Rahab fully explained in the notes at Hebrews 11:31. It may be observed here, that we are not to suppose that everything in the life and character of this woman is commended. She is commended for her faith, and for the fair expression of it; a faith which, as it induced her to receive the messengers of the true God, and to send them forth in peace, and as it led her to identify herself with the people of God, was also influential, we have every reason to suppose, in inducing her to abandon her former course of life. When we commend the faith of a man who has been a profane swearer, or an adulterer, or a robber, or a drunkard, we do not commend his former life, or give a sanction to it. We commend that which has induced him to abandon his evil course, and to turn to the ways of righteousness. The more evil his former course has been, the more wonderful, and the more worthy of commendation, is that faith by which he is reformed and saved.

Verse 26

For as the body without the spirit is dead - Margin, “breath.” The Greek word πνεύμα pneumais commonly used to denote spirit or soul, as referring to the intelligent nature. The meaning here is the obvious one, that the body is animated or kept alive by the presence of the soul, and that

when that is withdrawn, hope departs. The body has no life independent of the presence of the soul.

So faith without works is dead also - There is as much necessity that faith and works should be united to constitute true religion, as there is that the body and soul should be united to constitute a living man. If good works do not follow, it is clear that there is no true and proper faith; none that justifies and saves. If faith produces no fruit of good living, that fact proves that it is dead, that it has no power, and that it is of no value. This shows that James was not arguing against real and genuine faith, nor against its importance in justification, but against the supposition that mere faith was all that was necessary to save a man, whether it was accompanied by good works or not. He maintains that if there is genuine faith it will always be accompanied by good works, and that it is only that faith which can justify and save. If it leads to no practical holiness of life, it is like the body without the soul, and is of no value whatever. James and Paul both agree in the necessity of true faith in order to salvation; they both agree that the tendency of true faith is to produce a holy life; they both agree that where there is not a holy life there is no true religion, and that a man cannot be saved. We may learn, then, from the whole doctrine of the New Testament on the subject, that unless we believe in the Lord Jesus we cannot be justified before God; and that unless our faith is of that kind which will produce holy living, it has no more of the characteristics of true religion than a dead body has of a living man.

Reconciliation of Paul and James.

At the close of the exposition of this chapter, it may be proper to make a few additional remarks on the question in what way the statements of James can be reconciled with those of Paul, on the subject of justification. A difficulty has always been felt to exist on the subject; and there are, perhaps, no readers of the New Testament who are not perplexed with it. Infidels, and particularly Voltaire, have seized the occasion which they supposed they found here to sneer against the Scriptures, and to pronounce them to be contradictory. Luther felt the difficulty to be so great that, in the early part of his career, he regarded it as insuperable, and denied the inspiration of James, though be afterwards changed his opinion, and believed that his Epistle was a part of the inspired canon; and one of Luther‘s followers was so displeased with the statements of James, as to

charge him with willful falsehood. - Dr. Dwight‘s Theology, Serm. lxviii. The question is, whether their statements can be so reconciled, or can be shown to be so consistent with each other, that it is proper to regard them both as inspired men? Or, are their statements so opposite and contradictory, that it cannot be believed that both were under the influences of an infallible Spirit? In order to answer these questions, there are two points to be considered:

I.What the real difficulty is; and,

II.How the statements of the two writers can be reconciled, or whether there is any way of explanation which will remove the difficulty.

I. What the difficulty is. This relates to two points - that James seems to contradict Paul in express terms, and that both writers make use of the same case to illustrate their opposite sentiments.

(1) that James seems to contradict Paul in express terms. The doctrine of Paul on the subject of justification is stated in such language as the following: “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight,” Romans 3:20. “We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,” Romans 3:28. “Being justified by faith,” Romans 5:1. “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ,” Galatians 2:16. Compare Romans 3:24-26; Galatians 3:11; Titus 3:5-6. On the other hand, the statement of James seems to be equally explicit that a man is not justified by faith only, but that good works come in for an important share in the matter. “Was not Abraham our father justified by works?” James 2:21. “Seest thou how faith wrought with his works?” James 2:22. “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only,” James 2:24.

(2) both writers refer to the same case to illustrate their views - the case of Abraham. Thus Paul Romans 4:1-3 refers to it to prove that justification is wholly by faith. “For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.” And thus James James 2:21-22 refers to it to prove that justification is by works: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?”

The difficulty of reconciling these statements would be more clearly seen if they occurred in the writings of the same author; by supposing, for example, that the statements of James were appended to the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and were to be read in connection with that chapter. Who, the infidel would ask, would not be struck with the contradiction? Who would undertake to harmonize statements so contradictory? Yet the statements are equally contradictory, though they occur in different writers, and especially when it is claimed for both that they wrote under the influence of inspiration.

II. The inquiry then is, how these apparently contradictory statements may be reconciled, or whether there is any way of explanation that will remove the difficulty. This inquiry resolves itself into two - whether there is any theory that can be proposed that would relieve the difficulty, and whether that theory can be shown to be well founded.

(1) is there any theory which would remove the diffficulty - any explanation which can be given on this point which, if true, would show that the two statements may be in accordance with each other and with truth?

Before suggesting such an explanation, it may be further observed, that, as all history has shown, the statements of Paul on the subject of justification are liable to great abuse. All the forms of Antinomianism have grown out of such abuse, and are only perverted statements of his doctrine. It has been said, that if Christ has freed us from the necessity of obeying the law in order to justification; if he has fulfilled it in our stead, and borne its penalty, then the law is no longer binding on those who are justified, and they are at liberty to live as they please. It has been further said, that if we are saved by faith alone, a man is safe the moment he believes, and good works are therefore not necessary. It is possible that such views as these began to prevail as early as the time of James, and, if so, it was proper that there should be an authoritative apostolic statement to correct them, and to check these growing abuses. If, therefore, James had, as it has been supposed he had, any reference to the sentiments of Paul, it was not to correct his sentiments, or to controvert them but it was to correct the abuses which began already to flow from his doctrines, and to show that the

alleged inferences did not properly follow from the opinions which he held; or, in other words, to show that the Christian religion required men to lead holy lives, and that the faith by which it was acknowledged that the sinner must be justified, was a faith which was productive of good works.

Now, all that is necessary to reconcile the statements of Paul and James, is to suppose that they contemplate the subject of justification from different points of view, and with reference to different inquiries. Paul looks at it before a man is converted, with reference to the question how a sinner may be justified before God; James after a man is converted, with reference to the question how he may show that he has the genuine faith which justifies. Paul affirms that the sinner is justified before God only by faith in the Lord Jesus, and not by his own works; James affirms that it is not a mere speculative or dead faith which justifies, but only a faith that is productive of good works, and that its genuineness is seen only by good works. Paul affirms that whatever else a man has, if he have not faith in the Lord Jesus, he cannot be justified; James affirms that no matter what pretended faith a man has, if it is not a faith which is adapted to produce good works, it is of no value in the matter of justification. Supposing this to be the true explanation, and that these are the "stand-points" from which they view the subject, the reconciliation of these two writers is easy: for it was and is still true, that if the question is asked how a sinner is to be justified before God, the answer is to be that of Paul, that it is by faith alone, "without the works of the law;" if the question be asked, how it can be shown what is the kind of faith that justifies, the answer is that of James, that it is only that which is productive of holy living and practical obedience.

(2) Is this a true theory? Can it be shown to be in accordance with the statements of the two writers? Would it be a proper explanation if the same statements had been made by the same writer? That it is a correct theory, or that it is an explanation founded in truth, will be apparent if:

(a)the language used by the two writers will warrant it;

(b)if it accords with a fair interpretation of the declarations of both writers; and,

(c)if, in fact, each of the two writers held respectively the same doctrine on the subject.

(a) Will the language bear this explanation? That is, will the word justify, as used by the two writers, admit of this explanation? That it will, there need be no reasonable doubt; for both are speaking of the way in which man, who is a sinner, may be regarded and treated by God as if he were righteous - the true notion of justification. It is not of justification in the sight of men that they speak, but of justification in the sight of God. Both use the word "justify" in this sense - Paul as affirming that it is only by faith that it can be done; James as affirming, in addition not in contradiction, that it is by a faith that produces holiness, and no other.

(b) Does this view accord with the fair interpretation of the declarations of both writers?

In regard to Paul, there can be no doubt that this is the point from which he contemplates the subject, to wit, with reference to the question how a sinner may be justified. Thus, in the Epistle to the Romans, where his principal statements on the subject occur, he shows, first, that the Gentiles cannot be justified by the works of the law, Romans 3:20 draws his conclusion, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" - the whole argument showing conclusively that he is contemplating the subject before a man is justified, and with reference to the question how he may be.

In regard to James, there can be as little doubt that the point of view from which he contemplates the subject, is after a man professes to have been justified by faith, with reference to the question what kind of faith justifies, or how it may be shown that faith is genuine. This is clear,

(aa) because the whole question is introduced by him with almost express reference to that inquiry: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" James 2:14. That is, can such faith - can this faith (ἡ πίστις hē pistis) save him? In other words, He must have a different kind of faith in order to save him. The point of James" denial is not that faith, if genuine, would save; but it is, that such a faith, or a faith without works, would save.

(bb) That this is the very point which he discusses, is further shown by his illustrations, James 2:15-16, James 2:19. He shows James 2:15-16 that mere faith in religion would be of no more value in regard to salvation, than if one were naked and destitute of food, it would meet his wants to say, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled;" and then James 2:19, that even the demons had a certain kind of faith in one of the cardinal doctrines of religion, but that it was a faith which was valueless - thus showing that his mind was on the question what is true and genuine faith.

(cc) Then he shows by the case to which he refers James 2:21-23 - the case of Abraham - that this was the question before his mind. He refers not to the act when Abraham first believed - the act by which as a sinner he was justified before God; but to an act that occurred twenty years after - the offering up of his son Isaac. See the notes at those verses. He affirms that the faith of Abraham was of such a kind that it led him to obey the will of God; that is, to good works. Though, as is implied in the objection referred to above, he does refer to the same case to which Paul referred - the case of Abraham - yet it is not to the same act in Abraham. Paul Romans 4:1-3 refers to him when he first believed, affirming that he was then justified by faith; James refers indeed to an act of the same man, but occurring twenty years after, showing that the faith by which he had been justified was genuine. Abraham was, in fact, according to Paul, justified when he believed, and, had he died then, he would have been saved; but according to James, the faith which justified him was not a dead faith, but was living and operative, as was shown by his readiness to offer his son on the altar.

(c) Did each of these two writers in reality hold the same doctrine on the subject? This will be seen, if it can be shown that James held to the doctrine of justification by faith, as really as Paul did; and that Paul held that good works were necessary to show the genuineness of faith, as really as James did.

(1) they both agreed in holding the doctrine of justification by faith. Of Paul's belief there can be no doubt. That James held the doctrine is apparent from the fact that he quotes the very passage in Genesis, Genesis 15:6, and the one on which Paul relies, Romans 4:1-3, as expressing his own views - "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness."

The truth of this, James does not deny, but affirms that the Scripture which made this declaration was fulfilled or confirmed by the act to which he refers.

(2) they both agreed in holding that good works are necessary to show the genuineness of faith. Of James" views on that point there can be no doubt. That Paul held the same opinion is clear.

(a) from his own life, no man ever having been more solicitous to keep the whole law of God than he was.

(b) From his constant exhortations and declarations, such as these: "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Ephesians 2:10; "Charge them that are rich, that they be rich in good works," 1 Timothy 6:17-18; "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works," Titus 2:7; "Who gave himself for us, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Titus 2:14; "These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works," Titus 3:8.

(c) It appears from the fact that Paul believed that the rewards of heaven are to be apportioned according to our good works, or according to our character and our attainments in the divine life. The title indeed to eternal life is, according to him, in consequence of faith; the measure of the reward is to be our holiness, or what we do. Thus he says, 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body." Thus also he says, 2 Corinthians 9:6, "He which soweth sparingly. shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully." And thus also he says, Romans 2:6, that God "will render to every man according to his deeds." See also the influence which faith had on Paul personally, as described in the third chapter of his Epistle to the Philippians. If these things are so, then these two writers have not contradicted each other, but, viewing the subject from different points, they have together stated important truths which might have been made by any one writer without contradiction; first, that it is only by faith that a sinner can be justified - and second, that the faith which justifies is that only which leads to a holy life, and that no other is of value

in saving the soul. Thus, on the one hand, men would be guarded from depending on their own righteousness for eternal life; and, on the other, from all the evils of Antinomianism. The great object of religion would be secured - the sinner would be justified, and would become personally holy.

JAMES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

The evil which the apostle seems to have referred to in this chapter, was a desire, which appears to have prevailed among those to whom he wrote, to be public teachers (διδάσκαλοι didaskaloi) James 3:1), and to be such even where there was no proper qualification. It is not easy to see any connection between what is said in this chapter, and what is found in other parts of the Epistle; and indeed the plan of the Epistle seems to have been to notice such things as the apostle supposed claimed their attention, without particular regard to a logical connection. Some of the errors and improprieties which existed among them had been noticed in the previous chapters, and others are referred to in James 3:1, first clause.

II. Considerations to check and modify that desire, James 3:1 (last clause), James 3:18. These considerations are the following:

(1) The fact that public teachers must give a more solemn account than other men, and that they expose themselves to the danger of a deeper condemnation, James 3:1, last clause.

(2) the evils which grow out of an improper use of the tongue; evils to which those are particularly liable whose business is speaking, James 3:2-12. This leads the apostle into a general statement of the importance of the tongue as a member of the human body; of the fact that we are peculiarly liable to offend in that James 3:2; of the fact that if that is regulated aright, the whole man is - as a horse is managed by the bit, and a ship is steered by the rudder James 3:2-4; of the fact that the tongue, though a little member, is capable of accomplishing great things, and is peculiarly liable, when not under proper regulations, to do mischief, James 3:5-6; of the fact that, while everything else has been tamed, it has been found impossible to bring the tongue under proper restraints, and that it performs the most discordant and opposite functions, James 3:7-9; and of the impropriety and absurdity of this, as if the same fountain should bring forth sweet water and bitter, James 3:10-12. By these considerations, the apostle seems to have designed to repress the prevailing desire of leaving other employments, and of becoming public instructors without suitable qualifications.

(3) the apostle adverts to the importance of wisdom, with reference to the same end; that is, of suitable qualifications to give public instruction, James 3:13-18. He shows James 3:13 that if there was a truly wise man among them, he should show this by his works, with "meekness," and not by obtruding himself upon the attention of others; that if there was a want of it evinced in a spirit of rivalry and contention, there would be confusion and every evil work, James 3:14-16; and that where there was true wisdom, it was unambitious and unostentatious; it was modest, retiring, and pure. It would lead to a peaceful life of virtue, and its existence would be seen in the "fruits of righteousness sown in peace," James 3:17-18. It might be inferred that they who had this spirit would not be ambitious of becoming public teachers; they would not place themselves at the head of parties; they would show the true spirit of religion in an unobtrusive and humble life. We are not to suppose, in the interpretation of this chapter, that the apostle argued against a desire to enter the ministry, in itself considered, and where there are proper qualifications; but he endeavored to suppress a spirit which has not been uncommon in the world, to become public teachers as a means of more influence and power, and without any suitable regard to the proper endowments for such an office.

Verse 1

My brethren, be not many masters - "Be not many of you teachers." The evil referred to is that where many desired to be teachers, though but few could be qualified for the office, and though, in fact, comparatively few were required. A small number, well qualified, would better discharge the duties of the office, and do more good, than many would; and there would be great evil in having many crowding themselves unqualified into the office. The word here rendered "masters" (διδάσκαλοι didaskaloi) should have been rendered "teachers." It is so rendered in John 3:2; Acts 13:1; Romans 2:20; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 2:11; 1 Timothy 4:3; Hebrews 5:12; though it is elsewhere frequently rendered master. It has, however, in it primarily the notion of "teaching" (διδάσκω), even when rendered "master;" and the word "master" is often used in the New Testament, as it is with us, to denote an instructor - as the "school-master."

Compare Matthew 10:24-25; Matthew 22:16; Mark 10:17; Mark 12:19, et al. The word is not properly used in the sense of master, as distinguished

from a servant, but as distinguished from a disciple or learner. Such a position, indeed, implies authority, but it is authority based not on power, but on superior qualifications. The connection implies that the word is used in that sense in this place; and the evil reprehended is that of seeking the office of public instructor, especially the sacred office. It would seem that this was a prevailing fault among those to whom the apostle wrote. This desire was common among the Jewish people, who coveted the name and the office of "Rabbi," equivalent to that here used, (compare Matthew 23:7), and who were ambitious to be doctors and teachers. See Romans 2:19; 1 Timothy 1:7. This fondness for the office of teachers they naturally carried with them into the Christian church when they were converted, and it is this which the apostle here rebukes. The same spirit the passage before us would rebuke now and for the same reasons; for although a man should be willing to become a public instructor in religion when called to it by the Spirit and Providence of God, and should esteem it a privilege when so called, yet there would be scarcely anything more injurious to the cause of true religion, or that would tend more to produce disorder and confusion, than a prevailing desire of the prominence and importance which a man has in virtue of being a public instructor. If there is anything which ought to be managed with extreme prudence and caution, it is that of introducing men into the Christian ministry. Compare 1 Timothy 5:22; Acts 1:15-26; Acts 13:2-3.

Knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation - (μεῖζον κρὶμα meizon krimaOr rather, "a severer judgment;" that is, we shall have a severer trial, and give a stricter account. The word here used does not necessarily mean "condemnation," but "judgment, trial, account;" and the consideration which the apostle suggests is not that those who were public teacher would be condemned, but that there would be a much more solemn account to be rendered by them than by other men, and that they ought duly to reflect on this in seeking the office of the ministry. He would carry them in anticipation before the judgment-seat, and have them determine the question of entering the ministry there. No better "stand-point" can be taken in making up the mind in regard to this work; and if that had been the position assumed in order to estimate the work, and to make up the mind in regard to the choice of this profession, many a one who has sought the office would have been deterred from it; and it may be added, also, that many a pious and educated youth would have sought the office, who has

devoted his life to other pursuits. A young man, when about to make choice of a calling in life, should place himself by anticipation at the judgment-bar of Christ, and ask himself how human pursuits and plans will appear there. If that were the point of view taken, how many would have been deterred from the ministry who have sought it with a view to honor or emolument! How many, too, who have devoted themselves to the profession of the law, to the army or navy, or to the pursuits of elegant literature, would have felt that it was their duty to serve God in the ministry of reconciliation? How many at the close of life, in the ministry and out of it, feel, when too late to make a change, that they have wholly mistaken the purpose for which they should have lived!

Verse 2

For in many things we offend all - We all offend. The word here rendered offend, means to stumble, to fall; then to err, to fail in duty; and the meaning here is, that all were liable to commit error, and that this consideration should induce men to be cautious in seeking an office where an error would be likely to do so much injury. The particular thing, doubtless, which the apostle had in his eye, was the peculiar liability to commit error, or to do wrong with the tongue. Of course, this liability is very great in an office where the very business is public speaking. If anywhere the improper use of the tongue will do mischief, it is in the office of a religious teacher; and to show the danger of this, and the importance of caution in seeking that office, the apostle proceeds to show what mischief the tongue is capable of effecting.

If any man offend not in word - In his speech; in the use of his tongue.

The same is a perfect man - Perfect in the sense in which the apostle immediately explains himself; that he is able to keep every other member of his body in subjection. His object is not to represent the man as absolutely spotless in every sense, and as wholly free from sin, for he had himself just said that "all offend in many things;" but the design is to show that if a man can control his tongue, he has complete dominion over himself, as much as a man has over a horse by the bit, or as a steersman has over a ship if he has hold of the rudder. He is perfect in that sense, that he has complete control over himself, and will not be liable to error in anything. The design is to show the important position which the tongue occupies, as governing the whole man. On the meaning of the word perfect, see the notes at Job 1:1.

And able also to bridle the whole body - To control his whole body, that is, every other part of himself, as a man does a horse by the bridle. The word rendered "to bridle," means to lead or guide with a bit; then to rein in, to check, to moderate, to restrain. A man always has complete government over himself if he has the entire control of his tongue. It is that by which he gives expression to his thoughts and passions; and if that is kept under proper restraint, all the rest of his members are as easily controlled as the horse is by having the control of the bit.

Verse 3

Behold, we put bits in the horses" mouths … - The meaning of this simple illustration is, that as we control a horse by the bit - though the bit is a small thing - so the body is controlled by the tongue. He who has a proper control over his tongue can govern his whole body, as he who holds a bridle governs and turns about the horse.

Verse 4

Behold also the ships - This illustration is equally striking and obvious. A ship is a large object. It seems to be unmanageable by its vastness, and it is also impelled by driving storms. Yet it is easily managed by a small rudder; and he that has control of that, has control of the ship itself. So with the tongue. It is a small member as compared with the body; in its size not unlike the rudder as compared with the ship. Yet the proper control of the tongue in respect to its influence on the whole man, is not unlike the control of the rudder in its power over the ship.

Which though they be so great - So great in themselves, and in comparison with the rudder. Even such bulky and unwieldy objects are controlled by a very small thing.

And are driven of fierce winds - By winds that would seem to leave the ship beyond control. It is probable that by the "fierce winds" here as impelling the ship, the apostle meant to illustrate the power of the passions in impelling man. Even a man under impetuous passion would be restrained, if the tongue is properly controlled, as the ship driven by the winds is by the helm.

Yet are they turned about with a very small helm - The ancient rudder or helm was made in the shape of an oar. This was very small when compared with the size of the vessel - about as small as the tongue is as compared with the body.

Whithersoever the governor listeth - As the helmsman pleases. It is entirely under his control.

Verse 5

Even so the tongue is a little member - Little compared with the body, as the bit or the rudder is, compared with the horse or the ship.

And boasteth great things - The design of the apostle is to illustrate the power and influence of the tongue. This may be done in a great many respects: and the apostle does it by referring to its boasting; to the effects which it produces, resembling that of fire, James 3:6; to its untameableness, James 3:8-9; and to its giving utterance to the most inconsistent and incongruous thoughts, James 3:9-10. The particular idea here is, that the tongue seems to be conscious of its influence and power, and boasts largely of what it can do. The apostle means doubtless to convey the idea that it boasts not unjustly of its importance. It has all the influence in the world, for good or for evil, which it claims.

Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! - Margin, "wood." The Greek word ὕλην hulēnmeans a wood, forest, grove; and then fire-wood, fuel. This is the meaning here. The sense is, that a very little fire is sufficient to ignite a large quantity of combustible materials, and that the tongue produces effects similar to that. A spark will kindle a lofty pile; and a word spoken by the tongue may set a neighborhood or a village "in a flame."

Verse 6

And the tongue is a fire - In this sense, that it produces a "blaze," or a great conflagration. It produces a disturbance and an agitation that may be compared with the conflagration often produced by a spark.

A world of iniquity - A little world of evil in itself. This is a very expressive phrase, and is similar to one which we often employ, as when we speak of a town as being a world in miniature. We mean by it that it is an epitome of the world; that all that there is in the world is represented there on a small scale. So when the tongue is spoken of as being "a world of iniquity," it is meant that all kinds of evil that are in the world are exhibited there in miniature; it seems to concentrate all sorts of iniquity that exist on the earth. And what evil is there which may not be originated or fomented by the tongue? What else is there that might, with so much propriety, be represented as a little world of iniquity? With all the good which it does, who can estimate the amount of evil which it causes? Who can measure the

evils which arise from scandal, and slander, and profaneness, and perjury, and falsehood, and blasphemy, and obscenity, and the inculcation of error, by the tongue? Who can gauge the amount of broils, and contentions, and strifes, and wars, and suspicions, and enmities, and alienations among friends and neighbors, which it produces? Who can number the evils produced by the "honeyed" words of the seducer; or by the tongue of the eloquent in the maintenance of error, and the defense of wrong? If all men were dumb, what a portion of the crimes of the world would soon cease! If all men would speak only that which ought to be spoken, what a change would come over the face of human affairs!

So is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body - It stains or pollutes the whole body. It occupies a position and relation so important in respect to every part of our moral frame, that there is no portion which is not affected by it. Of the truth of this, no one can have any doubt. There is nothing else pertaining to us as moral and intellectual beings, which exerts such an influence over ourselves as the tongue. A man of pure conversation is understood and felt to be pure in every respect; but who has any confidence in the virtue of the blasphemer, or the man of obscene lips, or the calumniator and slanderer? We always regard such a man as corrupt to the core.

And setteth on fire the course of nature - The margin is "the wheel of nature." The Greek word also (τροχός trochos) means "a wheel," or any thing made for revolving and running. Then it means the course run by a wheel; a circular course or circuit. The word rendered "nature" (γένεσις genesis), means "procreation, birth, nativity;" and therefore the phrase means, literally, the wheel of birth - that is, the wheel which is set in motion at birth, and which runs on through life. - Rob. Lex. sub voce γένεσεως geneseōsIt may be a matter of doubt whether this refers to successive generations, or to the course of individual life. The more literal sense would be that which refers to an individual; but perhaps the apostle meant to speak in a popular sense, and thought of the affairs of the world as they roll on from age to age, as all enkindled by the tongue, keeping the world in a constant blaze of excitement. Whether applied to an individual life, or to the world at large, every one can see the justice of the comparison. One naturally thinks, when this expression is used, of a chariot driven on with so much speed that its wheels by their rapid motion become self-ignited, and the chariot moves on amidst flames.

And it is set on fire of hell - Hell, or Gehenna, is represented as a place where the fires continually burn. See the notes at Matthew 5:22. The idea here is, that that which causes the tongue to do so much evil derives its origin from hell. Nothing could better characterize much of that which the tongues does, than to say that it has its origin in hell, and has the spirit which reigns there. The very spirit of that world of fire and wickedness - a spirit of falsehood, and slander, and blasphemy, and pollution - seems to inspire the tongue. The image which seems to have been before the mind of the apostle was that of a torch which enkindles and burns everything as it goes along - a torch itself lighted at the fires of hell. One of the most striking descriptions of the woes and curses which there may be in hell, would be to portray the sorrows caused on the earth by the tongue.

Verse 7

For every kind of beasts - The apostle proceeds to state another thing showing the power of the tongue, the fact that it is ungovernable, and that there is no power of man to keep it under control. Everything else but this has been tamed. It is unnecessary to refine on the expressions used here, by attempting to prove that it is literally true that every species of beasts, and birds, and fishes has been tamed. The apostle is to be understood as speaking in a general and popular sense, showing the remarkable power of man over those things which are by nature savage and wild. The power of man in taming wild beasts is wonderful. Indeed, it is to be remembered that nearly all those beasts which we now speak of as "domestic" animals, and which we are accustomed to see only when they are tame, were once fierce and savage races. This is the case with the horse, the ox, the ass, (see the notes at Job 11:12; Job 39:5), the swine, the dog, the cat, etc. The editor of the Pictorial Bible well remarks, "There is perhaps no kind of creature, to which man has access, which might not be tamed by him with proper perseverance. The ancients seem to have made more exertions to this end, and with much better success, than ourselves. The examples given by Pliny, of creatures tamed by men, relate to elephants, lions, and tigers, among beasts; to the eagle, among birds; to asps, and other serpents; and to crocodiles, and various fishes, among the inhabitants of the water. Natural History viii. 9,16,17; x. 5,44. The lion was very commonly tamed by the ancient Egyptians, and trained to assist both in hunting and in war." Notes in loc. The only animal which it has been supposed has defied the power of man to tame it, is the hyena, and even this, it is said, has been subdued, in

modern times. There is a passage in Euripides which has a strong resemblance to this of James:

Βραχὺ τοι σθένος ἀνέρος
Ἀλλὰ ποικιλίαις πραπίδων
Δαμᾷ φῦλα πόντου ,

Χθονίων τ᾽ ἀερίων τε παιδεύματα .
Brachu toi sthenos aneros
Alla poikiliais prapidōn
Dama phula pontouChthoniōn t' aeriōn te paideumatais the power which nature has given to man; but, by various acts of his superior understanding, he has subdued the tribes of the sea, the earth, and the air." Compare on this subject, the passages quoted by Pricaeus in the Critici Sacri, in loc.

And of birds - It is a common thing to tame birds, and even the most wild are susceptible of being tamed. A portion of the leathered race, as the hen, the goose, the duck, is thoroughly domesticated. The pigeon, the martin, the hawk, the eagle, may be; and perhaps there are none of that race which might not be made subject to the will of man.

And of serpents - The ancients showed great skill in this art, in reference to asps and other venomous serpents, and it is common now in India. In many instances, indeed, it is known that the fangs of the serpents are extracted; but even when this is not done, they who practice the art learn to handle them with impunity.

And of things in the sea - As the crocodile mentioned by Pliny. It may be affirmed with confidence that there is no animal which might not, by proper skill and perseverance, be rendered tame, or made obedient to the will of man. It is not necessary, however, to understand the apostle as affirming that literally every animal has been tamed, or ever can be. He evidently speaks in a popular sense of the great power which man undeniably has over all kinds of wild animals - over the creation beneath him.

Verse 8

But the tongue can no man tame - This does not mean that it is never brought under control, but that it is impossible effectually and certainly to subdue it. It would be possible to subdue and domesticate any kind of beasts, but this could not be done with the tongue.

It is an unruly evil - An evil without restraint, to which no certain and effectual check can be applied. Of the truth of this no one can have any doubt, who looks at the condition of the world.

Full of deadly poison - That is, it acts on the happiness of man, and on the peace of society, as poison does on the human frame. The allusion here seems to be to the bite of a venomous reptile. Compare Psalm 140:3, "They have sharpened their tongues like serpent; adders" poison is under their lips." Romans 3:13, "with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips." Nothing would better describe the mischief that may be done by the tongue. There is no sting of a serpent that does so much evil in the world; there is no poison more deadly to the frame than the poison of the tongue is to the happiness of man. Who, for example, can stand before the power of the slanderer? What mischief can be done in society that can be compared with that which he may do?

- 'Tis slander;
Whose edge is sharper than the sword; whose tongue
Outvenoms all the worms of Nile; whose breath

Rides on the posting winds, and doth belie

All corners of the world: kings, queens, and states,

Maids, matrons, nay, the secrets of the grave

This viperous slander enters.
Shakespeare in Cymbellna.

Verse 9

Therewith bless we God - We men do this; that is, all this is done by the tongue. The apostle does not mean that the same man does this, but that all this is done by the same organ - the tongue.

Even the Father - Who sustains to us the relation of a father. The point in the remark of the apostle is, the absurdity of employing the tongue in such contradictory uses as to bless one who has to us the relation of a father, and to curse any being, especially those who are made in his image. The word bless here is used in the sense of praise, thank, worship.

And therewith curse we men - That is, it is done by the same organ by which God is praised and honored.

Which are made after the similitude of God - After his image, Genesis 1:26-27. As we bless God, we ought with the same organ to bless those who are like him. There is an absurdity in cursing men who are thus made, like what there would be in both blessing and cursing the Creator himself.

Verse 10

Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing - The meaning here may be, either that out of the mouth of man two such opposite things proceed, not referring to the same individual, but to different persons; or, out of the mouth of the same individual. Both of these are true; and both are equally incongruous and wrong. No organ should be devoted to uses so unlike, and the mouth should be employed in giving utterance only to that which is just, benevolent, and good. It is true, however, that the mouth is devoted to these opposite employments; and that while one part of the race employ it for purposes of praise, the other employ it in uttering maledictions. It is also true of many individuals that at one time they praise their Maker, and then, with the same organ, calumniate, and slander, and revile their fellow-men. After an act of solemn devotion in the house of God, the professed worshipper goes forth with the feelings of malice in his heart, and the language of slander, detraction, or even blasphemy on his lips.

My brethren, these things ought not so to be - They are as incongruous as it would be for the same fountain to send forth both salt water and fresh; or for the same tree to bear different kinds of fruit.

Verse 11

Doth a fountain send forth at the same place - Margin, "hole." The Greek word means "opening, fissure," such as there is in the earth, or in rocks from which a fountain gushes.

Sweet water and bitter - Fresh water and salt, James 3:12. Such things do not occur in the works of nature, and they should not be found in man.

Verse 12

Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries? - Such a thing is impossible in nature, and equally absurd in morals. A fig-tree bears only figs; and so the tongue ought to give utterance only to one class of sentiments and emotions. These illustrations are very striking, and show the absurdity of that which the apostle reproves. At the same time, they accomplish the main purpose which he had in view, to repress the desire of

becoming public teachers without suitable qualifications. They show the power of the tongue; they show what a dangerous power it is for a man to wield who has not the proper qualifications; they show that no one should put himself in the position where he may wield this power without such a degree of tried prudence, wisdom, discretion, and piety, that there shall be a moral certainty that he will use it aright.

Verse 13

Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? - This is spoken with reference to the work of public teaching; and the meaning of the apostle is, that if there were such persons among them, they should be selected for that office. The characteristics here stated as necessary qualifications, are wisdom and knowledge. Those, it would seem, on which reliance had been placed, were chiefly those which were connected with a ready elocution, or the mere faculty of speaking. The apostle had stated the dangers which would follow if reliance were placed on that alone, and he now says that something more is necessary, that the main qualifications for the office are wisdom and knowledge. No mere power of speaking, however eloquent it might be, was a sufficient qualification. The primary things to be sought in reference to that office were wisdom and knowledge, and they who were endowed with these things should be selected for public instructors.

Let him show out of a good conversation - From a correct and consistent life and deportment. On the meaning of the word "conversation," see the notes at Philemon 1:27. The meaning here is, that there should be an upright life, and that this should be the basis in forming the judgment in appointing persons to fill stations of importance, and especially in the office of teaching in the church.

His works - His acts of uprightness and piety. He should be a man of a holy life.

With meekness of wisdom - With a wise and prudent gentleness of life; not in a noisy, arrogant, and boastful manner. True wisdom is always meek, mild, gentle; and that is the wisdom which is needful, if men would become public teachers. It is remarkable that the truly wise man is always characterized by a calm spirit, a mild and placid demeanor, and by a gentle, though firm, enunciation of his sentiments. A noisy, boisterous, and stormy declaimer we never select as a safe counsellor. He may accomplish much in his way by his bold eloquence of manner, but we do not put him in places

where we need far-reaching thought, or where we expect the exercise of profound philosophical views. In an eminent degree, the ministry of the gospel should be characterized by a calm, gentle, and thoughtful wisdom - a wisdom which shines in all the actions of the life.

Verse 14

But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts - If that is your characteristic. There is reference here to a fierce and unholy zeal against each other; a spirit of ambition and contention.

Glory not - Do not boast, in such a case, of your qualifications to be public teachers. Nothing would render you more unfit for such an office than such a spirit.

And lie not against the truth - You would lie against what is true by setting up a claim to the requisite qualifications for such an office, if this is your spirit. Men should seek no office or station which they could not properly seek if the whole truth about them were known.

Verse 15

This wisdom descendeth not from above - Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 3:3. The wisdom here referred to is that carnal or worldly wisdom which produces strife and contention; that kind of knowledge which leads to self-conceit, and which prompts a man to defend his opinions with over-heated zeal. In the contentions which are in the world, in church and state, in neighborhoods and families, at the bar, in political life, and in theological disputes, even where there is the manifestation of enraged and irascible feeling, there is often much of a certain kind of wisdom. There is learning, shrewdness, tact, logical skill, subtle and skilful argumentation - "making the worse appear the better reason;" but all this is often connected with a spirit so narrow, bigoted, and contentious, as to show clearly that it has not its origin in heaven. The spirit which is originated there is always connected with gentleness, calmness, and a love of truth.

But is earthly - Has its origin in this world, and partakes of its spirit. It is such as men exhibit who are governed only by worldly maxims and principles.

Sensual - Margin, "natural." The meaning is, that it has its origin in our sensual rather than in our intellectual and moral nature. It is that which takes counsel of our natural appetites and propensities, and not of high and spiritual influences.

devilish - Demoniacal (δαιμονιώδης daimoniōdēs). Such as the demons exhibit. See the notes at James 2:19. There may be indeed talent in it, but there is the intermingling of malignant passions, and it leads to contentions, strifes, divisions, and "every evil work."

Verse 16

For where envying and strife is, there is confusion - Margin, tumult or unquietness. Everything is unsettled and agitated. There is no mutual confidence; there is no union of plan and effort; there is no co-operation in promoting a common object; there is no stability in any plan; for a purpose, though for good, formed by one portion, is defeated by another.

And every evil work - Of the truth of this no one can have any doubt who has observed the effects in a family or neighborhood where a spirit of strife prevails. All love and harmony of course are banished; all happiness disappears; all prosperity is at an end. In place of the peaceful virtues which ought to prevail, there springs up every evil passion that tends to mar the peace of a community. Where this spirit prevails in a church, it is of course impossible to expect any progress in divine things; and in such a church any effort to do good is vain.

"The Spirit, like a peaceful dove,
Flies from the realms of noise and strife."

Verse 17

But the wisdom that is from above - Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 2:6-7. The wisdom which has a heavenly origin, or which is from God. The man who is characterised by that wisdom will be pure, peaceable, etc. This does not refer to the doctrines of religion, but to its spirit.

Is first pure - That is, the first effect of it on the mind is to make it pure. The influence on the man is to make him upright, sincere, candid, holy. The word here used (ἁγνη hagnē) is that which would be applied to one who is innocent, or flee from crime or blame. Compare Philemon 4:8; 1 Timothy 5:22; 1 John 3:3; where the word is rendered, as here, "pure"; 2 Corinthians 7:11; where it is rendered clear, (in this matter); 2 Corinthians 11:2; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:2, where it is rendered chaste. The meaning here is, that the first and immediate effect of religion is not on the intellect, to make it more enlightened; or on the imagination, to make it more discursive and brilliant; or on the memory and judgment, to make them clearer and stronger; but it is to purify the heart, to make the man upright, inoffensive, and good. This

passage should not be applied, as it often is, to the doctrines of religion, as if it were the first duty of a church to keep itself free from errors in doctrine, and that this ought to be sought even in preference to the maintenance of peace - as if it meant that in doctrine a church should be "first pure, then peaceable;" but it should be applied to the individual consciences of men, as showing the effect of religion on the heart and life.

The first thing which it produces is to make the man himself pure and good; then follows the train of blessings which the apostle enumerates as flowing from that. It is true that a church should be pure in doctrinal belief, but that is not the truth taught here. It is not true that the scripture teaches, here or elsewhere, that purity of doctrine is to be preferred to a peaceful spirit; or that it always leads to a peaceful spirit; or that it is proper for professed Christians and Christian ministers to sacrifice, as is often done, a peaceful spirit, in an attempt to preserve purity of doctrine. Most of the persecutions in the church have grown out of this maxim. This led to the establishment of the Inquisition; this kindled the fires of Smithfield; this inspirited Laud and his friends; this has been the origin of no small part of the schisms in the church. A pure spirit is the best promoter of peace, and will do more than anything else to secure the prevalence of truth.

(It is but too true that much unseemly strife has had the aegis of this text thrown over it. The "wrath of man" accounts itself zeal for God, and strange fire usurps the place of the true fire of the sanctuary. Yet the author‘s statement here seems somewhat overcharged; possibly his own personal history may have contributed a little to this result. Although the Greek word ἁγνη hagnēhere qualifying the σοφια sophiaor wisdom, refers to purity of heart, still it remains true that a pure heart will never relinquish its hold on God‘s truth for the sake of a peace that at such a price would be too dearly purchased. A pure heart cannot but be faithful to the truth; it could not otherwise be pure, provided conscientiousness and love of truth form any part of moral purity. Surely, then, an individual solicited to yield up what he believed to be truth, or what were cherished convictions, might properly assign this text as a reason why he could not, and ought not; and if an individual might, why not any number associated into a church?

It is true the Scriptures do not teach that "doctrinal purity" is to be preferred to a "peaceful spirit." However pure a man‘s doctrine may be, if

he has not the peaceful spirit he is none of Christ‘s. But the common view of this passage is not chargeable with any such absurdity. It supposes only that there may be circumstances in which the spirit of peace, though possessed, cannot be exercised, except in meek submission to wrong for conscience sake; never can it turn traitor to truth, or make any compromise with error. The “first” of the apostle does not indicate even preference of the pure spirit to the peaceful spirit, but only the order in which they are to be exercised. There must be no attempts to reach peace by overleaping purity. The maxim that a pure heart ought not to sacrifice truth on any consideration whatever, never gave rise to persecution: it has made many martyrs, but never one persecutor; it has pined in the dungeon, but never immured any there; it has burned amid the flames, but never lighted the faggot; it has ascended scaffolds, but never erected them; it has preserved and bequeathed civil and religious liberty, but never assaulted them; it is a divine principle - the principle by which Christianity became strong, and will ultimately command the homage of the world. There is another principle, with which this has no brotherhood, that denies the right of private judgment, and enforces uniformity by the sword: its progeny are inquisitors, and Lauds and Sharpes; and let it have the credit of its own offspring.)

Then peaceable - The effect of true religion - the wisdom which is from above - will be to dispose a man to live in peace with all others. See the Romans 14:19 note; Hebrews 12:14.

Gentle - Mild, inoffensive, clement. The word here used (ἐπιεικὴς epieikēs) is rendered “moderation” in Philemon 4:5; patient in 1 Timothy 3:3; and gentle in Titus 3:2; James 3:17, and 1 Peter 2:18. It does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. Every one has a clear idea of the virtue of gentleness - gentleness of spirit, of deportment, and of manners; and every one can see that that is the appropriate spirit of religion. Compare the notes at 2 Corinthians 10:1. It is from this word that we have derived the word “gentleman”; and the effect of true religion is to make everyone, in the proper and best sense of the term, a gentleman. How can a man have evidence that he is a true Christian, who is not such? The highest title which can be given to a man is, that he is a Christian gentleman.

And easy to be entreated - The word here used does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means easily persuaded, compliant. Of course, this refers only to cases where it is right and proper to be easily

persuaded and complying. It cannot refer to things which are in themselves wrong. The sense is, that he who is under the influence of the wisdom which is from above, is not a stiff, stern, obstinate, unyielding man. He does not take a position, and then hold it whether right or wrong; he is not a man on whom no arguments or persuasions can have any influence. He is not one who cannot be affected by any appeals which may be made to him on the grounds of patriotism, justice, or benevolence; but is one who is ready to yield when truth requires him to do it, and who is willing to sacrifice his own convenience for the good of others. See this illustrated in the case of the apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 9:20-22. Compare the notes at that passage.

Full of mercy - Merciful; disposed to show compassion to others. This is one of the results of the wisdom that is from above, for it makes us like God, the "Father of mercies." See the notes at Matthew 5:7.

And good fruits - The fruits of good living; just, benevolent, and kind actions. Philemon 1:11 note; 2 Corinthians 9:10 note. Compare James 2:14-26.

Without partiality - Margin, "or wrangling." The word here used (ἀδιάκριτος adiakritos) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, "not to be distinguished." Here it may mean either of the following things:

(a)not open to distinction or doubt; that is, unambiguous, so that there shall be no doubt about its origin or nature;

(b)making no distinction, that is, in the treatment of others, or impartial towards them; or,

(c)without strife, from διακρίνω diakrinōto contend.

The second meaning here suggested seems best to accord with the sense of the passage; and according to this the idea is, that the wisdom which is from above, or true religion, makes us impartial in our treatment of others: that is, we are not influenced by a regard to dress, rank, or station, but we are disposed to do equal justice to all, according to their moral worth, and to show kindness to all, according to their wants. See James 2:1-4.

And without hypocrisy - What it professes to be; sincere. There is no disguise or mask assumed. What the man pretends to be, he is. This is everywhere the nature of true religion. It has nothing of its own of which to be ashamed, and which needs to be concealed; its office is not to hide or

conceal anything that is wrong. It neither is a mask, nor does it need a mask. If such is the nature of the "wisdom which is from above," who is there that should be ashamed of it? Who is there that should not desire that its blessed influence should spread around the world?

Verse 18

And the fruit of righteousness - That which the righteousness here referred to produces, or that which is the effect of true religion. The meaning is, that righteousness or true religion produces certain results on the life like the effects of seed sown in good ground. Righteousness or true religion as certainly produces such effects, as seed that is sown produces a harvest.

Is sown in peace - Is scattered over the world in a peaceful manner. That is, it is not done amidst contentions, and brawls, and strifes. The farmer sows his seed in peace. The fields are not sown amidst the tumults of a mob, or the excitements of a battle or a camp. Nothing is more calm, peaceful, quiet, and composed, than the farmer, as he walks with measured tread over his fields, scattering his seed. So it is in sowing the "seed of the kingdom," in preparing for the great harvest of righteousness in the world. It is done by men of peace; it is done in peaceful scenes, and with a peaceful spirit; it is not in the tumult of war, or amidst the hoarse brawling of a mob. In a pure and holy life; in the peaceful scenes of the sanctuary and the Sabbath; by noiseless and unobtrusive laborers, the seed is scattered over the world, and the result is seen in an abundant harvest in producing peace and order.

Of them that make peace - By those who desire to produce peace, or who are of a peaceful temper and disposition. They are engaged everywhere in scattering these blessed seeds of peace, contentment, and order; and the result shall be a glorious harvest for themselves and for mankind - a harvest rich and abundant on earth and in heaven. The whole effect, therefore, of religion, is to produce peace. It is all peace - peace in its origin and in its results; in the heart of the individual, and in society; on earth, and in heaven. The idea with which the apostle commenced this chapter seems to have been that such persons only should be admitted to the office of public teachers. From that, the mind naturally turned to the effect of religion in general; and he states that in the ministry and out of it; in the heart of the individual and on society at large; here and hereafter, the effect of religion is to produce peace. Its nature is peaceful as it exists in the heart, and as it is

developed in the world: and wherever and however it is manifested, it is like seed sown, not amid the storms of war and the contentions of battle, but in the fields of quiet husbandry, producing in rich abundance a harvest of peace. In its origin, and in all its results, it is productive only of contentment, sincerity, goodness, and peace. Happy he who has this religion in his heart; happy he who with liberal hand scatters its blessings broadcast over the world!

JAMES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

In James 3:13-18 the apostle had contrasted the wisdom which is from above with that which is from beneath. The former is peaceable, pure, and gentle, leading to universal kindness and order; the latter earthly, sensual, and devilish. The points suggested in this chapter grow directly out of the remarks made there, and are designed to show the effect of the "wisdom which descendeth not from above," as evinced in the spirit of this world, and thus by contrast to show the value of true wisdom, or of the spirit of religion. Accordingly, the apostle illustrates the effects of the wisdom of this world, or the spirit of this world, by showing what it produces, or what they do who are under its influence. We are not to suppose that the persons to whom the apostle addressed this Epistle were actually guilty of the things here referred to themselves, but such things had an existence in the world, and it gave more life and spirit to the discussion to represent them as existing "among them." In illustrating the subject, he refers to the following things as resulting from the spirit that is opposite to the wisdom which is from above, namely:

(1)Wars and fightings, which are to be traced solely to the lusts of men, James 4:1-2;

(2)The neglect of prayer, showing the reason why they did not have the things which were necessary, James 4:2;

(3)The fact that when they prayed they did not obtain what they needed, because they prayed with improper motives, in order to have the means of gratifying their sensual desires, James 4:3;

(4)The desire of the friendship of the world as one of the fruits of being under the influence of the wisdom which is not from above, James 4:4;

(5)Envy, as another of these fruits, James 4:5.

In view of these things, and of the danger to which they were exposed of acting under their influence, the apostle proceeds to give them some solemn cautions and admonitions. He tells them that God resists all who are proud, but gives grace to all who are humble, James 4:6; he counsels them to submit to God, James 4:7, to resist the devil, James 4:7, to draw nigh to

God, James 4:8, to cleanse their hands and their hearts, James 4:8, to be afflicted and mourn over their sins, and to become serious and devout, James 4:9, and to humble themselves before God that he might lift them up James 4:10; he commands them not to speak evil one of another, since by so doing they in fact set themselves up to be judges, and in the circumstances became judges of the law as well as of their brethren, James 4:11-12. He then rebukes the confident spirit which lays its plans for the future with no just view of the frailty and uncertainty of human life, and shows them that all their plans for the future should be formed with a distinct recognition of their dependence on God for success, and even for the continuance of life, James 4:13-16. The chapter closes with an affirmation that to him that knows how to do good and does it not, to him it is sin, James 4:17, implying that all he had said in the chapter might indeed be obvious, and that they would be ready to admit that these things were true, and that if they knew this, and did not do right, they must be regarded as guilty.

Verse 1

From whence come wars and fightings among you? - Margin, "brawlings." The reference is to strifes and contentions of all kinds; and the question, then, as it is now, was an important one, what was their source or origin? The answer is given in the succeeding part of the verse. Some have supposed that the apostle refers here to the contests and seditions existing among the Jews, which afterwards broke out in rebellion against the Roman authority, and which led to the overthrow of the Jewish nation. But the more probable reference is to domestic broils, and to the strifes of sects and parties; to the disputes which were carried on among the Jewish people, and which perhaps led to scenes of violence, and to popular outbreaks among themselves. When the apostle says "among you," it is not necessary to suppose that he refers to those who were members of the Christian church as actually engaged in these strifes, though he was writing to such; but he speaks of them as a part of the Jewish people, and refers to the contentions which prevailed among them as a people - contentions in which those who were Christian converts were in great danger of participating, by being drawn into their controversies, and partaking of the spirit of strife which existed among their countrymen. It is known that such a spirit of contention prevailed among the Jews at that time in an eminent degree, and it was well to put those among them who professed to be Christians on their guard

against such a spirit, by stating the causes of all wars and contentions. The solution which the apostle has given of the causes of the strifes prevailing then, will apply substantially to all the wars which have ever existed on the earth.

Come they not hence, even of your lusts? - Is not this the true source of all war and contention? The word rendered "lusts" is in the margin rendered "pleasures." This is the usual meaning of the word (ἡδονὴ hēdonē); but it is commonly applied to the pleasures of sense, and thence denotes desire, appetite, lust. It may be applied to any desire of sensual gratification, and then to the indulgence of any corrupt propensity of the mind. The lust or desire of rapine, of plunder, of ambition, of fame, of a more extended dominion, I would be properly embraced in the meaning of the word. The word would equally comprehend the spirit which leads to a brawl in the street, and that which prompted to the conquests of Alexander, Caesar, or Napoleon. All this is the same spirit evinced on a larger or smaller scale.

That war in your members - The word "member" (μέλος melos) denotes, properly, a limb or member of the body; but it is used in the New Testament to denote the members of the body collectively; that is, the body itself as the seat of the desires and passions, Romans 6:13, Romans 6:19; Romans 7:5, Romans 7:23; Colossians 3:5. The word war here refers to the conflict between those passions which have their seat in the flesh, and the better principles of the mind and conscience, producing a state of agitation and conflict. See the notes at Romans 7:23. Compare Galatians 5:17. Those corrupt passions which have their seat in the flesh, the apostle says are the causes of war. Most of the wars which have occurred in the world can be traced to what the apostle here calls lusts. The desire of booty, the love of conquest, the ambition for extended rule, the gratification of revenge, these and similar causes have led to all the wars that have desolated the earth. Justice, equity, the fear of God, the spirit of true religion, never originated any war, but the corrupt passions of men have made the earth one great battle-field. If true religion existed among all men, there would be no more war. War always supposes that wrong has been done on one side or the other, and that one party or the other, or both, is indisposed to do right. The spirit of justice, equity, and truth, which the religion of Christ would implant in the human heart, would put an end to war forever.

Verse 2

Ye lust, and have not - That is, you wish to have something which you do not now possess, and to which you have no just claim, and this prompts to the effort to obtain it by force. You desire extension of territory, fame, booty, the means of luxurious indulgence, or of magnificence and grandeur, and this leads to contest and bloodshed. These are the causes of wars on the large scale among nations and of the contentions and strifes of individuals. The general reason is, that others have that which we have not, and which we desire to have; and not content with endeavoring to obtain it, if we can, in a peaceful and honest manner, and not willing to content ourselves without its possession, we resolve to secure it by force. Socrates is reported by Plato to have said on the day of his death, "nothing else but the body and its desires cause wars, seditions, and contests of every kind; for all wars arise through the possession of wealth."

Phaedo of Plato, by Taylor, London, 1793, p. 158. The system of wars in general, therefore, has been a system of great robberies, no more honest or honorable than the purposes of the foot-pad, and more dignified only because it involves greater skill and talent. It has been said that "to kill one man makes a murderer, to kill many makes a hero." So it may be said, that to steal a horse, or to rob a house, makes a man a thief or burglar; to fire a dwelling subjects him to the punishment of arson; but to plunder kingdoms and provinces, and to cause cities, towns, and hamlets to be wrapped in flames, makes an illustrious conqueror, and gives a title to what is deemed a bright page in history. The one enrolls the name among felons, and consigns the perpetrator to the dungeon or the gibbet; the other, accompanied with no more justice, and with the same spirit, sends the name down to future times as immortal. Yet in the two the all-discerning eye of God may see no difference except in the magnitude of the crime, and in the extent of the injury which has been inflicted. In his way, and according to the measure of his ability, the felon who ends his life in a dungeon, or on the gibbet, is as worthy of grateful and honored remembrance as the conqueror triumphing in the spoils of desolated empires.

Ye kill - Margin, or "envy." The marginal reading "envy" has been introduced from some doubt as to the correct reading of the text, whether it should be φονεύτε phoneute"ye kill," or φθονεῖτε phthoneite"ye envy." The latter reading has been adopted by Erasmus, Schmidius, Luther, Beza, and some others, though merely from conjecture. There is no authority from the manuscripts for the change. The correct reading undoubtedly is, ye kill.

This expression is probably to be taken in the sense of having a murderous disposition, or fostering a brutal and murderous spirit. It is not exactly that they killed or committed murder previous to "desiring to have," but that they had such a covetous desire of the possessions of others as to produce a murderous and bloody temper. The spirit of murder was at the bottom of the whole; or there was such a desire of the possessions of others as to lead to the commission of this crime. Of what aggressive wars which have ever existed is not this true?

Desire to have - That is, what is in the possession of others.

And cannot obtain - By any fair and honest means; by purchase or negotiation: and this leads to bloody conquest. All wars might have been avoided if men had been content with what they had, or could rightfully obtain, and had not desired to have what was in the possession of others, which they could not obtain by honest and honorable means. Every war might have been avoided by fair and honorable negociation.

Ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not - Notwithstanding you engage in contentions and strifes, you do not obtain what you seek after. If you sought that from God which you truly need, you would obtain it, for he would bestow upon you all that is really necessary. But you seek it by contention and strife, and you have no security of obtaining it. He who seeks to gain anything by war seeks it in an unjust manner, and cannot depend on the divine help and blessing. The true way of obtaining anything which we really need is to seek it from God by prayer, and then to make use of just and fair means of obtaining it, by industry and honesty, and by a due regard for the rights of others. Thus sought, we shall obtain it if it would be for our good; if it is withheld, it will be because it is best for us that it should not be ours. In all the wars which have been waged on the earth, whether for the settlement of disputed questions, for the adjustment of boundaries, for the vindication of violated rights, or for the permanent extension of empire, how rare has it been that the object which prompted to the war has been secured! The course of events has shown that indisposed as men are to do justice, there is much more probability of obtaining the object by patient negotiation than there is by going to war.

Verse 3

Ye ask, and receive not - That is, some of you ask, or you ask on some occasions. Though seeking in general what you desire by strife, and without regard to the rights of others, yet you sometimes pray. It is not uncommon

for men who go to war to pray, or to procure the services of a chaplain to pray for them. It sometimes happens that the covetous and the quarrelsome; that those who live to wrong others, and who are fond of litigation, pray. Such men may be professors of religion. They keep up a form of worship in their families. They pray for success in their worldly engagements, though those engagements are all based on covetousness. Instead of seeking property that they may glorify God, and do good; that they may relieve the poor and distressed; that they may be the patrons of learning, philanthropy, and religion, they do it that they may live in splendor, and be able to pamper their lusts. It is not indeed very common that persons with such ends and aims of life pray, but they sometimes do it; for, alas! there are many professors of religion who have no higher aims than these, and not a few such professors feel that consistency demands that they should observe some form of prayer. If such persons do not receive what they ask for, if they are not prospered in their plans, they should not set it down as evidence that God does not hear prayer, but as evidence that their prayers are offered for improper objects, or with improper motives.

Because ye ask amiss - Ye do it with a view to self-indulgence and carnal gratification.

That you may consume it upon your lusts - Margin, "pleasures." This is the same word which is used in James 4:1, and rendered lusts. The reference is to sensual gratifications, and the word would include all that comes under the name of sensual pleasure, or carnal appetite. It was not that they might have a decent and comfortable living, which would not be improper to desire, but that they might have the means of luxurious dress and living; perhaps the means of gross sensual gratifications. Prayers offered that we may have the means of sensuality and voluptuousness, we have no reason to suppose God will answer, for he has not promised to hear such prayers; and it becomes every one who prays for worldly prosperity, and for success in business, to examine his motives with the closest scrutiny. Nowhere is deception more likely to creep in than into such prayers; nowhere are we more likely to be mistaken in regard to our real motives, than when we go before God and ask for success in our worldly employments.

Verse 4

Ye adulterers and adulteresses - These words are frequently used to denote those who are faithless towards God, and are frequently applied to

those who forsake God for idols, Hosea 3:1; Isaiah 57:3, Isaiah 57:7; 1 John 2:15. The term world here is to be understood not of the physical world as God made it, for we could not well speak of the "friendship" of that, but of the community, or people, called "the world," in contradistinction from the people of God. Compare John 12:31; 1 Corinthians 1:20; 1 Corinthians 3:19; Galatians 4:3; Colossians 2:8. The "friendship of the world" (φιλία τοῦ κόσμου philia tou kosmou) is the love of that world; of the maxims which govern it, the principles which reign there, the ends that are sought, the amusements and gratifications which characterize it as distinguished from the church of God. It consists in setting our hearts on those things; in conforming to them; in making them the object of our pursuit with the same spirit with which they are sought by those who make no pretensions to religion. See the notes at Romans 12:2.

Is enmity with God - Is in fact hostility against God, since that world is arrayed against him. It neither obeys his laws, submits to his claims, nor seeks to honor him. To love that world is, therefore, to be arrayed against God; and the spirit which would lead us to this is, in fact, a spirit of hostility to God.

Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world - "Whoever" he may be, whether in the church or out of it. The fact of being a member of the church makes no difference in this respect, for it is as easy to be a friend of the world in the church as out of it. The phrase "whosoever will" (βούληθῇ boulēthē) implies "purpose, intention, design." It supposes that the heart is set on it; or that there is a deliberate purpose to seek the friendship of the world. It refers to that strong desire which often exists, even among professing Christians, to secure the friendship of the world; to copy its fashions and vanities; to enjoy its pleasures; and to share its pastimes and its friendships. Wherever there is a manifested purpose to find our chosen friends and associates there rather than among Christians; wherever there is a greater desire to enjoy the smiles and approbation of the world than there is to enjoy the approbation of God and the blessings of a good conscience; and wherever there is more conscious pain because we have failed to win the applause of the world, or have offended its votaries, and have sunk ourselves in its estimation, than there is because we have neglected our duty to our Saviour, and have lost the enjoyment of religion, there is the clearest proof that the heart wills or desires to be the "friend of the world."

Is the enemy of God - This is a most solemn declaration, and one of fearful import in its bearing on many who are members of the church. It settles the point that anyone, no matter what his professions, who is characteristically a friend of the world, cannot be a true Christian. In regard to the meaning of this important verse, then, it may be remarked:

(1) that there is a sense in which the love of this world, or of the physical universe, is not wrong. That kind of love for it as the work of God, which perceives the evidence of his wisdom and goodness and power in the various objects of beauty, usefulness, and grandeur, spread around us, is not evil. The world as such - the physical structure of the earth, of the mountains, forests flowers, seas, lakes, and vales - is full of illustrations of the divine character, and it cannot be wrong to contemplate those things with interest, or with warm affection toward their Creator.

(2) when that world, however, becomes our portion; when we study it only as a matter of science, without "looking through nature up to nature's God;" when we seek the wealth which it has to confer, or endeavor to appropriate as our supreme portion its lands, its minerals, its fruits; when we are satisfied with what it yields, and when in the possession or pursuit of these things, our thoughts never rise to God; and when we partake of the spirit which rules in the hearts of those who avowedly seek this world as their portion, though we profess religion, then the love of the world becomes evil, and comes in direct conflict with the spirit of true religion.

(3) the statement in this verse is, therefore, one of most fearful import for many professors of religion. There are many in the church who, so far as human judgment can go, are characteristically lovers of the world. This is shown:

(a) by their conformity to it in all in which the world is distinguished from the church as such;

(b) in their seeking the friendship of the world, or their finding their friends there rather than among Christians;

(c) in preferring the amusements of the world to the scenes where spiritually-minded Christians find their chief happiness;

(d) in pursuing the same pleasures that the people of the world do, with the same expense, the same extravagance, the same luxury;

(e) in making their worldly interests the great object of living, and everything else subordinate to that.

This spirit exists in all cases where no worldly interest is sacrificed for religion; where everything that religion peculiarly requires is sacrificed for the world. If this be so, then there are many professing Christians who are the "enemies of God." See the notes at Philemon 3:18. They have never known what is true friendship for him, and by their lives they show that they can be ranked only among his foes. It becomes every professing Christian, therefore, to examine himself with the deepest earnestness to determine whether he is characteristically a friend of the world or of God; whether he is living for this life only, or is animated by the high and pure principles of those who are the friends of God. The great Searcher of hearts cannot be deceived, and soon our appropriate place will be assigned us, and our final Judge will determine to which class of the two great divisions of the human family we belong - to those who are the friends of the world, or to those who are the friends of God.

Verse 5

Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain - Few passages of the New Testament have given expositors more perplexity than this. The difficulty has arisen from the fact that no such passage as that which seems here to be quoted is found in the Old Testament; and to meet this difficulty, expositors have resorted to various conjectures and solutions. Some have supposed that the passage is spurious, and that it was at first a gloss in the margin, placed there by some transcriber, and was then introduced into the text; some that the apostle quotes from an apocryphal book; some, that he quotes the general spirit of the Old Testament rather than any particular place; some regard it not as a quotation, but read the two members separately, supplying what is necessary to complete the sense, thus: "Do you think that the Scripture speaks in vain, or without a good reason, when it condemns such a worldly temper? No; that you cannot suppose. Do you imagine that the Spirit of God, which dwelleth in us Christians, leads to covetousness, pride, envy? No. On the contrary, to such as follow his guidance and direction, he gives more abundant grace and favor." This is the solution proposed by Benson, and adopted by Bloomfield. But this solution is by no means satisfactory. Two things are clear in regard to the passage:

(1) that James meant to adduce something that was said somewhere, or which could be regarded as a quotation, or as authority in the case, for he uses the formula by which such quotations are made; and,

(2) that he meant to refer, not to an apocryphal book, but to the inspired and canonical Scriptures, for he uses a term ἡ γραφὴ hē graphē- the Scripture) which is everywhere employed to denote the Old Testament, and which is nowhere applied to an apocryphal book, Matthew 21:42; Matthew 22:29; Matthew 26:54, Matthew 26:56; John 2:22; John 5:39; John 7:38, John 7:42; John 10:35, et al. The word is used more than fifty times in the New Testament, and is never applied to any books but those which were regarded by the Jews as inspired, and which constitute now the Old Testament, except in 2 Peter 3:16, where it refers to the writings of Paul. The difficulty in the case arises from the fact that no such passage as the one here quoted is found in so many words in the Old Testament, nor any of which it can fairly be regarded as a quotation. The only solution of the difficulty which seems to me to be at all satisfactory, is to suppose that the apostle, in the remark made here in the form of a quotation, refers to the Old Testament, but that he had not his eye on any particular passage, and did not mean to quote the words literally, but meant to refer to what was the current teaching or general spirit of the Old Testament; or that he meant to say that this sentiment was found there, and designed himself to embody the sentiment in words, and to put it into a condensed form.

His eye was on envy as at the bottom of many of the contentions and strifes existing on earth, James 3:16, and of the spirit of the world which prevailed everywhere, James 4:4; and he refers to the general teaching of the Old Testament that the soul is by nature inclined to envy; or that this has a deep lodgement in the heart of man. That truth which was uttered every where in the Scriptures, was not taught "in vain." The abundant facts which existed showing its developement and operation in contentions, and wars, and a worldly spirit, proved that it was deeply imbedded in the human soul. This general truth, that man is prone to envy, or that there is much in our nature which inclines us to it, is abundantly taught in the Old Testament. Ecclesiastes 4:4, "I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbor." Job 5:2, "wrath killeth, and envy slayeth the silly one." Proverbs 14:30, "envy is the rottenness of the bones." Proverbs 27:4, "who is able to stand before envy?" For particular instances of this, and the effects, see Genesis 26:14; Genesis 30:1; Genesis 37:11;

Psalm 106:16; Psalm 73:3. These passages prove that there is a strong propensity in human nature to envy, and it was in accordance with the design of the apostle to show this. The effects of envy to which be himself referred evinced the same thing, and demonstrated that the utterance given to this sentiment in the Old Testament was not "in vain," or was not false, for the records in the Old Testament on the subject found a strong confirmation in the wars and strifes and worldliness of which he was speaking.

Saith in vain - Says falsely;" that is, the testimony thus borne is true. The apostle means that what was said in the Old Testament on the subject found abundant confirmation in the facts which were continually occurring, and especially in those to which he was adverting.

The spirit that dwelleth in us - Many have supposed that the word "spirit" here refers to the Holy Spirit, or the Christian spirit; but in adopting this interpretation they are obliged to render the passage, "the spirit that dwells in us lusteth against envy," or tends to check and suppress it. But this interpretation is forced and unnatural, and one which the Greek will not well bear. The more obvious interpretation is to refer it to our spirit or disposition as we are by nature, and it is equivalent to saying that we are naturally prone to envy.

Lusteth to envy - Strongly tends to envy. The margin is "enviously," but the sense is the same. The idea is, that there is in man a strong inclination to look with dissatisfaction on the superior happiness and prosperity of others; to desire to make what they possess our own; or at any rate to deprive them of it by detraction, by fraud, or by robbery. It is this feeling which leads to calumny, to contentions, to wars, and to that strong worldly ambition which makes us anxious to surpass all others, and which is so hostile to the humble and contented spirit of religion. He who could trace all wars and contentions and worldly plans to their source - all the schemes and purposes of even professed Christians, that do so much to mar their religion and to make them worldly-minded, to their real origin - would be surprised to find how much is to be attributed to envy. We are pained that others are more prosperous than we are; we desire to possess what others have, though we have no right to it; and this leads to the various guilty methods which are pursued to lessen their enjoyment of it, or to obtain it ourselves, or to show that they do not possess as much as they are commonly supposed to. This purpose will be accomplished if we can obtain

more than they have; or if we can diminish what they actually possess; or if by any statements to which we can give currency in society, the general impression shall be that they do not possess as much wealth, domestic peace, happiness, or honor, as is commonly supposed - for thus the spirit of envy in our bosoms will be gratified.

Verse 6

But he giveth more grace - The reference here is undoubtedly to God. Some have regarded this clause as a continuation of the quotation in the previous verse, but it is rather to be considered as a declaration of the apostle himself. The writer had just spoken of envy, and of the crimes which grew out of it. He thought of the wars and commotions of the earth, and of the various lusts which reigned among men. In the contemplation of these things, it seems suddenly to have occurred to him that all were not under the influence of these things; that there were cases where men were restrained, and where a spirit opposite to these things prevailed. Another passage of Scripture struck his mind, containing the truth that there was a class of men to whom God gave grace to restrain these passions, and to subdue these carnal propensities. They were the humble, in contradistinction to the proud; and he states the fact that "God giveth more grace;" that is, that in some instances he confers more grace than in the cases referred to; to some he gives more grace to overcome their evil passions, and to subdue their corrupt inclinations, than he does to others. The meaning may be thus expressed: - "It is true that the natural spirit in man is one that tends to envy, and thus leads to all the sad consequences of envy. But there are instances in which higher grace or favor is conferred; in which these feelings are subdued, and these consequences are prevented. They are not indeed to be found among the proud, whom God always resists; but they are to be found among the meek and the humble. Wherefore submit yourselves to his arrangements; resist the devil; draw nigh to God; purify yourselves, and weep over your past offences, and you shall find that the Lord will lift you up, and bestow his favor upon you," James 4:10.

Wherefore he saith - The reference here is to Proverbs 3:34, "Surely he scorneth the scorners; but he giveth grace unto the lowly." The quotation is made exactly from the Septuagint, which, though not entirely literal, expresses the sense of the Hebrew without essential inaccuracy. This passage is also quoted in 1 Peter 5:5.

God resisteth the proud - The proud are those who have an inordinate self-esteem; who have a high and unreasonable conceit of their own excellence or importance. This may extend to anything; to beauty, or strength, or attainments, or family, or country, or equipage, or rank, or even religion. A man may be proud of anything that belongs to him, or which can in any way be construed as a part of himself, or as pertaining to him. This does not, of course, apply to a correct estimate of ourselves, or to the mere knowledge that we may excel others. One may know that he has more strength, or higher attainments in learning or in the mechanic arts, or greater wealth than others, and yet have properly no pride in the case. He has only a correct estimate of himself, and he attaches no undue importance to himself on account of it. His heart is not lifted up; he claims no undue deference to himself; he concedes to all others what is their due; and he is humble before God, feeling that all that he has, and is, is nothing in his sight. He is willing to occupy his appropriate place in the sight of God and men, and to be esteemed just as he is. Pride goes beyond this, and gives to a man a degree of self-estimation which is not warranted by anything that he possesses. God looks at things as they are; and hence he abhors and humbles this arrogant claim, Leviticus 26:19; Job 33:17; Psalm 59:12; Proverbs 8:13; Proverbs 16:18; Proverbs 29:13; Isaiah 23:9; Isaiah 28:1; Daniel 4:37; Zechariah 10:11. This resistance of pride he shows not only in the explicit declarations of his word, but in the arrangements of his providence and grace:

(1)In his providence, in the reverses and disappointments which occur; in the necessity of abandoning the splendid mansion which we had built, or in disappointing us in some favorite plan by which our pride was to be nurtured and gratified.

(2)in sickness, taking away the beauty and strength on which we had so much valued ourselves, and bring us to the sad condition of a sick bed.

(3)in the grave, bringing us down to corruption and worms. Why should one be proud who will soon become so offensive to his best friends that they will gladly hide him in the grave?

(4)in the plan of salvation he opposes our pride. Not a feature of that plan is fitted to foster pride, but all is adapted to make us humble.

(a) The necessity for the plan - that we are guilty and helpless sinners;

(b) the selection of a Saviour - one who was so poor, and who was so much despised by the world, and who was put to death on a cross;

(c) our entire dependence on him for salvation, with the assurance that we have no merit of our own, and that salvation is all of grace;

(d) the fact that we are brought to embrace it only by the agency of the Holy Spirit, and that if we were left to ourselves we should never have one right thought or holy desire - all this is fitted to humble us, and to bring us low before God. God has done nothing to foster the self-estimation of the human heart; but how much has he done to "stain the pride of all glory? See the notes at Isaiah 23:9.

But giveth grace unto the humble - The meaning is, that he shows them favor; he bestows upon them the grace needful to secure their salvation. This he does:

(1)because they feel their need of his favor;

(2)because they will welcome his teaching and value his friendship;

(3)because all the arrangements of his grace are adapted only to such a state of mind. You cannot teach one who is so wise that he already supposes he knows enough; you cannot bestow grace on one who has no sense of the need of it. The arrangements of salvation are adapted only to an humble heart.

Verse 7

Submit yourselves therefore to God - That is, in his arrangements for obtaining his favor. Yield to what he has judged necessary for your welfare in the life that is, and your salvation in the life to come. The duty here enjoined is that of entire acquiescence in the arrangements of God, whether in his providence or grace. All these are for our good, and submission to them is required by the spirit of true humility. The object of the command here, and in the succeeding injunctions to particular duties, is to show them how they might obtain the grace which God is willing to bestow, and how they might overcome the evils against which the apostle had been endeavoring to guard them. The true method of doing this is by submitting ourselves in all things to God.

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you - While you yield to God in all things, you are to yield to the devil in none. You are to resist and oppose him in whatever way he may approach you, whether by allurements, by flattering promises, by the fascinations of the world, by temptation, or by threats. See 1 Peter 5:9. Satan makes his way, and secures his triumphs, rather by art, cunning, deception, and threatenings, than by true courage; and when opposed manfully, he flies. The true way of meeting him is by direct resistance, rather than by argument; by steadfastly refusing to yield in the slightest degree, rather than by a belief that we can either convince him that he is wrong, or can return to virtue when we have gone a certain length in complying with his demands. No one is safe who yields in the least to the suggestions of the tempter; there is no one who is not safe if he does not yield. A man, for example, is always safe from intemperance if he resists all allurements to indulgence in strong drink, and never yields in the slightest degree; no one is certainly safe if he drinks even moderately.

Verse 8

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you - Compare 2 Chronicles 15:2. This declaration contains a great and important principle in religion. If we wish the favor of God, we must come to him; nor can we hope for his mercy, unless we approach him and ask him for it. We cannot come literally any nearer to God than we always are, for he is always round about us; but we may come nearer in a spiritual sense. We may address him directly in prayer; we may approach him by meditation on his character; we may draw near to him in the ordinances of religion. We can never hope for his favor while we prefer to remain at a distance from him; none who in fact draw near to him will find him unwilling to bestow on them the blessings which they need.

Cleanse your hands, ye sinners - There may possibly be an allusion here to Isaiah 1:15-16; "Your hands are full of blood; wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil." The heart is the seat of motives and intentions - that by which we devise anything; the hands, the instruments by which we execute our purposes. The hands here are represented as defiled by blood, or by acts of iniquity. To wash or cleanse the hands was, therefore, emblematic of putting away transgression, Matthew 27:24. Compare Deuteronomy 21:6; Psalm 26:6. The heathen and the Jews were accustomed to wash their hands before they engaged in public worship. The particular idea here is, that in order to

obtain the favor of God, it is necessary to put away our sins; to approach him with a desire to be pure and holy. The mere washing of the hands, in itself, could not recommend us to his favor; but that of which the washing of the hands would be an emblem, would be acceptable in his sight. It may be inferred from what is said here that no one can hope for the favor of God who does not abandon his transgressions. The design of the apostle is, evidently, to state one of the conditions on which we can make an acceptable approach to God. It is indispensable that we come with a purpose and desire to wash ourselves from all iniquity, to put away from us all our transgressions. So David said, "I will wash my hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar. O Lord," Psalm 26:6.

("To obtain the favor of God, it is necessary to put away our sins" - is somewhat unguarded phraseology. If the favor of God were not obtained but on this condition, none ever would obtain it. The passage is a strong injunction to holiness and singleness of heart: it does not say, however, that by these we obtain acceptance with God. Of his favor, holiness is the fruit, the effect, and not the cause. The sinner must not think of getting quit of his sins to prepare him for going to God by Jesus; but he must first go to Jesus to prepare for laying aside his sins. Yet in every approach to God, it is true there must be a "desire "to be free from sin; and this doubtless is the view of the commentary; indeed it is so expressed, though some words are objectionable.)

And purify your hearts - That is, do not rest satisfied with a mere external reformation; with putting away your outward transgressions. There must be a deeper work than that; a work which shall reach to the heart, and which shall purify the affections. This agrees with all the requisitions of the Bible, and is in accordance with what must be the nature of religion. If the heart is wrong, nothing can be right. If, while we seek an external reformation, we still give indulgence to the secret corruptions of the heart, it is clear that we can have no true religion.

Ye double-minded - See the notes at James 1:8. The apostle here seems to have had his eye on those who were vacillating in their purposes; whose hearts were not decidedly fixed, but who were halting between good and evil. The heart was not right in such persons. It was not settled and determined in favor of religion, but vibrated between that and the world. The proper business of such persons, therefore, was to cleanse the heart

from disturbing influences, that it might settle down in unwavering attachment to that which is good.

Verse 9

Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep - That is, evidently, on account of your sins. The sins to which the apostle refers are those which he had specified in the previous part of the chapter, and which he had spoken of as so evil in their nature, and so dangerous in their tendency. The word rendered "be afflicted" means, properly, to endure toil or hardship; then to endure affliction or distress; and here means, that they were to afflict themselves - that is, they were to feel distressed and sad on account of their transgressions. Compare Ezra 8:21. The other words in this clause are those which are expressive of deep grief or sorrow. The language here used shows that the apostle supposed that it was possible that those who had done wrong should voluntarily feel sorrow for it, and that, therefore, it was proper to call upon them to do it.

(All who feel true sorrow for sin, do so voluntarily; but it is not intended by this assertion to insinuate that repentance is not the work of the Spirit. He operates on men without destroying their freedom, or doing violence to their will: "in the day of his power they are willing." Nor is it improper to call on men to do that for which they require the Spirit's aid. That aid is not withheld in the hour of need; and everywhere the Bible commands sinners to believe and repent.)

Let your laughter be turned to mourning - It would seem that the persons referred to, instead of suitable sorrow and humiliation on account of sin, gave themselves to joyousness, mirth, and revelry. See a similar instance in Isaiah 22:12-13. It is often the case, that those for whom the deep sorrows of repentance would be peculiarly appropriate, give themselves to mirth and vanity. The apostle here says that such mirth did not become them. Sorrow, deep and unfeigned, was appropriate on account of their sins, and the sound of laughter and of revelry should be changed to notes of lamentation. To how many of the assemblies of the vain, the gay, and the dissipated, might the exhortation in this passage with propriety be now addressed!

Your joy to heaviness - The word here rendered heaviness occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means dejection, sorrow. It is not gloom, melancholy, or moroseness, but it is sorrow on account of sin. God

has so made us that we should feel sorrow when we are conscious that we have done wrong, and it is appropriate that we should do so.

Verse 10

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord - Compare Matthew 23:12. See the notes at James 4:6. That is, be willing to take your appropriate place in the dust on account of your transgressions. This is to be "in the sight of the Lord," or before him. Our sins have been committed against him; and their principal aggravation, whoever may have been wronged by them, and great as is their criminality in other respects, arises from that consideration. Psalm 51:4, "against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Luke 15:18, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." As the Being against whom we have sinned is the only one who can pardon, it is proper that we should humble ourselves before him with penitent confession.

And he shall lift you up - He will exalt you from the condition of a broken-hearted penitent to that of a forgiven child; will wipe away your tears, remove the sadness of your heart, fill you with joy, and clothe you with the garments of salvation. This declaration is in accordance with all the promises in the Bible, and with all the facts which occur on the earth, that God is willing to show mercy to the humble and contrite, and to receive those who are truly penitent into his favor. Compare Luke 15:22.

Verse 11

Speak not evil one of another, brethren - It is not known to whom the apostle here particularly refers, nor is it necessary to know. It is probable that among those whom he addressed there were some who were less circumspect in regard to speaking of others than they should be, and perhaps this evil prevailed. There are few communities where such an injunction would not be proper at any time, and few churches where some might not be found to whom the exhortation would be appropriate. Compare the Ephesians 4:31 note; 1 Peter 2:1 note. The evil here referred to is that of talking against others - against their actions, their motives, their manner of living, their families, etc. Few things are more common in the world; nothing is more decidedly against the true spirit of religion.

He that speaketh evil of his brother - Referring here probably to Christian brother, or to a fellow Christian. The word may however be used in a larger sense to denote anyone - a brother of the human race. Religion

forbids both, and would restrain us from all evil speaking against any human being.

And judgeth his brother - His motives, or his conduct. See the notes at Matthew 7:1.

Speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law - Instead of manifesting the feelings of a brother he sets himself up as judge, and not only a judge of his brother, but a judge of the law. The law here referred to is probably the law of Christ, or the rule which all Christians profess to obey. It is that which James elsewhere calls the "law of liberty," (Notes, James 1:25) the law which released men from the servitude of the Jewish rites, and gave them liberty to worship God without the restraint and bondage Acts 15:10; Galatians 4:21-31 implied in that ancient system of worship; and the law by which it was contemplated that they should be free from sin. It is not absolutely certain to what the apostle refers here, but it would seem probable that it is to some course of conduct which one portion of the church felt they were at liberty to follow, but which another portion regarded as wrong, and for which they censured them.

The explanation which will best suit the expressions here used, is that which supposes that it refers to some difference of opinion which existed among Christians, especially among those of Jewish origin, about the binding nature of the Jewish laws, in regard to circumcision, to holy days, to ceremonial observances, to the distinctions of meats, etc. A part regarded the law on these subjects as still binding, another portion supposed that the obligation in regard to these matters had ceased by the introduction of the gospel. Those who regarded the obligation of the Mosaic law as still binding, would of course judge their brethren, and regard them as guilty of a disregard of the law of God by their conduct. We know that differences of opinion on these points gave rise to contentions, and to the formation of parties in the church, and that it required all the wisdom of Paul and of the other apostles to hush the contending elements to peace.

Compare the notes at Colossians 2:16-18. To some such source of contention the apostle doubtless refers here; and the meaning probably is, that they who held the opinion that all the Jewish ceremonial laws were still binding on Christians, and who judged and condemned their brethren who did not observe them, by such a course judged and condemned "the law of liberty" under which they acted - the law of Christianity that had abolished

the ceremonial observances, and released men from their obligation. The judgment which they passed, therefore, was not only on their brethren, but was on that law of Christianity which had given greater liberty of conscience, and which was intended to abolish the obligation of the Jewish ritual. The same thing now occurs when we judge others for a course which their consciences approve, because they do not deem it necessary to comply with all the rules which we think to be binding.

Not a few of the harsh judgments which one class of religionists pronounce on others, are in fact judgments on the laws of Christ. We set up our own standards, or our own interpretations, and then we judge others for not complying with them, when in fact they may be acting only as the law of Christianity, properly understood, would allow them to do. They who set up a claim to a right to judge the conduct of others, should be certain that they understand the nature of religion themselves. It may be presumed, unless there is evidence to the contrary, that others are as conscientious as we are; and it may commonly be supposed that they who differ from us have some reason for what they do, and may be desirous of glorifying their Lord and Master, and that they may possibly be right. It is commonly not safe to judge hastily of a man who has turned his attention to a particular subject, or to suppose that he has no reasons to allege for his opinions or conduct.

But if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge - It is implied here that it is the simple duty of every Christian to obey the law. He is not to assume the office of a judge about its propriety or fitness; but he is to do what he supposes the law to require of him, and is to allow others to do the same. Our business in religion is not to make laws, or to declare what they should have been, or to amend those that are made; it is simply to obey those which are appointed, and to allow others to do the same, as they understand them. It would be well for all individual Christians, and Christian denominations, to learn this, and to imbibe the spirit of charity to which it would prompt.

Verse 12

There is one lawgiver - There is but one who has a right to give law. The reference here is undoubtedly to the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Legislator of the church. This, too, is a most important and vital principle, though one that has been most imperfectly understood and acted on. The

tendency everywhere has been to enact other laws than those appointed by Christ - the laws of synods and councils - and to claim that Christians are bound to observe them, and should be punished if they do not. But it is a fundamental principle in Christianity that no laws are binding on the conscience, but those which Christ has ordained; and that all attempts to make other laws pertaining to religion binding on the conscience is a usurpation of his prerogatives. The church is safe while it adheres to this as a settled principle; it is not safe when it submits to any legislation in religious matters as binding the conscience.

Who is able to save and to destroy - Compare Matthew 10:28. The idea here would seem to be, that he is able to save those whom you condemn, and to destroy you who pronounce a judgment on them. Or, in general, it may mean that he is intrusted with all power, and is abundantly able to administer his government; to restrain where it is necessary to restrain; to save where it is proper to save; to punish where it is just to punish. The whole matter pertaining to judgment, therefore, may be safely left in his hands; and, as he is abundantly qualified for it, we should not usurp his prerogatives.

Who art thou that judgest another? - "Who art thou, a weak and frail and erring mortal, thyself accountable to that Judge, that thou shouldest interfere, and pronounce judgment on another, especially when he is doing only what that Judge permits him to do?" See this sentiment explained at length in the notes at Romans 14:4. Compare the Romans 2:1 note, and Matthew 7:1 note. There is nothing more decidedly condemned in the Scriptures than the habit of pronouncing a judgment on the motives and conduct of others. There is nothing in which we are more liable to err, or to indulge in wrong feelings; and there is nothing which God claims more for himself as his peculiar prerogative.

Verse 13

Go to now - The apostle here introduces a new subject, and refers to another fault which was doubtless prevalent among them, as it is everywhere, that of a presumptuous confidence respecting the future, or of forming plans stretching into the future, without any proper sense of the uncertainty of life, and of our absolute dependence on God. The phrase "go to now," (ἄγε νῦν age nunis a phrase designed to arrest attention, as if there were something that demanded their notice, and especially, as in this case,

with the implied thought that that to which the attention is called is wrong. See James 5:1. Compare Genesis 11:7; Isaiah 1:18.

Ye that say - You that form your plans in this manner or that speak thus confidently of what you will do in the future. The word say here probably refers to what was in their thoughts, rather than to what was openly expressed.

Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city - That is, they say this without any proper sense of the uncertainty of life, and of their absolute dependence on God.

And continue there a year - Fixing a definite time; designating the exact period during which they would remain, and when they would leave, without any reference to the will of God. The apostle undoubtedly means to refer here to this as a mere specimen of what he would reprove. It cannot be supposed that he refers to this single case alone as wrong. All plans are wrong that are formed in the same spirit. "The practice to which the apostle here alludes," says the editor of the Pictorial Bible, "is very common in the East to this day, among a very respectable and intelligent class of merchants. They convey the products of one place to some distant city, where they remain until they have disposed of their own goods and have purchased others suitable for another distant market; and thus the operation is repeated, until, after a number of years, the trader is enabled to return prosperously to his home. Or again, a shopkeeper or a merchant takes only the first step in this process - conveying to a distant town, where the best purchases of his own line are to be made, such goods as are likely to realise a profit, and returning, without any farther stop, with a stock for his own concern. These operations are seldom very rapid, as the adventurer likes to wait opportunities for making advantageous bargains; and sometimes opens a shop in the place to which he comes, to sell by retail the goods which he has bought." The practice is common in India. See Roberts" Oriental Illustrations.

And buy and sell, and get gain - It is not improbable that there is an allusion here to the commercial habits of the Jews at the time when the apostle wrote. Many of them were engaged in foreign traffic, and for this purpose made long journeys to distant trading cities, as Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, etc. - Bloomfield.

Verse 14

Whereas, ye know not what shall be on the morrow - They formed their plans as if they knew; the apostle says it could not be known. They had no means of ascertaining what would occur; whether they would live or die; whether they would be prospered, or would be overwhelmed with adversity. Of the truth of the remark made by the apostle here, no one can doubt; but it is amazing how men act as if it were false. We have no power of penetrating the future so as to be able to determine what will occur in a single day or a single hour, and yet we are almost habitually forming our plans as if we saw with certainty all that is to happen. The classic writings abound with beautiful expressions respecting the uncertainty of the future, and the folly of forming our plans as if it were known to us. Many of those passages, some of them almost precisely in the words of James, may be seen in Grotius and Pricaeus, in loc. Such passages occur in Anacreon, Euripides, Menander, Seneca, Horace, and others, suggesting an obvious but much-neglected thought, that the future is to is all unknown. Man cannot penetrate it; and his plans of life should be formed in view of the possibility that his life may be cut off and all his plans fail, and consequently in constant preparation for a higher world.

For what is your life? - All your plans must depend of course on the continuance of your life; but what a frail and uncertain thing is that! How transitory and evanescent as a basis on which to build any plans for the future! Who can calculate on the permanence of a vapor? Who can build any solid hopes on a mist?

It is even a vapour - Margin, "For it is." The margin is the more correct rendering. The previous question had turned the attention to life as something peculiarly frail, and as of such a nature that no calculation could be based on its permanence. This expression gives a reason for that, to wit, that it is a mere vapor. The word "vapor" (ἀτμὶς atmismeans a mist, an exhalation, a smoke; such a vapor as we see ascending from a stream, or as lies on the mountain side on the morning, or as floats for a little time in the air, but which is dissipated by the rising sun, leaving not a trace behind. The comparison of life with a vapor is common, and is as beautiful as it is just. Job says,

O remember that my life is Wind;
Mine eyes shall no more see good.
Job 7:7.

So the Psalmist,

For he remembered that they were but flesh,
A wind that passeth away and that cometh not again.
Psalm 78:39.
Compare 1 Chronicles 29:15; Job 14:10-11.

And then vanisheth away - Wholly disappears. Like the dissipated vapor, it is entirely gone. There is no remnant, no outline, nothing that reminds us that it ever was. So of life. Soon it disappears altogether. The works of art that man has made, the house that he has built, or the book that he has written, remain for a little time, but the life has gone. There is nothing of it remaining - any more than there is of the vapor which in the morning climbed silently up the mountain side. The animating principle has vanished forever. On such a frail and evanescent thing, who can build any substantial hopes?

Verse 15

For that ye ought to say - Instead of what you do say, "we will go into such a city," you ought rather to recognise your absolute dependence on God, and feel that life and success are subject to his will. The meaning is not that we ought always to be saying that in so many words, for this might become a mere ostentatious form, offensive by constant unmeaning repetition; but we are, in the proper way, to recognise our dependence on him, and to form all our plans with reference to his will.

If the Lord will … - This is proper, because we are wholly dependent on him for life, and as dependent on him for success. He alone can keep us, and he only can make our plans prosperous. In a thousand ways he can thwart our best-laid schemes, for all things are under his control. We need not travel far in life to see how completely all that we have is in the hands of God, or to learn how easily he can frustrate us if he pleases. There is nothing on which the success of our plans depends over which we have absolute control; there is nothing, therefore, on which we can base the assurance of success but his favor.

Verse 16

But now ye rejoice in your boastings - That is, probably, in your boastings of what you can do; your reliance on your own skill and sagacity. You form your plans for the future as if with consummate wisdom, and are confident of success. You do not anticipate a failure; you do not see how plans so skilfully formed can fail. You form them as if you were certain that

you would live; as if secure from the numberless casualties which may defeat your schemes.

All such rejoicing is evil - It is founded on a wrong view of yourselves and of what may occur. It shows a spirit forgetful of our dependence on God; forgetful of the uncertainty of life; forgetful of the many ways by which the best-laid plans may be defeated. We should never boast of any wisdom or skill in regard to the future. A day, an hour may defeat our best-concerted plans, and show us that we have not the slightest power to control coming events.

Verse 17

Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin - That is, he is guilty of sin if he does not do it. Cotton Mather adopted it as a principle of action, "that the ability to do good in any case imposes an obligation to do it." The proposition in the verse before us is of a general character, but probably the apostle meant that it should refer to the point specified in the previous verses - the forming of plans respecting the future. The particular meaning then would be, "that he who knows what sort of views he should take in regard to the future, and how he should form his plans in view of the uncertainty of life, and still does not do it, but goes on recklessly, forming his plans beastingly and confident of success, is guilty of sin against God." Still, the proposition will admit of a more general application. It is universally true that if a man knows what is right, and does not do it, he is guilty of sin.

If he understands what his duty is; if he has the means of doing good to others; if by his name, his influence, his wealth, he can promote a good cause; if he can, consistently with other duties, relieve the distressed, the poor, the prisoner, the oppressed; if he can send the gospel to other lands, or can wipe away the tear of the mourner; if he has talents by which he can lift a voice that shall be heard in favor of temperance, chastity, liberty, and religion, he is under obligations to do it: and if, by indolence, or avarice, or selfishness, or the dread of the loss of popularity, he does not do it, he is guilty of sin before God. No man can be released from the obligation to do good in this world to the extent of his ability; no one should desire to be. The highest privilege conferred on a mortal, besides that of securing the salvation of his own soul, is that of doing good to others - of alleviating sorrow, instructing ignorance, raising up the bowed down, comforting those that mourn, delivering the wronged and the oppressed, supplying the wants

of the needy guiding inquirers into the way of truth, and sending liberty, knowledge, and salvation around the world. If a man does not do this when he has the means, he sins against his own soul, against humanity, and against his Maker; if he does it cheerfully and to the extent of his means, it likens him more than anything else to God.

JAMES CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

The subjects which are introduced in this chapter are the following:

I. An address to rich men, and a severe condemnation of the manner in which they lived, James 5:1-6. There have been various opinions in regard to the persons here referred to.

(1) some have supposed that the address is to unbelieving Jews, and that the punishment which the apostle threatens was that which was about to be brought on the nation by the Roman armies. But, as Benson well observes, it can hardly be presumed that the apostle supposed that his letter would be read by the Jews, and it is not probable, therefore, that he would in this manner directly address them.

(2) another opinion has been, that this, like the rest of the Epistle, is addressed to professed Christians who had been Jews, and that the design is to reprove faults which prevailed among them. It is not supposed indeed, by those who hold this opinion, that all of those who were rich among them were guilty of the sins here adverted to, nor even that they were very prevalent among them. The rebuke would be proper if the sins here referred to existed at all, and were practiced by any who bore the Christian name. As to any improbability that professed Christians would be guilty of these faults, it might be remarked that the period has been rare in the church, if it has occurred at all, in which all that is here said of "rich men" would not be applicable to some members of the church. Certainly it is applicable in all those countries where slavery prevails; in countries where religion is allied to the state; in all places where the mass are poor, and the few are rich. It would be difficult now to find any extended church on earth in relation to which the denunciation here would not be applicable to some of its members. But still it can hardly be supposed that men were tolerated in the church, in the times of the apostles, who were guilty of the oppressions and wrongs here referred to, or who lived in the manner here specified. It is true, indeed, that such men have been, and are still found, in the Christian church; but we should not, without the clearest proof, suppose that such cases existed in the times of the apostles.

(3) the correct opinion therefore seems to be, that the design of the apostle in this chapter was to encourage and strengthen poor and oppressed Christians; to impart consolation to those who, under the exactions of rich men, were suffering wrong. In doing this, nothing would be more natural than for him first to declare his views in regard to those who were guilty of these wrongs, and who made use of the power which wealth gave to injure those in the humble walks of life. This he does in the form of an address to rich men - not perhaps expecting that they would see what he had written, but with a design to set before those to whom he wrote, and for whose benefit the statement is made, in a vivid manner, the nature of the wrongs under which they were suffering, and the nature of the punishment which must come upon those who oppressed them. Nothing would tend more effectually to reconcile those to whom he wrote to their own lot, or do more to encourage them to bear their trials with patience. At the same time, nothing would do more to keep them from envying the lot of the rich, or desiring the wealth which was connected with such a mode of life.

II. The apostle exhorts these who were suffering under these wrongs to exercise patience, James 5:7-11. He encourages them with the hope that the Lord would come; he refers them to the example of the farmer, who waits long for the fruit of the earth; he cautions them against indulging in hard feelings and thoughts against others more prospered than they were; he refers them, as examples of patience, to the prophets, to the case of Job, and to the Lord Jesus himself.

III. He adverts to a fault among them on the subject of swearing, James 5:12. This subject is introduced here apparently because they were in danger, through impatience, of expressing themselves in a severe manner, and even of uttering imprecations on those who oppressed them. To guard against this, be exhorts them to control their temper, and to confine themselves in their conversation to a simple affirmative or denial.

IV. He refers to the case of those who were sick and afflicted among them, and directs them what to do, James 5:14-18. The duty of those who were sick was to employ prayer - as the duty of those who were in health and prosperity was praise. The afflicted were to pray; the sick were to call for the elders of the church, who were to pray over them, and to anoint them

with the oil in the name of the Lord, not as "extreme unction," or with a view to their dying, but with a view to their living. To encourage them thus to call in the aid of praying men, he refers them to an illustrious instance of the power of prayer in the case of Elijah.

V. In the close of the chapter and of the Epistle, the apostle adverts to the possibility that some among them might err from the truth, and urges the duty of endeavoring to convert such, James 5:19-20. To encourage them to do this, he states the important consequences which would follow where such an effort would be successful, He who should do this, would have the satisfaction of saving a soul from death, and would hide from the universe a multitude of sins, which otherwise, in the case of the erring brother, could not but have been exposed in the great day of judgment.

Verse 1

Go to now - Notes, James 4:13.

Ye rich men - Not all rich men, but only that class of them who are specified as unjust and oppressive. There is no sin in merely being rich; where sin exists peculiarly among the rich, it arises from the manner in which wealth is acquired, the spirit which it tends to engender in the heart, and the way in which it is used. Compare the Luke 6:24 note; 1 Timothy 6:9 note.

Weep and howl - Greek: "Weep howling." This would be expressive of very deep distress. The language is intensive in a high degree, showing that the calamities which were coming upon them were not only such as would produce tears, but tears accompanied with loud lamentations. In the East, it is customary to give expression to deep sorrow by loud outcries. Compare Isaiah 13:6; Isaiah 14:31; Isaiah 15:2; Isaiah 16:7; Jeremiah 4:8; Jeremiah 47:2; Joel 1:5.

For your miseries that shall come upon you - Many expositors, as Benson, Whitby, Macknight, and others, suppose that this refers to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and to the miseries which would be brought in the siege upon the Jewish people, in which the rich would be the peculiar objects of cupidity and vengeance. They refer to passages in Josephus, which describe particularly the sufferings to which the rich were exposed; the searching of their houses by the zealots, and the heavy calamities which came upon them and their families. But there is no

reason to suppose that the apostle referred particularly to those events. The poor as well as the rich suffered in that siege, and there were no such special judgments then brought upon the rich as to show that they were the marked objects of the divine displeasure. It is much more natural to suppose that the apostle means to say that such men as he here refers to exposed themselves always to the wrath of God, and that they had great reason to weep in the anticipation of his vengeance. The sentiments here expressed by the apostle are not applicable merely to the Jews of his time. If there is any class of men which has special reason to dread the wrath of God at all times, it is just the class of men here referred to.

Verse 2

Your riches are corrupted - The word here rendered "corrupted" (σήπω sēpō) does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means, to cause to rot, to corrupt, to destroy. The reference here is to their hoarded treasures; and the idea is, that they had accumulated more than they needed for their own use; and that, instead of distributing them to do good to others, or employing them in any useful way, they kept them until they rotted or spoiled. It is to be remembered, that a considerable part of the treasures which a man in the East would lay up, consisted of perishable materials, as garments, grain, oil, etc. Such articles of property were often stored up, expecting that they would furnish a supply for many years, in case of the prevalence of famine or wars. Compare Luke 12:18-19. A suitable provision for the time to come cannot be forbidden; but the reference here is to cases in which great quantities had been laid up, perhaps while the poor were suffering, and which were kept until they became worthless.

Your garments are moth-eaten - The same idea substantially is expressed here in another form. As the fashions in the East did not change as they do with us, wealth consisted much in the garments that were laid up for show or for future use. See the notes at Matthew 6:19. Q. Curtius says that when Alexander the Great was going to take Persepolis, the riches of all Asia were gathered there together, which consisted not only of a great abundance of gold and silver, but also of garments, Lib. vi. c. 5. Horace tells us that when Lucullus the Roman was asked if he could lend a hundred garments for the theater, he replied that he had five thousand in his house, of which they were welcome to take part or all. Of course, such property would be liable to be moth-eaten; and the idea here is, that they had

amassed a great amount of this kind of property which was useless to them, and which they kept until it became destroyed.

Verse 3

Your gold and silver is cankered - That is, that you have heaped together, by injustice and fraud, a large amount, and have kept it from those to whom it is due, James 5:4, until it has become corroded. The word rendered is "cankered" (κατίωται katiōtaidoes not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It properly means "to cause to rust; to rust out" (Passow); "to be corroded with rust" (Robinson); to be spotted with rust. It is true that gold and silver do not properly rust, or become oxidized, and that they will not be corroded like iron and steel; but by being kept long in a damp place they will contract a dark color, resembling rust in appearance. This seems to be the idea in the mind of the apostle. He speaks of gold and silver as they appear after having been long laid up without use; and undoubtedly the word which he uses here is one which would to an ancient have expressed that idea, as well as the mere literal idea of the rusting or oxidizing of metals. There is no reason to suppose that the word was then used in the strict chemical sense of rusting, for there is no reason to suppose that the nature of oxidization was then fully understood.

And the rust of them - Another word is used here - ἰὸς iosThis properly denotes something sent out or emitted, (from ἵημι *hēmi*), and is applied to a missile weapon, as an arrow; to poison, as emitted from the tooth of a serpent; and to rust, as it seems to be emitted from metals. The word refers to the dark discoloration which appears on gold and silver, when they have remained long without use.

Shall be a witness against you - That is, the rust or discoloration shall bear testimony against you that the money is not used as it should be, either in paying those to whom it is due, or in doing good to others. Among the ancients, the gold and silver which anyone possessed was laid up in some secret and safe place. Compare the notes at Isaiah 45:3. There were no banks then in which money might be deposited; there were few ways of investing money so as to produce regular interest; there were no corporations to employ money in joint operations; and it was not very common to invest money in the purchase of real estate, and stocks and mortgages were little known.

And shall eat your flesh as it were fire - This cannot be taken literally. It must mean that the effect would be as if it should corrode or consume

their very flesh; that is, the fact of their laying up treasures would be followed by painful consequences. The thought is very striking, and the language in which it is conveyed is singularly bold and energetic. The effect of thus heaping up treasure will be as corroding as fire in the flesh. The reference is to the punishment which God would bring on them for their avarice and in-justice - effects that will come on all now for the same offences.

Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days - The day of judgment; the closing scenes of this world. You have been heaping up treasure; but it will be treasure of a different kind from what you have supposed. It is treasure not laid up for ostentation, or luxury, or use in future life, but treasure the true worth of which will be seen at the judgment-day. So Paul speaks of "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Romans 2:5. There are many who suppose they are accumulating property that may be of use to them, or that may secure them the reputation of possessing great wealth, who are in fact accumulating a most fearful treasure against the day of final retribution. Every man who is rich should examine himself closely to see whether there is anything in the manner in which he has gained his property, or in which he now holds it, that will expose him to the wrath of God in the last day. That on which he so much prides himself may yet bring down on him the vengeance of heaven; and in the day of judgment he may curse his own madness and folly in wasting his probation in efforts to amass property.

Verse 4

Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields - In the previous verses the form of the sin which the apostle specified was that they had hoarded their property. He now states another form of their guilt, that, while doing this, they had withheld what was due from the very laborers who had cultivated their fields, and to whose labor they were indebted for what they had. The phrase "who have reaped down your fields," is used to denote labor in general. This particular thing is specified, perhaps, because the reaping of the harvest seems to be more immediately connected with the accumulation of property. What is said here, however, will apply to all kinds of labor. It may be remarked, also, that the sin condemned here is one that may exist not only in reference to those who are hired to cultivate a farm, but to all in our employ - to day-laborers, to mechanics, to seamen, etc.

It will apply, in an eminent degree, to those who hold others in slavery, and who live by their unrequited toils. The very essence of slavery is, that the slave shall produce by his labor so much more than he receives for his own maintenance as to support the master and his family in indolence. The slave is to do the work which the master would otherwise be obliged to do; the advantage of the system is supposed to be that the master is not under a necessity of laboring at all. The amount which the slave receives is not presumed to be what is a fair equivalent for what he does, or what a freeman could be hired for; but so much less than his labor is fairly worth, as to be a source of so much gain to the master. If slaves were fairly compensated for their labor; if they received what was understood to be a just price for what they do, or what they would be willing to bargain for if they were free, the system would at once come to an end. No owner of a slave would keep him if he did not suppose that out of his unrequited toil he might make money, or might be relieved himself from the necessity of labor. He who hires a freeman to reap down his fields pays what the freeman regards as a fair equivalent for what he does; he who employs a slave does not give what the slave would regard as an equivalent, and expects that what he gives will be so much less titan an equivalent, that he may be free alike from the necessity of labor and of paying him what he has fairly earned. The very essence of slavery, therefore, is fraud; and there is nothing to which the remarks of the apostle here are more applicable than to that unjust and oppressive system.

Which is of you kept back by fraud - The Greek word here used is rendered defraud, in Mark 10:10; 1 Corinthians 6:7-8; 1 Corinthians 7:5; and destitute, in 1 Timothy 6:5. It occurs nowhere else, except in the passage before us. It means to deprive of, with the notion that that to which it is applied was due to one, or that he had a claim on it. The fraud referred to in keeping it back, may be anything by which the payment is withheld, or the claim evaded - whether it be mere neglect to pay it; or some advantage taken in making the bargain; or some evasion of the law; or mere vexatious delay; or such superior power that he to whom it is due cannot enforce the payment; or such a system that he to whom it is fairly due is supposed in the laws to have no rights, and to be incapable of suing or being sued. Any one of these things would come under the denomination of fraud.

Crieth - That is, cries out to God for punishment. The voice of this wrong goes up to heaven.

And the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth - That is, he hears them, and he will attend to their cry. Comp, Exodus 22:27. They are oppressed and wronged; they have none to regard their cry on earth, and to redress their wrongs, and they go and appeal to that God who will regard their cry, and avenge them. On the phrase "Lord of sabaoth," or Lord of hosts, for so the word sabaoth means, see the Isaiah 1:9 note, and Romans 9:29 note. Perhaps by the use of the word here it is implied that the God to whom they cry - the mighty Ruler of all worlds - is able to vindicate them. It may be added, that the cry of the oppressed and the wronged is going up constantly from all parts of the earth, and is always heard by God. In his own time he will come forth to vindicate the oppressed, and to punish the oppressor. It may be added, also, that if what is here said were regarded as it should be by all men, slavery, as well as other systems of wrong, would soon come to an end.

If everywhere the workman was fairly paid for his earnings; if the poor slave who cultivates the fields of the rich were properly compensated for his toil; if he received what a freeman would contract to do the work for; if there was no fraud in withholding what he earns, the system would soon cease in the earth. Slavery could not live a day if this were done. Now there is no such compensation; but the cry of oppressed millions will continue to go up to heaven, and the period must come when the system shall cease. Either the master must be brought to such a sense of right that he will be disposed to do justice, and let the oppressed go free; or God will so impoverish the lands where the system prevails as to make all men see that the system is unprofitable and ruinous as compared with free labor; or the oppressed will somehow become so acquainted with their own strength and their rights that they shall arise and assert their freedom; or under the prevalence of true religion better views will prevail, and oppressors, turned to God, shall relax the yoke of bondage; or God will so bring heavy judgments in his holy providence on the oppressors, that the system of slavery will everywhere come to an end on the earth.

Nothing is more certain than that the whole system is condemned by the passage of Scripture before us; that it is contrary to the genuine spirit of Christianity, and that the prevalence of true religion would bring it to an end. Probably all slaveholders feel that to place the Bible in the hands of slaves, and to instruct them to read it, would be inconsistent with the

perpetuity of the system. Yet a system which cannot survive the most full and free circulation of the sacred Scriptures, must be founded in wrong.

Verse 5

Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth - One of the things to which the rich are peculiarly addicted. Their wealth is supposed to be of value, because it furnishes them the means of doing it. Compare Luke 12:19; Luke 16:19. The word translated "lived in pleasure, (τρυφάω truphaō) occurs only here in the New Testament. It means, to live delicately, luxuriously, at ease. There is not in the word essentially the idea or vicious indulgence, but that which characterizes those who live for enjoyment. They lived in ease and affluence on the avails of the labors of others; they indulged in what gratified the taste, and pleased the ear and the eye, while those who contributed the means of this were groaning under oppression. A life of mere indolence and ease, of delicacy and luxury, is nowhere countenanced in the Bible; and even where unconnected with oppression and wrong to others, such a mode of living is regarded as inconsistent with the purpose for which God made man, and placed him on the earth. See Luke 12:19-20. Every man has high and solemn duties to perform, and there is enough to be done on earth to give employment to every human being, and to fill up every hour in a profitable and useful way.

And been wanton - This word now probably conveys to most minds a sense which is not in the original. Our English word is now commonly used in the sense of "lewd, lustful, lascivious." It was, however, formerly used in the sense of "sportive, joyous, gay," and was applied to anything that was variable or fickle. The Greek word used here (σπαταλάω spatalaō) means, to live luxuriously or voluptuously. Compare the notes at 1 Timothy 5:6, where the word is explained. It does not refer necessarily to gross criminal pleasures, though the kind of living here referred to often leads to such indulgences. There is a close connection between what the apostle says here, and what he refers to in the previous verses - the oppression of others, and the withholding of what is due to those who labor. Such acts of oppression and wrong are commonly resorted to in order to obtain the means of luxurious living, and the gratification of sensual pleasures. In all countries where slavery exists, the things here referred to are found in close connection. The fraud and wrong by which the reward of hard toil is

withheld from the slave is connected with indolence and sensual indulgence on the part of the master.

Ye have nourished your hearts - Or, yourselves - the word hearts here being equivalent to themselves. The meaning is, that they appeared to have been fattening themselves, like stall-fed beasts, for the day of slaughter. As cattle are carefully fed, and are fattened with a view to their being slaughtered, so they seemed to have been fattoned for the slaughter that was to come on them - the day of vengeance. Thus many now live. They do no work; they contribute nothing to the good of society; they are mere consumers - fruges, consumere nati; and, like stall-fed cattle, they seem to live only with reference to the day of slaughter, and to the recompense which awaits them after death.

As in a day of slaughter - There has been much variety in the interpretation of this expression. Robinson (lex.) renders it, "like beasts in the day of slaughter, without care or forethought." Rosenmuller (Morgenland) supposes that it means, as in a festival; referring, as he thinks, to the custom among the ancients of having a feast when a part of the animal was consumed in sacrifice, and the rest was eaten by the worshippers. So Benson. On such occasions, indulgence was given to appetite almost without limit; and the idea then would be, that they had given themselves up to a life of pampered luxury. But probably the more correct idea is, that they had fattened themselves as for the day of destruction; that is, as animals are fattened for slaughter. They lived only to eat and drink, and to enjoy life. But, by such a course, they were as certainly preparing for perdition, as cattle were prepared to be killed by being stall-fed.

Verse 6

Ye have condemned and killed the just - τὸν δίκαιον ton dikaion- "the just one," or "the just man" - for the word used is in the singular number. This may either refer to the condemnation and crucifixion of Christ - meaning that their conduct towards his people had been similar to the treatment of the Saviour, and was in fact a condemnation and crucifixion of him afresh; or, that by their rejection of him in order to live in sin, they in fact condemned him and his religion; or, that they had condemned and killed the just man - meaning that they had persecuted those who were Christians; or, that by their harsh treatment of others in withholding what was due to them, they had deprived them of the means of subsistence, and

had, as it were, killed the righteous. Probably the true meaning is, that it was one of their characteristics that they had been guilty of wrong towards good men. Whether it refers, however, to any particular act of violence, or to such a course as would wear out their lives by a system of oppression, injustice, and fraud, cannot now be determined.

And he doth not resist you - Some have supposed that this refers to God, meaning that he did not oppose them; that is, that he bore with them patiently while they did it. Others suppose that it should be read a question - "and doth he not resist you?" meaning that God would oppose them, and punish them for their acts of oppression and wrong. But probably the true reference is to the "just man" whom they condemned and killed; meaning that they were so powerful that all attempts to resist them would be vain, and that the injured and oppressed could do nothing but submit patiently to their acts of injustice and violence. The sense may be either that they could not oppose them - the rich men being so powerful, and they who were oppressed so feeble; or that they bore their wrongs with meekness, and did not attempt it. The sins, therefore, condemned in these verses James 5:1-6, and for which it is said the divine vengeance would come upon those referred to, are these four:

(1)that of hoarding up money when it was unnecessary for their real support and comfort, and when they might do so much good with it, (compare Matthew 6:19;)

(2)that of keeping back the wages which was due to those who cultivated their fields; that is, keeping back what would be a fair compensation for their toil - applicable alike to hired men and to slaves;

(3)that of giving themselves up to a life of ease, luxury, and sensual; indulgence; and,

(4)that of wronging and oppressing good and just men - men, perhaps in humble life, who were unable to vindicate their rights, and who had none to undertake their cause; men who were too feeble to offer successful resistance, or who were restrained by their principles from attempting it.

It is needless to say that there are multitudes of such persons now on the earth, and that they have the same reason to dread the divine vengeance which the same class had in the time of the apostle James.

Verse 7

Be patient therefore, brethren - That is, under such wrongs as the apostle had described in the previous verses. Those whom he addressed were doubtless suffering under those oppressions, and his object was to induce them to bear their wrongs without murmuring and without resistance. One of the methods of doing this was by showing them, in an address to their rich oppressors, that those who injured and wronged them would be suitably punished at the day of judgment, or that their cause was in the hands of God; and another method of doing it was by the direct inculcation of the duty of patience. Compare the notes at Matthew 5:38-41, Matthew 5:43-45. The margin here is, "be long patient," or "suffer with long patience." The sense of the Greek is, "be long-suffering, or let not your patience be exhausted. Your courage, vigor, and forbearance is not to be short-lived, but is to be enduring. Let it continue as long as there is need of it, even to the coming of the Lord. Then you will be released from sufferings."

Unto the coming of the Lord - The coming of the Lord Jesus - either to remove you by death, or to destroy the city of Jerusalem and bring to an end the Jewish institutions, or to judge the world and receive his people to himself. The "coming of the Lord" in any way was an event which Christians were taught to expect, and which would be connected with their deliverance from troubles. As the time of his appearing was not revealed, it was not improper to refer to that as an event that might possibly be near; and as the removal of Christians by death is denoted by the phrase "the coming of the Lord" - that is, his coming to each one of us - it was not improper to speak of death in that view. On the general subject of the expectations entertained among the early Christians of the second advent of the Saviour, see the 1 Corinthians 15:51 note; 2 Thessalonians 2:2-3 note.

Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth - The farmer waits patiently for the grain to grow. It requires time to mature the crop, and he does not become impatient. The idea seems to be, that we should wait for things to develop themselves in their proper season, and should not be impatient before that season arrives. In due time we may expect the harvest to be ripened. We cannot hasten it. We cannot control the rain, the sun, the season; and the farmer therefore patiently waits until in the regular course of events he has a harvest. So we cannot control and hasten the events which are in God's own keeping; and we should patiently wait

for the developments of his will, and the arrangements of his providence, by which we may obtain what we desire.

And hath long patience for it - That is, his patience is not exhausted. It extends through the whole time in which, by the divine arrangements, he may expect a harvest.

Until he receive the early and latter rain - In the climate of Palestine there are two rainy seasons, on which the harvest essentially depends - the autumnal and the spring rains - called here and elsewhere in the Scriptures the early and the latter rains. See Deuteronomy 11:14; Job 29:23; Jeremiah 5:24. The autumnal or early rains of Scripture, usually commence in the latter half of October or the beginning of November; not suddenly, but by degrees, which gives opportunity for the husbandman to sow his fields of wheat and barley. The rains come mostly from the west or south-west, continuing for two or three days at a time, and falling especially during the nights. The wind then chops round to the north or east, and several days of fine weather succeed. During the months of November and December the rains continue to fail heavily; afterwards they return only at longer intervals, and are less heavy; but at no period during the winter do they entirely cease to occur.

Snow often falls in Jerusalem, in January and February, to the depth of a foot or more, but it does not last long. Rain continues to fall more or less through the month of March, but it is rare after that period. At the present time there are not any particular periods of rain, or successions of showers, which might be regarded as distinct rainy seasons. The whole period from October to March now constitutes only one continued rainy season, without any regularly intervening time of prolonged fair weather. Unless, therefore, there has been some change in the climate since the times of the New Testament, the early and the latter rains for which the husbandman waited with longing, seem rather to have implied the first showers of autumn, which revived the parched and thirsty earth, and prepared it for the seed; and the latter showers of spring, which continued to refresh and forward the ripening crops and the vernal products of the fields. In ordinary seasons, from the cessation of the showers in spring until their commencement in October or November, rain never falls, and the sky is usually serene. - Robinson‘s *Biblical Researches*, vol. ii., pp. 96-100.

Verse 8

Be ye also patient - As the farmer is. In due time, as he expects the return of the rain, so you may anticipate deliverance from your trials.

Stablish your hearts - Let your purposes and your faith be firm and unwavering. Do not become weary and fretful; but bear with constancy all that is laid upon you, until the time of your deliverance shall come.

For the coming of the Lord draweth nigh - Compare Revelation 22:10, Revelation 22:12, Revelation 22:20; the notes at 1 Corinthians 15:51. It is clear, I think, from this place, that the apostle expected that that which he understood by "the coming of the Lord" was soon to occur; for it was to be that by which they would obtain deliverance from the trials which they then endured. See James 5:7. Whether it means that he was soon to come to judgment, or to bring to an end the Jewish policy and to set up his kingdom on the earth, or that they would soon be removed by death, cannot be determined from the mere use of the language. The most natural interpretation of the passage, and one which will accord well with the time when the Epistle was written, is, that the predicted time of the destruction of Jerusalem Matthew 24 was at hand; that there were already indications that that would soon occur; and that there was a prevalent expectation among Christians that that event would be a release from many trials of persecution, and would be followed by the setting up of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Perhaps many expected that the judgment would occur at that time, and that the Saviour would set up a personal reign on the earth. But the expectation of others might have been merely - what is indeed all that is necessarily implied in the predictions on the subject - that there would be after that a rapid and extensive spread of the principles of the Christian religion in the world. The destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple would contribute to that by bringing to an end the whole system of Jewish types and sacrifices; by convincing Christians that there was not to be one central rallying-point, thus destroying their lingering prejudices in favor of the Jewish mode of worship; and by scattering them abroad through the world to propagate the new religion. The Epistle was written, it is supposed, some ten or twelve years before the destruction of Jerusalem, (Introduction, Section 3,) and it is not improbable that there were already some indications of that approaching event.

Verse 9

Grudge not one against another - Margin, "groan, grieve." The Greek word (στενάζω stenazō) means, "to sigh, to groan," as of persons in distress, Romans 8:23; and then to sigh or groan through impatience, fretfulness, ill-humor; and hence "to murmur, to find fault, to complain." The exact idea here is, not that of grudging in the sense of dissatisfaction with what others possess, or of being envious; it is that of being fretful and impatient - or, to use a common word which more exactly expresses the sense that of grumbling. This may arise from many causes; either because others have advantages which we have not, and we are discontented and unhappy, as if it were wrong in them to have such enjoyments; or because we, without reason, suppose they intend to slight and neglect us; or because we are ready to take offence at any little thing, and to "pick a quarrel" with them. There are some persons who are always grumbling. They have a sour, dissatisfied, discontented temper; they see no excellence in other persons; they are displeased that others are more prospered, honored, and beloved than they are themselves; they are always complaining of what others do, not because they are injured, but because others seem to them to be weak and foolish; they seem to feel that it becomes them to complain if everything is not done precisely as in their estimation it should be. It is needless to say that this spirit - the offspring of pride - will make any man lead a wretched life; and equally needless to say that it is wholly contrary to the spirit of the gospel. Compare Luke 3:14; Philemon 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:8; Hebrews 13:5.

Lest ye be condemned - That is, for judging others with this spirit - for this spirit is in fact judging them. Compare the notes at Matthew 7:1.

Behold, the judge standeth before the door - The Lord Jesus, who is soon to come to judge the world. See James 5:8. He is, as it were, even now approaching the door - so near that he can hear all that you say.

Verse 10

Take, my brethren, the prophets - That is, in your trials and persecutions. To encourage them to the exercise of patience, he points them to the example of those who had trod the same thorny path before them. The prophets were in general a much persecuted race of men; and the argument on which the apostle relies from their example is this:

(1)that if the prophets were persecuted and tried, it may be expected that other good men will be;

(2)that they showed such patience in their trials as to be a model for us.

An example of suffering affliction - That is, they showed us how evils are to be borne.

Verse 11

Behold, we count them happy which endure - The word rendered "we count them happy" (μακαρίζομεν makarizomenoccurs only here and in Luke 1:48, where it is rendered "shall call me blessed." The word μακάριος makarios(blessed, or happy,) however, occurs often. See Matthew 5:3-11; Matthew 11:6; Matthew 13:6, *et soepe*. The sense here is, we speak of their patience with commendation. They have done what they ought to do, and their name is honored and blessed.

Ye have heard of the patience of Job - As one of the most illustrious instances of patient sufferers. See Job 1:21. The book of Job was written, among other reasons, to show that true religion would bear any form of trial to which it could be subjected. See Job 1:9-11; Job 2:5-6.

And have seen the end of the Lord - That is, the end or design which the Lord had in the trials of Job, or the result to which he brought the case at last - to wit, that he showed himself to be very merciful to the poor sufferer; that he met him with the expressions of his approbation for the manner in which he bore his trials; and that he doubled his former possessions, and restored him to more than his former happiness and honor. See Mark 3:26; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Luke 21:9; Hebrews 7:3;

(b) An event, issue, or result, Matthew 26:58; Romans 6:21; 2 Corinthians 11:18;

(c) The final purpose, that to which all the parts tend, and in which they terminate, 1 Timothy 1:5;

(d) Tax, custom, or tribute - what is paid for public ends or purposes, Matthew 17:25; Romans 13:7.

(2) this interpretation, referring it to the death of the Saviour, would not accord with the remark of the apostle in the close of the verse, "that the Lord is very merciful." That is, what he says was "seen," or this was what was particularly illustrated in the ease referred to. Yet this was not particularly seen in the death of the Lord Jesus. He was indeed most patient and submissive in his death, and it is true that he showed mercy to the penitent malefactor; but this was not the particular and most prominent trait which he evinced in his death. Besides, if it had been, that would not have

been the thing to which the apostle would have referred here. His object was to recommend patience under trials, not mercy shown to others; and this he does by showing:

(a) That Job was an eminent instance of it, and,

(b) That the result was such as to encourage us to be patient.

The end or the result of the divine dealings in his case was, that the Lord was "very pitiful and of tender mercy;" and we may hope that it will be so in our case, and should therefore be encouraged to be patient under our trials.

That the Lord is very pitiful - As he showed deep compassion in the case of Job, we have equal reason to suppose that he will in our own.

Verse 12

But above all things - That is be especially careful on this point; whatever else is done, let not this be. The manner in which James speaks of the practice referred to here, shows that he regarded it as a sin of a very heinous nature; one that was by all means to be avoided by those whom he addressed. The habit of swearing by various things was a very common one among the Jews, and it was important to guard those who from among them had been converted to Christianity on that subject.

Swear not - See this command illustrated in the notes at Matthew 5:33-34. Nearly the same things are mentioned here, as objects by which they were accustomed to swear, which are referred to by the Saviour.

But let our yea be yea - Let there be a simple affirmation, unaccompanied by any oath or appeal to God or to any of his works. A man who makes that his common method of speech is the man who will be believed. See the notes at Matthew 5:37.

Lest you fall into condemnation - That is, for profaning the name of God. "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain," Exodus 20:7.

Verse 13

Is any among you afflicted? - By sickness, bereavement, disappointment, persecutions, loss of health or property. The word used here refers to suffering evil of any kind, (κακοπαθεῖ kakopatheiLet him pray - That is, prayer is appropriate to trial. The mind naturally resorts to it, and in every way it is proper. God only can remove the source of sorrow; he can grant unto us "a happy issue out of all our afflictions;" he can make them the means of sanctifying the soul. Compare 2 Chronicles 33:12; Psalm

34:4; Psalm 107:6, Psalm 107:13, Psalm 107:28. It matters not what is the form of the trial, it is a privilege which all have to go to God in prayer. And it is an inestimable privilege. Health fails, friends die, property is lost, disappointments come upon us, danger threatens, death approaches - and to whom shall we go but to God? He ever lives. He never fails us or disappoints us if we trust in him, and his ear is ever open to our cries. This would be a sad world indeed, if it were not for the privilege of prayer. The last resource of millions who suffer - for millions suffer every day - would be taken away, if men were denied the access to the throne of grace. As it is, there is no one so poor that he may not pray; no one so disconsolate and forsaken that he may not find in God a friend; no one so broken-hearted that he is not able to bind up his spirit. One of the designs of affliction is to lead us to the throne of grace; and it is a happy result of trials if we are led by our trials to seek God in prayer.

Is any merry? - The word merry now conveys an idea which is not properly found in the original word here. It refers now, in common usage, to light and noisy pleasure; to that which is jovial; to that which is attended with laughter, or which causes laughter, as a merry jest. In the Scriptures, however, the word properly denotes "cheerful, pleasant, agreeable," and is applied to a state of mind free from trouble - the opposite of affliction - happy, Proverbs 15:13, Proverbs 15:15; Proverbs 17:22; Isaiah 24:7; Luke 15:23-24, Luke 15:29, Luke 15:32. The Greek word used here (εὐθυμεῖ euthumei) means, literally, "to have the mind well" (εῦ euand θυμὸς ;) that is, to have it happy, or free from trouble; to be cheerful.

Let him sing psalms - That is, if anyone is happy; if he is in health, and is prospered; if he has his friends around him, and there is nothing to produce anxiety; if he has the free exercise of conscience and enjoys religion, it is proper to express that in notes of praise. Compare Ephesians 5:19-20. On the meaning of the word here rendered "sing psalms," see the notes at Ephesians 5:19, where it is rendered "making melody." It does not mean to sing psalms in contradistinction from singing hymns, but the reference is to any songs of praise. Praise is appropriate to such a state of mind. The heart naturally gives utterance to its emotions in songs of thanksgiving. The sentiment in this verse is well expressed in the beautiful stanza:

In every joy that crowns my days,
In every pain I bear,

My heart shall find delight in praise,
Or seek relief in prayer.
- Mrs. Williams.

Verse 14

Is any sick among you? - In the previous verse the reference was to affliction in general, and the duty there urged was one that was applicable to all forms of trial. The subject of sickness, however, is so important, since it so often occurs, that a specific direction was desirable. That direction is to call in the aid of others to lead our thoughts, and to aid us in our devotions, because one who is sick is less able to direct his own reflections and to pray for himself than he is in other form of trial. Nothing is said here respecting the degree of sickness, whether it is that which would be fatal if these means were used or not; but the direction pertains to any kind of illness.

Let him call for the elders of the church - Greek "presbyters." See the notes at Acts 15:2; Acts 11:30. It cannot be supposed that this refers to the apostles, for it could not be that they would be always accessible; besides, instructions like this were designed to have a permanent character, and to be applicable to the church at all times and in all places. The reference, therefore, is doubtless to the ordinary religious teachers of the congregation; the officers of the church intrusted with its spiritual interests. The spirit of the command would embrace those who are pastors, and any others to whom the spiritual interests of the congregation are confided - ruling elders, deacons, etc. If the allusion is to the ordinary officers of the church, it is evident that the cure to be hoped for James 5:15 was not miraculous, but was that to be expected in the use of appropriate means accompanied by prayer.

It may be added, as worthy of note, that the apostle says they should "call" for the elders of the church; that is, they should send for them. They should not wait for them to hear of their sickness, as they might happen to, but they should cause them to be informed of it, and give them an opportunity of visiting them and praying with them. Nothing is more common than for persons - even members of the church - to be sick a long time, and to presume that their pastor must know all about it; and then they wonder that he does not come to see them, and think hard of him because he does not. A pastor cannot be supposed to know everything; nor can it be presumed that he knows when persons are sick, any more than he can know anything else, unless he is apprized of it; and many hard thoughts, and

many suspicions of neglect would be avoided, if, when persons are sick, they would in some way inform their pastor of it. It should always be presumed of a minister of the gospel that he is ready to visit the sick. But how can he go unless he is in some way apprized of the illness of those who need his counsel and his prayers? The sick send for their family physician; why should they presume that their pastor will know of their illness any more than that their physician will?

And let them pray over him - With him, and for him. A man who is sick is often little capable of praying himself; and it is a privilege to have some one to lead his thoughts in devotion. Besides, the prayer of a good man may be of avail in restoring him to health, James 5:15. Prayer is always one important means of obtaining the divine favor, and there is no place where it is more appropriate than by the bed-side of sickness. That relief from pain may be granted; that the mind may be calm and submissive; that the medicines employed may be blessed to a restoration to health; that past sins may be forgiven; that he who is sick may be sanctified by his trials; that he may be restored to health, or prepared for his "last change" - all these are subjects of prayer which we feel to be appropriate in such a case, and every sick man should avail himself of the aid of those who "have an interest at the throne of grace," that they may be obtained.

Anointing him with oil - Oil, or unguents of various kinds, were much used among the ancients, both in health and in sickness. The oil which was commonly employed was olive oil. See the Isaiah 1:6 note; Luke 10:34 note. The custom of anointing the sick with oil still prevails in the East, for it is believed to have medicinal or healing properties. Niebuhr (Beschrieb. von Arabien, s. 131) says, "The southern Arabians believe that to anoint with oil strengthens the body, and secures it against the oppressive heat of the sun, as they go nearly naked. They believe that the oil closes the pores of the skin, and thus prevents the effect of the excessive heat by which the body is so much weakened; perhaps also they regard it as contributing to beauty, by giving the skin a glossy appearance. I myself frequently have observed that the sailors in the ships from Dsjidda and Loheia, as well as the common Arabs in Tehama, anointed their bodies with oil, in order to guard themselves against the heat. The Jews in Mocha assured Mr. Forskal, that the Mohammedans as well as the Jews, in Sana, when they were sick, were accustomed to anoint the body with oil." Rosenmuller, Morgenland, in loc.

In the name of the Lord - By the authority or direction of the Lord; or as an act in accordance with his will, and that will meet with his approbation. When we do anything that tends to promote virtue, to alleviate misery, to instruct ignorance, to save life, or to prepare others for heaven, it is right to feel that we are doing it in the name of the Lord Compare, for such uses of the phrase "in the name of the Lord," and "in my name," Matthew 10:22; Matthew 18:5, Matthew 18:20; Matthew 19:29; Matthew 24:9; Mark 9:41; Mark 13:13; Luke 21:12, Luke 21:17; Revelation 2:3; Colossians 3:17. There is no reason to think that the phrase is used here to denote any peculiar religious rite or "sacrament." It was to be done in the name of the Lord, as any other good deed is.

Verse 15

And the prayer of faith - The prayer offered in faith, or in the exercise of confidence in God. It is not said that the particular form of the faith exercised shall be that the sick man will certainly recover; but there is to be unwavering confidence in God, a belief that he will do what is best, and a cheerful committing of the cause into his hands. We express our earnest wish, and leave the case with him. The prayer of faith is to accompany the use of means, for all means would be ineffectual without the blessing of God.

Shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up - This must be understood, as such promises are everywhere, with this restriction, that they will be restored to health if it shall be the will of God; if he shall deem it for the best. It cannot be taken in the absolute and unconditional sense, for then, if these means were used, the sick person would always recover, no matter how often he might be sick, and he need never die. The design is to encourage them to the use of these means with a strong hope that it would be effectual. It may fairly be inferred from this statement:

(1)that there would be cases in large numbers where these means would be attended with this happy result; and,

(2)that there was so much encouragement to do it that it would be proper in any case of sickness so make use of these means.

It may be added, that no one can demonstrate that this promise has not been in numerous instances fulfilled. There are instances, not a few, where recovery from sickness seems to be in direct answer to prayer, and no one can prove that it is not so. Compare the case of Hezekiah, in Isaiah 38:1-5.

And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him - Perhaps there may be a particular allusion here to sins which may have brought on the sickness as a punishment. In that case the removal of the disease in answer to prayer would be an evidence that the sin was pardoned. Compare Matthew 9:2. But the promise may be understood in a more general sense as denoting that such sickness would be the means of bringing the sins of the past life to remembrance, especially if the one who was sick had been unfaithful to his Christian vows; and that the sickness in connection with the prayers offered would bring him to true repentance, and would recover him from his wanderings. On backsliding and erring Christians sickness often has this effect; and the subsequent life is so devoted and consistent as to show that the past unfaithfulness of him who has been afflicted is forgiven.

This passage James 5:14-15 is important, not only for the counsel which it gives to the sick, but because it has been employed by the Roman Catholic communion as almost the only portion of the Bible referred to to sustain one of the peculiar rites of their religion - that of "extreme unction" - a "sacrament," as they suppose, to be administered to those who are dying. It is of importance, therefore, to inquire more particularly into its meaning. There can be but three views taken of the passage:

I. That it refers to a miraculous healing by the apostles, or by other early ministers of religion who were endowed with the power of healing diseases in this manner. This is the interpretation of Doddridge, Macknight, Benson, and others. But to this view the objections seem to me to be insuperable.

(a) Nothing of this kind is said by the apostle, and this is not necessary to be supposed in order to a fair interpretation of the passage.

(b) The reference, as already observed, is clearly not to the apostles, but to the ordinary officers of the church - for such a reference would be naturally understood by the word presbyters; and to suppose that this refers to miracles, would be to suppose that this was a common endowment of the ordinary ministers of religion. But there was no promise of this, and there is no evidence that they possessed it. In regard to the extent of the promise, "they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover," see the notes at Mark 16:17-18.

(c) If this referred to the power of working miracles, and if the promise was absolute, then death would not have occurred at all among the early

disciples. It would have been easy to secure a restoration to health in any instance where a minister of religion was at hand,

II. It is supposed by the Roman Catholics to give sanction to the practice of "extreme unction," and to prove that this was practiced in the primitive church. But the objections to this are still more obvious.

(a) It was not to be performed at death, or in the immediate prospect of death, but in sickness at any time. There is no hint that it was to be only when the patient was past all hope of recovery, or in view of the fact that he was to die. But "extreme unction," from its very nature, is to be practiced only where the patient is past all hope of recovery.

(b) It was not with a view to his death, but to his living, that it was to be practiced at all. It was not that he might be prepared to die, but that he might be restored to health - "and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." But "extreme unction" can be with no such reference, and no such hope. It is only with the expectation that the patient is about to die; and if there were any expectation that he would be raised up even by this ordinance, it could not be administered as "extreme unction."

(c) The ordinance practiced as "extreme unction" is a rite wholly unauthorized in the Scriptures, unless it be by this passage. There are instances indeed of persons being embalmed after death. It was a fact also that the Saviour said of Mary, when she poured ointment on his body, that she "did it for his burial," or with reference to his burial, (Notes, Matthew 26:12) but the Saviour did not say that it was with reference to his death or was designed in any way to prepare him to die, nor is there any instance in the Bible in which such a rite is mentioned. The ceremony of extreme unction has its foundation in two things: first, in superstition, in the desire of something that shall operate as a charm, or that shall possess physical efficiency in calming the apprehensions of a troubled conscience, and in preparing the guilty to die; and, second, in the fact that it gives immense power to the priesthood. Nothing is better adapted to impart such power than a prevalent belief that a minister of religion holds in his hands the ability to alleviate the pangs of the dying, and to furnish a sure passport to a world of bliss. There is deep philosophy in that which has led to the belief of this doctrine - for the dying look around for consolation and support, and they grasp at anything which will promise ease to a troubled conscience, and the hope of heaven. The gospel has made arrangements to meet this

state of mind in a better way - in the evidence which the guilty may have that by repentance and faith their sins are blotted out through the blood of the cross.

III. The remaining supposition, therefore, and, as it seems to me, the true one, is, that the anointing with oil was, in accordance with a common custom, regarded as medicinal, and that a blessing was to be invoked on this as a means of restoration to health. Besides what has been already said, the following suggestions may be made in addition:

(a)This was, as we have seen, a common usage in the East, and is to this day.

(b)This interpretation meets all that is demanded to a fair understanding of what is said by the apostle.

(c)Everything thus directed is rational and proper.

It is proper to call in the ministers of religion in time of sickness, and to ask their counsels and their prayers. It is proper to make use of the ordinary means of restoration to health. It was proper then, as it is now, to do this "in the name of the Lord;" that is, believing that it is in accordance with his benevolent arrangements, and making use of means which he has appointed. And it was proper then, as it is now, having made use of those means, to implore the divine blessing on them, and to feel that their efficacy depends wholly on him. Thus used, there was ground of hope and of faith in regard to the recovery of the sufferer; and no one can show that in thousands of instances in the apostles" day, and since, the prayer of faith, accompanying the proper use of means, may not have raised up those who were on the borders of the grave, and who but for these means would have died.

Verse 16

Confess your faults one to another - This seems primarily to refer to those who were sick, since it is added, "that ye may be healed." The fair interpretation is, that it might be supposed that such confession would contribute to a restoration to health. The case supposed all along here (see James 5:15) is, that the sickness referred to had been brought upon the patient for his sins, apparently as a punishment for some particular transgressions. Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 11:30. In such a case, it is said that if those who were sick would make confession of their sins, it would, in connection with prayer, be an important means of restoration to

health. The duty inculcated, and which is equally binding on all now, is, that if we are sick, and are conscious that we have injured any persons, to make confession to them. This indeed is a duty at all times, but in health it is often neglected, and there is a special propriety that such confession should be made when we are sick. The particular reason for doing it which is here specified is, that it would contribute to a restoration to health - "that ye may be healed." In the case specified, this might be supposed to contribute to a restoration to health from one of two causes:

(1)If the sickness had been brought upon them as a special act of divine visitation for sin, it might be hoped that when the confession was made the hand of God would be withdrawn; or

(2)in any case, if the mind was troubled by the recollection of guilt, it might be hoped that the calmness and peace resulting from confession would be favorable to a restoration to health.

The former case would of course be more applicable to the times of the apostles; the latter would pertain to all times. Disease is often greatly aggravated by the trouble of mind which arises from conscious guilt; and, in such a case, nothing will contribute more directly to recovery than the restoration of peace to the soul agitated by guilt and by the dread of a judgment to come. This may be secured by confession - confession made first to God, and then to those who are wronged. It may be added, that this is a duty to which we are prompted by the very nature of our feelings when we are sick, and by the fact that no one is willing to die with guilt on his conscience; without having done everything that he can to be at peace with all the world. This passage is one on which Roman Catholics rely to demonstrate the propriety of "auricular confession," or confession made to a priest with a view to an absolution of sin. The doctrine which is held on that point is, that it is a duty to confess to a priest, at certain seasons, all our sins, secret and open, of which we have been guilty; all our improper thoughts, desires, words, and actions; and that the priest has power to declare on such confession that the sins are forgiven. But never was any text less pertinent to prove a doctrine than this passage to demonstrate that. Because:

(1) The confession here enjoined is not to be made by a person in health, that he may obtain salvation, but by a sick person, that he may be healed.

(2) as mutual confession is here enjoined, a priest would be as much bound to confess to the people as the people to a priest.

(3) no mention is made of a priest at all, or even of a minister of religion, as the one to whom the confession is to be made.

(4) the confession referred to is for "faults" with reference to "one another," that is, where one has injured another; and nothing is said of confessing faults to those whom we have not injured at all.

(5) there is no mention here of absolution, either by a priest or any other person.

(6) if anything is meant by absolution that is Scriptural, it may as well be pronounced by one person as another; by a layman as a clergyman. All that it can mean is, that God promises pardon to those who are truly penitent, and this fact may as well be stated by one person as another. No priest, no man whatever, is empowered to say to another either that he is truly penitent, or to forgive sin. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" None but he whose law has been violated, or who has been wronged, can pardon an offence. No third person can forgive a sin which a man has committed against a neighbor; no one but a parent can pardon the offences of which his own children have been guilty towards him; and who can put himself in the place of God, and presume to pardon the sins which his creatures have committed against him?

(7) the practice of "auricular confession" is "evil, and only evil, and that continually." Nothing gives so much power to a priesthood as the supposition that they have the power of absolution. Nothing serves so much to pollute the soul as to keep impure thoughts before the mind long enough to make the confession, and to state them in words. Nothing gives a man so much power over a female as to have it supposed that it is required by religion, and appertains to the sacred office, that all that passes in the mind should be disclosed to him. The thought which but for the necessity of confession would have vanished at once; the image which would have departed as soon as it came before the mind, but for the necessity of retaining it to make confession - these are the things over which a man

would seek to have control, and to which he would desire to have access, if he wished to accomplish purposes of villany. The very thing which a seducer would desire would be the power of knowing all the thoughts of his intended victim; and if the thoughts which pass through the soul could be known, virtue would be safe nowhere. Nothing probably under the name of religion has ever done more to corrupt the morals of a community than the practice of auricular confession.

And pray one for another - One for the other; mutually. Those who have done injury, and those who are injured, should pray for each other. The apostle does not seem here, as in James 5:14-15, to refer particularly to the prayers of the ministers of religion, or the elders of the church, but refers to it as a duty pertaining to all Christians.

That ye may be healed - Not with reference to death, and therefore not relating to "extreme unction," but in order that the sick maybe restored again to health. This is said in connection with the duty of confession, as well as prayer; and it seems to be implied that both might contribute to a restoration to health. Of the way in which prayer would do this, there can be no doubt; for all healing comes from God, and it is reasonable to suppose that this might be bestowed in answer to prayer. Of the way in which confession might do this, see the remarks already made. We should be deciding without evidence if we should say that sickness never comes now as a particular judgment for some forms of sin, and that it might not be removed if the suffering offender would make full confession to God, or to him whom he has wronged, and should resolve to offend no more. Perhaps this is, oftener than we suppose, one of the methods which God takes to bring his offending and backsliding children back to himself, or to warn and reclaim the guilty. When, after being laid on a bed of pain, his children are led to reflect on their violated vows and their unfaithfulness, and resolve to sin no more, they are raised up again to health, and made eminently useful to the church. So calamity, by disease or in other forms, often comes upon the vicious and the abandoned. They are led to reflection and to repentance. They resolve to reform, and the natural effects of their sinful course are arrested, and they become examples of virtue and usefulness in the world.

The effectual fervent prayer - The word effectual is not the most happy translation here, since it seems to do little more than to state a truism - that a prayer which is effectual is availing - that is, that it is effectual. The Greek word (ἐνεργουμένη energoumenē) would be better rendered by the

word energetic, which indeed is derived from it. The word properly refers to that which has power; which in its own nature is fitted to produce an effect. It is not so much that it actually does produce an effect, as that it is fitted to do it. This is the kind of prayer referred to here. It is not listless, indifferent, cold, lifeless, as if there were no vitality in it, or power, but that which is adapted to be efficient - earnest, sincere, hearty, persevering. There is but a single word in the original to answer to the translation effectual fervent. Macknight and Doddridge suppose that the reference is to a kind of prayer "inwrought by the Spirit," or the "inwrought prayer;" but the whole force of the original is expressed by the word energetic, or earnest.

Of a righteous man - The quality on which the success of the prayer depends is not the talent, learning, rank, wealth, or office of the man who prays, but the fact that he is a "righteous man," that is, a good man; and this may be found in the ranks of the poor, as certainly as the rich; among laymen, as well as among the ministers of religion; among slaves, as well as among their masters.

Availeth much - ἰσχύει ischueiIs strong; has efficacy; prevails. The idea of strength or power is that which enters into the word; strength that overcomes resistance and secures the object. Compare Matthew 7:28; Acts 19:16; Revelation 12:8. It has been said that "prayer moves the arm that moves the world;" and if there is anything that can prevail with God, it is prayer - humble, fervent, earnest petitioning. We have no power to control him; we cannot dictate or prescribe to him; we cannot resist him in the execution of his purposes; but we may asK him for what we desire, and he has graciously said that such asking may effect much for our own good and the good of our fellow-men. Nothing has been more clearly demonstrated in the history of the world than that prayer is effectual in obtaining blessings from God, and in accomplishing great and valuable purposes. It has indeed no intrinsic power; but God has graciously purposed that his favor shall be granted to those who call upon him, and that what no mere human power can effect should be produced by his power in answer to prayer.

Verse 17

Elias - The common way of writing the word "Elijah" in the New Testament, Matthew 11:14; Matthew 16:14; Matthew 17:3, etc.

Was a man subject to like passions as we are - This does not mean that Elijah was passionate in the sense in which that word is now commonly used; that is, that he was excitable or irritable, or that he was the victim of

the same corrupt passions and propensities to which other men are subject; but that he was like affected; that he was capable of suffering the same things, or being affected in the same manner. In other words, he was a mere man, subject to the same weaknesses and infirmities as other men. Compare the notes at Acts 14:15. The apostle is illustrating the efficacy of prayer. In doing this, he refers to an undoubted case where prayer had such efficacy. But to this it might be objected that Elijah was a distinguished prophet, and that it was reasonable to suppose that his prayer would be heard. It might be said that his example could not be adduced to prove that the prayers of those who were not favored with such advantages would be heard; and especially that it could not be argued from his case that the prayers of the ignorant, and of the weak, and of children and of servants, would be answered. To meet this, the apostle says that he was a mere man, with the same natural propensities and infirmities as other men, and that therefore his case is one which should encourage all to pray. It was an instance of the efficacy of prayer, and not an illustration of the power of a prophet.

And he prayed earnestly - Greek, "He prayed with prayer" - a Hebraism, to denote that he prayed earnestly. Compare Luke 22:15. This manner of speaking is common in Hebrew. Compare 1 Samuel 26:25; Psalm 118:18; Lamentations 1:2. The reference here is undoubtedly to 1 Kings 17:1. In that place, however, it is not said that Elijah prayed, but that he said, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these three years, but according to my word." Either James interprets this as a prayer, because it could be accomplished only by prayer, or he states what had been banded down by tradition as the way in which the miracle was effected. There can be no reasonable doubt that prayer was employed in the case, for even the miracles of the Saviour were accomplished in connection with prayer, John 11:41-42.

That it might not rain - Not to gratify any private resentment of his, but as a punishment on the land for the idolatry which prevailed in the time of Ahab. Famine was one of the principal methods by which God punished his people for their sins.

And it rained not on the earth - On the land of Palestine, for so the word earth is frequently understood in the Bible. See the notes at Luke 2:1. There is no reason to suppose that the famine extended beyond the country that was subject to Ahab.

By the space - For the time.

Of three years and six months - See this explained in the notes at Luke 4:25. Compare Lightfoot, Horae Hebraicae, on Luke 4:25.

Verse 18

And he prayed again - The allusion here seems to be to 1 Kings 18:42, 1 Kings 18:45, though it is not expressly said there that he prayed. Perhaps it might be fairly gathered from the narrative that he did pray, or at least that would be the presumption, for he put himself into a natural attitude of prayer. "He cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees," 1 Kings 18:42. In such circumstances, it is to be fairly presumed that such a man would pray; but it is remarkable that it is not expressly mentioned, and quite as remarkable that James should have made his argument turn on a thing which is not expressly mentioned, but which seems to have been a matter of inference. It seems probable to me, therefore, that there was some tradition on which he relied, or that it was a common interpretation of the passage in 1Kings, that Elijah prayed earnestly, and that this was generally believed by those to whom the apostle wrote. Of the fact that Elijah was a man of prayer, no one could doubt; and in these circumstances the tradition and common belief were sufficient to justify the argument which is employed here.

And the heaven gave rain - The clouds gave rain. "The heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain," 1 Kings 18:45.

And the earth brought forth her fruit - The famine ceased, and the land again became productive. The case referred to here was indeed a miracle, but it was a case of the power of prayer, and therefore to the point. If God would work a miracle in answer to prayer, it is reasonable to presume that he will bestow upon us the blessings which we need in the same way.

Verse 19

Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth - Either doctrinally and speculatively, by embracing error; or practically, by falling into sinful practices. Either of these may be called "erring from the truth," because they are contrary to what the truth teaches and requires. What is here said does not appear to have any connection with what precedes, but the apostle seems to have supposed that such a case might occur; and, in the conclusion of the Epistle, he called their attention to the importance of endeavoring to save an erring brother, if such an instance should happen. The exhortation

would be proper in addressing a letter to any church, or in publicly addressing any congregation.

And one convert him - This does not mean "convert him as a sinner, or regenerate him," but turn him from the error of his way; bring him back from his wanderings; re-establish him in the truth, and in the practice of virtue and religion. So far as the word used here is concerned, ἐπιστρέψῃ *epistrepsē* he who had erred from the truth, and who was to be converted, may have been a true Christian before. The word means simply to turn, sc., from his way of error. See the notes at Luke 22:32.

Verse 20

Let him know - Let him who converts the other know for his encouragement.

That he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way - Any sinner; anyone who has done wrong. This is a general principle, applicable to this case and to all others of the same kind. It is a universal truth that he who turns a sinner from a wicked path does a work which is acceptable to God, and which will in some way receive tokens of his approbation. Compare Deuteronomy 12:3. No work which man can perform is more acceptable to God; none will be followed with higher rewards. In the language which is used here by the apostle, it is evidently intended not to deny that success in converting a sinner, or in reclaiming one from the error of his ways, is to be traced to the grace of God; but the apostle here refers only to the divine feeling towards the individual who shall attempt it, and the rewards which he may hope to receive. The reward bestowed, the good intended and done, would be the same as if the individual were able to do the work himself. God approves and loves his aims and efforts, though the success is ultimately to be traced to himself.

Shall save a soul from death - It has been doubted whether this refers to his own soul, or to the soul of him who is converted. Several manuscripts, and the Vulgate, Syriac, Arabic, and Coptic versions, here read: "his soul." The most natural interpretation of the passage is to refer it to the soul of the one converted, rather than of him who converts him. This accords better with the uniform teaching of the New Testament, since it is nowhere else taught that the method of saving our souls is by converting others; and this interpretation will meet all that the scope of the passage demands. The object of the apostle is to present a motive for endeavoring to convert one who has wandered away; and assuredly a sufficient motive for

that is furnished in the fact, that by this means an immortal soul would be saved from eternal ruin. The word death here must refer to eternal death, or to future punishment. There is no other death which the soul is in danger of dying. The body dies and moulders away, but the soul is immortal. The apostle cannot mean that he would save the soul from annihilation, for it is in no danger of that. This passage proves, then, that there is a death which the soul may die; that there is a condition which may properly be called death as a consequence of sin; and that the soul will suffer that unless it is converted.

And shall hide a multitude of sins - Shall cover them over so that they shall not be seen; that is, they shall not be punished. This must mean either the sins which he has committed who is thus converted and saved, or the sins of him who converts him. Whichever is the meaning, a strong motive is presented for endeavoring to save a sinner from the error of his ways. It is not easy to determine which is the true sense. Expositors have been about equally divided respecting the meaning. Doddridge adopts substantially both interpretations, paraphrasing it, "not only procuring the pardon of those committed by the convert, but also engaging God to look with greater indulgence on his own character, and to be less ready to mark severely what he has done amiss." The Jews regarded it as a meritorious act to turn a sinner from the error of his ways, and it is possible that James may have had some of their maxims in his eye. Compare Clarke, in loc. Though it may not be possible to determine with certainty whether the apostle here refers to the sins of him who converts another, or of him who is converted, yet it seems to me that the reference is probably to the latter, for the following reasons:

(1) Such an interpretation will meet all that is fairly implied in the language.

(2) this interpretation will furnish a strong motive for what the apostle expects us to do. The motive presented is, according to this, that sin will not be punished. But this is always a good motive for putting forth efforts in the cause of religion, and quite as powerful when drawn from our doing good to others as when applied to ourselves.

(3) this is a safe interpretation; the other is attended with danger. According to this, the effort would be one of pure benevolence, and there

would be no danger of depending on what we do as a ground of acceptance with God. The other interpretation would seem to teach that our sins might be forgiven on some other ground than that of the atonement - by virtue of some act of our own.

(4) and there might be danger, if it be supposed that this refers to the fact that our sins are to be covered up by this act, of supposing that by endeavoriug to convert others we may live in sin with impunity; that however we live, we shall be safe if we lead others to repentance and salvation.

If the motive be the simple desire to hide the sins of others - to procure their pardon - to save a soul from death, without any supposition that by that we are making an atonement for our own sins - it is a good one, a safe one. But if the idea is that by this act we are making some atonement for our own offences, and that we may thus work out a righteousness of our own, the idea is one that is every way dangerous to the great doctrine of justification by faith, and is contrary to the whole teaching of the Bible. For these reasons it seems to me that the true interpretation is, that the passage refers to the sins of others, not our own; and that the simple motive here presented is, that in this way we may save a fellow-sinner from being punished for his sins. It may be added, in the conclusion of the notes at this Epistle, that this motive is one which is sufficient to stimulate us to great and constant efforts to save others. Sin is the source of all the evil in the universe: and the great object which a benevolent heart ought to have, should be that its desolating effects may be stayed; that the sinner may be pardoned; and that the guilty soul may be saved from its consequences in the future world. This is the design of God in the plan of redemption; this was the object of the Saviour in giving himself to die; this is the purpose of the Holy Spirit in renewing and sanctifying the soul; and this is the great end of all those acts of Divine Providence by which the sinner is warned and turned to God. When we come to die, as we shall soon, it will give us more pleasure to be able to recollect that we have been the means of saying one soul from death, than to have enjoyed all the pleasures which sense can furnish, or to have gained all the honor and wealth which the world can give.

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1 PETER INTRODUCTION

Introduction to 1Peter

The First Epistle of Peter has never been doubted to be the production of the apostle of that name. While there were doubts respecting the genuineness of the Second Epistle (see the introduction to that Epistle, Section 1), the unvarying testimony of history, and the uniform belief of the church, ascribe this Epistle to Peter. Indeed, there is no ancient writing whatever of which there is more certainty in regard to the authorship.

The history of Peter is so fully detailed in the New Testament, that it is not necessary to go into any extended statement of his biography in order to an exposition of his Epistles. No particular light would be reflected on them from the details of his life; and in order, therefore, to their exposition, it is not necessary to have any further information of him than what is contained in the New Testament itself. Those who may wish to obtain all the knowledge of his life which can now be had, may find ample details in Lardner, vol. vi. pp. 203-254, ed. London, 1829; Koppe, *Prolegomena*; and Bacon‘s *Lives of the Apostles*, pp. 43-286. There are some questions, however, which it is important to consider in order to an intelligent understanding of his Epistles.

Section 1. The Persons to Whom the First Epistle Was Addressed

This Epistle purports to have been addressed “to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” All these were provinces of Asia Minor; and there is no difficulty, therefore, in regard to the places where those to whom the Epistle was written resided. The only question is, who they were who are thus designated as “strangers scattered abroad,” or strangers of the dispersion, (παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς parepidēmois diasporasCompare the notes at 1 Peter 1:1. In regard to this, various opinions have been held:

(1)That they were native-born Jews, who had been converted to the Christian faith. Of this opinion were Eusebius, Jerome, Grotius, Beza, Mill, Cave, and others. The principal argument for this opinion is the appellation given to them, which it is supposed is language which would be applied only to those of Hebrew extraction.

(2)asecond opinion has been that the persons to whom it was sent were all of Gentile origin. Of this opinion were Procopius, Cassiodorus, and more recently Wetstein. This belief is founded chiefly on such passages as

the following: 1 Peter 1:18; 1 Peter 2:10; 1 Peter 4:3 - which are supposed to show that they who were thus addressed were formerly idolaters.

(3)athird opinion has been that they were Gentiles by birth, but had been Jewish proselytes, or "proselytes of the gate," and had then been converted to Christianity. This sentiment was defended by Michaelis, chiefly on the ground that the phrase in 1 Peter 1:1, "strangers of the dispersion," when followed by the name of a pagan country or people, in the genitive case, denotes the Jews who were dispersed there, and yet that there is evidence in the Epistle that they were not native-born Jews.

(4)afourth opinion has been that the persons referred to were not Jews in general, but those of the 10 tribes who had wandered from Babylon and the adjacent regions into Asia Minor. This opinion is mentioned by Michaelis as having been entertained by some persons, but no reasons are assigned for it.

(5)afifth opinion has been that the persons referred to were Christians, converted from both Jews and Gentiles, with no particular reference to their extraction; that there were those among them who had been converted from the Jews, and those who had been Gentiles, and that the apostle addresses them as Christians, though employing language such as the Jews had been accustomed to, when speaking of those of their own nation who were scattered abroad. This is the opinion of Lardner, Estius, Whitby, Wolfius, and Doddridge.

That this last opinion is the correct one, seems to me to be clear from the Epistle itself. Nothing can be plainer than that the apostle, while in the main he addresses Christians as such, whether they had been Jews or pagan, yet occasionally makes such allusions, and uses such language, as to show that he had his eye, at one time, on some who had been Jews, and again on some who had been pagans. This is clear, I think, from the following considerations:

(1) The address of the Epistle is general, not directed particularly either to the Jews or to the Gentiles. Thus, in 1 Peter 5:14, he says, "Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus." From this it would seem that the Epistle was addressed to all true Christians in the region designated in 1 Peter 1:1. But no one can doubt that there were Christians there who had been Jews, and also those who had been Gentiles. The same thing is apparent from the

Second Epistle; for it is certain, from 2 Peter 3:2, that the Second Epistle was addressed to the same persons as the First. But the address in the Second Epistle is to Christians residing in Asia Minor, without particular reference to their origin. Thus, in 1 Peter 1:1, "To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." The same thing is apparent also from the address of the First Epistle: "To the elect strangers scattered throughout Pontus," etc.; that is, "to the strangers of the dispersion who are chosen, or who are true Christians, scattered abroad." The term "elect" is one which would apply to all who were Christians; and the phrase, "the strangers of the dispersion," is that which one who had been educated as a Hebrew would be likely to apply to those whom he regarded as the people of God dwelling out of Palestine. The Jews were accustomed to use this expression to denote their own people who were dispersed among the Gentiles; and nothing would be more natural than that one who had been educated as a Hebrew, and then converted to Christianity, as Peter had been, should apply this phrase indiscriminately to Christians living out of Palestine. See the notes on the passage. These considerations make it clear that in writing this Epistle he had reference to Christians as such, and meant that all who were Christians in the parts of Asia Minor which he mentions 1 Peter 1:1 should regard the Epistle as addressed to them.

(2) yet there are some allusions in the Epistle which look as if a part of them at least had been Jews before their conversion, or such as a Jew would better understand than a Gentile would. Indeed, nothing is more probable than that there were Jewish converts in that region. We know that there were many Jews in Asia Minor; and, from the Acts of the Apostles, it is morally certain that not a few of them had been converted to the Christian faith under the labors of Paul. Of the allusions of the kind referred to in the Epistle, the following may be taken as specimens: But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," 1 Peter 2:9. This is such language as was commonly used by the Jews when addressing their own countrymen as the people of God; and would seem to imply that to some of those at least to whom the Epistle was addressed, it was language which would be familiar. See also 1 Peter 3:6. It should be said, however, that these passages are not positive proof that any among them were Hebrews. While it is true that it is such language as would be

naturally employed in addressing those who were, and while it supposes an acquaintance among them with the Old Testament, it is also true that it is such language as one who had himself been educated as an Hebrew would not unnaturally employ when addressing any whom he regarded as the people of God.

(3) the passages in the Epistle which imply that many of those to whom it was addressed had been Gentiles or idolaters, are still more clear. Such passages are the following: "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance," 1 Peter 1:14. "This," says Dr. Lardner, "might be very pertinently said to men converted from Gentilism to Christianity; but no such thing is ever said by the apostles concerning the Jewish people who had been favored with the Divine revelation, and had the knowledge of the true God." So in 1 Peter 2:9, Peter speaks of them as "having been called out of darkness into marvelous light." The word "darkness" is one which would be naturally applied to those who had been pagans, but would not be likely to be applied to those who had had the knowledge of God as revealed in the Jewish Scriptures. So in 1 Peter 2:10, it is expressly said of them, "which in time past was not a people, but are now the people of God" - language which would not be applied to those who had been Jews. So also 1 Peter 4:3, "For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries."

Though the apostle here uses the word "us," grouping himself with them, yet it cannot be supposed that he means to charge himself with these things. It is a mild and gentle way of speech, adopted not to give offence, and is such language as a minister of the gospel would now use, who felt that he was himself a sinner, in addressing a church made up of many individuals. Though it might be true that he had not been guilty of the particular offences which he specifies, yet in speaking in the name of the church, he would use the term we, and use it honestly and correctly. It would be true that the church had been formerly guilty of these things; and this would be a much more mild, proper, and effective method of address, than to say you. But the passages adduced here prove conclusively that some of those whom Peter addresses in the Epistle had been formerly

idolaters, and had been addicted to the sins which idolaters are accustomed to commit.

These considerations make it clear that the Epistle was addressed to those Christians in general who were scattered throughout the various provinces of Asia Minor which are specified in 1 Peter 1:1, whether they had been Jews or Gentiles. It is probable that the great body of them had been converted from the pagan, though there were doubtless Jewish converts intermingled with them; and Peter uses such language as would be natural for one who had been a Jew himself in addressing those whom he now regarded as the chosen of God.

Section 2. The Time and Place of Writing the Epistle

On this point also there has been no little diversity of opinion. The only designation of the place where it was written which occurs in the Epistle is in 1 Peter 5:13; "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you." From this it is clear that it was written at Babylon, but still there has been no little difference of opinion as to what place is meant here by Babylon. Some have supposed that it refers to the well-known place of that name on the Euphrates; others to a Babylon situated in Lower Egypt; others to Jerusalem or Rome, represented as Babylon. The claims of each of these places it is proper to examine. The order in which this is done is not material.

(1) the opinion that the "Babylon" mentioned in the Epistle refers to a place of that name in Egypt, not far from Cairo. This opinion was held by Pearson and Le Clere, and by most of the Coptic interpreters, who have endeavored to vindicate the honor of their own country, Egypt, as a place where one of the books of Scripture was composed. See Koppe, *Prolegomena*, 12. That there was such a place in Egypt, there can be no doubt. It was a small town to the northeast of Cairo, where there was a strong castle in the time of Strabo, (i. 17, p. 807,) in which, under Tiberius, there were quartered three Roman legions, designed to keep the Egyptians in order. But there is little reason to suppose that there were many Jews there, or that a church was early collected there. The Jews would have been little likely to resort to a place which was merely a Roman garrison, nor would the apostles have been likely to go early to such a place to preach the gospel. Compare Basnage, Ant. 36, num. xxvii. As Lardner well remarks, if Peter had written an Epistle from Egypt, it would have been likely to have

been from Alexandria. Besides, there is not, for the first four centuries, any notice of a church at Babylon in Egypt; a fact which can hardly be accounted for, if it had been supposed that one of the sacred books had been composed there. - Lardner, vol. vi. 265. It may be added, also, that as there was another place of that name on the Euphrates, a place much better known, and which would be naturally supposed to be the one referred to, it is probable that if the Epistle had been composed at the Babylon in Egypt, there would have been something said clearly to distinguish it. If the Epistle was written at the Babylon on the Euphrates, so well known was that place that no one would be likely to understand that the Babylon in Egypt was the place referred to; on the other supposition, however, nothing would be more likely than that a mistake should occur.

(2) others have supposed that Jerusalem is intended, and that the name was given to it on account of its wickedness, and because it resembled Babylon. This was the opinion of Capellus, Spanheim, Hardouin, and some others. But the objections to this are obvious:

(a)There is no evidence that the name Babylon was ever given to Jerusalem, or so given to it as to make it commonly understood that that was the place intended when the term was employed. If not so, its use would be likely to lead those to whom the Epistle was addressed into a mistake.

(b)There is every reason to suppose that an apostle in writing a letter, if he mentioned the place at all where it was written, would mention the real name. So Paul uniformly does.

(c)The name Babylon is not one which an apostle would be likely to give to Jerusalem; certainly not as the name by which it was to be familiarly known.

(d)If the Epistle had been written there, there is no conceivable reason why the name of the place should not have been mentioned.

(3) others have supposed that Rome is intended by the name Babylon. This was the opinion of many of the Fathers, and also of Bede, Valesius, Grotius, Cave, Whitby, and Lardner. The principal reasons for this are, that such is the testimony of Papias, Eusebius, and Jerome; and that at that time

Babylon on the Euphrates was destroyed. See Lardner. But the objections to this opinion seem to me to be insuperable.

(a) There is no evidence that at that early period the name Babylon was given to Rome, nor were there any existing reasons why it should be. The name is generally supposed to have been applied to it by John, in the book of Revelation, Revelation 16:19; Revelation 17:5; Revelation 18:10, Revelation 18:21; but this was probably long after this Epistle was written, and for reasons which did not exist in the time of Peter. There is no evidence that it was given familiarly to it in the time of Peter, or even at all until after his death. Certain it is, that it was not given so familiarly to it that when the name Babylon was mentioned it would be generally understood that Rome was intended. But the only reason which Peter could have had for mentioning the name Babylon at all, was to convey some definite and certain information to those to whom he wrote.

(b) As has been already observed, the apostles, when they sent an epistle to the churches, and mentioned a place as the one where the Epistle was written, were accustomed to mention the real place.

(c) It would be hardly consistent with the dignity of an apostle, or any grave writer, to make use of what would be regarded as a nickname, when suggesting the name of a place where he then was.

(d) If Rome had been meant, it would have been hardly respectful to the church there which sent the salutation - “The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you” - to have given it this name. Peter mentions the church with respect and kindness; and yet it would have been scarcely regarded as kind to mention it as a “Church in Babylon,” if he used the term Babylon, as he must have done on such a supposition, to denote a place of eminent depravity.

(e) The testimony of the Fathers on this subject does not demonstrate that Rome was the place intended. So far as appears from the extracts relied on by Lardner, they do not give this as historical testimony, but as their own interpretation; and, from anything that appears, we are as well qualified to interpret the word as they were.

(f) In regard to the objection that Babylon was at that time destroyed, it may be remarked that this is true so far as the original splendor of the city was concerned, but still there may have been a sufficient population there to have constituted a church. The destruction of Babylon was gradual. It had not become an utter desert in the time of the apostles. In the first century of the Christian era a part of it was inhabited, though the greater portion of its former site was a waste. See the notes at Isaiah 13:19. Compare Diod. Sic., ii. 27. All that time, there is no improbability in supposing that a Christian church may have existed there. It should be added here, however, that on the supposition that the word Babylon refers to Rome, rests nearly all the evidence which the Roman Catholics can adduce that the apostle Peter was ever at Rome at all. There is nothing else in the New Testament that furnishes the slightest proof that he ever was there. The only passage on which Bellarmine relies to show that Peter was at Rome, is the very passage now under consideration. "That Peter was one time at Rome," he says, "we show first from the testimony of Peter himself, who thus speaks at the end of his First Epistle: "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you." He does not pretend to cite any other evidence from Scripture than this; nor does any other writer.

(4) there remains the fourth opinion, that the well-known Babylon on the Euphrates was the place where the Epistle was written. This was the opinion of Erasmus, Drusius, Lightfoot, Bengel, Wetstein, Basnage, Beausobre, and others. That this is the correct opinion seems to me to be clear from the following considerations:

(a) It is the most natural and obvious interpretation. It is that which would occur to the great mass of the readers of the New Testament now, and is that which would have been naturally adopted by those to whom the Epistle was sent. The word Babylon, without something to give it a different application, would have been understood anywhere to denote the well-known place on the Euphrates.

(b) There is, as has been observed already, no improbability that there was a Christian church there, but there are several circumstances which render it probable that this would be the case:

1.Babylon had been an important place; and its history was such, and its relation to the Jews such, as to make it probable that the attention of the apostles would be turned to it.

2.The apostles, according to all the traditions which we have respecting them, traveled extensively in the East, and nothing would be more natural than that they should visit Babylon.

3.There were many Jews of the captivity remaining in that region, and it would be in the highest degree probable that they would seek to carry the gospel to their own countrymen there. See Koppe, Proleg., pp. 16-18. Jos. Ant., b. xv., chapter ii., Section 2; chapter iii., Section 1. Philo. Do Virtut., p. 587.

These considerations make it clear that the place where the Epistle was written was Babylon on the Euphrates, the place so celebrated in ancient sacred and profane history. If this be the correct view, then this is a fact of much interest, as showing that even in apostolic times there was a true church in a place once so distinguished for splendor and wickedness, and so memorable for its acts in oppressing the ancient people of God. Our information respecting this church, however, ceases here. We know not by whom it was founded; we know not who were its pastors; nor do we know how long it survived. As Babylon, however, continued rapidly to decline, so that in the second century nothing remained but the walls (compare the notes at Isaiah 13:19), there is no reason to suppose that the church long existed there. Soon the ancient city became a heap of ruins; and excepting that now and then a Christian traveler or missionary has visited it, it is not known that a prayer has been offered there from generation to generation, or that amidst the desolations there has been a single worshipper of the true God. See this subject examined at length in Bacon‘s *Lives of the Apostles*, pp. 258-263.

In regard to the time when this First Epistle was written, nothing certainly can be determined. There are no marks of time in the Epistle itself, and there are no certain data from which we can determine when it was composed. Lardner supposes that it was in the year 63, or 64 a.d., or at the latest 65 a.d.; Michaelis, that it was about the year 60 a.d. If it was written at Babylon, it was probably some time between the year 58 and 61 a.d. The time is not material, and it is impossible now to determine it.

Section 3. The Characteristics of the First Epistle of Peter

(1) The Epistles of Peter are distinguished for great tenderness of manner, and for bringing forward prominently the most consolatory parts of the gospel. He wrote to those who were in affliction; he was himself an old man 2 Peter 1:14; he expected soon to be with his Saviour; he had nearly done with the conflicts and toils of life; and it was natural that he should direct his eye onward, and should dwell on those things in the gospel which were adapted to support and comfort the soul. There is, therefore, scarcely any part of the New Testament where the ripe and mellow Christian will find more that is adapted to his matured feelings, or to which he will more naturally turn.

(2) there is great compactness and terseness of thought in his Epistles. They seem to be composed of a succession of texts, each one fitted to constitute the subject of a discourse. There is more that a pastor would like to preach on in a course of expository lectures, and less that he would be disposed to pass over as not so well adapted to the purposes of public instruction, than in almost any other part of the New Testament. There is almost nothing that is local or of temporary interest; there are no discussions about points pertaining to Jewish customs such as we meet with in Paul; there is little that pertains particularly to one age of the world or country. Almost all that he has written is of universal applicability to Christians, and may be read with as much interest and profit now by us as by the people to whom his Epistles were addressed.

(3) there is evidence in the Epistles of Peter that the author was well acquainted with the writings of the apostle Paul. See this point illustrated at length in Eichlorn, *Einleitung in das Neue Tes.* viii. 606-618, Section 284, and Michaelis, *Introduction*, vol. iv. p. 323, following Peter himself speaks of his acquaintance with the Epistles of Paul, and ranks them with the inspired writings. 2 Peter 3:15-16, “even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; as also in all his Epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.” Indeed, to any one who will attentively compare the Epistles of Peter with those of Paul, it will be apparent that he was acquainted with the writings of the Apostle of the Gentiles, and had become so familiar with the modes of expression which he employed, that he naturally fell into it. There is that

kind of coincidence which would be expected when one was accustomed to read what another had written, and when he had great respect for him, but not that when there was a purpose to borrow or copy from him. This will be apparent by a reference to a few parallel passages:

d **PaulPeter**

d

d Ephesians 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." See also 2 Corinthians 1:3 1 Peter 1:3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Christ Jesus."

d

d Colossians 3:8"But now ye also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." 1 Peter 2:1 "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and all hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings."

d

d Ephesians 5:22 "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as unto the Lord." 1 Peter 3:1 "Likewise ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands."

d

d Ephesians 5:21 "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." 1 Peter 5:5 "Yea, all of you be subject one to another."

d

d 1 Thessalonians 5:6 "Let us watch and be sober." 1 Peter 5:8 "Be sober; be vigilant." (In the Greek the same words, though the order is reversed.)

d

d 1 Corinthians 16:20 “Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.” Also 2 Corinthians 13:12; Romans 16:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:26 1 Peter 5:14 “Greet ye one another with a kiss of love.” (ἐν φιλήματι ἀγάπης en philēmati agapēs

d

d Romans 8:18 “The glory that shall be revealed unto us.” 1 Peter 5:1 “The glory that shall be revealed.”

d

d Romans 4:24 “If we believe on him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.” 1 Peter 1:21 “Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead.”

d

d Romans 13:1, Romans 13:3-4 “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God … Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same … For he is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” 1 Peter 2:13-14 “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord‘s sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.”

d

d

See also the following passages:

d Romans 12:6-7 1 Peter 4:10

d

d 1 Timothy 2:9 1 Peter 3:3

d

d 1 Timothy 5:5 1 Peter 3:5

d

d

These coincidences are not such as would occur between two authors when one had no acquaintance with the writings of the other; and they thus demonstrate, what may be implied in 2 Peter 3:15, that Peter was familiar with the Epistles of Paul. This also would seem to imply that the Epistles of Paul were in general circulation.

(4) "in the structure of his periods," says Michaelis, "Peter has this peculiarity, that he is fond of beginning a sentence in such a manner that it shall refer to a principal word in the preceding. The consequence of this structure is, that the sentences, instead of being rounded, according to the manner of the Greeks, are drawn out to a great length; and in many places where we should expect that a sentence would be closed, a new clause is attached, and another again to this, so that before the whole period comes to an end, it contains parts which, at the commencement of the period, do not appear to have been designed for it." This manner of writing is also found often in the Epistles of Paul.

The canonical authority of this Epistle has never been disputed. For a view of the contents of it, see the analysis prefixed to the several chapters.

1 PETER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This Epistle was evidently addressed to those who were passing through severe trials, and probably to those who were, at that time, enduring persecution, 1 Peter 1:6-7; 1 Peter 3:14; 1 Peter 4:1, 1 Peter 4:12-19. The main object of this chapter is to comfort them in their trials; to suggest such considerations as would enable them to bear them with the right spirit, and to show the sustaining, elevating, and purifying power of the gospel. In doing this, the apostle adverts to the following considerations:

(1) He reminds them that they were the elect of God; that they had been chosen according to his foreknowledge, by the sanctifying agency of the Holy Spirit, and in order that they might be obedient, 1 Peter 1:1-2.

(2) he reminds them of the lively hope to which they had been begotten, and of the inheritance that was reserved for them in heaven. That inheritance was incorruptible, and undefiled, and glorious; it would be certainly theirs, for they would be kept by the power of God unto it, though now they were subjected to severe trials, 1 Peter 1:3-6.

(3) even now they could rejoice in hope of that inheritance, 1 Peter 1:6 their trial was of great importance to themselves in order to test the genuineness of their piety 1 Peter 1:7, and in the midst of all their sufferings they could rejoice in the love of their unseen Saviour 1 Peter 1:8 and they would certainly obtain the great object for which they had believed - the salvation of their souls 1 Peter 1:9. By these considerations the apostle would reconcile them to their sufferings; for they would thus show the genuineness and value of Christian piety, and would be admitted at last to higher honor.

(4) the apostle proceeds, in order further to reconcile them to their sufferings, to say that the nature of the salvation which they would receive had been an object of earnest inquiry by the prophets. They had searched diligently to know precisely what the Spirit by which they were inspired meant by the revelations given to them, and they had understood that they ministered to the welfare of those who should come after them, 1 Peter 1:10-12. Those who thus suffered ought, therefore, to rejoice in a salvation

which had been revealed to them in this manner; and in the fact that they had knowledge which had not been vouchsafed even to the prophets; and under these circumstances they ought to be willing to bear the trials which had been brought upon them by a religion so communicated to them.

(5) in view of these things, the apostle 1 Peter 1:13-17 exhorts them to be faithful and persevering to the end. In anticipation of what was to be revealed to them at the final day, they should be sober and obedient; and as he who had called them into his kingdom was holy, so it became them to be holy also.

(6) this consideration is enforced 1 Peter 1:18-21 by a reference to the price that was paid for their redemption. They should remember that they had been redeemed, not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. He had been appointed from eternity to be their Redeemer; he had been manifested in those times for them; he had been raised from the dead for them, and their faith and hope were through him. For these reasons they ought to be steadfast in their attachment to him.

(7) the apostle enjoins on them the special duty of brotherly love, 1 Peter 1:22-23. They had purified their hearts by obeying the truth, and as they were all one family, they should love one another fervently. Thus, they would show to their enemies and persecutors the transforming nature of their religion, and furnish an impressive proof of its reality.

(8) to confirm all these views, the apostle reminds them that all flesh must soon die. The glory of man would fade away. Nothing would abide but the Word of the Lord. They themselves would soon die, and be released from their troubles, and they should be willing, therefore, to bear trials for a little time. The great and the rich, and those apparently more favored in this life, would soon disappear, and all the splendor of their condition would vanish; and they should not envy them, or repine at their own more tremble and painful lot, 1 Peter 1:24-25. The keenest sufferings here are brief, and the highest honors and splendors of life here soon vanish away; and our main solicitude should be for the eternal inheritance. Having the prospect of that, and building on the sure word of God, which abides forever, we need not shrink from the trials appointed to us here below.

Verse 1

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ - On the word apostle, see the Romans 1:1 note; 1 Corinthians 9:1 ff notes.

To the strangers - In the Greek, the word "elect" (see 1 Peter 1:2) occurs here: ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις eklektois parepidēmois"to the elect strangers." He here addresses them as elect; in the following verse he shows them in what way they were elected. See the notes there: The word rendered "strangers" occurs only in three places in the New Testament; Hebrews 11:13, and 1 Peter 2:11, where it is rendered pilgrims, and in the place before us. See the notes at Hebrews 11:13. The word means, literally, a by-resident, a sojourner among a people not one's own - Robinson. There has been much diversity of opinion as to the persons here referred to: some supposing that the Epistle was written to those who had been Jews, who were now converted, and who were known by the common appellation among their countrymen as "the scattered abroad," or the "dispersion;" that is, those who were strangers or sojourners away from their native land; others, that the reference is to those who were called, among the Jews, "proselytes of the gate," or those who were admitted to certain external privileges among the Jews, (see the notes at Matthew 23:15) and others, that the allusion is to Christians as such, without reference to their origin, and who are spoken of as strangers and pilgrims.

That the apostle did not write merely to those who had been Jews, is clear from 1 Peter 4:3-4 (compare the introduction), and it seems probable that he means here Christians as such, without reference to their origin, who were scattered through the various provinces of Asia Minor. Yet it seems also probable that he did not use the term as denoting that they were "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," or with reference to the fact that the earth was not their home, as the word is used in Hebrews 11:13; but that he used the term as a Jew would naturally use it, accustomed, as he was, to employ it as denoting his own countrymen dwelling in distant lands. He would regard them still as the people of God, though dispersed abroad; as those who were away from what was properly the home of their fathers. So Peter addresses these Christians as the people of God, now scattered abroad; as similar in their condition to the Jews who had been dispersed among the Gentiles. Compare the introduction, section 1. It is not necessarily implied that these persons were strangers to Peter, or that he had

never seen them; though this was not improbably the fact in regard to most of them.

Scattered - Greek, "of the dispersion," (διασπορᾶς diasporas) a term which a Jew would be likely to use who spoke of his countrymen dwelling among the pagan. See the John 7:35 note, and James 1:1 note, where the same Greek word is found. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. Here, however, it is applied to Christians as dispersed or scattered abroad.

Throughout Pontus … - These were provinces of Asia Minor. Their position may be seen in the map prefixed to the Acts of the Apostles. On the situation of Pontus, see the notes at Acts 2:9.

Galatia - On the situation of this province, and its history, see the introduction to the notes at Galatians, section 1.

Cappadocia - See the notes at Acts 2:9.

Asia - Meaning a province of Asia Minor, of which Ephesus was the capital. See the notes at Acts 2:9.

And Bithynia - See the notes at Acts 16:7.

Verse 2

Elect - That is, "chosen." The meaning here is, that they were in fact chosen. The word does not refer to the purpose to choose, but to the fact that they were chosen or selected by God as His people. It is a word commonly applied to the people of God as being chosen out of the world, and called to be His. The use of the word does not determine whether God had a previous eternal purpose to choose them or not. That must be determined by something else than the mere use of the term. This word has reference to the act of selecting them, without throwing any light on the question why it was done. See Matthew 24:22, Matthew 24:24, Matthew 24:31; Mark 13:20; Luke 18:7; Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12. Compare the notes at John 15:16. The meaning is, that God had, on some account, a preference for them above others as his people, and had chosen them from the midst of others to be heirs of salvation. The word should be properly understood as applied to the act of choosing them, not to the purpose to choose them; the fact of his selecting them to be his, not the doctrine that he would choose them; and is a word, therefore, which should be freely and gratefully used by all Christians, for it is a word in frequent use in the Bible, and there is nothing for which people should be more grateful than the fact that God has chosen them to salvation. Elsewhere we learn that the purpose

to choose them was eternal, and that the reason of it was his own good pleasure. See the notes at Ephesians 1:4-5. We are here also informed that it was in accordance with "the foreknowledge of God the Father."

According to the foreknowledge of God the Father - The Father is regarded, in the Scriptures, as the Author of the plan of salvation, and as having chosen His people to life, and given them to His Son to redeem and save, John 6:37, John 6:65; John 17:2, John 17:6, John 17:11. It is affirmed here that the fact that they were elect was in some sense in accordance with the "foreknowledge of God." On the meaning of the phrase, see the notes at Romans 8:29. The passage does not affirm that the thing which God "foreknew," and which was the reason of their being chosen, was, that they would of themselves be disposed to embrace the offer of salvation. The foreknowledge referred to might have been of many other things as constituting the reason which operated in the case; and it is not proper to assume that it could have been of this alone. It may mean that God foreknew all the events which would ever occur, and that He saw reasons why they should be selected rather than others; or that He foreknew all that could be made to bear on their salvation; or that He foreknew all that He would himself do to secure their salvation; or that He foreknew them as having been designated by his own eternal counsels; or that He foreknew all that could be accomplished by their instrumentality; or that He saw that they would believe; but it should not be assumed that the word means necessarily any one of these things.

The simple fact here affirmed, which no one can deny, is, that there was foreknowledge in the case on the part of God. It was not the result of Ignorance or of blind chance that they were selected. But if foreknown, must it not be certain? How could a thing which is foreknown be contingent or doubtful? The essential idea here is, that the original choice was on the part of God, and not on their part, and that this choice was founded on what He before knew to be best. He undoubtedly saw good and sufficient reasons why the choice should fall on them. I do not know that the reasons why he did it are revealed, or that they could be fully comprehended by us if they were. I am quite certain that it is not stated that it is because they would be more disposed of themselves to embrace the Saviour than others; for the Scriptures abundantly teach, what every regenerated person feels to be true, that the fact that we are disposed to embrace the Saviour is to be traced to a

divine influence on our hearts, and not to ourselves. See John 6:65; Romans 9:16; Titus 3:5; Psalm 110:2-3.

Through sanctification of the Spirit - The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. The Greek is, "by (ἐν en) sanctification of the Spirit;" that is, it was by this influence or agency. The election that was purposed by the Father was carried into effect by the agency of the Spirit in making them holy. The word rendered "sanctification" (ἁγιασμός hagiasmos) is not used here in its usual and technical sense to denote "the progressive holiness of believers," but in its more primitive and usual sense of "holiness." Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 1:30. It means here the being made holy; and the idea is, that we become in fact the chosen or elect of God by a work of the Spirit on our hearts making us holy; that is, renewing us in the divine image. We are chosen by the Father, but it is necessary that the heart should be renewed and made holy by a work of grace, in order that we may actually become His chosen people. Though we are sinners, He proposes to save us; but we are not saved in our sins, nor can we regard ourselves as the children of God until we have evidence that we are born again. The purpose of God to save us found us unholy, and we become in fact His friends by being renewed in the temper of our mind. A man has reason to think that he is one of the elect of God, just so far as he has evidence that he has been renewed by the Holy Spirit, and so far as he has holiness of heart and life, and no further.

Unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ - This expresses the design for which they had been chosen by the Father, and renewed by the Spirit. It was that they might obey God, and lead holy lives. On the phrase "unto obedience," see the notes at Romans 1:5. The phrase "unto sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," means to cleansing from sin, or to holiness, since it was by the sprinkling of that blood that they were to be made holy. See it explained in the notes at Hebrews 9:18-23; Hebrews 12:24.

Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied - See the notes at Romans 1:7. The phrase "be multiplied" means, "may it abound," or "may it be conferred abundantly on you." From this verse we may learn that they who are chosen should be holy. Just in proportion as they have evidence that God has chosen them at all, they have evidence that He has chosen them to be holy; and, in fact, all the evidence which any man can have that he is among the elect, is that he is practically a holy man, and desires to become

more and more so. No man can penetrate the secret counsels of the Almighty. No one can go up to heaven, and inspect the Book of Life to see if his name be there. No one should presume that his name is there without evidence. No one should depend on dreams, or raptures, or visions, as proof that his name is there. No one should expect a new revelation declaring to him that he is among the elect. All the proof which any man can have that he is among the chosen of God, is to be found in the evidences of personal piety; and any man who is willing to be a true Christian may have all that evidence in his own case. If anyone, then, wishes to settle the question whether he is among the elect or not, the way is plain. Let him become a true Christian, and the whole matter is determined, for that is all the proof which anyone has that he is chosen to salvation. Until a man is willing to do that, he should not complain of the doctrine of election. If he is not willing to become a Christian and to be saved, assuredly he should not complain that those who are think that they have evidence that they are the chosen of God.

Verse 3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ - See the notes at 2 Corinthians 1:3.

Which according to His abundant mercy - Margin, as in the Greek, "much." The idea is, that there was great mercy shown them in the fact that they were renewed. They had no claim to the favor, and the favor was great. People are not begotten to the hope of heaven because they have any claim on God, or because it would not be right for him to withhold the favor. See the notes at Ephesians 2:4.

Hath begotten us again - The meaning is, that as God is the Author of our life in a natural sense, so he is the Author of our second life by regeneration. The Saviour said, John 3:3 that "except a man be born again," or "begotten again," (γεννηθῆ ἄνωθεν gennēthē anōthen"he cannot see the kingdom of God." Peter here affirms that that change had occurred in regard to himself and those whom he was addressing. The word used here as a compound (ἀναγεννάω anagennaō) does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament, though it corresponds entirely with the words used by the Saviour in John 3:3, John 3:5, John 3:7. Perhaps the phrase "begotten again" would be better in each instance where the word occurs, the sense being rather that of being begotten again, than of being born again.

Unto a lively hope - The word lively we now use commonly in the sense of active, animated, quick; the word used here, however, means living, in contradistinction from that which is dead. The hope which they had, had living power. It was not cold, inoperative, dead. It was not a mere form - or a mere speculation - or a mere sentiment; it was that which was vital to their welfare, and which was active and powerful. On the nature of hope, see the notes at Romans 8:24. Compare Ephesians 2:12.

By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead - The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the foundation of our hope. It was a confirmation of what he declared as truth when he lived; it was a proof of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; it was a pledge that all who are united to him will be raised up. See the 2 Timothy 1:10 note; 1 Thessalonians 4:14 note. On this verse we may remark, that the fact that Christians are chosen to salvation should be a subject of gratitude and praise. Every man should rejoice that any of the race may be saved, and the world should be thankful for every new instance of divine favor in granting to anyone a hope of eternal life. Especially should this be a source of joy to true Christians. Well do they know that if God had not chosen them to salvation, they would have remained as thoughtless as others; if he had had no purpose of mercy toward them, they would never have been saved. Assuredly, if there is anything for which a man should be grateful, it is that God has so loved him as to give him the hope of eternal life; and if he has had an eternal purpose to do this, our gratitude should be proportionably increased.

Verse 4

To an inheritance - Through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus we now cherish the hope of that future inheritance in heaven. On the word inheritance, see the Acts 20:32 note; Ephesians 1:11, Ephesians 1:14, Ephesians 1:18 notes; Colossians 1:12 note. Christians are regarded as the adopted children of God, and heaven is spoken of as their inheritance - as what their Father will bestow on them as the proof of his love.

Incorruptible - It will not fade away and vanish, as that which we inherit in this world does. See the word explained in the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:25. The meaning here is, that the inheritance will be imperishable, or will endure forever. Here, to whatever we may be heirs, we must soon part with the inheritance; there it will be eternal.

And undefiled - See the Hebrews 7:26; Hebrews 13:4 notes; James 1:27 note. The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. As applied

to an inheritance, it means that it will be pure. It will not have been obtained by dishonesty, nor will it be held by fraud; it will not be such as will corrupt the soul, or tempt to extravagance, sensuality, and lust, as a rich inheritance often does here; it will be such that its eternal enjoyment will never tend in any manner to defile the heart. "How many estates," says Benson, "have been got by fraudulent and unjust methods; by poisoning, or in some other way murdering the right heir; by cheating of helpless orphans; by ruining the fatherless and widows; by oppressing their neighbors, or grinding the faces of the poor, and taking their garments or vineyards from them! But this future inheritance of the saints is stained by none of these vices; it is neither got nor detained by any of these methods; nor shall persons polluted with vice have any share in it." Here no one can be heir to an inheritance of gold or houses without danger of soon sinking into indolence, effeminacy, or vice; there the inheritance may be enjoyed forever, and the soul continually advance in knowledge, holiness, and the active service of God.

And that fadeth not away - Greek ἀμάραντον amarantonThis word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though the word ἀμαράντινος amarantinosoccurs in 1 Peter 5:4, applied to a crown or garland. The word is properly applied to that which does not fade or wither, in contradistinction from a flower that fades. It may then denote anything that is enduring, and is applied to the future inheritance of the saints to describe its perpetuity in all its brilliance and splendor, in contrast with the fading nature of all that is earthly. The idea here, therefore, is not precisely the same as is expressed by the word "incorruptible." Both words indeed denote perpetuity, but that refers to perpetuity in contrast with decay; this denotes perpetuity in the sense that everything there will be kept in its original brightness and beauty. The crown of glory, though worn for millions of ages, will not be dimmed; the golden streets will lose none of their luster; the flowers that bloom on the banks of the river of life will always be as rich in color, and as fragant, as when we first beheld them.

Reserved in heaven for you - Margin, "us." The difference in the text and the margin arises from the various readings in mss. The common reading is "for you." The sense is not materially affected. The idea is, that it is an inheritance appointed for us, and kept by one who can make it sure to us, and who will certainly bestow it upon us. Compare the Matthew 25:34 note; John 14:2 note; Colossians 1:5 note.

Verse 5

Who are kept by the power of God - That is, "kept" or preserved in the faith and hope of the gospel; who are preserved from apostacy, or so kept that you will finally obtain salvation. The word which is used here, and rendered "kept," (φρουρέω phroureōis rendered in 2 Corinthians 11:32, kept with a garrison; in Galatians 3:23, and here, kept; in Philemon 4:7, shall keep. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means to keep, as in a garrison or fortress; or as with a military watch. The idea is, that there was a faithful guardianship exercised over them to save them from danger, as a castle or garrison is watched to guard it against the approach of an enemy. The meaning is, that they were weak in themselves, and were surrounded by temptations; and that the only reason why they were preserved was, that God exerted his power to keep them. The only reason which any Christians have to suppose they will ever reach heaven, is the fact that God keeps them by his own power. Compare the Philemon 1:6 note; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:18 notes. If it were left to the will of man; to the strength of his own resolutions; to his power to meet temptations, and to any probability that he would of himself continue to walk in the path of life, there would be no certainty that anyone would be saved.

Through faith - That is, he does not keep us by the mere exertion of power, but he excites faith in our hearts, and makes that the means of keeping us. As long as we have faith in God, and in his promises, we are safe. When that fails, we are weak; and if it should fail altogether, we could not be saved. Compare the notes at Ephesians 2:8.

Unto salvation - Not preserved for a little period, and then suffered to fall away, but so kept as to be saved. We may remark here that Peter, as well as Paul, believed in the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. If he did not, how could he have addressed these Christians in this manner, and said that they were "kept by the power of God unto salvation?" What evidence could he have had that they would obtain salvation, unless he believed in the general truth that it was the purpose of God to keep all who were truly converted?

Ready to be revealed in the last time - That is, when the world shall close. Then it shall be made manifest to assembled worlds that such an inheritance was "reserved" for you, and that you were "kept" in order to inherit it. Compare Matthew 25:34. This verse, then, teaches that the doctrine that the saints will persevere and be saved, is true. They are "kept

by the power of God to salvation;" and as God has all power, and guards them with reference to this end, it cannot be but that they will be saved. It may be added:

(a)that it is very desirable that the doctrine should be true. Man is so weak and feeble, so liable to fall, and so exposed to temptation, that it is in itself every way a thing to be wished that his salvation should be in some safer hands than his own.

(b)If it is desirable that it should be true, it is fair to infer that it is true, for God has made all the arrangements for the salvation of his people which are really desirable and proper.

(c)The only security for the salvation of anyone is founded on that doctrine.

If it were left entirely to the hands of people, even the best of people, what assurance could there be that anyone could be saved? Did not Adam fall? Did not holy angels fall? Have not some of the best of men fallen into sin? And who has such a strength of holiness that he could certainly confide in it to make his own salvation sure? Any man must know little of himself, and of the human heart, who supposes that he has such a strength of virtue that he would never fall away if left to himself. But if this be so, then his only hope of salvation is in the fact that God intends to "keep his people by his own power through faith unto salvation."

Verse 6

Wherein ye greatly rejoice - In which hope of salvation. The idea is, that the prospect which they had of the future inheritance was to them a source of the highest joy, even in the midst of their many sufferings and trials. On the general grounds for rejoicing, see the Romans 5:1-2 notes; Philemon 3:1; Philemon 4:4 notes; 1 Thessalonians 5:16 note. See also the notes at 1 Peter 1:8. The particular meaning here is, that the hope which they had of their future inheritance enabled them to rejoice even in the midst of persecutions and trials. It not only sustained them, but it made them happy. That must be a valuable religion which will make people happy in the midst of persecutions and heavy calamities.

Though now for a season - A short period - ὀλίγον oligonIt would be in fact only for a brief period, even if it should continue through the whole of life. Compare the notes at 2 Corinthians 4:17; "Our light affliction which is but for a moment." It is possible, however, that Peter supposed that the

trials which they then experienced would soon pass over. They may have been suffering persecutions which he hoped would not long continue.

If need be - This phrase seems to have been thrown in here to intimate that there was a necessity for their afflictions, or that there was "need" that they should pass through these trials. There was some good to be accomplished by them, which made it desirable and proper that they should be thus afflicted. The sense is, "since there is need;" though the apostle expresses it more delicately by suggesting the possibility that there might be need of it, instead of saying absolutely that there was need. It is the kind of language which we would use in respect to one who was greatly afflicted, by suggesting to him, in the most tender manner, that there might be things in his character which God designed to correct by trials, instead of saying roughly and bluntly that such was undoubtedly the fact. We would not say to such a person, "you certainly needed this affliction to lead you to amend your life;" but, "it may be that there is something in your character which makes it desirable, or that God intends that some good results shall come from it which will show that it is wisely ordered."

Ye are in heaviness - Greek, "Ye are sorrowing," (λυπηθέντες lupēthentesyou are sad, or grieved, Matthew 14:9; Matthew 17:23.

Through manifold temptations - Through many kinds of trials, for so the word rendered "temptation" (πειρασμος peirasmos) means, James 1:2, James 1:12. See the notes at Matthew 4:1; Matthew 6:13. The meaning here is, that they now endured many things which were suited to try or test their faith. These might have consisted of poverty, persecution, sickness, or the efforts of ethers to lead them to renounce their religion, and to go back to their former state of unbelief. Anyone or all of these would try them, and would show whether their religion was genuine. On the various ways which God has of trying his people, compare the notes at Isaiah 28:23-29.

Verse 7

That the trial of your faith - The putting of your religion to the test, and showing what is its real nature. Compare James 1:3, James 1:12.

Being much more precious than of gold - This does not mean that their faith was much more precious than gold, but that the testing of it, (δοκίμιον dokimionthe process of showing whether it was or was not genuine, was a much more important and valuable process than that of testing gold in the fire. More important results were to be arrived at by it, and it was more desirable that it should be done.

That perisheth - Not that gold perishes by the process of being tried in the fire, for this is not the fact, and the connection does not demand this interpretation. The idea is, that gold, however valuable it is, is a perishable thing. It is not an enduring, imperishable, indestructible thing, like religion. It may not perish in the fire, but it will in some way, for it will not endure forever.

Though it be tried with fire - This refers to the gold. See the Greek. The meaning is, that gold, though it will bear the action of fire, is yet a destructible thing, and will not endure forever. It is more desirable to test religion than it is gold, because it is more valuable. It pertains to that which is eternal and indestructible, and it is therefore of more importance to show its true quality, and to free it from every improper mixture.

Might be found unto praise - That is, might be found to be genuine, and such as to meet the praise or commendation of the final judge.

And honor - That honor might be done to it before assembled worlds.

And glory - That it might be rewarded with that glory which will be then conferred on all who have shown, in the various trials of life, that they had true religion.

At the appearing of Jesus Christ - To judge the world. Compare Matthew 25:31; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1, 2 Timothy 4:8; Titus 2:13. From these two verses 1 Peter 1:6-7 we may learn:

I. That it is desirable that the faith of Christians should be tried:

(a) It is desirable to know whether that which appears to be religion is genuine, as it is desirable to know whether that which appears to be gold is genuine. To gold we apply the action of intense heat, that we may know whether it is what it appears to be; and as religion is of more value than gold, so it is more desirable that it should be subjected to the proper tests, that its nature may be ascertained. There is much which appears to be gold, which is of no value, as there is much which appears to be religion, which is of no value. The one is worth no more than the other, unless it is genuine.

(b) It is desirable in order to show its true value. It is of great importance to know what that which is claimed to be gold is worth for the purposes to which gold is usually applied; and so it is in regard to religion. Religion claims to be of more value to man than anything else. It asserts its power to do that for the intellect and the heart which nothing else can do; to impart consolation in the various trials of life which nothing else can impart; and to

give a support which nothing else can on the bed of death. It is very desirable, therefore, that in these various situations it should show its power; that is, that its friends should be in these various conditions, in order that they may illustrate the true value of religion.

(c) It is desirable that true religion should be separated from all alloy. There is often much alloy in gold, and it is desirable that it should be separated from it, in order that it may be pure. So it is in religion. It is often combined with much that is unholy and impure; much that dims its lustre and mars its beauty; much that prevents its producing the effect which it would otherwise produce. Gold is, indeed, often better, for some purposes, for having some alloy mixed with it; but not so with religion. It is never better for having a little pride, or vanity, or selfishness, or meanness, or worldliness, or sensuality mingled with it; and that which will remove these things from our religion will be a favor to us.

II. God takes various methods of trying his people, with a design to test the value of their piety, and to separate it from all impure mixtures:

(1) He tries his people by prosperity - often as decisive a test of piety as can be applied to it. There is much pretended piety, which will bear adversity, but which will not bear prosperity. The piety of a man is decisively tested by popularity; by the flatteries of the world; by a sudden increase of property; and in such circumstances it is often conclusively shown that there is no true religion in the soul.

(2) he tries his people in adversity. He lays his hand on them heavily, to show:

(a)whether they will bear up under their trials, and persevere in his service;

(b)to show whether their religion will keep them from murmuring or complaining;

(c)to show whether it is adapted to comfort and sustain the soul.

(3) he tries his people by sudden transition from one to the other. We get accustomed to a uniform course of life, whether it be joy or sorrow; and the religion which is adapted to a uniform course may be little suited to transitions from one condition of life to another. In prosperity we may have shown that we were grateful, and benevolent, and disposed to serve God; but our religion will be subjected to a new test, if we are suddenly reduced

to poverty. In sickness and poverty, we learn to be patient and resigned, and perhaps even happy. But the religion which we then cultivated may be little adapted to a sudden transition to prosperity; and in such a transition, there would be a new trial of our faith. That piety which shone so much on a bed of sickness, might be little suited to shine in circumstances of sudden prosperity. The human frame may become accustomed either to the intense cold of the polar regions, or to the burning heats of the equator; but in neither case might it bear a transition from one to the other. It is such a transition that is a more decisive test of its powers of endurance than either intense heat or cold, if steadily prolonged.

III. Religion will bear any trial which may be applied to it, just as gold will bear the action of fire.

IV. Religion is imperishable in its nature. Even the most pure gold will perish. Time will corrode it, or it will be worn away by use, or it will be destroyed at the universal conflagration; but time and use will not wear out religion, and it will live on through the fires that will consume everything else.

V. Christians should be willing to pass through trials:

(a)They will purify their religion, just as the fire will remove dross from gold.

(b)They will make it shine more brightly, just as gold does when it comes out of the furnace.

(c)They will disclose more fully its value.

(d)They will furnish an evidence that we shall be saved; for that religion which will bear the tests that God applies to it in the present life, will bear the test of the final trial.

Verse 8

Whom having not seen, ye love - This Epistle was addressed to those who were "strangers scattered abroad," (See the notes at 1 Peter 1:1) and it is evident that they had not personally seen the Lord Jesus. Yet they had heard of his character, his preaching, his sacrifice for sin, and his resurrection and ascension, and they had learned to love him:

(1) It is possible to love one whom we have not seen. Thus, we may love God, whom no "eye hath seen," (compare 1 John 4:20) and thus we may love a benefactor, from whom we have received important benefits, whom we have never beheld.

(2) we may love the character of one whom we have never seen, and from whom we may never have received any particular favors. We may love his uprightness, his patriotism, his benignity, as represented to us. We might love him the more if we should become personally acquainted with him, and if we should receive important favors from him; but it is possible to feel a sense of strong admiration for such a character in itself.

(3) that may be a very pure love which we have for one whom we have never seen. It may be based on simple excellence of character; and in such a case there is the least chance for any intermingling of selfishness, or any improper emotion of any kind.

(4) we may love a friend as really and as strongly when he is absent, as when he is with us. The wide ocean that rolls between us and a child, does not diminish the ardour of our affection for him; and the Christian friend that has gone to heaven, we may love no less than when he sat with us at the fireside.

(5) Millions, even hundreds of millions, have been led to love the Saviour, who have never seen him. They have seen - not with the physical eye, but with the eye of faith - the inimitable beauty of his character, and have been brought to love him with an ardor of affection which they never had for any other one.

(6) there is every reason why we should love him:

(a)His character is infinitely lovely.

(b)He has done more for us than any other one who ever lived among men.

He died for us, to redeem our souls. He rose, and brought life and immortality to light. He ever lives to intercede for us in heaven. He is employed in preparing mansions of rest for us in the skies, and he will come and take us to himself, that we may be with him forever. Such a Saviour ought to be loved, is loved, and will be loved. The strongest attachments

which have ever existed on earth have been for this unseen Saviour. There has been a love for him stronger than that for a father, or mother, or wife, or sister, or home, or country. It has been so strong, that thousands have been willing, on account of it, to bear the torture of the rack or the stake. It has been so strong, that thousands of youth of the finest minds, and the most flattering prospects of distinction, have been willing to leave the comforts of a civilized land, and to go among the benighted pagans, to tell them the story of a Saviour‘s life and death. It has been so strong, that unnumbered multitudes have longed, more than they have for all other things, that they might see him, and be with him, and abide with him forever and ever. Compare the notes at Philemon 1:23.

In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing - He is now in heaven, and to mortal eyes now invisible, like his Father. Faith in him is the source and fountain of our joy. It makes invisible things real, and enables us to feel and act, in view of them, with the same degree of certainty as if we saw them. Indeed, the conviction to the mind of a true believer that there is a Saviour, is as certain and as strong as if he saw him; and the same may be said of his conviction of the existence of heaven, and of eternal realities. If it should be said that faith may deceive us, we may reply:

(1) May not our physical senses also deceive us? Does the eye never deceive? Are there no optical illusions? Does the ear never deceive? Are there no sounds which are mistaken? Do the taste and the smell never deceive? Are we never mistaken in the report which they bring to us? And does the sense of feeling never deceive? Are we never mistaken in the size, the hardness, the figure of objects which we handle? But,

(2) for all the practical purposes of life, the senses are correct guides, and do not in general lead us astray. So,

(3) there are objects of faith about which we are never deceived, and where we do act and must act with the same confidence as if we had personally seen them. Are we deceived about the existence of London, or Paris, or Canton, though we may never have seen either? May not a merchant embark with perfect propriety in a commercial enterprise, on the supposition that there is such a place as London or Canton, though he has never seen them? Would he not be reputed mad, if he should refuse to do it on this ground? And so, may not a man, in believing that there is a heaven,

and in forming his plans for it, though he has not yet seen it, act as rationally and as wisely as he who forms his plans on the supposition that there is such a place as Canton?

Ye rejoice - Ye do rejoice; not merely ye ought to rejoice. It may be said of Christians that they do in fact rejoice; they are happy. The people of the world often suppose that religion makes its professors sad and melancholy. That there are those who have not great comfort in their religion, no one indeed can doubt; but this arises from several causes entirely independent of their religion. Some have melancholy temperaments, and are not happy in anything. Some have little evidence that they are Christians, and their sadness arises not from religion, but from the want of it. But that true religion does make its possessors happy, anyone may easily satisfy himself by asking any number of sincere Christians, of any denomination, whom he may meet. With one accord they will say to him that they have a happiness which they never found before; that however much they may have possessed of the wealth, the honors, and the pleasures of the world - and they who are now Christians have not all of them been strangers to these things - they never knew solid and substantial peace until they found it in religion And why should they not be believed? The world would believe them in other things; why will they not when they declare that religion does not make them gloomy, but happy?

With joy unspeakable - A very strong expression, and yet verified in thousands of cases among young converts, and among those in the maturer days of piety. There are thousands who can say that their happiness when they first had evidence that their sins were forgiven, that the burden of guilt was rolled away, and that they were the children of God, was unspeakable. They had no words to express it, it was so full and so new:

"Tongue can never express.
The sweet comfort and peace
Of a soul in its earliest love."

And so there have been thousands of mature Christians who can adopt the same language, and who could find no words to express the peace and joy which they have found in the love of Christ, and the hope of heaven. And why are not all Christians enabled to say constantly that they "rejoice with joy unspeakable?" Is it not a privilege which they might possess? Is there anything in the nature of religion which forbids it? Why should not

one be filled with constant joy who has the hope of dwelling in a world of glory forever? Compare John 14:27; John 16:22.

And full of glory -

(1)Of anticipated glory - of the prospect of enjoying the glory of heaven.

(2)of present glory - with a joy even now which is of the same nature as that in heaven; a happiness the same in kind, though not in degree, as that which will be ours in a brighter world.

The saints on earth partake of the same kind of joy which they will have in heaven; for the happiness of heaven will be but an expansion, a prolongation, and a purifying of that which they have here. Compare the notes at Ephesians 1:14.

Verse 9

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls - The result or object of your faith; that is, what your faith is designed and adapted to secure. Compare the notes at Romans 10:4. The word rendered receiving is used here as indicating that they would surely obtain that. They even now had such peace and joy in believing, that it furnished undoubted evidence that they would be saved; and such that it might be said that even now they were saved. The condition of one who is a true Christian here is so secure that it may even now be called salvation.

Verse 10

Of which salvation - Of the certainty that this system of religion, securing the salvation of the soul, would be revealed. The object of this reference to the prophets seems to be to lead them to value the religion which they professed more highly, and to encourage them to bear their trials with patience. They were in a condition, in many respects, far superior to that of the prophets. They had the full light of the gospel. The prophets saw it only at a distance and but dimly, and were obliged to search anxiously that they might understand the nature of that system of which they were appointed to furnish the comparatively obscure prophetic intimations.

The prophets - This language would imply that this had been a common and prevalent wish of the prophets.

Have enquired - This word is intensive. It means that they sought out, or scrutinized with care the revelations made to them, that they might understand exactly what was implied in that which they were appointed to record in respect to the salvation which was to be made known through the Messiah. See the following places where the same word is used which

occurs here: Luke 11:50-51; Acts 15:17; Romans 3:11; Hebrews 11:6; Hebrews 12:17.

And searched diligently - ἐξερευνάω exereunaōCompare Daniel 9:2-3. The word used here means to search out, to trace out, to explore. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament, though one of the words from which this is compounded (ἐρευνάω ereunaō) occurs. See John 5:39, (Notes) John 7:52; Romans 8:27; 1 Corinthians 2:10; Revelation 2:23. The idea is, that they perceived that in their communications there were some great and glorious truths which they did not fully comprehend, and that they diligently employed their natural faculties to understand that which they were appointed to impart to succeeding generations. They thus became students and interpreters for themselves of their own predictions. They were not only prophets, but men. They had souls to be saved in the same way as others. They had hearts to be sanctified by the truth; and it was needful, in order to this, that truth should be applied to their own hearts in the same way as to others. The mere fact that they were the channels or organs for imparting truth to others would not save them, any more than the fact that a man now preaches truth to others will save himself, or than the fact that a sutler delivers bread to an army will nourish and support his own body.

Who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you - Of the favor that should be shown to you in the gospel. Though the predictions which they uttered appeared to the people of their own times, and perhaps to themselves, obscure, yet they were in fact prophecies of what was to come, and of the favors which, under another dispensation, would be bestowed upon the people of God. The apostle does not mean to say that they prophesied particularly of those persons to whom he was then writing, but that their prophecies were in fact for their benefit, for the things which they predicted had actually terminated on them. The benefit was as real as though the predictions had been solely on their account.

Verse 11

Searching what - That is, examining their own predictions with care, to ascertain what they meant. They studied them as we do the predictions which others have made; and though the prophets were the medium through which the truth was made known, yet their own predictions became a subject of careful investigation to themselves. The expression used here in the original, rendered "what," (εἰς τίνα eis tinaliterally, "unto what," may mean, so far as the Greek is concerned, either "what time," or "what

people," or "what person;" that is, with reference to what person the prophecies were really uttered. The latter, it seems to me, is the correct interpretation, meaning that they inquired in regard to him, who he would be, what would be his character, and what would be the nature of the work which he would perform. There can be no doubt that they understood that their predictions related to the Messiah; but still it is not improper to suppose that it was with them an interesting inquiry what sort of a person he would be, and what would be the nature of the work which he would perform.

This interpretation of the phrase εἰς τίνα eis tina(unto what or whom) it should be observed, however, is not that which is commonly given of the passage. Bloomfield, Rosenmuller, Doddridge, Whitby, Benson, and Grotius suppose it to refer to time, meaning that they inquired at what time, or when these things would occur. Macknight thinks it refers "to people," (λαον laonmeaning that they diligently inquired what people would put him to death. But the most obvious interpretation is that which I have suggested above, meaning that they made particular inquiry to whom their prophecies related - what was his rank and character, and what was to be the nature of his work. What would be a more natural inquiry for them than this? What would be more important? And how interesting is the thought that when Isaiah, for example, had given utterance to the sublime predictions which we now have of the Messiah, in his prophecies, he sat himself down with the spirit of a little child, to learn by prayer and study, what was fully implied in the amazing words which the Spirit had taught him to record! How much of mystery might seem still to hang around the subject And how intent would such a mind be to know what was the full import of those words!

Or what manner of time - This phrase, in Greek, (ποῖον καιρὸν poion kaironwould properly relate, not to the exact time when these things would occur, but to the character or condition of the age when they would take place; perhaps referring to the state of the world at that period, the preparation to receive the gospel, and the probable manner in which the great message would be received. Perhaps, however, the inquiry in their minds pertained to the time when the predictions would be fulfilled, as well as to the condition of the world when the event takes place. The meaning of the Greek phrase would not exclude this latter sense. There are not unfrequent indications of time in the prophets, (compare Daniel 9:24 ff) and

these indications were of so clear a character, that when the Saviour actually appeared there was a general expectation that the event would then occur. See the notes at Matthew 2:9.

The Spirit of Christ which was in them - This does not prove that they knew that this was the Spirit of Christ, but is only a declaration of Peter that it was actually so. It is not probable that the prophets distinctly understood that the Spirit of inspiration, by which they were led to foretell future events, was especially the Spirit of Christ. They understood that they were inspired; but there is no intimation, with which I am acquainted, in their writings, that they regarded themselves as inspired by the Messiah. It was not improper, however, for Peter to say that the Spirit by which they were influenced was in fact the Spirit of Christ, so called because that Spirit which suggested these future events to them was given as the great Medium of all revealed truth to the world. Compare Hebrews 1:3; John 1:9; John 14:16, John 14:26; John 16:7; Isaiah 49:6. It is clear from this passage:

(1)that Christ must have had an existence before his incarnation; and,

(2)that he must have understood then what would occur to him when he should become incarnate; that is, it must have been arranged or determined beforehand,

Did signify - Meant to intimate or manifest to them, ἐδήλου edēlouor what was implied in the communications made to them.

When it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ - As Isaiah, Isaiah 53:1-12; Daniel, Daniel 9:25-27. They saw clearly that the Messiah was to suffer; and doubtless this was the common doctrine of the prophets, and the common expectation of the pious part of the Jewish nation. Yet it is not necessary to suppose that they had clear apprehensions of his sufferings, or were able to reconcile all that was said on that subject with what was said of his glory and his triumphs. There was much about those sufferings which they wished to learn, as there is much still which we desire to know. We have no reason to suppose that there were any views of the sufferings of the Messiah communicated to the prophets except what we now have in the Old Testament; and to see the force of what Peter says, we ought to imagine what would be our views of him if all that we have known of Christ as history were obliterated, and we had only the knowledge which we could derive from the Old Testament. As has been already intimated, it is probable that they studied their own predictions, just as we would study them if we

had not the advantage of applying to them the facts which have actually occurred.

And the glory that should follow - That is, they saw that there would be glory which would be the result of his sufferings, but they did not clearly see what it would be. They had some knowledge that he would be raised from the dead, (Psalm 16:8-11; Compare Acts 2:25-28) they knew that he would "see of the travail of his soul, and would be satisfied," Isaiah 53:11 they had some large views of the effects of the gospel on the nations of the earth, Isaiah 25:7-8; 60; 66. But there were many things respecting his glorification which it cannot be supposed they clearly understood; and it is reasonable to presume that they made the comparatively few and obscure intimations in their own writings in relation to this, the subject of profound and prayerful inquiry.

Verse 12

Unto whom it was revealed - They were not permitted to know fully the import of the predictions which they were made the instruments of communicating to mankind, but they understood that they were intended for the benefit of future ages.

That not unto themselves - We are not to suppose that they derived no benefit from their own predictions; for, as far as they understood the truth, it was as much adapted to sanctify and comfort them as it is us now: but the meaning is, that their messages had reference mainly to future times, and that the full benefit of them would be experienced only in distant ages. Compare Hebrews 11:39-40.

Unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you - Not unto us by name, but their ministrations had reference to the times of the Messiah; and those to whom Peter wrote, in common with all Christians, were those who were to enjoy the fruits of the communications which they made. The word reported means announced, or made known.

By them that have preached the gospel unto you - The apostles, who have made known unto you, in their true sense, the things which the prophets predicted, the import of which they themselves were so desirous of understanding.

With the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven - Accompanied by the influences of the Holy Spirit bearing those truths to the heart, and confirming them to the soul. It was the same Spirit which inspired the prophets which conveyed those truths to the souls of the early Christians,

and which discloses them to true believers in every age. Compare John 16:13-14; Acts 2:4; Acts 10:44-45. The object of Peter by thus referring to the prophets, and to the interest which they took in the things which those to whom he wrote now enjoyed, seems to have been, to impress on them a deep sense of the value of the gospel, and of the great privileges which they enjoyed. They were reaping the benefit of all the labors of the prophets. They were permitted to see truth clearly, which the prophets themselves saw only obscurely. They were, in many respects, more favored than even those holy men had been. It was for them that the prophets had spoken the word of the Lord: for them and their salvation that a long line of the most holy men that the world ever saw, had lived, and toiled, and suffered; and while they themselves had not been allowed to understand the fall import of their own predictions, the most humble believer was permitted to see what the most distinguished prophet never saw. See Matthew 13:17.

Which things the angels desire to look into - The object of this reference to the angels is the same as that to the prophets. It is to impress on Christians a sense of the value of that gospel which they had received, and to show them the greatness of their privileges in being made partakers of it. It had excited the deepest interest among the most holy men on earth, and even among the inhabitants of the skies. They were enjoying the full revelation of what even the angels had desired more fully to understand, and to comprehend which they had employed their great powers of investigation. The things which are here referred to, εἰς ἅ eis ha- unto which) are those which the prophets were so desirous to understand - the great truths respecting the sufferings of Christ, the glory which would follow, and the nature and effects of the gospel. In all the events pertaining to the redemption of a world they felt a deep interest.

The word which is rendered "to look," (παρακύψαι parakupsaiis rendered "stooping down," and "stooped down," in Luke 24:12; John 20:5, John 20:11; looketh, in James 1:25; and look, in the place before us. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It properly means, to stoop down near by anything; to bend forward near, in order to look at anything more closely - Robinson, Lexicon. It would denote that state where one, who was before at so great a distance that he could not clearly see an object, should draw nearer, stooping down in order that he might observe it more distinctly. It is possible, as Grotius supposes, that there may be an allusion here to the posture of the cherubim over the mercy-seat, represented as

looking down with an intense gaze, as if to behold what was in the ark. But it is not necessary to suppose that this is the allusion, nor is it absolutely certain that that was the posture of the cherubim. See the notes at Hebrews 9:5. All that is necessarily implied in the language is, that the angels had an intense desire to look into these things; that they contemplated them with interest and fixed attention, like one who comes near to an object, and looks narrowly upon it. In illustration of this sentiment, we may make the following suggestions:

I. The angels, doubtless, desire to look into all the manifestations of the character of God, wherever those manifestations are made:

(1)It is not unreasonable to suppose that, to a great degree, they acquire the knowledge of God as all other creatures do. They are not omniscient, and cannot be supposed to comprehend at a glance all his doings.

(2)they doubtless employ their faculties, substantially as we do, in the investigation of truth; that is, from things known they seek to learn those that are even unknown.

(3)it is not unreasonable to suppose that there are many things in relation to the divine character and plans, which they do not yet understand. They know, undoubtedly, much more than we do; but there are plans and purposes of God which are yet made known to none of his creatures. No one can doubt that these plans and purposes must be the object of the attentive study of all holy created minds.

(4)they doubtless feel a great interest in the welfare of other beings - of their fellow-creatures, wherever they are. There is in the universe one great brotherhood, embracing all the creatures of God.

(5)they cannot but feel a deep interest in man - a fallen creature, tempted, suffering, dying, and exposed to eternal death. This they have shown in every period of the world‘s history. See the notes at Hebrews 1:14.

II. It is probable, that in each one of the worlds which God has made, there is some unique manifestation of his glory and character; something which is not to be found at all in any other world, or, if found, not in so

great perfection; and that the angels would feel a deep interest in all these manifestations, and would desire to look into them:

(1) This is probable from the nature of the case, and from the variety which we see in the form, size, movements, and glory of the heavenly orbs. There is no reason to suppose, that on any one of those worlds all the glory of the divine character would be manifest, which he intends to, make known to the universe.

(2) this is probable from what we can now see of the worlds which he has made. We know as yet comparatively little of the heavenly bodies, and of the manifestations of the Deity there; and yet, as far as we can see, there must be far more striking exhibitions of the power, and wisdom, and glory of God, in many or most of those worlds that roll above us, than there are on our earth. On the body of the sun - on the planets Jupiter and Saturn, so vast in comparison with the earth - there must be far more impressive exhibitions of the glory of the Creator, than there is on our little planet. Saturn, for example, is 82,000 miles in diameter, 1,100 times as large as our earth; it moves at the rate of 22,000 miles an hour; it is encircled by two magnificent rings, 5,000 miles apart, the innermost of which is 21,000 miles from the body of the planet, and 22,000 miles in breadth, forming a vast illuminated arch over the planet above the brightness of our moon, and giving a most beautiful appearance to the heavens there. It is also, doubtless, true of all the worlds which God has made, that in each one of them there may be some unique manifestation of the glory of the Deity.

(3) the universe, therefore, seems suited to give eternal employment to mind in contemplating it; and, in the worlds which God has made, there is enough to employ the study of his creatures forever. On our own world, the most diligent and pious student of the works of God might spend many thousand years, and then leave much, very much, which he did not comprehend; and it may yet be the eternal employment of holy minds to range from world to world, and in each new world to find much to study and to admire; much that shall proclaim the wisdom, power, love, and goodness of God, which had not elsewhere been seen.

(4) our world, therefore, though small, a mere speck in creation, may have something to manifest the glory of the Creator which may not exist in

any other. It cannot be its magnitude; for, in that respect, it is among the smallest which God has made. It may not be the height and the majesty of our mountains, or the length and beauty of our rivers, or the fragrance of our flowers, or the clearness of our sky; for, in these respects, there may be much more to admire in other worlds: it is the exhibition of the character of God in the work of redemption; the illustration of the way in which a sinner may be forgiven; the manifestation of the Deity as incarnate, assuming permanently a union with one of his own creatures. This, so far as we know, is seen in no other part of the universe; "and this is honor enough for one world." To see this, the angels may be attracted down to earth. When they come, they come not to contemplate our works of art, our painting and our sculpture, or to read our hooks of science or poetry: they come to gather around the cross, to minister to the Saviour, to attend on his steps while living, and to watch over his body when dead; to witness his resurrection and ascension, and to bless, with their offices of kindness, those whom he died to redeem, Hebrews 1:4.

III. What, then, is there in our world which we may suppose would attract their attention? What is there which they would not see in other worlds? I answer, that the manifestation of the divine character in the plan of redemption, is that which would especially attract their attention here, and lead them from heaven down to earth:

(1) The mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God would be to them an object of the deepest interest. This, so far as we know, or have reason to suppose, has occurred nowhere else. There is no evidence that in any other world God has taken upon himself the form of one of his own creatures dwelling there, and stooped to live and act like one of them; to mingle with them; to share their feelings; and to submit to toil, and want, and sacrifice, for their welfare.

(2) the fact that the guilty could be pardoned would attract their attention, for:

(a) it is elsewhere unknown, no inhabitant of heaven having the need of pardon, and no offer of pardon having been made to a rebel angel.

(b) There are great and difficult questions about the whole subject of forgiveness, which an angel could easily see, but which he could not so easily solve. How could it be done consistently with the justice and truth of God? How could he forgive, and yet maintain the honor of his own law, and the stability of his own throne? There is no more difficult subject in a human administration than that of pardon; and there is none which so much perplexes those who are entrusted with executive power.

(3) the way in which pardon has been shown to the guilty here would excite their deep attention. It has been in a manner entirely consistent with justice and truth; showing, through the great sacrifice made on the cross, that the attributes of justice and mercy may both be exercised: that, while God may pardon to any extent, he does it in no instance at the expense of justice and truth. This blending of the attributes of the Almighty in beautiful harmony; this manifesting of mercy to the guilty and the lost; this raising up a fallen and rebellious race to the favor and friendship of God; and this opening before a dying creature the hope of immortality, was what could be seen by the angels nowhere else: and hence, it is no wonder that they hasten with such interest to our world, to learn the mysteries of redeeming love. Every step in the process of recovering a sinner must be new to them, for it is unseen elsewhere; and the whole work, the atonement, the pardon and renovation of the sinner, the conflict of the child of God with his spiritual foes, the supports of religion in the time of sickness and temptation, the bed of death, the sleep in the tomb, the separate flight of the soul to its final abode, the resurrection of the body, and the solemn scenes of the judgment, all must open new fields of thought to an angelic mind, and attract the heavenly inhabitants to our world, to learn here what they cannot learn in their own abodes, however otherwise bright, where sin, and suffering, and death, and redemption are unknown. In view of these truths we may add:

(1) The work of redemption is worthy of the study of the profoundest minds. Higher talent than any earthly talent has been employed in studying it; for, to the most exalted intellects of heaven, it has been a theme of the deepest interest. No mind on earth is too exalted to be engaged in this study; no intellect here is so profound that it would not find in this study a range of inquiry worthy of itself.

(2) this is a study that is especially appropriate to man. The angels have no other interest in it than that which arises from a desire to know God, and from a benevolent regard for the welfare of others; we have a personal interest in it of the highest kind. It pertains primarily to us. The plan was formed for us. Our eternal all depends upon it. The angels would be safe and happy it they did not fully understand it; if we do not understand it, we are lost forever. It has claims to their attention as a wonderful exhibition of the character and purposes of God, and as they are interested in the welfare of others; it claims our attention because our eternal welfare depends on our accepting the offer of mercy made through a Saviour‘s blood.

(3) how amazing, then, how wonderful, is the indifference of man to this great and glorious work! How wonderful, that neither as a matter of speculation, nor of personal concern, he can be induced “to look into these things!” How wonderful that all other subjects engross his attention, and excite inquiry; but that for this he feels no concern, and that here he finds nothing to interest him! It is not unreasonable to suppose, that amidst all the other topics of wonder in this plan as seen by angels, this is not the least - that man by nature takes no interest in it; that in so stupendous a work, performed in his own world, he feels no concern; that he is unmoved when he is told that even God became incarnate, and appeared on the earth where he himself dwells; and that, busy and interested as he is in other things, often of a most trifling nature, he has no concern for that on which is suspended his own eternal happiness. If heaven was held in mute astonishment when the Son of God left the courts of glory to be poor, to be persecuted, to bleed, and to die, not less must be the astonishment than when, from those lofty heights, the angelic hosts look down upon a race unconcerned amidst wonders such as those of the incarnation and the atonement!

Verse 13

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind - The allusion here is to the manner in which the Orientals were accustomed to dress. They wear loose, flowing robes, so that, when they wish to run, or to fight, or to apply themselves to any business, they are obliged to bind their garments close around them. See the notes at Matthew 5:38-41. The meaning here is, that they were to have their minds in constant preparation to discharge the

duties, or to endure the trials of life - like those who were prepared for labor, for a race, or for a conflict.

Be sober - See the 1 Timothy 3:2 note; Titus 1:8; Titus 2:2 notes.

And hope to the end - Margin, "perfectly." The translation in the text is the most correct. It means that they were not to become faint or weary in their trials. They were not to abandon the hopes of the gospel, but were to cherish those hopes to the end of life, whatever opposition they might meet with, and however much might be done by others to induce them to apostatize. Compare the notes at Hebrews 10:35-36.

For the grace that is to be brought unto you - For the favor that shall then be bestowed upon you; to wit, salvation. The word brought here means, that this great favor which they hoped for would be borne to them by the Saviour on his return from heaven.

At the revelation of Jesus Christ - When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in his glory; that is, when he comes to judge the world. See the notes at 2 Thessalonians 1:7.

Verse 14

As obedient children - That is, conduct yourselves as becomes the children of God, by obeying his commands; by submitting to His will; and by manifesting unwavering confidence in him as your Father at all times.

Not fashioning yourselves - Not forming or modeling your life. Compare the notes at Romans 12:2. The idea is, that they were to have some model or example, in accordance with which they were to frame their lives, but that they were not to make their own former principles and conduct the model. The Christian is to be as different from what he was himself before conversion as he is from his fellow-men. He is to be governed by new laws, to aim at new objects, and to mould his life in accordance with new principles. Before conversion, he was:

(a)supremely selfish;

(b)he lived for personal gratification;

(c)he gave free indulgence to his appetites and passions, restrained only by a respect for the decencies of life, and by a reference to his own health, property, or reputation, without regard to the will of God;

(d)he conformed himself to the customs and opinions around him, rather than to the requirements of his Maker;

(e)he lived for worldly aggrandizements, his supreme object being wealth or fame; or,

(f)in many cases, those who are now Christians, gave indulgence to every passion which they wished to gratify, regardless of reputation, health, property, or salvation.

Now they are to be governed by a different rule, and their own former standard of morals and of opinions is no longer their guide, but the will of God.

According to the former lusts in your ignorance - When you were ignorant of the requirements of the gospel, and gave yourselves up to the unrestrained indulgence of your passions.

Verse 15

But as he which hath called you is holy - On the word called, see the notes at Ephesians 4:1. The meaning here is, that the model or example in accordance with which they were to frame their lives, should be the character of that God who had called them into his kingdom. They were to be like him. Compare the notes at Matthew 5:48.

So be ye holy in all manner of conversation - In all your conduct. On the word "conversation," see the notes at Philemon 1:27. The meaning is, that since God is holy, and we profess to be his followers, we also ought to be holy.

Verse 16

Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy - Leviticus 11:44. This command was addressed at first to the Israelites, but it is with equal propriety addressed to Christians, as the professed people of God. The foundation of the command is, that they professed to be his people, and that as his people they ought to be like their God. Compare Micah 4:5. It is a great truth, that people everywhere will imitate the God whom they worship. They will form their character in accordance with his. They will regard what he does as right. They will attempt to rise no higher in virtue than the God whom they adore, and they will practice freely what he is supposed to do or approve. Hence, by knowing what are the characteristics of the gods which are worshipped by any people, we may form a correct estimate of the character of the people themselves; and, hence, as the God who is the object of the Christian's worship is perfectly holy, the character

of His worshipers should also be holy. And hence, also, we may see that the tendency of true religion is to make people pure. As the worship of the impure gods of the pagan moulds the character of the worshippers into their image, so the worship of Yahweh moulds the character of His professed friends into His image, and they become like him.

Verse 17

And if ye call on the Father - That is, if you are true Christians, or truly pious - piety being represented in the Scriptures as calling on God, or as the worship of God. Compare Acts 9:11; Genesis 4:26; 1 Kings 18:24; Psalm 116:17; 2 Kings 5:11; 1 Chronicles 16:8; Joel 2:32; Romans 10:13; Zephaniah 3:9; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 2:21. The word "Father" here is used evidently not to denote the Father in contradistinction to the Son, but as referring to God as the Father of the universe. See 1 Peter 1:14 - "As obedient children." God is often spoken of as the Father of the intelligent beings whom he has made. Christians worship Him as a Father - as one having all the feelings of a kind and tender parent toward them. Compare Psalm 103:13, following.

Who without respect of persons - Impartiality. One who is not influenced in His treatment of people by a regard to rank, wealth, beauty, or any external distinction. See the Acts 10:34 note, and Romans 2:11 note.

Judgeth according to every man's work - He judges each one according to his character; or to what he has done, Revelation 22:12. See the notes at 2 Corinthians 5:10. The meaning is: "You worship a God who will judge every person according to his real character, and you should therefore lead such lives as he can approve."

Pass the time of your sojourning - "Of your temporary residence on earth. This is not your permanent home, but you are strangers and sojourners." See the notes at Hebrews 11:13.

In fear - See the Philemon 2:12 note; Hebrews 12:28 note. With true reverence or veneration for God and His law. Religion is often represented as the reverent fear of God, Deuteronomy 6:2, Deuteronomy 6:13, Deuteronomy 6:24; Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 3:13; Proverbs 14:26-27, et saepe al.

Verse 18

Forasmuch as ye know - This is an argument for a holy life, derived from the fact that they were redeemed, and from the manner in which their redemption had been effected. There is no more effectual way to induce true

Christians to consecrate themselves entirely to God, than to refer them to the fact that they are not their own, but have been purchased by the blood of Christ.

That ye were not redeemed - On the word rendered "redeemed," (λυτρόω lutroōsee the notes at Titus 2:14. The word occurs in the New Testament only in Luke 24:21; Titus 2:14, and in this place. The noun (λύτρον lutron) is found in Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45, rendered ransom. For the meaning of the similar word, (ἀπολύτρωσις apolutrōsissee the notes at Romans 3:24. This word occurs in Luke 21:28; Romans 3:24; Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:7, Ephesians 1:14; Ephesians 4:30; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:15, in all which places it is rendered redemption; and in Hebrews 11:35, where it is rendered "deliverance." The word here means that they were rescued from sin and death by the blood of Christ, as the valuable consideration on account of which it was done; that is, the blood, or the life of Christ offered as a sacrifice, effected the same purpose in regard to justice and to the maintenance of the principles of moral government, which the punishment of the sinner himself would have done. It was that which God was pleased to accept in the place of the punishment of the sinner, as answering the same great ends in his administration. The principles of his truth and justice could as certainly be maintained in this way as by the punishment of the guilty themselves. If so, then there was no obstacle to their salvation; and they might, on repentance, be consistently pardoned and taken to heaven.

With corruptible things, as silver and gold - On the word "corruptible," as applicable to gold, see the notes at 1 Peter 1:7. Silver and gold usually constitute the price or the valuable consideration paid for the redemption of captives. It is clear that the obligation of one who is redeemed, to love his benefactor, is in proportion to the price which is paid for his ransom. The idea here is, that a price far more valuable than any amount of silver or gold had been paid for the redemption of the people of God, and that they were under proportionate obligation to devote themselves to his service. They were redeemed by the life of the Son of God offered in their behalf; and between the value of that life and silver and gold there could be no comparison.

From your vain conversation - Your "vain conduct, or manner of life." See the notes at 1 Peter 1:15. The word "vain," applied to conduct, (ματαίας mataiasmeans properly "empty, fruitless." It is a word often applied

to the worship of idols, as being nothing, worthless, unable to help, Acts 14:15; 1 Kings 16:13; 2 Kings 17:15; Jeremiah 2:5, Jeremiah 2:8, Jeremiah 2:19 and is probably used in a similar sense in this place. The apostle refers to their former worship of idols, and to all the abominations connected with that service, as being vain and unprofitable; as the worship of nothing real (compare 1 Corinthians 8:4, "We know that an idol is nothing in the world'), and as resulting in a course of life that answered none of the proper ends of living. From that they had been redeemed by the blood of Christ.

Received by tradition from your fathers - The mode of worship which had been handed down from father to son. The worship of idols depends on no better reason than that it is that which has been practiced in ancient times; and it is kept up now in all lands, in a great degree, only by the fact that it has had the sanction of the venerated people of other generations.

Verse 19

But with the precious blood of Christ - On the use of the word blood, and the reason why the efficacy of the atonement is said to be in the blood, see the notes at Romans 3:25. The word "precious" (τίμιος timios) is a word which would be applied to that which is worth much; which is costly. Compare for the use of the noun (τιμή timē) in this sense, Matthew 27:6, "The price of blood;" Acts 4:34; Acts 5:2-3; Acts 7:16. See also for the use of the adjective, (τίμιος timios Revelation 17:4, "gold and precious stones" Revelation 18:12, "vessels of most precious wood." Revelation 21:11, "a stone most precious." The meaning here is, that the blood of Christ had a value above silver and gold; it was worth more, to wit:

(1)in itself - being a more valuable thing - and,

(2)in effecting our redemption. It accomplished what silver and gold could not do. The universe had nothing more valuable to offer, of which we can conceive, than the blood of the Son of God.

As of a lamb - That is, of Christ regarded as a lamb offered for sacrifice. See the notes at John 1:29.

Without blemish and without spot - Such a lamb only was allowed to be offered in sacrifice, Leviticus 22:20-24; Malachi 1:8. This was required:

(1)because it was proper that man should offer that which was regarded as perfect in its kind; and,

(2)because only that would be a proper symbol of the great sacrifice which was to be made by the Son of God. The idea was thus kept up from

age to age that he, of whom all these victims were the emblems, would be perfectly pure.

Verse 20

Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world - That is, it was foreordained, or predetermined, that he should be the great stoning Sacrifice for sin. On the meaning of the word "foreordained," (προγινώσκω proginōskōsee Romans 8:29. The word is rendered which knew, Acts 26:5; foreknew and foreknow, Romans 8:29; Romans 11:2; foreordained, 1 Peter 1:20; and know before, 2 Peter 2:17. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The sense is, that the plan was formed, and the arrangements made for the atonement, before the world was created.

Before the foundation of the world - That is, from eternity. It was before man was formed; before the earth was made; before any of the material universe was brought into being; before the angels were created. Compare the Matthew 25:34 note; John 17:24 note; Ephesians 1:4 note.

But was manifest - Was revealed. See the notes at 1 Timothy 3:16.

In these last times - In this, the last dispensation of things on the earth. See the notes at Hebrews 1:2.

For you - For your benefit or advantage. See the notes at 1 Peter 1:12. It follows from what is said in this verse:

(1)that the atonement was not an afterthought on the part of God. It entered into his plan when he made the world, and was revolved in his purposes from eternity.

(2)it was not a device to supply a defect in the system; that is, it was not adopted because the system did not work well, or because God had been disappointed. It was arranged before man was created, and when none but God could know whether he would stand or fall.

(3)the creation of the earth must have had some reference to this plan of redemption, and that plan must have been regarded as in itself so glorious, and so desirable, that it was deemed best to bring the world into existence that the plan might be developed, though it would involve the certainty that the race would fall, and that many would perish. It was, on the whole, more wise and benevolent that the race should be created with a certainty that they would apostatize, than it would be that the race should not he created,

and the plan of salvation be unknown to distant worlds. See the notes at 1 Peter 1:12.

Verse 21

Who by him do believe in God - Faith is sometimes represented particularly as exercised in God, and sometimes in Christ. It is always a characteristic of true religion that a man has faith in God. Compare the notes at Mark 11:22.

That raised him up from the dead - See the Acts 2:24; Acts 3:15, Acts 3:26; Acts 4:10; Acts 5:30; Acts 13:30 notes; Romans 4:24; Romans 6:4 notes; 1 Corinthians 15:15 note.

And gave him glory - By exalting him at his own right hand in heaven, Philemon 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 1:20-21.

That your faith and hope might be in God - That is, by raising up the Lord Jesus, and exalting him to heaven, he has laid the foundation of confidence in his promises, and of the hope of eternal life. Compare the notes at 1 Peter 1:3. Compare Colossians 1:27; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Timothy 1:1.

Verse 22

Seeing ye have purified your souls - Greek, "Having purified your souls." The apostles were never afraid of referring to human agency as having an important part in saving the soul Compare 1 Corinthians 4:15. No one is made pure without personal intention or effort - any more than one becomes accomplished or learned without personal exertion. One of the leading effects of the agency of the Holy Spirit is to excite us to make efforts for our own salvation; and there is no true piety which is not the fair result of culture, as really as the learning of a Person, or the harvest of the farmer. The amount of effort which we make "in purifying our souls" is usually also the measure of our attainments in religion. No one can expect to have any true piety beyond the amount of effort which he makes to be conformed to God, any more than one can expect wealth, or fame, or learning, without exertion.

In obeying the truth - That is, your yielding to the requirements of truth, and to its fair influence on your minds, has been the means of your becoming pure. The truth here referred to is, undoubtedly, that which is revealed in the gospel - the great system of truth respecting the redemption of the world.

Through the Spirit - By the agency of the Holy Spirit. It is his office to apply truth to the mind; and however precious the truth may be, and however adapted to secure certain results on the soul, it will never produce those effects without the influences of the Holy Spirit. Compare Titus 3:5-6; the notes at John 3:5.

Unto unfeigned love of the brethren - The effect of the influence of the Holy Spirit in applying the truth has been to produce sincere love to all who are true Christians. Compare the John 13:34 note; 1 Thessalonians 4:9 note. See also 1 John 3:14-18.

See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently - Compare the Hebrews 13:1 note; John 13:34-35 notes; Ephesians 5:2 note. The phrase "with a pure heart fervently," means:

(1)that it should be genuine love proceeding from a heart in which there is no guile or hypocrisy; and,

(2)that it should be intense affection, (ἐκτενῶς ektenōsnot cold and formal, but ardent and strong.

If there is any reason why we should love true Christians at all, there is the same reason why our attachment to them should be intense. This verse establishes the following points:

(1) That truth was at the foundation of their piety. They had none of which this was not the proper basis; and in which the foundation was not as broad as the superstructure. There is no religion in the world which is not the fair developement of truth; which the truth is not suited to produce.

(2) they became Christians as the result of obeying the truth; or by yielding to its fair influence on the soul. Their own minds complied with its claims; their own hearts yielded; there was the exercise of their own volitions. This expresses a doctrine of great importance:

(a)There is always the exercise of the powers of the mind in true religion; always a yielding to truth; always a voluntary reception of it into the soul.

(b)Religion is always of the nature of obedience. It consists in yielding to what is true and right; in laying aside the feelings of opposition, and in allowing the mind to follow where truth and duty lead.

(c)This would always take place when the truth is presented to the mind, if there were no voluntary resistance. If all people were ready to yield to the truth, they would become Christians. The only reason why all people do not

love and serve God is that they refuse to yield to what they know to be true and right.

(3) the agency by which this was accomplished was that of the Holy Spirit. Truth is adapted in itself to a certain end or result, as seed is adapted to produce a harvest. But it will no more of itself produce its appropriate effects on the soul, than seed will produce a harvest without rains, and dews, and suns. In all cases, therefore, the proper effect of truth on the soul is to be traced to the influence of the Holy Spirit, as the germination of the seed in the earth is to the foreign cause that acts on it. No man was ever converted by the mere effect of truth without the agency of the Holy Spirit, any more than seed germinates when laid upon a hard rock.

(4) the effect of this influence of the Holy Spirit in applying the truth is to produce love to all who are Christians. Love to Christian brethren springs up in the soul of everyone who is truly converted: and this love is just as certain evidence that the seed of truth has germinated in the soul, as the green and delicate blade that peeps up through the earth is evidence that the seed sown has been quickened into life. Compare the 1 Thessalonians 4:9 note; 1 John 3:14 note. We may learn hence:

(a)that truth is of inestimable value. It is as valuable as religion itself, for all the religion in the world is the result of it.

(b)Error and falsehood are mischievous and evil in the same degree. There is no true religion which is the fair result of error; and all the pretended religion that is sustained by error is worthless.

(c)If a system of religion, or a religious measure or doctrine, cannot be defended by truth, it should be at once abandoned. Compare the notes at Job 13:7.

(d)We should avoid the places where error is taught. Proverbs 19:27, "cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge."

(e)We should place ourselves under the teachings of truth, for there is truth enough in the world to occupy all our time and attention; and it is only by truth that our minds can be benefitted.

Verse 23

Being born again - See the notes at John 3:3.

Not of corruptible seed - "Not by virtue of any descent from human parents" - Doddridge. The result of such a birth, or of being begotten in this way - for so the word rendered "born again" more properly signifies - is only corruption and decay. We are begotten only to die. There is no permanent, enduring life produced by that. It is in this sense that this is spoken of as, "corruptible seed," because it results in decay and death. The word here rendered "seed" - σπορά spora- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament.

But of incorruptible - By truth, communicating a living principle to the soul which can never decay. Compare 1 John 3:9; "His seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

By the word of God - See the note at James 1:18; "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." Compare the notes at John 1:13. It is the uniform doctrine of the Scriptures that divine truth is made the instrument of quickening the soul into spiritual life.

Which liveth and abideth forever - This expression may either refer to God, as living forever, or to the word of God, as being forever true. Critics are about equally divided in the interpretation. The Greek will bear either construction. Most of the recent critics incline to the latter opinion - that it refers to the word of God, or to his doctrine. So Rosenmuller, Doddridge, Bloomfield, Wolf, Macknight, Clarke. It seems to me, however, that the more natural construction of the Greek is to refer it to God, as ever-living or enduring; and this interpretation agrees well with the connection. The idea then is, that as God is ever-living, that which is produced directly by him in the human soul, by the instrumentality of truth, may be expected also to endure forever. It will not be like the offspring of human parents, themselves mortal, liable to early and certain decay, but may be expected to be as enduring as its ever-living Creator.

Verse 24

For all flesh is as grass - That is, all human beings, all men. The connection here is this: The apostle, in the previous verse, had been contrasting that which is begotten by man with that which is begotten by God, in reference to its permanency. The forher was corruptible and decaying; the latter abiding. The latter was produced by God, who lives forever; the former by the agency of man, who is himself corruptible and

dying. It was not unnatural, then, to dwell upon the feeble, frail, decaying nature of man, in contrast with God; and the apostle, therefore, says that "all flesh, every human being, is like grass. There is no stability in anything that man does or produces. He himself resembles grass that soon fades and withers; but God and his word endure forever the same." The comparison of a human being with grass, or with flowers, is very beautiful, and is quite common in the Scriptures. The comparison turns on the fact, that the grass or the flower, however green or beautiful it may be, soon loses its freshness; is withered; is cut down, and dies. Thus, in Psalm 103:15-16;

"As for man, his days are as grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth;
For the wind passeth over it and it is gone,
And the place thereof shall know it no more."

So in Isaiah 40:6-8; a passage which is evidently referred to by Peter in this place:

"The voice said, Cry.
And he said, What shall I cry?
All flesh is grass,

And all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field.

The grass withereth,

The flower fadeth,

When the wind of Jehovah bloweth upon it:

Surely the people is grass,

The grass withereth,

The flower fadeth,
But the word of our God shall stand forever."

See also James 1:10-11. This sentiment is beautifully imitated by the great dramatist in the speech of Wolsey:

"This is the state of man; today he puts forth.
The tender leaves of hope, tomorrow blossoms,

And bears his blushing honors thick upon him.

The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,

And - when he thinks, good easy man, full surely.

His greatness is a ripening - nips his root,
And then he falls."
Compare the notes at Isaiah 40:6-8.

And all the glory of man - All that man prides himself on - his wealth, rank, talents, beauty, learning, splendor of equipage or apparel.

As the flower of grass - The word rendered "grass," (χόρτος chortosproperly denotes herbage; that which furnishes food for animals - pasture, hay. Probably the prophet Isaiah, from whom this passage is taken, referred rather to the appearance of a meadow or a field, with mingled grass and flowers, constituting a beautiful landscape, than to mere grass. In such a field, the grass soon withers with heat, and with the approach of winter; and the flowers soon fade and fall.

The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away - This is repeated, as is common in the Hebrew writings, for the sake of emphasis, or strong confirmation.

Verse 25

But the word of the Lord - In Isaiah Isaiah 40:8 "the word of our God." The sense is not materially varied.

Endureth forever - Is unmoved, fixed, permanent. Amidst all the revolutions on earth, the fading glories of natural objects, and the wasting strength of man, his truth remains unaffected. Its beauty never fades; its power is never enfeebled. The gospel system is as lovely now as it was when it was first revealed to man, and it has as much power to save as it had when first applied to a human heart. We see the grass wither at the coming on of autumn; we see the flower of the field decay; we see man, though confident in his strength, and rejoicing in the rigor of his frame, cut down in an instant; we see cities decline, and kingdoms lose their power: but the word of God is the same now that it was at first, and, amidst all the changes which may ever occur on the earth, that will remain the same.

And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you - That is, this gospel is the "word" which was referred to by Isaiah in the passage

which has been quoted. In view, then, of the affecting truth stated in the close of this chapter, 1 Peter 1:24-25 let us learn habitually to reflect on our feebleness and frailty. "We all do fade as a leaf," Isaiah 64:6. Our glory is like the flower of the field. Our beauty fades, and our strength disappears, as easily as the beauty and vigor of the flower that grows up in the morning, and that in the evening is cut down, Psalm 90:6. The rose that blossoms on the cheek of youth may wither as soon as any other rose; the brightness of the eye may become dim, as readily as the beauty of a field covered with flowers; the darkness of death may come over the brow of manliness and intelligence, as readily as night settles down on the landscape and our robes of adorning may be laid aside, as soon as beauty fades in a meadow full of flowers before the scythe of the mower.

There is not an object of natural beauty on which we pride ourselves that will not decay; and soon all our pride and pomp will be laid low in the tomb. It is sad to look on a beautiful lily, a rose, a magnolia, and to think how soon all that beauty will disappear. It is more sad to look on a rosy cheek, a bright eye, a lovely form, an expressive brow, an open, serene, intelligent countenance, and to think how soon all that beauty and brilliancy will fade away. But amidst these changes which beauty undergoes, and the desolations which disease and death spread over the world, it is cheering to think that all is not so. There is that which does not change, which never loses its beauty. "The word of the Lord" abides. His cheering promises, his assurances that there is a brighter and better world, remain amidst all these changes the same. The traits which are drawn on the character by the religion of Christ, more lovely by far than the most delicate coloring of the lily, remain forever. There they abide, augmenting in loveliness, when the rose fades from the cheek; when the brilliancy departs from the eye; when the body moulders away in the sepulchre. The beauty of religion is the only permanent beauty in the earth; and he that has that need not regret that that which in this mortal frame charms the eye shall fade away like the flower of the field.

1 PETER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

This chapter may be divided into three parts:

I. An exhortation to those whom the apostle addressed, to lay aside all malice, and all guile, and to receive the simple and plain instructions of the word of God with the earnestness with which babies desire their appropriate food, 1 Peter 2:1-3. Religion reproduces the traits of character of children in those whom it influences, and they ought to regard themselves as new-born babes, and seek that kind of spiritual nutriment which is adapted to their condition as such.

II. The privileges which they had obtained by becoming Christians, while so many others had stumbled at the very truths by which they had been saved, 1 Peter 2:4-10;

(a)They had come to the Saviour, as the living stone on which the whole spiritual temple was founded, though others had rejected him; they had become a holy priesthood; they had been admitted to the privilege of offering true sacrifices, acceptable to God, 1 Peter 2:4-5.

(b)To them Christ was precious as the chief cornerstone, on which all their hopes rested, and on which the edifice that was to be reared was safe, though that foundation of the Christian hope had been rejected and disallowed by others, 1 Peter 2:6-8.

(c)They were now a chosen people, an holy nation, appointed to show forth on earth the praises of God, though formerly they were not regarded as the people of God, and were not within the range of the methods by which he was accustomed to show mercy, 1 Peter 2:9-10,

III. Various duties growing out of these privileges, and out of the various relations which they sustained in life, 1 Peter 2:11-25;

(a)The duty of living as strangers and pilgrims; of abstaining from all those fleshly lusts which war against the soul; and of leading lives of entire honesty in relation to the Gentiles, by whom they were surrounded, 1 Peter 2:11-12.

(b)The duty of submitting to civil rulers, 1 Peter 2:13-17.

(c)The duty of servants to submit to their masters, though their condition was a hard one in life, and they were often called to suffer wrongfully, 1

Peter 2:18-20.

(d)This duty was enforced on servants, and on all, from the example of Christ, who was more wronged than any others can be, and who yet bore all his sufferings with entire patience, leaving us an example that we should follow in his steps, 1 Peter 2:21-25.

Verse 1

Wherefore laying aside - On the word rendered laying aside, see Romans 13:12; Ephesians 4:22, Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:8. The allusion is to putting off clothes; and the meaning is, that we are to cast off these things entirely; that is, we are no longer to practice them. The word "wherefore" (οὖν oun) refers to the reasonings in the first chapter. In view of the considerations stated there, we should renounce all evil.

All malice - All "evil," (κακίαν kakianThe word "malice" we commonly apply now to a particular kind of evil, denoting extreme enmity of heart, ill-will, a disposition to injure others without cause, from mere personal gratification, or from a spirit of revenge - Webster. The Greek word, however, includes evil of all kinds. See the notes at Romans 1:29. Compare Acts 8:22, where it is rendered wickedness, and 1 Corinthians 5:8; 1 Corinthians 14:20; Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8; Titus 3:3.

And all guile - Deceit of all kinds. See the Romans 1:29 note; 2 Corinthians 12:16 note; 1 Thessalonians 2:3 note.

And hypocrisies - See the 1 Timothy 4:2, note; Matthew 23:28; Galatians 2:13, on the word rendered dissimulation. The word means, feigning to be what we are not; assuming a false appearance of religion; cloaking a wicked purpose under the appearance of piety.

And envies - Hatred of others on account of some excellency which they have, or something which they possess which we do not. See the notes at Romans 1:29.

And all evil speaking - Greek: "speaking against others." This word (καταλαλιὰ katalalia) occurs only here and in 2 Corinthians 12:20, where it is rendered "backbitings." It would include all unkind or slanderous speaking against others. This is by no means an uncommon fault in the world, and it is one of the designs of religion to guard against it. Religion teaches us to lay aside whatever guile, insincerity, and false appearances we may have acquired, and to put on the simple honesty and openness of

children. We all acquire more or less of guile and insincerity in the course of life. We learn to conceal our sentiments and feelings, and almost unconsciously come to appear different from what we really are. It is not so with children. In the child, every emotion of the bosom appears as it is. "Nature there works well and beautifully." Every emotion is expressed; every feeling of the heart is developed; and in the cheeks, the open eye, the joyous or sad countenance, we know all that there is in the bosom, as certainly as we know all that there is in the rose by its color and its fragrance. Now, it is one of the purposes of religion to bring us back to this state, and to strip off all the subterfuges which we may have acquired in life; and he in whom this effect is not accomplished has never been converted. A man that is characteristically deceitful, cunning, and crafty, cannot be a Christian. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matthew 18:3.

Verse 2

As new-born babes - The phrase used here would properly denote those which were just born, and hence Christians who had just begun the spiritual life. See the word explained in the notes at 2 Timothy 3:15. It is not uncommon, in the Scriptures, to compare Christians with little children. See the notes at Matthew 18:3, for the reasons of this comparison. Compare the 1 Corinthians 3:2 note; Hebrews 5:12, Hebrews 5:14 notes.

Desire the sincere milk of the word - The pure milk of the word. On the meaning of the word "sincere," see the notes at Ephesians 6:24. The Greek word here (ἄδολον adolon) means, properly, that which is without guile or falsehood; then unadulterated, pure, genuine. The Greek adjective rendered "of the word," (λογικὸν logikonmeans properly rational, pertaining to reason, or mind; and, in the connection here with milk, means that which is adapted to sustain the soul. Compare the notes at Romans 12:1. There is no doubt that there is allusion to the gospel in its purest and most simple form, as adapted to be the nutriment of the new-born soul. Probably there are two ideas here; one, that the proper aliment of piety is simple truth; the other, that the truths which they were to desire were the more elementary truths of the gospel, such as would be adapted to those who were babes in knowledge.

That ye may grow thereby - As babes grow on their proper nutriment. Piety in the heart is susceptible of growth, and is made to grow by its proper

aliment, as a plant or a child is, and will grow in proportion as it has the proper kind of nutriment. From this verse we may see:

(1) the reason of the injunction of the Saviour to Peter, to "feed his lambs," John 21:15; 1 Peter 2:1-2. Young Christians strongly resemble children, babies; and they need watchful care, and kind attention, and appropriate aliment, as much as new-born infants do. Piety receives its form much from its commencement and the character of the whole Christian life will be determined in a great degree by the views entertained at first, and the kind of instruction which is given to those who are just entering on their Christian course. We may also see,

(2) that it furnishes evidence of conversion, if we have a love for the simple and pure truths of the gospel. It is evidence that we have spiritual life, as really as the desire of appropriate nourishment is evidence that an infant has natural life. The new-born soul loves the truth. It is nourished by it. It perishes without it. The gospel is just what it wants; and without that it could not live. We may also learn from this verse,

(3) that the truths of the gospel which are best adapted to that state, are those which are simple and plain. Compare Hebrews 5:12-14. It is not philosophy that is needed then; it is not the profound and difficult doctrines of the gospel; it is those elementary truths which lie at the foundation of all religion, and which can be comprehended by children. Religion makes everyone docile and humble as a child; and whatever may be the age at which one is converted, or whatever attainments he may have made in science, he relishes the same truths which are loved by the youngest and most unlettered child that is brought into the kingdom of God.

Verse 3

If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious - Or rather, as Doddridge renders it, "Since you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." The apostle did not mean to express any doubt on the subject, but to state that, since they had had an experimental acquaintance with the grace of God, they should desire to increase more and more in the knowledge and love of him. On the use of the word "taste," see the notes at Hebrews 6:4.

Verse 4

To whom coming - To the Lord Jesus, for so the word "Lord" is to be understood in 1 Peter 2:3. Compare the notes at Acts 1:24. The idea here is, that they had come to him for salvation, while the great mass of people rejected him. Others "disallowed" him, and turned away from him, but they had seen that he was the one chosen or appointed of God, and had come to him in order to be saved. Salvation is often represented as corning to Christ. See Matthew 11:28.

As unto a living stone - The allusion in this passage is to Isaiah 28:16, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." See the notes at that passage. There may be also possibly an allusion to Psalm 118:22, "The stone which the builders disallowed is become the headstone of the corner." The reference is to Christ as the foundation on which the church is reared. He occupied the same place in regard to the church which a foundation-stone does to the edifice that is reared upon it. Compare Matthew 7:24-25. See the Romans 9:33 note, and Ephesians 2:20-22 notes. The phrase "living stone" is however unusual, and is not found, I think, except in this place. There seems to be an incongruity in it, in attributing life to a stone, yet the meaning is not difficult to be understood. The purpose was not to speak of a temple, like that at Jerusalem, made up of gold and costly stones; but of a temple made up of living materials - of redeemed people - in which God now resides. In speaking of that, it was natural to refer to the foundation on which the whole rested, and to speak of that as corresponding to the whole edifice. It was all a living temple - a temple composed of living materials - from the foundation to the top. Compare the expression in John 4:10, "He would have given thee living water;" that is, water which would have imparted life to the soul. So Christ imparts life to the whole spiritual temple that is reared on him as a foundation.

Disallowed indeed of men - Rejected by them, first by the Jews, in causing him to be put to death; and then by all people when he is offered to them as their Saviour. See the notes at Isaiah 53:3. Psalm 118:22; "Which the builders refused." Compare the Matthew 21:42 note; Acts 4:11 note.

But chosen of God - Selected by him as the suitable foundation on which to rear his church.

And precious - Valuable. The universe had nothing more valuable on which to rear the spiritual temple.

Verse 5

Ye also, as lively stones - Greek, "living stones." The word should have been so rendered. The word lively with us now has a different meaning from living, and denotes "active, quick, sprightly." The Greek word is the same as that used in the previous verse, and rendered living. The meaning is, that the materials of which the temple here referred to was composed, were living materials throughout. The foundation is a living foundation, and all the superstructure is compassed of living materials. The purpose of the apostle here is to compare the church to a beautiful temple - such as the temple in Jerusalem, and to show that it is complete in all its parts, as that was. It has within itself what corresponds with everything that was valuable in that. It is a beautiful structure like that; and as in that there was a priesthood, and there were real and acceptable sacrifices offered, so it is in the Christian church.

The Jews prided themselves much on their temple. It was a most costly and splendid edifice. It was the place where God was worshipped, and where he was supposed to dwell. It had an imposing service, and there was acceptable worship rendered there. As a new dispensation was introduced; as the tendency of the Christian system was to draw off the worshippers from that temple, and to teach them that God could be worshipped as acceptably elsewhere as at Jerusalem, John 4:21-23 as Christianity did not inculcate the necessity of rearing splendid temples for the worship of God; and as in fact the temple at Jerusalem was about to be destroyed forever, it was important to show that in the Christian church there might be found all that was truly beautiful and valuable in the temple at Jerusalem; that it had what corresponded to what was in fact most precious there, and that there was still a most magnificent and beautiful temple on the earth.

Hence, the sacred writers labor to show that all was found in the church that had made the temple at Jerusalem so glorious, and that the great design contemplated by the erection of that splendid edifice - the maintenance of the worship of God - was now accomplished in a more glorious manner than even in the services of that house. For there was a temple, made up of living materials, which was still the special dwelling-place of God on the earth. In that I temple there was a holy priesthood - for every Christian was a priest. In that temple there were sacrifices offered, as acceptable to God as in the former - for they were spiritual sacrifices, offered continually. These

thoughts were often dwelt upon by the apostle Paul, and are here illustrated by Peter, evidently with the same design, to impart consolation to those who had never been permitted to worship at the temple in Jerusalem, and to comfort those Jews, now converted to Christianity, who saw that that splendid and glorious edifice was about to be destroyed. The special abode of God on the earth was now removed from that temple to the Christian church. The first aspect in which this is illustrated here is, that the temple of God was made up of "living stones;" that is, that the materials were not inanimate stones but endued with life, and so much more valuable than those employed in the temple at Jerusalem, as the soul is more precious than any materials of stone. There were living beings which composed that temple, constituting a more beautiful structure, and a more appropriate dwelling-place for God, than any edifice could be made of stone, however costly or valuable.

A spiritual house - A spiritual temple, not made of perishable materials, like that at Jerusalem net composed of matter, as that was, but made up of redeemed souls - a temple more appropriate to be the residence of one who is a pure spirit. Compare the Ephesians 2:19-22 notes, and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 notes.

An holy priesthood - In the temple at Jerusalem, the priesthood appointed to minister there, and to offer sacrifices, constituted an essential part of the arrangement. It was important, therefore, to show that this was not overlooked in the spiritual temple that God was raising. Accordingly, the apostle says that this is amply provided for, by constituting "the whole body of Christians" to be in fact a priesthood. Everyone is engaged in offering acceptable sacrifice to God. The business is not entrusted to a particular class to be known as priests; there is not a particular portion to whom the name is to be especially given; but every Christian is in fact a priest, and is engaged in offering an acceptable sacrifice to God. See Romans 1:6; "And hath made us: kings and priests unto God." The Great High Priest in this service is the Lord Jesus Christ, (see the Epistle to the Hebrews, passim) but besides him there is no one who sustains this office, except as it is borne by all the Christian members.

There are ministers, elders, pastors, evangelists in the church; but there is no one who is a priest, except in the general sense that all are priests - because the great sacrifice has been offered, and there is no expiation now to be made. The name priest, therefore should never be conferred on a

minister of the gospel. It is never so given in the New Testament, and there was a reason why it should not be. The proper idea of a priest is one who offers sacrifice; but the ministers of the New Testament have no sacrifices to offer - the one great and perfect oblation for the sins of the world having been made by the Redeemer on the cross. To him, and him alone, under the New Testament dispensation, should the name priest be given, as it is uniformly in the New Testament, except in the general sense in which it is given to all Christians. In the Roman Catholic communion it is consistent to give the name "priest" to a minister of the gospel, but it is wrong to do it.

It is consistent, because they claim that a true sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ is offered in the mass. It is wrong, because that doctrine is wholly contrary to the New Testament, and is derogatory to the one perfect Oblation which has been once made for the sins of the world, and in conferring upon just one class of people a degree of importance and of power to which they have no claim, and which is so liable to abuse. But in a Protestant church it is neither consistent nor right to give the name "priest" to a minister of religion. The only sense in which the term can now be used in the Christian church is a sense in which it is applicable to all Christians alike - that they "offer the sacrifice of prayer and praise."

To offer up spiritual sacrifices - Not bloody offerings, the blood of lambs and bullocks, but those which are the offerings of the heart - the sacrifices of prayer and praise. Since there is a priest, there is also involved the notion of a sacrifice; but that which is offered is such as all Christians offer to God, proceeding from the heart, and breathed forth from the lips, and in a holy life. It is called sacrifice, not because it makes an explation for sin, but because it is of the nature of worship. Compare the notes at Hebrews 13:15; Hebrews 10:14.

Acceptable to God by Jesus Christ - Compare the notes at Romans 12:1. Through the merits of the great sacrifice made by the Redeemer on the cross. Our prayers and praises are in themselves so imperfect, and proceed from such polluted lips and hearts, that they can be acceptable only through him as our intercessor before the throne of God. Compare the notes at Hebrews 9:24-25; Hebrews 10:19-22.

Verse 6

Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture - Isaiah 28:16. The quotation is substantially as it is found in the Septuagint.

Behold, I lay in Sion - See the Isaiah 28:16 note, and Romans 9:33 note.

A chief cornerstone - The principal stone on which the corner of the edifice rests. A stone is selected for this which is large and solid, and, usually, one which is squared, and worked with care; and as such a stone is commonly laid with solemn ceremonies, so, perhaps, in allusion to this, it is here said by God that he would lay this stone at the foundation. The solemnities attending this were those which accompanied the great work of the Redeemer. See the word explained in the notes at Ephesians 2:20.

Elect - Chosen of God, or selected for this purpose, 1 Peter 2:4.

And he that believeth on him shall not be confounded - Shall not be ashamed. The Hebrew is, "shall not make haste." See it explained in the notes at Romans 9:33.

Verse 7

Unto you therefore which believe - Christians are often called simply "believers," because faith in the Saviour is one of the prominent characteristics by which they are distinguished from their fellow-men. It sufficiently describes any man, to say that he is a believer in the Lord Jesus.

He is precious - Margin, "an honor." That is, according to the margin, it is an honor to believe on him, and should be so regarded. This is true, but it is very doubtful whether this is the idea of Peter. The Greek is ἡ τιμὴ hē timēliterally, "esteem, honor, respect, reverence;" then "value or price." The noun is probably used in the place of the adjective, in the sense of honorable, valued, precious; and it is not incorrectly rendered in the text, "he is precious." The connection demands this interpretation. The apostle was not showing that it was an honor to believe on Christ, but was stating the estimate which was put on him by those who believe, as contrasted with the view taken of him by the world. The truth which is taught is, that while the Lord Jesus is rejected by the great mass of people, he is regarded by all Christians as of inestimable value:

I. Of the fact there can be no doubt. Somehow, Christians perceive a value in him which is seen in nothing else. This is evinced:

(a)in their avowed estimate of him as their best friend;

(b)in their being willing so far to honor him as to commit to him the keeping of their souls, resting the whole question of their salvation upon him alone;

(c)in their readiness to keep his commands, and to serve him, while the mass of people disobey him; and,

(d)in their being willing to die for him.

II. The reasons why he is so precious to them are such as these:

(1) They are brought into a condition where they can appreciate his worth. To see the value of food, we must be hungry; of clothing, we must be exposed to the winter‘s blast; of home, we must be wanderers without a dwelling-place; of medicine, we must be sick; of competence, we must be poor. So, to see the value of the Saviour, we must see that we are poor, helpless, dying sinners; that the soul is of inestimable worth; that we have no merit of our own; and that unless someone interpose, we must perish. Everyone who becomes a true Christian is brought to this condition; and in this state he can appreciate the worth of the Saviour. In this respect the condition of Christians is unlike that of the rest of mankind - for they are in no better state to appreciate the worth of the Saviour, than the man in health is to appreciate the value of the healing art, or than he who has never had a want unsupplied, the kindness of one who comes to us with an abundant supply of food.

(2) the Lord Jesus is in fact of more value to them than any other benefactor. We have had benefactors who have done us good, but none who have done us such good as he has. We have had parents, teachers, kind friends, who have provided for us, taught us, relieved us; but all that they have done for us is slight, compared with what he has done. The fruit of their kindness, for the most part, pertains to the present world; and they have not laid down their lives for us. What he has done pertains to our welfare to all eternity; it is the fruit of the sacrifice of his own life. How precious should the name and memory of one be who has laid down his own life to save us!

(3) we owe all our hopes of heaven to him; and in proportion to the value of such a hope, he is precious to us. We have no hope of salvation but in him. Take that away - blot out the name and the work of the Redeemer - and we see no way in which we could be saved; we have no prospect of being saved. As our hope of heaven, therefore, is valuable to us; as it supports us in trial; as it comforts us in the hour of death, so is the Saviour

precious: and the estimate which we form of him is in proportion to the value of such a hope.

(4) there is an intrinsic value and excellency in the character of Christ, apart from his relation to us, which makes him precious to those who can appreciate his worth. In his character, abstractedly considered, there was more to attract, to interest, to love, than in that of any other one who ever lived in our world. There was more purity, more benevolence, more that was great in trying circumstances, more that was generous and self-denying, more that resembled God, than in any other one who ever appeared on earth. In the moral firmament, the character of Christ sustains a pre-eminence above all others who have lived, as great as the glory of the sun is superior to the feeble lights, though so numerous, which glimmer at midnight. With such views of him, it is not to be wondered at that, however he may be estimated by the world, "to them who believe, he is precious."

But unto them which be disobedient - Literally, "unwilling to be persuaded," (ἀπειθὴς apeithēs) that is, those who refused to believe; who were obstinate or contumacious, Luke 1:17; Romans 1:30. The meaning is, that to them he is made a stone against which they impinge, and ruin themselves. See the notes at 1 Peter 2:8.

The stone which the builders disallowed - Which they rejected, or refused to make a cornerstone. The allusion here, by the word "builders," is primarily to the Jews, represented as raising a temple of salvation, or building with reference to eternal life. They refused to lay this stone, which God had appointed, as the foundation of their hopes, but preferred some other foundation. See this passage explained in the Matthew 21:42 note; Acts 4:11 note; and Romans 9:33 note.

The same is made the head of the corner - That is, though it is rejected by the mass of people, yet God has in fact made it the cornerstone on which the whole spiritual temple rests, Acts 4:11-12. However people may regard it, there is, in fact, no other hope of heaven than that which is founded on the Lord Jesus. If people are not saved by him, he becomes to them a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.

Verse 8

And a stone of stumbling - A stone over which they, stumble, or against which they impinge. The idea seems to be that of a cornerstone which projects from the building, against which they dash themselves, and

by which they are made to fall. See the notes at Matthew 21:44. The rejection of the Saviour becomes the means of their ruin. They refuse to build on him, and it is as if one should run against a solid projecting cornerstone of a house, that would certainly be the means of their destruction. Compare the notes at Luke 2:34. An idea similar to this occurs in Matthew 21:44; "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken." The meaning is, that if this foundation-stone is not the means of their salvation, it will be of their ruin. It is not a matter of indifference whether they believe on him or not - whether they accept or reject him. They cannot reject him without the most fearful consequences to their souls.

And a rock of offence - This expresses substantially the same idea as the phrase "stone of stumbling." The word rendered "offence," (σκάνδαλον skandalon) means properly "a trap-stick - a crooked stick on which the bait is fastened which the animal strikes against, and so springs the trap," (Robinson, Lexicon) then "a trap, gin, snare"; and then "anything which one strikes or stumbles against; a stumbling-block." It then denotes "that which is the cause or occasion of ruin." This language would be strictly applicable to the Jews, who rejected the Saviour on account of his humble birth, and whose rejection of him was made the occasion of the destruction of their temple, city, and nation. But it is also applicable to all who reject him, from whatever cause; for their rejection of him will be followed with ruin to their souls. It is a crime for which God will judge them as certainly as he did the Jews who disowned him and crucified him, for the offence is substantially the same. What might have been, therefore, the means of their salvation, is made the cause of their deeper condemnation.

Even to them which stumble at the word - To all who do this. That is, they take the same kind of offence at the gospel which the Jews did at the Saviour himself. It is substantially the same thing, and the consequences must be the same. How does the conduct of the man who rejects the Saviour now, differ from that of him who rejected him when he was on the earth?

Being disobedient - 1 Peter 2:7. The reason why they reject him is, that they are not disposed to obey. They are solemnly commanded to believe the gospel; and a refusal to do it, therefore, is as really an act of disobedience as to break any other command of God.

Whereunto they were appointed - (εἰς ὅ καὶ ἐτέθησαν eis ho kai etethēsanThe word "whereunto "means unto which. But unto what? It

cannot be supposed that it means that they were "appointed" to believe on him and be saved by him; for:

(1)this would involve all the difficulty which is ever felt in the doctrine of decrees or election; for it would then mean that he had eternally designated them to be saved, which is the doctrine of predestination; and,

(2)if this were the true interpretation, the consequence would follow that God had been foiled in his plan - for the reference here is to those who would not be saved, that is, to those who "stumble at that stumblingstone," and are destroyed.

Calvin supposes that it means, "unto which rejection and destruction they were designated in the purpose of God." So Bloomfield renders it, "Unto which (disbelief) they were destined," (Critical Digest) meaning, as he supposes, that "into this stumbling and disobedience they were permitted by God to fall." Doddridge interprets it, "To which also they were appointed by the righteous sentence of God, long before, even as early as in his first purpose and decree he ordained his Son to be the great foundation of his church." Rosenmuller gives substantially the same interpretation. Clemens Romanus says it means that "they were appointed, not that they should sin, but that, sinning, they should be punished." See Wetstein. So Macknight. "To which punishment they were appointed." Whitby gives the same interpretation of it, that because they were disobedient, (referring, as he supposes, to the Jews who rejected the Messiah) "they were appointed, for the punishment of that disobedience, to fall and perish."

Dr. Clark supposes that it means that they were prophesied of that they should thus fall; or that, long before, it was predicted that they should thus stumble and fall. In reference to the meaning of this difficult passage, it is proper to observe that there is in the Greek verb necessarily the idea of designation, appointment, purpose. There was some agency or intention by which they were put in that condition; some act of placing or appointing, (the word τίθημι tithēmimeaning to set, put, lay, lay down, appoint, constitute) by which this result was brought about. The fair sense, therefore, and one from which we cannot escape, is, that this did not happen by chance or accident, but that there was a divine arrangement, appointment, or plan on the part of God in reference to this result, and that the result was in conformity with that. So it is said in Jude 1:4, of a similar class of people, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation." The facts were these:

(1) That God appointed his Son to be the cornerstone of his church.

(2) that there was a portion of the world which, from some cause, would embrace him and be saved.

(3) that there was another portion who, it was certain, would not embrace him.

(4) that it was known that the appointment of the Lord Jesus as a Saviour would be the occasion of their rejecting him, and of their deeper and more aggravated condemnation.

(5) that the arrangement was nevertheless made, with the understanding that all this would be so, and because it was best on the whole that it should be so, even though this consequence would follow. That is, it was better that the arrangement should be made for the salvation of people even with this result, that a part would sink into deeper condemnation, than that no arrangement should be made to save any. The primary and originating arrangement, therefore, did not contemplate them or their destruction, but was made with reference to others, and notwithstanding they would reject him, and would fall. The expression "whereunto" (εἰς ὅ eis ho) refers to this plan, as involving, under the circumstances, the result which actually followed. Their stumbling and falling was not a matter of chance, or a result which was not contemplated, but entered into the original arrangement; and the whole, therefore, might be said to be in accordance with a wise plan and purpose. And,

(6) it might he said in this sense, and in this connection, that those who would reject him were appointed to this stumbling and falling. It was what was foreseen; what entered into the general arrangement; what was involved in the purpose to save any. It was not a matter that was unforeseen, that the consequence of giving a Saviour would result in the condemnation of those who should crucify and reject him; but the whole thing, as it actually occurred, entered into the divine arrangement. It may be added, that as, in the facts in the case, nothing wrong has been done by God, and no one has been deprived of any rights, or punished more than he deserves,

it was not wrong in him to make the arrangement. It was better that the arrangement should be made as it is, even with this consequence, than that none at all should be made for human salvation. Compare the Romans 9:15-18 notes; John 12:39-40 notes. This is just a statement, in accordance with what everywhere occurs in the Bible, that all things enter into the eternal plans of God; that nothing happens by chance; that there is nothing that was not foreseen; and that the plan is such as, on the whole, God saw to be best and wise, and therefore adopted it. If there is nothing unjust and wrong in the actual development of the plan, there was nothing in forming it. At the same time, no man who disbelieves and rejects the gospel should take refuge in this as an excuse. He was "appointed" to it no otherwise than as it actually occurs; and as they know that they are voluntary in rejecting him, they cannot lay the blame of this on the purposes of God. They are not forced or compelled to do it; but it was seen that this consequence would follow, and the plan was laid to send the Saviour notwithstanding.

Verse 9

But ye are a chosen generation - In contradistinction from those who, by their disobedience, had rejected the Saviour as the foundation of hope. The people of God are often represented as his chosen or elected people. See the notes at 1 Peter 1:2.

A royal priesthood - See the notes at 1 Peter 2:5. The meaning of this is, probably, that they "at once bore the dignity of kings, and the sanctity of priests" - Doddridge. Compare Revelation 1:6; "And hath made us kings and priests unto God." See also Isaiah 61:6; "But ye shall be named priests of the Lord; men shall call ye ministers of our God." It may be, however, that the word royal is used only to denote the dignity of the priestly office which they sustained, or that they constituted, as it were, an entire nation or kingdom of priests. They were a kingdom over which he presided, and they were all priests; so that it might be said they were a kingdom of priests - a kingdom in which all the subjects were engaged in offering sacrifice to God. The expression appears to be taken from Exodus 19:6 - "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests" - and is such language as one who had been educated as a Jew would be likely to employ to set forth the dignity of those whom he regarded as the people of God.

An holy nation - This is also taken from Exodus 19:6. The Hebrews were regarded as a nation consecrated to God; and now that they were cast

off or rejected for their disobedience, the same language was properly applied to the people whom God had chosen in their place - the Christian church.

A peculiar people - Compare the notes at Titus 2:14. The margin here is purchased. The word "peculiar," in its common acceptation now, would mean that they were distinguished from others, or were singular. The reading in the margin would mean that they had been bought or redeemed. Both these things are so, but neither of them expresses the exact sense of the original. The Greek λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν laos eis peripoiēsin) means, "a people for a possession;" that is, as pertaining to God. They are a people which he has secured as a possession, or as his own; a people, therefore, which belong to him, and to no other. In this sense they are special as being His; and, being such, it may be inferred that they should be special in the sense of being unlike others (unique) in their manner of life. But that idea is not necessarily in the text. There seems to be here also an allusion to Exodus 19:5; "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure with me (Septuagint λαὸς περιούσιος laos periousios) above all people."

That ye should show forth the praises of him - Margin, "virtues." The Greek word (ἀρετὴ aretē) means properly "good quality, excellence" of any kind. It means here the excellences of God - His goodness, His wondrous deeds, or those things which make it proper to praise Him. This shows one great object for which they were redeemed. It was that they might proclaim the glory of God, and keep up the remembrance of His wondrous deeds in the earth. This is to be done:

(a)by proper ascriptions of praise to him in public, family, and social worship;

(b)by being always the avowed friends of God, ready ever to vindicate His government and ways;

(c)by endeavoring to make known His excellences to all those who are ignorant of Him; and,

(d)by such a life as shall constantly proclaim His praise - as the sun, the moon, the stars, the hills, the streams, the flowers do, showing what God does. The consistent life of a devoted Christian is a constant setting forth of the praise of God, showing to all that the God who has made him such is worthy to be loved.

Who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light - On the word called, see the notes at Ephesians 4:1. Darkness is the emblem of ignorance, sin, and misery, and refers here to their condition before their conversion; light is the emblem of the opposite, and is a beautiful representation of the state of those who are brought to the knowledge of the gospel. See the notes at Acts 26:18. The word marvelous means wonderful; and the idea is, that the light of the gospel was such as was unusual, or not to be found elsewhere, as that excites wonder or surprise which we are not accustomed to see. The primary reference here is, undoubtedly, to those who had been pagans, and to the great change which had been produced by their having been brought to the knowledge of the truth as revealed in the gospel; and, in regard to this, no one can doubt that the one state deserved to be characterized as darkness, and the other as light. The contrast was as great as that between midnight and noonday. But what is here said is substantially correct of all who are converted, and is often as strikingly true of those who have been brought up in Christian lands, as of those who have lived among the pagans. The change in conversion is often so great and so rapid, the views and feelings are so different before and after conversion, that it seems like a sudden transition from midnight to noon. In all cases, also, of true conversion, though the change may not be so striking, or apparently so sudden, there is a change of which this may be regarded as substantially an accurate description. In many cases the convert can adopt this language in all its fulness, as descriptive of his own conversion; in all cases of genuine conversion it is true that each one can say that he has been called from a state in which his mind was dark to one in which it is comparatively clear.

Verse 10

Which in time past were not a people - That is, who formerly were not regarded as the people of God. There is an allusion here to the passage in Hosea 2:23, "And I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." It is, however, a mere allusion, such as one makes who uses the language of another to express his ideas, without meaning to say that both refer to the same subject. In Hosea, the passage refers evidently to the reception of one portion of the Israelites into favor after their rejection; in Peter, it refers mainly to those who had been Gentiles, and who had never been recognized as the people of God. The

language of the prophet would exactly express his idea, and he therefore uses it without intending to say that this was its original application. See it explained in the notes at Romans 9:25. Compare the notes at Ephesians 2:11-12.

Which had not obtained mercy - That is, who had been living unpardoned, having no knowledge of the way by which sinners might be forgiven, and no evidence that your sins were forgiven. They were then in the condition of the whole pagan world, and they had not then been acquainted with the glorious method by which God forgives iniquity.

Verse 11

Dearly beloved, I beseech you strangers and pilgrims - On the word rendered "strangers," (παροίκους paroikoussee the notes at Ephesians 2:19, where it is rendered "foreigners." It means, properly, one dwelling near, neighboring; then a by-dweller, a sojourner, one without the rights of citizenship, as distinguished from a citizen; and it means here that Christians are not properly citizens of this world, but that their citizenship is in heaven, and that they are here mere sojourners. Compare the notes at Philemon 3:20, "For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven." On the word rendered "pilgrims," (παρεπιδήμους parepidēmoussee the 1 Peter 1:1 note; Hebrews 11:13 note. A pilgrim, properly, is one who travels to a distance from his own country to visit a holy place, or to pay his devotion to some holy object; then a traveler, a wanderer. The meaning here is, that Christians have no permanent home on earth; their citizenship is not here; they are mere sojourners, and they are passing on to their eternal home in the heavens. They should, therefore, act as become such persons; as sojourners and travelers do. They should not:

(a) regard the earth as their home.

(b) They should not seek to acquire permanent possessions here, as if they were to remain here, but should act as travelers do, who merely seek a temporary lodging, without expecting permanently to reside in a place.

(c) They should not allow any such attachments to be formed, or arrangements to be made, as to impede their journey to their final home, as pilgrims seek only a temporary lodging, and steadily pursue their journey.

(d) Even while engaged here in the necessary callings of life - their studies, their farming, their merchandise - their thoughts and affections should be on other things. One in a strange land thinks much of his country and home; a pilgrim, much of the land to which he goes; and even while his time and attention may be necessarily occupied by the arrangements needful for the journey, his thoughts and affections will be far away.

(e) We should not encumber ourselves with much of this world‘s goods. Many professed Christians get so many worldly things around them, that it is impossible for them to make a journey to heaven. They burden themselves as no traveler would, and they make no progress. A traveler takes along as few things as possible; and a staff is often all that a pilgrim has. We make the most rapid progress in our journey to our final home when we are least encumbered with the things of this world.

Abstain from fleshly lusts - Such desires and passions as the carnal appetites prompt to. See the notes at Galatians 5:19-21. A sojourner in a land, or a pilgrim, does not give himself up to the indulgence of sensual appetites, or to the soft pleasures of the soul. All these would hinder his progress, and turn him off from his great design. Compare Romans 13:4; Galatians 5:24; 2 Timothy 2:22; Titus 2:12; 1 Peter 1:14.

Which war against the soul - Compare the notes at Romans 8:12-13. The meaning is, that indulgence in these things makes war against the nobler faculties of the soul; against the conscience, the understanding, the memory, the judgment, the exercise of a pure imagination. Compare the notes at Galatians 5:17. There is not a faculty of the mind, however brilliant in itself, which will not be ultimately ruined by indulgence in the carnal propensities of our nature. The effect of intemperance on the noble faculties of the soul is well known; and alas, there are too many instances in which the light of genius, in those endowed with splendid gifts, at the bar, in the pulpit, and in the senate, is extinguished by it, to need a particular description. But there is one vice preeminently, which prevails all over the pagan world, (Compare the notes at Romans 1:27-29) and extensively in Christian lands, which more than all others, blunts the moral sense, pollutes the memory, defiles the imagination, hardens the heart. and sends a withering influence through all the faculties of the soul.

“The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Embodies, and embrutes, till she quite lose

The divine property of her first being."
Of this passion, Burns beautifully and truly said -
"But oh! it hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling."
From all these passions the Christian pilgrim is to abstain.

Verse 12

Having your conversation honest - Your conduct. See the notes at Philemon 1:27. That is, lead upright and consistent lives. Compare the notes at Philemon 4:8.

Among the Gentiles - The pagans by whom you are surrounded, and who will certainly observe your conduct. See the notes at 1 Thessalonians 4:12, "That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without." Compare Romans 13:13.

That, whereas they speak against you as evil doers - Margin, "wherein." Greek ἐν ᾧ en hō- "in what;" either referring "to time," and meaning that at the very time when they speak against you in this manner they may be silenced by seeing your upright lives; or meaning "in respect to which" - that is, that in respect to the very matters for which they reproach you they may see by your meek and upright conduct that there is really no ground for reproach. Wetstein adopts the former, but the question which is meant is not very important. Bloomfield supposes it to mean inasmuch, whereas. The sentiment is a correct one, whichever interpretation is adopted. It should be true that at the very time when the enemies of religion reproach us, they should see that we are actuated by Christian principles, and that in the very matter for which we are reproached we are conscientious and honest.

They may, by your good works, which they shall behold - Greek, "which they shall closely or narrowly inspect." The meaning is, that upon a close and narrow examination, they may see that you are actuated by upright principles, and ultimately be disposed to do you justice. It is to be remembered that the pagan were very little acquainted with the nature of Christianity; and it is known that in the early ages they charged on Christians the most abominable vices, and even accused them of practices at which human nature revolts. The meaning of Peter is, that while they charged these things on Christians, whether from ignorance or malice, they ought so to live as that a more full acquaintance with them, and a closer inspection of their conduct, would disarm their prejudices, and show that

their charges were entirely unfounded. The truth taught here is, "that our conduct as Christians should be such as to bear the strictest scrutiny; such that the closest examination will lead our enemies to the conviction that we are upright and honest." This may be done by every Christian this his religion solemnly requires him to do.

Glorify God - Honor God; that is, that they may be convinced by your conduct of the pure and holy nature of that religion which he has revealed, and be led also to love and worship him. See the notes at Matthew 5:16.

In the day of visitation - Many different opinions have been entertained of the meaning of this phrase, some referring it to the day of judgment; some to times of persecution; some to the destruction of Jerusalem; and some to the time when the gospel was preached among the Gentiles, as a period when God visited them with mercy. The word "visitation" (ἐπισκοπή episkopēmeans the act of visiting or being visited for any purpose, usually with the notion of inspecting conduct, of inflicting punishment, or of conferring favors. Compare Matthew 25:36, Matthew 25:43; Luke 1:68, Luke 1:78; Luke 7:16; Luke 19:44, in the sense of visiting for the purpose of punishing, the word is often used in the Septuagint for the Hebrew פקד paaqadthough there is no instance in which the word is so used in the New Testament, unless it be in the verse before us. The "visitation" here referred to is undoubtedly that of God; and the reference is to some time when he would make a "visitation" to people for some purpose, and when the fact that the Gentiles had narrowly inspected the conduct of Christians would lead them to honor him.

The only question is, to what visitation of that kind the apostle referred. The prevailing use of the word in the New Testament would seem to lead us to suppose that the "visitation" referred to was designed to confer favors rather than to inflict punishment, and indeed the word seems to have somewhat of a technical character, and to have been familiarly used by Christians to denote God's coming to people to bless them; to pour out his Spirit upon them; to revive religion. This seems to me to be its meaning here; and, if so, the sense is, that when God appeared among people to accompany the preaching of the gospel with saving power, the result of the observed conduct of Christians would be to lead those around them to honor him by giving up their hearts to Him; that is, their consistent lives would be the means of the revival and extension of true religion. And is it not always so? Is not the pure and holy walk of Christians an occasion of

His bending His footsteps down to earth to bless dying sinners, and to scatter spiritual blessings with a liberal hand? Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 14:24-25.

Verse 13

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man - Greek, "to every creation of man," (ἀνθρωπίνῃ κτίσει anthrōpinē ktiseiThe meaning is, to every institution or appointment of man; to wit, of those who are in authority, or who are appointed to administer government. The laws, institutes, and appointments of such a government may be spoken of as the creation of man; that is, as what man makes. Of course, what is here said must be understood with the limitation everywhere implied, that what is ordained by those in authority is not contrary to the law of God. See the notes at Acts 4:19. On the general duty here enjoined of subjection to civil authority, see the notes at Romans 13:1-7.

For the Lord's sake - Because he has required it, and has entrusted this power to civil rulers. See the notes at Romans 13:5. Compare the notes at Ephesians 6:7.

Whether it be to the king - It has been commonly supposed that there is reference here to the Roman emperor, who might be called king, because in him the supreme power resided. The common title of the Roman sovereign was, as used by the Greek writers, ᾰὐτοκράτωρ autokratōrand among the Romans themselves, "imperator," (emperor;) but the title king was also given to the sovereign. John 19:15, "we have no king but Cesar." Acts 17:7, "and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus." Peter undoubtedly had particular reference to the Roman emperors, but he uses a general term, which would be applicable to all in whom the supreme power resided, and the injunction here would require submission to such authority, by whatever name it might be called. The meaning is, that we are to be subject to that authority whether exercised by the sovereign in person, or by those who are appointed by him.

As supreme - Not supreme in the sense of being superior to God, or not being subject to him, but in the sense of being over all subordinate officers.

Verse 14

Or unto governors - Subordinate officers, appointed by the chief magistrate, over provinces. Perhaps Roman proconsuls are here particularly intended.

As unto them that are sent by him - By the king, or the Roman emperor. They represent the supreme power.

For the punishment of evil doers - One of the leading ends of government. "The Roman governors had the power of life and death in such conquered provinces as those mentioned in 1 Peter 1:1" - Doddridge. Ulpian, the celebrated Roman lawyer, who flourished two hundred years after Christ, thus describes the power of the governors of the Roman provinces: "It is the duty of a good and vigilant president to see to it that his province be peaceable and quiet. And that he ought to make diligent search after sacrilegious persons, robbers, man-stealers, and thieves, and to punish everyone according to their guilt." Again, "They who govern whole provinces, have the power of sending to the mines." And again," The presidents of provinces have the highest authority, next to the emperor." Peter has described the office of the Roman governors in language nearly resembling that of Ulpian. See Lardner's Credibility, (Works, i. 77, edit. 8vo., Lond. 1829)

And for the praise of them that do well - Praise here stands opposed to punishment, and means commendation, applause, reward. That is, it is a part of their business to reward in a suitable manner those who are upright and virtuous as citizens. This would be by protecting their persons and property; by defending their rights, and, perhaps, by admitting those to share the honors and emoluments of office who showed that they were worthy to be trusted. It is as important a part of the functions of magistracy to protect the innocent, as it is to punish the wicked.

Verse 15

For so is the will of God - That is, it is in accordance with the divine will that in this way you should put them to silence.

That with well doing - By a life of uprightness and benevolence.

Ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men - See the notes at Titus 2:8. The reference here is to men who brought charges against Christians, by accusing them of being inimical to the government, or insubordinate, or guilty of crimes. Such charges, it is well known, were often brought against them by their enemies in the early ages of Christianity. Peter says they were brought by foolish men, perhaps using the word foolish in the sense of evil-disposed, or wicked, as it is often used in the Bible. Yet, though there might be malice at the bottom, the charges were really based on ignorance. They were not thoroughly acquainted with the

principles of the Christian religion; and the way to meet those charges was to act in every way as became good citizens, and so as "to live them down." One of the best ways of meeting the accusations of our enemies is to lead a life of strict integrity. It is not easy for the wicked to reply to this argument.

Verse 16

As free - That is, they were to consider themselves as freemen, as having a right to liberty. The Jews boasted much of their freedom, and regarded it as a birthright privilege that they were free, John 8:33. They never willingly acknowledged their subjection to any other power, but claimed it as an elementary idea of their civil constitution that God only was their Sovereign. They were indeed conquered by the Romans, and paid tribute, but they did it because they were compelled to do it, and it was even a question much debated among them whether they should do it or not Matthew 22:17. Josephus has often referred to the fact that the Jews rebelled against the Romans under the plea that they were a free people, and that they were subject only to God. This idea of essential freedom the Jews had when they became Christians, and everything in Christianity tended to inspire them with the love of liberty.

They who were converted to the Christian faith, whether from among the Jews or the Gentiles, were made to feel that they were the children of God; that his law was the supreme rule of their lives; that in the ultimate resort they were subject to him alone; that they were redeemed, and that, therefore, the yoke of bondage could not be properly imposed on them; that God "had made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth," Acts 17:26; and that, therefore, they were on a level before him. The meaning here is, that they were not to consider themselves as slaves, or to act as slaves. In their subjection to civil authority they were not to forget that they were freemen in the highest sense, and that liberty was an invaluable blessing. They had been made free by the Son of God, John 8:32, John 8:36. They were free from sin and condemnation. They acknowledged Christ as their supreme Head, and the whole spirit and tendency of his religion prompted to the exercise of freedom.

They were not to submit to the chains of slavery; not to allow their consciences to be bound, or their essential liberty to be interfered with; nor in their subjection to the civil magistrate were they ever to regard themselves otherwise than as freemen. As a matter of fact, Christianity has

always been the friend and promoter of liberty. Its influence emancipated the slaves throughout the Roman Empire; and all the civil freedom which we enjoy, and which there is in the world, can be traced to the influence of the Christian religion. To spread the gospel in its purity everywhere would be to break every yoke of oppression and bondage, and to make people everywhere free. It is the essential right of every man who is a Christian to be a freeman - to be free to worship God; to read the Bible; to enjoy the avails of his own labor; to train up his children in the way in which he shall deem best; to form his own plans of life, and to pursue his own ends, provided only that he does not interfere with the equal rights of others - and every system which prevents this, whether it be that of civil government, of ecclesiastical law, or of domestic slavery, is contrary to the religion of the Saviour.

And not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness - Margin, as in Greek, "having." Not making your freedom a mere pretext under which to practice all kinds of evil. The word rendered "maliciousness" - κακία kakia- means more than our word maliciousness does; for it denotes evil of any kind, or all kinds. The word maliciousness refers rather to enmity of heart, ill-will, an intention to injure. The apostle has reference to an abuse of freedom, which has often occurred. The pretence of these who have acted in this manner has been, that the freedom of the gospel implied deliverance from all kinds of restraint; that they were under no yoke, and bound by no laws; that, being the children of God, they had a right to all kinds of enjoyment and indulgence; that even the moral law ceased to bind them, and that they had a right to make the most of liberty in all respects. Hence, they have given themselves up to all sorts of sensual indulgence, claiming exemption from the restraints of morality as well as of civil law, and sinking into the deepest abyss of vice. Not a few have done this who have professed to be Christians; and, occasionally, a fanatical sect now appears who make the freedom which they say Christianity confers, a pretext for indulgence in the most base and degrading vices. The apostles saw this tendency in human nature, and in nothing are they more careful than to guard against this abuse.

But as the servants of God - Not free from all restraint; not at liberty to indulge in all things, but bound to serve God in the faithful obedience of his laws. Thus bound to obey and serve him, they could not be at liberty to indulge in those things which would be in violation of his laws, and which

would dishonor him. See this sentiment explained in the notes at 1 Corinthians 7:22; 1 Corinthians 9:21.

Verse 17

Honor all men - That is, show them the respect which is due to them according to their personal worth, and to the rank and office which they sustain. See the notes at Romans 13:7.

Love the brotherhood - The whole fraternity of Christians, regarded as a band of brothers. The word used here occurs only in this place and in 1 Peter 5:9, where it is rendered "brethren." The idea expressed here occurs often in the New Testament. See the notes at John 13:34-35.

Fear God - A duty everywhere enjoined in the Bible, as one of the first duties of religion. Compare Leviticus 25:17; Psalm 24:7; Psalm 25:14; Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 3:13; Proverbs 9:10; Proverbs 23:17; See the Romans 3:18 note; 2 Corinthians 7:1 note. The word fear, when used to express our duty to God, means that we are to reverence and honor him. Religion, in one aspect, is described as the fear of God; in another, as the love of God; in another, as submission to his will, etc. A holy veneration or fear is always an elementary principle of religion. It is the fear, not so much of punishment as of his disapprobation; not so much the dread of suffering as the dread of doing wrong.

Honor the king - Referring here primarily to the Roman sovereign, but implying that we are always to respect those who have the rule over us. See the notes at Romans 13:1-7. The doctrine taught in these verses Romans 13:13-14 is, that we are faithfully to perform all the relative duties of life. There are duties which we owe to ourselves, which are of importance in their place, and which we are by no means at liberty to neglect. But we also owe duties to our fellow-men, to our Christian brethren, and to those who have the rule over us; and religion, while it is honored by our faithful performance of our duty to ourselves, is more openly honored by our performance of our duties to those to whom we sustain important relations in life. Many of the duties which we owe to ourselves are, from the nature of the case, hidden from public observation. All that pertains to the examination of the heart; to our private devotions; to the subjugation of our evil passions; to our individual communion with God, must be concealed from public view. Not so, however, with those duties which pertain to others. In respect to them, we are open to public view. The eye of the world is upon us. The judgment of the world in regard to us is made up from their

observation of the manner in which we perform them. If religion fails there, they judge that it fails altogether; and however devout we may be in private, if it is not seen by the world that our religion leads to the faithful performance of the duties which we owe in the various relations of life, it will be regarded as of little value.

Verse 18

Servants, be subject to your masters - On the duty here enjoined, see the notes at Ephesians 6:5-9. The Greek word used here (οἰκέται oiketai) is not the same which is employed in Ephesians, (δοῦλοι douloiThe word here means properly "domestics" - those employed about a house, or living in the same house - from οἶκος oikos"house." These persons might have been slaves, or might not. The word would apply to them, whether they were hired, or whether they were owned as slaves. The word should not and cannot be employed to prove that slavery existed in the churches to which Peter wrote, and still less to prove that he approved of slavery, or regarded it as a good institution. The exhortation here would be, and still is, strictly applicable to any persons employed as domestics, though they had voluntarily hired themselves out to be such. It would be incumbent on them, while they remained in that condition, to perform with fidelity their duties as Christians, and to bear with Christian meekness all the wrongs which they might suffer from those in whose service they were.

Those who are hired, and who are under a necessity of "going out to service" for a living, are not always free from hard usage, for there are trials incident to that condition of life which cannot be always avoided. It might be better, in many cases, to bear much than to attempt a change of situation, even though they were entirely at liberty to do so. It must be admitted, however, that the exhortation here will have more force if it is supposed that the reference is to slaves, and there can be no doubt that many of this class were early converted to the Christian faith. The word here rendered "masters" (δεσπόταις despotais) is not the same which is used in Ephesians 6:5, (κυρίοις kurioisNeither of these words necessarily implies that those who were under them were slaves. The word used here is applicable to the head of a family, whatever may be the condition of those under him. It is frequently applied to God, and to Christ; and it cannot be maintained that those to whom God sustains the relation of δεσπότης despotēsor "master," are "slaves." See Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24; 2 Timothy 2:21; 2 Peter 2:1; Jude 1:4; Revelation 6:10. The word, indeed, is one that might be applied to

those who were owners of slaves. If that be the meaning here, it is not said, however, that those to whom it is applied were Christians. It is rather implied that they were pursuing such a course as was inconsistent with real piety. Those who were under them are represented as suffering grievous wrongs.

With all fear - That is, with all proper reverence and respect. See the notes at Ephesians 6:5.

Not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward - The word rendered "froward" (σκολιοῖς skoliois) means properly "crooked, bent;" then perverse, wicked, unjust, peevish. Anyone who is a servant or domestic is liable to be employed in the service of such a master; but while the relation continues, the servant should perform his duty with fidelity, whatever may be the character of the master. Slaves are certainly liable to this; and even those who voluntarily engage as servants to others, cannot always be sure that they will have kind employers. Though the terms used here do not necessarily imply that those to whom the apostle gave this direction were slaves, yet it may be presumed that they probably were, since slavery abounded throughout the Roman empire; but the directions will apply to all who are engaged in the service of others, and are therefore of permanent value. Slavery will, sooner or later, under the influence of the gospel, wholly cease in the world, and instructions addressed to masters and slaves will have no permanent value; but it will always be true that there will be those employed as domestics, and it is the duty of all who are thus engaged to evince true fidelity and a Christian spirit themselves, whatever may be the character of their employers.

Verse 19

For this is thank-worthy - Margin, "thank." Greek, "This is grace," (χάρις charis). Doddridge renders the expression, "This is graceful indeed." Various interpretations of this expression have been proposed; but the meaning evidently is, that it is acceptable to God, (see 1 Peter 2:20, "this is acceptable to God" - χάρις παρὰ Θεῷ charis para Theōthat is, this will be regarded by him with favor. It does not mean that it was worthy of thanks, or that God would thank them for doing it, (compare Luke 17:9-10;) but that such conduct would meet with his approbation.

If a man for conscience toward God - If, in the conscientious discharge of his duty, or if, in the endurance of this wrong, he regards himself as serving God. That is, if he feels that God, by his providence, has

placed him in the circumstances in which he is, and that it is a duty which he owes to him to bear every trial incident to that condition with a submissive spirit. If he does this, he will evince the true nature of religion, and will be graciously accepted of God.

Endure grief - That is, endure that which is suited to produce grief, or that which is wrong.

Suffering wrongfully - Suffering injury, or where there is "injustice," (πάσχων ἀδίκως paschōn adikōsThis, though a general remark, has particular reference to servants, and to their duty in the relation which they sustain to their masters. In view of what is here said, we may remark:

(1) that if this has reference to slaves, as has been usually supposed, it proves that they are very liable to be abused; that they have little or no security against being wronged; and that it was a special and very desirable characteristic of those who were in that condition, to be able to bear wrong with a proper spirit. It is impossible so to modify slavery that this shall not be the case; for the whole system is one of oppression, and there can be nothing that shall effectually secure the slave from being ill-treated.

(2) It would follow from this passage, if this refers to slavery, that that is a very hard and undesirable condition of life; for that is a very undesirable condition where the principal virtue. which they who are in it are required to exercise, is "patience under wrongs." Such a condition cannot be in accordance with the gospel, and cannot be designed by God to be permanent. The relation of parent and child is never thus represented. It is never said or implied in the Scriptures that the principal virtue to which children are exhorted is patience under wrongs; nor, in addressing them, is it ever supposed that the most prominent thing in their condition is, that they would need the exercise of such patience.

(3) it is acceptable to God, if we bear wrong with a proper spirit, from whatever quarter it may come. Our proper business in life is, to do the will of God; to evince the right spirit, however others may treat us; and to show, even under excessive wrong, the sustaining power and the excellence of true religion. Each one who is oppressed and wronged, therefore, has an eminent opportunity to show a spirit which will honor the gospel; and the slave and the martyr may do more to honor the gospel than if they were both permitted to enjoy liberty and life undisturbed.

Verse 20

For what glory is it - What honor or credit would it be.

If, when ye be buffeted for your faults - That is, if you are punished when you deserve it. The word "buffet" (κολαφίζω kolaphizō) - means, to strike with the fist; and then to strike in any way; to maltreat, Matthew 26:67; Mark 14:65; 1 Corinthians 4:11; 2 Corinthians 12:7. Perhaps there may be a reference here to the manner in which servants were commonly treated, or the kind of pun ishment to which they were exposed. They would be likely to be struck in sudden anger, either by the hand, or by anything that was accessible. The word rendered "for your faults," is sinning, (ἁμαρτάνοντες hamartanontesThat is, "if being guilty of an offence, or having done wrong." The idea is, that if they were justly punished, and should take it patiently, there would be no credit or honor in it.

Ye shall take it patiently - "If, even then, you evince an uncomplaining spirit, and bear it with the utmost calmness and patience, it would be regarded as comparatively no virtue, and as entitling you to no honor. The feeling of all who saw it would be that you deserved it, and there would be nothing to excite their sympathy or compassion. The patience evinced might indeed be as great as in the other case, but there would be the feeling that you deserved all that you received, and the spirit evinced in that case could not be regarded as entitled to any particular praise. If your masters are inflicting on you only what you deserve, it would be in the highest degree shameful for you to rise up against them, and resist them, for it would be only adding to the wrong which you had already done." The expression here is, doubtless, to be understood comparatively. The meaning is not that absolutely there would be no more credit due to one who should bear his punishment patiently when he had done wrong, than if he had met it with resistance and complaining; but that there is very little credit in that compared with the patience which an innocent person evinces, who, from regard to the will of God, and by control over all the natural feelings of resentment, meekly endures wrong.

This expresses the common feeling of our nature. We attribute no particular credit to one who submits to a just punishment even with a calm temper. We feel that it would be wrong in the highest degree for him to do otherwise. So it is when calamities are brought on a man on account of his sins. If it is seen to be the fruit of intemperance or crime, we do not feel that

there is any great virtue exhibited if he bears it with a calm temper. But if he is overwhelmed with calamity when it seems to have no particular connection with his sins, or to be a punishment for any particular fault; if he suffers at the hand of man, where there is manifest injustice done him, and yet evinces a calm, submissive, and meek temper, we feel that in such cases there is eminent virtue.

This is acceptable with God - Margin, as in 1 Peter 2:19, "thank." It is that which is agreeable to him, or with which he is pleased.

Verse 21

For even hereunto were ye called - Such a spirit is required by the very nature of your Christian vocation; you were called into the church in order that you might evince it. See the notes at 1 Thessalonians 3:3.

Because Christ also suffered for us - Margin, "some read, for you." The latest editions of the Greek Testament adopt the reading "for you." The sense, however, is not essentially varied. The object is, to hold up the example of Christ to those who were called to suffer, and to say to them that they should bear their trials in the same spirit that he evinced in his. See the notes at Philemon 3:10.

Leaving us an example - The apostle does not say that this was the only object for which Christ suffered, but that it was an object, and an important one. The word rendered "example" (ὑπογραμμὸν hupogrammon) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means properly "a writing copy," such as is set for children; or an outline or sketch for a painter to fill up; and then, in general, an example, a pattern for imitation.

That ye should follow his steps - That we should follow him, as if we trod exactly along behind him, and should place our feet precisely where his were. The meaning is, that there should be the closest imitation or resemblance. The things in which we are to imitate him are specified in the following verses.

Verse 22

Who did no sin - Who was in all respects perfectly holy. There is an allusion here to Isaiah 53:9; and the sense is, that he was entirely innocent, and that he suffered without having committed any crime. In this connection the meaning is, that we are to be careful that, if we suffer, it should be without committing any crime. We should so live, as the Saviour did, as not to deserve to be punished, and thus only shall we entirely follow his example. It is as much our duty to live so as not to deserve the

reproaches of others, as it is to bear them with patience when we are called to suffer them. The first thing in regard to hard treatment from others, is so to live that there shall be no just occasion for it; the next is, if reproaches come upon us when we have not deserved them, to bear them as the Saviour did. If he suffered unjustly, we should esteem it to be no strange thing that we should; if he bore the injuries done him with meekness, we should learn that it is possible for us to do it also; and should learn also that we have not the spirit of his religion unless we actually do it. On the expression used here, compare the Isaiah 53:9 note; Hebrews 7:26 note.

Neither was guile found in his mouth - There was no deceit, hypocrisy, or insincerity. He was in all respects what he professed to be, and he imposed on no one by any false and unfounded claim. All this has reference to the time when the Saviour was put to death; and the sense is, that though he was condemned as an impostor, yet that the charge was wholly unfounded. As in his whole life before he was perfectly sincere, so he was eminently on that solemn occasion.

Verse 23

Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again - He did not use harsh and opprobrious words in return for those which he received:

(1) He was reviled. He was accused of being a seditious man; spoken of as a deceiver; charged with being in league with Beelzebub, the "prince of the devils" and condemned as a blasphemer against God. This was done:

(a)by the great and the influential of the land;

(b)in the most public manner;

(c)with a design to alienate his friends from him;

(d)with most cutting and severe sarcasm and irony; and,

(e)in reference to everything that would most affect a man of delicate and tender sensibility.

(2) he did not revile those who had reproached him. He asked that justice might be done. He demanded that if he had spoken evil, they should bear witness of the evil; but beyond that he did not go. He used no harsh language. He showed no anger. He called for no revenge. He prayed that they might robe forgiven. He calmly stood and bore it all, for he came to

endure all kinds of suffering in order that he might set us an example, and make an atonement for our sins.

When he suffered, he threatened not - That is, when he suffered injustice from others, in his trial and in his death, he did not threaten punishment. He did not call down the wrath of heaven. He did not even predict that they would be punished; he expressed no wish that they should be.

But committed himself to him that judgeth righteously - Margin, his cause. The sense is much the same. The meaning is, that he committed his cause, his name, his interests, the whole case, to God. The meaning of the phrase "that judgeth righteously" here is, that God would do him exact justice. Though wronged by people, he felt assured that he would do right. He would rescue his name from these reproaches; he would give him the honor in the world which he deserved; and he would bring upon those who had wronged him all that was necessary in order to show his disapprobation of what they had done, and all that would be necessary to give the highest support to the cause of virtue. Compare Luke 23:46. This is the example which is set before us when we are wronged. The whole example embraces these points:

(1) We should see to it that we ourselves are guiltless in the matter for which we are reproached or accused. Before we fancy that we are suffering as Christ did, we should be sure that our lives are such as not to deserve reproach. We cannot indeed hope to be as pure in all things as he was; but we may so live that if we are reproached and reviled we may be certain that it is not for any wrong that we have done to others, or that we do not deserve it from our fellow-men.

(2) When we are reproached and reviled, we should feel that we were called to this by our profession; that it was one of the things which we were taught to expect when we became Christians; that it is what the prophets and apostles endured, and what the Master himself suffered in an eminent degree; and that if we meet with the scorn of the great, the frivilous, the rich, the powerful, it is no more than the Saviour did, and no more than we have been taught to expect will be our portion. It may be well, too, to remember our unworthiness; and to reflect, that though we have done no wrong to the individual who reviles us yet that we are sinners, and that such reproaches may not be a useless admonisher of our being guilty before God. So David felt when reproached by Shimei: "So let him curse, because the

Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so?" 2 Samuel 16:10.

(3) when this occurs, we should calmly and confidently commit our cause to God. Our name, our character, our influence, our reputation, while living and after we are dead, we should leave entirely with him. We should not seek nor desire revenge. We should not call down the wrath of God on our persecutors and slanderers. We should calmly feel that God will give us the measure of reputation which we ought to have in the world, and that he will suffer no ultimate injustice to be done us. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass; and he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day," Psalm 37:5-6. The Latin Vulgate has here, "But he committed himself to him who judged him unjustly," judicanti se injuste; that is, to Pontius Pilate, meaning that he left himself in his hands, though he knew that the sentence was unjust. But there is no authority for this in the Greek, and this is one of the instances in which that version departs from the original.

Verse 24

Who his own self - See the notes at Hebrews 1:3, on the phrase "when he had by himself purged our sins." The meaning is, that he did it in his own proper person; he did not make expiation by offering a bloody victim, but was himself the sacrifice.

Bare our sins - There is an allusion here undoubtedly to Isaiah 53:4, Isaiah 53:12. See the meaning of the phrase "to bear sins" fully considered in the notes at those places. As this cannot mean that Christ so took upon himself the sins of people as to become himself a sinner, it must mean that he put himself in the place of sinners, and bore that which those sins deserved; that is, that he endured in his own person that which, if it had been inflicted on the sinner himself, would have been a proper expression of the divine displeasure against sin, or would have been a proper punishment for sin. See the notes at 2 Corinthians 5:21. He was treated as if he had been a sinner, in order that we might be treated as if we had not sinned; that is, as if we were righteous. There is no other way in which we can conceive that one bears the sins of another. They cannot be literally transferred to another; and all that can be meant is, that he should take the

consequences on himself, and suffer as if he had committed the transgressions himself.

(See also the supplementary notes at 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13, in which the subject of imputation is discussed at large)

In his own body - This alludes undoubtedly to his sufferings. The sufferings which he endured on the cross were such as if he had been guilty; that is, he was treated as he would have been if he had been a sinner. He was treated as a criminal; crucified as those most guilty were; endured the same kind of physical pain that the guilty do who are punished for their own sins; and passed through mental sorrows strongly resembling - as much so as the case admitted of - what the guilty themselves experience when they are left to distressing anguish of mind, and are abandoned by God. The sufferings of the Saviour were in all respects made as nearly like the sufferings of the most guilty, as the sufferings of a perfectly innocent being could be.

On the tree - Margin, "to the tree" Greek, ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον epi to xulonThe meaning is rather, as in the text, that while himself on the cross, he bore the sorrows which our sins deserved. It does not mean that he conveyed our sorrows there, but that while there he suffered under the intolerable burden, and was by that burden crushed in death. The phrase "on the tree," literally "on the wood," means the cross. The same Greek word is used in Acts 5:30; Acts 10:39; Acts 13:29; Galatians 3:13, as applicable to the cross, in all of which places it is rendered "tree."

That we, being dead to sins - In virtue of his having thus been suspended on a cross; that is, his being put to death as an atoning sacrifice was the means by which we become dead to sin, and live to God. The phrase "being dead to sins" is, in the original, ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἀπογενόμενοι tais hamartiais apogenomenoi- literally, "to be absent from sins." The Greek word was probably used (by an euphemism) to denote to die, that is, to be absent from the world. This is a milder and less repulsive word than to say to die. It is not elsewhere used in the New Testament. The meaning is, that we being effectually separated from sin - that is, being so that it no longer influences us - should live unto God. We are to be, in regard to sin, as if we were dead; and it is to have no more influence over us than if we were in our graves. See the notes at Romans 6:2-7. The means by which this is brought about is the death of Christ (See the notes at Romans 6:8) for as he

died literally on the cross on account of our sins, the effect has been to lead us to see the evil of transgression, and to lead new, and holy lives.

Should live unto righteousness - Though dead in respect to sin, yet we have real life in another respect. We are made alive unto God to righteousness, to true holiness. See the Romans 6:11 note; Galatians 2:20 note.

By whose stripes - This is taken from Isaiah 53:5. See it explained in the notes on that verse. The word rendered "stripes" (μώλωπι mōlōpi) means, properly, the livid and swollen mark of a blow; the mark designated by us when we use the expression "black and blue." It is not properly a bloody wound, but that made by pinching, beating, scourging. The idea seems to be that the Saviour was scourged or whipped; and that the effect on us is the same in producing spiritual healing, or in recovering us from our faults, as if we had been scourged ourselves. By faith we see the bruises inflicted on him, the black and blue spots made by beating; we remember that they were on account of our sins, and not for his; and the effect in reclaiming us is the same as if they had been inflicted on us.

Ye were healed - Sin is often spoken of as a disease, and redemption from it as a restoration from a deadly malady. See this explained in the notes at Isaiah 53:5.

Verse 25

For ye were as sheep going astray - Here also is an allusion to Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray." See the notes at that verse. The figure is plain. We were like a flock without a shepherd. We had wandered far away from the true fold, and were following our own paths. We were without a protector, and were exposed to every kind of danger. This aptly and forcibly expresses the condition of the whole race before God recovers people by the plan of salvation. A flock thus wandering without a shepherd, conductor, or guide, is in a most pitiable condition; and so was man in his wanderings before he was sought out and brought back to the true fold by the Great Shepherd.

But are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls - To Christ, who thus came to seek and save those who were lost. He is often called a Shepherd. See the notes at 2 Timothy 1:12.

(3) as, therefore, he has shown his regard for us in seeking us when we were wandering and lost; as he came on the kind and benevolent errand to find us and bring us back to himself, let us show our gratitude to him by

resolving to wander no more. As we regard our own safety and happiness, let us commit ourselves to him as our great Shepherd, to follow where he leads us, and to be ever under his pastoral inspection. We had all wandered away. We had gone where there was no happiness and no protector. We had no one to provide for us, to care for us, to pity us. We were exposed to certain ruin. In that state he pitied us, sought us out, brought us back. If we had remained where we were, or had gone further in our wanderings, we should have gone certainly to destruction. He has sought us out; be has led us back; he has taken us under his own protection and guidance; and we shall be safe as long as we follow where he leads, and no longer. To him then, a Shepherd who never forsakes his flock, let us at all times commit ourselves, following where he leads, feeling that under him our great interests are secure.

(4) we may learn from this chapter, indeed, as we may from every other part of the New Testament, that in doing this we may be called to suffer. We may be reproached and reviled as the great Shepherd himself was. We may become the objects of public scorn on account of our devoted attachment to him. We may suffer in name, in feeling, in property, in our business, by our honest attachment to the principles of his gospel. Many who are his followers may be in circumstances of poverty or oppression. They may be held in bondage; they may be deprived of their rights; they may feel that their lot in life is a hard one, and that the world seems to have conspired against them to do them wrong; but let us in all these circumstances look to Him "who made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Philemon 2:7-8; and let us remember that it is "enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord," Matthew 10:25. In view of the example of our Master, and of all the promises of support in the Bible, let us bear with patience all the trials of life, whether arising from poverty, an humble condition, or the reproaches of a wicked world. Our trials will soon be ended; and soon, under the direction of the "Shepherd and Bishop of souls," we shall be brought to a world where trials and sorrows are unknown.

(5) in our trials here, let it be our main object so to live that our sufferings shall not be on account of our own faults. See 1 Peter 2:19-22.

Our Saviour so lived. He was persecuted, reviled, mocked, condemned to die. But it was for no fault of his. In all his varied and prolonged sufferings, he had the ever-abiding consciousness that he was innocent; he had the firm conviction that it would yet be seen and confessed by all the world that he was "holy, harmless, undefiled," 1 Peter 2:23. His were not the sufferings produced by a guilty conscience, or by the recollection that he had wronged anyone. So, if we must suffer, let our trials come upon us. Be it our first aim to have a conscience void of offence, to wrong no one, to give no occasion for reproaches and revilings, to do our duty faithfully to God and to people. Then, if trials come, we shall feel that we suffer as our Master did; and then we may, as he did, commit our cause "to him that judgeth righteously," assured that in due time "he will bring forth our righteousness as the light, and our judgment as the noon-day," Psalm 37:6.

1 PETER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

This chapter embraces the following subjects:

I. The duty of wives, 1 Peter 3:1-6. Particularly:

(a)that their conduct should be such as would be adapted to lead their unbelieving husbands to embrace a religion whose happy influence was seen in the pure conduct of their wives, 1 Peter 3:1-2.

(b)In reference to dress and ornaments, that they should not seek that which was external, but rather that which was of the heart, 1 Peter 3:3-4.

(c)For an illustration of the manner in which these duties should be performed, the apostle refers them to the holy example of the wife of Abraham, as one which Christian females should imitate, 1 Peter 3:5-6.

II. The duty of husbands, 1 Peter 3:7. It was their duty to render all proper honor to their wives, and to live with them as fellow-heirs of salvation, that their prayers might not be hindered; implying:

(1)that in the most important respects they were on an equality;

(2)that they would pray together, or that there would be family prayer; and,

(3)that it was the duty of husband and wife so to live together that their prayers might ascend from united hearts, and that it would be consistent for God to answer them.

III. The general duty of unity and of kindness, 1 Peter 3:8-14. They were:

(a)to be of one mind; to have compassion; to love as brethren, 1 Peter 3:8.

(b)They were never to render evil for evil, or railing for railing, 1 Peter 3:9.

(c)They were to remember the promises of length of days, and of honor, made to those who were pure in their conversation, and who were the friends of peace, 1 Peter 3:9-10.

(d)They were to remember that the eyes of the Lord were always on the righteous; that they who were good were under his protection, 1 Peter 3:12;

and that if, while they maintained this character, they were called to suffer, they should count it rather an honor than a hardship, 1 Peter 3:13-14.

IV. The duty of being ready always to give to every man a reason for the hope they entertained; and, if they were called to suffer persecution and trial in the service of God, of being able still to show good reasons why they professed to be Christians, and of so living that those who wronged them should see that their religion was more than a name, and was founded in such truth as to command the assent even of their persecutors, 1 Peter 3:15-17.

V. In their persecutions and trials they were to remember the example of Christ, his trials, his patience, and his triumphs, 1 Peter 3:18-22. Particularly:

(a) the apostle refers them to the fact that he had suffered, though he was innocent, and that he was put to death though he had done no wrong, 1 Peter 3:18.

(b) He refers them to the patience and an age of great and abounding wickedness, when in the person of his representative and ambassador Noah, he suffered much and long from the opposition of the guilty and perverse people who were finally destroyed, and who are now held in prison, showing us how patient we ought to be when offended by others in our attempts to do them good, 1 Peter 3:19-20.

(c) He refers to the fact that notwithstanding all the opposition which Noah met with in bearing a message, as an ambassador of the Lord, to a wicked generation, he and his family were saved, 1 Peter 3:21. The design of this allusion evidently is to show us, that if we are patient and forbearing in the trials which we meet with in the world, we shall be saved also. Noah, says the apostle, was saved by water. We, too, says he, are saved in a similar manner by water. In his salvation, and in ours, water is employed as the means of salvation: in his case by bearing up the ark, in ours by becoming the emblem of the washing away of sins.

(d) The apostle refers to the fact that Christ has ascended to heaven, and has been exalted over angels, and principalities, and powers; thus showing that having borne all his trials with patience he ultimately triumphed, and that in like manner we, if we are patient, shall triumph also, 1 Peter 3:22. He came off a conqueror, and was exalted to the highest honors of heaven;

and so, if faithful, we may hope to come off conquerors also, and be exalted to the honors of heaven as he was. The whole argument here is drawn from the example of Christ, first, in his patience and forbearance with the whole world, and then when he was personally on the earth; from the fact, that in the case of that messenger whom he sent to the ungodly race before the flood, and in his own case when personally on earth, there was ultimate triumph after all that they met with from ungodly people; and thus, if we endure opposition and trials in the same way, we may hope also to triumph in heaven with our exalted Saviour.

Verse 1

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands - On the duty here enjoined, see the 1 Corinthians 11:3-9 notes, and Ephesians 5:22 note.

That, if any obey not the word - The word of God; the gospel. That is, if any wives have husbands who are not true Christians. This would be likely to occur when the gospel was first preached, as it does now, by the fact that wives might be converted, though their husbands were not. It cannot be inferred from this, that after they themselves had become Christians they had married unbelieving husbands. The term "word" here refers particularly to the gospel as preached; and the idea is, that if they were regardless of that gospel when preached - if they would not attend on preaching, or if they were unaffected by it, or if they openly rejected it, there might be hope still that they would be converted by the Christian influence of a wife at home. In such cases, a duty of special importance devolves on the wife.

They also may without the word be won - In some other way than by preaching. This I does not mean that they would be converted independently of the influence of truth - for truth is always the instrument of conversion, James 1:18; John 17:17; but that it was to be by another influence than preaching.

By the conversation of the wives - By the conduct or deportment of their wives. See the notes at Philemon 1:27. The word conversation, in the Scriptures, is never confined, as it is now with us, to oral discourse, but denotes conduct in general. It includes indeed "conversation" as the word is now used, but it embraces also much more - including everything that we do. The meaning here is, that the habitual deportment of the wife was to be

such as to show the reality and power of religion; to show that it had such influence on her temper, her words, her whole deportment, as to demonstrate that it was from God.

Verse 2

While they behold your chaste conversation - Your pure conduct. The word chaste here (ἁγνὴν hagnēn) refer's to purity of conduct in all respects, and not merely to chastity properly so called. It includes that, but it also embraces much more. The conduct of the wife is to be in all respects pure; and this is to be the grand instrumentality in the conversion of her husband. A wife may be strictly chaste, and yet there may be many other things in her conduct and temper which would mar the beauty of her piety, and prevent any happy influence on the mind of her husband,

Coupled with fear - The word fear, in this place, may refer either to the fear of God, or to a proper respect and reverence for their husbands, Ephesians 5:33. The trait of character which is referred to is that of proper respect and reverence in all the relations which she sustained, as opposed to a trifling and frivolous mind. Leighton suggests that the word fear here relates particularly to the other duty enjoined - that of chaste conversation - "fearing the least stain of chastity, or the very appearance of anything not suiting with it. It is a delicate, timorous grace, afraid of the least air, or shadow of anything that hath but a resemblance of wronging it, in carriage, or speech, or apparel."

Verse 3

Whose adorning - Whose ornament. The apostle refers here to a propensity which exists in the heart of woman to seek that which would be esteemed ornamental, or that which will appear well in the sight of others, and commend us to them. The desire of this is laid deep in human nature and therefore, when properly regulated is not wrong. The only question is, what is the true and appropriate ornament? What should be primarily sought as the right kind of adorning? The apostle does not condemn true ornament, nor does he condemn the desire to appear in such a way as to secure the esteem of others. God does not condemn real ornament. The universe is full of it. The colors of the clouds and of the rainbow; the varied hues of flowers; the plumage of birds, and the covering of many of the animals of the forest; the green grass; the variety of hill and dale; the beauty of the human complexion, the ruddy cheek, and the sparkling eye, are all of the nature of ornament. They are something superadded to what would be

merely useful, to make them appear well. Few or none of these things are absolutely necessary to the things to which they are attached; for the eye could see without the various tints of beauty that are drawn upon it, and the lips and the cheeks could perform their functions without their beautiful tints, and the vegetable world could exist without the variegated colors that are painted on it; but God meant that this should be a beautiful world; that it should appear well; that there should be something more than mere utility. The true notion of ornament or adorning is that which will make any person or thing appear well, or beautiful, to others; and the apostle does not prohibit that which would have this effect in the wife. The grand thing which she was to seek, was not that which is merely external, but that which is internal, and which God regards as of so great value.

Let it not be that outward adorning - Let not this be the main or principal thing; let not her heart be set on this. The apostle does not say that she should wholly neglect her personal appearance, for she has no more right to be offensive to her husband by neglecting her personal appearance, than by a finical attention to it. Religion promotes neatness, and cleanliness, and a proper attention to our external appearance according to our circumstances in life, as certainly as it does to the internal virtue of the soul. On this whole passage, see the notes at 1 Timothy 2:9-10.

Of plaiting the hair - See the notes at 1 Timothy 2:9; Compare the notes at Isaiah 3:24. Great attention is paid to this in the East, and it is to this that the apostle here refers. "The women in the eastern countries," says Dr. Shaw, (Travels, p. 294,) "affect to have their hair hang down to the ground, which they collect into one lock, upon the hinder part of the head, binding and plaiting it about with ribbons. Above this, or on the top of their heads, persons of better fashion wear flexible plates of gold or silver, variously cut through, and engraved in imitation of lace." We are not to suppose that a mere braiding or plaiting of the hair is improper, for there may be no more simple or convenient way of disposing of it. But the allusion here is to the excessive care which then prevailed, and especially to their setting the heart on such ornaments rather than on the adorning which is internal. It may not be easy to fix the exact limit of propriety about the method of arranging the hair, or about any other ornament; but those whose hearts are right, generally have little difficulty on the subject. Every ornament of the body, however beautiful, is soon to be laid aside; the adorning of the soul will endure forever.

And of wearing of gold - The gold here particularly referred to is probably that which was interwoven in the hair, and which was a common female ornament in ancient times. Thus, Virgil says, crines nodantur in aurum. And again, crinem implicat auro. See Homer, *Iliad*, B. 872; Herod. i. 82; and Thucydides i. 6. The wearing of gold in the hair, however, was more common among women of loose morals than among virtuous females - Pollux iv. 153. It cannot be supposed that all wearing of gold about the person is wrong, for there is nothing evil in gold itself, and there may be some articles connected with apparel made of gold that may in no manner draw off the affections from higher things, and may do nothing to endanger piety. The meaning is, that such ornaments should not be sought; that Christians should be in no way distinguished for them; that they should not engross the time and attention; that Christians should so dress as to show that their minds are occupied with nobler objects, and that in their apparel they should be models of neatness, economy, and plainness. If it should be said that this expression teaches that it is wrong to wear gold at all, it may be replied that on the same principle it would follow that the next clause teaches that it is wrong to put on apparel at all. There is really no difficulty in such expressions. We are to dress decently, and in the manner that will attract least attention, and we are to show that our hearts are interested supremely in more important things than in outward adorning.

Or of putting on of apparel - That is, this is not to be the ornament which we principally seek, or for which we are distinguished. We are to desire a richer and more permanent adorning - that of the heart.

Verse 4

But let it be the hidden man of the heart - This expression is substantially the same as that of Paul in Romans 7:22, "the inward man." See the notes at that place. The word "hidden" here means that which is concealed; that which is not made apparent by the dress, or by ornament. It lies within, pertaining to the affections of the soul.

In that which is not corruptible - Properly, "in the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." This is said to be incorruptible in contradistinction to gold and apparel. They will decay; but the internal ornament is ever enduring. The sense is, that whatever pertains to outward decoration, however beautiful and costly, is fading; but that which pertains to the soul is enduring. As the soul is immortal, so all that tends to adorn

that will be immortal too; as the body is mortal, so all with which it can be invested is decaying, and will soon be destroyed.

The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit - Of a calm temper; a contented mind; a heart free from passion, pride, envy, and irritability; a soul not subject to the agitations and vexations of those who live for fashion, and who seek to be distinguished for external adorning. The connection here shows that the apostle refers to this, not only as that which would be of great price in the sight of God, but as that which would tend to secure the affection of their husbands, and win them to embrace the true religion, (see 1 Peter 3:1-2); and, in order to this, he recommends them, instead of seeking external ornaments, to seek those of the mind and of the heart, as more agreeable to their husbands; as better adapted to win their hearts to religion; as that which would be most permanently proved. In regard to this point we may observe:

(1) that there are, undoubtedly, some husbands who are pleased with excessive ornaments in their wives, and who take a pleasure in seeing them decorated with gold, and pearls, and costly array.

(2) that all are pleased and gratified with a suitable attention to personal appearance on the part of their wives. It is as much the duty of a wife to be cleanly in her person, and neat in her habits, in the presence of her husband, as in the presence of strangers; and no wife can hope to secure the permanent affection of her husband who is not attentive to her personal appearance in her own family; especially if, while careless of her personal appearance in the presence of her husband, she makes it a point to appear gaily dressed before others. Yet.

(3) the decoration of the body is not all, nor is it the principal thing which husband desires. He desires primarily in his wife the more permanent adorning which pertains to the heart. Let it be remembered:

(a) that a large part of the ornaments on which females value themselves are lost to a great extent on the other sex. Many a man cannot tell the difference between diamonds and cut-glass, or paste in the form of diamonds; and few are such connoisseurs in the matter of female ornaments as to appreciate at all the difference in the quality or color of silks, and shawls, and laces, which might appear so important to a female eye. The

fact is, that those personal ornaments which to females appear of so much value, are much less regarded and prized by people than they often suppose. It is a rare thing that a man is so thoroughly skilled in the knowledge of the distinctions that pertain to fashions, as to appreciate that on which the heart of a female often so much prides itself; and it is no great credit to him if he can do this. His time usually, unless he is a draper or a jeweler, might have been much better employed than in making those acquisitions which are needful to qualify him to appreciate and admire the specialties of frivilous female apparel.

(b) But a man has a real interest in what constitutes the ornaments of the heart. His happiness, in his contact with his wife, depends on these. He knows what is denoted by a kind temper; by gentle words; by a placid brow; by a modest and patient spirit; by a heart that is calm in trouble, and that is affectionate and pure; by freedom from irritability, fretfulness, and impatience; and he can fully appreciate the value of these things No professional skill is necessary to qualify him to see their worth; and no acquired tact in discrimination is requisite to enable him to estimate them according to their full value. A wife, therefore, if she would permanently please her husband, should seek the adorning of the soul rather than the body; the ornament of the heart rather than gold and jewels. The one can never be a substitute for the other; and whatever outward decorations she may have, unless she have a gentleness of spirit, a calmness of temper, a benevolence and purity of soul, and a cultivation of mind that her husband can love, she cannot calculate on his permanent affection.

Which is in the sight of God of great price - Of great value; that being of great value for which a large price is paid. He has shown his sense of its value:

(a)by commending it so often in his word:

(b)by making religion to consist so much in it, rather than in high intellectual endowments, learning, skill in the arts, and valor; and,

(c)by the character of his Son, the Lord Jesus, in whom this was so prominent a characteristic.

Sentiments not unlike what is here stated by the apostle, occur not unfrequently in pagan Classic writers. There are some remarkable passages in Plutarch, strongly resembling it: “An ornament, as Crates said, is that

which adorns. The proper ornament of a woman is that which becomes her best. This is neither gold, nor pearls, nor scarlet, but those things which are an evident proof of gravity, regularity, and modesty" - Conjugalio Praecept., c. xxvi. The wife of Phocion, a celebrated Athenian general, receiving a visit from a lady who was elegantly adorned with gold and jewels, and her hair with pearls, took occasion to call the attention of her guest to the elegance and costliness of her dress. "My ornament," said the wife of Phocion, "is my husband, now for the twentieth year general of the Athenians" - Plutarch's Life of Phocion. "The Sicilian tyrant sent to the daughters of Lysander garments and tissues of great value, but Lysander refused them, saying, "These ornaments will rather put my daughters out of countenance than adorn them" - Plutarch. So in the fragments of Naumachius, as quoted by Benson, there is a precept much like this of Peter: "Be not too fond of gold, neither wear purple hyacinth about your neck, or the green jasper, of which foolish persons are proud. Do not covet such vain ornaments, neither view yourself too often in the glass, nor twist your hair into a multitude of curls," etc.

Verse 5

For after this manner, in the old time - The allusion here is particularly to the times of the patriarchs, and the object of the apostle is to state another reason why they should seek that kind of ornament which he had been commending. The reason is, that this characterized the pious and honored females of ancient times - those females who had been most commended of God, and who were most worthy to be remembered on earth.

Who trusted in God - Greek, "Who hoped in God;" that is, who were truly pious. They were characterized by simple trust or hope in God, rather than by a fondness for external adorning.

Adorned themselves - To wit, with a meek and quiet spirit, manifested particularly by the respect evinced for their husbands.

Being in subjection unto their own husbands - This was evidently a characteristic of the early periods of the world; and piety was understood to consist much in proper respect for others, according to the relations sustained toward them.

Verse 6

Even as Sara obeyed Abraham - Sarah was one of the most distinguished of the wives of the patriarchs, and her case is referred to as

furnishing one of the best illustrations of the duty to which the apostle refers. Nothing is said, in the brief records of her life, of any passion for outward adorning; much is said of her kindness to her husband, and her respect for him. Compare Genesis 12:5; Genesis 18:6.

Calling him Lord - See Genesis 18:12. It was probably inferred from this instance, by the apostle, and not without reason, that Sarah habitually used this respectful appellation, acknowledging by it that he was her superior, and that he had a right to rule in his own house. The word lord has the elementary idea of ruling, and this is the sense here - that she acknowledged that he had a right to direct the affairs of his household, and that it was her duty to be in subjection to him as the head of the family. In what respects this is a duty, may be seen by consulting the notes at Ephesians 5:22. Among the Romans, it was quite common for wives to use the appellation lord, (dominus), when speaking of their husbands. The same custom also prevailed among the Greeks. See Grotius, in loc. This passage does not prove that the term lord should be the particular appellation by which Christian wives should address their husbands now, but it proves that there should be the same respect and deference which was implied by its use in patriarchal times. The welfare of society, and the happiness of individuals, are not diminished by showing proper respect for all classes of persons in the various relations of life.

Whose daughters ye are - That is, you will be worthy to be regarded as her daughters, if you manifest the same spirit that she did. The margin here, as the Greek, is children. The sense is that if they demeaned themselves correctly in the relation of wives, it would be proper to look upon her as their mother, and to feel that they were not unworthy to be regarded as her daughters.

As long as ye do well - In respect to the particular matter under consideration.

And are not afraid with any amazement - This passage has been variously understood, Some have supposed that this is suggested as an argument to persuade them to do well, from the consideration that by so doing they would be preserved from those alarms and terrors which a contest with superior power might bring with it, and which would prove as injurious to their peace as to their character. Rosenmuller explains it, “If ye do well, terrified by no threats of unbelieving husbands, if they should undertake to compel you to deny the Christian faith.” Doddridge supposes

that it means that they were to preserve their peace and fortitude in any time of danger, so as not to act out of character, through amazement or danger. Calvin, Benson, and Bloomfield understand it of that firmness and intrepidity of character which would be necessary to support their religious independence, when united with pagan husbands; meaning that they were not to be deterred from doing their duty by any threats or terrors, either of their unbelieving husbands, or of their enemies and persecutors. Dr. Clarke supposes that it means that if they did well, they would live under no dread of being detected in improprieties of life, or being found out in their infidelities to their husbands, as those must always be who are unfaithful to their marriage vows. The word rendered "amazement"

d **ptonsis -** does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means terror, trepidation, fear; and the literal translation of the Greek is, "not fearing any fear." It seems to me that the following may express the sense of the passage:

(1) There is undoubtedly an allusion to the character of Sarah, and the object of the apostle is to induce them to follow her example.

(2) the thing in Sarah which he would exhort them to imitate, was her pure and upright life, her faithful discharge of her duties as a woman fearing God. This she did constantly wherever she was, regardless of consequences. Among friends and strangers, at home and abroad, she was distinguished for doing well. Such was her character, such her fidelity to her husband and her God, such her firm integrity and benevolence, that she at all times lived to do good, and would have done it, unawed by terror, undeterred by threats, To whatever trial her piety was exposed, it bore the trial; and such was her strength of virtue, that it was certain her integrity would be firm by whatever consequences she might have been threatened for her adherence to her principles.

(3) they were to imitate her in this, and were thus to show that they were worthy to be regarded as her daughters. They were to do well; to be faithful to their husbands; to be firm in their principles; to adhere steadfastly to what was true and good, whatever trials they might pass through, however much they might be threatened with persecution, or however any might attempt to deter them from the performance of their duty. Thus, by a life of

Christian fidelity, unawed by fear from any quarter, they would show that they were imbued with the same principles of unbending virtue which characterised the wife of the father of the faithful, and that they were not unworthy to be regarded as her daughters.

Verse 7

Likewise, ye husbands - On the general duty of husbands, see the notes at Ephesians 5:25 ff.

Dwell with them - That is, "Let your manner of living with them be that which is immediately specified."

According to knowledge - In accordance with an intelligent view of the nature of the relation; or, as becomes those who have been instructed in the duties of this relation according to the gospel. The meaning evidently is, that they should seek to obtain just views of what Christianity enjoins in regard to this relation, and that they should allow those intelligent views to control them in all their contact with their wives.

Giving honor unto the wife - It was an important advance made in society when the Christian religion gave such a direction as this, for everywhere among the pagan, and under all false systems of religion, woman has been regarded as worthy of little honor or respect. She has been considered as a slave, or as a mere instrument to gratify the passions of man. It is one of the elementary doctrines of Christianity, however, that woman is to be treated with respect; and one of the first and most marked effects of religion on society is to elevate the wife to a condition in which she will be worthy of esteem. The particular reasons for the honor which husbands are directed to show to their wives, here specified, are two: she is to be treated with special kindness as being more feeble than man, and as having a claim therefore to delicate attention; and she is to be honored as the equal heir of the grace of life. Doddridge, Clarke, and some others, suppose that the word honor here refers to maintenance or support; and that the command is, that the husband is to provide for his wife so that she may not want. But it seems to me that the word is to be understood here in its more usual signification, and that it inculcates a higher duty than that of merely providing for the temporal needs of the wife, and strikes at a deeper evil than a mere neglect of meeting her temporal necessities. The reasons assigned for doing this seem to imply it.

As unto the weaker vessel - It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to compare the body to a vessel, (Compare the notes at 1 Thessalonians 4:4), and thence the comparison is extended to the whole person. This is done either because the body is frail and feeble, like an earthen vessel easily broken; or because it is that in which the soul is lodged; or because, in accordance with a frequent use of the word, (see below,) the body is the instrument by which the soul accomplishes its purposes, or is the helper of the soul. Compare Acts 9:15; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Corinthians 4:7. In the later Hebrew usage it was common to apply the term vessel (Hebrew כלי keliyGreek σκεύος skeuos) to a wife, as is done here. See Schoettgen, *Hor. Heb.* p. 827. Expressions similar to this, in regard to the comparative feebleness of woman, occur frequently in the classic writers. See Wetstein in loc. The reasons why the term vessel was given to a wife, are not very apparent.

A not unfrequent sense of the word used here (σκεύος skeuos) in the Greek classics was that of an instrument; a helper; one who was employed by another to accomplish anything, or to aid him (Passow), and it seems probable that this was the reason why the term was given to the wife. Compare Genesis 2:18. The reason here assigned for the honor that was to be shown to the wife is, that she is "the weaker vessel." By this it is not necessarily meant that she is of feebler capacity, or inferior mental endowments, but that she is more tender and delicate; more subject to infirmities and weaknesses; less capable of enduring fatigue and toil; less adapted to the rough and stormy scenes of life. As such, she should be regarded and treated with special kindness and attention. This is a reason, the force of which all can see and appreciate. So we feel toward a sister; so we feel toward a beloved child, if he is of feeble frame and delicate constitution; and so every man should feel in relation to his wife. She may have mental endowments equal to his own; she may have moral qualities in every way superior to his; but the God of nature has made her with a more delicate frame, a more fragile structure, and with a body subject to many infirmities to which the more hardy frame of man is a stranger.

And as being heirs together of the grace of life - The grace that is connected with eternal life; that is, as fellow-Christians. They were equal heirs of the everlasting inheritance, called in the Scripture "life;" and the same "grace" connected with that inheritance had been conferred on both. This passage contains a very important truth in regard to the female sex.

Under every other system of religion but the Christian system, woman has been regarded as in every way inferior to man. Christianity teaches that, in respect to her higher interests, the interests of religion, she is every way his equal. She is entitled to all the hopes and promises which religion imparts. She is redeemed as he is. She is addressed in the same language of tender invitation. She has the same privileges and comforts which religion imparts here, and she will be elevated to the same rank and privileges in heaven. This single truth would raise the female sex everywhere from degradation, and check at once half the social evils of the race. Make her the equal of man in the hope of heaven, and at once she rises to her appropriate place. Home is made what it should be, a place of intelligence and pure friendship; and a world of suffering and sadness smiles under the benefactions of Christian woman.

That your prayers be not hindered - It is fairly implied here:

(1) that it was supposed there would be united or family prayer. The apostle is speaking of "dwelling with the wife," and of the right manner of treating her; and it is plainly supposed that united prayer would be one thing that would characterise their living together. He does not direct that there should be prayer. He seems to take it for granted that there would be; and it may be remarked, that where there is true religion in right exercise, there is prayer as a matter of course. The head of a family does not ask whether he must establish family worship; he does it as one of the spontaneous fruits of religion - as a thing concerning which no formal command is necessary. Prayer in the family, as everywhere else, is a privilege; and the true question to be asked on the subject is not whether a man must, but whether he may pray.

(2) it is implied that there might be such a way of living as effectually to hinder prayer; that is, to prevent its being offered aright, and to prevent any answer. This might occur in many ways. If the husband treated the wife unkindly; if he did not show her proper respect and affection; if there were bickerings, and jealousies, and contentions between them, there could be no hope that acceptable prayer would be offered. A spirit of strife; irritability and unevenness of temper; harsh looks and unkind words; a disposition easily to take offence, and an unwillingness to forgive, all these prevent a "return of prayers." Acceptable prayer never can be offered in the tempest of passion, and there can be no doubt that such prayer is often "hindered"

by the inequalities of temper, and the bickerings and strifes that exist in families. Yet how desirable is it that husband and wife should so live together that their prayers may not be hindered! How desirable for their own peace and happiness in that relation; how desirable for the welfare of children! In view of the exposition in this verse we may remark:

(a) that Christianity has done much to elevate the female sex. It has taught that woman is an heir of the grace of life as well as man; that, while she is inferior in physical vigor, she is his equal in the most important respect; that she is a fellow-traveler with him to a higher world; and that in every way she is entitled to all the blessings which redemption confers, as much as he is. This single truth has done more than all other things combined to elevate the female sex, and is all that is needful to raise her from her degradation all over the world.

(b) They, therefore, who desire the elevation of the female sex, who see woman ignorant and degraded in the dark parts of the earth, should be the friends of all well-directed efforts to send the gospel to pagan lands. Every husband who has a pure and intelligent wife, and every father who has an accomplished daughter, and every brother who has a virtuous sister, should seek to spread the gospel abroad. To that gospel only he owes it that he has such a wife, daughter, sister; and that gospel, which has given to him such an intelligent female friend, would elevate woman everywhere to the same condition. The obligation which he owes to religion in this respect can be discharged in no better way than by aiding in diffusing that gospel which would make the wife, the daughter, the sister, everywhere what she is in his own dwelling.

(c) Especially is this the duty of the Christian female. She owes her elevation in society to Christianity, and what Christianity has made her, it would make the sunken and debased of her own sex all over the earth; and how can she better show her gratitude than by aiding in any and every way in making that same gospel known in the dark parts of the world?

(d) Christianity makes a happy home. Let the principles reign in any family which are here enjoined by the apostle, and that family will be one of intelligence, contentment, and peace. There is a simple and easy way of

being happy in the family relation. It is to allow the spirit of Christ and his gospel to reign there. That done, though there be poverty, and disappointment, and sickness, and cares, and losses, yet there will be peace within, for there will be mutual love, and the cheerful hope of a brighter world. Where that is missing, no outward splendor, no costly furniture or viands, no gilded equipage, no long train of servants, no wine, or music, or dances, can secure happiness in a dwelling. With all these things there may be the most corroding passions; in the mansion where these things are, pale disease, disappointment, and death may come, and there shall be nothing to console and support.

Verse 8

Finally - As the last direction, or as general counsel in reference to your conduct in all the relations of life. The apostle had specified most of the important relations which Christians sustain, 1 Peter 2:13-25; 1 Peter 3:1-7; and he now gives a general direction in regard to their conduct in all those relations.

Be ye all of one mind - See the notes at Romans 12:16. The word used here (ὁμόφρων homophrōn) does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means, of the same mind; like-minded; and the object is to secure harmony in their views and feelings.

Having compassion one of another - "Sympathizing," (συμπαθεῖς sumpatheisentering into one another‘s feelings, and evincing a regard for each other‘s welfare. See the notes at Romans 12:15. Compare 1 Corinthians 12:26; John 11:35. The Greek word used here does occur not elsewhere in the New Testament. It describes that state of mind which exists when we enter into the feelings of others as if they were our own, as the different parts of the body are affected by that which affects one. See the notes at 1 Corinthians 12:26.

Love as brethren - Margin, "loving to the;" that is, the brethren. The Greek word (φιλάδελφος philadelphos) does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means loving one‘s brethren; that is, loving each other as Christian brethren - Robinson, Lexicon. Thus, it enforces the duty so often enjoined in the New Testament, that of love to Christians as brethren of the same family. See the notes at Romans 12:10. Compare Hebrews 13:1; John 13:34.

Be pitiful - The word used here (εὔσπλαγχνος eusplangchnos) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Ephesians 4:32, where it is rendered "tender-hearted." See the notes at that verse.

Be courteous - This word also φιλόφρων (philophrōn) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means "friendly-minded, kind, courteous." Later editions of the New Testament, instead of this, read (ταπεινόφρονες tapeinophrones) of a lowly or humble mind. See Hahn. The sense is not materially varied. In the one word, the idea of "friendliness" is the one that prevails; in the other, that of "humility." Christianity requires both of these virtues, and either word enforces an important injunction. The authority is in favor of the latter reading; and though Christianity requires that we should be courteous and gentlemanly in our treatment of others, this text can hardly be relied on as a prooftext of that point.

Verse 9

Not rendering evil for evil - See the Matthew 5:39, Matthew 5:44 notes; Romans 12:17 note.

Or railing for railing - See the notes at 1 Timothy 6:4. Compare Mark 15:29; Luke 23:39.

But contrariwise blessing - In a spirit contrary to this. See the notes at Matthew 5:44.

Knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing - "Knowing that you were called to be Christians in order that you should obtain a blessing infinite and eternal in the heavens. Expecting such a blessing yourselves, you should be ready to scatter blessings on all others. You should be ready to bear all their reproaches, and even to wish them well. The hope of eternal life should make your minds calm; and the prospect that you are to be so exalted in heaven should fill your hearts with benignity and love." There is nothing which is better suited to cause our hearts to overflow with benignity, to make us ready to forgive all others when they injure us, than the hope of salvation. Cherishing such a hope ourselves, we cannot but wish that all others may share it, and this will lead us to wish for them every blessing, A man who has a hope of heaven should abound in every virtue. and show that he is a sincere well-wisher of the race. Why should one who expects soon to be in heaven harbor malice in his bosom? Why should he wish to injure a fellow-worm? How can he?

Verse 10

For he that will love life - Greek, "He willing, (θέλων thelōnor that wills to love life." It implies that there is some positive desire to live; some active wish that life should be prolonged. This whole passage 1 Peter 3:10-12 is taken, with some slight variations, from Psalm 34:12-16. In the Psalm this expression is, "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?" The sense is substantially the same. It is implied here that it is right to love life, and to desire many days. The desire of this is referred to by the psalmist and by the apostle, without any expression of disapprobation, and the way is shown by which length of days may be secured. Life is a blessing; a precious gift of God. We are taught so to regard it by the instinctive feelings of our nature; for we are so made as to love it, and to dread its extinction. Though we should be prepared to resign it when God commands, yet there are important reasons why we should desire to live. Among them are the following:

(1) Because, as already intimated, life, as such, is to be regarded as a blessing. We instinctively shrink back from death, as one of the greatest evils; we shudder at the thought of annihilation. It is not wrong to love that, in proper degree, which, by our very nature, we are prompted to love; and we are but acting out one of the universal laws which our Creator has impressed on us, when, with proper submission to his will, we seek "to lengthen out our days as far as possible.

(2) that we may see the works of God, and survey the wonders of his hand on earth. The world is full of wonders, evincing the wisdom and goodness of the Deity; and the longest life, nay, many such lives as are allotted to us here, could be well employed in studying his works and ways.

(3) that we may make preparation for eternity. Man may, indeed, make preparation in a very brief period; but the longest life is not too much to examine and settle the question whether we have a well-founded hope of heaven. If man had nothing else to do, the longest life could be well employed in inquiries that grow out of the question whether we are suited for the world to come. In the possibility, too, of being deceived, and in view of the awful consequences that will result from deception, it is desirable that length of days should be given us that we may bring the subject to the severest test, and so determine it, that we may go sure to the changeless world.

(4) that we may do good to others. We may, indeed, do good in another world; but there are ways of doing good which are probably confined to this. What good we may do hereafter to the inhabitants of distant worlds, or what ministrations, in company with angels, or without them, we may exercise toward the friends of God on earth after we leave it, we do not know; but there are certain things which we are morally certain we shall not be permitted to do in the future world. We shall not:

(a)personally labor for the salvation of sinners, by conversation and other direct efforts;

(b)we shall not illustrate the influence of religion by example in sustaining us in trials, subduing and controlling our passions, and making us dead to the world;

(c)we shall not be permitted to pray for our impenitent friends and kindred, as we may now;

(d)we shall not have the opportunity of contributing of our substance for the spread of the gospel, or of going personally to preach the gospel to the perishing;

(e)we shall not be employed in instructing the ignorant, in advocating the cause of the oppressed and the wronged, in seeking to remove the fetters from the slave, in dispensing mercy to the insane, or in visiting the prisoner in his lonely cell;

(f)we shall not have it in our power to address a kind word to an impenitent child, or seek to guide him in paths of truth, purity, and salvation.

What we can do personally and directly for the salvation of others is to be done in this world; and, considering how much there is to be done, and how useful life may be on the earth, it is an object which we should desire, that our days may be lengthened out, and should use all proper means that it may be done. While we should ever be ready and willing to depart when God calls us to go; while we should not wish to linger on these mortal shores beyond the time when we may be useful to others, yet, as long as he

permits us to live, we should regard life as a blessing, and should pray that, if it be his will, we may not be cut down in the midst of our way.

"Love not thy life, nor hate; but what thou livest.
Live well; how long, or short, permit to heaven."
Paradise Lost.

And see good days - In the Psalm Psalm 34:12 this is, "and loveth many days, that he may see good." The quotation by Peter throughout the passage is taken from the Septuagint, excepting that there is a change of the person from the second to the third: in the psalm, e. g., "refrain thy tongue from evil," etc.; in the quotation, "let him refrain his tongue from evil," etc. "Good days" are prosperous days; happy days; days of usefulness; days in which we may be respected and loved.

Let him refrain his tongue from evil - The general meaning of all that is said here is, "let him lead an upright and pious life; doing evil to no one, but seeking the good of all men." To refrain the tongue from evil, is to avoid all slander, falsehood; "obscenity, and profaneness, and to abstain from uttering erroneous and false opinions. Compare James 1:26; James 3:2.

And his lips that they speak no guile - No deceit; nothing that will lead others astray. The words should be an exact representation of the truth. Rosenmuller quotes a passage from the Hebrew book Musar, which may be not an inappropriate illustration of this: "A certain Assyrian wandering through the city, cried and said, "Who will receive the elixir of life?" The daughter of Rabbi Jodus heard him, and went and told her father. "Call him in," said he. When he came in, Rabbi Jannei said to him, "What is that elixir of life which thou art selling?" He said to him, "Is it not written, What man is he that desireth life, and loveth days that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile. Lo, this is the elixir of life which is in the mouth of a man!""

Verse 11

Let him eschew evil - Let him avoid all evil. Compare Job 1:1.

And do good - In any and every way; by endeavoring to promote the happiness of all. Compare the notes at Galatians 6:10.

Let him seek peace, and ensue it - Follow it; that is, practice it. See the Matthew 5:9 note; Romans 12:18 note. The meaning is, that a peaceful spirit will contribute to length of days:

(1)A peaceful spirit - a calm, serene, and equal temper of mind - is favorable to health, avoiding those corroding and distracting passions which do so much to wear out the physical energies of the frame; and,

(2)such a spirit will preserve us from those contentions and strifes to which so many owe their death. Let anyone reflect on the numbers that are killed in duels, in battles, and in brawls, and he will have no difficulty in seeing how a peace fill spirit will contribute to length of days.

Verse 12

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous - That is, he is their Protector. His eyes are indeed on all people, but the language here is that which describes continual guardianship and care.

And his ears are open unto their prayers - He hears their prayers. As he is a hearer of prayer, they are at liberty to go to him at all times, and to pour out their desires before him. This passage is taken from Psalm 34:15, and it is designed to show the reason why a life of piety will contribute to length of days.

But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil - Margin, upon. The sense of the passage, however, is against. The Lord sets his face against them: an expression denoting disapprobation, and a determination to punish them. His face is not mild and benignant toward them, as it is toward the righteous. The general sentiment in these verses 1 Peter 3:10-12 is, that while length of days is desirable, it is to be secured by virtue and religion, or that virtue and religion will contribute to it. This is not to be understood as affirming that all who are righteous will enjoy long life, for we know that the righteous are often cut down in the midst of their way; and that in fire, and flood, and war, and the pestilence, the righteous and the wicked often perish together. But still there is a sense in which it is true that a life of virtue and religion will contribute to length of days, and that the law is so general as to be a basis of calculation in reference to the future:

I. Religion and virtue contribute to those things which are favorable to length of days, which are conducive to health and to a vigorous constitution. Among those things are the following:

(a)acalm, peaceful, and contented mind - avoiding the wear and tear of the raging passions of lusts, avarice, and ambition;

(b)temperance in eating and drinking - always favorable to length of days;

(c)industry - one of the essential means, as a general rule, of promoting long life;

(d)prudence and economy - avoiding the extravagancies by which many shorten their days; and,

(e)aconscientious and careful regard of life itself.

Religion makes men feel that life is a blessing, and that it should not be thrown away. Just in proportion as a man is under the influence of religion, does he regard life as of importance, and does he become careful in preserving it. Strange and paradoxical as it may seem, the lack of religion often makes people reckless of life, and ready to throw it away for any trifling cause. Religion shows a man what great issues depend on life, and makes him, therefore, desirous of living to secure his own salvation and the salvation of all others.

II. Multitudes lose their lives who would have preserved them if they had been under the influence of religion. To see this, we have only to reflect:

(a)on the millions who are cut off in war as the result of ambition, and the want of religion;

(b)on the countless hosts cut down in middle life, or in youth, by intemperance, who would have been saved by religion;

(c)on the numbers who are the victims of raging passions, and who are cut off by the diseases which gluttony and licentiousness engender;

(d)on the multitude who fall in duels, all of whom would have been saved by religion;

(e)on the numbers who, as the result of disappointment in business or in love, close their own lives, who would have been enabled to bear up under their troubles if they had had religion; and,

(f)on the numbers who are cut off from the earth as the punishment of their crimes, all of whom would have continued to live if they had had true religion.

III. God protects the righteous. He does it by saving them from those vices by which the lives of so many are shortened; and often, we have no reason to doubt, in answer to their prayers, when, but for those prayers, they would have fallen into crimes that would have consigned them to an early grave, or encountered dangers from which they would have had no means of escape. No one can doubt that in fact those who are truly religious are saved from the sins which consign millions to the tomb; nor is there any less reason to doubt that a protecting shield is often thrown before the children of God when in danger. Compare Psalm 91.

Verse 13

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? - This question is meant to imply, that as a general thing they need apprehend no evil if they lead an upright and benevolent life. The idea is, that God would in general protect them, though the next verse shows that the apostle did not mean to teach that there would be absolute security, for it is implied there that they might be called to suffer for righteousness" sake. While it is true that the Saviour was persecuted by wicked people, though his life was wholly spent in doing good; while it is true that the apostles were put to death, though following his example; and while it is true that good people have often suffered persecution, though laboring only to do good, still it is true as a general thing that a life of integrity and benevolence conduces to safety, even in a wicked world. People who are upright and pure; who live to do good to others who are characteristically benevolent and who are imitators of God - are those who usually pass life in most tranquillity and security, and are often safe when nothing else would give security but confidence in their integrity. A man of a holy and pure life may, under the protection of God, rely on that character to carry him safely through the world and to bring him at last to an honored grave. Or should he be calumniated when living, and his sun set under a cloud, still his name will be vindicated, and justice will ultimately be done to him when he is dead. The world ultimately judges right respecting character, and renders "honor to whom honor is due." Compare Psalm 37:3-6.

Verse 14

But and if ye suffer for righteousness" sake - Implying that though, in general, a holy character would constitute safety, yet that there was a possibility that they might suffer persecution. Compare the Matthew 5:10 note; 2 Timothy 3:12 note.

Happy are ye - Perhaps alluding to what the Saviour says in Matthew 5:10; "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness" sake." On the meaning of the word happy or blessed, see the notes at Matthew 5:3. The meaning here is, not that they would find positive enjoyment in persecution on account of righteousness, but that they were to regard it as a blessed condition; that is, as a condition that might be favorable to salvation; and they were not therefore, on the whole, to regard it as an evil.

And be not afraid of their terror - Of anything which they can do to cause terror. There is evidently an allusion here to Isaiah 8:12-13; "Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." See the notes at that passage. Compare Isaiah 51:12; Matthew 10:28. "Neither be troubled." With apprehension of danger. Compare the notes at John 14:1. If we are true Christians, we have really no reason to be alarmed in view of anything that can happen to us. God is our protector, and he is abundantly able to vanquish all our foes; to uphold us in all our trials; to conduct us through the valley of death, and to bring us to heaven. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come," 1 Corinthians 3:21-22.

Verse 15

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts - In Isaiah Isaiah 8:13 this is, "sanctify the Lord of hosts himself;" that is, in that connection, regard him as your Protector, and be afraid of him, and not of what man can do. The sense in the passage before us is, "In your hearts, or in the affections of the soul, regard the Lord God as holy, and act toward him with that confidence which a proper respect for one so great and so holy demands. In the midst of dangers, be not intimidated; dread not what man can do, but evince proper reliance on a holy God, and flee to him with the confidence which is due to one so glorious." This contains, however, a more general direction, applicable to Christians at all times. It is, that in our hearts we are to esteem God as a holy being, and in all our deportment to act toward him as such. The object of Peter in quoting the passage from Isaiah, was to lull the fears of those whom he addressed, and preserve them from any alarms in view of the persecutions to which they might be exposed; the trials which would be brought upon them by people. Thus, in entire accordance with the sentiment as employed by Isaiah, he says, "Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." That is, "in

order to keep the mind calm in trials, sanctify the Lord in your hearts; regard him as your holy God and Saviour; make him your refuge. This will allay all your fears, and secure you from all that you dread." The sentiment of the passage then is, that the sanctifying of the Lord God in our hearts, or proper confidence in him as a holy and righteous God, will deliver us from fear. As this is a very important sentiment for Christians, it may be proper, in order to a just exposition of the passage, to dwell a moment on it:

I. What is meant by our sanctifying the Lord God? It cannot mean to make him holy, for he is perfectly holy, whatever may be our estimate of him; and our views of him evidently can make no change in his character. The meaning therefore must be, that we should regard him as holy in our estimate of him, or in the feelings which we have toward him. This may include the following things:

(1) To esteem or regard him as a holy being, in contradistinction from all those feelings which rise up in the heart against him - the feelings of complaining and murmuring under his dispensations, as if he were severe and harsh; the feelings of dissatisfaction with his government, as if it were partial and unequal; the feelings of rebellion, as if his claims were unfounded or unjust.

(2) to desire that he may be regarded by others as holy, in accordance with the petition in the Lord's prayer, Matthew 6:9, "hallowed be thy name;" that is, "let thy name be esteemed to be holy everywhere;" a feeling in opposition to that which is regardless of the honor which he may receive in the world. When we esteem a friend, we desire that all due respect should be shown him by others; we wish that all who know him should have the same views that we have; we are sensitive to his honor, just in proportion as we love him.

(3) to act toward him as holy: that is, to obey his laws, and acquiesce in all his requirements, as if they were just and good. This implies:

(a)that we are to speak of him as holy, in opposition to the language of disrespect and irreverence so common among mankind;

(b)that we are to flee to him in trouble, in contradistinction from withholding our hearts from him, and flying to other sources of consolation and support.

II. What is it to do this in the heart? Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; that is, in contradistinction from a mere external service. This may

imply the following things:

(1) In contradistinction from a mere intellectual assent to the proposition that he is holy. Many admit the doctrine that God is holy into their creeds, who never suffer the sentiment to find its way to the heart. All is right on this subject in the articles of their faith; all in their hearts may be murmuring and complaining. In their creeds he is spoken of as just and good; in their hearts they regard him as partial and unjust, as severe and stern, as unamiable and cruel.

(2) in contradistinction From a mere outward form of devotion. In our prayers, and in our hymns, we, of course, "ascribe holiness to our Maker." But how much of this is the mere language of form! How little does the heart accompany it! And even in the most solemn and sublime ascriptions of praise, how often are the feelings of the heart entirely at variance with what is expressed by the lips! What would more justly offend us, than for a professed friend to approach us with the language of friendship, when every feeling of his heart belied his expressions, and we knew that his honeyed words were false and hollow!

III. Such a sanctifying of the Lord in our hearts will save us from fear. We dread danger, we dread sickness, we dread death, we dread the eternal world. We are alarmed when our affairs are tending to bankruptcy; we are alarmed when a friend is sick and ready to die; we are alarmed if our country is invaded by a foe, and the enemy already approaches our dwelling. The sentiment in the passage before us is, that if we sanctify the Lord God with proper affections, we shall be delivered from these alarms, and the mind will be calm:

(1) The fear of the Lord, as Leighton (in loc.) expresses it, "as greatest, overtops and nullifies all lesser fears: the heart possessed with this fear hath no room for the other." It is an absorbing emotion; making everything else comparatively of no importance. If we fear God, we have nothing else to fear. The highest emotion which there can be in the soul is the fear of God; and when that exists, the soul will be calm amidst all that might tend otherwise to disturb it. "What time I am afraid," says David, "I will trust in thee," Psalm 56:3. "We are not, careful," said Daniel and his friends, "to answer thee, O king. Our God can deliver us; but if not, we will not worship the image," Daniel 3:16.

(2) if we sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, there will be a belief that he will do all things well, and the mind will be calm. However dark his

dispensations may be, we shall be assured that everything is ordered aright. In a storm at sea, a child may be calm when he feels that his father is at the helm, and assures him that there is no danger. In a battle, the mind of a soldier may be calm, if he has confidence in his commander, and he assures him that all is safe. So in anything, if we have the assurance that the best thing is done that can be, that the issues will all be right, the mind will be calm. But in this respect the highest confidence that can exist, is that which is reposed in God.

(3) there will be the assurance that all is safe. "Though I walk," says David, "through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me," Psalm 23:4. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27:1. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble: therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof," Psalm 46:1-3. Let us ever then regard the Lord as holy, just, and good. Let us flee to him in all the trials of the present life, and in the hour of death repose on his arm. Every other source of trust will fail; and whatever else may be our reliance, when the hour of anguish approaches, that reliance will fail, and that which we dreaded will overwhelm us. Nor riches, nor honors, nor earthly friends, can save us from those alarms, or be a security for our souls when "the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow" upon us.

And be ready always - That is:

(a)be always able to do it; have such reasons for the hope that is in you that they can be stated; or, have good and substantial reasons; and,

(b)be willing to state those reasons on all proper occasions.

No man ought to entertain opinions for which a good reason cannot be given; and every man ought to be willing to state the grounds of his hope on all proper occasions. A Christian should have such intelligent views of the truth of his religion, and such constant evidence in his own heart and life that he is a child of God, as to be able at any time to satisfy a candid inquirer that the Bible is a revelation from heaven, and that it is proper for him to cherish the hope of salvation.

To give an answer - Greek, "An apology," (ἀπολογίαν apologianThis word formerly did not mean, as the word apology does now, an excuse for anything that is done as if it were wrong, but a defense of anything. We apply the word now to denote something written or said in extenuation of what appears to others to be wrong, or what might be construed as wrong - as when we make an apology to others for not fulfilling an engagement, or for some conduct which might be construed as designed neglect. The word originally, however, referred rather to that which was thought not to be true, than that which might be construed as wrong; and the defense or "apology" which Christians were to make of their religion, was not on the supposition that others would regard it as wrong, but in order to show them that it was true. The word used here is rendered "defense," Acts 22:1; Philemon 1:7, Philemon 1:17; answer, Acts 25:16; 1 Corinthians 9:3; 2 Timothy 4:16; 1 Peter 3:15; and clearing of yourselves in 2 Corinthians 7:11. We are not to hold ourselves ready to make an apology for our religion as if it were a wrong thing to be a Christian; but we are always to be ready to give reasons for regarding it as true.

To every man that asketh you - Anyone has a right respectfully to ask another on what grounds he regards his religion as true; for every man has a common interest in religion, and in knowing what is the truth on the subject. If any man, therefore, asks us candidly and respectfully by what reasons we have been led to embrace the gospel, and on what grounds we, regard it as true, we are under obligation to state those grounds in the best manner that we are able. We should regard it not as an impertinent intrusion into our private affairs, but as an opportunity of doing good to others, and to honor the Master whom we serve. Nay, we should hold ourselves in readiness to state the grounds of our faith and hope, whatever maybe the motive of the inquirer, and in whatever manner the request may be made. Those who were persecuted for their religion, were under obligation to make as good a defense of it as they could, and to state to their persecutors the "reason" of the hope which they entertained. And so now, if a man attacks our religion; if he ridicules us for being Christians; if he tauntingly asks us what reason we have for believing the truth of the Bible, it is better to tell him in a kind manner, and to meet his taunt with a kind and strong argument, than to become angry, or to turn away with contempt. The best way to disarm him is to show him that by embracing religion we are not fools in understanding; and, by a kind temper, to convince him that the

influence of religion over us when we are abused and insulted, is a reason why we should love our religion, and why he should too.

A reason of the hope that is in you - Greek, “an account,” (λόγον logonThat is, you are to state on what ground you cherish that hope. This refers to the whole ground of our hope, and includes evidently two things:

(1)The reason why we regard Christianity as true, or as furnishing a ground of hope for people; and,

(2)the reason which we have ourselves for cherishing a hope of heaven, or the experimental and practical views which we have of religion, which constitute a just ground of hope.

It is not improbable that the former of these was more directly in the eye of the apostle than the latter, though both seem to be implied in the direction to state the reasons which ought to satisfy others that it is proper for us to cherish the hope of heaven. The first part of this duty - that we are to state the reasons why we regard the system of religion which we have embraced as true - implies, that we should be acquainted with the evidences of the truth of Christianity, and be able to state them to others. Christianity is founded on evidence; and though it cannot be supposed that every Christian will be able to understand all that is involved in what are called the evidences of Christianity, or to meet all the objections of the enemies of the gospel; yet every man who becomes a Christian should have such intelligent views of religion, and of the evidences of the truth of the Bible, that he can show to others that the religion which he has embraced has claims to their attention, or that it is not a mere matter of education, of tradition, or of feeling. It should also be an object with every Christian to increase his acquaintance with the evidences of the truth of religion, not only for his own stability and comfort in the faith, but that he may be able to defend religion if attacked, or to guide others if they are desirous of knowing what is truth. The second part of this duty, that we state the reasons which we have for cherishing the hope of heaven as a personal matter, implies:

(a)that there should be, in fact, a well-founded hope of heaven; that is, that we have evidence that we are true Christians, since it is impossible to give a “reason” of the hope that is in us unless there are reasons for it;

(b)that we be able to state in a clear and intelligent manner what constitutes evidence of piety, or what should be reasonably regarded as such; and,

(c)that we be ever ready to state these reasons.

A Christian should always be willing to converse about his religion. He should have such a deep conviction of its truth, of its importance, and of his personal interest in it; he should have a hope so firm, so cheering, so sustaining, that he will be always prepared to converse on the prospect of heaven and to endeavor to lead others to walk in the path to life.

With meekness - With modesty; without any spirit of ostentation; with gentleness of manner. This seems to be added on the supposition that they sometimes might be rudely assailed; that the questions might be proposed in a spirit of evil; that it might be done in a taunting or insulting manner. Even though this should be done, they were not to fall into a passion, to manifest resentment, or to retort in an angry and revengeful manner; but, in a calm and gentle spirit, they were to state the reasons of their faith and hope, and leave the matter there.

And fear - Margin, "reverence." The sense seems to be, "in the fear of God; with a serious and reverent spirit; as in the presence of Him who sees and hears all things." It evidently does not mean with the fear or dread of those who propose the question, but with that serious and reverent frame of mind which is produced by a deep impression of the importance of the subject, and a conscious sense of the presence of God. It follows, from the injunction of the apostle here:

(1)that every professing Christian should have clear and intelligent views of his own personal interest in religion, or such evidences of piety that they can be stated to others, and that they can be made satisfactory to other minds;

(2)that every Christian, however humble his rank, or however unlettered he may be, may become a valuable defender of the truth of Christianity;

(3)that we should esteem it a privilege to bear our testimony to the truth and value of religion, and to stand up as the advocates of truth in the world. Though we may be rudely assailed, it is an honor to speak in defense of religion; though we are persecuted and reviled, it is a privilege to be permitted in any way to show our fellow-men that there is such a thing as true religion, and that man may cherish the hope of heaven.

Verse 16

Having a good conscience - That is, a conscience that does not accuse you of having done wrong. Whatever may be the accusations of your enemies, so live that you may be at all times conscious of uprightness. Whatever you suffer, see that you do not suffer the pangs inflicted by a guilty conscience, the anguish of remorse. On the meaning of the word "conscience," see the notes at Romans 2:15. The word properly means the judgment of the mind respecting right and wrong; or the judgment which the mind passes on the immorality of its own actions, when it instantly approves or condemns them. There is always a feeling of obligation connected with operations of conscience, which precedes, attends, and follows our actions. "Conscience is first occupied in ascertaining our duty, before we proceed to action; then in judging of our actions when performed." A "good conscience" implies two things:

(1) That it be properly enlightened to know what is right and wrong, or that it be not under the dominion of ignorance, superstition, or fanaticism, prompting us to do what would be a violation of the divine law; and,

(2) that its dictates must always be obeyed. Without the first of these - clear views of that which is right and wrong - conscience becomes an unsafe guide; for it merely prompts us to do what we esteem to be right, and if our views of what is right and wrong are erroneous, we may be prompted to do what may be a direct violation of the law of God. Paul thought he "ought" to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth Acts 26:9; the Saviour said, respecting his disciples, that the time would come when whosoever should kill them would think that they were doing God service, John 16:2; and Solomon says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death," Proverbs 14:12; Proverbs 16:25 Under an unenlightened and misguided conscience, with the plea and pretext of religion, the most atrocious crimes have been committed; and no man should infer that he is certainly doing right, because he follows the promptings of conscience.

No man, indeed, should act against the dictates of his conscience; but there may have been a previous wrong in not using proper means to ascertain what is right. Conscience is not revelation, nor does it answer the purpose of a revelation. It communicates no new truth to the soul, and is a safe guide only so far as the mind has been properly enlightened to see what

is truth and duty. Its office is "to prompt us to the performance of duty," not "to determine what is right." The other thing requisite that we may have a good conscience is, that its decisions should be obeyed. Conscience is appointed to be the "vicegerent" of God in inflicting punishment, if his commands are not obeyed. It pronounces a sentence on our own conduct. Its penalty is remorse; and that penalty will be demanded if its promptings be not regarded. It is an admirable device, as a part of the moral government of God, urging man to the performance of duty, and, in case of disobedience, making the mind its own executioner.

There is no penalty that will more certainly be inflicted, sooner or later, than that incurred by a guilty conscience. It needs no witnesses; no process for arresting the offender; no array of judges and executioners; no stripes, imprisonment, or bonds. Its inflictions will follow the offender into the most secluded retreat; overtake him in his most rapid flight; find him out in northern snows, or on the sands of the equator; go into the most splendid palaces, and seek out the victim when he is safe from all the vengeance that man can inflict; pursue him into the dark valley of the shadow of death, or arrest him as a fugitive in distant worlds. No one, therefore, can over-estimate the importance of having a good conscience. A true Christian should aim, by incessant study and prayer, to know what is right, and then always do it, no matter what may be the consequences.

That, whereas they speak evil of you - They who are your enemies and persecutors. Christians are not to hope that people will always speak well of them, Matthew 5:11; Luke 6:26.

As of evildoers - See the notes at 1 Peter 2:12.

They may be ashamed - They may see that they have misunderstood your conduct, and regret that they have treated you as they have. We should expect, if we are faithful and true, that even our enemies will yet appreciate our motives, and do us justice. Compare Psalm 37:5-6.

That falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ - Your good conduct as Christians. They may accuse you of insincerity, hypocrisy, dishonesty; of being enemies of the state, or of monstrous crimes; but the time will come when they will see their error, and do you justice. See the notes at 1 Peter 2:12.

Verse 17

For it is better, if the will of God be so - That is, if God sees it to be necessary for your good that you should suffer, it is better that you should suffer for doing well than for crime. God often sees it to be necessary that his people should suffer. There are effects to be accomplished by affliction which can be secured in no other way; and some of the happiest results on the soul of a Christian, some of the brightest traits of character, are the effect of trials. But it should be our care that our sufferings should not be brought upon us for our own crimes or follies. No man can promote his own highest good by doing wrong, and then enduring the penalty which his sin incurs; and no one should do wrong with any expectation that it may be overruled for his own good. If we are to suffer, let it be by the direct hand of God, and not by any fault of our own. If we suffer then, we shall have the testimony of our own conscience in our favor, and the feeling that we may go to God for support. If we suffer for our faults, in addition to the outward pain of body, we shall endure the severest pangs which man can suffer - those which the guilty mind inflicts on itself.

Verse 18

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins - Compare the notes at 1 Peter 2:21. The design of the apostle in the reference to the sufferings of Christ, is evidently to remind them that he suffered as an innocent being, and not for any wrong-doing, and to encourage and comfort them in their sufferings by his example. The reference to his sufferings leads him 1 Peter 3:18-22 into a statement of the various ways in which Christ suffered, and of his ultimate triumph. By his example in his sufferings, and by his final triumph, the apostle would encourage those whom he addressed to bear with patience the sorrows to which their religion exposed them. He assumes that all suffering for adhering to the gospel is the result of well-doing; and for an encouragement in their trials, he refers them to the example of Christ, the highest instance that ever was, or ever will be, both of well-doing, and of suffering on account of it. The expression, "hath once suffered," in the New Testament, means once for all; once, in the sense that it is not to occur again. Compare Hebrews 7:27. The particular point here, however, is not that he once suffered; it is that he had in fact suffered, and that in doing it he had left an example for them to follow.

The just for the unjust - The one who was just, (δίκαιος dikaioson account of, or in the place of, those who were unjust, (ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων huper adikōnor one who was righteous, on account of those who were wicked.

Compare the Romans 5:6 note; 2 Corinthians 5:21 note; Hebrews 9:28 note. The idea on which the apostle would particularly fix their attention was, that he was just or innocent. Thus, he was an example to those who suffered for well-doing.

That he might bring us to God - That his death might be the means of reconciling sinners to God. Compare the notes at John 3:14; John 12:32. It is through that death that mercy is proclaimed to the guilty; it is by that alone that God can be reconciled to people; and the fact that the Son of God loved people, and gave himself a sacrifice for them, enduring such bitter sorrows, is the most powerful appeal which can be made to mankind to induce them to return to God. There is no appeal which can be made to us more powerful than one drawn from the fact that another suffers on our account. We could resist the argument which a father, a mother, or a sister would use to reclaim us from a course of sin; but if we perceive that our conduct involves them in suffering, that fact has a power over us which no mere argument could have.

Being put to death in the flesh - As a man; in his human nature. Compare the notes at Romans 1:3-4. There is evidently a contrast here between "the flesh" in which it is said he was "put to death," and "the Spirit" by which it is said he was "quickened." The words "in the flesh" are clearly designed to denote something that was unique in his death; for it is a departure from the usual method of speaking of death. How singular would it be to say of Isaiah, Paul, or Peter, that they were put to death in the flesh! How obvious would it be to ask, In what other way are people usually put to death? What was there special in their case, which would distinguish their death from the death of others? The use of this phrase would suggest the thought at once, that though, in regard to that which was properly expressed by the phrase, "the flesh," they died, yet that there was something else in respect to which they did not die. Thus, if it were said of a man that he was deprived of his rights as a father, it would be implied that in, other respects he was not deprived of his rights; and this would be especially true if it were added that he continued to enjoy his rights as a neighbor, or as holding an office under the government. The only proper inquiry, then, in this place is, What is fairly implied in the phrase, the flesh? Does it mean simply his body, as distinguished from his human soul? or does it refer to him as a man, as distinguished from some higher nature, over which death

had no power Now, that the latter is the meaning seems to me to be apparent, for these reasons:

(1) It is the usual way of denoting the human nature of the Lord Jesus, or of saying that he became in carnate, or was a man, to speak of his being in the flesh. See Romans 1:2; "Made of the seed of David according to the flesh." John 1:14; "and the Word was made flesh." 1 Timothy 3:16; "God was manifest in the flesh." 1 John 4:2; "every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God." 2 John 1:7; "who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh."

(2) so far as appears, the effect of death on the human soul of the Redeemer was the same as in the case of the soul of any other person; in other words, the effect of death in his case was not confined to the mere body or the flesh. Death, with him, was what death is in any other case - the separation of the soul and body, with all the attendant pain of such dissolution. It is not true that his "flesh," as such, died without the ordinary accompaniments of death on the soul, so that it could be said that the one died, and the other was kept alive. The purposes of the atonement required that he should meet death in the usual form; that the great laws which operate everywhere else in regard to dissolution, should exist in his case; nor is there in the Scriptures any intimation that there was, in this respect, anything special in his case. If his soul had been exempt from whatever there is involved in death in relation to the spirit, it is unaccountable that there is no hint on this point in the sacred narrative. But if this be so, then the expression "in the flesh" refers to him as a man, and means, that so far as his human nature was concerned, he died. In another important respect, he did not die. On the meaning of the word "flesh" in the New Testament, see the notes at Romans 1:3.

But quickened - Made alive - ζοωποιηθεὶς zoōpoiētheisThis does not mean "kept alive," but "made alive; recalled to life; reanimated." The word is never used in the sense of maintained alive, or preserved alive. Compare the following places, which are the only ones in which it occurs in the New Testament: John 5:21 (twice); John 6:63; Romans 4:17; Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:36, 1 Corinthians 15:45; 1 Timothy 6:13; 1 Peter 3:18; in all which it is rendered "quickened, quicken, quickeneth;" 1 Corinthians 15:22, "be made alive;" 2 Corinthians 3:6, "giveth life;" and Galatians 3:21, "have given life." "Once the word refers to God, as he who giveth life to all

creatures, 1 Timothy 6:13; three times it refers to the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit, or of the doctrines of the gospel, John 6:63; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Galatians 3:21; seven times it is used with direct reference to the raising of the dead, John 5:21; Romans 4:17; Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 1 Corinthians 15:36, 1 Corinthians 15:45; 1 Peter 3:18." See *Biblical Repos.*, April, 1845, p. 269. See also Passow, and Robinson, Lexicon. The sense, then, cannot be that, in reference to his soul or spirit, he was preserved alive when his body died, but that there was some agency or power restoring him to life, or reanimating him after he was dead.

By the Spirit - According to the common reading in the Greek, this is τῷ Πνεύματι tō Pneumati- with the article the - "the Spirit." Hahn, Tittman, and Griesbach omit the article, and then the reading is, "quickened in spirit;" and thus the reading corresponds with the former expression, "in flesh" (σαρκὶ sarkiwhere the article also is lacking. The word "spirit," so far as the mere use of the word is concerned, might refer to his own soul, to his divine nature, or to the Holy Spirit. It is evident:

(1) that it does not refer to his own soul, for:

(a)as we have seen, the reference in the former clause is to his human nature, including all that pertained to him as a man, body and soul;

(b)there was no power in his own spirit, regarded as that pertaining to his human nature, to raise him up from the dead, any more than there is such a power in any other human soul. That power does not belong to a human soul in any of its relations or conditions.

(2) it seems equally clear that this does not refer to the Holy Spirit, or the Third Person of the Trinity, for it may be doubted whether the work of raising the dead is anywhere ascribed to that Spirit. His special province is to enlighten, awaken, convict, convert, and sanctify the soul; to apply the work of redemption to the hearts of people, and to lead them to God. This influence is moral, not physical; an influence accompanying the truth, not the exertion of mere physical power.

(3) it remains, then, that the reference is to his own divine nature - a nature by which he was restored to life after he was crucified; to the Son of God, regarded as the Second Person of the Trinity. This appears, not only from the facts above stated, but also:

(a) from the connection, It is stated that it was in or by this spirit that he went and preached in the days of Noah. But it was not his spirit as a man that did this, for his human soul had then no existence. Yet it seems that he

did this personally or directly, and not by the influences of the Holy Spirit, for it is said that "he went and preached." The reference, therefore, cannot be to the Holy Spirit, and the fair conclusion is that it refers to his divine nature.

(b) This accords with what the apostle Paul says Romans 1:3-4, "which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh," that is, in respect to his human nature, "and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness," that is, in respect to his divine nature, "by the resurrection from the dead." See the notes at that passage.

(c) It accords with what the Saviour himself says, John 10:17-18; "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." This must refer to his divine nature, for it is impossible to conceive that a human soul should have the power of restoring its former tenement, the body, to life. See the notes at the passage. The conclusion, then, to which we have come is, that the passage means, that as a man, a human being, he was put to death; in respect to a higher nature, or by a higher nature, here denominated Spirit (Πνεῦμα Pneumahe was restored to life. As a man, he died; as the incarnate Son of Gods the Messiah, he was made alive again by the power of his own Divine Spirit, and exalted to heaven. Compare Robinson's Lexicon on the word Πνεῦμα PneumaC.

Verse 19

By which - Evidently by the Spirit referred to in the previous verse - ἐν ᾧ en hō- the divine nature of the Son of God; that by which he was "quickened" again, after he had been put to death; the Son of God regarded as a Divine Being, or in that same nature which afterward became incarnate, and whose agency was employed in quickening the man Christ Jesus, who had been put to death. The meaning is, that the same "Spirit" which was efficacious in restoring him to life, after he was put to death, was that by which he preached to the spirits in prison.

He went - To wit, in the days of Noah. No particular stress should be laid here on the phrase "he went." The literal sense is, "he, having gone, preached," etc. πορευθεὶς poreutheisIt is well known that such expressions are often redundant in Greek writers, as in others. So Herodotus, "to these things they spake, saying" - for they said. "And he, speaking, said;" that is,

he said. So Ephesians 2:17, “And came and preached peace,” etc. Matthew 9:13, “but go and learn what that meaneth,” etc. So God is often represented as coming, as descending, etc., when he brings a message to mankind. Thus, Genesis 11:5, “The Lord came down to see the city and the tower.” Exodus 19:20, “the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai.” Numbers 11:25, “the Lord came down in a cloud.” 2 Samuel 22:10, “he bowed the heavens and came down.” The idea, however, would be conveyed by this language that he did this personally, or by himself, and not merely by employing the agency of another. It would then be implied here, that though the instrumentality of Noah was employed, yet that it was done not by the Holy Spirit, but by him who afterward became incarnate. On the supposition, therefore, that this whole passage refers to his preaching to the antediluvians in the time of Noah, and not to the “spirits” after they were confined in prison, this is language which the apostle would have properly and probably used. If that supposition meets the full force of the language, then no argument can be based on it in proof that he went to preach to them after their death, and while his body was lying in the grave.

And preached - The word used here (ἐκήρυξεν ekēruxen) is of a general character, meaning to make a proclamation of any kind, as a crier does, or to deliver a message, and does not necessarily imply that it was the gospel which was preached, nor does it determine anything in regard to the nature of the message. It is not affirmed that he preached the gospel, for if that specific idea had been expressed it would have been rather by another word - εὐαγγελίζω euangelizōThe word used here would be appropriate to such a message as Noah brought to his contemporaries, or to any communication which God made to people. See Matthew 3:1; Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:35; Mark 5:20; Mark 7:36. It is implied in the expression, as already remarked, that he did this himself; that it was the Son of God who subsequently became incarnate, and not the Holy Spirit, that did this; though the language is consistent with the supposition that he did it by the instrumentality of another, to wit, Noah. “Qui facit per alium, facit per se.” God really proclaims a message to mankind when he does it by the instrumentality of the prophets, or apostles, or other ministers of religion; and all that is necessarily implied in this language would be met by the supposition that Christ delivered a message to the antediluvian race by the agency of Noah. No argument, therefore, can be derived from this language

to prove that Christ went and personally preached to those who were confined in hades or in prison.

Unto the spirits in prison - That is, clearly, to the spirits now in prison, for this is the fair meaning of the passage. The obvious sense is, that Peter supposed there were "spirits in prison" at the time when he wrote, and that to those same spirits the Son of God had at some time "preached," or had made some proclamation respecting the will of God. Since this is the only passage in the New Testament upon which the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory is supposed to rest, it is important to ascertain the fair meaning of the language here employed. There are three obvious inquiries in ascertaining its signification. Who are referred to by "spirits?" What is meant by "in prison?" Was the message brought to them while in the prison, or at some previous period?

I. Who are referred to by spirits? The specification in the next verse determines this. They were those "who were sometimes disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." No others are specified; and if it should be maintained that this means that he went down to hell (Hades), or to Sheol, and preached to those who are confined there, it could be inferred from this passage only that he preached to that portion of the lost spirits confined there which belonged to the particular generation in which Noah lived. Why he should do this; or how there should be such a separation made in hades that it could be done; or what was the nature of the message which he delivered to that portion, are questions which it is impossible for any man who bolds to the opinion that Christ went down to hell after his death to preach, to answer. But if it means that he preached to those who lived in the days of Noah, while they were yet alive, the question will be asked why are they called "spirits?"

Were they spirits then, or were they people like others? To this the answer is easy. Peter speaks of them as they were when he wrote; not as they had been, or were at the time when the message was preached to them. The idea is, that to those spirits who were then in prison who had formerly lived in the days of Noah, the message had been in fact delivered. It was not necessary to speak of them precisely as they were at the time when it was delivered, but only in such a way as to identify them. We should use similar language now. If we saw a company of men in prison who had seen better days - a multitude now drunken, and debased, and poor, and riotous - it

would not be improper to say that "the prospect of wealth and honor was once held out to this ragged and wretched multitude. All that is needful is to identify them as the same persons who once had this prospect. In regard to the inquiry, then, who these "spirits" were, there can be no difference of opinion. They were that wicked race which lived in the days of Noah. There is no allusion in this passage to any other; there is no intimation that to any others of those "in prison" the message here referred to had been delivered.

II. What is meant by prison here? Purgatory, or the limbus patrum, say the Romanists - a place in which departed souls are supposed to be confined, and in which their final destiny may still be effected by the purifying fires which they endure, by the prayers of the living, or by a message in some way conveyed to their gloomy abodes - in which such sins may be expiated as do not deserve eternal damnation. The Syriac here is "in Sheol," referring to the abodes of the dead, or the place in which departed spirits are supposed to dwell. The word rendered "prison," (φυλακῇ phulakēmeans properly "watch, guard" - the act of keeping watch, or the guard itself; then watchpost, or station; then a place where anyone is watched or guarded, as a prison; then a watch in the sense of a division of the night, as the morning watch. It is used in the New Testament, with reference to the future world, only in the following places: 1 Peter 3:19, "Preached unto the spirits in prison;" and Revelation 20:7, "Satan shall be loosed put of his prison."

An idea similar to the one here expressed may be found in 2 Peter 2:4, though the word prison does not there occur: "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;" and in Jude 1:6, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." The allusion, in the passage before us, is undoubtedly to confinement or imprisonment in the invisible world; and perhaps to those who are reserved there with reference to some future arrangement - for this idea enters commonly into the use of the word prison. There is, however, no specification of the place where this is; no intimation that it is purgatory - a place where the departed are supposed to undergo purification; no intimation that their condition can be affected by anything that we can do;

no intimation that those particularly referred to differ in any sense from the others who are confined in that world; no hint that they can be released by any prayers or sacrifices of ours. This passage, therefore, cannot be adduced to support the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory, because:

(1)the essential ideas which enter into the doctrine of purgatory are not to be found in the word used here;

(2)there is no evidence in the fair interpretation of the passage that any message is borne to them while in prison;

(3)there is not the slightest hint that they can be released by any prayers or offerings of those who dwell on the earth. The simple idea is that of persons confined as in a prison; and the passage will prove only that in the time when the apostle wrote there were those wire were thus confined.

III. Was the message brought to them while in prison, or at some previous period? The Romanists say that it was while in prison; that Christ, after he was put to death in the body, was still kept alive in his spirit, and went and proclaimed his gospel to those who were in prison. So Bloomfield maintains, (in loc.,) and so (Ecumenius and Cyril, as quoted by Bloomfield. But against this view there are plain objections drawn from the language of Peter himself:

(1) As we have seen, the fair interpretation of the passage "quickened by the Spirit," is not that he was kept alive as to his human soul, but that he, after being dead, was made alive by his own divine energy.

(2) if the meaning be that he went and preached after his death, it seems difficult to know why the reference is to those only who "had been disobedient in the days of Noah." Why were they alone selected for this message? Are they separate from others? Were they the only ones in purgatory who could be beneficially affected by his preaching? On the other method of interpretation, we can suggest a reason why they were particularly specified. But how can we on this?

(3) the language employed does not demand this interpretation. Its full meaning is met by the interpretation that Christ once preached to the spirits then in prison, to wit, in the days of Noah; that is, that he caused a divine message to be borne to them. Thus, it would be proper to say that "Whitefield came to America, and preached to the souls in perdition;" or to

go among the graves of the first settlers of New Haven, and say, "Davenport came from England to preach to the dead men around us."

(4) this interpretation accords with the design of the apostle in inculcating the duty of patience and forbearance in trials; in encouraging those whom he addressed to be patient in their persecutions. See the analysis of the chapter. With this object in view, there was entire propriety in directing them to the long-suffering and forbearance evinced by the Saviour, through Noah. He was opposed, reviled, disbelieved, and, we may suppose, persecuted. It was to the purpose to direct them to the fact that he was saved as the result of his steadfastness to Him who had commanded him to preach to that ungodly generation. But what pertinency would there have been in saying that Christ went down to hell, and delivered some sort of a message there, we know not what, to those who are confined there?

Verse 20

Which sometime were disobedient - Which were "once," or "formerly," (ποτε potedisobedient or rebellious. The language here does not imply that they had ceased to be disobedient, or that they had become obedient at the time when the apostle wrote; but the object is to direct the attention to a former race of people characterized by disobedience, and to show the patience evinced under their provocations, in endeavoring to do them good. To say that people were formerly rebellious, or rebellious in a specified age, is no evidence that they are otherwise now. The meaning here is, that they did not obey the command of God when he called them to repentance by the preaching of Noah. Compare 2 Peter 2:5, where Noah is called "a preacher of righteousness."

When once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah - God waited on that guilty race for 120 years, Genesis 6:3, a period sufficiently protracted to evince his long-suffering toward one generation. It is not improbable that during that whole period Noah was, in various ways, preaching to that wicked generation. Compare the notes at Hebrews 11:7.

While the ark was a preparing - It is probable that preparations were made for building the ark during a considerable portion of that time. Peter's, at Rome, was a much longer time in building; and it is to be remembered that in the age of the world when Noah lived, and with the imperfect knowledge of the arts of naval architecture which must have

prevailed, it was a much more serious undertaking to construct an ark that would hold such a variety and such a number of animals as that was designed to, land that would float safely for more than a year in an universal flood, than it was to construct such a fabric as Peter‘s, in the days when that edifice was raised.

Wherein few, that is, eight souls - Eight persons - Noah and his wife, his three sons and their wives, Genesis 7:7. The allusion to their being saved here seems to be to encourage those whom Peter addressed to perseverance and fidelity, in the midst of all the opposition which they might experience. Noah was not disheartened. Sustained by the Spirit of Christ - the presence of the Son of God - he continued to preach. He did not abandon his purpose, and the result was that tie was saved. True, they were few in number who were saved; the great mass continued to be wicked; but this very fact should be an encouragement to us - that though the great mass of any one generation may be wicked, God can protect and save the few who are faithful.

By water - They were borne up by the waters, and were thus preserved. The thought on which the apostle makes his remarks turn, and which leads him in the next verse to the suggestions about baptism, is, that water was employed in their preservation, or that they owed their safety, in an important sense, to that element. In like manner we owe our salvation, in an important sense, to water; or, there is an important agency which it is made to perform in our salvation. The apostle does not say that it was in the same way, or that the one was a type designed to represent the other, or even that the efficacy of water was in both cases the same; but he says, that as Noah owed his salvation to water, so there is an important sense in which water is employed in ours. There is in certain respects - he does not say in all respects - a resemblance between the agency of water in the salvation of Noah, and the agency of water in our salvation. In both cases water is employed, though it may not be that it is in the same manner, or with precisely the same efficacy.

Verse 21

The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us - There are some various readings here in the Greek text, but the sense is not essentially varied. Some have proposed to read (ᾧ hō) to which instead of (ὅ ho) which, so as to make the sense “the antitype to which baptism now also saves us.” The antecedent to the relative, whichever word is used, is

clearly not the ark, but water; and the idea is, that as Noah was saved by water, so there is a sense in which water is made instrumental in our salvation. The mention of water in the case of Noah, in connection with his being saved, by an obvious association suggested to the mind of the apostle the use of water in our salvation, and hence led him to make the remark about the connection of baptism with our salvation. The Greek word here rendered "figure" - ἀντίτυπον antitupon- "antitype" means properly, "resisting a blow or impression," (from ἀντί antiand τύπος tuposthat is, hard, solid. In the New Testament, however, it is used in a different sense; and (ἀντί anti) in composition, implies resemblance, correspondence and hence, the word means, "formed after a type or model; like; corresponding; that which corresponds to a type" - Robinson, Lexicon. The word occurs only in this place and Hebrews 9:24, rendered "figures." The meaning here is, that baptism corresponded to, or had a resemblance to, the water by which Noah was saved; or that there was a use of water in the one case which corresponded in some respects to the water that was used in the other; to wit, in effecting salvation. The apostle does not say that it corresponded in all respects; in respect, e. g., to quantity, or to the manner of the application, or to the efficacy; but there is a sense in which water performs an important part in our salvation, as it did in his.

Baptism - Not the mere application of water, for that idea the apostle expressly disclaims, when he says that it involves not "putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." The sense is, that baptism, including all that is properly meant by baptism as a religious rite - that is, baptism administered in connection with true repentance, and true faith in the Lord Jesus, and when it is properly a symbol of the putting away of sin, and of the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, and an act of unreserved dedication to God - now saves us. On the meaning of the word "baptism," see the notes at Matthew 3:6, Matthew 3:16.

Doth also now save us - The water saved Noah and his family from perishing in the flood; to wit, by bearing up the ark. Baptism, in the proper sense of the term, as above explained, where the water used is a symbol, in like manner now saves us; that is, the water is an emblem of that purifying by which we are saved. It may be said to save us, not as the meritorious cause, but as the indispensable condition of salvation. No man can be saved without that regenerated and purified heart of which baptism is the

appropriate symbol, and when it would be proper to administer that ordinance. The apostle cannot have meant that water saves us in the same way in which it saved Noah, because that cannot be true. It is neither the same in quantity, nor is it applied in the same way, nor is it efficacious in the same manner. It is indeed connected with our salvation in its own proper way, as an emblem of that purifying of the heart by which we are saved. Thus, it corresponds with the salvation of Noah by water, and is the (ἀντίτυπον antitupon) "antitype" of that. Nor does it mean that the salvation of Noah by water was designed to be a type of Christian baptism. There is not the least evidence of that; and it should not be affirmed without proof. The apostle saw a resemblance in some respects between the one and the other; such a resemblance that the one naturally suggested the other to his mind, and the resemblance was so important as to make it the proper ground of remark.

(But if Noah's preservation in the ark, be the type of that salvation of which baptism is the emblem, who shall say it was not so designed of God? Must we indeed regard the resemblance between Noah's deliverance and ours, as a happy coincidence merely? But the author is accustomed to deny typical design in very clear cases; and in avoiding one extreme seems to have gone into another. Some will have types everywhere; and, therefore, others will allow them nowhere. See the supplementary note at Hebrews 7:1; M. Knight's *Essay*, viii. Sect. v., on the laws of typical interpretation, with his commentary in loco)

The points of resemblance in the two cases seem to have been these:

(1)There was salvation in both; Noah was saved from death, and we are saved from hell.

(2)water is employed in both cases - in the case of Noah to uphold the ark; in ours to be a symbol of our purification.

(3)the water in both cases is connected with salvation: in the case of Noah by sustaining the ark; in ours by being a symbol of salvation, of purity, of cleansing, of that by which we may be brought to God.

The meaning of this part of the verse, therefore, may be thus expressed: "Noah and his family were saved by water, the antitype to which (to wit, that which in important respects corresponds to that) baptism (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, or the mere application of material

water, but that purifying of the heart of which it is the appropriate emblem) now saves us."

Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh - Not a mere external washing, however solemnly done. No outward ablution or purifying saves us, but that which pertains to the conscience. This important clause is thrown in to guard the statement from the abuse to which it would otherwise be liable, the supposition that baptism has of itself a purifying and saving power. To guard against this, the apostle expressly declares that he means much more than a mere outward application of water.

But the answer of a good conscience toward God - The word here rendered "answer" (ἐπερώτημα eperōtēma) means properly a question, an inquiry. It is "spoken of a question put to a convert at baptism, or rather of the whole process of question and answer; that is, by implication, examination, profession" - Robinson, Lexicon. It is designed to mark the spiritual character of the baptismal rite in contrast with a mere external purification, and evidently refers to something that occurred at baptism; some question, inquiry, or examination, that took place then; and it would seem to imply:

(1)that when baptism was performed, there was some question or inquiry in regard to the belief of the candidate;

(2)that an answer was expected, implying that there was a good conscience; that is, that the candidate had an enlightened conscience, and was sincere in his profession; and,

(3)that the real efficacy of baptism, or its power in saving, was not in the mere external rite, but in the state of the heart, indicated by the question and answer, of which that was the emblem.

On the meaning of the phrase "a good conscience," see the notes at 1 Peter 3:16 of this chapter. Compare on this verse Neander, *Geschich der Pfianz. u. Leit. der chr, Kirche*, i. p. 203ff, in Bibl. Reposi. iv. 272ff. It is in the highest degree probable that questions would be proposed to candidates for baptism respecting their belief, an we have an instance of this fact undoubtedly in the case before us. How extensive such examinations would be, what points would be embraced, how much reference there was to personal experience, we have, of course, no certain means of ascertaining. We may suppose, however, that the examination pertained to what constituted the essential features of the Christian religion, as distinguished

from other systems, and to the cordial belief of that system by the candidate.

By the resurrection of Jesus Christ - That is, we are saved in this manner through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The whole efficiency in the case is derived from that. If he had not been raised from the dead, baptism would have been vain, and there would have been no power to save us. See this illustrated at length in the notes at Romans 6:4-5. The points, therefore, which are established in regard to baptism by this important passage are these:

(1) That Christian baptism is not a mere external rite; a mere outward ablution; a mere application of water to the body. It is not contemplated that it shall be an empty form, and its essence does not consist in a mere "putting away of the filth of the flesh." There is a work to be done in respect to the conscience which cannot be reached by the application of water.

(2) that there was an examination among the early Christians when a candidate was about to be baptized, and of course such an examination is proper now. Whatever was the ground of the examination, it related to that which existed before the baptism was administered. It was not expected that it should be accomplished by the baptism. There is, therefore, implied evidence here that there was no reliance placed on that ordinance to produce that which constituted the "answer of a good conscience;" in other words, that it was not supposed to have an efficacy to produce that of itself, and was not a converting or regenerating ordinance.

(3) the "answer" which was returned in the inquiry, was to be such as indicated a good conscience; that is, as Bloomfield expresses it, (New Testament in loc.,) "that which enables us to return such an answer as springs from a good conscience toward God, which can be no other than the inward change and renovation wrought by the Spirit." It was supposed, therefore, that there would be an internal work of grace; that there would be much more than an outward rite in the whole transaction. The application of water is, in fact, but an emblem or symbol of that grace in the heart, and is to be administered as denoting that. It does not convey grace to the soul by any physical efficacy of the water. It is a symbol of the purifying influences of religion, and is made a means of grace in the same way as obedience to any other of the commands of God.

(4) there is no efficacy in the mere application of water in any form, or with any ceremonies of religion, to put away sin. It is the "good conscience," the renovated heart, the purified soul, of which baptism is the emblem, that furnishes evidence of the divine acceptance and favor. Compare Hebrews 9:9-10. There must be a deep internal work on the soul of man, in order that he may be acceptable to God; and when that is missing, no external rite is of any avail.

(5) yet, it does not follow from this that baptism is of no importance. The argument of the apostle here is, that it is of great importance. Noah was saved by water; and so baptism has an important connection with our salvation. As water bore up the ark, and was the means of saving Noah, so baptism by water is the emblem of our salvation; and when administered in connection with a "good conscience," that is, with a renovated heart, it is as certainly connected with our salvation as the sustaining waters of the flood were with the salvation of Noah. No man can prove from the Bible that baptism has no important connection with salvation; and no man can prove that by neglecting it he will be as likely to obtain the divine favor as he would by observing it. It is a means of exhibiting great and important truths in an impressive manner to the soul; it is a means of leading the soul to an entire dedication to a God of purity; it is a means through which God manifests himself to the soul, and through which he imparts grace, as he does in all other acts of obedience to his commandments.

Verse 22

Who is gone into heaven - See the notes at Acts 1:9.

And is on the right hand of God - See the notes at Mark 16:19.

Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him - See the notes at Ephesians 1:20-21. The reason why the apostle here adverts to the fact that the Lord Jesus is raised up to the right hand of God, and is so honored in heaven, seems to have been to encourage those to whom he wrote to persevere in the service of God, though they were persecuted. The Lord Jesus was in like manner persecuted. He was reviled, and rejected, and put to death. Yet he ultimately triumphed. He was raised from the dead, and was exalted to the highest place of honor in the universe. Even so they, if they did not faint, might hope to come off in the end triumphant. As Noah,

who had been faithful and steadfast when surrounded by a scoffing world, was at last preserve by his faith from ruin, and as the Redeemer, though persecuted and put to death, was at last exalted to the right hand of God, so would it be with them if they bore their trials patiently, and did not faint or fail in the persecutions which they endured.

In view of the exposition in 1 Peter 3:1-2, we may remark:

(1) that it is our duty to seek the conversion and salvation of our impenitent relatives and friends. All Christians have relatives and friends who are impenitent; it is a rare thing that some of the members of their own families are not so. In most families, even Christian families, there is a husband or a wife, a father or a mother, a son or daughter, a brother or sister, who is not converted. To all such, they who are Christians owe important duties, and there is none more important than that of seeking their conversion. That this is a duty is clearly implied in this passage in reference to a wife, and for the same reason it is a duty in reference to all other persons. It may be further apparent from these considerations:

(a) It is an important part of the business of all Christians to seek the salvation of others. This is clearly the duty of ministers of the gospel; but it is no less the duty of all who profess to be followers of the Saviour, and to take him as their example and guide. Compare James 5:19-20.

(b) It is a duty especially devolving on those who have relatives who are unconverted, on account of the advantages which they have for doing it. They are with them constantly; they have their confidence and affection; they can feel more for them than anyone else can; and if they are not concerned for their salvation, they cannot hope that any others will be.

(c) It is not wholly an improper motive to seek their salvation from the happiness which it would confer on those who are already Christians. It is not improper that a wife should be stimulated to desire the conversion of her husband from the increased enjoyment which she would have if her partner in life were united with her in the same hope of heaven, and from the pleasure which it would give to enjoy the privilege of religious worship in the family, and the aid which would be furnished in training up her children in the Lord. A Christian wife and mother has important duties to

perform toward her children; it is not improper that in performing those duties she should earnestly desire the cooperation of her partner in life.

(2) those who have impenitent husbands and friends should be encouraged in seeking their conversion. It is plainly implied 1 Peter 3:1-2 that it was not to be regarded as a hopeless thing, but that in all cases they were to regard it as possible that unbelieving husbands might be brought to the knowledge of the truth. If this is true of husbands, it is no less true of other friends. We should never despair of the conversion of a friend as long as life lasts, however far he may be from the path of virtue and piety. The grounds of encouragement are such as these:

(a) You have an influence over them which no other one has; and that influence may be regarded as capital, which will give you great advantages in seeking their conversion.

(b) You have access to them at times when their minds are most open to serious impressions. Every man has times when he may be approached on the subject of religion; when he is pensive and serious; when he is disappointed and sad; when the affairs of this world do not go well with him, and his thoughts are drawn along to a better. There are times in the life of every man when he is ready to open his mind to a friend on the subject of religion, and when he would be glad of a word of friendly counsel and encouragement. It is much to have access to a man at such times.

(c) If all the facts were known which have occurred, there would be no lack of encouragement to labor for the conversion of impenitent relatives and friends. Many a husband owes his salvation to the persevering solicitude and prayers of a wife; many a son will enter heaven because a mother never ceased to pray for his salvation, even when to human view there seemed no hope of it.

(3) we may learn 1 Peter 3:1-2 what are the principal means by which we are to hope to secure the conversion and salvation of impenitent friends. It is to be mainly by a pure life; by a holy walk; by a consistent example. Conversation, properly so called, is not to be regarded as excluded from

those means, but the main dependence is to be on a holy life. This is to be so, because:

(a) most persons form their notions of religion from what they see in the lives of its professed friends. It is not so much what they hear in the pulpit, because they regard preaching as a mere professional business, by which a man gets a living; not so much by books in defense and explanation of religion, for they seldom or never read them; not by what religion enabled the martyrs to do, for they may have scarcely heard the names of even the most illustrious of the martyrs; but by what they see in the walk and conversation of those who profess to be Christians, especially of those who are their near relations. The husband is forming his views of religion constantly from what he sees on the brow and in the eye of his professedly Christian wife; the brother from what he sees in his sister; the child from what he sees in the parent.

(b) Those who profess to be Christians have an opportunity of showing the power of religion in a way which is superior to any abstract argument. It controls their temper; it makes them kind and gentle; it sustains them in trial; it prompts them to deeds of benevolence; it disposes them to be contented, to be forgiving, to be patient in the reverses of life. Everyone may thus be always doing something to make an impression favorable to religion on the minds of others. Yet it is also true that much may be done, and should be done for the conversion of others, by conversation properly so called, or by direct address and appeal. There is nothing, however, which requires to be managed with more prudence than conversation with those who are not Christians, or direct efforts to lead them to attend to the subject of religion. In regard to this it may be observed:

(a) that it does no good to be always talking with them. Such a course only produces disgust.

(b) It does no good to talk to them at unseasonable and improper times. If they are specially engaged in their business, and would not like to be interrupted - if they are in company with others, or even with their family - it does little good to attempt a conversation with them. It is “the word that fitly spoken that is like apples of gold in pictures of silver,” Proverbs 25:11.

(c) It does no good to scold them on the subject of religion, with a view to make them Christians. In such a case you show a spirit the very reverse of that religion which you are professedly endeavoring to persuade them to embrace.

(d) All conversation with impenitent sinners should be kind, and tender, and respectful. It should be addressed to them when they will be disposed to listen; usually when they are alone; and especially when from trials or other causes they may be in such a state of mind that they will be willing to listen. It may be added, that impenitent sinners are much more frequently in such a state of mind than most Christians suppose, and that they often wonder that their Christian friends do not speak to them about the salvation of the soul.

From the exposition given of the important 1 Peter 3:18-21, we may derive the following inferences:

(1) The pre-existence of Christ. If he preached to the antediluvians in the time of Noah, he must have had an existence at that time.

(2) his divinity. If he was "quickened" or restored to life by his own exalted nature, he must be divine; for there is no more inalienable attribute of the Deity than the power of raising the dead.

(3) if Christ preached to the pagan world in the time of Noah, for the same reason it may be regarded as true that all the messages which are brought to people, calling them to repentance, in any age or country, are through him. Thus, it was Christ who spake by the prophets and by the apostles; and thus he speaks now by his ministers.

(4) if this interpretation is wellfounded, it takes away one of the strongest supports of the doctrine of purgatory. There is no stronger passage of the Bible in support of this doctrine than the one before us; and if this does not countenance it, it may be safely affirmed that it has not a shadow of proof in the sacred Scriptures.

(5) it follows that there is no hope or prospect that the gospel will be preached to those who are lost. This is the only passage in the Bible that could be supposed to teach any such doctrine; and if the interpretation above proposed be correct, this furnishes no ground of belief that if a man dies impenitent he will ever be favored with another offer of mercy. This interpretation also accords with all the other representations in the Bible. "As the tree falleth, so it lies." "He that is holy, let him be holy still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." All the representations in the Bible lead us to suppose that the eternal destiny of the soul after death is fixed, and that the only change which can ever occur in the future state is that which will be produced by development: the developement of the principles of piety in heaven; the development of the principles of evil in hell.

(6) it follows, that if there is not a place of purgatory in the future world there is a place of punishment. If the word prison, in the passage before us, does not mean purgatory, and does not refer to a detention with a prospect or possibility of release, it must refer to detention of another kind, and for another purpose, and that can be only with reference "to the judgment of the great day," 2 Peter 2:14; Jude 1:6. From that gloomy prison there is no evidence that any have been, or will be, released.

(7) people should embrace the gospel at once. Now it is offered to them; in the future world it will not be. But even if it could be proved that the gospel would be offered to them in the future world, it would be better to embrace it now. Why should people go down to that world to suffer long before they become reconciled to God? Why choose to taste the sorrows of hell before they embrace the offers of mercy? Why go to that world of woe at all? Are people so in love with suffering and danger that they esteem it wise to go down to that dark prison-house, with the intention or the hope that the gospel may be offered to them there, and that when there they may be disposed to embrace it? Even if it could be shown, therefore, that they might again hear the voice of mercy and salvation, how much wiser would it be to hearken to the voice now, and become reconciled to God here, and never experience in any way the pangs of the second death! But of any such offer of mercy in the world of despair, the Bible contains no intimation; and he who goes to the eternal world unreconciled to God, perishes for ever.

The moment when he crosses the line between time and eternity, he goes forever beyond the boundaries of hope.

1 PETER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

This chapter relates principally to the manner in which those to whom the apostle wrote ought to bear their trials, and to the encouragements to a holy life, notwithstanding their persecutions. He had commenced the subject in the preceding chapter, and had referred them particularly to the example of the Saviour. His great solicitude was, that if they suffered, it should not be for crime, and that their enemies should not be able to bring any well-founded accusation against them He would have them pure and harmless, patient and submissive; faithful in the performance of their duties, and confidently looking forward to the time when they should be delivered. He exhorts them, therefore, to the following things:

(a)To arm themselves with the same mind that was in Christ; to consider that the past time of their lives was enough for them to have performed the will of the flesh, and that now it was their duty to be separate from the wicked world, in whatever light the world might regard their conduct - remembering that they who calumniated them must soon give account to God, 1 Peter 4:1-6.

(b)He reminds them that the end of all things was at hand, and that it became them to be sober, and watch unto prayer, 1 Peter 4:7.

(c)He exhorts them to the exercise of mutual love and hospitality - virtues eminently useful in a time of persecution and afflictions, 1 Peter 4:8-9.

(d)He exhorts them to a performance of every duty with seriousness of manner, and fidelity - whether it were in preaching, or in dispensing alms to the poor and needy, 1 Peter 4:10-11.

(e)He tells them not to think it strange that they were called to pass through fiery trials, nor to suppose that any unusual thing had happened to them; reminds them that they only partook of Christ‘s sufferings, and that it was to be regarded as a favor if anyone suffered as a Christian; and presses upon them the thought that they ought to be careful that none of them suffered for crime, 1 Peter 4:12-16.

(f)He reminds them that the righteous would be saved with difficulty, and that the wicked would certainly be destroyed; and exhorts them, therefore, to commit the keeping of their souls to a faithful Creator, 1 Peter 4:18-19.

Verse 1

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh - Since he as a man has died for us. See the notes at 1 Peter 3:18. The design was to set the suffering Redeemer before them as an example in their trials.

Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind - That is, evidently, the same mind that he evinced - a readiness to suffer in the cause of religion, a readiness to die as he had done. This readiness to suffer and die, the apostle speaks of as armour, and having this is represented as being armed. Armour is put on for offensive or defensive purposes in war; and the idea of the apostle here is, that that state of mind when we are ready to meet with persecution and trial, and when we are ready to die, will answer the purpose of armour in engaging in the conflicts and strifes which pertain to us as Christians, and especially in meeting with persecutions and trials. We are to put on the same fortitude which the Lord Jesus had, and this will be the best defense against our foes, and the best security of victory.

For he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin - Compare the notes at Romans 6:7. To "suffer in the flesh" is to die. The expression here has a proverbial aspect, and seems to have meant something like this: "when a man is dead, he will sin no more;" referring of course to the present life. So if a Christian becomes dead in a moral sense - dead to this world, dead by being crucified with Christ (see the notes at Galatians 2:20) - he may be expected to cease from sin. The reasoning is based on the idea that there is such a union between Christ and the believer that his death on the cross secured the death of the believer to the world. Compare 2 Timothy 2:11; Colossians 2:20; Colossians 3:3.

Verse 2

That he no longer should live - That is, he has become, through the death of Christ, dead to the world and to the former things which influenced him, in order that he should hereafter live not to the lusts of the flesh. See the notes at 2 Corinthians 5:15.

The rest of his time in the flesh - The remainder of the time that he is to continue in the flesh; that is, that he is to live on the earth.

To the lusts of men - Such lusts as people commonly live for and indulge in. Some of these are enumerated in the following verse.

But to the will of God - In such a manner as God commands. The object of redemption is to rescue us from being swayed by wicked lusts, and to bring us to be conformed wholly to the will of God.

Verse 3

For the time past of our life may suffice us - "We have spent sufficient time in indulging ourselves, and following our wicked propensities, and we should hereafter live in a different manner." This does not mean that it was ever proper thus to live, but that, as we would say, "we have had enough of these things; we have tried them; there is no reason why we should indulge in them any more." An expression quite similar to this occurs in Horace - Lusisti satis, edisti satis, atque bibisti. Tempus abire tibi est, etc. Epis. ii. 213.

To have wrought the will of the Gentiles - This does not mean to be subservient to their will, but to have done what they willed to do; that is, to live as they did. That the Gentiles or pagan lived in the manner immediately specified, see demonstrated in the notes at Romans 1:21-32.

When we walked in lasciviousness - When we lived in the indulgence of corrupt passions - the word walk being often used in the Scriptures to denote the manner of life. On the word "lasciviousness," see the notes at Romans 13:13. The apostle says we, not as meaning that he himself had been addicted to these vices, but as speaking of those who were Christians in general. It is common to say that we lived so and so, when speaking of a collection of persons, without meaning that each one was guilty of all the practices enumerated. See the notes at 1 Thessalonians 4:17, for a similar use of the word we. The use of the word we in this place would show that the apostle did not mean to set himself up as better than they were, but was willing to be identified with them.

Lusts - The indulgence of unlawful desires. See the notes at Romans 1:24.

Excess of wine - The word used here (οἰνοφλυγία oinophlugia) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means "overflowing of wine," (οἶνος oinos"wine," and φλύω , "to overflow";) then wine-drinking; drunkenness. That this was a common vice need not be proved. Multitudes of those who became Christians had been drunkards, for intemperance abounded in all the pagan world. Compare 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. It should

not be inferred here from the English translation, "excess of wine," that wine is improper only when used to excess, or that the moderate use of wine is proper. Whatever may be true on that point, nothing can be determined in regard to it from the use of this word. The apostle had his eye on one thing - on such a use of wine as led to intoxication; such as they had indulged in before their conversion. About the impropriety of that, there could be no doubt. Whether any use of wine, by Christians or other persons, was lawful, was another question. It should be added, moreover, that the phrase "excess of wine" does not precisely convey the meaning of the original. The word excess would naturally imply something more than was needful; or something beyond the proper limit or measure; but no such idea is in the original word. That refers merely to the abundance of wine, without any reference to the inquiry whether there was more than was proper or not. Tyndale renders it, somewhat better: "drunkenness." So Luther, "Trunkenheit."

Revellings - Rendered rioting in Romans 13:13. See the notes at that verse. The Greek word (κῶμος kōmos) occurs only here, and in Romans 13:13, and Galatians 5:21. It means feasting, revel; "a carousing or merrymaking after supper, the guests often sallying into the streets, and going through the city with torches, music, and songs in honor of Bacchus," etc. Robinson, Lexicon. The word would apply to all such noisy and boisterous processions now - scenes wholly inappropriate to the Christian.

Banquetings - The word used here (πότος potos) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means properly drinking; an act of drinking; then a drinking bout; drinking together. The thing forbidden by it is an assembling together for the purpose of drinking. There is nothing in this word referring to eating, or to banqueting, as the term is now commonly employed. The idea in the passage is, that it is improper for Christians to meet together for the purpose of drinking - as wine, toasts, etc. The prohibition would apply to all those assemblages where this is understood to be the main object. It would forbid, therefore, an attendance on all those celebrations in which drinking toasts is understood to be an essential part of the festivities, and all those where hilarity and joyfulness are sought to be produced by the intoxicating bowl Such are not proper places for Christians.

And abominable idolatries - Literally, unlawful idolatries; that is, unlawful to the Jews, or forbidden by their laws. Then the expression is used in the sense of wicked, impious, since what is unlawful is impious and

wrong. That the vices here referred to were practiced by the pagan world is well known. See the notes at Romans 1:26-31. That many who became Christians were guilty of them before their conversion is clear from this passage. The fact that they were thus converted shows the power of the gospel, and also that we should not despair in regard to those who are indulging in these vices now. They seem indeed almost to be hopeless, but we should remember that many who became Christians when the gospel was first preached, as well as since, were of this character. If they were reclaimed; if those who had been addicted to the gross and debasing vices referred to here, were brought into the kingdom of God, we should believe that those who are living in the same manner now may also be recovered. From the statement made in this verse, that "the time past of our lives may suffice to have worked the will of the Gentiles," we may remark that the same may be said by all Christians of themselves; the same thing is true of all who are living in sin:

(1) It is true of all who are Christians, and they feel it, that they lived long enough in sin:

(a) They made a fair trial - many of them with ample opportunities; with abundant wealth; with all that the fashionable world can furnish; with all that can be derived from low and gross indulgences. Many who are now Christians had opportunities of living in splendor and ease; many moved in joyful and brilliant circles; many occupied stations of influence, or had brilliant prospects of distinction; many gave indulgence to gross propensities; many were the companions of the vile and the abandoned. Those who are now Christians, take the church at large, have had ample opportunity of making the fullest trial of what sin and the world can furnish.

(b) They all feel that the past is enough for this manner of living. It is "sufficient" to satisfy them that the world cannot furnish what the soul demands. They need a better portion; and they can now see that there is no reason why they should desire to continue the experiment in regard to what the world can furnish. On that unwise and wicked experiment they have expended time enough; and satisfied with that, they desire to return to it no more.

(2) the same thing is true of the wicked - of all who are living for the world. The time past should be regarded as sufficient to make an experiment in sinful indulgences; for:

(a)the experiment has been made by millions before them, and has always failed; and they can hope to find in sin only what has always been found - disappointment, mortification, and despair.

(b)They have made a sufficient experiment. They have never found in those indulgences what they flattered themselves they would find, and they have seen enough to satisfy them that what the immortal soul needs can never be obtained there.

(c)They have spent sufficient time in this hopeless experiment. Life is short. Man has no time to waste. He may soon die - and at whatever period of life anyone may be who is living in sin, we may say to him that he has already wasted enough of life; he has thrown away enough of probation in a fruitless attempt to find happiness where it can never be found.

For any purpose whatever for which anyone could ever suppose it to be desirable to live in sin, the past should suffice. But why should it ever be deemed desirable at all? The fruits of sin are always disappointment, tears, death, despair.

Verse 4

Wherein they think it strange - In respect to which vices, they who were once your partners and accomplices now think it strange that you no longer unite with them. They do not understand the reasons why you have left them. They regard you as abandoning a course of life which has much to attract and to make life merry, for a severe and gloomy superstition. This is a true account of the feelings which the people of the world have when their companions and friends leave them and become Christians. It is to them a strange and unaccountable thing, that they give up the pleasures of the world for a course of life which to them seems to promise anything but happiness. Even the kindred of the Saviour regarded him as" beside himself," Mark 3:21, and Festus supposed that Paul was mad, Acts 26:24. There is almost nothing which the people of the world so little comprehend as the reasons which influence those with ample means of worldly enjoyment to leave the circles of gaiety and vanity, and to give themselves to the serious employments of religion. The epithets of fool, enthusiast, fanatic, are terms which frequently occur to the heart to denote this, if they

are not always allowed to escape from the lips. The reasons why they esteem this so strange, are something like the following:

(1) They do not appreciate the motives which influence those who leave them. They feel that it is proper to enjoy the world, and to make life cheerful, and they do not understand what it is to act under a deep sense of responsibility to God, and with reference to eternity. They live for themselves. They seek happiness as the end and aim of life. They have never been accustomed to direct the mind onward to another world, and to the account which they must soon render at the bar of God. Unaccustomed to act from any higher motives than those which pertain to the present world, they cannot appreciate the conduct of those who begin to live and act for eternity.

(2) they do not yet see the guilt and folly of sinful pleasures. They are not convinced of the deep sinfulness of the human soul, and they think it strange that ethers should abandon a course of life which seems to them so innocent. They do not see why those who have been so long accustomed to these indulgences should have changed their opinions, and why they now regard those tilings as sinful which they once considered to be harmless.

(3) they do not see the force of the argument for religion. Not having the views of the unspeakable importance of religious truth and duty which Christians now have, they wonder that they should break off from the course of life which they formerly pursued, and separate from the mass of their fellow-men. Hence, they sometimes regard the conduct of Christians as amiable weakness; sometimes as superstition; sometimes as sheer folly; sometimes as madness; and sometimes as sourness and misanthropy. In all respects they esteem it strange:

"Lions and beasts of savage name.
Put on the nature of the lamb,
While the wide world esteems it strange,
Gaze, and admire, and hate the change."

That ye run not with them - There may be an allusion here to the well-known orgies of Bacchus, in which his votaries ran as if excited by the furies, and were urged on as if transported with madness. See Ovid, Metam. iii. 529, thus translated by Addison:

"For now, through prostrate Greece, young Bacchus rode,

Whilst howling matrons celebrate the god;
All ranks and sexes to his orgies ran,
To mingle in the pomp and fill the train,"

The language, however, will well describe revels of any sort, and at any period of the world.

To the same excess of riot - The word rendered "excess" (ἀνάχυσις anachusis) means, properly, a pouring out, an affusion; and the idea here is, that all the sources and forms of riot and disorder were poured out together. There was no withholding, no restraint. The most unlimited indulgence was given to the passions. This was the case in the disorder referred to among the ancients, as it is the case now in scenes of midnight revelry. On the meaning of the word riot, see the Ephesians 5:18 note; Titus 1:6 note.

Speaking evil of you - Greek, blaspheming. See the notes at Matthew 9:3. The meaning here is, that they used harsh and reproachful epithets of those who would not unite with them in their revelry. They called them fools, fanatics, hypocrites, etc. The idea is not that they blasphemed God, or that they charged Christians with crime, but that they used language suited to injure the feelings, the character, the reputation of those who would no longer unite with them in the ways of vice and folly.

Verse 5

Who shall give account - That is, they shall not do this with impunity. They are guilty in this of a groat wrong and they must answer for it to God.

That is ready to judge - That is, "who is prepared to judge" - τῷ ἑτοίμως ἔχοντι tō hetoimōs echontiSee the phrase used in Acts 21:13; "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem." 2 Corinthians 12:14; "the third time I am ready to come to you." Compare the word "ready" - ἑτοιμος hetoimos- in Matthew 22:4, Matthew 22:8; Matthew 24:44; Matthew 25:10; Luke 12:40; Luke 22:33; 1 Peter 1:5. The meaning is, not that he was about to do it, or that the day of judgment was near at hand - whatever the apostle may have supposed to be true on that point - but that he was prepared for it; all the arrangements were made with reference to it; there was nothing to hinder it.

To judge the quick and the dead - The living and the dead; that is, those who shall be alive when he comes, and those in their graves. This is a common phrase to denote all who shall be brought before the bar of God for judgment. See the Acts 10:42 note; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 notes; 2 Timothy 4:1 note. The meaning in this connection seems to be, that they

should bear their trials and the opposition which they would meet with patiently, not feeling that they were forgotten, nor attempting to avenge themselves; for the Lord would vindicate them when he should come to judgment, and call those who had injured them to an account for all the wrongs which they had done to the children of God.

Verse 6

For, for this cause - The expression, "For, for this cause," refers to an end to be reached, or an object to be gained, or a reason why anything referred to is done. The end or reason why the thing referred to here, to wit, that "the gospel was preached to the dead," was done, is stated in the subsequent part of the verse to have been "that they might be judged," etc. It was with reference to this, or in order that this might be, that the gospel was preached to them.

Was the gospel preached also to them that are dead - Many, as Doddridge, Whitby, and others, understand this of those who are spiritually dead, that is, the Gentiles, and suppose that the object for which this was done was that "they might be brought to such a state of life as their carnal neighbors would look upon as a kind of condemnation and death" - Doddridge. Others have supposed that it refers to those who had suffered martyrdom in the cause of Christianity; others, that it refers to the sinners of the old world (Saurin), expressing a hope that some of them might be saved; and others, that it means that the Saviour went down and preached to those who are dead, in accordance with one of the interpretations given of 1 Peter 3:19. It seems to me that the most natural and obvious interpretation is to refer it to those who were then dead, to whom the gospel had been preached when living, and who had become true Christians. This is the interpretation proposed by Wetstein, Rosenmuller, Bloomfield, and others. In support of this it may be said:

(1) that this is the natural and obvious meaning of the word dead, which should be understood literally, unless there is some good reason in the connection for departing from the common meaning of the word.

(2) the apostle had just used the word in that sense in the previous verse.

(3) this will suit the connection, and accord with the design of the apostle. He was addressing those who were suffering persecution. It was natural, in such a connection, to refer to those who had died in the faith, and

to show, for their encouragement, that though they had been put to death, yet they still lived to God. He therefore says, that the design in publishing the gospel to them was, that though they might be judged by people in the usual manner, and put to death, yet that in respect to their higher and nobler nature, the spirit, they might live unto God. It was not uncommon nor unnatural for the apostles, in writing to those who were suffering persecution, to refer to those who had been removed by death, and to make their condition and example an argument for fidelity and perseverance. Compare 1 Thessalonians 4:13; Revelation 14:13.

That they might be judged according to men in the flesh - That is, so far as people are concerned, (κατὰ ἀνθρώπους kata anthrōpousor in respect to the treatment which they received from people in the flesh, they were judged and condemned; in respect to God, and the treatment which they received from him, (κατὰ Θεὸν kata Theonthey would live in spirit. People judged them severely, and put them to death for their religion; God gave them life, and saved them. By the one they were condemned in the flesh - so far as pain, and sorrow, and death could be inflicted on the body; by the other they were made to live in spirit - to be his, to live with him. The word "judged" here, I suppose, therefore, to refer to a sentence passed on them for their religion, consigning them to death for it. There is a particle in the original - μὲν men"indeed" - which has not been retained in the common translation, but which is quite important to the sense: "that they might indeed be judged in the flesh, but live," etc. The direct object or design of preaching the gospel to them was not that they might be condemned and put to death by man, but this was indeed or in fact one of the results in the way to a higher object.

But live according to God - In respect to God, or so far as he was concerned. By him they would not be condemned. By him they would be made to live - to have the true life. The gospel was preached to them in order that so far as God was concerned, so far as their relation to him was concerned, so far as he would deal with them, they might live. The word live here seems to refer to the whole life that was the consequence of their being brought under the power of the gospel:

(a)that they might have spiritual life imparted to them;

(b)that they might live a life of holiness in this world;

(c)that they might live hereafter in the world to come.

In one respect, and so far as people were concerned, their embracing the gospel was followed by death; in another respect, and so far as God was concerned, it was followed by life. The value and permanence of the latter, as contrasted with the former, seems to have been the thought in the mind of the apostle in encouraging those to whom he wrote to exercise patience in their trials, and to show fidelity in the service of their master.

In the spirit - In their souls, as contrasted with their body. In respect to that - to the flesh - they were put to death; in respect to their souls - their higher natures - they were made truly to live. The argument, then, in this verse is, that in the trials which we endure on account of religion, we should remember the example of those who have suffered for it, and should remember why the gospel was preached to them. It was in a subordinate sense, indeed, that they might glorify God by a martyr‘s death; but in a higher sense, that in this world and the next they might truly live. The flesh might suffer in consequence of their embracing the gospel that was preached to them, but the soul would live. Animated by their example, we should be willing to suffer in the flesh, if we may for ever live with God.

Verse 7

But the end of all things is at hand - This declaration is also evidently designed to support and encourage them in their trials, and to excite them to lead a holy life, by the assurance that the end of all things was drawing near. The phrase, “the end of all things,” would naturally refer to the end of the world; the winding up of human affairs. It is not absolutely certain, however, that the apostle used it here in this sense. It might mean that so far as they were concerned, or in respect to them, the end of all things drew near. Death is to each one the end of all things here below; the end of his plans and of his interest in all that pertains to sublunary affairs. Even if the phrase did originally and properly refer to the end of the world, it is probable that it would soon come to denote the end of life in relation to the affairs of each individual; since, if it was believed that the end of the world was near, it must consequently be believed that the termination of the earthly career of each one also drew near to a close.

It is possible that the latter signification may have come ultimately to predominate, and that Peter may have used it in this sense without referring to the other. Compare the notes at 2 Peter 3:8-14, for his views on this subject. See also the notes at Romans 13:11-12. The word rendered “is at hand,” (ἤγγικε ēngikemay refer either to proximity of place or time, and it

always denotes that the place or the time referred to was not far off. In the former sense, as referring to nearness of place, see Matthew 21:1; Mark 11:1; Luke 7:12; Luke 15:25; Luke 18:35, Luke 18:40; Luke 19:29, Luke 19:37, Luke 19:41; Luke 24:15; Acts 9:3; Acts 10:9; Acts 21:33; in the latter sense, as referring to time as being near, see Matthew 3:2; Matthew 4:17; Matthew 10:7; Matthew 21:34; Matthew 26:45; Mark 1:15; Luke 21:20, Luke 21:28; Acts 7:17; Romans 13:12; Hebrews 10:25; 1 Peter 4:7. The idea as applied to time, or to an approaching event, is undoubtedly that it is close by; it is not far off; it will soon occur. If this refers to the end of the world, it would mean that it was soon to occur; if to death, that this was an event which could not be far distant - perhaps an event that was to be hastened by their trials. The fact that it is such language as we now naturally address to people, saying that in respect to them "the end of all things is at hand," shows that it cannot be demonstrated that Peter did not use it in the same sense, and consequently that it cannot be proved that he meant to teach that the end of the world was then soon to occur.

Be ye therefore sober - Serious; thoughtful; considerate. Let a fact of so much importance make a solemn impression on your mind, and preserve you from frivolity, levity, and vanity. See the word explained in the notes at 1 Timothy 3:2.

And watch unto prayer - Be looking out for the end of all things in such a manner as to lead you to embrace all proper opportunities for prayer. Compare the notes at Matthew 26:39, Matthew 26:41. The word rendered watch, means to be sober, temperate, abstinent, especially in respect to wine; then watchful, circumspect. The important truth, then, taught by this passage is, "that the near approach, of the end of all things should make us serious and prayerful."

I. The end may be regarded as approaching. This is true:

(1) of all things; of the winding up of the affairs of this world. It is constantly drawing nearer and nearer, and no one can tell how soon it will occur. The period is wisely hidden from the knowledge of all people, (see Matthew 24:36; Acts 1:7,) among other reasons, in order that we may be always ready. No man can tell certainly at what time it will come; no man can demonstrate that it may not come at any moment. Everywhere in the Scriptures it is represented that it will come at an unexpected hour, as a thief in the night, and when the mass of people shall be slumbering in false

security, Matthew 24:37-39, Matthew 24:42-43; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; Luke 21:34.

(2) it is near in relation to each one of us. The day of our death cannot be far distant; it may be very near. The very next thing that we may have to do, may be to lie down and die.

II. It is proper that such a nearness of the end of all things should lead us to be serious, and to pray.

(1) to be serious; for:

(a) the end of all things, in regard to us, is a most important event. It closes our probation. It fixes our character. It seals up our destiny. It makes all ever onward in character and doom unchangeable.

(b) We are so made as to be serious in view of such events. God has so constituted the mind, that when we lose property, health, or friends; when we look into a grave, or are beset with dangers; when we are in the room of the dying or the dead, we are serious and thoughtful. It is unnatural not to be so. Levity and frivolity on such occasions are as contrary to all the finer and better feelings of our nature as they are to the precepts of the Bible.

(c) There are advantages in seriousness of mind. It enables us to take better views of things, Ecclesiastes 7:2-3. A calm, sober, sedate mind is the best for a contemplation of truth, and for looking at things as they are.

(2) to be watchful unto prayer:

(a) People naturally pray when they suppose that the end of all things is coming. An earthquake induces them to pray. An eclipse, or any other supposed prodigy, leads people to pray if they suppose the end of the world is drawing near. A shipwreck, or any other sudden danger, leads them to pray, Psalm 107:28. So people often pray in sickness who have never prayed in days of health.

(b) It is proper to do it. Death is an important event, and in anticipation of such an event we should pray. Who can help us then but God? Who can conduct us through the dark valley but he? Who can save us amidst the wrecks and ruins of the universe but he? Who can dissipate our fears, and make us calm amidst the convulsions of dissolving nature, but God? As that event, therefore, may come upon us at any hour, it should lead us to constant prayer; and the more so because, when it comes, we may be in no state of mind to pray. The posture in which we should feel that it would be most appropriate that the messenger of death should find us, would be that of prayer.

Verse 8

And above all things - More than all things else.

Have fervent charity among yourselves - Warm, ardent love toward each other. On the nature of charity, see the notes at 1 Corinthians 13:1. The word rendered "fervent," means properly extended; then intent, earnest, fervent.

For charity shall cover the multitude of sins - Love to another shall so cover or hide a great many imperfections in him, that you will not notice them. This passage is quoted from Proverbs 10:12; "Love covereth all sins." For the truth of it we have only to appeal to the experience of everyone:

(a)True love to another makes us kind to his imperfections, charitable toward his faults, and often blind even to the existence of faults. We would not see the imperfections of those whom we love; and our attachment for what we esteem their real excellencies, makes us insensible to their errors.

(b)If we love them we are ready to cover over their faults, even those which we may see in them. Of love the Christian poet says:

"Tis gentle, delicate, and kind,
To faults compassionate or blind.

The passage before us is not the same in signification as that in James 5:20, "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." See the notes at that passage. That passage means, that by the conversion of another the sins of him who is converted shall be covered over, or not brought to judgment for condemnation; that is, they shall be covered over so far as God is concerned: this passage means that, under the influence of love, the sins of another shall be covered over so far as we are concerned; that is, they shall

be unobserved or forgiven. The language used here does not mean, as the Romanists maintain, that "charity shall procure us pardon for a multitude of sins;" for, besides that such a doctrine is contrary to the uniform teachings of the Scriptures elsewhere, it is a departure from the obvious meaning of the passage. The subject on which the apostle is treating is the advantage of love in our conduct toward others, and this he enforces by saying that it will make us kind to their imperfections, and lead us to overlook their faults. It is nowhere taught in the Scriptures that our "charity" to others will be an atonement or expiation for our own offences. If it could be so, the atonement made by Christ would have been unnecessary. Love, however, is of inestimable value in the treatment of others; and imperfect as we are, and liable to go astray, we all have occasion to cast ourselves on the charity of our brethren, and to avail ourselves much and often of that "love which covers over a multitude of sins."

Verse 9

Use hospitality one to another - On the duty of hospitality, see the Romans 12:13 note; Hebrews 13:2 note.

Without grudging - Greek, "without murmurs;" that is, without complaining of the hardship of doing it; of the time, and expense, and trouble required in doing it. The idea of grudging, in the common sense of that word - that is, of doing it unwillingly, or regretting the expense, and considering it as ill-bestowed, or as not producing an equivalent of any kind - is not exactly the idea here. It is that we are to do it without murmuring or complaining. It greatly enhances the value of hospitality, that it be done on our part with entire cheerfulness. One of the duties involved in it is to make a guest happy; and this can be done in no other way than by showing him that he is welcome.

Verse 10

As every man hath received the gift - The word rendered "the gift" (χάρισμα charismain the Greek, without the article, means "endowment" of any kind, but especially that conferred by the Holy Spirit. Here it seems to refer to every kind of endowment by which we can do good to others; especially every kind of qualification furnished by religion by which we can help others. It does not refer here particularly to the ministry of the word - though it is applicable to that, and includes that - but to all the gifts and graces by which we can contribute to the welfare of others. All this is

regarded as a gift, or charisma, of God. It is not owing to ourselves, but is to be traced to him. See the word explained in the notes at 1 Timothy 4:14.

Even so minister the same one to another - In anything by which you can benefit another. Regard What you have and they have not as a gift bestowed upon you by God for the common good, and be ready to impart it as the needs of ethers require. The word "minister" here (διακονοῦντες diakonountes) would refer to any kind of ministering, whether by counsel, by advice, by the supply of the needs of the poor, or by preaching. It has here no reference to any one of these exclusively; but means, that in whatever God has favored us more than others, we should be ready to minister to their needs. See 2 Timothy 1:18; 2 Corinthians 3:8; 2 Corinthians 8:19-20.

As good stewards - Regarding yourselves as the mere stewards of God; that is, as appointed by him to do this work for him, and entrusted by him with what is needful to benefit others. He intends to do them good, but he means to do it through your instrumentality, and has entrusted to you as a steward what he designed to confer on them. This is the true idea, in respect to any special endowments of talent, property, or grace, which we may have received from God. Compare the 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 notes; Luke 16:1-2, Luke 16:8 notes.

Of the manifold grace of God - The grace or favor of God evinced in many ways, or by a variety of gifts. His favors are not confined to one single thing; as, for example, to talent for doing good by preaching; but are extended to a great many things by which we may do good to others - influence, property, reputation, wisdom, experience. All these are to be regarded as his gifts; all to be employed in doing good to others as we have opportunity.

Verse 11

If any man speak - As a preacher, referring here particularly to the office of the ministry.

Let him speak as the oracles of God - As the oracles of God speak; to wit, in accordance with the truth which God has revealed, and with an impressive sense of the responsibility of delivering a message from him. The word rendered "oracles" (λόγια logia) means, properly, something "spoken" or "uttered"; then anything uttered by God - a divine communication - a revelation. See the Romans 3:2 note; Hebrews 5:12 note. See the general duty here inculcated illustrated at length in the notes at

Romans 12:6-8. The passage here has a strong resemblance to the one in Romans.

If any man minister - διακονεῖ diakoneiThis may refer either, so far as the word is concerned, to the office of a deacon, or to any service which one renders to another. See 1 Peter 4:10. The word commonly refers to service in general; to attendance on another, or to aid rendered to another; to the distribution of alms, etc. It seems probable that the word here does not refer to the office of a deacon as such, because the speciality of that office was to take charge of the poor of the church, and of the funds provided for them, (see Acts 6:2-3;) but the apostle here says that they to whom he referred should "minister as of the ability which God giveth," which seems to imply that it was rather to distribute what was their own, than what was committed to them by the church. The word may refer to any aid which we render to others in the church, as distributing alms, attending on the sick, etc. Compare the notes at Romans 12:7-8.

As of the ability which God giveth - In regard to property, talent, strength, influence, etc. This is the limit of all obligation. No one is bound to go beyond his ability; everyone is required to come up to it. Compare Mark 14:8; Luke 17:10.

That God in all things may be glorified - That he may be honored; to wit, by our doing all the good we can to others, and thus showing the power of his religion. See the notes at 1 Corinthians 10:31.

Through Jesus Christ - That is, as the medium through whom all those holy influences come by which God is honored.

To whom - That is, to God; for he is the main subject of the sentence. The apostle says that in all things he is to be glorified by us, and then adds in this doxology that he is worthy to be thus honored. Compare Revelation 1:6; See the notes at 2 Timothy 4:18. Many, however, suppose that the reference here is to the Son of God. That it would be true of him, and appropriate, see the notes at Romans 9:5.

Verse 12

Beloved, think it not strange - Do not consider it as anything which you had no reason to expect; as anything which may not happen to others also.

Concerning the fiery trial which is to try you - Referring, doubtless, to some severe persecution which was then impending. We have not the means of determining precisely what this was. The word rendered "fiery

trial" (πυρώσει purōsei) occurs only here and in Revelation 18:9, Revelation 18:18; in both of which latter places it is rendered burning. It means, properly, a being on fire, burning, conflagration; and then any severe trial. It cannot be demonstrated from this word that they were literally to suffer by fire, but it is clear that some heavy calamity was before them.

As though some strange thing happened unto you - Something unusual; something which did not occur to others.

Verse 13

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings - That is, sufferings of the same kind that he endured, and inflicted for the same reasons. Compare Colossians 1:24; James 1:2; See the notes at Matthew 5:12. The meaning here is, that they were to regard it as a matter of rejoicing that they were identified with Christ, even in suffering. See this sentiment illustrated at length in the notes at Philemon 3:10.

That, when his glory shall be revealed - At the day of judgment. See the notes at Matthew 26:30.

Ye may be glad also with exceeding joy - Being admitted to the rewards which he will then confer on his people. Compare 1 Thessalonians 2:19. Every good man will have joy when, immediately at death, he is received into the presence of his Saviour; but his joy will be complete only when, in the presence of assembled worlds, he shall hear the sentence which shall confirm him in happiness forever.

Verse 14

If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye - That is, in his cause, or on his account. See the notes at Matthew 5:11. The sense of the word "happy" here is the same as "blessed" in Matthew 5:3-5, etc. It means that they were to regard their condition or lot as a blessed one; not that they would find personal and positive enjoyment on being reproached and vilified. It would be a blessed condition, because it would be like that of their Saviour; would show that they were his friends; would be accompanied with rich spiritual influences in the present world; and would be followed by the rewards of heaven.

For the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you - The glorious and Divine Spirit. There is no doubt that there is reference here to the Holy Spirit; and the meaning is, that they might expect that that Spirit would rest upon them, or abide with them, if they were persecuted for the cause of

Christ. There may be some allusion here, in the language, to the fact that the Spirit of God descended and abode on the Saviour at his baptism John 1:33; and, in like manner, they might hope to have the same Spirit resting on them. The essential idea is, that, if they were called to suffer in the cause of the Redeemer, they would not be left or forsaken. They might hope that God would impart his Spirit to them in proportion to their sufferings in behalf of religion, and that they would have augmented joy and peace. This is doubtless the case with those who suffer persecution, and this is the secret reason why they are so sustained in their trials. Their persecutions are made the reason of a much more copious effusion of the Spirit on their souls. The same principle applies, doubtless, to all the forms of trial which the children of God pass through; and in sickness, bereavement, loss of property, disappointment in their worldly plans, and death itself, they may hope that larger measures of the Spirit‘s influences will rest upon them. Hence, it is often gain to the believer to suffer.

On their part - So far as they are concerned; or by them.

He is evil spoken of - That is, the Holy Spirit. They only blaspheme him, (Greek;) they reproach his sacred influences by their treatment of you and your religion.

But on your part he is glorified - By your manner of speaking of him, and by the honor done to him in the patience evinced in your trials, and in your purity of life.

Verse 15

But let none of you suffer as a murderer - If you must be called to suffer, see that it be not for crime. Compare the notes at 1 Peter 3:14, 1 Peter 3:17. They were to be careful that their sufferings were brought upon them only in consequence of their religion, and not because any crime could be laid to their charge. If even such charges were brought against them, there should be no pretext furnished for them by their lives.

As an evil doer - As a wicked man; or as guilty of injustice and wrong toward others.

Or as a busy-body in other men‘s matters - The Greek word used here ἀλλοτριοεπίσκοπος allotrioepiskoposoccurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, an inspector of strange things, or of the things of others. Prof. Robinson (Lexicon) supposes that the word may refer to one who is “a director of heathenism;” but the more obvious signification, and the one commonly adopted, is that which occurs in our

translation - one who busies himself with what does not concern him; that is, one who pries into the affairs of another; who attempts to control or direct them as if they were his own. In respect to the vice here condemned, see the notes at Philemon 2:4. Compare 2 Thessalonians 3:11, and 1 Timothy 5:13.

Verse 16

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian - Because he is a Christian; if he is persecuted on account of his religion. This was often done, and they had reason to expect that it might occur in their own case. Compare the notes at 1 Peter 3:17. On the import of the word Christian, and the reasons why the name was given to the disciples of the Lord Jesus, see the notes at Acts 11:26.

Let him not be ashamed -

(1)Ashamed of religion so as to refuse to suffer on account of it.

(2)ashamed that he is despised and maltreated.

He is to regard his religion as every way honorable, and all that fairly results from it in time and eternity as in every respect desirable. He is not to be ashamed to be called a Christian; he is not to be ashamed of the doctrines taught by his religion; he is not to be ashamed of the Saviour whom he professes to love; he is not to be ashamed of the society and fellowship of those who are true Christians, poor and despised though they may be; he is not to be ashamed to perform any of the duties demanded by his religion; he is not to be ashamed to have his name cast out, and himself subjected to reproach and scorn. A man should be ashamed only of that which is wrong. He should glory in that which is right, whatever may be the consequences to himself. Christians now, though not subjected to open persecution, are frequently reproached by the world on account of their religion; and though the rack may not be employed, and the fires of martyrdom are not enkindled, yet it is often true that one who is a believer is called to "suffer as a Christian." He may be reviled and despised. His views may be regarded as bigoted, narrow, severe. Opprobrious epithets, on account of his opinions, may be applied to him. His former friends and companions may leave him because he has become a Christian. A wicked father, or a frivilous and worldly mother, may oppose a child, or a husband may revile a wife, on account of their religion. In all these cases, the same spirit essentially is required which was enjoined on the early Christian martyrs. We are never to

be ashamed of our religion, whatever results may follow from our attachment to it. Compare the notes at Romans 1:16.

But let him glorify God on this behalf - Let him praise God that he is deemed not unworthy to suffer in such a cause. It is a matter of thankfulness:

(1)that they may have this evidence that they are true Christians;

(2)that they may desire the advantages which may result from suffering as Christ did, and in his cause. See the notes at Acts 5:41, where the sentiment here expressed is fully illustrated. Compare the Philemon 3:10 note; Colossians 1:24 note.

Verse 17

For the time is come - That is, this is now to be expected. There is reason to think that this trial will now occur, and there is a propriety that it should be made. Probably the apostle referred to some indications then apparent that this was about to take place.

That judgment must begin - The word "judgment" here (κρίμα krima) seems to mean "the severe trial which would determine character." It refers to such calamities as would settle the question whether there was any religion, or would test the value of that which was professed. It was to "begin" at the house of God, or be applied to the church first, in order that the nature and worth of religion might be seen. The reference is, doubtless, to some fearful calamity which would primarily fall on the "house of God;" that is, to some form of persecution which was to be let loose upon the church.

At the house of God - Benson, Bloomfield, and many others, suppose that this refers to the Jews, and to the calamities that were to come around the temple and the holy city about to be destroyed. But the more obvious reference is to Christians, spoken of as the house or family of God. There is probably in the language here an allusion to Ezekiel 9:6; "Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women; and begin at my sanctuary." Compare Jeremiah 25:29. But the language used here by the apostle does not denote literally the temple, or the Jews, but those who were in his time regarded as the people of God - Christians - the church. So the phrase (בית יהוה bēyt Yahweh) "house of Yahweh" is used to denote the family or people of God, Numbers 12:7; Hosea 8:1. Compare also 1 Timothy 3:15 and the note on that verse. The sense here is, therefore, that

the series of calamities referred to were to commence with the church, or were to come first upon the people of God. Schoettgen here aptly quotes a passage from the writings of the Rabbis: "Punishments never come into the world unless the wicked are in it; but they do not begin unless they commence first with the righteous."

And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? - If God brings such trials upon us who have obeyed his gospel, what have we not reason to suppose he will bring upon those who are yet in their sins? And if we are selected first as the objects of this visitation, if there is that in us which requires such a method of dealing, what are we to suppose will occur in the end with those who make no pretensions to religion, but are yet living in open transgression? The sentiment is, that if God deals thus strictly with his people; if there is that in them which makes the visitations of his judgment proper on them, there is a certainty that they who are not his people, but who live in iniquity, will in the end be overwhelmed with the tokens of severer wrath. Their punishment hereafter will be certain; and who can tell what will be the measure of its severity? Every wicked man, when he sees the trials which God brings upon his own people, should tremble under the apprehension of the deeper calamity which will hereafter come upon himself. We may remark:

(1) that the judgments which God brings upon his own people make it certain that the wicked will be punished. If he does not spare his own people, why should he spare others?

(2) the punishment of the wicked is merely delayed. It begins at the house of God. Christians are tried, and are recalled from their wanderings, and are prepared by discipline for the heavenly world. The punishment of the wicked is often delayed to a future world, and in this life they have almost uninterrupted prosperity, but in the end it will be certain. See Psalm 73:1-19. The punishment will come in the end. It cannot be evaded. Sooner or later justice requires that the wicked should be visited with the expressions of divine displeasure on account of sin, and in the future world there will be ample time for the infliction of all the punishment which they deserve.

Verse 18

And if the righteous scarcely be saved - If they are saved with difficulty. The word used here (μόλις molis) occurs in the following places: Acts 14:18, "scarce restrained they the people;" Acts 27:7, "and scarce were come over against Cnidus;" 1 Peter 4:8, "and hardly passing it;" 1 Peter 4:16, "we had much work to come by the boat" - literally, we were able with difficulty to get the boat; Romans 5:7, "scarcely for a righteous man will one die;" and in the passage before us. The word implies that there is some difficulty, or obstruction, so that the thing came very near not to happen, or so that there was much risk about it. Compare Luke 13:31. The apostle in this passage seems to have had his eye on a verse in Proverbs, Proverbs 11:31, and he has merely expanded and illustrated it: "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." By the question which he employs, he admits that the righteous are saved with difficulty, or that there are perils which jeopard their salvation, and which are of such a kind as to make it very near not to happen. They would indeed be saved, but it would be in such a manner as to show that the circumstances were such as to render it, to human appearances, doubtful and problematical. This peril may have arisen from many circumstances:

(a) The difficulty of forming a plan of salvation, involving a degree of wisdom wholly beyond that of man, and of such a character that beforehand it would have been problematical and doubtful whether it could be. There was but one way in which it could be done. But what human wisdom could have devised that, or thought of it? There was but one being who could save. But who would have supposed that the Son of God would have been willing to become a man, and to die on a cross to do it? If he had been unwilling to come and die, the righteous could not have been saved.

(b) The difficulty of bringing those who are saved to a willingness to accept of salvation. All were disposed alike to reject it; and there were many obstacles in the human heart, arising from pride, and selfishness, and unbelief, and the love of sin, which must be overcome before any would accept of the offer of mercy. There was but one agent who could overcome these things, and induce any of the race to embrace the gospel - the Holy Spirit. But who could have anticipated that the Spirit of God would have undertaken to renew and sanctify the polluted human heart? Yet, if he had failed, there could have been no salvation for any.

(c) The difficulty of keeping them from falling away amidst the temptations and allurements of the world. Often it seems to be wholly doubtful whether those who have been converted will be kept to eternal life. They have so little religion; they yield so readily to temptation; they conform so much to the world; they have so little strength to bear up under trials, that it seems as if there was no power to preserve them and bring them to heaven. They are saved when they seemed almost ready to yield everything.

(d) The difficulty of rescuing them from the power of the great enemy of souls. The adversary has vast power, and he means, if be can, to destroy those who are the children of God. Often they are in most imminent danger, and it seems to be a question of doubtful issue whether they will not be entirely overcome and perish. It is no small matter to rescue a soul from the dominion of Satan, and to bring it to heaven, so that it shall be eternally safe. Through the internal struggles and the outward conflicts of life, it seems often a matter of doubt whether with all their effort they will be saved; and when they are saved, they will feel that they have been rescued from thousands of dangers, and that there has been many a time when they have stood on the very verge of ruin, and when, to human appearances, it was scarcely possible that they could be saved.

Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? - What hope is there of their salvation? The meaning is, that they would certainly perish; and the doctrine in the passage is, that the fact that the righteous are saved with so much difficulty is proof that the wicked will not be saved at all. This follows, because:

(a)there is the same difficulty in their salvation which there was in the salvation of those who became righteous; the same difficulty arising from the love of sin, the hardness of the heart, and the arts and power of the adversary.

(b)No one can be saved without effort, and in fact the righteous are saved only by constant and strenuous effort on their part.

But the wicked make no effort for their own salvation. They make use of no means for it; they put forth no exertions to obtain it; they do not make it a part of their plan of life. How, then, can they be saved? But where will they appear? I answer:

(a)they will appear somewhere. They will not cease to exist when they pass away from this world. Not one of them will be annihilated; and though they vanish from the earth, and will be seen here no more, yet they will make their appearance in some other part of the universe.

(b)They will appear at the judgment-seat, as all others will, to receive their sentence according to the deeds done in the body. It follows from this:

(1)that the wicked will certainly be destroyed. If the righteous are scarcely saved, how can they be?

(2)that there will be a state of future punishment, for this refers to what is to occur in the future world.

(3)that the punishment of the wicked will be eternal, for it is the opposite of what is meant by saved. The time will never come when it will be said that they are saved! But if so, their punishment must be eternal!

Verse 19

Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God - That is, who endure the kind of sufferings that he, by his providence, shall appoint. Compare 1 Peter 3:17; 1 Peter 4:15-16.

Commit the keeping of their souls - to him. Since there is so much danger; since there is no one else that can keep them; and since he is a Being so faithful, let them commit all their interests to him. Compare Psalm 37:5. The word "souls" here (ψυχὰς psuchas) is equivalent to themselves. They were to leave everything in his hand, faithfully performing every duty, and not being anxious for the result.

In well doing - Constantly doing good, or seeking to perform every duty in a proper manner. Their business was always to do right; the result was to be left with God. A man who is engaged always in well-doing, may safely commit all his interest to God.

As unto a faithful Creator - God may be trusted, or confided in, in all His attributes, and in all the relations which He sustains as Creator, Redeemer, Moral Governor, and Judge. In these, and in all other respects, we may come before Him with confidence, and put unwavering trust in Him. As Creator particularly; as one who has brought us, and all creatures and things into being, we may be sure that he will be "faithful" to the design which he had in view. From that design he will never depart until it is fully accomplished. He abandons no purpose which he has formed, and

we may be assured that he will faithfully pursue it to the end. As our Creator we may come to Him, and look to Him for His protection and care. He made us. He had a design in our creation. He so endowed us that we might live forever, and so that we might honor and enjoy Him. He did not create us that we might be miserable; nor does He wish that we should be. He formed us in such a way that, if we choose, we may be eternally happy. In that path in which He has appointed us to go, if we pursue it, we may be sure of His help and protection. If we really aim to accomplish the purposes for which we were made, we may be certain that He will show Himself to be a "faithful Creator;" one in whom we may always confide. And even though we have wandered from Him, and have long forgotten why we were made, and have loved and served the creature more than the Creator, we may be sure, if we will return to Him, that He will not forget the design for which He originally made us. As our Creator we may still confide in Him. Redeemed by the blood of His Son, and renewed by His Spirit after the image of Him who erected us, we may still go to Him as our Creator, and may pray that even yet the high and noble ends for which we were made may be accomplished in us. Doing this, we shall find Him as true to that purpose as though we had never sinned.

1 PETER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

This chapter embraces the following subjects:

I.An exhortation to the elders of the churches to be faithful to the flocks committed to their charge, 1 Peter 5:1-4.

II.An exhortation to the younger members of the church to evince all proper submission to those who were older; to occupy the station in which they were placed with a becoming spirit, casting all their care on God, 1 Peter 5:5-7.

III.An exhortation to be sober and vigilant, in view of the dangers which beset them, and the arts and power of their great adversary, the devil, and especially to bear with patience the trials to which they were subjected, in common with their Christian brethren elsewhere, 1 Peter 5:8-11.

IV.Salutations, 1 Peter 5:12-14.

Verse 1

The elders which are among you I exhort - The word "elder" means, properly, "one who is old;" but it is frequently used in the New Testament as applicable to the officers of the church; probably because aged persons were at first commonly appointed to these offices. See Acts 11:30, note; Acts 14:23, note; Acts 15:2, note. There is evidently an allusion here to the fact that such persons were selected on account of their age, because in the following verses (1 Peter 5:4) the apostle addresses particularly the younger. It is worthy of remark, that he here refers only to one class of ministers. He does not speak of three "orders," of "bishops, priests, and deacons;" and the evidence from the passage here is quite strong that there were no such orders in the churches of Asia Minor, to which this Epistle was directed. It is also worthy of remark, that the word "exhort" is here used. The language which Peter uses is not that of stern and arbitrary command; it is that of kind and mild Christian exhortation. Compare the notes at Philemon 1:8-9.

Who am also an elder - Greek: "a fellow-presbyter," (συμπρεσβύτερος sumpresbuterosThis word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means that he was a co-presbyter with them; and he makes this one of the

grounds of his exhortation to them. He does not put it on the ground of his apostolical authority; or urge it because he was the vicegerent of Christ; or because he was the head of the church; or because he had any pre-eminence over others in any way. Would he have used this language if he had been the "head of the church" on earth? Would he if he supposed that the distinction between apostles and other ministers was to be perpetuated? Would he if he believed that there were to be distinct orders of clergy? The whole drift of this passage is adverse to such a supposition.

And a witness of the sufferings of Christ - Peter was indeed a witness of the sufferings of Christ when on his trial, and doubtless also when he was scourged and mocked, and when he was crucified. After his denial of his Lord, he wept bitterly, and evidently then followed him to the place where he was crucified, and, in company with others, observed with painful solicitude the last agonies of his Saviour. It is not, so far as I know, expressly said in the Gospels that Peter was pre sent at the crucifixion of the Saviour; but it is said Luke 23:49 that "all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things," and nothing is more probable than that Peter was among them. His warm attachment to his Master, and his recent bitter repentance for having denied him, would lead him to follow him to the place of his death; for after the painful act of denying him he would not be likely to expose himself to the charge of neglect, or of any want of love again. His own solemn declaration here makes it certain that he was present. He alludes to it now, evidently because it qualified him to exhort those whom he addressed. It would be natural to regard with special respect one who had actually seen the Saviour in his last agony, and nothing would be more impressive than an exhortation falling from the lips of such a man. A son would be likely to listen with great respect to any suggestions which should be made by one who had seen his father or mother die. The impression which Peter had of that scene he would desire to have transferred to those whom he addressed, that by a lively view of the sufferings of their Saviour they might be excited to fidelity in his cause.

And a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed - Another reason to make his exhortation impressive and solemn. He felt that he was an heir of life. He was about to partake of the glories of heaven. Looking forward, as they did also, to the blessed world before him and them, he had a right to exhort them to the faithful performance of duty. Anyone, who is himself an

heir of salvation, may appropriately exhort his fellow-Christians to fidelity in the service of their common Lord.

Verse 2

Feed the flock of God - Discharge the duties of a shepherd toward the flock. On the word "feed," see the notes at John 21:15. It is a word which Peter would be likely to remember, from the solemn manner in which the injunction to perform the duty was laid on him by the Saviour. The direction means to take such an oversight of the church as a shepherd is accustomed to take of his flock. See the notes at 1 Peter 5:1, are called presbyters, or elders; and this is one of the numerous passages in the New Testament which prove that all that is properly implied in the performance of the episcopal functions pertained to those who were called presbyters, or elders. If so, there was no higher grade of ministers to which the special duties of the episcopate were to be entrusted; that is, there was no class of officers corresponding to those who are now called "bishops." Compare the notes at Acts 20:28.

Not by constraint, but willingly - Not as if you felt that a heavy yoke was imposed on you, or a burden from which you would gladly be discharged. Go cheerfully to your duty as a work which you love, and act like a freeman in it, and not as a slave. Arduous as are the labors of the ministry, yet there is no work on earth in which a man can and should labor more cheerfully.

Not for filthy lucre - Shameful or dishonorable gain. See the notes at 1 Timothy 3:3.

But of a ready mind - Cheerfully, promptly. We are to labor in this work, not under the influence of the desire of gain, but from the promptings of love. There is all the difference conceivable between one who does a thing because he is paid for it, and one who does it from love - between, for example, the manner in which one attends on us when we are sick who loves us, and one who is merely hired to do it. Such a difference is there in the spirit with which one who is actuated by mercenary motives, and one whose heart is in the work, will engage in the ministry.

Verse 3

Neither as being lords - Margin, "overruling." The word here used (κατακυριεύω katakurieuō) is rendered "exercise dominion over," in Matthew 20:25; exercise lordship over, in Mark 10:42; and overcame, in Acts 19:16. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It refers

properly to that kind of jurisdiction which civil rulers or magistrates exercise. This is an exercise of authority, as contradistinguished from the influence of reason, persuasion, and example. The latter pertains to the ministers of religion; the former is forbidden to them. Their dominion is not to be that of temporal lordship; it is to be that of love and truth. This command would prohibit all assumption of temporal power by the ministers of religion, and all conferring of titles of nobility on those who are preachers of the gospel. It needs scarcely to be said that it has been very little regarded in the church.

Over God's heritage - των κλήρων tōn klērōnVulgate: "in cleris" - over the clergy. The Greek word here (κλῆρος klēros) is that from which the word "clergy" has been derived; and some have interpreted it here as referring to the clergy, that is, to priests and deacons who are under the authority of a bishop. Such an interpretation, I however, would hardly be adopted now. The word means properly:

(a)alot, die, anything used in determining chances;

(b)apart or portion, such as is assigned by lot; hence,

(c)an office to which one is designated or appointed, by lot or otherwise; and,

(d)in general any possession or heritage, Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:12.

The meaning here is, "not lording it over the possessions or the heritage of God." The reference is, undoubtedly, to the church, as that which is especially his property; his own in the world. Whitby and others suppose that it refers to the possessions or property of the church; Doddridge explains it - "not assuming dominion over those who fall to your lot," supposing it to mean that they were not to domineer over the particular congregations committed by Providence to their care. But the other interpretation is most in accordance with the usual meaning of the word.

But being ensamples to the flock - Examples. See the notes at 1 Timothy 4:12. Peter has drawn here with great beauty, the appropriate character of the ministers of the gospel, and described the spirit with which they should be actuated in the discharge of the duties of their office. But how different it is from the character of many who have claimed to be ministers of religion; and especially how different from that corrupt communion which professes in a special manner to recognize Peter as the

head, and the vicegerent of Christ. It is well remarked by Benson on this passage, that "the church of Rome could not well have acted more directly contrary to this injunction of Peter's if she had studied to disobey it, and to form herself upon a rule that should be the reverse of this."

Verse 4

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear - The prince of the pastors - the Lord Jesus Christ. "Peter, in the passage above, ranks himself with the elders; here he ranks Christ himself with the pastors" - Benson. See the notes at 1 Peter 2:25. Compare Hebrews 13:20.

Ye shall receive a crown of glory - A glorious crown or diadem. Compare the notes at 2 Timothy 4:8.

That fadeth not away - This is essentially the same word, though somewhat different in form, which occurs in 1 Peter 1:4. See the notes at that verse. The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:25.

Verse 5

Likewise, ye younger - All younger persons of either sex.

Submit yourselves unto the elder - That is, with the respect due to their age, and to the offices which they sustain. There is here, probably, a particular reference to those who sustained the office of elders or teachers, as the same word is used here which occurs in 1 Peter 5:1. As there was an allusion in that verse, by the use of the word, to age, so there is in this verse to the fact that they sustained an office in the church. The general duty, however, is here implied, as it is everywhere in the Bible, that all suitable respect is to be shown to the aged. Compare Leviticus 19:32; 1 Timothy 5:1; Acts 23:4; 2 Peter 2:9.

Yea, all of you be subject one to another - In your proper ranks and relations. You are not to attempt to lord it over one another, but are to treat each other with deference and respect. See the Ephesians 5:21 note; Philemon 2:3 note.

And be clothed with humility - The word here rendered "be clothed" (ἐγκομβώμαι egkombōmai) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is derived from κόμβος *kombos* - a strip, string, or loop to fasten a garment; and then the word refers to a garment that was fastened with strings. The word ἐγκόμβωμα *engkombōma* refers particularly to a long white apron, or outer garment, that was commonly worn by slaves. See Robinson, Lexicon; Passow, Lexicon. There is, therefore, special force in the use of this word

here, as denoting an humble mind. They were to be willing to take any place, and to perform any office, however humble, in order to serve and benefit others. They were not to assume a style and dignity of state and authority, as if they would lord it over others, or as if they were better than others; but they were to be willing to occupy any station, however humble, by which they might honor God. It is known that not a few of the early Christians actually sold themselves as slaves, in order that they might preach the gospel to those who were in bondage. The sense here is, they were to put on humility as a garment bound fast to them, as a servant bound fast to him the apron that was significant of his station. Compare Colossians 3:13. It is not unusual in the Scriptures, as well as in other writings, to compare the virtues with articles of apparel; as that with which we are clothed, or in which we are seen by others. Compare Isaiah 11:5; Isaiah 59:17.

For God resisteth the proud … - This passage is quoted from the Greek translation in Proverbs 3:34. See it explained in the notes at James 4:6, where it is also quoted.

Verse 6

Humble yourselves therefore - Be willing to take a low place - a place such as becomes you. Do not arrogate to yourselves what does not belong to you; do not evince pride and haughtiness in your manner; do not exalt yourselves above others. See the notes at Luke 14:7-11. Compare Proverbs 15:33; Proverbs 18:12; Proverbs 22:4; Micah 6:8; Philemon 2:8.

Under the mighty hand of God - This refers probably to the calamities which he had brought upon them, or was about to bring upon them; represented here, as often elsewhere, as the infliction of his hand - the hand being that by which we accomplish anything. When that hand was upon them they were not to be lifted up with pride and with a spirit of rebellion, but were to take a lowly place before him, and submit to him wish a calm mind, believing that he would exalt them in due time. There is no situation in which one will be more likely to feel humility than in scenes of affliction.

That he may exalt you in due time - When he shall see it to be a proper time:

(1)They might be assured that this would be done at some time. He would not always leave them in this low and depressed condition. He would take off his heavy hand, and raise them up from their state of sadness and suffering.

(2)this would be in due time; that is, in the proper time, in the best time:

(a)It might be in the present life.

(b)It would certainly be in the world to come. There they would be exalted to honors which will be more than an equivalent for all the persecution, poverty, and contempt which are suffered in this world. He may well afford to be humble here who is to be exalted to a throne in heaven.

Verse 7

Casting all your care upon him - Compare Psalm 55:22, from whence this passage was probably taken. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee; he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Compare, for a similar sentiment, Matthew 6:25-30. The meaning is, that we are to commit our whole cause to him. If we suffer heavy trials; if we lose our friends, health, or property; if we have arduous and responsible duties to perform; if we feel that we have no strength, and are in danger of being crushed by what is laid upon us, we may go and cast all upon the Lord; that is, we may look to him for grace and strength, and feel assured that he will enable us to sustain all that is laid upon us. The relief in the case will be as real, and as full of consolation, as if he took the burden and bore it himself. He will enable us to bear with ease what we supposed we could never have done; and the burden which he lays upon us will be light, Matthew 11:30. Compare the notes at Philemon 4:6-7.

For he careth for you - See the notes at Matthew 10:29-31. He is not like the gods worshipped by many of the pagan, who were supposed to be so exalted, and so distant, that they did not interest themselves in human affairs; but He condescends to regard the needs of the meanest of his creatures. It is one of the glorious attributes of the true God, that he can and will thus notice the needs of the mean as well as the mighty; and one of the richest of all consolations when we are afflicted, and are despised by the world, is the thought that we are not forgotten by our heavenly Father. He who remembers the falling sparrow, and who hears the young ravens when they cry, will not be unmindful of us. "Yet the Lord thinketh on me," was the consolation of David, when he felt that he was "poor and needy," Psalm 40:17. "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up," Psalm 27:10.

Compare Isaiah 49:15. What more can one wish than to be permitted to feel that the great and merciful Yahweh thinks on him? What are we - what have we done, that should be worthy of such condescension? Remember, poor, despised, afflicted child of God, that you will never be forgotten. Friends on earth, the great, the frivilous, the noble, the rich, may forget you; God never will. Remember that you will never be entirely neglected. Father, mother, neighbor, friend, those whom you have loved, and those to whom you have done good, may neglect you, but God never will. You may become poor, and they may pass by you; you may lose your office, and flatterers may no longer throng your path; your beauty may fade, and your admirers may leave you; you may grow old, and be infirm, and appear to be useless in the world, and no one may seem to care for you; but it is not thus with the God whom you serve. When he loves, he always loves; if he regarded you with favor when you were rich, he will not forget you when you are poor; he who watched over you with a parent‘s care in the bloom of youth, will not cast you off when you are “old and grey-headed,” Psalm 71:18. If we are what we should be, we shall never be without a friend as long as there is a God.

Verse 8

Be sober - While you cast your cares Upon God, and have no anxiety on that score, let your solicitude be directed to another point. Do not doubt that he is able and willing to support and befriend you, but be watchful against your foes. See the word used here fully explained in the notes at 1 Thessalonians 5:6.

Be vigilant - This word (γρηγορέω grēgoreō) is everywhere else in the New Testament rendered “watch.” See Matthew 24:42-43; Matthew 25:13; Matthew 26:38, Matthew 26:40-41. It means that we should exercise careful circumspection, as one does when he is in danger. In reference to the matter here referred to, it means that we are to be on our guard against the wiles and the power of the evil one.

Your adversary the devil - Your enemy; he who is opposed to you. Satan opposes man in his best interests. He resists his efforts to do good; his purposes to return to God; his attempts to secure his own salvation. There is no more appropriate appellation that can be given to him than to say that he resists all our efforts to obey God and to secure the salvation of our own souls.

As a roaring lion - Compare Revelation 12:12. Sometimes Satan is represented as transforming himself into an angel of light, (see the notes at 2 Corinthians 11:14); and sometimes, as here, as a roaring lion: denoting the efforts which he makes to alarm and overpower us. The lion here is not the crouching lion - the lion stealthfully creeping toward his foe - but it is the raging monarch of the woods, who by his terrible roar would intimidate all so that they might become an easy prey. The particular thing referred to here, doubtless, is persecution, resembling in its terrors a roaring lion. When error comes in; when seductive arts abound; when the world allures and charms the representation of the character of the foe is not of the roaring lion, but of the silent influence of an enemy that has clothed himself in the garb of an angel of light, 2 Corinthians 11:14.

Walketh about, seeking whom he may devour - "Naturalists have observed that a lion roars when he is roused with hunger, for then he is most fierce, and most eagerly seeks his prey. See Judges 14:5; Psalm 22:13; Jeremiah 2:15; Ezekiel 22:25; Hosea 11:10; Zephaniah 3:3; Zechariah 11:3" - Benson.

Verse 9

Whom resist - See the notes at James 4:7. You are in no instance to yield to him, but are in all forms to stand up and oppose him. Feeble in yourselves, you are to confide in the arm of God. No matter in what form of terror he approaches, you are to fight manfully the fight of faith. Compare the notes at Ephesians 6:10-17.

Steadfast in the faith - Confiding in God. You are to rely on him alone, and the means of successful resistance are to be found in the resources of faith. See the notes at Ephesians 6:16.

Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world - Compare for a similar sentiment, 1 Corinthians 10:13. The meaning is, that you should be encouraged to endure your trials by the fact that your fellow-Christians suffer the same things. This consideration might furnish consolation to them in their trials in the following ways:

(1) They would feel that they were suffering only the common lot of Christians. There was no evidence that God was especially angry with them, or that he had in a special manner forsaken them.

(2) the fact that others were enabled to bear their trials should be an argument to prove to them that they would also be able. If they looked abroad, and saw that others were sustained, and were brought off triumphant, they might be assured that this would be the case with them.

(3) there would be the support derived from the fact that they were not alone in suffering. We can bear pain more easily if we feel that we are not alone - that it is the common lot - that we are in circumstances where we may have sympathy from others. This remark may be of great practical value to us in view of persecutions, trials, and death. The consideration suggested here by Peter to sustain those whom he addressed, in the trials of persecution, may be applied now to sustain and comfort us in every form of apprehended or real calamity. We are all liable to suffering. We are exposed to sickness, bereavement, death. We often feet as if we could not bear up under the sufferings that may be before us, and especially do we dread the great trial - death. It may furnish us some support and consolation to remember:

(1) that this is the common lot of people. There is nothing special in our case. It proves nothing as to the question whether we are accepted of God, and are beloved by him, that we suffer; for those whom he has loved most have been often among the greatest sufferers. We often think that our sufferings are unique; that there have been none like them. Yet, if we knew all, we should find that thousands - and among them the most wise, and pure, and good - have endured sufferings of the same kind as ours, and perhaps far more intense in degree.

(2) others have been conveyed triumphantly through their trials. We have reason to hope and to believe that we shall also, for:

(a)our trials have been no greater than theirs have been; and,

(b)their natural strength was no greater than ours. Many of them were timid, and shrinking, and trembling, and felt that they had no strength, and that they should fail under the trial.

(3) the grace which sustained them can sustain us. The hand of God is not shortened that it cannot save; his ear is not heavy that it cannot hear. His power is as great, and his grace is as fresh, as it was when the first sufferer was supported by him; and that divine strength which supported David and Job in their afflictions, and the apostles and martyrs in theirs, is just as powerful as it was when they applied to God to be upheld in their sorrows.

(4) we are especially fearful of death - fearful that our faith will fail, and that we shall be left to die without support or consolation. Yet let us remember that death is the common lot of man. Let us remember who have died - tender females; children; the timid and the fearful; those, in immense multitudes, who had no more strength by nature than we have. Let us think of our own kindred who have died. A wife has died, and shall a husband be afraid to die? A child, and shall a father? A sister, and shall a brother? It does much to take away the dread of death, to remember that a mother has gone through the dark valley; that that gloomy vale has been trod by delicate, and timid, and beloved sisters. Shall I be afraid to go where they have gone? Shall I apprehend that I shall find no grace that is able to sustain me where they have found it? Must the valley of the shadow of death be dark and gloomy to me, when they found it to be illuminated with the opening light of heaven? Above all, it takes away the fear of death when I remember that my Saviour has experienced all the horrors which can ever be in death; that he has slept in the tomb, and made it a hallowed resting-place.

Verse 10

But the God of all grace - The God who imparts all needful grace. It was proper in their anticipated trials to direct them to God, and to breathe forth in their behalf an earnest and affectionate prayer that they might be supported. A prayer of this kind by an apostle would also be to them a sort of pledge or assurance that the needed grace would be granted them.

Who hath called us unto his eternal glory - And who means, therefore, that we shall be saved. As he has called us to his glory, we need not apprehend that he will leave or forsake us. On the meaning of the word called, see the notes at Ephesians 4:1.

After that ye have suffered a while - After you have suffered as long as he shall appoint. The Greek is, "having suffered a little," and may refer either to time or degree. In both respects the declaration concerning afflictions is true. They are short, compared with eternity; they are light, compared with the exceeding and eternal weight of glory. See the notes at 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

Make you perfect - By means of your trials. The tendency of affliction is to make us perfect.

Stablish - The Greek word means "to set fast; to fix firmly; to render immovable," Luke 16:26; Luke 9:51; Luke 22:32; Romans 1:11; Romans 16:25; 1 Thessalonians 3:2, 1 Thessalonians 3:13, et al.

Strengthen - Give you strength to bear all this.

Settle you - Literally, found you, or establish you on a firm foundation - θεμελιώσες themeliōsesThe allusion is to a house which is so firmly fixed on a foundation that it will not be moved by winds or floods. Compare the notes at Matthew 7:24 ff.

Verse 11

To him be glory … - See the notes at 1 Peter 4:11.

Verse 12

By Silvanus - Or Silas. See the 2 Corinthians 1:19 note; 1 Thessalonians 1:1, note. He was the intimate friend and companion of Paul, and had labored much with him in the regions where the churches were situated to which this Epistle was addressed. In what manner he became acquainted with Peter, or why he was now with him in Babylon is unknown.

A faithful brother unto you, as I suppose - The expression "as I suppose" - ὡς λογίζομαι hōs logizomai- does not imply that there was any doubt on the mind of the apostle, but indicates rather a firm persuasion that what he said was true. Thus, Romans 8:18, "For I reckon (λογίζομαι logizomai) that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared," etc. That is, I am fully persuaded of it; I have no doubt of it. Peter evidently had no doubt on this point, but he probably could not speak from any personal knowledge. He had not been with them when Silas was, and perhaps not at all; for they may have been" strangers "to him personally - for the word "strangers," in 1 Peter 1:1, may imply that he had no personal acquaintance with them. Silas, however, had been much with them, (compare Acts 15:17-31,) and Peter had no doubt that he had shown himself to be "a faithful brother" to them. An epistle conveyed by his hands could not but be welcome. It should be observed, however, that the expression "I suppose" has been differently interpreted by some. Wetstein understands it as meaning, "Not that he supposed Silvanus to be a faithful brother, for who, says he, could doubt that? but that he had written as he understood matters, having carefully considered the subject, and as he regarded things to be true;" and refers for illustration to Romans 8:18; Philemon 4:8; Hebrews 11:9. Grotius understands it as meaning, "If I remember right;" and supposes that the idea is, that he shows his affection for them by saying

that this was not the first time that he had written to them, but that he had written before briefly, and sent the letter, as well as he could remember, by Silvanus. But there is no evidence that he had written to them before, and the common interpretation is undoubtedly to be preferred.

Exhorting - No small part of the Epistle is taken up with exhortations.

And testifying - Bearing witness. The main design of the office of the apostles was to bear witness to the truth, (See the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:1;) and Peter in this Epistle discharged that part of the functions of his office toward the scattered Christians of Asia Minor.

That this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand - That the religion in which you stand, or which you now hold, is that which is identified with the grace or favor of God. Christianity, not Judaism, or Paganism, was the true religion. To show this, and bear continual witness to it, was the leading design of the apostolic office.

Verse 13

The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you - It will be seen at once that much of this is supplied by our translators; the words "church that is" not being in the original. The Greek is, ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι συνεκλεκτὴ hē en Babulōni suneklektēand might refer to a church, or to a female. Wall, Mill, and some others, suppose that the reference is to a Christian woman, perhaps the wife of Peter himself. Compare 2 John 1:1. But the Arabic, Syriac, and Vulgate, as well as the English versions, supply the word "church." This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the word rendered "elected together with" - συνεκλεκτὴ suneklektēThis word would be properly used in reference to one individual if writing to another individual, but would hardly be appropriate as applied to an individual addressing a church. It could not readily be supposed, moreover, that any one female in Babylon could have such a prominence, or be so well known, that nothing more would be necessary to designate her than merely to say, "the elect female." On the word Babylon here, and the place denoted by it, see the introduction, section 2.

And so doth Marcus my son - Probably John Mark. See the notes at Acts 12:12; Acts 15:37. Why he was now with Peter is unknown. If this was the Mark referred to, then the word son is a title of affection, and is used by Peter with reference to his own superior age. It is possible, however, that some other Mark may be referred to, in whose conversion Peter had been instrumental.

Verse 14

Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity - A kiss of love; a common method of affectionate salutation in the times of the apostles. See the notes at Romans 16:16.

Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus - That are true Christians. See the Ephesians 6:23 note; Philemon 4:7 note.

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Introduction to 2Peter

Section 1. Genuineness and Authenticity of the Epistle

It is well known that at an early period of the Christian history there were doubts respecting the canonical authority of the Second Epistle of Peter. The sole ground of the doubt was, whether Peter was the author of it. Eusebius, in the chapter of his ecclesiastical history where he speaks of the New Testament in general, reckons it among the αντιλεγομενα antilegomenai. e. those books which were not universally admitted to be genuine; literally, "those which were spoken against," b. iii. chapter 25. This does not imply that even he, however, disbelieved its genuineness, but merely that it was numbered among those about which there had not always been complete certainty. Jerome says, "Peter wrote two epistles, called ‹catholic‘; the second of which is denied by many to be his, because of the difference of style from the former." Origen, before him, had also said, "Peter, on whom the church is built, has left one Epistle (universally) acknowledged. Let it be granted that he also wrote a second. For it is doubted of." See Lardner, vol. vi., p. 255, Ed. Lond. 1829. Both the Epistles of Peter, however, were received as genuine in the fourth and following centuries by all Christians, except the Syrians. The First Epistle was never doubted to have been the production of Peter. In regard to the second, as remarked above, it was doubted by some. The principal ground of the doubt, if not the entire ground, was the difference of style between the two, especially in the second chapter, and the fact that the old Syriac translator, though he admitted the Epistle of James, which was also reckoned among the "doubtful" epistles, did not-translate the Second Epistle of Peter. That version was made, probably, at the close of the first century, or in the second; and it is said that it is to be presumed that if this Epistle had been then in existence, and had been regarded as genuine, it would also have been translated by him.

It is of importance, therefore, to state briefly the evidence of the genuineness and authenticity of this Epistle. In doing this, it is proper to regard the "First" Epistle as undoubtedly genuine and canonical, for that was never called in question. That being admitted, the genuineness of this Epistle may be argued on the following grounds:

(1) It does not appear to have been "rejected" by any one. It was merely "doubted" whether it was genuine. How far even this "doubt" extended is not mentioned. It is referred to only by Jerome, Origen, and Eusebius, though there is not the least evidence that even they had any doubts of its genuineness. They merely state that there were some persons who had doubts on the subject, from the difference of style between this and the former Epistle. This fact, indeed, as Wall has remarked, (*Critical Notes on the New Testament*, pp. 358,359,) will serve at least to show the care which was evinced in admitting books to be canonical, proving that they were not received without the utmost caution, and that if the slightest doubt existed in the case of any one, it was honestly expressed.

(2) even all doubt on the subject disappeared as early as the third and fourth centuries, and the Epistle was received as being unquestionably the production of Peter. The effect of the examination in the case was to remove all suspicion, and it has never since been doubted that the Epistle was written by Peter; at least, no doubt has arisen, except from the fact stated by Jerome and Origen, that it was not universally admitted to be genuine.

(3) this Epistle purports to have been written by the author of the former, and has all the internal marks of genuineness which could exist.

(a) It bears the inscription of the name of the same apostle: "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ," 2 Peter 1:1.

(b) There is an allusion in 2 Peter 1:14, which Peter only could appropriately make, and which an impostor, or forger of an epistle, would hardly have thought of introducing: "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." Here, there is an evident reference to the Saviour's prediction of the death of Peter, recorded in John 21:18-19. It is conceivable, indeed, that an adroit forger of an epistle might have introduced such a circumstance; but the supposition that it is genuine is much more natural. It is such an allusion as Peter would naturally make; it would have required much skill and tact in another to have introduced it so as not to be easily detected, even if it had occurred to him to personate Peter at all. Would not a forger of an epistle

have been likely to mention particularly what kind of death was predicted by the Saviour, and not to have made a mere allusion?

(c) In 2 Peter 1:16-18, there is another allusion of a similar kind. The writer claims to have been one of the "eye-witnesses of the majesty" of the Lord Jesus when he was transfigured in the holy mount. It was natural for Peter to refer to this, for he was with him; and he has mentioned it just as one would be likely to do who had actually been with him, and who was writing from personal recollection. A forger of the epistle would have been likely to be more particular, and would have described the scene more minutely, and the place where it occurred, and would have dwelt more on the nature of the evidence furnished there of the Divine mission of the Saviour.

(d) In 2 Peter 3:1, it is stated that this is a Second Epistle written to the same persons, as a former one had been; and that the writer aimed at substantially the same object in both. Here the plain reference is to the First Epistle of Peter, which has always been acknowledged to be genuine. It may be said that one who forged the Epistle might have made this allusion. This is true, but it may be doubtful whether he would do it. It would have increased the liability to detection, for it would not be easy to imitate the manner, and to carry out the views of the apostle.

(4) to these considerations it may be added, that there is clear internal evidence of another kind to show that it was written by Peter. This evidence, too long to be introduced here, may be seen in Michaelis' *Introduction*, iv. 349-356. The sum of this internal evidence is, that it would not have been practicable for a writer of the first or second century to have imitated Peter so as to have escaped detection; and that, in general, it is not difficult to detect the books that were forged in imitation of, and in the name of, the apostles.

As to the alleged objection in regard to the difference of the style in the second chapter, see Michaelis, iv. 352-356. Why it was not inserted in the Old Syriac Version is not known. It is probable that the author of that version was exceedingly cautious, and did not admit any books about which he had any doubt. The fact that this was doubted by some, and that these

doubts were not removed from his mind, as in the case of the Epistle of James, was a good reason for his not inserting it, though it by no means proves that it is not genuine. It came, however, to be acknowledged afterward by the Syrians as genuine and canonical Ephrem the Syrian, a writer of the 4th century, not only quotes several passages of it, but expressly ascribes it to Peter. Thus, in the second volume of his Greek works, p. 387, he says, "The blessed Peter, also, the Coryphaeus of the apostles, cries, concerning that day, saying, The day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night, in which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." This is literally quoted (in the Greek) from 2 Peter 3:12. See Michaelis, as above, p. 348. And Asseman, in his catalog of the *Vatican Manuscripts*, gives an account of a Syriac book of *Lessons*, to be read, in which is one taken from this Epistle. See Michaelis.

These considerations remove all reasonable doubt as to the propriety of admitting this Epistle into the canon, as the production of Peter.

Section 2. The Time when the Epistle was Written

In regard to the time when this Epistle was written, nothing can be determined with absolute certainty. All that appears on that subject from the Epistle itself, is, that at the time of writing it the author was expecting soon to die. 2 Peter 1:14, "knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." What evidence he had that he was soon to die he has not informed us; nor is it known even what he meant precisely by the word "shortly." The Greek word (ταχινή tachinē) is indeed one that would imply that the event was expected not to be far off; but a man would not unnaturally use it who felt that he was growing old, even though he should in fact live several years afterwards. The Saviour John 21:18 did not state to Peter when his death would occur, except that it would be when he should be old; and the probability is, that the fact that he was growing old was the only intimation that he had that he was soon to die. Ecclesiastical history informs us that he died at Rome, 66 a.d., in the 12th year of the reign of Nero. See Calmet, the article "Peter." Compare Notes, John 21:18-19. Lardner supposes, from 2 Peter 1:13-15, that this was written not long after the First, as he then says that he "would not be "negligent" to put them in remembrance of these things." The two Epistles he supposes were written in the year 63 or 64 a.d., or at the latest 65 a.d. Michaelis supposes it was in the year 64 a.d.; Calmet that it was in the year

of Christ 68, or according to the Common Era, 65 a.d. Probably the year 64 or 65 a.d. would not be far from the real date of this Epistle. If so, it was, according to Calmet, one year only before the martyrdom of Peter (66 a.d.), and six years before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, 71 ad.

Section 3. The Persons to whom this Epistle was Written, and the Location

On this subject there is no room for doubt. In 2 Peter 3:1, the writer says, "this Second Epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance" This Epistle was written, therefore, to the same persons as the former. On the question to whom that was addressed, see the introduction to that Epistle, Section 1. The Epistles were addressed to persons who resided in Asia Minor, and in both they are regarded as in the midst of trials. No certain intimation of the place where this Epistle was written is given in the Epistle itself. It is probable that it was at the same place as the former, as, if it had not been, we may presume that there would have been some reference to the fact that he had changed his residence, or some local allusion which would have enabled us to determine the fact. If he wrote this Epistle from Babylon, as he did the former one, (see Introduction to that Epistle, Section 2,) it is not known why he was so soon removed to Rome, and became a martyr there. Indeed, everything respecting the last days of this apostle is involved in great uncertainty. See the article "Peter" in Calmet's *Dictionary*. See these questions examined also in Bacon's *Lives of the Apostles*, pp. 258-279.

Section 4. The Occasion on Which the Epistle Was Written

The First Epistle was written in view of the trials which those to whom it was addressed were then enduring, and the persecutions which they had reason to anticipate, 1 Peter 1:6-7; 1 Peter 4:12-19; 1 Peter 5:8-11. The main object of that Epistle was to comfort them in their trials, and to encourage them to bear them with a Christian spirit, imitating the example of the Lord Jesus. This Epistle appears to have been written, not so much in view of persecutions and bodily sufferings, real or prospective, as in view of the fact that there were teachers of error among them, the tendency of whose doctrine was to turn them away from the gospel. To those teachers of error, and to the dangers to which they were exposed on that account, there is no allusion in the First Epistle, and it would seem not to be improbable that Peter had been informed that there were such teachers among them after he had written and despatched that. Or, if he was not thus informed of

it, it seems to have occurred to him that this was a point of great importance which had not been noticed in the former Epistle, and that an effort should be made by apostolic influence and authority to arrest the progress of error, to counteract the influence of the false teachers, and to confirm the Christians of Asia Minor in the belief of the truth. A large part of the Epistle, therefore, is occupied in characterizing the teachers of error, in showing that they would certainly be destroyed, and in stating the true doctrine in opposition to what they held. It is evident that Peter supposed that the danger to which Christians in Asia Minor were exposed from these errors, was not less than that to which they were exposed from persecution, and that it was of as much importance to guard them from those errors as it was to sustain them in their trials.

The characteristics of the teachers referred to in this Epistle, and the doctrines which they taught, were the following:

(1) One of the prominent errors was a denial of the Lord that bought them, 2 Peter 2:1. On the nature of this error, see Notes on that verse.

(2) they gave indulgence to carnal appetites, and were sensual, corrupt, beastly, lewd, 2 Peter 2:10, 2 Peter 2:12-14, 2 Peter 2:19. Compare Jude 1:4, Jude 1:8, Jude 1:16. It is remarkable that so many professed "reformers" have been men who have been sensual and lewd - men who have taken advantage of their character as professed religious teachers, and as "reformers," to corrupt and betray others. Such reformers often begin with pure intentions, but a constant familiarity with a certain class of vices tends to corrupt the mind, and to awaken in the soul passions which would otherwise have slept; and they fall into the same vices which they attempt to reform. It should be said, however, that many professed reformers are corrupt at heart, and only make use of their pretended zeal in the cause of reformation to give them the opportunity to indulge their base propensities.

(3) they were disorderly in their views, and radical in their movements. The tendency of their doctrines was to unsettle the foundations of order and government; to take away all restraint from the indulgence of carnal propensities, and to break up the very foundations of good order in society, 2 Peter 2:10-12. They "walked after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness;" they "despised government" or authority; they were "presumptuous and

self-willed;" they "were not afraid to speak evil of dignities;" they were like "natural brute beasts;" they "spoke evil of the subjects which they did not understand." It is by no means an uncommon thing for professed reformers to become anti-government men, or to suppose that all the restraints of law stand in their way, and that they must be removed in order to success. They fix the mind on one thing to be accomplished. That thing magnifies itself until it fills all the field of vision. Everything which seems to oppose their efforts, or to uphold the evil which they seek to remove, they regard as an evil itself; and as the laws and the government of a country often seem to sustain the evil, they become opposed to the government itself, and denounce it as an evil. Instead of endeavoring to enlighten the public mind, and to modify the laws by a course of patient effort, they array themselves against them, and seek to overturn them. For the same reason, also, they suppose that "the church" upholds the evil, and become the deadly foe of all church organizations.

(4) they were seductive and artful, and adopted a course of teaching that was fitted to beguile the weak, and especially to produce licentiousness of living, 2 Peter 2:14. They were characterized by adulterous desires; and they practiced their arts particularly on the "unstable," those who were easily led away by any new and plausible doctrine that went to unsettle the foundations of rigid morality.

(5) they adopted a pompous mode of teaching, distinguished for sound rather than for sense, and proclaimed themselves to be the special friends of liberal views, and of a liberal Christianity, 2 Peter 2:17-19. They were like "wells without water;" "clouds that were carried about with a tempest;" they spake "great swelling words of vanity," and they promised "liberty" to those who would embrace their views, or freedom from the restraints of bigotry and of a narrow and gloomy religion. This appeal is usually made by the advocates of error.

(6) they had been professed Christians, and had formerly embraced the more strict views on morals and religion which were held by Christians in general, 2 Peter 2:20-22. From this, however, they had departed, and had fallen into practices quite as abominable as those of which they had been guilty before their pretended conversion.

(7) they denied the doctrines which the apostles had stated respecting the end of the world. The "argument" on which they based this denial was the fact that all things continued unchanged as they had been from the beginning, and that it might be inferred from that that the world would be stable, 2 Peter 3:3-4. They saw no change in the laws of nature; they saw no indications that the world was drawing to a close, and they "inferred" that laws so stable and settled as those were which existed in nature would continue to operate, and that the changes predicted by the apostles were impossible.

A large part of the Epistle is occupied in meeting these errors, and in so portraying the characters of their advocates as to show what degree of reliance was to be placed on their preaching. For a particular view of the manner in which these errors are met, see the analyses to 2 Peter 2; 3.

This Epistle is characterized by the same earnest and tender manner as the First, and by a peculiarly "solemn grandeur of imagery and diction." The apostle in the last two chapters had to meet great and dangerous errors, and the style of rebuke was appropriate to the occasion. He felt that he himself was soon to die, and, in the prospect of death, his own mind was uniquely impressed with the solemnity and importance of coming events. He believed that the errors which were broached tended to sap the very foundations of the Christian faith and of good morals, and his whole soul is roused to meet and counteract them. The occasion required that he should state in a solemn manner what was the truth in regard to the second advent of the Lord Jesus; what great changes were to occur; what the Christian might look for hereafter; and his soul kindles with the sublime theme, and he describes in glowing imagery, and in impassioned language, the end of all things, and exhorts them to live as became those who were looking forward to so important events. The practical effect of the whole Epistle is to make the mind intensely solemn, and to put it into a position of waiting for the coming of the Lord. On the similarity between this Epistlem, 2 Peter 2, and the Epistle of Jude, see the introduction to Jude.

2 PETER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This chapter comprises the following subjects:

I. The usual salutations, 2 Peter 1:1-2.

II. A statement that all the mercies which they enjoyed pertaining to life and godliness, had been conferred by the power of God, and that he had given them exceeding great and precious promises, 2 Peter 1:3-4. It was mainly with reference to these "promises" that the epistle was written, for they had been assailed by the advocates of error, 2 Peter 3:5-14.

III. An exhortation to abound in Christian virtues; to go on making constant attainments in knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, I and brotherly kindness, and charity, 2 Peter 1:5-9.

IV. An exhortation to endeavor to make their calling and election sure, that so an entrance might be ministered unto them abundantly into the kingdom of the Redeemer, 2 Peter 1:10-11.

V. The apostle says that he will endeavor to keep these things before their minds, 2 Peter 1:12-15. He knew well that they were then established in the truth, 2 Peter 1:12 but he evidently felt that they were in danger of being shaken in the faith by the seductive influence of error, and he says therefore, 2 Peter 1:13 that it was proper, as long as he remained on earth, to endeavor to excite in their minds a lively remembrance of the truths which they had believed; that the opportunity for his doing this must soon cease, as the period was approaching when he must be removed to eternity, in accordance with the prediction of the Saviour 2 Peter 1:14, but that he would endeavor to make so permanent a record of his views on these important subjects that they might always have them in remembrance, 2 Peter 1:15.

VI. A solemn statement that the doctrines which had been taught them, and which they had embraced, were not cunningly-devised fables, but were true, 2 Peter 1:16-21. In support of this the apostle appeals to the following things:

(a)The testimony to the fact that Jesus was the Son of God, which Peter had himself heard given on the mount of transfiguration, 2 Peter 1:17-18.

(b)Prophecy. These truths, on which he expected them to rely, had been the subject of distinct prediction, and they should be held, whatever were the plausible arguments of the false teachers, 2 Peter 1:19-20.

The general object, therefore, of this chapter is to affirm the truth of the great facts of religion, on which their hopes were based, and thus to prepare the way to combat the errors by which these truths were assailed. He first assures them that the doctrines which they held were true, and then, in 2 Peter 23, meets the errors by which they were assailed.

Verse 1

Simon Peter - Margin, "Symeon." The name is written either "Simon" or "Simeon" - Σίμων Simōnor Συμεών SumeōnEither word properly means "hearing;" and perhaps, like other names, was at first significant. The first epistle 1 Peter 1:1 begins simply, "Peter, an apostle," etc. The name Simon, however, was, his proper name - "Peter," or "Cephas," having been added to it by the Saviour, John 1:42. Compare Matthew 16:18.

A servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ - In the first epistle the word "apostle" only is used. Paul, however, uses the word "servant" as applicable to himself in Romans 1:1, and to himself and Timothy in the commencement of the epistle to the Philippians, Philemon 1:1. See the notes at Romans 1:1.

To them that have obtained like precious faith with us - With us who are of Jewish origin. This epistle was evidently written to the same persons as the former (Introduction, Section 3), and that was intended to embrace many who were of Gentile origin. Notes, 1 Peter 1:1. The apostle addresses them all now, whatever was their origin, as heirs of the common faith, and as in all respects brethren.

Through the righteousness of God - Through the method of justification which God has adopted. See this fully explained in the notes at Romans 1:17.

(The original is ἐν δικαιοσυνη en dikaiosunēin the righteousness, etc., which makes the righteousness the object of faith. We cannot but regard the author‘s rendering of the famous phrase here used by Peter, and by Paul, Romans 1:17; Romans 3:21, as singularly unhappy. That Newcome used it and the Socinian version adopted it, would not make us reject it; but when the apostles state specially the ground of justification, why should they be

made to speak indefinitely of its general "plan," or method. The rendering of Stuart, namely, "justification of God," is not more successful; it confounds the "thing itself" with the "ground" of it. Why not prefer the apostle's own words to any change or periphrasis? See the supplementary note at Romans 1:17).

God and our Saviour Jesus Christ - Margin, "our God and Saviour." The Greek will undoubtedly bear the construction given in the margin; and if this be the true rendering, it furnishes an argument for the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Middleton, Slade, Valpy, Bloomfield, and others, contend that this is the true and proper rendering. It is doubted, however, by Wetstein, Grotius, and others. Erasmus supposes that it may be taken in either sense. The construction, though certainly not a violation of the laws of the Greek language, is not so free from all doubt as to make it proper to use the passage as a proof-text in an argument for the divinity of the Saviour. It is easier to prove the doctrine from other texts that are plain, than to show that this must be the meaning here.

Verse 2

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord - That is, grace and peace abound to us, or may be expected to be conferred on us abundantly, if we have a true knowledge of God and of the Saviour. Such a knowledge constitutes true religion: for in that we find "grace" - the grace that pardons and sanctifies; and "peace" - peace of conscience, reconciliation with God, and calmness in the trials of life. See the notes at John 17:3.

Verse 3

According as his divine power hath given unto us - All the effects of the gospel on the human heart are, in the Scriptures, traced to the power of God. See the notes at Romans 1:16. There are no moral means which have ever been used that have such power as the gospel; none through which God has done so much in changing the character and affecting the destiny of man.

All things that pertain unto life and godliness - The reference here in the word "life" is undoubtedly to the life of religion; the life of the soul imparted by the gospel. The word "godliness" is synonymous with piety. The phrase "according as" (ὡς hōs) seems to be connected with the sentence in 2 Peter 1:5, "Forasmuch as he has conferred on us these privileges and promises connected with life and godliness, we are bound, in

order to obtain all that is implied in these things, to give all diligence to add to our faith, knowledge," etc.

Through the knowledge of him - By a proper acquaintance with him, or by the right kind of knowledge of him. Notes, John 17:3.

That hath called us to glory and virtue - Margin: "by." Greek, "through glory," etc. Doddridge supposes that it means that he has done this "by the strengthening virtue and energy of his spirit." Rosenmuller renders it, "by glorious benignity." Dr. Robinson (Lexicon) renders it, "through a glorious display of his efficiency." The objection which anyone feels to this rendering arises solely from the word "virtue," from the fact that we are not accustomed to apply that word to God. But the original word (ἀρετή aretē) is not as limited in its signification as the English word is, but is rather a word which denotes a good quality or excellence of any kind. In the ancient classics it is used to denote manliness, vigor, courage, valor, fortitude; and the word would rather denote "energy" or "power" of some kind, than what we commonly understand by virtue, and would be, therefore, properly applied to the "energy" or "efficiency" which God has displayed in the work of our salvation. Indeed, when applied to moral excellence at all, as it is in 2 Peter 1:5, of this chapter, and often elsewhere, it is perhaps with a reference to the "energy, boldness, vigor," or "courage" which is evinced in overcoming our evil propensities, and resisting allurements and temptations. According to this interpretation, the passage teaches that it is "by a glorious Divine efficiency" that we are called into the kingdom of God.

Verse 4

Whereby - Δἰ ὧν Di' hōn"Through which" - in the plural number, referring either to the "glory" and "virtue" in the previous verse, and meaning that it was by that glorious divine efficiency that these promises were given; or, to all the things mentioned in the previous verse, meaning that it was through those arrangements, and in order to their completion, that these great and glorious promises were made. The promises given are in connection with the plan of securing "life and godliness," and are a part of the gracious arrangements for that object.

Exceeding great and precious promises - A "promise" is an assurance on the part of another of some good for which we are dependent on him. It implies:

(1)that the thing is in his power;

(2)that he may bestow it or not, as he pleases;

(3)that we cannot infer from any process of reasoning that it is his purpose to bestow it on us;

(4)that it is a favor which we can obtain only from him, and not by any independent effort of our own.

The promises here referred to are those which pertain to salvation. Peter had in his eye probably all that then had been revealed which contemplated the salvation of the people of God. They are called "exceeding great and precious," because of their value in supporting and comforting the soul, and of the honor and felicity which they unfold to us. The promises referred to are doubtless those which are made in connection with the plan of salvation revealed in the gospel, for there are no other promises made to man. They refer to the pardon of sin; strength, comfort, and support in trial; a glorious resurrection; and a happy immortality. If we look at the greatness and glory of the objects, we shall see that the promises are in fact exceedingly precious; or if we look at their influence in supporting and elevating the soul, we shall have as distinct a view of their value. The promise goes beyond our reasoning powers; enters a field which we could not otherwise penetrate - the distant future; and relates to what we could not otherwise obtain.

All that we need in trial, is the simple promise of God that he will sustain us; all that we need in the hour of death, is the assurance of our God that we I shall be happy forever. What would this world be without a "promise?" How impossible to penetrate the future! How dark that which is to come would be! How bereft we should be of consolation! The past has gone, and its departed joys and hopes can never be recalled to cheer us again; the present may be an hour of pain, and sadness, and disappointment, and gloom, with perhaps not a ray of comfort; the future only opens fields of happiness to our vision, and everything there depends on the will of God, and all that we can know of it is from his promises. Cut off from these we have no way either of obtaining the blessings which we desire, or of ascertaining that they can be ours. For the promises of God, therefore, we should be in the highest degree grateful, and in the trials of life we should cling to them with unwavering confidence as the only things which can be an anchor to the soul.

That by these - Greek, "through these." That is, these constitute the basis of your hopes of becoming partakers of the divine nature. Compare the notes at 2 Corinthians 7:1.

Partakers of the divine nature - This is a very important and a difficult phrase. An expression somewhat similar occurs in Hebrews 12:10; "That we might be partakers of his holiness." See the notes at that verse. In regard to the language here used, it may be observed:

(1) That it is directly contrary to all the notions of "Pantheism" - or the belief that all things are now God, or a part of God - for it is said that the object of the promise is, that we "may become partakers of the divine nature," not that we are now.

(2) it cannot be taken in so literal a sense as to mean that we can ever partake of the divine "essence," or that we shall be "absorbed" into the divine nature so as to lose our individuality. This idea is held by the Budhists; and the perfection of being is supposed by them to consist in such absorption, or in losing their own individuality, and their ideas of happiness are graduated by the approximation which may be made to that state. But this cannot be the meaning here, because:

(a) It is in the nature of the case" impossible. There must be forever an essential difference between a created and an uncreated mind.

(b) This would argue that the Divine Mind is not perfect. If this absorption was necessary to the completeness of the character and happiness of the Divine Being, then he was imperfect before; if before perfect, he would not be after the absorption of an infinite number of finite and imperfect minds.

(c) In all the representations of heaven in the Bible, the idea of "individuality" is one that is prominent. "Individuals" are represented everywhere as worshippers there, and there is no intimation that the separate existence of the redeemed is to be absorbed and lost in the essence of the Deity. Whatever is to be the condition of man hereafter, he is to have a separate and individual existence, and the number of intelligent beings is never to be diminished either by annihilation, or by their being united to any other spirit so that they shall become one.

The reference then, in this place, must be to the "moral" nature of God; and the meaning is, that they who are renewed become participants of the same "moral" nature; that is, of the same views, feelings, thoughts, purposes, principles of action. Their nature as they are born, is sinful, and prone to evil Ephesians 2:3, their nature as they are born again, becomes like that of God. They are made like God; and this resemblance will increase more and more forever, until in a much higher sense than can be true in this world, they may be said to have become "partakers of the divine nature." Let us remark, then,

(a) That "man" only, of all the dwellers on the earth, is capable of rising to this condition. The nature of all the other orders of creatures here below is incapable of any such transformation that it can be said that they become "partakers of the divine nature."

(b) It is impossible now to estimate the degree of approximation to which man may yet rise toward God, or the exalted sense in which the term may yet be applicable to him; but the prospect before the believer in this respect is most glorious. Two or three circumstances may be referred to here as mere hints of what we may yet be:

(1) Let anyone reflect on the amazing advances made by himself since the period of infancy. But a few, very few years ago, he knew nothing. He was in his cradle, a poor, helpless infant. He knew not the use of eyes, or ears, or hands, or feet. He knew not the name or use of anything, not even the name of father or mother. He could neither walk, nor talk, nor creep. He did not know even that a candle would burn him if he put his finger there. He knew not how to grasp or hold a rattle, or what was its sound, or whence that sound or any other sound came. Let him think what he is at twenty, or forty, in comparison with this; and then, if his improvement in every similar number of years hereafter "should" be equal to this, who can tell the height to which he will rise?

(2) we are here limited in our own powers of learning about God or his works. We become acquainted with him through his works - by means of "the senses." But by the appointment of this method of becoming

acquainted with the external world, the design seems to have been to accomplish a double work quite contradictory - one to help us, and the other to hinder us. One is to give us the means of communicating with the external world - by the sight, the hearing, the smell, the touch, the taste; the other is to shut us out from the external world, except by these. The body is a casement, an enclosure, a prison in which the soul is incarcerated, from which we can look out on the universe only through these organs. But suppose, as may be the case in a future state, there shall be no such enclosure, and that the whole soul may look directly on the works of God - on spiritual existences, on God himself - who can then calculate the height to which man may attain in becoming a "partaker of the divine nature?"

(3) we shall have an "eternity" before us to grow in knowledge, and in holiness, and in conformity to God. Here, we attempt to climb the hill of knowledge, and having gone a few steps - while the top is still lost in the clouds - we lie down and die. We look at a few things; become acquainted with a few elementary principles; make a little progress in virtue, and then all our studies and efforts are suspended, and "we fly away." In the future world we shall have an "eternity" before us to make progress in knowledge, and virtue, and holiness, uninterrupted; and who can tell in what exalted sense it may yet be true that we shall be "partakers of the divine nature," or what attainments we may yet make?

Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust - The world is full of corruption. It is the design of the Christian plan of redemption to deliver us from that, and to make us holy; and the means by which we are to be made like God, is by rescuing us from its dominion.

Verse 5

And beside this - Καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο Kai auto toutoSomething here is necessary to be understood in order to complete the sense. The reference is to 2 Peter 1:3; and the connection is, since 2 Peter 1:3 God has given us these exalted privileges and hopes, "in respect to this," (κατὰ kataor διὰ diabeing understood,) or as a "consequence" fairly flowing from this, we ought to give all diligence that we may make good use of these advantages, and secure as high attainments as we possibly can. We should add one virtue to another, that we may reach the highest possible elevation in holiness.

Giving all diligence - Greek, "Bringing in all zeal or effort." The meaning is, that we ought to make this a distinct and definite object, and to apply ourselves to it as a thing to be accomplished.

Add to your faith virtue - It is not meant in this verse and the following that we are to endeavor particularly to add these things one to another "in the order" in which they are specified, or that we are to seek first to have faith, and then to add to that virtue, and then to add knowledge to virtue rather than to faith, etc. The order in which this is to be done, the relation which one of these things may have to another, is not the point aimed at; nor are we to suppose that any other order of the words would not have answered the purpose of the apostle as well, or that anyone of the virtues specified would not sustain as direct a relation to any other, as the one which he has specified. The design of the apostle is to say, in an emphatic manner, that we are to strive to possess and exhibit all these virtues; in other words, we are not to content ourselves with a single grace, but are to cultivate all the virtues, and to endeavor to make our piety complete in all the relations which we sustain. The essential idea in the passage before us seems to be, that in our religion we are not to be satisfied with one virtue, or one class of virtues, but that there is to be.

(1)adiligent cultivation of our virtues, since the graces of religion are as susceptible of cultivation as any other virtues;

(2)that there is to be progress made from one virtue to another, seeking to reach the highest possible point in our religion; and,

(3)that there is to be an accumulation of virtues and graces - or we are not to be satisfied with one class, or with the attainments which we can make in one class.

We are to endeavor to add on one after another until we have become possessed of all. Faith, perhaps, is mentioned first, because that is the foundation of all Christian virtues; and the other virtues are required to be added to that, because, from the place which faith occupies in the plan of justification, many might be in danger of supposing that if they had that they had all that was necessary. Compare James 2:14, following In the Greek word rendered "add," ἐπιχορηγήσατε epichorēgēsatethere is an allusion to a "chorus-leader" among the Greeks, and the sense is well expressed by Doddridge: "Be careful to accompany that belief with all the lovely train of attendant graces." Or, in other words, "let faith lead on as at

the head of the choir or the graces, and let all the others follow in their order." The word here rendered "virtue" is the same which is used in 2 Peter 1:3; and there ks included in it, probably, the same general idea which was noticed there. All the things which the apostle specifies, unless "knowledge" be an exception, are "virtues" in the sense in which that word is commonly used; and it can hardly be supposed that the apostle here meant to use a general term which would include all of the others. The probability is, therefore, that by the word here he has reference to the common meaning of the Greek word, as referring to manliness, courage, vigor, energy; and the sense is, that he wished them to evince whatever firmness or courage might be necessary in maintaining the principles of their religion, and in enduring the trials to which their faith might be subjected. True "virtue" is not a tame and passive thing. It requires great energy and boldness, for its very essence is firmness, manliness, and independence.

And to virtue knowledge - The knowledge of God and of the way of salvation through the Redeemer, 2 Peter 1:3. Compare 2 Peter 3:8. It is the duty of every Christian to make the highest possible attainments in "knowledge."

Verse 6

And to knowledge temperance - On the meaning of the word "temperance," see the Acts 24:25 note, and 1 Corinthians 9:25 note. The word here refers to the mastery over all our evil inclinations and appetites. We are to allow none of them to obtain control over us. See the notes at 1 Corinthians 6:12. This would include, of course, abstinence from intoxicating drinks; but it would also embrace all evil passions and propensities. Everything is to be confined within proper limits, and to no propensity of our nature are we to give indulgence beyond the limits which the law of God allows.

And to temperance patience - Notes, James 1:4.

And to patience godliness - True piety. Notes, 2 Peter 1:3. Compare 1 Timothy 2:2; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Timothy 4:7-8; 1 Timothy 6:3, 1 Timothy 6:5-6, 1 Timothy 6:11.

Verse 7

And to godliness brotherly kindness - Love to Christians as such. See the John 13:34 note; Hebrews 13:1 note.

And to brotherly kindness charity - Love to all mankind. There is to be a special affection for Christians as of the same family; there is to be a true and warm love, however, for all the race. See the notes at 1 Corinthians 13.

Verse 8

For if these things be in you, and abound - If they are in you in rich abundance; if you are eminent for these things.

They make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful - They will show that you are not barren or unfruitful. The word rendered "barren," is, in the margin, "idle." The word "idle" more accurately expresses the sense of the original. The meaning is, that if they evinced these things, it would show.

(1)that they were diligent in cultivating the Christian graces, and,

(2)that it was not a vain thing to attempt to grow in knowledge and virtue.

Their efforts would be followed by such happy results as to be an encouragement to exertion. In nothing is there, in fact, more encouragement than in the attempt to become eminent in piety. On no other efforts does God smile more propitiously than on the attempt to secure the salvation of the soul and to do good. A small part of the exertions which men put forth to become rich, or learned, or celebrated for oratory or heroism, would secure the salvation of the soul. In the former, also, men often fail; in the latter, never.

Verse 9

But he that lacketh these things is blind - He has no clear views of the nature and the requirements of religion.

And cannot see afar off - The word used here, which does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, (μυωπάζων muōpazōnmeans to shut the eyes; i. e., to contract the eyelids, to blink, to twinkle, as one who cannot see clearly, and hence to be "near-sighted." The meaning here is, that he is like one who has an indistinct vision; one who can see only the objects that are near him, but who has no correct apprehension of objects that are more remote. He sees but a little way into the true nature and design of the gospel. He does not take those large and clear views which would enable him to comprehend the whole system at a glance.

And hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins - He does not remember the obligation which grows out of the fact that a system has

been devised to purify the heart, and that he has been so far brought under the power of that system as to have his sins forgiven. If he had any just view of that, he would see that he was under obligation to make as high attainments as possible, and to cultivate to the utmost extent the Christian graces.

Verse 10

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence - 2 Peter 1:5. "In view of these things, give the greater diligence to secure your salvation." The considerations on which Peter based this appeal seem to have been the fact that such promises are made to us, and such hopes held out before us; the degree of uncertainty thrown over the whole matter of our personal salvation by low attainments in the divine life, and the dreadful condemnation which will ensue if in the end it shall be found that we are destitute of all real piety. The general thought is, that religion is of sufficient importance to claim our highest diligence, and to arouse us to the most earnest efforts to obtain the assurance of salvation.

To make your calling and election sure - On the meaning of the word "calling," see the notes at Ephesians 4:1. On the meaning of the word "election," see the Romans 9:11 note; 1 Thessalonians 1:4 note. Compare Ephesians 1:5. The word rendered "election" here, (ἐκλογήν eklogēnoccurs only in this place and in Acts 9:15; Romans 9:11; Romans 11:5, Romans 11:7, Romans 11:28; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; though corresponding words from the same root denoting "the elect, to elect, to choose," frequently occur. The word here used means "election," referring to the act of God, by which those who are saved are "chosen" to eternal life. As the word "calling" must refer to the act of God, so the word "election" must; for it is God who both "calls" and "chooses" those who shall be saved. The word in the Scriptures usually refers to the actual choosing of those who shall be saved; that is, referring to the time when they, in fact, become the children of God, rather than to the purpose of God that it shall be done; but still there must have been an eternal purpose, for God makes no choice which he did not always intend to make.

The word "sure," means firm, steadfast, secure, (βεβαίαν bebaianHere the reference must be to "themselves;" that is, they were so to act as to make it certain to themselves that they had been chosen, and were truly called into the kingdom of God. It cannot refer to God, for no act of theirs could make it more certain on his part, if they had been actually chosen to

eternal life. Still, God everywhere treats men as moral agents; and what may be absolutely certain in his mind from the mere purpose that it "shall" be so, is to be made certain to us only by evidence, and in the free exercise of our own powers. The meaning here is, that they were to obtain such evidences of personal piety as to put the question whether they were "called" and "chosen," so far as their own minds were concerned, to rest; or so as to have undoubted evidence on this point. The Syriac, the Vulgate, and some Greek manuscripts, insert here the expression "by your good works;" that is, they were to make their calling sure "by" their good works, or by holy living.

This clause, as Calvin remarks, is not authorized by the best authority, but it does not materially affect the sense. It was undoubtedly by their "good works" in the sense of holy living, or of lives consecrated to the service of God, that they were to obtain the evidence that they were true Christians; that is, that they had been really called into the kingdom of God, for there is nothing else on which we can depend for such evidence. God has given no assurance to us by name that he intends to save us. We can rely on no voice, or vision, or new revelation, to prove that it is so. No internal feeling of itself, no raptures, no animal excitement, no confident persuasion in our own minds that we are elected, can be proof in the case; and the only certain evidence on which we can rely is that which is found in a life of sincere piety. In view of the important statement of Peter in this verse, then, we may remark:

(1) that he believed in the doctrine of election, for he uses language which obviously implies this, or such as they are accustomed to use who believe the doctrine.

(2) the fact that God has chosen those who shall be saved, does not make our own efforts unnecessary to make that salvation sure to us. It can be made sure to our own minds only by our own exertions; by obtaining evidence that we are in fact the children of God. There can be no evidence that salvation will be ours, unless there is a holy life; that is, unless there is true religion. Whatever may be the secret purpose of God in regard to us, the only evidence that we have that we shall be saved is to be found in the

fact that we are sincere Christians, and are honestly endeavoring to do his will.

(3) it is possible to make our calling and election sure; that is, to have such evidence on the subject that the mind shall be calm, and that there will be no danger of deception. If we can determine the point that we are in fact true Christians, that settles the matter - for then the unfailing promise of God meets us that we shall be saved. In making our salvation sure to our own minds, if we are in fact true Christians, we have not to go into an argument to prove that we have sufficient strength to resist temptation, of that we shall be able in any way to keep ourselves. All that matter is settled by the promise of God, that if we are Christians we shall be kept by Him to salvation. The only question that is to be settled is, whether we are in fact true Christians, and all beyond that may be regarded as determined immutably. But assuredly it is possible for a man to determine the question whether he is or is not a true Christian.

(4) if it can be done, it should be. Nothing is more important for us to do than this; and to this great inquiry we should apply our minds with unfaltering diligence, until by the grace of God we can say that there are no lingering doubts n regard to our final salvation.

For if ye do these things - The things referred to in the previous verses. If you use all diligence to make as high attainments as possible in piety, and it you practice the virtues demanded by religion, 2 Peter 1:5-7.

Ye shall never fall - You shall never fall into perdition. That is, you shall certainly he saved.

Verse 11

For so an entrance - In this manner you shall be admitted into the kingdom of God.

Shall be ministered unto you - The same Greek word is here used which occurs in 2 Peter 1:5, and which is there rendered "add." See the notes at that verse. There was not improbably in the mind of the apostle a recollection of that word; and the sense may be, that "if they would lead on the virtues and graces referred to in their beautiful order, those graces would attend them in a radiant train to the mansions of immortal glory and blessedness." See Doddridge in loc.

Abundantly - Greek, "richly." That is, the most ample entrance would be furnished; there would be no doubt about their admission there. The gates of glory would be thrown wide open, and they, adorned with all the bright train of graces, would be admitted there.

Into the everlasting kingdom … - Heaven. It is here called "everlasting," not because the Lord Jesus shall preside over it as the Mediator (compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 15:24), but because, in the form which shall be established when "he shall have given it up to the Father," it will endure forever, The empire of God which the Redeemer shall set up over the souls of his people shall endure to all eternity. The object of the plan of redemption was to secure their allegiance to God, and that will never terminate.

Verse 12

Wherefore I will not be negligent - That is, in view of the importance of these things.

To put you always in remembrance - To give you the means of having them always in remembrance; to wit, by his writings.

Though ye know them - It was of importance for Peter, as it is for ministers of the gospel now, to bring known truths to remembrance. Men are liable to forget them, and they do not exert the influence over them which they ought. It is the office of the ministry not only to impart to a people truths which they did not know before, but a large part of their work is to bring to recollection well-known truths. and to seek that they may exert a proper influence on the life. Amidst the cares, the business, the amusements, and the temptations of the world, even true Christians are prone to forget them; and the ministers of the gospel render them an essential service, even if they should do nothing more than remind them of truths which are well understood, and which they have known before. A pastor, in order to be useful, need not always aim at originality, or deem it necessary always to present truths which have never been heard of before. He renders an essential service to mankind who "reminds" them of what they know but are prone to forget, and who endeavors to impress plain and familiar truths on the heart and conscience, for these truths are most important for man.

And be established in the present truth - That is, the truth which is with you, or which you have received - Robinson's Lexicon on the word πάρειμι pareimiThe apostle did not doubt that they were now confirmed in

the truth as far as it had been made known to them, but he felt that amidst their trials, and especially as they were liable to be drawn away by false teachers, there was need of reminding them of the grounds on which the truths which they had embraced rested, and of adding his own testimony to confirm their Divine origin. Though we may be very firm in our belief of the truth, yet there is a propriety that the grounds of our faith should be stated to us frequently, that they may be always in our remembrance. The mere fact that at present we are firm in the belief of the truth, is no certain evidence that we shall always continue to be; nor because we are thus firm should we deem it improper for our religious teachers to state the grounds on which our faith rests, or to guard us against the arts of those who would attempt to subvert our faith.

Verse 13

Yea, I think it meet - I think it becomes me as an apostle. It is my appropriate duty; a duty which is felt the more as the close of life draws near.

As long as I am in this tabernacle - As long as I live; as long as I am in the body. The body is called a tabernacle, or tent, as that in which the soul resides for a little time. See the notes at 2 Corinthians 5:1.

To stir you up, by putting you in remembrance - To excite or arouse you to a diligent performance of your duties; to keep up in your minds a lively sense of Divine things. Religion becomes more important to a man‘s mind always as he draws near the close of life, and feels that he is soon to enter the eternal world.

Verse 14

Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle - That I must die. This he knew, probably, because he was growing old, and was reaching the outer period of human life. It does not appear that he had any express revelation on the point.

Even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me - See the notes at John 21:18-19. This does not mean that he had any new revelation on the subject, showing him that he was soon to die, as many of the ancients supposed; but the idea is, that the time drew near when he was to die “in the manner” in which the Saviour had told him that he would. He had said John 21:18 that this would occur when he should be “old,” and as he was now becoming old, he felt that the predicted event was drawing near. Many years had now elapsed since this remarkable prophecy was uttered. It would

seem that Peter had never doubted the truth of it, and during all that time he had had before him the distinct assurance that he must die by violence; by having "his hands stretched forth;" and by being conveyed by force to some place of death to which he would not of himself go John 21:18, but, though the prospect of such a death must have been painful, he never turned away from it; never sought to abandon his Master's cause; and never doubted that it would be so.

This is one of the few instances that have occurred in the world, where a man knew distinctly, long beforehand, what would be the manner of his own death, and where he could have it constantly in his eye. we cannot foresee this in regard to ourselves, but we may learn to feel that death is not far distant, and may accustom ourselves to think upon it in whatever manner it may come upon us, as Peter did, and endeavor to prepare for it. Peter would naturally seek to prepare himself for death in the particular form in which he knew it would occur to him; we should prepare for it in whatever way it may occur to us. The subject of crucifixion would be one of special interest to him; to us death itself should be the subject of unusual interest - the manner is to be left to God. Whatever may be the signs of its approach, whether sickness or grey hairs, we should meditate much upon an event so solemn to us; and as these indications thicken we should be more diligent, as Peter was, in doing the work that God has given us to do. Our days, like the fabled Sybil's leaves, become more valuable as they are diminished in number; and as the inevitable hour draws nearer to us, we should labor more diligently in our Master's cause, gird our loins more closely, and trim our lamps. Peter thought of the cross, for it was such a death that he was led to anticipate. Let us think of the bed of languishing on which we may die, or of the blow that may strike us suddenly down in the midst of our way, calling us without a moment's warning into the presence of our Judge.

Verse 15

Moreover, I will endeavour - I will leave such a permanent record of my views on these subjects that you may not forget them. He meant not only to declare his sentiments orally, but to record them that they might be perused when he was dead. He had such a firm conviction of the truth and value of the sentiments which he held, that he would use all the means in his power that the church and the world should not forget them.

After my decease - My "exodus," (ἔξοδον exodonmy journey out; my departure; my exit from life. This is not the usual word to denote death, but is rather a word denoting that he was going on a journey out of this world. He did not expect to cease to be, but he expected to go on his travels to a distant abode. This idea runs through all this beautiful description of the feelings of Peter as he contemplated death. Hence he speaks of taking down the "tabernacle" or "tent," the temporary abode of the soul, that his spirit might be removed to another place 2 Peter 1:13; and, hence, he speaks of an "exodus" from the present life - a journey to another world. This is the true notion of death; and if so, two things follow from it:

(1)we should make preparation for it, as we do for a journey, and the more in proportion to the distance that we are to travel, and the time that we are to be absent; and,

(2)when the preparation is made, we should not be unwilling to enter on the journey, as we are not now when we are prepared to leave our homes to visit some remote part of our own country, or a distant land,

To have these things always in remembrance - By his writings. We may learn from this,

(1) that when a Christian grows old, and draws near to death, his sense of the value of Divine truth by no means diminishes. As he approaches the eternal world; as from its borders he surveys the past, and looks on to what is to come; as he remembers what benefit the truths of religion have conferred on him in life, and sees what a miserable being he would now be if he had no such hope as the gospel inspires; as he looks on the whole influence of those truths on his family and friends, on his country and the world, their value rises before him with a magnitude which he never saw before, and he desires most earnestly that they should be seen and embraced by all. A man on the borders of eternity is likely to have a very deep sense of the value of the Christian religion; and is he not then in favorable circumstances to estimate this matter aright? Let anyone place himself in imagination in the situation of one who is on the borders of the eternal world, as all in fact soon will be, and can he have any doubt about the value of religious truth?

(2) we may learn from what Peter says here, that it is the duty of those who are drawing near to the eternal world, and who are the friends of religion, to do all they can that the truths of Christianity "may be always had in remembrance." Every man's experience of the value of religion, and

the results of his examination and observation, should be regarded as the property of the world, and should not be lost. As he is about to die, he should seek, by all the means in his power, that those truths should be perpetuated and propagated. This duty may be discharged by some in counsels offered to the young, as they are about to enter on life, giving them the results of their own experience, observation, and reflections on the subject of religion; by some, by an example so consistent that it cannot be soon forgotten - a legacy to friends and to the world of much more value than accumulated silver and gold; by some, by solemn warnings or exhortations on the bed of death; in other cases, by a recorded experience of the conviction and value of religion, and a written defense of its truth, and illustration of its nature - for every man who can write a good book owes it to the church and the world to do it: by others, in leaving the means of publishing and spreading good books in the world.

He does a good service to his own age, and to future ages, who records the results of his observations and his reflections in favor of the truth in a book that shall be readable; and though the book itself may be ultimately forgotten, it may have saved some persons from ruin, and may have accomplished its part in keeping up the knowledge of the truth in his own generation. Peter, as a minister of the gospel, felt himself bound to do this, and no men have so good an opportunity of doing this now as ministers of the gospel; no men have more ready access to the press; no men have so much certainty that they will have the public attention, if they will write anything worth reading; no men, commonly, in a community are better educated, or are more accustomed to write; no individuals, by their profession, seem to be so much called to address their fellow-men in any way in favor of the truth; and it is matter of great marvel that men who have such opportunities, and who seem especially called to the work, do not do more of this kind of service in the cause of religion. Themselves soon to die, how can they help desiring that they may leave something that shall bear an honorable, though humble, testimony to truths which they so much prize, and which they are appointed to defend? A tract may live long after the author is in the grave; and who can calculate the results which have followed the efforts of Baxter and Edwards to keep up in the world the remembrance of the truths which they deemed of so much value? This little epistle of Peter has shed light on the path of men now for 1,800 years (circa 1880‘s), and will continue to do it until the second coming of the Saviour.

Verse 16

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables - That is, fictions or stories invented by artful men, and resting on no solid foundation. The doctrines which they held about the coming of the Saviour were not, like many of the opinions of the Greeks, defended by weak and sophistical reasoning, but were based on solid evidence - evidence furnished by the personal observation of competent witnesses. It is true of the gospel, in general, that it is not founded on cunningly devised fables; but the particular point referred to here is the promised coming of the Saviour. The evidence of that fact Peter proposes now to adduce.

When we made known unto you - Probably Peter here refers particularly to statements respecting the coming of the Saviour in his first epistle, 1 Peter 1:5, 1 Peter 1:13; 1 Peter 4:13; but this was a common topic in the preaching, and in the epistles, of the apostles. It may, therefore, have referred to statements made to them at some time in his preaching, as well as to what he said in his former epistle. The apostles laid great stress on the second coming of the Saviour, and often dwelt upon it. Compare 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Notes, Acts 1:11.

The power and coming - These two words refer to the same thing; and the meaning is, his "powerful coming," or his "coming in power." The advent of the Saviour is commonly represented as connected with the exhibition of power. Matthew 24:30, "coming in the clouds of heaven, with power." See the notes at that verse. Compare Luke 22:69; Mark 3:9. The "power" evinced will be by raising the dead; summoning the world to judgment; determining the destiny of men, etc. When the coming of the Saviour, therefore, was referred to by the apostles in their preaching, it was probably always in connection with the declaration that it would be accompanied by exhibitions of great power and glory - as it undoubtedly will be. The fact that the Lord Jesus would thus return, it is clear, had been denied by some among those to whom this epistle was addressed, and it was important to state the evidence on which it was to be believed. The grounds on which they denied it 2 Peter 3:4 were, that there were no appearances of his approach; that the premise had not been fulfilled; that all things continued as they had been; and that the affairs of the world moved on as they always had done. To meet and counteract this error - an error which so prevailed that many were in danger of "falling from their own

steadfastness" 2 Peter 3:17 - Peter states the proof on which he believed in the coming of the Saviour.

But were eye-witnesses of his majesty - On the mount of transfiguration, Matthew 17:1-5. See the notes at that passage. That transfiguration was witnessed only by Peter, James, and John. But it may be asked, how the facts there witnessed demonstrate the point under consideration - that the Lord Jesus will come with power? To this it may be replied:

(1) that these apostles had there such a view of the Saviour in his glory as to convince them beyond doubt that he was the Messiah.

(2) that there was a direct attestation given to that fact by a voice from heaven, declaring that he was the beloved Son of God.

(3) that that transfiguration was understood to have an important reference to the coming of the Saviour in his kingdom and his glory, and was designed to be a representation of the manner in which he would then appear. This is referred to distinctly by each one of the three evangelists who have mentioned the transfiguration. Matthew 16:28, "there be some standing here which shall not taste of death until they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom;" Mark 9:1-2; Luke 9:27-28. The transfiguration which occurred soon after these words were spoken was designed to show them what he would be in his glory, and to furnish to them a demonstration which they could never forget, that he would yet set up his kingdom in the world.

(4) they had in fact such a view of him as he would be in his kingdom, that they could entertain no doubt on the point; and the fact, as it impressed their own minds, they made known to others. The evidence as it lay in Peter's mind was, that that transfiguration was designed to furnish proof to them that the Messiah would certainly appear in glory, and to give them a view of him as coming to reign which would never fade from their memory. As that had not yet been accomplished, he maintained that the evidence was clear that it must occur at some future time. As the transfiguration was with reference to his coming in his kingdom, it was proper for Peter to use it with that reference, or as bearing on that point.

Verse 17

For he received from God the Father honour and glory - He was honored by God in being thus addressed.

When there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory - The magnificent splendor; the bright cloud which overshadowed them, Matthew 17:5.

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased - See the notes at Matthew 17:5; Matthew 3:17. This demonstrated that he was the Messiah. Those who heard that voice could not doubt this; they never did afterwards doubt.

Verse 18

And this voice which came from heaven we heard - To wit, Peter, and James, and John.

When we were with him in the holy mount - Called "holy" on account of the extraordinary manifestation of the Redeemer's glory there. It is not certainly known what mountain this was, but it has commonly been supposed to be Mount Tabor. See the notes at Matthew 17:1.

Verse 19

We have also a more sure word of prophecy - That is, a prophecy pertaining to the coming of the Lord Jesus; for that is the point under discussion. There has been considerable diversity of opinion in regard to the meaning of this passage. Some have supposed that the apostle, when he says, "a more sure word," did not intend to make any comparison between the miracle of the transfiguration and prophecy, but that he meant to say merely that the word of prophecy was very sure, and could certainly be relied on. Others have supposed that the meaning is, that the prophecies which foretold his coming into the world having been confirmed by the fact of his advent, are rendered more sure and undoubted than when they were uttered, and may now be confidently appealed to. So Rosenmuller, Benson, Macknight, Clarke, Wetstein, and Grotius. Luther renders it, "we have a firm prophetic word;" omitting the comparison.

A literal translation of the passage would be," and we have the prophetic word more firm." If a comparison is intended, it may be either that the prophecy was more sure than the fables referred to in 2 Peter 1:16; or than the miracle of the transfiguration; or than the word which was heard in the holy mount; or than the prophecies even in the time when they were first spoken. If such a comparison was designed, the most obvious of these

interpretations would be, that the prophecy was more certain proof than was furnished in the mount of transfiguration. But it seems probable that no comparison was intended, and that the thing on which Peter intended to fix the eye was not that the prophecy was a better evidence respecting the advent of the Messiah than other evidences, but that it was a strong proof which demanded their particular attention, as being of a firm and decided character. There can be no doubt that the apostle refers here to what is contained in the Old Testament; for, in 2 Peter 1:21, he speaks of the prophecy as that which was spoken "in old time, by men that were moved by the Holy Ghost." The point to which the prophecies related, and to which Peter referred, was the great doctrine respecting the coming of the Messiah, embracing perhaps all that pertained to his work, or all that he designed to do by his advent.

They had had one illustrious proof respecting his advent as a glorious Saviour by his transfiguration on the mount; and the apostle here says that the prophecies abounded with truths on these points, and that they ought to give earnest heed to the disclosures which they made, and to compare them diligently with facts as they occurred, that they might be confirmed more and more in the truth. If, however, as the more obvious sense of this passage seems to be, and as many suppose to be the correct interpretation (see Doddridge, in loc., and Professor Stuart, on the Canon of the Old Testament, p. 329), it means that the prophecy was more sure, more steadfast, more to be depended on than even what the three disciples had seen and heard in the mount of transfiguration, this may be regarded as true in the following respects:

(1) The prophecies are numerous, and by their number they furnish a stronger proof than could be afforded by a single manifestation. however clear and glorious.

(2) they were "recorded," and might be the subject of careful comparison with the events as they occurred.

(3) they were written long beforehand, and it could not be urged that the testimony which the prophets bore was owing to any illusion on their minds, or to any agreement among the different writers to impose on the

world. Though Peter regarded the testimony which he and James and John bore to the glory of the Saviour, from what they saw on the holy mount, as strong and clear confirmation that he was the Son of God, yet he could not but be aware that it might be suggested by a caviller that they might have agreed to impose on others, or that they might have been dazzled and deceived by some natural phenomenon occurring there. Compare Kuinoel on Matthew 17:1, following.

(4) even supposing that there was a miracle in the case, the evidence of the prophecies, embracing many points in the same general subject, and extending through a long series of years, would be more satisfactory than any single miracle whatever. See Doddridge, in loc. The general meaning is, that the fact that he had come as the Messiah was disclosed in the mount by such a manifestation of his glory, and of what he would be, that they who saw it could not doubt it; the same thing the apostle says was more fully shown also in the prophecies, and these prophecies demanded their close and prolonged attention.

Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed - They are worthy of your study, of your close and careful investigation. There is perhaps no study more worthy of the attention of Christians than that of the prophecies.

As unto a light that shineth in a dark place - That is, the prophecies resemble a candle, lamp, or torch, in a dark room, or in an obscure road at night. They make objects distinct which were before unseen; they enable us to behold many things which would be otherwise invisible. The object of the apostle in this representation seems to have been, to state that the prophecies do not give a perfect light, or that they do not remove all obscurity, but that they shed some light on objects which would otherwise be entirely dark, and that the light which they furnished was so valuable that we ought by all means to endeavor to avail ourselves of it. Until the day shall dawn, and we shall see objects by the clear light of the sun, they are to be our guide. A lamp is of great value in a dark night, though it may not disclose objects so clearly as the light of the sun. But it may be a safe and sure guide; and a man who has to travel in dark and dangerous places, does well to “take heed” to his lamp.

Until the day dawn - Until you have the clearer light which shall result from the dawning of the day. The reference here is to the morning light as compared with a lamp; and the meaning is, that we should attend to the

light furnished by the prophecies until the truth shall be rendered more distinct by the events as they shall actually be disclosed - until the brighter light which shall be shed on all things by the glory of the second advent of the Saviour, and the clearing up of what is now obscure in the splendors of the heavenly world. The point of comparison is between the necessary obscurity of prophecy, and the clearness of events when they actually occur - a difference like that which is observable in the objects around us when seen by the shining of the lamp and by the light of the sun. The apostle directs the mind onward to a period when all shall be clear - to that glorious time when the Saviour shall return to receive his people to himself in that heaven where all shall be light. Compare Revelation 21:23-25; Revelation 22:5. Meantime we should avail ourselves of all the light which we have, and should apply ourselves diligently to the study of the prophecies of the Old Testament which are still unfulfilled, and of those in the New Testament which direct the mind onward to brighter and more glorious scenes than this world has yet witnessed. In our darkness they are a cheering lamp to guide our feet, till that illustrious day shall dawn. Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 13:9-10.

And the day-star - The morning star - the bright star that at certain periods of the year leads on the day, and which is a pledge that the morning is about to dawn. Compare Revelation 2:28; Revelation 22:16.

Arise in your hearts - on your hearts; that is, sheds its beams on your hearts. Until you see the indications of that approaching day in which all is light. The period referred to here by the approaching day that is to diffuse this light, is when the Saviour shall return in the full revelation of his glory - the splendor of his kingdom. Then all will be clear. Until that time, we should search the prophetic records, and strengthen our faith, and comfort our hearts, by the predictions of the future glory of his reign. Whether this refers, as some suppose, to his reign on earth, either personally or by the principles of his religion universally prevailing, or, as others suppose, to the brighter revelations of heaven when he shall come to receive his people to himself, it is equally clear that a brighter time than any that has yet occurred is to dawn on our race, and equally true that we should regard the prophecies, as we do the morning star, as the cheering harbinger of day.

Verse 20

Knowing this first - Bearing this steadily in mind as a primary and most important truth.

That no prophecy of the Scripture - No prophecy contained in the inspired records. The word "scripture" here shows that the apostle referred particularly to the prophecies recorded in the Old Testament. The remark which he makes about prophecy is general, though it is designed to bear on a particular class of the prophecies.

Is of any private interpretation - The expression here used (ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως idias epiluseōs) has given rise to as great a diversity of interpretation, and to as much discussion, as perhaps any phrase in the New Testament; and to the present time there is no general agreement among expositors as to its meaning. It would be foreign to the design of these notes, and would be of little utility, to enumerate the different interpretations which have been given of the passage, or to examine them in detail. It will be sufficient to remark, preparatory to endeavoring to ascertain the true sense of the passage, that some have held that it teaches that no prophecy can be interpreted of itself, but can be understood only by comparing it with the event; others, that it teaches that the prophets did not themselves understand what they wrote, but were mere passive organs under the dictation of the Holy Spirit to communicate to future times what they could not themselves explain; others, that it teaches that "no prophecy is of self-interpretation," (Horsley;) others, that it teaches that the prophecies, besides having a literal signification, have also a hidden and mystical sense which cannot be learned from the prophecies themselves, but is to be perceived by a special power of insight imparted by the Holy Spirit, enabling men to understand their recondite mysteries.

It would be easy to show that some of these opinions are absurd, and that none of them are sustained by the fair interpretation of the language used, and by the drift of the passage. The more correct interpretation, as it seems to me, is that which supposes that the apostle teaches that the truths which the prophets communicated were not originated by themselves; were not of their own suggestion or invention; were not their own opinions, but were of higher origin, and were imparted by God; and according to this the passage may be explained, "knowing this as a point of first importance when you approach the prophecies, or always bearing this in mind, that it is a great principle in regard to the prophets, that what they communicated "was not of their own disclosure;" that is, was not revealed or originated by them." That this is the correct interpretation will be apparent from the following considerations:

(1) It accords with the design of the apostle, which is to produce an impressive sense of the importance and value of the prophecies, and to lead those to whom he wrote to study them with diligence. This could be secured in no way so well as by assuring them that the writings which he wished them to study did not contain truths originated by the human mind, but that they were of higher origin.

(2) this interpretation accords with what is said in the following verse, and is the only one of all those proposed that is consistent with that, or in connection with which that verse will have any force. In that verse 2 Peter 1:21, a reason is given for what is said here: "For (γὰρ gar) the prophecy came not in old time "by the will of man,"" etc. But this can be a good reason for what is said here only on the supposition that the apostle meant to say that what they communicated was not originated by themselves; that it was of a higher than human origin; that the prophets spake "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This fact was a good reason why they should show profound respect for the prophecies, and study them with attention. But how could the fact that "they were moved by the Holy Ghost" be a reason for studying them, if the meaning here is that the prophets could not understand their own language, or that the prophecy could be understood only by the event, or that the prophecy had a double meaning, etc.? If the prophecies were of Divine origin, then "that" was a good reason why they should be approached with reverence, and should be profoundly studied.

(3) this interpretation accords as well, to say the least, with the fair meaning of the language employed, as either of the other opinions proposed. The word rendered "interpretation" (ἐπίλυσις epilusis) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means "solution" (Robinson's Lexicon), "disclosure," (Prof. Stuart on the Old Testament, p. 328,) "making free (Passow,)" with the notion that what is thus released or loosed was before bound, entangled obscure. The verb from which this word is derived (ἐπιλύω epiluō) means, "to let loose upon," as dogs upon a hare, (Xen. Mem. 7,8; ib 9,10;) to loose or open letters; to loosen a band; to loose or disclose a riddle or a dark saying, and then to enlighten, illustrate, etc. - Passow. It is twice used in the New Testament. Mark 4:34, "he

expounded all things to his disciples"; Acts 19:39, "It shall be determined in a lawful assembly."

The verb would be applicable to loosing anything which is bound or confined, and thence to the explanation of a mysterious doctrine or a parable, or to a disclosure of what was before unknown. The word, according to this, in the place before us, would mean the disclosure of what was before bound, or retained, or unknown; either what had never been communicated at all, or what had been communicated obscurely; and the idea is, "no prophecy recorded in the Scripture is of, or comes from, any exposition or disclosure of the will and purposes of God by the prophets themselves." It is not a thing of their own, or a private matter originating with themselves, but it is to be traced to a higher source. If this be the true interpretation, then it follows that the prophecies are to be regarded as of higher than any human origin; and then, also, it follows that this passage should not be used to prove that the prophets did not understand the nature of their own communications, or that they were mere unconscious and passive instruments in the hand of God to make known his will. Whatever may be the truth on those points, this passage proves nothing in regard to them, any mare than the fact that a minister of religion now declares truth which he did not originate, but which is to be traced to God as its author, proves that he does not understand what he himself says. It follows, also, that this passage cannot be adduced by the Papists to prove that the people at large should not have free access to the word of God, and should not be allowed to interpret it for themselves. It makes no affirmation on that point, and does not even contain any "principle" of which such a use can be made; for:

(1) Whatever it means, it is confined to "prophecy;" it does not embrace the whole Bible.

(2) whatever it means, it merely states a fact; it does not enjoin a duty. It states, as a fact, that there was something about the prophecies which was not of private solution, but it does not state that it is the duty of the church to prevent any private explanation or opinion even of the prophecies.

(3) it says nothing about "the church" as empowered to give a public or authorized interpretation of the prophecies. There is not a hint, or an intimation of any kind, that the church is intrusted with any such power whatever. There never was any greater perversion of a passage of Scripture than to suppose that this teaches that any class of people is not to have free access to the Bible. The effect of the passage, properly interpreted, should be to lead us to study the Bible with profound reverence, as having a higher than any human origin, not to turn away from it as if it were unintelligible, nor to lead us to suppose that it can be interpreted only by one class of men. The fact that it discloses truths which the human mind could not of itself have originated, is a good reason for studying it with diligence and with prayer - not for supposing that it is unlawful for us to attempt to understand it; a good reason for reverence and veneration for it - not for sanctified neglect.

Verse 21

For the prophecy came not in old time - Margin, or, "at any." The Greek word (ποτὲ pote) will bear either construction. It would be true in either sense, but the reference is particularly to the recorded prophecies in the Old Testament. What was true of them, however, is true of all prophecy, that it is not by the will of man. The word "prophecy" here is without the article, meaning prophecy in general - all that is prophetic in the Old Testament; or, in a more general sense still, all that the prophets taught, whether relating to future events or not.

By the will of man - It was not of human origin; not discovered by the human mind. The word "will," here seems to be used in the sense of "prompting" or "suggestion;" men did not speak by their own suggestion, but as truth was brought to them by God.

But holy men of God - Pious men commissioned by God, or employed by him as his messengers to mankind.

Spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost - Compare 2 Timothy 3:16. The Greek phrase here (ὑπὸ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου φερόμενος hupo Pneumatos Hagiou pheromenos) means "borne along, moved, influenced" by the Holy Ghost. The idea is, that in what they spake they were "carried along" by an influence from above. They moved in the case only as they were moved; they spake only as the influence of the Holy Ghost was upon them. They were no more self-moved than a vessel at sea is that is impelled

by the wind; and as the progress made by the vessel is to be measured by the impulse bearing upon it, so the statements made by the prophets are to be traced to the impulse which bore upon their minds. They were not, indeed, in all respects like such a vessel, but only in regard to the fact that all they said as prophets was to be traced to the foreign influence that bore upon their minds.

There could not be, therefore, a more decided declaration than this in proof that the prophets were inspired. If the authority of Peter is admitted, his positive and explicit assertion settles the question. if this be so, also, then the point with reference to which he makes this observation is abundantly confirmed, that the prophecies demand our earnest attention, and that we should give all the heed to them which we would to a light or lamp when traveling in a dangerous way, and in a dark night. In a still more general sense, the remark here made may also be applied to the whole of the Scriptures. We are in a dark world. We see few things clearly; and all around us, on a thousand questions, there is the obscurity of midnight. By nature there is nothing to cast light on those questions, and we are perplexed, bewildered, embarrassed. The Bible is given to us to shed light on our way.

It is the only light which we have respecting the future, and though it does not give all the information which we might desire in regard to what is to come, yet it gives us sufficient light to guide us to heaven. It teaches us what it is necessary to know about God, about our duty, and about the way of salvation, in order to conduct us safely; and no one who has committed himself to its direction, has been suffered to wander finally away from the paths of salvation. It is, therefore, a duty to attend to the instructions which the Bible imparts, and to commit ourselves to its holy guidance in our journey to a better world: for soon, if we are faithful to its teachings, the light of eternity will dawn upon us, and there, amidst its cloudless splendor, we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known; then we shall "need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God shall give us light, and we shall reign forever and ever." Compare Revelation 21:22-24; Revelation 22:5.

2 PETER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

The general subject of this chapter is stated in the first verse, and it embraces these points:

(1)that it might be expected that there would be false teachers among Christians, as there were false prophets in ancient times;

(2)that they would introduce destructive errors, leading many astray; and,

(3)that they would be certainly punished. The design of the chapter is to illustrate and defend these points.

I. That there would be such false teachers the apostle expressly states in 2 Peter 2:1; and incidentally in that verse, and elsewhere in the chapter, he notices some of their characteristics, or some of the doctrines which they would hold.

(a) They would deny the Lord that bought them, 2 Peter 2:1. See the notes at that verse.

(b) They would be influenced by covetousness, and their object in their attempting to seduce others from the faith, and to induce them to become followers of themselves, would be to make money, 2 Peter 2:3.

(c) They would be corrupt, beastly, and licentious in their conduct; and it would be one design of their teaching to show that the indulgence of gross passions was not inconsistent with religion; 2 Peter 2:10, "that walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness;" 2 Peter 2:12, "as natural brute beasts;" "shall perish in their own corruption;" 2 Peter 2:14, "having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin;" 2 Peter 2:22, "the dog has returned to his own vomit again."

(d) They would be proud, arrogant, and self-willed; men who would despise all proper government, and who would be thoroughly radical in their views; 2 Peter 2:10, "and despise government; presumptuous are they and self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities;" 2 Peter 2:18, "they speak great swelling words of vanity."

(e) They were persons who had been formerly of corrupt lives, but who had become professing Christians. This is implied in 2 Peter 2:20-22. They are spoken of as having "escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" as "having known the ways of righteousness," but as having turned again to their former corrupt practices and lusts; "it has happened to them according to the true proverb," etc. There were various classes of persons in primitive times, coming under the general appellation of the term "Gnostic," to whom this description would apply, and it is probable that they had begun to broach their doctrines in the times of the apostles. Among those persons were the Ebionites, Corinthians, Nicolaitanes, etc.

II. These false teachers would obtain followers, and their teachings would be likely to allure many. This is intimated more than once in the chapter: 2 Peter 2:2, "and many shall follow their pernicious ways;" 2 Peter 2:3, "and through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you;" 2 Peter 2:14, "beguiling unstable souls." Compare 2 Peter 2:18.

III. They would certainly be punished. A large part of the chapter is taken up in proving this point, and especially in showing from the examples of others who had erred in a similar manner, that they could not escape destruction. In doing this, the apostle refers to the following facts and illustrations:

(1) The case of the angels that sinned, and that were cast down to hell, 2 Peter 2:4. If God brought such dreadful punishment on those who were once before his throne, wicked men could have no hope of escape.

(2)the case of the wicked in the time of Noah, who were cut off by the flood, 2 Peter 2:5.

(3)the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, 2 Peter 2:6.

(4)the "character" of the persons referred to was such that they could have no hope of escape.

(a) They were corrupt, sensual, presumptuous, and self-willed, and were even worse than the rebel angels had been - men that seemed to be made to be taken and destroyed, 2 Peter 2:10-12.

(b) They were spots and blemishes, sensual and adulterers, emulating the example of Balaam, who was rebuked by even a dumb ass for his

iniquity, 2 Peter 2:13-16.

(c) They allured others to sin under the specious promise of liberty, while they were themselves the slaves of debased appetites, and gross and sensual passions, 2 Peter 2:17-19.

From the entire description in this chapter, it is clear that the persons referred to, though once professors of religion, had become eminently abandoned and corrupt. It may not, indeed, be easy to identify them with any particular sect or class then existing and now known in history, though not a few of the sects in the early Christian church bore a strong resemblance to this description; but there have been those in every age who have strongly resembled these persons; and this chapter, therefore, possesses great value as containing important warnings against the arts of false teachers, and the danger of being seduced by them from the truth. Compare the introduction to the Epistle of Jude, Sections 3 and 4.

Verse 1

But there were false prophets also among the people - In the previous chapter, 2 Peter 2:19-21, Peter had appealed to the prophecies as containing unanswerable proofs of the truth of the Christian religion. He says, however, that he did not mean to say that all who claimed to be prophets were true messengers of God. There were many who pretended to be such, who only led the people astray. It is unnecessary to say, that such men have abounded in all ages where there have been true prophets.

Even as there shall be false teachers among you - The fact that false teachers would arise in the church is often adverted to in the New Testament. Compare Matthew 24:5, Matthew 24:24; Acts 20:29-30.

Who privily - That is, in a secret manner, or under plausible arts and pretences. They would not at first make an open avowal of their doctrines, but would, in fact, while their teachings seemed to be in accordance with truth, covertly maintain opinions which would sap the very foundations of religion. The Greek word here used, and which is rendered "who privily shall bring in," (παρεισάγω pareisagōmeans properly "to lead in by the side of others; to lead in along with others." Nothing could better express the usual way in which error is introduced. It is "by the side," or "along with," other doctrines which are true; that is, while the mind is turned mainly to other subjects, and is off its guard, gently and silently to lay down some principle, which, being admitted, would lead to the error, or from which the

error would follow as a natural consequence. Those who inculcate error rarely do it openly. If they would at once boldly "deny the Lord that bought them," it would be easy to meet them, and the mass of professed Christians would be in no danger of embracing the error. But when principles are laid down which may lead to that; when doubts on remote points are suggested which may involve it; or when a long train of reasoning is pursued which may secretly tend to it; there is much more probability that the mind will be corrupted from the truth.

Damnable heresies - αἱρέσεις ἀπωλείας haireseis apōleias"Heresies of destruction;" that is, heresies that will be followed by destruction. The Greek word which is rendered "damnable," is the same which in the close of the verse is rendered "destruction." It is so rendered also in Matthew 7:13; Romans 9:22; Philemon 3:19; 2 Peter 3:16 - in all of which places it refers to the future loss of the soul The same word also is rendered "perdition" in John 17:12; Philemon 1:28; 1 Timothy 6:9; Hebrews 10:39; 2 Peter 3:7; Revelation 17:8, Revelation 17:11 - in all which places it has the same reference. On the meaning of the word rendered "heresies," see the Acts 24:14 note; 1 Corinthians 11:19 note. The idea of "sect" or "party" is that which is conveyed by this word, rather than doctrinal errors; but it is evident that in this case the formation of the sect or party, as is the fact in most cases, would be founded on error of doctrine.

The thing which these false teachers would attempt would be divisions, alienations, or parties, in the church, but these would be based on the erroneous doctrines which they would promulgate. What would be the particular doctrine in this case is immediately specified, to wit, that they "would deny the Lord that bought them." The idea then is, that these false teachers would form sects or parties in the church, of a destructive or ruinous nature, founded on a denial of the Lord that bought them. Such a formation of sects would be ruinous to piety, to good morals, and to the soul. The authors of these sects, holding the views which they did, and influenced by the motives which they would be, and practicing the morals which they would practice, as growing out of their principles, would bring upon themselves swift and certain destruction. It is not possible now to determine to what particular class of errorists the apostle had reference here, but it is generally supposed that it was to some form of the Gnostic belief. There were many early sects of so-called "heretics" to whom what he here says would be applicable.

Even denying the Lord that bought them - This must mean that they held doctrines which were in fact a denial of the Lord, or the tendency of which would be a denial of the Lord, for it cannot be supposed that, while they professed to be Christians, they would openly and avowedly deny him. To "deny the Lord" may be either to deny his existence, his claims, or his attributes; it is to withhold from him, in our belief and profession, anything which is essential to a proper conception of him. The particular thing, however, which is mentioned here as entering into that self-denial, is something connected with the fact that he had ""bought"" them. It was such a denial of the Lord "as having bought them," as to be in fact a renunciation of the uniqueness of the Christian religion. There has been much difference of opinion as to the meaning of the word "Lord" in this place - whether it refers to God the Father. or to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Greek word is Δεσπότης DespotēsMany expositors have maintained that it refers to the Father, and that when it is said that he had "bought" them, it means in a general sense that he was the Author of the plan of redemption, and had causeD them to be purchased or redeemed. Michaelis supposes that the Gnostics are referred to as denying the Father by asserting that he was not the Creator of the universe, maintaining that it was created by an inferior being - *Introduction to New Testament*, iv. 360. Whitby, Benson, Slade, and many others, maintain that this refers to the Father as having originated the plan by which men are redeemed; and the same opinion is held, of necessity, by those who deny the doctrine of general atonement. The only arguments to show that it refers to God the Father would be,

(1)that the word used here Δεσπότην Despotēnis not the usual term (κύριος kurios) by which the Lord Jesus is designated in the New Testament; and,

(2)that the admission that it refers to the Lord Jesus would lead inevitably to the conclusion that some will perish for whom Christ died.

That it does, however, refer to the Lord Jesus, seems to me to be plain from the following considerations:

(1) It is the obvious interpretation; that which would be given by the great mass of Christians, and about which there could never have been any hesitancy if it had not been supposed that it would lead to the doctrine of general atonement. As to the alleged fact that the word used, Δεσπότης Despotēsis not that which is commonly applied to the Lord Jesus, that may be admitted to be true, but still the word here may be understood as applied

to him. It properly means "a master" as opposed to a servant; then it is used as denoting supreme authority, and is thus applied to God, and may be in that sense to the Lord Jesus Christ, as head over all things, or as having supreme authority over the church. It occurs in the New Testament only in the following places: 1 Timothy 6:1-2; Titus 2:9; 1 Peter 2:18, where it is rendered "masters;" Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24,; Revelation 6:10, where it is rendered "Lord," and is applied to God; and in Jude 1:4, and in the passage before us, in both which places it is rendered "Lord," and is probably to be regarded as applied to the Lord Jesus. There is nothing in the proper signification of the word which would forbid this.

(2) the phrase is one that is properly applicable to the Lord Jesus as having "bought" us with his blood. The Greek word is ἀγοράζω agorazō- a word which means properly "to market, to buy, to purchase," and then to redeem, or acquire for oneself by a price paid, or by a ransom. It is rendered "buy" or "bought" in the following places in the New Testament: Matthew 13:44, Matthew 13:46; Matthew 14:15; Matthew 21:12; Matthew 25:9-10; Matthew 27:7; Mark 6:36-37; Mark 11:15; Mark 15:46; Mark 16:1; Luke 9:13; Luke 14:18-19; Luke 17:28; Luke 19:45; Luke 22:36; John 4:8; John 6:5; John 13:29; 1 Corinthians 7:30; Revelation 3:18; Revelation 13:17; Revelation 18:11 - in all which places it is applicable to ordinary transactions of "buying." In the following places it is also rendered "bought," as applicable to the redeemed, as being bought or purchased by the Lord Jesus: 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Corinthians 7:23, "Ye are ‹bought‘ with a price;" and in the following places it is rendered "redeemed," Revelation 5:9; Revelation 14:3-4. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It is true that in a large sense this word might be applied to the Father as having caused his people to be redeemed, or as being the Author of the plan of redemption; but it is also true that the word is more properly applicable to the Lord Jesus, and that, when used with reference to redemption, it is uniformly given to him in the New Testament. Compare the passages referred to above.

It is strictly and properly true only of the Son of God that he has "bought" us. The Father indeed is represented as making the arrangement, as giving his Son to die, and as the great Source of all the blessings secured by redemption; but the "purchase" was actually made by the Son of God by

his sacrifice on the cross. Whatever there was of the nature of "a price" was paid by him; and whatever obligations may grow out of the fact that we are purchased or ransomed are due particularly to him; 2 Corinthians 5:15. These considerations seem to me to make it clear that Peter referred here to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that he meant to say that the false teachers mentioned held doctrines which were in fact a "denial" of that Saviour. He does not specify particularly what constituted such a denial; but it is plain that any doctrine which represented him, his person, or his work, as essentially different from what was the truth, would amount to such a denial.

If he were Divine, and that fact was denied, making him wholly a different being; if he actually made an expiatory sacrifice by his death, and that fact was denied, and he was held to be a mere religious teacher, changing essentially the character of the work which he came to perform; if he, in some proper sense, "bought" them with his blood, and that fact was denied in such a way that according to their views it was not strictly proper to speak of him as having bought them at all, which would be the case if he were a mere prophet or religious teacher, then it is clear that such a representation would be in fact a denial of his true nature and work. That some of these views entered into their denial of him is clear, for it was with reference to the fact that he had bought them, or redeemed them, that they denied him.

And bring upon themselves swift destruction - The destruction here referred to can be only that which will occur in the future world, for there can be no evidence that Peter meant to say that this would destroy their health, their property, or their lives. The Greek word (ἀπώλειαν apōleian) is the same which is used in the former part of the verse, in the phrase "damnable heresies." See the notes. In regard, then, to this important passage, we may remark:

(1) that the apostle evidently believed that some would perish for whom Christ died.

(2) if this is so, then the same truth may be expressed by saying that he died for others besides those who will be saved that is, that the atonement was not confined merely to the elect. This one passage, therefore, demonstrates the doctrine of general atonement. This conclusion would be

drawn from it by the great mass of readers, and it may be presumed, therefore, that this is the fair interpretation of the passage.

(See the supplementary 2 Corinthians 5:14 note; Hebrews 2:9 note for a general view of the question regarding the extent of the atonement. On this text Scott has well observed: "Doubtless Christ intended to redeem those, and those only, who he foresaw would eventually be saved by faith in him; yet his ransom was of infinite sufficiency, and people are continually addressed according to their profession." Christ has indeed laid down such a price as that all the human family may claim and find salvation in him. An unhappy ambiguity of terms has made this controversy very much a war of words. When the author here says, "Christ died for others besides those who will be saved," he does not use the words in the common sense of an actual design, on the part of Christ to save everyone. The reader will see, by consulting the notes above referred to, how much disputing might be saved by a careful definition of terms.)

(3) it follows that people may destroy themselves by a denial of the great and vital "doctrines" of religion. It cannot be a harmless thing, then, to hold erroneous opinions; nor can men be safe who deny the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. It is truth, not error, that saves the soul; and an erroneous opinion on any subject may be as dangerous to a man's ultimate peace, happiness, and prosperity, as a wrong course of life. How many men have been ruined in their worldly prospects, their health, and their lives, by holding false sentiments on the subject of morals, or in regard to medical treatment! Who would regard it as a harmless thing if a son should deny in respect to his father that he was a man of truth, probity, and honesty, or should attribute to him a character which does not belong to him - a character just the reverse of truth? Can the same thing be innocent in regard to God our Saviour?

(4) people bring destruction "on themselves." No one compels them to deny the Lord that bought them; no one forces them to embrace any dangerous error. If people perish, they perish by their own fault, for:

(a)ample provision was made for their salvation as well as for others;

(b)they were freely invited to be saved;

(c)it was, in itself, just as easy for them to embrace the truth as it was for others; and,

(d)it was as easy to embrace the truth as to embrace error.

Verse 2

And many shall follow their pernicious ways - Margin: "lascivious." A large number of manuscripts and versions read "lascivious" here - ἀσελγείαις aselgeiais- instead of "pernicious" - ἀπωλείαις apōleiais(see Wetstein), and this reading is adopted in the editions of the Greek Testament by Tittman, Griesbach, and Hahn, and it seems probable that this is the correct reading. This will agree well with the account elsewhere given of these teachers, that their doctrines tended to licentiousness, 2 Peter 2:10, 2 Peter 2:14, 2 Peter 2:18-19. It is a very remarkable circumstance, that those who have denied the essential doctrines of the gospel have been so frequently licentious in their own conduct, and have inculcated opinions which tended to licentiousness. Many of the forms of religious error have somehow had a connection with this vice. People who are corrupt at heart often seek to obtain the sanction of religion for their corruptions.

By reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of -

(1)because they were professors of religion, and religion would seem to be held responsible for their conduct; and,

(2)because they were professed teachers of religion, and, by many, would be understood as expounding the true doctrines of the gospel.

Verse 3

And through covetousness - This shows what one of the things was by which they were influenced - a thing which, like licentiousness, usually exerts a powerful influence over the teachers of error. The religious principle is the strongest that is implanted in the human bosom: and men who can obtain a livelihood in no other way, or who are too unprincipled or too indolent to labor for an honest living, often turn public teachers of religion, and adopt the kind of doctrines that will be likely to give them the greatest power over the purses of others. True religion, indeed, requires of its friends to devote all that they have to the service of God and to the promotion of his cause; but it is very easy to pervert this requirement, so

that the teacher of error shall take advantage of it for his own aggrandizement.

Shall they with feigned words - Greek formed, fashioned; then those which are formed for the occasion - feigned, false, deceitful. The idea is, thug the doctrines which they would defend were not maintained by solid and substantial arguments, but that they would make use of plausible reasoning made up for the occasion.

Make merchandise of you - Treat you not as rational beings but as a bale of goods, or any other article of traffic. That is, they would endeavor to make money out of them, and regard them only as fitted to promote that object.

Whose judgment - Whose condemnation.

Now of a long time lingereth not - Greek, "of old; long since." The idea seems to be, that justice had been long attentive to their movements, and was on its way to their destruction. It was not a new thing - that is, there was no new principle involved in their destruction; but it was a principle which had always been in operation, and which would certainly be applicable to them, and of a long time justice had been impatient to do the work which it was accustomed to do. What had occurred to the angels that sinned, 2 Peter 2:4 to the old world, 2 Peter 2:5 and to Sodom and Gomorrah, 2 Peter 2:6 would occur to them; and the same justice which had overthrown them might be regarded as on its way to effect their destruction. Compare the notes at Isaiah 18:4.

And their damnation slumbereth not - Their condemnation, (Notes, 1 Corinthians 11:29) yet here referring to future punishment. "Mr. Blackwell observes, that this is a most beautiful figure, representing the vengeance that shall destroy such incorrigible sinners as an angel of judgment pursuing them on the wing, continually approaching nearer and nearer, and in the mean time keeping a watchful eye upon them, that he may at length discharge an unerring blow" - Doddridge. It is not uncommon to speak of "sleepless justice;" and the idea here is, that however justice may have seemed to slumber or to linger, it was not really so, but that it had on them an everwatchful eye, and was on its way to do that which was right in regard to them. A sinner should never forget that there is an eye of unslumbering vigilance always upon him, and that everything that he does is witnessed by one who will yet render exact justice to all men. No person, however careful to conceal his sins, or however bold in transgression, or

however unconcerned he may seem to be, can hope that justice will always linger, or destruction always slumber.

Verse 4

For if God spared not the angels that sinned - The apostle now proceeds to the proof of the proposition that these persons would be punished. It is to be remembered that they had been, or were even then, professing Christians, though they had really, if not in form, apostatized from the faith 2 Peter 2:20-22, and a part of the proofs, therefore, are derived from the cases of those who had apostatized from the service of God. He appeals, therefore, to the case of the angels that had revolted. Neither their former rank, their dignity, nor their holiness, saved them from being thrust down to hell; and if God punished them so severely, then false teachers could not hope to escape. The apostle, by the "angels" here, refers undoubtedly to a revolt in heaven - an event referred to in Jude 1:6, and everywhere implied in the Scriptures. When that occurred, however - why they revolted, or what was the number of the apostates - we have not the slightest information, and on these points conjecture would be useless. In the supposition that it occurred, there is no improbability; for there is nothing more absurd in the belief that angels have revolted than that men have; and if there are evil angels, as there is no more reason to doubt than that there are evil men, it is morally certain that they must have fallen at some period from a state of holiness, for it cannot be believed that God made them wicked.

But cast them down to hell - Greek ταρταρώσας tartarōsas- "thrusting them down to Tartarus." The word here used occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, though it is common in the Classical writers. It is a verb formed from Τάρταρος TartarosTartarus, which in Greek mythology was the lower part, or abyss of Hades, Ἅδης Hadēswhere the shades of the wicked were supposed to be imprisoned and tormented, and corresponded to the Jewish word Γεέννα Geenna- "Gehenna." It was regarded, commonly, as beneath the earth; as entered through the grave; as dark, dismal, gloomy; and as a place of punishment. Compare the Job 10:21-22 notes, and Matthew 5:22 note. The word here is one that properly refers to a place of punishment, since the whole argument relates to that, and since it cannot be pretended that the "angels that sinned" were removed to a place of happiness on account of their transgression. It must also refer to punishment

in some other world than this, for there is no evidence that This world is made a place of punishment for fallen angels.

And delivered them into chains of darkness - "Where darkness lies like chains upon them" - Robinson, Lexicon. The meaning seems to be, that they are confined in that dark prisonhouse as if by chains. We are not to suppose that spirits are literally bound; but it was common to bind or fetter prisoners who were in dungeons, and the representation here is taken from that fact. This representation that the mass of fallen angels are confined in "Tartarus," or in hell, is not inconsistent with the representations which elsewhere occur that their leader is permitted to roam the earth, and that even many of those spirits are allowed to tempt men. It may be still true that the mass are con fined within the limits of their dark abode; and it may even be true also that Satan and those who axe permitted to roam the earth are under bondage, and are permitted to range only within certain bounds, and that they are so secured that they will be brought to trial at the last day.

To be reserved unto judgment - Jude 1:6, "to the judgment of the great day." They will then, with the revolted inhabitants of this world, be brought to trial for their crimes. That the fallen angels will be punished after the judgment is apparent from Revelation 20:10. The argument in this verse is, that if God punished the angels who revolted from Him, it is a fair inference that He will punish wicked people, though they were once professors of religion.

Verse 5

And spared not the old world - The world before the flood. The argument here is, that he cut off that wicked race, and thus showed that he would punish the guilty. By that awful act of sweeping away the inhabitants of a world, he showed that people could not sin with impunity, and that the incorrigibly wicked must perish.

But saved Noah the eighth person - This reference to Noah, like the reference to Lot in 2 Peter 2:7, seems to have been thrown in in the progress of the argument as an incidental remark, to show that the righteous, however few in number, would be saved when the wicked were cut off. The phrase "Noah the eighth," means Noah, one of eight; that is, Noah and seven others. This idiom is found, says Dr. Bloomfield, in the best writers - from Herodotus and Thucydides downward. See examples in Wetstein. The meaning in this place then is, that eight persons, and eight only of that race, were saved; thus showing, that while the wicked would be punished,

however numerous they might be, the righteous, however few, would be saved.

A preacher of righteousness - In Genesis 6:9, it is said of Noah that he was "a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God;" and it may be presumed that during his long life he was faithful in reproving the wickedness of his age, and warned the world of the judgment that was preparing for it. Compare the notes at Hebrews 11:7.

Bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly - Upon all the world besides that pious family. The argument here is, that if God would cut off a wicked race in this manner, the principle is settled that the wicked will not escape.

Verse 6

And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes - Genesis 19:24-25. This is a third example to demonstrate that God will punish the wicked. Compare the notes at Jude 1:7. The word here rendered "turning into ashes" τεφρωσας tephrōsasoccurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is from τέφρα *tefra* ashes, and means to reduce to ashes, and then to consume or destroy.

Condemned them with an overthrow - By the fact of their being overthrown, he showed that they were to be condemned, or that he disapproved their conduct. Their calamity came expressly on account of their enormous sins; as it is frequently the case now that the awful judgments that come upon the licentious and the intemperate, are as plain a proof of the divine disapprobation as were the calamities that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

Making them an ensample … - That is, they were a demonstration that God disapproved of the crimes for which they were punished, and would disapprove of the same crimes in every age and in every land. The punishment of one wicked man or people always becomes a warning to all others.

Verse 7

And delivered just Lot - Genesis 19:16. This case is incidentally referred to, to show that God makes a distinction between the righteous and the wicked; and that while the latter will be destroyed, the former will be saved. See 2 Peter 2:9. Lot is called "just," because he preserved himself uncontaminated amidst the surrounding wickedness. As long as he lived in Sodom he maintained the character of an upright and holy man.

Vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked - By the corrupt and licentious conduct of the wicked around him. On the word "conversation," see the notes at Philemon 1:27. The original phrase, which is rendered "filthy," has reference to licentiousness. The corruption of Sodom was open and shameless; and as Lot was compelled to see much of it, his heart was pained. The word here rendered "vexed," means that he was wearied or burdened. The crimes of those around him he found it hard to bear with.

Verse 8

For that righteous man dwelling among them - The Latin Vulgate renders this, "For in seeing and hearing he was just;" meaning that he maintained his uprightness, or that he did not become contaminated by the vices of Sodom. Many expositors have supposed that this is the correct rendering; but the most natural and the most common explanation is that which is found in our version. According to that, the meaning is, that compelled as he was, while living among them, to see and to hear what was going on, his soul was constantly troubled.

In seeing and hearing - Seeing their open acts of depravity, and hearing their vile conversation. The effect which this had on the mind of Lot is not mentioned in Genesis, but nothing is more probable than the statement here made by Peter. Whether this statement was founded on tradition, or whether it is a suggestion of inspiration to the mind of Peter, cannot be determined. The words rendered "seeing" and "hearing" may refer to the ACT of seeing, or to the object seen. Wetstein and Robinson suppose that they refer here to the latter, and that the sense is, that he was troubled by what he saw and heard. The meaning is not materially different. Those who live among the wicked are compelled to see and hear much that pains their hearts, and it is well if they do not become indifferent to it, or contaminated by it. "Vexed" his "righteous soul from day to day with" their "unlawful deeds."

Tortured or tormented his soul - ἐβασάνιζεν ebasanizenCompare Matthew 8:6, Matthew 8:29; Luke 8:28; Revelation 9:5; Revelation 11:10; Revelation 14:10; Revelation 20:10, where the same word is rendered "tormented." The use of this word would seem to imply that there was something active on the part of Lot which produced this distress on account of their conduct. He was not merely troubled as if his soul were passively acted on, but there were strong mental exercises of a positive kind, arising perhaps from anxious solicitude how he might prevent their evil conduct, or from painful reflections on the consequences of their deeds to themselves,

or from earnest pleadings in their behalf before God, or from reproofs and warnings of the wicked. At all events, the language is such as would seem to indicate that he was not a mere passive observer of their conduct. This, it would seem, was "from day to day," that is, it was constant. There were doubtless reasons why Lot should remain among such a people, and why, when he might so easily have done it, he did not remove to another place.

Perhaps it was one purpose of his remaining to endeavor to do them good, as it is often the duty of good men now to reside among the wicked for the same purpose. Lot is supposed to have resided in Sodom - then probably the most corrupt place on the earth - for 16 years; and we have in that fact an instructive demonstration that a good man may maintain the life of religion in his soul when surrounded by the wicked, and an illustration of the effects which the conduct of the wicked will have on a man of true piety when he is compelled to witness it constantly. We may learn from the record made of Lot what those effect will be, and what is evidence that one is truly pious who lives among the wicked.

(1) he will not be contaminated with their wickedness, or will not conform to their evil customs.

(2) he will not become indifferent to it, but his heart will be more and more affected by their depravity. Compare Psalm 119:136; Luke 19:41; Acts 17:16.

(3) he will have not only constant, but growing solicitude in regard to it - solicitude that will be felt every day: "He vexed his soul from day to day." It will not only be at intervals that his mind will be affected by their conduct, but it will be an habitual and constant thing. True piety is not fitful, periodical, and spasmodic; it is constant and steady. It is not a "jet" that occasionally bursts out; it is a fountain always flowing.

(4) he will seek to do them good. We may suppose that this was the case with Lot; we are certain that it is a characteristic of true religion to seek to do good to all, however wicked they may be.

(5) he will secure their confidence. He will practice no improper arts to do this, but it will be one of the usual results of a life of integrity, that a good man will secure the confidence of even the wicked. It does not appear that Lot lost that confidence, and the whole narrative in Genesis leads us to suppose that even the inhabitants of Sodom regarded him as a good man. The wicked may hate a good man because he is good; but if a man lives as he should, they will regard him as upright, and they will give him the credit of it when he dies, if they should withhold it while he lives.

Verse 9

The Lord knoweth … - That is, the cases referred to show that God is able to deliver his people when tempted, and understands the best way in which it should be done. He sees a way to do it when we cannot, though it is often a way which we should not have thought of. He can send an angel to take his tempted people by the hand; he can interpose and destroy the power of the tempter; he can raise up earthly friends; he can deliver his people completely and forever from temptation, by their removal to heaven.

And to reserve the unjust - As he does the rebel angels, 2 Peter 2:4. The case of the angels shows that God can keep wicked men, as if under bonds, reserved for their final trial at his bar. Though they seem to go at large, yet they are under his control, and are kept by him with reference to their ultimate arraignment.

Verse 10

But chiefly - That is, it may be presumed that the principles just laid down would be applicable in an eminent degree to such persons as he proceeds to designate.

That walk after the flesh - That live for the indulgence of their carnal appetites. Notes, Romans 8:1.

In the lust of uncleanness - In polluted pleasures. Compare the notes at 2 Peter 2:2.

And despise government - Margin: "dominion." That is, they regard all government in the state, the church, and the family, as an evil. Advocates for unbridled freedom of all sorts; declaimers on liberty and on the evils of oppression; defenders of what they regard as the rights of injured man, and yet secretly themselves lusting for the exercise of the very power which they would deny to others - they make no just distinctions about what constitutes true freedom, and in their zeal array themselves against

government in all forms. No topic of declamation would be more popular than this, and from none would they hope to secure more followers; for if they could succeed in removing all respect for the just restraints of law, the way would be open for the accomplishment of their own purposes, in setting up a dominion ever the minds of others. It is a common result of such views, that men of this description become impatient of the government of God himself, and seek to throw off all authority, and to live in the unrestrained indulgence of their vicious propensities.

Presumptuous are they - Τολμηταὶ Tolmētai- daring, bold, audacious, presumptuous men.

Self-willed - αὐθάδεις authadeisSee the notes at Titus 1:7.

They are not afraid to speak evil of dignities - The word rendered "dignities" here, (δόξας doxasmeans properly honor, glory, splendor; then that which is fitted to inspire respect; that which is dignified or exalted. It is applied here to men of exalted rank; and the meaning is, that they did not regard rank, or station, or office - thus violating the plainest rules of propriety and of religion. See the notes at Acts 23:4-5. Jude, between whose language and that of Peter in this chapter there is a remarkable resemblance, has expressed this more fully. He says, 2 Peter 2:8, "These filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities." It is one of the effects of religion to produce respect for superiors; but when men are self-willed, and when they purpose to give indulgence to corrupt propensities, it is natural for them to dislike all government. Accordingly, it is by no means an unfrequent effect of certain forms of error to lead men to speak disrespectfully of those in authority, and to attempt to throw off all the restraints of law. It is a very certain indication that men hold wrong opinions when they show disrespect to those in authority, and despise the restraints of law.

Verse 11

Whereas angels - The object, by the reference to angels here, is to show that they, even when manifesting the greatest zeal in a righteous cause, and even when opposing others, did not make use of reproachful terms, or of harsh and violent language. It is not known precisely to what Peter alludes here, nor on what the statement here is based. There can be little doubt, however, as Benson has remarked, that, from the strong resemblance between what Peter says and what Jude says, Jude 1:9-10, there is allusion to the same thing, and probably both referred to some common tradition

among the Jews respecting the contention of the archangel Michael with the devil about the body of Moses. See the notes at Jude 1:9. As the statement in Jude is the most full, it is proper to explain the passage before us by a reference to that; and we may suppose that, though Peter uses the plural term, and speaks of "angels," yet that he really had the case of Michael in his eye, and meant to refer to that as an example of what the angels do. Whatever may have been the origin of this tradition, no one can doubt that what is here said of the angels accords with probability, and no one can prove that it is not true.

Which are greater in power and might - And who might, therefore, if it were in any case proper, speak freely of things of an exalted rank and dignity. It would be more becoming for them than for men. On this difficult passage, see the notes at Jude 1:9.

Bring not railing accusation - They simply say, "The Lord rebuke thee," Jude 1:9. Compare Zechariah 3:2. The Greek here is, "bring not blasphemous or reproachful judgment, or condemnation" - βλάσφημον κρίσιν blasphēmon krisinThey abhor all scurrility and violence of language; they simply state matters as they are. No one can doubt that this accords with what we should expect of the angels; and that if they had occasion to speak of those who were opposers, it would be in a calm and serious manner, not seeking to overwhelm them by reproaches.

Against them - Margin, "against themselves." So the Vulgate. The more correct reading is "against them;" that is, against those who might be regarded as their adversaries, Jude 1:9, or those of their own rank who had done wrong - the fallen angels.

Before the Lord - When standing before the Lord; or when represented as reporting the conduct of evil spirits. Compare Zechariah 3:1-2. This phrase, however, is missing in many manuscripts. See Wetstein.

Verse 12

But these, as natural brute beasts - These persons, who resemble so much irrational animals which are made to be taken and destroyed. The point of the comparison is, that they are like fierce and savage beasts that exercise no control over their appetites, and that seeM to be made only to be destroyed. These persons, by their fierce and ungovernable passions, appear to be made only for destruction, and rush blindly on to it. The word rendered "natural," (which, however, is lacking in several manuscripts), means "as they are by nature," following the bent of their natural appetites

and passions. The idea is, that they exercised no more restraint over their passions than beasts do over their propensities. They were entirely under the dominion of their natural appetites, and did not allow their reason or conscience to exert any constraint. The word rendered "brute," means without reason; irrational. Man has reason, and should allow it to control his passions; the brutes have no rational nature, and it is to be expected that they will act out their propensities without restraint. Man, as an animal, has many passions and appetites resembling those of the brute creation, but he is also endowed with a higher nature, which is designed to regulate and control his inferior propensities, and to keep them in subordination to the requirements of law. If a man sinks himself to the level of brutes, he must expect to be treated like brutes; and as wild and savage animals - lions, and panthers, and wolves, and bears - are regarded as dangerous, and as "made to be taken and destroyed," so the same destiny must come upon men who make themselves like them.

Made to be taken and destroyed - They are not only useless to society, but destructive; and men feel that it is right to destroy them. We are not to suppose that this teaches that the only object which God had in view in making wild animals was that they might be destroyed; but that people so regard them.

Speak evil of the things that they understand not - Of objects whose worth and value they cannot appreciate. This is no uncommon thing among people, especially in regard to the works and ways of God.

And shall utterly perish in their own corruption - Their views will be the means of their ruin; and they render them fit for it, just as much as the fierce passions of the wild animals do.

Verse 13

And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness - The appropriate recompense of their wickedness in the future world. Such people do not always receive the due recompense of their deeds in the present life; and as it is a great and immutable principle that all will be treated, under the government of God, as they deserve, or that justice will be rendered to every rational being, it follows that there must be punishment in the future state.

As they that count it pleasure to riot in the day-time - As especially wicked, shameless, and abandoned men; for only such revel in open day. Compare the Acts 2:15 note; 1 Thessalonians 5:7 note.

Spots they are and blemishes - That is, they are like a dark spot on a pure garment, or like a deformity on an otherwise beautiful person. They are a scandal and disgrace to the Christian profession.

Sporting themselves - The Greek word here means to live delicately or luxuriously; to revel. The idea is not exactly that of sporting, or playing, or amusing themselves; but it is that they take advantage of their views to live in riot and luxury. Under the garb of the Christian profession, they give indulgence to the most corrupt passions.

With their own deceivings - Jude, in the parallel place, Jude 1:12, has, "These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you." Several versions, and a few manuscripts also, here read "feasts" instead of "deceivings," (ἀγάπαῖς agapaisfor ἀπάταις apataisThe common reading, however, is undoubtedly the correct one, (see Wetstein, in loc.); and the meaning is, that they took advantage of their false views to turn even the sacred feasts of charity, or perhaps the Lord's Supper itself, into an occasion of sensual indulgence. Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 11:20-22. The difference between these persons, and those in the church at Corinth, seems to have been that these did it at design, and for the purpose of leading others into sin; those who were in the church at Corinth erred through ignorance.

While they feast with you - συνευωχούμενοι suneuōchoumenoiThis word means to feast several together; to feast with anyone; and the reference seems to be to some festival which was celebrated by Christians, where men and women were assembled together, 2 Peter 2:14, and where they could convert the festival into a scene of riot and disorder. If the Lord's Supper was celebrated by them as it was at Corinth, that would furnish such an occasion; or if it was preceded by a "feast of charity" (notes, Jude 1:12), that would furnish such an occasion. It would seem to be probable that a festival of some kind was connected with the observance of the Lord's Supper (notes, 1 Corinthians 11:21), and that this was converted by these persons into a scene of riot and disorder.

Verse 14

Having eyes full of adultery - Margin, as in the Greek, "an adulteress;" that is, gazing with desire after such persons. The word "full" is designed to denote that the corrupt passion referred to had wholly seized and occupied their minds. The eye was, as it were, full of this passion; it saw nothing else but some occasion for its indulgence; it expressed nothing else but the

desire. The reference here is to the sacred festival mentioned in the previous verse; and the meaning is, that they celebrated that festival with licentious feelings, giving free indulgence to their corrupt desires by gazing on the females who were assembled with them. In the passion here referred to, the "eye" is usually the first offender, the inlet to corrupt desires, and the medium by which they are expressed. Compare the notes at Matthew 5:28. The wanton glance is a principal occasion of exciting the sin; and there is much often in dress, and mien, and gesture, to charm the eye and to deepen the debasing passion.

And that cannot cease from sin - They cannot look on the females who may be present without sinning. Compare Matthew 5:28. There are many men in whom the presence of the most virtuous woman only excites impure and corrupt desires. The expression here does not mean that they have no natural ability to cease from sin, or that they are impelled to it by any physical necessity, but only that they are so corrupt and unprincipled that they certainly will sin always.

Beguiling unstable souls - Those who are not strong in Christian principle, or who are naturally fluctuating and irresolute. The word rendered beguiling means to bait, to entrap, and would be applicable to the methods practiced in hunting. Here it means that it was one of their arts to place specious allurements before those who were known not to have settled principles or firmness, in order to allure them to sin. Compare 2 Timothy 3:6.

An heart they have exercised with covetous practices - Skilled in the arts which covetous men adopt in order to cheat others out of their property. A leading purpose which influenced these men was to obtain money. One of the most certain ways for dishonest men to do this is to make use of the religious principle; to corrupt and control the conscience; to make others believe that they are eminently holy, or that they are the special favorites of heaven; and when they can do this, they have the purses of others at command. For the religious principle is the most powerful of all principles; and he who can control that, can control all that a man possesses. The idea here is that these persons had made this their study, and had learned the ways in which men could be induced to part with their money under religious pretences. We should always be on our guard when professedly religious teachers propose to have much to do with money matters. While we should always be ready to aid every good cause, yet we should

remember that unprincipled and indolent men often assume the mask of religion that they may practice their arts on the credulity of others, and that their real aim is to obtain their property, not to save their souls.

Cursed children - This is a Hebraism, meaning literally, "children of the curse," that is, persons devoted to the curse, or who will certainly be destroyed.

Verse 15

Which have forsaken the right way - The straight path of honesty and integrity. Religion is often represented as a straight path, and to do wrong is to go out of that path in a crooked way.

Following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor - See Numbers 22:5, following. In the Book of Numbers, Balaam is called the son of "Beor." Perhaps the name Beor was corrupted into Bosor; or, as Rosenmuller suggests, the father of Balaam may have had two names. Schleusner (Lexicon) supposes that it was changed by the Greeks because it was more easily pronounced. The Septuagint, however, reads it as Βεὼρ *Beōr* - "Beor." The meaning here is, that they IMitAted Balaam. The particular point to which Peter refers in which they imitated him, seems to have been the love of gain, or covetousness. Possibly, however, he might have designed to refer to a more general resemblance, for in fact they imitated him in the following things:

(1)in being professed religious teachers, or the servants of God;

(2)in their covetousness;

(3)in inducing others to sin, referring to the same kind of sins in both cases.

Balaam counselled the Moabites to entice the children of Israel to illicit connection with their women, thus introducing licentiousness into the camp of the Hebrews (Numbers 31:16; compare Numbers 25:1-9); and in like manner these teachers led others into licentiousness, thus corrupting the church.

Who loved the wages of unrighteousness - Who was supremely influenced by the love of gain, and was capable of being employed, for a price, in a wicked design; thus prostituting his high office, as a professed prophet of the Most High, to base and ignoble ends. That Balaam, though he professed to be influenced by a supreme regard to the will of God Numbers 22:18, Numbers 22:38, was really influenced by the desire of

reward, and was willing to prostitute his great office to secure such a reward, there can be no doubt.

(1) the elders of Moab and of Midian came to Balaam with "the rewards of divination in their hand" Numbers 22:7, and with promises from Balak of promoting him to great honor, if he would curse the children of Israel, Numbers 22:17.

(2) Balaam was disposed to go with them, and was restrained from going at once only by a direct and solemn prohibition from the Lord, Numbers 22:11.

(3) notwithstanding this solemn prohibition, and not with standing he said to the ambassadors from Balak that he would do only as God directed, though Balak should give him his house full of silver and gold, Numbers 22:18, yet he did not regard the matter as settled, but proposed to them that they should wait another night, with the hope that the Lord would give a more favourable direction in reference to their request, thus showing that his heart was in the service which they required, and that his inclination was to avail himself of their offer, Numbers 22:19.

(4) when he did obtain permission to go, it was only to say that which the Lord should direct him to say, Numbers 22:20; but he went with a perverse heart, with a secret wish to comply with the desire of Balak, and with a knowledge that he was doing wrong, Numbers 22:34, and was restrained from uttering the curse which Balak desired only by an influence from above which he could not control. Balaam was undoubtedly a wicked man, and was constrained by a power from on high to utter sentiments which God meant should be uttered, but which Balaam would never have expressed of his own accord.

Verse 16

But was rebuked for his iniquity - The object of Peter in this seems to be to show that God employed the very extraordinary means of causing the ass on which he rode to speak, because his iniquity was so monstrous. The guilt of thus debasing his high office, and going forth to curse the people of God - a people who had done him no wrong, and given no occasion for his malediction - was so extraordinary, that means as extraordinary were proper to express it. If God employed means so extraordinary to rebuke "his"

depravity, it was to be expected that in some appropriate way he would express his sense of the wickedness of those who resembled him.

The dumb ass, speaking with man‘s voice - Numbers 22:28. God seems to have designed that both Balsam and Balak should be convinced that the children of Israel were his people; and so important was it that this conviction should rest fully on the minds of the rations through whom they passed, that he would not suffer even a pretended prophet to make use of his influence to curse them. He designed that all that influence should be in favor of the cause of truth, thus furnishing a striking instance of the use which he often makes of wicked men. To convince Balaam of the error of his course, and to make him sensible that God was an observer of his conduct, and to induce him to utter only what he should direct, nothing would be better suited than this miracle. The very animal upon which he rode, mute and naturally stupid, was made to utter a reproof; a reproof as directly from heaven as though the stones had cried out beneath his feet, or the trees of the wood had uttered the language of remonstrance. As to the nature of the miracle here referred to, it may be remarked:

(1)that it was as easy for God to perform this miracle as any other; and,

(2)that it was a miracle that would be as likely to be effectual, and to answer the purpose, as any other.

No one can show that it could not have occurred; and the occasion was one in which some decided rebuke, in language beyond that of conscience, was necessary.

Forbade the madness of the prophet - That is, the mad or perverse design of the prophet. The word here rendered “madness” means, properly, being aside from a right mind. It is not found elsewhere in the New Testament. It is used here to denote that Balaam was engaged in an enterprise which indicated a headstrong disposition; an acting contrary to reason and sober sense. He was so under the influence of avarice and ambition that his sober sense was blinded, and he acted like a madman. He knew indeed what was right, and had professed a purpose to do what was right, but he did not allow that to control him; but, for the sake of gain, went against his own sober conviction, and against what he knew to be the will of God. He was so mad or infatuated that he allowed neither reason, nor conscience, nor the will of God, to control him!

Verse 17

These are wells without water - Jude 1:12-13 employs several other epithets to describe the same class of persons. The language employed both by Peter and Jude is singularly terse, pointed, and emphatic. Nothing to an oriental mind would be more expressive than to say of professed religious teachers, that they were "wells without water." It was always a sad disappointment to a traveler in the hot sands of the desert to come to a well where it was expected that water might be found, and to find it dry. It only aggravated the trials of the thirsty and weary traveler. Such were these religious teachers. In a world, not unaptly compared, in regard to its real comforts, to the wastes and sands of the desert, they would only grievously disappoint the expectations of all those who were seeking for the refreshing influences of the truths of the gospel. There are many such teachers in the world.

Clouds that are carried with a tempest - Clouds that are driven about by the wind, and that send down no rain upon the earth. They promise rain, only to be followed by disappointment. Substantially the same idea is conveyed by this as by the previous phrase. "The Arabs compare persons who put on the appearance of virtue, when yet they are destitute of all goodness, to a light cloud which makes a show of rain, and afterward vanishes" - Benson. The sense is this: The cloud, as it rises, promises rain. The expectation of the farmer is excited that the thirsty earth is to be refreshed with needful showers. Instead of this, however, the wind "gets into" the cloud; it is driven about, and no rain falls, or it ends in a destructive tornado which sweeps everything before it. So of these religious teachers. Instruction in regard to the way of salvation was expected from them; but, instead of that, they disappointed the expectations of those who were desirous of knowing the way of life, and their doctrines only tended to destroy.

To whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever - The word rendered "mist" here, (ζόφος zophosmeans properly muskiness, thick gloom, darkness, (see 2 Peter 2:4); and the phrase "mist of darkness" is designed to denote "intense" darkness, or the thickest darkness. It refers undoubtedly to the place of future punishment, which is often represented as a place of intense darkness. See the notes at Matthew 8:12. When it is said that this is "reserved" for them, it means that it is prepared for them, or is kept in a state of readiness to receive them. It is like a jail or penitentiary which is built in anticipation that there will be criminals, and with the

expectation that there will be a need for it. So God has constructed the great prison-house of the universe, the world where the wicked are to dwell, with the knowledge that there would be occasion for it; and so he keeps it from age to age that it may be ready to receive the wicked when the sentence of condemnation shall be passed upon them. Compare Matthew 25:41. The word "forever" is a word which denotes properly eternity, (εἰς αἰώνα eis aiōnaand is such a word as could not have been used if it had been meant that they would not suffer forever. Compare the notes at Matthew 25:46.

Verse 18

For when they speak great swelling words of vanity - When they make pretensions to wisdom and learning, or seem to attach great importance to what they say, and urge it in a pompous and positive manner. Truth is simple, and delights in simple statements. It expects to make its way by its own intrinsic force, and is willing to pass for what it is worth. Error is noisy and declamatory, and hopes to succeed by substituting sound for sense, and by such tones and arts as shall induce men to believe that what is said is true, when it is known by the speaker to be false.

They allure through the lusts of the flesh - The same word is used here which in 2 Peter 2:14 is rendered "beguiling," and in James 1:14 "enticed." It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means that they make use of deceitful arts to allure, ensnare, or beguile others. The "means" which it is here said they employed, were "the lusts of the flesh;" that is, they promised unlimited indulgence to the carnal appetites, or taught such doctrines that their followers would feel themselves free to give unrestrained liberty to such propensities. This has been quite a common method in the world, of inducing people to embrace false doctrines.

Through much wantonness - See the notes at 2 Timothy 3:6. The meaning here is, that they made use of every variety of lascivious arts to beguile others under religious pretences. This has been often done in the world; for religion has been abused to give seducers access to the confidence of the innocent, only that they might betray and ruin them. It is right that for all such the "mist of darkness should be reserved forever;" and if there were not a place of punishment prepared for such men, there would be defect in the moral administration of the universe.

Those that were clean escaped from them who live in error - Margin, "for a little while." The difference between the margin and the text here arises from a difference of reading in the Greek. Most of the later editions

of the Greek Testament coincide with the reading in the margin, (ὀλίγως oligōsmeaning "little, but a little, scarcely." This accords better with the scope of the passage; and, according to this, it means that they had "almost escaped" from the snares and influences of those who live in error and sin. They had begun to think of their ways; they had broken off many of their evil habits; and there was hope that they would be entirely reformed, and would become decided Christians, but they were allured again to the sins in which they had so long indulged. This seems to me to accord with the design of the passage, and it certainly accords with what frequently occurs, that those who are addicted to habits of vice become apparently interested in religion, and abandon many of their evil practices, but are again allured by the seductive influences of sin, and relapse into their former habits. In the case referred to here it was by professedly religious teachers - and is this never done now? Are there none for example, who have been addicted to habits of intemperance, who had been almost reformed, but who are led back again by the influence of religious teachers? Not directly and openly, indeed, would they lead them into habits of intemperance. But, when their reformation is begun, its success and its completion depend on total abstinence from all that intoxicates. In this condition, nothing more is necessary to secure their entire reformation and safety than mere abstinence; and nothing more may be necessary to lead them into their former practices than the example of others who indulge in moderate drinking, or than the doctrine inculcated by a religious teacher that such moderate drinking is not contrary to the spirit of the Bible.

Verse 19

While they promise them liberty - True religion always promises and produces liberty (see the notes at John 8:36), but the particular liberty which these persons seem to have promised, was freedom from what they regarded as needless restraint, or from strict and narrow views of religion.

They themselves are the servants of corruption - They are the slaves of gross and corrupt passions, themselves utter strangers to freedom, and bound in the chains of servitude. These passions and appetites have obtained the entire mastery over them, and brought them into the severest bondage. This is often the case with those who deride the restraints of serious piety. They are themselves the slaves of appetite, or of the rules of fashionable life, or of the laws of honor, or of vicious indulgences. "He is a

freeman whom the truth makes free, and all are slaves besides." Compare the notes at 2 Corinthians 3:17.

For of whom a man is overcome … - Or rather "by what (ᾧ hō) anyone is overcome;" that is, "whatever" gets the mastery of him, whether it be avarice, or sensuality, or pride, or any form of error. See the notes at Romans 6:16, where this sentiment is explained.

Verse 20

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world - This does not necessarily mean that they had been true Christians, and had fallen from grace. People may outwardly reform, and escape from the open corruptions which prevail around them, or which they had themselves practiced, and still have no true grace at heart.

Through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesses Christ - Neither does This imply that they were true Christians, or that they had ever had any saving knowledge of the Redeemer. There is a knowledge of the doctrines and duties of religion which may lead sinners to abandon their outward vices, which has no connection with saving grace. They may profess religion, and may Know enough of religion to understand that it requires them to abandon their vicious habits, and still never be true Christians.

They are again entangled therein and overcome - The word rendered "entangled," (ἐμπλέκω emplekōfrom which is derived our word "implicate," means to braid in, to interweave; then to involve in, to entangle. It means here that they become implicated in those vices like an animal that is entangled in a net.

The latter end is worse with them than the beginning - This is usually the case. Apostates become worse than they were before their professed conversion. "Reformed" drunkards, if they go back to their "cups" again, become more abandoned than ever. Thus, it is with those who have been addicted to any habits of vice, and who profess to become religious, and then fall away. The "reasons" for this may be:

(1)that they are willing now to show to others that they are no longer under the restraints by which they had professedly bound themselves;

(2)that God gives them up to indulgence with fewer restraints than formerly; and,

(3)their old companions in sin may be at special pains to court their society, and to lead them into temptation, in order to obtain a triumph over virtue and religion.

Verse 21

For it had been better for them … - Compare the notes at Matthew 26:24. It would have been better for them, for:

(1)then they would not have dishonored the cause of religion as they have now done;

(2)they would not have sunk so deep in profligacy as they now have; and,

(3)they would not have incurred so aggravated a condemnation in the world of woe. If people are resolved on being wicked, they had better never pretend to be good. If they are to be cast off at last, it had better not be as apostates from the cause of virtue and religion.

Verse 22

But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb - The meaning of the proverbs here quoted is, that they have returned to their former vile manner of life. Under all the appearances of reformation, still their evil nature remained, as really as that of the dog or the swine, and that nature finally prevailed. There was no thorough internal change, any more than there is in the swine when it is washed, or in the dog. This passage, therefore, would seem to demonstrate that there never had been any real change of heart, and of course there had been no falling away from true religion. It should not, therefore, he quoted to prove that true Chrisfinns may fall from grace and perish. The dog and the swine had never been anything else than the dog and the swine, and these persons had never been anything else than sinners.

The dog is turned to his own vomit again - That is, to eat it up. The passage would seem to imply, that whatever pains should be taken to change the habits of the dog, he would return to them again. The quotation here is from Proverbs 26:11; "As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a feel returneth to his folly." A similar proverb is found in the Rabbinical writers. Of the truth of the disgusting fact here affirmed of the dog, there can be no doubt. Phaedrus (Fab. 27.) states a fact still more offensive respecting its

habits. In the view of the Orientals, the dog was reckoned among the most vile and disgusting of all animals. Compare Deuteronomy 23:18; 1 Samuel 17:43; 2 Samuel 3:8; 2 Samuel 9:8; 2 Samuel 16:9; Matthew 7:6; Philemon 3:2. See also Horace, II. Epis. 1,26:

Vixisset canis immundus, vel amica luto sus.

On the use of this proverb, see Wetstein, in loc.

And the sow that was washed … - This proverb is not found in the Old Testament, but it was common in the Rabbinical writings, and is found in the Greek classics. See Wetstein, in loc. Its meaning is plain, and of the truth of what is affirmed no one can have any doubt. No matter how clean the swine is made by washing, this would not prevent it, in the slightest degree, from rolling in filth again. It will act out its real nature. So it is with the sinner. No external reformation will certainly prevent his returning to his former habits; and when he does return, we can only say that he is acting according to his real nature - a nature which has never been changed, any more than the nature of the dog or the swine. On the characteristics of the persons referred to in this chapter, 2 Peter 2:9-19, see the introduction, Section 3.

This passage is often quoted to prove "the possibility of falling from grace, and from a very high degree of it too." But it is one of the last passages in the Bible that should be adduced to prove that doctrine. The true point of this passage is to show that the persons referred to never "were changed;" that whatever external reformation might have occurred, their nature remained the same; and that when they apostatized from their outward profession, they merely acted out their nature, and showed that in fact there had been "no" real change. This passage will prove - what there are abundant facts to confirm - that persons may reform externally, and then return again to their former corrupt habits; it can never be made to prove that one true Christian will fall away and perish. It will also prove that we should rely on no mere external reformation, no outward cleansing, as certain evidence of piety. Thousands who have been externally reformed have ultimately shown that they. had no religion, and there is nothing in mere outward reformation that can suit us for heaven. God looks upon the heart; and it is only the religion that has its seat there, that can secure our final salvation.

2 PETER CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

The principal design of this chapter is to demonstrate, in opposition to the objections of scoffers, that the Lord Jesus will return again to this world; that the world will be destroyed by fire, and that there will be a new heaven and a new earth; and to show what effect this should have on the minds of Christians. The chapter, without any very exact arrangement by the author, essentially consists of two parts.

I. The argument of the objectors to the doctrine that the Lord Jesus will return to the world, and that it will be destroyed, 2 Peter 3:1-4. In doing this, the apostle 2 Peter 3:1-2 calls their attention to the importance of attending diligently to the things which had been spoken by the prophets, and to the commands of the apostles, reminding them that it was to be expected that in the last days there would be scoffers who would deride the doctrines of religion, and who would maintain that there was no evidence that what had been predicted would be fulfilled, 2 Peter 3:3. He then 2 Peter 3:4 adverts to the argument on which they professed to rely, that there were no signs or indications that those events were to take place; that there were no natural causes in operation which could lead to such results; and that the fact of the stability of the earth since the time of the creation, demonstarted that the predicted destruction of the world could not occur.

II. The argument of Peter, in reply to this objection; a strong affirmation of the truth of the doctrine that the Lord Jesus will return; that the earth and all which it contains will be burned up; that there will be a new heaven and a new earth; and the effect which the prospect of the coming of the Lord Jesus, and of the destruction of the world by fire, should have on the minds of Christians, 2 Peter 3:5-18.

(1) the arguments of Peter, in reply to the objection from the long-continued stability of the earth, are the following:

(a) He refers to the destruction of the old world by the flood - a fact against which the same objections could have been urged, beforehand, which are urged against the predicted destruction of the world by fire, 2 Peter 3:5-7. With just as much plausibility it might have been urged then

that the earth bad stood for thousands of years, and that there were no natural causes at work to produce that change. It might have been asked where the immense amount of water necessary to drown a world could come from; and perhaps it might have been argued that God was too "good" to destroy a world by a flood. Every objection which could be urged to the destruction of the world by fire, could have been urged to its destruction by water; and as, in fact, those objections, as the event showed, would have had no real force, so they should be regarded as having no real force now.

(b) No argument against this predicted event can be derived from the fact that hundreds and thousands of years are suffered to elapse before the fulfillment of the predictions, 2 Peter 3:8-9. What seems long to men is not long to God. One thousand years with him, in reference to this point, are as one day. He does not measure time as men do. They soon die; and if they cannot execute their purpose in a brief period, they cannot at all. But this cannot apply to God. He has infinite ages in which to execute his purposes, and therefore no argument can be derived from the fact that his purposes are long delayed, to prove that he will not execute them at all.

(c) Peter says (2 Peter 3:15, following) that the delay which was observed in executing the plans of God should not be interpreted as a proof that they would never be accomplished, but as an evidence of his long-suffering and patience; and, in illustration of this, he refers to the writings of Paul, in which he says that the same sentiments were advanced. There were indeed, he says, in those writings, some things which were hard to be understood; but on this point they were plain.

(2) astrong affirmation of the truth of the doctrine, 2 Peter 3:9-10, 2 Peter 3:13. He declares that these events will certainly occur, and that they should be expected to take place suddenly, and without any preintimations of their approach - as the thief comes at night without announcing his coming.

(3) the practical suggestions which Peter intersperses in the argument illustrative of the effect which these considerations should have on the mind are among the most important parts of the chapter:

(1)We should be holy, devout, and serious, 2 Peter 3:11.

(2)we should look forward with deep interest to the new heavens and earth which are to succeed the present, 2 Peter 3:12.

(3)we should be diligent and watchful that we may be found on the return of the Saviour "without spot and blameless," 2 Peter 3:14.

(4)we should be cautious that we be not seduced and led away by the errors which deny these great doctrines, 2 Peter 3:17; and,

(5)We should grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Peter 3:18.

Verse 1

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you - This expression proves that he had written a former epistle, and that it was addressed to the same persons as this. Compare Introduction, Section 3.

In both which I stir up your pure minds … - That is, the main object of both epistles is the same - to call to your remembrance important truths which you have before heard, but which you are in danger of forgetting, or from which you are in danger of being turned away by prevailing errors. Compare the notes at 2 Peter 1:12-15. The word rendered "pure" (εἰλικρινής eilikrinēs) occurs only here and in Philemon 1:10, where it is rendered "sincere." The word properly refers to "that which may be judged of in sunshine;" then it means "clear, manifest;" and then "sincere, pure" - as that in which there is no obscurity. The idea here perhaps is, that their minds were open, frank, candid, sincere, rather than that they were "pure." The apostle regarded them as "disposed" to see the truth, and yet as liable to be led astray by the plausible errors of others. Such minds need to have truths often brought fresh to their remembrance, though they are truths with which they had before been familiar.

Verse 2

That ye may be mindful of the words - Of the doctrines, the truths; the prophetic statements. Jude Jude 1:18 says that it had been foretold by the apostles, that in the last days there would be scoffers. Peter refers to the instructions of the apostles and prophets in general, though evidently designing that his remarks should bear particularly on the fact that there would be scoffers.

Which were spoken before by the holy prophets - The predictions of the prophets before the advent of the Saviour, respecting his character and work. Peter had before appealed to them 2 Peter 1:19-21, as furnishing important evidence in regard to the truth of the Christian religion, and valuable instruction in reference to its nature. See the notes at that passage. Many of the most important doctrines respecting the kingdom of the Messiah are stated as clearly in the Old Testament as in the New Testament (compare Isaiah 53:1-12), and the prophecies therefore deserve to be studied as an important part of divine revelation. It should be added here, however, that when Peter wrote there was this special reason why he referred to the prophets, that the canon of the New Testament was not then completed, and he could not make his appeal to that. To some parts of the writings of Paul he could and did appeal 2 Peter 3:15-16, but probably a very small part of what is now the New Testament was known to those to whom this epistle was addressed.

And of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour - As being equally entitled with the prophets to state and enforce the doctrines and duties of religion. It may be observed, that no man would have used this language who did not regard himself and his fellow apostles as inspired, and as on a level with the prophets.

Verse 3

Knowing this first - As among the first and most important things to be attended to - as one of the predictions which demand your special regard. Jude Jude 1:18 says that the fact that there would be "mockers in the last time," had been particularly foretold by thom. It is probable that Peter refers to the same thing, and we may suppose that this was so well understood by all the apostles that they made it a common subject of preaching.

That there shall come in the last days - In the last dispensation; in the period during which the affairs of the world shall be wound up. The apostle does not say that that was the last time in the sense that the world was about to come to an end; nor is it implied that the period called "the last day" might not be a very long period, longer in fact than either of the previous periods of the world. He says that during that period it had been predicted there would arise those whom he here calls "scoffers." On the meaning of the phrase "in the last days," as used in the Scriptures, see the Acts 2:17 note; Hebrews 1:2 note; Isaiah 2:2 note.

Scoffers - In Jude Jude 1:18 the same Greek word is rendered "mockers." The word means those who deride, reproach, ridicule. There is usually in the word the idea of contempt or malignity toward an object. Here the sense seems to be that they would treat with derision or contempt the predictions respecting the advent of the Saviour, and the end of the world. It would appear probable that there was a particular or definite class of men referred to; a class who would hold special opinions, and who would urge plausible objections against the fulfillment of the predictions respecting the end of the world, and the second coming of the Saviour - for those are the points to which Peter particularly refers. It scarcely required inspiration to foresee that there would be "scoffers" in the general sense of the term - for they have so abounded in every age, that no one would hazard much in saying that they would be found at any particular time; but the eye of the apostle is evidently on a particular class of people, the special form of whose reproaches would be the ridicule of the doctrines that the Lord Jesus would return; that there would be a day of judgment; that the world would be consumed by fire, etc. Tillotson explains this of the Carpocratians, a large sect of the Gnostics, who denied the resurrection of the dead, and the future judgment.

Walking after their own lusts - Living in the free indulgence of their sensual appetites. See the notes at 2 Peter 2:10, 2 Peter 2:12, 2 Peter 2:14, 2 Peter 2:18-19.

Verse 4

And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? - That is, either, Where is the "fulfillment" of that promise; or, Where are the "indications" or "signs" that he will come? They evidently meant to imply that the promise had utterly failed; that there was not the slightest evidence that it would be accomplished; that they who had believed this were entirely deluded. It is possible that some of the early Christians, even in the time of the apostles, had undertaken to fix the time when these events would occur, as many have done since; and that as that time had passed by, they inferred that the prediction had utterly failed. But whether this were so or not, it was easy to allege that the predictions respecting the second coming of the "Saviour" seemed to imply that the end of the world was near, and that there were no indications that they would be fulfilled. The laws of nature were uniform, as they had always been, and the alleged promises had failed.

For since the fathers fell asleep - Since they "died" - death being often, in the Scriptures, as elsewhere, represented as sleep. John 11:11 note; 1 Corinthians 11:30 note. This reference to the "fathers," by such scoffers, was probably designed to be ironical and contemptuous. Perhaps the meaning may be thus expressed: "Those old men, the prophets, indeed foretold this event. They were much concerned and troubled about it; and their predictions alarmed others, and filled their bosoms with dread. They looked out for the signs of the end of the world, and expected that that day was drawing near. But those good men have died. They lived to old age, and then died as others; and since they have departed, the affairs of the world have gone on very much as they did before. The earth is suffered to have rest, and the laws of nature operate in the same way that they always did." It seems not improbable that the immediate reference in the word "fathers" is not to the prophets of former times, but to aged and pious men of the times of the apostles, who had dwelt much on this subject, and who had made it a subject of conversation and of preaching. Those old men, said the seeing objector, have died like others; and, notwithstanding their confident predictions, things now move on as they did from the beginning.

All things continue as they were, from the beginning of the creation - That is, the laws of nature are fixed and settled. The argument here - for it was doubtless designed to be an argument - is based on the stability of the laws of nature, and the uniformity of the course of events. Thus far, all these predictions had failed. Things continued to go on as they had always done. The sun rose and set; the tides ebbed and flowed; the seasons followed each other in the usual order; one generation succeeded another, as had always been the case; and there was every indication that those laws would continue to operate as they had always done. This argument for the stability of the earth, and against the prospect of the fulfillment of the predictions of the Bible, would have more force with many minds now than it had then, for 1,800 years (circa 1880's) more have rolled away, and the laws of nature remain the same. Meantime, the expectations of those who have believed that the world was coming to an end have been disappointed; the time set for this by many interpreters of Scripture has passed by; men have looked out in vain for the coming of the Saviour, and sublunary affairs move on as they always have done. Still there are no indications of the coming of the Saviour; and perhaps it would be said that the farther men search, by the aid of science, into the laws of nature, the more they become impressed with

their stability, and the more firmly they are convinced of the improbability that the world will be destroyed in the manner in which it is predicted in the Scriptures that it will be. The specious and plausible objection arising from this source, the apostle proposes to meet in the following verses.

Verse 5

For this they willingly are ignorant of - Λαιθάνει γὰρ αὐτοὺς τοῦτο θέλοντας Laithanei gar autous touto thelontasThere is some considerable variety in the translation of this passage. In our common version the Greek word (θέλοντας thelontas) is rendered as if it were an adverb, or as if it referred to their "ignorance" in regard to the event; meaning, that while they might have known this fact, they took no pains to do it, or that they preferred to have its recollection far from their minds. So Beza and Luther render it. Others, however, take it as referring to what follows, meaning, "being so minded; being of that opinion; or affirming." So Bloomfield, Robinson (Lexicon), Mede, Rosenmuller, etc. According to this interpretation the sense is, "They who thus will or think; that is, they who hold the opinion that all things will continue to remain as they were, are ignorant of this fact that things have not always thus remained; that there has been a destruction of the world once by water."

The Greek seems rather to demand this interpretation; and then the sense of the passage will be, "It is concealed or hidden from those who hold this opinion, that the earth has been once destroyed." It is implied, whichever interpretation is adopted, that the will was concerned in it; that they were influenced by that rather than by sober judgment and by reason; and whether the word refers to their "ignorance," or to their "holding that opinion," there was obstinacy and perverseness about it. The "will" has usually more to do in the denial and rejection of the doctrines of the Bible than the "understanding" has. The argument which the apostle appeals to in reply to this objection is a simple one. The adversaries of the doctrine affirmed that the laws of nature had always remained the same, and they affirmed that they always would. The apostle denies the fact which they assumed, in the sense in which they affirmed it, and maintains that those laws have not been so stable and uniform that the world has never been destroyed by an overwhelming visitation from God. It has been destroyed by a flood; it may be again by fire. There was the same improbability that the event would occur, so far as the argument from the stability of the laws

of nature is concerned, in the one case that there is in the other, and consequently the objection is of no force.

That by the word of God - By the command of God. "He spoke, and it was done." Compare Genesis 1:6, Genesis 1:9; Psalm 33:9. The idea here is, that everything depends on his word or will. As the heavens and the earth were originally made by his command, so by the same command they can be destroyed.

The heavens were of old - The heavens were formerly made, Genesis 1:1. The word "heaven" in the Scriptures sometimes refers to the atmosphere, sometimes to the starry worlds as they appear above us, and sometimes to the exalted place where God dwells. Here it is used, doubtless, in the popular signification, as denoting the heavens as they "appear," embracing the sun, moon, and stars.

And the earth standing out of the water and in the water - Margin, "consisting." Greek, συνεστῶσα sunestōsaThe Greek word, when used in an intransitive sense, means "to stand with," or "together;" then tropically, "to place together," to constitute, place, bring into existence - Robinson. The idea which our translators seem to have had is, that, in the formation of the earth, a part was out of the water, and a part under the water; and that the former, or the inhabited portion, became entirely submerged, and that thus the inhabitants perished. This was not, however, probably the idea of Peter. He doubtless has reference to the account given in Genesis 1:2, Genesis 1:6-7, Genesis 1:9. There was at first a vast fluid, an immense unformed collection of materials, called "waters," and from that the earth arose. The point of time, therefore, in which Peter looks at the earth here, is not when the mountains, and continents, and islands, seem to be standing partly out of the water and partly in the water, but when there was a vast mass of materials called "waters" from which the earth was formed. The phrase "out of the water" (ἐξ ὕδατος ex hudatos) refers to the origin of the earth. It was formed "from," or out of, that mass. The phrase "in the water" (δὶ ὕδατος di' hudatos) more properly means "through" or "by." It does not mean that the earth stood in the water in the sense that it was partly submerged; but it means not only that the earth arose "from" that mass that is called "water" in Genesis 1, but that that mass called "water" was in fact the grand material out of which the earth was formed. It was "through" or "by means of" that vast mass of mingled elements that the earth was made as it was. Everything arose out of that chaotic mass; through that, or by

means of that, all things were formed, and from the fact that the earth was thus formed out of the water, or that water entered so essentially into its formation, there existed causes which ultimately resulted in the deluge.

Verse 6

Whereby - Δι᾽ ὧν Di'hōnThrough which, or by means of which. The pronoun here is in the plural number, and there has been much difference of opinion as to what it refers. Some suppose that it refers to the heavens mentioned in the preceding verse, and to the fact that the windows of heaven were opened in the deluge (Doddridge), others that the Greek phrase is taken in the sense of (διὸ dio) "whence." Wetstein supposes that it refers to the "heavens and the earth." But the most obvious reference, though the plural number is used, and the word "water" in the antecedent is in the singular, is to "water." The fact seems to be that the apostle had the "waters" mentioned in Genesis prominently in his eye, and meant to describe the effect produced "by" those waters. He has also twice, in the same sentence, referred to "water" - "out of the water and in the water." It is evidently to these "waters" mentioned in Genesis, out of which the world was originally made, that he refers here. The world was formed from that fluid mass; by these waters which existed when the earth was made, and out of which it arose, it was destroyed. The antecedent to the word in the plural number is rather that which was in the mind of the writer, or that of which he was thinking, than the word which he had used.

The world that then was … - Including all its inhabitants. Rosenmuller supposes that the reference here is to some universal catastrophe which occurred before the deluge in the time of Noah, and indeed before the earth was fitted up in its present form, as described by Moses in Hebrews 11:7.

Verse 7

But the heavens and the earth which are now - As they now exist. There is no difficulty here respecting what is meant by the word "earth," but it is not so easy to determine precisely how much is included in the word "heavens." It cannot be supposed to mean "heaven" as the place where God dwells; nor is it necessary to suppose that Peter understood by the word all that would now be implied in it, as used by a modern astronomer. The word is doubtless employed in a popular signification, referring to the "heavens as they appear to the eye;" and the idea is, that the conflagration would not only destroy the earth, but would change the heavens as they now appear to us. If, in fact, the earth with its atmosphere should be subjected to an

universal conflagration, all that is properly implied in what is here said by Peter would occur.

By the same word - Dependent solely on the will of God. He has only to give command, and all will be destroyed. The laws of nature have no stability independent of his will, and at his pleasure all things could be reduced to nothing, as easily as they were made. A single word, a breath of command, from one Being, a Being over whom we have no control, would spread universal desolation through the heavens and the earth. Notwithstanding the laws of nature, as they are called, and the precision, uniformity, and power with which they operate, the dependence of the universe on the Creator is as entire as though there were no such laws, and as though all were conducted by the mere will of the Most High, irrespective of such laws. In fact, those laws have no efficiency of their own, but are a mere statement of the way in which God produces the changes which occur, the methods by which He operates who "works all in all." At any moment he could suspend them; that is, he could cease to act, or withdraw his efficiency, and the universe would cease to be.

Are kept in store - Greek, "Are treasured up." The allusion in the Greek word is to anything that is treasured up, or reserved for future use. The apostle does not say that this is the only purpose for which the heavens and the earth are preserved, but that this is one object, or this is one aspect in which the subject may be viewed. They are like treasure reserved for future use.

Reserved unto fire - Reserved or kept to be burned up. See the notes at 2 Peter 3:10. The first mode of destroying the world was by water, the next will be by fire. That the world would at some period be destroyed by fire was a common opinion among the ancient philosophers, especially the Greek Stoics. What was the foundation of that opinion, or whence it was derived, it is impossible now to determine; but it is remarkable that it should have accorded so entirely with the statements of the New Testament. The authorities in proof that this opinion was entertained may be seen in Wetstein, in loc. See Seneca, N. Q. iii. 28; Cic. N. D. ii. 46; Simplicius in Arist. de Coelo i. 9; Eusebius, P. xv. 18. It is quite remarkable that there have been among the pagan in ancient and modern times so many opinions that accord with the statements of revelation - opinions, many of them, which could not have been founded on any investigations of science among them, and which must, therefore, have been either the result of conjecture,

or handed down by tradition. Whatever may have been their origin, the fact that such opinions prevailed and were believed, may be allowed to have some weight in showing that the statements in the Bible are not improbable.

Against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men - The world was destroyed by a flood on account of the wickedness of its inhabitants. It would seem from this passage that it will be destroyed by fire with reference to the same cause; at least, that its destruction by fire will involve the perdition of wicked men. It cannot be inferred from this passage that the world will be as wicked at the general conflagration as it was in the time of Noah; but the idea in the mind of Peter seems to have been, that in the destruction of the world by fire the perdition of the wicked will be involved, or will at that time occur. It also seems to be implied that the fire will accomplish an important agency in that destruction, as the water did on the old world. It is not said, in the passage before us, whether those to be destroyed will be living at that time, or will be raised up from the dead, nor have we any means of determining what was the idea of Peter on that point. All that the passage essentially teaches is, that the world is reserved now with reference to such a consummation by fire; that is, that there are elements kept in store that may be enkindled into an universal conflagration, and that such a conflagration will be attended with the destruction of the wicked.

Verse 8

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years - This 2 Peter 3:8-9 is the second consideration by which the apostle meets the objection of scoffers against the doctrine of the second coming of the Saviour. The objection was, that much time, and perhaps the time which had been supposed to be set for his coming, had passed away, and still all things remained as they were. The reply of the apostle is, that no argument could be drawn from this, for that which may seem to be a long time to us is a brief period with God. In the infinity of his own duration there is abundant time to accomplish his designs, and it can make no difference with him whether they are accomplished in one day or extended to one thousand years. Man has but a short time to live, and if he does not accomplish his purposes in a very brief period, he never will. But it is not so with God. He always lives; and we cannot therefore infer, because the execution of His purposes seems to be delayed, that they are abandoned. With Him who always lives it will be as

easy to accomplish them at a far distant period as now. If it is His pleasure to accomplish them in a single day, He can do it; if He chooses that the execution shall be deferred to one thousand years, or that one thousand years shall be consumed in executing them, He has power to carry them onward through what seems, to us, to be so vast a duration. The wicked, therefore, cannot infer that they will escape because their punishment is delayed; nor should the righteous fear that the divine promises will fail because ages pass away before they are accomplished. The expression here used, that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, etc.," is common in the Rabbinical writings. See Wetstein in loc. A similar thought occurs in Psalm 90:4; "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."

Verse 9

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise - That is, it should not be inferred because His promise seems to be long delayed that therefore it will fail. When people, after a considerable lapse of time, fail to fulfil their engagements, we infer that it is because they have changed their plans, or because they have forgotten their promises, or because they have no ability to perform them, or because there is a lack of principle which makes them fail, regardless of their obligations. But no such inference can be drawn from the apparent delay of the fulfillment of the divine purposes. Whatever may be the reasons why they seem to be deferred, with God, we may be sure that it is from no such causes as these.

As some men count slackness - It is probable that the apostle here had his eye on some professing Christians who had become disheartened and impatient, and who, from the delay in regard to the coming of the Lord Jesus, and from the representations of those who denied the truth of the Christian religion, arguing from that delay that it was false, began to fear that his promised coming would indeed never occur. To such he says that it should not be inferred from his delay that he would not return, but that the delay should be regarded as an evidence of his desire that men should have space for repentance, and an opportunity to secure their salvation. See the notes at 2 Peter 3:15.

But is long-suffering to us-ward - Toward us. The delay should be regarded as a proof of His forbearance, and of His desire that all human beings should be saved. Every sinner should consider the fact that he is not cut down in his sins, not as a proof that God will not punish the wicked, but

as a demonstration that He is now forbearing, and is willing that he should have an ample opportunity to obtain eternal life. No one should infer that God will not execute His threats, unless he can look into the most distant parts of a coming eternity, and demonstrate that there is no suffering appointed for the sinner there; anyone who sins, and who is spared even for a moment, should regard the respite as only a proof that God is merciful and forbearing now.

Not willing that any should perish - That is, He does not desire it or wish it. His nature is benevolent, and He sincerely desires the eternal happiness of all, and His patience toward sinners "proves" that He is willing that they should be saved. If He were not willing, it would be easy for Him to cut them off, and exclude them from hope immediately. This passage, however, should not be adduced to prove:

(1) that sinners never will in fact perish; because:

(a) the passage does not refer to what God will do as the final Judge of mankind, but to what are His feelings and desires now toward men.

(b) One may have a sincere desire that others should not perish, and yet it may be that, in entire consistency with that, they will perish. A parent has a sincere wish that his children should not be punished, and yet he himself may be under a moral necessity to punish them. A lawgiver may have a sincere wish that no one should ever break the laws, or be punished, and yet he himself may build a prison, and construct a gallows, and cause the law to be executed in a most rigorous manner. A judge on the bench may have a sincere desire that no man should be executed, and that everyone arraigned before him should be found to be innocent, and yet even he, in entire accordance with that wish, and with a most benevolent heart, even with tears in his eyes, may pronounce the sentence of the law.

(c) It cannot be inferred that all that the heart of infinite benevolence would desire will be accomplished by his mere will. It is evidently as much in accordance with the benevolence of God that no one should be miserable in this world, as it is that no one should suffer in the next, since the difficulty is not in the question Where one shall suffer, but in the fact itself that any should suffer; and it is just as much in accordance with His nature that all should be happy here, as that they should be happy hereafter. And yet no man can maintain that the fact that God is benevolent proves that no

one will suffer here. As little will that fact prove that none will suffer in the world to come.

(2) the passage should not be adduced to prove that God has no purpose, and has formed no plan, in regard to the destruction of the wicked; because:

(a)the word here used has reference rather to His disposition, or to His nature, than to any act or plan.

(b)There is a sense, as is admitted by all, in which He does will the destruction of the wicked - to wit, if they do not repent - that is, if they deserve it.

(c)Such an act is as inconsistent with His general benevolence as an eternal purpose in the matter, since His eternal purpose can only have been to do what He actually does; and if it be consistent with a sincere desire that sinners should be saved to do this, then it is consistent to determine beforehand to do it - for to determine beforehand to do what is in fact right, can only be a lovely trait in the character of anyone.

(3) The passage then proves:

(a)that God has a sincere desire that people should be saved;

(b)that any purpose in regard to the destruction of sinners is not founded on mere will, or is not arbitrary;

(c)that it would be agreeable to the nature of God, and to His arrangements in the plan of salvation, if all human beings should come to repentance, and accept the offers of mercy;

(d)that if any come to Him truly penitent, and desirous to be saved, they will not be cast off;

(e)that, since it is in accordance with His nature, that He should desire that all people may be saved, it may be presumed that He has made an arrangement by which it is possible that they should be; and,

(f)that, since this is His desire, it is proper for the ministers of religion to offer salvation to every human being. Compare Ezekiel 33:11.

Verse 10

But the day of the Lord - The day of the Lord Jesus. That is, the day in which he will be manifested. It is called his day, because he will then be the grand and prominent object as the Judge of all. Compare Luke 17:27.

Will come as a thief in the night - Unexpectedly; suddenly. See the notes at 1 Thessalonians 5:2.

In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise - That is, what seems to us to be the heavens. It cannot mean that the holy home where God dwells will pass away; nor do we need to suppose that this declaration extends to the starry worlds and systems as disclosed by modern astronomy. The word is doubtless used in a popular sense - that is, as things appear to us; and the fair interpretation of the passage would demand only such a change as would occur by the destruction of this world by fire. If a conflagration should take place, embracing the earth and its surrounding atmosphere, all the phenomena would occur which are here described; and, if this would be so, then this is all that can be proved to be meant by the passage. Such a destruction of the elements could not occur without "a great noise."

And the elements shall melt with fervent heat - Greek: "the elements being burned, or burning, (καυσούμενα kausoumenashall be dissolved." The idea is, that the cause of their being "dissolved" shall be fire; or that there will be a conflagration extending to what are here called the "elements," that shall produce the effects here described by the word "dissolved." There has been much difference of opinion in regard to the meaning of the word here rendered "elements," (στοιχεῖα stoicheiaThe word occurs in the New Testament only in the following places: Galatians 4:3, Galatians 4:9; 2 Peter 3:10, 2 Peter 3:12, in which it is rendered "elements;" Colossians 2:8, Colossians 2:20, in which it is rendered "rudiments;" and in Hebrews 5:12, where it is rendered "principles." For the general meaning of the word, see the notes at Galatians 4:3. The word denotes the "rudiments" of anything; the minute parts or portions of which anything is composed, or which constitutes the simple portions out of which anything grows, or of which it is compounded.

Here it would properly denote the component parts of the material world; or those which enter into its composition, and of which it is made up. It is not to be supposed that the apostle used the term with the same exact signification with which a chemist would use it now, but in accordance with the popular use of the term in his day. In all ages, and in all

languages, some such word, with more or less scientific accuracy, has been employed to denote the primary materials out of which others were formed, just as, in most languages, there have been characters or letters to denote the elementary sounds of which language is composed. In general, the ancients supposed that the elements out of which all things were formed were four in number - air, earth, fire, and water. Modern science has overturned this theory completely, and has shown that these, so far from being simple elements, are themselves compounds; but the tendency of modern science is still to show that the elements of all things are in fact few in number.

The word, as used here by Peter, would refer to the elements of things as then understood in a popular sense; it would now not be an improper word to be applied to the few elements of which all things are composed, as disclosed by modern chemistry. In either case, the use of the word would be correct. Whether applied to the one or the other, science has shown that all are capable of combustion. Water, in its component parts, is inflammable in a high degree; and even the diamond has been shown to be combustible. The idea contained in the word "dissolved," is, properly, only the change which heat produces. Heat changes the forms of things; dissolves them into their elements; dissipates those which were solid by driving them off into gases, and produces new compounds, but it annihilates nothing. It could not be demonstrated from this phrase that the world would be annihilated by fire; it could be proved only that it will undergo important changes. So far as the action of fire is concerned, the form of the earth may pass away, and its aspect be changed; but unless the direct power which created it interposes to annihilate it, the matter which now composes it will still be in existence.

The earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up - That is, whether they are the works of God or man - the whole vegetable and animal creation, and all the towers, the towns, the palaces, the productions of genius, the paintings, the statuary, the books, which man has made:

"The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
And all that it inherits, shall dissolve,

And, like the baseless fabric of a vision,

Leave not one wreck behind."

The word rendered "burned up," like the word just before used and rendered "fervent heat" - a word of the same origin, but here intensive - means that they will undergo such a change as fire will produce; not, necessarily, that the matter composing them will be annihilated. If the matter composing the earth is ever to be destroyed entirely, it must be by the immediate power of God, because only He who created can destroy. There is not the least evidence that a particle of matter originally made has been annihilated since the world began; and there are no fires so intense, no chemical powers so mighty, as to cause a particle of matter to cease wholly to exist. So far as the power of man is concerned, and so far as one portion of matter can prey on another, matter is as imperishable as mind, and neither can be destroyed unless God destroys it. Whether it is His purpose to annihilate any portion of the matter which He has made, does not appear from His Word; but it is clear that He intends that the universe shall undergo important changes. As to the possibility or probability of such a destruction by fire as is predicted here, no one can have any doubt who is acquainted with the disclosures of modern science in regard to the internal structure of the earth.

Even the ancient philosophers, from some cause, supposed that the earth would still be destroyed by fire (see my notes at 2 Peter 3:7), and modern science has made it probable that the interior of the earth is a melted and intensely-heated mass of burning materials; that the habitable world is only a comparatively thin crust (shell) over those internal fires; that earthquakes are caused by the vapors engendered by that heated mass when water comes in contact with it; and that volcanoes are only openings and vent-holes through which those internal flames make their way to the surface. Whether these fires will everywhere make their way to the surface, and produce an universal conflagration, perhaps could not be determined by science, but no one can doubt that the simple command of God would be all that is necessary to pour those burning floods over the earth, just as He once caused the waters to roll over every mountain and through every valley.

As to the question whether it is probable that such a change will be produced by fire, bringing the present order of things to a close, it may be further remarked that there is reason to believe that such changes are in fact taking place in other worlds. "During the last two or three centuries,

upwards of thirteen fixed stars have disappeared. One of them, situated in the northern hemisphere, presented a special brilliancy, and was so bright as to be seen by the naked eye at mid-day. It seemed to be on fire, appearing at first of a dazzling white, then of a reddish yellow, and lastly of an ashy pale color. LaPlace supposes that it was burned up, as it has never been seen since. The conflagration was visible about sixteen months." The well-known astronomer, Von Littrow, in the section of his work on "New and Missing Stars" (entitled, Die Wunder der Himmels oder Gemeinfassliche Darstellung der Weltsystems, Stuttgart, 1843, Section 227), observes: "Great as may be the revolutions which take place on the surface of those fixed stars, which are subject to this alternation of light, what entirely different changes may those others have experienced, which in regions of the firmament where no star had ever been before, appeared to blaze up in clear flames, and then to disappear, perhaps forever."

He then gives a brief history of those stars which have excited the particular attention of astronomers. "In the year 1572, on the 11th of November," says he, "Tycho, on passing from his chemical laboratory to the observatory, through the court of his house, observed in the constellation Cassiopeia, at a place where before he had only seen very small stars, a new star of uncommon magnitude. It was so bright that it surpassed even Jupiter and Venus in splendor, and was visible even in the daytime. During the whole time in which it was visible, Tycho could observe no parallax or change of position. At the end of the year, however, it gradually diminished; and at length, in March 1574, sixteen months after its discovery, entirely disappeared, since which all traces of it have been lost. When it first appeared, its light was of a dazzling white color; in January 1573, two months after its reviving, it became yellowish; in a few months it assumed a reddish hue, like Mars or Aldebaran; and in the beginning of the year 1574, two or three months before its total disappearance, it glimmered only with a gray or lead-colored light, similar to that of Saturn." See *Bibliotheca Sacra*, III., p. 181. If such things occur in other worlds, there is nothing improbable or absurd in the supposition that they may yet occur on the earth.

Verse 11

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved - Since this is an undoubted truth.

What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness - In holy conduct and piety. That is, this fact ought to be allowed to exert a deep and abiding influence on us, to induce us to lead holy lives. We should feel that there is nothing permanent on the earth that this is not our abiding home; and that our great interests are in another world. We should be serious, humble, and prayerful; and should make it our great object to be prepared for the solemn scenes through which we are soon to pass. An habitual contemplation of the truth, that all that we see is soon to pass away, would produce a most salutary effect on the mind. It would make us serious. It would repress ambition. It would lead us not to desire to accumulate what must so soon be destroyed. It would prompt us to lay up our treasures in heaven. It would cause us to ask with deep earnestness whether we are prepared for these amazing scenes, should they suddenly burst upon us.

Verse 12

Looking for - Not knowing when this may occur, the mind should be in that state which constitutes "expectation;" that is, a belief that it will occur, and a condition of mind in which we would not be taken by surprise should it happen at any moment. See the notes at Titus 2:13.

And hasting unto the coming - Margin, as in Greek: ""hasting the coming."" The Greek word rendered "hasting," (σπεύδω speudōmeans to urge on, to hasten; and then to hasten after anything, to await with eager desire. This is evidently the sense here - Wetstein and Robinson. The state of mind which is indicated by the word is that when we are anxiously desirous that anything should occur, and when we would hasten or accelerate it if we could. The true Christian does not dread the coming of that day. He looks forward to it as the period of his redemption, and would welcome, at any time, the return of his Lord and Saviour. While he is willing to wait as long as it shall please God for the advent of His Redeemer, yet to Him the brightest prospect in the future is that hour when he shall come to take him to Himself.

The coming of the day of God - Called "the day of God," because God will then be manifested in his power and glory.

Verse 13

Nevertheless we, according to his promise - The allusion here seems to be, beyond a doubt, to two passages in Isaiah, in which a promise of this kind is found. Isaiah 65:17; "for, behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Isaiah 66:22; "for as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord," etc. Compare Revelation 21:1, where John says he had a vision of the new heaven and the new earth which was promised: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea." See the notes at Isaiah 65:17.

Look for new heavens and a new earth - It may not be easy to answer many of the questions which might be asked respecting the "new heaven and earth" here mentioned. One of those which are most naturally asked is, whether the apostle meant to say that this earth, after being purified by fire, would be suited again for the home of the redeemed; but this question it is impossible to answer with certainty. The following remarks may perhaps embrace all that is known, or that can be shown to be probable, on the meaning of the passage before us.

I. The "new heavens and the new earth" referred to will be such as will exist after the world shall have been destroyed by fire; that is, after the general judgment. There is not a word expressed, and not a hint given, of any "new heaven and earth" previous to this, in which the Saviour will reign personally over his saints, in such a renovated world, through a long millennial period. The order of events, as stated by Peter, is:

(a)that the heavens and earth which are now, are "kept in store, reserved unto fire "against the day of judgment," and perdition of ungodly men," 2 Peter 3:7;

(b)that the day of the Lord will come suddenly and unexpectedly, 2 Peter 3:10; that then the heavens and earth will pass away with a great noise, the elements will melt, and the earth with all its works be burned up, 2 Peter 3:10; and,

(c)that after this 2 Peter 3:13 we are to expect the "new heavens and new earth."

Nothing is said of a personal reign of Christ; nothing of the resurrection of the saints to dwell with him on the earth; nothing of the world's being fitted up for their home previous to the final judgment. If Peter had any

knowledge of such events, and believed that they would occur, it is remarkable that he did not even allude to them here. The passage before us is one of the very few places in the New Testament where allusion is made to the manner in which the affairs of the world will be closed; and it cannot be explained why, if he looked for such a glorious personal reign of the Saviour, the subject should have been passed over in total silence.

II. The word "new," applied to the heavens and the earth that are to succeed the present, might express one of the following three things - that is, either of these things would correspond with all that is fairly implied in that word:

(a) If a new world was literally created out of nothing after this world is destroyed; for that would be in the strictest sense "new." That such an event is possible no one can doubt, though it is not revealed.

(b) If an inhabitant of the earth should dwell after death In any other of the worlds now existing, it would be to him a "new" abode, and everything would appear new. Let him, for instance, be removed to the planet "Saturn," with its wonderful ring, and its seven moons, and the whole aspect of the heavens, and of the world on which he would then dwell, would be new to him. The same thing would occur if he were to dwell on any other of the heavenly bodies, or if he were to pass from world to world. See this illustrated at length in the works of Thomas Dick, LL. D. - "Celestial Scenery," etc. Compare the notes at 1 Peter 1:12.

(c) If the earth should be renovated, and suited for the home of man after the universal conflagration, it would then be a new abode.

III. This world, thus renovated, may be, from time to time, the temporary abode of the redeemed, after the final judgment. No one can prove that this may not be, though there is no evidence that it will be their permanent and eternal home or that even all the redeemed will at any one time find a home on this globe, for no one can suppose that the earth is spacious enough to furnish a dwelling-place for all the unnumbered millions that are to be saved. But that the earth may again be revisited from time to time by the redeemed; that in a purified and renovated form it may be one of the "many mansions" which are to be fitted up for them John 14:2, may not appear wholly improbable from the following suggestions:

(1) It seems to have been a law of the earth that in its progress it should be "prepared" at one period for the dwelling-place of a higher order of

beings at another period. Thus, according to the disclosures of geology, it existed perhaps for countless ages before it was fitted to be an abode for man; and that it was occupied by the monsters of an inferior order of existence, who have now passed away to make room for a nobler race. Who can tell but the present order of thing may pass away to make place for the manifestations of a more exalted mode of being?

(2) there is no certain evidence that any world has been annihilated, though some have disappeared from human view. Indeed, as observed above, (see the notes at 2 Peter 3:10) there is no proof that a single particle of matter ever has been annihilated, or ever will be. It may change its form, but it may still exist.

(3) it seems also to accord most with probability, that, though the earth may undergo important changes by flood or fire, it will not be annihilated. It seems difficult to suppose that, as a world, it will be wholly displaced from the system of which it is now a part, or that the system itself will disappear. The earth, as one of the worlds of God, has occupied too important a position in the history of the universe to make it to be easily believed that the place where the Son of God became incarnate and died, shall be utterly swept away It would, certainly, accord more with all the feelings which we can have on such a subject, to suppose that a world once so beautiful when it came from the hand of its Maker. should be restored to primitive loveliness; that a world which seems to have been made primarily (see the notes at 1 Peter 1:12) with a view to illustrate the glory of God in redemption, should be preserved in some appropriate form to be the theater of the exhibition of the developement of that plan in far distant ages to come.

(4) to the redeemed, it would be most interesting again to visit the spot where the great work of their redemption was accomplished; where the Son of God became incarnate and made atonement for sin; and where there would be so many interesting recollections and associations, even after the purification by fire, connected with the infancy of their existence, and their preparation for eternity. Piety would at least “wish” that the world where Gethsemane and Calvary are should never be blotted out from the universe.

(5) however, if, after their resurrection and reception into heaven, the redeemed shall ever revisit a world so full of interesting recollections and associations, where they began their being, where their Redeemer lived and died, where they were renewed and sanctified, and where their bodies once rested in the grave, there is no reason to suppose that this will be their permanent and unchanging home. It may be mere speculation, but it seems to accord best with the goodness of God, and with the manner in which the universe is made, to suppose that every portion of it may be visited, and become successively the home of the redeemed; that they may pass from world to world, and survey the wonders and the works of God as they are displayed in different worlds. The universe, so vast, seems to have been suited for such a purpose, and nothing else that we can conceive of will be so adapted to give employment without weariness to the minds that God has made, in the interminable duration before them.

IV. The new heavens and earth will be "holy." They will be the home of righteousness forever.

(a) This fact is clearly revealed in the verse before us; "wherein dwelleth righteousness." It is also the correct statement of the Scriptures, Revelation 21:27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Hebrews 12:14.

(b) This will be in strong contrast with what has occurred on earth, The history of this world has been almost entirely a history of sin - of its nature, developements, results. There have been no perfectly holy beings on the earth, except the Saviour, and the angels who have occasionally visited it. There has been no perfectly holy place - city, village, hamlet; no perfectly holy community. But the future world, in strong contrast with this, will be perfectly pure, and will be a fair illustration of what religion in its perfect form will do.

(c) It is for this that the Christian desires to dwell in that world, and waits for the coming of his Saviour. It is not primarily that he may be happy, desirable as that is, but that he may be in a world where he himself will be perfectly pure, and where all around him will be pure; where every being that he meets shall be "holy as God is holy," and every place on which his eye rests, or his foot treads, shall be uncontaminated by sin. To the eye of faith and hope, how blessed is the prospect of such a world!

Verse 14

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent - That is, in securing your salvation. The effect of such hopes and prospects should be to lead us to an earnest inquiry whether we are prepared to dwell in a holy world, and to make us diligent in performing the duties, and patient in bearing the trials of life. He who has such hopes set before him, should seek earnestly that he may be enabled truly to avail himself of them, and should make their attainment the great object of his life. He who is so soon to come to an end of all weary toil, should be willing to labor diligently and faithfully while life lasts. He who is so soon to be relieved from all temptation and trial, should he willing to bear a little longer the sorrows of the present world. What are all these compared with the glory that awaits us? Compare the 1 Corinthians 15:58 note; Romans 8:18 note, following; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 notes.

That ye may be found of him in peace - Found by him when he returns in such a state as to secure your eternal peace.

Without spot, and blameless - See the notes at Ephesians 5:27. It should be an object of earnest effort with us to have the last stain of sin and pollution removed from our souls. A deep feeling that we are soon to stand in the presence of a holy God, our final Judge, cannot but have a happy influence in making us pure.

Verse 15

And account - that "the long-suffering of our Lord" is "salvation." Regard his delay in coming to judge the world, not as an evidence that he never will come, but as a proof of his desire that we should be saved. Many had drawn a different inference from the fact that the Saviour did not return, and had supposed that it was a proof that he would never come, and that his promises had failed. Peter says that that conclusion was not authorized, but that we should rather regard it as an evidence of his mercy, and of his desire that we should be saved. This conclusion is as proper now as it was then. Wicked men should not infer, because God does not cut them down, that therefore they never will be punished, or that God is not faithful to his threatenings. They should rather regard it as a proof that he is willing to save them; because:

(1)He might justly cut them off for their sins;

(2)the only reason of which we have knowledge why he spares the wicked is to give them space for repentance; and,

(3)as long as life is prolonged a sinner has the opportunity to repent, and may turn to God. We may therefore, in our own case, look on all the delays of God to punish - on all his patience and forbearance toward us, notwithstanding our sins and provocations - on the numberless tokens of his kindness scattered along our way, as evidence that he is not willing that we should perish.

What an accumulated argument in any case would this afford of the willingness of God to save! Let any man look on his own sins, his pride, and selfishness, and sensuality; let him contemplate the fact that he has sinned through many years, and against many mercies; let him endeavor to estimate the number and magnitude of his offences, and upon God‘s patience in bearing with him while these have been committed, and who can overrate the force of such an argument in proof that God is slow to anger, and is willing to save? Compare the notes at Romans 2:4.

Even as our beloved brother Paul also - From this reference to Paul the following things are clear:

(1)that Peter was acquainted with his writings;

(2)that Peter presumed that those to whom he wrote were also acquainted with them;

(3)that Peter regarded Paul as a “beloved brother,” notwithstanding the solemn rebuke which Paul had had occasion to administer to him, Galatians 2:2 ff.

(4)that Peter regarded Paul as an authority in inculcating the doctrines and duties of religion; and,

(5)that Peter regarded Paul as an inspired man, and his writings as a part of divine truth. See the notes at 2 Peter 3:16.

That Peter has shown in his Epistles that he was acquainted with the writings of Paul, has been abundantly proved by Eichhorn (Einleitung in das N. Tes. viii. 606ff), and will be apparent by a comparison of the following passages: Ephesians 1:3, with 1 Peter 3:1; Colossians 3:8, with 1 Peter 2:1; Ephesians 5:22, with 1 Peter 3:1; Ephesians 5:21, with 1 Peter 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:6, with 1 Peter 5:8; 1 Corinthians 16:20, with 1 Peter 5:14; Romans 8:18, with 1 Peter 5:1; Romans 4:24, with 1 Peter 1:21; Romans 13:1, Romans 13:3-4, with 1 Peter 2:13-14; 1 Timothy 2:9, with 1

Peter 3:3; 1 Timothy 5:5, with 1 Peter 3:5. The writings of the apostles were doubtless extensively circulated; and one apostle, though himself inspired, could not but feel a deep interest in the writings of another. There would be cases also, as in the instance before us, in which one would wish to confirm his own sentiments by the acknowledged wisdom, experience, and authority of another.

According to the wisdom given unto him - Peter evidently did not mean to disparage that wisdom, or to express a doubt that Paul was endowed with wisdom; he meant undoubtedly that, in regard to Paul, the same thing was true which he would have affirmed of himself or of any other man, that whatever wisdom he had was to be traced to a higher than human origin. This would at the same time tend to secure more respect for the opinion of Paul than if he had said it was his own, and would keep up in the minds of those to whom he wrote a sense of the truth that all wisdom is from above. In reference to ourselves, to our friends, to our teachers, and to all men, it is proper to bear in remembrance the fact that all true wisdom is from the "Father of lights." Compare the notes at James 1:5, James 1:17.

Hath written unto you - It is not necessary to suppose that Paul had written any epistles addressed specifically, and by name, to the persons to whom Peter wrote. It is rather to be supposed that the persons to whom Peter wrote 1 Peter 1:1 lived in the regions to which some of Paul's epistles were addressed, and that they might be regarded as addressed to them. The epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians were of this description, all addressed to churches in Asia Minor, and all, therefore, having reference to the same people to whom Peter addressed his epistles.

Verse 16

As also in all his epistles - Not only in those which he addressed to the churches in Asia Minor, but in his epistles generally. It is to be presumed that they might have had an acquaintance with some of the other epistles of Paul, as well as those sent to the churches in their immediate vicinity.

Speaking in them of these things - The things which Peter had dwelt upon in his two epistles. The great doctrines of the cross; of the depravity of man; of the divine purposes; of the new birth; of the consummation of all things; of the return of the Saviour to judge the world, and to receive his people to himself; the duty of a serious, devout and prayerful life, and of being prepared for the heavenly world. These things are constantly dwelt

upon by Paul, and to his authority in these respects Peter might appeal with the utmost confidence.

In which - The common reading in this passage is ἐν οἷς en hoisand according to this the reference is to the "subjects" treated of - "in which things" - referring to what he had just spoken of - "speaking of these things." This reading is found in the common editions of the New Testament, and is supported by far the greater number of mss., and by most commentators and critics. It is found in Griesbach, Tittman, and Hahn, and has every evidence of being the genuine reading. Another reading, however, (ἐν αἷς en haisis found in some valuable mss., and is supported by the Syriac and Arabic versions, and adopted by Mill (Prolegomena 1484), and by Beza. According to this, the reference is to the "epistles" themselves - as would seem to be implied in our common version. The true construction, so far as the evidence goes, is to refer it not directly to the "epistles," but to the "things" of which Peter says Paul wrote; that is, not to the style and language of Paul, but to the great truths and doctrines which he taught. Those doctrines were indeed contained in his epistles, but still, according to the fair construction of the passage before us, Peter should not be understood as accusing Paul of obscurity of style. He refers not to the difficulty of understanding what Paul meant, but to the difficulty of comprehending the great truths which he taught. This is, generally, the greatest difficulty in regard to the statements of Paul. The difficulty is not that the meaning of the writer is not plain, but it is either:

(a)that the mind is overpowered by the grandeur of the thought, and the incomprehensible nature of the theme, or

(b)that the truth is so unpalatable, and the mind is so prejudiced against it, that we are unwilling to receive it.

Many a man knows well enough what Paul means, and would receive his doctrines without hesitation if the heart was not opposed to it; and in this state of mind Paul is charged with obscurity, when the real difficulty lies only in the heart of him who makes the complaint. If this be the true interpretation of this passage, then it should not be adduced to prove that Paul is an obscure writer, whatever may be true on that point. There are, undoubtedly, obscure things in his writings, as there are in all other ancient compositions, but this passage should not be adduced to prove that he had not the faculty of making himself understood. An honest heart, a willingness to receive the truth, is one of the best qualifications for

understanding the writings of Paul; and when this exists, no one will fail to find truth that may be comprehended, and that will be eminently adapted to sanctify and save the soul.

Are some things hard to be understood - Things pertaining to high and difficult subjects, and which are not easy to be comprehended. Peter does not call in question the truth of what Paul had written; he does not intimate that he himself would differ from him His language is rather that which a man would use who regarded the writings to which he referred as true, and what he says here is an honorable testimony to the authority of Paul. It may be added,

(1) that Peter does not say that all the doctrines of the Bible, or even all the doctrines of Paul, are hard to be understood, or that nothing is plain.

(2) he says nothing about withholding the Bible, or even the writings of Paul, from the mass of Christians, on the ground of the difficulty of understanding the Scriptures; nor does he intimate that that was the design of the Author of the Bible.

(3) it is perfectly manifest, from this very passage, that the writings of Paul were in fact in the hands of the people, else how could they wrest and pervert them?

(4) Peter says nothing about an infallible interpreter of any kind, nor does he intimate that either he or his "successors" were authorized to interpret them for the church.

(5) with what propriety can the pretended successor of Peter - the pope - undertake to expound those difficult doctrines in the writings of Paul, when even Peter himself did not undertake it, and when he did not profess to be able to comprehend them? Is the Pope more skilled in the knowledge of divine things than the apostle Peter? Is he better qualified to interpret the sacred writings than an inspired apostle was?

(6) those portions of the writings of Paul, for anything that appears to the contrary, are just as "hard to be understood" now, as they were before the "infallible" church undertook to explain them. The world is Little indebted to any claims of infallibility in explaining the meaning of the

oracles of God. It remains yet to be seen that any portion of the Bible has been made clearer by "any" mere authoritative explanation. And,

(7) it should be added, that without any such exposition, the humble inquirer after truth may find enough in the Bible to guide his feet in the paths of salvation. No one ever approached the sacred Scriptures with a teachable heart, who did not find them "able to make him wise unto salvation." Compare the notes at 2 Timothy 3:15.

Which they that are unlearned - The evil here adverted to is that which arises in cases where those without competent knowledge undertake to become expounders of the word of God. It is not said that it is not proper for them to attempt to become instructed by the aid of the sacred writings; but the danger is, that without proper views of interpretation, of language, and of ancient customs, they might be in danger of perverting and abusing certain portions of the writings of Paul. Intelligence among the people is everywhere in the Bible presumed to be proper in understanding the sacred Scriptures; and ignorance may produce the same effects in interpreting the Bible which it will produce in interpreting other writings. Every good thing is liable to abuse; but the proper way to correct this evil, and to remove this danger, is not to keep the people in ignorance, or to appoint some one to be an infallible interpreter; it is to remove the ignorance itself by enlightening the people, and rendering them better qualified to understand the sacred oracles. The way to remove error is not to perpetuate ignorance it is to enlighten the mind, so that it may be qualified to appreciate the truth.

And unstable - Who have no settled principles and views. The evil here adverted to is that which arises where those undertake to interpret the Bible who have no established principles. They regard nothing as settled. They have no landmarks set up to guide their inquiries. They have no stability in their character, and of course nothing can be regarded as settled in their methods of interpreting the Bible. They are under the control of feeling and emotion, and are liable to embrace one opinion to-day, and another directly opposite to-morrow. But the way to prevent This evil is not by attempting to give to a community an authoritative interpretation of the Bible; it is to diffuse abroad just principles, that men may obtain from the Bible an intelligent view of what it means.

Wrest - Pervert - στρεβλοῦσιν streblousinThe word here used occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is derived from a word meaning a

windlass, winch, instrument of torture στρεβλή *streblē* and means to roll or wind on a windlass; then to wrench, or turn away, as by the force of a windlass; and then to wrest or pervert. It implies a turning out of the way by the application of force. Here the meaning is, that they apply those portions of the Bible to a purpose for which they were never intended. It is doubtless true that this may occur. Men may abuse and pervert anything that is good. But the way to prevent this is not to set up a pretended infallible interpreter. With all the perversities arising from ignorance in the interpretation of the Bible; in all the crude, and weak, and fanciful expositions which could be found among those who have interpreted the Scriptures for themselves - and they are many - if they were all collected together, there would not be found so many adapted to corrupt and ruin the soul, as have come from the interpretations attempted to be palmed upon the world by the one church that claims to be the infallible expounder of the word of God.

As they do also the other scriptures - This is an unequivocal declaration of Peter that he regarded the writings of Paul as a part of the holy Scriptures, and of course that he considered him as inspired. The word "Scriptures," as used by a Jew, had a technical signification - meaning the inspired writings, and was the common word which was applied to the sacred writings of the Old Testament. As Peter uses this language, it implies that he regarded the writings of Paul as on a level with the Old Testament; and as far as the testimony of one apostle can go to confirm the claim of another to inspiration, it proves that the writings of Paul are entitled to a place in the sacred canon. It should be remarked, also, that Peter evidently speaks here of the common estimate in which the writings of Paul were held. He addresses those to whom he wrote, not in such a way as to declare to them that the writings of Paul were to be regarded as a part of the inspired volume, but as if this were already known, and were an admitted point.

Unto their own destruction - By embracing false doctrines. Error destroys the soul; and it is very possible for a man so to read the Bible as only to confirm himself in error. He may find passages which, by a perverted interpretation, shall seem to sustain his own views; and, instead of embracing the truth, may live always under delusion, and perish at last. It is not to be inferred that every man who reads the Bible, or even every one who undertakes to be its public expounder, will certainly be saved.

Verse 17

Seeing that ye know these things before - Being aware of this danger, and knowing that such results may follow. People should read the Bible with the feeling that it is possible that they may fall into error, and be deceived at last. This apprehension will do much to make them diligent, and candid, and prayerful, in studying the Word of God.

With the error of the wicked - Wicked men. Such as he had referred to in 2 Peter 2, who became public teachers of religion.

Fall from your own steadfastness - Your firm adherence to the truth. The particular danger here referred to is not that of falling from grace, or from true religion, but from the firm and settled principles of religious truth into error.

Verse 18

But grow in grace - Compare Colossians 1:10. Religion in general is often represented as "grace," since every part of it is the result of grace, or of unmerited favor; and to "grow in grace" is to increase in that which constitutes true religion. Religion is as susceptible of cultivation and of growth as any other virtue of the soul. It is feeble in its beginnings, like the grain of mustard seed, or like the germ or blade of the plant, and it increases as it is cultivated. There is no piety in the world which is not the result of cultivation, and which cannot be measured by the degree of care and attention bestowed upon it. No one becomes eminently pious, any more than one becomes eminently learned or rich, who does not intend to; and ordinarily men in religion are what they design to be. They have about as much religion as they wish, and possess about the character which they intend to possess. When men reach extraordinary elevations in religion, like Baxter, Payson, and Edwards, they have gained only what they meant to gain; and the gay and worldly professors of religion who have little comfort and peace, have in fact the characters which they designed to have. If these things are so, then we may see the propriety of the injunction "to grow in grace;" and then too we may see the reason why so feeble attainments are made in piety by the great mass of those who profess religion.

And in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ - See the notes at John 17:3. Compare the notes at Colossians 1:10. To know the Lord Jesus Christ - to possess just views of his person, character, and work - is the sum and essence of the Christian religion; and with this injunction, therefore, the apostle appropriately closes this epistle. He who has a saving knowledge of Christ, has in tact all that is essential to his welfare in the life

that is, and in that which is to come; he who has not this knowledge, though he may be distinguished in the learning of the schools, and may be profoundly skilled in the sciences, has in reality no knowledge that will avail him in the great matters pertaining to his eternal welfare.

To him be glory … - Compare the Romans 16:27 note; 2 Timothy 4:18 note. With the desire that honor and glory should be rendered to the Redeemer, all the aspirations of true Christians appropriately close. There is no wish more deeply cherished in their hearts than this; there is nothing that will enter more into their worship in heaven. Compare Revelation 1:5-6; Revelation 5:12-13.

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1 JOHN INTRODUCTION

Introduction to 1John

Section 1. The Authenticity of the Epistle

Little needs to be said respecting the authenticity of this Epistle, or the evidence that it was written by the apostle John. There are, in general, two sources of evidence in regard to ancient writings: the external evidence, or that which may be derived from the testimony of other writers; and the evidence which may be derived from some marks of the authorship in the writing itself, which is called the internal evidence. Both of these are remarkably clear in regard to this Epistle.

(1) The external evidence:

(a) is quoted or referred to by the early Christian writers as the undoubted production of the apostle John. It is referred to by Polycarp in the beginning of the second century; it is quoted by Papias, and also by Irenaeus. Origen says, "John, beside the Gospel and Revelation, has left us an epistle of a few lines. Grant also a second, and a third; for all do not allow these to be genuine." See Lardner, vi. 275, and Lueke, Einlei. i. Dionysius of Alexandria admitted the genuineness of John's First Epistle; so also did Cyprian. All the three Epistles were received by Athanasius, by Cyril of Jerusalem, and by Epiphanius. Eusebius says, "Beside his Gospel, his First Epistle is universally acknowledged by those of the present time, and by the ancients; but the other two are contradicted."

(b) It is found in the Old Syriac Version, probably made in the first century, though the Second and Third Epistles are not there.

(c) The genuineness of the First Epistle was never extensively called in question, and it was never reckoned among the doubtful or disputed epistles.

(d) It was rejected or doubted only by those who rejected his Gospel, and for the same reasons. Some small sects of those who were called ‹heretics,' rejected all the writings of John, because they conflicted with their unique views; but this was confined to a small number of persons, and never affected the general belief of the church. See Lucke, Einlei. 9ff.

(2) There is strong internal evidence that the same person wrote this Epistle who was the author of the Gospel which bears the same name. The resemblance in the mode of expression, and in the topics referred to, are numerous, and at the same time are not such as would be made by one who was attemptinG to imitate the language of another. The allusions of this kind, moreover, are to what is unique in the Gospel of John, and not to what is common to that Gospel and the other three. There is nothing in the Epistle which would particularly remind us of the Gospel of Matthew, or Mark, or Luke; but it is impossible to read it and not be reminded constantly of the Gospel by John. Among those passages and expressions the following may be referred to:

d **First JohnCompared**
withThe Gospel
of John

d

d 1 John 1:1 John 1:1, John 1:4, John 1:14

d

d 1 John 2:5 John 14:23

d

d 1 John 2:6 John 15:4

d

d 1 John 2:8; 1 John 3:11 John 13:34

d

d 1 John 2:8, 1 John 2:10 John 1:5, John 1:9; John 11:10

d

d 1John 2:13-14John 17:3

d

d 1 John 3:1 John 1:12

d

d 1 John 3:2 John 17:24

d

d 1 John 3:8 John 8:44

d

d 1 John 3:13 John 15:20

d

d 1 John 4:9 John 3:16

d

d 1 John 4:12 John 1:18

d

d 1 John 5:13 John 20:31

d

d 1 John 5:14 John 14:14

d

d 1 John 5:20 John 17:2

d

d

This language in the Epistle, as will be easily seen by a comparison, is such as the real author of the Gospel by John would be likely to use if he wrote an epistle. The passages referred to are in his style; they show that the mind of the author of both was turned to the same points, and those not such points as might be found in all writers, but such as indicated a unique mode of thinking. They are not such expressions as Matthew, or Mark, or Luke, or Paul would have used in an epistle, but just such as we should expect from the writer of the Gospel of John. It must be clear to anyone that either the author of the Gospel was also the author of this Epistle, or that the author of the Epistle meant to imitate the author of the Gospel, and to leave the impression that the apostle John was the author. But there are several things which make it clear that this is not a forgery.

(a) The passages where the resemblance is found are not exact quotations, and are not such as a man would make if he designed to imitate another. They are rather such as the same man would use if he were writing twice on the same subject, and should express himself the second time without intending to copy what he had said the first.

(b) If it had been an intentional fraud or forgery, there would have been some allusion to the name or authority of the author; or, in other words, the author of the Epistle would have endeavored to sustain himself by some distinct reference to the apostle, or to his authority, or to his well-known characteristics as a teller of truth. See John 19:35; John 21:24. Compare 3 John 1:12. But nothing of the kind occurs in this Epistle. It is written without disclosing the name of the author, or the place where he lived, or the persons to whom it was addressed, and with no allusions to the Gospel, except such as show that the author thought in the same manner, and had the same things in his eye, and was intent on the same object. It is,

throughout, the style and manner of one who felt that his method of expressing himself was so well understood, that he did not need even to mention his own name; as if, without anything further, it would be apparent from the very Epistle itself who had written it, and what right he had to speak. But this would be a device too refined for forgery. It bears all the marks of sincerity and truth.

Section 2. The Time and Place of Writing the Epistle

Almost nothing is known of the time and place of writing the Epistle, and nearly all that is said on this point is mere conjecture. Some recent critics have supposed that it was in fact a part of the Gospel, though in some way it afterward became detached from it; others, that it was sent "as an epistle" at the same time with the Gospel, and to the same persons. Some have supposed that it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem, and some long after, when John was very aged; and these last suppose that they find evidences of the very advanced age of the author in the Epistle itself, in such characteristics as commonly mark the conversation and writings of an old man. An examination of these opinions may be found in Lucke, Einlei. Kap. 2; and in Hug, *Introduction*, pp. 456ff; pp. 739ff.

There are "very few" marks of time in the Epistle, and none that can determine the time of writing it with any degree of certainty. Nor is it of much importance that we should be able to determine it. The truths which it contains are, in the main, as applicable to one age as to another, though it cannot be denied (see Section 3) that the author had some prevailing forms of error in his eye. The only marks of time in the Epistle by which we can form any conjecture as to the period when it was written are the following:

(1) It was in what the author calls "the last time," (ἐσχάτη ὥρα eschatē hōra 1 John 2:18. From this expression it might perhaps be inferred by some that it was just before the destruction of Jerusalem, or that the writer supposed that the end of the world was near. But nothing can be certainly determined from this expression in regard to the exact period when the Epistle was written. This phrase, as used in the Scriptures, denotes no more than, the last dispensation or economy of things, the dispensation under which the affairs of the world would be wound up, though that period might be in fact much longer than any one that had preceded it. See Isaiah 2:2 note; Acts 2:17 note; Hebrews 1:2 note. The object of the writer of this Epistle, in the passage referred to, 1 John 2:18, is merely to show that the

closing dispensation of the world had actually come; that is, that there were certain things which it was known would mark that dispensation, which actually existed then, and by which it could be known that they were living under the last or closing period of the world.

(2) it is quite evident that the Epistle was composed after the Gospel by John was published. Of this no one can have any doubt who will compare the two together, or even the parallel passages referred to above, Section 1. The Gospel is manifestly the original; and it was evidently presumed by the writer of the Epistle that the Gospel was in the hands of those to whom he wrote. The statements there made are much more full; the circumstances in which many of the peculiar doctrines adverted to were first advanced are detailed; and the writer of the Epistle clearly supposed that all that was necessary in order to an understanding of these doctrines was to state them in the briefest manner, and almost by mere allusion. On this point Lucke well remarks, ‹the more brief and condensed expression of the same sentiment by the same author, especially in regard to peculiarities of idea and language, is always the later one; the more extended statement, the unfolding of the idea, is an evidence of an earlier composition,‘ Einlei. p. 21. Yet while this is clear, it determines little or nothing about the time when the Epistle was written, for it is a matter of great uncertainty when the Gospel itself was composed. Wetstein supposes that it was soon after the ascension of the Saviour; Dr. Lardner that it was about the year 68 a.d.; and Mill and LeClerc that it was about the year 97 a.d. In this uncertainty, therefore, nothing can be determined absolutely from this circumstance in regard to the time of writing the Epistle.

(3) the only other note of time on which any reliance has been placed is the supposed fact that there were indications in the Epistle itself of the "great age" of the author, or evidences that he was an old man, and that consequently it was written near the close of the life of John, There is some evidence in the Epistle that it was written when the author was an old man, though none that he was in his "dotage," as Eichhorn and some others have maintained. The evidence that he was even an old man is not positive, but there is a certain air and manner in the Epistle, in its repetitions, and its want of exact order, and especially in the style in which he addresses those to whom he wrote, as "little children" - (τεκνία teknia) - 1 John 2:1, 1 John

2:12, 1 John 2:28; 1 John 3:7, 1 John 3:18; 1 John 4:4; 1 John 5:21 - which would seem to be appropriate only to an aged man. Compare Lucke, Einlei. pp. 23,25, and Stuart in Hug's *Introduction*, pp. 732,733.

As little is known about the place where the Epistle was written as about the time of its writing. There are no local references in it; no allusions to persons or opinions which can help us to determine where it was written. As John spent the latter part of his life, however, in Ephesus and its vicinity, there is no impropriety in supposing that it was written there. Nothing, in the interpretation of the Epistle, depends on our being able to ascertain the place of its composition. Hug supposes that it was written on Patmos, and was sent as a letter accompanying his Gospel, to the church at Ephesus. - Intro. Section 69. Lucke supposes that it was a circular epistle addressed to the churches in Asia Minor, and sent from Ephesus - Einlei. p. 27.

To whoM the Epistle was written is also unknown. It bears no inscription, as many of the other epistles of the New Testament do, and as even the Second and Third Epistles of John do, and there is no reference to any particular class of persons by which it can be determined for whom it was designed. Nor is it known why the name of the author was not attached to it, or why the persons for whom it was designed were not designated. All that can be determined on this subject from the Epistle itself is the following:

(1)It seems to have been addressed to no particular church, but rather to have been of a circular character, designed for the churches in a region of country where certain dangerous opinions prevailed.

(2)the author presumed that it would be known who wrote it, either by the style, or by the sentiments, or by its resemblance to his other writings, or by the messenger who bore it, so that it was unnecessary to affix his name to it.

(3)it appears to have been so composed as to be adapted to any people where those errors prevailed; and hence it was thought better to give it a general direction, that all might feel themselves to be addressed, than to designate any particular place or church.

There is, indeed, an ancient tradition that it was written to the "Parthians." Since the time of Augustine this has been the uniform opinion

in the Latin church. Venerable Bede remarks, that "many of the ecclesiastical writers, among whom is Athanasius, testify that the First Epistle of John was written to the Parthians." Various conjectures have been made as to the origin of this opinion, and of the title which the Epistle bears in many of the Latin mss., (ad Parthos,) but none of them are satisfactory. No such title is found in the Epistle itself, nor is there any intimation in it to whom it was directed. Those who are disposed to examine the conjectures which have been made in regard to the origin of the title may consult Lucke, Enlei. p. 28ff. No reason can be assigned why it should have been sent to the Parthians, nor is there any sufficient evidence to suppose that it was.

Section 3. The Object of the Epistle

It is evident from the Epistle itself that there were some prevailing errors among those to whom it was written, and that one design of the writer was to counteract those errors. Yet very various opinions have been entertained in regard to the nature of the errors that were opposed, and the persons whom the writer had in his eye. Loeffler supposes that "Jews" and "Judaizers" are the persons opposed; Semler, Tittman, Knapp, and Lange suppose that they were "Judaizing Christians," and especially "Ebionites," or apostate Christians; Michaelis, Kleuker, Paulus, and others, suppose that the "Gnostics" are referred to; others, as Schmidt, Lucke, Vitringa, Bertholdt, Prof. Stuart, suppose that the "Docetoe" was the sect that was principally opposed.

It is impossible now to determine with accuracy to whom particularly the writer referred, nor could it be well done without a more accurate knowledge than we now have of the peculiarities of the errors which prevailed in the time of the author, and among the people to whom he wrote. All that we can learn on the subject that is certain, is to be derived from the Epistle itself; and there the intimations are few, but they are so clear that we may obtain some knowledge to guide us.

(1) the persons referred to had been professing Christians, and were now apostates from the faith. This is clear from 1 John 2:19, ‹They went out from us, but they were not of us,‘ etc. They had been members of the church, but they had now become teachers of error.

(2) they were probably of the sect of the "Docetae;" or if that sect had not then formally sprung up, and was not organized, they held the opinions which they afterward embraced. This sect was a branch of the great Gnostic family; and the peculiarity of the opinion which they held was that Christ was only in appearance and seemingly, but not in reality, a man; that though he seemed to converse, to eat, to suffer, and to die, yet this was merely an "appearance" assumed by the Son of God for important purposes in regard to man. He had, according to this view, "no real humanity;" but though the Son of God had actually appeared in the world, yet all this was only an assumed form for the purpose of a manifestation to men. The opinions of the "Docetes" are thus represented by Gibbon: "They denied the truth and authenticity of the Gospels, as far as they relate the conception of Mary, the birth of Christ, and the thirty years which preceded the first exercise of his ministry. He first appeared on the banks of the Jordan in the form of perfect manhood; but it was a form only, and not a substance; a human figure created by the hand of Omnipotence to imitate the faculties and actions of a man, and to impose a perpetual illusion on the senses of his friends and enemies. Articulate sounds vibrated on the ears of his disciples; but the image which was impressed on their optic nerve, eluded the more stubborn evidence of the touch, and they enjoyed the spiritual, but not the corporeal presence of the Son of God. The rage of the Jews was idly wasted against an impassive phantom, and the mystic scenes of the passion and death, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, were represented on the theater of Jerusalem for the benefit of mankind." - *Decl. and Fall*, vol. iii. p. 245, Ed. New York, 1829. Compare vol. i. 440.

That these views began to prevail in the latter part of the first century there can be no reason to doubt; and there can be as little doubt that the author of this Epistle had this doctrine in his eye, and that he deemed it to be of special importance in this Epistle, as he had done in his Gospel, to show that the Son of God had actually "come in the flesh;" that he was truly and properly a man; that he lived and died in reality, and not in appearance only. Hence, the allusion to these views in such passages as the following: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life - that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you," 1 John 1:1, 1 John 1:3. "Many false prophets are gone out into

the world. Hereby know we the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ ‹is come in the flesh‘ is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come," 1 John 4:1-3. Compare 1 John 4:9, 1 John 4:14-15; 1 John 5:1, 1John 5:6,1 John 5:10-12. John had written his Gospel to show that Jesus was the Christ, John 20:31; he had furnished ample proof that he was divine, or was equal with the Father, John 1:1-14, and also that he was truly a man, John 15:25-27; but still it seemed proper to furnish a more unequivocal statement that he had actually appeared "in the flesh," not in appearance only but in reality, and this purpose evidently was a leading design of this Epistle.

The main scope of the Epistle the author has himself stated in 1 John 5:13; "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God;" that is, that you may have just views of him, and exercise an intelligent faith.

In connection with this general design, and keeping in view the errors to which they to whom the Epistle was written were exposed, there are two leading trains of thought, though often intermingled, in the Epistle.

(a)The author treats of the doctrine that Jesus is the Christ, and,

(b)the importance of "love" as an evidence of being united to him, or of being true Christians.

Both these things are characteristic of John; they agree with the design for which he wrote his gospel, and they were in accordance with his uniqueness of mind as "the beloved disciple," the disciple whose heart was full of love, and who made religion consist much in that.

The main characteristics of this Epistle are these:

(1)It is full of love. The writer dwells on it; places it in a variety of attitudes; enforces the duty of loving one another by a great variety of considerations, and shows that it is essential to the very nature of religion.

(2)the Epistle abounds with statements on the evidences of piety, or the characteristics of true religion.

The author seems to have felt that those to whom he wrote were in danger of embracing false notions of religion, and of being seduced by the abettors of error. He is therefore careful to lay down the characteristics of

real piety, and to show in what it essentially consists. A large part of the Epistle is occupied with this, and there is perhaps no portion of the New Testament which one could study to more advantage who is desirous of ascertaining whether he himself is a true Christian. An anxious inquirer, a man who wishes to know what true religion is, could be directed to no portion of the New Testament where he would more readily find the instruction that he needs, than to this portion of the writings of the aged and experienced disciple whom Jesus loved. Nowhere else can a true Christian find a more clear statement of the nature of his religion, and of the evidences of real piety, than in this Epistle.

1 JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This short chapter embraces the following subjects:

I. A strong affirmation that the Son of God, or the "Life," had appeared in the flesh, 1 John 1:1-3. The evidence of this, the writer says, was that he had seen him, heard him, handled him; that is, he had had all the evidence which could be furnished by the senses. His declaration on this point he repeats, by putting the statement into a variety of forms, for he seems to regard it as essential to true religion.

II. He says that he wrote to them, in order that they might have fellowship with him in the belief of this truth, and might partake of the joy which flows from the doctrine that the Son of God has actually come in the flesh, 1 John 1:3-4.

III. He states that the sum and substance of the whole message which he had to bring to them was, that God is light, and that if we profess to have fellowship with him we must walk in the light, 1 John 1:5-10.

(a)In God is no darkness, no impurity, no sin, 1 John 1:5.

(b)If we are in darkness, if we are ignorant and sinful, it proves that we cannot have any fellowship with him, 1 John 1:6.

(c)If we walk in the light as he is in the light, if we partake of his character and spirit, then we shall have fellowship one with another, and we may believe that the blood of Christ will cleanse us from all sin, 1 John 1:7.

(d)Yet we are to guard ourselves from one point of danger, we are not to allow ourselves to feel that we have "no" sin. We are to bear with us the constant recollection that we are sinners, and are to permit that fact to produce its proper impression on our minds, 1 John 1:8, 1 John 1:10.

(e)Yet we are not to be desponding though we do feel this, but are to remember, that if we will truly confess our sins he will be found faithful to his promises, and just to the general arrangements of grace, by which our sins may be forgiven, 1 John 1:9.

Verse 1

That which was from the beginning - There can be no doubt that the reference here is to the Lord Jesus Christ, or the "Word" that was made flesh. See the notes at John 1:1. This is such language as John would use respecting him, and indeed the phrase "the beginning," as applicable to the Lord Jesus, is unique to John in the writings of the New Testament: and the language here may be regarded as one proof that this Epistle was written by him, for it is just such an expression as "he" would use, but not such as one would be likely to adopt who should attempt to palm off his own writings as those of John. One who should have attempted that would have been likely to introduce the name "John" in the beginning of the Epistle, or in some way to have claimed his authority. The apostle, in speaking of "that which was from the beginning," uses a word in the neuter gender instead of the masculine, (ὅ hoIt is not to be supposed, I think, that he meant to apply this term "directly" to the Son of God, for if he had he would have used the masculine pronoun; but though he had the Son of God in view, and meant to make a strong affirmation respecting him, yet the particular thing here referred to was "whatever" there was respecting that incarnate Saviour that furnished testimony to any of the senses, or that pertained to his character and doctrine, he had borne witness to.

He was looking rather at the evidence that he was incarnate; the proofs that he was manifested; and he says that those proofs had been subjected to the trial of the senses, and he had borne witness to them, and now did it again. This is what is referred to, it seems to me, by the phrase "that which," (ὅ hoThe sense may be this: "Whatever there was respecting the Word of life, or him who is the living Word, the incarnate Son of God, from the very beginning, from the time when he was first manifested in the flesh; whatever there was respecting his exalted nature, his dignity, his character, that could be subjected to the testimony of the senses, to be the object of sight, or hearing, or touch, that I was permitted to see, and that I declare to you respecting him." John claims to be a competent witness in reference to everything which occurred as a manifestation of what the Son of God was.

If this be the correct interpretation, then the phrase "from the beginning" (ἀπ᾽ ἀρχῆς ap'archēsdoes not here refer to his eternity, or his being in the beginning of all things, as the phrase "in the beginning" (ἐν ἀρχῇ en archē) does in John 1:1; but rather means from the very commencement of his manifestation as the Son of God, the very first indications on earth of what

he was as the Messiah. When the writer says 1 John 1:3 that he "declares" this to them, it seems to me that he has not reference merely to what he would say in this Epistle, for he does not go extensively into it here, but that he supposes that they had his Gospel in their possession, and that he also means to refer to that, or presumes that they were familiar with the testimony which he had borne in that Gospel respecting the evidence that the "Word became flesh." Many have indeed supposed that this Epistle accompanied the Gospel when it was published, and was either a part of it that became subsequently detached from it, or was a letter that accompanied it. See Hug, *Introduction* P. II. Section 68. There is, it seems to me, no certain evidence of that; but no one can doubt that he supposed that those to whom he wrote had access to that Gospel, and that he refers here to the testimony which he had borne in that respecting the incarnate Word.

Which we have heard - John was with the Saviour through the whole of his ministry, and he has recorded more that the Saviour said than either of the other evangelists. It is on what he said of himself that he grounds much of the evidence that he was the Son of God.

Which we have seen with our eyes - That is, pertaining to his person, and to what he did. "I have seen him; seen what he was as a man; how he appeared on earth; and I have seen whatever there was in his works to indicate his character and origin." John professes here to have seen enough in this respect to furnish evidence that he was the Son of God. It is not hearsay on which he relies, but he had the testimony of his own eyes in the case. Compare the notes at 2 Peter 1:16.

Which we have looked upon - The word used here seems designed to be more emphatic or intensive than the one occurring before. He had just said that he had "seen him with his eyes," but he evidently designs to include an idea in this word which would imply something more than mere beholding or seeing. The additional idea which is couched in this word seems to be that of desire or pleasure; that is, that he had looked on him with desire, or satisfaction, or with the pleasure with which one beholds a beloved object. Compare Matthew 11:7; Luke 7:24; John 1:14; John 11:45. See Robinson, Lexicon. There was an intense and earnest gaze, as when we behold one whom we have desired to see, or when one goes out purposely to look on an object. The evidences of the incarnation of the Son of God had been subjected to such an intense and earnest gaze.

And our hands have handled - That is, the evidence that he was a man was subjected to the sense of touch. It was not merely that he had been seen by the eye, for then it might be pretended that this was a mere appearance assumed without reality; or that what occurred might have been a mere optical illusion; but the evidence that he appeared in the flesh was subjected to more senses than one; to the fact that his voice was heard; that he was seen with the eyes; that the most intense scrutiny had been employed; and, lastly, that he had been actually touched and handled, showing that it could not have been a mere appearance, an assumed form, but that it was a reality. This kind of proof that the Son of God had appeared in the flesh, or that he was truly and properly a man, is repeatedly referred to in the New Testament. Luke 24:39; "behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." Compare John 20:25-27. There is evident allusion here to the opinion which early prevailed, which was held by the Docetes, that the Son of God did not truly and really become a man, but that there was only an appearance assumed, or that he seemed to be a man. See the Introduction, Section 3. It was evidently with reference to this opinion, which began early to prevail, that the apostle dwells on this point, and repeats the idea so much, and shows by a reference to all the senses which could take any cognizance in the case, that he was truly and properly a man. The amount of it is, that we have the same evidence that he was properly a man which we can have in the case of any other human being; the evidence on which we constantly act, and in which we cannot believe that our senses deceive us.

Of the Word of life - Respecting, or pertaining to, the Word of life. "That is, whatever there was pertaining to the Word of life, which was manifested from the beginning in his speech and actions, of which the senses could take cognizance, and which would furnish the evidence that he was truly incarnate, that we have declared unto you.' The phrase "the Word of life," means the Word in which life resided, or which was the source and fountain of life. See the notes at John 1:1, John 1:3. The reference is undoubtedly to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 2

For the life was manifested - Was made manifest or visible unto us. He who was the life was made known to people by the incarnation. He appeared among people so that they could see him and hear him. Though originally with God, and dwelling with him, John 1:1-2, yet he came forth

and appeared among people. Compare the Romans 1:3 note; 1 Timothy 3:16 note. He is the great source of all life, and he appeared on the earth, and we had an opportunity of seeing and knowing what he was.

And we have seen it - This repetition, or turning over the thought, is designed to express the idea with emphasis, and is much in the manner of John. See John 1:1-3. He is particularly desirous of impressing on them the thought that he had been a personal witness of what the Saviour was, having had every opportunity of knowing it from long and familiar contact with him.

And bear witness - We testify in regard to it. John was satisfied that his own character was known to be such that credit would be given to what he said. He felt that he was known to be a man of truth, and hence he never doubts that faith would be put in all his statements. See John 19:35; John 21:24; Revelation 1:2; 3 John 1:12.

And shew unto you that eternal life - That is, we declare unto you what that life was - what was the nature and rank of him who was the life, and how he appeared when on earth. He here attributes eternity to the Son of God - implying that he had always been with the Father.

Which was with the Father - Always before the manifestation on the earth. See John 1:1. "The word was with God." This passage demonstrates the pre-existence of the Son of God, and proves that he was eternal. Before he was manifested on earth he had an existence to which the word life could be applied, and that was eternal. He is the Author of eternal life to us.

And was manifested unto us - In the flesh; as a man. He who was the life appeared unto people. The idea of John evidently is,

(1)that the Being here referred to was forever with God;

(2)that it was proper before the incarnation that the word life should be given to him as descriptive of his nature;

(3)that there was a manifestation of him who was thus called life, on earth; that he appeared among people; that he had a real existence here, and not a merely assumed appearance; and,

(4)that the true characteristics of this incarnate Being could be borne testimony to by those who had seen him, and who had been long with him. This second verse should be regarded as a parenthesis.

Verse 3

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you - We announce it, or make it known unto you - referring either to what he purposes to say in this Epistle, or more probably embracing all that he had written respecting him, and supposing that his Gospel was in their hands. He means to call their attention to all the testimony which he had borne on the subject, in order to counteract the errors which began to prevail.

That ye may have fellowship with us - With us the apostles; with us who actually saw him, and conversed with him. That is, he wished that they might have the same belief, and the same hope, and the same joy which he himself had, arising from the fact that the Son of God had become incarnate, and had appeared among people. To "have fellowship," means to have anything in common with others; to partake of it; to share it with them, (see the notes at Acts 2:42); and the idea here is, that the apostle wished that they might share with him all the peace and happiness which resulted from the fact that the Son of God had appeared in human form in behalf of men. The object of the apostle in what he wrote was, that they might have the same views of the Saviour which he had, and partake of the same hope and joy. This is the true notion of fellowship in religion.

And truly our fellowship is with the Father - With God the Father. That is, there was something in common with him and God; something of which he and God partook together, or which they shared. This cannot, of course, mean that his nature was the same as that of God, or that in all things he shared with God, or that in anything he was equal with God; but it means that he partook, in some respects, of the feelings, the views, the aims, the joys which God has. There was a union in feeling, and affection, and desire, and plan, and this was to him a source of joy. He had an attachment to the same things, loved the same truth, desired the same objects, and was engaged in the same work; and the consciousness of this, and the joy which attended it, was what was meant by fellowship. Compare the 1 Corinthians 10:16 note; 2 Corinthians 12:14 note. The fellowship which Christians have with God relates to the following points:

(1) Attachment to the same truths, and the same objects; love for the same principles, and the same beings.

(2) the same kind of happiness, though not in the same degree. The happiness of God is found in holiness, truth, purity, justice, mercy,

benevolence. The happiness of the Christian is of the same kind that God has; the same kind that angels have; the same kind that he will himself have in heaven - for the joy of heaven is only that which the Christian has now, expanded to the utmost capacity of the soul, and freed from all that now interferes with it, and prolonged to eternity.

(3) Employment, or cooperation with God. There is a sphere in which God works alone, and in which we can have no cooperation, no fellowship with him. In the work of creation; in upholding all things; in the government of the universe; in the transmission of light from world to world; in the return of the seasons, the rising and setting of the sun, the storms, the tides, the flight of the comet, we can have no joint agency, no cooperation with him. There God works alone. But there is also a large sphere in which he admits us graciously to a cooperation with him, and in which, unless we work, his agency will not be put forth. This is seen when the farmer sows his grain; when the surgeon binds up a wound; when we take the medicine which God has appointed as a means of restoration to health. So in the moral world. In our efforts to save our own souls and the souls of others, God graciously works with us; and unless we work, the object is not accomplished. This cooperation is referred to in such passages as these: "We are laborers together (συνεργοί sunergoi) with God," 1 Corinthians 3:9. "The Lord working with them," Mark 16:20. "We then as workers together with him," 2 Corinthians 6:1. "That we might be fellow-helpers to the truth," 3 John 1:8. In all such cases, while the efficiency is of God - alike in exciting us to effort, and in crowning the effort with success - it is still true that if our efforts were not put forth, the work would not be done. In this department God would not work by himself alone; he would not secure the result by miracle.

(4) we have fellowship with God by direct communion with him, in prayer, in meditation, and in the ordinances of religion. Of this all true Christians are sensible, and this constitutes no small part of their special joy. The nature of this, and the happiness resulting from it, is much of the same nature as the communion of friend with friend - of one mind with another kindred mind - that to which we owe no small part of our happiness in this world.

(5) the Christian will have fellowship with his God and Saviour in the triumphs of the latter day, when the scenes of the judgment shall occur, and when the Redeemer shall appear, that he may be admired and adored by assembled worlds. Compare the notes at 2 Thessalonians 1:10. See also Matthew 19:28; Revelation 3:21.

And with his Son Jesus Christ - That is, in like manner there is much which we have in common with the Saviour - in character, in feeling, in desire, in spirit, in plan. There is a union with him in these things - and the consciousness of this gives peace and joy.

(There is a real union between Christ and his people, which lies at the foundation of this fellowship. Without this union there can be no communion. But a "union with Christ in these things, i. e., in character and feeling, etc." is nothing more than the union which subsists between any chief and his followers; and why the apostle Paul, or others after him, should reckon this a great mystery, is not easily comprehended. Ephesians 5:32; Colossians 1:27. For a full view of the subject, see the author's notes, with the supplementary note at Romans 8:10.)

Verse 4

And these things write we unto you - These things respecting him who was manifested in the flesh, and respecting the results which flow from that.

That your joy may be full - This is almost the same language which the Saviour used when addressing his disciples as he was about to leave them, John 15:11; and there can be little doubt that John had that declaration in remembrance when he uttered this remark. See the notes at that passage. The sense here is, that full and clear views of the Lord Jesus, and the fellowship with him and with each other, which would follow from that, would be a source of happiness. Their joy would be complete if they had that; for their real happiness was to be found in their Saviour. The best editions of the Greek Testament now read "your joy," instead of the common reading "our joy."

Verse 5

This then is the message which we have heard of him - This is the substance of the announcement (ἐπαγγελία epangelia) which we have received of him, or which he made to us. The message here refers to what he communicated as the sum of the revelation which he made to man. The phrase "of him" (απ᾽ αὐτου ap'autou) does not mean respecting him, or

about him, but from him; that is, this is what we received from his preaching; from all that he said. The peculiarity, the substance of all that he said, may be summed up in the declaration that God is light, and in the consequences which follow from this doctrine. He came as the messenger of Him who is light; he came to inculcate and defend the truths which flow from that central doctrine, in regard to sin, to the danger and duty of man, to the way of recovery, and to the rules by which men ought to live.

That God is light - Light, in the Scriptures, is the emblem of purity, truth, knowledge, prosperity, and happiness - as darkness is of the opposite. John here says that "God is light" - φῶς phōs- not the light, or a light, but light itself; that is, he is himself all light, and is the source and fountain of light in all worlds. He is perfectly pure, without any admixture of sin. He has all knowledge, with no admixture of ignorance on any subject. He is infinitely happy, with nothing to make him miserable. He is infinitely true, never stating or countenancing error; he is blessed in all his ways, never knowing the darkness of disappointment and adversity. Compare the James 1:17 note; John 1:4-5 note; 1 Timothy 6:16 note.

And in him is no darkness at all - This language is much in the manner of John, not only affirming that a thing is so, but guarding it so that no mistake could possibly be made as to what he meant. Compare John 1:1-3. The expression here is designed to affirm that God is absolutely perfect; that there is nothing in him which is in any way imperfect, or which would dim or mar the pure splendor of his character, not even as much as the smallest spot would on the sun. The language is probably designed to guard the mind from an error to which it is prone, that of charging God with being the Author of the sin and misery which exist on the earth; and the apostle seems to design to teach that whatever was the source of sin and misery, it was not in any sense to be charged on God. This doctrine that God is a pure light, John lays down as the substance of all that he had to teach; of all that he had learned from him who was made flesh. It is, in fact, the fountain of all just views of truth on the subject of religion, and all proper views of religion take their origin from this.

Verse 6

If we say that we have fellowship uith him - If we reckon ourselves among his friends, or, in other words, if we profess to be like him: for a profession of religion involves the idea of having fellowship with God,

(compare the notes at 1 John 1:3), and he who professes that should be like him.

And walk in darkness - Live in sin and error. To "walk in darkness" now commonly denotes to be in doubt about our religious state, in contradistinction from living in the enjoyment of religion. That is not, however, probably the whole idea here. The leading thought is, that if we live in sin, it is a proof that our profession of religion is false. Desirable as it is to have the comforts of religion, yet it is not always true that they who do not are not true Christians, nor is it true by any means that they intend to deceive the world.

We lie - We are false professors; we are deceived if we think that we can have fellowship with God, and yet live in the practice of sin. As God is pure, so must we be, if we would be his friends. This does not mean necessarily that they meant to deceive, but that there was an irreconcilable contradiction between a life of sin and fellowship with God.

And do not the truth - Do not act truly. The profession is a false one. Compare the notes at John 3:22. To do the truth is to act in accordance with truth; and the expression here means that such an one could not be a Christian. And yet how many there are who are living in known sin who profess to be Christians! How many whose minds are dark on the whole subject of religion, who have never known anything of the real peace and joy which it imparts, who nevertheless entertain the belief that they are the friends of God, and are going to heaven! They trust in a name, in forms, in conformity to external rites, and have never known anything of the internal peace and purity which religion imparts, and in fact have never had any true fellowship with that God who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all. Religion is light; religion is peace, purity, joy; and though there are eases where for a time a true Christian may be left to darkness, and have no spiritual joy, and be in doubt about his salvation, yet still it is a great truth, that unless we know by personal experience what it is to walk habitually in the light, to have the comforts of religion, and to experience in our own souls the influences which make the heart pure, and which bring us into conformity to the God who is light, we can have no true religion. All else is but a name, which will not avail us on the final day.

Verse 7

But if we walk in the light - Compare the notes at 1 John 1:5. Walking in the light may include the three following things:

(1)Leading lives of holiness and purity; that is, the Christian must be characteristically a holy man, a light in the world, by his example.

(2)walking in the truth; that is, embracing the truth in opposition to all error of paganism and infidelity, and having clear, spiritual views of truth, such as the unrenewed never have. See 2 Corinthians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 2:9-15; Ephesians 1:18.

(3)enjoying the comforts of religion; that is, having the joy which religion is fitted to impart, and which it does impart to its true friends, Psalm 94:19; Isaiah 57:8; 2 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 13:11. Compare the notes at John 12:35.

As he is in the light - In the same kind of light that he has. The measure of light which we may have is not the same in degree, but it is of the same kind. The true Christian in his character and feelings resembles God.

We have fellowship one with another - As we all partake of his feelings and views, we shall resemble each other. Loving the same God, embracing the same views of religion, and living for the same ends, we shall of course have much that is common to us all, and thus shall have fellowship with each other.

And the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin - See the sentiment here expressed fully explained in the notes at Hebrews 9:14. When it is said that his blood cleanses us from all sin, the expression must mean one of two things - either that it is through that blood that all past sin is forgiven, or that that blood will ultimately purify us from all transgression, and make us perfectly holy. The general meaning is plain, that in regard to any and every sin of which we may be conscious, there is efficacy in that blood to remove it, and to make us wholly pure. There is no stain made by sin so deep that the blood of Christ cannot take it entirely away from the soul. The connection here, or the reason why this is introduced here, seems to be this: The apostle is stating the substance of the message which he had received, 1 John 1:5. The first or leading part of it was, that God is light, and in him is no darkness, and that his religion requires that all his friends should resemble him by their walking in the light. Another, and a material part of the same message was, that provision was made in his religion for cleansing the soul from sin, and making it like God. No system of religion intended for man could be adapted to his condition which did not contain this provision, and this did contain it in the

most full and ample manner. Of course, however, it is meant that that blood cleanses from all sin only on the conditions on which its efficacy can be made available to man - by repentance for the past, and by a cordial reception of the Saviour through faith.

Verse 8

If we say that we have no sin - It is not improbable that the apostle here makes allusion to some error which was then beginning to prevail in the church. Some have supposed that the allusion is to the sect of the Nicolaitanes, and to the views which they maintained, particularly that nothing was forbidden to the children of God under the gospel, and that in the freedom conferred on Christians they were at liberty to do what they pleased, Revelation 2:6, Revelation 2:15. It is not certain, however, that the allusion is to them, and it is not necessary to suppose that there is reference to any particular sect that existed at that time. The object of the apostle is to show that it is implied in the very nature of the gospel that we are sinners, and that if, on any pretence, we denied that fact, we utterly deceived ourselves. In all ages there have been those who have attempted, on some pretence, to justify their conduct; who have felt that they did not need a Saviour; who have maintained that they had a right to do what they pleased; or who, on pretence of being perfectly sanctified, have held that they live without the commission of sin. To meet these, and all similar cases, the apostle affirms that it is a great elementary truth, which on no pretence is to be denied, that we are all sinners. We are at all times, and in all circumstances, to admit the painful and humiliating truth that we are transgressors of the law of God, and that we need, even in our best services, the cleansing of the blood of Jesus Christ. The fair interpretation of the declaration here will apply not only to those who maintain that they have not been guilty of sin in the past, but also to those who profess to have become perfectly sanctified, and to live without sin. In any and every way, if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. Compare the notes at James 3:2.

We deceive ourselves - We have wrong views about our character. This does not mean that the self-deception is willful, but that it in fact exists. No man knows himself who supposes that in all respects he is perfectly pure.

And the truth is not in us - On this subject. A man who should maintain that he had never committed sin, could have no just views of the truth in regard to himself, and would show that he was in utter error. In like

manner, according to the obvious interpretation of this passage, he who maintains that he is wholly sanctified, and lives without any sin, shows that he is deceived in regard to himself, and that the truth, in this respect, is not in him. He may hold the truth on other subjects, but he does not on this. The very nature of the Christian religion supposes that we feel ourselves to be sinners, and that we should be ever ready to acknowledge it. A man who claims that he is absolutely perfect, that he is holy as God is holy, must know little of his own heart. Who, after all his reasoning on the subject, would dare to go out under the open heaven, at midnight, and lift up his hands and his eyes toward the stars, and say that he had no sin to confess - that he was as pure as the God that made those stars?

Verse 9

If we confess our sins - Pardon in the Scriptures, always supposes that there is confession, and there is no promise that it will be imparted unless a full acknowledgment has been made. Compare Psalm 32:1-11;; Luke 15:18 ff; Luke 7:41 ff; Proverbs 28:13.

He is faithful - To his promises. He will do what he has assured us he will do in remitting them.

And just to forgive us our sins - The word "just" here cannot be used in a strict and proper sense, since the forgiveness of sins is never an act of justice, but is an act of mercy. If it were an act of justice it could be demanded or enforced, and that is the same as to say that it is not forgiveness, for in that case there could have been no sin to be pardoned. But the word "just" is often used in a larger sense, as denoting upright, equitable, acting properly in the circumstances of the case, etc. Compare the notes at Matthew 1:19. Here the word may be used in one of the following senses:

(1)Either as referring to his general excellence of character, or his disposition to do what is proper; that is, he is one who will act in every way as becomes God; or,

(2)that he will be just in the sense that he will be true to his promises; or that, since he has promised to pardon sinners, he will be found faithfully to adhere to those engagements; or perhaps,

(3)that he will be just to his Son in the covenant of redemption, since, now that an atonement has been made by him, and a way has been opened through his sufferings by which God can consistently pardon, and with a

view and an understanding that he might and would pardon, it would be an act of injustice to him if he did not pardon those who believe on him.

Viewed in either aspect, we may have the fullest assurance that God is ready to pardon us if we exercise true repentance and faith. No one can come to God without finding him ready to do all that is appropriate for a God to do in pardoning transgressors; no one who will not, in fact, receive forgiveness if he repents, and believes, and makes confession; no one who will not find that God is just to his Son in the covenant of redemption, in pardoning and saving all who put their trust in the merits of his sacrifice.

And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness - By forgiving all that is past, treating us as if we were righteous, and ultimately by removing all the stains of guilt from the soul.

Verse 10

If we say that we have not sinned - In times that are past. Some perhaps might be disposed to say this; and as the apostle is careful to guard every point, he here states that if a man should take the ground that his past life had been wholly upright, it would prove that he had no true religion. The statement here respecting the past seems to prove that when, in 1 John 1:8, he refers to the present - "if we say we have no sin" - he meant to say that if a man should claim to be perfect, or to be wholly sanctified, it would demonstrate that he deceived himself; and the two statements go to prove that neither in reference to the past nor the present can anyone lay claim to perfection.

We make him a liar - Because he has everywhere affirmed the depravity of all the race. Compare the notes at Genesis 6:11-12; Job 14:4; Job 15:16; Psalm 14:1-3; Psalm 51:5; Psalm 58:3; Romans 3:9-20; Galatians 3:21.

And his word is not in us - His truth; that is, we have no true religion. The whole system of Christianity is based on the fact that man is a fallen being, and needs a Saviour; and unless a man admits that, of course he cannot be a Christian.

Remarks On 1 John 1:1-2. On that doctrine the apostle lays great stress; begins his Epistle with it; presents it in a great variety of forms; dwells upon it as if he would not have it forgotten or misunderstood. It has all the importance which he attached to it, for.

(a)it is the most wonderful of all the events of which we have any knowledge;

(b)it is the most deeply connected with our welfare.

(2) the intense interest which true piety always takes in this doctrine, 1 John 1:1-2. The feelings of John on the subject are substantially the feelings of all true Christians. The world passes it by in unbelief, or as if it were of no importance; but no true Christian can look at the fact that the Son of God became incarnate but with the deepest emotion.

(3) it is an object of ardent desire with true Christians that all others should share their joys, 1 John 1:3-4. There is nothing selfish, or narrow, or exclusive in true religion; but every sincere Christian who is happy desires that all others should be happy too.

(4) wherever there is true fellowship with God, there is with all true Christians, 1 John 1:3-4. There is but one church, one family of God; and as all true Christians have fellowship with God, they must have with each other.

(5) wherever there is true fellowship with Christians, there is with God himself, 1 John 1:3-4. If we love his people, share their joys, labor with them in promoting his cause, and love the things which they love, we shall show that we love him. There is but one God, and one church; and if all the members love each other, they will love their common God and Saviour. An evidence, therefore, that we love Christians, becomes an evidence that we love God.

(6) it is a great privilege to be a Christian, 1 John 1:3-4. If we are Christians, we are associated with:

(a)God the Father;

(b)with his Son Jesus Christ;

(c)with all his redeemed on earth and in heaven;

(d)with all holy angels.

There is one bond of fellowship that unites all together; and what a privilege it is to be united in the eternal bonds of friendship with all the holy minds in the universe!

(7) if God is "light" 1 John 1:5, then all that occurs is reconcilable with the idea that he is worthy of confidence. What he does may seem to be dark

to us, but we may be assured that it is all light with him. A cloud may come between us and the sun, but beyond the cloud the sun shines with undimmed splendor, and soon the cloud itself will pass away. At midnight it is dark to us, but it is not because the sun is shorn of his beams, or is extinguished. He will rise again upon our hemisphere in the fullness of his glory, and all the darkness of the cloud and of midnight is reconcilable with the idea that the sun is a bright orb, and that in him is no darkness at all. So with God. We may be under a cloud of sorrow and of trouble, but above that the glory of God shines with splendor, and soon that cloud will pass away, and reveal him in the fullness of his beauty and truth.

(8) we should, therefore, at all times exercise a cheerful confidence in God, 1 John 1:5. Who supposes that the sun is never again to shine when the cloud passes over it, or when the shades of midnight have settled down upon the world? We confide in that sun that it will shine again when the cloud has passed off, and when the shades of night have been driven away. So let us confide in God, for with more absolute certainty we shall yet see him to be light, and shall come to a world where there is no cloud.

(9) we may look cheerfully onward to heaven, 1 John 1:5. There all is light. There we shall see God as He is. Well may we then bear with our darkness a little longer, for soon we shall be ushered into a world where there is no need of the sun or the stars; where there is no darkness, no night.

(10) Religion is elevating in its nature, 1 John 1:6-7. It brings us from a world of darkness to a world of light. It scatters the rays of light on a thousand dark subjects, and gives promise that all that is now obscure will yet become clear as noonday. Wherever there is true religion, the mind emerges more and more into light; the scales of ignorance and error pass away.

(11) there is no sin so great that it may not be removed by the blood of the atonement, 1 John 1:7, “last clause.” This blood has shown its efficacy in the pardon of all the great sinners who have applied to it, and its efficacy is as great now as it was when it was applied to the first sinner that was saved. No one, therefore, however great his sins, needs to hesitate about

applying to the blood of the cross, or fear that his sins are so great that they cannot be taken away!

(12) the Christian will yet be made wholly pure, 1 John 1:7, "last clause." It is of the nature of that blood which the Redeemer shed that it ultimately cleanses the soul entirely from sin. The prospect before the true Christian that he will become perfectly holy is absolute; and whatever else may befall him, he is sure that he will yet be holy as God is holy.

(13) there is no use in attempting to conceal our offences, 1 John 1:8. They are known, all known, to one Being, and they will at some future period all be disclosed. We cannot hope to evade punishment by hiding them; we cannot hope for impunity because we suppose they may be passed over as if unobserved. No man can escape on the presumption either that his sins are unknown, or that they are unworthy of notice.

(14) it is manly to make confession when we have sinned, 1 John 1:9-10. All meanness was in doing the wrong, not in confessing it; what we should be ashamed of is that we are guilty, not that confession is to be made. When a wrong has been done, there is no nobleness in trying to conceal it; and as there is no nobleness in such an attempt, so there could be no safety.

(15) peace of mind, when wrong has been done, can be found only in confession, 1 John 1:9-10. That is what nature prompts to when we have done wrong, if we would find peace, and that the religion of grace demands. When a man has done wrong, the least that he can do is to make confession; and when that is done and the wrong is pardoned, all is done that can be to restore peace to the soul.

(16) the "ease" of salvation, 1 John 1:9. What more easy terms of salvation could we desire than an acknowledgment of our sins? No painful sacrifice is demanded; no penance, pilgrimage, or voluntary scourging; all that is required is that there should be an acknowledgment of sin at the foot of the cross, and if this is done with a true heart the offender will be saved. If a man is not willing to do this, why should he be saved? How can he be?

1 JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

The subjects which are introduced into this chapter are the following:

I. A statement of the apostle that the great object which he had in writing to them was that they should not sin; and yet if they sinned, and were conscious that they were guilty before God, they should not despair, for they had an Advocate with the Father who had made propitiation for the sins of the world, 1 John 2:1-2. This is properly a continuation of what he had said in the close of the previous chapter, and should not have been separated from that.

II. The evidence that we know God, or that we are His true friends, is to be found in the fact that we keep His commandments, 1 John 2:3-6.

III. The apostle says that what he had been saying was no new commandment, but was what they had always heard concerning the nature of the gospel; but though in this respect the law of love which he meant particularly to enforce was no new commandment, none which they had not heard before, yet in another respect it was a new commandment, for it was one which in its peculiarity was originated by the Saviour, and which he meant to make the characteristic of his religion, 1 John 2:7-11. A large part of the Epistle is taken up in explaining and enforcing this commandment requiring love to the brethren.

IV. The apostle specifies 1 John 2:12-14 various reasons why he had written to them - reasons derived from the unique character of different classes among them - little children, fathers, young men.

V. Each of these classes he solemnly commands not to love the world, or the things that are in the world, for that which constitutes the peculiarity of the "world" as such is not of the Father, and all "that there is in the world is soon to pass away," 1 John 2:15-17.

VI. He calls their attention to the fact that the closing dispensation of the world had come, 1 John 2:18-20. The evidence of this was, that antichrist had appeared.

VII. He calls their attention to the characteristics of the antichrist. The essential thing would be that antichrist would deny that Jesus was the Christ, involving a practical denial of both the Father and the Son. Persons of this character were abroad, and they were in great danger of being seduced by their arts from the way of truth and duty, 1 John 2:21-26.

VIII. The apostle, in the close of the chapter 1 John 2:27-29 expresses the belief that they would not be seduced, but that they had an anointing from above which would keep them from the arts of those who would lead them astray. He earnestly exhorts them to abide in God the Saviour, that when he should appear they might have confidence and not be ashamed at his coming.

Verse 1

My little children - Τεκνια μοῦ Teknia mouThis is such language as an aged apostle would be likely to use when addressing a church, and its use in this Epistle may be regarded as one evidence that John had reached an advanced period of life when he wrote the Epistle.

These things write I unto you - To wit, the things stated in 1 John 1:1.

That ye sin not - To keep you from sin, or to induce you to lead a holy life.

And if any man sin - As all are liable, with hearts as corrupt as ours, and amidst the temptations of a world like this, to do. This, of course, does not imply that it is proper or right to sin, or that Christians should have no concern about it; but the meaning is, that all are liable to sin, and when we are conscious of sin the mind should not yield to despondency and despair. It might be supposed, perhaps, that if one sinned after baptism, or after being converted, there could be no forgiveness. The apostle designs to guard against any such supposition, and to show that the atonement made by the Redeemer had respect to all kinds of sin, and that under the deepest consciousness of guilt and of personal unworthiness, we may feel that we have an advocate on high.

We have an advocate with the Father - God only can forgive sin; and though we have no claim on him, yet there is one with him who can plead our cause, and on whom we can rely to manage our interests there. The word rendered “advocate” (παράκλητος paraklētos- paraclete) is elsewhere

applied to the Holy Spirit, and is in every other place where it occurs in the New Testament rendered "comforter," John 14:16, John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7. On the meaning of the word, see the notes at John 14:16. As used with reference to the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, et al.) it is employed in the more general sense of "helper," or "aid;" and the particular manner in which the Holy Spirit aids us, may be seen stated in the notes at John 14:16. As usual here with reference to the Lord Jesus, it is employed in the more limited sense of the word "advocate," as the word is frequently used in the Greek writers to denote an advocate in court; that is, one whom we call to our aid; or to stand by us, to defend our suit. Where it is applied to the Lord Jesus, the language is evidently figurative, since there can be no literal pleading for us in heaven; but it is expressive of the great truth that he has undertaken our cause with God, and that he performs for us all that we expect of an advocate and counselor. It is not to be supposed, however, that he manages our cause in the same way, or on the same principles on which an advocate in a human tribunal does. An advocate in court is employed to defend his client. He does not begin by admitting his guilt, or in any way basing his plea on the conceded fact that he is guilty; his proper business is to show that he is not guilty, or, if he be proved to be so, to see that no injustice shall be done him. The proper business of an advocate in a human court, therefore, embraces two things:

(1)To show that his client is not guilty in the form and manner charged on him. This he may do in one of two ways, either,

(a)by showing that he did not do the act charged on him, as when he is charged with murder, and can prove an alibi, or show that he was not present at the time the murder was committed; or,

(b)by proving that he had a right to do the deed - as, if he is charged with murder, he may admit the fact of the killing, but may show that it was in self-defense.

(2)In case his client is convicted, his office is to see that no injustice is done to him in the sentence; to stand by him still; to avail himself of all that the law allows in his favor, or to state any circumstance of age, or sex, or former service, or bodily health, which would in any way mitigate the sentence.

The advocacy of the Lord Jesus in our behalf, however, is wholly different from this, though the same general object is pursued and sought,

the good of those for whom he becomes an advocate. The nature of his advocacy may be stated in the following particulars:

(1) He admits the guilt of those for whom he becomes the advocate, to the full extent charged on them by the law of God, and by their own consciences. He does not attempt to hide or conceal it. He makes no apology for it. He neither attempts to deny the fact, nor to show that they had a right to do as they have done. He could not do this, for it would not be true; and any plea before the throne of God which should be based on a denial of our guilt would be fatal to our cause.

(2) as our advocate, he undertakes to be security that no wrong shall be done to the universe if we are not punished as we deserve; that is, if we are pardoned, and treated as if we had not sinned. This he does by pleading what he has done in behalf of people; that is, by the plea that his sufferings and death in behalf of sinners have done as much to honor the law, and to maintain the truth and justice of God, and to prevent the extension of apostasy, as if the offenders themselves had suffered the full penalty of the law. If sinners are punished in hell, there will be some object to be accomplished by it; and the simple account of the atonement by Christ is, that his death will secure all the good results to the universe which would be secured by the punishment of the offender himself. It has done as much to maintain the honor of the law, and to impress the universe with the truth that sin cannot be committed with impunity. If all the good results can be secured by substituted sufferings which there would be by the punishment of the offender himself, then it is clear that the guilty may be acquitted and saved. Why should they not be? The Saviour, as our advocate, undertakes to be security that this shall be.

(3) as our advocate, he becomes a surety for our good behavior; gives a pledge to justice that we will obey the laws of God, and that he will keep us in the paths of obedience and truth; that, if pardoned, we will not continue to rebel. This pledge or surety can be given in no human court of justice. No man, advocate or friend can give security when one is pardoned who has been convicted of stealing a horse, that he will not steal a horse again; when one who has been guilty of murder is pardoned, that he will never be guilty of it again; when one who has been guilty of forgery is pardoned, that he will not be guilty of it again. If he could do this, the subject of pardon

would be attended with much fewer difficulties than it is now. But the Lord Jesus becomes such a pledge or surety for us, Hebrews 7:22, and hence he becomes such an advocate with the Father as we need.

Jesus Christ the righteous - One who is eminently righteous himself, and who possesses the means of rendering others righteous. It is an appropriate feeling when we come before God in his name, that we come pleading the merits of one who is eminently righteous, and on account of whose righteousness we may be justified and saved.

Verse 2

And he is the propitiation for our sins - The word rendered "propitiation" (ἱλασμός hilasmos) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in 1 John 4:10 of this Epistle; though words of the same derivation, and having the same essential meaning, frequently occur. The corresponding word ἱλαστήριον hilastērionoccurs in Romans 3:25, rendered "propitiation" - "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood;" and in Hebrews 9:5, rendered mercy-seat - "shadowing the mercy-seat." The verb ἱλάσκομαι hilaskomaioccurs also in Luke 18:3 - God be merciful to me a sinner;" and Hebrews 2:17 - "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." For the idea expressed by these words, see the notes at Romans 3:25. The proper meaning of the word is that of reconciling, appeasing, turning away anger, rendering propitious or favorable. The idea is, that there is anger or wrath, or that something has been done to offend, and that it is needful to turn away that wrath, or to appease. This may be done by a sacrifice, by songs, by services rendered, or by bloody offerings. So the word is often used in Homer - Passow. We have similar words in common use, as when we say of one that he has been offended, and that something must be done to appease him, or to turn away his wrath. This is commonly done with us by making restitution; or by an acknowledgment; or by yielding the point in controversy; or by an expression of regret; or by different conduct in time to come. But this idea must not be applied too literally to God; nor should it be explained away. The essential thoughts in regard to him, as implied in this word, are:

(1)that his will has been disregarded, and his law violated, and that he has reason to be offended with us;

(2)that in that condition he cannot, consistently with his perfections, and the good of the universe, treat us as if we had not done it;

(3)that it is proper that, in some way, he should show his displeasure at our conduct, either by punishing us, or by something that shall answer the same purpose; and,

(4)that the means of propitiation come in here, and accomplish this end, and make it proper that he should treat us as if we had not sinned; that is, he is reconciled, or appeased, and his anger is turned away.

This is done, it is supposed, by the death of the Lord Jesus, accomplishing, in most important respects, what would be accomplished by the punishment of the offender himself. In regard to this, in order to a proper understanding of what is accomplished, it is necessary to observe two things - what is not done, and what is.

I. There are certain things which do not enter into the idea of propitiation. They are such as these:

(a)That it does not change the fact that the wrong was done. That is a fact which cannot be denied, and he who undertakes to make a propitiation for sin does not deny it.

(b)It does not change God; it does not make Him a different being from what He was before; it does not buy Him over to a willingness to show mercy; it does not change an inexorable being to one who is compassionate and kind.

(c)The offering that is made to secure reconciliation does not necessarily produce reconciliation in fact. It prepares the way for it on the part of God, but whether they for whom it is made will be disposed to accept it is another question.

When two men are alienated from each other, you may go to B and say to him that all obstacles to reconciliation on the part of A are removed, and that he is disposed to be at peace, but whether B will be willing to be at peace is quite another matter. The mere fact that his adversary is disposed to be at peace, determines nothing in regard to his disposition in the matter. So in regard to the controversy between man and God. It may be true that all obstacles to reconciliation on the part of God are taken away, and still it may be quite a separate question whether man will be willing to lay aside his opposition, and embrace the terms of mercy. In itself considered, one does not necessarily determine the other, or throw any light on it.

II. The amount, then, in regard to the propitiation made for sin is, that it removes all obstacles to reconciliation on the part of God: it does whatever is necessary to be done to maintain the honor of His law, His justice, and His truth; it makes it consistent for Him to offer pardon - that is, it removes whatever there was that made it necessary to inflict punishment, and thus, so far as the word can be applied to God, it appeases Him, or turns away His anger, or renders Him propitious. This it does, not in respect to producing any change in God, but in respect to the fact that it removes whatever there was in the nature of the case that prevented the free and full offer of pardon. The idea of the apostle in the passage before us is, that when we sin we may be assured that this has been done, and that pardon may now be freely extended to us.

And not for our's only - Not only for the sins of us who are Christians, for the apostle was writing to such. The idea which he intends to convey seems to be, that when we come before God we should take the most liberal and large views of the atonement; we should feel that the most ample provision has been made for our pardon, and that in no respect is there any limit as to the sufficiency of that work to remove all sin. It is sufficient for us; sufficient for all the world.

But also for the sins of the whole world - The phrase "the sins of" is not in the original, but is not improperly supplied, for the connection demands it. This is one of the expressions occurring in the New Testament which demonstrate that the atonement was made for all people, and which cannot be reconciled with any other opinion. If he had died only for a part of the race, this language could not have been used. The phrase, "the whole world," is one which naturally embraces all people; is such as would be used if it be supposed that the apostle meant to teach that Christ died for all people; and is such as cannot be explained on any other supposition. If he died only for the elect, it is not true that he is the "propitiation for the sins of the whole world" in any proper sense, nor would it be possible then to assign a sense in which it could be true. This passage, interpreted in its plain and obvious meaning, teaches the following things:

(1)that the atonement in its own nature is adapted to all people, or that it is as much fitted to one individual, or one class, as another;

(2)that it is sufficient in merit for all; that is, that if anymore should be saved than actually will be, there would be no need of any additional suffering in order to save them;

(3)that it has no special adaptedness to one person or class more than another; that is, that in its own nature it did not render the salvation of one easier than that of another.

It so magnified the law, so honored God, so fully expressed the divine sense of the evil of sin in respect to all people, that the offer of salvation might be made as freely to one as to another, and that any and all might take shelter under it and be safe. Whether, however, God might not, for wise reasons, resolve that its benefits should be applied to a part only, is another question, and one which does not affect the inquiry about the intrinsic nature of the atonement. On the evidence that the atonement was made for all, see the 2 Corinthians 5:14 note, and Hebrews 2:9 note.

(See also the Supplementary notes at these passages, for a general review of the argument regarding the extent of atonement.)

Verse 3

And hereby we do know that we know him - To wit, by that which follows, we have evidence that we are truly acquainted with him, and with the requirements of his religion; that is, that we are truly his friends. The word "him" in this verse, seems to refer to the Saviour. On the meaning of the word "know," see the notes at John 17:3. The apostle had stated in the previous part of this Epistle some of the leading points revealed by the Christian religion, and he here enters on the consideration of the nature of the evidence required to show that we are personally interested in it, or that we are true Christians. A large part of the Epistle is occupied with this subject. The first, the grand evidence - that without which all others would be vain - he says is, that we keep his commandments.

If we keep his commandments - See the notes at John 14:15. Compare John 14:23-24; John 15:10, John 15:14.

Verse 4

He that saith, I know Him - He who professes to be acquainted with the Saviour, or who professes to be a Christian.

And keepeth not his commandments - What he has appointed to be observed by his people; that is, he who does not obey him.

Is a liar - Makes a false profession; professes to have that which he really has not. Such a profession is a falsehood, because there can be no true religion where one does not obey the law of God.

Verse 5

But whoso keepeth his word - That is, what he has spoken or commanded, The term "word" here will include all that he has made known to us as his will in regard to our conduct.

In him verily is the love of God perfected - He professes to have the love of God in his heart, and that love receives its completion or filling up by obedience to the will of God. That obedience is the proper carrying out, or the exponent of the love which exists in the heart. Love to the Saviour would be defective without that, for it is never complete without obedience. If this be the true interpretation, then the passage does not make any affirmation about sinless perfection, but it only affirms that if true love exists in the heart, it will be carried out in the life; or that love and obedience are parts of the same thing; that one will be manifested by the other; and that where obedience exists, it is the completion or perfecting of love. Besides, the apostle does not say that either the love or the obedience would be in themselves absolutely perfect; but he says that one cannot fully develop itself without the other.

Hereby know we that we are in him - That is, by having in fact such love as shall insure obedience. To be in him, is to be united to him; to be his friends. Compare the John 6:56 note; Romans 13:14 note.

Verse 6

He that saith, he abideth in him - Greek, "remains" in him; that is, abides or remains in the belief of his doctrines, and in the comfort and practice of religion. The expression is one of those which refer to the intimate union between Christ and his people. A great variety of phrase is employed to denote that. For the meaning of this word in John, see the notes at 1 John 3:6.

Ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked - Ought to live and act as he did. If he is one with him, or professes to be united to him, he ought to imitate him in all things. Compare John 13:15. See also the notes at 1 John 1:6.

Verse 7

Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you - That is, what I am now enjoining is not new. It is the same doctrine which you have always heard. There has been much difference of opinion as to what is referred to by the word "commandment," whether it is the injunction in the previous verse to live as Christ lived, or whether it is what he refers to in the

following verses, the duty of brotherly love. Perhaps neither of these is exactly the idea of the apostle, but he may mean in this verse to put in a general disclaimer against the charge that what he enjoined was new. In respect to all that he taught, the views of truth which he held the duties which he enjoined, the course of life which he would prescribe as proper for a Christian to live, he meant to say that it was not at all new; it was nothing which he had originated himself, but it was in fact the same system of doctrines which they had always received since they became Christians. He might have been induced to say this because he apprehended that some of those whom he had in his eye, and whose doctrines he meant to oppose, might say that this was all new; that it was not the nature of religion as it had been commonly understood, and as it was laid down by the Saviour. In a somewhat different sense, indeed, he admits 1 John 2:8 that there was a "new" commandment which it was proper to enjoin - for he did not forget that the Saviour himself called that "new;" and though that commandment had also been all along inculcated under the gospel, yet there was a sense in which it was proper to call that new, for it had been so called by the Saviour. But in respect to all the doctrines which he maintained, and in respect to all the duties which he enjoined, he said that they were not new in the sense that he had originated them, or that they had not been enjoined from the beginning.

Perhaps, also, the apostle here may have some allusion to false teachers who were in fact scattering new doctrines among the people, things before unheard of, and attractive by their novelty; and he may mean to say that he made no pretensions to any such novelty, but was content to repeat the old and familiar truths which they had always received. Thus, if he was charged with breaching new opinions, he denies it fully; if they were advancing new opinions, and were even "making capital" out of them, he says that he attempted no such thing, but was content with the old and established opinions which they had always received.

But an old commandment - Old, in the sense that it has always been inculcated; that religion has always enjoined it.

Which ye had from the beginning - Which you have always received ever since you heard anything about the gospel. It was preached, when the gospel was first preached; it has always been promulgated when that has been promulgated; it is what you first heard when you were made acquainted with the gospel. Compare the notes at 1 John 1:1.

The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning - Is the "doctrine;" or is what was enjoined. John is often in the habit of putting a truth in a new form or aspect in order to make it emphatic, and to prevent the possibility of misapprehension. See John 1:1-2. The sense here is: "All that I am saying to yea is in fact an old commandment, or one which you have always had. There is nothing new in what I am enjoining on you."

Verse 8

Again, a new commandment I write unto you - "And yet, that which I write to you, and particularly enjoin on you, deserves in another sense to be called a new commandment, though it has been also inculcated from the beginning, for it was called new by the Saviour himself." Or the meaning may be, "In addition to the general precepts which I have referred to, I do now call your attention to the new commandment of the Saviour, that which he himself called new." There can be no doubt here that John refers to the commandment to "love one another," (see 1 John 2:9-11), and that it is here called new, not in the sense that John inculcated it as a novel doctrine, but in the sense that the Saviour called it such. For the reasons why it was so called by him, see the notes at John 13:34.

Which thing is true in him - In the Lord Jesus. That is, which commandment or law of love was illustrated in him, or was manifested by him in his contact with his disciples. That which was most prominent in him was this very love which he enjoined on all his followers.

And in you - Among you. That is, you have manifested it in your contact with each other. It is not new in the sense that you have never heard of it, and have never evinced it, but in the sense only that he called it new.

Because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth - The ancient systems of error, under which people hated each other, have passed away, and you are brought into the light of the true religion. Once you were in darkness, like others; now the light of the pure gospel shines around you, and that requires, as its distinguishing characteristic, love. Religion is often represented as light; and Christ spoke of himself, and was spoken of, as the Light of the world. See the notes at John 1:4-5. Compare John 8:12; John 12:35-36, John 12:46; Isaiah 9:2.

Verse 9

He that saith he is in the light - That he has true religion, or is a Christian. See 1 John 1:7.

And hateth his brother - The word "brother" seems here to refer to those who professed the same religion. The word is indeed sometimes used in a larger sense, but the reference here appears to be to that which is properly brotherly love among Christians. Compare Lucke, in loc.

Is in darkness even until now - That is, he cannot have true religion unless he has love to the brethren. The command to love one another was one of the most solemn and earnest which Christ ever enjoined, John 15:17; he made it the special badge of discipleship, or that by which his followers were to be everywhere known, John 13:35; and it is, therefore, impossible to have any true religion without love to those who are sincerely and truly his followers. If a man has not that, he is in deep darkness, whatever else he may have, on the whole subject of religion. Compare the notes at 1 Thessalonians 4:9.

Verse 10

He that loveth his brother abideth in the light - Has true religion, and enjoys it.

And there is none occasion of stumbling in him - Margin, "scandal." Greek, "and there is no stumbling" (or scandal - σκάνδαλον skandalon- in him.) The word here used, means anything against which one strikes or stumbles; and then a stumbling-block, an impediment, or anything which occasions a fall. Then it is used in a moral or spiritual sense, as denoting that which is the occasion of falling into sin. See the Matthew 5:29 note, and Romans 14:13 note. Here it refers to an individual in respect to his treatment of others, and means that there is nothing, so far as he is concerned, to lead him into sin. - Robinson, Lexicon. If he has love to the brethren, he has true religion; and there is, so far as the influence of this shall extend, nothing that will be the occasion of his falling into sin in his conduct toward them, for "love worketh no ill to his neighbor," Romans 13:10. His course will be just, and upright, and benevolent. He will have no envy toward them in their prosperity, and will not be disposed to detract from their reputation in adversity; he will have no feelings of exultation when they fall, and will not be disposed to take advantage of their misfortunes; and, loving them as brethren, he will be in no respect under temptation to do them wrong. In the bosom of one who loves his brother, the baleful passions of envy, malice, hatred, and uncharitableness, can have no place. At the same time, this love of the brethren would have an important effect on his whole Christian life and walk, for there are few

things that will have more influence on a man‘s character in keeping him from doing wrong, than the love of the good and the pure. He who truly loves good people, will not be likely in any respect to go astray from the paths of virtue.

Verse 11

But he that hateth his brother - The word here used would, in this connection, include both the mere absence of love, and positive hatred. It is designed to include the whole of that state of mind where there is not love for the brethren.

Is in darkness - 1 John 2:9.

And walketh in darkness - He is like one who walks in the dark, and who sees no object distinctly. See the notes at John 12:35.

And knoweth not whither he goeth - Like one in the dark. He wanders about not knowing what direction he shall take, or where the course which he is on will lead. The general meaning is, that he is ignorant of the whole nature of religion; or, in other words, love to the brethren is a central virtue in religion, and when a man has not that, his mind is entirely clouded on the whole subject, and he shows that he knows nothing of its nature. There is no virtue that is designed to be made more prominent in Christianity; and there is none that will throw its influence farther over a man‘s life.

Verse 12

I write unto you, little children - There has been much difference of opinion among commentators in regard to this verse and the three following verses, on account of their apparent tautology. Even Doddridge supposes that considerable error has here crept into the text, and that a portion of these verses should be omitted in order to avoid the repetition. But there is no authority for omitting any portion of the text, and the passage is very much in accordance with the general style of the apostle John. The author of this Epistle was evidently accustomed to express his thoughts in a great variety of ways, having even the appearance of tautology, that the exact idea might be before his readers, and that his meaning might not be misapprehended. In order to show that the truths which he was uttering in this Epistle pertained to all, and to secure the interest of all in them, he addresses himself to different classes, and says that there were reasons existing in regard to each class why he wrote to them.

In the expressions “I write,” and “I have written,” he refers to what is found in the Epistle itself, and the statements in these verses are designed to

be “reasons” why he brought these truths before their minds. The word here rendered “little children” (τεκνία teknia) is different from that used in 1 John 2:13, and rendered there “little children,” (παιδία paidiabut there can be little doubt that the same class of persons is intended. Some have indeed supposed that by the term “little children” here, as in 1 John 2:1, the apostle means to address all believers - speaking to them as a father; but it seems more appropriate to suppose that he means in these verses to divide the body of Christians whom he addressed into three classes - children, young men, and the aged, and to state particular reasons why he wrote to each. If the term (τεκνία teknia) “little children” here means the same as the term (παιδία paidia) “little children” in 1 John 2:13, then he addresses each of these classes twice in these two verses, giving each time somewhat varied reasons why he addressed them. That, by the term “little children” here, he means children literally, seems to me to be clear,

(1) because this is the usual meaning of the word, and should be understood to be the meaning here, unless there is something in the connection to show that it is used in a metaphorical sense;

(2) because it seems necessary to understand the other expressions, “young men,” and “fathers,” in a literal sense, as denoting those more advanced in life;

(3) because this would be quite in character for the apostle John. He had recorded, and would doubtless remember the solemn injunction of the Saviour to Peter John 21:15, to “feed his lambs,” and the aged apostle could not but feel that what was worthy of so solemn an injunction from the Lord, was worthy of his attention and care as an apostle; and,

(4) because in that case, each class, fathers, young men, and children, would be twice addressed in these two verses; whereas if we understood this of Christians in general, then fathers and young men would be twice addressed, and children but once.

If this is so, it may be remarked:

(1) that there were probably quite young children in the church in the time of the apostle John, for the word would naturally convey that idea.

(2) the exact age cannot be indeed determined, but two things are clear:

(a) one is, that they were undoubtedly under 20 years of age, since they were younger than the "young men" - νεανίσκοι neaniskoi- a word usually applied to those who were in the vigor of life, from about the period of 20 up to 40 years, (Notes, 1 John 2:13), and this word would embrace all who were younger than that class; and,

(b) the other is, that the word itself would convey the idea that they were in quite early life, as the word "children" - fair translation of it - does now with us. It is not possible to determine, from the use of this word, precisely of what age the class here referred to was, but the word would imply that they were in quite early life. No rule is laid down in the New Testament as to the age in which children may be admitted to the communion. The whole subject is left to the wise discretion of the church, and is safely left there. Cases must vary so much that no rule could be laid down; and little or no evil has arisen from leaving the point undetermined in the Scriptures. It may be doubted, however, whether the church has not been rather in danger of erring by having it deferred too late, than by admitting children too early.

(3) such children, if worthy the attention of an aged apostle, should receive the particular notice of pastors now. Compare the notes at John 21:15. There are reasons in all cases now, as there were then, why this part of a congregation should receive the special attention of a minister of religion. The hopes of a church are in them. Their minds are susceptible to impression. The character of the piety in the next age will depend on their views of religion. All that there is of value in the church and the world will soon pass into their hands. The houses, farms, factories; the pulpits, and the chairs of professors in colleges; the seats of senators and the benches of judges; the great offices of state, and all the offices in the church; the interests of learning, and of benevolence and liberty, are all soon to be under their control. Everything valuable in this world will soon depend on their conduct and character; and who, therefore, can over-estimate the

importance of training them up in just views of religion. As John "wrote" to this class, should not pastors "preach" to them?

Because - ὅτι hotiThis particle may be rendered "for," or "because;" and the meaning may be either that the fact that their sins were forgiven was a reason for writing to them, since it would be proper, on that ground, to exhort them to a holy life; or that he wrote to them because it was a privilege to address them as those who were forgiven, for he felt that, in speaking to them, he could address them as such. It seems to me that it is to be taken as a causal particle, and that the apostle, in the various specifications which he makes, designs to assign particular reasons why he wrote to each class, enjoining on them the duties of a holy life. Compare 1 John 2:21.

Your sins are forgiven you - That is, this is a reason why he wrote to them, and enjoined these things on them. The meaning seems to be, that the fact that our past sins are blotted out furnishes a strong reason why we should be holy. That reason is founded on the goodness of God in doing it, and on the obligation under which we are brought by the fact that God has had mercy on us. This is a consideration which children will feel as well as others; for there is nothing which will tend more to make a child obedient hereafter, than the fact that a parent freely forgives the past.

For his name's sake - On account of the name of Christ; that is, in virtue of what he has done for us. In 1 John 2:13, he states another reason why he wrote to this same class - "because they had known the Father."

Verse 13

I write unto you, fathers - As there were special reasons for writing to children, so there were also for writing to those who were more mature in life. The class here addressed would embrace all those who were in advance of the νεανίσκοί neaniskoior young men, and would properly include those who were at the head of families.

Because ye have known him that is from the beginning - That is, the Lord Jesus Christ. Notes, 1 John 1:1. The argument is, that they had been long acquainted with the principles of his religion, and understood well its doctrines and duties. It cannot be certainly inferred from this that they had had a personal acquaintance with the Lord Jesus: yet that this might have been is not impossible, for John had himself personally known him, and there may have been some among those to whom he wrote who had also seen and known him. If this were so, it would give additional

impressiveness to the reason assigned here for writing to them, and for reminding them of the principles of that religion which they had learned from his own lips and example. But perhaps all that is necessarily implied in this passage is, that they had had long opportunity of becoming acquainted with the religion of the Son of God, and that having understood that thoroughly, it was proper to address them as aged and established Christians, and to call on them to maintain the true doctrines of the gospel, against the specious but dangerous errors which then prevailed.

I write unto you, young men - νεανίσκοι neaniskoiThis word would properly embrace those who were in the vigor of life, midway between children and old men. It is uniformly rendered "young men" in the New Testament: Matthew 19:20, Matthew 19:22; Mark 14:51; Mark 16:5; Luke 7:14; Acts 2:17; Acts 5:10; and in the passages before us. It does not elsewhere occur. It is commonly understood as embracing those in the prime and vigor of manhood up to the period of about forty years. - Robinson.

Because ye have overcome the wicked one - That is, because you have vigor, (see the next verse), and that vigor you have shown by overcoming the assaults of the wicked one - the devil. You have triumphed over the passions which prevail in early life; you have combated the allurements of vice, ambition, covetousness, and sensuality; and you have shown that there is a strength of character and of piety on which reliance can be placed in promoting religion. It is proper, therefore, to exhort you not to disgrace the victory which you have already gained, but to employ your vigor of character in maintaining the cause of the Saviour. The thing to which John appeals here is the energy of those at this period of life, and it is proper at all times to make this the ground of appeal in addressing a church. It is right to call on those who are in the prime of life, and who are endowed with energy of character, to employ their talents in the service of the Lord Jesus, and to stand up as the open advocates of truth. Thus, the apostle calls on the three great classes into which a community or a church may be considered as divided: youth, because their sins were already forgiven, and, though young, they had actually entered on a career of virtue and religion, a career which by all means they ought to be exhorted to pursue; "fathers," or aged men, because they had had long experience in religion, and had a thorough acquaintance with the doctrines and duties of the gospel, and they might be expected to stand steadfastly as examples to others; and "young men," those

who were in the vigor and prime of life, because they had shown that they had power to resist evil, and were endowed with strength, and it was proper to call on them to exert their vigor in the sacred cause of religion.

I write unto you, little children - Many manuscripts read here, "I have written" - ἔγραψα egrapsa- instead of "I write" - γράφω graphōThis reading is found in both the ancient Syriac versions, and in the Coptic; it was followed by Origen, Cyril, Photius, and OEeumenius; and it is adopted by Grotius, Mill, and Hahn, and is probably the true reading. The connection seems to demand this. In 1 John 2:12-13, the apostle uses the word γράφω graphō- I write - in relation to children, fathers, and young men; in the passage before us, and in the next verse, he again addresses children, fathers, and young men, and in relation to the two latter, he says ἔγραψα egrapsa- "I have written." The connection, therefore, seems to demand that the same word should be employed here also. Some persons have supposed that the whole passage is spurious, but of that there is no evidence; and, as we have elsewhere seen, it is not uncommon for John to repeat a sentiment, and to place it in a variety of lights, in order that he might make it certain that he was not misapprehended.

Some have supposed, also, that the expression "I have written," refers to some former epistle which is now lost, or to the Gospel by the same author, which had been sent to them (Hug.), and that he means here to remind them that he had written to them on some former occasion, inculcating the same sentiments which he now expressed. But there is no evidence of this, and this supposition is not necessary in order to a correct understanding of the passage. In the former expression, "I write," the state of mind would be that of one who fixed his attention on what he was "then" doing, and the particular reason "why" he did it - and the apostle states these reasons in 1 John 2:12-13. Yet it would not be unnatural for him immediately to throw his mind into the past, and to state the reasons why he had resolved to write to them at all, and then to look at what he had purposed to say as already done, and to state the reasons why that was done.

Thus one who sat down to write a letter to a friend might appropriately state in any part of the letter the reasons which had induced him to write at all to him on the subject. If he fixed his attention on the fact that he was actually writing, and on the reasons why he wrote, he would express himself in the present tense - I write; if on the previous purpose, or the

reasons which induced him to write at all, he would use the past tense - "I have written" for such and such reasons. So John seems here, in order to make what he says emphatic, to refer to two states of his own mind: the one when he resolved to write, and the reasons which occurred to him then; and the other when he was actually writing, and the reasons which occurred to him then. The reasons are indeed substantially the same, but they are contemplated from different points of view, and that fact shows that what he did was done with deliberation, and from a deep sense of duty.

Because ye have known the Father - In 1 John 2:12, the reason assigned for writing to this class is, that their sins were forgiven. The reason assigned here is, that in early life they had become acquainted with God as a Father. He desires that they would show themselves dutiful and faithful children in this relation which they sustained to him. Even children may learn to regard God as their Father, and may have toward him all the affectionate interest which grows out of this relation.

Verse 14

I have written unto you, fathers, because … - The reason assigned here for writing to fathers is the same which is given in the previous verse. It would seem that, in respect to them, the apostle regarded this as a sufficient reason for writing to them, and only meant to enforce it by repeating it. The fact that they had through many years been acquainted with the doctrines and duties of the true religion, seemed to him a sufficient reason for writing to them, and for exhorting them to a steadfast adherence to those principles and duties.

I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong … - The two additional circumstances which he here mentions as reasons for writing to young men are, that they are strong, and that the word of God abides in them. The first of these reasons is, that they were strong; that is, that they were qualified for active and useful service in the cause of the Redeemer. Children were yet too young and feeble to appeal to them by this motive, and the powers of the aged were exhausted; but those who were in the vigor of life might be called upon for active service in the cause of the Lord Jesus. The same appeal may be made now to the same class; and the fact that they are thus vigorous is a proper ground of exhortation, for the church needs their active services, and they are bound to devote their powers to the cause of truth. The other additional ground of appeal is, that the word of God abode in them; that is, that those of this class to whom he wrote had

showed, perhaps in time of temptation, that they adhered firmly to the principles of religion. They had not flinched from an open defense of the truths of religion when assailed; they had not been seduced by the plausible arts of the advocates of error, but they had had strength to overcome the wicked one. The reason here for appealing to this class is, that in fact they had showed that they could be relied on, and it was proper to depend on them to advocate the great principles of Christianity.

Verse 15

Love not the world - The term "world" seems to be used in the Scriptures in three senses:

(1)As denoting the physical universe; the world as it appears to the eye; the world considered as the work of God, as a material creation.

(2)the world as applied to the people that reside in it - "the world of mankind."

(3)as the dwellers on the earth are by nature without religion, and act under a set of maxims, aims, and principles that have reference only to this life, the term comes to be used with reference to that community; that is, to the objects which they especially seek, and the principles by which they are actuated.

Considered with reference to the first sense of the word, it is not improper to love the world as the work of God, and as illustrating his perfections; for we may suppose that God loves his own works, and it is not wrong that we should find pleasure in their contemplation. Considered with reference to the second sense of the word, it is not wrong to love the people of the world with a love of benevolence, and to have attachment to our kindred and friends who constitute a part of it, though they are not Christians. It is only with reference to the word as used in the third sense that the command here can be understood to be applicable, or that the love of the world is forbidden; with reference to the objects sought, the maxims that prevail, the principles that reign in that community that lives for this world as contradistinguished from the world to come. The meaning is, that we are not to fix our affections on worldly objects - on what the world can furnish - as our portion, with the spirit with which they do who live only for this world, regardless of the life to come. We are not to make this world the object of our chief affection; we are not to be influenced by the maxims and feelings which prevail among those who do. Compare the Romans 12:2

note, and James 4:4 note. See also Matthew 16:26; Luke 9:25; 1 Corinthians 1:20; 1 Corinthians 3:19; Galatians 4:3; Colossians 2:8.

Neither the things that are in the world - Referred to in the next verse as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." This explanation shows what John meant by "the things that are in the world." He does not say that we are in no sense to love "anything" that is in the material world; that we are to feel no interest in flowers, and streams, and forests, and fountains; that we are to have no admiration for what God has done as the Creator of all things; that we are to cherish no love for any of the inhabitants of the world, our friends and kindred; or that we are to pursue none of the objects of this life in making provision for our families; but that we are not to love the things which are sought merely to pamper the appetite, to please the eye, or to promote pride in living. These are the objects sought by the people of the world; these are not the objects to be sought by the Christian.

If any man love the world … - If, in this sense, a person loves the world, it shows that he has no true religion; that is, if characteristically he loves the world as his portion, and lives for that; if it is the ruling principle of his life to gain and enjoy that, it shows that his heart has never been renewed, and that he has no part with the children of God. See the James 4:4 note; Matthew 6:24 note.

Verse 16

For all that is in the world - That is, all that really constitutes the world, or that enters into the aims and purposes of those who live for this life. All that that community lives for may be comprised under the following things.

The lust of the flesh - The word "lust" is used here in the general sense of desire, or that which is the object of desire - not in the narrow sense in which it is now commonly used to denote libidinous passion. See the notes at James 1:14. The phrase, "the lust of the flesh," here denotes that which pampers the appetites, or all that is connected with the indulgence of the mere animal propensities. A large part of the world lives for little more than this. This is the lowest form of worldly indulgence; those which are immediately specified being of a higher order, though still merely worldly.

And the lust of the eyes - That which is designed merely to gratify the sight. This would include, of course, costly clothes, jewels, gorgeous furniture, splendid palaces, pleasure-grounds, etc. The object is to refer to

the frivolous vanities of this world, the thing on which the eye delights to rest where there is no higher object of life. It does not, of course, mean that the eye is never to be gratified, or that we can find as much pleasure in an ugly as in a handsome object, or that it is sinful to find pleasure in beholding objects of real beauty - for the world, as formed by its Creator, is full of such things, and he could not but have intended that pleasure should enter the soul through the eye, or that the beauties which he has shed so lavishly over his works should contribute to the happiness of his creatures; but the apostle refers to this when it is the great and leading object of life - when it is sought without any connection with religion or reference to the world to come.

And the pride of life - The word here used means, properly, ostentation or boasting, and then arrogance or pride. - Robinson. It refers to whatever there is that tends to promote pride, or that is an index of pride, such as the ostentatious display of dress, equipage, furniture, etc.

Is not of the Father - Does not proceed from God, or meet with his approbation. It is not of the nature of true religion to seek these things, nor can their pursuit be reconciled with the existence of real piety in the heart. The sincere Christian has nobler ends; and he who has not any higher ends, and whose conduct and feelings can all be accounted for by a desire for these things, cannot be a true Christian.

But is of the world - Is originated solely by the objects and purposes of this life, where religion and the life to come are excluded.

Verse 17

And the world passeth away - Everything properly constituting this world where religion is excluded. The reference here does not seem to be so much to the material world, as to the scenes of show and vanity which make up the world. These things are passing away like the shifting scenes of the stage. See the notes at 1 Corinthians 7:31.

And the lust thereof - All that is here so much the object of desire. These things are like a pageant, which only amuses the eye for a moment, and then disappears forever.

But he that doeth the will of God abideth forever - This cannot mean that he will never die; but it means that he has built his happiness on a basis which is secure, and which can never pass away. Compare the notes at Matthew 7:24-27.

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Verse 18

Little children - See 1 John 2:1.

It is the last time - The closing period or dispensation; that dispensation in which the affairs of the world are ultimately to be wound up. The apostle does not, however, say that the end of the world would soon occur, nor does he intimate how long this dispensation would be. That period might continue through many ages or centuries, and still be the last dispensation, or that in which the affairs of the world would be finally closed. See the Isaiah 2:2 note; Acts 2:17 note; Hebrews 1:2 note. Some have supposed that the "last time" here refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the Jewish economy; but the more natural interpretation is to refer it to the last dispensation of the world, and to suppose that the apostle meant to say that there were clear evidences that that period had arrived.

And as ye have heard that antichrist shall come - The word "antichrist" occurs in the New Testament only in these Epistles of John, 1 John 2:18, 1 John 2:22; 1 John 4:3; 2 John 1:7. The proper meaning of (ἀντί anti) in composition is:

(1)"over-against," as ἀντιτάσσειν antitassein"contrary to," as ἀντιλέγειν antilegeinreciprocity, as ἀνταποδίδωμι antapodidōmi"substitution," as ἀντιβασιλεύς antibasileusthe place of the king, or ἀνθύπατος anthupatos-"proconsul."

The word "antichrist," therefore, might denote anyone who either was or claimed to be in the place of Christ, or one who, for any cause, was in opposition to him. The word, further, would apply to one opposed to him, on whatever ground the opposition might be; whether it were open and avowed, or whether it were only in fact, as resulting from certain claims which were adverse to his, or which were inconsistent with his. A "vice-functionary," or an "opposing functionary," would be the idea which the word would naturally suggest. If the word stood alone, and there were nothing said further to explain its meaning, we should think, when the word "antichrist" was used, either of one who claimed to be the Christ, and who thus was a rival; or of one who stood in opposition to him on some other ground. That which constituted the characteristics of antichrist, according to John, who only has used the word, he has himself stated. 1 John 2:22, "who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." 1 John 4:3, "and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God; and this

is that spirit of antichrist." 2 John 1:7, "for many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

From this it is clear, that John understood by the word all those that denied that Jesus is the Messiah, or that the Messiah has come in the flesh. If they held that Jesus was a deceiver, and that he was not the Christ, or if they maintained that, though Christ had come, he had not come in the flesh, that is, with a proper human nature, this showed that such persons had the spirit of antichrist. They arrayed themselves against him, and held doctrines which were in fact in entire opposition to the Son of God. It would appear then that John does not use the word in the sense which it would bear as denoting one who set up a rival claim, or who came in the place of Christ, but in the sense of those who were opposed to him by denying essential doctrines in regard to his person and advent. It is not certainly known to what persons he refers, but it would seem not improbable to Jewish adversaries, (see Suicer's Thesaur. s. voc.,) or to some forms of the Gnostic belief. See the notes at 1 John 4:2. The doctrine respecting antichrist, as stated in the New Testament, may be summed up in the following particulars:

(1) That there would be those, perhaps in considerable numbers, who would openly claim to be the Christ, or the true Messiah, Matthew 24:5, Matthew 24:24.

(2) that there would be a spirit, which would manifest itself early in the church, that would strongly tend to some great apostasy under some one head or leader, or to a concentration on an individual, or a succession of individuals, who would have eminently the spirit of antichrist, though for a time the developement of that spirit would be hindered or restrained. See the notes at 2 Thessalonians 2:1-7.

(3) that this would be ultimately concentrated on a single leader - "the man of sin" - and embodied under some great apostasy, at the head of which would be that "man of sin," 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10. It is to this that Paul particularly refers, or this is the view which he took of this apostacy, and it is this which he particularly describes.

(4) that, in the meantime, and before the elements of the great apostasy should be concentrated and embodied, there might not be a few who would partake of the same general spirit, and who would be equally opposed to Christ in their doctrines and aims; that is, who would embody in themselves the essential spirit of antichrist, and by whose appearing it might be known that the last dispensation had come. It is to these that John refers, and these he found in his own age. Paul fixed the eye on future times, when the spirit of antichrist should be embodied under a distinct and mighty organization; John on his own time, and found then essentially what it had been predicted would occur in the church. He here says that they had been taught to expect that antichrist would come under the last dispensation; and it is implied that it could be ascertained that it was the last time, from the fact that the predicted opposer of Christ had come. The reference is probably to the language of the Saviour, that before the end should be, and as a sign that it was coming, many would arise claiming to be Christ, and, of course, practically denying that he was the Christ. Matthew 24:5, "many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." Matthew 24:24, "and there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets; and they shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." This prediction it is probable the apostles had referred to wherever they had preached, so that there was a general expectation that one or more persons would appear claiming to be the Christ, or maintaining such opinions as to be inconsistent with the true doctrine that Jesus was the Messiah. Such persons, John says, had then in fact appeared, by which it could be known that they were living under the closing dispensations of the world referred to by the Saviour. Compare the notes at 2 Thessalonians 2:2-5.

Even now are there many antichrists - There are many who have the characteristics which it was predicted that antichrist would have; that is, as explained above, there are many who deny that Jesus is the Messiah, or who deny that he has come in the flesh. If they maintained that Jesus was an impostor and not the true Messiah, or if, though they admitted that the Messiah had come, they affirmed, as the "Docetae" did, (Note at 1 John 4:2) that he had come in "appearance" only, and not really come in the flesh, this was the spirit of antichrist. John says that there were many such persons in fact in his time. It would seem from this that John did not refer to a single individual, or to a succession of individuals who should come

previous to the winding up of the affairs of the world, as Paul did (2 Thessalonians 2:2 ff), but that he understood that there might be many at the same time who would evince the spirit of antichrist. Both he and Paul, however, refer to the expectation that before the coming of the Saviour to judge the world there would be prominent adversaries of the Christian religion, and that the end would not come until such adversaries appeared. Paul goes more into detail, and describes the characteristics of the great apostasy more at length (2 Thessalonians 2:2 ff; 1 Timothy 4:1 ff; 2 Timothy 3:1 ff) John says, not that the appearing of these persons indicated that the end of the world was near, but that they had such characteristics as to show that they were living in the last dispensation. Paul so describes them as to show that the end of the world was not to be immediately expected (2 Thessalonians 2:1 ff), John, without referring to that point, says that there were enough of that character then to prove that the last dispensation had come, though he does not say how long it would continue.

Whereby we know it is the last time - They have the characteristics which it was predicted many would have before the end of the world should come. The evidence that it was "the last time," or the closing dispensation of the world, derived from the appearing of these persons, consists simply in the fact that it was predicted that such persons would appear under the Christian, or the last dispensation, Matthew 24:5, Matthew 24:24-27. Their appearance was to precede the coming of the Saviour, though it is not said "how long" it would precede that; but at any time the appearing of such persons would be an evidence that it was the closing dispensation of the world, for the Saviour, in his predictions respecting them, had said that they would appear before he should return to judgment. It cannot now be determined precisely to what classes of persons there is reference here, because we know too little of the religious state of the times to which the apostle refers. No one can prove, however, that there were "not" persons at that time who so fully corresponded to the predictions of the Saviour as to be a complete fulfillment of what he said, and to demonstrate that the last age had truly come. It would seem probable that there may have been reference to some Jewish adversaries, who denied that Jesus was the Messiah (Robinson Lexicon), or to some persons who had already broached the doctrine of the "Docetae," that though Jesus was the Messiah, yet that he was a man in appearance only, and had not really come in the flesh.

Classes of persons of each description abounded in the early ages of the church.

Verse 19

They went out from us - From the church. That is, they had once been professors of the religion of the Saviour, though their apostasy showed that they never had any true piety. John refers to the fact that they had once been in the church, perhaps to remind those to whom he wrote that they knew them well, and could readily appreciate their character. It was a humiliating statement that those who showed themselves to be so utterly opposed to religion had once been members of the Christian church; but this is a statement which we are often compelled to make.

But they were not of us - That is, they did not really belong to us, or were not true Christians. See the notes at Matthew 7:23. This passage proves that these persons, whatever their pretensions and professions may have been, were never sincere Christians. The same remark may be made of all who apostatize from the faith, and become teachers of error. They never were truly converted; never belonged really to the spiritual church of Christ.

For if they had been of us - If they had been sincere and true Christians.

They would no doubt have continued with us - The words "no doubt" are supplied by our translators, but the affirmation is equally strong without them: "they would have remained with us." This affirms, without any ambiguity or qualification, that if they had been true Christians they "would" have remained in the church; that is, they would not have apostatized. There could not be a more positive affirmation than that which is implied here, that those who are true Christians will continue to be such; or that the saints will not fall away from grace. John affirms it of these persons, that if they had been true Christians they would never have departed from the church. He makes the declaration so general that it may be regarded as a universal truth, that if "any" are truly "of us," that is, if they are true Christians, they will continue in the church, or will never fall away. The statement is so made also as to teach that if any "do" fall away from the church, the fact is full proof that they never had any religion, for if they had had they would have remained steadfast in the church.

But they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us - It was suffered or permitted in the providence of God that this should occur, "in order" that it might be seen and known that they were

not true Christians, or in order that their real character might be developed. It was desirable that this should be done:

(a)in order that the church might be purified from their influence - compare the notes at John 15:2;

(b)in order that it might not be responsible for their conduct, or reproached on account of it;

(c)in order that their real character might be developed, and they might themselves see that they were not true Christians;

(d)in order that, being seen and known as apostates, their opinions and conduct might have less influence than if they were connected with the church;

(e)in order that they might themselves understand their own true character, and no longer live under the delusive opinion that they were Christians and were safe, but that, seeing themselves in their true light, they might be brought to repentance.

For there is only a most slender prospect that any who are deceived in the church will ever be brought to true repentance there; and slight as is the hope that one who apostatizes will be, such an event is much more probable than it would be if he remained in the church. People are more likely to be converted when their character is known and understood, than they are when playing a game of deception, or are themselves deceived. What is here affirmed of these persons often occurs now; and those who have no true religion are often suffered to apostatize from their profession for the same purposes. It is better that they should cease to have any connection with the church than that they should remain in it; and God often suffers them to fall away even from the profession of religion, in order that they may not do injury as professing Christians. This very important passage, then, teaches the following things:

(1) That when people apostatize from the profession of religion, and embrace fatal error, or live in sin, it proves that they never had any true piety.

(2) the fact that such persons fall away cannot be adduced to prove that Christians ever fall from grace, for it demonstrates nothing on that point, but proves only that these persons never had any real piety. They may have

had much that seemed to be religion; they may have been zealous, and apparently devoted to God, and may even have had much comfort and peace in what they took to be piety; they may have been eminently "gifted" in prayer, or may have even been successful preachers of the gospel, but all this does not prove that they ever had any piety, nor does the fact that such persons apostatize from their profession throw any light on a question quite foreign to this - whether true Christians ever fall from grace. Compare Matthew 7:22-23.

(3) the passage before us proves that if any are true Christians they will remain in the church, or will certainly persevere and be saved. They may indeed backslide grievously; they may wander far away, and pain the hearts of their brethren, and give occasion to the enemies of religion to speak reproachfully; but the apostle says, "if they had been of us, they would have continued with us."

(4) one of the best evidences of true piety is found in the fact of continuing with the church. I do not mean nominally and formally, but really and spiritually, having the heart with the church; loving its peace and promoting its welfare; identifying ourselves with real Christians, and showing that we are ready to cooperate with those who love the Lord Jesus and its cause.

(5) the main reason why professing Christians are suffered to apostatize is to show that they had no true religion. It is desirable that they should see it themselves; desirable that others should see it also. It is better that it should be known that they had no true religion than that they should remain in the church to be a burden on its movements, and a reproach to the cause. By being allowed thus to separate themselves from the church, they may be brought to remember their violated vows, and the church will be free from the reproach of having those in its bosom who are a dishonor to the Christian name. We are not to wonder, then, if persons apostatize who have been professors of true religion; and we are not to suppose that the greatest injury is done to the cause when they do it. A greater injury by far is done when such persons remain in the church.

Verse 20

But ye have an unction from the Holy One - The apostle in this verse evidently intends to say that he had no apprehension in regard to those to whom he wrote that they would thus apostatize, and bring dishonor on their religion. They had been so anointed by the Holy Spirit that they understood the true nature of religion, and it might be confidently expected that they would persevere. The word "unction" or "anointing" (χρίσμα chrisma) means, properly, "something rubbed in or ointed;" oil for anointing, "ointment;" then it means an anointing. The allusion is to the anointing of kings and priests, or their inauguration or coronation, (1 Samuel 10:1; 1 Samuel 16:13; Exodus 28:41; Exodus 40:15; compare the notes at Matthew 1:1); and the idea seems to have been that the oil thus used was emblematic of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit as qualifying them for the discharge of the duties of their office. Christians, in the New Testament, are described as "kings and priests," Revelation 1:6; Revelation 5:10, and as a "royal priesthood" 1 Peter 2:5, 1 Peter 2:9; and hence they are represented as "anointed," or as endowed with those graces of the Spirit, of which anointing was the emblem. The phrase "the Holy One" refers here, doubtless, to the Holy Spirit, that Spirit whose influences are imparted to the people of God, to enlighten, to sanctify, and to comfort them in their trials. The particular reference here is to the influences of that Spirit as giving them clear and just views of the nature of religion, and thus securing them from error and apostasy.

And ye know all things - That is, all things which it is essential that you should know on the subject of religion. See the John 16:13 note; 1 Corinthians 2:15 note. The meaning cannot be that they knew all things pertaining to history, to science, to literature, and to the arts; but that, under the influences of the Holy Spirit, they had been made so thoroughly acquainted with the truths and duties of the Christian religion, that they might be regarded as safe from the danger or fatal error. The same may be said of all true Christians now, that they are so taught by the Spirit of God, that they have a practical acquaintance with what religion is, and with what it requires, and are secure from falling into fatal error. In regard to the general meaning of this verse, then, it may he observed:

I. That it does not mean any one of the following things:

(1) That Christians are literally instructed by the Holy Spirit in all things, or that they literally understand all subjects. The teaching, whatever

it may be, refers only to religion.

(2) it is not meant that any new faculties of mind are conferred on them, or any increased intellectual endowments, by their religion. It is not a fact that Christians, as such, are superior in mental endowments to others; nor that by their religion they have any mental traits which they had not before their conversion. Paul, Peter, and John had essentially the same mental characteristics after their conversion which they had before; and the same is true of all Christians.

(3) it is not meant that any new truth is revealed to the mind by the Holy Spirit. All the truth that is brought before the mind of the Christian is to be found in the Word of God, and "revelation," as such, was completed when the Bible was finished.

(4) it is not meant that anything is perceived by Christians which they had not the natural faculty for perceiving before their conversion, or which other people have not also the natural faculty for perceiving. The difficulty with people is not a defect of natural faculties, it is in the blindness of the heart.

II. The statement here made by John "does" imply, it is supposed, the following things:

(1) That the minds of Christians are so enlightened that they have a new perception of the truth. They see it in a light in which they did not before. They see it as truth. They see its beauty, its force, its adapted less to their condition and wants. They understand the subject of religion better than they once did, and better than others do. What was once dark appears now plain; what once had no beauty to their minds now appears beautiful; what was once repellant is now attractive.

(2) they see this to be true; that is, they see it in such a light that they cannot doubt that it is true. They have such views of the doctrines of religion, that they have no doubt that they are true, and are willing on the belief of their truth to lay down their lives, and stake their eternal interests.

(3) their knowledge of truth is enlarged. They become acquainted with more truths than they would have known if they had not been under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Their range of thought is greater; their vision more extended, as well as more clear.

III. The evidence that this is so is found in the following things:

(1) The express statements of Scripture. See 1 Corinthians 2:14-15, and the notes at that passage. Compare John 16:13-14.

(2) it is a matter of fact that it is so.

(a) People by nature do not perceive any beauty in the truths of religion. They are distasteful to them, or they are repulsive and offensive. "The doctrine of the cross is to the Jew a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolishness." They may see indeed the force of an argument, but they do not see the beauty of the way of salvation.

(b) When they are converted they do. These things appear to them to be changed, and they see them in a new light, and perceive a beauty in them which they never did before.

(c) There is often a surprising development of religious knowledge when persons are converted. They seem to understand the way of salvation, and the whole subject of religion, in a manner and to an extent which cannot be accounted for, except on the supposition of a teaching from above.

(d) This is manifest also in the knowledge which persons otherwise ignorant exhibit on the subject of religion. With few advantages for education, and with no remarkable talents, they show an acquaintance with the truth, a knowledge of religion, an ability to defend the doctrines of Christianity, and to instruct others in the way of salvation, which could have been derived only from some source superior to themselves. Compare John 7:15; Acts 4:13.

(e) The same thing is shown by their "adherence to truth" in the midst of persecution, and simply because they perceive that for which they die to be

the truth. And is there anything incredible in this? May not the mind see what truth is? How do we judge of an axiom in mathematics, or of a proposition that is demonstrated, but by the fact that the mind "perceives" it to be true, and cannot doubt it? And may it not be so in regard to religious truth - especially when that truth is seen to accord with what we know of ourselves, our lost condition as sinners, and our need of a Saviour, and when we see that the truths revealed in the Scriptures are exactly adapted to our wants?

(See also the supplementary note under 1 Corinthians 2:14.)

Verse 21

I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth - You are not to regard my writing to you in this earnest manner as any evidence that I do not suppose you to be acquainted with religion and its duties. Some, perhaps, might have been disposed to put this construction on what he had said, but he assures them that that was not the reason why he had thus addressed them. The very fact that they did understand the subject of religion, he says, was rather the reason why he wrote to them.

But because ye know it - This was the ground of his hope that his appeal would be effectual. If they had never known what religion was, if they were ignorant of its nature and its claims, he would have had much less hope of being able to guard them against error, and of securing their steady walk in the path of piety. We may always make a strong and confident appeal to those who really understand what the nature of religion is, and what are the evidences of its truth.

And that no lie is of the truth - No form of error, however plausible it may appear, however ingeniously it may be defended and however much it may seem to be favorable to human virtue and happiness, can be founded in truth. What the apostle says here has somewhat the aspect of a truism, but it contains a real truth of vital importance, and one which should have great influence in determining our minds in regard to any proposed opinion or doctrine. Error often appears plausible. It seems to be adapted to relieve the mind of many difficulties which perplex and embarrass it on the subject of religion. It seems to be adapted to promote religion. It seems to make those who embrace it happy, and for a time they apparently enjoy religion. But John says that however plausible all this may be, however much it may

seem to prove that the doctrines thus embraced are of God, it is a great and vital maxim that no error can have its foundation in truth, and, of course, that it must be worthless. The grand question is, "what is truth;" and when that is determined, we can easily settle the inquiries which come up about the various doctrines that are abroad in the world. Mere plausible appearances, or temporary good results that may grow out of a doctrine, do not prove that it is based on truth; for whatever those results may be, it is impossible that any error, however plausible, should have its origin in the truth.

Verse 22

Who is a liar - That is, who is false; who maintains an erroneous doctrine; who is an impostor, if he is not? The object of the apostle is to specify one of the prevailing forms of error, and to show that, however plausible the arguments might be by which it was defended, it was impossible that it should be true. Their own knowledge of the nature of religion must convince them at once that this opinion was false.

That denieth that Jesus is the Christ - It would seem that the apostle referred to a class who admitted that Jesus lived, but who denied that he was the true Messiah. On what grounds they did this is unknown; but to maintain this was, of course, the same as to maintain that he was an impostor. The ground taken may have been that he had not the characteristics ascribed to the Messiah in the prophets; or that he did not furnish evidence that he was sent from God; or that he was an enthusiast. Or perhaps some special form of error may be referred to, like that which is said to have been held by Corinthus, who in his doctrine separated Jesus from Christ, maintaining them to be two distinct persons. - "Doddridge."

He is antichrist - (See the notes at 1 John 2:18). He has all the characteristics and attributes of antichrist; or, a doctrine which practically involves the denial of both the Father and the Son, must be that of antichrist.

That denieth the Father and the Son - That denies the special truths pertaining to God the Father, and to the Son of God. The charge here is not that they entertained incorrect views of God "as such" - as almighty, eternal, most wise, and good; but that they denied the doctrines which religion taught respecting God as Father and Son. Their opinions tended to a denial of what was revealed respecting God as a Father - not in the general sense of being the "Father" of the universe, but in the particular sense of his

relation to the Son. It cannot be supposed that they denied the existence and perfections of God as such, nor that they denied that God is a "Father" in the relation which he sustains to the universe; but the meaning must be that what they held went to a practical denial of that which is special to the true God, considered as sustaining the relation of a Father to his Son Jesus Christ. Correct views of the Father could not be held without correct views of the Son; correct views of the Son could not be held without correct views of the Father. The doctrines respecting the Father and the Son were so connected that one could not be held without holding the other, and one could not be denied without denying the other. Compare the Matthew 11:27 note; John 5:23 note. No man can have just views of God the Father who has not right apprehensions of the Son. As a matter of fact in the world, people have right apprehensions of God only when they have correct views of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 23

Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father - That is, has no just views of the Father, and has no evidence of his friendship. It is only by the Son of God that the Father is made known to people, Matthew 11:27; Hebrews 1:2-3, and it is only through him that we can become reconciled to God, and obtain evidence of His favor. See the notes at John 5:23.

But he that acknowledges the Son, hath the Father also - This passage, in the common version of the New Testament, is printed in italics, as if it were not in the original, but was supplied by the translators. It is true that it is not found in all the manuscripts and versions; but it is found in a large number of manuscripts, and in the Vulgate, the Syriac, the Aethiopic, the Coptic, the Armenian, and the Arabic versions, and in the critical editions of Griesbach, Tittmann, and Hahn. It is probable, therefore, that it should be regarded as a genuine portion of the sacred text. It is much in the style of John, and though not necessary to complete the sense, yet it well suits the connection. As it was true that if one denied the Son of God he could have no pretensions to any proper acquaintance with the Father, so it seemed to follow that if anyone had any proper knowledge of the Son of God, and made a suitable confession of him, he had evidence that he was acquainted with the Father. Compare John 17:3; Romans 10:9. Though, therefore, this passage was wanting in many of the manuscripts consulted by the translators of the Bible, and though in printing it in the manner in

which they have they showed the great caution with which they acted in admitting anything doubtful into their translation, yet the passage should be restored to the text, and be regarded as a genuine portion of the Word of God. The great truth can never be too clearly stated, or too often inculcated, that it is only by a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ that we can have any true acquaintance with God. and that all who have just views of the Saviour are in fact acquainted with the true God, and are heirs of eternal life.

Verse 24

Let that therefore abide in you - Adhere steadfastly to it; let the truth obtain a permanent lodgement in the soul. In view of its great importance, and its influence on your happiness here and hereafter, let it never depart from you.

Which ye have heard from the beginning - That is, the same doctrines which you have always been taught respecting the Son of God and the way of salvation. See the notes at 1 John 2:7.

Ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father - Truly united to the Son and to the Father; or having evidence of the favor and friendship of the Son and the Father.

Verse 25

And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life - This is evidently added to encourage them in adhering to the truths which they had embraced respecting the Son of God. In maintaining these truths they had the promise of eternal life; in departing from them they had none, for the "promise" of heaven in our world is made only to those who embrace one class of doctrines or opinions. No one can show that any "promise" of heaven is made to the mere possessor of beauty, or wealth, or talent; to the accomplished or the "happy"; to those who are distinguished for science, or skill in the arts; to rank, or birth, or blood; to courage or strength. Whatever expectation of heaven anyone may entertain on account of any of these things, must be traced to something else than a "promise," for there is none in the Bible to that effect. The "promise" of heaven to people is limited to those who repent of their sins, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who lead a holy life; and if anyone will base his hope of heaven on a "promise," it must be limited to these things. And yet what well-founded hope of heaven "can" there be, except that which is based "on a promise?" How does anyone know that he can be saved, unless he has some assurance from God that it may and shall be so? Is not heaven his

home? How does anyone know that he may dwell there, without some assurance from Him that he may? Is not the crown of life His gift? How can anyone know that he will possess it, unless he has some promise from Him? However people may reason, or conjecture, or hope, the only "promise" of eternal life is found in the Bible; and the fact that we have such promise should surely be a sufficient inducement to us to hold fast the truth. On the promise of life in the gospel, see John 17:2; Romans 2:6-7; Mark 16:16; Matthew 25:46.

Verse 26

These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you - Respecting their character, and in order to guard you against their arts. The word "seduce" means to lead astray; and it here refers to those who would seduce them "from the truth," or lead them into dangerous error. The apostle does not mean that they had actually seduced them, for he states in the following verse that they were yet safe; but he refers to the fact that there was danger that they might be led into error.

Verse 27

But the anointing which ye have received of him - See the notes at 1 John 2:20.

Abideth in you - The meaning is, that the influence on your heart and life, which results from the fact that you are anointed of God, permanently abides with you, and will keep you from dangerous error. The apostle evidently meant to say that he felt assured that they would not be seduced from the truth, and that his confidence in regard to this was placed in the fact that they had been truly anointed unto God as kings and priests. Thus understood, what he here says is equivalent to the expression of a firm conviction that those who are true Christians will not fall away. Compare the notes at 1 John 2:19-20.

And ye need not that any man teach you - That is, what are the things essential to true religion. See the notes at 1 John 2:20.

But as the same anointing teacheth you of all things - This cannot mean that the mere act of anointing, if that had been performed in their case, would "teach" them; but it refers to what John includes in what he calls the anointing - that is, in the solemn consecrating to the duties of religion under the influences of the Holy Spirit.

And is truth, and is no lie - Leads to truth, and not to error. No man was ever led into error by those influences which result from the fact that he

has been consecrated to the service of God.

Ye shall abide in him - Margin, "or it." The Greek will bear either construction. The connection, however, seems to demand that it should be understood as referring to him - that is, to the Saviour.

Verse 28

And now, little children - See the notes at 1 John 2:1.

Abide in him; that, when he shall appear - In the end of the world, to receive his people to himself. See the notes at John 14:2-3.

We may have confidence - Greek, boldness - παῤῥησίαν . This word is commonly used to denote openness, plainness, or boldness in speaking, Mark 8:32; John 7:4, John 7:13, John 7:26; Acts 2:29; Acts 4:13, Acts 4:29; 2 Corinthians 3:12; 2 Corinthians 7:4. Here it means the kind of boldness, or calm assurance, which arises from evidence of piety, and of preparation for heaven. It means that they would not be overwhelmed and confounded at the coming of the Saviour, by its being then found that all their hopes were fallacious.

And not be ashamed before him at his coming - By having all our hopes taken away; by being held up to the universe as guilty and condemned. We feel ashamed when our hopes are disappointed; when it is shown that we have a character different from what we professed to have; when our pretensions to goodness are stripped off, and the heart is made bare. Many will thus be ashamed in the last day, Matthew 7:21-23; but it is one of the promises made to those who truly believe on the Saviour, that they shall never be ashamed or confounded. See the notes at 1 Peter 2:6. Compare Isaiah 45:17; Romans 5:5; 1 Peter 4:16; Mark 8:38.

Verse 29

If ye know that he is righteous - This is not said as if there could be any doubt on the subject, but merely to call their attention to it as a well-known truth, and to state what followed from it. Everyone who has any true acquaintance with God, must have the fullest conviction that he is a righteous Being. But, if this be so, John says, then it must follow that only those who are truly righteous can regard themselves as begotten of Him.

Ye know - Margin, "know ye." The Greek will bear either construction, and either would make good sense. Assuming that God is righteous, it would be proper to state, as in the text, that it followed from this that they must know that only those who are righteous can be regarded as begotten of Him; or, assuming this to be true, it was proper to exhort them to be

righteous, as in the margin. Whichever interpretation is adopted, the great truth is taught, that only those who are truly righteous can regard themselves as the children of God.

That everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him - Or rather, is begotten of Him; is truly a child of God. This truth is everywhere taught in the Bible, and is worthy of being often repeated. No one who is not, in the proper sense of the term, a righteous man, can have any wellfounded pretensions to being regarded as a child of God. If this be so, then it is not difficult to determine whether we are the children of God.

(1)if we are unjust, false, dishonest, we cannot be His children.

(2)if we are indulging in any known sin, we cannot be.

(3)if we are not truly righteous, all visions and rapture, all zeal and ardor, though in the cause of religion, all that we may pride ourselves on in being fervent in prayer, or eloquent in preaching, is vain.

(4)if we are righteous, in the true and proper sense, doing that which is right toward God and toward people, to ourselves, to our families, to our neighbors, to the world at large, to the Saviour who died for us, then we are true Christians; and then, no matter how soon he may appear, or how solemn and overwhelming the scenes that shall close the world, we shall not be ashamed or confounded, for we shall hail him as our Saviour, and rejoice that the time has come that we may go and dwell with him forever.

1 JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Introduction

This chapter embraces the following subjects:

I. The fact that Christians are now the sons of God, 1 John 3:1-3.

(1)we are the sons of God, and this will explain the reason why the world does not appreciate our character, or understand the reasons of our conduct, 1 John 3:1.

(2)the consequences of sustaining that relation to God, or of being regarded as His sons.

(a) We shall be like him when he appears, 1 John 3:2.

(b) We shall purify ourselves under the influence of this hope, 1 John 3:3.

II. The fact that he who is an adopted child of God does not commit sin, 1 John 3:4-10.

(1)all sin is the transgression of the law, 1 John 3:4;

(2)Christ was manifested to take away our sins, 1 John 3:5;

(3)he that commits sin is of the devil, 1 John 3:8; and,

(4)as a matter of fact, he who is of God does not commit sin, 1 John 3:7, 1 John 3:9-10.

III. True religion will be manifested by love to the Christian brotherhood, 1 John 3:10-18.

(1)as a man who is not righteous cannot be a true Christian, neither can he who does not love his brother, 1 John 3:10.

(2)it is the solemn command of the Saviour that his followers should love one another, 1 John 3:11.

(3)the importance of this is seen by the opposite conduct of Cain, 1 John 3:12.

(4)love to the brethren furnishes the most certain evidence that we have passed from death unto life, 1 John 3:14.

(5)aman who hates another is in fact a murderer, and, of course, cannot be a true child of God, 1 John 3:15.

(6)we should be stimulated to the love of the brethren by the example of the Saviour, who laid down his life for us, 1 John 3:16.

(7)if we see a brother in want, and have the means of aiding him, and do not do it, we cannot have the love of God dwelling in us, 1 John 3:17-18.

IV. We may have evidence that we love God by the consciousness of our feelings toward him, as well as by outward acts toward his friends, 1 John 3:19-21.

V. If we keep His commandments our prayers will be answered, 1 John 3:22-23.

(1)there is an assurance that we shall receive what we need if we ask it, and keep his commandments, 1 John 3:22.

(2)the particular commandments on which the efficacy of prayer so much depends, are:

(a)that we believe on the name of the Saviour, and,

(b)that we love the Christian brotherhood, 1 John 3:23.

VI. We may know that we abide in God by the spirit which he has given us, as well as by keeping his commandments, 1 John 3:24.

This chapter, therefore, is occupied mainly with stating what are the evidences of true piety; and, in order to determine this question, there is perhaps no part of the Bible that may be studied with more profit than this portion of the writings of John.

Verse 1

Behold, what manner of love - What love, in "kind" and in "degree." In kind the most tender and the most ennobling, in adopting us into His family, and in permitting us to address Him as our Father; in "degree" the most exalted, since there is no higher love that can be shown than in adopting a poor and friendless orphan, and giving him a parent and a home. Even God could bestow upon us no more valuable token of affection than that we should be adopted into His family, and permitted to regard Him as our Father. When we remember how insignificant we are as creatures, and how ungrateful, rebellious, and vile we have been as sinners, we may well be amazed at the love which would adopt us into the holy family of God, so that we may be regarded and treated as the children of the Most High. A prince could manifest no higher love for a wandering, ragged, vicious orphan boy, found in the streets, than by adopting him into his own family,

and admitting him to the same privileges and honors as his own sons; and yet this would be a trifle compared with the honor which God has bestowed on us.

The Father hath bestowed upon us - God, regarded as a Father, or as at the head of the universe considered as one family.

That we should be called the sons of God - That is, that we should "be" the sons of God - the word "called" being often used in the sense of "to be." On the nature and privileges of adoption, see the Romans 8:15-17 notes; 2 Corinthians 6:18 note, and practical remarks on that chapter.

Therefore the world knoweth us not - Does not understand our principles; the reasons of our conduct; the sources of our comforts and joys. The people of the world regard us as fanatics or enthusiasts; as foolish in abandoning the pleasures and pursuits which they engage in; as renouncing certain happiness for that which is uncertain; as cherishing false and delusive hopes in regard to the future, and as practicing needless austerities, with nothing to compensate for the pleasures which are abandoned. There is nothing which the frivolous, the ambitious, and the selfish "less" understand than they do the elements which go into the Christian's character, and the nature and source of the Christian's joys.

Because it knew him not - It did not know the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, the world had no right views of the real character of the Lord Jesus when he was on the earth. They mistook him for an enthusiast or an impostor; and it is no wonder that, having wholly mistaken his character, they should mistake ours. On the fact that the world did not know him, see the 1 Corinthians 2:8 note; Acts 3:17 note. Compare John 17:25. On the fact that Christians may be expected to be regarded and treated as their Saviour was, see the notes at John 15:18-20. Compare Matthew 10:24-25.

Verse 2

Beloved, now are we the sons of God - We now in fact sustain this rank and dignity, and on that we may reflect with pleasure and gratitude. It is in itself an exalted honor, and may be contemplated as such, whatever may be true in regard to what is to come. In the dignity and the privileges which we now enjoy, we may find a grateful subject of reflection, and a cause of thankfulness, even if we should look to nothing beyond, or when we contemplate the fact by itself.

And it doth not yet appear what we shall be - It is not fully revealed what we shall be hereafter; what will be the full result of being regarded as

the children of God. There are, indeed, certain things which may be inferred as following from this. There is enough to animate us with hope, and to sustain us in the trials of life. There is one thing which is clear, that we shall be like the Son of God; but what is fully involved in this is not made known. Perhaps,

(1)it could not be so revealed that we could understand it, for that state may be so unlike the present that no words would fully convey the conception to our minds. Perhaps,

(2)it may be necessary to our condition here, as on probation, that no more light should be furnished in regard to the future than to stimulate us to make efforts to reach a world where all is light. For an illustration of the sentiment expressed here by the apostle, compare the notes at 2 Peter 1:4.

But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him - It is revealed to us that we shall be made like Christ; that is, in the bodies with which we shall be raised up, in character, in happiness, in glory. Compare the Philemon 3:21 note; 2 Corinthians 3:18 note. This is enough to satisfy the Christian in his prospects for the future world. To be like Christ is the object of his supreme aim. For that he lives, and all his aspirations in regard to the coming world may be summed up in this - that he wishes to be like the glorified Son of God, and to share his honors and his joys. See the notes at Philemon 3:10.

For we shall see him as he is - It is clearly implied here that there will be an influence in beholding the Saviour as he is, which will tend to make us like him, or to transform us into his likeness. See the nature of this influence explained in the notes at 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Verse 3

And every man that hath this hope in him - This hope of seeing the Saviour, and of being made like him; that is, every true Christian. On the nature and influence of hope, see the notes at Romans 8:24-25.

Purifieth himself - Makes himself holy. That is, under the influence of this hope of being like the Saviour, he puts forth those efforts in struggling against sin, and in overcoming his evil propensities, which are necessary to make him pure. The apostle would not deny that for the success of these efforts we are dependent on divine aid; but he brings into view, as is often done in the sacred writings, the agency of man himself as essentially connected with success. Compare Philemon 2:12. The particular thought here is, that the hope of being like Christ, and of being permitted to dwell

with him, will lead a man to earnest efforts to become holy, and will be actually followed by such a result.

Even as he is pure - The same kind of purity here, the same degree hereafter. That is, the tendency of such a hope is to make him holy now, though he may be imperfect; the effect will be to make him "perfectly" holy in the world to come. It cannot be shown from this passage that the apostle meant to teach that anyone actually becomes as pure in the present life as the Saviour is, that is, becomes perfectly holy; for all that is fairly implied in it is, that those who have this hope in them aim at the same purity, and will ultimately obtain it. But the apostle does not say that it is attained in this world. If the passage did teach this, it would teach it respecting everyone who has this hope, and then the doctrine would be that no one can be a Christian who does not become absolutely perfect on earth; that is, not that some Christians may become perfect here, but that all actually do. But none, it is presumed, will hold this to be a true doctrine. A true Christian does not, indeed, habitually and willfully sin; but no one can pretend that all Christians attain to a state of sinless perfection on earth, or are, in fact, as pure as the Saviour was. But unless the passage proves that every Christian becomes absolutely perfect in the present life, it does not prove that in fact any do. It proves:

(1)that the tendency, or the fair influence of this hope, is to make the Christian pure;

(2)that all who cherish it will, in fact, aim to become as holy as the Saviour was; and,

(3)that this object will, at some future period, be accomplished. There is a world where all who are redeemed shall be perfectly holy.

Verse 4

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law - The law of God given to man as a rule of life. The object of the apostle here is to excite them to holiness, and to deter them from committing sin, perhaps in view of the fact stated in 1 John 3:3, that everyone who has the hope of heaven will aim to be holy like the Saviour. To confirm this, he shows them that, as a matter of fact, those who are born of God do lead lives of obedience, 1 John 3:5-10; and this he introduces by showing what is the nature of sin, in the

verse before us. The considerations by which he would deter them from indulging in sin are the following:

(a)all sin is a violation of the law of God, 1 John 3:4;

(b)the very object of the coming of Christ was to deliver people from sin, 1 John 3:5;

(c)those who are true Christians do not habitually sin, 1 John 3:6;

(d)those who sin cannot be true Christians, but are of the devil, 1 John 3:8; and,

(e)he who is born of God has a germ or principle of true piety in him, and cannot sin, 1 John 3:9.

It seems evident that the apostle is here combating an opinion which then existed that people might sin, and yet be true Christians, 1 John 3:7; and he apprehended that there was danger that this opinion would become prevalent. On what ground this opinion was held is unknown. Perhaps it was held that all that was necessary to constitute religion was to embrace the doctrines of Christianity, or to be orthodox in the faith; perhaps that it was not expected that people would become holy in this life, and therefore they might indulge in acts of sin; perhaps that Christ came to modify and relax the law, and that the freedoM which he procured for them was freedom to indulge in whatever people chose; perhaps that, since Christians were heirs of all things, they had a right to enjoy all things; perhaps that the passions of people were so strong that they could not be restrained, and that therefore it was not wrong to give indulgence to the propensities with which our Creator has formed us. All these opinions have been held under various forms of Antinomianism, and it is not at all improbable that some or all of them prevailed in the time of John. The argument which he urges would be applicable to any of them. The consideration which he here states is, that all sin is a transgression of law, and that he who commits it, under whatever pretence, is to be held as a transgressor of the law. The literal rendering of this passage is, “He who doeth sin (ἁμαρτίαν hamartian) doeth also transgression” - ἀνομίαν anomianSin is the generic term embracing all that would be wrong. The word transgression (ἀνομία anomia) is a specific term, showing where the wrong lay, to wit, in violating the law.

For sin is the transgression of the law - That is, all sin involves this as a consequence that it is a violation of the law. The object of the apostle is not so much to define sin, as to deter from its commission by stating what is its essential nature - though he has in fact given the best definition of it that could be given. The essential idea is, that God has given a law to people to regulate their conduct, and that whatever is a departure from that law in any way is held to be sin. The law measures our duty, and measures therefore the degree of guilt when it is not obeyed. The law determines what is right in all cases, and, of course, what is wrong when it is not complied with. The law is the expression of what is the will of God as to what we shall do; and when that is not done, there is sin. The law determines what we shall love or not love; when our passions and appetites shall be bounded and restrained, and to what extent they may be indulged; what shall be our motives and aims in living; how we shall act toward God and toward people; and whenever, in any of these respects, its requirements are not complied with, there is sin.

This will include everything in relation to which the law is given, and will embrace what we "omit" to do when the law has commanded a thing to be done, as well as a "positive" act of transgression where the law has forbidden a thing. This idea is properly found in the original word rendered "transgression of the law" - ἀνομία anomiaThis word occurs in the New Testament only in the following places: Matthew 7:23; Matthew 13:41; Matthew 23:28; Matthew 24:12; Romans 4:7; Romans 6:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:7; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 1:9; Hebrews 8:12; Hebrews 10:17, in all which places it is rendered "iniquity" and "iniquities;" in 2 Corinthians 6:14, where it is rendered "unrighteousness;" and in the verse before us twice. It properly means lawlessness, in the sense that the requirements of the law are not conformed to, or complied with; that is, either by not obeying it, or by positively violating it. When a parent commands a child to do a thing, and he does not do it, he is as really guilty of violating the law as when he does a thing which is positively forbidden. This important verse, therefore, may be considered in two aspects - as a definition of the nature of sin, and as an argument against indulgence in it, or against committing it.

I. As a definition of the nature of sin. It teaches.

(a)that there is a rule of law by which the conduct of mankind is to be regulated and governed, and to which it is to be conformed.

(b)That there is sin in all cases where that law is not complied with; and that all who do not comply with it are guilty before God.

(c)That the particular thing which determines the guilt of sin, and which measures it, is that it is a departure from law, and consequently that there is no sin where there is no departure from law.

The essential thing is, that the law has not been respected and obeyed, and sin derives its character and aggravation from that fact. No one can reasonably doubt as to the accuracy of this definition of sin. It is founded on the fact:

(a)that God has an absolute right to prescribe what we may and may not do;

(b)that it is to be presumed that what he prescribes will be in accordance with what is right; and,

(c)that nothing else in fact constitutes sin. Sin can consist in nothing else. It does not consist of a particular height of stature, or a particular complexion; of a feeble intellect, or an intellect made feeble, as the result of any former apostasy; of any constitutional propensity, or any disposition founded in our nature as creatures.

For none of these things do our consciences condemn us; and however we may lament them, we have no consciousness of wrong.

(In these remarks the author has in view the doctrine of original sin, or imputed sin, which he thinks as absurd as sin of stature or complexion. His views will be found at large in the notes at Romans 5 throughout, and by comparing these with the supplementary notes on the same place, the reader will be able to form his own opinion. There does not seem to be anything affecting the point in this passage.)

II. As an argument against the commission of sin. This argument may be considered as consisting of two things - the wrong that is done by the violation of law, and the exposure to the penalty.

(1)the wrong itself. This wrong, as an argument to deter from sin, arises mainly from two things:

(a)because sin is a violation of the will of God, and it is in itself wrong to disregard that will; and,

(b)because it is to be presumed that when God has given law there is a good reason why he has done it.

(2)the fact that the law has a penalty is an argument for not violating the law.

All law has a penalty; that is, there is some suffering, disadvantage, forfeit of privileges, etc., which the violation of law draws in its train, and which is to be regarded as an expression of the sense which the lawgiver entertains of the value of his law, and of the evil of disobeying it. Many of these penalties of the violation of the divine law are seen in this life, and all will be certain to occur sooner or later, in this world or in the world to come. With such views of the law and of sin - of his obligations, and of the evils of disobedience - a Christian should not, and will not, deliberately and habitually violate the law of God.

Verse 5

And ye know that he was manifested - The Lord Jesus, the Son of God. "You know that he became incarnate, or appeared among people, for the very purpose of putting an end to sin," Matthew 1:21. Compare the notes at 1 Timothy 3:16. This is the "second" argument in this paragraph, 1 John 3:4-10, by which the apostle would deter us from sin. The argument is a clear one, and is perhaps the strongest that can be made to bear on the mind of a true Christian - that the Lord Jesus saw sin to be so great an evil, that he came into our world, and gave himself to the bitter sorrows of death on the cross, to redeem us from it.

To take away our sins - The essential argument here is, that the whole work of Christ was designed to deliver us from the dominion of sin, not to furnish us the means of indulgence in it; and that, therefore, we should be deterred from it by all that Christ has done and suffered for us. He perverts the whole design of the coming of the Saviour who supposes that his work was in any degree designed to procure for his followers the indulgences of sin, or who so interprets the methods of his grace as to suppose that it is now lawful for him to indulge his guilty passions. The argument essentially is this:

(1)That we profess to be the followers of Christ, and should carry out his ends and views in coming into the world;

(2)that the great and leading purpose of his coming was to set us free from the bondage of transgression;

(3)that in doing this he gave himself up to a life of poverty, and shame, and sorrow, and to a most bitter death on the cross; and,

(4)that we should not indulge in that from which he came to deliver us, and which cost him so much toil and such a death. How could we indulge in that which has brought heavy calamity upon the head of a father, or which has pierced a sister‘s heart with many sorrows? Still more, how can we be so ungrateful and hardhearted as to indulge in that which crushed our Redeemer in death?

And in him is no sin - An additional consideration to show that we should be holy. As he was perfectly pure and spotless, so should all his followers aim to be; and none can truly pretend to be his who do not desire and design to become like him. On the personal holiness of the Lord Jesus, see the Hebrews 7:26 note, and 1 Peter 2:23 note.

Verse 6

Whosoever abideth in him - See 1 John 2:6. The word here employed (μένων menōn) properly means to remain, to continue, to abide. It is used of persons remaining or dwelling in a place, in the sense of abiding there permanently, or lodging there, and this is the common meaning of the word, Matthew 10:11; Matthew 26:38; Mark 6:10; Luke 1:56, “et saepe.” In the writings of John, however, it is quite a favorite word to denote the relation which one sustains to another, in the sense of being united to him, or remaining with him in affection and love; being with him in heart and mind and will, as one makes his home in a dwelling. The sense seems to be that we have some sort of relation to him similar to that which we have to our home; that is, some fixed and permanent attachment to him. We live in him; we remain steadfast in our attachment to him, as we do to our own home. For the use of the word in John, in whose writings it so frequently occurs, see John 5:38; John 6:56; John 14:10, John 14:17; John 15:27; 1 John 2:6, 1 John 2:10, 1 John 2:14, 1 John 2:17, 1 John 2:27-28; 1 John 3:6, 1 John 3:24; 1 John 4:12-13, 1 John 4:15-16. In the passage before us, as in his writings generally, it refers to one who lives the life of a Christian, as if he were always with Christ, and abode with him. It refers to the Christian considered as adhering steadfastly to the Saviour, and not as following him with transitory feelings, emotions, and raptures.

(See the supplementary note at Romans 8:10. We abide in Christ by union with him. The phrase expresses the continuance of the union; of which see in the note as above. Scott explains, “whoever abides in Christ as one with him and as maintaining communion with him. ‹)

It does not of itself necessarily mean that he will always do this; that is, it does not prove the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, but it refers to the adherence to the Saviour as a continuous state of mind, or as having permanency; meaning that there is a life of continued faith in him. It is of a person thus attached to the Saviour that the apostle makes the important declaration in the passage before us, that he does not sin. This is the third argument to show that the child of God should be pure; and the substance of the argument is, that "as a matter of fact" the child of God is not a sinner.

Sinneth not - There has been much difference of opinion in regard to this expression, and the similar declaration in 1 John 3:9. Not a few have maintained that it teaches the "doctrine of perfection," or that Christians may live entirely without sin; and some have held that the apostle meant to teach that this is always the characteristic of the true Christian. Against the interpretation, however, which supposes that it teaches that the Christian is absolutely perfect, and lives wholly without sin, there are three insuperable objections:

(1) If it teaches that doctrine at all, it teaches that all Christians are perfect; "whosoever abideth in him," "whosoever is born of God," "he cannot sin," 1 John 3:9.

(2) this is not true, and cannot be held to be true by those who have any just views of what the children of God have been and are. Who can maintain that Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob; that Moses, David, or Job; that Peter, John, or Paul, were absolutely perfect, and were never, after their regeneration, guilty of an act of sin? Certainly they never affirmed it of themselves, nor does the sacred record attribute to them any such perfection. And who can affirm this of all who give evidence of true piety in the world? Who can of themselves? Are we to come to the painful conclusion that all who are not absolutely perfect in thought, word, and deed, are destitute of any religion, and are to be set down as hypocrites or self-deceivers? And yet, unless this passage proves that "all" who have been born again are absolutely perfect, it will not prove it of anyone, for the affirmation is not made of a part, or of what any favored individual may be, but of what everyone is in fact who is born of God.

(3) this interpretation is not necessary to a fair exposition of the passage. The language used is such as would be employed by any writer if he designed to say of one that he is not characteristically a sinner; that he is a good man; that he does not commit habitual and willful transgression. Such language is common throughout the Bible, when it is said of one man that he is a saint, and of another that he is a sinner; of one that he is righteous, and of another that he is wicked; of one that he obeys the law of God, and of another that he does not. John expresses it strongly, but he affirms no more in fact than is affirmed elsewhere. The passage teaches, indeed, most important truths in regard to the true Christian; and the fair and proper meaning may be summed up in the following particulars:

(a) He who is born again does not sin habitually, or is not habitually a sinner. If he does wrong, it is when he is overtaken by temptation, and the act is against the habitual inclination and purpose of his soul. If a man sins habitually, it proves that he has never been renewed.

(b) That he who is born again does not do wrong deliberately and by design. He means to do right. He is not willfully and deliberately a sinner. If a man deliberately and intentionally does wrong, he shows that he is not actuated by the spirit of religion. It is true that when one does wrong, or commits sin, there is a momentary assent of the will; but it is under the influence of passion, or excitement, or temptation, or provocation, and not as the result of a deliberate plan or purpose of the soul. A man who deliberately and intentionally does a wrong thing, shows that he is not a true Christian; and if this were all that is understood by "perfection," then there would be many who are perfect, for there are many, very many Christians, who cannot recollect an instance for many years in which they have intentionally and deliberately done a wrong thing. Yet these very Christians see much corruption in their own hearts over which to mourn, and against which they earnestly strive; in comparing themselves with the perfect law of God, and with the perfect example of the Saviour, they see much in which they come short.

(c) He who is born again will not sin finally, or will not fall away. "His seed remaineth in him," 1 John 3:9. See the notes at that verse. There is a principle of grace by which he will ultimately be restrained and recovered.

This, it seems to me, is fairly implied in the language used by John; for if a person might be a Christian, and yet wholly fall away and perish, how could it be said with any truth that such a man "sinneth not;" how that "he doth not commit sin;" how that "his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin?" Just the contrary would be true if this were so.

Whosoever sinneth - That is, as explained above, habitually, deliberately, characteristically, and finally. - Doddridge. "Who habitually and avowedly sinneth."

Hath not seen him, nor known him - Has had no just views of the Saviour, or of the nature of true religion. In other words, cannot be a true Christian.

Verse 7

Little children - Notes at 1 John 2:1.

Let no man deceive you - That is, in the matter under consideration; to wit, by persuading you that a man may live in sinful practices, and yet be a true child of God. From this it is clear that the apostle supposed there were some who would attempt to do this, and it was to counteract their arts that he made these positive statements in regard to the nature of true religion.

He that doeth righteousness is righteous - This is laid down as a great and undeniable principle in religion - a maxim which none could dispute, and as important as it is plain. And it is worthy of all the emphasis which the apostle lays on it. The man who does righteousness, or leads an upright life, is a righteous man, and no other one is. No matter how any one may claim that he is justified by faith; no matter how he may conform to the external duties and rites of religion; no matter how zealous he may be for orthodoxy, or for the order of the church; no matter what visions and raptures he may have, or of what peace and joy in his soul he may boast; no matter how little he may fear death, or hope for heaven - unless he is in fact a righteous man, in the proper sense of the term, he cannot be a child of God. Compare Matthew 7:16-23. If he is, in the proper sense of the word, a man who keeps the law of God, and leads a holy life, he is righteous, for that is religion. Such a man, however, will always feel that his claim to be regarded as a righteous man is not to be traced to what he is in himself, but to what he owes to the grace of God.

Even as he is righteous - See the notes at 1 John 3:3. Not necessarily in this world to the same degree, but with the same kind of righteousness.

Hereafter he will become wholly free from all sin, like his God and Saviour, 1 John 3:2.

Verse 8

He that committeth sin - Habitually, willfully, characteristically.

Is of the devil - This cannot mean that no one who commits any sin, or who is not absolutely perfect, can be a Christian, for this would cut off the great mass, even according to the belief of those who hold that the Christian may be perfectly holy, from all claim to the Christian character. But what the apostle here says is true in two senses:

(1)That all who commit sin, even true believers, so far as they are imperfect, in this respect resemble Satan, and are under his influence, since sin, just so far as it exists at all, makes us resemble him.

(2)all who habitually and characteristically sin are of the devil." This latter was evidently the principal idea in the mind of the apostle. His object here is to show that those who sinned, in the sense in which it would seem some maintained that the children of God might sin, could have no real evidence of piety, but really belonged to Satan.

For the devil sinneth from the beginning - The beginning of the world; or from the first account we have of him. It does not mean that he sinned from the beginning of his existence, for he was made holy like the other angels. Notes, Jude 1:6. The meaning is, that he introduced sin into the universe, and that he has continued to practice it ever since. The word sinneth here implies continued and habitual sin. He did not commit one act of sin and then reform; but he has continued, and still continues, his course of sin. This may confirm what has been already said about the kind of sin that John refers to. He speaks of sinning habitually, continuously, willfully; and anyone who does this shows that he is under the influence of him whose characteristic it has been and is to sin.

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested - Became incarnate, and appeared among people, 1 John 3:5. Compare the notes at 1 Timothy 3:16.

That he might destroy the works of the devil - All his plans of wickedness, and his control over the hearts of people. Compare the Matthew 8:29 note; Mark 1:24 note; Hebrews 2:14 note. The argument here is, that as the Son of God came to destroy all the works of the devil, he cannot be his true follower who lives in sin.

Verse 9

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin - This passage must either mean that they who are born of God, that is, who are true Christians, do not sin habitually and characteristically, or that everyone who is a true Christian is absolutely perfect, and never commits any sin. If it can be used as referring to the doctrine of absolute perfection at all, it proves, not that Christians may be perfect, or that a "portion" of them are, but that all are. But who can maintain this? Who can believe that John meant to affirm this? Nothing can be clearer than that the passage has not this meaning, and that John did not teach a doctrine so contrary to the current strain of the Scriptures, and to fact; and if he did not teach this, then in this whole passage he refers to those who are habitually and characteristically righteous.

For his seed remaineth in him - There is much obscurity in this expression, though the general sense is clear, which is, that there is something abiding in the heart of the true Christian which the apostle here calls "seed," which will prevent his sinning. The word "his" in this phrase, "his seed," may refer either to the individual himself - in the sense that this can now be properly called "his," inasmuch as it is a part of himself, or a principle abiding in him; or it may refer to God - in the sense that what is here called "seed" is "his," that is, he has implanted it, or it is a germ of divine origin. Robinson (Lex.) understands it in the latter sense, and so also do Macknight, Doddridge, Lucke, and others, and this is probably the true interpretation. The word "seed" (σπέρμα sperma) means properly seed sown, as of grain, plants, trees; then anything that resembles it, anything which germinates, or which springs up, or is produced.

It is applied in the New Testament to the word of God, or the gospel, as that which produces effects in the heart and life similar to what seed that is sown does. Compare Matthew 13:26, Matthew 13:37-38. Augustin, Clemens, (Alex.,) Grotius, Rosenmuller, Benson, and Bloomfield, suppose that this is the signification of the word here. The proper idea, according to this, is that the seed referred to is truth, which God has implanted or sown in the heart, from which it may be expected that the fruits of righteousness will grow. But that which abides in the heart of a Christian is not the naked word of God; the mere gospel, or mere truth; it is rather that word as made vital and efficacious by the influence of his Spirit; the germ of the divine life; the principles of true piety in the soul. Compare the words of Virgil: Igneus est illi vigor et coelestis origo semini. The exact idea here, as it

seems to me, is not that the "seed" refers to "the word of God," as Augustin and others suppose, or to "the Spirit of God," but to the germ of piety which has been produced in the heart "by" the word and Spirit of God, and which may be regarded as having been implanted there by God himself, and which may be expected to produce holiness in the life. There is, probably, as Lucke supposes, an allusion in the word to the fact that we are begotten (Ὁ γεγεννημένος Ho gegennēmenosof God. The word "remaineth" - μένει , compare the notes at 1 John 3:6 - is a favorite expression of John. The expression here used by John, thus explained, would seem to imply two things:

(1)that the germ or seed of religion implanted in the soul abides there as a constant, vital principle, so that he who is born of God cannot become habitually a sinner; and,

(2)that it will so continue to live there that he will not fall away and perish. The idea is clearly that the germ or principle of piety so permanently abides in the soul, that he who is renewed never can become again characteristically a sinner.

And he cannot sin - Not merely he will not, but he cannot; that is, in the sense referred to. This cannot mean that one who is renewed has not physical ability to do wrong, for every moral agent has; nor can it mean that no one who is a true Christian never does, in fact, do wrong in thought, word, or deed, for no one could seriously maintain that: but it must mean that there is somehow a certainty as absolute "as if" it were physically impossible, that those who are born of God will not be characteristically and habitually sinners; that they will not sin in such a sense as to lose all true religion and be numbered with transgressors; that they will not fall away and perish. Unless this passage teaches that no one who is renewed ever can sin in any sense; or that everyone who becomes a Christian is, and must be, absolutely and always perfect, no words could more clearly prove that true Christians will never fall from grace and perish. How can what the apostle here says be true, if a real Christian can fall away and become again a sinner?

Because he is born of God - Or begotten of God. God has given him, by the new birth, real, spiritual life, and that life can never become extinct.

Verse 10

In this the children of God are manifest … - That is, this furnishes a test of their true character. The test is found in doing righteousness, and in

the love of the brethren. The former he had illustrated; the latter he now proceeds to illustrate. The general idea is, that if a person is not truly a righteous person, and does not love the brethren, he cannot be a child of God. Perhaps by the phrase in this, using a pronoun in the singular number, he means to intimate that an important part of righteousness consists in brotherly love.

Whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God - In 1 John 3:7, he had said that "he that doeth righteousness is of God."

If that is true, then what he here affirms must be true also, that a man who does not righteousness is not of God. The general idea is the same, that no one can be a true Christian who is not in fact a righteous man.

Neither he that loveth not his brother - The illustration of this point continues to 1 John 3:18. The general sense is, that brotherly love is essential to the Christian character, and that he who does not possess it cannot be a Christian. On the nature and importance of brotherly love as an evidence of piety, see the notes at John 13:34-35.

Verse 11

For this is the message - Margin, "commandment." In the received text, this is ἀγγελία angelia- "a message brought;" in several manuscripts, and in later editions, it is ἐπαγγελία epangelia- "annunciation, announcement;" an order given, or a commandment, Acts 23:21. It is not very material which reading is followed. The word "command" or "rule" would express the sense with sufficient clearness. The reference is to the law given by the Saviour as a permanent direction to his disciples.

That ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another - See the John 13:34-35 notes; 1 John 2:7 note.

Verse 12

Not as Cain - Not manifesting the spirit which Cain did. His was a most remarkable and striking instance of a want of love to a brother, and the case was well adapted to illustrate the propriety of the duty which the apostle is enjoining. See Genesis 4:4-8.

Who was of that wicked one - Of the devil; that is, he was under his influence, and acted from his instigation.

And wherefore slew he him? - Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." He acted under the influence of envy. He was dissatisfied that his own offering was not accepted, and that his brother's was. The apostle seems desirous to guard those to whom he wrote against

the indulgence of any feelings that were the opposite of love; from anything like envy toward more highly favored brethren, by showing to what this would lead if fairly acted out, as in the case of Cain. A large part of the crimes of the earth have been caused, as in the murder of Abel, by the want of brotherly love. Nothing but love would be necessary to put an end to the crimes, and consequently to a large part of the misery, of the world.

Verse 13

Marvel not - Do not think it so unusual, or so little to be expected, as to excite astonishment.

If the world hate you - The emphasis here is to be placed on the word "you." The apostle had just adverted to the fact that Cain hated Abel, his brother, without cause, and he says that they were not to deem it strange if the world hated them in like manner. The Saviour John 15:17-18 introduced these subjects in the same connection. In enjoining the duty of brotherly love on his disciples, he adverts to the fact that they must expect to be hated by the world, and tells them to remember that the world hated him before it hated them. The object of all this was to show more clearly the necessity of strong and tender mutual affection among Christians, since they could hope for none from the world. See the notes at John 15:18-19.

Verse 14

We know that we have passed from death unto life - From spiritual death (Notes, Ephesians 2:1) to spiritual life; that is, that we are true Christians.

Because we love the brethren - The sentiment here is, that it is an infallible evidence of true piety if we love the followers of Christ as such. See this sentiment illustrated in the notes at John 13:35. But how easy it would seem to be to apply such a test of piety as this! Who cannot judge accurately of his own feelings, and determine whether he loves a Christian because he bears the name and image of the Saviour - loves him the more just in proportion as he bears that image? Who cannot, if he chooses, look beyond the narrow bounds of his own sect, and determine whether he is pleased with the true Christian character wherever it may be found, and whether he would prefer to find his friends among those who bear the name and the image of the Son of God, than among the people of the world? The Saviour meant that his followers should be known by this badge of discipleship all over the world, John 13:34-35. John says, in carrying out

the sentiment, that Christians, by this test, may know "among themselves" whether they have any true religion.

He that loveth not his brother abideth in death - He remains dead in sins; that is, he has never been converted. Compare the notes at 1 John 3:6. As love to the Christian brotherhood is essential to true piety, it follows that he who has not that remains unconverted, or is in a state of spiritual death. He is by nature dead in sin, and unless he has evidence that he is brought out of that state, he "remains" or "abides" in it.

Verse 15

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer … - That is, he has the spirit of a murderer; he has that which, if it were acted out, would lead him to commit murder, as it did Cain. The private malice, the secret grudge, the envy which is cherished in the heart, is murderous in its tendency, and were it not for the outward restraints of human laws, and the dread of punishment, it would often lead to the act of murder. The apostle does not say that he who hates his brother, though he does not in fact commit murder, is guilty to the same degree as if he had actually done it; but he evidently means to say that the spirit which would lead to murder is there, and that God will hold him responsible for it. Nothing is missing but the removal of outward restraints to lead to the commission of the open deed, and God judges people as he sees them to be "in their hearts." What a fearful declaration, then, is this! How many real murderers there are on the earth besides those who are detected and punished, and besides those open violators of the laws of God and man who go at large! And who is them that should not feel humbled and penitent in view of his own heart, and grateful for that sovereign mercy which has restrained him from open acts of guilt - for who is there who has not at some period of his life, and perhaps often, indulged in feelings of hatred, and envy, and malice toward others, which, if acted out, would have led to the commission of the awful crime of taking human life? Any man may well shudder at the remembrance of the secret sins of his own heart, and at the thought of what he would have been but for the restraining grace of God. And how wonderful is that grace which, in the case of the true Christian, not only restrains and checks, but which effectually subdues all these feelings, and implants in their place the principles of love!

Verse 16

Hereby perceive we the love of God - The words "of God" are not in the original, and should not have been introduced into the translation, though they are found in the Latin Vulgate, and in the Genevan versions, and in one manuscript. They would naturally convey the idea that "God" laid down his life for us; or that God himself, in his divine nature, suffered. But this idea is not expressed in this passage as it is in the original, and of course no argument can be derived from it either to prove that Christ is God, or that the divine nature is capable of suffering. The original is much more expressive and emphatic than it is with this addition: "By this we know love;" that is, we know what true love is; we see a most affecting and striking illustration of its nature. "Love itself" - its real nature, its power, its sacrifices, its influences - was seen in its highest form, when the Son of God gave himself to die on a cross. For an illustration of the sentiment, see the notes at John 3:16; John 15:13.

Because he laid down his life for us - There can be no doubt that the Saviour is here referred to, though his name is not mentioned particularly. There are several instances in the New Testament where he is mentioned under the general appellation "he," as one who was well known, and about whom the writers were accustomed to speak.

And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren - For the good of our fellow Christians, if it be necessary. That is, circumstances may occur where it would be proper to do it, and we ought always to be ready to do it. The spirit which led the Saviour to sacrifice his life for the good of the church, should lead us to do the same thing for our brethren if circumstances should require it. That this is a correct principle no one can doubt; for:

(1)the Saviour did it, and we are bound to imitate his example, and to possess his spirit;

(2)the prophets, apostles, and martyrs did it, laying down their lives in the cause of truth, and for the good of the church and the world; and,

(3)it has always been held that it is right and proper, in certain circumstances, for a man to lay down his life for the good of others.

So we speak of the patriot who sacrifices his life for the good of his country; so we feel in the case of a shipwreck, that it may be the duty of a captain to sacrifice his life for the good of his passengers and crew; so in case of a pestilential disease, a physician should not regard his own life, if

he may save others; and so we always hold the man up to honor who is willing to jeopard his own life on noble principles of self-denial for the good of his fellow-men. In what cases this should occur the apostle does not state; but the general principle would seem to be, that it is to be done when a greater good would result from our self-sacrifice than from carefully guarding our own lives. Thus, in the case of a patriot, his death, in the circumstances, might be of greater value to his country than his life would be; or, his exposing himself to death would be a greater service to his country, than if that should not be done.

Thus, the Saviour laid down his life for the good of mankind; thus the apostles exposed their lives to constant peril in extending the principles of religion; and thus the martyrs surrendered their lives in the cause of the church and of truth. In like manner, we ought to be ready to hazard our lives, and even to lay them down, if in that way we may promote the cause of truth, and the salvation of sinners, or serve our Christian brethren. In what way this injunction was understood by the primitive Christians, may be perceived from what the world is reported to have said of them, "Behold, how they love one another; they are ready to die for one another." - Tertullian, *Apol*. c. 39. So Eusebius (*Eccl. His.* vii. 22) says of Christians, that "in a time of plague they visited one another, and not only hazarded their lives, but actually lost them in their zeal to preserve the lives of others." We are not indeed to throw away our lives; we are not to expose them in a rash, reckless, imprudent manner; but when, in the discharge of duty, we are placed in a situation where life is exposed to danger, we are not to shrink from the duty, or to run away from it. Perhaps the following would embrace the principal instances of the duty here enjoined by the apostle:

(1)We ought to have such love for the church that we should be willing to die for it, as patriot is willing to die for his country.

(2)we ought to have such love for Christians as to be willing to jeopard our lives to aid them - as in case of a pestilence or plague, or when they are in danger by fire, or flood, or foes.

(3)we ought to have such love for the truth as to be willing to sacrifice our lives rather than deny it.

(4)we ought to have such love for the cause of our Master as to be willing to cross oceans, and snows, and sands; to visit distant and barbarous

regions, though at imminent risk of our lives, and though with the prospect that we shall never see our country again.

(5)we ought to have such love for the church that we shall engage heartily and constantly in services of labor and self-sacrifice on its account, until, our work being done, exhausted nature shall sink to rest in the grave. In one word, we should regard ourselves as devoted to the service of the Redeemer, living or dying to be found engaged in his cause. If a case should actually occur where the question would arise whether a man would abandon his Christian brother or die, he ought not to hesitate; in all cases he should regard his life as consecrated to the cause of Sion and its friends. Once, in the times of primitive piety, there was much of this spirit in the world; how little, it is to be feared, does it prevail now!

Verse 17

But whoso hath this world‘s good - Has property - called “this world‘s good,” or a good pertaining to this world, because it is of value to us only as it meets our wants this side of the grave; and perhaps also because it is sought supremely by the people of the world. The general meaning of this verse, in connection with the previous verse, is, that if we ought to be willing to lay down our lives for others, we ought to be willing to make those comparatively smaller sacrifices which are necessary to relieve them in their distresses; and that if we are unwilling to do this, we can have no evidence that the love of God dwells in us.

And seeth his brother have need - Need of food, of raiment, of shelter; or sick, and poor, and unable to provide for his own wants and those of his family.

And shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him - The bowels, or “upper viscera,” embracing the heart, and the region of the chest generally, are in the Scriptures represented as the seat of mercy, piety, and compassion, because when the mind feels compassion it is that part which is affected. Compare the notes at Isaiah 16:11.

How dwelleth the love of God in him? - How can a man love God who does not love those who bear his image? See the notes at 1 John 4:20. On the general sentiment here, see the notes at James 2:14-16. The meaning is plain, that we cannot have evidence of piety unless we are ready to do good

to others, especially to our Christian brethren. See the Matthew 25:45 note; Galatians 6:10 note.

Verse 18

My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue - By mere profession; by merely sayinG that we love each other. See 1 Peter 1:22.

But in deed and in truth - In such acts as shall show that our professed love is sincere and real. Let us do the deed of love, whether anything is said about it or not. See the notes at Matthew 6:3.

Verse 19

And hereby - Greek, "by this;" that is, by the fact that we have true love to others, and that we manifest it by a readiness to make sacrifices to do them good.

We know that we are of the truth - That we are not deceived in what we profess to be; that is, that we are true Christians. To be of the truth stands opposed to cherishing false and delusive hopes.

And shall assure our hearts before him - Before God, or before the Saviour. In the margin, as in the Greek, the word rendered "shall assure," is "persuade." The Greek word is used as meaning to "persuade," e. g., to the reception and belief of truth; then to persuade anyone who has unkind or prejudiced feelings toward us, or to bring over to kind feelings, "to conciliate," and thus to pacify or quiet. The meaning here seems to be, that we shall in this way allay the doubts and trouble of our minds, and produce a state of quiet and peace, to wit, by the evidence that we are of the truth. Our consciences are often restless and troubled in view of past guilt; but, in thus furnishing the evidence of true piety by love to others, we shall pacify an accusing mind, and conciliate our own hearts, and persuade or convince ourselves that we are truly the children of God. See Robinson, Lexicon, sub voce πείθω peithōI. b. In other words, though a person's heart may condemn him as guilty, and though he knows that God sees and condemns the sins of his past life, yet the agitations and alarms of his mind may be calmed down and soothed by evidence that he is a child of God, and that he will not be finally condemned. A true Christian does not attempt to conceal the fact that there is much for which his own heart and conscience might justly accuse him but he finds, notwithstanding all this, evidence that he is a child of God, and he is persuaded that all will be well.

Verse 20

For if our heart condemn us - We cannot hope for peace from any expectation that our own hearts will never accuse us, or that we ourselves can approve of all that we have done. The reference here is not so much to our past lives, as to our present conduct and deportment. The object is to induce Christians so to live that their hearts will not condemn them for any secret sins, while the outward deportment may be unsullied. The general sentiment is, that if they should so live that their own hearts would condemn them for present insincerity and hypocrisy, they could have no hope of peace, for God knows all that is in the heart. In view of the past - when the heart accuses us of what we have done - we may find peace by such evidences of piety as shall allay the troubles of an agitated soul, 1 John 3:9, but we cannot have such peace if our hearts condemn us for the indulgence of secret sins, now that we profess to be Christians. If our hearts condemn us for present insincerity, and for secret sins, we can never "persuade" or soothe them by any external act of piety. In view of the consciousness of past guilt, we may find peace; we can find none if there is a present purpose to indulge in sin.

God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things - We cannot hope to find peace by hiding anything from his view, or by any supposition that he is not acquainted with the sins for which our consciences trouble us. He knows all the sins of which we are conscious, and sees all their guilt and aggravation as clearly as we do. He knows more than this. He knows all the sins which we have forgotten; all those acts which we endeavor to persuade ourselves are not sinful, but which are evil in his sight; and all those aggravations attending our sins which it is impossible for us fully and distinctly to conceive. He is more disposed to condemn sin than we are; he looks on it with less allowance than we do. We cannot hope, then, for a calm mind in any supposition that God does not see our sins as clearly as we do, or in any hope that he will look on them with more favor and indulgence. Peace cannot be found in the indulgence of sin in the hope that God will not perceive or regard it, for we can sooner deceive ourselves than we can him; and while therefore, 1 John 3:19, in reference to the past, we can only "persuade" our hearts, or soothe their agitated feelings by evidence that we are of the truth now, and that our sins are forgiven; in reference to the present and the future, the heart can be kept calm only by such a course of life that our own hearts and our God shall approve the manner in which we live.

Verse 21

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not - If we so live as to have an approving conscience - that is, if we indulge in no secret sin; if we discharge faithfully every known duty; if we submit without complaining to all the allotments of Divine Providence.

Then have we confidence toward God - Compare the 1 John 3:19; 1 John 2:28 notes; Acts 24:16 note. The apostle evidently does not mean that we have confidence toward God on the ground of what we do, as if it were meritorious, or as if it constituted a claim to his favor; but that we may so live as to have evidence of personal piety, and that we may look forward with a confident hope that we shall be accepted of him in the great day. The word here rendered "confidence" - παῤῥησίαν parrēsian- means properly "boldness;" usually boldness or openness in speaking our sentiments. See the notes at 1 John 2:28. The confidence or boldness which we have toward our Maker is founded solely on the evidence that he will graciously accept us as pardoned sinners; not in the belief that we deserve his favor.

Verse 22

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him - If we are truly his children, and ask in a proper manner. See the notes at Matthew 7:7. Compare Mark 11:24; Luke 11:9; Luke 18:1 ff; John 14:13; John 15:7; 1 John 5:14. The declaration here made must be understood with these limitations:

(1)that we ask in a proper manner, James 4:3; and,

(2)that the thing asked shall be such as will be consistent for God to give; that is, such as he shall see to be best for us, 1 John 5:14. See the notes at this latter passage.

Because we keep his commandments - Not that this is the meritorious ground of our being heard, but that it furnishes evidence that we are his children, and he hears his children as such.

And do those things that are pleasing in his sight - As a parent is disposed to bestow favors on obedient, affectionate, and dutiful children, so God is on those who please him by their obedience and submission to his will. We can have no hope that he will hear us unless we do so live as to please him.

Verse 23

And this is his commandment - His commandment, by way of eminence; the leading, principal thing which he enjoins on us; the

commandment which lies at the foundation of all true obedience.

That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ - See the notes at Mark 16:16. Compare John 16:1; Acts 16:31.

And love one another … - This follows from the other, and hence they are mentioned as together constituting his commandment. Notes, John 13:35.

Verse 24

And he that keepeth his commandments … - See the notes at John 14:23.

And hereby we know that he abideth in us - That is, this is another certain evidence that we are true Christians. The Saviour had promised John 14:23 that he would come and take up his abode with his people. John says that we have proof that he does this by the Spirit which he has given us. That is, the Holy Spirit is imparted to his people to enlighten their minds; to elevate their affections; to sustain them in times of trial; to quicken them in the performance of duty; and to imbue them with the temper and spirit of the Lord Jesus. When these effects exist, we may be certain that the Spirit of God is with us; for these are the "fruits" of that Spirit, or these are the effects which he produces in the lives of men. Compare the notes at Galatians 5:22-23. On the evidence of piety here referred to, see the notes at Romans 8:9, Romans 8:14, Romans 8:16. No man can be a true Christian in whom that Spirit does not constantly dwell, or to whom he is not "given." And yet no one can determine that the Spirit dwells in him, except by the "effects" produced in his heart and life. In the following chapter, the apostle pursues the subject suggested here, and shows that we should examine ourselves closely, to see whether the "Spirit" to which we trust, as furnishing evidence of piety, is truly the Spirit of God, or is a spirit of delusion.

1 JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

There are two principal subjects discussed in this chapter:

I. The method by which we may determine that we have the Spirit of God, 1 John 4:1-6. The apostle had said 1 John 3:24 that it could be determined that God dwells in them by the Spirit which he has given them; but as it is probable that the teachers of error, the persons whom John regarded as "antichrist," 1 John 2:18-19, would lay claim to the same thing, it was important to know how it could be ascertained that the Spirit of God had been really given to them, or how it could be determined that the spirit that was in them was not the spirit of antichrist, the very thing against which he would guard them. In doing this:

(1) He cautions them against trusting to every kind of spirit, or supposing that every spirit which animated even the professed friends of religion was the Spirit of God, 1 John 4:1.

(2)also, he shows them how it might be determined that they had really the Spirit of God, or what would be the effect of the influences of the Spirit on the mind. This evidence consisted of the following things:

(a) They had the Spirit of God who confessed that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh, 1 John 4:2;

(b) They who denied that, had not the Spirit of God and the denial of this was the real spirit of antichrist, 1 John 4:3;

(c)They who had the Spirit of God had not the spirit of this world, 1 John 4:4-5; and,

(d) They who had the Spirit of God would hear those who were his apostles, or who were sent by him, 1 John 4:6.

II. The duty, power, and influence of love, 1 John 4:7-21. This is a favorite subject with John, and he here considers it at length, as a subject that was essential in determining the evidences of piety. The duty and value of love are enforced by the following considerations:

(1) Love has its origin in God, and everyone who has true love is born of God, 1 John 4:7-8.

(2) God has shown his great love to us by having given His Son to die for us; and as He has so loved us, we ought also to love one another, 1 John

4:9-11.

(3)if we love one another, it furnishes the best evidence that God dwells in us, 1 John 4:12-15.

(4) God is love, and if we have true love we dwell in Him, and He dwells in us, 1 John 4:16,

(5) Love will furnish us great advantage in the day of judgment, by giving us confidence when we come before Him, 1 John 4:17.

(6)love will cast out all fear, and will make our minds calm in view of the events which are to come, 1 John 4:18,

(7) The very fact that He has first manifested His love to us should lead us to the exercise of love, 1 John 4:19,

(8) A man cannot truly love God and yet hate his brother, 1 John 4:20; and,

(9)it is the solemn command of God that he who loves God should love his brother also.

Verse 1

Beloved, believe not every spirit - Do not confide implicitly in everyone who professes to be under the influences of the Holy Spirit. Compare Matthew 24:4-5. The true and the false teachers of religion alike claimed to be under the influence of the Spirit of God, and it was of importance that all such pretensions should be examined. It was not to be admitted because anyone claimed to have been sent from God that therefore he was sent. Every such claim should be subjected to the proper proof before it was conceded. All pretensions to divine inspiration, or to being authorised teachers of religion, were to be examined by the proper tests, because there were many false and delusive teachers who set up such claims in the world.

But try the spirits whether they are of God - There were those in the early Christian church who had the gift of "discerning spirits," (see the

notes at 1 Corinthians 12:10), but it is not certain that the apostle refers here to any such supernatural power. It is more probable, as he addresses this command to Christians in general, that he refers to the ability of doing this by a comparison of the doctrines which they professed to hold with what was revealed, and by the fruits of their doctrines in their lives. If they taught what God had taught in his word, and if their lives corresponded with his requirements, and if their doctrines agreed with what had been inculcated by those who were admitted to be true apostles, 1 John 4:6, they were to receive them as what they professed to be. If not, they were to reject them, and hold them to be impostors. It may be remarked, that it is just as proper and as important now to examine the claims of all who profess to be teachers of religion, as it was then. In a matter so momentous as religion, and where there is so much at stake, it is important that all pretensions of this kind should be subjected to a rigid examination. No one should be received as a religious teacher without the clearest evidence that he has come in accordance with the will of God, nor unless he inculcates the very truth which God has revealed. See the Isaiah 8:20 note, and Acts 17:11 note.

Because many false prophets are gone out into the world - The word prophet is often used in the New Testament to denote religious instructors or preachers. See the notes at Romans 12:6. Compare the notes at 2 Peter 2:1. Such false teachers evidently abounded in the times here referred to. See the notes at 1 John 2:18. The meaning is, that many had gone out into the world pretending to be true teachers of religion, but who inculcated most dangerous doctrines; and it was their duty to be on their guard against them, for they had the very spirit of antichrist, 1 John 4:3.

Verse 2

Hereby - Greek, "By this;" that is, by the test which is immediately specified.

Know ye the Spirit of God - You may discern who are actuated by the Spirit of God.

Every spirit - Everyone professing to be under the influence of the Spirit of God. The apostle uses the word "spirit" here with reference to the person who made the claim, on the supposition that everyone professing to be a religious teacher was animated by some spirit or foreign influence, good or bad. If the Spirit of God influenced them, they would confess that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh; if some other spirit, the spirit of error and deceit, they would deny this.

That confesseth - That is, that makes a proper acknowledgment of this; that inculcates this doctrine, and that gives it a due place and prominence in his instructions. It cannot be supposed that a mere statement of this in words would show that they were of God in the sense that they were true Christians; but the sense is, that if this constituted one of the doctrines which they held and taught, it would show that they were advocates of truth, and not apostles of error. If they did not do this, 1 John 4:3, it would be decisive in regard to their character and claims.

That Jesus Christ is come in the flesh - Benson and some others propose to render this, "That Jesus, who came in the flesh, is the Christ." But this is liable to serious objections.

(1)it is not the obvious interpretation.

(2)it is unusual to say that Jesus "had come in the flesh," though the expression "the Son of God has come in the flesh," or "God was manifested in the flesh," would be in accordance with the usage of the New Testament.

(3)this would not, probably, meet the real point in the case. The thing denied does not appear to have been that Jesus was the Messiah, for their pretending to be Christian teachers at all implied that they admitted this; but that the Son of God was "really a man," or that he actually assumed human nature in permanent union with the divine. The point of the remark made by the apostle is, that the acknowledgment was to be that Christ assumed human nature; that he was really a man as he appeared to be: or that there was a real incarnation, in opposition to the opinion that he came in appearance only, or that he merely seemed to be a man, and to suffer and die. That this opinion was held by many, see the Introduction, Section III. 2. It is quite probable that the apostle here refers to such sentiments as those which were held by the "Docetae;" and that he meant to teach that it was indispensable to proper evidence that anyone came from God, that he should maintain that Jesus was truly a man, or that there was a real incarnation of the Son of God. John always regarded this as a very important point, and often refers to it, John 19:34-35; John 20:25-27; 1 John 5:6. It is as important to be held now as it was then, for the fact that there was a real incarnation is essential to all just views of the atonement. If he was not truly a man, if he did not literally shed his blood on the cross, of course all that was done was in appearance only, and the whole system of redemption as revealed was merely a splendid illusion. There is little danger

that this opinion will be held now, for those who depart from the doctrine laid down in the New Testament in regard to the person and work of Christ, are more disposed to embrace the opinion that he was a mere man; but still it is important that the truth that he was truly incarnate should be held up constantly before the mind, for in no other way can we obtain just views of the atonement.

Is of God - This does not necessarily mean that everyone who confessed this was personally a true Christian, for it is clear that a doctrine might be acknowledged to be true, and yet that the heart might not be changed; nor does it mean that the acknowledgment of this truth was all which it was essential to be believed in order that one might be recognised as a Christian; but it means that it was essential that this truth should be admitted by everyone who truly came from God. They who taught this held a truth which he had revealed, and which was essential to be held; and they thus showed that they did not belong to those to whom the name "antichrist" could be properly given. Still, whether they held this doctrine in such a sense, and in such connection with other doctrines, as to show that they were sincere Christians, was quite another question, for it is plain that a man may hold and teach the true doctrines of religion, and yet have no evidence that he is a child of God.

Verse 3

And every spirit that confesseth not … - That is, this doctrine is essential to the Christian system; and he who does not hold it cannot be regarded either as a Christian, or recognised as a Christian teacher. If he was not a man, then all that occurred in his life, in Gethsemane, and on the cross, was in "appearance" only, and was assumed only to delude the senses. There were no real sufferings; there was no shedding of blood; there was no death on the cross; and, of course, there was no atonement. A mere show, an appearance assumed, a vision, could not make atonement for sin; and a denial, therefore, of the doctrine that the Son of God had come in the flesh, was in fact a denial of the doctrine of expiation for sin. The Latin Vulgate here reads "qui solvit Jesum," "who dissolves or divides Jesus;" and Socrates (H. E. vii. 32) says that in the old copies of the New Testament it is written ὅ λίει τὸν Ἰησοῦν ho liei ton Hiēsoun"who dissolves or divides Jesus;" that is, who "separates" his true nature or person, or who supposes that there were "two" Christs, one in appearance, and one in reality. This reading was early found in some manuscripts, and is referred to by many of

the Fathers, (see Wetstein,) but it has no real authority, and was evidently introduced, perhaps at first from a marginal note, to oppose the prevailing errors of the times. The common reading, "who confesseth not," is found in all the Greek manuscripts, in the Syriac versions, in the Arabic; and, as Lucke says, the other reading is manifestly of Latin origin. The common reading in the text is that which is sustained by authority, and is entirely in accordance with the manner of John.

And this is that spirit of antichrist - This is one of the things which characterize antichrist. John here refers not to an individual who should be known as antichrist, but to a class of persons. This does not, however, forbid the idea that there might be some one individual, or a succession of persons in the church, to whom the name might be applied by way of eminence. See the notes at 1 John 2:18. Compare the notes at 2 Thessalonians 2:3 ff.

Whereof ye have heard that it should come - See the notes at 1 John 2:18.

Verse 4

Ye are of God - You are of his family; you have embraced his truth, and imbibed his Spirit.

Little children - Notes, 1 John 2:1.

And have overcome them - Have triumphed over their arts and temptations; their endeavors to draw you into error and sin. The word them in this place seems to refer to the false prophets or teachers who collectively constituted antichrist. The meaning is, that they had frustrated or thwarted all their attempts to turn them away from the truth.

Because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world - God, who dwells in your hearts, and by whose strength and grace alone you have been enabled to achieve this victory, is more mighty than Satan, who rules in the hearts of the people of this world, and whose seductive arts are seen in the efforts of these false teachers. The apostle meant to say that it was by no power of their own that they achieved this victory, but it was to be traced solely to the fact that God dwelt among them, and had preserved them by his grace. What was true then is true now. He who dwells in the hearts of Christians by his Spirit, is infinitely more mighty than Satan, "the ruler of the darkness of this world;" and victory, therefore, over all his arts and temptations may be sure. In his conflicts with sin, temptation, and error, the Christian should never despair, for his God will insure him the victory.

Verse 5

They are of the world - This was one of the marks by which those who had the spirit of antichrist might be known. They belonged not to the church of God, but to the world. They had its spirit; they acted on its principles; they lived for it. Compare the notes at 1 John 2:15.

Therefore speak they of the world - Compare the notes at John 3:31. This may mean either that their conversation pertained to the things of this world, or that they were wholly influenced by the love of the world, and not by the Spirit of God, in the doctrines which they taught. The general sense is, that they had no higher ends and aims than they have who are influenced only by worldly plans and expectations. It is not difficult to distinguish, even among professed Christians and Christian teachers, those who are heavenly in their conversation from those who are influenced solely by the spirit of the world. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and the general turn of a man's conversation will show what "spirit is within him."

And the world heareth them - The people of the world - the frivoulous ones, the rich, the proud, the ambitious, the sensual - receive their instructions, and recognize them as teachers and guides, for their views accord with their own. See the notes at John 15:19. A professedly religious teacher may always determine much about himself by knowing what class of people are pleased with him. A professed Christian of any station in life may determine much about his evidences of piety, by asking himself what kind of persons desire his friendship, and wish him for a companion.

Verse 6

We are of God - John here, doubtless, refers to himself, and to those who taught the same doctrines which he did. He takes it for granted that those to whom he wrote would admit this, and argues from it as an indisputable truth. He had given them such evidence of this, as to establish his character and claims beyond a doubt; and he often refers to the fact that he was what he claimed to be, as a point which was so well established that no one would call it in question. See John 19:35; John 21:24; 3 John 1:12. Paul, also, not unfrequently refers to the same thing respecting himself; to the fact - a fact which no one would presume to call in question, and which might be regarded as the basis of an argument - that he and his fellow apostles were what they claimed to be. See 1 Corinthians 15:14-15; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-11. Might not, and ought not, all Christians, and all

Christian ministers, so to live that the same thing might be assumed in regard to them in their contact with their fellow-men; that their characters for integrity and purity might be so clear that no one would be disposed to call them in question? There are such men in the church and in the ministry now; why might not all be such?

He that knoweth God, heareth us - Every one that has a true acquaintance with the character of God will receive our doctrine. John might assume this, for it was not doubted, he presumed, that he was an apostle and a good man; and if this were admitted, it would follow that those who feared and loved God would receive what he taught.

Hereby - By this; to wit, by the manner in which they receive the doctrines which we have taught.

Know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error - We can distinguish those who embrace the truth from those who do not. Whatever pretensions they might set up for piety, it was clear that if they did not embrace the doctrines taught by the true apostles of God, they could not be regarded as his friends; that is, as true Christians. It may be added that the same test is applicable now. They who do not receive the plain doctrines laid down in the word of God, whatever pretensions they may make to piety, or whatever zeal they may evince in the cause which they have espoused, can have no well-founded claims to the name Christian. One of the clearest evidences of true piety is a readiness to receive all that God has taught. Compare Matthew 18:1-3; Mark 10:15; James 1:19-21.

Verse 7

Beloved, let us love one another - This verse introduces a new topic, the consideration of which occupies the remainder of the chapter. See the Analysis. The subject is one on which John dwells more than on any other - that of love. His own character especially inclined him to the exercise of love; and the remarkable affection which the Lord Jesus had shown for him, seems to have had the effect to give this grace a special prominence in his views of what constituted true religion. Compare John 13:23. On the duty here enjoined, see the John 13:34-35 notes, and 1 John 3:11, 1 John 3:23 notes.

For love is of God -

(1)All true love has its origin in God.

(2)real love shows that we have his Spirit, and that we belong to him.

(3)it assimilates us to God, or makes us more and more like him.

What is here said by the apostle is based on the truth of what he elsewhere affirms, 1 John 4:8, that God is love. Hatred, envy, wrath, malice, all have their source in something else than God. He neither originates them, commends them, nor approves them.

And everyone that loveth, is born of God - Is a regenerated man. That is, everyone who has true love to Christians as such, or true brotherly love, is a true Christian. This cannot mean that everyone that loves his wife and children, his classmate, his partner in business, or his friend - his house, or his farms, or his horses, or his hounds, is a child of God; it must be understood as referring to the point under discussion. A man may have a great deal of natural affection toward his kindred; a great deal of benevolence in his character toward the poor and needy, and still he may have none of the love to which John refers. He may have no real love to God, to the Saviour, or to the children of God as such; and it would be absurd for such a one to argue because he loves his wife and children that therefore he loves God, or is born again.

Verse 8

He that loveth not, knoweth not God - Has no true acquaintance with God; has no just views of him, and no right feelings toward him. The reason for this is implied in what is immediately stated, that "God is love," and of course if they have no love reigning in their hearts, they cannot pretend to be like him.

For God is love - He is not merely benevolent, he is benevolence itself. Compare the notes at 2 Corinthians 13:11. Never was a more important declaration made than this; never was more meaning crowded into a few words than in this short sentence - "God is love." In the darkness of this world of sin - in all the sorrows that come now upon the race, and that will come upon the wicked hereafter - we have the assurance that a God of infinite benevolence rules over all; and though we may not be able to reconcile all that occurs with this declaration, or see how the things which he has permitted to take place are consistent with it, yet in the exercise of faith on his own declarations we may find consolation in "believing" that it is so, and may look forward to a period when all his universe shall see it to be so. In the midst of all that occurs on the earth of sadness, sin, and sorrow, there are abundant evidences that God is love.

In the original structure of things before sin entered, when all was pronounced "good;" in the things designed to promote happiness, where the only thing contemplated is happiness, and where it would have been as easy to have caused pain; in the preservation of a guilty race, and in granting that race the opportunity of another trial; in the ceaseless provision which God is making in his providence for the wants of unnumbered millions of his creatures; in the arrangements made to alleviate sorrow, and to put an end to it; in the gift of a Saviour more than all, and in the offer of eternal life on terms simple and easy to be complied with - in all these things, which are the mere expressions of love, not one of which would have been found under the government of a malignant being, we see illustrations of the sublime and glorious sentiment before us, that "God is love." Even in this world of confusion, disorder, and darkness, we have evidence sufficient to prove that he is benevolent, but the full glory and meaning of that truth will be seen only in heaven. Meantime, let us hold on to the truth that he is love. Let us believe that he sincerely desires our good, and that what seems dark to us may be designed for our welfare; and amidst all the sorrows and disappointments of the present life, let us feel that our interests and our destiny are in the hands of the God of love.

Verse 9

In this was manifested the love of God - That is, in an eminent manner, or this was a most signal proof of it. The apostle does not mean to say that it has been manifested in no other way, but that this was so prominent an instance of his love, that all the other manifestations of it seemed absorbed and lost in this.

Because that God sent his only begotten Son … - See the notes at John 3:16.

That we might live through him - He died that we might have eternal life through the merits of his sacrifice. The "measure" of that love, then, which was manifested in the gift of a Saviour, is to be found,

(1)in the worth of the soul;

(2)in its exposure to eternal death;

(3)in the greatness of the gift;

(4)in the greatness of his sorrows for us; and,

(5)in the immortal blessedness and joy to which he will raise us.

Who can estimate all this? All these things will magnify themselves as we draw near to eternity; and in that eternity to which we go, whether saved or lost, we shall have an ever-expanding view of the wonderful love of God.

Verse 10

Herein is love - In this great gift is the highest expression of love, as if it had done all that it can do.

Not that we loved God - Not that we were in such a state that we might suppose he would make such a sacrifice for us, but just the opposite. If we had loved and obeyed him, we might have had reason to believe that he would be willing to show his love to us in a corresponding manner. But we were alienated from him. We had even no desire for his friendship and favor. In This state he showed the greatness of his love for us by giving his Son to die for his enemies. See the notes at Romans 5:7-8.

But that he loved us - Not that he approved our character, but that he desired our welfare. Hc loved us not with the love of complacency, but with the love of benevolence.

And sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins - On the meaning of the word "propitiation," see the notes at Romans 3:25. Compare the notes at 1 John 2:2.

Verse 11

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another -

(1)Because he is so much exalted above us, and if he has loved those who were so inferior and so unworthy, we ought to love those who are on a level with us;

(2)because it is only in this way that we can show that we have his Spirit; and,

(3)because it is the nature of love to seek the happiness of all. There are much stronger reasons why we should love one another than there were why God should love us; and unless we do this, we can have no evidence that we are his children.

Verse 12

No man hath seen God at any time - See the notes at John 1:18, where the same declaration occurs. The statement seems to be made here in order

to introduce a remark to show in what way we may know that we have any true knowledge of God. The idea is, "He has never indeed been seen by mortal eyes. We are not, then, to expect to become acquainted with what he is in that way. But there is a method by which we may be assured that we have a true knowledge of him, and that is, by evidence that we love another, and by the presence of his Spirit in our hearts. We cannot become acquainted with him by sight, but we may by love."

If we love one another, God dwelleth in us - Though we cannot see him, yet there is a way by which we may be assured that he is near us, and that he even dwells in us. That way is by the exercise of love. Compare the notes at John 14:23-24.

And his love is perfected in us - Is carried out to completion. That is, our love for each other is the proper exponent of love to him reigning in our hearts. The idea here is not that we are absolutely perfect, or even that our love is perfect, whatever may be true on those points, but that this love to others is the proper carrying out of our love toward him; that is, without this our love to him would not have accomplished what it was adapted and designed to do. Unless it produced this effect, it would be defective or incomplete. Compare 1 John 4:17. The general sense is this: "We claim to have the love of God in our hearts, or that we are influenced and controlled by love. But however high and exalted that may seem to be as exercised toward God, it would be defective; it would not exert a fair influence over us, unless it led us to love our Christian brethren. It would be like the love which we might profess to have for a father, if it did not lead us to love our brothers and sisters. True love will diffuse itself over all who come within its range, and will thus become complete and entire." This passage, therefore, cannot be adduced to demonstrate the doctrine of sinless perfection, or to prove that Christians are ever absolutely perfect in this life. It proves only that love to God is not complete, or fully developed, unless it leads those who profess to have it to love each other. See the notes at Job 1:1. On the meaning of the Greek word here used, (τελειόω teleioōsee the notes at Philemon 3:12. Compare the notes at Hebrews 2:10.

Verse 13

Hereby know we that we dwell in him - Here is another, or an additional evidence of it.

Because he hath given us of his Spirit - He has imparted the influences of that Spirit to our souls, producing "love, joy, peace, long-suffering,

gentleness, goodness, faith," etc., Galatians 5:22-23. It was one of the promises which the Lord Jesus made to his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit to be with them after he should be withdrawn from them, John 14:16-17, John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7, and one of the clearest evidences which we can have that we are the children of God, is derived from the influences of that Spirit on our hearts. See this sentiment illustrated in the notes at Romans 8:16.

Verse 14

And we have seen - Notes on 1 John 1:1.

And do testify - Notes, 1 John 1:3. That is, we who are apostles bear witness to you of this great truth, that God has sent his Son to be a Saviour. Compare the notes at John 20:31. The reason why this is referred to here is not quite apparent, but the train of thought in this passage would seem to be this: The writer is discoursing of the love of God, and of its manifestation in the gift of the Saviour, and of the proper influence which it should have on us. Struck with the greatness and importance of the subject, his mind adverts to the "evidence" on which what he was saying rested - the evidence that the Father had really thus manifested his love. That evidence he repeats, that he had actually seen him who had been sent, and had the clearest demonstration that what he deemed so important had really occurred.

Verse 15

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God - In the true sense, and from the heart. This will always prove that a man is a Christian. But the passage cannot mean that if he merely says so in words, or if he does it insincerely, or without any proper sense of the truth, it will prove that he is a Christian. On the meaning of the sentiment here expressed, see the notes at 1 John 4:2. Compare the notes at Romans 10:10.

Verse 16

And we have known and believed … - We all have assurance that God has loved us, and the fullest belief in the great fact of redemption by which he has manifested his love to us.

God is love - Notes, 1 John 4:8. It is not uncommon for John to repeat an important truth. He delights to dwell on such a truth as that which is here expressed; and who should not? What truth is there on which the mind can dwell with more pleasure; what is there that is better fitted to win the heart to holiness; what that will do more to sustain the soul in the sorrows and

trials of this life? In our trials; in the darkness which is around us; in the perplexities which meet and embarrass us in regard to the divine administration; in all that seems to us incomprehensible in this world, and in the prospect of the next, let us learn to repeat this declaration of the favored disciple, ""God is love."" What trials may we not bear, if we feel assured of that! What dark cloud that seems to hang over our way, and to involve all things in gloom, will not be bright, if from the depths of our souls we can always say, "God is love!"

And he that dwelleth in love … - Religion is all love. God is love; he has loved us; we are to love him; we are to love one another; we are to love the whole world. Heaven is filled with love, and there is nothing else there. The earth is filled with love just as far as religion prevails, and would be entirely if it should prevail everywhere. Love would remove all the corrupt passions, the crimes, the jealousies, the wars on the earth, and would diffuse around the globe the bliss of heaven. If a man, therefore, is actuated by this, he has the spirit of the heavenly world reigning in his soul, and lives in an atmosphere of love.

Verse 17

Herein is our love made perfect - Margin, "love with us." The margin accords with the Greek - μεθ᾽ ἡμῶν meth'hēmōnThe meaning is, "the love that is within us, or in us, is made perfect." The expression is unusual; but the general idea is, that love is rendered complete or entire in the manner in which the apostle specifies. In this way love becomes what it should be, and will prepare us to appear with confidence before the judgment-seat. Compare the notes at 1 John 4:12.

That we may have boldness in the day of judgment - By the influence of love in delivering us from the fear of the wrath to come, 1 John 4:18. The idea is, that he who has true love to God will have nothing to fear in the day of judgment, and may even approach the awful tribunal where he is to receive the sentence which shall determine his everlasting destiny without alarm.

Because as he is, so are we in this world - That is, we have the same traits of character which the Saviour had, and, resembling him, we need not be alarmed at the prospect of meeting him.

Verse 18

There is no fear in love - Love is not an affection which produces fear. In the love which we have for a parent, a child, a friend, there is no fear. If a

man had perfect love to God, he would have no fear of anything - for what would he have to dread? He would have no fear of death, for he would have nothing to dread beyond the grave. It is guilt that makes people fear what is to come; but he whose sins are pardoned, and whose heart is filled with the love of God, has nothing to dread in this world or the world to come. The angels in heaven, who have always loved God and one another, have no fear, for they have nothing to dread in the future; the redeemed in heaven, rescued from all danger, and filled with the love of God, have nothing to dread; and as far as that same loves operates on earth, it delivers the soul now from all apprehension of what is to come.

But perfect love casteth out fear - That is, love that is complete, or that is allowed to exert its proper influence on the soul. As far as it exists, its tendency is to deliver the mind from alarms. If it should exist in any soul in an absolutely perfect state, that soul would be entirely free from all dread in regard to the future.

Because fear hath torment - It is a painful and distressing emotion. Thus men suffer from the fear of poverty, of losses, of bereavement, of sickness, of death, and of future woe. From all these distressing apprehensions, that love of God which furnishes an evidence of true piety delivers us.

He that feareth, is not made perfect in love - He about whose mind there lingers the apprehension of future wrath, shows that love in his soul has not accomplished its full work. Perhaps it never will on any soul until we reach the heavenly world, though there are many minds so full of love to God, as to be prevailingly delivered from fear.

Verse 19

We love him, because he first loved us - This passage is susceptible of two explanations; either.

(1)that the fact that he first loved us is the "ground" or "reason" why we love him, or.

(2)that as a matter of fact we have been brought to love him in consequence of the love which he has manifested toward us, though the real ground of our love may be the excellency of his own character.

If the former be the meaning, and if that were the only ground of love, then it would be mere selfishness, (compare Matthew 5:46-47); and it cannot be believed that John meant to teach that that is the "only" reason of our love to God. It is true, indeed, that that is a proper ground of love, or

that we are bound to love God in proportion to the benefits which we have received from his Hand; but still genuine love to God is something which cannot be explained by the mere fact that we have received favors from Him. The true, the original ground of love to God, is the "excellence of His own character," apart from the question whether we are to be benefited or not. There is that in the divine nature which a holy being will love, apart from the benefits which he is to receive, and from any thought even of his own destiny. It seems to me, therefore, that John must have meant here, in accordance with the second interpretation suggested above, that the fact that we love God is to be traced to the means which he has used to bring us to himself, but without saying that this is the sole or even the main reason why we love him. It was His love manifested to us by sending His Son to redeem us which will explain the fact that we now love Him; but still the real ground or reason why we love Him is the infinite excellence of His own character. It should be added here, that many suppose that the Greek words rendered "we love" (ἡμεῖς ἀγαπῶμεν hēmeis agapōmenare not in the indicative, but in the subjunctive; and that this is an exhortation - "let us love him, because he first loved us." So the Syriac, the Arabic, and the Vulgate read it; and so it is understood by Benson, Grotius, and Bloomfield. The main idea would not be essentially different; and it is a proper ground of exhortation to love God because He has loved us, though the highest ground is, because His character is infinitely worthy of love.

Verse 20

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother - His Christian brother; or, in a larger sense, any man. The sense is, that no man, whatever may be his professions and pretensions, can have any true love to God, unless he loves his brethren.

He is a liar - Compare the notes at 1 John 1:6. It is not necessary, in order to a proper interpretation of this passage, to suppose that he "intentionally" deceives. The sense is, that this must be a false profession.

For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen … - It is more reasonable to expect that we should love one whom we have seen and known personally, than that we should love one whom we have not seen. The apostle is arguing from human nature as it is, and everyone feels that we are more likely to love one with whom we are familiar than one who is a stranger. If a professed Christian, therefore, does not love one who bears the

divine image, whom he sees and knows, how can he love that God whose image he bears, whom he has not seen? Compare the notes at 1 John 3:17.

Verse 21

And this commandment have we from him - That is, the command to love a brother is as obligatory as that to love God. If one is obeyed, the other ought to be also; if a man feels that one is binding on him, he should feel that the other is also; and he can never have evidence that he is a true Christian, unless he manifests love to his brethren as well as love to God. See the notes at James 2:10.

That he who loveth God love his brother also - See the notes at John 13:34-35. Compare John 15:12, John 15:17.

1 JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

This chapter embraces the following subjects:

I. A continuance of the discussion about "love," 1 John 5:1-3. These verses should have been attached to the previous chapter.

II. The victory which is achieved over the world by those who are born of God. The grand instrumentality by which this is done, is by the belief that Jesus is the Son of God, 1 John 5:4-5.

III. The evidence that Jesus "is" the Son of God; or the means by which that truth is so believed as to secure a victory over the world, 1 John 5:6-12. In this part of the chapter the apostle goes fully into the nature of this evidence, or the ways in which the Christian becomes so thoroughly convinced of it as to give to faith this power. He refers to these sources of evidence:

(a)The witness of the Spirit, 1 John 5:6.

(b)The record borne in heaven, 1 John 5:7 - if that verse is genuine.

(c)The evidence borne on earth, by the Spirit, the water, and the blood - all bearing witness to that one truth.

(d)The credit which is due to the testimony of God, or which the soul pays to it, 1 John 5:8.

(e)The fact that he who believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself, 1 John 5:10,

(f)The amount of the record, that has given to us eternal life through his Son, 1 John 5:11-12.

IV. The reason why all this was written by the apostle, 1 John 5:13. It was that they might know that they had eternal life, and might believe on the name of the Saviour.

V. The effect of this in leading us to the throne of grace, with the assurance that God will hear us, and will grant our requests, 1 John 5:14-15.

VI. The power of prayer, and the duty of praying for those who have sinned. The encouragement to this is, that there are many sins which are not unto death, and that we may hope that God will be merciful to those who have not committed the unpardonable offence, 1 John 5:16-17.

VII. A summary of all that the apostle had said to them, or of the points of which they were sure in the matter of salvation, 1 John 5:18-20. They knew that those who are born of God do not sin; that the wicked one cannot permanently injure them; that they were of God, while all the world lay in wickedness; that the Son of God had come, and that they were truly united to that Saviour who is the true God, and who is eternal life.

VIII. An exhortation to keep themselves from all idolatry, 1 John 5:21.

Verse 1

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ - Is the Messiah; the anointed of God. On the meaning of the word Christ, see the notes at Matthew 1:1. Of course, it is meant here that the proposition, that "Jesus is the Christ," should be believed or received in the true and proper sense, in order to furnish evidence that anyone is born of God. Compare the notes at 1 John 4:3. It cannot be supposed that a mere intellectual acknowledgment of the proposition that Jesus is the Messiah is all that is meant, for that is not the proper meaning of the word believe in the Scriptures. That word, in its just sense, implies that the truth which is believed should make its fair and legitimate impression on the mind, or that we should feel and act as if it were true. See the notes at Mark 16:16. If, in the proper sense of the phrase, a man does believe that Jesus "is the Christ," receiving him as he is revealed as the Anointed of God, and a Saviour, it is undoubtedly true that that constitutes him a Christian, for that is what is required of a man in order that he may be saved. See the notes at Acts 8:37.

Is born of God - Or rather, "is begotten of God." See the notes at John 3:3

And everyone that loveth him that begat - That loves that God who has thus begotten those whom he has received as his children, and to whom he sustains the endearing relation of Father.

Loveth him also that is begotten of him - That is, he will love all the true children of God; all Christians. See the notes at 1 John 4:20. The

general idea is, that as all Christians are the children of the same Father; as they constitute one family; as they all bear the same image; as they share his favor alike; as they are under the same obligation of gratitude to him, and are bound to promote the same common cause, and are to dwell together in the same home forever, they should therefore love one another. As all the children in a family love their common father, so it should be in the great family of which God is the Head.

Verse 2

By this we know that we love the children of God … - This is repeating the same truth in another form. "As it is universally true that if we love Him who has begotten us, we shall also love His children, or our Christian brethren, so it is true also that if we love His children it will follow that we love Him." In other places, the apostle says that we may know that we love God if we love those who bear His image, 1 John 3:14. He here says, that there is another way of determining what we are. We may have undoubted evidence that we love God, and from that, as the basis of an argument, we may infer that we have true love to His children. Of the fact that we may have evidence that we love God, apart from that which we derive from our love to His children, there can be no doubt. We may be conscious of it; we may find pleasure in meditating on His perfections; we may feel sure that we are moved to obey Him by true attachment to Him, as a child may in reference to a father. But, it may be asked, how can it be inferred from this that we truly love His children? Is it not easier to ascertain this of itself than it is to determine whether we love God? Compare 1 John 4:20. To this it may be answered, that we may love Christians from many motives: we may love them as personal friends; we may love them because they belong to our church, or sect, or party; we may love them because they are naturally amiable: but the apostle says here, that when we are conscious that an attachment does exist toward Christians, we may ascertain that it is genuine, or that it does not proceed from any improper motive, by the fact that we love God. We shall then love Him as His children, whatever other grounds of affection there may be toward them.

And keep his commandments - See the notes at John 14:15.

Verse 3

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments - This constitutes true love; this furnishes the evidence of it.

And his commandments are not grievous - Greek, "heavy" - βαρεῖαι bareiaithat is, difficult to be borne as a burden. See Matthew 11:30. The meaning is, that his laws are not unreasonable; the duties which he requires are not beyond our ability; his government is not oppressive. It is easy to obey God when the heart is right; and those who endeavor in sincerity to keep his commandments do not complain that they are hard. All complaints of this kind come from those who are not disposed to keep his commandments. Indeed, they object that his laws are unreasonable; that they impose improper restraints; that they are not easily complied with; and that the divine government is one of severity and injustice. But no such complaints come from true Christians. They find his service easier than the service of sin, and the laws of God more mild and easy to be complied with than were those of fashion and honor, which they once endeavored to obey. The service of God is freedom; the service of the world is bondage. No man ever yet heard a true Christian say that the laws of God, requiring him to lead a holy life, were stern and "grievous." But who has not felt this in regard to the inexorable laws of sin? What votary of the world would not say this if he spoke his real sentiments? Compare the notes at John 8:32.

Verse 4

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world - The world, in its maxims, and precepts, and customs, does not rule him, but he is a freeman. The idea is, that there is a conflict between religion and the world, and that in the heart of every true Christian religion secures the victory, or triumphs. In John 16:33, the Saviour says, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." See the notes at that verse. He obtained a complete triumph over him "who rules the darkness of the world," and laid the foundation for a victory by his people over all vice, error, and sin. John makes this affirmation of all who are born of God. "Whatsoever," or, as the Greek is, "Everything which is begotten of God," (πᾶν τὸ γεγενημένον pan to gegenēmenonmeaning to affirm, undoubtedly, that "in every instance" where one is truly regenerated, there is this victory over the world. See the James 4:4 note; 1 John 2:15-16 note. It is one of the settled maxims of religion, that every man who is a true Christian gains a victory over the world; and consequently a maxim as settled, that where the spirit of the world reigns supremely in the heart, there is no true religion. But, if this be a true principle, how many professed Christians are there who are strangers

to all claims of piety - for how many are there who are wholly governed by the spirit of this world!

And this is the victory - This is the source or means of the victory which is thus achieved.

Even our faith - Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 John 5:5. He overcame the world, John 16:33, and it is by that faith which makes us one with him, and that imbues us with his Spirit, that we are able to do it also.

Verse 5

Who is he … - Where is there one who can pretend to have obtained a victory over the world, except he who believes in the Saviour? All else are worldly, and are governed by worldly aims and principles. It is true that a man may gain a victory over one worldly passion; he may subdue some one evil propensity; he may abandon the "happy" circle, may break away from habits of profaneness, may leave the company of the unprincipled and polluted; but still, unless he has faith in the Son of God, the spirit of the world will reign supreme in his soul in some form. The appeal which John so confidently made in his time may be as confidently made now. we may ask, as he did, where is there one who shows that he has obtained a complete victory over the world, except the true Christian? Where is there one whose end and aim is not the present life? Where is there one who shows that all his purposes in regard to this world are made subordinate to the world to come?

There are those now, as there were then, who break away from one form of sin, and from one circle of sinful companions; there are those who change the ardent passions of youth for the soberness of middle or advanced life there are those who see the folly of profaneness, and of gaiety, and intemperance; there are those who are disappointed in some scheme of ambition, and who withdraw from political conflicts; there are those who are satiated with pageantry, and who, oppressed with the cares of state, as Diocletian and Charles V were, retire from public life; and there are those whose hearts are crushed and broken by losses, and by the death, or what is worse than death, by the ingratitude of their children, and who cease to cherish the fond hope that their family will be honored, and their name perpetuated in those whom they tenderly loved - but still there is no victory over the world. Their deep dejection, their sadness, their brokenness of spirit, their lamentations, and their want of cheerfulness, all show that the spirit of the world still reigns in their hearts.

If the calamities which have come upon them could be withdrawn; if the days of prosperity could be restored, they would show as much of the spirit of the world as ever they did, and would pursue its follies and its vanities as greedily as they had done before. Not many years or months elapse before the worldly mother who has followed one daughter to the grave, will introduce another into the frivolous world with all the brilliancy which fashion prescribes; not long will a worldly father mourn over the death of a son before, in the whirl of business and the exciting scenes of ambition, he will show that his heart is as much wedded to the world as it ever was. If such sorrows and disappointments conduct to the Saviour, as they sometimes do; if they lead the troubled mind to seek peace in his blood, and support in the hope of heaven, then a real victory is obtained over the world; and then, when the hand of affliction is withdrawn, it is seen that there has been a work of grace in the soul that has effectually changed all its feelings, and secured a triumph that shall be eternal.

Verse 6

This is he - This Son of God referred to in the previous verse. The object of the apostle in this verse, in connection with 1 John 5:8, is to state the nature of the evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. He refers to three well-known things on which he probably had insisted much in his preaching - the water, and the blood, and the Spirit. These, he says, furnished evidence on the very point which he was illustrating, by showing that that Jesus on whom they believed was the Son of God. "This," says he, "is the same one, the very person, to whom the well-known and important testimony is borne; to him, and him alone, these undisputed things appertain, and not to any other who should claim to be the Messiah and they all agree on the same one point," 1 John 5:8.

That came - ὁ εἰδὼν ho eidōnThis does not mean that when he came into the world he was accompanied in some way by water and blood; but the idea is, that the water and the blood were clearly manifest during his appearing on earth, or that they were remarkable testimonials in some way to his character and work. An ambassador might be said to come with credentials; a warrior might be said to come with the spoils of victory; a prince might be said to "come" with the insignia of royalty; a prophet comes with signs and wonders; and the Lord Jesus might also be said to

have come with power to raise the dead, and to heal disease, and to cast out devils; but John here fixes the attention on a fact so impressive and remarkable in his view as to be worthy of special remark, that he "came" by water and blood.

By water - There have been many opinions in regard to the meaning of this phrase. See Pool's *Synopsis*. Compare also Lucke, "in loc." A mere reference to some of these opinions may aid in ascertaining the true interpretation.

(1) Clement of Alexandria supposes that by "water" regeneration and faith were denoted, and by "blood" the public acknowledgment of that.

(2) some, and among them Wetstein, have held that the words are used to denote the fact that the Lord Jesus was truly a man, in contradistinction from the doctrine of the "Docetae;" and that the apostle means to say that he had all the properties of a human being - a spirit or soul, blood, and the watery humors of the body.

(3) Grotius supposes that by his coming "by water," there is reference to his pure life, as water is the emblem of purity; and he refers to Ezekiel 36:25; Isaiah 1:16; Jeremiah 4:14. As a sign of that purity, he says that John baptized him, John 1:28. A sufficient objection to this view is, that as in the corresponding word "blood" there is undoubted reference to blood literally, it cannot be supposed that the word "water" in the same connection would be used figuratively. Moreover, as Lucke (p. 287) has remarked, water, though a "symbol" of purity, is never used to denote "purity itself," and therefore cannot here refer to the pure life of Jesus.

(4) many expositors suppose that the reference is to the baptism of Jesus, and that by his "coming by water and blood," as by the latter there is undoubted reference to his death, so by the former there is reference to his baptism, or to his entrance on his public work. Of this opinion were Tertullian, OEcumenius, Theophylact, among the fathers, and Capellus, Heumann, Stroth, Lange, Ziegler, A. Clarke, Bengel, Rosenmuller, Macknight, and others, among the moderns. A leading argument for this opinion, as alleged, has been that it was then that the Spirit bare witness to him, Matthew 3:16, and that this is what John here refers to when he says,

"It is the Spirit that beareth witness," etc. To this view, Locke urges substantially the following objections:

(a) That if it refers to baptism, the phrase would much more appropriately express the fact that Jesus came baptizing others, if that were so, than that he was baptized himself. The phrase would be strictly applicable to John the Baptist, who came baptizing, and whose ministry was distinguished for that, Matthew 3:1; and if Jesus had baptized in the same manner, or if this had been a prominent characteristic of his ministry, it would be applicable to him. Compare John 4:2. But if it means that he was baptized, and that he came in that way "by water," it was equally true of all the apostles who were baptized, and of all others, and there was nothing so remarkable in the fact that he was baptized as to justify the prominence given to the phrase in this place.

(b) If reference be had here, as is supposed in this view of the passage, to the witness that was borne to the Lord Jesus on the occasion of his baptism, then the reference should have been not to the "water" as the witness, but to the "voice that came from heaven," Matthew 3:17, for it was that which was the witness in the case. Though this occurred at the time of the baptism, yet it was quite an independent thing, and was important enough to have been referred to. See Lucke, "Com. in loc." These objections, however, are not insuperable. Though Jesus did not come baptizing others himself John 4:2, and though the phrase would have expressed that if he had, yet, as Christian baptism began with him; as this was the first act in his entrance on public life; as it was by this that he was set apart to his work; and as he designed that this should be always the initiatory rite of his religion, there was no impropriety in saying that his "coming," or his advent in this world, was at the beginning characterized by water, and at the close by blood. Moreover, though the "witness" at his baptism was really borne by a voice from heaven, yet his baptism was the prominent thing; and if we take the baptism to denote all that in fact occurred when he was baptized, all the objections made by Lucke here vanish.

(5) some, by the "water" here, have understood the ordinance of baptism as it is appointed by the Saviour to be administered to his people, meaning

that the ordinance was instituted by him. So Beza, Calvin, Piscator, Calovius, Wolf, Beausobre, Knapp, Lucke, and others understand it. According to this the meaning would be, that he appointed baptism by water as a symbol of the cleansing of the heart, and shed his blood to effect the ransom of man, and that thus it might be said that he "came by water and blood;" to wit, by these two things as effecting the salvation of people. But it seems improbable that the apostle should have grouped these things together in this way. For.

(a) the "blood" is that which he shed; which pertained to him personally; which he poured out for the redemption of man; and it is clear that, whatever is meant by the phrase "he came," his coming by "water" is to be understood in some sense similar to his coming by "blood;" and it seems incredible that the apostle should have joined a mere "ordinance" of religion in this way with the shedding of his blood, and placed them in this manner on an equality.

(b) It cannot be supposed that John meant to attach so much importance to baptism as would be implied by this. The shedding of his blood was essential to the redemption of people; can it be supposed that the apostle meant to teach that baptism by water is equally necessary?

(c) If this be understood of baptism, there is no natural connection between that and the "blood" referred to; nothing by which the one would suggest the other; no reason why they should be united. If he had said that he came by the appointment of two ordinances for the edification of the church, "baptism and the supper," however singular such a statement might be in some respects, yet there would be a connection, a reason why they should be suggested together. But why should baptism and the blood shed by the Saviour on the cross be grouped together as designating the principal things which characterized his coming into the world?

(6) there remains, then, but one other interpretation; to wit, that he refers to the "water and the blood" which flowed from the side of the Saviour when he was pierced by the spear of the Roman soldier. John had himself laid great stress on this occurrence, and on the fact that he had himself witnessed it, (see the notes at John 19:34-35); and as, in these Epistles, he is

accustomed to allude to more full statements made in his Gospel, it would seem most natural to refer the phrase to that event as furnishing a clear and undoubted proof of the death of the Saviour. This would be the obvious interpretation, and would be entirely clear, if John did not immediately speak of the "water" and the "blood" as "separate" witnesses, each as bearing witness to an important point, "as" separate as the "Spirit" and the "water," or the "Spirit" and the "blood;" whereas, if he refers to the mingled water and blood flowing from his side, they both witness only the same fact, to wit, his death.

There was no "special" significancy in the water, no distinct testifying to anything different from the flowing of the blood; but together they bore witness to the "one" fact that he actually died. But here he seems to suppose that there is some special significancy in each. "Not by water only, but by water and blood." "There are three that bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one." These considerations seem to me to make it probable, on the whole, that the fourth opinion, above referred to, and that which has been commonly held in the Christian church is correct, and that by the "water" the "baptism" of the Saviour is intended; his baptism as an emblem of his own purity; as significant of the nature of his religion; as a rite which was to be observed in his church at all times. That furnished an important attestation to the fact that he was the Messiah (compare the notes at Matthew 3:15), for it was by that that he entered on his public work, and it was then that a remarkable testimony was borne to his being the Son of God. He himself came thus by water as an emblem of purity; and the water used in his church in all ages in baptism, together with the "blood" and the "Spirit" bears public testimony to the pure nature of his religion.

It is possible that the mention of the "water" in his baptism suggested to John also the water which flowed from the side of the Saviour at his death, intermingled with blood; and that though the primary thought in his mind was the fact that Jesus was baptized, and that an important attestation was then given to his Messiahship, yet he "may" have instantly adverted to the fact that "water" performed so important a part, and was so important a symbol through all his work; water at his introduction to his work, as an ordinance in his church, as symbolical of the nature of his religion, and

even at his death, as a public attestation, in connection with flowing blood, to the fact that he truly "died," in reality, and not, as the "Docetae" pretended, in appearance only, thus completing the work of the Messiah, and making an atonement for the sins of the world. Compare the notes at John 19:34-35.

And blood - Referring, doubtless, to the shedding of his blood on the cross. He "came" by that; that is, he was manifested by that to people, or that was one of the forms in which he appeared to people, or by which his coming into the world was characterized. The apostle means to say that the blood shed at his death furnished an important evidence or "witness" of what he was. In what way this was done, see the notes at 1 John 5:8.

Not by water only, but by water and blood - John the Baptist came "by water only;" that is, he came to baptize the people, and to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah. Jesus was distinguished from him in the fact that his ministry was characterized by the shedding of blood, or the shedding of his blood constituted one of the peculiarities of his work.

And it is the Spirit - Evidently the Holy Spirit.

That beareth witness - That is, he is the great witness in the matter, confirming all others. He bears witness to the soul that Jesus came "by water and blood," for that would not be received by us without his agency. In what way he does this, see the notes at 1 John 5:8.

Because the Spirit is truth - Is so eminently true that he may be called truth itself, as God is so eminently benevolent that he may be called love itself. See the notes at 1 John 4:8.

Verse 7

For there are three that bear record in heaven … - There are three that "witness," or that "bear witness" - the same Greek word which, in 1 John 5:8, is rendered "bear witness" - μαρτυροῦντες marturountesThere is no passage of the New Testament which has given rise to so much discussion in regard to its genuineness as this. The supposed importance of the verse in its bearing on the doctrine of the Trinity has contributed to this, and has given to the discussion a degree of consequence which has pertained to the examination of the genuineness of no other passage of the New Testament. On the one hand, the clear testimony which it seems to bear to the doctrine of the Trinity, has made that portion of the Christian church which holds the doctrine reluctant in the highest degree to abandon it; and on the other hand, the same clearness of the testimony to that

doctrine, has made those who deny it not less reluctant to admit the genuineness of the passage.

It is not consistent with the design of these notes to go into a full investigation of a question of this sort. And all that can be done is to state, in a brief way, the "results" which have been reached, in an examination of the question. Those who are disposed to pursue the investigation further, can find all that is to be said in the works referred to at the bottom of the page. The portion of the passage, in 1 John 5:7-8, whose genuineness is disputed, is included in brackets in the following quotation, as it stands in the common editions of the New Testament: "For there are three that bear record (in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth,) the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one." If the disputed passage, therefore, be omitted as spurious, the whole passage will read, "For there are three that bear record, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one." The reasons which seem to me to prove that the passage included in brackets is spurious, and should not be regarded as a part of the inspired writings, are briefly the following:

I. It is missing in all the earlier Greek manuscripts, for it is found in no Greek manuscript written before the 16th century. Indeed, it is found in only two Greek manuscripts of any age - one the Codex Montfortianus, or Britannicus, written in the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the other the Codex Ravianus, which is a mere transcript of the text, taken partly from the third edition of Stephen's New Testament, and partly from the Complutensian Polyglott. But it is incredible that a genuine passage of the New Testament should be missing in all the early Greek manuscripts.

II. It is missing in the earliest versions, and, indeed, in a large part of the versions of the New Testament which have been made in all former times. It is wanting in both the Syriac versions - one of which was made probably in the first century; in the Coptic, Armenian, Slavonic, Ethiopic, and Arabic.

III. It is never quoted by the Greek fathers in their controversies on the doctrine of the Trinity - a passage which would be so much in point, and which could not have failed to be quoted if it were genuine; and it is not referred to by the Latin fathers until the time of Vigilius, at the end of the

5th century. If the passage were believed to be genuine - nay, if it were known at all to be in existence, and to have any probability in its favor - it is incredible that in all the controversies which occurred in regard to the divine nature, and in all the efforts to define the doctrine of the Trinity, this passage should never have been referred to. But it never was; for it must be plain to anyone who examines the subject with an unbiassed mind, that the passages which are relied on to prove that it was quoted by Athanasius, Cyprian, Augustin, etc., (Wetstein, II., p. 725) are not taken from this place, and are not such as they would have made if they had been acquainted with this passage, and had designed to quote it. IV. The argument against the passage from the external proof is confirmed by internal evidence, which makes it morally certain that it cannot be genuine.

(a) The connection does not demand it. It does not contribute to advance what the apostle is saying, but breaks the thread of his argument entirely. He is speaking of certain things which bear "witness" to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah; certain things which were well known to those to whom he was writing - the Spirit, and the water, and the blood. How does it contribute to strengthen the force of this to say that in heaven there are "three that bear witness" - three not before referred to, and having no connection with the matter under consideration?

(b) The "language" is not such as John would use. He does, indeed, elsewhere use the term "Logos," or "Word" - ὁ Λόγος ho Logos John 1:1, John 1:14; 1 John 1:1, but it is never in this form, "The Father, and the Word;" that is, the terms "Father" and "Word" are never used by him, or by any of the other sacred writers, as correlative. The word "Son" - ὁ Υἱός ho Huios- is the term which is correlative to the "Father" in every other place as used by John, as well as by the other sacred writers. See 1 John 1:3; 1 John 2:22-24; 1 John 4:14; 2 John 1:3, 2 John 1:9; and the Gospel of John, "passim." Besides, the correlative of the term "Logos," or "Word," with John, is not "Father," but "God." See John 1:1. Compare Revelation 19:13.

(c) Without this passage, the sense of the argument is clear and appropriate. There are three, says John, which bear witness that Jesus is the Messiah. These are referred to in 1 John 5:6; and in immediate connection with this, in the argument, 1 John 5:8, it is affirmed that their testimony

goes to one point, and is harmonious. To say that there are other witnesses elsewhere, to say that they are one, contributes nothing to illustrate the nature of the testimony of these three - the water, and the blood, and the Spirit; and the internal sense of the passage, therefore, furnishes as little evidence of its genuineness as the external proof. V. It is easy to imagine how the passage found a place in the New Testament. It was at first written, perhaps, in the margin of some Latin manuscript, as expressing the belief of the writer of what was true in heaven, as well as on earth, and with no more intention to deceive than we have when we make a marginal note in a book. Some transcriber copied it into the body of the text, perhaps with a sincere belief that it was a genuine passage, omitted by accident; and then it became too important a passage in the argument for the Trinity, ever to be displaced but by the most clear critical evidence. It was rendered into Greek, and inserted in one Greek manuscript of the 16th century, while it was missing in all the earlier manuscripts.

VI. The passage is now omitted in the best editions of the Greek Testament, and regarded as spurious by the ablest critics. See Griesbach and Hahn. On the whole, therefore, the evidence seems to me to be clear that this passage is not a genuine portion of the inspired writings, and should not be appealed to in proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. One or two remarks may be made, in addition, in regard to its use.

(1) even on the supposition that it is genuine, as Bengel believed it was, and as he believed that some Greek manuscript would still be found which would contain it, yet it is not wise to adduce it as a proof-text. It would be much easier to prove the doctrine of the Trinity from other texts, than to demonstrate the genuineness of this.

(2) it is not necessary as a proof-text. The doctrine which it contains can be abundantly established from other parts of the New Testament, by passages about which there can be no doubt.

(3) the removal of this text does nothing to weaken the evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity, or to modify that doctrine. As it was never used to shape the early belief of the Christian world on the subject, so its rejection, and its removal from the New Testament, will do nothing to modify that

doctrine. The doctrine was embraced, and held, and successfully defended without it, and it can and will be so still.

Verse 8

And there are three that bear witness in earth - This is a part of the text, which, if the reasoning above is correct, is to be omitted. The genuine passage reads, 1 John 5:7, "For there are three that bear record (or witness, μαρτυροῦντες marturountes) - the Spirit, and the water, and the blood." There is no reference to the fact that it is done "in earth." The phrase was introduced to correspond with what was said in the interpolated passage, that there are three that bear record "in heaven."

The Spirit - Evidently the Holy Spirit. The assertion here is, that that Spirit bears witness to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, 1 John 5:5. The testimony of the Holy Spirit to this fact is contained in the following things:

(1)He did it at the baptism of Jesus. Notes, Matthew 3:16-17.

(2)Christ was eminently endowed with the influences of the Holy Spirit; as it was predicted that the Messiah would be, and as it was appropriate he should be, Isaiah 11:2; Isaiah 61:1. Compare Luke 4:18; Notes, John 3:34.

(3)the Holy Spirit bore witness to his Messiahship, after his ascension, by descending, according to his promise, on his apostles, and by accompanying the message which they delivered with saving power to thousands in Jerusalem, John 16:14-15.

(5)he does it in the hearts of all true Christians, for "no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost," 1 Corinthians 12:3. See the notes at that passage.

The Spirit of God has thus always borne witness to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, and he will continue to do it to the end of time, convincing yet countless millions that he was sent from God to redeem and save lost people.

And the water - See the notes at 1 John 5:6. That is, the baptism of Jesus, and the scenes which occurred when he was baptized, furnished evidence that he was the Messiah. This was done in these ways:

(1)It was proper that the Messiah should be baptized when he entered on his work, and perhaps it was expected; and the fact that he was baptized

showed that he had "in fact" entered on his work as Redeemer. See the notes at Matthew 3:15.

(2)an undoubted attestation was then furnished to the fact that he was "the Son of God," by the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, and by the voice that addressed him from heaven, Matthew 3:16-17.

(3)his baptism with water was an emblem of the purity of his own character, and of the nature of his religion.

(4)perhaps it may be implied here, also, that water used in baptism now bears witness to the same thing,

(a)as it is the ordinance appointed by the Saviour;

(b)as it keeps up his religion in the world;

(c)as it is a public symbol of the purity of his religion;

(d)and as, in every case where it is administered, it is connected with the public expression of a belief that Jesus is the Son of God.

And the blood - There is undoubted allusion here to the blood shed on the cross; and the meaning is, that that blood bore witness also to the fact that he was the Son of God. This it did in the following respects:

(1)The shedding of the blood showed that he was truly dead - that his work was complete - that he died in "reality," and not in "appearance" only. See the notes at John 19:34-35.

(2)the remarkable circumstances that attended the shedding of this blood - the darkened sun, the earthquake, the rending of the veil of the temple - showed in a manner that convinced even the Roman centurion that he was the Son of God. See the notes at Matthew 27:54.

(3)the fact that an "atonement" was thus made for sin was an important "witness" for the Saviour, showing that he had done that which the Son of God only could do, by disclosing a way by which the sinner may be pardoned, and the polluted soul be made pure.

(4)perhaps, also, there may be here an allusion to the Lord's Supper, as designed to set forth the shedding of this blood; and the apostle may mean to have it implied that the representation of the shedding of the blood in this

ordinance is intended to keep up the conviction that Jesus is the Son of God. If so, then the general sense is, that that blood - however set before the eyes and the hearts of people - on the cross, or by the representation of its shedding in the Lord‘s Supper - is a witness in the world to the truth that Jesus is the Son of God, and to the nature of his religion. Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 11:26.

And these three agree in one - εἰς τὸ ἕν εἰσιν eis to hen eisinThey agree in one thing; they bear on one and the same point, to wit, the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. All are appointed by God as witnesses of this fact; and all harmonize in the testimony which is borne. The apostle does not say that there are no other witnesses to the same thing; nor does he even say that these are the most important or decisive which have been furnished; but he says that these are important witnesses, and are entirely harmonious in their testimony.

Verse 9

If we receive the witness of men - As we are accustomed to do, and as we must do in courts of justice, and in the ordinary daily transactions of life. We are constantly acting on the belief that what others say is true; that what the members of our families, and our neighbors say, is true; that what is reported by travelers is true; that what we read in books, and what is sworn to in courts of justice, is true. We could not get along a single day if we did not act on this belief; nor are we accustomed to call it in question, unless we have reason to suspect that it is false. The mind is so made that it must credit the testimony borne by others; and if this should cease even for a single day, the affairs of the world would come to a pause.

The witness of God is greater - Is more worthy of belief; as God is more true, and wise, and good than people. People may be deceived, and may undesignedly bear witness to that which is not true - God never can be; men may, for sinister and base purposes, intend to deceive - God never can; people may act from partial observation, from rumors unworthy of credence - God never can; people may desire to excite admiration by the marvelous - God never can; people have deceived - God never has; and though, from these causes, there are many instances where we are not certain that the testimony borne by people is true, yet we are always certain that that which is borne by God is not false. The only question on which the mind ever hesitates is, whether we actually have his testimony, or certainly know what he bears witness to; when that is ascertained, the human mind is so made

that it cannot believe that God would deliberately deceive a world. See the notes at Hebrews 6:18. Compare Titus 1:2.

For this is the witness of God … - The testimony above referred to - that borne by the Spirit, and the water, and the blood. Who that saw his baptism, and heard the voice from heaven, Matthew 3:16-17, could doubt that he was the Son of God? Who that saw his death on the cross, and that witnessed the amazing scenes which occurred there, could fail to join with the Roman centurion in saying that this was the Son of God? Who that has felt the influences of the Eternal Spirit on his heart, ever doubted that Jesus was the Son of God? Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 12:3. Any one of these is sufficient to convince the soul of this; all combined bear on the same point, and confirm it from age to age.

Verse 10

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself - The evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. Compare the notes at Romans 8:16. This cannot refer to any distinct and immediate "revelation" of that fact, that Jesus is the Christ, to the soul of the individual, and is not to be understood as independent of the external evidence of that truth, or as superseding the necessity of that evidence; but the "witness" here referred to is the fruit of all the evidence, external and internal, on the heart, producing this result; that is, there is the deepest conviction of the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. There is the evidence derived from the fact that the soul has found peace by believing on him; from the fact that the troubles and anxieties of the mind on account of sin have been removed by faith in Christ; from the new views of God and heaven which have resulted from faith in the Lord Jesus; from the effect of this in disarming death of its terrors; and from the whole influence of the gospel on the intellect and the affections - on the heart and the life. These things constitute a mass of evidence for the truth of the Christian religion, whose force the believer cannot resist, and make the sincere Christian ready to sacrifice anything rather than his religion; ready to go to the stake rather than to renounce his Saviour. Compare the notes at 1 Peter 3:15.

He that believeth not God hath made him a liar - Compare the notes at 1 John 1:10.

Because he believeth not the record … - The idea is, that in various ways - at his baptism, at his death, by the influences of the Holy Spirit, by the miracles of Jesus, etc. - God had become a "witness" that the Lord Jesus

was sent by him as a Saviour, and that to doubt or deny this partook of the same character as doubting or denying any other testimony; that is, it was practically charging him who bore the testimony with falsehood.

Verse 11

And this is the record - This is the sum, or the amount, of the testimony (μαρτυρία marturia) which God has given respecting him.

That God hath given to us eternal life - Has provided, through the Saviour, the means of obtaining eternal life. See the notes at John 5:24; John 17:2-3.

And this life is in his Son - Is treasured up in him, or is to be obtained through him. See the John 1:4; John 11:25; John 14:6 notes; Colossians 3:3 note.

Verse 12

He that hath the Son, hath life - See the notes at John 5:24. John evidently designs to refer to that passage in the verse before us, and to state a principle laid down by the Saviour himself. This is the sense of all the important testimony that had ever been borne by God on the subject of salvation, that he who believes in the Lord Jesus already has the elements of eternal life in his soul, and will certainly obtain salvation. Compare the notes at John 17:3.

And he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life - He that does not believe on him will not attain to eternal life. See the John 3:36 note; Mark 16:16 note.

Verse 13

These things have I written unto you - The things in this Epistle respecting the testimony borne to the Lord Jesus.

That believe on the name of the Son of God - To believe on his name, is to believe on himself - the word "name" often being used to denote the person. See the notes at Matthew 28:19.

That ye may know that ye have eternal life - That you may see the evidence that eternal life has been provided, and that you may be able, by self-examination, to determine whether you possess it. Compare the notes at John 20:31.

And that ye may believe … - That you may continue to believe, or may persevere in believing. He was assured that they actually did believe on him then; but he was desirous of so setting before them the nature of religion, that they would continue to exercise faith in him. It is often one of the most

important duties of ministers of the gospel, to present to real Christians such views of the nature, the claims, the evidences, and the hopes of religion, as shall be adapted to secure their perseverance in the faith. In the human heart, even when converted, there is such a proneness to unbelief; the religious affections so easily become cold; there are so many cares pertaining to the world that are suited to distract the mind; there are so many allurements of sin to draw the affections away from the Saviour; that there is need of being constantly reminded of the nature of religion, in order that the heart may not be wholly estranged from the Saviour. No small part of preaching, therefore, must consist of the re-statement of arguments with which the mind has been before fully convinced; of motives whose force has been once felt and acknowledged; and of the grounds of hope and peace and joy which have already, on former occasions, diffused comfort through the soul. It is not less important to keep the soul, than it is to "convert" it; to save it from coldness, and deadness, and formality, than it was to impart to it the elements of spiritual life at first. It may be as important to trim a vine, if one would have grapes, as it is to set it out; to keep a garden from being overrun with weeds in the summer, as it was to plant it in the spring.

Verse 14

And this is the confidence that we have in him - Margin, "concerning." Greek, "toward him," or in respect to him - πρὸς αὐτὸν pros autonThe confidence referred to here is that which relates to the answer to prayer. The apostle does not say that this is the only thing in respect to which there is to be confidence in him, but that it is one which is worthy of special consideration. The sense is, that one of the effects of believing on the Lord Jesus 1 John 5:13 is, that we have the assurance that our prayers will be answered. On the word "confidence," see the notes at 1 John 3:21; 1 John 4:17.

That, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us - This is the proper and the necessary limitation in all prayer. God has not promised to grant anything that shall be contrary to his will, and it could not be right that he should do it. We ought not to wish to receive anything that should be contrary to what he judges to be best. No man could hope for good who should esteem his own wishes to be a better guide than the will of God; and it is one of the most desirable of all arrangements that the promise of any blessing to be obtained by prayer should be limited and bounded by the will

of God. The limitation here, “according to his will,” probably implies the following things:

(1) In accordance with what he has “declared” that he is willing to grant. Here the range is large, for there are many things which we know to be in accordance with his will, if they are sought in a proper manner - as the forgiveness of sins, the sanctification of the soul, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, comfort in trial, the needful supply of our wants, grace that we may do our duty, wisdom to direct and guide us, James 1:5, deliverance from the evils which beset us, the influences of his Spirit to promote the cause of religion in the world, and our final salvation. Here is a range of subjects of petition that may gratify the largest wishes of prayer.

(2) the expression, “according to his will,” must limit the answer to prayer to what “he” sees to be best for us. Of that we are not always good judges. We never perceive it as clearly as our Maker does, and in many things we might be wholly mistaken. Certainly we ought not to desire to be permitted to ask anything which “God” would judge not to be for our good.

(3) the expression must limit the petition to what it will be “consistent” for God to bestow upon us. We cannot expect that he will work a miracle in answer to our prayers; we cannot ask him to bestow blessings in violation of any of the laws which he has ordained, or in any other way than that which he has appointed. It is better that the particular blessing should be withheld from us, than that the laws which he has appointed should be disregarded. It is better that an idle man should not have a harvest, though he should pray for it, than that God should violate the laws by which he has determined to bestow such favors as a reward of industry, and work a special miracle in answer to a lazy man‘s prayers.

(4) the expression, “according to his will,” must limit the promise to what will be for the good of the whole. God presides over the universe: and though in him there is an infinite fulness, and he regards the wants of every individual throughout his immense empire, yet the interests of the whole, as well as of the individual, are to be consulted and regarded. In a family, it is conceivable that a child might ask for some favor whose bestowment would interfere materially with the rights of others, or be inconsistent with the good of the whole, and in such a case a just father would of course withhold

it. With these necessary limitations the range of the promise in prayer is ample; and, with these limitations, it is true beyond a question that he does hear and answer prayer.

Verse 15

And if we know that he hear us - That is, if we are assured of this as a true doctrine, then, even though we may not "see" immediately that the prayer is answered, we may have the utmost confidence that it is not disregarded, and that it will be answered in the way best adapted to promote our good. The specific thing that we asked may not indeed be granted, (compare Luke 22:42; 2 Corinthians 12:8-9), but the prayer will not be disregarded, and the thing which is most for our good will be bestowed upon us. The "argument" here is derived from the faithfulness of God; from the assurance which we feel that when he has promised to hear us, there will be, sooner or later, a real answer to the prayer.

We know that we have the petitions … - That is, evidently, we now that we "shall" have them, or that the prayer will be answered. It cannot mean that we already have the precise thing for which we prayed, or that will be a real answer to the prayer, for

(a)the prayer may relate to something future, as protection on a journey, or a harvest, or restoration to health, or the safe return of a son from a voyage at sea, or the salvation of our souls - all of which are "future," and which cannot be expected to be granted at once; and,

(b)the answer to prayer is sometimes delayed, though ultimately granted. There may be reasons why the answer should be deferred, and the promise is not that it shall be immediate. The "delay" may arise from such causes as these:

(1)To try our faith, and see whether the blessing is earnestly desired.

(2)perhaps it could not be at once answered without a miracle.

(3)it might not be consistent with the divine arrangements respecting others to grant it to us at once.

(4)our own condition may not be such that it would be best to answer it at once.

We may need further trial, further chastisement, before the affliction, for example, shall be removed; and the answer to the prayer may be delayed for

months or years. Yet, in the meantime, we may have the firmest assurance that the prayer is heard, and that it will be answered in the way and at the period when God shall see it to be best.

Verse 16

If a man see his brother sin a sin … - From the general assurance that God hears prayer, the apostle turns to a particular case in which it may be benevolently and effectually employed, in rescuing a brother from death. There has been great diversity of opinion in regard to the meaning of this passage, and the views of expositors of the New Testament are by no means settled as to its true sense. It does not comport with the design of these notes to examine the opinions which have been held in detail. A bare reference, however, to some of them will show the difficulty of determining with certainty what the passage means, and the impropriety of any very great confidence in one‘s own judgment in the case. Among these opinions are the following. Some have supposed that the sin against the Holy Spirit is intended; some that the phrase denotes any great and enormous sin, as murder, idolatry, adultery; some that it denotes some sin that was punishable by death by the laws of Moses; some that it denotes a sin that subjected the offender to excommunication from the synagogue or the church; some that it refers to sins which brought fatal disease upon the offender, as in the case of those who abused the Lord‘s Supper at Corinth, (see the notes at 1 Corinthians 11:30); some that it refers to crimes committed against the laws, for which the offender was sentenced to death, meaning that when the charge alleged was false, and the condemnation unjust, they ought to pray for the one who was condemned to death, and that he would be spared; but that when the offence was one which had been really committed, and the offender deserved to die, they ought not to pray for him, or, in other words, that by “the sin unto death,” offences against the civil law are referred to, which the magistrate had no power to pardon, and the punishment of which he could not commute; and by the “sin not unto death,” offences are referred to which might be pardoned, and when the punishment might be commuted; some that it refers to sins “before” and “after” baptism, the former of which might be pardoned, but the latter of which might not be; and some, and perhaps this is the common opinion among the Roman Catholics, that it refers to sins that might or might not be pardoned after death, thus referring to the doctrine of purgatory.

These various opinions may be seen stated more at length in Rosenmuller, Lucke, Pool (Synopsis,) and Clarke, "in loc." To go into an examination of all these opinions would require a volume by itself, and all that can be done here is to furnish what seems to me to be the fair exposition of the passage. The word "brother" may refer either to a member of the church, whether of the particular church to which one was attached or to another, or it may be used in the larger sense which is common as denoting a fellow-man, a member of the great family of mankind. There is nothing in the word which necessarily limits it to one in the church; there is nothing in the connection, or in the reason assigned, why what is said should be limited to such an one. The "duty" here enjoined would be the same whether the person referred to was in the church or not; for it is our duty to pray for those who sin, and to seek the salvation of those whom we see to be going astray, and to be in danger of ruin, wherever they are, or whoever they may be. At the same time, the correct interpretation of the passage does not depend on determining whether the word "brother" refers to one who is a professed Christian or not.

A sin which is not unto death - The great question in the interpretation of the whole passage is, what is meant by the "sin unto death." The Greek (ἁμαρτία πρὸς θάνατον hamartia pros thanaton) would mean properly a sin which "tends" to death; which would "terminate" in death; of which death was the penalty, or would be the result, unless it were arrested; a sin which, if it had its own course, would terminate thus, as we should speak of a disease "unto death." Compare the notes at John 11:4. The word "death" is used in three significations in the New Testament, and as employed here might, so far as the word is concerned, be applied in any one of those senses. It is used to denote:

(a)literally, the death of the body;

(b)spiritual death, or death "in trespasses and sin," Ephesians 2:1;

(c)the "second death," death in the world of woe and despair.

If the sin here mentioned refers to "temporal" death, it means such a sin that temporal death must inevitably follow, either by the disease which it has produced, or by a judicial sentence where there was no hope of pardon or of a commutation of the punishment; if it refers to death in the future world, the second death, then it means such a sin as is unpardonable. That

this last is the reference here seems to me to be probable, if not clear, from the following considerations:

(1)There is such a sin referred to in the New Testament, a sin for which there is forgiveness "neither in this life nor the life to come." See the notes at Matthew 12:31-32. Compare Mark 3:29. If there is such a sin, there is no impropriety in supposing that John would refer to it here.

(2)this is the "obvious" interpretation. It is that which would occur to the mass of the readers of the New Testament, and which it is presumed they do adopt; and this, in general, is one of the best means of ascertaining the sense of a passage in the Bible.

(3)the other significations attached to the word "death," would be quite inappropriate here.

(a) It cannot mean "unto spiritual death," that is, to a continuance in sin, for how could that be known? and if such a case occurred, why would it be improper to pray for it? Besides, the phrase "a sin unto spiritual death," or "unto continuance in sin," is one that is unmeaning.

(b) It cannot be shown to refer to a disease that should be unto death, miraculously inflicted on account of sin, because, if such cases occurred, they were very rare, and even if a disease came upon a man miraculously in consequence of sin, it could not be certainly known whether it was, or was not, unto death. All who were visited in this way did not certainly die. Compare 1 Corinthians 5:4-5, with 2 Corinthians 2:6-7. See also 1 Corinthians 11:30.

(c) It cannot be shown that it refers to the case of those who were condenmed by the civil magistrate to death, and for whom there was no hope of reprieve or pardon, for it is not certain that there were such cases; and if there were, and the person condemned were innocent, there was every reason to pray that God would interpose and save them, even when there was no hope from man; and if they were guilty, and deserved to die, there was no reason why they should not pray that the sin might be forgiven, and that they might be prepared to die, unless it were a case where the sin was unpardonable. It seems probable, therefore, to me, that the reference here is to the sin against the Holy Spirit, and that John means here to illustrate the duty and the power of prayer, by showing that for any sin short of that, however aggravated, it was their duty to pray that a brother

might be forgiven. Though it might not be easy to determine what was the unpardonable sin, and John does not say that those to whom he wrote could determine that with certainty, yet there were many sins which were manifestly not of that aggravated character, and for those sins it was proper to pray.

There was clearly but one sin that was unpardonable - "there is a sin unto death;" there might be many which were not of this description, and in relation to them there was ample scope for the exercise of the prayer of faith. The same thing is true now. It is not easy to define the unpardonable sin, and it is impossible for us to determine in any case with absolute certainty that a man has committed it. But there are multitudes of sins which people commit, which upon no proper interpretation of the passages respecting the sin which "hath never forgiveness," can come under the description of that sin, and for which it is proper, therefore, to pray that they may be pardoned. We know of cases enough where sin "may" be forgiven; and, without allowing the mind to be disturbed about the question respecting the unpardonable sin, it is our duty to bear such cases on our hearts before God, and to plead with him that our erring brethren may be saved.

He shall ask - That is, he shall pray that the offender may be brought to true repentance, and may be saved.

And he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death - That is, God shall give life, and he shall be saved from the eternal death to which he was exposed. This, it is said, would be given to him who offers the prayer; that is, his prayer would be the means of saving the offending brother. What a motive is this to prayer! How faithful and constant should we be in pleading for our fellow-sinners, that we may be instrumental in saving their souls! What joy will await those in heaven who shall see there many who were rescued from ruin in answer to their prayers! Compare the notes at James 5:15, James 5:19-20.

There is a sin unto death - A sin which is of such a character that it throws the offender beyond the reach of mercy, and which is not to be pardoned. See Mark 3:28-29. The apostle does not here say what that sin is; nor how they might know what it is; nor even that in any case they could determine that it had been committed. He merely says that there is such a sin, and that he does not design that his remark about the efficacy of prayer should be understood as extending to that.

I do not say that he shall pray for it - "I do not intend that my remark shall be extended to all sin, or mean to affirm that all possible forms of guilt are the proper subjects of prayer, for I am aware that there is one sin which is an exception, and my remark is not to be applied to that." He does not say that this sin was of common occurrence: or that they could know when it had been committed; or even that a case could ever occur in which they could determine that; he merely says that in respect to that sin he did not say that prayer should be offered. It is indeed implied in a most delicate way that it would not be proper to pray for the forgiveness of such a sin, but he does not say that a case would ever happen in which they would know certainly that the sin had been committed. There were instances in the times of the prophets in which the sin of the people became so universal and so aggravated, that they were forbidden to pray for them.

Isaiah 14:11, "then said the Lord unto me, Pray not for this people for their good;" Isaiah 15:1, "Then said the Lord unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people; cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth." Compare the notes at Isaiah 1:15. But these were cases in which the prophets were directly instructed by God not to pray for a people. We have no such instruction; and it may be said now with truth, that as we can never be certain respecting anyone that he has committed the unpardonable sin, there is no one for whom we may not with propriety pray. There may be those who are so far gone in sin that there may seem to be little, or almost no ground of hope. They may have cast off all the restraints of religion, of morality, of decency; they may disregard all the counsels of parents and friends; they may be sceptical, sensual, profane; they may be the companions of infidels and of mockers; they may have forsaken the sanctuary, and learned to despise the sabbath; they may have been professors of religion, and now may have renounced the faith of the gospel altogether, but still, while there is life it is our duty to pray for them, "if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth," 2 Timothy 2:25.

"All things are possible with God;" and he has reclaimed offenders more hardened, probably, than any that we have known, and has demonstrated that there is no form of depravity which he has not the power to subdue. Let us remember the cases of Manasseh, of Saul of Tarsus, of Augustine, of Bunyan, of Newton, of tens of thousands who have been reclaimed from the

vilest forms of iniquity, and then let us never despair of the conversion of any, in answer to prayer, who may have gone astray, as long as they are in this world of probation and of hope. Let no parent despair who has an abandoned son; let no wife cease to pray who has a dissipated husband. How many a prodigal son has come back to fill with happiness an aged parent‘s heart! How many a dissipated husband has been reformed to give joy again to the wife of his youth, and to make a paradise again of his miserable home!

Verse 17

All unrighteousness is sin … - This seems to be thrown in to guard what he had just said, and there is “one” great and enormous sin, a sin which could not be forgiven. But he says also that there are many other forms and degrees of sin, sin for which prayer may be made. Everything, he says, which is unrighteous - ἀδικία adikia- everything which does not conform to the holy law of God, and which is not right in the view of that law, is to be regarded as sin; but we are not to suppose that all sin of that kind is of such a character that it cannot possibly be forgiven. There are many who commit sin who we may hope will be recovered, and for them it is proper to pray. Deeply affected as we may be in view of the fact that there is a sin which can never be pardoned, and much as we may pity one who has been guilty of such a sin, yet we should not hastily conclude in any case that it has been committed, and should bear constantly in mind that while there is one such sin, there are multitudes that may be pardoned, and that for them it is our duty unceasingly to pray.

Verse 18

We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not - Is not habitually and characteristically a sinner; does not ultimately and finally sin and perish; cannot, therefore, commit the unpardonable sin. Though he may fall into sin, and grieve his brethren, yet we are never to cease to pray for a true Christian: we are never to feel that he has committed the sin which has never forgiveness, and that he has thrown himself beyond the reach of our prayers. This passage, in its connection, is a full proof that a true Christian “will” never commit the unpardonable sin, and, therefore, is a proof that he will never fall from grace. Compare the notes at Hebrews 6:4-8; Hebrews 10:26. On the meaning of the assertion here made, that “whosoever is born of God sinneth not,” see the notes at 1 John 3:6-9.

Keepeth himself - It is not said that he does it by his own strength, but he will put forth his best efforts to keep himself from sin, and by divine assistance he will be able to accomplish it. Compare the 1 John 3:3 note; Jude 1:21 note.

And that wicked one toucheth him not - The great enemy of all good is repelled in his assaults, and he is kept from falling into his snares. The word "toucheth" (ἅπτεται haptetai) is used here in the sense of harm or injure.

Verse 19

And we know that we are of God - We who are Christians. The apostle supposed that true Christians might have so clear evidence on that subject as to leave no doubt on their own minds that they were the children of God. Compare 1 John 3:14; 2 Timothy 1:12.

And the whole world - The term "world" here evidently means not the material world, but the people who dwell on the earth, including all idolaters, and all sinners of every grade and kind.

Lieth in wickedness - "In the wicked one," or under the power of the wicked one - ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ en tō ponērōIt is true that the word πονηρῷ may be used here in the neuter gender, as our translators have rendered it, meaning "in that which is evil," or in "wickedness;" but it may be in the masculine gender, meaning "the wicked one;" and then the sense would be that the whole world is under his control or dominion. That this is the meaning of the apostle seems to be clear, because:

(1) the corresponding phrase, 1 John 5:20, ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ en tō alēthinō"in him that is true," is evidently to be construed in the masculine, referring to God the Saviour, and meaning "him that is true," and not that we are "in truth."

(2) it makes better sense to say that the world lies under the control of the wicked one, than to say that it lies "in wickedness."

(3) this accords better with the other representations in the Bible, and the usuage of the word elsewhere. Compare 1 John 2:13, "Ye have overcome the "wicked" one;" 1 John 5:14, "ye have overcome the "wicked" one;" 1 John 3:12, "who was of that "wicked" one." See also the notes at 2 Corinthians 4:4, on the expression "the god of this world;" John 12:31, where he is called "the prince of this world;" and Ephesians 2:2, where he is

called "the prince of the power of the air." In all these passages it is supposed that Satan has control over the world, especially the pagan world. Compare Ephesians 6:12; 1 Corinthians 10:20. In regard to the fact that the pagan world was pervaded by wickedness, see the notes at Romans 1:21-32.

(4) it may be added, that this interpretation is adopted by the most eminent critics and commentators. It is that of Calvin, Beza, Benson, Macknight, Bloomfield, Piscator, Lucke, etc. The word "lieth" here (κεῖται keitai) means, properly, to lie; to be laid; to recline; to be situated, etc. It seems here to refer to the "passive" and "torpid" state of a wicked world under the dominion of the prince of evil, as acquiescing in his reign; making no resistance; not even struggling to be free. It lies thus as a beast that is subdued, a body that is dead, or anything that is wholly passive, quiet, and inert. There is no energy; no effort to throw off the reign; no resistance; no struggling. The dominion is complete, and body and soul, individuals and nations, are entirely subject to his will. This striking expression will not unaptly now describe the condition of the pagan world, or of sinners in general. There would seem to be no government under which people are so little restive, and against which they have so little disposition to rebel, as that of Satan. Compare 2 Timothy 2:26.

Verse 20

And we know that the Son of God is come - We know this by the evidence that John had referred to in this Epistle, 1 John 1:1-4; 1 John 5:6-8.

And hath given us an understanding - Not an "understanding" considered as a faculty of the mind, for religion gives us no new faculties; but he has so instructed us that we do understand the great truths referred to. Compare the notes at Luke 24:45. All the correct knowledge which we have of God and his government, is to be traced directly or indirectly to the great Prophet whom God has sent into the world, John 1:4, John 1:18; John 8:12; John 9:5; Hebrews 1:1-3; Matthew 11:27.

That we may know him that is true - That is, the true God. See the notes at John 17:3.

And we are in him that is true - That is, we are united to him; we belong to him; we are his friends. This idea is often expressed in the Scriptures by being "in him." It denotes a most intimate union, as if we

were one with him - or were a part of him - as the branch is in the vine, John 15:4, John 15:6. The Greek construction is the same as that applied to "the wicked one," 1 John 5:19, (ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ en tō alēthinōThis is the true God - oThere has been much difference of opinion in regard to this important passage; whether it refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, the immediate antecedent, or to a more remote antecedent - referring to God, as such. The question is of importance in its bearing on the doctrine of the divinity of the Saviour; for if it refers to him, it furnishes an unequivocal declaration that he is divine. The question is, whether John "meant" that it should be referred to him? Without going into an extended examination of the passage, the following considerations seem to me to make it morally certain that by the phrase "this is the true God," etc., he did refer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

(1) the grammatical construction favors it. Christ is the immediate antecedent of the pronoun "this" - οὗτος houtosThis would be regarded as the obvious and certain construction so far as the grammar is concerned, unless there were something in the thing affirmed which led us to seek some more remote and less obvious antecedent. No doubt would have been ever entertained on this point, if it had not been for the reluctance to admit that the Lord Jesus is the true God. If the assertion had been that "this is the true Messiah;" or that "this is the Son of God;" or that "this is he who was born of the Virgin Mary," there would have been no difficulty in the construction. I admit that his argument is not absolutely decisive; for cases do occur where a pronoun refers, not to the immediate antecedent, but to one more remote; but cases of that kind depend on the ground of necessity, and can be applied only when it would be a clear violation of the sense of the author to refer it to the immediate antecedent.

(2) this construction seems to be demanded by the adjunct which John has assigned to the phrase "the true God" - "eternal life." This is an expression which John would be likely to apply to the Lord Jesus, considered as "life," and the "source of life," and not to God as such. "How familiar is this language with John, as applied to Christ! "In him (i. e. Christ) was life, and the life was the light of people - giving life to the world - the bread of life - my words are spirit and life - I am the way, and the truth, and the life. This life (Christ) was manifested, and we have "seen it," and do testify to you, and declare the eternal life which was with the

Father, and was manifested to us," 1 John 1:2." - Prof. Stuart's Letters to Dr. Channing, p. 83. There is no instance in the writings of John, in which the appellation life, and "eternal" life is bestowed upon the Father, to designate him as the author of spiritual and eternal life; and as this occurs so frequently in John's writings as applied to Christ, the laws of exegesis require that both the phrase "the true God," and "eternal life," should be applied to him.

(3) if it refers to God as such, or to the word "true" - τὸν ἀληθινόν (Θεὸν) ton alēthinon (Theon) it would be mere tautology, or a mere truism. The rendering would then be, "That we may know the true God, and we are in the true God: this is the true God, and eternal life." Can we believe that an inspired man would affirm gravely, and with so much solemnity, and as if it were a truth of so much magnitude, that the true God is the true God?

(4) this interpretation accords with what we are sure John would affirm respecting the Lord Jesus Christ. Can there be any doubt that he who said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;" that he who said, "all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made;" that he who recorded the declaration of the Saviour, "I and my Father are one," and the declaration of Thomas, "my Lord and my God," would apply to him the appellation "the true God!"

(5) if John did not mean to affirm this, he has made use of an expression which was liable to be misunderstood, and which, as facts have shown, would be misconstrued by the great portion of those who might read what he had written; and, moreover, an expression that would lead to the very sin against which he endeavors to guard in the next verse - the sin of substituting a creature in the place of God, and rendering to another the honor due to him. The language which he uses is just such as, according to its natural interpretation, would lead people to worship one as the true God who is not the true God, unless the Lord Jesus be divine. For these reasons, it seems to me that the fair interpretation of this passage demands that it should be understood as referring to the Lord Jesus Christ. If so, it is a direct assertion of his divinity, for there could be no higher proof of it than to affirm that he is the true God.

And eternal life - Having "life in himself," John 5:26, and the source and fountain of life to the soul. No more frequent appellation, perhaps, is given to the Saviour by John, than that he is life, and the source of life. Compare John 1:4; John 5:26, John 5:40; John 10:10; John 6:33, John 6:35, John 6:48, John 6:51, John 6:53, John 6:63; John 11:25; John 14:6; John 20:31; 1 John 1:1-2; 1 John 5:12.

Verse 21

Little children - This is a favorite mode of address with John, (see the notes at 1 John 2:1), and it was proper to use it in giving his parting counsel; embracing, in fact, all that he had to say - that they should keep themselves from idols, and suffer nothing to alienate their affections from the true God. His great object had been to lead them to the knowledge and love of God, and all his counsels would be practically followed, if, amidst the temptations of idolatry, and the allurements of sin, nothing were allowed to estrange their hearts from him.

Keep yourselves from idols - From worshipping them; from all that would imply communion with them or their devotees. Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 10:14. The word rendered "idols" here (εἰδώλων eidōlōn) means, properly, an image, specter, shade - as of the dead; then any image or figure which would represent anything, particularly anything invisible; and hence anything designed to represent God, and that was set up with a view to be acknowledged as representing him, or to bring, him, or his perfections, more vividly before the mind. The word is applicable to idol-gods - pagan deities, 1 Corinthians 8:4, 1 Corinthians 8:7; 1 Corinthians 10:19; Romans 2:22; 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; but it would, also, be applicable to any "image" designed to represent the true God, and through or by which the true God was to be adored. The essential things in the word seem to be:

(a)an image or representation of the Deity, and,

(b)the making of that an object of adoration instead of the true God.

Since one of these things would be likely to lead to the other, both are forbidden in the prohibitions of idolatry, Exodus 20:4-5. This would forbid all attempts to represent God by paintings or statuary; all idol-worship, or worship of pagan gods; all images and pictures that would be substituted in the place of God as objects of devotion, or that might transfer the homage from God to the image; and all giving of those affections to other beings or objects which are due to God. why the apostle closed this Epistle with this

injunction he has not stated, and it may not be easy to determine. It may have been for such reasons as these:

(1)Those to whom he wrote were surrounded by idolaters, and there was danger that they might fall into the prevailing sin, or in some way so act as to be understood to lend their sanction to idolatry.

(2)in a world full of alluring objects, there was danger then, as there is at all times, that the affections should be fixed on other objects than the supreme God, and that what is due to him should be withheld.

It may be added, in the conclusion of the exposition of this Epistle, that the same caution is as needful for us as it was for those to whom John wrote. We are not in danger, indeed, of bowing down to idols, or of engaging in the grosser forms of idol-worship. But we may be in no less danger than they to whom John wrote were, of substituting other things in our affections in the place of the true God, and of devoting to them the time and the affection which are due to him. Our children it is possible to love with such an attachment as shall effectually exclude the true God from the heart. The world - "its wealth, and pleasures, and honors - we may love with a degree of attachment such as even an idolater would hardly shew to his idol-gods; and all the time which he would take in performing his devotions in an idol-temple, we may devote with equal fervor to the service of the world. There is practical idolatry all over the world; in nominally Christian lands as well as among the pagan; in families that acknowledge no God but wealth and fashion; in the hearts of multitudes of individuals who would scorn the thought of worshipping at a pagan altar; and it is even to be found in the heart of many a one who professes to be acquainted with the true God, and to be an heir of heaven. God should have the supreme place in our affections. The love of everything else should be held in strict subordination to the love of him.

He should reign in our hearts; be acknowledged in our closets, our families, and in the place of public worship; be submitted to at all times as having a right to command and control us; be obeyed in all the expressions of his will, by his word, by his providence, and by his Spirit; be so loved that we shall be willing to part without a complaint with the dearest object of affection when he takes it from us; and so that, with joy and triumph, we shall welcome his messenger, "the angel of death," when he shall come to summon us into his presence. To all who may read these illustrations of the

Epistle of the “beloved disciple,” may God grant this inestimable blessing and honor. Amen.

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Introduction to 2 John and 3 John

Section 1. The Authenticity of the Second and Third Epistles of John

The authenticity of these two Epistles was doubted by many in the early Christian church, and it was not before a considerable time had elapsed that their canonical authority was fully admitted. The first of the three Epistles was always received as the undoubted production of the apostle John; but, though not positively and absolutely rejected, there were many doubts entertained in regard to the authorship of the Second Epistle and the Third Epistle. Their exceeding brevity, and the fact that they were addressed to individuals, and seemed not designed for general circulation, made them less frequently referred to by the early Christian writers, and renders it more difficult to establish their genuineness. The evidence of their genuineness is of two kinds - external and internal. Though, from their brevity, the proof on these points must be less full and clear than it is in regard to the First Epistle; yet it is such as to satisfy the mind, on the whole, that they are the production of the apostle John, and are entitled to a place in the canon of Scripture.

(1) External evidence. The evidence of this kind, either for or against the authenticity of these Epistles, is found in the following testimonies respecting them in the writings of the Fathers, and the following facts in regard to their admission into the canon.

(a) In the church and school at Alexandria they were both well known, and were received as a part of the sacred writings. Clement of Alexandria, and Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, quote them, or refer to them, as the writings of the apostle John. - Lardner‘s *Works*, vi. 275; Lucke, p. 329. Origen, the successor of Clement, says: “John left behind him an epistle of very few ‹stichoi;‘ perhaps also a Second and Third, though some do not consider these genuine. Both these together, however, contain only 100 ‹stichoi.‘” Dionysius of Alexandria shows that he was acquainted with all of them, but calls the two last φερόμεναι pheromenai- writings alleged to be genuine. For the import of this word, as used by Dionysius, see Lucke‘s Com., pp. 33,331.

(b) These Epistles were known and received in the western churches in the second and third centuries. Of this fact, an important witness is found in Irenaeus, who, on account of the place where he resided during his youth, and the school in which he was educated, deserves special regard as a witness respecting the works of John - Hug. He was born at Smyrna, and lived not long after the times of the apostles. He was a disciple of Polycarp, who was acquainted with the apostle John; and having passed his early years in Asia Minor, must, in the circumstances in which he was placed, have been familiar with the writings of John, and have known well what writings were attributed to him. He quotes the Second Epistle 2 John 1:11, and with express reference to John as the author, under the name of "John, the disciple of our Lord." In another place, also, he refers to this Epistle. After quoting from the First Epistle. he continues. "And John, the disciple of Jesus, in the Epistle before mentioned, commanded that they (the heretics) should be shunned, saying," etc. He then quotes, word for word, the seventh and eighth verses of the Epistle.

(c) The African church, in the third century, regarded the Second Epistle, at least, as the production of John. At a synod in Carthage, under Cyprian, Aurelius, the Bishop of Chullabi, in giving his vote on the question of baptizing heretics, quotes the tenth verse of the Second Epistle as authority, saying, "John, in his Epistle, declares," etc.

(d) There is some doubt in regard to the Syrian church, whether these Epistles were at first received as genuine or not. The manuscripts of the Peshitto, or Old Syriac version, at least since the sixth century, do not contain the Epistle of Jude, the Second Epistle of Peter, or the Second Epistle and the Third Epistle of John. Yet Ephrem the Syrian, in the fourth century, quotes the Epistle of Jude, the Second Epistle of Peter, and the Second of John, as genuine and canonical. Since this father in the Syrian church was not acquainted with the Greek language, (Lucke), it is clear that he must have read these Epistles in a translation, and as would seem most probable in some Syriac version. The probability would seem to be, since these Epistles are not in the oldest Syriac version, that there was some doubt about their authenticity when that version was made, but that before the time of Ephrem they had come to be regarded as genuine, and were translated by some other persons. Their use in the time of Ephrem would at

least show that they were then regarded as genuine. They may have been, indeed, at some period attached to the ancient version, but at a later period, as they did not originally belong to that version, they may have been separated from it - Lucke, in loc. At all events, it is clear that at an early period in the Syrian church they were regarded as genuine.

(e) Though there were doubts among many of the Fathers respecting the genuineness of these Epistles, yet they were admitted in several councils of the church to be genuine. In the 85th of the apostolic canons, (so called); in the 60th canon of the Synod of Laodicea; the Council at Hippo, (ad 393), and the third Council of Carthage (397 a.d.), they were reckoned as undoubtedly pertaining to the inspired canon of Scripture.

(f) All doubts on the subject of the genuineness of these Epistles were, however, subsequently removed in the view of Christian writers, and in the middle ages they were universally received as the writings of the apostle John. Some of the Reformers again had doubts of their genuineness. Erasmus quoted the sentiment of Jerome, that it was not the "apostle" John who wrote these Epistles, but a "presbyter" of the same name; and Calvin seems to have entertained some doubt of their genuineness, for he has omitted them in his commentaries; but these doubts have also disappeared, and the conviction has again become general, and indeed almost universal, that they are to be ranked among the genuine writings of the apostle John.

It may be added here, that the doubts which have been entertained on the subject, and the investigations to which they have given rise, show the care which has been evinced in forming the canon of the New Testament, and demonstrate that the Christian world has not been disposed to receive books as of sacred authority without evidence of their genuineness.

(2) there is strong internal evidence that they are genuine. This is found in their style, sentiment, and manner. It is true that one who was familiar with the writings of the apostle John might compose two short epistles like these, that should be mistaken for the real productions of the apostle. There are, even in these brief epistles, not a few passages which seem to be a mere repetition of what John has elsewhere said. But there are some things in regard to the internal evidence that they are the writings of the apostle John,

and were not designedly forged, which deserve a more particular notice. They are such as these:

(a) As already said, the style, sentiment, and manner are such as are appropriate to John. There is nothing in the Epistles which we might not suppose he would write; there is much that accords with what he has written; there is much in the style which would not be likely to be found in the writings of another man; and there is nothing in the sentiments which would lead us to suppose that the manner of the apostle John had been assumed, for the purpose of palming upon the world productions which were not his. Resemblances between these Epistles will strike every reader, and it is unnecessary to specify them. The following passages, however, are so decidedly in the manner of John, that it may be presumed that they were either written by him, or by one who designed to copy from him: 2 John 1:5-7, 2 John 1:9; 3 John 1:11-12.

(b) The fact that the name of the writer is not affixed to the Epistles is much in the manner of John. Paul, in every case except in the Epistle to the Hebrews, affixed his name to his Epistles; Peter, James, and Jude did the same thing. John, however, has never done it in any of his writings, except the Apocalypse. He seems to have supposed that there was something about his style and manner which would commend his writings as genuine; or that in some other way they would be so well understood to be his, that it was not necessary to specify it. Yet the omission of his name, or of something that would lay claim to his authority as an apostle, would not be likely to occur if these Epistles were fabricated with a design of palming them upon the world as his. The artifice would be too refined, and would be too likely to defeat itself, to be adopted by one who should form such a plan.

(c) The apparently severe and harsh remarks made in the Epistle in regard to heretics, may be adverted to as an evidence that these Epistles are the genuine writings of John the apostle. Thus, in 2 John 1:10, he says, “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.” So in 3 John 1:10; “If I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words,” etc. It has been made an objection to the genuineness of these Epistles, that this is not in the spirit of the mild and amiable “disciple whom

Jesus loved;" that it breathes a temper of uncharitableness and severity which could not have existed in him at any time, and especially when, as an old man, he is said to have preached nothing but "love one another." But two circumstances will show that this, so far from being an objection, is rather a proof of their genuineness.

One is, that in fact these expressions accord with what we know to have been the character of John. They are not inappropriate to one who was named by the Master himself, Boanerges - a son of thunder, Mark 3:17; or to one who was disposed to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritan who would not receive the Lord Jesus, Luke 9:54; or to one who, when he saw another casting out devils in the name of Jesus, took upon himself the authority to forbid him, Mark 9:38. The truth is, that there was a remarkable mixture of "gentleness" and "severity" in the character of John; and though the former was the most prominent, and may be supposed to have increased as he grew old, yet the other also often manifested itself. There was that in the character of John, which, under some circumstances, and under other teaching than that of the Lord Jesus, might have been developed in the form of great exclusiveness, bigotry, and sternness - perhaps in the form of open persecution.

Under the teaching of the Saviour, and through his example, his milder and better nature prevailed, and so decidedly acquired the ascendency, that we almost never think of the harsher traits of his character. The other circumstance is, that it would never have occurred to one who should have attempted to forge an Epistle in the name of John, to have introduced a passage of this kind. The artifice would have been too little likely to have accomplished the end, to have occurred to the mind, or to have been adopted. The public character of John was so amiable; he was so uniformly spoken of as the "disciple whom Jesus loved;" gentleness and kindness seemed to be such pervading traits in his nature, that no one would have thought of introducing sentiments which seemed to be at variance with these traits, even though, on a close analysis, it could be made out that they were not contrary to his natural character.

(d) Perhaps, also, the appellation which the writer gives himself in these two Epistles, (ὁ πρεσβύτερος ho presbuteros- the elder), may be regarded

as some evidence that they are the writings of the apostle John; that is, it is more probable that he would use this appellation than that any other writer would. It has, indeed, been made a ground of objection that the use of this term proves that they are not the productions of John. See Lucke, p. 340. But, as we have seen, John was not accustomed to prefix his own name to his writings; and if these Epistles were written by him when he was at Ephesus, nothing is more probable than that he should use this term. It can hardly be regarded as an appellation pertaining to "office," for as there were many "elders" or "presbyters" in the church, Acts 20:17, the use of the term "the elder" would not be sufficiently distinctive to designate the writer. It may be presumed, therefore, to have a particular respect to age; and, under the circumstances supposed, it would apply to no one with so much propriety as to the apostle John - one who would be well known as the aged and venerable disciple of the Saviour. Compare, however, Lucke (pp. 340-343) on the use of this word.

Section 2. Of the person to whom John Addressed His Second Epistle

This Epistle purports to be addressed, as it is in our translation, to "the elect lady" - ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ eklektē kuriaThere has been great diversity of opinion in regard to the person here referred to, and there are questions respecting it which it is impossible to determine with absolute certainty. The different opinions which have been entertained are the following:

(a)Some have supposed that a Christian matron is referred to, a friend of John, whose name was either Ἐκλεκτὴ Eklektē(Eclecte), or Κυρία Kuria(Kyria). Oecumenius and Theophylact supposed that the proper name of the female referred to was "Eclecte;" others have adopted the other opinion, that the name was "Cyria."

(b)Others among the ancients, and particularly Clement, supposed that the church was denoted by this name, under the delicate image of an elect lady; either some particular church to whom the Epistle was sent, or to the church at large. This opinion has been held by some of the modern writers also.

(c)Others have supposed, as is implied in our common version, that it was addressed to some Christian matron, whose name is not mentioned, but who was well known to John, and perhaps to many others, for her piety, and her acts of kindness to Christians. The reason why her name was

suppressed, it has been supposed, was that if it had been mentioned it might have exposed her to trouble in some way, perhaps to persecution.

(d)Recently, Knauer (*Studien und Kritik*., 1833, Heft 2. s. 452, ff.) has endeavored to show that it was addressed to the Virgin Mary, who is supposed then to have resided in Galilee. The improbability of this opinion is shown by Lucke, pp. 352,353.

These questions are not very important to be determined, even if they could be with accuracy; and at this period of time, and with the few data which we have for forming a correct judgment on the subject, it is not possible to settle them with entire certainty. The probable truth in regard to this point, and all which it seems now possible to ascertain with any degree of certainty, may be expressed in the following specifications:

(1) The letter was addressed to an individual, and not to a church. If it had been to a particular church, it would have been specified, for this is the uniform mode in the New Testament. If it were addressed to the church at large, it is in the highest degree improbable that John should have departed from the style of address in his First Epistle; improbable in every way that he should have adopted another style so mystical and unusual in a plain prose composition. It is only in poetry, in prophecy, in compositions where figurative language abounds, that the church is represented as a female at all; and it is wholly improbable that John, at the outset of a brief Epistle, should have adopted this appellation. The fact that it was addressed to an individual female is further apparent from the mention of her children: 2 John 1:1, 2 John 1:4, "Unto the elect lady and her children;" "I found of thy children walking in truth." This is not such language as one would use in addressing a church.

(2) it is probable that the "name" of this lady was designed to be specified, and that it was "Kyria," (Κυρία Kuria). This, indeed, is not absolutely certain; but the Greek will readily bear this, and it accords best with apostolic usage to suppose that the name of the person to whom the letter was addressed would be designated. This occurs in the Third Epistle of John, the Epistles of Paul to Philemon, to Timothy, and to Titus, and, so far as appears, there is no reason why it should not have been done in the case before us. The Syriac and Arabic translators so understand it, for both have retained the name Cyria. It may do something to confirm this view, to remark that the name Cyria was not uncommon, in subsequent times, at

least, among Christian females. See Corp. Inscript. Gruter, p. 1127, 2 John 1:5; that she was a mother, and that her children were pious, 2 John 1:1, 2 John 1:4; and that she was of a hospitable character, and would be likely to entertain those who came professedly as religious teachers, 2 John 1:10-11. Where or when she lived, or when she died, we have no information whatever. At the time of writing this Epistle, John had strong hopes that he would be permitted to come soon and see her, but whether he ever did so, we are not informed, 2 John 1:12.

Section 1:12.

3. The Canonical Authority of the Second and Third Epistles of John

The canonical authority of these Epistles depends on the following things:

(1)On the evidence that they are the writings of the apostle John. In proportion as that evidence is clear, their canonical authority is of course established.

(2)though brief, and though addressed to individuals, they are admitted into the canon of Scripture with the same propriety as the Epistles to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon, for those were addressed also to individuals.

(3)like those Epistles, also, these contain things of general interest to the church. There is nothing in either that is inconsistent with what John has elsewhere written, or that conflicts with any other part of the New Testament; there is much in them that is in the manner of John, and that breathes his spirit; there is enough in them to tell us of the way of salvation.

Of the time when these Epistles were written, and the place where, nothing is known, and conjecture would be useless, as there are no marks of time or place in either, and there is no historical statement that gives the information. It has been the common opinion that they were written at Ephesus, and when John was old. The appellation which he gives of himself, “the elder,” accords with this supposition, though it does not make it absolutely certain.

2 JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The points embraced in this Epistle are these: A salutation to the female to whom it is addressed, and an expression of warm attachment to her family, 2 John 1:1-3. An expression of joy and gratitude that he had been permitted to learn that her children had embraced the truth, and were walking in it, 2 John 1:4. An exhortation to live in the exercise of mutual love, in obedience to the great commandment of the Saviour, 2 John 1:5-6. The fact that many deceivers had gone out into the world, and an exhortation to be on their guard against their arts, 2 John 1:7-8. A test by which they might be known, and their true character ascertained, 2 John 1:9. An exhortation to show them no countenance whatever; not to treat them in any such way, even in the rites of hospitality, as to give occasion to the charge that she was friendly to their doctrines, 2 John 1:10-11. A statement that, as he hoped to see her soon, he would not write more to her, 2 John 1:12. And the salutation of the children of someone who is spoken of as her elect sister, 2 John 1:13.

Verse 1

The elder - See the introduction, Section 1, (2,d).

Unto the elect lady - The elect or chosen Kyria. See the introduction, Section 2. He addresses her as one chosen of God to salvation, in the use of a term often applied to Christians in the New Testament.

And her children - The word here rendered "children" (τέκνοις teknois) would include in itself both sons and daughters, but since the apostle immediately uses a masculine pronoun, τοις toisit would seem more probable that sons only were intended. At all events, the use of such a pronoun proves that some at least of her children were sons. Of their number and character we have no information, except that (the notes at 2 John 1:4) a part of them were Christians.

Whom I love in the truth - See the notes, John 3:18. The meaning here is, that he "truly" or "sincerely" loved them. The introduction of the article the here, which is not in the original, (ἐν ἀληθίᾳ en alēthia) somewhat obscures the sense, as if the meaning were that he loved them so far as they embraced the truth. The meaning however is, that he was sincerely attached to them. The word "whom" here, (οὓς housembraces both the mother and her children, though the pronoun is in the masculine gender, in accordance

with the usage of the Greek language. No mention is made of her husband, and it may thence be inferred that she was a widow. Had he been living, though he might not have been a Christian, it is to be presumed that some allusion would have been made to him as well as to the children, especially since there is reason to believe that only some of her children were pious. See the notes, 2 John 1:4.

And not I only, but also all they that have known the truth - That is, all those Christians who had had an opportunity of knowing them, were sincerely attached to them. It would seem, from a subsequent part of the Epistle 2 John 1:10, that this female was of a hospitable character, and was accustomed to entertain at her house the professed friends of religion, especially religious teachers, and it is probable that she was the more extensively known from this fact. The commendation of the apostle here shows that it is possible that a family shall be extensively known as one of order, peace, and religion, so that all who know it or hear of it shall regard it with interest, respect, and love.

Verse 2

For the truth's sake - They love this family because they love the truth, and see it so cordially embraced and so happily exemplified. Those who love the gospel itself will rejoice in all the effects which it produces in society, on individuals, families, neighborhoods, and their hearts will be drawn with warm affection to the places where its influence is most fully seen.

Which dwelleth in us - In us who are Christians; that is, the truths of the gospel which we have embraced. Truth may be said to have taken up a permanent abode in the hearts of all who love religion.

And shall be with us for ever - Its abode with us is not for a night or a day; not for a month or a year; not for the few years that make up mortal life; it is not a passing stranger that finds a lodging like the weary traveler for a night, and in the morning is gone to be seen no more; it has come to us to make our hearts its permanent home, and it is to be with us in all worlds, and while ceaseless ages shall roll away.

Verse 3

Grace be unto you … - See the notes at Romans 1:7. This salutation does not differ from those commonly employed by the sacred writers, except in the emphasis which is placed on the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is "the Son of the Father." This is much in the style of John, in all of whose

writings he dwells much on the fact that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God, and on the importance of recognizing that fact in order to the possession of true religion. Compare 1 John 2:22-23; 1 John 4:15; 1 John 5:1-2, 1 John 5:10-12, 1 John 5:20.

In truth and love - This phrase is not to be connected with the expression "the Son of the Father," as if it meant that he was his Son "in truth and love," but is rather to be connected with the "grace, mercy, and peace" referred to, as a prayer that they might be manifested to this family in promoting truth and love.

Verse 4

I rejoiced greatly that I found … - That I learned this fact respecting some of thy children. The apostle does not say how he had learned this. It may have been that he had become personally acquainted with them when they were away from their home, or that he had learned it from others. The word used εὕρηκα heurēkawould apply to either method. Grotius supposed that some of the sons had come to Ephesus on business, and that John had become acquainted with them there.

Of thy children walking in truth - That is, true Christians; living in accordance with the truth, for this constitutes the essence of religion. The expression used here, "of thy children," (ἐκ τῶν τέκνων ek tōn teknōnmeans some of thy children; implying that he knew of a part of them who were true Christians. This is clear from the Greek construction, because:

(a)if he had meant to say that he had found them all to be of this description, the sentiment would have been directly expressed, "thy children;" but as it is, some word is necessary to be understood to complete the sense; and,

(b)the same thing is demanded by the fact that the participle used ("walking" - περιπατοῦντας peripatountas) is in the accusative case.

If he had referred to them all, the participle would have been in the genitive, agreeing with the word "children," (τῶν περιπατοῦντων tōn peripatountōn) - Lucke. Whether the apostle means to say that only a part of them had in fact embraced the gospel, or that he had only known that a part of them had done it, though the others might have done it without his knowledge, is not quite clear, though the former supposition appears to be the correct one, for if they had all become Christians it is to be presumed that he would have been informed of it. The probability seems to be that a

part of her children only were truly pious, though there is no evidence that the others were otherwise than correct in their moral conduct. If there had been improper conduct in any of her other children, John was too courteous, and too delicate in his feelings, to allude to so disagreeable a circumstance. But "if that pious lady," to use the language of Benson, "had some wicked children, her lot was not unique. Her consolation was that she had some who were truly good. John commended those who were good, in order to excite them in the most agreeable manner to persevere."

As we have received a commandment from the Father - That is, as he has commanded us to live; in accordance with the truth which he has revealed. The "Father," in the Scripture, is everywhere represented as the Source of law.

Verse 5

And now I beseech thee, lady - Dr, "And now I entreat thee, Kyria," (κυρία kuriaSee the introduction, Section 2. If this was her proper name, there is no impropriety in supposing that he would address her in this familiar style. John was probably then a very old man; the female to whom the Epistle was addressed was doubtless much younger.

Not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee - John presumed that the command to love one another was understood as far as the gospel was known; and he might well presume it, for true Christianity never prevails anywhere without prompting to the observance of this law. See the notes at 1 Thessalonians 4:9.

But that which we had from the beginning - From the time when the gospel was first made known to us. See the notes at 1 John 2:7; 1 John 3:11.

That we love one another - That is, that there be among the disciples of Christ mutual love; or that in all circumstances and relations they should love one another, John 15:12, John 15:17. This general command, addressed to all the disciples of the Saviour, John doubtless means to say was as applicable to him and to the pious female to whom he wrote as to any others, and ought to be exercised by them toward all true Christians; and he exhorts her, as he did all Christians, to exercise it. It was a command upon which, in his old age, he loved to dwell; and he had little more to say to her than this, to exhort her to obey this injunction of the Saviour.

Verse 6

And this is love, that we walk after his commandments - This is the proper expression or evidence of love to God. See the notes at John 14:15,

John 14:21.

This is the commandment - That is, this is his great and special commandment; the one by which his disciples are to be especially characterized, and by which they are to be distinguished in the world. See the notes at John 13:34.

Verse 7

For - Ὅτι HotiThis word "for" is not here to be regarded as connected with the previous verse, and as giving a reason why there should be the exercise of mutual love, but is rather to be understood as connected with the following verse, 2 John 1:8, and as giving a reason for the caution there expressed: "Because it is a truth that many deceivers have appeared, or since it has occurred that many such are abroad, look to yourselves lest you be betrayed and ruined." The fact that there were many such deceivers was a good reason for being constantly on their guard, lest they should be so far drawn away as not to receive a full reward.

Many deceivers are entered into the world - Are abroad in the world, or have appeared among men. Several manuscripts read here, "have gone out into the world," (ἐξῆλθον exēlthoninstead of "have entered into," εἰσῆλθον eisēlthonThe common reading is the correct one, and the other was originated, probably, from the unusual form of the expression, "have come into the world," as if they had come from another abode. That, however, is not necessarily implied, the language being such as would he properly used to denote the idea that there were such deceivers in the world.

Who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh - Who maintain that he assumed only the appearance of a man, and was not really incarnate. See the notes at 1 John 4:2-3.

This is a deceiver - Everyone who maintains this is to be regarded as a deceiver.

And an antichrist - See the notes at 1 John 2:18; 1 John 4:3.

Verse 8

Look to yourselves - This seems to be addressed to the lady to whom he wrote, and to her children. The idea is, that they should be particularly on their guard, and that their first care should be to secure their own hearts, so that they should not be exposed to the dangerous attacks of error. When error abounds in the world, our first duty is not to attack it and make war upon it; it is to look to the citadel of our own souls, and see that all is well guarded there. When an enemy invades a land, the first thing will not be to

go out against him, regardless of our own strength, or of the security of our own fortresses, but it will be to see that our forts are well manned, and that we are secure there from his assaults. If that is so, we may then go forth with confidence to meet him on the open field. In relation to an error that is in the world, the first thing for a Christian to do is to take care of his own heart.

That we lose not those things which we have wrought - Margin: "Or, gained." Some copies read: "which ye have gained, but that ye." The reading here referred to in the margin is found in several manuscripts and also in the Vulgate, the Syriac, and the Aethiopic versions. It is not, however, adopted in the late critical editions of the New Testament, and the common reading is probably genuine. The sense is not materially varied, and the common reading is not unnatural. John was exhorting the family to whom this Epistle was written to take good heed to themselves while so many artful errorists were around them, lest they should be drawn away from the truth, and lose a part of the full reward which they might hope to receive in heaven. In doing this, nothing was more natural than that he, as a Christian friend, should group himself with them, and speak of himself as having the same need of caution, and express the feeling that he ought to strive also to obtain the full reward, thus showing that he was not disposed to address an exhortation to them which he was not willing to regard as applicable to himself.

The truth which is taught here is one of interest to all Christians - that it is possible for even genuine Christians, by suffering themselves to be led into error, or by failure in duty, to lose a part of the reward which they might have obtained. The crown which they will wear in heaven will be less bright than that which they might have worn, and the throne which they will occupy will be less elevated. The rewards of heaven will be in accordance with the services rendered to the Redeemer; and it would not be right that they who turn aside, or falter in their course, should have the same exalted honours which they might have received if they had devoted themselves to God with ever-increasing fidelity. It is painful to think how many there are who begin the Christian career with burnings zeal, as if they would strike for the highest rewards in heaven, but who soon waver in their course, and fall into some paralyzing error, until at last they receive, perhaps, not half the reward which they might have obtained.

But that we receive a full reward - Such as will be granted to a life uniformly consistent and faithful; all that God has to bestow on his people when most faithful and true. But who can estimate the "full reward" of heaven, the unspeakable glory of those who make it the grand business of their lives to obtain all they can of its bliss. And who is there that does not feel that he ought to strive for a crown in which not one gem shall be missing that might have sparkled there forever?

Verse 9

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God - In the doctrine which Christ taught, or the true doctrine respecting him. The language is somewhat ambiguous, like the phrase "the love of Christ," which may mean either his love to us, or our love to him. Compare John 15:9. It is difficult to determine here which is the true sense - whether it means the doctrine or precepts which he taught, or the true doctrine respecting him. Macknight understands by it the doctrine taught by Christ and his apostles. It would seem most probable that this is the sense of the passage, but then it would include, of course, all that Christ taught respecting himself, as well as his other instructions. The essential idea is, that the truth must be held respecting the precepts, the character, and the work of the Saviour. Probably the immediate allusion here is to those to whom John so frequently referred as "antichrist," who denied that Jesus had come in the flesh, 2 John 1:7. At the same time, however, he makes the remark general, that if anyone did not hold the true doctrine respecting the Saviour, he had no real knowledge of God. See John 1:18; John 5:23; John 15:23; John 17:3; 1 John 2:23.

Hath not God - Has no true knowledge of God. The truth taught here is, that it is essential for piety to hold the true doctrine respecting Christ.

He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ - In the true doctrine respecting Christ, or in the doctrine which he taught.

He hath both the Father and the Son - There is such an intimate union between the Father and the Son, that he who has just views of the one has also of the other. Compare the John 14:7, John 14:9-11 notes; 1 John 2:23 note.

Verse 10

If there come any unto you - Any professed teacher of religion. There can be no doubt that she to whom this Epistle was written was accustomed to entertain such teachers.

And bring not this doctrine - This doctrine which Christ taught, or the true doctrine respecting him and his religion.

Receive him not into your house - This cannot mean that no acts of kindness, in any circumstances, were to be shown to such persons; but that there was to be nothing done which could be fairly construed as encouraging or countenancing them as "religious teachers." The true rule would seem to be, in regard to such persons, that, so far as we have contact with them as neighbors, or strangers, we are to be honest, true, kind, and just, but we are to do nothing that will countenance them as religious teachers, We are not to aid their instruction, Proverbs 19:27; we are not to receive them into our houses, or to entertain them as religious teachers; we are not to commend them to others, or to give them any reason to use our names or influence in propagating error. It would not be difficult to practice this rule, and yet to show to others all the kindness, and all the attention in circumstances of need, which religion demands. A person who is truly consistent is never suspected of countenancing error, even when he is distinguished for liberality, and is ready, like the good Samaritan, to pour in oil and wine in the wounds of any waylaid traveler. The command not to "receive such an one into the house," in such circumstances as those referred to by John, would be probably understood literally, as he doubtless designed that it should be. To do that, to meet such persons with a friendly greeting, would be construed as countenancing their doctrine, and as commending them to others; and hence it was forbidden that they should be entertained as such. This treatment would not be demanded where no such interpretation could be put on receiving a friend or relative who held different and even erroneous views, or in showing kindness to a stranger who differed from us, but it would apply to the receiving and entertaining "a professed teacher of religion, as such;" and the rule is as applicable now as it was then.

Neither bid him God speed - Καὶ χαίρειν αὐτῷ μὴ λέγετε Kai chairein autō mē legete- "and do not say to him, hail, or joy." Do not wish him joy; do not hail, or salute him. The word used expresses the common form of salutation, as when we wish one health, success, prosperity, Matthew 26:49; Acts 15:23; Acts 23:26; James 1:1. It would be understood as expressing a wish for success in the enterprise in which they were embarked; and, though we should love all people, and desire their welfare, and sincerely

seek their happiness, yet we can properly wish no one success in career of sin and error.

Verse 11

For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds - Shows that he countenances and approves of the doctrine which is taught. Compare the notes at 1 Timothy 5:22.

Verse 12

Having many things to write unto you - That I would wish to say. This language is such as would be used by one who was hurried, or who was in feeble health, or who hoped soon to see the person written to. In such a case only the points would be selected which were of most immediate and pressing importance, and the remainder would be reserved for a more free personal interview.

I would not write with paper - The word "paper" here conveys an idea which is not strictly correct. "Paper," as that term is now understood, was not invented until long after this period. The material designated by the word used by John (χάρτης chartēs) was the Egyptian papyrus, and the particular thing denoted was a leaf made out of that plant. The sheets were made from membranes of the plant closely pressed together. This plant was found also in Syria and Babylon, but it was produced in greater abundance in Egypt, and that was the plant which was commonly used. It was so comparatively cheap, that it in a great measure superseded the earlier materials for writing - plates of lead, or stone, or the skins of animals. It is probable that the books of the New Testament were written on this species of paper. Compare Hug, *Introduction*, chapter iii., Section 11.

And ink - The ink which was commonly employed in writing was made of soot and water, with a mixture of some species of gum to give it consistency and durability - Lucke. The instrument (pen) was made of a reed.

But I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face - Margin, as in Greek, "mouth to mouth." The phrase is a common one, to denote conversation with any one, especially free and confidential conversation. Compare Numbers 12:8; Jeremiah 32:4.

That our joy may be full - Margin, "your." The marginal reading has arisen from a variation in the Greek copies. The word "our" is best sustained, and accords best with the connection. John would be likely to

express the hope that he would find pleasure from such an interview. See the notes at 1 John 1:4. Compare Romans 1:11-12.

Verse 13

The children of thy elect sister greet thee - Of this "elect sister" nothing more is known. It would seem probable, from the fact that she is not mentioned as sending her salutations, that she was either dead, or that she was absent. John mentions her, however, as a Christian - as one of the elect or chosen of God.

Remarks On 2John

In view of the exposition of this Epistle we may make the following remarks:

(1) It is desirable for a family to have a character for piety so consistent and well understood that all who know it shall perceive it and love it, 2 John 1:1. In the case of this lady and her household, it would seem that, as far as they were known, they were known as a well-ordered Christian household. John said he loved such a family; and he said that it was loved by all who had any knowledge of them. What is more lovely to the view than such a household? What is better fitted to make an impression on the world favorable to religion?

(2) it is a matter of great rejoicing when any part of a family becomes truly religious, 2 John 1:4. We should rejoice with our friends, and should render unfeigned thanks to God, if any of their children are converted, and walk in the truth. No greater blessing can descend on a family than the early conversion of children; and, just as angels rejoice over one sinner that is converted, we should rejoice when the children of our friends are brought to a knowledge of the truth, and devote themselves to God in early life.

(3) it is our duty to be on our guard against the arts of the teachers of error, 2 John 1:7. They abound in every age. They are often learned, eloquent, and profound. They study and understand the arts of persuasion. They adapt their instructions to the capacity of those whom they would lead astray. They flatter their vanity; accommodate themselves to their peculiar views and tastes; court their society, and seek to share their friendship. They often appear to be eminently meek, and serious, and devout, and prayerful, for they know that no others can succeed who profess to inculcate the principles of religion. There are few arts more profound than that of leading

people into error; few that are studied more, or with greater success. Every Christian, therefore, should be on his or her guard against such arts; and while he should (upon all subjects) be open to conviction, and be ready to yield his own opinions when convinced that they are wrong, yet he should yield to truth, not to people; to argument, not to the influence of the personal character of the professed religious teacher.

(4) we may see that it is possible for us to lose a portion of the reward which we might enjoy in heaven, 2 John 1:8. The rewards of heaven will be apportioned to our character, and for our services in the cause of religion in this life, and those who "sow sparingly shall reap also sparingly." Christians often begin their course with great zeal, and as if they were determined to reap the highest rewards of the heavenly world. If they should persevere in the course which they have commenced, they would indeed shine as the stars in the firmament. But, alas, their zeal soon dies away. They relax their efforts, and lose their watchfulness. They engage in some pursuit that absorbs their time, and interferes with their habits of devotion. They connive at error and sin; begin to love the comforts of this life; seek the honors or the riches of this world; and though they may be saved at last, yet they lose half their reward. It should be a fixed purpose with all Christians, and especially with such as are just entering upon the Christian life, to wear in heaven a crown as bright and studded with as many jewels as "can possibly be obtained."

(5) we may learn from this Epistle how to regard and treat the teachers of error, 2 John 1:10. We "are not to do anything that can be fairly construed as contenancing their doctrines." This simple rule would guide us to a course that is right. We are to have minds open to conviction. We are to love the truth, and always be ready to follow it. We are not to be prejudiced against anything. We are to treat all people with kindness; to be true, and just, and faithful in our contact with everyone; to be hospitable, and always ready to do good to any who are needy, whatever their name, color, rank, or opinions. We are not to cut the ties which bind us to our friends and kindred, though they embrace opinions which we deem erroneous or dangerous; but we are in no way to become the patrons of error, or to leave the impression that we are indifferent as to what is believed. The friends of truth and piety we should receive cordially to our dwellings, and should

account ourselves honored by their presence, Psalm 101:6-7; strangers we should not forget to entertain, for thereby we may entertain angels unawares, Hebrews 13:2; but the open advocate of what we regard as dangerous error, we are not to receive in any such sense or way as to have our treatment of him fairly construed as patronising his errors, or commending him as a teacher to the favorable regards of our fellowmen.

Neither by our influence, our names, our money, our personal friendship, are we to give him increased facilities for spreading pernicious error through the world. As people, as fellow-sufferers, as citizens, as neighbors, as the friends of temperance, of the prisoner, of the widow, the orphan, and the slave, and as the patrons of learning, we may be united in promoting objects dear to our hearts, but as "religious teachers" we are to show them no countenance, not so much as would be implied in the common form of salutation wishing them success. In all this there is no breach of charity, and no want of true love, for we are to love the truth more than we are the persons of men. To the person himself we should be ever ready to do good. We should never injure that individual in any way - in his person, property, or feelings. We should never attempt to deprive him of the right of cherishing his own opinions, and of spreading them in his own way, answerable, not to us, but to God. We should impose no pains or penalties upon him for the opinions which he holds. But we should do nothing to give him increased power to propagate them, and should never place ourselves by any alliance of friendship, family, or business, in such a position that we shall not be perfectly free to maintain our own sentiments, and to oppose what we deem to be error, whoever may advocate it.

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Section 1. The Authenticity of the Second and Third Epistles of John

The authenticity of these two Epistles was doubted by many in the early Christian church, and it was not before a considerable time had elapsed that their canonical authority was fully admitted. The first of the three Epistles was always received as the undoubted production of the apostle John; but, though not positively and absolutely rejected, there were many doubts entertained in regard to the authorship of the Second Epistle and the Third Epistle. Their exceeding brevity, and the fact that they were addressed to individuals, and seemed not designed for general circulation, made them less frequently referred to by the early Christian writers, and renders it more difficult to establish their genuineness. The evidence of their genuineness is of two kinds - external and internal. Though, from their brevity, the proof on these points must be less full and clear than it is in regard to the First Epistle; yet it is such as to satisfy the mind, on the whole, that they are the production of the apostle John, and are entitled to a place in the canon of Scripture.

(1) External evidence. The evidence of this kind, either for or against the authenticity of these Epistles, is found in the following testimonies respecting them in the writings of the Fathers, and the following facts in regard to their admission into the canon.

(a) In the church and school at Alexandria they were both well known, and were received as a part of the sacred writings. Clement of Alexandria, and Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, quote them, or refer to them, as the writings of the apostle John. - Lardner‘s *Works*, vi. 275; Lucke, p. 329. Origen, the successor of Clement, says: “John left behind him an epistle of very few ‹stichoi;‘ perhaps also a Second and Third, though some do not consider these genuine. Both these together, however, contain only 100 ‹stichoi.‘” Dionysius of Alexandria shows that he was acquainted with all of them, but calls the two last φερόμεναι pheromenai- writings alleged to be genuine. For the import of this word, as used by Dionysius, see Lucke‘s Com., pp. 33,331.

(b) These Epistles were known and received in the western churches in the second and third centuries. Of this fact, an important witness is found in Irenaeus, who, on account of the place where he resided during his youth, and the school in which he was educated, deserves special regard as a witness respecting the works of John - Hug. He was born at Smyrna, and lived not long after the times of the apostles. He was a disciple of Polycarp, who was acquainted with the apostle John; and having passed his early years in Asia Minor, must, in the circumstances in which he was placed, have been familiar with the writings of John, and have known well what writings were attributed to him. He quotes the Second Epistle 2 John 1:11, and with express reference to John as the author, under the name of "John, the disciple of our Lord." In another place, also, he refers to this Epistle. After quoting from the First Epistle. he continues. "And John, the disciple of Jesus, in the Epistle before mentioned, commanded that they (the heretics) should be shunned, saying," etc. He then quotes, word for word, the seventh and eighth verses of the Epistle.

(c) The African church, in the third century, regarded the Second Epistle, at least, as the production of John. At a synod in Carthage, under Cyprian, Aurelius, the Bishop of Chullabi, in giving his vote on the question of baptizing heretics, quotes the tenth verse of the Second Epistle as authority, saying, "John, in his Epistle, declares," etc.

(d) There is some doubt in regard to the Syrian church, whether these Epistles were at first received as genuine or not. The manuscripts of the Peshitto, or Old Syriac version, at least since the sixth century, do not contain the Epistle of Jude, the Second Epistle of Peter, or the Second Epistle and the Third Epistle of John. Yet Ephrem the Syrian, in the fourth century, quotes the Epistle of Jude, the Second Epistle of Peter, and the Second of John, as genuine and canonical. Since this father in the Syrian church was not acquainted with the Greek language, (Lucke), it is clear that he must have read these Epistles in a translation, and as would seem most probable in some Syriac version. The probability would seem to be, since these Epistles are not in the oldest Syriac version, that there was some doubt about their authenticity when that version was made, but that before the time of Ephrem they had come to be regarded as genuine, and were translated by some other persons. Their use in the time of Ephrem would at

least show that they were then regarded as genuine. They may have been, indeed, at some period attached to the ancient version, but at a later period, as they did not originally belong to that version, they may have been separated from it - Lucke, in loc. At all events, it is clear that at an early period in the Syrian church they were regarded as genuine.

(e) Though there were doubts among many of the Fathers respecting the genuineness of these Epistles, yet they were admitted in several councils of the church to be genuine. In the 85th of the apostolic canons, (so called); in the 60th canon of the Synod of Laodicea; the Council at Hippo, (ad 393), and the third Council of Carthage (397 a.d.), they were reckoned as undoubtedly pertaining to the inspired canon of Scripture.

(f) All doubts on the subject of the genuineness of these Epistles were, however, subsequently removed in the view of Christian writers, and in the middle ages they were universally received as the writings of the apostle John. Some of the Reformers again had doubts of their genuineness. Erasmus quoted the sentiment of Jerome, that it was not the "apostle" John who wrote these Epistles, but a "presbyter" of the same name; and Calvin seems to have entertained some doubt of their genuineness, for he has omitted them in his commentaries; but these doubts have also disappeared, and the conviction has again become general, and indeed almost universal, that they are to be ranked among the genuine writings of the apostle John.

It may be added here, that the doubts which have been entertained on the subject, and the investigations to which they have given rise, show the care which has been evinced in forming the canon of the New Testament, and demonstrate that the Christian world has not been disposed to receive books as of sacred authority without evidence of their genuineness.

(2) there is strong internal evidence that they are genuine. This is found in their style, sentiment, and manner. It is true that one who was familiar with the writings of the apostle John might compose two short epistles like these, that should be mistaken for the real productions of the apostle. There are, even in these brief epistles, not a few passages which seem to be a mere repetition of what John has elsewhere said. But there are some things in regard to the internal evidence that they are the writings of the apostle John,

and were not designedly forged, which deserve a more particular notice. They are such as these:

(a) As already said, the style, sentiment, and manner are such as are appropriate to John. There is nothing in the Epistles which we might not suppose he would write; there is much that accords with what he has written; there is much in the style which would not be likely to be found in the writings of another man; and there is nothing in the sentiments which would lead us to suppose that the manner of the apostle John had been assumed, for the purpose of palming upon the world productions which were not his. Resemblances between these Epistles will strike every reader, and it is unnecessary to specify them. The following passages, however, are so decidedly in the manner of John, that it may be presumed that they were either written by him, or by one who designed to copy from him: 2 John 1:5-7, 2 John 1:9; 3 John 1:11-12.

(b) The fact that the name of the writer is not affixed to the Epistles is much in the manner of John. Paul, in every case except in the Epistle to the Hebrews, affixed his name to his Epistles; Peter, James, and Jude did the same thing. John, however, has never done it in any of his writings, except the Apocalypse. He seems to have supposed that there was something about his style and manner which would commend his writings as genuine; or that in some other way they would be so well understood to be his, that it was not necessary to specify it. Yet the omission of his name, or of something that would lay claim to his authority as an apostle, would not be likely to occur if these Epistles were fabricated with a design of palming them upon the world as his. The artifice would be too refined, and would be too likely to defeat itself, to be adopted by one who should form such a plan.

(c) The apparently severe and harsh remarks made in the Epistle in regard to heretics, may be adverted to as an evidence that these Epistles are the genuine writings of John the apostle. Thus, in 2 John 1:10, he says, “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.” So in 3 John 1:10; “If I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words,” etc. It has been made an objection to the genuineness of these Epistles, that this is not in the spirit of the mild and amiable “disciple whom

Jesus loved;" that it breathes a temper of uncharitableness and severity which could not have existed in him at any time, and especially when, as an old man, he is said to have preached nothing but "love one another." But two circumstances will show that this, so far from being an objection, is rather a proof of their genuineness.

One is, that in fact these expressions accord with what we know to have been the character of John. They are not inappropriate to one who was named by the Master himself, Boanerges - a son of thunder, Mark 3:17; or to one who was disposed to call down fire from heaven on the Samaritan who would not receive the Lord Jesus, Luke 9:54; or to one who, when he saw another casting out devils in the name of Jesus, took upon himself the authority to forbid him, Mark 9:38. The truth is, that there was a remarkable mixture of "gentleness" and "severity" in the character of John; and though the former was the most prominent, and may be supposed to have increased as he grew old, yet the other also often manifested itself. There was that in the character of John, which, under some circumstances, and under other teaching than that of the Lord Jesus, might have been developed in the form of great exclusiveness, bigotry, and sternness - perhaps in the form of open persecution.

Under the teaching of the Saviour, and through his example, his milder and better nature prevailed, and so decidedly acquired the ascendency, that we almost never think of the harsher traits of his character. The other circumstance is, that it would never have occurred to one who should have attempted to forge an Epistle in the name of John, to have introduced a passage of this kind. The artifice would have been too little likely to have accomplished the end, to have occurred to the mind, or to have been adopted. The public character of John was so amiable; he was so uniformly spoken of as the "disciple whom Jesus loved;" gentleness and kindness seemed to be such pervading traits in his nature, that no one would have thought of introducing sentiments which seemed to be at variance with these traits, even though, on a close analysis, it could be made out that they were not contrary to his natural character.

(d) Perhaps, also, the appellation which the writer gives himself in these two Epistles, (ὁ πρεσβύτερος ho presbuteros- the elder), may be regarded

as some evidence that they are the writings of the apostle John; that is, it is more probable that he would use this appellation than that any other writer would. It has, indeed, been made a ground of objection that the use of this term proves that they are not the productions of John. See Lucke, p. 340. But, as we have seen, John was not accustomed to prefix his own name to his writings; and if these Epistles were written by him when he was at Ephesus, nothing is more probable than that he should use this term. It can hardly be regarded as an appellation pertaining to "office," for as there were many "elders" or "presbyters" in the church, Acts 20:17, the use of the term "the elder" would not be sufficiently distinctive to designate the writer. It may be presumed, therefore, to have a particular respect to age; and, under the circumstances supposed, it would apply to no one with so much propriety as to the apostle John - one who would be well known as the aged and venerable disciple of the Saviour. Compare, however, Lucke (pp. 340-343) on the use of this word.

Section 2. Of the person to whom John Addressed His Second Epistle

This Epistle purports to be addressed, as it is in our translation, to "the elect lady" - ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ eklektē kuriaThere has been great diversity of opinion in regard to the person here referred to, and there are questions respecting it which it is impossible to determine with absolute certainty. The different opinions which have been entertained are the following:

(a)Some have supposed that a Christian matron is referred to, a friend of John, whose name was either Ἐκλεκτὴ Eklektē(Eclecte), or Κυρία Kuria(Kyria). Oecumenius and Theophylact supposed that the proper name of the female referred to was "Eclecte;" others have adopted the other opinion, that the name was "Cyria."

(b)Others among the ancients, and particularly Clement, supposed that the church was denoted by this name, under the delicate image of an elect lady; either some particular church to whom the Epistle was sent, or to the church at large. This opinion has been held by some of the modern writers also.

(c)Others have supposed, as is implied in our common version, that it was addressed to some Christian matron, whose name is not mentioned, but who was well known to John, and perhaps to many others, for her piety, and her acts of kindness to Christians. The reason why her name was

suppressed, it has been supposed, was that if it had been mentioned it might have exposed her to trouble in some way, perhaps to persecution.

(d)Recently, Knauer (*Studien und Kritik*., 1833, Heft 2. s. 452, ff.) has endeavored to show that it was addressed to the Virgin Mary, who is supposed then to have resided in Galilee. The improbability of this opinion is shown by Lucke, pp. 352,353.

These questions are not very important to be determined, even if they could be with accuracy; and at this period of time, and with the few data which we have for forming a correct judgment on the subject, it is not possible to settle them with entire certainty. The probable truth in regard to this point, and all which it seems now possible to ascertain with any degree of certainty, may be expressed in the following specifications:

(1) The letter was addressed to an individual, and not to a church. If it had been to a particular church, it would have been specified, for this is the uniform mode in the New Testament. If it were addressed to the church at large, it is in the highest degree improbable that John should have departed from the style of address in his First Epistle; improbable in every way that he should have adopted another style so mystical and unusual in a plain prose composition. It is only in poetry, in prophecy, in compositions where figurative language abounds, that the church is represented as a female at all; and it is wholly improbable that John, at the outset of a brief Epistle, should have adopted this appellation. The fact that it was addressed to an individual female is further apparent from the mention of her children: 2 John 1:1, 2 John 1:4, "Unto the elect lady and her children;" "I found of thy children walking in truth." This is not such language as one would use in addressing a church.

(2) it is probable that the "name" of this lady was designed to be specified, and that it was "Kyria," (Κυρία Kuria). This, indeed, is not absolutely certain; but the Greek will readily bear this, and it accords best with apostolic usage to suppose that the name of the person to whom the letter was addressed would be designated. This occurs in the Third Epistle of John, the Epistles of Paul to Philemon, to Timothy, and to Titus, and, so far as appears, there is no reason why it should not have been done in the case before us. The Syriac and Arabic translators so understand it, for both have retained the name Cyria. It may do something to confirm this view, to remark that the name Cyria was not uncommon, in subsequent times, at

least, among Christian females. See Corp. Inscript. Gruter, p. 1127, 2 John 1:5; that she was a mother, and that her children were pious, 2 John 1:1, 2 John 1:4; and that she was of a hospitable character, and would be likely to entertain those who came professedly as religious teachers, 2 John 1:10-11. Where or when she lived, or when she died, we have no information whatever. At the time of writing this Epistle, John had strong hopes that he would be permitted to come soon and see her, but whether he ever did so, we are not informed, 2 John 1:12.

Section 1:12.

3. The Canonical Authority of the Second and Third Epistles of John

The canonical authority of these Epistles depends on the following things:

(1)On the evidence that they are the writings of the apostle John. In proportion as that evidence is clear, their canonical authority is of course established.

(2)though brief, and though addressed to individuals, they are admitted into the canon of Scripture with the same propriety as the Epistles to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon, for those were addressed also to individuals.

(3)like those Epistles, also, these contain things of general interest to the church. There is nothing in either that is inconsistent with what John has elsewhere written, or that conflicts with any other part of the New Testament; there is much in them that is in the manner of John, and that breathes his spirit; there is enough in them to tell us of the way of salvation.

Of the time when these Epistles were written, and the place where, nothing is known, and conjecture would be useless, as there are no marks of time or place in either, and there is no historical statement that gives the information. It has been the common opinion that they were written at Ephesus, and when John was old. The appellation which he gives of himself, “the elder,” accords with this supposition, though it does not make it absolutely certain.

3 JOHN CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Verse 1

This brief Epistle, written to a Christian whose name was Gaius, of whom nothing more is known (compare the notes at 3 John 1:1), and in respect to which the time and place of writing it are equally unknown, embraces the following subjects:

I. The address, with an expression of tender attachment, and an earnest wish for his welfare and happiness, 3 John 1:1-2.

II. A commendation of his character and doings, as the writer had learned it from some brethren who had visited him particularly;

(a)for his attachment to the truth, and,

(b)for his kindness shown to the members of his own church, and to strangers who had gone forth to some work of charity, 3 John 1:3-8.

III. The writer then adverts to the fact that he had written upon this subject to the church, commending these strangers to their attention, but that Diotrephes would not acknowledge his authority, or receive those whom he introduced to them. This conduct, he said, demanded rebuke; and he says that when he himself came, he would take proper measures to assert his own authority, and show to him and to the church the duty of receiving Christian brethren commended to them from abroad, 3 John 1:9-10.

IV. He exhorts Gaius to persevere in that which was good - in a life of love and kindness, in an imitation of the benevolent God, 3 John 1:11.

V. Of another person - Demetrius - who, it would seem, had been associated with Gaius in the honorable course which he had pursued, in opposition to what the church had done, he also speaks in terms of commendation, and says that the same honorable testimony had been borne of him which had been of Gaius, 3 John 1:12.

VI. As in the second Epistle, he says, in the close, that there were many things which he would be glad to say to him, but there were reasons why they should not be set down “with ink and pen,” but he hoped soon to confer with him freely on those subjects face to face, and the Epistle is closed by kind salutations, 3 John 1:13-14.

The occasion upon which the Epistle was written is no further known than appears from the Epistle itself. From this, the following facts are all

that can now be ascertained:

(1) That Gaius was a Christian man, and evidently a member of the church, but of what church is unknown.

(2) that there were certain persons known to the writer of the Epistle, and who either lived where he did, or who had been commended to him by others who proposed to travel to the place where Gaius lived. Their particular object is not known, further than that it is said 3 John 1:7 that they "went for his name's sake;" that is, in the cause of religion. It further appears that they had resolved not to be dependent upon the pagan for their support, but wished the favor and friendship of the church - perhaps designing to preach to the pagan, and yet apprehending that if they desired their maintenance from them, it would be charged on them that they were mercenary in their ends.

(3) in these circumstances, and with this view, the author of this Epistle wrote to the church, commending these brethren to their kind and fraternal regards.

(4) this recommendation, so far as appears, would have been successful, had it not been for one man, Diotrephes, who had so much influence, and who made such violent opposition, that the church refused to receive them, and they became dependent upon private charity. The ground of the opposition of Diotrephes is not fully stated, but it seems to have arisen from two sources:

(a)adesire to rule in the church; and,

(b)aparticular opposition to the writer of this Epistle, and a denial of any obligation to recognize his instructions or commendations as binding. The idea seems to have been that the church was entirely independent, and might receive or reject any whom it pleased, though they were commended to them by an apostle.

(5) in these circumstances, Gaius, as an individual, and against the action of the church, received and hospitably entertained these strangers, and aided them in the prosecution of their work. In this office of hospitality another member of the church, Demetrius, also shared; and to commend

them for this work, particularly Gaius, at whose house probably they were entertained, is the design of this Epistle.

(6) after having returned to the writer of this Epistle, who had formerly commended them to the church, and having borne honorable testimony to the hospitality of Gaius, it would seem that they resolved to repeat their journey for the same purpose, and that the writer of the Epistle commended them now to the renewed hospitality of Gaius. On this occasion, probably, they bore this Epistle to him. See the notes at 3 John 1:6-7. Nothing more is known of Diotrephes than is here specified. Erasmus and Bede supposed that he was the author of a new sect; but of this there is no evidence, and if he had been, it is probable that John would have cautioned Gaius against his influence. Many have supposed that he was a self-appointed "Bishop" or "Pastor" in the church where he resided; but there is no evidence of this, and, since John wrote to "the church," commending the strangers to "them," this would seem to be hardly probable. Compare Revelation 2:1, Revelation 2:8, Revelation 2:12, Revelation 2:18; Revelation 3:1, Revelation 3:7, Revelation 3:14. Others have supposed that he was a deacon, and had charge of the funds of the church, and that he refused to furnish to these strangers the aid out of the public treasury which they needed, and that by so doing he hindered them in the prosecution of their object. But all this is mere conjecture, and it is now impossible to ascertain what office he held, if he held any. That he was a man of influence is apparent; that he was proud, ambitious, and desirous of ruling, is equally clear; and that he prevailed upon the church not to receive the strangers commended to them by the apostle is equally manifest.

Of the rank and standing of Demetrius nothing more is known. Benson supposes that he was the bearer of this letter, and that he had gone with the brethren referred to in order to preach to the Gentiles. But it seems more probable that he was a member of the church to which Gaius belonged, and that he had concurred with him in rendering aid to the strangers who had been rejected by the influence of Diotrephes. If he had gone with these strangers, and had carried this letter, it would have been noticed, and it would have been in accordance with the apostolic custom, that he should have been commended to the favorable attentions of Gaius. In regard to the authenticity and the canonical authority of this Epistle, see the introduction at the beginning of the Second Epistle.

The elder - See the notes at 2 John 1:1.

Unto the well-beloved Gaius - Three persons of this name are elsewhere mentioned in the New Testament - Gaius, whom Paul in Romans 16:23 calls "his host," and whom he says 1 Corinthians 1:15 he baptized, residing at Corinth, (see the notes at Romans 16:23); Gaius of Macedonia, one of Paul's companions in travel, who was arrested by an excited mob at Ephesus, Acts 19:29; and Gaius of Derbe, who went with Paul and Timothy into Asia, Acts 20:4. Whether either of these persons is referred to here, cannot with certainty be determined. If it were any of them it was probably the last mentioned - Gaius of Derbe. There is no objection to the supposition that he was the one unless it is from the fact that this Epistle was probably written many years after the transaction mentioned in Acts 20:4, and the probability that Gaius might not have lived so long. The name was not an uncommon one, and it cannot be determined now who he was, or where he lived. Whether he had any office in the church is unknown, but he seems to have been a man of wealth and influence. The word translated "well-beloved," means simply "beloved." It shows that he was a personal friend of the writer of this Epistle.

Whom I love in the truth - Margin, "or truly." See the notes at 2 John 1:1.

Verse 2

Beloved, I wish above all things - Margin, "pray." The word used here commonly means in the New Testament to pray; but it is also employed to express a strong and earnest desire for anything, Acts 27:29; Romans 9:3; 2 Corinthians 13:9. This is probably all that is implied here. The phrase rendered "above all things" - περὶ πάντων peri pantōn- would be more correctly rendered here "concerning, or in respect to all things;" and the idea is, that John wished earnestly that "in all respects" he might have the same kind of prosperity which his soul had. The common translation "above all things" would seem to mean that John valued health and outward prosperity more than he did anything else; that he wished that more than his usefulness or salvation. This cannot be the meaning, and is not demanded by the proper interpretation of the original. See this shown by Lucke, in loc. The sense is, "In every respect, I wish that it may go as well with you as it does with your soul; that in your worldly prosperity, your comfort, and your bodily health, you may be as prosperous as you are in your religion." This is the reverse of the wish which we are commonly constrained to express for

our friends; for such is usually the comparative want of prosperity and advancement in their spiritual interests, that it is an expression of benevolence to desire that they might prosper in that respect as much as they do in others.

That thou mayest prosper - εὐοδοῦσθαι euodousthaiThis word occurs in the New Testament only in the following places: Romans 1:10, rendered "have a prosperous journey;" 1 Corinthians 16:2, rendered "hath prospered;" and in the passage before us. It means, properly, "to lead in a good way; to prosper one's journey;" and then to make prosperous; to give success to; to be prospered. It would apply here to any plan or purpose entertained. It would include success in business, happiness in domestic relations, or prosperity in any of the engagements and transactions in which a Christian might lawfully engage. It shows that it is right to wish that our friends may have success in the works of their hands and their plans of life.

And be in health - To enjoy bodily health. It is not necessary to to suppose, in order to a correct interpretation of this, that Gaius was at that time suffering from bodily indisposition, though perhaps it is most natural to suppose that, as John makes the wish for his health so prominent. But it is common, in all circumstances, to wish for the health and prosperity of our friends; and it is as proper as it is common, if we do not give that a degree of prominence above the welfare of the soul.

Even as thy soul prospereth - John had learned, it would seem, from the "brethren" who had come to him, 3 John 1:3, that Gaius was living as became a Christian; that he was advancing in the knowledge of the truth, and was exemplary in the duties of the Christian life; and he prays that in all other respects he might be prospered as much as he was in that. It is not very common that a man is more prospered in his spiritual interests than he is in his other interests, or that we can, in our wishes for the welfare of our friends, make the prosperity of the soul, and the practice and enjoyment of religion, the standard of our wishes in regard to other things. It argues a high state of piety when we can, as the expression of our highest desire for the welfare of our friends, express the hope that they may be in all respects as much prospered as they are in their spiritual concerns.

Verse 3

For I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came - Who these were is not certainly known. They may have been members of the same church with Gaius, who, for some reason, had visited the writer of this Epistle; or

they may have been the "brethren" who had gone from him with a letter of commendation to the church, 3 John 1:9, and had been rejected by the church through the influence of Diotrephes, and who, after having been hospitably entertained by Gaius, had again returned to the writer of this Epistle. In that case, they would of course bear honorable testimony to the kindness which they had received from Gaius, and to his Christian character.

And testified of the truth that is in thee - That you adhere steadfastly to the truth, notwithstanding the fact that errors abound, and that there are many false teachers in the world.

Even as thou walkest in the truth - Livest in accordance with the truth. The writer had made the same remark of the children of Cyria, to whom the second Epistle was directed. See the notes at 2 John 1:4.

Verse 4

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth - That they adhere steadfastly to the truth, and that they live in accordance with it. This is such language as would be used by an aged apostle when speaking of those who had been converted by his instrumentality, and who looked up to him as a father; and we may, therefore, infer that Gaius had been converted under the ministry of John, and that he was probably a much younger man than he was. John, the aged apostle, says that he had no higher happiness than to learn, respecting those who regarded him as their spiritual father, that they were steadfast in their adherence to the doctrines of religion. The same thing may be:

(a) of all the ministers of the gospel, that their highest comfort is found in the fact that those to whom they minister, whether still under their care or removed from them, persevere in a steadfast attachment to the true doctrines of religion, and live accordingly; and,

(b) of all Christian parents respecting their own children. the highest joy that a Christian parent can have is to know that his children, whether at home or abroad, adhere to the truths of religion, and live in accordance with the requirements of the gospel of Christ.

If a child wished to confer the highest possible happiness upon his parents when with them, it would be by becoming a decided Christian; if, when abroad, in foreign lands or his own, he wished to convey intelligence

to them that would most thrill their hearts with joy, it would be to announce to them that he had given his heart to God. There is no joy in a family like that when children are converted; there is no news that comes from abroad that diffuses so much happiness through the domestic circle as the intelligence that a child is truly converted to the Saviour. There is nothing that would give more peace to the dying pillow of the Christian parent, than to be able to leave the world with the assurance that his children would always walk in truth.

Verse 5

Beloved, thou doest faithfully - In the previous verses the writer had commended Gaius for his attachment to truth, and his general correctness in his Christian life. He now speaks more particularly of his acts of generous hospitality, and says that he had fully, in that respect, done his duty as a Christian.

Whatsoever thou doest - In all your contact with them, and in all your conduct toward them. The particular thing which led to this remark was his hospitality; but the testimony respecting his general conduct had been such as to justify this commendation.

To the brethren - Probably to Christians who were well known to him - perhaps referring to Christians in his own church.

And to strangers - Such as had gone to the church of which he was a member with a letter of commendation from John. Compare the Romans 12:13 note, and Hebrews 13:2 note.

Verse 6

Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church - It would seem that they had returned to John, and borne honorable testimony to the love manifested to them by Gaius. Before what church they had borne this testimony is unknown. Perhaps it was the church in Ephesus.

Whom if thou bring forward on their journey - οὕς προπέμψας hous propempsas"Whom bringing forward, or having brought forward." The word refers to aid rendered to them in their journey, in facilitating their travels, either by personally accompanying them, by furnishing them the means of prosecuting their journey, or by hospitably entertaining them. Gaius probably aided them in every way in which it was practicable. It has been made a question whether this refer, to the fact that he had thus aided them in some visit which they had made to the church where Gaius was, or

to a visit which they purposed to make. The Greek would seem to favor the latter construction, and yet it would appear from the Epistle, that the "brethren and strangers" actually had been with him that they had been rejected by the church through the influence of Diotrephes, and had been thrown upon the hospitality of Gaius, and that they had returned, and had borne honorable testimony to his hospitality. These views can be reconciled by supposing, as Lucke does, that having been once on their travels, and having shared the hospitality of Gaius, they were purposing to visit that region again, and that John, praising him for his former hospitality, commends them again to him, stating the reason 3 John 1:9-10 why he did not, in accordance with the usual custom, recommend them to the care of the church. They had now gone out 3 John 1:7 on the same errand upon which they had formerly gone, and they had now equal claims to the hospitality of the friends of religion.

After a godly sort - Margin, as in Greek, "worthy of God." The meaning is, As becomes those who serve God; or as becomes those who are professors of his religion.

Thou shalt do well - You will do what religion requires in these circumstances.

Verse 7

Because that for his name's sake - The word "his" here refers to God; and the idea is, that they had undertaken this journey not on their own account, but in the cause of religion.

They went forth - Or, "they have gone forth" - ἐξῆλθον exēlthon- referring to the journey which they had then undertaken; not to the former one.

Taking nothing of the Gentiles - The term "Gentile" embraced all who were not "Jews," and it is evident that these persons went forth particularly to labor among the pagan. When they went, they resolved, it seems, to receive no part of their support from them, but to depend upon the aid of their Christian brethren, and, hence, they were at first commended to the church of which Gaius and Diotrephes were members, and on this second excursion were commended particularly to Gaius. Why they, resolved to take nothing of the Gentiles is not stated, but it was doubtless from prudential considerations, lest it should hinder their success among them, and expose them to the charge of being actuated by a mercenary spirit. There were circumstances in the early propagation of Christianity which

made it proper, in order to avoid this reproach, to preach the gospel "without charge," those to whom it is preached to contribute to its maintenance, and that it is the right of those who preach to expect and receive a support. On this subject, see the 1 John 1:15, 1 John 1:18 notes.

Verse 8

We therefore ought to receive such - All of us ought hospitably to entertain and help such persons. The work in which they are engaged is one of pure benevolence. They have no selfish aims and ends in it. They do not even look for the supplies of their own needs among the people to whom they go to minister; and we ought, therefore, to help them in their work, and to contribute to their support. Doubtless, the apostle meant to urge this duty particularly upon Gaius; but, in order to show that he recognized the obligation himself, he uses the term "we," and speaks of it as a duty binding on all Christians.

That we might be fellow-helpers to the truth - All Christians cannot go forth to preach the gospel, but all may contribute something to the support of those who do; and in this case they would have a joint participation in the work of spreading the truth. The same reasoning which was applicable to that case, is also applicable now in regard to the duty of supporting those who go forth to preach the gospel to the destitute.

Verse 9

I wrote unto the church - That is on the former occasion when they went forth. At that time, John naturally commended them to the kind attentions of the church, not doubting but that aid would be rendered them in prosecuting their benevolent work among the Gentiles. The Epistle which was written on that occasion is now lost, and its contents cannot now be ascertained. It was, probably, however, a letter of mere commendation, perhaps stating the object which these brethren had in view, and soliciting the aid of the church. The Latin Vulgate renders this: "scripsissem forsan ecclesiae, "I would have written, perhaps, to the church, but Diotrephes," etc. Macknight also renders this, "I would have written," supposing the sense to be, that John would have commended them to the whole church rather than to a private member, if he had not been aware of the influence and opposition of Diotrephes. The Syriac version also adopts the same rendering. Several manuscripts also, of later date, introduced a particle, (αν anby which the same rendering would be demanded in the Greek, though

that reading is not sustained by good authority. Against this mode of rendering the passage, the reasons seem to me to be clear.

(1)as already remarked, the reading in the Greek which would require it is not sustained by good authority.

(2)the fair and obvious interpretation of the Greek word used by the apostle, (ἔγραψα egrapsawithout that particle, is, I "wrote" - implying that it had been already done.

(3)it is more probable that John had written to the church on some former occasion, and that his recommendation had been rejected by the influence of Diotrephes, than that he would be deterred by the apprehension that his recommendation would be rejected.

It seems to me, therefore, that the fair interpretation of this passage is, that these brethren had gone forth on some former occasion, commended by John to the church, and had been rejected by the influence of Diotrephes, and that now he commends them to Gains, by whom they had been formerly entertained, and asks him to renew his hospitality to them.

But Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not - Does not admit our authority, or would not comply with any such recommendation. The idea is, that he rejected his interference in the matter, and was not disposed to acknowledge him in any way. Of Diotrephes, nothing more is known than is here specified. Compare the analysis of the Epistle. If he was an officer in the church - a pastor, a ruling elder, a deacon, a vestry-man, a warden, or a private individual - we have no means of ascertaining. The presumption, from the phrase "who loveth to have the pre-eminence," would rather seem to be that he was an aspiring man, arrogating rights which he did not have, and assuming authority to which he was not entitled by virtue of any office. Still he might have held an office, and might have arrogated authority, as many have done, beyond what properly belonged to it.

The single word rendered "who loveth to have the pre-eminence," φιλοπρωτεύων philoprōteuōnoccurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means simply, "who loves to be first" - meaning that he loved to be at the head of all things, to rule, to lord it over others. It is clearly supposed here, that the church would have complied with the request of the writer if it had not been for this man. What were the alleged grounds for the course which he constrained the church to take, we are not informed; the real ground, the

apostle says, was his desire to rule. There may have been at the bottom of it some secret dislike of John, or some private grudge; but the alleged ground may have been, that the church was independent, and that it should reject all foreign interference; or that the church was unable to support those men; or that the work in which they were engaged was one of doubtful propriety.

Whatever was the cause, the case furnishes an illustration of the bad influence of one ambitious and arrogant man in a church. It is often in the power of one such man to bring a whole church under his control, and effectually to embarrass all its movements, and to prevent all the good which it would otherwise accomplish. When it is said, "but Diotrephes receiveth us not," the reference is doubtless to John, and the meaning is, either that he did not acknowledge him as an apostle, or that he did not recognize his right to interfere in the affairs of the church, or that he did not regard his recommendation of these brethren. The first of these suppositions is hardly probable; but, though he may have admitted that he was an apostle, there were perhaps some reasons operating in this particular case why he prevailed on the church to reject those who had been thus commended to their hospitality.

Verse 10

Wherefore, if I come - He was evidently expecting soon to make a visit to Gaius, and to the church, 3 John 1:14.

I will remember his deeds which he doeth - That is, he would punish his arrogance and presumption; would take measures that he should be dealt with in a proper manner. There is no evidence whatever that this is said in a vindictive or revengeful spirit, or that the writer spoke of it merely as a personal matter. From anything that can be shown to the contrary, if it had been a private and personal affair merely, the matter might have been dropped, and never referred to again. But what had been done was public. It pertained to the authority of the apostle, the duty of the church, and the character of the brethren who had been commended to them. If the letter was written, as is supposed by the aged John, and his authority had been utterly rejected by the influence of this one man, then it was proper that that authority should be asserted. If it was the duty of the church to have received these men, who had been thus recommended to them, and it had been prevented from doing what it would otherwise have done, by the

influence of one man, then it was proper that the influence of that man should be restrained, and that the church should see that he was not to control it. If the feelings and the character of these brethren had been injured by being rudely thrust out of the church, and held up as unworthy of public confidence, then it was proper that their character should be vindicated, and that the author of the wrong should be dealt with in a suitable manner. No one can show that this was not all that the apostle proposed to do, or that any feelings of private vindictiveness entered into his purpose to remember what Diotrephes had done; and the existence of any such feelings should not be charged on the apostle without proof. There is no more reason to suppose this in his case than there was in the case of Paul, in administering discipline in the church of Corinth, 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, or than there is in any instance of administering discipline now.

Prating against us - The word "prate," (φλυαρέω phluareōoccurring nowhere else in the New Testament, means to "overflow with talk," (Greek φλύω phluōLatin: "fluo," flow;) to talk much without weight, or to little purpose; to be loquacious; to trifle; or, to use an expression common among us, and which accords well with the Greek, to run on in talk, without connection or sense. The word does not properly imply that there was malignity or ill-feeling in what was said, but that the talk was of an idle, foolish, and unpprofitable character. As John here, however, specifies that there was a bad spirit in the manner in which Diotrephes expressed himself, the real thing which is implied in the use of the word here is, that there were much talk of that kind; that he was addicted to this habit of "running on" against the apostle; and that he was thus constantly undermining his influence, and injuring his character.

With malicious words - Greek, "evil words;" words that were fitted to do injury.

And not content therewith - Not satisfied with venting his private feelings in talk. Some persons seem to be satisfied with merely talking against others, and take no other measures to injure them; but Diotrephes was not. He himself rejected the brethren, and persuaded the church to do the same thing. Bad as evil talking is, and troublesome as a man may be who is always "prating" about matters that do not go according to his mind, yet it would be comparatively well if things always ended with that, and if the loquacious and the dissatisfied never took measures openly to wrong others.

Neither doth he himself receive the brethren - Does not himself treat them as Christian brethren, or with the hospitality which is due to them. He had not done it on the former visit, and John evidently supposed that the same thing would occur again.

And forbiddeth them that would - From this it is clear that there were those in the church who were disposed to receive them in a proper manner; and from anything that appears, the church, as such, would have been inclined to do it, if it had not been for the influence of this one man.

And casteth them out of the church - Compare Luke 6:22. It has been made a question whether the reference here is to the members of the church who were disposed to receive these brethren, or to the brethren themselves. Lucke, Macknight, and some others, suppose that it refers to those in the church who were willing to receive them, and whom Diotrephes had excommunicated on that account. Heumann, Carpzoviius, Rosenmuller, Bloomfield, and others, suppose that it refers to these strangers, and that the meaning is, that Diotrephes would not receive them into the society of Christians, and thus compelled them to go to another place. That this latter is the correct interpretation seems to me to be evident, for it was of the treatment which they had received that the apostle was speaking.

Verse 11

Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good - There can be no doubt that in this exhortation the writer had Diotrephes particularly in his eye, and that he means to exhort Gaius not to imitate his example. He was a man of influence in the church, and though Gaius had shown that he was disposed to act in an independent manner, yet it was not improper to exhort him not to be influenced by the example of any one who did wrong. John wished to excite him to acts of liberal and generous hospitality.

He that doeth good is of God - He shows that he resembles God, for God continually does good. See the sentiment explained in the notes at 1 John 3:7.

He that doeth evil hath not seen God - See the notes at 1 John 3:8-10.

Verse 12

Demetrius hath good report of all men - Little is known of Demetrius. Lucke supposes that he resided near the place where the author of this Epistle lived, and was connected with the church there, and was probably the bearer of this Epistle. It is impossible to determine with certainty on this

point, but there is one circumstance which seems to make it probable that he was a member of the same church with Gaius, and had united with him in showing Christian hospitality to these strangers. It is the use of the phrase "hath good report of all," implying that some testimony was borne to his character beyond what the writer personally knew. It is possible, indeed, that the writer would have used this term respecting him if he lived in the same place with himself, as expressing the fact that he bore a good character, but it is a phrase which would be more appropriately used if we suppose that he was a member of the same church with Gaius, and that John means to say than an honorable testimony was borne of his character by all those brethren, and by all others as far as he knew.

And of the truth itself - Not only by men, who might possibly be deceived in the estimate of character, but by fact. It was not merely a reputation founded on what "appeared" in his conduct, but in truth and reality. His deportment, his life, his deeds of benevolence, all concurred with the testimony which was borne by men to the excellency of his character. There is, perhaps, particular reference here to his kind and hospitable treatment of those brethren.

Yea, and we also bear record - John himself had personally known him. He had evidently visited the place where he resided on some former occasion, and could now add his own testimony, which no one would call in question, to his excellent character.

And ye know that our record is true - This is in the manner of John, who always spoke of himself as having such character for truth that no one who knew him would call it in question. Every Christian should have such a character; every man might if he would. Compare the notes at John 19:35; John 21:24.

Verse 13

I had many things to write … - This Epistle closes, as the second does, with a statement that he had many things to say, but that he preferred waiting until he should see him rather than put them on paper. Perhaps there were some things which he wished to say which he would not like to have exposed to the possibility of being seen by the public eye.

But I will not with ink and pen … - Notes at 2 John 1:12.

Verse 14

But I trust I shall shortly see thee … - Notes at 2 John 1:12.

Our friends salute thee - That is, your friends and mine. This would seem rather to refer to private friends of John and Gaius than to Christians as such. They had, doubtless, their warm personal friends in both places.

Greet the friends by name - That is, each one individually. He remembered them as individuals, but did not deem it proper to specify them.

Practical Remarks On 3John

(1) It is proper to desire for our friends all temporal good; to wish their happiness in every respect, 3 John 1:2. The welfare of the soul is indeed the great object, and the first desire in regard to a friend should be that his salvation may be secured; but in connection with that we may properly wish them health of body, and success in their lawful undertakings. It is not common that in their spiritual interests they are so much more prosperous than they are in other respects, that we can make that the standard of our wishes in regard to them, but it sometimes does occur, as in the case of Gaius. In such cases we may indeed rejoice with a friend, and feel that all will be well with him. But in how few cases, even among professed Christians, can we (with propriety) make the prosperity of the soul the standard by which to measure the happiness which we desire for them in other respects! Doddridge says, "What a curse would this bring upon many to wish that they might prosper even as their souls prospered!" Of how much property would they at once be deprived; how embarrassed would be their affairs; how pale, and wan, and sickly would they be, if they should be in all respects as they are in their spiritual interests!

(2) it is an unspeakable pleasure to a Christian to learn that his friends are living and acting as becomes sincere Christians; that they love what is true, and abound in the duties of hospitality charity, and benevolence, 3 John 1:3-6. When a friend learns this of a distant friend; when a pastor learns this of his people from whom be may be for a time separated; when those who have been instrumental in converting others learn this of their spiritual children; when a parent learns it of a son or daughter separated from him; when a teacher learns it of those who were formerly under his care, there is no joy that goes more directly to the heart than this - nothing that fills the soul with more true thankfulness and peace.

(3) it is the duty and the privilege of those who love the cause of religion to go and preach the gospel to those who are destitute, expecting to receive

nothing from them, and doing it as a work of pure benevolence, 3 John 1:7. The missionary spirit existed early in the Christian church, and indeed may be regarded as the "prevailing" spirit in those times. It has always been the prevailing spirit when religion has flourished in the church. At such times there have been many who were willing to leave their own quiet homes, and the religious privileges connected with a well-organized church, and to break away from the ties which bind to country and kindred, and to go among a distant people to publish salvation. In this cause, and with this spirit, the apostles spent their lives. In this cause, the "brethren" referred to by John went forth to labor. In this cause, thousands have labored in former times, and to the fact that they were "willing" to do it is to be traced all the happy influence of religion in the world. Our own religious privileges now we owe to the fact that in former times there were those who were willing to "go forth taking nothing of the Gentiles," devoting themselves, without hope of reward or fame, to the business of making known the name of the Saviour in what were then the dark places of the earth. The same principle is acted on now in Christian missions, and with the same propriety; and as we in Christian lands owe the blessings which we enjoy to the fact that in former times there were those who were willing thus to go forth, so it will be true that the richest blessings which are to descend upon India, and Africa, and the islands of the sea, will be traced in future times to the fact that there are in our age those who are willing to follow the example of the apostles in going forth to do good to a dying world.

(4) it is our duty to contribute to the support of those who thus go among the pagan, and to help them in every way in which we can promote the object which they have in view. So John felt it to be the duty of the church in regard to those who went forth in his time; and so, when the church, under the influence of Diotrephes, had refused to do it, he commended Gaius for performing that duty, 3 John 1:6, 3 John 1:8. Now, as then, from the nature of the case, missionaries to the pagan must go "taking nothing" of those among whom they labor, and expecting that, for a long time at least, they will do nothing for their support. They go as strangers. They go to those who do not believe the truth of the gospel; who are attached to their own superstitions; who contribute largely to the support of their own temples, and altars, and priesthood; who are, as yet, incapable of appreciating the value of a purer religion; who have no desire for it, and

who are disposed to reject it. In many cases, the pagan to whom the missionary goes are miserably poor, and it is only this religion, which as yet they are not disposed to receive, that can elevate them to habits of industry, and furnish them with the means of supporting religious teachers from abroad. Under these circumstances, no duty is more obvious than that of contributing to the support of those who go to such places as Christian missionaries. If the churches value the gospel enough to send their brethren among the pagan to propagate it. they should value it enough to minister to their needs while there; if they regard it as the duty of any of their number to leave their comfortable homes in a Christian land in order to preach to the pagan, they should feel that those who go make far greater sacrifices than those who contribute to their support. they give up all; we give only the small sum, not diminishing our own comforts, which is necessary to sustain them.

(5) for the same reason it is our duty to contribute to the support of missionaries in the destitute places of our own land, 3 John 1:8. They often go among a people who are as destitute, and who will as little appreciate the gospel, and who are as much prejudiced against it, and who are as poor, as the pagan. They are as likely to be charged with being actuated by mercenary motives, if they ask for support, as missionaries among the pagan are. They often go among people as little able and disposed to build churches and school-houses as the pagan are. Nothing is more obvious, therefore, than that those who have the gospel, and who have learned to prize and value it in some measure is it should be, should contribute to the support of those who go to convey its blessings to others, until those to whom they go shall so learn to prize it as to be able and willing to maintain it. That, under a faithful ministry, and with the Divine blessing, will not be long; always for the gospel, when it secures a hold in a community, makes men feel that it confers infinitely more blessings than it takes away, and that, even in a pecuniary point of view, it contributes more by far than it takes. What community is more prospered, or is more rich in all that promotes the temporal welfare of man, than that where the gospel has the most decided influence?

(6) we may see from this Epistle that churches “ought” to be united in promoting the cause of religion, 3 John 1:8-9. They should regard it as a

common cause in which one has as much concern as another, and where each should feel it a privilege to cooperate with his brethren. One church, in proportion to its ability, has as much interest in the spread of Christianity as another, and should feel that it has much responsibility in doing it. Between different churches there should be that measure of confidence and love that they will deem it a privilege to help each other in the common cause, and that one shall be ready to further the benevolent designs undertaken by another. In every Christian land, and among the people of every Christian denomination, missionaries of the gospel should find friends who will be willing to cooperate with them in advancing the common cause, and who, though they may bear a different name, and may speak a different language, should cheerfully lend their aid in spreading the common Christianity.

(7) we may see, from this Epistle, the evil of having one troublesome man in the church, 3 John 1:10. Such a man, by his talents, his address, his superior learning, his wealth, or by his arrogance, pride, and self-confidence, may control a church, and effectually hinder its promoting the work of religion. The church referred to by the apostle would have done its duty well enough, if it had not been for one ambitious and worldly man. No one can properly estimate the evil which one such man can do, nor the calamity which comes upon a church when such a man places himself at its head. As a man of wealth, of talents, and of learning, may do great good, if his heart is right, so may a man similarly endowed do proportionate evil if his heart is wicked. Yet how often has the spirit which actuated Diotrephes prevailed in the church! There is nothing that confers so much power on men as the control in religious matters; and hence, in all ages, proud and ambitious men have sought dominion over the conscience, and have sought to bring the sentiments of people on religion to subjection to their will.

(8) there may be circumstances where it is proper - where it is a duty - to receive those who have been cast out of the church, 3 John 1:8. The decisions of a church, under some proud and ambitious partisan leader, are often eminently unjust and harsh. The most modest, humble, devoted, and zealous men, under a charge of heresy, or of some slight aberration from the formulas of doctrine, may be cast out as unworthy to be recognized as ministers of the gospel, or even as unworthy to have a place at the table of the Lord. Some of the best men on earth have been thus disowned by the

church; and it is no certain evidence against a man when he is denounced as a heretic, or disowned as a member, by those who bear the Christian name. If we are satisfied that a man is a Christian, we should receive him as such, however he may be regarded by others; nor should we hesitate to help him forward in his Christian course, or in any way to assist him to do good.

(9) finally, let us learn from the examples commended in this brief Epistle, to do good. Let us follow the example of Gaius - the hospitable Christian; the large-hearted philanthropist; the friend of the stranger; the helper of those who were engaged in the cause of the Lord - a man who opened his heart and his house to welcome them when driven out and disowned by others. Let us imitate Demetrius, in obtaining a good report of those who know us; in so living that, if the aged apostle John were still on earth, we might be worthy of his commendation, and more than all, of the approbation of that gracious Saviour before whom these good men have long since gone, and in whose presence we also must soon appear.

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CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE
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JUDE INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Jude

Section 1. The Author of this Epistle

Little is known of the author of this brief Epistle. He styles himself Jude 1:1 "the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James;" but there has been some difference of opinion as to what "James" is meant. He does not call himself an "apostle," but supposes that the terms which he uses would sufficiently identify him, and would be a sufficient reason for his addressing his brethren in the manner in which he does in this Epistle. There were two of the name of "James" among the apostles Luke 6:14-15; and it has been made a question of which of them he was the brother. There were also two of the name of Judas, or Jude; but there is no difficulty in determining which of them was the author of this Epistle, for the other had the surname of Iscariot, and was the traitor. In the catalog of the apostles given by Matthew Matthew 10:3, the tenth place is given to an apostle who is there called "Lebbaeus," whose surname was "Thaddeus;" and as this name does not occur in the list given by Luke Luke 6:15, and as the 10th place in the catalog is occupied by "Simon, called Zelotes," and as he afterwards mentions "Judas the brother of James," it is supposed that Lebbaeus and Judas were the same persons. It was not uncommon for persons to have two or more names. Compare Robinson's Harmony of the Gospels, Section 40; Bacon's Lives of Apostles, p. 447; and Michaelis, iv., 365.

The title which he assumes, "brother of James," was evidently chosen because the James referred to was well-known, and because the fact that he was his brother would be a sufficient designation of himself, and of his right to address Christians in this manner. The name of the elder James, who was slain by Herod Acts 12:2, can hardly be supposed to be referred to, as he had been dead some time when this Epistle is supposed to have been written; and as that James was the brother of John, who was then living, it would have been much more natural for him to have mentioned that he was the brother of that beloved disciple. The other James - "James the Less," or "James the Just" - was still living; was a prominent man in Jerusalem; and was, besides, known as "the brother of the Lord Jesus;" and the fact of relationship to that James would sufficiently designate the writer. There can be little doubt, therefore, that this is the James here intended. In regard to his character and influence, see the introduction to the Epistle of James,

Section 1. If the author of this Epistle was the brother of that James, it was sufficient to refer to that fact, without mentioning that he was an apostle, in order to give to his Epistle authority, and to settle its canonical character.

Of Jude little is known. His name is found in the list of the apostles, but, besides that, it is but once mentioned in the Gospels. The only thing that is preserved of him in the Evangelists, is a question which he put to the Saviour, on the eve of his crucifixion. The Saviour had said, in his parting address to his disciples, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him." In regard to the meaning of this remark, Judas is said to have asked the following question: "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" John 14:21-22. To this question the Saviour gave him a kind and satisfactory answer, and that is the last that is said of him in the Gospels.

Of his subsequent life we know little. In Acts 15:22, he is mentioned as surnamed "Barsabas," and as being sent with Paul and Barnabas and Silas to Antioch. Paulinus says that he preached in Lybia, and that his body remained there. Jerome affirms, that after the ascension he was sent to Edessa, to king Abgarus; and the modern Greeks say that he preached in that city, and throughout Mesopotamia, and in Judea, Samaria, Idumea, Syria, and principally in Armenia and Persia - Calmet's Dictionary. Nothing certainly can be known in reference to the field of his labors, or to the place and circumstances of his death. On the question whether the Thaddeus who first preached the gospel in Syria was the same person as Jude, see Michaelis, *Introduction* iv., 367-371.

Section 2. The Authenticity of the Epistle

If this Epistle was written by the apostle Jude, the brother of James and of our Lord, there can be no doubt of its canonical authority, and its claim to a place in the New Testament. It is true that he does not call himself an apostle, but simply mentions himself as "a servant of Jesus Christ, and a brother of James." By this appellation, however, he has practically made it known that he was one of the apostles, for all who had a catalogue of the apostles would know "that Judas, the brother of James," was one of them. At the same time, as the relation of James to our Lord was well understood

Galatians 1:19, his authority would be recognized as soon as he was known to be the author of the Epistle. It may be asked, indeed, if he was an apostle, why he did not call himself such; and why he did not seek to give authority and currency to his Epistle, by adverting to the fact that he was the "Lord's brother."

To the first of these questions, it may be replied, that to have called himself "Judas, the apostle," would not have designated him so certainly, as to call himself "the brother of James;" and besides, the naked title, "Judas, the apostle," was one which he might not choose to see applied to himself. After the act of the traitor, and the reproach which he had brought upon that name, it is probable that he would prefer to designate himself by some other appellation than one which had such associations connected with it. It may be added, also, that in several of his epistles Paul himself does not make use of the name of the apostle, Philemon 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 1:1. To the second question, it may be replied, that "modesty" may have kept him from applying to himself the title, the "Lord's brother." Even James never uses it of himself; and we only know that he sustained this relation from an incidental remark of the apostle Paul, Galatians 1:19. Great honor would be attached to that relationship, and it is possible that the reason why it was not referred to by James and Jude was an apprehension that it might produce jealousy, as if they claimed some special pre-eminence over their brethren.

For the evidence of the canonical authority of this Epistle, the reader is referred to Lardner, vol. vi., pp. 304-313, and to Michaelis, *Introduction* vol. iv., p. 374, following Michaelis, chiefly on the internal evidence, supposes that it is not an inspired production. There were indeed, at first, doubts about its being inspired, as there were respecting the Epistle of James, and the Second Epistle of Peter, but those doubts were ultimately removed, and it was received as a canonical epistle. Clemens of Alexandria cites the Epistle under Jude's name, as the production of a prophetic mind. Origen calls it a production full of heavenly grace. Eusebius says that his predecessors were divided in opinion respecting it, and that it was not ranked among the universally acknowledged writings. It was not universally received among the Syrians, and is not found in the Peschito, the oldest Syriac version of the Scriptures. In the time of Jerome, however,

it came to be ranked among the other sacred Scriptures as of Divine authority - Hug, *Introduction*, Section 180.

The principal ground of doubt in regard to the canonical authority of the Epistle, arose from the supposed fact that the author has quoted two apocryphal writings, Jude 1:9, Jude 1:14. The consideration of this objection will be more appropriate in the notes at those verses, for it obviously depends much on the true interpretation of these passages. I shall, therefore, reserve what I have to say on that point to the exposition of those verses. Those who are disposed to examine it at length, may consult Hug, *Introduction*, Section 183; Lardner, 6:309-314, and Michaelis, *Introduction*, iv., 378ff.

Section 3. The Question when the Epistle was Written, to Whom, and its Design

Nothing can be determined with entire certainty in regard to the persons to whom this Epistle was written. Witsius supposed that it was addressed to Christians everywhere; Hammond, that it was addressed to Jewish Christians alone, who were scattered abroad, and that its design was to secure them against the errors of the Gnostics; Benson, that it was directed to Jewish believers, especially to those of the western dispersion; Lardner, that it was written to all, without distinction, who had embraced the gospel. The principal argument for supposing that it was addressed to Jewish converts is, that the apostle refers mainly for proof to Hebrew writings, but this might be sufficiently accounted for by the fact that the writer himself was of Jewish origin.

The only way of determining anything on this point is from the Epistle itself. The inscription is, “To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called,” Jude 1:1. From this it would appear evident that he had no particular classes of Christians in his eye, whether of Jewish or Gentile origin, but that he designed the Epistle for the general use of all who had embraced the Christian religion. The errors which he combats in the Epistle were evidently wide-spread, and were of such a nature that it was proper to warn all Christians against them. They might, it is true, be more prevalent in some quarters than in others, but still they were so common that Christians everywhere should be put on their guard against them.

The “design” for which Jude wrote the Epistle he has himself stated, Jude 1:3. It was with reference to the “common salvation” - the doctrines pertaining to salvation which were held by “all” Christians, and to show them the reasons for “contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.” That faith was assailed. There were teachers of error abroad. They were insinuating and artful men - men who had crept in unawares, and who, while they professed to hold the Christian doctrine, were really undermining its faith, and spreading corruption through the church. The purpose, therefore, of the Epistle is to put these to whom it was written on their guard against the corrupt teachings of these men, and to encourage them to stand up manfully for the great principle, of Christian truth.

Who these errorists were, it is not easy now to determine. The leading charge against them, both by Jude and Peter 2 Peter 2:1, is, that they denied our Lord Jude 1:4; and yet it is said that they were numbered among Christians, and were found in their assemblies, 2 Peter 2:13; Jude 1:12. By this denial, however, we are not to suppose that they literally and professedly denied that Jesus was the Christ, but that they held “doctrines” which amounted to a denial of him in fact. Compare the notes at 2 Peter 2:1. For the general characteristics of these teachers, see Introduction to 2Peter, Section 4.

At this distance of time, and with our imperfect knowledge of the characteristics of the early erroneous sects in the church, it is difficult to determine precisely who they were. It has been a common opinion, that reference is had by Peter and Jude to the sect of the Nicolaitanes; and this opinion, Hug remarks, is “neither improbable nor incompatible with the expressions of the two apostles, so far as we have any certain knowledge concerning this sect.” “The statements of the ancients, in regard to their profligacy and their detestable course of life, are so consonant with each other and with the charges of the apostles, that the two epistles may be pertinently considered as referring to them.” - *Introduction*, Section 182.

It is not possible to ascertain with certainty the time when the Epistle was written. There are no marks of time in it by which that can be known, nor is there any account among the early Christian writers which determines this. Benson supposes that it was written before the destruction of

Jerusalem, a few weeks or months after the Second Epistle of Peter; Mill, that it was written about 90 a.d.; Dodwell and Cave, that it was written after the destruction of Jerusalem, in the year 71 or 72 a.d.; L'Enfant and Beausobre, that it was between the year 70 and 75 a.d.; Witsius and Estius, that it was in the apostle's old age; Lardner, that it was about the year 65 or 66 a.d.; Michaelis, that it was before the destruction of Jerusalem; and Macknight, that it was in the latter part of the apostolic age, and not long before the death of Jude. All this, it is manifest, is mostly conjecture. There are only "two" things, it seems to me, in the Epistle, which can be regarded as "any" indication of the time. One is the striking resemblance to the Second Epistle of Peter, referring clearly to the same kind of errors, and warning those whom he addressed against the arts of the same kind of teachers, thus showing that it was written at about the same time as that Epistle; and the other is, that it seems to have been written "before" the destruction of Jerusalem, for, as Michaelis has well remarked, ‹As the author has mentioned Jude 1:5-8 several well-known instances of Divine justice in punishing sinners, he would probably if Jerusalem had been already destroyed, not have neglected to add to his other examples this most remarkable instance of Divine vengeance, especially as Christ had himself foretold it." - *Introduction* iv. 372. As there is reason to suppose that the Second Epistle of Peter was written about 64 or 65 a.d., we shall not probably, err in supposing that this was written not far from that time.

Section IV. The Resemblance between this Epistle and the Second Chapter of the Second Epistle of Peter

One of the most remarkable things respecting this Epistle, is its resemblance to the second chapter of the Second Epistle of Peter - a similarity so striking as to make it quite certain that one of these writers had seen the Epistle of the other, and copied from it; or rather, perhaps, adopted the language of the other as expressing his own views. It is evident, that substantially the same class of teachers is referred to by both; that they held the same errors, and were guilty of the same corrupt and dangerous practices; and that the two apostles, in describing them, made use of the same expressions, and employed the same arguments against them. They refer to the same facts in history, and to the same arguments from tradition; and if either of them quoted an apocryphal book, both have done it. On the resemblance, compare the following places: - Jude 1:8, with 2 Peter 2:10; Jude 1:10, with 2 Peter 2:12; Jude 1:16, with 2 Peter 2:18; Jude 1:4, with 2

Peter 1:2-3; Jude 1:7, with 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 1:9, with 2 Peter 2:11. The similarity between the two is so striking, both in the general structure of the argument and in the particular expressions, that it cannot have been accidental. It is not such a resemblance as would be likely to occur in two authors, if they had been writing in a wholly independent manner. In regard to this resemblance, there is but one of three ways in which it can be accounted for: either that the Holy Spirit inspired both of them to say the same thing, without the one having any knowledge of what the other said; or that they both copied from a common document, which is now lost; or that one copied from the other.

As to the first of these solutions, that the Holy Spirit inspired them both to say the same thing, it may be observed that no one can deny that this is "possible," but is by no means probable. No other instance of the kind occurs in the Bible, and the supposition would not be in accordance with what seems to have been a law in inspiration, that the sacred writers were allowed to express themselves according to the bent of their own genius. See the notes, 1 Corinthians 14:32.

As to the second of these suppositions, that they both copied from a common document, which is now lost, it may be observed, that this is wholly without evidence. That such a thing was "possible," there can be no doubt, but the supposition should not be adopted without necessity. If there had been such an original inspired document, it would probably have been preserved; or there would have been, in one or both of those who copied from it, some such allusion to it that it would have been possible to verify the supposition.

The remaining way of accounting for the resemblance, therefore, is to suppose that one of them had seen the Epistle of the other, and adopted the same line of argument, and many of the same expressions. This will account for all the facts in the case, and can be supposed to be true without doing violence to any just view of their inspiration. A question still arises, however, whether Peter or Jude is the original writer from which the other has copied. This question it is impossible to determine with certainty, and it is of little importance. If the common opinion which is stated above be correct, that Peter wrote his Epistle "first," of course that determines the matter. But that is not absolutely certain, nor is there any method by which

it can be determined. Hug adopts the other opinion, and supposes that Jude was the original writer. His reasons for this opinion are substantially these:

(1)That there is little probability that Jude, in so brief an epistle as his, consisting of only 25 verses, would have made use of foreign aid.

(2)that the style and phraseology of Jude is simple, unlabored, and without ornament; while that of Peter is artificial, and wears the appearance of embellishment and amplification; that the simple language of Jude seems to have been moulded by Peter into a more elegant form, and is embellished with participles, and even with rhetorical flourishes.

(3)that there is allusion in both Epistles 2 Peter 2:11; Jude 1:9 to a controversy between angels and fallen spirits; but that it is so alluded to by Peter, that it would not be understood without the more full statement of Jude; and that Peter evidently supposed that the letter of Jude was in the hands of those to whom he wrote, and that thus the allusion would be at once understood.

It could not be supposed that every reader would be acquainted with the fact alluded to by Peter; it was not stated in the sacred books of the Jews, and it seems probable that there must have been some book to which they had access, where the information was more full. Jude, however, as the original writer, stated it more at length, and having done this, a bare allusion to it by Peter was all that was necessary. Jude states the matter definitely, and expressly mentions the dispute of Michael with the devil about the body of Moses. But the language of Peter is so general and indefinite, that we could not know what he meant unless we had Jude in our possession. See Hug's *Introduction*, Section 176. It must be admitted that these considerations have much weight, though they are not absolutely conclusive. It should be added, that whichever supposition is adopted, the fact that one has expressed substantially the same sentiments as the other, and in nearly the same language, is no reason for rejecting either, any more than the coincidence between the Gospels is a reason for concluding that only one of them can be an inspired document. There might have been good reasons why the same warnings and counsels should have proceeded from two inspired men.

JUDE CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

(1) The inscription and salutation, Jude 1:1-2.

(2) astatement of the reasons why the Epistle was written, Jude 1:3-4. The author felt it to be necessary to write to them, because certain plausible errorists had crept in among them, and there was danger that their faith would be subverted.

(3) areference to past facts, showing that men who embraced error, and who followed corrupt and licentious practices, would be punished, Jude 1:5-7. He refers particularly to the unbelieving Hebrews whom God had delivered out of Egypt; to the apostate angels; and to the corrupt inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. The object in this is to warn them from following the examples of those who would certainly lead them to destruction.

(4) he describes particularly the characteristics of these persons, agreeing substantially in the description with the statement of Peter, Jude 1:8-16. For these characteristics, compare Introduction to 2Peter, Section 4. In general, they were corrupt, sensual, lewd, proud, arrogant, disorganizing, covetous, murmurers, complainers, wordy, windy, spots in their feasts of love. They had been and were professors of religion; they were professed reformers; they made great pretensions to uncommon knowledge of religious things. In the course of this description, the apostle contrasts their spirit with that of the archangel Michael Jude 1:9, and declares that it was with reference to such a class of men that Enoch long ago uttered a solemn prophecy, Jude 1:14-15.

(5) he calls to their remembrance the fact that it had been predicted that there would be such mockers in the last periods of the world; and the faith of true Christians, therefore, was not to be shaken, but rather confirmed by the fact of their appearance, Jude 1:17-19.

(6) in view of these facts and dangers, the apostle addresses to them two exhortations:

(a)to adhere steadfastly to the truths which they had embraced, Jude 1:20-21; and,

(b)to endeavor to recall and save those who were led astray - carefully guarding themselves from the same contamination while they sought to save others, Jude 1:22-23.

(7) the Epistle closes with an appropriate ascription of praise to him who was able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before his throne, Jude 1:24-25.

Verse 1

Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ - If the view taken in the Introduction to the Epistle is correct, Jude sustained a near relation to the Lord Jesus, being, as James was, "the Lord's brother," Galatians 1:19. The reasons why he did not advert to this fact here, as an appellation which would serve to designate him, and as showing his authority to address others in the manner in which he proposed to do in this Epistle, probably were,

(1)that the right to do this did not rest on his mere "relationship" to the Lord Jesus, but on the fact that he had called certain persons to be his apostles, and had authorized them to do it; and,

(2)that a reference to this relationship, as a ground of authority, might have created jealousies among the apostles themselves. We may learn from the fact that Jude merely calls himself "the servant of the Lord Jesus," that is, a Christian,

(a)that this is a distinction more to be desired than, would be a mere natural relationship to the Saviour, and consequently.

(b)that it is a higher honor than any distinction arising from birth or family. Compare Matthew 12:46-50.

And brother of James - See the introduction, Section 1.

To them that are sanctified by God the Father - To those who are "holy," or who are "saints." Compare the Romans 1:7 note; Philemon 1:1 note. Though this title is general, it can hardly be doubted that he had some particular saints in his view, to wit, those who were exposed to the dangers to which he refers in the Epistle. See Introduction, Section 3. As the Epistle was probably "sent" to Christians residing in a certain place, it was not necessary to designate them more particularly, though it was often done. The Syriac version adds here: "To the Gentiles who are called, beloved of God the Father," etc.

And preserved in Jesus Christ - See the notes, 1 Peter 1:5. The meaning is, that they owed their preservation wholly to him; and if they

were brought to everlasting life, it would be only by him. What the apostle here says of those to whom he wrote, is true of all Christians. They would all fall away and perish if it were not for the grace of God keeping them.

And called - Called to be saints. See Romans 1:7 note; Ephesians 4:1 note.

Verse 2

Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied - This is not quite the form of salutation used by the other apostles, but it is one equally expressive of an earnest desire for their welfare. These things are mentioned as the choicest blessings which could be conferred on them: "mercy" - in the pardon of all their sins and acceptance with God; "peace" - with God, with their fellow-men, in their own consciences, and in the prospect of death; and "love" - to God, to the brethren, to all the world. What blessings are there which these do not include?

Verse 3

Beloved - An expression of strong affection used by the apostles when addressing their brethren, Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 4:14; 1 Corinthians 10:14; 1 Corinthians 15:58; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 2 Corinthians 12:19; Philemon 2:12; Philemon 4:1; and often elsewhere.

When I gave all diligence - When I applied my mind earnestly; implying that he had reflected on the subject, and thought particularly what it would be desirable to write to them. The state of mind referred to is that of one who was purposing to write a letter, and who thought over carefully what it would be proper to say. The mental process which led to writing the Epistle seems to have been this:

(a)For some reasons - mainly from his strong affection for them - he purposed to write to them.

(b)The general subject on which he designed to write was, of course, something pertaining to the common salvation - for he and they were Christians.

(c)On reflecting what particular thing pertaining to this common salvation it was best for him to write on, he felt that, in view of their peculiar dangers, it ought to be an exhortation to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to them. Macknight renders this less correctly, "Making all haste to write to you," etc. But the idea is rather that he set himself

diligently and earnestly to write to them of the great matter in which they had a common interest.

To write unto you of the common salvation - The salvation common to Jews and Gentiles, and to all who bore the Christian name. The meaning is, that he did not think of writing on any subject pertaining to a particular class or party, but on some subject in which all who were Christians had a common interest. There are great matters of religion held in common by all Christians, and it is important for religious teachers to address their fellow Christians on those common topics. After all, they are more important than the things which we may hold as peculiar to our own party or sect, and should be more frequently dwelt upon.

It was needful for me to write to you - "I reflected on the general subject, prompted by my affectionate regard to write to you of things pertaining to religion in general, and, on looking at the matter, I found there was a particular topic or aspect of the subject on which it was necessary to address you. I saw the danger in which you were from false teachers, and felt it not only necessary that I should write to you, but that I should make this the particular subject of my counsels."

And exhort you - "That I should make my letter in fact an exhortation on a particular topic."

That ye should earnestly contend - Compare Galatians 2:5. The word here rendered "earnestly contend" - ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι epagōnizesthai- is one of those words used by the sacred writers which have allusion to the Grecian games. Compare the notes, 1 Corinthians 9:24, following. This word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It means "to contend upon" - i. e., "for or about" anything; and would be applicable to the earnest effort put forth in those games to obtain the prize. The reference here, of course, is only to contention by argument, by reasoning, by holding fast the principles of religion, and maintaining them against all opposers. It would not justify "contention" by arms, by violence, or by persecution; because:

(a)that is contrary to the spirit of true religion, and to the requirements of the gospel elsewhere revealed;

(b)it is not demanded by the proper meaning of the word, all that that fairly implies being the effort to maintain truth by argument and by a steady life;

(c)it is not the most effectual way to keep up truth in the world to attempt to do it by force and arms.

For the faith - The system of religion revealed in the gospel. It is called "faith," because that is the cardinal virtue in the system, and because all depends on that. The rule here will require that we should contend in this manner for all "truth."

Once delivered unto the saints - The word here used (ἅπαξ hapax) may mean either "once for all," in the sense that it was then complete, and would not be repeated; or "formerly," to wit, by the author of the system. Doddridge, Estius, and Beza, understand it in the former way; Macknight and others in the latter; Benson improperly supposes that it means "fully or perfectly." Perhaps the more usual sense of the word would be, that it was done once in the sense that it is not to be done again, and, therefore, in the sense that it was then complete, and that nothing was to be added to it. There is indeed the idea that it was formerly done, but with this additional thought, that it was then complete. Compare, for this use of the Greek word rendered "once," Hebrews 9:26-28; Hebrews 10:2; 1 Peter 3:18. The "delivering" of this faith to the saints here referred to is evidently that made by revelation, or the system of truth which God has made known in his word. Everything which He has revealed, we are to defend as true. We are to surrender no part of it whatever, for every part of that system "is" of value to mankind. By a careful study of the Bible we are to ascertain what that system is, and then in all places, at all times, in all circumstances, and at every sacrifice, we are to maintain it.

Verse 4

For there are certain men crept in unawares - The apostle now gives "reason" for thus defending the truth, to wit, that there were artful and wicked men who had crept into the church, pretending to be religious teachers, but whose doctrines tended to sap the very foundations of truth. The apostle Peter, describing these same persons, says, "who privily shall bring in damnable heresies." See the notes, 2 Peter 2:1. Substantially the same idea is expressed here by saying that they "had crept in unawares;" that is, they had come in "by stealth;" they had not come by a bold and open avowal of their real sentiments. They professed to teach the Christian religion, when in fact they denied some of its fundamental doctrines; they professed to be holy, when in fact they were living most scandalous lives. In all ages there have been men who were willing to do this for base purposes.

Who were before of old ordained to this condemnation - That is, to the condemnation (κρίμα krima) which he proceeds to specify. The statements in the subsequent part of the Epistle show that by the word used here he refers to the wrath that shall come upon the ungodly in the future world. See Jude 1:5-7, Jude 1:15. The meaning clearly is, that the punishment which befell the unbelieving Israelites Jude 1:5; the rebel angels Jude 1:6; the inhabitants of Sodom Jude 1:7; and of which Enoch prophesied Jude 1:15, awaited those persons. The phrase "of old" - πάλαι palai- means "long ago," implying that a considerable time had elapsed, though without determining how much. It is used in the New Testament only in the following places: Matthew 11:21, "they would have repented long ago;" Mark 15:44, "whether he had been any while dead;" Luke 10:13, "they had a great while ago repented;" Hebrews 1:1, "spake in time past unto the fathers;" 2 Peter 1:9, "purged from his old sins;" and in the passage before us.

So far as this word is concerned, the reference here may have been to any former remote period, whether in the time of the prophets, of Enoch, or in eternity. It does not "necessarily" imply that it was "eternal," though it "might" apply to that, if the thing referred to was, from other sources, certainly known to have been from eternity. It may be doubted, however, whether, if the thing referred to had occurred from eternity, this would have been the word used to express it, (compare Ephesians 1:4); and it is certain that it cannot be proveD from the use of this word (πάλαι palai) that the "ordination to condemnation" was eternal. Whatever may be referred to by that "ordaining to condemnation," this word will not prove that it was an eternal ordination. All that is fairly implied in it will be met by the supposition that it occurred in any remote period, say in the time of the prophets.

The word here rendered "before ordained' - προγεγραμμένοι progegrammenoifrom προγράφω prographō- occurs in the New Testament only here and in the following places: Romans 15:4, twice, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning;" Galatians 3:1, "Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth;" and Ephesians 3:3. "As I wrote afore in few words." Compare the notes, Galatians 3:1. In these places there is evidently no idea implied of "ordaining, or pre-ordaining," in the sense in which those words are now commonly understood. To that word there is

usually attached the idea of designating or appointing as by an arbitrary decree; but no such meaning enters into the word here used. The Greek word properly means, “to write before;” then “to have written before;” and then, with reference to time future, “to post up beforehand in writing; to announce by posting up on a written tablet,” as of some ordinance, law, or requirement; as descriptive of what will be, or what should be.

Compare Robinson, Lexicon. Burder (in Rosenmuller‘s Morgenland, in loc.) remarks that “the names of those who were to be tried were usually posted up in a public place, as was also their sentence after their condemnation, and that this was denoted by the same Greek word which the apostle uses here. Elsner,” says he, “remarks that the Greek authors use the word as applicable to to those who, among the Romans, were said to be “proscribed;” that is, those whose names were posted up in a public place, whereby they were appointed to death, and in reference to whom a reward was offered to any one who would kill them.” The idea here clearly is that of some such designation beforehand as would occur if the persons had been publicly posted as appointed to death. Their names, indeed, were not mentioned, but there was such a description of them, or of their character, that it was clear who were meant.

In regard to the question what the apostle “means” by such a designation or appointment beforehand, it is clear that he does not refer in this place to any arbitrary or eternal decree, but to such a designation as was made by the facts to which he immediately refers - that is, to the Divine prediction that there would be such persons Jude 1:14-15, Jude 1:18; and to the consideration that in the case of the unbelieving Israelites, the rebel angels, and the inhabitants of Sodom, there was as clear a proof that such persons would be punished as if their names had been posted up. All these instances bore on just such cases as these, and in these facts they might read their sentence as clearly as if their names had been written on the face of the sky. This interpretation seems to me to embrace all that the words fairly imply, and all that the exigence of the case demands; and if this be correct, then two things follow logically:

(1)that this passage should not be adduced to prove that God has from all eternity, by an arbitrary decree, ordained a certain portion of the race to destruction, whatever may be true on that point; and,

(2)that all abandoned sinners now may see, in the facts which have occurred in the treatment of the wicked in past times, just as certain evidence of their destruction, if they do not repent, as if their names were written in letters of light, and if it were announced to the universe that they would be damned.

Ungodly men - Men without piety or true religion, whatever may be their pretensions.

Turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness - Abusing the doctrines of grace so as to give indulgence to corrupt and carnal propensities. That is, probably, they gave this form to their teaching, as Antinomians have often done, that by the gospel they were released from the obligations of the law, and might give indulgence to their sinful passions in order that grace might abound. Antinomianism began early in the world, and has always had a wide prevalence. The liability of the doctrines of grace to be thus abused was foreseen by Paul, and against such abuse he earnestly sought to guard the Christians of his time, Romans 6:1, following.

And denying the only Lord God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ - See the notes, 2 Peter 2:1. That is, the doctrines which they held were in fact a denial of the only true God, and of the Redeemer of men. It cannot be supposed that they openly and formally did this, for then they could have made no pretensions to the name Christian, or even to religion of any kind; but the meaning must be, that "in fact" the doctrines which they held amounted to a denial of the true God, and of the Saviour in his proper nature and work. Some have proposed to read this, "denying the only Lord God, even (καὶ kai) our Lord Jesus Christ;" but the Greek does not demand this construction even if it would admit it, and it is most in accordance with Scripture usage to retain the common translation. It may be added, also, that the common translation expresses all that the exigence of the passage requires.

Their doctrines and practice tended as really to the denial of the true God as they did to the denial of the Lord Jesus. Peter, in 2 Peter 2:1, has adverted only to one aspect of their doctrine - that it denied the Saviour; Jude adds, if the common reading be correct, that it tended also to a denial of the true God. The word God (Θεὸν Theon) is missing in many manuscripts, and in the Vulgate and Coptic versions, and Mill, Hammond, and Bengel suppose it should be omitted. It is also wanting in the editions of Tittman, Griesbach, and Hahn. The amount of authority seems to be

against it. The word rendered "Lord," in the phrase "Lord God," is (Δεσπότης Despotēsand means here "Sovereign, or Ruler," but it is a word which may be appropriately applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the same word which is used in the parallel passage in 2 Peter 2:1. See it explained in the notes at that verse. If the word "God" is to be omitted in this place, the passage would be wholly applicable, beyond question, to the Lord Jesus, and would mean, "denying our only Sovereign and Lord, Jesus Christ." It is perhaps impossible now to determine with certainty the true reading of the text; nor is it "very" material. Whichever of the readings is correct; whether the word (Θεὸν Theon"God," is to be retained or not, the sentiment expressed would be true, that their doctrines amounted to a practical denial of the only true God; and equally so that they were a denial of the only Sovereign and Lord of the true Christian.

Verse 5

I will therefore put you in remembrance - "To show you what must be the doom of such men, I will call certain facts to your recollection, with which you are familiar, respecting the Divine treatment of the wicked in times past."

Though ye once knew this - That is, you were formerly made acquainted with these things, though they may not be now fresh in your recollection. On the different significations affixed to the word "once" in this place, see Bloomfield, "Crit. Digest, in loc." The thing which seems to have been in the mind of the apostle was an intention to call to their recollection, as bearing on the case before him, facts with which they had formerly been familiar, and about which there was no doubt. It was the thing which we often endeavor to do in argument - to remind a person of some fact which he once knew very well, and which bears directly on the case.

How that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt - Compare the notes, 1 Corinthians 10:5-12. The bearing of this fact on the case, before the mind of Jude, seems to have been this - that, as those who had been delivered from Egypt were afterward destroyed for their unbelief, or as the mere fact of their being rescued did not prevent destruction from coming on them, so the fact that these persons seemed to be delivered from sin, and had become professed followers of God would not prevent their

being destroyed if they led wicked lives. It might rather be inferred from the example of the Israelites that they would be.

Afterward - τὸ δεύτερον to deuteron- "the second;" that is, the second thing in order, or again. The expression is unusual in this sense, but the apostle seems to have fixed his mind on this event as a "second" great and important fact in regard to them. The "first" was that they were delivered; the second, that they were destroyed.

Destroyed them that believed not - That is, "on account" of their unbelief. They were not permitted to enter the promised land, but were cut off in the wilderness. See the notes at Hebrews 3:16-19.

Verse 6

And the angels which kept not their first estate - A second case denoting that the wicked would be punished. Compare the notes, 2 Peter 2:4. The word rendered "estate" (ἀρχὴν archēn) is, in the margin, "principality." The word properly means, "beginning, commencement;" and then that which surpasses others, which is "first," etc., in point of rank and honor; or pre-eminence, priority, precedence, princedom. Here it refers to the rank and dignity which the angels had in heaven. That rank or pre-eminence they did not keep, but fell from it. On the word used here, compare Ephesians 1:2; Ephesians 3:10; Colossians 2:10, as applied to angels; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 2:15, as applied to demons.

But left their own habitation - To wit, according to the common interpretation, in heaven. The word rendered "habitation" (οἰκητήριον oikētērion) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means here that heaven was their native abode or dwelling-place. They left it by sin; but the expression here would seem possibly to mean that they became "dissatisfied" with their abode, and voluntarily preferred to change it for another. If they did become thus dissatisfied, the cause is wholly unknown, and conjecture is useless. Some of the later Jews supposed that they relinquished heaven out of love for the daughters of men - "Robinson."

He hath reserved in everlasting chains - See the notes, 2 Peter 2:4. Peter says, "chains of darkness;" that is, the darkness encompasses them "as" chains. Jude says that those chains are "everlasting," (δεσμοῖς ἀΐδίοις desmois aidiosCompare Romans 1:20, "his eternal power and Godhead." The word does not elsewhere occur. It is an appropriate word to denote that which is eternal; and no one can doubt that if a Greek wished to express that

idea, this would be a proper word to use. The sense is, that that deep darkness always endures; there is no intermission; no light; it will exist forever. This passage in itself does not prove that the punishment of the rebel angels will be eternal, but merely that they are kept in a dark prison in which there is no light, and which is to exist for ever, with reference to the final trial. The punishment of the rebel angels after the judgment is represented as an everlasting fire, which has been prepared for them and their followers, Matthew 25:41.

Verse 7

Even as Sodom and Gomorrha - Notes, 2 Peter 2:6.

And the cities about them - Admah and Zeboim, Genesis 14:2; Deuteronomy 29:23; Hosea 11:8. There may have been other towns, also, that perished at the same time, but these are particularly mentioned. They seem to have partaken of the same general characteristics, as neighboring towns and cities generally do.

In like manner - "In a manner like to these," (τὸν ὅμοιον τούτοις τρόπον ton homoion toutois troponThe Greek word "these," is in the plural number. There has been much diversity in interpreting this clause. Some refer it to the angels, as if it meant that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah committed sin in a way similar to the angels; some suppose that it refers to the wicked teachers about whom Jude was discoursing, meaning that Sodom and Gomorrah committed the same kind of sins which they did; some that the meaning is, that "the cities round about Sodom and Gomorrah" sinned in the same way as those cities; and some that they were punished in the same manner, and were set forth like them as an example. I see no evidence that it refers to the angels, and if it did, it would not prove, as some have supposed, that their sin was of the same kind as that of Sodom, since there might have been a resemblance in some respects, though not in all. I see no reason to believe, as Macknight holds, that it refers to "false teachers," since that would be to suppose that the inhabitants of Sodom copied their example long "before" the example was set. It seems to me, therefore, that the reference is to the cities round about Sodom; and that the sense is, that they committed iniquity in the same manner as the inhabitants of Sodom did, and were set forth in the same way as an example.

Going after strange flesh - Margin: "other." The reference seems to be to the unusual sin which, from the name Sodom, has been called "sodomy."

Compare Romans 1:27. The meaning of the phrase "going after" is, that they were greatly addicted to this vice. The word "strange, or other," refers to that which is contrary to nature. Doddridge, however, explains it, "going after strange and detestable gratifications of their pampered and indulged flesh."

Are set forth for an example - They furnish a warning against all such conduct, and a demonstration that punishment shall come upon the ungodly. The condemnation of any sinner, or of any class of sinners, always furnishes such a warning. See the notes, 2 Peter 2:6.

Suffering the vengeance of eternal fire - The word rendered "suffering" (ὑπέχουσαι hupechousai) means, properly, "holding under" - as, for example, the hand; then to hold toward any one, as the ear - to give attention; then it is used as denoting to hold a discourse toward or with any one, or to hold satisfaction to any one, to make atonement; and then as "undergoing, paying, or suffering punishment," when united, as it is here, with the word δίκην dikēn(punishment, or vengeance). See "Rob. Lex." Here it expresses the idea of undergoing punishment. The word properly agrees in the construction with "cities," (πόλεις poleisreferring to Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them; but the things affirmed relate to the "inhabitants" of those cities. The word "vengeance" means punishment; that is, such vengeance as the Lord takes on the guilty; not vengeance for the gratification of private and personal feeling, but like that which a magistrate appoints for the maintenance of the laws; such as justice demands. The phrase "eternal fire" is one that is often used to denote future punishment - as expressing the severity and intensity of the suffering. See the notes, Matthew 25:41. As here used, it cannot mean that the fires which consumed Sodom and Gomorrah were literally eternal, or were kept always burning, for that was not true. The expression seems to denote, in this connection, two things:

(1)That the destruction of the cities of the plain, with their inhabitants, was as entire and perpetual as if the fires had been always burning - the consumption was absolute and enduring - the sinners were wholly cut off, and the cities forever rendered desolate; and,

(2)that, in its nature and duration, this was a striking emblem of the destruction which will come upon the ungodly. I do not see that the apostle here means to affirm that those particular sinners who dwelt in Sodom would be punished forever, for his expressions do not directly affirm that,

and his argument does not demand it; but still the "image" in his mind, in the destruction of those cities, was clearly that of the utter desolation and ruin of which this was the emblem; of the perpetual destruction of the wicked, like that of the cities of the plain. If this had not been the case, there was no reason why he should have used the word "eternal" - meaning here "perpetual" - since, if in his mind there was no image of future punishment, all that the argument would have demanded was the simple statement that they were cut off by fire.

The passage, then, cannot be used to prove that the particular dwellers in Sodom will be punished forever - whatever may be the truth on that point; but that there is a place of eternal punishment, of which that was a striking emblem. The meaning is, that the case was one which furnished a demonstration of the fact that God will punish sin; that this was an example of the punishment which God sometimes inflicts on sinners in this world, and a type of that eternal punishment which will be inflicted in the next.

Verse 8

Likewise also - In the same way do these persons defile the flesh, or resemble the inhabitants of Sodom; that is, they practice the same kind of vices. What the apostle says is, that their character resembled that of the inhabitants of Sodom; the example which he adduces of the punishment which was brought on those sinners, leaves it to be clearly inferred that the persons of whom he was speaking would be punished in a similar manner.

These filthy dreamers - The word "filthy" has been supplied by our translators, but there is no good reason why it should have been introduced. The Greek word (ἐνυπνιάζω enupniazō) means to dream; and is applied to these persons as holding doctrines and opinions which sustained the same relation to truth which dreams do to good sense. Their doctrines were the fruits of mere imagination, foolish vagaries and fancies. The word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Acts 2:17, where it is applied to visions in dreams.

Defile the flesh - Pollute themselves; give indulgence to corrupt passions and appetites. See the notes at 2 Peter 2:10.

Despise dominion - The same Greek word is used here which occurs in 2 Peter 2:10. See the notes at that verse.

And speak evil of dignities - See the notes at 2 Peter 2:10.

Verse 9

Yet Michael the archangel … - This verse has given more perplexity to expositors than any other part of the Epistle; and in fact the difficulties in regard to it have been so great that some have been led to regard the Epistle as spurious. The difficulty has arisen from these two circumstances:

(1)Ignorance of the origin of what is said here of Michael the archangel, nothing of this kind being found in the Old Testament; and,

(2)the improbability of the story itself, which looks like a mere Jewish fable.

Peter 2 Peter 2:2 made a general reference to angels as not bringing railing accusations against others before the Lord; but Jude refers to a particular case - the case of Michael when contending about the body of Moses. The methods proposed of reconciling the passage with the proper ideas of inspiration have been various, though perhaps no one of them relieves it of all difficulty. It would be inconsistent with the design of these notes to go into an extended examination of this passage. Those who wish to see a full investigation of it may consult Michaelis' *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. iv. pp. 378-393; Lardner, vol. vi. p. 312ff; Hug, *Introduction* Section 183; Benson, in loc.; Rosenmuller's *Morgenland*, iii. pp. 196,197; and Wetstein, in loc. The principal methods of relieving the difficulty have been the following:

I. Some have supposed that the reference is to the passage in Zechariah, Zechariah 3:1, following "And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan," etc. The opinion that Jude refers to this passage was held by Lardner. But the objections to this are very obvious:

(1)There is no similarity between the two, except the expression, "the Lord rebuke thee."

(2)the name Michael does not occur at all in the passage in Zechariah.

(3)there is no mention made of the "body of Moses" there, and no allusion to it whatever.

(4)there is no intimation that there was any such contention about his body. There is a mere mention that Satan resisted the angel of the Lord, as seen in the vision, but no intimation that the controversy had "any" reference to Moses in any way.

(5)the reason of the resistance which Satan offered to the angel in the vision as seen by Zechariah is stated. It was in regard to the consecration of Joshua to the office of high priest implying a return of prosperity to Jerusalem, and the restoration of the worship of God there in its purity; see Zechariah 3:2. To this Satan was of course opposed, and the vision represents him as resisting the angel in his purpose thus to set him apart to that office. These reasons seem to me to make it clear that Jude did not refer to the passage in Zechariah, nor is there any other place in the Old Testament to which it can be supposed he had reference.

II. Hug supposes that the reference here, as well as that in Jude 1:14, to the prophecy of Enoch, is derived from some apocryphal books existing in the time of Jude; and that though those books contained mere fables, the apostle appealed to them, not as conceding what was said to be true, but in order to refute and rebuke those against whom he wrote, out of books which they admitted to be of authority. *Introduction* Section 183. Arguments and confutations, he says, drawn from the sacred Scriptures, would have been of no avail in reasoning with them, for these they evaded 2 Peter 3:16, and there were no surer means of influencing them than those writings which they themselves valued as the sources of their special views. According to this, the apostle did not mean to vouch for the truth of the story, but merely to make use of it in argument. The objection to this is, that the apostle does in fact seem to refer to the contest between Michael and the devil as true. He speaks of it in the same way in which he would have done if he had spoken of the death of Moses, or of his smiting the rock, or of his leading the children of Israel across the Red Sea, or of any other fact in history. If he regarded it as a mere fable, though it would have been honest and consistent with all proper views of inspiration for him to have said to those against whom he argued, that on their own principles such and such things were true, yet it would not be honest to speak of it as a fact which he admitted to be true. Besides, it should be remembered that he is not arguing with them, in which case it might be admissible reason in this way, but was making statements to others about them, and showing that they manifested a spirit entirely different from that which the angels evinced even when contending in a just cause against the prince of all evil.

III. It has been supposed that the apostle quotes an apocryphal book existing in his time, containing this account, and that he means to admit that

the account is true. Origen mentions such a book, called "the Assumption of Moses," (Αναληψις του Μωσεως Analēpsis tou Mōseōsas extant in his time, containing this very account of the contest between Michael and the devil about the body of Moses. That was a Jewish Greek book, and Origen supposed that this was the source of the account here. That book is now lost. There is still extant a book in Hebrew, called פטירת משה paTiyret Mosheh- "the Death of Moses," which some have supposed to be the book referred to by Origen. "That" book contains many fabulous stories about the death of Moses, and is evidently the work of some Jew drawing wholly upon his imagination. An account of it may be seen in Michaelis, *Introduction* iv. p. 381ff. There is no reason to suppose that this is the same book referred to by Origen under the name of "the Assumption of Moses;" and there is a moral certainty that an inspired writer could not have quoted it as of authority. Further, there can be no reasonable doubt that such a book as Origen refers to, under the title of "the Assumption of Moses," was extant in "his" time, but that does not prove by any means that it was extant in the time of Jude, or that he quoted it. There is, indeed, no positive proof that it was "not" extant in the time of Jude, but there is none that it was, and all the facts in the case will be met by the supposition that it was written afterward, and that the tradition on the subject here referred to by Jude was incorporated into it.

IV. The remaining supposition is, that Jude here refers to a prevalent "tradition" among the Jews, and that he has adopted it as containing an important truth, and one which bore on the subject under discussion. In support of this, it may be observed,

(a)that it is well known that there were many traditions of this nature among the Jews. See the notes at Matthew 15:2.

(b)That though many of these traditions were puerile and false, yet there is no reason to doubt that some of them might have been founded in truth.

(c)That an inspired writer might select those which were true, for the illustration of his subject, with as much propriety as he might select what was written; since if what was thus handed down by tradition was true, it was as proper to use it as to use a fact made known in any other way.

(d)That in fact such traditions were adopted by the inspired writers when they would serve to illustrate a subject which they were discussing. Thus Paul refers to the tradition about Jannes and Jambres as true history. See the notes at 2 Timothy 3:8.

(e)If, therefore, what is here said was true, there was no impropriety in its being referred to by Jude as an illustration of his subject.

The only material question then is, whether it is "true." And who can prove that it is not? What evidence is there that it is not? How is it possible to demonstrate that it is not? There are many allusions in the Bible to angels; there is express mention of such an angel as Michael Daniel 12:1; there is frequent mention of the devil; and there are numerous affirmations that both bad and good angels are employed in important transactions on the earth. Who can prove that such spirits never meet, never come in conflict, never encounter each other in executing their purposes? Good men meet bad men, and why is it any more absurd to suppose that good angels may encounter bad ones? It should be remembered, further, that there is no need of supposing that the subject of the dispute was about burying the body of Moses; or that Michael sought to bury it, and the devil endeavored to prevent it - the one in order that it might not be worshipped by the Israelites, and the other that it might be.

This indeed became incorporated into the tradition in the apocryphal books which were afterward written; but Jude says not one word of this, and is in no way responsible for it. All that he says is, that there was a contention or dispute (διακρινόμενος διελέγετο diakrinomenos dielegetorespecting "his body." But when it was, or what was the occasion, or how it was conducted, he does "not" state, and we have no right to ascribe to him sentiments which he has not expressed. If ever such a controversy of any kind existed respecting that body, it is all that Jude affirms, and is all for which he should be held responsible. The sum of the matter, then, it seems to me is, that Jude has, as Paul did on another occasion, adopted a tradition which was prevalent in his time; that there is nothing necessarily absurd or impossible in the fact affirmed by the tradition, and that no one can possibly demonstrate that it is not true.

The archangel - The word "archangel" occurs only in one other place in the Scriptures. See the notes at 1 Thessalonians 4:16. It means "ruling or chief" angel - the chief among the hosts of heaven. It is nowhere else

applied to Michael, though his name is several times mentioned, Daniel 10:13, Daniel 10:21; Daniel 12:1; Revelation 12:7.

When contending - This word (διακρινόμενος diakrinomenos) refers here to a contention or strife with words - "a disputation." Nothing farther is necessarily implied, for it is so used in this sense in the New Testament, Acts 11:2, Acts 11:12, ("Greek.")

He disputed - διαλέγομαι dialegomai"This" word also would denote merely a controversy or contention of words, Mark 9:34; Acts 17:2, Acts 17:17; Acts 18:4, Acts 18:19; Acts 24:12.

About the body of Moses - The nature of this controversy is wholly unknown, and conjecture is useless. It is not said, however, that there was a strife which should get the body, or a contention about burying it, or any physical contention about it whatever. That there "may" have been, no one indeed can disprove; but all that the apostle says would be met by a supposition that there was any debate of any kind respecting that body, in which Michael, though provoked by the opposition of the worst being in the universe, still restrained himself from any outbreaking of passion, and used only the language of mild but firm rebuke.

Durst not - οὐκ ἐτόλμησεν - "Did not dare." It is not said that he did not dare to do it because he feared Satan; but all that the word implies is met by supposing that he did not dare to do it because he feared the Lord, or because in any circumstances it would be wrong.

A railing accusation - The Greek word is "blasphemy." The meaning is, he did not indulge in the language of mere reproach: and it is implied here that such language would be wrong anywhere. If it would be right to bring a railing accusation against any one, it would be against the devil.

But said, The Lord rebuke thee - The word here used (ἐπιτιμάω epitimaō) means, properly, to put honor upon; and then to adjudge or confirm. Then it came to be used in the sense of commanding or "restraining" - as, e. g., the winds and waves, Matthew 8:26; Mark 4:39. Then it is used in the sense of "admonishing strongly;" of enjoining upon one, "with the idea of censure," Matthew 18:18; Mark 1:25; Luke 4:35, Luke 4:41. This is the idea here - the expression of a wish that "the Lord" would take the matter of the dispute to himself, and that he would properly restrain and control Satan, with the implied idea that his conduct was wrong. The language is the same as that recorded in Zechariah 3:2, as used by "the angel" respecting Satan. But, as before observed, there is no reason

to suppose that the apostle referred to that. The fact, however, that the angel is said to have used the language on that occasion may be allowed to give confirmation to what is said here, since it shows that it is the language which angelic beings naturally employ.

Verse 10

But these speak evil of those things which they know not - These false and corrupt teachers employ reproachful language of those things which lie wholly beyond the reach of their vision. Notes, 2 Peter 2:12.

But what they know naturally - As mere men; as animals; that is, in things pertaining to their physical nature, or in which they are on a level with the brute creation. The reference is to the natural instincts, the impulses of appetite, and passion, and sensual pleasure. The idea of the apostle seems to be, that their knowledge was confined to those things. They did not rise above them to the intelligent contemplation of those higher things, against which they used only the language of reproach. There are multitudes of such men in the world. Towards high and holy objects they use only the language of reproach. They do not understand them, but they can rail at them. Their knowledge is confined to the subjects of sensual indulgence, and all their intelligence in that respect is employed only to corrupt and destroy themselves.

As brute beasts - Animals without intelligence. Notes, 2 Peter 2:12.

In those things they corrupt themselves - They live only for sensual indulgence, and sink deeper and deeper in sensual gratifications.

Verse 11

Woe unto them! - See Matthew 11:21.

For they have gone in the way of Cain - Genesis 4:5-12. That is, they have evinced disobedience and rebellion as he did; they have shown that they are proud, corrupt, and wicked. The apostle does not specify the points in which they had imitated the example of Cain, but it was probably in such things as these - pride, haughtiness, the hatred of religion, restlessness under the restraints of virtue, envy that others were more favored, and a spirit of hatred of the brethren (compare 1 John 3:15) which would lead to murder.

And ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward - The word rendered "ran greedily" - (ἐξεχύθησαν exechuthēsanfrom ἐκχέω ekcheō- means to pour out; and then, when spoken of persons, that they are "poured out," or that they "rush tumultuously" on an object, that is, that they give

themselves up to anything. The idea here is, that all restraint was relaxed, and that they rushed on tumultuously to any course of life that promised gain. See the notes at 2 Peter 2:15.

And perished - They perish, or they will perish. The result is so certain, that the apostle speaks of it as if it were already done. The thought, seems to have lain in his mind in this manner: he thinks of them as having the same character as Korah, and then at once thinks of them as destroyed in the same manner, or as if it were already done. They are "identified" with him in their character and doom. The word rendered "perish" (ἀπόλλυμι apollumi) is often used to denote future punishment, Matthew 10:28, Matthew 10:39; Matthew 18:14; Mark 1:24; Luke 13:3, Luke 13:5; John 3:15-16; John 10:28; 2 Thessalonians 2:10; 2 Peter 3:9.

In the gainsaying of Core - Of Korah, Numbers 16:1-30. The word "gainsaying" here means properly contradiction, or speaking against; then controversy, question, strife; then contumely, reproach, or rebellion. The idea here seems to be, that they were guilty of insubordination; of possessing a restless and dissatisfied spirit; of a desire to rule, etc.

Verse 12

These are spots - See the notes at 2 Peter 2:13. The word used by Peter, however, is not exactly the same as that used here. Peter uses the word, σπῖλοι spiloiJude, σπιλάδες spiladesThe word used by Jude means, properly, "a rock" by or in the sea; a cliff, etc. It may either be a rock by the sea, against which vessels may be wrecked, or a hidden rock "in" the sea, on which they may be stranded at an unexpected moment. See Hesyehius and Pollux, as quoted by Wetstein, "in loc." The idea here seems to be, not that they were "spots and blemishes" in their sacred feasts, but that they were like hidden rocks to the mariner. As those rocks were the cause of shipwreck, so these false teachers caused others to make shipwreck of their faith. They were as dangerous in the church as hidden rocks are in the ocean.

In your feasts of charity - Your feasts of love. The reference is probably to the Lord‘s Supper, called a feast or festival of love, because:

(1)it revealed the love of Christ to the world;

(2)it was the means of strengthening the mutual love of the disciples: a festival which love originated, and where love reigned.

It has been supposed by many, that the reference here is to festivals which were subsequently called "Agapae," and which are now known as

“love-feasts” - meaning a festival immediately “preceding” the celebration of the Lord‘s Supper. But there are strong objections to the supposition that there is reference here to such a festival.

(1) there is no evidence, unless it be found in this passage, that such celebrations had the sanction of the apostles. They are nowhere else mentioned in the New Testament, or alluded to, unless it is in 1 Corinthians 11:25; Acts 2:46; Acts 6:2), might be so construed as to seem to lend countenance to the custom. For these reasons it seems clear to me that the passage before us does not refer to “love-feasts;” and, therefore, that they are not authorized in the New Testament. See, however, Coleman‘s Antiquities of the Christian church, chapter xvi., Section 13.

When they feast with you - Showing that they were professors of religion. Notes at 2 Peter 2:13.

Feeding themselves without fear - That is, without any proper reverence or respect for the ordinance; attending on the Lord‘s Supper as if it were an ordinary feast, and making it an occasion of riot and gluttony. See 1 Corinthians 11:20-22.

Clouds they are … - Notes, 2 Peter 2:17. Compare Ephesians 4:14.

Trees whose fruit withereth - The idea here is substantially the same as that expressed by Peter, when he says that they were “wells without water;” and by him and Jude, when they say that they are like clouds driven about by the winds, that shed down no refreshing rain upon the earth. Such wells and clouds only disappoint expectations. So a tree that should promise fruit, but whose fruit should always wither, would be useless. The word rendered “withereth” φθινοπωρινὰ phthinopōrinaoccurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, properly, “autumnal;” and the expression here denotes “trees of autumn,” that is, trees stripped of leaves and verdure; trees on which there is no fruit. - Robinson‘s Lex. The sense, in the use of this word, therefore, is not exactly that which is expressed in our translation, that the fruit has “withered,” but rather that they are like the trees of autumn, which are stripped and bare. So the Vulgate, “arbores autumnales.” The idea of their being without fruit is expressed in the next word. The “image” which seems to have been before the mind of Jude in this expression, is that of the naked trees of autumn as contrasted with the bloom of spring and the dense foliage of summer.

Without fruit - That is, they produce no fruit. Either they are wholly barren, like the barren fig-tree, or the fruit which was set never ripens, but

falls off. They are, therefore, useless as religious instructors - as much so as a tree is which produces no fruit.

Twice dead - That is, either meaning that they are seen to be dead in two successive seasons, showing that there is no hope that they will revive and be valuable; or, using the word "twice" to denote emphasis, meaning that they are absolutely or altogether dead. Perhaps the idea is, that successive summers and winters have passed over them, and that no signs of life appear.

Plucked up by the roots - The wind blows them down, or they are removed by the husbandman as only cumbering the ground. They are not cut down - leaving a stump that might sprout again - but they are extirpated root and branch; that is, they are wholly worthless. There is a regular ascent in this climax. First, the apostle sees a tree apparently of autumn, stripped and leafless; then he sees it to be a tree that bears no fruit; then he sees it to be a tree over which successive winters and summers pass and no signs of life appear; then as wholly extirpated. So he says it is with these men. They produce no fruits of holiness; months and years show that there is no vitality in them; they are fit only to be extirpated and cast away. Alas! how many professors of religion are there, and how many religious teachers, who answer to this description!

Verse 13

Raging waves of the sea - Compare 2 Peter 2:18. They are like the wild and restless waves of the ocean. The image here seems to be, that they were noisy and bold in their professions, and were as wild and ungovernable in their passions as the billows of the sea.

Foaming out their own shame - The waves are lashed into foam, and break and dash on the shore. They seem to produce nothing but foam, and to proclaim their own shame, that after all their wild roaring and agitation they should effect no more. So with these noisy and vaunting teachers. What they impart is as unsubstantial and valueless as the foam of the ocean waves, and the result is in fact a proclamation of their own shame. Men with so loud professions should produce much more.

Wandering stars - The word rendered "wandering" (πλανῆται planētai) is that from which we have derived the word "planet." It properly means one who wanders about; a wanderer; and was given by the ancients to planets because they seemed to wander about the heavens, now forward and now backward among the ether stars, without any fixed law. - Pliny, *Nat.*

Hist. ii. 6. Cicero, however, who saw that they were governed by certain established laws, says that the name seemed to be given to them without reason. - De Nat. Deo. ii. 20. So far as the "words" used are concerned, the reference may be either to the planets, properly so called, or to comets, or to "ignes fatui," or meteors. The proper idea is that of stars that have no regular motions, or that do not move in fixed and regular orbits. The laws of the planetary motions were not then understood, and their movements seemed to be irregular and capricious; and hence, if the reference is to them, they might be regarded as not an unapt illustration of these teachers. The sense seems to be, that the aid which we derive from the stars, as in navigation, is in the fact that they are regular in their places and movements, and thus the mariner can determine his position. If they had no regular places and movements, they would be useless to the seaman. So with false religious teachers. No dependence can be placed on them. It is not uncommon to compare a religious teacher to a star, Revelation 1:16; Revelation 2:1. Compare Revelation 22:16.

To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever - Not to the stars, but to the teachers. The language here is the same as in 2 Peter 2:17. See the notes at that verse.

Verse 14

And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam - The seventh in the direct line of descent from Adam. The line of descent is Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahaleel, Jared, Enoch; see Genesis 5:3, following. On the character of Enoch, see the notes at Hebrews 11:5.

Prophesied of these - Uttered prophecies applicable to these men, or respecting just such men as these. It is not necessarily meant that he had these men specifically in his eye; but all that is fairly implied is, that his predictions were descriptive of them. There is no mention made in the writings of Moses of the fact that Enoch was a prophet; but nothing is more probable in itself, and there is no absurdity in supposing that a true prophecy, though unrecorded, might be handed down by tradition. See the 2 Timothy 3:8 note; Jude 1:9 note. The source from which Jude derived this passage respecting the prophecy of Enoch is unknown. Amidst the multitude of traditions, however, handed down by the Jews from a remote antiquity, though many of them were false, and many of a trifling character, it is reasonable to presume that some of them were true and were of importance. No man can prove that the one before us is not of that

character; no one can show that an inspired writer might not be led to make the selection of a true prophecy from a mass of traditions; and as the prophecy before us is one that would be every way worthy of a prophet, and worthy to be preserved, its quotation furnishes no argument against the inspiration of Jude. There is no clear evidence that he quoted it from any book extant in his time.

There is, indeed, now an apocryphal writing called "the Book of Enoch," containing a prediction strongly resembling this, but there is no certain proof that it existed so early as the time of Jude, nor, if it did, is it absolutely certain that he quoted from it. Both Jude and the author of that book may have quoted a common tradition of their time, for there can be no doubt that the passage referred to was handed down by tradition. The passage as found in "the Book of Enoch" is in these words: "Behold he comes with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon them, and destroy the wicked, and reprove all the carnal, for everything which the sinful and ungodly have done and committed against him," chapter ii. *Bib. Repository*, vol. xv. p. 86. If the Book of Enoch was written after the time of Jude, it is natural to suppose that the prophecy referred to by him, and handed down by tradition, would be inserted in it. This book was discovered in an AEthiopic version, and was published with a translation by Dr. Laurence of Oxford, in 1821, and republished in 1832. A full account of it and its contents may be seen in an article by Prof. Stuart in the Bib. Repository for January 1840, pp. 86-137.

The Lord cometh - That is, the Lord will come. See the notes at 1 Corinthians 16:22. It would seem from this to have been an early doctrine that the Lord would "descend" to the earth for judgment.

With ten thousand of his saints - Or, "of his holy ones." The word "saints" we now apply commonly to "redeemed" saints, or to Christians. The original word is, however, applicable to all who are "holy," angels as well as men. The common representation in the Scriptures is, that he would come attended by the angels Matthew 25:31, and there is doubtless allusion here to such beings. It is a common representation in the Old Testament also that God, when he manifests himself, is accompanied by great numbers of heavenly beings. See Psalm 68:17; Deuteronomy 33:2.

Verse 15

To execute judgment upon all - That is, he shall come to judge all the dwellers upon the earth, good and bad.

And to convince all - The word “convince we now use commonly in a somewhat limited sense, as meaning “to satisfy” a man‘s own mind” either of the truth of some proposition, or of the fact that he has done wrong, as being in this latter sense synonymous with the word “convict.” This “conviction” is commonly produced by argument or truth, and is not necessarily followed by any sentence of disapprobation, or by any judicial condemnation. But this is clearly not the sense in which the word is used here. The purpose of the coming of the Lord will not be to convince men in that sense, though it is undoubtedly true that the wicked will see that their lives have been wrong; but it will be to pronounce a sentence on them as the result of the evidence of their guilt. The Greek word which is here used occurs nowhere else in the New Testament.

All that are ungodly among them - All that are not pious; all that have no religion.

Of all their ungodly deeds … - Of their wicked actions and words. This is the common doctrine of the Bible, that all the wicked actions and words of men will be called into judgment. In regard to this passage, thus quoted from an ancient prophecy, we may remark:

(1) that the style bears the marks of its being a quotation, or of its being preserved by Jude in the language in which it had been handed down by tradition. It is not the style of Jude. It is not so terse, pointed, energetic.

(2) it has every probable mark of its having been actually delivered by Enoch. The age in which he lived was corrupt. The world was ripening for the deluge. He was himself a good man, and, as would seem perhaps, almost the only good man of his generation. Nothing would be more natural than that he should be reproached by hard words and speeches, and nothing more natural than that he should have pointed the men of his own age to the future judgment.

(3) the doctrine of the final judgment, if this was uttered by Enoch, was an early doctrine in the world. It was held even in the first generations of the race. It was one of those great truths early communicated to man to restrain him from sin, and to lead him to prepare for the great events which are to occur on the earth. The same doctrine has been transmitted from age to age, and is now one of the most important and the most affecting that refers to the final destiny of men.

Verse 16

These are murmurers - The word here used does not elsewhere occur, though the word "murmur" is frequent, Matthew 20:11; Luke 5:30; John 6:41, John 6:43, John 6:61; John 7:32; 1 Corinthians 10:10. Compare John 7:12; Acts 6:1; Philemon 2:14; 1 Peter 4:9. The sense is that of repining or complaining under the allotments of Providence, or finding fault with God's plans, and purposes, and doings.

Complainers - Literally, finding fault with one's own lot (μεμψίμοιροι mempsimoiroiThe word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament; the thing often occurs in this world. Nothing is more common than for men to complain of their lot; to think that it is hard; to compare theirs with that of others, and to blame God for not having made their circumstances different. The poor complain that they are not rich like others; the sick that they are not well; the enslaved that they are not free; the bereaved that they are deprived of friends; the ugly that they are not beautiful; those in humble life that their lot was not cast among the great and the frivolous. The virtue that is opposed to this is "contentment" - a virtue of inestimable value. See the notes at Philemon 4:11.

Walking after their own lusts - Giving unlimited indulgence to their appetites and passions. See the notes at 2 Peter 3:3.

And their mouth speaketh great swelling words - Notes at 2 Peter 2:18.

Having men's persons in admiration - Showing great respect to certain persons, particularly the rich and the great. The idea is, that they were not "just" in the esteem which they had for others, or that they did not appreciate them according to their real worth, but paid special attention to one class in order to promote their selfish ends.

Because of advantage - Because they hoped to derive some benefit to themselves.

Verse 17-18

But, beloved, remember ye … - There is a striking similarity between these two verses and 2 Peter 3:1-3. It occurs in the same connection, following the description of the false and dangerous teachers against whom the apostle would guard them, and couched almost in the same words. See it explained in the notes at the similar passage in Peter. When Jude (Jude 1:17) entreats them to remember the words which were spoken by "the

apostles," it is not necessarily to be inferred that he was not himself an apostle, for he is speaking of what was past, and there might have been a special reason why he should refer to something that they would distinctly remember which had been spoken by the "other" apostles on this point. Or it might be that he meant also to include himself among them, and to speak of the apostles collectively, without particularly specifying himself.

Mockers - The word rendered "mockers" here is the same which in the parallel place in 2 Peter 3:3 is rendered "scoffers." Peter has stated more fully what was the particular subject on which they scoffed, and has shown that there was no occasion for it 2 Peter 3:4, following.

Verse 19

These be they who separate themselves - That is, from their brethren and from the work of benevolence and truth. Compare Romans 16:17; Judges 5:16, Judges 5:23.

Sensual - Under the influence of gross passions and appetites.

Having not the spirit - The Holy Spirit, or the spirit of true religion.

Verse 20

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith - Compare the notes at Jude 1:3. On the word "building," see the 1 Corinthians 3:9-10 notes; Ephesians 2:20 note. It is said here that they were to "build up themselves;" that is, they were to act as moral and responsible agents in this, or were to put forth their own proper exertions to do it. Dependent, as we are, and as all persons with correct views will feel themselves to be, yet it is proper to endeavor to do the work of religion as if we had ample power of ourselves. See the notes at Philemon 2:12. The phrase "most holy faith" here refers to the system of religion which was founded on faith; and the meaning is, that they should seek to establish themselves most firmly in the belief of the doctrines, and in the practice of the duties of that system of religion.

Praying in the Holy Ghost - See the notes at Ephesians 6:18.

Verse 21

Keep yourselves in the love of God - Still adverting to their own agency. On the duty here enjoined, see the notes at John 15:9. The phrase "the love of God" may mean either God's love to us, or our love to him. The latter appears, however, to be the sense here, because it is not a subject which could be enjoined, that we should keep up "God's love to us." That is a point over which we can have no control, except so far as it may be the

result of our obedience; but we may be commanded to love him, and to "keep" ourselves in that love.

Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ - Particularly when he shall come to receive his people to himself. See the Titus 2:13 note; 2 Peter 3:12 note; 2 Timothy 4:8 note.

Verse 22

And of some have compassion - This cannot be intended to teach that they were not to have compassion for all people, or to regard the salvation of all with solicitude, but that they were to have special and unusual compassion for a certain class of persons, or were to approach them with feelings appropriate to their condition. The idea is, that the special feeling to be manifest toward a certain class of persons in seeking their salvation was tender affection and kindness. They were to approach them in the gentlest manner, appealing to them by such words as "love" would prompt. Others were to be approached in a different manner, indicated by the phrase, "save with fear." The class here referred to, to whom "pity" (ἐλεάτε eleate) was to be shown, and in whose conversion and salvation tender compassion was to be employed, appear to have been the timid, the gentle, the unwary; those who had not yet fallen into dangerous errors, but who might be exposed to them; those, for there are such, who would be more likely to be influenced by kind words and a gentle manner than by denunciation. The direction then amounts to this, that while we are to seek to save all, we are to adapt ourselves wisely to the character and circumstances of those whom we seek to save. See the notes at 1 Corinthians 9:19-22.

Making a difference - Making a distinction between them, not in regard to your "desires" for their salvation, or your "efforts" to save them, but to the "manner" in which it is done. To be able to do this is one of the highest qualifications to be sought by one who endeavors to save souls, and is indispensable for a good minister of the gospel. The young, the tender, the delicate, the refined, need a different kind of treatment from the rough, the uncultivated, the hardened. This wisdom was shown by the Saviour in all his preaching; it was eminent in the preaching of Paul.

Verse 23

And others - Another class; those who were of such a character, or in such circumstances, that a more bold, earnest, and determined manner would be better adapted to them.

Save with fear - That is, by appeals adapted to produce fear. The idea seems to be that the arguments on which they relied were to be drawn from the dangers of the persons referred to, or from the dread of future wrath. It is undoubtedly true, that while there is a class of persons who can be won to embrace religion by mild and gentle persuasion, there is another class who can be aroused only by the terrors of the law. Every method is to be employed, in its proper place, that we "by all means may save some."

Pulling them out of the fire - As you would snatch persons out of the fire; or as you would seize on a person that was walking into a volcano. Then, a man would not use the mild and gentle language of persuasion, but by word and gesture show that he was deeply in earnest.

Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh - The allusion here is not quite certain, though the idea which the apostle meant to convey is not difficult to be understood. By "the garment spotted by the flesh" there may be an allusion to a garment worn by one who had had the plague, or some offensive disease which might be communicated to others by touching even the clothing which they had worn. Or there may be an allusion to the ceremonial law of Moses, by which all those who came in contact with dead bodies were regarded as unclean, Leviticus 21:11; Numbers 6:6; Numbers 9:6; Numbers 19:11. Or there may be an allusion to the case mentioned in Leviticus 15:4, Leviticus 15:10, Leviticus 15:17; or perhaps to a case of leprosy. In all such instances, there would be the idea that the thing referred to by which the garment had been spotted was polluting, contagious, or loathsome, and that it was proper not even to touch such a garment, or to come in contact with it in any way. To something of this kind the apostle compares the sins of the persons here referred to. While the utmost effort was to be made to save them, they were in no way to partake of their sins; their conduct was to be regarded as loathsome and contagious; and those who attempted to save them were to take every precaution to preserve their own purity. There is much wisdom in this counsel. While we endeavor to save the "sinner," we cannot too deeply loathe his "sins;" and in approaching some classes of sinners there is need of as much care to avoid being defiled by them, as there would be to escape the plague if we had any transaction with one who had it. Not a few have been deeply corrupted in their attempts to reform the polluted. There never could be, for example, too much circumspection and prayer for personal safety from pollution, in attempting to reform licentious and abandoned females.

Verse 24

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling - This ascription to one who was able to keep them from falling is made in view of the facts adverted to in the Epistle - the dangers of being led away by the arts and the example of these teachers of error. Compare Jude 1:3. On the ascription itself, compare the notes at Romans 16:25-27. The phrase "to keep from falling" means here to preserve from falling into sin, from yielding to temptation, and dishonoring their religion. The word used (ἀπταιστους aptaistous) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means properly, "not stumbling" as of a horse; then "without falling into sin, blameless." It is God only who, amidst the temptations of the world, can keep us from falling; but, blessed be his name, he can do it, and if we trust in him he will.

And to present you faultless - The word here rendered "faultless" is the same which is rendered "unblamable" in Colossians 1:22. See the sentiment here expressed explained in the notes at that passage.

Before the presence of his glory - In his own glorious presence; before himself encompassed with glory in heaven. The saints are to be presented there as redeemed and sanctified, and as made worthy by grace to dwell there forever.

With exceeding joy - With the abounding joy that they are redeemed; that they are rescued from sorrow, sin, and death, and that heaven is to be their eternal home. Who now can form an adequate idea of the happiness of that hour?

Verse 25

To the only wise God - See the Romans 16:27 note; 1 Timothy 1:17 note.

Our Saviour - The word "Saviour" may be appropriately applied to God as such, because he is the great Author of salvation, though it is commonly applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. That it may have been designed that it should be applied here to the Lord Jesus no one can certainly deny, nor can it be demonstrated that it was; and in these circumstances, as all that is fairly implied in the language may be applied to God as such, it is most natural to give the phrase that interpretation.

Be glory and majesty - 1 Timothy 1:17 note; Romans 16:17 note.

Dominion and power … - See Matthew 6:13. It is common in the Scriptures to ascribe power, dominion, and glory to God, expressing the feeling that all that is great and good belongs to him, and the desire of the

heart that he may reign in heaven and on earth. Compare Revelation 4:11; Revelation 19:1. With the expression of such a desire it was not inappropriate that this Epistle should be closed - and it is not inappropriate that this volume should be closed with the utterance of the same wish. In all our affections and aspirations, may God be supreme; in all the sin and woe which prevail here below, may we look forward with strong desire to the time when his dominion shall be set up over all the earth; in all our own sins and sorrows, be it ours to look onward to the time when in a purer and happier world his reign may be set up over our own souls, and when we may cast every crown at his feet and say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. - Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God," Revelation 4:11; Revelation 19:1.

JUDE CONTENTS

CHAPTER SIXTY-SIX
Revelation

REVELATION CONTENTS

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Contents

Introduction to Revelation

Section 1. The Writer of the Book of Revelation

Much has been written on the question who was the author of this book. To enter into an extended investigation of this would greatly exceed the limits which I have, and would not comport with my design in these notes. For a full examination of the question I must refer to others, and would mention particularly, Prof. Stuart, Com. i. 283-427; Lardner, *Works*, vi. 318-327; Hug, *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 650-673, Andover, 1836; Michaelis, *Introduction to the New Testament*, iv. 457-544; and the article "Revelation," in Kitto's Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature. I propose to exhibit, briefly, the evidence that the apostle John was the author, according to the opinion which has been commonly entertained in the church; the proof of which seems to me to be satisfactory. This may be considered under these divisions: the direct historical evidence, and the insufficiency of the reason for doubting it.

I. The Direct Historical Evidence

The sum of all that is to be said on this point is, that to the latter half of the third century it was not doubted that the apostle John was the author. Why it was ever doubted after that, and what is the force and value of the doubt, will be considered in another part of this Introduction.

There may be some convenience in dividing the early historical testimony into three periods of half a century each, extending from the death of John, about 98 a.d., to the middle of the third century.

1. From the Death of JOHN, about 98 a.d. to 150 a.d.

This period embraces the last of those men who conversed, or who might have conversed, with the apostles; that is, who were, for a part of their lives, the contemporaries of John. The testimony of the writers who lived then would, of course, be very important. Those embraced in this period are Hermas, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Papias. The evidence of this period is not indeed very direct, but it is such as it would be on the supposition that John was the author, and there is nothing contradictory to that supposition.

Hermas, about 100 ad - In the "Shepherd" or "Pastor," ascribed to this writer, there are several allusions which are supposed to refer to this book, and which resemble it so much as to make it probable that the author was

acquainted with it. Dr. Lardner thus expresses the result of his examination of this point: “It is probable that Hermas had read the Book of Revelation, and imitated it. He has many things resembling it” (vol. ii. pp. 69-72). There is no “direct” testimony, however, in this writer that is of importance.

Ignatius - He was Bishop of Antioch, and flourished 70-107 a.d. In the latter year he suffered martyrdom, in the time of Trajan. Little, however, can be derived from him in regard to the Apocalypse. He was a contemporary of John, and it is not a little remarkable that he has not more directly alluded to him. In the course of a forced and hurried journey to Rome, the scene of his martyrdom, he wrote several epistles to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, Romans, Philadelphians, Smyrneans, and to Polycarp. There has been much controversy respecting the authenticity of these epistles, and it is generally admitted that those which we now possess have been greatly corrupted. There is no direct mention of the Apocalypse in these epistles, and Michaelis makes this one of the strong grounds of his disbelief of its genuineness. His argument is, that the silence of Ignatius shows, either that he did not know of the existence of this book, or did not recognize it as a part of the sacred Scriptures. Little, however, can be ever inferred. from the mere silence of an author; for there may have been many reasons why, though the book may have been in existence, and recognized as the writing of John, Ignatius did not refer to it.

The whole matter of the residence of John at Ephesus, of his banishment to Patmos, and of his death, is unnoticed by him. There are, however, two or three “allusions” in the epistles of Ignatius which have been supposed to refer to the Apocalypse, or to prove that he was familiar with that work - though it must be admitted that the language is so general, that it furnishes no certain proof that he designed to quote it. They are these: Epistle to the Romans - “In the patience of Jesus Christ,” compare Revelation 1:9; and the Epistle to the Ephesians - “Stones of the temple of the Father prepared for the building of God,” compare Revelation 3:12, “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God.” It must be admitted, however, that this coincidence of language does not furnish any certain proof that Ignatius had seen the Apocalypse, though this is such language as he might have used if he had seen it. There was no known necessity, however, for his

referring to this book if he was acquainted with it, and nothing can be inferred from his silence.

Polycarp - He was Bishop of Smyrna, and suffered martyrdom, though at what time is not certain. The "Chronicon Paschale" names 163 a.d.; Eusebius, 167; Usher, 169; and Pearson, 148. He died at the age of eighty-six, and consequently was contemporary with John, who died about 98 a.d. There is but one relic of his writings extant - his Epistle to the Philippians. There is in Eusebius (iv. 15), an epistle from the church in Smyrna to the churches in Pontus, giving an account of the martyrdom of Polycarp. It is admitted that in neither of these is there any express mention, or any certain allusion, to the Book of Revelation. But from this circumstance nothing can be inferred respecting the Apocalypse, either for or against it, since there may have been no occasion for Polycarp or his friends, in the writings now extant, to speak of this book; and from their silence nothing more should be inferred against this book than against the epistles of Paul, or the Gospel by John. There is, however, what may, without impropriety, be regarded as an important testimony of Polycarp in regard to this book. Polycarp was, as there is every reason to suppose, the personal friend of John, and Irenaeus was the personal friend of Polycarp (Lardner, ii. 94-96). Now Irenaeus, as we shall see, on all occasions, and in the most positive manner, gives his clear testimony that the Apocalypse was written by the apostle John. It is impossible to suppose that he would do this if Polycarp had not believed it to be true; and certainly he would not have been likely to hold this opinion if one who was his own friend, and the friend of John, had doubted or denied it. This is not indeed absolute proof, but it furnishes strong presumptive evidence in favor of the opinion that the Book of Revelation was written by the apostle John. The whole history of Polycarp, and his testimony to the books of the New Testament, may be seen in Lardner, ii. 94-114.

Papias - He was Bishop of Hierapolis, near Colosse, and flourished, according to Cave, about 110 a.d.; according to others, about the year 115 a.d. or 116 a.d. How long he lived is uncertain. Irenaeus asserts that he was the intimate friend - ἑτᾶίρος hetairos- of Polycarp, and this is also admitted by Eusebius (Eccl. Hist. iii. 39). He was the contemporary of John, and was probably acquainted with him. Eusebius expressly says that he was "a

hearer of John" (Lardner, ii. 117). Of his writings there remain only a few fragments preserved by Eusebius, by Jerome, and in the Commentary of Andrew, Bishop of Caesarea, in Cappadocia. He was a warm defender of the Millennarian doctrines. In his writings preserved to us (see Lardner, ii. 120-125), there is no express mention of the Apocalypse, or direct reference to it; but the commentator Andrew of Caesarea reckons him among the explicit witnesses in its favor. In the Preface to his Commentary on the Apocalypse, Andrew says, "In regard now to the inspiration of the book, we think it superfluous to extend our discourse, inasmuch as the blessed Gregory, and Cyril, and moreover the ancient (writers) "Papias, Irenaeus, Methodius, and Hippolytus" bear testimony to its credibility." See the passage in Hug, *Introduction*, p. 652; and Prof. Stuart, i. 305. And in nearly the same words does Arethas, the successor of Andrew, bear the like testimony. The evidence, therefore, in this case is the same as in the case of Polycarp, and it cannot be supposed that Papias would have been thus referred to unless it was uniformly understood that he regarded the book as the production of the apostle John.

These are all the testimonies that properly belong to the first half century after the death of John, and though not absolutely "positive and conclusive" in themselves, yet the following points may be regarded as established:

(a)The book was known;

(b)so far as the testimony goes, it is in favor of its having been composed by John;

(c)the fact that he was the author is not called in question or doubted;

(d)it was generally ascribed to him;

(e)it was "probably" the foundation of the Millennarian views entertained by Papias - that is, it is easier to account for his holding these views by supposing that the book was known, and that he founded them on this book, than in any other way. See Prof. Stuart, i. 304.

2. The Second Half Century after the Death of John, from 150 to 200 a.d.

This will include the names of Justin Martyr, the Narrator of the Martyrs of Lyons, Irenaeus, Melito, Theophilus, Apollonius, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian.

Justin Martyr - He was a Christian philosopher, born at Flavia Neapolis, anciently called Sichem, a city of Samaria, it is supposed about a.d. 103; was converted to Christianity about 133 a.d., and suffered martyrdom about 165 a.d. (Lardner, ii. 125-140). He was partly contemporary with Polycarp and Papias. He traveled in Egypt, Italy, and Asia Minor, and resided some time at Ephesus. He was endowed with a bold and inquiring mind, and was a man eminent for integrity and virtue. Tatian calls him an "admirable man." Methodius says, that he was a man "not far removed from the apostles in time or in virtue." Photius says, that he was "well acquainted with the Christian philosophy, and especially with the heathen; rich in the knowledge of history, and all other parts of learning" (Lardner). He was, therefore, well qualified to ascertain the truth about the origin of the Book of Revelation, and his testimony must be of great value.

He was an advocate of the doctrine of "Chiliasm" - or, the doctrine that Christ would reign a thousand years on the earth - and in defense of this he uses the following language: "And a man from among us, by name John, one of the Apostles of Christ, in a Revelation made to him - ἐν Ἀποκάλυψει γενομένη αὐτῷ en Apokalupsei genomenē autō- has prophesied that the believers in one Christ shall live a thousand years in Jerusalem; and after that shall be the general, and, in a word, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men together." There can be no doubt whatever that there is an allusion here to the Book of "Revelation" - for the very name Revelation - Ἀποκάλυψις Apokalupsis- is used; that Justin believed that it was written by the apostle John; and that there is express reference to what is now Revelation 14:2; "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." There can be no doubt that this passage in Revelation was referred to; and it proves that the book was then known, and that the writers were accustomed to regard it as on a level with the other sacred writings.

Irenaeus - The testimony of this father has already been referred to when speaking of Polycarp. He was Bishop of Lyons, in Gaul. His country is not certainly known, but Lardner supposes that he was a Greek, and, from his early acquaintance with Polycarp, that he was from Asia. When a youth, he

was a hearer of Polycarp, and also a disciple of Papias. He was born about the beginning of the second century, and it is commonly supposed that he suffered martyrdom in extreme old age. He became Bishop of Lyons after he was 70 years of age, and wrote his principal work, "Contra Haereses," after this. His testimony is particularly valuable, as he was in early life acquainted with Polycarp, who was a contemporary and friend of the apostle John (Lardner, ii. 165-192). Of his reference to the Book of Revelation, Lardner says: "The Apocalypse, or Revelation, is often quoted by him as the Revelation of John, the disciple of the Lord." In one place he says: "It was seen no long time ago, but almost in our age, at the end of the reign of Domitian." And again, he spoke of the exact and ancient copies of the book, as if it was important to ascertain the true reading, and as if it were then possible to do this.

Thus, Eusebius (Lardner, ii. 167) says of him: "In his fifth book he thus discourses of the Revelation of John, and the computation of the name of antichrist: ‹These things being thus, and this number being in all the exact and ancient copies, and they who saw John attesting to the same things, and reason teaching us that the number of the name of the beast, according to the acceptation of the Greeks, is expressed by the letters contained in it.' "

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This chapter, Revelation 1:1-3. A blessing is pronounced on him who should read and understand the book, and special attention is directed to it because the time was at hand when the predicted events would occur.

II. Salutation to the seven churches of Asia, Revelation 1:4-8. To those churches, it would seem from this, the book was originally dedicated or addressed, and two of the chapters Revelation 1:9, and the whole book was doubtless sent to them, and committed to their keeping. In this salutation, the author wishes for them grace, mercy, and peace from "him which is, and which was, and which is to come" - the original fountain of all light and truth - referring to the Father; "from the seven Spirits which are before the throne" - referring to the Holy Spirit (see the note on Revelation 1:4), by whom all grace is communicated to people; and from the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the revelation is imparted. As it is his revelation, as it is designed especially to glorify him, and as it predicts the final triumph of his religion, the author appends to this reference to him a special ascription of praise, Revelation 1:5-8. He refers to the great work which he had done for his people in redeeming them, and making them kings and priests to God; he assures those to whom he wrote that he would come in glory to the world again, and that all eyes would see him; and he represents the Redeemer himself as applying to his own person a title - "Alpha and Omega," "the beginning and the ending" - which indicates his exalted nature, and his supreme authority.

III. The commission of the writer, or his authority for thus addressing the churches of Asia, Revelation 1:9-20. His authority to do this is derived from the fact that the Lord Jesus had appeared to him personally in his exile, and had directed him to reveal what he saw in vision, and to send it to those churches. The statement of this commission is made as impressive as it well could be:

(a) The writer was an exile - banished to a lonely island on account of the common faith, Revelation 1:9.

(b) On the day of Christian rest - the day set apart to the memory of the Saviour, and which he sacredly observed in his solitude as holy time - when in the spirit of calm contemplation on the truths appropriate to this day, he suddenly heard the voice of his Redeemer, like a trumpet, commanding him to record what he saw, and to send it to the seven churches of Asia, Revelation 1:10-11.

(c) Then follows Revelation 1:12-18 a magnificent description of the appearance of the Saviour, as he appeared in his glory. He is seen standing in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, clothed in a long white robe, girded with a girdle of gold, his hair white, his eyes like a flame of fire, his feet like brass, and his voice like the roaring of mighty waters. In his hand are seven stars, and from his mouth goes a sharp sword, and his countenance is like the sun in the full splendor of its shining. John falls at his feet as if he were dead; and the Saviour lays his right hand upon him, and animates him with the assurance that though he had himself been dead he is now alive, and would forever live, and that he has the keys of hell and death.

(d) Then follows the commission itself, Revelation 1:19-20. He was to make a record of the things which he saw. He was especially to unfold the meaning of the seven stars which he saw in the right hand of the Saviour, and of the seven golden candlesticks, as referring to the seven churches of Asia Minor; and was then to describe the series of visions which pertained to the future history and destiny of the church at large.

In the scene represented in this chapter, there is some imagery which would be suggested by the arrangements in the temple at Jerusalem, and it has been supposed (Elliott, i., 72,73) that the vision was laid there, and that Christ is represented as walking among the seven lamps “habited as the ancient high priest.” But the vision is not such an one as would have been presented in I the holy place in the temple. In that place there was but one lampstand, with seven sconces; here, there were seven separate lampstands; there were there no “stars,” and the vestments of the Jewish high priest were not those in which the Saviour is represented as appearing. He had no mitre, no ephod, no breastplate, and no censer. The object was not to represent Christ as a priest, or as superseding the Jewish high priest, but to

represent him with costume appropriate to the Son of God - as having been raised from the dead, and received to the glory of heaven.

His vestments are neither those of a prophet, a king, nor a priest; not with such garments as the ancient prophets wore, nor with crown and scepter such as monarchs bear, nor yet with the usual habiliments of a priest. He appears as the Son of God, irrespective of the offices that he bears, and comes as the glorified Head of the Church to declare his will in regard to the seven churches of Asia, and to disclose the future for the guidance and comfort of his church at large. The scene appears to be laid at Patmos, and the apostle in the vision of the Saviour does not appear to have regarded himself as transferred to any other place. The view which is to be kept before the mind in the description of "the things that are" Revelation 23, is that of seven burning lamps, and the Son of God standing among them. Thus, amidst these lamps, representing the churches, he dictates to the apostle what he shall write to the churches; thus, with seven stars in his hand, representing the angels of the churches, he dictates what shall be said to them. Is it unnatural to suppose that the position of those lamps might have been arranged in the vision in a manner resembling the geographical position of the churches themselves? If so, the scene would be more significant, and more sublime.

Verse 1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ - This is evidently a title or caption of the whole book, and is designed to comprise the substance of the whole; for all that the book contains would be embraced in the general declaration that it is a revelation of Jesus Christ. The word rendered "Revelation" - Ἀποκάλυψις Apokalupsiswhence we have derived our word "Apocalypse" - means properly an that is, nakedness; from ἀποκαλύπτω apokaluptōto uncover. It would apply to anything which had been covered up so as to be bidden from the view, as by a veil, a darkness, in an ark or chest, and then made manifest by removing the covering. It comes then to be used in the sense of disclosing or revealing, by removing the veil of darkness or ignorance. "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed." It may be applied to the disclosing or manifesting of anything which was before obscure or unknown. This may be done:

(a) by instruction in regard to what was before obscure; that is, by statements of what was unknown before the statements were made; as in Luke 2:32, where it is said that Christ would be "a light to lighten the Gentiles" - φῶς εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἐθνῶν phōs eis apokalupsin ethnōnor when it is applied to the divine mysteries, purposes, or doctrines, before obscure or unknown, but made clear by light revealed in the gospel, Romans 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:10; 1 Corinthians 14:6; Ephesians 3:5.

(b) by the event itself; as the manifestation of the wrath of God at the day of judgment will disclose the true nature of his wrath. "After thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and "revelation" of the righteous judgment of God," Revelation 2:5. "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation (Greek revelation) of the sons of God," Romans 8:19; that is until it shall be manifest by the event what they who are the children of God are to be. In this sense the word is frequently applied to the second advent or appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, as disclosing him in his glory, or showing what he truly is; "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed," 2 Thessalonians 1:7 - ἐν τῇ ἀποκαλυψει en tēn apokalupsei- in the revelation of Jesus Christ; "Waiting for the coming (the revelation - την ἀποκάλυψιν tēn apokalupsinof our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Corinthians 1:7; "At the appearing (Greek revelation) of Jesus Christ," 1 Peter 1:7; "When his glory shall be revealed," 1 Peter 4:13.

(c) It is used in the sense of making known what is to come, whether by words, signs, or symbols, as if a veil were lifted from what is hidden from human vision, or which is covered by the darkness of the unknown future. This is called a revelation, because the knowledge of the event is in fact made known to the world by Him who alone can see it, and in such a manner as he pleases to employ; though many of the terms or the symbols may be, from the necessity of the case, obscure, and though their full meaning may be disclosed only by the event. It is in this sense, evidently, that the word is used here: and in this sense that it is more commonly employed when we speak of a revelation. Thus, the word גלה gaalaahis used in Amos 3:7, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants." So Job 33:16, "Then he openeth (margin, revealeth or uncovereth; Heb. יגלה yiglehthe ears of men"; that is, in a

dream, he discloses to their ears his truth before concealed or unknown. Compare Daniel 2:22, Daniel 2:28-29; Daniel 10:1; Deuteronomy 29:29. These ideas enter into the word as used in the passage before us. The idea is that of a disclosure of an extraordinary character, beyond the mere ability of man, by a special communication from heaven. This is manifest, not only from the usual meaning of this word, but by the word "prophecy," in Revelation 1:3, and by all the arrangements by which these things were made known. The ideas which would be naturally conveyed by the use of this word in this connection are two:

(1)that there was something which was before hidden, obscure, or unknown; and,

(2)that this was so disclosed by these communications as to be seen or known.

The things hidden or unknown were those which pertained to the future; the method of disclosing them was mainly by symbols. In the Greek, in this passage, the article is missing - ἀποκάλυψις apokalupsis- a Revelation, not ἡ hēthe Revelation. This is omitted because it is the title of a book, and because the use of the article might imply that this was the only revelation, excluding other books claiming to be a revelation; or it might imply some previous mention of the book, or knowledge of it in the reader. The simple meaning is, that this was "a Revelation"; it was only a part of the revelation which God has given to mankind.

The phrase, "the Revelation of Jesus Christ," might, so far as the construction of the language is concerned, refer either to Christ as the subject or object. It might either mean that Christ is the object revealed in this book, and that its great purpose is to make him known, and so the phrase is understood in the commentary called Hyponoia (New York, 1844); or it may mean that this is a revelation which Christ makes to mankind, that is, it is his in the sense that he communicates it to the world. That this latter is the meaning here is clear:

(1)because it is expressly said in this verse that it was a revelation which God gave to him;

(2)because it is said that it pertains to things which must shortly come to pass; and,

(3)because, in fact, the revelation is a disclosure of eyelets which were to happen, and not of the person or work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Which God gave unto him - Which God imparted or communicated to Jesus Christ. This is in accordance with the representations everywhere made in the Scriptures, that God is the original fountain of truth and knowledge, and that, whatever was the original dignity of the Son of God, there was a mediatorial dependence on the Father. See John 5:19-20, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for whatsoever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him (δεικνυσιν αὐτῷ deiknusin autō) all things that himself doeth." "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me," John 7:16. "As my Father hath taught me ἐδιδάξεν με edidaxen meI speak these things," John 8:28. "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak," John 12:49. See also John 14:10; John 17:7-8; Matthew 11:27; Mark 13:32. The same mediatorial dependence the apostle teaches us still subsists in heaven in his glorified state, and will continue until he has subdued all things 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; and hence, even in that state, he is represented as receiving the Revelation from the Father to communicate it to people.

To show unto his servants - That is, to his people, to Christians, often represented as the servants of God or of Christ, 1 Peter 2:16; Revelation 2:20; Revelation 7:3; Revelation 19:2; Revelation 22:3. It is true that the word is sometimes applied, by way of eminence, to the prophets 1 Chronicles 6:49; Daniel 6:20, and to the apostles Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:10; Philemon 1:1; Titus 1:1; James 1:1; but it is also applied to the mass of Christians, and there is no reason why it should not be so understood here. The book was sent to the churches of Asia, and was clearly designed for general use; and the contents of the book were evidently intended for the churches of the Redeemer in all ages and lands. Compare Revelation 1:3. The word rendered "to show" (δεῖξαι deixai) commonly denotes to point out, to cause to see, to present to the sight, and is a word eminently appropriate here, as what was to be revealed was, in general, to be presented to the sight by sensible tokens or symbols.

Things which must shortly come to pass - Not all the things that will occur, but such as it was deemed of importance for his people to be made acquainted with. Nor is it certainly implied that all the things that are communicated would shortly come to pass, or would soon occur. Some of them might perhaps he in the distant future, and still it might be true that

there were those which were revealed in connection with them, which soon would occur. The word rendered "things" (ἅ ha) is a pronoun, and might be rendered "what"; "he showed to his servants what things were about to occur," not implying that he showed all the things that would happen, but such as he judged to be needful that his people should know. The word would naturally embrace those things which, in the circumstances, were most desirable to be known. The phrase rendered "must come to pass" (δεῖ γενέσθαι dei genesthai), would imply more than mere futurity; The word used (δεῖ dei) means "it needs, there is need of," and implies that there is some kind of necessity that the event should occur.

That necessity may either arise from the felt waist of anything, as where it is absent or missing, Xen. Cyr. iv., 10; ib. Revelation 7:5, Revelation 7:9; or from the nature of the case, or from a sense of duty, as Matthew 16:21, "Jesus began to show to his disciples that he must go (δεῖ ἀπελθεῖν dei apelthein) to Jerusalem" (compare Matthew 26:35; Mark 14:31; Luke 2:49); or the necessity may exist, because a thing is right and just, meaning that it ought to be done, as Luke 13:14, "There are six days in which men ought to work" δεῖ ἐργάζεσθαι dei ergazesthaiAnd ought not this woman οὐκ ἔδει ouk edeiwhom Satan hath bound, etc., be loosed from this bond," Luke 13:16 (compare Mark 13:14; John 4:20; Acts 5:11, Acts 5:29; 2 Timothy 2:6; Matthew 18:33; Matthew 25:27); or the necessity may be that it is conformable to the divine arrangement, or is made necessary by divine appointment, as in John 3:14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must (δεῖ dei) the Son of man be lifted up." "For as yet they knew not the Scriptures, that he must (δεῖ dei) rise again from the dead," John 20:9; compare Acts 4:12; Acts 14:22, et al.

In the passage before us, it is implied that there was some necessity that the things referred to should occur. They were not the result of chance, they were not fortuitous. It is not, however, stated what was the ground of the necessity; whether because there was a want of something to complete a great arrangement, or because it was fight and proper in existing circumstances, or because such was the divine appointment. They were events which, on some account, must certainly occur, and which, therefore, it was important should be made known. The real ground of the necessity, probably, was founded in the design of God in redemption. He intended to carry out his great plans in reference to his church, and the things revealed

here must necessarily occur in the completion of that design. The phrase rendered "shortly" (ἐν τάχει en tachei) is one whose meaning has been much controverted, and on which much has been made to depend in the interpretation of the whole book.

The question has been whether the phrase necessarily implies that the events referred to were soon to occur, or whether it may have such an extent of meaning as to admit the supposition that the events referred to, though beginning soon, would embrace in their development far distant years, and would reach the end of all things. Those who maintain, as Prof. Stuart, that the book was written before the destruction of Jerusalem, and that the portion in 1 Corinthians 4:19, "But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will." "Go out quickly into the streets," Luke 14:21. "Sit down quickly, and write fifty," Luke 16:6. "She rose up hastily (ταχέως tacheōs) and went out," John 11:31. "That ye are so soon removed (ταχέως tacheōs) from him that called you," Galatians 1:6. "Lay hands suddenly on no man," 1 Timothy 5:22. See also Philemon 2:19, Philemon 2:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Timothy 4:9. The phrase used here ἐν τάχει en tacheioccurs in Luke 18:8, "He will avenge them speedily" (literally with speed). "Arise up quickly," Acts 12:7. "Get time quickly out of Jerusalem," Acts 22:18. "Would depart shortly," Acts 25:4. "Bruise Satan under your feet shortly," Romans 16:20; and Revelation 1:1; Revelation 22:6. The essential idea is, that the thing which is spoken of was soon to occur, or it was not a remote and distant event. There is the notion of rapidity, of haste, of suddenness. It is such a phrase as is used when the thing is on the point of happening, and could not be applied to an event which was in the remote future, considered as an independent event standing by itself. The same idea is expressed, in regard to the same thing, in Revelation 1:3, "The time is at hand" - ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς ho gar kairos engusthat is, it is near, it is soon to occur. Yet.

(b) it is not necessary to suppose that the meaning is that all that there is in the book was soon to happen. It may mean that the series of events which were to follow on in their proper order was soon to commence, though it might be that the sequel would be remote. The first in the series of events was soon to begin, and the others would follow on in their train, though a portion of them, in the regular order, might be in a remote futurity. If we suppose that there was such an order, that a series of transactions was about

to commence, involving along train of momentous developments, and that the beginning of this was to occur soon, the language used by John would be what would be naturally employed to express it. Thus, in case of a revolution in a government, when a reigning prince should be driven from his kingdom, to be succeeded by a new dynasty, which would long occupy the throne, and involving, as the consequence of the revolution, important events extending far into the future, we would naturally say that these things were shortly to occur, or that the time was near. It is customary to speak of a succession of events or periods as near, however vast or interminable the series may be, when the commencement is at hand. Thus, we say that the great events of the eternal world are near; that is, the beginning of them is soon to occur. So Christians now speak often of the millennium as near, or as about to occur, though it is the belief of many that it will be protracted for many ages.

(c) That this is the true idea hem is clear, whatever general view of interpretation in regard to the book is adopted. Even Prof. Stuart, who contends that the greater portion of the book refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the persecutions of pagan Rome, admits that "the closing part of the Revelation relates beyond all doubt to a distant period, and some of it to a future eternity" (ii., p. 5); and, if this be so, then there is no impropriety in supposing that a part of the series of predictions preceding this may lie also in a somewhat remote futurity. The true idea seems to be that the writer contemplated a series of events that were to occur, and that this series was about to commence. How far into the future it was to extend, is to be learned by the proper interpretation of all the parts of the series.

And he sent - Greek: "Sending by his angel, signified it to his servant John." The idea is not precisely that he sent his angel to communicate the message, but that he sent by him, or employed him as an agent in doing it. The thing sent was rather the message than the angel.

And signified it - Ἐσήμανεν EsēmanenHe indicated it by signs and symbols. The word occurs in the New Testament only in John 12:33; John 18:32; John 21:19; Acts 11:28; Acts 25:27, and in the passage before us, in all which places it is rendered "signify, signifying, or signified." It properly refers to some sign, signal, or token by which anything is made known (compare Matthew 26:28; Romans 4:11; Genesis 9:12-13; Genesis 17:11; Luke 2:12; 2 Corinthians 12:12; 1 Corinthians 14:22), and is a word most

happily chosen to denote the manner in which the events referred to were to be communicated to John, for nearly the whole book is made up of signs and symbols. If it be asked what was signified to John, it may be replied that either the word "it" may be understood, as in our translation, to refer to the Apocalypse (Revelation), or refer to what he saw (ὅσα εἶδε hosa eide), as Prof. Stuart supposes; or it may be absolute, without any object following, as Prof. Robinson (Lexicon) supposes. The general sense is, that, sending by his angel, he made to John a communication by expressive signs or symbols.

By his angel - That is, an angel was employed to cause these scenic representations to pass before the mind of the apostle. The communication was not made directly to him, but was through the medium of a heavenly messenger employed for this purpose. Thus, in Revelation 22:6, it is said, "And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done." Compare Revelation 1:8-9 of that chapter. There is frequent allusion in the Scriptures to the fact that angels have been employed as agents in making known the divine will, or in the revelations which have been made to people. Thus, in Acts 7:53, it is said, "Who have received the law by the disposition of angels." "For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast," etc., Hebrews 2:2; "and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator," Galatians 3:19. Compare the notes on Acts 7:38, Acts 7:53. There is almost no further reference to the agency of the angel employed for this service in the book, and there is no distinct specification of what he did, or of his great agency in the case.

John is everywhere represented as seeing the symbols himself, and it would seem that the agency of the angel was, either to cause those symbols to pass before the apostle, or to convey their meaning to his mind. How far John himself understood the meaning of these symbols, we have not the means of knowing with certainty. The most probable supposition is, that the angel was employed to cause these visions or symbols to pass before his mind, rather than to interpret them. If an interpretation had been given, it is inconceivable that it should not have been recorded, and there is no more probability that their meaning should have been disclosed to John himself, for his private use, than that it should have been disclosed and recorded for the use of others. It would seem probable, therefore, that John had only that view of the meaning of what he saw which anyone else might obtain from the record of the visions. Compare the notes on 1 Peter 1:10-12.

Unto his servant John - Nothing could be learned from this expression as to what John was the author of the book, whether the apostle of that name or some other. Compare the introduction, section 1. It cannot be inferred from the use of the word "servant," rather than apostle, that the apostle John was not the author, for it was not uncommon for the apostles to designate themselves merely by the words "servants," or "servants of God." Compare the notes on Romans 1:1.

Verse 2

Who bare record of the word of God - Who bore witness to, or testified of ἐμαρτύρησεν emarturēsenthe Word of God. He regarded himself merely as a "witness" of what he had seen, and claimed only to make a fair and faithful "record" of it. "This is the disciple which "testifieth" (ὁ μαρτυρῶν ho marturōn) of these things, and wrote these things," John 21:24. "And he that saw it bare record" - μεμαρτύρηκε memarturēke John 19:35. Compare also the following places, where the apostle uses the same word of himself: 1 John 1:2; 1 John 4:14. The expression here, "the word of God," is one the meaning of which has been much controverted, and is important in its bearing on the question who was the author of the Book of Revelation. The main inquiry is, whether the writer refers to the "testimony" which he bears in this book respecting the "word of God"; or whether he refers to some testimony on that subject in some other book with which those to whom he wrote were so familiar that they would at once recognize him as the author; or whether he refers to the fact that he had borne his testimony to the great truths of religion, and especially respecting Jesus Christ, as a preacher who was well known, and who would be characterized by this expression.

The phrase "the word of God" - τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ ton logon tou Theou- occurs frequently in the New Testament (compare John 10:35; Acts 4:31; Acts 6:2, Acts 6:7; Acts 11:1; Acts 12:24); and may either mean the Word or doctrine respecting God - that which teaches what God is - or what he speaks or teaches. It is more commonly used in the latter sense (compare the passages referred to above), and especially refers to what God speaks or commands in the gospel. The fair meaning of this expression would be, that John had borne faithful witness to, or testimony of, the truth which God had spoken to man in the gospel of Christ. So far as the "language" used here is concerned, this might apply either to a written or an oral testimony; either to a treatise like that of his gospel, to his preaching, or to the record which

he was then making. Vitringa and others suppose that the reference here is to the gospel which he had published, and which now bears his name; Lucke and others, to the revelation made to him in Patmos, the record of which he now makes in this book; Prof. Stuart and others, to the fact that he was a teacher or preacher of the gospel, and that (compare Revelation 1:9) the allusion is to the testimony which he had borne to the gospel, and for which he was an exile in Patmos. Is it not possible that these conflicting opinions may be to some extent harmonized, by supposing that in the use of the aorist tense - ἐμαρτύρησε emarturēse- the writer meant to refer to a characteristic of himself, to wit, that he was a faithful witness of the Word of God and of Jesus Christ whenever and however made known to him?

With an eye, perhaps, to the record which he was about to make in this book, and intending to include that may he not also refer to what had been and was his well-known character as a witness of what God communicated to him? He had always borne this testimony. He always regarded himself as such a witness. He had been an eyewitness of what had occurred in the life and at the death of the Saviour (see the notes on 2 Peter 1:17-18), and had, in all his writings and public administrations, horne witness to what he had seen and heard; for that Revelation 1:9 he had been banished to Patmos: and he was now about to carry out the same characteristic of himself by bearing witness to what he saw in these new revelations. This would be much in the manner of John, who often refers to this characteristic of himself (compare John 19:35; John 21:24; 1 John 1:2), as well as harmonize the different opinions. The meaning, then, of the expression, "who bare record of the word of God," as I understand it, is, that it was a characteristic of the writer to bear simple but faithful testimony to the truth which God communicated to people in the gospel. If this be the correct interpretation, it may be remarked:

(a)that this is such language as John the apostle would be likely to use, and yet

(b)that it is not such language as an author would be likely to adopt if there was an attempt to forge a book in his name.

The artifice would be too refined to occur probably to anyone, for although perfectly natural for John, it would not be so natural for a forger of a book to select this circumstance and weave it thus unostentatiously into his narrative.

And of the testimony of Jesus Christ - That is, in accordance with the interpretation above, of the testimony "which Jesus Christ bore for the truth"; not of a testimony "respecting" Jesus Christ. The idea is, that Jesus Christ was himself "a witness" to the truth, and that the writer of this book was a witness merely of the testimony which Christ had borne. Whether the testimony of Jesus Christ was borne in his preaching when in the flesh, or whether made known to the writer by him at any subsequent period, it was his office to make a faithful record of that testimony. As he had always before done that, so he was about to do it now in the new revelation made to him in Patmos, which he regarded as a new testimony of Jesus Christ to the truth, Revelation 1:1. It is remarkable that, in confirmation of this view, John so often describes the Lord Jesus as a witness, or represents him as having come to hear his faithful testimony to the truth. Thus, in Revelation 1:5; "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful and true witness." "I am one that bear witness - ὁ μαρτυρῶν ho marturōn- of myself," John 8:18. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness - ἵνα μαρτυρήσω hina marturēsō- to the truth," John 18:37. "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness" - ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς ho martus ho pistos … Revelation 3:14. Of this testimony which the Lord Jesus came to bring to man respecting eternal realities, the writer of this book says that he regarded himself as a witness. To the office of bearing such testimony he had been dedicated; that testimony he was now to bear, as he had always done.

And of all things that he saw - Ὅσα τε εἶδεν Hosa te eidenThis is the common reading in the Greek, and according to this reading it would properly mean, "and whatsoever he saw"; that is, it would imply that he bore witness to "the Word of God," and to "the testimony of Jesus Christ," and to "whatever he saw" - meaning that the things which he saw, and to which he refers, were things additional to those to which he had referred by "the Word of God," and the "testimony of Christ." From this it has been supposed that in the former part of the verse he refers to some testimony which he had formerly borne, as in his gospel or in his preaching, and that here he refers to what he "saw" in the visions of the Revelation as additional to the former. But it should be remembered that the word rendered "and" - τε te- is missing in a large number of manuscripts (see Wetstein), and that it is now omitted in the best editions of the Greek Testament - as by Griesbach, Tittmann and Hahn. The evidence is clear that

it should be omitted; and if so omitted, the reference is to whatever he had at any time borne his testimony to, and not particularly to what passed before him in the visions of this book.

It is a general affirmation that he had always borne a faithful testimony to whatever he had seen respecting the Word of God and the testimony of Christ. The correct rendering of the whole passage then would be, "And sending by his angel, he signifies it to his servant John, who bare record of" (that is, whose character and office it was to bear his testimony to) "the word of God" (the message which God has sent to me), "and the testimony of Jesus Christ" (the testimony which Christ bore to the truth), "whatsoever he saw." He concealed nothing; he held nothing back; he made it known precisely as it was seen by him. Thus interpreted, the passage refers to what was a general characteristic of the writer, and is designed to embrace all that was made known to him, and to affirm that he was a faithful witness to it. There were doubtless special reasons why John was employed as the medium through which this communication was to be made to the church and the world. Among these reasons may have been the following:

(a)That he was the "beloved disciple."

(b)That he was the only surviving apostle.

(c)That his character was such that his statements would be readily received. Compare John 19:35; John 21:24; 3 John 1:12.

(d)It may be that his mind was better suited to be the medium of these communications than that of any other of the apostles - even if they had been then alive.

There is almost no one whose mental characteristics are less correctly understood than those of the apostle John. Among the most gentle and amiable of people; with a heart so suited for love as to be known as "the beloved disciple" - he yet had mental characteristics which made it proper that he should be called "a son of thunder" Mark 3:17; a mind suited to preserve and record the profound thoughts in his gospel; a mind of high poetic order, suited for the magnificent conceptions in this book.

Verse 3

Blessed is he that readeth - That is, it is to be regarded as a privilege attended with many blessings, to be permitted to mark the disclosures to be made in this book; the important revelations respecting future times. Prof.

Stuart supposes that this refers to a public reading, and that the phrase "those who hear the words of this prophecy," refers to those who listened to the public reader, and that both the reader and hearer should regard themselves as highly favored. It is, however, more in accordance with the usual meaning of the word rendered "read," to suppose that it refers to the act of one's reading for himself; to learn by reading. So Robinson (Lexicon) understands it. The Greek word, indeed, would bear the other interpretation (see Luke 4:16; Acts 13:27; Acts 15:21; 2 Corinthians 3:15); but as this book was sent abroad to be read by Christians, and not merely to be in the hands of the ministers of religion to be read by them to others, it is more natural to interpret the word in the usual sense.

And hear the words of this prophecy - As they shall be declared or repeated by others; or perhaps the word "hear" is used in a sense that is not uncommon, that of giving attention to; taking heed to. The general sense is, that they were to be regarded as highly favored who became acquainted in any way with what is here communicated. The writer does not say that they were blessed who understood it, or that they who read or heard it would fully understand it; but it is clearly implied, that there would be so far an understanding of its meaning as to make it a felicitous condition to have been made acquainted with it. An author could not be supposed to say that one should regard his condition as a favored one who merely heard words that he could not understand, or who had placed before him magnificent symbols that had to him no meaning. The word "prophecy" is used here in its more strict sense as denoting the disclosure of future events - a large portion of the book being of this nature. It is here synonymous with "Revelation" in Revelation 1:1.

And keep those things which are written therein - Keep in mind those things which relate to the future; and obey those things which arc required as truth and duty. The blessing which results from having in possession the revealed truth of God is not merely in reading it, or in hearing it: it results from the fact that the truth is properly regarded, and exerts a suitable influence over our lives. Compare Psalm 19:11; "And in keeping of them there is great reward."

For the time is at hand - See Revelation 1:1. The word used here - ἐγγύς engus- has the same signification substantially as the word "shortly" in Revelation 1:1. It would apply to any event whose beginning was soon to occur, though the end might be remote, for the series of events might stretch

far into the future. It cannot be doubted, however, that the writer meant to press upon them the importance of attending to these things, from the fact that either entirely or in part these things were soon to happen. It may be inferred from this verse, that it is possible so to "understand" this book, as that it may convey useful instruction. This is the only book in the Bible of which a special blessing is pronounced on him who reads it; but assuredly a blessing would not be pronounced on the perusal of a book which is entirely unintelligible. While, therefore, there may be many obscurities in this book, it is also to be assumed that it may be so far understood as to be useful to Christians, in supporting their faith, and giving them elevated views of the final triumph of religion, and of the glory of the world to come. Anything is a blessing which enables us with well-founded hope and joy to look forward to the heavenly world.

Verse 4

John to the seven churches which are in Asia - The word "Asia" is used in quite different senses by different writers. It is used:

(1)as referring to the whole eastern continent now known by that name;

(2)either Asia or Asia Minor;

(3)that part of Asia which Attalus III, king of Pergamos, gave to the Romans, namely, Mysia, Phrygia, Lycaonia, Lydia, Carla, Pisidia, and the southern coast - that is, all in the western, southwestern, and southern parts of Asia Minor; and,

(4)in the New Testament, usually the southwestern part of Asia Minor, of which Ephesus was the capital. See the notes at Acts 2:9.

The word "Asia" is not found in the Hebrew Scriptures, but it occurs often in the Books of Maccabees, and in the New Testament. In the New Testament it is not used in the large sense in which it is now, as applied to the whole continent, but in its largest signification it would include only Asia Minor. It is also used, especially by Luke, as denoting the country that was called "Ionia," or what embraced the provinces of Caria and Lydia. Of this region Ephesus was the principal city, and it was in this region that the "seven churches" were situated. Whether there were more than seven churches in this region is not intimated by the writer of this book, and on that point we have no certain knowledge. it is evident that these seven were

the principal churches, even if there were more, and that there was some reason why they should be particularly addressed.

There is mention of some other churches in the neighborhood of these. Colosse was near to Laodicea; and from Colossians 4:13, it would seem not improbable that there was a church also at Hierapolis. But there may have been nothing in their circumstances that demanded particular instruction or admonition, and they may have been on that account omitted. There is also some reason to suppose that, though there had been other churches in that vicinity besides the seven mentioned by John, they had become extinct at the time when he wrote the Book of Revelation. It appears from Tacitus (History, xiv, 27; compare also Pliny, N. H., v. 29), that in the time of Nero, 61 a.d., the city of Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake, in which earthquake, according to Eusebius, the adjacent cities of Colosse and Hierapolis were involved. Laodicea was, indeed, immediately rebuilt, but there is no evidence of the re-establishment of the church there before the time when John wrote this book.

The earliest mention we have of a church there, after the one referred to in the New Testament by Paul Colossians 2:1; Colossians 4:13, Colossians 4:15-16, is in the time of Trajan, when Papias was bishop there, sometime between 98 a.d. and 117 a.d. It would appear, then, to be not improbable that at the time when the Apocalypse was written, there were in fact but seven churches in the vicinity. Prof. Stuart (i., 219) supposes that "seven, and only so many, may have been named, because the sevenfold divisions and groups of various objects constitute a conspicuous feature in the Apocalypse throughout." But this reason seems too artificial; and it can hardly be supposed that it would influence the mind of John, in the specification by name of the churches to which the book was sent. If no names had been mentioned, and if the statement had occurred in glowing poetic description, it is not inconceivable that the number seven might have been selected for some such purpose.

Grace be unto you, and peace - The usual form of salutation in addressing a church. See the notes on Romans 1:7.

From him which is, and which was, and which is to come - From him who is everlasting - embracing all duration, past, present, and to come. No expression could more strikingly denote eternity than this. He now exists; he has existed in the past; he will exist in the future. There is an evident

allusion here to the name Yahweh, the name by which the true God is appropriately designated in the Scriptures. That name יהוה Yahwehfrom היה haayahto be, to exist, seems to have been adopted because it denotes existence, or being, and as denoting simply one who exists; and has reference merely to the fact of existence. The word has no variation of form, and has no reference to time, and would embrace all time: that is, it is as true at one time as another that he exists. Such a word would not be inappropriately paraphrased by the phrase "who is, and who was, and who is to come," or who is to be; and there can be no doubt that John referred to him here as being himself the eternal and uncreated existence, and as the great and original fountain of all being.

They who desire to find a full discussion in regard to the origin of the name Yahweh, may consult an article by Prof. Tholuck, in the "Biblical Repository," vol. iv., pp. 89-108. It is remarkable that there are some passages in pagan inscriptions and writings which bear a very strong resemblance to the language used here by John respecting God. Thus, Plutarch (De Isa. et Osir., p. 354.), speaking of a temple of Isis, at Sais, in Egypt, says, "It bore this inscription - ‹I am all that was, and is, and shall be, and my vail no mortal can remove'" - Ἐγώ εἰμι πᾶν τὸ γεγονός, καὶ ὅν, καὶ ἐσόμενον καὶ τὸν ἐμὸν πέπλον οὐδείς τω θνητὸς ἀνεκάλυψεν Egō eimi pan to gegonoskai honkai esomenon kai ton emon peplon oudeis tō thnētos anekalupsenSo Orpheus (in Auctor. Lib. de Mundo), "Jupiter is the head, Jupiter is the middle, and all things are made by Jupiter." So in Pausanias (Phocic. 12), "Jupiter was; Jupiter is; Jupiter shall be." The reference in the phrase before us is to God as such, or to God considered as the Father.

And from the seven Spirits which are before his throne - After all that has been written on this very difficult expression, it is still impossible to determine with certainty its meaning. The principal opinions which have been held in regard to it are the following:

I. That it refers to God, as such. This opinion is held by Eichhorn, and is favored by Ewald. No arguments derived from any parallel passages are urged for this opinion, nor can any such be found, where God is himself spoken of under the representation of a sevenfold Spirit. But the objections to this view are so obvious as to be insuperable:

(1)If it refers to God as such, then it would be mere tautology, for the writer had just referred to him in the phrase "from him who was," etc.

(2)it is difficult to perceive in what sense "seven spirits" could be ascribed to God, or how he could be described as a being of "Seven Spirits." At least, if he could be spoken of as such, there would be no objection to applying the phrase to the Holy Spirit.

(3)how could it be said of God himself that he was "before the throne?" He is everywhere represented as sitting on the throne, not as before it. It is easy to conceive of angels as standing before the throne; and of the Holy Spirit it is more easy to conceive as being represented thus as ready to go forth and convey a heavenly influence from that throne, but it is impossible to conceive in what sense this could be applied to God as such.

II. The opinion held by Grotius, and by John Henry Heinrichs, that it refers to "the multiform providence of God," or to God considered as operating in seven or many different ways. In support of this Grotius appeals to Revelation 5:12; Revelation 7:12. But this opinion is so far-fetched, and it is so destitute of support, as to have found, it is believed, no other advocates, and to need no further notice. It cannot be supposed that John meant to personify the attributes of the Deity, and then to unite them with God himself, and with the Lord Jesus Christ, and to represent them as real subsistences from which important blessings descend to people. It is clear that as by the phrase, "who is, and who was, and who is to come," and by "Jesus Christ, the faithful and true witness," he refers to real subsistences, so he must here. Besides, if the attributes of God, or the modes of divine operation, are denoted why is the number seven chosen? And why are they represented as standing before the throne?

III. A third opinion is, that the reference is to seven attending and ministering presence-angels - angels represented as standing before the throne of God, or in his presence. This opinion was adopted among the ancients by Clemens of Alexandria Andreas of Cesarea, and others; among the moderns by Beza, Drusius, Hammond, Wetstein, Rosenmuller, Clarke, Prof. Stuart, and others. This opinion, however, has been held in somewhat different forms; some maintaining that the seven angels are referred to because it was a received opinion among the Hebrews that there were seven angels standing in the presence of God as seven princes stood in the Persian court before the king; others, that the angels of the seven churches are particularly referred to, represented now as standing in the presence of God; others, that seven angels, represented as the principal angels employed in

the government of the world, are referred to; and others, that seven archangels are particularly designated. Compare Poole, Synoptists in loco. The arguments which are relied on by those who suppose that seven angels are here referred to are briefly these:

(1) The nature of the expression used here. The expression, it is said, is such as would naturally denote beings who were before his throne - beings who were different from him who was on the throne - and beings more than one in number. That it could not refer to one on the throne, but must mean those distinct and separate from one on the throne, is argued from the use of the phrases "before the throne," and "before God," in Revelation 4:5; Revelation 7:9, Revelation 7:15; Revelation 8:2; Revelation 11:4, Revelation 11:16; Revelation 12:10; Revelation 14:3; Revelation 20:12; in all which places the representation denotes those who were in the presence of God, and standing before him.

(2) it is argued from other passages in the Book of Revelation which, it is said (Prof. Stuart), go directly to confirm this opinion. Thus, in Revelation 8:2; "And I saw the seven angels which stood before God." So Revelation 4:5; the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, are said to be "the seven Spirits of God." In these passages, it is alleged that the article "the" designates the well-known angels; or those which had been before specified, and that this is the first mention of any such angels after the designation in the passage before us.

(3) it is said that this is in accordance with what was usual among the Hebrews, who were accustomed to speak of seven presence-angels, or angels standing in the presence of Yahweh. Thus, in the Book of Tobit (12:15), Raphael is introduced as using this language: "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One." The apocryphal Book of Enoch (chapter 20) gives the names of the seven angels who watch; that is, of the watchers (compare the notes on Daniel 4:13, Daniel 4:17) who stand in the presence of God waiting for the divine commands, or who watch over the affairs of people. So in the Zendavesta of Zoroaster, seven amshaspends, or archangels, are mentioned. See Prof. Stuart, in loco.

To these views, however, there are objections of great weight, if they are not in fact quite insuperable. They are such as the following:

(1) That the same rank should be given to them as to God, as the source of blessings. According to the view which represents this expression as referring to angels, they are placed on the same level, so far as the matter before us is concerned, with "him who was, and is, and is to come," and with the Lord Jesus Christ - a doctrine which does not elsewhere occur in the Scriptures, and which we cannot suppose the writer designed to teach.

(2) that blessings should be invoked from angels - as if they could impart "grace and peace." It is evident that, whoever is referred to here by the phrase "the seven Spirits," he is placed on the same level with the others mentioned as the source of "grace and peace." But it cannot be supposed that an inspired writer would invoke that grace and peace from any but a divine being.

(3) that as two persons of the Trinity are mentioned here, it is to be presumed that the third would not be omitted; or to put this argument in a stronger form, it cannot be supposed that an inspired writer would mention two of the persons of the Trinity in this connection, and then not only not mention the third, but refer to angels - to creatures - as bestowing what would be appropriately sought from the Holy Spirit. The incongruity would be not merely in omitting all reference to the Spirit - which might indeed occur, as it often does in the Scriptures - but in putting in the place which that Spirit would naturally occupy an allusion to angels as conferring blessings.

(4) if this refer to angels, it is impossible to avoid the inference that angel-worship, or invocation of angels, is proper. To all intents and purposes, this is an act of worship; for it is an act of solemn invocation. It is an acknowledgment of the "seven Spirits," as the source of "grace and peace." It would be impossible to resist this impression on the popular mind; it would not be possible to meet it if urged as an argument in favor of the propriety of angel-invocation, or angel-worship. And yet, if there is anything clear in the Scriptures, it is that God alone is to he worshipped.

For these reasons, it seems to me that this interpretation cannot be well founded.

IV. There remains a fourth opinion, that it refers to the Holy Spirit, and in favor of that opinion it may be urged:

(1) That it is most natural to suppose that the Holy Spirit would be invoked on such an occasion, in connection with him "who was, and is, and is to come," and with "Jesus Christ." If two of the persons of the Trinity were addressed on such an occasion, it would be properly supposed that the Holy Spirit would not be omitted, as one of the persons from whom the blessing was to descend. Compare 2 Corinthians 13:14; "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."

(2) it would be unnatural and improper, in such an invocation, to unite angels with God as imparting blessings, or as participating with God and with Christ in communicating blessings to man. An invocation to God to send his angels, or to impart grace and favor through angelic help, would be in entire accordance with the usage in Scripture, but it is not in accordance with such usage to invoke such blessings from angels.

(3) it cannot be denied that an invocation of grace from "him who is, and was, and is to come," is of the nature of worship. The address to him is as God, and the attitude of the mind in such an address is that of one who is engaged in an act of devotion. The effect of uniting any other being with him in such a case, would be to lead to the worship of one thus associated with him. In regard to the Lord Jesus, "the faithful and true witness," it is from such expressions as these that we are led to the belief that he is divine, and that it is proper to worship him as such. The same effect must be produced in reference to what is here called "the seven Spirits before the throne." We cannot well resist the impression that someone with divine attributes is intended; or, if it refer to angels, we cannot easily show that it is not proper to render divine worship to them. If they were thus invoked by an apostle, can it be improper to worship them now?

(4) the word used here is not “angels,” but “spirits”; and though it is true that angels are spirits, and that the word “spirit” is applied to them Hebrews 1:7, yet it is also true that that is not a word which would be understood to refer to them without designating that angels were meant. If angels had been intended here, that word would naturally have been used, as is the case elsewhere in this book.

(5) in Revelation 4:5, where there is a reference to “the seven lamps before the throne,” it is said of them that they “are,” that is, they represent “the seven Spirits of God.” This passage may be understood as referring to the same thing as that before us, but it cannot he well understood of angels; because:

(a)if it did, it would have been natural to use that language for the reason above mentioned;

(b)the angels are nowhere called “the spirits of God,” nor would such language be proper.

The phrase, “Spirit of God” naturally implies divinity, and could not be applied to a creature. For these reasons it seems to me that the interpretation which applies the phrase to the Holy Spirit is to be preferred; and though that interpretation is not free from difficulties, yet there are fewer difficulties in that than in either of the others proposed. Though it may not be possible wholly to remove the difficulties involved in that interpretation, yet perhaps something may be done to diminish their force:

(1) First, as to the reason why the number seven should be applied to the Holy Spirit:

(a) There would be as much propriety certainly in applying it to the Holy Spirit as to God as such. And yet Grotius, Eichhorn, Ewald, and others saw no difficulty in such an application considered as representing a sevenfold mode of operation of God, or a manifold divine agency.

(b) The word “seven” often denotes a full or complete number, and may be used to denote what is full, complete, or manifold; and might thus be used in reference to an all-perfect Spirit, or to a spirit which was manifold in its operations.

(c) The number seven is evidently a favorite number in the Book of Revelation, and it might be used by the author in places, and in a sense, such as it would not be likely to be used by another writer. Thus, there are seven epistles to the seven churches; there are seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials of the wrath of God, seven last plagues; there are seven lamps, and seven Spirits of God; the Lamb has seven horns and seven eyes. In Revelation 1:16, seven stars are mentioned; in Revelation 5:12, seven attributes of God; Revelation 12:3, the dragon has seven heads; Revelation 13:1, the beast has seven heads.

(d) The number seven, therefore, may have been given to the Holy Spirit with reference to the diversity or the fulness of his operations on the souls of people, and to his manifold agency on the affairs of the world, as further developed in this book.

(2) as to his being represented as "before the throne," this may be intended to designate the fact that the Divine Spirit was, as it were, prepared to go forth, or to be sent forth, in accordance with a common representation in the Scriptures, to accomplish important purposes on human affairs. The posture does not necessarily imply inferiority of nature, anymore than the language does respecting the Son of God, when he is represented as being sent into the world to execute an important commission from the Father.

Verse 5

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness - See the notes on Revelation 1:2. He is faithful in the sense that he is one on whose testimony there may be entire reliance, or who is entirely worthy to be believed. From him "grace and peace" are appropriately sought, as one who hears such a testimony, and as the first-begotten from the dead, and as reigning over the kings of the earth. Thus, grace and peace are invoked from the infinite God in all his relations and operations: as the Father, the Source of all existence; as the Sacred Spirit, going forth in manifold operations upon the hearts of people; and as the Son of God, the one appointed to bear faithful testimony to the truth respecting God and future events.

And the first-begotten of the dead - The same Greek expression -πρωτότοκος prōtotokos- occurs in Colossians 1:18. See it explained in the notes on that passage. Compare the notes at 1 Corinthians 15:20.

And the prince of the kings of the earth - Who has over all the kings of the earth the pre-eminence which kings have over their subjects. He is the Ruler of rulers; King of kings. In Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:16, the same thought is expressed by saying that he is the "King of kings." No language could more sublimely denote his exalted character, or his supremacy. Kings and princes sway a scepter over the million of the earth, and the exaltation of the Saviour is here expressed by supposing that all those kings and princes constitute a community over which he is the head. The exaltation of the Redeemer is elsewhere expressed in different language, but the idea is one that everywhere prevails in regard to him in the Scriptures. Compare Matthew 28:18; Matthew 11:27; John 17:2; Ephesians 1:20-22; Philemon 2:9-11; Colossians 1:15-18. The word "prince" - ὁ ἄρχων ho archōn- means properly, "ruler, leader, the first in rank." We often apply the word "prince" to an heir to a throne who is not invested with absolute sovereignty. The word here, however, denotes that he actually exercises dominion over the rulers of the earth. As this is an authority which is claimed by God (compare Isaiah 10:5 ff; Isaiah 45:1 ff; Psalm 47:2; Psalm 99:1; Psalm 103:9; Daniel 4:34), and which can only pertain to God, it is clear that in ascribing this to the Lord Jesus it is implied that he is possessed of divine attributes. As much of the revelations of this book pertained to the assertion of power over the princes and rulers of this world, there was a propriety that, in the commencement, it should be asserted that he who was to exert that power was invested with the prerogative of a ruler of the nations, and that he had this right of control.

Unto him that loved us - This refers undoubtedly to the Lord Jesus, whose love for people was so strong that nothing more was necessary to characterize him than to speak of him as the one "who loved us." It is manifest that the division in the verses should have been made here, for this commences a new subject, not having any special connection with what precedes. In Revelation 1:4, and the first part of this verse, the writer had invoked grace from the Father, the Spirit, and the Saviour. In the latter clause of the verse there commences an ascription of praise to the Redeemer; an ascription to him particularly, because the whole book is regarded as a revelation from him Revelation 1:1; because he was the one who especially appeared to John in the visions of Patmos; and because he was to be the great agent in carrying into execution the purposes revealed in this book.

And washed us from our sins in his own blood - He has removed the pollution of sin from our souls by his blood; that is, his blood has been applied to cleanse us from sin. Blood can be represented as having a cleansing power only as it makes an expiation for sin, for considered literally its effect would be the reverse. The language is such as would be used only on the supposition that he had made an atonement, and that it was by the atonement that we are cleansed; for in what sense could it be said of a martyr that he "had washed us from our sins in his blood?" How could this language be used of Paul or Polycarp; of Ridley or Cranmer? The doctrine that the blood of Christ cleanses us from sin, or purifies us, is one that is common in the Scriptures. Compare 1 John 1:7; Hebrews 9:14. The specific idea of washing, however - representing that blood as washing sin away - is one which does not elsewhere occur. It is evidently used in the sense of "cleansing" or "purifying," as we do this by "washing," and as the blood of Christ accomplishes in respect to our souls, what washing with water does in respect to the body.

Verse 6

And hath made us kings and priests unto God - In 1 Peter 2:9 the same idea is expressed by saying of Christians that they are "a royal priesthood." See the notes on that verse. The quotation in both places is from Exodus 19:6; "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests." This idea is expressed here by saying that Christ had made us in fact kings and priests; that is, Christians are exalted to the dignity and are invested with the office, implied in these words. The word "kings," as applied to them, refers to the exalted rank and dignity which they will have; to the fact that they, in common with their Saviour, will reign triumphant over all enemies; and that, having gained a victory over sin and death and hell, they may be represented as reigning together. The word "priests" refers to the fact that they are engaged in the holy service of God, or that they offer to him acceptable worship. See the notes on 1 Peter 2:5.

And his Father - Even his Father; that is, the Saviour has redeemed them, and elevated them to this exalted rank, in order that they may thus be engaged in the service of his Father.

To him be glory - To the Redeemer; for so the construction Revelation 1:5 demands. The word "glory" here means praise, or honor, implying a wish that all honor should be shown him.

And dominion - This word means literally "strength" - κράτος kratosbut it here means the strength, power, or authority which is exercised over others, and the expression is equivalent to a wish that he may reign.

Verse 7

Behold he cometh with clouds - That is, the Lord Jesus, when he returns, will come accompanied with clouds. This is in accordance with the uniform representation respecting the return of the Saviour. See the notes on Matthew 24:30. Compare Matthew 26:64; Mark 13:26; Mark 14:62; Acts 1:9, Acts 1:11. Clouds are appropriate symbols of majesty, and God is often represented as appearing in that manner. See Exodus 19:18; Psalm 18:11 ff; Isaiah 19:1. So, among the pagan, it was common to represent their divinities as appearing clothed with a cloud:

"tandem venias, precamur,
Nube candentes humeros amictus.
Augur Apollo"

The design of introducing this representation of the Saviour, and of the manner in which he would appear, seems to be to impress the mind with a sense of the majesty and glory. of that being from whom John received his revelations. His rank, his character, his glory were such as to demand respect; all should reverence him, and all should feel that his communications about the future were important to them, for they must soon appear before him.

And every eye shall see him - He will be made visible in his glory to all that dwell upon the earth; to all the children of men. Everyone, therefore, has an interest in what he says; everyone has this in certain prospect, that he shall see the Son of God coming as a Judge.

And they also which pierced him - When he died; that is, they who pierced his hands, his feet, and his side. There is probably an allusion here to Zechariah 12:10; "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." The language here is so general that it may refer to any act of looking upon the pierced Saviour, and might be applied to those who would see him on the cross and to their compunctious visitings then; or to their subsequent reflections, as they might look by faith on him whom they had crucified; or to the feeling of any sinners who should reflect that their sins had been the cause of the death of the Lord Jesus; or it might be applied, as it is here, more specifically to the feelings which his murderers will have when they shall see him coming in his glory. All sinners who have

pierced his heart by their crimes will then behold him and will mourn over their treatment of him; they, in a special manner, who imbrued their hands in his blood will then remember their crime and be overwhelmed with alarm. The design of what is here said seems to be, to show that the coming of the Saviour will be an event of great interest to all mankind. None can be indifferent to it, for all will see him. His friends will hail his advent (compare Revelation 22:20), but all who were engaged in putting him to death, and all who in any manner have pierced his heart by sin and ingratitude, unless they shall have repented, will have occasion of bitter lamentation when he shall come. There are none who have a more fearful doom to anticipate than the murderers of the Son of God, including those who actually put him to death, and those who would have engaged in such an act had they been present, and those who, by their conduct, have done all they could to pierce and wound him by their ingratitude.

And all kindreds of the earth - Greek, "All the tribes - φυλαὶ phulaiof the earth." This language is the same which the Saviour uses in Matthew 24:30. See the notes on that passage. The word "tribes" is what is commonly applied to the twelve tribes of Israel, and thus used, it would describe the inhabitants of the Holy Land; but it may be used to denote nations and people in general, as descended from a common ancestor, and the connection requires that it should be understood in this sense here, since it is said that "every eye shall see him"; that is, all that dwell on the face of the earth.

Shall wail because of him - On account of him; on account of their treatment of him. The word rendered "wail" - κόπτω koptō- means properly to beat, to cut; then to beat or cut oneself in the breast as an expression of sorrow; and then to lament, to cry aloud in intense grief. The coming of the Saviour will be an occasion of this:

(a)because it will be an event which will call the sins of people to remembrance, and

(b)because they will be overwhelmed with the apprehension of the wrath to come.

Nothing would fill the earth with greater consternation than the coming of the Son of God in the clouds of heaven; nothing could produce so deep and universal alarm. This fact, which no one can doubt, is proof that people feel that they are guilty, since, if they were innocent, they would have nothing to dread by his appearing. It is also a proof that they believe in the

doctrine of future punishment, since, if they do not, there is no reason why they should be alarmed at his coming. Surely people would not dread his appearing if they really believed that all will be saved. Who dreads the coming of a benefactor to bestow favors on him? Who dreads the appearing of a jailer to deliver him from prison; of a physician to raise him up from a bed of pain; of a deliverer to knock off the fetters of slavery? And how can it be that people should be alarmed at the coming of the Saviour, unless their consciences tell them that they have much to fear in the future? The presence of the Redeemer in the clouds of heaven would destroy all the hopes of those who believe in the doctrine of universal salvation - as the approach of death now often does. People believe that there is much to be dreaded in the future world, or they would not fear the coming of Him who shall wind up the affairs of the human race.

Even so, Amen - ναὶ, ἀμήν naiamēn"A double expression of "so be it, assuredly, certainly," one in Greek and the other in Hebrew" (Prof. Stuart). Compare Romans 8:16, "Abba, Father" - ἀββᾶ, ὁ πατήρ abbaho patērThe idea which John seems to intend to convey is, that the coming of the Lord Jesus, and the consequences which he says will follow, are events which are altogether certain. This is not the expression of a wish that it may be so, as our common translation would seem to imply, but a strong affirmation that it will be so. In some passages, how. over, the word (ναὶ nai) expresses assent to what is said, implying approbation of it as true, or as desirable. "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight," Matthew 11:26; Luke 10:21. So in Revelation 16:7, "Even so (ναὶ nai), Lord God Almighty." So in Revelation 22:20, "Even so (ναὶ nai), come, Lord Jesus." The word "Amen" here seems to determine the meaning of the phrase, and to make it the affirmation of a "certainty," rather than the expression of a "wish."

Verse 8

I am Alpha and Omega - These are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet, and denote properly the first and the last. So in Revelation 22:13, where the two expressions are united, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." So in Revelation 1:17, the speaker says of himself, "I am the first and the last." Among the Jewish rabbis it was common to use the first and the last letters of the Hebrew alphabet to denote the whole of anything, from beginning to end. Thus, it is said, "Adam transgressed the whole law, from ‹Aleph (א) to Taw (ת)." "Abraham kept the whole law, from ‹Aleph (א) to Taw (ת)." The language

here is what would properly denote "eternity" in the being to whom it is applied, and could be used in reference to no one but the true God. It means that he is the beginning and the end of all things; that he was at the commencement, and will be at the close; and it is thus equivalent to saying that he has always existed, and that he will always exist. Compare Isaiah 41:4, "I the Lord, the first, and with the last"; Isaiah 44:6, "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God"; Isaiah 48:12, "I am he; I am the first, I also am the last." There can be no doubt that the language here would be naturally understood as implying divinity, and it could be properly applied to no one but the true God. The obvious interpretation here would be to apply this to the Lord Jesus; for:

(a)it is he who is spoken of in the verses preceding, and

(b)there can be no doubt that the same language is applied to him in Revelation 1:11.

As there is, however, a difference of reading in this place in the Greek text, and as it can. not be absolutely certain that the writer meant to refer to the Lord Jesus specifically here, this cannot be adduced with propriety as a proof-text to demonstrate his divinity. Many mss., instead of "Lord," κυρίος kuriosread "God," Θεὸς Theosand this reading is adopted by Griesbach, Tittman, and Hahn, and is now regarded as the correct reading. There is no real incongruity in supposing, also, that the writer here meant to refer to God as such, since the introduction of a reference to him would not be inappropriate to his manifest design. Besides, a portion of the language used here, "which is, and was, and is to come," is what would more naturally suggest a reference to God as such, than to the Lord Jesus Christ. See Revelation 1:4. The object for which this passage referring to the "first and the last - to him who was, and is, and is to come," is introduced here evidently is, to show that as he was clothed with omnipotence, and would continue to exist through all ages to come as he had existed in all ages past, there could be no doubt about his ability to execute all which it is said he would execute.

Saith the Lord - Or, saith God, according to what is now regarded as the correct reading.

Which is, and which was, … - See the notes on Revelation 1:4.

The Almighty - An appellation often applied to God, meaning that he has all power, and used here to denote that he is able to accomplish what is disclosed in this book.

Verse 9

I John, who also am your brother - Your Christian brother; who am a fellow-Christian with you. The reference here is doubtless to the members of the seven churches in Asia, to whom the epistles in the following chapters were addressed, and to whom the whole book seems to have been sent. In the previous verse, the writer had closed the salutation, and he here commences a description of the circumstances under which the vision appeared to him. He was in a lonely island, to which he had been banished on account of his attachment to religion; he was in a state of high spiritual enjoyment on the day devoted to the sacred remembrance of the Redeemer; he suddenly heard a voice behind him, and turning saw the Son of man himself, in glorious form, in the midst of seven golden lamps, and fell at his feet as dead.

And companion in tribulation - Your partner in affliction. That is, he and they were suffering substantially the same kind of trials on account of their religion. It is evident from this that some form of persecution was then raging, in which they were also sufferers, though in their case it did not lead to banishment. The leader, the apostle, the aged and influential preacher, was banished; but there were many other forms of trial which they might be called to endure who remained at home. What they were we have not the means of knowing with certainty.

And in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ - The meaning of this passage is, that he, and those whom he addressed, were not only companions in affliction, but were fellow-partners in the kingdom of the Redeemer; that is, they shared the honor and the privileges pertaining to that kingdom; and that they were fellow-partners in the "patience" of Jesus Christ, that is, in enduring with patience whatever might follow from their being his friends and followers. The general idea is, that alike in privileges and sufferings they were united. They shared alike in the results of their attachment to the Saviour.

Was in the isle that is called Patmos - Patmos is one of the cluster of islands in the Aegean Sea anciently called the "Sporades." It lies between the island of Icaria and the promontory of Miletus. It is merely mentioned by the ancient geographers (Plin. Hist. Nat., iv., 23; Strabo, x., 488). It is now called Patino or Patmoso. It is some six or eight miles in length, and not more than a mile in breadth, being about fifteen miles in circumference. It has neither trees nor rivers, nor has it any land for cultivation, except

some little nooks among the ledges of rocks. On approaching the island, the coast is high, and consists of a succession of capes, which form so many ports, some of which are excellent. The only one in use, however, is a deep bay, sheltered by High mountains on every side but one, where it is protected by a projecting cape. The town attached to this port is situated upon a high rocky mountain, rising immediately from the sea, and this, with the Scala below upon the shore, consisting of some ships and houses, forms the only inhabited site of the island.

Though Patmos is deficient in trees, it abounds in flowery plants and shrubs. Walnuts and other fruit trees are raised in the orchards, and the wine of Patmos is the strongest and the best flavored in the Greek islands. Maize and barley are cultivated, but not in a quantity sufficient for the use of the inhabitants and for a supply of their own vessels, and others which often put into their good harbor for provisions. The inhabitants now do not exceed four or five thousand; many of whom are emigrants from the neighboring continent. About halfway up the mountain there is shown a natural grotto in a rock, where John is said to have seen his visions and to have written this book. Near this is a small church, connected with which is a school or college, where the Greek language is taught; and on the top of the hill, and in the center of the island, is a monastery, which, from its situation, has a very majestic appearance (Kitto‘s Cyclopoedia of Bib. Literally). The annexed engraving is supposed to give a good representation of the appearance of the island,

It is commonly supposed that John was banished to this island by Domitian, about 94 a.d. No place could have been selected for banishment which would accord better with such a design than this. Lonely, desolate, barren, uninhabited, seldom visited, it had all the requisites which could be desired for a place of punishment; and banishment to that place would accomplish all that a persecutor could wish in silencing an apostle, without putting him to death. It was no uncommon thing, in ancient times, to banish people from their country; either sending them forth at large, or specifying some particular place to which they were to go. The whole narrative leads us to suppose that this place was designated as that to which John was to be sent. Banishment to an island was a common mode of punishment; and there was a distinction made by this act in favor of those who were thus banished. The more base, low, and vile of criminals were commonly

condemned to work in the mines; the more decent and respectable were banished to some lonely island. See the authorities quoted in Wetstein, "in loco."

For the word of God - On account of the word of God; that is, for holding and preaching the gospel. See the notes on Revelation 1:2. It cannot mean that he was sent there with a view to his "preaching" the Word of God; for it is inconceivable that he should have been sent from Ephesus to preach in such a little, lonely, desolate place, where indeed there is no evidence that there were any inhabitants; nor can it mean that he was sent there by the Spirit of God to receive and record this revelation, for it is clear that the revelation could have been made elsewhere, and such a place afforded no special advantages for this. The fair interpretation is, in accordance with all the testimony of antiquity, that he was sent there in a time of persecution, as a punishment for preaching the gospel.

And for the testimony of Jesus Christ - See the notes on Revelation 1:2. He did not go there to bear testimony to Jesus Christ on that island, either by preaching or recording the visions in this book, but he went because he had preached the doctrines which testified of Christ.

Verse 10

I was in the Spirit - This cannot refer to his own spirit, for such an expression would be unintelligible. The language then must refer to some unusual state, or to some influence that had been brought to bear upon him from without, that was appropriate to such a day. The word "Spirit" may refer either to the Holy Spirit, or to some state of mind such as the Holy Spirit produces - a spirit of elevated devotion, a state of high and uncommon religious enjoyment. It is clear that John does not mean here to say that he was under the influence of the Holy Spirit in such a sense as that he was inspired, for the command to make a record, as well as the visions, came subsequently to the time referred to. The fair meaning of the passage is, that he was at that time favored, in a large measure, with the influences of the Holy Spirit - the spirit of true devotion; that he had a high state of religious enjoyment, and was in a condition not inappropriate to the remarkable communications which were made to him on that day.

The state of mind in which he was at the time here referred to, is not such as the prophets are often represented to have been in when under the prophetic inspiration (compare Ezekiel 1:1; Ezekiel 8:3; Ezekiel 40:2; Jeremiah 24:1), and which was often accompanied with an entire

prostration of bodily strength (compare Numbers 24:4); 1 Samuel 19:24; Ezekiel 1:28; Daniel 10:8-10; Revelation 1:17), but such as any Christian may experience when in a high state of religious enjoyment. He was not yet under the prophetic ecstasy (compare Acts 10:10; Acts 11:5; Acts 22:17), but was, though in a lonely and barren island, and far away from the privileges of the sanctuary, permitted to enjoy, in a high degree, the consolations of religion - an illustration of the great truth that God can meet his people anywhere; that, when in solitude and in circumstances of outward affliction, when persecuted and cast out, when deprived of the public means of grace and the society of religious friends, He can meet them with the abundant consolations of His grace, and pour joy and peace into their souls. This state was not inappropriate to the revelations which were about to be made to John, but this itself was not that state. It was a state which seems to have resulted from the fact, that on that desert island he devoted the day to the worship of God, and, by honoring the day dedicated to the memory of the risen Saviour, found, what all will find, that it was attended with rick spiritual influences on his soul.

On the Lord‘s day - The word rendered here as “Lord‘s” (κυριακῇ kuriakē), occurs only in this place and in 1 Corinthians 11:20, where it is applied to the Lord‘s supper. It properly means “pertaining to the Lord”; and, so far as this word is concerned, it might mean a day “pertaining to the Lord,” in any sense, or for any reason; either because he claimed it as his own, and had set it apart for his own service, or because it was designed to commemorate some important event pertaining to him, or because it was observed in honor of him. It is clear:

(1) That this refers to some day which was distinguished from all other days of the week, and which would be sufficiently designated by the use of this term.

(2) that it was a day which was for some reason regarded as especially a day of the Lord, or especially devoted to him.

(3) it would further appear that this was a day particularly devoted to the Lord Jesus; for:

(a)that is the natural meaning of the word “Lord” as used in the New Testament (compare the notes on Acts 1:24); and

(b)if the Jewish Sabbath were intended to be designated, the word “Sabbath” would have been used.

The term was used generally by the early Christians to denote the first day of the week. It occurs twice in the Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians (about 101 a.d.), who calls the Lord‘s day “the queen and prince of all days.” Chrysostom (on Exodus 19:13; Numbers 10:10; Judges 7:18, etc.; 1 Samuel 13:3; 2 Samuel 15:10.

Verse 11

Saying - That is, literally, “the trumpet saying.” It was, however, manifestly the voice that addressed these words to John, though they seemed to come through a trumpet, and hence the trumpet is represented as uttering them.

I am Alpha and Omega - Revelation 1:8.

The first and the last - An explanation of the terms Alpha and Omega. See the notes on Revelation 1:8.

And, What thou seest - The voice, in addition to the declaration, “I am Alpha and Omega,” gave this direction that he should record what he saw. The phrase, “what thou seest,” refers to what would pass before him in vision, what he there saw, and what he would see in the extraordinary manifestations which were to be made to him.

Write in a book - Make a fair record of it all; evidently meaning that he should describe things as they occurred, and implying that the vision would be held so long before the eye of his mind that he would be able to transfer it to the “book.” The fair and obvious interpretation of this is, that he was to make the record in the island of Patmos, and then send it to the churches. Though Patmos was a lonely and barren place, and though probably here were few or no inhabitants there, yet there is no improbability in supposing that John could have found writing materials there, nor even that he may have been permitted to take such materials with him. He seems to have been banished for “preaching,” not for “writing”; and there is no evidence that the materials for writing would be withheld from him. John Bunyan, in Bedford jail, found materials for writing the “Pilgrim‘s Progress,” and there is no evidence that the apostle John was denied the means of recording his thoughts when in the island of Patmos. The word “book” here (βιβλίον biblion), would more properly mean a roll or scroll, that being the form in which books were anciently made. See the notes on Luke 4:17.

And send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia - The churches which are immediately designated, not implying that there were no other churches in Asia, but that there were particular reasons for sending it to

these. He was to send all that he should "see"; to wit, all that is recorded in this volume or book of "Revelation." Part of this Revelation 2; Revelation 3 would pertain particularly to them; the remainder Revelation 422 would pertain to them no more than to others, but still they would have the common interest in it which all the church would have, and, in their circumstances of trial, there might be important reasons why they should see the assurance that the church would ultimately triumph over all its enemies. They were to derive from it themselves the consolation which it was suited to impart in time of trial, and to transmit it to future times, for the welfare of the church at large.

Unto Ephesus - Perhaps mentioned first as being the capital of that portion of Asia Minor; the most important city of the seven; the place where John had preached, and whence he had been banished. For a particular description of these seven churches, see the notes on the epistles addressed to them in Revelation 23.

Verse 12

And I turned to see the voice that spake with me - He naturally turned round to see who it was that spake to him in this solitary and desolate place, where he thought himself to be alone. To see the "voice" here means to see the "person" who spake.

And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks - These were the "first" things that met his eye. This must have been in "vision," of course, and the meaning is, that there "seemed" to be there seven such lamps or candelabras. The word rendered "candlesticks" (λυχνία luchnia) means properly a light-stand, lampstand - something to bear up a light. It would be applied to anything that was used for this purpose; and nothing is intimated, in the use of the word, in regard to the form or dimensions of the light-bearers. Lamps were more commonly used at that time than candles, and it is rather to be supposed that these were designed to be lamp-bearers, or lamp-sustainers, than candle-sticks. They were seven in number; not one branching into seven, but seven standing apart, and so far from each other that he who appeared to John could stand among them. The lamp-bearers evidently sustained each a light, and these gave a special brilliancy to the scene. It is not improbable that, as they were designed to represent the seven churches of Asia, they were arranged in an order resembling these churches. The scene is not laid in the temple, as many suppose, for there is nothing that resembles the arrangements in the temple except the mere fact

of the lights. The scene as yet is in Patmos, and there is no evidence that John did not regard himself as there, or that he fancied for a moment that he was translated to the temple in Jerusalem. There can be no doubt as to the design of this representation, for it is expressly declared Revelation 1:20 that the seven lamp-bearers were intended to represent the seven churches. Light is often used in the Scriptures as an emblem of true religion; Christians are represented as "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14; compare Philemon 2:15; John 8:12), and a Christian church may be represented as a light standing in the midst of surrounding darkness.

Verse 13

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks - Standing among them, so as to be encircled with them. This shows that the representation could not have been like that of the vision of Zechariah Zechariah 4:2, where the prophet sees "a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon." In the vision as it appeared to John, there was not one lampbearer, with seven lamps or branches, but there were seven lamp-bearers, so arranged that one in the likeness of the Son of man could stand in the midst of them.

One like unto the Son of man - This was evidently the Lord Jesus Christ himself, elsewhere so often called "the Son of man." That it was the Saviour himself is apparent from Revelation 1:18. The expression rendered "like unto the Son of man," should have been "like unto a son of man"; that is, like a man, a human being, or in a human form. The reasons for so interpreting it are:

(a)that the Greek is without the article, and

(b)that, as it is rendered in our version, it seems to make the writer say that he was like himself, since the expression "the Son of man" is in the New Testament but another name for the Lord Jesus.

The phrase is often applied to him in the New Testament, and always, except in three instances Acts 7:56; Revelation 1:13; Revelation 14:14, by the Saviour himself, evidently to denote his warm interest in man, or his relationship to man; to signify that he was a man, and wished to designate himself eminently as such. See the notes on Matthew 8:20. In the use of this phrase in the New Testament, there is probably an allusion to Daniel 7:13. The idea would seem to be, that he whom he saw resembled "the Son of man" - the Lord Jesus, as he had seen him in the days of his flesh though it would appear that he did not know that it was he until he was informed of

it, Revelation 1:18. Indeed, the costume in which he appeared was so unlike that in which John had been accustomed to see the Lord Jesus in the days of his flesh, that it cannot be well supposed that he would at once recognize him as the same.

Clothed with a garment down to the foot - A robe reaching down to the feet, or to the ankles, yet so as to leave the feet themselves visible. The allusion here, doubtless, is to a long, loose, flowing robe, such as was worn by kings. Compare the notes on Isaiah 6:1.

And girt about the paps - About the breast. It was common, and is still, in the East, to wear a girdle to confine the robe, as well as to form a beautiful ornament. This was commonly worn about the middle of the person, or "the loins," but it would seem also that it was sometimes worn around the breast. See the notes on Matthew 5:38-41.

With a golden girdle - Either wholly made of gold, or, more probably, richly ornamented with gold. This would naturally suggest the idea of one of rank, probably one of princely rank. The raiment here assumed was not that of a priest, but that of a king. It was very far from being that in which the Redeemer appeared when he dwelt upon the earth, and was rather designed to denote his royal state as he is exalted in heaven. He is not indeed represented with a crown and scepter here, and perhaps the leading idea is that of one of exalted rank, of unusual dignity, of one suited to inspire awe and respect. In other circumstances, in this book, this same Redeemer is represented as wearing a crown, and going forth to conquest. See Revelation 19:12-16. Here the representation seems to have been designed to impress the mind with a sense of the greatness and glory of the personage who thus suddenly made his appearance.

Verse 14

His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow - Exceedingly or perfectly white - the first suggestion to the mind of the apostle being that of wool, and then the thought occurring of its extreme whiteness resembling snow - the purest white of which the mind conceives. The comparison with wool and snow to denote anything especially white is not uncommon. See Isaiah 1:18. Prof. Stuart supposes that this means, not that his hairs were literally white, as if with age, which he says would be incongruous to one just risen from the dead, clothed with immortal youth and vigor, but that it means radiant, bright, resplendent - similar to what

occurred on the transfiguration of the Saviour, Matthew 17:2. But to this it may be replied:

(a)That this would not accord well with that with which his hair is compared - snow and wool, particularly the latter.

(b)The usual meaning of the word is more obvious here, and not at all inappropriate.

The representation was suited to signify majesty and authority; and this would be best accomplished by the image of one who was venerable in years. Thus, in the vision that appeared to Daniel Daniel 7:9, it is said of him who is there called the "Ancient of Days," that "his garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool." It is not improbable that John had that representation in his eye, and that therefore he would be impressed with the conviction that this was a manifestation of a divine person. We are not necessarily to suppose that this is the form in which the Saviour always appears now in heaven, anymore than we are to suppose that God appears always in the form in which he was manifested to Isaiah Isaiah 6:1, to Daniel Daniel 7:9, or to Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu in the mount, Exodus 24:10-11. The representation is, that this form was assumed for the purpose of impressing the mind of the apostle with a sense of his majesty and glory.

And his eyes were as a flame of fire - Bright, sharp, penetrating; as if everything was light before them, or they would penetrate into the thoughts of people. Such a representation is not uncommon. We speak of a lightning glance, a fiery look, etc. In Daniel 10:6, it is said of the man who appeared to the prophet on the banks of the river Hiddekel, that his eyes were "as lamps of fire." Numerous instances of this comparison from the Greek and Latin Classics may be seen in Wetstein, in loco.

Verse 15

And his feet like unto fine brass - Compare Daniel 10:6, "And his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass." See also Ezekiel 1:7, "and they" (the feet of the living creatures) "sparkled like the color of burnished brass." The word used here - χαλκολιβάνω chalkolibanō- occurs in the New Testament only here and in Revelation 2:18. It is not found in the Septuagint. The word properly means "white brass" (probably compounded of χαλκός chalkosbrass, and λίβανος libanoswhiteness, from the Hebrew לבן labanwhite). Others regard it as from χαλκός chalkosbrass, and λιπαρόν liparonclear. The metal referred to was undoubtedly a species of brass

distinguished for its clearness or whiteness. Brass is a compound metal, composed of copper and zinc. The color varies much according to the different proportions of the various ingredients. The Vulgate here renders the word "aurichalcum," a mixture of gold and of brass - perhaps the same as the ἠλεκτρον ēlektron- the electrum of the ancients, composed of gold and of silver, usually in the proportion of four parts gold and one part silver, and distinguished for its brilliancy. See Robinson, Lexicon, and Wetstein, in loco. The kind of metal here referred to, however, would seem to be some compound of brass - of a whitish and brilliant color. The exact proportion of the ingredients in the metal here referred to cannot now be determined.

As if they burned in a furnace - That is, his feet were so bright that they seemed to be like a beautiful metal glowing intensely in the midst of a furnace. Anyone who has looked upon the dazzling and almost insupportable brilliancy of metal in a furnace, can form an idea of the image here presented.

And his voice as the sound of many waters - As the roar of the ocean, or of a cataract. Nothing could be a more sublime description of majesty and authority than to compare the voice of a speaker with the roar of the ocean. This comparison often occurs in the Scriptures. See Ezekiel 43:2, "And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the east: and his voice was like the sound of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory." So Revelation 14:2; Revelation 19:6. Compare Ezekiel 1:24; Daniel 10:6.

Verse 16

And he had in his right hand seven stars - Emblematic of the angels of the seven churches. How he held them is not said. It may be that they seemed to rest on his open palm; or it may be that he seemed to hold them as if they were arranged in a certain order, and with some sort of attachment, so that they could be grasped. It is not improbable that, as in the case of the seven lamp-bearers (see the notes at Revelation 1:13), they were so arranged as to represent the relative position of the seven churches.

And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword - On the form of the ancient two-edged sword, see the notes on Ephesians 6:17. The two edges were designed to cut both ways; and such a sword is a striking emblem of the penetrating power of truth, or of words that proceed from the mouth; and this is designed undoubtedly to be the representation here - that there was some symbol which showed that his words, or his truth, had the

power of cutting deep, or penetrating the soul. So in Isaiah 49:2, it is said of the same personage, "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword." See the notes on that verse. So in Hebrews 4:12, "The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword," etc. So it is said of Pericles by Aristophanes:

"His powerful speech.
Pierced the hearer's soul, and left behind.
Deep in his bosom its keen point infixt."

A similar figure often occurs in Arabic poetry. "As arrows his words enter into the heart." See Gesenius, Commentary zu, Isaiah 49:2. The only difficulty here is in regard to the apparently incongruous representation of a sword seeming to proceed from the mouth; but it is not perhaps necessary to suppose that John means to say that he saw such an image. He heard him speak; he felt the penetrating power of his words; and they were as if a sharp sword proceeded from his mouth. They penetrated deep into the soul, and as he looked on him it seemed as if a sword came from his mouth. Perhaps it is not necessary to suppose that there was even any visible representation of this - either of a sword or of the breath proceeding from his mouth appearing to take this form, as Prof. Stuart supposes. It may be wholly a figurative representation, as Heinrichs and Ewald suppose. Though there were visible and impressive symbols of his majesty and glory presented to the eyes, it is not necessary to suppose that there were visible symbols of his words.

And his countenance - His face. There had been before particular descriptions of some parts of his face - as of his eyes - but this is a representation of his whole aspect; of the general splendor and brightness of his countenance.

Was as the sun shineth in his strength - In his full splendor when unobscured by clouds; where his rays are in no way intercepted. Compare Judges 5:31; "But let them that love him (the Lord) be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might"; 2 Samuel 23:4, "And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds"; Psalm 19:5, "Which (the sun) is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." There could be no more striking description of the majesty and glory of the countenance than to compare it with the overpowering splendor of the sun. This closes the description of the personage that appeared to John. The design was evidently to impress

him with a sense of his majesty and glory, and to prepare the way for the authoritative nature of the communications which he was to make. It is obvious that this appearance must have been assumed.

The representation is not that of the Redeemer as he rose from the dead - a middle-aged man; nor is it clear that it was the same as on the mount of transfiguration - where, for anything that appears, he retained his usual aspect and form though temporarily invested with extraordinary brilliancy; nor is it the form in which we may suppose he ascended to heaven for there is no evidence that he was thus transformed when he ascended; nor is it that of a priest - for all the special habiliments of a Jewish priest are missing in this description. The appearance assumed is, evidently, in accordance with various representations of God as he appeared to Ezekiel, to Isaiah, and to Daniel - what was a suitable manifestation of a divine being - of one clothed in the majesty and power of God. We are not to infer from this, that this is in fact the appearance of the Redeemer now in heaven, or that this is the form in which he will appear when he comes to judge the world. Of his appearance in heaven we have no knowledge; of the aspect which he will assume when he comes to judge people we have no certain information. We are necessarily quite as ignorant of this as we are of what will be our own form and appearance after the resurrection from the dead.

Verse 17

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead - As if I were dead; deprived of sense and consciousness. He was overwhelmed with the suddenness of the vision; he saw that this was a divine being; but he did not as yet know that it was the Saviour. It is not probable that in this vision he would immediately recognize any of the familiar features of the Lord Jesus as he had been accustomed to see him some sixty years before; and if he did, the effect would have been quite as overpowering as is here described. But the subsequent revelations of this divine personage would rather seem to imply that John did not at once recognize him as the Lord Jesus. The effect here described is one that often occurred to those who had a vision of God. See Daniel 8:18, "Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground; but he touched me, and set me upright"; Daniel 8:27, "And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business." Compare Exodus 33:20; Isaiah 6:5; Ezekiel 1:28; Ezekiel 43:3; Daniel 10:7-9, Daniel 10:17.

And he laid his right hand upon me - For the purpose of raising him up. Compare Daniel 8:18, "He touched me and set me upright." We usually stretch out the right hand to raise up one who has fallen.

Saying unto me, Fear not - Compare Matthew 14:27, "It is I; be not afraid." The fact that it was the Saviour, though he appeared in this form of overpowering majesty, was a reason why John should not be afraid. Why that was a reason, he immediately adds - that he was the first and the last; that though he had been dead he was now alive, and would continue ever to live, and that he had the keys of hell and of death. It is evident that John was overpowered with that awful emotion which the human mind must feel at the evidence of the presence of God. Thus, people feel when God seems to come near them by the impressive symbols of his majesty - as in the thunder, the earthquake, and the tempest. Compare Habakkuk 3:16; Luke 9:34. Yet, amidst the most awful manifestations of divine power, the simple assurance that our Redeemer is near us is enough to allay our fears, and diffuse calmness through the soul.

I am the first and the last - See the notes at Revelation 1:8. This is stated to be one of the reasons why he should not fear - that he was eternal: "I always live - have lived through all the past, and will live through all which is to come - and therefore I can accomplish all my promises, and execute all my purposes."

Verse 18

I am he that liveth, and was dead - I was indeed once dead, but now I live, and shall continue to live forever. This would at once identify him who thus appeared as the Lord Jesus Christ, for to no one else could this apply. He had been put to death; but he had risen from the grave. This also is given as a reason why John should not fear; and nothing would allay his fears more than this. He now saw that he was in the presence of that Saviour whom more than half a century before he had so tenderly loved when in the flesh, and whom, though now long absent, he had faithfully served, and for whose cause he was now in this lonely island. His faith in his resurrection had not been a delusion; he saw the very Redeemer before him who had once been laid in the tomb.

Behold, I am alive forevermore - I am to live forever. Death is no more to cut me down, and I am never again to slumber in the grave. As he was always to live, he could accomplish all his promises, and fulfil all his purposes. The Saviour is never to die again. He can, therefore, always

sustain us in our troubles; he can be with us in our death. Whoever of our friends die, he will not die; when we die, he will still be on the throne.

Amen - A word here of strong affirmation - as if he had said, it is "truly," or "certainly so." See the notes on Revelation 1:7. This expression is one that the Saviour often used when he wished to give emphasis, or to express anything strongly. Compare John 3:3; John 5:25.

And have the keys of hell and of death - The word rendered "hell" - ᾅδης Hadēs"Hades" - refers properly to the underworld; the abode of departed spirits; the region of the dead. This was represented as dull and gloomy; as enclosed with walls; as entered through gates which were fastened with bolts and bars. For a description of the views which prevailed among the ancients on the subject, see the Luke 16:23 note, and Job 10:21-22 notes. To hold the key of this, was to hold the power over the invisible world. It was the more appropriate that the Saviour should represent himself as having this authority, as he had himself been raised from the dead by his own power (compare John 10:18), thus showing that the dominion over this dark world was entrusted to him.

And of death - A personification. Death reigns in that world. But to his wide-extended realms the Saviour holds the key, and can have access to his empire when he pleases, releasing all whom he chooses, and confining there still such as he shall please. It is probably in part from such hints as these that Milton drew his sublime description of the gates of hell in the "Paradise Lost." As Christ always lives; as he always retains this power over the regions of the dead, and the whole world of spirits, it may be further remarked that we have nothing to dread if we put our trust in him. We need not fear to enter a world which he has entered, and from which he has emerged, achieving a glorious triumph; we need not fear what the dread king that reigns there can do to us, for his power extends not beyond the permission of the Saviour, and in his own time that Saviour will call us forth to life, to die no more.

Verse 19

Write the things which thou hast seen - An account of the vision which thou hast had, Revelation 1:10-18.

And the things which are - Give an account of those things which thou hast seen as designed to represent the condition of the seven churches. He had seen not only the Saviour, but he had seen seven lampstands, and seven stars in the hand of the Saviour, and he is now commanded to record the

meaning of these symbols as referring to things then actually existing in the seven churches. This interpretation is demanded by Revelation 1:20.

And the things which shall be hereafter - The Greek phrase rendered "hereafter" - μετὰ ταῦτα meta tauta- means "after these things"; that is, he was to make a correct representation of the things which then were, and then to record what would occur "after these things:" to wit, of the images, symbols, and truths, which would be disclosed to him after what he had already seen. The expression refers to future times. He does not say for how long a time; but the revelations which were to be made referred to events which were to occur beyond those which were then taking place. Nothing can be argued from the use of this language in regard to the length of time embraced in the revelation-whether it extended only for a few years or whether it embraced all coming time. The more natural interpretation, however, would seem to be, that it would stretch far into future years, and that it was designed to give at least an outline of what would be the character of the future in general.

Verse 20

The mystery of the seven stars - On the word "mystery," see notes on Ephesians 1:9. The word means, properly, "what is hidden, obscure, unknown" - until it is disclosed by one having the ability to do it, or by the course of events. When disclosed, it may be as clear, and as capable of comprehension, as any other truth. The meaning here, as applied to the seven stars, is, that they were symbols, and that their meaning as symbols, without a suitable explanation, would remain hidden or unknown. They were designed to represent important truths, and John was directed to write down what they were intended in the circumstances to signify, and to send the explanation to the churches. It is evidently implied that the meaning of these symbols would be beyond the ordinary powers of the human mind to arrive at with certainty, and hence John was directed to explain the symbol. The general and obvious truths which they would serve to convey would be that the ministers of the churches, and the churches themselves, were designed to be lights in the world, and should burn clearly and steadily. Much important truth would be couched under these symbols, indeed, if nothing had been added in regard to their signification as employed here by the Saviour; but there were particular truths of great importance in reference to each of these "stars" and "lampbearers," which John was more fully to explain.

Which thou sawest in my right hand - Greek, "upon my right hand" - ἐπὶ τῆς δεξιᾶς μου epi tēs dexias mougiving some support to the opinion that the stars, as they were seen, appeared to be placed on his hand - that is, on the palm of his hand as he stretched it out. The expression in Revelation 1:16 is, that they were "in (ἐν en) his right hand"; but the language used here is not decisive as to the position of the stars. They may have been held in some way by the hand, or represented as scattered on the open hand,

The seven golden candlesticks - The truth which these emblematic representations are designed to convey.

The seven stars are - That is, they represent, or they denote - in accordance with a common usage in the Scriptures. See the notes on Matthew 26:26.

The angels of the seven churches - Greek, "Angels of the seven churches:" the article being missing. This does not refer to them as a collective or associated body, for the addresses are made to them as individuals - an epistle being directed to "the angel" of each particular church, Revelation 2:1, Revelation 2:12, etc. The evident meaning, however, is, that what was recorded should be directed to them, not as pertaining to them exclusively as individuals, but as presiding over or representing the churches, for what is recorded pertains to the churches, and was evidently designed to be laid before them. It was for the churches, but was committed to the "angel" as representing the church, and to be communicated to the church under his care. There has been much diversity of opinion in regard to the meaning of the word "angels" here. By the advocates of Episcopacy, it has been argued that the use of this term proves that there was a presiding bishop over a circle or group of churches in Ephesus, in Smyrna, etc., since it is said that it cannot be supposed that there was but a single church in a city so large as Ephesus, or in the other cities mentioned. A full examination of this argument may be seen in my work on the Apostolic Church (pp. 191-199, London edition). The word "angel" properly means a messenger, and is thus applied to celestial beings as messengers sent forth from God to convey or to do his will. This being the common meaning of the word, it may be employed to denote anyone who is a messenger, and hence, with propriety, anyone who is employed to communicate the will of another; to transact his business, or, more remotely, to act in his place - to be a representative. In order to ascertain the

meaning of the word as used in this place, and in reference to these churches, it may be remarked:

(1) That it cannot mean literally an angel, as referring to a heavenly being, for no one can suppose that such a being presided over these churches.

(2) it cannot be shown to mean, as Lord (in loco) supposes, messengers that the churches had sent to John, and that these letters were given to them to be returned by them to the churches; for:

(a)there is no evidence that any such messenger had been sent to John;

(b)there is no probability that while he was a banished exile in Patmos such a thing would be permitted;

(c)the message was not sent by them, it was sent to them "Unto the angel of the church in Ephesus write," etc.

(3) it cannot be proved that the reference is to a prelatical bishop presiding over a group or circle of churches, called a diocese; for:

(a) There is nothing in the word "angel," as used in this connection, which would be especially applicable to such a personage - it being as applicable to a pastor of a single church, as to a bishop of many churches.

(b) There is no evidence that there were any such groups of churches then as constitute an episcopal diocese.

(c) The use of the word "church" in the singular, as applied to Ephesus, Smyrna, etc., rather implies that there was but a single church in each of those cities. Compare Revelation 2:1, Revelation 2:8, Revelation 2:12, Revelation 2:18; see also similar language in regard to the church in Corinth, 1 Corinthians 1:2; in Antioch, Acts 13:1; at Laodicea, Colossians 4:16; and at Ephesus, Acts 20:28.

(d) There is no evidence, as Episcopalians must suppose, that a successor to John had been appointed at Ephesus, if, as they suppose, he was "bishop" of Ephesus; and there is no probability that they would so soon after his banishment show him such a want of respect as to regard the see as vacant, and appoint a successor.

(e) There is no improbability in supposing that there was a single church in each of these cities - as at Antioch, Corinth, Rome.

(f) If John was a piclatical “bishop,” it is probable that he was “bishop” of the whole group of churches embracing the seven: yet here, if the word “angel” means “bishop,” we have no less than seven such bishops immediately appointed to succeed him. And,

(g) the supposition that this refers to prelatical bishops is so forced and unnatural that many Episcopalians are compelled to abandon it. Thus, Stillingfleet - than whom an abler man, or one whose praise is higher in Episcopal churches, as an advocate of prelacy, is not to be found - says of these angels: “If many things in the epistles be directed to the angels, but yet so as to concern the whole body, then, of necessity, the angel must be taken as a representative of the whole body; and then why may not the angel be taken by way of representation of the body itself, either of the whole church, or, which is far more probable, of the concessors, or order of presbyters in this church?”

(4) if the word does not mean literally “an angel”; if it does not refer to messengers sent to John in Patmos by the churches; and if it does not refer to a prelatical bishop, then it follows that it must refer to someone who presided over the church as its pastor, and through whom a message might be properly sent to the church. Thus understood, the paster or “angel” would be regarded as the representative of the church; that is, as delegated by the church to manage its affairs, and as the authorized person to whom communications should be made in matters pertaining to it - as pastors are now. A few considerations will further confirm this interpretation, and throw additional light on the meaning of the word:

(a) The word “angel” is employed in the Old Testament to denote a prophet; that is, a minister of religion as sent by God to communicate his will. Thus in Haggai 1:13 it is said, “Then spake Haggai, the Lord‘s messenger (Hebrew: angel, מלאך יהוה mal'ak Yahweh- Septuagint: ἄγγελος κυρίου angelos kuriouin the Lord‘s message unto the people,” etc.

(b) It is applied to a priest, as one sent by God to execute the functions of that office, or to act in the name of the Lord. Malachi 2:7, “for the priest‘s lips should keep knowledge, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts” - מלאך יהוה צבאות mal'ak Yahweh tsebaa'owt- that is,” angel of the Lord of hosts.”

(c) The name prophet is often given in the New Testament to the ministers of religion, as being appointed by God to proclaim or communicate his will to his people, and as occupying a place resembling, in some respects, that of the prophets in the Old Testament.

(d) There was no reason why the word might not be thus employed to designate a pastor of a Christian church, as well as to designate a prophet or a priest under the Old Testament dispensation.

(e) The supposition that a pastor of a church is intended will meet all the circumstances of the case; for:

(1)it is an appropriate appellation;

(2)there is no reason to suppose that there was more than one church in each of the cities referred to;

(3)it is a term which would designate the respect in which the office was held;

(4)it would impress upon those to whom it was applied a solemn sense of their responsibility.

Further, it would be more appropriately applied to a pastor of a single church than to a prelatical bishop; to the tender, intimate, and endearing relation sustained by a pastor to his people, to the blending of sympathy, interest, and affection, where he is with them continually, meets them frequently in the sanctuary, administers to them the bread of life, goes into their abodes when they axe afflicted, and attends their kindred to the grave, than to the union subsisting between the people of an extended diocese and a prelate - the formal, infrequent, and, in many instances, stately and pompous visitations of a diocesan bishop - to the unsympathizing relation between him and a people scattered in many churches, who are visited at distant intervals by one claiming a “superiority in ministerial rights and

powers," and who must be a stranger to the ten thousand ties of endearment which bind the hearts of a pastor and people together. The conclusion, then, to which we have come is, that the "angel of the church" was the pastor, or the presiding presbyter in the church; the minister who had the pastoral charge of it, and who was therefore a proper representative of it. He was a man who, in some respects, performed the functions which the angels of God do; that is, who was appointed to execute his will, to communicate his message, and to convey important intimations of his purposes to his people. To no one could the communications in this book, intended for the churches, be more properly entrusted than to such an one; for to no one now would a communication be more properly entrusted than to a pastor.

Such is the sublime vision under which this book opens; such the solemn commission which the penman of the book received. No more appropriate introduction to what is contained in the book could be imagined; no more appropriate circumstances for making such a sublime revelation could have existed. To the most beloved of the apostles, now the only surviving one of the number; to him who had been a faithful laborer for a period not far from 60 years after the death of the Lord Jesus, who had been the bosom friend of the Saviour when in the flesh, who had seen him in the mount of transfiguration, who had seen him die, and who had seen him ascend, into heaven; to him who had lived while the church was founded, and while it had spread into all lands; and to him who was now suffering persecution on account of the Saviour and his cause, it was appropriate that such communications should be made. In a lonely island; far away from the homes of people; surrounded by the ocean, and amid barron rocks; on the day consecrated to the purposes of sacred repose and the holy duties of religion - the day observed in commemoration of the resurrection of his Lord, it was most fit that the Redeemer should appear to the "beloved disciple" in the last Revelation which he was ever to make to mankind. No more appropriate time or circumstance could be conceived for disclosing, by a series of sublime visions, what would occur in future times; for sketching out the history of the church or the consummation of all things.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

This chapter Revelation 2:1, the allusion is to the fact that he who speaks to them "holds the seven stars in his right hand, and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks"; in the epistle to the church at Smyrna Revelation 2:8, it is he who "is the first and the last, who was dead and is alive"; in the epistle to the church at Pergamos Revelation 2:12, it is he "which hath the sharp sword with the two edges"; in the epistle to the church at Thyatira Revelation 2:18, it is "the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass"; in the epistle to the church at Sardis Revelation 3:1, it is he who "hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars"; in the epistle to the church at Philadelphia Revelation 3:7, it is "he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth"; in the epistle to the church at Laodicea Revelation 3:14, it is he who is the "Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."

(2) these introductions are followed with the formula, "I know thy works." The special characteristics, then, of each church are referred to, with a sentiment of approbation or disapprobation expressed in regard to their conduct. Of two of the churches, that at Smyrna Revelation 2:9, and that at Philadelphia Revelation 3:10, he expresses his entire approbation; to the churches of Sardis Revelation 3:3, and Laodicea Revelation 3:15-18, he administers a decided rebuke; to the churches of Ephesus Revelation 2:3-6, Pergamos Revelation 2:13-16, and Thyatira Revelation 3:19-20, he intermingles praise and rebuke, for he saw much to commend, but, at the same time, not a little that was reprehensible. In all cases, however, the approbation precedes the blame; showing that he was more disposed to find what was good than what was evil.

(3) after the statement of their characteristics, there follows in each case counsel, advice, admonition, or promises, such as their circumstances demanded - encouragement in trial, and injunctions to put away their sins. The admonitions are addressed to the churches as if Christ were - at hand, and would ere long come and sit in judgment on them and their deeds.

(4) there is a solemn admonition to hear what the Spirit has to say to the churches. This is in each case expressed in the same manner, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" Revelation 2:7, Revelation 2:11, Revelation 2:17, Revelation 2:29; Revelation 3:6, Revelation 3:13, Revelation 3:22. These admonitions were designed to call the attention of the churches to these things, and, at the same time, they seemed designed to show that they were not intended for them alone. They are addressed to anyone who "has an ear," and therefore had some principles of general application to others, and to which all should attend who were disposed to learn the will of the Redeemer. What was addressed to one church, at any time, would be equally applicable to all churches in the same circumstances; what was adapted to rebuke, elevate, or comfort Christians in any one age or land, would be adapted to be useful to Christians of all ages and lands.

(5) there then is, either following or preceding that call on all the churches to hear, some promise or assurance designed to encourage the church, and urge it forward in the discharge of duty, or in enduring trial. This is found in each one of the epistles, though not always in the same relative position.

Verse 1

The Epistle to the Church at Ephesus

The contents of the epistle to the church at Ephesus - the first addressed - are these:

(1)The attribute of the Saviour referred to is, that he "holds the stars in his right hand, and walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks," Revelation 2:1.

(2)he commends them for their patience, and for their opposition to those who are evil, and for their zeal and fidelity in carefully examining into the character of some who claimed to be apostles, but who were, in fact, impostors; for their perseverance in bearing up under trial, and not fainting in his cause, and for their opposition to the Nicolaitanes, whom, he says, he hates, Revelation 2:2-3, Revelation 2:6.

(3)he reproves them for having left their first love to him, Revelation 2:4.

(4)he admonishes them to remember whence they had fallen, to repent, and to do their first works Revelation 2:5.

(5)he threatens them that, if they do not repent, he will come and remove the candlestick out of its place, Revelation 2:5; and,

(6)he assures them, and all others, that whosoever overcomes he will "give him to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God," Revelation 2:7.

Unto the angel - The minister; the presiding presbyter; the bishop - in the primitive sense of the word "bishop" - denoting one who had the spiritual charge of a congregation. See the notes on Revelation 1:20.

Of the church - Not of the churches of Ephesus, but of the one church of that city. There is no evidence that the word is used in a collective sense to denote a group of churches, like a diocese; nor is there any evidence that there was such a group of churches in Ephesus, or that there was more than one church in that city. It is probable that all who were Christians there were regarded as members of one church - though for convenience they may have met for worship in different places. Thus, there was one church in Corinth 1 Corinthians 1:1; one church in Thessalonica 1 Thessalonians 1:1, etc.

Of Ephesus - On the situation of Ephesus, see the notes on Acts 18:19, and the introduction to the notes on the Epistle to the Ephesians, section 1, and the engraving there. It was the capital of Ionia; was one of the twelve Ionian cities of Asia Minor in the Mythic times, and was said to have been founded by the Amazons. It was situated on the river Cayster, not far from the Icarian Sea, between Smyrna and Miletus. It was one of the most considerable cities of Asia Minor, and while, about the epoch when Christianity was introduced, other cities declined, Ephesus rose more and more. It owed its prosperity, in part, to the favor of its governors; for Lysimachus named the city Arsinoe, in honor of his second wife, and Attalus Philadelphus furnished it with splendid wharves and docks. Under the Romans it was the capital not only of Ionia, but of the entire province of Asia, and bore the honorable title of the first and greatest metropolis of Asia. John is supposed to have resided in this city, and to have preached the gospel there for many years; and on this account, perhaps, it was, as well as

on account of the relative importance of the city, that the first epistle of the seven was addressed to that church. On the present condition of the ruins of Ephesus, see the notes on Revelation 2:5. We have no means whatever of ascertaining the size of the church when John wrote the Book of Revelation. From the fact, however, that Paul, as is supposed (see the introduction to the Epistle to the Ephesians, section 2), labored there for about three years; that there was a body of "elders" who presided over the church there Acts 20:17; and that the apostle John seems to have spent a considerable part of his life there in preaching the gospel, it may be presumed that there was a large and flourishing church in that city. The epistle before us shows also that it was characterized by distinguished piety.

These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand - See the notes on Revelation 1:16. The object here seems to be to turn the attention of the church in Ephesus to some attribute of the Saviour which deserved their special regard, or which constituted a special reason for attending to what he said. To do this, the attention is directed, in this case, to the fact that he held the seven stars - emblematic of the ministers of the churches - in his hand, and that he walked in the midst of the lampbearers - representing the churches themselves; intimating that they were dependent on him, that he had power to continue or remove the ministry, and that it was by his presence only that those lamp-bearers would continue to give light. The absolute control over the ministry, and the fact that he walked amidst the churches, and that his presence was necessary to their perpetuity and their welfare, seem to be the principal ideas implied in this representation. These truths he would impress on their minds, in order that they might feel how easy it would be for him to punish any disobedience, and in order that they might do what was necessary to secure his continual presence among them. These views seem to be sanctioned by the character of the punishment threatened Revelation 2:5, "that he would remove the candlestick representing their church out of its place." See the notes on Revelation 2:5.

Who walketh in the midst, … - In Revelation 1:13 he is represented simply as being seen amidst the golden candlesticks. See the notes on that place. Here there is the additional idea of his "walking" in the midst of them, implying perhaps constant and vigilant supervision. He went from one to another, as one who inspects and surveys what is under his care;

perhaps also with the idea that he went among them as a friend to bless them.

Verse 2

I know thy works - The common formula with which all the epistles to the seven churches are introduced. It is designed to impress upon them deeply the conviction that he was intimately acquainted with all that they did, good and bad, and that therefore he was abundantly qualified to dispense rewards or administer punishments according to truth and justice. It may be observed that, as many of the things referred to in these epistles were things pertaining to the heart - the feelings, the state of the mind - it is implied that he who speaks here has an intimate acquaintance with the heart of man, a prerogative which is always attributed to the Saviour. See John 2:25. But no one can do this who is not divine; and this declaration, therefore, furnishes a strong proof of the divinity of Christ. See Psalm 7:9; Jeremiah 11:20; Jeremiah 17:10; 1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Kings 8:39.

And they labor - The word used here (κόπος kopos) means properly "a beating," hence wailing, grief, with beating the breast; and then it means excessive labor or toil adapted to produce grief or sadness, and is commonly employed in the New Testament in the latter sense. It is used in the sense of trouble in Matthew 26:10, "Why trouble ye (literally, why give ye trouble to) the woman?" (compare also Mark 14:6; Luke 11:7; Luke 18:5; Galatians 6:17); and in the sense of labor, or wearisome toil, in John 4:38; 1 Corinthians 3:8; 1 Corinthians 15:58; 2 Corinthians 6:5; 2 Corinthians 10:15; 2 Corinthians 11:23, 2 Corinthians 11:27, et al. The connection here would admit of either sense. It is commonly understood, as in our translation, in the sense of labor, though it would seem that the other signification, that of trouble, would not be inappropriate. If it means labor, it refers to their faithful service in his cause, and especially in opposing error. It seems to me, however, that the word "trouble" would better suit the connection.

And thy patience - Under these trials; to wit, in relation to the efforts which had been made by the advocates of error to corrupt them, and to turn them away from the truth. They had patiently borne the opposition made to the truth, they had manifested a spirit of firm endurance amidst many arts of those opposed to them to draw them off from simple faith in Christ.

And how thou canst not bear them which are evil - Canst not "endure" or "tolerate" them. Compare the notes on 2 John 1:10-11. That is,

they had no sympathy with their doctrines or their practices, they were utterly opposed to them. They had lent them no countenance, but had in every way shown that they had no fellowship with them. The evil persons here referred to were, doubtless, those mentioned in this verse as claiming that "they were apostles," and those mentioned in Revelation 2:6 as the Nicolaitanes.

And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles - Thou hast thoroughly examined their claims. It is not said in what way they had done this, but it was probably by considering attentively and candidly the evidence on which they relied, whatever that may have been. Nor is it certainly known who these persons were, or on what grounds they advanced their pretensions to the apostolic office. It cannot be supposed that they claimed to have been of the number of apostles selected by the Saviour, for that would have been too absurd; and the only solution would seem to be that they claimed either:

(1)that they had been called to that office after the Saviour ascended, as Paul was; or,

(2)that they claimed the honor due to this name or office, in virtue of some election to it; or,

(3)that they claimed to be the successors of the apostles, and to possess and transmit their authority.

If the first of these, it would seem that the only ground of claim would be that they had been called in some miraculous way to the rank of apostles, and, of course, an examination of their claims would be an examination of the alleged miraculous call, and of the evidence on which they would rely that they had such a call. If the second, then the claim must have been founded on some such plea as that the apostolic office was designed to be elective, as in the case of Matthias Acts 1:23-26, and that they maintained that this arrangement was to be continued in the church; and then an examination of their claims would involve an investigation of the question, whether it was contemplated that the apostolic office was designed to be perpetuated in that manner, or whether the election of Matthias was only a temporary arrangement, designed to answer a particular purpose. If the third, then the claim must have been founded on the plea that the apostolic office was designed to be perpetuated by a regular succession, and that they, by ordination, were in a line of that succession; and then the examination

and refutation of the claim must have consisted in showing, from the nature of the office, and the necessary qualifications for the office of apostle, that it was designed to be temporary, and that there could be properly no successors of the apostles, as such. On either of these suppositions, such a line of argument would be fatal to all claims to any succession in the apostolic office now. If each of these points should fail, of course their claims to the rank of apostles would cease; just as all claims to the dignity and rank of the apostles must fail now. The passage becomes thus a strong argument against the claims of any persons to be "apostles," or to be the "successors" of the apostles, in the uniqueness of their office.

And are not - There were never any apostles of Jesus Christ but the original twelve whom he chose, Matthias, who was chosen in the place of Judas Acts 1:26, and Paul, who was specially called to the office by the Saviour after his resurrection. On this point, see my work on the Apostolic Church (pp. 49-57, London ed.).

And hast found them liars - Hast discovered their pretensions to be unfounded and false. In 2 Corinthians 11:13, "false apostles" are mentioned; and, in an office of so much honor as this, it is probable that there would be not a few claimants to it in the world. To set up a claim to what they knew they were not entitled to would be a falsehood, and as this seems to have been the character of these people, the Saviour, in the passage before us, does not hesitate to designate them by an appropriate term, and to call them liars. The point here commended in the Ephesian church is, that they had sought to have a "pure ministry," a ministry whose claims were well founded. They had felt the importance of this, had carefully examined the claims of pretenders, and had refused to recognize those who could not show, in a proper manner, that they had been designated to their work by the Lord Jesus. The same zeal, in the same cause, would be commended by the Saviour now.

Verse 3

And hast borne - Hast borne up under trials; or hast borne with the evils with which you have been assailed. That is, you have not given way to murmuring or complaints in trial, you have not abandoned the principles of truth and yielded to the prevalence of error.

And hast patience - That is, in this connection, hast shown that thou canst bear up under these things with patience. This is a repetition of what is said in Revelation 2:2, but in a somewhat different connection. There it

rather refers to the trouble which they had experienced on account of the pretensions of false apostles, and the patient, persevering, and enduring spirit which they had shown in that form of trial; here the expression is more general, denoting a patient spirit in regard to all forms of trial.

And for my name‘s sake hast laboured - On account of me, and in my cause. That is, the labor here referred to, whatever it was, was to advance the cause of the Redeemer. In the word rendered “hast labored” (κεκοπιακας kekopiakas) there is a reference to the word used in the previous verse - “thy labor” (κόπον σου kopon sou); and the design is to show that the “labor,” or trouble there referred to, was on account of him.

And hast not fainted - Hast not become exhausted, or wearied out, so as to give over. The word used here (κάμνω kamnō) occurs in only three places in the New Testament: “Lest ye be wearied, and faint,” Hebrews 12:3; “The prayer of faith shall save the sick,” James 5:15; and in the passage before us. It means properly to become weary and faint from toil, etc.; and the idea here is, that they had not become so wearied out as to give over from exhaustion. The sense of the whole passage is thus rendered by Prof. Stuart: “Thou canst not bear with false teachers, but thou canst bear with troubles and perplexities on account of me; thou hast undergone wearisome toil, but thou art not wearied out thereby.” The state of mind, considered as the state of mind appropriate to a Christian, here represented, is, that we should not tolerate error and sin, but that we should bear up under the trials which they may incidentally occasion us; that we should have such a repugnance to evil that we cannot endure it, as evil, but that we should have such love to the Saviour and his cause as to be willing to bear anything, even in relation to that, or springing from that, that we may be called to suffer in that cause; that while we may be weary in his work, for our bodily strength may become exhausted (compare Matthew 26:41), we should not be weary of it; and that though we may have many perplexities, and may meet with much opposition, yet we should not relax our zeal, but should persevere with an ardor that never faints, until our Saviour calls us to our reward.

Verse 4

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee - Notwithstanding this general commendation, there are things which I cannot approve.

Because thou hast left thy first love - Thou hast “remitted” (ἀφῆκας aphēkas) or let down thy early love; that is, it is less glowing and ardent

than it was at first. The love here referred to is evidently love to the Saviour; and the idea is, that, as a church, they had less of this than formerly characterized them. In this respect they were in a state of declension; and, though they still maintained the doctrines of his religion, and opposed the advocates of error, they showed less ardor of affection toward him directly than they had formerly done. In regard to this we may remark:

(1) That what is here stated of the church at Ephesus is not uncommon:

(a) Individual Christians often lose much of their first love. It is true, indeed, that there is often an appearance of this which does not exist in reality. Not a little of the ardor of young converts is often nothing more than the excitement of animal feeling, which will soon die away of course, though their real love may not be diminished, or may be constantly growing stronger. When a son returns home after a long absence, and meets his parents and brothers and sisters, there is a glow, a warmth of feeling, a joyousness of emotion, which cannot be expected to continue always, and which he may never be able to recall again, though he may be ever growing in real attachment to his friends and to his home.

(b) Churches remit the ardor of their first love. They are often formed under the reviving influences of the Holy Spirit when many are converted, and are warm-hearted and zealous young converts. Or they are formed from other churches that have become cold and dead, from which the new organization, embodying the life of the church, was constrained to separate. Or they are formed under the influence of some strong and mighty truth that has taken possession of the mind, and that gives a special character to the church at first. Or they are formed with a distinct reference to promoting some one great object in the cause of the Redeemer. So the early Christian churches were formed. So the church in Germany, France, Switzerland, and England came out from the Roman communion under the influence of the doctrine of justification by faith. So the Nestorians in former ages, and the Moravians in modern times, were characterized by warm zeal in the cause of missions.

So the Puritans came out from the established church of England at one time, and the Methodists at another, warmed with a holier love to the cause

of evangelical religion than existed in the body from which they separated. So many a church is formed now amidst the exciting scenes of a revival of religion, and in the early days of its history puts to shame the older and the slumbering churches around them. But it need scarcely be said that this early zeal may die away, and that the church, once so full of life and love, may become as cold as those that went before it, or as those from which it separated, and that there may be a necessity for the formation of new organizations that shall be fired with ardor and zeal. One has only to look at Germany, at Switzerland, at various portions of the reformed churches elsewhere; at the Nestorians, whose zeal for missions long since departed; or even at the Moravians, among whom it has so much declined; at various portions of the Puritan churches, and at many an individual church formed under the warm and exciting feelings of a revival of religion, to see that what occurred at Ephesus may occur elsewhere.

(2) the same thing that occurred there may be expected to follow in all similar cases. The Saviour governs the church always on essentially the same principles; and it is no uncommon thing that, when a church has lost the ardor of its first love, it is suffered more and more to decline, until "the candlestick is removed" - until either the church becomes wholly extinct, or until vital piety is wholly gone, and all that remains is the religion of forms.

Verse 5

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen - The eminence which you once occupied. Call to remembrance the state in which you once were. The duty here enjoined is, when religion has declined in our hearts, or in the church, to call to distinct recollection the former state - the ardor, the zeal, the warmth of love which once characterized us. The reason for this is, that such a recalling of the former state will be likely to produce a happy influence on the heart. Nothing is better adapted to affect a backsliding Christian, or a backsliding church, than to call to distinct recollection the former condition - the happier days of piety. The joy then experienced, the good done, the honor reflected on the cause of religion, the peace of mind of that period, will contrast strongly with the present, and nothing will be better suited to recall an erring church, or an erring individual, from their wanderings than such a reminiscence of the past. The advantages of thus "remembering" their former condition would be many; for some of the most

valuable impressions which are made on the mind, and some of the most important lessons learned, are from the recollections of a former state. Among those advantages, in this case, would be such as the following:

(a)It would show how much they might have enjoyed if they had continued as they began, how much more real happiness they would have had than they actually have enjoyed.

(b)How much good they might have done, if they had only persevered in the zeal with which they commenced the Christian life. How much more good might most Christians do than they actually accomplish, if they would barely, even without increasing it, continue with the degree of zeal with which they begin their course.

(c)How much greater attainments they might have made in the divine life, and in the knowledge of religion, than they have made; that is, how much more elevated and enlarged might have been their views of religion, and their knowledge of the Word of God. And,

(d)such a recollection of their past state as, contrasted with what they now are, would exert a powerful influence in producing true repentance; for there is nothing better adapted to do this than a just view of what we might have been, as compared with what we now are.

If a man has become cold toward his wife, nothing is better suited to reclaim him than to recall to his recollection the time when he led her to the altar, the solemn vow then made, and the rapture of his heart when he pressed her to his bosom and called her his own.

And repent - The word used here means "to change one's mind and purposes," and, along with that, "to change one's conduct or demeanor." The duty of repentance here urged would extend to all the points in which they had erred.

And do the first works - The works which were done when the church was first established. That is, manifest the zeal and love which were formerly evinced in opposing error, and in doing good. This is the true counsel to be given to those who have backslidden, and have "left their first love," now. Often such persons, sensible that they have erred, and that they have not the enjoyment in religion which they once had, profess to be willing and desirous to return, but they know not how to do it - how to revive their ardor, how to rekindle in their bosom the flame of extinguished

love. They suppose it must be by silent meditation, or by some supernatural influence, and they wait for some visitation from above to call them back, and to restore to them their former joy. The counsel of the Saviour to all such, however, is to do their first works. It is to engage at once in doing what they did in the first and best days of their piety, the days of their "espousals" Jeremiah 2:2 to God. Let them read the Bible as they did then; let them pray as they did then; let them go forth in the duties of active benevolence as they did then; let them engage in teaching a Sunday school as they did then; let them relieve the distressed, instruct the ignorant, raise up the fallen, as they did then; let them open their heart, their purse, and their hand, to bless a dying world. As it was in this way that they manifested their love then, so this would be better suited than all other things to rekindle the flame of love when it is almost extinguished. The weapon that is used keeps bright; that which has become rusty will become bright again if it is used.

Or else I will come unto thee quickly - On the word rendered "quickly" (τάχει tachei), see the notes on Revelation 1:1. The meaning is, that he would come as a Judge, at no distant period, to inflict punishment in the manner specified - by removing the candle-stick out of its place. He does not say in what way it would be done; whether by some sudden judgment, by a direct act of power, or by a gradual process that would certainly lead to that result.

And will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent - On the meaning of the word "candlestick" see the notes on Revelation 1:12. The meaning is, that the church gave light in Ephesus; and that what he would do in regard to that place would be like removing a lamp, and leaving a place in darkness. The expression is equivalent to saying that the church there would cease to exist. The proper idea of the passage is, that the church would be wholly extinct; and it is observable that this is a judgment more distinctly disclosed in reference to this church than to any other of the seven churches. There is not the least evidence that the church at Ephesus did repent, and the threatening has been most signally fulfilled. Long since the church has become utterly extinct, and for ages there was not a single professing Christian there. Every memorial of there having been a church there has departed, and there are nowhere, not even in Nineveh, Babylon, or Tyre, more affecting demonstrations of the fulfillment of ancient prophecy than in the present state of the ruins of Ephesus. A remark of Mr. Gibbon

(Decline and Fall, iv. 260) will show with what exactness the prediction in regard to this church has been accomplished.

He is speaking of the conquests of the Turks. “In the loss of Ephesus the Christians deplored the fall of the first angel, the extinction of the first candlestick of the Revelations; the desolation is complete; and the temple of Diana, or the Church of Mary will equally elude the search of the curious traveler.” Thus, the city, with the splendid temple of Diana, and the church that existed there in the time of John, has disappeared, and nothing remains but unsightly ruins. These ruins lie about ten days‘ journey from Smyrna, and consist of shattered walls, and remains of columns and temples. The soil on which a large part of the city is supposed to have stood, naturally rich, is covered with a rank, burnt-up vegetation, and is everywhere deserted and solitary, though bordered by picturesque mountains. A few grainfields are scattered along the site of the ancient city. Toward the sea extends the ancient port, a pestilential marsh.

Along the slope of the mountain, and over the plain, are scattered fragments of masonry and detached ruins, but no thing can now be fixed on as the great temple of Diana. There are ruins of a theater; there is a circus, or stadium, nearly entire; there are fragments of temples and palaces scattered around; but there is nothing that marks the site of a church in the time of John; there is nothing to indicate even that such a church then existed there. About a mile and a half from the principal ruins of Ephesus there is indeed now a small village called Asalook, a Turkish word, which is associated with the same idea as Ephesus, meaning, The City of the Moon. A church, dedicated to John, is supposed to have stood near, if not on the site of the present mosque. Dr. Chandler (p. 150,4to) gives us a striking description of Ephesus as he found it in 1764: “Its population consisted of a few Greek peasants, living in extreme wretchedness, dependence, and insensibility, the representatives of an illustrious people, and inhabiting the wreck of their greatness. Some reside in the substructure of the glorious edifices which they raised; some beneath the vaults of the stadium, and the crowded scenes of these diversions; and some in the abrupt precipice, in the sepulchres which received their ashes. Its streets are obscured and overgrown. A herd of goats was driven to it for shelter from the sun at noon, and a noisy flight of crows from the quarries seemed to insult its silence. We heard the partridge call in the area of the theater and of the stadium …

Its fate is that of the entire country; a garden has become a desert. Busy centers of civilization, spots where the refinements and delights of the age were collected, are now a prey to silence, destruction, and death.

Consecrated first of all to the purposes of idolatry, Ephesus next had Christian temples almost rivaling the pagan in splendor, wherein the image of the great Diana lay prostrate before the cross; after the lapse of some centuries Jesus gives way to Muhammed, and the crescent glittered on the dome of the recently Christian church. A few more scores of years, and Ephesus has neither temple, cross, crescent, nor city, but is desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness." See the article" Ephesus" in Kitto's Cyclopedia, and the authorities there referred to. What is affirmed here of Ephesus has often been illustrated in the history of the world, that when a church has declined in piety and love, and has been called by faithful ministers to repent, and has not done it, it has been abandoned more and more, until the last appearance of truth and piety has departed, and it has been given up to error and to ruin.

And the same principle is as applicable to individuals, for they have as much reason to dread the frowns of the Saviour as churches have. If they who have "left their first love" will not repent at the call of the Saviour, they have every reason to apprehend some fearful judgment, some awful visitation of his Providence that shall overwhelm them in sorrow, as a proof of his displeasure. Even though they should finally be saved, their days may be without comfort, and perhaps their last moments without a ray of conscious hope. The accompanying engraving, representing the present situation of Ephesus, will bring before the eye a striking illustration of the fulfillment of this prophecy, that the candlestick of Ephesus would be removed from its place. See also the engravings prefixed to the notes on the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Verse 6

But this thou hast - This thou hast that I approve of, or that I can commend.

That thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans - Greek, "works" (τὰ ἔργα ta erga). The word "Nicolaitanes" occurs only in this place, and in the Revelation 2:15 verse of this chapter. From the reference in the latter place

it is clear that the doctrines which they held prevailed at Pergamos as well as at Ephesus; but from neither place can anything now be inferred in regard to the nature of their doctrines or their practices, unless it be supposed that they held the same doctrine that was taught by Balaam. See the notes on Revelation 2:15. From the two passages, compared with each other, it would seem that they were alike corrupt in doctrine and in practice, for in the passage before us their deeds are mentioned, and in Revelation 2:15 their doctrine. Various conjectures, however, have been formed respecting this class of people, and the reasons why the name was given to them:

I. In regard to the origin of the name, there have been three opinions:

(1) That mentioned by Irenaeus, and by some of the other fathers, that the name was derived from Nicolas, one of the deacons ordained at Antioch, Acts 6:5. Of those who have held this opinion, some have supposed that it was given to them because he became apostate and was the founder of the sect, and others because they assumed his name, in order to give the greater credit to their doctrine. But neither of these suppositions rests on any certain evidence, and beth are destitute of probability. There is no proof whatever that Nicolas the deacon ever apostatized from the faith, and became the founder of a sect; and if a name had been assumed, in order to give credit to a sect and extend its influence, it is much more probable that the name of an apostle would have been chosen, or of some other prominent man, than the name of an obscure deacon of Antioch.

(2) Vitringa, and most commentators since his time, have supposed that the name Nicolaitanes was intended to be symbolical, and was not designed to designate any sect of people, but to denote those who resembled Balaam, and that this word is used in the same manner as the word "Jezebel" in Revelation 2:20, which is supposed to be symbolical there. Vitringa supposes that the word is derived from νίκος nikos"victory," and λαός laos"people," and that thus it corresponds with the name Balaam, as meaning either בצל צם bàal`am"lord of the people," or בלץ צם baalà`am"he destroyed the people"; and that, as the same effect was produced by their doctrines as by those of Balaam, that the people were led to commit fornication and to join in idolatrous worship, they might be called

“Balaamites” or “Nicolaitanes,” that is, corrupters of the people. But to this it may be replied:

(a)that it is far-fetched, and is adopted only to remove a difficulty;

(b)that there is every reason to suppose that the word used here refers to a class of people who bore that name, and who were well known in the two churches specified;

(c)that in Revelation 2:15 they are expressly distinguished from those who held the doctrine of Balaam, Revelation 2:14, “So hast thou also (καὶ kai) those that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes.”

(3) it has been supposed that some person now unknown, probably of the name Nicolas, or Nicolaus, was their leader, and laid the foundation of the sect. This is by far the most probable opinion, and to this there can be no objection. It is in accordance with what usually occurs in regard to sects, orthodox or heretical, that they derive their origin from some person whose name they continue to bear; and as there is no evidence that this sect prevailed extensively, or was indeed known beyond the limits of these churches, and as it soon disappeared, it is easily accounted for that the character and history of the founder were so soon forgotten.

II. In regard to the opinions which they held, there is as little certainty. Irenaeus (Adv. Haeres. i., 26) says that their characteristic tenets were the lawfulness of promiscuous sexual intercourse with women, and of eating things offered to idols. Eusebius (Hist. Eccl. iii., 29) states substantially the same thing, and refers to a tradition respecting Nicolaus, that he had a beautiful wife, and was jealous of her, and being reproached with this, renounced all intercourse with her, and made use of an expression which was misunderstood, as implying that illicit pleasure was proper. Tertullian speaks of the Nicolaitanes as a branch of the Gnostic family, and as, in his time, extinct. Mosheim (De Rebus Christian Ante. Con. section 69) says that “the questions about the Nicolaitanes have difficulties which cannot be solved.” Neander (History of the Christian Religion, as translated by Torrey, vol. i, pp. 452,453) numbers them with Antinomians; though he expresses some doubt whether the actual existence of such a sect can be proved, and rather inclines to an opinion noticed above, that the name is symbolical, and that it is used in a mystical sense, according to the usual style of the Book of Revelation, to denote corrupters or seducers of the people, like Balaam. He supposes that the passage relates simply to a class of persons who were

in the practice of seducing Christians to participate in the sacrificial feasts of the pagans, and in the excesses which attended them - just as the Jews were led astray of old by the Moabites, Numbers 25.

What was the origin of the name, however, Neander does not profess to be able to determine, but suggests that it was the custom of such sects to attach themselves to some celebrated name of antiquity, in the choice of which they were often determined by circumstances quite accidental. He supposes also that the sect may have possessed a life of Nicolas of Antioch, drawn up by themselves or others from fabulous accounts and traditions, in which what had been imputed to Nicolas was embodied. Everything, however, in regard to the origin of this sect, and the reason of the name given to it, and the opinions which they held, is involved in great obscurity, and there is no hope of throwing light on the subject. It is generally agreed, among the writers of antiquity who have mentioned them, that they were distinguished for holding opinions which countenanced gross social indulgences. This is all that is really necessary to be known in regard to the passage before us, for this will explain the strong language of aversion and condemnation used by the Saviour respecting the sect in the epistles to the Churches of Ephesus and Pergamos.

Which I also hate - If the view above taken of the opinions and practices of this people is correct, the reasons why he hated them are obvious. Nothing can be more opposed to the personal character of the Saviour, or to his religion, than such doctrines and deeds.

Verse 7

He that hath an ear, let him hear … - This expression occurs at the close of each of the epistles addressed to the seven churches, and is substantially a mode of address often employed by the Saviour in his personal ministry, and quite characteristic of him. See Matthew 11:15; Mark 4:23; Mark 7:16. It is a form of expression designed to arrest the attention, and to denote that what was said was of special importance.

What the Spirit saith unto the churches - Evidently what the Holy Spirit says - for he is regarded in the Scriptures as the Source of inspiration, and as appointed to disclose truth to man. The "Spirit" may be regarded either as speaking through the Saviour (compare John 3:34), or as imparted to John, through whom he addressed the churches. In either case it is the same Spirit of inspiration, and in either case there would be a claim that his

voice should be heard. The language used here is of a general character - "He that hath an ear"; that is, what was spoken was worthy of the attention not only of the members of these churches, but of all others. The truths were of so general a character as to deserve the attention of mankind at large.

To him that overcometh - Greek, "To him that gains the victory, or is a conqueror" - τῷ νικῶντι tō nikōntiThis may refer to any victory of a moral character, and the expression used would be applicable to one who should triumph in any of these respects:

(a)over his own easily-besetting sins;

(b)over the world and its temptations;

(c)over prevalent error;

(d)over the ills and trials of life, so as, in all these respects, to show that his Christian principles are firm and unshaken.

Life, and the Christian life especially, may be regarded as a warfare. Thousands fall in the conflict with evil; but they who maintain a steady warfare, and who achieve a victory, shall be received as conquerors in the end.

Will I give to eat of the tree of life - As the reward of his victory. The meaning is, that he would admit him to heaven, represented as paradise, and permit him to enjoy its pleasures - represented by being permitted to partake of its fruits. The phrase "the tree of life" refers undoubtedly to the language used respecting the Garden of Eden, Genesis 2:9; Genesis 3:22 - where the "tree of life" is spoken of as what was adapted to make the life of man perpetual. Of the nature of that tree nothing is known, though it would seem probable that, like the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was a mere emblem of life - or a tree that was set before man in connection with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and that his destiny turned on the question whether he partook of the one or the other. That God should make the question of life or death depend on that, is no more absurd or improbable than that he should make it depend on what man does now - it being a matter of fact that life and death, happiness and misery, joy and sorrow, are often made to depend on things quite as arbitrary apparently, and quite as unimportant as an act of obedience or disobedience in partaking of the fruit of a designated tree.

Does it not appear probable that in Eden there were two trees designated to be of an emblematic character, of life and death, and that as man partook of the one or the other he would live or die? Of all the others he might freely partake without their affecting his condition; of one of these - the tree of life - he might have partaken before the fall, and lived forever. One was forbidden on pain of death. When the law forbidding that was violated, it was I still possible that he might partake of the other; but, since the sentence of death had been passed upon him, that would not now be proper, and he was driven from the garden, and the way was guarded by the flaming sword of the cherubim. The reference in the passage before us is to the celestial paradise - to heaven - spoken of under the beautiful image of a garden; meaning that the condition of man, in regard to life, will still be the same as if he had partaken of the tree of life in Eden. Compare the notes on Revelation 22:2.

Which is in the midst of the paradise of God - Heaven, represented as paradise. To be permitted to eat of that tree, that is, of the fruit of that tree, is but another expression implying the promise of eternal life, and of being happy forever. The word "paradise" is of Oriental derivation, and is found in several of the Eastern languages. In the Sanskrit the word "paradesha" and "paradisha" is used to denote a land elevated and cultivated; in the Armenian the word "pardes" denotes a garden around the house planted with grass, herbs, trees for use and ornament; and in the Hebrew form פרדס pardēcand Greek παράδεισος paradeisosit is applied to the pleasure gardens and parks, with wild animals, around the country residences of the Persian monarchs and princes, Nehemiah 2:8. Compare Ecclesiastes 2:5; Ca. Ecclesiastes 4:13; Xen. Cyro. i. 3,14 (Robinson's Lexicon). Here it is used to denote heaven - a world compared in beauty with a richly cultivated park or garden. Compare 2 Corinthians 12:4. The meaning of the Saviour is, that he would receive him that overcame to a world of happiness; that he would permit him to taste of the fruit that grows there, imparting immortal life, and to rest in an abode suited up in a manner that would contribute in every way to enjoyment. Man, when he fell, was not permitted to reach forth his hand and pluck of the fruit of the tree of life in the first Eden, as he might have done if he had not fallen; but he is now permitted to reach forth his hand and partake of the tree of life in the paradise above. He is thus restored to what he might have been if he had not transgressed by eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and in the Paradise Regained,

the blessings of the Paradise Lost will be more than recovered - for man may now live forever in a far higher and more blessed state than his would have been in Eden.

The Epistle to the Church at Smyrna

The contents of the epistle to the church at Smyrna are these:

(1) A statement, as in the address to the church at Ephesus, of some of the attributes of the Saviour, Revelation 2:8. The attributes here referred to are, that he was "the first and the last," that "he had been dead, but was alive" - attributes suited to impress the mind deeply with reverence for him who addressed them, and to comfort them in the trials which they endured.

(2) astatement Revelation 2:9, as in the former epistle, that he well knew their works and all that pertained to them - their tribulation, their poverty, and the opposition which they met with from wicked people.

(3) an exhortation not to be afraid of any of those things that were to come upon them, for, although they were to be persecuted, and some of them were to be imprisoned, yet, if they were faithful, they should have a crown of life, Revelation 2:10.

(4) acommand to hear what the Spirit said to the churches, as containing matter of interest to all persons, with an assurance that any who would "overcome" in these trials would not be hurt by the second death, Revelation 2:11. The language addressed to the church of Smyrna is throughout that of commiseration and comfort. There is no intimation that the Saviour disapproved of what they had done; there is no threat that he would remove the candle-stick out of its place. Smyrna was a celebrated commercial town of Ionia (Ptolem. v. 2), situated near the bottom of that gulf of the Aegean Sea which received its name from it (Mela, Revelation 1:17, Revelation 1:3), at the mouth of the small river Meles, 320 stadia, or about forty miles north of Ephesus (Strabo, 15, p. 632). It was a very ancient city; but having been destroyed by the Lydians, it lay waste four hundred years to the time of Alexander the Great, or, according to Strabo, to that of Antigonus. It was rebuilt at the distance of twenty stadia from the ancient city, and in the time of the first Roman emperor it was one of the most flourishing cities of Asia. It was destroyed by an earthquake, 177 a.d.,

but the emperor Marcus Aurelius caused it to be rebuilt with more than its former splendor.

It afterward, however, suffered greatly from earthquakes and conflagrations, and has declined from these causes, though, from its commercial advantages, it has always been a city of importance as the central emporium of the Levantine trade, and its relative rank among the cities of Asia Minor is probably greater than it formerly bore. The engraving in this vol. will give a representation of Smyrna. The Turks now call it Izmir. It is better built than Constantinople, and its population is computed at about 130,000, of which the Franks compose a greater proportion than in any other town in Turkey, and they are generally in good circumstances. Next to the Turks, the Greeks form the most numerous portion of the inhabitants, and they have a bishop and two churches. The unusually large portion of Christians in the city renders it especially unclean in the eyes of strict Moslems, and they call it Giaour Izmir, or the Infidel Smyrna. There are in it about 20,000 Greeks, 8,000 Armenians, 1,000 Europeans, and 9,000 Jews. It is now the seat of important missionary operations in the East, and much has been done there to spread the gospel in modern times.

Its history during the long tract of time since John wrote is not indeed minutely known, but there is no reason to suppose that the light of Christianity there has ever been wholly extinct. Polycarp suffered martyrdom there, and the place where he is supposed to have died is still shown. The Christians of Smyrna hold his memory in great veneration, and go annually on a visit to his supposed tomb, which is at a short distance from the place of his martyrdom. See the article "Smyrna" in Kitto's Cyclopedia, and the authorities referred to there.

Verse 8

And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write - On the meaning of the word "angel," see the notes on Revelation 1:20.

These things saith the first and the last - See the notes on Revelation 1:8, Revelation 1:17.

Which was dead, and is alive - See the notes on Revelation 1:18. The idea is, that he is a Living Saviour; and there was a propriety in referring to

that fact here from the nature of the promise which he was about to make to the church at Smyrna: "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death," Revelation 2:11. As he had himself triumphed over death in all its forms, and was now alive forever, it was appropriate that he should promise to his true friends the same protection from the second death. He who was wholly beyond the reach of death could give the assurance that they who put their trust in him should come off victorious.

Verse 9

I know thy works - The uniform method of introducing these epistles, implying a most intimate acquaintance with all that pertained to the church. See the notes on Revelation 2:2.

And tribulation - This word is of a general signification, and probably includes all that they suffered in any form, whether from persecution, poverty, or the blasphemy of opposers.

And poverty - It would seem that this church, at that time, was eminently poor, for this is not specified in regard to any one of the others. No reason is suggested why they were particularly poor. It was not, indeed, an uncommon characteristic of early Christians (compare 1 Corinthians 1:26-28), but there might have Been some special reasons why that church was eminently so. It is, however, the only church of the seven which has survived, and perhaps in the end its poverty was no disadvantage.

But thou art rich - Not in this world's goods, but in a more important respect - in the grace and favor of God. These things are not infrequently united. Poverty is no hindrance to the favor of God, and there are some things in it which are favorable to the promotion of a right spirit toward God which are not found where there is abundant wealth. The Saviour was eminently poor, and not a few of his most devoted and useful followers have had as little of this world's goods as he had. The poor should always be cheerful and happy, if they can hear their Saviour saying unto them, "I know thy poverty - but thou art rich." However keen the feeling arising from the reflection "I am a poor man," the edge of the sorrow is taken off if the mind can be turned to a brighter image - "but thou art rich."

And I know the blasphemy - The reproaches; the harsh and bitter revilings. On the word "blasphemy," see the notes on Matthew 9:3; Matthew 26:65. The word here does not seem to refer to blasphemy against God, but to bitter reproaches against themselves. The reason of these reproaches is not stated, but it was doubtless on account of their religion.

Of them which say they are Jews - Who profess to be Jews. The idea seems to be that though they were of Jewish extraction, and professed to be Jews, they were not true Jews; they indulged in a bitterness of reproach, and a severity of language, which showed that they had not the spirit of the Jewish religion; they had nothing which became those who were under the guidance of the spirit of their own Scriptures. That would have inculcated and fostered a milder temper; and the meaning here is, that although they were of Jewish origin, they were not worthy of the name. That spirit of bitter opposition was indeed often manifested in their treatment of Christians, as it had been of the Saviour, but still it was foreign to the true nature of their religion. There were Jews in all parts of Asia Minor, and the apostles often encountered them in their journeyings, but it would seem that there was something which had particularly embittered those of Smyrna against Christianity. What this was is now unknown.

It may throw some light on the passage, however, to remark that at a somewhat later period - in the time of the martyrdom of Polycarp - the Jews of Smyrna were among the most bitter of the enemies of Christians, and among the most violent in demanding the death of Polycarp. Eusebius (Eccl. Hist. 4:15) says,. that when Polycarp was apprehended, and brought before the proconsul at Smyrna, the Jews were the most furious of all in demanding his condemnation. When the mob, after his condemnation to death, set about gathering fuel to burn him, "the Jews," says he, "being especially zealous, as was their custom - μάλιστα προθύμως, ὡς ἔθος αὐτοῖς malista prothumōshōs ethos autois- ran to procure fuel." And when, as the burning failed, the martyr was transfixed with weapons, the Jews urged and besought the magistrate that his body might not be given up to Christians. Possibly at the time when this epistle was directed to be sent to Smyrna, there were Jews there who manifested the same spirit which those of their countrymen did afterward, who urged on the death of Polycarp.

But are the synagogue of Satan - Deserve rather to be called the synagogue of Satan. The synagogue was a Jewish place of worship (compare the notes on Matthew 4:23), but the word originally denoted "the assembly" or "the congregation." The meaning here is plain, that though they worshipped in a synagogue, and professed to be the worshippers of God, yet they were not worthy of the name, and deserved rather to be regarded as in the service of Satan. "Satan" is the word that is properly

applied to the great evil spirit, elsewhere called the devil. See the Luke 22:3 note, and Job 1:6 note.

Verse 10

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer - He did not promise them exemption from suffering. He saw that they were about to suffer, and he specifies the manner in which their affliction would occur. But he entreats and commands them not to be afraid. They were to look to the "crown of life," and to be comforted with the assurance that if they were faithful unto death, that would be, theirs. We need not dread suffering if we can hear the voice of the Redeemer encouraging us, and if he assures us that in a little while we shall have the crown of life.

Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison - Or, shall cause some of you to be cast into prison. He had just said that their persecutors were of the "synagogue of Satan." He here represents Satan, or the devil - another name of the same being - as about to throw them into prison. This would be done undoubtedly by the hands of men, but still Satan was the prime mover, or the instigator in doing it. It was common to cast those who were persecuted into prison. See Acts 12:3-4; Acts 16:23. It is not said on what pretence, or by what authority, this would be done; but, as John had been banished to Patmos from Ephesus, it is probable that this persecution was raging in the adjacent places, and there is no improbability in supposing that many might be thrown into prison.

That ye may be tried - That the reality of your faith may be subjected to a test to show whether it is genuine. The design in the case is that of the Saviour, though Satan is allowed to do it. It was common in the early periods of the church to suffer religion to be subjected to trial amidst persecutions, in order to show that it was of heavenly origin, and to demonstrate its value in view of the world. This is, indeed, one of the designs of trial at all times, but this seemed eminently desirable when a new system of religion was about to be given to mankind. Compare the notes on 1 Peter 1:6-7.

And ye shall have tribulation ten days - A short time; a brief period; a few days. It is possible, indeed, that this might have been literally ten days, but it is much more in accordance with the general character of this book, in regard to numbers, to suppose that the word "ten" here is used to denote a few. Compare Genesis 24:55; 1 Samuel 25:38; Daniel 1:12, Daniel 1:14. We are wholly ignorant how long the trial actually lasted; but the assurance

was that it would not be long, and they were to allow this thought to cheer and sustain them in their sorrows. Why should not the same thought encourage us now? Affliction in this life, however severe, can be but brief; and in the hope that it will soon end, why should we not bear it without complaining or repining?

Be thou faithful unto death - Implying, perhaps, that though, in regard to the church, the affliction would be brief, yet that it might be fatal to some of them, and they who were thus about to die should remain faithful to their Saviour until the hour of death. In relation to all, whether they were to suffer a violent death or not, the same injunction and the same promise was applicable. It is true of everyone who is a Christian, in whatever manner he is to die, that if he is faithful unto death, a crown of life awaits him. Compare the notes on 2 Timothy 4:8.

And I will give thee a crown of life - See the notes on James 1:12. Compare 1 Peter 5:4; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. The promise here is somewhat different from what was made to the faithful in Ephesus Revelation 2:7, but the same thing substantially is promised them - happiness hereafter, or an admission into heaven. In the former case it is the peaceful image of those admitted into the scenes of paradise; here it is the triumph of the crowned martyr.

Verse 11

He that hath an ear … - See the notes on Revelation 2:7.

He that overcometh - See the notes on Revelation 2:7. The particular promise here is made to him that should "overcome"; that is, that would gain the victory in the persecutions which were to come upon them. The reference is to him who would show the sustaining power of religion in times of persecution; who would not yield his principles when opposed and persecuted; who would be triumphant when so many efforts were made to induce him to apostatize and abandon the cause.

Shall not be hurt of the second death - By a second death. That is, he will have nothing to fear in the future world. The punishment of hell is often called death, not in the sense that the soul will cease to exist, but:

(a)because death is the most fearful thing of which we have any knowledge, and

(b)because there is a striking similarity, in many respects, between death and future punishment.

Death cuts off from life - and so the second death cuts off from eternal life; death puts an end to all our hopes here, and the second death to all our hopes forever; death is attended with terrors and alarms - the faint and feeble emblem of the terrors and alarms in the world of woe. The phrase, "the second death," is three times used elsewhere by John in this book Revelation 20:6, Revelation 20:14; Revelation 21:8, but does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The words "death" and "to die," however, are not infrequently used to denote the future punishment of the wicked.

The promise here made would be all that was necessary to sustain them in their trials. Nothing more is requisite to make the burdens of life tolerable than an assurance that, when we reach the end of our earthly journey, we have arrived at the close of suffering, and that beyond the grave there is no power that can harm us. Religion, indeed, does not promise to its friends exemption from death in one form. To none of the race has such a promise ever been made, and to but two has the favor been granted to pass to heaven without tasting death. It could have been granted to all the redeemed, but there were good reasons why it should not be; that is, why it would be better that even they who are to dwell in heaven should return to the dust, and sleep in the tomb, than that they should be removed by perpetual miracle, translating them to heaven. Religion, therefore, does not come to us with any promise that we shall not die. But it comes with the assurance that we shall be sustained in the dying hour; that the Redeemer will accompany us through the dark valley; that death to us will be a calm and quiet slumber, in the hope of awakening in the morning of the resurrection; that we shall be raised up again with bodies incorruptible and undecaying; and that beyond the grave we shall never fear death in any form. What more is needful to enable us to bear with patience the trials of this life, and to look upon death when it does come, disarmed as it is of its sting 1 Corinthians 15:55-57, with calmness and peace?

The Epistle to the Church at Pergamos

The contents of the epistle Revelation 2:12-17 are as follows:

(1)A reference, as is usual in these epistles, to some attribute of Him who addressed them, suited to inspire respect, and adapted to a state of things existing in the church, Revelation 2:12. That to which the Saviour here directs their attention is, that he has "the sharp sword with two edges" - implying Revelation 2:16 that he had the power of punishing.

(2)astatement, in the usual form, that he was thoroughly acquainted with the state of the church; that he saw all their difficulties; all that there was to commend, and all that there was to reprove, Revelation 2:13.

(3)acommendation to the church for its fidelity, especially in a time of severe persecution, when one of her faithful friends was slain, Revelation 2:13.

(4)A reproof of the church for tolerating some who held false and pernicious doctrines - doctrines such as were taught by Balaam, and the doctrines of the Nicolaitanes, Revelation 2:14-15.

(5)asolemn threat that, unless they repented, he would come against them, and inflict summary punishment on them, Revelation 2:16.

(6)the usual call upon all to hear what the Spirit says to the churches, and a promise to those who should overcome, Revelation 2:17.

Pergamos was a city in the southern part of Mysia, the capital of a kingdom of that name, and afterward of the Roman province of Asia Propria. It was on the bank of the river Caicus, which is formed by the union of two branches meeting thirty or forty miles above its mouth, and watering a valley not exceeded in beauty and fertility by any in the world. The city of Pergamos stood about twenty miles from the sea. It was on the northern bank of the river, at the base and on the declivity of two high and steep mountains. About two centuries before the Christian era, Pergamos became the residence of the celebrated kings of the family of Attals, and a seat of literature and the arts. King Eumenes, the second of the name, greatly beautified the town, and so increased the number of volumes in the library that they amounted to 200,000. This library remained at Pergamos after the kingdom of the Artali had lost its independence, until Antony removed it to Egypt, and presented it to Queen Cleopatra (Pliny, Hist. Nat. 3:2). It is an old tradition, that, as the papyrus plant had not begun to be exported from Egypt (Kitto), or as Ptolemy refused to sell it to Eumenes (Prof. Stuart), sheep and goat skins, prepared for the purpose, were used for manuscripts; and as the art of preparing them was brought to perfection at Pergamos, they, from that circumstance, obtained the name of “pergamena” (περγαμηνή pergamēnē) or “parchment.”

The last king of Pergamos bequeathed his treasures to the Romans, who took possession of the kingdom also, and created it into a province by the name of Asia Propria. Under the Romans, it retained that authority over the cities of Asia which it had acquired under the successors of Attalus. The present name of the place is Bergamos, and it is of considerable importance, containing a population of about 14,000, of whom about 3000 are Greeks, 300 Armenians, and the rest Turks. Macfarlane describes the approach to the town as very beautiful: "The approach to this ancient and decayed city was as impressive as well might be. After crossing the Caicus, I saw, looking over three vast tumuli, or sepulchral barrows, similar to those on the plains of Troy, the Turkish city of Pergamos, with its tall minarets, and its taller cypresses, situated on the lower declivities and at the foot of the Acropolis, whose bold gray brow was crowned by the rugged walls of a barbarous castle, the usurper of the site of a magnificent Greek temple. The town consists, for the most part, of small and mean wooden houses, among which appear the remains of early Christian churches. None of these churches have any scriptural or apocalyptic interest connected with them, having been erected several centuries after the ministry of the apostles, and when Christianity was not an humble and despised creed, but the adopted religion of a vast empire.

The pagan temples have fared worse than these Christian churches. The fanes of Jupiter and Diana, of Aesculapius and Venus, are prostrate in the dust; and where they have not been carried away by the Turks, to be cut up into tombstones or to pound into mortar, the Corinthian and Ionic columns, the splendid capitals, the cornices and the pediments, all in the highest ornament, are thrown into unsightly heaps" ("Visit to the Seven Apocalyptic Churches," 1832. Compare "Missionary Herald" for 1839, pp. 228-230). The engraving represents the ruins of one of the ancient churches in Pergamos.

Verse 12

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos - See the notes on Revelation 1:20.

These things saith he which hath the sharp sword, … - See the notes on Revelation 1:16. Compare Hebrews 4:12; Ecclesiastes 12:11; Isaiah 49:2. Prof. Stuart suggests that when the Saviour, as represented in the

vision, “uttered words, as they proceeded from his mouth, the halitus which accompanied them assumed, in the view of John, the form of an igneous two-edged sword.” It is more probable, however, that the words which proceeded from his mouth did not assume anything like a form or substance, but John means to represent them as if they were a sharp sword. His words cut and penetrate deep, and it was easy to picture him as having a sword proceeding from his mouth; that is, his words were as piercing as a sharp sword. As he was about to reprove the church at Pergamos, there was a propriety in referring to this power of the Saviour. Reproof cuts deep; and this is the idea represented here.

Verse 13

I know thy works - The uniform mode of addressing the seven churches in these epistles. See the notes on Revelation 2:2.

And where thou dwellest - That is, I know all the temptations to which you are exposed; all the allurements to sin by which you are surrounded; all the apologies which might be made for what has occurred arising from those circumstances; and all that could be said in commendation of you for having been as faithful as you have been. The sense of the passage is, that it does much to enable us to judge of character to know where people live. It is much more easy to be virtuous and pious in some circumstances than in others; and in order to determine how much credit is due to a man for his virtues, it is necessary to understand how much he has been called to resist, how many temptations he has encountered, what easily-besetting sins he may have, or what allurements may have been presented to his mind to draw him from the path of virtue and religion. In like manner, in order to judge correctly of those who have embraced error, or have been led into sin, it is necessary to understand what there may have been in their circumstances that gave to error what was plausible, and to sin what was attractive; what there was in their situation in life that exposed them to these influences, and what arguments may have been employed by the learned, the talented, and the plausible advocates of error, to lead them astray. We often judge harshly where the Saviour would be far less severe in his judgments; we often commend much where in fact there has been little to commend. It is possible to conceive that in the strugglings against evil of those who have ultimately fallen, there may be more to commend than in cases where the path of virtue has been pursued as the mere result of circumstances, and where there never has been a conflict with temptation.

The adjudications of the great day will do much to reverse the judgments of mankind.

Even where Satan‘s seat is - A place of special wickedness, as if Satan dwelt there. Satan is, as it were, enthroned there. The influence of Satan in producing persecution is what is particularly alluded to, as is apparent from the reference which is immediately made to the case of Antipas, the “faithful martyr.”

And thou holdest fast my name - They had professed the name of Christ; that is, they had professed to be his followers, and they had steadfastly adhered to him and his cause in all the opposition made to him. The name Cristian, given in honor of Christ, and indicating that they were his disciples, they had not been ashamed of or denied. It was this name that subjected the early Christians to reproach. See 1 Peter 4:14.

And hast not denied my faith - That is, hast not denied my religion. The great essential element in the Christian religion is faith, and this, since it is so important, is often put for the whole of religion.

Even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr - Of Antipas we know nothing more than is here stated. “In the Acta Sanctorum (2, pp. 3,4) is a martyrology of Antipas from a Greek ms.; but it is full of fable and fiction, which a later age had added to the original story” (Prof. Stuart, in loco).

Who was slain among you - It would seem from this that, though the persecution had raged there, but one person had been put to death. It would appear also that the persecution was of a local character, since Pergamos is described as “Satan‘s seat”; and the death of Antipas is mentioned in immediate connection with that fact. All the circumstances referred to would lead us to suppose that this was a popular outbreak, and not a persecution carried on under the authority of government, and that Antipas was put to death in a popular excitement. So Stephen Acts 14:19.

Where Satan dwelleth - The repetition of this idea - very much in the manner of John - showed how intensely the mind was fixed on the thought, and how much alive the feelings were to the malice of Satan as exhibited at Pergamos.

Verse 14

But I have a few things against thee - As against the church at Ephesus, Revelation 2:4. The charge against this church, however, is somewhat different from that against the church at Ephesus. The charge

there was, that they had "left their first love"; but it is spoken in commendation of them that they "hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes," Revelation 2:6. Here the charge is, that they tolerated that sect among them, and that they had among them also those who held the doctrine of Balaam. Their general course had been such that the Saviour could approve it; he did not approve, however, of their tolerating those who held to pernicious practical error - error that tended to sap the very foundation of morals.

Because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam - It is not necessary to suppose that they professedly held to the same opinion as Balaam, or openly taught the same doctrines. The meaning is, that they taught substantially the same doctrine which Balaam did, and deserved to be classed with him. What that doctrine was is stated in the subsequent part of the verse.

Who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel - The word "stumbling-block" properly means anything over which one falls or stumbles, and then anything over which anyone may fall into sin, or which becomes the occasion of one's falling into sin. The meaning here is, that it was through the instructions of Balaam that Balak learned the way by which the Israelites might be led into sin, and might thus bring upon themselves the divine malediction. The main circumstances in the case were these:

(1) Balak, king of Moab, when the children of Israel approached his borders, felt that he could not contend successfully against so great a host, for his people were dispirited and disheartened at their numbers, Numbers 22:3-4.

(2) in these circumstances he resolved to send for one who had a distinguished reputation as a prophet, that he might "curse" that people, or might utter a malediction over them, in order, at the same time, to ensure their destruction, and to inspirit his own people in making war on them: in accordance with a prevalent opinion of ancient times, that prophets had the power of blighting anything by their curse. Compare the notes on Job 3:8. For this purpose he sent messengers to Balaam to invite him to come and perform this service, Numbers 22:5-6.

(3) Balaam professed to be a prophet of the Lord, and it was obviously proper that he should inquire of the Lord whether he should comply with

this request. He did so, and was positively forbidden to go, Numbers 22:12.

(4) when the answer of Balaam was reported to Balak, he supposed that he might be prevailed to come by the offer of rewards, and he sent more distinguished messengers with an offer of ample honor if he would come, Numbers 22:15-17.

(5) Balaam was evidently strongly inclined to go, but, in accordance with his character as a prophet, he said that if Balak would give him his house full of silver and gold he could do no more, and say no more, than the Lord permitted, and he proposed again to consult the Lord, to see if he could obtain permission to go with the messengers of Balak. He obtained permission, but with the express injunction that he was only to utter what God should say; and when he came to Balak, notwithstanding his own manifest desire to comply with the wish of Balak, and notwithstanding all the offers which Balak made to him to induce him to do the contrary, he only continued to bless the Hebrew people, until, in disgust and indignation, Balak sent him away again to his own land, Numbers 24:10 ff.

(6) Balaam returned to his own house, but evidently with a desire still to gratify Balak. Being forbidden to curse the people of Israel; having been overruled in all his purposes to do it; having been, contrary to his own desires, constrained to bless them when he was himself more than willing to curse them; and having still a desire to comply with the wishes of the King of Moab, he cast about for some way in which the object might yet he accomplished - that is, in which the curse of God might in fact rest upon the Hebrew people, and they might become exposed to the divine displeasure. To do this, no way occurred so plausible, and that had such probability of success, as to lead them into idolatry, and into the sinful and corrupt practices connected with idolatry. It was, therefore, resolved to make use of the charms of the females of Moab, that through their influence the Hebrews might be drawn into licentiousness. This was done. The abominations of idolatry spread through the camp of Israel; licentiousness everywhere prevailed, and God sent a plague upon them to punish them, Numbers 25:1 ff. That also this was planned and instigated by Balaam is apparent from Numbers 31:16; “Behold these (women) caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the

Lord, in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord." The attitude of Balaam's mind in the matter was this:

I. He had a strong desire to do what he knew was wrong, and which was forbidden expressly by God.

II. He was restrained by internal checks and remonstrances, and prevented from doing what he wished to do.

III. He cast about for some way in which he might do it, notwithstanding these internal checks and remonstrances, and finally accomplished the same thing in fact, though in form different from that which he had first prepared. This is not an unfair description of what often occurs in the plans and purposes of a wicked man. The meaning in the passage before us is, that in the church at Pergamos there were those who taught, substantially, the same thing that Balaam did; that is, the tendency of whose teaching was to lead people into idolatry, and the ordinary accompaniment of idolatry - licentiousness.

To eat things sacrificed unto idols - Balaam taught the Hebrews to do this - perhaps in some way securing their attendance on the riotous and gluttonous feasts of idolatry celebrated among the people among whom they sojourned. Such feasts were commonly held in idol temples, and they usually led to scenes of dissipation and corruption. By plausibly teaching that there could be no harm in eating what had been offered in sacrifice - since an idol was nothing, and the flesh of animals offered in sacrifice was the same as if slaughtered for some other purpose, it would seem that these teachers at Pergamos had induced professing Christians to attend on those feasts - thus lending their countenance to idolatry, and exposing themselves to all the corruption and licentiousness that commonly attended such celebrations. See the banefulness of thus eating the meat offered in sacrifice to idols considered in the notes on Acts 15:20.

Verse 15

So hast thou also them … - That is, there are those among you who hold those doctrines. The meaning here may be, either that, in addition to those who held the doctrine of Balaam, they had also another class who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes; or that the Nicolaitanes held the same doctrine, and taught the same thing as Balaam. If but one class is referred

to, and it is meant that the Nicolaitanes held the doctrines of Balaam, then we know what constituted their teaching; if two classes of false teachers are referred to, then we have no means of knowing what was the uniqueness of the teaching of the Nicolaitanes. The more natural and obvious construction, it seems to me, is to suppose that the speaker means to say that the Nicolaitanes taught the same things which Balaam did - to wit, that they led the people into corrupt and licentious practices. This interpretation seems to be demanded by the proper use of the word "so" - οὕτως houtōs- meaning, "in this manner on this wise, thus"; and usually referring to what precedes. If this be the correct interpretation, then we have, in fact, a description of what the Nicolaitanes held, agreeing with all the accounts given of them by the ancient fathers. See the notes on Revelation 2:6. If this is so, also, then it is clear that the same kind of doctrines was held at Smyrna, at Pergamos, and at Thyatira Revelation 2:20, though mentioned in somewhat different forms. It is not quite certain, however, that this is the correct interpretation, or that the writer does not mean to say that, in addition to those who held the doctrine of Balaam, they had also another class of errorists who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes.

Which thing I hate - So the common Greek text - ὅ μισῶ ho misōBut the best-supported reading, and the one adopted by Griesbach, Tittmann, and Hahn, is ὁμοίως homoiōs- "in like manner"; that is, "as Balak retained a false prophet who misled the Hebrews, so thou retainest those who teach things like to those which Balaam taught."

Verse 16

Repent - See Revelation 2:5.

Or else I will come unto thee quickly - On the word "quickly," see the notes on Revelation 1:1. The meaning here is, that he would come against them in judgment, or to punish them.

And will fight against them - Against the Nicolaitanes. He would come against the church for tolerating them, but his opposition would be principally directed against the Nicolaitanes themselves. The church would excite his displeasure by retaining them in its bosom, but it was in its power to save them from destruction. If the church would repent, or if it would separate itself from the evil, then the Saviour would not come against them. If this were not done, they would feel the vengeance of his sword, and be subjected to punishment. The church always suffers when it has offenders

in its bosom; it has the power of saving them if it will repent of its own unfaithfulness, and will strive for their conversion.

With the sword of my mouth - notes on Revelation 1:16; Revelation 2:12. That is, he would give the order, and they would be cut as if by a sword. Precisely in what way it would be done he does not say; but it might be by persecution, or by heavy judgments. To see the force of this, we are to remember the power which Christ has to punish the wicked by a word of his mouth. By a word in the last day he will turn all the wicked into hell.

Verse 17

He that hath an ear … - notes on Revelation 2:7.

To him that overcometh - notes on Revelation 2:7.

Will I give to eat of the hidden manna - The true spiritual food; the food that nourishes the soul. The idea is, that the souls of those who "overcame," or who gained the victory in their conflict with sin, and in the persecutions and trials of the world, would be permitted to partake of that spiritual food which is laid up for the people of God, and by which they will be nourished forever. The Hebrews were supported by manna in the desert Exodus 16:32-34; it is called "angels' food" Psalm 78:25, and "corn of heaven" Psalm 78:24; and it would seem to have been emblematical of that spiritual food by which the people of God are to be fed from heaven, in their journey through this world. By the word "hidden," there would seem to be an allusion to what was laid up in the pot before the ark of the testimony, and the blessing which is promised here is that they would be nourished as if they were sustained by that manna thus laid up before the ark: by food from the immediate presence of God. The language thus explained would mean that they who overcome will be nourished through this life as if by that "hidden manna"; that is, that they will be supplied all along through the "wilderness of this world" by that food from the immediate presence of God which their souls require.

As the parallel places in the epistles to the churches, however, refer rather to the heavenly world, and to the rewards which they who are victors shall have there, it seems probable that this has immediate reference to that world also, and that the meaning is, that, as the most holy place was a type of heaven, they will be admitted into the immediate presence of God, and nourished forever by the food of heaven - what the angels have; what the soul will need to sustain it there. Even in this world their souls may be

nourished with this “hidden manna”; in heaven it will be their constant food forever.

And will give him a white stone - There has been a great variety of opinion in regard to the meaning of this expression, and almost no two expositors agree. Illustrations of its meaning have been sought from Grecian, Hebrew, and Roman customs, but none of these have removed all difficulty from the expression. The general sense of the language seems plain, even though the allusion on which it is founded is obscure, or even unknown. It is, that the Saviour would give him who overcame a token of his favor which would have some word or name inscribed on it, and which would be of use to him alone, or intelligible to him only: that is, some secret token which would make him sure of the favor of his Redeemer, and which would be unknown to other people. The idea here would find a correspondence in the evidences of his favor granted to the soul of the Christian himself; in the pledge of heaven thus made to him, and which he would understand, but which no one else would understand,

The things, then, which we are to look for in the explanation of the emblem are two - what would thus be a token of his favor, and what would explain the fact that it would be intelligible to no one else. The question is, whether there is any known thing pertaining to ancient customs which would convey those ideas. The word rendered “stone” - ψῆφον psēphon- means, properly, a small stone, as worn smooth by water - a gravel-stone, a pebble; then any polished stone, the stone of a gem, or ring (Robinson‘s Lexicon). Such a stone was used among the Greeks for various purposes, and the word came to have a signification corresponding to these uses. The following uses are enumerated by Dr. Robinson, Lexicon: the “stones,” or “counters” for reckoning; “dice,” “lots,” used in a kind of magic; a vote, spoken of the black and white stones or pebbles anciently used in voting - that is, the white for approval, and the black for condemning.

In regard to the use of the word here, some have supposed that the reference is to a custom of the Roman emperors, who, in the games and spectacles which they gave to the people in imitation of the Greeks, are said to have thrown among the populace dice or tokens inscribed with the words, “Frumentum, vestes,” etc.; that is, “Corn, clothing,” etc.; and whosoever obtained one of these received from the emperor whatever was marked upon it. Others suppose that allusion is made to the mode of casting lots, in

which sometimes dice or tokens were used with names inscribed on them, and the lot fell to him whose name first came out. The “white stone” was a symbol of good fortune and prosperity; and it is a remarkable circumstance that, among the Greeks, persons of distinguished virtue were said to receive a ψῆφον psēphon“stone,” from the gods, that is, as an approving testimonial of their virtue.

See Robinson‘s Lexicon, and the authorities there referred to; Wetstein, New Testament, in loco, and Stuart, in leto. Prof. Stuart supposes that the allusion is to the fact that Christians are said to be kings and priests to God, and that as the Jewish high priest had a mitre or turban, on the front of which was a plate of gold inscribed “Holiness to the Lord,” so they who were kings and priests under the Christian dispensation would have that by which they would be known, but that, instead of a plate of gold, they would have a pellucid stone, on which the name of the Saviour would be engraved as a token of his favor. It is possible, in regard to the explanation of this phrase, that there has been too much effort to find all the circumstances alluded to in some ancient custom. Some well-understood fact or custom may have suggested the general thought, and then the filling up may have been applicable to this case alone. It is quite clear, I think, that none of the customs to which it has been supposed there is reference correspond fully with what is stated here, and that though there may have been a general allusion of that kind, yet something of the particularity in the circumstances may be regarded as unique to this alone. In accordance with this view, perhaps the following points will embody all that need be said:

(1) A white stone was regarded as a token of favor, prosperity, or success everywhere - whether considered as a vote, or as given to a victor, etc. As such, it would denote that the Christian to whom it is said to be given would meet with the favor of the Redeemer, and would have a token of his approval.

(2) the name written on this stone would be designed also as a token or pledge of his favor - as a name engraved on a signet or seal would be a pledge to him who received it of friendship. It would be not merely a white stone - emblematic of favor and approval - but it would be so marked as to indicate its origin, with the name of the giver on it. This would

appropriately denote, when explained, that the victor Christian would receive a token of the Redeemer‘s favor, as if his name were engraven on a stone, and given to him as a pledge of his friendship; that is, that he would be as certain of his favor as if he had such a stone. In other words, the victor would be assured from the Redeemer, who distributes rewards, that his welfare would be secure.

(3) this would be to him as if he should receive a stone so marked that its letters were invisible to all others, but apparent to him who received it. It is not needful to suppose that in the Olympic games, or in the prizes distributed by Roman emperors, or in any other custom, such a case had actually occurred, but it is conceivable that a name might be so engraved - with characters so small, or in letters so unknown to all others or with marks so unintelligible to others - that no other one into whose hands it might fall would understand it. The meaning then probably is, that to the true Christian - the victor over sin - there is given some pledge of the divine favor which has to him all the effect of assurance, and which others do not perceive or understand. This consists of favors shown directly to the soul - the evidence of pardoned sin; joy in the Holy Spirit; peace with God; clear views of the Saviour; the possession of a spirit which is properly that of Christ, and which is the gift of God to the soul. The true Christian understands this; the world perceives it not. The Christian receives it as a pledge of the divine favor, and as an evidence that he will be saved; to the world, that on which he relies seems to be enthusiasm, fanaticism, or delusion. The Christian bears it about with him as he would a precious stone given to him by his Redeemer, and on which the name of his Redeemer is engraved, as a pledge that he is accepted of God, and that the rewards of heaven shall be his; the world does not understand it, or attaches no value to it.

And in the stone a new name written - A name indicating a new relation, new hopes and triumphs. Probably the name here referred to is the name of the Redeemer, or the name Christian, or some such appellation. It would be some name which he would understand and appreciate, and which would be a pledge of acceptance.

Which no man knoweth, … - That is, no one would understand its import, as no one but the Christian estimates the value of that on which he relics as the pledge of his Redeemer‘s love.

The Epistle to the Church at Thyatira

The contents of this epistle Revelation 2:18-29 are as follows:

(1) A reference, as is usual in these epistles, to some attribute of the Saviour which demanded their particular attention, or which was especially appropriate to the nature of the message which he was about to send to them, Revelation 2:18. The attributes which he fixes on here are, that his eyes are like a flame of fire - as if they would pierce and penetrate to the recesses of the heart; and that his feet are like fine brass - perhaps indicative of majesty as he moved among the churches.

(2) astatement, in the usual form, that he was entirely acquainted with the church, and that therefore the judgment which he was about to pronounce was founded on a thorough knowledge of what the church was; and a general commendation of them for their charity, service, faith, and patience, Revelation 2:19.

(3) asevere reproof of the church, notwithstanding, for their tolerating a teacher of dangerous doctrine, whom he calls Jezebel, with the assurance that she and her children should not go unpunished, Revelation 2:20-23.

(4) an assurance to all the rest in Thyatira that no other calamity or burden would come upon the church than what was inevitable in delivering it from the dangerous influence of these doctrines, and a solemn charge to them to hold fast all the truth which they had until he should come, Revelation 2:24-25.(5) A promise, as usual, to those who should overcome, or who should be victorious, Revelation 2:26-29. They would have power over the nations; they would be associated with the Redeemer in ruling them; they would have the morning star.

(6) acall, as usual, on all who had ears to hear, to attend to what the Spirit said to the churches.

Thyatira was a city of Asia Minor, on the northern border of Lydia, and commonly reckoned as belonging to Lydia. It was about twenty-seven miles from Sardis; about a day‘s journey from Pergamos, and about the same distance from the seacoast. Its modern name is Ak-hissar, or the white castle. According to Pliny, it was known in earlier times by the name of

Pelopia (Hist. Nat. v. 29). Strabo (xiii. p. 928) says that it was a Macedonian colony. The Roman road from Pergames to Sardis passed through it. It was noted for the art of dyeing Acts 16:14, and Luke‘s account in the Acts has been confirmed by the discovery of an inscription in honor of Antonius Claudius Alphenus, which concludes with the words οἱ βαφεῖς hoibafeis- the dyers.

Pliny Fisk, the American missionary, who visited the city, thus describes it: “Thyatira is situated near a small river, a branch of the Caicus, in the center of an extensive plain. At the distance of three or four miles it is almost completely surrounded by mountains. The houses are low; many of them made of mud or earth. Excepting the motsellim‘s palace, there is scarcely a decent house in the place. The streets are narrow and dirty, and everything indicates poverty and degradation. We had a letter of introduction to Economo, the bishop‘s procurator, and a principal man among the Greeks of this town … He says the Turks have destroyed all remnants of the ancient church; and even the place where it stood is now unknown. At present there are in the town one thousand houses, for which taxes are paid to the government” (Memoir of P. Fisk; Boston, Mass., 1828).

The following description, by Mr. Schneider, missionary of the American Board, will give a correct view of Thyatira, as it existed in 1848: “From Magnesia we proceeded to Thyatira, the site of one of the Apocalyptic churches, now called Ak-hissar. The population consists of about 700 Mussulman houses, 250 Greek houses, and 50 Armenian houses (circa 1850‘s). The town is located in a plain of considerable size, and is hardly visible on being approached, by reason of the profusion of foliage. The plain itself is bounded on all sides by mountains, and cotton and a kind of reddish root (madder), used for dyeing red, are raised abundantly. I observed that this root is extensively cultivated in all that region, and forms an important article of export to England, where it is used for dyeing purposes. In Acts 16:14 we read of Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira. May not this root be the very article with which her purple was colored, which she was selling at Philippi, when the Lord opened her heart to attend to the things spoken by Paul? It seems to me probable. But, if it

was so, this art of coloring appears to have been lost, for I could not find that it is now at all practiced in that place or that region.

"The Christian traveler and missionary naturally looks for something interesting in a place where once existed a true church of Christ. But, alas! how sadly is he disappointed! The place presents an appearance in nothing different from other Turkish towns. Everything wears a Mussulman aspect. The houses, streets, dress, occupation, and language of the inhabitants all indicate a predominating Turkish influence. Christianity exists there in name, but it is the bare name. Its spirit has long since fled. The Greeks, especially, seem to be especially superstitious. I visited their church, and found it full of pictures and other marks of degenerate Christianity. A long string of these images, extending from one side of the church to the other, was suspended so low as to permit the worshipper to approach and kiss them; and so frequently had this adoration been bestowed on them, that all appeared soiled from the frequent contact of the lips. Over the entrance of the church I observed a representation of a grave old man, with a silvery beard, surrounded by angels. Suspecting the object designed to be shadowed forth, I inquired of a lad standing by what that figure meant. He instantly replied, ‹It is God.‘ I observed two similar representations of the Deity in the interior of the church. The churchyard is used as a burying-place; but only those whose friends are able to pay for the privilege of entombing their dead can enjoy it. Candles are lighted at the heads of the graves in the night, and incense is often burned. When the process of decay has proceeded so far as to leave nothing but the bones, these are taken up and thrown into a sealed vault, over which a chapel is suited up, in which mass is said over these relics of the dead for the benefit of their souls! A feeling of abhorrence came over me as I stood in the place where such abominations are committed.

"The Armenians are far less superstitious. Comparatively only a few pictures are to be seen in their church, and three or four individuals are more or less enlightened, and in an inquiring state of mind. We had a long interview with one of them, the teacher, and left some books with him. I am not without hopes that a little gospel leaven has been deposited here, the effects of which will appear at some future day" (Miss. Herald, Feb. 1848).

The engraving in this volume will give a representation of this city as it now exists.

Verse 18

And unto the angel of the church - See the notes on Revelation 1:20.

These things saith the Son of God - This is the first time, in these epistles, that the name of the speaker is referred to. In each other instance there is merely some attribute of the Saviour mentioned. Perhaps the severity of the rebuke contemplated here made it proper that there should be a more impressive reference to the authority of the speaker; and hence he is introduced as the "Son of God." It is not a reference to him as the "Son of man "the common appellation which he gave to himself when on earth - for that might have suggested his humanity only, and would not have conveyed the same impression in regard to his authority; but it is to himself as sustaining the rank, and having the authority, of the Son of God - one who, therefore, has a right to speak, and a right to demand that what he says shall be heard.

Who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire - Compare the notes on Revelation 1:14. Before the glance of his eye all is light, and nothing can be concealed from his view. Nothing would be better suited to inspire awe then, as nothing should be now, than such a reference to the Son of God as being able to penetrate the secret recesses of the heart.

And his feet are like fine brass - See the notes on Revelation 1:15. Perhaps indicative of majesty and glory as he walked in the midst of the churches.

Verse 19

I know thy works - See the notes on Revelation 2:2. He knew all they had done, good and bad.

And charity - Love; love to God, and love to man. There is no reason for restricting this word here to the comparatively narrow sense which it now bears. Compare the notes on 1 Corinthians 13:1.

And service - Greek, "ministry" - διακονίαν diakonianThe word would seem to include all the service which the church had rendered in the cause of religion; all which was the proper fruit of love, or which would be a carrying out of the principles of love to God and man.

And faith - Or, fidelity in the cause of the Redeemer. The word here would include not only trust in Christ for salvation, but what is the proper

result of such trust - fidelity in his service.

And thy patience - Patient endurance of the sorrows of life - of all that God brought upon them in any way, to test the reality of their religion.

And thy works - Thy works as the fruit of the virtues just mentioned. The word is repeated here, from the first part of the verse, perhaps to specify more particularly that their works had been recently more numerous and praiseworthy even than they had formerly been. In the beginning of the verse, as in the commencement of each of the epistles, the word is used, in the most general sense, to denote all that they had done; meaning that he had so thorough an acquaintance with them in all respects that he could judge of their character. In the latter part of the verse the word seems to be used in a more specific sense, as referring to good works, and with a view to say that they had latterly abounded in these more than they had formerly.

And the last to be more than the first - Those which had been recently performed were more numerous, and more commendable, than those which had been rendered "formerly." That is, they were making progress; they had been acting more and more in accordance with the nature and claims of the Christian profession. This is a most honorable commendation, and one which every Christian, and every church, should seek. Religion in the soul, and in a community, is designed to be progressive; and while we should seek to live in such a manner always that we may have the commendation of the Saviour, we should regard it as a thing to be greatly desired that we may be approved as making advances in knowledge and holiness; that as we grow in years we may grow alike in the disposition to do good, and in the ability to do it; that as we gain in experience, we may also gain in a readiness to apply the results of our experience in promoting the cause of religion. He would deserve little commendation in religion who should be merely stationary; he alone properly develops the nature of true piety, and shows that it has set up its reign in the soul, who is constantly making advances.

Verse 20

Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee - Compare notes on Revelation 2:4.

Because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel - Thou dost tolerate, or countenance her. Compare the notes on Revelation 2:14. Who the individual here referred to by the name Jezebel was, is not known. It is by no means probable that this was her real name, but seems to have been given to her as

expressive of her character and influence. Jezebel was the wife of Ahab; a woman of vast influence over her husband - an influence which was uniformly exerted for evil. She was a daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre and Sidon, and lived about 918 years before Christ. She was an idolater, and induced her weak husband not only to connive at her introducing the worship of her native idols, but to become an idolater himself, and to use all the means in his power to establish the worship of idols instead of the worship of the true God. She was highly gifted, persuasive, and artful; was resolute in the accomplishment of her purposes; ambitious of extending and perpetuating her power, and unscrupulous in the means which she employed to execute her designs. See 1 Kings 16:31 ff.

The kind of character, therefore, which would be designated by the term as used here, would be that of a woman who was artful and persuasive in her manner; who was capable of exerting a wide influence over others; who had talents of a high order; who was a thorough advocate of error; who was unscrupulous in the means which she employed for accomplishing her ends; and the tendency of whose influence was to lead the people into the abominable practices of idolatry. The opinions which she held, and the practices into which she led others, appear to have been the same which are referred to in Revelation 2:6 and Revelation 2:14-15 of this chapter. The difference was, that the teacher in this case was a woman - a circumstance which by no means lessened the enormity of the offence; for, besides the fact that it was contrary to the whole genius of Christianity that a woman should be a public teacher, there was a special incongruity that she should be an advocate of such abominable opinions and practices. Every sentiment of our nature makes us feel that it is right to expect that if a woman teaches at all in a public manner, she should inculcate only what is true and holy - she should be an advocate of a pure life. We are shocked; we feel that there is a violation of every principle of our nature, and an insult done to our common humanity, if it is otherwise. We have in a manner become accustomed to the fact that man should be a teacher of pollution and error, so that we do not shrink from it with horror; we never can be reconciled to the fact that a woman should.

Which calleth herself a prophetess - Many persons set up the claim to be prophets in the times when the gospel was first preached, and it is not improbable that many females would lay claim to such a character, after the example of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, etc.

To teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication - Compare Revelation 2:14. Whether she herself practiced what she taught is not expressly affirmed, but seems to be implied in Revelation 2:22. It is not often that persons teach these doctrines without practicing what they teach; and the fact that they desire and design to live in this manner will commonly account for the fact that they inculcate such views.

And to eat things sacrificed unto idols - See the notes on Revelation 2:14. The custom of attending on the festivals of idols led commonly to licentiousness, and they who were gross and sensual in their lives were fit subjects to be persuaded to attend on idol feasts - for nowhere else would they find more unlimited toleration for the indulgence of their passions.

Verse 21

And I gave her space to repent of her fornication - Probably after some direct and solemn warning of the evil of her course. The error and sin had been of long standing, but he now resolved to bear with it no longer. It is true of almost every great sinner, that sufficient time is given for repentance, and that vengeance is delayed after crime is committed. But it cannot always be deferred, for the period must arrive when no reason shall exist for longer delay, and when punishment must come upon the offender.

And she repented not - As she did not do it; as she showed no disposition to abandon her course; as all plea of having had no time to repent would now be taken away, it was proper that he should rise in his anger and cut her down.

Verse 22

Behold, I will cast her into a bed - Not into a bed of ease, but a bed of pain. There is evidently a purpose to contrast this with her former condition. The harlot‘s bed and a sick-bed are thus brought together, as they are often, in fact, in the dispensations of Providence and the righteous judgments of God. One cannot be indulged without leading on, sooner or later, to the horrid sufferings of the other: and how soon no one knows.

And them that commit adultery with her - Those who are seduced by her doctrines into this sin; either they who commit it with her literally, or who are led into the same kind of life.

Into great tribulation - Great suffering; disease of body or tortures of the soul. How often - how almost uniformly is this the case with those who thus live! Sooner or later, sorrow always comes upon the licentious; and God has evinced by some of his severest judgments, in forms of frightful

disease, his displeasure at the violation of the laws of purity. There is no sin that produces a mere withering and desolating effect upon the soul than what is here referred to; none which is more certain to be followed with sorrow.

Except they repent of their deeds - It is only by repentance that we can avoid the consequences of sin. The word "repent" here evidently includes both sorrow for the past, and abandonment of the evil course of life.

Verse 23

And I will kill her children with death - A strong Hebraistic mode of expression, meaning that he would certainly destroy them. It has been made a question whether the word "children" here is to be taken literally or figuratively. The word itself would admit of either interpretation; and there is nothing in the connection by which its meaning here can be determined. If it is to be taken literally, it is in accordance with what is often threatened in the Scriptures, that children shall be visited with calamity for the sins of parents, and with what often occurs in fact, that they do thus suffer. For it is no uncommon thing that whole families are made desolate on account of the sin and folly of the parent. See the notes on Romans 5:19. If it is to be taken figuratively, then it refers to those who had imbibed her doctrines, and who, of course, would suffer in the punishment which would follow from the propagation of such doctrines. The reference in the word "death" here would seem to be to some heavy judgment, by plague, famine, or sword, by which they would be cut off.

And all the churches shall know, … - That is, the design of this judgment will be so apparent that it will convince all that I know what is in the hearts of people, even the secret acts of wickedness that are concealed from human view.

I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts - This is clearly a claim to omniscience; and as it is the Lord Jesus who speaks in all these epistles, it is a full proof that he claims this for himself. There is nothing which more clearly pertains to God than the power of searching the heart, and nothing that is more constantly claimed by him as his special prerogative, 1 Chronicles 28:9; Psalm 7:9; Psalm 11:4; Psalm 44:21; Psalm 139:2; Proverbs 15:3; Jeremiah 11:20; Jeremiah 17:10; Jeremiah 20:12; Jeremiah 32:19; Hebrews 4:13. The word "reins" - νεφροὺς nephrous- means, literally, "the kidney," and is commonly used in the plural to denote the kidneys, or the loins. In the Scriptures it is used to denote the inmost mind,

the secrets of the soul; probably because the parts referred to by the word are as hidden as any other part of the frame, and would seem to be the repository of the more secret affections of the mind. It is not to be supposed that it is taught in the Scriptures that the reins are the real seat of any of the affections or passions; but there is no more impropriety in using the term in a popular signification than there is in using the word "heart," which all continue to use, to denote the seat of love.

And I will give unto every one of you according to your works - To every one of you; not only to those who have embraced these opinions, but to all the church. This is the uniform rule laid down in the Bible by which God will judge people.

Verse 24

But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira - The word - "and" - καὶ kai- is omitted in many mss. and versions, and in the critical editions of Griesbach, Tittmann, and Hahn, and the connection demands that it should be omitted. As it stands in the received text, it would seem that what he here says was addressed to those who had received that doctrine, and to all others as well as to them; whereas the declaration here made pertains manifestly to those who had not received the doctrine. With that particle omitted the passage will read, as rendered by Prof. Stuart, "But I say unto you, the remainder in Thyatira, so many as hold not this doctrine," etc. That is, he addresses now all the members of the church who were not involved in the charges already made. He does not say how large a portion of the church had escaped the contaminating influence of those opinions, but to that portion, whether great or small, he addresses only words of exhortation and comfort.

As many as have not this doctrine - To all who have not embraced it, or been contaminated with it. It may be presumed that there was a considerable portion of the church which had not.

And which have not known the depths of Satan - The deep art and designs of Satan. Deep things are those which are hidden from view - as of things which are far underground; and hence the word is used to denote mysteries, or profound designs and purposes. The allusion here is not to any trials or sufferings that Satan might bring upon anyone, or to any temptations of which he might be the author, but to his profound art in inculcating error and leading people astray. There are doctrines of error, and arguments for sin, to originate which seems to lie beyond the power of

people, and which would appear almost to have exhausted the talent of Satan himself. They evince such a profound knowledge of man; of the divine government; of the course of events on earth; and of what our race needs; and they are defended with so much eloquence, skill, learning, and subtlety of argumentation, that they appear to lie beyond the compass of the human powers.

As they speak - This cannot mean that the defenders of these errors themselves called their doctrines "the depths of Satan," for no teachers would choose so to designate their opinions; but it must mean, either that they who were opposed to those errors characterized them as "the depths of Satan," or that they who opposed them said that they had not known "the depths of Satan." Prof. Stuart understands it in the latter sense. A somewhat more natural interpretation, it seems to me, however, is to refer it to what the opposers of these heretics said of these errors. They called them "the depths of Satan," and they professed not to have known anything of them. The meaning, perhaps, would be expressed by the familiar words, "as they say," or "as they call them," in the following manner: "As many as have not known the depths of Satan, as they say," or, "to use their own language." Doddridge paraphrases it, "as they proverbially speak." Tyndale encloses it in a parenthesis.

I will put upon you none other burden - That is, no other than that which you now experience from having these persons with you, and that which must attend the effort to purify the church. He had not approved their conduct for suffering these persons to remain in the church, and he threatens to punish all those who had become contaminated with these pernicious doctrines. He evidently designed to say that there was some token of his displeasure proper in the case, but he was not disposed to bring upon them any other expression of his displeasure than what grew naturally and necessarily out of the fact that they had been tolerated among them, and those troubles and toils which must attend the effort to deliver the church from these errors. Under any circumstances the church must suffer. It would suffer in reputation. It would suffer in respect to its internal tranquility. Perhaps, also, there were those who were implicated in these errors, and who would be implicated in the punishment, who had friends and kindred in the church; and the judgments which were to come upon the advocates of these errors must, therefore, come in a measure upon the church.

A kind Saviour says, that he would bring upon them no other and no weightier burden, than must arise from his purpose to inflict appropriate vengeance on the guilty themselves. The trouble which would grow out of that would be a sufficient expression of his displeasure. This is, in fact, often now all that is necessary as a punishment on a church for harboring the advocates of error and of sin. The church has trouble enough ultimately in getting rid of them; and the injury which such persons do to its piety, peace, and reputation, and the disorders of which they are the cause, constitute a sufficient punishment for having tolerated them in its bosom. Often the most severe punishment that God can bring upon people is to "lay upon them no other burden" than to leave them to the inevitable consequences of their own folly, or to the trouble and vexation incident to the effort to free themselves from what they had for a long time tolerated or practiced.

Verse 25

But that which ye have … - All that there is of truth and purity remaining among you, retain faithfully. Compare Revelation 3:11.

Till I come - To receive you to myself, John 14:3.

Verse 26

And he that overcometh - notes on Revelation 2:7.

And keepeth my works unto the end - The works that I command and that I require, to the end of his life. Compare John 13:1.

To him will I give power over the nations - The evident meaning of what is said here, and in the next verse, is, that in accordance with the uniform promise made to the redeemed in the New Testament, they would partake of the final triumph anal glory of the Saviour, and be associated with him. It is not said that they would have exclusive power over the nations, or that they would hold offices of trust under him during a personal reign on the earth; but the meaning is, that they would be associated with him in his future glory. Compare the Romans 8:17 note; 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 notes.

Verse 27

And he shall rule them with a rod of iron - There is an allusion here to Psalm 2:9; "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." There is a slight change in the passage, "he shall rule," instead of "thou shalt break," in order to adapt the language to

the purpose of the speaker here. The allusion in the Psalm is to the Messiah as reigning triumphant over the nations, or subduing them under him; and the idea here, as in the previous verse, is, that his redeemed people will be associated with him in this dominion. To rule with a scepter of iron, is not to rule with a harsh and tyrannical sway, but with power that is firm and invincible. It denotes a government of strength, or one that cannot be successfully opposed; one in which the subjects are effectually subdued.

As the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers - The ironic here is that of the vessel of a potter - a fragile vessel of clay - struck with a rod of iron and broken into fragments. That is, as applied to the nations, there would be no power to oppose His rule; the enemies of his government would be destroyed. Instead of remaining firm and compacted together, they would be broken like the clay vessel of a potter when struck with a rod of iron. The speaker does not intimate when this would be; but all that is said here would be applicable to that time when the Son of God will come to judge the world, and when His saints will be associated with him in his triumphs. As, in respect to all the others of the seven epistles to the churches, the rewards promised refer to heaven, and to the happy state of that blessed world, it would seem also that this should have a similar reference, for there is no reason why "to him that overcame" in Thyatira a temporal reward and triumph should be promised more than in the cases of the others. If so, then this passage should not be adduced as having any reference to an imaginary personal reign of the Saviour and of the saints on the earth.

Even as I received of my Father - As he has appointed me, Psalm 2:6-9.

Verse 28

And I will give him the morning star - The "morning star" is that bright planet - Venus - which at some seasons of the year appears so beautifully in the east, leading on the morning - the harbinger of the day. It is one of the most beautiful objects in nature, and is susceptible of a great variety of uses for illustration. It appears as the darkness passes away; it is an indication that the morning comes; it is intermingled with the first rays of the light of the sun; it seems to be a herald to announce the coming of that glorious luminary; it is a pledge of the faithfulness of God. In which of these senses, if any, it is referred to here, is not stated; nor is it said what is implied by its being given to him that overcomes. It would seem to be used

here to denote a bright and brilliant ornament; something with which he who "overcame" would be adorned, resembling the bright star of the morning. It is observable that it is not said that he would make him like the morning star, as in Daniel 12:3; nor that he would be compared with the morning star, like the king of Babylon, Isaiah 14:12; nor that he would resemble a star which Balaam says he saw in the distant future, Numbers 24:17. The idea seems to be, that the Saviour would give him something that would resemble that morning planet in beauty and splendor - perhaps meaning that it would be placed as a gem in his diadem, and would sparkle on his brow - bearing some such relation to him who is called "the Sun of Righteousness," as the morning star does to the glorious sun on his rising. If so, the meaning would be that he would receive a beautiful ornament, bearing a near relation to the Redeemer himself as a bright sun - a pledge that the darkness was past - but one whose beams would melt away into the superior light of the Redeemer himself, as the beams of the morning star are lost in the superior glory of the sun.

Verse 29

He that hath an ear … - See the notes on Revelation 2:7.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

Verse 1

The Epistle to the Church at Sardis

The contents of the epistle to the church at Sardis Revelation 3:1-6 are:

(1)The usual salutation to the angel of the church, Revelation 3:1.

(2)the usual reference to the attributes of the Saviour - those referred to here being that he had the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars, Revelation 3:1.

(3)the assurance that he knew their works, Revelation 3:1.

(4)the statement of the uniqueness of the church, or what he saw in it - that it had a name to live and was dead, Revelation 3:1.

(5)asolemn direction to the members of the church, arising from their character and circumstances, to be watchful, and to strengthen the things which remained, but which were ready to die; to remember what they had received, and to hold fast what had been communicated to them, and to repent of all their sins, Revelation 3:2-3.

(6)athreat that if they did not do this, he would come suddenly upon them, at an hour which they could not anticipate, Revelation 3:3.

(7)acommendation of the church as far as it could be done, for there were still a few among them who had not defiled their garments, and a promise that they should walk before him in white, Revelation 3:4.

(8)apromise, as usual, to him that should be victorious. The promise here is, that he should walk before him in white; that his name should not be blotted out of the book of life; that he should be acknowledged before the Father, and before the angels, Revelation 3:5.

(9)the usual call on all persons to hear what the Spirit said to the churches.

Sardis was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia, one of the provinces of Asia Minor, and was situated at the foot of Mount Tmolus, in a

fine plain watered by the river Pactolus, famous for its golden sands. It was the capital where the celebrated Croesus, proverbial for his wealth, reigned. It was taken by Cyrus (548 bc), when Croesus was king, and was at that time one of the most splendid and opulent cities of the East. It subsequently passed into the hands of the Romans, and under them sank rapidly in wealth and importance. In the time of Tiberius it was destroyed by an earthquake, but was rebuilt by order of the emperor. The inhabitants of Sardis bore an ill repute among the ancients for their voluptuous modes of life. Perhaps there may be an allusion to this fact in the words which are used in the address to the church there: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments."

Successive earthquakes, and the ravages of the Saracens and the Turks, have reduced this once-celebrated city to a heap of ruins, though exhibiting still many remains of former splendor. The name of the village which now occupies the place of this ancient capital is Sart. It is a miserable village, comprising only a few wretched cottages, occupied by Turks and Greeks. There are ruins of the theater, the stadium, and of some ancient churches. The most remarkable of the ruins are two pillars supposed to have belonged to the temple of Cybele; and if so, they are among the most ancient in the world, the temple of Cybele having been built only three hundred years after that of Solomon. The Acropolis serves well to define the site of the city. Several travelers have recently visited the remains of Sardis, and its appearance will be indicated by a few extracts from their writings. Arundell, in his "Discoveries in Asia Minor," says: "If I were asked what impresses the mind most strongly in beholding Sardis, I should say its indescribable solitude, like the darkness of Egypt - darkness that could be felt. So the deep solitude of the spot, once the ‹lady of kingdoms,‘ produces a corresponding feeling of desolate abandonment in the mind, which can never be forgotten."

John Hartley, in regard to these ruins, remarks: "The ruins are, with one exception, more entirely gone to decay than those of most of the ancient cities which we have visited. No Christians reside on the spot: two Greeks only work in a mill here, and a few wretched Turkish huts are scattered among the ruins. We saw the churches of John and the Virgin, the theater, and the building styled the Palace of Croesus; but the most striking object at Sardis is the temple of Cybele. I was filled with wonder and awe at

beholding the two stupendous columns of this edifice, which are still remaining: they are silent but impressive witnesses of the power and splendor of antiquity."

The impression produced on the mind is vividly described in the following language of a recent traveler, who lodged there for a night: "Every object was as distinct as in a northern twilight; the snowy summit of the mountain (Tmolus), the long sweep of the valley, and the flashing current of the river (Pactolus). I strolled along toward the banks of the Pactolus, and seated myself by the side of the half-exhausted stream.

"There are few individuals who cannot trace on the map of their memory some moments of overpowering emotion, and some scene, which, once dwelt upon, has become its own painter, and left behind it a memorial that time could not efface. I can readily sympathize with the feelings of him who wept at the base of the pyramids; nor were my own less powerful, on that night when I sat beneath the sky of Asia to gaze upon the ruins of Sardis, from the banks of the golden-sanded Pactolus. Beside me were the cliffs of the Acropolis, which, centuries before, the hardy Median scaled, while leading on the conquering Persians, whose tents had covered the very spot on which I was reclining. Before me were the vestiges of what had been the palace of the gorgeous Croesus; within its walls were once congregated the wisest of mankind, Thales, Cleobulus, and Solon. It was here that the wretched father mourned alone the mangled corse of his beloved Atys; it was here that the same humiliated monarch wept at the feet of the Persian boy who wrung from him his kingdom. Far in the distance were the gigantic "tumuli" of the Lydian monarchs, Candaules, Halyattys, and Gyges; and around them were spread those very plains once trodden by the countless hosts of Xerxes, when hurrying on to find a sepulchre at Marathon.

"There were more varied and more vivid remembrances associated with the sight of Sardis than could possibly be attached to any other spot of earth; but all were mingled with a feeling of disgust at the littleness of human glory. All - all had passed away! There were before me the fanes of a dead religion, the tombs of forgotten monarchs, and the palm-tree that waved in the banquet-hall of kings; while the feeling of desolation was

doubly heightened by the calm sweet sky above me, which, in its unfading brightness, shone as purely now as when it beamed upon the golden dreams of Croesus" (Emerson's "Letters from the Aegean," p. 113ff). The present appearance of the ruins is shown by the engraving in this volume.

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis - notes on Revelation 1:20.

These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God - See the notes on Revelation 1:4. If the phrase, "the seven Spirits of God," as there supposed, refers to the Holy Spirit, there is great propriety in saying of the Saviour, that he has that Spirit, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is represented as sent forth by him into the world, John 15:26-27; John 16:7, John 16:13-14. It was one of the highest characteristics that could be given of the Saviour to say, that the Holy Spirit was his to send forth into the world, and that that great Agent, on whose gracious influences all were dependent for the possession of true religion, could be given or withheld by him at his pleasure.

And the seven stars - See the notes on Revelation 1:16. These represented the angels of the seven churches (notes on Revelation 1:20); and the idea which the Saviour would seem to intend to convey here is, that he had entire control over the ministers of the churches, and could keep or remove them at pleasure.

I know thy works - See the notes on Revelation 2:2.

That thou hast a name that thou livest - Thou dost profess attachment to me and my cause. The word "life" is a word that is commonly employed, in the New Testament, to denote religion, in contradistinction from the natural state of man, which is described as death in sin. By the profession of religion they expressed the purpose to live unto God, and for another world; they professed to have true, spiritual life.

And art dead - That is, spiritually. This is equivalent to saying that their profession was merely in name; and yet this must be understood comparatively, for there were some even in Sardis who truly lived unto God, Revelation 3:4. The meaning is, that in general, the profession of religion among them was a mere name. The Saviour does not, as in the case of the churches of Ephesus and Thyatira, specify any prevailing form of error or false doctrine; but it would seem that here it was a simple waist of religion.

Verse 2

Be watchful - Be wakeful; be attentive and earnest - in contradistinction from the drowsy condition of the church.

Strengthen the things which remain - The true piety that still lives and lingers among you. Whatever there was of religion among them, it was of importance to strengthen it, that the love of the Saviour might not become wholly extinct. An important duty in a low and languishing state of religion is, to "strengthen the things that still survive." It is to cultivate all the graces which do exist; to nourish all the love of truth which may linger in the church; and to confirm, by warm exhortation, and by a reference to the gracious promises of God's word, the few who may be endeavoring to do their duty, and who, amidst many discouragements, are aiming to be faithful to the Saviour. In the lowest state of religion in a church there may be a few, perhaps quite obscure and of humble rank, who are mourning over the desolations of Zion, and who are sighing for better times. All such it is the duty of the ministers of religion to comfort and encourage; for it is in their hearts that piety may be kept alive in the church - it is through them that it may be hoped religion may yet be revived. In the apparent hopelessness of doing much good to others, good may always be done to the cause itself by preserving and strengthening what there may be of life among those few, amidst the general desolation and death. It is much to preserve life in grain sown in a field through the long and dreary winter, when all seems to be dead - for it will burst forth, with new life and beauty, in the spring. When the body is prostrate with disease, and life just lingers, and death seems to be coming on, it is much to preserve the little strength that remains; much to keep the healthful parts from being invaded, that there may be strength yet to recover.

That are ready to die - That seem just ready to become extinct. So, sometimes, in a plant, there seems to be but the least conceivable life remaining, and it appears that it must die. So, when we are sick, there seems to be but the feeblest glimmering of life, and it is apparently just ready to go out. So, when a fire dies away, there seems but a spark remaining, and it is just ready to become extinct. And thus, in religion in the soul - religion in a church - religion in a community - it often seems as if it were just about to go out forever.

For I have not found thy works perfect before God - I have not found them complete or full. They come short of what is required. Of what church, of what individual Christian, is not this true? Whom might not the

Saviour approach with the same language? It was true, however, in a marked and eminent sense, of the church at Sardis.

Verse 3

Remember therefore how thou hast received - This may refer either to some uniqueness in the manner in which the gospel was conveyed to them - as, By the labors of the apostles, and by the remarkable effusions of the Holy Spirit; or to the ardor and love with which they embraced it; or to the greatness of the favors and privileges conferred on them; or to their own understanding of what the gospel required, when they were converted. It is not possible to determined in which sense the language is used; but the general idea is plain, that there was something marked and unusual in the way in which they had been led to embrace the gospel, and that it was highly proper in these circumstances to look back to the days when they gave themselves to Christ. It is always well for Christians to call to remembrance the "day of their espousals," and their views and feelings when they gave their hearts to the Saviour, and to compare those views with their present condition, especially if their conversion was marked by anything unusual.

And heard - How thou didst hear the gospel in former times; that is, with what earnestness and attention thou didst embrace it. This would rather seem to imply that the reference in the whole passage is to the fact that they embraced the gospel with great ardor and zeal.

And hold fast -

(1)Hold fast the truths which thou didst then receive;

(2)hold fast what remains of true religion among you.

And repent - Repent in regard to all that in which you have departed from your views and feelings when you embraced the gospel.

If therefore thou shalt not watch - The speaker evidently supposed that it was possible that they would not regard the warning; that they would presume that they would be safe if they refused to give heed to it, or, that by mere inattention and indifference they might suffer the warning to pass by unheeded. Similar results have been so common in the world as to make such a supposition not improbable, and to make proper, in other cases as well as that, the solemn threatening that he would come suddenly upon them.

I will come on thee as a thief - In a sudden and unexpected manner. See the notes on 1 Thessalonians 5:2.

And ye shall not know what hour I will come upon thee - You shall not know beforehand; you shall have no warning of my immediate approach. This is often the way in which God comes to people in his heavy judgments. Long beforehand, he admonishes us, indeed, of what must be the consequences of a course of sin, and warns us to turn from it; but when sinners refuse to attend to his warning, and still walk in the way of evil, he comes suddenly, and cuts them down. Every man who is warned of the evil of his course, and who refuses or neglects to repent, has reason to believe that God will come suddenly in his wrath, and call him to his bar, Proverbs 29:1. No such man can presume on impunity; no one who is warned of his guilt and danger can feel that he is for one moment safe. No one can have any basis of calculation that he will be spared; no one can flatter himself with any probable anticipation that he will have time to repent when God comes to take him away. Benevolence has done its appropriate work in warning him - how can the Great Judge of all be to blame, if he comes then, and suddenly cuts the sinner off?

Verse 4

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis - See the analysis of the chapter. The word "names" here is equivalent to "persons"; and the idea is, that even in a place so depraved, and where religion had so much declined, there were a few persons who had kept themselves free from the general contamination. In most cases, when error and sin prevail, there may be found a few who are worthy of the divine commendation; a few who show that true religion may exist even when the mass are evil. Compare the notes on Romans 11:4.

Which have not defiled their garments - Compare the notes on Jude 1:23. The meaning is, that they had not defiled themselves by coming in contact with the profane and the polluted; or, in other words, they had kept themselves free from the prevailing corruption. They were like persons clothed in white walking in the midst of the defiled, yet keeping their raiment from being soiled.

And they shall walk with me in white - White is the emblem of innocence, and is hence appropriately represented as the color of the raiment of the heavenly inhabitants. The persons here referred to had kept their garments uncontaminated on the earth, and as an appropriate reward it is said that they would appear in white raiment in heaven. Compare Revelation 7:9; Revelation 19:8.

For they are worthy - They have shown themselves worthy to be regarded as followers of the Lamb; or, they have a character that is suited for heaven. The declaration is not that they have any claim to heaven on the ground of their own merit, or that it will be in virtue of their own works that they will be received there; but that there is a fitness or propriety that they should thus appear in heaven. We are all personally unworthy to be admitted to heaven, but we may evince such a character as to show that, according to the arrangements of grace, it is fit and proper that we should be received there. We have the character to which God has promised eternal life.

Verse 5

He that overcometh - See the notes on Revelation 2:7.

The same shall be clothed in white raiment - Whosoever he may be that shall overcome sin and the temptations of this world, shall be admitted to this glorious reward. The promise is made not only to those in Sardis who should be victorious, but to all in every age and every land. The hope that is thus held out before us, is that of appearing with the Redeemer in his kingdom, clad in robes expressive of holiness and joy.

And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life - The book which contains the names of those who are to live with him forever. The names of his people are thus represented as enrolled in a book which he keeps - a register of those who are to live forever. The phrase "book of life" frequently occurs in the Bible, representing this idea. See the notes on Philemon 4:3. Compare Revelation 15:3; Revelation 20:12, Revelation 20:15; Revelation 21:27; Revelation 22:19. The expression "I will not blot out" means, that the names would be found there on the great day of final account, and would be found there forever. It may be remarked, that as no one can have access to that book but he who keeps it, there is the most positive assurance that it will never be done, and the salvation of the redeemed will be, therefore, secure. And let it be remembered that the period is coming when it will be felt to be a higher honor to have the name enrolled in that book than in the books of heraldry - in the most splendid catalogue of princes, poets, warriors, nobles, or statesmen that the world has produced.

But I will confess his name, … - I will acknowledge him to be my follower. See the notes on Matthew 10:32.

Verse 6

He that hath an ear … - See the notes on Revelation 2:7.

The Epistle to the Church in Philadelphia

This epistle Revelation 3:7-13 comprises the following subjects:

(1)The usual address to the angel of the church, Revelation 3:7.

(2)the reference to some attribute or characteristic of the speaker, Revelation 3:7. He here addresses the church as one who is holy and true; as he who has the key of David, and who can shut and no one can open, and open and no one can shut. The representation is that of one who occupies a royal palace, and who can admit or exclude anyone whom he pleases. The reference to such a palace is continued through the epistle.

(3)the usual declaration that he knows their works, and that he has found that they had strength, though but a little, and had kept his word, Revelation 3:8.

(4)adeclaration that he would constrain some who professed that they were Jews, but who were of the synagogue of Satan, to come and humble themselves before them, Revelation 3:9.

(5)the particular promise to that church. He would keep them in the hour of temptation that was coming to try all that dwelt upon the earth, Revelation 3:10.

(6)the command addressed to them as to the other churches. He solemnly enjoins it on them to see that no one should take their crown, or deprive them of the reward which he would give to his faithful followers, Revelation 3:11.

(7)ageneral promise, in view of the circumstances in Philadelphia, to all who should overcome, Revelation 3:12. They would be made a pillar in the temple of God, and go no more out. They would have written on themselves the name of his God, and the name of the holy city - showing that they were inhabitants of the heavenly world.

(8)the usual call on all to attend to what was said to the churches, Revelation 3:13.

Philadelphia stood about 25 miles south-cast from Sardis, in the plain of Hermus, and about midway between the river of that name and the termination of Mount Tmolus. It was the second city in Lydia, and was built by King Attalus Philadelphus, from whom it received its name. In the year 133 b.c. the place passed, with the country in the vicinity, under the dominion of the Romans. The site is reported by Strabo to be liable to earthquakes, but it continued to be a place of importance down to the Byzantine age; and, of all the towns in Asia Minor, it withstood the Turks the longest. It was taken by Bajazat, 1392 a.d. "It still exists as a Turkish town, under the name of Allah Shehr, ‹City of God,‘ that is, the ‹High Town.‘ It covers a considerable extent of ground, running up the slopes of four hills, or rather of one hill with four flat summits. The country, as viewed from these hills, is extremely magnificent - gardens and vineyards lying at the back and sides of the town, and before it one of the most beautiful and extensive plains of Asia. The missionaries Fisk and Parsons were informed by the Greek bishop that the town contained 3,000 houses, of which he assigned 250 to the Greeks, and the rest to the Turks (the mid-19th century). On the same authority it is stated that there are five churches in the town, besides twenty others which were too old or too small for use. Six minarets, indicating as many mosques, are seen in the town, and one of these mosques is believed by the native Christians to have been the church in which assembled the primitive Christians addressed in the Apocalypse. There are few ruins; but in one part are four pillars, which are supposed to have been columns of a church.

One solitary pillar has been often noticed, as reminding beholders of the remarkable words in the Apocalypse - ‹Him that overcometh I will make a pillar in the temple of my God‘" (Kitto‘s *Encyclopedia*. See also the *Missionary Herald* for 1821, p. 253; 1839, pp. 210-212). The town is the seat of a Greek archbishop, with about twenty inferior clergy. The streets are narrow, and are described as remarkably filthy. The engraving in this volume will give a representation of the town as it now appears.

Verse 7

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia - See the notes on Revelation 1:20.

These things saith he that is holy - This refers undoubtedly to the Lord Jesus. The appellation holy, or the holy one, is one that befits him, and is

not infrequently given to him in the New Testament, Luke 1:35; Acts 2:27; Acts 3:14. It is not only an appellation appropriate to the Saviour, but well adapted to be employed when he is addressing the churches. Our impression of what is said to us will often depend much on our idea of the character of him who addresses us, and solemnity and thoughtfulness always become us when we are addressed by a holy Redeemer.

He that is true - Another characteristic of the Saviour well suited to be referred to when he addresses people. It is a characteristic often ascribed to him in the New Testament (John 1:9, John 1:14, John 1:17; John 8:40, John 8:45; John 14:6; John 18:37; 1 John 5:20), and one which is eminently adapted to impress the mind with solemn thought in view of the fact that he is to pronounce on our character, and to determine our destiny.

He that hath the key of David - This expression is manifestly taken from Isaiah 22:22, "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder." See the passage explained in the notes on that place. As used by Isaiah, the phrase is applied to Eliakim; and it is not to be inferred, because the language here is applied to the Lord Jesus, that originally it had any such reference. "The application of the same terms," says Prof. Alexander on Isaiah 22:22, "to Peter Matthew 16:19, and to Christ himself Revelation 3:7, does not prove that they here refer to either, or that Eliakim was a type of Christ, but merely that the same words admit of different applications." The language is what properly denotes authority or control - as when one has the key of a house, and has unlimited access to it; and the meaning here is, that as David is represented as the king of Israel residing in a palace, so he who had the key to that palace had regal authority.

He that openeth, and no man shutteth, … - He has free and unrestrained access to the house; the power of admitting anyone, or of excluding anyone. Applied here to the Saviour, as king in Zion, this means that in his kingdom he has the absolute control in regard to tire admission or exclusion of anyone. He can prescribe the terms; he can invite whom he chooses; he can exclude those whom he judges should not be admitted. A reference to this absolute control was every way proper when he was addressing a church, and is every way proper for us to reflect on when we think of the subject of our personal salvation.

Verse 8

I know thy works - See the notes on Revelation 2:2.

Behold, I have set before thee an open door - Referring to his authority as stated in Revelation 3:7. The "open door" here evidently refers to the enjoyment of some privilege or honor; and, so far as the language is concerned, it may refer to any one of the following things - either:

(1)the ability to do good - represented as the "opening of the door." Compare Acts 14:27; 1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4:3.

(2)the privilege of access to the heavenly palace; that is, that they had an abundant opportunity of securing their salvation, the door being never closed against them by day or by night. Compare Revelation 21:25. Or.

(3)it may mean that they had before them an open way of egress from danger and persecution.

This latter Prof. Stuart supposes to be the true meaning; and argues this because it is immediately specified that those Jewish persecutors would be made to humble themselves, and that the church would but lightly experience the troubles which were coming upon the world around them. But the more natural interpretation of the phrase "an open door" is that it refers to access to a thing rather than egress from a thing; that we may come to what we desire to approach, rather than escape from what we dread. There is no objection, it seems to me, to the supposition that the language may be used here in the largest sense - as denoting that, in regard to the church at Philadelphia, there was no restraint. He had given them the most unlimited privileges. The temple of salvation was thrown open to them; the celestial city was accessible; the whole world was before them as a field of usefulness, and anywhere, and everywhere, they might do good, and at all times they might have access to the kingdom of God.

And no man can shut it - No one has the power of preventing this, for he who has control over all things concedes these privileges to you.

For then hast a little strength - This would imply that they had not great vigor, but still that, notwithstanding there were so many obstacles to their doing good, and so many temptations to evil, there still remained with them some degree of energy. They were not wholly dead; and as long as that was the case, the door was still open for them to do good. The words "little strength" may refer either to the smallness of the number - meaning that they were few; or it may refer to the spiritual life and energy of the church - meaning that, though feeble, their vital energy was not wholly

gone. The more natural interpretation seems to be to refer it to the latter; and the sense is, that although they had not the highest degree of energy, or had not all that the Saviour desired they should have, they were not wholly dead. The Saviour saw among them the evidences of spiritual life; and in view of that he says he had set before them an open door, and there was abundant opportunity to employ all the energy and zeal which they had. It may be remarked that the same thing is true now; that wherever there is any vitality in a church, the Saviour will furnish ample opportunity that it may be employed in his service.

And hast not denied my name - When Christians were brought before pagan magistrates in times of persecution, they were required to renounce the name of Christ, and to disown him in a public manner. It is possible that, amidst the persecutions that raged in the early times, the members of the church at Philadelphia had been summoned to such a trial, and they had stood the trial firmly. It would seem from the following verse, that the efforts which had been made to induce them to renounce the name of Christ had been made by those who professed to be Jews, though they evinced the spirit of Satan. If so, then the attempt was probably to convince them that Jesus was not the Christ. This attempt would be made in all places where there were Jews.

Verse 9

Behold, I will make - Greek, "I give" - δίδωμι didōmithat is, I will arrange matters so that this shall occur. The word implies that he had power to do this, and consequently proves that he has power over the heart of man, and Call secure such a result as he chooses.

Them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews - Who profess to be Jews, but are really of the synagogue of Satan. See the notes on Revelation 2:9. The meaning is, that, though they were of Jewish extraction, and boasted much of being Jews, yet they were really under the influence of Satan, and their assemblages deserved to be called his "synagogue."

And are not, but do lie - It is a false profession altogether. Compare notes on 1 John 1:6.

Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet - The word rendered "worship" here, means, properly, to full prostrate; and then to do homage, or to worship in the proper sense, as this was commonly done by falling prostrate. See the notes on Matthew 2:2. So far as the word

is concerned, it may refer either to spiritual homage, that is, the worship of God; or it may mean respect as shown to superiors. If it is used here in the sense of divine worship properly so called, it means that they would be constrained to come and worship "before them," or in their very presence; if it is used in the more general signification, it means that they would be constrained to show them honor and respect. The latter is the probable meaning; that is, that they would be constrained to acknowledge that they were the children of God, or that God regarded them with his favor. It does not mean necessarily that they would themselves be converted to Christ, but that, as they had been accustomed to revile and oppose those who were true Christians, they would be constrained to come and render them the respect due to those who were sincerely endeavoring to serve their Maker. The truth taught here is, that it is in the power of the Lord Jesus so to turn the hearts of all the enemies of religion that they shall be brought to show respect to it; so to incline the minds of all people that they shall honor the church, or be at least outwardly its friends. Such homage the world shall yet be constrained to pay to it.

And to know that I have loved thee - This explains what he had just said, and shows that he means that the enemies of his church will yet be constrained to acknowledge that it enjoys the smiles of God, and that instead of being persecuted and reviled, it should be respected and loved.

Verse 10

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience - My word commanding or enjoining patience; that is, thou hast manifested the patience which I require. They had shown this in the trials which they had experienced; he promises now, that in return he will keep them in the future trials that shall come upon the world. One of the highest rewards of patience in one trial is the grace that God gives us to bear another. The fact that we have been patient and submis sive may be regarded as proof that he will give us grace that we may be patient and submissive in the trials that are to come. God does not leave those who have shown that they will not leave him.

I also will keep thee - That is, I will so keep you that you shall not sink under the trials which will prove a severe temptation to many. This does not mean that they would be actually kept from calamity of all kinds, but that they would be kept from the temptation of apostasy in calamity. He would

give them grace to bear up under trials with a Christian spirit, and in such a manner that their salvation should not be endangered.

From the hour of temptation - The season; the time; the period of temptation. You shall be no kept that what will prove to be a time of temptation to so many, shall not endanger your salvation. Though others fall, you shall not; though you may be afflicted with others, yet you shall have grace to sustain you.

Which shall come upon all the world - The phrase used here - "all the world" - may either denote the whole world; or the whole Roman empire; or a large district of country; or the land of Judaea. See the notes on Luke 2:1. Here, perhaps, all that is implied is, that the trial would be very extensive or general - so much so as to embrace the world, as the word was understood by those to whom the epistle was addressed. It need not be supposed that the whole world literally was included in it, or even all the Roman empire, but what was the world to them - the region which they would embrace in that term. If there were some far-spreading calamity in the country where they resided, it would probably be all that would be fairly embraced in the meaning of the word. It is not known to what trial the speaker refers. It may have been some form of persecution, or it may have been some calamity by disease, earthquake, or famine that was to occur. Tacitus (see Wetstein, in loco) mentions an earthquake that sank twelve cities in Asia Minor, in one night, by which, among others, Philadelphia was deeply affected; and ‹it is possible that there may have been reference here to that overwhelming calamity. But nothing can be determined with certainty in regard to this.

To try them that dwell upon the earth - To test their character. It would rather seem from this that the affliction was some form of persecution as adapted to test the fidelity of those who were affected by it. The persecutions in the Roman empire would furnish abundant occasions for such a trial.

Verse 11

Behold, I come quickly - That is, in the trials referred to. Compare the notes on Revelation 1:1, Revelation 1:11, Revelation 1:16.

Hold that fast which thou hast - That is, whatever of truth and piety you now possess. See the notes on Revelation 3:3.

That no man take thy crown - The crown of life appointed for all who are true believers. See the notes on 2 Timothy 4:8. The truth which is taught

bore is, that by negligence or unfaithfulness in duty we may be deprived of the glory which we might have obtained if we had been faithful to our God and Saviour. We need to be on our constant guard, that, in a world of temptation, where the enemies of truth abound, we may not be robbed of the crown that we might have worn forever. Compare notes on 2 John 1:8.

Verse 12

Him that overcometh - See the notes on Revelation 2:7.

Will make a pillar in the temple of my God - See the introductory remarks to this epistle. The promised reward of faithfulness here is, that he who was victorious would be honored as if he were a pillar or column in the temple of God. Such a pillar or column was partly for ornament, and partly for support; and the idea here is, that in that temple he would contribute to its beauty and the justness of its proportions, and would see the same time be honored as if he were a pillar which was necessary for the support of the temple. It is not uncommon in the New Testament to represent the church as a temple, and Christians as parts of it. See 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:5.

And he shall go no more out - He shall be permanent as a part of that spiritual temple. The idea of "going out" does not properly belong to a pillar; but the speaker here has in his mind the man, though represented as a column. The description of some parts would be applicable more directly to a pillar; in others more properly to a man. Compare John 6:37; John 10:28-29; 1 John 2:19, for an illustration of the sentiment here. The main truth here is, that if we reach heaven, our happiness will be secure forever. We shall have the most absolute certainty that the welfare of the soul will no more be perilled; that we shall never be in danger of falling into temptation; that no artful foe shall ever have power to alienate our affections from God; that we shall never die. Though we may change our place, and may roam from world to world until we shall have surveyed all the wonders of creation, yet we shall never "go out of the temple of God." Compare the notes on John 14:2. When we reach the heavenly world our conflicts will be over, our doubts at an end. As soon as we cross the threshold we shall be greeted with the assurance, "he shall go no more out forever." That is to be our eternal abode, and whatever of joy, or felicity, or glory, that bright world can furnish, is to be ours. Happy moment I when, emerging from a world of danger and of doubt, the soul shall settle down into the calmness

and peace of that state where there is the assurance of God himself that that world of bliss is to be its eternal abode!

And I will write upon him the name of my God - Considered as a pillar or column in the temple. The name of God would be conspicuously recorded on it to show that he belonged to God. The allusion is to a public edifice, on the columns of which the names of distinguished and honored persons were recorded; that is, where there is a public testimonial of the respect in which one whose name was thus recorded was held. The honor thus conferred on him "who should overcome" would be as great as if the name of that God whom he served, and whose favor and friendship he enjoyed, were inscribed on him in some conspicuous manner. The meaning is, that he would be known and recognized as belonging to God; the God of the Redeemer himself - indicated by the phrase, "the name of my God."

And the name of the city of my God - That is, indicating that he belongs to that city, or that the New Jerusalem is the city of his habitation. The idea would seem to be, that in this world, and in. all worlds wherever he goes and wherever he abides, he will be recognized as belonging to that holy city; as enjoying the rights and immunities of such a citizen.

Which is New Jerusalem - Jerusalem was the place where the temple was reared, and where the worship of God was celebrated. It thus came to be synonymous with the church - the dwelling-place of God on earth.

Which cometh down out of heaven from my God - See this explained in the notes on Revelation 21:2 ff. Of course this must be a figurative representation, but the idea is plain. It is:

(1)that the church is, in accordance with settled Scripture language, represented as a city - the abode of God on earth.

(2)that is, instead of being built here, or having an earthly origin, it has its origin in heaven.

It is as if it had been constructed there, and then sent down to earth ready formed. The type, the form, the whole structure is heavenly. It is a departure from all proper laws of interpretation to explain this literally, as if a city should be actually let down from heaven; and equally so to infer from this passage, and the others of similar import in this book, that a city will be literally reared for the residence of the saints. If the passage proves anything on either of these points, it is, that a great and splendid city, such as that described in Revelation 2:17. The reward, therefore, promised here is, that he who, by persevering fidelity, showed that he was a real friend of the

Saviour, would be honored with a permanent abode in the holy city of his habitation, In the church redeemed and triumphant he would have a perpetual dwelling; and wherever he should be, there would be given him sure pledges that he belonged to him, and was recognized as a citizen of the heavenly world. To no higher honor could any man aspire; and yet that is an honor to which the most humble and lowly may attain by faith in the Son of God.

The Epistle to the Church at Laodicea

The contents of the epistle to the church at Laodicea Revelation 3:14-22 are as follows:

(1)The usual salutation to the angel of the church, Revelation 3:14,

(2)The reference to the attributes of the speaker - the one here referred to being that he was the "Amen," "the faithful and true witness," and "the beginning of the creation of God," Revelation 3:14.

(3)the claim that he knew all their works, Revelation 3:15.

(4)the characteristic of the church: it was "lukewarm" - neither "cold nor hot," Revelation 3:15.

(5)the punishment threatened, that he would "spue them out of his mouth," Revelation 3:16.

(6)asolemn reproof of their self-confidence, of their ignorance of themselves, an of their pride, when they were in fact poor, and blind, and naked; and a solemn counsel to them to apply to him for those things which would make them truly rich - which would cover up the shame of their nakedness, and which would give them clear spiritual vision, Revelation 3:17-18.

(7)acommand to repent, in view of the fact that he rebukes and chastens those whom he loves.

(8)an assurance that an opportunity is still offered for repentance, represented by his standing at the door and praying for admittance, Revelation 3:20.

(9)apromise to him that should be victorious - in this case, that he should sit down with him on his throne, Revelation 3:21; and,

(10)the usual call on those who had ears to hear, to attend to what the Spirit said to the churches.

Laodicea was situated in the southern part of Phrygia, near the junction of the small rivers Asopus and Carpus, on a plain washed at its edges by each. It was about 40 miles from Ephesus, and not far from Colosse and Hierapolis. In the time of Strabo it was a large city; but the frequency of earthquakes, to which this district has been always liable, demolished, long since, a large part of the city, and destroyed many of the inhabitants, and the place was abandoned, and now lies in ruins. It is now a deserted place, called by the Turks Eski-hissar, or Old Castle. From its ruins, ‹which are numerous, consisting of the remains of temples, theaters, etc., it seems to have been situated on six or seven hills, taking up a large space of ground. The whole rising ground on which the city stood is one vast tumulus of ruins, abandoned entirely to the owl and the fox. Col. Leake says, "There are few ancient sites more likely than Laodicea to preserve many curious remains of antiquity beneath the surface of the soil; its opulence, and the earthquakes to which it was subject, rendering it probable that valuable works of art were there buried beneath the ruins of the public and private edifices."

The neighboring village contains some 50 or 60 people, among whom, on a visit of a recent traveler there, there were only two nominal Christians (circa the mid-19th century). "The name of Christianity," says Emerson (p. 101), "is forgotten, and the only sounds that disturb the silence of its desertion are the tones of the Muezzin, whose voice from the distant village (Eski-hissar) proclaims the ascendency of Muhammed. Laodicea is even more solitary than Ephesus; for the latter has the prospect of the rolling sea or of a whitening sail to enliven its decay; while the former sits in widowed loneliness, its walls are grass-grown, its temples desolate, its very name has perished." A thunderstorm gathered on the mountains at a distance while this traveler was examining the ruins of Laodicea. He returned to Eski-hissar, and waited until the fury of the storm had abated, but set off on his journey again before it had entirely ceased to blow and to rain. "We preferred," says he, "hastening on, to a further delay in that melancholy spot, where everything whispered desolation, and where the very wind that

swept impetuously through the valley sounded like the fiendish laugh of time exulting over the destruction of man and his proudest monuments." See Prof. Stuart, vol. ii. pp. 44,45; Kitto's Encyclopedia; "Smith's Journey to the Seven Churches," 1671; Leake, Arundell, Hartley, MacFarlane, Pococke, etc. The engraving in this vol. will furnish a representation of the ruins of Laodicea.

Verse 14

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write - See the notes on Revelation 1:20.

These things saith the Amen - Referring, as is the case in every epistle, to some attribute of the speaker adapted to impress their minds, or to give special force to what he was about to say to that particular church. Laodicea was characterized by lukewarmness, and the reference to the fact that he who was about to address them was the "Amen" - that is, was characterized by the simple earnestness and sincerity denoted by that word - was eminently suited to make an impression on the minds of such a people. The word "Amen" means "true," "certain," "faithful"; and, as used here, it means that he to whom it is applied is eminently true and faithful. What he affirms is true; what he promises or threatens is certain. Himself characterized by sincerity and truth (notes on 2 Corinthians 1:20), he can look with approbation only on the same thing in others: and hence he looks with displeasure on the lukewarmness which, from its very nature, always approximates insincerity. This was an attribute, therefore, every way appropriate to be referred to in addressing a lukewarm church.

The faithful and true witness - This is presenting the idea implied in the word "Amen" in a more complete form, but substantially the same thing is referred to. He is a witness for God and his truth, and he can approve of nothing which the God of truth would not approve. See the notes on Revelation 1:5.

The beginning of the creation of God - This expression is a very important one in regard to the rank and dignity of the Saviour, and, like all similar expressions respecting him, its meaning has been much controverted. Compare the notes on Colossians 1:15. The phrase used here is susceptible, properly, of only one of the following significations, namely, either:

(a)that he was the beginning of the creation in the sense that he caused the universe to begin to exist - that is, that he was the author of all things; or.

(b)that he was the first created being; or.

(c)that he holds the primacy over all, and is at the head of the universe.

It is not necessary to examine any other proposed interpretations, for the only other senses supposed to be conveyed by the words, that he is the beginning of the creation in the sense I that he rose from the dead as the first-fruits of them that sleep, or that he is the head of the spiritual creation of God, axe so foreign to the natural meaning of the words as to need no special refutation. As to the three significations suggested above, it may be observed, that the first one - that he is the author of the creation, and in that sense the beginning - though expressing a scriptural doctrine John 1:3; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16, is not in accordance with the proper meaning of the word used here - ἀρχὴ archēThe word properly refers to the "commencement" of a thing, not its "authorship," and denotes properly primacy in time, and primacy in rank, but not primacy in the sense of causing anything to exist. The two ideas which run through the word as it is used in the New Testament are those just suggested. For the former - primacy in regard to time - that is properly the commencement of a thing, see the following passages where the word occurs: Matthew 19:4, Matthew 19:8; Matthew 24:8, Matthew 24:21; Mark 1:1; Mark 10:6; Mark 13:8, Mark 13:19; Luke 1:2; John 1:1-2; John 2:11; John 6:64; John 8:25, John 8:44; John 15:27; John 16:4; Acts 11:15; 1 John 1:1; 1 John 2:7, 1 John 2:13-14, 1 John 2:24; 1 John 3:8, 1 John 3:11; 2 John 1:5-6. For the latter signification, primacy of rank or authority, see the following places: Luke 12:11; Luke 20:20; Romans 8:38; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Ephesians 1:21; Ephesians 3:10; Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 1:16, Colossians 1:18; Colossians 2:10, Colossians 2:15; Titus 3:1. The word is not, therefore, found in the sense of authorship, as denoting that one is the beginning of anything in the sense that he caused it to have an existence. As to the second of the significations suggested, that it means that he was the first created being, it may be observed:

(a) that this is not a necessary signification of the phrase, since no one can show that this is the only proper meaning which could be given to the words, and therefore the phrase cannot be adduced to prove that he is

himself a created being. If it were demonstrated from other sources that Christ was, in fact, a created being, and the first that God had made, it cannot be denied that this language would appropriately express that fact. But it cannot be made out from the mere use of the language here; and as the language is susceptible of other interpretations, it cannot be employed to prove that Christ is a created being.

(b) Such an interpretation would be at variance with all those passages which speak of him as uncreated and eternal; which ascribe divine attributes to him; which speak of him as himself the Creator of all things. Compare John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2, Hebrews 1:6, Hebrews 1:8, Hebrews 1:10-12. The third signification, therefore, remains, that he is "the beginning of the creation of God," in the sense that he is the head or prince of the creation; that is, that he presides over it so far as the purposes of redemption are to be accomplished, and so far as is necessary for those purposes. This is:

(1)in accordance with the meaning of the word, Luke 12:11; Luke 20:20, et al. ut supra; and,

(2)in accordance with the uniform statements respecting the Redeemer, that "all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth" Matthew 28:18; that God has "given him power over all flesh" John 17:2; that all things are "put under his feet" the. John 2:8; 1 Corinthians 15:27); that he is exalted over all things, Ephesians 1:20-22. Having this rank, it was proper that he should speak with authority to the church at Laodicea.

Verse 15

I know thy works - notes on Revelation 2:2.

That thou art neither cold nor hot - The word "cold" here would seem to denote the state where there was no pretension to religion; where everything was utterly lifeless and dead. The language is obviously figurative, but it is such as is often employed, when we speak of one as being cold toward another, as having a cold or icy heart, etc. The word "hot" would denote, of course, the opposite - warm and zealous in their love and service. The very words that we are constrained to use when speaking on this subject - such words as ardent (that is, hot or burning); fervid (that is, very hot, burning, boiling) - show how necessary it is to use such words, and how common it is. The state indicated here, therefore, would be that in

which there was a profession of religion, but no warm-hearted piety; in which there was not, on the one hand, open and honest opposition to him, and, on the other, such warm-hearted and honest love as he had a right to look for among his professed friends; in which there was a profession of that religion which ought to warm the heart with love, and fill the soul with zeal in the cause of the Redeemer; but where the only result, in fact, was deadness and indifference to him and his cause. Among those who made no profession he had reason to expect nothing but coldness; among those who made a profession he had a right to expect the glow of a warm affection; but he found nothing but indifference.

I would thou wert cold or hot - That is, I would prefer either of those states to what now exists. Anything better than this condition, where love is professed, but where it does not exist; where vows have been assumed which are not fulfilled. Why he would prefer that they should be "hot" is clear enough; but why would he prefer a state of utter coldness - a state where there was no profession of real love? To this question the following answers may be given:

(1) Such a state of open and professed coldness or indifference is more honest. There is no disguise; no concealment; no pretence. We know where one in this state "may be found"; we know with whom we are dealing; we know what to expect. Sad as the state is, it is at least honest; and we are so made that we all prefer such a character to one where professions are made which are never to be realized - to a state of insincerity and hypocrisy.

(2) such a state is more honorable. It is a more elevated condition of mind, and marks a higher character. Of a man who is false to his engagements, who makes professions and promises never to be realized, we can make nothing. There is essential meanness in such a character, and there is nothing in it which we can respect. But in the character of the man who is openly and avowedly opposed to anything; who takes his stand, and is earnest and zealous in his course, though it be wrong, there are traits which may be, under a better direction, elements of true greatness and magnanimity. In the character of Saul of Tarsus there were always the elements of true greatness; in that of Judas Iscariot there were never. The one was capable of becoming one of the noblest men that has ever lived on the earth; the other, even under the personal teaching of the Redeemer for years, was nothing but a traitor - a man of essential meanness.

(3) there is more hope of conversion and salvation in such a case. There could always have been a ground of hope that Saul would be converted and saved, even when "breathing out threatening and slaughter"; of Judas, when numbered among the professed disciples of the Saviour, there was no hope. The most hopeless of all persons, in regard to salvation, are those who are members of the church without any true religion; who have made a profession without any evidence of personal piety; who are content with a name to live. This is so, because:

(a) the essential character of anyone who will allow himself to do this is eminently unfavorable to true religion. There is a lack of that thorough honesty and sincerity which is so necessary for true conversion to God. He who is content to profess to be what he really is not, is riot a man on whom the truths of Christianity are likely to make an impression.

(b) Such a mall never applies the truth to himself. Truth that is addressed to impenitent sinners he does not apply to himself, of course; for he does not rank himself in that class of persons. Truth addressed to hypocrites he will not apply to himself; for no one, however insincere and hollow he may be, chooses to act on the presumption that he is himself a hypocrite, or so as to leave others to suppose that he regards himself as such. The means of grace adapted to save a sinner, as such, he will not use; for he is in the church, and chooses to regard himself as safe. Efforts made to reclaim him he will resist; for he will regard it as proof of a meddlesome spirit, and an uncharitable judging in others, if they consider him to be anything different from what he professes to be. What right have they to go back of his profession, and assume that he is insincere? As a consequence, there are probably fewer persons by far converted of those who come into the church without any religion, than of any other class of persons of similar number; and the most hopeless of all conditions, in respect to conversion and salvation, is when one enters the church deceived.

(c) It may be presumed that, for these reasons, God himself will make less direct effort to convert and save such persons. As there are fewer appeals that can be brought to bear on them; as there is less in their character that is noble, and that can be depended on in promoting the

salvation of a soul; and as there is special guilt in hypocrisy, it may be presumed that God will more frequently leave such persons to their chosen course, than he will those who make no professions of religion. Comp, Psalm 109:17-18; Jeremiah 7:16; Jeremiah 11:14; Jeremiah 14:11; Isaiah 1:15; Hosea 4:17.

Verse 16

So then because thou art lukewarm … I will spue thee out of my mouth - Referring, perhaps, to the well-known fact that tepid water tends to produce sickness at the stomach, and an inclination to vomit. The image is intensely strong, and denotes deep disgust and loathing at the indifference which prevailed in the church at Laodicea. The idea is, that they would be utterly rejected and cast off as a church - a threatening of which there has been an abundant fulfillment in subsequent times. It may be remarked, also, that what was threatened to that church may be expected to occur to all churches, if they are in the same condition; and that all professing Christians, and Christian churches, that are lukewarm, have special reason to dread the indignation of the Saviour.

Verse 17

Because thou sayest, I am rich - So far as the language here is concerned, this may refer either to riches literally, or to spiritual riches; that is, to a boast of having religion enough. Prof. Stuart supposes that it refers to the former, and so do Wetstein, Vitringa, and others. Doddridge, Rosenmuller, and others, understand it in the latter sense. There is no doubt that there was much wealth in Laodicea, and that, as a people, they prided themselves on their riches. See the authorities in Wetstein on Colossians 2:1, and Vitringa, p. 160. It is not easy to determine which is the true sense; but may it not have been that there was an allusion to both, and that, in every respect, they boasted that they had enough? May it not have been so much the characteristic of that people to boast of their wealth, that they carried the spirit into everything, and manifested it even in regard to religion? Is it not true that they who have much of this world‘s goods, when they make a profession of religion, are very apt to suppose that they are well off in everything, and to feel self-complacent and happy? And is not the possession of much wealth by an individual Christian, or a Christian church, likely to produce just the lukewarmness which it is said existed in the church at Laodicea? If we thus understand it, there will be an

accordance with the well-known fact that Laodicea was distinguished for its riches, and, at the same time, with another fact, so common as to be almost universal, that the possession of great wealth tends to make a professed Christian self-complacent and satisfied in every respect; to make him feel that, although he may not have much religion, yet he is on the whole well off; and to produce, in religion, a state of just such lukewarmness as the Saviour here says was loathsome and odious.

And increased with goods - πεπλουτηκα peploutēka- "am enriched." This is only a more emphatic and intensive way of saying the same thing. It has no reference to the kind of riches referred to, but merely denotes the confident manner in which they affirmed that they were rich.

And have need of nothing - Still an emphatic and intensive way of saying that they were rich. In all respects their needs were satisfied; they had enough of everything. They felt, therefore, no stimulus to effort; they sat down in contentment, self-complacency, and indifference. It is almost unavoidable that those who are rich in this world's goods should feel that they have need of nothing. There is no more common illusion among people than the feeling that if one has wealth he has everything; that there is no want of his nature which cannot be satisfied with that; and that he may now sit down in contentment and ease. Hence, the almost universal desire to be rich; hence the common feeling among those who are rich that there is no occasion for solicitude or care for anything else. Compare Luke 12:19.

And knowest not - There is no just impression in regard to the real poverty and wretchedness of your condition.

That thou art wretched - The word "wretched" we now use to denote the actual consciousness of being miserable, as applicable to one who is sunk into deep distress or affliction. The word here, however, refers rather, to the condition itself than to the consciousness of that condition, for it is said that they did not know it. Their state was, in fact, a miserable state, and was suited to produce actual distress if they had had any just sense of it, though they thought that it was otherwise.

And miserable - This word has, with us now, a similar signification; but the term used here - ἐληινὸς elēinos- rather means a pitiable state than one actually felt to be so. The meaning is, that their condition was one that was suited to excite pity or compassion; not that they were actually miserable. Compare the notes on 1 Corinthians 15:19.

And poor - Notwithstanding all their boast of having enough. They really had not what was necessary to meet the actual needs of their nature, and, therefore, they were poor. Their worldly property could not meet the needs of their souls; and, with all their pretensions to piety, they had not religion enough to meet the necessities of their nature when calamities should come, or when death should approach; and they were, therefore, in the strictest sense of the term, poor.

And blind - That is, in a spiritual respect. They did not see the reality of their condition; they had no just views of themselves, of the character of God, of the way of salvation. This seems to be said in connection with the boast which they made in their own minds - that they had everything; that they wanted nothing. One of the great blessings of life is clearness of vision, and their boast that they had everything must have included that; but the speaker here says that they lacked that indispensable thing to completeness of character and to full enjoyment. With all their boasting, they were actually blind - and how could one who was in that state say that he "had need of nothing?"

And naked - Of course, spiritually. Salvation is often represented as a garment Matthew 22:11-12; Revelation 6:11; Revelation 7:9, Revelation 7:13-14; and the declaration here is equivalent to saying that they had no religion. They had nothing to cover the nakedness of the soul, and in respect to the real needs of their nature they were like one who had no clothing in reference to cold, and heat, and storms, and to the shame of nakedness. How could such an one be regarded as rich? We may learn from this instructive verse:

(1) That people may think themselves to be rich, and yet, in fact, be miserably poor. They may have the wealth of this world in abundance, and yet have nothing that really will meet their needs in disappointment, bereavement, sickness, death; the needs of their never-dying soul; their needs in eternity. What had the "rich fool," as he is commonly termed, in the parable, when he came to die? Luke 12:16 ff. What had "Dives," as he is commonly termed, to meet the needs of his nature when he went down to hell? Luke 16:19 ff.

(2) people may have much property, and think that they have all they want, and yet be wretched. In the sense that their condition is a wretched

condition, this is always true; and in the sense that they are consciously wretched, this may be, and often is, true also.

(3) people may have great property, and yet be miserable. This is true in the sense that their condition is a pitiable one, and in the sense that they are actually unhappy. There is no more pitiable condition than that where one has great property, and is self-complacent and proud, and who has nevertheless no God, no Saviour, no hope of heaven, and who perhaps that very day may "lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments"; and it need not be added that there is no greater actual misery in this world than what sometimes finds its way into the palaces of the rich. He greatly errs who thinks that misery is confined to the cottages of the poor.

(4) people may be rich, and think they have all that they want, and yet be blind to their condition. They really have no distinct vision of anything. They have no just views of God, of themselves, of their duty, of this world, or of the next. In most important respects they are in a worse condition than the inmates of an asylum for the blind, for they may have clear views of God and of heaven. Mental darkness is a greater calamity than the loss of natural vision; and there is many an one who is surrounded by all that affluence can give, who never yet had one correct view of his own character, of his God, or of the reality of his condition, and whose condition might have been far better if he had actually been born blind.

(5) there may be gorgeous robes of adorning, and yet real nakedness. With all the decorations that wealth can impart, there may be a nakedness of the soul as real as that of the body would be if, without a rag to cover it, it were exposed to cold, and storm, and shame. The soul destitute of the robes of salvation, is in a worse condition than the body without raiment; for how can it bear the storms of wrath that shall beat upon it forever, and the shame of its exposure in the last dread day?

Verse 18

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire - Pure gold; such as has been subjected to the action of heat to purify it from dross. See the notes on 1 Peter 1:7. Gold here is emblematic of religion - as being the most precious of the metals, and the most valued by human beings. They

professed to be rich, but were not; and he counsels them to obtain from him what would make them truly rich.

That thou mayest be rich - In the true and proper sense of the word. With true religion; with the favor and friendship of the Redeemer, they would have all that they really needed, and would never be in want.

And white raiment - The emblem of purity and salvation. See the notes on Revelation 3:4. This is said in reference to the fact Revelation 3:17 that they were then naked.

That thou mayest be clothed - With the garments of salvation. This refers, also, to true religion, meaning that what the Redeemer furnishes will answer the same purpose in respect to the soul which clothing does in reference to the body. Of course it cannot be understood literally, nor should the language be pressed too closely, as if there was too strict a resemblance.

And that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear - We clothe the body as well for decency as for protection against cold, and storm, and heat. The soul is to be clothed that the "shame" of its sinfulness may not be exhibited, and that it may not be offensive and repellent in the sight.

And anoint thine eyes with eye-salve - In allusion to the fact that they were blind, Revelation 3:17. The word "eye-salve" - κολλούριον kollourion- occurs no where else in the New Testament. It is a diminutive from κολλύρα kollura- collyra - a coarse bread or cake, and means properly a small cake or cracknel. It is applied to eye-salve as resembling such a cake, and refers to a medicament prepared for sore or weak eyes. It was compounded of various substances supposed to have a healing quality. See Wetstein, in loco. The reference here is to a spiritual healing - meaning that, ill respect to their spiritual vision, what he would furnish would produce the same effect as the collyrium or eye-salve would in diseased eyes. The idea is, that the grace of the gospel enables people who were before blind to see clearly the character of God, the beauty of the way of salvation, the loveliness of the person and work of Christ, etc. See the notes on Ephesians 1:18.

Verse 19

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten - Of course, only on the supposition that they deserve it. The meaning is, that it is a proof of love on his part, if his professed friends go astray, to recall them by admonitions and by trials. So a father calls back his children who are disobedient; and there is no higher proof of his love than when, with great pain to himself, he

administers such chastisement as shall save his child. See the sentiment here expressed fully explained in the notes on Hebrews 12:6. The language is taken from Proverbs 3:12.

Be zealous therefore, and repent - Be earnest, strenuous, ardent in your purpose to exercise true repentance, and to turn from the error of your ways. Lose no time; spare no labor, that you may obtain such a state of mind that it shall not be necessary to bring upon you the severe discipline which always comes on those who continue lukewarm in religion. The truth taught here is, that when the professed followers of Christ have become lukewarm in his service, they should lose no time in returning to him, anti seeking his favor again. As sure as he has any true love for them, if this is not done he will bring upon them some heavy calamity, alike to rebuke them for their errors, and to recover them to himself.

Verse 20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock - Intimating that, though they had erred, the way of repentance and hope was not closed against them. He was still willing to be gracious, though their conduct had been such as to be loathsome, Revelation 3:16. To see the real force of this language, we must remember how disgusting and offensive their conduct had been to him. And yet he was willing, notwithstanding this, to receive them to his favor; nay more, he stood and pled with them that he might be received with the hospitality that would be shown to a friend or stranger. The language here is so plain that it scarcely needs explanation. It is taken from an act when we approach a dwelling, and, by a well-understood sign - knocking - announce our presence, and ask for admission. The act of knocking implies two things:

(a)that we desire admittance; and,

(b)that we recognize the right of him who dwells in the house to open the door to us or not, as he shall please.

We would not obtrude upon him; we would not force his door; and if, after we are sure that we are heard, we are not admitted, we turn quietly away. Both of these things are implied here by the language used by the Saviour when he approaches man as represented under the image of knocking at the door: that he desires to be admitted to our friendship; and that he recognizes our freedom in the matter. He does not obtrude himself upon us, nor does he employ force to find admission to the heart. If admitted, he comes and dwells with us; if rejected, he turns quietly away -

perhaps to return and knock again, perhaps never to come back. The language used here, also, may be understood as applicable to all persons, and to all the methods by which the Saviour seeks to come into the heart of a sinner. It would properly refer to anything which would announce his presence: his word; his Spirit; the solemn events of his providence; the invitations of his gospel. In these and in other methods he comes to man; and the manner in which these invitations ought to be estimated would be seen by supposing that he came to us personally and solicited our friendship, and proposed to be our Redeemer. It may be added here, that this expression proves that the attempt at reconciliation begins with the Saviour. It is not that the sinner goes out to meet him, or to seek for him; it is that the Saviour presents himself at the door of the heart, as if he were desirous to enjoy the friendship of man. This is in accordance with the uniform language of the New Testament, that "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son"; that "Christ came to seek and to save the lost"; that the Saviour says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden," etc. Salvation, in the Scriptures, is never represented as originated by man.

If any man hear my voice - Perhaps referring to a custom then prevailing, that he who knocked spake, in order to let it be known who it was. This might be demanded in the night Luke 11:5, or when there was apprehension of danger, and it may have been the custom when John wrote. The language here, in accordance with the uniform usage in the Scriptures (compare Isaiah 55:1; John 7:37; Revelation 22:17), is universal, and proves that the invitations of the gospel are made, and are to be made, not to a part only, but fully and freely to all people; for, although this originally had reference to the members of the church in Laodicea, yet the language chosen seems to have been of design so universal (ἐάν τις ean tis) as to be applicable to every human being; and anyone, of any age and in any land, would be authorized to apply this to himself, and, under the protection of this invitation, to come to the Saviour, and to plead this promise as one that fairly included himself. It may be observed further, that this also recognizes the freedom of man. It is submitted to him whether he will hear the voice of the Redeemer or not; and whether he will open the door and admit him or not. He speaks loud enough, and distinctly enough, to be heard, but he does not force the door if it is not voluntarily opened.

And open the door - As one would when a stranger or friend stood and knocked. The meaning here is simply, if anyone will admit me; that is, receive me as a friend. The act of receiving him is as voluntary on our part as it is when we rise and open the door to one who knocks. It may be added:

(1)that this is an easy thing. Nothing is more easy than to open the door when one knocks; and so everywhere in the Scriptures it is represented as an easy thing, if the heart is willing, to secure the salvation of the soul.

(2)this is a reasonable thing.

We invite him who knocks at the door to come in. We always assume, unless there is reason to suspect the contrary, that he applies for peaceful and friendly purposes. We deem it the height of rudeness to let one stand and knock long; or to let him go away with no friendly invitation to enter our dwelling. Yet how different does the sinner treat the Saviour! How long does he suffer him to knock at the door of his heart, with no invitation to enter - no act of common civility such as that with which he would greet even a stranger! And with how much coolness and indifference does he see him turn away - perhaps to come back no more, and with no desire that he ever should return!

I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me - This is an image denoting intimacy and friendship. Supper, with the ancients, was the principal social meal; and the idea here is, that between the Saviour and those who would receive him there would be the intimacy which subsists between those who sit down to a friendly meal together. In all countries and times, to eat together, to break bread together, has been the symbol of friendship, and this the Saviour promises here. The truths, then, which are taught in this verse, are:

(1)that the invitation of the gospel is made to all - “if any man hear my voice”;

(2)that the movement toward reconciliation and friendship is originated by the Saviour - “behold, I stand at the door and knock”;

(3)that there is a recognition of our own free agency in religion - “if any man will hear my voice, and open the door”;

(4)the ease of the terms of salvation, represented by “hearing his voice,” and “opening the door”; and,

(5)the blessedness of thus admitting him, arising from his friendship - "I will sup with him, and he with me." What friend can man have who would confer so many benefits on him as the Lord Jesus Christ? Who is there that he should so gladly welcome to his bosom?

Verse 21

To him that overcometh - See the notes on Revelation 2:7.

Will I grant to sit with me in my throne - That is, they will share his honors and his triumphs. See the notes on Revelation 2:26-27; compare the notes on Romans 8:17.

Even as I also overcame - As I gained a victory over the world, and over the power of the tempter. As the reward of this, he is exalted to the throne of the universe Philemon 2:6-11, and in these honors, achieved by their great and glorious Head, all the redeemed will share.

And am set down with my Father in his throne - Compare the notes on Philemon 2:6-11. That is, he has dominion over the universe. All things are put under his feet, and in the strictest unison and with perfect harmony he is united with the Father in administering the affairs of all worlds. The dominion of the Father is that of the Son - that of the Son is that of the Father; for they are one. See the notes on John 5:19; compare the Ephesians 1:20-22 notes; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 notes.

Verse 22

He that hath an ear … - See the notes on Revelation 2:7.

This closes the epistolary part of this book, and the "visions" properly commence with the next chapter. Two remarks may be made in the conclusion of this exposition:

(1) The first relates to the truthfulness of the predictions in these epistles. is an illustration of that truthfulness, and of the present correspondence of the condition of those churches with what the Saviour said to John they would be, the following striking passage may be introduced from Mr. Gibbon. It occurs in his description of the conquests of the Turks ("Decline and Fall," iv. 260,261). "Two Turkish chieftains, Sarukhan and Aidin left their names to their conquests, and their conquests to their posterity. The captivity or ruin of the seven churches of Asia was consummated; and the barbarous lords of Ionia and Lydia still trample on the monuments of classic and Christian antiquity. In the loss of Ephesus, the

Christians deplored the fall of the first angel, the extinction of the first candlestick of the Revelations: the desolation is complete; and the temple of Diana, or the church of Mary, will equally elude the search of the curious traveler. The circus and three stately theaters of Laodicea are now populated with wolves and foxes; Sardis is reduced to a miserable village; the God of Muhammed, without a rival or a son, is invoked in the mosques of Thyatira and Pergamos; and the populousness of Smyrna is supported by the foreign trade of Franks and Armenians. Philadelphia alone has been saved by prophecy or courage. At a distance from the sea, forgotten by the emperors, encompassed on all sides by the Turks, her valiant citizens defended their religion and freedom above fourscore years, and at length capitulated with the proudest of the Ottomans. Among the Greek colonies and churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect, a column in a scene of ruins; a pleasing example that the paths of honor and safety may sometimes be the same."

(2) the second remark relates to the applicability of these important truths to us. There is perhaps no part of the New Testament more searching than these brief epistles to the seven churches; and though those to whom they were addressed have long since passed away, and the churches have long since become extinct; though darkness, error, and desolation have come over the places where these churches once stood, yet the principles laid down in these epistles still live, and they are full of admonition to Christians in all ages and all lands. It is a consideration of as much importance to us as it was to these churches, that the Saviour now knows our works; that he sees in the church, and in any individual, all that there is to commend and all that there is to reprove; that he has power to reward or punish now as he had then; that the same rules in apportioning rewards and punishments will still be acted on; that he who overcomes the temptations of the world will find an appropriate reward; that those who live in sin must meet with the proper recompense, and that those who are lukewarm in his service will be spurned with unutterable loathing. His rebukes are awful; but his promises are full of tenderness and kindness. While they who have embraced error, and they who are living in sin, have occasion to tremble before him, they who are endeavoring to perform their duty may find in these epistles enough to cheer their hearts, and to animate them with the hope of final victory, and of the most ample and glorious reward.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter Revelation 4:1-11 properly commences the series of visions respecting future events, and introduces those remarkable symbolical descriptions which were designed to cheer the hearts of those to whom the book was first sent, in their trials, and the hearts of all believers in all ages, with the assurance of the final triumph of the gospel. See the Introduction.

In regard to the nature of these visions, or the state of mind of the writer, there have been different opinions. Some have supposed that all that is described was made only to pass before the mind, with no visible representation; others, that there were visible representations so made to him that he could copy them; others, that all that is said or seen was only the production of the author‘s imagination. The latter is the view principally entertained by German writers on the book. All that would seem to be apparent on the face of the book - and that is all that we can judge by - is, that the following things occurred:

(1) The writer was in a devout frame of mind - a state of holy contemplation - when the scenes were represented to him, Revelation 1:10.

(2) the representations were supernatural; that is, they were something which was disclosed to him, in that state of mind, beyond any natural reach of his faculties.

(3) these things were so made to pass before him that they had the aspect of reality, and he could copy and describe them as real. It is not necessary to suppose that there was any representation to the bodily eye; but they had, to his mind, such a reality that he could describe them as pictures or symbols - and his office was limited to that. He does not attempt to explain them, nor does he intimate that he understood them; but his office pertains to an accurate record - a fair transcript - of what passed before his mind. For anything that appears, he may have been as ignorant of their signification as any of his readers, and may have subsequently studied them with the same kind of attention which we now give to them (compare the notes on 1 Peter 1:11-12), and may have, perhaps, remained ignorant of

their signification to the day of his death. It is no more necessary to suppose that he understood all that was implied in these symbols, than it is that one who can describe a beautiful landscape understands all the laws of the plants and flowers in the landscape; or, that one who copies all the designs and devices of armorial bearings in heraldry, should understand all that is meant by the symbols that are used; or, that one who should copy the cuneiform inscriptions of Persepolis, or the hieroglyphics of Thebes, should understand the meaning of the symbols. All that is demanded or expected, in such a case, is, that the copy should be accurately made; and, when made, this copy may be as much an object of study to him who made it as to anyone else.

(4) yet there was a sense in which these symbols were real; that is, they were a real and proper delineation of future events. They were not the mere workings of the imagination. He who saw them in vision though there may have been no representation to the eye, had before him what was a real and appropriate representation of coming events. If not, the visions are as worthless as dreams are.

The visions open Revelation 4:1-11 with a Theophany, or a representation of God. John is permitted to look into heaven, and to have a view of the throne of God, and of the worship celebrated there. A door (θύρα thura) or opening is made into heaven, so that he, as it were, looks through the concave above, and sees what is beyond. He sees the throne of God, and him who sits on the throne, and the worshippers there; he sees the lightnings play around the throne, and hears the thunder‘s roar; he sees the rainbow that encompasses the throne, and hears the songs of the worshippers. In reference to this vision, at the commencement of the series of symbols which he was about to describe, and the reason why this was vouchsafed to him, the following remarks may be suggested:

(1) There is, in some respects, a striking resemblance between this and the visions of Isaiah Revelation 4:1-2.

(b) The first thing that strikes him is a throne, with one sitting on the throne, Revelation 4:2.

(c) The appearance of him who sits upon the throne is described, Revelation 4:3. He is “like a jasper and a sardine stone.” There is no attempt to portray his form; there is no description from which an image could be formed that could become an object of idolatrous worship - for who would undertake to chisel anything so indefinite as what is merely “like a jasper or a sardine stone?” And yet the description is distinct enough to fill the mind with emotions of awe and sublimity, and to leave the impression that he who sat on the throne was a pure and holy God.

(d) Round about the throne there was a bright rainbow: a symbol of peace, Revelation 4:3.

(e) Around the throne are gathered the elders of the church, having on their heads crowns of gold: symbols of the ultimate triumph of the church, Revelation 4:4.

(f) Thunder and lightning, as at Sinai, announce the presence of God, and seven burning lamps before the throne represent the Spirit of God, in his diversified operations, as going forth through the world to enlighten, sanctify, and save, Revelation 4:5.

(g) Before the throne there is a pellucid pavement, as of crystal, spread out like a sea: emblem of calmness, majesty, peace, and wide dominion, Revelation 4:6.

(h) The throne is supported by four living creatures, full of eyes: emblems of the all-seeing power of him that sits upon the throne, and of his ever-watchful providence, Revelation 4:6.

(i) To each one of these living creatures there is a unique symbolic face: respectively emblematic of the authority, the power, the wisdom of God, and of the rapidity with which the purposes of Providence are executed, Revelation 4:7. All are furnished with wings: emblematic of their readiness to do the will of God Revelation 4:8, but each one individually with a special form.

(j) All these creatures pay ceaseless homage to God, whose throne they are represented as supporting: emblematic of the fact that all the operations of the divine government do, in fact, promote his glory, and, as it were, render him praise, Revelation 4:8-9.

(k) To this the elders, the representatives of the church, respond: representing the fact that the church acquiesces in all the arrangements of Providence, and in the execution of all the divine purposes, and finds in them all ground for adoration and thanksgiving, Revelation 4:10-11.

Verse 1

After this - Greek, "After these things"; that is, after what he had seen, and after what he had been directed to record in the preceding chapters. How long after these things this occurred, he does not say - whether on the same day, or at some subsequent time; and conjecture would be useless. The scene, however, is changed. Instead of seeing the Saviour standing before him Ezekiel 1:1, "The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God." The Hebrews spoke of the sky above as a solid expanse; or as a curtain stretched out; or as an extended arch above the earth - describing it as it appears to the eye. In that expanse, or arch, the stars are set as gems (compare the notes on Isaiah 34:4); through apertures or windows in that expanse the rain comes down, Genesis 7:11; and that is opened when a heavenly messenger comes down to the earth, Matthew 3:16. Compare Luke 3:21; Acts 7:56; Acts 10:11. Of course, all this is figurative, but it is such language as all people naturally use. The simple meaning here is, that John had a vision of what is in heaven as if there had been such an opening made through the sky, and he had been permitted to look into the world above.

And the first voice which I heard - That is, the first sound which he heard was a command to come up and see the glories of that world. He afterward heard other sounds - the sounds of praise; but the first notes that fell on his ear were a direction to come up there and receive a revelation respecting future things. This does not seem to me to mean, as Prof. Stuart, Lord, and others suppose, that he now recognized the voice which had first, or formerly spoken to him Revelation 1:10, but that this was the first in contradistinction from other voices which he afterward heard. It resembled the former "voice" in this, that it was "like the sound of a trumpet," but

besides that there does not seem to have been anything that would suggest to him that it came from the same source. It is certainly possible that the Greek would admit of that interpretation, but it is not the most obvious or probable.

Was as it were of a trumpet - It resembled the sound of a trumpet, Revelation 1:10.

Talking with me - As of a trumpet that seemed to speak directly to me.

Which said - That is, the voice said.

Come up hither - To the place whence the voice seemed to proceed - heaven.

And I will show thee things which must be hereafter - Greek, "after these things." The reference is to future events; and the meaning is, that there would be disclosed to him events that were to occur at some future period. There is no intimation here when they would occur, or what would be embraced in the period referred to. All that the words would properly convey would be, that there would be a disclosure of things that were to occur in some future time.

Verse 2

And immediately I was in the Spirit - See the notes on Revelation 1:10. He does not affirm that he was caught up into heaven, nor does he say what impression was on his own mind, if any, as to the place where he was; but he was at once absorbed in the contemplation of the visions before him. He was doubtless still in Patmos, and these things were made to pass before his mind as a reality; that is, they appeared as real to him as if he saw them, and they were in fact a real symbolical representation of things occurring in heaven.

And, behold, a throne was set in heaven - That is, a throne was placed there. The first thing that arrested his attention was a throne. Tiffs was "in heaven" - an expression which proves that the scene of the vision was not the temple in Jerusalem, as some have supposed. There is no allusion to the temple, and no imagery drawn from the temple. Isaiah had his vision Isaiah 6:1-13 in the holy of holies of the temple; Ezekiel Ezekiel 1:1, by the river Chebar; but John looked directly into heaven, and saw the throne of God, and the encircling worshippers there.

And one sat on the throne - It is remarkable that John gives no description of him who sat on the throne, nor does he indicate who he was by name. Neither do Isaiah or Ezekiel attempt to describe the appearance of

the Deity, nor are there any intimations of that appearance given from which a picture or an image could be formed. So much do their representations accord with what is demanded by correct taste; and so sedulously have they guarded against any encouragement of idolatry.

Verse 3

And he that sat was to look upon - Was in appearance; or, as I looked upon him, this seemed to be his appearance. He does not describe his form, but his splendor.

Like a jasper - ἰάσπιδι iaspidiThe jasper, properly, is "an opaque, impure variety of quartz, of red, yellow, and also of some dull colors, breaking with a smooth surface. It admits of a high polish, and is used for vases, seals, snuff-boxes, etc. When the colors are in stripes or bands, it is called striped jasper" (Dana, in Webster's Dictionary). The color here is not designated, whether red or yellow. As the red was, however, the common color worn by princes, it is probable that that was the color that appeared, and that John means to say that he appeared like a prince in his royal robes. Compare Isaiah 6:1.

And a sardine stone - σαρδίῳ sardiōThis denotes a precious stone of a bloodred, or sometimes of a flesh-color, more commonly known by the name of carnelian (Robinson's Lexicon). Thus, it corresponds with the jasper, and this is only an additional circumstance to convey the exact idea in the mind of John, that the appearance of him who sat on the throne was that of a prince in his scarlet robes. This is all the description which he gives of his appearance; and this is:

(a)entirely appropriate, as it suggests the idea of a prince or a monarch; and,

(b)it is well adapted to impress the mind with a sense of the majesty of Him who cannot be described, and of whom no image should be attempted. Compare Deuteronomy 4:12; "Ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude."

And there was a rainbow round about the throne - This is a beautiful image, and was probably designed to be emblematical as well as beautiful. The previous representation is that of majesty and splendor; this is adapted to temper the majesty of the representation. The rainbow has always, from its own nature, and from its associations, been an emblem of peace. It appears on the cloud as the storm passes away. It contrasts beautifully with the tempest that has just been raging. It is seen as the rays of the sun again

appear clothing all things with beauty - the more beautiful from the fact that the storm has come, and that the rain has fallen. If the rain has been gentle, nature smiles serenely, and the leaves and flowers refreshed appear clothed with new beauty: if the storm has raged violently, the appearance of the rainbow is a pledge that the war of the elements has ceased, and that God smiles again upon the earth. It reminds us, too, of the "covenant" when God did "set his bow in the cloud," and solemnly promised that the earth should no more be destroyed by a flood, Genesis 9:9-16. The appearance of the rainbow, therefore, around the throne, was a beautiful emblem of the mercy of God, and of the peace that was to pervade the world as the result of the events that were to be disclosed to the vision of John. True, there were lightnings and thunderings and voices, but there the bow abode calmly above them all, assuring him that there was to be mercy and peace.

In sight like unto an emerald - The emerald is green, and this color so predominated in the bow that it seemed to be made of this species of precious stone. The modified and mild color of green appears to everyone to predominate in the rainbow. Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:28) has introduced the image of the rainbow, also, in his description of the vision that appeared to him, though not as calmly encircling the throne, but as descriptive of the general appearance of the scene. "As is the appearance of the bow that is on the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about." Milton, also, has introduced it, but it is also as a part of the coloring of the throne:

"Over their heads a crystal firmament,
Whereon a sapphire throne, inlaid with pure.
Amber, and colors of the showery arch."
- *Paradise Lost,* b. vii.

Verse 4

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats - Or rather, "thrones" - θρόνοι thronoi- the same word being used as what is rendered "throne" - θρόνος thronosThe word, indeed, properly denotes a seat, but it came to be employed to denote particularly the seat on which a monarch sat, and is properly translated thus in Revelation 4:2-3. So it is rendered in Matthew 5:34; Matthew 19:28; Matthew 23:22; Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:32; and uniformly elsewhere in the New Testament (53 places in all), except in Luke 1:52; Revelation 2:13; Revelation 4:4; Revelation 11:16; Revelation 16:10, where it is rendered "seat and seats." It should have been rendered

“thrones” here, and is so translated by Prof. Stuart. Coverdale and Tyndale render the word “seat” in each place in Revelation 4:2-5. It was undoubtedly the design of the writer to represent those who sat on those seats as, in some sense, kings - for they have on their heads crowns of gold - and that idea should have been retained in the translation of this word.

And upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting - Very various opinions have been entertained in respect to those who thus appeared sitting around the throne, and to the question why the number twenty-four is mentioned. Instead of examining those opinions at length, it will be better to present, in a summary manner, what seems to be probable in regard to the intended reference. The following points, then, would appear to embrace all that can be known on this subject:

(1)These elders have a regal character, or are of a kingly order. This is apparent:

(a) because they are represented as sitting on “thrones,” and

(b) because they have on their heads “crowns of gold.”

(2)they are emblematic. They are designed to symbolize or represent some class of persons. This is clear:

(a) because it cannot be supposed that so small a number would compose the whole of those who are in fact around the throne of God, and,

(b) because there are other symbols there designed to represent something pertaining to the homage rendered to God, as the four living creatures and the angels, and this supposition is necessary in order to complete the symmetry and harmony of the representation.

(3)they are human beings, and are designed to have some relation to the race of man, and somehow to connect the human race with the worship of heaven. The four living creatures have another design; the angels Revelation 5:1-14 have another; but these are manifestly of our race - persons from this world before the throne.

(4)they are designed in some way to be symbolic of the church as redeemed. Thus, they say Revelation 5:9, “Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”

(5)they are designed to represent the whole church in every land and every age of the world. Thus, they say Revelation 5:9, “Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” This shows, further, that the whole representation is emblematic;

for otherwise in so small a number - twenty-four - there could not be a representation out of every nation.

(6)they represent the church triumphant - the church victorious. Thus, they have crowns on their heads; they have harps in their hands Revelation 5:8; they say that they are "kings and priests," and that they will "reign on the earth," Revelation 5:10.

(7)the design, therefore, is to represent the church triumphant - redeemed - saved - as rendering praise and honor to God; as uniting with the hosts of heaven in adoring him for his perfections and for the wonders of his grace; As representatives of the church, they are admitted near to him; they encircle his throne; they appear victorious over every foe; and they come, in unison with the living creatures, and the angels, and the whole universe Revelation 5:13, to ascribe power and dominion to God.

(8)as to the reason why the number "twenty-four" is mentioned, perhaps nothing certain can be determined. Ezekiel, in his vision Ezekiel 8:16; Ezekiel 11:1, saw twenty-five men between the porch and the altar, with their backs toward the temple, and their faces toward the earth - supposed to be representations of the twenty-four "courses" into which the body of priests was divided 1 Peter 2:9), and to have alluded to the fact that the priesthood under the Jewish economy was divided into twenty-four courses, each with a presiding officer, and who was a representative of that portion of the priesthood over which he presided. If so, then the ideas which enter into the representation are these:

(a) That the whole church may be represented as a priesthood, or a community of priests - an idea which frequently occurs in the New Testament.

(b) That the church, as such a community of priests, is employed in the praise and worship of God - an idea, also, which finds abundant countenance in the New Testament.

(c) That, in a series of visions having a designed reference to the church, it was natural to introduce some symbol or emblem representing the church, and representing the fact that this is its office and employment. And,

(d) that this would be well expressed by an allusion derived from the ancient dispensation - the division of the priesthood into classes, over each one of which there presided an individual who might be considered as the representative of his class.

It is to be observed, indeed, that in one respect they are represented as" kings," but still this does not forbid the supposition that there might have been intermingled also another idea, that they were also "priests." Thus, the two ideas are blended by these same elders in Revelation 5:10; "And hath made us unto our God kings and priests." Thus understood, the vision is designed to denote the fact that the representatives of the church, ultimately to be triumphant, are properly engaged in ascribing praise to God. The word "elders" here seems to be used in the sense of aged and venerable men, rather than as denoting office. They were such as by their age were qualified to preside over the different divisions of the priesthood.

Clothed in white raiment - Emblem of purity, and appropriate, therefore, to the representatives of the sanctified church. Compare Revelation 3:4; Revelation 6:11; Revelation 7:9.

And they had on their heads crowns of gold - Emblematic of the fact that they sustained a kingly office. There was blended in the representation the idea that they were both "kings and priests." Thus, the idea is expressed by Peter 1 Peter 2:9, "a royal priesthood" - βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα basileion hierateumaf0.

Verse 5

And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices - Expressive of the majesty and glory of Him that sat upon it. We are at once reminded by this representation of the sublime scene that occurred at Sinai Exodus 19:16, where "there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud." Compare Ezekiel 1:13, Ezekiel 1:24. So Milton:

"Forth rushed with whirlwind sound.
The chariot of Paternal Deity,
Flahing thick flames."
"And from about him fierce effusion rolled.
Of smoke, and lightning flame, and sparkles dire."
Par. Lost, b. vi.

The word "voices" here connected with "thunders" perhaps means "voices even thunders" - referring to the sound made by the thunder. The

meaning is, that these were echoing and re-echoing sounds, as it were a multitude of voices that seemed to speak on every side.

And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne - Seven burning lamps that constantly shone there, illuminating the whole scene. These steadily burning lamps would add much to the beauty of the vision.

Which are the seven Spirits of God - Which represent, or are emblematic of, the seven Spirits of God. On the meaning of the phrase, "the seven Spirits of God," see the notes on Revelation 1:4. If these lamps are designed to be symbols of the Holy Spirit, according to the interpretation proposed in Revelation 1:4, it may be perhaps in the following respects:

(1)They may represent the manifold influences of that Spirit in the world - as imparting light; giving consolation; creating the heart anew; sanctifying the soul, etc.

(2)they may denote that all the operations of that Spirit are of the nature of light, dissipating darkness, and vivifying and animating all things.

(3)perhaps their being placed here before the throne, in the midst of thunder and lightning, may be designed to represent the idea that - amidst all the scenes of magnificence and grandeur; all the storms, agitations, and tempests on the earth; all the political changes; all the convulsions of empire under the providence of God; and all the commotions in the soul of man, produced by the thunders of the law - the Spirit of God beams calmly and serenely, shedding a steady influence over all, like lamps burning in the very midst of lightnings, and thunderings, and voices. In all the scenes of majesty and commotion that occur on the earth, the Spirit of God is present, shedding a constant light, and undisturbed in his influence by all the agitations that are abroad.

Verse 6

And before the throne there was a sea of glass - An expanse spread out like a sea composed of glass: that is, that was pellucid and transparent like glass. It is not uncommon to compare the sea with glass. See numerous examples in Wetstein, in loco. The point of the comparison here seems to be its transparent appearance. It was perfectly clear - apparently stretching out in a wide expanse, as if it were a sea.

Like unto crystal - The word “crystal” means properly anything congealed and pellucid, as ice; then anything resembling that, particularly a certain species of stone distinguished for its clearness - as the transparent crystals of quartz; limpid and colorless quartz; rock or mountain quartz. The word “crystal” now, in mineralogy, means an inorganic body which, by the operation of affinity, has assumed the form of a regular solid, by a certain number of plane and smooth faces. It is used here manifestly in its popular sense to denote anything that is perfectly clear like ice. The comparison, in the representation of the expanse spread around the throne, turns on these points:

(1)It appeared like a sea - stretching afar.

(2)it resembled, in its general appearance, glass; and this idea is strengthened by the addition of another image of the same character - that it was like an expanse of crystal, perfectly clear and pellucid. This would seem to be designed to represent the floor or pavement on which the throne stood. If this is intended to be emblematical, it may denote:

(a) that the empire of God is vast - as if it were spread out like the sea; or.

(b) it may be emblematic of the calmness, the placidity of the divine administration - like an undisturbed and unruffled ocean of glass. Perhaps, however, we should not press such circumstances too far to find a symbolical meaning.

And in the midst of the throne - ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου en mesō tou thronouNot occupying the throne, but so as to appear to be intermingled with the throne, or “in the midst” of it, in the sense that it was beneath the center of it. The meaning would seem to be, that the four living creatures referred to occupied such a position collectively that they at the same time appeared to be under the throne, so that it rested on them, and around it, so that they could be seen from any quarter. This would occur if their bodies were under the throne, and if they stood so that they faced outward. To one approaching the throne they would seem to be around it, though their bodies were under, or “in the midst” of it as a support. The form of their bodies is not specified, but it is not improbable that though their heads were different, their bodies, that were under the throne, and that sustained it, were of the same form.

And round about the throne - In the sense above explained - that, as they stood, they would be seen on every side of the throne.

Were four beasts - This is a very unhappy translation, as the word "beasts" by no means conveys a correct idea of the original word. The Greek word - ζοῶν zoōn- means properly "a living thing"; and it is thus indeed applied to animals, or to the living creation, but the notion of their being living things, or living creatures, should be retained in the translation. Prof. Stuart renders it, "living creatures." Isaiah Isaiah 6:1-13, in his vision of Yahweh, saw two seraphim; Ezekiel, whom John more nearly resembles in his description, saw four "living creatures" - חיות chayowt Ezekiel 1:5 - that is, living, animated, moving beings. The words "living beings" would better convey the idea than any other which could be employed. They are evidently, like those which Ezekiel saw, symbolical beings; but the nature and purpose of the symbol is not perfectly apparent. The "four and twenty elders" are evidently human beings, and are representatives, as above explained, of the church.

In Revelation 5:11, angels are themselves introduced as taking an important part in the worship of heaven: and these living beings, therefore, cannot be designed to represent either angels or human beings. In Ezekiel they are either designed as poetic representations of the majesty of God, or of his providential government, showing what sustains his throne; symbols denoting intelligence, vigilance, the rapidity and directness with which the divine commands are executed, and the energy and firmness with which the government of God is administered. The nature of the case, and the similarity to the representation in Ezekiel, would lead us to suppose that the same idea is to be found substantially in John; and there would be no difficulty in such an interpretation were it not that these "living creatures" are apparently represented in Revelation 5:8-9, as uniting with the redeemed from the earth in such a manner as to imply that they were themselves redeemed.

But perhaps the language in Revelation 5:9, "And they sung a new song," etc., though apparently connected with the "four beasts" in Revelation 4:8, is not designed to be so connected. John may intend there merely to advert to the fact that a new song was sung, without meaning to say that the "four living beings" united in that song. For, if he designed merely to say that the "four living beings" and the "four and twenty elders" fell down to worship, and then that a song was heard, though in fact sung only by the four and twenty eiders, he might have employed the language

which he actually has done. If this interpretation be admitted, then the most natural explanation to be given of the "four living beings" is to suppose that they are symbolical beings designed to furnish some representation of the government of God - to illustrate, as it were, that on which the divine government rests, or which constitutes its support - to wit, power, intelligence, vigilance, energy. This is apparent:

(a)because it was not unusual for the thrones of monarchs to be supported by carved animals of various forms, which were designed undoubtedly to be somehow emblematic of government - either of its stability, vigilance, boldness, or firmness. Thus, Solomon had twelve lions carved on each side of his throne - no improper emblems of government - 1 Kings 10:10, 1 Kings 10:20.

(b)These living beings are described as the supports of the throne of God, or as that on which it rests, and would be, therefore, no improper symbols of the great principles or truths which give support or stability to the divine administration.

(c)They are, in themselves, well adapted to be representatives of the great principles of the divine government, or of the divine providential dealings, as we shall see in the more particular explanation of the symbol.

(d)Perhaps it might be added, that, so understood, there would be completeness in the vision.

The "elders" appear there as representatives of the church redeemed; the angels in their own proper persons render praise to God. To this it was not improper to add, and the completeness of the representation seems to make it necessary to add, that all the doings of the Almighty unite in his praise; his various acts in the government of the universe harmonize with redeemed and unfallen intelligences in proclaiming his glory. The vision of the "living beings," therefore, is not, as I suppose, a representation of the attributes of God as such, but an emblematic representation of the divine government - of the throne of Deity resting upon, or sustained by, those things of which these living beings are emblems - intelligence, firmness, energy, etc. This supposition seems to combine more probabilities than any other which has been proposed; for, according to this supposition, all the acts, and ways, and creatures of God unite in his praise.

It is proper to add, however, that expositors are by no means agreed as to the design of this representation. Prof. Stuart supposes that the attributes of God are referred to; Mr. Elliott (i. 93), that the "twenty-four elders and the four living creatures symbolize the church, or the collective body of the saints of God; and that as there are two grand divisions of the church, the larger one that of the departed in Paradise, and the other that militant on earth, the former is depicted by the twenty-four elders, and the latter by the living creatures"; Mr. Lord (pp. 53,54), that the living creatures and the elders are both of one race; the former perhaps denoting those like Enoch and Elijah, who were translated, and those who were raised by the Saviour after his resurrection, or those who have been raised to special eminence - the latter the mass of the redeemed; Mr. Mede, that the living creatures are symbols of the church worshipping on earth; Mr. Daubuz, that they are symbols of the ministers of the church on earth; Vitringa, that they are symbols of eminent ministers and teachers in every age; Dr. Hammond regards him who sits on the throne as the metropolitan bishop of Judea, the representative of God, the elders as diocesan bishops of Judea, and the living creatures as four apostles, symbols of the saints who are to attend the Almighty as assessors in judgment! See Lord on the Apocalypse, pp. 58,59.

Full of eyes - Denoting omniscience. The ancients fabled Argus as having 100 eyes, or as having the power of seeing in any direction. The emblem here would denote an everwatchful and observing Providence; and, in accordance with the explanation proposed above, it means that, in the administration of the divine government, everything is distinctly contemplated; nothing escapes observation; nothing can be concealed. It is obvious that the divine government could not be administered unless this were so; and it is the perfection of the government of God that all things are seen just as they are. In the vision seen by Ezekiel Ezekiel 1:18, the "rings" of the wheels on which the living creatures moved are represented as "full of eyes round about them," emblematic of the same thing. So Milton:

"As with stars their bodies all,
And wings were set with eyes; with eyes the wheels.
Of beryl, and careening fires between."

Before - In front. As one looked on their faces, from whatever quarter the throne was approached, he could see a multitude of eyes looking upon him.

And behind - On the parts of their bodies which were under the throne. The meaning is, that there is universal vigilance in the government of God. Whatever is the form of the divine administration; whatever part is contemplated; however it is manifested - whether as activity, energy, power, or intelligence - it is based on the fact that all things are seen from every direction. There is nothing that is the result of blind fate or of chance.

Verse 7

And the first beast was like a lion - A general description has been given, applicable to all, denoting that in whatever form the divine government is administered, these things will be found; a particular description now follows, contemplating that government under particular aspects, as symbolized by the living beings on which the throne rests. The first is that of a lion. The lion is the monarch of the woods, the king of beasts, and he becomes thus the emblem of dominion, of authority, of government in general. Compare Genesis 49:9; Amos 3:8; Joel 3:16; Daniel 7:4. As emblematic of the divine administration, this would signify that He who sits on the throne is the ruler over all, and that his dominion is absolute and entire. It has been made a question whether the whole body had the form of a lion, or whether it had the appearance of a lion only as to its face or front part. It would seem probable that the latter only is intended, for it is expressly said of the "third beast" that it had "the face of a man," implying that it did not resemble a man in other respects, and it is probable that, as these living creatures were the supports of the throne, they had the same form in all other particulars except the front part. The writer has not informed us what was the appearance of these living creatures in other respects, but it is most natural to suppose that it was in the form of an ox, as being adapted to sustain a burden. It is hardly necessary to say that the thing supposed to be symbolical here in the government of God - his absolute rule - actually exists, or that it is important that this should be fairly exhibited to people.

And the second beast like a calf - Or, more properly, a young bullock, for so the word - μόσχος moschos- means. The term is given by Herodotus (ii. 41; iii. 28) to the Egyptian god Apis, that is, a young bullock. Such an emblem, standing under a throne as one of its supports, would symbolize firmness, endurance, strength (compare Proverbs 14:4); and, as used to represent qualities pertaining to him who sat on the throne, would denote stability, firmness, perseverance: qualities that are found abundantly in the

divine administration. There was clearly, in the apprehension of the ancients, some natural fitness or propriety in such an emblem. A young bullock was worshipped in Egypt as a god. Jeroboam set up two idols in the form of a calf, the one in Dan and the other in Bethel, 1 Kings 12:28-29. A similar object of worship was found in the Indian, Greek, and Scandinavian mythologies, and the image appears to have been adopted early and extensively to represent the divinity.

The above figure is a representation of a calfidol, copied from the collection made by the artists of the French Institute at Cairo. It is recumbent, with human eyes, the skin flesh-colored, and the whole after-parts covered with a white and sky-blue drapery: the horns not on the head, but above it, and containing within them the symbolical globe surmounted by two feathers. The meaning of the emblems on the back is not known. It is copied here merely to show that, for some cause, the calf was regarded as an emblem of the Divinity. It may illustrate this, also, to remark that among the sculptures found by Mr. Layard, in the ruins of Nineveh, were not a few winged bulls, some of them of large structure, and probably all of them emblematic. One of these was removed with great difficulty, to be deposited in the British Museum. See Mr. Layard‘s Nineveh and its Remains, vol. ii. pp. 64-75. Such emblems were common in the East; and, being thus common, they would be readily understood in the time of John.

And the third beast had a face as a man - There is no intimation as to what was the form of the remaining portion of this living creature; but as the beasts were “in the midst of the throne,” that is, under it as a support, it may be presumed that they had such a form as was adapted to that purpose - as supposed above, perhaps the form of an ox. To this living creature there was attached the head of a man, and that would be what would be particuLarly visible to one looking on the throne. The aspect of a man here would denote intelligence - for it is this which distinguishes man from the creation beneath him; and if the explanation of the symbol above given be correct, then the meaning of this emblem is, that the operations of the government of God are conducted with intelligence and wisdom. That is, the divine administration is not the result of blind fate or chance; it is founded on a clear knowledge of things, on what is best to be done, on what will most conduce to the common good.

Of the truth of this there can be no doubt; and there was a propriety that, in a vision designed to give to man a view of the government of the

Almighty, this should be appropriately symbolized. It may illustrate this to observe, that in ancient sculptures it was common to unite the head of a man with the figure of an animal, as cobining symbols. Among the most remarkable figures discovered by Mr. Layard, in the ruins of Nineveh, were winged, human-headed lions. These lions are thus described by Mr. Layard: "They were about twelve feet in height, and the same number in length. The body and limbs were admirably portrayed; the muscles and bones, although strongly developed, to display the strength of the animal, showed, at the same time, a correct knowledge of its anatomy and form. Expanded wings sprung from the shoulder and spread over the back; a knotted girdle, ending in tassels, encircled the loins. These sculptures, forming an entrance, were partly in full, and partly in relief. The head and forepart, facing the chambers, were in full; but only one side of the rest of the slab was sculptured, the back being placed against the wall of sun-dried bricks" ("Nineveh and its Remains," vol. i. p. 75).

The following engraving will give an idea of one of these human-headed animals, and will serve to illustrate the passage before us alike in reference to the head, indicating intelligence, and the wings, denoting rapidity. On the use of these figures, found in the ruins of Nineveh, Mr. Layard makes the following sensible remarks - remarks admirably illustrating the view which I take of the symbols before us: "I used to contemplate for hours these mysterious emblems, and muse over their intent and history. What more noble forms could have ushered the people into the temple of their gods? What more subblime images could have been borrowed from nature by people who sought, unaided by the light of revealed religion, to embody their conceptions of the wisdom, power, and ubiquity of a Supreme Being? They could find no better type of intellect and knowledge than the head of a man; of strength, than the body of the lion; of rapidity of motion, than the wings of a bird. These winged, human-headed lions were not idle creations, the offspring of mere fancy their meaning was written upon them. They had awed and instructed races which flourished 3000 years ago. Through the portals which they guarded, kings, priests, and warriors had borne sacrifices to their altars, long before the wisdom of the East had penetrated into Greece, and had furnished its mythology with symbols long recognized by the Assyrian votaries" ("Nineveh and its Remains," vol. i. p. 75,76).

And the fourth beast was like a flying eagle - All birds, indeed, fly; but the epithet flying is here employed to add intensity to the description. The eagle is distinguished, among the feathered race, for the rapidity, the power, and the elevation of its flight. No other bird is supposed to fly so high; none ascends with so much power; none is so majestic and grand in his ascent toward the sun. That which would be properly symbolized by this would be the rapidity with which the commands of God are executed; or this characteristic of the divine government, that the purposes of God are carried into prompt execution. There is, as it were, a vigorous, powerful, and rapid flight toward the accomplishment of the designs of God - as the eagle ascends unmolested toward the sun. Or, it may be that this symbolizes protecting care, or is an emblem of that protection which God, by his providence, extends over those who put their trust in him.

Thus, in Exodus 19:4, "Ye have seen how I bare you on eagles' wings." "Hide me under the shadow of thy wings," Psalm 17:8. "In the shadow of thy wing's will I rejoice," Psalm 63:7. "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him," Deuteronomy 32:11-12, etc. As in the case of the other living beings, so it is to be remarked of the fourth living creature also, that the form of the body is unknown. There is no impropriety in supposing that it is only its front aspect that John here speaks of, for that was sufficient for the symbol. The remaining portion "in the midst of the throne" may have corresponded with that of the other living beings, as being adapted to a support. In further illustration of this it may be remarked, that symbols of this description were common in the Oriental world.

Figures in the human form, or in the form of animals, with the head of an eagle or a vulture, are found in the ruins of Nineveh, and were undoubtedly designed to be symbolic. "On the earliest Assyrian monuments," says Mr. Layard ("Nineveh and its Remains," vol. ii., p. 348,349), "one of the most prominent sacred types is the eagle-headed, or the vulture-headed, human figure. Not only is it found in colossal proportions on the walls, or guarding the portals of the chambers, but it is also constantly represented in the groups on the embroidered robes. When thus introduced, it is generally seen contending with other mythic animals - such as the human-headed lion or bull; and in these contests it is always the

conqueror. it may hence be inferred that it was a type of the Supreme Deity, or of one of his principal attributes. A fragment of the Zoroastrian oracles, preserved by Eusebius, declares that ‹God is he that has the head of a hawk. He is the first, indestructible, eternal, unbegotten, indivisible, dissimilar; the dispenser of all good; incorruptible; the best of the good, the wisest of the wise; he is the father of equity and justice, self-taught, physical and perfect, and wise, and the only inventor of the sacred philosophy.‘ Sometimes the head of this bird is added to the body of a lion.

Under this form of the Egyptian hieracosphinx it is the conqueror in combats with other symbolical figures, and is frequently represented as striking down a gazelle or wild goat. It also clearly resembles the gryphon of the Greek mythology, avowedly an Eastern symbol, and connected with Apollo, or with the sun, of which the Assyrian form was probably an emblem.” The following figure found in Nimroud, or ancient Nineveh; may furnish an illustration of one of the usual forms. If these views of the meaning of these symbols are correct, then the idea which would be conveyed to the mind of John, and the idea, therefore, which should be conveyed to our minds, is, that the government of God is energetic, firm, intelligent, and that in the execution of its purposes it is rapid like the unobstructed flight of an eagle, or protective like the care of the eagle for its young. When, in the subsequent parts of the vision, these living creatures are represented as offering praise and adoration to Him that sits on the throne Revelation 4:8; Revelation 5:8, Revelation 5:14, the meaning would be, in accordance with this representation, that all the acts of divine government do, as if they were personified, unite in the praise which the redeemed and the angels ascribe to God. All living things, and all acts of the Almighty, conspire to proclaim his glory. The church, by her representatives, the “four and twenty elders,” honors God; the angels, without number, unite in the praise; all creatures in heaven, in earth, under the earth, and in the sea Revelation 5:13, join in the song; and all the acts and ways of God declare also his majesty and glory: for around his throne, and beneath his throne, are expressive symbols of the firmness, energy, intelligence, and power with which his government is administered.

Verse 8

And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him - An emblem common to them all, denoting that, in reference to each and all the things here symbolized, there was one common characteristic - that in heaven there is the utmost promptness in executing the divine commands. Compare Isaiah 6:2; Psalm 18:10; Psalm 104:3; Jeremiah 48:40. No mention is made of the manner in which these wings were arranged, and conjecture in regard to that is vain. The seraphim, as seen by Isaiah, had each one six wings, with two of which the face was covered, to denote profound reverence; with two the feet, or lower parts - emblematic of modesty; and with two they flew - emblematic of their celerity in executing the commands of God, Isaiah 6:2. Perhaps without impropriety we may suppose that, in regard to these living beings seen by John, two of the wings of each were employed, as in Isaiah, to cover the face - token of profound reverence; and that the remainder were employed in flight denoting the rapidity with which the divine commands are executed. Mercury, the messenger of Jupiter among the pagan, was represented with wings, and nothing is more common in the paintings and basreliefs of antiquity than such representations.

And they were full of eyes within - Prof. Stuart more correctly renders this, "around and within are full of eyes"; connecting the word "around" ("about"), not with the wings, as in our version, but with the eyes. The meaning is, that the portions of the beasts that were visible from the outside of the throne, and the portions under or within the throne, were covered with eyes. The obvious design of this is to mark the universal vigilance of divine providence.

And they rest not - Margin, have no rest. That is, they are constantly employed; there is no intermission. The meaning, as above explained, is, that the works and ways of God are constantly bringing praise to him.

Day and night - Continually. They who are employed day and night fill up the whole time - for this is all.

Saying, Holy, holy, holy - For the meaning of this, see the notes on Isaiah 6:3.

Lord God Almighty - Isaiah Isaiah 6:3 expresses it, "Yahweh of hosts." The reference is to the true God, and the epithet Almighty is one that is often given him. It is especially appropriate here, as there were to be, as the sequel shows, remarkable exhibitions of power in executing the purposes described in this book.

Which was, and is, and is to come - Who is eternal - existing in all past time; existing now; and to continue to exist forever. See the notes on Revelation 1:4.

Verse 9

And when those beasts give glory … - As often as those living beings ascribe glory to God. They did this continually Revelation 4:8; and, if the above explanation be correct, then the idea is that the ways and acts of God in his providential government are continually of such a nature as to honor him.

Verse 10

The four and twenty elders fall down before him … - The representatives of the redeemed church in heaven (see the notes at Revelation 4:4) also unite in the praise. The meaning, if the explanation of the symbol be correct, is, that the church universal unites in praise to God for all that characterizes his administration. In the connection in which this stands here, the sense would be, that as often as there is any new manifestation of the principles of the divine government, the church ascribes new praise to God. Whatever may be thought of this explanation of the meaning of the symbols, of the fact here stated there can be no doubt. The church of God always rejoices when there is any new manifestation of the principles of the divine administration. As all these acts, in reality, bring glory and honor to God, the church, as often as there is any new manifestation of the divine character and purposes, renders praise anew. Nor can it be doubted that the view here taken is one that is every way appropriate to the general character of this book. The great design was to disclose what God was to do in future times, in the various revolutions that were to take place on the earth, until his government should be firmly established, and the principles of his administration should everywhere prevail; and there was a propriety, therefore, in describing the representatives of the church as taking part in this universal praise, and as casting every crown at the feet of Him who sits upon the throne.

And cast their crowns before the throne - They are described as "crowned" Revelation 4:4, that is, as triumphant, and as kings (compare Revelation 5:10), and they are here represented as casting their crowns at his feet, in token that they owe their triumph to Him. To his providential dealings, to his wise and merciful government, they owe it that they are

crowned at all; and there is, therefore, a propriety that they should acknowledge this in a proper manner by placing their crowns at his feet.

Verse 11

Thou art worthy, O Lord - In thy character, perfections, and government, there is what makes it proper that universal praise should be rendered. The feeling of all true worshippers is, that (God is worthy of the praise that is ascribed to him. No man worships him aright who does not feel that there is that in his nature and his doings which makes it proper that he should receive universal adoration.

To receive glory - To have praise or glory ascribed to thee.

And honour - To be honored; that is, to be approached and adored as worthy of honor.

And power - To have power ascribed to thee, or to be regarded as having infinite power. Man can confer no power on God, but he may acknowledge what he has, and adore him for its exertion in his behalf and in the government of the world.

For thou hast created all things - Thus, laying the foundation for praise. No one can contemplate this vast and wonderful universe without seeing that He who has made it is worthy to "receive glory, and honor, and power." Compare the notes on Job 38:7.

And for thy pleasure they are - They exist by thy will - διὰ τὸ θέλημά dia to thelēmaThe meaning is, that they owe their existence to the will of God, and therefore their creation lays the foundation for praise. He "spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." He said, "Let there be light; and there was light." There is no other reason why the universe exists at all than that such was the will of God; there is nothing else that is to be adduced as explaining the fact that anything has now a being. The putting forth of that will explains all; and, consequently, whatever wisdom, power, goodness, is manifested in the universe, is to be traced to God, and is the expression of what was in him from eternity. It is proper, then, to "look up through nature to nature's God," and wherever we see greatness or goodness in the works of creation, to regard them as the faint expression of what exists essentially in the Creator.

And were created - Bringing more distinctly into notice the fact that they owe their existence to his will. They are not eternal; they are not self-existent; they were formed from nothing. This concludes the magnificent introduction to the principal visions in this book. It is beautifully

appropriate to the solemn disclosures which are to be made in the following portions of the book, and, as in the case of Isaiah and Ezekiel, was eminently adapted to impress the mind of the holy seer with awe. Heaven is opened to his view; the throne of God is seen; there is a vision of Him who sits upon that throne; thunders and voices are heard around the throne; the lightnings play; and a rainbow, symbol of peace, encircles all; the representatives of the redeemed church, occupying subordinate thrones, and in robes of victory, and with crowns on their heads, are there; a vast smooth expanse like the sea is spread out before the throne; and the emblems of the wisdom, the power, the vigilance, the energy, the strength of the divine administration are there, represented as in the act of bringing honor to God, and proclaiming his praise. The mind of John was doubtless prepared by these august visions for the disclosures which follow; and the mind of the reader should in like manner be deeply and solemnly impressed when he contemplates them, as if he looked into heaven, and saw the impressive grandeur of the worship there. Let us fancy ourselves, therefore, with the holy seer looking into heaven, and listen with reverence to what the great God discloses respecting the various changes that are to occur until every foe of the church shall be subdued, and the earth shall acknowledge his sway, and the whole scene shall close in the triumphs and joys of heaven.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter Revelation 5:1-14 introduces the disclosure of future events. It is done in a manner eminently suited to impress the mind with a sense of the importance of the revelations about to be made. The proper state of mind for appreciating this chapter is that when we look on the future, and are sensible that important events are about to occur; when we feel that that future is wholly impenetrable to us; and when the efforts of the highest created minds fail to lift the mysterious veil which hides those events from our view; it is in accordance with our nature that the mind should be impressed with solemn awe under such circumstances; it is not a violation of the laws of our nature that one who had an earnest desire to penetrate that future, and who saw the volume before him which contained the mysterious revelation, and who yet felt that there was no one in heaven or earth who could break the seals, and disclose what was to come, should weep. Compare Revelation 5:4. The design of the whole chapter is evidently to honor the Lamb of God, by showing that the power was entrusted to him which was confided to no one else in heaven or earth, of disclosing what is to come. Nothing else would better illustrate this than the fact that he alone could break the mysterious seals which barred out the knowledge of the future from all created eyes; and nothing would be better adapted to impress this on the mind than the representation in this chapter - the exhibition of a mysterious book in the hand of God; the proclamation of the angel, calling on any who could do it to open the book; the fact that no one in heaven or earth could do it; the tears shed by John when it was found that no one could do it; the assurance of one of the elders that the Lion of the tribe of Judah had power to do it; and the profound adoration of all in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth in view of the power entrusted to him of breaking these mysterious seals.

The main points in the chapter are these:

(1) Having in Revelation 4:1-11 described God as sitting on a throne, John here Revelation 5:1 represents himself as seeing in his right hand a mysterious volume; written all over on the inside and the outside, yet sealed

with seven seals; a volume manifestly referring to the future, and containing important disclosures respecting coming events.

(2) amighty angel is introduced making a proclamation, and asking who is worthy to open that book, and to break those seals; evidently implying that none unless of exalted rank could do it, Revelation 5:2.

(3) there is a pause: no one in heaven, or in earth, or under the earth, approaches to do it, or claims the right to do it, Revelation 5:3.

(4) John, giving way to the expressions of natural emotion - indicative of the longing and intense desire in the human soul to be made acquainted with the secrets of the future - pours forth a flood of tears because no one is found who is worthy to open the seals of this mysterious book, or to read what was recorded there, Revelation 5:4.

(5) in his state of suspense and of grief, one of the elders - the representatives of that church for whose benefit these revelations of the future were to be made (note on Revelation 4:4) - approaches him and says that there is one who is able to open the book; one who has the power to loose its seals, Revelation 5:5. This is the Messiah - the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David - coming now to make the disclosure for which the whole book was given, Revelation 1:1.

(6) immediately the attention of John is attracted by the Messiah, appearing as a Lamb in the midst of the throne; with horns, the symbols of strength; and eyes, the symbols of all-pervading intelligence. He approaches and takes the book from the hand of Him that sits on the throne; symbolical of the fact that it is the province of the Messiah to make known to the church and the world the events which are to occur, Revelation 5:6-7. He appears here in a different form from that in which he manifested himself in Revelation 5:8-10.

(8) this ascription of praise in heaven is instantly responded to, and echoed back, from all parts of the universe - all joining in acknowledging the Lamb as worthy of the exalted office to which he was raised, Revelation 5:11-13. The angels around the throne - amounting to thousands of myriads

- unite with the living creatures and the elders; and to these are joined the voices of every creature in heaven, on the earth, under the earth, and in the sea, ascribing to Him that sits upon the throne and the Lamb universal praise.

(9) to this loud ascription of praise from far-distant worlds the living creatures respond with a hearty "Amen," and the elders fall down and worship him that lives forever and ever, Revelation 5:14. The universe is held in wondering expectation of the disclosures which are to be made, and from all parts of the universe there is an acknowledgment that the Lamb of God alone has the right to break the mysterious seals. The importance of the developments justifies the magnificence of this representation; and it would not be possible to imagine a more sublime introduction to these great events.

Verse 1

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne - Of God, Revelation 4:3-4. His form is not described there, nor is there any intimation of it here except the mention of his." right hand." The book or roll seems to have been so held in his hand that John could see its shape, and see distinctly how it was written and sealed.

A book - βιβλίον biblionThis word is properly a diminutive of the word commonly rendered "book" (βίβλος biblos), and would strictly mean a small book, or a book of diminutive size - a tablet, or a letter (Liddell and Scott, Lexicon). It is used, however, to denote a book of any size - a roll, scroll, or volume; and is thus used:

(a)to denote the Pentateuch, or the Mosaic law, Hebrews 9:19; Hebrews 10:7;

(b)the book of life, Revelation 17:8; Revelation 20:12; Revelation 21:27;

(c)epistles which were also rolled up, Revelation 1:11;

(d)documents, as a bill of divorce, Matthew 19:7; Mark 10:4.

When it is the express design to speak of a small book, another word is used (βιβλαρίδιον biblaridion), Revelation 10:2, Revelation 10:8-10. The book or roll referred to here was what contained the revelation in the

subsequent chapters, to the end of the description of the opening of the seventh seal - for the communication that was to be made was all included in the seven seals; and to conceive of the size of the book, therefore, we are only to reflect on the amount of parchment that would naturally be written over by the communications here made. The form of the book was undoubtedly that of a scroll or roll; for that was the usual form of books among the ancients, and such a volume could be more easily sealed with a number of seals, in the manner here described, than a volume in the form in which books are made now. On the ancient form of books, see the notes on Luke 4:17. The engraving in Matthew 27:66; compare the notes on Job 38:14. The fact that there were seven seals - an unusual number in fastening a volume - would naturally attract the attention of John, though it might not occur to him at once that there was anything significant in the number. It is not stated in what manner the seals were attached to the volume, but it is clear that they were so attached that each seal closed one part of the volume, and that when one was broken and the portion which that was designed to fasten was unrolled, a second would be come to, which it would be necessary to break in order to read the next portion. The outer seal would indeed bind the whole; but when that was broken it would not give access to the whole volume unless each successive seal were broken. May it not have been intended by this arrangement to suggest the idea that the whole future is unknown to us, and that the disclosure of any one portion, though necessary if the whole would be known, does not disclose all, but leaves seal after seal still unbroken, and that they are all to be broken one after another if we would know all? How these were arranged, John does not say. All that is necessary to be supposed is, that the seven seals were put successively upon the margin of the volume as it was rolled up, so that each opening would extend only as far as the next seal, when the unrolling would be arrested. Anyone, by rolling up a sheet of paper, could so fasten it with pins, or with a succession of seals, as to represent this with sufficient accuracy.

Verse 2

And I saw a strong angel - An angel endowed with great strength, as if such strength was necessary to enable him to give utterance to the loud voice of the inquiry. “Homer represents his heralds as powerful, robust men, in order consistently to attribute to them deep-toned and powerful voices” (Prof. Stuart). The inquiry to be made was one of vast importance;

it was to be made of all in heaven, all on the earth, and all under the earth, and hence an angel is introduced so mighty that his voice could be heard in all those distant worlds.

Proclaiming with a loud voice - That is, as a herald or crier. He is rather introduced here as appointed to this office than as self-moved. The design undoubtedly is to impress the mind with a sense of the importance of the disclosures about to be made, and at the same time with a sense of the impossibility of penetrating the future by any created power. That one of the highest angels should make such a proclamation would sufficiently show its importance; that such an one, by the mere act of making such a proclamation, should practically confess his own inability, and consequently the inability of all of similar rank, to make the disclosures, would show that the revelations of the future were beyond mere created power.

Who is worthy to open the book, … - That is, who is "worthy" in the sense of having a rank so exalted, and attributes so comprehensive, as to authorize and enable him to do it. In other words, who has the requisite endowments of all kinds to enable him to do it? It would require moral qualities of an exalted character to justify him in approaching the seat of the holy God, to take the book from his hands; it would require an ability beyond that of any created being to penetrate the future, and disclose the meaning of the symbols which were employed. The fact that the book was held in the hand of him that was on the throne, and sealed in this manner, was in itself a sufficient proof that it was not his purpose to make the disclosure directly, and the natural inquiry arose whether there was anyone in the wide universe who, by rank, or character, or office, would be empowered to open the mysterious volume.

Verse 3

And no man in heaven - No one - οὐδεὶς oudeisThere is no limitation in the original to man. The idea is, that there was no one in heaven - evidently alluding to the created beings there - who could open the volume. Is it not taught here that angels cannot penetrate the future, and disclose what is to come? Are not their faculties limited in this respect like those of man?

Nor in earth - Among all classes of people - sages, divines, prophets, philosophers - who among those have ever been able to penetrate the future, and disclose what is to come?

Neither under the earth - These divisions compose, in common language, the universe: what is in heaven above; what is on the earth; and whatever there is under the earth - the abodes of the dead. May there not be an allusion here to the supposed science of necromancy, and an assertion that even the dead cannot penetrate the future, and disclose what is to come? Compare the notes on Isaiah 8:19. In all these great realms no one advanced who was qualified to undertake the office of making a disclosure of what the mysterious scroll might contain.

Was able to open the book - Had ability - ἠδύνατε ēdunate- to do it. It was a task beyond their power. Even if anyone had been found who had a rank and a moral character which might have seemed to justify the effort, there was no one who had the power of reading what was recorded respecting coming events.

Neither to look thereon - That is, so to open the seals as to have a view of what was written therein. That it was not beyond their power merely to see the book is apparent from the fact that John himself saw it in the hand of him that sat on the throne; and it is evident also Revelation 5:5 that in that sense the elders saw it. But no one could prevail to inspect the contents, or so have access to the interior of the volume as to be able to see what was written there. It could be seen, indeed Revelation 5:1, that it was written on both sides of the parchment, but what the writing was no one could know.

Verse 4

And I wept much, because no man was found worthy … - Greek, as in Revelation 5:3, no one. It would seem as if there was a pause to see if there were any response to the proclamation of the angel. There being none, John gave way to his deep emotions in a flood of tears. The tears of the apostle here may be regarded as an illustration of two things which are occurring constantly in the minds of people:

(1) The strong desire to penetrate the future; to lift the mysterious veil which shrouds what is to come; to find some way to pierce the dark wall which seems to stand up before us, and which shuts from our view what is to be hereafter. There have been no more earnest efforts made by people than those which have been made to read the scaled volume which contains the record of what is yet to come. By dreams, and omens, and auguries, and astrology, and the flight of birds, and necromancy, people have sought anxiously to ascertain what is to be hereafter. Compare, for an expression of

that intense desire, Foster‘s Life and Correspondence, vol. i. p. 111, and vol. ii. pp. 237,238.

(2) The weeping of the apostle may be regarded as an instance of the deep grief which people often experience when all efforts to penetrate the future fail, and they feel that after all they are left completely in the dark. Often is the soul overpowered with grief, and often are the eyes filled with sadness at the reflection that there is an absolute limit to the human powers; that all that man can arrive at by his own efforts is uncertain conjecture, and that there is no way possible by which he can make nature speak out and disclose what is to come. Nowhere does man find himself more fettered and limited in his powers than here; nowhere does he feel that there is such an intense disproportion between his desires and his attainments. In nothing do we feel that we are more absolutely in need of divine help than in our attempts to unveil the future; and were it not for revelation man might weep in despair.

Verse 5

And one of the elders saith unto me - See the notes on Revelation 4:4. No particular reason is assigned why this message was delivered by one of the elders rather than by an angel. If the elders were, however (see the notes on Revelation 4:4), the representatives of the church, there was a propriety that they should address John in his trouble. Though they were in heaven, they were deeply interested in all that pertained to the welfare of the church, and they had been permitted to understand what as yet was unknown to him, that the power of opening the mysterious volume which contained the revelation of the future was entrusted particularly to the Messiah. Having this knowledge, they were prepared to comfort him with the hope that what was so mysterious would be made known.

Weep not - That is, there is no occasion for tears. The object which you so much desire can be obtained. There is one who can break those seals, and who can unroll that volume and read what is recorded there.

Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah - This undoubtedly refers to the Lord Jesus; and the points needful to be explained are, why he is called a Lion, and why be is spoken of as the Lion of the tribe of Judah:

(a) As to the first: This appellation is not elsewhere given to the Messiah, but it is not difficult to see its propriety as used in this place. The

lion is the king of beasts, the monarch of the forest, and thus becomes an emblem of one of kingly authority and of power (see the notes on Revelation 4:7), and as such the appellation is used in this place. It is because Christ has power to open the seals - as if he ruled over the universe, and all events were under his control, as the lion rules in the forest - that the name is here given to him.

(b) As to the other point: He is called the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," doubtless, with reference to the prophecy in Genesis 49:9 - "Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion"; and from the fact that the Messiah was of the tribe of Judah. Compare Genesis 49:10. This use of the term would connect him in the apprehension of John with the prophecy, and would suggest to him the idea of his being a ruler, or having dominion. As such, therefore, it would be appropriate that the power of breaking these seals should be committed to him.

The Root of David - Not the Root of David in the sense that David sprung from him as a tree does from a root, but in the sense that he himself was a "root-shoot" or sprout from David, and had sprung from him as a shoot or sprout springs up from a decayed and fallen tree. See the notes on Isaiah 11:1. This expression would connect him directly with David, the great and glorious monarch of Israel, and as having a right to occupy his throne. As one thus ruling over the people of God, there was a propriety that to him should be entrusted the task of opening these seals.

Hath prevailed - That is, he has acquired this power as the result of a conflict or struggle. The word used here - ἐνίκησεν enikēsen- refers to such a conflict or struggle, properly meaning to come off victor, to overcome, to conquer, to subdue; and the idea here is, that his power to do this, or the reason why he does this, is the result of a conflict in which he was a victor. As the series of events to be disclosed, resulting in the final triumph of religion, was the effect of his conflicts with the powers of evil, there was a special propriety that the disclosure should be made by him. The truths taught in this verse are:

(1)that the power of making disclosures, in regard to the future, is entrusted to the Messiah; and,

(2)that this, so far as he is concerned, is the result of a conflict or struggle on his part.

Verse 6

And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne - We are not to suppose that he was in the center of the throne itself, but he was a conspicuous object when the throne and the elders and the living beings were seen. He was so placed as to seem to be in the midst of the group made up of the throne, the living beings, and the elders.

And of the four beasts - See the notes at Revelation 4:6.

Stood a Lamb - An appellation often given to the Messiah, for two reasons:

(1)because the lamb was an emblem of innocence and,

(2)because a lamb was offered commonly in sacrifice. Compare the notes on John 1:29.

As it had been slain - That is, in some way having the appearance of having been slain; having some marks or indications about it that it had been slain. What those were the writer does not specify. If it were covered with blood, or there were marks of mortal wounds, it would be all that the representation demands. The great work which the Redeemer performed - that of making an atonement for sin - was thus represented to John in such a way that he at once recognized him, and saw the reason why the office of breaking the seals was entrusted to him. It should be remarked that this representation is merely symbolic, and we are not to suppose that the Redeemer really assumed this form, or that he appears in this form in heaven. We should no more suppose that the Redeemer appear: literally as a lamb in heaven with numerous eyes and horns, than that there is a literal throne and a sea of glass there; that there are "seats" there, and "elders," and "crowns of gold."

Having seven horns - Emblems of authority and power - for the horn is a symbol of power and dominion. Compare Deuteronomy 33:17; 1 Kings 22:11; Jeremiah 48:25; Zechariah 1:18; Daniel 7:24. The propriety of this symbol is laid in the fact that the strength of an animal is in the horn, and that it is by this that he obtains a victory over other animals. The number seven here seems to be designed, as in other places, to denote completeness. See the notes on Revelation 1:4. The meaning is, that he had so large a number as to denote complete dominion.

And seven eyes - Symbols of intelligence. The number seven here also denotes completeness; and the idea is, that he is able to survey all things.

John does not say anything as to the relative arrangement of the horns and eyes on the "Lamb," and it is vain to attempt to conjecture how it was. The whole representation is symbolical, and we may understand the meaning of the symbol without being able to form an exact conception of the figure as it appeared to him.

Which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth - See the notes on Revelation 1:4. That is, which represent the seven Spirits of God; or the manifold operations of the one Divine Spirit. As the eye is the symbol of intelligence - outward objects being made visible to us by that - so it may well represent an all-pervading spirit that surveys and sees all things. The eye, in this view, among the Egyptians was an emblem of the Deity. By the "seven Spirits" here the same thing is doubtless intended as in Revelation 1:4; and if, as there supposed, the reference is to the Holy Spirit considered with respect to his manifold operations, the meaning here is, that the operations of that Spirit are to be regarded as connected with the work of the Redeemer. Thus, all the operations of the Spirit are connected with, and are a part of, the work of redemption. The expression "sent forth into all the earth," refers to the fact that that Spirit prevades all things The Spirit of God is often represented as sent or poured out; and the meaning here is, that his operations are as if he was sent out to survey all things and to operate everywhere. Compare 1 Corinthians 12:6-11.

Verse 7

And he came and took the book out of the right hand … - As if it pertained to him by virtue of rank or office. There is a difficulty here, arising from the incongruity of what is said of a lamb, which it is not easy to solve. The difficulty is in conceiving how a lamb could take the book from the hand of Him who held it. To meet this several solutions have been proposed:

(1) Vitringa supposes that the Messiah appeared as a lamb only in some such sense as the four living beings Revelation 4:7 resembled a lion, a calf, and an eagle; that is, that they bore this resemblance only in respect to the head, while the body was that of a man. He thus supposes, that though in respect to the upper part the Saviour resembled a lamb, yet that to the front part of the body hands were attached by which he could take the book. But there are great difficulties in this supposition. Besides that nothing of this kind is intimated by John, it is contrary to every appearance of probability that the Redeemer would be represented as a monster. In his being

represented as a lamb there is nothing that strikes the mind as inappropriate or unpleasant, for he is often spoken of in this manner, and the image is one that is agreeable to the mind. But all this beauty and fitness of representation is destroyed, if we think of him as having human hands proceeding from his breast or sides, or as blending the form of a man and an animal together. The representation of having an unusual number of horns and eyes does not strike us as being incongruous in the same sense; for though the number is increased, they are such as pertain properly to the animal to which they are attached.

(2) another supposition is that suggested by Prof. Stuart, that the form was changed, and a human form resumed when the Saviour advanced to take the book and open it. This would relieve the whole difficulty, and the only objection to it is, that John has not given any express notice of such a change in the form; and the only question can be whether it is right to suppose it in order to meet the difficulty in the case. In support of this it is said that all is symbol; that the Saviour is represented in the book in various forms; that as his appearing as a lamb was designed to represent in a striking manner the fact that he was slain, and that all that he did was based on the atonement, so there would be no impropriety in supposing that when an action was attributed to him he assumed the form in which that act would be naturally or is usually done. And as in taking a book from the hand of another it is wholly incongruous to think of its being done by a lamb, is it not most natural to suppose that the usual form in which the Saviour is represented as appearing would be resumed, and that he would appear again as a man?

But is it absolutely certain that he appeared in the form of a lamb at all? May not all that is meant be, that John saw him near the throne, and among the elders, and was struck at once with his appearance of meekness and innocence, and with the marks of his having been slain as a sacrifice, and spoke of him in strong figurative language as a lamb? And where his “seven horns” and “seven eyes” are spoken of, is it necessary to suppose that there was any real assumption of such horns and eyes? May not all that is meant be that John was struck with that in the appearance of the Redeemer of which these would be the appropriate symbols, and described him as if these had been visible? When John the Baptist saw the Lord Jesus on the

banks of the Jordan, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" John 1:29, is it necessary to suppose that he actually appeared in the form of a lamb?

Do not all at once understand him as referring to traits in his character, and to the work which he was to accomplish, which made it proper to speak of him as a lamb? And why, therefore, may we not suppose that John in the Apocalypse designed to use language in the same way, and that he did not intend to present so incongruous a description as that of a lamb approaching a throne and taking a book from the hand of Him that sat on it, and a lamb, too, with many horns and eyes? If this supposition is correct, then all that is meant in this passage would be expressed in some such language as the following: "And I looked, and lo there was one in the midst of the space occupied by the throne, by the living creatures, and by the elders, who, in aspect, and in the emblems that represented his work on the earth, was spotless, meek, and innocent as a lamb; one with marks on his person which brought to remembrance the fact that he had been slain for the sins of the world, and yet one who had most striking symbols of power and intelligence, and who was therefore worthy to approach and take the book from the hand of Him that sat on the throne." It may do something to confirm this view to recollect that when we use the term "Lamb of God" how, as is often done in preaching and in prayer, it never suggests to the mind the idea of a lamb. We think of the Redeemer as resembling a lamb in his moral attributes and in his sacrifice, but never as to form. This supposition relieves the passage of all that is incongruous and unpleasant, and may be all that John meant.

Verse 8

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts … - The acts of adoration here described as rendered by the four living creatures and the elders are, according to the explanation given in Revelation 4:4-7, emblematic of the honor done to the Redeemer by the church, and by the course of providential events in the government of the world.

Fell down before the Lamb - The usual posture of profound worship. Usually in such worship there was entire prostration on the earth. See the Matthew 2:2 note; 1 Corinthians 14:25 note.

Having every one of them harps - That is, as the construction, and the propriety of the case would seem to demand, the elders had each of them harps. The whole prostrated themselves with profound reverence; the elders had harps and censers, and broke out into a song of praise for redemption. This construction is demanded, because:

(a)the Greek word - ἔχοντες echontes- more properly agrees with the word "elders" - πρεσβύτεροι presbuteroi- and not with the word "beasts" - ζῶα zōathere is an incongruity in the representation that the living creatures, in the form of a lion, a calf, an eagle, should have harps and censers; and,

(c)the song of praise that is sung Revelation 5:9 is one that properly applies to the elders as the representatives of the church, and not to the living creatures - "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

The harp was a well-known instrument used in the service of God. Josephus describes it as having ten strings, and as struck with a key (Ant. Revelation 7:12, Revelation 7:3). See the notes on Isaiah 5:12.

And golden vials - The word "vial" with us, denoting a small slender bottle with a narrow neck, evidently does not express the idea here. The article here referred to was used for offering incense, and must have been a vessel with a large open mouth. The word "bowl" or "goblet" would better express the idea, and it is so explained by Prof. Robinson, Lexicon, and by Prof. Stuart, in loco. The Greek word - φιάλη phialē- occurs in the New Testament only in Revelation Revelation 5:8; Revelation 15:7; Revelation 16:1-4, Revelation 16:8, Revelation 16:10, Revelation 16:12, Revelation 16:17; Revelation 17:1; Revelation 21:9, and is uniformly rendered "vial" and "vials," though the idea is always that of a "bowl" or "goblet."

Full of odours - Or rather, as in the margin, full of incense - θυμιαμάτων thumiamatōnSee the notes on Luke 1:9.

Which are the prayers of saints - Which represent or denote the prayers of saints. Compare Psalm 141:2, "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense." The meaning is, that incense was a proper emblem of prayer. This seems to have been in two respects:

(a)as being acceptable to God - as incense produced an agreeable fragrance; and,

(b)in its being wafted toward heaven - ascending toward the eternal throne.

In Revelation 8:3, an angel is represented as having a golden censer: "And there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with

the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. The representation there undoubtedly is, that the angel is employed in presenting the prayers of the saints which were offered on earth before the throne. See the notes on that passage. It is most natural to interpret the passage before us in the same way. The allusion is clearly to the temple service, and to the fact that incense was offered by the priest in the temple itself at the time that prayer was offered by the people in the courts of the temple. See Luke 1:9-10. The idea here is, therefore, that the representatives of the church in heaven - the elders - spoken of as "priests" Revelation 5:10, are described as officiating in the temple above in behalf of the church still below, and as offering incense while the church is engaged in prayer.

It is not said that they offer the prayers themselves, but that they offer incense as representing the prayers of the saints. If this be the correct interpretation, as it seems to be the obvious one, then the passage lays no foundation for the opinion expressed by Prof. Stuart, as derived from this passage (in loco), that prayer is offered by the redeemed in heaven. Whatever may be the truth on that point - on which the Bible seems to be silent - it will find no support from the passage before us. Adoration, praise, thanksgiving, are represented as the employment of the saints in heaven: the only representation respecting prayer as pertaining to that world is, that there are emblems there which symbolize its ascent before the throne, and which show that it is acceptable to God. It is an interesting and beautiful representation that there are in heaven appropriate symbols of ascending prayer, and that while in the outer courts here below we offer prayer, incense, emblematic of it, ascends in the holy of holies above. The impression which this should leave on our minds ought to be, that our prayers are wafted before the throne, and are acceptable to God.

Verse 9

And they sung a new song - Compare Revelation 14:3. New in the sense that it is a song consequent on redemption, and distinguished therefore from the songs sung in heaven before the work of redemption was consummated. We may suppose that songs of adoration have always been sung m heaven; we know that the praises of God were celebrated by the angelic choirs when the foundations of the earth were laid Job 38:7; but the song of redemption was a different song, and is one that would never have been sung there if man had not fallen, and if the Redeemer had not died.

This song strikes notes which the ether songs do not strike, and refers to glories of the divine character which, but for the work of redemption, would not have been brought into view. In this sense the song was new; it will continue to be new in the sense that it will be sung afresh as redeemed million continue to ascend to heaven. Compare Psalm 40:3; Psalm 96:1; Psalm 144:9; Isaiah 42:10.

Thou art worthy to take the book, … - This was the occasion or ground of the "new song," that by his coming and death he had acquired a right to approach where no other one could approach, and to do what no other one could do.

For thou wast slain - The language here is such as would be appropriate to a lamb slain as a sacrifice. The idea is, that the fact that he was thus slain constituted the ground of his worthiness to open the book. It could not be meant that there was in him no other ground of worthiness, but that this was what was most conspicuous. It is just the outburst of the grateful feeling resulting from redemption, that he who has died to save the soul is worthy of all honor, and is suited to accomplish what no other being in the universe can do. However this may appear to the inhabitants of other worlds, or however it may appear to the dwellers on the earth who have no interest in the work of redemption, yet all who are redeemed will agree in the sentiment that He who has ransomed them with his blood has performed a work to do which every other being was incompetent, and that now all honor in heaven and on earth may appropriately be conferred on him.

And hast redeemed us - The word used here - ἀγοράζω agorazō- means properly to purchase, to buy; and is thus employed to denote redemption, because redemption was accomplished by the payment of a price. On the meaning of the word, see the notes on 2 Peter 2:1.

To God - That is, so that we become his, and are to be henceforward regarded as such; or so that he might possess us as his own. See the notes on 2 Corinthians 5:15. This is the true nature of redemption, that by the price paid we are rescued from the servitude of Satan, and are henceforth to regard ourselves as belonging unto God.

By thy blood - See the notes on Acts 20:28. This is such language as they use who believe in the doctrine of the atonement, and is such as would be used by them alone. It would not be employed by those who believe that Christ was a mere martyr, or that he lived and died merely as a teacher of

morality. If he was truly an atoning sacrifice, the language is full of meaning; if not, it has no significance and could not be understood.

Out of every kindred - Literally, "of every tribe" - φυλῆς phulēsThe word "tribe" means properly a comparatively small division or class of people associated together (Prof. Stuart). It refers to a family, or race, having a common ancestor, and usually associated or banded together - as one of the tribes of Israel; a tribe of Indians; a tribe of plants; a tribe of animals, etc. This is such language as a Jew would use, denoting one of the smaller divisions that made up a nation of people; and the meaning would seem to be, that it will be found ultimately to be true that the redeemed will have been taken from all such minor divisions of the human family - not only from the different nations but from the smaller divisions of those nations. This can only be true from the fact that the knowledge of the true religion will yet be diffused among all those smaller portions of the human race; that is, that its diffusion will be universal.

And tongue - People speaking all languages. The word used here would seem to denote a division of the human family larger than a tribe, but smaller than a nation. It was formerly a fact that a nation might be made up of those who spoke many different languages - as, for example, the Assyrian, the Babylonian, or the Roman nations. Compare Daniel 3:29; Daniel 4:1. The meaning here is, that no matter what language the component parts of the nations speak, the gospel will be conveyed to them, and in their own tongue they will learn the wonderful works of God. Compare Acts 2:8-11.

And people - The word used here - λαός laos- properly denotes a people considered as a mass, made up of smaller divisions - as an association of smaller bodies - or as a multitude of such bodies united together. It is distinguished from another word commonly applied to a people - δῆμος dēmos- for that is applied to a community of free citizens, considered as on a level, or without reference to any minor divisions or distinctions. The words used here would apply to an army, considered as made up of regiments, battalions, or tribes; to a mass-meeting, made up of societies of different trades or professions; to a nation, made up of different associated communities, etc. It denotes a larger body of people than the previous words; and the idea is, that no matter of what people or nation, considered as made up of such separate portions, one may be, he will not be excluded from the blessings of redemption. The sense would be well expressed, by

saying, for instance, that there will be found there those of the Gaelic race, the Celtic, the Anglo-Saxon, the Mongolian, the African, etc.

And nation - Εθνους EthnousA word of still larger signification; the people in a still wider sense; a people or nation considered as distinct from all others. The word would embrace all who come under one sovereignty or rule; as, for example, the British nation, however many rumor tribes there may be; however many different languages may be spoken; and however many separate people there may be - as the Anglo-Saxon, the Scottish, the Irish, the people of Hindustan, of Labrador, of New South Wales, etc. The words used here by John would together denote nations of every kind, great and small; and the sense is, that the blessings of redemption will be extended to all parts of the earth.

Verse 10

And hast made us unto our God kings and priests - See the notes on Revelation 1:6.

And we shall reign on the earth - The redeemed, of whom we are the representatives. The idea clearly is, in accordance with what is so frequently said in the Scriptures, that the dominion on the earth will be given to the saints; that is, that there will be such a prevalence of true religion, and the redeemed will be so much in the ascendency, that the affairs of the nations will be in their hands. Righteous people will hold the offices; will fill places of trust and responsibility; will have a controlling voice in all that pertains to human affairs. See the notes on Daniel 7:27, and Revelation 20:1-6 notes. To such a prevalence of religion all things are tending; and to this, in all the disorder and sin which now exist, are we permitted to look forward. It is not said that this will be a reign under the Saviour in a literal kingdom on the earth; nor is it said that the saints will descend from heaven, and occupy thrones of power under Christ as a visible king. The simple affirmation is, that they will reign on the earth; and as this seems to be spoken in the name of the redeemed, all that is necessary to be understood is, that there will be such a prevalence of true religion on the earth that it will become a vast kingdom of holiness, and that, instead of being in the minority, the saints will everywhere have the ascendency.

Verse 11

And I beheld - And I looked again.

And I heard the voice of many angels - The inhabitants of heaven uniting with the representatives of the redeemed church in ascribing honor

to the Lamb of God. The design is to show that there is universal sympathy and harmony in heaven, and that all worlds will unite in ascribing honor to the Lamb of God.

Round about the throne and the beasts and the elders - In a circle or area beyond what was occupied by the throne, the living creatures, and the elders. They occupied the center, as it appeared to John, and this innumerable company of angels surrounded them. The angels are represented here, as they are everywhere in the Scriptures, as taking a deep interest in all that pertains to the redemption of people, and it is not surprising that they are here described as uniting with the representatives of the church in rendering honor to the Lamb of God. Compare the notes on 1 Peter 1:12.

And the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand - 100 million - a general term to denote either a countless number, or an exceedingly great number. We are not to suppose that it is to be taken literally.

And thousands of thousands - Implying that the number before specified was not large enough to comprehend all. Besides the "ten thousand times ten thousand," there was a vast uncounted host which one could not attempt to enumerate. The language here would seem to be taken from Daniel 7:10; "Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him." Compare Psalm 68:17; "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels." See also Deuteronomy 33:2; 1 Kings 22:19.

Verse 12

Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain - See the notes on Revelation 5:2, Revelation 5:9. The idea here is, that the fact that he was slain, or was made a sacrifice for sin, was the ground or reason for what is here ascribed to him. Compare the notes on Revelation 5:5.

To receive power - Power or authority to rule over all things. Compare notes on Matthew 28:18. The meaning here is, that he was worthy that these things should be ascribed to him, or to be addressed and acknowledged as possessing them. A part of these things were his in virtue of his very nature - as wisdom, glory, riches; a part were conferred on him as the result of his work - as the mediatorial dominion over the universe, the honor resulting from his work, etc. In view of all that he was, and of all that he has done, he is here spoken of as "worthy" of all these things.

And riches - Abundance. That is, he is worthy that whatever contributes to honor, and glory, and happiness, should be conferred on him in abundance. Himself the original proprietor of all things, it is fit that he should be recognized as such; and having performed the work which he has, it is proper that whatever may be made to contribute to his honor should be regarded as his.

And wisdom - That he should be esteemed as eminently wise; that is, that as the result of the work which he has accomplished, he should be regarded as having ability to choose the best ends and the best means to accomplish them. The feeling here referred to is what arises from the contemplation of the work of salvation by the Redeemer, as a work eminently characterized by wisdom - wisdom manifested in meeting the evils of the fall; in honoring the law; in showing that mercy is consistent with justice; and in adapting the whole plan to the character and needs of man. If wisdom was anywhere demanded, it was in reconciling a lost world to God; if it has been anywhere displayed, it has been in the arrangements for that work, and in its execution by the Redeemer. See the notes on 1 Corinthians 1:24; compare Matthew 13:54; Luke 2:40, Luke 2:52; 1 Corinthians 1:20-21, 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:8; Ephesians 3:10.

And strength - Ability to accomplish his purposes. That is, it is meet that he should be regarded as having such ability. This strength or power was manifested in overcoming the great enemy of man; in his control of winds, and storms, and diseases, and devils; in triumphing over death; in saving his people.

And honor - He should be esteemed and treated with honor for what he has done.

And glory - This word refers to a higher ascription of praise than the word honor. Perhaps that might refer to the honor which we feel in our hearts; this to the expression of that by the language of praise.

And blessing - Everything which would express the desire that he might be happy, honored, and adored. To bless one is to desire that he may have happiness and prosperity; that he may be successful, respected, and honored. To bless God, or to ascribe blessing to him, is that state where the heart is full of love and gratitude, and where it desires that he may be everywhere honored, loved, and obeyed as he should be. The words here express the wish that the universe would ascribe to the Redeemer all honor, and that he might be everywhere loved and adored.

Verse 13

And every creature which is in heaven - The meaning of this verse is, that all created things seemed to unite in rendering honor to Him who sat on the throne, and to the Lamb. in the previous verse a certain number - a vast host - of angels are designated as rendering praise as they stood round the area occupied by the throne, the elders, and the living creatures; here it is added that all who were in heaven united in this ascription of praise.

And on the earth - All the universe was heard by John ascribing praise to God. A voice was heard from the heavens, from all parts of the earth, from under the earth, and from the depths of the sea, as if the entire universe joined in the adoration. It is not necessary to press the language literally, and still less, is it necessary to understand by it, as Prof. Stuart does, that the angels who presided over the earth, over the under-world, and over the sea, are intended. It is evidently popular language; and the sense is, that John heard a universal ascription of praise. All worlds seemed to join in it; all the dwellers on the earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, partook of the spirit of heaven in rendering honor to the Redeemer.

Under the earth - Supposed to be inhabited by the shades of the dead. See the Job 10:21-22 notes; Isaiah 14:9 note.

And such as are in the sea - All that dwell in the ocean. In Psalm 148:7-10, "dragons, and all deeps; beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl," are called on to praise the Lord; and there is no more incongruity or impropriety in one description than in the other. In the Psalm, the universe is called on to render praise; in the passage before us it is described as actually doing it. The hills, the streams, the floods; the fowls of the air, the dwellers in the deep, and the beasts that roam over the earth; the songsters in the grove, and the insects that play in the sunbeam, in fact, declare the glory of their Creator; and it requires no very strong effort of the fancy to imagine the universe as sending up a constant voice of thanksgiving.

Blessing, and honour, … - There is a slight change here from Revelation 5:12, but it is the same thing substantially. It is an ascription of all glory to God and to the Lamb.

Verse 14

And the four beasts said, Amen - The voice of universal praise came to them from abroad, and they accorded with it, and ascribed honor to God.

And the four and twenty elders fell down, … - The living creatures and the elders began the work of praise Revelation 5:8, and it was proper that it should conclude with them; that is, they give the last and final response (Prof. Stuart). The whole universe, therefore, is sublimely represented as in a state of profound adoration, waiting for the developments to follow on the opening of the mysterious volume. All feel an interest in it; all feel that the secret is with God; all feel that there is but One who can open this volume; and all gather around, in the most reverential posture, awaiting the disclosure of the great mystery.

The truths taught in this chapter are the following:

(1) The knowledge of the future is with God, Revelation 5:1. It is as in a book held in his hand, fully written over, yet sealed with seven seals.

(2) it is impossible for man or angel to penetrate the future, Revelation 5:2-3. It seems to be a law of created being, that the ability to penetrate the future is placed beyond the reach of any of the faculties by which a creature is endowed. Of the past we have a record, and we can remember it; but no created being seems to have been formed with a power in reference to the future corresponding with that in reference to the past - with no faculty of foresight corresponding to memory.

(3) it is natural that the mind should be deeply affected by the fact that we cannot penetrate the future, Revelation 5:4. John wept in view of this; and how often is the mind borne down with heaviness in view of that fact! What things there are, there must be, in that future of interest to us! What changes there may be for us to experience; what trials to pass through; what happiness to enjoy; what scenes of glory to witness! What progress may we make in knowledge; what new friendships may we form; what new displays of the divine perfections may we witness! All our great interests are in the future - in what is to us now unknown. There is to be all the happiness which we are to enjoy, all the pain that we are to suffer; all that we hope, all that we fear. All the friends that we are to have are to be there; all the sorrows that we are to experience are to be there. Yet an impenetrable veil is set up to hide all that from our view. We cannot remove it; we cannot penetrate it. There it stands to mock all our efforts, and in all our attempts to look into the future we soon come to the barrier, and are repelled and driven

back. Who has not felt his heart sad that he cannot look into what is to come?

(4) the power of laying open the future to mortals has been entrusted to the Redeemer, Revelation 5:5-7. It is a part of the work which was committed to him to make known to people as much as it was proper to be known. Hence, he is at once a prophet, and is the inspirer of the prophets. Hence, he came to teach people what is to be in the future pertaining to them, and hence he has caused to be recorded by the sacred writers all that is to be known of what is to come until it is slowly unfolded as events develop themselves. The Saviour alone takes the mysterious book and opens the seals; he only unrolls the volume and discloses to man what is to come.

(5) the fact that he does this is the foundation of joy and gratitude for the church, Revelation 5:8-10. It is impossible that the church should contemplate what the Saviour has revealed of the future without gratitude and joy; and how often, in times of persecution and trouble, has the church joyfully turned to the developments made by the Saviour of what is to be when the gospel shall spread over the world, and when truth and righteousness shall be triumphant.

(6) this fact is of interest to the angelic beings, and for them also it lays the foundation of praise, Revelation 5:11-12. This may arise from these causes:

(a)from the interest which they take in the church, and the happiness which they have from anything that increases its numbers or augments its joy:

(b)from the fact that in the disclosures of the future made by the Redeemer, there may be much that is new and of interest to them (compare notes on 1 Peter 1:12); and,

(c)from the fact that they cannot but rejoice in the revelations which are made of the final triumphs of truth in the universe.

(7) the universe at large has an interest in these disclosures, and the fact that they are to be made by the Redeemer lays the foundation for universal joy, Revelation 5:13-14. These events pertain to all worlds, and it is proper

that all the inhabitants of the universe should join in the expressions of adoration and thanksgiving. The universe is one; and what affects one portion of it really pertains to every part of it. Angels and human beings have one and the same God and Father, and may unite in the same expressions of praise.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 6

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter Isaiah 45:1 of Cyrus, or as there is in Daniel Daniel 8:21; Daniel 10:20; Daniel 11:2 of the "king of Grecia"; there is no designation of time that is necessarily unambiguous; and there are no characteristics of the symbols used that make it antecedently certain that they could be applied only to one class of events. In the boundless future that was to succeed the times of John, there would be, of necessity, many events to which these symbols might be applied, and the result has shown that it has required but a moderate share of pious ingenuity to apply them, by different expositors, to events differing widely from each other in their character, and in the times when they would occur.

It would be too long to glance even at the various theories which have been proposed and maintained in regard to the interpretation of the subsequent portions of the Apocalypse, and wholly impossible to attempt to examine those theories. Time, in its developments, has already exploded many of them; and time, in its future developments, will doubtless explode many more, and each one must stand or fall as, in the disclosures of the future, it shall be found to be true or false. It would be folly to add another to those numerous theories, even if I had any such theory (see the Preface), and perhaps equal folly to pronounce with certainty on any one of those which have been advanced. Yet this seems to be an appropriate place to state, in few words, what principles it is designed to pursue in the interpretation of the remainder of the book:

(1) It may be assumed that large portions of the book relate to the future; that is, to what was future when John wrote. In this all expositors are agreed, and this is manifest indeed on the very face of the representation. It would be impossible to attempt an interpretation on any other supposition, and somewhere in that vast future the events are to be found to which the symbols used here had reference. This is assumed, indeed, on the supposition that the book is inspired - a fact which is assumed all along in this exposition, and which should be allowed to control our interpretation. But assuming that the book relates to the future, though that supposition will do something to determine the true method of interpretation, yet it

leaves many questions still unsolved. Whether it refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, on the supposition that the work was written before that event, or to the history of the church subsequent to that; whether it is designed to describe events minutely, or only in the most general manner; whether it is intended to furnish a syllabus of civil and ecclesiastical history, or only a very general outline of future events; whether the times are so designated that we can fix them with entire certainty; or whether it was intended to furnish any certain indication of the periods of the world when these things should occur; all these are still open questions, and it need not be said that on these the opinions of expositors have been greatly divided.

(2) it may be assumed that there is meaning in these symbols, and that they were not used without an intention to convey some important ideas to the mind of John and to the minds of his readers - to the church then, and to the church in future times. Compare the notes on Revelation 1:3. The book is indeed surpassingly sublime. It abounds with the highest flights of poetic language. It is Oriental in its character, and exhibits everywhere the proofs of a most glowing imagination in the writer. But it is also to be borne in mind that it is an inspired book, and this fact is to determine the character of the exposition. If inspired, it is to be assumed that there is a meaning in these symbols; an idea in each one of them, and in all combined, of importance to the church and the world. Whether we can ascertain the meaning is another question; but it is never to be doubted by an expositor of the Bible that there is a meaning in the words and images employed, and that to find out that meaning is worthy of earnest study and prayer.

(3) Predictions respecting the future are often necessarily obscure to man. It cannot be doubted, indeed, that God could have foretold future events in the most clear and unambiguous language. He who knows all that is to come as intimately as he does all the past, could have caused a record to have been made, disclosing names, and dates, and places, so that the most minute statements of what is to occur might have been in the possession of man as clearly as the records of the past now are. But there were obvious reasons why this should not occur, and in the prophecies it is rare that there is any such specification. To have done this might have been to defeat the very end in view; for it would have given to man, a free agent, the power of embarrassing or frustrating the divine plans. But if this course

is not adopted, then prophecy must, from the nature of the case, be obscure. The knowledge of any one particular fact in the future is so connected with many other facts, and often implies so much knowledge of other things, that without that other knowledge it could not be understood.

Suppose that it had been predicted, in the time of John, that at some future period some contrivance should be found out by which what was doing in one part of the world could be instantaneously known in another remote part of the world, and spread abroad by thousands of copies in an hour, to be read by a nation. Suppose, for instance, that there had been some symbol or emblem representing what actually occurs now, when in a morning newspaper we read what occurred last evening at Louis, Dubuque, Galena, Chicago, Cincinnati, Charleston, New Orleans; it is clear that at a time when the magnetic telegraph and the printing-press were unknown, any symbol or language describing it that could be employed must be obscure, and the impression must have been that this could be accomplished only by miracle - and it would not be difficult for one who was disposed to scepticism to make out an argument to prove that this could not occur. It would be impossible to explain any symbol that could be employed to represent this until these wonderful descriptions should become reality, and in the meantime the book in which the symbols were found might be regarded as made up of mere riddles and enigmas; but when these inventions should be actually found out, however much ridicule or contempt had been poured on the book before, it might be perfectly evident that the symbol was the most appropriate that could be used, and no one could doubt that it was a divine communication of what was to be in th future. Something of the same kind may have occurred in the symbols used by the writer of the book before us.

(4) it is not necessary to suppose that a prophecy will be understood in all its details until the prediction is accomplished. In the case just referred to, though the fact of the rapid spread of intelligence might be clear, yet nothing would convey any idea of the mode, or of the actual meaning of the symbols used, unless the inventions were themselves anticipated by a direct revelation. The trial of faith in the case would be the belief that the fleet would occur, but would snot relate to the mode in which it was to be accomplished, or the language employed to describe it. There might be

great obscurity in regard to the symbols and language, and yet the knowledge of the fact be perfectly plain. When, however, the fact should occur as predicted, all would be clear. So it is in respect to prophecy. Many recorded predictions that are now clear as noon-day, were once as ambiguous and uncertain in respect to their meaning as in the supposed case of the press and the telegraph. Time has made them plain; for the event to which they referred has so entirely corresponded with the symbol as to leave no doubt in regard to the meaning. Thus, many of the prophecies relating to the Messiah were obscure at the time when they were uttered; were apparently so contradictory that they could not be reconciled; were so unlike anything that then existed, that the fulfillment seemed to be impossible; and were so enigmatical in the symbols employed, that it seemed in vain to attempt to disclose their meaning. The advent of the long-promised Messiah, however, removed the obscurity; and now they are read with no uncertainty as to their meaning, and with no doubt that those predictions, once so obscure, had a divine origin.

The view just suggested may lead us to some just conceptions of what is necessary to be done in attempting to explain the prophecies. Suppose, then, first, that there had been, say in the dark ages, some predictions that claimed to be of divine origin, of the invention of the art of printing and of the magnetic telegraph. The proper business of an interpreter, if he regarded this as a divine communication, would have consisted in four things:

(a) to explain, as well as he could, the fair meaning of the symbols employed, and the language used;

(b) to admit the fact referred to, and implied in the fair interpretation of the language employed, of the rapid spread of intelligence in that future period, though he could not explain how it was to be done;

(c) in the meantime it would be a perfectly legitimate object for him to inquire whether there were any events occurring in the world, or whether there had been any, to which these symbols were applicable, or which would meet all the circumstances involved in them;

(d) if there were, then his duty would he ended; if there were not, then the symbols, with such explanation as could be furnished of their meaning, should be handed on to future times, to be applied when the predicted events should actually occur. Suppose, them secondly, the case of the predictions respecting the Messiah, scattered along through many books, and given in various forms, and by various symbols. The proper business of an interpreter would have been, as in the other case:

(a)to explain the fair meaning of the language used, and to bring together all the circumstances in one connected whole, that a distinct conception of the predicted Messiah might be before the mind;

(b)to admit the facts referred to, and thus predicted, however incomprehensible and apparently contradictory they might appear to be;

(c)to inquire whether anyone had appeared who combined within himself all the characteristics of the description; and,

(d)if no one had thus appeared, to send on the prophecies, with such explanations of words and symbols as could be ascertained to be correct, to future times, to have their full meaning developed when the object of all the predictions should be accomplished, and the Messiah should appear. Then the meaning of all would be plain; and then the argument from prophecy would be complete. This is obviously now the proper state of the mind in regard to the predictions in the Bible, and these are the principles which should be applied in examining the Book of Revelation.

(5) it may be assumed that new light will be thrown upon the prophecies by time, and by the progress of events. It cannot he supposed that the investigations of the meaning of the prophetic symbols will all be in vain. Difficulties, it is reasonable to hope, may be cleared up; errors may be detected in regard to the application of the prophecies to particular events; and juster views on the prophecies, as on all other subjects, will prevail as the world grows older. We become wiser by seeing the errors of those who have gone before us, and an examination of the causes which led them astray may enable us to avoid such errors in the future. Especially may it be supposed that light will be thrown on the prophecies as they shall be in part or wholly fulfilled. The prophecies respecting the destruction of Babylon, of Petra, of Tyre, of Jerusalem, are now fully understood; the prophecies respecting the advent of the Messiah, and his character and work, once so

obscure, are now perfectly clear. So, we have reason to suppose, it will be with all prophecy in the progress of events, and sooner or later the world will settle down into some uniform belief in regard to the design and meaning of these portions of the sacred writings. Whether the time has yet come for this, or whether numerous other failures are to be added to the melancholy catalogue of past failures on this subject, is another question; but ultimately all the now unfulfilled prophecies will be as clear as to their meaning as are those which have been already fulfilled.

(6) the plan, therefore, which I propose in the examination of the remaining portion of the Apocalypse is the following:

(a) To explain the meaning of the symbols; that is, to show, as clearly as possible, what those symbols properly express, independently of any attempt to apply them. This opens, of itself, an interesting field of investigation, and one where essential service may be done, even if nothing further is intended. Without any reference to the application of those symbols, this, of itself, is an important work of criticism, and, if successfully done, would be rendering a valuable service to the readers of the sacred volume.

(b) To state, as briefly as possible, what others who have written on this book, and who have brought eminent learning and talent to bear on its interpretation, have supposed to be the true interpretation of the symbols employed by John, and in regard to the times in which the events referred to would occur. It is in this way only that we can be made acquainted with the real progress made in interpreting this book, and it will be useful at least to know how the subject has struck other minds, and how and why they have failed to perceive the truth. I propose, therefore, to state, as I go along, some of the theories which have been held as to the meaning of the Apocalypse, and as to the events which have been supposed by others to be referred to. My limits require, however, that this should be briefly done, and forbid my attempting to examine those opinions at length.

(c) To state, in as brief and clear a manner as possible, the view which I have been led to entertain as to the proper application of the symbols employed in the book, with such historical references as shall seem to me to confirm the interpretation proposed.

(d) Where I cannot form an opinion as to the meaning, to confess my ignorance. He does no service in a professed interpretation of the Bible who passes over a difficulty without attempting to remove it, or who, to save his own reputation, conceals the fact that there is a real difficulty; and he does as little service who is unwilling to confess his ignorance on many points, or who attempts an explanation where he has no clear and settled views. As his opinion can be of no value to anyone else unless it is based on reasons in his own mind that will bear examination, so it can usually be of little value unless those reasons are stated. It is as important for his readers to have those reasons before their own minds as it is for him; and unless he has it in his power to state reasons for what he advances, his opinions can be worth nothing to the world. He who lays down this rule of interpretation may expect to have ample opportunity, in interpreting such a book as the Apocalypse, to confess his ignorance; but he who interprets a book which he believes to be inspired, may console himself with the thought that what is now obscure will be clear hereafter, and that he performs the best service which he can if he endeavors to explain the book up to the time in which he lives. There will be developments hereafter which will make that clear which is now obscure; developments which will make this book, in all past ages apparently so enigmatical, as clear as any other portion of the inspired volume, as it is now, even with the imperfect view which we may have of its meaning, beyond all question one of the most sublime books that has ever been written.

This chapter describes the opening of the first six seals:

(1) The first discloses a white horse, with a rider armed with a bow. A crown is given to him, symbolical of triumph and prosperity, and he goes forth to conquer, Revelation 6:1-2.

(2) the second discloses a red-colored horse, with a rider. The emblem is that of blood - of sanguinary war. Power is given him to take peace from the earth, and a sword is given him - emblem of war, but not of certain victory. Triumph and prosperity are denoted by the former symbol; war, discord, bloodshed, by this, Revelation 6:3-4.

(3) the third discloses a black horse, with a rider. He has a pair of balances in his hand, as if there were scarcity in the earth, and he announces the price of grain in the times of this calamity, and a command is given not to hurt the oil and the wine, Revelation 6:5-6. The emblem is that of scarcity - as if there were oppression, or as a consequence of war or discord, while at the same time there is care bestowed to preserve certain portions of the produce of the earth from injury.

(4) the fourth discloses a pale horse, with a rider. The name of this rider is Death, and Hell (or Hades) follows him - as if the hosts of the dead came again on the earth. Power is given to the rider over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and with wild beasts. This emblem would seem to denote war, wide-wasting pestilence, famine, and desolation - as if wild beasts were suffered to roam over lands that had been inhabited; something of which paleness would be an emblem. Here ends the array of horses; and it is evidently intended by these four symbols to refer to a series of events that have a general resemblance - something that could be made to stand by themselves, and that could be grouped together.

(5) the fifth seal opens a new scene. The horse and the rider no longer appear. It is not a scene of war, and of the consequences of war, but a scene of persecution. The souls of those who were slain for the Word of God and the testimony which they held are seen under the altar, praying to God that he would avenge their blood. White robes are given them - tokens of the divine favor, and emblems of their ultimate triumph; and they are commanded to "rest for a little season, until their fellow-servants and their brethren that should be killed as they were should be fulfilled"; that is, that they should be patient until the number of the martyrs was filled up. In other words, there was:

(a)the assurance of the divine favor toward them;

(b)vengeance, or the punishment of those who had persecuted them, would not be immediate; but.

(c)there was the implied assurance that just punishment would be inflicted on their persecutors, and that the cause for which they had suffered would ultimately triumph, Revelation 6:9-11.

(6) the opening of the sixth seal, Revelation 6:12-17. There was an earthquake, and the sun became dark, and the moon was turned to blood, and the stars fell, and all kings and people were filled with consternation. This symbol properly denotes the time of public commotion, of revolution, of calamity; and it was evidently to be fulfilled by some great changes on the earth, or by the overturning of the seats of power, and by such sudden revolutions as would fill the nations with alarm.

Verse 1

And I saw - Or, I looked. He fixed his eye attentively on what was passing, as promising important disclosures. No one had been found in the universe who could open the seals but the Lamb of God Revelation 5:2-4; and it was natural for John, therefore, to look upon the transaction with profound interest.

When the Lamb opened one of the seals - See the notes on Revelation 5:1, Revelation 5:5. This was the first or outermost of the seals, and its being broken would permit a certain portion of the volume to be unrolled and read. See the notes on Revelation 5:1. The representation in this place is, therefore, that of a volume with a small portion unrolled, and written on both sides of the parchment.

And I heard, as it were the noise of thunder - One of the four living creatures speaking as with a voice of thunder, or with a loud voice.

One of the four beasts - notes on Revelation 4:6-7. The particular one is not mentioned, though what is said in the subsequent verses leaves no doubt that it was the first in order as seen by John - the one like a lion, Revelation 4:7. In the opening of the three following seals, it is expressly said that it was the second, the third, and the fourth of the living creatures that drew near, and hence the conclusion is certain that the one here referred to was the first. If the four living creatures be understood to be emblematic of the divine providential administration, then there was a propriety that they should be represented as summoning John to witness what was to be disclosed. These events pertained to the developments of the divine purposes, and these emblematic beings would therefore be interested in what was occurring.

Come and see - Addressed evidently to John. He was requested to approach and see with his own eyes what was disclosed in the portion of the volume now unrolled. He had wept much Revelation 5:4 that no one was found who was worthy to open that book, but he was now called on to

approach and see for himself. Some have supposed (Lord, in loco) that the address here was not to John, but to the horse and his rider, and that the command to them was not to "come and see," but to come forth, and appear on the stage, and that the act of the Redeemer in breaking the seal, and unrolling the scroll, was nothing more than an emblem signifying that it was by his act that the divine purposes were to be unfolded. But, in order to this interpretation, it would be necessary to omit from the Received Text the words καὶ βλέπε kai blepe- "and see." This is done, indeed, by Hahn and Tittmann, and this reading is followed by Prof. Stuart, though he says that the received text has "probability" in its favor, and is followed by some of the critical editions. The most natural interpretation, however, is that the words were addressed to John. John saw the Lamb open the seal; he heard the loud voice; he looked and beheld a white horse - that is, evidently, he looked on the unfolding volume, and saw the representation of a horse and his rider. That the voice was addressed to John is the common interpretation, is the most natural, and is liable to no real objection.

Verse 2

And I saw, and behold - A question has arisen as to the mode of representation here: whether what John saw in these visions was a series of pictures, drawn on successive portions of the volume as one seal was broken after another; or whether the description of the horses and of the events was written on the volume, so that John read it himself, or heard it read by another; or whether the opening of the seal was merely the occasion of a scenic representation, in which a succession of horses was introduced, with a written statement of the events which are referred to. Nothing is indeed said by which this can be determined with certainty; but the most probable supposition would seem to be that there was some pictorial representation in form and appearance, such as he describes in the opening of the six seals. In favor of this it may be observed:

(1)that, according to the interpretation of Revelation 6:1, it was something in or on the volume - since he was invited to draw nearer, in order that he might contemplate it.

(2)each one of the things under the first five seals, where John uses the word "saw," is capable of being represented by a picture or painting.

(3)the language used is not such as would have been employed if he had merely read the description, or had heard it read.

(4)the supposition that the pictorial representation was not in the volume, but that the opening of the seal was the occasion merely of causing a scenic representation to pass before his mind, is unnatural and forced.

What would be the use of a sealed volume in that case? What the use of the writing within and without? On this supposition the representation would be that, as the successive seals were broken, nothing was disclosed in the volume but a succession of blank portions, and that the mystery or the difficulty was not in anything in the volume, but in the want of ability to summon forth these successive scenic representations. The most obvious interpretation is, undoubtedly, that what John proceeds to describe was in some way represented in the volume; and the idea of a succession of pictures or drawings better accords with the whole representation, than the idea that it was a mere written description. In fact, these successive scenes could be well represented now in a pictorial form on a scroll.

And behold a white horse - In order to any definite understanding of what was denoted by these symbols, it is proper to form in our minds, in the first place, a clear conception of what the symbol properly represents, or an idea of what it would naturally convey. It may be assumed that the symbol was significant, and that there was some reason why that was used rather than another; why, for instance, a horse was employed rather than an eagle or a lion; why a white horse was employed in one case, and a red one, a black one, a pale one in the others; why in this case a bow was in the hand of the rider, and a crown was placed on his head. Each one of these particulars enters into the constitution of the symbol; and we must find something in the event which fairly corresponds with each - for the symbol is made up of all these things grouped together. It may be further observed, that where the general symbol is the same - as in the opening of the first four seals - it may be assumed that the same object or class of objects is referred to; and the particular things denoted, or the diversity in the general application, is to be found in the variety in the representation - the color, etc., of the horse, and the arms, apparel, etc., of the rider. The specifications under the first seal are four:

(1)the general symbol of the horse - common to the first four seals;

(2)the color of the horse;

(3)the fact that he that sat on him had a bow; and,

(4)that a crown was given him by someone, as indicative of victory.

The question now is, what these symbols would naturally denote:

(1) The horse. The meaning of this symbol must be drawn from the natural use to which the symbol is applied, or the characteristics which it is known to have; and it may be added, that there might have been something for which that was best known in the time of the writer who uses it, which would not be so prominent at another period of the world, or in another country, and that it is necessary to have that before the mind in order to obtain a correct understanding of the symbol. The use of the horse, for instance, may have varied at different times to some degree; at one time the prevailing use of the horse may have been for battle; at another for rapid marches - as of cavalry; at another for draught; at another for races; at another for conveying messages by the establishment of posts or the appointment of couriers. To an ancient Roman the horse might suggest prominently one idea; to a modern Arab another; to a teamster in Holland another. The things which would be most naturally suggested by the horse as a symbol, as distinguished, for instance, from an eagle, a lion, a serpent, etc., would be the following:

(a) War, as this was probably one of the first uses to which the horse was applied. So, in the magnificent description of the horse in Job 39:19-25, no notice is taken of any of his qualities but those which pertain to war. See, for a full illustration of this passage, and of the frequent reference in the classic writers to the horse as connected with war, Bochart, Hieroz. lib. ii, c. viii., particularly p. 149. Compare Virgil, Geor. 3:83,84:

"Si qua sonum procul arma dedere,
Stare loco nescit, micat auribus, et tremit artus."

Ovid, *Metam*. iii:

"Ut fremit acer equus, cum bellicus, aere canoro.
Signa dedit tubicen, pugnaeque assumit amorem."

Silius, lib. xiii:

"Is trepido alituum tinnitu, et stare neganti,
Imperitans violenter equo."

So Solomon says Proverbs 21:31, "The horse is prepared against the day of battle." So in Zechariah 10:3, the prophet says, God had made the house

of Judah "as his goodly horse in the battle"; that is, he had made them like the victorious war-horse.

(b) As a consequence of this, and of the conquests achieved by the horse in war, he became the symbol of conquest - of a people that could not be overcome. Compare the above reference in Zech. Thus, in Carthage the horse was an image of victorious war, in contradistinction to the ox, which was an emblem of the arts of peaceful agriculture. This was based on a tradition respecting the foundation of the city, referred to by Virgil, *Aeneas* i. 442-445:

"Quo primum jactati undis et turbine Poeni.
Effodere loco signum, quod regia Juno.
Monstrarat, caput acris equi: sic nam fore bello.
Egregiam, et facilem victu per Secula gentem."

In reference to this circumstance Justin (lib. xviii. 5) remarks, that "in laying the foundations of the city the head of an ox was found, which was regarded as an emblem of a fruitful land, but of the necessity of labor and of dependence; on which account the city was transferred to another place. Then the head of a horse was found, and this was regarded as a happy omen that the city would be warlike and prosperous." Compare Creuzer, Symbolik, vol. ii. p. 456.

(c) The horse was an emblem of fleetness, and, consequently, of the rapidity of conquest. Compare Joel 2:4; "The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run." Jeremiah 4:13; "behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as the whirlwind; his horses are swifter than eagles." Compare Job 39:18.

(d) The horse is an emblem of strength, and consequently of safety. Psalm 147:10; "he delighteth not in the strength of the horse." In general, then, the horse would properly symbolize war, conquest, or the rapidity with which a message is conveyed. The particular character or complexion of the event - as peaceful or warlike, prosperous or adverse - is denoted by the color of the horse, and by the character of the rider.

(2) the color of the horse: "a white horse." It is evident that this is designed to be significant, because it is distinguished from the red, the black, and the pale horse, referred to in the following verses. In general, it may be observed that white is the emblem of innocence, purity, prosperity -

as the opposite is of sickness, sin, calamity. If the significance of the emblem turned alone on the color, we should look to something cheerful, prosperous, happy as the thing that was symbolized. But the significance in the case is to be found not only in the color - white - but in the horse that was white; and the inquiry is, what would a horse of that color properly denote; that is, on what occasions, and with reference to what ends, was such a horse used? Now, the general notion attached to the mention of a white horse, according to ancient usage, would be that of state and triumph, derived from the fact that white horses were rode by conquerors on the days of their triumph; that they were used in the marriage cavalcade; that they were employed on coronation occasions, etc. In the triumphs granted by the Romans to their victorious generals, after a procession composed of musicians, captured princes, spoils of battle, etc., came the conqueror himself, seated on a high chariot drawn by four white horses, robed in purple, and wearing a wreath of laurel (Eschenburg, "Man. of Class." Literature, p. 283. Compare Ovid de Arte Amandi, lib. v. 214). The name of λευκιππος leukippos- leucippos - was given to Proserpine, because she was borne from Hades to Olympus in a chariot drawn by white horses (Scol. Pind. Ol. vi. 161. See Creuzer's *Symbol*. iv. 253). White horses are supposed, also, to excel others in fleetness. So Horace, Sat. lib. i. vii. 8:

"Sisennas, Barrosque ut equis praecurreret albis."

So Plaut. Asin. ii. 2,12. So Homer, Iliad K. 437:

Λευκότεροι χιονος, θείειν δ᾽ ἀνέμοισιν ὁμοῖοι

Leukoteroi chionostheiein d' anemoisin homoioi"Whiter than the snow, and swifter than the winds."

And in the *Aeneid*, where Turnus was about to contend with Aeneas, he demanded horses:

"Qui candore nives anteirent cursibus auras."

"Which would surpass the snow in whiteness, and the wind in fleetness" (*Aeneas* xii. 84).

So the poets everywhere describe the chariot of the sun as drawn by while horses (Bochart, ut supra). So conquerors and princes are everywhere represented as borne on white horses. Thus, Propertius, lib. iv. eleg. i.:

"Quatuor huic albos Romulus egit equos."

So Claudian, lib. ii., *de Laudibus Stilichonis*:

"Deposits mitis clypeo, candentibus urbem.

Ingreditur trabeatus equis."

And thus Ovid (lib. i. de Arte) addresses Augustus, auguring that he would return a victor:

"Ergo erit illa dies, qua tu, Pulcherrime rerum,
Quatuor in niveis aureus ibis equis."

The preference of "white" to denote triumph or victory was early referred to among the Hebrews. Thus, Judges 5:10, in the Song of Deborah:

"Speak, ye that ride on white asses,
Ye that sit in judgment,
And walk by the way."

The expression, then, in the passage before us, would properly refer to some kind of triumph; to some joyous occasion; to something where there was success or victory; and, so far as this expression is concerned, would refer to any kind of triumph, whether of the gospel or of victory in war.

(3) the bow: "and he that sat on him had a bow." The bow would be a natural emblem of war - as it was used in war; or of hunting - as it was used for that purpose. It was a common instrument of attack or defense, and seems to have been early invented, for it is found in all rude nations. Compare Genesis 27:3; Genesis 48:22; Genesis 49:24; Joshua 24:12; 1 Samuel 18:4; Psalm 37:15; Isaiah 7:24. The bow would be naturally emblematic of the following things:

(a)War. See the passages above.

(b)Hunting. Tires it was one of the emblems of Apollo as the god of hunting.

(c)The effect of truth - as what secured conquest, or overcame opposition in the heart.

So far as this emblem is concerned, it might denote a warrior, a hunter, a preacher, a ruler - anyone who exerted power over others, or who achieved any kind of conquest over them.

(4) the crown: "and a crown was given unto him." The word used here - στέφανος stephanos- means a circlet, chaplet, or crown - usually such as was given to a victor, 1 Corinthians 9:25. It would properly be emblematic of victory or conquest - as it was given to victors in war, or to the victors at the Grecian games, and as it is given to the saints in heaven regarded as victors, Revelation 4:4, Revelation 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:8. The crown or chaplet here was "given" to the rider as significant that he would be victorious, not that he had been; and the proper reference of the emblem

was to some conquest yet to be made, not to any which had been made. It is not said by whom this was given to the rider; the material fact being only that such a diadem was conferred on him.

(5) the going forth to conquest: “and he went forth, conquering and to conquer.” He went forth as a conqueror, and that he might conquer. That is, he went forth with the spirit, life, energy, determined purpose of one who was confident that he would conquer, and who had the port and bearing of a conqueror. John saw in him two things: one, that he had the aspect or port of a conqueror - that is, of one who had been accustomed to conquest, and who was confident that he could conquer; the ether was, that this was clearly the design for which he went forth, and this would be the result of his going forth.

Having thus inquired into the natural meaning of the emblems used, perhaps the proper work of an expositor is done, and the subject might be left here. But the mind naturally asks what was this designed to signify, and to what events are these things to be applied? On this point it is scarcely necessary to say, that the opinions of expositors have been almost as numerous as the expositors themselves, and that it would be a hopeless task, and as useless as hopeless, to attempt to enumerate all the opinions entertained. They who are desirous of examining those opinions must be referred to the various books on the Apocalypse where they may be found. Perhaps all the opinions entertained, though presented by their authors under a great variety of forms, might be referred to three:

(1) That the whole passage in Revelation 1:1; “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass.” See the notes on that verse. Whatever may be said of some of those events - those lying most remotely in the series - it would not accord with the fair interpretation of the language to suppose that the beginning of the series would be far distant, and we therefore naturally look for that beginning in the age succeeding the time of the apostle, or the reign of Domitian.

(c) The inquiry then occurs whether there were any such events in that age as would properly be symbolized by the circumstances before us - the

horse; the color of the horse; the how in the hand of the rider; the crown given him; the state and hearing of the conqueror.

(d) Before proceeding to notice what seems to me to be the interpretation which best accords with all the circumstances of the symbol, it may be proper to refer to the only other one which has any plausibility, and which is adopted by Grotius, by the author of Hyponoia, by Dr. Keith (Signs of the Times, 1:181ff), by Mr. Lord, and others, that this refers to Christ and his church - to Christ and his ministers in spreading the gospel. The objections to this class of interpretations seem to me to be insuperable:

(1) The whole description, so far as it is a representation of triumph, is a representation of the triumph of war, not of the gospel of peace. All the symbols in the opening of the first four seals are warlike; all the consequences in the opening of each of the seals where the horseman appears, are such as are usually connected with war. It is the march of empire, the movement of military power.

(2) ahorseman thus armed is not the usual representation of Christ, much less of his ministers or of his church. Once indeed Revelation 19:14-16 Christ himself is thus represented; but the ordinary representation of the Saviour in this book is either that of a man - majestic and glorious, holding the stars in his right hand - or of a lamb. Besides, if it were the design of the emblem to refer to Christ, it must be a representation of him personally and literally going forth in this manner; for it would be incongruous to suppose that this relates to him, and then to give it a metaphorical application, referring it not to himself, but to his truth, his gospel, his ministers.

(3) if there is little probability that this refers to Christ, there is still less that it refers to ministers of the gospel - as held by Lord and others - for such a symbol is employed nowhere else to represent an order of ministers, nor do the circumstances find a fulfillment in them. The minister of the gospel is a herald of peace, and is employed in the service of the Prince of Peace. He cannot well be represented by a warrior, nor is he in the Scriptures. In itself considered, there is nothing more unlike or incongruous than a warrior going forth to conquest with hostile arms, and a minister of Christ.

(4) besides, this representation of a horse and his rider, when applied in the following verses, on this principle becomes most forced and unnatural. If the warrior on the white horse denotes the ministry, then the warrior on the red horse, the black horse, the pale horse, must denote the ministry also, and nothing is more fanciful and arbitrary than to attempt to apply these to teachers of various kinds of error - error denoted by the red, black, and pale color - as must be done on that supposition. It seems plain, therefore, to me, that the representation was not designed to symbolize the ministry, or the state of the church considered with reference to its extension, or the various forms of belief which prevailed. But if so, it only remains to inquire whether a state of things existed in the Roman world of which these would be appropriate symbols. We have, then, the following facts, which are of such a nature as would properly be symbolized by the horse of the first seal; that is, they are such facts that if one were to undertake to devise an appropriate symbol of them since they occurred, they would be well represented by the image here employed:

(1) It was in general a period of prosperity, of triumph, of conquest - well represented by the horseman on the white horse going forth to conquest. I refer now to the period immediately succeeding the time of John‘s banishment, embracing some ninety years, anti extending through the successive reigns of Nerva, Trajan, Adrian, and the two Antonines, from the death of Domitian, 96 a.d., to the accession of Commodus, and the peace made by him with the Germans, 180 a.d. As an illustration of this period, and of the pertinency of the symbol, I will first copy from an historical chart drawn up with no reference to the symbol here, and in the mind of whose author the application to this symbol never occurred. The chart, distinguished for accuracy, is that of A.S. Lyman, published 1845 a.d. The following is the account of this period, beginning at the death of Domitian: “Domitian, a cruel tyrant, the last of the twelve Caesars.” (His death, therefore, was an important epoch.) “96 a.d. Nerva, noted for his virtues, but enfeebled by age.” “98 a.d. Trajan, a great general, and popular emperor; under him the empire attains its greatest extent.” “117 a.d. Adrian, an able sovereign; spends thirteen years traveling through the empire, reforming abuses and rebuilding cities.” “138 a.d. Antonions Pius,

celebrated for his wisdom, virtue, and humanity." "161 a.d. Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, the Stoic Philosopher, noted for his virtues."

Then begins a new era - a series of wicked princes and of great calamities. The next entry in the series is, "180 a.d. Commodus, profligate and cruel." Then follows a succession of princes of the same general description. Their character will be appropriately considered under the succeeding seals. But in regard to the period now supposed to be represented by the opening of the first seal, anti the general applicability of the description here to that period, we have the fullest testimony in Mr. Gibbon, in his Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: a writer who, sceptic as he was, seems to have been raised up by Divine Providence to search deeply into historic records, and to furnish an inexhaustible supply of materials in confirmation of the fulfillment of the pro phecies, and of the truth of revelation. For:

(1) he was eminently endowed by talent, and learning, and patience, and general candor, and accuracy, to prepare a history of that period of th world, and to place his name in the very first rank of historians.

(2) his history commences at about the period supposed in this interpretation to be referred to by these symbols, and extends over a very considerable portion of the time embraced in the book of Revelation.

(3) it cannot be alleged that he was biassed in his statements of facts by a desire to favor revelation; nor can it be charged on him that he perverted facts with a view to overthrow the authority of the volume of inspired truth. He was, indeed, thoroughly skeptical as to the truth of Christianity, and he lost no opportunity to express his feelings toward it by a sneer - for it seems to have been an unfortunate characteristic of his mind to sneer at everything - but there is no evidence that he ever designedly perverted a fact in history to press it into the service of infidelity, or that he designedly falsified a statement for the purpose of making it bear against Christianity. It cannot be suspected that he had any design, by the statements which he makes, to confirm the truth of Scripture prophecies. Infidels, at least, are bound to admit his testimony as impartial.

(4) not a few of the most clear and decisive proofs of the fulfillment of prophecies are to be found in his history. They are frequently such statements as would be expected to occur in the writings of a partial friend of Christianity who was endeavoring to make the records of history speak out in favor of his religion; and if they had been found in such a writer, they would be suspected of having been shaped with a view to the confirmation of the prophecies, and it may be added also with an intention to defend some favorite interpretation of the Apocalypse. In regard to the passage before us - the opening of the first seal and the general explanation of the meaning of that seal, above given, there is a striking resemblance between that representation and the state of the Roman empire as given by Mr. Gibbon at the period under consideration - from the end of the reign of Domitian to the accession of Commodes. By a singular coincidence Mr. Gibbon begins his history at about the period supposed to be referred to by the opening of the seal - the period following the death of Domitian, 96 a.d. Thus, in the opening sentences of his work he says: “In the second century of the Christian era the empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilized portion of mankind. During a happy period of more than fourscore years the public administration was conducted by the virtue and abilities of Nerva, Trajan, Adrian, and the two Antenines. It is the design of this and the two succeeding chapters to describe the prosperous condition of their empire; and afterward, from the death of Marcus Antoninus, to deduce the most important circumstances of its decline and fall; a revolution which will ever be remembered, and is still felt by the nations of the earth,” vol. i. 1.

Before Mr. Gibbon proceeds to give the history of the fall of the empire, he pauses to describe the happy condition of the Roman world during the period now referred to - for this is substantially his object in the first three chapters of his history. The titles of these chapters will show their object. They are respectively the following: Ch. i., “The Extent and Military Force of the Empire, in the Age of the Antonines”; ch. ii., “Of the Union and Internal Prosperity of the Roman Empire, in the Age of the Antonines”; ch. iii., “Of the Constitution of the Roman Empire, in the Age of the Antonines.” In the language of another, this is “the bright ground of his historic picture, from which afterward more effectively to throw out in deep coloring the successive traits of the empire‘s corruption and decline”

(Elliott). The introductory remarks of Mr. Gibbon, indeed, professedly refer to “the age of the Antenines” (138-180 a.d.); but that he designed to describe, under this general title, the actual condition of the Roman world during the period which I suppose to be embraced under the first seal, as a time of prosperity, triumph, and happiness - from Domitian to Commodes - is apparent from a remarkable statement which there will be occasion again to quote, in which he expressly designates this period in these words: “If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name what elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus,” i. 47.

The same thing is apparent also from a remark of Mr. Gibbon in the general summary which he makes of the Roman affairs, showing that this period constituted, in his view, properly an era in the condition of the world. Thus, he says (i. 4): “Such was the state of the Roman frontiers, and such the maxims of imperial policy, from the death of Augustus to the accession of Trajan.” This was 98 a.d. The question now is, whether, during this period, the events in the Roman empire were such as accord with the representation in the first seal. There was nothing in the first century that could accord with this; and if John wrote the Apocalypse at the time supposed (95 or 96 a.d.), of course it does not refer to that. Respecting that century Mr. Gibbon remarks: “The only accession which the Roman empire received, during the first century of the Christian era, was the province of Britain. In this single instance the successors of Caesar and Augustus were persuaded to follow the example of the former rather than the precept of the latter. After a war of about forty years, undertaken by the most stupid, maintained by the most dissolute, and terminated by the most timid of all the emperors, the far greater part of the island submitted to the Roman yoke,” i. 2,3.

Of course the representation in the first seal could not be applied to such a period as this. In the second century, however, and especially in the early part of it - the beginning of the period supposed to be embraced in the opening of the first seal - a different policy began to prevail, and though the main characteristic of the period, as a whole, was comparatively peaceful, yet it began with a career of conquests, and its general state might be

characterized as triumph and prosperity. Thus, Mr. Gibbon speaks of Trajan on his accession after the death of Nerva: “That virtuous and active prince had received the education of a soldier, and possessed the talents of a general. The peaceful system of his predecessors was interrupted by scenes of war and conquest; and the legions, after a long interval, beheld a military emperor at their head. The first exploits of Trajan were against the Dacians, the most warlike of men, who dwelt beyond the Danube, and who, during the reign of Domitian, had insulted the majesty of Rome. This memorable war, with a very short suspension of hostilities, lasted five years; and as the emperor could exert, without control, the whole force of the state, it was terminated by an absolute submission of the barbarians. The new province of Dacia, which formed a second exception to the precept of Augustus, was about thirteen hundred miles in circumference,” i. 4.

Speaking of Trajan (p. 4), he says further: “The praises of Alexander, transmitted by a succession of poets and historians, had kindled a dangerous emulation in the mind of Trajan. Like him, the Roman emperor undertook an expedition against the nations of the East; but he lamented with a sigh that his advanced age scarcely left him any hopes of equalling the renown of the son of Phil Yet the success of Trajan, however transient, was rapid and specious. The degenerate Parthians, broken by intestine discord, fled before his arms. He descended the river Tigris, in triumph, from the mountains of Armenia to the Persian Gulf. He enjoyed the honor of being the first, as he was the last, of the Roman generals who ever navigated that remote sea. His fleets ravaged the coasts of Arabia; and Trajan vainly flattered himself that he was approaching toward the confines of India. Every day the astonished senate received the intelligence of new names and new nations that acknowledged his sway.

They were informed that the kings of Bosphorus, Colchis, lberia, Albania, Osrhoene, and even the Parthian monarch himself, had accepted their diadems from the hand of the emperor; that the independent tribes of the Median and Carduchian hills had implored his protection; and that the rich countries of Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Assyria were reduced into the state of provinces.” Of such a reign what more appropriate symbol could there be than the horse and the rider of the first seal? If Mr. Gibbon had been writing a designed commentary on this, what more appropriate

language could he have used in illustration of it? The reign of Hadrian, the successor of Trajan (117-138 a.d.), was comparatively a reign of peace - though one of his first acts was to lead an expedition into Britain: but though comparatively a time of peace, it was a reign of prosperity and triumph. Mr. Gibbon, in the following language, gives a general characteristic of that reign: "The life of Hadrian was almost a perpetual journey; and as he possessed the various talents of the soldier, the statesman, and the scholar, he gratified his curiosity in the discharge of his duty. careless of the difference of seasons and of climates, he marched on foot, and bareheaded, over the snows of Caledonia and the sultry plains of Upper Egypt; nor was there a province of the empire which, in the course of his reign, was not honored with the presence of the monarch," p. 5.

On p. 6, Mr. Gibbon remarks of this period: "The Roman name was revered among the remote nations of the earth. The fiercest barbarians frequently submitted their differences to the arbitration of the emperor; and we are informed by a contemporary historian that he had seen ambassadors who were refused the honor which they came to solicit, of being admitted into the rank of subjects." And again, speaking of the reign of Hadrian, Mr. Gibbon remarks (i. 45): "Under his reign, as has been already mentioned, the empire flourished in peace and prosperity. He encouraged the arts, reformed the laws, asserted military discipline, and visited all the provinces in person." Hadrian was succeeded by the Antonines, Antoninus Pins and Marcus Aurelius (the former from 138 a.d. to 161 a.d.; the latter from 161 a.d. to the accession of Commodus, 180 a.d.). The general character of their reigns is well known.

It is thus stated by Mr. Gibbon: "The two Antenines governed the world for 42 years with the same invariable spirit of wisdom and virtue. Their united reigns are possibly the only period of history in which the happiness of a great people was the sole object of government," i. 46. And after describing the state of the empire in respect to its military and naval character, its roads, and architecture, and constitution, and laws, Mr. Gibbon sums up the whole description of this period in the following remarkable words (vol. i. p. 47): "If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name what elapsed from the

death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus. The vast extent of the Roman empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom. The armies were restrained by the firm but gentle hands of four successive emperors, whose characters and authority commanded involuntary respect. The forms of the civil administration were carefully preserved by Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines, who delighted in the image of liberty, and were pleased with considering themselves as the accountable ministers of the laws. Such princes deserved the honor of restoring the republic, had the Romans of their days been capable of enjoying a rational freedom." If it be supposed now that John designed to represent this period of the world, could he have chosen a more expressive and significant emblem of it than occurs in the horseman of the first seal? If Mr. Gibbon had intended to prepare a commentary on it, could he have shaped the facts of history so as better to furnish an illustration?

(2) the particular things represented in the symbol:

(a) The bow - a symbol of war. Mr. Elliott has endeavored to show that the bow at that period was especially the badge of the Cretians, and that Nerva, who succeeded Domitian, was a Cretian by birth. The argument is too long to be abridged here, but, if well founded, the fulfillment is remarkable; for although the sword or the javelin was usually the badge of the Roman emperor, if this were so, there would be a special propriety in making the bow the badge during this period. See Elliott, vol. 1, pp. 133-140. But whatever may be said of this, the bow was so generally the badge of a warrior, that there would be no impropriety in using it as a symbol of Roman victory.

(b) The crown - στέφανος stephanos- was, up to the time of Aurelian, 270 a.d. (see Spanheim, p. 60), the distinguishing badge of the Roman emperor; after that, the diadem, set with pearls and other jewels, was adopted and worn. The crown, composed usually of laurel, was properly the badge of the emperor considered as a military leader or commander. See Elliott, 1:130. At the period now under consideration the proper badge of the Roman emperor would be the crown; after the time of Aurelian, it would have been the diadem. In illustration of this, two engravings have

been introduced, the first representing the emperor Nerva with the crown, or στέφανος stephanosthe second the emperor Valentinian, with the diadem.

(c) The fact that the crown was given to the rider. It was common among the Romans to represent an emperor in this manner; either on medals, bas-reliefs, or triumphal arches. The emperor appears going forth on horseback, and with Victory represented as either crowning him, or as preceding him with a crown in her hand to present to him. The engraving below, copied from one of the basreliefs on a triumphal arch erected to Claudius Drusus on occasion of his victories over the Germans, will furnish a good illustration of this, and, indeed, is so similar to the symbol described by John, that the one seems almost a copy of the other. Except that the bow is missing, nothing could have a closer resemblance; and the fact that such symbols were employed, and were well understood by the Romans, may be admitted to be a confirmation of the view above taken of the meaning of the first seal. Indeed, so many things combine to confirm this, that it seems impossible to be mistaken in regard to it: for if it should be supposed that John lived after this time, and that he meant to furnish a striking emblem of this period of Roman history, he could not have employed a more significant and appropriate symbol than he has done.

Verse 3

And when he had opened the second seal - So as to disclose another portion of the volume. See the notes at Revelation 5:1.

I heard the second beast say - The second beast was like a calf or an ox. See the notes at Revelation 4:7. It cannot be supposed that there is any special significancy in the fact that the second beast addressed the seer on the opening of the second seal, or that, so far as the symbol was concerned, there was any reason why this living. creature should approach on the opening of this seal rather than on either of the others. All that seems to be designed is, that as the living creatures are intended to be emblems of the providential government of God, it was proper to represent that government as concerned in the opening of each of these four seals, indicating important events among the nations.

Come and see - See the notes on Revelation 6:1.

Verse 4

And there went out another horse - In this symbol there were, as in the others, several particulars which it is proper to explain in order that we may be able to understand its application. The particular things in the symbol are the following:

(a) The horse. See this explained in the notes on Revelation 6:2.

(b) The color of the horse: another horse that was red. This symbol cannot be mistaken. As the white horse denoted prosperity, triumph, and happiness, so this would denote carnage, discord, bloodshed. This is clear, not only from the nature of the emblem, but from the explanation immediately added: "And power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another." On the color, compare Bochart, Hieroz. P. 1, lib. 2, c. 7: p. 104. See also Zechariah 1:8. There is no possibility of mistaking this, that a time of slaughter is denoted by this emblem.

(c) The power given to him that sat on the horse: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another. This would seem to indicate that the condition immediately preceding this was a condition of tranquility, and that this was now disturbed by some cause producing discord and bloodshed. This idea is confirmed by the original words - τὴν εἰρήνην tēn eirēnēn- "the peace"; that is, the previously existing peace. When peace in general is referred to, the word is used without the article: Matthew 10:34, "Think not that I am come to send peace - βαλεῖν εἰρήνην balein eirēnēn- upon the earth." Compare Luke 1:79; Luke 2:14; Luke 19:38; Mark 5:34; John 14:27; John 16:33; Acts 7:26; Acts 9:31, et al. in the Greek. In these cases the word "peace" is without the article. The characteristics of the period referred to by this are:

(a)that peace and tranquility existed before;

(b)that such peace and tranquility were now taken away, and were succeeded by confusion and bloodshed; and,

(c)that the particular form of that confusion was civil discord, producing mutual slaughter: "that they should kill one another."

(d)The presentation of a sword: and there was given unto him a great sword. As an emblem of what he was to do, or of the period that was

referred to by the opening of the seal.

The sword is an emblem of war, of slaughter, of authority Romans 13:4, and is used here as signifying that that period would be characterized by carnage. Compare Isaiah 34:5; Revelation 19:17-18; Leviticus 26:25; Genesis 27:40; Matthew 10:34; Matthew 26:52. It is not said by whom the sword was presented, but the fact is merely referred to, that the rider wets presented with a sword as a symbol of what would occur.

In inquiring now into the period referred to by this symbol, we naturally look to what immediately succeeded the one which was represented by the opening of the first seal; that is, the period which followed the accession of Commodus, 180 a.d. We shall find, in the events which succeeded his accession to the empire, a state of things which remarkably accords with the account given by John in this emblem - so much so, that if it were supposed that the book was written after these events had occurred, and that John had designed to represent them by this symbol, he could not have selected a more appropriate emblem. The only authority which it is necessary to refer to here is Mr. Gibbon; who, as before remarked, seems to have been raised up by a special Providence to make a record of those events which were referred to by some of the most remarkable prophecies in the Bible. As he had the highest qualifications for an historian, his statements may be relied on as accurate; and as he had no belief in the inspiration of the prophetic records, his testimony will riot be charged with partiality in their favor. The following particulars, therefore, will furnish a full illustration of the opining of the second seal:

(a) The previous state of peace. This is implied in the expression, “and power was given to him to take peace from the earth.” Of this we have had a full confirmation in the peaceful reign of Hadrian and tim Antenines. See the notes on the exposition of the first seal. Mr. Gibbon, speaking of the accession of Commodus to the imperial throne, says that he “had nothing to wish, and everything to enjoy. The beloved son of Marcus (Commodus) succeeded his father amidst the acclamations of the senate and armies; and when he ascended the throne, the happy youth saw around him neither competitor to remove, nor enemies to punish. In this calm elevated station, it was surely natural that he should prefer the love of mankind to their detestation; the mild glories of his five predecessors to the ignominions fate of Nero and Domitian,” i. 51. So again, on the same page, he says of

Commodus, “His graceful person, popular address, and imagined virtues attracted the public favor; the honorable peace which he had recently granted to the barbarians diffused an universal joy.” No one can doubt that the accession of Commodus was preceded by a remarkable prevalence of peace and prosperity.

(b) Civil war and bloodshed: to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another. Of the applicability of this to the time supposed to be represented by this seal, we have the fullest confirmation in the series of civil wars commencing with the assassination of the emperor Commodus, 193 a.d., and continued, with scarcely any intervals of intermission, for 80 or 90 years. So Sismondi, on the fall of the Roman empire (i. 36), says, “With Commodus‘ death commenced the third and most calamitous period. It lasted 92 years, from 193 to 284. During that time, 32 emperors, and 27 pretenders to the empire, alternately hurried each other from the throne, by incessant civil warfare. Ninety-two years of almost incessant civil warfare taught the world on what a frail foundation the virtue of the Antonines had reared the felicity of the empire.” The full history of this period may be seen in Gibbon, i. pp. 50-197.

Of course it is impossible in these notes to present anything like a complete account of the characteristics of those times. Yet the briefest summary may well show the general condition of the Roman empire then, and the propriety of representing it by the symbol of a red horse, as a period when peace would be taken from the earth, and when people would kill one another. Commodus himself is represented by Mr. Gibbon in the following words: “Commodus was not, as be has been represented, a tiger, born with an insatiate thirst of human blood, and capable, from his infancy, of the most inhuman actions. Nature had formed him of a weak, rather than a wicked disposition. His simplicity and timidity rendered him the slave of his attendants, who gradually corrupted his mind. His cruelty, which at first obeyed the dictates of others, degenerated into habit, and at length became the ruling passion of his soul,” i. 51.

During the first three years of his reign “his hands were yet unstained with blood” (Ibid.), but he soon degenerated into a most severe and bloody tyrant, and “when Commodus had once tasted human blood, he was

incapable of pity or remorse," i. 52. "The tyrant's rage," says Mr. Gibbon (i. 52), "after having shed the noblest blood of the senate, at length recoiled on the principal instrument of his cruelty. While Commodus was immersed in blood and luxury he devolved the detail of public business on Perennis, a servile and ambitious minister, who had obtained his post by the murder of his predecessor," etc. "Every sentiment of virtue and humanity was extinct in the mind of Commodus," i. 55. After detailing the history of his crimes, his follies, and his cruelties, Mr. Gibbon remarks of him: "His cruelty proved at last fatal to himself. He had shed with impunity the best blood of Rome: he perished as soon as he was dreaded by his own domestics. Marcia, his favorite concubine, Eclectus, his chamberlain, and Laetus, his pretorian prefect, alarmed by the fate of their companions and predecessor, resolved to prevent the destruction which every hour hung over their heads, either from the mad caprice of the tyrant, or the sudden indignation of the people. Marcia seized the occasion of presenting a draught of wine to her lover, after he had fatigued himself with hunting some wild beasts. Commodus retired to sleep; but while he was laboring with the effects of poison and drunkenness, a robust youth, by profession a wrestler, entered his chamber, and strangled him without resistance," i. 57.

The immediate consequence of the assassination of Commodus was the elevation of Pertinax to the throne, and his murder eighty-six days after (Decline and Fall, i. 60). Then followed the public setting-up of the empire to sale by the pretorian guards, and its purchase by a wealthy Roman senator, Didius Julianus, or Julian, who, "on the throne of the world, found himself without a friend and without an adherent," i. 63. "The streets and public places in Rome resounded with clamors and imprecations." "The public discontent was soon diffused from the center to the frontiers of the empire," i. 63. In the midst of this universal indignation Septimius Severus, who then commanded the army in the neighborhood of the Danube, resolved to avenge the death of Pertinax, and to seize upon the imperial crown. He marched to Rome, overcame the feeble Julian, and placed himself on the throne. Julian, after having reigned 66 days, was beheaded in a private apartment of the baths of the palace, i. 67. "In less than four years Severus subdued the riches of the East, and the valor of the West. He vanquished two competitors of reputation and ability, and defeated

numerous armies provided with weapons and discipline equal to his own," i. 68.

Mr. Gibbon then enters into a detail of "the two civil wars against Niger and Albinus" - rival competitors for the empire (i. 68-70), both of whom were vanquished, and both of whom were put to death "in their flight from the field of battle." Yet he says, "Although the wounds of civil war were apparently healed, its mortal poison still lurked in the vitals of the constitution," i. 71. After the death of Severus, then follows an account of the contentions between his sons, Geta and Caracalla, and of the death of the former by the instigation of the latter (i. 77); then of the remorse of Caracalla, in which it is said that "his disordered fancy often beheld the angry forms of his father and his brother rising into life to threaten and upbraid him" (i. 77); then of the cruelties which Caracalla inflicted on the friends of Geta, in which "it was computed that, under the vague appellation of the friends of Geta, above twenty thousand persons of both sexes suffered death" (i. 78); then of the departure of Caracalla from the capital, and his cruelties in other parts of the empire, concerning which Mr. Gibbon remarks (i. 78,79), that "Caracalla was the common enemy of mankind. Every province was by turns the scene of his rapine and cruelty. In the midst of peace and repose, upon the slightest provocation, he issued his commands at Alexandria in Egypt for a general massacre. From a secure post in the temple of Serapis he viewed and directed the slaughter of many thousand citizens, as well as strangers, without distinguishing either the number or the crime of the sufferers," etc.

Then follows the account of the assassination of Caracalla (i. 80); then, and in consequence of that, of the civil war which crushed Macrinus, and raised Elagabalus to the throne (i. 83); then of the life and follies of that wretched voluptuary, and of his massacre by the pretorian guards (i. 86); then, after an interval of thirteen years, of the murder of his successor, the second Severus, on the Rhine; then of the civil wars excited against his murderer and successor, Maximin, in which the two emperors of a day - the Gordians, father and son - perished in Africa, and Maximin himself, and his son, in the siege of Aquileia; then of the murder at Rome of the two joint emperors, Maximus and Balbinus; and quickly after that an account of the murder of their successor in the empire, the third and youngest Gordian, on

the banks of the river Aboras; then of the slaughter of the next emperor Philip, together with his son and associate in the empire, in the battle near Verona: and this state of things may be said to have continued until the accession of Diocletian to the empire, 284 a.d. See *Decline and Fall*, i. 110-197. Does any portion of the history of the world present a similar period of connected history that would be so striking a fulfillment of the symbols used here of "peace being taken from the earth," and "men killing one another?" In regard to this whole period it is sufficient, after reading Mr. Gibbon's account, to ask two questions:

(1) If it were supposed that John lived after this period, and designed to represent this by an expressive symbol, could he have found one that would have characterized it better than this does?

(2) and if it should be supposed that Mr. Gibbon designed to write a commentary on this "seal," and to show the exact fulfillment of the symbol, could he have selected a better portion of history to do it, or could he have better described facts that would be a complete fulfillment? It is only necessary to observe further:

(c) that this is a marked and definite period. It has such a beginning, and such a continuance and ending, as to show that tiffs symbol was applicable to this as a period of the world. For it was not only preceded by a state of peace, as is supposed in the symbol, but no one can deny that the condition of things in the empire, from Commodus onward through many years, was such as to be appropriately designated by the symbol used here.

Verse 5-6

And when he had opened the third seal - Unfolding another portion of the volume. See the notes on Revelation 5:1.

I heard the third beast say, Come and see - See the notes on Revelation 4:7. It is not apparent why the third beast is represented as taking a particular interest in the opening of this seal (compare the notes on Revelation 6:3), nor is it necessary to show why it was so. The general design seems to have been, to represent each one of the four living creatures as interested in the opening of the seals, but the order in which they did this does not seem to be a matter of importance.

And I beheld, and lo, a black horse - The specifications of the symbol here are the following:

(a) As before, the horse. See the notes on Revelation 6:2.

(b) The color of the horse: "lo, a black horse." This would properly denote distress and calamity - for black has been regarded always as such a symbol. So Virgil speaks of fear as black: "atrumque timorem" (*Aen.* ix. 619). So again, Georg. iv. 468:

"Caligantem nigra formidine lucum."

So, as applied to the dying Acca, *Aeneas* xi. 825:

"Tenebris nigrescunt omnia circum."

Black, in the Scriptures, is the image of fear, of famine, of death. Lamentations 5:10; "our skin was black like an oven, because of the terrible famine." Jeremiah 14:2; "because of the drought Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are in deep mourning (literally, black) for the land." Joel 2:6; "all faces shall gather blackness." Nahum 2:10; "the knees smite together, and there is great pain in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness." Compare Revelation 6:12; Ezekiel 32:7. See also Bochart, Hieroz. P. i. lib. ii. c. vii. pp. 106,107. From the color of the horse here introduced we should naturally look for some dire calamity, though the nature of the calamity would not be designated by the mere use of the word "black." What the calamity was to be must be determined by what follows in the symbol. Famine, pestiilence, oppression, heavy taxation, tyranny, invasion - any of these might be denoted by the color of the horse.

(c) The balances: "and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand." The original word rendered here as "a pair of balances," is ζυγὸν zugonThis word properly means a yoke, serving to couple anything together, as a yoke for cattle. Hence it is used to denote the beam of a balance, or of a pair of scales - and is evidently so used here. The idea is, that something was to be weighed, in order to ascertain either its quantity or its value. Scales or balances are the emblems of justice or equity (compare Job 31:6; Psalm 62:9; Proverbs 11:1; Proverbs 16:11); and when joined with symbols that denote the sale of grain and fruit by weight, become the symbol of scarcity. Thus, "bread by weight" Leviticus 26:26 denotes scarcity. So in Ezekiel 4:16, "And they shall eat bread by weight." The use of balances here as a symbol would signify that something was to be accurately and carefully weighed out.

The connection leads us to suppose that this would pertain to the necessaries of life, and that it would occur either in consequence of scarcity, or because there would be an accurate or severe exaction, as in collecting a revenue on these articles. The balance was commonly the symbol of equity and justice; but it was also, sometimes, the symbol of exaction and oppression, as in Hosea 12:7; "The balance of deceit is in his hands; he loveth to oppress." If the balances stood alone, and there were no proclamation as to what was to occur, we should look, under this seal, to a time of the exact administration of justice, as scales or balances are now used as emblems of the rigid application of the laws and of the principles of justice in courts, or in public affairs. If this representation stood alone, or if the black horse and the scales constituted the whole of the symbol, we should look for some severe administration, or perhaps some heavy calamity under a rigorous administration of laws. The reference, however, to the "wheat and barley," and to the price for which they were to be weighed out, serves still further to limit and define the meaning of the symbol as having reference to the necessaries of life - to the productions of the land - to the actual capital of the country. Whether this refers to scarcity, or to taxation, or both, must be determined by the other parts of the symbol.

(d) The proclamation: And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say. That is, from the throne, Revelation 4:6. The voice was not that of one of the four beasts, but it seemed to come from among them. As the rider went forth, this was the proclamation that was made in regard to him; or this is what is symbolized in his going forth, to wit, that there would be such a state of things that a measure of wheat would be sold for a penny, etc. The proclamation consists essentially of two things - what refers to the price or value of wheat and barley, and what requires that care shall be taken not to injure the oil and the wine. Each of these demands explanation.

A measure of wheat for a penny - See the margin. The word rendered "measure" - χοῖνιξ choinix- denotes an Attic measure for grain and things dry, equal to the 48th part of the Attic medimnus, or the 8th part of the Roman modius, and consequently was nearly equivalent to one quart English (Robinson‘s Lexicon). The word rendered "penny," δηναρίον dēnarion- Latin, denarius- was of the same value as the Greek δραχμή drachmēand was equivalent to about fourteen cents or seven-pence (circa

mid-19th century). This was the usual price of a day‘s labor, Matthew 20:2, Matthew 20:9. The choenix, or measure of grain here referred to, was the ordinary daily allowance for one man (*Odyssey* xix. 27,28). See Stuart, in loco. The common price of the Attic medimnus of wheat was five or six denarii; but here, as that contained 48 choenixes or quarts, the price would be augmented to 48 denarii - or it would be about eight times as dear as ordinary; that is, there would be a scarcity or famine. The price of a bushel of wheat at this rate would be about four dollars and a half or 18 shillings - a price which would indicate great scarcity, and which would give rise to much distress.

And three measures of barley for a penny - It would seem from this that barley usually bore about one-third the price of wheat. It was a less valuable grain, and perhaps was produced in greater abundance. This is not far from the proportion which the price of this grain usually bears to that of wheat, and here, as in the case of the wheat, the thing which would be indicated would be scarcity. This proclamation of “a measure of wheat for a penny” was heard either as addressed to the horseman, as a rule of action for him, or as addressed by the horseman as he went forth. If the former is the meaning, it would be an appropriate address to one who was going forth to collect tribute - with reference to the exact manner in which this tribute was to be collected, implying some sort of severity of exaction; or to one who should distribute wheat and barley out of the public granaries at an advanced price, indicating scarcity. Thus, it would mean that a severe and heavy tax - represented by the scales and the scarcity - or a tax so severe as to make grain dear, was referred to. If the latter is the meaning, then the idea is that there would be a scarcity, and that grain would be dealt out by the government at a high and oppressive price. The latter idea would be as consonant with the symbol of the scales and the price mentioned as the other, if it were not for the additional injunction not to “hurt the oil and the wine” - which cannot be well applied to the idea of dealing out grain at a high price. It can, however, be connected, by a fair interpretation of that passage, with such a severity of taxation that there would be a propriety in such a command - for, as we shall see, under the explanation of that phrase, such a law was actually promulgated as resulting from severity of taxation. The idea, then, in the passage before us, would seem to be:

(a) that there would be a rigid administration of the law in regard to the matter under consideration-that pertaining to the productions of the earth -

represented by the balances; and,

(b) that that would be connected with general scarcity, or such an exercise of this power as to determine the price of grain, so that the price would be some three times greater than ordinary.

And see thou hurt not the oil and the wine - There has been a great variety of interpretations proposed of this passage, and it is by no means easy to determine the true sense. The first inquiry in regard to it is, to whom is it addressed? Perhaps the most common impression on reading it would be, that it is addressed to the horseman with the balances, commanding him not to injure the oliveyards and the vineyards. But this is not probably the correct view. It does not appear that the horseman goes forth to destroy anything, or that the effect of his going forth is directly to injure anything. This, therefore, should not be understood as addressed to the horseman, but should be regarded as a general command to any and all not to injure the oliveyards and vineyards; that is, an order that nothing should be done essentially to injure them. If thus regarded as addressed to others, a fair and congruous meaning would be furnished by either of the following interpretations: either:

(a) considered as addressed to those who were disposed to be prodigal in their manner of living, or careless as to the destruction of the crop of the oil and wine, as they would now be needed; or.

(b) as addressed to those who raised such productions, on the supposition that they would be taxed heavily, or that large quantities of these productions would be extorted for revenue, that they. should not mutilate their fruit-trees in order to evade the taxes imposed by the government. In regard to the things specified here - oil and wine - it may be remarked, that they were hardly considered as articles of luxury in ancient times. They were almost as necessary articles as wheat and barley. They constituted a considerable part of the food and drink of the people, as well as furnished a large portion of the revenue, and it would seem to be with reference to that fact that the command here is given that they should not be injured; that is, that nothing should be done to diminish the quantity of oil and wine, or to impair the productive power of oliveyards and vineyards. The state of things thus described by this seal, as thus interpreted, would be:

(a)arigid administration of the laws of the empire, particularly in reference to taxation, producing a scarcity among the necessary articles of living;

(b)astrong tendency, from the severity of the taxation, to mutilate such kinds of property, with a view either of concealing the real amount of property, or of diminishing the amount of taxes; and,

(c)asolemn command from some authoritative quarter not to do this.

A command from the ruling power not to do this would meet all that would be fairly demanded in the interpretation of the passage; and what is necessary in its application, is to find such a state of things as would correspond with these predictions; that is, such as a writer would have described by such symbols on the supposition that they were referred to.

Now it so happens that there were important events which occurred in the Roman empire, and connected with its decline and fall, of sufficient importance to be noticed in a series of calamitous events, which corresponded with the symbol here, as above explained. They were such as these:

(a) The general severity of taxation, or the oppressive burdens laid on the people by the emperors. In the account which Mr. Gibbon gives of the operation of the Indictions, and Superindictions, though the specific laws on this subject pertained to a subsequent period, the general nature of the taxation of the empire and its oppressive character may be seen (Decline and Fall, i. 357-359). A general estimate of the amount of revenue to be exacted was made out, and the collecting of this was committed to the pretorian prefects, and to a great number of subordinate officers. “The lands were measured by surveyors who were sent into the provinces; their nature, whether arable, or pasture, or woods, was distinctly reported; and an estimate made of their common value, from the average produce of five years. The number of slaves and of cattle constituted an essential part of the report; an oath was administered to the proprietors, which bound them to disclose the true state of their affairs; and their attempts to prevaricate or elude the intention of the legislature were severely watched, and punished as a capital crime, which included the double guilt of treason and of sacrilege. According to the different nature of lands, their real produce in the various articles of wine or oil, grain or barley, wood or iron, was

transported by the labor or at the expense of the provincials to the imperial magazines, from whence they were occasionally distributed for the use of the court or of the army, and of the two capitals, Rome and Constantinople," i. p. 358. Compare Lactant. de mort. Persecut., c. 23.

(b) The particular order, under this oppressive system of taxation, respecting the preservation of vineyards and oliveyards, may be referred to, also, as corresponding to the command sent forth under this rider, not to "hurt the oil and the wine." That order was in the following words: "If anyone shall sacrilegiously cut a vine, or stint the fruit of prolific boughs, and craftily feign poverty in order to avoid a fair assessment, he shall, immediately on detection, suffer death, and his property be confiscated" (Cod. Theod. l. xiii. lib. xi. seq.; Gibbon, i. 358, note). Mr. Gibbon remarks: "Although this law is not without its studied obscurity, it is, however, clear enough to prove the minuteness of the inquisition, and the disproportion of the penalty."

(c) Under this general subject of the severity of taxation - as a fact farspreading and oppressive, and as so important as to hasten the downfall of the empire, may be noticed a distinct edict of Caracalla as occurring more directly in the period in which the rider with the balances may be supposed to have gone forth. This is stated by Mr. Gibbon (i. 91) as one of the important causes which contributed to the downfall of the empire. "The personal characters of the emperors, their victories, laws, and fortunes," says he, "can interest us no further than they are connected with the general history of the decline and fall of the monarchy. Our constant attention to that object will not suffer us to overlook a most important edict of Antoninus Caracalla, which communicated to all the free inhabitants of the empire the name and privileges of Roman citizens. His unbounded liberality, however, flowed not from the sentiments of a generous mind; it was the sordid result of avarice," etc.

He then proceeds at length to state the nature and operations of that law, by which a heavy tax, under the pretence of liberality, was in fact imposed on all the citizens of the empire - a fact which, in its ultimate results, the historian of the Decline and Fall regards as so closely connected with the termination of the empire. See Gibbon, i. pp. 91-95. After noticing the laws

of Augustus, Nero, and the Antonines, and the real privileges conferred by them on those who became entitled to the rank of Roman citizens - privileges which were a compensation in the honor, dignity, and offices of that rank for the measure of taxation which it involved - he proceeds to notice the fact that the title of "Roman citizen" was conferred by Caracalla on all the free citizens of the empire, involving the subjection to all the heavy taxes usually imposed on those who sustained the rank expressed by the title, but with nothing of the compensation connected with the title when it was confined to the inhabitants of Italy. "But the favor," says he, "which implied a distinction, was lost in the prodigality of Caracalla, and the reluctant provincials were compelled to assume the vain title, and the real obligations, of Roman citizens. Nor was the rapacious son of Severus (Caracalla) contented with such a measure of taxation as had appeared sufficient to his moderate predecessors. Instead of a twentieth, he exacted a tenth of all legacies and inheritances; and during his reign he crushed alike every part of the empire under the weight of his iron scepter," (i. 95).

So again (Ibid.), speaking of the taxes which had been lightened somewhat by Alexander, Mr. Gibbon remarks: "It is impossible to conjecture the motive that engaged him to spare so trifling a remnant of the evil; but the noxious weed, which had not been totally eradicated, again sprung up with the most luxuriant growth, and in the succeeding age darkened the Roman world with its deadly shade. In the course of this history we shall be too often summoned to explain the land-tax, the capitation, and the heavy contributions of grain, wine, oil, and meat, which were exacted from the provinces for the use of the court, the army, and the capital." In reference to this whole matter of taxation as being one of the things which contributed to the downfall of the empire, and which spread woe through the falling empire - a woe worthy to be illustrated by one of the seals - a confirmation may be delayed from the reign of Galerius, who, as Caesar, acted under the authority of Diocletian; who excited Diocletian to the work of persecution (Decline and Fall, i. 317,318); and who, on the abdication of Diocletian, assumed the title of Augustus (Decline and Fall, i. 222).

Of his administration in general Mr. Gibbon i. 226) remarks: "About that time the avarice of Galerius, or perhaps the exigencies of the state, had

induced him to make a very strict and rigorous inquisition into the property of his subjects for the purpose of a general taxation, both on their lands and on their persons. A very minute survey appears to have been taken of their real estates; and wherever there was the slightest suspicion of concealment, torture was very freely employed to obtain a sincere declaration of their personal wealth." Of the nature of this exaction under Galerius; of the cruelty with which the measure was prosecuted - particularly in its bearing on Christians, toward whom Galerius cherished a mortal enmity (Decline and Fall, i. 317); and of the extent and severity of the suffering among Christians and others, caused by it - the following account of Lactantius (De Mort. Persecut., c. 23) will furnish a painful but most appropriate illustration: "Swarms of exacters sent into the provinces and cities filled them with agitation and terror, as though a conquering enemy were leading them into captivity. The fields were separately measured, the trees and vines, the flocks and herds numbered, and an examination made of the people. In the cities the cultivated and rude were united as of the same rank. The streets were crowded with groups of families, and every one required to appear with his children and slaves. Tortures and lashes resounded on every side. Sons were gibbeted in the presence of their parents, and the most confidential servants harassed that they might make disclosures against their masters, and wives that they might testify unfavorably of their husbands. If there were a total destitution of property, they were still tortured to make acknowledgments against themselves, and, when overcome by pain, inscribed for what they did not possess.

Neither age nor ill-health was admitted as an excuse for not appearing. The sick and weak were borne to the place of inscription, a reckoning made of the age of each, and years added to the young and deducted from the old, in order to subject them to a higher taxation than the law imposed. The whole scene was filled with wailing and sadness. In the meantime individuals died, and the herds and the flocks diminished, yet tribute was none the less required to be paid for the dead, so that it was no longer allowed either to live or die without a tax. Mendicants alone escaped, where nothing could be wrenched, and whom misfortune and misery had made incapable of further oppression. These the impious wretch affecting to pity, that they might not suffer want, ordered to be assembled, borne off in vessels, and plunged into the sea." See Lord on the Apoc., pp. 128,129.

These facts in regard to the severity of taxation, and the rigid nature of the law enforcing it; to the sources of the revenue exacted in the provinces, and to the care that none of those sources should be diminished; and to the actual and undoubted bearing of all this on the decline and fall of the empire, are so strikingly applicable to the symbol here employed, that if it be supposed that it was intended to refer to them, no more natural or expressive symbol could have been used; if it were supposed that the historian meant to make a record of the fulfillment, he could not well have made a search which would more strikingly accord with the symbol.

Were we now to represent these things by a symbol, we could scarcely find one that would be more expressive than that of a rider on a black horse with a pair of scales, sent forth under a proclamation which indicated that there would be a most rigid and exact administration of severe and oppressive laws, and with a special command, addressed to the people, not for the purposes of concealment, or from opposition to the government, to injure the sources of revenue. It may serve further to illustrate this, to copy one of the usual emblems of a Roman procurator or questor. It is taken from Spanheim, *De Usu Num. Diss.*, vi. 545. See Elliott, i. 169. It has a balance as a symbol of exactness or justice, and an car of grain as a symbol employed with reference to procuring or exacting grain from the provinces.

Verse 7

And when he had opened the fourth seal - See the notes at Revelation 5:1.

I heard the voice of the fourth beast say - The flying eagle. See the notes at Revelation 15:7. As in the other cases, there does not appear to have been any particular reason why the fourth of the living creatures should have made this proclamation rather than either of the others. It was poetic and appropriate to represent each one in his turn as making proclamation.

Come and see - See the notes at Revelation 6:1.

Verse 8

And I looked, and behold a pale horse - - ἵππος χλωρὸς hippos chlōrosOn the horse, as an emblem, see the notes on Revelation 6:2. The uniqueness of this emblem consists in the color of the horse, the rider, and the power that was given unto him. In these there is entire harmony, and

there can be comparatively little difficulty in the explanation and application. The color of the horse was "pale" - χλωρὸς chlōrosThis word properly means "pale-green, yellowish-green," like the color of the first shoots of grass and herbage; then green, verdant, like young herbage, Mark 6:39; Revelation 8:7; Revelation 9:4; and then pale yellowish (Robinson, Lexicon). The color here would be an appropriate one to denote the reign of death - as one of the most striking effects of death is paleness - and, of course, of death produced by any cause, famine, pestilence, or the sword. From this portion of the symbol, if it stood with nothing to limit and define it, we should naturally look for some condition of things in which death would prevail in a remarkable manner, or in which multitudes of human beings would be swept away. And yet, perhaps, from the very nature of this part of the symbol, we should look for the prevalence of death in some such peaceful manner as by famine or disease. The red color would more naturally denote the ravages of death in war; the black, the ravages of death by sudden calamity; the pale would more obviously suggest famine or wasting disease.

And his name that sat on him was Death - No description is given of his aspect; nor does he appear with any emblem - as sword, or spear, or bow. There is evident scope for the fancy to picture to itself the form of the destroyer; and there is just that kind of obscurity about it which contributes to sublimity. Accordingly, there has been ample room for the exercise of the imagination in the attempts to paint "Death on the pale horse," and the opening of this seal has furnished occasion for some of the greatest triumphs of the pencil The simple idea in this portion of the symbol is, that death would reign or prevail under the opening of this seal - whether by sword, by famine, or by pestilence, is to be determined by other descriptions in the symbol.

And Hell followed with him - Attended him as he went forth. On the meaning of the word rendered here as "hell" - Ἅδης HadēsHades - see the Luke 16:23 note, compare the Job 10:21-22 notes; Isaiah 14:9 note. It is used here to denote the abode of the dead, considered as a place where they dwell, and not in the more restricted sense in which the word is now commonly used as a place of punishment. The idea is, that the dead would be so numerous at the going forth of this horseman, that it would seem as if the pale nations of the dead had come again upon the earth. A vast retinue

of the dead would accompany him; that is, it would be a time when death would prevail on the earth, or when multitudes would die.

And power was given unto them - Margin, to him. The common Greek text is αὐτοὶς autois- "to them." There are many mss., however, which read αὐτῷ autō- "to him." So Prof. Stuart reads it. The authority, however, is in favor of them as the reading; and according to this, death and his train are regarded as grouped together, and the power is considered as given to them collectively. The sense is not materially varied.

Over the fourth part of the earth - That is, of the Roman world. It is not absolutely necessary to understand this as extending over precisely a fourth part of the world. Compare Revelation 8:7-10, Revelation 8:12; Revelation 9:15, et al. Undoubtedly we are to look in the fulfillment of this to some far-spread calamity; to some severe visitations which would sweep off great multitudes of people. The nature of that visitation is designated in the following specifications.

To kill with sword - In war and discord - and we are, therefore, to look to a period of wax.

And with hunger - With famine - one of the accompaniments of war - where armies ravage a nation, trampling down the crops of grain; consuming the provisions laid up; employing in war, or cutting off, the people who would be occupied in cultivating the ground; making it necessary that they should take the field at a time when the grain should be sown or the harvest collected; and shutting up the people in besieged cities to perish by hunger. Famine has been not an infrequent accompaniment of war; and we are to look for the fulfillment of this in its extensive prevalence.

And with death - Each of the other forms - "with the sword and with hunger" - imply that death would reign; for it is said that "power was given to kill with sword and with hunger." This word, then, must refer to death in some other form - to death that seemed to reign without any such visible cause as the "sword" and "hunger." This would well denote the pestilence - not an infrequent accompaniment of war. For nothing is better suited to produce this than the unburied bodies of the slain; the filth of a camp; the want of food; and the crowding together of multitudes in a besieged city; and, accordingly, the pestilence, especially in Oriental countries, has been often closely connected with war. That the pestilence is referred to here is rendered more certain by the fact that the Hebrew word דבר

deber“pestilence,” which occurs about fifty times in the Old Testament, is rendered θάνατος thanatos“death,” more than thirty times in the Septuagint.

And with the beasts of the earth - With wild beasts. This, too, would be one of the consequences of war, famine, and pestilence. Lands would be depopulated, and wild beasts would be multiplied. Nothing more is necessary to make them formidable than a prevalence of these things; and nothing, in the early stages of society, or in countries ravaged by war, famine, and the pestilence, is more formidable. Homer, at the very beginning of his Iliad, presents us with a representation similar to this. Compare Ezekiel 14:21; “I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence,” דבר deber- Septuagint, as here, θάνατον thanatonSee also 2 Kings 17:26.

In regard to the fulfillment of this there can be little difficulty, if the principles adopted in the interpretation of the first three seals are correct. We may turn to Gibbon, and, as in the other cases, we shall find that he has been an unconscious witness of the fidelity of the representation in this seal. Two general remarks may be made before there is an attempt to illustrate the particular things in the symbol:

(a) The first relates to the place in the order of time, or in history, which this seal occupies. If the three former seals have been located with any degree of accuracy, we should expect that this would follow, not very remotely, the severe laws pertaining to taxation, which, according to Mr. Gibbon, contributed so essentially to the downfall of the empire. And if it be admitted to be probable that the fifth seal refers to a time of persecution, it would be most natural to fix this period between those times and the times of Diocletian, when the persecution ceased. I may be permitted to say, that I was led to fix on this period without having any definite view beforehand of what occurred in it, and was surprised to find in Mr. Gibbon what seems to be so accurate a correspondence with the symbol.

(b) The second remark is, that the general characteristics of this period, as stated by Mr. Gibbon, agree remarkably with what we should expect of the period from the symbol. Thus, speaking of this whole period (248-268 a.d.), embracing the reigns of Decius, Gallus, Aemilianus, Valerian, and Gallienus, he says, “From the great secular games celebrated by Philip to the death of the emperor Gallienus, there elapsed twenty years of shame and

misfortune. During this calamitous period every instant of time was marked, every province of the Roman world was afflicted by barbarous invaders and military tyrants, and the ruined empire seemed to approach the last and fatal moment of its dissolution," i. 135.

In regard to the particular things referred to in the symbol, the following specifications may furnish a sufficient confirmation and illustration:

(a) The killing with the sword. A fulfillment of this, so far as the words are concerned, might be found indeed in many portions of Roman history, but no one can doubt that it was eminently true of this period. It was the period of the first Gothic invasion of the Roman empire; the period when those vast hordes, having gradually come down from the regions of Scandinavia, and having moved along the Danube toward the Ukraine and the countries bordering on the Borysthenes, invaded the Roman territories from the East, passed over Greece, and made their appearance almost, as Mr. Gibbon says, within sight of Rome. Of this invasion Mr. Gibbon says, "This is the first considerable occasion (the fact that the emperor Decius was summoned to the banks of the Danube, 250 a.d., by the invasion of the Goths) in which history mentions that great people, who afterward broke the Roman power, sacked the Capitol, and reigned in Gaul, Spain, and Italy. So memorable was the part which they acted in the subversion of the Western empire, that the name of Goths is frequently, but improperly, used as a general appellation of rude and warlike barbarism," i. p. 136.

As one of the illustrations that the "sword" would be used by "Death" in this period, we may refer to the siege and capture of Philippolis. "A hundred thousand persons are reported to have been massacred in the sack of that great city" (Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, i. 140). "The whole period," says Mr. Gibbon, speaking of the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, "was one uninterrupted series of confusion and calamity. The Roman empire was, at the same time, and on every side, attacked by the blind fury of foreign invaders, and the wild ambition of domestic usurpers," i. 144. "Such were the barbarians," says Mr. Gibbon in the close of his description of the Goths at this period, and of the tyrants that reigned, "and such the tyrants, who, under the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, dismembered the

provinces, and reduced the empire to the lowest pitch of disgrace and ruin, from whence it seemed impossible that it should ever emerge," i. 158.

(b) Famine: "Shall kill with hunger." This would naturally be the consequence of long-continued wars, and of such invasions as those of the Goths. Mr. Gibbon says of this period: "Our habits of thinking so fondly connect the order of the universe with the fate of man, that this gloomy period of history has been decorated with inundations, earthquakes, uncommon meteors, preternatural darkness, and a crowd of prodigies, fictitious or exaggerated. But a long and general famine was a calamity of a more serious kind. It was the inevitable consequence of rapine and oppression, which extirpated the produce of the present, and the hope of future harvests," i. p. 159. Prodigies, and preternatural darkness, and earthquakes, were not seen in the vision of the opening of the seal - but war and famine were; and the facts stated by Mr. Gibbon are such as would be now appropriately symbolized by Death on the pale horse.

(c) Pestilence: "And shall kill with death." Of the pestilence which raged in this period Mr. Gibbon makes the following remarkable statement, in immediate connection with what he says of the famine: "Famine is almost always followed by epidemical diseases, the effect of scanty and unwholesome food. Other causes must, however, have contributed to the furious plague, which, from the year 250 to the year 265, raged without interruption in every province, every city, and almost every family of the Roman empire. During some time five thousand persons died daily at Rome; and many towns that had escaped the hands of the barbarians were entirely depopulated," i. 159.

(d) Wild beasts: "And shall kill with the beasts of the earth." As already remarked, these are formidable enemies in the early stages of society, and when a country becomes, from any cause, depopulated. They are not mentioned by Mr. Gibbon as contributing to the decline and fall of the empire, or as connected with the calamities that came upon the world at that period. But no one can doubt that in such circumstances they would be likely to abound, especially if the estimate of Mr. Gibbon be correct (i. 159), when speaking of these times, and making an estimate of the proportion of the inhabitants of Alexandria that had perished - which he

says was more than one-half - he adds, “Could we venture to extend the analogy to the other provinces, we might suspect that war, pestilence, and famine had consumed in a few years the moiety of the human species.” Yet, though not adverted to by Mr. Gibbon, there is a record pertaining to this very period, which shows that this was one of the calamities with which the world was then afflicted.

It occurs in Arnobius, Adv. Gentes, lib. i. p. 5. Within a few years after the death of Gallienus (about 300 a.d.) he speaks of wild beasts in such a manner as to show that they were regarded as a sore calamity. The public peril and suffering on this account were so great, that in common with other evils this was charged on Christians as one of the judgments of heaven which they brought upon the world. In defending Christians against the general charge that these judgments were sent from heaven on their account, he adverts to the prevalence of wild beasts, and shows that they could not have been sent as a judgment on account of the existence of Christianity, by the fact that they had prevailed also in the times of paganism, long before Christianity was introduced into the empire. “Quando cum feris bella, et proelia cum leonibus gesta sunt? Non ante nos? Quando pernicies populis venenatis ab anguibus data est? Non ante nos?” “When were wars waged with wild beasts, and contests with lions? Was it not before our times? When did a plague come upon people poisoned by serpents? Was it not before our times?”

In regard to the extent of the destruction which these causes would bring upon the world, there is a remarkable confirmation in Gibbon. To say, as is said in the account of the seal, that “a fourth part of the earth” would be subjected to the reign of death by the sword, by famine, by pestilence, and by wild beasts, may seem to many to be an improbable statement - a statement for the fulfillment of which we should look in vain to any historical records. Yet Mr. Gibbon, without expressly mentioning the plague of wild beasts, but referring to the three others - “war, pestilence, and famine” - goes into a calculation, in a passage already referred to, by which he shows that it is probable that from these causes half the human race was destroyed. The following is his estimate: “We have the knowledge of a very curious circumstance, of some use perhaps in the melancholy calculation of human calamities. An exact register was kept at Alexandria of all the

citizens entitled to receive the distribution of grain. It was found that the ancient number of those comprised between the ages of forty and seventy had been equal to the whole sum of claimants, from fourteen to fourscore years of age, who remained alive after the reign of Gallienus. Applying this authentic fact to the most correct tables of mortality, it evidently proves that above half the people of Alexandria had perished; and could we venture to extend the analogy to the other provinces, we might suspect that war, pestilence, and famine had consumed in a few years the moiety of the human species," i. 159. The historian says that it might be "suspected" from these data that one-half of the human race had been cut off in a few years, from these causes; in the Apocalyptic vision it is said that power was given over one "fourth" of the earth. We may remark:

(a) that the description in the symbol is as likely to be correct as the "suspicion" of the historian; and,

(b) that his statement that in this period "a moiety of the race," or one-half of the race, perished, takes away all improbability from the prediction, and gives a most graphic confirmation of the symbol of Death on the pale horse. If such a desolation in fact occurred, there is no improbability in the supposition that it might have been prefigured by the opening of a prophetic seal. Such a widespread desolation would be likely to be referred to in a series of symbols that were designed to represent the downfall of the Roman power, and the great changes in human affairs that would affect the welfare of the church.

Verses 9-11

And when he had opened the fifth seal - notes at Revelation 5:1; Revelation 6:1.

I saw under the altar - The four living creatures are no longer heard as in the opening of the first four seals. No reason is given for the change in the manner of the representation; and none can be assigned, unless it be, that having represented each one of the four living creatures in their turn as calling attention to the remarkable events about to occur, there seemed to be no necessity or propriety in introducing them again. In itself considered, it cannot be supposed that they would be any less interested in the events about to be disclosed than they were in those which preceded. This seal

pertains to martyrs - at the former successively did to a time of prosperity and triumph; to discord and bloodshed; to oppressive taxation; to war, famine, and pestilence. In the series of woes, it was natural and proper that there should be a vision of martyrs, if it was intended that the successive seals should refer to coming and important periods of the world; and accordingly we have here a striking representation of the martyrs crying to God to interpose in their behalf and to avenge their blood. The points which require elucidation are:

(a)their position - under the altar;

(b)their invocation - or their prayer that they might be avenged;

(c)the clothing of them with robes; and,

(d)the command to wait patiently a little time.

(1) the position of the martyrs - "under the altar." There were in the temple at Jerusalem two altars - the altar of burnt sacrifices, and the altar of incense. The altar here referred to was probably the former. This stood in front of the temple, and it was on this that the daily sacrifice was made. Compare the notes on Matthew 5:23-24. We are to remember, however, that the temple and the altar were both destroyed before the time when this book was written, and this should, therefore, be regarded merely as a vision. John saw these souls as if they were collected under the altar - the place where the sacrifice for sin was made - offering their supplications. Why they are represented as being there is not so apparent; but probably two suggestions will explain this:

(a)The altar was the place where sin was expiated, and it was natural to represent these redeemed martyrs as seeking refuge there; and

(b)it was usual to offer prayers and supplications at the altar, in connection with the sacrifice made for sin, and on the ground of that sacrifice.

The idea is, that they who were suffering persecution would naturally seek a refuge in the place where expiation was made for sin, and where prayer was appropriately offered. The language here is such as a Hebrew would naturally use; the idea is appropriate to anyone who believes in the atonement, and who supposes that that is the appropriate refuge for those who are in trouble. But while the language here is such as a Hebrew would use, and while the reference in the language is to the altar of Burnt sacrifice,

the scene should be regarded as undoubtedly laid in heaven - the temple where God resides. The whole representation is that of fleeing to the atonement, and pleading with God in connection with the sacrifice for sin.

The souls of them that were slain - That had been put to death by persecution. This is one of the incidental proofs in the Bible that the soul does not cease to exist at death, and also that it does not cease to be conscious, or does not sleep until the resurrection. These souls of the martyrs are represented as still in existence; as remembering what had occurred on the earth; as interested in what was now taking place; as engaged in prayer; and as manifesting earnest desires for the divine interposition to avenge the wrongs which they had suffered.

For the word of God - On account of the word or truth of God. See the notes on Revelation 1:9.

And for the testimony which they held - On account of their testimony to the truth, or being faithful witnesses of the truth of Jesus Christ. See the notes on Revelation 1:9.

(2) the invocation of the martyrs, Revelation 6:10; And they cried with a loud voice. That is, they pleaded that their blood might be avenged.

Saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true - They did not doubt that God would avenge them, but they inquired how long the vengeance would be delayed. It seemed to them that God was slow to interpose, and to check the persecuting power. They appeal therefore to him as a God of holiness and truth; that is, as one who could not look with approval on sin, and in whose sight the wrongs inflicted by the persecuting power must be infinitely offensive; as one who was true to his promises, and faithful to his people. On the ground of his own hatred of wrong, and of his plighted faithfulness to his church, they pleaded that he would interpose.

Dost thou not judge and avenge our blood - That is, dost thou forbear to judge and avenge us; or dost thou delay to punish those who have persecuted and slain us. They do not speak as if they had any doubt that it would be done, nor as if they were actuated by a spirit of revenge; but as if it would be proper that there should be an expression of the divine sense of the wrongs that had been done them. It is not right to desire vengeance or revenge; it is to desire that justice should be done, and that the government of God should be vindicated. The word "judge" here may either mean "judge us," in the sense of "vindicate us," or it may refer to their persecutors, meaning "judge them." The more probable sense is the latter:

“How long dost thou forbear to execute judgment on our account on those that dwell on the earth?” The word “avenge” - ἐκδικεω ekdikeō- means to do justice; to execute punishment.

On them that dwell on the earth - Those who are still on the earth. This shows that the scene here is laid in heaven, and that the souls of the martyrs are represented as there. We are not to suppose that this literally occurred, and that John actually saw the souls of the martyrs beneath the altars - for the whole representation is symbolical; nor are we to suppose that the injured and the wronged in heaven actually pray for vengeance on those who wronged them, or that the redeemed in heaven will continue to pray with reference to things on the earth; but it may be fairly inferred from this that there will be as real a remembrance of the wrongs of the persecuted, the injured, and the oppressed, as if such prayer were offered there; and that the oppressor has as much to dread from the divine vengeance as if those whom he has injured should cry in heaven to the God who hears prayer, and who takes vengeance. The wrongs done to the children of God; to the orphan, the widow, the down-trodden; to the slave and the outcast, will be as certainly remembered in heaven as if they who are wronged should plead for vengeance there, for every act of injustice and oppression goes to heaven and pleads for vengeance. Every persecutor should dread the death of the persecuted as if he went to heaven to plead against him; every cruel master should dread the death of his slave that is crushed by wrongs; every seducer should dread the death and the cries of his victim; every one who does wrong in any way should remember that the sufferings of the injured cry to heaven with a martyr‘s pleadings, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?”

(3) the robes that were given to the martyrs: And white robes were given unto every one of them. Emblems of purity or innocence. See the notes on Revelation 3:5. Here the robes would be an emblem of their innocence as martyrs; of the divine approval of their testimony and lives, and a pledge of their future blessedness.

(4) the command to wait: And it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season. That is, that they must wait for a little season before they could be avenged as they desired, Revelation 6:10. They had pleaded that their cause might be at once vindicated, and had asked how

long it would be before it should be done. The reply is, that the desired vindication would not at once occur, but that they must wait until other events were accomplished. Nothing definite is determined by the phrase "a little season," or a short time. It is simply an intimation that this would not immediately occur, or was not soon to take place. Whether it refers to an existing persecution, and to the fact that they were to wait for the divine interposition until that was over, and those who were then suffering persecution should be put to death and join them; or whether to a series of persecutions stretching along in the history of the world, in such a sense that the promised vengeance would take place only when all those persecutions were passed, and the number of the martyrs completed, cannot be determined from the meaning of their words. Either of these suppositions would accord well with what the language naturally expresses.

Until their fellow-servants also - Those who were then suffering persecution, or those who should afterward suffer persecution, grouping all together.

And their brethren - Their brethren as Christians, and their brethren in trial: those then living, or those who would live afterward and pass through similar scenes.

Should be fulfilled - That is, until these persecutions were passed through, and the number of the martyrs was complete. The state of things represented here would seem to be, that there was then a persecution raging on the earth. Many had been put to death, and their souls had fled to heaven, where they pleaded that their cause might be vindicated, and that their oppressors and persecutors might be punished. To this the answer was, that they were now safe and happy - that God approved their course, and that in token of his approbation they should be clothed in white raiment; but that the invoked vindication could not at once occur. There were others who would yet be called to suffer as they had done, and they must wait until all that number was completed. Then, it is implied, God would interpose, and vindicate his name. The scene, therefore, is laid in a time of persecution, when many had already died, and when there were many more that were exposed to death; and a sufficient fulfillment of the passage, so far as the words are concerned, would be found in any persecution, where many might be represented as having already gone to heaven, and where there was a certainty that many more would follow.

We naturally, however, look for the fulfillment of it in some period succeeding those designated by the preceding symbols. There would be no difficulty, in the early history of the church, in finding events that would correspond with all that is represented by the symbol; but it is natural to look for it in a period succeeding that represented, under the fourth seal, by Death on the pale horse. If the previous seals have been correctly interpreted we shall not be much in danger of erring in supposing that this refers to the persecution under Diocletian; and perhaps we may find in one who never intended to write a word that could be construed as furnishing a proof of the fulfillment of the prophecies of the New Testament, what should be regarded as a complete verification of all that is represented here. The following particulars may justify this application:

(a) The place of that persecution in history, or the time when it occurred. As already remarked, if the previous seals have been rightly explained, and the fourth seal denotes the wars, the famine, and the pestilence, under the invasion of the Goths, and in the time of Valerian and Gallienus, then the last great persecution of the church under Diocletian would well accord with the period in history referred to. Valerian died in 260 a.d., being flayed alive by Sapor, king of Persia; Gallienus died in 268 a.d., being killed at Milan. Diocletian ascended the throne 284 a.d., and resigned the purple 304 a.d. It was during this period, and chiefly at the instigation of Galerius, that the tenth persecution of the Christians occurred - the last under the Roman power; for in 306 a.d. Constantine ascended the throne, and ultimately be, came the protector of the church.

(b) The magnitude of this persecution under Diocletian is as consonant to the representation here as its place in history. So important was it, that, in a general chapter on the persecutions of the Christians, Mr. Gibbon has seen fit, in his remarks on the nature, causes, extent, and character of the persecutions, to give a prominence to this which he has not assigned to any others, and to attach an importance to it which he has not to any other. See vol. i. pp. 317-322. The design of this persecution, as Mr. Gibbon expresses it (i. 318), was “to set bounds to the progress of Christianity”; or, as he elsewhere expresses it (on the same page), “the destruction of Christianity.” Diocletian, himself naturally averse from persecution, was excited to this by Galerius, who urged upon the emperor every argument by which he could

persuade him to engage in it. Mr. Gibbon says in regard to this, “Galerius at length extorted from him (Diocletian) the permission of summoning a council, composed of a few persons, the most distinguished in the civil and military departments of the state. It may be presumed that they insisted on every topic which might interest the pride, the piety, the fears of their sovereign in the destruction of Christianity,” 1:318.

The purpose evidently in the persecution, was, to make a last and desperate effort, through the whole Roman empire, for the destruction of the Christian religion; for Mr. Gibbon (i. 320) says that “the edict against the Christians was designed for a general law of the whole empire.” Other efforts had failed. The religion still spread, notwithstanding the rage and fury of nine previous persecutions. It was resolved to make one more effort. This was designed by the persecutors to be the last, in the hope that then the Christian name would cease to be: in the providence of God it was the last - for then even these opposing powers became convinced that the religion could not be destroyed in this manner - and as this persecution was to establish this fact, it was an event of sufficient magnitude to be symbolized by the opening of one of the seals.

(c) The severity of this persecution accorded with the description here, and was such as to deserve a place in the series of important events which were to occur in the world. We have seen above, from the statement of Mr. Gibbon, that it was designed for the “whole empire,” and it in fact raged with fury throughout the empire. After detailing some of the events of local persecutions under Diocletian, Mr. Gibbon says, “The resentment or the fears of Diocletian at length transported him beyond the bounds of moderation, which he had hitherto preserved, and he declared, in a series of edicts, his intention of abolishing the Christian name. By the first of these edicts the governors of the provinces were directed to apprehend all persons of the ecclesiastical order; and the prisons destined for the vilest criminals were soon filled with a multitude of bishops, presbyters, deacons, and exorcists. By a second edict the magistrates were commanded to employ every method of severity which might reclaim them from their odious superstition, and oblige them to return to the established worship of the gods. This rigorous order was extended, by a subsequent edict, to the whole body of Christians, who were exposed to a violent and general persecution.

Instead of those salutary restraints which had required the direct and solemn testimony of an accuser, it became the duty as well as the interest of the imperial officers to discover, to pursue, and to torment the most obnoxious among the faithful. Heavy penalties were denounced against all who should presume to save a proscribed sectary from the just indignation of the gods, and of the emperors," i. 322. The first decree against the Christians, at the instigation of Galerius, will show the general nature of this fiery trial of the church. That decree was to the following effect: "All assembling of the Christians for the purposes of religious worship was forbidden; the Christian churches were to be demolished to their foundations; all manuscripts of the Bible should be burned; those who held places of honor or rank must either renounce their faith or be degraded; in judicial proceedings the torture might be used against all Christians, of whatever rank; those belonging to the lower walks of private life were to be divested of their rights as citizens and as freemen; Christian slaves were to be incapable of receiving their freedom, so long as they remained Christians" (Neander, Hist. of the Church, Torrey's Trans. i. 148).

This persecution was the last against the Christians by the Roman emperors; the last that was waged by that mighty pagan power. Diocletian soon resigned the purple, and after the persecution had continued to rage, with more or less severity, under his successors, for ten years, the peace of the church was established. "Diocletian," says Mr. Gibbon (i. 322), "had no sooner published his edicts against the Christians, than, as if he had been committing to other hands his work of persecution, he divested himself of the imperial purple. The character and situation of his colleagues and successors sometimes urged them to enforce, and sometimes to suspend, the execution of these rigorous laws; nor can we acquire a just and distinct idea of this important period of ecclesiastical history, unless we separately consider the state of Christianity in the different parts of the empire, during the space of ten years which elapsed between the first edicts of Diocletian and the final peace of the church."

For this detail consult Gibbon, i. 322-329, and the authorities there referred to; and Neander, *History of the Church*, i. 147-156. Respecting the details of the persecution, Mr. Gibbon remarks (i. 326), "It would have been

an easy task, from the history of Eusebius, from the declamations of Lactantius, and from the most ancient acts, to collect a long series of horrid and disgustful pictures, and to fill many pages with racks and scourges, with iron-hooks, and red-hot beds, and with the variety of tortures which fire and steel, savage beasts, and more savage executioners, could inflict on the human body." It is true that Mr. Gibbon professes to doubt the truth of these records, and attempts to show that the account of the number of the martyrs has been greatly exaggerated; yet no one, in reading his own account of this persecution, can doubt that it was the result of a determined effort to blot out the Christian religion, and that the whole of the imperial power was exerted to accomplish this end.

At length the last of the imperial persecutions ceased, and the great truth was demonstrated that Christianity could not be extinguished by power, and that "the gates of hell could not prevail against it." "In the year 311," says Neander (i. 156), "the remarkable edict appeared which put an end to the last sanguinary conflict of the Christian church and the Roman empire." This decree was issued by the author and instigator of the persecution, Galerius, who, "softened by a severe and painful disease, the consequence of his excesses, had been led to think that the God of the Christians might, after all, be a powerful being, whose anger punished him, and whose favor he must endeavor to conciliate." This man suspended the persecution, and gave the Christians permission "once more to hold their assemblies, provided they did nothing contrary to the good order of the Roman state." "Ita ut ne quid contra disciplinam agant" (Neander, ibid.).

Verses 12-17

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal - See the notes at Revelation 5:1; Revelation 6:1.

And, lo, there was a great earthquake - Before endeavoring to ascertain to what the sixth seal was designed to refer, it is proper, as in the previous cases, to furnish a particular explanation of the meaning of the symbols. All the symbols represented in the opening of this seal denote consternation, commotion, changes; but still they are all significant, and we are to suppose that something would occur corresponding with each one of them. It cannot be supposed that the things here described were represented on the part of the roll or volume that was now unfolded in any other way

than that they were pictures, or that the whole was a species of panoramic representation made to pass before the eyes. Thus understood, it would not be difficult to represent each one of these things in a painting: as the heaving ground - the agitated forests - the trembling hills - the falling cities and houses - the sun blackened, and the moon turned to blood:

(a) The earthquake, Revelation 6:12; "There was a great earthquake." The word used here denotes a shaking or agitation of the earth. The effect, when violent, is to produce important changes - opening chasms in the earth; throwing down houses and temples; sinking hills, and elevating plains; causing ponds and lakes to dry up, or forming them where none existed; elevating the ocean from its bed, rending rocks, etc. As all that occurs in the opening of the other seals is symbolical, it is to be presumed that this is also, and that for the fulfillment of this we are not to look for a literal earthquake, but for such agitations and changes in the world as would be properly symbolized by this. The earthquake, as a symbol, would merely denote great agitations or overturnings on the earth. The particular character of those changes must be determined by other circumstances in the symbol that would limit and explain it.

There are, it is said, but three literal earthquakes referred to in the Scripture: that mentioned in 1 Kings 19:11; that in Uzziah's time, Amos 1:1; Zechariah 14:5; and what took place at the Saviour's death. All the rest are emblematical or symbolical-referring mostly to civil commotions and changes. Then in Haggai 2:6-7; "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." That is, there would be great agitations in the world before he came. See the notes on Hebrews 12:26-28. So also great changes and commotions are referred to in Isaiah 24:19-20; "The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage." An earthquake, if there were no other circumstances limiting and explaining the symbol, would merely denote great agitation and commotion - as if states and empires were tumbling to ruin. As this is here a mere symbol, it is not necessary to look for a literal fulfillment, or to expect to find in history actual earthquakes to which this had reference, anymore than when it is said that "the heavens departed as a

scroll" we are to expect that they will be literally rolled up; but if, in the course of history, earthquakes preceded remarkable political convulsions and revolutions, it would be proper to represent such events in this way.

(b) The darkening of the sun: "And the sun became black as sackcloth of hair." Sackcloth was a coarse black cloth, commonly, though not always, made of hair. It was used for sacks, for strainers, and for mourning garments; and as thus worn it was not an improper emblem of sadness and distress. The idea here is, that the sun put on a dark, dingy, doleful appearance, as if it were in mourning. The general image, then, in this emblem, is that of calamity - as if the very sun should put on the robes of mourning. We are by no means to suppose that this was literally to occur, but that some great calamity would happen, of which this would be an appropriate emblem. See the Isaiah 13:10 note; Matthew 24:29 note; Compare Isaiah 24:23; Isaiah 34:4; 1,3; Isaiah 60:19-20; Ezekiel 32:7-8; Joel 2:10; Joel 3:15-16; Amos 8:9. What is the particular nature of the calamity is to be learned from other parts of the symbol.

(c) The discoloration of the moon: "And the moon became as blood." Red like blood - either from the smoke and vapor that usually precedes an earthquake, or as a mere emblem. This also would betoken calamity, and perhaps the symbol may be so far limited and modified by this as to denote war, for that would be most naturally suggested by the color - red. Compare the notes on Revelation 6:4 of this chapter. But any great calamity would be appropriately represented by this - as the change of the moon to such a color would be a natural emblem of distress.

(d) The falling of the stars, Revelation 6:13; "And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth." This language is derived from the poetic idea that the sky seems to be a solid concave, in which the stars are set, and that when any convulsion takes place, that concave will be shaken, and the stars will be loosened and fall from their places. See this language explained in the notes on Isaiah 34:4. Sometimes the expanse above us is spoken of as a curtain that is spread out, and that may be rolled up; sometimes as a solid crystalline expanse in which the stars are fixed. According to either representation the stars are described as falling to the earth. If the expanse is rolled up, the stars, having nothing to support them, fall if violent tempests

or concussions shake the heavens, the stars, loosened from their fixtures, fall to the earth. Stars, in the Scriptures, are symbols of princes and rulers (see Daniel 8:10; Revelation 8:10-11; Revelation 9:1); and the natural meaning of this symbol is, that there would be commotions which would unsettle princes, and bring them down from their thrones - like stars falling from the sky.

Even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs - Mart., "green"; Greek, ὀλύνθους olunthousThis word properly denotes "winter-figs," or such as grow under the leaves, and do not ripen at the proper season, but hang upon the trees during the winter (Robinson, Lexicon). This fruit seldom matures, and easily falls off in the spring of the year (Stuart, in loco). A violent wind shaking a plantation of fig-trees would of course cast many such figs to the ground. The point of the comparison is, the ease with which the stars would seem to be shaken from their places, and hence, the ease with which, in these commotions, princes would be dethroned.

(e) The departing of the heavens, Revelation 6:14; "And the heaven departed as a scroll." That is, as a book or volume - βιβλίον biblion- rolled up. The heavens are here described as spread out, and their passing away is represented by the idea that they might be rolled up, and thus disappear. See the notes on Isaiah 34:4. This, too, is a symbol, and we are not to suppose that it will literally occur. Indeed it never can literally occur; and we are not, therefore, to look for the fulfillment of this in any physical fact that would correspond with what is here said. The plain meaning is, that there would be changes as if such an event would happen; that is, that revolutions would occur in the high places of the earth, and among those in power, as if the stars should fall, and the very heavens were swept away. This is the natural meaning of the symbol, and this accords with the usage of the language elsewhere.

(f) The removal of mountains and islands, Revelation 6:14; "And every mountain and island were moved out of their places." This would denote convulsions in the political or moral world, as great as would occur in the physical world if the very mountains were removed and the islands should change their places. We are not to suppose that this would literally occur; but we should be authorized from this to expect that, in regard to those things which seemed to be permanent and fixed on an immov able basis, like mountains and islands, there would be violent and important changes.

If thrones and dynasties long established were overthrown; if institutions that seemed to be fixed and per manent were abolished; if a new order of things should rise in the political world, the meaning of the symbol, so far as the language is concerned, would be fulfilled.

(g) The universal consternation, Revelation 6:15-17; "And the kings of the earth, etc." The design of these verses Revelation 6:15-17, in the varied language used, is evidently to denote universal consternation and alarm - as if the earth should be convulsed, and the stars should fall, and the heavens should pass away. This consternation would extend to all classes of people, and fill the world with alarm, as if the end of all things were coming.

The kings of the earth - Rulers - all who occupied thrones.

The great men - High officers of state.

And the rich men - Their wealth would not secure them from destruction, and they would be alarmed like others.

And the chief captains - The commanders of armies, who tremble like other men when God appears judgment.

And the mighty men - Men of great prowess in battle, but who feel now that they have no power to withstand God.

And every bondman - Servant - δοῦλος doulosThis word does not necessarily denote a slave (compare the Ephesians 6:5 note; 1 Timothy 6:1 note; Philemon 1:16 note), but here the connection seems to demand it, for it stands in contrast with freeman. There were, in fact, slaves in the Roman empire, and there is no objection in supposing that they are here referred to. There is no reason why they should not be filled with consternation as well as others; and as this does not refer to the end of the world, or the day of judgment, the word here determines nothing as to the question whether slavery is to continue on the earth.

And every freeman - Whether the master of slaves or not. The idea is, that all classes of people, high and low, would be filled with alarm.

Hid themselves in the dens - Among the caves or caverns in the mountains. See the notes on Isaiah 2:19. These places were resorted to for safety in times of danger. Compare 1 Samuel 13:6; 24; Judges 6:2; Jeremiah 41:9; Josephus, *Antiq.* book 14, chapter 15; *Jewish Wars*, book 1, chapter 16.

And in the rocks of the mountains - Among the crags or the fastnesses of the mountains - also natural places of refuge in times of hostile invasion

or danger. See the notes on Isaiah 2:21.

And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, … - Revelation 6:16. This language is found substantially in Hosea 10:8; "And they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us." It is also used by the Saviour as denoting the consternation which would occur at his coming: "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us," Luke 23:30. It is language denoting consternation, and an awful fear of impending wrath. The state of mind is that where there is an apprehension that God himself is coming forth with the direct instruments of his vengeance, and where there is a desire rather to be crushed by falling rocks and hills than by the vengeance of his uplifted arm.

From the face of him that sitteth on the throne - The face of God - for he seems to be coming forth with the displays of his vengeance. It is not said that God would actually come forth in a visible form, lint their consternation would be as great as if he were to do this; the state of mind indicated by this was an apprehension that it would be so.

And from the wrath of the Lamb - The Lamb of God; the Lord Jesus. See the notes on Revelation 5:6. There seems to be an incongruity between the words "wrath," and "Lamb"; but the word "Lamb" here is so far a proper name as to be used only to designate the Redeemer. He comes forth to execute wrath, not as a Lamb, but as the Son of God, who bore that name. It would seem from this that they who thus dreaded the impending terrors were aware of their source, or had knowledge enough to understand by whom they were to be inflicted. They would see that these were divine judgments, and would apprehend that the end of the world drew near.

For the great day of his wrath is come - Revelation 6:17. The threatening judgments would be so severe and awful that they would suppose that the end of the world was coming.

And who shall be able to stand? - To stand before him, or to withstand his judgments.

It is unnecessary to say that there has been, in this case, as in reference to every other part of the Book of Revelation, a great diversity of opinion respecting the events symbolized by this seal. Grotius applied it to the wars between the Jews and Romans under Nero and Vespasian; Dr. Hammond supposed that the defeat of the Jewish leaders in those wars was particularly symbolized; Mr. Brightman referred these symbols to the persecution under Diocletian; Mr. Mede, Dr. Cressner, Dr. More, Mr. Whiston, Mr. Jurien, Mr.

Daubuz, Mr. Lowman, Dr. Newton, Mr. Elliott, and others, refer it to the defeat of the pagan powers, and the final suppression of those powers as opposed to Christianity; Vitringa regarded it as foreshadowing the overthrow of the anti-Christian powers of the western Roman empire; Cocceius explains it of the wars of the Emperor Frederick against the German princes in the sixteenth century; Dr. Woodhouse, of the day of vengeance at the end of the world; Mr. Cunninghame, of the same period as the seventh trumpet, commencing with the French revolution, and to be consummated by the visible advent of the Son of God; Prof. Stuart, of the destruction of Jerusalem; and Mr. Lord, of a series of events, part of which are fulfilled, three of them corresponding with the first three vials - the first expressive of the revolution of France, the second of despotism extending through several rears, and the third of the overthrow of that violent dynasty, at the fall of Bonaparte, in 1815.

It is not my purpose to examine these views; but, amidst this great variety of opinion, it seems to me that the obvious and natural application of the opening of the seal has not been adverted to. I shall suggest it because it is the most natural and obvious, and seems to be demanded by the explanations given of the previous seals. It is, in one word, the impending judgments from the invasions of the northern hordes of Goths and Vandals, threatening the breaking up of the Roman empire - the gathering of the storm, and the hovering of those barbarians on the borders of the empire; the approaches which they made from time to time toward the capital, though restrained as yet from taking it; the tempest of wrath that was, as it were, suspended yet on the frontiers, until the events recorded in the next chapter should occur, then bursting forth in wrath in successive blasts, as denoted by the first four trumpets of the seventh seal Revelation 8:1-13, when the empire was entirely overthrown by the Goths and Vandals. The precise point of time which I suppose this seal occupies is that succeeding the last persecution.

It embraces the preparatory arrangements of these hordes of invaders - their gathering on the frontiers of the empire - their threatened approaches toward the capital - and the formation of such vast armies as would produce universal consternation. A brief notice of these preparatory scenes, as adapted to produce the alarm referred to in the opening of the sixth seal, is

all that will be necessary here; the more complete detail must be reserved for the explanation of the four trumpets of the seventh seal, when the work of destruction was consummated. These preparations and threatened invasions were events sufficiently important in their relation to the church, to what preceded, and to the future history of the world, to be symbolized here; and they are events in which all the particulars of the symbol may find a fulfillment. Anyone has only to took on a chart of history to see how appropriately this application of the symbol follows, if the previous explanations have been correct. In the illustration of this, in order to show the probability that these events are referred to by the symbols of the sixth seal, I would submit the following remarks:

(1) The time is what would be naturally suggested by this seal in its relation to the others. If the fifth referred to the persecutions under Diocletian - the last great persecution of the pagan powers in attempting to extinguish the Christian name - then we should naturally look for the fulfillment of the opening of the next in some event, or series of events, which would succeed that at no very distant interval, and that pertained to the empire or power that had been the prominent subject of the predictions in the previous seals. It would also be natural to look for some events that might be regarded as conveying an expression of the divine feeling in regard to that power, or that would present it in such an aspect that it would be seen that its power to persecute was at an end. This natural expectation would be answered either by some symbol that would refer to the complete triumph of the Christian system, or by such a series of judgments as would break the persecuting power itself in pieces. Now the threatened irruption of the northern barbarians followed the series of events already described with sufficient nearness to make it proper to regard that series of events as referred to.

(2) the events were of sufficient importance in the history of the empire to deserve this notice in the foreshadowing of what would occur. They were connected with the breaking up of that mighty power, and the complete change of the aspect of the world, in a political and religious point of view. A new order of things arose in the world‘s history. A new religion became established. New kingdoms from the fragments of the once-mighty Roman empire were founded, and the affairs of the world were put on a new

footing. These mighty northern hordes not only spread consternation and alarm, as if the world were coming to an end, but they laid the foundations of kingdoms which continue to this day. In fact, few more important events have occurred in history.

(3) this series of events was introduced in the manner described in the opening of the sixth seal. I have already said that it is not necessary to suppose, in the fulfillment of the symbol, that there would be a literal earthquake; but nothing in the symbol forbids us to suppose that there might be, and if there were we could not but consider it as remarkable. Now it so happens that the series of events pertaining to the Gothic invasions is introduced by Mr. Gibbon in the following language: "365 a.d. In the second year of the reign of Valentinian and Valens, on the morning of the twenty-first day of July, the greatest part of the Roman world was shaken by a violent and destructive earthquake. The impression was communicated to the waters; the shores of the Mediterranean were left dry by the sudden retreat of the sea; great quantities of fish were caught with the hand; large vessels were stranded on the mud; and a curious spectator amused his eye, or rather his fancy, by contemplating the various appearances of valleys and mountains which had never before, since the formation of the globe, been exposed to the sun. But the tide soon returned, with the weight of an immense and irresistible deluge, which was severely felt on the coasts of Sicily, of Dalmatia, of Greece, and of Egypt; large boats were transported, and lodged on the roofs of houses, or at the distance of two miles from the shore; the people, with their habitations, were swept away by the waters; and the city of Alexandria annually commemorated the day on which fifty thousand persons had lost their lives in the inundation.

This calamity, the report of which was magnified from one province to another, astonished and terrified the subjects of Rome; and their affrighted imagination enlarged the real extent of the momentary evil. They recollected the preceding earthquakes which had subverted the cities of Palestine and Bithynia; they considered these alarming strokes as the prelude only of still more dreadful calamities, and their fearful vanity was disposed to confound the symptoms of a declining empire and a sinking world," vol. ii. pp. 115,116. Mr. Gibbon then proceeds to detail the evils of war, as greatly surpassing the calamities produced by any natural causes,

and adds (p. 116), “In the disastrous period of the fall of the Roman empire, which may be justly dated from the reign of Valens, the happiness and security of each individual was personally attacked; and the arts and labors of ages were rudely defaced by the barbarians of Scythia and Germany.” He then proceeds with an exceedingly interesting description of the origin, the habits, and the movements of the Tartar nations, particularly the Huns, as they moved to the West, and precipitated the Gothic nations on the provinces of the Roman empire, until Rome itself was thrice besieged, was taken, and was sacked (ii. 116-266).

The earthquake referred to occurred in 365 a.d. The movements of the Huns from their territories in the neighborhood of China had commenced about 100 a.d., and in 375 a.d. they overcame the Goths lying along the Danube. The Goths, pressed and overcome by these savage invaders, asked permission of the Romans to cross the Danube, to find protection in the Roman empire, and to cultivate the waste lands of Thrace (Gibbon, ii. 129,130). In the year 376 they were transported over the Danube, by the permission of the Roman emperor Valens; an event which, according to Mr. Gibbon, in its ultimate result, was the cause of the downfall of the empire; for they learned their own strength; they were attracted by the riches of the capital and the hope of reward, until they finally drew the Western emperor to Ravenna, sacked Rome, and took possession of Italy.

(4) aslight reference to the series of events in these periods of consternation and conquest may show more closely the nature of the alarms which would be caused by the prospect of these dreadful invasions, and may prepare us for a better understanding of the successive calamities which occurred under these invaders, when the empire fell, as described by the four first trumpets of the seventh seal. I shall copy from the tables of contents of Mr. Gibbon‘s history, under the twenty-sixth, thirtieth, and thirty-first chapters:

d “ad

d

d 365Earthquakes.

d

d 376The Huns and Goths.

d

d 100The emigration of the Huns.

d

d 375Their victories over the Goths.

d

d 376The Goths implore the protection of Valens.

d

d 376They are transported over the Danube into the Roman Empire.

d

d 376They penetrate into Thrace.

d

d 377Union of the Goths with Huns, Alani, etc.

d

d 378Battle of Hadrianople.

d

d 378The defeat of the Romans.

d

d 383-395The settlement of the Goths in Thrace and Asia.

d

d 395Revolt of the Goths.

d

d 396Alaric marches into Greece.

d

d 398Is proclaimed king of the Visigoths.

d

d 400-403He invades Italy.

d

d 406Radagaisus invades Italy.

d

d 406Besieges Florence.

d

d 406Threatens Rome.

d

d 406The remainder of the Germans invade Gaul.

d

d 407Desolation of Gaul.

d

d 408Alaric marches to Rome.

d

d 408First siege of Rome by the Goths.

d

d 408Famine, plague, superstition.

d

d 409Alaric accepts a ransom and raises the siege.

d

d 409Fruitless negotiations for peace.

d

d 409Second siege of Rome by the Goths.

d

d 410Third siege and sack of Rome by the Goths.

d

d 410Respect of the Goths for the Christian religion.

d

d 410Pillage and fire of Rome.

d

d 410Captives and fugitives.

d

d 411-416Fall of the usurpers Jovinus, Sebastian, and Attalus.

d

d 409Invasion of Spain by the Suevi, Vandals, Alani, etc.

d

d 415-418The Goths conquer and restore Spain."

d

d (5) This would coincide, in the effects produced on the empire, with the consternation and alarm described in the passage before us. The symbols are such as would be employed on the supposition that these are the events referred to; they are such as the events are suited to suggest. The mighty preparations in the East and North - the report of which could not but spread through the empire - would be appropriately symbolized by the earthquake, the darkened sun, the moon becoming like blood, the stars falling, the departing heavens, and the kings and great men of the earth fleeing in alarm to find a place of safety, as if the end of the world were drawing near. Nothing could have been so well adapted to produce the consternation described in the opening of the sixth seal, as the dreaded approach of vast hosts of barbarians from the regions of the North. This alarm would be increased by the fact that their numbers were unknown; that their origin was hidden; and that the advancing multitudes would sweep everything before them.

As in other cases, also, rumour would increase their numbers and augment their ferocity. The sudden shock of an earthquake, the falling stars, the departing heavens, the removal of mountains and islands, and the consternation of kings and all classes of people, would be the appropriate emblems to represent these impending calamities. In confirmation of this, and as showing the effect produced by the approach of the Goths, and the dread of the Gothic arms, in causing universal consternation, the following extracts may be adduced from Mr. Gibbon, when describing the threatened invasion of Alaric, king of the Visigoths. He quotes from Claudian. "‹Fame,‘ says the poet,‘ encircling with terror her gloomy wings, proclaimed the march of the barbarian army, and filled Italy with consternation.‘" Mr. Gibbon adds, "the apprehensions of each individual were increased in just proportion to the measure of his fortune; and the most timid, who had already embarked their valuable effects, meditated their escape to the island of Sicily, or to the African coast. The public distress was aggravated by the fears and reproaches of superstition. Every hour produced some horrid tale of strange and portentous accidents; the pagans deplored the neglect of omens and the interruption of sacrifices; but the Christians still derived some comfort from the powerful intercession of the saints and martyrs," ii. 218,219. See further illustrations in the notes on Revelation 8:7-13.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 7

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

The state of things represented in this chapter Revelation 7:1. This impending ruin is symbolized by the four winds of heaven that seemed about to sweep over the world; the interposition of God is represented by the four angels who have power over those winds to hold them back, as if it depended on their will to let them loose and to spread ruin over the earth or not.

(2) asuspension of these desolating influences and agents until another important purpose could be accomplished - that is, until the servants of God could be sealed in their foreheads, Revelation 7:2-3. Another angel, acting independently of the four first seen, and having power to command, appears in the east, having the seal of the living God; and he directs the four angels having the four winds not to let them loose upon the earth until the servants of God should be sealed in their foreheads. This obviously denotes some suspension of the impending wrath, and for a specific purpose, that something might be done by which the true servants of God would be so marked as to be publicly known - as if they had a mark or brand to that effect imprinted on their foreheads. Whatever would serve to designate them, to determine who they were, to ascertain their number, would be a fulfillment of this act of the sealing angel. The length of time during which it would be done is not designated; the essential thing is, that there would be a suspension of impending judgments, in order that it might be done. Whether this was to occupy a longer or a shorter period is not determined by the symbol; nor is it determined when the winds thus held back would be suffered to blow.

(3) the number of the sealed, Revelation 7:4-8. The seer does not represent himself as actually beholding the process of sealing, but he says that he heard the number of those who were sealed. That number was an hundred and forty-four thousand, and they were selected from the twelve tribes of the children of Israel - Levi being reckoned, who was not usually numbered with the tribes, and the tribe of Dan being omitted. The number from each tribe, large or small, was the same; the entire portion selected being but a very small part of the whole. The general idea here, whatever

may be the particular application, is, that there would be a selection, and that the whole number of the tribe would not be embraced; that the selection would be made from earth tribe, and that all would have the same mark, and be saved by the same means. It would not be in accordance with the nature of symbolic representation to suppose that the saved would be the precise number here referred to; but some great truth is designed to be represented by this fact. We should look, in the fulfillment, to some process by which the true servants of God would be designated; we should expect that a portion of them would be found in each one of the classes here denoted by a tribe; we should suppose that the true servants of God thus referred to would be as safe in the times of peril as if they were designated by a visible mark.

(4) after this, another vision presents itself to the seer. It is that of a countless multitude before the throne, redeemed out of all nations, with palms in their hands, Revelation 7:9-17. The scene is transferred to heaven, and there is a vision of all the redeemed - not only of the hundred and forty-four thousand, but of all who would be rescued and saved from a lost world. The design is doubtless to cheer the hearts of the true friends of God in times of gloom and despondency, by a view of the great numbers that will be saved, and the glorious triumph that awaits the redeemed in heaven. This portion of the vision embraces the following particulars:

(a)A vast multitude, which no man can number, is seen before the throne in heaven. They are clad in white robes - emblems of purity; they have palms in their hands - emblems of victory, Revelation 7:9.

(b)They are engaged in ascribing praise to God, Revelation 7:10.

(c)The angels, the elders, and the four living creatures, fall down before the throne, and unite with the redeemed in ascriptions of praise, Revelation 7:11-12.

(d)A particular inquiry is made of the seer - evidently to call his attention to it - respecting those who appear there in white robes, Revelation 7:13.

(e)To this inquiry it is answered, that they were those who had come up out of great tribulation, and who had washed their robes, and had made

them pure in the blood of the Lamb, Revelation 7:14.

(f)Then follows a description of their condition and employment in heaven, Revelation 7:15-17. They are constantly before the throne; they serve God continually; they neither hunger nor thirst; they are not subjected to the burning heat of the sun; they are provided for by the Lamb in the midst of the throne; and all tears are forever wiped away from their eyes.

This must be regarded, I think, as an episode, having no immediate connection with what precedes or with what follows. It seems to be thrown in here - while the impending judgments of the sixth seal are suspended, and before the seventh is opened - to furnish a relief in the contemplation of so many scenes of woe, and to cheer the soul with inspiring hopes from the view of the great number that would ultimately be saved. While these judgments, therefore, are suspended, the mind is directed on to the world of triumph, as a view suited to sustain and comfort those who would be partakers in the scenes of woe. At the same time it is one of the most touching and beautiful of all the representations of heaven ever penned, and is eminently adapted to comfort those, in all ages, who are in a vale of tears.

In the exposition it will be proper Revelation 7:1-8 to inquire into the fair meaning of the language employed in the symbols; and then to inquire whether there are any known facts to which the description is applicable. The first inquiry may and should be pursued independently of the other; and it may be added, that the explanation offered on this may be correct, even if the other should be erroneous. The same remark, also, is applicable to the remainder of the chapter Revelation 7:9-17, and indeed is of general applicability in the exposition of this book.

Verse 1

And after these things - After the vision of the things referred to in the opening of the sixth seal. The natural interpretation would be, that what is here said of the angels and the winds occurred after those things which are described in the previous chapter. The exact chronology may not be always observed in these symbolical representations, but doubtless there is a general order which is observed.

I saw four angels - He does not describe their forms, but merely mentions their agency. This is, of course, a symbolical representation. We are not to suppose that it would be literally fulfilled, or that, at the time

referred to by the vision, four celestial beings would be stationed in the four quarters of the world for the purpose of checking and restraining the winds that blow from the four points of the compass. The meaning is, that events would occur which would be properly represented by four angels standing in the four quarters of the world, and having power over the winds.

Standing on the four corners of the earth - This language is, of course, accommodated to the prevailing mode of speaking of the earth among the Hebrews. It was a common method among them to describe it as a vast plain, having four corners, those corners being the prominent points - north, south, east, and west. So we speak now of the four winds, the four quarters of the world, etc. The Hebrews spoke of the earth, as we do of the rising and setting of the sun and of the motions of the heavenly bodies, according to appearances, and without aiming at philosophical exactness. Compare the notes on Job 26:7. With this view they spoke of the earth as an extended plain, and as having boundaries or corners, as a plain or field naturally has. Perhaps, also, they used this language with some allusion to an edifice, as having four corners; for they speak also of the earth as having foundations. The language which the Hebrews used was in accordance with the prevailing ideas and language of the ancients on the subject.

Holding the four winds of the earth - The winds blow in fact from every quarter, but it is convenient to speak of them as coming from the four principal points of the compass, and this method is adopted probably in every language. So among the Greeks and Latins, the winds were arranged under four classes - Zephyrus, Boreas, Notus, and Eurus - considered as under the control of a king, Aeolus. See Eschenburg, Man. Class. Literally, section 78, compare section 108. The angels here are represented as "holding" the winds - κρατοῦντας kratountasThat is, they held them back when about to sweep over the earth, and to produce far-spread desolation. This is an allusion to a popular belief among the Hebrews, that the agency of the angels was employed everywhere. It is not suggested that the angels had raised the tempest here, but only that they now restrained and controlled it. The essential idea is, that they had plower over those winds, and that they were now exercising that power by keeping them back when they were about to spread desolation over the earth.

That the wind should not blow on the earth - That there should be a calm, as if the winds were held back.

Nor on the sea - Nowhere - neither on sea nor land. The sea and the land constitute the surface of the globe, and the language here, therefore, denotes that there would be a universal calm.

Nor on any tree - To injure it. The language used here is such as would denote a state of profound quiet; as when we say that it is so still that not a leaf of the trees moves.

In regard to the literal meaning of the symbol here employed there can be no great difficulty; as to its application there may be more. The winds are the proper symbols of wars and commotions. Compare Daniel 7:2. In Jeremiah 49:36-37 the symbol is both used and explained: "And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come. For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies, and before them that seek their life." So in Jeremiah 51:1-2, a destroying wind is an emblem of destructive war: "I will raise up against Babylon a destroying wind, and will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land." Compare Horace, *Odes*, b. i. 14. The essential ideas, therefore, in this portion of the symbol, cannot be mistaken. They are two:

(1)that at the period of time here referred to - after the opening of the sixth seal and before the opening of the seventh - there would be a state of things which would be well represented by rising tempests and storms, which if unrestrained would spread desolation afar; and,

(2)that this impending ruin was held back as if by angels having control of those winds; that is, those tempests were not suffered to go forth to spread desolation over the world. A suspended tempest calamity held in check; armies hovering on the borders of a kingdom, but not allowed to proceed for a time; hordes of invaders detained, or stayed in their march, as if by some restraining power not their own, and from causes not within themselves - any of these things would be an obvious fulfilling of the meaning of the symbol.

Verse 2

And I saw another angel - Evidently having no connection with the four, and employed for another purpose. This angel, also, must have been symbolic; and all that is implied is, that something would be done as if an angel had done it.

Ascending from the east - He appeared in the east, and seemed to rise like the sun. It is not easy to determine what is the special significancy, if any, of the east here, or why this quarter of the heavens is designated rather than the north, the south, or the west. It may be that as light begins in the east, this would be properly symbolic of something that could be compared with the light of the morning; or that some influence in "sealing" the servants of God would in fact go out from the east; or perhaps no special significance is to be attached to the quarter from which the angel is seen to come. It is not necessary to suppose that every minute thing in a symbol is to receive a complete fulfillment, or that there will be some particular thing to correspond with it. Perhaps all that is meant here is, that as the sun comes forth with splendor from the east, so the angel came with magnificence to perform a task - that of sealing the servants of God - cheerful and joyous like what the sun performs. It is certain that from no other quarter of the heavens would it be so appropriate to represent an angel as coming forth to perform a purpose of light, and mercy, and salvation. It does not seem to me, therefore, that we are to look, in the fulfillment of this, for any special influence setting in from the east as what is symbolized here.

Having the seal of the living God - Bearing it in his hands. In regard to this seal the following remarks may be made:

(a) The phrase "seal of the living God" doubtless means what God had appointed, or which he would use; that is, if God himself came forth in this manner, he would use this seal for these purposes. People often have a seal of their own, with some name, symbol, or device, which designates it as theirs, and which no other one has a right to use. A seal is sometimes used by the person himself; sometimes entrusted to a high officer of state; sometimes to the secretary of a corporation; and sometimes, as a mark of special favor, to a friend. In this case it was entrusted to an angel, who was authorized to use it, and whose use of it would be sanctioned, of course, wherever he applied it, by the living God, as if he had employed it himself.

(b) As to the form of the seal, we have no information. It would be most natural to suppose that the name "of the living God" would be engraven on it, so that that name would appear on anyone to whom it might be affixed. Compare the notes on 2 Timothy 2:19. It was customary in the East to brand the name of the master on the forehead of a slave (Grotius, in loco); and such an idea would meet all that is implied in the language here, though

there is no certain evidence that there is an allusion to that custom. In subsequent times, in the church, it was common for Christians to impress the sign of the cross on their foreheads (Tertullian de Corolla; Cyrill. lib. vi. See Grotius). As nothing is said here, however, about any mark or device on the seal, conjecture is useless as to what it was.

(c) As to what was to be designated by the seal, the main idea is clear, that it was to place some such mark upon his friends that they would be known to be his, and that they would be safe in the impending calamities, There is perhaps allusion here to Ezekiel 9:4-6, where the following direction to the prophet occurs: "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the people that sigh, and that cry, for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark." The essential ideas in the sealing, in the passage before us, would therefore seem to be:

(1)that there would be some mark, sign, or token, by which they who were the people of God would be known; that is, there would be something which would answer, in this respect, the same purpose as if a seal had been impressed upon their foreheads. Whether this was an outward badge, or a religious rite, or the doctrines which they would hold and by which they would be known, or something in their spirit and manner which would characterize his true disciples, may be a fair subject of inquiry. It is not specifically designated by the use of the word.

(2)it would be something that would be conspicuous or prominent, as if it were impressed on the forehead. It would not be merely some internal sealing, or some designation by which they would be known to themselves and to God, but it would be something apparent, as if engraved on the forehead. What this would be, whether a profession, or a form of religion, or the holding of some doctrine, or the manifestation of a particular spirit, is not here designated.

(3)this would be something appointed by God himself. It would not be of human origin, but would be as if an angel sent from heaven should impress it on the forehead. If it refers to the doctrines which they would

hold, they could not be doctrines of human origin; if to the spirit which they would manifest, it would be a spirit of heavenly origin; if to some outward protection, it would be manifest that it was from God.

(4)this would be a pledge of safety. The design of sealing the persons referred to seems to have been to secure their safety in the impending calamities. Thus, the winds were held back until those who were to be sealed could be designated, and then they were to be allowed to sweep over the earth. These things, therefore, we are to look for in the fulfillment of the symbol.

And he cried with a loud voice - As if he had authority to command, and as if the four winds were about to be let forth upon the world.

To whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea - Who had power committed to them to do this by means of the four winds.

Verse 3

Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea … - Let the winds be restrained until what is here designated shall be done. These destroying angels were commanded to suspend the work of destruction until the servants of God could be rendered secure. The division here, as in Revelation 7:1, of the "earth, the sea, and the trees," seems to include everything - water, land, and the productions of the earth. Nothing was to be injured until the angel should designate the true servants of God.

Till we have sealed the servants of our God - The use of the plural "we" seems to denote that he did not expect to do it alone. Who were to be associated with him, whether angels or human beings, he does not intimate; but the work was evidently such that it demanded the agency of more than one.

In their foreheads - See the notes on Revelation 7:2; compare Ezekiel 9:4-5. A mark thus placed on the forehead would be conspicuous, and would be something which could at once be recognized if destruction should spread over the world. The fulfillment of this is to be found in two things:

(a)in something which would be conspicuous or prominent - so that it could be seen; and,

(b)in the mark being of such a nature or character that it would be a proper designation of the fact that they were the true servants of God.

Verse 4

And I heard the number of them which were sealed - He does not say where he heard that, or by whom it was communicated to him, or when it was done. The material point is, that he heard it; he did not see it done. Either by the angel, or by some direct communication from God, he was told of the number that would be sealed, and of the distribution of the whole number into twelve equal parts, represented by the tribes of the children of Israel.

And there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel - In regard to this number, the first and the main question is, whether it is meant that this was to be the literal number, or whether it was symbolical; and, if the latter, of what it is a symbol:

I. As to the first of these inquiries, there does not appear to be any good reason for doubt. The fair interpretation seems to require that it should be understood as symbolical, or as designed not to be literally taken; for:

(a)the whole scene is symbolical - the winds, the angels, the sealing.

(b)It cannot be supposed that this number will include all who will be sealed and saved. In whatever way this is interpreted, and whatever we may suppose it to refer to, we cannot but suppose that more than this number will be saved.

(c)The number is too exact and artificial to suppose that it is literal. It is inconceivable that exactly the same number - precisely twelve thousand - should be selected from each tribe of the children of Israel.

(d)If literal, it is necessary to suppose that this refers to the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. But on every supposition this is absurd. Ten of their tribes had been long before carried away, and the distinction of the tribes was lost, no more to be recovered, and the Hebrew people never have been, since the time of John, in circumstances to which the description here could be applicable. These considerations make it clear that the description here is symbolical. But,

II. Of what is it symbolical? Is it of a large number, or of a small number? Is it of those who would be saved from among the Jews, or of all who would be saved in the Christian church - represented as the “tribes of the children of Israel?” To these inquiries we may answer:

(1) that the representation seems to be rather that of a comparatively small number than a large one, for these reasons:

(a) The number of itself is not large.

(b) The number is not large as compared with those who must have constituted the tribes here referred to - the number twelve thousand, for example, as compared with the whole number of the tribe of Judah, of the tribe of Reuben, etc.

(c) It would seem from the language that there would be some selection from a much greater number. Thus, not all in the tribes were scaled, but those who were sealed were "of all the tribes" - ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς ek pasēs phulēsthat is, out of these tribes. So in the specification in each tribe - ἐκ φυλῆς Ἰούδα, Ρουβὴν ek phulēs IoudaRoubēnetc. Some out of the tribe, to wit, twelve thousand, were sealed, It is not said of the twelve thousand of the tribes of Judah, Reuben, etc., that they constituted the tribe, but that they were sealed out of the tribe, as a part of it preserved and saved. "When the preposition ἐκ ekor "out of," stands after any such verb as sealed, between a definite numeral and a noun of multitude in the genitive, sound criticism requires, doubtless, that the numeral should be thus construed as signifying, not the whole, but a part taken out" (Elliott, i. 237). Compare Exodus 32:28; Numbers 1:21; 1 Samuel 4:10. The phrase, then, would properly denote those taken out of some other and greater number - as a portion of a tribe, and not the whole tribe. If the reference here is to the church, it would seem to denote that a portion only of that church would be sealed.

(d) For the same reason the idea would seem to be, that comparatively a small portion is referred to - as twelve thousand would be comparatively a small part of one of the tribes of Israel; and if this refers to the church, we should expect to find its fulfillment in a state of things in which the largest proportion would not be scaled; that is, in a corrupt state of the church in which there would be many professors of religion, but comparatively few who had real piety.

(2) to the other inquiry - whether this refers to those who would be sealed and saved among the Jews, or to those in the Christian church - we may answer:

(a) that there are strong reasons for supposing the latter to be the correct opinion. Long before the time of John all these distinctions of tribe were

abolished. The ten tribes had been carried away and scattered in distant lands, never more to be restored; and it cannot be supposed that there was any such literal selection from the twelve tribes as is here spoken of, or any such designation of twelve thousand from each. There was no occasion - either when Jerusalem was destroyed, or at any ether time - on which there were such transactions as are here referred to occurring in reference to the children of Israel.

(b) The language is such as a Christian, who had been by birth and education a Hebrew, would naturally use if he wished to designate the church. Compare the notes on James 1:1. Accustomed to speak of the people of God as "the twelve tribes of Israel," nothing was more natural than to transfer this language to the church of the Redeemer, and to speak of it in that figurative manner. Accordingly, from the necessity of the case, the language is universally understood to have reference to the Christian church. Even Prof. Stuart, who supposes that the reference is to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, interprets it of the preservation of Christians, and their flight to Pella, beyond Jordan. Thus interpreted, moreover, it accords with the entire symbolical character of the representation.

(c) The reference to the particular tribes may be a designed allusion to the Christian church as it would be divided into denominations, or known by different names; and the fact that a certain portion would be sealed from every tribe would not be an unfit representation of the fact that a portion of all the various churches or denominations would be sealed and saved. That is, salvation would be confined to no one church or denomination, but among them all there would be found true servants of God. It would be improper to suppose that the division into tribes among the children of Israel was designed to be a type of the sects and denominations in the Christian church, and yet the fact of such a division may not improperly be employed as an illustration of that; for the whole church is made up not of any one denomination alone, but of all who hold the truth combined, as the people of God in ancient times consisted not solely of any one tribe, however large and powerful, but of all combined. Thus understood, the symbol would point to a time when there would be various denominations in the church, and yet with the idea that true friends of God would be found among them all.

(d) Perhaps nothing can be argued from the fact that exactly twelve thousand were selected from each of the tribes. In language so figurative and symbolical as this, it could not be maintained that this proves that the santo definite number would be taken from each denomination of Christians. Perhaps all that can be fairly inferred is, that there would be no partiality or preference for one more than another; that there would be no favoritism on account of the tribe or denomination to which anyone belonged; but that the seal would be impressed on all, of any denomination, who had the true spirit of religion. No one would receive the token of the divine favor because he was of the tribe of Judah or Reuben; no one because he belonged to any particular denomination of Christians. Large numbers from every branch of the church would be sealed; none would be sealed because he belonged to one form of external organization rather than to another; none would be excluded because he belonged to any one tribe, if he had the spirit and held the sentiments which made it proper to recognize him as a servant of God. These views seem to me to express the true sense of this passage. No one can seriously maintain that the writer meant to refer literally to the Jewish people; and if he referred to the Christian church, it seems to be to some selection that would be made out of the whole church, in which there would be no favoritism or partiality, and to the fact that, in regard to them, there would be some something which, in the midst of abounding corruption or impending danger, would designate them as the chosen people of God, and would furnish evidence that they would be safe.

Verses 5-8

Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand - That is, a selection was made, or a number sealed, as if it had been made from one of the tribes of the children of Israel - the tribe of Judah. If the remarks above made are correct, this refers to the Christian church, and means, in connection with what follows, that each portion of the church would furnish a definite part of the whole number sealed and saved. We are not required to understand this of the exact number of twelve thousand, but that the designation would be made from all parts and branches of the church as if a selection of the true servants of God were made from the whole number of the tribes of Israel. There seems to be no particular reason why the tribe of Judah was

mentioned first. Judah was not the oldest of the sons of Jacob, and there was no settled order in which the tribes were usually mentioned.

The order of their birth, as mentioned in Ezekiel 48:31-34, where Levi is reckoned as one, and Joseph as only one; and in Genesis 48:1, and that these two sons gave name to two of the tribes, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. There was, properly speaking, no tribe of the name of Joseph. In Numbers 13:8, Numbers 13:11. In Numbers 13:11 the writer states expressly that by the tribe Joseph he meant Manasseh - "Of the tribe of Joseph, namely, of the tribe of Manasseh," etc. From this it would seem that, as Manasseh was the oldest Genesis 48:14, the name Joseph was sometimes given to that tribe. As Ephraim, however, became the largest tribe, and as Jacob in blessing the two sons of Joseph Genesis 48:14 laid his right hand on Ephraim, and pronounced a special blessing on him Genesis 48:19-20, it would seem not improbable that, when not particularly designated, the name Joseph was given to that tribe, as it is evidently in this place. Possibly the name Joseph may have been a general name which was occasionally applied to either of these tribes. In the long account of the original division of Canaan in Revelation 7:8 is doubtless designed, as remarked above, to refer to Ephraim.

(2) in this list Revelation 7:7 the name of Levi is inserted among the tribes. As already remarked, this name is not commonly inserted among the tribes of the children of Israel, because that tribe, being devoted to the sacerdotal office, had no inheritance in the division of the country, but was scattered among the other tribes. See Joshua 14:3-4; Joshua 18:7. It may have been inserted here, if this refers to the Christian church, to denote that the ministers of the gospel, as well as other members of the church, would share in the protection implied by the sealing; that is, to denote that no class in the church would be excluded from the blessings of salvation.

(3) the name of one of the tribes - Dan - is omitted; so that by this omission, and the insertion of the tribe of Levi, the original number of twelve is preserved. There have been numerous conjectures as to the reason why the tribe of Dan is omitted here, but none of the solutions proposed are without difficulty. All that can be known, or regarded as probable, on the subject, seems to be this:

(a) As the tribe of Levi was usually omitted in an enumeration of the tribes, because that tribe had no part in the inheritance of the Hebrew people in the division of the land of Canaan, so there appear to have been instances in which the names of some of the other tribes were omitted, the reason for which is not given. Thus, in Judges 18:30; and that fact seems to be a sufficient reason for the omission of the name. As being thus idolatrous, it was in a measure separated from the people of God, and deserved not to be reckoned among them; and in enumerating those who were the servants of God, there seemed to be a propriety that a tribe devoted to idolatry should not be reckoned among the number This will account for the omission, without resorting to the supposition of Grotius, that the tribe of Dan was extinct at the time when the Apocalypse was written - a fact which also existed in regard to all the ten tribes; or to the supposition of Andreas and others, that Dan is omitted because Antichrist was to spring from that tribe - a supposition which is alike without proof and without probability. The fact that Dan was omitted cannot be supposed to have any special significancy in the case before us. Such an omission is what, as we have seen, might have occurred at any time in the enumeration of the tribes.

In reference to the application of this portion of the book Revelation 7:1-8, or of what is designed to be here represented, there has been, as might be expected, a great variety of opinions. From the exposition of the words and phrases which has been given, it is manifest that we are to look for a series of events like the following:

(1)Some impending danger, or something that threatened to sweep everything away - like winds that were ready to blow on the earth.

(2)that tempest restrained or held back, as if the winds were held in check by an angel, and were not suffered to sweep over the world.

(3)some new influence or power, represented by an angel coming from the east - the great source of light - that should designate the true church of God - the servants of the Most High.

(4)some mark or note by which the true people of God could be designated, or by which they could be known - as if some name were impressed on their foreheads.

(5)aselection or election of the number from a much greater number who were the professed, but were not the true servants of God.

(6)adefinite, though comparatively a small number thus designated out of the whole mass.

(7)this number taken from all the divisions of the professed people of God, in such numbers and in such a manner, that it would be apparent that there would be no partiality or favoritism; that is, that wherever the true servants of God were found, they would be sealed and saved.

These are things which lie on the face of the passage, if the interpretation above given is correct, and in its application it is necessary to find some facts that will properly correspond with these things.

If the interpretation of the sixth seal proposed above is correct, then we are to look for the fulfillment of this in events that soon succeeded those which are there referred to, or at least which had their commencement at about that time; and the inquiry now is, whether there were any events that would accord properly with the interpretation here proposed: that is, any impending and spreading danger; any restraining of that danger; any process of designating the servants of God so as to preserve them; anything like a designation or selection of them from among the masses of the professed people of God? Now, in respect to this, the following facts accord so well with what is demanded in the interpretation that it may be regarded as morally certain that they were the things which were thus made to pass in vision before the mind of John. They have at least this degree of probability, that if it were admitted that he intended to describe them, the symbols which are actually employed are those which it would have been proper to select to represent them:

I. The impending danger, like winds restrained, that threatened to sweep everything away, and to hasten on the end of the world. In reference to this, there may have been two classes of impending danger - that from the invasion of the northern hordes, referred to in the sixth seal Revelation 6:12-17. The nations which ultimately spread desolation through the empire hovered around its borders, making occasional incursions into its territory; even carrying their arms, as we have seen in some instances, as far as Rome itself, but still restrained from accomplishing the final purpose of

overthrowing the city and the empire, The church and the state alike were threatened with destruction, and the impending wrath seemed only to be held back as if to give time to accomplish some other purpose.

(b) At the same time there was another class of evils which threatened to sweep like a tempest over the church - the evils of error in doctrine that sprang up on the establishment of Christianity by Constantine. That fact was followed with a great increase of professors of religion, who, for various purposes, crowded into a church patronized by the state - a condition of things which tended to do more to destroy the church than all that had been done by persecution had accomplished. This effect was natural; and the church became filled with those who had yielded themselves to the Christian faith from motives of policy, and who, having no true spiritual piety, were ready to embrace the most lax views of religion, and to yield themselves to any form of error. Of this period, and of the effect of the conversion of Constantine in this respect, Mr. Gibbon makes the following remarks, strikingly illustrative of the view now taken of the meaning of this passage: "The hopes of wealth and honors, the example of an emperor, his exhortations, his irresistible smiles, diffused conviction among the venal and obsequious crowds which usually fill the apartments of a palace. The cities which signalized a forward zeal, by the voluntary destruction of their temples, were distinguished by municipal privileges, and rewarded with popular donatives; and the new capital of the East gloried in the singular advantage, that Constantinople was never profaned by the worship of idols. As the lower ranks of society are governed by imitation, the conversion of those who possessed any eminence of birth, of power, or of riches, was soon followed by dependent multitudes. The salvation of the common people was purchased at an easy rate, if it is true that, in one year, twelve thousand people were baptized at Rome, besides a proportionable number of women and children, and that a white garment, with twenty pieces of gold, had been promised by the emperor to every convert" i. 425).

At a time, therefore, when it might have been supposed that, under the patronage of a Christian emperor, the truth would have spread around the world, the church was exposed to one of its greatest dangers - that arising from the fact that it had become united with the state. About the same time,

also, there sprang up many of those forms of error which have spread farthest over the Christian world, and which then threatened to become the universal form of belief in the church. Of this class of doctrine were the views of Arius, and the views of Pelagius - forms of opinion which, there were strong reasons to fear, might become the prevailing belief of the church, and essentially change its character. About this time, also, the church was passing into the state in which the papacy would arise - that dark and gloomy period in which error would spread over the Christian world, and the true servants of God would retire for a long period into obscurity.

"We are now but a little way off from the commencement of that noted period - obscurely hinted at by Daniel, plainly announced by John the twelve hundred and sixty prophetic days or years, for which preparations of a very unusual kind, but requisite, doubtless, are made. This period was to form the gloomiest, without exception, in the annals of the world the period of Satan's highest success, and of the church's greatest depression; and lest she should become during it utterly extinct, her members, never so few as then, were all specially sealed. The long night passes on, darkening as it advances; but the sealed company are not visible; they disappear from the Apocalyptic stage, just as they then disappeared from the observation of the world; for they fled away to escape the fire and the dungeons of their persecutors, to hide in the hoary caves of the earth, or to inhabit the untrodden regions of the wilderness, or to dwell beneath the shadow of the Alps, or to enjoy fellowship with God, emancipated and unknown, in the deep seclusion and gloom of some convent" (The Seventh Vial, London, 1848, pp. 27,28). These facts seem to me to show, with a considerable degree of probability, what was designated by the suspense which occurred after the opening of the sixth seal - when the affairs of the world seemed to be hastening on to the Treat catastrophe. At that period the prophetic eye sees the tendency of things suddenly arrested; the winds held back, the church preserved, and a series of events introduced, intended to designate and to save from the Treat mass of those who professedly constituted the "tribes of Israel," a definite number who should be in fact the true church of God.

II. The facts, then, to which there is reference in checking the tendency of things, and sealing the servants of God, may have been the following:

(a) The preservation of the church from extinction during those calamitous periods when ruin seemed about to sweep over the Roman world. Not only as a matter of fact was there a suspension of those impending judgments that seemed to threaten the very extinction of the empire by the invasion of the northern hordes (see the notes on Revelation 6), but there were special acts in favor of the church, by which these fierce barbarians appeared not only to be restrained from destroying the church, but to be influenced by tenderness and sympathy for it, as if they were raised up to preserve it when Rome had done all it could to destroy it. It would seem as if God restrained the rage of these hordes for the sake of preserving his church; as if he had touched their hearts that they might give to Christians an opportunity to escape in the impending storm. We may refer here particularly to the conduct of Alaric, king of the Goths, in the attack on Rome already referred to; and, as usual, we may quote from Mr. Gibbon, who will not be suspected of a design to contribute anything to the illustration of the Apocalypse. "At the hour of midnight," says he (vol. ii. pp. 260,261), "the Salarian Gate was silently opened, and the inhabitants were awakened by the tremendous sound of the Gothic trumpet. Eleven hundred and sixty-three years after the foundation of Rome, the imperial city, which had subdued and civilized so considerable a part of mankind, was delivered to the licentious fury of the tribes of Germany and Scythia. The proclamation of Alaric, when he forced his entrance into the vanquished city, discovered, however, some regard for the laws of humanity and religion. He encouraged his troops boldly to seize the rewards of valor, and to enrich themselves with the spoils of a wealthy and effeminate people; but he exhorted them at the same time to spare the lives of the unresisting citizens, and to respect the churches of the apostles Peter and Paul as holy and inviolable sanctuaries.

While the barbarians roamed through the city in quest of prey, the humble dwelling of an aged virgin, who had devoted her life to the service of the altar, was forced open by one of the powerful Goths. He immediately demanded, though in civil language, all the gold and silver in her possession; and was astonished at the readiness with which she conducted

him to a splendid hoard of massy plate, of the richest materials and the most curious workmanship. The barbarian viewed with wonder and delight this valuable acquisition, until he was interrupted by a serious admonition, addressed to him in the following words: ‹These,‘ said she, ‹are the consecrated vessels belonging to Peter; if you presume to touch them, the sacrilegious deed will remain on your conscience: for my part, I dare not keep what I am unable to defend.‘ The Gothic captain, struck with reverential awe, despatched a messenger to inform the king of the treasure which he had discovered; and received a peremptory order from Alaric, that all the consecrated plate and ornaments should be transported, without damage or delay, to the church of the apostle.

From the extremity, perhaps, of the Quirinal hill, to the distant quarter of the Vatican, a numerous detachment of the Goths, marching in order of battle through the principal streets, protected, with glittering arms, the long train of their devout companions, who bore aloft on their heads the sacred vessels of gold and silver; and the martial shouts of the barbarians were mingled with the sound of religious psalmody. From all the adjacent houses a crowd of Christians hastened to join this edifying procession and a multitude of fugitives, without distinction of age or rank, or even of sect, had the good fortune to escape to the secure and hospitable sanctuary of the Vatican" In a note Mr. Gibbon adds: "According to Isidore, Alaric himself was heard to say, that he waged war with the Romans, and not with the apostles." He adds also (p. 261), "The learned work concerning the City of God was professedly composed by Augustine to justify the ways of Providence in the destruction of the Roman greatness. He celebrates with special satisfaction this memorable triumph of Christ; and insults his adversaries by challenging them to produce some similar example of a town taken by storm, in which the fabulous gods of antiquity had been able to protect either themselves or their deluded votaries."

We may refer here, also, to that work of Augustine as illustrating the passage before us. In book i. ch. 2, he defends this position, that "there never was war in which the conquerors would spare them whom they conquered for the gods they worshipped" - referring particularly to the sacking of Troy; in chapter 3 he appeals to the example of Troy; in chapter 4 he appeals to the sanctuary of Juno, in Troy; in chapter 5 he shows that

the Romans never spared the temples of those cities which they destroyed; and in chapter 6 he maintains that the fact that mercy was shown by the barbarians in the sacking of Rome, was "through the power of the name of Jesus Christ." In illustration of this he says, "Therefore, all the spoil, murder, violence, and affliction, that in this fresh calamity came upon Rome, were nothing but the ordinary effects following the custom of war. But what was so unaccustomed, that the savage nature of the barbarians should put on a new shape, and appear so merciful that it would make choice of great and spacious churches to fill with such as it meant to show pity on, from which none should be baled to slaughter or slavery, in which none should be hurt, to which many by their courteous foes should be conducted, and out of which none should be led into bondage; this is due to the name of Christ, this is due to the Christian profession; he that seeth not is blind; he that seeth and praiseth it not is unthankful; he that hinders him that praiseth it is mad" (City of God, p. 11; London, 1620). Such a preservation of Christians; such a suspension of judgments, when all things seemed to be on the verge of ruin, would not be inappropriately represented by winds that threatened to sweep over the world; by the staying of those winds by some remarkable power, as by an angel; and by the special interposition which spared the church in the tumults and terrors of a siege, and of the sacking of a city.

(b) There may have been a reference to another class of divine interpositions at about the same time, to designate the true servants of God. It has been already remarked, that from the time when Constantine took the church under his patronage, and it became connected with the state, there was a large accession of nominal professors in the church, producing a great corruption in regard to spiritual religion, and an extended prevalence of error. Now the delay here referred to, between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals, may have referred to the fact, that during this period the true doctrines of Christianity would be vindicated and established in such a way that the servants of God would be "sealed" and designated in contradistinction from the great mass of the professed followers of Christ, and from the numerous advocates of error. From that mass a certain and definite number was to be sealed - implying, as we have seen, that there would be a selections, or that there would be something which would discriminate them from the multitudes as the true servants of God. This is

represented by an angel coming from the east: the angel representing the new heavenly influence coming upon the church; and the coming from the east - as the east is the quarter where the sun rises - denoting that it came from the source and fountain of light - that is, God. The “sealing” would denote anything in this new influence or manifestation which would mark the true children of God, and would be appropriately employed to designate any doctrines which would keep up true religion in the world; which would preserve correct views about God, the way of salvation, and the nature of true religion, and which would thus determine where the church of God really was.

If there should be a tendency in the church to degenerate into formality; if the rules of discipline should be relaxed; if error should prevail as to what constitutes spiritual religion; and if there should be a new influence at that time which would distinguish those who were the children of God from those who were not, this would be appropriately represented by the angel from the east, and by the sealing of the servants of God. Now it requires but a slight knowledge of the history of the Roman empire, and of the church at the period supposed here to be referred to, to perceive that all this occurred. There was a large influx of professed converts. There was a vast increase of worldliness. There was a wide diffusion of error. Religion was fast becoming mere formalism. The true church was apparently fast verging to ruin. At this period God raised up distinguished people - as if they had been angels ascending from the east - who came as with the “seal of the living God” - the doctrines of grace, and just views of spiritual religion - to designate who were, and who were not, the “true servants of God” among the multitudes who professed to be his followers.

Such were the doctrines of Athanasius and Augustine - those great doctrines on which the very existence of the true church has in all ages depended. The doctrines thus illustrated and defended were suited to make a broad line of distinction between the true church and the world, and this would be well represented by the symbol employed here - for it is by these doctrines that the true people of God are sealed and confirmed. On this subject compare Elliott, i. 279-292. The general sense here intended to be expressed is, that there was at the period referred to, after the conversion of Constantine, a decided tendency to a worldly, formal, lax kind of religion in

the church; a very prevalent denial of the doctrine of the Trinity and of the doctrines of grace; a lax mode of admitting members to the church, with little or no evidence of true conversion; a disposition to attribute saving grace to the ordinances of religion, and especially to baptism; a disposition to rely on the outward ceremonies of religion, with little acquaintance with its spiritual power; and a general breaking down of the barriers between the church and the world, as there is usually in a time of outward prosperity, and especially when the church is connected with the state.

At this time there arose another set of influences well represented by the angel coming from the east, and sealing the true servants of God, in illustration and confirmation of the true doctrines of Christianity - doctrines on which the spirituality of the church has always depended: the doctrines of the Trinity, the atonement, the depravity of man, regeneration by the agency of the Holy Spirit, justification by faith, the sovereignty of God, and kindred doctrines. Such doctrines have in all ages served to determine where the true church is, and to designate and "seal" the servants of the Most High.

(c) This process of "sealing" may be regarded as continued during the long night of papal darkness that was coming upon the church, when error would abound, and the religion of forms would be triumphant. Even then, in places obscure and unknown, the work of sealing the true servants of God might be going forward - for even in those times of gloomy night there were those, though comparatively few in number, who loved the truth, and who were the real servants of God. The number of the elect was filling up, for even in the darkest times there were those who loved the cause of spiritual religion, and who bore upon them the impress of the "seal of the living God." Such appears to have been the intent of this sealing vision: a staying of the desolation that, in various forms, was sweeping over the world, in order that the true church might be safe, and that a large number, from all parts of the church, might be sealed and designated as the true servants of God. The winds that blowed from all quarters were stayed as if by mighty angels.

A new influence, from the great source of light, came in to designate those who were the true servants of the Most High, as if an angel had come

from the rising sun with the seal of the living God, to impress it on their foreheads. A selection was made out of a church filling up with formalists, and in which the true doctrines of spiritual religion were fast fading away, of those who could be designated as the true servants of God. By their creed, and their lives, and their spirit, and their profession, they could be designated as the true servants of God, as if a visible mark were impressed on their foreheads. This selection was confined to no place, no class, no tribe, no denomination. It was taken from the whole of Israel, in such numbers that it could be seen that none of the tribes were excluded from the honor, but that, wherever the true spirit of religion was, God was acknowledging these tribes - or churches - as his, and there he was gathering a people to himself. This would be long continued, until new scenes would open, and the eye would rest on other developments in the series of symbols, revealing the glorious host of the redeemed emerging from darkness, and in countless numbers triumphing before the throne.

Verse 9

After this - Greek," After these things" - Μετὰ ταῦτα Meta tautathat is, after I saw these things thus represented I had another vision. This would undoubtedly imply, not only that he saw these things after he had seen the sealing of the hundred and forty-four thousand, but that they would occur subsequently to that. But he does not state whether they would immediately occur, or whether other things might not intervene. As a matter of fact, the vision seems to be transferred from earth to heaven - for the multitudes which he saw appeared "before the throne" Revelation 7:9; that is, before the throne of God in heaven. The design seems to be to carry the mind forward quite beyond the storms and tempests of earth - the scenes of woe and sorrow - the clays of error, darkness, declension, and persecution - to that period when the church should be triumphant in heaven. Instead, therefore, of leaving the impression that the hundred and forty-four thousand would be all that would be saved, the eye is directed to an innumerable host, gathered from all ages, all climes, and all people, triumphant in glory. The multitude that John thus saw was not, therefore, I apprehend, the same as the hundred and forty-four thousand, but a far greater number the whole assembled host of the redeemed in heaven, gathered there as vistors, with palmbranches, the symbols of triumph, in their hands. The object of the vision is to cheer those who are desponding in

times of religious declension and in seasons of persecution, and when the number of true Christians seems to be small, with the assurance that an immense host shall be redeemed from our world, and be gathered triumphant before the throne.

I beheld - That is, he saw them before the throne. The vision is transferred from earth to heaven; from the contemplation of the scene when desolation seemed to impend over the world, and when comparatively few in number were "sealed" as the servants of God, to the time when the redeemed would be triumphant, and when a host which no man can number would stand before God.

And, lo - Indicating surprise. A vast host burst upon the view. Instead of the comparatively few who were sealed, an innumerable company were presented to his vision, and surprise was the natural effect.

A great multitude - Instead of the comparatively small number on which the attention had been fixed.

Which no man could number - The number was so great that no one could count them, and John, therefore, did not attempt to do it. This is such a statement as one would make who should have a view of all the redeemed in heaven. It would appear to be a number beyond all power of computation. This representation is in strong contrast with a very common opinion that only a few will be saved. The representation in the Bible is, that immense hosts of the human race will be saved; and though vast numbers will be lost, and though at any particular period of the world hitherto it may seem that few have been in the path to life, yet we have every reason to believe that, taking the race at large, and estimating it as a whole, a vast majority of the whole will be brought to heaven. For the true religion is yet to spread all over the world, and perhaps for many, many thousands of years, piety is to be as prevalent as sin has been; and in that long and happy time of the world's history we may hope that the numbers of the saved may surpass all who have been lost in past periods, beyond any power of computation. See the notes on Revelation 20:3-6.

Of all nations - Not only of Jews; not only of the nations which, in the time of the sealing vision, had embraced the gospel, but of all the nations of the earth. This implies two things:

(a)that the gospel would be preached among all nations; and,

(b)that even when it was thus preached to them they would keep up their national characteristics.

There can be no hope of blending all the nations of the earth under one visible sovereignty. They may all be subjected to the spiritual reign of the Redeemer, but still there is no reason to suppose that they will not have their distinct organizations and laws.

And kindreds - φυλῶν phulōnThis word properly refers to those who are descended from a common ancestry, and hence denotes a race, lineage, kindred. It was applied to the tribes of Israel, as derived from the same ancestor, and for the same reason might be applied to a clan, and thence to any division in a nation, or to a nation itself - properly retaining the notion that it was descended from a common ancestor. Here it would seem to refer to a smaller class than a nation - the different clans of which a nation might be composed.

And people - λαῶν laōnThis word refers properly to a people or community as a mass, without reference to its origin or any of its divisions. The former word would be used by one who should look upon a nation as made up of portions of distinct languages, clans, or families; this word would be used by one who should look on such an assembled people as a mere mass of human beings, with no reference to their difference of clanship, origin, or language.

And tongues - Languages. This word would refer also to the inhabitants of the earth, considered with respect to the fact that they speak different languages. The use of particular languages does not designate the precise boundaries of nations - for often many people speaking different languages are united as one nation, and often those who speak the same language constitute distinct nations. The view, therefore, with which one would look upon the dwellers on the earth, in the use of the word "tongues" or "languages," would be, not as divided into nations; not with reference to their lineage or clanship; and not as a mere mass without reference to any distinction, but as divided by speech. The meaning of the whole is, that persons from all parts of the earth, as contemplated in these points of view, would be among the redeemed. Compare the notes on Daniel 3:4; Daniel 4:1.

Stood before the throne - The throne of God. See the notes on Revelation 4:2. The throne is there represented as set up in heaven, and the vision here is a vision of what will occur in heaven. It is designed to carry the thoughts beyond all the scenes of conflict, strife, and persecution on earth, to the time when the church shall be triumphant in glory - when all

storms shall have passed by; when all persecutions shall have ceased; when all revolutions shall have occurred; when all the elect - not only the hundred and forty-four thousand of the sealed, but of all nations and times - shall have been gathered in. There was a beautiful propriety in this vision. John saw the tempests stayed, as by the might of angels. He saw a new influence and power that would seal the true servants of God. But those tempests were stayed only for a time, and there were more awful visions in reserve than any which had been exhibited - visions of woe and sorrow, of persecution and of death. It was appropriate, therefore, just at this moment of calm suspense - of delayed judgments - to suffer the mind to rest on the triumphant close of the whole in heaven, when a countless host would be gathered there with palms in their hands, uniting with angels in the worship of God. The mind, by the contemplation of this beautiful vision, would be refreshed and strengthened for the disclosure of the awful scenes which were to occur on the sounding of the trumpets under the seventh seal. The simple idea is, that, amidst the storms and tempests of life - scenes of existing or impending trouble and wrath - it is well to let the eye rest on the scene of the final triumph, when innumerable hosts of the redeemed shall stand before God, and when sorrow shall be known no more.

And before the Lamb - In the midst of the throne - in heaven. See the notes on Revelation 5:6.

Clothed with white robes - The emblems of innocence or righteousness, uniformly represented as the raiment of the inhabitants of heaven. See the notes on Revelation 3:4; Revelation 6:11.

And palms in their hands - Emblems of victory. Branches of the palm-tree were carried by the victors in the athletic contests of Greece and Rome, and in triumphal processions. See the notes on Matthew 21:8. The palm-tree - straight, elevated, majestic - was an appropriate emblem of triumph. The portion of it which was borne in victory was the long leaf which shoots out from the top of the tree. Compare the notes on Isaiah 3:26. See Eschenberg, *Manual of Class.* Literally, p. 243, and Leviticus 23:40; "And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm-trees," etc. So in the Saviour‘s triumphal entry into Jerusalem John 12:12-13 - "On the next day much people took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna."

Verse 10

And cried with a loud voice - Compare Zechariah 4:7. This is expressive of the greatness of their joy; the ardor and earnestness of their praise.

Salvation to our God - The word rendered "salvation" - σωτηρία sōtēria- means properly "safety, deliverance, preservation"; then welfare or prosperity; then victory; then, in a Christian sense, deliverance from punishment and admission to eternal life. Here the idea seems to be that their deliverance from sin, danger, persecution, and death, was to be ascribed solely to God. It cannot be meant, as the words would seem to imply, that they desired that God might have salvation; but the sense is, that their salvation was to be attributed entirely to him. This will undoubtedly be the song of the released forever, and all who reach the heavenly world will feel that they owe their deliverance from eternal death, and their admission to glory, wholly to him. Prof. Robinson (Lexicon) renders the word "victory" here. The fair meaning is, that whatever is included in the word "salvation" will be due to God alone - the deliverance from sin, danger, and death; the triumph over every foe; the resurrection from the grave; the rescue from eternal burnings; the admission to a holy heaven - victory in all that that word implies will be due to God.

Which sitteth upon the throne - notes on Revelation 4:2.

And unto the Lamb - notes on Revelation 5:6. God the Father, and He who is the Lamb of God, alike claim, the honor of salvation. It is observable here that the redeemed ascribe their salvation to the Lamb as well as to Him who is on the throne. Could they do this if he who is referred to as the "Lamb" were a mere man? Could they if he were an angel? Could they if he were not equal with the Father? Do those who are in heaven worship a creature? Will they unite a created being with the Anointed One in acts of solemn adoration and praise?

Verse 11

And all the angels stood round about the throne - notes on Revelation 5:11.

And about the elders - notes on Revelation 4:4.

And the four beasts - notes on Revelation 4:6. The meaning is, that the angels stood in the outer circle, or outside of the elders and the four living creatures. The redeemed, it is manifest, occupied the inner circle, and were near the throne, though their precise location is not mentioned. The angels sympathize with the church redeemed and triumphant, as they did with the

church in its conflicts and trials, and they now appropriately unite with that church in adoring and praising God. They see in that redemption new displays of the character of God, and they rejoice that that church is rescued from its troubles, and is now brought triumphant to heaven.

And fell before the throne on their faces - The usual position of profound adoration, Revelation 4:10; Revelation 5:8.

And worshipped God - notes on Revelation 5:11-12.

Verse 12

Saying, Amen - See the notes on Revelation 1:7. The word "Amen" here is a word strongly affirming the truth of what is said, or expressing hearty assent to it. It may be uttered, as expressing this, either in the beginning or end of a sentence. Thus, wills are commonly commenced, "In the name of God, Amen."

Blessing, and glory, … - Substantially the same ascription of praise occurs in Revelation 5:12. See the notes on that verse. The general idea is, that the highest kind of praise is to be ascribed to God; everything excellent in character is to be attributed to him; every blessing which is received is to be traced to him. The order of the words indeed is changed, but the sense is substantially the same. In the former case Revelation 5:12 the ascription of praise is to the Lamb - the Son of God; here it is to God. In both instances the worship is described as rendered in heaven; and the use of the language shows that God and the Lamb are regarded in heaven as entitled to equal praise. The only words found here which do not occur in Revelation 5:12 are thanksgiving and might - words which require no particular explanation.

Verse 13

And one of the elders - See the notes on Revelation 4:4. That is, as there understood, one of the representatives of the church before the throne.

Answered - The word "answer," with us, means "to reply to something which has been said." In the Bible, however, the word is not infrequently used in the beginning of a speech, where nothing has been said - as if it were a reply to something that might be said on the subject; or to something that is passing through the mind of another; or to something in the case under consideration which suggests an inquiry. Compare Isaiah 65:24; Daniel 2:26; Acts 5:8. Thus it is used here. John was looking on the host, and reflecting on the state of things; and to the train of thought passing through his mind the angel answered by an inquiry as to a part of that host. Prof. Stuart renders it accosted me.

What are these which are arrayed in white robes? - Who are these? The object evidently is to bring the case of these persons more particularly into view. The vast host with branches of palm had attracted the attention of John, but it was the object of the speaker to turn his thoughts to a particular part of the host - the martyrs who stood among them. He would seem, therefore, to have turned to a particular portion of the immense multitude of the redeemed, and by an emphasis on the word these - "Who are these" - to have fixed the eye upon them. All those who are before the throne are represented as clothed in white robes Revelation 7:9, but the eye might be directed to a particular part of them as grouped together, and as having something special in their position or appearance. There was a propriety in thus directing the mind of John to the martyrs as triumphing in heaven in a time when the churches were suffering persecution, and in view of the vision which he had had of times of darkness and calamity coming upon the world at the opening of the sixth seal. Beyond all the scenes of sorrow and grief, he was permitted to see the martyrs triumphing in heaven.

Arrayed in white robes - See the notes on Revelation 7:9.

And whence came they? - The object is to fix the attention more distinctly on what is said of them, that they came up out of great tribulation.

Verse 14

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest - The word "sir" in this place - κύριέ kurie"lord" - is a form of respectful address, such as would be used when speaking to a superior, Genesis 43:20; Matthew 13:27; Matthew 21:30; Matthew 27:63; John 4:11, John 4:15, John 4:19, John 4:49; John 5:7; John 12:21; John 20:15. The simple meaning of the phrase "thou knowest" is, that he who had asked the question must be better informed than he to whom he had proposed it. It is, on the part of John, a modest confession that he did not know, or could not be presumed to know, and at the same time the respectful utterance of an opinion that he who addressed this question to him must be in possession of this knowledge.

And he said unto me - Not offended with the reply, and ready, as he had evidently intended to do, to give him the information which he needed.

These are they which came out of great tribulation - The word rendered "tribulation" - θλίψις thlipsis- is a word of general character, meaning "affliction," though perhaps there is here an allusion to persecution. The sense, however, would be better expressed by the phrase great trials. The object seems to have been to set before the mind of the

apostle a view of those who had suffered much, and who by their sufferings had been sanctified and prepared for heaven, in order to encourage those who might be yet called to suffer.

And have washed their robes - To wit, in the blood of the Lamb.

And made them white in the blood of the Lamb - There is some incongruity in saying that they had made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and the meaning therefore must be, that they had cleansed or purified them in that blood. Under the ancient ritual, various things about the sanctuary were cleansed from ceremonial defilement by the sprinkling of blood on them - the blood of sacrifice. In accordance with that usage, the blood of the Lamb - of the Lord Jesus - is said to cleanse and purify. John sees a great company with white robes. The means by which it is said they became white or pure is the blood of the Lamb. It is not said that they were made white as the result of their sufferings or their afflictions but by the blood of the Lamb. The course of thought here is such that it would be natural to suppose that, if at any time the great deeds or the sufferings of the saints could contribute to the fact that they will wear white robes in heaven, this is an occasion on which there might be such a reference.

But there is no allusion to that. It is not by their own sufferings and trials, their persecutions and sorrows, that they are made holy, but by the blood of the Lamb that had been shed for sinners. This reference to the blood of the Lamb is one of the incidental proofs that occur so frequently in the Scriptures of the reality of the atonement. It could be only in allusion to that, and with an implied belief in that, that the blood of the Lamb could be referred to as cleansing the robes of the saints in heaven. If he sheds his blood merely as other people have done; if he died only as a martyr, what propriety would there have been in referring to his blood more than to the blood of any other martyr? And what influence could the blood of any martyr have in cleansing the robes of the saints in heaven? The fact is, that if that were all, such language would be unmeaning. It is never used except in connection with the blood of Christ; and the language of the Bible everywhere is such as would be employed on the supposition that he shed his blood to make expiation for sin, and on no other supposition. On the general meaning of the language used here, and the sentiment expressed, see the Hebrews 9:14 note and 1 John 1:7 note.

Verse 15

Therefore are they before the throne of God - The reason why they are there is to be traced to the fact that the Lamb shed his blood to make expiation for sin. No other reason can be given why anyone of the human race is in heaven; and that is reason enough why any of that race are there.

And serve him day and night in his temple - That is, continually or constantly. Day and night constitute the whole of time, and this expression, therefore, denotes constant and uninterrupted service. On earth, toil is suspended by the return of night, and the service of God is intermitted by the necessity of rest; in heaven, as there will be no weariness, there will be no need of intermission, and the service of God, varied doubtless to meet the state of the mind, will be continued forever. The phrase, "to serve him in his temple," refers undoubtedly to heaven, regarded as the temple or holy dwelling-place of God. See the notes on Revelation 1:6.

And he that sitteth on the throne - God. See the notes at Revelation 4:2.

Shall dwell among them - σκηνώσει skēnōseiThis word properly means, "to tent, to pitch a tent"; and, in the New Testament, to dwell as in tents. The meaning here is, that God would dwell among them as in a tent, or would have his abode with them. Perhaps the allusion is to the tabernacle in the wilderness. That was regarded as the special dwelling-place of God, and that always occupied a central place among the tribes of Israel. So in heaven there will be the consciousness always that God dwells there among his people, and that the redeemed are gathered around him in his own house. Prof. Stuart renders this, it seems to me, with less beauty and propriety, "will spread his tent over them," as meaning that he would receive them into intimate connection and union with him, and offer them his protection. Compare Revelation 21:3.

Verse 16

They shall hunger no more - A considerable portion of the redeemed who will be there, were, when on earth, subjected to the evils of famine; many who perished with hunger. In heaven they will be subjected to that evil no more, for there will be no want that will not be supplied. The bodies which the redeemed will have - spiritual bodies 1 Corinthians 15:44 - will doubtless be such as will be nourished in some other way than by food, if they require any nourishment; and whatever that nourishment may be, it will be fully supplied. The passage here is taken from Isaiah 49:10; "They

shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them." See the notes on that passage.

Neither thirst any more - As multitudes of the redeemed have been subjected to the evils of hunger, so have multitudes also been subjected to the pains of thirst. In prison; in pathless deserts; in times of drought, when wells and fountains were dried up, they have suffered from this cause - a cause producing as intense suffering perhaps as any that man endures. Compare Exodus 17:3; Psalm 63:1; Lamentations 4:4; 2 Corinthians 11:27. It is easy to conceive of persons suffering so intensely from thirst that the highest vision of felicity would be such a promise as that in the words before us - "neither thirst anymore."

Neither shall the sun light on them - It is hardly necessary, perhaps, to say that the word "light" here does not mean to enlighten, to give light to, to shine on. The Greek is πέσῃ pesē- "fall on" - and the reference, probably is to the intense and burningheat of the sun, commonly called a sunstroke. Excessive heat of the sun, causing great pain or sudden death, is not a very uncommon thing among us, and must have been more common in the warm climates and burning sands of the countries in the vicinity of Palestine. The meaning here is, that in heaven they would be free from this calamity.

Nor any heat - In Isaiah 49:10, from which place this is quoted, the expression is שׁרב shaaraabproperly denoting heat or burning, and particularly the mirage, the excessive heat of a sandy desert producing a vapor which has a striking resemblance to water, and which often misleads the unwary traveler by its deceptive appearance. See the notes on Isaiah 35:7. The expression here is equivalent to intense heat; and the meaning is, that in heaven the redeemed will not be subjected to any such suffering as the traveler often experiences in the burning sands of the desert. The language would convey a most grateful idea to those who had been subjected to these sufferings, and is one form of saying that, in heaven, the redeemed will be delivered from the ills which they suffer in this life. Perhaps the whole image here is that of travelers who have been on a long journey, exposed to hunger and thirst, wandering in the burning sands of the desert, and exposed to the fiery rays of the sun, at length reaching their quiet and peaceful home, where they would find safety and abundance. The believer‘s journey from earth to heaven is such a pilgrimage.

Verse 17

For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne - notes on Revelation 5:6. He is still the great agent in promoting the happiness of the redeemed in heaven.

Shall feed them - Rather, shall exercise over them the office of a shepherd - ποιμανεῖ poimainōThis includes much more than mere feeding. It embraces all the care which a shepherd takes of his flock - watching them, providing for them, guarding them from danger. Compare Psalm 23:1-2, Psalm 23:5; Psalm 36:8. See this fully illustrated in the notes on Isaiah 40:11.

And shall lead them unto living fountains of waters - Living fountains refer to running streams, as contrasted with standing water and stagnant pools. See the notes on John 4:10. The allusion is undoubtedly to the happiness of heaven, represented as fresh and everflowing, like streams in the desert. No image of happiness, perhaps, is more vivid, or would be more striking to an Oriental, than that of such fountains flowing in sandy and burning wastes. The word "living" here must refer to the fact that that happiness will be perennial. These fountains will always bubble; these streams will never dry up. The thirst for salvation will always be gratified; the soul will always be made happy.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes - This is a new image of happiness taken from another place in Isaiah Isaiah 25:8, "The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." The expression is one of exquisite tenderness and beauty. The poet Burns said that he could never read this without being affected to weeping. Of all the negative descriptions of heaven, there is no one perhaps that would be better adapted to produce consolation than this. This is a world of weeping - a vale of tears. Philosophers have sought a brief definition of man, and have sought in vain. Would there be any better description of him, as representing the reality of his condition here, than to say that he is one who weeps? Who is there of the human family that has not shed a tear? Who that has not wept over the grave of a friend; over his own losses and cares; over his disappointments; over the treatment he has received from others; over his sins; over the follies, vices, and woes of his fellow-men?

And what a change would it make in our world if it could be said that henceforward not another tear would be shed; not a head would ever be bowed again in grief! Yet this is to be the condition of heaven. In that world there is to be no pain, no disappointment, no bereavement. No friend is to

lie in dreadful agony on a sick-bed; no grave is to be opened to receive a parent, a wife, a child; no gloomy prospect of death is to draw tears of sorrow from the eyes. To that blessed world, when our eyes run down with tears, are we permitted to look forward; and the prospect of such a world should contribute to wipe away our tears here - for all our sorrows will soon be over. As already remarked, there was a beautiful propriety, at a time when such calamities impended over the church and the world - when there was such a certainty of persecution and sorrow - in permitting the mind to rest on the contemplation of these happy scenes in heaven, where all the redeemed, in white robes, and with palms of victory in their hands, would be gathered before the throne. To us also now, amidst the trials of the present life - when friends leave us; when sickness comes; when our hopes are blasted; when calumnies and reproaches come upon us; when, standing on the verge of the grave, and looking down into the cold tomb, the eyes pour forth floods of tears - it is a blessed privilege to be permitted to look forward to that brighter scene in heaven, where not a pang shall ever be felt, and not a tear shall ever be shed.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 8

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

One seal of the mysterious roll Revelation 5:1 remains to be broken - six having already disclosed the contents of the volume relating to the future. It was natural that the opening of the seventh, and the last, should be attended with circumstances of special solemnity, as being all that remained in this volume to be unfolded, and as the events thus far had been evidently preparatory to some great catastrophe. It would have been natural to expect that, like the six former, this seal would have been opened at once, and would have disclosed all that was to happen at one view. But, instead of that, the opening of this seal is followed by a series of events, seven also in number, which succeed each other, represented by new symbols - the blowing of as many successive trumpets. These circumstances retard the course of the action, and fix the mind on a new order of events - events which could be appropriately grouped together, and which, for some reason, might be thus more appropriately represented than they could be in so many successive seals. What was the reason of this arrangement will be more readily seen on an examination of the particular events referred to in the successive trumpet-blasts. The points in the chapter are the following:

(1) The opening of the seventh seal, Revelation 8:1. This is attended, not with an immediate exhibition of the events which are to occur, as in the case of the former seals, but with a solemn silence in heaven for the space of half an hour. The reason of this silence, apparently, is found in the solemn nature of the events which are anticipated. At the opening of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12 ff) the grand catastrophe of the world‘s history seemed about to occur. This had been suspended for a time, as if by the power of angels holding the winds and the storm Revelation 8:2.

(3) as a still further preparation, another angel is introduced, standing at the altar with a golden censer, Revelation 8:3-5. He is represented as engaged in a solemn act of worship, offering incense and the prayers of the saints before the throne. This unusual representation seems to be designed to denote that some extraordinary events were to occur, making it proper that incense should ascend, and prayer be offered to deprecate the wrath of God. After the offering of the incense, and the prayers, the angel takes the

censer and casts it to the earth; and the effect is, that there are voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. All these would seem to be symbolical of the fearful events which are to follow. The silence; the incense-offering; the prayers; the fearful agitations produced by the casting of the censer upon the earth, as if the prayer was not heard, and as if the offering of the incense did not avail to turn away the impending wrath - all are appropriate symbols to introduce the series of fearful calamities which were coming upon the world on the sounding of the trumpets.

(4) the first angel sounds, Revelation 8:7. Hail and fire follow, mingled with blood. The third part of the trees and of the green grass - that is, of the vegetable world - is consumed.

(5) the second angel sounds, Revelation 8:8-9. A great burning mountain is cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea becomes blood, and a third part of all that is in the sea - fishes and ships - is destroyed.

(6) the third angel sounds, Revelation 8:10-11. A great star, burning like a lamp, falls from heaven upon a third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters, and the waters become bitter, and multitudes of people die from drinking the waters.

(7) the fourth angel sounds, Revelation 8:12. The calamity falls on the sources of light - the sun, the moon, and the stars - and the third part of the light is extinguished, and for the third part of the day there is no light, and for the third part of the night also there is no light.

(8) at this stage of things, after the sounding of the four trumpets, there is a pause, and an angel flies through the midst of heaven, thrice crying woe, by reason of the remaining trumpets which are to sound, Revelation 8:13. Here would seem to be some natural interval, or something which would separate the events which had occurred from those which were to follow. These four, from some cause, are grouped together, and are distinguished from those which are to follow - as if the latter pertained to a new class of events, though under the same general group introduced by the opening of the seventh seal. A few general remarks are naturally suggested

by the analysis of the chapter, which may aid us in its exposition and application:

(a) These events, in their order, undoubtedly succeed those which are referred to under the opening of the first six seals. They are a continuation of the series which is to occur in the history of the world. It has been supposed by some that the events here symbolized are substantially the same as those already referred to under the first six seals, or that, at the opening of the sixth seal, there is a catastrophe; and, one series being there concluded, the writer, by a new set of symbols, goes back to the same point of time, and passes over the same period by a new and parallel set of symbols. But this is manifestly contrary to the whole design. At the first Revelation 5:1 a volume was exhibited, sealed with seven seals, the unrolling of which would manifestly develop successive events, and the whole of which would embrace all the events which were to be disclosed. When all these seven seals were broken, and the contents of that volume were disclosed, there might indeed be another set of symbols going over the same ground with another design; or giving a representation of future events in some other point of view; but clearly the series should not be broken until the whole seven seals are opened, nor should it be supposed that there is, in the opening of the same volume, an arresting of the course of events, in order to go back again to the same beginning.

The representation in this series of symbols is like drawing out a telescope. A telescope might be divided into seven parts, as well as into the usual number, and the drawing out of the seventh part, for example, might be regarded as a representation of the opening of the seventh seal. But the seventh part, instead of being one unbroken piece like the other six, might be so constructed as to be subdivided into seven minor parts, each representing a smaller portion of the seventh part. In such a case, the drawing out of the seventh division would succeed that of the others, and would be designed to represent a subsequent order of events.

(b) There was some reason, manifestly, why these seven last events, or the series represented by the seven trumpets, should be grouped together, as coming under the same general classification. They were sufficiently distinct to make it proper to represent them by different symbols, and yet

they had so much of the same general character as to make it proper to group them together. If this had not been so it would have been proper to represent them by a succession of seals extending to thirteen in number, instead of representing six seals in succession, and then, under the seventh, a new series extending also to the number seven. In the fulfillment, it will be proper to look for some events which have some such natural connection and bearing that, for some reason, they can be classed together, and yet so distinct that, under the same general symbol of the seal, they can be represented under the particular symbol of the trumpets.

(c) For some reason there was a further distinction between the events represented by the first four trumpets and those which were to follow. There was some reason why they should be more particularly grouped together, and placed in close connection, and why there should be an interval Revelation 8:13 before the other trumpet should sound. In the fulfillment of this we should naturally look for such an order of events as would be designated by four successive symbols, and then for such a change, in some respects, as to make an interval proper, and a proclamation of woe, before the sounding of the other three, Revelation 8:13. Then it would be natural to look for such events as could properly be grouped under the three remaining symbols - the three succeeding trumpets.

(d) It is natural, as already intimated, to suppose that the entire group would extend, in some general manner at least, to the consummation of all things; or that there would be under the last one, a reference to the consummation of all things - the end of the world. The reason for this has already been given, that the apostle saw a volume Revelation 5:1, which contained a sealed account of the future, and it is natural to suppose that there would be a reference to the great leading events which were to occur in the history of the church and of the world. This natural anticipation is confirmed by the events disclosed under the sounding of the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:15 ff): “And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come;

because thou hast taken thy great power, and hast reigned," etc. At all events, this would lead us on to the final triumph of Christianity - to the introduction of the millennium of glory - to the period when the Son of God should reign on the earth. After that (Revelation 11:19 ff) a new series of visions commences, disclosing, through the same periods of history, a new view of the church to the time also of its final triumph: the church internally; the rise of Antichrist, and the effect of the rise of this formidable power. See the Analysis of the Book, part fifth.

Verse 1

And when he had opened the seventh seal - See the notes on Revelation 5:1.

There was silence in heaven - The whole scene of the vision is laid in heaven Revelation 4:1-11, and John represents things as they seem to be passing there. The meaning here is, that on the opening of this seal, instead of voices, thunderings, tempests, as perhaps was expected from the character of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12 ff), and which seemed only to have been suspended for a time Revelation 7:1 - the wrath in respect to the city, which was now suspended for a short time. Prof. Stuart also refers it to the destruction of Jerusalem, and supposes that the seven trumpets refer to seven gradations in the series of judgments that were coming upon the persecutors of the church. Mr. Daubuz regards the silence here referred to as a symbol of the liberty granted to the church in the time of Constantine; Vitringa interprets it of the peace of the millennium which is to succeed the overthrow of the beast and the false prophet; Dr. Woodhouse and Mr. Cunninghame regard it as the termination of the series of events which thee former seals denote, and the commencement of a new train of revelations; Mr. Elliott, as the suspension of the winds during the sealing of the servants of God; Mr. Lord, as the period of repose which intervened between the close of the persecution by Diocletian and Galerius, in 311, and the commencement, near the close of that year, of the civil wars by which Constantine the Great was elevated to the imperial throne.

It will be seen at once how arbitrary and unsatisfactory most of those interpretations are, and how far from harmony expositors have been as to the meaning of this symbol. The most simple and obvious interpretation is likely to be the true one; and that is, as above suggested, that it refers to silence in heaven as expressive of the fearful anticipation felt on opening

the last seal that was to close the series, and to wind up the affairs of the church and the world. Nothing would be more natural than such a state of solemn awe on such an occasion; nothing would introduce the opening of the seal in a more impressive manner; nothing would more naturally express the anxiety of the church, the probable feelings of the pious on the opening of these successive seals, than the representation that incense, accompanied with their prayers, was continually offered in heaven.

Verse 2

And I saw the seven angels which stood before God - Prof. Stuart supposes that by these angels are meant the "presence-angels" which he understands to be referred to, in Revelation 1:4, by the "seven spirits which are before the throne." If, however, the interpretation of that passage above proposed, that it refers to the Holy Spirit, with reference to his multiplied agency and operations, be correct, then we must seek for another application of the phrase here. The only difficulty in applying it arises from the use of the article - "the seven angels" - τοὺς tousas if they were angels already referred to; and as there has been no previous mention of "seven angels," unless it be in the phrase "the seven spirits which are before the throne," in Revelation 1:4, it is argued that this must have been such a reference. But this interpretation is not absolutely necessary. John might use this language either because the angels had been spoken of before; or because it would be sufficiently understood, from the common use of language, who would be referred to - as we now might speak of "the seven members of the cabinet of the United States," or "the thirty-one governors of the states of the Union," though they had not been particularly mentioned; or he might speak of them as just then disclosed to his view, and because his meaning would be sufficiently definite by the circumstances which were to follow - their agency in blowing the trumpets.

It would be entirely in accordance with the usage of the article for one to say that he saw an army, and the commander-in-chief, and the four staff-officers, and the five bands of music, and the six companies of sappers and miners, etc. It is not absolutely necessary, therefore, to suppose that these angels had been before referred to. There is, indeed, in the use of the phrase "which stood before God," the idea that they are to be regarded as permanently standing there, or that that is their proper place - as if they were angels who were particularly designated to this high service. Compare

Luke 1:19; "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God." If this idea is involved in the phrase, then there is a sufficient reason why the article is used, though they had not before been mentioned.

And to them were given seven trumpets - One to each. By whom the trumpets were given is not said. It may be supposed to have been done by Him who sat on the throne. Trumpets were used then, as now, for various purposes; to summon an assembly; to muster the hosts of battle; to inspirit and animate troops in conflict. Here they are given to announce a series of important events producing great changes in the world as if God summoned and led on his hosts to accomplish his designs.

Verse 3

And another angel came - Who this angel was is not mentioned, nor have we any means of determining. Of course a great variety of opinion has been entertained on the subject (see Poole's Synopsis) - some referring it to angels in general; others to the ministry of the church; others to Constantine; others to Michael; and many others to the Lord Jesus. All that we know is, that it was an angel who thus appeared, and there is nothing inconsistent in the supposition that anyone of the angels in heaven may have been appointed to perform what is here represented. The design seems to be, to represent the prayers of the saints as ascending in the anticipation of the approaching series of wonders in the world - and there would be a beautiful propriety in representing them as offered by an angel, feeling deep interest in the church, and ministering in behalf of the saints.

And stood at the altar - In heaven - represented as a temple with an altar, and with the usual array of things employed in the worship of God. The altar was the appropriate place for him to stand when about to offer the prayers of the saints for that is the place where the worshipper stood under the ancient dispensation. Compare the Matthew 5:23-24 notes; Luke 1:11 note. In the latter place an angel is represented as appearing to Zacharias "on the right side of the altar of incense."

Having a golden censer - The firepan, made for the purpose of carrying fire, on which to burn incense in time of worship. See it described and illustrated in the notes on Hebrews 9:4. There seems reason to suppose that the incense that was offered in the ancient worship was designed to be emblematic of the prayers of saints, for it was the custom for worshippers to be engaged in prayer at the time the incense was offered by the priest. See Luke 1:10.

And there was given unto him much incense - See the notes on Luke 1:9. A large quantity was here given to him, because the occasion was one on which many prayers might be expected to be offered.

That he should offer it with the prayers - Margin, "add it to." Greek, "that he should give it with" - δώση dōsēThe idea is plain, that, when the prayers of the saints ascended, he would also burn the incense, that it might go up at the same moment, and be emblematic of them. Compare the notes on Revelation 5:8.

Of all saints - Of all who are holy; of all who are the children of God. The idea seems to be, that, at this time, all the saints would unite in calling on God, and in deprecating his wrath. As the events which were about to occur were a matter of common interest to the people of God, it was to be supposed that they would unite in common supplication.

Upon the golden altar - The altar of incense. This in the tabernacle and in the temple was overlaid with gold.

Which was before the throne - This is represented as a temple-service, and the altar of incense is, with propriety, placed before his seat or throne, as it was in the tabernacle and temple. In the temple, God is represented as occupying the mercy-seat in the holy of holies, and the altar of incense is in the holy place before that. See the description of the temple in the notes on Matthew 21:12.

Verse 4

And the smoke of the incense … - The smoke caused by the burning incense. John, as he saw this, naturally interpreted it of the prayers of the saints. The meaning of the whole symbol, thus explained, is that, at the time referred to, the anxiety of the church in regard to the events which were about to occur would naturally lead to much prayer. It is not necessary to attempt to verify this by any distinct historical facts, for no one can doubt that, in a time of such impending calamities, the church would be earnestly engaged in devotion. Such has always been the case in times of danger; and it may always be assumed to be true, that when danger threatens, whether it be to the church at large or to an individual Christian, there will be a resort to the throne of grace.

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Verse 5

And the angel took the censer - Revelation 8:3. This is a new symbol, designed to furnish a new representation of future events. By the former it

had been shown that there would be much prayer offered; by this it is designed to show that, notwithstanding the prayer that would be offered, great and fearful calamities would come upon the earth. This is symbolized by casting the censer upon the earth, as if the prayers were not heard any longer, or as if prayer were now in vain.

And filled it with fire of the altar - An image similar to this occurs in Ezekiel 10:2, where the man clothed in linen is commanded to go between the wheels under the cherub, and fill his hands with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and to scatter them over the city as a symbol of its destruction. Here the coals are taken, evidently, from the altar of sacrifice. Compare the notes on Isaiah 6:1. On these coals no incense was placed, but they were thrown at once to the earth. The new emblem, therefore, is the taking of coals, and scattering them abroad as a symbol of the destruction that was about to ensue.

And cast it into the earth - Margin, upon. The margin expresses undoubtedly the meaning. The symbol, therefore, properly denoted that fearful calamities were about to come upon the earth. Even the prayers of saints did not prevail to turn them away, and now the symbol of the scattered coals indicated that terrible judgments were about to come upon the world.

And there were voices - Sounds, noises. See the notes on Revelation 4:5. The order is not the same here as there, but lightnings, thunderings, and voices are mentioned in both.

And an earthquake - Revelation 6:12. This is a symbol of commotion. It is not necessary to look for a literal fulfillment of it, anymore than it is for literal "voices," "lightnings," or "thunderings."

Verse 6

And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound - Revelation 8:7. Evidently in succession, perhaps by arranging themselves in the order in which they were to sound. The way is now prepared for the sounding of the trumpets, and for the fearful commotions and changes which would be indicated by that. The last seal is opened; heaven stands in suspense to know what is to be disclosed; the saints, filled with solicitude, have offered their prayers; the censer of coals has been cast to the earth, as if these judgments could be no longer stayed by prayer; and the angels prepare to sound the trumpets indicative of what is to occur.

Verse 7

The first angel sounded - The first in order, and indicating the first in the series of events that were to follow.

And there followed hail - Hail is usually a symbol of the divine vengeance, as it has often been employed to accomplish the divine purposes of punishment. Thus, in Exodus 9:23, "And the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt." So in Psalm 105:32, referring to the plagues upon Egypt, it is said, "He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land." So again, Psalm 78:48, "He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts." As early as the time of Job hail was understood to be an emblem of the divine displeasure, and an instrument in inflicting punishment:

"Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow,
Or hast thou seen the treasure of the hail?
Which I have reserved against the time of trouble,

Against the day of battle and war!"
Job 38:22-23.

So also the same image is used in Psalm 18:13;
"The Lord also thundered in the heaven,
And the Most High gave forth his voice,
Hailstones and coals of fire."

Compare Haggai 2:17. The destruction of the Assyrian army, it is said, would be accomplished in the same way, Isaiah 30:30. Compare Ezekiel 13:11; Ezekiel 38:22.

And fire - Lightning. This also is an instrument and an emblem of destruction.

Mingled with blood - By blood "we must naturally understand," says Prof. Stuart, "in this case, a shower of colored rain; that is, rain of a rubidinous aspect, an occurrence which is known sometimes to take place, and which, like falling stars, eclipses, etc., was viewed with terror by the ancients, because it was supposed to be indicative of blood that was to be shed." The appearance, doubtless, was that of a red shower, apparently of hail or snow - for rain is not mentioned. It is not a rain-storm, it is a hail-storm that is the image here; and the image is that of a driving hail-storm, where the lightnings flashed, and where there was the intermingling of a

reddish substance that resembled blood, and that was an undoubted symbol of blood that was to be shed. I do not know that there is red rain, or red hail, but red snow is not very uncommon; and the image here would be complete if we suppose that there was an intermingling of red snow in the driving tempest.

This species of snow was found by Captain Ross at Baffin‘s Bay on the 17th of August, 1819. The mountains that were dyed with the snow were about 8 miles long, and 600 feet high. The red color reached to the ground in many places 10 or 12 feet deep, and continued for a great length of time. Although red snow had not until this attracted much notice, yet it had been long before observed in Alpine countries. Saussure discovered it on Mount Bernard in 1778. Ramoud found it on the Pyrenees; and Summerfield discovered it in Norway. “In 1818 red snow fell on the Italian Alps and Apennines. In March, 1808, the whole country about Cadore, Belluno, and Feltri was covered with a red-colored snow to the depth of six and a half feet; but a white snow had fallen both before and after it, the red formed a stratum in the middle of the white. At the same time a similar fall took place in the mountains of the Valteline, Brescia, Carinthia, and Tyrol” (Edin. Encyclo. art. “Snow”). These facts show that what is referred to here in the symbol might possibly occur. Such a symbol would be properly expressive of blood and carnage.

And they were cast upon the earth - The hail, the fire, and the blood - denoting that the fulfillment of this was to be on the earth.

And the third part of trees was burnt up - By the fire that came down with the hail and the blood.

And all green grass was burnt up - Wherever this lighted on the earth. The meaning would seem to be, that wherever this tempest beat the effect was to destroy a third part - that is, a large portion of the trees, and to consume all the grass. A portion of the trees - strong and mighty - would stand against it; but what was so tender as grass is, would be consumed. The sense does not seem to be that the tempest would be confined to a third part of the world, and destroy all the trees and the grass there; but that it would be a sweeping and general tempest, and that wherever it spread it would prostrate a third part of the trees and consume all the grass. Thus understood, it would seem to mean, that in reference to those things in the world which were firm and established like trees it would not sweep them wholly away, though it would make great desolation; but in reference to

those which were delicate and feeble - like grass - it would sweep them wholly away.

This would not be an inapt description of the ordinary effects of invasion in time of war. A few of those things which seem most firm and established in society - like trees in a forest - weather out the storm; while the gentle virtues, the domestic enjoyments, the arts of peace, like tender grass, are wholly destroyed. The fulfillment of this we are undoubtedly to expect to find in the terrors of invasion; the evils of war; the effusion of blood; the march of armies. So far as the language is concerned, the symbol would apply to any hostile invasion; but in pursuing the exposition on the principles on which we have thus far conducted it, we are to look for the fulfillment in one or more of those invasions of the northern hordes that preceded the downfall of the Roman empire and that contributed to it. In the Analysis of the chapter, some reasons were given why these four trumpet signals were placed together, as pertaining to a series of events of the same general character, and as distinguished from those which were to follow.

The natural place which they occupy, or the events which we should suppose, from the views taken above of the first six seals, would be represented, would be the successive invasions of the northern hordes which ultimately accomplished the overthrow of the Roman empire. There are four of these "trumpets," and it would be a matter of inquiry whether there were four events of sufficient distinctness that would mark these invasions, or that would constitute periods or epochs in the destruction of the Roman power. At this point in writing, I looked on a chart of history, composed with no reference to this prophecy, and found a singular and unexpected prominence given to four such events extending from the first invasion of the Goths and Vandals at the beginning of the fifth century, to the fall of the Western empire, 476 a.d. The first was the invasion of Alaric, king of the Goths, 410 a.d.; the second was the invasion of Attila, king of the Huns, "scourge of God," 447 a.d.; a third was the sack of Rome by Genseric, king of the Vandals, 455 a.d.; and the fourth, resulting in the final conquest of Rome, was that of Odoacer, king of the Heruli, who assumed the title of King of Italy, 476 a.d. We shall see, however, on a closer examination, that although two of these - Attila and Genseric - were, during a part of their career, contemporary, yet the most prominent place is due to Genseric in the events that attended the downfall of the empire, and that the

second trumpet probably related to him; the third to Attila. These were, beyond doubt, four great periods or events attending the fall of the Roman empire, which synchronize with the period before us.

If, therefore, we regard the opening of the sixth seal as denoting the threatening aspect of these invading powers - the gathering of the dark cloud that hovered over the borders of the empire, and the consternation produced by that approaching storm; and if we regard the transactions in the seventh chapter - the holding of the winds in check, and the sealing of the chosen of God - as denoting the suspension of the impending judgments in order that a work might be done to save the church, and as referring to the divine interposition in behalf of the church; then the appropriate place of these four trumpets, under the seventh seal, will be when that delayed and restrained storm burst in successive blasts upon different parts of the empire - the successive invasions which were so prominent in the overthrow of that vast power. History marks four of these events - four heavy blows - four sweepings of the tempest and the storm - under Alaric, Genseric, Attila, and Odoacer, whose movements could not be better symbolized than by these successive blasts of the trumpet.

The first of these is the invasion of Alaric; and the inquiry now is, whether his invasion is such as would be properly symbolized by the first trumpet. In illustrating this, it will be proper to notice some of the movements of Alaric, and the alarm consequent on his invasion of the empire; and then to inquire how far this corresponds with the images employed in the description of the first trumpet. For these illustrations I shall be indebted mainly to Mr. Gibbon. Alaric, the Goth, was at first employed in the service of the emperor Theodosius, in his attempt to oppose the usurper Arbogastes, after the murder of Valentinian, emperor of the West. Theodosius, in order to oppose the usurper, employed, among others, numerous barbarians - Iberians, Arabs, and Goths. One of them was Alaric, who, to use the language of Mr. Gibbon (ii. 179), “acquired in the school of Theodosius the knowledge of the art of war, which he afterward so fatally exerted for the destruction of Rome,” 392-394 a.d. After the death of Theodosius (395 a.d.) the Goths revolted from the Roman power, and Alaric, who had been disappointed in his expectations of being raised to the command of the Roman armies, became their leader (Decline and Fall, ii.

213). “That renowned leader was descended from the noble race of the Balti; which yielded only to the royal dignity of the Amali; he had solicited the command of the Roman armies; and the imperial court provoked him to demonstrate the folly of their refusal, and the importance of their loss. In the midst of a divided court and a discontented people the emperor Arcadius was terrified by the aspect of the Gothic arms,” etc.

Alaric then invaded and conquered Greece, laying it waste in his progress, until he reached Athens, ii. 214,215. “The fertile fields of Phocis and Boeotia were instantly covered by a deluge of barbarians, who massacred the males of age to bear arms, and drove away the beautiful females, with the spoil and cattle of the flaming villages.” Alaric then concluded a treaty with Theodosius, the emperor of the East (ii. 216); was made master-general of Eastern Illyricum, and created a magistrate (ii. 217); soon united under his command the barbarous nations that had made the invasion, and was solemnly declared to be the king of the Visigoths, ii. 217. “Armed with this double power, seated on the verge of two empires, he alternately sold his deceitful promises to the courts of Arcadius and Honorius, until he declared and executed his purpose of invading the dominions of the West. The provinces of Europe which belonged to the Eastern empire were already exhausted; those of Asia were inaccessible; and the strength of Constantinople had resisted his attack. But he was tempted by the beauty, the wealth, and the fame of Italy, which he had twice visited; and he secretly aspired to plant the Gothic standard on the walls of Rome; and to enrich his army with the accumulated spoils of 300 triumphs,” ii. 217,218.

In describing his march to the Danube, and his progress toward Italy, having increased his army with a large number of barbarians, Mr. Gibbon uses the remarkable language expressive of the general consternation, already quoted in the description of the sixth seal. Alaric approached rapidly toward the imperial city, resolved to “conquer or die before the gates of Rome.” But he was checked by Stilicho, and compelled to make peace, and retired (Decline and Fall, ii. 222), and the threatening storm was for a time suspended. See the notes on Revelation 7:1 ff. So great was the consternation, however, that the Roman court, which then had its seat at Milan, thought it necessary to remove to a safer place, and became fixed at

Ravenna, ii. 224. This calm, secured by the retreat of Alaric, was, however, of short continuance. In 408 a.d. he again invaded Italy in a more successful manner, attacked the capital, and more than once pillaged Rome. The following facts, for which I am indebted to Mr. Gibbon, will illustrate the progress of the events, and the effects of this blast of the "first trumpet" in the series that announced the destruction of the Western empire:

(a) The effect, on the destiny of the empire, of removing the Roman court to Ravenna from the dread of the Goths. As early as 303 a.d. the court of the emperor of the West was, for the most part, established at Milan. For some time before, the "sovereignty of the capital was gradually annihilated by the extent of conquest," and the emperors were required to be long absent from Rome on the frontiers, until in the time of Diocletian and Maximian the seat of government was fixed at Milan, "whose situation at the foot of the Alps appeared far more convenient than that of Rome for the important purpose of watching the motions of the barbarians of Germany" (Gibbon, i. 213). "The life of Diocletian and Maximian was a life of action, and a considerable portion of it was spent in camps, or in their long and frequent marches; but whenever the public business allowed them any relaxation, they seem to have retired with pleasure to their favorite residences of Nicomedia and Milan. Until Diocletian, in the twentieth year of his reign, celebrated his Roman triumph, it is extremely doubtful whether he ever visited the ancient capital of the empire" (Gibbon, i. 214).

From this place the court was driven away, by the dread of the northern barbarians, to Ravenna, a safer place, which thenceforward became the seat of government, while Italy was ravaged by the northern hordes, and while Rome was besieged and pillaged. Mr. Gibbon, under date of 404 a.d., says, "The recent danger to which the person of the emperor had been exposed in the defenseless palace of Milan (from Alaric and the Goths) urged him to seek a retreat in some illaccessible fortress in Italy, where he might securely remain, while the open country was covered by a deluge of barbarians" (vol. ii. p. 224). He then proceeds to describe the situation of Ravenna, and the removal of the court thither, and then adds (p. 225), "The fears of Honorius were not without foundation, nor were his precautions without effect. While Italy rejoiced in her deliverance from the Goths, a furious tempest was excited among the nations of Germany, who yielded to the

irresistible impulse that appears to have been gradually communicated from the eastern extremity of the continent of Asia." That mighty movement of the Huns is then described, as the storm was preparing to burst upon the Roman empire, ii. 225. The agitation and the removal of the Roman government were events not inappropriate to be described by symbols relating to the fall of that mighty power.

(b) The particulars of that invasion, the consternation, the siege of Rome, and the capture and pillage of the imperial city, would confirm the propriety of this application to the symbol of the first trumpet. It would be too long to copy the account - for it extends through many pages of the History of the Decline and Fall of the Empire; but a few selected sentences may show the general character of the events, and the propriety of the symbols, on the supposition that they referred to these things. Thus, Mr. Gibbon (ii. 226,227) says, "The correspondence of nations was, in that age, so imperfect and precarious, that the revolutions of the North might escape the knowledge of the court of Ravenna, until the dark cloud which was collected along the coast of the Baltic burst in thunder upon the banks of the Upper Danube. The king of the confederate Germans passed, without resistance, the Alps, the Po, and the Apennines; leaving on the one hand the inaccessible palace of Honorius securely buried among the marshes of Ravenna; and on the other the camp of Stilicho, who had fixed his headquarters at Ticinum, or Pavia, but who seems to have avoided a decisive battle until he had assembled his distant forces. Many cities of Italy were pillaged or destroyed. The senate and people trembled at their approach within a hundred and eighty miles of Rome; and anxiously compared the danger which they had escaped with the new perils to which they were exposed," etc.

Rome was besieged for the first time by the Goths 408 a.d. Of this siege Mr. Gibbon (ii. 252-254) has given a graphic description. Among other things, he says, "That unfortunate city gradually experienced the distress of scarcity, and at length the horrid calamities of famine." "A dark suspicion was entertained, that some desperate wretches fed on the bodies of their fellow-creatures whom they had secretly murdered; and even mothers - such were the horrid conflicts of the two most powerful instincts implanted by nature in the human breast - even mothers are said to have tasted the

flesh of their slaughtered infants. Many thousands of the inhabitants of Rome expired in their houses, or in the streets, for want of sustenance; and as the public sepulchres without the walls were in the power of the enemy, the stench which arose from so many putrid and unburied carcasses infected the air; and the miseries of famine were succeeded and aggravated by a pestilential disease."

The first siege was raised by the payment of an enormous ransom (Gibbon, ii. 254). The second siege of Rome by the Goths occurred 409 a.d. This siege was carried on by preventing the supply of provisions, Alaric having seized upon Ostia, the Roman port, where the provisions for the capital were deposited. The Romans finally consented to receive a new emperor at the hand of Alaric, and Attalus was appointed in the place of the feeble Honorius, who was then at Ravenna, and who had abandoned the capital. Attalus, an inefficient prince, was soon publicly stripped of the robes of office, and Alaric, enraged at the conduct of the court at Ravenna toward him, turned his wrath a third time on Rome, and laid siege to the city. This occurred 410 a.d. "The king of the Goths, who no longer dissembled his appetite for plunder and revenge, appeared in arms under the walls of the capital; and the trembling senate, without any hope of relief, prepared, by a desperate effort, to delay the ruin of their country. But they were unable to guard against the conspiracy of their slaves and domestics, who, either from birth or interest, were attached to the cause of the enemy. At the hour of midnight the Salarian Gate was silently opened, and the inhabitants were awakened by the tremendous sound of the Gothic trumpet. Eleven hundred and sixty-three years after the foundation of Rome, the imperial city, which had subdued and civilized so considerable a part of mankind, was delivered to the licentious fury of the tribes of Germany and Scythia" (Gibbon, ii. 260).

(c) It is, perhaps, only necessary to add that the invasion of Alaric was in fact but one of the great events that led to the fall of the empire, and that, in announcing that fall, where a succession of events was to occur, it would properly be represented by the blast of one of the trumpets. The expressions employed in the symbol are, indeed, such as might be applied to any invasion of hostile armies, but they are such as would be used if the design were admitted to be to describe the invasion of the Gothic conqueror. For:

(1)that invasion, as we have seen, would be well represented by the storm of hail and lightning that was seen in vision;

(2)by the red color mingled in that storm - indicative of blood;

(3)by the fact that it consumed the trees and the grass.

This, as we saw in the exposition, would properly denote the desolation produced by war - applicable, indeed, to all war, but as applicable to the invasion of Alaric as any war that has occurred, and it is such an emblem as would be used if it were admitted that it was the design to represent his invasion. The sweeping storm, prostrating the trees of the forest, is an apt emblem of the evils of war, and, as was remarked in the exposition, no more striking illustration of the consequences of a hostile invasion could be employed than the destruction of the "green grass." What is here represented in the symbol cannot, perhaps, be better expressed than in the language of Mr. Gibbon, when describing the invasion of the Roman empire under Alaric. Speaking of that invasion, he says - "While the peace of Germany was secured by the attachment of the Franks and the neutrality of the Alemanni, the subjects of Rome, unconscious of their approaching calamities, enjoyed the state of quiet and prosperity which had seldom blessed the frontiers of Gaul. Their flocks and herds were permitted to graze in the pastures of the barbarians; their huntsmen penetrated, without fear or danger, into the darkest recesses of the Hercynian wood. The banks of the Rhine were crowned, like those of the Tiber, with elegant houses and well-cultivated farms; and if a poet descended the river, he might express his doubt on which side was situated the territory of the Romans. This scene of peace and plenty was suddenly changed into a desert; and the prospect of the smoking ruins could alone distinguish the solitude of nature from the desolation of man.

The flourishing city of Mentz was surprised and destroyed; and many thousand Christians were inhumanly massacred in the church. Worms perished after a long and obstinate siege; Strasburg, Spires, Rheims, Tournay, Arras, Amiens, experienced the cruel oppression of the German yoke; and the consuming flames of war spread from the banks of the Rhine over the greatest part of the seventeen provinces of Gaul. That rich and extensive country, as far as the ocean, the Alps, and the Pyrenees, was delivered to the barbarians, who drove before them, in a promiscuous crowd, the bishop, the senator, and the virgin, laden with the spoils of their

houses and altars," ii. 230. In reference, also, to the invasion of Alaric, and the particular nature of thee desolation depicted under the first trumpet, a remarkable passage which Mr. Gibbon has quoted from Claudian, as describing the effects of the invasion of Alaric, may be here introduced. "The old man," says he, speaking of Claudian, "who had passed his simple and innocent life in the neighborhood of Verona, was a stranger to the quarrels both of kings and of bishops; his pleasures, his desires, his knowledge, were confined within the little circle of his paternal farm; and a staff supported his aged steps on the same ground where he had sported in infancy. Yet even this humble and rustic felicity (which Claudian describes with so much truth and feeling) was still exposed to the undistinguishing rage of war.

Ingentem meminit parvo qui germine quercum
Aequaevumque videt consenuisse nemus.
A neighboring wood born with himself he sees
And loves his old contemporary trees.
- *Cowley.*

His trees, his old contemporary trees, must blaze in the conflagration of the whole country; a detachment of Gothic cavalry must sweep away his cottage and his family; and the power of Alaric could destroy this happiness which he was not able either to taste or to bestow. ‹Fame,‘ says the poet, ‹encircling with terror or gloomy wings, proclaimed the march of the barbarian army, and filled Italy with consternation,‘" ii. 218. And,

(4) as to the extent of the calamity, there is also a striking propriety in the language of the symbol as applicable to the invasion of Alaric. I do not suppose, indeed, that it is necessary, in order to find a proper fulfillment of the symbol, to be able to show that exactly one-third part of the empire was made desolate in this way; but it is a sufficient fulfillment if desolation spread over a considerable portion of the Roman world - as if a third part had been destroyed. No one who reads the account of the invasion of Alaric can doubt that it would be an apt description of the ravages of his arms to say that a third part was laid waste. That the desolations produced by Alaric were such as would be properly represented by this symbol may be fully seen by consulting the whole account of that invasion in Gibbon, ii. 213-266.

Verse 8

And the second angel sounded - Compare the notes on Revelation 8:2-7. This, according to the interpretation proposed above, refers to the second of the four great events which contributed to the downfall of the Roman empire. It will be proper in this case, as in the former, to inquire into the literal meaning of the symbol, and then whether there was any event that corresponded with it.

And as it were a great mountain - A mountain is a natural symbol of strength, and hence becomes a symbol of a strong and powerful kingdom; for mountains arc not only places of strength in themselves, but they anciently answered the purposes of fortified places, and were the seats of power. Hence, they are properly symbols of strong nations. "The stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth," Daniel 2:35. Compare Zechariah 4:7; Jeremiah 51:25. We naturally, then, apply this part of the symbol to some strong and mighty nation - not a nation, necessarily, that issued from a mountainous region but a nation that in strength resembled a mountain.

Burning with fire - A mountain in a blaze; that is, with all its woods on fire, or, more probably, a volcanic mountain. There would perhaps be no more sublime image than such a mountain lifted suddenly from its base and thrown into the sea. One of the sublimest parts of the Paradise Lost is that where the poet represents the angels in the great battle in heaven as lifting the mountains - tearing them from their base - and hurling them on the foe:

"From their foundations heaving to and fro,
They plucked the seated hills, with all their load,
Rocks, waters, woods, and by the shaggy tops

Uplifting, bore them in their hands," etc.
Book vi.

The poet, however, has not, as John has, represented a volcano borne along and cast into the sea. The symbol employed here would denote some fiery, impetuous, destructive power. If used to denote a nation, it would be a nation that was, as it were, burning with the desire of conquest - impetuous, and fierce, and fiery in its assaults - and consuming all in its way.

Cast into the sea - The image is very sublime; the scene, should such an event occur, would be awfully grand. As to the fulfillment of this, or the thing that was intended to be represented by it, there cannot be any material doubt. It is not to be understood literally, of course; and the natural

application is to some nation, or army, that has a resemblance in some respects to such a blazing mountain, and the effect of whose march would be like casting such a mountain into the ocean. We naturally look for agitation and commotion, and particularly in reference to the sea, or to some maritime coasts. It is undoubtedly required in the application of this, that we should find its fulfillment in some country lying beyond the sea, or in some seacoast or maritime country, or in reference to commerce.

And the third part of the sea became blood - Resembled blood; became as red as blood. The figure here is, that as such a blazing mountain cast into the sea would, by its reflection on the waters, seem to tinge them with red, so there would be something corresponding with this in what was referred to by the symbol. It would be fulfilled if there was a fierce maritime warfare, and if in some desperate naval engagement the sea should be tinged with blood.

Verse 9

And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died - The effect was as if one-third of all the fish in the sea were cut off. Of course this is not to be taken literally. It is designed to describe an effect, pertaining to the maritime portion of the world, as if a third portion of all that was in the sea should perish. The natural interpretation would be to apply it to some invasion or calamity pertaining to the sea - to the islands, to the maritime regions, or to commerce. If the whole description pertains to the Roman empire, then this might be supposed to have particular reference to something that would have a bearing on the maritime parts of that empire.

And the third part of the ships were destroyed - This also pertains to the same general calamity, affecting the commerce of the empire. The destruction of the “ships” was produced, in some way, by casting the mountain into the sea - either by their being consumed by the contact with the burning mass, or by being sunk by the agitation of the waters. The essential idea is, that the calamity would be of such a nature as would produce the destruction of vessels at sea - either naval armaments, or ships of commerce. In looking now for the application or fulfillment of this, it is necessary:

(a)to find some event or events which would have a particular bearing on the maritime or commercial part of the world; and,

(b)some such event or events that, on the supposition that they were the things referred to, would be properly symbolized by the image here employed:

(1) If the first trumpet had reference to the invasion of Alaric and the Goths, then in this we naturally look for the next succeeding act of invasion which shook the Roman empire, and contributed to its fall.

(2) the next invasion was that under Genseric, at the head of the Vandals (Gibbon, ii. 306ff). This occurred 428-468 ad.

(3) The symbol of a blazing or burning mountain, torn from its foundation, and precipitated into the ocean, would well represent this mighty nation moved from its ancient seat, and borne along toward the maritime parts of the empire, and its desolations there - as will be shown in the following remarks.

(4) the acts of the Vandals, under Genseric, corresponded with the ideas expressed by the symbol. In illustrating this I shall be indebted, as heretofore, principally to Mr. Gibbon:

(a) His general account of the Vandals is this: they are supposed (i. 138) to have been originally the same people with the Goths, the Goths and Vandals constituting one great nation living on the shores of the Baltic. They passed in connection with them over the Baltic; emigrated to Prussia and the Ukraine; invaded the Roman provinces; received tribute from the Romans; subdued the countries about the Bosphorus; plundered the cities of Bithynia; ravaged Greece and Illyrium, and were at last settled in Thrace under the emperor Theodosius (Gibbon, i. 136-166; ii. 110-150). They were then driven forward by the Huns, and having passed through France and Spain into Africa, conquered the Carthaginian territory, established an independent government, and thence through a long period harassed the neighboring islands, and the coasts of the Mediterranean by their predatory incursions, destroying the ships and the commerce of the Romans, and were distinguished in the downfall of the empire by their ravages on the islands and the sea. Thus, they were moved along from place to place until the scene of their desolations became more distinctly the maritime parts of the empire; and the effect of their devastations might be well compared with a

burning mountain moved from its ancient base, and then thrown into the sea.

(b) This will be apparent from the statements of Mr. Gibbon in regard to their ravages under their leader Genseric. “Seville and Carthagena became the reward, or rather the prey of the ferocious conquerors” (after they had defeated the Roman Castinus), “and the vessels which they found in the harbor of Carthagena might easily transport them to the isles of Majorca and Minorca, where the Spanish fugitives, as in a secure recess, had vainly concealed their families and fortunes. The experience of navigation, and perhaps the prospect of Africa, encouraged the Vandals to accept the invitation which they received from Count Boniface” (to aid him in his apprehended difficulties with Rome, and to enter into an alliance with him by settling permanently in Africa (Gibbon, ii. 305,306)): “and the death of Goaderic” (the Vandal king) “served only to forward and animate the bold enterprise. In the room of a prince, not conspicuous for any superior powers of the mind or body, they acquired his bastard brother, the terrible Genseric - a name which, in the destruction of the Roman empire, has deserved an equal rank with the names of Alaric and Attila.” “The ambition of Genseric was almost without bounds, and without scruples; and the warrior could dexterously employ the dark engines of policy to solicit the allies who might be useful to his success, or to scatter among his enemies the seeds of enmity and contention. Almost in the moment of his departure he was informed that Hermanric, king of the Suevi, had presumed to ravage the Spanish territories, which he was resolved to abandon. Impatient of the insult, Genseric pursued the hasty retreat of the Suevi as far as Merida; precipitated the king and his army into the river Anas, and calmly returned to the seashore to embark his troops. The vessels which transported the Vandals over the modern Straits of Gibraltar, a channel only twelve miles in breadth, were furnished by the Spaniards, who anxiously wished for their departure; and by the African general who had implored their formidable assistance” (Gibbon, ii. 306. Genseric, in the accomplishment of his purposes, soon took possession of the northern coast of Africa, defeating the armies of Boniface, and “Carthage, Cirta, and Hippo Regius were the only cities that appeared to rise above the general inundation” (Gibbon, ii. 308). “On a sudden,” says Mr. Gibbon (ii. 309), “the seven fruitful provinces, from Tangier to Tripoli, were overwhelmed by the invasion of the Vandals;

whose destructive rage has perhaps been exaggerated by popular animosity, religious zeal, and extravagant declamation. War in its fairest form implies a perpetual violation of humanity and justice; and the hostilities of barbarians are inflamed by the fierce and lawless spirit which perpetually disturbs their peaceful and domestic society. The Vandals, where they found resistance, seldom gave quarter; and the deaths of their valiant countrymen were expiated by the ruin of the cities under whose walls they had fallen," etc.

The result of the invasion was the conquest of all northern Africa; the reduction of Hippo and Carthage, and the establishment of a government under Genseric in Africa that waged a long war with Rome (Gibbon, ii. 310,311). The symbol before us has particular reference to maritime or naval operations and desolations, and the following extracts from Mr. Gibbon will show with what propriety, if this symbol was designed to refer to him, these images were employed. "The discovery and conquest of the black nations (in Africa) that might dwell beneath the torrid zone could not tempt the rational ambition of Genseric; but he east his eyes toward the sea; he resolved to create a naval power, and his bold resolution was executed with steady and active perseverance. The woods of Mount Atlas afforded an inexhaustible supply of timber; his new subjects were skilled in the arts of navigation and ship-building; he animated his daring Vandals to embrace a mode of warfare which would render every maritime country accessible to their arms; the Moors and Africans were allured by the hope of plunder; and after an interval of six centuries the fleets that issued from the port of Carthage again claimed the empire of the Mediterranean. The success of the Vandals, the conquest of Sicily, the sack of Palermo, and the frequent descents on the coasts of Lucania, awakened and alarmed the mother of Valentinian and the sister of Theodosius. Alliances were formed; and armaments, expensive and ineffectual, were prepared for the destruction of the common enemy, who reserved his courage to encounter those dangers which his policy could not prevent or elude.

The revolutions of the palace, which left the Western empire without a defender and without a lawful prince, dispelled the apprehension and stimulated the avarice of Genseric. He immediately equipped a numerous fleet of Vandals and Moors, and cast anchor at the mouth of the Tiber," etc. (Gibbon, ii. 352). "On the third day after the tumult (455 a.d., on the death

of Maximus) Genseric boldly advanced from the port of Ostia to the gates of the defenseless city. Instead of a sally of the Roman youth, there issued from the gates an unarmed and venerable procession of the bishop at the head of the clergy. But Rome and its inhabitants were delivered to the licentiousness of the Vandals and the Moors, whose blind passions revenged the injuries of Carthage. The pillage lasted fourteen days and nights; and all that yet remained of public or private wealth, of sacred or profane treasure, was diligently transported to the vessels of Genseric," etc.

See the account of this pillage in Gibbon, ii. 355-366. The emperor Majorian (457 a.d.) endeavored to "restore the happiness of the Romans," but he encountered the arms of Genseric, from his character and situation their most formidable enemy. A fleet of Vandals and Moors landed at the mouth of the Liris, or Garigliano; but the imperial troops surprised and attacked the disorderly barbarians, who were encumbered with the spoils of Campania; they were chased with slaughter to their ships; and their leader, the king's brother-in-law, was found in the number of the slain. Such vigilance might announce the character of the new reign; but the strictest vigilance, and the most numerous forces, were insufficient to protect the long-extended coast of Italy from the depredations of a naval war" (Gibbon, ii. 363). "The emperor had foreseen that it was impossible, without a maritime power, to achieve the conquest of Africa. In the first Punic war the republic had exerted such incredible diligence, that within sixty days after the first stroke of the axe had been given in the forest a fleet of one hundred and sixty galleys proudly rode at anchor in the sea. Under circumstances much less favorable Majorian equalled the spirit and perseverance of the ancient Romans. The woods of the Apennines were felled, the arsenals and manufactures of Ravenna and Misenium were restored, Italy and Gaul vied with each other in liberal contributions to the public service; and the imperial navy of 300 large galleys, with an adequate proportion of transports and smaller vessels, was collected in the secure and capacious harbor of Carthagena in Spain" (Gibbon, ii. 363,364).

The fate of this large navy is thus described by Mr. Gibbon: "Genseric was saved from impending and inevitable ruin by the treachery of some powerful subjects; envious or apprehensive of their master's success. Guided by their secret intelligence, he surprised the unguarded fleet in the

bay of Carthagena; many of the ships were sunk, or taken, or burnt; and the preparations of three years were destroyed in a single day," ii. 364. The further naval operations and maritime depredations of the Vandals under Genseric are thus stated by Mr. Gibbon: "The kingdom of Italy, a name to which the Western empire was gradually reduced, was afflicted, under the reign of Ricimer, by the incessant depredations of Vandal pirates. In the spring of each year they equipped a formidable navy in the port of Carthage; and Genseric himself, though in very advanced age, still commanded in person the most important expeditions. His designs were concealed with impenetrable secrecy until the moment that he hoisted sail. When he was asked by the pilot what course he should steer - ‹Leave the determination to the winds,‘ replied the barbarian, with pious arrogance; ‹they will transport us to the guilty coast whose inhabitants have provoked the divine justice;‘ but if Genseric himself deigned to issue more precise orders, he judged the most wealthy to be the most criminal.

The Vandals repeatedly visited the coasts of Spain, Liguria, Tuscany, Campania, Lucania, Bruttium, Apulia, Calabria, Venetia, Dalmatia, Epirus, Greece, and Sicily; they were tempted to subdue the island of Sardinia, so advantageously placed in the center of the Mediterranean; and their arms spread desolation, or terror, from the Columns of Hercules to the mouth of the Nile. As they were more ambitious of spoil than of glory, they seldom attacked any fortified cities, or engaged any regular troops in the open field. But the celerity of their motions enabled them, almost at the same time, to threaten and to attack the most distant objects which attracted their desires; and as they always embarked a sufficient number of horses, they had no sooner landed than they swept the dismayed country with a body of light cavalry," ii. 366. How far this description agrees with the symbol in the passage before us - "a great mountain burning with fire cast into the sea"; "the third part of the ships were destroyed" - must be left to the reader to judge.

It may be asked, however, with at least some show of reason, whether, if it be admitted that it was the design of the author of the Book of Revelation to refer to the movements of the Vandals under Genseric as one of the important and immediate causes of the ruin of the Roman empire, he could have found a more expressive symbol than this? Indeed, is there now any

symbol that would be more striking and appropriate? If one should now undertake to represent this as one of the causes of the (downfall of the empire by a symbol, could he easily find one that would be more expressive? It is a matter that is in itself perhaps of no importance, but it may serve to show that the interpretation respecting the second trumpet was not forced, to remark that I had gone through with the interpretation of the language of the symbol before I looked into Mr. Gibbon with any reference to the application.

Verse 10

And the third angel sounded - Indicating, according to the interpretation above proposed, some important event in the downfall of the Roman empire.

And there fell a great star from heaven - A star is a natural emblem of a prince, of a ruler, of one distinguished by rank or by talent. Compare the notes on Revelation 2:28. See Numbers 24:17, and the notes on Isaiah 14:12. A star falling from heaven would be a natural symbol of one who had left a higher station, or of one whose character and course would be like a meteor shooting through the sky.

Burning as it were a lamp - Or, as a torch. The language here is such as would describe a meteor blazing through the air; and the reference in the symbol is to something that would have a resemblance to such a meteor. It is not a lurid meteor (livid, pale, ghastly) that is here referred to, but a bright, intense, blazing star - emblem of fiery energy; of rapidity of movement and execution; of splendor of appearance - such as a chieftain of high endowments, of impetuousness of character, and of richness of apparel, would be. In all languages, probably, a star has been an emblem of a prince whose virtues have shone brightly, and who has exerted a beneficial influence on mankind. In all languages also, probably, a meteor flaming through the sky has been an emblem of some splendid genius causing or threatening desolation and ruin; of a warrior who has moved along in a brilliant but destructive path over the world; and who has been regarded as sent to execute the vengeance of heaven. This usage occurs because a meteor is so bright; because it appears so suddenly; because its course cannot be determined by any known laws; and because, in the apprehensions of people, it is either sent as a proof of the divine displeasure, or is adapted to excite consternation and alarm. In the

application of this part of the symbol, therefore, we naturally look for some prince or warrior of brilliant talents, who appears suddenly and sweeps rapidly over the world; who excites consternation and alarm; whose path is marked by desolation, and who is regarded as sent from heaven to execute the divine purposes - who comes not to bless the world by brilliant talents well directed, but to execute vengeance on mankind.

And it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters - On the phrase, "the third part," see the notes on Revelation 8:7. This reference to the "rivers" and to the "fountains of waters" seems, in part, to be for the purpose of saying that everything would be affected by this series of judgments. In the previous visions the trees and the green grass, the sea and the ships, had been referred to. The rivers and the fountains of waters are not less important than the trees, the grass, and the commerce of the world, and hence this judgment is mentioned as particularly bearing on them. At the same time, as in the case of the other trumpets, there is a propriety in supposing that there would be something in the event referred to by the symbol which would make it more appropriate to use this symbol in this case than in the others. It is natural, therefore, to look for some desolations that would particularly affect the portions of the world where rivers abound, or where they take their rise; or, if it be understood as having a more metaphorical sense, to regard it as affecting those things which resemble rivers and fountains - the sources of influence; the morals, the religion of a people, the institutions of a country, which are often so appropriately compared with running fountains or flowing streams.

Verse 11

And the name of the star is called Wormwood - Is appropriately so called. The writer does not say that it would be actually so called, but that this name would be properly descriptive of its qualities. Such expressions are common in allegorical writings. The Greek word - ἄψινθος apsinthos- denotes "wormwood," a well-known bitter herb. That word becomes the proper emblem of bitterness. Compare Jeremiah 9:15; Jeremiah 23:15; Lamentations 3:15, Lamentations 3:19.

And the third part of the waters became wormwood - Became bitter as wormwood. This is doubtless an emblem of the calamity which would occur if the waters should be thus made bitter. Of course they would become useless for the purposes to which they are mostly applied, and the destruction of life would be inevitable. To conceive of the extent of such a

calamity we have only to imagine a large portion of the wells, and rivers, and fountains of a country made bitter as wormwood. Compare Exodus 15:23-24.

And many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter - This effect would naturally follow if any considerable portion of the fountains and streams of a land were changed by an infusion of wormwood. It is not necessary to suppose that this is intended to be literally true; for as, by the use of a symbol, it is not to be supposed that literally a part of the waters would be turned into wormwood by the baleful influence of a falling meteor, so it is not necessary to suppose that there is intended to be represented a literal destruction of human life by the use of waters. Great destruction and devastation are undoubtedly intended to be denoted by this - destruction that would be well represented in a land by the natural effects if a considerable part of the waters were, by their bitterness, made unfit to drink.

In the interpretation and application, therefore, of this passage, we may adopt the following principles and rules:

(a)It may be assumed, in this exposition, that the previous symbols, under the first and second trumpet-blasts, referred respectively to Alaric and his Goths, and to Genseric and his Vandals.

(b)That the next great and decisive event in the downfall of the empire is the one that is here referred to.

(c)That there would be some chieftain or warrior who might be compared with a blazing meteor; whose course would be singularly brilliant; who would appear suddenly like a blazing star, and then disappear like a star whose light was quenched in the waters.

(d)That the desolating course of that meteor would be mainly on those portions of the world that abounded with springs of water and running streams.

(e)That an effect would be produced as if those streams and fountains were made bitter; that is, that many persons would perish, and that wide desolations would be caused in the vicinity of those rivers and streams, as if a bitter and baleful star should fall into the waters, and death should spread over the lands adjacent to them, and watered by them.

Whether any events occurred of which this would be the proper emblem is now the question. Among expositors there has been a considerable degree of unanimity in supposing that Attila, the king of the Huns, is referred to; and if the preceding expositions are correct, there can be no doubt on the subject. After Alaric and Genseric, Attila occupies the next place as an important agent in the overthrow of the Roman empire, and the only question is, whether he would be properly symbolized by this baleful star. The following remarks may be made to show the propriety of the symbol:

(1) As already remarked, the place which he occupies in history, as immediately succeeding Alaric and Genseric in the downfall of the empire. This will appear in any chronological table, or in the table of contents of any of the histories of those times. A full detail of the career of Attila may be found in Gibbon, vol. ii. pp. 314-351. His career extended from 433 a.d. to 453 a.d. It is true that he was contemporary with Genseric, king of the Vandals, and that a portion of the operations of Genseric in Africa were subsequent to the death of Attila (455 a.d. to 467 a.d.); but it is also true that Genseric preceded Attila in the career of conquest, and was properly the first in order, being pressed forward in the Roman warfare by the Huns, 428 a.d. See Gibbon, ii. 306ff.

(2) In the manner of his appearance he strongly resembled a brilliant meteor flashing in the sky. He came from the east, gathering his Huns, and poured them down, as we shall see, with the rapidity of a flashing meteor, suddenly on the empire. He regarded himself also as devoted to Mars, the god of war, and was accustomed to array himself in a especially brilliant manner, so that his appearance, in the language of his flatterers, was such as to dazzle the eyes of beholders. One of his followers perceived that a heifer that was grazing had wounded her foot, and curiously followed the track of blood, until he found in the long grass the point of an ancient sword, which he dug out of the ground and presented to Attila. “That magnanimous, or rather that artful prince,” says Mr. Gibbon, “accepted with pious gratitude this celestial favor; and, as the rightful possessor of the sword of Mars, asserted his divine and indefeasible claim to the dominion of the earth. The favorite of Mars soon acquired a sacred character, which rendered his conquests more easy and more permanent; and the barbarian princes confessed, in the language of devotion or flattery, that they could not presume to gaze, with a steady eye, on the divine majesty of the king of the

Huns," ii. 317. How appropriate would it be to represent such a prince by the symbol of a bright and blazing star - or a meteor flashing through the sky!

(3) there may be propriety, as applicable to him, in the expression - "a great star from heaven failing upon the earth." Attila was regarded as an instrument in the divine hand in inflicting punishment. The common appellation by which he has been known is "the scourge of God." This title is supposed by the modern Hungarians to have been first given to Attila by a hermit of Gaul, but it was "inserted by Attila among the titles of his royal dignity" (Gibbon, ii. 321, foot-note). To no one could the title be more applicable than to him.

(4) his career as a conqueror, and the effect of his conquests on the downfall of the empire, were such as to be properly symbolized in this manner:

(a) The general effect of the invasion was worthy of an important place in describing the series of events which resulted in the overthrow of the empire. This is thus stated by Mr. Gibbon: "The western world was oppressed by the Goths and Vandals, who fled before the Huns; but the achievements of the Huns themselves were not adequate to their power and prosperity. Their victorious hordes had spread from the Volga to the Danube, but the public force was exhausted by the discord of independent chieftains; their valor was idly consumed in obscure and predatory excursions; and they often degraded their national dignity by condescending, for the hopes of spoil, to enlist under the banners of their fugitive enemies. In the reign of Attila the Huns again became the terror of the world; and I shall now describe the character and actions of that formidable barbarian who alternately invaded and insulted the East and the West, and urged the rapid downfall of the Roman empire, ‹vol. ii. pp. 314,315.

(b) The parts of the earth affected by the invasion of the Huns were those which would be properly symbolized by the things specified at the blowing of this trumpet. It is said particularly that the effect would be on "the rivers," and on "the fountains of waters." If this has a literal

application, or if, as was supposed in the case of the second trumpet, the language used was such as had reference to the portion of the empire that would be particularly affected by the hostile invasion, then we may suppose that this refers to those portions of the empire that abounded in rivers and streams, and more particularly those in which the rivers and streams had their origin - for the effect was permanently in the "fountains of waters." As a matter of fact, the principal operations of Attila were in the regions of the Alps, and on the portions of the empire whence the rivers flow down into Italy. The invasion of Attila is described by Mr. Gibbon in this general language: "The whole breadth of Europe, as it extends above five hundred miles from the Euxine to the Adriatic, was at once invaded, and occupied, and desolated, by the myriads of barbarians whom Attila led into the field," ii. 319,320.

After describing the progress and the effects of this invasion (pp. 320-331) he proceeds more particularly to detail the events in the invasion of Gaul and Italy, pp. 331-347. After the terrible battle of Chalons, in which, according to one account, one hundred and sixty-two thousand, and, according to other accounts, three hundred thousand persons were slain, and in which Attila was defeated, he recovered his vigor, collected his forces, and made a descent on Italy. Under pretence of claiming Honoria, the daughter of the Empress of Rome, as his bride, "the indignant lover took the field, passed the Alps, invaded Italy, and besieged Aquileia with an innumerable host of barbarians." After endeavoring in vain for three months to subdue the city, and when about to abandon the siege, Attila took advantage of the appearance of a stork as a favorable omen to arouse his men to a renewed effort, "a large breach was made in the part of the wall where the stork had taken her flight; the Huns mounted to the assault with irresistible fury; and the succeeding generation could scarcely discover the ruins of Aquileia. After this dreadful chastisement Attila pursued his march; and as he passed, the cities of Altinum, Concordia, and Padua were reduced into heaps of stones and ashes. The inland towns, Vicenza, Verona, and Bergamo, were exposed to the rapacious cruelty of the Huns; Milan and Pavia submitted without resistance to the loss of their wealth, and applauded the unusual clemency which preserved from the flames the public as well as the private buildings, and spared the lives of the captive multitude. The popular traditions of Comum, Turin, or Modena, may be

justly suspected, yet they concur with more authentic evidence to prove that Attila spread his ravages over the rich plains of modern Lombardy, which are divided by the Po, and bounded by the Alps and the Apennines," ii. pp. 343,344. "It is a saying worthy of the ferocious pride of Attila, that the grass never grew on the spot where his horse had trod" (ibid. p. 345). Anyone has only to look on a map, and to trace the progress of those desolations and the chief seats of his military operations to see with what propriety this symbol would be employed. In these regions the great rivers that water Europe have their origin, and are swelled by numberless streams that flow down from the Alps; and about the fountains whence these streams flow were the principal military operations of the invader.

(c) With equal propriety is he represented in the symbol as affecting "a third" part of these rivers and fountains. At least a third part of the empire was invaded and desolated by him in his savage march, and the effects of his invasion were as disastrous on the empire as if a bitter star had fallen into a third part of those rivers and fountains, and had converted them into wormwood.

(d) There is one other point which shows the propriety of this symbol. It is, that the meteor, or star, seemed to be absorbed in the waters. It fell into the waters; embittered them; and was seen no more. Such would be the case with a meteor that should thus fall upon the earth - flashing along the sky, and then disappearing forever. Now, it was remarkable in regard to the Huns, that their power was concentrated under Attila; that he alone appeared as the leader of this formidable host; and that when he died all the concentrated power of the Huns was dissipated, or became absorbed and lost. "The revolution," says Mr. Gibbon (ii. 348), "which subverted the empire of the Huns, established the fame of Attila, whose genius alone had sustained the huge and disjointed fabric. After his death the boldest chieftains aspired to the rank of kings; the most powerful kings refused to acknowledge a superior; and the numerous sons, whom so many various mothers bore to the deceased monarch, divided and disputed, like a private inheritance, the sovereign command of the nations of Germany and Scythia." Soon, however, in the conflicts which succeeded, the empire passed away, and the empire of the Huns ceased. The people that composed it were absorbed in the surrounding nations, and Mr. Gibbon makes this

remark, after giving a summary account of these conflicts, which continued but for a few years: "The Igours of the north, issuing from the cold Siberian regions, which produced the most valuable furs, spread themselves over the desert, as far as the Borysthenes and the Caspian gates, and finally extinguished the empire of the Huns." These facts may, perhaps, show with what propriety Attila would be compared with a bright but beautiful meteor; and that, if the design was to symbolize him as acting an important part in the downfall of the Roman empire, there is a fitness in the symbol here employed.

Verse 12

And the fourth angel sounded - See the notes at Revelation 8:6-7.

And the third part of the sea was smitten - On the phrase the third part, see the notes on Revelation 8:7. The darkening of the heavenly luminaries is everywhere an emblem of any great calamity - as if the light of the sun, moon, and stars should be put out. See the notes on Revelation 6:12-13. There is no certain evidence that this refers to rulers, as many have supposed, or to anything that would particularly affect the government as such. The meaning is, that calamity would come as if darkness should spread over the sun, the moon, and the stars, leaving the world in gloom. What is the precise nature of the calamity is not indicated by the language, but anything that would diffuse gloom and disaster would accord with the fair meaning of the symbol. There are a few circumstances, however, in regard to this symbol which may aid us in determining its application:

(1) It would follow in the series of calamities that were to occur.

(2) it would be separated in some important sense - of time, place, or degree - from those which were to follow, for there is a pause here Revelation 8:13, and the angel proclaims that more terrible woes are to succeed this series.

(3) like the preceding, it is to affect "one third part" of the world; that is, it is to be a calamity as if a third part of the sun, the moon, and the stars were suddenly smitten and darkened.

(4) it is not to be total. It is not as if the sun, the moon, and the stars were entirely blotted out, for there was still some remaining light; that is,

there was a continuance of the existing state of things - as if these heavenly bodies should still give an obscure and partial light.

(5) perhaps it is also intended by the symbol that there would be light again. The world was not to go into a state of total and permanent night. For a third part of the day, and a third part of the night, this darkness reigned; but does not this imply that there would be light again - that the obscurity would pass away, and that the sun, and moon, and stars would shine again? That is, is it not implied that there would still be prosperity in some future period? Now, in regard to the application of this, if the explanation of the preceding symbols is correct, there can be little difficulty. If the previous symbols referred to Alaric, to Genseric, and to Attila, there can be no difficulty in applying this to Odoacer, and to his reign - a reign in which, in fact, the Roman dominion in the West came to an end, and passed into the hands of this barbarian. Anyone has only to open the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, to see that this is the next event that should be symbolized if the design were to represent the downfall of the empire.

These four great barbarian leaders succeed each other in order, and under the last, Odoacer, the barbarian dominion was established; for it is here that the existence of the Roman power, as such, ended. The Western empire terminated, according to Mr. Gibbon (ii. p. 380), about 476 or 479 a.d. Odoacer was "King of Italy" from 476 a.d. to 490 a.d. (Gibbon, ii. 379). The Eastern empire still lingered, but calamity, like blotting out the sun, and moon, and stars, had come over that part of the world which for so many centuries had constituted the seat of power and dominion. Odoacer was the son of Edecon, a barbarian, who was in the service of Attila, and who left two sons - Onulf and Odoacer. The former directed his steps to Constantinople; Oloacer "led a wandering life among the barbarians of Noricum, with a mind and fortune suited to the most desperate adventures; and when he had fixed his choice, he piously visited the cell of Severinus, the popular saint of the country, to solicit his approbation and blessing. The lowness of the door would not admit the lofty stature of Odoacer; he was obliged to stoop; but in that humble attitude the saint could discern the symptoms of his future greatness; and addressing him in a prophetic tone, ‹Pursue,‘ said he, ‹your design; proceed to Italy; you will soon cast away this coarse garment of skins; and your wealth will be adequate to the

liberality of your mind.‘ The barbarian, whose daring spirit accepted and ratified this prediction, was admitted into the service of the Western empire, and soon obtained an honorable rank in the guards.

His manners were gradually polished, his military skill improved; and the confederates of Italy would not have elected him for their general unless the exploits of Odoacer had established a high opinion of his courage and capacity. Their military acclamations saluted him with the title of king; but he abstained during his whole reign from the use of the purple and the diadem, lest he should offend those princes whose subjects, by their accidental mixture, had formed the victorious army which time and policy might insensibly unite into a great nation” (Gibbon, ii. 379,380). In another place Mr. Gibbon says: “Odoacer was the first barbarian who reigned in Italy, over a people who had once asserted their superiority above the rest of mankind. The disgrace of the Romans still excites our respectful compassion, and we fondly sympathize with the imaginary grief and indignation of their degenerate posterity. But the calamities of Italy had gradually subdued the proud consciousness of freedom and glory. In the age of Roman virtue the provinces were subject to the arms, and the citizens to the laws, of the republic; until those laws were subverted by civil discord, and both the city and the provinces became the servile property of a tyrant. The forms of the constitution which alleviated or disguised their abject slavery were abolished by time and violence; the Italians alternately lamented the presence or the absence of the sovereigns whom they detested or despised; and the succession of five centuries inflicted the various evils of military license, capricious despotism, and elaborate oppression.

During the same period the barbarians had emerged from obscurity and contempt, and the warriors of Germany and Scythia were introduced into the provinces, as the servants, the allies, and at length the masters of the Romans, whom they insulted or protected,” ii. 381,382. Of the effect of the reign of Odoacer Mr. Gibbon remarks: “In the division and decline of the empire the tributary harvests of Egypt and Africa were withdrawn; the numbers of the inhabitants continually decreased with the means of subsistence; and the country was exhausted by the irretrievable losses of war, famine, and pestilence. Ambrose has deplored the ruin of a populous district, which had been once adorned with the flourishing cities of

Bologna, Modena, Rhegium, and Placentia. Pope Gelasius was a subject of Odoacer; and he affirms, with strong exaggeration, that in Aemilia, Tuscany, and the adjacent provinces the human species was almost extirpated. One-third of those ample estates, to which the ruin of Italy is originally imputed, was extorted for the use of the conquerors," ii. 383.

Yet the light was not wholly extinct. It was "a third part" of it which was put out; and it was still true that some of the forms of the ancient constitution were observed - that the light still lingered before it wholly passed away. In the language of another, "The authority of the Roman name had not yet entirely ceased. The senate of Rome continued to assemble as usual. The consuls were appointed yearly, one by the Eastern emperor, one by Italy and Rome. Odoacer himself governed Italy under a title - that of Patrician - conferred on him by the Eastern emperor. There was still a certain, though often faint, recognition of the supreme imperial authority. The moon and the stars might seem still to shine in the West, with a dim reflected light. In the course of the events, however, which rapidly followed in the next half-century, these too were extinguished. After above a century and a half of calamities unexampled almost, as Dr. Robertson most truly represents it, in the history of nations, the statement of Jerome - a statement couched under the very Apocalyptic figure of the text, but prematurely pronounced on the first taking of Rome by Alaric - might be considered at length accomplished: ‹*Clarissimum terrarum lumen extincturn est* ' - ‹The world's glorious sun has been extinguished;' or, as the modern poet Byron (Childe Harold, canto iv.) has expressed it, still under the Apocalyptic imagery:

‹She saw her glories star by star expire, ‹

Till not even one star remained to glimmer in the vacant and dark night" (Elliott, i. 360,361).

I have thus endeavored to explain the meaning of the four first trumpets under the opening of the seventh seal, embracing the successive severe blows struck on the empire by Alaric, Genseric, Attila, and Odoacer, until the empire fell, to rise no more. I cannot better conclude this part of the exposition than in the words of Mr. Gibbon, in his reflections on the fall of

the empire. “I have now accomplished,” says he, “the laborious narrative of the decline and fall of the Roman empire, from the fortunate age of Trajan and the Antonines to its total extinction in the West, about five centuries after the Christian era. At that unhappy period the Saxons fiercely struggled with the natives for the possession of Britain; Gaul and Spain were divided between the powerful monarchies of the Franks and the Visigoths, and the dependent kingdoms of the Suevi and the Burgundians; Africa was exposed to the cruel persecution of the Vandals, and the savage insults of the Moors; Rome and Italy, as far as the banks of the Danube, were afflicted by an army of barbarian mercenaries, whose lawless tyranny was succeeded by the reign of Theodoric the Ostrogoth. All the subjects of the empire, who, by the use of the Latin language, more particularly deserved the name and privileges of Romans, were oppressed by the disgrace and calamities of foreign conquest; and the victorious nations of Germany established a new system of manners and government in the western countries of Europe. The majesty of Rome was faintly represented by the princes of Constantinople, the feeble and imaginary successors of Augustus” (vol. ii. pp. 440,441). “The splendid days of Augustus and Trajan were eclipsed by a cloud of ignorance (a fine illustration of the language ‹the third part of the sun was smitten, and the day shone not, and the night likewise‘); and the barbarians subverted the laws and palaces of Rome” (ibid. p. 446).

Thus ended the history of the Gothic period, and, as I suppose, the immediate symbolic representation of the affairs of the Western empire. An interval now occurs Revelation 8:13 in the sounding of the trumpets, and the scene is transferred, in the three remaining trumpets, to the Eastern parts of the empire. After that the attention is directed again to the West, to contemplate Rome under a new form, and exerting a new influence in the nations, under the papacy, but destined ultimately to pass away in its spiritual power, as its temporal power had yielded to the elements of internal decay in its bosom, and to the invasions of the northern hordes.

Verse 13

And I beheld - My attention was attracted by a new vision.

And heard an angel flying, … - I heard the voice of an angel making this proclamation.

Woe, woe, woe - That is, there will be great woe. The repetition of the word is intensive, and the idea is, that the sounding of the three remaining trumpets would indicate great and fearful calamities. These three are grouped together as if they pertained to a similar series of events, as the first four had been. The two classes are separated from each other by this interval and by this proclamation - implying that the first series had been completed, and that there would be some interval, either of space or time, before the other series would come upon the world. All that is fairly implied here would be fulfilled by the supposition that the former referred to the West, and that the latter pertained to the East, and were to follow when those should have been completed.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 9

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

The three remaining trumpets Revelation 8:13 (Prof. Stuart). The three extend, as I suppose, to the end of time, or, as it is supposed by the writer himself Revelation 11:15, to the period when "the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of Christ," embracing a succinct view of the most material events that were to occur, particularly in a secular point of view. See the Analysis prefixed to the book. In Revelation 11:19, as I understand it, a new view is commenced, referring to the church internally; the rise of Antichrist, and the effect of the rise of that formidable power on the internal history of the church, to the time of its overthrow, and the triumphant establishment of the kingdom of God. This, of course, synchronizes in its beginning and its close with the portion already passed over, but with a different view. See the Analysis prefixed to Revelation 11:19 ff.

This chapter Revelation 9:1-12. This woe is represented under the figure of calamities brought upon the earth by an immense army of locusts. A star is seen to fall from heaven representing some mighty chieftain, and to him is given the key of the bottomless pit. He opens the pit, and then comes forth an innumerable swarm of locusts that darken the heavens, and they go forth upon the earth. They have a command given them to do a certain work. They are not to hurt the earth, or any green thing, but they are sent against those people which have not the seal of God on their foreheads. Their main business, however, was not to kill them, but to torment them for a limited time - for five months. A description of the appearance of the locusts then follows. Though they are called locusts, because in their general appearance, and in the ravages they commit, they resemble them, yet, in the main, they are imaginary beings, and combine in themselves qualities which are never found united in reality.

They had a strong resemblance to horses prepared for battle; they wore on their heads crowns of gold; they had the faces of men but the hair of women and the teeth of lions. They had breastplates of iron, and tails like scorpions, with stings in their tails. They had a mighty king at their head, with a name significant of the destruction which he would bring upon the

world. These mysterious beings had their origin in the bottomless pit, and they are summoned forth to spread desolation upon the earth. Second, a description of the second of these trumpets, the sixth in order, Revelation 9:13-19. When this is sounded, a voice is heard from the four horns of the altar which is before God. The angel is commanded to loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. These angels are loosed - angels which had been prepared for a definite period - a day, and a month, and a year, to slay the third part of people.

The number of the army that would appear - composed of cavalry - is stated to amount to two hundred thousand, and the uniqueness qualities of these horsemen are then stated. They are remarkable for having breastplates of fire, and jacinth, and brimstone; the heads of the horses resemble lions; and they breathe forth fire and brimstone. A third part of people fall before them, by the fire, and the smoke, and the brimstone. Their power is in their mouth and in their tails, for their tails are like serpents. Third, a statement of the effect of the judgments brought upon the world under these trumpets, Revelation 9:20-21. The effect, so far as the reasonable result could have been anticipated, is lost. The nations are not turned from idolatry. Wickedness still abounds, and there is no disposition to repent of the abominations which had been so long practiced on the earth.

Verse 1

And the fifth angel sounded - See the notes on Revelation 8:6-7.

And I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth - This denotes, as was shown in the notes on Revelation 8:10, a leader, a military chieftain, a warrior. In the fulfillment of this, as in the former case, we look for the appearance of some mighty prince and warrior, to whom is given power, as it were, to open the bottomless pit, and to summon forth its legions. That some such agent is denoted by the star is further apparent from the fact that it is immediately added, that "to him (the star) was given the key of the bottomless pit." It could not be meant that a key would be given to a literal star, and we naturally suppose, therefore, that some intelligent being of exalted rank, and of baleful influence, is here referred to Angels, good and bad, are often called stars; but the reference here, as in Revelation 8:10, seems to me not to be to angels, but to some mighty leader of armies, who

was to collect his hosts, and to go through the world in the work of destruction.

And to him was given the key of the bottomless pit - Of the under-world, considered particularly of the abode of the wicked. This is represented often as a dark prison-house, enclosed with walls, and accessible by gates or doors. These gates or doors are fastened, so that none of the inmates can come out, and the key is in the hand of the keeper or guardian. In Revelation 1:18 it is said that the keys of that world are in the hand of the Saviour (compare the notes on that passage); here it is said that for a time, and for a temporary purpose, they are committed to another. The word "pit" - φρέαρ phrear- denotes properly a well, or a pit for water dug in the earth; and then any pit, cave, abyss. The reference here is doubtless to the nether world, considered as the abode of the wicked dead, the prison-house of the guilty. The word "bottomless," ἀβύσσος abussos- whence our word "abyss" means properly "without any bottom" (from A athe alpha privative (not), and βύθος buthosdepth, bottom). It would be applied properly to the ocean, or to any deep and dark dell, or to any obscure place whose depth was unknown. Here it refers to Hades - the region of the dead the abode of wicked spirits - as a deep, dark place, whose bottom was unknown. Having the key to this, is to have the power to confine those who are there, or to permit them to go at large. The meaning here is, that this master-spirit would have power to evoke the dead from these dark regions; and it would be fulfilled if some mighty genius, that could be compared with a fallen star, or a lurid meteor, should summon forth followers which would appear like the dwellers in the nether world called forth to spread desolation over the earth.

Verse 2

And he opened the bottomless pit - It is represented before as wholly confined, so that not even the smoke or vapor could escape.

And there arose a smoke out of the pit - Compare Revelation 14:11. The meaning here is that the pit, as a place of punishment, or as the abode of the wicked, was filled with burning sulphur, and consequently that it emitted smoke and vapor as soon as opened. The common image of the place of punishment, in the Scriptures, is that of a "lake that burns with fire and brimstone." Compare Revelation 14:10; Revelation 19:20; Revelation 20:10; Revelation 21:8. See also Psalm 11:6; Isaiah 30:33; Ezekiel 38:22. It is not improbable that this image was taken from the destruction of Sodom

and Gomorrah, Genesis 19:24. Such burning sulphur would produce, of course, a dense smoke or vapor; and the idea here is, that the pit had been closed, and that as soon as the door was opened a dense column escaped that darkened the heavens. The purpose of this is, probably, to indicate the origin of the plague that was about to come upon the world. It would be of such a character that it would appear as if it had been emitted from hell; as if the inmates of that dark world had broke loose upon the earth. Compare notes on Revelation 6:8.

As the smoke of a great furnace - So in Genesis 19:28, whence probably this image is taken: "And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the land of the plain, and beheld and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace."

And the sun and the air were darkened, … - As will be the case when a smoke ascends from a furnace. The meaning here is, that an effect would be produced as if a dense and dark vapor should ascend from the under-world. We are not, of course, to understand this literally.

Verse 3

And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth - That is, they escaped from the pit with the smoke. At first they were mingled with the smoke, so that they were not distinctly seen, but when the smoke cleared away they appeared in great numbers. The idea seems to be, that the bottomless pit was filled with vapor and with those creatures, and that as soon as the gate was opened the whole contents expanded and burst forth upon the earth. The sun was immediately darkened, and the air was full, but the smoke soon cleared away, so that the locusts became distinctly visible. The appearance of these locusts is described in another part of the chapter, Revelation 9:7 ff. The locust is a voracious insect belonging to the grasshopper or grylli genus, and is a great scourge in Oriental countries. A full description of the locust may be seen in Robinson's *Calmet*, and in Kitto's *Encyclo*. vol. ii. pp. 258ff. There are ten Hebrew words to denote the locust, and there are numerous references to the destructive habits of the insect in the Scriptures. In fact, from their numbers and their destructive habits, there was scarcely any other plague that was so much dreaded in the East. Considered as a symbol, or emblem, the following remarks may be made in explanation:

(1) The symbol is Oriental, and would most naturally refer to something that was to occur in the East. As locusts have appeared chiefly in the East,

and as they are in a great measure an Oriental plague, the mention of this symbol would most naturally turn the thoughts to that portion of the earth. The symbols of the first four trumpets had no special locality, and would suggest no particular part of the world; but on the mention of this, the mind would be naturally turned to the East, and we should expect to find that the scene of this woe would be located in the regions where the ravages of locusts most abounded. Compare, on this point, Elliott, Horae *Apoc*. i. 394-406. He has made it probable that the prophets, when they used symbolical language to denote any events, commonly, at least, employed those which had a local or geographical reference; thus, in the symbols derived from the vegetable kingdom, when Judah is to be symbolized, the olive, the vine, and the fig-tree are selected; when Egypt is referred to, the reed is chosen; when Babylon, the willow. And so, in the animal kingdom, the lion is the symbol of Judah; the wild ass, of the Arabs; the crocodile, of Egypt, etc. Whether this theory could be wholly carried out or not, no one can doubt that the symbol of locusts would most naturally suggest the Oriental world, and that the natural interpretation of the passage would lead us to expect its fulfillment there.

(2) locusts were remarkable for their numbers - so great often as to appear like clouds, and to darken the sky. In this respect they would naturally be symbolical of numerous armies or hosts of men. This natural symbol of numerous armies is often employed by the prophets. Thus, in Jeremiah 46:23;

"Cut down her forests (i. e. her people, or cities), saith Jehovah,
That it may not be found on searching;
Although they surpass the locusts in multitude,
And they are without number."

So in Nahum 3:15;

"There shall the fire devour thee;
The sword shall cut thee off; it shall devour thee as the locust,
Increase thyself as the numerous locusts."

So also in Nahum 3:17;

"Thy crowned princes are as the numerous locusts,
And thy captains as the grasshoppers;
Which encamp in the fences in the cold day,

But when the sun ariseth they depart,
And their place is not known where they were."

See also Deuteronomy 28:38, Deuteronomy 28:42; Psalm 78:46; Amos 7:1. Compare Judges 6:3-6; Judges 7:12; and Joel 1:2.

(3) locusts are an emblem of desolation or destruction. No symbol of desolation could be more appropriate or striking than this, for one of the most remarkable properties of locusts is, that they devour every green thing and leave a land perfectly waste. They do this even when what they destroy is not necessary for their own sustenance. "Locusts seem to devour not so much from a ravenous appetite as from a rage for destroying. Destruction, therefore, and not food, is the chief impulse of their devastations, and in this consists their utility; they are, in fact, omnivorous. The most poisonous plants are indifferent to them; they will prey even upon the crowfoot, whose causticity burns even the hides of beasts. They simply consume everything, without predilection - vegetable matter, linens, woolens, silk, leather, etc.; and Pliny does not exaggerate when he says, fores quoque tectorum - ‹even the doors of houses' - for they have been known to consume the very varnish of furniture. They reduce everything indiscriminately to shreds, which become manure" (Kitto's Encyclopedia ii. 263). Locusts become, therefore, a most striking symbol of an all-devouring army, and as such are often referred to in Scripture. So also in Josephus, de Bello Jude book v. ch. vii.: "As after locusts we see the woods stripped of their leaves, so, in the rear of Simon's army, nothing but devastation remained." The natural application of this symbol, then, is to a numerous and destructive army, or to a great multitude of people committing ravages, and sweeping off everything in their march.

And unto them was given power - This was something that was imparted to them beyond their ordinary nature. The locust in itself is not strong, and is not a symbol of strength. Though destructive in the extreme, yet neither as individuals, nor as combined, are they distinguished for strength. Hence, it is mentioned as a remarkable circumstance that they had such power conferred on them.

As the scorpions of the earth have power - The phrase "the earth" seems to have been introduced here because these creatures are said to have come up from "the bottomless pit," and it was natural to compare them with some well-known objects found on the earth. The scorpion is an animal with eight feet, eight eyes, and a long, jointed tail, ending in a pointed

weapon or sting. It is the largest and the most malignant of all the insect tribes. It somewhat resembles the lobster in its general appearance, but is much more hideous. See the notes on Luke 10:19. Those found in Europe seldom exceed four inches in length, but in tropical climates, where they abound, they are often found twelve inches long. There are few animals more formidable, and none more irascible, than the scorpion. Goldsmith states that Maupertuis put about a hundred of them together in the same glass, and that as soon as they came into contact they began to exert all their rage in mutual destruction, so that in a few days there remained but fourteen, which had killed and devoured all the rest.

The sting of the scorpion, Dr. Shaw states, is not always fatal; the malignity of their venom being in proportion to their size and complexion. The torment of a scorpion, when he strikes a man, is thus described by Dioscorides, lib. 7:cap. 7, as cited by Mr. Taylor: "When the scorpion has stung, the place becomes inflamed and hardened; it reddens by tension, and is painful by intervals, being now chilly, now burning. The pain soon rises high, and rages, sometimes more, sometimes less. A sweating succeeds, attended by a shivering and trembling; the extremities of the body become cold, the groin swells, the hair stands on end, the members become pale, and the skin feels throughout the sensation of a perpetual pricking, as if by needles" (Fragments to Calmet's Dic. vol. iv. p. 376,377). "The tail of the scorpion is long, and formed after the manner of a string of beads, the last larger than the others, and longer; at the end of which are, sometimes, two stings which are hollow, and filled with a cold poison, which it ejects into the part which it stings" (Calmet's Dic.). The sting of the scorpion, therefore, becomes the emblem of what causes acute and dangerous suffering. On this comparison with scorpions see the remark of Niebuhr, quoted in the notes on Revelation 9:7.

Verse 4

And it was commanded them - The writer does not say by whom this command was given, but it is clearly by someone who had the direction of them. As they were evoked from the "bottomless pit" by one who had the key to that dark abode, and as they are represented in Revelation 9:11 as under the command of one who is there called Abaddon, or Apollyon - the Destroyer - it would seem most probable that the command referred to is one that is given by him; that is, that this expresses one of the principles on

which he would act in his devastations. At all events, this denotes what would be one of the characteristics of these destroyers. Their purpose would be to vex and trouble people; not to spread desolation over vineyards, olive-yards, and fields of grain.

That they should not hurt the grass of the earth, … - See the notes on Revelation 8:7. The meaning here is plain. There would be some sense in which these invaders would be characterized in a manner that was not common among invaders, to wit, that they would show particular care not to carry their devastations into the vegetable world. Their warfare would be with people, and not with orchards and green fields.

But only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads - See the notes on Revelation 7:2-3. They commenced war against that part of the human race only. The language here properly denotes those who were not the friends of God. It may here refer, however, either to those who in reality were not such, or to those who were regarded by him who gave this command as not being such. In the former case, the commission would have respect to real infidels in the sight of God - that is, to those who rejected the true religion; in the latter it would express the sentiment of the leader of this host, as referring to those who in his apprehension were infidels or enemies of God. The true interpretation must depend on the sense in which we understand the phrase "it was commanded"; whether as referring to God, or to the leader of the host himself. The language, therefore, is ambiguous, and the meaning must be determined by the other parts of the passage. Either method of understanding the passage would be in accordance with its fair interpretation.

Verse 5

And to them it was given - There is here the same indefiniteness as in the former verse, the impersonal verb being here also used. The writer does not say by whom this power was given, whether by God, or by the leader of the host. It may be admitted, however, that the most natural interpretation is to suppose that it was given them by God, and that this was the execution of his purpose in this case. Still it is remarkable that this is not directly affirmed, and that the language is so general as to admit of the other application. The fact that they did not kill them, but tormented them - if such a fact should be found to exist - would be in every sense a fulfillment of what is here said.

That they should not kill them - This is in accordance with the nature of the symbol. The locusts do not themselves destroy any living creature; and the sting of the scorpion, though exceedingly painful, is not usually fatal. The proper fulfillment of this would be found in what would not be generally fatal, but which would diffuse misery and wretchedness. (Compare Revelation 9:6.) Perhaps all that would be necessarily meant by this would be, not that individual people would not be killed, but that they would be sent to inflict plagues and torments rather than to take life, and that the characteristic effects of their appearing would be distress and suffering rather than death. There may be included in the fair interpretation of the words, "general distress" and "sorrow"; acts of oppression, cruelty, and violence; such a condition of public suffering that people would regard death as a relief if they could find it.

But that they should be tormented - That is, that they should be subjected to ills and troubles which might be properly compared with the sting of a scorpion.

Five months - So far as the words here are concerned this might be taken literally, denoting five months or one hundred and fifty days; or as a prophetic reckoning, where a day stands for a year. Compare the notes on Daniel 9:24 ff. The latter is undoubtedly the correct interpretation here, for it is the character of the book thus to reckon time. See the notes on Revelation 9:15. If this be the true method of reckoning here, then it will be necessary to find some events which will embrace about the period of one hundred and fifty years, during which this distress and sorrow would continue. The proper laws of interpretation demand that one or the other of these periods should be found - either that of five months literally, or that of 150 years. It may be true, as Prof. Stuart suggests (in loco), that "the usual time of locusts is from May to September inclusive - five months." It may be true, also, that this symbol was chosen partly because that was the fact, and they would, from that fact, be well adapted to symbolize a period that could be spoken of as "five months"; but still the meaning must be more than simply it was "a short period," as he supposes. The phrase a few months might designate such a period; but if that had been the writer's intention, he would not have selected the definite number five.

And their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, … - See the notes on Revelation 9:3. That is, it would be painful, severe, dangerous.

Verse 6

And in those days shall men seek death … - See the notes on Revelation 9:5. It is very easy to conceive of such a state of things as is here described, and, indeed, this has not been very uncommon in the world. It is a state where the distress is so great that people would consider death a relief, and where they anxiously look to the time when they may be released from their sufferings by death. In the case before us it is not intimated that they would lay violent hands on themselves, or that they would take any positive measures to end their sufferings; and this, perhaps, may be a circumstance of some importance to show that the persons referred to were servants of God. When it is said that "they would seek death," it can only be meant that they would look out for it - or desire it - as the end of their sorrows. This is descriptive, as we shall see, of a particular period of the world; but the language is beautifully applicable to what occurs in all ages and in all lands.

There is always a great number of sufferers who are looking forward to death as a relief. In cells and dungeons; on beds of pain and languishing; in scenes of poverty and want; in blighted hopes and disappointed affections, how many are there who would be glad to die, and who have no hope of an end of suffering but in the grave! A few, by the pistol, by the halter, by poison, or by drowning, seek thus to end their woes. A large part look forward to death as a release, when, if the reality were known, death would furnish no such relief, for there are deeper and longer woes beyond the grave than there are this side of it. Compare the notes on Job 3:20-22. But to a portion death will be a relief. It will be an end of sufferings. They will find peace in the grave, and are assured they shall suffer no more. Such bear their trials with patience, for the end of all sorrow to them is near, and death will come to release their spirits from the suffering clay, and to bear them in triumph to a world where a pang shall never be felt, and a tear never shed.

Verse 7

And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared for battle - The resemblance between the locust and the horse, dissimilar as they are in most respects, has been often remarked. Dr. Robinson (Bib. Research. i. 59) says: "We found today upon the shrubs an insect, either a species of black locust, or much resembling them, which our Bedouin called Farras el Jundy, ‹soldiers‘ horses.‘ They said these insects were common on Mount Sinai, of a green color, and were found on dead trees,

but did them no injury." The editor of the Pictorial Bible makes the following remarks: - "The first time we saw locusts browsing with their wings closed, the idea of comparing them to horses arose spontaneously to our minds - as we had not previously met with such a comparison, and did not at that time advert to the present text Joel 2:4. The resemblance in the head first struck our attention; and this notion having once arisen, other analogies were found or imagined in its general appearance and action in feeding. We have since found the observation very common. The Italians, indeed, from this resemblance, called the locust cavaletta, or little horse. Sir W. Ouseley reports: ‹Zakaria Cazvine divides the locusts into two classes, like horsemen and footmen - mounted and pedestrian.' Niebuhr says that he heard from a Bedouin, near Bussorah, a particular comparison of the locust to other animals; but as this passage of Scripture did not occur to him at the time he thought it a mere fancy of the Arab's, until he heard it repeated at Baghdad. He compared the head of the locust to that of the horse; the feet to those of the camel; the belly with that of a serpent; the tail with that of a scorpion; and the feelers (if Niebuhr remembered rightly) to the hair of a virgin" (Pict. Bib. on Joel 2:4). The resemblance to horses would naturally suggest the idea of cavalry, as being referred to by the symbol.

And on their heads were as it were crowns like gold - The writer does not say either that these were literally crowns, or that they were actually made of gold. They were "as it were" (ὡς hōs) "crowns," and they were like (ὅμοιοι homoioi) "gold." That is, as seen by him, they had a resemblance to crowns or diadems, and they also resembled gold in their color and brilliancy. The word "crown" - στέφανος stephanos- means properly a circlet, chaplet, encircling the head:

(a)as an emblem of royal dignity, and as worn by kings;

(b)as conferred on victors in the public games - a chaplet, a wreath;

(c)as an ornament, honor, or glory, Philemon 4:1.

No particular shape is designated by the word στέφανος stephanosand perhaps the word "crown" does not quite express the meaning. The word "diadem" would come nearer to it. The true notion in the word is that of something that is passed around the head, and that encircles it, and as such it would well describe the appearance of a turban as seen at a distance. On the supposition that the symbolic beings here referred to had turbans on their heads, and on the supposition that something was referred to which

was not much worn in the time of John, and, therefore, that had no name, the word στέφανος stephanosor *diadem*, would be likely to be used in describing it. This, too, would accord with the use of the phrase "as it were" - ὡς hōsThe writer saw such head-ornaments as he was accustomed to see. They Were not exactly crowns or diadems, but they had a resemblance to them, and he therefore uses this language: "and on their heads were as it were crowns." Suppose that these were turbans, and that they were not in common use in the time of John, and that they had, therefore, no name, would not this be the exact language which he would use in describing them? The same remarks may be made respecting the other expression.

Like gold - They were not pure gold, but they had a resemblance to it. Would not a yellow turban correspond with all that is said in this description?

And their faces were as the faces of men - They had a human countenance. This would indicate that, after all, they were human beings that the symbol described, though they had come up from the bottomless pit. Horsemen, in strange apparel, with a strange head-dress, would be all that would be properly denoted by this.

Verse 8

And they had hair as the hair of women - Long hair; not such as men commonly wear, but such as women wear. See the notes on 1 Corinthians 11:14. This struck John as a peculiarity, that, though warriors, they should have the appearance of effeminacy indicated by allowing their hair to grow long. It is clear from this, that John regarded their appearance as unusual and remarkable. Though manifestly designed to represent an army, yet it was not the usual appearance of men who went forth to battle. Among the Greeks of ancient times, indeed, long hair was not uncommon (see the notes above referred to on 1 Corinthians 11:14), but this was by no means the usual custom among the ancients; and the fact that these warriors had long hair like women was a circumstance that would distinguish them particularly from others. On this comparison of the appearance of the locusts with the hair of women see the remarks of Niebuhr, in the notes on Revelation 9:7.

And their teeth were as the teeth of lions - Strong; suited to devour. The teeth of the locust are by no means prominent, though they are strong, for they readily cut down and eat up all vegetable substances that come in their way. But it is evident that John means to say that there was much that

was unusual and remarkable in the teeth of these locusts. They would be ravenous and fierce, and would spread terror and desolation like the lions of the desert.

Verse 9

And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron - Hard, horny, impenetrable, as if they were made of iron. The locust has a firm and hard cuticle on the forepart of the breast, which serves for a shield or defense while it moves in the thorny and furzy vegetation. On those which John saw this was especially hard and horny, and would thus be well adapted to be an emblem of the breastplates of iron commonly worn by ancient warriors. The meaning is, that the warriors referred to would be well clad with defensive armor.

And the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle - The noise made by locusts is often spoken of by travelers, and the comparison of that noise with that of chariots rushing to battle, is not only appropriate, but also indicates clearly what was symbolized. It was an army that was symbolized, and everything about them served to represent hosts of men well armed, rushing to conflict. The same thing here referred to is noticed by Joel Joel 2:4-5, Joel 2:7;

"The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses;
And as horsemen so shall they run.
Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains, shall they leap;

Like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble;

As a strong people set in battle array.

They shall run like mighty men;

They shall climb the wall like men of war;

And they shall march every one his ways,
And shall not break their ranks," etc.

It is remarkable that Volney, who had no intention of illustrating the truth of Scripture, has given a description of locusts, as if he meant to confirm the truth of what is here said. "Syria," says he, "as well as Egypt, Persia, and almost all the south of Asia, is subject to another calamity no

less dreadful (than earthquakes); I mean those clouds of locusts so often mentioned by travelers. The quantity of these insects is incredible to all who have not themselves witnessed their astounding numbers; the whole earth is covered with them for the space of several leagues. The noise they make in browsing on the trees and herbage may be heard to a great distance, and resembles that of an army foraging in secret" (Travels in Egypt and Syria, vol. i. pp. 283,284).

Verse 10

And they had tails like unto scorpions - The fancy of an Arab now often discerns a resemblance between the tail of the locust and the scorpion. See the remark of Niebuhr, quoted in the notes on Revelation 9:7.

And there were stings in their tails - Like the stings of scorpions. See the notes on Revelation 9:3. This made the locusts which appeared to John the more remarkable, for though the fancy may imagine a resemblance between the tail of a locust and a scorpion, yet the locusts have properly no sting. The only thing which they have resembling a sting is a hard bony subsubstance like a needle, with which the female punctures the bark and wood of trees in order to deposit her eggs. It has, however, no adaptation, like a sting, for conveying poison into a wound. These, however, appeared to be armed with stings properly so called.

And their power was to hurt men - Not primarily to kill people, but to inflict on them various kinds of tortures. See the notes on Revelation 9:5. The word used here - ἀδικῆσαι adikēsairendered "to hurt" - is different from the word in Revelation 9:5 - βασανισθῶσιν basanisthōsinrendered "should be tormented." This word properly means "to do wrong, to do unjustly, to injure, to hurt"; and the two words would seem to convey the idea that they would produce distress by doing wrong to others, or by deeding unjustly with them. It does not appear that the wrong would be by inflicting bodily torments, but would be characterized by that injustice toward others which produces distress and anguish.

Five months - See the notes on Revelation 9:5; (also Editor's Preface).

Verse 11

And they had a king over them - A ruler who marshalled their hosts. Locusts often, and indeed generally, move in bands, though they do not appear to be under the direction of anyone as a particular ruler or guide. In this case it struck John as a remarkable peculiarity that they had a king - a king who, it would seem, had the absolute control, and to whom was to be

traced all the destruction which would ensue from their emerging from the bottomless pit.

Which is the angel of the bottomless pit - See the notes on Revelation 9:1. The word "angel" here would seem to refer to the chief of the evil angels, who presided over the dark and gloomy regions from whence the locusts seemed to emerge. This may either mean that this evil angel seemed to command them personally, or that his spirit was infused into the leader of these hosts.

Whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon - The name Abaddon means literally "destruction," and is the same as Apollyon.

But in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon - From ἀπόλλυμι apollumi- "to destroy." The word properly denotes "a destroyer," and the name is given to this king of the hosts, represented by the locusts, because this would be his principal characteristic.

After this minute explanation of the literal meaning of the symbol, it may be useful, before attempting to apply it, and to ascertain the events designed to be represented, to have a distinct impression of the principal image - the locust. It is evident that this is, in many respects, a creature of the imagination, and that we are not to expect the exact representation to be found in any forms of actual existence in the animal creation. The following engraving, prepared by Mr. Elliott (vol. i. p. 410), will give a sufficiently accurate representation of this symbolical figure as it appeared to John.

The question now is, whether any events occurred in history, subsequent to and succeeding those supposed to be referred to in the fourth trumpet, to which this symbol would be applicable. Reasons have already been suggested for supposing that there was a transfer of the seat of the operations to another part of the world. The first four trumpets referred to a continual series of events of the same general character, and having a proper close. These have been explained as referring to the successive shocks which terminated in the downfall of the Western empire. At the close of that series there is a pause in the representation Revelation 8:13, and a solemn proclamation that other scenes were to open distinguished for woe. These were to be symbolized in the sounding of the remaining three trumpets, embracing the whole period until the consummation of all things - or sketching great and momentous events in the future, until the volume sealed with the seven seals Revelation 5:1 should have been wholly unrolled and

its contents disclosed. The whole scene now is changed. Rome has fallen. It has passed into the hands of strangers. The power that had spread itself over the world has, in that form, come to an end, and is to exist no more - though, as we shall see (Exodus 10:13, and they must therefore have come from some portion of Arabia - for Arabia is the land that lies over against Egypt in the east. Such, too, is the testimony of Volney; "the most judicious," as Mr. Gibbon calls him, "of modern travelers." "The inhabitants of Syria," says he, "have remarked that locusts come constantly from the desert of Arabia," ch. 20:sect. 5.

All that is necessary to say further on this point is, that on the supposition that it was the design of the Spirit of inspiration in the passage before us to refer to the followers of Muhammed, the image of the locusts was that which would be naturally selected. There was no other one so appropriate and so striking; no one that would so naturally designate the country of Arabia. As some confirmation of this, or as showing how natural the symbol would be, a remark may be introduced from Mr. Forster. In his *Mohammedanism Unveiled*, vol. i. p. 217, he says, "In the Bedoween romance of Antar, the locust is introduced as the national emblem of the Ishmaelites. And it is a remarkable coincidence that Muslim tradition speaks of locusts having dropped into the hands of Muhammed, bearing on their wings this inscription - ‹We are the army of the Great God.‘" These circumstances will show the propriety of the symbol on the supposition that it refers to Arabia and the Saracens.

(2) the people. The question is, whether there was anything in the symbol, as described by John, which would properly designate the followers of Muhammed, on the supposition that it was designed to have such a reference:

(a) As to numbers. "They (the Midianite Arabs) came as locusts for multitude," John 6:5. See the notes on Revelation 9:3. Nothing would better represent the numbers of the Saracenic hordes that came out of Arabia, and that spread over the East - over Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Spain, and that threatened to spread over Europe - than such an army of locusts. "One hundred years after his flight (Muhammed) from Mecca," says Mr. Gibbon, "the arms and the reign of his successors extended from India to the

Atlantic Ocean, over the various and distant provinces which may be comprised under the names of Persia, Syria, Egypt, Africa, and Spain," vol. iii. p. 410. "At the end of the first century of the Hegira the caliphs were the most potent and absolute monarchs on the globe. Under the last of the Ommiades the Arabian empire extended two hundred days' journey from east to west, from the confines of Tartary and India to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean" (ibid. p. 460). In regard to the immense hosts employed in these conquests, an idea may be formed by a perusal of the whole fifty-first chapter in Gibbon (vol. iii. pp. 408-461). Those hosts issued primarily from Arabia, and in their numbers would be well compared with the swarms of locusts that issued from the same country, so numerous as to darken the sky.

(b) The description of the people.

"Their faces were as the faces of men" This would seem to be in contrast with other people, or to denote something that was unique in the appearance of the persons represented. In other words, the meaning would seem to be, that there was something manly and warlike in their appearance, so far as their faces were concerned. It is remarkable that the appearance of the Goths (represented, as I suppose, under the previous trumpets) is described by Jerome (compare on Revelation 9:8. And yet this strictly accords with the appearance of the Arabs or Saracens. Pliny, the contemporary of John, speaks of the Arabs then as having the hair long and uncut, with the moustache on the upper lip, or the beard: Arabes mitrati sunt, aut intoso crine. Barba abraditur, praeterquam in superiore labro. Aliis et haec intonsa(Nat. Hist. vol. 6, p. 28). So Solinus describes them in the third century (Plurimis crinis intonsus, mitrata capita, pars rasa in cutem barba, 100:53); so Ammianus Marcellinus, in the fourth century (Crinitus quidam a Saracenorum cuneo, vol. xxxi. p. 16); and so Claudian, Theodore of Mopsuesta, and Jerome, in the fifth. Jerome lived about two centuries before the great Saracen invasion; and as he lived at Bethlehem, on the borders of Arabia, he must have been familiar with the appearance of the Arabs. Still later, in that most characteristic of Arab poems, Antar, a poem written in the time of Muhammed's childhood, we find the moustache, and the beard, and the long flowing hair on the shoulder, and the turban, all specified as characteristic of the Arabians: "He adjusted himself properly, twisted his whiskers, and folded up his hair under his turban, drawing it

from off his shoulders," vol. i. p. 340. "His hair flowed down on his shoulders," vol. i. p. 169. "Antar cut off Maudi's hair in revenge and insult," vol. iii. p. 117. "We will hang him up by his hair," vol. iv. p. 325. See Elliott, vol. i. pp. 411,412. Compare *Newton on the Prophecies*, p. 485.

"And on their heads were as it were crowns of gold" See the notes on Revelation 9:7. That is, diadems, or something that appeared like crowns, or chaplets. This will agree well with the turban worn by the Arabs or Saracens, and which was quite characteristic of them in the early periods when they became known. So in the passage already quoted, Pliny speaks of them as Arabes mitrati; so Solinus, mitrata capita; so in the poem of Antar, "he folded up his hair under his turbans." It is remarkable also that Ezekiel Ezekiel 23:42 describes the turbans of the Sabean or Keturite Arabs under the very appellation used here by John: "Sabeans from the wilderness, which put beautiful crowns upon their heads." So in the preface to Antar, it is said, "It was a usual saying among them, that God had bestowed four special things on the Arabs; that their turbans should be unto them instead of diadems, their tents instead of walls and houses, their swords instead of intrenchments, and their poems instead of written laws." Mr. Forster, in his Mohammedanism Unveiled, quotes as a precept of Muhammed; "Make a point of wearing turbans, because it is the way of angels." Turbans might then with propriety be represented as crowns, and no doubt these were often so gilded and ornamented that they might be spoken of as "crowns of gold."

"They had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron" See the notes on Revelation 9:9. As a symbol, this would be properly descriptive of the Arabians or Saracens. In the poem Antar the steel and iron cuirasses of the Arab warriors are frequently noticed: "A warrior immersed in steel armor," vol. ii. p. 203. "Fifteen thousand men armed with cuirasses, and well accoutred for war," vol. ii. p. 42. "They were clothed in iron armor, and brilliant cuirasses," vol. i. p. 23. "Out of the dust appeared horsemen clad in iron," vol. iii. p. 274. The same thing occurs in the Koran: "God hath given you coats of mail to defend you in your wars," vol. ii. p. 104. In the history of Muhammed we read expressly of the cuirasses of himself and of his Arab troops. Seven cuirasses are noted in the list of Muhammed's private armory (Gagnier, vol. iii. p. 328-334). In his second battle with the Koreish, seven

hundred of his little army are spoken of by Mr. Gibbon as armed with cuirasses. See Elliott, vol. i. p. 413. These illustrations will show with what propriety the locusts in the symbol were represented as having breastplates like breastplates of iron. On the supposition that this referred to the Arabs and the Saracens this would have been the very symbol which would have been used. Indeed, all the features in the symbol are precisely such as would properly be employed on the supposition that the reference was to them. It is true that beforehand it might not have been practicable to describe exactly what people were referred to, but:

(a)it would be easy to see that some fearful calamity was to be anticipated from the ravages of hosts of fearful invaders; and,

(b)when the events occurred, there would be no difficulty in determining to whom this application should be made.

(3) "the time when this would occur." As to this there can be no difficulty in the application to the Saracens. On the supposition that the four first trumpets refer to the downfall of the Western empire, then the proper time supposed to be represented by this symbol is subsequent to that; and yet the manner in which the last three trumpets are introduced Revelation 8:13 shows that there would be an interval between the sounding of the last of the four trumpets and the sounding of the fifth. The events referred to, as I have supposed, as represented by the fourth trumpet, occurred in the close of the fifth century (476-490 a.d.). The principal events in the seventh century were connected with the invasions and conquests of the Saracens. The interval of a century is not more than the fair interpretation of the proclamation in Revelation 8:13 would justify.

(4) "the commission given to the symbolical locusts." This embraces the following things:

(a)They were not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing;

(b)they were especially to go against those who had not the seal of God in their foreheads;

(c)they were not to kill them, but were to torment them.

"They were not to hurt the grass of the earth, … " see the notes at Revelation 9:4. This agrees remarkably with an express command in the Koran. The often-quoted order of the Caliph Aboubekir, the father-in-law and successor of Muhammed, issued to the Saracen hordes on their invasion of Syria, shows what was understood to be the spirit of their religion:

“Remember that you are always in the presence of God, on the verge of death, in the assurance of judgment, and the hope of paradise. Avoid injustice and oppression; consult with your brethren, and study to preserve the love and confidence of your troops. When you fight the battles of the Lord, acquit yourselves like men, without turning your backs; but let not the victory be stained with the blood of women or children. Destroy no palm-trees, nor burn any fields of grain. Cut down no fruit-trees, nor do any mischief to cattle, only such as you kill to eat. When you make any covenant or article, stand to it, and be as good as your word. As you go on, you will find some religious persons who live retired in monasteries, and propose to themselves to serve God in that way; let them alone, and neither kill them (‹and to them it was given that they should not kill them,‘ ver 5), nor destroy their monasteries,” etc. (Gibbon, iii. 417,418).

So Mr. Gibbon notices this precept of the Koran: “In the siege of Tayaf,” says he, “sixty miles from Mecca, Muhammed violated his own laws by the extirpation of the fruit-trees,” ii. 392. The same order existed among the Hebrews, and it is not improbable that Muhammed derived his precept from the command of Moses Deuteronomy 20:19, though what was mercy among the Hebrews was probably mere policy with him. This precept is the more remarkable because it has been the usual custom in war, and particularly among barbarians and semi-barbarians, to destroy grain and fruit, and especially to cut down fruit-trees, in order to do greater injury to an enemy. Thus, we have seen (notes on Revelation 8:7), that in the invasion of the Goths their course was marked by desolations of this kind. Thus, in more modern times, it has been common to carry the desolations of war into gardens, orchards, and vineyards. In the single province of Upper Messenia the troops of Muhammed Ali, in the war with Greece, cut down half a million of olive-trees, and thus stripped the country of its means of wealth. So Scio was a beautiful spot, the seat of delightful villas, and gardens, and orchards; and in one day all this beauty was destroyed. On the supposition, therefore, that this prediction had reference to the Saracens, nothing could be more appropriate. Indeed, in all the history of barbarous and savage warfare it would be difficult to find another distinct command that no injury should be done to gardens and orchards.

(d) Their commission was expressly against “those men who had not the seal of God in their foreheads.” See the notes on Revelation 9:4. That is,

they were to go either against those who were not really the friends of God, or those who in their estimation were not. Perhaps, if there were nothing in the connection to demand a different interpretation, the former would be the most natural explanation of the passage; but the language way be understood as referring to the purpose which they considered themselves as called upon to execute: that is, that they were to go against those whom they regarded as being strangers to the true God, to wit, idolaters. Now it is well known that Muhammed considered himself called upon, principally, to make war with idolaters, and that he went forth, professedly, to bring them into subjection to the service of the true God. "The means of persuasion," says Mr. Gibbon, "had been tried, the season of forbearance was elapsed, and he was now commanded to propagate his religion by the sword, to destroy the monuments of idolatry, and, without regarding the sanctity of days or months, to pursue the unbelieving nations of the earth," iii. 387. "The fair option of friendship, or submission, or battle, was proposed to the enemies of Muhammed" (ibid.). "The sword," says Muhammed, "is the key of heaven and hell; a drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months of fasting and prayer: whosoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven; at the day of judgment his wounds shall be resplendent as vermilion, and odoriferous as musk; and the loss of his limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubim" (Gibbon, iii. 387) The first conflicts waged by Muhammed were against the idolaters of his own country - those who can, on no supposition, be regarded as "having the seal of God in their foreheads"; his subsequent wars were against infidels of all classes; that is, against those whom he regarded as not having the "seal of God in their foreheads," or as being the enemies of God.

(e) The other part of the commission was "not to kill, but to torment them." See the notes at Revelation 9:5. Compare the quotation from the command of Aboubekir, as quoted above: "Let not the victory be stained with the blood of women and children." "Let them alone, and neither kill them nor destroy their monasteries." The meaning of this, if understood as applied to their commission against Christendom, would seem to be, that they were not to go forth to "kill," but to "torment" them; to wit, by the calamities which they would bring upon Christian nations for a definite period. Indeed, as we have seen above, it was an express command of Aboubekir that they should not put those to death who were found leading

quiet and peaceable lives in monasteries, though against another class he did give an express command to “cleave their skulls.” See Gibbon, iii. 418. As applicable to the conflicts of the Saracens with Christians, the meaning here would seem to be, that the power conceded to those who are represented by the locusts was not to cut off and to destroy the church, but it was to bring upon it various calamities to continue for a definite period.

Accordingly, some of the severest afflictions which have come upon the church have undoubtedly proceeded from the followers of the Prophet of Mecca. There were times in the early history of that religion when, to all human appearance, it would universally prevail, and wholly supplant the Christian church. But the church still survived, and no power was at any time given to the Saracenic hosts to destroy it altogether. In respect to this, some remarkable facts have occurred in history. The followers of the false prophet contemplated the subjugation of Europe, and the destruction of Christianity, from two quarters - the East and the West - expecting to make a junction of the two armies in the north of Italy, and to march down to Rome. Twice did they attack the vital part of Christendom by besieging Constantinople: first, in the seven years‘ siege, which lasted from 668 a.d. to 675 a.d.; and, secondly, in the years 716-718, when Leo the Isaurian was on the imperial throne.

But on both occasions they were obliged to retire defeated and disgraced - Gibbon, iii. 461ff. Again, they renewed their attack on the West. Having conquered Northern Africa, they passed over into Spain, subdued that country and Portugal, and extended their conquests as far as the Loire. At that time they designed to subdue France, and having united with the forces which they expected from the East, they intended to make a descent on Italy, and complete the conquest of Europe. This purpose was defeated by the valor of Charles Martel, and Europe and the Christian world were saved from subjugation (Gibbon, iii. 467, following). “A victorious line of march,” says Mr. Gibbon, “had been prolonged above a thousand miles, from the rock of Gibraltar to the banks of the Loire; the repetition of an equal space would have carried the Saracens to the confines of Poland and the Highlands of Scotland. The Rhine is not more impassable than the Nile or the Euphrates, and the Arabian fleet might have sailed without a naval combat into the mouth of the Thames. Perhaps the interpretation of the

Koran would now be taught in the schools of Oxford, and her pulpits might demonstrate to a circumcised people the sanctity and truth of the revelation of Muhammed." The arrest of the Saracen hosts before Europe was subdued, was what there was no reason to anticipate, and it even yet perplexes historians to be able to account for it.

The calm historian," says Mr. Gibbon, "who strives to follow the rapid course of the Saracens, must study to explain by what means the church and state were saved from this impending, and, as it should seem, inevitable danger." "These conquests," says Mr. Hallam, "which astonish the careless and superficial, are less perplexing to a calm inquirer than their cessation - the loss of half the Roman empire than the preservation of the rest" (Middle Ages, ii. 3,169). These illustrations may serve to explain the meaning of the symbol - that their grand commission was not to annihilate or root out, but to annoy and afflict. Indeed, they did not go forth with a primary design to destroy. The announcement of the Mussulman always was "the Koran, the tribute, or the sword," and when there was submission, either by embracing his religion or by tribute, life was always spared. "The fair option of friendship, or submission, or battle," says Mr. Gibbon (iii. 387), "was proposed to the enemies of Muhammed." Compare also vol. iii. 453,456. The torment mentioned here, I suppose, refers to the calamities brought upon the Christian world - on Egypt, and Northern Africa, and Spain, and Gaul, and the East - by the hordes which came out of Arabia, and which swept over all those countries like a troublesome and destructive host of locusts. Indeed, would any image better represent the effects of the Saracenic invasions than such a countless host of locusts? Even now, can we find an image that would better represent this?

(5) the leader of this host:

(a) He was like a star that fell from heaven, Revelation 9:1, a bright and illustrious prince, as if heaven-endowed, but fallen. Would anything better characterize the genius, the power, and the splendid but perverted talent of Muhammed? Muhammed was, moreover, by birth, of the princely house of the Koreish, governors of Mecca, and to no one could the term be more appropriate than to one of that family.

(b) He was a king. That is, there was to be one monarch - one ruling spirit to which all these hosts were subject. And never was anything more appropriate than this title as applied to the leader of the Arabic hosts. All those hosts were subject to one mind - to the command of the single leader that originated the scheme.

(c) The name Abaddon, or Apollyon - Destroyer, Revelation 9:11. This name would be appropriate to one who spread his conquests so far over the world; who wasted so many cities and towns; who overthrew so many kingdoms; and who laid the foundation of ultimate conquests by which so many human beings were sent to the grave.

(d) The description of the leader "as the angel of the bottomless pit," Revelation 9:11. If this be regarded as meaning that "the angel of the bottomless pit" - the spirit of darkness himself - originated the scheme, and animated these hosts, what term would better characterize the leader? And if it be a poetic description of Muhammed as sent out by that presiding spirit of evil, how could a better representative of the spirit of the nether world have been sent out upon the earth than he was - one more talented, more sagacious, more powerful, more warlike, more wicked, more suited to subdue the nations of the earth to the dominion of the Prince of Darkness, and to hold them for ages under his yoke?

(6) the duration of the torment. It is said Revelation 9:5 that this would be five months; that is, prophetically, 150 years. See the notes on Revelation 9:5. The Hegira, or flight of Muhammed, occurred 622 a.d.; the Saracens first issued from the desert into Syria, and began their series of wars on Christendom, 629 a.d. Reckoning from these periods respectively, the five months, or 150 years, would extend to 772 or 779 a.d. It is not necessary to understand this period of 150 years of the actual continued existence of the bodies symbolized by the locusts, but only of the period in which they would inflict their "torment" - "that they should be tormented five months." That is, this would be the period of the intensity of the woe inflicted by them; there would be at that time some marked intermission of the torrent. The question then is, whether, in the history of the Saracens, there was any period after their career of conquest had been continued for

about a hundred and fifty years, which would mark the intermission or cessation of these “torments.”

If so, then this is all that is necessary to determine the applicability of the symbol to the Arabian hordes. Now, in reply to this question, we have only to refer to Mr. Gibbon. The table of contents profixed to chapters forty-one and forty-two of his work would supply all the information desired. I looked at that table, after making the estimate as to what period the “five months,” or hundred and fifty years, would conduct us to, to see whether anything occurred at about that time in the Muhammedan power and influence, which could be regarded as marking the time of the intermission or cessation of the calamities inflicted by the Arabic hordes on the Christian world. After Mr. Gibbon had recorded in detail (vol. iii. 360-460) the character and conquests of the Arabian hordes under Muhammed and his successors, I find the statement of the decline of their power at just about the period to which the hundred and fifty years would lead us, for at that very time an important change came over the followers of the prophet of Mecca turning them from the love of conquest to the pursuits of literature and science.

From that period they ceased to be formidable to the church; their limits were gradually contracted; their power diminished; and the Christian world, in regard to them, was substantially at peace. This change in the character and purposes of the Saracens is thus described by Mr. Gibbon, at the close of the reign of the caliph Abdalrahman, whose reign commenced 755 a.d., and under whom the peaceful sway of the Ommiades of Spain began, which continued for a period of two hundred and fifty years. “The luxury of the caliphs, so useless to their private happiness, relaxed the nerves, and terminated the progress, of the Arabian empire. Temporal and spiritual conquest had been the sole occupation of the first successors of Muhammed; and after supplying themselves with the necessaries of life, the whole revenue was scrupulously devoted to that salutary work. The Abassides were impoverished by the multitude of their needs, and their contempt of economy. Instead of pursuing the great object of ambition, their leisure, their affections, and the powers of their minds were diverted by pomp and pleasure: the rewards of valor were embezzled by women and eunuchs, and the royal camp was encumbered by the luxury of the palace. A

similar temper was diffused among the subjects of the caliph. Their stern enthusiasm was softened by time and prosperity: they sought riches in the occupations of industry, fame in the pursuits of literature, and happiness in the tranquility of domestic life.

War was no longer the passion of the Saracens; and the increase of pay, the repetition of donatives, were insufficient to allure the posterity of those voluntary champions who had crowded to the standard of Aboubekir and Omar for the hopes of spoil and of paradise," iii. 477,478. Of the Ommiades, or princes who succeeded Abdalrahman, Mr. Gibbon remarks in general - "Their mutual designs or declarations of war evaporated without effect; but instead of opening a door to the conquest of Europe, Spain was dissevered from the trunk of the monarchy, engaged in perpetual hostility with the East, and inclined to peace and friendship with the Christian sovereigns of Constantinople and France," iii. p. 472. How much does this look like some change occurring by which they would cease to be a source of "torment" to the nations with whom they now dwelt! From this period they gave themselves to the arts of peace; cultivated literature and science; lost entirely their spirit of conquest, and their ambition for universal dominion, until they gradually withdrew, or were driven, from those parts of the Christian world where they had inspired most terror, and which in the days of their power and ambition they had invaded. By turning merely to the "table of contents" of Mr. Gibbon's history, the following periods, occurring at about the time that would be embraced in the "five months," or hundred and fifty years, are distinctly marked:

d "a.d.

d

d 668-675First siege of Constantinople by the Arabs.

d

d 677Peace and tribute.

d

d 716-718Second siege of Constantinople.

d

d 716-718Failure and retreat of the Saracens.

d

d 716-718Invention and use of the Greek fire.

d

d 721Invasion of France by the Arabs.

d

d 732Defeat of the Saracens by Charles Martel.

d

d 732They retreat before the Franks.

d

d 746-750The elevation of the Abassides.

d

d 750Fall of the Ommiades.

d

d 755Revolt of Spain.

d

d 755Triple division of the caliphate.

d

d 750-960Magnificence of the caliphs.

d

d 750-960Its consequences on private and public happiness.

d

d 754 etc.Introduction of learning among the Arabians.

d

d 754 etc.Their real progress in the sciences.”

d

d

It will be seen from this that the decline of their military and civil power; their defeats in their attempts to subjugate Europe; their turning their attention to the peaceful pursuits of literature and science, synchronize remarkably with the period that would be indicated by the five months, or 150 years. It should be added, also, that in the year 762, Almanzor, the caliph, built Bagdad, and made it the capital of the Saracen empire. Henceforward that became the seat of Arabic learning, luxury, and power, and the wealth and talent of the Saracen empire were gradually drawn to that capital, and they ceased to vex and annoy the Christian world. The building of Bagdad occurred within just ten years of the time indicated by the “five months” - reckoning that from the Hegira, or flight of Muhammed; or reckoning from the time when Muhammed began to preach (609 ad -

Gibbon, iii. 383), it wanted only three years of coinciding exactly with the period.

These considerations show with what propriety the fifth trumpet - the symbol of the locusts - is referred to the Arabian hordes under the guidance of Muhammed and his successors. On the supposition that it was the design of John to symbolize these events, the symbo has been chosen which of all others was best adapted to the end. If, now that these events are past, we should endeavor to find some symbol which would appropriately represent them, we could not find one that would be more striking or appropriate than what is here employed by John.

Verse 12

One woe is past - The woe referred to in Revelation 9:1-11. In Revelation 8:13 three woes are mentioned which were to occur successively, and which were to embrace the whole of the period comprised in the seven seals and the seven trumpets. Under the last of the seals we have considered four successive periods, referring to events connected with the downfall of the Western empire; and then we have found one important event worthy of a place in noticing the things which would permanently affect the destiny of the world - the rise, the character, and the conquests of the Saracens. This was referred to by the first woe-trumpet. We enter now on the consideration of the second. This occupies the remainder of the chapter, and in illustrating it the same method will be pursued as heretofore: first, to explain the literal meaning of the words, phrases, and symbols; and then to inquire what events in history, if any, succeeding the former, occurred, which would correspond with the language used.

And, behold, there come two woes more hereafter - Two momentous and important events that will be attended with sorrow to mankind. It cannot be intended that there would be no other evils that would visit mankind; but the eye, in glancing along the future, rested on these as having a special pre-eminence in affecting the destiny of the church and the world.

Verse 13

And the sixth angel sounded - See the notes on Revelation 8:2, Revelation 8:7.

And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God - In the language used here there is an allusion to the temple,

but the scene is evidently laid in heaven. The temple in its arrangements was designed, undoubtedly, to be in important respects a symbol of heaven, and this idea constantly occurs in the Scriptures. Compare the Epistle to the Hebrews passim. The golden altar stood in the holy place, between the table of show-bread and the golden candlestick. See the notes on Hebrews 9:1-2. This altar, made of shittim or acacia wood, was ornamented at the four corners, and overlaid throughout with laminae of gold. Hence, it was called "the golden altar," in contradistinction from the altar for sacrifice, which was made of stone. Compare the notes on Matthew 21:12, following on its four corners it had projections which are called horns Exodus 30:2-3, which seem to have been intended mainly for ornaments. See Jahn, *Arch*. 332; Joseph. *Ant*. iii. 6,8. When it is said that this was "before God," the meaning is, that it was directly before or in front of the symbol of the divine presence in the most holy place. This image, in the vision of John, is transformed to heaven. The voice seemed to come from the very presence of the Deity; from the place where offerings are made to God.

Verse 14

Saying to the sixth angel, which had the trumpet - See the notes at Revelation 8:2.

Loose, … - This power, it would seem, was given to the sixth angel in addition to his office of blowing the trumpet. All this, of course, was in vision, and cannot be literally interpreted. The meaning is, that the effect of his blowing the trumpet would be the same as if angels that had been bound should be suddenly loosed and suffered to go forth over the earth; that is, some event would occur which would be properly symbolized by such an act.

The four angels - Compare the notes at Revelation 8:2. It was customary to represent important events as occurring under the ministry of angels. The general meaning here is, that in the vicinity of the river Euphrates there were mighty powers which had been bound or held in check, which were now to be let loose upon the world. What we are to look for in the fulfillment is evidently this - some power that seemed to be kept back by an invisible influence as if by angels, now suddenly let loose and suffered to accomplish the purpose of desolation mentioned in the subsequent verses. It is not necessary to suppose that angels were actually employed in these restraints, though no one can demonstrate that their agency was not concerned in the transactions here referred to. Compare the

notes on Daniel 10:12-13. It has been made a question why the number four is specified, and whether the forces were in any sense made up of four divisions, nations, or people. While nothing certain can be determined in regard to that, and while the number four may be used merely to denote a great and strong force, yet it must be admitted that the most obvious interpretation would be to refer it to some combination of forces, or to some union of powers, that was to accomplish what is here said. If it had been a single nation, it would have been more in accordance with the usual method in prophecy to have represented them as restrained by an angel, or by angels in general, without specifying any number.

Which are bound - That is, they seemed to be bound. There was something which held them, and the forces under them, in check, until they were thus commanded to go forth. In the fulfillment of this it will be necessary to look for something of the nature of a check or restraint on these forces, until they were commissioned to go forth to accomplish the work of destruction.

In the great river Euphrates - The well-known river of that name, commonly called, in the Scriptures, "the great river," and, by way of eminence, "the river," Exodus 23:31; Isaiah 8:7. This river was on the east of Palestine; and the language used here naturally denotes that the power referred to under the sixth trumpet would spring up in the East, and that it would have its origin in the vicinity of that river. Those interpreters, therefore, who apply this to the invasion of Judaea by the Romans have great difficulty in explaining this - as the forces employed in the destruction of Jerusalem came from the West, and not from the East. The fair interpretation is, that there were forces in the vicinity of the Euphrates which were, up to this period, bound or restrained, but which were now suffered to spread woe and sorrow over a considerable portion of the world.

Verse 15

And the four angels were loosed - Who had this mighty host under restraint. The loosening of the angels was, in fact, also a letting loose of all these hosts, that they might accomplish the work which they were commissioned to do.

Which were prepared - See Revelation 9:7. The word used here properly refers to what is made ready, suited up, arranged for anything: as persons prepared for a journey, horses for battle, a road for travelers, food for the hungry, a house to live in, etc. See Robinson's Lexicon, sub. voce

Ἑτοιμάζω HetoimazōAs used here, the word means "that whatever was necessary to prepare these angels" - the leaders of this host - for the work which they were commissioned to perform, was now done, and that they stood in a state of readiness to execute the design. In the fulfillment of this it will be necessary to look for some arrangements existing in the vicinity of the Euphrates, by which these restrained hosts were in a state of readiness to be summoned forth to the execution of this work, or in such a condition that they would go forth spontaneously if the restraints existing were removed.

For an hour, … - Margin, "at." The Greek - εἰς eis- means properly "unto, with reference to"; and the sense is, that, with reference to that hour, they had all the requisite preparation. Prof. Stuart explains it as meaning that they were "prepared for the particular year, month, day, and hour, destined by God for the great catastrophe which is to follow." The meaning, however, rather seems to be that they were prepared, not for the commencement of such a period, but they were prepared for the whole period indicated by the hour, the day, the month, and the year; that is, that the continuance of this "woe" would extend along through the whole period. For:

(a)this is the natural interpretation of the word "for" - εἰς eisit makes the whole sentence intelligible - for though it might be proper to say of anything that it was "prepared for an hour," indicating the commencement of what was to be done, it is not usual to say of anything that it is "prepared for an hour, a month, a day, a year," when the design is merely to indicate the beginning of it; and,

(c)it is in accordance with the prediction respecting the first "woe" Revelation 9:5, where the time is specified in language similar to this, to wit, "five months." It seems to me, therefore, that we are to regard the time here mentioned as a prophetic indication of the period during which this woe would continue.

An hour, and a day, and a month, and a year - If this were to be taken literally, it would, of course, be but little more than a year. If it be taken, however, in the common prophetic style, where a day is put for a year (see the notes on Daniel 9:24 ff; also Editor's Preface, p. xxv. etc.), then the amount of time (360 + 30 + 1 + an hour) would be 391 years, and the portion of a year indicated by an hour - a twelfth part or twenty-fourth part, according as the day was supposed to be divided into twelve or twenty-four

hours. That this is the true view seems to be clear, because this accords with the usual style in this book; because it can hardly be supposed that the "preparation" here referred to would have been for so brief a period as the time would be if literally interpreted; and because the mention of so small a portion of time as an "hour," if literally taken, would be improbable in so great transactions. The fair interpretation, therefore, will require us to find some events that will fill up the period of about 391 years.

For to slay the third part of men - Compare Revelation 8:7, Revelation 8:9, Revelation 8:12. The meaning here is, that the immense host which was restrained on the Euphrates would, when loosed, spread desolation over about a third part of the world. We are not to suppose that this is to be understood in exactly a literal sense; but the meaning is, that the desolation would be so widespread that it would seem to embrace a third of the world. No such event as the cutting off of a few thousands of Jews in the siege of Jerusalem would correspond with the language here employed, and we must look for events more general and more disastrous to mankind at large.

Verse 16

And the number of the army of the horsemen - It is to be observed here that the strength of the army seemed to be cavalry. In the former plagues there is no distinct mention of horsemen; but here what struck the beholder was the immense and unparalleled number of horsemen.

Were two hundred thousand thousand - A thousand thousand is one million, and consequently the number here referred to would be 200 million. This would be a larger army than was ever assembled, and it cannot be supposed that it is to be taken literally. That it would be a very large host - so large that it would not be readily numbered - is clear. The expression in the original, while it naturally conveys the idea of an immense number, would seem also to refer to some uniqueness in the manner of reckoning them. The language is, "two myriads of myriads" - δύο μυριάδες μυριάδων duo muriades muriadōnThe myriad was ten thousand. The idea would seem to be this. John saw an immense host of cavalry. They appeared to be divided into large bodies that were in some degree separate, and that might be reckoned by ten thousands. Of these different squadrons there were many, and to express their great and unusual numbers he said that there seemed to be myriads of them - two myriads of myriads, or twice ten

thousand myriads. The army thus would seem to be immense - an army, as we should say, to be reckoned by tens of thousands.

And I heard the number of them - They were so numerous that he did not pretend to be able to estimate the number himself, for it was beyond his power of computation; but he heard it stated in these round numbers, that there were "two myriads of myriads" of them.

Verse 17

And thus I saw the horses in the vision - That is, he saw them as he proceeds to describe them, for the word "thus" - οὕτως houtōs- refers to what follows. Compare Robinson's Lexicon on the word (b), and see Matthew 1:18; Matthew 2:5; John 21:1; Hebrews 4:4. Prof. Stuart, however, refers to what precedes. The meaning, as it seems to me, is, that he fixed his attention on the appearance of the immense army - the horses and their riders, and proceeded to describe them as they struck him.

And them that sat on them - He fixed the attention on horse and rider. Their appearance was unusual, and deserved a particular description.

Having breastplates of fire - That is, those who sat on them had such breastplates. The word rendered here as "breastplate" denoted properly a coat of mail that covered the body from the neck to the thighs. See the notes on Ephesians 6:14. This would be a prominent object in looking at a horseman. This was said to be composed of "fire, and jacinth, and brimstone"; that is, the part of the body usually incased in the coat of mail had these three colors. The word "fire" here simply denotes red. It was burnished and bright, and seemed to be a blaze of fire. The word "jacinth" - ὑακινθίνους huakinthinous- means "hyacinthine." The color denoted is that of the hyacinth - a flower of a deep purple or reddish blue. Then it refers to a gem of the same color, nearly related to the zircon of the mineralogists, and the color mentioned here is deep purple or reddish blue. The word rendered "brimstone" - θειώδης theiōdēs- means properly "sulphurous," that is, made of sulphur, and means here simply yellow. The meaning of the whole then is, that these horsemen appeared to be clad in a special kind of armor - armor that shone like fire, mingled with blue and yellow. It will be necessary to look for the fulfillment of this in cavalry that was so caparisoned.

And the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions - Resembled, in some respects, the heads of lions. He does not say that they were the heads of lions, or that the riders were on monsters, but only that they, in

some respects, resembled the heads of lions. It would he easy to give this general appearance by the way in which the head-dress of the horses was arrayed.

And out of their mouths issued - That is, appeared to issue. It is not necessary to understand this as affirming that it actually came from their months, but only that, to one looking on such an approaching army, it would have this appearance. The pagan poets often speak of horses breathing out fire and smoke (Virgil, Geor. vol. ii. p. 140; iii. 85; Ovid, Met. vol. vii. p. 104), meaning that their breath seemed to be mingled smoke and fire. There is an image superadded here not found in any of the classic descriptions, that this was mingled with brimstone. All this seemed to issue from their mouths - that is, it was breathed forth in front of the host, as if the horses emitted it from their mouths.

Fire and smoke and brimstone - The exact idea, whether that was intended or not, would be conveyed by the discharge of musketry or artillery. The fire, the smoke, and the sulphurous smell of such a discharge would correspond precisely with this language; and if it be supposed that the writer meant to describe such a discharge, this would be the very language that would be used. Moreover, in describing a battle nothing would be more proper than to say that this appeared to issue from the horses‘ mouths. If, therefore, it should be found that there were any events where firearms were used, in contradistinction from the ancient mode of warfare, this language would be appropriate to describe that; and if it were ascertained that the writer meant to refer to some such fact, then the language used here would be what he would adopt. One thing is certain, that this is not language which would be employed to describe the onset of ancient cavalry in the mode of warfare which prevailed then. No one describing a charge of cavalry among the Persians, the Greeks, or the Romans, when the only armor was the sword and the spear, would think of saying that there seemed to be emitted from the horses‘ mouths fire, and smoke, and brimstone.

Verse 18

By these three - Three things - explained immediately as referring to the fire, the smoke, and the brimstone.

Was the third part of men killed - See the notes on Revelation 8:7-12, on each of which verses we have notices of calamities that came upon the third part of the race, of the sea, of rivers, etc. We are not to suppose that

this is to be taken literally, but the description is given as it appeared to John. Those immense numbers of horsemen would sweep over the world, and a full third part of the race of people would seem to fall before them.

Verse 19

For their power is in their mouth - That is, as described in the fire, smoke, and brimstone that proceeded out of their mouths. What struck the seer as remarkable on looking on the symbol was, that this immense destruction seemed to proceed out of their mouths. It was not that they trampled down their enemies; nor that they destroyed them with the sword, the bow, or the spear: it was some new and remarkable power in warfare - in which the destruction seemed to proceed from fire, and smoke, and sulphur issuing from the mouths of the horses themselves.

And in their tails - The tails of the horses. This, of course, was something unusual and remarkable in horses, for naturally they have no power there. The power of a fish, or a scorpion, or a wasp, may be said to be in their tails, for their strength or their means of defense or of injury are there; but we never think of speaking in this way of horses. It is not necessary, in the interpretation of this, to suppose that the reference is literally to the tails of the horses, anymore than it is to suppose that the smoke, and fire, and brimstone literally proceeded from their mouths. John describes things as they appeared to him in looking at them from a considerable distance. From their mouths the horses belched forth fire, and smoke, and sulphur, and even their tails seemed to be armed for the work of death.

For their tails were like unto serpents - Not like the tails of serpents, but like serpents themselves.

And had heads - That is, there was something remarkable in the position and appearance of their heads. All serpents, of course, have heads; but John saw something unusual in this - or something so unique in their heads as to attract special attention. It would seem most probable that the heads of these serpents appeared to extend in every direction - as if the hairs of the horses‘ tails had been converted into snakes, presenting a most fearful and destructive image. Perhaps it may illustrate this to suppose that there is reference to the Amphisbaena, or two-headed snake. It is said of this reptile that its tail resembles a head, and that with this it throws out its poison (Lucan, vol. ix. p. 179; Pliny‘s Hist. Nat. vol. viii. p. 35). It really has but one head, but its tail has the appearance of a head, and it has the

power of moving in either direction to a limited degree. If we suppose these snakes fastened to the tail of a horse, the appearance of heads would be very prominent and remarkable. The image is that of the power of destruction. They seemed like ugly and poisonous serpents instead of tails.

And with them they do hurt - Not the main injury, but they have the power of inflicting some injury by them.

Verse 20-21

And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues … - One third part is represented as swept off, and it might have been expected that a salutary effect would have been produced on the remainder, in reforming them, and restraining them from error and sin. The writer proceeds to state, however, that these judgments did not have the effect which might reasonably have been anticipated. No reformation followed; there was no abandonment of the prevailing forms of iniquity; there was no change in their idolatry and superstition. In regard to the exact meaning of what is here stated Revelation 9:20-21, it will be a more convenient arrangement to consider it after we have ascertained the proper application of the passage relating to the sixth trumpet. What is here stated Revelation 9:20-21 pertains to the state of the world after the desolations which would occur under this woe-trumpet; and the explanation of the words may be reserved, therefore, with propriety, until the inquiry shall have been instituted as to the general design of the whole.

With respect to the fulfillment of this symbol - the sixth trumpet - it will be necessary to inquire whether there has been any event, or class of events occurring at such a time, and in such a manner, as would be properly denoted by such a symbol. The examination of this question will make it necessary to go over the leading points in the symbol, and to endeavor to apply them. In doing this I shall simply state, with such illustrations as may occur, what seems to me to have been the design of the symbol. It would be an endless task to examine all the explanations which have been proposed, and it would be useless to do so.

The reference, then, seems to me to be to the Turkish power, extending from the time of the first appearance of the Turks in the neighborhood of the Euphrates, to the final conquest of Constantinople in 1453. The general reasons for this opinion are such as the following:

(a)If the previous trumpet referred to the Saracens, or to the rise of the Muhammedan power among the Arabs, then the Turkish dominion, being the next in succession, would be what would most naturally be symbolized.

(b)The Turkish power rose on the decline of the Arabic, and was the next important power in affecting the destinies of the world.

(c)This power, like the former, had its seat in the East, and would be properly classified under the events occurring there as affecting the destiny of the world.

(d)The introduction of this power was necessary, in order to complete the survey of the downfall of the Roman empire - the great object kept in view all along in these symbols.

In the first four of these trumpets, under the seventh seal, we found the decline and fall of the Western empire; in the first of the remaining three - the fifth in order - we found the rise of the Saracens, materially affecting the condition of the Eastern portion of the Roman world; and the notice of the Turks, under whom the empire at last fell to rise no more, seemed to be demanded in order to the completion of the picture. As a leading design of the whole vision was to describe the ultimate destiny of that formidable power - the Roman - which, in the time when the Revelation was given to John ruled over the whole world; under which the church was then oppressed; and which, either as a civil or ecclesiastical power, was to exert so important an influence on the destiny of the church, it was proper that its history should be sketched until it ceased - that is, until the conquest of the capital of the Eastern empire by the Turks. Here the termination of the empire, as traced by Mr. Gibbon, closes; and these events it was important to incorporate in this series of visions.

The rise and character of the Turkish people may be seen stated in full in Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, iii. 101-103,105,486; iv. 41,42,87,90,91,93,100,127,143,151,258,260,289,350. The leading facts in regard to the history of the Turks, so far as they are necessary to be known before we proceed to apply the symbols, are the following:

(1) The Turks, or Turkmans, had their origin in the vicinity of the Caspian Sea, and were divided into two branches, one on the east, and the other on the west. The latter colony, in the 10th century, could muster

40,000 soldiers; the other numbered 100,000 families (Gibbon, iv. 90). By the latter of these, Persia was invaded and subdued, and soon Bagdad also came into their possession, and the seat of the caliph was occupied by a Turkish prince. The various details respecting this, and respecting their conversion to the faith of the Koran, may be seen in Gibbon, iv. 90-93. A mighty Turkish and Moslem power was thus concentrated under Togrul, who had subdued the caliph, in the vicinity of the Tigris and the Euphrates, extending east over Persia and the countries adjacent to the Caspian Sea, but it had not yet crossed the Euphrates to carry its conquests to the west. The conquest of Bagdad by Togrul, the first prince of the Seljuk race, was an important event, not only in itself, but as it was by this event that the Turk was constituted temporal lieutenant of the prophet‘s vicar, and so the head of the temporal power of the religion of Islam. “The conqueror of the East kissed the ground, stood some time in a modest posture, and was led toward the throne by the vizier and an interpreter. After Togrul had seated himself on another throne his commission was publicly read, which declared him the temporal lieutenant of the prophet. He was successively invested with seven robes of honor, and presented with seven slaves, the natives of the seven climates of the Arabian empire, etc. Their alliance (of the sultan and the caliph) was cemented by the marriage of Togrul‘s sister with the successor of the prophet,” etc. (Gibbon, iv. 93).

The conquest of Persia, the subjugation of Bagdad, the union of the Turkish power with that of the caliph, the successor of Muhammed, and the foundation of this powerful kingdom in the neighborhood of the Euphrates, is all that is necessary to explain the sense of the phrase “which were prepared for an hour,” etc., Revelation 9:15. The arrangements were then made for the important series of events which were to occur when that formidable power should be summoned from the East, to spread the predicted desolation over so large a part of the world. A mighty dominion had been forming in the East that had subdued Persia, and that, by union with the caliphs, by the subjugation of Bagdad, and by embracing the Muhammedan faith, had become “prepared” to play its subsequent important part in the affairs of the world.

(2) the next important event in their history was the crossing of the Euphrates, and the invasion of Asia Minor. The account of this invasion can

be best given in the words of Mr. Gibbon: “Twenty-five years after the death of Basil (the Greek emperor), his successors were suddenly assaulted by an unknown race of barbarians, who united the Scythian valor with the fanaticism of new proselytes, and the art and riches of a powerful monarchy. The myriads of Turkish horse overspread a frontier of 600 miles from Taurus to Arzeroum, and the blood of one hundred and thirty thousand Christians was a grateful sacrifice to the Arabian prophet. Yet the arms of Togrul did not make any deep or lasting impression on the Greek empire. The torrent rolled away from the open country; the sultan retired without glory or success from the siege of an Armenian city; the obscure hostilities were continued or suspended with a vicissitude of events; and the bravery of the Macedonian legions renewed the fame of the conqueror of Asia. The name of Alp Arslan, the valiant lion, is expressive of the popular idea of the perfection of man; and the successor of Togrul displayed the fierceness and generosity of the royal animal. (‹The heads of the horses were as the heads of lions.‘) He passed the Euphrates at the head of the Turkish cavalry, and entered Caesarea, the metropolis of Cappadocia, to which he had been attracted by the fame and the wealth of the temple of Basil” (vol. iv. 93,94; compare also p. 95).

(3) the next important event was the establishing of the kingdom of Roum in Asia Minor. After a succession of victories and defeats; after being driven once and again from Asia Minor, and compelled to retire beyond its limits; and after subjecting the East to their arms (Gibbon, iv. 95-100) in the various contests for the crown of the Eastern empire, the aid of the Turks was invoked by one party or the other until they secured for themselves a firm foothold in Asia Minor, and established themselves there in a permanent kingdom - evidently with the purpose of seizing upon Constantinople itself when an opportunity should be presented (Gibbon, iv. 100,101). Of this kingdom of Roum Mr. Gibbon (iv. 101) gives, the following description, and speaks thus of the effect of its establishment on the destiny of the Eastern empire: “Since the first conquests of the caliphs, the establishment of the Turks in Anatolia, or Asia Minor, was the most deplorable loss which the church and empire had sustained. By the propagation of the Moslem faith Soliman deserved the name of Gazi, a holy champion; and his new kingdom of the Romans, or of Roum, was added to the table of Oriental geography. It is described as extending from the

Euphrates to Constantinople, from the Black Sea to the confines of Syria; pregnant with mines of silver and iron, of alum and copper, fruitful in grain and wine, and productive of cattle and excellent horses. The wealth of Lydia, the arts of the Greeks, the splendor of the Augustan age, existed only in books and ruins, which were equally obscure in the eyes of the Scythian conquerors. By the choice of the Sultan, Nice, the metropolis of Bithynia, was preferred for his palace and fortress - the seat of the Seljukian dynasty of Roum was planted one hundred miles from Constantinople; and the divinity of Christ was denied and derided in the same temple in which it had been pronounced by the first general synod of the Catholics. The unity of God and the mission of Muhammed were preached in the mosques; the Arabian learning was taught in the schools; the cadis judged according to the law of the Koran; the Turkish manners and language prevailed in the cities; and Turkman camps were scattered over the plains and mountains of Anatolia," etc.

(4) the next material event in the history of the Turkish power was the conquest of Jerusalem. See this described in Gibbon, iv. 102-106. By this the attention of the Turks was turned for a time from the conquest of Constantinople - an event at which the Turkish power all along aimed, and in which they doubtless expected to be ultimately successful. Had they not been diverted from it by the wars connected with the Crusades, Constantinople would have fallen long before it did fall, for it was too feeble to defend itself if it had been attacked.

(5) the conquest of Jerusalem by the Turks, and the oppressions which Christians experienced there, gave rise to the Crusades, by which the destiny of Constantinople was still longer delayed. The war of the Crusades was made on the Turks, and as the crusaders mostly passed through Constantinople and Anatolia, all the power of the Turks in Asia Minor was requisite to defend themselves, and they were incapable of making an attack on Constantinople until after the final defeat of the crusaders and restoration of peace. See Gibbon, iv. 106-210.

(6) The next material event in the history of the Turks was the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 ad - an event which established the Turkish

power in Europe and completed the downfall of the Roman empire (Gibbon, iv. 333-359).

After this brief reference to the general history of the Turkish power, we are prepared to inquire more particularly whether the symbol in the passage before us is applicable to this series of events. This may be considered in several particulars:

(1) "The time." If the first woe-trumpet referred to the Saracens, then it would be natural that the rise and progress of the Turkish power should be symbolized as the next great fact in history, and as that under which the empire fell. As we have seen, the Turkish power rose immediately after the power of the Saracens had reached its height, and identified itself with the Muhammedan religion; and was, in fact, the next great power that affected the Roman empire, the welfare of the church, and the history of the world. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the time is such as is demanded in the proper interpretation of the symbol.

(2) "the place." We have seen (in the remarks on Revelation 9:14) that this was on or near the river Euphrates, and that this power was long forming and consolidating itself on the east of that river before it crossed it in the invasion of Asia Minor. It had spread over Persia, and had even invaded the region of the East as far as the Indies; it had secured, under Togrul, the conquest of Bagdad, and had united itself with the caliphate, and was, in fact, a mighty power "prepared" for conquest before it moved to the west. Thus, Mr. Gibbon (iv. 92) says, "The more rustic, perhaps the wisest, portion of the Turkmans continued to dwell in the tents of their ancestors; and from the Oxus to the Euphrates these military colonies were protected and propagated by their native princes." So again, speaking of Alp Arslan, the son and successor of Togrul, he says (iv. 94), "He passed the Euphrates at the head of the Turkish cavalry, and entered Caesarea, the metropolis of Cappadocia, to which he was attracted by the fame and the wealth of the temple of Basil." If it be admitted that it was intended by John to refer to the Turkish power, it could not have been better represented than as a power that had been forming in the vicinity of that great river, and that was prepared to precipitate itself on the Eastern empire. To one contemplating it

in the time of Togrul or Alp Arslan, it would have appeared as a mighty power growing up in the neighborhood of the Euphrates.

(3) “the four angels:” “Loose the four angels which are bound.” That is, loose the powers which are in the vicinity of the Euphrates, as if they were under the control of four angels. The most natural construction of this would be, that under the mighty power that was to sweep over the world, there were four subordinate powers, or that there were such subdivisions that it might be supposed they were ranged under four angelic powers or leaders. The question is, whether there was any such division or arrangement of the Turkish power, that, to one looking on it at a distance, there would seem to be such a division. In the “History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire” (iv. 100) we find the following statement: “The greatness and unity of the Turkish empire expired in the person of Malek Shah. The vacant throne was disputed by his brother and his four sons; and, after a series of civil wars, the treaty which reconciled the surviving candidates confirmed a lasting separation in the Persian dynasty, the oldest and principal branch of the house of Seljuk. The three younger dynasties were those of Kerman, of Syria, and of Roum; the first of these commanded an extensive, though obscure dominion, on the shores of the Indian Ocean; the second expelled the Arabian princes of Aleppo and Damascus: and the third (our special care) invaded the Roman provinces of Asia Minor. The generous policy of Malek contributed to their elevation; he allowed the princes of his blood, even those whom he had vanquished in the field, to seek new kingdoms worthy of their ambition; nor was he displeased that they should draw away the more ardent spirits who might have disturbed the tranquility of his reign.

As the supreme head of his family and nation, the great Sultan of Persia commanded the obedience and tribute of his royal brethren: the thrones of Kerman and Nice, of Aleppo and Damascus; the atabeks and emirs of Syria and Mesopotamia erected their standards under the shadow of his scepter, and the hordes of Turkmans overspread the plains of Western Asia. After the death of Malek the bands of union and subordination were gradually relaxed and dissolved; the indulgence of the house of Seljuk invested their slaves with the inheritance of kingdoms; and, in the Oriental style, a crowd of princes arose from the dust of their feet.” Here it is observable, that, at

the period when the Turkman hordes were about to precipitate themselves on Europe, and to advance to the destruction of the Eastern empire, we have distinct mention of four great departments of the Turkish power: the original power that had established itself in Persia, under Malek Shah, and the three subordinate powers that sprung out of that of Kerman, Syria, and Roum. It is observable:

(a)that this occurs at the period when that power would appear in the East as advancing in its conquests to the West;

(b)that it was in the vicinity of the great river Euphrates;

(c)that it had never before occurred - the Turkish power having been before united as one; and,

(d)that it never afterward occurred - for, in the words of Mr. Gibbon, "after the death of Malek the bands of union and subordination were relaxed and finally dissolved."

It would not be improper, then, to look upon this one mighty power as under the control of four spirits that were held in cheek in the East, and that were "prepared" to pour their energies on the Roman empire.

(4) "the preparation:" "Prepared for an hour," etc. That is, arranged; made ready - as if by previous discipline - for some mighty enterprise. Applied to the Turkmans, this would mean that the preparation for the ultimate work which they executed had been making as that power increased and became consolidated under Togrul, Alp Arslan, and Malek Shah. In its successful strides Persia and the East had been subdued; the caliph at Bagdad had been brought under the control of the sultan; a union had been formed between the Turks and the Saracens; and the sultanies of Kerman, Syria, and Roum had been established embracing together all the countries of the East, and constituting this by far the most mighty nation on the globe. All this would seem to be a work of preparation to do what was afterward done as seen in the visions of John.

(5) "the fact that they were bound:" "Which are bound in the great river Euphrates." That is, they were, as it were, restrained and kept back for a long time in that vicinity. It would have been natural to suppose that that vast power would at once move on toward the West to the conquest of the capital of the Eastern empire. Such had been the case with the Huns, the

Goths, and the Vandals. But these Turkish hordes had been long restrained in the East. They had subdued Persia. They had then achieved the conquest of India. They had conquered Bagdad, and the entire East was under their control. Yet for a long time they had now been inactive, and it would seem as if they had been bound or restrained by some mighty power from moving in their conquests to the West.

(6) "the material that composed the army:" "And the number of the army of the horsemen." "And thus I saw the horses in the vision. And the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions." From this it appears that this vast host was composed mainly of cavalry; and it is hardly necessary to say that this description would apply better to the Turkish hordes than to any other body of invaders known in history. Thus, Mr. Gibbon (vol. iv. p. 94) says, "The myriads of the Turkish horse overspread a frontier of six hundred miles, from Taurus to Arzeroum," 1050 ad. So again, speaking of Togrul (vol. iv. p. 94), "He passed the Euphrates at the head of the Turkish cavalry" (ibid.). So again (vol. iii. p. 95), "Alp Arslan flew to the scene of action at the head of forty thousand horse." 1071 a.d. So in the attack of the crusaders on Nice, the capital of the Turkish kingdom of Roum, Mr. Gibbon (vol. iv. p. 127) says of the sultan Soliman: "Yielding to the first impulse of the torrent, he deposited his treasure and family in Nice; retired to the mountains with fifty thousand horse," etc. And so again (ibid.), speaking of the Turks who rallied to oppose the "strange" invasion of "the Western barbarians," he says, "The Turkish emirs obeyed the call of loyalty or religion; the Turkman hordes encamped round his standard; and his whole force is loosely stated by the Christians at two hundred, or even three hundred and sixty thousand horse," 1097 a.d. Every student of history knows that the Turks, or Turkmans, in the early periods of their history, were remarkable for their cavalry.

(7) "their numbers:" "And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand." That is, it was vast, or it was such as to be reckoned by myriads, or by tens of thousands - δύο μυριάδες μυριάδων duo muriades muriadōn- "two myriads of myriads." Thus, Mr. Gibbon (vol. iv. p. 94) says, "The myriads of Turkish horse overspread," etc. It has been suggested by Daubuz that in this there may be probably an allusion to the Turkman custom of numbering by tomans, or myriads. This custom, it is

true, has existed elsewhere, but there is probably none with whom it has been so familiar as with the Tartars and Turks. In the Seljukian age the population of Samarcand was rated at seven tomans (myriads), because it could send out 70,000 warriors. The dignity and rank of Tamerlane‘s father and grandfather was thus described, that “they were the hereditary chiefs of a toman, or 10,000 horse” - a myriad (Gibbon, vol. iv. p. 270); so that it is not without his usual propriety of language that Mr. Gibbon speaks of the myriads of the Turkish horse, or of the cavalry of the earlier Turks of Mount Altai, “being, both men and horses, proudly computed by myriads.” One thing is clear, that to no other invading hosts could the language used here be so well applied, and if it were supposed that John was writing after the event, this would be the language which he would be likely to employ - for this is nearly the identical language employed by the historian Gibbon.

(8) “their personal appearance:” “Them that sat on them having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone” - as explained above, in a “uniform” of red, and blue, and yellow. This might, undoubtedly, be applicable to other armies besides the Turkish hordes; but the proper question here is, whether it would be applicable to them. The fact of the application of the symbol to the Turks in general must be determined from other points in the symbol which designate them clearly; the only natural inquiry here is, whether this description would apply to the Turkish hosts; for if it would not, that would be fatal to the whole interpretation. On the application of this passage to the Turks Mr. Daubuz justly remarks, that “from their first appearance the Ottomans have affected to wear warlike apparel of scarlet, blue, and yellow - a descriptive trait the more marked from its contrast to the military appearance of the Greeks, Franks, or Saracens contemporarily.” Mr. Elliott adds: “It only needs to have seen the Turkish cavalry (as they were before the late innovations), whether in war itself, or in the djerrid war‘s mimicry, to leave an impression of the absolute necessity of some such notice of their rich and varied colorings, in order to give in description at all a just impression of their appearance,” vol. i. p. 481.

(9) “The remarkable appearance of the cavalry:” “Having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone; and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire, and smoke, and

brimstone." It was remarked in the exposition of this passage that this is just such a description as would be given of an army to which the use of gunpowder was known, and which made use of it in these wars. Looking now upon a body of cavalry in the heat of an engagement, it would seem, if the cause were not known, that the horses belched forth smoke and sulphurous flame. The only question now is, whether in the warfare of the Turks there was anything which would especially or remarkably justify this description. And here it is impossible not to advert to the historical fact that they were among the first to make use of gunpowder in their wars, and that to the use of this destructive element they owed much of their success and their ultimate triumphs.

The historical truth of this it is necessary now to advert to, and this will be done by a reference to Mr. Gibbon, and to the account which he has given of the final conquest of Constantinople by the Turks. It will be seen how he puts this new instrumentality of war into the foreground in his account; how prominent this seemed to him to be in describing the victories of the Turks; and how probable, therefore, it is that John, in describing an invasion by them, would refer to the "fire and smoke and brimstone," that seemed to be emitted from the mouths of their horses. As preparatory to the account of the siege and conquest of Constantinople by the Turks, Mr. Gibbon gives a description of the invention and use of gunpowder. "The chemists of China or Europe had found, by casual or elaborate experiments, that a mixture of saltpetre, sulpher, and charcoal produces, with a spark of fire, a tremendous explosion. It was soon observed that if the expansive force were compressed in a strong tube, a ball of stone or iron might be expelled with irresistible add destructive velocity. The precise era of the invention and application of gunpowder is involved in doubtful traditions and equivocal language; yet we may clearly discern that it was known before the middle of the fourteenth century; and that before the end of the same the use of artillery in battles and sieges, by sea and land, was familiar to the states of Germany, Italy, Spain, France, and England. The priority of nations is of small account; none could derive any exclusive benefit from their previous or superior knowledge; and in the common improvement they stood on the same level of relative power and military science.

Nor was it possible to circumscribe the secret within the pale of the church; it was disclosed to the Turks by the treachery of apostates and the selfish policy of rivals; and the sultans had sense to adopt, and wealth to reward, the talents of a Christian engineer. By the Venetians the use of gunpowder was communicated without reproach to the sultans of Egypt and Persia, their allies against the Ottoman power; the secret was soon propagated to the extremities of Asia; and the advantage of the European was confined to his easy victories over the savages of the New World," vol. iv. p. 291. In the description of the conquest of Constantinople Mr. Gibbon makes frequent mention of their artillery, and of the use of gunpowder, and of its important agency in securing their final conquests, and in the overthrow of the Eastern empire. "Among the implements of destruction he (the Turkish sultan) studied with special care the recent and tremendous discovery of the Latins; and his artillery surpassed whatever had yet appeared in the world. A founder of cannon, a Dane or Hungarian, who had almost starved in the Greek service, deserted to the Moslems, and was liberally entertained by the Turkish sultan. Muhammed was satisfied with the answer to his first question, which he eagerly pressed on the artist: ‹Am I able to cast a cannon capable of throwing a ball or stone of sufficient size to batter the walls of Constantinople? I am not ignorant of their strength, but, were they more solid than those of Babylon, I could oppose an engine of superior power; the position and management of that engine must be left to your engineers.‘ On this assurance a foundry was established at Adrianople; the metal was prepared; and at the end of three months Urban produced a piece of brass ordnance of stupendous and almost incredible magnitude: a measure of twelve palms is assigned to the bore; and the stone bullet weighed above six hundred pounds.

A vacant place before the new palace was chosen for the first experiment; but to prevent the sudden and mischievous effects of astonishment and fear, a proclamation was issued that the cannon would be discharged the ensuing day. The explosion was felt or heard in a circuit of 100 furlongs; the ball, by force of gunpowder, was driven above a mile; and on the spot where it fell it buried itself a fathom deep in the ground," vol. iv. p. 339. So, in speaking of the siege of Constantinople by the Turks, Mr. Gibbon says of the defense by the Christians (vol. iv. p. 343): "The incessant volleys of lances and arrows were accompanied with the smoke,

the sound, and the fire of their musketry and cannon." "The same destructive secret," he adds, "had been revealed to the Moslems, by whom it was employed with the superior energy of zeal, riches, and despotism. The great cannon of Muhammed has been separately noticed - an important and visible object in the history of the times; but that enormous engine was flanked by two follows almost of equal magnitude; the long order of the Turkish artillery was pointed against the walls; fourteen battories thundered at once on the most accessible places; and of one of these it is ambiguously expressed that it was mounted with one hundred and thirty guns, or that it discharged one hundred and thirty bullets," vol. iv. pp. 343,344.

Again: "The first random shots were productive of more sound than effect; and it was by the advice of a Christian that the engineers were taught to level their aim against the two opposite sides of the salient angles of a bastion. However imperfect, the weight and repetition of the fire made some impression on the walls," vol. iv. p. 344. And again: "A circumstance that distinguishes the siege of Constantinople is the reunion of the ancient and modern artillery. The cannon were intermingled with the mechanical engines for casting stones and darts, the bullet and the battering-ram were directed against the same walls; nor had the discovery of gunpowder superseded the use of the liquid and inextinguishable fire," vol. iv. p. 344. So again, in the description of the final conflict when Constantinople was taken, Mr. Gibbon says, "From the lines, the galleys, and the bridge, the Ottoman artillery thundered on all sides; and the camp and city, the Greeks and the Turks, were involved in a cloud of smoke which could only be dispelled by the final deliverance or destruction of the Roman empire," vol. iv. p. 350. Assuredly, if such was the fact in the conquests of the Turks, it was not unnatural in one who was looking on these warriors in vision to describe them as if they seemed to belch out "fire and smoke and brimstone." If Mr. Gibbon had designed to describe the conquest of the Turks as a fulfillment of the prediction, could he have done it in a style more clear and graphic than what he has employed? If this had occurred in a Christian writer, would it not have been charged on him that he had shaped his facts to meet his notions of the meaning of the prophecy?

(10) the statement that "their power was in their mouth, and in their tails," Revelation 9:19. The former part of this has been illustrated. The

inquiry now is, what is the meaning of the declaration that "their power was in their tails?" In Revelation 9:19 their tails are described as resembling "serpents, having heads," and it is said that "with them they do hurt." See the notes on that verse. The allusion to the "serpents" would seem to imply that there was something in the horses' tails, as compared with them, or in some use that was made of them, which would make this language proper; that is, that their appearance would so suggest the idea of death and destruction, that the mind would easily imagine they were a bundle of serpents. The following remarks may show how applicable this was to the Turks:

(a) In the Turkish hordes there was something, whatever it was, that naturally suggested some resemblance to serpents. Of the Turkmans when they began to spread their conquests over Asia, in the eleventh century, and an effort was made to rouse the people against them, Mr. Gibbon makes the following remark: "Massoud, the son and successor of Mahmoud, had too long neglected the advice of his wisest Omrahs. ‹Your enemies' (the Turkmans), they repeatedly urged, ‹were in their origin a swarm of ants; they are now little snakes; and unless they be instantly crushed, they will acquire the venom and magnitude. of serpents," vol. iv. p. 91.

(b) It is a remarkable fact that the horse's tail is a well-known Turkish standard - a symbol of office and authority. "The pashas are distinguished, after a Tartar custom, by three horsetails on the side of their tents, and receive by courtesy the title of beyler beg, or prince of princes. The next in rank are the pashas of two tails, the beys who are honored with one tail" - Edin. Ency. (art. "Turkey"). In the times of their early warlike career the principal standard was once lost in battle, and the Turkman commander, in default, cut off his horse's tail, lifted it on a pole, made it the rallying ensign, and so gained the victory. So Tournefort in his Travels states. The following is Ferrario's account of the origin of this ensign: "An author acquainted with their customs says, that a general of theirs, not knowing how to rally his troops that had lost their standards, cut off a horse's tail, and fixed it to the end of a spear; and the soldiers rallying at that signal, gained the victory."

He adds further, that whereas "on his appointment a pasha of the three tails used to receive a drum and a standard, now for the drum there have been substituted three horses' tails, tied at the end of a spear, round a gilded haft. One of the first officers of the palace presents him these three tails as a standard" (Elliott, vol. i. pp. 485,486). This remarkable standard or ensign is found only among the Turks, and, if there was an intended reference to them, the symbol here would be the proper one to be adopted. The meaning of the passage where it is said that "their power is in their tails" would seem to be, that their tails were the symbol or emblem of their authority - as in fact the horse's tail is in the appointment of a pasha. The image before the mind of John would seem to have been, that he saw the horses belching out fire and smoke, and, what was equally strange, he saw that their power of spreading desolation was connected with the tails of horses. Anyone looking on a body of cavalry with such banners or ensigns would be struck with this unusual and remarkable appearance, and would speak of their banners as concentrating and directing their power. The above engraving, representing the standard of a Turkish pasha, will illustrate the passage before us.

(11) the number slain, Revelation 9:18. That is said to have been "the third part of men." No one in reading the accounts of the wars of the Turks, and of the ravages which they have committed, would be likely to feel that this is an exaggeration. It is not necessary to suppose that it is literally accurate, but it is such a representation as would strike one in looking over the world, and contemplating the effect of their invasions. If the other specifications in the symbol are correct, there would be no hesitation in admitting the propriety of this.

(12) the time of the continuance of this power. This is a material, and a more difficult point. It is said Revelation 9:15 to be "an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year"; that is, as explained, three hundred and ninety-one years, and the portion of a year indicated by the expression "an hour"; to wit, an additional twelfth or twenty-fourth part of a year. The question now is, whether, supposing the time to which this reaches to be the capture of Constantinople, and the consequent downfall of the Roman empire - the object, in view in this series of visions - in reckoning back from that period for 391 years, we should reach an epoch that would properly denote the

moving forward of this power toward its final conquest; that is, whether there was any such marked epoch that, if the 391 years were added to it, it would reach the year of the conquest of Constantinople, 1453 a.d. The period that would be indicated by taking the number 391 from 1453 would be 1062 - and that is the time in which we are to look for the event referred to. This is on the supposition that the year consisted of 360 days, or twelve months of thirty days each. If, however, instead of this, we reckon 365 days and six hours, then the length of time would be found to amount to 396 years and 106 days.

This would make the time of the "loosening of the angels," or the moving forward of this power, to be 1057 a.d. In the uncertainty on this point, and in the unsettled state of ancient chronology, it would, perhaps, be vain to hope for minute accuracy, and it is not reasonable to demand it of an interpreter. On any fair principle of interpretation it would be sufficient if at about one of these periods - 1062 a.d. or 1057 ad - there was found such a definite or strongly marked event as would indicate a movement of the hitherto restrained power toward the West. This is the real point, then, to be determined. Now, in a common work on chronology I find this record: "1055 a.d., Turks reduce Bagdad, and overturn the empire of the caliphs." In a work still more important to our purpose (Gibbon, iv. 92,93), under the date of 1055 a.d., I find a series of statements which will show the propriety of referring to that event as the one by which this power, so long restrained, was "let loose"; that is, was placed in such a state that its final conquest of the Eastern empire certainly followed.

The event was the union of the Turkish power with the caliphate in such a way that the sultan was regarded as "the temporal lieutenant of the vicar of the prophet." Of this event Mr. Gibbon gives the following account. After mentioning the conversion of the Turks to the Moslem faith, and especially the zeal with which the son of Seljuk had embraced that faith, he proceeds to state the manner in which the Turkish sultan Togrul came in possession of Bagdad, and was invested With the high office of the "temporal lieutenant of the vicar of the prophet." There were two caliphs, those of Bagdad and Egypt, and "the sublime character of the successor of the prophet" was "disputed" by them, iv. 93. Each of them became "solicitous to prove his title in the judgment of the strong though illiterate barbarians."

Mr. Gibbon then says, “Mahmoud the Gaznevide had declared himself in favor of the line of Abbas; and had treated with indignity the robe of honor which was presented by the Fatimite ambassador. Yet the ungrateful Hashemite had changed with the change of fortune; he applauded the victory of Zendecan, and named the Seljukian sultan his temporal vicegerent over the Moslem world. As Togrul executed and enlarged this important trust, he was called to the deliverance of the caliph Cayem, and obeyed the holy summons, which gave a new kingdom to his arms. In the palace of Bagdad the commander of the faithful still slumbered, a venerable phantom. His servant or master, the prince of the Bowides, could no longer protect him from the insolence of meaner tyrants; and the Euphrates and the Tigris were oppressed by the revolt of the Turkish and Arabian emirs.

The presence of a conqueror was implored as a blessing; and the transient mischiefs of fire and sword were excused as the sharp but salutary remedies which alone could restore the health of the republic. At the head of an irresistible force the sultan of Persia marched from Hamadan; the proud were crushed, the prostrate were spared; the prince of the Bowides disappeared; the heads of the most obstinate rebels were laid at the feet of Togrul; and he inflicted a lesson of obedience on the people of Mosul and Bagdad. After the chastisement of the guilty, and the restoration of peace, the royal shepherd accepted the reward of his labors; and a solemn comedy represented the triumph of religious prejudice over barbarian power. The Turkish sultan embarked on the Tigris, landed at the gate of Racca, and made his public entry on horseback. At the palace gate he respectfully dismounted, and walked on foot preceded by his emirs without arms.

The caliph was seated behind his black veil; the black garment of the Abbassides was cast over his shoulders, and he held in his hand the staff of the Apostle of God. The conqueror of the East kissed the ground, stood some time in a modest posture, and was led toward the throne by the vizier and an interpreter. After Togrul had seated himself on another throne, his commission was publicly read, which declared him the temporal lieutenant of the vicar of the prophet. He was successively invested with seven robes of honor, and presented with seven slaves, the natives of the seven climates of the Arabian empire. His mystic veil was perfumed with musk; two crowns were placed on his head; two scimetars were girded to his side, as

the symbols of a double reign over the East and West. Their alliance was cemented by the marriage of Togrul‘s sister with the successor of the prophet,” iv. 93,94. This event, so described, was of sufficient importance, as constituting a union of the Turkish power with the Moslem faith, as making it practicable to move in their conquests toward the West, and as connected in its ultimate results with the downfall of the Eastern empire, to make it an epoch in the history of nations. In fact, it was the point which one would have particularly looked at, after describing the movements of the Saracens (Revelation 9:1-11), as the next event that was to change the condition of the world.

Happily we have also the means of fixing the exact date of this event, so as to make it accord with singular accuracy with the period supposed to be referred to. The general time specified by Mr. Gibbon is 1055 a.d. This, according to the two methods referred to of determining the period embraced in the “hour, and day, and month, and year,” would reach, if the period were 391 years, to 1446 a.d.; if the other method were referred to, making it 396 years and 106 days to 1451 a.d., with 106 days added, within less than two years of the actual taking of Constantinople. But there is a more accurate calculation as to the time than the general one thus made. In vol. iv. 93Mr. Gibbon makes this remark: “Twenty-five years after the death of Basil his successors were suddenly assaulted by an unknown race of barbarians, who united the Scythian valor with the fanaticism of new proselytes, and the art and riches of a powerful monarchy.”

He then proceeds (pp. 94ff) with an account of the invasions of the Turks. In vol. iii. 307 we have an account of the death of Basil. “In the sixty-eighth year of his age his martial spirit urged him to embark in person for a holy war against the Saracens of Sicily; he was prevented by death, and Basil, surnamed the slayer of the Bulgarians, was dismissed from the world, with the blessings of the clergy and the curses of the people.” This occurred 1025 a.d. “Twenty-five years” after this would make 1050 a.d. To this add the period here referred to, and we have respectively, as above, the years 1446 a.d., or 1451 a.d., and 106 days. Both periods are near the time of the taking of Constantinople and the downfall of the Eastern empire (1453 a.d.), and the latter strikingly so; and, considering the general nature of the statement of Mr. Gibbon, and the great indefiniteness of the dates in

chronology, may be considered as remarkable. - But we have the means of a still more accurate calculation.

It is by determining the exact period of the investiture of Togrul with the authority of caliph, or as the "temporal lieutenant of the vicar of the prophet." The time of this investiture, or coronation, is mentioned by Abulfeda as occurring on the 25th of Dzoulcad, in the year of the Hegira 449; and the date of Elmakin's narrative, who has given an account of this, perfectly agrees with this. Of this transaction Elmakin makes the following remark: "There was now none left in Irak or Chorasmia who could stand before him." The importance of this investiture will be seen from the charge which the caliph is reported by Abulfeda to have given to Togrul on this occasion: "The caliph commits to your care all that part of the world which God has committed to his care and dominion; and entrusts to thee, under the name of vicegerent, the guardianship of the pious, faithful, and God-serving citizens." The exact time of this investiture is stated by Abulfeda, as above, to be the 25th of Dzoulcad, A.H. 449.

Now, reckoning this as the time, and we have the following result: The 25th of Dzoulcad, A.H. 449, would answer to February 2,1058 a.d. From this to May 29,1453, the time when Constantinople was taken, would be 395 years and 116 days. The prophetic period, as above, is 396 years and 106 days - making a difference only of 1 year and 10 days - a result that cannot but be considered as remarkable, considering the difficulty of fixing ancient dates. Or if, with Mr. Elliott (i. 495-499), we suppose that the time is to be reckoned from the period when the Turkman power went forth from Bagdad on a career of conquest, the reckoning should be from the year of the Hegira 448, the year before the formal investiture, then this would make a difference of only 24 days. The date of that event was the 10th of Dzoulcad, A.H. 448. That was the day in which Togrul with his Turkmans, now the representative and head of the power of Islamism, quitted Bagdad to enter on a long career of war and conquest. "The part allotted to Togrul himself in the fearful drama soon to open against the Greeks was to extend and establish the Turkman dominion over the frontier countries of Irak and Mesopotamia, that so the requisite strength might be attained for the attack ordained of God's counsels against the Greek empire. The first step to this was the siege and capture of Moussul; his next of Singara. Nisibis, too, was

visited by him; that frontier fortress that had in other days been so long a bulwark to the Greeks. Everywhere victory attended his banner - a presage of what was to follow."

Reckoning from that time, the coincidence between the period that elapsed from that, and the conquest of Constantinople, would be 396 years and 130 days - a period that corresponds, with only a difference of 24 days, with that specified in the prophecy according to the explanation already given. It could not be expected that a coincidence more accurate than this could be made out on the supposition that the prophecy was designed to refer to these events; and if it did refer to them, the coincidence could have occurred only as a prediction by Him who sees with perfect accuracy all the future.

(13) The effect. This is stated, in Revelation 9:20-21, to be that those who survived these plagues did not repent of their wickedness, but that the abominations which existed before still remained. In endeavoring to determine the meaning of this, it will be proper, first, to ascertain the exact sense of the words used, and then to inquire whether a state of things existed subsequent to the invasions of the Turks which corresponded with the description here:

(a) The explanation of the language used in Revelation 9:20-21.

The rest of the men - That portion of the world on which these plagues did not come. One third of the race, it is said, would fall under these calamities, and the writer now proceeds to state what would be the effect on the remainder. The language used - "the rest of the people" - is not such as to designate with certainty any particular portion of the world, but it is implied that the things mentioned were of very general prevalence.

Which were not killed by these plagues - The two-thirds of the race which were spared. The language here is such as would be used on the supposition that the crimes here referred to abounded in all those regions which came within the range of the vision of the apostle.

Yet repented not of the works of their hands - To wit, of those things which are immediately specified.

That they should not worship devils - Implying that they practiced this before. The word used here - δαιμόνιον daimonion- means properly "a god,

deity"; spoken of the pagan gods, Acts 17:18; then a genius, or tutelary demon, e. g., that of Socrates; and, in the New Testament, a demon in the sense of an evil spirit. See the word fully explained in the notes on 1 Corinthians 10:20. The meaning of the passage here, as in 1 Corinthians 10:20, "they sacrifice to devils," is not that they literally worshipped devils in the usual sense of that term, though it is true that such worship does exist in the world, as among the Yezidis (see Layard, Nineveh and its Remains, vol. i. pp. 225-254, and Rosenmuller, Morgenland, iii. 212-216); but that they worshipped beings which were inferior to the Supreme God; created spirits of a rank superior to human beings, or the spirits of people that had been enrolled among the gods. This last was a common form of worship among the pagan, for a large portion of the gods whom they adored were heroes and benefactors who had been enrolled among the gods - as Hercules, Bacchus, etc. All that is necessarily implied in this word is, that there prevailed in the time referred to the worship of spirits inferior to God, or the worship of the spirits of departed people. This idea would be more naturally suggested to the mind of a Greek by the use of the word than the worship of evil spirits as such - if indeed it would have conveyed that idea at all; and this word would be properly employed in the representation if there was any homage rendered to departed human spirits which came in the place of the worship of the true God. Compare a dissertation on the meaning of the word used here, in Elliott on the Apocalypse, Appendix I. vol. ii.

And idols of gold, and silver, … - Idols were formerly, as they are now in pagan lands, made of all these materials. The most costly would, of course, denote a higher degree of veneration for the god, or greater wealth in the worshipper, and all would be employed as symbols or representatives of the gods whom they adored. The meaning of this passage is, that there would prevail, at that time, what would be properly called idolatry, and that this would be represented by the worship paid to these images or idols. It is not necessary to the proper understanding of this, to suppose that the images or idols worshipped were acknowledged pagan idols, or were erected in honor of pagan gods, as such. All that is implied is, that there would be such images - εἴδωλα eidōla- and that a degree of homage would be paid to them which would be in fact idolatry. The word used here - εἴδωλον eidōlon εἴδωλα - properly means an image, spectre, shade; then an idol-image, or what was a representative of a pagan god; and then the idol-god itself - a

pagan deity. So far as the word is concerned, it may be applied to any kind of image-worship.

Which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk - The common representation of idol-worship in the Scriptures, to denote its folly and stupidity. See Isaiah 44:9-19.

Neither repented they of their murders - This implies that, at the time referred to, murders would abound; or that the times would be characterized by what deserved to be called murder.

Nor of their sorceries - The word rendered "sorceries" - φαρμακεία pharmakeia- whence our word "pharmacy," means properly "the preparing and giving of medicine," Eng. "pharmacy" (Robinson's *Lexicon*). Then, as the art of medicine was supposed to have magical power, or as the persons who practiced medicine, in order to give themselves and their art greater importance, practiced various arts of incantation, the word came to be connected with the idea of magic sorcery, or enchantment. See Schleusner, Lexicon. In the New Testament the word is never used in a good sense, as denoting the preparation of medicine, but always in this secondary sense, as denoting sorcery, magic, etc. Thus, in Galatians 5:20, "the works of the flesh - idolatry, witchcraft," etc. Revelation 9:21, "of their sorceries." Revelation 18:23, "for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived." Revelation 21:8, "Whoremongers, and sorcerers." The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament; and the meaning of the word would be fulfilled in anything that purposed to accomplish an object by sorcery, by magical arts, by trick, by cunning, by sleight of hand, or "by deceiving the senses in any way." Thus, it would be applicable to all jugglery and to all pretended miracles.

Nor of their fornication - Implying that this would be a prevalent sin in the times referred to, and that the dreadful plagues which are here predicted would make no essential change in reference to its prevalence.

Nor of their thefts - Implying that this, too, would be a common form of iniquity. The word used here - κλέμμα klemma- is the common word to denote theft. The true idea in the word is that of privately, unlawfully, and feloniously taking the goods or movables of another person. In a larger and in the popular sense, however, this word might embrace all acts of taking the property of another by dishonest arts, or on false pretence, or without an equivalent.

(b) The next point then is, the inquiry whether there was any such state of things as is specified here existing in the time of the rise of the Turkish power, and in the time of the calamities which that formidable power brought upon the world. There are two things implied in the statement here:

(1)that these things had an existence before the invasion and destruction of the Eastern empire by the Turkish power; and,

(2)that they continued to exist after that, or were not removed by these fearful calamities.

The supposition all along in this interpretation is, that the eye of the prophet was on the Roman world, and that the design was to mark the various events which would characterize its future history. We look, then, in the application of this, to the state of things existing in connection with the Roman power, or that portion of the world which was then pervaded by the Roman religion. This will make it necessary to institute an inquiry whether the things here specified prevailed in that part of the world before the invasions of the Turks, and the conquest of Constantinople, and whether the judgments inflicted by that formidable Turkish invasion made any essential change in this respect:

(1) The statement that they worshipped devils; that is, as explained, demons, or the deified souls of people. Homage rendered to the spirits of departed people, and substituted in the place of the worship of the true God, would meet all that is properly implied here. We may refer, then, to the worship of saints in the Roman Catholic communion as a complete fulfillment of what is here implied in the language used by John. The fact cannot be disputed that the invocation of saints took the place, in the Roman Catholic communion, of the worship of sages and heroes in pagan Rome, and that the canonization of saints took the place of the ancient deification of heroes and public benefactors. The same kind of homage was rendered to them; their aid was invoked in a similar manner, and on similar occasions; the effect on the popular mind was substantially the same; and the one interfered as really as the other with the worship of the true God. The decrees of the seventh general council, known as the second council of Nice, 787 a.d., authorized and established the worshipping (προσκυνέω proskuneō- the same word used here - προσκυνήσωσι τὰ δαιμόνια proskunēsōsi ta daimonia) of the saints and their images.

This occurred after the exciting scenes, the debates, and the disorders produced by the Iconoclasts, or image-breakers, and after the most careful deliberation on the subject. In that celebrated council it was decreed, according to Mr. Gibbon (iii. 341), "unanimously," "that the worship of images is agreeable to Scripture and reason, to the fathers and councils of the church; but they hesitate whether that worship be relative or direct; whether the Godhead and the figure of Christ be entitled to the same mode of adoration." This worship of the "saints," or prayer to the saints, asking for their intercession, it is well known, has from that time everywhere prevailed in the papal communion. Indeed, a large part of the actual prayers offered in their services is addressed to the Virgin Mary. Mr. Maitland, "the able and learned advocate of the Dark Ages," says, "The superstition of the age supposed the glorified saint to know what was going on in the world; and to feel a deep interest, and to possess a considerable power, in the church militant on earth. I believe that they who thought so are altogether mistaken; and I lament, abhor, and am amazed at the superstition, blasphemies, and idolatries, which have grown out of that opinion" (Elliott, ii. p. 10).

As to the question whether this continued after the judgments brought upon the world by the hordes "loosed on the Euphrates," or whether they repented and reformed on account of the judgments, we have only to look into the Roman Catholic religion everywhere. Not only did the old practice of "daemonolatry," or the worship of departed saints, continue, but new "saints" have been added to the number, and the list of those who are to receive this homage has been continually increasing. Thus, in the year 1460, Catharine of Sienna was canonized by Pope Pius II; in 1482, Bonaventura; the blasphemer, by Sixtus IV; in 1494, Anselm by Alexander VI. Alexander‘s bull, in language more pagan than Christian, avows it to be the pope‘s duty thus to choose out, and to hold up the illustrious dead, as their merits claim, for adoration and worship.

(2) the statement that idolatry was practiced, and continued to be practiced, after this invasion: "Repented not that they should not worship idols of gold, silver, and brass." On this point, perhaps it would be sufficient to refer to what has been already noticed in regard to the homage paid to the souls of the departed; but it may be further and more clearly illustrated by a

reference to the worship of images in the Roman Catholic communion. Anyone familiar with church history will recollect the long conflicts which prevailed respecting the worship of images; the establishment of images in the churches; the destruction of images by the “Iconoclasts”; and the debars on the subject by the council at Hiera; and the final decision in the second council of Nice, in which the propriety of image-worship was affirmed and established. See, on this subject, Bowers‘ History of the Popes, ii. 98ff, 144ff; Gibbon, vol. iii. pp. 322-341.

The importance of the question respecting image-worship may be seen from the remarks of Mr. Gibbon, iii. 322. He speaks of it as “a question of popular superstition which produced the revolt of Italy, the temporal power of the popes, and the restoration of the Roman empire in the West.” A few extracts from Mr. Gibbon - who may be regarded as an impartial witness on this subject - will show what was the popular belief, and will confirm what is said in the passage before us in reference to the prevalence of idolatry. “The first introduction of a symbolic worship was in the veneration of the cross, and of relics. The saints and martyrs, when intercession was implored, were seated on the right hand of God; but the gracious, and often supernatural favors, which, in the popular belief, were showered round their tombs, conveyed an unquestionable sanction of the devout pilgrims who visited, and touched, and kissed these lifeless remains, the memorials of their merits and sufferings. But a memorial, more interesting than the skull or the sandals of a departed worthy, is a faithful copy of his person and features delineated by the arts of painting or sculpture. In every age such copies, so congenial to human feelings, have been cherished by the zeal of private friendship or public esteem; the images of the Roman emperors were adored with civil and almost religious honors; a reverence, less ostentatious, but more sincere, was applied to the statues of sages and patriots; and these profane virtues, these splendid sins, disappeared in the presence of the holy people who had died for their celestial and everlasting country.

At first the experiment was made with caution and scruple, and the venerable pictures were discreetly allowed to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the cold, and to gratify the prejudices of the pagan proselytes. By a slow, though inevitable progression, the honors of the original were

transferred to the copy; the devout Christian prayed before the image of a saint, and the pagan rites of genuflexion, luminaries, and incense.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 10

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter Revelation 10:1-11 contains the record of a sublime vision of an angel which, at this juncture, John saw descending from heaven, disclosing new scenes in what was yet to occur. The vision is interposed between the sounding of the sixth, or second woe-trumpet, and the sounding of the seventh, or third woe-trumpet, under which is to be the final consummation, Revelation 11:15 ff. It occupies an important interval between the events which were to occur under the sixth trumpet and the last scene - the final overthrow of the formidable power which had opposed the reign of God on the earth, and the reign of righteousness, when the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of God, Revelation 11:15. It is, in many respects, an unhappy circumstance that this chapter has been separated from the following. They constitute one continued vision, at least to Revelation 11:15, where the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet occurs.

The tenth chapter contains the following things:

(1) An angel descends from heaven, and the attention of the seer is for a time turned from the contemplation of what was passing in heaven to this new vision that appeared on the earth. This angel is clothed with a cloud; he is encircled by a rainbow; his face is as the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire - all indicating his exalted rank, and all such accompaniments as became a heavenly messenger.

(2) the angel appears with a small volume in his hand, Revelation 10:2. This book is not closed and sealed, like the one in Revelation 5:1-14, but was “open” - so that it could be read. Such a book would indicate some new message or revelation from heaven; and the book would be, properly, a symbol of something that was to be accomplished by such an open volume.

(3) the angel sets his feet upon the sea and the land, Revelation 10:2 - indicating by this, apparently, that what he was to communicate pertained alike to the ocean and the land - to all the world.

(4) the angel makes a proclamation - the nature of which is not here stated - with a loud voice, like the roaring of a lion, as if the nations were called to hear, Revelation 10:3.

(5) this cry or roar is responded to by heavy thunders, Revelation 10:3. What those thunders uttered is not stated, but it was evidently so distinct that John heard it, for he says Revelation 10:4 that he was about to make a record of what was said.

(6) John, about to make this record, is forbidden to do so by a voice from heaven, Revelation 10:4. For some reason, not here stated, he was commanded not to disclose what was said, but so to seal it up that it should not be known. The reason for this silence is nowhere intimated in the chapter.

(7) the angel lifts his hand to heaven in a most solemn manner, and swears by the Great Creator of all things that the time should not be yet - in our common version, "that there should be time no longer," Revelation 10:5-7. It would seem that just at this period there would be an expectation that the reign of God was to begin upon the earth; but the angel, in the most solemn manner, declares that this was not yet to be, but that it would occur when the seventh angel should begin to sound. Then the great "mystery" would be complete, as it had been declared to the prophets.

(8) John is then commanded, by the same voice which he heard from heaven, to go to the angel and take the little book from him which he held in his hand, and eat it - with the assurance that it would be found to be sweet to the taste, but would be bitter afterward, Revelation 10:8-10.

(9) the chapter concludes with a declaration that he must yet prophesy before many people and nations Revelation 10:11, and then follows Revelation 9:13-19. This was an important era in the history of the world; and if the exposition which has been proposed is correct, then the sketches of history pertaining to the Roman empire in the Book of Revelation have been made with surprising accuracy.

(b) A statement had been made Revelation 9:20-21 to the effect that the same state of things continued subsequent to the plagues brought on by those invasions, which had existed before, or that the effect had not been to produce any general repentance and reformation. God had scourged the nations; he had cut off multitudes of people; he had overthrown the mighty empire that had so long ruled over the world; but the same sins of superstition, idolatry, sorcery, murder, fornication, and theft prevailed afterward that had prevailed before. Instead of working a change in the minds of people, the world seemed to be confirmed in these abominations more and more. In the exposition of that passage Revelation 9:20-21 it was shown that those things prevailed in the Roman church - which then embraced the whole Christian world - before the invasion of the Eastern empire by the Turks, and that they continued to prevail afterward: that, in fact, the moral character of the world was not affected by those "plagues."

(c) The next event, in the order of time, was the Reformation, and the circumstances in the case are such as to lead us to suppose that this chapter refers to that. For:

(1) the order of time demands this. This was the next important event in the history of the church and the world after the conquest of Constantinople producing the entire downfall of the Roman empire; and if, as is supposed in the previous exposition, it was the design of the Spirit of inspiration to touch on the great and material events in the history of the church and the world, then it would be natural to suppose that the Reformation would come next into view, for no previous event had more deeply or permanently affected the condition of mankind.

(2) the state of the world, as described in Revelation 9:20-21, was such as to demand a reformation, or something that should be more effectual in purifying the church than the calamities described in the previous verse had been. The representation is, that God had brought great judgments upon the world, but that they had been ineffectual in reforming mankind. The same kind of superstition, idolatry, and corruption remained after those judgments which had existed before, and they were of such a nature as to make it every way desirable that a new influence should be brought to bear upon the world to purify it from these abominations. Some such work as the

Reformation is, therefore, what we should naturally look for as the next in order; or, at least, such a work is one that well fits in with the description of the previous state of things.

(d) It will be found, I apprehend, in the exposition of the chapter, that the symbols are such as accord well with the great leading events of the Protestant Reformation; or, in other words, that they are such that, on the supposition that it was intended to refer to the Reformation, these are the symbols which would have been appropriately employed. Of course it is not necessary to suppose that John understood distinctly all that was meant by these symbols, nor is it necessary to suppose that those who lived before the Reformation would be able to comprehend them perfectly, and to apply them with accuracy. All that is necessary to be supposed in the interpretation is:

(1)that the symbol was designed to be of such a character as to give some general idea of what was to occur; and,

(2)that we should be able, now that the event has occurred, to show that it is fairly applicable to the event: that is, that on the supposition that this was designed to be referred to, the symbols are such as would properly be employed. This, however, will be seen more clearly after the exposition shall have been gone through.

With this general view of what we should naturally anticipate in this chapter, from the course of exposition in the preceding chapters, we are prepared for a more particular exposition and application of the symbols in this new vision. It will be the most convenient course, keeping in mind the general views presented here, to explain the symbols, and to consider their application as we go along.

Verse 1

And I saw - I had a vision of. The meaning is, that he saw this subsequently to the vision in the previous chapter. The attention is now arrested by a new vision - as if some new dispensation or economy was about to occur in the world.

Another mighty angel - He had before seen the seven angels who were to blow the seven trumpets Revelation 8:2, he had seen six of them successively blow the trumpet, he now sees another angel, different from them, and apparently having no connection with them, coming from heaven to accomplish some important purpose before the seventh angel should give

the final blast. The angel is here characterized as a "mighty" angel - ἰσχυρὸν ischuron- one of strength and power; implying that the work to be accomplished by his mission demanded the interposition of one of the higher orders of the heavenly inhabitants. The coming of an angel at all was indicative of some divine interposition in human affairs; the fact that he was one of exalted rank, or endowed with vast power, indicated the nature of the work to be done - that it was a work to the execution of which great obstacles existed, and where great power would be needed.

Clothed with a cloud - Encompassed with a cloud, or enveloped in a cloud. This was a symbol of majesty and glory, and is often represented as accompanying the divine presence, Exodus 16:9-10; Exodus 24:16; Exodus 34:5; Numbers 11:25; 1 Kings 8:10; Psalm 97:2. The Saviour also ascended in a cloud, Acts 1:9; and he will again descend in clouds to judge the world, Matthew 24:30; Matthew 26:64; Mark 13:26; Revelation 1:7. Nothing can be argued here as to the purpose for which the angel appeared, from his being encompassed with a cloud; nor can anything be argued from it in respect to the question who this angel was. The fair interpretation is, that this was one of the angels now represented as sent forth on an errand of mercy to man, and coming with appropriate majesty as the messenger of God.

And a rainbow was upon his head - In Revelation 4:3 the throne in heaven is represented as encircled by a rainbow. See the notes on that verse. The rainbow is properly an emblem of peace. Here the symbol would mean that the angel came not for wrath, but for purposes of peace; that he looked with a benign aspect upon people, and that the effect of his coming would be like that of sunshine after a storm.

And his face was as it were the sun - Bright like the sun (See the notes at Revelation 1:16); that is, he looked upon people with:

(a)an intelligent aspect - as the sun is the source of light; and,

(b)with benignity - not covered with clouds, or darkened by wrath. The brightness is probably the main idea, but the appearance of the angel would, as here represented, naturally suggest the ideas just referred to. As an emblem or symbol we should regard his appearing as what was to be followed by knowledge and by prosperity.

And his feet as pillars of fire - See the notes on Revelation 1:15. In this symbol, then, we have the following things:

(a)An angel - as the messenger of God, indicating that some new communication was to be brought to mankind, or that there would be some interposition in human affairs which might be well represented by the coming of an angel;

(b)the fact that he was “mighty” - indicating that the work to be done required power beyond human strength;

(c)the fact that he came in a cloud - on an embassage so grand and magnificent as to make this symbol of majesty proper;

(d)the fact that he was encircled by a rainbow - that the visitation was to be one of peace to mankind; and,

(e)the fact that his coming was like the sun - or would diffuse light and peace.

Now, in regard to the application of this, without adverting to any other theory, no one can fail to see that, on the supposition that it was designed to refer to the Reformation, this would be the most striking and appropriate symbol that could have been chosen. For:

(a) as we have seen already, this is the place which the vision naturally occupies in the series of historical representations.

(b) It was at a period of the world, and the world was in such a state, that an intervention of this kind would be properly represented by the coming of an angel from heaven. God had visited the nations with terrible judgments, but the effect had not been to produce reformation, for the same forms of wickedness continued to prevail which had existed before. See the notes at Revelation 9:20-21. In this state of things any new interposition of God for reforming the world would be properly represented by the coming of an angel from heaven as a messenger of light and peace.

(c) The great and leading events of the Reformation were well represented by the power of this angel. It was not, indeed, physical power; but the work to be done in the Reformation was a great work, and was such as would be well symbolized by the intervention of a mighty angel from heaven. The task of reforming the church, and of correcting the abuses which had prevailed, was wholly beyond any ability which man possessed,

and was well represented, therefore, by the descent of this messenger from the skies.

(d) The same thing may be said of the rainbow that was upon his head. Nothing would better symbolize the general aspect of the Reformation, as suited to produce peace, tranquility, and joy upon the earth. And,

(e) the same thing was indicated by the splendor - the light and glory - that attended the angel. The symbol would denote that the new order of things would be attended with light; with knowledge; with what would be benign in its influence on human affairs. And it need not be said, to anyone acquainted with the history of those times, that the Reformation was preceded and accompanied with a great increase of light; that at just about that period of the world the study of the Greek-language began to be common in Europe; that the sciences had made remarkable progress; that schools and colleges had begun to flourish; and that, to a degree which had not existed for ages before, the public mind had become awakened to the importance of truth and knowledge. For a full illustration of this, from the close of the eleventh century and onward, see Hallam's *Middle Ages*, vol. ii. pp. 265-293, ch. ix. part 2. To go into any satisfactory detail on this point would be wholly beyond the proper limits of these notes, and the reader must be referred to the histories of those times, and especially to Hallam, who has recorded all that is necessary to be known on the subject. Suffice it to say, that on the supposition that it was the intention to symbolize those times, no more appropriate emblem could have been found than that of an angel whose face shone like the sun, and who was covered with light and splendor. These remarks will show, that if it be supposed it was intended to symbolize the Reformation, no more appropriate emblem could have been selected than that of such an angel coming down from heaven. If, after the events have occurred, we should desire to represent the same things by a striking and expressive symbol, we could find none that would better represent those times.

Verse 2

And he had in his hand a little book open - This is the first thing that indicated the purpose of his appearing, or that would give any distinct indication of the design of his coming from heaven. The general aspect of

the angel, indeed, as represented in the former verse, was that of benignity, and his purpose, as there indicated, was light and peace. But still there was nothing which would denote the particular design for which he came, or which would designate the particular means which he would employ. Here we have, however, an emblem which will furnish an indication of what was to occur as the result of his appearing. To be able to apply this, it will be necessary, as in all similar cases, to explain the natural significancy of the emblem:

(1) "The little book." The word used here - βιβλαρίδιον biblaridion- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament except in Revelation 10:8-10 of this chapter. The word βιβλίον biblion- "book" - occurs frequently: Matthew 19:7; Mark 10:4 - applied to a bill of divorcement; Luke 4:17, Luke 4:20; John 20:30; John 21:25; Galatians 3:10; 2 Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 9:19; Hebrews 10:7. In the Apocalypse this word is of common occurrence: Revelation 1:11; Revelation 5:1-5, Revelation 5:7-9; Revelation 6:14, rendered "scroll"; Revelation 17:8; Revelation 20:12; Revelation 21:27; Revelation 22:7, Revelation 22:9-10, Revelation 22:18-19. The word was evidently chosen here to denote something that was special in the size or form of the book, or to distinguish it from what would be designated by the ordinary word employed to denote a book. The word properly denotes "a small roll" or "volume"; a "little scroll" (Robinson's Lexicon, Pollux. Onomast. vii. 210). It is evident that something was intended by the diminutive size of the book, or that it was designed to make a distinction between this and that which is indicated by the use of the word "book" in the other parts of the Apocalypse. It was, at least, indicated by this that it was something different from what was seen in the hand of him that sat on the throne in Revelation 5:1.

That was clearly a large volume; this was so small that it could be taken in the hand, and could be represented as eaten, Revelation 10:9-10. But of what is a book an emblem? To this question there can be little difficulty in furnishing an answer. A book seen in a dream, according to Artemidorus, signifies the life, or the acts of him that sees it (Wemyss). According to the Indian interpreters, a book is the symbol of power and dignity. The Jewish kings, when they were crowned, had the book of the law of God put into their hands 2 Kings 11:12; 2 Chronicles 23:11; denoting that they were to observe the law, and that their administration was to be one of intelligence

and uprightness. The gift of a Bible now to a monarch when he is crowned, or to the officer of a corporation or society, denotes the same thing. A book, as such, thus borne in the hand of an angel coming down to the world, would be an indication that something of importance was to be communicated to people, or that something was to be accomplished by the agency era book.

It was not, as in Revelation 6:2, a bow - emblem of conquest; or Revelation 10:4, a sword - emblem of battle; or Revelation 10:5, a pair of scales - emblem of the exactness with which things were to be determined; but it was a book - a speechless, silent thing, yet mighty; not designed to carry desolation through the earth, but to diffuse light and truth. The natural interpretation, then, would be, that something was to be accomplished by the agency of a book, or that a book was to be the prominent characteristic of the times - as the bow, the sword, and the balances had been of the previous periods. As to the size of the book, perhaps all that can be inferred is, that this was to be brought about, not by extended tomes, but by a comparatively small volume - so that it could be taken in the hand; so that it could, without impropriety, be represented as eaten by an individual.

(2) "the fact that it was open:" "a little book open" - ἀνεῳγμένον aneōgmenonThe word used here means, properly, "to open or unclose" in respect to what was before fastened or sealed, as what is covered by a door, Matthew 2:11; tombs, which were closed by large stones, Matthew 27:60, Matthew 27:66; a gate, Acts 5:23; Acts 12:10; the abyss, Revelation 9:2 - "since in the east pits or wells are closed with large stones, compare Genesis 29:2" (Robinson's *Lexicon*). The meaning of this word, as applied to a book, would be, that it was now opened so that its contents could be read. The word would not necessarily imply that it had been sealed or closed, though that would be the most natural impression from the use of the word. Compare for the use of the word rendered "open," Revelation 3:8, Revelation 3:20; Revelation 4:1; Revelation 5:2-5, Revelation 5:9; Revelation 6:1, Revelation 6:3, Revelation 6:5, Revelation 6:7, Revelation 6:9, Revelation 6:12; Revelation 8:1; Revelation 9:2; Revelation 10:8; Revelation 11:19; Revelation 20:12. This would find a fulfillment if some such facts as the following should occur:

(a)if there had been any custom or arrangement by which knowledge was kept from people, or access was forbidden to books or to some one book in particular; and,

(b)if something should occur by which what had before been kept hidden or concealed, or that to which access had been denied, should be made accessible. In other words, this is the proper symbol of a diffusion of knowledge, or of "the influence of a book on mankind."

(3) the fact that it was in the hand of the angel. All that seems to be implied in this is, that it was now offered, or was ready to be put in possession of John - or of the church - or of mankind. It was open, and was held out, as it were, for perusal.

In regard to the application of this, it is plain that, if it be admitted that it was the design of the author of the vision to refer to the Reformation, no more appropriate emblem could have been chosen. If we were now to endeavor to devise an emblem of the Reformation that would be striking and expressive, we could not well select one which would better represent the great work than what is here presented. This will appear plain from a few considerations:

(1) The great agent in the Reformation, the moving cause of it, its suggester and supporter, was a book - "the Bible." Wycliffe had translated the New Testament into the English language, and though this was suppressed, yet it had done much to prepare the people for the Reformation; and all that Luther did can be traced to the discovery of the Bible, and to the use which was made of it. Luther had grown up into manhood; had passed from the schools to the university of Erfurt, and there having, during the usual four years' course of study, displayed intellectual powers and an extent of learning that excited the admiration of the university, and that seemed to open to his attainment both the honor and emolument of the world, he appeared to have been prepared to play an important part on the great drama of human affairs. Suddenly, however, to the astonishment and dismay of his friends, he betook himself to the solitude and gloom of an Augustinian monastery.

There he found a Bible - a copy of the Vulgate - hid in the shelves of the university library. Until then he had supposed that there existed no other Gospels or Epistles than what were given in the Breviary, or quoted by the

preachers. To the study of that book he now gave himself with untiring diligence and steady prayer; and the effect was to show to him the way of salvation by faith, and ultimately to produce the Reformation. No one acquainted with the history of the Reformation can doubt that it is to be traced to the influence of the Bible; that the moving cause, the spring of all that occurred in the Reformation, was the impulse given to the mind of Luther and his fellow-laborers by the study of that one book. It is this well-known fact that gives so much truth to the celebrated declaration of Chillingworth, that "the Bible is the religion of Protestants." If a symbol of this had been designed before it occurred, or if one should be sought for now that would designate the actual nature and influence of the Reformation, nothing better could he selected than that of an angel descending from heaven, with benignant aspect, with a rainbow around his head, and with light beaming all around him, holding forth to mankind a book.

(2) this book had before been hidden, or closed; that is, it could not until then be regarded as an open volume:

(a) It was in fact known by few even of the clergy, and it was not in the hands of the mass of the people at all. There is every reason to believe that the great body of the Roman Catholic clergy, in the time that preceded the Reformation, were even more ignorant of the Bible than Luther himself was. Many of them were unable to read; few had access to the Bible; and those who had, drew their doctrines rather from the fathers of the church than from the Word of God. Hallam (Middle Ages, ii. 241) says: "Of this prevailing ignorance (in the tenth century and onward) it is easy to produce abundant testimony. In almost every council the ignorance of the clergy forms a subject for reproach. It is asserted by one held in 992, that scarcely a single person could be found in Rome itself who knew the first clements of letters. Not one priest of a thousand in Spain, about the age of Charlemagne, could address a letter of common salutation to another. In England, Alfred declares that he could not recollect a single priest south of the Thames (the best part of England), at the time of his accession, who understood the ordinary prayers, or who could translate the Latin into the mother tongue."

There were few books of any kind in circulation, and even if there had been an ability to read, the cost of books was so great as to exclude the great mass of the people from all access to the sacred Scriptures. “Many of the clergy,” says Dr. Robertson (Hist. of Charles V. p. 14, Harper‘s ed.), “did not understand the Breviary which they were obliged daily to recite; some of them could scarcely read it.” “Persons of the highest rank, and in the most eminent stations, could neither read nor write.” One of the questions appointed by the canons to be put to persons who were candidates for orders was this, “Whether they could read the Gospels and Epistles, and explain the sense of them at least literally?” For the causes of this ignorance see Robertson‘s History of Charles V. p. 515. One of those causes was the cost of books. “Private persons seldom possessed any books whatever. Even monasteries of considerable note had only one Missal. The price of books became so high that persons of a moderate fortune could not afford to purchase them. The Countess of Anjou paid for a copy of the Homilies of Haimon, bishop of Alberstadt, two hundred sheep, five quarters of wheat, and the same quantity of rye and millet,” etc. Such was the cost of books that few persons could afford to own a copy of the sacred Scriptures; and the consequence was, there were almost none in the hands of the people. The few copies that were in existence were mostly in the libraries of monasteries and universities, or in the hands of some of the higher clergy.

(b) But there was another reason that was still more efficacious, perhaps, in keeping the people at large from the knowledge of the Scriptures. It was found in the prevailing views in the Roman Catholic communion respecting the private use and interpretation of the sacred volume. Whatever theory may now be advocated in the Roman Catholic communion on this point, as a matter of fact, the influence of that denomination has been to withhold the Bible from a free circulation among the common people. No one can deny that, in the times just preceding the Reformation, the whole influence of the papal denomination was opposed to a free circulation of the Bible, and that one of the great and characteristic features of the Reformation was the fact, that the doctrine was promulgated that the Bible was to be freely distributed, and that the people everywhere were to have access to it, and were to form their own opinions of the doctrines which it reveals.

(3) the Bible became, at the Reformation, in fact an “open” book. it was made accessible. It became the popular book of the world - the book that did more than all other things to change the aspect of affairs, and to give character to subsequent times. This occurred because:

(a) the art of printing was discovered just before the Reformation, as if, in the providence of God, it was designed then to give this precious volume to the world; and the Bible was, in fact, the first book printed, and has been since printed more frequently than any other book whatever, and will continue to be to the end of the world. It would be difficult to imagine now a more striking symbol of the art of printing, or to suggest a better device for it, than to represent an angel giving an open volume to mankind.

(b) The leading doctrine of the Reformers was, that the Bible is the source of all authority in matters of religion, and, consequently, is to be accessible to all the people. And,

(c) the Bible was the authority appealed to by the Reformers. It became the subject of profound study; was diffused abroad; and gave form to all the doctrines that sprang out of the times of the Reformation. These remarks, which might be greatly expanded, will show with what propriety, on the supposition that the chapter here refers to the Reformation, the symbol of a book was selected. Obviously no other symbol would have been so appropriate; nothing else would have given so just a view of the leading characteristics of that period of the world.

And he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth - This is the third characteristic in the symbol. As a mere description this is eminently sublime. I was once (at Cape May, 1849) impressively reminded of this passage. My window was in such a position that it commanded a fine view at the same time of the ocean and the land. A storm arose such as I had never witnessed - the clouds from the different points of the compass seeming to come together over the place, and producing incessant lightning and thunder. As the storm cleared away the most magnificent rainbow that I ever saw appeared, arching the heavens, one foot of it far off on the sea, and the other on the land - an emblem of peace to both - and most strikingly suggesting to me the angel in the Apocalypse. The natural meaning of such a symbol as that represented here would be,

that something was to occur which would pertain to the whole world, as the earth is made up of land and water.

It is hardly necessary to say, that on the supposition that this refers to the Reformation, there is no difficulty in finding an ample fulfillment of the symbol. That great work was designed manifestly by Providence to affect all the world - the sea and the land - the dwellers in the islands and in the continents - those who "go down to the sea in ships, and do business in the great waters," and those who have a permanent dwelling on shore. It may be admitted, indeed, that, in itself, this one thing - the angel standing on the sea and the land, if it occurred alone, could not suggest the Reformation; and if there were nothing else, such an application might seem fanciful and unnatural; but, taken in connection with the other things in the symbol, and assuming that the whole vision was designed to symbolize the Reformation, it will not be regarded as unnatural that there should be some symbol which would intimate that the blessings of a reformed religion - a pure gospel - would be ultimately spread over land and ocean - over the continents and islands of the globe; in all the fixed habitations of people, and in their floating habitations on the deep. The symbol of a rainbow bending over the sea and land, would have expressed this; the same thing would be expressed by an angel whose head was encircled by a rainbow, and whose face beamed with light, with one foot on the ocean and the other on the land,

Verse 3

And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth - The lion is the monarch of the woods, and his roar is an image of terror. The point of the comparison here seems to be the loudness with which the angel cried, and the power of what he said to awe the world - as the roar of the lion keeps the dwellers of the forest in awe. What he said is not stated; nor did John attempt to record it. Prof. Stuart supposes that it was "a loud note of woe, some interjection uttered which would serve to call attention, and at the same time be indicative of the judgments which were to follow." But it is not necessary to suppose that this particular thing was intended. Any loud utterance - any solemn command - any prediction of judgment - any declaration of truth that would arrest the attention of mankind, would be in accordance with all that is said here. As there is no application of what is said, and no explanation made by John, it is impossible to determine with any certainty what is referred to.

But, supposing that the whole refers to the Reformation, would not the loud and commanding voice of the angel properly represent the proclamation of the gospel as it began to be preached in such a manner as to command the attention of the world, and the reproof of the prevailing sins in such a manner as to keep the world in awe? The voice that sounded forth at the Reformation among the nations of Europe, breaking the slumbers of the Christian world, awaking the church to the evil of the existing corruptions and abominations, and summoning princes to the defense of the truth, might well be symbolized by the voice of an angel that was heard afar. In regard to the effect of the "theses" of Luther, in which he attacked the main doctrines of the papacy, a contemporary writer says, "In the space of a fortnight they spread over Germany, and within a month they had run through all Christendom, as if angels themselves had been the bearers of them to all men." To John it might not be known beforehand - as it probably would not be - what this symbolized; but could we now find a more appropriate symbol to denote the Reformation than the appearance of such an angel; or better describe the impression made by the first announcement of the great doctrines of the Reformation, than by the loud voice of such an angel?

And when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices - Prof. Stuart renders this, "the seven thunders uttered their voices," and insists that the article should be retained, which it has not been in our common version. So Elliott, Dr. Middleton, and others. Dr. Middleton says, "Why the article is inserted here I am unable to discover. It is somewhat remarkable that a few manuscripts and editions omit it in both places Revelation 10:3-4. Were the seven thunders anything well known and pre-eminent? If not, the omission must be right in the former instance, but wrong in the latter; if they were pre-eminent, then is it wrong in both. Bengel omits the article in Revelation 10:3, but has it in Revelation 10:4." He regards the insertion of the article as the true reading in both places, and supposes that there may have been a reference to some Jewish opinion, but says that he had not been able to find a vestige of it in Lightfoot, Schoettgen, or Meuschen. Storr supposes that we are not to seek here for any Jewish notion, and that nothing is to be inferred from the article (Middleton, on the Greek Article, p. 358).

The best editions of the New Testament retain the article in both places, and indeed there is no authority for omitting it. The use of the article here

naturally implies either that these seven thunders were something which had been before referred to, either expressly or impliedly; or that there was something about them which was so well known that it would be at once understood what was referred to; or that there was something in the connection which would determine the meaning. Compare the notes on Revelation 8:2. It is plain, however, that there had been no mention of "seven thunders" before, nor had anything been referred to which would at once suggest them. The reason for the insertion of the article here must, therefore, be found in some pre-eminence which these seven thunders had; in some well-known facts about them; in something which would at once suggest them when they were mentioned - as when we mention the sun, the moon, the stars, though they might not have been distinctly referred to before. The number "seven" is used here either:

(a)as a general or perfect number, as it is frequently in this book, where we have it so often repeated - seven spirits; seven angels; seven seals; seven trumpets; or,

(b)with some specific reference to the matter in hand - the case actually in view of the writer.

It cannot be doubted that it might be used in the former sense here, and that no law of language would be violated if it were so understood; as denoting many thunders; but still it is equally true that it way be used in a specific sense as denoting something that would be well understood by applying the number seven to it. Now let it be supposed, in regard to the application of this symbol, that the reference is to Rome, the seven-hilled city, and to the thunders of excommunication, anathema, and wrath that were uttered from that city against the Reformers; and would there not be all that is fairly implied in this language, and is not this such a symbol as would he appropriately used on such a supposition? The following circumstances may be referred to as worthy of notice on this point:

(a)the place which this occupies in the series of symbols - being just after the angel had uttered his voice as symbolical of the proclamation of the great truths of the gospel in the Reformation, if the interpretation above given is correct. The next event, in the order of nature and of fact, was the voice of excommunication uttered at Rome.

(b)The word "thunder" would appropriately denote the bulls of excommunication uttered at Rome, for the name most frequently given to the decrees of the papacy, when condemnatory, was that of papal thunders.

So LeBas, in his Life of Wycliffe, p. 198, says: “The thunders which shook the world when they issued from the seven hills sent forth an uncertain sound, comparatively faint and powerless, when launched from a region of less devoted sanctity.”

(c)The number seven would, on such a supposition, be used here with equal propriety. Rome was built on seven hills; was known as the “seven-hilled” city, and the thunders from that city would seem to echo and re-echo from those hills. Compare Revelation 17:9.

(d)This supposition, also, will accord with the use of the article here, as if those thunders were something well known - “the seven thunders”; that is, the thunders which the nations were accustomed to hear.

(e)This will also accord with the passage before us, inasmuch as the thunders would seem to have been of the nature of a response to what the angel said, or to have been sent forth because he had uttered his loud cry.

In like manner, the anathemas were hurled from Rome because the nations had been aroused by the loud cry for reformation, as if an angel had uttered that cry. For these reasons there is a propriety in applying this language to the thunders which issued from Rome condemning the doctrines of the Reformation, and in defense of the ancient faith, and excommunicating those who embraced the doctrines of the Reformers. If we were now to attempt to devise a symbol which would be appropriate to express what actually occurred in the Reformation, we could not think of one which would be better suited to that purpose than to speak of seven thunders bellowing forth from the seven-hilled city.

Verse 4

And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices - After he had listened to those thunders; or when they had passed by.

I was about to write - That is, he was about to record what was uttered, supposing that that was the design for which he hart been made to hear them. From this it would seem that it was not mere thunder - brutum fulmen - but that the utterance had a distinct and intelligible enunciation, or that words were employed that could be recorded. It may be observed, by the way, as Prof. Stuart has remarked, that this proves that John wrote down what he saw and heard as soon as practicable, and in the place where he

was; and that the supposition of many modern critics, that the Apocalyptic visions were written at Ephesus a considerable time after the visions took place, has no good foundation.

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me - Evidently the voice of God: at all events it came with the clear force of command,

Seal up those things - On the word "seal," see the notes on Revelation 5:1. The meaning here is, that he was not to record those things, but what he heard he was to keep to himself as if it was placed under a seal which was not to be broken.

And write them not - Make no record of them. No reason is mentioned why this was not to be done, and none can now be given that can be proved to be the true reason. Vitringa, who regards the seven thunders as referring to the Crusades, supposes the reason to have been that a more full statement would have diverted the mind from the course of the prophetic narrative, and from more important events which pertained to the church, and that nothing occurred in the Crusades which was worthy to be recorded at length: Nec dignae erant quae prolixius exponerentur - "for," he adds, "these expeditions were undertaken with a foolish purpose, and resulted in real detriment to the church," pp. 431,432. Prof. Stuart (vol. ii. pp. 204-206) supposes that these "thunders" refer to the destruction of the city and temple of God, and that they were a sublime introduction to the last catastrophe, and that the meaning is not that he should keep "entire silence," but only that he should state the circumstances in a general manner, without going into detail. Mede supposes that John was commanded to keep silence because it was designed that the meaning should not then be known, but should be disclosed in future times; Forerius, because it was the design that the wise should be able to understand them, but that they were not to be disclosed to the wicked and profane. Without attempting to examine these and other solutions which have been proposed, the question which, from the course of the exposition, is properly before us is, whether, on the supposition that the voice of the seven thunders referred to the papal anathemas, a rational and satisfactory solution of the reasons of this silence can be given. Without pretending to know the reasons which existed, the following may be referred to as not improbable, and as those which would meet the case:

(1) In these papal anathemas there was nothing that was worthy of record; there was nothing that was important as history; there was nothing

that communicated truth; there was nothing that really indicated progress in human affairs. In themselves there was nothing more that deserved record than the acts and doings of wicked people at any time; nothing that fell in with the main design of this book.

(2) such a record would have retarded the progress of the main statements of what was to occur, and would have turned off the attention from these to less important matters.

(3) all that was necessary in the case was simply to state that such threaders were heard: that is, on the supposition that this refers to the Reformation, that that great change in human affairs would not be permitted to occur without opposition and noise - as if the thunders of wrath should follow those who were engaged in it.

(4) John evidently mistook this for a real revelation, or for something that was to be recorded as connected with the divine will in reference to the progress of human affairs. He was naturally about to record this as he did what was uttered by the other voices which he heard; and if he had made the record, it would have been with this mistaken view. There was nothing in the voices, or in what was uttered, that would manifestly mark it as distinct from what had been uttered as coming from God, and he was about to record it under this impression. If this was a mistake, and if the record would do anything, as it clearly would, to perpetuate the error, it is easy to see a sufficient reason why the record should not be made.

(5) it is remarkable that there was an entire correspondence with this in what occurred in the Reformation; in the fact that Luther and his fellow-laborers were, at first, and for a long time - such was the force of education, and of the habits of reverence for the papal authority in which they had been reared - disposed to receive the announcements of the papacy as the oracles of God, and to show to them the deference which was due to divine communications. The language of Luther himself, if the general view here taken is correct, will be the best commentary on the expressions used here. “When I began the affairs of the Indulgences,” says he, “I was a monk, and a most mad papist. So intoxicated was I, and drenched in papal dogmas, that I would have been most ready to murder, or assist others in murdering,

any person who should have uttered a syllable against the duty of obedience to the pope."

And again: "Certainly at that time I adored him in earnest." He adds, "How distressed my heart was in that year 1517 - how submissive to the hierarchy, not feignedly but really - those little knew who at this day insult the majesty of the pope with so much pride and arrogance. I was ignorant of many things which now, by the grace of God, I understand. I disputed; I was open to conviction; not finding satisfaction in the works of theologians, I wished to consult the living members of the church itself. There were some godly souls that entirely approved my propositions. But I did not consider their authority of weight with me in spiritual concerns. The popes, bishops, cardinals, monks, priests, were the objects of my confidence. After being enabled to answer every objection that could be brought against me from sacred Scripture, one difficulty alone remained, that the Church ought to be obeyed.

If I had then braved the pope as I now do, I should have expected every hour that the earth would have opened to swallow me up alive, like Korah and Abiram." It was in this frame of mind that, in the summer of 1518, a few months after the affair with Tetzel, he wrote that memorable letter to the pope, the tenor of which can be judged of by the following sentences: and what could more admirably illustrate the passage before us, on the interpretation suggested, than this language? "Most blessed Father! Prostrate at the feet of thy blessedness I offer myself to thee, with all that I am, and that I have. Kill me, or make me live; call or recall; approve or reprove, as shall please thee. I will acknowledge thy voice as the voice of Christ presiding and speaking in thee." See the authorities for these quotations in Elliott, vol. ii. pp. 116,117.

(6) The command not to record what the seven thunders uttered was of the nature of a caution not to regard what was said in this manner; that is, not to be deceived by these utterances as if they were the voice of God. Thus understood, if this is the proper explanation and application of the passage, it should be regarded as an injunction not to regard the decrees and decisions of the papacy as containing any intimation of the divine will, or as of authority in the church. That this is to be so regarded is the opinion of all

Protestants; and if this is so, it is not a forced supposition that this might have been intimated by such a symbol as that before us.

Verse 5

And the angel which I saw stand … - Revelation 10:2. That is, John saw him standing in this posture when he made the oath which he proceeds to record.

Lifted up his hand to heaven - The usual attitude in taking an oath, as if one called heaven to witness. See Genesis 14:22; Deuteronomy 32:40; Ezekiel 20:5-6. Compare the notes on Daniel 12:7.

Verse 6

And sware by him that liveth forever and ever - By the ever-living God: a form of an oath in extensive use now. The essential idea in such an oath is an appeal to God; a solemn reference to Him as a witness; an utterance in the presence of Him who is acquainted with the truth or falsehood of what is said, and who will punish him who appeals to him falsely. It is usual, in such an oath, in order to give to it greater solemnity, to refer to some attribute of God, or something in the divine character on which the mind would rest at the time, as tending to make it more impressive. Thus, in the passage before us, the reference is to God as "ever-living"; that is, he is now a witness, and he ever will be; he has now the power to detect and punish, and he ever will have the same power.

Who created heaven, and the things that therein are, … - Who is the Maker of all things in heaven, on the earth, and in the sea; that is, throughout the universe. The design of referring to these things here is what is just specified to give increased solemnity to the oath by a particular reference to someone of the attributes of God. With this view nothing could be more appropriate than to refer to him as the Creator of the universe - denoting his infinite power, his right to rule and control all things.

That there should be time no longer - This is a very important expression, as it is the substance of what the angel affirmed in so solemn a manner; and as the interpretation of the whole passage depends on it. It seems now to be generally agreed among critics that our translation does not give the true sense, inasmuch:

(a)as that was not the close of human affairs, and

(b)as he proceeds to state what would occur after that.

Accordingly, different versions of the passage have been proposed. Prof. Stuart renders it, “that delay shall be no longer.” Mr. Elliott, “that the time shall not yet be; but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, whensoever he may be about to sound, then the mystery of God shall be finished.” Mr. Lord, “that the time shall not be yet, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel,” etc. Andrew Fuller (Works, vol. vi. p. 113), “there should be no delay.” So Dr. Gill. Mr. Daubuz, “the time shall not be yet.” Vitringa (p. 432), tempus non fore amplius, “time shall be no more.” He explains it (p. 433) as meaning, “not that this is to be taken absolutely, as if at the sounding of the seventh trumpet all things were then to terminate, and the glorious epiphany - ἐπίφανεια epiphaneia(or manifestation of Jesus Christ) - was then to occur, who would put an end to all the afflictions of his church; but in a limited sense - restricte - as meaning that there would be no delay between the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the fulfillment of the prophecies.” The sense of this passage is to be determined by the meaning of the words and the connection:

(a) The word “time” - χρόνος chronos- is the common Greek word to denote time, and may be applied to time in general, or to any specified time or period. See Robinson, Lexicon sub voce, (a, b). In the word itself there is nothing to determine its particular signification here. It might refer either to time in general, or to the time under consideration, and which was the subject of the prophecy. Which of these is the true idea is to be ascertained by the other circumstances referred to. It should be added, however, that the word does not of itself denote delay, and is never used to denote that directly. It can only denote that because delay occupies or consumes time, but this sense of the noun is not found in the New Testament. It is found, however, in the verb χρονίζω chronizōto linger, to delay, to be long in coming, Matthew 25:5; Luke 1:21.

(b) The absence of the article - “time,” not “the time” - would naturally give it a general signification, unless there was something in the connection to limit it to some well-known period under consideration. See the notes on Revelation 8:2; Revelation 10:3. In this latter view, if the time referred to would be sufficiently definite without the article, the article need not be inserted. This is such a case, and comes under the rule for the omission of the article as laid down by Dr. Middleton, part i. ch. 3: The principle is, that when the copula, or verb connecting the subject and predicate, is the verb

substantive, then the article is omitted. “To affirm the existence,” says he, “of that of which the existence is already assumed, would be superfluous; to deny it, would be contradictory and absurd.” As applicable to the case before us, the meaning of this rule would be, that the nature of the time here referred to is implied in the use of the substantive verb (ἔσται estai), and that consequently it is not necessary to specify it. All that needs to be said on this point is, that, on the supposition that John referred to a specified time, instead of time in general, it would not be necessary, under this rule, to insert the article. The reference would be understood without it, and the insertion would be unnecessary. This is substantially the reasoning of Mr. Elliott (vol. ii. p. 123), and it is submitted for what it is worth. My own knowledge of the usages of the Greek article is too limited to justify me in pronouncing an opinion on the subject, but the authorities are such as to authorize the assertion that, on the supposition that a particular well-known period were here referred to, the insertion of the article would not be necessary.

(c) The particle rendered “longer” - έτι eti- “time shall be no longer” - means properly, according to Robinson (Lexicon), “yet, still”; implying:

(1) duration - as spoken of the present time; of the present in allusion to the past, and, with a negative, no more, no longer;

(2) implying accession, addition, yet, more, further, besides. According to Buttmann, Grammatical section 149, vol. i. p. 430, it means, when alone, “yet still, yet further; and with a negative, no more, no further.” The particle occurs often in the New Testament, as may be seen in the Concordance. It is more frequently rendered “yet” than by any other word (compare Matthew 12:46; Matthew 17:5; Matthew 19:20; Matthew 26:47; Matthew 27:63; Mark 5:35; Mark 8:17; Mark 12:6; Mark 14:43 - and so in the other Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles); in all, 50 times. In the Book of Revelation it is only once rendered “yet,” Revelation 6:11, but is rendered “more” in Revelation 3:12; Revelation 7:16; Revelation 9:12; Revelation 12:8; Revelation 18:21-22 (three times), Revelation 18:23 (twice); Revelation 20:3; Revelation 21:1, Revelation 21:4 (twice); “longer” in Revelation 10:6; “still” in Revelation 22:11 (four times). The usage, therefore, will justify the rendering of the word by “yet,” and in connection

with the negative, “not yet” - meaning that the thing referred to would not occur immediately, but would be hereafter. In regard to the general meaning, then, of this passage in its connection, we may remark:

(a) That it cannot mean, literally, that there would be time no longer, or that the world would then come to an end absolutely, for the speaker proceeds to disclose events that would occur after that, extending far into tim future Revelation 10:11, and the detail that follows Revelation 10:7, “in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound.” Then “the mystery of God would be finished,” and the affairs of the world would be put on their permanent footing.

(c) This would imply that, at the time when the angel appeared, or in the time to which he refers, there would be some expectation or general belief that the “mystery was then to be finished, and that the affairs of the world were to come to an end. The proper interpretation would lead us to suppose that there would be so general an expectation of this, as to make the solemn affirmation of the angel proper to correct a prevailing opinion, and to show that the right interpretation was not put on what seemed to be the tendency of things.

(d) As a matter of fact, we find that this expectation did actually exist at the time of the Reformation; that such an interpretation was put on the prophecies, and on the events that occurred; and that the impression that the Messiah was about to come, and the reign of saints about to commence, was so strong as to justify some interference, like the solemn oath of the angel, to correct the misapprehension. It is true that this impression had existed in former times, and even in the early ages of the church; but, as a matter of fact, it was true, and eminently true, in the time of the Reformation, and there was, on many accounts, a strong tendency to that form of belief. The Reformers, in interpreting the prophecies, learned to connect the downfall of the papacy with the coming of Christ, and with his universal reign upon the earth; and as they saw the evidences of the approach of the former, they naturally anticipated the latter as about to occur.

Compare Daniel 2:34; Daniel 12:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 2 Thessalonians 2:8. The anticipation that the Lord Jesus was about to come;

that the affairs of the world, in the present form, were to be wound up; that the reign of the saints would soon commence; and that the permanent kingdom of righteousness would be established, became almost the current belief, of the Reformers, and was frequently expressed in their writings. Thus, Luther, in the year 1520, in his answer to the pope‘s bull of excommunication, expresses his anticipations: “Our Lord Jesus Christ yet liveth and reigneth; who, I firmly trust, will shortly come, and slay with the spirit of his mouth, and (destroy with the brightness of his coming, that Man of Sin” (Merle D‘Aubig., vol. ii. p. 166). After being summoned before the Diet at Worms, and after condemnation had been pronounced on him by the emperor, he fell back for comfort on the same joyous expectation. “For this once,” he said, “the Jews, as on the crucifixion day, may sing their paean; but Easter will come for us, and then we shall sing Hallelujah” (D‘Aubig., vol. ii. p. 275). The next year, writing to Staupitz, he made a solemn appeal against his abandoning the Reformation, by reference to the sure and advancing fulfillment of Daniel‘s prophecy. “My father,” said he, “the abominations of the pope, with his whole kingdom, must be destroyed; and the Lord does this without hand, by the Word alone. The subject exceeds all human comprehension. I cherish the best hopes” (Milner, p. 692).

In 1523 he thus, in a similar strain, expresses his hopes: “The kingdom of Antichrist, according to the prophet Daniel, must be broken without hands; that is, the Scriptures will be understood by and by; and every one will preach against papal tyranny, from the Word of God, until the Man of Sin is deserted of all, and dies of himself” (Milner, p. 796). The same sentiments respecting the approach of the end of the world were entertained by Melancthon. In commenting on the passage in Daniel relating to the “little horn,” he thus refers to an argument which has been prevalent: “The words of the prophet Elias should be marked by every one, and inscribed upon our walls, and on the entrances of our houses. Six thousand years shall the world stand, and after that be destroyed; two thousand years without the law; two thousand years under the law of Moses; two thousand years under the Messiah; and if any of those years are not fulfilled, they will be shortened (a shortening intimated by Christ also, on account of our sins).”

The following manuscript addition to this argument has been found in Melancthon‘s hand, in Luther‘s own copy of the German Bible: “Written

1557 a.d., and from the creation of the world, 5519; from which number we may see that this aged world is not far from its end." So also the British Reformers believed. Thus, Dr. Latimer: "Let us cry to God day and night … Most merciful Father, let thy kingdom come! Paul saith, The Lord will not come until the swerving from the faith cometh 2 Thessalonians 2:3; which thing is already done and past. Antichrist is already known throughout all the world. Wherefore the day is not far off." Then, reverting to the consideration of the age of the world, as Melancthon had done, he says, "The world was ordained to endure, as all learned ones affirm, 6000 years. Now of that number there be past 5552 years, so that there is no more left but 448 years. Furthermore, those days shall be shortened for the elect's sake. Therefore, all those excellent and learned men, whom without doubt God hath sent into the world in these last days to give the world warning, do gather out of sacred Scripture that the last day cannot be far off."

So again, in a sermon on the nearness of the second advent, he says, "So that peradventure it may come in my days, old as I am, or in my children's days." Indeed, it is well known that this was a prevalent opinion among the Reformers; and this fact will show with what propriety, if the passage before us was designed to refer to the Reformation, this solemn declaration of the angel was made, that the "time would not be yet" - that those anticipations which would spring up from the nature of the case, and from the interpretations which would be put on what seemed to be the obvious sense of the prophecies, were unfounded, and that a considerable time must yet intervene before the events would be consummated.

(e) The proper sense of this passage, then, according to the above interpretation would be "And the angel lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth forever and ever, That the time should not yet be; but, in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God shall be finished." Appearances, indeed, would then indicate that the affairs of the world were to be wound up, and that the prophecies respecting the end of the world were about to be fulfilled: but the angel solemnly swears "by Him who lives forever and ever" - and whose reign therefore extends through all the changes on the earth - "by Him who is the Creator of all things," and whose purpose alone can determine when the end shall be, that the time would not be yet. Those

cherished expectations would not yet be realized, but there was a series of important events to intervene before the end would come. Then - at the time when the seventh angel should sound - would be the consummation of all things.

Verse 7

But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel - The days in the period of time embraced by the sounding of the seventh trumpet. That is, the affairs of this world would not be consummated in that period embraced in the sounding of the sixth trumpet, but in that embraced in the sounding of the seventh and last of the trumpets. Compare Revelation 11:15-19.

When he shall begin to sound - That is, the events referred to will commence at the period when the angel shall begin to sound. It will not be merely during or in that period, but the sounding of the trumpet, and the beginning of those events, will be contemporaneous. In other words, then would commence the reign of righteousness - the kingdom of the Messiah the dominion of the saints on the earth.

The mystery of God should be finished - On the meaning of the word "mystery," see the notes on Ephesians 1:9. It means here, as elsewhere in the New Testament, the purpose or truth of God which had been concealed, and which had not before been communicated to man. Here the particular reference is to the divine purpose which had been long concealed respecting the destiny of the world, or respecting the setting up of his kingdom, but which had been progressively unfolded by the prophets. That purpose would be "finished," or consummated, in the time when the seventh angel should begin to sound. Then all the "mystery" would be revealed; the plan would be unfolded; the divine purpose, so long concealed, would be manifested, and the kingdom of the Messiah and of the saints would be set up on the earth. Under that period, the affairs of the world would be ultimately wound up, and the whole work of redemption completed.

As he hath declared to his servants the prophets - As he has from time to time disclosed his purposes to mankind through the prophets. The reference here is, doubtless, to the prophets of the Old Testament, though the language would include all who at any time had uttered any predictions respecting the final condition of the world. These prophecies had been scattered along through many ages; but the angel says that at that time all that had been said respecting the setting up of the kingdom of God, the

reign of the saints, and the dominion of the Redeemer on the earth, would be accomplished. See the notes on Revelation 11:15. From the passage thus explained, if the interpretation is correct, it will follow that the sounding of the seventh trumpet Revelation 11:15-18 is properly the conclusion of this series of visions, and denotes a "catastrophe" in the action, and that what follows is the commencement of a new series of visions. This is clear, because:

(a)the whole seven seals, comprising the seven trumpets of the seventh seal, must embrace one view of all coming events - since this embraced all that there was in the volume seen all the hand of him that sat on the throne;

(b)this is properly implied in the word rendered here as "should be finished" - τελέσθη telesthē- the fair meaning of which is, that the "mystery" here referred to - the hitherto unrevealed purpose or plan of God - would, under that trumpet, be consummated or complete (see the conclusive reasoning of Prof. Stuart on the meaning of the word, vol. ii. p. 210, footnote); and,

(c)it will be found in the course of the exposition that, at Revelation 11:19, there commences a new series of visions, embracing a view of the world in its religious aspect, or ecclesiastical characteristics, reaching down to the same consummation, and stating at the close of that Revelation 20:1-15 more fully what is here Revelation 11:15-18 designated in a more summary way - the final triumph of religion, and the establishment of the kingdom of the saints.

The present series of visions Revelation 11:19; Revelation 12:20 relates to the church internally, the rise of Antichrist, and the effect of the rise of that formidable power on the internal history of the church, to the time of the overthrow of that power, and the triumphant establishment of the kingdom of God. See the Analysis of the work, Intro. 5. In other words, this series of visions, terminating at Revelation 11:18, refers, as the leading thing, to what would occur in relation to the Roman empire considered as a secular power, in which the church would be interested; what follows Revelation 11:19; Revelation 1220 to the Roman power considered as a great apostasy, and setting up a mighty and most oppressive domination over the true church, manifested in deep corruption and bloody persecutions, running on in its disastrous influence on the world, until that

power should be destroyed, Babylon fall, and the reign of the saints be introduced.

Verse 8

And the voice which I heard from heaven - Revelation 10:4. This is not the voice of the angel, but a direct divine command,

Said, Go and take the little book which is open, … - That is, take it out of his hand, and do with it as you shall be commanded. There is a very strong resemblance between this passage and the account contained in Ezekiel 2:9-10; Ezekiel 3:1-3. Ezekiel was directed to go to the house of Israel and deliver a divine message, whether they would hear or forbear; and in order that he might understand what message to deliver, there was shown to him a roll of a book, written within and without. That roll he was commanded to eat, and he found it to be "in his mouth as honey for sweetness." John has added to this the circumstance that, though "sweet in the mouth," it made "the belly bitter." The additional command Revelation 10:11, that he must yet "prophecy before many people," leads us to suppose that he had the narrative in Ezekiel in his eye; for, as the result of his eating the roll, he was commanded to go and prophesy to the people of Israel. The passage here Revelation 10:8 introduces a new symbol, that of "eating the book," and evidently refers to something that was to occur before the "mystery should be finished"; that is, before the seventh trumpet should sound.

"Which is open in the hand … " On the symbolical meaning of the word "open," as applied to the book, see the notes on Revelation 10:2.

Verse 9

And I went unto the angel - This is symbolic action, and is not to be understood literally. As it is not necessary to suppose that an angel literally descended, and stood upon the sea and the land, so it is not necessary to suppose that there was a literal act of going to him, and taking the book from his hand and eating it.

Give me the little book - In accordance with the command in Revelation 10:8. We may suppose, in regard to this:

(a)that the symbol was designed to represent that the book was to be used in the purpose here referred to, or was to be an important agent or instrumentality in accomplishing the purpose. The book is held forth in the hand of the angel as a striking emblem. There is a command to go and take

it from his hand for some purpose not yet disclosed. All this seems to imply that the book - or what is represented by it - would be an important instrument in accomplishing the purpose here referred to.

(b)The application for the book might intimate that, on the part of him who made it, there would be some strong desire to possess it. He goes, indeed, in obedience to the command; but, at the same time, there would naturally be a desire to be in possession of the volume, or to know the contents (compare Revelation 5:4), and his approach to the angel for the book would be most naturally interpreted as expressive of such a wish.

And he said unto me, Take it - As if he had expected this application; or had come down to furnish him with this little volume, and had anticipated that the request would be made. There was no reluctance in giving it up; there was no attempt to withhold it; there was no prohibition of its use. The angel had no commission, and no desire to retain it for himself, and no hesitation in placing it in the bands of the seer on the first application. Would not the readiness with which God gives his Bible into the hands of human beings, in contradistinction from all human efforts to restrain its use, and to prevent its free circulation, be well symbolized by this act?

And eat it up - There is a similar command in Ezekiel 3:1. Of course, this is to he understood figuratively, for no one would interpret literally a command to eat a manuscript or volume. We have in common use a somewhat similar phrase, when we speak of devouring a book, which may illustrate this, and which is not liable to be misunderstood. In Jeremiah 15:16, we have similar language: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Thus, in Latin, the words propinare, imbibere, devorare, deglutire, etc., are used to denote the greediness with which knowledge is acquired. Compare in the Apocrypha, Ezekiel 3:1-3. The expression here must refer to something that would occur after the symbolical action of "eating" the little book, or to some consequence of eating it - for the act of eating it is represented as pleasant: "in thy mouth sweet as honey." The meaning here is, that the effect which followed from eating the book was painful or disagreeable - as food would be that was pleasant to the taste, but that produced bitter pain when eaten. The fulfillment of this would be found in one of two things:

(a) It might mean that the message to be delivered in consequence of devouring the book, or the message which it contained, would be of a

painful or distressing character; that with whatever pleasure the book might be received and devoured, it would be found to contain a communication that would be indicative of woe or sorrow. This was the case with the little book that Ezekiel was commanded to eat up. Thus, in speaking of this book, it is said, "And it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe," Ezekiel 2:10. Compare Revelation 3:4-9, where the contents of the book, and the effect of proclaiming the message which it contained, are more fully stated. So here the meaning may be, that, however gladly John may have taken the book, and with whatever pleasure he may have devoured its contents, yet that it would be found to be charged with the threatening of wrath, and with denunciations of a judgment to come, the delivery of which would be well represented by the "bitterness" which is said to have followed from "eating" the volume. Or.

(b) it may mean that the consequence of devouring the book, that is, of embracing its doctrines, would be persecutions and trouble - well represented by the "bitterness" that followed the "eating" of the volume. Either of these ideas would be a fulfillment of the proper meaning of the symbol; for, on the supposition that either of these occurred in fact, it would properly be symbolized by the eating of a volume that was sweet to the taste, but that made the belly bitter.

But it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey - So in Ezekiel 3:3. The proper fulfillment of this it is not difficult to understand. It would well represent the pleasure derived from divine truth - the sweetness of the Word of God - the relish with which it is embraced by those that love it. On the supposition that the "little book" here refers to the Bible, and to the use which would be made of it in the times referred to, it would properly denote the relish which would exist for the sacred volume, and the happiness which would be found in its perusal; for this very image is frequently employed to denote this. Thus, in Psalm 19:10; "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." Psalm 119:103; "how sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." We are then to look for the fulfillment of this in some prevailing delight or satisfaction, in the times referred to, in the Word of the Lord, or in the truths of revelation.

Verse 10

And as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter - The effect immediately followed: that is, as soon as he was made acquainted with the contents of the book, either, as above explained, requiring him to deliver some message of woe and wrath which it would be painful to deliver, or that the consequence of receiving it was to bring on bitter persecutions and trials.

Verse 11

And he said unto me - The angel then said.

Thou must prophesy - The word "prophesy" here is evidently used in the large sense of making known divine truth in general; not in the comparatively narrow and limited sense in which it is commonly used, as referring merely to the foretelling of future events. See the word explained in the Romans 12:6 note; 1 Corinthians 14:1 note. The meaning is, that, as a consequence of becoming possessed of the little volume and its contents, he would be called to proclaim divine truth, or to make the message of God known to mankind. The direct address is to John himself; but it is evidently not to be understood of him personally. He is represented as seeing the angel; as hearkening to his voice; as listening to the solemn oath which he took; as receiving and eating the volume; and then as prophesying to many people; but the reference is undoubtedly to the far-distant future. If the allusion is to the times of the Reformation, the meaning is, that the end of the world was not, as would be expected, about to occur, but that there was to be an interval long enough to permit the gospel to be proclaimed before "nations, and tongues, and kings"; that in consequence of coming into possession of the "little book," the Word of God, the truth was yet to be proclaimed far and wide on the earth.

Again - πάλιν palinThis had been done before. That is, supposing this to refer to the time of the Reformation, it could be said:

(a)that this had been done before - that the gospel had been in former times proclaimed in its purity before "many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings"; and,

(b)that it would be done "again"; that is, though the Word of God had been hidden, and a mass of corrupt traditions had taken its place, yet the time would come when those pure truths would be made known again to all lands. This will explain the word "again" in this place - not meaning that John would do this personally, but that this would be in fact the result of the restoration of the Bible to the church.

Before many peoples - This word denotes people considered as masses, or as grouped together in masses, without reference to the manner in which it is done. It is used when we look on a mass of people, without taking into account the question whether they are of the same nation, or language, or rank. See the notes on Revelation 7:9. The plural is used here - "peoples" - perhaps to denote that those to whom the truth would be made known would be very numerous. They would not only be numerous in regard to the individuals to whom it would be communicated, but numerous considered as communities or nations.

And nations - The word "nations" here denotes people considered as separated by national boundaries, constitutions, laws, customs. See the notes on Revelation 7:9.

And tongues - People considered as divided by languages - a division not always or necessarily the same as that denoted by the word "people," or "nations" as used in this passage.

And kings - Rulers of the people. The meaning is, that the gospel would not only be borne before the masses of mankind, but in a special manner before kings and rulers. The effect of thus possessing the "little volume," or of the "open book" of revealed truth, would ultimately be that the message of life would be carried with power before princes and rulers, and would influence them as well as the common people.

In inquiring now for the proper application of this symbol as thus explained, we naturally turn to the Reformation, and ask whether there was anything in that of which this would he the proper emblem. The following things, then, are found in fact as occurring at that time, of which the symbol before us may be regarded as the proper representation:

(1) The reception of the Bible as from the hand of an angel - or its recovery from obscurity and forgetfulness, as if it were now restored to the church by a heavenly interposition. The influence of the Bible on the Reformation; the fact that it was now recovered from its obscurity, and that it was made the grand instrument in the Reformation, has already been illustrated. See the notes on Revelation 10:2. The symbolical action of taking it from the hand of an angel was not an improper representation of its reception again by the church, and of its restoration to its true place in the church. It became, as it is proper that it should always be, the grand means of the defense of the faith, and of the propagation of truth in the world.

(2) the statement that the little book when eaten was "in the mouth sweet as honey," is a striking and proper representation of the relish felt for the sacred Scriptures by those who love the truth (compare notes on Revelation 10:9), and is especially appropriate to describe the interest which was felt in the volume of revealed truth in the time of the Reformation. For the Bible was to the Reformers emphatically a new book. It had been driven from common use to make way for the legends of the saints and the traditions of the church. It had, therefore, when translated into the vernacular tongue, and when circulated and read, the freshness of novelty - the interest which a volume of revealed truth would have if just given from heaven. Accordingly, it is well known with what avidity and relish the sacred volume was studied by Luther and his fellow-laborers in the Reformation; how they devoured its doctrines; how they looked to it for comfort in their times of trial; how sweet and sustaining were its promises in the troubles that came upon them, and in the labors which they were called to perform.

(3) the representation that, after it was eaten, it was "bitter," would not improperly describe the effect, in some respects, of thus receiving the Bible, and making it the groundwork of faith. It brought the Reformers at once into conflict with all the power of the papacy and the priesthood; exposed them to persecution; aroused against them a host of enemies among the princes and rulers of the earth; and was the cause for which many of them were put to death. Such effects followed substantially when Wycliffe translated the Bible; when John Huss and Jerome of Prague published the pure doctrines of the New Testament; and when Luther gave to the people the Word of God in their own language. To a great extent this is always so - that, however sweet and precious the truths of the Bible may be to the preacher himself, one of the effects of his attempting to preach those truths may be such opposition on the part of people, such cold indifference, or such fierce persecution, that it would be well illustrated by what is said here, "it shall make thy belly bitter."

(4) the representation that, as a consequence of receiving that book, he would prophesy again before many people, is a fit representation of the effect of the reception of the Bible again by the church, and of allowing it its proper place there. For:

(a) it led to preaching, or, in the language of this passage, “prophesying” - a thing comparatively little known before for many ages. The grand business in the papal communion was not, and is not, preaching, but the performance of rites and ceremonies. Genuflexions, crossings, burning of incense, processions, music, constitute the characteristic features of all papal churches; the grand thing that distinguishes the Protestant churches all over the world, just in proportion as they are Protestant, is preaching. The Protestant religion - the pure form of religion as it is revealed in the New Testament - has few ceremonies: its rites are simple: it depends for success on the promulgation and defense of the truth, with the attending influence of the Holy Spirit; and for this view of the nature and degree of religion the world is indebted to the fact that the Bible was again restored to its true place in the church.

(b) The Bible is the basis of all genuine preaching. Preaching will not be kept up in its purity, except in the places where the Bible is freely circulated, and where it is studied; and where it is studied, there will be, in the proper sense of the term, preachers. Just in proportion as the Bible is studied in the world, we may expect that preaching will be better understood, and that the number of preachers will be increased.

(c) The study of the Bible is the foundation of all the efforts to spread the knowledge of the truth to “peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings,” in our own times. All these efforts have been originated by the restoration of the Bible to its proper place in the church, and to its more profound and accurate study in this age; for these efforts are but carrying out the injunction of the Saviour as recorded in this book - to “go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

(d) The same thing will be true to the end of the world; or, in the language of the portion of the Book of Revelation before us, until “the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever,” Revelation 11:15. The fact of the restoration of the Bible to its proper place in the church will, therefore, ultimately be the means of the conversion of the whole world to God; and this fact, so momentous in its nature and its consequences, was worthy to be

symbolized by the appearance of the “angel descending from heaven clothed with a cloud”; was properly represented by the manner in which he appeared - “his face radiant as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire”; was worthy to be expressed by the position which he assumed, as “standing on the sea and the earth” - as if all the world were interested in the purpose of his mission, and was worthy of the loud proclamation which he made - as if a new order of things were to commence. Beautiful and sublime, then, as this chapter is, and always has been esteemed as a composition, it becomes still more beautiful and sublime if it be regarded as a symbol of the Reformation - an event the most glorious, and the most important in its issues, of any that has occurred since the Saviour appeared on the earth.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 11

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter Revelation 11:18 - consists (excluding the last verse, which properly belongs to the succeeding chapter) essentially of three parts:

I. The measuring of the temple, Revelation 11:1-2. A reed, or measuring-stick, is given to John, and he is directed to arise and measure the temple. This direction embraces two parts:

(a)he was to measure, that; is, to take an exact estimate of the temple, of the altar, and of the true worshippers;

(b)he was carefully to separate this, in his estimate, from the outward court, which was to be left out and to be given to the Gentiles, to be trodden under foot forty-two months; that is, three years and a half, or twelve hundred and sixty days - a period celebrated in the book of Daniel as well as in this book.

II. The two witnesses, Revelation 11:3-13. This is, in some respects, the most difficult portion of the Book of Revelation, and its meaning can be stated only after a careful examination of the signification of the words and phrases used. The general statement in regard to these witnesses is, that they should have power, and should prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days; that if anyone should attempt to injure them, they had power, by fire that proceeded out of their mouths, to devour and kill their enemies; that they had power to shut heaven so that it should not rain, and power to turn the waters of the earth into blood, and power to smite the earth with plagues as often as they chose; that when they had completed their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit would make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them; that their dead bodies would lie unburied in that great city where the Lord was crucified three days and a half; that they that dwelt upon the earth would exult in their death, and send gifts to one another in token of their joy; that after the three days and a half the spirit of life from God would enter into them again, and they would stand up on their feet; that they would then be taken up into heaven, in the sight of their enemies; and that, at the time of their ascension, there would be a great earthquake, and a tenth part of the city would fall, and many (seven thousand) would be killed, and that the remainder would be affrighted, and would give glory to the God of heaven.

III. The sounding of the seventh trumpet, Revelation 11:14-18. This is the grand consummation of the whole; the end of this series of visions; the end of the world. A rapid glance only is given of it here, for under another series of visions a more detailed account of the state of the world is given under the final triumph of truth. Here, as a proper close of the first series of visions, the result is merely glanced at or adverted to - that then the period would have arrived when the kingdoms of the world were to become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ, and when he should commence that reign which was to continue forever. Then universal peace and happiness would reign, and the long-promised and expected kingdom of God on the earth would be established. The "nations" had been "angry," but the time had now come when a judgment was to be pronounced on the dead, and when the due reward was to be given to the servants of God - the prophets, and the saints, and those who feared his name, small and great - in the establishment of a permanent kingdom, and the complete triumph of the true religion in the world.

I regard this chapter, therefore, to Revelation 11:13, as extending down to the consummation of all things, and as disclosing the last of the visions seen in the scroll or volume "sealed with the seven seals," Revelation 5:1. For a reason above suggested, and which will appear more fully hereafter, the detail is here much less minute than in the earlier portions of the historic visions, but still it embraces the whole period, and states in few words what will be the condition of things in the end. This was all that wes necessary; this was, in fact, the leading design of the whole book. The end toward which all tended - what John needed most to know and which the church needed most to know, was that religion would ultimately triumph, and that the period would arrive when it could be announced that the kingdoms of this world had become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ. That is here announced; and that is properly the close of one of the divisions of the whole book.

Verse 1

And there was given me - He does not say by whom, but the connection would seem to imply that it was by the angel. All this is of course to be regarded as symbolical. The representation undoubtedly pertains to a future age, but the language is such as would be properly

addressed to one who had been a Jew, and the imagery employed is such as he would be more likely to understand than any other. The language and the imagery are, therefore, taken from the temple, but there is no reason to suppose that it had any literal reference to the temple, or even that John would so understand it. Nor does the language used here prove that the temple was standing at the time when the book was written; for, as it is symbolical, it is what would be employed whether the temple were standing or not, and would be as likely to be used in the one case as in the other. It is such language as John, educated as a Jew, and familiar with the temple worship, would be likely to employ if he designed to make a representation pertaining to the church.

A reed - κάλαμος kalamosThis word properly denotes a plant with a jointed hollow stalk, growing in wet grounds. Then it refers to the stalk as cut for use - as a measuring-stick, as in this place; or a mock scepter, Matthew 27:29-30; or a pen for writing, 3 John 1:13. Here it means merely a stick that could be used for measuring.

Like unto a rod - This word - ῥάβδος rabdos- means properly a "rod, wand, staff," used either for scourging, 1 Corinthians 4:21; or for leaning upon in walking, Matthew 10:10; or for a scepter, Hebrews 1:8. Here the meaning is, that the reed that was put into his hands was like such a rod or staff in respect to size, and was therefore convenient for handling. The word "rod" also is used to denote a measuring-pole, Psalm 74:2; Jeremiah 10:16; Jeremiah 51:19.

And the angel stood, saying - The phrase, "the angel stood," is missing in many mss. and editions of the New Testament, and is rejected by Prof. Stuart as spurious. It is also rejected in the critical editions of Griesbach and Hahn, and marked as doubtful by Tittmann. The best critical authority is against it, and it appears to have been introduced from Zechariah 3:5. The connection does not demand it, and we may, therefore, regard the meaning to be, that the one who gave him the reed, whoever he was, at the same time addressed him, and commanded him to take a measure of the temple and the altar.

Rise, and measure the temple of God - That is, ascertain its true dimensions with the reed in your hand. Of course, this could not be understood of the literal temple - whether standing or not - for the exact measure of that was sufficiently well known. The word, then, must be used of something which the temple would denote or represent, and this would

properly be the church, considered as the abode of God on the earth. Under the old dispensation, the temple at Jerusalem was that abode; under the new, that special residence was transferred to the church, and God is represented as dwelling in it. See the notes on 1 Corinthians 3:16. Thus, the word is undoubtedly used here, and the simple meaning is, that he who is thus addressed is directed to take an accurate estimate of the true church of God; as accurate as if he were to apply a measuring-reed to ascertain the dimensions of the temple at Jerusalem. In doing that, if the direction had been literally to measure the temple at Jerusalem, he would ascertain its length, and breadth, and height; he would measure its rooms, its doorways, its porticoes; he would take such a measurement of it that, in a description or drawing, it could be distinguished from other edifices, or that one could be constructed like it, or that a just idea could be obtained of it if it should be destroyed.

If the direction be understood figuratively, as applicable to the Christian church, the work to be done would be to obtain an exact estimate or measurement of what the true church was - as distinguished from all other bodies of people, and as constituted and appointed by the direction of God; such a measurement that its characteristics could be made known; that a church could be organized according to this, and that the accurate description could be transmitted to future times. John has not, indeed, preserved the measurement; for the main idea here is not that he was to preserve such a model, but that, in the circumstances, and at the time referred to, the proper business would be to engage in such a measurement of the church that its true dimensions or character might be known. There would be, therefore, a fulfillment of this, if at the time here referred to there should be occasions, from any cause, to inquire what constituted the true church; if it was necessary to separate and distinguish it from all other bodies; and if there should be any such prevailing uncertainty as to make an accurate investigation necessary.

And the altar - On the form, situation, and uses of the altar, see the Matthew 5:23-24; Matthew 21:12. The altar here referred to was, undoubtedly, the altar situated in front of the temple, where the daily sacrifice was offered. To measure that literally, would be to take its dimensions of length, breadth, and height; but it is plain that that cannot be intended here, for there was no such altar where John was, and, if the reference were to the altar at Jerusalem, its dimensions were sufficiently

known. This language, then, like the former, must be understood metaphorically, and then it must mean - as the altar was the place of sacrifice - to take an estimate of the church considered with reference to its notions of sacrifice, or of the prevailing views respecting the sacrifice to be made for sin, and the method of reconciliation with God. It is by sacrifice that a method is provided for reconciliation with God; by sacrifice that sin is pardoned; by sacrifice that man is justified; and the direction here is equivalent, therefore, to a command to make an investigation on these subjects, and all that is implied would be fulfilled if a state of things should exist where it would be necessary to institute an examination into the prevailing views in the church on the subject of the atonement, and the true method of justification before God.

And them that worship therein - In the temple, or, as the temple is the representation here of the church, of those who are in the church as professed worshippers of God. There is some apparent incongruity in directing him to "measure" those who were engaged in worship; but the obvious meaning is, that he was to take a correct estimate of their character; of what they professed; of the reality of their piety; of their lives, and of the general state of the church considered as professedly worshipping God. This would receive its fulfillment if a state of things should arise in the church which would make it necessary to go into a close and searching examination on all these points, in order to ascertain what was the true church, and what was necessary to constitute true membership in it. There were, therefore, three things, as indicated by this verse, which John was directed to do, so far as the use of the measuring-rod was concerned:

(a)to take a just estimate of what constitutes the true church, as distinguished from all other associations of people;

(b)to institute a careful examination into the opinions in the church on the subject of sacrifice or atonement - involving the whole question about the method of justification before God; and,

(c)to take a correct estimate of what constitutes true membership in the church; or to investigate with care the prevailing opinions about the qualifications for membership.

Verse 2

But the court which is without the temple - Which is outside of the temple proper, and, therefore, which does not strictly pertain to it. There is undoubtedly reference here to the "court of the Gentiles," as it was called among the Jews - the outer court of the temple to which the Gentiles had access, and within which they were not permitted to go. For a description of this, see the notes on Matthew 21:12. To an observer this would seem to be a part of the temple, and the persons there assembled a portion of the true worshippers of God; but it was necessarily neither the one nor the other. In forming an estimate of those who, according to the Hebrew notions, were true worshippers of God, only those would be regarded as such who had the privilege of access to the inner court, and to the altar. In making such an estimate, therefore, those who had no nearer access than that court, would be omitted; that is, they would not be reckoned as necessarily any part of those who were regarded as the people of God.

Leave out, and measure it not - Margin, "cast out." So the Greek. The meaning is, that he was not to reckon it as pertaining to the true temple of worshippers. There is, indeed, a degree of force in the words rendered "leave out," or, in the margin, "cast out" - ἔκβαλε ἔξω ekbale exō- which implies more than a mere passing by, or omission. The word (ἐκβάλλω ekballō) usually has the idea of "force" or "impluse" (Matthew 8:12; Matthew 15:17; Matthew 25:30; Mark 16:9; Acts 27:38, et al.); and the word here would denote some decisive or positive act by which it would be indicated that this was not any part of the true temple, but was to be regarded as pertaining to something else. He was not merely not to mention it, or not to include it in the measurement, but he was to do this by some act which would indicate that it was the result of design in the case, and not by accidentally passing it by.

For it is given unto the Gentiles - It properly pertains to them as their own. Though near the temple, and included in the general range of building, yet it does not pertain to those who worship there, but to those who are regarded as pagan and strangers. It is not said that it was then given to the Gentiles; nor is it said that it was given to them to be overrun and trodden down by them, but that it pertained to them, and was to be regarded as belonging to them. They occupied it, not as the people of God, but as those who were without the true church, and who did not pertain to its real communion. This would find a fulfillment if there should arise a state of things in the church in which it would be necessary to draw a line between

those who properly constituted the church and those who did not; if there should be such a condition of things that any considerable portion of those who professedly pertained to the church ought to be divided off as not belonging to it, or would have such characteristic marks that it could be seen that they were strangers and aliens. The interpretation would demand that they should sustain some relation to the church, or that they would seem to belong to it - as the court did to the temple; but still that this was in appearance only, and that in estimating the true church it was necessary to leave them out altogether. Of course this would not imply that there might not be some sincere worshippers among them as individuals - as there would be found usually, in the court of the Gentiles in the literal temple, some who were proselytes and devout worshippers, but what is here said relates to them as a mass or body that they did not belong to the true church, but to the Gentiles.

And the holy city - The whole holy city - not merely the outer court of the Gentiles, which it is said was given to them, nor the temple as such, but the entire holy city. There is no doubt that the words "the holy city" literally refer to Jerusalem - a city so called because it was the special place of the worship of God. See the notes on Matthew 4:5; compare Nehemiah 11:1, Nehemiah 11:18; Isaiah 52:1; Daniel 9:24; Matthew 27:53. But it is not necessary to suppose that this is its meaning here. The "holy city," Jerusalem, was regarded as sacred to God - as his dwelling-place on earth, and as the abode of his people, and nothing was more natural than to use the term as representing the church. Compare the Galatians 4:26 note; Hebrews 12:22 note. In this sense it is undoubtedly used here as the whole representation is emblematical. John, if he were about to speak of anything that was to occur to the church, would, as a native Jew, be likely to employ such language as this to denote it.

Shall they tread under foot - That is, the Gentiles above referred to; or those who, in the measurement of the city, were set off as Gentiles, and regarded as not belonging to the people of God. This is not spoken of the Gentiles in general, but only of that portion of the multitudes that seemed to constitute the worshippers of God, who, in measuring the temple, were set off or separated as not properly belonging to the true church. The phrase "should tread under foot" is derived from warriors and conquerors, who tread down their enemies, or trample on the fields of grain. It is rendered in this passage by Dr. Robinson (Lexicon), "to profane and lay waste." As

applied literally to a city, this would be the true idea; as applied to the church, it would mean that they would have it under their control or in subjection for the specified time, and that the practical effect of that would be to corrupt and prostrate it.

Forty and two months - Literally, this would be three years and a half; but if the time here is prophetic time - a day for a year - then the period would be twelve hundred and sixty years - reckoning the year at 360 days. For a full illustration of this usage, and for the reasons for supposing that this is prophetic time, see the notes on Daniel 7:25. See also Editor's Preface, p. 25: In addition to what is there said, it may be remarked, in reference to this passage, that it is impossible to show, with any degree of probability, that the city of Jerusalem was "trampled under foot" by the Romans for the exact space of three years and a half. Prof. Stuart, who adopts the opinion that it refers to the conquest of Jerusalem by the Romans, says, indeed, "It is certain that the invasion of the Romans lasted just about the length of the period named, until Jerusalem was taken. And although the city itself was not besieged so long, yet the metropolis in this case, as in innumerable others in both Testaments, appears to stand for the country of Judaea." But it is to be remembered that the affirmation here is, that "the holy city" was thus to be trodden under foot; and even taking the former supposition, in what sense is it true that the "whole country" was "trodden under foot" by the Romans only three years and a half?

Even the wars of the Romans were not of that exact duration; and, besides, the fact was that Judaea was held in subjection, and trodden down by the Romans for centuries, and never, in fact, regained its independence. If this is to be literally applied to Jerusalem, it has been "trodden down by the Gentiles," with brief intervals, since the conquest by the Romans, to the present time. There has been no precise period of three years and a half, in respect to which the language used here would be applicable to the literal city of Jerusalem. In regard, then, to the proper application of the language which has thus been explained Revelation 11:1-2, it may be remarked, in general, that, for the reasons just stated, it is not to be taken literally. John could not have been directed literally to measure the temple at Jerusalem, and the altar, and the worshippers; nor could he have been requested literally to leave out, or "cast out" the court that was without; nor could it be meant that the holy city literally was to be trodden under foot for three years and a half. The language clearly is symbolical, and the reference must

have been to something pertaining to the church. And, if the preceding exposition of the tenth chapter is correct, then it may be presumed that this would refer to something that was to occur at about the period there referred to. Regarding it, then, as applicable to the time of the Reformation, and as being a continuation of the vision in Revelation 10:1-11, we shall find, in the events of that period, what would be properly symbolized by the language used here. This will appear by reviewing the particulars which have been explained in these verses:

(1) The command to "measure the temple of God," Revelation 11:1. This, we have seen, was a direction to take an estimate of what constituted the true church; the very work which it was necessary to do in the Reformation, for this was the first point which was to be settled, whether the papacy was the true church or was the antichrist. This involved, of course, the whole inquiry as to what constitutes the church, alike in reference to its organization, its ministry, its sacraments, and its membership. It was long before the Reformers made up their minds that the papacy was not the true church; for the veneration which they had been taught to cherish for that lingered long in their bosoms. And even when they were constrained to admit that that corrupt communion was the predicted form of the great apostasy - antichrist - and had acquired boldness enough to break away from it forever, it was long before they settled down in a uniform belief as to what was essential to the true church. Indeed, the differences of opinion which prevailed, the warm discussions which ensued, and the diversities of sect which sprang up in the Protestant world, showed with what intense interest the mind was fixed on this question, and how important it was to take an exact measurement of the real church of God.

(2) the direction to "measure the altar." This, as we have seen, would relate to the prevailing opinions on the subject of sacrifice and atonement; on the true method of a sinner's acceptance with God; and, consequently, on the whole subject of justification. As a matter of fact, it need not be said that this was one of the first questions which came before the Reformers, and was one which it was indispensable to settle, in order to a just notion of the church and of the way of salvation. The papacy had exalted the Lord's supper into a real sacrifice; had made it a grand and essential point that the bread and wine were changed into the real body and blood of the Lord, and

that a real offering of that sacrifice was made every time that ordinance was celebrated; had changed the office of the ministers of the New Testament from preachers to that of priests; had become familiar with the terms altar, and sacrifice, and priest hood, as founded on the notion that a real sacrifice was made in the "mass"; and had fundamentally changed the whole doctrine respecting the justification of a sinner before God. The altar in the Roman Catholic communion had almost displaced the pulpit; and the doctrine of justification by the merits of the great sacrifice made by the death of our Lord, had been superseded by the doctrine of justification by good works, and by the merits of the saints. It became necessary, therefore, to restore the true doctrine respecting sacrifice for sin, and the way of justification before God; and this would be appropriately represented by a direction to "measure the altar."

(3) the direction to take an estimate of those "who worshipped in the temple." This, as we have seen, would properly mean that there was to be a true estimate taken of what constituted membership in the church, or of the qualifications of those who should be regarded as true worshippers of God. This, also, was one of the first works necessary to be done in the Reformation. Before that, for ages, the doctrine of baptismal regeneration had been the established doctrine of the church; that all that was necessary to membership was baptism and confirmation, was the common opinion; the necessity of regeneration by the influences of the Holy Spirit, as a condition of church membership, was little understood, if not almost wholly unknown; and the grand requisition in membership was not holy living, but the observance of the rites and ceremonies of the church. One of the first things necessary in the Reformation was to restore to its true place the doctrine laid down by the Saviour, that a change of heart that regeneration by the Holy Spirit - was necessary to membership in the church, and that the true church was composed of those who had been thus renewed in the spirit of their mind. This great work would be appropriately symbolized by a direction to take an estimate of those who "worshipped in the temple of God"; that is, to settle the question who should be regarded as true worshippers of God, and what should be required of those who professed to be such worshippers. No more important point was settled in the Reformation than this.

(4) the direction to leave out, or to “cast out” the court without the temple. This, as we have seen, would properly mean that a separation was to be made between what was the true church and what was not, though it might seem to belong to it. The one was to be measured or estimated; the other was to be left out, as not pertaining to that, or as belonging to the Gentiles, or to paganism. The idea would be, that though it; professedly pertained to the true church, and to the worship of God, yet that it deserved to be characterized as paganism. Now this will apply with great propriety, according to all Protestant notions, to the manner in which the papacy was regarded by the Reformers, and should be regarded at all times. It claimed to be the true church, and to the eye of an observer would seem to belong to it, as much as the outer court seemed to pertain to the temple. But it had the essential characteristics of paganism, and was, therefore, properly to be left out, or, cast out, as not pertaining to the true church.

Can anyone doubt the truth of this representation as applicable to the papacy? Almost everything that was unique in the ancient pagan systems of religion had been introduced into the Roman communion; and a stranger at Rome would see more that would lead him to feel that he was in a pagan land, than he would that he was in a land where the pure doctrines of Christianity prevailed, and where the worship was celebrated which the Redeemer hack designed to set up on the earth. This was true not only in the pomp and splendor of worship, and in the processions and imposing ceremonials; but in the worship of images, in the homage rendered to the dead, in the number of festival days, in the fact that the statues reared in pagan Rome to the honor of the gods had been reconsecrated in the service of Christian devotion to the apostles, saints, and martyrs; and in the robes of the Christian priesthood, derived from those in use in the ancient pagan worship. The direction was, that, in estimating the true church, this was to be “left out,” or “cast out”; and, if this interpretation is correct, the meaning is, that the Roman Catholic communion, as an organized body, is to be regarded as no part of the true church - a conclusion which is inevitable, if the passages of Scripture which are commonly supposed by Protestants to apply to it are correctly applied. To determine this, and to separate the true church from it, was no small part of the work of the Reformation.

(5) the statement that the holy city was to be trodden under foot, Revelation 11:2. This, as we have seen, must mean that the true church would thus be trodden down by those who are described as "Gentiles." So far as pure religion was concerned; so far as pertained to the real condition of the church, and the pure worship of God, it would be as if the whole holy city where God was worshipped were given into the hands of the Gentiles, and they should tread it down, and desecrate all that was sacred for the time here referred to. Everything in Rome at the time of the Reformation would sustain this description. "It is incredible," says Luther, on his visit to Rome, "what sins and atrocities are committed in Rome; they must be seen and heard to be believed. So that it is usual to say: ‹If there be a hell, Rome is built above it; it is an abyss from which all sins proceed.‘" So again he says: "It is commonly observed that he who goes to Rome for the first time, goes to seek a knave there; the second time he finds him; and the third time he brings him away with him under his cloak. But now, people are become so clever, that they make the three journeys in one."

So Machiavelli, one of the most profound geniuses in Italy, and himself a Roman Catholic, said, "The greatest symptom of the approaching ruin of Christianity is, that the nearer we approach the capital of Christendom, the less do we find of the Christian spirit of the people. The scandalous example and crimes of the court of Rome have caused Italy to lose every principle of piety and every religious sentiment. We Italians are principally indebted to the church and to the priests for having become impious and profane." See D‘Aubigne‘s "History of the Reformation," p. 54, ed. Phila. 1843. In full illustration of the sentiment that the church seemed to be trodden down and polluted by paganism, or by abominations and practices that came out of paganism, we may refer to the general history of the Roman Catholic communion from the rise of the papacy to the Reformation. For a sufficient illustration to justify the application of the passage before us which I am now making, the reader may be referred to the notes on Revelation 9:20-21. Nothing would better describe the condition of Rome previous to and at the time of the Reformation - and the remark may be applied to subsequent periods also - than to say that it was a city which once seemed to be a Christian city, and was not improperly regarded as the center of the Christian world and the seat of the church, and that it had been, as it were, overrun and trodden down by pagan rites and

customs and ceremonies, so that, to a stranger looking on it, it would seem to be in the possession of the "Gentiles" or the pagans.

(6) the time during which this was to continue - "forty-two months"; that is, according to the explanation above given, twelve hundred and sixty years. This would embrace the whole period of the ascendency and prevalence of the papacy, or the whole time of the continuance of that corrupt domination in which Christendom was to be trodden down and corrupted by it. The prophet of Patmos saw it in vision thus extending its dreary and corrupting reign, and during that time the proper influence of Christianity was trampled down, and the domination of practical paganism was set up where the church should have reigned in its purity. Thus regarded, this would properly express the time of the ascendency of the papal power, and the end of the "forty-two months," or twelve hundred and sixty years, would denote the time when the influence of that power would cease. If, therefore, the time of the rise of the papacy can be determined, it will not be difficult to determine the time when it will come to an end. But for a full consideration of these points the reader is referred to the extended discussion on Daniel 7:25. See also Editor's Preface, p. 25. As the point is there fully examined it is unnecessary to go into an investigation of it here.

The general remark, therefore, in regard to this passage Revelation 11:1-2 is, that it refers to what would be necessary to be done at the Reformation in order to determine what is the true church and what are the doctrines on which it is based; and to the fact that the Roman Catholic communion, to which the church had been given over for a definite time, was to be set aside as not being the true church of Christ.

Verse 3

And I will give power unto my two witnesses - In respect to this important passage Revelation 11:3-13 I propose to pursue the same method which I have pursued all along in this exposition: first, to examine the meaning of the words and phrases in the symbol, with a purpose to ascertain the fair signification of the symbols; and, secondly, to inquire into the application - that is, to inquire whether any events have occurred which, in respect to their character and to the time of their occurrence, can be shown to be a fair fulfillment of the language.

And I will give power - The word "power" is not in the original. The Greek is simply, "I will give" - that is, I will grant to my two witnesses the right or the power of prophesying during the time specified - correctly expressed in the margin, "give unto my two witnesses that they may prophesy." The meaning is not that he would send two witnesses to prophesy, but rather that these were in fact such "witnesses," and that he would during that time permit them to exercise their prophetic gifts, or give them the privilege and the strength to enunciate the truth which they were commissioned to communicate as his "witnesses" to mankind. Some word, then, like "power, privilege, opportunity, or boldness," it is necessary to supply in order to complete the sense.

Unto my two witnesses - The word "two" evidently denotes that the number would be small; and yet it is not necessary to confine it literally to two persons, or to two societies or communities. Perhaps the meaning is, that as, under the law, two witnesses were required, and were enough, to establish any fact (notes on John 8:17), such a number would during those times be preserved from apostasy as would be sufficient to keep up the evidence of truth; to testify against the prevailing abominations, errors, and corruptions; to show what was the real church, and to bear a faithful witness against the wickedness of the world. The law of Moses required that there should be two witnesses on a trial, and this, under that law, was deemed a competent number. See Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6; Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16; John 5:30-33. The essential meaning of this passage then is, that there would be "a competent number" of witnesses in the case; that is, as many as would be regarded as sufficent to establish the points concerning which they would testify, with perhaps the additional idea that the number would be small.

There is no reason for limiting it strictly to two persons, or for supposing that they would appear in pairs, two and two; nor is it necessary to suppose that it refers particularly to two people or nations. The word rendered "witnesses" - μάρτυρί marturi- is that from which we have derived the word "martyr." It means properly one who bears testimony, either in a judicial sense Matthew 18:16; Matthew 26:65, or one who can in any way testify to the truth of what he has seen and known, Luke 24:48; Romans 1:9; Philemon 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 2:10; 1 Timothy 6:12. Then it came to be employed in the sense in which the word "martyr" is now - to denote one who, amidst great sufferings or by his death, bears witness to the truth; that

is, one who is so confident of the truth, and so upright, that he will rather lay down his life than deny the truth of what he has seen and known, Acts 22:20; Revelation 2:13. In a similar sense it comes to denote one who is so thoroughly convinced on a subject that it is not susceptible of being seen and heard, or who is so attached to one that he is willing to lay down his life as the evidence of his conviction and attachment. The word, as used here, refers to those who, during this period of "forty and two months," would thus be witnesses for Christ in the world; that is, who would bear their testimony to the truth of his religion, to the doctrines which he had revealed, and to what was required of man - who would do this amidst surrounding error and corruption, and when exposed to persecutions and trials on account of their belief. It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to represent the righteous as witnesses for God. See the notes on Isaiah 43:10, Isaiah 43:12; Isaiah 44:8.

And they shall prophesy - The word "prophesy" does not necessarily mean that they would predict future events; but the sense is, that they would give utterance to the truth as God had revealed it. See the notes on Revelation 10:11. The sense here is, that they would in some public manner hold up or maintain the truth before the world.

A thousand two hundred and threescore days - The same period as the forty and two months Revelation 11:2, though expressed in a different form. Reckoning a day for a year, this period would be twelve hundred and sixty years, or the same as the "time and times and the dividing of time" in Daniel 7:25. See the notes on that place; also Editor's Preface. The meaning of this would be, therefore, that during that long period, in which it is said that "the holy city would be trodden under foot," there would be those who might be properly called "witnesses" for God, and who would be engaged in holding up his truth before the world; that is, there would be no part of that period in which there would not be found some to whom this appellation could with propriety be given. Though the "holy city" - the church - would seem, to be wholly trodden down, yet there would be a few at least who would assert the great doctrines of true godliness.

Clothed in sackcloth - Sackcloth - σάκκους sakkous- was properly a coarse black cloth commonly made of hair, used for sacks, for straining, and for mourning garments. See the Revelation 6:12 note; Isaiah 3:24 note; and Matthew 11:21 note. Here it is an emblem of mourning; and the idea is, that they would prophesy in the midst of grief. This would indicate that the time

would be one of calamity, or that, in doing this, there would be occasion for their appearing in the emblems of grief, rather than in robes expressive of joy. The most natural interpretation of this is, that there would be but few who could be regarded as true witnesses for God in the world, and that they would be exposed to persecution.

Verse 4

These are the two olive-trees - These are represented by the two olive-trees, or these are what are symbolized by the two olive-trees. There can be little doubt that there is an allusion here to Zechariah 4:3, Zechariah 4:11, Zechariah 4:14, though the imagery is in some respects changed. The prophet Zechariah 4:2-3 saw in vision "a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which were upon the top thereof; and two olive-trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof." These two "olive branches" were subsequently declared Revelation 11:14 to be "the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." The olive-trees, or olive-branches Revelation 11:12, appear in the vision of the prophet to have been connected with the ever-burning lamp by golden pipes; and as the olive-tree produced the oil used by the ancients in their lamps, these trees are represented as furnishing a constant supply of oil through the golden pipes to the candlestick, and thus they become emblematic of the supply of grace to the church. John uses this emblem, not in the sense exactly in which it was employed by the prophet, but to denote that these two "witnesses," which might be compared with the two olivetrees, would be the means of supplying grace to the church. As the olive-tree furnished oil for the lamps, the two trees here would seem properly to denote ministers of religion; and as there can be no doubt that the candlesticks, or lamp-bearers, denote churches, the sense would appear to be that it was through the pastors of the churches that the oil of grace which maintained the brightness of those mystic candlesticks, or the churches, was conveyed. The image is a beautiful one, and expresses a truth of great importance to the world; for God has designed that the lamp of piety shall be kept burning in the churches by truth supplied through ministers and pastors.

And the two candlesticks - The prophet Zechariah saw but one such candlestick or lamp-bearer; John here saw two - as there are two "witnesses" referred to. In the vision described in Revelation 1:12, he saw

seven - representing the seven churches of Asia. For an explanation of the meaning of the symbol, see the notes on that verse.

Standing before the God of the earth - So Zechariah 4:14, "These be the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." The meaning is, that they stood, as it were, in the very presence of God - as, in the tabernacle and temple, the golden candlestick stood "before" the ark on which was the symbol of the divine presence, though separated from it by a veil. Compare the notes on Revelation 9:13. This representation, that the ministers of religion "stand before the Lord," is one that is not uncommon in the Bible. Thus it is said of the priests and Levites: "The Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to staled before the Lord, to minister unto him, and to bless his name," Deuteronomy 10:8; compare Deuteronomy 18:7. The same thing is said of the prophets, as in the cases of Elijah and Elisha: "As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand," 1 Kings 17:1; also, 1 Kings 18:15; 2 Kings 3:14; 2 Kings 5:16; compare Jeremiah 15:19. The representation is, that they ministered, as it were, constantly in his presence, and under his eye.

Verse 5

And if any man will hurt them - This implies that there would be those who would be disposed to injure or wrong them; that is, that they would be liable to persecution. The word "will" is here more than the mere sign of the future; it denotes "intention, purpose, design," θέλεὶ thelei- "if any man wills or purposes to injure them." See a similar use of the word in 1 Timothy 6:9. The word "hurt" here means to do "injury" or "injustice" - ἀδικῆσαι adikēsai- and may refer to wrong in any form - whether in respect to their character, opinions, persons, or property. The general sense is, that there would be those who would be disposed to do them harm, and we should naturally look for the fulfillment of this in some form of persecution.

Fire proceedeth out of their mouth - It is, of course, not necessary that this should be taken literally. The meaning is, that they would have the power of destroying their enemies as if fire should proceed out of their mouth; that is, their words would be like burning coals or flames. There may possibly be an allusion here to 2 Kings 1:10-14, where it is said that Elijah commanded the fire to descend from heaven to consume those who were sent to take him (compare Luke 9:54); but in that case Elijah commanded the fire to come "from heaven"; here it proceedeth "out of the mouth." The allusion here, therefore, is to the denunciations which they

would utter, or the doctrines which they would preach, and which would have the same effect on their enemies as if they breathed forth fire and flame. So Jeremiah 5:14, "Because ye speak this word, Behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire and this people wood, and it shall devour them."

And devoureth their enemies - The word "devour" is often used with reference to fire, which seems to "eat up" or "consume" what is in its way, or to "feed on" what it destroys. This is the sense of the word here - κατεσθίει katesthiei- "to eat down, to swallow down, to devour." Compare Revelation 20:9; Septuagint Isaiah 29:6; Joel 2:5; Leviticus 10:2. As there is no reason to believe that there would be literal fire, so it is not necessary to suppose that their enemies would be literally devoured or consumed. The meaning is fulfilled if their words should in any way produce an effect on their enemies similar to what is produced by fire: that is, if it should destroy their influence; if it should overcome and subdue them; if it should annihilate their domination in the world.

And if any man will hurt them - This is repeated in order to make the declaration more intensive, and also to add another thought about the effect of persecuting and injuring them.

He must in this manner be killed - That is, in the manner specified - by fire. It does not mean that he would be killed in the same manner in which the "witnesses" were killed, but in the method specified before - by the fire that should proceed out of their mouth. The meaning is, undoubtedly, that they would have power to bring down on them divine vengeance or punishment, so that there would be a just retaliation for the wrongs done them.

Verse 6

These have power to shut heaven - That is, so far as rain is concerned - for this is immediately specified. There is probably a reference here to an ancient opinion that the rain was kept in the clouds of heaven as in reservoirs or bottles, and that when they were opened it rained; when they were closed it ceased to rain. So Job, "He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them," Job 26:8. "Which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly," Job 36:28. "Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven?" Job 38:37; compare Genesis 1:7; Genesis 7:12; Genesis 8:2; 2 Kings 7:2. To shut or

close up the heavens, therefore, is to restrain the rain from descending, or to produce a drought. Compare notes on James 5:17.

That it rain not in the days of their prophecy - In the time when they prophesy. Probably the allusion here is to what is said of Elijah, 1 Kings 17:1. This would properly refer to some miraculous power; but still it may be used to denote merely that they would be clothed with the power of causing blessings to be withheld from people, as if rain were withheld; that is, that in consequence of the calamities that would be brought upon them, and the persecutions which they would endure, God would bring judgments upon people as if they were clothed with this power. The language, therefore, it seems to me, does not necessarily imply that they would have the power of working miracles.

And have power over waters to turn them to blood - The allusion here is doubtless to what occurred in Egypt, Exodus 7:17. Compare the notes on Revelation 8:8. This, too, would literally denote the power of working a miracle; but still it is not absolutely necessary to suppose that this is intended. Anything that would be represented by turning waters into blood, would correspond with all that is necessarily implied in the language. If any great calamity should occur in consequence of what was done to them that would be properly represented by turning the waters into blood so that they could not be used, and that was so connected with the treatment which they received as to appear to be a judgment of heaven on that account, or that would appear to have come upon the world in consequence of their imprecations, it would be all that is necessarily implied in this language.

And to smite the earth with all plagues - All kinds of plague or calamity; disease, pestilence, famine, flood, etc. The word "plague" - πληγῇ plēgē- which means, properly, "stroke, stripe, blow," would include any or all of these. The meaning here is, that great calamities would follow the manner in which they were treated, as if the power were lodged in their hands.

As often as they will - So that it would seem that they could exercise this power as they pleased.

Verse 7

And when they shall have finished their testimony - Prof. Stuart renders this, "And whenever they shall have finished their testimony." The reference is undoubtedly to a period when they should have faithfully borne

the testimony which they were appointed to bear. The word rendered here "shall have finished" - τελέσωσιν telesōsinfrom τελέω teleōmeans properly to end, to finish, to complete, to accomplish. It is used, in this respect, in two senses - either in regard to time or in regard to the end or object in view, in the sense of "perfecting it," or "accomplishing it." In the former sense it is employed in such passages as the following: "Till the thousand years should be fulfilled," Revelation 20:3. "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel (Greek, ye shall not have finished the cities of Israel) until the Son of man be come," Matthew 10:23; that is, ye shall not have finished passing through them. "When Jesus had made an end (Greek, finished) of commanding his twelve disciples," Matthew 11:1. "I have "finished" my course," 2 Timothy 4:7.

In these passages it clearly refers to time. In the other sense it is used in such places as the following: "And shall not the uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law," Romans 2:27; that is, if it accomplish or come up to the demands of the law. "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scriptures," James 2:8. The word, then, may here refer not to "time," meaning that, these events would occur at the end of the "thousand two hundred and threescore days," but to the fact that what is here stated would occur when they had completed their testimony in the sense of having testified all that they were "appointed" to testify; that is, when they had borne full witness for God, and fully uttered his truth. Thus understood, the meaning here may be that the event here referred to would take place, not at the end of the 1260 years, but at that period during the 1260 years when it could be said with propriety that they had accomplished their testimony in the world, or that they had borne full and ample witness on the points entrusted to them.

The beast - This is the first time in the Book of Revelation in which what is here called "the beast" is mentioned, and which has so important an agency in the events which it is said would occur. It is repeatedly mentioned in the course of the book, and always with similar characteristics, and as referring to the same object. Here it is mentioned as "ascending out of the bottomless pit"; in Revelation 13:1, as "rising up out of the sea"; in Revelation 13:11, as "coming up out of the earth." It is also mentioned with characteristics appropriate to such an origin, in Revelation 13:2-4 (twice), Revelation 13:11, Revelation 13:12 (twice), Revelation 13:14 (twice), Revelation 13:15 (twice), 17,18; Revelation 14:9, Revelation 14:11;

Revelation 15:2; Revelation 16:2, Revelation 16:10, Revelation 16:13; Revelation 17:3, Revelation 17:7-8 (twice), 11,12,13,16,17; Revelation 19:19-20 (twice); Revelation 20:4, Revelation 20:9. The word used here - θηρίον thērion- means properly "a beast, a wild beast," Mark 1:13; Acts 10:12; Acts 11:6; Acts 28:4-5; Hebrews 12:20; James 3:7; Revelation 6:8. It is once used tropically of brutal or savage men, Titus 1:12. Elsewhere, in the passages above referred to in the Apocalypse, it is used symbolically. As employed in the Book of Revelation, the characteristics of the "beast" are strongly marked:

(a)It has its origin from beneath - in the bottomless pit; the sea; the earth, Revelation 11:7; Revelation 13:1, Revelation 13:11.

(b)It has great power, Revelation 13:4, Revelation 13:12; Revelation 17:12-13.

(c)It claims and receives worship, Revelation 13:3, Revelation 13:12, Revelation 13:14-15; Revelation 14:9, Revelation 14:11.

(d)It has a certain "seat" or throne from whence its power proceeds, Revelation 16:10.

(e)It is of scarlet color, Revelation 17:3.

(f)It receives power conferred upon it by the kings of the earth, Revelation 17:13,

(g)It has a mark by which it is known, Revelation 13:17; Revelation 19:20.

(h)It has a certain "number"; that is, there are certain mystical letters or figures which so express its name that it may be known, Revelation 13:17-18.

These things serve to characterize the "beast" as distinguished from all other things, and they are so numerous and definite, that it would seem to have been intended to make it easy to understand what was meant when the power referred to should appear. In regard to the origin of the imagery here, there can be no reasonable doubt that it is to be traced to Daniel, and that the writer here means to describe the same "beast" which Daniel refers to in

Revelation 7:7. The evidence of this must be clear to anyone who will compare the description in Daniel Daniel 7:25. It may be assumed here that the opinion there defended is correct, and consequently it may be assumed that the "beast" of this book refers to the papal power.

That ascendeth out of the bottomless pit - See the notes on Revelation 9:1. This would properly mean that its origin is the nether world; or that it will have characteristics which will show that it was from beneath. The meaning clearly is, that what was symbolized by the beast would have such characteristics as to show that it was not of divine origin, but had its source in the world of darkness, sin, and death. This, of course, could not represent the true church, or any civil government that is founded on principles which God approves. But if it represent a community pretending to be a church, it is an apostate church; if a civil community, it is a community the characteristics of which are that it is controlled by the spirit that rules over the world beneath. For reasons which we shall see in abundance in applying the descriptions which occur of the "beast," I regard this as referring to that great apostate power which occupies so much of the prophetic descriptions - the papacy.

Shall make war against them - Will endeavor to exterminate them by force. This clearly is not intended to be a general statement that they would be persecuted, but to refer to the particular manner in which the opposition would be conducted. It would be in the form of "war"; that is, there would be an effort to destroy them by arms.

And shall overcome them - Shall gain the victory over them; conquer them - νικήσει αὐτοὺς nikēsei autousThat is, there will be some signal victory in which those represented by the two witnesses will he subdued.

And kill them - That is, an effect would be produced as if they were put to death. They would be overcome; would be silenced; would be apparently dead. Any event that would cause them to cease to bear testimony, as if they were dead, would be properly represented by this. It would not be necessary to suppose that there would be literally death in the ease, but that there would be some event which would be well represented by death - such as an entire suspension of their prophesying in consequence of force.

Verse 8

And their dead bodies shall lie in the street - Prof. Stuart, "Shall be in the street." The words "shall lie" are supplied by the translators, but not improperly. The literal rendering would be, "and their corpses upon the

street of the great city"; and the meaning is, that there would be a state of things in regard to them which would be well represented by supposing them to lie unburied. To leave a body unburied is to treat it with contempt, and among the ancients nothing was regarded as more dishonorable than such treatment. See the Ajax of Sophocles. Among the Jews also it was regarded as a special indignity to leave the dead unburied, and hence they are always represented as deeply solicitous to secure the interment of their dead. See Genesis 23:4. Compare 2 Samuel 21:9-13; Ecclesiastes 6:3; Isaiah 14:18-20; Isaiah 22:16; Isaiah 53:9. The meaning here is, that, for the time specified, those who are here referred to would be treated with indignity and contempt. In the fulfillment of this, we are not, of course, to look for any literal accomplishment of what is here said, but for some treatment of the "witnesses" which would be well represented by this; that is, which would show that they were treated, after they were silenced, like unburied corpses putrefying in the sun.

Of the great city - Where these transactions would occur. As a great city would be the agent in putting them to death, so the result would be as if they were publicly exposed in its streets. The word "great" here supposes that the city referred to would be distinguished for its size - a circumstance of some importance in determining the place referred to.

Which spiritually is called - πνευματικῶς pneumatikōsThis word occurs only in one other place in the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 2:14, "because they are spiritually discerned" - where it means, "in accordance with the Holy Spirit," or" through the aid of the Holy Spirit." Here it seems to be used in the sense of metaphorically, or allegorically, in contradistinction from the literal and real name. There may possibly be an intimation here that the city is so called by the Holy Spirit to designate its real character, but still the essential meaning is, that that was not its literal name. For some reason the real name is not given to it; but such descriptions are applied as are designed to leave no doubt as to what is intended.

Sodom - Sodom was distinguished for its wickedness, and especially for that vice to which its abominations have given name. For the character of Sodom, see Genesis 18:19. Compare 2 Peter 2:6. In inquiring what "city" is here referred to, it would be necessary to find in it such abominations as characterized Sodom, or so much wickedness that it would be proper to call it Sodom. If it shall be found that this was designed to refer to papal Rome,

no one can doubt that the abominations which prevailed there would justify such an appellation. Compare the notes on Revelation 9:20-21.

And Egypt - That is, it would have such a character that the name Egypt might be properly given to it. Egypt is known in the Scriptures as the land of oppression - the land where the Israelites, the people of God, were held in cruel bondage. Compare Ezekiel 23:8. The particular idea, then, which seems to be conveyed here is, that the "city" referred to would be characterized by acts of oppression and wrong toward the people of God. So far as the language is concerned, it might apply either to Jerusalem or to Rome - for both were eminently characterized by such acts of oppression toward the true children of God as to make it proper to I compare their cruelties with those which were inflicted on the Israelites by the Egyptians. Of whichever of these places the course of the exposition may require us to understand this, it will be seen at once that the language is such as is strictly applicable to either; though, as the reference is rather to Christians than to the ancient people of God, it must be admitted that it would be most natural to refer it to Rome. More acts authorizing persecution, and designed to crush the true people of God, have gone forth from Rome than from any other city on the face of the earth; and taking the history of the church together, there is no place that would be so properly designated by the term here employed.

Where also our Lord was crucified - If this refers to Jerusalem, it is to be taken literally; if to another city, it is to be understood as meaning that he was practically crucified there: that is, that the treatment of his friends - his church - was such that it might be said that he was "crucified afresh" there; for what is done to his church may be said to be done to him. Either of these interpretations would be justified by the use of the language. Thus in Hebrews 6:6, it is said of apostates from the true faith (compare the notes on the passage), that "they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh." If the passage before us is to be taken figuratively, the meaning is, that acts would be performed which might properly be represented as crucifying' the Son of God; that, as he lives in his church, the acts of perverting his doctrines, and persecuting his people, would be, in fact, an act of crucifying the Lord again. Thus understood, the language is strictly applicable to Rome; that is, if it is admitted that John meant to characterize that city, he has employed such language as a Jewish Christian would naturally use. While, therefore, it must be admitted that the language is such as could be

literally applied only to Jerusalem, it is still true that it is such language as might be figuratively applied to any other city strongly resembling that, and that in this sense it would characterize Rome above all other cities of the world. The common reading of the text here is "our Lord" - ἡμῶν hēmōnthe text now regarded as correct, however (Griesbach, Tittmann, Hahn), is "their Lord" - αὐτῶν autōnThis makes no essential difference in the sense, except that it directs the attention more particularly to the fact that they were treated like their own Master.

Verse 9

And they of the people - Some of the people; a part of the people - ἐκ τῶν λαῶν ek tōn laōnThe language is such as would be employed to describe a scene where a considerable portion of a company of people should be referred to, without intending to include all. The essential idea is, that there would be an assemblage of different classes of people to whom their carcasses would be exposed, and that they would come and look upon them. We should expect to find the fulfillment of this in some place where, from any cause, a variety of people should be assembled - as in some capital, or some commercial city, to which they would be naturally attracted.

Shall see their dead bodies - That is, a state of things will occur as if these witnesses were put to death, and their carcasses were publicly exposed.

Three days and an half - This might be either literally three days and a half, or, more in accordance with the usual style of this book, these would be prophetic days; that is, three years and a half. Compare the notes on Revelation 9:5, Revelation 9:15.

And shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves - That is, there would be a course of conduct in regard to these witnesses such as would be shown to the dead if they were not suffered to be decently interred. The language used here - "shall not suffer" - seems to imply that there would be those who might be disposed to show them the respect evinced by interring the dead, but that this would not be permitted. This would find a fulfillment if, in a time of persecution, those who had borne faithful testimony were silenced and treated with dishonor and if there should be those who were disposed to show them respect, but who would be prevented by positive acts on the part of their persecutors. This has often been the case in persecution, and there could be no difficulty in finding

numerous instances in the history of the church to which this language would he applicable.

Verse 10

And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them - Those dwelling in the land would rejoice over their fall and ruin. This cannot, of course, mean all who inhabit the globe; but, according to the usage in Scripture, those who dwell in the country where this would occur. Compare the notes on Luke 2:1. We now affix to the word "earth" an idea which was not necessarily implied in the Hebrew word ארץ ʿerets(compare Exodus 3:8; Exodus 13:5; Deuteronomy 19:2, Deuteronomy 19:10; Deuteronomy 28:12; Nehemiah 9:22; Psalm 37:9, Psalm 37:11, Psalm 37:22, Psalm 37:29; Psalm 66:4; Proverbs 2:21; Proverbs 10:30; Joel 1:2); or the Greek word γῆ gēcompare Matthew 2:6, Matthew 2:20-21; Matthew 14:15; Acts 7:7, Acts 7:11, Acts 7:36, Acts 7:40; Acts 13:17. Our word "land," as now commonly understood, would better express the idea intended to be conveyed here; and thus understood, the meaning is, that the dwellers in the country where these things would happen would thus rejoice. The meaning is, that while alive they would, by their faithful testimony against existing errors, excite so much hatred against themselves, and would be so great an annoyance to the governing powers, that there would be general exultation when the voice of their testimony should be silenced. This, too, has been so common in the world that there would be no difficulty in applying the language used here, or in finding events which it would appropriately deseribe.

And make merry - Be glad. See the notes on Luke 12:19; Luke 15:23. The Greek word does not necessarily denote the lighthearted mirth expressed by our word merriment, but rather joy or happiness in general. The meaning is, that they would be filled with joy at such an event.

And shall send gifts one to another - As expressive of their joy. To send presents is a natural expression of our own happiness, and our desire for the happiness of others - as is indicated now by "Christmas" and "New Year's gifts." Compare also Nehemiah 8:10-12; "Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength," etc. See also Esther 9:19-22.

d **Because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth -** They "tormented" them, or were a source of annoyance to them, by

bearing testimony to the truth; by opposing the prevailing errors; and by rebuking the vices of the age: perhaps by demanding reformation, and by denouncing the judgment of heaven on the guilty. There is no intimation that they tormented them in any other way than by the truths which they held forth. See the word explained in the notes on 2 Peter 2:8.

Verse 11

And after three days and an half - See the notes on Revelation 11:9.

The Spirit of life from God - The living, or life-giving Spirit that proceeds from God entered into them. Compare the notes on Job 33:4. There is evidently allusion here to Genesis 2:7, where God is spoken of as the Author of life. The meaning is, that they would seem to come to life again, or that effects would follow as if the dead were restored to life. If, when they had been compelled to cease from prophesying, they should, after the interval here denoted by three days and a half, again prophesy, or their testimony should be again borne to the truth as it had been before, this would evidently be all that would be implied in the language here employed.

Entered into them - Seemed to animate them again.

And they stood upon their feet - As if they had come to life again.

And great fear fell upon them which saw them - This would be true if those who were dead should be literally restored to life; and this would be the effect if those who had given great annoyances by their doctrines, and who had been silenced, and who seemed to be dead, should again, as if animated anew by a divine power, begin to prophesy, or to proclaim their doctrines to the world. The statement in the symbol is, that those who had put them to death had been greatly troubled by these "witnesses"; that they had sought to silence them, and in order to this had put them to death; that they then greatly rejoiced, as if they would no more be annoyed by them. The fact that they seemed to come to life again would, therefore, fill them with consternation, for they would anticipate a renewal of their troubles, and they would see in this fact evidence of the divine favor toward those whom they persecuted, and reason to apprehend divine vengeance on themselves.

Verse 12

And they heard a great voice from heaven - Some manuscripts read, "I heard" - ἤκουσα ēkousa- but the more approved reading is that of the

common text. John says that a voice was addressed to them calling them to ascend to heaven.

Come up hither - To heaven.

And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud - So the Saviour ascended, Acts 1:9; and so probably Elijah, 2 Kings 2:11.

And their enemies beheld them - That is, it was done openly, so that their enemies, who had put them to death, saw that they were approved of God, as if they had been publicly taken up to heaven. It is not necessary to suppose that this would literally occur. All this is, manifestly, mere symbol. The meaning is, that they would triumph as if they should ascend to heaven, and he received into the presence of God. The sense of the whole is, that these witnesses, after bearing a faithful testimony against prevailing errors and sins, would be persecuted and silenced; that for a considerable period their voice of faithful testimony would be hushed as if they were dead; that during that period they would be treated with contempt and scorn, as if their unburied bodies should be exposed to the public gaze; that there would be general exultation and joy that they were thus silenced; that they would again revive, as if the dead were restored to life, and bear a faithful testimony to the truth again; and that they would have the divine attestation in their favor, its if they were raised up visibly and publicly to heaven.

Verse 13

And the same hour - In immediate connection with their triumph.

Was there a great earthquake - "An earthquake is a symbol of commotion, agitation, change; of great political revolutions, etc. See the notes on Revelation 6:12. The meaning here is, that the triumph of the witnesses, represented by their ascending to heaven, would be followed by such revolutions as would be properly symbolized by an earthquake.

And the tenth part of the city fell - That is, the tenth part of that which is represented by the "city" - the persecuting power. A city would be the seat and center of the power, and the acts of persecution would seem to proceed from it; but the destruction, we may suppose, would extend to all that was represented by the persecuting power. The word "tenth" is probably used in a general sense to denote that a considerable portion of the persecuting power would be thus involved in ruin; that is, that in respect to that power there would be such a revolution, such a convulsion or commotion, such a loss, that it would be proper to represent it by an earthquake.

And in the earthquake - In the convulsions consequent on what would occur to the witnesses.

Were slain of men seven thousand - Mart., as in the Greek, "names of men" - the name being used to denote the people themselves. The number here mentioned - seven thousand - seems to have been suggested because it would bear some proportion to the tenth part of the city which fell. It is not necessary to suppose, in seeking for the fulfillment of this, that just seven thousand would be killed; but the idea clearly is, that there would be such a diminution of numbers as would be well represented by a calamity that would overwhelm a tenth part of the city, such as the apostle had in his eye, and a proportional number of the inhabitants. The number that would be slain, therefore, in the convulsions and changes consequent on the treatment of the witnesses, might be numerically much larger than seven thousand, and might be as great as if a tenth part of all that were represented by the "city" should be swept away.

And the remnant were affrighted - Fear and alarm came on them in consequence of these calamities. The "remnant" here refers to those who still remained in the "city" - that is, to those who belonged to the community or people designed to be represented here by the city.

And gave glory to the God of heaven - Compare Luke 5:26; "And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things today." All that seems to be meant by this is, that they stood in awe at what God was doing, and acknowledged his power in the changes that occurred. It does not mean, necessarily, that they would repent and become truly his friends, but that there would be a prevailing impression that these changes were produced by his power, and that his hand was in these things. This would be fulfilled if there should be a general willingness among mankind to acknowledge God, or to recognize his hand in the events referred to; if there should be a disposition extensively prevailing to regard the "witnesses" as on the side of God, and to favor their cause as one of truth and righteousness; and if these convulsions should so far change public sentiment as to produce an impression that theirs was the cause of God.

Verse 14

The second woe is past - That is, the second of the three that were announced as yet to come, Revelation 8:13; compare Revelation 9:12.

And, behold, the third woe cometh quickly - The last of the series. The meaning is, that what was signified by the third "woe" would be the next, and final event, in order. On the meaning of the word "quickly," see the notes on Revelation 1:1; compare Revelation 2:5, Revelation 2:16; Revelation 3:11; Revelation 22:7, Revelation 22:12, Revelation 22:20.

In reference now to the important question about the application of this portion of the Book of Revelation, it need hardly be said that the greatest variety of opinion has prevailed among expositors. It would be equally unprofitable, humiliating, and discouraging to attempt to enumerate all the opinions which have been held; and I must refer the reader who has any desire to become acquainted with them to Poole's Synopsis, in loco, and to the copious statement of Prof. Stuart, Cove. vol. 2, pp. 219-227. Prof. Stuart himself supposes that the meaning is, that "a competent number of divinely-commissioned and faithful Christian witnesses, endowed with miraculous powers, should bear testimony against the corrupt Jews, during the last days of their commonwealth, respecting their sins; that they should proclaim the truths of the gospel; and that the Jews by destroying them, would bring upon themselves an aggravated and an awful doom," 2:226. Instead of attempting to examine in detail the opinions which have been held, I shall rather state what seems to me to be the fair application of the language used, in accordance with the principles pursued thus far in the exposition. The inquiry is, whether there have been any events to which this language is applicable, or in reference to which, if it be admitted that it was the design of the Spirit of inspiration to describe them, it may be supposed that such language would be employed as we find here.

In this inquiry it may be assumed that the preceding exposition is correct, and the application now to be made must accord with that - that is, it must be found that events occurred in such times and circumstances as would be consistent with the supposition that that exposition is correct. It is to be assumed, therefore, that Revelation 9:20-21, refers to the state of the ecclesiastical world after the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks, and previous to the Reformation; that Revelation 10:1-11 refers to the Reformation itself; that Revelation 11:1-2, refers to the necessity, at the time of the Reformation, of ascertaining what was the true church, of reviving the Scripture doctrine respecting the atonement and justification, and of drawing correct lines as to membership in the church. All this has

reference, according to this interpretation, to the state of the church while the papacy would have the ascendency, or during the twelve hundred and sixty years in which it would trample down the church as if the holy city were in the hands of the Gentiles. Assuming this to be the correct exposition, their what is here said Revelation 11:3-13 must relate to that period, for it is with reference to that same time - the period of "a thousand two hundred and threescore days," or twelve hundred and sixty years - that it is said Revelation 11:3 the witnesses would "prophesy," "clothed in sackcloth."

If this be so, then what is here stated Revelation 11:3-13 must be supposed to occur during the ascendency of the papacy, and must mean, in general, that during that long period of apostasy, darkness, corruption, and sin, there would be faithful witnesses for the truth, who, though they were few in number, would be sufficient to keep up the knowledge of the truth on the earth, and to bear testimony against the prevailing errors and abominations. The object of this portion of the book, therefore, is to describe the character of the faithful witnesses for the truth during this long period of darkness; to state their influence; to record their trials; and to show what would he the ultimate result in regard to them, when their "testimony" should become triumphant. This general view will be seen to accord with the exposition of the previous portion of the book, and will be sustained, I trust, by the more particular inquiry into the application of the passage to which I now proceed. The essential points in the passage Revelation 11:3-13 respecting the "witnesses" are six:

(1)who are meant by the witnesses;

(2)the war made on them;

(3)their death;

(4)their resurrection;

(5)their reception into heaven; and,

(6)the consequences of their triumph in the calamity that came upon the city.

I. Who are meant by the witnesses, Revelation 11:3-6. There are several specifications in regard to this point which it is necessary to notice:

(a) The fact that, during this long period of error, corruption, and sin, there were those who were faithful witnesses for the truth - people who opposed the prevailing errors; who maintained the great doctrines of the Christian faith; and who were ready to lay down their lives in defense of the truth. For a full confirmation of this it would be necessary to trace the history of the church down from the rise of the papal power through the long lapse of the subsequent ages; but such an examination would be far too extensive for the purpose contemplated in these notes, and, indeed, would require a volume by itself. Happily, this has already been done; and all that is necessary now is to refer to the works where the fact here affirmed has been abundantly established. In many of the histories of the church - Mosheim, Neander, Milner, Milman, Gieseler - most ample proof may be found, that amidst the general darkness and corruption there were those who faithfully adhered to the truth as it is in Jesus, end who, amidst many sufferings, bore their testimony against prevailing errors. The investigation has been made, also, with special reference to an illustration of this passage, by Mr. Elliott, *Hover Apoca.* vol. 2, pp. 193-406; and although it must be admitted that some of the details are of doubtful applicability, yet the main fact is abundantly established, that during that long period there were "witnesses" for the pure truths of the gospel, and a faithful testimony borne against the abominations and errors of the papacy. These "witnesses" are divided by Mr. Elliott into:

(1) the earlier Western witnesses - embracing such men, and their followers, as Serenus, bishop of Marseilles; the Anglo-Saxon church in England; Agobard, Archbishop of Lyons from 810 to 841 a.d., on the one side of the Alps, and Claude of Turin on the other; Gotteschalcus, 884 a.d.; Berenger, Arnold of Brescia, Peter de Bruys, and his disciple Henry, and then the Waldenses.

(2) the Eastern, or Paulikian line of witnesses, a sect deriving their origin, about 653 a.d., from an Armenian by the name of Constantine, who received from a deacon, by whom he was hospitably entertained, a present of two volumes, very rare, one containing the Gospels, and the other the Epistles of Paul, and who applied himself to the formation of a new sect or

church, distinct from the Manicheans, and from the Greek Church. In token of the nature of their profession, they adopted the name by which they were ever after distinguished, Paulikiani, Paulicians, or "disciples of the disciple of Paul." This sect continued to bear "testimony" in the East from the time of its rise until the eleventh or twelfth centuries, when it commenced a migration to the West, where it bore the same honorable character for its attachment to the truth. See Elliott, 2:233-246,275-315.

(3) Witnesses during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, up to the time of Peter Waldo. Among these are to be noticed those who were arraigned for heresy before the councils of Orleans, Arras, Thoulouse, Oxford, and Lombers, in the years 1022,1025,1119,1160,1165, respectively, and who were condemned by those councils for their departure from the doctrines held by the papacy. For a full illustration of the doctrines held by those who were thus condemned, and of the fact that they were "witnesses" for the truth, see Elliott, it. 247-275.

(4) The Waldenses and Albigenses. The nature of the testimony borne by these persecuted people is so well known that it is not necessary to dwell on the subject; and a full statement of their testimony would require the entire transcription of their history. No Protestant will doubt that they were "witnesses" for the truth, or that from the time of their rise, through all the periods of their persecution, they bore full and honorable testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus. The general ground of this claim to be regarded as Apocalyptic witnesses, will be seen from the following summary statements of their doctrines. Those statements are found in a work called The Noble Lesson, written within some twenty years of 1170. The treatise begins in this manner: "O brethren, hear a Noble Lesson. We ought always to watch and pray," etc. In this treatise the following doctrines are drawn out, says Mr. Elliott, "with much simplicity and beauty: the origin of sin in the fall of Adam; its transmission to all people, and the offered redemption from it through the death of Jesus Christ; the union and cooperation of the three persons of the blessed Trinity in man‘s salvation; the obligation and spirituality. of the moral law under the gospel; the duties of prayer, watchfulness, self-denial, unworldliness, humility, love, as ‹the way of Jesus Christ;‘ their enforcement by the prospect of death and judgment, and the world‘s near ending; by the narrowness, too, of the way of life, and the

fewness of those who find it; as also by the hope of coming glory at the judgment and revelation of Jesus Christ. Besides which we find in it a protest against the Roman Catholic system generally, as one of soul-destroying idolatry; against masses for the dead, and therein against the whole doctrine of purgatory; against the system of the confessional, and asserted power of the priesthood to absolve from sin; this last point being insisted on as the most deadly point of heresy, and its origin referred to the mercenariness of the priesthood, and their love of money; the iniquity further noticed of the Roman Catholic persecutions of good people and teachers that wished to teach the way of Jesus Christ; and the suspicion half-hinted, and apparently half-formed, that, though a personal antichrist might be expected, yet Popery itself might be one form of antichrist."

In another work, the Treatise of Antichrist, there is a strong and decided identification of the anti-Christian system and the papacy. This was written probably in the last quarter of the fourteenth century. "From this," says Mr. Elliott (ii. 355), "the following will appear to have been the Waldensian views: that the papal or Roman Catholic system was that of antichrist; which, from infancy in apostolic times, had grown gradually by the increase of its constituent parts to the stature of a full-grown man; that its prominent characteristics were - to defraud God of the worship due to Him, rendering it to creatures, whether departed saints, relics, images, or antichrist; - to defraud Christ, by attributing justification and forgiveness to antichrist's authority and words, to saints' intercession, to the merits of people's own performances, and to the fire of purgatory; to defraud the Holy Spirit, by attributing regeneration and sanctification to the opus operation of the two sacraments; that the origin of this anti-Christian religion was the covetousness of the priesthood; its tendency, to lead people away from Christ; its essence, a ceremonial; its foundation, the false notion of grace and forgiveness." This work is so important as a "testimony" against antichrist, and for the truth, and is so clear as showing that the papacy was regarded as antichrist, that I will copy, from the work itself, the portion containing these sentiments - sentiments which may be regarded as expressing the uniform testimony of the Waldenses on the subject:

"Antichrist is the falsehood of eternal damnation, covered with the appearance of the truth and righteousness of Christ and his spouse. The

iniquity of such a system is with all his ministers, great and small: and inasmuch as they follow the law of an evil and blinded heart, such a congregation, taken together, is called antichrist, or Babylon, or the Fourth beast, or the Harlot, or the Man of Sin, who is the son of perdition.

"His first work is, that the service of "latria," properly due to God alone, he perverts unto antichrist himself and to his doings; to the poor creature, rational or irrational, sensible or insensible; as, for instance, to male or female saints departed this life, and to their images, or carcasses, or relics. His doings are the sacraments, especially that of the eucharist, which he worships equally with God and Christ, prohibiting the adoration of God alone.

"His second work is, that he robs and deprives Christ of the merits of Christ, with the whole sufficiency of grace, and justification, and regeneration, and remission of sins, and sanctification, and confirmation, and spiritual nourishment; and imputes and attributes them to his own authority, or to a form of words, or to his own performances, or to the saints and their intercession, or to the fire of purgatory. Thus he divides the people from Christ, and leads them away to the things already mentioned; that so they may seek not the things of Christ, nor through Christ, but only the work of their own hands; not through a living faith in God, and Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit; but through the will and the work of antichrist, agreeably to the preaching that man‘s salvation depends on his own deeds.

"His third work is, that he attributes the regeneration of the Holy Spirit to a dead outward faith; baptizing children in that faith, and teaching that by the mere outward consecration of baptism regeneration may be procured.

"His fourth work is, that he rests the whole religion of the people upon his Mass; for leading them to hear it, he deprives them of spiritual and sacramental manducation.

"His fifth work is, that he does everything to be seen, and to glut his insatiable avarice.

“His sixth work is, that he allows manifest sins without ecclesiastical censure.

“His seventh work is, that he defends his unity, not by the Holy Spirit, but by the secular power.

“His eighth work is, that he hates, and persecutes, and searches after, and robs and destroys the members of Christ.

“These things, and many others, are the cloak and vestment of antichrist; by which he covers his lying wickedness, lest he should be rejected as a pagan. But there is no other cause of idolatry than a false opinion of grace, and truth, and authority, and invocation, and intercession; which this antichrist has taken away from God, and which he has ascribed to ceremonies, and authorities, and a man‘s own works, and to saints, and to purgatory” (Elliott, it. 354,355).

It is impossible not to be struck with the application of this to the papacy, and no one can doubt that the papacy was intended to be referred to. And, if this be so, this was a bold and decided” testimony “against the abominations of that system, and they who bore this testimony deserved to be regarded as “witnesses” for Christ and his truth.

If to the “testimony” thus briefly referred to, we add that of such men as Wycliffe, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and then that of the Reformers, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Melancthon, and their fellow-laborers, we can see with what propriety it was predicted that even during the prevalence of the great apostasy there would be a competent number of “witnesses” to keep up the knowledge of the truth in the world. And supposing that this is what was designed to be represented, it is easy to perceive that the symbol which is employed is admirably appropriate. The design of what is here said is merely to show that during the whole of the period of the papal apostasy whenever it may be supposed to have begun, and whenever it shall cease, it is and will he true that the Savior has had true “witnesses” on the earth - that there have been those who have “testified” against these abominations, and who, often at great personal peril and sacrifice, have borne a faithful testimony for the truth.

(b) The number of the witnesses. In Revelation 11:3, this is said to be "two," and this has been shown to mean that there would be a competent number, yet probably with the implied idea that the number would not be large. The only question then is, whether, in looking through this long period, it would be found that, according to the established laws of testimony under the divine code, there was a competent number to bear witness to the truth. And of this no one can doubt, for, in respect to each and every part of the period of the great apostasy, it is possible now to show that there was a sufficient number of the true friends of the Redeemer to testify against all the great and cardinal errors of the papacy. This simple and obvious interpretation of the language, it may be added, also, makes wholly unnecessary and inappropriate all the efforts which have been made by expositors to find precisely two such witnesses, or two churches or people with whom the line of the faithful testimony was preserved: all such interpretations as that the Old and New Testaments are referred to, as Melchior, Affelman, and Croly suppose; or that preachers are referred to who are instructed by the law and the Gospel, as Pannonins and Thomas Aquinas, supposed; or that Christ and John the Baptist are referred to, as Ubertinus supposed; or that Pope Sylvester and Mena, who wrote against the Eutychians, are meant, as Lyranus and Ederus supposed; or that Francis and Dominic, the respective heads of two orders of monks, are intended, as Cornelius k Lapidc supposed; or that the great wisdom and sanctity of the primitive preachers are meant, as Alcassar maintained; or that John Huss and Luther, or John Huss and Jerome of Prague, or the Waldenses and Albigeuses, or the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Aelia, are intended, as others have supposed.

According to the obvious and fair meaning of the language, all this is mere fancy, and can illustrate nothing but the fertility of invention of those who have written on the Apocalypse. All that is necessarily implied is, that the number of true and uncorrupted followers of the Saviour has been at all times sufficiently large to bear a competent testimony to the world, or to keep up the remembrance of the truth upon the earth - and the reality of this no one acquainted with the history of the church will doubt.

(c) The condition of the "witnesses" as "clothed in sackcloth," Revelation 11:3. This has been shown to mean that they would be in a state of sadness and grief; and they would be exposed to trouble and persecution. It is unnecessary to prove that all this was abundantly fulfilled. The long history of those times was a history of persecutions; and if it be admitted that the passage before us was designed to refer to those above mentioned as "witnesses," no more correct description could be given of them than to say that they were "clothed in sackcloth."

(d) The power of the witnesses, Revelation 11:5-6. Of this there are several specifications:

(1) They had power over those who should injure or hurt them, Revelation 11:5. This is represented by "fire proceeding out of their mouth, and devouring their enemies." This has been shown to refer to the doctrines which they would proclaim, and the denunciations which they would utter, and which would resemble consuming fire. This would be accomplished or fulfilled if their solemn testimony - their proclamations of truth - and their denunciations of the wrath of God should have the effect ultimately to bring down the divine vengeance on their persecutors. And no one can doubt that this has had an ample fulfillment. That is, the effect of the testimony borne; of the solemn appeals made; of the deuunciations of the judgment of heaven, has been to show that that great persecuting power that oppressed them is arrayed against God, and must be finally overthrown. In order to see the complete fulfillment of this, it would be necessary to trace all the effect of the testimony of the witnesses for the truth from age to age on that power, and to see how far it has been among the causes of the ultimate and final overthrow of the papacy.

Of course, it may be said that in an important sense it is all to be traced to that, since if they had forborne to bear that testimony, and to protest against those corruptions and abominations, that colossal power would have stood unshaken. But the solemn appeals made from age to age by the friends of truth, amidst much persecution, have contributed to weaken that power, and to prepare the world for its ultimate fall as if fire from heaven fell upon it. The causes of the decline of the papal power were, therefore, laid far back in the solemn truths urged by those persecuted "witnesses";

and the calamities which have ravaged Europe for these three hundred years, and the changes now occurring which make it so certain that this mighty power hastens to its fall, may all be the regular results of the "testimony" for the truths of a pure gospel borne long ago by the people that dwelt amidst the Alps, and their fellow-sufferers in persecution.

(2) they "have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy," Revelation 11:6. This has been shown to mean that they would have power to cause blessings to be withheld from people as if the rain were withheld. The reference here is probably to the spiritual heavens, and to that of which rain is the natural emblem the influences of truth, and the influences of the Divine Spirit on the world. So Moses says, in Deuteronomy 32:2, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, and my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." So the psalmist Psalm 72:6, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth." So Isaiah Isaiah 55:10-11, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, so shall my word be," etc. Compare Micah 5:7. The meaning here, then, must be, that spiritual influences would seem to be under their control; or that they would be imparted at their bidding, and withheld at their will. This found an ample fulfillment in the history of the church in those dark periods, in the fact that it was in connection with these "witnesses," and in answer to their prayers, that the influences of the Holy Spirit were imparted to the world, and that the true religion was kept up on the earth. "It is an historical fact," says the author of The Seventh Vial (p. 130), "that during the ages of their ministry, there was neither dew nor rain of a spiritual kind upon the earth, but at the word of the witnesses. There was no knowledge of salvation but by their preaching - no descent of the Spirit but in answer to their prayers; and, as the witnesses were shut out from Christendom generally, a universal famine ensued."

(3) they had power over the waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, Revelation 11:6. That is, as explained above, calamities would come upon the earth as if the waters were turned into blood, and this would be so connected with them, and with the treatment which they would receive, that these calamities would seem to have been called down from heaven in answer to their prayers, and in order to avenge

their wrongs. And can anyone be ignorant that wars, commotions, troubles, disasters have followed the attempts to destroy those who have borne a faithful testimony for Christ in the dark period of the world here referred to? The calamities that have befallen the papal communion from time to time may have been, and seem to have been, to a great degree, the consequence of its persecuting spirit, and of its attempts to quench the light of truth. When the oppressed and persecuted nations of Europe had borne it long, and when attempts had long been made to extinguish every spark of true liberty, the spirit of freedom and revenge was roused. The yoke was broken; and in the wars that ensued rivers of blood flowed upon the earth, as if these "witnesses" or martyrs had, by their own power and prayers, brought these calamities upon their oppressors. A philosophic historian carefully studying human nature, and the essential spirit of Christianity, might find in these facts a sufficient explanation of all the calamities that have come upon that once colossal power - the papacy - and a full demonstration that, under the operation of these causes, that power must ultimately fall - as if in revenge called down from heaven by the martyrs for the wrongs done to them who had borne a faithful testimony to the truth.

II. The war against the witnesses, Revelation 11:7. There are several circumstances stated in regard to this which demand explanation in order to a full understanding of the prophecy. Those circumstances relate to the time when this would occur; to the government by which this war would be waged; and to the victory:

(a) The time when the war referred to would be waged. The whole narrative (compare Revelation 11:3, Revelation 11:5) supposes that opposition would be made to them at all times, and that their condition would be such that they could properly be represented as always clothed in sackcloth; but it is evident that a particular period is here referred to, when there would be such a war waged with them that they would be for a time overcome, and would seem to be dead. This time is referred to by the phrase "when they shall have finished their testimony" Revelation 11:7; and it is to the period when this could be properly said of them that we are to look for the fulfillment of what is here predicted. This must mean, when they should have borne full or ample testimony; that is, when they had borne their testimony on all the great points on which they were appointed to bear

witness. See the notes on Revelation 11:7. This, then, must not be understood as referring to the time of the completion of the twelve hundred and sixty years, but to any time during that period when it could be said that they had borne a full and ample testimony for the truths of the gospel, and against the abominations and errors that prevailed.

In this general expression there is not, indeed, anything that would accurately designate the time, but no one can doubt that this herd been done at the time of the Reformation. In the preceding remarks it has been shown that there was a succession of faithful witnesses for the truth in the darkest periods of the church, and that to all the great points pertaining to the system of religion revealed in the gospel, as well as against the errors that prevailed, they had borne an unambiguous testimony. There is no impropriety, therefore, in fixing this period at about the time of the Reformation, for all that is necessarily implied in the language is fulfilled on such a supposition. Faithful testimony had been borne during the long period of the papal corruptions, until it could be said that their special work had been accomplished. The earlier witnesses for the truth - the Paulicians, the Waldenses, the Vaudois, and other bodies of true Christians - had borne an open testimony, from the beginning, against the various corruptions of Rome - her errors in doctrine, her idolatries in worship, and her immoralities, until in the end of the twelfth century - the same century in which, according to Mr. Gibbon, the meridian of papal greatness was attained - they proclaimed her, as we have seen, to be the antichrist of Scripture, the Harlot of the Apocalypse. Thus did they fulfil their testimony; and then was the war waged against them, with all the power of apostate Rome, to silence and to destroy them.

This war was commenced in the edicts of councils, which stigmatized the pure doctrines of the Bible, and branded those who held them as heretics. The next step was to pronounce the most dreadful anathemas on those who were regarded as heretics, which were executed in the same remorseless and exterminating manner in which they were conceived. The confessors of the truth were denied both their natural and their civil rights. They were forbidden all participation in dignities and offices; their goods were confiscated; their houses were to be razed and never more to be rebuilt; and their lands were given to those who were able to seize them.

They were shut out from the solace of human converse; no one might give them shelter while living, or Christian burial when dead. At length a crusade was proclaimed against them. Preachers were sent abroad through Europe to sound the trumpet of vengeance, and to assemble the nations.

The pope wrote to all Christian princes, exhorting them to earn their pardon and win heaven rather by bearing the cross against heretics than by marching against the Saracens. The war, in particular, which was waged against the Waldenses, is well known, and the horror of its details is among the darkest pages of history. The peaceful and fertile valleys of the Vaudois were invaded, and speedily devastated with fire and sword; their towns and villages were burnt; while not one individual, in many cases, escaped to carry the tidings to the next valley. To all the cruelties of these wars, and to all the open persecutions Which were waged, are to be added the horrors of the Inquisition, as an illustration of the fact that "wars" would be made against the true witnesses for Christ. Calculations, more or less accurate, have been made of the numbers that Popery has slain; and the lowest of those calculations would confirm what is said here, on the supposition that the reference is to the papal power.

From the year 1540 to the year 1570, comprehending a space of only thirty years, no fewer than nine hundred thousand Protestants were put to death by the papists, in different countries of Europe. During the short pontificate of Paul the Fourth, which lasted only four years (1555-1559 a.d.), the Inquisition alone, on the testimony of Vergerius, destroyed a hundred and fifty thousand! When he died, the indignant populace of Rome crowded to the prison of the Inquisition, broke open the doors, and released seventeen hundred prisoners, and then set fire to the building (Bowers' *History of the Popes*, 3:319, edit. 1845). Those who perished in Germany during the wars of Charles the Fifth, and in Flanders, under the infamous Duke of Alva, are reckoned by hundreds of thousands. In France several million were destroyed in the innumerable massacres that took place in that kingdom. It has been computed that since the rise of the papacy, not fewer than fifty million of persons have been put to death on account of religion! Of this vast number the greater part have been cut off during the last six hundred years; for the papacy persecuted very little during the first half of its existence, and it was in this way that it was not until the witnesses had

“completed” their testimony, or had borne full and ample testimony, that it made war against them. Compare *The Seventh Vial*, pp. 149-157. For a full illustration of the facts here referred to, see the notes on Daniel 7:21. There can be no reasonable doubt that Daniel and John refer to the same thing.

(b) By whom this was to be done. In Revelation 11:7, it is said that it would be by “the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit.” This is undoubtedly the same as the fourth beast of Daniel (Revelation 11:7. That is, they would gain a temporary victory over them, and the witnesses would seem for a time to be dead. The subsequent statement shows, however, that they would revive again, and would again resume their prophesying. Compare the notes on Revelation 9:20. The victory over them would appear to be complete, and the great object of the persecuting power would seem to have been gained. A few facts on this subject will show the propriety of the statement that “when they had finished,” or had fully borate their testimony, a victory was obtained over them, and that they were so silenced that it might be said they were killed. The first will be in the words of Milner, in his account of the opening of the sixteenth century (History of the Church, p. 660, ed. Edin. 1835): “The sixteenth century opened with a prospect of all others the most gloomy, in the eyes of every true Christian. Corruption both in doctrine and in practice had exceeded all bounds; and the general face of Europe, though the name of Christ was everywhere professed, presented nothing that was properly evangelical. The Waldenses were too feeble to molest the popedom; and the Hussites, divided among themselves, and worn out by a long series of contentions, were reduced to silence. Among both were found persons of undoubted godliness, but they appeared incapable of making effectual impressions on the kingdom of antichrist. The Roman pontiffs were still the uncontrolled patrons of impiety; neither the scandalous crimes of Alexander VI., nor the military ferocity of Julius II., seemed to have lessened the dominion of the court of Rome, or to have opened the eyes of people so as to induce them to make a sober investigation of the nature of true religion.”

The language of Mr Cunninghame may here be adopted as describing the state of things at the beginning of the sixteenth century: “At the commencement of the sixteenth century, Europe reposed in the deep sleep of spiritual death, under the iron yoke of the papacy. That haughty power,

like the Assyrian of the prophet, said in the plenitude of his insolence, ‹My hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people; and as one gathereth eggs, I have gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.‘" And in a similar manner, the writer of the article on the Reformation, in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* - in a statement made, of course, with no reference to the fulfillment of this passage - thus speaks of that period: "Everything was quiet; every heretic was exterminated, and the whole Christian world supinely acquiesced in the enormous absurdities inculcated by the Roman Catholic church." These quotations will show the propriety of the language used here by John, on the supposition that it was intended to refer to this period. No symbol would be more striking, or more appropriate to that state of things, than to represent the witnesses for the truth as overcome and slain, so that, for a time at least, they would cease to bear their testimony against the prevailing errors and corruptions. It will be remembered, also, that this occurred at a time when it might be said that they had "fulfilled" their testimony, or when, in a most solemn manner, they had protested against the existing idolatries and abominations.

III. The witnesses dead, Revelation 11:8-10. The preceding verse contains the statement that they would be overcome and killed; these verses describe their treatment when they would be dead; that is, when they would be silenced. There are several circumstances referred to here which demand notice:

(a) The "place" where it is said that this would occur - that "great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified," Revelation 11:8. In the explanation of this verse, it has been shown that the language used here is such as would be properly employed, on the supposition that the intention was to refer to Rome, or the Roman Catholic communion. A few testimonies may serve to confirm the interpretation proposed in the notes on Revelation 11:8, and to show further the propriety of applying the appellation "Sodom" and "Egypt" to Rome. Thus among the Reformers, "Grosteste perceived that the whole scheme of the papal government was enmity with God, and exclaimed that nothing but the sword could deliver the church from the Egyptian bondage" (D‘Aubigne). Wycliffe compared the Roman Catholic priest-craft to "the

accursed sorceries with which the sages of Pharaoh presumed to emulate the works of Yahweh" (LeBas' Wycliffe, pp. 68,147).

Luther, in a letter to Melancthon, says, "Italy is plunged, as in ancient times in Egypt, in darkness that may be felt." And of Zuingle in Switzerland, they who longed for the light of salvation said of him, "He will be our Moses, to deliver us out of the darkness of Egypt." Any number of passages could be found in the writings of the Reformers, and even some in the writings of Romanists themselves, in which the abominations that prevailed in Rome are compared with those in Sodom. Compare Elliott, ii. pp. 386,387, notes. Assuming this to be the correct interpretation, the meaning is, that a state of things would exist after the silencing of the witnesses which would be well represented by supposing that their dead bodies would lie unburied; that is, that there would be dishonor and indignity heaped upon them, such as is shown to the dead when they are suffered to lie unburied. No one needs to be informed that this accurately represents the state of things throughout the Roman world. To the "witnesses" thus persecuted, downtrodden, and silenced, there was the same kind of indignity shown which there is when the dead are left unburied.

(b) The exposure of their bodies, Revelation 11:8. That is, as we have seen, they would be treated with indignity, as if they were not worthy of Christian burial. Now this not only expresses what was in fact the general feeling among the papists in respect to those whom they regarded as heretics, but it had a literal fulfillment in numerous cases where the rites of Christian burial were denied them. One of the punishments most constantly decreed and constantly enforced in reference to those who were called "heretics," was their exclusion from burial as persons excommunicated and without the pale of the church. Thus, in the third council of Lateran (1179 a.d.), Christian burial was denied to heretics; the same in the Lateran council 1215 a.d., and the papal decree of Gregory IX, 1227 a.d.; the same again in that of Pope Martin, 1422 a.d.; and the same thing was determined in the council of Constance, 1422 a.d., which ordered that the body of Wycliffe should be exhumed, and that the ashes of John Huss, instead of being buried, should be collected and thrown into the lake of Constance. It may be added that Savonarola's ashes were in a similar manner east into the Arno, 1498 a.d.; and that in the first bull entrusted to the cardinal Cajetan

against Luther, this was one of the declared penalties, that both Luther and his partisans should be deprived of ecclesiastical burial. See Waddington, p. 717; D'Aubigne, 1:355; Foxe, v. 677.

(c) The mutual congratulations of those who had put them to death; their exultation over them; and the expression of their joy by the interchange of presents: "And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them," etc., Revelation 11:10. The language used here is expressive of general joy and rejoicing, and there can be no doubt that such joy and rejoicing occurred at Rome whenever a new victory was obtained over those who were regarded as heretics. Patens remarks on the passage in Luke 15:32, "It was meet that we should make merry," etc., that "when heretics are burnt, papists play at frolicsome games, celebrate feasts and banquets, sing Te Deum laudamus, and wish one another joy." And so too Bullinger, in loco. But there was special rejoicing, which accorded entirely with the prediction here, at the close of the sessions of the Lateran council 1517 a.d., in the splendor of the dinners and fates given by the cardinals. The scene on the closing of the council is thus described by Dr. Waddington: "The pillars of the papal strength seemed visible and palpable; and Rome surveyed them with exultation from her golden palaces. The assembled princes and prelates separated from the council with complacency, confidence, and mutual congratulations on the peace, unity, and purity of the church." Still, while this was true of that particular council, it should be added that the language used here is general, and may be regarded as descriptive of the usual joy which would be felt, and which was felt at Rome, in view of the efforts made to suppress heresy in the church.

(d) The "time" during which the witnesses would remain "dead." This, it is said Revelation 11:9, would be for "three days and an half," during which time they would "not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves"; that is, there would be a course of conduct, and a state of things, as if the dead were left unburied. This time, as we have seen (notes on Revelation 11:9), means probably three years and a half; and in the application of this we are to look for some striking event relating to the "witnesses," when they should have "finished their testimony," or when they had fully borne their testimony, that would fully correspond with this. Now it happens that there was a point of time, just previous to the Reformation, when it was supposed that a

complete victory was gained for over over those who were regarded as "heretics," but who were in fact the true witnesses for Christ. That point of time was during the session of the council of Lateran, which was assembled 1513 a.d., and which continued its sessions to May 16,1517.

In the ninth session of this council a remarkable proclamation was made, indicating that all opposition to the papal power had now ceased. The scene is thus described by Mr. Elliott (ii. 396,397): "The orator of the session ascended the pulpit; and, amidst the applause of the assembled council, uttered that memorable exclamation of triumph - an exclamation which, notwithstanding the long multiplied anti-heretical decrees of popes and councils, notwithstanding the yet more multiplied anti-heretical crusades and inquisitorial fires, was never, I believe, pronounced before, and certainly never since - ‹*Jam nemo reclamat, nullus obsistit* ' - ‹There is an end of resistance to the papal rule and religion; opposers there exist no more:' and again, ‹The whole body of Christendom is now seen to be subjected to its Head, that is, to Thee.'" This occurred May 5,1514. It is, probably, from this "time" that the three days and a half, or the three years and a half, during which the "dead bodies of the witnesses remained unburied," and were exposed to public gaze and derision, are to be reckoned.

But it was with remarkable accuracy that a period of three years and a half occurred from the time when this proclamation was made, and when it was supposed that these "witnesses" were "dead," to the time when the voice of living witnesses for the truth was heard again, as if those witnesses that had been silenced had come to life again; and "not in the compass of the whole ecclesiastical history of Christendom, except in the case of the death and resurrection of Christ himself, is there any such example of the sudden, mighty, and triumphant resuscitation of his church from a state of deep depression, as was, just after the separation of the Lateran council, exhibited in the protesting voice of Luther, and the glorious Reformation." All accounts agree in placing the beginning of the Reformation in 1517 ad. See Bowers' *History of the Popes*, iii. 295; Murdock's *Mosheim*, iii. 11, note. The effect of this, as compared with the supposed suppression of heresy, or the death of the witnesses, and as an illustration of the passage before us, will be seen from the following language of a writer in the

Encyclopaedia Britannica: “Everything was quiet; every heretic exterminated; and the whole Christian world supinely acquiescing in the enormous absurdities inculcated in the Roman Catholic church, when, in 1517, the empire of superstition received its first attack from Luther.” Or, in the language of Mr. Cunninghame, “At the commencement of the sixteenth century, Europe reposed in the deep sleep of spiritual death, under the iron yoke of the papacy. There was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped: when suddenly in one of the universities of Germany the voice of an obscure monk was heard, the sound of which rapidly filled Saxony, Germany, and Europe itself, shaking the very foundations of the papal power, and arousing people from the lethargy of ages.”

The remarkable coincidence in regard to time - supposing that three years and a half are intended - will be seen from the following statement. The day of the ninth session of the Lateran council, when the proclamation above referred to was made, was, as we have seen, May 5,1514; the day of Luther‘s posting up his theses at Wittemberg (the well-known epoch of the beginning of the Reformation), was October 31,1517. “Now, from May 5,1514, to May 5,1517, are three years; and from May 5,1517, to October 31 of the same year, 1517, the reckoning in days is as follows:

d May

d 5-31- 27

d August

d 31- 31

d

d June

d 30- 30

d September

d 30- 30

d

d July

d 31- 31

d October

d 31- 31

d

d

In all - 180, or half of 360 days, that is, half a year; so that the whole interval is precisely, to a day, three and a half years" (Elliott, 2:402,403). But, without insisting on this very minute accuracy, anyone can see, and all must be prepared to admit, that, on the supposition that it was intended by the Spirit of God to refer to these events, this is the language which would be used; or, in other words, nothing would better represent this state of things than the declaration that the witnesses would be "slain," and would be suffered to "remain unburied" during this period of time, and that at the end of this period, a public testimony would be borne again for the truth, and against the abominations of the papacy, as if "the Spirit of life from God should again enter into them, and they should stand upon their feet," Revelation 11:11.

IV. The resurrection of the witnesses, Revelation 11:11. Little need be added on this point, after what has Been said on the previous portions of the chapter. We have seen (notes on Revelation 11:11) that this must mean that a state of things would occur which would be well represented by their being restored to life again; and if the previous illustrations are correct, there will be little difficulty in admitting that this had its fulfillment in the

commencement of the Reformation. As to the time when they would revive, we have seen above how remarkably this accords with the commencement of the Reformation in 1517; and as to the correspondence of this with what is here symbolized, nothing would better represent this than to describe the witnesses as coming to life again. It was as if "the Spirit of life from God entered into" those who had been slain, and "they stood upon their feet" again, and again bore their solemn testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus. For:

(a) it was the same kind of testimony - testimony to the same truths, and against the same evils - which had been borne by the long array of the confessors and martyrs that had been put to death. The truths proclaimed by the Reformers on the great doctrines of grace were the same which had been professed by the Waldenses, by Wycliffe, by John Huss, and others; and the abominations of image-worship, of the invocations of the saints, of the arrogant claims of the pope, of the doctrine of human merit in justification, of the corruptions of the monastic systems, of the celibacy of the clergy, of the doctrine of purgatory, against which they testified, were the same.

(b) That testimony was borne by people of the same spirit and character. In what would now be called personal religious experience there was the closest resemblance between the Waldenses and the other "witnesses" before the Reformation, and the Reformers themselves - between the piety of Huss, Jerome of Prague, Wycliffe, and Peter Waldo; and Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Calvin, Bucer, Latimer, Ridley, and Knox. They were men who belonged to the same spiritual communion, and who had been moulded and fashioned in their spiritual character by the same power from on high.

(c) The testimony was borne with the same fearlessness, and in the midst of the same kind of persecution and opposition. All that occurred was as if the same "witnesses" had been restored to life and again lifted up their voice in the cause for which they had been persecuted and slain. The propriety of this language, as applied to these events, may be further seen from expressions used by the "witnesses" themselves, or by the persecuted friends of the truth. "And I," said John Huss, speaking of the gospel-

preachers who should appear after he had suffered at the stake, "and I, awaking as it were from the dead, and rising from the grave, shall rejoice with exceeding great joy." Again, in 1523, after the Reformation had broken out, we find Pope Hadrian saying, in a missive addressed to the Diet at Nuremberg, "The heretics Huss and Jerome are now alive again in the person of Martin Luther" (The Seventh Vial, p. 190).

V. The ascension of the witnesses, Revelation 11:12; "And they ascended to heaven in a cloud." We have seen (notes on this verse) that this means that events would take place as if they should ascend in triumph to heaven, or which should be properly symbolized by such an ascent to heaven. All that is here represented would be fulfilled by a triumph of the truth under the testimony of the witnesses, or by its becoming gloriously established in view of the nations of the earth, as if the witnesses ascended publicly and were received to the presence of God in heaven. All this was fulfilled in the various influences that served to establish and confirm the Reformation, and to introduce the great principles of religious freedom, giving to that work ultimate triumph, and showing that it had the favor of God. This would embrace the whole series of events after the Reformation was begun, by which its triumph was secure, or by which that state of things was gradually introduced which now exists, in which the true religion is free from persecution, in which it is advancing into so many parts of the world where the papacy once had the control, and in which, with so little molestation, and with such an onward march toward ultimate victory, it is extending its conquests over the earth. The triumphant ascent of the witnesses to heaven, and the public proof of the divine favor thus shown to them, would be an appropriate symbol of this.

VI. The consequences of the resurrection, ascension, and triumph of the witnesses, Revelation 11:13. These are said to be, that there would be "in the same hour a great earthquake; that a tenth part of the city would fall; that seven thousand would be slain, and that the remainder would be affrighted and would give glory to the God of heaven."

(a) The earthquake. This, as we have seen (notes on Revelation 11:13), denotes that there would be a shock or a convulsion in the world, so that the powers of the earth would be shaken, as cities, trees, and hills are in the

shocks of an earthquake. There can be little difficulty in applying this to the shock produced throughout Europe by the boldness of Luther and his fellow-laborers in the Reformation. No events have ever taken place in history that would be better compared with the shock of an earthquake than those which occurred when the long-established governments of Europe, and especially the domination of the papacy, so long consolidated and confirmed, were shaken by the Reformation. In the suddenness of the attack made on the existing state of things, in the commotions which were produced, in the overthrow of so many governments, there was a striking resemblance to the convulsions caused by an earthquake. So Dr. Lingard speaks of the Reformation: "That religious revolution which astonished and convulsed the nations of Europe." Nothing would better represent the convulsions caused in Germany, Switzerland, Prussia, Saxony, Sweden, Denmark, and England by the Reformation than an earthquake.

(b) The fate of a part of the city: "And the tenth part of the city fell." That is, as we have seen (notes on Revelation 11:13), of what is represented by the city, to wit, the Roman power. The fall of a "tenth part" would denote the fall of a considerable portion of that power; as if, in an earthquake, a tenth part of a city should be demolished. This would well represent what occurred in the Reformation, when so considerable a portion of the colossal papal power suddenly fell away, and the immediate effect on the portions of Europe where the Reformation prevailed, as compared with the whole of that power, might well be represented by the fall of the length part of a city. It is true that a much larger proportion ultimately fell off from Rome, so that now the number of Romanists and Protestants is not far from being equal; but in the first convulsion - in what passed before the eye in vision as represented by the earthquake - that proportion would not be improperly represented by the tenth part of a city. The idea is, that the sudden destruction of a tenth part of a great city by an earthquake would well represent the convulsion at the breaking out of the Reformation, by which a considerable portion of the papal power would fall.

(c) Those who were slain, Revelation 11:13; "And in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand." That is, as we have seen (notes on Revelation 11:13), a calamity would occur to this vast papal power, as if this number should be killed in the earthquake, or which would be well

represented by that. In other words, a portion of those who were represented by the city would be slain, which, compared with the whole number, would bear about the saint proportion which seven thousand would to the usual dwellers in such a city. As the numbers in the city are not mentioned, it is impossible to form any exact estimate of the numbers that would be slain on this supposition. But if we suppose that the city contained a hundred thousand, then the proportion would be something like a fourteenth part; but if it were half a million, then it would be about a seventieth part; if it were a million, then it would be about a hundred and forty-fifth part; and, as we may suppose that John, in these visions, had his eye on Rome as it was in the age in which he lived, we may, if we can ascertain what the size of Rome was at that period, take that estimate as the basis of the interpretation.

Mr. Gibbon (2:251,252) has endeavored to form an estimate of the probable number of the inhabitants of ancient Rome; and, after enumerating all the circumstances which throw any light on the subject, says: "If we adopt the same average which, under similar circumstances, has been found applicable to Paris, and indifferently allow about twenty-five persons for each house, of every degree, we may fairly estimate the inhabitants of Rome at twelve hundred thousand." Allowing this to be the number of the inhabitants of the city, then the number here specified that was slain - seven thousand - would be about the one hundred and seventieth part, or one in one hundred and seventy. This would, according to the purport of the vision here, represent the number that would perish in the convulsion denoted by the earthquake - a number which, though it would be large in the aggregate, is not probably too large in fact as referring to the number of persons that perished in papal Europe in the wars that were consequent on the Reformation.

(d) The only other circumstance in this representation is, that "the remnant were affrighted and gave glory to the God of heaven," Revelation 11:13. That is, as we have soon (notes on Revelation 11:13), fear and consternation came upon them, and they stood in awe at what was occurring, and acknowledged the power of God in the changes that took place. How well this was fulfilled in what occurred in the Reformation, it is hardly necessary to state. The events which then took place had every mark of being under the divine hand, and were such as to fill the minds of people

with awe and to teach them to recognize the hand of God. The power which tore asunder that immense ecclesiastical establishment, that had so long held the whole of Europe in servitude; which dissolved the charm which had so long held kings, and princes, and people spell-bound; which rent away forever so large a portion of the papal dominions; which led kings to separate themselves from the control to which they had been so long subjected, and which emancipated the human mind, and diffused abroad the great principles of civil and religious liberty, was well adapted to fill the mind with awe, and to lead people to recognize the hand and the agency of God; and if it be admitted that the Holy Spirit in this passage meant to refer to these events, it cannot be doubted that the language used here is such as is well adapted to describe the effects produced on the minds of people at large.

Verse 15

And the seventh angel sounded - See the notes on Revelation 8:2, Revelation 8:6-7. This is the last of the trumpets, implying, of course, that under this the series of visions was to end, and that this was to introduce the state of things under which the affairs of the world were to be wound up. The place which this occupies in the order of time, is when the events pertaining to the colossal Roman power - the fourth kingdom of Daniel Daniel 7:9-14, Daniel 7:27-28 should have been introduced. This, both in Daniel and in John, is to occur when the mighty power of the papacy shall have been overthrown at the termination of the twelve hundred and sixty years of its duration. See the notes on Daniel 7:25. In both Daniel and John the termination of that persecuting power is the commencement of the reign of the saints; the downfall of the papacy, the introduction of the kingdom of God, and its establishment on the earth.

And there were great voices in heaven - As of exultation and praise. The grand consummation had come, the period so long anticipated and desired when God should reign on the earth had arrived, and this lays the foundation for joy and thanksgiving in heaven.

The kingdoms of this world - The modern editions of the New Testament (see Tittmann and Hahn) read this in the singular number - "The kingdom of this world has become," etc. According to this reading, the meaning would be, either that the sole reign over this world had become that of the Lord Jesus; or, more probably, that the dominion over the earth

had been regarded as one in the sense that Satan had reigned over it, but had now become the kingdom of God; that is, that "the kingdoms of this world are many considered in themselves; but in reference to the sway of Satan, there is only one kingdom ruled over by the ‹god of this world‘" (Prof. Stuart). The sense is not materially different whichever reading is adopted; though the authority is in favor of the latter (Wetstein). According to the common reading, the sense is, that all the kingdoms of the earth, being many in themselves, had been now brought under the one scepter of Christ; according to the other, the whole world was regarded as in fact one kingdom - that of Satan - and the scepter had now passed from his hands into those of the Saviour.

The kingdoms of our Lord - Or, the kingdom of our Lord, according to the reading adopted in the previous part of the verse. The word "Lord" here evidently has reference to God as such - represented as the original source of authority, and as giving the kingdom to his Son. See the notes on Daniel 7:13-14; compare Psalm 2:8. The word "Lord" - Κυριος Kurios- implies the notion of possessor, owner, sovereign, supreme ruler - and is thus properly given to God. See Matthew 1:22; Matthew 5:33; Mark 5:19; Luke 1:6, Luke 1:28; Acts 7:33; Hebrews 8:2, Hebrews 8:10; James 4:15, al. saepe.

And of his Christ - Of his anointed; of him who is set apart as the Messiah, and consecrated to this high office. See the notes on Matthew 1:1. He is called "his Christ," because he is set apart by him, or appointed by him to perform the work appropriate to that office on earth. Such language as what occurs here is often employed, in which God and Christ are spoken of as, in some respects, distinct - as sustaining different offices, and performing different works. The essential meaning here is, that the kingdom of this world had now become the kingdom of God under Christ; that is, that that kingdom is administered by the Son of God.

And he shall reign forever and ever - A kingdom is commenced which shall never terminate. It is not said that this would be on the earth; but the essential idea is, that the scepter of the world had now, after so long a time, come into his hands never more to pass away. The fuller characteristics of this reign are stated in a subsequent part of this book Psalm 2:8; Isaiah 9:7; Isaiah 11:9; Isaiah 45:22; 60; Daniel 2:35, Daniel 2:44-45; Daniel 7:13-14, Daniel 7:27-28; Zechariah 14:9; Malachi 1:11; Luke 1:33. On this whole subject, see the very ample illustrations and proofs in the notes on Daniel

2:44-45; Daniel 7:13-14, Daniel 7:27-28; compare the notes on Revelation 2022.

Verse 16

And the four and twenty elders which sat … - See the notes on Revelation 4:4.

Fell upon their faces, and worshipped God - Prostrated themselves before him - the usual form of profound adoration. See the notes on Revelation 5:8-14.

Verse 17

Saying, We give thee thanks - We, as the representatives of the church, and as identified in our feelings with it (see the notes on Revelation 4:4), acknowledge thy goodness in tires delivering the church from all its troubles, and having conducted it through the times of fiery persecution, thus establishing it upon the earth. The language here used is an expression of their deep interest in the church, and of the fact that they felt themselves identified with it. They, as representatives of the church, would of course rejoice in its prosperity and final triumph.

O Lord God Almighty - Referring to God all-powerful, because it was by his omnipotent arm alone that this great work had been I accomplished. Nothing else could have I defended the church in its many trials; nothing else could have established it upon the earth.

Which art, and wast, and art to come - The Eternal One, always the same. See the notes on Revelation 1:8. The reference here is to the fact that God, who had thus established his church on the earth, is unchanging. In all the revolutions which occur on the earth, he always remains the same. What he was in past times he is now; what he is now he always will be. The particular idea suggested here seems to be, that he had now shown this by having caused his church to triumph; that is, he had shown that he was the same God who had early promised that it should ultimately triumph; he had carried forward his glorious purposes without modifying or abandoning them amidst all the changes that had occurred in the world; and he had thus given the assurance that he would now remain the same, and that all his purposes in regard to his church would be accomplished. The fact that God remains always unchangeably the same is the sole reason why his church is safe, or why any individual member of it is kept and saved. Compare Malachi 3:6.

Because thou hast taken to thee thy great power - To wit, by setting up thy kingdom over all the earth. Before that it seemed as if he had relaxed that power, or had given the power to others. Satan had reigned on the earth. Disorder, anarchy, sin, rebellion, had prevailed. It seemed as if God had let the reins of government fall from his hand. Now he came forth as if to resume the dominion over the world, and to take the scepter into his own hand, and to exert his great power in keeping the nations in subjection. The setting up of his kingdom all over the world, and causing his laws everywhere to be obeyed, will be among the highest demonstrations of divine power. Nothing can accomplish this but the power of God; when that power is exerted nothing can prevent its accomplishment.

And hast reigned - Prof. Stuart, "and shown thyself as king" - that is, "hast become king, or acted as a king." The idea is, that he had now vindicated his regal power (Robinson, Lexicon) - that is, he had now set up his kingdom on the earth, and had truly begun to reign. One of the characteristics of the millennium - and indeed the main characteristic will be that God will be everywhere obeyed; for when that occurs all will be consummated that properly enters into the idea of the millennial kingdom.

Verse 18

And the nations were angry - Were enraged against thee. This they had shown by their opposition to his laws; by persecuting his people; by slaying his witnesses; by all the attempts which they had made to destroy his authority on the earth. The reference here seems to be to the whole series of events preceding the final establishment of his kingdom on the earth; to all the efforts which had been made to throw off his government and to crush his church. At this period of glorious triumph it was natural to look back to those dark times when the "nations raged" (compare Psalm 2:1-3), and when the very existence of the church was in jeopardy.

And thy wrath is come - That is, the time when thou wilt punish them for all that they have done in opposition to thee, and when the wicked shall be cut off. There will be, in the setting up of the kingdom of God, some manifestation of his wrath against the powers that opposed it; or something that will show his purpose to destroy his enemies, and to judge the wicked. The representations in this book lead us to suppose that the final establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth will be introduced or accompanied by commotions and wars which will end in the overthrow of the great powers that have opposed his reign, and by such awful calamities

in those portions of the world as shall show that God has arisen in his strength to cut off his enemies, and to appear as the vindicator of his people. Compare the notes on Revelation 16:12-16; Revelation 20:1-15, and the meaning of the sacred writer will, therefore, come up for a more distinct and full examination when we consider that chapter. See the notes on Revelation 20:4-6, Revelation 20:12-15. The purpose of the writer does not require that a detailed statement of the order of the events referred to should be made here, for it would be better made when, after another line of illustration and of symbol Revelation 11:19; Matthew 25:34-40; Revelation 21:22. That is, in the final winding-up of human affairs, God will bestow the long-promised reward on those who have been his true friends. The wicked that annoyed and persecuted them will annoy and persecute them no more; and the righteous will be publicly acknowledged as the friends of God. For the manner in which this will be done, see the details in Revelation 10:11.

And to the saints - To all who are holy - under whatever dispensation, and in whatever land, and at whatever time, they may have lived. Then will be the time when, in a public manner, they will be recognized as belonging to the kingdom of God, and as being his true friends.

And them that fear thy name - Another way of designating his people, since religion consists in a profound veneration for God, Malachi 3:16; Job 1:1; Psalm 15:4; Psalm 22:23; Psalm 115:11; Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 3:13; Proverbs 9:10; Isaiah 11:2; Acts 10:22, Acts 10:35.

Small and great - Young and old; low and high; poor and rich. The language is designed to comprehend all, of every class, who have a claim to be numbered among the friends of God, and it furnishes a plain intimation that people of all classes will be found at last among his true people. One of the glories of the true religion is, that, in bestowing its favors, it disregards all the artificial distinctions of society, and addresses man as man, welcoming all who are human beings to the blessings of life and salvation. This will be illustriously shown in the last period of the world‘s history, when the distinctions of wealth, and rank, and blood shall lose the importance which has been attributed to them, and when the honor of being a child of God shall have its true place. Compare Galatians 3:28.

And shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth - That is, all who have, in their conquests, spread desolation over the earth and who have

persecuted the righteous, and all who have done injustice and wrong to any class of people. Compare the notes on Revelation 20:13-15.

Here ends, as I suppose, the first series of visions referred to in the volume sealed with the seven seals, Revelation 5:1. At this point, where the division of the chapter should have been made, and which is properly marked in our common Bibles by the sign of the paragraph (),there commences a new series of visions, intended also, but in a different line, to extend down to the consummation of all things. The former series traces the history down mainly through the series of civil changes in the world, or the outward affairs which affect the destiny of the church; the latter - the portion still before us - embraces the same period with a more direct reference to the rise of antichrist, and the influence of that power in affecting the destiny of the Church. When that is completed Revelation 11:19; Revelation 1219, the way is prepared Revelation 2022 for the more full statement of the final triumph of the gospel, and the universal prevalence of religion, with which the book so appropriately closes. That portion of the book, therefore, refers to the same period as the one which has just been considered under the sounding of the seventh trumpet, and the description of the final state of things would have immediately succeeded if it had not been necessary, by another series of visions, to trace more particularly the history of antichrist on the destiny of the church, and the way in which that great and fearful power would be finally overcome. See the Analysis of the Book, part 5. The way is then prepared for the description of the state of things which will exist when all the enemies of the church shall be subdued; when Christianity shall triumph; and when the predicted reign of God shall be set up on the earth, Revelation 2022.

Verse 19

Analysis of the Chapter 11:1912

This portion of the book commences, according to the view presented in the closing remarks on the last chapter, a new series of visions, designed more particularly to represent the internal condition of the church; the rise of antichrist, and the effect of the rise of that formidable power on the internal history of the church to the time of the overthrow of that power, and the triumphant establishment of the kingdom of God. See the Analysis of the Book, part 5. The portion before us embraces the following particulars:

(1) A new vision of the temple of God as opened in heaven, disclosing the ark of the testimony, and attended with lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail, Revelation 11:19. The view of the "temple," and the "ark," would naturally suggest a reference to the church, and would be an appropriate representation on the supposition that this vision related to the church. The attending circumstances of the lightnings, etc., were well suited to impress the mind with awe, and to leave the conviction that great and momentous events were about to be disclosed. I regard this verse, therefore, which should have been separated from the eleventh chapter and attached to the twelfth, as the introduction to a new series of visions, similar to what we have in the introduction of the previous series, Revelation 4:1. The vision was of the temple the symbol of the church - and it was "opened" so that John could see into its inmost part - even within the veil where the ark was - and could have a view of what most intimately pertained to it.

(2) arepresentation of the church, under the image of a woman about to give birth to a child, Revelation 12:1-2. A woman is seen, clothed, as it were, with the sun - emblem of majesty, truth, intelligence, and glory; she has the moon under her feet, as if she walked the heavens; she has on her head a glittering diadem of stars; she is about to become a mother. This seems to have been designed to represent the church as about to be increased, and as in that condition watched by a dragon - a mighty foe - ready to destroy its offspring, and thus compelled to flee into the wilderness for safety. Thus understood, the point of time referred to would be when the church was in a prosperous condition, and when it would be encountered by antichrist, represented here by the dragon, and compelled to flee into the wilderness; that is, the church for a time would be driven into obscurity, and be almost unknown. It is no uncommon thing, in the Scriptures, to compare the church with a beautiful woman. See the notes on Isaiah 1:8. The following remarks of Prof. Stuart (vol. 2:252), though he applies the subject in a manner very different from what I shall, seem to me accurately to express the general design of the symbol: "The daughter of Zion is a common personification of the church in the Old Testament; and in the writings of Paul, the same image is exhibited by the phrase, Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all; that is, of all Christians, Galatians 4:26. The main point before us is the illustration of that church, ancient or later, under

the image of a woman. If the Canticles are to have a spiritual sense given to them, it is plain enough, of course, how familiar such an idea was to the Jews. Whether the woman thus exhibited as a symbol be represented as bride or mother depends, of course, on the nature of the case, and the relations and exigencies of any particular passage."

(3) the dragon that stood ready to devour the child, Revelation 12:3-4. This represents some formidable enemy of the church, that was ready to persecute and destroy it. The real enemy here referred to is, undoubtedly, Satan, the great enemy of God and the church, but here it is Satan in the form of some fearful opponent of the church that would arise at a period when the church was prosperous, and when it was about to be enlarged. We are to look, therefore, for some fearful manifestation of this formidable power, having the characteristics here referred to, or some opposition to the church such as we may suppose Satan would originate, and by which the existence of the church might seem to be endangered.

(4) the fact that the child which the woman brought forth was caught up to heaven - symbolical of its real safety, and of its having the favor of God - a pledge that the ultimate prosperity of the church was certain, and that it was safe from real danger, Revelation 12:5.

(5) the fleeing of the woman into the wilderness, for the space of a thousand two hundred and threescore days, or 1260 years, Revelation 12:6. This act denotes the persecuted and obscure condition of the church during that time, and the period which would elapse before it would be delivered from this persecution, and restored to the place in the earth which it was designed to have.

(6) the war in heaven; a struggle between the mighty powers of heaven and the dragon, Revelation 12:7-9. Michael and his angels contend against the dragon, in behalf of the church, and finally prevail. The dragon is overcome, and is cast out, and all his angels with him; in other words, the great enemy of God and his church is overcome and subdued. This is evidently designed to be symbolical, and the meaning is, that a state of things would exist in regard to the church, which would be well represented by supposing that such a scene should occur in heaven; that is, as if a war

should exist there between the great enemy of God and the angels of light, and as if, being there vanquished, Satan should be cast down to the earth, and should there exert his malignant power in a warfare against the church. The general idea is, that his warfare would be primarily against heaven, as if he fought with the angels in the very presence of God, but that the form in which he would seem to prevail would be against the church, as if, being unsuccessful in his direct warfare against the angels of God, he was permitted, for a time, to enjoy the appearance of triumph in contending with the church.

(7) the shout of victory in view of the conquest, over the dragon, Revelation 12:10-12. A loud voice is heard in heaven, saying, that now the kingdom of God is come, and that the reign of God would be set up, for the dragon is cast down and overcome. The grand instrumentality in overcoming this foe was "the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony"; that is, the great doctrines of truth pertaining to the work of the Redeemer would be employed for this purpose, and it is proclaimed that the heavens and all that dwell therein had occasion to rejoice at the certainty that a victory would be ultimately obtained over this great enemy of God. Still, however, his influence was not wholly at an end, for he would yet rage for a brief period on the earth.

(8) the persecution of the woman, Revelation 12:13-15. She is constrained to fly, as on wings given her for that purpose, into the wilderness, where she is nourished for the time that the dragon is to exert his power - a "time, times, and half a time" - or for 1260 years. The dragon in rage pours out a flood of water, that he may cause her to be swept away by the flood: referring to the persecutions that would exist while the church was in the wilderness, and the efforts that would be made to destroy it entirely.

(9) the earth helps the woman, Revelation 12:16. That is, a state of things would exist as if, in such a case, the earth should open and swallow up the flood. The meaning is, that the church would not be swept away, but that there would be an interposition in its behalf, as if the earth should, in the case supposed, open its bosom, and swallow up the swelling waters.

(10) the dragon, still enraged, makes war with all that pertains to the woman, Revelation 12:17. Here we are told literally who are referred to by the "seed" of the woman. They are those who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" Revelation 12:17; that is, the true church.

The chapter, therefore, may be regarded as a general vision of the persecutions that would rage against the church. It seemed to be about to increase and to spread over the world. Satan, always opposed to it, strives to prevent its extension. The conflict is represented as if in heaven, where war is waged between the celestial beings and Satan, and where, being overcome, Satan is cast down to the earth, and permitted to wage the war there. The church is persecuted; becomes obscure and almost unknown, but still is mysteriously sustained; and when most in danger of being wholly swallowed up, is kept as if a miracle were performed in its defense. The detail - the particular form in which the war would be waged - is drawn out in the following chapters.

And the temple of God was opened in heaven - The temple of God at Jerusalem was a pattern of the heavenly one, or of heaven, Hebrews 8:1-5. In that temple God was supposed to reside by the visible symbol of his presence - the Shekinah - in the holy of holies. See the notes on Hebrews 9:7. Thus God dwells in heaven, as in a holy temple, of which that on earth was the emblem. When it is said that that was "opened in heaven," the meaning is, that John was permitted, as it were, to look into heaven, the abode of God, and to see him in his glory.

And there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament - See the notes on Hebrews 9:4. That is, the very interior of heaven was laid open, and John was permitted to witness what was transacted in its obscurest recesses, and what were its most hidden mysteries. It will be remembered, as an illustration of the correctness of this view of the meaning of the verse, and of its proper place in the divisions of the book - assigning it as the opening verse of a new series of visions that in the first series of visions we have a statement remarkably similar to this, Revelation 4:1; "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven"; that is, there was, as it were, an opening made into heaven, so that John was permitted to look in and see what was occurring there. The same idea is expressed substantially here, by saying that the very interior of the sacred temple where God

resides was "opened in heaven," so that John was permitted to look in and see what was transacted in his very presence. This, too, may go to confirm the idea suggested in the Analysis of the Book, part 5, that this portion of the Apocalypse refers rather to the internal affairs of the church, or the church itself - for of this the temple was the proper emblem. Then appropriately follows the series of visions describing, as in the former case, what was to occur in future times: this series referring to the internal affairs of the church, as the former did mainly to what would outwardly affect its form and condition.

And there were lightnings, … - Symbolic of the awful presence of God, and of his majesty and glory, as in the commencement of the first series of visions. See the notes on Revelation 4:5. The similarity of the symbols of the divine majesty in the two cases may also serve to confirm the supposition that this is the beginning of a new series of visions.

And an earthquake - Also a symbol of the divine majesty, and perhaps of the great convulsions that were to occur under this series of visions. Compare the notes on Revelation 6:12. Thus, in the sublime description of God in Psalm 18:7, "Then the earth shook and trembled, the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth." So in Exodus 19:18, "And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke - and the whole mount quaked greatly." Compare Amos 8:8-9; Joel 2:10.

And great hail - Also an emblem of the presence and majesty of God, perhaps with the accompanying idea that he would overwhelm and punish his enemies. So in Psalm 18:13, "The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice: hailstones and coals of fire." So also Job 38:22-23;

"Hast thou entered into the treasures of snow?
Or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail?
Which I have reserved against the time of trouble.
Against the day of battle and war?"

So in Psalm 105:32;

"He gave them hail for rain,
And flaming fire in their land."

Compare Psalm 78:48; Isaiah 30:30; Ezekiel 38:22.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 12

Verse 1

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven - In that heavenly world thus disclosed, in the very presence of God, he saw the impressive and remarkable symbol which he proceeds to describe. The word "wonder" - σημεῖον sēmeion- properly means something extraordinary, or miraculous, and is commonly rendered "sign." See Matthew 12:38-39; Matthew 16:1, Matthew 16:3-4; Matthew 24:3, Matthew 24:24, Matthew 24:30; Matthew 26:48; Mark 8:11-12; Mark 13:4, Mark 13:22; Mark 16:17, Mark 16:20; in all which, and in numerous other places in the New Testament, it is rendered "sign," and mostly in the sense of "miracle." When used in the sense of a miracle, it refers to the fact that the miracle is a sign or token by which the divine power or purpose is made known. Sometimes the word is used to denote "a sign of future things" - a portent or presage of coming events; that is, some remarkable appearances which foreshadow the future. Thus in Matthew 16:3; "signs of the times"; that is, the miraculous events which foreshadow the coming of the Messiah in his kingdom. So also in Matthew 24:3, Matthew 24:30; Mark 13:4; Luke 21:7, Luke 21:11. This seems to be the meaning here, that the woman who appeared in this remarkable manner was a portent or token of what was to occur.

A woman clothed with the sun - Bright, splendid, glorious, as if the sunbeams were her raiment. Compare Revelation 1:16; Revelation 10:1; see also Revelation 12:2. Is the splendor of the sunlight designed to denote the brightness of the gospel? Is the moon designed to represent the comparatively feeble light of the Jewish dispensation? Is the fact that she stood upon the moon, or that it was under her feet, designed to denote the superiority of the gospel to the Jewish dispensation? Such a supposition gives much beauty to the symbol, and is not foreign to the nature of symbolic language.

And upon her head a crown of twelve stars - A diadem in which there were placed twelve stars. That is, there were twelve sparkling gems in the crown which she wore. This would, of course, greatly increase the beauty of the vision; and there can be no doubt that the number twelve here is significant. If the woman here is designed to symbolize the church, then the number twelve has, in all probability, some allusion either to the twelve tribes of Israel as being a number which one who was born and educated as

a Jew would be likely to use (compare James 1:1), or to the twelve apostles - an allusion which, it may be supposed, an apostle would be more likely to make. Compare Matthew 19:28; Revelation 21:14.

Verse 2

And she being with child cried, travailing in birth … - That is, there would be something which would be properly represented by a woman in such circumstances.

The question now is, what is referred to by this woman? And here it need hardly be said that there has been, as in regard to almost every other part of the Book of Revelation, a great variety of interpretations. It would be endless to undertake to examine them, and would not be profitable if it could be done; and it is better, therefore, and more in accordance with the design of these notes, to state briefly what seems to me to be the true interpretation:

(1) The woman is evidently designed to symbolize the church; and in this there is a pretty general agreement among interpreters. The image, which is a beautiful one, was very familiar to the Jewish prophets. See the notes on Isaiah 1:8; Isaiah 47:1; compare Revelation 12:5 is supposed to refer to Christ, who "sprang from the church" - κατὰ σάρκα kata sarka- according to the flesh (Prof. Stuart, vol. 2, p. 252). The church, according to this view, is not simply regarded as Jewish, but, in a more general and theocratic sense, as "the people of God." "From the Christian church, considered as Christian, he could not spring; for this took its rise only after the time of his public ministry. But from the bosom of the "people of God" the Saviour came. This church Judaical indeed (at the time of his birth) in respect to rites and forms, but to become Christian after he had exercised his ministry in the midst of it, might well be represented here by the woman which is described in Revelation 21:2. "I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife," Revelation 21:9; compare Isaiah 54:5; Isaiah 61:10; Isaiah 62:5.

(b) If this interpretation be adopted, then this must refer to the Jewish church, and thus the woman will personify the Jewish community before the birth of Christ. But this seems contrary to the whole design of the Apocalypse, which has reference to the Christian church, and not to the ancient dispensation.

(c) If this interpretation be adopted, then the statement about the dwelling in the wilderness for a period of 1260 days or years Revelation 12:14 must be assigned to the Jewish community - a supposition every way improbable and untenable. In what sense could this be true? When did anything happen to the Jewish people that could, with any show of probability, be regarded as the fulfillment of this?

(d) It, may be added, that the statement about the "man child" Revelation 12:5 is one that can with difficulty be reconciled to this supposition. In what sense was this true, that the "man child" was "caught up unto God, and to his throne?" The Saviour, indeed, ascended to heaven, but it was not, as here represented, that he might be protected from the danger of being destroyed; and when he did ascend, it was not as a helpless and unprotected babe, but as a man in the full maturity of his powers. The other opinion is, that the woman here refers to the Christian church, and that the object is to represent that church as about to be enlarged - represented by the condition of the woman, Revelation 12:2. A beautiful woman appears, clothed with light - emblematic of the brightness and purity of the church; with the moon under her feet - the ancient and comparatively obscure dispensation now made subordinate and humble; with a glittering diadem of twelve stars on her head - the stars representing the usual well-known division of the people of God into twelve parts - as the stars in the American flag denote the original states of the Union; and in a condition Revelation 12:2 which showed that the church was to be increased.

The time there referred to is at the early period of the history of the church, when, as it were, it first appears on the theater of things, and going forth in its beauty and majesty over the earth. John sees this church, as it was about to spread in the world, exposed to a mighty and formidable enemy - a hateful dragon - stationing itself to prevent its increase, and to accomplish its destruction. From that impending danger it is protected in a manner that would he well represented by the saving of the child of the woman, and bearing it up to heaven, to a place of safety - an act implying that, notwithstanding all dangers, the progress and enlargement of the church was ultimately certain. In the meantime, the woman herself flees into the wilderness - an act representing the obscure, and humble, and

persecuted state of the church - until the great controversy is determined which is to have the ascendency - God or the Dragon. In favor of this interpretation, the following considerations may be suggested:

(a) It is the natural and obvious interpretation.

(b) If it be admitted that John meant to describe what occurred in the world at the time when the true church seemed to be about to extend itself over the earth, and when that prosperity was checked by the rise of the papal power, the symbol employed would be strikingly expressive and appropriate.

(c) It accords with the language elsewhere used in the Scriptures when referring to the increase of the church. "Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children," Isaiah 66:7-8. "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord," Isaiah 54:1. "The children which thou shalt have, after thou shalt have lost the other, shall say again in thy ears, The place is too strait for me; give place to me that I may dwell," Isaiah 49:20. The comparison of the church to a woman as the mother of children, is one that is very common in the Scriptures.

(d) The future destiny of the child and of the woman agrees with this supposition. The child is caught up to heaven, Revelation 12:5 - emblematic of the fact that God will protect the church, and not suffer its increase to be cut off and destroyed; and the woman is driven for 1260 years into the wilderness and nourished there, Revelation 12:14 - emblematic of the long period of obscurity and persecution in the true church, and yet of the fact that it would be protected and nourished. The design of the whole, therefore, I apprehend, is to represent the peril of the church at the time when it was about to be greatly enlarged, or in a season of prosperity, from the rise of a formidable enemy that would stand ready to destroy it. I regard this, therefore, as referring to the time of the rise of the papacy, when, but for that formidable, corrupting, and destructive power, it might have been hoped that the church would have spread all over the world. In regard to the

rise of that power, see all that I have to say, or can say, in the notes on Daniel 7:24-28.

Verse 3

And there appeared another wonder in heaven - Represented as in heaven. See the notes on Revelation 12:1. That is, he saw this as occurring at the time when the church was thus about to increase.

And behold a great red dragon - The word rendered "dragon" - δράκων drakōn- occurs, in the New Testament, only in the book of Revelation, where it is uniformly rendered as here - "dragon:" Revelation 12:3-4, Revelation 12:7, Revelation 12:9, Revelation 12:13, Revelation 12:16-17; Revelation 13:2, Revelation 13:4, Revelation 13:11; Revelation 16:13; Revelation 20:2. In all these places there is reference to the same thing. The word properly means "a large serpent"; and the allusion in the word commonly is to some serpent, perhaps such as the anaconda, that resides in a desert or wilderness. See a full account of the ideas that prevailed in ancient times respecting the dragon, in Bochart, Hieroz. lib. iii. cap. xiv., vol. ii. pp. 428-440. There was much that was fabulous respecting this monster, and many notions were attached to the dragon which did not exist in reality, and which were ascribed to it by the imagination at a time when natural history was little understood. The characteristics ascribed to the dragon, according to Bochart, are, that it was distinguished:

(a)for its vast size;

(b)that it had something like a beard or dew-lap;

(c)that it had three rows of teeth;

(d)that its color was black, red, yellow, or ashy;

(e)that it had a wide mouth;

(f)that in its breathing it not only drew in the air, but also birds that were flying over it; and,

(g)that its hiss was terrible.

Occasionally, also, feet and wings were attributed to the dragon, and sometimes a lofty crest. The dragon, according to Bochart, was supposed to

inhabit waste places and solitudes (compare the notes on Isaiah 13:22), and it became, therefore, an object of great terror. It is probable that the original of this was a huge serpent, and that all the other circumstances were added by the imagination. The prevailing ideas in regard to it, however, should be borne in mind, in order to see the force and propriety of the use of the word by John. Two special characteristics are stated by John in the general description of the dragon: one is, its red color; the other, that it was great. In regard to the former, as above mentioned, the dragon was supposed to be black, red, yellow, or ashy. See the authorities referred to in Bochart, ut sup., pp. 435,436. There was doubtless a reason why the one seen by John should be represented as red. As to the other characteristic - great - the idea is that it was a huge monster, and this would properly refer to some mighty, terrible power which would be properly symbolized by such a monster.

Having seven heads - It was not unusual to attribute many heads to monsters, especially to fabulous monsters, and these greatly increased the terror of the animal. "Thus Cerberus usually has three heads assigned to him; but Hesiod (Theog. 312) assigns him fifty, and Horace (*Ode* II. 13,34) one hundred. So the Hydra of the Lake Lerna, killed by Hercules, had fifty heads (Virgil, *Aen.* vi. 576); and in Kiddushim, fol. 29,2, rabbi Achse is said to have seen a demon like a dragon with seven heads" (Prof. Stuart, in loco). The seven heads would somehow denote power, or seats of power. Such a number of heads increase the terribleness, and, as it were, the vitality of the monster. What is here represented would be as terrible and formidable as such a monster; or such a monster would appropriately represent what was designed to be symbolized here. The number seven may be used here "as a perfect number," or merely to heighten the terror of the image; but it is more natural to suppose that there would be something in what is here represented which would lay the foundation for the use of this number. There would be something either in the origin of the power; or in the union of various powers now combined in the one represented by the dragon; or in the seat of the power, which this would properly symbolize. Compare the notes on Daniel 7:6.

And ten horns - Emblems of power, denoting that, in some respects, there were ten powers combined in this one. See the notes on Daniel 7:7-8, Daniel 7:20, Daniel 7:24. There can be little doubt that John had those passages of Daniel in his eye, and perhaps as little that the reference is to

the same thing. The meaning is, that, in some respects, there would be a tenfold origin or division of the power represented by the dragon.

And seven crowns upon his heads - Greek, "diadems." See the notes on Revelation 9:7. There is a reference here to some kingly power, and doubtless John had some kingdom or sovereignty in his eye that would be properly symbolized in this manner. The method in which these heads and horns were arranged on the dragon is not stated, and is not material. All that is necessary in the explanation is, that there was something in the power referred to that would be properly represented by the seven heads, and something by the ten horns.

In the application of this, it will be necessary to inquire what was properly symbolized by these representations, and to refer again to these particulars with this view:

(a) "The dragon." This is explained in Revelation 12:9 of this chapter: "And the great dragon was cast out that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world." So again, Revelation 20:2, "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil." Compare Bochart, Hieroz. ii. pp. 439,440. There can be no doubt, therefore, that the reference here is to Satan, considered as the enemy of God, and the enemy of the peace of man, and especially as giving origin and form to some mighty power that would threaten the existence of the church.

(b) "Great." This will well describe the power of Satan as originating the organizations that were engaged for so long a time in persecuting the church, and endeavoring to destroy it. It was a work of vast power, controlling kings and nations for ages, and could have been accomplished only by one to whom the appellation used here could be given.

(c) "Red." This, too, is an appellation properly applied here to the dragon, or Satan, considered as the enemy of the church, and as originating this persecuting power, either:

(1)because it well represents the bloody persecutions that would ensue, or.

(2)because this would be the favorite color by which this power would be manifest. Compare Revelation 17:3-4; Revelation 18:12, Revelation 18:16.

(d) "The seven heads." There was, doubtless, as above remarked, something significant in these heads, as referring to the power designed to be represented. On the supposition that this refers to Rome, or to the power of Satan as manifested by Roman persecution, there can be no difficulty in the application; and, indeed, it is such an image as the writer would naturally use on the supposition that it had such a designed reference. Rome was built, as is well known, on seven hills (compare the notes on Revelation 10:3), and was called the seven-hilled city (Septicollis), from having been originally built on seven hills, though subsequently three hills were added, making the whole number ten. See Eschenburg, *Manual of Classical Literature*, p. 1, section 53. Thus, Ovid:

"Sed quae de septem totum circumspicit orbem.
Montibus, imperii Romae Deumque locus."

Horace:

"Dis quibus septem placuere colles."

Propertius:

"Septem urbs alta jugis, toti quae praesidet orbi."

Tertullian: "I appeal to the citizens of Rome, the populace that dwell on the seven hills" (*Apol*. 35). And again, Jerome to Marcella, when urging her to quit Rome for Bethlehem: "Read what is said in the Apocalypse of the seven hills," etc. The situation of the city, if that was destined to he represented by the dragon, would naturally suggest the idea of the seven-headed monster. Compare the notes on Revelation 17:9; "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth," Compare Revelation 12:18.

(e) "The ten horns." These were emblems of power, denoting that in reference to that power there were, in some respects, ten sources. The same thing is referred to here which is in Daniel 7:7-8, Daniel 7:20, Daniel 7:24. See the notes on Daniel 7:24, where this subject is fully considered. The creature that John saw was indeed a monster, and we are not to expect entire congruity in the details. It is sufficient that the main idea is preserved, and that would be, if the reference was to Rome considered as the place where the energy of Satan, as opposed to God and the church, was centered.

(f) "The seven crowns." This would merely denote that kingly or royal authority was claimed.

The "general" interpretation which refers this vision to Rome may receive confirmation from the fact that the dragon was at one time the Roman standard, as is represented by the annexed engraving from Montfaucon. Ammianus Marcellinus (John 16:10) thus describes this standard: "The dragon was covered with purple cloth, and fastened to the end of a pike gilt and adorned with precious stones. It opened its wide throat, and the wind blew through it; and it hissed as if in a rage, with its tail floating in several folds through the air." He elsewhere often gives it the epithet of "purpureus" - purple-red: "purpureum signum draconis, etc." With this the description of Claudian well agrees also:

"Hi volucres tollent aquilas; hi picta draconum.
Colla levant: multumque tumet per nubila serpens,
Iratus stimulante noto, vivitque receptis.
Flatibus, et vario mentitur sibila flatu."

The dragon was first used as an ensign near the close of the second century of the Christian era, and it was not until the third century that its use had become common; and the reference here, according to this fact, would be to that period of the Roman power when this had become a common standard, and when the applicability of this image would be readily understood. It is simply Rome that is referred to - Rome, the great agent of accomplishing the purposes of Satan toward the church. The eagle was the common Roman ensign in the time of the republic, and in the earlier periods of the empire; but in later periods the dragon became also a standard as common and as well known as the eagle. "In the third century it had become almost as notorious among Roman ensigns as the eagle itself; and is in the fourth century noted by Prudentius, Vegetius, Chrysostom, Ammianus, etc.; in the fifth, by Claudian and others" (Elliott).

Verse 4

And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven - The word rendered "drew" - συρω surō- means to "draw, drag, haul." Prof. Stuart renders it "drew along"; and explains it as meaning that "the danger is represented as being in the upper region of the air, so that his tail may be supposed to interfere with and sweep down the stars, which, as viewed by the ancients, were all set in the visible expanse or welkin." So Daniel 8:10, speaking of the little horn, says that "it waxed great, even to the host of heaven, and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground." See the notes on that passage. The main idea here undoubtedly is that of

power, and the object of John is to show that the power of the dragon was as if it extended to the stars, and as if it dragged down a third part of them to the earth, or swept them away with its tail, leaving two-thirds unaffected.

A power that would sweep them all away would be universal; a power that would sweep away one-third only would represent a dominion of that extent only. The dragon is represented as floating in the air - a monster extended along the sky - and one-third of the whole expanse was subject to his control. Suppose, then, that the dragon here was designed to represent the Roman pagan power; suppose that it referred to that power about to engage in the work of persecution, and at a time when the church was about to be greatly enlarged, and to fill the world; suppose that it referred to a time when but one-third part of the Roman world was subject to pagan influence, and the remaining two-thirds were, for some cause, safe from this influence - all the conditions here referred to would be fulfilled. Now it so happens that at a time when the "dragon" had become a common standard in the Roman armies, and had in some measure superseded the eagle, a state of things did exist which well corresponds with this representation.

There were times under the emperors when, in a considerable part of the empire, after the establishment of Christianity, the church enjoyed protection, and the Christian religion was tolerated, while in other parts paganism still prevailed, and waged a bitter warfare with the church. "Twice, at least, before the Roman empire became, divided permanently into the two parts, the Eastern and the Western, there was a "tripartite" division of the empire. The first occurred 311 a.d., when it was divided between Constantine, Licinius, and Maximin; the other 337 a.d., on the death of Constantine, when it was divided between his three sons, Constantine, Constans, and Constantius." "In two-thirds of the empire, embracing its whole European and African territory, Christians enjoyed toleration; in the other, or Asiatic portion, they were still, after a brief and uncertain respite, exposed to persecution, in all its bitterness and cruelty as before" (Elliott). I do not deem it absolutely essential, however, in order to a fair exposition of this passage, that we should be able to refer to minute historical facts with names and dates. A sufficient fulfillment is found if there was a period when the church, bright, glorious, and prosperous, was apparently about to become greatly enlarged, but when the monstrous pagan power still held its sway over a considerable part of the world, exposing the

church to persecution. Even after the establishment of the church in the empire, and the favor shown to it by the Roman government, it was long before the pagan power ceased to rage, and before the church could be regarded as safe.

And the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child - To prevent the increase and spread of the church in the world.

Verse 5

And she brought forth a man child - Representing, according to the view above taken, the church in its increase and prosperity - as if a child were born that was to rule over all nations. See the notes on Revelation 12:2.

Who was to rule all nations - That is, according to this view, the church thus represented was destined to reign in all the earth, or all the earth was to become subject to its laws. Compare the notes on Daniel 7:13-14.

With a rod of iron - The language used here is derived from Psalm 2:9; "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron." The form of the expression here used, "who was to rule" - ὅς μέλλει ποιμαίνειν hos mellei poimainein- is derived from the Septuagint translation of the Psalm - ποιμανεῖς poimaineis- "thou shalt rule them"; to wit, as a shepherd does his flock. The reference is to such control as a shepherd employs in relation to his flock - protecting, guarding, and defending them, with the idea that the flock is under his care; and, on the supposition that this refers to the church, it means that it would yet have the ascendency or the dominion over the earth. The meaning in the phrase, "with a red of iron," is, that the dominion would be strong or irresistible - as an iron scepter is one that cannot be broken or resisted. The thoughts here expressed, therefore, are:

(a)that the church would become universal - or that the principles of truth and righteousness would prevail everywhere on the earth;

(b)that the ascendency of religion over the understandings and consciences of people would be irresistible - as firm as a government administered under a scepter of iron; yet,

(c)that it would be rather of a character of protection than of force or violence, like the sway which a shepherd wields over his flock.

I understand the "man child" here, therefore, to refer to the church in its increase under the Messiah, and the idea to be, that that church was, at the

time referred to, about to be enlarged, and that, though its increase was opposed, yet it was destined ultimately to assert a mild sway over all the world. The time here referred to would seem to be some period in the early history of the church when religion was likely to be rapidly propagated, and when it was opposed and retarded by violent persecution - perhaps the last of the persecutions under the pagan Roman empire.

And her child was caught up unto God - This is evidently a symbolical representation. Some event was to occur, or some divine interposition was to take place, as if the child thus born were caught up from the earth to save it from death, and was rendered secure by being in the presence of God, and near his throne. It cannot be supposed that anything like this would "literally" occur. Any divine interposition to protect the church in its increase, or to save it from being destroyed by the dragon - the fierce pagan power - would be properly represented by this. Why may we not suppose the reference to be to the time of Constantine, when the church came under his protection; when it was effectually and finally saved from pagan persecution; when it was rendered safe from the enemy that waited to destroy it? On the supposition that this refers to an increasing but endangered church, in whose defense a civil power was raised up, exalting Christianity to the throne, and protecting it from danger, this would be well represented by the child caught up to heaven.

This view may derive confirmation from some well-known facts in history. The old pagan power was concentrated in Maximin, who was emperor from the Nile to the Bosphorus, and who raged against the gospel and the church "with Satanic enmity." "Infuriate at the now imminent prospect of the Christian body attaining establishment in the empire, Maximin renewed the persecution against Christians within the limits of his own dominion; prohibiting their assemblies, and degrading, and even killing their bishops." Compare Gibbon, 1:325,326. The last struggle of pagan Rome to destroy the church by persecution, before the triumph of Constantine, and the public establishment of the Christian religion, might be well represented by the attempt of the dragon to destroy the child; and the safety of the church, and its complete deliverance from pagan persecution, by the symbol of a child caught up to heaven, and placed near the throne of God. The persecution under Maximin was the last struggle of paganism to retain the supremacy, and to crush Christianity in the empire. "Before the decisive battle," says Milner, "Maximin vowed to Jupiter that,

if victorious, he would abolish the Christian name. The contest between Yahweh and Jupiter was now at its height, and drawing to a crisis."

The result was the defeat and death of Maximin, and the termination of the efforts of paganism to destroy Christianity by force. Respecting this event, Mr. Gibbon remarks, "The defeat and death of Maximin soon delivered the church from the last and most implacable of her enemies," 1:326. Christianity was, after that, rendered safe from pagan persecution. Mr. Gibbon says, "The gratitude of the church has exalted the virtues of the generous patron who seated Christianity on the throne of the Roman world." If, however, it should be regarded as a forced and fanciful interpretation to suppose that the passage before us refers to this specific event, yet the general circumstances of the times would furnish a fulfillment of what is here said:

(a)The church would be well represented by the beautiful woman.

(b)The prospect of its increase and universal dominion would be well represented by the birth of the child.

(c)The furious opposing pagan power would be well represented by the dragon in its attempts to destroy the child.

(d)The safety of the church would be well represented by the symbol of the child caught up to God, and placed near his throne.

Verse 6

And the woman - The woman representing the church. See the notes at Revelation 12:1.

Fled - That is, she fled in the manner, and at the time, stated in Revelation 12:14. John here evidently anticipates, by a summary statement, what he relates more in detail in Revelation 12:14-17. He had referred Revelation 12:2-5 to what occurred to the child in its persecutions, and he here alludes, in general, to what befell the true church as compelled to flee into obscurity and safety. Having briefly referred to this, the writer Revelation 12:7-13 gives an account of the efforts of Satan consequent on the removal of the child to heaven.

Into the wilderness - On the meaning of the word "wilderness" in the New Testament, see the notes on Matthew 3:1. It means a desert place, a

place where there are few or no inhabitants; a place, therefore, where one might be concealed and unknown - remote from the habitations and the observations of people. This would well represent the fact, that the true church became for a time obscure and unknown - as if it had fled away from the habitations of people, and had retired to the solitude and loneliness of a desert. Yet even there Revelation 12:14, Revelation 12:16 it would be mysteriously nourished, though seemingly driven out into wastes and solitudes, and having its abode among the rocks and sands of a desert.

Where she hath a place prepared of God - A place where she might be safe, and might be kept alive. The meaning is, that during that time the true church, though obscure and almost unknown, would be the object of the divine protection and care - a beautiful representation of the church during the corruptions of the papacy and the darkness of the middle ages.

That they should feed her - That they should "nourish" or "sustain" her - τρέφωσιν trephōsin- to wit, as specified in Revelation 12:14, Revelation 12:16. Those who were to do this, represented by the word "they," are not particularly mentioned, and the simple idea is that she would be nourished during that time. That is, stripped of the figure, the church during that time would find true friends, and would be kept alive. It is hardly necessary to say that this has, in fact, occurred in the darkest periods of the history of the church.

A thousand two hundred and threescore days - That is, regarding these as prophetic days, in which a day denotes a year, twelve hundred and sixty years. The same period evidently is referred to in Revelation 12:14, in the words "for a time, and times, and half a time." And the same period is undoubtedly referred to in Daniel 7:25; "And they shall be given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of time." For a full consideration of the meaning of this language, and its application to the papacy, see the notes on Daniel 7:25. The full investigation there made of the meaning and application of the language renders its consideration here unnecessary. I regard it here, as I do there, as referring to the proper continuance of the papal power, during which the true church would remain in comparative obscurity, as if driven into a desert. Compare the notes on Revelation 11:2. The meaning here is, that during that period the true church would not become wholly extinct. It would have an existence upon the earth, but its final triumph would be reserved for the time when this

great enemy should be finally overthrown. Compare the notes on Revelation 12:14-17.

Verse 7

And there was war in heaven - There was a state of things existing in regard to the woman and the child - the church in the condition in which it would then be - which would be well represented by a war in heaven; that is, by a conflict between the powers of good and evil, of light and darkness. Of course it is not necessary to understand this literally, anymore than the other symbolical representations in the book. All that is meant is, that a vision passed before the mind of John as if there was a conflict, in regard to the church, between the angels in heaven and Satan. There is a vision of the persecuted church - of the woman fleeing into the desert - and the course of the narrative is here interrupted by going back Revelation 12:7-13 to describe the conflict which led to this result, and the fact that Satan, as it were cast out of heaven, and unable to achieve a victory there, was suffered to vent his malice against the church on earth. The seat of this warfare is said to be heaven. This language sometimes refers to heaven as it appears to us - the sky - the upper regions of the atmosphere, and some have supposed that that was the place of the contest. But the language in Revelation 11:19; Revelation 12:1 (see the notes on those places), would rather lead us to refer it to heaven considered as lying beyond the sky. This accords, too, with other representations in the Bible, where Satan is described as appearing before God, and among the sons of God. See the notes on Job 1:6. Of course this is not to be understood as a real transaction, but as a symbolical representation of the contest between good and evil - as if there was a war waged in heaven between Satan and the leader of the heavenly hosts.

Michael - There have been very various opinions as to who Michael is. Many Protestant interpreters have supposed that Christ is meant. The reasons usually alleged for this opinion, many of which are very fanciful, may be seen in Hengstenberg (Die Offenbarung des heiliges Johannes), 1:611-622. The reference to Michael here is probably derived from Daniel 10:13; Daniel 12:1. In those places he is represented as the guardian angel of the people of God; and it is in this sense, I apprehend, that the passage is to be understood here. There is no evidence in the name itself, or in the circumstances referred to, that Christ is intended; and if he had been, it is inconceivable why he was not referred to by his own name, or by some of

the usual appellations which John gives him. Michael, the archangel, is here represented as the guardian of the church, and as contending against Satan for its protection. Compare the notes on Daniel 10:13. This representation accords with the usual statements in the Bible respecting the interposition of the angels in behalf of the church (see the notes on Hebrews 1:14), and is one which cannot be proved to be unfounded. All the analogies which throw any light on the subject, as well as the uniform statements of the Bible, lead us to suppose that good beings of other worlds feel an interest in the welfare of the redeemed church below.

And his angels - The angels under him. Michael is represented as the archangel, and all the statements in the Bible suppose that the heavenly hosts are distributed into different ranks and orders. See the Jude 1:9 note; Ephesians 1:21 note. If Satan is permitted to make war against the church, there is no improbability in supposing that, in those higher regions where the war is carried on, and in those aspects of it which lie beyond the power and the knowledge of man, good angels should be employed to defeat his plans.

Fought - See the notes on Jude 1:9.

Against the dragon - Against Satan. See the notes at Revelation 12:3.

And the dragon fought and his angels - That is, the master-spirit - Satan, and those under him. See the notes on Matthew 4:1. Of the nature of this warfare nothing is definitely stated. Its whole sphere lies beyond mortal vision, and is carried on in a manner of which we can have little conception. What weapons Satan may use to destroy the church, and in what way his efforts may be counteracted by holy angels, are points on which we can have little knowledge. It is sufficient to know that the fact of such a struggle is not improbable, and that Satan is successfully resisted by the leader of the heavenly host.

Verse 8

And prevailed not - Satan and his angels failed in their purpose.

Neither was their place found any more in heaven - They were cast out, and were seen there no more. The idea is, that they were defeated and driven away, though for a time they were suffered to carry on the warfare elsewhere.

Verse 9

And the great dragon was cast out - See the notes on Revelation 12:3. That there may be an allusion in the language here to what actually

occurred in some far distant period of the past, when Satan was ejected from heaven, there can be no reason to doubt. Our Saviour seems to refer to such an event in the language which he uses when he says Luke 10:18, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven"; and Jude, perhaps Revelation 12:6, may refer to the same event. All that we know on the subject leads us to suppose that at some time there was a revolt among the angels, and that the rebellious part were cast out of heaven, for an allusion to this is not infrequent in the Scriptures. Still the event here referred to is a symbolical representation of what could occur at a later period, when the church would be about to spread and he triumphant, and when Satan would wage a deadly war against it. That opposition would be as if he made war on Michael the archangel, and the heavenly hosts, and his failure would be as great as if he were vanquished and cast out of heaven.

That old serpent - This doubtless refers to the serpent that deceived Eve (Genesis 3:1-11; Revelation 20:2; compare the notes on 2 Corinthians 11:3); and this passage may be adduced as a proof that the real tempter of Eve was the devil, who assumed the form of a serpent. The word "old" here refers to the fact that his appearance on earth was at an early stage of the world's history, and that he had long been employed in the work which is here attributed to him - that of opposing the church.

Called the devil - To whom the name devil is given. That is, this is the same being that is elsewhere and commonly known by that name. See the notes on Matthew 4:1.

And Satan - Another name given to the same being - a name, like the other, designed to refer to something in his character. See it explained in the notes on Job 1:6.

Which deceiveth the whole world - Whose character is that of a deceiver; whose agency extends over all the earth. See the John 8:44 note, and 1 John 5:19 note.

He was cast out into the earth - That is, he was not suffered to pursue his designs in heaven, but was cast down to the earth, where he is permitted for a time to carry on his warfare against the church. According to the interpretation proposed above, this refers to the period when there were indications that God was about to set up his kingdom on the earth. The language, however, is such as would be used on the supposition that there had been, at some period, a rebellion in heaven, and that Satan and his followers had been cast out to return there no more. It is difficult to explain

this language except on that supposition; and such a supposition is, in itself, no more improbable than the apostasy and rebellion of man.

And his angels were cast out with him - They shared the lot of their leader. As applicable to the state of things to which this refers, the meaning is, that all were overthrown; that no enemy of the church would remain unsubdued; that the victory would be final and complete. As applicable to the event from which the language is supposed to have been derived - the revolt in heaven - the meaning is, that the followers in the revolt shared the lot of the leader, and that all who rebelled were ejected from heaven. The first and the only revolt in heaven was quelled; and the result furnished to the universe an impressive proof that none who rebelled there would be forgiven - that apostasy so near the throne could not be pardoned.

Verse 10

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven - The great enemy was expelled; the cause of God and truth was triumphant; and the conquering hosts united in celebrating the victory. This representation of a song, consequent on victory, is in accordance with the usual representations in the Bible. See the song of Moses at the Red Sea, Isaiah 12:25. On no occasion could such a song be more appropriate than on the complete routing and discomfiture of Satan and his rebellious hosts. Viewed in reference to the time here symbolized, this would relate to the certain triumph of the church and of truth on the earth; in reference to the language, there is an allusion to the joy and triumph of the heavenly hosts when Satan and his apostate legions were expelled.

Now is come salvation - That is, complete deliverance from the power of Satan.

And strength - That is, now is the mighty power of God manifested in casting down and subduing the great enemy of the church.

And the kingdom of our God - The reign of our God. See the notes on Matthew 3:2. That is now established among people, and God will henceforward rule. This refers to the certain ultimate triumph of his cause in the world.

And the power of his Christ - His anointed; that is, the kingdom of Christ as the Messiah, or as anointed and set apart to rule over the world. See the notes on Matthew 1:1.

For the accuser of our brethren is cast down - The phrase "our brethren" shows by whom this song is celebrated. It is sung in heaven; but it

is by those who belonged to the redeemed church, and whose brethren were still suffering persecution and trial on the earth. It shows the tenderness of the tie which unites all the redeemed as brethren, whether on earth or in heaven; and it shows the interest which they "who have passed the flood" have in the trials, the sorrows, and the triumphs of those who are still upon the earth. We have here another appellation given to the great enemy - "accuser of the brethren." The word used here - κατήγορος katēgorosin later editions of the New Testament κατήγωρ katēgōr- means properly "an accuser," one who blames another, or charges another with crime. The word occurs in John 8:10; Acts 23:30, Acts 23:35; Acts 24:8; Acts 25:16, Acts 25:18; Revelation 12:10, in all which places it is rendered "accuser" or "accusers," though only in the latter place applied to Satan. The verb frequently occurs, Matthew 12:10; Matthew 27:12; Mark 3:2; Mark 15:3, et al.

The description of Satan as an accuser accords with the opinion of the ancient Hebrews in regard to his character. Thus he is represented in Job 1:9-11; Job 2:4-5; Zechariah 3:1-2; 1 Chronicles 21:1. The phrase "of the brethren" refers to Christians, or to the people of God; and the meaning here is, that one of the characteristics of Satan - a characteristic so well known as to make it proper to designate him by it - is that he is an accuser of the righteous; that he is employed in bringing against them charges affecting their character and destroying their influence. The propriety of this appellation cannot be doubted. It is, as it has always been, one of the characteristics of Satan - one of the means by which he keeps up his influence in the world - to bring accusations against the people of God. Thus, under his suggestions, and by his agents, they are charged with hypocrisy; with insincerity; with being influenced by bad motives; with pursuing sinister designs under the cloak of religion; with secret vices and crimes. Thus it was that the martyrs were accused; thus it is that unfounded accusations are often brought against ministers of the gospel, palsying their power and diminishing their influence, or that when a professed Christian falls the church is made to suffer by an effort to cast suspicion on all who bear the Christian name. Perhaps the most skillful thing that Satan does, and the thing by which he most contributes to diminish the influence of the church, is in thus causing "accusations" to be brought against the people of God.

Is cast down - The period here referred to was, doubtless, the time when the church was about to be established and to flourish in the world, and when accusations would be brought against Christians by various classes of calumniators and informers. It is well known that in the early ages of Christianity crimes of the most horrid nature were charged on Christians, and that it was by these slanders that the effort was made to prevent the extension of the Christian church.

Which accused them before our God - See the notes on Job 1:9-10. The meaning is, that he accused them, as it were, in the very presence of God.

Day and night - He never ceased bringing these accusations, and sought by the perseverance and constancy with which they were urged to convince the world that there was no sincerity in the church and no reality in religion.

Verse 11

And they overcame him - That is, he was foiled in his attempt thus to destroy the church. The reference here, undoubtedly, is primarily to the martyr age and to the martyr spirit; and the meaning is, that religion had not become extinct by these accusations, as Satan hoped it would be, but lived and triumphed. By their holy lives, by their faithful testimony, by their patient sufferings, they showed that all these accusations were false, and that the religion which they professed Was from God, and thus in fact gained a victory over their accuser. Instead of being themselves subdued, Satan himself was vanquished, and the world was constrained to acknowledge that the persecuted religion had a heavenly origin. No design was ever more ineffectual than that of crushing the church by persecution, no victory was ever more signal than what was gained when it could be said that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

By the blood of the Lamb - The Lord Jesus - the Lamb of God. See the notes at Revelation 5:6; compare the notes on John 1:29. The blood of Christ was that by which they were redeemed, and it was in virtue of the efficacy of the atonement that they were enabled to achieve the victory. Compare the notes on Philemon 4:13. Christ himself achieved a victory over Satan by his death (see the Colossians 2:15 note; Hebrews 2:15 note), and it is in virtue of the victory which he thus achieved that we are now able to triumph over our great foe.

"I ask them whence their victory came.

They, with united breath,

Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to his death."

And by the word of their testimony - The faithful testimony which they bore to the truth. That is, they adhered to the truth in their sufferings, they declared their belief in it, even in the pains of martyrdom; and it was by this that they overcame the great enemy - that is, by this that the belief in the gospel was established and maintained in the world. The reference here is to the effects of persecution and to the efforts of Satan to drive religion from the world by persecution. John says that the result as he saw it in vision was, that the persecuted church bore a faithful testimony to the truth, and that the great enemy was overcome.

And they loved not their lives unto the death - They did not so love their lives that they were unwilling to die as martyrs. They did not shrink back when threatened with death, but remained firm in their attachment to their Saviour, and left their dying testimony to the truth and power of religion. It was by these means that Christianity was established in the world, and John, in the scene before us, saw it thus triumphant, and saw the angels and the redeemed in heaven celebrating the triumph. The result of the attempts to destroy the Christian religion by persecution demonstrated that it was to triumph. No more mighty power could be employed to crush it than was employed by the Roman emperors; and when it was seen that Christianity could survive those efforts to crush it it was certain that it was destined to live forever.

Verse 12

Therefore rejoice, ye heavens - It is not unusual in the Scriptures to call on the heavens and the earth to sympathize with the events that occur. Compare the notes on Isaiah 1:2. Here the heavens are called on to rejoice because of the signal victory which it was seen would be achieved over the great enemy. Heaven itself was secure from any further rebellion or invasion, and the foundation was laid for a final victory over Satan everywhere.

And ye that dwell in them - The angels and the redeemed. This is an instance of the sympathy of the heavenly inhabitants - the unfallen and holy beings before the throne - with the church on earth, and with all that may affect its welfare. Compare the notes on 1 Peter 1:12.

Woe to the inhabiters of the earth - This is not an imprecation, or a wish that woe might come upon them, but a prediction that it would. The

meaning is this: Satan would ultimately be entirely overcome - a fact that was symbolized by his being cast out of heaven; but there would be still temporary war upon the earth, as if he were permitted to roam over the world for a time and to spread woe and sorrow there.

And of the sea - Those who inhabit the islands of the sea and those who are engaged in commerce. The meaning is, that the world as such would have occasion to mourn - the dwellers both on the land and on the sea.

For the devil is come down unto you - As if cast out of heaven.

Having great wrath - Wrath shown by the symbolical war with Michael and his angels Revelation 12:7; wrath increased and inflamed because he has been discomfited; wrath the more concentrated because he knows that his time is limited.

Because he knoweth that he hath but a short time - That is, he knows that the time is limited in which he will be permitted to wage war with the saints on the earth. There is allusion elsewhere to the fact that the time of Satan is limited, and that he is apprised of that. Thus in Matthew 8:29, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" See the notes on that passage. Within that limited space, Satan knows that he must do all that he ever can do to destroy souls, and to spread woe through the earth, and hence, it is not unnatural that he should be represented as excited to deeper wrath, and as rousing all his energy to destroy the church.

Verse 13

And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth - That is, when Satan saw that he was doomed to discomfiture and overthrow, as if he had been cast out of heaven; when he saw that his efforts must be confined to the earth, and that only for a limited time, he "persecuted the woman," and was more violently enraged against the church on earth.

He persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child - See the notes on Revelation 12:5. The child is represented as safe; that is, the ultimate progress and extension of the church was certain. But Satan was permitted still to wage a warfare against the church - represented here by his wrath against the woman, and by her being constrained to flee into the wilderness. It is unnecessary to say that, after the pagan persecutions ceased, and Christianity was firmly established in the empire; after Satan saw that all hope of destroying the church in that manner was at an end, his enmity was vented in another form - in the rise of the papacy, and in the

persecutions under that an opposition to spiritual religion no less determined and deadly than what had been waged by paganism.

Verse 14

And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle - The most powerful of birds, and among the most rapid in flight. See the notes on Revelation 4:7. The meaning here is, that the woman is represented as prepared for a rapid flight; so prepared as to be able to outstrip her pursuer, and to reach a place of safety. Divested of the figure, the sense is, that the church, when exposed to this form of persecution, would be protected as if miraculously supplied with wings.

That she might fly into the wilderness - There is here a more full description of what is briefly stated in Revelation 12:6. A wilderness or desert is often represented as a place of safety from pursuers. Thus David 1 Samuel 23:14-15 is represented as fleeing into the wilderness from the persecutions of Saul. So Elijah 1 Kings 19:4 fled into the wilderness from the persecutions of Jezebel. The simple idea here is, that the church, in the opposition which would come upon it, would find a refuge.

Into her place - A place appointed for her; that is, a place where she could be safe.

Where she is nourished - The word rendered here "nourished" is the same - τρέφω trephō- which occurs in Revelation 12:6, and which is there rendered "feed." It means to feed, nurse, or nourish, as the young of animals Matthew 6:26; Matthew 25:37; Luke 12:24; Acts 12:20; that is, to sustain by proper food. The meaning here is, that the church would be kept alive. It is not indeed mentioned by whom this would be done, but it is evidently implied that it would be by God. During this long period in which the church would be in obscurity, it would not be suffered to become extinct. Compare 1 Kings 17:3-6.

For a time, and times, and half a time - A year, two years, and half a year; that is, forty-two months (see the notes on Revelation 11:2); or, reckoning the month at thirty days, twelve hundred and sixty days; and regarding these as prophetic days, in which a day stands for a year, twelve hundred and sixty years. For a full discussion of the meaning of this language, see the notes on Daniel 7:25; and Editor's Pref. For the evidence, also, that the time thus specified refers to the papacy, and to the period of its continuance, see the notes on that place. The full consideration given to the subject there renders it unnecessary to discuss it here. For it is manifest that

there is an allusion here to the passage in Daniel; that the twelve hundred and sixty days refer to the same thing; and that the true explanation must be made in the same way. The main difficulty, as is remarked on the notes on that passage, is in determining the time when the papacy properly commenced.

If that could be ascertained with certainty, there would be no difficulty in determining when it would come to an end. But though there is considerable uncertainty as to the exact time when it arose, and though different opinions have been entertained on that point, yet it is true that all the periods assigned for the rise of that power lead to the conclusion that the time of its downfall cannot be remote. The meaning in the passage before us is, that during all the time of the continuance of that formidable, persecuting power, the true church would not in fact become extinct. It would be obscure and comparatively unknown, but it would still live. The fulfillment of this is found in the fact, that during all the time here referred to, there has been a true church on the earth. Pure, spiritual religion - the religion of the New Testament - has never been wholly extinct. In the history of the Waldenses, and Albigenses, the Bohemian brethren, and kindred people; in deserts and places of obscurity; among individuals and among small and persecuted sects; here and there in the cases of individuals in monasteries, the true religion has been kept up in the world, as in the days of Elijah God reserved seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal: and it is possible now for us, with a good degree of certainty, to show, even during the darkest ages, and when Rome seemed to have entirely the ascendency, where the true church was. To find out this, was the great design of the Ecclesiastical History of Milner; it has been done, also, with great learning and skill, by Neander.

From the face of the serpent - The dragon - or Satan represented by the dragon. See the notes at Revelation 12:3. The reference here is to the opposition which Satan makes to the true church under the persecutions and corruptions of the papacy.

Verse 15

And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood - This is special and uncommon imagery, and it is not necessary to suppose that anything like this literally occurs in nature. Some serpents are indeed said to eject from their mouths poisonous bile when they are enraged, in order to annoy their pursuers; and some sea monsters, it is known, spout forth large

quantities of water; but the representation here does not seem to be taken from either of those cases. It is the mere product of the imagination, but the sense is clear. The woman is represented as having wings, and as being able thus to escape from the serpent. But, as an expression of his wrath, and as if with the hope of destroying her in her flight by a deluge of water, he is represented as pouring a flood from his mouth, that he might, if possible, sweep her away. The figure here would well represent the continued malice of the papal body against the true church, in those dark ages when it was sunk in obscurity, and, as it were, driven out into the desert. That malice never slumbered, but was continually manifesting itself in some new form, as if it were the purpose of papal Rome to sweep it entirely away.

That he might cause her to be carried away of the flood - Might cause the church wholly to be destroyed. The truth taught is, that Satan leaves no effort untried to destroy the church.

Verse 16

And the earth helped the woman - The earth seemed to sympathize with the woman in her persecutions, and to interpose to save her. The meaning is, that a state of things would exist in regard to the church thus driven into obscurity, which would be well represented by what is here said to occur. It was cut off from human aid. It was still in danger; still persecuted. In this state it was nourished from some unseen source. It was enabled to avoid the direct attacks of the enemy, and when he attacked it in a new form, a new mode of intervention in its behalf was granted, as if the earth should open and swallow up a flood of water. We are not, therefore, to look for any literal fulfillment of this, as if the earth interposed in some marvelous way to aid the church. The sense is, that, in that state of obscurity and solitude, the divine interposition was manifested, in an unexpected manner, as if, when an impetuous stream was rolling along that threatened to sweep everything away, a chasm should suddenly open in the earth and absorb it. During the dark ages many such interventions occurred, saving the church from utter destruction. Overflowing waters are often in the Scriptures an emblem of mighty enemies. Psalm 124:2-5, "if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us; then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul." Psalm 18:16, "he sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters." Jeremiah 47:2, "behold,

waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land," etc. Compare Jeremiah 46:7-8, and notes on Isaiah 8:7-8.

And the earth opened her mouth - A chasm was made sufficient to absorb the waters. That is, John saw that the church was safe from this attack, and that, in order to preserve it, there was an interposition as marked and wonderful as if the earth should suddenly open and swallow up a mighty flood.

Verse 17

And the dragon was wroth with the woman - This wrath had been vented by his persecuting her Revelation 12:13; by his pursuing her; and by his pouring out the flood of water to sweep her away Revelation 12:15; and the same wrath was now vented against her children. As he could not reach and destroy the woman herself, he turned his indignation against all who were allied to her. Stripped of the imagery, the meaning is, that as he could not destroy the church as such, he vented his malice against all who were the friends of the church, and endeavored to destroy them. "The church, as such, he could not destroy; therefore he turned his wrath against individual Christians, to bring as many of them as possible to death" (DeWette).

And went to make war with the remnant of her seed - No mention is made before of his persecuting the children of the woman, except his opposition to the "man child" which she bore, Revelation 12:1-4. The "woman" represents the church, and the phrase "the remnant of her seed" must refer to her scattered children, that is, to the scattered members of the church, wherever they could be found. The reference here is to persecutions against individuals, rather than a general persecution against the church itself, and all that is here said would find an ample fulfillment in the vexations and troubles of individuals in the Roman communion in the dark ages, when they evinced the spirit of pure evangelical piety; in the cruelties practiced in the Inquisition on individual Christians under the plea that they were heretics; and in the persecutions of such men as Wycliffe, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague. This warfare against individual Christians was continued long in the papal church, and tens of thousands of true friends of the Saviour suffered every form of cruelty and wrong as the result.

Which keep the commandments of God - Who were true Christians. This phrase characterizes correctly those who, in the dark ages, were the friends of God, in the midst of abounding corruption.

And have the testimony of Jesus Christ - That is, they bore a faithful testimony to his truth, or were real martyrs. See Revelation 2:13.

The scene, then, in this chapter is this: John saw a most beautiful woman, suitably adorned, representing the church as about to he enlarged, and to become triumphant in the earth. Then he saw a great red monster, representing Satan, about to destroy the church: the pagan power, infuriated, and putting forth its utmost energy for its destruction. He then saw the child caught up into heaven, denoting that the church would be ultimately safe, and would reign over all the world. Another vision appears, It is that of a contest between Michael, the protecting angel of the people of God, and the great foe, in which victory declares in favor of the former, and Satan suffers a discomfiture, as if he were cast from heaven to earth. Still, however, he is permitted for a time to carry on a warfare against the church, though certain that he would be ultimately defeated. He puts forth his power, and manifests his hostility, in another form - that of the papacy - and commences a new opposition against the spiritual church of Christ. The church is, however, safe from that attempt to destroy it, for the woman is represented as fleeing to the wilderness beyond the power of the enemy, and is there kept alive. Still filled with rage, though incapable of destroying the true church itself, he turns his wrath, under the form of papal persecutions, against individual Christians, and endeavors to cut them off in detail.

This is the general representation in this chapter, and on the supposition that it was designed to represent the various forms of opposition which Satan would make to the church of Christ, under paganism and the papacy, it must be admitted, I think, that no more expressive or appropriate symbols could have been chosen. This fact should be allowed to have due influence in confirming the interpretation suggested above; and if it be admitted to be a correct interpretation, it is conclusive evidence of the inspiration of the book. Further details of this opposition of Satan to the church under the papal form of persecution are made in the subsequent chapters.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 13

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter Revelation 20:1-15. See the Analysis of the Book. The vision in this chapter is of two distinct "beasts," each with special characteristics, yet closely related, deriving their power from a common source; aiding each other in the accomplishment of the same object, and manifestly relating to the same power under different forms. To see the design of the chapter, it will be necessary to exhibit the special characteristics of the two "beasts," and the points in which they resemble each other, and sustain each other:

I. The Characteristics Of The Beasts

A. "The characteristics of the first beast," Revelation 13:1-10.

(a) It comes up out of the sea Revelation 13:1 - out of the commotion, the agitation of nations - a new power that springs up from those disturbed elements.

(b) It has seven heads and ten horns, and upon its horns ten crowns or diadems, Revelation 13:1.

(c) In its general form it resembles a leopard; its feet are like those of a bear; its mouth like that of a lion. Its connection with the great "dragon" - with Satan - is indicated by the statement that it derives its "power, and its seat, and its authority" from him Revelation 13:2 - a striking representation of the fact that the civil or secular Roman power which supported the church of Rome through all its corrupt and bloody progress was the putting forth of the power of Satan on the earth.

(d) One of the heads of this beast is "wounded to death" - that is, with a wound that is in itself mortal. This wound is, however, in some way as yet unexplained, so healed that the vitality yet remains, and all the world pays homage to the beast, Revelation 13:3. A blow is aimed at this authority which seems to be fatal; and there is some healing or restorative process by which its power is recovered, and by which the universality of its dominion and influence is again restored.

(e) The effect of this is, that the world renders homage really to the "dragon," the source of this power, though in the form of adoration of the "beast," Revelation 13:4. That is, while the outward homage is rendered to the "beast," the real worship is that of the "dragon," or Satan. This beast is regarded as:

(1)incomparable - "Who is like unto the ‹beast?‘" and

(2)invincible - "Who is able to war with him?"

(f) In this form the beast is endowed with a mouth that "speaks great things and blasphemies," Revelation 13:5 - that is, the power here referred - to is arrogant, and reviles the God of heaven.

(g) The time during which he is to continue is "forty and two months" - that is, twelve hundred and sixty days, or twelve hundred and sixty years. See the notes on Revelation 11:2.

(h) The characteristics of this beast, and of his dominion, are these:

(1)He opens his mouth in blasphemy against God, and his church, and all holy beings, Revelation 13:6.

(2)he makes war with the saints and overcomes them, Revelation 13:7.

(3)he asserts his power over all nations, Revelation 13:7.

(4)he is worshipped by all that dwell on the earth, whose names are not in the book of life, Revelation 13:8.

(i) All are called on to hear - as if the announcement were important for the church, Revelation 13:9.

(j) The result or issue of the power represented by this monster, Revelation 13:10. It had led others into captivity, it would itself be made captive; it had been distinguished for slaying others, it would itself feel the power of the sword. Until this is accomplished the patience and faith of the saints must be sorely tried, Revelation 13:10.

B. "The characteristics of the second beast," Revelation 13:11-18.

(a) It comes out of the earth Revelation 13:11 - having a different origin from the former; not springing from troubled elements, as of nations at strife, but from what is firm and established - like the solid earth.

(b) It has two horns like a lamb, but it speaks as a dragon Revelation 13:11. It is apparently mild, gentle, lamb-like, and inoffensive; but it is, in fact, arrogant, haughty, and imperative.

(c) Its dominion is coextensive with that of the first beast, and the effect of its influence is to induce the world to do homage to the first beast, Revelation 13:12.

(d) It has the power of performing great wonders, and particularly of deceiving the world by the "miracles" which it performs. This power is particularly manifested in restoring what might be regarded as an "image" of the beast which was wounded, though not put to death, and by giving life to that image, and causing those to be put to death who will not worship it, Revelation 13:13-15.

(e) This beast causes a certain mark to be affixed to all, small and great, and attempts a jurisdiction over all persons, so that none may buy or sell, or engage in any business, who have not the mark affixed to them - that is, the power represented attempts to set up a control over the commerce of the world, Revelation 13:16-17.

(f) The way by which the power here referred to may be known is by some proper application of the number 666. This is stated in an enigmatical form, and yet with such clearness that it is supposed that it would be sufficient to indicate the power here referred to.

II. Points In Which The Two Beasts Resemble Or Sustain Each Other

It is manifest, on the slightest inspection of the characteristics of the "beasts" referred to in this chapter, that they have a close relation to each other; that, in important respects, the one is designed to sustain the other, and that both are manifestations or embodiments of that one and the same power represented by the "dragon," Revelation 13:4. He is the great original source of power to both, and both are engaged in accomplishing his purposes, and are combined to keep up his dominion over the earth. The points of resemblance which it is very important to notice are the following:

(1) They have the same origin - that is, they both owe their power to the "dragon," and are designed to keep up his ascendency in human affairs,

Revelation 12:3; Revelation 13:2, Revelation 13:4, Revelation 13:12.

(2) they have the same extent of power and dominion.

First beast.

The world wonders after the beast, Revelation 13:3. They worship the dragon and the beast, Revelation 13:4; and all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, Revelation 13:8.

Second beast.

He exercises all the power of the first beast, Revelation 13:12. He causes the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, Revelation 13:12. He has power to give life unto the image of the beast Revelation 13:15. He sets up jurisdiction over the commerce of the world, Revelation 13:16-17.

(3) they do the same things.

First beast.

The dragon gives power to the beast, Revelation 13:4. There is given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, Revelation 13:5. He opens his mouth in blasphemy against God, Revelation 13:6. It is given him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them, Revelation 13:7.

Second beast.

He exercises all the power of the first beast, Revelation 13:12. He does great wonders, Revelation 13:13. He makes fire come down from heaven in the sight of men, Revelation 13:13. He performs miracles, Revelation 13:14. He causes that as many as would not worship the first beast should be killed, Revelation 13:15. He claims dominion over all, Revelation 13:16-17.

(4) the one is the means of healing the wounded head of the other, and of restoring its authority.

First beast.

One of his heads is, as it were, wounded to death: a wound that would be mortal if it were not healed, Revelation 13:3.

Second beast.

Has power to heal the wound of the first beast, Revelation 13:12; for it is manifest that the healing comes from some influence of the second beast.

(5) the one restores life to the other when dying.

First beast.

Is wounded, Revelation 13:3, and his power manifestly becomes exhausted.

Second beast.

Causes an "image" of the first beast - something that should resemble that, or be the same power revived, to be made, and to be worshipped, Revelation 13:15.

(6) They have the same general characteristics.

First beast.

Has a mouth given him to speak great things and blasphemies, Revelation 13:5; opens his mouth in blasphemy, Revelation 13:6; blasphemes the name of God, and his tabernacle, and his people, Revelation 13:6; makes war with the saints and overcomes them, Revelation 13:7.

Second beast.

Speaks like a dragon, Revelation 13:11; deceives those that dwell upon the earth, Revelation 13:14; is a persecuting power - causing those who would not worship the image of the first beast to be killed, Revelation 13:15.

From this comparison of the two beasts, the following things are plain:

(1)That the same general power is referred to, or that they are both modifications of one general dominion on the earth; having the same origin, having the same locality, and aiming at the same result.

(2)it is the same general domination prolonged - that is, the one is, in another form, but the continuation of the other.

(3)the one becomes weak, or is in some way likely to lose its authority and power, and is revived by the other - that is, the other restores its waning authority, and sets up substantially the same dominion again over the earth, and causes the same great power to be acknowledged on the earth.

(4)the one runs into the other; that is, one naturally produces, or is followed by the other.

(5)one sustains the other.

(6)they, therefore, have a very close relation to each other: having the same object; possessing the same general characteristics; and accomplishing substantially the same thing on the earth.

What this was, will be better seen after the exposition of the chapter shall have been made. It may be sufficient here to remark, that, on the very face of this the Roman power suggested to the mind, as a mighty persecuting power, in the two forms of the civil and ecclesiastical authority, both having the same origin; aiming at the same object; the one sustaining the other; and both combined to keep up the dominion of the great enemy of God and man upon the earth. It is impossible, also, not to be struck with the resemblance, in many particulars, between this vision and that of Daniel Daniel 7, and to be impressed with the conviction that they are intended to refer to the same kingdom in general, and to the same events. But this will be made more manifest in the exposition of the chapter.

Verse 1

And I stood upon the sand of the sea - The sand upon the shore of the sea. That is, he seemed to stand there, and then had a vision of a beast rising out of the waters. The reason of this representation may, perhaps, have been that among the ancients the sea was regarded as the appropriate place for the origin of huge and terrible monsters (Prof. Stuart, in loco). This vision strongly resembles that in Daniel 7:2 ff, where the prophet saw four beasts coming up in succession from the sea. See the notes on that place. In Daniel, the four winds of heaven are described as striving upon the great sea Daniel 13:2, and the agitated ocean represents the nations in commotion, or in a state of disorder and anarchy, and the four beasts represent four successive kingdoms that would spring up. See the notes on Daniel 7:2. In the passage before us, John indeed describes no storm or tempest; but the sea itself, as compared with the land (see the notes on Revelation 13:11), represents an agitated or unsettled state of things, and we should naturally. look for that in the rise of the power here referred to. If the reference be to the civil or secular Roman power that has always appeared in connection with the papacy, and that has always followed its designs, then it is true that it rose amidst the agitations of the world, and from a state of commotion that might well be represented by the restless ocean. The sea in either case naturally describes a nation or people, for this image is frequently so employed in the Scriptures. Compare, as above, Daniel 7:2, and Psalm 65:7; Jeremiah 51:42; Isaiah 60:5; Revelation 10:2. The natural idea, therefore, in this passage, would be that the power that was represented by the "beast" would spring up among the nations, when restless or unsettled, like the waves of the ocean.

And saw a beast - Daniel saw four in succession Daniel 7:3-7, all different, yet succeeding each other; John saw two in succession, yet strongly resembling each other, Revelation 13:1, Revelation 13:11. On the general meaning of the word "beast" - θηρίον thērion- see the notes on Revelation 11:7. The beast here is evidently a symbol of some power or kingdom that would arise in future times. See the notes on Daniel 7:3.

Having seven heads - So also the dragon is represented in Revelation 12:3. See the notes on that passage. The representation there is of Satan, as the source of all the power lodged in the two beasts that John subsequently saw. In Revelation 17:9, referring substantially to the same vision, it is said that "the seven heads are seven mountains"; and there can be no difficulty, therefore, in referring this to the seven hills on which the city of Rome was

built (compare the notes on Revelation 12:3), and consequently this must be regarded as designed, in some way, to be a representation of Rome.

And ten horns - See this also explained in the notes on Revelation 12:3; compare also the more extended illustration in the notes on Daniel 7:25, following The reference here is to Rome, or the one Roman power, contemplated as made up of ten subordinate kingdoms, and therefore subsequently to the invasion of the Northern hordes, and to the time when the papacy was about to rise. Compare Revelation 17:12; "And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings (marg. "kingdoms"), which have received no kingdom as yet, but receive power as kings with the beast." For a full illustration of this, see the copious notes at the close of the seventh chapter of Daniel.

And upon his horns ten crowns - Greek, "ten diadems." See the notes on Revelation 12:3. These indicated dominion or authority. In Revelation 12:3, the "dragon is represented as having seven diadems on his head"; here, the beast is represented as having ten. The dragon there represents the Roman domination, as such, the seven-hilled, or seven-headed power, and, therefore, properly described as having seven diadems; the beast here represents the Roman power, as now broken up into the ten dominations which sprung up (see the notes on Daniel as above) from the one original Roman power, and that became henceforward the supporters of the papacy, and, therefore, properly represented here as having ten diadems.

And upon his heads the name of blasphemy - That is, the whole power was blasphemous in its claims and pretensions. The word "blasphemy" here seems to be used in the sense that titles and attributes were claimed by it which belonged only to God. On the meaning of the word "blasphemy," see the notes on Matthew 9:3; Matthew 26:65. The meaning here is, that each one of these heads appeared to have a frontlet, with an inscription that was blasphemous, or that ascribed some attribute to this power that properly belonged to God; and that the whole power thus assumed was in derogation of the attributes and claims of God. In regard to the propriety of this description considered as applicable to the papacy, see the notes on 2 Thessalonians 2:4.

Verse 2

And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard - For a description of the leopard, see the notes on Daniel 7:6. It is distinguished for bloodthirstiness and cruelty, and thus becomes an emblem of a fierce,

tyrannical power. In its general character it resembles a lion and the lion and the leopard are often referred to together. In this description, it is observable that John has combined in one animal or monster, all those which Daniel brought successively on the scene of action as representing different empires. Thus in Daniel 7:2-7 the lion is introduced as the symbol of the Babylonian power; the bear, as the symbol of the Medo-Persian; the leopard, as the symbol of the Macedonian; and a nondescript animal, fierce, cruel, and mighty, with two horns as the symbol of the Roman. See the notes on that passage. In John there is one animal representing the Roman power, as if it were made up of all these: a leopard with the feet of a bear, and the mouth of a lion, with two horns, and with the general description of a fierce monster. There was an obvious propriety in this, in speaking of the Roman power, for it was, in fact, made up of the empires represented by the other symbols in Daniel, and "combined in itself all the elements of the terrible and the oppressive, which had existed in the aggregate in the other great empires that preceded it." At the same time there was an obvious propriety in the symbol itself; for the bloodthirstiness and cruelty of the leopard would well represent the ferocity and cruelty of the Roman power, especially as John saw it here as the great antagonistic power of the true church, sustaining the papal claim, and thirsting for blood.

And his feet were as the feet of a bear - See the notes on Daniel 7:5. The idea here seems to be that of strength, as the strength of the bear resides much in its feet and claws. At the same time, there is the idea of a combination of fierce qualities - as if the bloodthirstiness, the cruelty, and the agility of the leopard were united with the strength of the bear.

And his mouth as the mouth of a lion - See the notes on Daniel 7:4. The month of the lion is made to seize and hold its prey, and is indicative of the character of the animal as a beast of prey. John has thus brought together the qualities of activity, bloodthirstiness, strength, ferocity, all as symbolical of the power that was intended to be represented. It is hardly necessary to say that this description is one that would apply well, in all respects, to Rome; nor is it necessary to say, that if it be supposed that he meant to refer to Rome, this is such a description as he would have adopted.

And the dragon - See the notes on Revelation 12:3.

Gave him his power - Satan claimed, in the time of the Saviour, all power over the kingdoms of the world, and asserted that he could give them to whomsoever he pleased. See the notes on Matthew 4:8-9. How far the

power of Satan in this respect may extend, it may not be possible to determine; but it cannot be doubted that the Roman power seemed to have such an origin, and that in the main it was such as, on that supposition, it would be. In its arrogance and haughtiness - in its thirst for dominion - in its persecutions - it had such characteristics as we may suppose Satan would originate. If, therefore, as the whole connection leads us to suppose, this refers to the Roman secular power, considered as the support of the papacy, there is the most evident propriety in the representation.

And his seat - θρόνον throononHence, our word "throne." The word properly means a seat; then a high seat; then a throne, as that on which a king sits. Here it refers to this power as exercising dominion on the earth.

And great authority - The authority was great. It extended over a large part of the earth, and, alike in its extent and character, it was such as we may suppose Satan would set up in the world.

Verse 3

And I saw one of his heads, as it were wounded to death - The phrase "wounded to death" means properly that it received a mortal wound, that is, the wound would have been mortal if it had not been healed. A blow was struck that would be naturally fatal, but there was something that prevented the fatal result. John does not say, however, by whom the wound was inflicted, nor does he describe further the nature of the wound. He says that "one of the heads" - that is, one of the seven heads - was thus wounded. In Revelation 17:9, he says that "the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth." In Revelation 17:10, he says, "there are seven kings." And this would lead us to suppose that there were "seven" administrations, or forms of dominion, or dynasties, that were presented to the eye of John; and that while the number "seven," as applied to the "heads," so far identified the power as to fix its location on the seven "hills" Revelation 17:9, in another respect also the number "seven" suggested forms of administration of dynasties, Revelation 17:10. What is meant by saying that one of these heads was wounded to death has been among the most perplexing of all the inquiries pertaining to the Book of Revelation. The use of the word "seven," and the explanation in Revelation 17:9, make it morally certain that Rome, in some form of its administration, is referred to. Of this there can be no doubt, and in this all are agreed. It is not, however, the papal power as such that is here referred to; for:

(a)the papal power is designated under the image of the second beast;

(b)the descriptions pertaining to the first beast are all applicable to a secular power and,

(c)there was no form of the papal spiritual dominion which would properly correspond with what is said in Revelation 17:10.

The reference in this place is, therefore, to Rome considered as a civil or secular power, yet Rome regarded as giving support to the second beast - the papal power. The general idea here is, that a state of things would exist in regard to that power, at the time referred to, as if one of the seven heads of the monster should receive a wound which would be fatal, if it were not healed in some way. That is, its power would be weakened; its dominion would be curtailed, and that portion of its power would have come to an end, if there had not been something which would, as it were, restore it, and save it from the wrath that was impending. The great point of difficulty relates to the particular application of this; to the facts in history that would correspond with the symbol.

On this there have been almost as many opinions as there have been interpreters of the Apocalypse, and there is no impropriety in saying that none of the solutions are wholly free from objection. The main difficulty, so far as the interpretation proposed above is concerned, is, in the fact that "one" of the seven heads is referred to as wounded unto death; as if one-seventh part of the power was endangered. I confess I am not able wholly to solve this difficulty; but, after all, is it certain that the meaning is that just one-seventh part of the power was in peril; that the blow affected just such a portion that it might be described as the one-seventh part? Is not the number seven so used in the Scriptures as to denote a considerable portion - a portion quite material and important? And may not all that is intended here be, that John saw a wound inflicted on that mighty power which would have been fatal if it had not been marvelously healed? And was it not true that the Roman civil and secular power was so waning and decaying, that it might properly be represented as if one of the seven heads of the monster had received a fatal wound, until its power was restored by the influence of the spiritual domination of the church of Rome? If this be the correct exposition, then what is implied here may be thus stated:

(a)The general subject of the representation is the Roman power, as seen at first in its vigor and strength;

(b)then that power is said to be greatly weakened, as if one of its heads were smitten with a deadly wound;

(c)then the wound was healed - this power was restored - by being brought into alliance with the papacy; that is, the whole Roman power over the world would have died away, if it had not been restored and perpetuated by means of this new and mighty influence, Revelation 13:12.

Under this new form, Rome had all the power which it had ever had, and was guilty of all the atrocities of which it had ever been guilty: it was Rome still. Every wound that was inflicted on that power by the incursion of barbarians, and by the dividing off of parts of the empire, was healed by the papacy, and under this form its dominion became as wide and as formidable as under its ancient mode of administration. If a more particular application of this is sought for, I see no reason to doubt that it may be found in the quite common interpretation of the passage given by Protestants, that the reference is to the forms of administration under which this power appeared in the world. The number of distinct forms of government which the Roman power assumed from first to last was the following: kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs, military tribunes, emperors. These seven forms of administration were, at least, sufficiently prominent and marked to be represented by this symbol, or to attract the attention of one contemplating this formidable power - for it was under these forms that its conquests had been achieved, and its dominion set up over the earth. In the time of John, and the time contemplated in this vision, all these had passed away but the imperial. That, too, was soon to be smitten with a deadly wound by the invasion of the Northern hordes; and that would have wholly and forever ceased if it had not been restored - the deadly wound being healed - by the influence of the papal power, giving Rome its former ascendency. See the notes at the close of Revelation 13:15.

And his deadly wound was healed - That is, as explained above, the waning Roman secular power was restored by its connection with the spiritual power - the papacy. This was:

(a)asimple matter of fact, that the waning secular power of Rome was thus restored by connecting itself with the spiritual or ecclesiastical power, thus prolonging what might properly be called the Roman domination far beyond what it would otherwise have been; and,

(b)this would be properly represented by just the symbol employed here - the fatal wound inflicted on the head, and the healing of that wound, or preventing what would naturally be the effects. On the fulfillment of this, see the notes on Revelation 13:15, at the close.

And all the world wondered after the beast - The word used here - θαυμαζω thaumazō- means, properly, to be astonished; to be amazed; then to wonder at; then to admire and follow (Robinson, Lexicon). In Revelation 13:4, it is said that the world "worshipped" the beast; and the general idea is, that the beast received such universal reverence, or inspired such universal awe, as to be properly called worship or adoration. There can be no doubt of the propriety of this, considered as applicable to that secular Roman power which sustained the papacy. The homage was as wide as the limits of the Roman empire had ever been, and might be said to embrace "all the world."

Verse 4

And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast - See the notes at Revelation 12:3; Revelation 13:2. That is, they in fact worshipped him. The word "worship" - προσκυνέω proskuneō- is not always, however, used in a religious sense. It means, properly, "to kiss"; to kiss toward anyone; that is, to kiss his own hand and to extend it toward a person, in token of respect and homage (Robinson, Lexicon). Compare Job 31:27. Then it means to show respect to one who is our superior; to kings and princes; to parents; and pre-eminently to God. See the notes on Matthew 2:2. The word may be used here to mean that homage or reverence, as to a higher power, was rendered to the "dragon"; not strictly that he was openly worshipped in a religious sense as God. Can anyone doubt that this was the case under papal Rome; that the power which was set up under that entire domination, civil and ecclesiastical, was such as Satan approved, and such as he sought to have established on the earth? And can anyone doubt that the homage thus rendered, so contrary to the law of God, and so much in derogation of his claims, was in fact homage rendered to this presiding spirit of evil?

And they worshipped the beast - That is, they did it, as is immediately specified, by saying that he was "incomparable" and "invincible"; in other words, that he was superior to all others, and that he was almighty. For the fulfillment of this, see the notes on 2 Thessalonians 2:4.

Who is like unto the beast? - That is, he is to be regarded as unequalled and as supreme. This was, in fact, ascribing honors to him which belonged only to God; and this was the manner in which that civil and secular power was regarded in the period here supposed to be referred to. It was the policy of rulers and princes in those times to augment in every way possible the respect in which they were held; to maintain that they were the vicegerents of heaven; to claim for themselves sacredness of character and of person; and to secure from the people a degree of reverence which was in fact idolatrous. Never was this more marked than in the times when the papacy had the ascendency, for it was its policy to promote reverence for the power that sustained itself, and to secure for itself the idolatrous veneration of the people.

Who is able to make war with him? - That is, he is invincible. They thus attributed to him omnipotence - an attribute belonging only to God. This found a fulfillment in the honor shown to the civil authority which sustained the papacy; for the policy was to impress the public mind with the belief that that power was invincible. In fact, it was so regarded. Nothing was able to resist that absolute despotism; and the authority of princes and rulers that were allied with the papal rule was of the most absolute kind, and the subjugation of the world was complete. There was no civil, as there was no religious liberty; and the whole arrangement was so ordered as to subdue the world to an absolute and uncontrollable power.

Verse 5

And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things - John does not say by whom this was given; but we may suppose that it was by the "dragon," who is said Revelation 13:2 to have given him his power, and seat, and authority. The fulfillment of this is found in the claims set up by the princes and rulers here referred to - that mighty secular power that sustained the papacy, and that was, in some sort, a part of the papacy itself. These arrogant claims consisted in the assertion of a divine right; in the power assumed over the liberty, the property, and the consciences of the people; in the arbitrary commands that were issued; and in the right asserted of giving absolute law. The language used here is the same as what is found in Daniel 7:8 when speaking of the "little horn:" "In this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." For an illustration of the meaning of this, see the notes on that passage. Compare notes on Daniel 7:25.

And blasphemies - That is, the whole power represented by the "beast" will be blasphemous. See the notes on Revelation 13:1. Compare the notes on Daniel 7:25.

And power was given unto him to continue forty and two months - Three years and a half, reckoned as months; or twelve hundred and sixty days, reckoning thirty days for a month; or twelve hundred and sixty years, regarding the days as prophetic days. For the evidence that this is to be so regarded, see the notes on Daniel 7:25. This is the same period that we meet with in chap. Revelation 11:2, and in chap. Revelation 12:6. See the notes on those places. This fact proves that the same power is referred to in these places and in Daniel; and this fact may be regarded as a confirmation of the views here taken, that the power here referred to is designed to have a connection in some form with the papacy. The duration of the existence of this power is the same as what is everywhere ascribed to the papacy, in the passages which refer to it; and all the circumstances, as before remarked, show that the same general power is referred to by the two "beasts" which are described in this chapter. If so, the continuance or duration may be supposed to be the same; and this is indicated in the passage before us, where it is said that it would be twelve hundred and sixty years. In regard to the application of this to the papal power, and the manner in which the calculation is to be made of the duration of that power, see the notes on Daniel 7:25, and the remarks at the end of that chapter. The meaning in the passage before us I take to be, that the papal power, considered as a civil or secular institution, will have, from the time when that properly commenced, a duration of twelve hundred and sixty years. In the Scriptures there is nothing more definite in regard to any future event than this.

Verse 6

And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name - By his own arrogant claims; by his assumed authority in matters of conscience; by setting aside the divine authority; and by impious declarations in derogation of the divine claims. See the notes on Revelation 13:1.

And his tabernacle - Literally, his "tent" - σκηνὴν skēnēnThis is the word which is commonly applied to the sacred tent or tabernacle among the Hebrews, in which the ark was kept, and which was the seat of the Jewish worship before the building of the temple. It is thus used to denote a place of worship, considered as the dwelling-place of God, and is in this sense

applied to heaven, Hebrews 8:2; Hebrews 9:11; Revelation 15:5. It seems to be used here in a general sense to denote the place where God was worshipped; and the meaning is, that there would be a course of conduct in regard to the true church - the dwelling-place of God on the earth - which could properly be regarded as blasphemy. Let anyone remember the anathemas and excommunications uttered against the Waldenses and Albigenses, and those of kindred spirit that appeared in the long period of the papal rule, and he will find no difficulty in perceiving a complete fulfillment of all that is here said.

And them that dwell in heaven - The true worshippers; the members of the true church, represented as dwelling in this holy tabernacle. No one acquainted with the reproaches cast on the devoted and sincere followers of the Saviour during the dark periods of the papal rule can fail to see that there was in that a complete fulfillment of all that is here predicted.

Verse 7

And it was given unto him - By the same power that taught him to blaspheme God and his church. See the notes on Revelation 13:2, Revelation 13:5.

To make war with the saints - See this fully illustrated in the notes on the parallel passage in Daniel 7:21, and at the end of that chapter, (f).

And to overcome them - In those wars. This was abundantly fulfilled in the wars with the Waldenses, the Albigenses, and the other sincere followers of the Saviour in the time of the papal persecutions. The language used here is the same as what is found in Daniel 7:21; "The same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them." See the notes on that passage.

And power was given him - See the notes on Revelation 13:2.

Over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations - For the meaning of these words see the notes on Revelation 7:9. The meaning here is, that this dominion was set up over the world. Compare Daniel 7:25. The fact that so large a portion of the kingdoms of the earth was under the influence of the papacy, and sustained it, and the claim which it set up to universal dominion, and to the right of deposing kings and giving away kingdoms, corresponds entirely with the language used here.

Verse 8

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him - That is, as immediately stated, all whose names are not in the book of life. On the word "worship," see the notes on Revelation 13:4.

Whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb - That is, of the Lord Jesus - the Lamb of God. See the notes on Philemon 4:3. Compare the notes on John 1:29. The representation here is, that the Lord Jesus keeps a book or register, in which are recorded the names of all who shall obtain everlasting life.

Slain from the foundation of the world - See the notes on Revelation 5:6. Compare the notes on Revelation 3:5. The meaning here is, not that he was actually put to death "from the foundation of the world," but that the intention to give him for a sacrifice was formed then, and that it was so certain that it might be spoken of as actually then occurring. See Romans 4:17. The purpose was so certain, it was so constantly represented by bloody sacrifices from the earliest ages, all typifying the future Saviour, that it might be said that he was "slain from the foundation of the world." Prof. Stuart, however (Com. in loco), supposes that this phrase should be connected with the former member of the sentence, "whose names are not written, from the foundation of the world, in the life-book of the Lamb, which was slain." Either construction makes good sense; but it seems to me that what is found in our common version is the most simple and natural.

Verse 9

If any man have an ear, let him hear - See the notes on Revelation 2:7. The idea here is, that what was here said respecting the "beast" was worthy of special attention, as it pertained to most important events in the history of the church.

Verse 10

He that leadeth into captivity - This is clearly intended to refer to the power or government which is denoted by the beast. The form of expression here in the Greek is special - "If anyone leadeth into captivity," etc. - Εἴ τις αἰχμαλωσίαν συνάγει Ei tis aichmalōsian sunageiThe statement is general, and is intended to make use of a general or prevalent truth with reference to this particular case. The general truth is, that people will, in the course of things, be dealt with according to their character and their treatment of others; that nations characterized by war and conquests will be subject to the evils of war and conquest - or that they may expect to share the same lot which they have brought on others. This general statement accords with what the Saviour says in Matthew 26:52; "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." This has been abundantly illustrated in the world; and it is a very important admonition to nations not to indulge in the

purposes of conquest and to individuals not to engage in strife and litigation. The particular idea here is, that it would be a characteristic of the power here referred to that it would "lead others into captivity." This would be fulfilled if it was the characteristic of this power to invade other countries and to make their inhabitants prisoners of war; if it made slaves of other people; if it set up an unjust dominion over other people; or if it was distinguished for persecuting and imprisoning the innocent, or for depriving the nations of liberty. It is unnecessary to say that this is strikingly descriptive of Rome, considered in any and every point of view, whether under the republic or the empire, whether secular or ecclesiastical, whether pagan or papal. In the following forms there has been a complete fulfillment under that mighty power of what is here said:

(a)In the desire of conquest or of extending its dominion, and, of course, leading others captive as prisoners of war or subjecting them to slavery.

(b)In its persecutions of true Christians, alike pursued under the pagan and the papal form of the administration.

(c)Especially in the imprisonments practiced under the Inquisition, where tens of thousands have been reduced to the worst kind of captivity. In every way this description is applicable to Rome, as seeking to lead the world captive or to subject it to its own absolute sway.

Shall go into captivity - As a just recompense for subjecting others to bondage, and as an illustration of a general principle of the divine administration. This is yet, in a great measure, to be fulfilled; and, as I understand it, it discloses the manner in which the papal secular power will come to an end. It will be by being subdued, so that it might seem to be made captive and led off by some victorious host. Rome now is practically held in subjection by foreign arms, and has no true independence; perhaps this will be more and more so as its ultimate fall approaches.

He that killeth with the sword - See the notes as above, on Matthew 26:52. There can be no doubt that this is applicable to Rome in all the forms of its administration considered as a pagan power; or considered as a nominally Christian power, either with reference to its secular or its spiritual dominion. Compute the numbers of human beings that have been put to death by that Roman power, and no better language could have been chosen to characterize it than what is used here - "killed with the sword." Compare the notes on Daniel 7:24-28, II. (3), (g).

Must be killed with the sword - This domination must be brought to an end by war and slaughter. Nothing is more probable than this in itself; nothing could be more in accordance with the principles of the divine dealings in the world. Such a power as that of Rome will not be likely to be overcome but by the force of arms; and the probability is that it will ultimately be overthrown in a bloody revolution, or by foreign conquest. Indeed, there are not a few intimations now that this result is hastening on. Italy is becoming impatient of the secular power swayed in connection with the papacy, and sighs for freedom; and it is every way probable that that land would have been free, and that the secular power of the papacy, if not every form of the papacy itself, would have come to an end in the late convulsion (1848), if it had not been for the intervention of France and Austria. The period designated by prophecy for the final overthrow of that power had not arrived; but nothing can secure its continuance for any very considerable period longer.

Here is the patience and the faith of the saints - That is, the trial of their patience and of their faith. Nowhere on earth have the patience and the faith of the saints been put to a severer test than under the Roman persecutions. The same idea occurs in Revelation 14:12.

Verse 11

And I beheld another beast - Compare the notes on Revelation 13:1. This was so distinct from the first that its characteristics could be described, though, as shown in the Analysis of the Chapter, there was in many points a strong resemblance between them. The relations between the two will be more fully indicated in the notes.

Coming up out of the earth - Prof. Stuart renders this, "ascending from the land." The former was represented as rising up out of the sea Revelation 13:1; indicating that the power was to rise from a perturbed or unsettled state of affairs - like the ocean. This, from what was more settled and stable - as the land is more firm than the waters. It may not be necessary to carry out this image; but the natural idea, as applied to the two forths of the Roman power supposed to be here referred to, would be that the former - the secular power that sustained the papacy - rose out of the agitated state of the nations in the invasions of the northern hordes, and the convulsions and revolutions of the falling empire of Rome; and that the latter, the spiritual power itself - represented by the beast coming up from the land - grew up under the more settled and stable order of things. It was comparatively calm

in its origin, and had less the appearance of a frightful monster rising up from the agitated ocean. Compare the notes on Revelation 13:1.

And he had two horns like a lamb - In some respects he resembled a lamb; that is, he seemed to be a mild, gentle, inoffensive animal. It is hardly necessary to say that this is a most striking representation of the actual manner in which the power of the papacy has always been put forth - putting on the apparent gentleness of the lamb; or laying claim to great meekness and humility, even when deposing kings, and giving away crowns, and driving thousands to the stake, or throwing them into the dungeons of the Inquisition.

And he spake as a dragon - See the notes on Revelation 12:3. The meaning here is, that he spoke in a harsh, haughty, proud, arrogant tone - as we should suppose a dragon would if he had the power of utterance. The general sense is, that while this "beast" had, in one respect in its resemblance to a lamb - the appearance of great gentleness, meekness, and kindness, it had, in another respect, a haughty, imperious, and arrogant spirit. How appropriate this is, as a symbol, to represent the papacy, considered as a spiritual power, it is unnecessary to say. It will be admitted, whatever may be thought of the design of this symbol, that if it was in fact intended to refer to the papacy, a more appropriate one could not have been chosen.

Verse 12

And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him - The same amount of power; the same kind of power. This shows a remarkable relationship between these two beasts; and proves that it was intended to refer to the same power substantially, though manifested in a different form. In the fulfillment of this, we should naturally look for some government whose authority extended far, and which was absolute and arrogant in its character, for this is the power attributed to the first beast. See the notes on Revelation 13:2-4, Revelation 13:7-8. This description had a remarkable fulfillment in the papacy, considered as a spiritual dominion. The relation to the secular power is the same as would be indicated by these two beasts; the dominion was as widespread; the authority was as absolute and arrogant. In fact, on these points they have been identical. The one has sustained the other; either one would long since have fallen if it had not been upheld by the other. The papacy, considered as a spiritual domination, was in fact a new power starting up in the same place as the old Roman dominion, to

give life to that as it was tending to decay, and to continue its ascendency over the world. These two things, the secular and the spiritual power, constituting the papacy in the proper sense of the term, are in fact but the continuance or the prolongation of the old Roman dominion - the fourth kingdom of Daniel - united so as to constitute in reality but one kingdom, and yet so distinct in their origin, and in their manifestations, as to be capable of separate contemplation and description, and thus properly represented by the two "beasts" that were shown in vision to John.

And causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast - That is, to respect, to reverence, to honor. The word "worship" here refers to civil respect, and not to religious adoration. See the notes on Revelation 13:4. The meaning here, according to the interpretation proposed all along in this chapter, is, that the papacy, considered in its religious influence, or as a spiritual power - represented by the second beast - secured for the civil or secular power - represented by the first beast - the homage of the world. It was the means of keeping up that dominion, and of giving it its ascendency among the nations of the earth. The truth of this, as an historical fact, is well known. The Roman civil power would have long ago lost all its influence and been unknown, if it had not been for the papacy; and, in fact, all the influence which it has had since the irruption of the northern barbarians, and the changes which their invasion produced, can be traced to that new power which arose in the form of the papacy - represented in Daniel Daniel 7:8 by the "little horn." That new power gave life and energy to the declining influence of Rome, and brought the world again to respect and honor its authority.

Whose deadly wound was healed - See the notes on Revelation 13:3. That is, was healed by the influence of this new power represented by the second beast. A state of things occurred, on the rise of that new power, as if a wound in the head, otherwise fatal, was healed. The striking applicability of this to the decaying Roman power - smitten as with a deadly wound by the blows inflicted by the northern hordes, and by internal dissensions - will occur to every one. It was as if a healing process had been imparted by some life-giving power, and, as a consequence, the Roman dominion - the prolongation of Daniel's fourth kingdom - has continued to the present time. Other kingdoms passed away - the Assyrian, the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Macedonian; Rome alone, of all the ancient empires, has prolonged its power over men. In all changes elsewhere, an influence has

gone forth from the seven-hilled city as wide and as fearful as it was in the brightest days of the republic, the triumvirate, or the empire, and a large part of the world still listens reverently to the mandates which issue from the seat which so long gave law to mankind. The fact that it is so is to be traced solely to the influence of that power represented here by the second beast that appeared in vision to John - the papacy.

Verse 13

And he doeth great wonders - "Signs" - σημεῖα sēmeia- the word commonly employed to denote "miracles" (compare the notes on Acts 2:19); and the representation here is, that the power referred to by the second beast would found its claim on pretended miracles, and would accomplish an effect on the world as if it actually did work miracles. The applicability of this to papal Rome no one can doubt. See the notes on 2 Thessalonians 2:9. Compare Revelation 13:14.

That he maketh five come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men - That is, he pretends this; he accomplishes an effect as if he did it. It is not necessary to suppose that he actually did this, anymore than it is to suppose that he actually performed the other pretended miracles referred to in other places. John describes him as he saw him in the vision; and he saw him laying claim to this power, and actually producing an effect as if by a miracle he actually made fire to descend from heaven upon the earth. This is to be understood as included in what the apostle Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:9) calls "signs and lying wonders," as among the things by which the "man of sin and the son of perdition" would be characterized, and by which he would be sustained. See the notes on that passage. Why this particular pretended miracle is specified here is not certain. It may be because this would be among the most striking and impressive of the pretended miracles performed - as if lying beyond all human power - as Elijah made fire come down from heaven to consume the sacrifice 1 Kings 18:37-38, and as the apostles proposed to do on the Samaritans Luke 9:54, as if fire were called down on them from heaven. The phrase "in the sight of men" implies that this would be done publicly, and is such language as would be used of pretended miracles designed for purposes of ostentation. Amidst the multitudes of pretended miracles of the papacy, it would probably not be difficult to find instances in which the very thing here described was attempted, in which various devices of pyrotechnics were shown off as miracles. For an illustration of the wonders produced in the

dark ages in reference to fire, having all the appearance of miracles, and regarded as miracles by the masses of people, the reader is referred to Dr. Brewster‘s Letters on Natural Magic, particularly Letter 12.

Verse 14

And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles - Nothing could possibly be more descriptive of the papacy than this. It has been kept up by deception and delusion, and its pretended miracles have been, and are to this day, the means by which this is done. Anyone in the slightest degree acquainted with the pretended miracles practiced at Rome, will see the propriety of this description as applied to the papacy. The main fact here stated, that the papacy would endeavor to sustain itself by pretended miracles, is confirmed by an incidental remark of Mr. Gibbon, when speaking of the pontificate of Gregory the Great; he says: “The credulity or the prudence of Gregory was always disposed to confirm the truths of religion by the evidence of ghosts, miracles, and resurrections” (Decline and Fall, 3:210). Even within a month of the time that I am writing (October 5,1850), intelligence has been received in this country of extraordinary privileges conferred on some city in Italy, because the eyes of a picture of the Virgin in that city have miraculously moved - greatly to the “confirmation of the faithful.”

Such things are constantly occurring; and it is by these that the supremacy of the papacy has been and is sustained. The Breviary teems with examples of miracles performed by the saints. For instance: Francis Xavier turned a sufficient quantity of salt water into fresh to save the lives of five hundred travelers who were dying of thirst, enough being left to allow a large exportation to different parts of the world, where it performed astonishing cures. Raymond de Pennafort laid his cloak on the sea, and sailed from Majorca to Barcelona, a distance of a hundred and sixty miles, in six hours. Juliana lay on her death-bed; her stomach rejected all solid food, and in consequence she was prevented from receiving the eucharist. In compliance with her earnest solicitations, the consecrated wafer was laid on her breast; the priest prayed; the wafer vanished, and Juliana expired. Many pages might be filled with accounts of modern miracles of the most ridiculous description, yet believed by Roman Catholics - the undoubted means by which papal Rome “deceives the world,” and keeps up its ascendency in this age. See Forsyth‘s Italy, ii. pp. 154-157; Rome in the

Nineteenth Century, i. p. 40,86, ii. p. 356,3, pp. 193-201; Lady Morgan‘s Italy, ii. p. 306, iii. p. 189; Graham‘s Three Months‘ Residence, etc., p. 241.

Saying to them that dwell on the earth - That is, as far as its influence would extend. This implies that there would be authority, and that this authority would be exercised to secure this object.

That they should make an image to the beast - That is, something that would represent the beast, and that might be an object of worship. The word rendered “image” - εἰκών eikōn- means properly:

(a)an image, effigy, figure, as an idol, image, or figure;

(b)alikeness, resemblance, similitude.

Here the meaning would seem to be that, in order to secure the acknowledgment of the beast, and the homage to be rendered to him, there was something like a statue made, or that John saw in vision such a representation - that is, that a state of things existed as if such a statue were made, and people were constrained to acknowledge this. All that is stated here would be fulfilled if the old Roman civil power should become to a large extent dead, or cease to exert its influence over people, and if then the papal spiritual power should cause a form of domination to exist strongly resembling the former in its general character and extent, and if it should secure this result - that the world would acknowledge its sway or render it homage as it did to the old Roman government. This would receive its fulfillment if it be supposed that the first “beast” represented the ancient Roman civil power as such; that this died away - as if the head had received a fatal wound; that it was again revived under the influence of the papacy; and that, under that influence, a civil government, strongly resembling the old Roman dominion, was caused to exist, depending for its vital energy on the papacy, and, in its turn, lending its aid to support the papacy.

All this in fact occurred in the decline of the Roman power after the time of Constantine, and its final apparent extinction, as if “wounded to death,” in the exile of the last of the emperors, the son of Orestes, who assumed the names of Romulus and Augustus, names which were corrupted, the former by the Greeks into Momyllus, and the latter by the Latins “into the contemptible diminutive Augustulus.” See Gibbon 2:381. Under him the empire ceased, until it was revived in the days of Charlemagne. In the empire which then sprung up, and which owed much of its influence to the sustaining aid of the papacy, we discern the “image” of the former Roman power; the prolongation of the Roman ascendency

over the world. On the exile of the feeble son of Orestes (476 a.d.), the government passed into the hands of Odoacer, "the first barbarian who reigned in Italy" (Gibbon); and then the authority was divided among the sovereignties which sprang up after the conquests of the barbarians, until the "empire" was again restored in the time and the person of Charlemagne. See Gibbon, iii. 344ff.

Which had the wound by a sword, and did live - Which had a wound that was naturally fatal. but whose fatal consequences were prevented by the intervention of another power. See the notes on Revelation 13:3. That is, according to the explanation given above, the Roman imperial power was "wounded with a fatal wound" by the invasions of the northern hordes - the sword of the conquerors. Its power, however, was restored by the papacy, giving life to what resembled essentially the Roman civil jurisdiction - the "image" of the former beast; and that power, thus restored, asserted its dominion again, as the prolonged Roman dominion - the fourth kingdom of Daniel (see the notes on Daniel 7:19 ff) - over the world.

Verse 15

And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast - That is, that image of the beast would be naturally powerless, or would have no life in itself. The second beast, however, had power to impart life to it, so that it would be invested with authority, and would exercise that authority in the manner specified. If this refers, as is supposed, to the Roman civil power - the power of the empire restored - it would find a fulfillment in some act of the papacy by which the empire that resembled in the extent of its jurisdiction, and in its general character, the former Roman empire, received some vivifying impulse, or was invested with new power. That is, it would have power conferred on it through the papacy which it would not have in itself, and which would confirm its jurisdiction. How far events actually occurred corresponding with this, will be considered in the notes at the close of this verse.

That the image of the beast should both speak - Should give signs of life; should issue authoritative commands. The speaking here referred to pertains to what is immediately specified, in issuing a command that they who "would not worship the image of the beast should be killed."

And cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast - Would not honor it, or acknowledge its authority. The "worship" here referred to is civil, not religious homage. See the notes on Revelation 13:4.

The meaning is, that what is here called the “image of the beast” had power given it, by its connection with the second “beast,” to set up its jurisdiction over people, and to secure their allegiance on pain of death. The power by which this was done was derived from the second beast; the obedience and homage demanded was of the most entire and submissive character; the nature of the government was in a high degree arbitrary; and the penalty enforced for refusing this homage was death. The facts that we are to look for in the fulfillment of this are:

(1)that the Roman imperial power was about to expire - as if wounded to death by the sword;

(2)that this was revived in the form of what is here called the “image of the beast” - that is, in a form closely resembling the former power;

(3)that this was done by the agency of the papal power, represented by the second beast;

(4)that the effect of this was to set up over people a wide-extended secular jurisdiction, of a most arbitrary and absolute kind, where the penalty of disobedience to its laws was death, and where the infliction of this was, in fact, to be traced to the influence of the second beast - that is, the papal spiritual power.

The question now is, whether facts occurred that corresponded with this emblematic representation. Now, as to the leading fact, the decline of the Roman imperial power - the fatal wound inflicted on that by the “sword” - there can be no doubt. In the time of “Augustulus,” as above stated, it had become practically extinct - “wounded as it were to death,” and so wounded that it would never have been revived again had it not been for some foreign influence. It is true also, that, when the papacy arose, the necessity was felt of allying itself with some wide extended civil or secular dominion, that might be under its own control, and that would maintain its spiritual authority. It is true, also, that the empire was revived - the very “image” or copy, so far as it could be, of the former Roman power, in the time of Charlemagne, and that the power which was wielded in what was called the “empire,” was what was, in a great measure, derived from the papacy, and was designed to sustain the papacy, and was actually employed for that purpose. These are the main facts, I suppose, which are here referred to, and a few extracts from Mr. Gibbon will show with what propriety and accuracy

the symbols here employed were used, on the supposition that this was the designed reference:

(a) The rise, or restoration of this imperial power in the time and the person of Charlemagne. Mr. Gibbon says (3:342), "It was after the Nicene synod, and under the reign of the pious Irene, that the popes consummated the separation of Rome and Italy (from the Eastern empire) by the translation of the empire to the less orthodox Charlemagne. They were compelled to choose between the rival nations; religion was not the sole motive of their choice; and while they dissembled the failings of their friends, they beheld with reluctance and suspicion the Catholic virtues of their foes. The difference of language and manners had perpetuated the enmity of the two capitals (Rome and Constantinople); and they were alienated from each other by the hostile opposition of seventy years. In that schism the Romans had tasted of freedom, and the popes of sovereignty; their submission would have exposed them to the revenge of a jealous tyrant, and the revolution of Italy had betrayed the impotence as well as the tyranny of the Byzantine court."

Mr. Gibbon then proceeds to state reasons why Charlemagne was selected as the one who was to be placed at the head of the revived imperial power, and then adds (p. 343), "The title of patrician was below the merit and greatness of Charlemagne; and it was only by reviving the "Western empire" that they could pay their obligations, or secure their establishment. By this decisive measure they would finally eradicate the claims of the Greeks; from the debasement of a provincial town the majesty of Rome would be restored; the Latin Christians would be united, under a supreme head, in their ancient metropolis; "and the conquerors of the West would receive their crown from the successors of Peter. The Roman church would acquire a zealous and respectable advocate"; and under the shadow of the Carlovingian power, the bishop might exercise, with honor and safety, the government of the city." All this seems as if it were a designed commentary on such expressions as these: "And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed," "saying to them that dwell on the earth that they should make an image to the beast which had the wound by a sword, and did live; and he had power to give life unto the image of the beast," etc.

(b) Its extent. It is said Revelation 13:12, "And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." Compare Revelation 13:14-15. That is, the extent of the jurisdiction of the revived power, or the restored empire, would be as great as it was before the wound was inflicted. Of the extent of the restored empire under Charlemagne, Mr. Gibbon has given a full account, iii. pp. 546-549. The passage is too long to be copied here in full, and a summary of it only can be given. He says, "The empire was not unworthy of its title; and some of the fairest kingdoms of Europe were the patrimony or conquest of a prince who reigned at the same time in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Hungary.

I. The Roman province of Gaul had been transformed into the name and monarchy of France, etc.

II. The Saracens had been expelled from France by the grandfather and father of Charlemagne, but they still possessed the greatest part of Spain, from the rock of Gibraltar to the Pyrenees. Amidst their civil divisions, an Arabian emir of Saragossa implored his protection in the diet of Paderborn. Charlemagne undertook the expedition, restored the emir, and, without distinction of faith, impartially crushed the resistance of the Christians, and rewarded the obedience and service of the Muslims. In his absence he instituted the Spanish March, which extended from the Pyrenees to the river Ebro: Barcelona was the residence of the French governor; he possessed the counties of Rousillon and Catalonia; and the infant kingdoms of Navarre and Aragon were subject to his jurisdiction.

III. As king of the Lombards, and patrician of Rome, he reigned over the greatest part of Italy, a tract of a thousand miles from the Alps to the borders of Calabria, etc.

IV. Charlemagne was the first who united Germany under the same scepter, etc.

V. He retaliated on the Avars, or Huns of Pannonia, the same calamities which they had inflicted on the nations: the royal residence of the Chagan

was left desolate and unknown; and the treasures, the rapine of two hundred and fifty years, enriched the victorious troops, or decorated the churches of Italy and Gaul." "If we retrace the outlines of the geographical picture," continues Mr. Gibbon, "it will be seen that the empire of the Franks extended, between east and west, from the Ebro to the Elbe or Vistula; between the north and south, from the duchy of Beneventum to the river Eyder, the perpetual boundary of Germany and Denmark. Two-thirds of the Western empire of Rome were subject to Charlemagne, and the deficiency was amply supplied by his command of the inaccessible or invincible nations of Germany."

(c) The dependence of this civil or revived secular power on the papacy. "His deadly wound was healed." "And caused the earth to worship the first beast." "Saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast." "He had power to give life unto the image of the beast." Thus Mr. Gibbon (3:343) says, "From the debasement of a provincial town, the majesty of Rome would be restored; the Latin Christians would be united, under a supreme head, in their ancient metropolis; and the conquerors of the West would receive their crown from the successors of Peter." And again (3:344) he says, "On the festival of Christmas, the last year of the eighth century, Charlemagne appeared in the church of Peter; and, to gratify the vanity of Rome, he had exchanged the simple dress of his country for the habit of a patrician. After the celebration of the holy mysteries, Leo suddenly placed a precious crown on his head, and the dome resounded with the acclamations of the people, ‹Long life and victory to Charles, the most pious Augustus, crowned by God the great and pacific emperor of the Romans!' The head and body of Charlemagne were consecrated by the royal unction; his coronation oath represents a promise to maintain the faith and privileges of the church; and the first-fruits are paid in rich offerings to the shrine of the apostle. In his familiar conversation the emperor protested his ignorance of the intentions of Leo, which he would have disappointed by his absence on that memorable day.

But the preparations of the ceremony must have disclosed the secret; and the journey of Charlemagne reveals his knowledge and expectation; he had acknowledged that the imperial title was the object of his ambition, and a Roman senate had pronounced that it was the only adequate reward of his

merit and services." So again (3:350), Mr. Gibbon, speaking of the conquests of Otho (962 a.d.), and of his victorious march over the Alps, and his subjugation of Italy, says, "From that memorable era, two maxims of public jurisprudence were introduced by force and ratified by time:

I. That the prince who was elected in the German diet, acquired from that instant the subject kingdoms of Italy and Rome.

II. But that he might not legally assume the titles of emperor and Augustus, until he had received the crown from the hands of the Roman Pontiff." In connection with these quotations from Mr. Gibbon, we may add, from Sigonius, the oath which the emperor took on the occasion of his coronation: "I, the Emperor, do engage and promise, in the name of Christ, before God and the blessed apostle Peter, that I will be a protector and defender of this holy church of Rome, in all things wherein I can be useful to it, so far as divine assistance shall enable me, and so far as my knowledge and power can reach" (quoted by Prof. Bush, Hieroph. Nov. 1842, p. 141). We learn, also, from the biographers of Charlemagne that a commemorative coin was struck at Rome under his reign, bearing this inscription: "Renovatio Imperil Romani" - "Revival of the Roman Empire" (Ibid.). These quotations, whose authority will not be questioned, and whose authors will not be suspected of having had any design to illustrate these passages in the Apocalypse, will serve to confirm what is said in the notes of the decline and restoration of the Roman secular power; of its dependence on the papacy to give it life and vigor; and of the fact that it was designed to sustain the papacy, and to perpetuate the power of Rome. It needs only to be added, that down to the time of Charles the Fifth - the period of the Reformation-nothing was more remarkable in history than the readiness of this restored secular power to sustain the papacy and to carry out its designs; or than the readiness of the papacy to sustain an absolute civil despotism, and to make the world subject to it by suppressing all attempts in favor of civil liberty.

Verse 16

And he caused all - He claims jurisdiction, in the matters here referred to, over all classes of persons, and compels them to do his will. This is the

second beast, and, according to the interpretation given above, it relates to the papal power, and to its claim of universal jurisdiction.

Both small and great - All these expressions are designed to denote universality - referring to various divisions into which the human family may be regarded as divided. One of those divisions is into "small and great"; that is, into young and old; those small in stature and those large in stature; those of humble, and those of elevated rank.

Rich and poor - Another way of dividing the human race, and denoting here, as in the former case, all - for it is a common method, in speaking of mankind, to describe them as "the rich and poor."

Free and bond - Another method still of dividing the human race, embracing all - for all the dwellers upon the earth are either free or bond. These various forms of expression, therefore, are designed merely to denote, in an emphatic manner, universality. The idea is, that, in the matter referred to, none were exempt, either on account of their exalted rank, or on account of their humble condition; either because they were so mighty as to be beyond control, or so mean and humble as to be beneath notice. And if this refers to the papacy, every one will see the propriety of the description. The jurisdiction set up by that power has been as absolute over kings as over the feeble and the poor; over masters and their slaves; alike over those in the humblest and in the most elevated walks of life.

To receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads - The word here rendered "mark" - χάραγμα charagma- occurs only in one place in the New Testament except in the Book of Revelation Acts 17:29, where it is rendered "graven." In all the other places where it is found Revelation 13:16-17; Revelation 14:9, Revelation 14:11; Revelation 15:2; Revelation 16:2; Revelation 19:20; Revelation 20:4, it is rendered "mark," and is applied to the same thing - the "mark of the beast." The word properly means "something graven or sculptured"; hence:

(a)agraving, sculpture, sculptured work, as images or idols;

(b)amark cut in or stamped - as the stamp on a coin.

Applied to people, it was used to denote some stamp or mark on the hand or elsewhere - as in the case of a servant on whose hand or arm the name of the master was impressed; or of a soldier on whom some mark was impressed denoting the company or phalanx to which he belonged. It was no uncommon thing to mark slaves or soldiers in this way; and the design

was either to denote their ownership or rank, or to prevent their escaping so as not to be detected.

Most of us have seen such marks made on the hands or arms of sailors, in which, by a voluntary tattooing, their names, or the names of their vessels, were written, or the figure of an anchor, or some other device, was indelibly made by punctures in the skin, and by inserting some kind of coloring matter. The thing which it is here said was engraven on the hand or the forehead was the "name" of the beast, or the "number" of his name, Revelation 13:17. That is, the "name" or the "number" was so indelibly inscribed either on the hand or the forehead, as to show that he who bare it pertained to the "beast," and was subject to his authority - as a slave is to his master, or a soldier to his commander. Applied to the papacy, the meaning is, that there would be some mark of distinction; some indelible sign; something which would designate, with entire certainty, those persons who belonged to it, and who were subject to it. It is hardly necessary to say that, in point of fact, this has eminently characterized the papacy. All possible care has been taken to designate with accuracy those who belong to that communion, and, all over the world, it is easy to distinguish those who render allegiance to the papal power. Compare the notes on Revelation 7:3.

Verse 17

And that no man might buy or sell - That is, this mighty power would claim jurisdiction over the traffic of the world, and endeavor to make it tributary to its own purposes. Compare Revelation 18:11-13, Revelation 18:17-19. This is represented by saying that no one might "buy or sell" except by its permission; and it is clear that where this power exists of determining who may "buy and sell," there is absolute control over the wealth of the world.

Save he that had the mark - To keep it all among its own friends; among those who showed allegiance to this power.

Or the name of the beast - That is, the "mark" referred to was either the name of the beast, or the number of his name. The meaning is, that he had something branded on him that showed that he belonged to the beast - as a slave had the name of his master; in other words, there was something that certainly showed that he was subject to its authority.

Or the number of his name - In regard to what is denoted by the number of the beast, see the notes on Revelation 13:18. The idea here is, that that "number," whatever it was, was so marked on him as to show to whom he belonged. According to the interpretation here proposed, the meaning of this passage is, that the papacy would claim jurisdiction over traffic and commerce; or would endeavor to bring it under its control, and make it subservient to its own ends. Traffic or commerce is one of the principal means by which property is acquired, and he who has the control of this has, to a great degree, the control of the wealth of a nation; and the question now is, whether any such jurisdiction has been set up, or whether any such control has in fact been exercised, so that the wealth of the world has been subject to papal Rome? For a more full illustration of this I may refer to the notes on Revelation 18:11-13, Revelation 18:16-17; but at present it may be sufficient to remark, that the manifest aim of the papacy, in all its history, has been to control the world, and to get dominion over its wealth, in order that it might accomplish its own purposes. But, besides this, there have been numerous specified acts more particularly designed to control the business of "buying and selling." It has been common in Rome to prohibit, by express law, all traffic with heretics. Thus a canon of the Lateran council, under Pope Alexander III., commanded that no man should entertain or cherish them in his house or land, or traffic with them (Hard. vi., 2:1684). The synod of Tours, under the same Pope Alexander, passed the law that no man should presume to receive or assist the heretics, no, not so much as to exercise commerce with them in selling or buying. And so, too, the Constance council as expressed in Pope Martin's bull (Elliott, vol. 3, pp. 220,221).

Verse 18

Here is wisdom - That is, in what is stated respecting the name and the number of the name of the beast. The idea is, either that there would be need of special sagacity in determining what the "number" of the "beast" or of his "name" was, or that special "wisdom" was shown by the fact that the number could be thus expressed. The language used in the verse would lead the reader to suppose that the attempt to make out the "number" was not absolutely hopeless, but that the number was so far enigmatical as to require much skill in determining its meaning. It may also be implied that, for some reason, there was true "wisdom" in designating the name by this number, either because a more direct and explicit statement might expose him who

made it to persecution, and it showed practical wisdom thus to guard against this danger; or because there was "wisdom" or skill shown in the fact that a number could be found which would thus correspond with the name. On either of these suppositions, special wisdom would be required in deciphering its meaning.

Let him that hath understanding - Implying:

(a)that it was practicable to "count the number of the name"; and,

(b)that it would require uncommon skill to do it.

It could not be successfully attempted by all; but still there were those who might do it. This is such language as would be used respecting some difficult matter, but where there was hope that, by diligent application of the mind, and by the exercise of a sound understanding, there would be a prospect of success.

Count the number of the beast - In Revelation 13:16 it is "the number of his name." The word rendered here "count" - ψηφισάτω psēphisatō- means, properly, to count or reckon with pebbles, or counters; then to reckon, to estimate. The word here means "compute"; that is, ascertain the exact import of the number, so as to identify the beast. The "number" is what is immediately specified, "six hundred threescore and six" - 666. The phrase "the number of the beast" means, that somehow this number was so connected with the beast, or would so represent its name or character, that the "beast" would be identified by its proper application. The mention in Revelation 13:17 of "the name of the beast," and "the number of his name," shows that this "number" was somehow connected with his proper designation, so that by this he would be identified. The plain meaning is, that the number 666 would be so connected with his name, or with what would properly designate him, that it could be determined who was meant by finding that number in his name or in his proper designation. This is the exercise of the skill or wisdom to which the writer here refers: substantially that which is required in the solution of a riddle or a conundrum. If it should be said here that this is undignified and unworthy of an inspired book, it may be replied:

(a)that there might be some important reason why the name or designation should not be more plainly made;

(b)that it was important, nevertheless, that it should be so made that it would be possible to ascertain who was referred to;

(c)that this should be done only in some way which would involve the principle of the enigma - “where a known thing was concealed under obscure language” (Webster‘s Dictionary);

(d)that the use of symbols, emblems, hieroglyphics, and riddles was common in the early periods of the world; and,

(e)that it was no uncommon thing in ancient times, as it is in modern, to test the capacity and skill of people by their ability to unfold the meaning of proverbs, riddles, and dark sayings. Compare the riddle of Samson, Judges 14:12 ff. See also Psalm 49:4; Psalm 78:2; Ezekiel 17:2-8; Proverbs 1:2-6; Daniel 8:23.

It would be a sufficient vindication of the method adopted here if it was certain or probable that a direct and explicit statement of what was meant would have been attended with immediate danger, and if the object could be secured by an enigmatical form.

For it is the number of a man - Various interpretations of this have been proposed. Clericus renders it, “The number is small, or not such as cannot be estimated by a man.” Rosenmuller, “The number indicates a man, or a certain race of men.” Prof. Stuart, “The number is to be computed more humano, not wore angelico”; “it is a man‘s number.” DeWette, “It is such a number as is commonly reckoned or designated by men.” Other interpretations may be seen in Poole‘s Synopsis. That which is proposed by Rosenmuller, however, meets all the circumstances of the case. The idea is, evidently, that the number indicates or refers to a certain man, or order of people. It does not pertain to a brute, or to angelic beings. Thus it would be understood by one merely interpreting the language, and thus the connection demands.

And his number is six hundred threescore and six - The number of his name, Revelation 13:17. This cannot be supposed to mean that his name would be composed of six hundred and sixty-six letters; and it must, therefore, mean that somehow the number 666 would be expressed by his name in some well-understood method of computation. The number here - six hundred and sixty-six - is, in Walton‘s Polyglott, written out in full: Ἑξακόσιοι ἑξάκοντα ἕξ Hexakosioi hexakonta hexIn Wetstein, Griesbach, Hahn, Tittmann, and the common Greek text, it is expressed by the characters χξς = 666. There can be no doubt that this is the correct number,

though, in the time of Irenaeus, there was in some copies another reading - χις = 616. This reading was adopted by the expositor Tychonius; but against this Irenaeus inveighs (Liv. v. 100:30). There can be no doubt that the number 666 is the correct reading, though it would seem that this was sometimes expressed in letters, and sometimes written in full. Wetstein supposes that both methods were used by John; that in the first copy of his book he used the letters, and in a subsequent copy wrote it in full. This inquiry is not of material consequence.

It need not be said that much has been written on this mysterious "number," and that very different theories have been adopted in regard to its application. For the views which have been entertained on the subject, the reader may consult, with advantage, the article in Calmet's Dictionary, under the word "antichrist." It was natural for Calmet, being a Roman Catholic, to endeavor to show that the interpretations have been so various, that there could be no certainty in the application, and especially in the common application to the papacy. In endeavoring to ascertain the meaning of the passage, the following general remarks may be made, as containing the result of the investigation thus far:

(a) There was some mystery in the matter - some designed concealment - some reason why a more explicit statement was not adopted. The reason of this is not stated; but it may not be improper to suppose that it arose from something in the circumstances of the writer, and that the adoption of this enigmatical expression was designed to avoid some peril to which he or others might be exposed if there were a more explicit statement.

(b) It is implied, nevertheless, that it could be understood; that is, that the meaning was not so obscure that, by proper study, the designed reference could not be ascertained without material danger of error.

(c) It required skill to do this; either natural sagacity, or particular skill in interpreting hieroglyphics and symbols, or uncommon spiritual discernment.

(d) Some man, or order of men, is referred to that could properly be designated in this manner.

(e) The method of designating persons obscurely by a reference to the numerical signification of the letters in their names was not very uncommon, and was one that was not unlikely, in the circumstances of the case, to have been resorted to by John. “Thus, among the pagans, the Egyptian mystics spoke of Mercury, or Thouth, under the name 1218, because the Greek letters composing the word Thouth, when estimated by their numerical value, together made up that number. By others, Jupiter was invoked under the mystical number 717; because the letters of῾Η ΑΡΧΗ HEĒ ARCHEE- “Beginning,” or “First Origin,” which was a characteristic of the supreme deity worshipped as Jupiter, made up that number. And Apollo under the number 608, as being that of ηυς ēusor ὑης huēswords expressing certain solar attributes. Again, the pseudo-Christian, or semi-pagan Gnostics, from John‘s time and downward, affixed to their gems and amulets, of which multitudes remain to the present day, the mystic word αβρασαξ abrasaxor αβραξας abraxasunder the idea of some magic virtue attaching to its number 365, as being that of the days of the annual solar circle,” etc. See other instances referred to in Elliott, 3:205. These facts show that John would not be unlikely to adopt some such method of expressing a sentiment which it was designed should be obscure in form, but possible to be understood. It should be added here, that this was more common among the Jews than among any other people.

(f) It seems clear that some Greek word is here referred to, and that the mystic number is to be found in some word of that language. The reasons for this opinion are these:

(1)John was writing in Greek, and it is most natural to suppose that this would be the reference;

(2)he expected that his book would be read by those who understood the Greek language, and it would have been unnatural to have increased the perplexity in understanding what he referred to by introducing a word of a foreign language;

(3)the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, and not those of the Hebrew, are expressly selected by the Saviour to denote his eternity - “I am Alpha and Omega,” Revelation 1:8, Revelation 1:11; and,

(4)the numerals by which the enigma is expressed - χξς - are Greek. It has indeed been supposed by many that the solution is to be found in the Hebrew language, but these reasons seem to me to show conclusively that we are to look for the solution in some Greek word.

The question now is, whether there is any word which corresponds with these conditions, and which would naturally be referred to by John in this manner. The exposition thus far has led us to suppose that the papacy in some form is referred to; and the inquiry now is, whether there is any word which is so certain and determinate as to make it probable that John meant to designate that. The word Λατεινος Lateinos- “Lateinos, the Latin” (Man) - actually has all the conditions supposed in the interpretation of this passage. From this word the number specified - 666 - is made out as follows:

d Λ A T E I N O Σ

d

d

d 3013005105070200

d = 666

d

d

In support of the opinion that this is the word intended to be referred to, the following suggestions may be made:

(a) It is a Greek word.

(b) It expresses the exact number, and corresponds in this respect with the language used by John.

(c) It was early suggested as the probable meaning, and by those who lived near the time of John; who were intimately acquainted with the Greek language; and who may be supposed to have been familiar with this mode of writing.

Thus it was suggested by Irenaeus, who says, “It seems to me very probable; for this is a name of the last of Daniel‘s four kingdoms; they being Latins that now reign.” It is true that he also mentions two other words as those which may be meant - ευανθας euanthasa word which had been suggested by others, but concerning which he makes no remarks, and which, of course, must have been destitute of any probability in his view; and Τειταν Teitanwhich he thinks has the clearest claims for admission - though he speaks of the word Λατεινος Lateinosas having a claim of probability.

(d) This word would properly denote the Roman power, or the then Latin power, and would refer to that dominion as a Latin dominion - as it properly was; and if it be supposed that it was intended to refer to that, and, at the same time, that there should be some degree of obscurity about it, this would be more likely to be selected than the word “Roman,” which was better known; and,

(e) there was a special propriety in this, on the supposition that it was intended to refer to the papal Latin power. The most appropriate appellation, if it was designed to refer to Rome as a civil power, would undoubtedly have been the word “Roman”; but if it was intended to refer to the ecclesiastical power, or to the papacy, this is the very word to express the idea. In earlier times the more common appellation was Roman. This continued until the separation of the Eastern and Western empires, when the Eastern was called Greek, and the Western the Latin; or when the Eastern empire assumed the name of Roman, and affixed to the Western kingdoms one and all that were connected with Rome the appellation of Latin. This appellation, originally applied to the language only, was adopted by the Western kingdoms, and came to be that by which they were best designated. It was the Latin world, the Latin kingdom, the Latin church, the Latin patriarch, the Latin clergy, the Latin councils. To use Dr. More‘s words, “They Latinize everything: mass, prayers, hymns, litanies, canons,

decretals, bulls, are conceived in Latin. The papal councils speak in Latin, women themselves pray in Latin. The Scriptures are read in no other language under the papacy than Latin. In short, all things are Latin." With what propriety, then, might John, under the influence of inspiration, speak, in this enigmatical manner, of the new power that was symbolized by the beast as Latin.

The only objection to this solution that has been suggested is, that the orthography of the Greek word is Λατινος Latinos- "Latinos," and not Λατεινος Lateinos- Lateinosgiving the number 661, and not 666; and Bellarmine asserts that this is the uniform method of spelling in Greek authors. All that is necessary in reply to this is to copy the following remark from Prof. Stuart, vol. ii. p. 456: "As to the form of the Greek word Λατεινος Lateinosnamely, that ει eiis employed for the Latin long 4, it is a sufficient vindication of it to cite Σαβεῖνος Sabeinos Φαυστεῖνος Fausteinos Παυλεῖνος Pauleinos Αντωνεῖνος Antōneinos Ατειλιος Ateilios Μετεῖλιος Meteĭlios Παπεῖριος Papeirios Ουεῖβιος Oueibiosetc. Or we may refer to the custom of the more ancient Latin, as in Plautus, of writing i by ei; e. g., solitei, Diveis, captivei, preimus, Lateina, etc." See this point examined further, in Elliott, 3:210-213.

As a matter of historical interest, it may be observed that the solution of the difficulty has been sought in numerous other words, and the friends of the papacy and the enemies of the Bible have endeavored to show that such terms are so numerous that there can be no certainty in the application. Thus Calmet (*Dictionary*, "Antichrist"), after enumerating many of these terms, says: "The number 666 is found in names the most sacred, the most opposite to antichrist. The wisest and best way is to be silent."

We have seen that, besides the name "Lateinos," two other words had been referred to in the time of Irenaeus. Some of the words in which the mysterious number has been since supposed to be found are the following:

d נרון קסר Neron Caesar.
50 + 200 + 6 + 50, and 100 + 60 + 200 =

666

d

d Diocles Augustus (Dioclesian) = DCLXVI.

d

d C. F. Julianus Caesar Atheus (the Apostate) = DCLXVI.

d

d Luther - לוֹלתר
200 + 400 + 30 + 6 + 30 =
666

d

d Lampetis, Λαμπετις
30 + 1 + 40 + 80 + 5 + 300 + 10 + 200 =
666

d

d ἡ Λατινη Βασιλεια hē Latinē Basileia
8 + 30 + 1 + 300 + 10 + 50 + 8 + 2 + 1 + 200 + 10 + 30 + 5 + 10 + 1 =

666

d

d Ἰταλικα εκκλησια Italika ekklēsia
10 + 300 + 1 + 30 + 10 + 20 + 1 + 5 + 20 + 20 + 30 + 8 + 200 + 10 + 1 =

666

d

d Ἀποστατης Apostatēs(the Apostate)
1 + 80 + 70 + 6 + 1 + 300 + 8 + 200 =
666

d

d רומיית (Roman, sc. Sedes)
200 + 6 + 40 + 10 + 10 + 400 =
666

d

d רמצנוש (Romanus, sc. Man)
200 + 40 + 70 + 50 + 6 + 300 =
666

d

d

It will be admitted that many of these, and others that might be named, are fanciful, and perhaps had their origin in a determination, on the one hand, to find Rome referred to somehow, or in a determination, on the other hand, equally strong, not to find this; but still it is remarkable how many of the most obvious solutions refer to Rome and the papacy. But the mind need not be distracted, nor need doubt be thrown over the subject, by the number of the solutions proposed. They show the restless character of the human mind, and the ingenuity of people; but this should not be allowed to bring into doubt a solution that is simple and natural, and that meets all the circumstances of the case. Such a solution, I believe, is found in the word Λατεινος Lateinos- "Lateinos," as illustrated above; and as that, if correct, settles the case, it is unnecessary to pursue the matter further. Those who are disposed to do so, however, may find ample illustration in Calmet, Dictionary "Antichrist"; Elliott, Horae Apoca. iii. 207-221; Prof. Stuart, Com. vol. ii. Excursus iv.; Bibliotheca Sacra, i. 84-86; Robert Fleming on

the Rise and Fall of the papacy, 28, seq.; DeWette, Exegetisches Handbuch, New Testament, iii. 140-142; Vitringa, Com. 625-637, Excursus iv.; Nov. Tes. Edi. Koppianae, vol. x. b, pp. 235-265; and the Commentaries generally.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 14

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

In the previous chapters Revelation 14:1-5. They have the Father‘s name in their foreheads Revelation 14:1; they sing a song of victory Revelation 14:2-3; they are found without fault before God - representatives, in this respect, of all that will be saved, Revelation 14:4-5.

(2) the vision of the final triumph of the gospel, Revelation 14:6-7. An angel is seen flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to all that dwell upon the earth, and announcing that the end is near - a representation designed to show that the gospel will be thus preached among all nations; and when that is done, the time will draw on when the affairs of the world will be wound up.

(3) the fall of Babylon, the mighty anti-Christian power, Revelation 14:8. An angel is seen going forth announcing the glad tidings that this mighty power is overthrown, and that, therefore, its oppressions are come to an end. This, to the church in trouble and persecution, is one of the most comforting of all the assurances that God makes in regard to the future.

(4) the certain and final destruction of all the upholders of that anti-Christian power, Revelation 14:9-12. Another angel is seen making proclamation that all the supporters and abettors of this formidable power would drink of the wine of the wrath of God; that they would be tormented with fire and brimstone; and that the smoke of their torment would ascend up forever and ever.

(5) the blessedness of all those who die in the Lord; who, amidst the persecutions and trials that were to come upon the church, would be found faithful unto death, Revelation 14:13. They would rest from their labors; the works of mercy which they had done on the earth would follow them to the future world, securing rich and eternal blessings there.

(6) the final overthrow of all the enemies of the church, Revelation 14:14-20. This is the grand completion; to this all things are tending; this

will be certainly accomplished in due time. This is represented under various emblems:

(a)The Son of man appears seated on a cloud, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle - emblem of gathering in the great harvest of the earth, and of his own glorious reign in heaven, Revelation 14:14.

(b)An angel is seen coming out of the temple, announcing that the time had come, and calling on the great Reaper to thrust in his sickle, for the harvest of the world was ripe, Revelation 14:15.

(c)He that has the sickle thrusts in his sickle to reap the great harvest, Revelation 14:16.

(d)Another angel is seen representing the final judgment of God on the wicked, Revelation 14:17-20. He also has a sharp sickle; he is commanded by an angel that has power over fire to thrust in his sickle into the earth; he goes forth and gathers the clusters of the vine of the earth, and casts them into the great wine-press of the wrath of God.

This whole chapter, therefore, is designed to relieve the gloom of the former representations. The action of the grand moving panorama is stayed that the mind may not be overwhelmed with gloomy thoughts, but that it may be cheered with the assurance of the final triumph of truth and righteousness. The chapter, viewed in this light, is introduced with great artistic skill, as well as great beauty of poetic illustration; and, in its place, it is adapted to set forth this great truth, that, to the righteous, and to the church at large, in the darkest times, and with the most threatening prospect of calamity and sorrow, there is the certainty of final victory, and that this should be allowed to cheer and sustain the soul.

Verse 1

And I looked - My attention was drawn to a new vision. The eye was turned away from the beast and his image to the heavenly world - the Mount Zion above.

And, lo, a Lamb - See the notes on Revelation 5:6.

Stood on the mount Zion - That is, in heaven. See the notes on Hebrews 12:22. Zion, literally the southern hill in the city of Jerusalem, was a name also given to the whole city; and, as that was the seat of the divine worship on earth, it became an emblem of heaven - the dwelling-place of

God. The scene of the vision here is laid in heaven, for it is a vision of the ultimate triumph of the redeemed, designed to sustain the church in view of the trials that had already come upon it, and of those which were yet to come.

And with him an hundred forty and four thousand - These are evidently the same persons that were seen in the vision recorded in Revelation 7:3-8, and the representation is made for the same purpose - to sustain the church in trial, with the certainty of its future glory. See the notes on Revelation 7:4.

Having his Father's name written in their foreheads - Showing that they were his. See the notes on Revelation 7:3; Revelation 13:16. In Revelation 7:3, it is merely said that they were "sealed in their foreheads"; the passage here shows how they were sealed. They had the name of God so stamped or marked on their foreheads as to show that they belonged to him. Compare the notes on Revelation 7:3-8.

Verse 2

And I heard a voice from heaven - Showing that the scene is laid in heaven, but that John in the vision was on the earth.

As the voice of many waters - As the sound of the ocean, or of a mighty cataract. That is, it was so loud that it could be heard from heaven to earth. No comparison could express this more sublimely than to say that it was like the roar of the ocean.

As the voice of a great thunder - As the loud sound of thunder.

And I heard the voice of harpers - In heaven: the song of redemption accompanied with strains of sweet instrumental music. For a description of the harp, see the notes on Isaiah 5:12.

Harping with their harps - Playing on their harps. This image gives new beauty to the description. Though the sound was loud and swelling, so loud that it could be heard on the earth, yet it was not mere shouting, or merely a tumultuous cry. "It was like the sweetness of symphonious harps." The music of heaven, though elevated and joyous, is sweet and harmonious; and perhaps one of the best representations of heaven on earth, is the effect produced on the soul by strains of sweet and solemn music.

Verse 3

And they sung as it were a new song - See the notes on Revelation 5:9. It was proper to call this "new," because it was on a new occasion, or pertained to a new object. The song here was in celebration of the complete

redemption of the church, and was the song to be sung in view of its final triumph over all its foes. Compare notes on Revelation 7:9-10.

Before the throne - The throne of God in heaven. See the notes on Revelation 4:2.

And before the four beasts - See the notes on Revelation 4:6-8.

And the elders - See the notes on Revelation 4:4.

And no man could learn that song, … - None could understand it but the redeemed. That is, none who had not been redeemed could enter fully into the feelings and sympathies of those who were. A great truth is taught here. To appreciate fully the songs of Zion; to understand the language of praise; to enter into the spirit of the truths which pertain to redemption; one must himself have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. He must have known what it is to be a sinner under the condemnation of a holy law; he must have known what it is to be in danger of eternal death; he must have experienced the joys of pardon, or he can never understand, in its true import, the language used by the redeemed. And this is only saying what we are familiar with in other things. He who is saved from peril; he who is rescued from long captivity; he who is pardoned at the foot of the scaffold; he who is recovered from dangerous illness; he who presses to his bosom a beloved child just rescued from a watery grave, will have an appreciation of the language of joy and triumph which he can never understand who has not been placed in such circumstances: but of all the joy ever experienced in the universe, so far as we can see, that must be the most sublime and transporting, which will be experienced when the redeemed shall stand on Mount Zion above, and shall realize that they are saved.

Verse 4

These are they - In this verse, and in the following verse, the writer states the leading characteristics of those who are saved. The general idea is, that they are chaste; that they are the followers of the Lamb; that they are redeemed from among people; and that they are without guile.

Which were not defiled with women - Who were chaste. The word "defiled" here determines the meaning of the passage, as denoting that they were not guilty of illicit sexual intercourse with women. It is unnecessary to show that this is a virtue everywhere required in the Bible, and everywhere stated as among the characteristics of the redeemed. On no point are there more frequent exhortations in the Scriptures than on this; on no point is there more solicitude manifested that the professed friends of the Saviour

should be without blame. Compare the Acts 15:20 note; Romans 1:24-32 notes; 1 Corinthians 6:18 note; Hebrews 13:4 note. See also 1 Corinthians 5:1; 1 Corinthians 6:13; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3. This passage cannot be adduced in favor of celibacy, whether among the clergy or laity, or in favor of monastic principles in any form; for the thing that is specified is, that they were not "defiled with women," and a lawful connection of the sexes, such as marriage, is not defilement. See the notes on Hebrews 13:4. The word rendered here "defiled" - ἐμολύνθησαν emolunthēsanfrom μολύνω molunō- is a word that cannot be applied to the marriage relation. It means properly to "soil, to stain, to defile." 1 Corinthians 8:7; "their conscience being weak, is defiled." Revelation 3:4; "which have not defiled their garments." The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament, except in the passage before us, and it will be seen at once that it cannot be applied to that which is lawful and proper, and consequently that it cannot be construed as an expression against marriage and in favor of celibacy. It is a word that is properly expressive of illicit sexual intercourse - of impurity and unchastity of life - and the statement is, that they who are saved are not impure and unchaste.

For they are virgins - παρθένοι parthenoiThis is the masculine form, but this form is found in the later Greek and in the Christian fathers. See Suidas and Suicer, Thes. The meaning of the word, when found in the feminine form, is well understood. It denotes a virgin, a maiden, and thence it is used to denote what is chaste and pure: virgin modesty; virgin gold; virgin soil; virgin blush; virgin shame. The word in the masculine form must have a similar meaning as applied to men, and may denote:

(a)those who are unmarried;

(b)those who are chaste and pure in general.

The word is applied by Suidas to Abel and Melchizedek. "The sense," says DeWette, in loco, "cannot be that all these 144,000 had lived an unmarried life; for how could the apostle Peter, and others who were married, have been excluded? But the reference must be to those who held themselves from all impurity - "unkeuschheit und hurerei" - which, in the view of the apostles, was closely connected with idolatry." Compare Bleek, Beitr. i. 185. Prof. Stuart supposes that the main reference here is to those who had kept themselves from idolatry, and who were thus pure. It seems to me, however, that the most obvious meaning is the correct one, that it refers

to the redeemed as chaste, and thus brings into view one of the prominent things in which Christians are distinguished from the devotees of nearly every other form of religion, and, indeed, exclusively from the world at large. This passage, also, cannot be adduced in favor of the monastic system, because:

(a)whatever may be said anywhere of the purity of virgins, there is no such commendation of it as to imply that the married life is impure;

(b)it cannot be supposed that God meant in any way to reflect on the married life as in itself impure or dishonorable;

(c)the language does not demand such an interpretation; and,

(d)the facts in regard to the monastic life have shown that it has had very little pretensions to a claim of virgin purity.

These are they which follow the Lamb - This is another characteristic of those who are redeemed - that they are followers of the Lamb of God. That is, they are his disciples; they imitate his example; they obey his instructions; they yield to his laws; they receive him as their counselor and their guide. See the notes on John 10:3, John 10:27.

Whithersoever he goeth - As sheep follow the shepherd. Compare Psalm 23:1-2. It is one characteristic of true Christians that they follow the Saviour wherever he leads them. Be it into trouble, into danger, into difficult duty; be it in Christian or pagan lands; be it in pleasant paths, or in roads rough and difficult, they commit themselves wholly to his guidance, and submit themselves wholly to his will.

These were redeemed from among men - This is another characteristic of those who are seen on Mount Zion. They are there because they are redeemed, and they have the character of the redeemed. They are not there in virtue of rank or blood John 1:13; not on the ground of their own works Titus 3:5; but because they are redeemed unto God by the blood of his Son. See the notes on Revelation 5:9-10. None will be there of whom it cannot be said that they are "redeemed"; none will be absent who have been truly redeemed from sin.

Being the first-fruits unto God - On the meaning of the word "first-fruits," see the notes on 1 Corinthians 15:20. The meaning here would seem to be, that the hundred and forty-four thousand were not to be regarded as the whole of the number that was saved, but that they were representatives

of the redeemed. They had the same characteristics which all the redeemed must have; they were a pledge that all the redeemed would be there. Prof. Stuart supposes that the sense is, that they were, as it were, "an offering especially acceptable to God." The former explanation, however, meets all the circumstances of the case, and is more in accordance with the usual meaning of the word.

And to the Lamb - They stood there as redeemed by him, thus honoring him as their Redeemer, and showing forth his glory.

Verse 5

And in their mouth was found no guile - No deceit, fraud, hypocrisy. They were sincerely and truly what they professed to be - the children of God. This is the last characteristic which is given of them as redeemed, and it is not necessary to say that this is always represented as one of the characteristics of the true children of God. See the notes on John 1:47.

For they are without fault before the throne of God - The word here rendered "without fault" - ἄμωμοι amōmoi- means, properly, "spotless, without blemish," 1 Peter 1:19. See the notes on Colossians 1:22. This cannot be construed as meaning that they were by nature pure and holy, but only that they were pure as they stood before the throne of God in heaven - "having washed their robes, and made them pure in the blood of the Lamb." See the notes on Revelation 7:14. It will be certainly true that all who stand there will be, in fact, pure, for nothing impure or unholy shall enter there, Revelation 21:27.

The "design" of this portion of the chapter was evidently to comfort those to whom the book was addressed, and, in the same way, to comfort all the children of God in times of persecution and trial. Those living in the time of John were suffering persecution, and, in the previous chapters, he had described more fearful trials yet to come on the church. In these trials, therefore, present and prospective, there was a propriety in fixing the thoughts on the final triumph of the redeemed - that glorious state in heaven where all persecution shall cease, and where all the ransomed of the Lord shall stand before his throne. What could be better suited than this view to sustain the souls of the persecuted and the sorrowful? And how often since in the history of the church in the dark times of religious declension and of persecution - has there been occasion to seek consolation in this bright view of heaven? How often in the life of each believer, when sorrows come upon him like a flood, and earthly consolation is gone, is there occasion to look

to that blessed world where all the redeemed shall stand before God; where all tears shall be wiped away from every face; and where there shall be the assurance that the last pang has been endured, and that the soul is to be happy forever?

Verse 6

And I saw another angel - This must, of course, mean a different one from someone mentioned before; but no such angel is referred to in the previous chapters, unless we go back to Revelation 12:7. It is not necessary, however, to suppose that John refers to a particular angel immediately preceding this. In the course of these visions he had seen many angels; and now, accustomed to these visions, he says that he saw "another" one employed in a remarkable embassy, whose message was suited to cheer the hearts of the desponding, and to support the souls of the persecuted and the sad - for his appearing was the pledge that the gospel would be ultimately preached to all that dwell upon the earth. The design of this vision is, therefore, substantially the same as the former - to cheer the heart, and to sustain the courage and the faith of the church, in the persecutions and trials which were yet to come, by the assurance that the gospel would be ultimately triumphant.

Fly in the midst of heaven - In the air; so as to appear to be moving along the face of the sky. The scene cannot be in heaven, as the gospel is not to be preached there; but the word must denote "heaven" as it appears to us - the sky. Prof. Stuart renders it correctly "mid-air." He is represented as flying, to denote the rapidity with which the gospel would spread through the world in that future period referred to. Compare the notes on Isaiah 6:2.

Having the everlasting gospel - The gospel is here called everlasting or eternal:

(a)because its great truths have always existed, or it is conformed to eternal truth;

(b)because it will forever remain unchanged - not being liable to fluctuation like the opinions held by people;

(c)because its effects will be everlasting - in the redemption of the soul and the joys of heaven. In all the glorious eternity before the redeemed, they will be but developing the effects of that gospel on their own hearts, and enjoying the results of it in the presence of God.

To preach unto them that dwell on the earth - To all people - as is immediately specified. Compare Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15.

And to every nation, and kindred, … - To all classes and conditions of people; to all human beings, without any distinction or exception. See the notes on Revelation 7:9. The truth here taught is, that the gospel is to be preached to all people as on an equality, without any reference to their rank, their character, or their complexion; and it is implied also, that at the time referred to this will be done. When that time will be the writer does not intimate further, than that it would be after the beast and his adherents had attempted to stay its progress; and for the fulfillment of this, therefore, we are to look to a period subsequent to the rise and fall of that great anti-Christian power symbolized by the beast and his image. This is in entire accordance with the prediction in Daniel. See the notes on Daniel 7:19-22.

Verse 7

Saying with a loud voice - As if all the nations were summoned to hear.

Fear God - That is, reverence, honor, obey God. Render homage not to the beast, to his image, or to any idol, but to the only true God. This is the substance of the gospel - its end and design - to turn people from all forms of idol worship and superstition, to the worship of the only true God.

And give glory to him - To give glory to him is to acknowledge him as the only true God; to set up his pure worship in the heart; and to praise him as the great Ruler of heaven and earth.

For the hour of his judgment is come - His judgment on the beast and on those who worship him. The imagery here is substantially the same as in Daniel 7:9-10, Daniel 7:14, Daniel 7:26-27; and there can be no doubt that there is reference to the same subject. See the notes on those verses. The main idea is, that when God shall be about to cause his gospel to spread through the world, there will be, as it were, a solemn judgment on that anti-Christian power which had so long resisted his truth and persecuted his saints, and that on the fall of that power his own kingdom will be set up on the earth; that is, in the language of Daniel, "the kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High."

And worship him that made heaven, and earth, … - The true God, the Creator of all things. As already remarked, this is the ultimate design of the gospel, and, when this is accomplished, the great end for which it was revealed will be reached.

The design of this portion of the chapter Revelation 14:6-7, also, was to comfort those to whom the book was addressed, and in the same way to comfort the church in all the persecution and opposition which the truth would encounter. The ground of consolation then was, that a time was predicted when the "everlasting gospel" would be made to fly speedily through the earth, and when it would be announced that a final judgment had come upon the anti-Christian power which had prevented its being before diffused over the face of the world. The same ground of encouragement and consolation exists now, and the more so as we see the day approaching; and in all times of despondency we should allow our hearts to be cheered as we see that great anti-Christian power waning, and as we see evidence that the way is thus preparing for the rapid and universal diffusion of the pure gospel of Christ.

Verse 8

And there followed another angel - That is, in the vision. It is not necessary to suppose that this would, in the fulfillment, succeed the other in time. The chapter is made up of a number of representations, all designed to illustrate the same general thing, and to produce the same general effect on the mind - that the gospel would be finally triumphant, and that, therefore, the hearts of the troubled and the afflicted should be comforted. The representation in this verse, bearing on this point, is, that Babylon, the great enemy, would fall to rise no more.

Babylon - This is the first time that the word "Babylon" occurs in this book, though it is repeatedly mentioned afterward, Revelation 16:19; Revelation 17:5; Revelation 18:2, Revelation 18:10, Revelation 18:21. In reference to the literal Babylon, the word is used, in the New Testament, in Matthew 1:11-13; Acts 7:43; 1 Peter 5:13. See Intro. to 1Peter, section 2. Babylon was a well-known city on the Euphrates (for a full description of which see the notes on Isaiah, analysis of chapters 13 and 14), and was, in the days of its pride and glory, the head of the pagan world. In reference to the meaning of the word in this place, it may be remarked:

(1) That the general characteristics of Babylon were, that it was proud, haughty, insolent, oppressive. It was chiefly known and remembered by the Hebrew people as a power that had invaded the Holy Land; that had reduced its capital and temple to ruins; that had destroyed the independence of their country, subjecting it to the condition of a province, and that had

carried away the inhabitants into a long and painful captivity. It became, therefore, the emblem of all that was haughty and oppressive, and especially of all that persecuted the church of God.

(2) the word must be used here to denote some power that resembled the ancient and literal Babylon in these characteristics. The literal Babylon was no more; but the name might be properly used to denote a similar power. We are to seek, therefore, in the application of this, for some power that had the same general characteristics which the literal Babylon had.

(3) in inquiring, then, what is referred to here by the word "Babylon," we may remark:

(a) that it could not be the literal Babylon on the Euphrates, for the whole representation here is of something future, and the literal Babylon had long since disappeared, never, according to the prophecies, to be rebuilt. See the notes on Isaiah 13:20-22.

(b) All the circumstances require us to understand this of Rome, at some period of its history: for Rome, like Babylon, was the seat of empire, and the head of the pagan world; Rome was characterized by many of the same attributes as Babylon, being arrogant, proud, oppressive; Rome, like Babylon, was distinguished for its conquests, and for the fact that it made all other nations subject to its control; Rome had been, like Babylon, a desolating power, having destroyed the capital of the Holy Land, and burnt its beautiful temple, and reduced the country to a province. Rome, like Babylon of old, was the most formidable power with which the church had to contend. Yet.

(c) it is not, I suppose, Rome considered as pagan that is here meant, but Rome considered as the prolongation of the ancient power in the papal form. Alike in this book and in Daniel, Rome, pagan and papal, is regarded as one power, standing in direct opposition to the gospel of Christ, resisting its progress in the world, and preventing its final prevalence. See the notes on Daniel 7:26-27.

(d) So it was understood among the early Christians. Mr. Gibbon, speaking of the expectations of the early Christians about the end of the world, and the glory of the literal reign of the Messiah, says, "While the happiness and glory of a temporal reign were promised to the disciples of Christ, the most dreadful calamities were denounced against an unbelieving world. The edification of the New Jerusalem was to advance by equal steps with the destruction of the mystic Babylon; and as long as the emperors who reigned before Constantine persisted in the profession of idolatry, the epithet of Babylon was applied to the city and to the empire of Rome," vol. i. p. 263.

Is fallen - That is, an event appeared in vision as if a mighty city fell to rise no more.

Is fallen - This is repeated to give emphasis to the declaration, and to express the joyousness of that event.

That great city - Babylon in its glory was the largest city of the world. Rome, in its turn, also became the largest; and the expression used here denotes that the power here referred to would be properly represented by cities of their magnitude.

Because she made all nations drink of the wine - This language is probably taken from Jeremiah 51:7; "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunk of the wine, therefore the nations are mad." Babylon here, in accordance with the usual custom of the sacred writers when speaking of cities (see the notes on Isaiah 1:8), is represented as a female - here a female of abandoned character, holding in her hand a cup of wine to attract her lovers; that is, she allures and intoxicates them. This is a beautiful image to denote the influence of a great and corrupt city, and especially a city corrupt in its religion and devoted to idolatry and superstition, and may well be applied either to Babylon or Rome, literal or mystical.

Of the wrath - There seems an incongruity in the use of this word here, and Prof. Stuart proposes to render it "the inflammatory wine of her fornication"; that is, inebriating wine - wine that excited the passions and that led to uncleanness. He supposes that the word here used - θυμός thumos- means "heat, inflammation," corresponding to the Hebrew חמה chēmaahThere are no instances, however, in the New Testament in which the word is used in this sense. The common and proper meaning is mind, soul, then mind agitated with passion or under the influence of desire - a

violent commotion of mind, as wrath, anger, indignation (Robinson, Lexicon). The ground of the representation here seems to be that Yahweh is often described as giving to the nations in his wrath an intoxicating cup so that they should reel and stagger to their destruction. Compare Jeremiah 25:15; Jeremiah 51:7. The meaning here is, that the nations had drunk of that cup which brought on the wrath of God on account of her "fornication." Babylon is represented as a harlot, with a cup of wine in her hand, and the effect of drinking that cup was to expose them to the wrath of God, hence, called "the wine of the wrath of her fornication" - the alluring cup that was followed by wrath on account of her fornication.

Of her fornication - Due to her fornication. The word "fornication" here is used to denote spiritual uncleanness; that is, pagan and superstitious rites and observances. The term is often used in the Scriptures as applicable to idolatry and superstition. The general meaning here is, that Rome - papal Rome - would employ all forms of voluptuous allurements to bring the nations to the worship of the beast and his image, and that the "wrath" of God would be poured out on account of these abominations. The design of this verse also is to impart consolation by the assurance that this great enemy - this mighty, formidable, persecuting power - would be entirely overthrown. This is everywhere held up as the brightest hope of the church, for with this will fall its last great enemy, and the grand obstruction to the final triumph of the gospel on earth will be removed.

Verse 9

And the third angel followed them - This was a new vision designed to represent the removal of all the obstructions to the final prevalence of the gospel. We are not necessarily to suppose that this event would succeed those mentioned before in the order of time, though this would be the natural construction. The design of this is to show that the worshippers of the beast and his image would be certainly and finally destroyed.

Saying with a loud voice - Making a loud proclamation. Revelation 14:7.

If any man worship the beast and his image - See the notes on Revelation 13:4, Revelation 13:8, Revelation 13:12, Revelation 13:15. This declaration is universal, affirming of all who thus render idolatrous reverence to the power represented by the beast and his image that they should drink of the wine of the wrath of God. The general meaning is, that they were guilty of idolatry of a gross form; and wherever this existed they

who were guilty of it would come under the denunciations in the Scriptures against idolaters. And why should not such denunciations fall on idolaters under the papacy as well as on others? Is it not true that there is as real idolatry there as in the pagan world? Is not the idolatry as gross and debasing? Is it not attended with as real corruption in the heart and the life? Is it not encompassed with as many things to inflame the passions, corrupt the morals, and alienate the soul from God? And is it not all the worse for being a perversion of Christianity, and practiced under the forms of the religion of the Saviour? On what principle should idolatry be denounced and condemned anywhere if it is not in papal Rome? Compare the notes on 2 Thessalonians 2:4.

And receive his mark in his forehead or in his hand - See the notes on Revelation 13:16. The "receive" here implies that there was, on their part, some degree of voluntariness: it was not a mark impressed by force, but a mark received. This is true in respect to all idolatry; and this lays the ground for condemnation. Whatever art is used to induce people to worship the beast and his image, it is still true that the worshippers are voluntary, and that, being voluntary, it is right that they should be treated as such. It is on this ground only that any idolaters, or any sinners of any kind, can be, in the proper sense of that term, published.

Verse 10

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God - See notes on Revelation 14:8. The "wine of the wrath of God" is the cup in the hand of the Lord, which, when drunk, makes them reel and fall. The image would seem to have been taken from the act of holding out a cup of poison to a condemned man that he might drink and die. See the sentiment here expressed illustrated in the notes on Isaiah 51:17.

Which is poured out without mixture - Without being diluted with water - that is, in its full strength. In other words, there would be no mitigation of the punishment.

Into the cup of his indignation - The cup held in his hand, and given them to drink. This is expressive of his indignation, as it causes them to reel and fall. The sentiment here is substantially the same, though in another form, as what is expressed in 2 Thessalonians 2:12. See the notes on that verse.

And he shall be tormented - Shall be punished in a manner that would be well represented by being burned with fire and brimstone. On the

meaning of this word see the notes on Revelation 9:5; Revelation 11:10. Compare also Revelation 18:7, Revelation 18:10, Revelation 18:15; Revelation 20:10; Matthew 8:29; Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28. The word commonly denotes "severe torture."

With fire and brimstone - As if with burning sulphur. See the notes on Luke 17:28-30. Compare Psalm 11:6; Job 18:15; Isaiah 30:33; Ezekiel 38:22. The imagery is taken from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Genesis 19:24. The common representation of the punishment of the wicked is, that it will be in the manner here represented, Matthew 5:22; Matthew 13:42; Matthew 18:9; Matthew 25:41; Mark 9:44-48; 2 Peter 3:7; Jude 1:7; Revelation 20:14. Compare the Matthew 5:22 note; Mark 9:44 note.

In the presence of the holy angels - This may mean either:

(a)that the angels will be present at their condemnation Matthew 25:31, or.

(b)that the punishment will be actually witnessed by the angels, as it is most probable it will be. Compare Isaiah 66:24; Luke 16:23-26.

And in the presence of the Lamb - The Lamb of God - the final Judge. This also may mean either that the condemnation will occur in his presence, or that the punishment will be under his eye. Both of these things will be true in regard to him; and it will be no small aggravation of the punishment of the wicked, that it will occur in the very presence of their slighted and rejected Saviour.

Verse 11

And the smoke of their torment - The smoke proceeding from their place of torment. This language is probably derived from the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Genesis 19:28; "And he (Abraham) looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." The destruction of these cities is regarded as an emblem of the destruction of the wicked, and the smoke that ascended from them as a representation of what ascends from the place where the wicked suffer forever. See the notes on Jude 1:7.

Ascendeth up - Continually rises from that world of woe.

For ever and ever - See the notes on Jude 1:7. This does not indeed affirm that their individual sufferings would be eternal, since it is only a declaration that "the smoke of their torment ascends," but it is such

language as would be used on the supposition that they would suffer forever, and as can be explained only on that supposition. It implies that their torments continued, and were the cause of that ascending smoke; that is, that they were tormented while it ascended; and, as this is declared to be "forever and ever," it implies that the sufferings of the wicked will be eternal: and this is such language as would not, and could not have been used in a revelation from God, unless the punishment of the wicked is eternal. Compare the notes on Matthew 25:46.

And they have no rest day nor night - "Day and night" include all time; and hence, the phrase is used to denote perpetuity - "always." The meaning here is, that they never have any rest - any interval of pain. This is stated as a circumstance strongly expressive of the severity of their torment. Here, rest comes to the sufferer. The prisoner in his cell lies down on his bed, though hard, and sleeps; the overworked slave has also intervals of sleep; the eyes of the mourner are locked in repose, and for moments, if not hours, he forgets his sorrows; no pain that we endure on earth can be so certain and prolonged that nature will not, sooner or later, find the luxury of sleep, or will find rest in the grave. But it will be one of the bitterest ingredients in the cup of woe, in the world of despair, that this luxury will be denied forever, and that they who enter that gloomy prison sleep no more, never know the respite of a moment, never even lose the consciousness of their heavy doom. Oh how different from the condition of sufferers here! And oh how sad and strange that any of our race will persevere in sin, and go down to those unmitigated and unending sorrows!

Who worship the beast and his image - See the notes on Revelation 13:4, Revelation 13:15.

And whosoever receiveth the mark of his name - See the notes on Revelation 13:17. The meaning here is, that such worshippers will receive the punishment which other idolaters and sinners do. No exception will be made in favor of an idolater, though he worships idols under the forms of an abused Christianity; none will be made in favor of a sinner because he practiced iniquity under the garb of religion.

Verse 12

Here is the patience of the saints - See the notes on Revelation 13:10.

Here are they that keep the commandments of God - That is, in exercising such patience. Those who exercise that "patience" in these long-continued persecutions and trials, will show that they belong to those who

keep the commandments of God, and are his true children. Or perhaps the meaning may be, "Here is a disclosure respecting the final destiny of these persecutors, which is adapted to comfort and sustain the saints in the trials which they will endure; an encouragement to constancy in obeying the commands of God, and in evincing the meek faith of the gospel."

And the faith of Jesus - To encourage persevering faith in the Saviour. In these times of trial it will be shown who are the friends of the Saviour; and in the prospect of the certain overthrow of all the enemies of God and his cause, there is a ground of encouragement for continued attachment to him.

The design of this portion of the chapter Revelation 14:9-12 is to encourage Christians in their trials by the assurance, that this formidable anti-Christian power would be overthrown, and that all the enemies of God would receive their just doom in the world of despair. Fearful as that doctrine is, and terrible as is the idea of the everlasting suffering of any of the creatures of God, yet the final overthrow of the wicked is necessary to the triumph of truth and holiness, and there is consolation in the belief that religion will ultimately triumph. The desire for its triumph necessarily supposes that the wicked will be overthrown and punished; and indeed it is the aim of all governments, and of all administrations of law, that the wicked shall be overthrown, and that truth and justice shall prevail. What would be more consolatory in a human government than the idea that all the wicked would be arrested and punished as they deserve? For what else is government instituted? For what else do magistrates and police-officers discharge the functions of their office?

Verse 13

And I heard a voice from heaven - A voice that seemed to speak from heaven.

Saying unto me, Write - Make a record of this truth. We may suppose that John was engaged in making a record of what he saw in vision; he was now instructed to make a record of what he heard. This passage may be referred to as a proof that he wrote this book while in Patmos, or as the heavenly disclosures were made to him, and not afterward from memory.

Blessed are the dead - That is, the condition of those who die in the manner which is immediately specified, is to be regarded as a blessed or happy one. It is much to be able to say of the dead that they are "blessed."

There is much in death that is sad; we so much dread it by nature; it cuts us off from so much that is dear to us; it blasts so many hopes; and the grave is so cold and cheerless a resting place, that we owe much to a system of religion which will enable us to say and to feel, that it is a blessed thing to die. Assuredly we should be grateful for any system of religion which will enable us thus to speak of those who are dead; which will enable us, with corresponding feeling, to look forward to our own departure from this world.

Which die in the Lord - Not all the dead; for God never pronounces the condition of the wicked who die, blessed or happy. Religion guards this point, and confines the declaration to those who furnish evidence that they are prepared for heaven. The phrase "to die in the Lord" implies the following things:

(1)That they who thus die are the friends of the Lord Jesus. The language "to be in the Lord" is often used to denote true attachment to him, or close union with him. Compare John 15:4-7; Romans 16:13, Romans 16:22; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 7:39; Philemon 1:14; Colossians 4:7. The assurance, then, is limited to those who are sincere Christians; for this the language properly implies, and we are authorized to apply it only as there is evidence of true religion.

(2)to "die in the Lord" would seem also to imply that there should be, at the time, the evidence of his favor and friendship. This would apply:

(a) to those who die as martyrs, giving their lives as a testimony to the truth of religion, and as an evidence of their love for it; and,

(b) to those who have the comforting evidence of his presence and favor on the bed of death.

From henceforth - ἀπάρτι apartiThis word has given no little perplexity to expositors, and it has been variously rendered. Some have connected it with the word "blessed" - "Blessed henceforth are the dead who die in the Lord"; that is, they will be ever-onward blessed: some with the word "die," referring to the time when the apostle was writing - "Blessed are they who, after this time, die in the Lord"; designing to comfort those who were exposed to death, and who would die as martyrs: some as referring to the times contemplated in these visions - "Blessed will they be who shall die in those future times." Witsius understands this as meaning that, from the time of their death, they would be blessed, as if it had been said, immediately after their dissolution they would be blessed. Doddridge renders it,

“Henceforth blessed are the dead.” The language is evidently not to be construed as implying that they who had died in the faith before were not happy, but that in the times of trial and persecution that were to come, they were to be regarded as especially blessed who should escape from these sorrows by a Christian death. Scenes of woe were indeed to occur, in which many believers would die. But their condition was not to be regarded as one of misfortune, but of blessedness and joy, for:

(a)they would die in an honorable cause;

(b)they would emerge from a world of sorrow; and,

(c)they would rise to eternal life and peace.

The design, therefore, of the verse is to impart consolation and support to those who would be exposed to a martyr‘s death, and to those who, in times of persecution, would see their friends exposed to such a death. It may be added that the declaration here made is true still, and ever will be. It is a blessed thing to die in the Lord.

Yea, saith the Spirit - The Holy Spirit; “the Spirit by whose inspiration and command I record this” (Doddridge).

That they may rest from their labours - The word rendered here “labor” - κόπος kopos- means properly “wailing, grief,” from κόπτω KOPTOO“to beat,” and hence, a beating of the breast as in grief. Then the word denotes “toil, labor, effort,” John 4:38; 1 Corinthians 3:8; 1 Corinthians 15:58; 2 Corinthians 6:5; 2 Corinthians 10:15; 2 Corinthians 11:23, 2 Corinthians 11:27. It is used here in the sense of wearisome toil in doing good, in promoting religion, in saving souls, in defending the truth. From such toils the redeemed in heaven will be released; for although there will be employment there, it will be without the sense of fatigue or weariness. And in view of such eternal rest from toil, we may well endure the labors and toils incident to the short period of the present life, for, however arduous or difficult, it will soon be ended.

And their works do follow them - That is, the rewards or the consequences of their works will follow them to the eternal world, the word works here being used for the rewards or results of their works. In regard to this, considered as an encouragement to labor, and as a support in the trials of life, it may be remarked:

(a)that all that the righteous do and suffer here will be appropriately recompensed there.

(b)This is all that can follow a man to eternity. He can take with him none of his gold, his lands, his raiment; none of the honors of this life; none of the means of sensual gratification. All that will go with him will be his character, and the results of his conduct here, and, in this respect, eternity will be but a prolongation of the present life.

(c)It is one of the highest honors of our nature that we can make the present affect the future for good; that by our conduct on the earth we can lay the foundation for happiness million of ages hence.

In no other respect does man appear so dignified as in this; nowhere do we so clearly see the grandeur of the soul as in the fact, that what we do today may determine our happiness in that future period, when all the affairs of this world shall which cannot now be numbered shall have rolled by. It is then a glorious thing to live, and will be a glorious thing to die. Compare the notes on 1 Corinthians 15:58.

Verse 14

And I looked - See the notes on Revelation 14:1. His attention is arrested by a new vision. The Son of man himself comes forth to close the scene, and to wind up the affairs of the world. This, too, is of the nature of an episode, and the design is the same as the previous visions - to support the mind in the prospect of the trials that the church was to experience, by the assurance that it would be finally triumphant, and that every enemy would be destroyed.

And behold a white cloud - Bright, splendid, dazzling - appropriate to be the seat of the Son of God. Compare the Matthew 17:5 note; Revelation 1:7 note. See also Matthew 24:30; Matthew 26:64; Luke 20:27; Acts 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 10:1.

And upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man - Compare the Revelation 1:13 note; Daniel 7:13 note. It is probable that there is here a designed reference to the passage in Daniel. The meaning is, that one appeared on the cloud in a human form, whom John at once recognized as he to whom the appellation of "the Son of man" especially belonged - the Lord Jesus. The meaning of that term had not been fixed in the time of Daniel 7:13; subsequently it was appropriated by the Saviour, and was the favorite term by which he chose to speak of himself, Matthew 8:20; Matthew 9:6; Matthew 10:23; Matthew 11:19; Matthew 12:8, Matthew 12:32, Matthew 12:40, et al.

Having on his head a golden crown - Appropriate to him as king. It was mainly in virtue of his kingly power and office that the work was to be done which John is now about to describe.

And in his hand a sharp sickle - The word "sickle" here - δρέπανον drepanon- means a crooked knife or scythe for gathering the harvest, or vintage, by cutting off the clusters of grapes. See Revelation 14:17. The image of a harvest is often employed in the New Testament to describe moral subjects, Matthew 9:37-38; Matthew 13:30, Matthew 13:39; Mark 4:29; Luke 10:2; John 4:35. Here the reference is to the consummation of all things, when the great harvest of the world will be reaped, and when all the enemies of the church will be cut off - for that is the grand idea which is kept before the mind in this chapter. In various forms, and by various images, that idea had already been presented to the mind, but here it is introduced in a grand closing image; as if the grain of the harvest-field were gathered in - illustrating the reception of the righteous into the kingdom - and the fruit of the vineyard were thrown into the wine-press, representing the manner in which the wicked would be crushed, Revelation 14:19-20.

Verse 15

And another angel - The fourth in order, Revelation 14:6, Revelation 14:8-9.

Came out of the temple - See the notes on Revelation 11:19. Came, as it were, from the immediate presence of God; for the temple was regarded as his unique dwelling-place.

Crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud - To the Messiah, Revelation 14:14. That is, the command was borne directly from God by the angel to the Messiah, to go forth and reap the great harvest of the world. It is not a command of the angel, but a command from God the Father to the Son. This is in accordance with all the representations in the New Testament, that the Son, as Messiah or Redeemer, is subordinate to the Father, and performs the work which has been given him to do. See John 3:16-17; John 5:19; John 10:18; John 12:49; John 14:31. Compare the notes on Revelation 1:1.

Thrust in thy sickle, and reap - Into the great harvest of the world.

For the time is come for thee to reap - That is, "the harvest which thou art to reap is ripe; the seed which thou hast sown has grown up; the earth which thou hast cultivated has produced this golden grain, and it is fit that thou shouldst now gather it in." This language is appropriately addressed to

the Son of God, for all the fruits of righteousness on the earth may be regarded as the result of his culture.

For the harvest of the earth is ripe - The "harvest" in reference to the righteous - fruit of the good seed sown by the Saviour and his apostles and ministers. The time alluded to here is the end of the world, when the affairs of earth shall be about to he wound up. The design is to state that the Redeemer will then gather in a great and glorious harvest, and by this assurance to sustain the hearts of his people in times of trial and persecution.

Verse 16

And he that sat on the cloud - The Saviour, Revelation 14:14.

Thrust in his sickle on the earth - To cut down the harvest - that is, to gather his people to himself.

And the earth was reaped - So far as the righteous were concerned. The end had come; the church was redeemed; the work contemplated was accomplished; and the results of the work of the Saviour were like a glorious harvest.

Verse 17

And another angel - The fifth in order. This angel came for a different purpose - with reference to the cutting off of the enemies of God, represented by the gathering of a vintage. Compare Matthew 13:41; Matthew 24:31.

Came out of the temple which is in heaven - Sent or commissioned by God. See the notes on Revelation 14:15.

He also having a sharp sickle - On the word "sickle," see the notes on Revelation 14:14.

Verse 18

And another angel - The sixth in order. He came, like the angel in Revelation 14:15, with a command to him who had the sickle to go forth and execute his commission.

Came out from the altar - This stood in the front of the temple (see the notes on Matthew 21:12; compare the notes on Matthew 5:23-24), and was the place where burnt-sacrifices were made. As the work now to be done was a work of destruction, this was an appropriate place in the representation.

Which had power over fire - As if he kept the fire on the altar. Fire is the usual emblem of destruction; and as the work now to be done was such,

it was proper to represent this angel as engaged in it.

And cried with a loud cry, … - See Revelation 14:15. That is, he came forth, as with a command from God, to call on him who was appointed to do the work of destruction, now to engage in performing it. The time had fully come.

Thrust in thy sharp sickle - Revelation 14:15.

And gather the clusters of the vine of the earth - That portion of the earth which might be represented by a vineyard in which the grapes were to be gathered and crushed. The image here employed occurs elsewhere to denote the destruction of the wicked. See the very beautiful description in Isaiah 63:1-6, respecting the destruction of Edom, and the notes on that passage.

For her grapes are fully ripe - That is, the time has come for the ingathering; or, to apply the image, for the winding up of human affairs by the destruction of the wicked. The time here, as in the previous representation, is the end of the world; and the design is, to comfort the church in its trials and persecutions, by the assurance that all its enemies will be cut off.

Verse 19

And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth - That is, into that part of the earth which might be represented by a vineyard; or the earth considered as having been the abode of wicked men.

And cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God - See Isaiah 63:1-6. That is, the wine-press where the grapes are crushed, and where the juice, resembling blood, flows out, may be used as a symbol to denote the destruction of the wicked in the last day; and as the numbers will be immensely great, it is called the "great wine-press of divine wrath." The symbol appears to be used here alike with reference to the color of the wine resembling blood, and the pressure necessary to force it out; and thus employed it is one of the most striking emblems conceivable to denote the final destruction of the wicked.

Verse 20

And the wine-press was trodden without the city - The representation was made as if it were outside of the city - that is, the city of Jerusalem, for that is represented as the abode of the holy. The word "trodden" refers to the manner in which wine was usually prepared, by being trodden by the feet of people. See the notes on Isaiah 63:2. The wine-press was usually in

the vineyard - not in the city - and this is the representation here. As appearing to the eye of John, it was not within the walls of any city, but standing without.

And blood came out of the wine-press - The representation is, that there would be a great destruction which would be well represented by the juice flowing from a wine-press.

Even unto the horse bridles - Deep, as blood would be in a field of slaughter where it would come up to the very bridles of the horses. The idea is, that there would be a great slaughter.

By the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs - That is, two hundred miles; covering a space of two hundred miles square - a lake of blood. This is designed to represent a great slaughter; but why the space here employed to describe it was chosen is unknown. Some have supposed it was in allusion to the length of Palestine. Prof. Stuart supposes that it refers to the breadth of Italy, and that the allusion is to the attack made on the city of the beast. But it is impossible to determine why this space was chosen, and it is unnecessary. The idea is, that there would be a slaughter so great, as it were, as to produce a lake or sea of blood; that the enemies of the church would be completely and finally overthrown, and that the church, therefore, delivered from all its enemies, would be triumphant.

The "design" of this, as of the previous representations in this chapter, is to show that all the enemies of God will be destroyed, and that, therefore, the hearts of the friends of religion should be cheered and consoled in the trials and persecutions which were to come upon it. What could be better suited to sustain the church in the time of trial, than the assurance that every foe will be ultimately cut off? What is better suited to sustain the heart of the individual believer, than the assurance that all his foes will be quelled, and that he will ere long be safe in heaven?

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 15

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter Revelation 15:1-8 has a close connection in design with the previous chapter. In that, pledges and assurances had been given that all the enemies of religion would be cut off, and that the church would be ultimately triumphant, and particularly that that formidable anti-Christian power represented by the "beast" would be destroyed. This chapter commences the statement in regard to the manner in which these pledges would be accomplished, and the statement is pursued through the subsequent chapters, giving in detail what is here promised in a general manner. The vision in this chapter may be thus described:

I. The writer sees a new sign or wonder in heaven. Seven angels appear, having the seven last plagues that fill up or complete the wrath of God; representing the wrath that is to come upon the beast, or the complete overthrow of this formidable anti-Christian power, Revelation 15:1.

II. Those who in former times had "gotten the victory over the beast," now appear standing on a sea of glass, rejoicing and rendering thanks for the assurance that this great enemy of the church was now to be destroyed, and that now all nations were to come and worship before God, Revelation 15:2-4.

III. The writer sees the interior of the temple opened in heaven, and the seven angels, having the seven plagues, issuing forth to execute their commission. They come clothed in pure and white linen, and girded with golden girdles. One of the four beasts before the throne immediately gives them the seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, to empty them upon the earth - that is, to bring upon the beast the predicted destruction. The temple is immediately filled with smoke, so that no one might enter; that is, no one could now approach to make intercession, and the destruction of this great enemy's power is now certain, Revelation 15:5-8.

This chapter, therefore, is merely introductory to what follows, and its interpretation is attended with no particular difficulty. It is a beautiful scenic representation preparatory to the infliction of predicted judgments, and

designed to introduce the account of those judgments with suitable circumstances of solemnity.

Verse 1

And I saw another sign in heaven - Another wonder or extraordinary symbol. The word "sign" here - σημεῖον sēmeion- is the same which in Revelation 12:1, Revelation 12:3; Revelation 13:13, is rendered "wonder" and "wonders," and in Revelation 13:14; Revelation 16:14; Revelation 19:20, "miracles." The word is not found elsewhere in the Book of Revelation, though it is of frequent occurrence in other parts of the New Testament. See it explained in the notes on Revelation 12:1. Here it is used to denote something wonderful or marvelous. This is represented as appearing in heaven, for the judgments that were to fall upon the world were to come thence. Compare Revelation 11:19; Revelation 12:1; Revelation 14:1, Revelation 14:6, Revelation 14:13-14, Revelation 14:17.

Great and marvelous - Great and wonderful, or suited to excite admiration - θαυμαστὸν thaumastonThe subsequent statements fully justify this, and show that the vision was one of portentous character, and that was suited to hold the mind in astonishment.

Seven angels - Compare the notes on Revelation 1:4.

Having the seven last plagues - The article here, "the seven last plagues," would seem to imply that the plagues referred to had been before specified, or that it would be at once understood what is referred to. These plagues, however, have not been mentioned before, and the reason why the article is used here seems to be this: the destruction of this great anti-Christian power had been distinctly mentioned, Luke 12:48; Acts 16:23, Acts 16:33; 2 Corinthians 6:5; 2 Corinthians 11:23. It does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament, except in the Book of Revelation. In this book it is rendered "wound" in Revelation 13:3, Revelation 13:12, Revelation 13:14; and plagues in Revelation 9:20; Revelation 11:6; Revelation 15:1, Revelation 15:6, Revelation 15:8; Revelation 16:9, Revelation 16:21; Revelation 18:4, Revelation 18:8; Revelation 21:9; Revelation 22:18. It does not occur elsewhere. The secondary meaning of the word, and the meaning in the passage before us, is "a stripe" or "blow inflicted by God"; calamity or punishment. The word "last" means those under which the order of things here referred to would terminate; the winding up of the affairs respecting the beast and his image - not necessarily the closing of the affairs

of the world. Important events were to occur subsequent to the destruction of this anti-Christian power Revelation 10:7, where the word rendered "filled up" - ἐτελέσθη etelesthē- is rendered "finished."

Verse 2

And I saw as it were a sea of glass - In Revelation 4:6, a similar vision is recorded - "And before the throne there was a sea of glass, like unto crystal." See the notes on that passage. The sea of glass here means a sea clear, pellucid, like glass: an expanse that seemed to be made of glass. There it was entirely clear; here it is mingled with fire.

Mingled with fire - That is, a portion of the sea was red like fire. It was not all clear and pellucid, as in Revelation 4:6, but it was as it were a tesselated expanse, composed in part of what seemed to be glass, and in part of a material of a red or fiery color. In the former case Revelation 4:6, the emblem was designed to represent the pure worship of heaven without reference to any other symbolic design, and hence, the sea is wholly clear and pellucid; here, in connection with the purpose of furnishing an appropriate symbol of the divine majesty, there is united the idea of punishment on the foes of God, represented by the fiery or red color. If it is proper, from conjecture, to suggest the meaning of this as an emblem, it would be that the foundation - the main element - of all the divine dealings is justice or holiness - represented by the portion of the sea that seemed to be glass; and that there was, in this case, intermingled with that, the image of wrath or anger - represented by the portion that was fiery or red. The very sight of the pavement, therefore, on which they stood when worshipping God, would keep before their minds impressive views of his character and dealings.

And them that had gotten the victory over the beast - Revelation 13:11. That is, they who had gained a victory in times of persecution and temptation; or they whom the "beast" had not been able, by arts or arms, to subdue. The persons referred to here, I suppose, are those who in the long dominion of the papal power, and amidst all its arts and corruptions - its threats and persecutions - had remained steadfast in the truth, and who might thus be said to have gained a victory - for such victories of piety, virtue, and truth, amidst the corrupting influences of sin and error, and the intimidations of power, are the most important that are gained in this world.

And over his image - See the notes on Revelation 13:14-15. The meaning is, that they had not been led to apostatize by the dread of the

power represented here by the "image of the beast." In all the attempts of that power to subdue them - to intimidate them - to induce them to give up their attachment to the truth as it is in Jesus - they had remained steadfast in the faith, and had triumphed.

And over his mark - See the notes on Revelation 13:16. Over all the attempts of the beast to fix his mark upon them, or to designate them as his own.

And over the number of his name - See the notes on Revelation 13:17-18. Over all the attempts to fix upon them that mysterious number which expressed his name. The general sense is, that in times of general error and corruption; when the true friends of Christ were exposed to persecution; when every effort was made to induce them to become the followers of the "beast," and to yield to the corrupt system represented by the "beast," they remained unmoved, and adhered firmly to the truth. The number of such in the aggregate was not small; and with great beauty and propriory they are here represented as rejoicing and giving thanks to God on the overthrow of that corrupt and formidable power.

Stand on the sea of glass - That is, before God. They are now seen in heaven, redeemed and triumphant.

Having the harps of God - Harps that pertained to the worship of God; harps to be employed in his praise. See the notes on Revelation 14:2.

Verse 3

And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God - A song of thanksgiving and praise, such as Moses taught the Hebrew people to sing after their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. See Revelation 5:9-10, Revelation 5:12-13.

Saying, Great and marvelous are thy works - See the notes on Revelation 15:1. The meaning is, that great power was evinced in redeeming them; and that the interposition of the divine goodness in doing it was marvelous, or was such as to excite wonder and admiration.

Lord God Almighty - This would seem to mean the same thing as the expression so common in the Old Testament, "Yahweh, God of hosts." The union of these appellations give solemnity and impressiveness to the ascription of praise, for it brings into view the fact, that he whose praise is celebrated is Lord - Yahweh - -the uncreated and eternal One; that he is God the creator, upholder, and sovereign of all things; and that he is Almighty - having all power in all worlds. All these names and attributes are suggested

when we think of redemption; for all the perfections of a glorious God are suggested in the redemption of the soul from death. It is the Lord the Ruler of all worlds; it is God - the Maker of the race, and the Father of the race, who performs the work of redemption; and it is a work which could be accomplished only by one who is Almighty.

Just and true - The attributes of justice and truth are brought prominently into view also in the redemption of man. The fact that God is just, and that in all this work he has been careful to maintain his justice Romans 3:26; and the fact that he is true to himself, true to the creation, true to the fulfillment of all his promises, are prominent in this work, and it is proper that these attributes should be celebrated in the songs of praise in heaven.

Are thy ways - Thy ways or dealings with us, and with the enemies of the church. That is, all the acts or "ways" of God in the redemption of his people had been characterized by justice and truth.

Thou King of saints - King of those who are holy; of all who are redeemed and sanctified. The more approved reading here, however, is "King of nations" - ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν ἐθνῶν ho basileus tōn ethnōn- instead of "King of saints" - τῶν ἁγιῶν tōn hagiōnSo it is read in the critical editions of Griesbach, Tittmann, and Hahn. The sense is not materially affected by the difference in the reading.

Verse 4

Who shall not fear thee, O Lord - Reverence and adore thee; for the word "fear," in the Scriptures, is commonly used in this sense when applied to God. The sense here is, that the judgments about to be inflicted on the beast and his image should and would teach people to reverence and adore God. There is, perhaps, included here also the idea of awe, inasmuch as this would be the effect of punishment.

And glorify thy name - Honor thee - the name being put for the person who bare it. The sense is, that, as a consequence of these judgments, men would be brought to honor God, and to acknowledge him as the Ruler of the earth.

For thou only art holy - That is, in these judgments he would show himself to be a holy God; a God hating sin, and loving righteousness and truth. When it is said that he "only" is holy, the expression is used, of course, in a comparative sense. He is so pure that it may be said that, in

comparison with him, no one else is holy. Compare the notes on Job 4:18; Job 15:15.

For all nations shall come and worship before thee - That is, as the result of these punishments inflicted on this dread anti-Christian power, they shalt come and worship thee. Everywhere in the New Testament the destruction of that power is connected with the promise of the speedy conversion of the world.

For thy judgments are made manifest - To wit, on the beast. That formidable power is overthrown, and the grand hindrance to the universal spread of the true religion is now taken away. Compare the notes on Isaiah 26:9.

Verse 5

And after that I looked - After I had seen in vision the redeemed thus referred to, celebrating the praises of God, I saw the preparation made for the execution of these purposes of judgment.

And behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony - Not the whole temple, but only that part to which this name was given. The word "tabernacle" - σκηνή skēnē- means properly a booth, hut, tent, and was the name commonly given to the tent or tabernacle that was erected in the wilderness for the service of God. See the notes on Acts 7:44. The same word came naturally to be applied to the temple that was reared for the same purpose in Jerusalem. It is called the "tabernacle of testimony," because it was a testimony or witness of the presence of God among the people - that is, it served to keep up the remembrance of him. See the notes as above on Acts 7:44, where the same Greek phrase is used as here - rendered there "tabernacle of witness." The word "temple" here - ναὸς naos- does not refer to the whole of the building called the "temple," but to the holy of holies. See the notes on Hebrews 9:3. This was regarded as the unique dwelling-place of God; and it was this sacred place, usually closed from all access, that now seemed to be opened, implying that the command to execute these purposes came directly from God himself.

In heaven - That is, that part of heaven which corresponds to the most holy place in the temple was opened; to wit, what is the unique residence of God himself.

Was opened - Was thrown open to the viewer John, so that he was permitted to look, as it were, upon the very dwelling-place of God. From his holy presence now came forth the angels to execute his purposes of

judgment on that anti-Christian power which had so long corrupted religion and oppressed the world.

Verse 6

And the seven angels - See the notes on Revelation 15:1.

Came out of the temple - Were seen to come from the temple; that is, from the immediate presence of God.

Having the seven plagues - See the notes on Revelation 15:1. Each one entrusted with a single "plague" to be executed upon the earth. The meaning here is, that they were designated or appointed to execute those plagues in judgments. The symbols of their office - the golden vials - were given to them afterward, Revelation 15:7.

Clothed in pure and white linen - The emblem of holiness - the common representation in regard to the heavenly inhabitants. See the notes on Revelation 3:4; Revelation 7:13. Compare Matthew 17:2; Luke 9:29; Mark 16:5.

And having their breasts girded with golden girdles - See the notes on Revelation 1:13. The meaning is, that they were attired in a manner befitting their rank and condition.

Verse 7

And one of the four beasts - See the notes on Revelation 4:6-7. Which one of the four is not mentioned. From the explanation given of the design of the representation of the "four beasts," or living creatures, in the notes on Revelation 4:6-7, it would seem that the meaning here is, that the great principles of that divine government would be illustrated in the events which are now to occur. In events that were so closely connected with the honor of God and the triumph of his cause on the earth, there was a propriety in the representation that these living creatures, symbolizing the great principles of divine administration, would be particularly interested.

Gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials - The word used here - φιάλη phialē- means properly, "a bowl or goblet, having more breadth than depth" (Robinson, Lexicon). Our word vial, though derived from this, means rather a thin long bottle of glass, used particularly by apothecaries and druggists. The word would be better rendered by "bowl" or "goblet," and probably the representation here was of such bowls as were used in the temple service. See the notes on Revelation 5:8. They are called in Revelation 16:1, "vials of the wrath of God"; and here they are said to be "full of the wrath of God." The allusion seems to be to a drinking cup or

goblet filled with poison, and given to persons to drink - an allusion drawn from one of the methods of punishment in ancient times. See the notes on Revelation 14:10. These vials or goblets thus became emblems of divine wrath, to be inflicted on the beast and his image.

Full of the wrath of God - Filled with what represented his wrath; that is, they seemed to be filled with a poisonous mixture, which being poured upon the earth, the sea, the rivers, the sun, the seat of the beast, the river Euphrates, and into the air, was followed by severe divine judgments on this great anti-Christian power. See Revelation 16:2-4, Revelation 16:8, Revelation 16:10, Revelation 16:12, Revelation 16:17.

Who liveth forever and ever - The eternal God. The particular object in referring to this attribute here appears to be, that though there may seem to be delay in the execution of his purposes, yet they will be certainly accomplished, as he is the ever-living and unchangeable God. He is not under a necessity of abandoning his purposes, like people, if they are not soon accomplished.

Verse 8

And the temple was filled with smoke - The usual symbol of the divine presence in the temple. See the notes on Isaiah 4:5; Isaiah 6:4.

From the glory of God - From the manifestation of the divine majesty. That is, the smoke was the proper accompaniment of the Divine Being when appearing in majesty. So on Mount Sinai he is represented as appearing in this manner: "And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly," Exodus 19:18. The purpose here seems to have been, partly to represent the smoke as the proper symbol of the divine presence, and partly to represent it as so filling the temple that no one could enter it until the seven plagues were fulfilled.

And from his power - Produced by his power; and the symbol of his power.

And no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled - Until those vials had been poured out, and all that was indicated by them was accomplished. The meaning here seems to be, that no one would be permitted to enter to make intercession - to turn away his wrath - to divert him from his purpose. That is, the purpose of punishment had been formed, and would certainly be executed. The

agents or instrumentalities in this fearful work had been now sent forth, and they would by no means be recalled. The mercy-seat, in this respect, was inaccessible; the time of judgment on the great foe had come, and the destruction of the grand enemy of the church was certain. The point, therefore, at which this vision leaves us is, that where all the preparations are made for the infliction of the threatened punishment on the grand anti-Christian power which had so long stood up against the truth; where the agents had prepared to go forth; and where no intercession will ever avail to turn away the infliction of the divine wrath. The detail follows in the next chapter.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 16

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

The previous chapter Revelation 15:1-8 had described the preparation for the last plagues that were to come upon that mighty anti-Christian power to which this series of prophetic visions refers. All is now ready; and this chapter contains the description of those seven last "plagues" under which this power would reel and fall. These "plagues" are described as if they were a succession of physical calamities that would come upon this anti-Christian power, and bring it to an end; though perhaps it is not necessary to look for a literal infliction of such calamities. The course of the exposition thus far will lead us to regard this chapter as a description of the successive blows by which the papacy will fall. A part of this is still undoubtedly future, though perhaps not far distant; and, in reference to this, and to some portions of the remainder of the book, there may be more difficulty in satisfying the mind than in the portions which pertain to past events.

The chapter comprises statements on the following points:

A command is issued from the temple to the seven angels, to go and execute the commission with which they were entrusted, Revelation 16:1.

The first angel pours out his vial upon the earth followed by a plague upon those who had worshipped the beast and his image, Revelation 16:2.

The second angel pours out his vial upon the sea - followed by the death of all that were in the sea, Revelation 16:3.

The third angel pours out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters, and they become blood. This is followed by an ascription of praise from the angel of the waters, because God had given to those who had shed the blood of the saints blood to drink, with a response from the altar that this was just, Revelation 16:4-7.

The fourth angel pours out his vial upon the sun, and an intenser heat is given to it to scorch people. The consequence is, that they blaspheme the

name of God, but repent not of their sins, Revelation 16:8-9.

The fifth angel pours out his vial upon the very seat of the beast, and his kingdom is full of darkness. People still blaspheme the name of God and repent not of their sins, Revelation 16:10-11.

The sixth angel pours out his vial upon the great river Euphrates. The consequence is, that the waters of the river are dried up, so that the way of the kings of the East might be prepared. The writer sees also, in this connection, three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, that go forth into all the earth to gather all nations to the great day of the battle of God Almighty, Revelation 16:12-16.

The seventh angel pours out his vial into the air, and a voice is heard answering that "it is done:" the time of the consummation has come - the formidable anti-Christian power is to come to an end. The great city is divided into three parts; the cities of the nations fall; great Babylon thus comes up in remembrance before God to receive the punishment which is her due. This terrific scene is accompanied with voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake, and with great hail - a tempest of wrath beating upon that formidable power that had so long stood up against God, Revelation 16:17-21. The detail of the actual destruction of this power is carried forward in the subsequent chapters.

Verse 1

And I heard a great voice out of the temple - A loud voice out of the temple as seen in heaven (notes on Revelation 11:19), and that came, therefore, from the very presence of God.

Saying to the seven angels - That had the seven vials of wrath. See the notes on Revelation 15:1, Revelation 15:7.

Go your ways - Your respective ways, to the fulfillment of the task assigned to each.

And pour out the vials of the wrath of God - Empty those vials; cause to come upon the earth the plagues indicated by their contents. The order in which this was to be done is not intimated. It seems to be supposed that that would be understood by each.

Upon the earth - The particular part of the earth is not here specified, but it should not be inferred that it was to be upon the earth in general, or that there were any calamities, in consequence of this pouring out of the vials of wrath, to spread over the whole world. The subsequent statements show what parts of the earth were particularly to be affected.

Verse 2

And the first went - Went forth from heaven, where the seat of the vision was laid.

And poured out his vial upon the earth - That is, upon the land, in contradistinction from the sea, the rivers, the air, the seat of the beast, the sun, as represented in the other vials. In Revelation 16:1, the word earth is used in the general sense to denote this world as distinguished from heaven; in this verse it is used in the specific sense, to denote land as distinguished from other things. Compare Mark 4:1; Mark 6:47; John 6:21; Acts 27:29, Acts 27:43-44. In many respects there is a strong resemblance between the pouring out of those seven vials, and the sounding of the seven trumpets, in Revelation 8:7, it was the earth that was particularly affected in contradistinction from the sea, the fountains, and the sun: "The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth." Compare Revelation 8:8, Revelation 8:10, Revelation 8:12. In regard to the symbolical meaning of the term earth, considered with reference to divine judgments, see the notes on Revelation 8:7.

And there fell a noisome and grievous sore - The judgment here is specifically different from that inflicted under the first trumpet, Revelation 8:7. There it is said to have been that "the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up." Here it is that there fell upon people a "noisome and grievous sore." The two, therefore, are designed to refer to different events, and to different forms of punishment. The word rendered "sore" properly denotes a wound (Homer, Iliad xi. 812), and then, in later writers, an ulcer or sore. It is used in the New Testament only in the following places: Luke 16:21, "The dogs came and licked his sores"; and in Revelation 16:2, Revelation 16:11, where it is rendered "sore," and "sores." It is used in the Septuagint, in reference to the boils that were brought upon the Egyptians, in Exodus 9:9-12, and probably Deuteronomy 28:27; in reference to the leprosy, Leviticus 13:18-20, Leviticus 13:23; in reference to

the boil, ulcer, or elephantiasis brought upon Job Job 2:7; and in reference to any sore or ulcer, in Deuteronomy 28:35.

In all these places it is the translation of the word שׁחין shechiyn- rendered in our English version as "boil," Exodus 9:9-11; Leviticus 13:18-20, Leviticus 13:23; 2 Kings 20:7; Job 2:7; Isaiah 38:21; and "botch," Deuteronomy 28:27, Deuteronomy 28:35. The proper meaning, therefore, is that of a sore, ulcer, or boil of a severe and painful character; and the most obvious reference in the passage, to one who was accustomed to the language of Scripture, would be to some fearful plague like what was sent upon the Egyptians. In the case of Hezekiah 2 Kings 20:7; Isaiah 38:21, it was probably used to denote a "plague-boil," or the black leprosy. See the notes on Isaiah 38:21. The word "noisome" - κακὸν kakon"evil, bad" - is used here to characterize the plague referred to as being especially painful and dangerous. The word "grievous" - πονηρον ponēron- "bad, malignant, hurtful" - is further used to increase the intensity of the expression, and to characterize the plague as particularly severe. There is no reason to suppose that it is meant that this would be literally inflicted, anymore than it is in the next plague, where it is said that the "rivers and fountains became blood." What is obviously meant is, that there would be some calamity which would be well represented or symbolized by such a fearful plague.

Upon the men - Though the plague was poured upon "the earth," yet its effects were seen upon "men." Some grievous calamity would befall them, as if they were suddenly visited with the plague.

Which had the mark of the beast - notes on Revelation 13:16-17. This determines the portion of the earth that was to be afflicted. It was not the whole world; it was only that part of it where the "beast" was honored. According to the interpretation proposed in Revelation 13:14-15. According to the interpretation in Revelation 13:1-2, Revelation 13:11, and on "the image of the beast" in the notes on Revelation 13:14-15. This one mighty power existed in two forms closely united, and mutually sustaining each other - the civil or secular, and the ecclesiastical or spiritual. It is this combined and consolidated power - the papacy as such - that is referred to here, for this has been the grand anti-Christian power in the world.

(2) it refers to some grievous and fearful calamity which would come upon that power, and which would be like a plague-spot on the human body - something which would be of the nature of a divine judgment, resembling what came upon the Egyptians for their treatment of the people of God.

(3) the course of this exposition leads us to suppose, that this would be the beginning in the series of judgments, which would terminate in the complete overthrow of that formidable power. It is the first of the vials of wrath, and the whole description evidently contemplates a series of disasters, which would be properly represented by these successive vials. In the application of this, therefore, we should naturally look for the first of a series of such judgments, and should expect to find some facts in history which would he properly represented by the vial "poured upon the earth."

(4) in accordance with this representation, we should expect to find such a series of calamities gradually weakening, and finally terminating the papal power in the world, as would be properly represented by the number seven.

(5) in regard now to the application of this series of symbolical representations, it may be remarked, that most recent expositors - as Elliott, Cunninghame, Keith, Faber, Lord, and others - refer them to the events of the French revolution, as important events in the overthrow of the papal power; and this, I confess, although the application is attended with some considerable difficulties, has more plausibility than any other explanation proposed. In support of this application, the following considerations may be suggested:

(a) France, in the time of Charlemagne, was the kingdom to which the papacy owed its civil organization and its strength - a kingdom to which could be traced all the civil or secular power of the papacy, and which was, in fact, a restoration or reconstruction of the old Roman power - the fourth kingdom of Daniel. See the notes on Daniel 7:24-28; and compare the notes on Revelation 13:3, Revelation 13:12-14. The restoration of the old Roman dominion under Charlemagne, and the aid which he rendered to the papacy in its establishment as to a temporal power, would make it probable that this kingdom would be referred to in the series of judgments that were to accomplish the overthrow of the papal dominion.

(b) In an important sense France has always been the head of the papal power. The king of France has been usually styled, by the popes themselves, "the oldest son of the church." In reference to the whole papal

dominion in former times, one of the principal reliances has been on France, and, to a very large extent, the state of Europe has been determined by the condition of France. “A revolution in France,” said Napoleon, “is sooner or later followed by a revolution in Europe” (Alison). Its central position; its power; its direct relation to all the purposes and aims of the papacy, would seem to make it probable that, in the account of the final destruction of that power, this kingdom would not be overlooked.

(c) The scenes which occurred in the times of the French revolution were such as would be properly symbolized by the pouring out of the first, the second, the third, and the fourth vials. In the passage before us - the pouring out of the first vial - the symbol employed is that of “a noisome and grievous sore” - boil, ulcer, plague-spot - “on the men which had the mark of the beast, and on them which worshipped his image.” This representation was undoubtedly derived from the account of the sixth plague on Egypt Exodus 9:9-11; and the sense here is, not that this would be literally inflicted on the power here referred to, but that a calamity would come upon it which would be well represented by that, or of which that would be an appropriate emblem. This interpretation is further confirmed by Revelation 11:8, where Rome is referred to under the name of Egypt, and where it is clear that we are to look for a course of divine dealing, in regard to the one, resembling what occurred to the other.

See the notes on that passage. Now, this “noisome and grievous sore would well represent the moral corruption, the pollution, the infidelity, the atheism, the general dissolution of society, that preceded and accompanied the French revolution; for that was a universal breaking out of loathsome internal disease - of corruption at the center - and in its general features might be represented as a universal plague-spot on society, extending over the countries where the beast and his image were principally worshipped. The symbol would properly denote that “tremendous outbreak of social and moral evil, of democratic fury, atheism, and vice, which was specially seen to characterize the French revolution: that of which the ultimate source was in the long and deep-seated corruption and irreligion of the nation; the outward vent, expression, and organ of its Jacobin clubs, and seditious and atheistic publications; the result, the dissolution of all society, all morals, and all religion; with acts of atrocity and horror accompanying, scarce

paralleled in the history of people; and suffering and anguish of correspondent intensity throbbing throughout the social mass and corroding it; what, from France as a center, spread like a plague throughout its affiliated societies to the other countries of papal Christendom, and was, wherever its poison was imbibed, as much the punishment as the symptoms of the corruption within."

Of this sad chapter in the history of man, it is unnecessary to give any description here. For scenes of horror, pollution, and blood, its parallel has never been found in the history of our race, and, as an event in history, it was worthy of a notice in the symbols which portrayed the future. The full details of these amazing scenes must be sought in the histories which describe them, and to such works as Alison's *History of Europe*, and Burke's Letters on a Regicide Peace, the reader must be referred. A few expressions copied from those letters of Mr. Burke, penned with no design of illustrating this passage in the Apocalypse, and no expectation that they would be ever so applied, will show with what propriety the spirit of inspiration suggested the phrase, "a noisome and grievous sore" or plague-spot, on the supposition that the design was to refer to these scenes. In speaking of the revolutionary spirit in France, Mr. Burke calls it "the fever of aggravated Jacobinism," "the epidemic of atheistical fanaticism," "an evil lying deep in the corruptions of human nature," "the malignant French distemper," "a plague, with its fanatical spirit of proselytism, that needed the strictest quarantine to guard against it," whereof, though the mischief might be "skimmed over" for a time, yet the result into whatever country it entered, was "the corruption of all morals," "the decomposition of all society," etc. But it is unnecessary to describe those scenes further. The "world has them by heart," and they can never be obliterated from the memory of man. In the whole history of the race there has never been an outbreak of evil that showed so deep pollution and corruption within.

(d) The result of this was to affect the papacy - a blow, in fact, aimed at that power. Of course, all the infidelity and atheism of the French nation, before so strongly papal, went just so far in weakening the power of the papacy; and in the ultimate result it will perhaps yet be found that the horrid outbreaks in the French revolution were the first in the series of providential events that will result in the entire overthrow of that anti-Christian power.

At all events, it will be admitted, I think, that, on the supposition that it was intended that this should be descriptive of the scenes that occurred in Europe at the close of the last century, no more expressive symbol could have been chosen than has been employed in the pouring out of this first vial of wrath.

Verse 3

And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea - So the second trumpet Revelation 8:8, "And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood." For the meaning of this as a symbol, see the notes on that verse.

And it became as the blood of a dead man - "Either very bloody, like a mangled corse, or else colored, as it were, with the dark and almost black blood of a dead man" (Prof. Stuart, in loco). The latter would seem to be, most probably, the meaning; implying that the ocean would become discolored, and indicating that this was the effect of blood shed in great quantities on its waters. In Revelation 8:8 it is, "the sea became blood"; here the allusion to the blood of a dead man would more naturally suggest the idea of naval conflicts, and of the blood of the slain poured in great quantities into the deep.

And every living soul died in the sea - In Revelation 8:9 it is said that "the third part of the creatures that were in the sea died, and the third part of the ships were destroyed." Here the destruction is more general; the calamity is more severe and awful. It is as if every living thing - πᾶσα ψυχὴ ζῶσα pasa psuchē zōsa- had died. No emphasis should be put on the word "soul" here, for the word means merely "a creature, a living thing, an animal," Acts 2:43; Acts 3:23; Romans 13:1; 1 Corinthians 15:45. See Robinson, Lexicon sub voce, c. The sense here is, that there would be some dreadful calamity, as if the sea were to be changed into dark blood, and as if every living thing in it were to die.

In inquiring into the proper application of this, it is natural to look for something pertaining to the sea, or the ocean (see the notes on Revelation 8:8-9), and we should expect to find the fulfillment in some calamity that would fall on the marine force, or the commerce of the power that is here referred to; that is, according to the interpretation all along adopted, of the papal power; and the proper application, according to this interpretation,

would be the complete destruction or annihilation of the naval force that contributed to sustain the papacy. This we should look for in respect to the naval power of France, Spain, and Portugal, for these are the only papal nations that have had a navy. We should expect, in the fulfillment of this, to find a series of naval disasters, reddening the sea with blood, which would tend to weaken the power of the papacy, and which might be regarded as one in the series of events that would ultimately result in its entire overthrow.

Accordingly, in pursuance of the plan adopted in explaining the pouring out of the first vial, it is to be observed that immediately succeeding, and connected with, the events thus referred to, there was a series of naval disasters that swept away the fleets of France, and that completely demolished the most formidable naval power that had ever been prepared by any nation under the papal dominion. This series of disasters is thus noticed by Mr. Elliott (iii. 329,330): "Meanwhile, the great naval war between France and England was in progress; which, from its commencement in February, 1793, lasted for above twenty years, with no intermission but that of the short and delusive peace of Amiens; in which war the maritime power of Great Britain was strengthened by the Almighty Providence that protected her to destroy everywhere the French ships, commerce, and smaller colonies; including those of the fast and long-continued allies of the French, Holland and Spain. In the year 1793, the greater part of the French fleet at Toulon was destroyed by Lord Hood; in June, 1794, followed Lord Howe's great victory over the French off Ushant; then the taking of Corsica, and nearly all the smaller Spanish and French West India Islands; then, in 1795, Lord Bridport's naval victory, and the capture of the Cape of Good Hope; as also soon after of a French and Dutch fleet, sent to retake it; then, in 1797, the victory over the Spanish fleet off Cape Vincent; and that of Camperdown over the Dutch; then, in succession, Lord Nelson's three mighty victories - of the Nile in 1798, of Copenhagen in 1801, and in 1805 of Trafalgar. Altogether in this naval war, from its beginning in 1793, to its end in 1815, it appears that there were destroyed near 200 ships of the line, between 300 and 400 frigates, and an almost incalculable number of smaller vessels of war and ships of commerce. The whole history of the world does not present such a period of naval war, destruction, and bloodshed." This brief summary may show, if

this was referred to, the propriety of the expression, "The sea became as the blood of a dead man"; and may show also that, on the supposition that it was intended that these events should be referred to, an appropriate symbol has been employed. No language could more strikingly set forth these bloody scenes.

Verse 4

And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters - This coincides also with the account of the sounding of the third trumpet Revelation 8:10-11; "And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters." As to the meaning of the phrase, "rivers and fountains of waters," see the notes on that passage. We found, it was supposed, in the application of that passage, that the invasion of the Roman empire by Attila, king of the Huns, was referred to, affecting mainly those parts of the empire where the rivers and streams had their origin. The analogy would lead us, in the fulfillment of the passage before us, to look for some similar desolations on those portions of Europe. See the notes at the close of Revelation 16:7.

And they became blood - This would properly mean that they became as blood; or became red with blood; and it would be fulfilled if bloody battles were fought near them, so that they seemed to run blood.

Verse 5

And I heard the angel of the waters say - The angel who presides over the element of water; in allusion to the common opinion among the Hebrews that the angels presided over elements, and that each element was committed to the jurisdiction of a particular angel. Compare the notes on Revelation 7:1.

Thou art righteous, O Lord - In view of the judgments that reddened these streams and fountains with the blood of people, the angel ascribes righteousness to God. These judgments seemed terrible - the numbers slain were so vast - the bloody stream indicated so great slaughter, and such severity of the divine judgment; yet the angel sees in all this only the act of a righteous God bringing just retribution on the guilty.

Which art, and wast, and shalt be - That is, who art eternal - existing now; who hast existed in all past time; and who will exist ever onward. See the notes on Revelation 1:8. The reason why this attribute of God is here

referred to, seems to be that the mind of the angel adverts to it in the changes and desolations that were occurring around him. In such overturnings among people - such revolutions of kingdoms - such desolations of war - the mind naturally turns to one who is unchanging; to one whose throne is from everlasting to everlasting.

Because thou hast judged thus - Hast suffered these wars to occur that have changed rivers and fountains to blood.

Verse 6

For they have shed the blood of saints - The nations here referred to. They have been engaged in scenes of bloody persecution, and this is a just recompense.

And prophets - Teachers of religion; ministers of truth. It is not necessary to understand the word "prophets" here in its technical sense, as denoting those who are raised up by God and sent forth as inspired men, but it may be understood in its more common signification in the New Testament as denoting teachers of religion in general. See the Romans 12:6 note; 1 Corinthians 14:1 note.

And thou hast given them blood to drink - To wit, by turning the streams and fountains into blood, Revelation 16:4. Blood had been poured out in such abundance that it seemed to mingle with the very water that they drank. This was a recompense for their having, in those very regions, poured out so much blood in persecuting the saints and prophets - the pious private members of the church, and the public teachers of religion.

For they are worthy - That is, they deserve this; or this is a just recompense for their sins. It is not intended that those who would thus suffer had been individually guilty of this, or that this was properly a punishment on them; but it is meant that in those countries there had been bloody persecutions, and that this was a fit recompense for what had there occurred.

Verse 7

And I heard another - Evidently another angel, though this is not specified.

Out of the altar - Either the angel of the altar - that is, who presided over the altar (Prof. Stuart), or an angel whose voice seemed to come from the altar. The sense is essentially the same. The writer seemed to hear a voice coming from the altar responding to what had just been said in regard to the judgment of God, or to his righteousness in bringing the judgment

upon people, Revelation 16:5. This was evidently the voice of someone who was interested in what was occurring, or to whom these things particularly pertained; that is, one who was particularly connected with the martyrs referred to, whose blood was now, as it were, to be avenged. We are naturally reminded by this of the martyr-scene in Revelation 6:9-11, in the opening of the fifth seal, though it cannot be supposed that the same events are referred to. There "the souls of those that had been slain for the word of God" are represented as being "under the altar," and as crying to God to "avenge their blood on them who dwelt on the earth." Here a voice is heard with reference to martyrs, as of one interested in them, ascribing praise to God for having brought a righteous judgment on those who had shed the blood of the saints. They are both, for similar reasons, connected with the "altar," and the voice is heard proceeding from the same source. In regard to the meaning of the word "altar" here, and the reason why the martyrs are represented in connection with it, see the notes on Revelation 6:9.

True and righteous are thy judgments - Responding to what is said in Revelation 16:5. That is, God is "true" or faithful to his promises made to his people, and "righteous" in the judgments which he has now inflicted. These judgments had come upon those who had shed the blood of the martyrs, and they were just.

In regard to the application of this there are several things to be said. The following points are clear:

(a)That this judgment would "succeed" the first-mentioned, and apparently at a period not remote.

(b)It would occur in a region where there had been much persecution.

(c)It would be in a country of streams, and rivers, and fountains.

(d)It would be a just retribution for the bloody persecutions which had occurred there.

The question now is, where we shall find the fulfillment of this, assuming that the explanation of the pouring out of the first vial is correct. And here, I think, there can be no mistake in applying it to the events bearing on the papacy, and the papal powers, which followed the French revolution. The next material event, after that revolution, was the invasion of Italy, where Napoleon began his career of victories, and where he first acquired his fame. At this stage of my examination of this passage, I looked

into Alison's *History of Europe* to see what events, in fact, followed the scenes of confusion, crime, blood, atheism, and pollution in the French revolution, and I found that the next chapters in these eventful scenes, were such as would be well represented by the vial poured upon the rivers and fountains, and by their being turned into blood.

The detail would be too long for my limits, and I can state merely a summary of a few of the chapters in that history. Chapter xix contains the "History of the French Republic from the fall of Robespierre to the establishment of the Directory" - comprising properly the closing scenes of "the Reign of Terror." Chapter xx contains an account of the campaign in Italy in 1796, embracing, as stated in the summing up of contents in this chapter, the "Battles of Montenotte, Millesimo, Dego; the passage of the bridge of Lodi, and fall of Milan; the siege of Mantua, and the battle of Castiglione; the battles of Caldero and Arcola; and the battles of Rivoli and Mantua." This is followed (chapter xxiii) with an account of the campaign of 1797, which closed with the fall of Venice; and this is followed (chapter xxvi.) with an account of the invasion of Switzerland, etc. It is unnecessary to dwell on the details of the wars which followed the French revolution on the Rhine, the Po, and the Alpine streams of Piedmont and Lombardy. The slightest acquaintance with that history will show the propriety of the following remarks:

(a) These wars occurred in regions under the influence of the papacy, for these were all papal states and territories.

(b) These scenes followed closely on the French revolution, and grew out of it as a natural consequence, and would be properly represented as a second "vial" poured out immediately after the first.

(c) The country is such as here supposed - "of rivers and fountains" - for, being mostly a mountainous region, it abounds with springs, and fountains, and streams. Indeed, on the supposition that this is the land referred to, a more appropriate description could not have been given of it than is found in this passage. One has only to look upon a map of Northern Italy to see that there is no other portion of the world which would more naturally be suggested when speaking of a country abounding in "rivers and fountains of water." The admirable map of this region prefixed to the

volume, for which I am indebted to the work of Dr. Alexander Keith, on the Signs of the Times, will clearly illustrate this passage, and the corresponding passage in chapter viii., x., xi.,. Let anyone look at the Po and its tributaries on the map, and then read with attention the twentieth chapter of Alison's *History of Europe* (vol. i. pp. 391-424), and he will be struck with the appropriateness of the description, on the supposition that this portion of the book of Revelation was designed to refer to these scenes; for he cannot but see that the battles there described were fought in a country in every way corresponding with the statement here.

(d) This country corresponds with the description here given in another respect. In Revelation 16:5-6 there is a tribute of praise rendered to God, in view of these judgments, because he was righteous in bringing them upon a land where the blood of saints and prophets had been shed - a land of martyrs. Now this is applicable to the circumstances supposed, not only in the sense that Italy in general had been the land where the blood of martyrs had been shed - the land of Roman persecution, alike under paganism and the papacy - but true in a more definite sense, from the fact that this was the very region where the persecutions against the Waldenses and the Albigenses had been carried on - the valleys of Piedmont. In the times of papal persecution these valleys had been made to flow with the blood of the saints; and it seemed, at least, to be a righteous retribution that these desolations of war, these conflagrations, and these scenes of carnage, should occur in that very land, and that the very fountains and streams which had before been turned into blood, by the slaughter of the friends of the Saviour, should now be reddened with the blood of men slain in battle. This is, perhaps, what John saw in vision: a land where persecution had raged, and the blood of the holy had flowed freely, and then the same land brought under the awful judgments of God, and the fountains and streams reddened with the blood of the slain. There was a propriety, therefore, that a voice should be heard ascribing righteousness to God for avenging the blood of the saints Revelation 16:5-6, and that another voice should be heard from the "altar" of the martyrs Revelation 16:7 responding and saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."

(e) It may be added, to show the propriety of this, that this was one of the series of events which will be found in the end to have contributed to

the overthrow of the papal power; for a blow was struck, in the French invasion of Italy, from which Rome has never recovered, and sentiments were diffused as the result in favor of liberty which it has been difficult ever since to suppress, and which are destined yet to burst out in favor of freedom, and to be one of the means of the final destruction of the power. Compare Alison's *History of Europe*, vol. 1, p. 403.

Verse 8

And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun - Toward the sun, or so as to reach the sun. The effect was as if it had been poured upon the sun, giving it an intense heat, and thus inflicting a severe judgment upon people. This corresponds also with the fourth trumpet Revelation 8:12, where it is said, that the "third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars." For the general meaning of this symbol see the notes on that place. The idea is, that a scene of calamity and woe would occur as if the sun should be made to pour forth such intense heat that people would be "scorched." It cannot be supposed that the sun would be literally made hotter, or that the exact nature of these calamities would be that people would be consumed by its rays.

And power was given unto him - To the sun. The meaning is, that a calamity would follow as if such an increased power should be given to its rays.

To scorch men with fire - Literally, "And it was given him to scorch men with fire" - that is, with heat so great that it seemed to be fire. The Greek word - καυματίσαι kaumatisai- meaning "to burn, to scorch" - is used in the New Testament only in Matthew 13:6; Mark 4:6; Revelation 16:8-9, in all which places it is rendered "scorch" and "scorched." Compare, however, the use of the word καῦμα kaumain Revelation 7:16; Revelation 16:9; καῦσις kausisin Hebrews 6:8; καυσόω kausoōin 1 Peter 3:10, 1 Peter 3:12; and καύσων kausōnin Matthew 20:12; Luke 12:55; James 1:11. The notion of intense or consuming heat is implied in all the forms of the word; and the reference here is to some calamity that would be well represented by such an increased heat of the sun.

Verse 9

And men were scorched with great heat - That is, as above expressed, calamity came upon them which would be well represented by such heat. It is said that this calamity would come upon people, and we are to suppose

that it would be such that human life would be particularly affected; and as that heat of the sun must be exceedingly intense which would cut down people, we are to suppose that the judgment here referred to would be intensely severe.

And blasphemed the name of God - The effect would be to cause them to blaspheme God or to reproach him as the author of these calamities; and in the fulfillment of this we are to look for a state of things when there would be augmented wickedness and irreligion, and when people would become worse and worse, notwithstanding the woes that had come upon them.

Which hath power over these plagues - Who had brought these plagues upon them, and who had power to remove them.

And they repented not - The effect was not to produce repentance, though it was manifest that these judgments had come upon them on account of their sins. Compare the notes on Revelation 9:21.

To give him glory - To turn from sin; to honor him by lives of obedience. Compare the notes on John 9:24.

In regard to the "application" of this the following things may be remarked:

(a)That the calamity here referred to was one of the series of events which would precede the overthrow of the "beast," and contribute to that, for to this all these judgments tend.

(b)In the order in which it stands it is to follow, and apparently to follow soon, the third judgment - the pouring of the vial upon the fountains and streams.

(c)It would be a calamity such as if the sun, the source of light and comfort to mankind, were smitten, and became a source of torment.

(d)This would be attended by a great destruction of people, and we should naturally look in such an application for calamities in which multitudes of people would be, as it were, consumed.

(e)This would not be followed, as it might be hoped it would, by repentance, but would be attended with reproaches of God, with profaneness, with a great increase of wickedness.

Now, on the supposition that the explanation of the previous passages is correct, there can be no great difficulty in supposing that this refers to the wars of Europe following the French revolution, the wars that preceded the direct attack on the papacy and the overthrow of the papal government, for these events had all the characteristics here referred to:

(a) They were one of a series in weakening the papal power in Europe - heavy blows that will yet be seen to have been among the means preliminary to its final overthrow.

(b) They followed in their order the invasion of Northern Italy, for one of the purposes of that invasion was to attack the Austrian power there, and ultimately through the Tyrol to attack Austria itself. Napoleon, after his victories in Northern Italy, above referred to (compare chapter xx of Alison‘s *History of Europe*), thus writes to the French Directory: “Coni, Ceva, and Alexandria are in the hands of our army; if you do not ratify the convention I will keep these fortresses and march upon Turin. Meanwhile I shall march tomorrow against Beaulieu, and drive him across the Po; I shall follow close at his heels, overrun all Lombardy, and in a month be in the Tyrol, join the army of the Rhine, and carry our united forces into Bavaria. That design is worthy of you, of the army, and of the destinies of France” (Alison, i. 401).

(c) The campaign in Germany in 1796 followed immediately this campaign in Italy. Thus, in chapter xx. of Alison‘s History, we have an account of the campaign in Italy; in chapter xxi. we have the account of the campaign in Germany; and the other wars in Europe that continued so long, and that were so fierce and bloody, followed in quick succession - all tending, in their ultimate results, to weaken the papal power and to secure its final overthrow.

(d) It is hardly necessary to say here that these wars had all the characteristics here supposed. It was as if the sun were smitten in the heavens and power were given to scorch people with fire. Europe seemed to be on fire with musketry and artillery, and presented almost the appearance of the broad blaze of a battlefield. The number that perished was immense. These wars were attended with the usual consequences - blasphemy, profaneness, and reproaches of God in every form. And yet there was

another effect wholly in accordance with the statement here, that none of these judgments brought people to "repentance, that they might give God the glory." Perhaps these remarks, which might be extended to great length, will show that, on the supposition that it was intended to refer to those scenes by the outpouring of this vial, the symbol was well chosen and appropriate.

Verse 10

And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast - The previous judgments had been preparatory to this. They all had a bearing on this, and were all preliminary to it; but the "seat" - the home, the center of the power of the beast - had not yet been reached. Here, however, there was a direct blow aimed at that power, still not such yet as to secure its final overthrow, for that is reserved for the pouring out of the last vial, Revelation 16:17-21. All that is represented here is a heavy judgment which was merely preliminary to to that final overthrow, but which affected the very seat of the beast. The phrase "the seat of the beast" - τὸν θρόνον τοῦ θηρίου ton thronon tou thēriou- means the "seat" or "throne" which the representative of that power occupied, the central point of the Anti-christian dominion. Compare the notes on Revelation 13:2. See also Revelation 2:13. I understand this as referring to the very seat of the papal power - Rome - the Vatican.

And his kingdom was full of darkness - Confusion - disorder - distress, for darkness is often the emblem of calamity, Isaiah 59:9-10; Jeremiah 13:16; Ezekiel 30:18; Ezekiel 32:7-8; Ezekiel 34:12; Joel 2:2.

And they gnawed their tongues for pain - This is a "most significant expression of the writhings of anguish." The word rendered here "gnawed" does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, nor is the expression elsewhere used in the Bible; but its meaning is plain - it indicates deep anguish.

Verse 11

And blasphemed the God of heaven - The same effect which it was said would be produced by the pouring out of the fourth vial, Revelation 16:9.

Because of their pains and their sores - Of the calamities that had come upon them.

And repented not of their deeds - See the notes on Revelation 16:9. Compare Revelation 9:21.

In regard to the fulfillment and application of this, the following general remarks may be made here:

(a) It would succeed, at no great interval probably, what is referred to under the previous "vials," and would be one in the series tending to the same result.

(b) It would fall directly on the seat of the authority of the "beast" - on the central power of the papacy, according to the interpretation of the other symbols; and we should look, therefore, for some calamity that would come upon Rome itself, and still more specifically upon the pope himself, and those immediately around him.

(c) This would be attended with deep distress and darkness in the papal dominions.

(d) There would be an increase of what is here called "blasphemy"; that is, of impiety and reproaches of the Divine Being.

(e) There would be no repentance produced. There would be no reformation. The system would be as corrupt as it was before, and people would be as much under its influence. And,

(f) we should not expect that this would be the final overthrow of the system. That is reserved for the outpouring of the seventh and last vial in the series Revelation 16:17-21, and under that the system would be overthrown, and would come to an end. This is distinctly stated in the account of that "vial"; and therefore we are not to expect to find, in the application of the fifth "vial," that the calamity brought upon "the seat of the beast" would be such that it would not recover for a time, and maintain, apparently, in some good degree, its former power and influence.

With this view of what we are to expect, and in connection with the explanations of the previous symbols, it seems to me that there can be no hesitation in applying this to the direct attacks on the papal power and on

the pope himself, as one of the consequences of the French revolution, and to the calamities that were thus brought upon the papal States. In order to show the appropriateness of this application, I will state a few facts which will show that, on the supposition that it was the intention in this symbol to refer to the papal power at that time, the symbol has been well chosen, and has been fulfilled. And, in doing this, I will merely copy from Alison's *History of Europe* (vol. 1, pp. 542-546) a few statements, which, like many that have been quoted from Mr. Gibbon in the former part of these notes, would seem almost to have been penned in view of this prophecy, and with a view to record its fulfillment. The statement is as follows:

"The Ecclesiastical States were the next object of attack. It had long been an avowed object of ambition with the Republican government to revolutionize the Roman people, and plant the tricolor flag in the city of Brutus," and fortune at length presented them with a favorable opportunity to accomplish the design.

"The situation of the pope had become, since the French conquests in Italy, in the highest degree precarious. Cut off by the Cisalpine Republic from any support from Austria; left by the treaty of Campo Formio entirely at the mercy of the French republic; threatened by the heavings of the democratic spirit within his own dominions; and exposed to all the contagion arising from the complete establishment and close vicinity of republican governments in the north of Italy, he was almost destitute of the means of resisting so many seen and unseen enemies. The pontifical treasury was exhausted by the immense payments stipulated by the treaty of Tolentino; while the activity and zeal of the revolutionary clubs in all the principal towns of the Ecclesiastical States was daily increasing with the prospect of success. To enable the government to meet the enormous demands of the French army, the principal Roman families, like the pope, had sold their gold, their silver, their jewels, their horses, their carriages - in a word, all their valuable effects; but the exactions of the republican agents were still unabated.

In despair they had recourse to the fatal expedient of issuing a paper circulation; but that, in a country destitute of credit, soon fell to an inconsiderable value, and augmented rather than relieved the public

distress. Joseph Bonaparte, brother to Napoleon, had been appointed ambassador at the court of Rome; but as his character was deemed too honorable for political intrigue, Generals Duphot and Sherlock were sent along with him, the former of whom had been so successful in effecting the overthrow of the Genoese aristocracy. The French embassy, under their direction, soon became the center of the revolutionary action; and those numerous ardent characters with which the Italian cities abound, flocked there as to a common focus, from whence the next great explosion of democratic power was to be expected. In this extremity, Pius VI., who was above eighty years of age, and sinking into the grave, called to his counsels the Austrian general Provera, already distinguished in the Italian campaigns; but the Directory soon compelled the humiliated pontiff to dismiss that intrepid counselor. As his recovery then seemed hopeless, the instructions of government to their ambassador were to delay the proclamation of a republic until his death, when the vacant chair of Peter might be overturned with little difficulty; but such was the activity of the revolutionary agents, that the train was ready to take fire before that event took place, and the cars of the Romans were assailed by incessant abuse of the ecclesiastical government, and vehement declamations in favor of republican freedom.

"The resolution to overturn the papal government, like all the other ambitious projects of the Directory, received a very great impulse from the re-ascendant of Jacobin influence at Paris, by the results of the revolution of 18th Fructidor. One of the first measures of the new government was to despatch an order to Joseph Bonaparte at Rome, to promote, by all the means in his power, the approaching revolution in the papal States; and, above all things, to take care that at the pope's death no successor should be elected to the chair of Peter. Napoleon's language to the Roman pontiff became daily more menacing. Immediately before setting out for Rastadt, he ordered his brother Joseph to intimate to the pope that three thousand additional troops had been forwarded to Ancona; that if Provera was not dismissed within twenty-four hours, war would be declared; that if any of the revolutionists who had been arrested were executed, reprisals would immediately be exercised on the cardinals; and that, if the Cisalpine Republic was not recognized, it would be the signal for immediate hostilities.

At the same time ten thousand troops of the Cisalpine Republic advanced to Leon, in the papal duchy of Urbino, and made themselves masters of that fortress; while at Ancona, which was still garrisoned by French troops, notwithstanding its stipulated restoration by the treaty of Tolentino to the Holy See, the democratic party openly proclaimed the ‹Anconite Republic.‘ Similar revolutionary movements took place at Corneto, Civita Vecchia, Pesaro, and Senigaglia; while at Rome itself, Joseph Bonaparte, by compelling the papal government to liberate all persons confined for political offences, suddenly vomited forth upon the capital several hundreds of the most heated republicans in Italy. After this great addition, measures were no longer kept with the government. Seditious meetings were constantly held in every part of the city; immense collections of tricolor cockades were made to distinguish the insurgents, and deputations of the citizens openly waited on the French ambassador to invite him to support the insurrection, to which he replied, in ambiguous terms - ‹The fate of nations, as of individuals, being buried in the womb of futurity, it is not given to me to penetrate its mysteries. ‹

“In this temper of men‘s minds, a spark was sufficient to occasion an explosion. On the 27th of December, 1797, an immense crowd assembled, with seditious cries, and moved to the palace of the French ambassador, where they exclaimed, ‹Vive la Republique Romaine!‘ and loudly invoked the aid of the French to enable them to plant the tricolor flag on the Capitol. The insurgents displayed the tricolor cockade, and evinced the most menacing disposition; the danger was extreme; from similar beginnings the overthrow of the governments of Venice and Genoa had rapidly followed. The papal ministers sent a regiment of dragoons to prevent any sortie of the revolutionists from the palace of the French ambassador; and they repeatedly warned the insurgents that their orders were to allow no one to leave its precincts. Duphot, however, indignant at being restrained by the pontifical troops, drew his sword, rushed down the staircase, and put himself at the head of one hundred and fifty armed Roman democrats, who were now contending with the dragoons in the courtyard of the palace. He was immediately killed by a discharge ordered by the sergeant commanding the patrol of the papal troops; and the ambassador himself, who had followed to appease the tumult, narrowly escaped the same fate. A violent

scuffle ensued; several persons were killed and wounded on both sides; and, after remaining several hours in the greatest alarm, Joseph Bonaparte, with his suite, retired to Florence.

“This catastrophe, however, obviously occasioned by the revolutionary schemes which were in agitation at the residence of the French ambassador, having taken place within the precincts of his palace, was, unhappily, a violation of the law of nations, and gave the Directory too fair a ground to demand satisfaction. But they instantly resolved to make it the pretext for the immediate occupation of Rome and overthrow of the papal government. The march of troops out of Italy was countermanded, and Berthier, the commander-in-chief, received orders to advance rapidly into the Ecclesiastical States. Meanwhile, the democratic spirit burst forth more violently than ever at Ancona and the neighboring towns, and the papal authority was soon lost in all the provinces on the eastern slope of the Apennines. To these accumulated disasters the pontiff could only oppose the fasts and prayers of an aged conclave - weapons of spiritual warfare little calculated to arrest the conquerors of Arcola and Lodi.

“Berthier, without an instant‘s delay, carried into execution the orders of the Directory. Six thousand Poles were stationed at Rimini to cover the Cisalpine Republic; a reserve was established at Tolentino, while the commander-in-chief, at the head of eighteen thousand veteran troops, entered Ancona. Having completed the work of revolution in that turbulent district, and secured the fortress, he crossed the Apennines; and, advancing by Foligno and Narni, appeared on the 10th of February before the Eternal City. The pope, in the utmost consternation, shut himself up in the Vatican, and spent night and day at the foot of the altar in imploring the divine protection.

“Rome, almost defenseless, would have offered no obstacle to the entrance of the French troops; but it was part of the policy of the Directory to make it appear that their aid was invoked by the spontaneous efforts of the inhabitants. Contenting himself, therefore, with occupying the castle of Angelo, from which the feeble guards of the pope were soon expelled, Berthier kept his troops for five days encamped without the walls. At length, the revolutionists having completed their preparations, a noisy

crowd assembled in the Campo Vaccino, the ancient Forum; the old foundations of the Capitol were made again to resound with the cries, if not the spirit, of freedom, and the venerable ensigns, S. P. Q. R., after the lapse of 1,400 years, again floated in the winds. The multitude tumultuously demanded the overthrow of the papal authority; the French troops were invited to enter; the conquerors of Italy, with a haughty air, passed the gates of Aurelian, defiled through the Piazza del Popolo, gazed on the indestructible monuments of Roman grandeur, and, amid the shouts of the inhabitants, the tricolor flag was displayed from the summit of the Capitol.

"But while part of the Roman populace were surrendering themselves to a pardonable intoxication upon the fancied recovery of their liberties, the agents of the Directory were preparing for them the sad realities of slavery. The pope, who had been guarded by five hundred soldiers ever since the entry of the republicans, was directed to retire into Tuscany; his Swiss guard relieved by a French one; and he himself ordered to dispossess himself of all his temporal authority. He replied, with the firmness of a martyr, ‹I am prepared for every species of disgrace. As supreme pontiff, I am resolved to die in the exercise of all my powers. You may employ force - you have the power to do so; but know that, though you may be masters of my body, you are not so of my soul. Free in the region where it is placed, it fears neither the events nor the sufferings of this life. I stand on the threshold of another world; there I shall be sheltered alike from the violence and impiety of this.' Force was soon employed to dispossess him of his authority; he was dragged from the altar in his palace, his repositories all ransacked and plundered, the rings even torn from his fingers, the whole effects in the Vatican and Quirinal inventoried and seized, and the aged pontiff conducted, with only a few domestics, amid the brutal jests and sacrilegious songs of the French dragoons, into Tuscany, where the generous hospitality of the grand-duke strove to soften the hardships of his exile. But, though a captive in the hands of his enemies, the venerable old man still retained the supreme authority in the church. From his retreat in the convent of the Chartreuse, he yet guided the counsels of the faithful; multitudes fell on their knees wherever he passed, and sought that benediction from a captive which they would, perhaps, have disregarded from a ruling pontiff.

“The subsequent treatment of this venerable man was as disgraceful to the republican government as it was honorable to his piety and constancy as the head of the church. Fearful that from his virtues and sufferings he might have too much influence on the continent of Italy, he was removed by their orders to Leghorn, in March, 1799, with the design of transferring him to Cagliari in Sardinia; and the English cruisers in the Mediterranean redoubled their vigilance in the generous hope of rescuing the father of an opposite church from the persecution of his enemies. Apprehensive of losing their prisoner, the French altered his destination; and forcing him to traverse, often during the night, the Apennines and the Alps in a rigorous season, he at length reached Valence, where, after an illness of ten days, he expired, in the eighty-second year of his age, and the twenty-fourth of his pontificate. The cruelty of the Directory increased as he approached their dominions, all his old attendants were compelled to leave him, and the father of the faithful was allowed to expire, attended only by his confessor. Yet even in this disconsolate state he derived the highest satisfaction from the devotion and reverence of the people in the provinces of France through which he passed. Multitudes from Gap, Vizelle, and Grenoble flocked to the road to receive his benediction; and he frequently repeated, with tears in his eyes, the words of Scripture: ‹Verily, I say unto you, I have not seen such faith, no, not in Israel. ‹

“But long before the pope had sunk under the persecution of his oppressors, Rome had experienced the bitter fruits of republican fraternization. Immediately after the entry of the French troops, commenced the regular and systematic pillage of the city. Not only the churches and the convents, but the palaces of the cardinals and of the nobility, were laid waste. The agents of the Directory, insatiable in the pursuit of plunder, and merciless in the means of exacting it, ransacked every quarter within its walls, seized the most valuable works of art, and stripped the Eternal City of those treasures which had survived the Gothic fire and the rapacious hands of the Spanish soldiers. The bloodshed was much less, but the spoil collected incomparably greater, than at the disastrous sack which followed the death of the Constable Bourbon. Almost all the great works of art which have since that time been collected throughout Europe, were then scattered abroad.

The spoliation exceeded all that the Goths or Vandals had effected. Not only the palaces of the Vatican, and the Monte Cavallo, and the chief nobility of Rome, but those of Castel Gandolfo, on the margin of the Alban Lake, of Terracina, the Villa Albani, and others in the environs of Rome, were plundered of every article of value which they possessed. The whole sacerdotal habits of the pope and cardinals were burned, in order to collect from the flames the gold with which they were adorned. The Vatican was stripped to its naked walls; the immortal frescoes of Raphael and Michael Angelo, which could not be removed, remained in solitary beauty amid the general desolation. A contribution of four million in money, two million in provisions, and three thousand horses, was imposed on a city already exhausted by the enormous exactions it had previously undergone. Under the direction of the infamous commissary Haller, the domestic library, museum, furniture, jewels, and even the private clothes of the pope were sold. Nor did the palaces of the Roman nobility escape devastation. The noble galleries of the Cardinal Braschi, and the Cardinal York, the last relic of the Stuart line, underwent the same fate. Others, as those of the Chigi, Borghese, and Doria palaces, were rescued from destruction only by enormous ransoms. Everything of value that the treaty of Tolentino had left in Rome became the prey of republican cupidity, and the very name of freedom soon became odious, from the sordid and infamous crimes which were committed in its name.

"Nor were the exactions of the French confined to the plunder of palaces and churches. Eight cardinals were arrested and sent to Civita Castellana, while enormous contributions were levied on the papal territory, and brought home the bitterness of conquest to every poor man's door. At the same time the ampie territorial possessions of the church and the monasteries were confiscated, and declared national property - a measure which, by drying up at once the whole resources of the affluent classes, precipitated into the extreme of misery the numerous poor who were maintained by their expenditure, or fed by their bounty. All the respectable citizens and clergy were in fetters; and a base and despicable faction alone, among whom, to their disgrace be it told, were found fourteen cardinals, followed in the train of the oppressors; and, at a public festival, returned thanks to God for the miseries they had brought upon their country."

Verse 12

And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates - On the situation of that river, and the symbolical meaning of this language, see the notes on Revelation 9:14-21. The reference there was supposed to be to the Turkish power, and the analogy of interpretation would seem to require that it should be so understood here. There is every reason, therefore, to suppose that this passage has reference to something in the future history of the Turkish dominions, and to some bearing of the events which are to occur in that history on the ultimate downfall of the anti-Christian power referred to by the "beast."

And the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared - That is, as the effect of pouring out the vial. There is an allusion here, undoubtedly, to the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea, so that the children of Israel might pass. See Exodus 14:21-22. Compare the notes on Isaiah 11:15. In this description the Euphrates is represented as a barrier to prevent the passage of "the kings of the East," on their way to the West for some purpose not yet specified; that is, applying the symbol of the Euphrates as being the seat of the Turkish power, the meaning is, that "that power" is such a hindrance, and that, in some way that hindrance is to be removed as if the waters of an unbridged and unfordable river were dried up so as to afford a safe and easy passage through. Still there are several inquiries as to the application of this, which is not easy, and, as it refers to what is still future, it may be impossible to answer. The language requires us to put upon it the following interpretation:

(a) The persons here referred to as "kings of the East," were ready to make a movement toward the West, over the Euphrates, and would do this if this obstruction were not in their way. Who these "kings of the East" are is not said, and perhaps cannot be conjectured. The natural interpretation is, that they are the kings that reign in the East, or that preside over the countries of the eastern hemisphere. "Why" there was a proposed movement to the West is not said. It might have been for conquest, or it might have been that they were to bring their tribute to the spiritual Jerusalem, in accordance with what is so often said in the prophets, that under the gospel kings and princes would consecrate themselves and their wealth to God. See Psalm 72:10-11; "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him." So also Isaiah 60:4-6, Isaiah 60:9, Isaiah

60:11; “Thy sons shall come from far - The forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee - All they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense - The isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them - Thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought.” All that is fairly implied in the language used here is, that the kings of the East would be converted to the true religion, or that they were, at the time referred to, in a state of readiness to be converted, if there were no hindrance or obstruction.

(b) There was some hindrance or obstruction to their conversion; that is, as explained, from the Turkish power: in other words, they would be converted to the true faith if it were not for the influence of that power.

(c) The destruction of that power, represented by the drying up of the Euphrates, would remove that obstruction, and the way would thus be “prepared” for their conversion to the true religion. We should most naturally, therefore, look, in the fulfillment of this, for some such decay of the Turkish power as would be followed by the conversion of the rulers of the East to the gospel.

Verse 13

And I saw three unclean spirits - They assumed a visible form which would well represent their odiousness - that of frogs - but still they are spoken of as “spirits.” They were evil powers, or evil influences (Revelation 16:14, “spirits of devils”), and the language here is undoubtedly designed to represent some such power or influence which would, at that period, proceed from the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet.

Like frogs - βατράχοι batrachoiThis word does not occur in the New Testament except in the passage before us. It is properly translated frogs. The frog is here employed clearly as a symbol, and it is designed that certain qualities of the “spirits” here referred to should be designated by the symbol. For a full illustration of the meaning of the symbol, the reader may consult Bochart, Hieroz. P. II. lib. v. cap. 4. According to Bochart, the frog is characterized, as a symbol:

(1)for its rough, harsh, coarse voice;

(2)on this account, as a symbol of complaining or reproaching;

(3)as a symbol of empty loquacity;

(4)as a symbol of heretics and philosophers, as understood by Augustine;

(5)because the frog has its origin in mud, and lives in mud, as a symbol of those who are born in sin, and live in pollution;

(6)because the frog endures all changes of the season cold and heat, summer, winter, rain, frost - as a symbol of monks who practice self-denial;

(7)because the frog though abstemious of food, yet lives in water and drinks often, as a symbol of drunkards;

(8)as a symbol of impudence;

(9)because the frog swells his size, and distends his cheeks, as a symbol of pride.

See the authorities for these uses of the word in Bochart. How many or few of these ideas enter into the symbol here, it is not easy to decide. We may suppose, however, that the spirits referred to would be characterized by pride, arrogance, impudence, assumption of authority; perhaps impurity and vileness, for all these ideas enter into the meaning of the symbol. They are not here, probably, symbols of persons, but of influences or opinions which would be spread abroad, and which would characterize the age referred to. The reference is to what the "dragon," the "beast," and the "false prophet" would do at that time in opposing the truth, and in preparing the world for the great and final conflict.

Out of the mouth of the dragon - One of which seemed to issue from the mouth of the dragon. On the symbolic meaning of the word "dragon," see the notes on Revelation 12:3. It, in general, represents Satan, the great enemy of the church; perhaps here Satan under the form of paganism or paganism, as in Revelation 12:3-4. The idea then is, that, at the time referred to, there would be some manifestation of the power of Satan in the pagan nations, which would be bold, arrogant, proud, loquacious, hostile to

truth, and which would be well represented by the hoarse murmur of the frog.

And out of the mouth of the beast - The papacy, as above explained, Revelation 16:5-6), that although the fifth vial was poured upon "the seat of the beast," the effect was not to crush and overthrow that power entirely. The papacy would still survive, and would be finally destroyed under the outpouring of the seventh vial, Revelation 16:17-21. In the passage before us we have a representation of it as still living; as having apparently recovered its strength; and as being as hostile as ever to the truth, and able to enter into a combination, secret or avowed, with the "dragon" and the "false prophet," to oppose the reign of truth upon the earth.

And out of the mouth of the false prophet - The word rendered "false prophet" - ψευδοπροφήτου pseudoprophētou- does not before occur in the Book of Revelation, though the use of the article would seem to imply that some well-known power or influence was referred to by this. Compare the notes on Revelation 10:3. The word occurs in other places in the New Testament, Matthew 7:15; Matthew 24:11, Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22; Luke 6:26; Acts 13:6; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1; and twice elsewhere in the Book of Revelation, with the same reference as here, Revelation 19:20; Revelation 20:10. In both these latter places it is connected with the "beast:" "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet"; "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are." It would seem, then, to refer to some power that was similar to that of the beast, and that was to share the same fate in the overthrow of the enemies of the gospel. As to the application of this, there is no opinion so probable as that it alludes to the Muhammedan power - not strictly the Turkish power, for that was to be "dried up," or to diminish; but to the Muhammedan power as such, that was still to continue for a while in its vigor, and that was yet to exert a formidable influence against the gospel, and probably in some combination, in fact, if not in form, with paganism stud the papacy. The reasons for this opinion are:

(a)that this was referred to, in the former part of the book, as one of the formidable powers that would arise, and that would materially affect the destiny of the world - and it may be presumed that it would be again referred to in the account of the final consummation, see Revelation 9:1-11;

(b)the name “false prophet” would, better than any other, describe that power, and would naturally suggest it in future times - for to no one that has ever appeared in our world could the name be so properly applied as to Muhammed; and,

(c)what is said will be found to agree with the facts in regard to that power, as, in connection with the papacy and with paganism, constituting the sum of the obstruction to the spread of the gospel around the world.

Verse 14

For they are the spirits of devils - On the meaning of the word used here, see the notes on Revelation 9:20. It is used here, as it is in Revelation 9:20, in a bad sense, as denoting evil spirits. Compare the notes on Matthew 4:1-2, Matthew 4:24.

Working miracles - Working what seemed to be miracles; that is, such wonders as to deceive the world with the belief that they were miracles. See the notes on Revelation 13:13-14, where the same power is ascribed to the “beast.”

Which go forth unto the kings of the earth - Which particularly affect and influence kings and rulers. No class of people have been more under the influence of pagan superstition, Muhammedan delusion, or the papacy, than kings and princes. We are taught by this passage that this will continue to be so in the circumstances referred to.

And of the whole world - That is, so far that it might be represented as affecting the whole world - to wit, the pagan, the Muhammedan, and the papal portions of the earth. These still embrace so large a portion of the globe, that it might be said, that what would affect those powers now would influence the whole world.

To gather them - Not literally to assemble them all in one place, but so to unite and combine them that it might be represented as an assembling of the hosts for battle.

To the battle of that great day of God Almighty - Not the day of judgment, but the day which would determine the ascendency of true religion in the world - the final conflict with those powers which had so long opposed the gospel. It is not necessary to suppose that there would be a literal “battle,” in which God would be seen to contend with his foes; but there would be what might be properly represented as a battle. That is, there

would be a combined struggle against the truth, and in that God would appear by his providence and Spirit on the side of the church, and would give it the victory. It accords with all that has occurred in the past, to suppose that there will be such a combined struggle before the church shall finally triumph in the world.

Verse 15

Behold, I come as a thief - That is, suddenly and unexpectedly. See the Matthew 24:43 note; 1 Thessalonians 5:2 note. This is designed evidently to admonish people to watch, or to be in readiness for his coming, since, whenever it would occur, it would be at a time when people were not expecting him.

Blessed is he that watcheth - Compare Matthew 24:42-44. The meaning here is, that he who watches for these events, who marks the indications of their approach, and who is conscious of a preparation for them, is in a better and happier state of mind than he on whom they come suddenly and unexpectedly.

And keepeth his garments - The allusion here seems to be to one who, regardless of danger, or of the approach of an enemy, should lay aside his garments and lie down to sleep. Then the thief might come and take away his garments, leaving him naked. The essential idea, therefore, here, is the duty of vigilance. We are to be awake to duty and to danger; we are not to be found sleeping at our post; we are to be ready for death - ready for the coming of the Son of man.

Lest he walk naked - His raiment being carried away while he is asleep.

And they see his shame - Compare the notes on Revelation 3:18. The meaning here is, that, as Christians are clothed with the garments of righteousness, they should not lay them aside, so that their spiritual nakedness should be seen. They are to be always clothed with the robes of salvation; always ready for any event, however soon or suddenly it may come upon them.

Verse 16

And he gathered them together - Who gathered them? Prof. Stuart renders it "they gathered them together," supposing that it refers to the "spirits" - πνέυματα pneumata- in Revelation 16:13, and that this is the construction of the neuter plural with a singular verb. So DeWette understands it. Hengstenberg supposes that it means that God gathered them

together; others suppose that it was the sixth angel; others that it was Satan; others that it was the beast; and others that it was Christ. See Poole‘s Synopsis, in loco. The authority of DeWette and Prof. Stuart is sufficient to show that the construction which they adopt is authorized by the Greek, as indeed no one can doubt, and perhaps this accords better with the context than any other construction proposed. Thus, in Revelation 16:14, the spirits are represented as going forth into the whole world for the purpose of gathering the nations together to the great battle, and it is natural to suppose that the reference is to them here as having accomplished what they went forth to do. But who are to be gathered together? Evidently those who, in Revelation 16:14, are described by the word “them” - the “kings of the earth, and the whole world”; that is, there will be a state of things which would be well described by a universal gathering of forces in a central battlefield. It is by no means necessary to suppose that what is here represented will literally occur. There will be a mustering of spiritual forces; there will be a combination and a unity of opposition against the truth; there will be a rallying of the declining powers of paganism, Mohammedanism, and Romanism, as if the forces of the earth, marshalled by kings and rulers, were assembled in some great battlefield, where the destiny of the world was to be decided.

Into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon - The word “Armageddon” - Ἀρμαγεδδών Armageddōn- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and is not found in the Septuagint. It seems to be formed from the Hebrew הר מגדו har MegidowHar Megiddo - Mountain of Megiddo. Compare 2 Chronicles 35:22, where it is said that Josiah “came to fight in the valley of Megiddo.” Megiddo was a town belonging to Manasseh, although within the limits of Issachar, Joshua 17:11. It had been originally one of the royal cities of the Canaanites Joshua 12:21, and was one of those of which the Israelites were unable for a long time to take possession. It was rebuilt and fortified by Solomon 1 Kings 9:15, and thither Ahaziah king of Judah fled when wounded by Jehu, and died there, 2 Kings 9:27. It was here that Deborah and Barak destroyed Sisera and his host Judges 5:19; and it was in a battle near this that Josiah was slain by Pharaoh-Necho, 2 Kings 23:29-30; 2 Chronicles 35:20-25.

From the great mourning held for his loss, it became proverbial to speak of any grievous mourning as being “like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon,” Zechariah 12:11. It has not been found easy to

identify the place, but recent searches have made it probable that the vale or plain of Megiddo comprehended, if it was not wholly composed of, the prolongation of the plain of Esdraelon, toward Mount Carmel; that the city of Megiddo was situated there; and that the waters of Megiddo, mentioned in Judges 5:19, are identical with the stream Kishon in that part of its course. See Biblical Repository, vol. 1, pp. 602,603. It is supposed that the modern town called Lejjun occupies the site of the ancient Megiddo (Robinson‘s *Biblical Researches*, vol. 3, pp. 177-180). Megiddo was distinguished for being the place of the decisive conflict between Deborah and Sisera, and of the battle in which Josiah was slain by the Egyptian invaders; and hence it became emblematic of any decisive battlefield - just as Marathon, Leuctra, Arbela, or Waterloo is.

The word “mountain,” in the term Armageddon - “Mountain of Megiddo” - seems to have been used because Megiddo was in a mountainous region, though the battles were fought in a valley adjacent. The meaning here is, that there would be, as it were, a decisive battle which would determine the question of the prevalence of true religion on the earth. What we are to expect as the fulfillment of this would seem to be, that there will be some mustering of strength - some rallying of forces” - some opposition made to the kingdom of God in the gospel, by the powers here referred to, which would be decisive in its character, and which would be well represented by the battles between the people of God and their foes in the conflicts in the valley of Megiddo.

As this constitutes, according to the course of the exposition by which we have been conducted, an important division in the Book of Revelation, it may be proper to pause here and make a few remarks. The previous parts of the book, according to the interpretation proposed, relate to the past, and thus far we have found such a correspondence between the predictions and facts which have occurred as to lead us to suppose that these predictions have been fulfilled. At this point, I suppose, we enter on that part which remains yet to be fulfilled, and the investigation must carry us into the dark and unknown future. The remaining portion comprises a very general sketch of things down to the end of time, as the previous portion has touched on the great events pertaining to the church and its progress for a

period of more than one thousand eight hundred years. A few general remarks, therefore, seem not inappropriate at this point:

(a) In the previous interpretations, we have had the facts of history by which to test the accuracy of the interpretation. The plan pursued has been, first, to investigate the meaning of the words and symbols, entirely independent of any supposed application, and then to inquire whether there have been any facts that may be regarded as corresponding with the meaning of the words and symbols as explained. Of this method of testing the accuracy of the exposition, we must now take our leave. Our sole reliance must be in the exposition itself, and our work must be limited to that.

(b) It is always difficult to interpret a prophecy. The language of prophecy is often apparently enigmatical; the symbols are sometimes obscure; and prophecies relating to the same subject are often in detached fragments, uttered by different perseus at different times; and it is necessary to collect and arrange them, in order to have a full view of the one subject. Thus the prophecies respecting the Messiah were many of them obscure, and indeed apparently contradictory, before he came; they were uttered at distant intervals, and by different prophets; at one time one trait of his character was dwelt upon, and at another another; and it was difficult to combine these so as to have an accurate view of what he would be, until he came. The result has shown what the meaning of the prophecies was; and at the same time has demonstrated that there was entire consistency in the various predictions, and that to one who could have comprehended all, it would have been possible to combine them so as to have had a correct view of the Messiah, and of his work, even before he came. The same remark is still more applicable to the predictions in the Book of Revelation, or to the similar predictions in the book of Daniel, and to many portions of Isaiah. It is easy to see how difficult it would have been, or rather how impossible by any human powers, to have applied these prophecies in detail before the events occurred; and yet, now that they have occurred, it may be seen that the symbols were the happiest that could have been chosen, and the only ones that could with propriety have been selected to describe the remarkable events which were to take place in future times.

(c) The same thing we may presume to be the case in regard to events which are to occur. We may expect to find:

(1)language and symbols that are, in themselves, capable of clear interpretation as to their proper meaning;

(2)the events of the future so sketched out by that language, and by those symbols, that we may obtain a general view that will be accurate; and yet.

(3)an entire impossibility of filling up beforehand the minute details.

In regard, then, to the application of the particular portion now before us, Revelation 16:12-16, the following remarks may be made:

(1) The Turkish power, especially since its conquest of Constantinople under Muhammed II. in 1453, and its establishment in Europe, has been a grand hindrance to the spread of the gospel. It has occupied a central position; it has possessed some of the richest parts of the world; it has, in general, excluded all efforts to spread the pure gospel within its limits; and its whole influence has been opposed to the spread of pure Christianity. Compare the notes on Revelation 9:14-21. "By its laws it was death to a Mussulman to apostatize from his faith, and become a Christian; and examples, not a few, have occurred in recent times to illustrate it." It was not until quite recently, and that under the influence of missionaries in Constantinople, that evangelical Christianity has been tolerated in the Turkish dominions.

(2) the prophecy before us implies that there would be a decline of that formidable power - represented by the "drying up of the great river Euphrates." See the notes on Revelation 16:12. And no one can be insensible to the fact that events are occurring which would be properly represented by such a symbol; or that there is, in fact, now such a decline of that Turkish power, and that the beginning of that decline closely followed, in regard to time, if not in regard to the cause, the events which it is supposed were designated by the previous vials - those connected with the successive blows on the papacy and the seat of the beast. In reference, then, to the decline of that power, we may refer to the following things:

(a) The first great cause was internal revolt and insurrection. In 1820 Ali Pasha asserted his independence, and by his revolt precipitated the Greek

insurrection which had been a long time secretly preparing - an insurrection so disastrous to the Turkish power.

(b) The Greek insurrection followed. This soon spread to the Aegean isles, and to the districts of Northern Greece, Epirus, and Thessaly; while at the same time the standard of revolt was raised in Wallachia and Moldavia. The progress and issue of that insurrection are well known. A Turcoman army of 30,000 that entered the Morea to reconquer it was destroyed in 1823 in detail, and the freedom of the peninsula was nearly completed by the insurgents. By sea the Greeks emulated their ancestors of Salamis and Mycale; and, attended with almost uniform success, encountered and vanquished the superior Turkish and Egyptian fleets. Meanwhile the sympathies of Western Christendom were awakened in behalf of their brother Christians struggling for independence; and just when the tide of success began to turn, and the Morea was again nearly subjected by Ibrahim Pasha, the united fleets of England, France, and Russia (in contravention of all their usual principles of policy) interposed in their favor; attacked and destroyed the Turco-Egyptian fleets in the battle of Navarino (September, 1827), and thus secured the independence of Greece. Nothing had ever occurred that tended so much to weaken the power of the Turkish empire.

(c) The rebellion of the great Egyptian pasha, Mehemet Ali, soon followed. The French invasion of Egypt had prepared him for it, by having taught him the superiority of European discipline, and thus this event was one of the proper results of those described under the first four vials. Mehemet Ali, through Ibrahim, attacked and conquered Syria; defeated the sultan‘s armies sent against him in the great battles of Hems, of Nezib, and of Iconium; and, but for the intervention of the European powers of England, Russia, Prussia, and Austria, by which he was driven out of Syria, and forced hack to his proper pashalic, Egypt, he would probably have advanced to Constantinople and subdued it.

(d) There has been for centuries a gradual weakening of the Turkish power. It has done nothing to extend its empire by arms. It has been resting in inglorious ease, and, in the meantime, its wealth and its strength have been gradually decreasing. It has lost Moldavia, Wallachia, Greece, Algiers, and, practically, Egypt; and is doing nothing to recruit its wasted and

exhausted strength. Russia only waits for a favorable opportunity to strike the last blow on that enfeebled power, and to put an end to it forever.

(e) The general condition of the Turkish empire is thus described by Mr. Walsh, chaplain to the British ambassador to Constantinople: "The circumstances most striking to a traveler passing through Turkey is its depopulation. Ruins where villages had been built, and fallows where land had been cultivated, are frequently seen with no living thing near them. This effect is not so visible in larger towns, though the cause is known to operate there in a still greater degree. Within the last twenty years, Constantinople has lost more than half its population. Two conflagrations happened while I was in Constantinople, and destroyed fifteen thousand houses. The Russian and Greek wars were a constant drain on the janizaries of the capital; the silent operation of the plague is continually active, though not always alarming; it will be no exaggeration to say that, within the period mentioned, from three to four hundred thousand persons have been swept away in one city in Europe by causes which were not operating in any other - "conflagration, pestilence, and civil commotion."

The Turks, though naturally of a robust and vigorous constitution, addict themselves to such habits as are very unfavorable to population - the births do little more than exceed the ordinary deaths, and cannot supply the waste of casualties. The surrounding country is, therefore, continually drained to supply this waste in the capital, which, nevertheless, exhibits districts nearly depopulated. We see every day life going out in the fairest portion of Europe; and the human race threatened with extinction in a soil and climate capable of supporting the most abundant population" (Walsh's Narrative, pp. 22-26, as quoted in Bush on the Millennium, 243,244). The probability now is, that this gradual decay will be continued; that the Turkish power will more and more diminish; that one portion after another will set up for independence; and that, by a gradual process of decline, this power will become practically extinct, and what is here symbolized by the "drying up of the great river Euphrates" will have been accomplished.

(3) this obstacle removed, we may look for a general turning of the princes, and rulers, and people of the Eastern world to Christianity, represented Revelation 16:12 by its being said that "the way of the kings of

the East might be prepared." See the notes on that verse. It is clear that nothing would be more likely to contribute to this, or to prepare the way for it, than the removal of that Turcoman dominion which for more than four hundred years has been an effectual barrier to the diffusion of the gospel in the lands where it has prevailed. How rapidly, we may suppose, the gospel would spread in the East, if all the obstacles thrown in its way by the Turkish power were at once removed!

(4) in accordance with the interpretation suggested on Revelation 16:13-14, we may look for something that would be well represented by a combined effort on the part of paganism, Mohammedanism, and Romanism, to stay the progress and prevent the spread of evangelical religion. That is, according to the fair interpretation of the passage, we should look for some simultaneous movement as if their influence was to be about to cease, and as if it were necessary to arouse all their energies for a last and desperate struggle. It may be added that, in itself, nothing would be more probable than this; but when it will occur, and what form the aroused enemy will assume, it would be vain to conjecture.

(5) and in accordance with the interpretation suggested on Revelation 16:15, we are to suppose that something will occur which would be well represented by the decisive conflicts in the valley of Megiddo; that is, something that will determine the ascendency of true religion in the world, as if these great powers of paganism, Mohammedanism, and Romanism should stake all their interests on the issue of a single battle. It is not necessary to suppose that this will literally occur, and there are no certain intimations as to the time when what is represented will happen; but all that is meant may be, that events will take place which would be well represented by such a conflict. Still, nothing in the prophecy prevents the supposition that these combined powers may be overthrown in some fierce conflict with Christian powers.

Verse 17

And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air - This introduces the final catastrophe in regard to the "beast" - his complete and utter overthrow, accompanied with tremendous judgments. Why the vial was poured into the air is not stated. The most probable supposition as to

the idea intended to be represented is, that, as storms and tempests seem to be engendered in the air, so this destruction would come from some supernatural cause, as if the whole atmosphere should be filled with wind and storm; and a furious and desolating whirlwind should be aroused by some invisible power.

And there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven - The voice of God. See the notes on Revelation 11:19.

From the throne - See the notes on Revelation 4:2. This shows that it was the voice of God, and not the voice of an angel.

Saying, It is done - The series of judgments is about to be completed; the dominion of the beast is about to come to an end forever. The meaning here is, that that destruction was so certain, that it might be spoken of as now actually accomplished.

Verse 18

And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings - Accompanying the voice that was heard from the throne. See the notes on Revelation 4:5; Revelation 11:19.

And there was a great earthquake, … - See the notes on Revelation 6:12; Revelation 11:19. The meaning is, that a judgment followed as if the world were shaken by an earthquake, or which would be properly represented by that.

So mighty an earthquake, and so great - All this is intensive, and is designed to represent the severity of the judgment that would follow.

Verse 19

And the great city was divided into three parts - The city of Babylon; or the mighty power that was represented by Babylon. See the notes on Revelation 14:8. The division mentioned here in three parts was manifestly with reference to its destruction - either that one part was smitten and the others remained for a time, or that one form of destruction came on one part, and another on the others. In Revelation 11:13 it is said, speaking of "the great city spiritually called Sodom and Egypt" - representing Rome, that "the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand" (see the notes on that place); here it is said that the whole city, in the calamities that came upon it, was divided into three portions, though it is evidently implied that, in these calamities, the whole city was sooner or later destroyed. Prof. Stuart (in loco) supposes that the number three is used here, as it is throughout the book, "in a symbolical way," and

that the meaning is, that “the city was severed and broken in pieces, so that the whole was reduced to a ruinous state.” He supposes that it refers to pagan Rome, or to the pagan Roman persecuting power. Others refer it to Jerusalem, and suppose that the allusion is to the divisions of the city, in the time of the siege, into Jewish, Samaritan, and Christian parties; others suppose that it refers to a division of the Roman empire under Honorius, Attalus, and Constantine; others to the fact, that when Jerusalem was besieged by Titus, it was divided into three factions; and others, that the number three is used to denote perfection, or the total ruin of the city. All that, it seems to me, can be said now on the point is:

(a)that it refers to papal Rome, or the papal power;

(b)that it relates to something yet future, and that it may not be possible to determine with precise accuracy what will occur;

(c)that it probably means that, in the time of the final ruin of that power, there will be a threefold judgment - either a different judgment in regard to some threefold manifestation of that power, or a succession of judgments, as if one part were smitten at a time. The certain and entire ruin of the power is predicted by this, but still it is not improbable that it will be by such divisions, or such successions of judgments, that it is proper to represent the city as divided into three portions.

And the cities of the nations fell - In alliance with it, or under the control of the central power. As the capital fell, the dependent cities fell also. Considered as relating to papal Rome, the meaning here is that what may be properly called “the cities of the nations” that were allied with it would share the same fate. The cities of numerous “nations” are now, and have been for ages, under the control of the papal power, or the spiritual Babylon; and the calamity that will smite the central power as such - that is, as a spiritual power - will reach and affect them all. Let the central power at Rome be destroyed; the papacy cease; the superstition with which Rome is regarded come to an end; the power of the priesthood in Italy be destroyed, and however widely the Roman dominion is spread now, it cannot be kept up. If it falls in Rome, there is not influence enough out of Rome to continue it in being - and in all its extended ramifications it will die as the body dies when the head is severed; as the power of provinces ceases when ruin comes upon the capital. This the prophecy leads us to suppose will be the final destiny of the papal power.

And great Babylon - See the notes on Revelation 14:8.

Came in remembrance before God - That is, for purposes of punishment. It had been, as it were, overlooked. It had been permitted to carry on its purposes, and to practice its abominations, unchecked, as if God did not see it. Now the time had come when all that it had done was to be remembered, and when the long-suspended judgment was to fall upon it.

To give unto her the cup of the wine, … - To punish; to destroy her. See the notes on Revelation 14:10.

Verse 20

And every island fled away - Expressive of great and terrible judgments, as if the very earth were convulsed, and everything were moved out of its place. See the notes on Revelation 6:14.

And the mountains were not found - The same image occurs in Revelation 6:14. See the notes on that place.

Verse 21

And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven - Perhaps this is an allusion to one of the plagues of Egypt, Exodus 9:22-26. Compare the notes on Revelation 11:19. For a graphic description (by Com. Porter) of the effects of a hailstorm, see the notes on Isaiah 30:30. Compare the notes on Job 38:22.

Every stone about the weight of a talent - The Attic talent was equal to about 55 lbs. or 56 lbs. Troy weight; the Jewish talent to about 113 lbs. Troy. Whichever weight is adopted, it is easy to conceive what must be the horror of such a storm, and what destruction it must cause. We are not, of course, to suppose necessarily, that this would literally occur; it is a frightful image to denote the terrible and certain destruction that would come upon Babylon - that is, upon the papal power.

And men blasphemed God - See the notes on Revelation 16:9.

Because of the plague of the hail - Using the word "plague" in allusion to the plagues of Egypt.

For the plague thereof was exceeding great - The calamity was great and terrible. The design of the whole is to show that the destruction would be complete and awful.

This finishes the summary statement of the final destruction of this formidable anti-Christian power. The details and the consequences of that overthrow are more fully stated in the subsequent chapters. The fulfillment of what is here stated will be found, according to the method of

interpretation proposed, in the ultimate overthrow of the papacy. The process described in this chapter is that of successive calamities that would weaken it and prepare it for its fall; then a rallying of its dying strength; and then some tremendous judgment that is compared with a storm of hail, accompanied with lightning, and thunder, and an earthquake, that would completely overthrow all that was connected with it, We are not, indeed, to suppose that this will literally occur; but the fair interpretation of prophecy leads us to suppose that that formidable power will, at no very distant period, be overthrown in a manner that would be well represented by such a fearful storm.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 17

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter Revelation 16:17-21, at the close of which the great enemy of God and the church will be destroyed, and the church will be triumphant, Revelation 19:17-21. The image in this chapter is that of a harlot, or abandoned woman, on whom severe judgment is brought for her sins. The action is here delayed, and this chapter has much the appearance of an explanatory episode, designed to give a more clear and definite idea of the character of that formidable anti-Christian power on which the judgment was to descend. The chapter, without any formal division, embraces the following points:

(1) Introduction, Revelation 17:1-3. One of the seven angels entrusted with the seven vials comes to John, saying that he would describe to him the judgment that was to come upon the great harlot with whom the kings of the earth had committed fornication, and who had made the dwellers upon the earth drunk by the wine of her fornication - that is, of that anti-Christian power so often referred to in this book, which by its influence had deluded the nations, and brought their rulers under its control.

(2) aparticular description of this anti-Christian power represented as an abandoned and attractive female, in the usual attire of an harlot, Revelation 17:3-6. She is seated on a scarlet-colored beast, covered over with blasphemous names - a beast with seven heads and ten horns. She is arrayed in the usual gorgeous and alluring attire of an harlot, clothed in purple, decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls, with a golden cup in her hand full of abomination and filthiness. She has on her forehead a name expressive of her character. She is represented as drunken with the blood of the saints, and is such as to attract attention and excite wonder.

(3) an explanation of what is meant by this scarlet-clothed woman, and of the design of the representation, Revelation 17:7-18. This comprises several parts:

(a) A promise of the angel that he would explain this, Revelation 17:7.

(b) An enigmatical or symbolical representation of the design of the vision, Revelation 17:8-14. This description consists of an account of the beast on which the woman sat, Revelation 17:8; of the seven heads of the beast, as representing seven mountains, Revelation 17:9; of the succession of kings or dynasties represented, Revelation 17:9-11; of the ten horns as representing ten kings or kingdoms giving their power and strength to the beast, Revelation 17:12-13; and of the conflict or warfare of all these confederated or consolidated powers with the Lamb, and their discomfiture by him, Revelation 17:14.

(c) A more literal statement of what is meant by this, Revelation 17:15-18. The waters on which the harlot sat represent a multitude of people subject to her control, Revelation 17:15. The ten horns, or the ten kingdoms, on the beast, would ultimately hate the harlot, and destroy her, as if they should eat her flesh, and consume her with fire, Revelation 17:16. This would be done because God would put it into their hearts to fulfil his purposes, alike in giving their kingdom to the beast, and then turning against it to destroy it, Revelation 17:17. The woman referred to is at last declared to be the great city which reigned over the kings of the earth, Revelation 17:18. For particularity and definiteness, this is one of the most remarkable chapters in the book, and there can be no doubt that it was the design in it to give such an explanation of what was referred to in these visions, that there could be no mistake in applying the description. "All that remains between this and the twentieth chapter," says Andrew Fuller, "would in modern publications be called notes of illustration. No new subject is introduced, but mere enlargement on what has already been announced" (Works, 6:205).

Verse 1

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials - See the notes on Revelation 15:1, Revelation 15:7. Reference is again made to these angels in the same manner in Revelation 21:9, where one of them says that he would show to John "the bride, the Lamb's wife." No particular one is specified. The general idea seems to be, that to those seven angels was entrusted the execution of the last things, or the winding up of affairs introductory to the reign of God, and that the communications respecting those last events were properly made through them. It is clearly quite

immaterial by which of these it is done. The expression "which had the seven vials," would seem to imply that though they had emptied the vials in the manner stated in the previous chapter, they still retained them in their hands.

And talked with me - Spake to me. The word "talk" would imply a more protracted conversation than occurred here.

Come hither - Greek, δεῦρο deuro- "Here, hither." This is a word merely calling the attention, as we should say now, "Here." It does not imply that John was to leave the place where he was.

I will shew unto thee - Partly by symbols, and partly by express statements; for this is the way in which, in fact, he showed him.

The judgment - The condemnation and calamity that will come upon her.

Of the great whore - It is not uncommon in the Scriptures to represent a city under the image of a woman - a pure and holy city under the image of a virgin or chaste female; a corrupt, idolatrous, and wicked city under the image of an abandoned or lewd woman. See the notes on Isaiah 1:21; "How is the faithful city become an harlot!" Compare the notes on Isaiah 1:8. In Revelation 17:18, it is expressly said that "this woman is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth" - that is, as I suppose, papal Rome; and the design here is to represent it as resembling an abandoned female - fit representative of an apostate, corrupt, unfaithful church. Compare the notes on Revelation 9:21.

That sitteth upon many waters - An image drawn either from Babylon, situated on the Euphrates, and encompassed by the many artificial rivers which had been made to irrigate the country, or Rome, situated on the Tiber. In Revelation 17:15 these waters are said to represent the peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues over which the government symbolized by the woman ruled. See the notes on that verse. Waters are often used to symbolize nations.

Verse 2

With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication - Spiritual adultery. The meaning is, that papal Rome, unfaithful to God, and idolatrous and corrupt, had seduced the rulers of the earth, and led them into the same kind of unfaithfulness, idolatry, and corruption. Compare Jeremiah 3:8-9; Jeremiah 5:7; Jeremiah 13:27; Jeremiah 23:14; Ezekiel 16:32; Ezekiel 23:37; Hebrews 2:2; Hebrews 4:2. How true this is in history need

not be stated. All the princes and kings of Europe in the dark ages, and for many centuries were, and not a few of them are now, entirely under the influence of papal Rome.

And the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication - The alluring cup which, as an harlot, she had extended to them. See this image explained in the notes on Revelation 14:8. There it is said that Babylon - referring to the same thing - had "made them drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication"; that is, of the cup that led to wrath or punishment. Here it is said that the harlot had made them "drunk with the wine of her fornication"; that is, they had been, as it were, intoxicated by the alluring cup held out to them. What could better describe the influence of Rome on the people of the world, in making them, under these delusions, incapable of sober judgment, and in completely fascinating and controlling all their powers?

Verse 3

So he carried me away in the spirit - In vision. He seemed to himself to be thus carried away; or the scene which he is about to describe was made to pass before him as if he were present.

Into the wilderness - Into a desert. Compare the notes on Revelation 12:6. Why this scene is laid in a wilderness or desert is not mentioned. Prof. Stuart supposes that it is because it is "appropriate to symbolize the future condition of the beast." So DeWette and Rosenmuller. The imagery is changed somewhat from the first appearance of the harlot in Revelation 17:1. There she is represented as "sitting upon many waters." Now she is represented as "riding on a beast," and of course the imagery is adapted to that. Possibly there may have been no intentional significancy in this; but on the supposition, as the interpretation has led us to believe all along, that this refers to papal Rome, may not the propriety of this be seen in the condition of Rome and the adjacent country, at the rise of the papal power? That had its rise (see the notes on Daniel 7:25 ff) after the decline of the Roman civil power, and properly in the time of Clovis, Pepin, or Charlemagne. Perhaps its first visible appearance, as a power that was to influence the destiny of the world, was in the time of Gregory the Great, 590-605 a.d. On the supposition that the passage before us refers to the period when the papal power became thus marked and defined, the state of Rome at this time, as described by Mr. Gibbon, would show with what propriety the term "wilderness" or "desert" might be then applied to it.

The following extract from this author, in describing the state of Rome at the accession of Gregory the Great, has almost the appearance of being a designed commentary on this passage, or is, at anyrate, such as a partial interpreter of this book would desire and expect to find. Speaking of that period, he says (Decline and Fall, 3:207-211): "Rome had reached, about the close of the sixth century, the lowest period of her depression. By the removal of the seat of empire, and the successive loss of the provinces, the sources of public and private opulence were exhausted; the lofty tree under whose shade the nations of the earth had reposed was deprived of its leaves and branches, and the sapless trunk was left to wither on the ground. The ministers of command and the messengers of victory no longer met on the Appian or Flaminian Way; and the hostile approach of the Lombards was often felt and continually feared. The inhabitants of a potent and peaceful capital, who visit without an anxious thought the garden of the adjacent country, will faintly picture in their fancy the distress of the Romans; they shut or opened their gates with a trembling hand, beheld from the walls the flames of their houses, and heard the lamentations of their brethren who were coupled together like dogs, and dragged away into distant slavery beyond the sea and the mountains.

Such incessant alarms must annihilate the pleasures, and interrupt the labors of a rural life; and the Campagna of Rome was speedily reduced to the stale of a dreary wilderness, in which the land is barren, the waters are impure, and the air is infectious. Curiosity and ambition no longer attracted the nations to the capital of the world; but if chance or necessity directed the steps of a wandering stranger, he contemplated with horror the vacancy and solitude of the city; and might be tempted to ask, Where is the Senate, and where are the people? In a season of excessive rains, the Tiber swelled above its banks, and rushed with irresistible violence into the valleys of the seven hills. A pestilential disease arose from the stagnation of the deluge, and so rapid was the contagion that fourscore persons expired in an hour in the midst of a solemn procession which implored the mercy of Heaven. A society in which marriage is encouraged, and industry prevails, soon repairs the accidental losses of pestilence and war; but as the far greater part of the Romans was condemned to hopeless indigence and celibacy, the depopulation was constant and visible, and the gloomy enthusiasts might expect the approaching failure of the human race. Yet the number of

citizens still exceeded the measure of subsistence; their precarious food was supplied from the harvests of Sicily or Egypt; and the frequent repetition of famine betrays the inattention of the emperor to a distant province. The edifices of Rome were exposed to the same ruin and decay; the mouldering fabrics were easily overthrown by inundations, tempests, and earthquakes; and the monks who had occupied the most advantageous stations exulted in their base triumph over the ruins of antiquity.

"Like Thebes, or Babylon, or Carthage, the name of Rome might have been erased from the earth, if the city had not been animated by a vital principle which again restored her to honor and dominion. The power as well as the virtue of the apostles resided with living energy in the breast of their successors; and the chair of Peter, under the reign of Maurice, was occupied by the first and greatest of the name of Gregory. The sword of the enemy was suspended over Rome; it was averted by the mild eloquence and seasonable gifts of the pontiff, who commanded the respect of heretics and barbarians." Compare Revelation 13:3, Revelation 13:12-15. On the supposition, now, that the inspired author of the Apocalypse had Rome, in that state when the civil power declined and the papacy arose, in his eye, what more expressive imagery could he have used to denote it than he has employed? On the supposition - if such a supposition could be made - that Mr. Gibbon meant to furnish a commentary on this passage, what more appropriate language could he have used? Does not this language look as if the author of the Apocalypse and the author of the Decline and Fall meant to play into each other's hands?

And, in further confirmation of this, I may refer to the testimony of two Roman Catholic writers, giving the same view of Rome and showing that, in their apprehension also, it was only by the reviving influence of the papacy that Rome was saved from becoming a total waste. They are both of the middle ages. The first is Augustine Steuchus, who thus writes: "The empire having been overthrown, unless God had raised up the "pontificate," Rome, resuscitated and restored by none, would have become uninhabitable, and been a most foul habitation thenceforward of cattle. But in the pontificate it revived as with a second birth; its empire in magnitude not indeed equal to the old empire, but its form not very dissimilar: because all nations, from East and from West, venerate the pope, not otherwise than

they before obeyed the emperor." The other is Flavio Blondas: "The princes of the world now adore and worship as perpetual dictator the successor not of Caesar but of the fisherman Peter; that is, the supreme pontiff, the substitute of the aforesaid emperor." See the original in Elliott, 3:113.

And I saw a woman - Evidently the same which is referred to in Revelation 17:1.

Sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast - That is, either the beast was itself naturally of this color, or it was covered with trappings of this color. The word "scarlet" properly denotes a bright red color - brighter than crimson, which is a red color tinged with blue. See the notes on Isaiah 1:18. The word used here - κόκκινον kokkinon- occurs in the New Testament only in the following places: Matthew 27:28; Hebrews 9:19; Revelation 17:3-4; Revelation 18:12, Revelation 18:16 - in all which places it is rendered "scarlet." See the Matthew 27:28 note and Hebrews 9:19 note. The color was obtained from a small insect which was found adhering to the shoots of a species of oak in Spain and Western Asia. This was the usual color in the robes of princes, military cloaks, etc. It is applicable in the description of papal Rome, because this is a favorite color there. Thus it is used in Revelation 12:3, where the same power is represented under the image of a "red dragon."

See the notes on that passage. It is remarkable that nothing would better represent the favorite color at Rome than this, or the actual appearance of the pope, the cardinals, and the priests in their robes, on some great festival occasion. Those who are familiar with the descriptions given of papal Rome by travelers, and those who have passed much time in Rome, will see at once the propriety of this description, on the supposition that it was intended to refer to the papacy. I caused this inquiry to be made of an intelligent gentleman who had passed much time in Rome - without his knowing my design what would strike a stranger on visiting Rome, or what would be likely particularly to arrest his attention as remarkable there; and he unhesitatingly replied, "The scarlet color." This is the color of the dress of the cardinals - their hats, and cloaks, and stockings being always of this color.

It is the color of the carriages of the cardinals, the entire body of the carriage being scarlet, and the trappings of the horses the same. On occasion of public festivals and processions, scarlet is suspended from the

windows of the houses along which processions pass. The inner color of the cloak of the pope is scarlet; his carriage is scarlet; the carpet on which he treads is scarlet. A large part of the dress of the body-guard of the pope is scarlet; and no one can take up a picture of Rome without seeing that this color is predominant. I looked through a volume of engravings representing the principal officers and public persons of Rome. There were few in which the scarlet color was not found as constituting some part of their apparel; in not a few the scarlet color prevailed almost entirely. And in illustration of the same thought, I introduce here an extract from a foreign newspaper, copied into an American newspaper of Feb. 22,1851, as an illustration of the fact that the scarlet color is characteristic of Rome, and of the readiness with which it is referred to in that respect: "Curious Costumes - The three new cardinals, the archbishops of Thoulouse, Rheims, and Besancon, were presented to the president of the French Republic by the Pope's nuncio. They wore red caps, red stockings, black Roman coats lined and bound with red, and small cloaks." I conclude, therefore, that if it be admitted that it was intended to represent papal Rome in the vision, the precise description would have been adopted which is found here.

Full of names of blasphemy - All covered over with blasphemous titles and names. What could more accurately describe papal Rome than this? Compare for some of these names and titles the notes on 2 Thessalonians 2:4; 1 Timothy 4:1-4; and notes on Revelation 13:1, Revelation 13:5.

Having seven heads and ten horns - See the notes on Revelation 13:1.

Verse 4

And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour - On the nature of the scarlet color, see the notes on Revelation 17:3. The purple color - πορφύρα porphura- was obtained from a species of shellfish found on the coasts of the Mediterranean, which yielded a reddish-purple dye, much prized by the ancients. Robes dyed in that color were commonly worn by persons of rank and wealth, Mark 15:17, Mark 15:20; Luke 16:19. The purple color contains more blue than the crimson, though the limits are not very accurately defined, and the words are sometimes interchanged. Thus the mock robe put on the Saviour is called in Mark 15:17, Mark 15:20, πορφύραν porphuran- "purple," and in Matthew 27:28, κοκκίνην - "crimson." On the applicability of this to the papacy, see the notes on Revelation 17:3.

And decked with gold - After the manner of an harlot, with rich jewelry.

And precious stones - Sparkling diamonds, etc.

And pearls - Also a much-valued female ornament. Compare the notes on Matthew 7:6; Matthew 13:46.

Having a golden cup in her hand - As if to entice lovers. See the notes on Revelation 14:8.

Full of abominations - Of abominable things; of things suited to excite abhorrence and disgust; things unlawful and forbidden. The word, in the Scriptures, is commonly used to denote the impurities and abominations of idolatry. See the notes on Daniel 9:27. The meaning here is, that it seemed to be a cup filled with wine, but it was in fact a cup full of all abominable drugs, leading to all kinds of corruption. How much in accordance this is with the fascinations of the papacy, it is not necessary now to say, after the ample illustrations of the same thing already furnished in these notes.

And filthiness of her fornication - The image here is that of papal Rome, represented as an abandoned woman in gorgeous attire, alluring by her arts the nations of the earth, and seducing them into all kinds of pollution and abomination. It is a most remarkable fact that the papacy, as if designing to furnish a fulfillment of this prophecy, has chosen to represent itself almost precisely in this manner - as a female extending an alluring cup to passers by - as will be seen by the engraving on this page. Far as the design of striking this medal may have been from confirming this portion of the Book of Revelation, yet no one can fail to see that if this had been the design, no more happy illustration could have been adopted. Apostate churches, and guilty nations, often furnish the very proofs necessary to confirm the truth of the Scriptures.

Verse 5

And upon her forehead - In a circlet around her forehead. That is, it was made prominent and public, as if written on the forehead in blazing capitals. In Revelation 13:1 it is said that "the name of blasphemy" was written on the "heads" of the beast. The meaning in both places is substantially the same, that it was prominent, and unmistakable. See the notes on that verse. Compare the note on Revelation 14:1.

Was a name written - A title, or something that would properly indicate her character.

Mystery - It is proper to remark that there is nothing in the original as written by John, so far as now known, that corresponded with what is implied in placing this inscription in capital letters; and the same remark may be made of the "title" or inscription that was placed over the head of the Saviour on the cross, Matthew 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19. Our translators have adopted this form, apparently for the sole purpose of denoting that it was an inscription or title. On the meaning of the word "mystery," see the notes on 1 Corinthians 2:7. Compare the notes on 1 Timothy 3:16. Here it seems to be used to denote that there was something hidden, obscure, or enigmatical, under the title adopted; that is, the word "Babylon," and the word "mother," were symbolical. Our translators have printed and pointed the word "mystery" as if it were part of the inscription. It would probably be better to regard it as referring to the inscription, thus: "a name was written - a mysterious name, to wit, Babylon," etc. Or, "a name was written mysteriously." According to this, it would mean, not that there was any wonderful "mystery" about the thing itself, whatever might be true on that point, but that the name was enigmatical or symbolical; or that there was something hidden or concealed under the name. It was not to be literally understood.

Babylon the great - papal Rome, the nominal head of the Christian world, as Babylon had been of the pagan world. See the notes on Revelation 14:8.

The mother of harlots -

(a)Of that spiritual apostasy from God which, in the language of the prophets, might be called adultery. See the notes on Revelation 14:8.

(b)The promoter of lewdness by her institutions. See the notes on Revelation 9:21. In both these senses, there never was a more expressive or appropriate title than the one here employed.

And abominations of the earth - Abominable things that prevail on the earth, Revelation 17:4. Compare the notes on Revelation 9:20-21.

Verse 6

And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints - A reeling, intoxicated harlot, for that is the image which is kept up all along. In regard to the phrase "drunken with blood," compare Jeremiah 46:10. "The phraseology is derived from the barbarous custom (still extant among many pagan nations) of drinking the blood of the enemies slain in the way of revenge. The effect of drinking blood is said to be to exasperate, and to

intoxicate with passion and a desire of revenge" (Prof. Stuart, in loco). The meaning here is, that the persecuting power referred to had shed the blood of the saints; and that, in its fury, it had, as it were, drunk the blood of the slain, and had become, by drinking that blood, intoxicated and infuriated. No one need say how applicable this has been to the papacy. Compare, however, the Daniel 7:21, Daniel 7:25 notes; Revelation 12:13-14; Revelation 13:15 notes.

And with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus - Especially with their blood. The meaning is, that the warfare, in which so much blood was shed, was directed against the saints as such, and that, in fact, it terminated particularly on those who, amidst cruel sufferings, were faithful witnesses for the Lord Jesus, and deserved to be called, by way of eminence, "martyrs." Compare the notes on Revelation 2:13; Revelation 6:9; Revelation 11:5, Revelation 11:7. How applicable this is to the papacy, let the blood shed in the valleys of Piedmont; the blood shed in the Low Countries by the Duke of Alva; the blood shed on Bartholomew's day; and the blood shed in the Inquisition, testify.

And when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration - I was astonished at her appearance, at her apparel, and at the things which were so significantly symbolized by her.

Verse 7

And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? - He was doubtless struck with the appearance of John as he stood fixed in astonishment. The question asked him, "why" he wondered, was designed to show him that the cause of his surprise would be removed or lessened, for that he would proceed so to explain this that he might have a correct view of its design.

I will tell thee the mystery of the woman - On the word "mystery," see the notes on Revelation 17:5. The sense is, "I will explain what is meant by the symbol - the hidden meaning that is couched under it." That is, he would so far explain it that a just view might be obtained of its signification. The explanation follows, Revelation 17:8-18.

And of the beast that carrieth her, … - Revelation 17:3.

Verse 8

The beast that thou sawest was, and is not - In the close of the verse it is added, "and yet is" - "the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." There are three things affirmed here: first, that there is a sense in which it might be

said of the power here referred to, that it "was," or that, before this, it had an existence; second, that there was a sense in which it might be said that it is "not," that is, that it had become practically extinct; and third, that there is a sense in which that power would be so revived that it might be said that it "still is." The "beast" here referred to is the same that is mentioned in Revelation 17:3, and in Revelation 13:1, Revelation 13:3, Revelation 13:11-16. That is, there was one great formidable power, having essentially the same origin, though manifested under somewhat different modifications, to one and all of which might, in their different manifestations, be given the same name, "the beast."

And shall ascend out of the bottomless pit - ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου ek tēs abussouOn the meaning of the word here used, see the notes on Revelation 9:1. The meaning here is, that this power would seem to come up from the nether world. It would appear at one time to be extinct, but would revive again as if coming from the world over which Satan presides, and would, in its revived character, be such as might be expected from such an origin.

And go into perdition - That is, its end will be destruction. It will not be permanent, but will be overthrown and destroyed. The word perdition here is properly rendered by Prof. Stuart "destruction," but nothing is indicated by the word of the "nature" of the destruction that would come upon it.

And they that dwell on the earth - The inhabitants of the earth generally; that is, the matter referred to will be so remarkable as to attract general attention.

Shall wonder - It will be so contrary to the regular course of events, so difficult of explanation, so remarkable in itself, as to excite attention and surprise.

Whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world - See this explained in the notes on Revelation 13:8. The idea seems to be, that those whose names are written in the book of life, or who are truly the friends of God, would not be drawn off in admiration of the beast, or in rendering homage to it.

When they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is - That is, the power that once was mighty; that had declined to such a state that it became, as it were, extinct; and that was revived again with so much of its original strength, that it might be said that it still exists. The fact of its being

revived in this manner, as well as the nature of the power itself, seemed suited to excite this admiration.

Verse 9

And here is the mind which hath wisdom - Here is what requires wisdom to interpret it; or, here is a case in which the mind that shows itself able to explain it will evince true sagacity. So in Revelation 13:18. See the notes on that place. Prof. Stuart renders this, "Here is a meaning which compriseth wisdom." It is undoubtedly implied that the symbol might be understood - whether in the time of John, or afterward, he does not say; but it was a matter which could not be determined by ordinary minds, or without an earnest application of the understanding.

The seven heads are seven mountains - Referring, undoubtedly, to Rome - the seven-hilled city - Septicollis Roma. See the notes on Revelation 12:3. (d).

On which the woman sitteth - The city represented as a woman, in accordance with a common usage in the Scriptures. See the notes on Isaiah 1:8.

Verse 10

And there are seven kings - That is, seven in all, as they are enumerated in this verse and the next. An eighth is mentioned in Revelation 17:11, but it is, at the same time, said that this one so pertains to the seven, or is so properly in one sense of the number seven, though, in another sense, to be regarded as an eighth, that it may be properly reckoned as the seventh. The word "kings" - βασιλεῖς basileis- may be understood, so far as the meaning of the word is concerned:

(a)literally, as denoting a king, or one who exercises royal authority;

(b)in a more general sense, as denoting one of distinguished honor - a viceroy, prince, leader, chief, Matthew 2:1, Matthew 2:3, Matthew 2:9; Luke 1:5; Acts 12:1;

(c)in a still larger sense, as denoting a dynasty, a form of government, a mode of administration, as what, in fact, "rules."

See the notes on Daniel 7:24, where the word "king" undoubtedly denotes a "dynasty," or "form of rule." The notion of ruling, or of authority, is undoubtedly in the word, for the verb βασιλεύω basileuōmeans "to rule," but the word may be applied to anything in which sovereignty resides. Thus it is applied to a king's son, to a military commander, to the gods, to a

Greek archon, etc. See Passow. It would be contrary to the whole spirit of this passage, and to what is demanded by the proper meaning of the word, to insist that the word should denote literally kings, and that it could not be applied to emperors, or to dictators, or to dynasties.

Five are fallen - Have passed away as if fallen; that is, they have disappeared. The language would be applicable to rulers who have died, or who had been dethroned; or to dynasties or forms of government that had ceased to be. In the fulfillment of this, it would be necessary to find five such successive kings or rulers who had died, and who pertained to one sovereignty or nation; or five such dynasties or forms of administrations that had successively existed, but which had ceased.

And one is - That is, there is one - a sixth - that now reigns. The proper interpretation of this would be, that this existed in the time of the writer; that is, according to the view taken of the time of the writing of the Apocalypse (see Intro., section 2), at the close of the first century.

And the other is not yet come - The sixth one is to be succeeded by another in the same line, or occupying the same dominion.

And when he cometh - When that form of dominion is set up. No intimation is yet given as to the time when this would occur.

He must continue a short space - ὀλίγον oligonA short time; his dominion will be of short duration. It is observable that this characteristic is stated as applicable only to this one of the seven; and the fair meaning would seem to be, that the time would be short as compared with the six that preceded, and as compared with the one that followed - the eighth - into which it was to be merged, Revelation 17:11.

Verse 11

And the beast that was, and is not - That is, the one power that was formerly mighty; that died away so that it might be said to be extinct; and yet Revelation 17:8 that "still is," or has a prolonged existence. It is evident that, by the "beast" here, there is some one power, dominion, empire, or rule, whose essential identity is preserved through all these changes, and to which it is proper to give the same name. It finds its termination, or its last form, in what is here called the "eighth"; a power which, it is observed, sustains such a special relation to the seven, that it may be said to be "of the seven," or to be a mere prolongation of the same sovereignty.

Even he is the eighth - The eighth in the succession. This form of sovereignty, though a mere prolongation of the former government, so

much so as to be, in fact, but keeping up the same empire in the world, appears in such a novelty of form, that, in one sense, it deserves to be called the eighth in order, and yet is so essentially a mere concentration and continuance of the one power, that, in the general reckoning Revelation 17:10, it might be regarded as pertaining to the former. There was a sense in which it was proper to speak of it as the eighth power; and yet, viewed in its relation to the whole, it so essentially combined and concentrated all that there was in the seven, that, in a general view, it scarcely merited a separate mention. We should look for the fulfillment of this in some such concentration and embodiment of all that it was, in the previous forms of sovereignty referred to, that it perhaps would deserve mention as an eighth power, but that it was, nevertheless, such a mere prolongation of the previous forms of the one power, that it might be said to be "of the seven"; so that, in this view, it would not claim a separate consideration. This seems to be the fair meaning, though there is much that is enigmatical in the form of the expression.

And goeth into perdition - See the notes on Revelation 17:8.

In inquiring now into the application of this very difficult passage, it may be proper to suggest some of the principal opinions which have been held, and then to endeavor to ascertain the true meaning:

I. The principal opinions which have been held may be reduced to the following:

(1) That the seven kings here refer to the succession of Roman emperors, yet with some variation as to the manner of reckoning. Prof. Stuart begins with Julius Caesar, and reckons them in this manner: the "five that are fallen" are Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius. Nero, who, as he supposes, was the reigning prince at the time when the book was written, he regards as the sixth; Galba, who succeeded him, as the seventh. Others, who adopt this literal method of explaining it, suppose that the time begins with Augustus, and then Galba would be the sixth, and Otho, who reigned but three months, would be the seventh. The expression, "the beast that was, and is not, who is the eighth," Prof. Stuart regards as referring to a general impression among the pagan and among Christians, in the time of the persecution under Nero, that he would again appear after it was reported that he was dead, or that he would rise from the dead and

carry on his persecution again. See Prof. Stuart, *Com*. vol. ii., Excur. 3. The beast, according to this view, denotes the Roman emperors, specifically Nero, and the reference in Revelation 17:8 is to "the well known hariolation respecting Nero, that he would be assassinated, and would disappear for a while, and then make his appearance again to the confusion of all his enemies." "What the angel," says he, "says, seems to be equivalent to this - ‹The beast means the Roman emperors, specifically Nero, of whom the report spread throughout the empire that he will revive, after being apparently slain, and will come, as it were, from the abyss or Hades, but he will perish, and that speedily,‘" vol. ii. p. 323.

(2) That the word "kings" is not to be taken literally, but that it refers to forms of government, dynasties, or modes of administration. The general opinion among those who hold this view is, that the first six refer to the forms of the Roman government:

(1)kings;

(2)consuls;

(3)dictators;

(4)decemvirs;

(5)military tribunes;

(6)the imperial form, beginning with Augustus.

This has been the common Protestant interpretation, and in reference to these six forms of government there has been a general agreement. But, while the mass of Protestant interpreters have supposed that the "six" heads refer to these forms of administration, there has been much diversity of opinion as to the seventh; and here, on this plan of interpretation, the main, if not the sole difficulty lies. Among the opinions held are the following:

(a)That of Mr. Mede. He makes the seventh head what he calls the "Demi-Caesar," or the "Western emperor who reigned after the division of the empire into East and West, and which continued, after the last division, under Honorius and Arcadius, about sixty years - a short space" (*Works*, book iii. ch. 8; book v. ch. 12).

(b)That of Dr. Newton, who regards the sixth or imperial "head" as continuing uninterruptedly through the line of Christian as well as pagan emperors, until Augustulus and the Heruli; and the seventh to be the Dukedom of Rome, established soon after under the exarchate of Ravenna (*Prophecies*, pp. 575,576).

(c)That of Dr. More and Mr. Cunninghame, who suppose the Christian emperors, from Constantine to Augustulus, to constitute the seventh head, and that this had its termination by the sword of the Heruli.

(d)That of Mr. Elliott, who supposes the seventh head or power to refer to a new form of administration introduced by Diocletian, changing the administration from the original imperial character to that of an absolute Asiatic sovereignty. For the important changes introduced by Diocletian that justify this remark, see the *Decline and Fall*, vol. i. pp. 212-217.

Numerous other solutions may be found in Poole's Synopsis, but these embrace the principal, and the most plausible that have been proposed.

II. I proceed, then, to state what seems to me to be the true explanation. This must be found in some facts that will accord with the explanation given of the meaning of the passage:

(1) There can be no doubt that this refers to Rome, either pagan, Christian, or papal. All the circumstances combine in this; all respectable interpreters agree in this. This would be naturally understood by the symbols used by John, and by the explanations furnished by the angel. See Revelation 17:18; "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth." Every circumstance combines here in leading to the conclusion that Rome is intended. There was no other power or empire on the earth to which this could be properly applied; there was everything in the circumstances of the writer to lead us to suppose that this was referred to; there is an utter impossibility now in applying the description to anything else.

(2) it was to be a revived power; not a power in its original form and strength. This is manifest, because it is said Revelation 17:8 that the power represented by the beast "was, and is not, and yet is" - that is, it was once a mighty power; it then declined so that it could be said that "it is not"; and

yet there was so much remaining vitality in it, or so much revived power, that it could be said that it "still is" - καίπερ ἐστίν kaiper estinNow, this is strictly applicable to Rome when the papal power arose. The old Roman might had departed; the glory and strength evinced in the days of the consuls, the dictators, and the emperors, had disappeared, and yet there was a lingering vitality, and a reviving of power under the papacy, which made it proper to say that it still continued, or that that mighty power was prolonged. The civil power connected with the papacy was a revived Roman power - the Roman power prolonged under another form - for it is susceptible of clear demonstration that, if it had not been for the rise of the papal power, the sovereignty of Rome, as such, would have been wholly extinct. For the proof of this, see the passages quoted in the notes on Revelation 17:3. Compare the notes on Revelation 13:3, Revelation 13:12, Revelation 13:15.

(3) it was to be a power emanating from the "abyss," or that would seem to ascend from the dark world beneath. See Revelation 17:8. This was true in regard to the papacy, either:

(a)as apparently ascending from the lowest state and the most depressed condition, as if it came up from below (see the notes on Revelation 17:3, compare Revelation 13:11); or,

(b)as, in fact, having its origin in the world of darkness, and being under the control of the prince of that world, which, according to all the representations of that formidable anti-Christian power in the Scriptures, is true, and which the whole history of the papacy, and of its influence on religion, confirms.

(4) one of the powers referred to sustained the other. "The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth," Revelation 17:9. That is, the power represented by the harlot was sustained or supported by the power represented by the seven heads or the seven mountains. Literally, applied, this would mean that the papacy, as an ecclesiastical institution, was sustained by the civil power, with which it was so closely connected. For the illustration and support of this, see the notes on Revelation 13:2-3, Revelation 13:12, Revelation 13:15. In the notes on these passages it is shown that the support was mutual; that while the papacy, in fact, revived the almost extinct Roman civil power, and gave it new vitality, the price of that was, that it should be, in its turn, sustained by that revived Roman civil

power. All history shows that that has been the fact; that in all its aggressions, assumptions, and persecutions, it has, in fact, and professedly, leaned on the arm of the civil power.

(5) amore important inquiry, and a more serious difficulty, remains in respect to the statements respecting the "seven kings," Revelation 17:10-11. The statements on this point are, that the whole number properly was seven; that of this number five had fallen or passed away; that one was in existence at the time when the author wrote; that another one was yet to appear who would continue for a little time; and that the general power represented by all these would be embodied in the "beast that was, and is not," and that might, in some respects, be regarded as an "eighth." These points may be taken up in their order:

(a) The first inquiry relates to the five that were fallen and the one that was then in existence - the first six. These may be taken together, for they are manifestly of the same class, and have the same characteristics, at least so far as to be distinguished from the "seventh" and the "eighth." The meaning of the word "kings" here has been already explained, Revelation 17:10. It denotes ruling power, or forms of power; and, so far as the signification of the word is concerned, it might be applicable to royalty, or to any other form of administration. It is not necessary, then, to find an exact succession of princes or kings that would correspond with this - five of whom were dead, and one of whom was then on the throne, and all soon to be succeeded by one more, who would soon die.

The true explanation of this seems to be what refers this to the forms of the Roman government or administration. These six "heads," or forms of administration, were, in their order, Kings, Consuls, Dictators, Decemvirs, Military Tribunes, and Emperors. Of these, five had passed away in the time when John wrote the Apocalypse; the sixth, the imperial, was then in power, and had been from the time of Augustus Caesar. The only questions that can be raised are, whether these forms of administration were so distinct and prominent, and whether in the times previous to John they so embraced the whole Roman power, as to justify this interpretation - that is, whether these forms of administration were so marked in this respect that it may be supposed that John would use the language here employed in describing

them. As showing the probability that he would use this language, I refer to the following arguments, namely:

(1) The authority of Livy, lib. 6:cap. 1. Speaking of the previous parts of his history, and of what he had done in writing it, he says: "Quae ab condita urbe Roma a.d. captam eandem urbem, Romani sub regibus primum, consulibus deinde ac dictatoribus, decemviris ac tribunis consularibus gessere, foris bella, domi seditiones, quinque libris exposui." That is, "In five books I have related what was done at Rome, pertaining both to foreign wars and domestic strifes, from the foundation of the city to the time when it was taken, as it was governed by kings, by consuls, by dictators, by the decemvirs, and by consular tribunes." Here he mentions five forms of administration under which Rome had been governed in the earlier periods of its history. The imperial power had a later origin, and did not exist until near the time of Livy himself.

(2) the same distribution of power, or forms of government, among the Romans, is made by Tacitus, *Annual*. lib. i. cap. 1: "*Urbem Romam a principio reges habuere. Libertatem et consulatum L. Brutus instituit. Dictaturae a.d. tempus sumebantur. Neque decemviralis potestas ultra biennium, neque tribunorum militum consulure jus diu valuit. Non Cinnae, non Syllae longa dominatio: et Pompeii Crassique potentia cito in Caesarem, Lepidi atque Antonii arma in Augustum cessere; qui cuncta, discordiis civilibus fessa, nomine principis sub imperium accepit*." That is, "In the beginning, Rome was governed by kings. Then L. Brutus gave to her liberty and the consulship. A temporary power was conferred on the dictators. The authority of the decemvirs did not continue beyond the space of two years: neither was the consular power of the military tribunes of long duration. The rule of Cinna and Sylla was brief; and the power of Pompey and Crassus passed into the hands of Caesar; and the arms of Lepidus and Antony were surrendered to Augustus, who united all things, broken by civil discord, under the name of prince in the imperial government." Here Tacitus distinctly mentions the six forms of administration that had prevailed in Rome, the last of which was the imperial. It is true, also, that he mentions the brief rule of certain men - as Cinna, Sylla, Antony, and Lepidus; but these are not forms of administration, and their temporary authority did not indicate any change in the government - for some of these

men were dictators, and none of them, except Brutus and Augustus, established any permanent form of administration.

(3) the same thing is apparent in the usual statements of history, and the books that describe the forms of government at Rome. In so common a book as Adam‘s Roman Antiquities, a description may be found of the forms of Roman administration that corresponds almost precisely with this. The forms of supreme power in Rome, as enumerated there, are what are called ordinary and extraordinary magistrates. Under the former are enumerated kings, consuls, praetors, censors, quaestors, and tribunes of the people. But of these, in fact, the supreme power was vested in two; for there were, under this, but two forms of administration - that of kings and consuls; the offices of praetor, censor, quaestor, and tribune of the people being merely subordinate to that of the consuls, and no more a new form of administration than the offices of secretary of the state, of war, of the navy, of the interior, are now. Under the latter - that of extraordinary magistrates - are enumerated dictators, decemvirs, military tribunes, and the interrex. But the interrex did not constitute a form of administration, or a change of government, anymore than, when the President or Vice-president of the United States should die, the performance of the duties of the office of president by the speaker of the senate would indicate a change, or than the regency of the Prince of Wales in the time of George III constituted a new form of government. So that, in fact, we have enumerated, as constituting the supreme power at Rome, kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs, and military tribunes - five in number. The imperial power was the sixth.

(4) in confirmation of the same thing, I may refer to the authority of Bellarmine, a distinguished Roman Catholic writer. In his work De Pontiff., cap. 2, he thus enumerates the changes which the Roman government had experienced, or the forms of administration that had existed there:

1.Kings;

2.Consuls;

3.Decemvirs;

4.Dictators;

5.Military Tribunes with consular power;

6.Emperors.

See Poole‘s *Synoptists*, in loco. And,

(5) it may be added, that this would be understood by the contemporaries of John in this sense. These forms of government were so marked that, in connection with the mention of the “seven mountains,” designating the city, there could be no doubt as to what was intended. Reference would at once be made to the imperial power as then existing, and the mind would readily and easily turn back to the five main forms of the supreme administration which had existed before.

(b) The next inquiry is, what is denoted by “the seventh.” If the word “kings” here refers, as is supposed (see the notes on Revelation 17:10), to a form of government or administration; if the “five” refer to the forms previous to the imperial, and the “sixth” to the imperial; and if John wrote during the imperial government, then it follows that this must refer to some form of administration that was to succeed the imperial. If the papacy was “the eighth,” and of the “seventh,” then it is clear that this must refer to some form of civil administration lying between the decline of the imperial and the rise of the papal power: that “short space” - for it was a short space that intervened. Now, there can be no difficulty, I think, in referring this to that form of administration over Rome that “dukedom” under the exarchate of Ravenna, which succeeded the decline of the imperial power, and which preceded the rise of the papal power; between the year 566 or 568, when Rome was reduced to a dukedom, under the exarchate of Ravenna, and the time when the city revolted from this authority and became subject to that of the pope, about the year 727.

This period continued, according to Mr. Gibbon, about two hundred years. He says, “During a period of two hundred years, Italy was unequally divided between the kingdom of the Lombards and the exarchate of Ravenna. The offices and professions, which the jealousy of Constantine had separated, were united by the indulgence of Justinian; and eighteen successive exarchs were invested, in the decline of the empire, with the full remains of civil, of military, and even of ecclesiastical power. Their immediate jurisdiction, which was afterward consecrated as the patrimony

of Peter, extended over the modern Romagna, the marshes or valleys of Ferrara and Commachic, five maritime cities from Rimini to Ancona, and a second inland Pentapolis, between the Adriatic coast and the hills of the Apennine. The duchy of Rome appears to have included the Tuscan, Sabine, and Latian conquests, of the first four hundred years of the city; and the limits may be distinctly traced along the coast, from Civita Vecchia to Terracina, and with the course of the Tiber from Ameria and Narni to the port of Ostia" (Dec. and Fall, 3:202).

How accurate is this if it be regarded as a statement of a new power or form of administration that succeeded the imperial - a power that was, in fact, a prolongation of the old Roman authority, and that was designed to constitute and embody it all! Could Mr. Gibbon have furnished a better commentary on the passage if he had adopted the interpretation of this portion of the Apocalypse above proposed, and if he had designed to describe this as the seventh power in the successive forms of the Roman administration? It is worthy of remark, also, that this account in Mr. Gibbon's history immediately precedes the account of the rise of the papacy; the record respecting the exarchate, and that concerning Gregory the Great, described by Mr. Gibbon as "the Saviour of Rome," occurring in the same chapter, vol. iii. 202-211.

(c) This was to "continue for a short space" - for a little time. If this refers to the power to which in the remarks above it is supposed to refer, it is easy to see the propriety of this statement. Compared with the previous form of administration - the imperial - it was of short duration; absolutely considered, it was brief. Mr. Gibbon (iii. 202) has marked it as extending through "a period of two hundred years"; and if this is compared with the form of administration which preceded it, extending to more than five hundred years, and more especially with that which followed - the papal form - which has extended now some twelve hundred years, it will be seen with what propriety this is spoken of as continuing for a "short space."

(d) "The beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven," Revelation 17:11. If the explanations above given are correct, there can be no difficulty in the application of this to the papal power; for:

(1) all this power was concentrated in the papacy, all that revived or prolonged Roman power had now passed into the papacy, constituting that mighty dominion which was to be set up for so many centuries over what had been the Roman world. See the statements of Mr. Gibbon (iii. 207-211), as quoted in the notes on Revelation 17:3. Compare also, particularly, the remarks of Augustine Steuchus, a Roman Catholic writer, as quoted in the notes on that verse: "The empire having been overthrown, unless God had raised up the pontificate, Rome, resuscitated and restored by none, would have become uninhabitable, and been thenceforward a most foul habitation of cattle. But in the pontificate it revived as with a second birth; its empire in magnitude not indeed equal to the old empire, but its form not very dissimilar: because all nations, from East and from West, venerate the pope, not otherwise than they before obeyed the emperor."

(2) this was an eighth power or form of administration - for it was different, in many respects, from that of the kings, the consuls, the dictators, the decemvirs, the military tribunes, the emperors, and the dukedom - though it comprised substantially the power of all. Indeed, it could not have been spoken of as identical with either of the previous forms of administration, though it concentrated the power which had been wielded by them all.

(3) it was "of the seven"; that is, it pertained to them; it was a prolongation of the same power. It had the same central seat - Rome; it extended over the same territory, and it embraced sooner or latter the same nations. There is not one of those forms of administration which did not find a prolongation in the papacy; for it aspired after, and succeeded in obtaining, all the authority of kings, dictators, consuls, emperors. It was in fact still the Roman scepter swayed over the world; and with the strictest propriety it could be said that it was "of the seven," as having sprung out of the seven, and as perpetuating the sway of this mighty domination. For full illustration of this, see the Daniel 7 notes; and Revelation 13 notes.

(4) it would "go into perdition"; that is, it would be under this form that this mighty domination that had for so many ages ruled over the earth would die away, or this would be the last in the series. The Roman dominion, as such, would not be extended to a ninth, or tenth, or eleventh

form, but would finally expire under the eighth. Every indication shows that this is to be so, and that with the decline of the papal power the whole Roman domination, that has swayed a scepter for two thousand five hundred years, will have come forever to an end. If this is so, then we have found an ample and exact application of this passage even in its most minute specifications.

Verse 12

And the ten horns which thou sawest - On the scarlet-colored beast, Revelation 17:3.

Are ten kings - Represent or denote ten kings - that is, kingdoms or powers. See the notes on Daniel 7:24.

Which have received no kingdom as yet - That is, they were not in existence when John wrote. It is implied, that during the period under review they would arise, and would become connected, in an important sense, with the power here represented by the "beast." For a full illustration respecting the ten "kings," or kingdoms here referred to, see the notes on Daniel 7, at the close of the chapter, II. (2).

But receive power - It is not said from what source this power is received, but it is simply implied that it would in fact be conferred on them.

As kings - That is, the power would be what is usually exercised by kings.

One hour - It cannot be supposed that this is to be taken literally. The meaning clearly is, that this would be brief and temporary; that is, it was a form of administration which would be succeeded by one more fixed and permanent. Anyone can see that, in fact, this is strictly applicable to the governments, as referred to in the notes on Daniel, which sprang up after the incursion of the northern barbarians, and which were finally succeeded by the permanent forms of government in Europe. Most of them were very brief in their duration, and they were soon remodelled in the forms of permanent administration. Thus, to take the arrangement proposed by Sir Isaac Newton:

(1)the kingdom of the Vandals and Alans in Spain and Africa;

(2)the kingdom of the Suevians in Spain;

(3)the kingdom of the Visigoths;

(4)the kingdom of the Alans in Gallia;

(5)the kingdom of the Burgundians;

(6)the kingdom of the Franks;

(7)the kingdom of the Britons;

(8)the kingdom of the Huns;

(9)the kingdom of the Lombards;

(10)the kingdom of Ravenna - how temporary were most of these; how soon they passed into the more permanent forms of administration which succeeded them in Europe!

With the beast - With that rising papal power. They would exercise their authority in connection with that, and under its influence.

Verse 13

These have one mind - That is, they are united in the promotion of the same object. Though in some respects wholly independent of each other, yet they may be regarded as, in fact, so far united that they tend to promote the same ultimate end. As a fact in history, all these kingdoms, though of different origin, and though not infrequently engaged in war with each other, became Roman Catholics, and were united in the support of the papacy. It was with propriety, therefore, that they should be regarded as so closely connected with that power that they could be represented as "ten horns" on the seven-headed monster.

And shall give their power and strength unto the beast - Shall lend their influence to the support of the papacy, and become the upholders of that power. The meaning, according to the interpretation above proposed, is, that they would all become papal kingdoms, and supporters of the papal power. It is unnecessary to pause to show how true this has been in history. At first, most of the people out of whom these kingdoms sprang were pagans; then many of them embraced Christianity under the prevailing form of Arianism, and this fact was for a time a bar to their perfect adhesion to the Roman see; but they were all ultimately brought wholly under its influence, and became its supporters. In 496 a.d., Clovis, the king of the

Franks, on occasion of his victory over the Allemanni, embraced the Catholic faith, and so received the title, transmitted downward through nearly thirteen hundred years to the French kings as his successors, of "the oldest son of the church"; in the course of the sixth century, the kings of Burgundy, Bavaria, Spain, Portugal, England, embraced the same religion, and became the defenders of the papacy. It is well known that each one of the powers above enumerated as constituting these ten kingdoms, became subject to the papacy, and continued so during their separate existence, or when merged into some other power, until the Reformation in the sixteenth century. All "their power and strength was given unto the beast"; all was made subservient to the purposes of papal Rome.

Verse 14

These shall make war with the Lamb - The Lamb of God - the Lord Jesus (See the notes at Revelation 5:6); that is, they would combine with the papacy in opposing evangelical religion. It is not meant that they would openly and avowedly proclaim war against the Son of God, but that they would practically do this in sustaining a persecuting power. It is unnecessary to show how true this has been in history; how entirely they sustained the papacy in all its measures of persecution.

And the Lamb shall overcome them - Shall ultimately gain the victory over them. The meaning is, that they would not be able to extinguish the true religion. In spite of all opposition and persecution, that would still live in the world, until it would be said that a complete triumph was gained.

For he is Lord of lords, and King of kings - He has supreme power over all the earth, and all kings and princes are subject to his control. Compare Revelation 19:16.

And they that are with him - The reference is to the persecuted saints who have adhered to him as his faithful followers in all these protracted conflicts.

Are called - That is, called by him to be his followers; as if he had selected them out of the world to maintain his cause. See the notes on Romans 1:7.

And chosen - See the John 15:16 note, and 1 Peter 1:2 note. In their steadfast adherence to the truth, they had shown that they were truly chosen by the Saviour, and could be relied on in the warfare against the powers of evil.

And faithful - They had shown themselves faithful to him in times of persecution, and in the hour of darkness.

Verse 15

And he saith unto me - The angel, Revelation 17:7. This commences the more "literal" statement of what is meant by these symbols. See the Analysis of the chapter.

The waters which thou sawest - See the notes on Revelation 17:1.

Are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues - For an explanation of these terms, see the notes on Revelation 7:9. The meaning here is:

(a) that these waters represent a multitude of people. This is a common and an obvious symbol - for outspread seas or raging floods would naturally represent such a multitude. See Isaiah 8:7-8; Isaiah 17:12-13; Jeremiah 47:2. Compare *Iliad*, v. 394. The sense here is, that vast numbers of people would be subject to the power here represented by the woman.

(b) They would be composed of different nations, and would be of different languages, It is unnecessary to show that this, in both respects, is applicable to the papacy. Nations have been, and are subject to its control, and nations speaking a large part of the languages of the world. Perhaps under no one government - not even the Babylonian, the Macedonian, or the ancient Roman - was there so great a diversity of people, speaking so many different languages, and having so different an origin.

Verse 16

And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast - Revelation 17:3. The ten powers or kingdoms represented by those horns. See the notes on Revelation 17:12.

These shall hate the whore - There seems to be some incongruity between this statement and what was previously made. In the former Revelation 17:12-14, these ten governments are represented as in alliance with the beast; as "giving all their power and strength" unto it; and as uniting with it in making war with the Lamb. What is here said must, therefore, refer to some subsequent period, indicating some great change in their feelings and policy. We have seen the evidence of the fulfillment of the former statements. This statement will be accomplished if these same powers, represented by the ten horns, that were formerly in alliance with the

papacy, shall become its enemy, and contribute to its final overthrow. That is, it will be accomplished if the nations of Europe, embraced within the limits of those ten kingdoms, shall become hostile to the papacy, and shall combine for its overthrow. Is anything more probable than this? France (see the notes on Revelation 18:8.

Verse 17

For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will - That is, in regard to the destruction of this mighty power. They would be employed as his agents in bringing about his designs. Kings and princes are under the control of God, and, whatever may be their own designs, they are in fact employed to accomplish his purposes, and are instruments in his hands. See the notes on Isaiah 10:7. Compare Psalm 76:10.

And to agree - See Revelation 17:13. That is, they act harmoniously in their support of this power, and so they will in its final destruction.

And give their kingdom unto the beast - See the notes at Revelation 17:13.

Until the words of God shall be fulfilled - Not forever; not as a permanent arrangement. God has fixed a limit to the existence of this power. When his purposes are accomplished, these kingdoms will withdraw their support, and this mighty power will fall to rise no more.

Verse 18

And the woman which thou sawest - Revelation 17:3.

Is that great city - Represents that great city.

Which reigneth over the kings of the earth - Rome would of course be understood by this language in the time of John, and all the circumstances, as we have seen, combined to show that Rome, in some form of its dominion, is intended. Even the name could hardly have designated it more clearly, and all expositors agree in supposing that Rome, either as pagan or as Christian, is referred to. The chapter shows that its power is limited; and that, although for purposes which he saw to be wise, God allows it to have a wide influence over the nations of the earth, yet, in his own appointed time, the very powers that have sustained it will become its foes, and combine for its overthrow. Europe needs but little further provocation, and the fires of liberty, which have been so long pent up, will break forth, and that storm of indignation which has expelled the Jesuits from all the courts of Europe; which has abolished the Inquisition; which has more than once led hostile armies to the very gates of papal Rome, will again be aroused in a manner

which cannot be allayed, and that mighty power, which has controlled so large a part of the nations of Europe for more than a thousand years of the world‘s history, will come to an end.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 18

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter Revelation 16:17-21 on the formidable anti-Christian power so often referred to. The description in this chapter is that of a rich merchant-city reduced to desolation, and is but carrying out the general idea under a different form. The chapter comprises the following points:

(1) Another angel is seen descending from heaven, having great power, and making proclamation that Babylon the great is fallen, and is become utterly desolate, Revelation 18:1-3.

(2) awarning voice is heard from heaven, calling on the people of God to come out of her, and to be partakers neither of her sins nor her plagues. Her torment and sorrow would be proportionate to her pride and luxury; and her plagues would come upon her suddenly; death, and mourning, and famine, and consumption by fire, Revelation 18:4-8.

(3) lamentation over her fall - by those especially who had been connected with her; who had been corrupted by her; who had been profited by her, Revelation 18:9-19;

(a) By kings, Revelation 18:9-10. They had lived deliciously with her, and they would lament her.

(b) By merchants, Revelation 18:11-17. They had trafficked with her, but now that traffic was to cease, and no man would buy of her. Their business, so far as she was concerned, was at an end. All that she had accumulated was now to be destroyed; all her gathered riches were to be consumed; all the traffic in those things by which she had been enriched was to be ended; and the city that was more than all others enriched by these things, as if clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls, was to be destroyed forever.

(c) By ship-masters and seamen, Revelation 18:17-19. They had been made rich by this traffic, but now all was ended; the smoke of her burning is seen to ascend, and they stand afar off and weep.

(4) rejoicing over her fall, Revelation 18:20. Heaven is called upon to rejoice, and the holy apostles and prophets, for their blood is avenged, and persecution ceases in the earth.

(5) the final destruction of the city, Revelation 18:21-24. A mighty angel takes up a stone and casts it into the sea as an emblem of the destruction that is to come upon it. The voice of harpers, and musicians, and pipers would be heard no more in it; and no craftsmen would lye there, and the sound of the millstone would be heard no more, and the light of a candle would shine no more there, and the voice of the bridegroom and bride would be heard no more.

Verse 1

And after these things - After the vision referred to in the previous chapter.

I saw another angel come down from heaven - Different from the one that had last appeared, and therefore coming to make a new communication to him. It is not unusual in this book that different communications should be entrusted to different angels. Compare Revelation 14:6, Revelation 14:8-9, Revelation 14:15, Revelation 14:17-18.

Having great power - That is, he was one of the higher rank or order of angels.

And the earth was lightened with his glory - The usual representation respecting the heavenly beings. Compare Exodus 24:16; Matthew 17:2; Luke 2:9; Acts 9:3. This would, of course, add greatly to the magnificence of the scene.

Verse 2

And he cried mightily - Literally, "he cried with a strong great voice." See Revelation 10:3.

Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen - See the notes on Revelation 14:8. The proclamation here is substantially the same as in that place, and no doubt the same thing is referred to.

And is become the habitation of devils - Of demons - in allusion to the common opinion that the demons inhabited abandoned cities, old ruins, and deserts. See the notes on Matthew 12:43-45. The language here is taken

from the description of Babylon in Isaiah 13:20-22; and for a full illustration of the meaning, see the notes on that passage.

And the hold of every foul spirit - φυλακὴ phulakēA watch-post, station, haunt of such spirits - That is, they, as it were, kept guard there; were stationed there; haunted the place.

And a cage of every unclean and hateful bird - That is, they would resort there, and abide there as in a cage. The word translated "cage" is the same which is rendered "hold" - φυλακὴ phulakēIn Isaiah 13:21, it is said, "and owls shall dwell there"; and in Isaiah 14:23, it is said that it would be a "possession for the bittern." The idea is that of utter desolation; and the meaning here is, that spiritual Babylon - papal Rome Revelation 14:8 - will be reduced to a state of utter desolation resembling that of the real Babylon. It is not necessary to suppose this of the city of Rome itself - for that is not the object of the representation. It is the papacy, represented under the image of the city, and having its seat there. That is to be destroyed as utterly as was Babylon of old; that will become as odious, and loathsome, and detestable as the literal Babylon, the abode of monsters is.

Verse 3

For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication - See the notes on Revelation 14:8. This is given as a reason why this utter ruin had come upon her. She had beguiled and corrupted the nations of the earth, leading them into estrangement from God, and into pollution and sin. See the notes on Revelation 9:20-21.

And the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her - Spiritual adultery; that is, she has been the means of seducing them from God and leading them into sinful practices.

And the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies - The word rendered "abundance" here, means commonly "power." It might here denote influence, though it may also mean number, quantity, wealth. Compare Revelation 3:8, where the same word is used. The word rendered "delicacies" - στρῆνους strēnous- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means rudeness, insolence, pride; and hence "revel, riot, luxury." It may be rendered here properly as "luxury," or "proud voluptuousness"; and the reference is to such luxuries as are found commonly in a great, a frivolous, and a splendid city. These, of course, give rise to much traffic, and furnish employment to many merchants and sailors, who thus procure a livelihood, or become

wealthy as the result of such traffic. Babylon - or papal Rome - is here represented under the image of such a luxurious city; and of course, when she falls, they who have thus been dependent on her, and who have been enriched by her, have occasion for mourning and lamentation. It is not necessary to expect to find a literal fulfillment of this, for it is emblematic and symbolical. The image of a great, rich, splendid, proud and luxurious city having been employed to denote that anti-Christian power, all that is said in this chapter follows, of course, on its fall. The general idea is, that she was doomed to utter desolation, and that all who were connected with her, far and near, would be involved in her ruin.

Verse 4

And I heard another voice from heaven - He does not say whether this was the voice of an angel, but the idea seems rather to be that it is the voice of God.

Come out of her, my people - The reasons for this, as immediately stated, are two:

(a)that they might not participate in her sins; and,

(b)that they might not be involved in the ruin that would come upon her.

The language seems to be derived from such passages in the Old Testament as the following: "Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing," Isaiah 48:20. "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul; be not cut off in her iniquity," Jeremiah 51:6. "My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the Lord," Jeremiah 51:45. Compare Jeremiah 50:8.

That ye be not partakers of her sins - For the meaning of this expression, see the notes on 1 Timothy 5:22. It is implied here that by remaining in Babylon they would lend their sanction to its sins by their presence, and would, in all probability, become contaminated by the influence around them. This is an universal truth in regard to iniquity, and hence it is the duty of those who would be pure to come out from the world, and to separate themselves from all the associations of evil.

And that ye receive not of her plagues - Of the punishment that was to come upon her - as they must certainly do if they remained in her. The judgment of God that was to come upon the guilty city would make no discrimination among those who were found there; and if they would

escape these woes they must make their escape from her. As applicable to papal Rome, in view of her impending ruin, this means:

(a)that there might be found in her some who were the true people of God;

(b)that it was their duty to separate wholly from her - a command that will not only justify the Reformation, but which would have made a longer continuance in communion with the papacy, when her wickedness was fully seen, an act of guilt before God;

(c)that they who remain in such a communion cannot but be regarded as partaking of her sin; and,

(d)that if they remain, they must expect to be involved in the calamities that will come upon her. There never was any duty plainer than that of withdrawing from papal Rome; there never has been any act attended with more happy consequences than that by which the Protestant world separated itself forever from the sins and the plagues of the papacy.

Verse 5

For her sins have reached unto heaven - So in Jeremiah 51:9, speaking of Babylon, it is said, "For her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies." The meaning is not that the sins of this mystical Babylon were like a mass or pile so high as to reach to heaven, but that it had become so prominent as to attract the attention of God. Compare Genesis 4:10, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." See also Genesis 18:20.

And God hath remembered her iniquities - He had seemed to forget them, or not to notice them, but now he acted as if they had come to his recollection. See the notes on Revelation 16:19.

Verse 6

Reward her even as she rewarded you - It is not said to whom this command is addressed, but it would seem to be to those who had been persecuted and wronged. Applied to mystical Babylon - papal Rome - it would seem to be a call on the nations that had been so long under her sway, and among whom, from time to time, so much blood had been shed by her, to arise now in their might, and to inflict deserved vengeance. See the notes on Revelation 17:16-17.

And double unto her double according to her works - That is, bring upon her double the amount of calamity which she has brought upon others; take ample vengeance upon her. Compare for similar language, Isaiah 40:2, "She hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." "For your shame ye shall have double," Isaiah 61:7.

In the cup which she hath filled - To bring wrath on others. See the notes at Revelation 14:8.

Fill to her double - Let her drink abundantly of the wine of the wrath of God - double what she has dealt out to others. That is, either let the quantity administered to her be doubled, or let the ingredients in the cup be doubled in intensity.

Verse 7

How much she hath glorified herself - Been proud, boastful, arrogant. This was true of ancient Babylon, that she was proud and haughty; and it has been no less true of mystical Babylon - papal Rome.

And lived deliciously - By as much as she has lived in luxury and dissoluteness, so let her suffer now. The word used here and rendered "lived deliciously" - ἐστρηνίασεν estrēniasen- is derived from the noun - στρῆνος strēnos- which is used in Revelation 18:3, and rendered "delicacies." See the notes on that verse. It means properly, "to live strenuously, rudely," as in English, "to live hard"; and then to revel, to live in luxury, riot, dissoluteness. No one can doubt the propriety of this as descriptive of ancient Babylon, and as little can its propriety be doubted as applied to papal Rome.

So much torment and sorrow give her - Let her punishment correspond with her sins. This is expressing substantially the same idea which occurs in the previous verse.

For she saith in her heart - This is the estimate which she forms of herself.

I sit a queen - Indicative of pride, and of an asserted claim to rule.

And am no widow - Am not in the condition of a widow - a state of depression, sorrow, and mourning. All this indicates security and self-confidence, a description in every way applicable to papal Rome.

And shall see no sorrow - This is indicative of a state where there was nothing feared, notwithstanding all the indications which existed of approaching calamity. In this state we may expect to find papal Rome, even when its last judgments are about to come upon it; in this state it has usually

been; in this state it is now, notwithstanding all the indications that are abroad in the world that its power is waning, and that the period of its fall approaches.

Verse 8

Therefore - In consequence of her pride, arrogance, and luxury, and of the calamities that she has brought upon others.

Shall her plagues come in one day - They shall come in a time when she is living in ease and security; and they shall come at the same time - so that all these terrible judgments shall seem to be poured upon her at once.

Death - This expression, and those which follow, are designed to denote the same thing under different images. The general meaning is, that there would be utter and final destruction. It would be as if death should come and cut off the inhabitants.

And mourning - As there would be where many were cut off by death.

And famine - As if famine raged within the walls of a besieged city, or spread over a land,

And she shall be utterly burned with fire - As completely destroyed as if she were entirely burned up. The certain and complete destruction of that formidable anti-Christian power is predicted under a great variety of emphatic images. See Revelation 14:10-11; Revelation 16:17-21; Revelation 17:9, Revelation 17:16. Perhaps in this so frequent reference to a final destruction of that formidable anti-Christian power by fire, there may be more intended than merely a figurative representation of its final ruin. There is some degree of probability, at least, that Rome itself will be literally destroyed in this manner, and that it is in this way that God intends to put an end to the papal power, by destroying what has been so long the seat and the center of this authority. The extended prevalence of this belief, and the grounds for it, may be seen from the following remarks:

(1) It was an early opinion among the Jewish rabbies that Rome would be thus destroyed. Vitringa, on the Apocalypse, cites some opinions of this kind; the Jewish expectation being founded, as he says, on the passage in Isaiah 34:9, as Edom was supposed to mean Rome. “This chapter,” says Kimchi, “points out the future destruction of Rome, here called Bozra, for Bozra was a great city of the Edomites.” This is, indeed, worthless as a proof or an interpretation of Scripture, for it is a wholly unfounded interpretation; it is of value only as showing that somehow the Jews entertained this opinion.

(2) the same expectation was entertained among the early Christians. Thus Mr. Gibbon (vol. i. p. 263, ch. xv.), referring to the expectations of the glorious reign of the Messiah on the earth (compare the notes on Revelation 14:8), says, speaking of Rome as the mystic Babylon, and of its anticipated destruction: "A regular series was prepared (in the minds of Christians) of all the moral and physical evils which can afflict a flourishing nation; intestine discord, and the invasion of the fiercest barbarians from the unknown regions of the north; pestilence and famine, comets and eclipses, earthquakes and inundations. All these were only so many preparatory and alarming signs of the great catastrophe of Rome, when the country of the Scipios and Caesars should be consumed by a flame from heaven, and the city of the seven hills, with her palaces, her temples, and her triumphal arches, should be buried in a vast lake of fire and brimstone." So even Gregory the Great, one of the most illustrious of the Roman pontiffs, himself says, acknowledging his belief in the truth of the tradition: Roma a Gentilibus non exterminabitur; sed tempestatibus, coruscis turbinibus, ac terrae motu, in se marcescet (Dial. Isaiah 2:15).

(3) whatever may be thought of these opinions and expectations, there is "some" foundation for the opinion in the nature of the case:

(a) The region is adapted to this. "It is not Aetna, the Lipari volcanic islands, Vesuvius, that alone offer visible indications of the physical adaptedness of Italy for such a catastrophe. The great Apennine mountain-chain is mainly volcanic in its character, and the country of Rome more especially is as strikingly so almost as that of Sodom itself." Thus the mineralogist Ferber, in his "Tour in Italy," says: "The road from Rome to Ostia is all volcanic ashes until within two miles of Ostia." "From Rome to Tivoli I went on fields and hills of volcanic ashes or tufa." "A volcanic hill in an amphitheatrical form includes a part of the plain over Albano, and a flat country of volcanic ashes and hills to Rome. The ground about Rome is generally of that nature," pp. 189,191,200,234.

(b) Mr. Gibbon, with his usual accuracy, as if commenting on the Apocalypse, has referred to the physical adaptedness of the soil of Rome for such an overthrow. Speaking of the anticipation of the end of the world

among the early Christians, he says: “In the opinion of a general conflagration, the faith of the Christian very happily coincided with the tradition of the East, the philosophy of the Stoics, and the analogy of nature; ‹and even the country, which, from religious motives, had been chosen for the origin and principal scene of the conflagration, was the best adapted for that purpose by natural and physical causes;‘ by its deep caverns, beds of sulphur, and numerous volcanoes, of which those of Aetna, of Vesuvius, and of Lipari, exhibit a very imperfect representation,” vol. i. p. 263, ch. xv. As to the general state of Italy, in reference to volcanoes, the reader may consult, with advantage, Lyell‘s Geology, book ii. ch. 912. See also Murray‘s Encyclopaedia of Geography, book ii. ch. 2. Of the country around Rome it is said in that work, among other things: “The country around Rome, and also the hills on which it is built, is composed of tertiary marls, clays, and sandstones, and intermixed with a preponderating quantity of granular and lithoidal volcanic tufas. The many lakes around Rome are formed by craters of ancient volcanoes.” “On the road to Rome is the Lake of Vico, formerly the Lacus Cimini, which has all the appearance of a crater.”

The following extract from a recent traveler will still further confirm this representation: “I behold everywhere - in Rome, near Rome, and through the whole region from Rome to Naples - most astounding proof, not merely of the possibility, but the probability, that the whole region of central Italy will one day be destroyed by such a catastrophe (by earthquakes or volcanoes). The soil of Rome is tufa, with a volcanic subterranean action going on. At Naples the boiling sulphur is to be seen bubbling near the surface of the earth. When I drew a stick along the ground, the sulphurous smoke followed the indentation; and it would never surprise me to hear of the utter destruction of the southern peninsula of Italy. The entire country and district is volcanic. It is saturated with beds of sulphur and the substrata of destruction. It seems as certainly prepared for the flames, as the wood and coal on the hearth are prepared for the taper which shall kindle the fire to consume them. The divine hand alone seems to me to hold the element of fire in check by a miracle as great as what protected the cities of the plain, until the righteous Lot had made his escape to the mountains” (Townsend‘s Tour in Italy in 1850).

For strong is the Lord God who judgeth her - That is, God has ample power to bring all these calamities upon her.

Verse 9

And the kings of the earth - This verse commences the description of the lamentation over the fall of the mystical Babylon (see the Analysis of the chapter).

Who have committed fornication - That is, who have been seduced by her from the true God, and have been led into practical idolatry. See the notes on Revelation 14:8. The kings of the earth seem to be represented as among the chief mourners, because they had derived important aid from the power which was now to be reduced to ruin. As a matter of fact, the kings of Europe have owed much of their influence and power to the support which has been derived from the papacy, and when that power shall fall, there will fall much that has contributed to sustain oppressive and arbitrary governments, and that has prevented the extension of popular liberty. In fact, Europe might have been long since free, if it had not been for the support which despotic governments have derived from the papacy.

And lived deliciously with her - In the same kind of luxury and dissoluteness of manners. See Revelation 18:3, Revelation 18:7. The courts of Europe, under the papacy, have had the same general character for dissoluteness and licentiousness as Rome itself. The same views of religion produce the same effects everywhere.

Shall bewail her, and lament for her - Because their ally is destroyed, and the source of their power is taken away. The fall of the papacy will be the signal for a general overturning of the thrones of Europe.

When they shall see the smoke of her burning - When they shall see her on fire, and her smoke ascending toward heaven. See the notes on Revelation 14:11.

Verse 10

Standing afar off for the fear of her torment - Not daring to approach, to attempt to rescue and save her. They who had so long contributed to the support of the papal power, and who had, in turn, been upheld by that, would not now even attempt to rescue her, but would stand by and see her destroyed, unable to render relief.

Alas, alas, that great city Babylon - The language of lamentation that so great and so mighty a city should fall.

For in one hour is thy judgment come - See the notes on Revelation 18:8. The general sentiment here is, that, in the final ruin of papal Rome, the kings and governments that had sustained her, and had been sustained by her, would see the source of their power taken away, but that they would not, or could not attempt her rescue. There have been not a few indications already that this will ultimately occur, and that the papal power will be left to fall, without any attempt, on the part of those governments which have been so long in alliance with it, to sustain or restore it.

Verse 11

And the merchants of the earth - Who have been accustomed to traffic with her, and who have been enriched by the traffic. The image is that of a rich and splendid city. Of course, such a city depends much on its merchandise; and when it declines and falls, many who had been accustomed to deal with it, as merchants or traffickers, are affected by it, and have occasion to lament its fall.

Shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise anymore - The merchandise which they were accustomed to take to the city, and by the sale of which they lived. The enumeration of the articles of merchandise which follows, seems to have been inserted for the purpose of filling out the representation of what is usually found in such a city, and to show the desolation which would occur when this traffic was suspended.

Verse 12

The merchandise of gold, and silver - Of course, these constitute an important article of commerce in a great city.

And precious stones - Diamonds, emeralds, rubies, etc. These have always been important articles of traffic in the world, and, of course, most of the traffic in them would find its way to great commercial cities.

And pearls - See the notes on Matthew 7:6; Matthew 13:46. These, too, have been always, and were, particularly in early times, valuable articles of commerce. Mr. Gibbon mentions them as among the articles that contributed to the luxury of Rome in the age of the Antonines: "precious stones, among which the pearl claimed the first rank after the diamond," vol. i. p. 34.

And fine linen - This was also a valuable article of commerce. It was obtained chiefly from Egypt. See the notes on Isaiah 19:9. Linen, among the ancients, was an article of luxury, for it was worn chiefly by the rich,

Exodus 28:42; Leviticus 6:10; Luke 16:19. The original word here is βύσσος bussos"byssus," and it is found in the New Testament only in this place, and in Luke 16:19. It was a "species of fine cotton, highly prized by the ancients." Various kinds are mentioned - as that of Egypt, the cloth which is still found wrapped around mummies; that of Syria, and that of India, which grew on a tree similar to the poplar; and that of Achaia, which grew in the vicinity of Elis. See Robinson, Lexicon.

And purple - See the notes on Luke 16:19. Cloth of this color was a valuable article of commerce, as it was worn by rich men and princes.

And silk - Silk was a very valuable article of commerce, as it was costly, and could be worn only by the rich. It is mentioned by Mr. Gibbon as such an article in Rome in the age of the Antonines: "Silk, a pound of which was esteemed not inferior in value to a pound of gold," vol. i. p. 34. On the cultivation and manufacture of silk by the ancients, see the work entitled, "The History of Silk, Cotton, Linen, and Wool, etc.," published by Harper Brothers, New York, 1845, pp. 1-21.

And scarlet - See the notes on Revelation 17:3.

And all thyine wood - The word used here - θύϊνον thuinon- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It denotes an evergreen African tree, from which statues and costly vessels were made. It is not agreed, however, whether it was a species of cedar, savin, or lignum-vitae, which latter constitutes the modern genus Thuja, or Thyia. See Rees' Cyclo., art. "Thuja."

And all manner vessels of ivory - Everything that is made of ivory. Ivory, or the tusk of the elephant, has always been among the precious articles of commerce.

And all manner vessels of most precious wood - Furniture of costly wood - cedar, the citron tree, lignum-vitae, etc.

And of brass, and iron, and marble - Brass or copper would, of course, be a valuable article of commerce. The same would be the case with iron; and so marble, for building, for statuary, etc., would likewise be.

Verse 13

And cinnamon - Cinnamon is the aromatic bark of the Laurus Cinnamomam, which grows in Arabia, India, and especially in the island of Ceylon. It was formerly, as it is now, a valuable article in the Oriental trade.

And odours - Aromatics employed in religious worship, and for making perfumes. Mr. Gibbon (vol. i. p. 34) mentions, among the articles of

commerce and luxury, in the age of the Antonines, "a variety of aromatics that were consumed in religious worship and the pomp of funerals." It is unnecessary to say that the use of such odors has been always common at Rome.

And ointments - Unguents - as spikenard, etc. These were in common use among the ancients. See the Matthew 14:7 note; Mark 14:3 note.

And frankincense - See the notes on Matthew 2:11. It is unnecessary to say that incense has been always much used in public worship in Rome, and that it has been, therefore, a valuable article of commerce there.

And wine - An article of commerce and luxury in all ages.

And oil - That is, olive oil. This, in ancient times, and in Oriental countries particularly, was an important article of commerce.

And fine flour - The word here means the best and finest kind of flour.

And beasts, and sheep, and horses - Also important articles of merchandise.

And chariots - The word used here - ῥεδῶν redōn- means, properly a carriage with four wheels, or a carriage drawn by mules (Prof. Stuart). It was properly a traveling carriage. The word is of Gallic origin (Quinctil. 1:9; Cic. Mil. 10; Att. v. 17; 6:1. See Adam's Rom. Ant. p. 525). It was an article of luxury.

And slaves - The Greek here is σωμάτων sōmatōn- "of bodies." Prof. Stuart renders it "grooms," and supposes that it refers to a particular kind of slaves who were employed in taking care of horses and carriages. The word properly denotes body - an animal body - whether of the human body, living or dead, or the body of a beast; and then the external man - the person, the individual. In later usage, it comes to denote a slave (see Robinson, Lexicon), and in this sense it is used here. The traffic in slaves was common in ancient times, as it is now. We know that this traffic was carried on to a large extent in ancient Rome, the city which John probably had in his eye in this description. See Gibbon, Dec. and Fall, vol. 1, pp. 25,26. Athenaeus, as quoted by Mr. Gibbon (p. 26), says that "he knew very many Romans who possessed, not for use, but for ostentation, ten, and even twenty thousand slaves." It should be said here, however, that although this refers evidently to traffic in slaves, it is not necessary to suppose that it would be literally characteristic of papal Rome. All this is symbolical, designed to exhibit the papacy under the image of a great city, with what was customary in such a city, or with what most naturally presented itself to

the imagination of John as found in such a city; and it is no more necessary to suppose that the papacy would be engaged in the traffic of slaves, than in the traffic of cinnamon, or fine flour, or sheep and horses.

And souls of men - The word used and rendered "souls" - ψυχὰς psuchas- though commonly denoting the "soul" (properly the "breath" or "vital principle"), is also employed to denote the living thing - the animal - in which the soul or vital principle resides; and hence may denote a person or a man. Under this form it is used to denote a "servant" or "slave." See Robinson, Lexicon. Prof. Robinson supposes that the word here means "female slaves," in distinction from those designated by the previous word. Prof. Stuart (in loco) supposes that the previous word denotes a particular kind of slaves - those who had the care of horses - and that the word here is used in a generic sense, denoting slaves in general. This kind of traffic in the "persons" or souls of people is mentioned as characterizing ancient Tyre, in Ezekiel 27:13; "Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were thy merchants; they traded in the persons of men." It is not quite clear why, in the passage before us, this traffic is mentioned in two forms, as that of the bodies and the souls of people but it would seem most probable that the writer meant to designate all that would properly come under this traffic, whether male or female slaves were bought and sold; whether they were for servitude, or for the gladiatorial sports (see Wetstein, in loco); whatever might be the kind of servitude that they might be employed in, and whatever might be their condition in life. The use of the two words would include all that is implied in the traffic, for, in most important senses, it extends to the body and the soul. In slavery both are purchased; both are supposed, so far as he can avail himself of them, to become the property of the master.

Verse 14

And the fruits that thy soul lusted after - Literally, "the fruits of the desire of thy soul." The word rendered "fruits" - ὀπώρα opōra- properly means, "late summer; dog-days," the time when Sirius, or the Dog-star, is predominant. In the East this is the season when the fruits ripen, and hence the word comes to denote fruit. The reference is to any kind of fruit that would be brought for traffic into a great city, and that would be regarded as an article of luxury.

Are departed from thee - That is, they are no more brought for sale into the city.

And all things which were dainty and goodly - These words "characterize all kinds of furniture and clothing which were gilt, or plated, or embroidered, and therefore were bright or splendid" (Prof. Stuart).

And thou shalt find them no more at all - The address here is decidedly to the city itself. The meaning is, that they would no more be found there.

Verse 15

The merchants of these things - Who trafficked in these things, and who supplied the city with them, Revelation 18:11.

Which were made rich by her - By traffic with her.

Shall stand afar off - Revelation 18:10.

For fear of her torment - Struck with terror by her torment, so that they did not dare to approach her, Revelation 18:10.

Verse 16

And saying, Alas, alas … - notes on Revelation 18:10.

That was clothed in fine linen - In the previous description Revelation 18:12-13, these are mentioned as articles of traffic; here the city, under the image of a female, is represented as clothed in the most rich and frivolous of these articles.

And purple, and scarlet - See the notes on Revelation 17:3-4. Compare Revelation 18:12 of this chapter.

And decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls - notes on Revelation 17:4.

Verse 17

For in one hour - In a very brief period - so short, that it seemed to them to be but one hour. In the prediction Revelation 18:8, it is said that it would be "in one day" (see the notes on that place); here it is said that, to the on-lookers, it seemed to be but an hour. There is no inconsistency, therefore, between the two statements.

So great riches is come to nought - All the accumulated wealth of so great and rich a city. This should have been united with Revelation 18:16, as it is a part of the lamentation of the merchants, and as the lamentation of the mariners commences in the other part of the verse. It is so divided in the Greek Testaments.

And every ship-master - This introduces the lamentation of the mariners, who would, of course, be deeply interested in the destruction of a city with which they had been accustomed to trade, and by carrying

merchandise to which they had been enriched. The word "ship-master" - κυβερνήτης kubernētēs- means, properly, a "governor"; then a governor of a ship - the "steersman" or "pilot," Acts 27:11.

And all the company in ships - Prof. Stuart renders this "coasters." There is here, however, an important difference in the reading of the text. The commonly received text is, πᾶς ἐπὶ τῶν πλοίων ὁ ὅμιλος pas epi tōn ploiōn ho homilos- "the whole company in ships," as in our common version; the reading which is now commonly adopted, and which is found in Griesbach, Hahn, and Tittmann, is ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων ho epi topon pleōn- "he who sails to a place"; that is, he who sails from one place to another along the coast, or who does not venture out far to sea; and thus the phrase would denote a secondary class of sea-captains or officers - those less venturesome, or experienced, or bold than others. There can be little doubt that this is the correct reading (compare Wetatein, in loco); and hence the class of seamen here referred to is "coasters." Such seamen would naturally be employed where there was a great and luxurious maritime city, and would have a deep interest in its fall.

And sailors - Common seamen.

And as many as trade by sea - In any kind of craft, whether employed in a near or a remote trade.

Stood afar off - notes on Revelation 18:10.

Verse 18

And cried … - That is, as they had a deep interest in it, they would, on their own account, as well as hers, lift up the voice of lamentation.

d **What city is like unto this great city? -** In her destruction. What calamity has ever come upon a city like this?

Verse 19

And they cast dust on their heads - A common sign of lamentation and mourning among the Orientals. See the notes on Job 2:12.

By reason of her costliness - The word rendered "costliness" - τιμιότητος timiotētos- means, properly, "preciousness, costliness"; their magnificence, costly merchandise. The luxury of a great city enriches many individuals, however much it may impoverish itself.

For in one hour is she made desolate - So it seemed to them. See the notes on Revelation 18:17.

Verse 20

Rejoice over her - Over her ruin. There is a strong contrast between this language and what precedes. Kings, merchants, and seamen, who had been countenanced and sustained by her in the indulgence of corrupt passions, or who had been enriched by traffic with her, would have occasion to mourn. But not so they who had been persecuted by her. Not so the church of the redeemed. Not so heaven itself. The great oppressor of the church, and the corrupter of the world, was now destroyed; the grand hindrance to the spread of the gospel was now removed, and all the holy in heaven and on earth would have occasion to rejoice. This is not the language of vengeance, but it is the language of exultation and rejoicing in view of the fact, that the cause of truth might now spread, without hindrance, through the earth.

Thou heaven - The inhabitants of heaven. Compare the notes on Isaiah 1:2. The meaning here is, that the dwellers in heaven - the holy angels and the redeemed - had occasion to rejoice over the downfall of the great enemy of the church.

And ye holy apostles - Prof. Stuart renders this, "Ye saints, and apostles, and prophets." In the common Greek text, it is, as in our version, "holy apostles and prophets." In the text of Griesbach, Hahn, and Tittmann, the word καὶ kai(and) is interposed between the word "holy" and "apostle." This is, doubtless, the true reading. The meaning, then, is that the "saints" in heaven are called on to rejoice over the fall of the mystical Babylon.

Apostles - The twelve who were chosen by the Saviour to be his witnesses on earth. See the notes on 1 Corinthians 9:1. The word is commonly limited to the twelve, but, in a larger sense, it is applied to other distinguished teachers and preachers of the gospel. See the notes on Acts 14:14. There is no impropriety, however, in supposing that the apostles are referred to here as such, since they would have occasion to rejoice that the great obstacle to the reign of the Redeemer was now taken away, and that that cause in which they had suffered and died was now to he triumphant.

And prophets - Prophets of the Old Testament and distinguished teachers of the New. See the notes on Romans 12:6. All these would have occasion to rejoice in the prospect of the final triumph of the true religion.

For God hath avenged you on her - Has taken vengeance on her for her treatment of you. That is, as she had persecuted the church as such, they all might be regarded as interested in it and affected by it. All the redeemed, therefore, in earth and in heaven, are interested in whatever tends to retard

or to promote the cause of truth. All have occasion to mourn when the enemies of the truth triumph; to rejoice when they fall.

Verse 21

And a mighty angel - See the notes on Revelation 18:1. This seems, however, to have been a different angel from the one mentioned in Revelation 18:1, though, like that, he is described as having great power.

Took up a stone like a great millstone - On the structure of mills among the ancients see the notes on Matthew 24:41.

And cast it into the sea - As an emblem of the utter ruin of the city; an indication that the city would be as completely destroyed as that stone was covered by the waters.

Saying, Thus with violence - With force, as the stone was thrown into the sea. The idea is, that it would not be by a gentle and natural decline, but by the application of foreign power. This accords with all the representations in this book, that violence will be employed to overthrow the papal power. See Revelation 17:16-17. The origin of this image is probably Jeremiah 51:63-64; "And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates; and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring on her."

Verse 22

And the voice of harpers - Those who play on the harp. This was usually accompanied with singing. The idea, in this verse and the following, is substantially the same as in the previous parts of the chapter, that the mystical Babylon - papal Rome - would be brought to utter desolation. This thought is here exhibited under another form - that all which constituted festivity, joy, and amusement, and all that indicated thrift and prosperity, would disappear. Of course, in a great and "fun" city, there would be all kinds of music; and when it is said that this would be heard there no more it is a most striking image of utter desolation.

And musicians - Musicians in general; but perhaps here singers, as distinguished from those who played on instruments.

And of pipers - Those who played on pipes or flutes. See the 1 Corinthians 14:7 note; Matthew 11:17 note.

And trumpeters - Trumpets were common instruments of music, employed on festival occasions, in war, and in worship. Only the principal instruments of music are mentioned here, as representatives of the rest. The

general idea is, that the sound of music, as an indication of festivity and joy, would cease.

Shall be heard no more at all in thee - It would become utterly and permanently desolate.

And no craftsman, of whatsoever craft - That is, artificers of all kinds would cease to ply their trades there. The word used here - τεχνίτης technitēs- would include all artisans or mechanics, all who were engaged in any kind of trade or craft. The meaning here is, that all these would disappear, an image, of course, of utter decay.

And the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more - Taylor (Frag. to Calmet, Dictionary vol. iv. p. 346) supposes that this may refer not so much to the rattle of the mill as to the voice of singing, which usually accompanied grinding. The sound of a mill is cheerful, and indicates prosperity; its ceasing is an image of decline.

Verse 23

And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee - Another image of desolation, as if every light were put out, and there were total darkness.

And the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee - The merry and cheerful voice of the marriage procession in the streets (notes on Matthew 25:1-7), or the cheerful, glad voice of the newly-married couple in their own dwelling (notes on John 3:29).

For thy merchants were the great men of the earth - Those who dealt with thee were the rich, and among them were even nobles and princes; and now that they trade with thee no more there is occasion for lamentation and sorrow. The contrast is great between the time when distinguished foreigners crowded thy marts, and now, when none of any kind come to traffic with thee. The origin of this representation is probably the description of Tyre in Revelation 13:14), and no representation ever made accords more with facts as they have occurred. The word "sorceries" here refers to the various arts the tricks impostures, and false pretences by which this has been done. See the notes on Revelation 9:21.

Verse 24

And in her - When she came to be destroyed, and her real character was seen.

Was found the blood of prophets - Of the public teachers of the true religion. On the word "prophets" see the notes on Revelation 18:20.

And of saints - Of the holy. See the notes on Revelation 18:20.

And of all that were slain upon the earth - So numerous have been the slain, so constant and bloody have been the persecutions there, that it may be said that all the blood ever shed has been poured out there. Compare the notes on Matthew 23:35. No one can doubt the propriety of this representation with respect to pagan and papal Rome.

In regard to the general meaning and application of this chapter the following remarks may be made:

(1) It refers to papal Rome, and is designed to describe the final overthrow of that formidable anti-Christian power. The whole course of the interpretation of the previous chapters demands such an application, and the chapter itself naturally suggests it.

(2) if it be asked why so much of this imagery is derived from the condition of a maritime power, or pertains to commerce, since both Babylon and Rome were at some distance from the sea, and neither could with propriety be regarded as seaport towns, it may be replied:

(a)that the main idea in the mind of John was that of a rich and magnificent city;

(b)that all the things enumerated were doubtless found, in fact, in both Babylon and Rome;

(c)that though not properly seaport towns, they were situated on rivers that opened into seas, and were therefore not unfavorably situated for commerce; and,

(d)that, in fact, they traded with all parts of the earth.

The leading idea is that of a great and luxurious city, and this is filled up and decorated with images of what is commonly found in large commercial towns. We are not, therefore, to look for a literal application of this, and it is not necessary to attempt to find all these things, in fact, in the city referred to. Much of the description may be for the mere sake of keeping, or ornament.

(3) if this refers to Rome, as is supposed, then, in accordance with the previous representations, it shows that the destruction of the papal power is to be complete and final. The image which John had in his eye as illustrating that was undoubtedly ancient Babylon as prophetically described in Revelation 18:4, his people are expressly commanded to "come out of her, that they might not be partakers of her sins, nor of her plagues." If it had been the design of the Reformers to perform a work that should be in all respects a fulfilling of the command of God, they could have done nothing that would have more literally met the divine requirement. Indeed, the church has never performed a duty more manifestly in accordance with the divine will, and more indispensable for its own purity, prosperity, and safety, than the act of separating entirely and forever from papal Rome.

(5) the Reformation was a great movement in human affairs. It was the index of great progress already reached, and the pledge of still greater. The affairs of the world were at that period placed on a new footing, and from the period of the Reformation, and just in proportion as the principles of the Reformation are acted on, the destiny of mankind is onward.

(6) the fall of papal Rome, as described in this chapter, will remove one of the last obstructions to the final triumph of the gospel. In the notes on Revelation 16:10-16, we saw that one great hindrance to the spread of the true religion would be taken away by the decline and fall of the Turkish power. A still more formidable hindrance will be taken away by the decline and fall of the papal power; for that power holds more million of the race under its subjection, and with a more consummate art, and a more powerful spell. The papal influence has been felt, and still is felt, in a considerable part of the world. It has churches, and schools, and colleges, in almost all lands. It exercises a vast influence over governments. It has powerful societies organized for the purpose of propagating its opinions; and it so panders to some of the most powerful passions of our nature, and so converts to its own purposes all the resources of superstition, as still to retain a mighty, though a waning hold on the human mind. When this power shall finally cease, anyone can see that perhaps the most mighty obstruction which has ever been on the earth for a thousand years to the spread of the

gospel will have been removed, and the way will be prepared for the introduction of the long-hoped-for millennium.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 19

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter Revelation 19:1-7;

(a)A voice is heard in heaven shouting Hallelujah, in view of the fact that God had judged the great harlot that had corrupted the earth, Revelation 19:1-2.

(b)The sound is echoed and repeated as the smoke of her torment ascends, Revelation 19:3.

(c)The four and twenty elders, and the four living creatures, as interested in all that pertains to the church, unite in that shout of Hallelujah, Revelation 19:4.

(d)A voice is heard from the throne commanding them to praise God, Revelation 19:5; and,

(e)the mighty shout of Hallelujah is echoed and repeated from unnumbered hosts, Revelation 19:6-7.

II. The marriage of the Lamb, Revelation 19:8-9. The Lamb of God is united to his bride - the church - never more to be separated; and after all the persecutions, conflicts, and embarrassments which had existed, this long-desired union is consummated, and the glorious triumph of the church is described under the image of a joyous wedding ceremony.

III. John is so overcome with this representation, that in his transports of feeling he prostrates himself before the angel who shows him all this, ready to worship one who discloses such bright and glorious scenes, Revelation 19:10. He is gently rebuked for allowing himself to be so overcome that he would render divine homage to any creature, and is told that he who communicates this to him is but a fellow-servant, and that God only is to be worshipped.

IV. The final conquest over the beast and the false prophet, and the subjugation of all the foes of the church, Revelation 19:11-21;

(a)A description of the conqueror - the Son of God, Revelation 19:11-16. He appears on a white horse - emblem of victory. He has on his head many

crowns; wears a vesture dipped in blood; is followed by the armies of heaven on white horses; from his mouth goes a sharp sword; and his name is prominently written on his vesture and his thigh - all emblematic of certain victory.

(b)An angel is seen standing in the sun, calling on all the fowls of heaven to come to the great feast prepared for them in the destruction of the enemies of God - as if there were a great slaughter sufficient to supply all the fowls that feed on flesh, Revelation 19:17-18.

(c)The final war, Revelation 19:19, Revelation 19:21. The beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies are gathered together for battle; the beast and the false prophet are taken, and are cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; and all that remain of the enemies of God are slain, and the fowls are satisfied with their flesh. The last obstacle that prevented the dawn of the millennial morning is taken away, and the church is triumphant.

Verse 1

And after these things - The things particularly that were exhibited in the previous chapter. See the notes on Revelation 18:1.

I heard a great voice of much people in heaven - The voice of the worshippers before the throne.

Saying, Alleluia - The Greek method of writing "Hallelujah." This word - ἀλληλούϊα allēlouia- occurs in the New Testament only in this chapter, Revelation 19:1, Revelation 19:3-4, Revelation 19:6. The Hebrew phrase - הללו יה haleluw Yah"Hallelujah" - occurs often in the Old Testament. It means, properly, "Praise Yahweh," or "Praise the Lord." The occasion on which it is introduced here is very appropriate. It is uttered by the inhabitants of heaven, in the immediate presence of God himself, and in view of the final overthrow of the enemies of the church, and the triumph of the gospel. In such circumstances it was fit that heaven should render praise, and that a song of thanksgiving should be uttered in which all holy beings could unite.

Salvation - That is, the salvation is to be ascribed to God. See the notes on Revelation 7:10.

And glory, and honour - notes on Revelation 5:12.

And power - notes on Revelation 5:13.

Unto the Lord our God - That is, all that there is of honor, glory, power, in the redemption of the world belongs to God, and should be ascribed to him. This is expressive of the true feelings of piety always; this will constitute the song of heaven.

Verse 2

For true and righteous are his judgments - That is, the calamities that come upon the power here referred to are deserved.

For he hath judged the great whore - The power represented by the harlot. See the notes on Revelation 17:1.

Which did corrupt the earth with her fornication - See the notes on Revelation 14:8; Revelation 17:2, Revelation 17:4-5; Revelation 18:3. Compare the notes on Revelation 9:21.

And hath avenged the blood of his servants - See the notes on Revelation 18:20, Revelation 18:24.

At her hand - Shed by her hand,

Verse 3

And again they said, Alleluia - See the notes on Revelation 19:1. The event was so glorious and so important; the final destruction of the great enemy of the church was of so much moment in its bearing on the welfare of the world, as to call forth repeated expressions of praise.

And her smoke rose up forever and ever - See the notes on Revelation 14:11. This is an image of final ruin; the image being derived probably from the description in Genesis of the smoke that ascended from the cities of the plain, Genesis 19:28. On the joy expressed here in her destruction, compare the notes on Revelation 18:20.

Verse 4

And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts - See the notes on Revelation 4:4, Revelation 4:6-7. As representatives of the church, and as interested in its welfare, they are now introduced as rejoicing in its final triumph, and in the destruction of its last foe.

Fell down - Prostrated themselves - the usual posture of worship.

And worshipped God that sat on the throne - Revelation 4:2-3, Revelation 4:10. That is, they now adored him for what he had done in delivering the church from all its persecutions, and causing it to triumph in the world.

Saying, Amen - See the notes on Matthew 6:13. The word here is expressive of approbation of what God had done; or of their solemn assent

to all that had occurred in the destruction of the great enemy of the church.

Alleluia - See the notes on Revelation 19:1. The repetition of this word so many times shows the intenseness of the joy of heaven in view of the final triumph of the church.

Verse 5

And a voice came out of the throne - A voice seemed to come from the very midst of the throne. It is not said by whom this voice was uttered. It cannot be supposed, however, that it was uttered by God himself, for the command which it gave was this: "Praise our God," etc. For the same reason it seems hardly probable that it was the voice of the Messiah, unless it be supposed that he here identifies himself with the redeemed church, and speaks of God as his God and hers. It would seem rather that it was a responsive voice that came from those nearest the throne, calling on all to unite in praising God in view of what was done. The meaning then will be, that all heaven was interested in the triumph of the church, and that one portion of the dwellers there called on the others to unite in offering thanksgiving.

Praise our God - The God that we worship.

All ye his servants - All in heaven and earth; all have occasion for thankfulness.

And ye that fear him - That reverence and obey him. The fear of the Lord is a common expression in the Scriptures to denote true piety.

Both small and great - All of every class and condition - poor and rich - young and old; those of humble and those of exalted rank. Compare Psalm 148:7-13.

Verse 6

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude - In Revelation 19:1 he says that he "heard a great voice of much people"; here he says he "heard as it were a voice of a great multitude." That is, in the former case he heard a shout that he at once recognized as the voice of a great multitude of persons; here he says that he heard a sound not distinctly recognized at first as such, but which resembled such a shout of a multitude. In the former case it was distinct; here it was confused - bearing a resemblance to the sound of roaring waters, or to muttering thunder, but less distinct than the former. This phrase would imply:

(a)alouder sound; and,

(b)that the sound was more remote, and therefore less clear and distinct.

And as the voice of many waters - The comparison of the voices of a host of people with the roar of mighty waters is not uncommon in the Scriptures. See the notes on Isaiah 17:12-13. So in Homer:

"The monarch spoke, and straight a murmur rose,
Loud as the surges when the tempest blows;
That dash'd on broken rocks tumultuous roar,
And foam and thunder on the stony shore."

And as the voice of mighty thunderings - The loud, deep, heavy voice of thunder. The distant shouts of a multitude may properly be represented by the sound of heavy thunder.

Saying, Alleluia - See the notes on Revelation 19:1. This is the fourth time in which this is uttered as expressive of the joy of the heavenly hosts in view of the overthrow of the enemies of the church. The occasion will be worthy of this emphatic expression of joy.

For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth - Yahweh - God Almighty - the true God. The meaning is, that as the last enemy of the church is destroyed, he now truly reigns. This is the result of his power, and therefore it is proper that he should be praised as the "omnipotent" or "Almighty God" - for he has shown that he can overcome all his enemies, and bring the world to his feet.

Verse 7

Let us be glad and rejoice - Let all in heaven rejoice - for all have an interest in the triumph of truth; all should be glad that the government of God is set up over an apostate world.

And give honour to him - Because the work is glorious; and became it is by his power alone that it has been accomplished. See the notes on Revelation 5:12.

For the marriage of the Lamb is come - Of the Lamb of God - the Redeemer of the world. See the notes on Revelation 5:6. The relation of God, and especially of the Messiah, to the church, is often in the Scriptures represented under the image of marriage. See the Isaiah 54:4-6; 62:4-5 notes; 2 Corinthians 11:2 note; Ephesians 5:23-33 note. Compare Jeremiah 3:14; Jeremiah 31:32; Hosea 2:19-20. The idea is also said to be common in Arabic and Persian poetry. It is to be remembered, also, that papal Rome has just been represented as a frivolous and meretricious woman; and there is a propriety, therefore, in representing the true church as a pure bride, the Lamb's wife, and the final triumph of that church as a joyous marriage. The

meaning is, that the church was now to triumph and rejoice as if in permanent union with her glorious head and Lord.

And his wife hath made herself ready - By putting on her beautiful apparel and ornaments. All the preparations had been made for a permanent and uninterrupted union with its Redeemer, and the church was henceforward to be recognized as his beautiful bride, and was no more to appear as a decorated harlot - as it had during the papal supremacy. Between the church under the papacy, and the church in its true form, there is all the difference which there is between an abandoned woman gaily decked with gold and jewels, and a pure virgin chastely and modestly adorned, about to be led to be united in bonds of love to a virtuous husband,

Verse 8

And to her was granted - It is not said here by whom this was granted, but it is perhaps implied that this was conferred by the Saviour himself on his bride.

That she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white - See the notes on Revelation 3:4-5, Revelation 3:18; Revelation 7:13. White has, perhaps, in all countries been the usual color of the bridal dress - as an emblem of innocence.

For the fine linen is the righteousness of saints - Represents the righteousness of the saints; or is an emblem of it. It should be remarked, however, that it is implied here, as it is everywhere in the Scriptures, that this is not their own righteousness, for it is said that this was "given" to the bride - to the saints. It is the gracious bestowment of their Lord; and the reference here must be to that righteousness which they obtain by faith - the righteousness which results from justification through the merits of the Redeemer. Of this Paul speaks, when he says Philemon 3:9, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but what is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Compare the notes on Romans 3:25-26.

Verse 9

And he saith unto me - The angel who made these representations to him. See Revelation 19:10.

Write, Blessed are they - See the notes on Revelation 14:13.

Which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb - The idea of a festival, or a marriage-supper, was a familiar one to the Jews to represent the happiness of heaven, and is frequently found in the New

Testament. Compare the Luke 14:15-16; Luke 16:22; Luke 22:16 notes; Matthew 22:2 note. The image in the passage before us is that of many guests invited to a great festival.

And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God - Confirming all by a solemn declaration. The importance of what is here said; the desirableness of having it fixed in the mind, amidst the trials of life and the scenes of persecution through which the church was to pass, makes this solemn declaration proper. The idea is, that in all times of persecution - in every dark hour of despondency - the church, as such, and every individual member of the church, should receive it as a solemn truth never to be doubted, that the religion of Christ would finally prevail, and that all persecution and sorrow here would be followed by joy and triumph in heaven.

Verse 10

And I fell at his feet to worship him - At the feet of the angel. See the notes on Revelation 19:9. This is a common posture of adoration in the East. See Rosenmuller's "Morgenland, in loco." notes on 1 Corinthians 14:25. John was entirely overcome with the majesty of the heavenly messenger, and with the amazing truths that he had disclosed to him, and in the overflowing of his feelings he fell upon the earth in the posture of adoration. Or it may be that he mistook the rank of him who addressed him, and supposed that he was the Messiah whom he had been accustomed to worship, and who had first Luke 17:10), though we may regard it as an honor to be associated with the angels, and it may raise us in conscious dignity to feel that we are united with them.

And of thy brethren - Of other Christians; for all are engaged in the same work.

That have the testimony of Jesus - Who are witnesses for the Saviour. It is possible that there may be here a particular reference to those who were engaged in preaching the gospel, though the language will apply to all who give their testimony to the value of the gospel by consistent lives.

Worship God - He is the only proper object of worship; he alone is to be adored.

For the testimony of Jesus - The meaning here seems to be, that this angel, and John, and their fellow-servants, were all engaged in the same work that of bearing their testimony to Jesus. Thus, in this respect, they were on a level, and one of them should not worship another, but all should

unite in the common worship of God. No one in this work, though an angel, could have such a pre-eminence that it would be proper to render the homage to him which was due to God alone. There could be but one being whom it was proper to worship, and they who were engaged in simply bearing testimony to the work of the Saviour should not worship one another.

Is the spirit of prophecy - The design of prophecy is to bear testimony to Jesus. The language does not mean, of course, that this is the only design of prophecy, but that this is its great and ultimate end. The word "prophecy" here seems to be used in the large sense in which it is often employed in the New Testament - meaning to make known the divine will (see the notes on Romans 12:6), and the primary reference here would seem to be to the preachers and teachers of the New Testament. The sense is, that their grand business is to bear testimony to the Saviour. They are all - whether angels, apostles, or ordinary teachers - appointed for this, and therefore should regard themselves as "fellow-servants." The design of the angel in this seems to have been, to state to John what was his own specific business in the communications which he made, and then to state a universal truth applicable to all ministers of the gospel, that they were engaged in the same work, and that no one of them should claim adoration from others. Thus understood, this passage has no direct reference to the prophecies of the Old Testament, and teaches nothing in regard to their design, though it is in fact undoubtedly true that their grand and leading object was to bear testimony to the future Messiah. But this passage will not justify the attempt so often made to "find Christ" everywhere in the prophecies of the Old Testament, or justify the many forced and unnatural interpretations by which the prophecies are often applied to him.

Verse 11

And I saw heaven opened - He saw a new vision, as if an opening were made through the sky, and he was permitted to look into heaven. See the notes on Revelation 4:1.

And behold, a white horse - On the white horse as a symbol, see the notes on Revelation 6:2. He is here the symbol of the final victory that is to be obtained over the beast and the false prophet Revelation 19:20, and of the final triumph of the church.

And he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True - He is not designated here by his usual and real name, but by his attributes. There can

be no doubt that the Messiah is intended, as he goes forth to the subjugation of the world to himself. The attributes here referred to - faithful and true - are especially appropriate, for they are not only strongly marked attributes of his character, but they would be particularly manifested in the events that are described. He would thus show that he was faithful - or worthy of the confidence of his church in delivering it from all its enemies; and true to all the promises that he has made to it.

And in righteousness he doth judge - All his acts of judgment in determining the destiny of people are righteous. See the notes on Isaiah 11:3-5.

And make war - That is, the war which he wages is not a war of ambition; it is not for the mere purpose of conquest; it is to save the righteous, and to punish the wicked.

Verse 12

His eyes were as a flame of fire - See the notes on Revelation 1:14.

And on his head were many crowns - Many diadems, indicative of his universal reign. It is not said how these were worn or arranged on his head - perhaps the various diadems worn by kings were in some way wreathed into one.

And he had a name written - That is, probably on the frontlet of this compound diadem. Compare the notes on Revelation 13:1; Revelation 14:1.

That no man knew but he himself - See the notes on Revelation 2:17. This cannot here mean that no one could read the name, but the idea is, that no one but himself could fully understand its import. It involved a depth of meaning, and a degree of sacredness, and a relation to the Father, which he alone could apprehend in its true import. This is true of the name here designated - "the Word of God" - the "Logos" - Λόγος Logosand it is true of all the names which he bears. See Matthew 11:27. Compare a quotation from Dr. Buchanan in the Asiatic Researches, vol. 1, vi. p. 264, as quoted by Rosenmuller, Morgenland, in loco.

Verse 13

And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood - Red, as if dipped in blood - emblem of slaughter. The original of this image is probably Isaiah 63:2-3. See the notes on that passage.

And his name is called The Word of God - The name which in Revelation 19:12, it is said that no one knew but he himself. This name is Ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ Ho logos tou Theouor "the Logos of God." That is, this is

his unique name; a name which belongs only to him, and which distinguishes him from all other beings. The name "Logos," as applicable to the Son of God, and expressive of his nature, is found in the New Testament only in the writings of John, and is used by him to denote the higher or divine nature of the Saviour. In regard to its meaning, and the reason why it is applied to him, see the notes on John 1:1. The reader also may consult, with great advantage, an article by Prof. Stuart in the Bibliotheca Sacra, vol. vii. pp. 16-31. The following may be some of the reasons why it is said Revelation 19:12 that no one understands this but he himself:

(1)No one but he can understand its full import, as it implies so high a knowledge of the nature of the Deity;

(2)no one but he can understand the relation which it supposes in regard to God, or the relation of the Son to the Father;

(3)no one but he can understand what is implied in it, regarded as the method in which God reveals himself to his creatures on earth;

(4)no one but he can understand what is implied in it in respect to the manner in which God makes himself known to other worlds.

It may be added, as a further illustration of this, that none of the attempts made to explain it have left the matter so that there are no questions unsolved which one would be glad to ask.

Verse 14

And the armies which were in heaven followed him - The heavenly hosts; particularly, it would seem, the redeemed, as there would be some incongruity in representing the angels as riding in this manner. Doubtless the original of this picture is Isaiah 63:3; "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me." These hosts of the redeemed on white horses accompany him to be witnesses of his victory, and to participate in the joy of the triumph, not to engage in the work of blood.

Upon white horses - Emblems of triumph or victory. See the notes on Revelation 6:2.

Clothed in fine linen, white and clean - The usual raiment of those who are in heaven, as everywhere represented in this book. See Revelation 3:4-5; Revelation 4:4; Revelation 7:9, Revelation 7:13; Revelation 15:6.

Verse 15

And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword - See the notes on Revelation 1:16. In that place the sword seems to be an emblem of his words or doctrines, as penetrating the hearts of people; here it is the emblem of a work of destruction worked on his foes.

That with it he should smite the nations - The nations that were opposed to him; to wit, those especially who were represented by the beast and the false prophet, Revelation 19:18-20.

And he shall rule them with a rod of iron - See the notes on Revelation 2:27; Revelation 12:5.

And he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God - This language is probably derived from Isaiah 63:1-4. See it explained in the notes on that place, and on Revelation 14:19-20. It means here that his enemies would be certainly crushed before him - as grapes are crushed under the feet of him that treads in the winevat.

Verse 16

And he hath on his vesture - That is, this name was conspicuously written on his garment - probably his military robe.

And on his thigh - The robe or military cloak may be conceived of as open and flowing, so as to expose the limbs of the rider; and the idea is, that the name was conspicuously written not only on the flowing robe, but on the other parts of his dress, so that it must be conspicuous whether his military cloak were wrapped closely around him, or whether it was open to the breeze. Grotius supposes that this name was on the edge or hilt of the sword which depended from his thigh.

A name written - Or a title descriptive of his character.

King of kings, and Lord of lords - As in Revelation 17:5, so here, there is nothing in the original to denote that this should be distinguished, as it is, by capital letters. As a conspicuous title, however, it is not improper. It means that he is, in fact, the sovereign over the kings of the earth, and that all nobles and princes are under his control - a rank that properly belongs to the Son of God. Compare the notes on Ephesians 1:20-22. See also Revelation 19:12 of this chapter. The custom here alluded to of inscribing the name or rank of distinguished individuals on their garments, so that they might be readily recognized, was not uncommon in ancient times. For full proof of this, see Rosenmuller, Morgenland, vol. iii. pp. 232-236. The authorities quoted there are, Thevenot‘s Travels, vol. i. p. 149; Gruter, p. 989; Dempster‘s Etruria Regalis, t. ii. tab. 93; Montfaucon, Antiq. Expliq. t.

iii. tab. 39. Thus Herodotus (vol. ii. p. 196), speaking of the figures of Sesostris in Ionia, says that, "Across his breast, from shoulder to shoulder, there is this inscription in the sacred characters of Egypt, ‹I conquered this country by the force of my arms.'" Compare Cic. Verr. iv. 23; LeMoyne a.d. Jeremiah 23:6; Munter, Diss. a.d. Revelation 17:5, as referred to by Prof. Stuart, in loco.

Verse 17

And I saw an angel standing in the sun - A different angel evidently from the one which had before appeared to him. The number of angels that appeared to John, as referred to in this book, was very great, and each one came on a new errand, or with a new message. Everyone must be struck with the image here. The description is as simple as it can be; and yet as sublime. The fewest words possible are used; and yet the image is distinct and clear. A heavenly being stands in the blaze of the brightest of the orbs that God permits us here to see - yet not consumed, and himself so bright that he can be distinctly seen amidst the dazzling splendors of that luminary. It is difficult to conceive of an image more sublime than this. Why he has his place in the sun is not stated, for there does not appear to be anything more intended by this than to give grandeur and impressiveness to the scene.

And he cried with a loud voice - So that all the fowls of heaven could hear.

Saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven - That is, to all the birds of prey - all that feed on flesh - such as hover over a battlefield. Compare the notes on Isaiah 18:6; Isaiah 56:9. See also Jeremiah 7:33; Jeremiah 12:9; Ezekiel 39:4-20.

Come and gather yourselves together - All this imagery is taken from the idea that there would be a great slaughter, and that the bodies of the dead would be left unburied to the birds of prey.

Unto the supper of the great God - As if the great God were about to give you a feast - to wit, the carcasses of those slain. It is called "his supper" because he gives it; and the image is merely that there would be a great slaughter of his foes, as is specified in the following verse.

Verse 18

That ye may eat the flesh of kings - Of the kings under the control of the beast and the false prophet, Revelation 16:14; Revelation 17:12-14.

And the flesh of captains - Of those subordinate to kings in command. The Greek word is χιλιάρχων chiliarchōn- "chiliarchs" - denoting captains of a thousand, or, as we should say, commanders of a regiment. The word "colonel" would better convey the idea with us; as he is the commander of a regiment, and a regiment is usually composed of about one thousand people.

And the flesh of mighty men - The word here means "strong," and the reference is to the robust soldiery - rank and file in the army.

And the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them - Cavalry - for most armies are composed in part of horsemen.

And the flesh of all men, both free and bond - Freemen and slaves. It is not uncommon that freemen and slaves are mingled in the same army. This was the case in the American Revolution, and is common in the East.

Both small and great - Young and old; of small size and of great size; of those of humble, and those of exalted rank. The later armies of Napoleon were composed in great part of conscripts, many of whom were only about eighteen years of age, and to this circumstance many of his later defeats are to be traced. In the army that was raised after the invasion of Russia no less than one hundred and fifty thousand of the conscripts were between eighteen and nineteen years of age (Alison's History of Europe, vol. 4, p. 27). Indeed, it is common in most armies that a considerable portion of the enlistments are from those in early life; and besides this, it is usual to employ mere boys on various services about a camp.

Verse 19

And I saw the beast - notes on Revelation 13:1, Revelation 13:11. Compare Revelation 17:13.

And the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together - There is allusion here to the same assembling of hostile forces which is described in Revelation 16:13-14, for the great decisive battle that is to determine the destiny of the world - the question whether the Messiah or antichrist shall reign. There can be no doubt that the writer in these passages designed to refer to the same events - the still future scenes that are to occur when the Roman, the pagan, and the Muhammedan powers shall be aroused to make common cause against the true religion, and shall stake all on the issue of the great conflict. See the notes on Revelation 16:13-14.

Against him that sat on the horse - The Messiah - the Son of God. notes on Revelation 19:11.

And against his army - The hosts that are associated with him - his redeemed people. See the notes on Revelation 19:14.

Verse 20

And the beast was taken - That is, was taken alive, to be thrown into the lake of fire. The hosts were slain Revelation 19:21, but the leaders were made prisoners of war. The general idea is, that these armies were overcome, and that the Messiah was victorious; but there is a propriety in the representation here that the leaders - the authors of the war should be taken captive, and reserved for severer punishment than death on the battlefield would be - for they had stirred up their hosts, and summoned these armies to make rebellion against the Messiah. The beast here, as all along, refers to the papal power; and the idea is that of its complete and utter overthrow, as if the leader of an army were taken captive and tormented in burning flames, and all his followers were cut down on the field of battle.

And with him the false prophet - As they had been practically associated together, there was a propriety that they should share the same fate. In regard to the false prophet, and the nature of this alliance, see the notes on Revelation 16:13.

That wrought miracles before him - That is, the false prophet had been united with the beast in deceiving the nations of the earth. See the notes on Revelation 16:14.

With which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast - notes on Revelation 13:16-18. By these arts they had been deceived - that is, they had been led into the alliance, and had been sustained in their opposition to the truth. The whole representation is that of an alliance to prevent the spread of the true religion, as if the papacy and Mohammedanism were combined, and the one was sustained by the pretended miracles of the other. There would be a practical array against the reign of the Son of God, as if these great powers should act in concert, and as if the special claims which each set up in behalf of its own divine origin became a claim which went to support the whole combined organization.

These both were cast alive into a lake of fire - The beast and the false prophet. That is, the overthrow will be as signal, and the destruction as complete, as if the leaders of the combined hosts should be taken alive, and thrown into a pit or lake that burns with an intense heat. There is no necessity for supposing that this is to be literally inflicted - for the whole

scene is symbolical - meaning that the destruction of these powers would be as complete as if they were thrown into such a burning lake. Compare the notes on Revelation 14:10-11.

Burning with brimstone - Sulphur - the usual expression to denote intense heat, and especially as referring to the punishment of the wicked. See the notes on Revelation 14:10.

Verse 21

And the remnant - The remainder of the assembled hosts - the army at large, in contradistinction from the leaders.

Were slain with the sword - Cut down with the sword; not rescued for protracted torment. A proper distinction is thus made between the deceived multitudes and the leaders who had deceived them.

Of him that sat upon the horse - The Messiah, Revelation 19:11.

Which sword proceeded out of his mouth - notes on Revelation 19:15. That is, they were cut down by a word. They fell before him as he spake, as if they were slain by the sword. Perhaps this indicates that the effect that is to be produced when these great powers shall be destroyed is a moral effect; that is, that they will be subdued by the word of the Son of God.

And all the fowls were filled with their flesh - notes on Revelation 19:17. An effect was produced as if the fowls of heaven should feed upon the carcasses of the slain.

The general idea here is, that these great anti-Christian powers which had so long resisted the gospel, and prevented its being spread over the earth; which had shed so much blood in persecution, and had so long corrupted and deceived mankind, would be subdued. The true religion would be as triumphant as if the Son of God should go forth as a warrior in his own might, and secure their leaders for punishment, and give up their hosts to the birds of prey. This destruction of these great enemies - which the whole course of the interpretation leads us to suppose is still future - prepares the way for the millennial reign of the Son of God - as stated in the following chapter. The “beast” and the “false prophet” are disposed of, and there remains only the subjugation of the great dragon - the source of all this evil - to prepare the way for the long-anticipated triumph of the gospel. The subjugation of the great original source of all those evil influences is stated in Revelation 20:1-3; and then follows the account of the thousand years‘ rest of the saints, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 20

Introduction

Analysis Of The Chapter

This chapter Revelation 20:1-15, like Revelation 16:12-21, Revelation 16:16, that much obscurity should hang over it, nor that it is difficult to explain it so as to remove all obscurity. The statement in this chapter, however, is distinct and clear in its general characteristics, and time will make all its particular statements free from ambiguity.

In the previous chapter, an account is given of the final destruction of two of the most formidable enemies of the church, and consequently the removal of two of the hindrances to the universal spread of the gospel - the beast and the false prophet - the papal and the Muhammedan powers. But one obstacle remains to be removed - the power of Satan as concentrated and manifested in the form of pagan power. These three powers it was said Revelation 16:13-14 would concentrate their forces as the time of the final triumph of Christianity drew on; and with these the last great battle was to be fought. Two of these have been subdued; the conquest over the other remains, and Satan is to be arrested and bound for a thousand years. He is then to be released for a time, and afterward finally destroyed, and at that period the end will come.

The chapter comprises the following parts:

I. The binding of Satan, Revelation 20:1-3. An angel comes down from heaven with the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand, and seizes upon the dragon, and casts him into the pit, that for a thousand years he should deceive the nations no more. The great enemy of God and his cause is thus made a prisoner, and is restrained from making war in any form against the church. The way is thus prepared for the peace and triumph which follow.

II. The millennium, Revelation 20:4-6. John sees thrones, and persons sitting on them; he sees the souls of those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God - those who had not worshipped the beast nor his image - living and reigning with Christ during the thousand years: the spirits of the martyrs revived, and becoming again the

reigning spirit on earth. This he calls the first resurrection; and on all such he says the second death has no power. Temporal death they might experience - for such the martyrs had experienced - but over them the second death has no dominion, for they live and reign with the Saviour. This is properly the millennium - the long period when the principles of true religion will have the ascendency on the earth, as if the martyrs and confessors - the most devoted and eminent Christians of other times - should appear again upon the earth, and as if their spirit should become the reigning and pervading spirit of all who professed the Christian name.

III. The release of Satan, Revelation 20:7-8. After the thousand years of peace and triumph shall have expired, Satan will be released from his prison, and will be permitted to go out and deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, and gather them together to battle; that is, a state of things will exist as if Satan were then released. There will be again an outbreak of sin on the earth, and a conflict with the principles of religion, as if an innumerable multitude of opposers should be marshalled for the conflict by the great author of all evil.

IV. The final subjugation of Satan, and destruction of his power on the earth, Revelation 20:9-10. After the temporary and partial outbreak of evil Revelation 20:7-8, Satan and his hosts will be entirely destroyed. The destruction will be as if fire should come down from heaven to devour the assembled hosts Revelation 20:9, and as if Satan, the great leader of evil, should be cast into the same lake where the beast and false prophet are to be tormented forever. Then the church will be delivered from all its enemies, and religion henceforward will be triumphant. How long the interval will be between this state and that next disclosed Revelation 20:11-15 - the final judgment - is not stated. The eye of the seer glances from one to the other, but there is nothing to forbid the supposition, that, according to the laws of prophetic vision, there may be a long interval in which righteousness shall reign upon the earth. Compare the introduction to Isaiah, section 7, III. (3)-(5).

V. The final judgment, Revelation 20:11-15. This closes the “earthly” scene. Henceforward Revelation 2122 the scene is transferred to heaven - the abode of the redeemed. The last judgment is the winding up of the

earthly affairs. The enemies of the church are all long since destroyed; the world has experienced, perhaps for a long series of ages, the full influence of the gospel; countless million have been, we may suppose, brought under its power; and then at last, in the winding up of human affairs, comes the judgment of the great day, when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God; when the sea shall give up its dead; when death and hell shall give up the dead that are in them; when the records of human actions shall be opened, and all shall be judged according to their works; and when all who are not found written in the book of life shall be cast into the lake of fire. This is the earthly consummation; henceforward the saints shall reign in glory - the New Jerusalem above, Revelation 2122.

In order to prepare the way for a proper understanding of this chapter, the following additional remarks may be here made:

(a) The design of this book did not demand a minute detail of the events which would occur in the consummation of human affairs. The main purpose was to trace the history of the church to the scene of the final triumph when all its enemies would be overthrown, and when religion would be permanently established upon the earth. Hence, though in the previous chapters we have a detailed account of the persecutions that would be endured; of the enemies that would rise up against the church, and of their complete ultimate overthrow - leaving religion triumphant on the earth - yet we have no minute statement of what will occur in the millennium. A rapid view is taken of the closing scenes of the earth‘s history, and the general results only are stated. It would not be strange, therefore, if there should be much in this that would seem to be enigmatical and obscure, especially as it is now all in the future.

(b) There may be long intervening periods between the events thus thrown together into the final grouping. We are not to suppose necessarily that these events will succeed each other immediately, or that they will be of short duration. Between these events thus hastily sketched, there may be long intervals that are not described, and whose general character is scarcely even glanced at. This results from the very nature of the prophetic vision, as described in the introduction to Isaiah, section 7, III. (3)-(5). This may be illustrated by the view which we have in looking at a landscape.

When one is placed in a favorable situation, he can mark distinctly the order of the objects in it - the succession - the grouping. He can tell what objects appear to him to lie near to each other, and are apparently in juxtaposition. But there are objects which, in such a vision, the eye cannot take in, and which would not be exhibited by any description which might be given of the view taken. Hills in the distant view may seem to lie near each other; one may seem to rise just back of another, and to the eye they may seem to constitute parts of the same mountain, and yet between them there may be deep and fertile vales, smiling villages, running streams, beautiful gardens and waterfalls, which the eye cannot take in, and the extent of which it may be wholly impossible to conjecture; and a description of the whole scene, as it appears to the observer, would convey no idea of the actual extent of the intervals. So it is in the prophecies. Between the events which are to occur hereafter, as seen in vision, there may be long intervals, but the length of these intervals the prophet may have left us no means of determining. See these thoughts more fully illustrated in the Introduction to Isaiah, as above referred to.

What is here stated may have occurred in the vision which John had of the future, as described in this chapter. Time is marked in the prophetic description until the fall of the great enemy of the church; beyond that it does not seem to have been regarded as necessary to determine the actual duration of the events referred to. Compare Prof. Stuart, Com. ii. 353,354.

(c) These views are sustained by the most cursory glance of the chapter before us. There is none of the detail which we have found in the previous portions of the book - for such detail was not necessary to the accomplishment of the design of the book. The grand purpose was to show that Christianity would finally triumph, and hence the detailed description is carried on until that occurs, and beyond that we have only the most general statements. Thus, in this chapter, the great events that are to occur are merely hinted at. The events of a thousand years; the invasion by Gog and Magog; the ultimate confinement and punishment of Satan; the general judgment - are all crowded into the space of twelve verses. This shows that the distant future is only glanced at by the writer; and we should not wonder, therefore, if it should be found to be obscure, nor should we regard

it as strange that much is left to be made clear by the events themselves when they shall occur.

(d) The "end" is triumphant and glorious. We are assured that every enemy of the church will be slain, and that there will be a long period of happiness, prosperity, and peace. "The eye of hope," says Prof. Stuart, beautifully, "is directed forward, and sees the thousand years of uninterrupted prosperity; then the sudden destruction of a new and fatal enemy; and all the rest is left to joyful anticipation. When all clouds are swept from the face of the sky, why should not the sun shine forth in all his glory? I cannot, therefore, doubt that the setting sun of the church on earth is to be as a heaven of unclouded splendor. Peaceful and triumphant will be her latest age. The number of the redeemed will be augmented beyond all computation; and the promise made from the beginning, that ‹the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent‘s head,‘ will be fulfilled in all its extent, and with a divine plenitude of meaning. The understanding and pious reader closes the book with admiration, with wonder, with delight, with lofty anticipations of the future, and with undaunted resolution to follow on in the steps of those who, through faith and patience, have inherited the promises, and entered into everlasting rest," vol. 2, pp. 354,355.

Verse 1

And I saw an angel come down from heaven - Compare the notes on Revelation 10:1. He does not say whether this angel had appeared to him before, but the impression is rather that it was a different one. The whole character of the composition of the book leads us to suppose that different angels were employed to make these communications to John, and that, in fact, in the progress of things disclosed in the book, he had contact with a considerable number of the heavenly inhabitants. The scene that is recorded here occurred after the destruction of the beast and the false prophet Revelation 19:18-21, and therefore, according to the principles expressed in the explanation of the previous chapters, what is intended to be described here will take place after the final destruction of the papal and Muhammedan powers.

Having the key of the bottomless pit - See the notes on Revelation 1:18; Revelation 9:1. The fact that he has the key of that underworld is

designed to denote here, that he can fasten it on Satan so that it shall become his prison.

And a great chain in his hand - With which to bind the dragon, Revelation 20:2. It is called great because of the strength of him that was to be bound. The chain only appears to have been in his hand. Perhaps the key was suspended to his side.

Verse 2

And he laid hold on - Seized him by violence - ἐκράτησεν ekratēsenThe word denotes "the employment of strength" or "force"; and it implies that he had power superior to that of the dragon. Compare Matthew 14:3; Matthew 18:28; Matthew 21:46; Matthew 22:6; Matthew 26:4. We can at once see the propriety of the use of this word in this connection. The great enemy to be bound has himself mighty power, and can be overcome only by a superior. This may teach us that it is only a power from heaven that can destroy the empire of Satan in the world; and perhaps it may teach us that the interposition of angels will be employed in bringing in the glorious state of the millennium. Why should it not be?

The dragon - See the notes on Revelation 12:2. Compare Revelation 12:4, Revelation 12:7, Revelation 12:13, Revelation 12:16-17; Revelation 13:2, Revelation 13:4, Revelation 13:11; Revelation 16:13. There can be no doubt as to the meaning of the word here; for it is expressly said to mean the devil, and Satan. It would seem, however, that it refers to some manifestation of the power of Satan that would exist after the beast and false prophet - that is, the papacy and Mohammedanism - should be destroyed, and probably the main reference is to the still existing power of paganism. Compare the notes on Revelation 16:13-14. It may include, however, all the forms of wickedness which Satan shall have kept upon the earth, and all the modes of evil by which he will endeavor to perpetuate his reign.

That old serpent - This is undoubtedly an allusion to the serpent that deceived our first parents (Genesis 3:1 ff.), and therefore a proof that it was Satan that, under the form of a serpent, deceived them. Compare notes on Revelation 12:3.

Which is the devil - On the meaning of this word, see the notes on Matthew 4:1.

And Satan - On the meaning of this word, see the notes on Job 1:6. In regard to the repetition of the names of that great enemy of God and the

church here, Mr. Taylor, in the Fragments to Calmet‘s Dictionary, No. 152, says that this “almost resembles a modern Old Bailey indictment, in which special care is taken to identify the culprit, by a sufficient number of aliases. An angel from heaven, having the key of the prison of the abyss, and a great chain to secure the prisoner, ‹apprehended the dragon, alias the old serpent, alias the devil, alias the Satan, alias the seducer of the world,‘ who was sentenced to a thousand years‘ imprisonment.” The object here, however, seems to be not so much to identify the culprit by these aliases, as to show that under whatever forms, and by whatever names he had appeared, it was always the same being, and that now the author of the whole evil would be arrested. Thus the one great enemy sometimes has appeared in a form that would be best represented by a fierce and fiery dragon; at another, in a form that would be best represented by a cunning and subtle serpent; now in a form to which the word “devil” (“accuser”), would be most appropriate; and now in a form in which the word “Satan” - an adversary - would be most expressive of what he does. In these various forms, and under these various names, he has ruled the fallen world; and when this one great enemy shall be seized and imprisoned, all these forms of evil will, of course, come to an end.

A thousand years - This is the period usually designated as the millennium - for the word “millennium” means “a thousand years.” It is on this passage that the whole doctrine of the millennium as such has been founded. It is true that there are elsewhere in the Scriptures abundant promises that the gospel will ultimately spread over the world; but the notion of a millennium as such is found in this passage alone. It is, however, enough to establish the doctrine, if its meaning be correctly ascertained; for it is a just rule in interpreting the Bible, that the clearly-ascertained sense of a single passage of Scripture is sufficient to establish the truth of a doctrine. The fact, however, that this passage stands alone in this respect, makes it the more important to endeavor accurately to determine its meaning. There are but three ways in which the phrase “a thousand years” can be understood here: either:

(a)literally; or,

(b)in the prophetic use of the term, where a day would stand for a year, thus making a period of three hundred and sixty thousand years; or,

(c)figuratively, supposing that it refers to a long but indefinite period of time.

It may be impossible to determine which of these periods is intended, though the first has been generally supposed to be the true one, and hence the common notion of the millennium. There is nothing, however, in the use of the language here, as there would be nothing contrary to the common use of symbols in this book in regard to time, in the supposition that this was designed to describe the longest period here suggested, or that it is meant that the world shall enjoy a reign of peace and righteousness during the long period of three hundred and sixty thousand years. Indeed, there are somethings in the arrangements of nature which look as if it were contemplated that the earth would continue under a reign of righteousness through a vastly long period in the future.

Verse 3

And cast him into the bottomless pit - See the notes on Revelation 9:1. A state of peace and prosperity would exist as if Satan, the great disturber, were confined in the nether world as a prisoner.

And shut him up - Closed the massive doors of the dark prison-house upon him. Compare the notes on Job 10:21-22.

And set a seal upon him - Or, rather, "upon it" - ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ epanō autouThe seal was placed upon the "door" or "gate" of the prison, not because this would fasten the gate or door of itself, and make it secure, for this was secured by the key, but because it prevented intrusion, or any secret opening of it without its being known. See the Daniel 6:17 note, and Matthew 27:66 note. The idea here is, that every precaution was taken for absolute security.

That he should deceive the nations no more - That is, during the thousand years. Compare the notes on Revelation 12:9.

Till the thousand years should be fulfilled - That is, during that period there will be a state of things upon the earth as if Satan should be withdrawn from the world, and confined in the great prison where he is ultimately to dwell forever.

And after that he must be loosed a little season - See Revelation 20:7-8. That is, a state of things will then exist, for a brief period, as if he were again released from his prison-house, and suffered to go abroad upon the earth. The phrase "a little season" - μικρὸν χρόνον mikron chronon"little time" - denotes properly that this would be brief as compared with the

thousand years. No intimation is given as to the exact time, and it is impossible to conjecture how long it will be. All the circumstances stated, however, here and in Revelation 20:7-10, would lead us to suppose that what is referred to will be like the sudden outbreak of a rebellion in a time of general peace, but which will soon be quelled.

Section a. - Condition of the world in the period referred to in Revelation 20:1-3

It may be proper, in order to a correct understanding of this chapter, to present a brief summary under the different parts (see the Analysis of the chapter) of what, according to the interpretation proposed, may be expected to be the condition of things in the time referred to.

On the portion now before us Revelation 20:1-3, according to the interpretation proposed, the following suggestions may be made:

(1) This will be subsequent to the downfall of the papacy and the termination of the Muhammedan power in the world. Of course, then, this lies in the future - how far in the future it is impossible to determine. The interpretation of the various portions of this book, and the book of Daniel, have, however, led to the conclusion that the termination of those powers cannot now be remote. If so, we are on the eve of important events in the world‘s history. The affairs of the world look as if things were tending to a fulfillment of the prophecies so understood.

(2) it will be a condition of the world “as if” Satan were bound; that is, where his influences will be suspended, and the principles of virtue and religion will prevail. According to the interpretation of the previous chapters, it will be a state in which all that has existed, and that now exists, in the papacy to corrupt mankind, to maintain error, and to prevent the prevalence of free and liberal principles, will cease; in which all that there now is in the Muhammedan system to fetter and enslave mankind - now controlling more than one hundred and twenty million of the race - shall have come to an end; and in which, in a great measure, all that occurs under the direct influence of Satan in causing or perpetuating slavery, war, intemperance, lust, avarice, disorder, scepticism, atheism, will be checked arid stayed. It is proper to say, however, that this passage does not require

us to suppose that there will be a “total cessation” of Satanic influence in the earth during that period. Satan will, indeed, be bound and restrained as to his former influence and power. But there will be no change in the character of man as he comes into the world. There will still be corrupt passions in the human heart. Though greatly restrained, and though there will be a general prevalence of righteousness on the earth, yet we are to remember that the race is fallen, and that even then, if restraint should be taken away, man would act out his fallen nature. This fact, if remembered, will make it appear less strange that, after this period of prevalent righteousness, Satan should be represented as loosed again, and as able once more for a time to deceive the nations.

(3) it will be a period of long duration. On the supposition that it is to be literally a period of one thousand years, this is in itself long, and will give, especially under the circumstances, opportunity for a vast progress in human affairs. To form some idea of the length of the period, we need only place ourselves in imagination “back” for a thousand years - say in the middle of the ninth century - and look at the condition of the world then, and think of the vast changes in human affairs that have occurred during that period. It is to be remembered, also, that if the millennial period were soon to commence, it would find the world in a far different state in reference to future progress from what it was in the ninth century, and that it would “start off,” so to speak, with all the advantages in the arts and sciences which have been accumulated in all the past periods of the world.

Even if there were no special divine interposition, it might be presumed that the race, in such circumstances, would make great and surprising advances in the long period of a thousand years. And here a very striking remark of Mr. Hugh Miller may be introduced as illustrating the subject. “It has been remarked by some student of the Apocalypse,” says he, “that the course of predicted events at first moves slowly, as one after one, six of seven seals are opened; that, on the opening of the seventh seal, the progress is so considerably quickened that the seventh period proves as fertile in events - represented by the sounding of the seven trumpets - as the foregoing six taken together; and that on the seventh trumpet, so great is the further acceleration, that there is an amount of incident condensed in this seventh part of the seventh period equal, as in the former case, to that of all

the previous six parts in one. There are three cycles, it has been said, in the scheme - cycle within cycle - the second comprised within a seventh portion of the first, and the third within a seventh portion of the second. Be this as it may, we may, at least, see something that exceedingly resembles it in that actual economy of change and revolution manifested in English history for the last two centuries. "It would seem as if eyelets, in their downward course, had come under the influence of that law of gravitation through which falling bodies increase in speed, as they descend, according to the squares of the distance" (First Impressions of England and its People, pp. 7,8.). If to this we add the supposition, which we have seen (see the notes on Revelation 20:2) to be by no means improbable, that it is intended, in the description of the millennium in this chapter, that the world will continue under a reign of peace and righteousness for the long period of three hundred and sixty thousand years, it is impossible to anticipate what progress will be made during that period, or to enumerate the numbers that will be saved. On this subject, see some very interesting remarks in the "Old Red Sandstone," by Hugh Miller, pp. 248-250,258,259. Compare Prof. Hitchcock's "Religion and Geology," pp. 370-409.

(4) What, then, will be the state of things during that long period of a thousand years?

(a) There will be a great increase in the population of the globe. Let wars cease, and intemperance cease, and slavery cease, and the numberless passions that now shorten life be stayed, and it is easy to see that there must be a vast augmentation in the number of the human species.

(b) There will be a general diffusion of intelligence upon the earth. Every circumstance would be favorable to it, and the world would be in a condition to make rapid advances in knowledge, Daniel 12:4.

(c) That period will be characterized by the universal diffusion of revealed truth, Isaiah 11:9; Isaiah 25:7.

(d) It will be marked by unlimited subjection to the scepter of Christ, Psalm 2:7; Psalm 22:27-29; Isaiah 2:2-3; Isaiah 66:23; Zechariah 9:10; Zechariah 14:9; Matthew 13:31-32; Revelation 11:15.

(e) There will be great progress in all that tends to promote the welfare of man. We are not to suppose that the resources of nature are exhausted. Nature gives no signs of exhaustion or decay. In the future there is no reason to doubt that there will yet be discoveries and inventions mere surprising and wonderful than the art of printing, or the use of steam, or the magnetic telegraph. There are profounder secrets of nature that may be delivered up than any of these, and the world is tending to their development.

(f) It will be a period of the universal reign of peace. The attention of mankind will be turned to the things which tend to promote the welfare of the race, and advance the best interests of society. The single fact that wars will cease will make an inconceivable difference in the aspect of the world; for if universal peace shall prevail through the long period of the millennium, and the wealth, the talent, and the science now employed in human butchery shall be devoted to the interests of agriculture, the mechanical arts, learning, and religion, it is impossible now to estimate the progress which the race will make, and the changes which will be produced on the earth. For Scripture "proofs" that it will be a time of universal peace, see Isaiah 2:4; Isaiah 11:6-9; Micah 4:3.

(g) There will be a "general" prevalence of evangelical religion. This is apparent in the entire description in this passage, for the two most formidable opposing powers that religion has ever known - the beast and the false prophet - will be destroyed, and Satan will be bound. In this long period, therefore, we are to suppose that the gospel will exert its fair influence on governments, on families, on individuals; in the contact of neighbors, and in the contact of nations. God will be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and not in the mere "forms" of devotion; and temperance, truth, liberty, social order, honesty, and love, will prevail over the world.

(h) It will be a time when the Hebrew people - the Jews - will be brought to the knowledge of the truth, and will embrace the Messiah whom their fathers crucified, Zechariah 12:10; Zechariah 13:1; Romans 11:26-29.

(i) Yet we are not necessarily to suppose that "all" the world will be absolutely and entirely brought under the power of the gospel. There will be still on the earth the remains of wickedness in the corrupted human heart, and there will be so much "tendency" to sin in the human soul, that Satan, when released for a time Revelation 20:7-8, will be able once more to deceive mankind, and to array a formidable force, represented by Gog and Magog, against the cause of truth and righteousness. We are not to suppose that the nature of mankind, as fallen, will be essentially changed, or that there may not be sin enough in the human heart to make it capable of the same opposition to the gospel of God which has thus far been evinced in all ages. From causes which are not fully stated Revelation 20:8-9, Satan will be enabled once more to rouse up their enmity, and to make one more desperate effort to destroy the kingdom of the Redeemer by rallying his forces for a conflict. See these views illustrated in the work entitled "Christ's Second Coming," by Rev. David Brown, of James' Free Church, Glasgow, pp. 398-442; New York, 1851.

Verse 4

And I saw thrones - θρόνους thronousSee Revelation 1:4; Revelation 3:21; Revelation 4:3-4. John here simply says, that he saw in vision thrones, with persons sitting on them, but without intreating who they were that sat on them. It is not the throne of God that is now revealed, for the word is in the plural number, though the writer does not hint how "many" thrones there were. It is intimated, however, that these thrones were placed with some reference to pronouncing a judgment, or determining the destiny of some portion of mankind, for it is immediately added, "and judgment was given unto them." There is considerable resemblance, in many respects, between this and the statement in Daniel 7:9; "I beheld until the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit"; or, as it should be rendered, "I beheld" - that is, I continued to look - "until the thrones were placed or set," to wit, for the purposes of judgment. See the notes on that passage. So John here sees, as the termination of human affairs approaches, thrones placed with reference to a determination of the destiny of some portion of the race, "as if" they were now to have a trial, and to receive a sentence of acquittal or condemnation. The "persons" on whom this judgment is to pass are specified, in the course of the verse, as those who were "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, who had the Word of God, who

had not worshipped the beast," etc. The "time" when this was to occur manifestly was at the Beginning of the thousand years.

And they sat upon them - Who sat on them is not mentioned. The natural construction is, that "judges" sat on them, or that persons sat on them to whom judgment was entrusted. The language is such as would be used on the supposition either that he had mentioned the subject before, so that he would be readily understood, or that, from some other cause, it was so well understood that there was no necessity for mentioning who they were. John seems to have assumed that it would be understood who were meant. And yet to us it is not entirely clear; for John has not before this given us any such intimation that we can determine with certainty what is intended. The probable construction is, that those are referred to to whom it appropriately belonged to occupy such seats of judgment, and who they are is to be determined from other parts of the Scriptures. In Matthew 19:28, the Saviour says to his apostles, "When the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." In 1 Corinthians 6:2, Paul asks the question, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" The meaning as thus explained is, that Christians will, in some way, be employed in judging the world; that is, that they will be exalted to the right hand of the Judge, and be elevated to a station of honor, as if they were associated with the Son of God in the judgment. Something of that kind is, doubtless, referred to here; and John probably means to say that he saw the thrones placed on which those will sit who will be employed in judging the world. If the apostles are specially referred to, it was natural that John, eminent for modesty, should not particularly mention them, as he was one of them, and as the true allusion would be readily understood.

And judgment was given unto them - The power of pronouncing sentence in the case referred to was conferred on them, and they proceeded to exercise that power. This was not in relation to the whole race of mankind, but to the martyrs, and to those who, amidst many temptations and trials, had kept themselves pure. The sentence which is to be passed would seem to be that in consequence of which they are to be permitted to "live and reign with Christ a thousand years." The "form" of this expressed approval is that of a resurrection and judgment; whether this be the "literal" mode is another inquiry, and will properly be considered when the exposition of the passage shall have been given.

And I saw the souls of them - This is a very important expression in regard to the meaning of the whole passage. John says he saw "the souls" - not "the bodies." If the obvious meaning of this be the correct meaning; if he saw the "souls" of the martyrs, not the "bodies," this would seem to exclude the notion of a "literal" resurrection, and consequently overturn many of the theories of a literal resurrection, and of a literal reign of the saints with Christ during the thousand years of the millennium. The doctrine of the last resurrection, as everywhere stated in the Scripture, is, that the "body" will be raised up, and not merely that the "soul will live" (see Revelation 20:5-6, but there is not the slightest intheation that it would be a resurrection of the "body," or that it would be identical with the "final" resurrection. John undoubtedly intends to describe some honor conferred on the "spirits or souls" of the saints and martyrs during this long period, as if they were raised from the dead, or which might be represented by a resurrection from the dead. What that honor is to be, is expressed by their "living and reigning with Christ." The meaning of this will be explained in the exposition of these words; but the word used here is fatal to the notion of a literal resurrection and a personal reign with Christ on the earth.

That were beheaded - The word used here - πελεκίζω pelekizō- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means, "to axe," that is, to hew or cut with an axe - from πέλεκυς pelekus"axe." Hence it means to behead with an axe. This was a common mode of execution among the Romans, and doubtless many of the Christian martyrs suffered in this manner; but "it cannot be supposed to have been the intention of the writer to confine the rewards of martyrs to those who suffered in this particular way; for this specific and ignominious method of punishment is designated merely as the symbol of any and every kind of martyrdom" (Prof. Stuart).

For the witness of Jesus - As witnesses of Jesus; or bearing in this way their testimony to the truth of his religion. See the notes on Revelation 1:9; compare Revelation 6:9.

And for the Word of God - See the notes on Revelation 1:9. "Which had not worshipped the beast." Who had remained faithful to the principles of the true religion, and had resisted all the attempts made to seduce them from the faith, even the temptations and allurements in the times of the papacy. See this language explained in the notes on Revelation 13:4.

Neither his image - notes on Revelation 13:14-15.

Neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands - See the notes on Revelation 13:16.

And they lived - ἔζησαν ezēsanfrom ζάω zaō"to live." Very much, in the whole passage, depends on this word. The meanings given to the word by Prof. Robinson (*Lexicon*) are the following:

(a)to live, to have life, spoken of physical life and existence;

(b)to live, that is, to sustain life, to live on or by anything;

(c)to live in any way, to pass one's life in any manner;

(d)to live and prosper; to be blessed.

It may be applied to those who were before dead Matthew 9:18; Mark 16:11; Luke 24:23; John 5:25; Acts 1:3; Acts 9:41, but it does not necessarily imply this, nor does the mere use of the word "suggest" it. It is the proper notion of living, or having life "now," whatever was the former state - whether nonexistence, death, sickness, or health. The mind, in the use of this word, is fixed on the "present as a state of living." It is not necessarily in contrast with a former state "as dead," but it is on the fact that they are now alive. As, however, there is reference, in the passage before us, to the fact that a portion of those mentioned had been "beheaded for the witness of Jesus," it is to be admitted that the word here refers, in some sense, to that fact. They were put to death in the body, but their "souls" were now seen to be alive. They had not ceased to be, but they lived and reigned with Christ as if they had been raised up from the dead. And when this is said of the "souls" of those who were beheaded, and who were seen to reign with Christ, it cannot mean:

(a)that their "souls" came to life again, for there is no intimation that they had for a moment ceased to exist; nor,

(b)that they then became "immortal," for that was always true of them; nor,

(c)that there was any literal "resurrection of the body," as Prof. Stuart (2:360,475,476) supposes, and as is supposed by those who hold to a literal reign of Christ on the earth, for there is no intimation of the resurrection of the "body."

The meaning, then, so far as the language is concerned, must be, that there would exist, at the time of the thousand years, a state of things as if

the martyrs were raised up from the dead - an honoring of the martyrs as if they should live and reign with Christ. Their names would be vindicated; their principles would be revived; they would be exalted in public estimation above other men; they would be raised from the low rank in which they were held by the world in times of persecution to a state which might well be represented by their sitting with Christ on the throne of government, and by their being made visible attendants on his glorious kingdom.

This would not occur in respect to the rest of the dead - even the pious dead Revelation 20:5 - for "their" honors and rewards would be reserved for the great day when all the dead should be judged according to their deeds. In this view of the meaning of this passage there is nothing that forbids us to suppose that the martyrs will be "conscious" of the honor thus done to their names, their memory, and their principles on earth, or that this consciousness will increase their joy even in heaven. This sense of the passage is thus expressed, substantially, by Dr. Whately (Essays on the Future State): "It may signify not the literal raising of dead men, but the raising up of an increased Christian zeal and holiness; the revival in the Christian church, or in some considerable portion of it, of the "spirit and energy" of the noble martyrs of old (even as John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elias), so that Christian principles shall be displayed in action throughout the world in an infinitely greater degree than ever before."

This view of the signification of the word "lived" is sustained by its use elsewhere in the Scriptures and by its common use among people. Thus in this very book, Revelation 11:11; "And after three days and a half, the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet." So in Ezekiel, in speaking of the restoration of the Jews: "Thus saith the Lord God, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves," and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live," Ezekiel 37:12-14. So in Hosea 6:2; "After two days he will "revive" us (cause us to live again); in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall "live" in his sight." So in the parable of the prodigal son: "This thy brother was dead, and is alive again," Luke 15:32.

So in Isaiah 26:19; “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.” The following extract, from D‘Aubigne‘s “History of the Reformation,” will show how natural it is to use the very language employed here when the idea is intended to be conveyed of reviving former principles as if the people who held them should be raised to life again. It is the language of the martyr John Huss, who, in speaking of himself in view of a remarkable dream that he had, said, “I am no dreamer, but I maintain this for certain, that the image of Christ will never be effaced. They (his enemies) have wished to destroy it, but it shall be painted afresh in all hearts by much better preachers than myself. The nation that loves Christ will rejoice at this. And I, awaking from among the dead, and rising, so to speak, from my grave, shall leap with great joy.” So a Brief addressed by Pope Adrian to the Diet at Nuremberg contains these words: “The heretics Huss and Jerome are now alive again in the person of Martin Luther.” For a further illustration of the passage see the remarks which follow (section b) on the state of things which may be expected to exist in the time referred to in Revelation 20:4-6.

And reigned with Christ - Were exalted in their principles, and in their personal happiness in heaven, as if they occupied the throne with him, and personally shared his honors and his triumphs. Who can tell, also, whether they may not be employed in special services of mercy, in administering the affairs of his government during that bright and happy period?

A thousand years - During the period when Satan will be bound, and when the true religion will have the ascendency in the earth. See the notes on Revelation 20:2.

Verse 5

But the rest of the dead - In contradistinction from the beheaded martyrs, and from those who had kept themselves pure in the times of great temptation. The phrase “rest of the dead” here would most naturally refer to the “same general class” which was before mentioned - the pious dead. The meaning is, that the martyrs would be honored as if they were raised up and the others not - that is, that special respect would be shown to their principles, their memory, and their character. In other words, “special” honor would be shown “to a spirit of eminent piety” during that period above the “common and ordinary” piety which has been manifested in the church. The “rest of the dead” - the pious dead - would indeed be raised up

and rewarded, but they would occupy comparatively humble places, as if they did not partake in the exalted triumphs when the world should be subdued to the Saviour. Their places in honor, in rank, and in reward would be "beneath" that of those who in fiery times had maintained unshaken fidelity to the cause of truth.

Lived not - On the word "lived," see the notes on Revelation 20:4. That is, they "lived" not during that period in the special sense in which it is said Revelation 20:4 that the eminent saints and martyrs lived. They did not come into remembrance; their principles were not what then characterized the church; they did not see, as the martyrs did, their principles and mode of life in the ascendency, and consequently they had not the augmented happiness and honor which the more eminent saints and martyrs had.

Until the thousand years were finished - Then all who were truly the children of God, though some might be less eminent than others had been, would come into remembrance, and would have their proper place in the rewards of heaven. The "language" here is not necessarily to be interpreted as meaning that they would be raised up then, or would live then, whatever may be true on that point. It is merely an emphatic mode of affirming that "up to float period they would not live" in the sense in which it is affirmed that the others would. But it is not affirmed that they would even then "live" immediately. A "long" interval might elapse before that would occur in the general resurrection of the dead. See the Analysis of the chapter.

This is the first resurrection - The resurrection of the saints and martyrs, as specified in Revelation 20:4. It is called the "first" resurrection in contradistinction from the second and last - the general resurrection - when all the dead will be "literally" raised up from their graves and assembled for the judgment, Revelation 20:12. It is not necessary to suppose that what is called here the "first resurrection" will resemble the real and literal resurrection in every respect. All that is meant is, that there will be such a resemblance as to make it proper to call it a resurrection - a coming to life again. This will be, as explained in the notes on Revelation 20:4, in the honor done to the martyrs, in the restoration of their principles as the great actuating principles of the church, and perhaps in the increased happiness conferred on them in heaven, and in their being employed in promoting the cause of truth in the world.

Verse 6

Blessed - That is, his condition is to be regarded as a happy or a favored one. This is designed apparently to support and encourage those who, in the time of John, suffered persecution, or who might suffer persecution afterward.

And holy - That is, no one will be thus honored who has not an established character for holiness. Holy principles will then reign, and none will be exalted to that honor who have not a character for eminent sanctity.

That hath part in the first resurrection - That participated in it; that is, who is associated with those who are thus raised up.

On such the second death hath no power - The "second death" is properly the death which the wicked will experience in the world of woe. See Revelation 20:14. The meaning here is, that all who are here referred to as having part in the first resurrection will be secure against that. It will be one of the blessed privileges of heaven that there will be absolute security against death in any and every form; and when we think of what death is here, and still more when we think of "the bitter pains of the second death," we may well call that state "blessed" in which there will be eternal exemption from either.

But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him - notes at Revelation 1:6; Revelation 5:10.

Section b. - Condition of the world in the period referred to in Revelation 20:4-6.

I. It is well known that this passage is the principal one which is relied on by those who advocate the doctrine of the literal reign of Christ on the earth for a thousand years, or who hold what are called the doctrines of the "second advent." The points which are maintained by those who advocate these views are substantially:

(a)that at that period Christ will descend from heaven to reign personally upon the earth;

(b)that he will have a central place of power and authority, probably Jerusalem;

(c)that the righteous dead will then be raised, in such bodies as are to be immortal;

(d)that they will be his attendants, and will participate with him in the government of the world;

(e)that this will continue during the period of a thousand years;

(f)that the world will be subdued and converted during this period, not by moral means, but by “a new dispensation” - by the power of the Son of God; and,

(g)that at the close of this period all the remaining dead will be raised, the judgment will take place, and the affairs of the earth will be consummated.

The opinion here adverted to was held substantially by Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and others among the Christian fathers, and, it need not be said, is held by many modern expositors of the Bible, and by large numbers of Christian ministers of high standing, and other Christians. See the “Literalist, passim.” The opinion of the Christian fathers, with which the modern “literalists,” as they are called, substantially coincide, is thus stated by Mr. Elliott: “This resurrection is to be literally that of departed saints and martyrs, then at length resuscitated in the body from death and the grave; its time to synchronize with, or follow instantly after, the destruction of the beast antichrist, on Christ‘s personal second advent; the “binding” of Satan to be an absolute restriction of the power of hell from tempting, deceiving, or injuring mankind, throughout a literal period of a thousand years, thence calculated; the “government of the earth” during its continuance to be administered by Christ and the risen saints - the latter being now ἰσάγγελοι isangeloi- in nature like angels; and under it, all false religion having been put down, the Jews and saved remnant of the Gentiles been converted to Christ, the earth renovated by the fire of antichrist‘s destruction, and Jerusalem made the universal capital, there will be a realization on earth of the blessedness depicted in the Old Testament prophecies, as well as perhaps of that too which is associated with the New Jerusalem in the visions of the Apocalypse - until at length this millennium having ended, and Satan gone forth to deceive the nations, the final consummation will follow; the new-raised enemies of the saints, Gog and Magog, be destroyed by fire from heaven: and then the general resurrection and judgment take place, the devil and his servants be cast into the lake of

fire, and the millennial reign of the saints extend itself into one of eternal duration" (Elliott on the Apocalypse, iv. 177,178).

Mr. Elliott's own opinion, representing, it is supposed, that of the great body of the "literalists," is thus expressed: "It would seem, therefore, that in this state of things and of feeling in professing Christendom (a feeling of carnal security), all suddenly, and unexpectedly, and conspicuous over the world as the lightning that shineth from the east even unto the west, the second advent and appearing of Christ will take place; that at the accompanying voice of the archangel and trump of God, the departed saints of either dispensation will rise from their graves to meet him - alike patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and confessors - all at once and in the twinkling of an eye; and then instantly the saints living at the time will be also caught up to meet him in the air; these latter being separated out of the ungodly nations, as when a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats, and all, both dead and living saints, changed at the moment from corruption to incorruption, from dishonor to glory, though with very different degrees of glory; and so in a new angelic nature, to take part in the judging and ruling in this world.

Meanwhile, with a tremendous earthquake accompanying, of violence unknown since the revolutions of primeval chaos, an earthquake under which the Roman world at least is to rock to and fro like a drunken man, the solid crust of this earth shall be broken, and fountains burst forth from its inner deep, not as once of water, but of liquid fire; and that the flames shall consume the antichrist and his confederate kings, while the sword also does its work of slaughter; the risen saints being perhaps the attendants of the Lord's glory in this destruction of antichrist, and assessors in his judgment on a guilty world. And then immediately the renovation of this our earth is to take place, its soil being purified by the very action of the fire, and the Spirit poured out from on high, to renew, in a yet better sense, the moral face of nature; the Shekinah, or personal glory of Christ amidst his saints, being manifested chiefly in the Holy Land and at Jerusalem, but the whole earth partaking of the blessedness; and thus the regeneration of all things, and the world's redemption from the curse, having their accomplishment, according to the promise, at the manifestation of the sons of God," 4:224-231.

To this account of the prevailing opinion of the "literalists" in interpreting the passage before us, there should be added that of Prof. Stuart, who, in general, is as far as possible from sympathizing with this class of writers. He says, in his explanation of the expression "they lived," in Revelation 20:4, "There would seem to remain, therefore, only one meaning which can be consistently given to ἔζησαν ezēsan(they lived); namely, that they (the martyrs who renounced the beast) are now "restored to life," namely, such life as implies the vivification of the body. Not to a union of the soul with a gross material body indeed, but with such an one as the saints in general will have at the final resurrection - a spiritual body, 1 Corinthians 15:44. In no other way can this resurrection be ranked as "correlate" with the second resurrection named in the sequel," vol. ii. p. 360. So again, Excursus vi. (vol. ii. p. 476), he says, "I do not see how we can, on the ground of exegesis, fairly avoid the conclusion that John has taught in the passage before us, that there will be a resurrection of the martyr-saints, at the commencement of the period after Satan shall have been shut up in the dungeon of the great abyss." This opinion he defends at length, pp. 476-490. Prof. Stuart, indeed, maintains that the martyrs thus raised up will be taken to heaven and reign with Christ "there," and opposes the whole doctrine of the literal reign on the earth, vol. ii. p. 480. The risen saints and martyrs are to be "enthroned with Christ; that is, they are to be where he dwells, and where he will continue to dwell, until he shall make his descent at the final judgment day."

II. In regard to these views, as expressive of the meaning of the passage under consideration, I would make the following remarks:

(1) There is strong "presumptive" evidence against this interpretation, and especially against the main point in the doctrine, that there will be a literal "resurrection" of the bodies of the saints at the beginning of that millennial period, to live and reign with Christ on earth, from the following circumstances:

(a) It is admitted, on all hands, that this doctrine, if contained in the Scriptures at all, is found in this one passage only. It is not pretended that there is, in any other place, a direct affirmation that this will literally occur, nor would the advocates for that opinion undertake to show that it is fairly

implied in any other part of the Bible. But it is strange, not to say improbable, that the doctrine of the literal resurrection of the righteous, a thousand years before the wicked, should be announced in one passage only. If it were so announced in plain and unambiguous language, I admit that the believer in the divine origin of the Scriptures would be bound to receive it; but this is so contrary to the usual method of the Scriptures on all great and important doctrines, that this circumstance should lead us at least to doubt whether the passage is correctly interpreted. The resurrection of the dead is a subject on which the Saviour often dwelt in his instructions; it is a subject which the apostles discussed very frequently and at great length in their preaching, and in their writings; it is presented by them in a great variety of forms, for the consolation of Christians in time of trouble, and with reference to the condition of the world at the winding up of human affairs; and it is strange that, in respect to so important a doctrine as this, if it be true, there is not elsewhere, in the New Testament, a hint, an intheation, an allusion, that would lead us to suppose that the righteous are to be raised in this manner.

(b) If this is a true doctrine, it would be reasonable to expect that a clear and unambiguous statement of it would be made. Certainly, if there is but one statement on the subject, that might be expected to be a perfectly clear one, it would be a statement about which there could be no diversity of opinion, concerning which those who embraced it might be expected to hold the same views. But it cannot be pretended that this is so in regard to this passage. It occurs in the book which, of all the books in the Bible, is most distinguished for figures and symbols; it cannot be maintained that it is “directly and clearly” affirmed; and it is not so taught that there is any uniformity of view among those who profess to hold it. In nothing has there been greater diversity among people than in the opinions of those who profess to hold the “literal” views respecting the personal reign of Christ on the earth. But this fact assuredly affords “presumptive” evidence that the doctrine of the literal resurrection of the saints a thousand years before the rest of the dead, is not intended to be taught.

(c) It is presumptive proof against this, that nothing is said of the employment of those who are raised up; of the reason why they are raised; of the new circumstances of their being; and of their condition when the

thousand years shall have ended. In so important a matter as this, we can hardly suppose that the whole subject would be left to a single hint in a symbolical representation, depending on the doubtful meaning of a single word, and with nothing to enable us to determine, with absolute certainty, that this must be the meaning.

(d) If it be meant that this is a description of the resurrection of the "righteous" as such - embracing all the righteous - then it is wholly unlike all the other descriptions of the resurrection of the righteous that we have in the Bible. Here the account is confined to "those that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus," and to "those who had not worshipped the beast." If the righteous, as such, are here referred to, why are these particular classes specified? Why are not the usual general terms employed? Why is the account of the resurrection confined to these? Elsewhere in the Scriptures, the account of the resurrection is given in the most "general" terms (compare Matthew 25:41; John 4:54; John 5:28-29; Revelation 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:23; Philemon 3:20-21; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Hebrews 9:28; 1 John 2:28-29; 1 John 3:2); and if this had been the designed reference here, it is inconceivable why the statement should be limited to the martyrs, and to those who have evinced great fidelity in the midst of temptations and allurements to apostasy. These circumstances furnish strong "presumptive" proofs, at least, against the doctrine that there is to be a literal resurrection of all the saints at the beginning of the millennial period. Compare "Christ's Second Coming," by David Brown, p. 219ff.

(2) In reference to many of the views necessarily implied in the doctrine of the "second advent," and avowed by those who hold that doctrine, it cannot be pretended that they receive any countenance or support from this passage. In the language of Prof. Stuart (Com. vol. ii. p. 479), there is "not a word of Christ's descent to the earth at the beginning of the millennium. Nothing of the literal assembling of the Jews in Palestine; nothing of the Messiah's temporal reign on earth; nothing of the overflowing abundance of worldly peace and plenty." Indeed, in all this passage, there is not the remotest hint of the grandeur and magnificence of the reign of Christ as a literal king upon the earth; nothing of his having a splendid capital at Jerusalem, or anywhere else; nothing of a new dispensation of a miraculous kind; nothing of the renovation of the earth to fit it for the abode of the risen

saints. All this is the mere work of fancy, and no man can pretend that it is to be found in this passage.

(3) nor is there anything here of a literal resurrection of the "bodies" of the dead, as Prof. Stuart himself supposes. It is not a little remarkable that a scholar so accurate as Prof. Stuart is, and one, too, who has so little sympathy with the doctrines connected with a literal reign of Christ on the earth, should have lent the sanction of his name to perhaps the most objectionable of all the dogmas connected with that view - the opinion that the "bodies" of the saints will be raised up at the beginning of the millennial period. Of this there is not one word, one intimation, one hint, in the passage before us. John says expressly, "and as if to guard the point from all possible danger of this construction," that he "saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus"; he saw them "living" and "reigning" with Christ - raised to the exalted honor during that period, as if they had been raised from the dead; but he nowhere mentions or intimates that they were raised up from their graves; that they were clothed with bodies; that they had their residence now literally on the earth; or that they were, in any way, otherwise than disembodied spirits. There is not even one word of their having "a spiritual body."

(4) there are "positive" arguments, which are perfectly decisive, against the interpretation which supposes that the bodies of the saints will be raised up at the beginning of the millennial period, to reign with Christ on the earth for a thousand years. Among these are the following:

(a) If the "first resurrection" means rising from the grave in immortal and glorified bodies, we do not need the assurance Revelation 20:6, that on such the second death hath no power"; that is, that they would not perish forever. That would be a matter of course, and there was no necessity for such a statement. But if it be supposed that the main idea is that the "principles" of the martyrs and of the most eminent saints would be revived and would live, as if the dead were raised up, and would be manifested by those who were in "mortal" bodies - people living on the earth - then there would be a propriety in saying that all such were exempt from the danger of the "second" death. "Once," indeed, they would die; but the "second" death could not reach them. Compare Revelation 2:10-11.

(b) In the whole passage there are but two classes of people referred to. There are those "who have part in the first resurrection"; that is, according to the supposition, all the saints; and there are those over whom "the second death" has power. Into which of these classes are we to put the myriads of people having flesh and blood who are to people the world during the millennium? They have no part in "the first resurrection," if it be a bodily one. Are they then given over to the power of the "second death?" But if the "first resurrection" be regarded as figurative and spiritual, then the statement that those who are actuated by the spirit of the martyrs and of the eminent saints, shall not experience the "second death," is seen to have meaning and pertinency.

(c) The mention of the "time" during which they are to reign, if it be literally understood, is contrary to the whole statement of the Bible in other places. They are to "live and reign with Christ" "a thousand years." What, then? Are they to live no longer? Are they to reign no longer with him? This supposition is entirely contrary to the current statement in the Scriptures, which is, that they are to live and reign with him forever: 1 Thessalonians 4:17, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." According to the views of the "literalists," the declaration that they "should live and reign with Christ," considered as the characteristic features of the millennial state, is to terminate with the thousand years - for this is the promise, according to that view, that they should thus live and reign. But it need not be said that this is wholly contrary to the current doctrine of the Bible, that they are to live and reign with him forever.

(d) A further objection to this view is, that the wicked part of the world - "the rest of the dead who lived not again until the thousand years were finished" - must of course be expected to "live again" in the same bodily sense wheat those thousand years were finished. But, so far from this, there is no mention of their living then. When the thousand years are finished, Satan is loosed for a season; then the nations are roused to opposition against God; then there is a conflict, and the hostile forces are overthrown; and then comes the final judgment. During all this time we read of no resurrection at all. The period after this is to be filled up with something besides the resurrection of the "rest of the dead." There is no intheation, as

the “literal” construction, as it is claimed, would demand, that immediately after the “thousand years arc finished” the “rest of the dead” - the wicked dead - would be raised up; nor is there any intimation of such a resurrection until all the dead are raised up for the final trial, Revelation 20:12. But every consideration demands, if the interpretation of the “literalists” be correct, that the “rest of the dead” - the unconverted dead - should be raised up immediately after the close of the millennial period, and be raised up as a distinct and separate class.

(e) There is no intimation in the passage itself that the “righteous” will be raised up “as such” in this period, and the proper interpretation of the passage is contrary to that supposition. There are but two classes mentioned as having part in the first resurrection. They are those who were “beheaded for the witness of Jesus,” and those who “had not worshipped the beast” - that is, the martyrs, and those who had been eminent for their fidelity to the Saviour in times of great temptation and trial. There is no mention of the resurrection of the righteous as “such” - of the resurrection of the great body of the redeemed; and if it could be shown that this refers to a “literal” resurrection, it would be impossible to apply it, according to any just rules of interpretation, to anymore than the two classes that are specified. By what rules of interpretation is it made to to teach that “all” the righteous will be raised up on that occasion, and will live on the earth during that long period? In this view of the matter, the passage “does not” express the doctrine that the whole church ofi God will be raised bodily from the grave. And supposing it had been the design of the Spirit of God to teach this, is it credible, when there are so many clear expressions in regard to the resurrection of the dead, that so important a doctrine should have been reserved for one single passage so obscure, and where the great mass of the readers of the Bible in all ages have failed to perceive it? That is not the way in which, in the Scriptures, great and momentous doctrines are communicated to mankind.

(f) The fair statement in Revelation 20:11-15 is, that all the dead will then be raised up and be judged. This is implied in the general expressions there used - “the dead, small and great”; the “book of life was opened” - as if not opened before; “the dead” - all the dead - “were judged out of those things which were written in the books”; “the sea gave up the dead which

were in it, and death and hell (hades) delivered up the dead which were in them." This is entirely inconsistent with the supposition that a large part of the race to wit, all the righteous - had been before raised up; had passed the solemn judgment; had been clothed with their immortal bodies, and had been admitted to a joint reign with the Saviour on his throne. In the last judgment what place are they to occupy? In what sense are they to be raised up and judged? Would such a representation have been made as is found in Revelation 20:11-15, if it had been designed to teach that a large part of the race had been already raised up, and had received the approval of their judge?

(g) This representation is wholly inconsistent, not only with Revelation 20:11-15, but with the uniform language of the Scriptures, "that all the righteous and the wicked will be judged together, and both at the coming of Christ." On no point are the statements of the Bible more uniform and explicit than on this, and it would seem that the declarations had been of design so made that there should be no possibility of mistake. I refer for full proof on this point to the following passages of the New Testament: Matthew 10:32-33, compared with Matthew 7:21-23; Matthew 13:30, Matthew 13:38-43; Matthew 16:24-27; Matthew 25:10,31-46; Mark 8:38; John 5:28-29; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:5-16; Romans 14:10, Romans 14:12; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:9-11; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; 1 Timothy 5:24-25; 2 Peter 3:7, 2 Peter 3:10, 2 Peter 3:12; 1 John 2:28; 1 John 4:17; Revelation 3:5; Revelation 20:11-15; Revelation 22:12-15. It is utterly "impossible" to explain these passages on any other supposition than that they are intended to teach that the righteous and the wicked will be judged together, and both at the coming of Christ. And if this is so, it is of course impossible to explain them consistently with the view that all the righteous will have been already raised up at the beginning of the millennium in their immortal and glorified bodies, and that they have been solemnly approved by the Saviour, and admitted to a participation in his glory. Nothing could be more irreconcilable than these two views; and it seems to me, therefore, that the objections to the literal resurrection of the saints at the beginning of the millennial period are insuperable.

III. The following points, then, according to the interpretation proposed, are implied in this statement respecting the “first resurrection,” and these will clearly comprise all that is stated on the subject:

(1) There will be a reviving, and a prevalence of the spirit which actuated the saints in the best days, and a restoration of their principles as the grand principles which will control and govern the church, as if the most eminent saints were raised again from the dead, and lived and acted upon the earth.

(2) their memory will then be sacredly cherished, and they will be honored on the earth with the honor which is due to theft names, and which they should have received when in the land of the living. They will be no longer cast out and reproached; no longer held up to obloquy and scorn; no longer despised and forgotten; but there will be a reviving of sacred regard for their principles, as if they lived on the earth, and had the honor which was due to them.

(3) there will be a state of things upon the earth as if they thus lived and were thus honored. Religion will no longer be trampled under foot, but will triumph. In all parts of the earth it will have the ascendency, as if the most eminent saints of past ages lived and reigned with the Son of God in his kingdom. A spiritual kingdom will be set up with the Son of God at the head of it, which will be a kingdom of eminent holiness, as if the saints of the best days of the church should come back to the earth and dwell upon it. The ruling influence in the world will be the religion of the Son of God, and the principles which have governed the most holy of his people.

(4) it may be implied that the saints and martyrs of other times will be employed by the Saviour in embassies of mercy; in visitations of grace to our world to carry forward the great work of salvation on earth. Nothing forbids the idea that the saints in heaven may be thus employed, and in this long period of a thousand years, it may be that they will be occupied in such messages and agencies of mercy to our world as they have never been before - as if they were raised from the dead, and were employed by the Redeemer to carry forward his purposes of mercy to mankind.

(5) in connection with these things, and in consequence of these things, they may be, during that period, exalted to higher happiness and honor in heaven. The restoration of their principles to the earth; the Christian remembrance of their virtues; the prevalence of those truths to establish which they laid down their lives, would in itself exalt them, and would increase their joy in heaven. All this would be well represented, in vision, by a resurrection of the dead; and admitting that this was all that was intended, the representation of John here would be in the highest degree appropriate. What could better symbolize it - and we must remember that this is a symbol - than to say that at the commencement of this period there was, as it were, a solemn preparation for a judgment, and that the departed dead seemed to stand there, and that a sentence was pronounced in their favor, and that they became associated with the Son of God in the honors of his kingdom, and that their principles were now to reign and triumph in the earth, and that the kingdom which they labored to establish would be set up for a thousand years, and that, in high purposes of mercy and benevolence during that period, they would be employed in maintaining and extending the principles of religion in the world? Admitting that the Holy Spirit intended to represent these things, and these only, no more appropriate symbolical language could have been used; none that would more accord with the general style of the Book of Revelation.

Verse 7

And when the thousand years are expired - See Revelation 20:2.

Satan shall be loosed out of his prison - See Revelation 20:3. That is, a state of things will then occur as if Satan should be for a time let loose again, and should be permitted to go as formerly over the world. No intimation is given "why or how" he would be thus released from his prison. We are not, however, to infer that it would be a mere arbitrary act on the part of God. All that is necessary to be supposed is, that there would be, in certain parts of the world, a temporary outbreak of wickedness, as if Satan were for a time released from his chains.

Verse 8

And shall go out to deceive the nations - See the notes on Revelation 12:9. The meaning here is, that he would again, for a time, act in his true character, and in some way delude the nations once more. In what way this would be done is not stated. It would be, however, clearly an appeal to the

wicked passions of mankind, exciting a hope that they might yet overthrow the kingdom of God on the earth.

Which are in the four quarters of the earth - Literally, corners of the earth, as if the earth were one extended square plain. The earth is usually spoken of as divided into four parts or quarters - the eastern, the western, the northern, and the southern. It is implied here that the deception or apostasy referred to would not be confined to one spot or portion of the world, but would extend afar. The idea seems to be, that during that period, though there would be a "general" prevalence of the gospel, and a "general" diffusion of its blessings, yet that the earth would not be entirely under its influence, and especially that the native character of the human heart would not be changed. Man, under powerful temptations, would be liable to be deluded by the great master spirit that has so often corrupted the race. Once more he would be permitted to make the trial, and then his power would forever come to an end.

Gog and Magog - The name "Gog" occurs as the name of a prince in Ezekiel 38:2-3, Ezekiel 38:16, Ezekiel 38:18; Ezekiel 39:1, Ezekiel 39:11. "He is an invader of the land of Israel, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal," Ezekiel 38:2. "Magog" is also mentioned in Ezekiel 38:2, "the land of Magog"; and in Ezekiel 39:6, "I will send a fire on Magog." As the terms are used in the Old Testament, the representation would seem to be that "Gog" was the king of a people called "Magog." The signification of the names is unknown, and consequently nothing can be determined about the meaning of this passage from that source. Nor is there much known about the "people" who are referred to by Ezekiel. His representation would seem to be, that a great and powerful people, dwelling in the extreme recesses of the north Ezekiel 38:15; Ezekiel 39:2, would invade the Holy Land after the return from the exile, Ezekiel 38:8-12. It is commonly supposed that they were Scythians, residing between the Caspian and Euxine Seas, or in the region of Mount Caucasus. Thus Josephus (*Ant* Ezekiel 1:6, Ezekiel 1:3) has dropped the Hebrew word Magog, and rendered it by Σκύθαι Skuthai- "Scythians"; and so does Jerome. Suidas renders it Persai- Persians; but this does not materially vary the view, since the word "Scythians," among the ancient writers, is a collective word, to denote all the northeastern, unknown, barbarous tribes.

Among the Hebrews, the name "Magog" also would seem to denote all the unknown barbarous tribes about the Caucasian mountains. The fact that

the names Gog and Magog are, in Ezekiel, associated with Meshech and Tubal, seems to determine the locality of these people, for those two countries lie between the Euxine and Caspian Seas, or at the southeast extremity of the Euxine Sea (Rosenmuller, Bib. Geog. vol. 1, p. 240). The people of that region were, it seems, a terror to Middle Asia, in the same manner as the Scythians were to the Greeks and Romans. Intercourse with such distant and savage nations was scarcely possible in ancient times; and hence, from their numbers and strength, they were regarded with great terror, just as the Scythians were regarded by the ancient Greeks and Romans, and as the Tartars were in the middle ages. In this manner they became an appropriate symbol of rude and savage people; of enemies fierce and warlike; of foes to be dreaded; and as such they were referred to by both Ezekiel and John. It has been made a question whether Ezekiel and John do not refer to the same period, but it is not necessary to consider that question here.

All that is needful to be understood is, that John means to say that at the time referred to there would be formidable enemies of the church who might be compared with the dreaded dwellers in the land of Magog; or, that after this long period of millennial tranquility and peace, there would be a state of things which might be properly compared with the invasion of the Holy Land by the dreaded barbarians of Magog or Scythia. It is not necessary to suppose that any particular "country" is referred to, or that there would be any one portion of the earth which the gospel would not reach, and which would be still barbarous, pagan, and savage; all that is necessary to be supposed is, that though religion would generally prevail, human nature would remain essentially corrupt and unchanged; and that, therefore, from causes which are not stated, there might yet be a fearful apostasy, and a somewhat general prevalence of iniquity. This would be nothing more than has occurred after the most favored times in the church, and nothing more than human nature would exhibit at any time, if all restraints were withdrawn, and people were suffered to act out their native feelings. "Why" this will be permitted; what causes will bring it about; what subordinate agencies will be employed, is not said, and conjecture would be vain. The reader who wishes more information in regard to Gog and Magog may consult Prof. Stuart on this book, vol. 2, pp. 364-368, and the authorities there referred to. Compare especially Rosenmuller on Ezekiel

38:2. See also Sale's "Koran," Pre. Dis. section 4, and the "Koran" itself, Sura 18:94 and 21:95.

To gather them together to battle - As if to assemble them for war; that is, a state of things would exist in regard to the kingdom of God and the prevalence of the true religion as if distant and barbarous nations should be aroused to make war on the church of God. The meaning is, that there would be an awakened hostility against the kingdom of Christ in the earth. See the notes on Revelation 16:14.

The number of whom is as the sand of the sea - A common comparison in the Scriptures to denote a great multitude, Genesis 22:17; Genesis 32:12; Genesis 41:49; 1 Samuel 13:5; 1 Kings 4:20, et al.

Section c. - Condition of things in the period referred to in Revelation 20:7-8;

(1) This will occur "at the close" of the millennial period - the period of the thousand years. It is not said, indeed, that it would be "immediately" after that; but the statement is explicit that it will be "after" that, or "when the thousand years are expired." There may be an interval before it shall be accomplished of an indefinite time; the alienation and corruption may be gradual; a considerable period may elapse before the apostasy shall assume an organized form, or, in the language of John, before the hosts shall "be gathered to battle," but it is to be the "next" marked and prominent event in the history of the world, and is to precede the final consummation of all things.

(2) this will be a "brief period." Compared with the long period of prosperity that preceded it, and "perhaps" compared with the long period that shall follow it before the final judgment, it will be short. Thus, in Revelation 20:3, it is said that Satan "must be loosed a little season." See the notes on that verse. There is no way of determining the time with exactness; but we are assured that it will not be long.

(3) what will be the exact state of things then can be only a matter of conjecture. We may say, however, that it will not be:

(a)necessarily "war." The language is figurative and symbolical, and it is not necessary to suppose that an actual and bloody warfare will be literally waged against the church. Nor,

(b)will there be a literal invasion of the land of Palestine as the residence of the saints and the capital of the Redeemer‘s visible empire, for there is not a hint of this - not a word to justify such an interpretation. Nor,

(c)is it necessary to suppose that there will be literally such nations as will be then called “Gog and Magog,” for this language is figurative, and designed to characterize the foes of the church - as being in some respects formidable and terrible as were those ancient nations.

We may thus suppose that at that time, from causes which are unexplained, there will be:

(a)arevived opposition to the truths of religion;

(b)the prevalence, to a greater or less extent, of infidelity;

(c)agreat spiritual declension;

(d)acombination of interests opposed to the gospel;

(e)possibly some new form of error and delusion that shall extensively prevail.

Satan may set up some new form of religion, or he may breathe into those that may already exist: a spirit of worldliness and vanity - some new manifestation of the religion of forms - that shall for a limited period produce a general decline and apostasy. As there is, however, no distinct specification of what will characterize the world at that time it is impossible to determine what is referred to anymore than in this general manner.

(4) A few remarks may, however, be made on the “probability” of what is here affirmed, for it seems contrary to what we should suppose would be the characteristics of the closing period of the world. The following remarks, then, may show that this anticipated state of things is not improbable:

(a) We are to remember that human nature will then be essentially the same as now. There is no intimation that man, as born into the world, will be then different from what he is now, or that any of the natural corrupt tendencies of the human heart will be changed. People will be “liable” to the same outbreaks of passion, to be influenced by the same forms of temptation, to fall into the same degeneracy and corruption, to feel the same

unhappy influences of success and prosperity as now, for all this pertains to a fallen "nature," except as it is checked and controlled by grace. We often mistake much in regard to the millennial state by supposing that all the evils of the apostasy will be arrested and that the nature of man will be as wholly changed as it will be in the heavenly world.

(b) The whole history of the church has shown that there is a liability to "declension" even in the best state and in the condition of the highest spiritual prosperity. To see this we have only to remember the example of the Hebrews, and how readily they apostatized after the most striking manifestation of the divine mercies; the early Christian church, and how soon it declined; the seven churches of Asia Minor, and how soon their spirituality departed; the various revivals of religion that have occurred from time to time, and how soon they have been succeeded by coldness, worldliness, and error; the fact that great religious denominations, which have begun their career with zeal and love, have so soon degenerated in spirit, and fallen into the same formality and worldliness which they have evinced who have gone before them; and the case of the individual Christian, who from the most exalted state of love and joy so soon often declines into a state of conformity to the world.

These are sad views of human nature, even under the influence of true religion; but the past history of man has given but too much occasion for such reflections, and too much reason to apprehend that the same things may occur, for a time, even under the best forms in which religion may manifest itself in a fallen world. Man's nature will be better in heaven, and religion there, in its purest and best form, will be permanent; here we are not to be surprised at any outbreak of sin or any form of declension in religion. What has often occurred in the world on a small scale we may suppose may then occur on a larger scale. "Just as on a small scale, in some little community like that of Northampton, as described by President Edwards, after the remarkable sense of God's presence over the whole town had begun to wax feeble, the still unconverted persons of it, though subdued and seemingly won over to Christ, would by little and little recover themselves, and at length venture forth in their true character; so it will be, in all probability, on a vast scale, at the close of the latter day. The unconverted portion of the world - long constrained by the religious

influences everywhere surrounding them to fall in with the spirit of the day, catching apparently its holy impulses, but never coming savingly under its power - this portion of mankind, which we have reason to fear will not be small, will now be freed from these irksome restraints, no longer obliged to breathe an atmosphere uncongenial to their nature" (Brown on the Seceded Coming of Christ, p. 442). "No oppression is so grievous to an unsanctified heart as that which arises from the purity of Christianity. A desire to shake off this yoke is the true cause of the opposition which Christianity has met with in the world in every period, and will, it is most likely, be the chief motive to influence the followers of Gog in his time" (Frazer's Key, p. 455).

(c) The representations of the New Testament elsewhere confirm this view in regard to the latter state of the world - the state when the Lord Jesus shall come to judgment. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8. "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" 2 Peter 3:3-4. "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape," 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3. See especially Luke 17:26-30; "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day wheat the Son of man is revealed."

Verse 9

And they went up on the breadth of the earth - They spread over the earth in extended columns. The image is that of an invading army that seems, in its march, to spread all over a land. The reference here is to the hosts assembled from the regions of Gog and Magog; that is, to the formidable enemies of the gospel that would be roused up at the close of the period properly called the "millennial" period - the period of the thousand years. It is not necessary to suppose that there would be "literally" armies of

enemies of God summoned from lands that would be called lands of "Gog and Magog"; but all that is necessarily implied is, that there will be a state of hostility to the church of Christ which would be well illustrated by such a comparison with an invading host of barbarians. The expression "the breadth of the land" occurs in Habakkuk 1:6, in a description. of the invasion of the Chaldeans, and means there "the whole extent of it"; that is, they would spread over the whole country.

And compassed the camp of the saints about - Besieged the camp of the saints considered as engaged in war, or as attacked by an enemy. The "camp of the saints" here seems to be supposed to be without the walls of the city; that is, the army was drawn out for defense. The fact that the foes were able to "compass this camp about," and to encircle the city at the same time, shows the greatness of the numbers of the invaders.

And the beloved city - Jerusalem - a city represented as beloved by God and by his people. The whole imagery here is derived from a supposed invasion of the land of Palestine - imagery than which nothing could be more natural to John in describing the hostility that would be aroused against the church in the latter day. But no just principle of interpretation requires us to understand this "literally." Compare Hebrews 12:22. Indeed, it would be absolutely "impossible" to give this chapter throughout a "literal" interpretation. What would be the "literal" interpretation of the very first verses? "I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the "key" of the bottomless pit, and "a great chain" in his hand; and he laid hold on the "dragon and bound" him." Can anyone believe that there is to be a literal "key," and a "chain," and an act of seizing a "serpent," and "binding" him? As little is it demanded that the passage before us should be taken "literally"; for if it is maintained that this should be, we may insist that the same principle of interpretation should be applied to every part of the chapter, and every part of the book.

And fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them - Consumed them - fire being represented as devouring or eating. See the notes on Revelation 17:16. The meaning is, that they would be destroyed as if fire should come down from heaven, as on Sodom and Gomorrah. But it is not necessary to understand this literally, anymore than it is the portions of the chapter just referred to. What is obviously meant is, that their destruction would be sudden, certain, and entire, and that thus the last enemy of God and the church would be swept away. Nothing can be

determined from this about the "means" by which this destruction will be effected; and that must be left for time to disclose. It is sufficient to know that the destruction of these last foes of God and the church will be certain and entire. This "language," as denoting the final destruction of the enemies of God, is often employed in the Scriptures. See Psalm 11:6; Isaiah 29:6; Ezekiel 38:22; Ezekiel 39:6.

Verse 10

And the devil that deceived them - See the notes on Revelation 20:3, Revelation 20:8.

Was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone - In Revelation 19:20, it is said of the beast and the false prophet that they were "cast alive into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone." Satan, on the other hand, instead of being doomed at once to that final ruin, was confined for a season in a dark abyss, Revelation 20:1-3. As the final punishment, however, he is appropriately represented as consigned to the same doom as the beast and the false prophet, that those great enemies of God, that had been associated and combined in deceiving the nations, might share the same appropriate punishment in the end. Compare Revelation 16:13-14.

Where the beast and the false prophet are - See the notes on Revelation 19:20.

And shall be tormented day and night forever - Compare the notes on Revelation 14:11. All the great enemies of the church are destroyed, and henceforward there is to be no array of hostile forces; no combination of malignant powers against the kingdom of God. The gospel triumphs; the way is prepared for the final consummation.

Section d. - Condition of things in the period referred to in Revelation 20:9-10;

(1) There will be, after the release of Satan, and of course at the close of the millennial period properly so called, a state of things which may be well represented by the invasion of a country by hostile, formidable forces. This, as shown in the exposition, need not be supposed to be literal; but it is implied that there will be decided hostility against the true religion. It may be an organization and consolidation, so to speak, of infidel principles, or a decided worldly spirit, or some prevalent form of error, or some new form of depravity that shall be developed by the circumstances of that age. What it will be it is impossible now to determine; but, as shown above (section c,

(4)), it is by no means improbable that this will occur even at the close of the millennium.

(2) there will be a decided defeat of these forces thus combined, "as if" fire should come down from heaven to destroy an invading army. The "mode" in which this will be done is not indeed stated, for there is no necessity of understanding the statement in Revelation 20:9 "literally," anymore than the other parts of the chapter. The fair inference, however, is that it will be by a manifest divine agency; that it will be sudden, and that the destruction will be entire. We have no reason, therefore, to suppose that the outbreak will be of long continuance, or that it will very materially disturb the settled order of human affairs on the earth - anymore than a formidable invasion of a country does, when the invading army is suddenly cut off by some terrible judgment from heaven.

(3) this overthrow of the enemies of God and of the church will be "final." Satan will be "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, to be tormented day and night forever." The beast and the false prophet are already there Revelation 19:20; that is, they will have ceased long since, even before the beginning of the millennial period (Revelation 19:20, compared with Revelation 20:1-3), to have opposed the progress of truth in the world, and their power will have been brought to an end. Satan now, the last enemy, will be doomed to the same hopeless woe; and all the enemies that have ever opposed the church - in all forms of paganism, Mohammedanism, Popery, and delusion - will be destroyed forever. The world then will have peace; the church will have rest; the great triumph will have been achieved.

(4) for reasons stated in the analysis of the chapter, 5. (c), it is possible that there will be a long period of continued prosperity and peace between the events stated in Revelation 20:9-10, and the final judgment, as described in Revelation 20:11-15. If so, however, the purpose of the book did not require that that should be described at length, and it must be admitted that the most "obvious" interpretation of the New Testament would not be favorable to such a supposition. Compare Luke 17:26-30; Luke 18:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 1 Thessalonians 5:3; 2 Peter 3:3-4. The great glory of the world will be the millennial period; when religion shall have the

ascendency and the race shall have reached its highest point of progress on earth, and the blessings of liberty, intelligence, peace, and piety, shall have during that period been spread over the globe. In that long duration, who can estimate the numbers that shah be redeemed and saved? That period passed, the great purpose contemplated by the creation of the earth - the glory of God in the redemption of a fallen race, and in setting up a kingdom of righteousness in a world of apostasy - will have been accomplished, and there will be no reason why the final judgment should not then occur. "The work of redemption will now be finished. The end for which the means of grace have been instituted shall be obtained. All the effect which was intended to be accomplished by them shall now be accomplished. All the great wheels of Providence have gone round all things are ripe for Christ's coming to judgment" (President Edwards' History of Redemption).

Verse 11

And I saw a great white throne - This verse commences the description of the final judgment, which embraces the remainder of the chapter. The first thing seen in the vision is the burning throne of the Judge. The things that are specified in regard to it are, that it was "great," and that it was "white." The former expression means that it was high or elevated. Compare Isaiah 6:1. The latter expression - white - means that it was "splendid or shining." Compare 1 Kings 10:18-20. The throne here is the same which is referred to in Matthew 25:31, and called there "the throne of his glory."

And him that sat on it - The reference here undoubtedly is to the Lord Jesus Christ, the final Judge of mankind (compare Matthew 25:31), and the scene described is what will occur at his second advent.

From whose face - Or, from whose presence; though the word may be used here to denote more strictly his face - as illuminated, and shining like the sun. See Revelation 1:16, "And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

The earth and the heaven fled away - That is, as the stars, at the rising of the sun, seem to flee to more remote regions, and vanish from human view, so when the Son of God shall descend in his glory to judge the world, the earth and all other worlds shall seem to vanish. Every one must admire the sublimity of this image; no one can contemplate it without being awed by the majesty and glory of the final Judge of mankind. Similar

expressions, where the natural creation shrinks back with awe at the presence of God, frequently occur in the Bible. Compare Psalm 18:7-15; Psalm 77:16-19; Psalm 114:3-5; Habakkuk 3:6, Habakkuk 3:10-11.

And there was found no place for them - They seemed to flee "entirely away," as if there was "no" place where they could find a safe retreat, or which would receive and shelter them in their flight. The image expresses, in the most emphatic manner, the idea that they entirely disappeared, and no language could more sublimely represent the majesty of the Judge.

Verse 12

And I saw the dead, small and great - All the dead - for this language would express that - the whole race being composed of the "small and great." Thus, in other language, the same idea might be expressed by saying, the young and old; the rich and poor; the bond and free; the sick and well; the happy and the unhappy; the righteous and the wicked; for all the human family might, in these respects, be considered as thus divided. The fair meaning in this place therefore is, that all the dead would be there, and of course this would preclude the idea of a "previous" resurrection of any part of the dead, as of the saints, at the beginning of the millennium. There is no intimation here that it is the wicked dead that are referred to in this description of the final judgment. It is the judgment of all the dead.

Stand before God - That is, they appear thus to be judged. The word "God" here must naturally refer to the final Judge on the throne, and there can be no doubt (see Matthew 25:31) that this is the Lord Jesus. Compare 2 Corinthians 5:10. None can judge the secrets of the heart; none can pronounce on the moral character of all mankind, of all countries and ages, and determine their everlasting allotment, but he who is divine.

And the books were opened - That is, the books containing the record of human deeds. The representation is, that all that people have done is recorded, and that it will be exhibited on the final trial, and will constitute the basis of the last judgment. The imagery seems to be derived from the accusations made against such as are arraigned before human courts of justice.

And another book was opened, which is the book of life - The book containing the record of the names of all who shall enter into life, or into heaven. See the notes on Revelation 3:5. The meaning here is, that John saw not only the general books opened containing the records of the deeds of

people, but that he had a distinct view of the list or roll of those who were the followers of the Lamb. It would seem that in regard to the multitudes of the impenitent and the wicked, the judgment will proceed "on their deeds" in general; in regard to the righteous, it will turn on the fact that their names had been enrolled in the book of life. That will be sufficient to determine the nature of the sentence that is to be passed on them. He will be safe whose name is found in the book of life; no one will be safe who is to have his eternal destiny determined by his own deeds. This passage proves particularly that the righteous dead are referred to here as being present at the final judgment; and is thus an additional argument against the supposition of a resurrection of the righteous, and a judgment on them, at the beginning of the millennium.

And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books - The records which had been made of their deeds. The final judgment will proceed on the record that has been made. It will not be arbitrary, and will not be determined by rank, condition, or profession, but it will be according to the record.

According to their works - See the notes on 2 Corinthians 5:10. The fact that the name of anyone was found in the book of life would seem, as above remarked, to determine the "certainty" of salvation; but the amount of reward would be in proportion to the service rendered to the Redeemer, and the attainments made in piety.

Verse 13

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it - All that had been buried in the depths of ocean. This number in the aggregate will be great. If we include all who were swept off by the flood, and all who have perished by shipwreck, and all who have been killed in naval battles and buried in the sea, and all who have been swept away by inundations of the ocean, and all who have peacefully died at sea, as sailors, or in the pursuits of commerce or benevolence, the number in the aggregate will be immense - a number so vast that it was proper to notice them particularly in the account of the general resurrection and the last judgment.

And death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them - That is, all the dead came, from all regions where they were scattered - on the land and in the ocean - in this world and in the invisible world. "Death and hell" are here personified, and are represented as having dominion over the dead, and as now "delivering" up, or "surrendering" those who were held

tinder them. On the meaning of the words used here, see the notes on Revelation 1:18; Revelation 6:8. Compare the Matthew 10:23 note; Job 10:21-22 notes; Isaiah 14:9 note. This whole representation is entirely inconsistent with the supposition that a large part of the dead had been already raised up at the beginning of the millennial period, and had been permitted, in their glorified bodies, to reign with Christ.

And they were judged, … - All these were judged - the righteous and the wicked; those buried at sea, and those buried on the land; the small and the great; the dead, in whatever world they may have been.

Verse 14

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire - Death and Hades (hell) are here personified, as they are in the previous verse. The declaration is equivalent to the statement in 1 Corinthians 15:26; "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." See the notes on that passage. The idea is, that death, considered as the separation of soul and body, with all the attendant woes, will exist no more. The righteous will live forever, and the wicked will linger on in a state never to be terminated by death. The reign of Death and Hades, as such, would come to an end, and a new order of things would commence where this would be unknown. There might be what would be properly called death, but it would not be death in this form; the soul would live forever, but it would not be in that condition represented by the word ᾅδης hadēs- "hades." There would be "death" still, but a "second death differs from the first, in the fact that it is not a separation of the soul and body, but a state of "continual agony" like what the first death inflicts - like that in intensity, but not in kind" (Prof. Stuart).

This is the second death - That is, this whole process here described - the condemnation, and the final death and ruin of those whose names are "not found written in the book of life" - properly constitutes the second death. This proves that when it is said that "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire," it cannot be meant that all punishment will cease forever, and that all will be saved, for the writer goes on to describe what he calls "the second death" as still existing. See Revelation 20:15. John describes this as the second death, not because it in all respects resembles the first death, but because it has so many points of resemblance that it may be properly called "death." Death, in any form, is the penalty of law; it is attended with pain; it cuts off from hope, from friends, from enjoyment; it subjects him who dies to a much-dreaded condition, and in all these respects it was proper to call

the final condition of the wicked "death" - though it would still be true that the soul would live. There is no evidence that John meant to affirm that the second death would imply an extinction of "existence." Death never does that; the word does not naturally and properly convey that idea.

Verse 15

And whosoever - All persons, of all ranks, ages, and conditions. No word could be more comprehensive than this. The single condition here stated, as being what would save any from being cast into the lake of fire, is, that they are "found written in the book of life." All besides these, princes, kings, nobles, philosophers, statesmen, conquerors; rich men and poor men; the bond and the free; the young and the aged; the frivolous, the vain, the proud, and the sober; the modest and the humble, will be doomed to the lake of fire. Unlike in all other things, they will be alike in the only thing on which their eternal destiny will depend - that they have not so lived that their names have become recorded in the book of life. As they will also be destitute of true religion, there will be a propriety that they shall share the same doom in the future world.

Written in the book of life - See the notes on Revelation 3:5.

Was cast into the lake of fire - See the notes on Matthew 25:41. That is, they will be doomed to a punishment which will be well represented by their lingering in a sea of fire forever. This is the termination of the judgment - the winding up of the affairs of men. The vision of John here rests for a moment on the doom of the wicked, and then turns to a more full contemplation of the happy lot of the righteous, as detailed in the two closing chapters of the book.

Section e. - Condition of things referred to in Revelation 20:11-15;

(1) There will be a general resurrection of the dead - of the righteous and the wicked. This is implied by the statement that the "dead, small and great," were seen to stand before God; that "the sea gave up the dead which were in it"; that "Death and Hades gave up their dead." All were there whose names were or were not written in the book of life.

(2) there will be a solemn and impartial judgment. How long a time this will occupy is not said, and is not necessary to be known - for time is of no consequence where there is an eternity of devotion - but it is said that they will be all judged "according to their works" - that is, strictly according to

their character. They will receive no arbitrary doom; they will have no sentence which will not be just. See Revelation 22:11.

(4) the wicked will be destroyed, in what may be properly called the "second" death. As remarked in the notes, this does not mean that this death will in all respects resemble the first death, but there will be so many points of resemblance that it will be proper to call it "death." It does not mean that they will be "annihilated," for "death" never implies that. The meaning is, that this will be a cutting off from what is properly called "life," from hope, from happiness, and from peace, and a subjection to pain and agony, which it will be proper to call "death" - death in the most fearful form; death that will continue for ever. No statements in the Bible are more clear than those which are made on this point; no affirmation of the eternal punishment of the wicked "could be" more explicit than those which occur in the sacred Scriptures. See the Matthew 25:46 note, and 2 Thessalonians 1:9 note.

(5) this will be the end of the woes and calamities produced in the kingdom of God by sin. The reign of Satan and of Death, so far as the Redeemer's kingdom is concerned, will be at an end and henceforward the church will be safe from all the arts and efforts of its foes. Religion will be triumphant, and the affairs of the universe be reduced to permanent order.

(6) the preparation is thus made for the final triumph of the righteous - the state to which all things tend. The writer of this book has conducted the prospective history through all the times of persecution which awaited the church, and stated the principal forms of error which would prevail, and foretold the conflicts through which the church would pass, and described its eventful history to the millennial period, and to the final triumph of truth and righteousness; and now nothing remains to complete the plan of the work but to give a rapid sketch of the final condition of the redeemed. This is done in the two following chapters, and with this the work is ended.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 21

Introduction

Analysis Of Revelation 21:1. The first heaven and the first earth passed away at the judgment Revelation 20:11-15, to be succeeded by a new heaven and earth suited to be the abode of the blessed.

II. A vision of the holy city - the New Jerusalem - descending from heaven, as the abode of the redeemed, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband - representing the fact that God would truly abide with men, Revelation 21:2-4. Now all the effects of the apostasy will cease; all tears will be wiped away, and in that blessed state there will be no more death, or sorrow, or pain. This contains the "general" statement of what will be the condition of the redeemed in the future world. God will be there; and all sorrow will cease.

III. A command to make a record of these things, Revelation 21:5.

IV. A general description of those who should dwell in that future world of blessedness, Revelation 21:6-8. It is for all who are athirst; for all who desire it, and long for it; for all who "overcome" their spiritual enemies, who maintain a steady conflict with sin, and gain a victory over it. But all who are fearful and unbelieving - all the abominable, and murderers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and liars - shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. That is, that world will be pure and holy.

V. A minute description of the city representing the happy abode of the redeemed, Revelation 21:11, Revelation 21:18, Revelation 21:21. It is bright and splendid - like a precious jasper-stone, clear as crystal, and composed of pure gold.

(2) its walls, Revelation 21:12, Revelation 21:18. The walls are represented as "great and high," and as composed of "jasper."

(3) its gates, Revelation 21:12-13, Revelation 21:21. The gates are twelve in number, three on each side; and are each composed of a single pearl.

(4) its foundations, Revelation 21:14, Revelation 21:18-20. There are twelve foundations, corresponding to the number of the apostles of the Lamb. They are all composed of precious stones - jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth, and amethyst.

(5) its size; Revelation 21:15-17. It is square - the length being as great as the breadth, and its height the same. The extent of each dimension is twelve thousand furlongs - a length on each side and in height of three hundred and seventy-five miles. It would seem, however, that though the "city" was of that height, the "wall" was only an hundred and forty-four cubits, or about two hundred and sixteen feet high. The idea seems to be that the city - the dwellings within it - towered high above the wall that was thrown around it for protection. This is not uncommon in cities that are surrounded by walls.

(6) its light, Revelation 21:23-24; Revelation 22:5. It has no need of the sun, or of the moon, or of a lamp Revelation 22:5 to lighten it; and yet there is no night there Revelation 22:5, for the glory of God gives light to it.

(7) it is a city without a temple, Revelation 21:22. There is no one place in it that is especially sacred, or where the worship of God will be exclusively celebrated. It will be all a temple, and the worship of God will be celebrated in all parts of it.

(8) it is always open, Revelation 21:25. There will be no need of closing it as walled cities on earth are closed to keep enemies out, and it will not be shut to prevent those who dwell there from going out and coming in when they please. The inhabitants will not be prisoners, nor will they be in danger, or be alarmed by the prospect of an attack from an enemy.

(9) its inhabitants will all be pure and holy, Revelation 21:27. There will in no wise enter there anything that defiles, or that works abomination, or that is false. They only shall dwell there whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

(10) its enclosures and environs, Revelation 22:1-2. A stream of water, pure as crystal, proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb. That stream flows through the city, and on its banks is the tree of life constantly bearing fruit - fruit to be partaken of freely. It is Paradise regained - a holy and beautiful abode, of which the garden of Eden was only an imperfect emblem, where there is no prohibition, as there was there, of anything that grows, and where there is no danger of falling into sin.

(11) it is a place free, consequently, from the curse that was pronounced on man when he forfeited the blessings of the first Eden, and when he was driven out from the happy abodes where God had placed him.

(12) it is a place where the righteous shall reign forever, Revelation 22:5. Death shall never enter there, and the presence and glory of God shall fill all with peace and joy.

Such is an outline of the figurative and glowing description of the future blessedness of the redeemed; the eternal abode of those who shall be saved. It is poetic and emblematical; but it is elevating, and constitutes a beautiful and appropriate close, not only of this single book, but of the whole sacred volume - for to this the saints are everywhere directed to look forward; this is the glorious termination of all the struggles and conflicts of the church; this is the result of the work of redemption in repairing the evils of the fall, and in bringing man to more than the bliss which he lost in Eden. The mind rests with delight on this glorious prospect; the Bible closes, as a revelation from heaven should, in a manner that calms down every anxious feeling; that fills the soul with peace, and that leads the child of God to look forward with bright anticipations, and to say, as John did, "Come, Lord Jesus," Revelation 22:20.

Verse 1

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth - Such a heaven and earth that they might properly be called new; such transformations, and such changes in their appearance, that they seemed to be just created. He does not say that they were created now, or anew; that the old heavens and earth were annihilated; but all that he says is, that there were such changes that they seemed to be new. If the earth is to be renovated by fire, such a

renovation will give an appearance to the globe as if it were created anew, and might be attended with such an apparent change in the heavens that they might be said to be new. The description here Revelation 21:1 relates to scenes after the general resurrection and the judgment - for those events are detailed in the close of the previous chapter. In regard to the meaning of the language here, see the notes on 2 Peter 3:13. Compare, also, "The Religion of Geology and its Connected Sciences," by Edward Hitchcock, D. D., LL. D., pp. 370-408.

For the first heaven and the first earth were passed away - They had passed away by being changed, and a renovated universe had taken their place. See the notes on 2 Peter 3:10.

And there was no more sea - This change struck John more forcibly, it would appear, than anything else. Now, the seas and oceans occupy about three-fourths of the surface of the globe, and, of course, to that extent prevent the world from being occupied by people - except by the comparatively small number that are mariners. There, the idea of John seems to be, the whole world will be inhabitable, and no part will be given up to the wastes of oceans. In the present state of things, these vast oceans are necessary to render the world a fit abode for human beings, as well as to give life and happiness to the numberless tribes of animals that find their homes in the waters. In the future state, it would seem, the present arrangement will be unnecessary; and if man dwells upon the earth at all, or if he visits it as a temporary abode (see the notes on 2 Peter 3:13), these vast wastes of water will be needless. It should be remembered that the earth, in its changes, according to the teachings of geology, has undergone many revolutions quite as remarkable as it would be if all the lakes, and seas, and oceans of the earth should disappear. Still, it is not certain that it was intended that this language should be understood literally as applied to the material globe. The object is to describe the future blessedness of the righteous; and the idea is, that that will be a world where there will be no such wastes as those produced by oceans.

Verse 2

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven - See the Analysis of the chapter. On the phrase "new Jerusalem," see the Galatians 4:26 note, and Hebrews 12:22 note. Here it refers to the residence of the redeemed, the heavenly world, of which Jerusalem was the type and symbol. It is here represented as "coming down

from God out of heaven." This, of course, does not mean that this great city was "literally" to descend upon the earth, and to occupy any one part of the renovated world; but it is a symbolical or figurative representation, designed to show that the abode of the righteous will be splendid and glorious. The idea of a city literally descending from heaven, and being set upon the earth with such proportions - three hundred and seventy miles high Revelation 21:16, made of gold, and with single pearls for gates, and single gems for the foundations - is absurd. No man can suppose that this is literally true, and hence this must be regarded as a figurative or emblematic description. It is a representation of the heavenly state under the image of a beautiful city, of which Jerusalem was, in many respects, a natural and striking emblem.

Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband - See the notes on Isaiah 49:18; Isaiah 61:10. The purpose here is, to represent it as exceedingly beautiful. The comparison of the church with a bride, or a wife, is common in the Scriptures. See the Revelation 19:7-8 notes, and Isaiah 1:21 note. It is also common in the Scriptures to compare a city with a beautiful woman, and these images here seem to be combined. It is a beautiful city that seems to descend, and this city is itself compared with a richly-attired bride prepared for her husband,

Verse 3

And I heard a great voice out of heaven - As if uttered by God himself or the voice, of angels.

Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men - The tabernacle, as that word is commonly used in the Scriptures, referring to the sacred "tent" erected in the wilderness, was regarded as the unique dwelling-place of God among his people - as the temple was afterward, which was also called a "tabernacle." See the notes on Hebrews 9:2. The meaning here is, that God would now dwell with the redeemed, as if in a tabernacle, or in a house specially prepared for his residence among them. It is not said that this would be "on the earth," although that may be; for it is possible that the earth, as well as other worlds, may yet become the abode of the redeemed. See the notes on 2 Peter 3:13.

And he will dwell with them - As in a tent, or tabernacle - σκηνώσει skēnōseiThis is a common idea in the Scriptures.

And they shall be his people - He will acknowledge them in this public way as his own, and will dwell with them as such.

And God himself shall be with them - Shall be permanently with them; shall never leave them.

And be their God - Shall manifest himself as such, in such a manner that there shall be no doubt.

Verse 4

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes - This will be one of the characteristics of that blessed state, that not a tear shall ever be shed there. How different will that be from the condition here - for who is there here who has not learned to weep? See the notes on Revelation 7:17. Compare the notes on Isaiah 25:8.

And there shall be no more death - In all that future world of glory, not one shall ever die; not a grave shall ever be dug! What a view do we begin to get of heaven, when we are told there shall be no "death" there! How different from earth, where death is so common; where it spares no one; where our best friends die; where the wise, the good, the useful, the lovely die; where fathers, mothers, wives, husbands, sons, daughters, all die; where we habitually feel that we must die. Assuredly we have here a view of heaven most glorious and animating to those who dwell in a world like this, and to whom nothing is more common than death. In all their endless and glorious career, the redeemed will never see death again; they will never themselves die. They will never follow a friend to the tomb, nor fear that an absent friend is dead. The slow funeral procession will never be witnessed there; nor will the soil ever open its bosom to furnish a grave. See the notes on 1 Corinthians 15:55.

Neither sorrow - The word "sorrow" here - πένθος penthos- denotes sorrow or grief of any kind; sorrow for the loss of property or friends; sorrow for disappointment, persecution, or care; sorrow over our sins, or sorrow that we love God so little, and serve him so unfaithfully; sorrow that we are sick, or that we must die. How innumerable are the sources of sorrow here; how constant is it on the earth! Since the fall of man there has not been a day, an hour, a moment, in which this has not been a sorrowful world; there has not been a nation, a tribe - a city or a village - nay, not a family, where there has not been grief. There has been no individual who has been always perfectly happy. No one rises in the morning with any certainty that he may not end the day in grief; no one lies down at night with any assurance that it may not be a night of sorrow. How different would this world be if it were announced that henceforward there would be

no sorrow! How different, therefore, will heaven be when we shall have the assurance that henceforward grief shall be at an end!

Nor crying - κραυγὴ kraugēThis word properly denotes a cry, an outcry, as in giving a public notice; a cry in a tumult - a clamor, Acts 23:9; and then a cry of sorrow, or wailing. This is evidently its meaning here, and it refers to all the outbursts of grief arising from affliction, from oppression, from violence. The sense is, that as none of these causes of wailing will be known in the future state, all such wailing will cease. This, too, will make the future state vastly different from our condition here; for what a change would it produce on the earth if the cry of grief were never to be heard again!

Neither shall there be any more pain - There will be no sickness, and no calamity; and there will be no mental sorrow arising from remorse, from disappointment, or from the evil conduct of friends. And what a change would this produce - for how full of pain is the world now! How many lie on beds of languishing; how many are suffering under incurable diseases; how many are undergoing severe surgical operations; how many are pained by the loss of property or friends, or subjected to acuter anguish by the misconduct of those who are loved! How different would this world be, if all pain were to cease forever; how different, therefore, must the blessed state of the future be from the present!

For the former things are passed away - The world as it was before the judgment.

Verse 5

And he that sat upon the throne said - Probably the Messiah, the dispenser of the rewards of heaven. See the notes on Revelation 20:11.

Behold, I make all things new - A new heaven and new earth Revelation 21:1, and an order of things to correspond with that new creation. The former state of things when sin and death reigned will be changed, and the change consequent on this must extend to everything.

And he said unto me, Write - Make a record of these things, for they are founded in truth, and they are adapted to bless a suffering world. Compare the notes on Revelation 14:13. See also Revelation 1:19.

For these words are true and faithful - They are founded in truth, and they are worthy to be believed. See the notes on Revelation 19:9. Compare also notes on Daniel 12:4.

Verse 6

And he said unto me - That is, he that sat on the throne - the Messiah.

It is done - It is finished, complete; or, still more expressively, "it is" - γέγοναν gegonanAn expression remarkably similar to this occurs in John 19:30, when the Saviour on the cross said, "It is finished." The meaning in the passage before us evidently is, "The great work is accomplished; the arrangement of human affairs is complete. The redeemed are gathered in; the wicked are cut off; truth is triumphant, and all is now complete - prepared for the eternal state of things."

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end - This language makes it morally certain that the speaker here is the Lord Jesus, for it is the very language which he uses of himself in Revelation 1:11. See its meaning explained in the notes on Revelation 1:8. If it is applied to him here, it proves that he is divine, for in the following verse (7) the speaker says that he would be a God to him who should "overcome." The meaning of the language as used here, regarded as spoken by the Redeemer at the consummation of all things, and as his people are about entering into the abodes of blessedness, is, "I am now indeed the Alpha and the Omega - the first and the last. The attributes implied in this language which I claimed for myself are now verified in me, and it is seen that these properly belong to me. The scheme for setting up a kingdom in the lost world began in me, and it ends in me - the glorious and triumphant king."

I will give unto him that is athirst - See the Matthew 5:6 note; John 4:14; John 7:37 notes.

Of the fountain of the water of life - An image often used in the Scriptures to represent salvation. It is compared with a fountain that flows in abundance, where all may freely slake their thirst.

Freely - Without money and without price (Isaiah 55:1 note; John 7:37 note); the common representation in the Scriptures. The meaning here is, not that he would do this in the future, but that he had shown that this was his character, as he had claimed, in the same way as he had shown that he was the Alpha and the Omega. The freeness and the fulness of salvation will be one of the most striking things made manifest when the immense hosts of the redeemed shall be welcomed to their eternal abodes.

Verse 7

He that overcometh - See the notes on Revelation 2:7.

Shall inherit all things - Be an heir of God in all things. See the notes on Romans 8:17. Compare Revelation 2:7, Revelation 2:11, Revelation

2:17, Revelation 2:26; Revelation 3:5, Revelation 3:12, Revelation 3:21.

And I will be his God - That is, forever. He would be to them all that is properly implied in the name of God; he would bestow upon them all the blessings which it was appropriate for God to bestow. See the 2 Corinthians 6:18 note; Hebrews 8:10 note.

And he shall be my son - He shall sustain to me the relation of a son, and shall be treated as such. He would ever onward sustain this relation, and be honored as a child of God.

Verse 8

But the fearful - Having stated, in general terms, who they were who would be admitted into that blessed world, he now states explicitly who would not. The "fearful" denote those who had not firmness boldly to maintain their professed principles, or who were afraid to avow themselves as the friends of God in a wicked world. They stand in contrast with those who "overcome," Revelation 21:7.

And unbelieving - Those who have not true faith; avowed infidels; infidels at heart; and all who have not the sincere faith of the gospel. See the notes on Mark 16:16.

And the abominable - The verb from which this word is derived means to excite disgust; to feel disgust at; to abominate or abhor; and hence the participle - "the abominable" - refers to all who are detestable, to wit, on account of their sins; all whose conduct is offensive to God. Thus it would include those who live in open sin; who practice detestable vices; whose conduct is suited to excite disgust and abhorrence. These must all, of course, be excluded from a pure and holy world; and this description, alas! would embrace a lamentably large portion of the world as it has hitherto been. See the notes on Romans 1:26 ff.

And murderers - See the Romans 1:29 note; Galatians 5:21 note.

And whoremongers - See the notes on Galatians 5:19.

And sorcerers - See the word used here - φαρμακεῦσι pharmakeusi- explained in the notes on Galatians 5:19, under the word "witchcraft."

And idolaters - 1 Corinthians 6:9; Galatians 5:19.

And all liars - All who are false in their statements, their promises, their contracts. The word would embrace all who are false toward God Acts 5:1-3, and false toward human beings. See Romans 1:31.

Shall have their part in the lake which burneth, … - notes on Revelation 20:14. That is, they will be excluded from heaven, and punished

for ever. See the 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 notes; Galatians 5:19-21 notes.

Verse 9

And there came unto me one of the seven angels … - See the notes on Revelation 16:6-7. Why one of these angels was employed to make this communication is not stated. It may be that as they had been engaged in bringing destruction on the enemies of the church, and securing its final triumph, there was a propriety that that triumph should be announced by one of their number.

And talked with me - That is, in regard to what he was about to show me.

I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife - I will show you what represents the redeemed church now to be received into permanent union with its Lord - as a bride about to be united to her husband. See the notes on ver. 2. Compare Revelation 19:7-8.

Verse 10

And he carried me away in the spirit - Gave him a vision of the city; seemed to place him where he could have a clear view of it as it came down from heaven. See the notes on Revelation 1:10.

To a great and high mountain - The elevation, and the unobstructed range of view, gave him an opportunity to behold it in its glory.

And showed me that great city, … - As it descended from heaven. See the notes on Revelation 21:2.

Verse 11

Having the glory of God - A glory or splendor such as became the dwelling place of God. The nature of that splendor is described in the following verses.

And her light - In Revelation 21:23 it is said that "the glory of God did lighten it." That is, it was made light by the visible symbol of the Deity - the "Shekinah." See the Luke 2:9 note; Acts 9:3 note. The word here rendered "light" - φωστὴρ phōstēr- occurs nowhere else in the New Testament except in Philemon 2:15. It means, properly, a light, a lightgiver, and, in profane writers, means commonly a "window." It is used here to denote the brightness or shining of the divine glory, as supplying the place of the sun, or of a window.

Like unto a stone most precious - A stone of the richest or most costly nature.

Even like a jasper stone - On the jasper, see the notes on Revelation 4:3. It is used there for the same purpose as here, to illustrate the majesty and glory of God.

Clear as crystal - Pellucid or resplendent like crystal. There are various kinds of jasper - as red, yellow, and brown, brownish yellow, etc. The stone is essentially a quartz, and the word "crystal" here is used to show that the form of it referred to by John was clear and bright.

Verse 12

And had a wall great and high - Ancient cities were always surrounded with walls for protection, and John represents this as enclosed in the usual manner. The word "great" means that it was thick and strong. Its height also is particularly noticed, for it was unusual. See Revelation 21:16.

And had twelve gates - Three on each side. The number of the gates correspond to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and to the number of the apostles. The idea seems to be that there would be ample opportunity of access and egress.

And at the gates twelve angels - Stationed there as guards to the New Jerusalem. Their business seems to have been to watch the gates that nothing improper should enter; that the great enemy should not make an insidious approach to this city as he did to the earthly paradise.

And names written thereon - On the gates.

Which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel - So in the city which Ezekiel saw in vision, which John seems also to have had in his eye. See Ezekiel 48:31. The inscription in Ezekiel denoted that that was the residence of the people of God; and the same idea is denoted here. The New Jerusalem is the eternal residence of the children of God, and this is indicated at every gate. None can enter who do not belong to that people; all who are within are understood to be of their number.

Verse 13

On the east three gates … - The city was square Revelation 21:16, and the same number of gates is assigned to each quarter. There does not appear to be any special significancy in this fact, unless it be to denote that there is access to this city from all quarters of the world, and that they who dwell there will have come from each of the great divisions of the earth - that is, from every land,

Verse 14

And the wall of the city had twelve foundations - It is not said whether these foundations were twelve rows of stones placed one above another under the city, and extending round it, or whether they were twelve stones placed at intervals. The former would seem to be the most probable, as the latter would indicate comparative feebleness and liability to fall. Compare the notes on Revelation 21:19.

And in them - In the foundation of stones. That is, the names of the apostles were cut or carved in them so as to be conspicuous.

The names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb - Of the Lamb of God; the Messiah. For an illustration of this passage, see the notes on Ephesians 2:20.

Verse 15

And he that talked with me - The angel, Revelation 21:9.

Had a golden reed to measure the city - See the notes on Revelation 11:1. The reed, or measuring rod, here, is of gold, because all about the city is of the most rich and costly materials. The rod is thus suited to the personage who uses it, and to the occasion. Compare a similar description in Ezekiel 40:3-5; Ezekiel 43:16. The object of this measuring is to show that the city has proper architectural proportions.

And the gates thereof, … - To measure every part of the city, and to ascertain its exact dimensions.

Verse 16

And the city lieth four-square - It was an exact square. That is, there was nothing irregular about it; there were no crooked walls; there was no jutting out, and no indentation in the walls, as if the city had been built at different times without a plan, and had been accommodated to circumstances. Most cities have been determined in their outline by the character of the ground - by hills, streams, or ravines; or have grown up by accretions, where one part has been joined to another, so that there is no regularity, and so that the original plan, if there was any, has been lost sight of. The New Jerusalem, on the contrary, had been built according to a plan of the utmost regularity, which had not been modified by the circumstances, or varied as the city grew. The idea here may be, that the church, as it will appear in its state of glory, will be in accordance with an eternal plan, and that the great original design will have been fully carried out.

And the length is as large as the breadth - The height also of the city was the same - so that it was an exact square.

And he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs - As eight furlongs make a mile, the extent of the walls, therefore, must have been three hundred and seventy-five miles. Of course, this must preclude all idea of there being such a city literally in Palestine. This is clearly a figurative or symbolical representation; and the idea is, that the city was on the most magnificent scale, and with the largest proportions, and the description here is adopted merely to indicate this vastness, without any idea that it would be understood "literally."

The length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal - According to this representation, the height of the city, not of the walls (compare Revelation 21:17), would be three hundred and seventy-five miles. Of course, this cannot be understood literally, and the very idea of a literal fulfillment of this shows the absurdity of that method of interpretation. The idea intended to be conveyed by this immense height would seem to be that it would contain countless numbers of inhabitants. It is true that such a structure has not existed, and that a city of such a height may seem to be out of all proportion; but we are to remember:

(a)that this is a "symbol"; and,

(b)that, considered as one mass or pile of buildings, it may not seem to be out of proportion. It is no uncommon thing that a house should be as high as it is long or broad.

The idea of vastness and of capacity is the main idea designed to be represented. The image before the mind is, that the numbers of the redeemed will be immense.

Verse 17

And he measured the wall thereof - In respect to its "height." Of course, its length corresponded with the extent of the city.

An hundred and forty and four cubits - This would be, reckoning the cubit at eighteen inches, two hundred and sixteen feet. This is less than the height of the walls of Babylon, which Herodotus says were three hundred and fifty feet high. See the introduction to chapter 13 of Isaiah. As the walls of a city are designed to protect it from external foes, the height mentioned here gives all proper ideas of security; and we are to conceive of the city itself as towering immensely above the walls. Its glory, therefore, would not be obscured by the wall that was thrown around it for defense.

According to the measure of a man - The measure usually employed by men. This seems to be added in order to prevent any mistake as to the

size of the city. It is an "angel" who makes the measurement, and without this explanation it might perhaps be supposed that he used some measure not in common use among people, so that, after all, it would be impossible to form any definite idea of the size of the city.

That is, of the angel - That is, "which is the measure employed by the angel." It was, indeed, an angel who measured the city, but the measure which he employed was that in common use among people.

Verse 18

And the building of the wall of it - The material of which the wall was composed. This means the wall above the foundation, for that was composed of twelve rows of precious stones, Revelation 21:14, Revelation 21:19-20. The height of the foundation is not stated, but the entire wall above was composed of jasper.

Was of jasper - See the notes on Revelation 4:3. Of course, this cannot be taken literally; and an attempt to explain all this literally would show that that method of interpreting the Apocalypse is impracticable.

And the city was pure gold - The material of which the edifices were composed.

Like unto clear glass - The word rendered "glass" in this place - ὕαλος hualos- occurs in the New Testament only here and in Revelation 21:21. It means, properly, "anything transparent like water"; as, for example, any transparent stone or gem, or as rock-salt, crystal, glass (Robinson, Lexicon). Here the meaning is, that the golden city would be so bright and burnished that it would seem to be glass reflecting the sunbeams. Would the appearance of a city, as the sun is setting, when the reflection of its beams from thousands of panes of glass gives it the appearance of burnished gold, represent the idea here? If we were to suppose a city made entirely of glass, and the setting sunbeams falling on it, it might convey the idea represented here. It is certain that, as nothing could be more magnificent, so nothing could more beautifully combine the two ideas referred to here - that of "gold and glass."

Perhaps the reflection of the sunbeams from the "Crystal Palace," erected for the late "industrial exhibition" in London, would convey a better idea of what is intended to be represented here than anything which our world has furnished. The following description from one who was an eyewitness, drawn up by him at the time, and without any reference to this passage, and furnished at my request, will supply a better illustration of the

passage before us than any description which I could give: “Seen as the morning vapors rolled around its base - its far-stretching roofs rising one above another, and its great transept, majestically arched, soaring out of the envelope of clouds - its pillars, window-bars, and pinnacles, looked literally like a castle in the air; like some palace, such as one reads of in idle tales of Arabian enchantment, having about it all the ethereal softness of a dream. Looked at from a distance at noon, when the sunbeams came pouring upon the terraced and vaulted roof, it resembles a regal palace of silver, built for some Eastern prince; ‹when the sun at eventide sheds on its sides his parting rays, the edifice is transformed into a temple of gold and rubies;‘ and in the calm hours of night, when the moon walketh in her brightness, the immense surface of glass which the building presents looks like a sea, or like throwing back, in flickering smile, the radiant glances of the queen of heaven.”

Verse 19

And the foundations of the wall of the city - notes on Revelation 21:14.

Were garnished - Were adorned, or decorated. That is, the foundations were composed of precious stones, giving them this highly ornamented and brilliant appearance.

The first foundation - The first “row, layer, or course.” notes on Revelation 21:14.

Was jasper - See the notes on Revelation 4:3.

The second, sapphire - This stone is not elsewhere mentioned in the New Testament. It is a precious stone, next in hardness to the diamond, usually of an azure or sky-blue color, but of various shades.

The third, a chalcedony - This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The stone referred to is an uncrystallized translucent variety of quartz, having a whitish color, and of a luster nearly like wax. It is found covering the sides of cavities, and is a deposit from filtrated silicious waters. When it is arranged in “stripes,” it constitutes “agate”; and if the stripes are horizontal, it is the “onyx.” The modern “carnelian” is a variety of this. The carnelian is of a deep flesh red, or reddishwhite color. The name chalcedony is from “Chalcedon,” a town in Asia Minor, opposite to Byzantium, or Constantinople, where this stone was probably first known (Webster‘s Dictionary).

The fourth, an emerald - See the notes on Revelation 4:3. The emerald is green.

Verse 20

The fifth, sardonyx - This word does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The "name" is derived from "Sardis," a city in Asia Minor (notes on Revelation 3:1), and ὄνυξ onuxa nail - so named, according to Pliny, from the resemblance of its color to the flesh and the nail. It is a silicious stone or gem, nearly allied to the onyx. The color is a reddish yellow, nearly orange (Webster, Dictionary).

The sixth, sardius - This word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It is also derived from "Sardis," and the name was probably given to the gem because it was found there. It is a stone of a blood-red or flesh color, and is commonly known as a "carnelian." It is the same as the sardine stone mentioned in Revelation 4:3. See the notes on that place.

The seventh, chrysolite - This word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. It is derived from χρυσὸς chrusos"gold," and λίθος lithos"stone," and means "golden stone," and was applied by the ancients to all gems of a golden or yellow color, probably designating particularly the topaz of the moderns (Robinson, Lexicon). But in Webster's Dictionary it is said that its prevalent color is green. It is sometimes transparent. This is the "modern" chrysolite. The ancients undoubtedly understood by the name a "yellow" gem.

The eighth, beryl - This word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. The beryl is a mineral of great hardness, and is of a green or bluish-green color. It is identical with the emerald, except in the color, the emerald having a purer and richer green color, proceeding from a trace of oxide of chrome. Prisms of beryl are sometimes found nearly two feet in diameter in the state of New Hampshire (Webster).

The ninth, a topaz - This word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The topaz is a well-known mineral, said to be so called from "Topazos," a small island in the Arabian Gulf. It is generally of a yellowish color, and pellucid, but it is also found of greenish, bluish, or brownish shades.

The tenth, a chrysoprasus - This word χρυσόπρασος chrusoprasosdoes not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It is derived from χρυσὸς chrusos"gold," and πράσον prason"a leek," and denotes a precious stone of greenish golden color, like a leek; that is, "apple-green passing into a grass-

green" (Robinson, Lexicon). "It is a variety of quartz. It is commonly apple-green, and often extremely beautiful. It is translucent, or sometimes semi-transparent; its hardness little inferior to flint" (Webster, Dictionary).

The eleventh, a jacinth - The word does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It is the same word as "hyacinth" - ὑάκινθος huakinthos- and denotes properly the well-known flower of that name, usually of a deep purple or reddish blue. Here it denotes a gem of this color. It is a red variety of "zircon." See Webster's Dictionary under the word "hyacinth."

The twelfth, an amethyst - This word, also, is found only in this place in the New Testament. It denotes a gem of a deep purple or violet color. The word is derived from α athe alpha privative ("not"), and μεθύω methuōto be intoxicated, because this gem was supposed to be an antidote against drunkenness. It is a species of quartz, and is used in jewelry.

Verse 21

And the twelve gates - Revelation 21:12.

Were twelve pearls - See the Revelation 17:4 note; Matthew 13:46 note.

Every several gate was of one pearl - Each gate. Of course, this is not to be understood literally. The idea is that of ornament and beauty, and nothing could give a more striking view of the magnificence of the future abode of the saints.

And the street of the city was pure gold - Was paved with gold; that is, all the vacant space that was not occupied with buildings was of pure gold. See the notes on Revelation 21:18.

Verse 22

And I saw no temple therein - No structure reared expressly for the worship of God; no particular place where he was adored. It was all temple - nothing but a temple. It was not like Jerusalem, where there was but one house reared expressly for divine worship, and to which the inhabitants repaired to praise God; it was all one great temple reared in honor of his name, and where worship ascended from every part of it. With this explanation, this passage harmonizes with what is said in Revelation 2:12; Revelation 7:15.

For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it - They are present in all parts of it in their glory; they fill it with light; and the splendor of their presence may be said to be the temple. The idea here is, that it would be a holy world - all holy. No particular portion would be set

apart for purposes of public worship, but in all places God would be adored, and every portion of it devoted to the purposes of religion.

Verse 23

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it - This imagery seems to be derived from Isaiah 9:19-20. See notes on those verses. No language could give a more striking or beautiful representation of the heavenly state than what is here employed.

For the glory of God did lighten it - By the visible splendor of his glory. See the notes on Revelation 21:11. That supplied the place of the sun and the moon.

And the Lamb is the light thereof - The Son of God; the Messiah. See the Revelation 5:6 note; Isaiah 60:19 note.

Verse 24

And the nations of them which are saved - All the nations that are saved; or all the saved considered as nations. This imagery is doubtless derived from that in Isaiah, particularly Isaiah 60:3-9. See the notes on that passage.

Shall walk in the light of it - Shall enjoy its splendor, and be continually in its light.

And the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it - All that they consider as constituting their glory, treasures, crowns, scepters, robes. The idea is, that all these will be devoted to God in the future days of the church in its glory, and will be, as it were, brought and laid down at the feet of the Saviour in heaven. The language is derived, doubtless, from the description in Isaiah 60:3-14. Compare Isaiah 49:23.

Verse 25

And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day - It shall be constantly open, allowing free ingress and egress to all who reside there. The language is derived from Isaiah 60:11. See the notes on that place. Applied to the future state of the blessed, it would seem to mean, that while this will be their permanent abode, yet that the dwellers there will not be prisoners. The universe will be open to them. They will be permitted to go forth and visit every world, and survey the works of God in all parts of his dominions.

For there shall be no night there - It shall be all day; all unclouded splendor. When, therefore, it is said that the gates should not be "shut by day," it means that they would never be shut. When it is said that there

would be no night there, it is, undoubtedly, to be taken as meaning that there would be no literal darkness, and nothing of which night is the emblem: no calamity, no sorrow, no bereavement, no darkened windows on account of the loss of friends and kindred. Compare the notes on Revelation 21:4.

Verse 26

And they shall bring … - See the notes on Revelation 21:24. That blessed world shall be made up of all that was truly valuable and pure on the earth.

Verse 27

And there shall in no wise - On no account; by no means. This strong language denotes the absolute exclusion of all that is specified in the verse.

Anything that defileth - Literally, anything "common." See the notes on Acts 10:14. It means here that nothing will be found in that blessed abode which is unholy or sinful. It will be a pure world, 2 Peter 3:13.

Neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie - See the notes on Revelation 21:8.

But they which are written in the Lamb's book of life - Whose names are there recorded. See the notes on Revelation 3:5. Compare the notes on Revelation 21:8.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER 22

Introduction

For the analysis of the first five verses of this chapter see the analysis of Revelation 22:1-5, and then Revelation 22:6; for the remainder properly comprises the conclusion of the whole book. Compare the introduction to the notes on the Gospels.

Analysis Of Chapter 22:6-20

This portion of the Book of Revelation is properly the epilogue, or conclusion. The main purposes of the vision are accomplished; the enemies of the church are quelled; the church is triumphant; the affairs of the world are wound up; the redeemed are received to their blissful, eternal abode; the wicked are cut off; the earth is purified, and the affairs of the universe are fixed on their permanent foundation. A few miscellaneous matters, therefore, close the book:

(1)A solemn affirmation on the part of him who had made these revelations, that they are true, and that they will be speedily accomplished, and that he will be blessed or happy who shall keep the sayings of the book, Revelation 22:6-7.

(2)the effect of all these things on John himself, leading him, as in a former case Revelation 19:10, to a disposition to worship him who had been the medium in making to him such extraordinary communications, Revelation 22:8-9.

(3)acommand not to seal up what had been revealed, since the time was near. These things would soon have their fulfillment, and it was proper that the prophecies should be unsealed, or open, both that the events might be compared with the predictions, and that a persecuted church might be able to see what would be the result of all these things, and to find consolation in the assurance of the final triumph of the Son of God, Revelation 22:10.

(4)the fixed and unchangeable state of the righteous and the wicked, Revelation 22:11-13.

(5)the blessedness of those who keep the commandments of God, and who enter into the New Jerusalem, Revelation 22:14-15.

(6)Jesus, the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star, proclaims himself to be the Author of all these revelations by the instrumentality of an angel, Revelation 22:16.

(7)the universal invitation of the gospel - the language of Jesus himself - giving utterance to his strong desire for the salvation of people, Revelation 22:17.

(8)asolemn command not to change anything that had been revealed in this book, either by adding to it or taking from it, Revelation 22:18-19.

(9)the assurance that he who had made these revelations would come quickly, and the joyous assent of John to this, and prayer that his advent might soon occur, Revelation 22:20.

(10)the benediction, Revelation 22:21.

Verse 1

And he showed me a pure river of water of life - In the New Jerusalem; the happy abode of the redeemed. The phrase "water of life," means living or running water, like a spring or fountain, as contrasted with a stagnant pool. See the notes on John 4:14. The allusion here is doubtless to the first Eden, where a river watered the garden (Genesis 2:10, seq.), and as this is a description of Eden recovered, or Paradise regained, it was natural to introduce a river of water also, yet in such a way as to accord with the general description of that future abode of the redeemed. It does not spring up, therefore, from the ground, but flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. Perhaps, also, the writer had in his eye the description in Ezekiel 47:1-12, where a stream issues from under the temple, and is parted in different directions.

Clear as crystal - See the notes on Revelation 4:6.

Proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb - Flowing from the foot of the throne. Compare Revelation 4:6. This idea is strictly in accordance with Oriental imagery. In the East, fountains and running streams constituted an essential part of the image of enjoyment and prosperity (see the notes on Isaiah 35:6), and such fountains were common in the courts of Oriental houses. Here, the river is an emblem of peace,

happiness, plenty; and the essential thought in its flowing from the throne is, that all the happiness of heaven proceeds from God.

Verse 2

In the midst of the street of it - Prof. Stuart renders this, "between the street thereof and the river"; and says that "the writer conceives of the river as running through the whole city; then of streets parallel to it on either side; and then, on the banks of the river, between the water and the street, the whole stream is lined on either side with two rows of the tree of life." The more common interpretation, however, is doubtless admissible, and would give a more beautiful image; that in the street, or streets of the city, as well as on the banks of the river, the tree of life was planted. It abounded everywhere. The city had not only a river passing through it, but it was pervaded by streets, and all those streets were lined and shaded with this tree. The idea in the mind of the writer is that of Eden or Paradise; but it is not the Eden of the book of Genesis, or the Oriental or Persian Paradise: it is a picture where all is combined, that in the view of the writer would constitute beauty, or contribute to happiness.

And on either side of the river - As well as in all the streets. The writer undoubtedly conceives of a single river running through the city - probably as meandering along - and that river lined on both sides with the tree of life. This gives great beauty to the imagery.

Was there the tree of life - Not a single tree, but it abounded everywhere - on the banks of the river, and in all the streets. It was the common tree in this blessed Paradise - of which all might partake, and which was everywhere the emblem of immortality. In this respect, this new Paradise stands in strong contrast with that in which Adam was placed at his creation, where there seems to have been a single tree that was designated as the tree of life, Genesis 3:22-23. In the future state of the blessed, that tree will abound, and all may freely partake of it; the emblem, the pledge of immortal life, will be constantly before the eyes, whatever part of the future abode may be traversed, and the inhabitants of that blessed world may constantly partake of it.

Which bare twelve manner of fruits - "Producing twelve fruit-harvests; not (as our version) twelve manner of fruits" (Prof. Stuart). The idea is not that there are twelve kinds of fruit on the same tree, for that is not implied in the language used by John. The literal rendering is, "producing twelve fruits" - ποιοῦν καρποὺς δώδεκα poioun karpous

dōdekaThe word “manner” has been introduced by the translators without authority. The idea is, that the tree bore every month in the year, so that there were twelve fruit-harvests. It was not like a tree that bears but once a year, or in one season only, but it constantly bore fruit - it bore every month. The idea is that of abundance, not variety. The supply never fails; the tree is never barren. As there is but a single class of trees referred to, it might have been supposed, perhaps, that, according to the common method in which fruit is produced, there would be sometimes plenty and sometimes want; but the writer says that, though there is but one kind, yet the supply is ample. The tree is everywhere; it is constantly producing fruit.

And yielded her fruit every month - The word “and” is also supplied by the translators, and introduces an idea which is not in the original, as if there was not only a succession of harvests, which is in the text, but that each one differed from the former, which is not in the text. The proper translation is, “producing twelve fruits, yielding or rendering its fruit in each month.” Thus there is, indeed, a succession of fruit-crops, but it is the same kind of fruit. We are not to infer, however, that there will not be variety in the occupations and the joys of the heavenly state, for there can be no doubt that there will be ample diversity in the employments, and in the sources of happiness, in heaven; but the single thought expressed here is, that the means of life will be abundant: the trees of life will be everywhere, and they will be constantly yielding fruit.

And the leaves of the tree - Not only the fruit will contribute to give life, but even the leaves will be salutary. Everything about it will contribute to sustain life.

Were for the healing - That is, they contribute to impart life and health to those who had been diseased. We are not to suppose that there will be sickness, and a healing process in heaven, for that idea is expressly excluded in Revelation 21:4; but the meaning is, that the life and health of that blessed world will have been imparted by partaking of that tree; and the writer says that, in fact, it was owing to it that they who dwell there had been healed of their spiritual maladies, and had been made to live forever.

Of the nations - Of all the nations assembled there, Revelation 21:24. There is a close resemblance between the language used here by John and that used by Ezekiel Ezekiel 47:12, and it is not improbable that both these writers refer to the same thing. Compare also in the Apocrypha, 2 Esdras 2:12; 8:52-54.

Verse 3

And there shall be no more curse - This is doubtless designed to be in strong contrast with our present abode; and it is affirmed that what now properly comes under the name of a curse, or whatever is part of the curse pronounced on man by the fall, will be there unknown. The earth will be no more cursed, and will produce no more thorns and thistles; man will be no more compelled to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow; woman will be no more doomed to bear the sufferings which she does now; and the abodes of the blessed will be no more cursed by sickness, sorrow, tears, and death.

But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it - God will reign there forever; the principles of purity and love which the Lamb of God came to establish, will pervade that blessed abode to all eternity.

And his servants shall serve him - All his servants that are there; that is, all the inhabitants of that blessed world. For the meaning of this passage, see the notes on Revelation 7:15.

Verse 4

And they shall see his face - See the notes on Matthew 18:10. They would be constantly in his presence, and be permitted continually to behold his glory.

And his name shall be in their foreheads - They shall be designated as his. See the notes on Revelation 3:12; Revelation 7:3; Revelation 13:16.

Verse 5

And there shall be no night there - notes on Revelation 21:25.

And they need no candle - No lamp; no artificial light, as in a world where there is night and darkness.

Neither light of the sun; for the Lord God, … - See the notes on Revelation 21:23.

And they shall reign forever and ever - That is, with God; they shall be as kings. See the notes on Revelation 5:10; Revelation 20:6. Compare the Romans 8:16 note; 2 Timothy 2:11-12 note.

Remarks On Revelation 21:1.

(2) the locality of that abode is not determined. No particular place is revealed as constituting heaven; nor is it intimated that there would be such a place. For anything that appears, the universe at large will be heaven - the earth and all worlds; and we are left free to suppose that the redeemed will yet occupy any position of the universe, and be permitted to behold the special glories of the divine character that are manifested in each of the

worlds that he has made. Compare the notes on 1 Peter 1:12. That there may be some one place in the universe that will be their permanent home, and that will be more properly called heaven, where the glory of their God and Saviour will be especially manifested, is not improbable; but still there is nothing to prevent the hope and the belief that in the infinite duration that awaits them they will be permitted to visit all the worlds that God has made, and to learn in each, and from each, all that he has especially manifested of his own character and glory there.

(3) that future state will be entirely and forever free from all the consequences of the apostasy as now seen on the earth. There will be neither tears, nor sorrow, nor death, nor crying, nor pain, nor curse, Revelation 21:4; Revelation 22:3. It will, therefore, be a perfectly happy abode.

(4) it will be pure and holy. Nothing will ever enter there that shall contaminate and defile, Revelation 21:8, Revelation 21:27. On this account, also, it will be a happy world, for:

(a)all real happiness has its foundation in holiness; and,

(b)the source of all the misery that the universe has experienced is sin. Let that be removed, and the earth would be happy; let it be extinguished from any world, and its happiness will be secure.

(5) it will be a world of perfect light, Revelation 21:22-25; Revelation 22:5. There will be:

(a)literally no night there:

(b)spiritually and morally there will be no darkness - no error, no sin.

Light will be cast on a thousand subjects now obscure; and on numerous points pertaining to the divine government and dealings which now perplex the mind there will be poured the splendor of perfect day. All the darkness that exists here will be dissipated there; all that is now obscure will be made light. And in view of this fact, we may well submit for a little time to the mysteries which hang over the divine dealings here. The Christian is destined to live forever and ever. He is capable of an eternal progression in knowledge. He is soon to be ushered into the splendors of that eternal abode where there is no need of the light of the sun or the moon, and where there is no night. In a little time - a few weeks or days - by removal to that higher state of being, he will have made a degree of progress in true knowledge

compared with which all that can be learned here is a nameless trifle. In that future abode he will be permitted to know all that is to be known in those worlds that shine upon his path by day or by night; all that is to be known in the character of their Maker, and the principles of his government; all that is to be known of the glorious plan of redemption; all that is to be known of the reasons why sin and woe were permitted to enter this beautiful world. There, too, he will be permitted to enjoy all that there is to be enjoyed in a world without a cloud and without a tear; all that is beatific in the friendship of God the Father, of the Ascended Redeemer, of the Sacred Spirit; all that is blessed in the goodly fellowship of the angels, of the apostles, of the prophets; all that is rapturous in reunion with those that were loved on the earth. Well, then, may he bear with the darkness and endure the trials of this state a little longer.

(6) it will be a world of surpassing splendor. This is manifest by the description of it in Revelation 20:1-15, as a gorgeous city, with ample dimensions, with most brilliant colors, set with gems, and composed of pure gold. The writer, in the description of that abode, has accumulated all that is gorgeous and magnificent, and doubtless felt that even this was a very imperfect representation of that glorious world.

(7) that future world will be an abode of the highest conceivable happiness. This is manifest, not only from the fact stated that there will be no pain or sorrow here, but from the positive description in Revelation 22:1-2. It was, undoubtedly, the design of the writer, under the image of a "Paradise," to describe the future abode of the redeemed as one of the highest happiness - where there would be an ample and a constant supply of every want, and where the highest ideas of enjoyment would be realized. And,

(8) All this will be eternal. The universe, so vast and so wonderful, seems to have been made to be suited to the eternal contemplation of created minds, and in this universe there is an adaptation for the employment of mind forever and ever.

If it be asked now why John, in the account which he has given of the heavenly state, adopted this figurative and emblematic mode of representation, and why it did not please God to reveal any were respecting

the nature of the employments and enjoyments of the heavenly world, it may be replied:

(a)That this method is eminently in accordance with the general character of the book, as a book of symbols and emblems.

(b)He has stated enough to give us a general and a most attractive view of that blessed state.

(c)It is not certain that we would have appreciated it, or could have comprehended it, if a more minute and literal description had been given.

That state may be so unlike this that it is doubtful whether we could have comprehended any literal description that could have been given. How little of the future and the unseen can ever be known by a mere description; how faint and imperfect a view can we ever obtain of anything by the mere use of words, and especially of objects which have no resemblance to anything which we have seen! Who ever obtained any adequate idea of Niagara by a mere description? To what Greek or Roman mind, however cultivated, could there have been conveyed the idea of a printing-press, of a locomotive engine, of the magnetic telegraph, by mere description? Who can convey to one born blind an idea of the prismatic colors; or to the deaf an idea of sounds? If we may imagine the world of insect tribes to be endowed with the power of language and thought, how could the happy and gilded butterfly that today plays in the sunbeam impart to its companions of yesterday - low and grovelling worms - any adequate idea of that new condition of being into which it had emerged? And how do we know that we could comprehend any description of that world where the righteous dwell, or of employments and enjoyments so unlike our own?

I cannot more appropriately close this brief notice of the revelations of the heavenly state than by introducing an ancient poem, which seems to be founded on this portion of the Apocalypse, and which is the original of one of the most touching and beautiful hymns, now used in Protestant places of worship - the well-known hymn which begins, “Jerusalem! my happy home!” This hymn is deservedly a great favorite, and is an eminently beautiful composition. It is, however, of Roman Catholic origin. It is found in a small volume of miscellaneous poetry, sold at Mr. Bright‘s sale of manuscripts in 1844, which has been placed in the British Museum, and now forms the additional ms. 15,225. It is referred, by the lettering on the book, to the age of Elizabeth, but it is supposed to belong to the subsequent

reign. The volume seems to have been formed by or for some Roman Catholic, and contains many devotional songs or hymns, interspersed with others of a more general character. See Littell‘s *Living Age*, vol. xxviii. pp. 333-336. The hymn is as follows:

A Song Made by F. B. P.

To the tune of “Diana”
Jerusalem! my happy home!
When shall I come to thee?
When shall my sorrows have an end -
Thy joys when shall I see?
O happy harbor of the saints -
O sweet and pleasant soil!
In thee no sorrow may be found,
No grief, no care, no toil.
In thee no sickness may be seen,
No hurt, no ache, no sore;
There is no death, no ugly deil*,
There‘s life forevermore.
No dampish mist is seen in thee,
No cold nor darksome night;
There every soul shines as the sun,
There God himself gives light.
There lust and lucre cannot dwell,
There envy hears no sway;
There is no hunger, heat, nor cold,
But pleasure every way.
Jerusalem! Jerusalem!
God grant I once may see.
Thy endless joys, and of the same.
Partaker aye to be.
Thy walls are made of precious stones,
Thy bulwarks diamonds square;
Thy gates are of right orient pearl,
Exceeding rich and rare.
Thy turrets and thy pinnacles.

With carbuncles to shine;
Thy very streets are paved with gold,
Surpassing clear and fine.
Thy houses are of ivory,
Thy windows crystal clear;
Thy tiles are made of beaten gold -
O God, that I were there!
Within thy gates no thing doth come.
That is not passing clean;
No spider‘s web, no dirt, no dust,
No filth may there be seen.
Ah, my sweet home, Jerusalem!
Would God I were in thee;
Would God my woes were at an end,
Thy joys that I might see!
Thy saints are crown‘d with glory great,
They see God face to face;
They triumph still, they still rejoice -
Most happy is their case.
We that are here in banishment.
Continually do moan;
We sigh and sob, we weep and wail,
Perpetually we groan.
Our sweet is mixed with bitter gall,
Our pleasure is but pain;
Our joys scarce last the looking on,
Our sorrows still remain.
But there they live in such delight,
Such pleasure, and such play,
As that to them a thousand years.
Doth seem as yesterday.
Thy vineyards said thy orchards are.
Most beautiful and fair;
Full furnished with trees and fruits,
Most wonderful and rare.
Thy gardens and thy gallant walks.
Continually are green;

There grow such sweet and pleasant flowers.
As nowhere else are seen.
There‘s nectar and ambrosia made,
There‘s musk and civet sweet;
There many a fair and dainty drug.
Are trodden under feet.
There cinnamon, there sugar grows,
There nard and balm abound;
What tongue can tell, or heart conceive,
The joys that there are found?
Quite through the streets, with silver sound,
The flood of life doth flow;
Upon whose banks, on every side,
The wood of life doth grow.
There trees forevermore bear fruit,
And evermore do spring;
There evermore the angels sit,
And evermore do sing.
There David stands with harp in hand,
As master of the quire;
Ten thousand times that man were blest.
That might this music** hear.
Our Lady sings Magnificat,
With tune surpassing sweet;
And all the virgins bear their parts,
Sitting above her feet.
Te Deun doth Saint Ambrose sing,
Saint Austin doth the like;
Old Simeon and Zachary.
Have not their song to seek.
There Magdalene hath left her moan,
And cheerfully doth sing.
With blessed saints, whose harmony.
In every street doth ring.
Jerusalem, my happy home!
Would God I were in thee;
Would God my woes were at an end,

Thy joys that I might see!
*devil, in ms., but it must have been pronounced Scoticè, "deil."
**Musing, in ms.

Verse 6

And he said unto me - The angel-interpreter, who had showed John the vision of the New Jerusalem, Revelation 21:9-10. As these visions are now at an end, the angel comes to John directly, and assures him that all these things are true - that there has been no deception of the senses in these visions, but that they were really divine disclosures of what would soon and certainly occur.

These sayings are faithful and true - These communications - all that has been disclosed to you by symbols, or in direct language. See the notes on Revelation 21:5.

And the Lord God of the holy prophets - The same God who inspired the ancient prophets.

Sent his angel - See the notes on Revelation 1:1.

To show unto his servants - To all his servants - that is, to all his people, by the instrumentality of John. The revelation was made to him, and he was to record it for the good of the whole church.

The things which must shortly be done - The beginning of which must soon occur - though the series of events extended into distant ages, and even into eternity. See the notes on Revelation 1:1-3.

Verse 7

Behold, I come quickly - See the notes on Revelation 1:3. The words used here are undoubtedly the words of the Redeemer, although they are apparently repeated by the angel. The meaning is, that they were used by the angel as the words of the Redeemer. See Revelation 22:12, Revelation 22:20.

Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book - That receives them as a divine communication; that makes use of them to comfort himself in the days of darkness, persecution, and trial; and that is obedient to the precepts here enjoined. See the notes on Revelation 1:3.

Verse 8

And I John saw these things, and heard them - That is, I saw the parts that were disclosed by pictures, visions, and symbols; I heard the parts that were communicated by direct revelation.

And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel, … - As he had done on a former occasion. See the notes on Revelation 19:10. John appears to have been entirely overcome by the extraordinary nature of the revelations made to him, and not improbably entertained some suspicion that it was the Redeemer himself who had manifested himself to him in this remarkable manner.

Verse 9

Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not - See the notes on Revelation 19:10.

For I am thy fellow-servant - notes on Revelation 19:10.

And of thy brethren the prophets - In Revelation 19:10, it is "of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus." Here the angel says that, in the capacity in which he appeared to John, he belonged to the general rank of the prophets, and was no more entitled to worship than any of the prophets had been. Like them, he had merely been employed to disclose important truths in regard to the future; but as the prophets, even the most eminent of them, were not regarded as entitled to worship on account of the communications which they had made, no more was he.

And of them which keep the sayings of this book - "I am a mere creature of God." I, like human beings, am under law, and am bound to observe the law of God. The "sayings of this book" which he says he kept, must be understood to mean those great principles of religion which it enjoined, and which are of equal obligation on human beings and angels.

Worship God - Worship God only. See the notes on Revelation 19:10.

Verse 10

And he saith unto me - The angel.

Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book - That is, seal not the book itself, for it may be regarded altogether as a prophetic book. On the sealing of a book, see the notes on Revelation 5:1. Isaiah (Isaiah 8:16; Isaiah 30:8) and Daniel (Daniel 8:26; Daniel 12:4, Daniel 12:9) were commanded to seal up their prophecies. Their prophecies related to far-distant times, and the idea in their being commanded to seal them was, that they should make the record sure and unchangeable; that they should finish it, and lay it up for future ages; so that, in far-distant times, the events might be compared with the prophecy, and it might be seen that there was an exact correspondence between the prophecy and the fulfillment. Their prophecies would not be immediately demanded for the use of persecuted saints, but

would pertain to future ages. On the other hand, the events which John had predicted, though in their ultimate development they were to extend to the end of the world, and even into eternity, were about to begin to be fulfilled, and were to be of immediate use in consoling a persecuted church. John, therefore, was directed not to seal up his predictions; not to lay them away, to be opened, as it were, in distant ages; but to leave them open, so that a persecuted church might have access to them, and might, in times of persecution and trial, have the assurance that the principles of their religion would finally triumph. See the notes on Revelation 10:2.

For the time is at hand - That is, they are soon to commence. It is not implied that they would be soon completed. The idea is, that as the scenes of persecution were soon to open upon the church, it was important that the church should have access to these prophecies of the final triumph of religion, to sustain it in its trials. Compare the notes on Revelation 1:1, Revelation 1:3.

Verse 11

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still - This must refer to the scenes beyond the judgment, and must be intended to affirm an important truth in regard to the condition of people in the future state. It cannot refer to the condition of human beings on this side the grave, for there is no fixed and unchangeable condition in this world. At the close of this book, and at the close of the whole volume of revealed truth, it was proper to declare, in the most solemn manner, that when these events were consummated, everything would be fixed and unchanging; that all who were then found to be righteous would remain so forever; and that none who were impenitent, impure, and wicked, would ever change their character or condition. That this is the meaning here seems to me to be plain; and this sentiment accords with all that is said in the Bible of the final condition of the righteous and the wicked.

See Matthew 25:46; Romans 2:6-9; 1 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Daniel 12:2; Ecclesiastes 11:3. Every assurance is held out in the Bible that the righteous will be secure in holiness and happiness, and that there will be no danger - no possibility - that they will fall into sin, and sink to woe; and by the same kind of arguments by which it is proved that their condition will be unchanging, is it demonstrated that the condition of the wicked will be unchanging also. The argument for the eternal punishment of the wicked is as strong as that for the eternal happiness of the righteous; and if the one is

open to doubt, there is no security for the permanence of the other. The word "unjust" here is a general term for an unrighteous or wicked man. The meaning is, that he to whom that character properly belongs, or of whom it is properly descriptive, will remain so forever. The design of this seems to be, to let the ungodly and the wicked know that there is no change beyond the grave, and by this solemn consideration to warn them now to flee from the wrath to come. And assuredly no more solemn consideration can ever be presented to the human mind than this.

And he which is filthy, let him be filthy still - The word "filthy" here is, of course, used with reference to moral defilement or pollution. It refers to the sensual, the corrupt, the profane; and the meaning is, that, their condition will be fixed, and that they will remain in this state of pollution forever. There is nothing more awful than the idea that a polluted soul will be always polluted; that a heart corrupt will be always corrupt; that the defiled will be put forever beyond the possibility of being cleansed from sin.

And he that is righteous, let him be righteous still - The just, the upright man - in contradistinction from the unjust mentioned in the first part of the verse.

And he that is holy, let him be holy still - He that is pure, in contradistinction from the filthy mentioned in the former part of the verse. The righteous and the holy will be confirmed in their character and condition, as well as the wicked. The affirmation that their condition will be fixed is as strong as that that of the wicked will be - and no stronger; the entire representation is, that all beyond the judgment will be unchanging forever. Could anymore solemn thought be brought before the mind of man?

Verse 12

And behold, I come quickly - See the notes on Revelation 1:1, Revelation 1:3. These are undoubtedly the words of the Redeemer; and the meaning is, that the period when the unchanging sentence would be passed on each individual - on the unjust, the filthy, the righteous, and the holy - would not be remote. The design of this seems to be to impress on the mind the solemnity of the truth that the condition hereafter will soon be fixed, and to lead people to prepare for it. In reference to each individual, the period is near when it is to be determined whether he will be holy or sinful to all eternity. What thought could there be more adapted to impress on the

mind the importance of giving immediate attention to the concerns of the soul?

And my reward is with me - I bring it with me to give to every man: either life or death; heaven or hell; the crown or the curse. He will be prepared immediately to execute the sentence. Compare Matthew 16:27 note; Romans 2:6 note; 2 Corinthians 5:10 note.

Verse 13

I am Alpha and Omega … - See the notes on Revelation 1:8, Revelation 1:11. The idea here is, that he will thus show that he is the first and the last - the beginning and the end. He originated the whole plan of salvation, and he will determine its close; he formed the world, and he will wind up its affairs. In the beginning, the continuance, and the end, he will be recognized as the same being presiding over and controlling all.

Verse 14

Blessed are they that do his commandments - See the notes on Revelation 1:3; Revelation 22:7.

That they may have right - That they may be entitled to approach the tree of life; that this privilege may be granted to them. It is not a right in the sense that they have merited it, but in the sense that the privilege is conferred on them as one of the rewards of God, and that, in virtue of the divine arrangements, they will be entitled to this honor. So the word used here - ἐξουσία exousia- means in John 1:12, rendered "power." The reason why this right or privilege is conferred is not implied in the use of the word. In this case it is by grace, and all the right which they have to the tree of life is founded on the fact that God has been pleased graciously to confer it on them.

To the tree of life - See the notes on Revelation 22:2. They would not be forbidden to approach that tree as Adam was, but would be permitted always to partake of it, and would live forever.

And may enter in through the gates into the city - The New Jerusalem, Revelation 21:2. They would have free access there; they would be permitted to abide there forever.

Verse 15

For without are dogs - The wicked, the depraved, the vile: for of such characters the dogs, an unclean animal among the Jews, was regarded as a symbol, Deuteronomy 23:18. On the meaning of the expression, see the notes on Philemon 3:2. The word "without" means that they would not be

admitted into the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, Revelation 21:8, Revelation 21:27.

And sorcerers, … - All these characters are specified in Revelation 21:8, as excluded from heaven. See the notes on that verse. The only change is, that those who "love and make a lie" are added to the list; that is, who delight in lies, or what is false.

Verse 16

I Jesus - Here the Saviour appears expressly as the speaker - ratifying and confirming all that had been communicated by the instrumentality of the angel.

Have sent mine angel - See the notes on Revelation 1:1.

To testify unto you - That is, to be a witness for me in communicating these things to you.

In the churches - Directly and immediately to the seven churches in Asia Minor Revelation 2:3; remotely and ultimately to all churches to the end of time. Compare the notes on Revelation 1:11.

I am the root - Not the root in the sense that David sprang from him, as a tree does from a root, but in the sense that he was the "root-shoot" of David, or that he himself sprang from him, as a sprout starts up from a decayed and fallen tree - as of the oak, the willow, the chestnut, etc. See this explained in the notes on Isaiah 11:1. The meaning then is, not that he was the ancestor of David, or that David sprang from him, but that he was the offspring of David, according to the promise in the Scripture, that the Messiah should be descended from him. No argument, then, can be derived from this passage in proof of the pre-existence, or the divinity of Christ.

And the offspring - The descendant; the progeny of David; "the seed of David according to the flesh." See the notes on Romans 1:3. It is not unusual to employ two words in close connection to express the same idea with some slight shade of difference.

And the bright and morning star - See the notes on Revelation 2:28. It is not uncommon to compare a prince, a leader, a teacher, with that bright and beautiful star which at some seasons of the year precedes the rising of the sun, and leads on the day. Compare the notes on Isaiah 14:12. The reference here is to that star as the harbinger of day; and the meaning of the Saviour is, that he sustains a relation to a dark world similar to this beautiful star. At one time he is indeed compared with the sun itself in giving light to the world; here he is compared with that morning star rather with reference

to its beauty than its light. May it not also have been one object in this comparison to lead us, when we look on that star, to think of the Saviour? It is perhaps the most beautiful object in nature; it succeeds the darkness of the night; it brings on the day - and as it mingles with the first rays of the morning, it seems to be so joyous, cheerful, exulting, bright, that nothing can be better adapted to remind us of Him who came to lead on eternal day. Its place - the first thing that arrests the eye in the morning - might serve to remind us that the Saviour should be the first object that should draw the eye and the heart on the return of each day. In each trial - each scene of sorrow - let us think of the bright star of the morning as it rises on the darkness of the night - emblem of the Saviour rising on our sorrow and our gloom.

Verse 17

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come - That is, come to the Saviour; come and partake of the blessings of the gospel; come and be saved. The construction demands this interpretation, as the latter part of the verse shows. The design of this whole verse is, evidently, to show the freeness of the offers of the gospel; to condense in a summary manner all the invitations of mercy to mankind; and to leave on the mind at the close of the book a deep impression of the ample provision which has been made for the salvation of a fallen race. Nothing, it is clear, could be more appropriate at the close of this book, and at the close of the whole volume of revealed truth, than to announce, in the most clear and attracting form, that salvation is free to all, and that whosoever will may be saved.

The Spirit - The Holy Spirit. He entreats all to come. This he does:

(a)in all the recorded invitations in the Bible - for it is by the inspiration of that Spirit that these invitations are recorded;

(b)by all his influences on the understandings, the consciences, and the hearts of people;

(c)by all the proclamations of mercy made by the preaching of the gospel, and by the appeal which friend makes to friend, and neighbor to neighbor, and stranger to stranger - for all these are methods in which the Spirit invites people to come to the Saviour.

And the bride - The church. See the notes at Revelation 21:2, Revelation 21:9. That is, the church invites all to come and be saved. This it does:

(a)by its ministers, whose main business it is to extend this invitation to mankind;

(b)by its ordinances - constantly setting forth the freeness of the gospel;

(c)by the lives of its consistent members - showing the excellency and the desirableness of true religion;

(d)by all its efforts to do good in the world;

(e)by the example of those who are brought into the church - showing that all, whatever may have been their former character, may be saved; and,

(f)by the direct appeals of its individual members.

Thus a Christian parent invites his children; a brother invites a sister, and a sister invites a brother; a neighbor invites his neighbor, and a stranger a stranger; the master invites his servant, and the servant his master. The church on earth and the church in heaven unite in the invitation, saying, Come. The living father, pastor, friend, invites - and the voice of the departed father, pastor, friend, now in heaven, is heard re-echoing the invitation. The once-loved mother that has gone to the skies still invites her children to come; and the sweet-smiling babe that has been taken up to the Saviour stretches out its arms from heaven, and says to its mother - "Come."

Say, Come - That is, come to the Saviour; come into the church; come to heaven.

And let him that heareth say, Come - Whoever hears the gospel, let him go and invite others to come. Nothing could more strikingly set forth the freeness of the invitation of the gospel than this. The authority to make the invitation is not limited to the ministers of religion; it is not even confined to those who accept it themselves. All persons, even though they should not accept of it, are authorized to tell others that they may be saved. One impenitent sinner may go and tell another impenitent sinner that if he will he may find mercy and enter heaven. How could the offer of salvation be made more freely to mankind?

And let him that is athirst come - Whoever desires salvation, as the weary pilgrim desires a cooling fountain to allay his thirst, let him come as freely to the gospel as that thirsty man would stoop down at the fountain

and drink. See the notes on Isaiah 55:1. Compare the Matthew 5:6 note; John 7:37 note; Revelation 21:6 note.

And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely - Revelation 21:6. Every one that is disposed to come, that has any sincere wish to be saved, is assured that he may live. No matter how unworthy he is; no matter what his past life has been; no matter how old or how young, how rich or how poor; no matter whether sick or well, a freeman or a slave; no matter whether educated or ignorant; no matter whether clothed in purple or in rags - riding in state or laid at the gate of a rich man full of sores, the invitation is freely made to all to come and be saved. With what more appropriate truth could a revelation from heaven be closed?

Verse 18

For I testify - The writer does not specify who is meant by the word "I" in this place. The most natural construction is to refer it to the writer himself, and not to the angel, or the Saviour. The meaning is, "I bear this solemn witness, or make this solemn affirmation, in conclusion." The object is to guard his book against being corrupted by any interpolation or change. It would seem not improbable, from this, that as early as the time of John, books were liable to be corrupted by additions or omissions, or that at least there was felt to be great danger that mistakes might be made by the carelessness of transcribers. Against this danger, John would guard this book in the most solemn manner. Perhaps he felt, too, that as this book would be necessarily regarded as obscure from the fact that symbols were so much used, there was great danger that changes would be made by well-meaning persons with a view to make it appear more plain.

Unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book - The word "heareth" seems here to be used in a very general sense. Perhaps in most cases persons would be made acquainted with the contents of the book by hearing it read in the churches; but still the spirit of the declaration must include all methods of becoming acquainted with it.

If any man shall add unto these things - With a view to furnish a more full and complete revelation; or with a profession that new truth had been communicated by inspiration. The reference here is to the book of Revelation only - for at that time the books that now constitute what we call the Bible were not collected into a single volume. This passage, therefore, should not be adduced as referring to the whole of the sacred Scriptures. Still, the principle is one that is thus applicable; for it is obvious that no one

has a right to change any part of a revelation which God makes to man; to presume to add to it, or to take from it, or in any way to modify it. Compare the notes at 2 Timothy 3:16.

God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book - These "plagues" refer to the numerous methods described in this book as those in which God would bring severe judgment upon the persecutors of the church and the corrupters of religion. The meaning is, that such a person would be regarded as an enemy of his religion, and would share the fearful doom of all such enemies.

Verse 19

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy - If he shall reject the book altogether; if he shall, in transcribing it, designedly strike any part of it out. It is conceivable that, from the remarkable nature of the communications made in this book, and the fact that they seemed to be unintelligible, John supposed there might be those who would be inclined to omit some portions as improbable, or that he apprehended that when the portions which describe antichrist were fulfilled in distant ages, those to whom those portions applied would be disposed to strike them from the sacred volume, or to corrupt them. He thought proper to guard against this by this solemn declaration of the consequence which would follow such an act. The whole book was to be received - with all its fearful truths - as a revelation from God; and however obscure it might seem, in due time it would be made plain; however faithfully it might depict a fearful apostasy, it was important, both to show the truth of divine inspiration and to save the church, that these disclosures should be in their native purity in the possession of the people of God.

God shall take away his part out of the book of life - Perhaps there is here an intimation that this would be most likely to be done by those who professed to be Christians, and who supposed that their names were in the book of life. In fact, most of the corruptions of the sacred Scriptures have been attempted by those who have professed some form of Christianity. Infidels have but little interest in attempting such changes, and but little influence to make them received by the church. It is most convenient for them, as it is most agreeable to their feelings, to reject the Bible altogether. When it said here that "God would take away his part out of the book of life," the meaning is not that his name had been written in that book, but that he would take away the part which he might have had, or which he

professed to have in that book. Such corruption of the divine oracles would show that they had no true religion, and would be excluded from heaven. On the phrase "book of life," see the notes on Revelation 3:5.

And out of the holy city - Described in Revelation 21. He would not be permitted to enter that city; he would have no part among the redeemed.

And from the things which are written in this book - The promises that are made; the glories that are described.

Verse 20

He which testifieth these things - The Lord Jesus; for he it was that had, through the instrumentality of the angel, borne this solemn witness to the truth of these things, and this book was to be regarded as his revelation to mankind. See the notes on Revelation 1:1; Revelation 22:16. He here speaks of himself, and vouches for the truth and reality of these things by saying that he "testifies" of them, or bears witness to them. Compare John 18:37. The fact that Jesus himself vouches for the truth of what is here revealed, shows the propriety of what John had said in the previous verses about adding to it, or taking from it.

Saith, Surely I come quickly - That is, the development of these events will soon begin - though their consummation may extend into far distant ages, or into eternity. See the notes on Revelation 1:1, Revelation 1:3; Revelation 22:7, Revelation 22:10.

Amen - A word of solemn affirmation or assent. See the notes on Matthew 6:13. Here it is to be regarded as the expression of John, signifying his solemn and cheerful assent to what the Saviour had said, that he would come quickly. It is the utterance of a strong desire that it might be so. He longed for his appearing.

Even so - These, too, are the words of John, and are a response to what the Saviour had just said. In the original, it is a response in the same language which the Saviour had used, and the beauty of the passage is marred by the translation "Even so." The original is, "He which testifieth to these things saith, Yea - ναὶ nai- I come quickly. Amen. Yea - ναὶ nai- come, Lord Jesus." It is the utterance of desire in the precise language which the Saviour had used - heart responding to heart.

Come, Lord Jesus - That is, as here intended, "Come in the manner and for the objects referred to in this book." The language, however, is expressive of the feeling of piety in a more extended sense, and may be used to denote a desire that the Lord Jesus would come in any and every

manner; that he would come to impart to us the tokens of his presence; that he would come to bless his truth and to revive his work in the churches; that he would come to convert sinners, and to build up his people in holiness; that he would come to sustain us in affliction, and to defend us in temptation; that he would come to put a period to idolatry, superstition, and error, and to extend the knowledge of his truth in the world; that he would come to set up his kingdom on the earth, and to rule in the hearts of people; that he would come to receive us to his presence, and to gather his redeemed people into his everlasting kingdom. It was appropriate to the aged John, suffering exile in a lonely island, to pray that the Lord Jesus would speedily come to take him to himself; and there could have been no more suitable close of this marvelous book than the utterance of such a desire. And it is appropriate for us as we finish its contemplation, disclosing so much of the glories of the heavenly world, and the blessedness of the redeemed in their final state, when we think of the earth, with its sorrows, trials, and cares, to respond to the prayer, and to say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." For that glorious coming of the Son of God, when he shall gather his redeemed people to himself, may all who read these notes be finally prepared. Amen.

Verse 21

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen - The usual benediction of the sacred writers. See the notes on Romans 16:20.

REVELATION CONTENTS

CHAPTER SIXTY-SEVEN
Bible Study Guide

Study Guide
- A Secret Of Understanding The Bible
- The Different Genres Of The Bible
- Grasping The Big Pictures
- 4 Essential Tips
- The Authority Of The Bible
- The Theme Of The Bible
- The Impact Of The Bible On Our Lives
- How To Study The Bible

STUDY GUIDE

Studying the Bible is one of the most wonderful activities we can be involved in. Every session will reveal something more of God, His personality and His desire for each of our lives. Whether we gain insight into a complex area of theology or we are driven to worship Him as we see more of His wonder we are benefited and blessed by spending time in His word.

The Bible is God speaking to us, directly. It may seem too amazing to be true but it is.

These few pages offer us some ideas as to how we can use this commentary to find out more of God and His love for us.

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE TABLE OF CONTENTS

A SECRET OF UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

The Bible is one wonderful work of our God. There is nothing more daunting than approaching something so large that you do not know where to begin. This was certainly how I felt, and still do! So I decided to start the ball rolling by posting some help for us. You could call this series Bible Study 101. What we are trying to do is to get a feel for the chain of events that happen in the Bible.

BREAK THE BIBLE INTO SECTIONS

The first stage to helping us understand the Bible is to break it down into manageable chunks. This will help us start to be able to put our finger on things that are going on through the whole book. We could look at individual books but given that there are 66 books of the Bible we might just find that too much at this stage.

At this stage, in terms of history, I think it is helpful to think of the Bible as running through 3 periods:

1. 1. Old Testament
2. 2. Inter-testamental Period
3. 3. New Testament

The Bible does divide itself up this way. The word testament means covenant or an agreement (between God and mankind). One way of understanding this is in terms of the old promise and new promise which refers to God's promise to save His people. The old way was through the Mosaic Law while the new way is through Jesus Christ, God's own Son.

It is worthwhile developing a grasp of what is going on in the Bible in terms of its story. Looking into the Psalms or in the book of Amos is not going to reveal much about the timeline of events from a long distance perspective. This is where it comes in handy to know what is going on and apply this knowledge to the passage of the Bible you are looking at.

OLD TESTAMENT

This section of the Bible covers the longest period of history. Starting with creation it charts the progress of God's chosen nation, Israel, from their beginnings through to their return from and re-establishment after their exile in Babylon. Her is a list of some (very general and not exhaustive) of the key events taking place in the Old Testament:

- ¬ The story of Creation
- ¬ The fall of man
- ¬ The Great Flood
- ¬ God's selection of Abraham
- ¬ From Jacob through Joseph to Egypt
- ¬ Escape from Egypt
- ¬ The wandering in the wilderness
- ¬ Receiving of the 10 Commandments
- ¬ Claiming the Promised Land
- ¬ The Judges (e.g. Gideon, Samson, Samuel)
- ¬ The Kingdom of Israel (Saul, David, Solomon)
- ¬ Division of the Kingdom (into Israel and Judah)
- ¬ Exile
- ¬ Return from Exile.

It is worth pointing out that through the period of the Division of the Kingdom through to and during the Return from Exile God sent a number of prophets to speak to the people of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

INTER-TESTAMENTAL PERIOD

This period is not covered in the Protestant Christian Bible. It covers a 400 year period from the time of Malachi's ministry (Circa 420 BC) through until the conception of John the Baptist.

It is accepted by the Protestant tradition that God was silent during this period. This meant that there were no prophets nor was anyone divinely inspired to record a narrative of the period. The Catholic tradition recognises the Apocrypha as part of the Cannon of Scripture, a recognised part of the Bible but for the purposes of this blog it is not viewed in this light.

The Apocrypha is a worthwhile section of literature to read because it is a set of writings that dates from that period and can teach us about this period.

As this blog will not focus on the Apocrypha I think it is worthwhile to highlight some of the key events that took place during the period between the Old and New Testament. This will help us understand what happened to the nation of Judah (see back to the split of the Kingdom of Israel).

Political

- ¬ 400 – 334 BC saw the Jews ruled over by the Persians. It was the Persians who conquered the Babylonians and let the exiled Jews return home. The Jews tended to have a certain freedom to govern themselves but they were most definitely under the rule of the Persians. Aramaic became the common language spoken although Hebrew was continued to be used in their religion.

- ¬ 333 – 323 BC saw the rule of the area by the Greeks. Alexander the Great conquered the area. This resulted in the start of the spread of the Hellenistic culture. The Greek language became more common. The Greek philosophies began to take root in the thinking of the Jews.

- ¬ 323 – 199 BC after the death of Alexander the Great his empire was split between two of his generals Ptolemy and Seleucus. These generals and their dynasties waged war against each other. As a result

Judea spent periods being ruled by both powers. During this period is was the Ptolemaic dynasty that controlled the region.

- ¬ 198 – 143 BC the Seleucids through Antiochus III took over in Jerusalem.

- ¬ 142 – 62 BC saw a period of some independence for the Jews. The Maccabees fought a guerrilla campaign to free Jerusalem from foreign rule. The revolt was sparked by many outrages by Antiochus Epiphanes. This rebellion led to the founding of the Hasmonean dynasty.

- ¬ 61 BC – Time of Christ was another period when Judea was occupied. This time they were conquered by the Romans. This conquest put Herod on the throne of Judea.

Social

- ¬ As mentioned above the Greek language began to become more prevalent in Judea.

- ¬ Some Jews were removed from Judea to Greece. This eventually led to the translation of the Scriptures (at that time the books of the Old Testament) into Greek. This is known as the Septuagint which established the official content of the Old Testament (the Canon).

- ¬ A number of sects began to spring up. These included the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

- ¬ The Dead Sea Scrolls were written by the scribe sect, the Essenes of Qumran.

NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament begins, chronologically, with the announcement that John the Baptist would be born. He was the forerunner to Jesus Christ and would prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah (Hebrew for Christ).

Compared to the Old Testament the New Testament covers a much shorter period. It only lasts about 100 years (from the birth of John the Baptist to the writing of Revelation). During this period there was much activity and many events that changed the world around those living at the time.

The New Testament can be boiled down to the following key events:

- ¬ Birth of Jesus Christ

- ¬ Life of Jesus Christ – His teaching and His miracles

- ¬ Death of Jesus Christ

- ¬ The birth of the Church

- ¬ Development of the Church

- ¬ The Revelation to the Apostle John.
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BIBLE STUDY GUIDE TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE DIFFERENT GENRES OF THE BIBLE

We just looked at splitting Biblical events into the Old and New Testaments. This is a very rough and ready way to split the story in terms of understanding Bible.

What we really need to do is drill down a bit further and look at some further ways to classify different sections of the Bible. When you read different books you will quickly realise that the structure and genre differs one from the other. Compare the story telling of Judges with the poetry in Song of Songs. Then look at one of Paul's epistles and see how it is different from the visions compared in Revelation.

So let us take a look at our original split from the post on understanding the Bible – the two covenants. We will look at further dividing these two parts into different genres and the books that make up these sub-sections.

SPLITTING THE OLD TESTAMENT INTO QUARTERS

While it is possible to make three sections out of the OT I favour four. To my mind the fourfold split makes more sense, I like things organised in my head in a certain way, but I would suggest that if you prefer the three then make use of that instead.

The four sections of the Old Testament are:

- • The Law
- • History
- • Poetry & Wisdom

- • Prophets (both the Major and Minor)

It is into these four general headings that we can put every one of the 39 books of the OT. The splits come in the natural running order of our Bibles.

The Law

The books making up this section are also known as the Pentateuch or by in the Jewish religion as the Torah:

- ♣ Genesis
- ♣ Exodus
- ♣ Leviticus
- ♣ Numbers
- ♣ Deuteronomy

These books outline the origin of creation, God's selection of His chosen people and also the giving of the law. While there is much narrative in these books what is very clear is the giving of a set of rules. A distillation of these rules, especially the 10 Commandments, later came to be referred to as the Mosaic Law.

History

This is a segment of the OT that is a narrative. It purely tells a story of God's people. There are highs and lows. From entering the Promised Land of Canaan to the division of the Kingdom and then the return from exile in Babylon these books fill out the history of the nation:

- ♣ Joshua
- ♣ Judges
- ♣ Ruth
- ♣ 1st and 2nd Samuel
- ♣ 1st and 2nd Kings

- ♣ 1st and 2nd Chronicles
- ♣ Ezra
- ♣ Nehemiah
- ♣ Esther

If you want to trace the story of how the nation of Israel rose and fell then the whole story is contained in these books. It is at the end of this selection of books that we leave the story of the Jews until the birth of the Saviour around 400 years later.

Poetry & Wisdom

Reading these books in English does not always reveal the poetic nature of their contents. We must remember that the original language was Hebrew and this had its own, distinct form of poetry. The books are:

- ♣ Job
- ♣ Psalms
- ♣ Proverbs
- ♣ Ecclesiastes
- ♣ Song of Solomon

These books are more abstract in nature and exist with little need for regard of the events of their day. In other words we do not necessarily need to know what was happening in Solomon's kingdom to appreciate the passion and the beauty contained in Song of Solomon.

Prophets

In a similar way to the Poetry & Wisdom books the Prophets contain information that is not heavily interlinked with the events going on at the time of writing. I would qualify this statement and point out that we can tell a lot about contemporary events from the prophets but it is their focus. They are not written to tell us what the king of the day was doing. They were

written to reveal God's judgement and warnings to the people. Contained in this section:

- ♣ Isaiah
- ♣ Jeremiah
- ♣ Lamentations
- ♣ Daniel
- ♣ Ezekiel
- ♣ Hosea
- ♣ Joel
- ♣ Amos
- ♣ Obadiah
- ♣ Jonah
- ♣ Micah
- ♣ Nahum
- ♣ Habakkuk
- ♣ Zephaniah
- ♣ Haggai
- ♣ Zechariah
- ♣ Malachi

This section can be further sub-divided into the Major Prophets (Isaiah – Ezekiel) and the Minor Prophets (the remaining 12).

THE NEW TESTAMENT – FOUR SECTIONS TOO

It is quite fitting to split the NT into four headings just as we did the OT.

Gospels

The Gospels give us the story of the birth, life and death of our Lord Jesus:

- ♣ Matthew
- ♣ Mark
- ♣ Luke
- ♣ John

Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the Synoptic Gospels because they share so much content. They even share the exact same words on occasion. John's Gospel differs markedly from the Synoptics as it reports events in a different order. In fact it has no mention of the birth of Jesus!

Narrative

This section contains only one book:

- ♣ Acts

This is a wonderful account from the Ascension of Jesus Christ back into heaven through the development of the early Church.

Epistles

Another word for letters these books lay down the doctrine of the Church as well as giving advice and rules.

- ♣ Romans
- ♣ 1st & 2nd Corinthians
- ♣ Galatians
- ♣ Ephesians
- ♣ Philippians
- ♣ Colossians
- ♣ 1st & 2nd Thessalonians
- ♣ 1st & 2nd Timothy
- ♣ Titus
- ♣ Philemon

- ♣ Hebrews
- ♣ James
- ♣ 1st & 2nd Peter
- ♣ 1st, 2nd & 3rd John
- ♣ Jude

This list can be further broken down into the Pauline Epistles (Romans – Philemon) and the General Epistles (Hebrews – Jude).

Apocalyptic

Apocalypse means disclosure of something that is hidden. It contains one book:

- ♣ Revelation

This is a book that has caused much disagreement and controversy in both Christian and secular circles. Some claim to have deciphered its hidden meaning, while many of us (myself included) are uncertain which particular definition seems best (I would argue we are not meant to understand – simply accept).

WHAT IS THE POINT TO THIS?

OK so Simon has managed to post a list of how we can slot all the books of the Bible into different categories. It is neither clever nor is it original. "So what is the point?" I hear you ask. Well I think it is important to recognise that the Bible is not written by one person nor are all the books written for one purpose (when read independently of each other). When it comes to any form of Bible study we cannot read Ruth the same way we read Revelation.

We have to adapt the way we study so that our understanding of the Bible is secured in truth.

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GRASPING THE BIG PICTURE

The Bible is the word of God, divinely inspired and through His word God tells us the story of history (some have put it His Story). God does not lock away secrets in the Bible in the mystical way some would suggest but makes things clear.

Understanding the Bible is about patience and application. There is no need for college degrees or many decades in full time ministry.

I have put together a table that shows some of the events that took place in the Bible together with their approximate date and the Bible reference detailing the events.

DATE	EVENT	BIBLE REF
Before 4000 BC	The Creation	Genesis 1
Before 4000 BC	The Fall of Man	Genesis 3
Before 3000 BC	Cain kills Abel	Genesis 4
Before 3000 BC	The Great Flood	Genesis 7
Before 3000 BC	Covenant of the Rainbow	Genesis 9
Before 2100 BC	The Tower of Babel	Genesis 11
2091 BC	God Sends Abram to Egypt	Genesis 12
2085 BC	Abram and Lot Part Ways	Genesis 13
2081 BC	God's Covenant with Abram	Genesis 15
2067 BC	The Destruction of Sodom	Genesis 19
2054 BC	The Offering of Isaac	Genesis 22
1928 BC	Jacob's vision of a ladder	Genesis 28:10
1921 BC	Jacob Marries Rachel	Genesis 29:28

1916 BC	Rachel Bears Joseph	Genesis 30:22
1906 BC	Jacob Named Israel	Genesis 35:10
1898 BC	Joseph's Dreams and Betrayal	Genesis 37
1898 BC	Joseph Sold into Slavery	Genesis 37:25
1886 BC	Joseph Put in Charge	Genesis 41:33
1875 BC	Jacob and Family to Egypt	Genesis 46
1700 BC	Israelites Multiply in Egypt	Exodus 1:6
1600 BC	Israelites Oppressed by New King	Exodus 1:8
1539 BC	Pharaoh's Order to Kill Firstborn	Exodus 1:22
1525 BC	The Birth and Adoption of Moses	Exodus 2
1446 BC	Moses Sent to Deliver Israel	Exodus 3 - 6
1446 BC	The Ten Plagues on Egypt	Exodus 7 - 12
1446 BC	The Exodus Begins	Exodus 13 - 18
1446 BC	The Israelites At Mount Sinai	Exodus 19
1446 BC	Moses Receives the Commandments	Exodus 20
1446 BC	Moses Receives the Law	Exodus 21 - 24
1446 BC	The Golden Calf and Moses' Anger	Exodus 32
1445 BC	Laws for Sacrifices and Offerings	Leviticus 1 - 7
1407 BC	The Bronze Snake	Numbers 21
1407 BC	Balaam and the Angel	Numbers 22 - 25
1407 BC	Joshua Chosen to Succeed Moses	Numbers 27:18

1406 BC	The Death of Moses	Deuteronomy 34
1406 BC	God Commissions Joshua	Joshua 1
1406 BC	The Israelites Cross the Jordan	Joshua 3 - 5
1399 BC	Land allotted among the Tribes	Joshua 13 - 22
1374 BC	Israelites Capture Jerusalem, Hebron	Judges 1
1169 BC	Gideon and the Midianites	Judges 6 - 8
1075 BC	Samson and Delilah	Judges 16
1043 BC	Saul Becomes King	1 Samuel 8 - 10
1028 BC	Saul's Disobedience and Samuel's Rebuke	1 Samuel 15
1024 BC	Samuel Anoints David at Bethlehem	1 Samuel 16
1024 BC	David Kills Goliath	1 Samuel 17
1010 BC	Saul and His Sons Killed	1 Samuel 31
1003 BC	David Reigns over All Israel	2 Samuel 5, 1 Chronicles 11
993 BC	David and Bathsheba	2 Samuel 11
970 BC	David's last days	1 Chronicles 28, 29, 1 Kings 1, 2
967 BC	Solomon Asks for Wisdom	2 Chronicles 1, 1 Kings 3
966 BC	The Building of Solomon's Temple	1 Kings 6
966 BC	The Ark Brought to the Temple	1 Kings 8
946 BC	The Queen of Sheba Visits Solomon	1 Kings 10, 2 Chronicles 9
931 BC	Solomon's Death	1 Kings 11:40

931 BC	The Kingdom is Divided	1 Kings 12, 13
863 BC	Elijah on Mount Carmel	1 Kings 18
858 BC	Elisha Called	1 Kings 19:19
851 BC	Elijah Taken up to Heaven	2 Kings 2
851 BC	Elisha Succeeds Elijah	2 Kings 2:12
722 BC	Israel Led into Captivity	2 Kings 17:6
586 BC	The Fall of Jerusalem	2 Kings 25, Jeremiah 52
537 BC	The Exiles Return	Ezra 2
535 BC	Temple Work Begins	Ezra 3
457 BC	Ezra's reforms	Ezra 9
444 BC	Ezra Reads the Law	Nehemiah 8
6 BC	Birth of John the Baptist	Luke 1, John 1:6
6 BC	Augustus Taxes the Roman Empire	Luke 2
5 BC	Birth of Jesus	Matthew 1, Mark 1, Luke 2:6, John 1:14
5 BC	Visit of the Magi	Matthew 2
5 BC	Escape to Egypt	Matthew 2:13
4 BC	Slaughter of Infants	Matthew 2:16
4 BC	Return to Nazareth	Matthew 2:23
8 AD	The Boy Jesus at the Temple	Luke 2:41
26 AD	John the Baptist Prepares the Way	Matthew 3, Mark 1:4, Luke 3, John 1:15
26 AD	The Baptism of Jesus	Matthew 3:13,

		Mark 1:9, Luke 3:21
27 AD	Temptation of Jesus	Matthew 4, Mark 1:12, Luke 4
27 AD	Jesus Calls his First Disciples	Matthew 4:18, Mark 1:16, Luke 5
27 AD	Sermon on the Mount	Matthew 5 - 7
28 AD	Jesus Ministers in Galilee	Matthew 8, Mark 2, Luke 4:14
29 AD	Jesus Sends out His Twelve Apostles	Matthew 10, Mark 6
29 AD	John the Baptist Beheaded	Matthew 14, Mark 6:14
29 AD	Jesus Feeds the 5,000	Matthew 14:15, Mark 6:30, Luke 9, John 6
29 AD	Peter's Confession of Christ	Matthew 16, Mark 8, Luke 9:18
29 AD	The Transfiguration	Matthew 17, Mark 9, Luke 9:28
29 AD	Greatest and Least in the Kingdom	Matthew 18
29 AD	The Woman Caught in Adultery	John 8
29 AD	Jesus Affirms He is the Son of God	John 9
30 AD	Jesus Cleanses the Ten Lepers	Luke 17

30 AD	Jesus Raises Lazarus	John 11
30 AD	Final Journey to Jerusalem	Matthew 19, 20, Mark 10, Luke 18
30 AD	The Triumphal Entry	Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19, John 12
30 AD	Thursday Before Passover	Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, John 13
30 AD	Jesus Comforts His Disciples	John 14
30 AD	Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit	John 16
30 AD	Jesus' Intercessory prayers	John 17
30 AD	Jesus' Betrayal, Trial, Crucifixion	Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, John 18, 19
30 AD	Jesus' Resurrection	Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20, 21
30 AD	The Ascension	Acts 1
30 AD	The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost	Acts 2
31 AD	Saul Persecutes the Church	Acts 8
31 AD	Philip and the Ethiopian	Acts 8:26
34 AD	Saul's Conversion	Acts 9
37 AD	Peter Preaches to the Gentiles	Acts 10, 11
48 AD	Paul's First Missionary Journey	Acts 13
48 AD	The Council at Jerusalem	Acts 15
60 AD	Paul imprisoned in Caesarea	Acts 24
62 AD	Paul Sails for Rome	Acts 27
95 AD	John's Revelation on Patmos	Revelation 1 - 22

Not knowing or remembering these events and dates will not adversely affect our ability to study the Bible. I have posted this because I feel it is useful to have a resource where we can refer to when we wish to know the overriding social events to the passages we are studying. When we consider Daniels prophecy we need to know that he was in exile in Babylon at the time.

You will notice that the Bible references here are, in the majority of cases, from books that narrate the history of God's people. There are very few references to the Prophets or Epistles. This is because the narrative books serve the purpose of telling us what was happening.

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 ESSENTIAL TIPS

VARY YOUR APPROACH

- • Just as there are different genres in the Bible there are different ways to study.
- • Mix things up – do not get tied into the one approach
- • Carry out word studies – what can you learn from studying "justification" or "adoption".
- • Take a chapter and do a verse by verse analysis.
- • Set aside a month and do an indepth study of a book – include social aspect it was written against, look at it chapter by chapter and also give an outline of the whole book.
- • Look at different characters and identify traits, successes or even failures.
- • Delve into the study of different themes – "salvation", "faith" or "the Trinity" are good starting points.
- • Don't limit yourself to this list.
- • Post a comment telling me what you do to study the Bible and how you keep your approach fresh. We can all learn from each other.

USE THE RIGHT RESOURCES

- • The basic thing is to make sure you have a good, reliable study Bible. The translation you use is your call. I would recommend that you use a translation as opposed to a paraphrase because this keeps you much closer to the original Greek.
- • Do not feel you need an exhaustive library to get the benefit from studying the Bible.
- • If you want to build your library it is sensible to view this in the long term. Buying books, especially resources for studying the Bible is an expensive pastime.
- • When you do invest in some books think about what you need in terms of how you study the Bible. If you do not enjoy word studies

then there is little point in buying Strong's Complete Word Study Concordance.

- • The key thing to remember about any resource is that it should complement your study, not direct it.
- • The first thing, I think, you should invest in is an exhaustive concordance for the translation of the Bible you use.
- • Spend some time on a site like Amazon looking at various resources.
- • Remember that you can spend a smaller amount of money and buy a Bible Study software package for your PC. These software packages contain many different resources including, word concordances, Bible dictionaries and some commentaries.
- • Commentaries are a handy resource but I would caution you on when you use them in the study process. What YOU learn from the Bible is the most valuable thing you will learn. Not what some expert has written about it. By all means use a commentary to check what you have found (far out ideas are not necessarily wrong but if you differ from the whole academic community on a doctrine you may want to reconsider your findings).
- • I love books so I am always adding to my reference library, I see it as a huge investment in something I love doing and something that benefits my life.
- • What sort of resources do you turn to in order to assist your studies?

DEVELOP A CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH

- • Bible study will not happen without a concerted effort. We need to make sure that we dedicate time to it. Whatever amount of time this is or whenever you schedule it does not matter. Once you have determined to study then set aside the time, regularly.
- • When you approach study remember to begin in prayer. This is not purely an intellectual exercise and we must remember that what we learn from the Bible is revealed to us by God.

- • After praying dedicate yourself to the process – whatever form of studying you decide to follow, do it wholeheartedly.
- • This tip may sound obvious but you would be surprised at how many people ignore it – whatever you learn, RECORD IT. Write it down. Dictate it. Store it on a CD ROM….however you do it, do it. Recording your findings means you can come back to them later and add to them, or even correct them.
- • At the end of the slot make you sure you finish in prayer. In fact make sure you pray throughout your study. Involve God. Ask Him for guidance, thank Him for revelation and confess where you fall short in what you have found out.
- • What sort of routine do you use for study?

APPLY WHAT YOU LEARN

- • As I said above this is not simply an intellectual exercise. It is not a college exam you are preparing for, it is about learning more of the God who loves us.
- • When we learn from God's word we must move it from head knowledge to life altering knowledge. If you learn that hate is wrong – then work on cutting hate out of your life (if applicable).
- • God's word is a light for us to follow. It teaches us the way we need to live our lives. It helps us in times of trouble and it reminds us of God's goodness and promises to us.
- • Of all my advice this is where I would really pray for God to guide us – we cannot keep being the same people once we engage in God's word. It must change us.
- • One final word of encouragement – be ambitious. Do not avoid subjects because they seem too big, too deep, reserved for academics. Remember that simple fisherman, Peter? On Pentecost he was using the words of the prophet Joel to preach. Deep stuff for someone who had never darkened the door of the schools of learning of his day.
- • In a similar way what you learn for yourself will resonate the deepest in your life. Tackle justification. Investigate salvation. Drill deep down into faith. You will be rewarded for your efforts. Remember

Isaiah 49:23 “And you shall know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for Me.”

- • I sometimes struggle to apply what I learn – dwelling on situations that make me angry is a big failing of mine. I know that writing words encouraging us to apply what we learn is rather easy compared to actually putting it into practice.
-

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There are many facets to our lives as Christians. There are a number of things that we should be trying to keep a the forefront of everything we do every day. This series of online Bible Studies for January is aimed at reminding us what is important to us and what should be made priorities in all that we try and do.

The first thing I wish to focus on is the Bible.

Before we go any further I want us to consider the following questions:

1. 1. What place does the Bible hold in your life?
2. 2. How often do you read it?
3. 3. What priority do you give to what you read?
4. 4. Do you believe it can change your life?

Make a note of your answers.

It is possible to answer these questions quickly, without really thinking about them but give some serious consideration to the consequences of your answers!

So what can we say about the importance of the Bible?

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

ITS AUTHORITY

I hope your answers to the 4 questions above were such that they give the Bible the place of highest authority in your life. What the Bible says is what we should do. Why? Because it is the word of God. To disobey the Bible is to disobey God Himself.

What does the Bible say about itself? In answering this we must remember that the canon of Scripture was not formalised until the Council of Carthage in AD 397 but the Bible is not silent regarding itself.

One key passage that is a foundational text for the Word of God is 2 Timothy 3:15-17. “How from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

We will return to this text from time to time. It is a most useful one to learn by heart.

Revealed As The Word Of God

Job 11:7 gives us the very words of God affirming how awesome He is. Job is asked how he can hope to fathom God who created the world. If it was not for God revealing Himself in word then we would not have the Bible John Stott says in Understanding the Bible that we cannot discover God for ourselves – He must reveal Himself to us. The Bible is that revelation. God shows us who He is and what He has done for us.

1 Corinthians 14:37 reminds us that the written Scriptures are indeed the word of God as revealed by Him.

Inspired By The Spirit Of God

This is where we return to 2 Timothy 3:16. All word is God breathed. Breathing and inspiration are from the same Greek word. The words that made their way into the Bible did not come from man. While men wrote them down they were ‘inspired’ by God to do so. That is why the Bible is God breathed.

Take a look at 1 Corinthians 2:13. Paul is teaching that what he says is not about his own authority, it is God’s words inspired by the Spirit.

Endorsed By The Son Of God

We have briefly explored the role of the Father and Spirit in the provision of the Bible and how this defines it as the Word of God. Luke

24:44 shows the Son's role in defining the Bible as the Word of God.

Here we see Jesus Christ referring to the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms. This instantly attributes divine authority to what had already been written.

Matthew 26:54 is another instance of Jesus Christ giving His authority to the Scriptures. The endorsement by Christ is irrefutable.

The Bible Has Timeless Relevance

Consider the fact that the Bible has survived for so many centuries. In fact the earliest writings have survived for thousands of years. We still read it regularly. It is still a best seller. Many people work on new translations. Sermons are preached from it on a daily basis.

This is not the mark of a book that is irrelevant or a simple intellectual piece of literature. The Bible hits home with messages that are 100% relevant for today. The stories of David's sin provide us with salutary lessons. The teachings of Jesus Christ resonate today – love your neighbour.

The messages contained in the Bible connect with people today. Why? It is the Word of God and God still speaks into this world today.

The Bible Has Living Power

The fact that the Bible is the Word of God, its continued relevance and the impact it makes on lives serves to demonstrate that it has as much power today as it has ever had. This is because it is the living Word of God. It is not a stagnant piece of material that is dissected

A piece of literature does not have any power. Just look at the power of the Bible. People read it and have their lives changed. Not because it is a beautifully bound book – because it is God's own Word.

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THE THEME OF THE BIBLE

The Bible's Theme

It can be a common misunderstanding that the Bible is solely about multi themes, but equally it is also incorrect to assume it is purely about one thing only. The Bible is multi layered. It cannot be put in one particular box. A useful book to read on this subject is IVP Introduction To The Bible: Story, Themes and Interpretation.

It is perfectly correct to say that Bible is the story of God's love for mankind. It is also correct to mention that there are other subplots – the story of Israel for instance. The Bible itself gives us an insight into its themes.

Let us look back at our foundational text from my earlier post **Christian Life: The Authority Of The Bible. This is 2 Timothy 3:15-17. Especially look at verse 15 which says "…**from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

Consider the following questions, noting down your answers:

1. 1. What is the benefit from reading the Bible?
2. 2. What themes are there to the Bible according to this text?

This verse gives us a rather sharp insight into three key themes of the Bible, namely, salvation, Christ and faith. Another way of putting this together is to say that the Bible tells us what we need, why we need it and how we get it.

Salvation

In Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 we read of how God created our world. That is the first 2 chapters of the Bible (out of over 1,000 chapters). Then in

Genesis 3 we read how sin entered into the world and corrupted God's perfect creation. It is from that moment on that the Bible weaves in the need for our salvation. From Genesis 3 the need for salvation becomes clear after God's relationship with Adam is destroyed and from the same chapter we read of the promise of a Saviour.

Christ

After the need for a Saviour became apparent in Genesis 3 the Bible tells a story that charts the choosing and progress of God's chosen people. There are high points and many, many lows in this progression. Israel failed God on a continuing basis and this trend continued even after the split of the kingdom.

This inability to meet God's standards meant that for salvation to be available there needed to be a saviour.

The Messiah was promised to God's people. The Old Testament builds the case for the need of a Messiah and gives the people the promise of God's Chosen One to come. The New Testament describes the coming of the Messiah (the Christ) and His life on earth as complete man, completely divine.

Faith

The final theme is faith. Having established the need for salvation and identified the Christ who saves the Bible points out clearly that we must have faith. The Bible tells of only a few men who laid eyes on God, there were many who saw Jesus Christ but there were many more who did not. Belief in a God who loves and the Christ who saves is needed through faith.

Those hearing the words of the Prophets were required to have faith that the message came from God.

Elijah needed to have faith that God would send fire to ignite the burnt offering on Mount Carmel.

Moses needed faith that God would lead the Israelites to the Promised Land.

We are required to have faith so that we are justified.

Salvation through Christ requires faith.

Conclusion

The Bible is a book of many sub-divisions, chapters and verses. We can examine the themes of the individual books of the Bible but we can most definitely trace three themes from start to finish – Salvation, Christ and Faith.

My first two questions can now be answered. The Bible is, on a strategic level, about God's love for us and His desire that we should not be lost for eternity.

How do these themes affect our own lives?

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THE IMPACT OF THE BIBLE ON OUR LIVES

So far we have examined the authority of the Bible and its theme. This post looks at the impact of the Bible on our lives.

1. 1. What do you find the Bible useful for?
2. 2. What does the Bible tell us it is useful for?

Read 2 Timothy 3:16 "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness"

1. 3. What does this verse tell us it is useful for?

There are 4 aspects to what the Bible is useful for here:

Teaching

This is where we start from a position of little or no knowledge and the Bible builds this up. We did not know what God was like until we read about Him.

The Bible shows us how we are called to live our lives. It is an educational tool. Nobody becomes a Christian and immediately knows everything that is required of them.

Rebuking

We all know what it is like to see a child misbehave. The child's parent will tell off the misbehaving rascal! This is a rebuke. It is harsh but necessary. Without the rebuke the child will continue doing wrong. The rebuke is needed because the deviation from acceptable behaviour is so marked.

So it is with us when we really step out of the line of God's commands. The Bible does not miss us and hit the wall! When we are wrong we need to be hauled back from our wrong doing and put right.

Correcting

This is similar to rebuking except it is really a lot gentler. Our mistake is maybe not so serious as to deserve a stinging rebuke but nonetheless we need to be guided back onto the right path. The Bible does this in a way that does not leave us feeling defensive but cared for.

Training

When we made the commitment to follow Christ we were called into a life of service for Him. Remember when you started that new job? You didn't know where anything was or what procedure you should follow in a given situation. It took training.

Training is a two way process. Somebody teaches and you learn. So when the Bible is instructing us on what God wants us to do we need to listen, understand and then practice what we are told. The Bible is an exceptional training resource.

Further Study

Look at the following verses and write down what you think they tell us about what the Bible is useful for:

1. 1. Matthew 4:4
2. 2. Psalm 119:130
3. 3. Romans 10:17
4. 4. Psalm 119:11
5. 5. Hebrews 4:12-13

The Bible is not just a literary resource. It is not a simple handbook that we can read from cover to cover and then realise we are fully trained. The Bible is the living, breathing Word of God. That said, however, we it is a book we can turn to in order to find out what God wants us to do.

We must be committed to reading and studying the Bible on a regular basis because it is God's way of speaking to us (please note I am not ruling out the more supernatural means by which God can communicate with this world). We must be open to hear what God has to say to us.

So how did you get on with the verses?

Some answers:

1. 1. Food for our soul
2. 2. Light for our mind
3. 3. Depth to our faith
4. 4. Protection from sin
5. 5. Power to fight

As wonderful as Charles Dickens' masterpieces are they lack the ability to do all the things the Bible does. God is not silent today. He speaks, every day. We just need to listen and obey.

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HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

The other day a young friend of mine asked me how he should study the Bible. I thought it would be worthwhile to give a brief overview of a useful approach to study. I would stress that this is not the definitive or only way.

How do you approach the Bible?

My first piece of advice is to approach the Bible:

- ¬ With an open book (i.e. read the Bible itself, not what others say about it)
- ¬ With an open mind (do not be influenced by what others have said about the passage)
- ¬ With an open heart (be ready to learn and apply what you read and come to understand)

So here is one way I approach Bible study…

1. 1) Read the passage you are studying through as many times as possible (minimum of 5 times) and if possible also look to see how different translations of the Bible put the same passage.

1. 2) Try and identify key words, phrases or themes within the passage.

1. 3) Set aside the divisions and chapters that are in your Bible and see if you can decide where the most appropriate paragraph divisions are.

1. 4) List the important points in each paragraph.

1. 5) Relate the passage to the general context of the book of the Bible it is in.

1. 6) Only when you reach this stage – consult a brief commentary to compare your understanding of the passage with what an "expert" thinks.

1. 7) Consult more detailed commentaries on more difficult points.

1. 8) Think of illustrations; other scriptures etc. to help you if you were to try and explain this passage to somebody else.
2.

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AVAILABLE TITLES

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25 INSPIRING SERMONS

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ADAM' CLARKE'S BIBLE COMMENTARY (Whole Bible Commentary)

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COMMENTARY ON THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

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MEN OF THE BIBLE

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